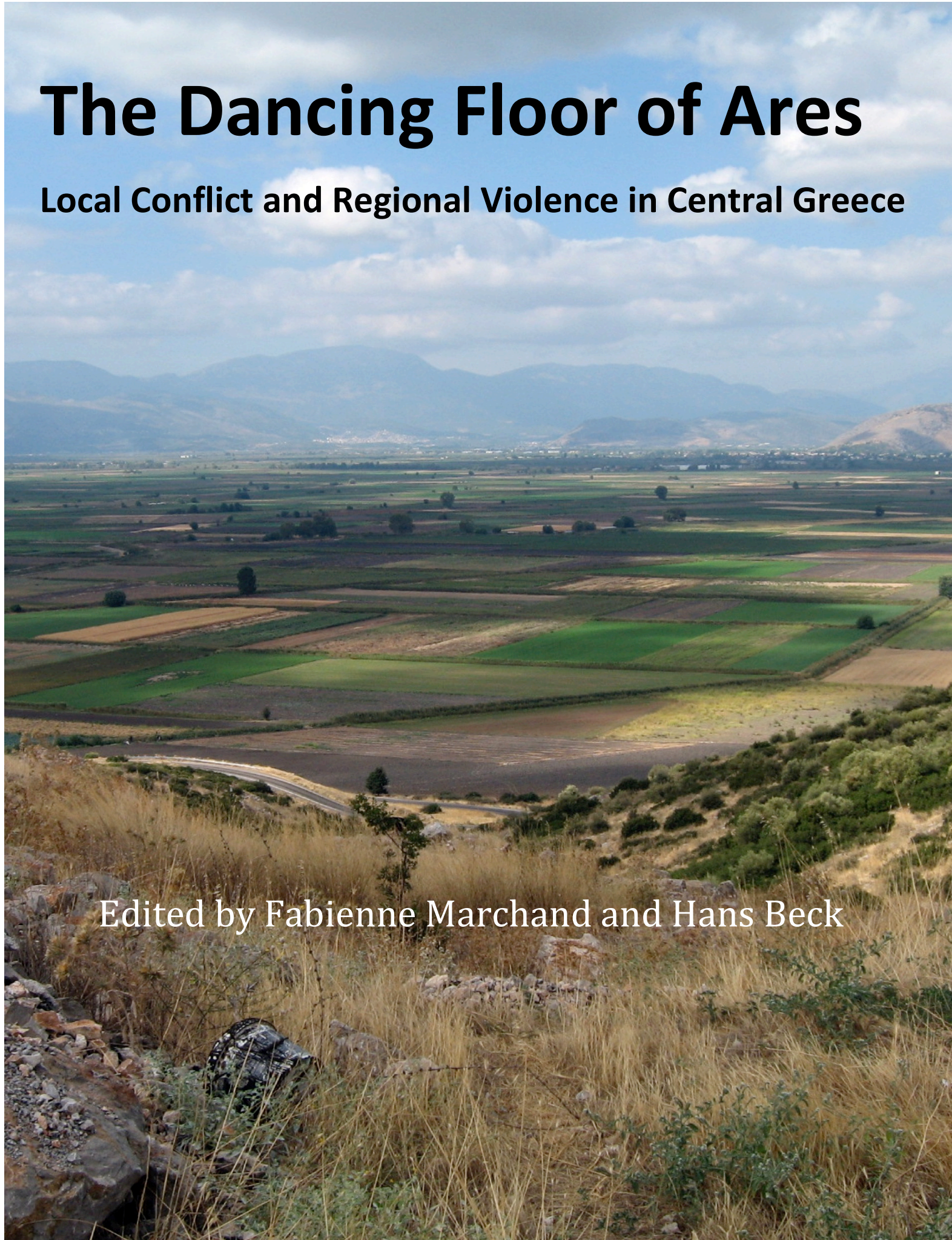


# The Dancing Floor of Ares

Local Conflict and Regional Violence in Central Greece

Edited by Fabienne Marchand and Hans Beck





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## Preface

The present collection of papers stems from two one-day workshops, the first at McGill University on November 9, 2017, followed by another at the Université de Fribourg on May 24, 2018. Both meetings were part of a wider international collaboration between two projects, the *Parochial Polis* directed by Hans Beck in Montreal and now at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, and Fabienne Marchand's Swiss National Science Foundation *Old and New Powers: Boiotian International Relations from Philip II to Augustus*. The collaboration was further facilitated by a Swiss National Science Foundation Short Visit Fellowship that brought Fabienne Marchand as a Visiting Professor to McGill University in the fall of 2017.

Famously dubbed, according to Plutarch, the “Dancing Floor of Ares” by the 4th century Theban general Epaminondas (Plut. *Life of Marcellus* 21.2), the region of Boiotia hosted throughout Antiquity a series of battles that shaped the history of the ancient world, such as the battle of Plataia – which ended the Persian Wars in 479 – and the battle of Chaironeia, won in 338 by the Macedonian king Philip II and his son Alexander the Great over a coalition of Greek states. The present volume is devoted to different dances of Ares. Rather than discussing seminal battles through the lens of military history, it investigates regional conflicts and local violence in Central Greece, with a particular focus on the region Boiotia, through the complementary approaches, conceptual approaches and synergies offered by the two research projects. This double perspective allows us to explore the crucial role played by conflict in the shaping of the Boiotian experience. At the same time, the region's relations with various foreign powers (the Achaian *koinon*, the Macedonian kings, the Romans among others) as well as with its neighbours, such as Athens, Lokris, and Euboea, become visible. Organised as a series of thematic studies involving mythology, genealogy, federalism, political institutions, and geopolitical strategies, our inquiry starts with the Mycenaean period, and runs down through the Classical and Hellenistic periods to conclude with the involvement of the Romans in Central Greece.

The Montreal workshop received funding from the Anneliese Maier Research Prize that was awarded to Hans Beck by the German Humboldt Foundation, as well as from the John MacNaughton Chair of Classics, which he held at McGill University at the time. The Fribourg workshop was supported by the Université de Fribourg Fonds du Centenaire and the Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines. The respective teams of research assistants in Montreal and Fribourg did a magnificent job to turn both workshops into a wonderful experience: Corey Straub, Cyrena Gerardi, Emilie Lucas, Daniel Whittle, and Roy van Wijk. As the papers were prepared for publication, we received insightful comments from the anonymous peer-reviewers. Tim Howe offered helpful advice to improve the manuscript of this first volume in the new AHB Supplement Series. To all we offer our heartfelt thanks.

Fabienne Marchand and Hans Beck

May 2019

# The End of a World: Local Conflict and Regional Violence in Mycenaean Boeotia?

*Laetitia Phialon*

**Abstract:** The collapse of the Mycenaean palatial world that occurred around 1200 BC was certainly a devastating upheaval for Boeotian populations. The strong decrease of sites in the post-palatial period shows that Boeotia has been more affected than other neighbouring regions like Attica. The final destruction of the Mycenaean palace of Thebes was not merely the end of a system in Boeotia but also the beginning of a withdrawal period most likely marked by socio-political instability and mobility. How and why a Mycenaean citadel like Gla has been destroyed? It may be assumed that internal conflicts and tensions were the main causes of this collapse, without ruling out the hypothesis of external destabilizing factors, here as in other areas on the Greek mainland. This raises the question as to how traces of local violence or regional conflicts at the time of the palatial collapse and in the post-palatial period can be detected through the analysis of the archaeological record. In this paper, I explore the idea of Aegean interregional violence and argue that socio-political conflicts may have contributed to the end of the Mycenaean palatial system, but that Orchomenos was probably an ally more than a rival for Thebes in the palatial period, especially in LH IIIB2 (1250-1200 BC).

**Keywords:** Boeotia, Late Bronze Age, palatial collapse, Mycenaean, Thebes, Orchomenos, Gla, Dorian, Sea Peoples

## 1. Introduction

The collapse of the Mycenaean palatial world that occurred around 1200 BC was a devastating upheaval for Boeotian populations. The pronounced decrease in number of sites in the post-palatial period shows that Boeotia had been more affected than other neighbouring regions like Attica.<sup>1</sup> The destruction of the palace of Thebes marked not merely the end of a system, but also the beginning of a period of decline and instability in Boeotia. Research on the end of the Bronze Age has been very active these last fifteen years and produced various monographs and collective volumes used as references in the field.<sup>2</sup> To date, however, the causes of the

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<sup>1</sup> Phialon 2020. For bibliography, see below.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Dickinson 2006; Deger-Jalkotzy and Lemos 2006; Cline 2014.



destruction of the Mycenaean palaces in Boeotia as in the Peloponnese remain an unresolved mystery.

