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Collana di filologia e antichità egee

diretta da Louis Godart e Anna Sacconi

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VASSILIS ARAVANTINOS, ADAMANTIA VASILOGAMVROU

THE FIRST LINEAR B DOCUMENTS FROM AYIOS VASILEIOS (LACONIA)

Over the last two years, an important Mycenaean site has gradually come to light on the low hill of Ayios Vasileios, in the western side of Eurotas valley not far from Sparta. Among various other finds, the discovery of a few fragmentary clay tablets testifies for the presence of an archive of Linear B texts, during the period of the last Aegean palaces (c.1400-1200 BC) in Laconia[1]. This region was of primary importance in the Aegean Bronze Age as well as in later Greek history, but no Linear B documents were discovered until recently. From this point of view the recent epigraphic finds mark a missing link in the chain of the Mycenaean studies in general[2]. In fact, after years of intermittent yet pioneering, dense and extensive archaeological research, comprising both survey and excavation, the long awaited discovery of Mycenaean written documents in Laconia may seem quite natural on the base of the evidence collected so far from neighbouring areas famous in myth and history[3].

During the Mycenaean period (c.1680-1100 BC) Laconia hosted numerous settlements, some of them flourishing, as well as cemeteries and tombs, some of which renowned for their rich contents, such as the, supposedly royal, tholos tomb by the Vapheio village or the impressive rock-cut chamber tombs at Pellana[4]. In the Homeric

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*The authors of this article would like to express their most sincere gratitude to Prof. P. Carlier, for the invitation and encouragement to present this modest joint contribution in the XIII Colloquium of Mycenaean Studies in Paris. They are also much indebted to the members of the French Committee and especially to Fr. Rougemont and J. Zurbach, for their hospitality and efforts to help them during, before and after the Colloquium. To the latter as well as to M. del Freo we are grateful for looking after our text and improving it in many aspects. Special thanks are finally due to the General Secretary of the Athens Academy/Athens Archaeological Society, Mr. V. Petrakos for inviting us to give a lecture as soon as the first tablets were discovered in Ayios Vasileios and present them in the *Archaeologhiki Etaireia* as well as for including the excavation of this site in the systematic research undertaken by the Society (2010).

[1] This is the first, preliminary study of the tablets, discovered as stressed below on separate occasions and during several survey campaigns on the Ayios Vasileios hill. A lecture on the three first tablets was organized in Athens (April 2009) by the Archaeological Society. This lecture was repeated some months later (December 2009) in Rome (Università "La Sapienza"), after a warm invitation by Prof. A. Sacconi, to whom we are also grateful. A preliminary report for the 2010 campaign is found in *To Ergon tis en Athinais Archaiologhikis Etaireias* 2010, p. 33-40.

[2] See *To Vima*, May 25, 2009 (M. Thermou). The last two tablets, discovered in the summer of 2009, are discussed here for the first time.

[3] See W. CAVANAGH, J.CROUWEL, R.W.V. CATLING and GR. SHIPLEY (eds.) *The Laconia Survey I*, London 2002 (*BSA* Suppl. 26), p.121-150, especially p. 142-150. For a recent account of Mycenaean Laconia and the Homeric traditions related to it, see R. HOPE SIMPSON, "The Mycenaean Settlements in the Sparta Plain and the Ancient Traditions", *SMEA* 51 (2009), p. 315-335.

[4] For a catalogue of the Mycenaean sites in Laconia see R. HOPE SIMPSON and O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, *A Gazetteer of Aegean Civilisation,in the Bronze Age, I*, Göteborg 1979, p. 107ff. Cf. Also

poems this region was held to be the realm of the mighty king Menelaos and the beautiful queen Elena of Sparta (*Il*. 2, 581-590)[5]. Laconia is located in the Southern Peloponnese and is adjacent to Messenia; it faces Crete and is closer to it than any other part of mainland Greece, with the small island of Kythera serving as its bridgehead. During the Mycenaean palatial period, both Pylos in Messenia and Kydonia in West Crete acted as independent kingdoms, were administered by powerful elites with Linear B archives and had very close relations with Laconia and its supposed political centre.

In the past few decades, Linear B finds have mostly appeared in the few Mycenaean centres, known already since the mid 20th century: two palatial sites in Crete (Knossos and Kydonia) and at least four primary sites in Mainland Greece (Pylos, Thebes, Mycenae and Tiryns)[6]. The impression one gets is that political relations between the different Mycenaean states or kingdoms were as close and vivid as at least those described in the Homeric *Catalogue* with the Achaean ships and contigents which set off for Troy. Meanwhile recent studies have demonstrated that the *Catalogue of Ships* in Homer's Iliad (2, 494ff) in no way reproduces the geography and history of Greece in the period of the last Bronze Age palaces[7].

The discoveries of Linear B documents in the Aegean have been multiplied over the last years. At Thebes there are at least two points in the citadel which would certainly produce tablets or inscribed sealings if they were fully excavated. Both of them were only partially excavated in the '60s while recent exploration has confirmed the presence of

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W.-D. NIEMEIER, "La struttura territoriale della Grecia micenea", in FR. PRONTERA (ed.), *Geografia storica della Grecia antica*, Roma-Bari 1991, p. 123-149. For a possible identification of the Homeric places with prehistoric settlements see R. HOPE SIMPSON and J.F. LAZENBY, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad*, Oxford 1970, p. 74ff. See also R. HOPE SIMPSON, *SMEA* 51 (2009), p.323-335.

[5] For questions related to the Homeric geography of the Laconian area see HOPE-SIMPSON, LAZENBY, *The Catalogue*, p.74 ff. A. P. CHAPIN and L.A. HITCHCOCK, "Homer and Laconian Topography. This is what the Book Says and This is What the Land tells Us", in S.P. MORRIS and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *Epos, Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology*, *Aegaeum* 28, 2007, p. 255-263.

