Mycenaean Messenia and the Kingdom of Pylos

PREHISTORY MONOGRAPHS 45

Mycenaean Messenia and the Kingdom of Pylos

by

Richard Hope Simpson



Published by
INSTAP Academic Press
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
2017

Design and Production
INSTAP Academic Press, Philadelphia, PA

ISBN 978-1-931534-75-8 (hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-931534-92-5 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-623033-51-4 (ebook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Simpson, R. Hope.
Mycenaean Messenia and the kingdom of Pylos / by Richard Hope Simpson.
pages cm. – (Prehistory monographs ; 45)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-931534-75-8 (hardcover ; alkaline paper)
1. Messenia (Greece)–Antiquities. 2. Civilization, Mycenaean. 3. Pylos (Greece)–Antiquities. 4. Excavations (Archaeology)–Greece–Messenia. 5. Excavations (Archaeology)–Greece–Pylos. 6. Human geography–Greece–Pylos–History–To 1975. 7. Pylos (Greece)–Politics and government. 8. Pylos (Greece)–Geography. I. Title.
DF261.M45S56 2013
938'.9–dc23

2013041018

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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Printed in the United States of America

Dedicated to my wife,
Waveney Jennifer Hope Simpson

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Preface and Acknowledgments

I was introduced to the study of Prehistoric Greece by Dorothea Gray, my tutor from 1954 to 1955 for the Diploma in Classical Archaeology at Oxford. From 1956 to 1958, as School Student of the British School at Athens, I continued the survey of Prehistoric Laconia, begun by Lady Helen Waterhouse (née Thomas) from 1936 to 1938. I have traveled throughout the Peloponnese, central Greece, and the islands, mainly during the years 1956–1979. In 1958, together with Dorothea Gray and my wife Jennifer, I spent five weeks in central Greece, both visiting known prehistoric sites and discovering "new" sites. In 1958 and 1959, my wife and I examined many sites in the Peloponnese, with the same objectives and some further positive results. From spring 1958 to summer 1961, I collaborated with John Lazenby in the investigation of the topography of Mycenaean Greece in relation to the Homeric Catalogue of the Ships (the subject of my Ph.D. thesis for the University of London in 1962 and of our subsequent book). In 1960 we also began an extensive survey of the Dodecanese islands, which was completed in 1970.

My interest in Messenia began in 1957, with an initial exploration of the sites around the Messenian Gulf, particularly in the northern Mani, in an attempt to identify the Seven Cities offered by Agamemnon to Achilles in the *Iliad*. In autumn 1958, William A. McDonald kindly agreed to accept me as his collaborator in the survey he had begun in Messenia. This survey had been inspired both by the discovery of the Palace of Nestor at Pylos and its inscriptions in the Linear B script by Carl Blegen and his team (including McDonald), and by the decipherment of the script by Michael Ventris. Our collaboration began in spring 1959 with the investigation of selected areas, mainly in the Pylos district, and was specifically aimed at the discovery of prehistoric sites, especially the Mycenaean ones (*Messenia* I). In 1962 the size and scope of the venture was expanded to include work by specialists in other disciplines (mainly earth sciences), mostly from the staff of the University of Minnesota. From these beginnings the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition (UMME) was formed (*Messenia* II; cf. Ch. 1, below).

In this present study, however, I return to one of the main original objectives of our survey, namely the quest for the locations of the place names recorded in the Linear B inscriptions found in the Palace of Nestor. For this inquiry the main sources of evidence are the data concerning the Mycenaean settlements in the region and the contents of the inscriptions themselves. I have here attempted (as have many other scholars) to assess and to correlate these two sources of evidence, in order to identify the locations of the main districts named in the Pylos inscriptions. The conclusions I have drawn are not only in accord with John Chadwick's theories, but they are also consistent with recent archaeological discoveries in Messenia, in particular the excavations at Traganes by the Iklaina Archaeological Project (IKAP) under Michael B. Cosmopoulos, and the putative cothon harbor at Romanou discovered by the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project (PRAP), together with the evidence, revealed by their intensive surface survey, for an exceptionally large (and contemporary) "Lower Town" around the Palace of Nestor. It has, however, proved impossible for me, as a layman, to take into account all of the very many relevant publications by experts in Linear B studies. I am obliged to the two anonymous reviewers, who have kindly supplied references to some of the more recent literature.

