

which the sites belong. But relatively few papers are concerned with interconnections or take wide views; most are concerned with internal processes rather than external links. Some deal with special types of artefact whose distribution spans a wide geographical range of cultural contexts, but the underlying picture of likely cross-cultural contacts is not as much discussed as one might hope. One cannot help wondering whether the discussions that followed the papers might have been illuminating sometimes. It would be interesting to know how Anatolian archaeologists took to Georgieva's suggestion that a migrant population from Bulgaria stimulated further development in Anatolian metallurgy (p. 103), for instance, or what reaction there was to Aslanis's hypothesis that the major farming settlements of mainland Greece were abandoned because of climate change, their populations moved into the hills, and 'the economy switched over to pastoralism' (pp. 28–9).

Almost all papers give detailed and readily intelligible accounts of their material and are illustrated with useful selections of photos and drawings, not only of pottery but of metalwork, figurines and other notable finds. The general papers in the first section (Renfrew; Kotsakis; Parkinson, Ridge and Gyucha; Aslanis; Coleman and Facorellis; Mina) all deserve attention, despite critical comments above. Others that seem particularly informative and/or most likely to excite some general interest, apart from that on Strofilas already mentioned, concern: the Chalcolithic site at Varhari in the Rhodope Mountains of south Bulgaria, a single-period specialist production centre of scrapers, beads and figurines in many kinds of stone (Boyadzhiev and Boyadzhiev); the latest Chalcolithic phase at Tell Yunastite, a burnt settlement site further north in Bulgaria, in which house contents including many bodies were found on the floors (Matsanova and Mishina; this site produced a remarkable series of 'cult tables', discussed by Terzijska-Ignatova); relative and absolute chronology between the Aegean and the Black Sea in the fifth millennium, with particular attention to the widespread development of graphite-painted ware (Reingruber); the role of the Theopetra cave in western Thessaly (probably ritual) at the end of the Neolithic (Kyparissi-Apostolika); the evidence of transitions in Boeotia from the earlier Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age (Bintliff and Sarri); the different patterns of development in parts of the Peloponnese between Late Neolithic and Early Helladic I (Pullen); the Early Helladic I cemetery of rock-cut chamber tombs at Kalyvia in Elis (Rambach), a considerable extension of our knowledge of Early Helladic burial customs; settlement pattern and social organisation in Crete c. 3700–3000 BC (Nowicki); the tell site of Çukuriçi Höyük on the central West Anatolian coast,

which has remarkable evidence for long-distance connections and specialised craftwork in the fifth millennium and again in the Early Bronze Age (Horejs and Schwall); and two marble conical 'rhyta' (a type with a long history and very wide distribution in the area covered by the book) of a new 'transitional' form from Yeşiltepe, a site well inland in western Anatolia (Takaoğlu and Bamyacı). Also, Alram-Stern's paper concerning the material of Visviki Magoula, close to Dhimini in Thessaly, which includes an elaborate 'megaron'-like house plan but mainly pottery that covers the transition from the Arapi to the Dhimini phase (so rather earlier than the period of the book), should not go unmentioned, because it has some particularly fine drawings of elaborately painted pottery, a reminder of how sophisticated pottery of the Greek Neolithic could be.

The general impression given by this book is that the Aegean was not influenced strongly by neighbours to north and east in this period of transition, as it had been in earlier Neolithic phases – unless one accepts Coleman's hypothesis concerning the 'arrival of the Greeks', about which the reviewer feels very wary – still less that it exercised any appreciable influence in those directions. But the example of Strofilas, once again, should warn us that at any moment a new find may radically affect our ideas about this interesting period.