[6] Exciting are in fact the news about the two Linear B tablets, discovered among ceramic material from the old excavations in the Palaea neibourghood (Volos), a site with rich deposits from the Mycenaean palatial period (14th-13th c. BC). See D. R. THEOCHARIS, "Iolkos", *Archaeology* 11 (1958), p. 13-18. This material is actually studied by our colleagues E. Skafida, A. Karnava and J.-P. Olivier. See their contribution in this Colloquium. The discovery of a tablet, presented here by C. W. Shelmerdine, in Prof. M. Cosmopoulos' excavations at Iklaina, a site not far from Pylos, is not surprising given the relative vicinity to the Englianos Palace, which may resemble the setting of the citadel and settlements of Mycenae, Midea and Tiryns and possibly also Argos and Nauplia in contemporary Argolid. Surprising seems to be the proposed very early dating (LH II-IIIA1) of this lone and unstratified document (press). For the text of the Iklaina tablet see C.W. Shelmerdine's contribution in this Colloquium.

[7] Cf. J. CHADWICK, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 180-186. See also L. PRANDI, *Platea: momenti e problemi della storia di una polis*, Padova 1988, p. 17: "...questa parte dell'Iliade non rappresenta la riproduzione fedele di un assetto geografico realmente esistito, ma è un misto di situazioni dell'epoca arcaica e di sistemazioni per lo più arcaicizanti, cioè miranti a riprodurre l'assetto *miceneo* dell'*epos*." For a recent assessment, see O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, "The Catalogue of Ships and All That", in *Meletemata*, vol. I, P.P. BETANCOURT *et alii* (eds), Liège 1999, p. 207-210. On the Mycenaean or Early Greek cultural and artistic background described by the Homeric poems, see e.g. P. DUCREY, *Guerre et guerriers dans la Grèce antique*, Fribourg, 1985, p. 15 ff.

more Linear B texts there[8]. The late John Chadwick wrote some years ago that: "The evidence makes it almost certain that somewhere below the centre of the modern town lies an archive of tablets. Thebes was clearly the site of a palace, which controlled a large kingdom in this part of Greece, and its records would be very important, if we could only find them"[9].

This was the *status questionis* of Linear B discoveries until new Linear B tablets were found at Ayios Vasileios and tilted the balance. The new documents point to the presence of a *par excellence* powerful economic and administrative centre in Laconia at the peak of the Mycenaean palatial period (14th-13th c. BC). A palace of such type and size would have administered some thousands of population in and around it, hundreds of functionaries and tens of scribes making tablets, labels and nodules. The palace officials treated the various departments and products in a way similar to the other six palaces known in the Aegean. All of them have established close and permanent contacts with other centres inside and outside the entire Mycenaean world. In fact, the parallel presence and consequent analysis of written documents and archaeological finds, could bring new ideas, enrich and eventually change certain pages in the history of the Aegean Bronze Age. Laconia has been for long on the sidelines of these issues. As it was the only important region of the Mycenaean world where no Linear B tablets had been found, even scholars familiar with its history believed that "if a *Laconian Pylos* existed it would already have been discovered".[10]

The site of Ayios Vasileios lies on the west bank of the Eurotas river in the plain of Sparta, in a distance of c. 12 km south of the city and 4 km northeast of the village of Xerocambi (fig.1). The Mycenaean settlement occupies a low hill chain cut by the national road from Sparta to Gytheion. The first hill west of the road is crowned by the Byzantine chapel of Ayios Vasileios and, so far, it seems that the centre of the Mycenaean settlement was there. In 2008, three Linear B Tablets discovered there assigned to the settlement the features of an administrative centre. The first Linear B Tablet of Laconia (**HV Rb 1,** Sparta Mus. 16240) came to light accidentally on the west slope of the second hill, in a distance of about 300 m. southwest from the chapel. It was found in a deposit pit, which after excavation proved to be the collapsed chamber of a rock-cut tomb[11]. During a quick survey on the main hill two more fragmentary inscribed tablets were collected (**HV Lg 3**, Sparta Mus. 16339 and **HV X 2**, Sparta Mus. 16340). Three trial trenches that were opened in summer 2009 on the main hill, south and southwest of the chapel, produced evidence of an extended Mycenaean layer partially disturbed by a Byzantine

[8] The first is adjacent to the so called "Armoury" of the Palace, the second is next to the plot lying opposite the so-called "Treasury". Tablets and inscribed sealings were discovered in the "Treasury" room in 1996-97 and later, in 2005, in the "Pithos" room, which is the continuation of the "Treasury" to the South. The unexplored part of the "Pithos" room lies under the modern (Antigonis) street.

[9] J. CHADWICK, "Linear B and Related Scripts", in *Reading the Past. Ancient writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet, British Museum Publications*, London 1990, p. 140-195; see especially p. 145.

[10] P. CARTLEDGE, *Sparta and Lakonia, A Regional History 1300-362 BC.*, London, Boston and Henley 1979. Also O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, "Parallels and Contrasts in the Bronze Age Peloponnese", *OJA* 1 (1982), p. 136.

[11] See detailed map in *To Ergon*, p.34, 40.

stratum, which yielded two more fragmentary tablets (**HV X 4**, Sparta Mus. 16341 and **HV Kb 5**, Sparta Mus. 16797).

