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Elias Petropoulos, *Homer and the East on Aegean Crossroads: History, Archaeology, Mythology*, Kleidarithmos Editions, Athens 2018. ISBN: 9789604618576, Pages: 527. Language: Greek with English Summary, Original title: *Όμηρος και Ανατολή στο σταυροδρόμι του Αιγαίου: Ιστορία, Αρχαιολογία, Μυθολογία.*

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The recent book by Mr. Elias K. Petropoulos, Associate Professor of Ancient History at the Democritus University of Thrace, entitled *Homer and the East at the crossroads of the Aegean. History, Archaeology, Mythology* is the fruit of painstaking research, careful methodology and thorough documentation. It is structured in four chapters with sub-chapters corresponding to the title of each chapter. It also includes Preface, Introduction (pp.19-30), Summary and conclusions (pp.409-436), Bibliography (pp.437-496), Abstract in English (pp. 497-518) and Index (pp. .519-527).

The density of information it contains is the result of commentary on direct and indirect sources, not only Greek, but also Khurrit, Hittite, Lubian, as he has deep knowledge of these languages, but also cuneiform and Lubian hieroglyphic writing. Extensive research of sources is combined with the assimilated knowledge of modern literature and fruitful reflection.

I quote some of the information I gained while studying this book. In the first chapter, entitled "Homer and the legacy of the Late Bronze Age" (pp. 31-105), the author focuses on the

importance of fiction and mythography and the contribution of myths to the foundation and consolidation of ancient Greek religion. He observes that some members of the Olympic Twelve, such as Apollo and Aphrodite, arrived as foreign deities from neighboring religious traditions through a channel of cultural and diplomatic communication. To understand how ideas and people circulate, he quotes excerpts from a document of the Hittite state. The learning of the Hittite language, which presupposes the knowledge of cuneiform, allows him to deduce the existence of relations between the Hittites and the Achiyavas at the end of the 14th century. e.g. Additional Hittite documents of the 13th c. e.g. reveal that the Greek king of Achiyava was held in high esteem by his Hittite counterpart, as evidenced by the address [My brother] on behalf of the Hittite king. It is an official declaration of recognition of the high position he held among the most powerful states of the time. He also quotes the text of a Hittite cuneiform tablet, dating to the second half of the 15th century. e.g., the first record of official contact between the Hittites and the Mycenaeans. Common features in Mycenaean and Hittite architecture in the middle of the 13th century. e.g. are pointed out, among them the resemblance of the Lions' Gate (symbol of the Hittite royal power) with a corresponding building in the area of ancient Phrygia.

Based on Hittite documents and archaeological findings, it is speculated that Homer received a rich legacy that was elaborated and incorporated into his monumental epic work. He focuses on these issues in the following chapters.

The second chapter ("Epic production in the East and the Greek world", pp. 107-262), deals with the connection of early Greek production with pre-existing epic creations from the Eastern Mediterranean, focusing on the works written by Hittites, Hurrians, Louvians professional scribes, during the second millennium BC.

Taking into account that the text of the 12th tablet of the Gilgamesh epic is a later addition made by the Neo-Assyrian scribes in honor of the Emperor Sargon (705 BC) and the fact that Homer knew of the existence and usefulness of a common alphabetic code of written communication, he argues that the text, considered to bear similarities with the subject of Achilles-Patroclus, was inspired by the Iliad and not that the transmission took place from Assyria to the Aegean, as it is thus far presupposed.

The book reinforces the prevailing view that the Assyrian poetic tradition has provided homeric epics with a variety of thematic images and logos. However, he notes that homeric heroes come from the local Greek tradition of the entire Greek world, an element that makes his epics of pan-Hellenic scope and impact. He points out that the verse of the last rhapsody of the Iliad, Ω 331-345, reflects the development of close relations between the greek and the

hittite epic tradition, which in turn was influenced by the babylonian and the akkadian tradition. More specifically, the episode, where Zeus asks Hermes to lead Priam so that the latter is not perceived by the Greeks, exists as it is in the epic of Ullikummi. The original is quoted in transliteration and five excerpts from this epic are quoted in translation, in which there is a description of the scene of the god who is wearing the wind sandals and is directly related to the Iliad. It is claimed that Homer knew the epic, as evidenced by some elements of similarity between Ullikummi and the unheroized Achilles, which he analyzes. It is considered possible that Homer, with the help of interpreters, had read Hittite and other archives kept in temple libraries and assumes that the original tradition of copying the texts continued even after the dissolution of the Hittite state. At the same time, the Greeks who came to live in the East gained access either by hearing or by learning to write. It is argued that Homer and Hesiod composed literary texts with the aim of consolidating the basic principles of the Greek religion, guided by the religious, social and political changes that took place in Greek society.

In the third chapter ("The Greeks and the sea", pp. 263-344) the shipwrecks of the end of the 14th and 13th century BC are first investigated as indisputable witnesses of the commercial activity and the development of shipping.

As far as the women and children mentioned on Mycenaean tablets are concerned, it is noted that the Mycenaeans raided the coasts of Central Asia with the aim of destroying and looting villages and cities and abducting women and children whom they used in primary production, including textiles, an extremely advanced art in Central Asia and Northern Syria. It is pointed out that the homeric Iliad and the plaques confirm and possibly complement each other in terms of information on kidnappings and looting. It refers to the disturbances and rearrangements in the wider area of the Mediterranean since 1250 BC. which led the Mycenaean world to its end, to the collapse of political and economic organization and to the disappearance of writing. He observes that the contacts, although reduced, did not stop with the typical example of the tomb of the 12th c. e.g. in Perati, where the deceased is accompanied by elaborate bounties from Syria and Palestine. The migration movement of the Achaeans, and the role of Cyprus as the crossroads in the maritime communication network of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean are pointed out, while Ionians starting from Athens moved to Western Central Asia, where they founded the Ionian public. He comments on the views expressed regarding the settlement of Al Mina, by Euboeans, who continue the glorious Mycenaean past in the sea connections from North Aegean. He also comments on the information of Herodotus regarding the founding of Cyrene and the journey of Colaeus to

Tartarus and notes that this journey, of the first Greek traveler who managed to cross the Strait of Gibraltar, was not unplanned.

In the last chapter ("New Assyria and Homer's message", pp. 345-407), the author explores the emergence of the New Assyrian Empire under Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 BC), who launched an expansionist policy with successors as far back as Ashurbanipal. He points out that the organization, enforcement and management of a well-organized control mechanism in all international ports located in the region of Cilicia, Northern Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, had as a result the creation of the first known system of world economy. He refers to the Greek mercenaries who serve in the Assyrian army and to other rulers of the Near East, who in return show their financial prosperity with various offerings in temples. It seems that they themselves were forced to learn the language of their host country, which not only served the need to communicate with their comrades-in-arms but was also a great cultural weapon. He mentions the beginning of the Odyssey as a typical example.

He disproves the view that Homer composed the Iliad under the fear of the Assyrians and accepts that the message of the homeric works is to cultivate national conscience and reconciliation in a general spirit of amity against every enemy.

He investigates the causes of the transition from the cosmogony of Homer and Hesiod to cosmology, the development of the city as a form of state and the formation of a strong middle class. He points out that since that time the law has been a key element of claim by members of society. However, while he outlines the social upheavals and the causes behind them, he downplays the importance of the introduction of the hoplite phalanx. This in no way diminishes the value of Mr. Petropoulos' multifaceted research and the book's offer, as I think was evident from the quotation of the information gathered.

A.R.Ch.