

SOFIA VOUTSAKI and JOHN KILLEN, eds.: *Economy and Politics in the Mycenaean Palace States*. Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume no. 27. Cambridge 2001, pp. viii + 254.

This valuable collection of papers represents the results of a conference at the University of Cambridge in July 1999, on the occasion of John Killen's retirement. The papers represent a variety of approaches to the broad theme of the conference and cluster into thematic groups. The main topics are palatial involvement in agriculture (Halstead), craft production (Whitelaw, Knappett and Killen), the regional development of Mycenaean polities (Driessen and Shelmerdine), Mycenaean bureaucracy and its agents (de Fidio, Olivier, Rougemont, and Bennet), and exchange and trade (Voutsaki and Sherratt). In addition, J. Nicholas Postgate provides a useful overview of several Near Eastern bureaucracies. All in all, the volume is a good cross-section of modern approaches to Mycenaean economy, and will no doubt become part of the standard reading in the field.

Paul Halstead's contribution explores the nature of palatial involvement in the production and maintenance of wheat, flax and sheep. In particular, Halstead focuses on the implications for non-palatial society, following the valuable study of de Fidio («Palais et communautés de village dans le royaume mycénien de Pylos», in P. Iliovski and L. Crepajac, eds., *Tractata Mycenaea: Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies*, Skopje, pp. 129-149). He finds that palatial 'direct production' relies on relations with the rural population, who stood to gain by their involvement in exchange for their labor. Halstead's paper paints a convincing picture of the interaction between the palace and rural communities, suggesting that some elements of collective farming and redistribution took place at a local level.

Palatial control over pottery production is the shared topic of Todd Whitelaw and Carl Knappett. Whitelaw's useful piece begins with the disjunction of textual and archaeological evidence for palatial pottery production. His detailed analysis of the pottery pantries at the Palace of Nestor allows him to estimate roughly the annual consumption of the palace. Comparing this to the overall demand for pottery in the polity, Whitelaw finds that the palace represented a relatively small percentage of total consumption. He concludes that only two full-time potters would be necessary to supply the palace, while positing a plausible scenario in which the palace's pantries would be supplied by local potters working in the town of Pylos. The lack of textual references to pottery is plausibly explained by the seasonality of pottery production and acquisition, as well as the ephemeral and short-term nature of texts recording pottery, such as those from the House of Sphinxes at Mycenae. Knappett's paper differs in that his paper is primarily a critique of Brumfield and Earle's model of craft production and specialization. It is commendable that he employs Mycenaean evidence to show the weaknesses of a general theory, but the article would have been strengthened by more attention to the specifics of Pylian pottery production.

The *ta-ra-si-ja* system of production is the topic of John Killen's piece. Killen takes us through the more certain instances of *ta-ra-si-ja* production (textiles, bronze, and wheel-making) before discussing the possibility of *ta-ra-si-ja* chariot production in the S-tablets at Knossos. If Killen is correct, then we cannot characterize *ta-ra-si-ja* production as 'decentralized', since the lack of a place-name from all but two of the S-tablets probably indicates manufacture at Knossos itself. Contrasting the *ta-ra-si-ja* industries with the production of aromatic unguent, Killen concludes that the former is characterized by a large work force of a relatively low status. This system, then, is designed to provide small amounts of few raw materials to many individuals, who return finished goods to the palace.

Jan Driessen's treatment of Knossian administration in the palatial territory builds from John Bennet's earlier work, focusing on approaching the evidence from a diachronic

perspective. Driessen's provocative conclusion is that Knossian hegemony "took the form of 'islands of influence' in a 'sea' of uncontrolled hinterland" (p. 111). The evidence brought to bear on the problem is impressive, and Driessen is surely right to conclude that Knossian territorial interests expanded over time, possibly into east-central Crete and the Amari valley. Driessen notes that there is no evidence to suggest that the few West Cretan sites in the Knossos tablets "formed administrative hubs for lower level sites" (p. 111), but one would expect tighter control in Knossos' immediate hinterland, with distant regions less closely managed. Therefore, the possibility that the western sites mentioned in the tablets did act as 'second degree' centers seems plausible; unfortunately, the evidence does not allow us to decide between these two scenarios.

Cynthia Shelmerdine's contribution looks at the development of administration at Pylos by deploying the rich data set gathered by the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project (PRAP). Shelmerdine finds that Pylos is one of a number of sites which grow significantly in the Early Mycenaean period, but then surpasses other settlements in LHIIIA, absorbing local communities while perhaps allowing centers further from Pylos to grow. Early Mycenaean sites in the mountainous Aigaleon region are abandoned by LHIIIA, just at the period when we suspect that Pylos is exerting its control over western Messenia. The picture of LHIII expansion sketched by Shelmerdine is a necessarily rough one, but illustrates the value of the integration of archaeological and epigraphic evidence in order to provide a fuller account of the rise of the Pylian state.

Pia de Fidio's contribution focuses on the topic of centralization and the 'non-palatial' sector (the *damos*). She rightly concentrates on individual agents operating within the larger system, such as bronze smiths or 'collectors', who act both as agents of the state and as private individuals pursuing their own interests. The strength of this fine piece is the clarity with which de Fidio sets forth the main issues of Mycenaean economy and society.

