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SE-106 91 Stockholm
editor@ecsi.se

SECRETARY'S ADDRESS:

Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Uppsala University
Box 626
SE-751 26 Uppsala
secretary@ecsi.se

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Cover illustration from Blid *et al.* in this volume, p. 188

is the construction of the large chevron-shaped *proteichisma* with its rows of catapult emplacements and ditches A and B. Mertens compares this arrangement with the outworks at Selinunte, also studied in depth and published by Mertens and his team. These outworks have already been dated by several scholars to the time of Agathokles of Syracuse (around 307/6 BC). Mertens is here thus lifting back also the outworks at Syracuse to the time of Agathokles. This conclusion stands in contrast to earlier works dating them to the time of Hieron II (269–215 BC), designed by his engineer Archimedes, an idea originally put forward by A.W. Lawrence in 1947, whose argument for this is that the *proteichisma*, and especially ditch B with its underground passages were never completed. The reason for this was the capture of Syracuse by Marcellus and Rome in 212/211 BC, which interrupted the construction of the outworks. To this latest moment of Syracusan independence, which is Merten's phase V, rooms inside the fort and some small closing-off walls are ascribed, for example wall 13 (no. 18 on Beil. 1, Abb. 172), which prevented anyone from entering the huge ditch C. According to Mertens, we are back at a passive approach to defensive strategy (p. 293). Posterns and openings are being walled-up. So, according to this publication, nothing of the outworks at Syracuse can be assigned to the engineer Archimedes.

This book is an excellent publication with useful and detailed drawings. As stated by Mertens several times, this is a study of the walls on the Epipolai plateau, but there are also several very well-researched and informative sections of walls of the other regions of Syracuse, such as Ortygia and Achradina (pp. 241–255).

LARS KARLSSON
Department of Archaeology and Ancient history
Uppsala University
Box 626
SE-751 26 Uppsala

D. Panagiotopoulos, *Mykenische Siegelpraxis. Funktion, Kontext und administrative Verwendung mykenischer Tonplomben aus dem griechischen Festland und Kreta* (Athenaia, 5), München: Max Hirmer Verlag 2014. xiv + 394 pp., 60 figs. ISBN 978-3-7774-2288-6.

This long-awaited monograph, the publication of Panagiotopoulos' *Habilitationsschrift*, is the most comprehensive synthesis on Mycenaean sealing practices currently available. Earlier, we had the quite readable account in Olga Krzyszkowska's *Aegean seals. An introduction* (2005), which made extensive use of the conclusions and analyses of the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (CMS) project. The latter recently moved (December 2011) to Heidelberg, under the

joint supervision of Panagiotopoulos and Maria Anastasiadou (www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zaw/cms). Panagiotopoulos' research has followed closely and expanded significantly on the CMS mass of data.

Following a short introduction (pp. 1–7), where the author outlines the scope, aims, and methods of this work, the volume is divided in twelve chapters, grouped in three parts.

The first part deals with the reconstruction of the historical framework of Mycenaean seal use. Chapter 1 (pp. 9–30) aims to provide a general overview of the Mycenaean palace economy that employed the sealings, focusing on three realms of activity that Panagiotopoulos identifies as the main “structural components”: production, accumulation, and exchange, and the involvement (or not) of sealings in each one of these interconnected segments. From the outset, Panagiotopoulos views the palace both as an economic and as an ideological institution. Chapter 2 (pp. 31–56) deals with the (Cretan) predecessors of the Mycenaean system and provides a good overview of those sealing types associated with the Linear A script (cf. previously E. Hallager's, *The Minoan roundel*, 1996). Panagiotopoulos discusses a number of interesting aspects in Neopalatial sealing administration, such as the so-called “intensive seal use” (evident e.g. in Ayia Triada), the practice of multiple sealing on the same document, the problem of similar seals (“look-alikes”) used in the same contexts, the relationship between sealings and clay tablets, and particularly the so-called Knossos “replica rings” (precious metal rings that had produced identical impressions on sealings from different sites in Central Crete, East Crete, and Akrotiri, Thera). A final section assesses the considerable—to say the least—distance between Neopalatial and Mycenaean seal use, and Panagiotopoulos advances the interesting hypothesis of a Cretan Hieroglyphic “substrate” that affected the formation of the Mycenaean sealing system (p. 56). One hopes that pertinent discussion will be rejuvenated by the forthcoming publication (by Erik and Birgitta Hallager) of the Late Minoan II–IIIA1 (late 15th–early 14th centuries BC) material from Chania, crucial for our understanding of the process that led to the formation of the Mycenaean system, largely known from 13th century BC contexts (pp. 35, 265).

