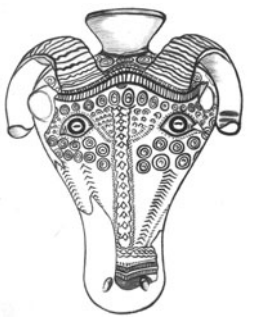
Review article

Interactions and -isations in the Aegean and beyond

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Barry P.C. Molloy (ed.). *Of odysseys and oddities: scales and modes of interaction between prehistoric Aegean societies and their neighbours*. 2016. vi+460 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-231-0 paperback £38.

Evi Gorogianni, Peter Pavúk & Luca Girella (ed.). *Beyond thalassocracies: understanding processes of Minoanisation and Mycenaeanisation in the Aegean*. 2016. x+224 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-203-7 hardback £45.



Connectivity in the ancient world has become a subject of such consuming interest in recent years that new publications on various aspects of the issue, pertaining to some area or period, appear with great regularity. Just in later European prehistory we have *Continental connections: exploring cross-channel relationships* (Anderson-Whymark *et al.* 2015), *Exchange networks and local transformations* (Alberti & Sabatini 2013) and *Enclosed space—open society* (Jaeger *et al.* 2012), to name but a few. One can hardly believe otherwise than that every part of the later prehistoric world was intimately involved, not only with its immediate neighbours but also with other areas near and far. Allied to this is the matter of colonialism and 'post-colonial' archaeology, with questions of hybridity, importation, local imitation and acculturation or adaptation; all these are things that loom large in these volumes and many others (e.g. Stockhammer 2012). The question of '-isations', such as 'Romanisation', has been a concern of archaeologists for many years; here it is '-isations' of the prehistoric Aegean world that are the focus of attention.

The two books under review both emanate from workshops; the volume edited by Barry Molloy (hereafter *Of odysseys and oddities*) from a Sheffield Aegean Round Table in 2013, and the volume edited by Evi Gorogianni, Peter Pavúk and Luca Girella (hereafter *Beyond thalassocracies*) from a workshop held during the 114th AIA meeting in Seattle, also in 2013. In each case, additional contributions were solicited to add to those of the speakers themselves.

As *Of odysseys and oddities* has 16 chapters and *Beyond thalassocracies* 13, it is impossible to devote attention to all the contributions. Even allowing for the fact that Molloy provides a general introduction to the *Of odysseys and oddities* volume that needs little discussion, and that *Beyond thalassocracies* offers a concluding overview by Carl Knappett, there is still more here than can reasonably be accorded adequate consideration; hence I will restrict myself to discussion of those chapters that seem to me most important, and to a consideration of some general issues.

The question of a Minoan 'thalassocracy' has been on the agenda for decades; I had to write an essay on it as an undergraduate in the 1960s, in which I read, *inter alia*, Furumark's (1950) classic study of the Ialysos pottery, and Buck's (1962) reconsideration of the question. Since then, many authors have engaged with the topic. The concept of a Cretan domination of the Aegean, as demonstrated by the presence of Minoan material culture (particularly pottery) outside Crete, led inevitably to a consideration of whether the pottery was imported, made by expatriate Cretans, imitated locally, part of an

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antiquity 91 355 (2017): 250–253 doi:10.15184/aqy.2016.231

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.231 Published online by Cambridge University Press

acculturation process, or something else. This has most recently, and fully, been the subject of a landmark article by Cyprian Broodbank (2004), drawing especially on the material from Kythera. The nature of the Minoan presence, or the status of the Cretan material, at Thera is also of critical importance; Minoanisation is considered here by several authors, including Maria Emanuela Alberti in *Of odysseys and oddities*. Much the same applies, this time in spades, to the question of 'Mycenaeanisation', as the quantities of Mycenaean pottery found beyond the Mycenaean core area are much greater. Every finder of such pottery outside southern and south-central Greece has had to engage with the debate: was it imported from the Argolid? Made locally? Does it demonstrate that Mycenaean Greeks were present? Or should we follow other scholars in believing that Mycenaean pottery is a cultural, not an ethnic, trait? Of course we can follow this discussion in many other arenas, for instance with the identification of the Philistines or the Phoenicians—not to speak of Iron Age peoples in Europe, or those of the Migration period. These have all formed the nucleus of discussions of migration, trade, culture contact and much more over the years. In an Aegean Bronze Age context, the characterisation studies led by Richard Jones and others (e.g. most recently Jones *et al.* 2014) have shed much light on the whole question, so that in many instances, importation can be ruled out—although the other explanations remain to be debated.

