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THE MYCENAEAN SEMINAR 2010-11

13 October 2010

STEP BY STEP: APPROACHING THE THRONE OF THE WANAX

ULRICH THALER

In a discussion of movement towards the *megara* of Mycenaean palaces, computer-aided configurational analysis of the palace of Pylos indicates that one effect of architectural changes within the 13th century was to direct official visitors towards the court fronting the main building from where they had to follow the canonical route to reach the *megaron*. Wall-paintings such as the processional scene in the *megaron*'s vestibule would have assisted the orientation along this route and new evidence suggests a similar role for a life-size procession scene at Tiryns, where configurational analysis indicates an even stronger focus on the canonical route which may bear witness to a more advanced mid-13th century design. For Pylos, study of perceptual thresholds resulting from different forms of surface treatment and thus changing sensory stimuli not only underscores the channelling towards the canonical route, but also provides evidence for a perceptual lengthening of the distance between visitor and ruler, an effect to which further elements, such as the sentry stands, would have added. Similar effects are suggested by, *e.g.*, carefully staged changes of direction in Tiryns, where furthermore the duplication of the propylon-court sequence resulted in an actual lengthening of the canonical route. This linear sequence of courts can also be linked to differentiations in rights of access, which have received much attention in recent years, *e.g.* in Lisa Bendall's study of the distribution of different qualities of drinking vessels used in Pylos during palatial feasts; the results of Bendall's work are largely paralleled in configurational analysis, while inter-cultural comparisons with, *e.g.*, the Hittites remind us that differential rights of access may have been in effect in everyday situations, too.

Among these characteristics of the approach to the *megaron*, the lengthening and indirectness of the route, as well as what Lucinda McCallum termed the use of wall-paintings as 'sign-posts', are also relevant to a discussion of movement within the *megaron*. This is clearly illustrated by wall-painting fragment 45 H 6 from the Pylian throne room, a processional depiction which suggests movement from the door to the left, *i.e.* away from the throne. This first indication of a clockwise circular sense of movement around the central hearth is not on its own conclusive, but is joined by others: from a position on the other side of the room, *i.e.* across the hearth from the throne, the ruler as well as the depiction of lion(s) and griffin(s) focused on the throne in Pylos not only become fully visible, but are also effectively and most likely meaningfully framed by the columns and the hearth. John Bennet rightly suggested that those throne wall paintings were incomplete without the enthroned

ruler; to this should be added that the architectural framework and varied connotations, e.g. with the hearth-wanax ideology, formed part of the same *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In Mycenae, it is the opposite side of the room including the wall-section directly to the left of the door for which we have evidence for wall-paintings, but here again Gerhart Rodenwaldt's reconstruction of a sequence of scenes from preparation in camp to a pitched battle is strongly suggestive of clockwise movement. The orientation of floor-paintings in both Pylos and Tiryns mirrors the significance of the cross-axis of the throne rooms, too. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that the position across the hearth from the throne was the point from which visitors formally greeted and entered into interaction with the enthroned ruler. Presumably a large number of them would have turned back afterwards, with rights of access further differentiated even within the throne room itself. The exclusive circle of those who could further approach the throne most likely continued towards it in a clockwise movement, but with this putative exclusivity comes lower archaeological visibility. Still, the offering table and libation installation in the megaron at Pylos may represent final steps on the way to the throne of the wanax.

10 November 2010

LATE MYCENAEAN THEBES: THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY AND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE KADMEIA AT THE END OF LHIIIb

MARIA EMANUELA ALBERTI

The international project *Mycenaean Textiles. Texts and Contexts: The Evidence from the Kadmeia of Thebes* started in 2006 as a collaboration between the IX Ephorate for Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (Θ' Εφορεία Π.Κ.Α.) of Thebes and the Center for Textile Research of Copenhagen, and supported by CNRS (Nanterre), the University of Udine, and the ICEVO-CNR, Rome.¹ The overall aim was to sketch a general picture of the organization of textile production in Mycenaean Thebes (Kadmeia), combining both textual and archaeological evidence. The first results were published in the proceedings of the *Kosmos* conference (edited by R. Laffineur and M.-L. Nosch) and are forthcoming in the volume *Tools, Textiles and Contexts* (edited by E. Andersson and M.-L. Nosch).

