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UDC 316:811.14'02'28

MAX WEBER ON BRONZE AGE SOCIETIES

Abstract. Weber's interest in the Bronze Age, and in particular for Mycenaean Greece, derives from the encounter during his research into Roman agrarian history with the *oikos* theories of Rodbertus and Bücher, and with the 'Universalgeschichte' of Eduard Meyer. The course that leads from the *Agrarverhältnisse des Altertums* to *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* corresponds to the gradual maturation of Weber's reflections on the 'Burgkönigtum' and its relation to the forms taken by feudal and patrimonial power. The distinguishing feature of the castle monarchy is its dichotomy, since it represents a common theoretical stage, but is at the same time the point of divergence between two lines of historical development which were to give rise to feudalism and the freedom of the western city on the one hand, and the despotic bureaucratic oriental states on the other.

When on the centenary of Weber's birth, Alfred Heuss gave a first synthesis of Weber's reflections on the ancient economies and societies, he also remarked on the singular lack of response that they had generated up to that time among historians¹. In recent decades things have changed considerably. This is largely due to a renewed interest in attitudes to the past that differ from traditional political and event-oriented history. And in more recent times, also as a result of a certain reaction to Marxist historiography, there has been a lively rediscovery of Weber on the part of scholars of ancient history. A valuable series of studies has begun to focus on Weber's position in the culture of his time², and has examined the main points of reference for his reconstruction both of the agrarian history of Rome and

¹ A. Heuss, "Max Webers Bedeutung für die Geschichte des griechisch-römischen Altertums", *Historische Zeitschrift*, 201 (1965), 554 s.

² Cf. A. Momigliano, "Dopo Max Weber?", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, III S., 8 (1978), 1315-1332 (now in ID., *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, I, Roma 1980, 295-312, and in ID., *Sui fondamenti della storia antica*, Torino 1984, 437-454); ID., "Max Weber di fronte agli storici dell'antichità", preface to the Italian translation of the *Agrarverhältnisse*, Roma 1981, VII-XIII); W. J. Mommsen, "Max Weber und die historiographische Methode in seiner Zeit", *History of Historiography*, 3 (1983), 28-43; W. Nippel, "Methodenentwicklung und Zeitbezüge im althistorischen Werk Max Webers", in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 16 (1990), 355-374. See also the collection of essays in W. J. Mommsen – W. Schwentker, *Max Weber und seine Zeitgenossen*, Göttingen-Zürich 1988 (English edition by W. J. Mommsen – J. Osterhammel, London 1987), and in M. Losito – P. Schiera (eds.), *Max Weber e le scienze sociali del suo tempo*, Bologna 1988.

of the Greek and Oriental societies³. At the same time a growing interest has been given to the theoretical and methodological aspects of his work, especially with regard to his position in the *Methodenstreit* in the years at the turn of the twentieth century⁴, and in the contrast between Bücher and Meyer and their respective followers that more or less during the same years flared up on the question of the character of the ancient economies⁵. It was perhaps inevitable that the interest of ancient historians should be attracted principally by the general interpretation of the classic ancient Greek and Roman city, proposed firstly in the *Agraverhältnisse des Altertums*⁶, and then taken up again, from a somewhat different perspective, in the monograph *Die Stadt*, which was included by the editors in Weber's extraordinary unfinished posthumous work: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*⁷. Concepts such as city feudalism, synoecism of the warrior aristocracy, of brotherhood, of democracy as the expression of charismatic power, or of the ancient city as a centre prevalently of consumers and not producers; these were bound to produce, together with some consensus, a great deal of perplexity, and at times a severe distancing on the part even of those who, like Moses Finley, showed

³ An excellent critical presentation of Weber's theses on ancient history together with an exhaustive bibliography can now be found in L. Capogrossi Colognesi, *Max Weber e le economie del mondo antico*, Roma-Bari 2000.

⁴ On the 'Methodenstreit' and on Karl Lamprecht see in particular E. Engelberg, "Zum Methodenstreit um Karl Lamprecht", in J. Streisand (ed.), *Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft*, II, Berlin 1965, 136-152; H. Schleier, "Karl Lamprecht als Initiator einer intensivierten Forschung über die Geschichte der Geschichtsschreibung", *History of Historiography*, 2 (1982), 38-56; K. H. Metz, "Historisches 'Verstehen' und Sozialpsychologie", *Saeculum*, 33 (1982), 95-104; ID., "Der 'Methodenstreit' in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft (1891-1899)", *History of Historiography*, 6 (1984), 3-20; G. G. Iggers, "The 'Methodenstreit' in international Perspective", *ibid.*, 21-32.

⁵ Cf. M. Mazza, "Meyer vs Bücher: il dibattito sull'economia antica nella storiografia tedesca tra otto e novecento", *Società e storia*, VIII (1985), 507-546, who rightly warns (513 s.) against the anachronistic adoption of the labels of 'modernism' and 'primitivism' in connection with the earliest phase of this debate; cf. W. Schneider, "Die Bücher-Meyer Kontroverse", in W. M. Calder III – A. Demandt (eds), *Eduard Meyer. Leben und Leistung eines Universalhistorikers* (Suppl. to *Mnemosyne*, 112), Leyden-New York 1990, 417-445.

⁶ The article (cited in these notes as *AvA*) went through three redactions that were progressively enlarged for the successive editions of the *Handbuch der Staatswissenschaften* (Jena 1897, 1-18; 1898, 57-98; 1909, 52-188). Only in the 1909 edition, together with the notably fuller section on Greece, there appeared the two sections on the Near and Middle East and on the Hellenistic States of the Orient, now in M. WEBER, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, (subsequently cited as *GASW*), Tübingen 1924, 1-288, from which we quote.

⁷ The writing of *Die Stadt* may date from the years between 1911 and 1913, and was first published in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 47 (1920/21), 621-772. Previously included by Marianne Weber in the 1922 edition of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (cited in these notes as *WuG*), it was then included in the critical edition by J. Winkelmann (Tübingen, fifth ed., 1976), 727-814, from which we quote. On the criteria of the current collocation of this 'fragment' see J. Winkelmann, Preface to the 5th edition of *WuG*, XIX (cf. *ibid.*, XXVII).

himself to be receptive to concepts of Weberian flavour such as the 'spectrum of status', as typical of ancient societies⁸.

It is in the field of Oriental studies that we see a more positive reaction, and even outright acceptance of the *oikos* theory⁹, which we also find, as far as Mycenaean studies are concerned, in the recent definition, of declared Weberian origin, of the Mycenaean monarchy in terms of 'ständisch-patrimoniale Herrschaft' as proposed by S. Deger-Jalkotzy¹⁰. Leaving aside the Archaic and Classical periods, we would like here to propose a brief re-examination of the criteria used by Weber in his description of the societies and economies of the second millennium BC, and in particular of Greece. The object of this is not to seek to verify the possible validity of his ideas in the context of current research rendered possible by the decipherment of the linear B documents, which would require far greater space, so much as to better understand the premises, the sources and the internal logic of Weber's analysis.

