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Mycenae 1939-1956, 1957: Part V. The Chronology of late Helladic IIIB

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## MYCENAE 1939–1956, 1957

### PART V. THE CHRONOLOGY OF LATE HELLADIC IIIB

THE sequence of styles in the evolution of Late Helladic pottery is now well recognized. A sequence dating of finds is thus archaeologically possible. Absolute dating of finds, however, is another and more difficult question. Nothing Late Helladic has any absolute date of its own. We can, however, arrive at approximate absolute dates from Late Helladic pottery found in datable contexts in Egypt or from Egyptian objects found in Late Helladic deposits in Greece. But we cannot always be sure that Egyptian objects found in Greece are contemporary with the Helladic objects with which they are associated. For instance, in Tomb 518 at Mycenae,<sup>1</sup> which is of L.H. I–II date, was found part of an Egyptian porphyry bowl which dates from the First or Second Dynasty. No one would for a moment believe that this Egyptian bowl and the tomb could be contemporary. There are similar cases from Asine and Knossos. It is logical that an early object can be found in a late context, but no one could ever accept that a late object can be found in an early context, unless there has been much disturbance of the stratigraphy.

The three phases of Late Helladic III pottery A, B, and C can be distinguished among themselves with reasonable certainty, although there are always examples which stand on the borderlines. We know that the later Late Helladic IIIA pottery is contemporary with the Amarna Age, because it occurred in quantity in the ruins of Akhenaten's capital. Its latest absolute date is about 1375–1350 B.C., according to the dating placed by Egyptologists on the Amarna Age. There are even a few sherds from Amarna which, if found isolated, might possibly be called L.H. IIIB. Here again another possible difficulty can be glimpsed. A borderline sherd might be called by one archaeologist A and by another B.

It is important for us to try to determine the approximate length of L.H. IIIB, because a great quantity of Mycenaean pottery of that period has been found not merely at Mycenae itself, but all about the Mycenaean world. It is in fact the most widespread category of Mycenaean pottery. In his suggested chronology for Late Helladic III pottery Professor Furumark<sup>2</sup> gives twenty-five years to L.H. IIIA 1 (1425–1400) and another twenty-five years to L.H. IIIA 2 *e* (1400–1375), and seventy-five years to L.H. IIIA 2 *l* (1375–1300). On the other hand he gives only seventy years to the whole of L.H. IIIB (1300–1230). There is so far known a much greater quantity of L.H. IIIB pottery than of all his three categories of L.H. IIIA. He says,<sup>3</sup> however: 'The evidence from Gurob, in conjunction with that of the other finds here cited, indicates with absolute clearness that the transition between the Myc. IIIA 2 and IIIB styles should be placed in the time of Seti I, *i.e.* at *c.* 1300 B.C. It might be objected that the time thus attributed to the later phase of the IIIA 2 style, about seventy-five years, seems too long in comparison with the twenty-five years allowed for the earlier stage. It should then be remembered that the initial phase was one of transition, whereas the later phase is represented by the standardized *koine* ware, found in enormous quantities and bearing witness to stagnation and gradual impoverishment of style.'

Here two statements may be questioned. (a) Does the Gurob<sup>4</sup> evidence indicate with absolute clearness that the transition from L.H. IIIA 2 to L.H. IIIB took place in the reign of Seti I?

<sup>1</sup> Wace, *Chamber Tombs* 223.

<sup>2</sup> *CMP* 115 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* 114.

<sup>4</sup> Fimmen, *Kretisch-Mykenische Kultur* 161 f., gives a good conspectus of the finds at Gurob.

(b) Where are the enormous quantities of L.H. IIIA 2 pottery? To take the second point first: it is well known that the amount of L.H. IIIA pottery so far discovered is small in comparison with the enormous amount of L.H. IIIB were known to us. Owing to the manner in which Mycenaean sites on the Mainland have been excavated and published, this is not at once apparent, but anyone who has excavated at Mycenae or any Mainland Mycenaean site will agree. For instance, the great store of pottery from Petsas' House at Mycenae is of developed

