

Recensioni

John Killen (ed.), *The New Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024, 2 vols, vol. 1 = pp. XXVIII + 409, vol. 2 = pp. XXVI + 736. ISBN: 9781009286091.

The obscurity of the several thousand published texts in the various Mycenaean corpora makes them especially difficult to be approached by non-specialists, and this has generally meant that treatments of the Greek experience of the Late Bronze Age are treated cursorily by the ancient historiography, relegated to ‘prehistory’ and marked off-bounds. The problem is only more acute in the literature on ancient legal history. Decisive for the neglect of these sources by Greek legal historians was the early realisation after the decipherment of Linear B that legislative or judicial texts were absent from all the Mycenaean corpora, something which was of great disappointment to the early commentators. This has generally meant the texts have been considered impossible matter for legal historical methods. However, many subseries of these administrative documents sit very comfortably with certain major preoccupations of legal history, foremost the large number which record landholdings and which pose significant questions for the reconstruction of property relations in early Greece, but also texts relating to labour movement, production and redistribution, which are significant for their insight into the juridical forms that underpinned social and economic relations. It is on the treatment of these two themes — property and obligations — with which this review shall consider this new handbook on the Mycenaean texts, with a view towards how it may serve ancient legal historians and how it may contribute to broadening the perspectives brought to debates in ancient Greek legal history. Legal history has something to offer to the interpretation of the Mycenaean sources because the texts are either structured in reflection of defined juridical categories (such as an institutional status) or they are in the background of the records (such as property

relations). The complexity of the documents owes to the fact that, as De Fidio puts it in the *New Documents*, while they are short and simple, their content ‘allows us to perceive an interweaving of juridical classifications’ (p. 271), most of which are subject to interpretive debate.

The Linear B documents are no longer new. The passage of almost seventy years since the decipherment of this earliest Greek script has seen the publication of several modern handbooks in English,¹ German,² and Italian.³ Still, perhaps the most accessible entry-point to the Mycenaean texts remains Ventris and Chadwick’s very dated *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (1st ed. 1956; 2nd ed. 1973), which does not reflect recent movements in the scholarship.⁴ This new handbook is intended as an updated version and offers itself as an authoritative companion to the Linear B documents. The *New Documents* does not disrupt the basic structure of the old version, and reproduces many of the key chapters, but significant interventions have been made by leading specialists to update the thematic chapters, with many new chapters added to augment the scope of the handbook. The inserted paragraphs have been noted with certain sigla in the margins, leaving the original text of the old *Documents* for the reader. This is an idiosyncratic choice and renders the two volumes rather curious documents of their own, the utility of which is that it allows the reader to appreciate movements and developments in the scholarship.

The handbook has four parts across two volumes. Part One includes the main thematic chapters, which vastly extends the scope of the corresponding part in the old second edition of the *Documents*. Chapters I through IV.7 provide an introduction to the Mycenaean system of writing, the history of its decipherment, and aids for the interpretation of special symbols. Chapters V through X.2 treat specific historiographical themes: the documentary practices of the palaces (ch. V by M. del Freo), the Mycena-

¹ Y. Duhoux and A. Morpurgo Davies edd., *A Companion to Linear B*, 3 vols (2008–2014), Louvain: Peeters. Also C. Shelmerdine ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age* (2008), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; E.H. Cline, *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean* (2012), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² A. Bartonek, *Handbuch des mykenischen Griechisch* (2003), Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

³ M. Del Freo and M. Perna edd. *Manuale di epigrafia micenea*, 2 vols (2016), Padova: libreriauniversitaria.it edizioni.

