

**MYTH BECOMES
HISTORY:
Pre-Classical Greece**

**Publications of the
Association of
Ancient Historians 4**

Carol G. Thomas

University of Washington

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Regina Books
Claremont, California

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thomas, Carol G., 1938-

Myth becomes history : pre-classical Greece / Carol G. Thomas.

p. c. -- (Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians ; 4)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-941690-52-0 : \$19.95. -- ISBN 0-941690-51-2 (pbk.) : \$11.95

1. Greece--Civilization--To 146 B.C. 2. Bronze age--Greece. 3. Trojan War. 4. History--Methodology. I. Title. II. Series. [DF220.T48 1993]

938--dc20

93-7199

Co-published by arrangement with the
Association of Ancient Historians

Regina Books
Post Office Box 280
Claremont, California 91711

Manufactured in the United States of America.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present volume is the fourth in the series *Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians*. The publications committee of the Association, Eugene Borza of Pennsylvania State University, Stanley Burstein of California State University, Los Angeles, Jack Cargill of Rutgers University, and Judith Hallett of the University of Maryland, wish to extend our thanks to Carol G. Thomas of the University of Washington for contributing this survey of the state of current scholarship on Preclassical Greece to the series.

Dedication

*To Richard and Mary Susan,
and historians and historians-in-training all*

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FOREWORD

I readily accepted Eugene Borza's invitation to contribute to the Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians. The value of Chester Starr's recently-published volume was immediately evident; it remains required reading for my beginning graduate students. It would be an honor, I thought, to provide a similar treatment of preclassical Greece especially since some would still exclude these centuries from the proper domain of history. The title of this volume conveys my position on this issue. What once was thought to be the product of a lively collective imagination is assuming a fixed shape. I use the present progressive tense deliberately: a final shape will depend on decades of continuing work but, nonetheless, the mythical is becoming historical.

In quite another sense myth becomes history. One of the healthiest developments of recent scholarship is a willingness of scholars of different disciplines to cooperate in efforts to find solutions to questions concerning the past. Such a tendency is particularly noteworthy in early Greek studies as developments now bring together scientists, linguists, anthropologists, art historians and historically-minded archaeologists. New approaches are yielding novel results, some unexpected and many provocative. It is a lively time in preclassical Greek studies.

These trends in method merit discussion, especially since they encompass disciplines not so integral to other historical fields. To place the developments in a context, I have elected to use Troy as a paradigm throughout the discussion. The range of topics treated is broad, although I have attempted to deal with the major issues of Bronze and Dark Age Greece. The text was complete in autumn of 1991; consequently, more recent finds or theories will not appear in these pages. Perhaps, when you read these words, we all will know the significance of the Minoan

fresco fragments found at Avaris in the Nile delta. Brief announcements of the find have only just appeared as these pages are being readied for publication. Certainly there will have been other developments, as yet unannounced or even unknown.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the study of preclassical Greece is reflected in the assistance I have had in preparing this study. Tom B. Jones and Merle Langdon agreed to read an initial draft; their comments and suggestions corrected and greatly enhanced the discussion. The observations of an historian of colonial America, Richard R. Johnson (who is my colleague and husband), added clarity and grace to the material. Then followed meticulous reading by Eugene Borza and Jack Cargill which served to catch several remaining slips of detail and to bring this volume into conformity with the three previous issues. Thomas Ridgeway, director of the Humanities and Arts Computing Center at the University of Washington, produced camera-ready text. He had the assistance of E. Kent Webb, a graduate student in ancient history, who also devoted many hours to checking citations. I extend my grateful thanks to each of the aides in this venture.

I

INTRODUCTION

In the first volume of this series, Chester Starr omitted the Bronze Age from his historical survey since, as he wrote, it remains "primarily in the hands of archeologists." He did include the Dark Age on the grounds that advances in scholarship dealing with that period have shown that "The centuries after the fall of Mycenae down to...500 now can be seen much more clearly as the decisive period in which the political, religious, and cultural framework of classic times was being established."¹ I wholeheartedly agree with the second assertion; in fact, scholarship that has appeared since the 1987 publication of Starr's overview strengthens his position. But with respect to the earliest civilization of Greece my verdict differs: recent work has drawn the Bronze Age, as well as the Dark Age, into the realm of historical analysis.

This is not to deny that knowledge of the Bronze Age remains predominantly archaeological. However, the dichotomy between the disciplines of history and archaeology has been over-emphasized. During the past two decades, increasing numbers of students of preclassical Greece have come to realize that the two skills can work together to produce a fuller picture of Greece and its place in the larger Mediterranean realm. This cooperation between the disciplines will be a large part of the present discussion.

Central to the realization that the goals of historians and archaeologists overlap has been the combination of acquisition of new and fuller evidence with methodological advances. Excavations continue at familiar Bronze Age sites, sometimes with startling results, and new investigations are equally fruitful. Archaeologists, historians and students of oral tradition

¹C. G. Starr, *Past and Future in Ancient History*, Proceedings of the Association of Ancient Historians 1 (Lanham, MD, 1987), p. 2.

have enriched our understanding of Dark Age culture. For both periods, the evidence remains primarily material—human products and non-artifactual items with little addition to the stock of written evidence. What has changed is the way in which this evidence is acquired and studied. Methodological developments in field work and theoretical analysis now emphasize a diachronic understanding of Greece and, in the process, are revealing more lines of continuity from the earliest civilization to and beyond the classical age.

Yet even as the methods for discerning the true contours of preclassical Greece have advanced enormously, the major issues remain much the same. Schliemann began with Homer's account of the Trojan War and today we continue to focus attention on the cultures alleged to have fought that war: every issue of *Nestor*² cites studies exploring the context in which hostilities could have occurred, the conditions giving rise to the civilizations flourishing around the Aegean during the Late Bronze Age, the collapse of those civilizations and the presence or absence of cultural continuity across the bleak years of the Dark Age. We would still readily join Socrates in longing "to be able to question the leader of that great host against Troy" (*Apology* 41B).

Indeed, the issues surrounding the "Trojan War" lead us into every aspect of preclassical Greece and thus the topic serves as a useful guide to the current state of scholarship in early Greece generally. Not just past armies but traditional archaeologists as well as advocates of the "new" archaeology have been drawn into battle on the plain of Troy. In the critical matter of dating, the fall of "Troy" remains a hinge for many other dates. Hovering round the end of the Bronze Age, the subject points backward to the flourishing Mycenaean Age and forward to the impoverished Dark Age. Remembrance of the mighty war is, of course, the basis of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, whose nature and historical value remain among the fundamental topics of all ancient history.

So, like Homer and Schliemann, I will turn to Troy as both the probable site of an actual war and as a metaphor for the larger dimensions of preclassical Greece. It will serve as a central pivot for developments in methodology, recent discoveries and major problems of the first several millennia of

²The bibliographic publication dealing with preclassical Greece and related matters; published by The Program in Classical Archaeology of Indiana University.

ancient Greece. Consequently, the account in the following chapters is not chronological but, rather, is organized around the role of a would-be explorer. What tools should an investigator possess? At what locations will he use them? What sorts of problems and unresolved quarrels lie ahead? What picture of the Mycenaean and Dark Ages emerges from these efforts? Beginning with the present state of knowledge about the Trojan War issues, I will then follow the several paths leading from Troy around the Aegean from 1600 to 750 B.C.

II

TROY: WAR AND METAPHOR

The battle over Troy continues to rage, and the list of combatants has grown ever longer.¹ Archaeologists still dominate the ranks but they have been joined, in increasing numbers, by philologists, historians, students of oral tradition, geologists, geographers, anthropologists and even psychohistorians. The foundation of a new interdisciplinary periodical, *Studia Troica*, devoted to the theme "Troia and the Troad, Archaeology of a Region" is a good indicator that an end of conflict is not in sight.

Very few authorities nowadays doubt that Schliemann correctly identified the site of Hissarlik—the place the ancients called Troy—as Troy. This new consensus represents a major change of opinion since, for decades, the clear discrepancies between the actual land around the site and features described in the *Iliad* served to undermine acceptance of the site excavated by Schliemann as Homer's Ilium. Those who believed that Schliemann had identified the location of an historical war often argued that Homer had never seen the site, and thus exact agreement was not to be expected. Some of those unwilling to accept Hissarlik as Troy sought another site.

At present there is little interest in seeking a more likely site; instead some students of the Trojan War are attempting to reconstruct a more accurate topography for Bronze Age

¹Two symposia held during the 1980s give a good sampling of the current dimensions of the issues. L. Foxhall and J. K. Davies edited *The Trojan War, Its Historicity and Context: Papers of the First Greenbank Colloquium* held in Liverpool 1981 (Bristol, 1984). *Troy and the Trojan War*, edited by M. Mellink, contains papers presented at a symposium held at Bryn Mawr College in October 1984 (Bryn Mawr, 1986). A more general review of the issues is M. Wood's *In Search of the Trojan War* (New York and Oxford, 1985). The book is based on a BBC television series that was filmed on location and includes interviews with mostly British scholars actively pursuing the issues.

Hissarlik. Since 1980, for instance, hydrologists have been working to reconstruct the configuration of the ancient site.² Notable in their findings is the conclusion that the bay between Sigeium and Cape Rhoetum, where the Greek fleet was traditionally anchored, was considerably deeper and larger in the second millennium B.C. than it is at present, due to the silting that has made it shallower and less extensive. The reconstructed configuration places the Greek camp across the bay from Troy, instead of along the coast north of the citadel as most earlier plans had imagined. It also makes a great deal more sense of Homeric references.

While the physical location now appears more reasonable for a military engagement, there are skeptics who see no compelling reason to believe that the Greeks ever attacked and destroyed the fortress at Hissarlik. The position largely echoes that of Moses Finley³ who argued that although Hissarlik may have been destroyed in the late Bronze Age, the agents were either marauding Sea People or other inhabitants of Asia Minor. "Achaeans" from mainland Greece may have been among the marauders, Finley's argument continues, with memory of their participation later distorted into the heroic tradition of the Homeric epics. The clear record of disturbances throughout the eastern Mediterranean toward the end of the Bronze Age has demonstrated a context in which this sort of raid upon Troy could have occurred.⁴

The evidence, however, is not definitive, and indications of Mycenaean presence in Asia Minor, growing as exploration increases, tend to buttress the traditional view of the Trojan War espoused by archaeologists and students of the epic tradition.

²J. C. Kraft, I. Kayan and O. Erol, "Geomorphic Reconstructions in the Environs of Ancient Troy," *Science* 209 (15 August, 1980) pp. 776-82, and "Geology and Paleogeographic Reconstructions of the Vicinity of Troy" in G. Rapp and J. A. Gifford (eds.), *Troy: The Archeological Geology*, supplementary monograph 4 (Princeton, 1982). J.V. Luce, "The Homeric Topography of the Trojan Plain Reconsidered," *Oxford Journal of Archeology* III:1 (1984) pp. 31-43.

³M. I. Finley, "The Trojan War," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 84 (1964) pp. 1-9, reprinted as appendix to *The World of Odysseus*, 1973.

⁴N. K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean, 1250-1150 B.C.* (London, 1978 and 1987), catalogues the disturbances and possible agents. The Sea Peoples have been discussed by G. A. Lehmann, *Die mykenische-frühgriechische Welt und der östliche Mittelmeerraum in der Zeit der 'Seevölker'-Invasionen um 1200 v. Chr.* (Opladen, 1985).

Many scholars believe that the Catalogue of Ships in Book II of the *Iliad* is an authentic muster roll of Mycenaean forces mobilized against some overseas target.⁵ There is mounting evidence of frequent contact between mainland Greece and the Asia Minor coast from the fifteenth century. Settlement is now well attested at Miletos where a megaron of more than 200 square meters, and other living quarters and agricultural buildings, date to the fourteenth century. Samos, Iasos and a site near Erythrai have been identified as settlements, and pottery and tomb finds have been made at a number of additional sites from the Troad to Knidos and into the interior. Nor are such finds insignificant in terms of quantity: for instance, some fifty Mycenaean chamber tombs were discovered in 1962 near Muskebi, west of Bodrum.