The second part provides a detailed analysis of the archaeological evidence for seal use. Chapter 3 (pp. 57–105) has the convenient form of a gazetteer, discussing the contexts in which sealings have been found. Greek mainland (Pylos, Thebes, Mycenae, Midea, Tiryns, and Menelaion) and Cretan (Knossos, Malia, Chania, and Kommos) find-places are considered in detail, accompanied by plans, indicating the distribution and contextual associations of specific sealing types in the various assemblages. Presentation is thorough, clear, and

valuable, even with the omission of an interesting—yet typologically obscure—fragmentary sealing from Kolonna.¹

The typology of Mycenaean sealings is outlined in Chapter 4 (pp. 107–122). Panagiotopoulos follows closely the CMS terminology, with one significant modification: the distinction of what he calls *kanonische Schnurplomben*, corresponding to Krzyszkowska's "gable-shaped hanging nodules" (*Aegean seals*, op. cit., pp. 218–219, 280) and Hallager's "regular string nodule."² Panagiotopoulos' "nicht-kanonische Schnurplombe" are a heterogeneous grouping equivalent to Krzyszkowska's "irregular hanging nodules" (*Aegean seals*, op. cit., pp. 219–220, 280–281) and Hallager's "irregular string nodules" ('Uniformity', op. cit., pp. 254–258), even if the internal subdivisions of this category are different in Hallager. One wishes that this crucial distinction had been made explicit in the typological summary table (p. 111) and in the excellent illustrations accompanying the discussion of contexts in Chapter 3. Other types should be familiar to students of Aegean administrations (*Objektschnurplomben* = combination nodules/sealings; *Stopper* = stoppers; *Objektplomben* = direct-object sealings; *Noduli*; "*Päckchenplomben*" = flat-based nodules; "*Tonstempel*" = "clay seals"; *Schnurendplomben* = single-hole hanging nodules); the possible identification of two "*Schnurendplomben*" (single-hole hanging nodules)—a type otherwise exclusively Neopalatial—at Mycenae and Knossos respectively is of great interest (p. 117). Although not belonging within the scope of the book *sensu stricto*, Panagiotopoulos also briefly discusses those few inscribed nodules that bore no seal impressions, found at Knossos and Pylos, which he terms "*clay labels*" (pp. 120–121; English in the original).

Chapter 5 (pp. 123–160) deals in an original way with the messages conveyed by the seal impressions themselves. The double function of the image on the seal impression is assessed in a rigorous manner. On the one hand, the seal image functioned as an indexical sign, confirming the identity of the seal owner and therefore authenticating the sealed document (p. 123–124); Panagiotopoulos stresses that the diversity of the motifs would be insufficient to distinguish different *individuals*, and that the existence of similar motifs in the same context(s) suggests rather affiliation between seal-users, perhaps representing broader entities (such as kin-groups, factions, or administrative offices). On the other hand, seal images maintained an iconic function (pp. 124–133); the author

makes the important observation that the images on the seal impressions can be classified into just few major semantic categories (participation in ritual action; real and fantastic predators in heraldic arrangement; scenes of combat and hunting; domestic animals and wild game), which thus represent a Mycenaean *orbis pictus*, a collection of images which were emically significant as representations of fundamental values of the palatial society (p. 149). The final sections discuss the problem of the discrepancy between the accepted early chronology of the seals and the later date of the sealed documents themselves, for which Panagiotopoulos supports a provocative solution: to allow for the possibility that some production of seals and signet rings continued down to the 13th century BC (pp. 158–160).

Chapter 6 (pp. 161–187) deals with the inscriptions found on sealed documents (predominantly on "canonical" or "regular" gable-shaped string nodules). Technical/administrative terms, place-names and ethnics, as well as commodity signs are discussed (but the signs for "man" and "woman" on the Knossian *noduli* Wn 8713 and 8752 are omitted). Interpretations are sensible, even if not always the preferred ones: *me-ka-ro-de*/Megaronde/ on the Midea sealing MI Wv 6.β1 need not imply the residence of the local ruler or the Midea citadel itself (p. 174): it is at least just as likely that **me-ka-ro* (perhaps Megaron indeed) was a place-name located somewhere else in the Argolid (cf. the plural form Megara).

The third part attempts to synthesize all previously presented information in order to reconstruct sealing practices in each of those sites that have yielded sufficient evidence. Chapters 7–10 (pp. 189–247) discuss evidence from various contexts at Pylos, Mycenae, Thebes, and Knossos respectively. This approach allows both the differences and the similarities between palace centres to become clear.

Chapter 11 (pp. 249–263) revisits certain fundamental questions about the function of the various sealing types and their relationship to the tablets. Panagiotopoulos distinguishes between the securing and the labelling function of the non-canonical and canonical string nodules respectively, and presents some very interesting thoughts regarding the physical attachment of certain string-nodules to some elongated tablets bearing string-marks (pp. 253–254). The author is successful in outlining the relative flexibility in the employment of the various sealing types, stressing the ultimately palatial character of their use (although whether sealings were employed in exchange between palatial centres is more debatable).

A short concluding Chapter 12 (pp. 265–271) presents conveniently the main results and perspectives of the preceding chapters (cf. Panagiotopoulos' 'A systemic approach to the Mycenaean sealing system', in *Die Bedeutung der minoischen und mykenischen Glyptik*, edited by W. Müller, CMS Beiheft 8, Mainz 2009, pp. 297–307). The author's own characteriza-

¹ W. Gauss, 'Ägina Kolonna in frühmykenischer Zeit', in *Keimelion: Elitenbildung und Elitärer Konsum von der Mykenischen Palastzeit bis zur Homerischen Epoche*, eds. E. Alram-Stern & G. Nightingale, Wien 2007, 166–167, fig. 6.

