

REVIEWS

Kjell Aartun, *Die Minoische Schrift, Sprache und Texte. Band I: Der Diskos von Phaistos, Die beschriftete Bronzeaxt, Die Inschrift der Tarragona-Tafel*, Wiesbaden 1992, 414 pp., ISBN 3 447 03273 1.

[After an introductory part (pp. 5-136), which mainly focuses on the Semitic nature of Cretan Linear A (p. 53 onwards), the author sets out to decipher the hieroglyphic texts on the discus of Phaistos (pp. 137-286), the double axe from Arkalochori (pp. 287-299), both situated in Crete, and a vase-fragment from Tarragona in Spain (pp. 300-329). In an appendix, he also proposes Semitic interpretations of hieroglyphic texts on an altar stone from Malia and a clay lable from Knossos (pp. 332-336). Finally, the author offers extensive indices of Minoan words and their assumed Semitic cognates, and an impressive bibliography (pp. 338-414).]

One way of winning immortal fame for oneself is to decipher an ancient script, immortal fame, that is, within the small circle of perhaps a few interested intellectuals. So now and then a scholar after reaching old age gives a try to decipher the text on the already famous Phaistos Disk. In order to impress his audience, important scholarly institutions are called upon to give more weight to the results of his endeavour. In order to demonstrate his overwhelming erudition, the works of hundreds of other scholars are cited in the notes. Thick volumes are written, whose contents will smash his opponents all over the world for ever. But after a few years of excitement in the news media silence reigns again and the scholar in question should be satisfied when at least his grandchildren will remember him after his death. Such is life. Yet Kjell Aartun's *Die Minoische Schrift, Sprache und Texte Band I, Der Diskos von Phaistos, Die beschriftete Bronzeaxt, Die Inschrift der Tarragona-Tafel* deserves our attention for being a *Paradebeispiel* in proving the case that since Champollion succeeded to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822, script decipherment has never come into existence as an academic discipline in its own right. From a methodological point of view, the momentum given to the mixing of "Rassenelemente" in Crete on the basis of different skull types (p. 28: "der Gestalt der Schädels", "Rassenstudien"; p. 29: "die Funde von Skeletten und Schädeln, die als Beweismaterial heranzuziehen sind") for defining the ethnicity of scribes of ancient

scripts is—to say the very least—outdated. Who will still wonder that also “die große, leicht gebogene Nase und das lockige Haar des ‘Priest-king’s” (p. 30) leads up to a predominantly Semitic population of Crete? But when a well-known formula from Egypt, rightly interpreted long ago, is read against scholarly *communis opinio* as an unknown sort of Semitic invented by Kjell Aartun and appears to be “ein außerkretisches Zeugnis der Sprache des altkretischen Herrenvolkes” (p. 126), one should really wonder in which times we will still seem to live. Nevertheless, many German and American semitists of our times will agree that the Cretan Linear A script does indeed contain a Semitic vocabulary and syntax, although not necessarily those presented by Kjell Aartun. *Non tali auxilio* will probably be their verdict. The reviewer finds himself at least quite often cited in the notes for opinions on Cretan writing he has never expressed in his own writings and therefore one may well wonder whether other cited authors have met the same fate. As for the sexual text interpretations offered by Kjell Aartun for the inscriptions on the Phaistos Disk, the bronze axe from Arkalochori and the sherd from Tarragona, one may conclude for the last ones that they are nicely in line with the first one. However, since Yves Duhoux could convincingly establish in 1977 that on both sides of the Phaistos Disk the text should be read from the periphery to the centre and from right to left, it is a pity that Aartun’s text still starts in the centre and thus reads from left to right.

In short, Kjell Aartun will certainly be remembered by posterity as a competent scholar because of his excellent work done on the Ugaritic particles during his earlier lifetime.

Jan G.P. Best

W. Kendrick Pritchett, *The Liar School of Herodotos*, Amsterdam 1993, 359 pp., ISBN 90 5063 088 X.

“What Herodotus the Halicarnassian has learnt by inquiry is here set forth: in order that so the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown” (Hdt. I.1, translation Godley, *Loeb Classical Library*). With these words Herodotus (c. 485–425 BC) starts his review of the history of the Persian Wars, including various excursions and in fact illuminating the period between the Trojan War and the battle of Mycale (479 BC). He described not merely the occurrences in Greece, but also inserts tales from Egypt (especially in Book II, commented upon by A.B. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II*, Leiden, three vols., 1975–1988), Phoenicia, Mesopotamia, Thrace, Scythia, and, of course, Persia, to name only the