In light of this better-attested Mycenaean presence in Asia Minor, interest in the Ahhiyawa-Mycenae equation has revived among Hittite as well as Greek scholars. The investigations of Hans G. Güterbock are especially important.⁶ Certain Hittite tablets, with references to Wilusiya and Taruisa (Ilion and Troia?) in a list of places that combined forces against the Hittite king, recently have been redated from the thirteenth century to ca. 1400 B.C. If the new date is correct and if the Hittite references have anything to do with the Trojan War, the tablets may offer support of an earlier dating for the historical event that gave rise to the memory of war. On the reading of Alaksandus as a Greek name written in Hittite form in cuneiform, it is even possible to settle a Greek ruler on the Wilusan throne. However, as Güterbock cautions, "Having spun out this nice hypothesis I must repeat that it is no more than just

⁵From an archaeological perspective, see R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad*, (Oxford, 1970): "...we suggest that the Catalogue probably originated in an attempt by oral poets contemporary with the historical Trojan War to record in their songs the names of the princes who took part, and the places from which their forces came" (p. 169).

⁶H. G. Güterbock, "Hittites and the Aegean World: Part I. The Ahhiyawa Problem Reconsidered," *American Journal of Archaeology* 87 (1983) pp. 133-138; "Hittites and Akhaeans: A New Look," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (1984) pp. 114-122. D. F. Easton is also active in unraveling the nature of Hittite/Achaean interaction. See, for example, "Hittite History and the Trojan War," in L. Foxhall and J.K. Davies, eds., *The Trojan War*, pp. 23-44.

that: a hypothesis. We cannot claim with any certainty that Wilusa is Ilios or that Alaksandus is Alexandros."⁷

The use of Hittite evidence is also problematical in that it complicates the question of dating. The excavations of the University of Cincinnati team headed by Carl Blegen identified Level VIIa at Hissarlik as the most likely candidate for the Trojan War destruction. Recent work has created dissatisfaction both with the date assigned by Blegen to Level VIIa and with its identification in preference to Level VI as the object of the siege. As long ago as 1954, Gray stressed the "curious accuracy" of the description of Troy in the *Iliad*, suggesting that it is based on Mycenaean memory of the power and wealth of Troy VI somehow conflated with its poorer successor.⁸ Reevaluation of the evidence hints that defenders of both positions may be correct: that there really was an organized war during the thirteenth century when Troy flourished, but that final destruction of the site occurred in the random raiding activities that characterized the twelfth century.

For some scholars like Emily Vermeule, this picture of two or more attacks together with pre-Mycenaean elements in the poetic tradition, points to the possibility that the Trojan War tradition grew out of conflicts of the early Mycenaean era. "Suppose what we always thought is wrong, and the *Iliad* is pre-palatial after all, and really belongs in the generations when the Greeks and Cretans were joining and clashing, at Knossos or Trianda or Miletos, and rioting in Anatolia like Atarrissyas and

⁷H. G. Güterbock, "Troy in Hittite Texts? Wilusa, Ahhiyawa, and Hittite History," in M. J. Mellink, ed., *Troy and The Trojan War*, pp. 33-44. Nor can we define the relationship of coastal settlements in Asia Minor with one another, with the Hittites or with Ahhiyawa. F. Schachermeyr argues that the Asia Minor settlements were vassals of both the Hittites and Mycenaeans in *Mykene und das Hethiterreich* (Vienna, 1986). T. R. Bryce, "Ahhiyawans and Mycenaeans—an Anatolian Viewpoint", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 8 (1989) pp. 297-310, concludes that while the identification of Ahhiyawans and Mycenaeans is not proved, "it is worth stressing that if one does not accept the identification, one *does* have to accept a set of remarkable coincidences" (p. 306). Bryce's reconstruction of the relationships between Ahhiyawans and Hittites from the last quarter of the fifteenth century to the last quarter of the thirteenth is an excellent example of our ability to deal with the Bronze Age by means of historical tools.

⁸D. Gray, "Homer and the Archaeologists," in M. Platnauer, ed., *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1954) pp. 24-31.

his one hundred chariots?"⁹ Hittite difficulties with Wilusa seem to have occurred several times, one of which may be reflected in the material evidence from Hissarlik during the last main phase of Troy VI. There are indications of partial destruction before the final disaster to Troy VI. Thus, even if earthquake were responsible for the end of Troy VI, as Blegen believed, there may have been a major attack on Troy earlier in the thirteenth century. Hittite specialists have dated the accession of Alaksandus as king of Wilusa to the period just before the battle of Qadesh, placed in 1275 on the newest reconstruction of Egyptian New Kingdom chronology. During the time of Alaksandus at least one of the attacks seems to have occurred: the text of the treaty concluded between Alaksandus and the Hittite King Muwatallis implies that Muwatallis assisted Alaksandus against some aggressors before the treaty was made.

If these aggressors were Achaeans and if Wilusa was Troy, Troy VI may have been the source of the epic remembrance. This solution of multiple attacks would account for the strange mixture of pottery found in both Troy VI and Troy VIIa, with dates ranging from the early thirteenth century into the twelfth. To account for the overlapping of pottery traditions, many scholars propose lowering the date for the fall of Troy. If, however, the first calamity to befall Troy was an attack but not a total destruction, it is entirely reasonable to find later pottery remains along with earlier examples from the same level. Inhabitants would have carried on as best they could, until the final destruction occurred several decades later.¹⁰

Discussion also continues over a cause of hostility between Achaeans and the inhabitants of Troy. Such a venture is completely in character with what is known of Mycenaean warlike psychology and military exploits around and beyond the Aegean, but why would Mycenaeans have fastened their hatred on this particular citadel?

There is no question that Mycenaeans knew Troy's location: as in early phases of the Bronze Age, Troy seems to have had reasonably close and constant trade connections with the

⁹For a summary of issues, see her "Priam's Castle Blazing: A Thousand Years of Trojan Memories" in M. J. Mellink, ed., *Troy and The Trojan War*, pp. 77-92; quote from p. 90.

¹⁰M. Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War* (New York and Oxford, 1985), adopts this conclusion after surveying the history of the question from antiquity to 1985.

Mycenaeans during the final centuries of the Bronze Age. Moreover, there has long been an implicit assumption that much of Trojan prosperity was due to its strategic position, controlling the water route between the Aegean and the Black Sea as well as the easiest land route between Asia and Europe. If the view of Rhys Carpenter is correct that heavily loaded merchant ships of the type used in the Late Bronze Age could not negotiate under sail the swift currents in the narrows of the Hellespont (Dardanelles) and particularly of the Bosphorus,¹¹ transshipping near Troy might suggest that Troy's wealth derived from the tolls exacted on commerce. If so, it has been argued, the Greeks may have finally acted to remove this impediment to their expanding trade.

However, Carpenter's argument has been categorically denied and the scanty evidence that Mycenaean goods penetrated to the Black Sea area throws increasing doubt on this explanation for the war. Not commerce but fishing (especially for tunny) has been proposed as the attraction that led the Mycenaeans to Troy.¹² Remains of fish are abundant in later Trojan levels, suggesting that the resource existed during the Bronze Age and Michael Wood has proposed that "The archaeology of Hissarlik could support the idea" of "a sort of Bronze-Age cod war."¹³ Yet a careful examination of the excavated evidence has shown that tunny is all but absent in Troy VI and VII and representations of any kind of fish are rare on the mainland throughout most of the Bronze Age.¹⁴ Many are inclined to attribute Trojan prosperity not to fish but mainly to shrewd management of resources, such as raising horses and sheep within Troy's own immediate territory, and to see this kind of success as arousing the mainland Greeks' cupidity. In other words, events at Troy may have been similar to earlier events at Knossos.

T.B.L. Webster maintained that the amount of Mycenaean pottery at Troy indicates that there might have been a Greek trading station at Troy, as there apparently was at Ugarit. He

¹¹R. Carpenter "The Greek Penetration of the Black Sea," *American Journal of Archaeology* 52 (1948) pp. 1-10.

¹²E. F. Bloedow, "Mycenaean Fishing in Troubled Waters," *Echos du Monde Classique* 31, n.s. 6 (1987), pp. 179-195.

¹³Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, p. 166.

¹⁴C. Mee, "Aegean Trade and Settlement in Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C.," *Anatolian Studies* 28 (1978) pp. 121-155.

even considered it possible that "Troy VII A was a Greek-speaking kingdom and a member of the circle of Mycenaean kingdoms like Knossos and Pylos."¹⁵ Several scholars argue for affinity of population at Troy and on the mainland at the start of the Middle Bronze Age. While analysis of skeletal remains is not yet very helpful,¹⁶ it is an intriguing fact that, among the names so far identified in the Linear B tablets, about one-quarter are names that Homer assigns to Trojans. If there was affinity of population, the conflict over Troy may have been another instance of conflict between Mycenaean kingdoms.¹⁷

The mechanism by which any knowledge of Bronze Age life persisted through the centuries of the Dark Age was the conventional language of poetry. Another group of scholars, the intellectual descendants of Milman Parry, has been especially active in investigating the nature of this poetry. Tracking the nature and course of traditional stories extends well beyond their association with the Trojan War and now plays an important role in our understanding of both Bronze and Dark Age Greek society. With respect to Troy, however, the high level of expertise attained by bards during the Dark Age has led many—but, of course, not all—to the view that memory of specific events could have endured through centuries of nonliteracy.¹⁸ I will have more to say about current developments in this area of early Greek history in section four.

Even as the reality of a Trojan War has become more acceptable to scholars, a few scholars of the present generation have launched sharp attacks upon the first excavator of the site. Schliemann is once again the target of the same virulent hostility that he contended with in his own lifetime and, in its present form, the attack on the man bears directly on the value of his excavations.

¹⁵T.B.L. Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer* (London, 1958), p. 116.

¹⁶J. Lawrence Angel, "The Physical Identity of the Trojans," in M. J. Mellink, ed., *Troy and The Trojan War* pp. 63-71.

¹⁷See the discussion of the nature of interaction between Mycenaean kingdoms in section five.

¹⁸Antony Raubitschek, "What the Greeks Thought of Their Early History," *Ancient World* 20 (1989) pp. 39-45, concludes that the Classical Greek view of events between 1500 and 500 B.C. was continuous and uniform, based on the heroic stories recorded in the epics.

Schliemann was regarded in a variety of lights even before his death.¹⁹ He was the sort of "colorful" figure who attracted—and enjoyed—attention: a perseverer against huge obstacles, he was irascible, temperamental, unsure at times, yet full of conceit toward others—an easy target of satire published in the popular press. He was never fully accepted by the academic establishment of his own day: the Berlin Archaeological Society was particularly hostile. On the other hand, this hostility was balanced by support from German anthropologists and archaeologists such as Virchow and Dörpfeld. Later, the division of opinion continued: even as the German psychoanalyst W. G. Niederland was studying Schliemann's childhood conflicts as the source of his later obsession for digging, Carl Blegen was conceding Schliemann full credit for identification of Hissarlik as Troy.

The recent allegations arguing that Schliemann was unable to tell right from wrong are coupled with charges of deliberate distortion of the archaeological record. The current argument was first broadcast in 1972 by William Calder III, who has since been joined by others, perhaps most prominently by David A. Traill.²⁰ They have concluded that Schliemann created a myth of himself; there was, for instance, no trace of a consuming desire to find Troy until he had actually found something. In creating his story, Schliemann lied about a number of things: witnessing the great San Francisco fire, for instance, and being entertained by President and Mrs. Fillmore. Such mendacity, the argument continues, is one trait of a character tinged with psychopathy. Other tendencies include superficial charm and good intelligence; unreliability, untruthfulness and insincerity; inadequately motivated social behavior; poor judgment and failure to learn by experience; pathologic egocentricity and incapacity for love; general poverty in major affective reactions; failure to follow any life

¹⁹Hartmut Döhl's *Heinrich Schliemann, Mythos und Ärgeris* (Munich and Lucerne, 1981), describes Schliemann's role in the development of the discipline of archaeology. He recognizes shortcomings along with accomplishments and even those who argue that Schliemann is beyond redemption admit that this is "the most intelligent book ever written on Heinrich Schliemann" (W. Calder's review of Döhl's book in *German Studies Review* 6 [1983] pp. 603 f).

