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An assemblage of Linear B administrative documents from Ayios Vasileios, Laconia: preliminary report on the study of the documents in their archaeological context

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*The site and its importance**

The site of Ayios Vasileios lies on the mid-west edge of the narrow plain crossed longitudinally by the Eurotas river, the diachronic heartland of human habitation in Laconia. So named after a late Byzantine chapel, the site is located on a low hill, part of a ridge extending either side of the

* The content of this presentation stems from mutually interactive work among the authors, who wish to express our collective gratitude to the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia and its Director, Evangelia Pantou, for their superb accommodation of the conservation and study of this important material at their headquarters in Sparta, which is still ongoing. Dr Maria Tsouli, Aphroditis Maltezou, Leonidas Souhleris, Giorgos Tsiaggouris and Evangelia Maniati contributed to the collegial friendly atmosphere of all our study sessions. The excavation and study of the material presented here is part of the Ayios Vasileios Archaeological Project conducted since 2010 under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society and directed by Adamantia Vasilogamvrou. Work at Ayios Vasileios has been made possible through the support of the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, the J. M. Kaplan Fund, the Amoddo Foundation, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology, the Mediterranean Archaeological Trust, the Global Heritage Fund, the Psychia Foundation and the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation. We are grateful to our hosts (and now editors) for their invitation to present this material at the plenary session of the 15th Mycenaean Colloquium. The original oral presentation took place in an exclusively online mode, when other options were deemed untenable. For valuable discussions before and for feedback during and after the presentation, authors are grateful to Emilia Banou, Bill Cavanagh, Mary Dabney, Wieke de Neef, Oliver Dickinson, José Melena, Torsten Meißner, José Luis García Ramón, Louis Godart, Anna Judson, Reinhard Jung, Angeliki Karathanou, Dora Kondyli, Joseph Maran, Barbara Montecchi, Tom Palaima, Anna Sacconi, Joseph Shaw, Trevor Van Damme, Aleydis van de Moortel, Carlos Varias García, Corien Wiersma and Sofia Voutsaki. Throughout the text, references to the Pylos documents follow *PT*³. In cases where the different editions of the Pylos texts give a different numbering of the 'scribe' to which a document is assigned, all numbers will be given separated by a slash (e.g. Hand 1/601).

Sparta-Gytheion road at its junction, about 12 km south of Sparta, with the road leading to the modern village of Xirokambi. Ayios Vasileios had already been known from surface finds since the late 1950s, which, augmented by later survey work, had already suggested its placement amongst the most important Late Helladic sites in Laconia (Fig. 1a).¹

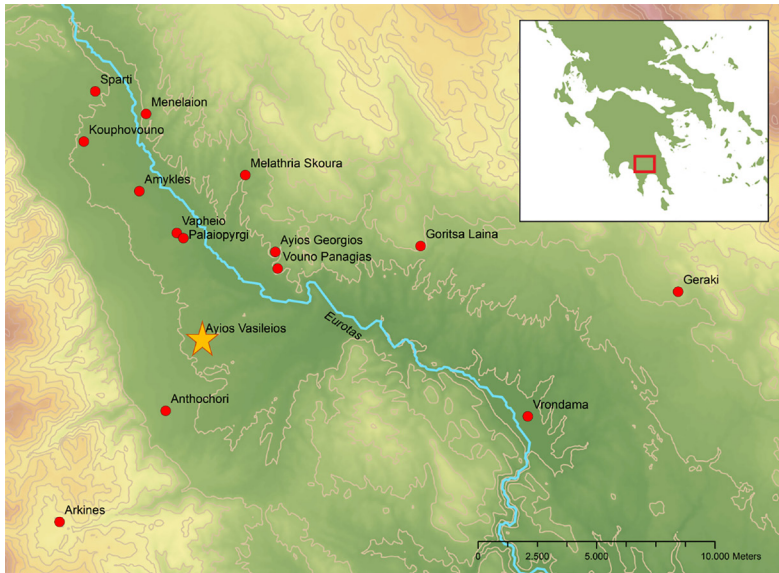


Fig. 1a. Map of the Eurotas valley, Laconia, Greece; the star marks the location of the site of Ayios Vasileios (Map by Dr Wieke de Neef, with added annotation by V. Petrakis).

The discovery, however, of fragments of Linear B inscriptions on the surface of the site in 2008 took a part of the scholarly community by surprise.² This was in part justified, as such finds are quite rare.³ Ayios Vasileios, with no less than five (**AV Rb 1**; **X 2**; **Lg 3**; **X 7**; **Ds 113**) sur-

¹ WATERHOUSE & HOPE SIMPSON 1960, 79-81, Fig. 5, Pl. 17; BANOU 2006, 135-141 with references. Ayios Vasileios is officially registered as an archaeological site since 1966 (administrative proclamation is included in the Official Gazette of that year: ΦΕΚ 429 Β'/8-7-1966), along with a series of well-known sites in Laconia, including, among others: Vapheio, Amyklaion, Menelaion, Ayios Stephanos, PalaioPyrgi. Emilia Banou, commenting on the size and strategic location of the site before the discovery of Linear B documents in 2008, had already placed Ayios Vasileios “στην πρώτη θέση μεταξύ των μυκηναϊκών οικισμών της κοιλάδας του Ευρώτα” (BANOU 2006, 138).

² For an account of the first discoveries of Linear B documents at Ayios Vasileios see ARAVANTINOS & VASIOLOGAMVROU 2012.

³ A clay ‘label’ from the area of the ‘Little Palace’ at Knossos (**KN Wb 8711**), the first tablet found at Mycenae (**MY X 1**) in the area of the Petsas House and one fragment from Pylos (**PY Ua 1413**) were the few similar cases.

face finds (fragments of tablets), either accidental or from non-systematic survey, raised very high expectations.⁴ Perhaps more impressive than the number of surface finds is the diversity of their subject-matters: *e-pi-zo-ta* probably /epí-dʹōsta(i)/ ‘[items made] to be worn in girts/ belts’, plausibly implicit of weapons, either swords or daggers (AV Rb 1 r. and v.),⁵ textiles (AV Lg 3), *tu-we-a₂* /thúweha/ (perhaps a generic term for aromatic substances on AV X 4.2),⁶ as well as sheep on AV Ds 113 (a surface fragment found in 2016).

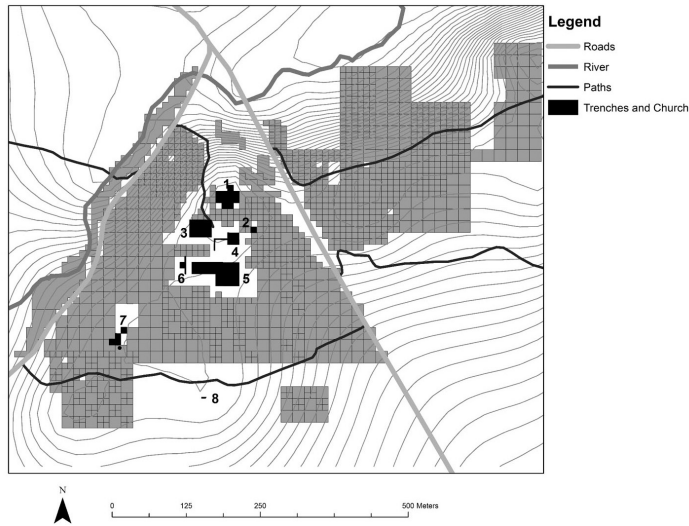


Fig. 1b. Schematic map of the hill range of Ayios Vasileios with location of church and excavation trenches. 1. North Cemetery; 2. Building B; 3. Chapel; 4. Building A; 5. Building ‘Δ-E’ [the ‘stoai’ and ‘court’ complex]; 6. Test Trench III with fresco deposit; 7. Chamber Tomb and test trenches; 8. Quarry. Areas surveyed are indicated in grey (images after VOUTSAKI *et al.* 2019, 69, 73, Figs. 2-3; schematic map by Corien Wiersma; images courtesy of Sophia Voutsaki, Corien Wiersma and Wieke de Neef).

⁴ On AV Rb 1, X 2 and Lg 3 see ARAVANTINOS & VASILOGAMVROU 2012, 43, 45-51. AV X 7 is reported in VASILOGAMVROU 2015b, 108 with n.12. AV X 4 and Kb 5 were not surface finds proper, as they had been found within an extensive but partially disturbed Mycenaean layer (ARAVANTINOS & VASILOGAMVROU 2012, 43-44).

⁵ The implication that *e-pi-zo-ta* refers to weapons is projected here from the occurrence of the term on records of short swords or daggers from Knossos (KN Ra(2) 984.2 referring to the obscure term *zo-wa*) and not on definitive evidence from AV Rb 1.

⁶ On the basis of the sign-groups *tu-we-a₂* and *ri-za* attested on AV X 4.2 and .3 respectively and paralleled only on the Pylos Un series (*tu-we-a*: PY Un(1) 267.3; *wi-ri-za -if* related to *ri-za*: Un(1) 249.2), the reclassification of this document as UI is proposed here. Of course, the classification X is not inappropriate, as the fragment did not yield any commodity sign (‘ideogram’) (cf. ARAVANTINOS & VASILOGAMVROU 2012, 52, n. 42).

Expectations were entirely fulfilled. Preliminary work was swiftly undertaken and a project comprising systematic survey and excavation on various areas within the site has been underway since 2010 under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society and with the efficient collaboration of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Laconia,⁷ revealing amongst other significant finds an early Mycenaean burial ground (North Cemetery) and a remarkable building complex (Building A) (Fig. 1b, nos. 1, 4). The assemblage herein presented was found within the excavated part of a large architectural complex (provisionally named ‘Δ-E’ in preliminary reports) built around an open area (‘court’) of remarkable proportions (see the next section for a more detailed description) (Fig. 1b, no. 5). Due to the occurrence of façades with colonnades, the buildings to the west and south of the Ayios Vasileios have been tentatively termed ‘stoai.’ The assemblage of Linear B documents that this presentation reports on was found in the debris of the so-called ‘West Stoa.’

Viewed in conjunction, the scale and the apparent monumentality of the architectural setting and the occurrence of such administrative *instrumenta*, the most reliable witnesses to the existence of a functional literate administrative centre at Ayios Vasileios, along with the monumental scale of the architectural complex that has been revealed during the last decade, convincingly suggest the palatial status of the site.⁸

The material reported herein has confirmed the importance of the early finds. More than that, the meticulous recording of the excavation and the study of the assemblage in its archaeological context has underpinned an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to the assemblage of administrative documents, the ἀπαρχή of which is offered here.

