

EPILOGUE

Here we pull together the diverse conclusions reached in the chapters of this book within the loose framework of Colin Renfrew's systems theory model. We speculate retroactively why and how one polity, Pylos, emerged into statehood.

Archaeologists who work in Greece have tended to be highly specialized in their interests. Until very recently there was not even an introduction to the archaeology of Greece that treated every period of its past, from the Paleolithic until modern times.¹ Instead, research is fragmented by period and topic, and it is not easy to gain a sense of the continuity and flow of human existence in the Greek landscape.

Long-term historical perspectives have, however, grown more popular since the 1980s. Intensive surface surveys confronted archaeologists with a Hobson's choice: ignore much of what they were finding or invest more resources in analysis and programs of publication for finds from all periods of the past. Earlier surveys had been more restricted in their interests. Indeed, casual hunting in the 1920s for prehistoric remains alone was what led to the discovery of the Palace of Nestor and many other Mycenaean settlements and cemeteries in Messenia.

A long-term perspective permits us to focus analyses on critical junctures in time, when inertia was broken, when a society rapidly developed in previously undocumented ways, as happened at Pylos in the Early Mycenaean period. That can potentially also provide a prehistorian with analogies drawn from historical societies that existed in the same physical landscapes as did prehistoric. Comparisons with other periods may suggest interpretations for the prehistoric evidence we assemble, as did Ottoman geography in chapter 3 for Mycenaean patterns of settlement.

Such an approach conforms to principles of the *Annales* school of history. Its members, such as Fernand Braudel and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, viewed the past as a dialectic between short-term events and those played out on longer time scales in similar environments.²

EARLY MYCENAEAN CIVILIZATION AND PYLOS

What can we now say about the beginnings of Mycenaean civilization at Pylos? The so-called multiplier effect, as defined by Renfrew in *The Emergence of Civilization*, provides a useful framework for drawing together our disparate conclusions about Early Mycenaean Pylos—although he himself applied it to events in the third-millennium-B.C. Aegean that he imagined lay behind the Minoan palatial system. Renfrew's analysis broke society into the following subsystems: population and settlement, subsistence, craft production, social systems, projective systems, and trade and communications. Here we briefly do the same and consider how growth in each subsystem likely promoted expansion in the others.

POPULATION AND SETTLEMENT

The Early Mycenaean period witnessed a growth in population at Pylos. The settlement expanded in area, but, at the same time, the absolute number of settlements in the broader region increased and a three-tier hierarchy of settlement emerged that had not existed in the Middle Helladic period. Sites at each of the three levels in the hierarchy likely functioned in dissimilar ways—the community at Pylos, where elites resided, functioned very differently from smaller settlements, which in some cases were inhabited by only a handful of families.

SUBSISTENCE

The basic Mediterranean triad of crops (olives, grain, and vines) has long been entrenched in the Pylos area. A settlement of the mid-third millennium B.C., recently excavated near Pylos has, in fact, yielded the oldest testimony to grape cultivation in the entire Peloponnese.³ Other evidence for agriculture in the Bronze Age comes from pollen analyses conducted in the 1990s by Sergei Yazvenko on behalf of the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project.⁴ Sergei and his wife, Gule Ismailzade, drilled cores into the floor of the lagoon of Osmanaga, north of the bay of Navarino. Fossilized grains of pollen allowed vegetational histories to be written, beginning as early as the sixth millennium B.C.

In the Middle Helladic period (before 1600 B.C.), there was little pressure on the landscape from agriculture. After that, in the Early Mycenaean period, pine forests began to disappear and an expansion in olive cultivation began, which reached its peak in the thirteenth century B.C. During that high-water mark, the archives

found by Blegen in the Palace of Nestor testify to the production of perfumed oil, presumably for export.⁵ The environmental evidence seems to fit with what we would hypothesize from settlement patterns: that there had been an intensification in land use in the Early Mycenaean period, one that we think reflects the creation of elite benefices, landed estates granted in tenure to those at the top of the social and political order.

It is also possible also that metal agricultural implements came into more common use, if the large number of metal vessels found in Early Mycenaean graves is any indication that bronze was then more available—although no such tools have yet been found at Pylos.

CRAFT PRODUCTION, TRADE, AND COMMUNICATIONS

What do we know about craft production in the early phases of the Late Bronze Age? Quite a bit, in fact, although there remain many unanswered questions. Bronze vessels are not the only novelty in Early Mycenaean graves. They and other exquisitely crafted goods were arriving from the Minoan world, but we also find goods from more exotic locations. Glass “Nuzi” beads likely came from as far away as northeastern Iraq, lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, amber from the Baltic Sea, inlaid cloisonné ornaments from the Levant. All these products doubtless followed indirect routes to Pylos.