The work involved the study of textile tools and the re-examination of the general archaeological data from a series of building complexes excavated in the town of Thebes, dated mainly to the LHIIIb2 period (the plots called Soteriou Dougekou 1970-71, Loukou 1980, Pavloyiannopoulou 1963-64 and 1994-95, Pelopidou street 1993-95, Christodoulou 1983 and Stamatis 1983-84 and Kofini 2005). The material assemblages from these plots suggest that these architectural units were all dedicated to utilitarian activities, with tools of various kinds, including textile tools, and one or more bath tubs positioned on the floor. Some of these units yielded also traces of administration (Linear B tablets, inscribed nodules, seals and sealings) and/or craft activity, especially ivory working, and were possibly used as storage area for craft products (bronzes, ivories, pottery), raw material

¹ The bulk of the work was funded by: an INSTAP Research Grant (2007-10), a Greek Government scholarship (2007-08), the Michael Ventris Memorial Award (2009) and a grant from the Mediterranean Archaeological Trust (2010).

(wool) or agricultural products. In addition, a review of the Thebes Linear B texts related to textiles has been carried out by M. Del Frio and F. Rougemont (see also the recent analysis by M.-L. Nosch).

Research on production and more broad economic activities in Thebes has been recently improved especially thanks to the work of V. Aravantinos and A. Dakouri-Hild, who underlined the existence of a large and widespread archaeological evidence for the production of stone, ivory, bone, glass and small metal artefacts (mostly gold). Until the present study, however, the evidence for textile industry was poor. The distribution of textile tools suggests that textile production was quite a diffuse craft in Late Mycenaean Thebes: the artefacts have been found in small amounts in each examined plot and in almost every phase of use, pointing to a small- or medium- scale activity in each structure. Spinning (i.e. spindle-whorls) is the most attested activity, but also weaving (i.e. loom-weights) is documented. Bone pointed objects, possible 'weavers' points' and needles, complete the picture. As illustrated in the CTR Technical Report, in most cases a concentration of spindle-whorls masses on light values points to a specialized production of thin thread types. The same is true for the recorded loom-weights, which could fit well the usage of fine threads for the production of light fabrics on an open warp.

Based on both previous research and the results of the new programme, it seems that during the late palatial Mycenaean phase in Thebes (i.e. LH IIIb2) there were many organizational units, dispersed throughout the town. In these areas, many activities took place side by side (i.e. high-quality ivory and stone working, specialized weaving and large- or medium-sized storage). By piecing together the main characteristics of the examined contexts, some interesting associations appear, suggesting a hypothetical more or less standardized differentiation amongst various types of units, which coped in different ways with the key activities of record keeping, storing and craft working and were possibly related to a general hierarchical framework, from the more complex and 'central' ones to the smallest ones, that were less involved in the administrative activities. As far as the textile industry is concerned, the parallel administrative and archaeological evidence for a decentralized and somehow complex organization of the textile production should be stressed.

8 December

TEXTILE TOWNS ON CRETE 3500 YEARS AGO: UNRAVELLING NEW EVIDENCE FOR DOMESTIC TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EAST CRETE

THOMAS M. BROGAN

The title and subject of this seminar were inspired by Peter Warren's excavations at EM II Myrtos Fournou Korifi and the evidence recovered there for domestic textile production.² These mantinades by Matina Papadaki and the speaker were delivered on the occasion.

² Ed. note: this special meeting of the seminar preceded the presentation and launch of *Cretan Offerings: Studies in Honour of Peter Warren*. BSA Studies 18 (ed. O. Krzyszkowska).