⁴ M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (1st ed. 1956; 2nd ed. 1973), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ean language (ch. VI by R. Thompson), geography (ch. VII by J. Bennet), economy (ch. VIII by P. De Fidio), social and political structure (ch. IX by C. Shelmerdine), and religion (ch. X.1 by J. Killen, and ch. X.2 by R. Parker). Part Two contains a large selection of drawn documents, some hitherto unpublished. Part Three in the second volume follows the model of the old *Documents* in providing thematic commentaries on various groups of tablets as a primer to the interpretation of the texts. Notable for legal historians is the long chapter on land tenure (ch. XIV.1 by Y. Duhoux), which is more systematic than the corresponding chapter in the old edition, and a new extended treatment of the Pylos ‘dosmos’ tablets (ch. XIV.2 by P. De Fidio), which provide great insight into relations of debt/credit. The apparatus in Part Four provides, among detailed indexes, a useful updated glossary of all attested Mycenaean words.

The chapter on documentary production and typology by Del Freo (ch. V) treats several important legal historical themes familiar from other contexts, namely the relative chronology of the related ‘palm leaf’- vs. ‘page’-shaped tablets (pp. 206-7), which offers itself to a comparison with other historical documentary practices (cf. double-document notarial practices in the Egyptian papyri), and the use of marked seals to signify the contractual nature of the obligation under which goods were produced (pp. 212-3; cf. 270-1 by De Fidio). Strong evidence for the administrative practices both within and beyond the palace comes from the rich series of land-related tablets from Pylos, with Del Freo emphasising the ‘live’ nature of the documents, some of which record information incoming to the administrators of the palace, and others revealing its processing within the administration itself (see p. 214, cf. p. 229, 230-31). Del Freo is thus open to the possibility — much disputed — that the surviving clay tablets are not an exhaustive representation of the documentary practices of the Mycenaean world, alluding to the possibility that perishable media (e.g. papyrus or parchment) may have been used for certain types of documents which did not have the fortune of being preserved by the fires which saved the tablets (cf. pp. 229-30; cf. De Fidio on p. 288). Given the literature has contrasted the short-term administrative objectives of the tablets with the requirement for durability that describes legal epigraphy from the Archaic period onwards, the typology and practices of documentary production outline a topic worthy of deeper consideration by legal historians with a focus on the normative content of the different documentary forms.

The emphasis on the theme of tension between the palace, other elites and the rural communities is a welcome update to the *New Documents*. This reflects the well-accepted need in the more recent scholarship to moderate the slant of the old historiography on the economy, which had emphasised the dominance of the palace in economic activity (described famously by Finley as a ‘massive redistributive operation’⁵) (cf. p. 288). The new handbook finally reflects the shift in the literature which offers a much more nuanced perspective on how the palace likely mobilised rural elites to its advantage, engaging and negotiating with earlier power structures rather than wiping them out (cf. pp. 287-88, cf. 269). Other chapters in the *New Documents* offer some important relevant reflections which, put together, make out a strong trend in perspectives on the extent of the authority of the Mycenaean palaces, corresponding to an apparent consensus between specialists working in different related fields (both textual and material archaeological). In his treatment of geography in the *New Documents* (ch. VII) Bennet reflects on the scholarship on Knossos that the palace on Crete was likely not ‘in total control of a large, continuous territory at any point ... but was selective in both the specific regions and the activities in which it maintained an interest’ (p. 260). The Knossian administrators relied on the inward flow of information from local delegates instead of employing a circuit of officers sent outwards from the centre. Thus Bennet suggests that the rising palatial centre at Knossos would have had to contend with powers that were established earlier on the island, as exemplified by the (notorious and disputed) ‘collectors’ involved in livestock management on behalf of the palace (cf. 502-7 with Killen’s critique of the view that these ‘collectors’ were local rather than palatial elites). At Pylos, attempts to assimilate the attested toponyms in the texts with the archaeological data leads Bennet to reflect both that palatial power, while reflected statically in the documents, expanded over time, and even ‘that the northern margins were still in “administrative flux” at the time of the documents’ (p. 264).