²⁰For the position and additional bibliography, see W. Calder and D. Traill, eds., *Myth, Scandal, and History: The Heinrich Schliemann Controversy and a First Edition of the Mycenaean Diary* (Detroit, 1986).

plan. If this recreation of Schliemann's character is correct, "It would be remarkable indeed if an individual so inclined to fraud and deceit proved consistently truthful in his archaeological reporting."²¹

These charges have produced defenders from the ranks of both archaeologists and ancient historians. H. Döhl's reexamination of Schliemann's career pays careful attention to Schliemann's archaeological activity during the years 1869-1890. He finds shortcomings but also sees much that is admirable in the record, including a willingness to admit errors both in excavation and in publication. While relying on Homer, Schliemann's dependence on the poet was neither blind nor total since he recognized that Homer *was* a poet, not an historian. Schliemann valued the independent testimony of topography and travelled widely to gain first-hand knowledge of geography. While some of his methods of excavation arouse panic in the breasts of modern archaeologists, Schliemann knew the value of monetarily worthless finds such as potsherds. While travelling in Nubia, for instance, he learned how handmade pottery was produced in a faithful tradition thousands of years old, acquired some of these modern examples of an ancient skill and offered them to the Berlin Museum for their comparative value. The speed of publication of his finds is especially impressive, even today.

Edmund Bloedow and Donald Easton have been particularly active in offering rebuttals convincingly refuting several allegations and, in other instances, demonstrating that the evidence does not exist to prove beyond doubt the truth or falsity of the individual charges.²² Moreover, the case as a

²¹*Ibid.*, 27, 130.

²²E. Bloedow: "Schliemann on his Accusers," *Tyche* 1 (1986) pp. 30-40; "Schliemann on his Accusers II: A Study in the Reuse of Sources," *L'Antiquité Classique* 57 (1988) pp. 5-30; and with Noyes-Roberts and Smulders, "Schliemann at Mycenae," *Echos du Monde Classique* 33 (1989) pp. 147-165. D. Easton: "Schliemann's Mendacity—A False Trail?" *Antiquity* 58 (1984) pp. 197-204; "Priam's Treasure," *Anatolian Studies* 34 (1984) pp. 141-169. Recent announcements from the Soviet Union reporting the presence of certain art treasures and antiquities in that nation allow the possibility of determining Schliemann's veracity or mendacity at least with respect to the Trojan Treasure. Schliemann's critics have alleged that the excavator collected and planted the precious objects found massed near the fortification wall of the second city. Defenders have argued the antiquity and contemporaneity of the objects but examination and testing of the actual pieces would decide the issue. James Hooker has put the case well: "The great, though deeply-

whole is ahistorical: his main accusers have separated Schliemann from his nineteenth-century context. Mortimer Chambers, in his account of the relationship between Schliemann and America, has recently shown that it is possible to understand both Schliemann's shortcomings and his accomplishments.²³

Analysis of the sort carried on by challengers of Schliemann belongs to the field of psychobiography, and its employment in the case of the excavator of Troy and Mycenae marks its entrance into preclassical Greek history. The technique has not been successful, nor is it likely to be fruitful for other early excavators of Bronze and Dark Age Greece. Consequently, this one contingent is virtually absent from the battlefield of modern studies of preclassical Greek history. But the other contingents are present and ready to do battle. Let us consider first the tactics they are likely to employ.

flawed, man they [Calder and Traill] attack with such venom was on occasion a liar. He showed that baseness can inhabit the human frame alongside far vision and dauntless courage. As the reader of this book soon becomes aware, baseness is not always accompanied by any redeeming virtues." Review of *Myth, Scandal and History*, JHS 108 (1988) pp. 258 f.

²³"Schliemann and America," in W. Calder and J. Cobet, eds., *Heinrich Schliemann nach Hundert Jahren*. Papers held at the 1989 Symposium in Bad Homburg (Frankfurt, 1990).

III

THE TOOLS

METHOD

The present-day tactics for uncovering the story of preclassical Greece combine traditional and new modes of operation. Our discussion of the Trojan War began with the recent work of hydrologists as a demonstration that new approaches, such as topographical reconstruction, are an excellent point of departure for the entire scope of preclassical Greek history. It is no exaggeration to claim that methodological developments deserve much of the credit for bridging the divide between prehistory and history. At the same time, traditional archaeology has added whole new subjects to our picture of early Greece, clarifying certain issues and raising new problems. Using a wide lens first, I will begin with recent developments.

The discipline of archaeology has changed greatly and swiftly in the past generation.¹ Much of that change is reflected in what is still termed the "new archaeology." Named in the 1960s to distinguish recent developments in the discipline from older practices, the new archaeology was described by one of its first proponents, the English archaeologist David Clarke, as "a new level of disciplinary consciousness, critical self-consciousness."² Novel methodologies, observations and philosophies have extended the discipline in a host of directions, enlisting the skills of other disciplines and drawing on recent technology for the

¹As recently as 1972, R. A. McNeal urged that "we should stop classifying potsherds for a while and ask ourselves just what we are doing." "The Greeks in History and Prehistory," *Antiquity* 46 (1972) pp. 19-28; p. 27.

²D. Clarke, "Archaeology: The Loss of Innocence," *Antiquity* 47 (1973) pp. 6-18. S. Manning tracks the course of archaeological research in a brilliant discussion that is often devastating and regularly witty: "Frames of Reference for the Past: Some Thought on Bernal, Truth and Reality," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 3 (1990) pp. 255-274.

collection and analysis of data. In the best of situations, truly interdisciplinary efforts result.

With the innovative tools have come new questions, further expanding the dimensions of the field. Investigators ask how human communities function and how they interact with the environment and with other communities. This kind of archaeology seeks a larger contextual analysis than description of individual objects or sites, while acknowledging the need for specific object or site information as part of the necessary data base.

These developments, in turn, have coincided with an expansion of the scope of inquiry among historians. Alongside examination of specific events and institutions, scholars have turned increasing to long-term processes and issues that, more often than not, cannot be associated with specific individuals or fixed dates. The *longue durée* of the *Annales* school has gained adherents in a number of historical fields associated with ancient studies: social and economic history enjoy greater respect and many scholars have a new appreciation of the role of the environment in shaping the course of human affairs. Such concerns are precisely the issues that new archaeology also emphasizes.

Thus, not single objects or individual events but processes and entire cultural complexes are the favored objects of attention among new archaeologists. An illustration used by Michael Wood is well chosen: the effect of the new approach is "to emphasise the role of the long term against that of the individual event, to diminish the role of the Hectors and Agamemmons of the Bronze-Age world, and to look instead at the roles of people like the women flax workers at Pylos, the silent masses who supported such societies."³

An increasingly popular tool for gathering the information essential to analysis of this sort is survey archaeology, or organized investigation of a landscape. An attempt to gain familiarity with the terrain is not new to archaeology; reconnaissance was one of the earliest practices of the students of antiquity such as the travellers Jacob Spon and George Wheler, who began the rediscovery of ancient Greece in the seventeenth century. Schliemann was an inveterate traveller, even after his excavations were well underway, recognizing the advantage of a better understanding of the whole region in which he was

³Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, p. 243.

excavating or considering excavating. But in the past two decades, the technique has been enriched with more precise methods and more specific goals and, in the process, it has become a formal division of the discipline.

One main result is associated with the size and complexity of surveys. Until recently, topographical surveys were regularly projects of one or two people, sometimes quite informal in nature. Such individual enterprises are increasingly giving way to larger projects involving several people collectively possessing a wide range of expertise whose aim is intensive coverage of a defined area in order to identify every site within the area's boundaries. The size of the teams has grown in response to the aim of present day surveys: "The growing emphasis is on interdisciplinary research projects which address the broader issues of patterns of settlement and resource exploitation, demography, economics and political organization, trade systems and the relationship of man to his environment on a regional scale."⁴ The area of exploration, questions asked of the evidence, and the period of time covered are all larger than the similar concerns of excavation archaeology. The area of survey is regularly extended over more than one site; search ("intensive survey") extends over a block of landscape that is laid out in transects and inspected closely by workers who walk as closely as 15 m. to one another. Within that region, questions are asked of settlement patterns, spheres of cultural influence, extent of trade. Survey archaeology is inherently diachronic inasmuch as surface remains that provide the evidence catalogued or collected by the surveyors cut across broad periods of time. In addition to material remains, survey archaeologists are especially concerned with the interaction between human and environmental conditions.

For all these reasons, an archaeological survey team must be interdisciplinary. As early as the 1940s, Robert Braidwood realized that he required the specialist skills of a paleobotanist, geologist and palaeontologist in his work in northern Iraq. One of the first larger efforts in Greece was the Minnesota Messenia Expedition. The subtitle of the published findings defines the research goal of the expedition as "Reconstructing a Bronze Age

⁴D. R. Keller and D. W. Rupp, eds., *Archaeological Survey in the Mediterranean Area* (Oxford, 1983) p. 5. The discussion by J. Cherry is an excellent overview: "Frogs Round the Pond: Perspectives on Current Archaeological Survey Projects in the Mediterranean Region," pp. 375-416.

Regional Environment." While special attention was addressed to the Late Bronze Age, the team studied the habitation pattern in a region of 1400 square miles for all periods from the Neolithic to the Roman era. Personnel included both archaeologists and para-archaeological personnel represented by specialists in ethnology, epigraphy, metallurgy, civil engineering, geology, history, geography, ceramic technology, soils, agricultural economics and palynology.

The combination of varied expertise provides a different perspective from that of excavation. John Cherry has summed up the difference between the two kinds of endeavor: "Excavation reveals a lot about a little of one site; survey can tell us a little about lots of sites..."⁵ Since many of the sites selected for excavation have been major centers, results have emphasized the activities and culture of more densely populated (if not truly urban) settlements. With its regional focus, survey concentrates on rural, non-elite sites. Its results point to environmental, social and economic developments of all strata in the region defined for investigation. The product is a story of regional developments over extended periods of time. The book jacket of one such story published in 1987—*Beyond the Acropolis: A Rural Greek Past*⁶—proclaims its intent to trace "the cycles of growth and decline that characterize the history of rural Greece," and to show "the interconnection of a landscape and the people who live upon it." The result is to reconfigure the disciplines of both archaeology and history, bringing their practices closer together.

Not all scholars acknowledge the desirability of this closeness, and thus the emergence of these new approaches has not been smooth nor has their appearance been uniformly welcome. Perhaps the most outspoken attack of "new archaeology" is the critique by Paul Courbin, published in 1982 as *Qu'est-ce que l'archéologie?* and, six years later, in English translation by Paul Bahn.⁷ The author finds nothing salutary in the new approaches. But while he is correct in noting some genuine errors on the part of practitioners of new archaeology, still the assault is extreme. In a recent review, C. Runnels generously attributed some of the failings of the English edition

⁵Cherry, p. 387.

⁶T. H. van Andel and C. Runnels (Stanford, 1987).

⁷Originally published in Paris, 1982. English translation *What is Archaeology?* (Chicago, 1988).

to its date of publication: certain excesses of new archaeology had been corrected since the early 1980s.

Many students of early Greece are willing to accept the value of both traditional and new practices. A bridge has been started over what Colin Renfrew, one of the leading advocates of the values of the newer approaches, described as "the Great Divide between the anthropological tradition in America and the classical tradition of the Old World."⁸ And in his Sather Lectures, Anthony Snodgrass offers a persuasive case for the value of newer methods in understanding the nature of early Greece. Snodgrass believes that "Greek archaeology...has been married to, or waiting on, the wrong kind of history."⁹ The discipline of archaeology developed in connection with the older, traditional study of specific events and dates; consequently its role was that of confirming, supplementing or contradicting traditional historical knowledge. While such an alliance is possible in certain cases, "The further one moves away from the geographical center of the central and southern Greek mainland or from the chronological center of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. (and in the case of Greece this means primarily moving to earlier periods), the scantier and less reliable the historical documentation is likely to be, and the greater the scope for the supplementary or the contradictory roles for the archaeological evidence."¹⁰

My own—sometimes heated—debates with colleagues suggest that Renfrew and Snodgrass have not won over all historians or archaeologists dealing with preclassical Greece. Still, they have persuaded many, including the present author, that such an approach enhances the potential for historical examination of once legendary or even mythical periods of the Greek past. Through these tools, we may never know the names and dates of those who fought at Troy but we will be able to reconstruct their communities, appreciate the sources of their livelihood, visualize the horizons of their world and understand how much of their world was inherited by their children and grandchildren.

⁸C. Renfrew, "The Great Tradition versus the Great Divide: Archaeology as Anthropology?" *American Journal of Archaeology* 84 (1980) pp. 287-298.

⁹A. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece: the present state and future scope of a discipline* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1987) p. 37.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 39.