most important. That a narrative so comprehensive in its nature—dealing with so great a variety of subjects, and drawn from miscellaneous sources (ranging from autopsy via Hecataeus of Miletus and other written sources to myths and stories by hearsay) may contain information that cannot be regarded as serious history is, then, only to be expected. In fact, Herodotus was the first to acknowledge that his work might contain errors: “These Egyptian stories are for the use of whosoever believes such tales: for myself, it is my rule throughout this history that I record whatever is told me as I have heard it” (Hdt. II. 123). Extrapolated: “I am a transmitter of information, not a sieve”. What results is a complex combination of information, which may be used for research in varying aspects of classical studies. As Macan states the case in his still always important commentary (R.W. Macan, *Herodotus, Books IV-VI*, London 1895 [two vols.] and *Herodotus, Books VII-IX*, London 1908 [three vols.], a sequel to A.H. Sayce, *The Ancient Empires of the East: Herodotos I-III*, London 1883): “the historical value of the matter found in Herodotus’ work varies not merely from volume to volume, or from book to book, but from paragraph to paragraph, from sentence to sentence, from line to line. Every separate story, every individual statement is to be tried on its own merits”.

Many critics, and Herodotus earned himself next to many admirers perhaps as many enemies, have not taken the trouble to exercise this discrimination. Recorded attacks on Herodotus begin, as far as I know, with Plutarch’s *De Malignitate Herodoti*. Since, many have followed him. Also among modern writers suspicious critics of Herodotus are manifestly present. As it seems, their main point is always the same: it is *a priori* improbable that a historian who is inaccurate in one narrative could be accurate in another. Among the advocates of this view we may find Detlev Fehling, e.g. in his *Herodotus and his ‘Sources’: Citation, Invention and Narrative Art*, Leeds 1989 and O. Kimball Armayor, *Herodotus’ Autopsy of the Fayoum: Lake Moeris and the Labyrinth of Egypt*, Amsterdam 1985. Critical is also the attitude of Stéphanie West. Her last remark in a review of D. Lateiner’s *The Historical Method of Herodotus*, Toronto/Buffalo/London 1989 (Phoenix, suppl. 23) in *CR* 105 (1991), pp. 23-5, “Some might judge the title misleading labelling”, suggests a negative appreciation not only of Lateiner’s study but also of Herodotus. However, her position, reviewing *Hérodote et les peuples non grecs. Neuf exposés suivis de discussions*, Eds. G. Nenci and O. Reverdin, Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1990 in *CR* 106 (1992), pp. 277-9, seems somewhat more balanced: “But indeed the more we learn, the more complex appears the problem of Herodotus’ veracity” (West 1992: 279).

Pritchett counts both Fehling and West among “the group of scholars

who deal not with the philosophical aspect of historiography, but with one that advances the thesis that Herodotos was consciously fictionalizing, as denoted by the word liar, under the false pretense that his work represented reality" (Pritchett 1993: 9). Judging that the balance is gone in the view of many of Herodotus' critics, Pritchett has set himself the task to evaluate their arguments against Herodotus. Pritchett is very well qualified to discuss the position of Herodotus. Professor emeritus of Greek at the University of California, Berkeley, he is, naturally, very well accustomed with Greek literature in a very wide perspective. His special interests, Greek military practices (cf. his *Ancient Greek Military Practices*, Berkeley 1971, continued as *The Greek State at War* (vols. II-V), Berkeley 1974-1991) and Greek topography (cf. his *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, vols. I-VI, Berkeley 1965-1989, vols. VII and VIII, Amsterdam 1991-1992; cf. also his *Essays in Greek History*, Amsterdam 1994) have made him, moreover, preeminently familiar with the practical aspects of textual interpretation, including the problems of reliability and veracity of our classical sources.

In his book Pritchett first deals with Fehling (P.'s section 2), next West (section 3) and finally with Hartog (section 4, on the Scythian *logos*). The work of a range of specialists in different fields is the subject of section 5. Their research confirms, more or less, according to Pritchett, Herodotus' stories. Within the framework of Pritchett's evaluation of Herodotus' critics I find his section 6 a bit out of place. It enumerates a series of "monstrous races" (many of them of Indian origin) as presented by various writers, ancient, mediaeval and "modern" (up to the 16th century AD). Though these tales show that Herodotus was not the first nor the only one to present miraculous creatures, the section offers little extra for a balanced view on Herodotus. This is not the case with section 7. In this section the topographical evidence of Herodotus on Plataea (criticized by Wallace) and Thermopylae (rebuked by Kase and Szemler) is reviewed by Pritchett. Though Pritchett admits of the situation round Plataea that his view is a little speculative (p. 297), I consider his reconstruction generally convincing. Convincing is also his identification of Trachis, the Colonus hill, and (in combination with the relevant passages of *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, vols. V and VII) the road through the Thermopylae pass. Section 8 deals with Herodotus' audience. Though sometimes presented somewhat pathetically, I think his general argument, that a critical and knowing audience like the Greek would have reacted vehemently if Herodotus had fabricated stories of events—events, moreover, in which many of his audience had partaken—on the whole correct. The comparison in this section of Herodotus and Pausanias offers no evidence on the point of Herodotus' veracity.