The question of the territorial extent of palatial power and how deep it penetrated into social relations concerns perhaps the most interesting and complicated subject for a legal history of the Mycenaean world, namely land and property relations. The great significance of the Pylian landholding tablets (E- series) for the scholarship generally is reflected in the fact

⁵ M I Finley, ‘The Mycenaean Tablets and Economic History’, *Economic History Review* 10 (1957): 135.

that questions of land and property seep into very many of the chapters, not just the chapter on landholding by Duhoux (ch. XIV.1), discussed here below. As De Fidio notes (pp. 280-1), questions of landholding are concerns which extend to several series of texts, including the taxation records in the Pylian Na and Ma series, which Del Freo proposes as evidence for the relationship of a tributary system tied to the cultivation of flax on land. An interesting outline of the functions of the ‘king’ (*wa-na-ka* [ῥάναξ]) in Shelmerdine’s chapter on political structure (ch. IX) even refers to the possible perception in the records from Pylos of a separation of the royal estate (ῥανάκτηρον τέμενος) from the landholdings of the *wanax* himself (p. 292-3). It is, of course, unclear whether this represents the maturity of the Mycenaean ‘state’ in its ability to accommodate such a legal fiction, or perhaps nods to the role of palatial elites beyond the palace. In either case, certain insights as this into a more complex picture of Mycenaean landholding does not contradict the apparent selectivity of the palatial records and their many lamented lacunae, but rather suggests the need for a more contingent explanation of palatial strategies, one which does not require them to be forced into the mould of either a Near Eastern kingdom or one of mediaeval Europe. At the other end of the hierarchy, an interesting complexity of the tablets which attest slaves is that the few which record their own names (rather than those of their masters) include those where they hold an interest in land themselves (p. 303). This leads Duhoux to identify two separate usages of *doelos/doela*, the first as a chattel slave and usually unnamed in the sources, and the second a person of higher status of unclear function who may well hold land in their name (pp. 577–8).

An important theme recurrent across several chapters in the new handbook is how the conceptual framework of property in the Mycenaean documents is defined. A comment by De Fidio of great significance for our understanding of the relevance of the Mycenaean land documents for Greek legal history more generally is her reflection that the strong association of the *da-mo* [δαμος] with rural landholding may represent ‘residual ... practices of land ownership’ which continued to exist despite the growth of palatial influence over the hinterland (p. 272; cf. Duhoux maintaining from the earlier edition talk of ‘residue’ of an older system on p. 570). In another chapter, Shelmerdine refers to the power of the *dāmos* and related elites as ‘a vestige of the power structure of the Early Mycenaean period’, citing, for instance, the archaeological evidence for elite competition in

Messenia (p. 297). De Fidio identifies the role of the *dāmos* in the famous dispute with the priestess Eritha (PY Eb 297 and Ep 704.5-6) as evidence of the apparent antagonism of the rural community's authority over land with that of the palace (p. 272). Similarly, regarding complex and debated questions of the palaces' involvement in the production of bronze, Del Freo reflects that the appearance in the relevant tablets of figures like the *qa-si-re-u* [cf. βασιλεύς] and *ke-ro-te* [cf. γέροντες] may represent the 'remodelling of these older institutions' under palatial influence, and that their apparent misalignment with their politically significant roles in Homer may be explained by their having 'recover[ed] their autonomy' after the fall of the palaces (pp. 278-9, cf. pp. 297-8, cf. 454-55, 458-59). This responds to the theory, popular among archaeologists, that the effective 'decapitation' of the upper palatial hierarchy allowed those who had held lower positions to consolidate their power and reappear as significant elites several centuries later. De Fidio does not extend this theory as a possible interpretation of the terminology of privileges which derive from the noun ὀνίνημι (such as the property interests *o-na-to* and *e-to-ni-jo*), though she suggests that such benefits may have been granted by the palace to prominent elites (p. 283), without addressing whether they also held some authority independently of the palace and with which the palace had to contend (but cf. p. 287). Considered in the context of the question of political continuity among the elites before the rise, and after the fall, of the palaces, a legal historical perspective on the operation of this family of terms of obligation (specifically, concessions and benefits: cf. p. 282) may allow us to better understand the juridical forms which underpinned the expansion of palatial jurisdiction.

