

# CRETAN STUDIES

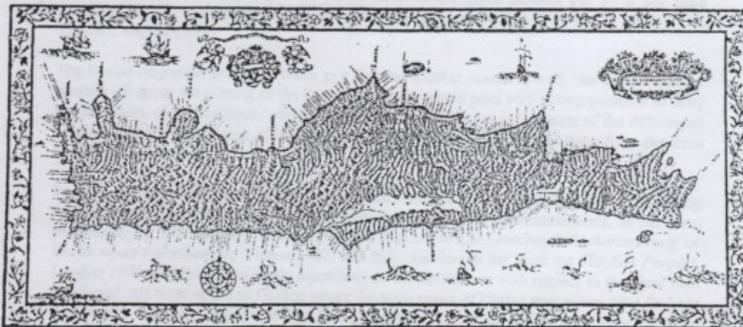
PETER G. VAN SOESBERGEN

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VOL. 8



ADOLF M. HAKKERT - PUBLISHER - AMSTERDAM

2003

Peter G. van Soesbergen, *The Dorian Question*, *Cretan Studies* Vol. 8, 2003, pp. 185-187.

# THE DORIAN QUESTION

*In memoriam Dolf Hakkert*

## Methodology.

I should like to make some general points of methodology with respect to research on the Dorians. For the Dorian migration(s) there are three strands of evidence: linguistic, literary and archaeological. Of these the archaeological evidence is the weakest, since pots (unless inscribed) cannot tell which language or dialect their users used.

It is not always easy to combine or compare linguistic, literary and archaeological sources, because they are basically of a different order. And for these reasons it is understandable that some people might even refrain from using any archaeological evidence with respect to migrations. But in that case nothing could be said, for instance, on the arrival of the Greeks either, for the evidence would primarily be archaeological.

In fact we are in a much more favourable position in the case of the Dorian migration, because here at least we have a firm *terminus post quem*, namely the time of the Mycenaean tablets. In this respect I regard the evidence as conclusive. There is no proof that two dialects were simultaneously in use at all Mycenaean centres and there is no trace of a 'Proto-Doric' dialect in the Linear B texts as I have shown in my article 'The coming of the Dorians', *Kadmos* 20.1 (1981), 38-51, and in my paper 'Il valore fonetico dei segni micenei per z- ai fini della questione dorica', in *Le origini dei Greci: Dori e mondo egeo*, a cura di D. Musti, Rome 1985, 323-327, and 365-368.

The Dorian migration should be taken as a fact for another reason as well: the ancient literary sources tell about the coming of the Dorians, and one would need very strong evidence to deny the historicity of this tradition, which has provided a satisfactory explanation of the differences between and the distribution of the groups of Greek dialects as we know them from the sixth to the fourth century B.C..

I see no cogent reason why one should postulate bands of Sea Peoples on Greek soil as being responsible for the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces and other settlements, as has been proposed by F. Schachermeyr in the first seven chapters of *Die Griechische Rückerinnerung im Lichte neuer Forschungen*, Vienna 1983, and N.K. Sandars in her book on *The Sea Peoples*, London 1978. Sea Peoples are only mentioned in written sources with respect to the Near East and Egypt, not with regard to Greece where the texts speak of Dorian migrations. Nor do I see any reason why the coming of the Dorians should be placed much later than the date mentioned by Thucydides (I, 12), 'eighty years after the Trojan war', which I consider pretty close to the archaeological date of the destruction of the Mycenaean centres, about 1200-1180 B.C., provided that one takes Wilhelm Dörpfeld's Troy VI once again as Homer's Troy as was convincingly argued by Michael Wood, *In search of the Trojan war*, London 1985.

## The archaeological evidence.

The archaeological records reveal total or partial destruction, and sometimes abandonment, of Late Helladic IIIB settlements throughout the central and southern mainland of Greece, which might well be regarded as proof of invasion, were it not for the alleged absence of evidence of new artefacts that could be ascribed to the newcomers. V.R.d'A. Desborough, 'The end of Mycenaean civilization and the Dark Age', *Cambridge Ancient History* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) 1975, Vol. II, Part 2, Chap. 36(a), 660-662, has claimed that only two artefacts were introduced about this time - the cut-and-thrust sword (Naue II type) and the violin-bow fibula; the context of both, however, show that they were used by Mycenaeans and not invaders. A.M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece*, Edinburgh 1971, 304, 311-312, has argued likewise.

P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Laconia*, London 1979, 79, has offered an ironic description: "It has of late become an acknowledged scandal that the Dorians, archaeologically speaking, do not exist. That is, there is no cultural trait surviving in the material record for the two centuries or so after 1200 which can be regarded as a peculiarly Dorian hallmark. Robbed of their patents for Geometric pottery, cremation burial, iron-working and, unkindest prick of all, the humble straight pin, the hapless Dorians stand naked before their creator - or, some would say, inventor. For, it is argued, if they cannot be identified archaeologically, this is because they had been in the Peloponnese all the time - or at least for a considerable time before 1200."