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**R. Angus K. Smith, Mary K. Dabney, Evangelia Pappi, Sevasti Triantaphyllou and James C. Wright. *Ayia Sotira. A Mycenaean chamber tomb cemetery in the Nemea Valley, Greece. (Prehistoric Monographs 33). pp. xxviii+202, 54 pls.+139 b/w text figures, 62 tables. 2017. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press. ISBN hardback 978–1–93143–490–1, ebook 978–1–62303–420–7 hardback \$80.00***

This volume publishes a group of 6 chamber tombs excavated at the south end of the Nemea valley, not much more than a kilometre to the north-west of the settlement of Tsoungiza, which itself lies a similar distance slightly to the north-west of the historical Sanctuary of Zeus, site of one of the four

regular festivals of Panhellenic athletic contests. Tsoungiza was a long-lived settlement, originally founded in the Early Bronze Age but abandoned for much of the Middle Bronze Age and only resettled in the phase in which the foundations of Mycenaean civilisation were being laid. It was never a very large or important settlement (at its largest it consisted of at least ten structures, probably not many more), yet not only these tombs but a single one at the site of Barnavos, very close to Tsoungiza on the west, are likely to have been used by some of its inhabitants in the 14th and 13th centuries BC (the tombs were all in use for much of the LH IIIA2-III B phases; one probably began earlier, one has material suggesting early LH IIIC activity). The idea that a dispersal of cemeteries might reflect dispersed land-holdings bears consideration, but it may also reflect familial relationships, for in the Ayia Sotira cemetery some graves seem to be deliberately placed at a distance from others.

Two of the Ayia Sotira tombs had been looted, also that at Barnavos, and a third had been carefully emptied of its burials and most of its goods, but there is no reason to suppose that these differed significantly from the others in the range of goods that they once contained. This range may be considered only a little more than basic; it consisted mainly of pottery, mostly decorated, also some groups of very ordinary beads, a few figurines and a single bronze item. The tombs themselves are not very distinguished or carefully shaped; most are roughly oval and quite small, with no dimension exceeding 4 m, but they all have separate stoma and substantial dromoi, often around 5½–7 m in length. Several but not all contained pits used for primary and secondary burials. These are hardly the tombs of anything like an 'elite', but they seem likely to represent the more prosperous members of the community at Tsoungiza.

Despite the unimpressive nature of the tombs and most of the finds (the pottery includes a few unusually fine pieces, one figured), this publication is very important because of the extreme care with which the tombs have been excavated, with particular attention to working out the sequence and nature of episodes of use, the recovery of human remains, and the taking of samples for several different forms of scientific analysis. The result has been that for several tombs it has been possible to offer a very plausible reconstruction of a complex pattern of opening and reopening for burial and various forms of ritual activity involving the remains of the dead. The evidence varies in details from tomb to tomb, suggesting that there was no established system of essential rites, rather

that each group of tomb users made their own decisions within a range of acceptable behaviours, which may well have been far more complex than has generally been imagined. In particular, the plausible argument that all burial remains were carefully taken from T. 3 for redeposition elsewhere, a practice not often suggested before, is a striking indication of how little we can actually be certain of in discussing Mycenaean funerary ritual. Such a practice might explain apparently 'empty' tombs like the Dendra 'cenotaph' (T. 2).

It has to be said that the effort put into collecting and analysing various kinds of natural remains, of archaeobotanical remains, wood charcoal, phytoliths, none of which were very well preserved by local soil conditions, and organic residues on pottery, is not matched by the results, which are mainly negative or inconclusive. But it is laudable that the effort was made, adding to what are still very restricted data bases. It is little surprise that the residues, well represented in closed vases, give signs of coming from plant-based oils and fatty materials, and that olive and other lowland coniferous and evergreen species dominate in the charcoal. It is of some interest that, at Ayia Sotira at least, there is no evidence of the lighting of fires for ritual or purificatory purposes in the chamber, as has been postulated in other cemeteries, also that there is no indication that the dead were laid on any kind of mat or that flowers or grasses were placed with them.