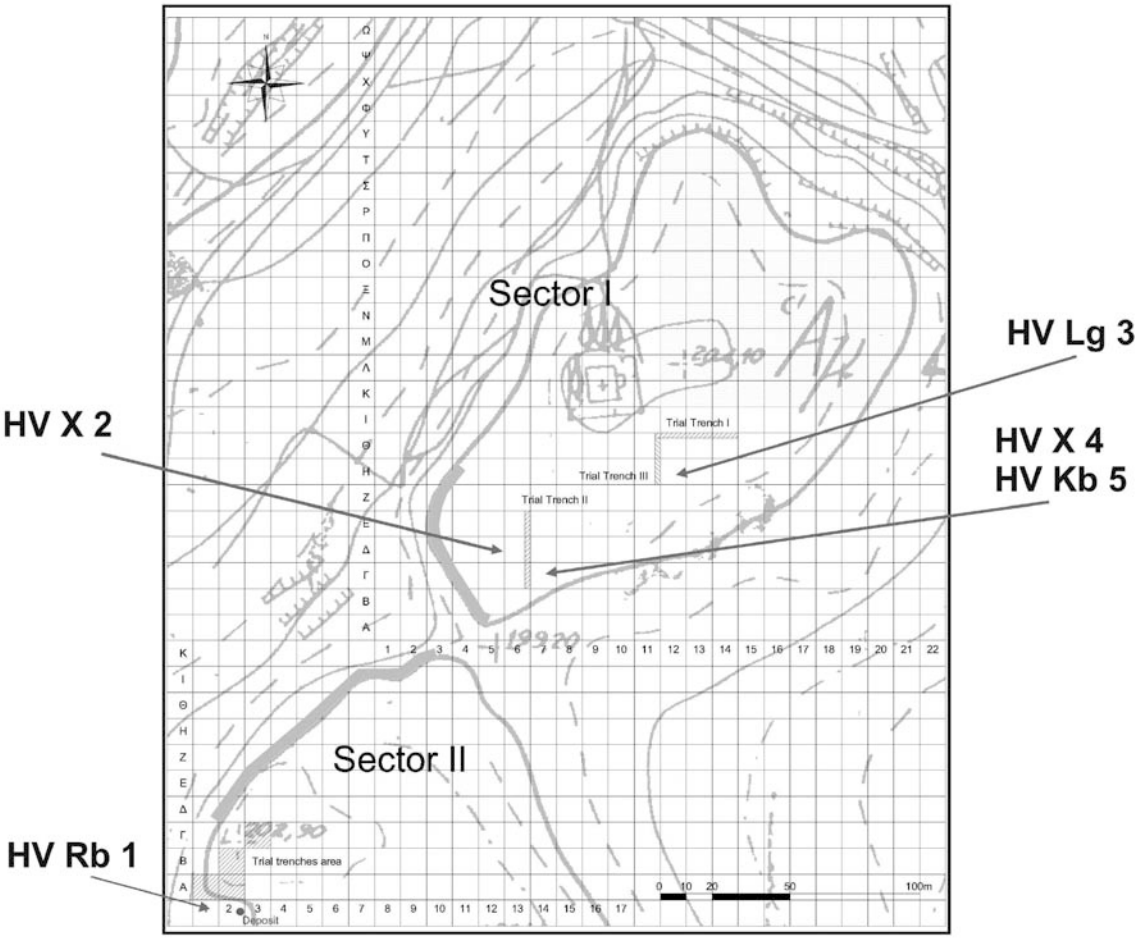


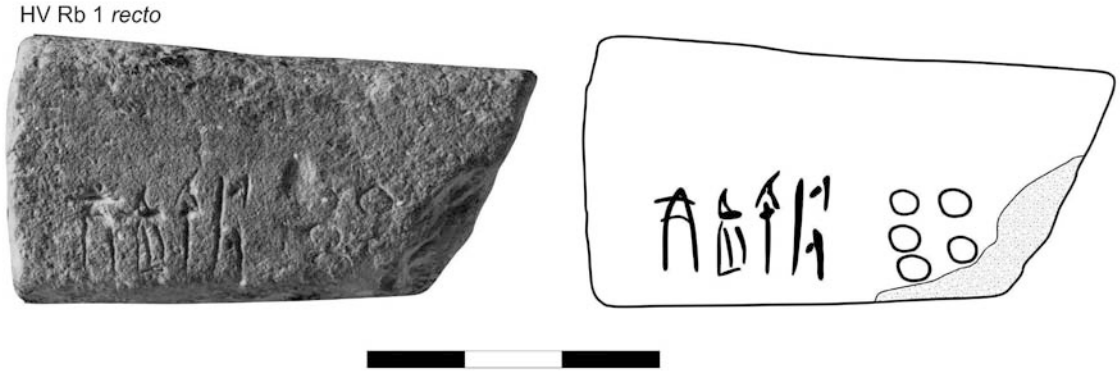
Fig. 1. The site of Ayios Vasileios

The spacious hill would be an ideal site for a typical Mycenaean palatial centre, similar to the site of Epano Englianos in Messenia[12]. The settlement is located in a key

[12] The archaeological bibliography highlights the importance of the site of Ayios Vasileios in the hierarchy of settlements in the Eurotas valley in the Mycenaean palatial period. HOPE SIMPSON and LAZENBY, *The Catalogue*, p.74ff. The identification with the Homeric Pharis dates back to Hope-Simpson and Lazenby. Quite recently R. HOPE SIMPSON, *SMEA* 51 (2009), p. 325-327, returned on this identification. Other information comes from the collection of material, especially pottery in surveys. See R. HOPE SIMPSON and O.T.P.K. DICKINSON, *A Gazetteer of Aegean Civilisation in the Bronze Age*, I, Göteborg 1979, p.110. See also W. CAVANAGH and J. CROUWEL in W. CAVANAGH, J. CROUWEL, R.W.V. CATLING, G. SHIPLEY, *The Laconia Survey*, I, London 2002 (*BSA* Suppl. 26), p. 142-150. The position of Ay. Vasileios as a site of primary importance has been pointed out also by E. BANOU, *Beitrag zum Studium Lakoniens in der mykenischen Zeit*, München 1996. More recently E. BANOU, "Μυκηναϊκά περιοχής Ξηροκαμπίου Λακωνίας. Συμπεράσματα μιας εκτεταμένης έρευνας επιφανείας και ερευνητικές προοπτικές", in *Praktika of the 2nd Congress of Laconian Studies, Xirokambi 2004*, Athens 2006, especially

position suitable for contacts throughout the Eurotas valley, the region of Messenia and the Aegean. It was part of a chain of sites situated relatively close from each other. The same is true for most of the Mycenaean palatial centres, Pylos and Thebes, Mycenae and Tiryns in the Argolid and perhaps Dimini and Volos in Thessaly. However, topographical and archaeological data, when taken under account on their own, cannot prove in themselves the presence of an administrative system and a very probable palatial centre. Neither the rich monumental tombs, nor the ponderous fortifications or pantries with thousands of *kylikes* can in themselves prove the presence of central administration. The site of Ayios Vasileios has produced texts, found sporadically on the extended *acropolis*, whose size is comparable to those of Thebes or Gla. The site is scattered with numerous sherds of stemmed goblets (*kylikes*), fragments of frescoes and other luxury objects[13].