From the formal point of view the article on the *Agrarverhältnisse* appears as the natural progression of his agrarian history of Rome of 1891¹¹. In actual fact, in it the agrarian history only acts

⁸ M. I. Finley, "Max Weber and the Greek City-State", in ID., *Ancient History. Evidence and Models*, London 1985, 90: 'But on Greek history and politics, he perplexingly offered no more than hints or faulty explanations' (cf. 94, and ID., "The Ancient City: from Fustel de Coulanges to Max Weber and beyond", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19 (1977), 305-27, now in ID., *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, New York 1982, 3-23, 250-53. The Finley-Weber relation is dealt with at length by W. Nippel, "Finley and Weber. Some comments and theses", *Opus*, VI-VIII, 1987/89, 43-50). Cf. A. Momigliano, "Max Weber di fronte agli storici dell'antichità" (*supra*, n. 2), XI: 'Ma per la storia greca e orientale era soprattutto un geniale sintetizzatore e interprete di ricerche altrui'; W. Nippel, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil Max Webers für die Althistorie", *Antike und Abendland*, 40 (1994), 178: 'dann zeigt sich dass hier wegen des selektiven, apodiktischen und voraussetzungs-vollen Umgangs mit Quellen und Forschungsliteratur ein recht ideosynkratisches Modell vorliegt...'. Reservations have also been expressed by H. Bruhns, "De Werner Sombart à Max Weber et Moses I. Finley", in Ph. Leveau (ed.), *L'origine des richesses dépensées dans la ville antique* (Actes du Colloque Aix-en-Provence 11-12 Mai 1984), Aix-en-Provence 1985, 255-273.

⁹ Cf. for example F. M. Heichelheim, *An Ancient Economic History*, I², Leiden 1958, 160-193, espec. 170, 178, 180; I. Gelb, "From Freedom to Slavery", in D. O. Edzard (ed.), *Gesellschaftsklassen im alten Zweistromland* (XVIII Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, 1970), München 1972, 81-92 (espec. 90).

¹⁰ S. Deger-Jalkotzy, "Zum Charakter und zur Herausbildung der mykenischen Sozialstruktur", in A. Heubeck – G. Neumann (eds), *Res Mycenaeeae*, Göttingen 1983, 89-111; EAD., "Landbesitz und Sozialstruktur im mykenischen Staat von Pylos", in M. Heltzer – E. Lipiński (eds), *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Proc. Symposium Haifa 1985), Leuven 1988, 31-52.

¹¹ *Die römische Agrargeschichte in ihrer Bedeutung für das Staat - und Privatrecht*, Stuttgart 1891 (now in *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*, I², ed. by J. Deininger, Tübingen 1986).

as a starting point for a comparison of cultures in a perspective that from the Roman scenario expands to that of the whole of antiquity. Hence, in addition to imperial and republican Rome, Weber takes into consideration the great civilizations of the Near and Middle East (the Assyro-Babylonian, the Egyptian, and that of Israel) and of ancient Greece from the Mycenaean and Homeric to the Hellenistic age¹². His intention is to capture the specificity of the western city, both medieval and modern, and to distinguish it both from its own precursors and from the more radically different ones of the ancient Orient. On the basis of this considerably broadened horizon we should mention a series of works by Weber himself and by other scholars, spread out between 1891 and 1909, which is the date of the definitive version of the *Agrarverhältnisse*. These works mark the development of an intense process of maturation, of understanding, and at the same time of method, that culminates in Weber's dense introductory essay of 1909 that bears the ambitious title of a programme: Towards an economic theory of the ancient world.

Between 1893 and 1909 there appeared some fundamental reference works on Greek and Oriental history that gave Weber a useful update on the documentation for the period we are examining.

1893 saw the publication of the second edition of Volume I of the *Griechische Geschichte* by Georg Busolt¹³ and of Volume I of the *Griechische Geschichte* by K.J. Beloch¹⁴. Volume II of the *Geschichte des Altertums* by Eduard Meyer was published in 1893, with its description of the 'Hellenic Middle Ages'¹⁵; while 1896 saw the publication of Meyer's *Entstehung des Judentums*, which together with Wellhausen's works constituted the principal authority

¹² In the Introduction there is also a fleeting but evocative mention of the pre-Columbian civilizations of Central America (*AvA*, 3). The importance of Eduard Meyer's 'Universalgeschichte' as the inspiration of this amplification is highlighted by Momigliano, "The Instruments of Decline", *Times Literary Supplement*, 8.4.1977, reprinted as "Max Weber and Eduard Meyer: A propos of City and Country in Antiquity", in ID., *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, I, Roma 1980, 285-293 (cf. also *infra*, n. 72).

¹³ In Weber's opinion this work contained 'eine speziell wertvolle Analyse der Handelsaustauschverhältnisse der mykenischen Zeit an der Hand der Funde' (*AvA*, 284).

¹⁴ The German edition had been preceded by an Italian one (*Storia greca. Parte prima. La Grecia antichissima*, Roma 1891), which was clearly well known to the specialists. Weber admired Beloch's demographic studies (*Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt*, Leipzig 1896), but criticized, also in the interest for economic questions, their insufficient conceptual clarity (*AvA*, 283, 284): 'nicht überall ganz scharf in der Begriffsbildung'.

¹⁵ This followed on, after almost a decade, from Volume I (1884), that had been dedicated to the Oriental civilizations. The update on ancient Egypt dates from 1896.

for Weber's chapter on Israel in the *Agrarverhältnisse*¹⁶. Of the works that concerned themselves more closely with the social and economic contexts of the ancient world in those years we should remember above all the 1893 edition of the famous article by Karl Bücher on the rise of the national economy¹⁷, whose starting point was the *oikos* theory of Rodbertus¹⁸, and which was followed in 1901 by his essay on Greek economic history¹⁹. In direct and at times harsh polemic against Bücher two essays were published in rapid succession by Beloch on large scale industry (1899)²⁰ and on the development of the economy in antiquity (1902)²¹, followed in 1905 by Meyer's lecture on the same subject²², which finds its logical completion in his essay on slavery in antiquity²³. The study on the Roman latifundium by H. Gummerus of 1906²⁴ revisited the theories of Bücher but with noticeable modifications which won the praise of Weber²⁵. In 1902 Meyer had also published a long essay on historiographical theory and method²⁶, in which in antithesis

¹⁶ *AvA*, 282. Also of importance was Meyer's *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarn*, Halle a.S. 1906.

¹⁷ *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft. Sechs Vorträge*, now reprinted in the 1906 version in M. I. Finley (ed.), *The Bücher-Meyer Controversy*, New York 1979 (which also contains the other study by Bücher, cit. *infra*, n. 19, together with the essays by Beloch, cit. *infra*, nn. 20 e 21, and by Meyer, *infra*, n. 22).

¹⁸ K. Rodbertus, "Zur Geschichte der agrarhistorischen Entwicklung Roms unter den Kaisern", *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie*, II (1863); ID., "Zur Geschichte der römischen Tributsteuern seit Augustus", *ibid.*, IV (1865); V (1865); VIII (1867).

¹⁹ "Zur griechischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte", in *Festgabe für A. Schäffle*, Tübingen 1901, subsequently in an enlarged edition in ID., *Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Tübingen 1922, chapt. I, 1-97.

