

Sit, Stay, Speak: Dogs in Mycenaean Iconography and Homeric Epics as Possible Support for Dialectical Movement in the Late Bronze Age

The study of the social interaction between dogs and humans in the ancient world has often been restricted to before the Bronze Age (Mazzorin 2023) or after the historical period, that is, the Greek Archaic Period (Chanel-Velarde 2006). However, no investigation has been done into Aegean Bronze Age dogs and their roles in livestock guarding and elite hunting. This paper aims to remedy that gap. I will argue that the descriptions of hunting dogs in the Homeric epics mirror dogs from Mycenaean iconography and that the differences between modern Greek hunting dogs (Cretan and Hellenic hounds) and livestock guardian dogs (Greek Sheepdog, Molossos of Epirus, and Greek White Shepherd Dog) (Kennel Club of Greece 2014), existed in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Greece. These differences can help demonstrate, and perhaps support, Janko's argument for the movement of different Greek-dialect speakers at the end of the Bronze Age (Janko 2018). I will suggest that the typical livestock guardian dog, which is large and thick-coated, originates in the area of Epirus and spread because of the movement of North Greek speakers southwards. At the same time, the short-haired, smaller hunting hound is unique to elite speakers of the Mycenaean dialect in the Peloponnese. Methodologically, this paper aims to bridge the gap between archaeology and philology in order to elucidate realities of the Late Bronze Age Greece.

Works Cited

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