This enigma raises the question as to how traces of local conflict and regional violence at the time of the palatial collapse and in the post-palatial period can be detected through the analysis of the archaeological record in Boeotia. It must be remembered that no Mycenaean texts from Thebes or iconographic documents from Boeotia provide information on internal tensions or nearby hostility. How and why was a Mycenaean citadel like Gla destroyed? How did Boeotian communities endure the economical breakdown resulting from the collapse of centralized powers, transitioning from a palatial to a local self-sufficient economy? Might unfavourable environmental conditions or natural disasters have contributed to the end of a world in Boeotia?

In order to explore these issues, my paper will first focus on major Mycenaean settlements in Boeotia such as Thebes, Orchomenos and Gla during the 13th century BC, before turning attention to the collapse of Mycenaean palaces that occurred around 1200 BC, looking for archaeological traces of turmoil or inner tensions at the end of the Bronze Age in Boeotia as in other areas on the Greek mainland. In this regard, it must be remembered that Orchomenos was historically considered Thebes's traditional rival.<sup>3</sup> Special attention will then be paid to the post-palatial occupation on the Kadmeia of Thebes and in settlements such as Eutresis and Eleon (c. 1200-1100 BC), on the assumption that communities living in this last phase of the Late Bronze Age were not safe from local conflict and regional violence. The study of the burial record is also a key issue in a better understanding of the end of the Mycenaean world in Boeotia. Therefore, I will focus again on Thebes, namely on the cemeteries located on the hills bordering the Kadmeia, before turning attention to the cemeteries of Tanagra.

## **2. Thebes, Orchomenos and Gla in the 13th century BC: a solid palatial organization**

Thebes was a major palatial centre in the Mycenaean period, as illustrated by the large and massive buildings, wall paintings, Linear B archival documents, jewelry and ivories, bronze weapons and harness pieces uncovered in various plots on the Kadmeia.<sup>4</sup> The Linear B documents from Thebes provide a wealth of information about the Mycenaean palatial economy and territory, recording men and various goods circulating between different localities, and opening a window on the socio-political organization and religious sphere in Mycenaean Boeotia too. If one assumes a reliable correlation between Mycenaean and ancient toponyms in the present-day geography of Boeotia, the most distant places from Thebes were located in the area of ancient Anthedon to the northeast, and probably Mount Kithairon to the

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<sup>3</sup> Dickinson 1977: 98; Maggidis 2009: 410. See also Giroux' paper in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Symeonoglou 1985: spec. 26-52; Dakouri-Hild 2001; Aravantinos 2010: spec. 80-95. Also five articles on Mycenaean crafts, nodules and tombs, of K. Demakopoulou, A. Dakouri-Hild, A. Sacconi, H. Tzavella-Evjen (also her book published in 2014b), and A. Papadaki respectively, in Aravantinos and Kountouri 2014: 139-211.

southwest.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the northern and north-western limits of the Mycenaean kingdom of Thebes remain to date uncertain. Whereas place-names such as Eleon, Eutresis, Ptoion and Hylai have been identified in the Linear B documents of Thebes,<sup>6</sup> Orchomenos does not appear among these localities. This absence raises the question as to whether Orchomenos was integrated into the Mycenaean kingdom of Thebes in Late Helladic IIIB (13th century BC), whether the Theban territory was structured in two provinces, as was the case in the Pylian kingdom,<sup>7</sup> or whether Boeotia was “politically divided into two areas ruled respectively by Thebes and Orchomenos”.<sup>8</sup> The last option brings with it the possibility that Thebes and Orchomenos were two rival centres in the 13th century BC.<sup>9</sup>

In ancient Greek literature, the historical tradition tends to distinguish two political powers in the Bronze Age,<sup>10</sup> since Orchomenos is described in the Catalogue of the Ships<sup>11</sup> as Minyan (Homer, *Iliad*, II, 511-516) and is not included among the Boeotian “cities” (II, 494-510). This mytho-historical distinction also makes plausible the hypothesis that Orchomenos was a potential rival of Thebes before and at the time of the Trojan War, which is traditionally placed at the transition from the 13th to the 12th century BC.<sup>12</sup> In this extent, rivalry between these two major regional centres might have been the source of local conflict and regional violence.

According to the ancient written sources (Strabo, *Geography*, IX.2.40), the inhabitants of Orchomenos owned and cultivated the Kopais basin before the Trojan war.<sup>13</sup> It clearly appears that Orchomenos was a powerful centre in the 13th century BC: a large building decorated with figurative wall paintings regarded as a palace has been excavated to the East of the acropolis,<sup>14</sup> as well as a large tholos tomb at the bottom of this rocky spur.<sup>15</sup> Hence,

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<sup>5</sup> Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001: 355-358. According to the authors, the ethnics *i-si-wi-jo-i* and *pe-ta-o-ni-jo*, along with the possible ethnic *]ke-re-u-so* and the toponym *a-ra-o*, correspond respectively to Isos, Peteon, Kreusis and Halai, whereas *te-re-ja-de* and *]ro-na-de* (TH Av 104) refer to Mount Kithairon, where the festivities in honour of Hera Teleia took place (see Phialon 2011a: 192). On the territorial extension of the Mycenaean kingdom of Thebes outside Boeotia, see Rougemont 2001: 703-705 (review of Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001).

<sup>6</sup> For further toponyms and derivative forms, *e-re-o-ni*, *e-u-te-re-u*, *po-to-a-ja-de* and *u-re-we*, see Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001: 355-358; Aravantinos 1987: 33-40. See also Del Frio 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Phialon 2011a: 192; Darcque and Rougemont 2015: 564. For the Pylian kingdom, see Chadwick 1977.

<sup>8</sup> Del Frio 2009: 67, for the two Pylian provinces, see p. 49, n. 54. I could unfortunately not include the results of M. Del Frio's study in my previous article, but I take here the (late) opportunity to thank the author for sharing his view on this issue before the publication of his article. On Orchomenos as a leading palatial centre in LH IIIB, see Livieratou 2012: 82-83.

<sup>9</sup> Shelmerdine 1997: 553-554, n. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Sakellariou 1990: 182; Vottéro 2006: 121.

<sup>11</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, II, 494-759. On physical violence expressed materially and presumably orally in the Mycenaean world based on a comparison with the Homeric language, see Harrell 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Cline 2014: 40, 127. The approximate date of the destruction has been re-dated to c. 1200-1190 BC by P. Mountjoy (1999a: 298, table 1, 300-301), who sees the Sea Peoples as possible perpetrators of this destruction.

<sup>13</sup> Kountouri et al. 2013: 3; also Lane et al. 2016: 293.

<sup>14</sup> Spyropoulos 2015. The wealth of Orchomenos is underlined in the ancient Greek literature, see e.g. Homer, *Iliad*, IX.381.

<sup>15</sup> Excavation of Schliemann, see Bulle 1907: 85-87; Pelon 1976: 233-237, no. 33 (LH IIIB, 13<sup>th</sup> cent. BC); Aravantinos et al. 2016: 929-930 (LH IIIA1, first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> cent. BC). In both publications, the date is based on

Orchomenos may have been the centre that initiated large scale works in the Kopais basin during this century;<sup>16</sup> their rulers may have settled in the citadel of Gla located in the northeastern part of this basin.<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that the Mycenaean citadel of Gla, which probably housed troops of soldiers, horses and supplies of various kinds in Late Helladic IIIA2 (c. 1370-1325) and Late Helladic IIIB (c. 1325-1225/00),<sup>18</sup> played a central role within the Kopais by controlling a large area (fig. 1), maintaining drainage mechanisms, storing agricultural products and protecting the local population.<sup>19</sup> Cyclopean fortification walls enclosed large buildings adorned with wall paintings of palatial character. In other words, the citadel of Gla was fully embedded in the palatial system prevailing in Boeotia in Late Helladic IIIA2-IIIB.<sup>20</sup> After its destruction by fire, the citadel was abandoned, and the whole hydraulic system of the basin came to an end.



**Figure 1. View of the Kopais basin from Ayia Marina-Pyrgos, with Gla to the south-west (on the left side of the picture, © L. Phialon, 2016.)**

The Kopais basin, once dried, was certainly an area of agricultural and economic interest for Thebes as well. The idea that two palatial centres may have fought for draining and controlling the Kopais basin in the 13th century BC is challenging, but faces two main issues. The first argument is the geographic proximity between Orchomenos and Thebes, situated c. 35 km apart.<sup>21</sup> If the presence of two palaces in the same region is conceivable, as was the case in the Argolid, the existence of two kings, equally important, established on very close but distinct territories is questionable. In the Argolid, the existence of two Mycenaean palaces of great importance, in Tiryns and Mycenae, which are separated by c. 15 km as the crow flies, is

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that of the tholos known as the “Treasury of Atreus” at Mycenae, see Pelon 1976: 175 (c. 1330 BC according to A. Wace *contra* 1250 BC to G. Mylonas).