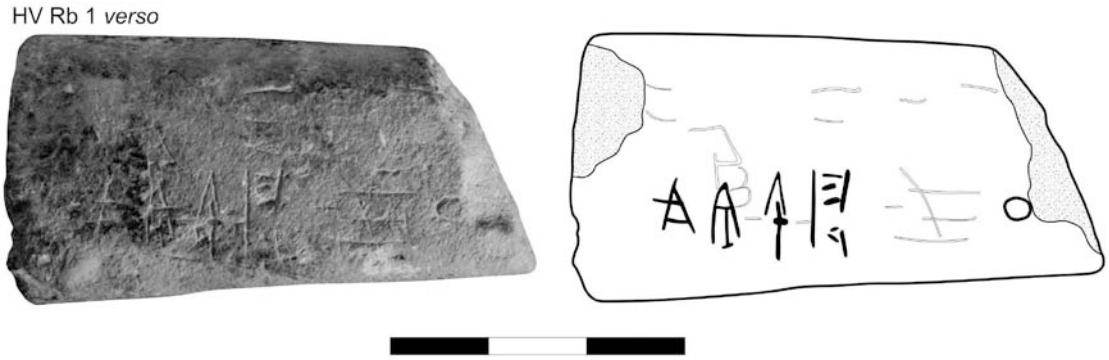
The first tablet (**HV Rb 1,** Sparta Mus. 16240) has the form of a palm leaf[14]. The text on the recto and on the verso reads as follows (figs.2-3):



p.135-141. The information available until 2008 was not enough to prove the hierarchical relationship between this settlement and other contemporary ones in Laconia, especially those situated in the western part of the Eurotas valley, but the appearance of the inscribed documents makes a big difference. For other attempts, see e.g. TH. G. SPYROPOULOS, "Pellana, the administrative centre of prehistoric Laconia", in W.G. CAVANAGH and S.E.C. WALKER (eds), *Sparta in Laconia*, Nottingham 1998 (*BSA* Studies 4), p. 28-38.

[13] See *To Ergon*, p.33-40. See detailed plan on p. 34 and 40.

[14] The prefix HV was preferred to AV because in Aegean epigraphy the texts from Ayia Triada and Ayios Stephanos have the prefixes HT and HS. In spite of the distance of only 12 kilometres from ancient and modern Sparta, it has been decided not to use the prefix LAC or SP, because the site is surrounded by several Mycenaean settlements, some of which are particularly famous in Aegean bibliography, such as Amyclaion and Vapheio, and at present it would not have been wise to identify Ayios Vasileios with any ancient, historical or homeric site, Pharis, Sparta or Lacedaimon.



HV Rb 1

] e-pi-zo-ta 500[

↓

v.] e-pi-zo-ta 100[

On both sides *e-pi-zo-ta* written in small characters on the lower edge of the tablet.

The presence of large numbers of items related to weapons, despite the absence of a real ideogram, collocates the tablet in the **R-** series, in absolute concordance with examples from Knossos, where the same entry *e-pi-zo-ta* is found. The text of the broken tablet is almost entirely preserved. Despite its small dimensions, it looks very interesting. It is in fact only 6.0 cm long, 2.7 - 3.1 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick. It is clear that it laid on the surface or in cultivated soil (*humus*) for a long time. The clay seems to be local, with incidences of impurities. Visual examination revealed no difference from the Thebes documents. Despite the surface damages, the signs are very clear, firm and deeply incised into the clay, betraying the work of an expert scribe. There is only one line of text, without ruled lines. The word *e-pi-zo-ta* is clearly inscribed on the lower edge of the tablet, and most probably refers to items related to weapons, as in the Knossos **Ra** documents[15].

The interpretation ἐπίζωστα, from ἐπιζώννυμι, for Mycenaean *e-pi-zo-ta* is more suitable to our context than any other one, as it refers to weapons or related items, for example scabbards worn on the belt around the waist[16]. Extremely luxurious scabbards, presumably decorated with ivory strips (κολεοί), were probably kept as heirlooms and were known to the poet of the Odyssey[17]. The term *e-pi-zo-ta* is followed here by at least

[15] For *e-pi-zo-ta* , *DMic*. I (1985), s.v. 227 also for *de-de-me-na ke-ra and e-re-pa-te*.

[16] The connection with the verb was first proposed by L.R. PALMER, *Interpretation*, p. 418. See also C. MILANI in *Aevum* 40 (1966) p. 423.

[17] *Od.* 8, 403-405: here is mentioned the ivory-decorated scabbard (κολεός) of Euryalos' bronze (παγχάλκεον) sword. See H.L. LORIMER (*Homer and the Monuments*, London 1950, p. 275). She is not however right when she infers that: "If ivory scabbards had been in use, ivory fragments might have been expected to survive in one grave or another". However it was not necessary to have the entire item made of ivory. Small pieces of such a decoration can survive but are not easily identifiable if found in a tomb or elsewhere. This is always a question of chance, of careful excavation and depends on many other factors. The scabbards were of perishable materials (wood or leather) with eventually ivory or metal decoration.