The core of Pritchett's book, as I see it, are the sections 2, 3 and 4. In section 2 Pritchett reviews thirty-nine examples brought forward by Fehling to show Herodotus wrong; in section 3 some twenty examples presented by West to discredit Herodotus are reviewed, and in section 4 Pritchett tries to show that Hartog's negative appreciation of Herodotus' Scythian *logos* is completely unfounded. To make his points Pritchett uses both classical sources and secondary literature. He quotes, one after another, the passages that have to show Herodotus' critics wrong, almost without cohesion. He sometimes resembles a boxer that wants to finish his adversary with a series of blows: some of the punches only displace some air, some go home, but not as effective as meant, and some really come through devastatingly. The effectivity of Pritchett's arguments, strange as it may seem, is also lessened by his vast learning: his references are sometimes incomplete or by way of unexplained abbreviations (this does, of course, not go for his references to periodicals), expecting that everybody will know the literature he mentions: I doubt whether every reader or even every student really does. I think the book would have greatly benefited from a good bibliography (or at least an index of modern authors). Even worse is that the book also lacks a general index, a deficiency that, in my opinion, devaluates the use of the book. What remains is, as a consequence, a pamphlet that bears testimony of Pritchett's enormous mastery of archaic and classical Greece, an interesting and very learned contribution to a discussion in which the final word is not yet written: Herodotus' veracity has not been shown by Pritchett, at least not at every point, beyond *all* reasonable doubt.

Jan P. Stronk

J. Richard Steffy, *Wooden Ship Building and the Interpretation of Shipwrecks*, College Station (TX) 1994, 314 pp., ISBN 0-89096-552-8.

Among the pioneers of scientific maritime archaeology the name of Keith Muckelroy deserves to be remembered with honour. His *Maritime Archaeology* (Cambridge 1978) may be considered, still, as the best theoretical treatment of "the scientific study of the material remains of man and his activities on the sea" (Muckelroy 1978: 4). What was lacking was a complement to this study focused on the ship as a 'work of art', including a clear terminology to describe the ship's parts (to be exact: there exist books that offer such a terminology, e.g. Anderson, R.K., *Guidelines for Recording Historic Ships*, Washington D.C. 1988, but even this study is not complete). In the past years some cautious steps have been made trying to fill some parts of this enormous *lacuna*, including my own "(Greek) Sailing Merchant-Ships, c. 500-330 BC: a

preliminary research" (*Talanta* XXIV/V (1992-93): 117-140). Now, I think, the complement to Muckelroy's *Maritime Archaeology* is there. It has been written by J. Richard Steffy, emeritus professor of nautical archaeology at Texas A & M University and the Institute of Nautical Archaeology. From the mid-1960s he has been involved in numerous shipwreck excavation projects in Europe, Asia, and North America. Among these projects the reconstruction of the Kyrenia ship is, I think, best known to the general public.

The book proper is divided into three parts. The first part is an introduction to the subject, presenting the basic information to understand the analysis of ship and boat construction. The second part, divided into three sections, describes ancient, mediaeval, and postmediaeval shipwrecks (including supporting documentation). Part three is devoted to the techniques to record hull remains, assemble archival documentation, and to reconstruct vessels. Added to the body of the book are three appendices, treating displacement, dimensions and proportions, and characteristics of common shipbuilding timber and, last but not least, an illustrated glossary of ship and boat terms. A select bibliography and a good index complete the book. Whenever possible illustrations, both photographs and line drawings, support the text throughout the book, making it possible that even people who are not familiar with the maritime past can follow the argument.

This *eulogy* of the book does not mean that the book is perfect. There are several points that should have been commented more clearly upon by Steffy. Of those points I would like to mention those that struck me most. The first problem is that Steffy does not make clear on what basis he has chosen his examples. As he describes it, it seems as if shipbuilding techniques, at least of the ancient world, show an unilinear evolution. As a matter of fact, I think it *generally* does, but that impression may be coloured by the specific site conditions that rendered the shipwrecks found until now. Somewhat more caution might be wise policy.