The archaeological context: the ‘West Stoa’, the location and chronology of the assemblage of administrative documents

On the southern slopes of the hill of Ayios Vasileios, excavation brought to light the remains of structures unique in the Greek mainland of the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 2). The so-called West Stoa and South Stoa framed a large open area or ‘court,’ the east and north limits of which have not

⁷ VASILOGAMVROU 2015a; 2015b; 2018 [report on the 2014-2016 seasons]; 2020; 2022 [report on 2021 season]; VOUTSAKI *et al.* 2019 (survey).

⁸ A proper assessment of the regional significance of the site within our knowledge of Late Helladic Laconia would be both premature and beyond the scope of the present paper.



Fig. 2. State plan of the 'West Stoa' at the end of the excavation in 2021 (plan by Amalia Konidi).

yet been identified. The *excavated* lengths of the West and South Stoi are 18m and 25m respectively. Based on the extent of the excavated architectural remains and assuming that the 'court' was rectangular, the complex may have covered a *minimum* area of 559sq.m. Of this, 416sq.m seem to be occupied by the 'court,' which is considerably larger than the 'courts' located before the entrances to the palatial so-called 'megara' at Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos.⁹

Each stoa was supported by a long continuous exterior wall and by a colonnade of alternating pillars and columns along the façade towards the 'court,' creating a roofed but open corridor of c. 5.5m in width. Both stoi had an upper storey, the floor of which was coated with coarse lime plaster, c. 0.01-0.03m thick. The latter was often found in contact with a red layer of varying thickness (0.20-0.30m), which was the substrate of the storey's floor (conventionally called *dorosis*).

The overall characteristics of the stoi and in particular the alternating pillars and columns are paralleled in Crete, particularly in the Stoa dell'Agora at Ayia Triada dated to LM IIIA2 (late 14th century BC).¹⁰ A plaster band of semi-circular section and c. 0.20m wide runs along the 'court'-facing edge of the pillar and column colonnade. This is a feature without exact parallels elsewhere. At Kommos, a plaster band was also used along the lower parts of the North Stoa colonnade of Building AA, probably to keep rainwater out.¹¹ The same purpose may have been served by the plaster band at Ayios Vasileios.¹²

Pits had been dug into the debris of both stoi during the Byzantine period, cutting through the successive stratigraphic units. In the case of the 'West Stoa,' some of these pits even penetrated the ground floor, thus allowing Mycenaean pottery to be collected from the sides of the pits beneath the ground-floor level of the stoa. The latest pottery found under the floor belongs to the Early LH IIIA2 period, which effectively dates the construction of the stoi to this sub-phase.¹³

⁹ For discussion of such open spaces within Late Helladic palatial complexes see CAVANAGH 2001.

¹⁰ D'AGATA 2005; LA ROSA 1997; PRIVITERA 2015, Fig. 3; see VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2021, 342-358, for the discussion of parallels and construction techniques of the stoi and the 'court.'

¹¹ SHAW & SHAW 2006, 28, pl. 1.57. Cf. VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2021, 358.

¹² We are grateful to Joseph Shaw and Joseph Maran for discussion of this feature.

¹³ VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2021, 350-352.

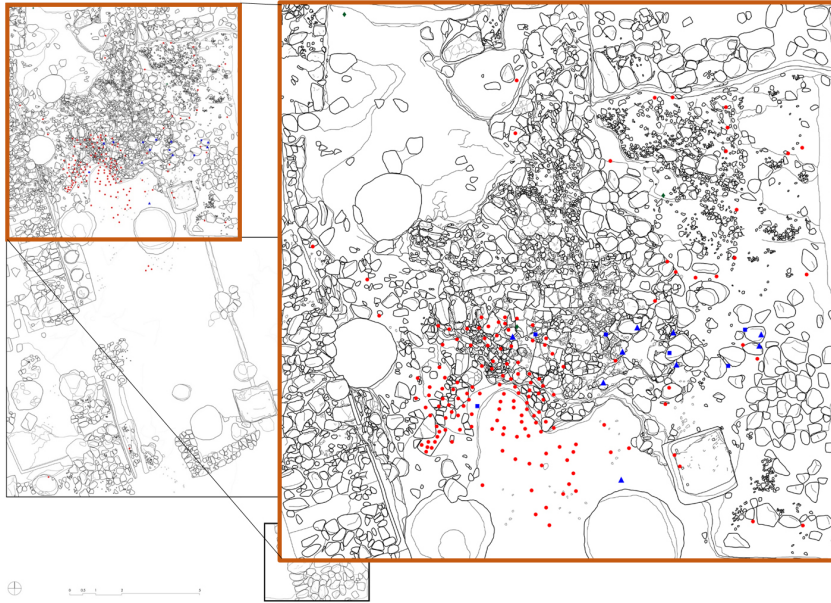


Fig. 3. State plan of the 'West Stoa', showing the distribution of fragments of clay administrative documents enlargement. Circles <●> indicate tablet fragments; triangles <▲> indicate string-nodules; lozenges <◆> indicate labels (plan by Amalia Konidi, with annotations by Nektarios Karadimas).

The area of the 'West Stoa' has yielded one of the most significant discoveries made so far at Ayios Vasileios: an assemblage of clay administrative documents, including tablets of various types bearing Linear B inscriptions, string nodules (some of them also inscribed in Linear B), as well as clay 'labels' that according to the stratigraphic evidence were all originally located in the upper storey of the northernmost excavated part of the 'West Stoa' (Fig. 3). Together with these documents, the upper storey also accommodated a few storage vessels, as indicated by numerous fragments of storage vessels retrieved from the debris. The dense concentration of clay tablets, nodules and 'labels' suggests that the entire assemblage would have been located in a relatively restricted area in the upper floor, whence they probably fell.

The end of the life of the building was as impressive as its construction. The stoa were destroyed during an intense fire which in many cases led to the vitrification of the coarse lime plaster coating of the ground floor. The intensity of the fire is evident in the fused and charred

material found scattered throughout the area, but also in the deformation of some pottery vessels that were either in situ on the ground floor or among the debris of the upper storey of the 'West Stoa'. These conditions also led to the firing of the clay documents, thus preserving this significant assemblage.

Besides being a formidable ally, the destruction has also inflicted an only partly repairable damage to the study of the assemblage. During the collapse of the upper floor, which might have been a single or successive episodes during the conflagration, the invaluable links that might have been indicated by the original arrangement of the documents were lost. It is thus highly unfortunate that the find-spots of each fragment, meticulously recorded during excavation, are of little or no help in reconstructing groupings or 'sets' of documents. Whatever arrangement there was on the upper floor became a seemingly confused mass amidst the debris fallen on the ground floor.¹⁴



Fig. 4. Tablet fragment found attached to a piece of coarse lime plaster fallen from the upper storey of the 'West Stoa' (photo by Nektarios Karadimas).

¹⁴ Although the attempt to reconstruct some of the original 'sets' of documents has been and will be continuous until (and considerably after) the publication of the assemblage -currently at an advanced stage of preparation- we are under no illusion as to the difficulties involved. For the moment, although we have advanced the attribution of certain documents to common series indicated by the well-known two-letter prefixes, taking into account features such as subject-matter, document type and format, we are still some way from identifying coherent sets in the sense

These stratigraphic circumstances are best demonstrated by the find spots of the Linear B tablets. A number of fragments of Linear B tablets were found in contact with fragments of the coarse lime plaster of the collapsed floor of the upper storey (Fig. 4). However, other fragments were found in the red layer (*dorosis*). The vertical of joined fragments recovered from varying depths and layers was also observed. We have the notable case of tablet **AV UI 10** (discussed further below): its ten joined fragments were found across various layers, a vertical distance of 0.59m through the mass of debris. Although rather extreme, the distribution of the various joining components of **AV UI 10** is not an isolated case. Such joins are strongly suggestive both of the unity of the Linear B assemblage and the intensity of the collapse during the conflagration that abruptly ended the life of the building complex.

The detailed study of the various stratigraphic units was important for understanding the pottery from the red substrate (*dorosis*), that associated with the ground floor and the first floor of the 'West Stoa' and the in situ material from the ground floor. The red substrate included ceramic material dating from LH I to LH IIIB but most of the material belongs to LH IIIA2, which is identified as the construction phase of the building. The LH IIIB pottery derived from the upper storey and penetrated the lower red layer of the *dorosis*, when the West Stoa collapsed.¹⁵ This is well indicated by the coated floor of the upper storey: although in some cases the coarse lime plaster coating of the upper floor fell in an almost horizontal position on top of the red layer of the *dorosis*, its fragments were more frequently found fallen in a vertical position and scattered in the red layer.

As a result of the collapse, many of the Linear B documents were found in association with pottery from this red layer, and this had led to the original hypothesis that the Linear B assemblage may have also been dated to LH IIIA2.¹⁶ The pottery associated with the destruction of the building and the assemblage of administrative documents include intact or well preserved vessels from the ground floor or the upper storey of the structure, such as shallow angular bowls, carinated kylikes and a few painted dippers. This material is dated to the middle of LH IIIB, in the

of records "intended by their writers to be read as single document" (CHADWICK 1968, 12).

¹⁵ VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2022.

¹⁶ See KARDAMAKI 2017, 110-114, for discussion; VASILOGAMVROU 2015a, 74; 2015b, 108 (citing a date towards the end of LH IIIA2/ beginning of LH IIIB).

mid-13th century BC.¹⁷ Hence, the evidence currently available suggests that the destruction of the complex took place earlier than the final destructions of the Mycenaean palaces in mainland Greece that are placed in the early part of the 12th century BC. It is hoped that future excavations may bring to light new evidence that will confirm or refine the date of this final destruction and, therefore, the assemblage of administrative documents presented here.

The epigraphic material: an outline of the main features of the assemblage of Linear B documents

A note on the classificatory prefixes

The site prefix used here (AV) replaces the one previously used (HV). A full outline of the description of the documents grouped together under the same single or two-letter prefix must be reserved for the final publication and *editio princeps* of the documents. As classification might be subject to some modification during final study of the documents, the classification of the documents in this paper must be considered provisional. As two-letter prefixes are by definition a finite category, in order to avoid any overlap, the editors note, in advance of the forthcoming final publication of the documents, that the following series prefixes have been used for the Ayios Vasileios documents: **Ah, At, Cd, Cs, Ds, Gb, Gd, Gs, Kb, Lg, Lo, Md, Oc, Ok, Or, Os, Ot, Rb, Tb, Ul, Wi** (labels), **Wq** (inscribed string-nodules with seal-impressions) and the commonly used **X** (unclassified tablets). Further subdivisions may follow future 'hand' identifications and a forthcoming, full palaeographic study.