500 items, certainly relevant to military equipment[18]. Such a high number of weapons generate serious implications and considerations about their production, their destination as well as the importance of both the archive and the establishment to which they once had belonged. It is of course extremely important that a hoard of swords was found *in situ* during the recent systematic excavation of the site[19]. However, in **HV Rb 1** no ideograms or any particular decoration are denoted, in contrast to other Knossian and Pylian tablets, where swords were depicted by the proper ideogram and called by name or described according to their decoration or special fabric, like an example in Homer (*a-ra-ru-wo-a* or *e-re-pa-te* / *ke-ra de-de-me-na* etc., i.e. finished with ivory or horn). It is believed that the weapons or other equipment at Ayios Vasileios had no decoration. However, their massive presence in storage decisively confirms the identification of an important administrative, economic and military centre in Laconia in the third Palatial period (14th or 13th c. BC). Such a large number of individual weapons had never been documented in the archives[20] or ever discovered in the Mycenaean palatial residences[21].

The two better preserved texts from Knossos could provide the parallel evidence for our analysis. The first text is **KN Ra(2) 984 + *fr*.** and the second and more complete one is **KN Ra(2) 1028 + *frr*.** (4) **[+] 7498 [+] *fr***. On both tablets *e-pi-zo-ta* is followed by the ideogram of weapons, the second one also recording their number, a total of 99 + 18 = 117 items (daggers or swords) bound with ivory and horn pieces. Several years before the decipherment of Linear B script, A. Evans had drawn attention to the ideograms of the series with swords having their points facing upwards[22]. The ideograms obviously correspond to short swords or daggers. However, according to J. Chadwick, it is difficult to decide if the ideograms of the weapons correspond to swords or daggers, since the conventional way in which these were presented in the tablets did not allow clear depiction[23]. As a matter of fact, Homer uses the terms φάσγανον (myc. **pa-ka-no/pa-ka-*

[18] At the fracture more hundreds may have been recorded, theoretically up to 999, although this number appears almost impossible or extremely speculative. On the contrary the items appear to have been recorded in round numbers, perhaps in hundreds.

[19] See *To Ergon*, p.35, fig. 26.

[20] With the exception of the 8,640 arrowheads recorded on the Knossos tablet **R 4482**, which is from the *Arsenal*.

[21] Some spearheads of various types were discovered at Thebes (*Armoury*) alongside a conspicuous number of arrowheads. Given their number, variety and general context (horse trappings and cheek-pieces, tablets), they could probably belong to members of the ruling elite and were destined for their personal use. A considerable number of arrowheads was also brought to light in the Pylos *Near Eastern Building* [Room 100] (cf. L.M. BENDALL, "A Reconsideration of the Northeastern Building at Pylos: Evidence for a Mycenaean Redistributive Center", *AJA* 107 [2003], p. 187, 190, fig. 10) and in the *Arsenal* at Knossos (cf. e.g. R. FIRTH, "A Review of the Find-Places of the Linear B Tablets from the Palace of Knossos", *Minos* 35-36 [2000-2001], p. 253).

[22] A. EVANS, *PM IV*, 856-857.

[23] J. CHADWICK, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p.171: " Some of them have depictions which are not easy to interpret; *fitted with band* may refer to baldricks on which the weapon could be slung and worn".

na), alongside two other terms for the sword (ξίφος myc. sing.**qi-si-po*/dual *qi-si-pe-e*) and moreover ἄορ, but no special term for the dagger or the very short sword[24].

The tablet **HV Rb 1** is also inscribed on the *verso*. The inscription is closely related to the transaction recorded on the *recto*. Around this *palimpsest* inscription appear random traces or strokes related probably to erased signs, which are very difficult to read. However, the final text refers again to *e-pi-zo-ta*, followed by the number of at least one hundred of them. The number is visible just before the fracture of the tablet, on the extreme right side. It can be deduced that the scribe turned the tablet 180° along the horizontal axis and wrote the same text using again the lower edge of the tablet as a rule. In this way the inscription on the *verso* seems to continue from the *recto*. From a total of 500 items or more, a transaction perhaps of one hundred of them had taken place. The Laconian scribe, certainly an official fully responsible for this transaction, noted down the fact with care. The signs supposedly cancelled out on the *verso* could well have been erased in the second use of the tablet.

The term *e-pi-zo-ta* has received to the present various etymologies and interpretations, of which *epidzōsta*, Gr. ἐπίζωστα, seems to be the most suitable for the context of the tablets both from Knossos (**Ra**) and from Ay. Vasileios (**Rb**). *Prima facie* the Laconian text appears to be confirming the relation of *e-pi-zo-ta* to offensive weapons, the ideograms of which (**233* and **236*) were discussed at length after the reconstruction of this term on a second Knossian tablet by J.-P. Olivier[25]. Some 117 pieces were enumerated in **KN Ra(2) 1028 + *frr.*** (4) **[+] 7498 [+] *fr***. They are said to be decorated with ivory or horn appliques[26]. On the other hand, the new text **TH Av 100** suggests that the problematic term *zo-wa* could actually be a personal name also in Knossos[27]. The new tablet **HV Rb 1** confirms the evidence about the relation of the term *e-pi-zo-ta* to weapons. We believe, after all, that its interpretation as "*belts furnished with scabbards*" or even simply "*scabbards*" is in agreement with the new evidence and with the tradition of a well-known decoration, echoed centuries later in the Homeric poems[28]. The term seems in fact to have a general application to daggers or swords, but does not seem to identify with either of them or to introduce a new specific name for them.

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[24] *DMic. II* (1993), p. 205-6: *qi-si-pe-e*, dual of **qi-si-po*, with references to its interpretation as sword or dagger. See also *ibid.*, p.70 : *pa-ka-na*, with analogous interpretation.

[25] J.-P. OLIVIER in L. GODART and J.-P. OLIVIER, "119 raccords de fragments dans les tablettes de Cnossos", *SMEA* 15 (1972), p. 37-38.

[26] FR. VANDENABEELE and J.-P. OLIVIER, *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B*, Paris 1979, p. 47-56. For most recent discussions of these tablets and terms, see A. BERNABÉ, "Some thoughts on the Knossos Ra series", in A. SACCONI. M. DEL FREO, L. GODART, M. NEGRI (eds), *Colloquium Romanum, Atti del XII Colloquio Internazionale di Micenologia*, Pisa-Roma 2008, vol. I, p. 111-119. M. CIVITILLO, "Il sillabogramma **19*: status questionis e proposte di lettura", *ibid.*, p. 131-149.

