The archaeobotanical investigation of human activity in late Bronze Age Greece

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Introduction
The Late Bronze Age (LBA, 1700-1050 BC) in Greece is characterized by significant variability in material culture and settlement pattern. During the last part of the LBA, palatial centers emerge in southern and central mainland Greece while, in the north, complex communities are involved in loose hierarchical systems (e.g., Cline 2010). The role of agricultural production and economy in the emergence of these centers and in the organization of LBA societies has been extensively discussed (e.g. Renfrew 1972, Halstead 2001). Yet most discussion is based on textual evidence from Linear B tablets, in the absence of available archaeobotanical data (Hanssen 1998). The research project presented here, carried out as a PhD thesis by A. Karathanou, aims to rectify this and highlight aspects of agricultural production during the LBA through the study of archaeobotanical remains from several sites distributed across mainland Greece. Charred plant remains systematically retrieved from Thessaloniki Tounta, Dimini, Kynos, Mitrou, and Agios Vasileios form the body of data used in this investigation.

Storage, crop production and agricultural practices
The social and economic organization of the palatial sites in comparison to that of simple settlements will be explored, for example through the investigation of crop storage strategies. Moreover, the analysis of crop weeds, accompanying stored products will provide valuable data for the investigation of the crop husbandry methods applied at the different sites studied. Therefore, much debated aspects related to the agricultural practice during the LBA, such as “specialization”, “extensification”, “intensification” and “surplus production”, will be explored.

Viticulture, wine-production and drinking, feasting
The role of viticulture and wine-production within the context of LBA communities as well as etiquettes of wine drinking and ceremonial food consumption, possibly within symbolically loaded feasting activities, will be investigated in conjunction with published pottery finds and pottery residue analyses.

Olive cultivation and oil production
The cultivation of the olive and the context of oil production and consumption will be discussed based on finds of olive from palatial and non-palatial sites under study (e.g. Dimini and Kynos).

Conclusion
Through this research an excellent opportunity is offered to use archaeobotanical methods and analysis in order to shed light to the interesting and much-discussed aspects of the Late Bronze Age society and economy in Greece in relation to human activity and plants.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank the excavators of all the settlements, Pr. S. Andreou, Dr. Adroni-Sismani, Dr. F. Dakoronia, As. Pr. A. van de Moortel, Dr. E. Zachou and Dr. A. Vasilogiannou, who entrusted us with the study of archaeobotanical remains and provided excavation and pottery photos. Thanks are also due to the A.G. Leventis Foundation for awarding A. Karathanou with a research bursary for the current academic year.

Bibliography