Plant remains from Ayios Vasileios, a Mycenaean settlement near Sparta: preliminary results

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Building A

Built in the centre of the hill top sometime during LH I-IIa, Building A remained in use until it was completely burned down by the end of the Late Helladic IIIA / early IIIB period. Mud brick walls divided the building into at least ten rooms. In one of these, a hoard of 21 bronze swords were found accumulated possibly kept in a perishable box. In the central room of the building remains of feasting were recovered, dating a bit earlier than the building's destruction. The fire itself, however, preserved in situ significant quantities of hulled barley stored in at least two rooms in the northern part of Building A (Room 1 and north-eastern part of Room 10).

The archaeobotanical remains

Based on the presence of asymmetrical barley seeds, cultivation and storage of the hulled variety of six-row barley is suggested, while the presence of two-row barley cannot be excluded. Racks remains, though present, are inconclusive. In addition to barley, sparse remains of wheat species are also encountered in the archaeobotanical remains both as seeds and chaff remains. A variety of pulse seeds were also identified, though such remains are only sporadically encountered. On the other hand, exploitation of fig trees and the vine is suggested by the presence of their numerous remains, charred and mineralised in the case of fig seeds. Nuts, such as those of the Pistacia genus, were also collected from the wild. The presence of wild species typically considered as cultivation weeds, along with the stored quantities of barley, is promising in terms of investigating crop husbandry practices.

Conclusion

The archaeobotanical material from Ayios Vasileios offers the opportunity to investigate various aspects of human activity in relation to plants, adding substantially to the current discussion concerning the role of the agricultural economy in the context of the administrative-palatial centres of southern Greece.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the excavator of the settlement, Dr. A. Vasilogamvrou, who entrusted us with the study of the archaeobotanical remains and generously provided excavation photos and valuable contextual and stratigraphical information. D. Kondylí also helped in many ways. Thanks are also due to the A.G. Leventis Foundation for awarding AK with a research bursary for the current academic year towards completion of her PhD which includes the study of the Ayios Vasileios archaeobotanical material.

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