METHOD

The methodological changes wrought by the "new archaeology" are not its only contribution. It has also enhanced our understanding of the depth of Greek prehistory. Features of the remote millennia before the Bronze Age remain part of the cultural heritage of later centuries and, consequently, their discovery and definition adds much to our picture of the subsequent Bronze and Iron Age civilizations. Evidence from the remote Stone Ages is particularly significant for our understanding of the Mycenaean era in tracing the sources of language affinities with other regions of Europe and for correcting the earlier view of the respective roles of Crete and the mainland. Two decades ago, it could be claimed that Greece had few traces of human life during the upper, middle and late Paleolithic phases. The few wanderers to enter Greece up until the Neolithic era were seen as splinter groups from more heavily populated areas of Europe. From these beliefs came theories concerning the arrival of the Greeks and their indebtedness to the Minoans. As we shall see, the earlier views must now be modified.

One implication of the new evidence concerns the basis of the population and the language of Bronze Age Greece. A theory lately formulated by Colin Renfrew ascribes the spread of Indo-European languages to the time and people of the Neolithic agricultural revolution. From an original location probably in Anatolia, he argues, the practice of agriculture seems to have been carried across almost the whole of Europe beginning about 7000 B.C. In the process of movement, the language of those earliest farmers would have also spread across Europe, changing over the centuries into dialects and eventually into distinct though cognate languages. In some areas, the languages of even earlier settlers who spoke "relict" tongues like Etruscan, Basque and Iberian may have prevailed.¹¹

If this thesis is proven correct, it will greatly alter the dimensions of ancient "Greek" history. Since farming techniques

¹¹C. Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (New York, 1987). The theory has been widely reviewed. A good representation of its reception appears in *Current Anthropology* 29 (1988) pp. 437-468. In his study of the basic issues, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology and Myth* (London, 1989), J. P. Mallory does not accept Renfrew's "challenge to the conventional wisdom" (p. 8). See especially chapter six.

were being practiced in Greece well before 6000 B.C., it will relocate the origin of the Greek-speakers to a far earlier time than the date ca. 2000 B. C. that has hitherto been widely accepted. This idea also radically upsets standing interpretations of culture "breaks" for inserting the several dialects into Greece and, consequently, we will be able to do without some, or even all, the later "invasions" in explaining the development of the Mycenaean Age.

The modified picture of earlier developments in the Aegean also has an historiographic importance for our understanding of early Greece. Through the first half of the twentieth century, the generally accepted picture of events in the Aegean gave a leading position to Crete. From the time of its settlement in the Neolithic Age by people already practiced in agriculture and animal husbandry, inhabitants of Crete have been viewed as providing a conduit of cultural diffusion to less advanced cultures in the north and west. Greece, it was thought, had few inhabitants in the Paleolithic period, agriculture came rather late to the northeastern region of the mainland and only gradually spread to the rockier southern areas. Progress accelerated, it was often asserted, when the mainlanders met the culturally more advanced Cretans. Such a picture is no longer so believable if the past of Greek developments is as deep or deeper than that of Crete.

Recent archaeological evidence sustains such a revision: many additional Paleolithic finds have been made in the past twenty-five or thirty years showing traces of human activity from ever earlier times. In July of 1991, archaeologists at Boston University announced the discovery in southern Epirus of a flint hand ax dating between 200,000 and 500,000 years ago. Important excavations have recently been completed at several cave sites, yielding dates as early as ca. 40,000 B.C. Two cave sites have been intensively explored: the rock shelter in northwestern Greece known as Klithi and the Franchthi cave on the coast of the Argive peninsula. Radiocarbon dates for Klithi indicate that much of the material dates from the upper Paleolithic between 12,000 and 10,000 B.C.¹² The Franchthi site demonstrates that humans began to make seasonal visits to the

¹²Lengthy annual reports can be found in *Archaeological Reports* published by the Council of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies and the Managing Committee of the British School at Athens. The publication is an indispensable service for the current state of archaeological investigation in Greece.

area at the end of the European ice ages about 20,000 B.C. Perennial springs were probably an important attraction for animal and human visitors. Human occupants with ever more complex skills visited seasonally over a period of 17,000 years, down to approximately 3000 B. C. when the site appears to have been abandoned because of earthquake.¹³

Neolithic evidence was more abundant than Paleolithic in earlier decades of the present century, but for the millennia between 6000 and 3000 new data has been of similar importance in clarifying our picture of the first farming communities of the Aegean. Previously unknown Neolithic sites have been located—especially on Euboea, in east-central Greece notably near Lake Copais and in Thessaly. Moreover, Neolithic remains have been found at deep levels of known sites such as Tiryns, Mycenae, Corinth, Argos, Nauplion and Thebes. Discovery of more and more farming villages demonstrates a pattern of life that would remain the core of Greek culture from its inception through the rest of antiquity.

Archaeologists have also allotted concerted effort to disclosing evidence of life in Greece after the Bronze Age. The importance of the years from 1200 to 750 is obvious: at the start of the period, the Mycenaean and Minoan civilization collapsed and subsequent developments have been murky. At the end of the Dark Age, Greek culture recovered to become again a commanding presence in the eastern Mediterranean sphere. What ties, if any, bound the Mycenaean civilization to later Greek culture? To return to the Trojan War, we wish to know whether a Dark Age bard could have retained accurate memory of an actual war several centuries earlier. Continuous habitation of sites makes an affirmative answer more plausible.

It has long been known that Athens was continuously occupied from the Bronze Age across the Dark Age into the Classical period. Ongoing work of the American School of Classical Studies is revealing both the basis of the Athenian claim to autochthony and the transformations occurring between the

¹³The final publications are now appearing under the general editorship of T. W. Jacobsen, *Excavations at Franchthi Cave, Greece*, Bloomington, Indiana. A great many other similar sites have been identified throughout Greece, perhaps the most controversial being the Petralona cave of the Chalkidice which contained two human skeletons claimed to date to 800,000 years ago. Whatever the final verdict on those skeletons, it is certain that, in recent years, our progress has been even deeper into the past.

Mycenaean collapse and the eighth century recovery.¹⁴ Like so much of the Greek world, Dark Age Athens was a cluster of small villages making use of a common citadel.

Athens is no longer so unique as new investigations are greatly enlarging present-day understanding of general conditions of these centuries. One major Dark Age excavation conducted at Nichoria in the southwest Peloponnese has demonstrated the variety of roles played by the site during different phases of its history.¹⁵ During the Bronze Age it was likely part of the larger socio-economic unit generally called the Kingdom of Pylos. In the Dark Age, by contrast, the villagers determined their own destiny.

Though possibly uninhabited for a century or so, Nichoria's natural features of location, perennial springs, protected harbor and secure elevation ensured that the site was not forgotten. The first Dark Age village, dating from the eleventh century, evidences continuity from the Mycenaean Age, although life was greatly simplified and the population considerably reduced. During the first phase of its Dark Age existence, excavators estimate a population of about 13-14 families, or 85 to 90 people, rising, in the second phase, to some 40 families or 200 people and falling again to about 20 families or 100 people in the final phase. An assortment of crops was grown—cereal grains, grapes, olives, pea legumes, acorns, figs and perhaps wild cherries. Of greater importance during the Dark Age than during the Mycenaean era were the herding activities in the environs of

¹⁴Volume 13 of *The Athenian Agora* by S. A. Immerwahr treats the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (Princeton, 1971), while volume 8 by E. Brann presents the evidence of late geometric and proto-Attic pottery (Princeton, 1962). A volume by E. Smithson detailing the sub-Mycenaean through Middle Geometric pottery is promised. Chapter two of John Camp's *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens* (London, 1986), succinctly summarizes the preclassical evidence.

¹⁵Work at that site shows clearly the value to be derived from merging the techniques of excavation with survey archaeology. Investigation here constituted the second phase of the Minnesota Messenia Expedition; in fact, in volume I of the final excavation report (edited by Rapp and Aschenbrenner and published in 1978) much of the emphasis is on the local physical environment and the adaptation by the inhabitants of Nichoria to this terrain. Volumes II and III deal with the more traditional evidence found at the site itself: volume II, treating the history of the site to the end of the Bronze Age, is forthcoming; volume III, dealing with the Dark Age and Byzantine settlements, appeared in 1983 edited by McDonald, Coulson and Rosser.

Nichoria. Bones of cattle and red (later roe) deer increase markedly, indicating a shift in the main economic base of the community from mixed farming to cattle ranching. There is a corresponding decrease in the proportion of sheep and goat bones. This and other evidence has led to a revival of the view that Greeks reverted to pastoralism following the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization.¹⁶

Alongside the increased attention to animal husbandry, some specialization seems to have been practiced—the making of ceramics and textiles, building, metallurgy, the production of stone tools and leather working—although much of the craft production must have been carried on within the home. The products show some, but not much, contact with other parts of Greece. There may also have been some political specialization; a much larger than average structure may have been both the home of a village chieftain and his family and a religious center for the little community.

Evidence from sites on the island of Euboea, particularly Eretria and Lefkandi, now joins that from Nichoria in showing that most Dark Age dwellings were simple, one-room huts with stone foundations, wattle and daub or mudbrick walls and pitched, thatched roofs. Some communities, however, were capable of grander structures. Excavators at Eretria discovered a U-shaped building set on a stone foundation bearing resemblance to a structure at Nichoria. The Eretrian structure has been identified as the first in a series of temples on the site. An even earlier apsidal building at Lefkandi measures 10 by 45 meters. Probably a center of a hero-cult, it rested on a stone socle and contained Near Eastern objects as well as fine jewelry. A date of approximately 1000 B.C. together with the site's prosperity has prompted reassessment of long-held notions of the nature of Dark Age life, at least in some communities. Far from being isolated and impoverished, Lefkandi enjoyed considerable foreign contact and, as a result, a degree of wealth and prosperity not generally found in Greek sites of the early Iron Age. Products from a bronze and iron foundry, dated to ca. 900 B.C., show clear indications of contact with Cyprus and the Levant; gold and faience have been found in several graves; pottery indicates contact with other mainland sites, particularly Athens but also Thessaly and even Macedonia. In these characteristics,

¹⁶A. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece*; chapter six presents the case clearly.

Lefkandi may have been unusual among Greek towns of the time. However, the Classical period prepares us to expect divergent paths throughout Greece and that divergence is entirely likely to be a product of the Dark Age with its low population and isolation of towns from one another.

At either end of the Bronze Age, then, our evidence reveals a culture rooted in the land. Small villages, located to take advantage of the land's resources and protective features, defined the world for most people. For the Bronze Age itself, archaeology has confirmed the village focus of life. Additionally, however, those villages were drawn together into larger administrative units, governed through palace centers. For this reason, a predominant share of excavation is directed toward major sites. Excavations have continued at most of the major sites investigated earlier in the century in attempts to clarify our understanding both of developments at particular sites and of connections between sites. A great deal of attention has been paid to dating, both absolute and relative.

Fresh work at Mycenae has been of great importance in improving our knowledge of Bronze Age religious areas and buildings. Excavations in 1968 and 1969 brought to light independent cult buildings interpreted collectively as a religious center of the settlement. Such a center would not be unique inasmuch as Pylos, Tiryns, Phylakopi on Melos and Anemospilia near Knossos on Crete also have buildings thought by many to have been used for cult.¹⁷ While the evidence cannot reveal the beliefs of Bronze Age worshippers, it does show how those worshippers practiced rituals related to their beliefs. Separate buildings not very different from dwellings were a part of the practice and much of the ritual was carried on in the open air, at altars situated near the cult buildings. Clay figurines and perhaps, in one location, a large wooden image celebrated deities by depicting them or by representing their worshippers.¹⁸ Figurines and special vessels such as rhyta played a significant role in ritual. In a word, there is much here to remind us of

¹⁷B. Rutkowski, *The Cult Places of the Aegean* (New Haven, 1986). C. Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (London, 1985).

¹⁸Clay feet discovered at Anemospilia are argued to have belonged to a large wooden image; see N. Marinatos and R. Hägg, "Anthropomorphic Cult Images in Minoan Crete?," in O. Krzyszkowska and L. Nixon, *Minoan Society* (Bristol, 1983) pp. 185-201.

Classical Greek religion and, in fact, evidence of cult continuity increases with each archaeological season.¹⁹

Work at Mycenae and several other sites is clarifying our understanding of dating, especially of the last troubled years of the Bronze Age. Evidence of earthquake has been detected in strata traditionally dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century, but it is now clear that the disaster was not sufficient to end or even greatly reduce occupation. At Mycenae the final Bronze Age community endured to about 1120 B.C.