<sup>16</sup> Kountouri 2008: 251. The new topographic, geophysical and archaeological results undertaken in *The Mycenaean Northeastern Kopais project (MYNEKO)* will shed light on the functioning of the Kopais basin in the Bronze Age, see <http://myneko.umbc.edu/>. Also Allen 1997 (with bibliography).

<sup>17</sup> Iakovidis 2007: 211.

<sup>18</sup> Iakovidis 2001, for a first damage, repairs, and a final destruction shortly before 1200 BC, see p. 145 and 156. For an abandon in LH IIIB2 after a destruction by fire, see Mountjoy 1999b: 644.

<sup>19</sup> On the drainage system and fortress of Gla, see Kountouri et al. 2013; Lane et al. 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Kountouri et al. 2013: 3.

<sup>21</sup> Driving routes between Orchomenos and Thebes: c. 40 km (across the Kopais basin on the southern and western side) to c. 47 km (on the eastern-northeastern edges of the Kopais basin).



an example even more striking than the Boeotian one.<sup>22</sup> According to J. Maran, it is possible that “the two major sites of the LH IIIB-Argolid belonged to the same kingdom and were ruled by the same king residing in Mycenae”, involving similar building programmes and the same long-distance trade networks.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, by comparison, despite the discovery of an imposing tholos tomb at Orchomenos, which can be compared with the “Tomb of Atreus” at Mycenae, I would not exclude the idea of a single Mycenaean kingdom in Boeotia. This theory however diverts from the traditional territorial division supported by the aforementioned ancient written sources.

The strong socio-cultural interconnection between the Mycenaean elites may constitute a second argument against the existence of devastating regional conflicts in the palatial period (c. 1370-1200). In the figurative arts, especially on the wall paintings, the same iconographic themes were represented: processions of women adorned the House of Kadmos in Thebes and the palaces in the Peloponnese, the oared ship and argonauts that decorated respectively the palatial complex at Orchomenos and the fortress of Gla are motifs also represented in the Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Messenia.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, boar hunt scenes were depicted on the wall paintings in Orchomenos and Tiryns,<sup>25</sup> embodying the same Mycenaean palatial values. Eventually, armed men wearing boar’s tusk helmets were represented on the wall paintings in Orchomenos and Pylos, with the difference, however, that these men (warriors or hunters) were depicted as mobilised troops in Orchomenos, and as warriors involved in violent fights at Pylos.<sup>26</sup> The elites in Thebes and Orchomenos, which may be regarded as potential competing or rival rulers according to the literary sources, evolved in the same socio-cultural sphere and referred to a common visual language.<sup>27</sup> Could this strong socio-cultural interconnection have deteriorated in a few years into a destructive game of power? Attention must be drawn to additional archaeological and written sources of the Mycenaean palatial period.

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<sup>22</sup> The last part of the route leading to Mycenae is hilly. Driving route between Mycenae and Tiryns: c. 20 km.

<sup>23</sup> Maran 2009: 250. In the same line of reasoning, see Darcque and Rougemont 2015: 567: “the Mycenaean Argolid might be more accurately understood as a single territory centred on Mycenae and including at least two secondary centres”, i.e. Tiryns and Midea.

<sup>24</sup> Aravantinos and Fappas 2015: 324. Gla: Boulotis 2015. Pylos: Brecolaki et al. 2015; Egan and Brecolaki 2015. The dolphins are motifs depicted on the wall paintings in Gla (LH IIIB) and earlier on those in Iklaina (LH IIB-III A1): Cosmopoulos 2015: 251-254, fig. 2. Orchomenos (exhibited at the Museum of Thebes, see <https://www.mthv.gr/en/permanent-exhibition/mycenaean-period/#image-40>).

<sup>25</sup> Spyropoulos 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Orchomenos: Spyropoulos 2015, and website, see n. 24. Pylos: Lang 1969: 22H64 and 25H64, pl. M and N.

<sup>27</sup> For an artistic *koine* within the Aegean and in the Eastern Mediterranean in the palatial period, see Poursat 2014: 140-216. I would however not exclude the hypothesis of a violent rivalry that may have occurred before the palatial period.

### 3. Destructions in Boeotia and collapse of the Mycenaean palaces around 1200 BC

#### 3.1. Regional conflicts at the time of the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces?

The weapons and warlike equipment from the “Armoury” plot on the Kadmeia of Thebes,<sup>28</sup> along with the themes depicted on the above-mentioned wall paintings at Orchomenos, leave little doubt about the existence of solid military forces in Boeotia. The destruction of several buildings by fire on the Kadmeia, including that of the “Armoury” plot, in Late Helladic IIIB1 (c. 1325-1250)<sup>29</sup> was certainly regarded as a violent series of events by the Theban population, but the causes of destruction remain unknown. It is impossible to attribute them reliably to the existence of local or regional conflicts rather than natural disaster. The accidental destruction of buildings was a widespread phenomenon in the Aegean, but the destructions were generally followed by building phases, as was the case at Orchomenos after the earthquake in Late Helladic IIIB1.<sup>30</sup> Whereas signs of earthquakes at the end of Late Helladic IIIB have been previously reported in Tiryns and Midea in the Argolid but not in either Pylos or Thebes,<sup>31</sup> results of a recent project conducted by J. Maran in collaboration with seismologists do not support “the hypothesis of a destructive earthquake at Tiryns and Midea, which may have contributed at the end of the LBA Mycenaean palatial period.”<sup>32</sup> The view that natural disasters, subsistence failures or epidemics may have put a hold on the development of a whole civilization between the end of the Late Helladic IIIB and the very beginning of the Late Helladic IIIC Early cannot, to date, be proven.<sup>33</sup>

Ongoing palaeoenvironmental research in Boeotia may enlighten us about potential adverse climate conditions. Special interest should be shown to the chronology. By comparison, on the basis of high-resolution oxygen and carbon isotope data from Mavri Trypa Cave (SW Peloponnese), two phases of drier conditions have been recorded in Messenia, the first, a short period (c. 20 years) in Late Helladic IIIB, and the other, a major one in Late Helladic IIIC, subsequent to the destruction of the palace of Nestor at Pylos.<sup>34</sup> These results of this research lead the authors to suggest two distinct phenomena: firstly, “a brief period of drier conditions around 3200 years BP [that] may have disrupted the Mycenaean agricultural

<sup>28</sup> “Armoury” or “Arsenal” plot, for the study and publication, see the reports and articles listed in Dakouri-Hild 2001: 106, n. 134; Andrikou 2007. Also Aravantinos 2010: 65, 90-91.

<sup>29</sup> Dakouri-Hild 2001: 106-107. The destruction by fire of the House of Kadmos and most LH building plots occurred in LH IIIB1 (e.g. Tzotzi plot, Arsenal plot, Loukou plot), but the Kordatzi plot seems to have been abandoned in this phase, without showing traces of fire or earthquake. A destruction at the end of LH IIIB2 or in the transitional LH IIIB2-C period is attested in other plots on the Kadmeia, mainly by fire (e.g. Pelopidou street, Soteriou-Dougekou plot, Lianga-Christodoulou plot). As possible evidence of warfare or local accident, see Dickinson 2006: 42.

<sup>30</sup> Spyropoulos 2015: 359.

<sup>31</sup> Maran 2009: 242, see the article by K. Kilian and that by P. Åström and K. Demakopoulou in Stiros and Jones 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Hinzen et al. 2018: abstract, also the plausibility matrix linking potential causes of damage with observations or damage descriptions at Tiryns and Midea.

<sup>33</sup> See discussion in Jung 2016: 554-555.

<sup>34</sup> Finné et al. 2017: 9; this first short period is dated to c. 1200 BC, the chronology proposed in this article is thus low, see also p. 9: “The destruction of the Palace of Nestor is thought to have occurred ~3150-3130 yrs BP”).

system”, secondly “dry conditions [that] belong to the LH IIIC period and likely contributed to the inability of the Mycenaean palaces in the Peloponnese to reassert their power”.<sup>35</sup> Similar results in Boeotia may confirm this plausible scenario.