[27] *DMic. II*, p. 460: "*Sin intepretación griega satisfactoria*". In Knossos tablets **Nc 4473**; **Ra 984**.2; **KN Ra 1028+fr[+] 7498+ fr.; X 766**. In the light of the new Theban tablets the interpretations so far given to the term do not seem plausible and *zo-wa* must rather considered as a personal name. See V. ARAVANTINOS, L. GODART and A. SACCONI, *Thèbes. Fouilles de la Cadmée I*, Pisa-Roma 2001, p. 398 with a list of its occurrences.

[28] Compare J.Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 171.

Archaeologicaly speaking, daggers are not differenciated from short swords[29]; but here, in Ayios Vasileios, the issue is far more interesting. The large numbers of military equipment, present in the stores and in the archive, offers the evidence for the existence of central palatial administration[30].

The tablet **HV X 2** (Sparta Mus. 16340) is somehow incomplete on the left, where some traces of a sign, perhaps *a*, are just visible, while traces of signs in the second line are very dubious. The fragmentary word]-*ti-jo-ko* probably corresponds to Antiochos (Ἀντίοχος), a well known Homeric personal name, if we admit that *ti* was preceded by *a*. This name was carried by persons of superior rank on the battlefield at Troy and by one of the princes in the kingdom of Cephallenians, a pretender of Penelope[31]. However, the name]-*ti-jo-ko* or *a*]-*ti-jo-ko* is a *hapax leg.*, never attested before in the Linear B texts[32]. The small fragment **HV X 2** is 6 cm long, 3.9-3.2 cm wide, and 1.2 cm thick (fig.4):

HV X 2

sup. mut.
.1]-ti-jo-ko [
.2] *vac.* [
inf. mut.

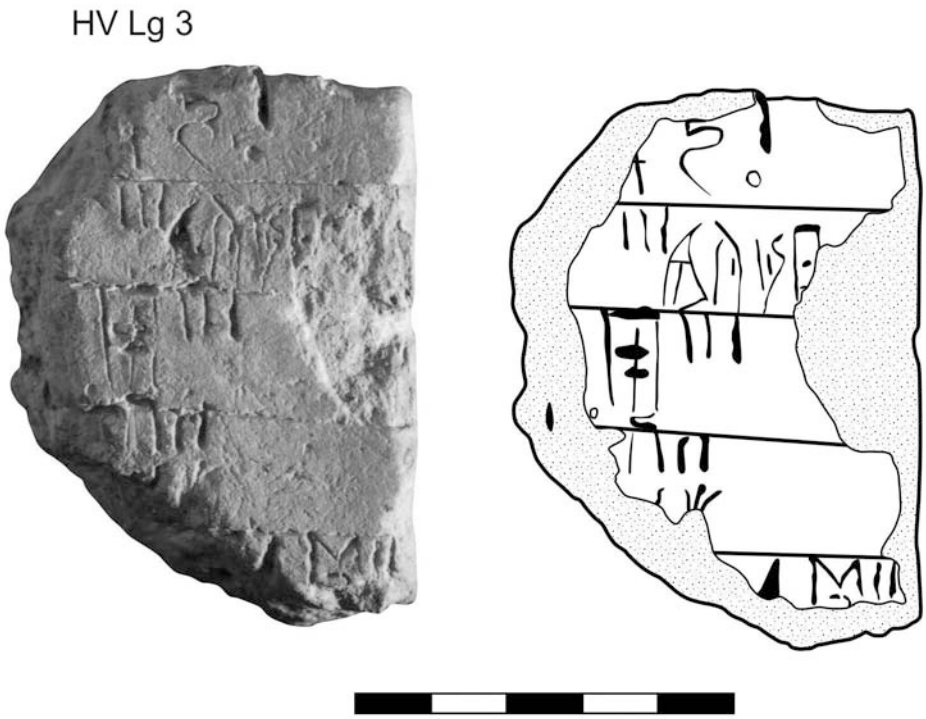
[29] TH. PAPADOPOULOS, *The Late Bronze Daggers of the Aegean I: The Greek Mainland*, Stuttgart 1998 (Prähistorische Bronzefunde VI, 11).

[30] Recent (2010) excavations on the hill, not far from the chapel, uncovered a hoard of bronze swords, kept in a magazine or armoury. *To Ergon* 2010, p. 33-40.

[31] Names with ἀντι- mean "opposite, adversary" etc. Compare: Ἄντεια, Αντήνωρ, Αντίκλεια, Ἄντικλος, Αντίμαχος, Αντίνοος (F. BECHTEL, *Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit*, Halle, 1917).

[32] The group of signs]-*ti-jo-ko* must be taken as a *hapax* because the form *a*]-*ti-jo-ko* is less possible but not totally excluded. There is only the fragmentary]*ti-jo-qo* in **TI X 19**.2, also a *hapax*. The reading]*ti-jo-qo* on this tablet is quite doubtful and not at all a parallel to the Laconian one. The text of the great tablet **KN As 1516**, has the personal name *a-ti-jo* (Ἄνθιος ?).

The third tablet (**HV Lg 3,** Sparta Mus. 16339) is incised with a very interesting text, though severely damaged and badly broken. This fragment is part of the right side of a well-fired page-shaped tablet (fig.5). The dimensions of the whole document cannot be estimated for now at first sight. The preserved piece measures 7.1 cm in length, 5. 2 cm in width and 1.7 cm in thickness. The text reads as follows:



HV Lg 3

sup. mut.
.1]to-jo [
.2]3 wi-ti-mi-ja[
.3] TELA+*PA* 3 [
.4a]3
.4b] *vest.*
.5]**146* 2[
inf. mut.