Continuing investigations on Crete have done much to reshape our understanding of the Mycenaean civilization *vis-à-vis* that of Crete. The traditional picture viewed Minoan civilization as peaceful, undisturbed by internal or external conflict.²⁰ To account for anomalous finds, it was necessary to resort to arguments that accorded with the received picture. Swords, for example, were seen as ceremonial insignia of office.

By contrast, the culture of mainland Greece has regularly been described as warlike and militaristic. Groups of people relied on their swords to establish control over limited territories; they built walls around natural fortresses; their martial spirit carried them to other parts of the Aegean and the larger Mediterranean world. This dichotomy between the two Bronze Age Aegean cultures has been employed to explain the history of their development and interaction. Thus, a Minoan trading empire collapsed when the Mycenaeans intruded with their greater force of arms; Knossos itself fell to redoubtable Mycenaean warriors; the attackers shown on the Akrotiri frescoes *must* be Myceneans, not peace-loving Minoans.

New evidence—detection of more fortifications on Crete, for instance—is occasioning review of these once-standard

¹⁹B. C. Dietrich, "Some Evidence of Religious Continuity in the Greek Dark Age," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 17 (1970) pp. 16-31, and "Evidence of Minoan Religious Traditions and Their Survival in the Mycenaean and Greek World," *Historia* 31 (1982) pp. 1-12. As investigation continues, more traces of continuity are being shown. For example, V.K. Lambrinoudakis discusses evidence from Naxos in "Veneration of Ancestors in Geometric Naxos," in R. Hägg, N. Marinatos and G. C. Nordquist, eds., *Early Greek Cult Practice* (Stockholm, 1988), pp. 235-245.

²⁰R. Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art* (New York, 1967) p. 18: "The peaceful character of this civilization is noticeable even before the Palace period. It was to remain a Cretan peculiarity and contributed to no small extent to the rapid development of her culture."

contrasts.²¹ And it strikes another blow at one of the strangest theories presented during the present generation of Aegean studies: in 1971 H.G. Wunderlich proposed that the Minoan centers were not palaces for the living but sites where preservation of the dead was carried out.²² Lack of defenses may be strange for settlements of the living, the argument goes, but is not surprising for communities of the dead. Wunderlich's thesis has not been accepted, essentially because there is no trace of all those dead supposedly preserved at the "palace centers"; nor are there indicators of the real lives of those engaged in the massive tasks of preserving the bodies.

Evidence of Minoan and Mycenaean activity in other parts of the Aegean should serve as a similar corrective to overstated descriptions of pacificity. Some encounters were peaceful; others clearly were not, as extensive work on the Aegean islands in recent years demonstrates. Sites like Keos, Phylakopi on Melos and Koukounaries on Paros show a pattern of early Minoan and Cycladic affinities replaced by Mycenaean influence. The transitions were not uniformly gradual and peaceful as mainlanders enlarged their sphere of influence, suggesting hostility from both parties.

That the sphere did increase is clearly shown through another contemporary development in Bronze Age archaeology: underwater excavation. A 1982 discovery of a ship wrecked off

²¹As C. Starr cautions: "In sum, we may properly continue to believe that the Minoans cherished the flora and fauna of nature. Both positive archaeological evidence and the comparative testimony of other civilizations, however, should not lead us to the dangerous further step of idealizing their relations with foreigners or captives, slaves, and other unfortunate victims." "Minoan Flower Lovers" in *The Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and Reality*, eds. R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (Stockholm: 1984: p. 12). This is one of several important publications of international symposia sponsored by the Swedish Institute in Athens. The proceedings reflect the current thinking of major scholars. The seventh symposium on *Agriculture of Ancient Greece* was held in May of 1990. Other titles are *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age*, eds. R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (Stockholm, 1981); *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B. C.: Tradition and Innovation* ed. Hägg (Stockholm, 1983); *The Function of the Minoan Palaces*, eds. Hägg and Marinatos (Stockholm, 1987); *Early Greek Cult Practice*, eds. Hägg, Marinatos and G. C. Nordquist (Stockholm, 1987); *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid* eds. Hägg and Nordquist (Stockholm, 1990).

²²H. G. Wunderlich, *The Secret of Crete*. English translation by R. Winston (New York, 1974).

the southern coast of Turkey near Ulu Burun has been particularly dramatic. The vessel appears to have sunk in the fourteenth century B. C. as it was travelling to a further destination, carrying a mixture of objects that demonstrate an international trading enterprise. There are pottery pieces from Cyprus and Syria-Palestine; metal objects with Egyptian, Cypriot, Canaanite and Mycenaean designs; tin ingots and 200 copper ingots; Canaanite glass; a quartz cylinder seal similar to known Kassite seals; a scarab with Egyptian hieroglyphs containing the name Nefertiti; beads of Baltic amber; two hippopotamus teeth and a length of elephant tusk; fragments of tortoise-shell; and a small folding tablet of wood thought to have once contained a text pressed in wax.

Some of the individual finds are unique: the tin ingots are the oldest yet discovered, the gold scarab is the first known with the complete name of Nefertiti, "the Exquisite Beauty of the Aten." Studied as a whole, the finds tell us a great deal about the nature of contacts between cultures in the late Bronze Age. Ships like the one wrecked at Ulu Burun may well have sailed from port to port around the eastern Mediterranean into the Aegean and perhaps as far as the Tyrrhenian Sea gathering goods—and crew—in each harbor. The director of the excavation, George Bass, has described the shipwreck, still only partly excavated, as an archaeologist's dream come true. It contains information for scholars of individual Bronze Age cultures, for students of ship construction, economic history, ancient metallurgy, social history, for geographers and art historians.²³

Not simply unique objects, but entire new sites have been discovered and are now being explored. The most exciting new excavation has been at Akrotiri on the Cycladic island of Thera (Santorini). It provides a splendid illustration of the techniques of contemporary archaeological practice in disinterring a site buried in an ash layer more than 150 feet deep. Many of the specific finds are both intrinsically exciting and valuable in illustrating the interaction of island, mainland, and Cretan civilizations in the later Bronze Age. Finally, as we will see in the following section, a firm dating of the volcanic eruption that buried the site and transformed the island provides an anchor for many points of interpretation in Aegean affairs.

²³*National Geographic* 172 (December 1987), pp. 692-733, has a lengthy discussion by George Bass that is lavishly illustrated: "Oldest Known Shipwreck Reveals Splendors of the Bronze Age."

Thera's remains are the consequence of a volcanic eruption that collapsed two-thirds of the island, producing a caldera of 83 square kilometers, and spewing lava of a temperature estimated to have been more than 1470 degrees Fahrenheit. The volcano's force was four times the power of the 1883 Krakatoa eruption that darkened the sky for two days, could be heard 3000 miles away and created a tidal wave still more than 36 meters high after travelling thirty miles. Thera's eruption was powerful enough to send volcanic material as far away as Crete and Rhodes and mainland Nichoria, where it has been recognized. Thousands of tons of ash entombed the remainder of the island.

Though scholars had long ago found traces of remains at Akrotiri, not until 1967 was a sustained investigation launched when Spyridon Marinatos began to tunnel into the pumice from a gully bed that straddles the site. He had argued, as early as 1939, that the volcanic eruption of Thera had destroyed the Minoan civilization centered on Crete, and he sought to support this theory in his examination of Thera. In the very first season, Marinatos found highly promising remains: buildings preserved to two or three stories, ceramics and metal goods. Continuing excavations under the sponsorship of the Greek Archaeological Society have revealed a Bronze Age equivalent to Pompeii; it is one of the most completely preserved towns of antiquity. Since Marinatos' untimely death in 1974 as the result of a fall in the excavated area, Christos Doumas has supervised the investigations, which he believes will require at least several decades to complete.²⁴

After two decades of work, the general nature of the site can be reconstructed with some certainty. Occupied from about the middle of the third millennium, it merits description as a city by the time of destruction. Professor Doumas has estimated its area as 200,000 square meters where a population of several thousand lived. In appearance, Thera was probably quite like modern Cycladic villages with narrow, winding streets, irregularly shaped buildings made of clay, timber and stone, and variable levels with uses as living quarters, workshops, storage areas

²⁴Doumas' readable survey of the finds into the early 1980s is *Thera: Pompeii of the Ancient Aegean* (London, 1983). Thera has been the subject of several international congresses: Acta of the first congress were published in Athens, 1971; proceedings of the second, entitled *Thera and the Aegean World II* appeared in 1980; to date, abstracts of the third congress, *Thera and the Aegean World III*, held in September 1989, have been published by the Thera Foundation.

and, perhaps, small shops. Windows, a water supply enabling the use of toilets and bath tubs, and magnificent frescoes in many of the houses bespeak a high standard of comfort.

These frescoes, which Doumas declares "the ultimate artistic creations of Late Bronze Age society in the Aegean," have been particularly prominent in the question of cultural interaction. The technique is the same as that practiced on Crete and some of the figures are comparable to Cretan frescoes, yet there are important differences. The naturalism of many examples is striking. Equally vivid is the narrative quality of several of the paintings. In the "flotilla," a fleet of ships is sailing into or from a harbor where townspeople watch from the roofs of buildings or from the land. A miniature fresco shows warriors marching while women and unarmed men watch, herdsmen drive animals, and contorted bodies of naked men appear to be flailing in the sea. Debate has been particularly lively over these frescoes in attempting to disentangle historical clues: are the figures to be identified as Mycenaean or Minoan by physiognomy and dress? Is the artist recalling the capture of a town, perhaps even his town, by foreigners?²⁵ Disagreement is unavoidable, given the nature of the evidence and its state of preservation. While the scenes may be vignettes of daily life portraying actual people in specific situations, we lack both the range of physical evidence and the literary evidence needed to make conclusive identifications. At least one thing is much clearer: the island cultures had strong individual personalities, even though contact with Minoan Crete and, later, mainland Greece was regular and frequent. At present, development appears to have been from largely independent cultural status to increasing influence from Crete and then to growing Mycenaean presence. Confirmation may come from new excavations at other places where the three cultures came into regular contact.

It is safe to wager that objects and sites do remain to be discovered. As long ago as the first century B.C., Cicero recognized the wealth of historical memories associated with Greek lands. His brother, Lucius Cicero, commented, "wherever we set foot, we tread upon some bit of history" (*de Finibus* 5.1).

Excavation will persist although it has already assumed new forms such as rescue archaeology when, for instance, modern

²⁵The literature is already large and grows constantly. See L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (New York, 1988).

construction reveals ancient remains that must be studied and removed in a matter of months or even days. As we have seen, archaeology is not only changed but enlarged. The recent interest in survey techniques to uncover the daily lives of nameless, average people is of particular importance. Along with new interests have come new tools which make possible more precise answers to questions historians regularly ask.²⁶ "When did it happen?" is near the top of that list. I will turn to that feature of early Greek studies next, since major strides in the issue of dating are both exciting and perplexing.

DATING

Hermann Bengtson begins his account of "The Fundamentals of the Study of Ancient History" noting that chronology is known as the "eye of history": "All history takes place in time, and nothing has the same basic importance for the judgment and the historical classification of events as establishing their temporal sequence."²⁷ Historians really want to know whether a Trojan War was fought in, say, 1251 or 1191. In this respect traditional historians must remain disappointed with preclassical Greek studies, for even the newest methods do not readily allow such precision. They cannot even hope, with Bickerman, to establish the Julian year and approximate season of known events.²⁸ Yet a variety of means exists for indicating time for all early Greece. To take our example of the Trojan War, we may look to (1) testimony such as that of Eratosthenes, the librarian of Alexandria, who dated the war to 1184-1183 B.C; (2) the relative dating provided by archaeology which indicates a time when Late Helladic IIIB style pottery was being replaced by Late Helladic IIIC style ware; (3) scientific evidence in the form of Carbon-14

²⁶For a detailed review of recent work see the account of archaeologist K. Kilian. "Mycenaeans up to date, trends and changes in recent research" gives a detailed review of recent work in *Problems in Greek Prehistory*, papers presented at the centenary conference of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, Manchester, April 1986, edited by E. B. French and K. A. Wardle (Bristol, 1988), pp. 115-152. Kilian's discussion is good evidence of the convergence of archaeology and history and, in fact, he writes of historical "factoids."