²⁰ K. J. Beloch, "Der Großhandel im Altertum", in *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, II (1899), 18-26.

²¹ "Zur griechischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte". *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, V (1902), 95-103 and 169-179 (this is the enlarged version printed in Finley in the above cited volume, *supra*, n. 17). This essay was then substantially re-elaborated by Beloch and included in the second edition of his *Griechische Geschichte*, III 2, Berlin 1923, 419-449.

²² "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums", *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 9, (1895), 696-750. This *Vortrag* was presented at the third meeting of the German historians of 20.4.1895, and was then included in his *Kleine Schriften*, I², Halle 1924, 79-168, from where we quote.

²³ "Die Sklaverei im Altertum", now in *Kleine Schriften*, I² (cit.), 169-212 (which is a development of "Zur Bedeutung der Sklaverei in der Kaiserzeit", previously published as App. III to "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums" (*supra*, n. 22)).

²⁴ H. Gummerus, *Der römische Gutsbetrieb als wirtschaftlicher Organismus* (Klio Beiheft 5), Leipzig 1906. On the importance of this publication on Weber see E. Lo Cascio, "Appunti su Weber 'teorico' dell'economia greco-romana", in *Fenomenologia e società*, V (1982), 128 s.

²⁵ *AvA*, II, 245 and n. 2, 288.

²⁶ "Zur Theorie und Methodik der Geschichte", now in *Kleine Schriften*, I² (cit. *supra*, n. 22), 1-67, from where we quote.

above all to the heterodox theories of Lamprecht²⁷ he resolutely stressed the supremacy of political history, of chance occurrences and of individual events in determining historical change, as opposed to social change, to what is 'typical', to the presumed laws of historical development, postulated by those who would like to classify history with the natural sciences²⁸.

Weber had already taken up his position in this complex debate in two works of considerable theoretical commitment. In 1896 appeared the famous article *Über die sozialen Gründe des Untergangs der antiken Kultur*²⁹, on the complexity of the not exclusively cultural causes for the decline of ancient civilization, while in 1906 his *Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik*, in practice consisted mainly in a punctilious and polemical discussion of Meyer's theses on historical method³⁰. But it is above all in the Introduction of the final version of the *Agrarverhältnisse* that Weber best sums up both his ideas on method and his interpretation of distinguishing features of the development of the Western city. He clearly rejects anachronistic approaches which project onto the past the concepts and heuristic models contemporary to the historian³¹. It is from this, and therefore from his effort to understand, irrespective of apparent potential analogies, the specificity of the social and economic facts pertinent to the ancient world, that we can explain his general adhesion to the theory of the *oikos* of Rodbertus and Bücher³².

This however did not occur without a significant distancing from the weaknesses in these authors' arguments. In fact, Weber resolutely denies the centrality of the idea of self-sufficiency for a definition of the economy of the *oikos*, and that the *oikos* was the direct product of the expansion of the ancient autarchic domestic communities, as Rodbertus seemed to believe³³. On the contrary, in

²⁷ See *supra*, n. 4.

²⁸ "Zur Theorie und Methodik der Geschichte" (*supra*, n. 26), espec. 8 ss., 32, 41 ss.

²⁹ Lecture given at the Akademische Gesellschaft at Freiburg i.B., first published in *Die Wahrheit*, VI (1896), 57-77, now in *GASW*, 289-311. On this essay see in particular J. Deininger, "Bemerkungen zu Max Webers Vortrag von 1896", in *Alte Geschichte und Wissenschaftsgeschichte. Festschrift Karl Christ*, Darmstadt 1988, 95-112.

³⁰ *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, XXII (1906), 143-207, now in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen 1922, 215-290; the first part of this essay is significantly entitled: *Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Eduard Meyer*.

³¹ *AvA*, 4, 8 and *passim*. Cf. W. Nippel, *Prolegomena zu Eduard Meyers Anthropologie*, in Calder – Demandt (*supra*, n. 5), 311-328.

³² *AvA*, 7s., 10 and *passim*.

³³ Note the parallel criticism of Meyer, who in his essay of 1895 (*supra*, n. 22), pointed out that in the Greek sources there is no mention of an *oikos* autarchy;

Rome it had been a late occurrence, while in the Orient and in Greece it 'derived from the accumulation of revenue which the most ancient depository of regular exchange relations, that is, the chief or prince, accumulated in a number of ways'³⁴. According to the clear formulation in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, the *oikos* was generated by the internal articulation of the domestic community. In a technical sense 'it was not distinguished only by the domestic production of agricultural and industrial products, but constituted the large scale domestic economy of a prince, a great landowner, or patrician, that was organized to meet his needs on a natural basis and employed all means, including exchange, (limited, however, to eliminating surplus and making up what was necessary)³⁵. Seen in this way the *oikos* economy was never completely autonomous, since it was precisely foreign trade that ensured the accumulation of those treasures upon which the power and prestige of those who possessed them was based³⁶.

Weber also shares a certain basic ambiguity with Bücher, regarding the classification of the *oikos* as an 'ideal type', which approximated its conceptual purity only in antiquity³⁷, and its function within a framework of historical development (in which one would seem to hear the distant echo of evolutionistic concepts). At the end of the Introduction, while emphasising their ideal typical nature, Weber delineates seven organizational stages - which, within certain limits, are 'common to all the «ancient» peoples, from the Seine to the Euphrates, that have undergone an urban development'³⁸ - and whose description roughly anticipates the contents of the volume.

The remote precursor of the city was the rampart wall constructed in defence against enemy attack. In this phase, that was characterized by the domestic community and the village, all the freemen participated in the possession of land. The roles of command were mainly intermittent and tied to the eventuality of war; they were bound to tradition, with spontaneous gifts and plots of land being conferred to the chiefs personally. Subsequently, where the presence of fertile land and of profits by trade made possible the accumulation of treasure, there appeared the castle monarchy (*Burgkönigtum*) or for Aristotle only in the polis was the ideal of self-sufficiency realized (83, n. 1, where we also find a reference to Weber's *Römische Agrargeschichte*, 241).

³⁴ *AvA*, 10-11.

³⁵ *WuG*, 230-233.

³⁶ Also of interest are Weber's considerations (*WuG*, 232) on the figure of the ancient 'entrepreneur', whose activities however remain in the sphere of patrimonial income and not that of 'capitalistic' profit.

³⁷ Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft* (*supra*, n. 17), 87, 148; ID., "Zur griechischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte" (*supra*, n. 19), 4; cf. Weber, *AvA*, 7, 43.