B.G. Trigger, *Beyond history*, New York 1968, 43, has coined the phrase 'archaeologically invisible migrations', in which newly arrived populations leave no evidence other than 'signs of war, cultural decline, and fairly rapid cultural change', and in my article in *Kadmos* (see above), 39-40, I have mentioned some historical parallels for migrations that are well documented, but have left virtually no visible traces of new artefacts: the Slav penetration of the Peloponnese from the end of the sixth century A.D. onwards, and the settlement of Celtic tribes in Asia Minor in the third century B.C.. One must keep in mind that the survival of older elements following signs of discontinuity (such as extensive destruction of settlements) does not necessarily mean that the composition of the population remained unchanged, but may reasonably be taken to indicate that the previous population was not entirely wiped out. One should actually not even expect to find artefacts that can easily be ascribed to newcomers arriving in an area with a higher level of civilization. The Kassites in Babylon would not easily have been recognized, archaeologically speaking, if they had not been known from the literary sources.

It is clear that a vast majority of pots dated in Late Helladic IIIC consists of wheel made ware with forms and decoration continuing Mycenaean traditions. But it may be useful to draw attention to a category of primitive-looking handmade pottery with a surface often burnished and tending to be red or dark in colour, which has been in use in some parts of the Peloponnese from the beginning of LH IIIC, discovered at Mycenae, Tiryns, Lefkandi and the Menelaion near Sparta, and in LH IIIC burials in Kephallenia. This ware, which has been coined 'northern' or 'barbaric', has at most places been found in association with much larger quantities of Mycenaean LH IIIC style pottery made on the fast wheel.

However, M.S.F. Hood, 'Northern 'barbaric' elements in early Greek civilization, c. 1200-500 B.C.', *Concilium EIRENE XVI*, Vol. 3 (ed. P. Oliva and A. Frolíková), Prague 1983, 98-103, has drawn attention to the well preserved stratigraphy at Aegira in eastern Achaia. The lowest occupation level of this settlement on virgin ground only produced pottery of this primitive handmade type; in the level above, the handmade ware was found with wheelmade pots assignable to an early phase of LH IIIC, and it disappeared in the succeeding LH IIIC level (cf. S. Deger-Jalkotzy, *Fremde Zuwanderer im Spätmykenischen Griechenland*, Vienna 1977).

In other words, the history of the settlement is told by its stratigraphy: first the new inhabitants of Aegira settled on virgin ground and started to make the primitive ware which they had brought from the north. But in due time the newcomers adapted their products to the taste of their neighbours who had preserved the Mycenaean pottery traditions, and eventually the primitive ware totally disappeared.

Unfortunately, as mentioned before, the pots cannot tell which language and dialect their users used; they only provide a firm link with the north. It is tempting to assume that the Dorians introduced the 'northern' handmade ware into the Peloponnese, as we know that the Doric dialects were closest to those from North-West Greece. It is exactly this area from which came the Dorians, according to Herodotus (I, 56, 3).

If one insists that it is illegitimate to propose any hypotheses with regard to migrations on the basis of archaeological evidence, archaeology would be reduced to a discipline which is primarily descriptive, unable to explain provenance or to aid an historical interpretation.

### **The Mycenaean tablets and history.**

The hypothesis that the rulers of the Mycenaean palace of Pylos expected an attack from oversea might well be justified. It has been suggested that the archives at Pylos may contain indications of a state of emergency preceding the disaster that caused the actual destruction of the palace. One may assume that the tablets found in the palace of Pylos date from the very year of destruction, since they contain the annual reports of that very last year which were only baked and preserved by the fire that destroyed the palace.

The 'rowers' tablets, found at Pylos, for instance PY An 1.1: *e-re-ta pe-re-u-ro-na-de / i-jo-te* = *eretai Pleuronade iontes* 'the rowers going to Pleuron' (*Docs.* 184-185) may well reflect the rulers' reaction to a threat from the north: they sent rowers from several coastal places to Pleuron on the Aetolian coast, a place that was already associated with Aetolians in Homer's *Iliad* (B 638-640). Is it merely a matter of coincidence that in the description of events in our literary sources the Dorians crossed the sea from Naupaktos and/or Molykreion to Rhion with the Aetolian Oxylos as their ally and guide (Strabo, *Geog.*, VIII, 3, 33; cf. *ibidem* IX, 4, 7-8; Apollodoros II, 8, 2-4; Pausanias V, 3, 5- V, 4, 1; VIII, 5, 6; Polyaeus I, 9) ?