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Kingship in the Mycenaean World and its Reflections in the Oral Tradition [Review]

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Part 2 of volume 9 comprises individual studies that concern the Bronze Age agricultural features: terraces (Hope Simpson, Clark, and Goldberg); dams (Hope Simpson); threshing floors and extant Byzantine architecture (Hope Simpson and Harrison); and sites in the Megali Ammos cove (German, Betancourt, Hope Simpson, and Poulou-Papadimitriou). Without excavation, the limited nature of settlement on the island would suggest the terraces are either prehistoric or Byzantine in date, and excavation confirmed Bronze Age phases for many of these agricultural terraces. The small and abundant sherds found behind these terraces, with few joins noted, suggest manuring of these fields. This occurred in the Neopalatial period, as a more intensified use of the landscape accompanied growth in the primary settlement.

A synopsis of the survey pottery and summary of the settlement evidence for each period are presented by Betancourt in the concluding chapter. In general, ceramics found on the island indicate strong ties within the Gulf of Mirabello region, particularly with Gournia and the Isthmus area. Lack of a land-based communications network and few imports, even from sites as close as Malia, suggest that Pseira was not a "gateway community" but rather a way station for local shipping. The harbor settlement grew in size during the Neopalatial period, in response to an expanding horizon for trade and more contact with central Crete. This new organization and transformation of the Neopalatial landscape are also seen in mainland settlement systems in eastern Crete.

These volumes are excellent additions to the Pseira series and to the corpus of publications detailing recent work in the Mirabello area. A primary contribution of these carefully prepared and thorough publications concerns Bronze Age agricultural practices and features. The conclusions drawn regarding the nature and development of settlement on Pseira securely place this island within a historical framework that spans the broad Gulf of Mirabello.

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KINGSHIP IN THE MYCENAEAN WORLD AND ITS REFLECTIONS IN THE ORAL TRADITION, by *Ione Mylonas Shear* (Prehistory Monographs 13). Pp. 233, figs. 11. INSTAP Academic Press, Philadelphia 2004. \$60. ISBN 1-931534-12-8 (cloth).

Shear undertakes a detailed comparison of archaeological evidence from Mycenaean Greece, the surviving Linear B tablets, and the Homeric epics with the aim of showing that, contrary to the reigning scholarly consensus, Homer preserves a detailed and accurate portrait of the age he purports to describe. Indeed, Shear believes that both epics and much of Greek myth took shape during this period and reflect actual historical events (hence the reference to "oral tradition" rather than "Homer" in the title). Thus, because

Pelops is the eponym of the Peloponnesos, "he should logically belong to the early tradition that evolved soon after the arrival of . . . the Greeks" (70). And, since Pelops is grandfather to Agamemnon, Shear infers the loss of numerous intervening kings from the genealogical tradition. (A more direct inference, however, would be that myth has failed to preserve any sense of the chronological depth of Bronze Age civilization.) Belief in a historical kernel to myth also leads Shear to combine references from various sources in ways that most students of traditional narrative will find equally problematic (e.g., 71, 74).

Unsurprisingly, Shear's discussion of the archaeological material is more nuanced, even if many of her findings remain somewhat speculative. My principal objections concern her notions of Bronze Age cultural homogeneity and her underlying belief that panhellenic epic—which she rightly identifies Homeric epic as being—could only originate in the context of a panhellenic culture (82). She also introduces a false dichotomy when she argues that the authority of the *wanax* was based on economic rather than military or religious control (21) and when she distinguishes between palatial and private economic activity by, for example, the *lawagetas* (46). Even those who believe that oral tradition is able to preserve a detailed memory of a civilization that existed five centuries earlier will likely find it hard to accept the specificity that Shear assumes. For example, she uses the window placement in the Panagia House I at Mycenae to explain Penelope's awareness of the suitors' activities in the megaron while remaining in her *thalamos* (36).

Shear is conscientious in her handling of the Linear B material, and her bibliography is both deep and up-to-date. Her argument that the tablets reveal important continuities between Homeric and Bronze Age society is unconvincing, however, for nothing in Homer would have ever led us to suspect the complex social hierarchies and palace bureaucracy revealed by the tablets, or the size and above all the nature of the palatial economy. Shear herself notes that the tablets document some 4,000 individuals, including 500 to 600 women engaged in textile production associated with the palace at Pylos (55, 61). Shear argues that Homer preserves four terms, *wanax*, *basileus*, and, implausibly, *koiranos* (korete) and *hetairos* (e-ge-ta), used in the Bronze Age to designate persons of rank (51). One might reasonably expect some Bronze Age terms to crop up in the epics, given the ability of the tradition to preserve formulas extending not only to Bronze Age but even to Indo-European song. But, as Shear concedes, numerous other terms for officials and, notoriously, for types of land tenure are not found in Homer. For this absence Shear offers a variety of explanations, including an appeal to the unsettled conditions following the arrival of the Sea People (which essentially concedes a loss in the continuity for which she is arguing). I consider it diagnostic that when Odysseus returns to Ithake in the *Odyssey*, the alliances he reestablishes are with three servants: his wet nurse and two herdsmen. It is not that Homer is uninterested in the palace personnel—a point Shear also argues—rather, numerous intervening layers of the Bronze Age palace hierarchy are conspicuously absent.

