

Some Remarks on the “Dorian Invasion”

SHIMMURA Yūichirō

A theory formerly held until about fifteen years ago believed that the cause of the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization was due to the destruction by one of the Greek races, the Dorians. However, this view contains some ambiguity. I once disclosed a hypothetical thesis, “The Collapse of the Mycenaean Civilization,” but recent researchers have become more critical of the theory of the Dorians. The hitherto practiced theories, therefore, have become less popular.

The point at issue rests on the periodical difference between the Mycenaean downfall and the invasion of the Dorians. And here another problem arises as to what led to the fall of the Mycenaean civilization. One of the most convincing theories is the one which considers that it was destroyed by invasion of a race which moved from the Illyrian region toward the Greek area. The idea holds that the Dorians invaded after the area was mostly destroyed and could occupy the Peloponnesian peninsula with little effort. The invading race was partly composed of what the Egyptians called the “Sea Peoples.” Not settling in Greece, they kept campaigning aggressively. This view itself must be linguistically and archaeologically ascertained and also it may be necessary to compare the examined result with mythological and folkloric elements.

My article here discusses some problematic aspects concerning the Dorian invasion, reconsidering the points above. I have inquired into mythologies and legends in order to trace back the movement of the Illyrians who may have passed through Greece earlier than the Dorians. Thucydides stated that there is an eighty years’ difference between the

Trojan War and the Return of the Heraclids. In relation to this, I tried to examine the historical reality of the Trojan War and made a comparative analysis of the relationship between these two transmissions and other Greek legends. At the same time an inquiry was made as to how much historical fact is contained in those stories handed down to us.

Subjects on Heracles such as worshipping him in the Peloponnesian region will be discussed on another occasion. I am sorry for the insufficiency of this article, because I have dealt with the overall perspectives.