The large chapter on 'Land Tenure' by Duhoux (ch. XIV.1) replaces that on 'Land Ownership and Land Use' by Ventris and Chadwick in the first and second editions of the *Documents*. The change in the titles conceals a neat shift in the stance of the handbook on the appropriate model for understanding the land regime. The older editions exhibit a clear reliance on the vocabulary of mediaeval feudalism for explaining Mycenaean landholding, often imported to the Greek space second-hand through the Near East (for example, in the first edition Ventris and Chadwick quote a mediaevalising translation of Hittite legislation on land, though they vaguely gloss over the very different nature of various kinds of feudal dues, namely those of service as distinct from payments).⁶ Feudalism is no longer a popular model but

⁶ Michael Ventris and John Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 1st ed.

its early adoption has left a conceptual hangover in some of the literature. The shift away from the feudal model is acknowledged in the approach to the economy in the first volume of the *New Documents* (ch. VIII by P. De Fidio) which nevertheless notes the need to deal with the problems that adopting the model sought to explain away (pp. 268-9). One of those key problems is whether the landholdings of prominent elites (e.g. the *telestai*) represent something like fiefs held from the king (*wanax*). De Fidio acknowledges that there is really little strong evidence for such interpretations which instead rely on an analogy with the Near Eastern sources (p. 271-2, cf. Shelmerdine's treatment of the political hierarchy at pp. 291-3). Still, De Fidio is persuaded by the possibility that some individuals or classes of individuals close to the palace or within its internal hierarchy held certain estates on the condition of paying a tribute or owing another obligation (pp. 271-2, cf. pp. 280, 288).

Meanwhile, Duhoux's long new chapter on 'land tenure' (ch. XIV.1) is evidently aware of the need for a more precise organisation of the complex terminology used by the tablets to describe landholdings, and the welcome contribution of his new chapter is in his clear arrangement of related but conceptually distinct elements of landholding. Duhoux usefully distinguishes between several analytical categories which neatly correspond to what the palace was interested in when recording landholdings, as reflected by the regular structure of the Pylian E-series records. The first analytical category is types of land ('categories': p. 568), the *ke-ke-me-na*, *ki-ti-me-na*, and *ka-ma* land, but also importantly including other, less attested types of land too (pp. 568-576). Among these, Duhoux mentions the *temenos*, *aroura* and *pu-te-ri-ja* on p. 576 (these are then explained in detail through the commentaries on the selected texts). Duhoux then surveys the category of 'occupiers of the plots' (pp. 577-578), the plots' dimensions (pp. 578), and, very importantly for legal historians, an outline of the 'legal status of landholding' (p. 581-585; cf. De Fidio, who refers to the 'juridical status of possession' on p. 270). This last section of Duhoux's chapter is the first treatment of the subject along these lines in a handbook. While Zurbach, for example, has recognised the important distinction between 'un mode de tenure' and 'un type de terre',⁷ this fundamental conceptual distinction

(Cambridge University Press, 1956), 233-34.

⁷ Julien Zurbach, *Les hommes, la terre et la dette en Grèce c. 1400-c. 500 a.C.*, vol. 1 (Ausonius, 2017), 41.

has tended to be blurred in other overviews of landholding in the handbooks, especially in the older editions of the *Documents*. This new handbook therefore contributes to better organising the problems which concern our understanding of property in the Mycenaean documents, though many of these remain unresolved.