The identification and role of 'collectors' is the focus of the papers of Françoise Rougemont and Jean-Pierre Olivier. Rougemont conscientiously goes through past scholarship on the 'collectors' and the problems associated with their identification. She treats Killen's suggestion that the 'collectors' were part of an international élite with some caution. Olivier, on the other hand, opens the door to a number of suggestive possibilities not noted by Killen regarding the recurrence of the names of 'collectors' in different places and chronological periods, both between sites and including the different dates of the archives at Knossos. He concludes that the 'collectors' represent a kind of 'aristocratic dynastique' (p. 157). This line of inquiry is an important one, and certainly merits the detailed discussion that it is given in this volume. Indeed, the articles of Rougemont and Olivier constitute a rather nice pair, in that the former lays out criteria for identification and the necessary background, while the latter reveals new avenues of research.

The interest in individual agency is also a theme of John Bennet's thought-provoking article, which should be read alongside a recent paper of Kyriakidis («Some Aspects of the Rôle of Scribes in Pylian Palace Administration», *Minos* 31-32 [1996-97], pp. 201-229). Bennet has two main points: (1) that clay documents were in fact the 'final' administrative documents of Pylos; and (2) that our 'scribes' are also the administrative élite of the palace. Following the second point, Bennet tentatively identifies several of the scribal hands with prominent individuals in the administration of Pylos. However tentative, Bennet's ideas are intriguing, and should stimulate much-needed detailed research in this area, as much detailed work still remains to be done on the way in which scribal administration works, particularly at Pylos.

Sofia Voutsaki addresses the issue of control of prestige goods through a massive synthesis of archaeological evidence. Voutsaki's main argument is that the palaces exerted strict control over flows of prestige goods, based on the differential distributions of such

materials. Voutsaki notes an increase in deposited wealth during LHIIIC in Thessaly, the Cyclades and the Dodecanese; she argues that these areas, particularly the islands, acted as nodes of acquisition for mainland Greeks. With the fall of the palaces, local élites regained control over these prestige-conferring artifacts. However, it is difficult to argue that the absence of prestige goods in tombs indicates a total lack of access to these goods. Surely we can imagine different attitudes to, and strategies for, the deposition of valuables in tombs over space (i.e., between Thessaly, the Argolid, and the Dodecanese) and time (i.e., from the beginning to the end of the LBA). While not rejecting Voutsaki's conclusions, one might imagine a more fluid and dynamic model in which élites deployed a variety of strategies for social legitimation.

Voutsaki's approach can be contrasted with Susan Sherratt's globalizing account of the rise and fall of Mycenaean palaces, seen from the perspective of inter-regional exchange. Sherratt essentially views the palaces as epiphenomena: they owe their emergence to their placement along long-distance trade routes, and their demise is nothing more than the result of a shift in trade patterns at the end of the Bronze Age. These conclusions rest on the (rather subjective) characterization of the palaces as "client-based warrior societies onto which the outward trappings of a derivative, and essentially symbolic, idea of 'palatial' civilisation were somewhat clumsily grafted" (p. 238). Sherratt's description recalls the interpretation put forward by Glotz in the 1920s, in which the Mycenaeans were nothing but imitators of Minoan 'high culture'. Sherratt is surely right to insist that trade and exchange are active agents of change in the Mycenaean world, but her model denies the significance of internal change and the reciprocal nature of the interaction between Aegean trade and Mycenaean economies.

J. Nicholas Postgate's study is comparative, wherein he paints with broad strokes the administrative nature of three Near Eastern bureaucracies (Ur III, Old Babylonian, and Middle Assyrian). Postgate limits his discussion by focusing on several variables, particularly the extent of bureaucratic control ('administrative reach') and the intensiveness of written documentation ('documentary coverage'). Postgate's overview usefully highlights the salient features of each system, providing the Mycenologist with comparisons and contrasts; it is our loss that Postgate did not give us his view of Mycenaean palatial administration as well. However, in response to Olivier's paper, Postgate raises the possibility that the uniformity in the form of Linear B tablets suggests that they operated within a single over-arching administration (p. 160). Yet the conservatism of the scribes must be examined within the context of writing itself; so far as we can tell, the use of Linear B is very restricted, in contrast to the wide application of literacy in the Near East.

In sum, several trends can be detected in the collected papers. The integration of archaeology and Linear B is illustrated by a number of papers that deal with the gaps between these kinds of evidence. Whitelaw's detailed study of the pantries at the Palace of Nestor demonstrates the value of the meticulous methods and recording practices of modern archaeology, while Shelmerdine illustrates the contribution of intensive archaeological survey. The contribution of regional survey highlights the important interaction between the center and periphery, which was the basis of the palace's existence. Moreover, a number of papers show that the ancient economy is inextricably linked to politics and power. Here the Linear B tablets are particularly useful, for they contain a wealth of information about the individual agents of the bureaucracy of Mycenaean states. Olivier's argument about the 'collectors' as members of an international élite has obvious implications for the way in which we understand inter-polity interaction. Likewise, Bennet's article compels us to consider more fully the interactions between scribes/administrators at the palace at the level of the individual and the overall system. Overall, the quality of the scholarship in this volume is excellent, and illustrates the benefit of increased communication between archaeology and Mycenaeanology.

If the articles within are signs of developments in the field, its future should be quite bright indeed.

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