Be that as it may, Orchomenos and Thebes both suffered from a severe final destruction late in Late Helladic IIIB, or at the latest to the transition to Late Helladic IIIC with regards to Thebes (c. 1200-1190),<sup>36</sup> that is to say 50-60 years after the LH IIIB1 destructions in other plots on the Kadmeia. The contemporaneity or short period of time during which the destructions took place in Boeotia is worth stressing. Both centres would have been significant losers in a devastating regional antagonism, bringing a whole region down with them. This observation may challenge any theory supporting an extreme rivalry between Thebes and Orchomenos as the cause of the destructions around 1200 BC, and may also serve as a test for that of a series of social revolts or a Mycenaean revolution applied to Boeotia, at least without involving other factors.

The occurrence of internal rebellions within the Mycenaean territories, possibly due to excessively heavy taxation or to forced labour, is a scenario that might explain the end of the palatial system on the Greek mainland. The palatial dignitaries, captives of their ideological values and convictions, may have been unreceptive to the growing discontent of their population and unable to react in the right way to a series of social revolts.<sup>37</sup> However, as pointed out by E. Cline, the idea of peasants revolting against the palatial rulers and being responsible for the palatial collapse is a plausible but discussed hypothesis.<sup>38</sup> The application of regional taxes suggested by the lists of commodities required by the palaces from various locations in the Linear B documents, for instance in terms of grain or olives as regards Eutresis and Eleon for the palace of Thebes (TH Ft 140),<sup>39</sup> does not imply the existence of conflict and violence as a consequence of too high taxation.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, R. Jung points out that “the latest palace building at Thebes of LH IIIB Final was apparently not plundered, at least not to any comparable extent”, in comparison with Pylos, Mycenae and Tiryns.<sup>41</sup>

The idea of a “Mycenaean revolution” with the *basileis* taking up a leading role in the fall of the palatial power has been recently discussed by this last scholar.<sup>42</sup> The discontent of the *qa-si-re-we* with the distribution of wealth gained by the palaces may have been at the basis of

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<sup>35</sup> Finné et al. 2017: 1 (abstract), and 9.

<sup>36</sup> The pottery from the destruction layer of the palatial complex in Orchomenos is unpublished, but a LH IIIB2 date is provided by the excavator, see Spyropoulos 2015: 359. Also Mountjoy 1999b: 643.

<sup>37</sup> Maran 2009: 256, on the view that the collapse of past societies was due to wrong decisions, see Diamond 2006. The concentration of power and control in the palaces may have strengthened the impact of the disaster in the Near East (Liverani 1987: 69) as in the Aegean, see Cline 2014: 162. On too specialized Mycenaean kingdoms and uneven local reactions to an economic disaster, see Betancourt 1976: 44.

<sup>38</sup> Cline 2014: 148.

<sup>39</sup> On detailed records of land-holdings with possible contributions expected by the palace, see Killen 2008: 166; Aravantinos et al. 2012: 947. For the tablet TH Ft 140, see Aravantinos 1999: 54-55; together with TH X 155, see Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi 2001: 263, 355; Del Frio 2009: 45-46; Burke et al. 2013: 11.

<sup>40</sup> On taxation, see notably Shelmerdine 2008: 145-146; Killen 2008: 166-167.

<sup>41</sup> Jung 2016: 555.

<sup>42</sup> Jung 2016: 568.



this military uprising. It has been demonstrated that the *qa-si-re-we* had an intermediate local role consisting of certain controls and requisitions of materials on the behalf of the palaces, between the dignitaries directly dependent on the palace and the village communities, and presided associations, the *qa-si-re-wi-ja*, listed on the Linear B documents from Knossos, Pylos and Thebes.<sup>43</sup> As regards Thebes, according to the information provided by the Ug tablets, it has been suggested that “the texts refer to workers under the supervision of *qa-si-re-we*”.<sup>44</sup> With the scenario of a revolution in mind, this raises the question as to whether workers may have followed the leading social groups responsible for “the overthrow of the *wanax* régime”.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, another issue arises then, that of the visibility of the *basileis* after the collapse of the palatial system. As conceded by R. Jung, “it may have taken some time for the enriched βασιλῆες to consolidate their new supremacy and to effectively demonstrate their status by ostentatious burial assemblages”.<sup>46</sup> There was certainly no direct transfer from a *wanax* to a *basileus* ideology in the 12th century BC.<sup>47</sup> In the frame of this scenario, it appears that the leading social group remaining in Boeotia would have been inconspicuous post-palatial leaders in comparison with their wealthy palatial predecessors, as addressed in the last part of this article.

There is also no clear evidence that internal rebellions are likely to have led to the conflagration of the palace system in Mycenaean Greece, which may have included oppressed social groups, or have been initiated by them, even though certain tablets from Pylos provide information on workers fully dependent from the palace, if not slaves, on rowers coming from various towns and probably conscripted by the palace.<sup>48</sup> In the last year of its existence, the Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Messenia reinforced its military organization and coastal defense, as suggested by lists of military equipment recorded on Linear B tablets,<sup>49</sup> but the reason that led to this military reinforcement, the origin of the potential forthcoming danger, as well as the cause of the destruction of the palace remain unknown.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jung 2016: 562; see Carlier 1995: 359-361, for a certain control over the work of the smiths and requisition of gold, see p. 356, and for a certain control over some local sanctuaries, see p. 359, 364.

<sup>44</sup> Jung 2016: 562. One of the individuals who supervised the workmen listed on the Ug tablets is a *basileus*, on the assumption that the title of *qa-si-re-u* was in the genitive (*qa-si-re-wo*); another suggested restitution is *qa-si-re-wi[-ja]*; see Carlier 1995: 361. For the terms related to the function of the *wanax* and *basileus* in the Linear B documents from Thebes: *wa-na-ka*[(TH Of 36.1)], *wa-na-ka-te-ro* (TH Z 839), *wa-na-ke-te* (TH X 105.2), and *qa-si-re-wi*[(TH Ug 42.a)]. Also Del Freo 2014: esp. 59, 63-64, 66.

<sup>45</sup> Jung 2016: 568. Another issue is the loyalty of other military groups towards the *wanax*, such as the *e-qe-ta* (Deger-Jalkotzy 1999: 126), or that of another collective body like the *ke-ro-si-ja* (Jung 2016: 563, 566-567; see Deger-Jalkotzy 1998-1999 [2002]: 77-78), as well as their fate after the collapse.

<sup>46</sup> Jung 2016: 568.

<sup>47</sup> On the concept of a *wanax* ideology, see Kilian 1988. See discussion in Jung 2016: 570.

<sup>48</sup> On military service (e.g., obligation of five towns to the palatial centre in Messenia), see Shelmerdine 2008: 146-147. For corvée works in various fields of activities: Jung 2016: 563-565.

<sup>49</sup> On watchers guarding the coastal regions (a set of five tablets from Pylos, An 657, An 654, An 519, An 656, An 661), see Chadwick 1976a: 175; Shelmerdine 1997: 583; Shelmerdine 1999: 404-405. The destruction of the palace at Pylos has been re-dated to the transitional phase IIIB2-IIIC Early (c. 1200-1190 BC) by P. Mountjoy (1999b: 36); Cline 2014: 127 (c. 1190-1180 BC).

<sup>50</sup> Shelmerdine 1997: 583; Cline 2014: 129. Also Deger-Jalkotzy 2008: 391; Darcque 2008: 380.

### 3.2. A comment on the Dorian invasion and raids by the Sea Peoples

The assumption that the Mycenaean palaces might have been defeated by a foreign power or marauders invading the kingdom(s), killing huge numbers of the local population or forcing communities to abandon their homelands is a much-debated question. The theory of the Dorian invasion is now mostly rejected, whereas the idea of raids by the Sea Peoples as the cause of the Mycenaean palatial collapse is seriously challenged.<sup>51</sup> As regards the Dorians, scholars like B. Eder argue for waves of migration in the Peloponnese, especially in Laconia and Messenia, from the 11th to the 8th centuries BC, that is to say at the very end of the Late Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age, ruling out the concept of a massive invasion.<sup>52</sup> The notion of a slow arrival of new populations associated with deep linguistic and cultural changes is not in line with the idea of a conquest or violent takeover of territories that may correspond to the return of the Heracleidae and the Dorian occupation mentioned by the ancient authors.<sup>53</sup>

As regards Boeotia, it must be stressed that this area, often regarded in terms of regional dialects as an Aeolic land in the first millennium BC, was in any case not a Doric one.<sup>54</sup> According to M. B. Sakellariou, the three different versions in ancient literary sources dealing with the origins of the Boeotians, their arrival, expulsion by Thracians and Pelasgians, and return in Boeotia, agree on the fact that Boeotians were in Boeotia at the time of the Trojan War.<sup>55</sup> However, the population movements reported by the ancient authors can hardly be confirmed by the archaeological evidence.