Such problems become more acute in the chapter on Homer; it is telling that Shear has to shift to the English term "king" to describe Odysseus' position on Ithake, as Homer's use of *anax* and *basileus* does not support her interpretation

(72; cf. 42). In *Odyssey* Book I, Antinoös asserts it is Telemachos' birthright to be *basileus*, not *anax* (the office Shear assigns to Odysseus); when Telemachos responds that there are many *basileis* on Ithake, it is not hard to see the term as a general designation of the elite class, and thus Odysseus as *primus inter pares* whose position is the earned outcome of status competition (*Od.* 1.386–98; cf. also the multiple *basileis* on Scheria).

Telemachos' subsequent actions arguably fit better in an Iron Age than a Bronze Age social context; pace Shear, he successfully uses the public assembly to mobilize public opinion (cf. *Od.* 16.374–75), gathers a band of supporters with whom he undertakes a sea voyage—and who represent a potential threat to the suitors on his return—and reestablishes ancestral *xenia* at Pylos and Sparta. These would all constitute natural strategies of elite competition in Iron Age society; it is only when the suitors learn that Telemachos has sailed to the mainland that they perceive him as a threat.

Shear's treatment of the Homeric assembly is problematic in other ways as well. She considers it significant that in *Iliad* I Agamemnon is free to ignore the assembly's wishes, and on this basis infers that the assembly is not an index of the relative lateness of Homeric society. Yet the assembly has not been convened as a deliberative body, the object of discussion is not a public issue but Agamemnon's private concern, and Agamemnon is not simply king of Mycene but the chieftain of a panhellenic army. Even so, in the assemblies of *Iliad* 1, 2, and 9, the army does "vote by acclamation," for which archaic Sparta supplies a parallel. And though Agamemnon ignores their wishes in Book 1, he does not in Book 2, and he follows them in 9.

No less problematic is the claim that the marriage of Arete to her parental uncle reflects the troubles of succession Shear infers from the burials in the Grave Circles at Mycene. Such arrangements can be paralleled, for example, in classical Athens, where they were used to keep the property within the male bloodline. Similar objections can be raised against the claim that the border skirmishes Nestor narrates in the *Iliad* reflect the period of territorial expansion in LH II–IIIA, or that the raids recounted by Menelaos and Odysseus reflect the unsettled conditions of LH IIIC (58). Quite apart from whether the territorial consolidation is likely to have been remembered in Dark Age song, Nestor's stories of cattle raids are just what we would expect from the period of the emerging polis; and Shear nowhere mentions the eighth- and seventh-century references to raids by Ionian pirates in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. The choice of Agamemnon's armor to demonstrate that the epics remember Bronze Age inlay techniques is unfortunate, as the Gorgon depicted on his shield enters Greek iconographic tradition from the Near East in the Orientalizing period. The description of metal inlay could be based on the physical survival of a Bronze Age artifact or, more plausibly in my opinion, on contemporary Near Eastern examples, either of which would explain why Homer is able to describe the appearance of inlay but not its manufacture. In the end, I suspect those who find her arguments more persuasive than I do will conclude with archaeologists such as Snodgrass or historical linguists such as Katz that Homer's world is a pastiche rather than an accurate and coherent representation of Mycenaean Greece.

Indeed, one of the chief shortcomings of this book is Shear's routine neglect of alternative arguments and Dark

Age parallels to the Homeric evidence: in cases where she does concede that such evidence exists, her arguments are often forced. Conversely, she routinely ignores important material that could not have belonged to Bronze Age epic. For example, it is true that some members of the Olympian pantheon are attested in the tablets, but it is also generally accepted that important gods such as Apollo and Aphrodite arrived from the east in the early years of the Dark Age. She also dismisses the idea that the lamp by which Athene guides Odysseus and his son in *Odyssey* 19 reflects the cult lamp from the Erechtheion, arguing instead that the lamp made by Kallimachos is inspired by the *Odyssey*. On the latter point I fully agree, but Shear neglects the seventh-century evidence for Athene's lamp. Which points to a final problem I had with this book: without a rigorous definition of what is meant by "continuity," the project of correlating the epics with the archaeological record remains somewhat nebulous. Shear also does not explore the degree to which the continuities she does find could also be paralleled in Iron Age material culture.

In the end, however, such objections do not diminish the book's contribution. When all is said and done, *Kingship in the Mycenaean World and Its Reflections in the Oral Tradition* is a highly learned and thought-provoking book and it is sure to generate further productive discussion on a topic of central importance to archaeologists, historians, and students of archaic Greek literature. In the course of her long and distinguished career, Shear was an important advocate of the need to build bridges between bodies of evidence all too often studied in isolation. This book is a fitting testament to her efforts. I sincerely hope that her call for continued work in the area will be heeded.

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SOTIRA KAMINOUDHIA: AN EARLY BRONZE AGE SITE IN CYPRUS, edited by S. Swiny, G. (Rip) Rapp, and E. Herscher (Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute Monograph Series 4). Pp. xxviii + 600, figs. 112, pls. 136, tables 17. American Schools of Oriental Research, Boston 2003. \$99.95. ISBN 0-89757-064-2 (cloth).

The site of Sotira Kaminoudhia comprises an Early Bronze I–II cemetery and a slightly later Early Bronze III settlement in south-central Cyprus. The final publication of the excavation is a major contribution to Cypriot archaeology, because the Early and Middle Bronze Ages were poorly documented until 10 years ago, when two more settlements were published, Alambra and Marki, which are in the center of the island. Kaminoudhia is the only excavated Early Cypriot site in the south, a fact of crucial importance for a period characterized by a significant degree of regionalization.

The book is so clearly written and the descriptions of all finds are so detailed that they can be frequently followed with-