² E. Hallager, 'Uniformity in seal use and sealing practice during the LH/LM period', in *Ariadne's threads. Connections between Crete and the Greek mainland in Late Minoan III (LM IIIA2 to LM IIIC)*, eds. A.-L. D'Agata, J. Moody & E. Williams, Athens 2005, 253–254

tion of this book as “eine erste Zwischenbilanz des Materials” (p. 271) displays an ideal proportion of modesty.

Three appendices (pp. 273–328) contain indispensable concordance lists of all properly published (in *CMS* and associated publications) Mycenaean sealings. The bibliography (pp. 329–347) is full up to 2011, with only one entry not updated before the submission of the manuscript at the end of 2012: ‘Hallager im Druck b’ (p. 334) was published in 2011.

The abundance, high quality and informativeness of the illustrations (most of them plans and graphs in colour) accompanying the data presentation (mostly in Chapters 3–5) deserve high praise. Overall, this excellent monograph should be consulted and carefully considered by anyone with a serious interest in understanding the workings of the Mycenaean palatial administrations. While maintaining the interest of the expert reader, it can now also be recommended as the best introduction to Mycenaean sealing practice to students and non-expert professionals alike.

VASSILIS PETRAKIS
Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs
vpetrakisrm@yahoo.gr

S. Vargas Vázquez, *Diseños geométricos en los mosaicos de Écija (Sevilla)* (BAR-IS, 2654), Oxford: Archaeopress 2014. 202 pp., 21 figs., 48 plates, 53 geometric drawings. ISBN 978-1-4073-1296-5.

This innovative book focuses on the geometric mosaics of the Roman city of Colonia Augusta Firma Astigi, modern Écija in Andalusia, Spain. The study presents a way to reconstruct the geometric patterns on mosaic floors in an accessible arrangement. Most importantly, the book gives a convincing picture of the creative process of imaginative geometricians and skilled craftsmen. This work is a substantial achievement founded on the decoding of the geometric compositions through a system of construction drawings developed on AutoCAD by the author. They show how the basic forms relate and in ever-changing combinations generate new patterns of great complexity and visual attraction.

The publication is a shortened version of the author’s extensive thesis defended at the University of Pablo Olavide, Seville in 2013/2014. Written in Spanish, the volume comprises an informative abstract in English, an introduction, and six chapters, followed by black and white plates, graphic documentation, and a bibliography. The catalogue contains 48 selected well-conserved geometric mosaics among the originally collected 78 of the city, as those that are lost or fragmented are omitted in this publication.

In the introduction and abstract the author presents an informative setting of the study and its place in a larger future project covering the geometric mosaics of the whole region of Bética. An overall aim is set to increase the interest in and heighten the value of geometric motifs in Roman mosaics, which have been overshadowed by figurative motifs in previous studies. The author rightly remarks that this is in contrast to the role geometry held in the contemporary Roman world. As one of the practical branches of mathematics, geometry was central for the advancements in architecture, engineering, urban planning, and surveying, not to mention the role it played in the embellishing of different sorts of material.

Chapter 1 (“Methodology”) (the following titles are the reviewer’s translation) introduces the arrangement of the book and the catalogue, described in more detail below. Chapter 2 (“Historic contexts”) presents the ancient settings for the mosaics, the city of Astigi, which played a significant role in the history of economic success of Bética and dating from Emperor Augustus time, about AD 14onwards. Situated in one of the most fertile areas of the Iberian peninsula and ideally placed in the centre of the region, Astigi’s production of olive oil, which constituted the main base for its wealth, reached its peak under Emperor Hadrian. This coincides with the city’s maximum size and its monumental architecture between the 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD. The period of abundant mosaic production is longer, extending from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD.

Chapter 3 (“Current state of research”) affirms that the mosaics of the city equal those of other large cities in the Roman Empire, but their number, quality, and originality differ from the rest of Bética and they have evoked great interest since their discovery. The excavation history starts in the 1940s resulting in the first publication in 1951 (Hernandez Sanchez Collantes de Terán), which according to the custom of the time, primarily focused on well-known mosaics with mythological motifs. New studies took place during the 1950s and the interest continued in the 1970s and 1980s. G. López Monteagudo is mentioned as a forerunner who has explored the area since 1992 emphasizing the iconographic uniqueness of the figurative motifs.

Chapter 4 (“Catalogue”) presents in the first part the 48 mosaic panels, which are organized according to their location. The second part presents the plates with photographs or drawings of the mosaic panels found in Écija that display the patterns focused on by the study. The catalogue includes a general description with an overview of the geometric area, followed by a closer presentation of the basic geometric structures and a chronology. The establishment of a timeline presented larger problems than expected, since fundamental and reliable information was missing and geometric motifs were used over an extensive time-span.