³⁸ *AvA*, 35.

military monarchy³⁹. This marked the first real division between the king and the people and his emergence above the other clan princes, who were soon to be reduced to his vassals, inasmuch as he possessed the greatest treasure. This stage then passed through two distinct institutional developments, which depended on the circumstances and on the specific geographical characteristics of the various territories. The first, typical of the ancient cultures of the Near and Middle East, led to a bureaucratic monarchy with an efficient administrative system and offices, which represented a rational response to the organizational needs to manage the river waters essential for the irrigation of fields, and which also retained the practice of *corvées* and the imposition of tributes. A similar form, merely more rational, was the authoritarian liturgical state, which evolved from the former, but tended to bind individuals to their roles in a permanent manner. The second development, typical, on the other hand, of the Western populations, first saw the aristocratic polis, which had arisen from the emancipation of the feudal nobility from the supremacy of the monarch of the castle. After a drastic reduction in his powers, the monarch had eventually been deposed and replaced by an elected magistrature of a non bureaucratic type. This was the phase of ‘city feudalism’ and of the synoecism of the military aristocratic clans, who derived a notable part of their riches from exchange activities rendered possible by the prevalently coastal location of the urban settlements. After this phase there appeared the hoplite polis, which was characterised by the linkage between landownership, military obligations, and the extension of the right of citizenship to all free landowners fit for military service. And finally there appeared the phase of the democratic polis in which this linkage was abolished.

Hence in these phases, Weber assigns a crucial role to the *Burgkönigtum*, which marked the distinction between two radically different political and institutional forms of development, one typical of the Orient, the other of the West. The description of this stage is limited to the Greek context, since the Oriental societies, at the point where the available written documentation begins, showed that they had already superseded it. On this point one should mark that Weber is silent about the matter that, in actual fact, no written contemporary texts were available for Greece during this period either. Still less does he dwell on a discussion of the *aporia* on the basis of which the Greeks should have accepted the Oriental influences proper to a more advanced stage of cultural development (the bureaucratic

³⁹ This equation is clear, for example, in the form used by Weber (*AvA*, 38) to describe the ‘bureaucratic’ monarchy (*bureaukratisches Stadtkönigtum*, or also *bureaukratisches Stadt- oder Stromuferkönigtum*) as an alternative development of the ancient *Heerkönigtum*.

monarchy) compared with the one actually achieved on Greek soil (the more primitive *Burgkönigtum*). What transpires here at a methodological level is a certain hermeneutic redundancy, if not an actual unresolved contrast between the notion of a ‘model’ as a means to transmit cultural development⁴⁰, and that of the stages of evolution, common according to him to all the ancient peoples who experienced urbanization.

The section on Greece opens with a brief exposition of the more ancient conditions, with unfortified villages in which the community maintained sovereignty over the lands, as seemed to be shown in the cases described by Homer of the conferment of *temene* by the *demos*⁴¹. During this phase the first disparities in the accumulation of wealth derived from the possession of livestock and the spoils of war, and brought about the rise of princes (*wanaktes*), and of an aristocracy in possession of *oikoi*⁴². Sovereignty, sustained by divine favour, was still of a traditional type. It was not the recipient of tributes but of spontaneous gifts and its authority, supported by the council of the elders, was based, during peace time, essentially on the careful exercise of arbitration⁴³.

The first great social transformation in Weber’s opinion, which resulted in the *Burgkönigtum*, occurred in Greece as a consequence of seaborne influences from the Orient⁴⁴. This corresponds to the Mycenaean period, during which the power of the king derived its economic basis from the treasure accumulated through his monopoly of passive trade, which was carried out by foreign merchants and subjected to tributes. At a military level this power was based on the use of the war chariot and hence on the control of a technique of warfare, which due to its high cost and the level of professionalism it required, was necessarily limited to the few. The result of this was a heightening of social inequality and the formation of a class who were the king’s comrades in war and ate at his table, and who

⁴⁰ *Infra*, nn. 44 and 64.

⁴¹ *AvA*, 98 s. The excessive use that Weber makes of the Homeric texts would be worthy of further study. They are used, as in this case, to illustrate the conditions in primitive Greece, but also the Mycenaean ones (the supposed *Großkönigtum* of Agamemnon) and the post-Mycenaean ones (the weakness of Agamemnon compared with the other Achaean princes exemplified by the fight with Achilles).

⁴² *AvA*, 95-97.

⁴³ Up to here what is described is an essentially pastoral and warrior society, in which the true seed of inequality is not primarily land, but on the contrary, livestock and spoils generated an unequal appropriation of the agricultural land and the formation of *oikoi*.

⁴⁴ *AvA*, 99: ‘Die erste grosse Bewegung der sozialen Verhältnisse in Hellas in der Richtung der Polisbildung wurde, allem Anschein nach, durch das Eindringen orientalischer Kulturelemente von der See her und die Verflechtung der Küstenlandschaften in den überseeischen Verkehr herbeigeführt’.

received from him lands, cattle and slaves. At the other end of the social scale we find the remaining mass of the population, subjected to obligatory work (*Fronarbeit*). Among the corvées there is explicit mention of craft work, which from a certain point onwards produced pottery and metal artefacts for export. Thus, from a monopoly of passive trade, according to Weber, there was the move to an active organization of exchanges on the part of the Mycenaean kings, at first through armed raids, then through the establishment of colonies, and the setting up of a production for the purpose of trade. A process thus began that contained the seeds of a further deeper transformation, this time in a form that was specifically Hellenic, of the social conditions that prior to the era of written laws had closely resembled those of the Oriental states, except for the absence of bureaucracy and clergy⁴⁵. Various factors combined to determine this change, among which the one that most stands out is precisely the disgregation of those Oriental cultures that had furnished the model for the Mycenaean monarchy. The splendour thus abated on which the prestige of the royal court had rested, and, above all, perhaps also through the advent of mercenary practice, the king's following reduced to the point where it disappeared⁴⁶. In its place there arose a class of warriors who owned lands, and were capable of arming themselves and of increasing their wealth by organizing their own expeditions in search of spoils and active trade. By Homer's time the king has been degraded to the rank of *primus inter pares*, and the Doric invasion merely accelerated the process that led to the aristocratic polis⁴⁷.

No doubt this reconstruction owes a great deal to the chapter dedicated to Mycenaean Greece by Eduard Meyer in his *Geschichte des Altertums*⁴⁸, and also to minor interferences deriving from other historiographical models. Meyer's interpretation was essentially based on the results of archaeological research that in those very years had brought to light the strongholds, the palaces with their extraordinary frescoes, the tholoi and the fabulous artefacts of the Shaft Graves of Mycenae, the network of roads of the Argolid, the influences of oriental art and the evidence of international trade. Credit must be given to Meyer for his lucid distinction, as far as sources were concerned, between Mycenaean material and the written documentation, which at that time was represented only by Homer's epics and which was correctly referred by him to the sub-

⁴⁵ *AvA*, 99-102.

⁴⁶ *AvA*, 103-104.

⁴⁷ *AvA*, 105-107.

⁴⁸ *GdA*, II, 128-248.

sequent 'Hellenic middle ages'⁴⁹. The local development that produced Mycenaean culture is seen as having been the result of contacts with the Orient. Trade had been the driving force behind the economy, in the sense that from the monopoly exercised on it, or from the tributes that were drawn from it, the treasures of the princes had initially originated, transforming small tribal chiefs into powerful *wanaktes*. For Meyer the Mycenaean palaces had their roots in the ancient 'Bauernhof', the country court, and had grown to the point of becoming a structure capable of organizing a craft activity for export purposes, and of employing dependent labour ('leibeigene und fronpflichtige') for the carrying out of great public works, in a manner analogous to that of the Pharaohs of Egypt⁵⁰. As far as the rest of the population was concerned, the old aggregations had changed into local groupings and into village communities around the citadels. A large part of the people had, however, fallen into servitude, thus widening their division from the warrior aristocracy that was able to use the war chariot. The 'colonization' that took place between 1300 and 1000 BC, was the swan song of this culture which was doomed to exhaust itself after the fall of the great Oriental powers that had acted as its models. Thus a deep fracture was brought about and new institutions arose in the Hellenic middle ages out of the transformation of the ancient 'Wehrgemeinde', the community of armed free men, inaugurating a sort of new cycle of history that was able to take place freely by itself⁵¹.