²⁷H. Bengtson, *Introduction to Ancient History* (tr. R. Frank and F. Gilliard) (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970), p. 23.

²⁸E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (Ithaca, 1968), p. 80. Inasmuch as written records are the usual source for absolute dates, Bickerman's information is of little use to students of Bronze and Dark Age Greece.

dating of organic material found in the drillings of hydrologists or through excavation offering fixed years, within a margin of error of some 50 to 100 years, for the time of death of that material; (4) and dates determined by cross references to datable materials such as the Hittite records.

The ancients supplied the first category of dates, namely traditional dates or durations. Herodotus, for example, could remind his audience that Homer and Hesiod lived "not more than four hundred years ago" (II.53) and he not infrequently supplied such information as the reckoning that a total of 11,340 years separated the first king of Egypt from the last mentioned (II.142). Ancient testimony can also give a kind of relative dating, such as Thucydides' scheme of the Greek colonization of Sicily (VI.1).

For preliterate periods, archaeology provides another sort of relative dating, based on an object's position within a larger sequence. A vase found in the lowest level of an undisturbed, stratified site is earlier in date than a vase found in a higher level. Even when objects cannot be described according to exact archaeological location, they can be assigned relative dates on the basis of their stylistic and technological elements.

A more absolute dating derives from modern scientific methods. The lively debate concerning the eruption of Thera provides an excellent illustration since several schemes of anchoring the event in time are actively employed.²⁹ Up until ten years ago, archaeological evidence placed the eruption securely in the second millennium B.C., but greater precision was impossible. Many scholars argued for a date near 1500 B.C. on the grounds that objects found in the destruction level at the main Bronze Age site at Akrotiri seemed similar to Minoan items assigned to that time frame. For others, 1450 seemed a more likely date: the force of the volcanic explosion would thus account for the widespread destruction in Crete about the middle

²⁹An excellent summary of the dating and its implications is that of S. Manning, "The Bronze Age Eruption of Thera: Absolute Dating, Aegean Chronology and Mediterranean Cultural Interrelations," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 1 (1988), pp. 17-82. Manning reassesses the evidence in "The Santorini Eruption: An Update," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 2 (1989), pp. 303-313. Admitting that the evidence of ice-cores and tree rings is not yet sufficient to reach a precise date, he concludes that "the balance of probabilities strongly supports a 17th century BC date for the Santorini eruption." (p. 309) With the acceptance of this chronology, he insists, must come a rethinking of Eastern Mediterranean chronology generally.

of the fifteenth century. Geological evidence indicates that there were two or even three eruptions separated by intervals perhaps of fifty years. Or, as Professor Galanopoulos proposed, separate eruptions occurred about 1450 and 1200 B.C.; thus the effects of the Thera explosion help to account for the decline of Aegean civilization at the end of the Bronze Age.³⁰ Leon Pomerance has pressed the case for a single eruption ca. 1200 B.C.³¹

This variation in opinion was due, in no small part, to what seem still to be imprecise dating techniques. Carbon-14 dating of charred wood of a pine tree buried in the volcanic tephra on Thera yielded a date of 3370 years, or a date between 1500 and 1400 B. C. Even less exact was the evidence of cores taken from the sea floor. They were found to contain layers of volcanic ash, and one layer was dated to "later than 3000 B.C." In contrast to this variability, developments of the 1980s have proposed a much earlier and very precise date and, along with it, have posed new problems.

The earliest step in this development occurred in C¹⁴ dating, used since 1946 to measure the isotope of carbon remaining in dead organic matter as a means to calculate the amount of time elapsed since the death of the object. The date is only approximate; 30 years, for example, yields a sixty-year range within which the specific date should be fixed. Beyond this fairly wide margin of probable date, there was a flaw in the original method of calculation. Until recently, it was not known that the ratio of radioactive to ordinary carbon is not constant but varies over the years according to fluctuations in the environment. Thus an organism alive when conditions lead to higher production of radioactive carbon will contain more after it has been dead 500 years than will an organism alive during a period of different conditions. When the known environmental fluctuations are taken into account, the C¹⁴ dates can be adjusted accordingly.³² A series of dates from Akrotiri is especially long and provides a subset of dates for fixing the volcanic eruption. Sixteen dates of short-lived objects like twigs and seeds have been calculated

³⁰A. Galanopoulos, *New Light on the Legend of Atlantis and the Mycenaean Decadence* (Athens, 1981).

³¹L. Pomerance, *The Final Collapse of Santorini (Thera): 1400 B.C. or 1200 B.C.? Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 26 (Göteborg, 1970).

³²C. Renfrew, *Before Civilisation, the Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe* (Harmondsworth, 1976).

giving a mean age, adjusted to account for environmental fluctuations, of 1615 B.C.³³

Work in two other dating techniques—dendrochronology and ice dating—has strengthened the case for the C¹⁴ results. Overlapping the evidence of living trees with old wood has yielded two remarkably long series of tree rings: a series based largely on California bristlecone pines extends over 8500 years and, in 1984, a 7272-year chronology was completed in Belfast using oaks preserved in Irish bogs. These series are useful for indicating both ordinary annual growth and environmental abnormalities with narrow rings corresponding to poor growth conditions. Among the possible causes for growth variation is volcanic activity since volcanoes create dust veils that have the effect of lowering temperatures, thus affecting growing patterns. In 1984, scientists examining evidence from the California series claimed that a significant frost ring dating to 1626 B.C. might relate to the eruption of Thera.³⁴ Detection of narrow bands through much of the decade of the 1620s B.C. has led Irish dendrochronologists to a similar conclusion.³⁵

Dating by means of annual ice deposits gives the same result. Working with samples from southern Greenland, a Danish team has studied seasonal variations in layers of ice deposits from 1300 back to 1900 B.C. Cores from this period show three layers of high acidity and since one possible cause of such acidity is the ejection of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere by volcanic eruptions, the analysis of these layers is of great interest. The three are dated to 1428, 1644 and 1688 and, of the three, the second had both the highest level of acidity and alone was associated with sulfuric acid, the form in which sulfur dioxide is frozen into ice. Thus, if this sulphuric layer resulted from the volcanic eruption on Thera³⁶, that explosion can be dated to 1645 ± two possible deviations of 7 and 20 years respectively. In other words, ice dating identifies the same decade in which tree rings

³³For a summary and citations see, P.P. Betancourt, "Dating the Aegean Late Bronze Age with Radiocarbon," *Archaeometry* 29 (1987), pp. 45-49.

³⁴J. C. La Marche, Jr., and K. K. Hirschboeck, "Frost Rings in Trees as Records of Major Volcanic Eruptions," *Nature* 307 (1984), pp. 121-126.

³⁵M. G. L. Baillie and M. A. Munro, "Irish Tree Rings, Santorini and Volcanic Dust Veils," *Nature* 332 (1988), pp. 344-346.

³⁶The eruption column of Thera is estimated to have extended 29 kilometers; thus it penetrated well into the stratosphere and would have drifted thousands of miles.

show abnormal growth very probably caused by a major volcanic eruption.³⁷

The much higher date is not altogether welcome to Aegean specialists. It is a century earlier than chronology reached through pottery dating and, as we have seen, the edifice built on analysis of ceramic evidence has been painfully erected. In a candid admission, Minoan pottery specialist Philip Betancourt has confronted the new evidence:

...if we were to ignore earlier prejudices completely and erect a new Aegean chronology today, it would be somewhat different from the received tradition. This author withdraws many of the opinions he expressed a decade ago...; the Aegean Late Bronze Age probably began during the Hyksos period, and radiocarbon was correct all along.³⁸

The primary thrust of the new chronology would be to place the start of the Late Bronze Age a century earlier for all the Aegean cultures. Then, all later periods at least to the end of the Bronze Age must be either expanded to absorb the hundred years or similarly dated to earlier absolute dates. Professor Betancourt proposes a tentative chronology for Crete and Greece based on the seventeenth century dating of Thera:

| Crete | Greece | Dates |
|----------|----------|---------------------|
| LMIA | LHIA | c.1700-1610 B.C. |
| LMIB | LHIIA | c.1610-1550 B.C. |
| LMII | LHIIIB | c.1550-1490 B.C. |
| LMIIIA:1 | LHIIIA:1 | c.1490-1431/10 B.C. |
| LMIIIA:2 | LHIIIA:2 | c.1430/10-1365 B.C. |
| LMIIIB | LHIIIB | c.1365-1200 B.C. |

There are some firm absolute dates for the later phases of the Late Bronze Age, particularly Aegean finds found in datable Egyptian contexts or datable Egyptian materials discovered in Crete or on the Greek mainland. For the earlier phases, there are no Aegean goods in well-dated eastern Mediterranean contexts. Consequently, the earlier centuries can better accommodate stretching than can the later centuries of the period. What is

³⁷C. U. Hammer, H. B. Clausen and W. Dansgaard, "Greenland Ice Sheet Evidence of Post-glacial Volcanism and Its Climatic Impact," *Nature* 288 (1980), pp. 230-235.

³⁸P.P. Betancourt, "Dating the Aegean Late Bronze Age with Radiocarbon," *Archaeometry* 29 (1987), p. 48.

more, the new dating solves other chronological problems that have existed in the relationship between Aegean and northern European cultures.³⁹ In the revised dating scheme, the Aegean-related metalwork of northern Europe is closer in time to similar finds from the Aegean. And, as Betancourt has argued, the earlier dating explains why there is no report of the explosion in Egyptian records. There are no records from the Hyksos/Second Intermediate period which lasted through the seventeenth century B.C.⁴⁰

Reaction to this information has been mixed. Since the new scheme entails a number of highly specialized techniques, a verdict is likely to be delayed some years. Aside from its importance as a fixed absolute point, this case demonstrates the problematic nature of determining such points. It also invokes the fourth means of attempting to do so with which we began this discussion. Not all Bronze and Dark Age cultures were nonliterate; Egypt and the Near Eastern civilizations used written records some of which have been preserved into the present. Cross-dating thus provides another means of determining absolute dates. It becomes especially valuable when cultures were closely interlinked, as were the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean during the late Bronze Age.

A need to compare data on chronology is at the heart of a new publication, *Studies in Ancient Chronology*, whose scope extends from the Neolithic period to Roman times in the Old World. Its inaugural volume (1987) dealt with an issue that is of great importance to students of early Greece, namely a reassessment of the Dark Age chronology in the eastern and central Mediterranean.⁴¹

Beyond its intrinsic significance, the debate illustrates well the interdependence of evidence from contemporary cultures.

³⁹Recent examination of the evidence has led some scholars to the conclusion that contacts between Greece and the rest of Europe seem particularly noticeable in the early Mycenaean period. J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Göteborg, 1985); S. Diamant, "Mycenaean Origins: Infiltration from the North" in E.B. French and K. A. Wardle, *Problems in Greek Prehistory* (1988), pp. 153-159.

⁴⁰Betancourt, p. 48.

⁴¹"Bronze to Iron Age Chronology in the Old World: Time for a Reassessment?" *Studies in Ancient Chronology* 1 (1987). Sections treat "Greece: 'Dark Age' Debates," "Greece: The Foundations of Geometric Chronology" and "Troy and Central Anatolia: Centuries of Darkness."

According to P.J. James, a main contributor to the debate, "The trail of 'Dark Age' questions eventually leads to Egypt, whose history provides the yardstick of Old World chronology."⁴² Revised estimates for Egyptian chronology of the Third Intermediate Period (traditionally dated to ca. 1100-650 B.C.) suggest that the length of time has been telescoped by such tendencies as treating concurrent reigns as successive. Since Egyptian chronology serves to fix other chronologies, the early first millennium dates of other Mediterranean cultures will be affected. In fact, scholars examining other local chronologies have independently reached similar conclusions: the "Dark Age" should be condensed.

If these findings prove correct—a task that will demand considerable investigation at the local and more general levels—they will necessitate evaluation of the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age dating for all Mediterranean cultures. For our understanding of early Greece, a condensed Dark Age might halve the period of darkness, thereby making continuity from the Mycenaean world more probable.

