

The break between the Mycenaean world and the Homeric

Homeric poems ignore the movements of people in the period after the fall of Mycenae

p. 196 In the Homeric ^{poems} poems, the property regime, in particular, was already fully stabilized. . . The regime which we see in the poems was, above all, one of private ownership.

p. 197 There were no feudal . . . tenures in the Homeric world . . .

The Mycenaean tablets, on the contrary, suggest that in their world conditional tenures were the rule.

p. 202 There can be little hope, therefore, that either the vocabulary or the substance of the poems will provide reliable clues to a world four or five hundred years back, with a radically different kind of organization, the two worlds being separated not only by centuries but also by a very deep breach in the tradition.

p. 202 Not once is tenure mentioned [in Homer's poems]

p. 146 [The Homeric poets] "knew from their inherited formulas that there had been great rulers in Mycenae and Pylos and other 'prehistoric' centres; but they really had no idea what a great Mycenaean ruler was, or how he behaved, or on what his power rested. Just as they retained what were for them no longer real descriptions of palaces or of chariot fighting, garbled to a point of unintelligibility, and of words and expressions which they either did not understand at all or misunderstood badly, so they retained and repeated garbled and unintelligible narrative bits from a past that was lost not only institutionally, but in large part even from memory."

p. 205 A significant proportion of the tablets record operations of some sort with landed property. In the poems, by contrast, the alienation of land in any form and to any degree, other than by succession, is rarely mentioned, and I have no doubt that it was rarely carried out.

p. 217 Summation

1. What happened after the fall of Mycenaean civilization was not merely a decline within the existing social framework but a decline and a change in character ~~at~~ together. Then, as the new Greek society emerged from these new beginnings, it moved in a very different direction, so that the kind of world which had existed before 1200 B.C. never again reappeared in ancient Greece proper. In that sense, the break was complete and permanent.

2. Given the nature of the Iliad and Odyssey, it is methodologically false to consider any given word, phrase, or passage in isolation if one is studying the institutions. That holds whether one is concerned with the Homeric world alone, or with that world in comparison with any other.

3. The Homeric world was altogether post-Mycenaean, and the so-called reminiscences and survivals are rare, isolated, and garbled. Hence Homer is not only not a reliable guide to the Mycenaean tablets; he is no guide at all.