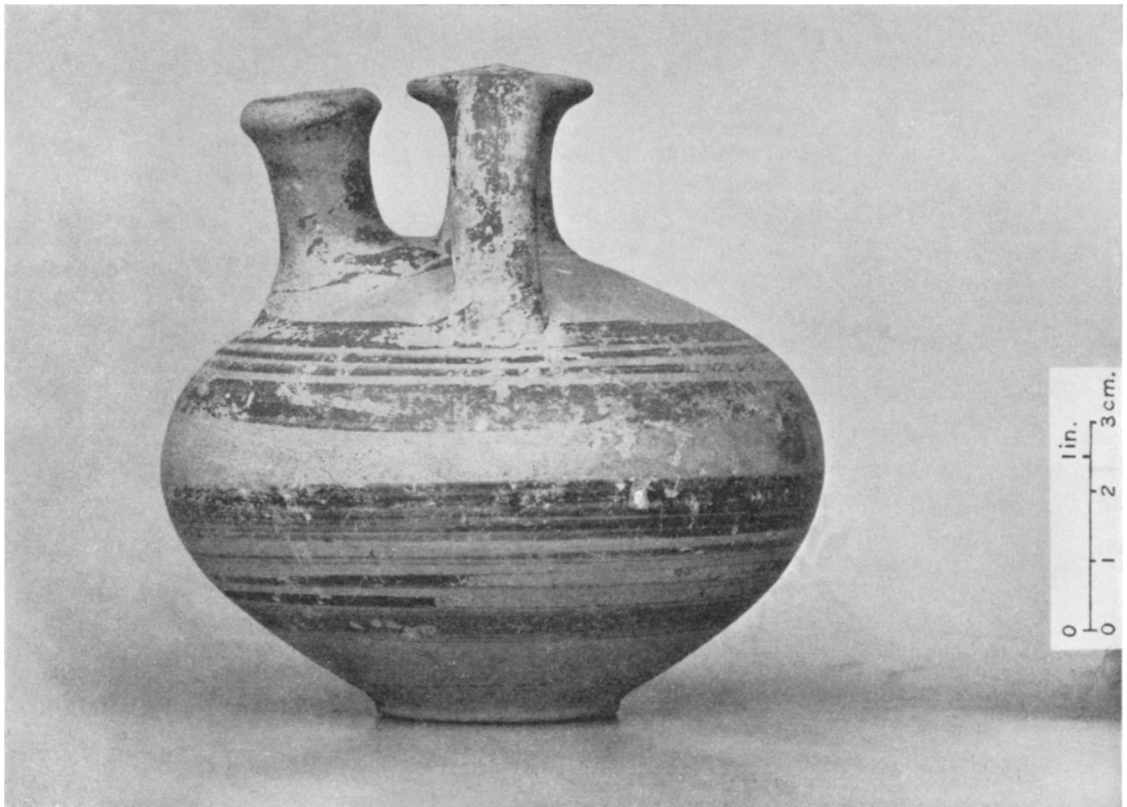


FIG. 3. GUROB: BRITISH MUSEUM A 987

L.H. IIIB date.<sup>5</sup> At Phylakopi the bulk of the Mycenaean pottery is of the same period.<sup>6</sup> Further, in Rhodes, Cyprus, Syria, and Palestine the full L.H. IIIB style is far more plentiful than L.H. IIIA.<sup>7</sup> It is not always clear either what induces Furumark to class a vase as L.H. IIIA 2 rather than L.H. IIIB. He even speaks of L.H. IIIA/B and of possible sub-L.H. IIIA 2 classes.<sup>8</sup> His division, therefore, between L.H. IIIA 2 and L.H. IIIB is by no means definite. In fact by bringing the end of L.H. IIIA down to the end of the fourteenth century he is automatically led to class as L.H. IIIA 2 *l* pottery which is better classed stylistically and typologically as L.H. IIIB. He rightly emphasizes the fact that his L.H. IIIB is a natural development of his L.H. IIIA 2. It is only by including in L.H. IIIA 2 all the transitional pottery (L.H. IIIA/B and sub-L.H. IIIA 2) that Furumark can obtain the 'enormous quantities'

<sup>5</sup> *PAE* 1950, 203 f.; *BCH* lxxv (1951) 113.

<sup>6</sup> *BSA* xvii, 18 f.

<sup>7</sup> Stubbings, *Mycenaean Pottery from the Levant* 11, 17 f., 37, 71, 79.

<sup>8</sup> See Stubbings's remarks op. cit. 20.

of L.H. IIIA 2 ware of which he speaks. Developed L.H. IIIB is the great period of the *koine* and mass production, and even if transitional wares are withdrawn from it and added to L.H. IIIA 2 *l*, L.H. IIIB still remains far more plentiful than any other Mycenaean style.

