

BOOK REVIEW

Individuals and Society in Mycenaean Pylos. By DIMITRI NAKASSIS. Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2013. Pp. xvii + 448. Hardcover, \$171.00. ISBN 978-90-04-24451-1.

This prosopographical study by Nakassis appears forty years after Lindgren's *The People of Pylos*, and aims both to provide an updated catalogue of every possible personal name recorded in the Linear B tablets from Pylos, as well as to cast new light on the Mycenaean society.

The book is structured in five chapters and an appendix. The first two are an introduction, touching on aspects that range from methodological questions to new approaches on the subject. Although an interesting link between named individuals and the mortuary evidence is already outlined in the first chapter, chapter two shows the connections between onomastic data and other fields. As the author stresses, the relationship between prosopography and geography is based on previous works both about this subject and about the crosscheck between onomastic and administrative data. He is particularly original in arguing that geographical distance is not an impediment for prosopographical identification.

Taking into account the fact that the Pylian texts are restricted in time, space and function, Nakassis reaches two new conclusions: first, that in many cases, multiple attestations of the same name represent a single individual, rather than multiple individuals with the same name and, second, that the named individuals were people of high status. In this way, he contributes evidence to the hypothesis that the Mycenaean elite used a limited number of names. Nakassis questions—correctly in my opinion—what has been written previously about prosopography and society. He criticizes not the bipartition of the society and its consequent application to prosopography, but rather the fact that terse deductions were made on the basis of just one match. Using data from the Linear B tablets, Nakassis analyzes the proper names *ko-ma-we* and *pa-ku-ro₂* to illustrate his methodology. He argues that the names belong to brothers because of the reference to the same patronymic, *de-wi-jo*. However, he shows no positive evidence that *de-wi-jo* is actually the exact same person in both attestations (50-56, 231, 294f., 331).

I find chapters three (“Smiths and Herders”) and four (“Soldiers and Landowners”) particularly interesting. Both chapters apply the previously discussed

methods to concrete cases. The choice of smiths, herders, soldiers and landowners is due to shared characteristics. First, they constitute the largest cohesive group of named individuals in the tablets from Pylos. Moreover, there is a significant overlap of many names between the onomastic data from the Jn (smiths) and Cn series (herders). Finally, documents from the Jn and Cn series are well-preserved and their current number is very close to the original one. The examination of named individuals from administrative sets of texts and the evaluation of the possible matches in other documents allowed for the compilation of dossiers containing detailed descriptions of the activities of specific people. Furthermore, especially regarding smiths and herders, prosopographical matches lead to the conclusion that some of them were not low-status and full-time workers, but individuals with more elevated roles who were involved in the palatial administration, and appeared in craft contexts.

Conclusions are offered in the fifth chapter. On the basis of the previous critical analysis, Nakassis argues that named individuals share several traits. They were important agents within the palatial administration, they constituted a heterogeneous group, and they belonged to the elite. However, the author finds a lack of clear rank in status among the named individuals. Instead, there is a continuum of importance. He finds that the individuals who appear in multiple texts were generally not specialists, but rather tended to be involved in multiple types of activity within the palatial purview. Regarding the named herders, Nakassis shows that they ranged widely in importance and status. Indeed, he argues that some of them, if not all, must have been supervisors rather than simple herders, a situation that has various parallels, e.g. in Near Eastern administrative systems. Also, due to the fact that many of the individuals who appear in large numbers of texts do not belong to the traditional model's palatial elite, have no official status, and can hold multiple offices, Nakassis highlights that the prosopographical evidence confuses the clear administrative structures previously derived from official status.

The large appendix *A Prosopography of Mycenaean Pylos* (187–414) is a catalogue of every potential prosopographical identification from the Pylian Linear B tablets. Each item is categorized as certain, probable, possible or doubtful, and then discussed. One of the great virtues of this part consists in establishing the first treatise of several new Pylian words, e.g. *ti-re-wo* (F. Aura Jorro-A. Bernabé-E.R. Luján-C. Varias, *Suplemento al Diccionario Micénico*, currently in preparation). In this part, it would have been helpful to include a cross reference to the pages of chapters three

and four where the same named individuals are discussed. The book closes with a bibliography, index of subjects, and index of sources.

As a whole, the volume is a helpful and a significant work in the field of Mycenaean studies. In the complex issue of the prosopographical identification, this book has several merits, especially in the range of content and amount of data discussed. Nakassis' work will be an important reference point for scholars for years to come.

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