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“Archaeology, Anthropology, Homer and Hesiod: Recovering Lost Maritime Worlds of Mycenaean Greece”

Discussion of Mycenaean seafaring typically centers on long-distance maritime trade in the eastern and central Mediterranean, while there is a virtual absence of sophisticated treatment of local-scale maritime networks. In this lecture, drawing upon my recently published book Maritime Networks in the Mycenaean World (Cambridge University Press 2013), I describe concepts and methods to help recover and explore the maritime worlds of the everyday rather than the exceptional. Fieldwork methods drawn from geology and archaeology can recapture lost anchorages and their coastal landscapes. The conceptual component is a multiscale framework that reveals how connectivity forms and joins networks from local to international, yet also how networks at different geographical scales are different in nature. I emphasize the small-scale networks of the coastscape and the maritime small world. Using the Saronic Gulf and other case studies, I attempt to identify and elucidate the long-term histories of maritime small worlds of the Mycenaean Aegean.

Thomas F. Tartaron is Associate Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is also Chair of the Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World Graduate Group, and a Consulting Scholar in the Penn Museum. He earned a Ph.D. in Archaeology from Boston University, and taught at MIT and Yale before arriving at Penn in 2006. He has participated in numerous excavations and regional surveys in Greece, Iraq, Albania, and the United States. His recent field project, the Saronic Harbors Archaeological Research Project, co-directed with Daniel J. Pullen, exposed a unique Mycenaean harbor settlement that may have been one of Mycenae’s main ports on the Aegean Sea. Tartaron has published many articles on Greek prehistory and archaeological method and theory in edited volumes and in journals such as Antiquity, Hesperia, and the Journal of Archaeological Research. His current research includes a surface survey in Aegean Thrace and oral history projects among fishing communities in Greece and India.