In a linguistic approach that rejects the theory of waves of Greek-speaking invaders, J. Chadwick argued for the identification of Dorian elements in the Mycenaean dialect, dismissing the existence of an Aeolic kernel in Boeotia before the end of the Mycenaean period on one hand,<sup>56</sup> and on the other, introducing the idea of “Helladic” lower classes potentially responsible for the “sack of Knossos early in the 14th century” and becoming as Dorians dominant in Greece after the Mycenaean period.<sup>57</sup> This hypothesis does not consider the possibility of a Mycenaean revolution or of a war between Mycenaean rulers.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the supposed division between a Mycenaean ruling class and “Helladic” subjects does not reflect

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<sup>51</sup> E.g., Shelmerdine 1997: 583; Maran 2009: 242; Cline 2014: 149, 154-160.

<sup>52</sup> Eder 1998: 13, 202; Eder 2006. Also Drews 1988: 206-207, 224. On the first Dorians in Lakonia, c. 1050-775 BC, see Cartledge 1979: 75-101.

<sup>53</sup> On the return of the Heracleidae: Herodotus, *Calliope*, IX.26; together with the Dorian occupation: Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, I.XII.

<sup>54</sup> Buck 1968; Sakellariou 1990: 150-151; Scarborough 2017: 16, with a new proposed fragmentation of the Aeolic dialects, see p. 21, fig. 13. On divergences between the Boeotian and other Aeolic dialects, on Aeolic elements in the Boeotian dialect rooted in an “Ur-böotish” linguistic background, see Vottéro 2006: 101, 142.

<sup>55</sup> Sakellariou 1990: 180-182. On dialects, historical traditions (*légende de peuplement*) and archaeology, see Vottéro 2006: 121-129.

<sup>56</sup> Chadwick 1976b: 116.

<sup>57</sup> Chadwick 1976b: 112 (without excluding “the possibility that there was an even lower [than the descendants of the Middle Helladic population] serf class”), 114 (Knossos), 117 (mainland Greece).

<sup>58</sup> Jung 2016: 554, n. 8.

well in the archaeological record. For instance, the predominance of simple graves (pits, cists) on the Greek mainland, instead of collective tombs (chambers, tholoi), in the Early Iron Age is no more seen as a resurgence of Middle Helladic practices but as new practices induced by the socio-political transformations from the Bronze to Iron age and/or possibly as the results of newcomers.<sup>59</sup> Eventually, as regards Boeotia, scholars like E. Kountouri have already pointed out that “our knowledge about today Geometric Thebes is very fragmentary” and that the first signs of a cultural rebirth did not occur before the last quarter of the 8th century BC.<sup>60</sup> It is necessary to focus on other nearby regions like Phthiotis (ancient East Lokris) or Euboea to better understand the social and economic structures in the previous three centuries (1100/1050-800/750 BC).<sup>61</sup>

A comparison with the post-palatial occupation in Achaea, a region facing Boeotia on the southern side of the Corinthian Gulf, regarded as Doric in the first millennium BC, provides us with further elements for reflection concerning the arrivals of “newcomers” on the Greek mainland. In two articles, J.-M. Luce points out some relevant correlations between dialectal and burial geographies in the Early Iron Age.<sup>62</sup> According to the author, cremation practices may have different origins within the Dorian territories of the first millennium BC. Similarly, F. Ruppenstein assumes that cremation practices – a phenomenon sparsely attested in the Late Bronze Age – may have been introduced in Achaea from Italy in Late Helladic IIIC (c. 1200-1000), while cremation burials discovered in tumuli in the Argolid may possibly be assigned to foreigners or groups of foreign descent from the Western Balkans.<sup>63</sup> This ethnic lecture of cremation should also be read jointly with that of other potential foreign cultural markers on the Greek mainland.

The sword of type Naue II notably, together with the violin-bow fibula, has been seen as material reflection of the Dorian invasion or migration, but this interpretation must be revised.<sup>64</sup> The origin of this type may be now traced in Italy.<sup>65</sup> As regards Achaea, an example of Naue II sword, type A Cetona, has been identified from a post-palatial funerary context.<sup>66</sup> The discovery of other bronze blades of Italian type in the Late Helladic IIIC tombs at Clauss near Patras raises the question whether “foreigners, traders and/or immigrants”,<sup>67</sup> may have been integrated into the local population in Achaea, since they were buried in traditional Mycenaean chamber tombs. A correlation between bronze blades of Italian type and

<sup>59</sup> Lemos 2002: 185-186 (with bibliography); Dickinson 2006: 39, 51-52.

<sup>60</sup> Kountouri 2014: 228-229.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Lemos 2002; Kramer-Hajós 2008 and 2016; Livieratou 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Luce 2007: 46-49, fig. 46; Luce 2009: 421, fig. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ruppenstein 2013: 188-190. According to F. Ruppenstein (2013: 192-193), the later Early Iron Age cremation practices must be seen as a distinct phenomenon with a new cultural and social background.

<sup>64</sup> Hall 2002: 79.

<sup>65</sup> Jung and Mehofer 2005-2006: 125-126; Ruppenstein 2013: 188. On XRF and lead isotope analyses, see Mehofer and Jung 2017: esp. p. 391, fig. 2. On a transadriatic “*koiné metallurgica*” in LH IIIC, see Deger-Jalkotzy 2002: 65.

<sup>66</sup> Tomb 2 at Spaliareika-Lousika, LH IIIC Late: Mehofer and Jung 2017: 396, see Giannopoulos 2008: 120, cat. no. Sp.G2-48.

<sup>67</sup> Paschalidis 2018: 427, also p. 424 (knife  $\Theta$ 11 of “Peschiera” type), 426 (“fenestrated” razor H20 of Scoglio del Tonno type).



cremations would be a compelling argument in favour of the arrival of western foreigners in Achaea, possibly of war-related character. However, to date, such a correlation seems to be lacking in the archaeological record.<sup>68</sup> The aforementioned sword of type A Cetona comes from Tomb 2 at Spaliareika-Lousika, and is related more precisely with other bronze blades to an inhumation burial of Late Helladic IIIC Late, while the cremations excavated in this tomb are assigned to two other deposits of Late Helladic IIIC Early-Middle.<sup>69</sup> At Clauss, in two different tombs of the 12th century BC, two bronze blades of Italian type, as well as a Naue II sword made of Cypriot copper, were associated with two inhumations of men, and not cremations.<sup>70</sup>

In Boeotia, three cremation burials dated to Late Helladic IIIC Early and Middle – i.e., three secondary burials of infants in cinerary urns – have been excavated in a plot northeast of Thebes, along the road leading to Mouriki.<sup>71</sup> The introduction of this practice is difficult to explain and may be related to the fact that the cremated individuals were small children, whose family origins remain untold. The vases used as urns belong to the traditional Mycenaean pottery production. One of these graves also contained a simple rectangular bronze blade with a central tang (possibly a razor), but without distinctive typological features allowing assigning of it to a foreign culture.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to Achaea where the funerary sphere was obviously marked by a strong warlike ideology,<sup>73</sup> no post-palatial funerary deposits in Boeotia have so far yielded bronze swords or spearheads, and only a very few tombs in Central Greece contained weapons that may definitely be dated to Late Helladic IIIC (Elateia-Alonaki, LH IIIC Late; Delphi, LH IIIC).<sup>74</sup> In the cemetery of Elateia, signs of population increase have been detected towards the end of Late Helladic IIIC Late and the transition to the Sub-Mycenaean, possibly due to newcomers.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, the analysis of the archaeological evidence does not allow us to identify the arrival of foreigner tribes, regardless of their origins outside the Aegean, powerful enough to overthrow the Mycenaean palaces and citadels, to defeat the armed forces on the Greek mainland at the end of Late Helladic IIIB2 or early in the Late Helladic IIIC phase, devastating regions without remaining in the destroyed agglomerations. This aspect alone should caution against the idea that raids of Sea Peoples were the causes for the destruction of the Mycenaean

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<sup>68</sup> For cremations in Achaea: Paschalidis 2018: 450-453.

<sup>69</sup> For the skeletal remains in the deposit 6 that includes the Naue II sword and other bronze blades (a knife, a razor and two spearheads): Giannopoulos 2008: 103, 120, 233, 236-237 (LH IIIC Late). For cremation burials in this tomb: Giannopoulos 2008: 103, 221-230, deposits 1 and 2 (LH IIIC Early-Middle).

