

***A Greek State in Formation: The Origins of Civilization in Mycenaean Pylos.* Jack L. Davis, with contributions by Sharon R. Stocker. 2022. University of California Press, Oakland. xxiv + 127 pp. \$34.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-52038-724-9. Open access (e-book), ISBN 978-0-520-38725-6, <https://luminosa.org/site/books/m/10.1525/luminos.121/>.**

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This compact book on Mycenaean Pylos arises from the author's stint as Sather Professor in the Department of Ancient Greek and Roman Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Jack L. Davis takes the opportunity offered by the format of a lecture series to present an autobiographical account, leading us on a personal journey that takes in his childhood in rural Ohio, his early fieldwork on Aegean surveys, his academic career at the University of Cincinnati, and his most recent excavations at Pylos. Carefully woven into this journey are the various methods that Davis and his team have employed and that have characterized successive phases of Aegean archaeology over the past five decades. These range from the historiographical focus that has urged critical reflection on the discipline's colonial roots within the context of Greece as an emerging nation-state (Chapter 1), the growth of intensive survey as a means to understand ancient settlement patterns (Chapter 2), the turn to post-Classical evidence from Ottoman texts to provide analogies for prehistoric land use (Chapter 3), the role of legacy data from old excavations and how they can be retrieved and put into play (Chapter 4), skeletal analysis and what isotopic evidence can say about social relations and economic inequality (Chapter 5), to the evaluation of tomb assemblages and how we can read their artifacts and artworks as signs of cultural identity (Chapter 6).

Although this methodological focus is front and center, there is also an historical angle, as conveyed in the book's subtitle, *The Origins of Civilization in Mycenaean Pylos*. What the author offers is a perspective on the Early Mycenaean period (ca. 1600–1400 BC) through a microhistory focused on one site, Pylos. The site is intimately tied to Carl Blegen, its first excavator, and Davis reveals Blegen's political commitment to the idea of modern Greece having its roots in Mycenaean culture. But once overtly nationalistic agendas are put aside, how are we to justify a search for origins? Davis feels that the answer is straightforward for anthropological archaeologists: the massive amounts of high-quality data produced in Greek archaeology offer a unique opportunity for studying how early states formed. However, he goes to greater lengths to convince classicists of the merit of seeking out prehistoric origins. Not unlike Blegen, for Davis, the key is historical continuity, although now shown through evidence rather than argued for political ends; the Archaic and Classical city-states of the first millennium BC had Mycenaean foundations. And with this emphasis on evidence, we learn in Chapter 2 how intensive regional survey has revealed signs of both population growth and a multitiered pattern of settlement in Messenia at the end of the Middle Helladic period (ca. 1600 BC), presaging the later emergence of the palatial centers. Chapter 3 is still about settlement, but it shifts to an interpretation of the new settlement pattern, based in analogy from the Ottoman period, that envisages a sharecropping system devised by elites to extract wealth and establish power. Chapter 4 zooms in on the Palace of Nestor, the palatial center at Pylos first excavated by Blegen. Although the methodological focus is on legacy data, in historical terms, Davis highlights the evidence for palatial developments in the Early Mycenaean period, with fortifications, ashlar buildings, and painted plaster already present on the acropolis. Chapter 5 turns to the new burial evidence from Pylos—the remarkable grave of the Griffin Warrior and tholos tombs recently excavated by Davis and his team. With such wealthy tombs in use contemporaneously, Davis asks if they point to competing lineages or factions during the Early Mycenaean period. These burials contained young adults, both male and female, and

dental evidence suggests that males may have had more protein in their diet, possibly from meat consumed in feasting. Chapter 6 draws further on the burials but focuses more fully on the material culture—particularly with the grave of the Griffin Warrior containing so many astonishing artworks of Cretan origin. Davis uses these finds, not least the striking sun symbol in the iconography of a seal found in the tomb and on the warrior’s breastplate, to put a new spin on the topic of Minoanization—the deep influence Minoan Crete held over the rest of the Aegean at this time. He sees the religious symbolism in the tomb as an indication that Cretan belief systems had already been adopted by Pylian elites in the Early Mycenaean period. Davis ends with a short epilogue to pull together the various lines of evidence organized according to Colin Renfrew’s subsystems: population and settlement, subsistence, craft production, social systems, projective systems, and trade and communications.

The way in which methods are introduced through the author’s personal experiences makes for an absorbing narrative that will appeal to the interested amateur; this audience is clearly anticipated, given the useful introductions to the Aegean Bronze Age and the Palace of Nestor in the preface, and the approachable style with light referencing. I can see the volume also being useful to students of the Aegean Bronze Age, particularly in the way it highlights the shifting and contingent pathways of discovery in the practice of archaeology. The book has every chance of reaching a broad readership thanks to its availability through the Luminosa Open Access publishing program. For this reviewer, it is the promise of more to come on Early Mycenaean society that whets the appetite, particularly from this perspective that speaks to both questions of state formation and historical continuity and change from the second to first millennia BC.

doi:10.1017/aaq.2023.26

***English Landscapes and Identities: Investigating Landscape Change from 1500 BC to AD 1086.* Chris Gosden, Chris Green, Anwen Cooper, Miranda Creswell, Victoria Donnelly, Tyler Franconi, Roger Glyde, Zena Kamash, Sarah Mallet, Laura Morley, Daniel Stansbie, and Letty ten Harkel. 2021. Oxford University Press, Oxford. xxiv + 470 pp. \$110.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-19-887062-3.**

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This book’s aim is to provide a new long-term history of the English landscape, to be a modern version of William G. Hoskins’s *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) from the perspective of archaeology, recognizing prehistoric origins to medieval land use. It covers 2,500 years from the Middle Bronze Age origins of England’s field systems (around 1500 BC) through the publication of the Domesday Book in AD 1086. A large team, applying a long-term approach to the study of “big data” in archaeology (through 2013), asks what total data analysis can reveal. An ambitious project, the book is the outcome of a decade of work devoted to developing a fresh perspective on the history of the English landscape. So, does it succeed?

The introduction provides historical grounding in the development since 1900 of archaeological knowledge and heritage protection and management around an ever-expanding resource. In prehistoric studies, “big data” projects originated in northern Britain, increasing over time to 6,000 sites. By comparison, this project has 900,000 data records. Chapter 2 discusses data decisions. Accessible