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Review of *Meaning and Identity in a Greek Landscape: An Archaeological Ethnography*, by Hamish Forbes

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Citation

MacKay, Camilla. Review of *Meaning and Identity in a Greek Landscape: An Archaeological Ethnography*, by Hamish Forbes. *American Journal of Archaeology* 113 (2009): 304-305.

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posal, this ambitious archaeological undertaking by the Pisa team deserves hearty gratitude—all the more so because it occurs in a climate of shrinking governmental budgets for such specialized investigations.

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MEANING AND IDENTITY IN A GREEK LANDSCAPE:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY, by *Hamish Forbes*. Pp. xxii + 438, figs. 39, tables 10. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. \$99. ISBN 978-0-521-86699-6 (cloth).

This volume is a study of the Methana peninsula in the Argolid, with a focus on its culturally created landscapes (historical, religious, kinship, and productive [i.e., agricultural]). The book derives from Forbes' anthropological fieldwork in the early 1970s and the archaeological survey of Methana that he codirected in the 1990s (published with C. Mee as *A Rough and Rocky Place: The Landscape and Settlement History of the Methana Peninsula, Greece* [Liverpool 1997]). It is very much an ethnography, but Forbes writes of his work that it "is also archaeological inasmuch as it places its theoretical interests firmly within the historical context of archaeologists' interest in landscape" (5).

Forbes begins with a detailed discussion of literature on landscape studies, especially archaeological and anthropological; he is engagingly critical of different approaches. Forbes is particularly critical of processual and phenomenological archaeology and the tendency of both to ignore human agency, to favor the perspective of the archaeologist, or to favor an elite rather than a common perspective. His own book, he argues, transcends some of the problems of using ethnographic data in an archaeological setting because Methanites are not so different from European or American academics: this is "a Greek landscape with real people" (49).

In the third chapter, Forbes presents the recent history of Methana, particularly its settlements and agriculture. This chapter expands on "Turkish and Modern Methana," in *A Rough and Rocky Place*; he draws here on physical remains and interviews with inhabitants but also 19th-century census and birth register records newly available since the publication of the survey. Chapter 4 provides the background to Forbes' own presence on Methana, both as an ethnographer and as an archaeologist.

Chapter 5, "Kinship, Marriage, and the Transmission of Names and Property," is an admonition against the indiscriminate use of anthropological comparanda for archaeological explanation. The reality of household organization on Methana matches neither Methanites' own perception of kinship nor anthropological models of lineage-based societies. While contemporary Methanites asserted, for example,

that married children used to share a household with parents, census returns do not bear out these memories. Forbes suggests that the reality was that children and parents functioned as a single economic unit, a domestic space that was not a single house but was remembered as such. Kinship on Methana focused on members of the same generation and could be both bilateral and patrilineal. Particularly interesting is his discussion of how Methanites' knowledge of their families did not extend, for the most part, beyond grandparents. Forbes is at pains not to dismiss oral history about earlier generations on Methana; nonetheless, that Methanites lost track of their own families' history means that oral tradition, while it may tell much about the current generation, is of limited historical use.

In chapter 6, "The Productive Landscape," Forbes examines agricultural production on Methana, the location of settlements, and, within settlements, households. Since all but one of the current settlements on Methana seem to have been founded since 1820, Forbes considers both the oral tradition about their foundation and the archaeological reality. Siting of settlements does not follow, for example, distance minimization models, so Forbes tries to explore Methanites' own understanding of the meaning of their landscapes. He argues that the decision of the household, and not the community, must be the important consideration in terms of agricultural production. In this case, meaning existed in family ownership of property.

In chapter 7, "The Historical Landscape: Memory, Monumentality, and Time-Depth," Forbes addresses the relation of modern memory of historical landscapes on Methana to architectural remains. Unlike many other largely illiterate communities, oral traditions about Methana, and particularly the human landscape, are inaccurate. Even where information from oral histories could be checked against 19th-century census records, the record of births on the peninsula, or inscriptions, there are discrepancies. Forbes suggests several reasons: the reuse of names every other generation, the lack of family knowledge of generations preceding grandparents, and general perception of the past as a time of hardship. What knowledge there is focuses on individuals, while different types of buildings—houses, fieldhouses (*kalivia*), terraces, cisterns, storerooms, grape-treading floors, and churches—play a role in memories both historical and familial, especially in prompting memories of the different ways of living in the past. In discussing cemeteries, he points out that monumentalization of cemeteries is a recent phenomenon (grave markers before World War II were wood), and as Methanites increasingly moved away from farming as the primary means of subsistence, attention was given to cemeteries rather than the buildings that marked the agricultural landscape.

In chapter 8, "The Kinship Landscape," Forbes discusses the importance of kinship to the Methanite understanding of their landscape and the role of houses and households in particular. He draws heavily on evidence provided by names in the 19th-century documents to determine how families lived together (and by extension, were buried together) and how their plots of land were organized.

The role of the Orthodox Church and superstitions in the landscape of Methana are addressed in "The Religious Landscape." Oral tradition about settlements on Methana focuses on the safety of settlements from pirates, but prox-

imity to preexisting churches seems to have played a considerable role; churches were reused and repaired, where other buildings were not. Not all churches attracted settlements—clearly other forces were at play—but Forbes argues that greater consideration should be given to religious needs and religious beliefs in attempting to explain settlement patterns archaeologically or ethnographically. Churches were also one of the reasons Methanites visited other parts of the peninsula, to attend festivals (*panegiria*). In recent decades, road construction has sometimes taken otherwise impractical routes in order to connect rural churches, indicating their continuing importance.

Archaeology is sometimes a bit thin in this book; plans and photographs are sparse and small. One must turn to *A Rough and Rocky Place* for detailed discussion of remains on

Methana. Given Forbes' reason for the book—to provide a European ethnography to assist archaeologists working in Europe—an example of how Forbes might use his own ethnographic data from Methana in an archaeological context would have been interesting. What about premodern Methana itself, since the premodern settlements of Methana were so different from the modern? Nonetheless, even if such a study of Methana remains to be written, this is a well-written, well-documented, and very readable book.

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