<sup>70</sup> In Tomb Θ, a bronze knife of “Peschiera” type and a Naue II sword were associated to the inhumation of a man: Paschalidis and McGeorge 2009: 89-90, and 85-86 (LH IIIC Developed to IIIC Advanced); Paschalidis 2018: 250-252, Θ11, fig. 498, Θ13, fig. 500 (LH IIIC Middle, phase 3). In Tomb Η, a bronze razor of Italian fenestrated type is assigned to that of a young man: Paschalidis and McGeorge 2009: 85-86 (LH IIIB/IIIC Early Transitional; possible foreign connections also suggested by handmade pottery sherds); Paschalidis 2018: 245, Η20, fig. 487. The Naue II sword Θ13 is not related to Italy, but likely to a local production using Cypriot copper: Paschalidis 2018: 418.

<sup>71</sup> Papadaki 2014: 187-189, 202-211.

<sup>72</sup> T. 65, see Papadaki 2014: 206-207, fig. 33.

<sup>73</sup> On LH IIIC warrior burials, see Cavanagh, Mee 1998: 95; Deger-Jalkotzy 2006. Also Paschalidis 2018: 418, 452.

<sup>74</sup> Steinmann 2012: 402-404.

<sup>75</sup> Livieratou 2012: 102, see Deger-Jalkotzy and Dakoronia 1992: 68-70.

palaces. In the troubled times at the end of the 13th century and in the first quarter of the 12th century BC, the Hittite kingdom also collapsed, and Egypt was attacked by two waves of Sea Peoples from various ethnic backgrounds, possibly including groups from Sicily and Sardinia.<sup>76</sup> The view that Mycenaeans left their countries and were part of the Sea Peoples, no longer regarded as agents of destruction but as migrants to the Levant, has been discussed, notably by A. Yasur-Landau and E. Cline.<sup>77</sup> Smaller groups of people from the Aegean, some of them with possible earlier Italian roots, may have preceded the large destructions in the Levant; this idea highlights “the complexity of the period and of the people potentially involved”.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, despite the doubts expressed in the previous part of this article, the scenario of a Mycenaean revolution is perhaps the most convincing so far,<sup>79</sup> especially if it is regarded as an initiating factor, but it does not sufficiently explain the disastrous results in regions like Boeotia.<sup>80</sup> The fate of most populations from Boeotia after the destructions however remains an unresolved question too.

#### 4. Scanty post-palatial occupation in Boeotia (c. 1200-1100)

##### 4.1. The Late Helladic IIIC settlement data

After the collapse of the palaces, Boeotia became largely depopulated, as attested by the marked decrease in the number of sites: from more than forty in Late Helladic IIIB (c. 1325-1200) (fig. 2, below), to a dozen in Late Helladic IIIC (c. 1200-1100) (fig. 3, below).<sup>81</sup> None of the remaining sites expanded or became denser in the post-palatial period. The following overview of the settlement data aims to demonstrate this. The population may have been strongly affected by the consequences of the destruction of Gla and the abandonment of a whole water management system in the Kopais basin.<sup>82</sup> However, this assumption does not imply that traces of local conflict and regional violence are necessarily detectable in the archaeological record of the Late Helladic IIIC period.

Thebes was not fully abandoned after the general destruction that took place in c. 1200 BC, but the few subsequent post-palatial remains have nothing to do with the wealth and

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<sup>76</sup> See discussion in Cline 2014: 3-4, 8. The question as to whether the Sea Peoples were destructive agents in the Levant (Syria) is also discussed by J. M. Millek (2019: 172-173).

<sup>77</sup> Yasur-Landau 2012: 193-195, cited by Cline 2014: 157-159.

<sup>78</sup> Cline 2014: 114. For the origins of these groups, see Jung 2012: 115-116, hypothesis based on the presence of local Mycenaean pottery, imported Handmade Burnished Ware and Grey Ware class at tell Kazel, see pp. 105-110.

<sup>79</sup> See above, discussion in Jung 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Or a “prime mover” responsible for the catastrophe, see Maran 2009: 242. Also Cline 2014: 128, n. 97, citing Rutter 1992: 70 (“an unforeseen catastrophe which precipitated a century of crisis in the Aegean”), 161 (“a systemic failure with both a domino and a multiplier effect”). Also Dickinson 1994: 307-308; Darcque 2008: 381.

<sup>81</sup> Hope Simpson and Dickinson 1979; Hope Simpson 1981; Mountjoy 1999b; Phialon 2011b; Phialon 2020. One can cite Orchomenos, Kalami, Paralimni, Loukisia-*Anthedon*, Drosia-*Lithosoros*, Thebes, Eleon, Tanagra-*Dendron* and *Gephyra*, Dramesi, Schimatari, Eutresis, and Palatai. Today’s Euboea includes Loukisia, Drosia and Dramesi.

<sup>82</sup> On the drainage system, see Kountouri et al. 2013.

prominence of the palatial period. A concentration of post-palatial floors and pottery deposits on the Kadmeia has been identified on Pelopidou street (LH IIIC Early, Middle).<sup>83</sup> The LH IIIC occupation may have extended in the area south of the House of Kadmos, since pottery of this phase has been uncovered in quantity in the new excavation led by V. Aravantinos.<sup>84</sup> In this case, survivors of the collapse would have inhabited near the destroyed palatial remains in the reminiscence of the past glorious days. As regards Orchomenos, little evidence of the post-palatial period can be provided, since the archaeological context of the Late Helladic IIIC pottery remains unknown.<sup>85</sup> It may thus be assumed that Thebes and Orchomenos were no longer in a position to control a large territory in the post-palatial period.

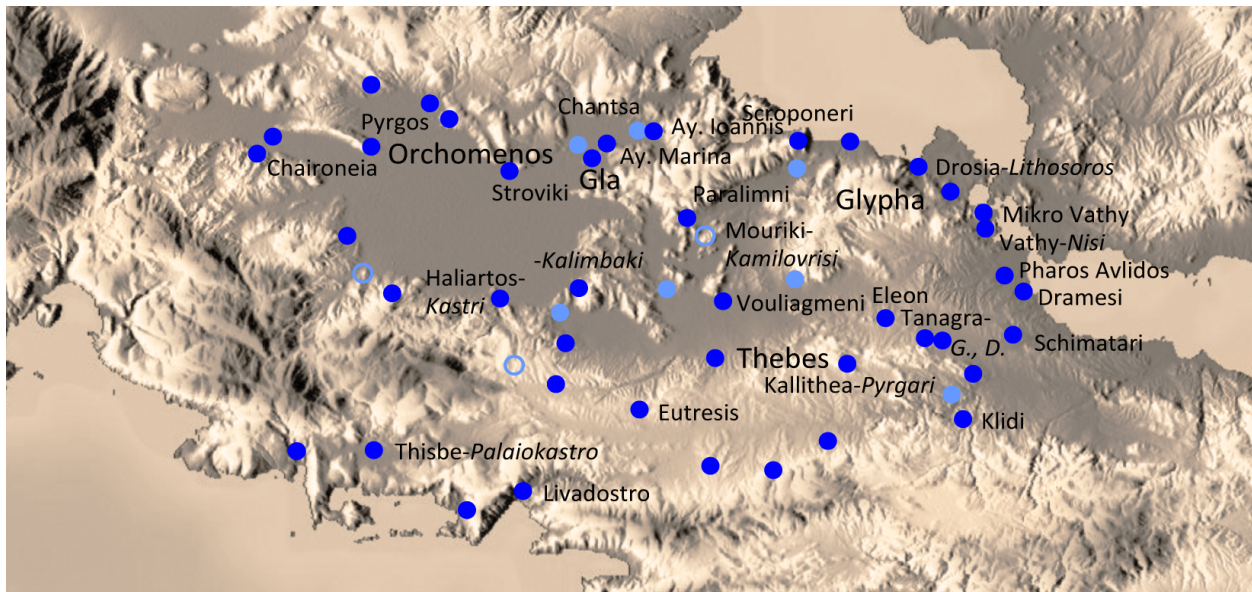


Figure 2. Map with distribution of LH IIIB sites in ancient Boeotia [blue: LH IIIB sites, light blue: LH III(A-B) sites]. Prepared by Laetitia Phialon.

The settlements in Eutresis and Eleon mentioned above, which have been integrated in the kingdom of Thebes in the 13th century BC, were still inhabited in the post-palatial period. In Eutresis, where an extensive circuit wall enclosed the settlement in Late Helladic IIIB (c. 1325-1200),<sup>86</sup> the built area was quite limited early in Late Helladic IIIC (c. 1200-1175): a single house excavated in the 1920s by H. Goldman was occupied at the transition to Late Helladic IIIC

<sup>83</sup> Andrikou 2006: 11, 44, 48-50. Also Aravantinos 2019: 190-191. Spindle whorls have also been collected in the Pelopidou LH IIIC Early and Middle contexts, see Alberti et al. 2015: 288-291.