As to (a), is the evidence of the Gurob<sup>9</sup> pottery *absolutely clear*? We can set it all out in tabular form<sup>10</sup> thus:

<i>Original publication</i>	<i>Museum no.</i>	<i>Egyptian date</i>	<i>F.'s date</i>	<i>Stubbings</i> <sup>11</sup>	<i>Notes</i>
1. (a) <i>Illahun</i> 17, pl. 17, 3	BM A 984	Amenhotep III, 1st year	IIIA 2/B, IIIB	IIIB	House Deposit, F late 171
(b) <i>Ibid.</i>	BM A 985	..	..	..	F late 171?
(c) <i>Ibid.</i>	Ashmolean 892	..	..	..	..
(d) <i>Ibid.</i>	Ashmolean 893	..	..	..	..
(e) <i>Ibid.</i>	Ashmolean 897?	..	..	..	F imit. 173 (? see <i>CMP</i> 116, n. 5)
2. <i>Kahun</i> 45, two vases <sup>12</sup>	..	Akhenaten, 6th year	IIIA 2 <i>l</i>	..	Beneath wall of house above ruined temple of Akhenaten. F late 171
3. (a) <i>Illahun</i> 17, pl. 17, 28	..	Tutankhamen, 1st year	IIIA 2	..	House Deposit. F 171
(b) <i>JHS</i> xi. 274, pl. 14, 2	..	..	IIIB	..	F 183: 6
4. <i>Kahun</i> 42, 44 f., pl. 28, 7	BM A 986	Late XVIIIth dyn.	IIIA 2 <i>l</i>	c. 1300 B.C.	House. F 171: 36
5. (a) <i>Illahun</i> 19, pl. 20, 7	BM A 988	Late XVIIIth dyn.	IIIA 2 <i>l</i>	Late IIIA	House Deposit, Group 7, <i>CMP</i> 57. Sacrificial pit with burnt remains below house floor. F 178: 12
(b) <i>Ibid.</i> pl. 20, 9	..	Late XVIIIth dyn.	IIIA 2 <i>l</i>	Late IIIA	F 195: 14
6. <i>Kahun</i> 39, 42, 44, pl. 28, 1. Tomb 23	BM A 937	Seti I, 1st year or pre-Ramses II	IIIA 2 <i>l</i>	Late IIIA	F 171: 35
7. Brunton-Engelbach, <i>Gurob</i> 16, pl. 39, 29. Tomb 605	..	Ramses II, 1st year	IIIB	IIIB (p. 95)	Closed Group. F 182: 22

Only one find, no. 6 (here illustrated,<sup>13</sup> FIG. 3), can be said to be near Seti I in date. Its context is said to be older than Ramses II, but how much older is not clear. In any case it seems unwise to use a vase so indefinite in type as a pivot for chronological purposes. As regards nos. 1 *a*<sup>14</sup> and 3, the associations of some of these finds are Amenhotep III and Tutankhamen and they are called by Furumark Myc. IIIA 2 and Myc. IIIB. If L.H. IIIB did not begin until the time of Seti I, how can pottery of that style be dated to the reigns of Amenhotep III and Tutankhamen? On the other hand we can easily believe that L.H. IIIA pottery could survive until the time of Seti I. Nos. 4 and 5 fall late in the XVIIIth dynasty and are called Myc. IIIA 2.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Reynold Higgins has kindly given me information about the Gurob vases in the British Museum, and his colleagues Mr. Edwards and Mr. James of the Egyptian Department have generously checked Petrie's dating of the Gurob material.

<sup>10</sup> I owe this table to Miss Elizabeth Wace. It is based on the lists given by Furumark, *CMP* 113 f.

<sup>11</sup> *Mycenaean Pottery from the Levant* 94 f.

<sup>12</sup> *Kahun* 45 compares these to pl. 29, 1. This is doubtless a misprint for 28, 1.

<sup>13</sup> I owe this photograph to the kindness of the Trustees of the British Museum.

<sup>14</sup> Furumark, *CMP* 116, says this is similar in shape to late Myc. IIIB types.

A dispassionate survey of all this evidence would suggest that L.H. IIIA lasted until late in the XVIIIth dynasty, the end of the Amarna Age in fact, and that some L.H. IIIB pottery had already appeared by the time of Tutankhamen. This supports the suggestion already made that L.H. IIIA ended approximately with the Amarna Age.<sup>15</sup> The vase no. 6 is then a survival. Nos. 4 and 5 show that L.H. IIIA reached to the end of the XVIIIth dynasty, i.e. about 1350 B.C., and no. 2 confirms this. No. 3 bridges the change from L.H. IIIA to L.H. IIIB. The Gurob evidence then can hardly be said to make it 'absolutely clear' that the transition from L.H. IIIA to L.H. IIIB took place 'in the time of Seti I' as Furumark says, but only that it had already taken place by his reign. We are then justified in placing the transition from L.H. IIIA to L.H. IIIB at the end of the XVIIIth dynasty, in other words at the close of the Amarna Age.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wace, *BSA* xlviii. 15; *Proc. Am. Phil. Soc.* xcvi. 424.

*the Near East, Studies presented to Hetty Goldman* 126-35.

<sup>16</sup> See Wace, 'Last Days of Mycenae' in *The Aegean and*