However, the evidence from Greece argues caution, for as excavators uncover new information for the Dark Age such shortening becomes less feasible. For instance, a British School team directed by K.A. Wardle is excavating the settlement at Assiros Toumba in central Macedonia which shows historical continuity from the Late Bronze Age to the very end of the Dark Age. Its origins are demonstrably linked to the Bronze Age; later settlements are shown to be separated by destruction debris caused by local disruptions. In other words, a single settlement has not been defined erroneously as two or more. The nine phases are dated between ca. 1300 and 700 B.C., allowing fifty years for every phase with the exception of the two latest which are each accorded a full century. Other recently excavated sites show a similar richness that could be compressed only with difficulty. So, for now, perhaps we should accord the Greek Dark Age its traditional length of four hundred years from ca. 1150 to 750 B.C.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 68. See also P. J. James, *Centuries of Darkness* (London, 1991).

IV

THE EVIDENCE

WRITING

The Evidence

The paucity of written records does much to explain the virtual absence of a fixed chronology for early Greek history. While the Mycenaean civilization used written records in its late phase, writing was limited to administrative functions and practiced by so few people that craft literacy best describes the writing of the Greek Bronze Age. Even this limited literacy appears to have disappeared in the early twelfth century with the collapse of the administrative systems that had called it forth. For the Dark Age, written records completely disappear until the eighth century, providing an example of a culture operating in conditions of total nonliteracy. Consequently there are no true historical records for either period of early Greece.

The corpus of written data from the Bronze Age has not grown significantly in the past several decades. Some Knossos Linear B fragments were rediscovered in 1984: they had been wrapped in newspaper and stored away since Evans' original discovery of them. Crete has produced additional Linear A inscriptions from several sites, some new hieroglyphic inscriptions and fragments of Linear B inscriptions from Chania in the western part of the island. Beyond Crete, more Linear A is reported from Kythera and Kea while objects with Cypro-Minoan signs have been excavated at several sites on Cyprus and, if the identification as Cypro-Minoan is correct, Kea. Apart from the Linear B from western Crete, the largest new find is 55 sealings inscribed in Linear B excavated at Thebes.¹ In a

¹V. Aravantinos is particularly active in the interpretation of the Thebes material. See, for example, "The Mycenaean Inscribed Sealings from Thebes: Preliminary Notes," *Tractata Mycenaea*, Proceedings of the Eighth International

Protogeometric context, the cemetery at Tekke on Crete was the source of a bronze bowl with an incised inscription of 13 letters of the Phoenician alphabet. An alphabetic cuneiform inscription was found at the Late Cycladic site Hala Sultan Tekke in Cyprus.

The quantity of Linear A is still insufficient to enable much progress toward decipherment. A sensible procedure has been to compare signs with similar forms in Linear A and B. For instance, if decoded according to the values of Linear B, some of the Linear A groupings produce names almost identical with place names found on the Knossos Linear B tablets. Since names of places tend to persist even under new inhabitants, such similarity between tablets is not surprising: both Linear A and Linear B tablets seem to deal with commodities and people that are regularly identified by location. Comparison between Linear A and Linear B has been enough to confirm the belief that the language of the former is not Greek. An important clue to the nature of the language of the Linear B script is the word for "total," *to-so* or *to-sa*, used before a reckoning. The word used before a reckoning in Linear A tablets is *ku-ro* when transcribed according to Linear B values. *Ku-ro* means nothing like "total" in classical Greek.

Far more examples of Linear A are needed before decipherment becomes likely. John Chadwick's 1987 assessment for the Phaistos Disk is appropriate for Linear A as well:

Only a large increase in the number of inscriptions will permit real progress towards a decipherment. Meanwhile, we must curb our impatience, and admit that if King Minos himself were to reveal to someone in a dream the true interpretation it would be quite impossible for him to convince anyone else that his was the one and only possible solution.²

With more numerous but still limited materials, Linear B scholars have worked hard to share the evidence. The Pylos tablets were published in two parts in 1973 and 1976; a new edition of the Knossos tablets appeared in 1987. The Mycenae, Tiryns and Thebes tablets have also been published, as has the corpus of vases with Linear B inscriptions. This access to the data has spurred the pace of further work. Fragments of tablets have been joined to create larger grammatical contexts and to

Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies held in Ohrid, 15-20 September 1985 (Skopje, 1987), pp. 13-27.

²J. Chadwick, *Linear B and Related Scripts* (London and Berkeley, 1987), is a fine overview of the current state of Linear B studies. It is one of the series "Reading the Past" (p. 61).

clarify points of detail, although Lydia Baumbach has concluded, "in the interpretation of vocabulary words we seemed to have reached the point where the 'law of diminishing returns' becomes established." In her view, the more profitable use of the tablets lies in studying them as "sets" revealing various aspects of Bronze Age life.³

In pursuing this path, several scholars, notably J.P. Olivier, Y. Duhoux and T. Palaima, have focused on differences between the Minoan and Mycenaean archives. While Linear A is found at all types of sites throughout Crete and beyond, Linear B is concentrated at major mainland sites. Linear A inscriptions occur on votive offerings, ceramic and stone vases, metal objects, seals and sealings and on plaster fragments as well as on tablets. By contrast, Linear B appears on tablets, sealings, labels and pottery. Such differences suggest distinctions in the administrative structures within which the two writing systems were employed. They also indicate that literacy had penetrated deeper into Minoan culture than it had on the mainland. John Chadwick is of the opinion that "The finds show that writing was not in widespread use in Mycenaean Greece.... Writing seems to have been exclusively a bureaucratic tool, a necessary method of keeping administrative accounts and documents, but never used for historical or even frivolous purposes."⁴ Linear A, on the other hand, apparently had religious and decorative as well as administrative uses.

Comparison with written records from other Bronze Age cultures has become a useful means of examining the Aegean materials. Set against evidence from the Near East, the records of Crete and Greece are limited: there is nothing personal, commemorative, legal, literary or propagandistic in the Aegean collections as there is in the Near Eastern accounts. Nevertheless, the tablets are a strong clue to the nature of the Mycenaean economy: centralization characterized Mycenaean Greek economic, social and political organization, just as it did

³L. Baumbach, "Linear B: Retrospect and Respects" in J. T. Killen, J. L. Melena and J.-P. Olivier, eds., *Studies in Mycenaean and Classical Greek Presented to John Chadwick* (Minos 20-22; Salamanca, 1987), pp. 69-76, quote from p. 75.

⁴Chadwick, *Linear B and Related Scripts*, 11. T. Palaima has reached quite a different conclusion, arguing for far greater pervasiveness of literacy in the Mycenaean world. See his "Comments on Mycenaean Literacy," Killen, Melena and Olivier, eds., *Studies...to John Chadwick*, pp. 499-510.

contemporary Near Eastern economies. Recent scholarship has elucidated the types of goods that were controlled from the palace centers. The work of John Killen and José Melena with the sheep and textiles tablets is an important example; Cynthia Shelmerdine has demonstrated the major role for perfumed oil production at Pylos. Margareta Lindgren has undertaken prosopographical study of individual names.⁵

Cooperation between textual scholars and archaeologists has also brought greater insight in the use of written materials. Fundamental to their cooperation is the view that the architecture and other contents of places in which tablets were found will shed light on the tablets while, reciprocally, the tablets will shed light on the find-spots. For example, a complex of seven rooms excavated at Pylos in 1957 was first described as a garrison or palace guard quarters. But an examination of the contents of the complex together with tablets listing groups of men, herds of animals, skins, one tablet dealing with bronze and another referring to wheels, now leads to the conclusion that it was a workshop.

Relationships between parts of the larger palace complex can be demonstrated by means of another clue provided by the tablets. Identification of scribal hands has made it possible to follow the activity of specific individuals. The same hand can be detected in tablets describing different commodities, or the same hand can be recognized on tablets located in certain parts of the palace. T. Palaima has found "an apparent versatility in the range of subjects treated by the better-attested record-keepers" and argues that "This wide range of 'assignments' must be kept in mind when considering the role of scribes, whether well-attested or not, in specialized industries."⁶

Establishing a context for the tablets has a methodological importance. The product of archaeological excavation is a static picture: archaeology provides evidence of once-dynamic processes which, for us, have lost that activity. Examining the context of the tablets, or any single category of evidence for that

⁵J. T. Killen, *A Mycenaean Industry*, forthcoming; J. Melena, *Studies on Some Mycenaean Inscriptions from Knossos Dealing with Textiles*, Supplement to *Minos* 5 (Salamanca, 1975); C. W. Shelmerdine, *The Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos* (Göteborg, 1985); M. Lindgren, *The People of Pylos*, 2 vols. (Uppsala, 1973).

⁶T. Palaima and C. Shelmerdine, eds., *Pylos Comes Alive: Industry + Administration in a Mycenaean Palace* (New York, 1984), p. 34.

matter, restores some of the original dynamism. The historical dynamism of language development has prompted a study of morphology, etymology and phonology to uncover the relationship of Mycenaean Greek to the Classical dialects. Antonin Bartonek, who has done a great deal of work in this area, has stressed the significance of the decipherment in the study of the Greek language:

...the discovery in 1952 of the only recorded Greek dialect from the second millennium B.C., Mycenaean Greek, opened up unexpected perspectives for the diachronic study of the relations between the dialects, whose possibilities were considered virtually exhausted twenty-five years ago.⁷

Several scholars now believe that some differentiation occurred during the second millennium when the language of southern Greeks diverged from that of northern Greeks. Linguistic developments were more rapid, many believe, at the end of the Bronze Age. Ernst Risch joins Bartonek in looking to the "darkening" century following the collapse of Mycenaean rule as "the great period of linguistic ferment."⁸ There is general agreement that, of the later dialects, Arcadian and Cypriot are closest to Mycenaean; however, there is less consensus with regard to the association between Mycenaean and the other dialects of the first millennium B.C. I will have more to say in the last chapter about a thesis advanced by John Chadwick that attempts to trace the relationship of Mycenaean to the Doric dialect.

Identification of the time and place of the origin of the scripts poses another contextual question. The first evidence came from Crete, and Evans explained the development as a succession of forms of writing within the Minoan civilization: pictographic writing gave way to Linear A which led to Linear B. The discovery of large quantities of Linear B on the Greek mainland suggested that some revision was necessary; even the Cretan evidence argued against a view of simple succession since it is likely that earlier scripts continued in use even when later forms had evolved.

But what situation produced a script to write the Greek language? Those who believe that mainlanders established themselves on Crete during the second millennium have a ready

⁷A. Bartonek, "Greek Dialects between 1000 and 300 B.C.," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-anatolici* 20 (1979), p. 113.

⁸E. Risch, "Die Griechischen Dialekte im. 2. Vorchristlichen Jahrtausend," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-anatolici* 20 (1979), pp. 91-110.

explanation: Minoan scribes altered their own script, Linear A, tailoring it to the needs of a different language. The result was Linear B, which shows similarity to Linear A in almost half of the signs. Use of Linear B was carried from Crete to the mainland centers. This, at present, is the favored position.⁹

Others are persuaded that Linear B was developed on the mainland of Greece. Minoan scribes as well as Minoan artisans practiced their skills—either voluntarily or through compulsion—in the emerging centers on the mainland. It was at Pylos or Mycenae that scribes adapted their knowledge of writing to accommodate Greek.¹⁰ James Hooker argued that expanding trade led to the introduction of a Minoan script to the mainland as early as the sixteenth century.¹¹ As the script continued in use, it was gradually modified to accommodate the language of the mainland Greeks, as well as other peoples, who were increasingly part of a cultural *koinê*. More Greek words, even notations of weights and measures, were introduced. Linear A, in other words, became proto-Linear B, then fully Linear B. Thus, for Hooker, the use of Linear B at Knossos does not betoken control of that site by mainlanders. Rather, it demonstrates the mixture of cultures and languages that typifies the second half of the second millennium.

There are other contenders for Linear B's place of origin, particularly locations where Minoans and Mycenaeans came regularly into contact with one another: Kythera, perhaps, or Thera. On the basis of present evidence, either Crete or the mainland seems a more likely source. As in so many areas, a final verdict must await major additions to the body of evidence.

A similar debate over origins is heating up on the issue of the introduction of alphabetic writing in Dark Age Greece. There are even some scholars who argue that the Greeks never lost their literate skills.¹² This view remains the exception and, on the

⁹Accepted by A. Heubeck who gives a useful review of the positions in "L'origine della lineare B," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-anatolici* 23 (1982), pp. 195-207.

¹⁰This is the view of L. Godart, "Le linéaire A et son environnement," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-anatolici* 20 (1979), pp. 27-42.

¹¹J.T. Hooker, *The Origin of the Linear B Script* (*Minos* supplement 8; Salamanca, 1979).