In various writings, and even in his letters, Meyer returns to the notion of the Hellenic middle ages⁵² and the analogy with the transition from Imperial Rome to the European Middle ages, from

⁴⁹ *GdA*, 167. Only on the question of the *Großkönigtum* does Meyer appear inclined to recognize in the epos a basis of genuine tradition (cf. chapt. VII: "Zur Rechtfertigung des zweiten Bandes meiner *GdA*", in *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, I, Halle a.S. 1892, 515: 'wenn irgendwo im Epos Tradition vorliegt, so muß sie hier vorliegen'). *Contra*, Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I² 1, 122: 'Das große Reich Agamemnon's ... hat nur in der Phantasie der Dichter bestanden...'

⁵⁰ *GdA*, II, 167.

⁵¹ *GdA*, II, 248; cf. *infra*, n. 69.

⁵² See in particular Meyer's letter to his friend Beloch dated 22.1.1894: 'Den Ausdruck «Mittelalter» habe ich allerdings auch aus dem Grunde gewählt, weil ihm eine nach manchen Richtungen höher entwickelte Cultur meiner Meinung nach in der mykenischen Epoche vorangegangen ist ...' (first published by L. Polverini, "Il carteggio Beloch-Meyer", in K. Christ – A. Momigliano (eds), *L'antichità nell'Ottocento in Italia e Germania*, Bologna-Berlin 1988, 217). Also of interest is Meyer's letter dated 28.12.1893, in which he takes up certain arguments from his review to the first volume of Beloch's *Griechische Geschichte*, (which appeared in *Literarisches Centralblatt*) and criticizes his friend for his arrangement of the book, 'welche(s) grosse Perioden zusammenfasst, und innerhalb derselben die einzelne Stadien der Entwicklung und die Unterschiede der Epochen, wie ich glaube, nicht genügend hervortreten läßt' (in Polverini, *ibid.*, 216; cf. K. Christ, "Zu Belochs Rezeption in Deutschland", *ibid.*, 183). Cf. also *GdA*, II, 291 ss.

which he had drawn inspiration. In particular he resolutely rejects the received opinion that all Greek cultural origins are to be found in the Greece of Homer, which is his *Mittelalter*, conceived of as a direct consequence of the primitive conditions of the *Urzeit*⁵³. On the contrary, Meyer claimed the merit of having been the first to indicate the importance of this cultural growth that had been brought about in Greece through the encounter with the Orient, and from which had followed all subsequent development⁵⁴. On this specific point, actually, Meyer appears to vacillate between two partly conflicting solutions. His basic tendency is towards the idea of an interrupted history. After the end of the palaces and the period of the tribal migrations within Greece there would have been, as we have said, a new beginning under conditions similar to the *Urzeit*, and only after a period of time the rise of new inequalities in land possession would have brought about the formation of the new aristocracy, together with the social struggles that bestrew the history of the archaic Greek cities⁵⁵. As a counterbalance to this interpretation, however, there are certain observations that would seem to reflect a more mature train of thought that tended towards less linear solutions. In these Meyer suggests that in some places at least, Mycenaean culture, even after its dissolution, did not altogether cease. On the contrary, in Asian Ionia and similar territories the different position of the aristocracy finds a plausible explanation, in his view, precisely by virtue of the greater endurance of Mycenaean traits, when compared, for instance, with Doric Sparta and Crete⁵⁶. And it is this second train of thought, which preserves the idea of an at least partial continuity between the

⁵³ Cf. Meyer, "Zur Rechtfertigung des zweiten Bandes meiner *GdA*" (*supra*, n. 49), 515 s.: '... eben diese Auffassung, die dazu führt, die Zustände des griechischen Mittelalters unmittelbar an die der konstruierten «Urzeit» anzuknüpfen ... muss ich mit aller Entschiedenheit bekämpfen'; the gibe at Beloch is plain.

⁵⁴ *GdA*, II, 133: 'Auf der Verbindung, welche hier zum ersten Male zwischen dem Abendland und dem Orient hergestellt wird ... beruht alle weitere historische Entwicklung'.

⁵⁵ *GdA*, II, 293: (as in the German middle ages) 'so ist auch die politische Gestaltung des griechischen Mittelalters nicht aus dem mykenischen Staat hervorgegangen... der Staat des griechischen Mittelalters beruht in erster Linie auf der Umwandlung der alten Wehrgemeinde der Vollfreien unter der Einwirkung der Sesshaftigkeit. An die Zustände der Urzeit müssen wir daher überall anknüpfen' (cf. also *GdA*, II, 297-303, with the description of the passage, during the *Mittelalter*, from the common to the private possession of the land that led to the inequalities that brought about the formation of the aristocratic *gene*).

⁵⁶ For example in *GdA*, II, 292, Meyer speaks of a *Führung* of the Greeks in Asia Minor, where Mycenaean culture continued to exist with greater vitality. Cf. "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums" (*supra*, n. 22), 99-100, where the diversity is highlighted of the economic and political conditions of the *griechisches Mittelalter*, that had grown up 'aus den Verhältnissen teils einer noch nicht zu voller Sesshaftigkeit gelangten Urzeit, teils des mächtigen mykenischen Königtums', in different territories like Sparta and Crete on the one hand, and Asian Ionia on the other.

two periods, that Weber appears to take up in his analysis of the aristocratic and hoplite cities.

Despite some errors of perspective, which only further archaeological research would have been able to correct⁵⁷, and the reservations produced by some assertions, one is struck by the modernity of Meyer's view of the Mycenaean age. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the contemporary works of similar content by Busolt and Beloch. The first of these limited himself to a meticulous review of the material aspects of Mycenaean culture, without touching on the political and socio-economic ones. Weber gave a positive evaluation of its presentation of Mycenaean trade, and it may have inspired his own observations on the importance of the active type of Mycenaean trade⁵⁸. As to Beloch, his negation of the historic fact of the Doric invasion⁵⁹ and his conviction that Mycenaean culture had lasted until the eighth century⁶⁰, induced him to a gross underestimation of Mycenaean in favour of Homeric culture. While admitting that the beginning and height of the Mycenaean age must be considered as preceding the *epos*, Beloch thought it legitimate, unlike Meyer, to base himself on the text of Homer to deduce the political conditions of the preceding age⁶¹. From this assumption of absolute continuity also derived the excessive simplification in his view of the economy and an insufficient appreciation of the importance of Mycenaean craft activities⁶².