The Pylian E-series documents were grouped on the basis that they all record the size of registered landholdings as reflected in their common use of the ideogram for grain as an equivalent measure of surface area (interpreted as wheat by Duhoux: p. 566). While the records' administrative purpose is not specified, many have assumed they were used for assessing the landholder's tax burden. Duhoux believes that while some land records (the Pylian Es series) were clearly records for tax assessment, in general 'they were a survey of the plots that the palace controlled' (p. 567), presumably meaning that the palace was interested in the legal status of land as such. Nevertheless Duhoux leaves open the question of whether 'control' means this territory was 'actual property' of the palace (p. 567), by which he seems to imply something like absolute ownership (cf. the reference to possession vs. ownership at p. 573). At this point we note a significant, and novel, treatment of the conception of property relations in Mycenaean Greece, though certain legal concepts have been applied somewhat restrictively. In framing this old problem in terms of ownership and possession, Duhoux seems to be at pains to get over the feudal hangover. Instead, his presentation focusses on interrogating the popularly assumed distinction between 'public' and 'private' land, offered by many scholars as a gloss on *ke-ke-me-na* versus *ki-ti-me-na*. While the association of the *ke-ke-me-na* with the *damos* is clear in the tablets, the *ki-ti-me-na* are usually only assumed to be 'private' by contrast, because these lands are held by a handful of elites. Duhoux makes a welcome contribution to reconsidering the meaning of 'private' in this context, though his 'tentative conclusion' (p. 574) requires caution. Duhoux's view is that the thirteen elite men (*telestai*) who hold *ki-ti-me-na* plots do not own them, but simply possess them on the condition of service to the king (p. 573-4). He suggests the 'crown' is the real owner, specifically that the *ki-ti-me-na* are 'privately owned (by the crown)' and granted out to the *telestai* (p. 574). It would perhaps be preferable to eschew the assumption of a neat distinction between 'public' and 'private' land, since in modern usage the former tends to imply state ownership, which sits rather awkwardly with Duhoux's proposal. This makes us question whether

the public–private distinction is applicable to the proposed model at all. The treatment relies on a somewhat jarring synthesis of different conceptual frameworks which seeks to overcome the impasse in the interpretation of the two main categories of land, but perhaps confuses things more. Ownership and possession are probably inappropriate terms to explain what is here described as land granted on the condition of service to a higher landholder; it is an awkward marriage of Roman legal concepts with what sounds a lot like feudalism. In essence, Duhoux’s treatment reads the *ki-ti-me-na* as land granted directly from the centre to individual landholders. Duhoux’s treatment of the *ke-ke-me-na* plots also offers a rather palace-centred view of things. While individual interests in *ke-ke-me-na* land are typically said to be held ‘from the *damos*’ (*pa-ro da-mo*), Duhoux suggests that the *damos* did not really have ‘full power’ over that land (p. 584). The *damos* does grant out interests in land to individuals (the *o-na-to* and *e-to-ni-jo*), which Duhoux calls ‘conditions of tenure’ (p. 569), yet he maintains that the palace has the final say. The famous dispute between the priestess Eritha and the *damos* on PY Eb 297 and Ep 704.5–6 is offered as evidence, with Duhoux suggesting the fact the record of the dispute has no resolution means the *damos*’s position is not decisive. Duhoux, like many others, suggests the palace must have decided, as ‘real owner of all these lands’ (p. 584). Duhoux reminds us that the palace’s ‘clerks so minutely controlled the *ke-ke-me-na* ground’ (p. 584; ‘controlled’ here meaning surveyed?), but do these limited surveys necessarily reflect ownership? Duhoux’s model reduces the *damos* to a manager of *ke-ke-me-na* land, which the palace owned in the end, so it is no different to *ki-ti-me-na* land in that respect. So is the *damos* just a tenant of the king’s who grants out plots to further subtenants? That is how Duhoux interprets the *ki-ti-me-na* land (p. 569). All in all, Duhoux’s proposed model is more palace-centred than the treatments by other scholars, including by De Fidio in ch. VIII (see p. 272). The *damos* is brought under the palatial umbrella by treating land held from it (*pa-ro da-mo*) as something like subinfeudation by a tenant of the king’s rather than as evidence of a communal or traditional authority over land, as believed by many other scholars. In sum, the introduction of the conception of ‘ownership’ has probably muddied the waters, and the feudal hangover still lingers.