Quantification, document typology and materiality

The excavation of the 'West Stoa' has so far yielded 204 components (intact inscribed documents or fragments of inscribed documents), each with its individual inventory number and pertinent excavation information.¹⁸

¹⁷ KARADIMAS *et al.* 2022; KARDAMAKI forthcoming; KARDAMAKI *et al.* forthcoming; VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2022.

¹⁸ With the completion of the preliminary sorting of the material, following the conclusion of the 2021 season, the inventory of Linear B documents from Ayios Vasileios reached the number 217. From this we exclude seven items that were either surface finds (1-3, 7, 113), or found in locations other than the assemblage presented herein (4-5). We have also naturally excluded an additional six items that proved not to be fragments of tablets at all and whose respective inventory numbers have been deleted.

Based on joins hitherto achieved, a long and arduous task in which we were greatly assisted by our able conservator Vicky Katsichti, we have been able to reconstruct so far 105 tablets, nine inscribed regular string-nodules (out of a total of 19 sealings of various types identified so far) and three clay labels, a total of 117 inscribed documents from the assemblage that fell along with the debris from the upper storey of the 'West Stoa.' While the excavation of the current assemblage was completed in September 2021, it is important to bear in mind that these numbers are as yet neither minimum nor maximum figures. Small modifications may still be accommodated: the progress of the study of the excavated material may, on the one hand, yield a few more fragments, while, on the other hand, new joins or quasi-joins might still be achieved. In any case, these figures suffice to place Ayios Vasileios second among Peloponnesian and fourth among Aegean sites in terms of the quantity of Linear B documents.¹⁹ Of course, it must be noted that such numbers mostly reflect the post-palatial 'afterlife' of palatial sites, the taphonomy of the assemblages and the pace and extent of the excavation, leaving aside more complex factors, such as the existence of duplicate records (the latter being exemplified in the Pylos landholding records).

As noted above, all three basic types of Linear B administrative documents are well represented in the Ayios Vasileios assemblage. Typologically, no significant differences with the administrative apparatus known from late 13th/early 12th century deposits, such as those from Mycenae, Thebes or Pylos, are observed.²⁰

Tablets of various formats, both elongated and 'page-shaped,'²¹ are dominant. These are typically carefully made of consistent and well-kneaded clay with inclusions, their writing surfaces proper (the *recto* surfaces) flattened appropriately and covered with a thin film of finer clay forming the smooth writing surface.²² In most cases, only the *recto* is found inscribed; writing on both the *recto* and *verso* surfaces so far occurs on only two tablets, while a single example (AV UI 121) preserves an inscription on the *latus inferius*.

¹⁹ DEL FREO 2016, 180-181, Table 1.

²⁰ For recent detailed discussions of the form and functions of Linear B document types, see DEL FREO 2016; PALAIMA 2011, 100-112.

²¹ We acknowledge here that the any division between 'page-shaped' and elongated formats, while heuristically useful, oversimplifies our data and conceals the considerable diversity of formats and proportions among Linear B tablets.

²² We might tentatively consider the writing surfaces as 'self-slipped', a term referring to the effect of a slurry of clay that covered the surface because of wetting during the tablet's manufacture.

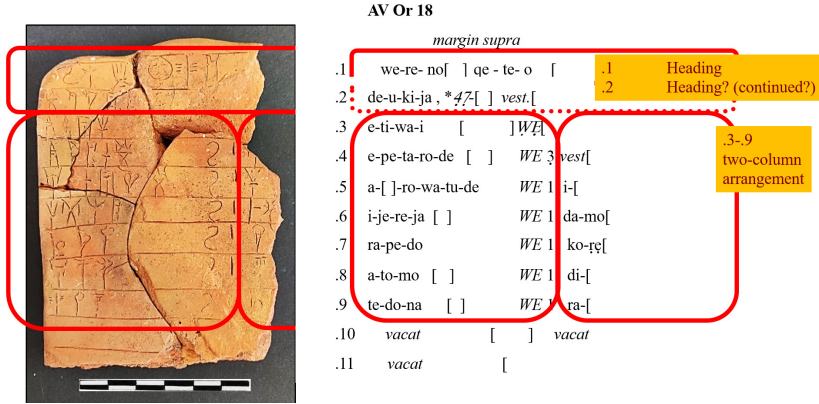


Fig. 5. Tablet AV Or 18, showing features of text structure and format (photo by Vicky Katsichti; transliteration and further annotations by Vassilis Petrakis).

Detailed observations on the form of tablets as artefacts has highlighted the considerable care devoted to their manufacture.²³ Although probably regularly recycled, and certainly often corrected (or edited/ updated?), inscriptions are always highly legible, formatted for easy and direct extraction of complex information. A good example of such attentive care is tablet AV Or 18 (Fig. 5), the two-column arrangement of which follows what appears to be a full-line (or perhaps two-lined) heading. This format is paralleled in other cases (e.g. PY Jn[1] 829). The tablet in question can be considered indicative of the attention invested in both the production of the material-carrier of the text (the clay tablet) and in laying out the textual information on it.²⁴

Detailed observations have showed that AV Or 18 was made by the 'portrait' folding in two of a thick (c. 0.01m) sheet of clay and the laborious flattening of its recto face by applying hand pressure on its verso, leaving strong papillary and finger impressions during the process (Fig. 6a). Its *latus superius* was then carefully rounded and then slightly flattened, while the *latus sinistrum* has an almost flat surface (Figs. 6b-c). The *latus sinistrum* also preserves a clear print from the left thumb of the 'scribe',²⁵ probably impressed while he was holding the tablet for writing (Fig. 6b).

²³ For a general account, see KARAGIANNI 2015, 48-50; PALAIMA 2011, 105-106.

²⁴ KARAGIANNI forthcoming.

²⁵ The terms 'scribe' and 'writer' are used interchangeably in the present text; we acknowledge that there is no positive evidence for any *emic* conceptualization of the literary agents in the Mycenaean world as a distinct group comparable to the scribes in Egypt or Mesopotamia.

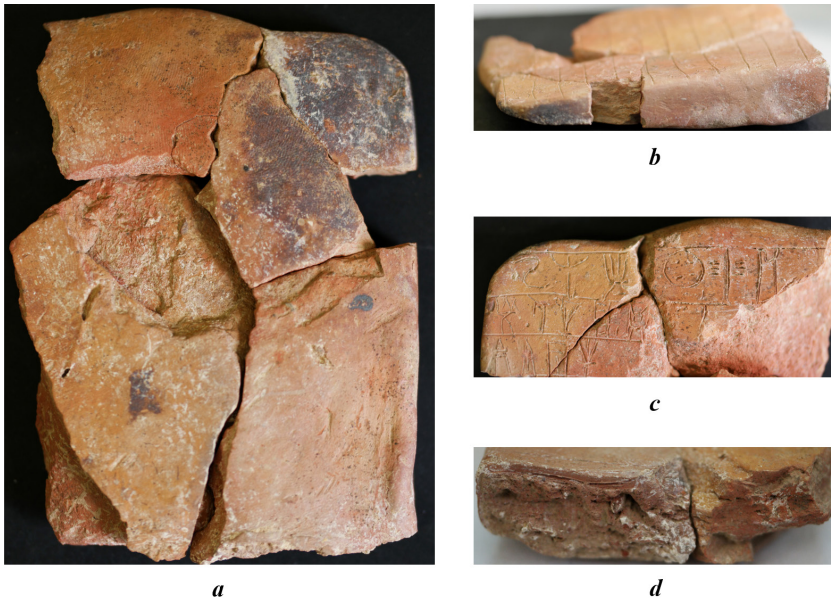


Fig. 6. Tablet AV Or 18. (a) *Verso* surface showing strong papillary lines and finger impressions; (b) *latus sinistrum* showing thumb impressions; (c) upper part of tablet showing the rounded *latus superius* and the ruling of the *recto* surface, leaving a margin *supra*; (d) evidence for deliberate cutting at the bottom of the tablet (photos and arrangement of images by Angeliki Karagianni).

It is possible to identify successive ‘episodes’ in the formatting of this clay document. One of the first steps may have been the ruling of the whole *recto*, with lines spaced at c. 0.01m. Noticeably, the top ruling does not have a ‘functional’ use, but was probably intended to ‘isolate’ the curving edge of the tablet, therefore creating an uninscribed margin²⁶ and defining the part of the surface that would be intended for writing for the visual convenience of the ‘scribe’ (Fig. 6c). Then the administratively meaningful information was inscribed in an equally tidy manner: the first one or two lines receive the heading, written with relatively large signs that occupy the full width of the row and define the nature and overall context of the record. Then, the individual entries were inserted on the rest of the lines in a consistent column-like vertical alignment of the ‘phonographic slot’ to the left part of the document and the ‘non-phonographic’ (or, in the opinion of one of us, sematographic)²⁷ part (the one

²⁶ For a discussion of the feature and its conventional notation, see *PT*³, lii–liiii.

²⁷ PETRAKIS 2017, 148–151, 158–162.

with ‘ideograms’²⁸ for commodities, metrograms or arithmograms) to the right.²⁹ It is interesting to note the slightly deeper *ductus* of arithmograms (signs for numerals), perhaps intended to make them stand out ‘at a glance’, a mode potentially equivalent to our printed bold typeface. After finishing the text (which the shallowness of the *ductus* of the last entries shows that it took place within a few hours, as the clay had perhaps become more dry) and leaving the last line empty, the excess clay at the bottom of the tablet was cut off (Fig. 6d).³⁰ Traces of erasures³¹ and re-writing of text (perhaps marks of corrections or editing) can be identified possibly by re-wetting locally the clay and using a blunt instrument on **AV Or 18.1**, or a fingertip on .6 to erase an extra arithmogram.

In Ayios Vasileios, as elsewhere in the Mycenaean palatial world, the anonymous ‘tablet-writers’ -either literate officials themselves or their trustworthy literate helpers- invested such care in the making and formatting of tablets, that we may be even better placed in accepting that the tablets were themselves the main sources of information for any further check or consultation: practically speaking, the ‘final’ documents.³²

Inscribed string-nodules or *Schnurplombe*, classified in Ayios Vasileios as **Wq**, are lumps of clay made around a knotted string, the gable-shaped ridge of which is owed to the manner of receiving the impression of a sealstone or signet-ring on one side. As reported above, these inscribed nodules constitute almost the half of all sealings found so far in Ayios Vasileios. They did not seal anything; rather, they were sealed hanging documents with an apparent labelling function.³³ As the

²⁸ For ease of reference, the term ‘ideogram,’ still defensible (THOMPSON 2012) will be used throughout this paper. However, see PETRAKIS 2017, 148-151, 158-162 on pertinent problems.