⁵⁷ Thus in the subsequent editions of the *GdA*, after the extraordinary discoveries of Sir Arthur Evans and the Italian mission to Crete, Meyer attributed great importance to the influence of Cretan culture on the development of Mycenaean Greece (as did Beloch in the second edition of his *Griechische Geschichte*).

⁵⁸ *Supra*, n. 13. Busolt (*Griechische Geschichte*, I², 109-110) made a distinction between the exchange that took place with northern Syria, above all through the Phoenicians (otherwise it would not be possible, in his opinion, to explain why the Mycenaean had not learned the use of writing), and the exchange within the Aegean, where the great distribution of Mycenaean pottery would serve to demonstrate their direct involvement in trading activities (*ibid.*, 112, where, apart from merely desultory raids, he stressed the importance of artisan activity and trade to explain the wealth of Mycenae and Orchomenos).

⁵⁹ Beloch, "Die dorische Wanderung", *Rheinisches Museum*, XLV (1890), 555-598; *ID.*, "Zur griechischen Vorgeschichte", *Historische Zeitschrift*, XLIII (1907), 193 ss.; *ID.*, *Storia greca*, cit. *supra*, n. 14, 90-98; *ID.*, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 149-158; I² 2, 92-96.

⁶⁰ Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 83: 'Auch sonst kann kein Zweifel sein, dass die mykenaische Kultur in Griechenland bis in das VIII. Jhd geherrscht hat'.

⁶¹ Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 92: 'Die Burgmauern, die Paläste und Kuppelgräber ..., zeigen uns, dass auch dort politische Zustände herrschten, die den im Epos geschilderten durchaus entsprechen'. Whereas Meyer looked for analogies at the Orient, Beloch looked at Homer.

⁶² Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 86, 89 s. Beloch also maintained the same position in the second edition of the book (I² 1, Strassburg 1912, 96-125, espec. 125, where together with the reception of the discoveries relating to the Cretan civilization can be seen various indications of his reading of Meyer's *GdA*).

It is clear, however that if one wishes to appreciate the novelty of the reconstruction of Mycenaean Greece that Weber proposed, we must first of all mark out the extent of his debt to Meyer⁶³.

From Meyer Weber received in the first place the entire historical framework: the chronology, the idea of the Hellenic middle ages, the reality of the Doric invasion, and the clear distinction between the Mycenaean and Homeric Greece. He also accepted from him the decisive role of the Oriental influences, not only for what concerns the birth and the end of Mycenaean culture, but above all as a model for its institutions (*Fronstaat*)⁶⁴. Furthermore, in Meyer there had already been the characterization of Mycenaean civilization as essentially coastal, and as such, open to passive trade and to the foreign influences introduced through it⁶⁵. Weber expanded on this to the point of making the coastal character a distinctive mark of the Greek city compared to the 'fluvial' cities of the Orient⁶⁶. At the same time, and with greater force than Meyer, he stressed the role that trade had exercised, not only as a boost to the economy which had helped the rise of the *wanaktes*, but also as a factor that had contributed to their fall, by permitting the strengthening of the aristocracy and its consequent emancipation from the power of the monarch⁶⁷.

⁶³ On Eduard Meyer in general see K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovzeff*, Darmstadt 1972, 286-333; A. Momigliano, "Premesse per una discussione su Eduard Meyer", *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 93 (1981), 384-398; and the collection of essays edited by Calder III and Demandt cit. *supra*, n. 5. Specifically on the connection between Meyer and Weber cf. A. Momigliano, "Max Weber and Eduard Meyer" (cit. *supra*, n. 12); F. H. Tenbruck, "Max Weber and Eduard Meyer", in Mommsen – Schwentker (cit., *supra*, n. 2), 337-379; J. Deininger, "Eduard Meyer und Max Weber", in Calder – Demandt (cit. *supra*, n. 5), 132-158; W. Nippel, "Eduard Meyer, Max Weber e le origini dello Stato", in B. de Gerloni (ed.), *Problemi e metodi della storiografia tedesca contemporanea* (Atti della Conferenza di San Marino, dicembre 1990), Torino 1996, 175-193; ID., "Max Weber, Eduard Meyer und die 'Kulturgeschichte'", in M. Hettling et al. (eds.), *Was ist Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, München 1991, 323-330.

⁶⁴ Cf. *GdA*, II, 167, where Meyer speaks of a Mycenaean *Fronstaat* supported in a similar manner ('in ähnlicher Weise wie') to the State of the Pharaohs; and Weber, *AvA*, 107, who makes explicit use (and, as far as we know, for the first time) of the notion of 'model' ('seine orientalischen Muster').

⁶⁵ *GdA*, II, 155, 158; cf. "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung" (*supra*, n. 22), 99.

⁶⁶ On this see above all J. Deininger, "Die politische Struktur des mittelmeerrisch- vorderorientalischen Altertums bei Max Weber", in W. Schluchter (ed.), *Max Webers Sicht des antiken Christentums*, Frankfurt a.M. 1985, 72-110; S. Breuer, "Stromuferkultur und Küstenkultur. Geographische und ökologische Faktoren in Max Webers 'ökonomische Theorie der antiken Staatenwelt'", *ibid.*, 111-150; W. Nippel, "Max Weber's 'The City' revisited", in A. Molho – K. Raaflaub (eds.), *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, Stuttgart 1991, 24.

⁶⁷ On the role of ancient trade in Weber cf. S. Breuer, "Max Weber und die evolutionäre Bedeutung der Antike", *Saeculum*, 33 (1982), 174-192, espec. 176 s.

Hence for Weber, in a context of essentially static social relations based on the possession of land, the dynamic element capable of changing them came prevalently from outside, at first exclusively through war (booty) and later by peaceful exchange. But that is not all, Weber had also found in Meyer the assertion that if one wished to acquire knowledge about the stages of development simpler than those attested to since the earliest available documentation for the Oriental cultures, then it was to Greece that one had to look⁶⁸. What transpires *in nuce*, in the concept of a stage of cultural development that for a time at least was common to both the Orient and the West, was in principle an attitude free of the prejudice against Oriental cultures present in the culture of the times. This attitude both in Weber and Meyer was quickly to be rendered vain by the sense of pride implicit in the conviction of a 'purely Hellenic' form of development that the archaic Greek culture had subsequently embarked on⁶⁹. Weber had also read in Meyer the definition of the ancient Egyptian Kingdom, as a 'bureaucratic state'⁷⁰ in evolution towards a feudal state, and the citation of the Pharaoh's 'House'⁷¹ so suggestive of his own formulation of the *oikos*. And this is to say nothing of the potentially feudal aspects of Meyer's notion of *Mittelalter* and its warrior connotations of the archaic aristocracy. All these separate observations Weber re-elaborated in an original way and wove them into his *Agrarverhältnisse* within the framework of cultural stages as ideal types, and in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, in his reflections on the forms of power⁷².

What is most striking at first sight in Weber's description of the *Burgkönigtum* in the *Agrarverhältnisse* is the coexistence of traits of the *oikos* with feudal traits, that is to say, of apparently contrasting elements. However, this contradiction is, from a logical perspective, a structural element, and is in a way typical of the phase as Weber imagined it. It is well to remember that the phase is purely

⁶⁸ Meyer, "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums" (*supra*, n. 22), 99.