Their availability, however, signals an extension in the range of the trading networks into which Pylos was plugged, and their accessibility must have promoted the production of luxury goods in the Aegean, if not at Pylos itself. Objects manufactured of gold foil are common in Early Mycenaean graves around the Palace of Nestor and elsewhere, and contemporary parallels on Crete are rare. Minoan-derived curvilinear motives are sometimes embossed in the gold, but geometric motives lack Cretan antecedents.

The tradition of cutting limestone into squared blocks set in impressive façades of buildings is an art that the Minoans learned from the Levantine coast, but it had been practiced on Crete for two centuries by the time it reached the mainland.⁶ Pylos is not the only place in the Mycenaean world where ashlar masonry was employed, but the fact that fashions there followed trends on Crete over several centuries favors Cretan masons being responsible for its execution. So does the presence of a Minoan mason’s mark on a block found in an older wall under the Archives of the thirteenth-century Mycenaean palace.

Such stonework would have contributed to the monumentality of Early Mycenaean mansions on the Pylos acropolis and lacks any parallel in Middle Helladic architecture—true also of the wall-paintings that appear now for the first time on the mainland. Deposits of murex shells on the Pylos acropolis possibly point to local production of purple pigment used for painting.

Itinerant craftsmen may have been responsible for these innovations, but the demand would have emanated from the elite stratum that was emerging within an increasingly hierarchical society. As yet, however, we lack direct evidence that this elite supported and patronized craftsmen permanently ensconced at Pylos, other than perhaps for the production of pottery. Blegen's discovery of an Early Mycenaean kiln on the acropolis bears witness to the local manufacture of pottery, and its location raises the possibility that some was being produced for those living in the acropolis mansions. But whatever the case, Cretan styles of pottery rapidly replaced traditional Middle Helladic types for all consumers, not just for the elite.

SOCIAL AND PROJECTIVE SYSTEMS

A major social upheaval occurred at Pylos in the Early Mycenaean period. A great disparity in access to resources is obvious from differential access to types of burial (single or collective), from the relative richness of grave goods, from mansions, and from exceptional elite diets. Objects of symbolic importance mark rank: diadems as well as a staff in the grave of the Griffin Warrior.

Weapons, both defensive and offensive, emphasized the status of the elite as warriors, even as a defensive wall was erected around the citadel on which their mansions stood. Finds from the grave of the Griffin Warrior, in particular, demonstrate that such privileged individuals understood the meaning of Minoan symbols, whether they were religious or badges of authority. This dual concurrence led us to suggest that the Griffin Warrior was a Mycenaean king, a *wanax*.

Those who held power at Pylos were surrounded by a universe of imagery deeply immersed in Minoanized forms, styles, and decorations. The Middle Helladic period had been largely devoid of figural images, but, in the Early Mycenaean period, human, animal, and floral motives pervaded representations on jewelry, ceramics, and wall-paintings. The elite who demanded new ways were no mean raiders preying on Minoan targets, then slinking back into mainland hovels. They knew the finer aspects of Minoan society; they wanted them for themselves; and they drew on its material culture as their own society leapt to a higher level of complexity.

The "multiplier effect" allows us to imagine how positive feedback among the preceding subsystems would have promoted expansion in each. Increased efficiency in agriculture would have favored population increase. A greater population may have demanded more specialized systems of social management. Warfare would have promoted the emergence of strong leadership. As an emergent elite struggled to differentiate itself from others, trade for exotic goods must have followed. One may presume too that involvement in regional exchange networks would have led to competition of all sorts with elites in other emergent polities for land, prestige, power—all of them, like Pylos, finding inspiration in Minoan models.

Such an analysis allows us retroactively to speculate how Early Mycenaean societies like Pylos grew in complexity. What set such profound changes in motion after a long period of homeostasis in Middle Helladic times and led to the emergence of a social and political structure unprecedented on the mainland? It is hard to imagine that integration within the Minoan world did not play a decisive role in promoting growth in trade, intensification of agricultural production, greater acquisitiveness on the part of mainlanders, more specialization in craft manufacture, and the formation of larger political units through wars of expansion. Systems theory anticipates that growth in subsystems eventually reaches a point where any additional increase, however small, will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. A system will be transformed and restructure itself in an unprecedented manner. It was at that point that Mycenaean society stabilized itself within a new social system based on the institutionalization of inherited leadership, rank, and privilege.