²⁹ For the consistency and significance of this ‘slot’-structure in Linear B writing, see KARAGIANNI 2015, 53; PETRAKIS 2017, 127-129, with Fig. 1, 163.

³⁰ The practice of cutting the remaining part of the tablets is not uncommon in Pylos and Knossos (even excluding the Knossian simili-joins, for which see DRIESSEN 1987; 2000, 48-49) and its relative scarcity elsewhere may be accidental. On the cutting of tablets by Pylos Hand 1/601, see PALAIMA 1988, 51-52, Fig. 7; 2011, 84; TOMAS 2013.

³¹ PALAIMA 2011, 67-71; PAPE *et al.* 2014 demonstrate, through an experimental approach to erasures on clay and à propos a discussion on the Knossos **DI(1)** tablets, how the *potential* of corrections and revisions long after the initial inscription introduces a much more dynamic perspective in the maintenance and use of such written records.

³² BENNET 2001, 27-33.

³³ PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2014. A reconstruction drawing of the making of an inscribed string-nodule drawn by Melena is reproduced in PALAIMA 2011, 109, Fig. 12.45.

exemplary study of the Thebes nodules has shown,³⁴ the information on these documents was further processed by ‘tablet-writers’ and their content, undoubtedly supplemented by a variety of para-textual sources (including presumably oral information) was the basis for (at least some) of the tablets. At Ayios Vasileios, we have identified certain thematic correspondences between nodules and tablets that might suggest a similar ‘centripetal’ flow of information processing here: these include aromatic substances, such as *ka-na-ko* /knākos/ (cf. κνήκος) ‘safflower’ or adjectival /knākós/ (cf. κνηκός) ‘pale yellow, tawny < of safflower colour’, *ko-ri-ja-da-na* /koriađna/ cf. κορίανδρον, κορίαννον ‘coriander’ or the rather obscure *i-re-we*, as well as LANA ‘wool’ (see below, also noted with plus-signs on Table 1). The technical term *qe-te-o* /kweitehos, -on/(?) ‘due to be paid’ *vel sim.* also appears both on tablets, as well as on nodules.³⁵

Last, but hardly least, are the so-called labels (classified in Ayios Vasileios as **Wi**), small pieces of clay attached to baskets that contained tablets³⁶ or wicker-trays in which tablets were placed, as José Melena recently suggested.³⁷ Labels were previously known from Knossos and Pylos and their presence might indicate active processing of administrative information of either outgoing or incoming documents in the upper floor of the ‘West Stoa.’ It is often difficult to specify the relationship of labels to specific tablets, although there are some notable exceptions from Pylos.³⁸ In Ayios Vasileios, pertinent information is to date obscure and we have not yet been able to pinpoint such relationships with certainty.

³⁴ PITEROS *et al.* 1990.

³⁵ On its occurrence on nodules, see VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* forthcoming; on the term, see also THOMPSON, this volume.

³⁶ The placement of tablets in baskets, presumably for transportation within the complex, is indicated by certain wicker imprints and the deformation occasionally observed. Presently, this is best exemplified in the elongated Pylos **Sh** tablets recording armour (PALAIMA 1996a; 1996b).

³⁷ PALAIMA 2011, 107-110, Figs. 12.44A-12.44B; *PT*³, xliii-xliv, lxxi.

³⁸ Succinctly summarised by PALAIMA 2011, 109-110. Perhaps the best known case is the association between **PY Wa(3) 732** and the **Sh** armour tablets assigned to Hand 5/605 and found in the same find-spot in Room 7 of the Pylian ‘Archives Complex.’

The signary: new (and quasi-new) non-phonographic signs

New non-phonographic signs for recorded commodities, which can still be called ‘ideograms’,³⁹ have been identified on the documents of the assemblage. [*235] was already known to be an iconic (or pictorial) grapheme, whose form is a simple line drawing of a standing double axe (Figs. 7a-b).⁴⁰ Both its occurrences as an isolated (i.e. not part of a sign-group) sign accompanied by arithmograms (AV Tb⁴¹ 6.2; Tb 12.A) lend support to its interpretation as a commodity sign rendering the artefact ‘double axe’.⁴² On AV Tb 12.A, [*235] is preceded by a new ligature *212^{VAS}+PE (Fig. 7c); *212^{VAS}, already known either plain or ligatured with U,⁴³ now joins those vessel ideograms that are ligatured with more than one sign, thus questioning the simple assertion that the phonographic ligature abbreviates the name of the vessel.⁴⁴ Of course, it remains possible that the same vessel shape was known under different names at Knossos and Ayios Vasileios. Placed on the left of *212^{VAS}+PE, *140 AES ‘copper/bronze’ has a known modificatory function, indicating the material of the vessel (Fig. 7c).⁴⁵

Other documents have given us a quasi-new sign, for which the numbering [*270] has been temporarily reserved (Figs. 7d-g).⁴⁶ The sign is presented here as quasi-new, because, although formally hitherto unknown, it is probably related to the hitherto uniquely Pylian *157 (Fig. 7h), which may be identified with one of its ligatures. Although the WI-shaped ele-

³⁹ PETRAKIS 2017, 159; THOMPSON 2012.

⁴⁰ MELENA 2014, 150; VASILOGAMVROU 2015a, 74. The number was assigned already by Melena, and its transliteration in brackets [] indicates that the number is reserved (rather than formally assigned) by the Signary Committee at the 14th Mycenological Colloquium in Copenhagen in September 2015 (BENDALL *et al.* 2017, 836).

⁴¹ Its previous published classification as **Rb** (MELENA 2014, 150) is here revised.

⁴² MELENA 2014, 150, proposed the Latin transliteration SEC < *securis* ‘axe’. As Latin *securis* does not specify the form of the artefact, it is proposed that only the numerical indication is maintained, in order to avoid any confusion with *232 (PY Ta 716.1), also an axe, but *clearly* of a different type, cf. also PALAIMA & BLACKWELL 2020, 78-79.

⁴³ *212^{VAS} occurs plain at Knossos and once at Pylos (PY Tn 996.2) and ligatured with U only at Knossos, cf. VANDENABEELE & OLIVIER 1979, 190-194, Fig. 122, Pls. CV-CVI.

⁴⁴ For a general discussion on this specific matter see PETRAKIS 2022a, 176-180.

⁴⁵ Cf. KN K(1) 740.1, .2 referring to *214^{VAS}+DI and *255 respectively; KN Ws 8497.α referring to *246; PY Tn 996.3 referring to *205^{VAS}. A similar function is also known for *141 AUR ‘gold’.

⁴⁶ This numbering is in accordance to the resolutions of the Signary Committee in Copenhagen (BENDALL *et al.* 2017, 836-837). The *reserved* (as indicated by brackets) number is not yet officially assigned at the time of the latest revision of this text (May 2022).



Fig. 7. New non-phonographic signs identified on Linear B tablets from Ayios Vasileios. (a) [*235] on AV Tb 6.2; (b) [*235] on AV Tb 12.A; (c) AES *212^{VAS} +PE on AV Tb 12.A; (d)-(g) [*270] and ligatured variants: (d) [*270] on AV UI 121.2; (e) [*270]+WI+ on AV UI 98.1; (f) [*270]+WI+MA on AV UI 10.1; (g) [*270]+WI+MA on AV UI 10.2; (h) drawing of Pyliaian *157 as executed by Hand 1/601 (not in scale with other images) (photos and arrangement of images by Vassilis Petrakis; drawing of *157 after palaeographic table in Palaima 1988, 230).

ment on *157 has long been recognized,⁴⁷ the sign has so far been treated in transliterations as a single grapheme, rather than a ligature.⁴⁸ The Ayios Vasileios attestations support the identification of a plain [*270] occurring on AV UI 121.2 (Fig. 7d) and a ligatured form analyzable as [*270]+WI+MA or [*270]+WIMA (Figs. 7e-g), attested on AV UI 10.1, .2 and possibly also on AV UI 98.1.⁴⁹ The form of this ligature, that of a

⁴⁷ *157 has been amusingly described as “an infinity sign surmounted by *wi*” (SHELMERDINE 1985, 18).

⁴⁸ An exception is Melena’s note of its alternative possible interpretations as a monogram *WEWI* or as a ligature insightfully described as “iconic matrix+*WT*” (MELENA 2014, 142). A monogrammatic interpretation of *157 was unlikely from the outset, as it would involve an unparalleled 90° rotation of <*we*> (cf. PETRAKIS 2017, 145, n. 25), but the new evidence from Ayios Vasileios demonstrated that Melena’s second proposal was sound, even though the ‘iconic’ character of the ‘base’ still eludes us.

⁴⁹ It is important to note that the sign on AV UI 98.1 (Fig. 7e) is transliterated as [*270]+WI+ with possible vestiges of a second ligatured sign on the right that *may* be MA. In this paper, the conventional transliterations [*270a] and [*270b] for the possible variants presented in the oral lecture are replaced by transliterations of the same sign forms as ligatures ([*270]+WI+ and [*270]+WI+MA respectively).

non-phonographic sign ligatured with two syllabograms, is quite rare.⁵⁰ The similarity of the 'base' elements (the elegant execution of the one in *157 by Pylos Hand 1/601 notwithstanding) and the occurrence of a *WI* shaped element in the ligatured variants strongly suggests that Pylian *157 (Fig. 7h) is to be grouped together with the variant forms of [*270]. Morphological similarity is, of course, merely indicative, but we may note the occurrence of *157 in contexts remarkably similar to those of [*270]+*WI*+*MA*: notably, their concurrence with *i-re-we* AROM on **PY Un(1) 616** and **AV UI 10.2** and the concurrence of *157 with *KAPO* on **PY Un(1) 267**, **Un(1) 616** and perhaps **Un(1) 249** alongside the concurrence of [*270]+*WI*+*MA* with *ka-po* AROM on **AV UI 10.1**.⁵¹