This fragmentary text relates to the famous textile sector of the Mycenaean palace economy. Aegean textile products were perhaps the most popular trade goods and the organization of their production, distribution and export required strong and continuous

palatial involvement[33]. Trade systems, textile industry and weighing standards are generally strictly connected in ancient Mediterranean economies and are involved in various ways in the life of complex societies[34]. The wool and other natural fibres, such as linen, were used for the production of different types of textiles.

Textile activity has been recorded less at Thebes, more at Pylos and to a great extent at Knossos. Textiles are present everywhere, especially in certain series of documents at Knossos, and are closely linked with the series of tablets related to wool. Textiles are also represented in processions and offered as gifts to a seated divinity[35]. It is well known that textiles were on basic taxation lists, and in one case - **MY X 508** - some *pu-ka-ta-ri-ja* textiles were sent from Mycenae to Thebes[36]. The Theban text **TH Lf 139** contains the ideogram-ligature TELA^2 +*PO* followed by 13[37]. In this text the textiles are specified by the abbreviation *PO* for *po-ni-ke-ja* or *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* probably referring respectively to the dye used or to decoration motifs[38]. At Pylos, some texts (for example **PY La 623**) contain the ideogram–ligature TELA+*PA*. The same ligature can be found in other texts of the **KN Ld** series, for example **KN Ld 786** and in **KN Ld 787 + 1009 + 7378** and **KN L 178 + 281**.

The tablet fragment **HV Lg 3** preserves parts of 5 lines of text, better legible on the right side of the document. In the first line of the text,]*to-jo* can be read with some difficulty[39], then a vertical stroke and next to it a hole, perhaps caused by the *stylus* of the scribe, as in the case of **Av 100** from Thebes. The line .2 preserves most probably]3

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[33] See recent work on these subjects: L. M. BENDALL, *Economies of Religion in the Mycenaean World. Resources dedicated to religion in the Mycenaean Palace Economy*, Oxford 2007. FR. ROUGEMONT, *Contrôle économique et administration à l'époque des palais mycéniens (fin du IIe millénaire av. J.-C.)*, Athènes 2009 (with full bibliography). See also the updated version of J. KILLEN's "Mycenaean Economy" in Y. DUHOUX and A. MORPURGO DAVIES (ed.), *A Companion to Linear B. Mycenaean Texts and their World, I*, Louvain-La-Neuve 2008, p.159-200.

[34] See recently M.E. ALBERTI, "The Minoan Textile Industry and the Territory from Neopalatial to Mycenean Times: Some first Thoughts", *Creta Antica* 8 (2007), p. 243-263 with bibliography; M.-L. NOSCH, "The Mycenaean Textile Industry on the Kadmeia", in V. ARAVANTINOS (ed.), *Epeteris Etaireias Voiotikon Meleton (EEBM) 4A*, Athens 2008, p. 191-202 with updated bibliographical references. See also V. L. ARAVANTINOS, M.E. ALBERTI, M. DEL FREO, I. FAPPAS, A. PAPADAKI and FR. ROUGEMONT, "Textile Production in Mycenaean Thebes. A first Overview", in R. LAFFINEUR and M.-L.NOSCH (eds), *KOSMOS. Proceedings of the 13th International Aegean Conference, Univ. of Copenhagen 19-23 April 2010* (forthcoming).

[35] M.-L. NOSCH and M. PERNA, "Cloth in the Cult", in R. LAFFINEUR, R. HÄGG (eds), *POTNIA. Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age, Aegaeum 22* (2001), p. 471-477. On some frescoes from Crete, Santorini and Mainland Greece is represented the offering of a textile, as textiles are considered part of the offerings in religious processions. See Christos Boulotis in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, and ID., "Η τέχνη των τοιχογραφιών στη μυκηναϊκή Βοιωτία", in V. ARAVANTINOS (ed.), *Epeteris Etaireias Voiotikon Meleton (EEBM) 3A*, Athens 2000, p.1095-1149. See also generally J. WEILHARTNER, *Mykenische Opfergaben nach Aussage der Linear B- Texte*, Wien 2005.

[36] *DMic. II*, p. 167-168: "un tipo de tejido"; *TITHEMY*, p.75.

[37] See V. L. ARAVANTINOS, "Mycenaean Texts and Contexts at Thebes", in *Floreant Studia Mycenaea*, Wien 1999, p.53.

[38] For this group of words connected with textiles see *DMic. II*, p. 134-135 and 138-140.

[39] *DMic. II*, 358-359.

units, the right end of the entry TELA+*PA* 3, which is found complete in line .3. The]3 entry is followed by the term *wi-ti-mi-ja*. The adjective seems to relate to *wi-ti-mi-jo* (**PY Jn 605**.7), and both to isthmus[40]. It is difficult to specify if it is singular or plural, and whether a *-de* suffix followed after *-ja*. *Wi-ti-mi-ja* seems to parallel the words *do-ti-ja*, *pu-ka-ta-ri-ja*, *po-pu-re-ja*, and is used to specify textiles of some kind. Line .3 contains the above mentioned ligature-ideogram TELA+*PA* and is once more followed by 3 units. The commodity is found especially in the Knossos archives. Line .4 contains traces of the same ideogram-ligature, again followed by 3 units and some vestigia which cannot be identified. As with those traces observed in line .5, it is very difficult to link them with numbers as in the previous lines.

In the last preserved line, where very little has survived, there is the undeciphered ideogram **146* followed by 2 units[41]. This commodity **146* is found very often among offerings. It is included in the taxation lists, and is somehow connected with linen (**PY Ma**, **Mn**). Large quantities of this textile have been recorded at Pylos.

This tablet **HV Lg 3** contains two units of **146*. This ideogram is very common though the corresponding word is not known. Both ideograms of **HV Lg 3** (TELA and **146*) are often found together at Knossos, e.g. TELA^2+*PU* 15 **146*^{2}[on **KN L 868 + 5712** and without ligature on **KN M 720**. **KN M 757** records 250 units of the commodity **146*.

The fragment of a fourth tablet, in the absence of any ideogram, has been provisionally classified as **HV X 4** (Sparta Mus. 16341)[42]:

[40] *DMic. II*, p. 436.