Here, the *Beyond thalassocracies* volume includes studies of material culture from a number of places around the Aegean where Minoan or Mycenaean material has been found: Luca Girella and Peter Pavúk on the north-eastern Aegean; Jana Mokrišová on south-west Anatolia; Amy Raymond *et al.* on Miletus; Salvatore Vitale on Kos; Jason Earle on Melos; Andreas Vlachopoulos on Naxos; Evi Gorogianni on Ayia Irini, Kea; and Bryan Feuer on Thessaly. All these authors engage with the question of how 'Minoan' or 'Mycenaean' particular levels or phases at their sites or areas were at different stages of the Middle and Late Bronze Age. Michael Galaty then sets out a detailed model for the process of Mycenaeanisation, bringing in his ethnographic studies in northern Albania, and then applying it to the different parts of the Aegean (as presented in the volume); while his "explanation" (p. 215) of Mycenaeanisation seems to boil down to little more than Mycenaean trading interest in particular areas, I found the model overall to be convincing and informative. Michael Boyd (in *Of odysseys and oddities*) also considers the nature of 'Mycenaeanness' with special reference to burials; as he notes, the situation was very varied across the Mycenaean world: adoption of burial practice occurred piecemeal in different areas, so that "Late Bronze Age identities were fractured and differentiating, as well as inclusive or widely resonant" (p. 403).

Another paper in *Beyond thalassocracies*, by Joanne Cutler, uses weaving technology to consider cultural similarities between different areas, with its bearing on dress style and weaves as indicators of identity, something considered 20 years ago by Marie Louise Sørensen (1997, not referenced here). An interesting feature linking this paper to that by Lorenz Rahmstorf in *Of odysseys and oddities* is the question of how the clay spools, found at many Aegean sites, were used. Cutler has no doubt that they were used in the weaving process, especially the large examples that could serve as loom-weights. Rahmstorf, on the other hand, repeats his argument, presented several times before, that the spools are balance weights, part of a widespread system of weights and measures that covered the whole of the East Mediterranean (something that Maria Emanuela Alberti also picks up in her chapter). Judit Haas-Lebegyev and Colin Renfrew (2013) interpreted the large number of spools from the ritual site on Dhaskalio as having varied functions, but not as balance weights; Rahmstorf goes into considerable detail to counter this opinion; he believes that they are SSPBW(!)—that is, to the uninitiated, 'spool-shaped potential balance weights'. It is not easy to decide the matter, as no explanation accounts for all the variability in the data set; they do not fit perfectly either as loom-weights or as balance weights. It may be mentioned in passing that such spools appear in other prehistoric areas and contexts; for instance, in the Baden culture; Tünde Horváth (2012) has considered a range of possible functions, including a use as pedestals in salt evaporation—which, however, seems unlikely. It is noticeable that Rahmstorf does not reference Horváth's work, nor other discussions of Bronze Age weighing systems, such as those by Renato Peroni (1998), Christopher Pare (1999, 2013) or Marisa Ruiz-Galvez (2000); the same is true for Alberti.

Another paper of wide application is that by Barry Molloy, a discussion of changes in metalwork in the centuries around 1200 BC. He considers what are often called 'Urnfield bronzes' because

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they appear first and most prolifically in Central Europe, but points out that such pieces, when they occur in Greece, are often slightly different from their supposed models, indicating a wide range of directions from which the cultural influences in question came; hence he considers that "entangled bronzes" (p. 348) would be a better term. His paper makes a number of useful observations, which add to the important metallurgical data presented by Reinhard Jung and Mathias Mehofer (e.g. 2008, 2013).

The paper by Dushka Urem-Kotsou in *Of odysseys and oddities* on the possibility that salt was a major item of exchange in the Neolithic Balkans caught my eye, as this is an area in which much recent work has been done, including by my colleague Valery Kavruk and myself (notably Harding & Kavruk 2013). Unfortunately, with the exception of the article in our volume by E. Bánffy (on which Urem-Kotsou draws extensively), other recent works must have appeared too late for her to include, and the most definite Balkan Neolithic evidence (from Moldavia) is not cited. The fact is that the reconstruction of a Neolithic salt trade must be based almost entirely on the situation derived from other materials, such as shells or obsidian (which she does consider), or from the presumption that large settlements in salt-less areas (e.g. the Tripillya zone) must have imported large quantities of salt.

All the authors, to a greater or lesser extent, relate their specific material to the wider issue of interaction and connectivity. Several mention Network Theory, although none engages with it; even Carl Knappett, who has led the field in this area, eschews any detailed consideration of it here. As it is still an emerging field, this is probably a wise decision. The evidence of connectedness in the later prehistoric Mediterranean is so prominent that enough can be said without it, although it promises much for the future.

The volumes are well produced, as one expects from this publisher; *Of odysseys and oddities* suffers somewhat from less-than-perfect correction of the English of the non-Anglophone authors. One may perhaps question the current fad for publishing conference proceedings. It is often the case, and particularly so here with *Of odysseys and oddities*, that little new information is provided in such volumes; the articles tend to be the authors' more or less distilled thoughts about particular issues. Given the amount of literature we all have to read, one wonders about the usefulness of such discursive pieces, especially when they reiterate material that is part of the tropes of current debate.

Nevertheless, both these volumes contain much of interest and, in spite of some minor drawbacks, will stimulate and interest readers from a range of archaeological subject areas.

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