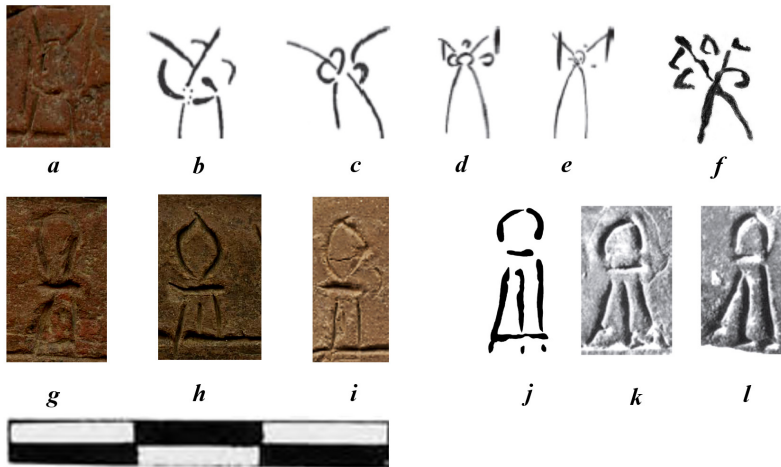


Fig. 8. Untransliterated syllabograms identified on Linear B tablets from Ayios Vasileios. (a) *47 on **AV Or 18.2**; (b)-(e) drawings of *47 from Knossos (**KN Fp(1) 1.9**; **V(3) 503.2**; **Fh 393**; and **Fh 351** respectively); (f) *47 from Mycenae (**MY Go 610.1**); (g)-(i) three examples of *19 from Ayios Vasileios, on (g) **AV Tb 6.1**; (h) **AV UI 76.1**; and (i) **AV Gd 146.1**; (j)-(l): examples of *19 from Pylos by Hand 3/603, on (j) **PY An(5) 427.3**; (k) **PY Vn 10.2**; and (l) **PY Vn 10.5** (photos and arrangement of images of AV signs by Vassilis Petrakis; drawings of KN signs after CoMIK, courtesy of Jean-Pierre Olivier and Louis Godart; drawing of *47 on **MY Go 610.1** and images of *19 from Pylos after Judson 2020, 137, Fig. 3.12 and 157, Fig. 4.8 left, courtesy of Anna Judson).

⁵⁰ A parallel might be *172+*KE*+*RQ*₂ (alternative reading: *172+*KE*+*RQ*) on **KN Gg 746**. *172 is also a good parallel for the pattern of attestations of [*270], as it occurs as plain *172 on **KN Gg 701** and as *172+*KE* on **KN Gg 436**.

⁵¹ At the time of the latest revision of this text (May 2022), no final decision has been reached on the transliteration of [*270] and *157. Considering the identification of the 'base elements' and the occurrence of the plain form only at Ayios Vasileios (Fig. 7d), two options are available: (i) that *157 is suppressed and be transliterated as [*270]+*WI*; (ii) that, in correction of the Salamanca convention (MELENA 2014, 18, Fig. 17.6), *157 is officially adopted as the transliteration of the 'base element' alone and that the signs are transliterated as *157 (AV; plain), *157+*WI* (PY; lig-

The signary: untransliterated syllabograms

Ayios Vasileios has also yielded important attestations of two untransliterated syllabograms. This heterogeneous group of signs, whose values remain elusive because of their scarce attestations, has recently been studied by Anna Judson.⁵² Syllabogram *47, mainly Knossian (Figs. 8b-e) but already known on the Greek mainland from an uncertain occurrence on a tablet from Mycenae (Fig. 8f),⁵³ appears now on tablet **AV Or 18.2**. Although the sign-group is incomplete, *47 is found in initial position, as most of its known attestations.⁵⁴ Sign *19⁵⁵ also appears three times in sign-groups on documents from Ayios Vasileios:]*pi*-*19-*ta* [⁵⁶ from the fragmentary **AV Tb 6.1** and *a*-*19-*ni-jo* on **AV Gd 76.1** and **Gd 146.1** where it probably refers to personnel (see below). Its form is paralleled by examples of *19 assigned to Hand 3/603 at Pylos (Figs. 8j-l).

Particularly important was the identification of the phonographic use of sign *33 <*ra*₃> on two nodules (**AV Wq 179.γ1**; **Wq 180.γ1**) in the sequence *e-ra*₃-*wo* /*élaiwon*/ ‘olive oil’ (see below). The use pattern of this grapheme had already been remarkable: it occurred exclusively as *144 <CROC> a commodity ‘ideogram’ for saffron at Knossos, with its phonographic use to render /*rai*/ or /*lai*/ attested only at Pylos. The evidence from Ayios Vasileios demonstrates that such a use was not exclusively Pylian, but, at least, south Peloponnesian.⁵⁷

ature) and *157+*WI+MA* (**AV**; ligature). Deciding on this issue exceeds our ‘jurisdiction’ as editors of the Ayios Vasileios documents and needs to be reached through the Signary Committee and approved by CIPEM.

⁵² JUDSON 2020.

⁵³ JUDSON 2020, 135-138, where she favoured the positive identification of the sign on **MY Go 610.1** as *47, and had already cited the occurrence of *47 from Ayios Vasileios, reported at the 14th Mycenaological Colloquium in Copenhagen in September 2015.

⁵⁴ Let us note that its sole attestation on the Greek mainland, in the sign group *me-ta*-*47-*wa* on **MY Go 610.1**, although formally in middle position, might also be conceived as initial if the sign-group is a compound with preposition *me-ta*- /*meta*-. Admittedly, evidence for /**47-wV*/ is presently quite ambiguous to say the least: we are limited to the fragmentary]*47-*we*[on **KN Fh 9076**, if not]*je-we*[, and]*a*-*47-*wi*[, but only if *a*- represents a prothetic element.

⁵⁵ JUDSON 2020, 155-161.

⁵⁶ The form is very likely a verbal adjective (possibly substantivised) and the reconstruction *e-]**pi*-*19-*ta* [(a term known from **PY Vn 10.2**, .5 and **TH Wu 430.α**) is, of course, possible. Although initially attractive, we here concede with Judson that *e-pi-zo-ta* (its attestation on **AV Rb 1** notwithstanding) may be unrelated to *e-pi*-*19-*ta* (JUDSON 2020, 159-160).

⁵⁷ In acknowledgement of the potential complexity of the situation, we hesitate to consider the phonographic use of that sign as a ‘mainland’ feature (although this may well turn out to be the case, cf. PETRAKIS 2022b, 409). It would be premature (and also perhaps immature) to argue, on the basis of the comparatively earlier attestation of *ra*₃ at Ayios Vasileios, that its phonographic adoption took place there. On *ra*₃, see JUDSON 2020, 49-51; PALAIMA 2020.

Writing at Ayios Vasileios and in other administrative centres

A proper assessment of the palaeography of the Ayios Vasileios documents is still in preparation. However, in closing the report on the signs used at Ayios Vasileios, it is perhaps important to reflect soberly on the significance of the parallels noted above. On the basis of the similarities in the form of *19, the occurrence of [*270] and its relationship to *157 or the use of *ra*₃, one might be justified in considering a ‘special’ relationship between Ayios Vasileios and Pylos, or shared graphic traits between the two sites, with geographical proximity generating the impression of a regional ‘tradition’ consisting of similarities or convergences. While it might suffice here to note that such assessments should be based only on the full conspectus of all aspects of writing and its use in administrative practice, it might be argued that the evidence from Ayios Vasileios already contributes towards exposing the fragility of such hypotheses.

To the degree that it shares elements with Pylos, Ayios Vasileios may offer a highly sought corrective image that exposes how elements that we used to consider as Pylian were not exclusively so, challenging the quantitative dominance of the Pylian material over whatever can be considered as ‘mainland’ Linear B. From this perspective, the contribution of Ayios Vasileios to any comprehensive assessment of the place of each site in the palaeographic landscape of the Mycenaean palatial world will surely be very important. On the other hand, we cannot afford to downplay those elements that we used to consider Knossian, such as the use of the tripod vase ideogram *207^{VAS} (AV Kb 5; cf. KN K(1) 740.4; K 8244).⁵⁸ The use of *207^{VAS} or *47 are not by definition ‘Knossianising’ features, just as a hitherto Pylian feature is not necessarily a reliable index of affiliation with the Pylian administration. All such characterisations can be applied only with great caution and in full acknowledgement of their etic nature.

We may, in fact, legitimately wonder whether it will ever be possible to identify ‘special’ relationships between specific palatial centres on the basis of such traits or features. The question itself might be misplaced. The very modifications that are deemed necessary because of the contribution of a limited amount of material, such as that surveyed in this section, is perhaps suggestive of the insufficiency of our data. The nexus

⁵⁸ The attestation of such ‘iconic’ or ‘pictorial’ commodity signs (or indeed most commodity ‘ideograms’) on more than one site is not frequent. See the assessment in PETRAKIS 2017, 140-146, Table 2.

of relationships among polities might have been more complex, fluctuating or -just as likely- not reflected directly on supposedly ‘measurable’ features like the similarity between palaeographic variants.⁵⁹ What remains important is to resist the temptation, all too powerful in Aegean prehistory, to ‘join the dots’, assuming overconfidently that what we know is already a most significant and representative sample of what had been.

Recorded (and unrecorded) commodities and topics

As with all Linear B clay documents, the *raison d'être* of the Ayios Vasileios records is the management of a range of topics that were of interest to the palatial administration. The documents recovered from the excavation of the ‘West Stoa’ yielded a variety of topics, confirming the diversity of the subject-matters attested on the early surface finds (see above). Table 1 outlines the commodities identified on the tablets and inscribed nodules recovered from the ‘West Stoa’ assemblage.⁶⁰ Both presences and absences are important in assessing this evidence. Recorded topics include human personnel, livestock, aromatic substances and spices, animal products, wool and textiles, as well as other artefacts, such as double axes and metal vessels. These topics, duly listed in Table 1, give us a snapshot, an image potentially representative of the broader -but always eclectic as to the overall economy- interests of a palatial administration. In terms of quality, diversity is remarkable. When one considers the number of references and the quantities recorded along with, an emphasis on aromatics can be discerned. However, there may be two reasons why quantities should be viewed with caution in any such study:

- Considering the fragmentary state of our material, one should generally refrain from making arguments from absent evidence. It is noted that more than half of the 106 tablets so far reconstructed do not bear a commodity ‘ideogram’ or other clear indication of their subject matter. These are classified with the prefix X, and are naturally

⁵⁹ For some thoughts on the matter à propos an examination of the fragmentary evidence for Linear B writing predating LH IIIB on the Greek mainland, see PETRAKIS 2022b, 419-420.

⁶⁰ The evidence from surface finds is here omitted, as their association with the excavated assemblage from the ‘West Stoa’ is not known.