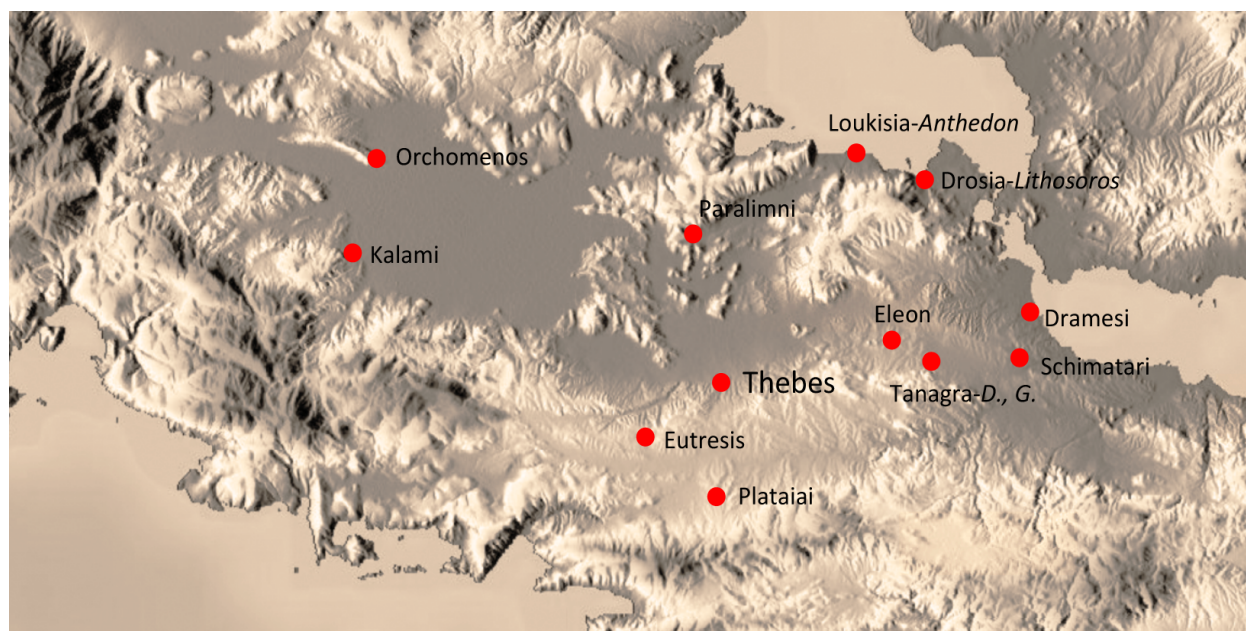
<sup>84</sup> Aravantinos 2014: 150-151, 165, fig. 5. The disturbed layer that yielded LH IIIC fragments is linked to a Hellenistic settlement level.

<sup>85</sup> Mountjoy 1983: 28-32.

<sup>86</sup> Hope Simpson and Hagel 2006: 83-84.



Early.<sup>87</sup> In comparison, the recent excavation at Eleon (Canadian Institute in Greece and Ephorate of Antiquities of Boeotia) has revealed a more substantial post-palatial occupation, especially in the northwest and southwest sectors, where Late Helladic IIIC Early and Middle building phases have been recorded.<sup>88</sup> In the northwest sector, a room with a bathtub and a hearth, as well as various findings such as spindle whorls and spools possibly used for small-scale textile production in Late Helladic IIIC Early, have been uncovered.<sup>89</sup>



**Figure 3. Map with distribution of LH IIIC sites in ancient Boeotia. Prepared by Laetitia Phialon.**

Eleon and Thebes were still occupied at the end of the 12th century BC, but Late Helladic IIIC Late pottery sherds from both settlements cannot be clearly associated with any built remains.<sup>90</sup> The same is true of Late Helladic IIIC Middle pictorial pottery recently discovered in both sites. It includes the representation of a chariot on a fragment from Eleon,<sup>91</sup> a recurring theme in the palatial imagery, and an image of armed men moving forward on a sherd from Thebes, a scene linked by V. Aravantinos to the central warlike theme occurring on the

<sup>87</sup> Goldman 1931: 189-191, fig. 263; Mountjoy 1983: 93-95; Mountjoy 1999b: 647 (House V, Transitional IIIB2-IIIC Early), see p. 680, no. 164-166, 168, fig. 260 (LH IIIB2-IIIC Early), and pottery without context p. 686 (LH IIIC Early).

<sup>88</sup> Burke et al. 2013: 13, 19, also a LH IIIC Early burnt destruction level in the northwestern sector. For the pottery dated to the latest LH IIIB and middle IIIC periods, see Aravantinos et al. 2012: 948.

<sup>89</sup> Burke et al. 2013: 13-14, 16, for LH IIIC Middle constructions, see p. 13 and 19.

<sup>90</sup> Eleon: Burke et al. 2013: 19; Van Damme 2017. Thebes: Andrikou 2006: 55, cat. nos 103, 355.

<sup>91</sup> Burke et al. 2013: 19-20, fig. 16.



contemporary pictorial pottery from East Lokris.<sup>92</sup> The use of pictorial kraters suggests a revival of Mycenaean drinking practices around 1150 BC. Despite the fact that no explicit violent scenes are displayed on these sherds, the scene with armed men is perhaps to date the only hint of a warlike ideology that reached Boeotia in the post-palatial period. As discussed below, the burial record provides precious information on the post-palatial occupation but not on the presence of warriors or warlike elites.

#### 4.2. A preliminary re-assessment of the post-palatial funerary landscape

A good evidence for a post-palatial occupation in Boeotia comes from Late Helladic IIIC mortuary contexts. At Thebes, some burial grounds excavated on the hills near the Kadmeia were still used in the 12th century BC, that is to say, chamber tombs at Kolonaki, south of the Kadmeia, used or reused in Late Helladic IIIC Early and Middle (c. 1190-1120), and on the Ismenion hill, in Late Helladic IIIC Early.<sup>93</sup> The age and sex of the individuals buried in these tombs, as well as the cause of their death, remain unknown, since no bioarchaeological analysis has yet been undertaken on the skeletal material from these cemeteries. Nevertheless, the use of earlier burial grounds, together with the reopening of chamber tombs, suggests that the small community still living in Thebes tried to maintain traditional Mycenaean funerary customs in the post-palatial period.<sup>94</sup> By contrast, the discovery of three cremation burials dated to Late Helladic IIIC Early and Middle to the northeast of Thebes raises the question of whether this new practice in Boeotia, which would, however, only have regarded immature individuals, may have been inspired by foreign contacts (see above). In neither case were traces of violence or warlike equipment related to these burials.

Two further cemeteries excavated in the South-Eastern part of Boeotia deserve special attention, one about 1 km east and the other 400 m south-east of modern Tanagra.<sup>95</sup> They include at least a total of 210 tombs that were mostly in use in Late Helladic IIIA and IIIB (c. 1400-1200), but two later ceramic vases among the pottery material come from these cemeteries, one dated to the transition Late Helladic IIIB-IIIC Early (c. 1200-1190), the other to Late Helladic IIIC Middle or Late (c. 1150-1100/1050), which suggests a later funerary re-use.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Aravantinos 2014: 151, 165, fig. 5, see pictorial pottery from Thebes in *Έργον* 2014: 29-30, fig. 21; Aravantinos 2019: 192, pl. LXXV.a.

<sup>93</sup> Symeonoglou 1985: 249, Table 3 (t. 10, 12, 14, 15, 16); for the LH IIIC pottery, see in addition Mountjoy 1999b: 647, 684, 689, no. 179, 182, n. 332 (t. 17, 19, 25), and 684, no. 185 (t. 4). Also Tzavella-Evjen 2014b: 63-67 (Kolonaki, t. 4, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 25; Ismenion, t. 1, 4, 5).

<sup>94</sup> On Sub-Mycenaean and Protogeometric graves found in earlier Mycenaean occupation levels on the Kadmeia, see Kountouri 2014: 213. Also Andreiomenou 1989: 254-256, 261; Aravantinos 2014: 151; Aravantinos 2019: 190. For the Elektrae Gates Cemetery, see Tzavella-Evjen 2014b: 68 (Sub-Mycenaean, t. 2 and 8, with also LH IIIC pottery).

<sup>95</sup> The excavation reports of Th. Spyropoulos have been published from 1969 to 1984 in *Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* and *Τό Έργον τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας*. For the location, see Aravantinos et al. 2012: 946.

