

Perati at the end of the Late Helladic IIIB. In this way, Vravron is now beginning to find a place in the study of the political geography of Mycenaean Attica (for a recent overview, see Privitera 2013).

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MARIAN H. FELDMAN. *Communities of style: portable luxury arts, identity, and collective memory in the Iron Age Levant*. 2014. xvii+250 pages, 64 colour and b&w illustrations. Chicago (IL) & London: University of Chicago Press; 978-0-226-10561-1 hardback £49.



There is always a sense of unease around discussions of the luxury arts of the Iron Age Levant. The exquisite carved ivories, bronze bowls, and decorated shells that fill museum cases

from New York to Baghdad are routinely labelled 'Phoenician' or 'Syrian' despite the fact that very few come from Syria and none from Phoenicia—instead, these highly stylised artefacts are usually found in neighbouring regions, including Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Cyprus, Italy and Greece. Marian Feldman's highly readable new book neatly sidesteps this longstanding problem of provenance to concentrate instead on the role that portable luxury goods played in the construction of community identities in different

contexts and places in the Mediterranean between c. 1200 and 600 BC. She is interested not in finding overall explanations or models, but in reconstructing the varied stories of individual items at different stages of their working lives. It is a refreshing approach to these artefacts that also offers new interpretative tools to those working on the art of other times and places.

Chapter 1 focuses on the ivories, dispensing swiftly with the fundamentally insoluble problem of where they were made. While "the overall density of coextensive material remains—monumental and small-scale arts of several different media—provides support for a generally Levantine regional context" (p. 3), any attempts to go beyond that to identify individual 'workshops' attached to particular city-states are doomed to fail. There is simply not enough information, and the whole notion of production based on 'workshops' assumes the universality of the artisanal models of the Italian Renaissance, so central to art historical training in connoisseurship; instead, Feldman proposes that there was a network of skilled practices reaching across and beyond the Levant.

Another traditional approach to ancient art associates style with environment in a context of separate historical 'cultures', even seeing it as expressive of the spirit of particular regions and their inhabitants. Feldman demonstrates the reductiveness of this approach, in that the standard division of the ivories into a 'north Syrian' and a more Egyptianising 'Phoenician' style is difficult to maintain in the face of objects that mix both styles, and that it obscures what is much more probably a chronological distinction.

Chapter 2 continues the chronological investigation, looking at the imitation in the 'north Syrian' luxury artefacts (especially the ivories) of stylistic features that are also found in the Late Bronze Age. This practice actively produces pan-regional communities of memory by evoking a past golden age of heroic kingship that links its producers and consumers. This was perhaps especially important in a time of social and political upheaval, when commercialism, imperialism and ethno-linguistic balkanisation were threatening older ways of life.

Chapter 3 turns to a very different artistic milieu, that of the Assyrian court. In contrast to the flexible Levantine style, Assyrian art is highly standardised, and Feldman convincingly argues that this phenomenon is not simply the result of a centralised state, but actively helps to consolidate

that courtly community. She goes on to suggest that this consolidation operates in part through the 'Assyrianisation' of subject regions, in the sense that Assyrian court art portrays foreign peoples, places and objects not in the ways that they did themselves, but in the standard Assyrian flat style. At first this seems unconvincing: why would artists working in Assyria not use their own style for all the subjects that they portray? But then Feldman produces a rabbit out of her hat in the form of the Assyrian depiction of Babylonian themes, where the much higher and more rounded forms of Babylonian art are indeed imported along with the Babylonian people and the things that they portray. This must relate, as she suggests, to the more complex relationship that the Assyrian kings had with Babylonia, "seeing themselves as the rightful inheritors and stewards of the Babylonian cultural tradition" (p. 106).

Chapter 4 moves from a primary focus on ivories to bronze bowls, and in particular those with inscriptions. Although these come in several different languages and scripts, they all consist of relatively simple declarations of ownership. Feldman argues, in what is probably her most speculative move, that these statements "claimed a subjecthood for the bowls—the bowls as extended personhood of the named individual—that signalled notions of timeless belonging" (p. 113).

These inscriptions also raise issues of secondary use and recirculation, with some post-dating the bowls themselves by centuries, and this theme is continued in a fascinating final chapter on the afterlives of Levantine luxury goods in new places. It is striking that commerce, often supposed to be the motor behind the production of these goods, is not in fact required as an explanation for their mobility. And whether taken as booty, scavenged or sent to foreign sanctuaries, these artefacts are often appreciated abroad for things that have nothing to do with their original function or context, such as the bronze bridal components that are preserved as works of art in themselves in Samos and Eretria, or the bronze relief bands reused as decorations for the skirts of Greek statues at Olympia. It is easy to see how the Iron Age stories Feldman tells in this chapter could be continued to cover the same objects' displacement and display in modern times, further stages in long journeys that put geographic labels beside the point.

There are moments where the argument moves a little fast, most notably in the initial confirmation of a general 'Levantine' provenance for these artefacts,

and there is the very occasional resort to statistical arguments in which the numbers involved are really too small to be significant. But this is an important and exciting book, which will be read with profit and enjoyment by scholars of times and places well beyond the Iron Age Levant.

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NATALIA VOGKOFF-BROGAN. *Mochlos III: the Late Hellenistic settlement: the beam-press complex* (Prehistory Monograph 48). 2014. xx+143 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 7 tables. Philadelphia (PA): INSTAP Academic; 978-1-931534-78-9 hardback £55.



The Hellenistic period (c. late fourth–first centuries BC) on the island of Crete has never garnered even a fraction of the attention granted to the Bronze Age. Indeed, historical remains were often considered a nuisance, to be removed to provide better access to prehistoric material. Such was the case for the site of Mochlos, a small island located off the north-east coast of Crete, approximately 18km west of the city of Siteia. Home to an important Bronze Age settlement, the site was first excavated by Richard Seager in 1908. His report (Seager 1909) on these excavations shows a lack of enthusiasm for the Hellenistic- and Roman-period structures situated above the Bronze Age town—he removed them without documentation. When excavations at Mochlos recommenced in 1989 under the direction of Jeffery Soles and Costis Davaras, they decided on a different approach and gave equal treatment to historical remains, which included several Hellenistic buildings.

Vogeikoff-Brogan's book represents the first full publication of Hellenistic material from Mochlos. Her focus is on the beam-press complex, a structure of the late second century BC located outside the circuit wall that enclosed an extensive Late Hellenistic settlement at Mochlos. The complex was excavated from 1991–1992 and stands as one of the site's largest and best-preserved Hellenistic structures. The name derives from a beam-press feature uncovered in one of the rooms of the complex, consisting of a platform of large boulders topped by flat schist slabs, with a stone

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