CATEGORY	‘IDEOGRAM’	COMMODITY NAME/ MODIFICATORY TECHNICAL TERM
Personnel	VIR]-we-te-e ⁶¹ a-pe-o-te
	VIR	
	MUL	
Livestock	OVIS	
	CAP ^f	
	SUS ^m	
	BOS ^m ; BOS ^f	
Aromatic substances and spices		tu-we-a ₂ ^{SF}
	AROM (plain)	ka-po
	AROM	i-re-we+
	AROM	ko-ri-ja-da-na+
		ku-pa-ro
	[*270] and ligature(s)	
Animal products	*190	a ₃ -zo, o-wi-jo, or unmodified wi-ri-na
Olive oil		i-je-ro e-ra ₃ -wo
Wool, textiles	LANA+	ka-na-ko+
		ka-na-ko ki-to-si i-je-ro-i
		ka-na-ko+
	*146 TELA+PA ^{+SF}	
Artefacts		e-pi-zo-ta ^{SF}
	*207 ^{VAS OF}	
	*212 ^{VAS+PE}	
	[*235] *246 or *208 ^{VAS}	

Table 1. Commodities recorded on the administrative documents from the West Stoa of Ayios Vasileios, Laconia. Modificatory terms in the same entry as ‘ideograms’ indicate modification of the pertinent ‘ideogram’ on at least one instance. Plus signs <+> indicate occurrence of the respective term on both tablets and inscribed string-nodes. Doubtful readings and documents still under conservation at the time of writing (May 2022) have been omitted. Evidence from finds not associated with the ‘West Stoa’ has been incorporated with the following special abbreviations: ^{OF} occurrence of a commodity hitherto exclusively on a document found in a location not associated with the ‘West Stoa’; ^{SF} occurrence of a commodity hitherto exclusively on (at least one) s(urface) F(ind); ^{+SF} occurrence of a commodity also on (at least one) s(urface) F(ind).

⁶¹ For proposed reconstructions see discussion in n. 74-75.

omitted from Table 1, which is therefore only representative of those documents that preserve such information.

- The presence of totalling records (of which **AV UI 10** is an explicit example, see below) makes the overlap of quantities likely. The possibility of having the same quantity recorded as a separate entry and as part of a totalling entry would generate an oversized and highly misleading figure.

It is with such cautionary notes in mind that we should explore what might be missing from the documents preserved for us. So far, we have no records of basic agricultural staple products (e.g. cereals, figs, wine or olive oil)⁶² of any kind, including rations, which we know was a basic provision from the palace to its personnel, in the context of work projects, as well as other activities or festivities. We also lack references to feasting provisions, where meat (chiefly from sacrificed animals) was consumed alongside a variety of foodstuff, a practice well documented on tablets from Pylos and Knossos as well as nodules from Thebes.⁶³ Similarly, we do not have taxation records, as well as relevant records of fiscal/tax capacity, as the landholding records of Pylos probably were. Besides references to aromatic substances, we have so far no other references to industrial activities, a hint –no more and no less than that– that the apparent overrepresentation of such substances might be significant. This issue may have a bearing on our assessment of the nature and function of the ‘West Stoa’ assemblage and will be revisited at the end of this contribution.

The aforementioned emphasis on aromatics is exemplified by certain important documents. Let us first focus on **AV UI 10** (Fig. 9), a large elongated tablet that testifies to the grand scale of the production and processing of aromatic substances and especially of the commodity rendered by ideogram *190. The text of this remarkable document, also discussed above à propos the distribution of its components and the occurrence of [*270]+*WI+MA* on it, is currently transliterated as follows:

⁶² Two references to olive oil (phonographic, not employing the ‘ideogram’ *OLE*) on nodules **AV Wq 179** and **180** are a special case, see below.

⁶³ For a survey of textual evidence on Mycenaean sacrificial banquets see PALAIMA 2004.

AV UI 10

- .1 ku-su-[vest.]14 *146 114 ka-po AROM 2 T 2 [*270]+WI+MA 45
 .2 a₃-zo *190 2900 o-wi-jo *190 570 ne-[] *190 140 i-re-we AROM 5 [*270]+WI+MA 20

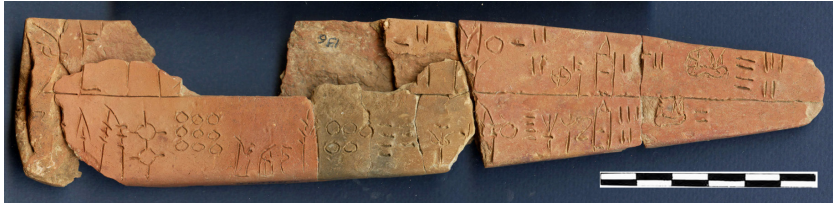


Fig. 9. AV UI 10 (photo by Vassilis Petrakis).

It is noted that the reconstruction of the first sign-group on .1 as *ku-su-*[*to-ro-qa* is compatible with the preserved vestigia to the right of *ku-su-*], as well as quite attractive and plausible. *ku-su-to-ro-qa* /ksúnstrokwḥā/ ‘collection, gathering’ (cf. Att.-Ion. συστροφή) appears to precede totals elsewhere,⁶⁴ and its likely reconstruction here indicates that **AV UI 10** is a totalling document, as further supported by the considerable quantities (including the number ‘2900’ for a quantity of *190, the largest quantity identified so far). On two separate entries of this document, the generic ‘ideogram’ AROM is modified as *ka-po* (.1) and as *i-re-we* (.2).

Such modifying function of *ka-po* suggests a return to Anna Sacconi’s earlier association of *ka-po* and the monogram *KAPO* with /kárphos/ ‘dried substance’, perhaps some dried aromatic plant, such as the bark of the cinnamon (although not necessarily this particular commodity).⁶⁵ The use of aromatic wood might be hinted at by the term *tu-wo* /thúwon/ (cf. θύον) that appears as a specific aromatic commodity on **PY Un 219.1** and *ka-po* or *KAPO* might indicate similar commodities. The term *i-re-we* is considerably more difficult to reconstruct, although its identification

⁶⁴ An employment of *ku-su-to-ro-qa* that seems similar to the one we suggest for **AV UI 10** is to be found on **PY Ed 411**. For an analysis of *ku-su-to-ro-qa* as indicating ‘ENSEMBLES’ (distinct from ‘SOMMES’ of individual entries) see DUHOUX 2013, 56-59, 60-66 (for the *somme/ensemble* distinction, see DUHOUX 2013, 53-54). Duhoux has convincingly argued that the three occurrences of *ku-su-to-ro-qa* in other positions preceding or following *to-so* (**KN Bg 817**, **PY Ed 847.2** –where the erasure [[*ku-su-qa*]] occurs, **Er 880.8**) are due to mistakes on the part of the ‘tablet-writer’ (DUHOUX 2013, 56-57, 62).

⁶⁵ SACCONI 1972. Greek *kárphos* was a non-technical term for any dried small plant part, such as a twig, without necessary reference to a specific species. See in particular the mention of *kárpha* in Hdt 3.111: ὄρνιθας δὲ λέγουσι μεγάλας φορέειν ταῦτα τὰ κάρφεια τὰ ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ Φοινίκων μαθόντες κινάμωμον καλέομεν.

as an aromatic substance is secured by its already known occurrence as modifying *AROM* on **PY Un(1) 616.7**,⁶⁶ as well as from two nodules from Ayios Vasileios, where *i-re-we* appears in a position interchangeable to *ko-ri-ja-da-na* /*koriadna*/ ‘coriander’ (**AV Wq 179.β1** ~ **AV Wq 180.β1**).

The clues offered by **AV UI 10** and a few other documents from the ‘West Stoa’ assemblage are also of great help in the identification of the commodity represented by the ‘ideogram’ *190. At Ayios Vasileios, *190 is counted, as is the usual case in other attestations of the ‘ideogram’ at Mycenae, Thebes or Knossos.⁶⁷

The adjectives *a₃-zo* /*aid²os*/ < **/aígyos*/ ‘from goat/goatish’ and *o-wi-jo* /*owios*/ ‘from sheep/sheepish’ that occur on **AV UI 10.2** are quite transparent and occur once more on two other records of *190 from Ayios Vasileios (**AV Gb 83** and **AV Gb 124** respectively).⁶⁸ They demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that, as many scholars had suspected before, *190 is an animal product.⁶⁹ From the outset, the likelihood that it denotes cheese has been quite strong and is certainly strengthened by the non-use of *190 at Pylos where the *TURO₂* monogram is used.⁷⁰ The only potential obstacle is the context in which such large quantities of *190 appear on **AV UI 10**: this document otherwise records substanc-

⁶⁶ The reading *i-re-we* is considered secure in *PT*³, 205-206. The attractive –but admittedly quite conjectural– association with the *Iris* plant known from its employment in perfume production as well as medicine (cf. the later adjective /*irinos*/ used to indicate ointments, such as the ἴρινον μύρον in *Hp.Mul.* 235 or *Thphr.HP.* 9.9.2) was originally put forward, but must be abandoned if the suggested original form /*wiris*/, based on an inscription from Aetolia (SCHWYZER 1960, 199, nr. 380) and on metrical evidence from Homer (CHANTRAINE 1948, 152) can be considered projectable onto the Bronze Age. Melena (pers.com.) has ingeniously proposed an association with /*ilús*/ ‘sediment,’ used in certain contexts to indicate wine dregs (*Arist. GA* 753a24; *Hp. Mul.* 1.66), an interpretation that would find a context interchangeable with *ka-po* as **/kárphos*/ ‘dried substance’ on **AV UI 10** (see above).

⁶⁷ However, in one case at Ayios Vasileios, we might have a possible measurement in *v* (solid/ liquid capacity metrogram) units. The reading is not yet certain, but it reminds us of the puzzling attestations of *190 measured in *s* (liquid capacity metrogram) units on **MY Go 610** from the ‘House of Sphinxes’ at Mycenae.

⁶⁸ During the first presentation of **AV UI 10** during the 14th Mycenological Colloquium at Copenhagen in September 2015, John Killen, to everyone’s applause, had predicted the reconstruction *a₃-zo* at the beginning of .2 before the actual join was achieved, based on the known adjective *a₃-za* /*aidzā*/ < **/aígyā*/ ‘goatish’ modifying *di-pte-ra* on **PY Ub(1) 1318.7**. The join that produced this reconstruction was achieved by our conservator Vicky Katsichti, without awareness and potential ‘contamination’ from Killen’s observation.

⁶⁹ On *190 see KILLEN 1992, 366-367 à propos the evidence from the Thebes **Wu** nodules. A more comprehensive assessment of the literature will be included in the forthcoming publication of the Ayios Vasileios documents.