<sup>96</sup> Mountjoy 1999b: 643, n. 43 (LH IIIC Middle or Late lekythos), 647, 680, no. 167 (trans. LH IIIB-LH IIIC Early cup).

Although most of the deceased were traditionally buried on the floors of the chamber tombs, clay sarcophagi (larnakes) were also used in these cemeteries, some of them decorated with painted scenes, including various iconographic themes (e.g., mourners, burials in larnakes, sphinx, bull-leaping, chariot and hunt scenes).<sup>97</sup> A dozen of these larnakes constitute a stylistic group, mainly represented by female mourners, that may be compared to the Warrior Vase and the painted stele adorned with a row of warriors from Mycenae, both dated to Late Helladic IIIC (c. 1150).<sup>98</sup> This raises the question as to whether these larnakes were used in the post-palatial period, or whether this group must be regarded as an earlier manifestation of a style transmitted later in the pictorial art of the post-palatial period.<sup>99</sup>

If one assumes a Late Helladic IIIC date for a certain number of Tanagra larnakes, the question arises as to why the community of Tanagra used larnakes to bury their dead, a practice inherited from Minoan Crete, in a period when Boeotia was particularly exposed to a cultural and demographic decline. Ongoing research on the Tanagra cemeteries will certainly provide new information about the chronological development and the people buried there, but there is so far no reason to believe that the adoption of outside practices, or even the arrival of foreigners, would have been the source of conflicts in Boeotia, in the palatial period as in the post-palatial one.

## 5. Conclusion

The search for traces of local conflict and regional violence in Boeotia at the time of the palatial collapse and in the following century raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, it must be assumed that the collective drainage works undertaken in the Kopais basin in the 13th century BC generated economic benefits for a whole region, works most likely initiated by the Mycenaean elite in Orchomenos whose political and hierarchical relationship with the palace of Thebes, however, remains a debated issue. The drainage and control of the Kopais basin may have been just as much a source of conflicts as a focal point for collaborative efforts. Inner tensions and local conflicts may have emerged in Boeotia as in other regions on the Greek mainland. As regards Messenia, it is worth recalling the violent scenes depicted on the wall paintings at Pylos, not only between groups of distinct appearance but also between men wearing short kilts of the same kind,<sup>100</sup> a similarity suggesting that these men may have thus belonged to the same socio-cultural sphere in the 13th century BC.<sup>101</sup> However, a scenario of a regional antagonism between Thebes and Orchomenos responsible

<sup>97</sup> Aravantinos 2003; Phialon and Farrugio 2005; Aravantinos 2010: 100-123; Kramer-Hajós 2015. The larnakes were mainly discovered during the excavations of the Greek Ephorate led by Th. Spyropoulos at Tanagra-*Dendron* and *Gephyra*, now exhibited and stored in the Museums of Thebes and Schimatari, but a dozen of larnakes already came from earlier plundering and were identified in private collections, see Vermeule 1965.

<sup>98</sup> Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982: 130-134, XI.42, XI.43.

<sup>99</sup> Poursat 2014: 238, for the warrior Vase and the painted stele, see p. 220, 262, pl. LXXXI, LXXXII.

<sup>100</sup> Lang 1969: pl. 123-124, 28H64 and 24H64, pl. N, 25H64. On the perception of the otherness in light of the wall paintings from Pylos, see Bennet and Davis 1999.

<sup>101</sup> Moreover, it has been challenged that different clothing would have characterized distinct ethnic categories rather than distinct social classes, see discussion in Jung 2016: 561.

for the destruction around 1200 BC is hardly plausible, as demonstrated in this paper, since these destructions were devastating for both Mycenaean centres, bringing with them the decline of a whole region. The same reasoning leads to doubt about a revolution led by Mycenaean *basileis* or embedded in rural revolts. None of the actors in the destructions would have benefitted from the collapse of the palaces, and in Boeotia from the destruction of Gla and abandon of a draining infrastructure.

The theory of foreign invaders is even less plausible than the idea of local conflicts as the cause of the palatial collapse. As argued in this paper, there is no conclusive evidence that the destructions around 1200 BC were due to the violent arrival of a new population or to attacks of a foreign power or marauders, who moreover would not have settled afterwards in regions such as Boeotia, where there was a lack of new cultural markers and foreign practices detectable in the destruction horizon of the palatial sites. There are also no traces of a new prevailing culture in the few remaining sites of the post-palatial period in Boeotia, which mostly maintained Mycenaean traditions. This paper points to the importance of not confusing causes and consequences of these destructions.

The possibility of unfavourable environmental conditions and/or a series of natural disasters as causes of the collapse has also been discussed above, but new results of palaeoenvironmental research are needed to clarify the debate. As regards the Eastern part of Boeotia, Eleon is the main Mycenaean settlement identified in the region, and was perhaps related to the use of the Tanagra cemeteries in the Late Helladic III period.<sup>102</sup> People thus continued to live and die in this area after the palatial collapse. There is, however, no reason to believe that the living conditions were better in the Eastern part of Boeotia than in other areas in Central Greece. Even if the acropolis of Eleon was well-watered in the times of its occupation, the seismic risk was always there.<sup>103</sup>

Whatever the scenario explored for the palatial collapse, certainly to date nothing can be definitively proven. However, in the pursuit of a plausible scenario, I would not exclude the idea, as an initiating factor, of a socio-political uprising with leading groups already involved in the palatial system,<sup>104</sup> but certainly not without correlating it with other factors. Moving a step forward in this hypothetical scenario, I would suggest that such an uprising might have been trapped with interregional conflicts, leading to an unexpected devastating effect in regions like Boeotia. Nevertheless, despite a possible weakening of the palatial political predominance at the end of the Late Helladic IIIB (c. 1200 BC),<sup>105</sup> the hypothesis that communities living in the non-palatial provinces would have taken part in such conflicts should be supported by tangible traces of such involvement in the archaeological record, notably in Boeotia.

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<sup>102</sup> Aravantinos et al. 2012: 949.

<sup>103</sup> On the geological survey undertaken by R. Siddall (University College London), see Aravantinos et al. 2012: 946.

<sup>104</sup> Jung 2016: 562, 568.

<sup>105</sup> Deger-Jalkotzy 2002: 51-52.

A region like East Lokris (Phthiotis) may have suffered from a temporary decline in Late Helladic IIIB, according to M. Kramer-Hajós, due to the palatial hegemony in Boeotia,<sup>106</sup> but it is so far impossible to prove that East Lokrian communities would have been responsible for violent acts in Boeotia at the end of the palatial period. In a disrupted post-palatial landscape, although the collapse of the palatial system was certainly a destabilising factor for the population in East Lokrian as well, local centres like Mitrou and Kynos have gained a new leading position.<sup>107</sup> The sea navigation was still a central activity in both coastal settlements during the post-palatial period,<sup>108</sup> and the representation of ships together with armed warriors on pictorial pottery developed there in Late Helladic IIIC.<sup>109</sup> The collapse of the palatial system in Boeotia was certainly not the end of a world in East Lokris. This raises the question as to whether some Boeotian communities may have established in the nearby regions in the 12th century BC. In this extent, the theme of violence and conflict would be an issue worth exploring further in another article through the prism of interregional tensions and mobility patterns.

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<sup>106</sup> Kramer-Hajós 2008: 125-128. However, A. Livieratou (2012: 81, 83) underlines the fact that the archaeological evidence in Phthiotis remains to a large extent unpublished or partially published.

<sup>107</sup> Livieratou 2012: 89-100. For Mitrou, see Van de Moortel 2009: 361-364; Van de Moortel, Zahou and Rutter 2018: 190-191. For Pyrgos Livanaton (ancient Kynos): Dakoronia 2007; Kounouklas 2011; Kounouklas 2015.

<sup>108</sup> According to M. Kramer-Hajós (2016, Ch. 7), a sailor-warrior culture raised there in reaction to the collapse of the palaces.

<sup>109</sup> Wedde 1999 and 2006. Most examples of warriors depicted on ships are dated to LH IIIC, but one from Cyprus to LH IIIB, and another to MG. For Kynos: Dakoronia 2006 and 2007.



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#### List of figures

Figure 1. View of the Kopais basin from Ayia Marina-Pyrgos, with Gla to the south-west (on the left side of the picture, © L. Phialon, 2016)

Figure 2. Map with distribution of LH IIIB sites in ancient Boeotia [blue: LH IIIB sites, light blue: LH III(A-B) sites]. Prepared by Laetitia Phialon.

Figure 3. Map with distribution of LH IIIC sites in ancient Boeotia. Prepared by Laetitia Phialon.