A related and unresolved problem is posed by the bias of the land documents from Pylos, given their focus on a limited part of the territory under palatial influence and close to the centre. Duhoux’s chapter does not offer

a detailed treatment of the question of the land regime in the periphery. Duhoux follows the caution expressed already by Ventris and Chadwick who had questioned whether the Pylian land records represented an ‘exceptional’ situation (see pp. 567–8).⁸ Yet the new chapter does not address the theory, cautiously promoted by Killen in another handbook, of decreasing palatial control further from the centre.⁹ Duhoux nevertheless accepts the reading of a handful of tablets which provide evidence for a concession of land in compensation for killing (pp. 577, 589–90, cf. pp. 606, 608). These certainly open the possibility that customary practices were the basis for some land relations, in this instance customs which are attested in the Archaic period. This perhaps does not sit well with Duhoux’s emphasis on the palace’s ‘ownership’ of land. In this respect, we can perceive a key difference with the general view promoted in this handbook by Bennet (ch. VII, see pp. 262–4), who emphasises the territorial contingency of palatial control. Overall, Duhoux’s presentation of the land regime highlights the interpretive problems for future studies of the land regime, however the treatment offers a somewhat confused picture of the categories of land and forms of proprietary relations. This owes more to the difficulty of overcoming the burden posed by a confused scholarship, to which Duhoux’s treatment has responded with a welcome attempt at a fresh reading.

The other very interesting theme for legal historians concerns documents which record relations of obligation between individuals or between individuals and the palace. These include those which describe the operation of tributes, with a technical vocabulary built around the verb *δίδομι*: *dosmoi* (‘assessment’), *apudosis* (‘actual consignment’), *ou didonsi* (because of an exemption?), and other terms (p. 280, cf. p. 633). De Fidio emphasises the relevant terminology as ‘a vocabulary lacking in technicality, based on the somewhat vague notion of ‘donation’ and ‘giving’, applied in contexts that are not of reciprocity, but of unequal social relationships’ (p. 282). A key problem is whether the documents provide any evidence for relations of reciprocity or exchange involving what De Fidio calls ‘free “bargaining”’ (p. 282). Two relevant terms are the main interests in land, the *o-na-to* and

⁸ Michael Ventris and John Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1973), 443.

⁹ J. T. Killen, ‘Mycenaean Economy’, in *A Companion to Linear B: Mycenaean Greek Texts and Their World*, ed. Yves Duhoux and Anna Morpurgo Davies, vol. 1, *Bibliothèque des Cahiers de l’Institut de Linguistique de Louvain* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 165–71.

e-to-ni-jo, which have tended to be glossed as leaseholds, the latter perhaps privileged in some way. In his chapter on land, Duhoux notes that the *o-na-to*-holders are called *o-na-te-re* (e.g. on PY En 74, 609) which suggests they ‘bestow a benefit’ on the higher landholder rather than receive one (p. 582). Similarly, both De Fidio and Killen interpret the related word *o-no* (e.g. on PY An 35.5) as standing for a payment owed for a product or services (pp. 283, 460). The attestation of the aorist of *πρίαμαι* on some Knossian records of sales of slaves (KN B 822, 988, cf. Ai(3) 1037: *qi-ri-ja-to*, cf. *πρίατο*) had been provocatively interpreted by Olivier, together with other indications, as evidence of the reliance of the palatial records on private transactions, arguing for the existence of written contracts.¹⁰ Killen treats this as ‘excessive’ (p. 450), though Del Freo leaves open the possibility that private transactions were recorded on documents which have not survived (pp. 230–1). In this barter economy payments were in kind, for which De Fidio interestingly points out that in Homer the verb *πρίαμαι* is accompanied by an instrumental determinant (p. 283). De Fidio does not offer a view on whether these Knossian tablets relied on other written private contracts (though seems open to the general idea, at p. 285), but stresses that the tablets which attest *qi-ri-ja-to* are merely records of the ‘registration of transfer of property’ (p. 283). Shelmerdine similarly makes the point that the verb shows that the purchase conferred true ‘ownership’ of slaves (pp. 303–4). Duhoux thus speaks of chattel slavery (pp. 577–8). Also important is De Fidio’s reminder that the documents are silent on trade, for which we have overwhelming archaeological evidence (p. 285). Overall, the intensive activities of production and exchange were evidently supported by a system of relations of obligations for which the tablets provide scant detail. Still, the handbook shows an interest in conceiving these obligations in terms of legal relations, providing another avenue for a legal historical approach. The suggestion that some shepherds herded flocks under contract, in addition to whatever they themselves owned, shows that contractual relations are a popular motif for conceiving the juridical relations which supported at least part of the productive economy (discussed by De Fidio at p. 273). There is evidence that reciprocal contractual obligations were not the basis