⁷⁰ VARIAS GARCÍA 2017, 386.

es associated with perfume production. Although we should note that the latter is based on inference from the occurrence of *AROM*, *KAPO* (if the same as *ka-po*) and *i-re-we* on Pylos, and while a rather culinary use of them at Ayios Vasileios cannot be excluded, the alternative proposal may be offered here that *190 may render animal fat, used as a base for many unguents in antiquity. Such an interpretation might perhaps better accommodate the large quantities recorded in proportion to the aromatic substances proper (if they are admitted as such).⁷¹

The discussion over the interpretation of *190 is perhaps symptomatic of our difficulty to discern the context of **AV UI 10** as either culinary or aromatic and of how to perceive a possibly less strict division between them. For the time being, it is perhaps preferable that both interpretation modes -cheese and fat, culinary and aromatic- are left open.

We reported above on [*270], its variants and its association with Pylian *157 (Figs. 7d-h). In the context of its occurrence on **AV UI 10**, it is pertinent to note here that the syllabograms *WI* and *MA* that are ligatured to it might be acrophonic abbreviations of terms such as *wi-ri-za* /wrídʷā/ 'root' and */mallós/ or */málluks/ 'wool'.⁷² Support for this hypothesis may be provided by the occurrence of *wi-ri-za* and *LANA* on **PY Un(1) 249** in the company of *157 and *KAPO* (the latter rendered as a monogram). *LANA* (possibly as a source of lanolin),⁷³ *157 and *KAPO* occur again in the list of aromatic substances on **PY Un(1) 267**. Another link between wool and perfume production may be found at Ayios Vasileios, where a record of *i-re-we* *AROM* occurs on the same document (**AV UI 80**) as an identifiable *vestigium* of *LANA*.

A number of documents are of interest exactly because they lack close parallels from other palatial sites. A small group of elongated tablets (classified as **Gd**) appear to record aromatic substances deploying the *AROM* 'ideogram' alongside male personnel (the latter indicated by

⁷¹ One difficulty may be that the animal species most explicitly mentioned as fattened in Mycenaean documents, pig, does not appear to be associated with *190 on **AV UI 10** or any other document, as José Melena shrewdly objected (pers. com.). However, if the modification of animals as *si-a₂-ro* /síhalos/ (cf. later Greek σίαλος) or its abbreviation *SI* ligatured to livestock 'ideograms' is any indicative, fattening was not restricted to pigs, but was applied at least to cattle too, as the *sus+SI* (e.g. on **PY Cn(2) 608** and other Pylian 'banquet' records) and *bos+SI* (on **PY Cn 418**) ligatures indicate. For a thorough discussion of σίαλος pertinent to this point see MEISNER 2019.

⁷² On the etymology of Greek πίζα see VINE 1999; on */mallós/ or */málluks/ as possible Minoan loan-words associated with the original monogram that may have been the ancestor of the Linear B wool 'ideogram' *LANA*, see PETRAKIS 2012, 529-531.

⁷³ MAZOW 2014.

the VIR ‘ideogram’ on two occasions). Despite the lack of clear *comparanda*, it would not be far-fetched to speculate that the men recorded were employed in the perfume industry.⁷⁴

The term *a-pe-o-te* that occurs in some of these documents is interpreted as /apéhontes/ ‘absent,’ modifying (some of) the men recorded in these documents, while a rather straightforward interpretation would be that they record absent or missing personnel.⁷⁵

Geographical and temporal references

The ‘West Stoa’ assemblage of tablets has yielded little evidence of historically attested toponyms. Two possible references may be mentioned here. On the one hand, we may have the term *e-ti-wa-i* on AV Or 18.3 (Fig. 5), which may well be a locative of a place-name,⁷⁶ if we are not

⁷⁴ A more comprehensive treatment of these documents, most of them in the process of reconstruction, must be reserved for the final publication. So far, among the sign-groups associated with the personnel entries, the incomplete sequence]-*we-te-e*, a clear dual form of an *s*-stem modifying two men (VIR 2) on AV Gd 146.2 has attracted attention. During the oral presentation, Petrakis proposed to read the sign as]*tu-* with a reconstructed **tu-we-te-e* rendering the dual /thuwéstehe/ nominative dual of an unattested *s*-stem appellative /thuwestés/ ‘he who deals with /thúweha/. Petrakis’ proposal aimed at compatibility with the occurrence of an unmodified AROM entry following the VIR entry on AV Gd 146.2. That said, the *vestigia* of the sign to the left may also (and perhaps better) indicate]*za-*, although a sequence]*za-we-te-e* in adjectival function faces certain important difficulties: first, it would be an unparalleled formation, although not an impossible one (cf. the derivative forms in -ivoç, such as τητινός/ σατινός < τήτες/ σάτες); moreover, the meaning ‘this year’s’ is already covered in Mycenaean Greek by a different adjectival formation, namely *za-we-te-ro/-ra* (*za-we-]te-ra* on KN Ga 461.a;] *za-we-te-ra* Ga(1) 518.a; also the uncertain reading *za-we-te-ro* KN Gg 5637.2). Such a designation might be indicative of yearly *rotation* of personnel (‘this year’s men’ perhaps), making it possible that this is the form abbreviated as *za* referring to women (KN Ak(2) 616.1; 9001.1). We are grateful to Torsten Meißner and José Melena for discussions on these issues, and we hope that further study of these documents or a future join might illuminate them.

⁷⁵ It is difficult to resist the temptation to consider a possible causal relationship between *a-pe-o-te* on AV Gd 146.1 and the possible]*za-we-te-e* on AV Gd 146.2, as indicating ‘absent, missing’ and ‘this year’s’ (in the sense of newly recruited?) personnel respectively. Alternatively (but not totally incompatible with the previous interpretation), we may refer to the recent discussion of the same term on PY An(4) 724 by Del Frio, according to which the term is semantically linked to the verbal form *a-pe-e-ke* ‘he let go’ and refers to personnel absent due to a specific obligation imposed to them by the central administration (DEL FRIE 2002-2003). If this were the meaning of *a-pe-o-te* on these Ayios Vasileios records, then these men are not ‘absent’ or ‘missing’ from the perfume industry, but may be indicated as ‘let go’ of other obligation to work there. It is not clear to what extent such a reinterpretation might be projected to other occurrences of similarly ‘absent’ men or women (DMic I, 86-87, s.v.]*a-pe-e-si*[).

⁷⁶ Not necessarily related to the sign-group *e-ti-wa-i*[(alternative reading: *e-ti-wa-no*[) on PY Wr 1359.β, *e-ti-wa* on KN Fs 9.1 or the forms *e-ti-wa-jo* (PY Va 15 verso) and *e-ti-wa-ja* (KN Od 681.a; Ap 639.8).

carried away by Ἡτία· δῆμος Λακωνικῆς (Stephani Byzantii H27). *e-ti-wa-i* occurs in the same position as other sign-groups on **AV Or 18.4-.5** ending in *-de*, which might be the allative suffix (Fig. 5). The second example is the term *me-sa-pi-jo* that appears on the fragmentary tablet **AV X 111**.⁷⁷ The term may well be an ethnic adjective, bringing to mind the place-name Μεσσαπέαι, glossed by Stephanus Byzantius as a χωρίον Λακωνικῆς (Stephani Byzantii M159).⁷⁸

Leaving the axis of space, we move to other component of the continuum, the axis of time. It is broadly known that Linear B documents were temporary records, regularly recycled and had a rather narrow -by our standards- time reference, restricted to the current administrative year and flanked by occasional references to the previous and following year.⁷⁹ The -unfortunately fragmentary- tablet **AV U1 80**, preserving records of LANA ‘wool’ and the aromatic *i-re-we* AROM has given us the first explicit temporal reference extending beyond that frame: the occurrence of the adjective *po-ro-pe-ru-si-nwa* /properusinwá/ ‘(referring to) the year before the last year’, hitherto not known before the 4th century BC (Thphr. HP 3.12.4 referring to καρπός) and apparently referring to the transaction involving the quantity of wool that follows it. Through this transparent adjective, we gain an important backwards extension of the temporal ‘catchment’ of Mycenaean administrations not previously documented.

Religious and official titles

Religious affairs have been of prime concern to the Mycenaean palatial administrations, to the extent that, as in most pre-modern political economies, religion was intertwined with other aspects of economy and politics.⁸⁰ The ‘West Stoa’ assemblage yielded evidence for such

⁷⁷ This tablet, as others that lack any ‘ideogram,’ has been temporarily classified as X. Its possible reclassification, based on similarities with the Gd tablets, and progress in our understanding of the nature of these documents will be further assessed in the final publication of the assemblage.

⁷⁸ On Messapeai and the problem of the location of the shrine of Zeus Messapeus, see CATLING & SHIPLEY 1989; HOPE SIMPSON 2009, 327-331, although, of course, it remains uncertain whether this should have a bearing on the location of the LBA toponym, which might be *me-sa-po* or **me-sa-pa*. We may also mention here a few terms that appear with endings that might be productive suffixes in *-a-jo* and *-i-jo*: *a-^{*}19-ni-jo*, *ko-ri-te-wi-jo*, *o-to-wa-jo*. As these terms appear in contexts of personnel entries, including some of the aforementioned Gd tablets, it is not unlikely that they are derivative ethnic adjectives, although we have yet no attestation of the corresponding toponyms.

⁷⁹ Cf. also BENNET 2001, 29-30, Fig. 1; KARAGIANNI 2018; 2021.

⁸⁰ BENDALL 2007 for a recent overview of the textual evidence.

interlocking of religion and politics. Inscribed string-nodule AV Wq 117.β (Fig. 10) bears the sign-group *wa-na-ko-to*, the genitive singular /wánaktos/,⁸¹ an explicit reference to the wánaks ‘lord,’ a central power figure in Mycenaean palatial society that functioned as a conceptual bridge between human mortal and divine metaphysical sovereignty and kingship. It is not impossible here that the genitive is possessive and might be semantically equivalent to the adjective /wanákteros/ ‘pertaining to the wanax.’ Unfortunately, further understanding of the inscription is limited by the lack of any other text on this nodule.



Fig. 10. AV Wq 117.β
(photo by Vassilis Petrakis).