[41] This ideogram, composed by two syllabograms, *PTE+WE*, represents a textile product with a special form and use.

[42] We preferred to classify this text as **HV X4** instead of **HV Up 4** because of the absence of an ideogram proper, although its contents are almost certainly related to aromatic substances and or unguents.

HV X 4

.1 e-ni-da[
.2 tu-we-a_2 [
.3 ri-za [
inf. mut.

It is a fragment from the left upper angle of a page-shaped tablet (fig.6). Its dimensions are: height 3.6 cm and width 2.6 cm. The initial parts of three lines of text with three words respectively have been preserved. The first two lines contain three syllabic signs each and the third line has only two. The text in the first line reads as *e-ni-da*[, possibly *e-ni-wa*[or even *e-ni-u*[[43]. In the second line, however, the word *tu-we-a_2*, alternative form for *tu-we-a* from the famous Pylian tablet **Un 267**.1-4 (*o-do-ke a-ko-so-ta tu-we-ta a-re-pa-zo-o tu-we-a a-re-pa-te ze-so-me-no*), introduces the context of aromatic substances and of unguent production. In the singular form, the word *tu-wo* (*thyos)* is found at Pylos (**Un 219**.1**)** and Thebes (**Fq 126**.1: *o-te tu-wo-te-to ma-ka*...) with the meaning of aromatic substances and offerings (Gr. θύος/θύεα). These words have a very long tradition in the Greek language[44].

In the same context appears the word *wi-ri-za* (**PY Un 249**.2**),** known at Pylos and Knossos always in contexts connected with wool. It is commonly interpreted as ρίζα, "root section of wool rich in lanolin"[45]. On our tablet, a complete word *ri-za* is certainly and not accidentally placed as alternative probably (*scriptio brevis*) of *wi-ri-za*, which is connected to wool and the preparation of aromatics and/or unguents at Pylos[46].

The fifth document is **HV Kb 5** (Sparta Mus. 16797):

[43] This group of words is not known elsewhere (*hapax leg*.)

[44] *DMic. II*, p. 382. V. ARAVANTINOS, L. GODART and A. SACCONI, "Sui nuovi testi del palazzo di Cadmo a Tebe", *RAL* IX, VI serie (1995), p. 809-845; IIDEM, *Thèbes. Fouilles de la Cadmée*, vol. I, p. 185-188; I. FAPPAS, *Έλαιον ευώδες τεθυωμένον: τα αρωματικά έλαια και οι πρακτικές χρήσης τους στη μυκηναϊκή Ελλάδα και την αρχαία Εγγύς Ανατολή (14ος -13ος αι. π.Χ.*), Chania 2010.

[45] See e.g. *Docs2*, p.592. Generally C. W. SHELMERDINE, *The Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos*, Göteborg 1985.

[46] *DMic II*, p.435 with bibliography.

HV Kb 5

] **207*^{VAS} 1 [

The document has a length of 3.1 cm and width of 1.0 cm (fig.7). It is a really very small tablet in the form of a label pressed perhaps onto a basket or a box, which evidently contained tripod globular vases with two handles of the "*Flacons globulaires à trois pieds, i.e. VAS 207*" type, of Vandenabeele-Olivier[47]. This type compares to the vase, said to be of gold, registered on **KN K 740**, and to another uncertain example equally from Knossos. The vase represented by this ideogram, could be identified as a *two handled, tripod hydria.*

The Linear B archives discovered at Thebes mention a man called "the Lacedaemonian", as well as his son in one case. This is a personal name which must have derived from an ethnic adjective and the place name was certainly Lacedaemon[48]. The Theban documents testify for the first time to the name of the whole area as Lacedaemon, exactly the same as in Homer (*Il*. 2, 581-590).

Although partly preserved, the first Laconian Linear B tablets display a great variety. The scribes appear to be well-trained and of great expertise. Their work is comparable to that of their colleagues at Thebes, Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns and elsewhere[49]. The texts indicate the bureaucratic experience and a power background suitable for an administrative centre, thus answering the question of the existence of a Mycenaean palatial centre in the Sparta plain. These data, combined with other significant finds come to light during the first two excavation seasons on the Ayios Vasileios hill, allow us to consider this settlement as a serious candidate to this function.[50]

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[47] FR. VANDENABEELE, J.-P. OLIVIER, *Les ideogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B*, Paris 1979, p. 245-246.

[48] The word Lacedaemonian (*ra-ke-da-mo/mi-ni-jo*), found in the tablets of the series **TH Fq-** (*passim*) and **Gp 227**.2., could perfectly be a personal name (MN) not necessarily an ethnic. Both derive from Lacedaemon, like many other analogous names in the tablets. Cf. *au-to-te-qa-jo* etc. See V. ARAVANTINOS, "Mycenaean Texts and Contexts", in *Floreant Studia Mycenaea*, Vienna 1999, p. 73-74. The possibility that here the adjective denotes the Lacedaemonian *wanax* (king) or another first rank magistrate should probably be ruled out. See V. ARAVANTINOS , L. GODART and A. SACCONI, *Thèbes. Fouilles de la Cadmée*, vol. I, p. 214-215 and *passim*. Y. DUHOUX, "Mycenaean Anthology", in Y. DUHOUX and A. MORPURGO DAVIES (eds), *A Companion to Linear B. Mycenaean Greek Texts and their World*, Louvain-la-Neuve 2008, p. 359-360.

[49] Many aspects of the administration, industrial activity and artistic expression show sound similarities in the various palatial centres in the time of the Achaean expansion and the Mycenaean *koinè* in the Mediterranean.

[50] *To Ergon*, p. 33-40. See also A. VASILOGAMVROU, "Preliminary Study of the First Mycenaean Fresco Fragments from Laconia", in *Mycenaean Iconography in Context: New Discoveries and Old Finds Reconsidered, International Colloquium held in Athens on February 11-13, 2011, Athens* (to be submitted).