

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

### ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

HOPE SIMPSON (R.) **Mycenaean Messenia and the Kingdom of Pylos** (Prehistory Monographs 45). Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2014. Pp. xviii + 84, illus. £38. 9781931534758.

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This book aims to provide an updated reconstruction of the political geography of the Mycenaean kingdom of Pylos through an analysis of all the relevant archaeological and textual data. Its contribution consists of the attempt to identify the major settlements of the kingdom, as we know them from the Linear B tablets, with sites known from archaeological surveys and excavations. The argument is laid out in three chapters. The first reviews the history of archaeological work in Messenia with a focus on archaeological survey. The second is a register of known Mycenaean (i.e. Late Helladic) sites in Messenia in the form of a large table, accompanied by a text commentary. The third reviews the textual evidence for the kingdom's political geography and attempts to reconstruct the settlement structures of the Pylian kingdom.

At its core, this book is an up-to-date site gazetteer with attendant commentaries that discuss the relationships of the sites to their broader regions and propose identifications of archaeological sites to textually-attested toponyms. Most of these sites have been visited by Hope Simpson during his 20 years of experience in Messenia, much of it with the Minnesota Messenia Expedition. The argumentative centre of the book (56–69), which identifies archaeological sites with toponyms, is largely credible and the proposals are not radically different from those made by previous studies. There is the occasional lacuna: reference ought to have been made to Michael Boyd's useful catalogue (*Middle Helladic and Early Mycenaean Mortuary Practices in the Southern and Western Peloponnese*, Oxford 2002) and to the persuasive arguments made by Pascal Darque (*L'architecture domestique mycénienne*, Lille 1981, 32–33) that the site of Malthi Dorion was a major site in LH III. There is also the rare argumentative lapse. For instance, on the basis of

a Pylian taxation document (Ma 225), John Bennet made the convincing proposal that Leuktron, an important administrative centre in the Linear B texts, be identified with the site of Mouriatadha ('*re-u-ko-to-ro za-we-te*: Leuktron as a secondary capital in the Pylos kingdom?', *A-NA-QO-TA: Studies Presented to J.T. Killen*. Salamanca 2002, 11–30). This proposal is based on the insertion two words – the toponym Leuktron and the word for 'this year' (*za-we-te*) – between two lines of a tablet recording tax obligations for *pi*-\*82, a site located in northwestern Messenia. This juxtaposition of the toponyms suggests that the two sites were proximate. Hope Simpson objects that 'the purpose of the insertions is not clear' and suggests that they have nothing to do with the rest of the tablet's content (61). Earlier in the chapter he urges us not to 'be led astray by minor and controversial arguments over anomalies such as a few marginal or inter-linear additions by scribes' (55). Yet these arguments are neither minor nor controversial, and the purpose of the insertions is convincingly explained by Bennet: the first insertion modifies a deficit in last year's payment of taxes, while the second modifies a tax exemption; each of the items modified is recorded in the second line of the tablet immediately below the relevant insertion.

The goals of this monograph are fairly straightforward. Hope Simpson endeavours, successfully, to put the political geography of Pylos on a firmer footing. He has done us all a great favour by collecting the evidence and discussing it lucidly and in detail. This monograph is yet another achievement of a long and illustrious career that has shed much light on settlement in prehistoric Greece.

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