AV Or 18 (Fig. 5) further illuminates the religious-political continuum. Its heading informs us that the tablet records *we-re-no* (.1), which may be interpreted as the genitive singular /wrēnós/ ‘of/from young sheep/lamb,’ possibly semantically equivalent to the adjective *we-re-ne-ja* (PY Ub(1) 1318.7) and, like it, referring to skins or hides of such animals, or a hitherto unattested derivative of the

same meaning.⁸² This is apparently the term abbreviated as *WE* in the individual entries (.3-.9). The verbal adjective *qe-te-o* (a type of /kweitehos/) is generally accepted to indicate a type of payment obligation.⁸³

⁸¹ The canonical spelling <ko-to> for /-ktos/ is in fact scarcely attested in spellings of that title: throughout the Mycenaean world, ‘writers’ on tablets and stirrup jars tend to render the consonant clusters /kto/ and /kte/ in the *wa-na-ka* spellings not with the anticipated <ko-to> and <ke-te>, but as <ka-to> and <ka-te>, hence *wa-na-ka-to*, *wa-na-ka-te* and *wa-na-ka-te-ro*, employing a persistent and arbitrary orthographic vowel <a> (the spelling *wa-na-ka-to* occurs on PY La(1) 622 verso .1). This remarkable spelling pattern appears so far restricted to *wa-na-ka* and its derivatives and appears to be an orthographic cliché, of very broad attestation, occurring at Knossos, Pylos, Thebes and on the Cretan inscribed stirrup jars (PETRAKIS 2016). ‘Canonical’ spellings have been so far erratically found: besides AV Wq 117.β, we had two examples of the dative singular /wanaktei/ as *wa-na-ke-te* from Pylos and Thebes (PY Fr(5) 1215.; TH X 105.1). For a full conspectus of all attestations and their geographical distribution, see PETRAKIS 2016, 68-71, Table 1, Fig. 1. Nodules, however, as documents peripheral to the ‘core’ administrative action of palatial ‘tablet-writers’ could, as Palaima has discussed, bear non-canonical features (PETRAKIS 2016, 407-408 citing a now revised chronology of the West Stoa assemblage; on the peripherality of nodules from a palaeographic perspective, see PALAIMA 2000).

⁸² For proto-Greek *wrēn, see MEIER-BRÜGGER 1990. /wrēnós/ could modify a noun (standing for ‘hide’) on the missing part of .1 on the right, unless the latter was implicit. The term may alternatively be a noun, perhaps an *o*-stem */wrēnos/ with the meaning of ‘sheepskin’ (cf. the diminutive ἀρνίον).

⁸³ DMic II, 201-202, s.v. *qe-te-jo*; also THOMPSON, this volume.

The term occurs also on nodules from Thebes⁸⁴ and Ayios Vasileios.⁸⁵ The occurrence of the term on such documents, ‘incoming’ to the palatial administration, might suggest the centripetal flow of both information and the obligated payment.⁸⁶

On **AV Or 18.6**, *i-je-re-ja* (apparently the ‘recipient’ in the dative case, /hiéreiai/) occurs alongside fragmentary sign-groups which might be titles of local or regional officials. *a-to-mo* /arthmós/ (**AV Or 18.8**) is clear,⁸⁷ and the possibly incomplete sign-groups *da-mo*[or *ko-re*](**AV Or 18.6**, .7) might be reconstructed as well-known titles (*da-mo-ko-ro* and *ko-re-te* respectively). Of course, it is acknowledged that such reconstructions might seem too conjectural at the moment.

Aromatics and possible pigments are mentioned in relation to two kinds of ‘sacred’ commodities. On nodule **AV Wq 175.β1-β2-γ**, continued through two facets of the document, we have *ka-na-ko i-je-ro-i ki-to-si* /knákos hieroíhi khitónsi/. The dative plural indicates the purpose of /knákos/ ‘safflower’ (cf. κνήκος), apparently here indicating the well-known colouring agent employed in textile manufacture, which is intended ‘for sacred garments.’ On two other nodules (**AV Wq 179; 180**) in the company of *qe-te-o*, two different aromatics (*i-re-we* and *ko-ri-ja-da-na*) are sent as part of an obligatory payment (*qe-te-o*), intended *i-je-ro e-ra₃-wo* /hierōi elaiwōi/ ‘for sacred oil,’ without any further details with regard to its processing. The precise meaning of *i-je-ro* here remains, however, frustratingly uncertain. It is therefore difficult to know whether this is intended as an offering, as perfumed oil on the Pylos **Fr** tablets appears to be, or whether the oil itself is intended to be employed in ritual action, such as an act of anointment. Of course, these options are not mutually exclusive. If *i-je-ro* is implicit of an act of offering or dedication, then it might be relevant to note that both perfumed oil and garments are attested in this use.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ PITEROS *et al.* 1990, 152-153; cf. also HUTTON 1990-1991; SACCONI 2005.

⁸⁵ **AV Wq 179.β2; 180.β2; 182.γ**. On these documents, see VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* forthcoming.

⁸⁶ This is strengthened by the association of *qe-te-a₂* with the allative *te-qa-de* on the Thebes **Wu** nodules. Such concurrence is not identified in Ayios Vasileios. The diversity of allative types on **AV Or 18** may suggest a more complex pattern in the direction of such payments (perhaps originally received under *qe-te-o* payment conditions).

⁸⁷ *DMic* I, 120, s.v. *a-to-mo*.

⁸⁸ BENDALL 2007, 95-140, 228-241. The term *i-je-ro* appears in olive oil records at Knossos (**KN Fh 5467.b; Fp(2) 363.2**), although its function as a modifier of the commodity is not explicit.

Economic and technical vocabulary

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the familiar technical vocabulary of Mycenaean palatial management appears to have been used as anticipated, despite the non-occurrence of certain terms (whose absence cannot be presently assessed). Besides the aforementioned *qe-te-o*, references to debts owed to the centre using the term *o-pe-ro /óphelos/*, the well-known members of the /dídōmi/ lexical group, like the perfect participle *de-do-me-na /dedoména/* ‘those that have been given/ delivered’, the term *do-so-mo /dosmós/*, usually interpreted as indicating a religious offering to a deity, and its derivative *do-si-mi-ja* (either feminine /dosmiā/ or neuter /dósmia/) suggest that Ayios Vasileios had fully endorsed the practices of transaction and book-keeping that we are familiar with from other palatial centres.⁸⁹ Of interest is also another occurrence, on AV UI 121.2, of the verbal phrase *jo-de-ka-sa-to /jo-déksato/* (3rd person passive aorist of /dékhomai/) ‘what has been accepted/ received’, suggestive perhaps of a receipt of commodities.⁹⁰

Concluding: do we have an ‘archive?’

Our brief survey of the assemblage recovered from the fallen debris of the so-called ‘West Stoa’ has been based, understandably, on texts safely reconstructed to date. Although the progress in reconstruction and interpretation of the documents will undoubtedly bring about modifications to what has been presented, it is only fair that we already address a truly central question: is this assemblage, the ‘central archive’ or ‘central document deposit’ of Ayios Vasileios? This final section of our presentation does not provide a definitive answer, but rather ponders on the term ‘archive’ (ἄρχείο) that has been used more or less conventionally to refer to this assemblage in preliminary reports and presentations.⁹¹ The question is not whether the ‘West Stoa’ assemblage constitutes an

⁸⁹ Understandably, a full documentation of such terms (which would be relatively premature) could not be accommodated in either the oral presentation or its written version.

⁹⁰ As AV UI 121 is currently under reconstruction, a full transliteration is omitted. For the same reason, it would be premature to comment on this occurrence of *jo-* within the discussion of the pertinent evidence for *o- /jo-* (PROBERT 2008; THOMPSON 2002-2003).

⁹¹ E.g. KARDAMAKI 2017, 73, 113-114; VASILOGAMVROU 2015b, 107-109; VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* 2021, 344.

‘archival’ administrative assemblage,⁹² but of its role, central or specialized/ peripheral in the Ayios Vasileios administration.

The dense concentration of documents of many types and of many topics (Table 1) might seem, at first sight, to support this identification. However, identifying an ‘archive’ should be, first and foremost, a matter of qualitative, rather than quantitative assessment. We may not be able to deduce this directly from the number of documents or topics represented, although these are important aspects too. In this regard, it is important to note, on the one hand, that the occurrence of labels at Ayios Vasileios is quite significant. Despite their small number (three identified so far), their presence shows that written information was in the process of being classified, stored and/or processed in the upper floor of the so-called ‘West Stoa’ at the time of its destruction.⁹³ This is further supported by the occurrence of inscribed string-nodules concerned with certain commodities also recurring on the tablets.⁹⁴ We should, on the other hand, not lose sight of the many and important *lacunae* in our list of topics (Table 1), with important commodities and realms of economic activity missing from the documents so far recovered, difficult as it is to assess the significance of such negative evidence. The ultimate question is whether the identified emphasis on perfume or spices in our extant assemblage may be indicative of its ‘specialized’ character. To this, we give a tentative, affirmative answer.

The temptation is admittedly great, standing before a substantial archaeological find, to overestimate its significance. It is not uncommon, even for the most cautious and conscientious scholar, to assume that what was to be found, has actually been found, and that a neat and comprehensive narrative on the basis of the evidence we have at hand can now be produced. We badly want to ‘join the dots;’ but we cannot afford

⁹² Following FISSORE 1994, 344-345, and PALAIMA 2003, 170, we may easily adopt the term ‘archive’ for any ancient “pre-set system of rationalized conservation according to rules which permit the later use of documents for [an] administration’s internal needs, but not necessarily with a view to permanent conservation,” and also keep in mind that some ancient archival practices are directed mainly at “the problem of administrative control, with its specific requirements and regular rhythms of use and discard.”

⁹³ It seems that their presence is indicative of such action, but not necessarily of the overall function of the assemblage. The concentration of most labels in the ‘Archives Complex’ is evident at Pylos. However, exceptions occur, such as **PY Wa 1576** from Room 23. The evidence at Knossos is more ambiguous and quite different from that at Pylos.

⁹⁴ VASILOGAMVROU *et al.* forthcoming.

to pretend that there are things we do not know, and things that have yet to be found, as we should not be under any delusion on the preliminary character of the evidence presented in this paper. As the study of the administrative documents in their archaeological context progresses, we are bound to raise new questions and re-shape those already set, often in a Sisyphean fashion. The distribution of surface finds at Ayios Vasileios, even allowing for the effect of intense ploughing, and the thematic emphasis of the 'West Stoa' assemblage, to the extent that this is currently known, allows us to anticipate the discovery of further such assemblages of inscriptions in other parts of the site.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ With regard to the existence of a 'central archive' at Ayios Vasileios, or the possible identification of the 'West Stoa' assemblage as one, we should remain open to the possibility that something similar to the Pylian 'Archives Complex,' a find still unique in the Aegean, may not be found.

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