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Olivier, ‘Des extraits de contrats de vente d’esclaves dans les tablettes de Knossos’, in *Studies in Mycenaean and Classical Greek Presented to John Chadwick*, ed. John T. Killen, José L. Melena, and Jean-Pierre Olivier, *Minos* 20–22 (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1987), 479–98.

of all production, as suggested by other, perhaps more vertical, labour relations (in perfume production, for example: pp. 274–5, 301–2, cf. 750; also bronze: pp. 278–9). Nevertheless, the treatments on the economy across several chapters in this handbook perhaps indicate a greater sensitivity to the limitations of the documentary evidence. De Fidio reminds us that the palatial archival practices may well have deprived us of information or evidence of phenomena that did well exist, but was not registered in the tablets kept for a short-term administrative need (p. 288; cf. Del Frio at pp. 214, 229–30). In the field of obligations, it appears that scholars are keen to avoid assuming one model explains all relations. Does the fact that some relations are more horizontal while others appear to be more vertical reveal a complexity explained only by the fact that palatial intervention in the economy never crowded out non-palatial production? Many scholars now emphasise the archaeological evidence for productive activities which are never mentioned by the tablets. Perhaps this is an area ripe for a future legal historical treatment of the Mycenaean evidence for productive relations, one which may identify a diversity of forms of obligation rather than one coherent model.

In sum, this new handbook has highlighted the emergence of several important themes in the study of these earliest of Greek documents which relate to key problems in legal history generally, specifically questions of forms of property and relations of obligation. The increasing appeal to legal conceptions in the specialist scholarship follows what appears to be a growing interest in the scope of palatial power from the perspective of its role as a source of normative order, or what we can loosely describe as the ‘jurisdiction’ of the Mycenaean palaces. This concerns the extent of palatial control of land relations as much as it touches the subject of private transactions and the relations of obligation on which economic production was based. We must hope that this new accessible handbook may prompt legal historians to consider whether, say, Mycenaean ‘law’ followed the pattern of the palace’s limited and strategic intervention in the productive economy. Despite the absence of a dedicated treatment of the problem of law in the *New Documents* (the chapters of which reflect the epistemological framework followed in the other handbooks) there are many scattered indications through the two volumes that legal themes are at the centre of key problems in the specialist Mycenaean scholarship. While the barriers to a treatment of the subject are well known (beyond the paucity of the

sources, the ‘ephemerality’ of the documentary practices of the palace bureaucrats), the up-to-date thematic chapters in *New Documents* define the task for future scholars, including those coming from the perspective of legal history. Certainly there shall have to be an openness to approaching the sources on their own terms, rather than trying to assimilate them with evidence from another time or place. Such comparisons — say, with the Near Eastern cuneiform documents, or Archaic Greek inscribed laws — have led many to consider legal themes irrelevant to the Mycenaean palatial records, because their documentary forms do not neatly align with categories of legal documents from other contexts. A legal historical approach shall only be possible with an effort to understand the conceptual frameworks constructed by these earliest Greek documents themselves, including their textual and formulaic structure, and the tablets’ material function within their administrative and social context.

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