I am indebted to many colleagues and others for assistance or encouragement at various stages of my research in Greece, and particularly to Bill McDonald and to all my other fellow workers in the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition and the Nichoria excavations (the latter are named in *Nichoria* I, xxvii–xxviii). I thank especially the following: Stanley E. Aschenbrenner, Paul Åström, John Bennet, Philip P. Betancourt, Duane Bingham, Carl W. Blegen, Bryan Carlson, Hector W. Catling, John Chadwick, John F. Cherry, William D.E. Coulson, Michael B. Cosmopoulos, Jack L. Davis, Oliver T.P.K. Dickinson, Jesse E. Fant, John M. Fossey, David H. French, Dorothea H.F. Gray, Dietmar K. Hagel, W. Jennifer Hope Simpson, Roger J. Howell, Helen Hughes-Brock, Zhichun Jing, Jost Knauss, George S. Korres, John F. Lazenby and Elizabeth Lazenby, Yannos G. Lolos, William G. Loy, Frederick E. Lukermann, Suzanne Martin, Frederick R. Matson, William A. McDonald, Christopher B. Mee, Jennifer Moody, Penelope A. Mountjoy, Robert Noyes, Thomas G. Palaima, George R. Rapp, Joseph W. Shaw and Maria Shaw, C. Thomas Shay and Jennifer M. Shay, Cynthia W. Shelmerdine, Richard A. Tomlinson, Peter Topping, Alan J.B. Wace, Kenneth A. Wardle, Peter M. Warren, Lady Helen Waterhouse, L. Vance Watrous, Veronica E.S. Webb, Malcolm H. Wiener, Nancy C. Wilkie, Frederick E. Winter, Herbert E. Wright, Nikolaos Yalouris, and Eberhard Zangger. I thank also the anonymous reviewers, some of whose suggestions I have been able to incorporate.

Financial support was provided by the British School of Athens, the University of Oxford Craven Fund, the University of London Institute of Classical Studies, the University of Birmingham, the Michael Ventris Memorial Fund, the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, Queen's University Research Fund, and the University of Minnesota.

The maps were drawn by Jennifer Grek Martin; the plates were arranged by Gregory McQuat. Preparation of the illustrations was supervised by Gerald Barber of the Department of Geography, Queen's University at Kingston. I am most grateful also to Terry M. Smith, the administrative assistant of the Department of Classics, and to Erin Gunsinger, the secretary, for special assistance, and to Sharon Mohammed in the Department of Geography, for typing my manuscript. I am deeply indebted to Philip Betancourt, for all his help with the publication, and to Susan Ferrence and Sarah Peterson of the INSTAP Academic Press for their guidance and supervision. My manuscript was essentially completed in early 2010, but other commitments, together with my age and physical condition, have delayed its production.

List of Abbreviations

References

AR — *Archaeological Reports* (supplement to *JHS*)

Docs[2] — Ventris, M., and J. Chadwick. 1973. *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2nd ed., Cambridge.

GAC — Hope Simpson, R., and O.T.P.K. Dickinson. 1979. *A Gazetteer of Aegean Civilisation in the Bronze Age*, Vol. 1: *The Mainland and Islands* (*SIMA* 52), Göteborg.

Messenia I — McDonald, W.A., and R. Hope Simpson. 1961. "Prehistoric Habitation in Southwestern Peloponnese," *AJA* 65, pp. 221–260.

Messenia II — McDonald, W.A., and R. Hope Simpson. 1964. "Further Exploration in Southwestern Peloponnese: 1962–1963," *AJA* 68, pp. 229–245.

Messenia III — McDonald, W.A., and R. Hope Simpson. 1969. "Further Explorations in Southwestern Peloponnese: 1964–1968," *AJA* 73, pp. 123–177.

MG — Hope Simpson, R. 1981. *Mycenaean Greece*, Park Ridge, NJ.

MME — McDonald, W.A., and G.R. Rapp, eds. 1972. *The Minnesota Messenia Expedition: Reconstructing a Bronze Age Regional Environment*, Minneapolis.

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Nichoria II — McDonald, W.A., and N.C. Wilkie, eds. 1992. *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece* II: *The Bronze Age Occupation*, Minneapolis.

Nichoria III — McDonald, W.A., W.D.E. Coulson, and J. Rosser, eds. 1983. *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece* III: *Dark Age and Byzantine Occupation*, Minneapolis.

Archaeological Periods

A	Archaic
BA	Bronze Age
C	Classical
DA	Dark Age
EH	Early Helladic
EIA	Early Iron Age
G	Geometric
H	Hellenistic
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LH	Late Helladic (Mycenaean)
M	Medieval
MH	Middle Helladic
N	Neolithic
R	Roman

Measurements

ca.	approximately
diam.	diameter
ha	hectare (10,000 m^2)
km	kilometer
m	meter

Register of Mycenaean Sites in Messenia (Table 2)

CEM	Mycenaean grave(s), cemetery
ChT	Mycenaean chamber tomb(s)
HAB	Mycenaean settlement
tholos (tholoi)	Mycenaean tholos tomb(s)

Miscellaneous

EAY	Greek Archaeological Service (Elliniki Archaiologiki Yperesia)
FP	Further Province
GPS	Global Positioning System
HP	Hither Province
IKAP	Iklaina Archaeological Project
MARWP	Minnesota Archaeological Research in the Western Peloponnese
PRAP	Pylos Regional Archaeological Project
UMME	University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition