

Archaic State Interaction: The Eastern Mediterranean in the Bronze Age

Edited by William A. Parkinson and Michael L. Galaty, with contributions by John F. Cherry, Eric H. Cline, P. Nick Kardulias, Robert Schon, Susan Sherratt, Helena Tomas, and David Wengrow (School for Advanced Research Advanced Seminar Series). Pp. xii + 318, figs. 24, tables 2. School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe, N.M. 2009. \$34.95. ISBN 978-1-934691-20-5 (paper).

This volume presents the nine contributions to a seminar held in 2007 at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The editors brought together a diverse group of scholars from different backgrounds, working on Aegean civilizations and their neighbors during the Bronze Age. The aim was to refocus debate from state evolution to state interaction, and in particular to find a useful middle ground on the topic of world-systems theory, the theoretical approach most under discussion throughout the volume. The result is a fruitful step forward, not rejecting the theory out of hand but frankly articulating its limitations. The first chapter, by the two editors, is considerably aimed at readers with anthropological training, who will be familiar with the theoretical issues under consideration but need an introduction to the eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age data, terminology, and chronology. Chapter 2, a joint effort by all the participants, works the other way, orienting the reader in time and place and reviewing developments in the Aegean Bronze Age in the larger context of its regional and international interactions.

Kardulias (ch. 3) and Sherratt (ch. 4) are articulate advocates for a world-systems view. Kardulias reviews modifications to the original theory that resulted in the archaeologically more flexible and more useful formulation of world-systems analysis. Operating at multiple levels (internal, intermediate, and long distance), it allows one to analyze core-periphery developments within the Aegean and also to view the Aegean itself as peripheral to its powerful Egyptian and Near Eastern neighbors. In

this light, Kardulias looks at exchange relationships within second-millennium B.C.E. Crete and also at broader phenomena such as climate events in the late third millennium and widespread regime collapses ca. 1200–1100 B.C.E.

Sherratt reinforces this holistic view, using as an example the rise of Cretan palaces early in the second millennium B.C.E. Viewed in isolation, it is a puzzle, but Sherratt links it to the demand in Egypt for woolen textiles, which Crete was well suited to produce. They suggest the organizational demands of the industry and of getting its products into the hands of Levantine traders were the catalysts for palatial development.

As the editors discuss in chapter 1, however, the world-systems approach can be criticized both for the breadth of its brush and for the leaps of imagination it can inspire. Cherry (ch. 5) criticizes Sherratt's maximalist explanation on just such grounds. He gives a balanced assessment of internal and exogenous factors in Cretan state development. Given that a burst of external contact in Middle Minoan (MM) IA coincided with the start of a process that turned local leaders into kings and Crete into the core of a new Aegean world system, he acknowledges that outside forces played a role, but he resists giving them explanatory priority.

Wengrow (ch. 6) provides another object lesson in maximalist interpretation. The only participant who specializes in the archaeology of Egypt and the Middle East, he looks at the earliest Egyptian imports to Crete—scarabs and stone vases—by considering their meaning at their source. These objects are associated in

provincial (non-elite) Egyptian cemeteries with women's graves and with rituals centered on care and protection of the (female) body. He makes a provocative argument, necessarily from analogy, that their value in Crete, too, at least initially, was as part of social consumption rituals focused on women. While conceding that such associations may not have been retained in Crete, he offers this alternative to the conventional view that acquisitive elites in search of prestige goods drove the foreign contact that occurred in MM IA.

Cline (ch. 7) is a self-styled maximalist, but a firmly nontheoretical one. With this chapter, the focus shifts to the Late Bronze Age and to mainland Greece. Our knowledge of Aegean interactions with its eastern neighbors is thanks in good part to Cline's efforts in documenting foreign imports into the region, and he rightly says that the next step is to refine the chronology of such objects and their find contexts, looking at specific phases within the general view of Late Helladic (LH) IIIA–B contacts. He devotes part of the chapter to reviewing other types of evidence (or lack of it) for such contacts. He also renews his previous published criticisms of world-systems theory. It would have been good, however, to see the critique updated with reference to the work of the present conference.

Tomas (ch. 8) helpfully collects all the actual and potential evidence for Bronze Age contact between the Aegean and the eastern Adriatic. The chapter is anomalous in this volume, though, for apart from some signs of contact flowing from north to south at the end of the Aegean Early Bronze Age, no good evidence exists. Her application of world-systems theory here is therefore an academic exercise, leading to the conclusion that the eastern Adriatic lay beyond even the margins of a Mycenaean world system in the Late Bronze Age.

Schon (ch. 9) argues that Mycenaean elites used their access to a larger world system

internally to reify their power. In the Early Mycenaean period, imported luxury objects symbolized the status of an individual or kin group. Late Mycenaean palatial administrators imported raw materials and transformed them into prestige goods (though the claim that they did so to reinforce affiliations with secondary elites seems to me only a partial explanation), while luxury objects now reached a wider audience than before. The circulation of heirlooms in both periods is particularly interesting. Particularly apt is his point (227) that "power is a negotiated resource." As Kardulias discusses the role of more peripheral groups to negotiate their relationship with core states, so Schon brings individual agency into the Mycenaean equation. This is a good corrective to earlier views of a monolithic and all-powerful Mycenaean state.

Parkinson and Galaty are to be commended for both the idea of this conference and volume and for its execution. A heavier editorial hand might have avoided repetition from chapter to chapter, especially exposition of the same concepts, but comparison of the different attitudes are instructive. The good amount of interchapter reference is welcome, and factual errors are few and minor. The editors have worked hard to ensure a diversity of approaches and to contextualize these in ways useful to both anthropologists and ancient historians. The result is a substantive, largely jargon-free lesson in how theoretical models may be applied to data not usually viewed in this way. It will be a good teaching tool and a good bridge among disciplines.

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