A second problem is the insertion of the clinker-built vessels of Northern Europe into the general shipbuilding techniques of this part of Europe. This part is not dealt with completely satisfactorily. Was this caused, as Gould suggests in his review of Steffy's book in the *JFA* 229 (1995): 245-248, by a "'scheme of technological progress adopted by the author (and by INA)'"? In that case, I think this starting point should have been explicated more (at least more thoroughly) than Steffy does.

A third point is that non-Western shipbuilding traditions have not been considered. In the past *e.g.* the works of Gerhard Kapitan and Lucien Basch have revealed that various shipbuilding techniques, like the ones attested for India, Southern Arabia, and Sri Lanka, have parallels in

Western shipbuilding techniques or may even have influenced those Western techniques. Steffy remains silent on this point. Again, this point may be caused by a standard INA-policy, but also that should have been made clear in advance.

A fourth point, more or less parallel with the previous, is that Steffy leaves little room for local developments. Up till now some sixty well preserved Roman hulls have been found (cf., e.g., M.D. de Weerd, *Schepen voor Zwammerdam: Bouwwijze en Herkomst van enkele Vaartuigtypen in West- en Middeneuropa uit de Romeinse Tijd en de Middeleeuwen in Archeologisch Perspectief* (diss.) [s.n.] [1988] (Dutch text with summary in German)). They reveal not only broad chronological trends (generally treated by Steffy), but also local technological variations which persisted during the Roman Empire and even beyond (generally omitted by Steffy).

Yet, in spite of the points briefly sketched above, I think that Steffy's book will remain for a number of years by far the best book on wooden ship building for the western-oriented maritime archaeologist and historian. No one, working in this field, can allow himself to miss it.

Jan P. Stronk

G.R. Tsjetskhladze and F. De Angelis (eds.), *The Archaeology of Greek Colonization, Essays dedicated to Sir John Boardman, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph 40*, Oxford, 1994, 149 pp., hardback, ISBN 0 947816 40 2.

The colonization of large parts of the Mediterranean and Black Sea coastlines by the Greeks from the 8th century BC onwards is one of the most interesting aspects of Antiquity.

Not only did it disperse the Hellenic culture over a large area, but in return also other cultures influenced civilization in the Greek homelands. The fact that Greek colonization was not a one way road is sometimes forgotten.

It also widened the economical and political interest of the Greek city-states over a much larger area.

During the last decades, an enormous amount of archaeological material concerning Greek colonization became available. Some of this material contradicts our sources from Antiquity or at least our interpretation of these sources, thus generating animosity between ancient historians and archaeologists.

The Archaeology of Greek Colonization, edited by G. Tsjetskhladze and F. De Angelis, contains a number of lectures dedicated to Sir John Boardman by mainly British archaeologists, sometimes presenting the

latest archaeological material of some of the most important Greek colonial sites. Most authors relate their archaeological material to the historical evidence provided by the ancient sources, and try in this way to develop new approaches to handle the data.

This approach is extremely succesful in F. De Angelis' systematic chapter on the foundation of Selinous and the *chora* of its mother city Megara-Hyblaia on Sicily, and in D. Ridgway's chapter on Greeks and Phoenicians in Pithekoussai.

Most archaeological material concerning Greek colonization comes from the western part of the Mediterranean and this is reflected in the contents of this book. A. Snodgrass, D. Ridgway, J. Coldstream, B. Shefton and F. De Angelis all deal with the West.

Unluckily less well represented are the three other regions of Greek colonization. The chapter by M. Popham discusses early Greek contacts with the East while the chapters by J. Boardman and G. Tsetskhladze are concerned with North Africa and the Black Sea. G. Tsetskhladze's article about Greek penetration in the Black Sea is especially interesting for the fact that the archeaology of this area is hardly known in western Europe owing to a language barrier and the cold war which for decades blocked contacts between historians and archaeologists east and west of the former Iron Curtain. Several new journals, like "Colloquia Pontica" in Oxford and "From Scythia to Siberia" in Leiden, now close this gap of information.

Tssetskhladze's chapter gives besides his dealing with the several stages of Greek colonization in the Black Sea an extensive bibliography on this subject.

This book is without question a good purchase for any scholar dealing with or having an interest in ancient Greek civilization.

Jan de Boer

L.B. VAN DER MEER

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FRED C. WOULDHUIZEN

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