

## Wace and Stubbings

## Social Culture

## Polity and Society (i) The Homeric Picture -G. Calhoun

Investigators have too often taken up their problems with conclusions already formed . . . During a great part of the last century the goal was commonly the discovery of an 'original' state of society, or of religion, or government, which could be connected with the hypothetical kernel of the Iliad; . . . The general result has been a substitution of deduction for induction and the consequent development of a pseudo-criticism which at times violates the first principles of sound historical method; perhaps the most flagrant violation has been the practice of stigmatizing as 'late' or 'interpolated' passages which are fully attested in the tradition but do not square with the hypothesis of the critic.

Little can be said for the type of criticism, unfortunately all too common that fails to take account of the conventional use of numerals, . . . ; or proceeds upon the assumption that the poet tells everything he knows upon a given subject every time it comes up, and cannot know anything that is not to be found somewhere in the poems. (p. 431)

## The Polis

. . . everywhere in the poems the two salient facts are the polis and the household. (p. 433)

. . . too often the primary aim of those who study political conditions in the Odyssey is to devise arguments for the 'lateness' of the poem. With astounding complacency this theory disregards the well-known fact that in both poems the title βασιλεύς is freely bestowed upon others than kings of states, and the less known but equally important fact that of all the many titles later given to magistrates in the aristocracies not one is ever used in Homer. (p.435)

. . . It may be profitable to ask whether the internal evidence, fairly interpreted, is not entirely compatible with the view that in both poems the political background is a simple tribal monarchy. This hypothesis is followed provisionally in the present sketch of the Homeric state. (p.435)

It is commonly assumed that the folk in Homer constitute a plebeian mass, ruled over by a nobility of birth claiming divine descent. To this view there are serious objections, notably the conspicuous absence from both poems of specific terms for nobility of birth . . . . (p.438)

## Justice and Law

There is, of course, no written law in Homer, and no positive law in the stricter sense of definite prescription by a sovereign power. . . The source of law in Homer is custom, expressed in these decisions and pronouncements. (p.439)

## Religion and Mythology

Throughout the Iliad and the Odyssey the world of human kind is surrounded . . . by a supernatural realm . . . Proposed solutions have differed widely, and it has even been maintained that Homer's gods are so wholly mythological and artistic that nothing can be learned from the poems about the religion of the times in which they were composed. This paradox, virtually a reductio ad absurdum, seems to be an intrusion of modern habits of thought into a very ancient world, for it rests on distinctions and classifications of which the poet and his hearers were almost certainly unaware. (pp. 442-443)

In view of this relatively abundant evidence, it is nothing short of absurdity to maintain that Homer's gods are purely figures of art and story, and that the men and women he knew did not believe in them, but in other gods none of whom he so much as mentions. (p.447)