⁶⁹ *GdA*, II, 248: 'So folgt jetzt ein Zeitraum (*scil.* after the disappearance of Oriental conditioning), in dem die griechische Nation innerlich und äusserlich die freieste, von keiner Seite her gehinderte Entwicklung aus sich selbst heraus ermöglicht hat'; cf. Weber, *AvA*, 102: 'Allerdings aber hängt die Kolonisation zweifellos zusammen mit dem Übergange vom P a s s i v handel zum A k t i v handel ... und gehört damit in den großen Umstaltungsprozeß, der die Eigenart der hellenischen Kultur begründete'.

⁷⁰ *GdA*, I (1884), 58-61; cf. "Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung", 93.

⁷¹ *GdA*, I, 59: 'das hohe Haus'; 'das große Haus'.

⁷² As Momigliano has already pointed out ("Max Weber and Eduard Meyer", cit. *supra*, n. 12), the influence of Meyer on Weber appears to develop in keeping with the widening of his historiographical horizons from the agrarian history of Rome to *Universalgeschichte*. On this question see the recent divergent positions of Tenbruck (in the above cited essay, n. 63) and W. Nippel (*ibid.*).

conjectural, and that its principal *raison d'être* is to furnish the missing link between two so greatly different 'types' of city, that of the Orient and that of the West. By definition this link cannot but contain the germs of these opposing courses of development, and hence a mixture of feudal traits that were destined to produce the aristocratic polis, alongside features of the *oikos* system pertaining to the liturgical and bureaucratic states.

Basically, from the *Agrarverhältnisse*, it appears possible to describe the phase of the castle monarchy as a feudal state in evolution towards the *oikos*. According to Weber's definition in the Introduction it is possible to include in the notion of 'feudal' all those social formations based on the gradual diversification of a ruling elite that engaged in war or was in the service of the king, and whose resources derived from the privilege of land possession, income and obligatory labour from an unarmed and subjected population⁷³. The evidence of *Fronarbeit* (whose existence is evinced in the impressive construction of the fortified citadels, palaces, monumental tholoi etc.) is therefore a first indication of feudal conditions during the Mycenaean age. Weber had also referred openly to an 'accumulation of feudal seigneuries' in his section on the Mycenaean monarchy⁷⁴. And it is clear from what he maintains on the subject of the Ancient Egyptian Kingdom, that for Weber the castle monarchy of the corvées precedes that of the *oikos*⁷⁵, one of whose distinguishing features was the presence of a 'rational' and well developed bureaucracy that was expert in the use of writing. Therefore, when, discussing the Mycenaean age, he refers to 'situations of an Oriental type but without bureaucracy', this is clearly to be understood also in the sense of '(as yet) without *oikos*'.

The same interpretation is accentuated, albeit in a brief way, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, where Mycenaean Greece receives only a few paragraphs in the famous chapter on *Die Stadt*, inasmuch as it is considered an institutional precursor of the aristocratic polis⁷⁶. Here we find an interesting reference to Cyprus, whose inventory documents already showed the existence of a bureaucratic-patrimonial administration of the storehouses⁷⁷. However, Cyprus was on the fringe of the Hellenic world, and more exposed to the innova-

⁷³ *AvA*, 3.

⁷⁴ *AvA*, 101: 'Es finden sich – im mykenischen Reich – ziemlich umfassende Staatenbildungen, allerdings wohl stets in der Form einer Anhäufung feudaler Burgenherrschaften in der Hand eines Oberkönigs' (with an obvious reference to Meyer's concept of Agamemnon's *Großkönigtum*).

⁷⁵ *AvA*, 63.

⁷⁶ *WuG*, 766-767; cf. 391-394.

⁷⁷ *WuG*, 391, cf. 766: (Kypros) 'eine Verwaltung ... welche ... eine patrimonial-bureaucratische Magazinverwaltung gewesen sein muss ...'.

tions from the Orient. Still, it is interesting that here Weber abandons his previous definition of 'castle monarchy' and speaks of a 'patrimonial monarchy founded on servile labour'; and that he does not return to the notion of the king's 'comrades in war, who ate at his table', but prefers that of 'noble families', who fought on horseback, had their own chariots, ships and followers, and hence military and economic autonomy, and who were ready, with the decline of the great Oriental powers, to break the king's monopoly of trade and become the protagonists in the transformation towards the aristocratic city⁷⁸. Hence, if it is true that with the definition of a 'patrimoniales Herrschaft' Weber now appears to draw the Mycenaean monarchy closer to the sphere of the *oikos*, he also gives special importance to the feudal features of an aristocratic caste, that later produced the 'city feudalism'. In the succinct exposition of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* there seems to be a further highlighting of that intrinsic dichotomy already present in the *Agraverhältnisse*, where, in conjunction with the feudal connotations of the castle societies, there had appeared, in a form that was not yet identifiable as a fully developed *oikos* system, the adoption of the *oikos* category, both in relation to the king, and to the warrior aristocracy⁷⁹.

The oppositions and the intersections between the *oikos* and the feudal system are treated in magisterial manner by Weber in the second book of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in chapter IX on the sociology of power, where sections III and IV are dedicated respectively to the patrimonial power and the relation between patrimonialism and feudalism⁸⁰. Weber maintains that patrimonial power developed on the basis of the *oikos*, that is, on an organized domestic (or patriarchal) basis. And he will refer to a patrimonial State when the prince extends his political power to men and territories that are extra-patrimonial, which is to say, political subjects. Through the rationalization of his finances patrimonialism shifts imperceptibly towards a bureaucratic form of administration. With regard to military power, the patrimonial prince can proceed to the conferment of lands and privileges in exchange for military services, together with the related risk of a shift in a feudal direction. But in general he depends directly on the peasant masses and aims to avoid the concentration of military and economic power in the hands of other patrimonial lords⁸¹. From this perspective the decisive indication to establish the degree to which the prince's army was of a patrimonial type is above all of an economic character, and consists of the equip-

⁷⁸ *WuG*, 393.

⁷⁹ *AvA*, 96, 107.

⁸⁰ *WuG*, Kap. IX, 3. Abschnitt: "Patriarchale und patrimoniale Herrschaft", 580-624; 4. Abschnitt: "Feudalismus, 'Ständestaat' und Patrimonialismus", 625-653.

⁸¹ *WuG*, 589 (but cf. already Meyer, *GdA*, I, 61).

ment and maintenance of the troops made possible by virtue of his provisions and income⁸². From this one can see how the possession of treasure, and hence of the control of the trading activities which increased it, was everywhere the indispensable foundation for the patrimonial power of sovereignty.

By contrast, what typified the feudal system in the first place was its military origin, whereby it represented the power of the few who were able to participate in military activities. At the same time it was characterized by the tie of fealty to the prince, and hence a relationship of a contractual nature, that bore nothing of a patrimonial dependency. Feudalism was also 'the most direct consequence of the systematic decentralization of power', (another feature in strong antithesis to patrimonial power), and therefore represented 'the most extreme case of «caste» patrimonialism, as opposed to that of patriarchal type'⁸³. For Weber another decisive distinction between patrimonialism and feudalism was trade, whose proceeds accrued to the coffers of the prince, but which was foreign to the feudal system proper.

