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THE PHOENICIANS IN TARTESSOS

Michał Krueger, *Estructura social tartésica a través del ejemplo de la necrópolis de Setefilla (Lora del Río, Sevilla)*, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona 2010, XXX + 337 pp.

The study of Michał Krueger focuses on the prehistoric society of the early Iron Age from the locality of Setefilla in southern Spain. It is a site of the so-called Tartessian culture (from the unidentified town of Tartessos), which, in the middle of the first millennium BC, covered a substantial area of Andalucía (see p. X–XII). The development of Setefilla dates from the close of the Bronze Age to the 4th century BC. The choice of the site results primarily from the state of knowledge of its necropolises, especially tumuli A and B, which were utilised in the 8th–7th century BC, and therefore in the beginnings of the Iron Age (see p. XII–XV). Apart from archaeological research, one is also concerned here with anthropological investigation, which, within the Tartessos area, precisely the area which interests the author in view of its penetration by the Phoenicians, had been carried out only for Setefilla (see p. XV). The purpose of the dissertation is to provide a picture of the Tartessian social structure in Setefilla at the beginning of the Iron Age (p. VII, IX). In other words, one of the incentives to embark on a research in this field was also the wish to examine the Phoenician component in its cultural make-up.

The arrangement of the work is perspicuous. It is divided into six chapters, which feature an internal division into subchapters. The whole is preceded by a thorough introduction (p. V–XXIX), which specifies the aims of the work, its territorial and chronological extent, provides information about the sources (these are the reports from excavations on the tumuli A and B, including unpublished material) and on the methodology of the work. With regard to the latter, Michał Krueger emphasizes the necessity to “proceed in small steps”: first, to establish a material basis (collated at the end of the work in an extensive annex in the form of tables and a catalogue), followed by its detailed spatial analysis (i.e. the placement of artefacts and osseous remains at the moment of their discovery) and a statistical analysis, with the application of the PAST software. At the analytical stage, Michał Krueger employs the methodology of processual archaeology, while in the interpretative phase he resorts to the achievements of the post-processual archaeology (see p. XVI). On the

one hand, the author requires this “split” methodological approach to present appropriately the results of the research, which has not been undertaken as yet in the case of Setefilla, or which has been carried out to an insufficient degree, while on the other, to “abandon the paradigm of social classes, which has been widespread in the archaeology in the recent years” (p. XVI).

The comprehensive first chapter, “Social structure and archaeology” (*Estructura social y arqueología*, p. 1–32) is an attempt to situate archaeology in the context of sciences such as sociology and anthropology, to whose methods the author resorts. The issue in question is the notion of social structure in the research of those disciplines with its transposition for the needs of archaeology. Here, Michał Krueger draws on the views of such scholars as Anthony Giddens, Michael Foucault, Ian Hodder or Claude Lévi-Strauss. Consequently, he assumes, following Ian Hodder, that the social system is — in general terms — the entirety of relations which occur in a social group among its members, the system of authority and dependencies. The social structure, on the other hand, is contained within the principles which regulate the functioning of a social system. Naturally, this is associated with a specific ideology. “For the purpose of this work, writes Michał Krueger, I accept precisely that definition of social structure, because it allows the funeral monuments to be perceived not as «frozen» social reality, but as the result of ideology and numerous actions rooted in culture and ritual traditions” (p. 32).

The second chapter, „The necropolis of Setefilla” (*La necrópolis de Setefilla*, p. 35–56), is a systematic description of the entire site, and hence all tumuli, with separate chronological stages for mounds A and B. The reader will find here a short presentation of the history of research in Setefilla (p. 36–41). The singular phenomenon of the necropolis was moving earlier burials into other locations, which — as the author aptly observes — is not easy to account for due to the shortage of analogies. The custom of dismembering corpses is also an intriguing aspect, as evidenced in tumuli A and B, throughout all stages of their use.

Chapter three, “Analysis of the grave goods in Setefilla” (*Breve studio de los elementos de ajuar de Setefilla*, p. 59–81), comes down to a detailed analysis of the accoutrements of the necropolis (urns, bowls, knives and other metal objects, etc.). It is important that artefacts originating from the tombs A and B display evident homogeneity with the material from the entire necropolis, which implies a definite research approach. The conducted detailed analysis of the material establishes a foundation for further investigation of the rites of the community of Setefilla.

Chapters four and five, entitled “Statistical analysis-” and “Spatial analysis of the tumuli A and B” respectively (*Análisis estadístico de los tumulos A y B; Análisis espacial de los túmulos A y B*, p. 83–128), constitute the essential part of the work.

The first of those is devoted to demonstrating the relationships between sex, age and the grave goods. In general, this can be observed for adult specimens, principally adult ones, and objects made of metal (knives, belt buckles, and double spring fibulas), and this is the best identifiable group (p. 111). Apart from certain exceptions, a decisive majority of the grave goods was found in burials of both sexes.

The distribution of burials within tumuli (chapter five) points to a certain regularity, although one cannot exclude random behaviour here. Every type of urn had a specific place in the funeral space. For instance bowls, utilised as urns, would always be situated in the peripheral space. The pattern is in evidence both in the tumulus A and the tumulus B. It cannot be ruled out, states the author, that incineration in bowls had a votive character (see p. 127)

Chapter six, “Body, cultural gender and age in Setefilla” (*Cuerpo, género y edad en Setefilla*, p. 131–171), completes the deliberations. The research permitted, claims the author, to draw a picture of the society of the transitional period, rooted in the culture of the late Bronze Age, undoubtedly autochthonous (p. 174), which simultaneously is exposed to stimuli from a foreign culture, namely Phoenician (see p. 169–171).

The extensive “Conclusions” (*Conclusiones y perspectivas*, p. 173–178) recapitulates the entirety of conducted research. Above all, the author highlights the presence of artefacts associated with Phoenicians, which in his view had a vital influence on the development of the society in Setefilla. As a result of the contacts, there ensued a wealth-related stratification and a gradual replacement of family relationships with economic ones.

As already noted, the dissertation has been provided with an annex (p. 321–326). It includes, besides a map locating Setefilla, an extensive documentation of both tumuli. It also demonstrates the thoroughness and diligence of the research carried out by Michał Krueger. The exhaustive bibliography (p. 181–200) makes one aware of the scope, and at the same time of the degree of difficulty of studies which he had undertaken.

The image of the society of Setefilla obtained in the course of the research is not and cannot be unambiguous. On the one hand, the sources remain fragmentary in any case. On the other, drawing conclusions concerning relations between sex, age, and social hierarchy, mutual dependencies etc. on the basis of discovered artefacts and the spatial distribution of urns with ashes are fraught with a large degree of risk. Nevertheless it remains — and I fully support the standpoint of the author here — the only method of reconstructing the organization of prehistoric communities. An undeniable achievement of Michał Krueger’s research is demonstrating the presence of Phoenician component in Setefilla accompanied by the

justified thesis that it contributed to the precipitation of transformations within the Setefillian community.

Without doubt, the dissertation of Michał Krueger can be considered a significant scientific achievement. It constitutes an indisputable contribution to the research into the society of prehistoric Setefilla, and in more general terms, of the ancient Spain and the Phoenician relationships with it.