
Hamilakis, Yannis


In the article, Yannis Hamilakis points out the need for a new way to analyze wine and oil production in Bronze Age Crete. He examines the social reasons behind the production, consumption, and connection of olive oil and wine to the human body. Hamilakis provides archaeological evidence to support his conclusions, and states that he wants archaeological evidence to play a larger role in the analysis of food (Hamilakis 1999:39).

Hamilakis first points out that oil has a high fat content and is high in calories, but this is not related to social context because the consumption of oil never stayed constant (Hamilakis 1999:43). He concludes that olive oil was not used for cooking, but rather it was used for lighting. Along with his conclusions, he does consider other possible substances, such as animal fat, that may have been used for lighting (Hamilakis 199:46). He does not make conclusions without physical evidence, which is why he considers other possibilities of fuel for light. One conclusion he makes based on evidence, is that olive oil was used in the production of perfumes and ointments (Hamilakis 1999:47). Hamilakis is able to make some conclusions about olive oil in Bronze Age Crete, but his arguments about wine production are supported with more evidence than his olive oil production arguments. Wine production is a more complicated process than olive oil production because climates, such as a dry climate in Egypt, can increase the risk of failed cultivation, a risk not all farmers are able to take (Hamilakis 1999:44). The dry climates even affected the social context where wine was consumed, because in dry climates wine was less likely to be consumed due to less production, so wine was not considered as a symbol of high status where it might be in other places (Hamilakis:44). This sentence is very confusing and needs to be reworded.

Hamilakis's main goal is to understand why olive oil and wine production changed in the past and the need for more archaeological analysis. One analysis he made is about the style of drinking vessels and the quantity produced. He concludes that less detailed vessels and the more similarities the vessels had, meant that they were produced in higher quantity, which indicates an increase in wine consumption (Hamilakis 1999:48). He is able to make conclusions about wine consumption based on physical evidence.

This article was interesting to read because it is a subject I was completely unfamiliar with. Hamilakis consistently provided archaeological evidence or stated other beliefs along with every point he made. The way he interpreted the quantity of wine consumed based on the looks of the drinking vessels was especially fascinating because it is an interpretation I would not have thought of. Furthermore, he views a link between olive oil and wine production to the human body, which is than the basis for production, rather than for economic purposes. He gives social gatherings, such as feasting, as an example of a way people can connect with food (Hamilakis 1999:50).

I liked your choice of article and this was a good review.