It thus becomes clearer in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* that the fundamental element that distinguishes patrimonialism from the feudal system is not to be looked for primarily (and in any case not exclusively) on the economic plane, in the autarchy or autonomous production for the internal needs of the prince (we should remember, on the contrary the key role of exchange), but rather on the social level and in the nature of the dependence relationships, which in the first case are of serfdom (clients and slaves) and in the second are free and contractual. It is thus evident that only in the extreme case of the Egyptian 'state socialism' can we see, in theory, a coincidence between the *oikos* and the state⁸⁴. In the other instances, there can never be an entirely pure system, but a more or less unresolved coexistence between the supreme patrimonial prince and the other patrimonial lords, who were ready to take power away from him and to transform it into a form of caste patrimonialism, or feudal system.

In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* far more than in the *Agrarverhältnisse* it thus becomes evident that for Weber feudalism and patrimonialism in the ancient world did not stand in a temporal relationship of before and after, but in a sort of dialectic tension. The one is like the shadow of the other. The feudal tendencies were always latent within patrimonialism itself, and situations of a feudal type may have preceded, coexisted, or broken out in a system of patrimonialism, depending on the forces at play and the prevalence

⁸² *WuG*, 590.

⁸³ *WuG*, 636.

⁸⁴ *WuG*, 585, 607 s.

of the prince's power of centralization, or, alternatively, on the drive towards autonomy and contractual relationships on the part of the other patrimonial lords. This explains why in this mature exposition of the typologies of the forms of power Weber coherently eschews the reproposal of the rigid doctrine of the stages of development contained in the *Agrarverhältnisse*. The castle monarchy and the bureaucratic and liturgical states correspond to the different stages of development in patrimonial power. They all fall under the system of the *oikos*, and represent variations, on the economic level, of the sources of income and of the degrees of complexity and 'rationality' achieved by the patrimonial administration, while on the social level they represent the nature of power relationships between the various holders of patrimonial power: the monarch and the other owners of *oikoi*. If a specificity can be identified in the castle monarchy phase, this should be sought precisely in this intrinsic fluidity of relationships between centripetal and centrifugal drives, in this delicate balance between the authoritarian power of the supreme patrimonial prince and the drives towards fragmentation that existed in opposition to him. As for the Greek, at least from Herodotus on, and for all the subsequent European historiography, for Weber too the opposition between despotism and liberty defines the most essential distinction between the different cultural and political experiences of the Orient and the West.

Returning now to Weber's basic interpretation of the Mycenaean society, it will be useful to distinguish between what was based on solid documentation, and what was of theoretical construction. With regard to the first of these aspects, it was not possible in Weber's times to go beyond the point that Meyer had reached, regarding the evidence of a strong central power that was able to dispose of obligatory labour along the lines of what had been minutely documented for the coeval Oriental societies. These were indications, which in Weberian terminology pointed to patrimonial power and an *oikos* system in its initial stages, since there was (as yet) no proof on the use of writing, if not in peripheral areas, such as in the case of Cyprus. Instead the role to be ascribed to the aristocracy, and in particular its feudal connotations in the evolutionary framework, rested entirely on conjecture and inferences drawn from looking back at the conditions of Homeric and archaic Greece. The proof of the existence of the war chariot furnished by the famous *stelae* of Mycenae, and the wealth of arms among the funeral gifts might certainly have suggested the existence of a warrior aristocracy⁸⁵. But Weber knew perfectly well that military equipment from the royal storehouses, or the means to procure them, was one of the

⁸⁵ Cf. Meyer, *GdA*, II, 168; Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, I, 92.

traits typical of a strong patrimonial power (*supra*). He also knew that in Babylon the conferment of lands in the form of feudal tithes for services rendered (which were of modest size and, at first, not even of a hereditary nature) had little to do with the idea of great feudal seigneuries, but served the purpose of ensuring a certain independence, and naturally, an extended fealty from these professional warriors⁸⁶. Aside from its future potential development, this represented a means that in itself was still perfectly a part of patrimonial power. When Weber speaks of ‘comrades in arms who ate at the table of the prince’, who had received from him lands, slaves and livestock, (in effect, *oikoi*), and who gradually transformed themselves into an autonomous caste in competition with the monarch, he is making a statement that could be corroborated neither by the sources, (which did not exist for this aspect in the case of Mycenaean Greece), nor by cogent and unequivocal analogies with the Orient. From the various theories that were open to him, (and which were not, perhaps, entirely mutually exclusive) he simply chose the one that was most in tune with his own conviction of a feudal, that is to say ‘free’ development of the western city.

In effect the critical point in Weber’s analysis, in so far as it is not proved but only presupposed, is precisely this feudal character of the Greek bronze age society, which in observance to the postulation of a basic continuity in the development of the western city, he superimposed on an intrinsically different system. Today we know that the decipherment of linear B has attributed greater importance, aside from the inevitable elements of continuity, to the radical difference between the Mycenaean socio-economic and political contexts and those of the Homeric monarchies and the poleis of classical Greece. It has also surprisingly confirmed and accentuated the traits of ‘patrimonialism’, to use the Weberian terminology, that are inherent to the system. The use of writing, of ‘archives’ and palace inventories, together with the presence of a considerable number of civilian and religious functionaries, represent at least the outline of a rational administration and a patrimonial bureaucracy. The actual term *oikos* has also appeared in the texts, to designate a structure responsible not only for agricultural, but also artisan produce⁸⁷. Likewise, the palace of the *wanax* or its annexes, and some temple buildings, seem to have been used for a level of production capable, in some cases at least, of supplying products intended for exchange. In particular, in workshops under the control of the palace, arms, war chariots and their wheels, and other military equipment were produced and stored - a sign from Weber’s viewpoint

⁸⁶ AvA, 50.

⁸⁷ KN As 1519.11 (*ma-ri-ne-wo*, *wo-i-ko-de*).

of patrimonialism in full strength. In general the written documentation confirms certain features of centralization, which Weber would no doubt have ascribed to his *oikos* system. It is nevertheless also true that other, perhaps less evident indications, could be classified as of a 'feudal' type. Among these, for instance, in the kingdom of Pylos, we might count the presence of some peasants or farmers (*kititai*) summoned to serve the prince as oarsmen, not directly, but through their 'patrimonial' lords⁸⁸. Likewise there are certain indications of the use of special, perhaps mercenary, troops that were recompensed through concessions (we do not know whether temporary or permanent), of lands that were used for the cultivation of linen, thus producing a high income⁸⁹. However, the precise evaluation of the make up of the elites, the manner of their relation to the centre, and the degree of their (in)dependence from it, their possible contribution to the process that terminated the authority of the *wanaktes*, remain today among the main tasks of Mycenaean studies. But even the reader who does not feel he can agree with the excessive schematization and the feudal overtones of Weber's analysis, cannot help measuring himself by it, or admiring the intellectual lucidity and flexibility of his interpretative tools, especially in the discussion of the *Herrschaftsformen*, which he consigned to future research.

⁸⁸ PY An 610.13.14; An 724.

⁸⁹ PY Na 396, 405, 514, 516, 543, 928.