The study of the often rather fragmentary human remains by Sevasti Triantaphyllou underlines how important it is to have an osteological specialist on site, when graves have been multiply used and often disturbed by ancient or modern looting or more recent use of the land for agriculture or construction. As well as presenting a very clear account of the remains themselves, this study is a mine of up-to-date information and ideas about the material from other sites and its interpretation, especially on important points such as the underrepresentation of some groups, notably children. In fact, in the Ayia Sotira tombs whose material is best preserved, burials of adult males form a clear majority, although there is a fair number of adult females, often young, and a certain number of children; but overall burials are not as common as might be expected, maybe representing only one or two per generation. Calculation of the likely number of dead adults and children of both genders that the Tsoungiza community might have produced over the one and a half to two centuries during which the tombs were in use forces the conclusion that we do not know how and where the

majority of the community's dead were buried, or what the criteria were for choosing which persons to bury in chamber tombs.

In fact, the Ayia Sotira evidence ties in with much from other sites where human remains have been studied with some care. Often, relatively small numbers of burials have been identified in chamber tombs that had apparently long periods of use, and at large settlements, where dozens or even hundreds of such tombs have been found, there is a glaring discrepancy between even the most generous estimates of numbers of burials and the likely numbers of dead over the Mycenaean civilisation's most flourishing period. In sum, the Ayia Sotira evidence focuses attention on important questions: should we continue to refer to these tombs as 'family tombs', do we have a clear idea what proportion of the population used them, and can this proportion be classified as an 'elite'? Given the relative insignificance of Tsoungiza, the last question can surely be answered 'No', but this does not mean that the use of such tombs could not have begun as an elite practice. There is much to be said for the argument put forward by Wright and Dabney that at Tsoungiza the locally more prominent members of the community were assimilating themselves to Mycenaean 'norms' by adopting customs established at more important centres like Mycenae, from which the community was probably governed (it is reachable through the Tretos pass in three hours' walk).

Overall, this is a study which provides considerable food for thought. It demonstrates how much knowledge can be gained through really careful excavation, but this carries with it a warning on the substantial resources that need to be committed to excavating even such essentially unimpressive tombs.

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**Frederick W. Cooper and Diane Fortenberry (eds). *The Minnesota Pylos Project 1990-98* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 2856). pp. 426, 293 plates and figures (43 colour), 47 tables, maps and graphs, 33 state plans. 2017. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports. ISBN 9-781-40731-534-8. £79.00.**

This is a somewhat delayed but extremely welcome volume. It contains a detailed account of the discoveries made in the field and study seasons of the Minnesota Pylos Project. This began with the decision of the Greek Ephoreia of Messenia that a state plan was needed of the remains of the Mycenaean palace excavated by C.W. Blegen on the site often called Ano (surely correctly Epano) Englianos, here most often simply Englianos, identifiable as the legendary Pylos, seat of king Nestor, from the Linear B archive found there. Once work had begun, it quickly became apparent that many widely accepted beliefs about the architectural history of the site were wrong, and a full study of the surviving remains was instituted, including those in various soundings beneath the palace and exploratory trenches in adjacent areas. This did not involve any new excavation, but investigation was taken to the level that Blegen and his team had reached, and the original excavators' notebooks and preliminary reports were carefully studied. A by-product of this work was the rediscovery in the Northwest Area, in 1994, of 'Blegen's backfill', an enormous mass of material (some 2.5 million items!) that had been produced in excavation and cleaned but discarded during preliminary study. Even a hasty overview of this material required extensive work, but the results included, rather unexpectedly, a few fragments of Linear B tablets, along with masses of pottery and fresco scraps, and a certain number of small finds.

The basic result of all this work has been not only to give a more accurate account of the extant palace, generally dated to Late Helladic (hereafter LH) IIIB, but to show that the earlier Mycenaean phases on the site had considerably more importance than the brief references to them in Blegen and Rawson 1966 and Blegen *et al.* 1973 might suggest, for there is clear evidence for a series of earlier major buildings and other structures that may stretch back as far as the beginning of the Mycenaean period. The picture of post-Mycenaean occupation has also been much clarified, including remains not merely of ordinary settlement (and possibly industrial activity), datable to what used to be called the Dark Age,