¹²M. Bernal takes this stance: "It is now impossible to maintain that the Greek Bronze and Iron Ages were separated from each other by impermeable

grounds that there was a hiatus in literacy, I will return to the question of writing after considering the other means of preserving knowledge—viz. oral communication.

ORAL TRADITION

Some compensation for the limited written evidence deriving from preclassical Greece can be found in the immense strides made recently in the study of oral communication and composition. Although the roots of such study extend back to the work of Milman Parry during the 1920s and 1930s, the findings were not then widely appreciated. Forty years after Parry's work, Sterling Dow could write, "the human brain works slowly, if at all, and there are signs that although the Parry doctrines are getting to be fairly well absorbed in England, farther away, as in Vienna, the light has not yet dawned."¹³ Absorption has proceeded at a far more rapid rate during the past two decades; in fact, there is a new field known as oral-formulaic theory whose development is described by John Miles Foley in his 1988 study *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*.¹⁴

As its name reveals, oral tradition relies solely on word of mouth for memory and transmission of information; as such it is positioned between conservation and change. Traditional tales with stock characters, regular metrical form and units of words and phrases facilitate memory in cultures that are nonliterate. But, largely because story tellers are not aided by writing, each telling of an account varies from the preceding. Moreover, the most successful of the bards were those able to combine various inherited elements into a dynamic, apparently spontaneous whole. Consequently, those products of oral tradition that are eventually captured in written form will contain chronological

centuries of illiteracy." *Black Athena*, Vol. II: *The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991), p. 5.

¹³S. Dow, "Literacy: The Palace Bureaucracies, the Dark Age, Homer," in *A Land Called Crete* (Smith College, 1968) pp. 109-147; 124.

¹⁴Bloomington, Ind., 1988. In 1986, Foley founded a journal fittingly named *Oral Tradition* as a forum for discussion of positions and issues dealing with this subject. Although much of the field's philological analysis of language, meter and form is highly technical, its conclusions have a direct bearing on our understanding of historical events and later remembrance of them.

"layers" corresponding to the depth of time over which they have been sung.¹⁵

Eric Havelock was, for more than a decade, the most outspoken advocate of the historical implications of the Greek oral tradition. Describing the Homeric epics as the encyclopedia of the Greeks, he argued that they were the vehicle permitting "the storage of cultural information for reuse."¹⁶ Technological information, behavioral codes, world view and even historical knowledge are preserved, Havelock maintained, through the special language designed to encode essential knowledge. Both the knowledge to be retained and the form in which it is encased are determined anew by each generation—files are sorted, pruned and added, to speak in terms of the current technology of storing information. In this way, present needs and concerns shape the memory of the past; according to Havelock, "the stories...are fashioned in such a way as to take for granted a polity and life style which are contemporary, meaning that they reflect Greek life as it was lived in the period when the poems assumed their final compositional form."¹⁷

Havelock's position was initially most unpopular and even when it gradually won adherents, they tended to come from fields other than classical studies.¹⁸ A number of his professional

¹⁵R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod, and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 188 f: "In an oral or mainly oral tradition... formulae are preserved over long periods for reasons of convenience, or even necessity, as an aid to composition. Many formulae are handed down through the generations and preserve archaic forms, some extremely ancient indeed...one expects old formulae and archaisms to diminish in frequency through the generations, as innovative phraseology and language creeps in; and if this could be quantified, it might provide a yardstick useful for assigning approximate relative dates to the poems." On Homer as oral poet, the works of A. B. Lord, G. S. Kirk, M. W. Edwards, J. A. Notopoulos and J. A. Russo are important points of departure. Foley's *The Theory of Oral Composition* contains a good bibliography.

¹⁶E. A. Havelock, "Prologue to Greek Literacy" in *University of Cincinnati Classical Studies II* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1973), p. 32. A collection of his articles has been reprinted under the title *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982). See also his *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, 1963), and *The Greek Concept of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978).

¹⁷*Greek Concept of Justice*, p. 87.

¹⁸His last book outlines the history of his position: *The Muse Learns to Write* (New Haven and London, 1986). A sensitive review by R. J. Connors (*Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 [1988], pp. 379-81), speaks of the early conservative

colleagues believe that Havelock simply pushed his argument to an extreme. Many classicists minimize the role of orality in ancient Greece on the grounds that orality connotes a primitive level of cultural development, making oral poetry a debased form of poetry. Few would assert that Homeric poetry is debased; thus, the reasoning continues, the society that produced it can not have been primitive as many oral cultures have been. It is important to remember that Havelock also emphasized the special character of Greek oral tradition. The Greeks were not, in the Dark Age, illiterates in a world that was reliant on literacy; they were nonliterate in a world without literacy. As their world became increasingly complex, their oral tradition was shaped to deal with a great range of societal demands. Thus, following in the footsteps of Milman Parry, Havelock saw great scope and beauty in oral composition, something different from, but not second-rate to, literate composition.

If Greek classical scholars have been slow to appreciate the implications of oral formulaic theory, those in other fields have been more receptive. During the past generation, specialists from such diverse fields as psychology, anthropology, communications, linguistics and history have been demonstrating that oral societies, widely separated by time and space, share certain features, while literate cultures, equally distant from one another, are marked by quite another set of features. The differences between the two sets of characteristics are sufficient to distinguish between a literate and a nonliterate mentality whose world views and means of communicating those views are quite distinct.¹⁹

Neither form of communication is superior; each has its own potentialities, strengths and limitations. A first-time reader of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* must know that the epic is the result of oral composition in order to "excuse" its faults and "praise" its

response of the world of classical studies. Even today, Connors continues, "much of Havelock's own world of classical scholarship still grumpily dismisses his ideas as 'exaggerated'."

¹⁹Five seminal studies in the early years of the study of orality are M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto, 1962); E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* cited n. 3; W. J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven and London, 1967); J. Goody and I. Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in J. Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 27-68; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition, A Study in Historical Methodology* (first published as *De la Tradition Orale*, 1961; English translation H.M. Wright, Chicago and London, 1965).

virtues. Without this knowledge, readers today will react like their Renaissance predecessors who, on rediscovering classical Greek, wondered why Homer was so highly praised by the ancients since his epics possessed few of the virtues of, say, Vergil's or Milton's poetry. Insights into the techniques of oral composition show why the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are poor instances of literate epics just as the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* are equally poor examples of oral epics, while all are exemplary models of their own genres.

Beyond enhancing our appreciation of the *products* of an oral tradition, recent scholarship offers insights into the mechanics of nonliterate *cultures* themselves.²⁰ Information judged necessary to be remembered was vital to the culture's continued health. It results from a collective decision and reflects the basic features and values of the culture. Embedded in its remembered tradition, consequently, are both the guidelines and fundamental institutions of those who sang and listened to the oral poetry comprising their collective life. We can see attitudes toward authority, customary law, the ordering of communal life, the economic foundations of healthy existence and attitudes toward the gods and toward other humans. Our insight may remain anonymous but, much as the results of survey archaeology, the study of oral tradition raises the curtain a little on the daily life of the ordinary people of early Greece.

An exact date for this insight can not be given; nor will it ever be possible through the study of oral tradition alone. Few scholars today argue, as did S.E. Bassett, that Homer's account bears little if any resemblance to actual events and places.²¹ By contrast, many believe that the picture of society in the Homeric epics is an amalgam from different historical periods.²² It is interesting that many archaeologists see in Homeric poetry strong

²⁰Havelock's more recent books have been mentioned in earlier notes; W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York, 1982); J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977), and *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge, 1986); J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London and Nairobi, 1985).

²¹S.E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley, 1938), p. 173: "So Homer's picture differs from what the spade has revealed, much as fifth-century Attic potsherds differ from Keats's Ode on a Grecian Urn. It is neither fragmentary nor photographic. No more is it historical."

²²M.W. Edwards, *Homer: Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore, 1987); J. Griffin, *Homer, The Odyssey* (Cambridge, 1987).

ties to the Mycenaean period.²³ Another school of thought accepts that a tale of the Trojan War sung by a bard of the eighth century could well have its roots in the Mycenaean Age, but much of the foliage would date from later centuries more or less contemporary with the final, monumental version of the tale. As Ian Morris has summarized the position in his excellent "The Use and Abuse of Homer," the institutions, beliefs and structures of the poet's own time form the backdrop of the epics.²⁴ Thus the evidence of the epics provides information about Dark Age Greece as well as supporting the reality of a Bronze Age event. Moses Finley's sociological study *The World of Odysseus* remains the best known illustration of the perspective that locates the framework of the epics in the Dark Age, preferring a tenth or ninth century date.²⁵

A second issue of dating is closely associated with the Homeric Question: the development or rediscovery of writing in Greece. How could such lengthy and sophisticated poems, even if they were orally composed, have been preserved beyond a single singing without the aid of writing? Was Homer able to write? Did an oral poet, Homer, dictate his songs to a scribe? Did short compositions come to form single epics only when

²³I think immediately of C. Blegen whose belief was captured by J. Alsop in *From the Silent Earth* (New York, 1962): Alsop visited Pylos with Blegen who helped the author visualize "the capital of Homer's 'sandy Pylos'." (p. 1) By no means do archaeologists argue for a complete agreement between the Homeric epics and the Mycenaean civilization, as E. Vermeule's position in *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago, 1964), nicely demonstrates. The Catalogue of Ships in Book Two of the *Iliad* is now regularly regarded as an embedded fossil of a list of Bronze Age sites: see R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford, 1970). J. V. Luce, *Homer and the Heroic Age* (London, 1975), sums up the current attitude of many: "...the credibility of the Homeric tradition about the Mycenaean Age has, in my opinion, been strengthened rather than weakened by major discoveries in the past forty years" (p. 172). See also J.K. Davies, "The Reliability of the Oral Tradition" in L. Foxhall and J.K. Davies, eds., *The Trojan War*, pp. 87-110.

²⁴*Classical Antiquity* 5 (1986), pp. 81-138.

²⁵M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York, 1954; 2d rev. ed., Harmondsworth, 1978). Many of the criticisms that book provoked are examined (or reexamined) in Finley's Address at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, "The World of Odysseus Revisited," published in *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 71 (1974), pp. 13-31, and reprinted as appendix 1 in the latest revision of *The World of Odysseus* (1978).

Pisistratus arranged to have stable texts compiled in the sixth century B.C.?

The first two possibilities have modern advocates. Sir Maurice Bowra believed that Homer, an oral poet, learned the new technique of writing.²⁶ Albert Lord, on the other hand, advocated the view that Homer dictated his orally-created poems to a literate accomplice,²⁷ a position that others find unnecessary, since poems created orally could have been transmitted orally and, in fact, there are indications that variants did develop in parts of the tradition. However, these differences are not enough, in the eyes of most present-day scholars, to support the argument that a Pisistratid recension created the epics as we know them: "The strong Homeric echoes in the literature and art of the seventh century tend to support the unanimous opinion of the Classical Age that a conspicuous and coherent *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were widely and continuously familiar before Pisistratus."²⁸

This is as far as we can safely proceed in determining the connection between writing and the Homeric epics. Both seem to have been products of the late Dark Age: most scholars of Greek history believe that writing returned to Greece in the eighth century when tremendous changes propelled Greece into its "Age of Revolution."²⁹ Population growth, renewed contact with more complex cultures of the eastern Mediterranean and increasing complexity within their own communities marked the life of Greeks from shortly after 775 B.C. At this same time, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were known in some form, and it has been argued that their preservation in written form occasioned the peculiar developments of the Greek alphabet.³⁰

Those developments were incorporated into a script of Phoenician origin. In Greek usage, five signs representing

²⁶C.M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952).

²⁷A.B. Lord, "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts," *TAPA* 84 (1953), pp. 124-134.

²⁸G.S. Kirk, *Homer and the Epic* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 213.

²⁹The concept of revolutionary change at the end of the Dark Age was argued convincingly by C.G. Starr in part three, "The Age of Revolution," of *The Origins of Greek Civilization* (London, 1961).

³⁰This view was first presented by H.T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the Iliad* (Cambridge, 1952), and has been revived recently; it has gained the support, for example, of A. Snodgrass, whose understanding of Dark Age and Archaic Greece is especially well-founded and keen: see his *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment* (London, 1980), pp. 78-84, on the recovery of writing.

consonants in the Semitic alphabet were denoted vowels and four letters—phi, chi, psi and omega—were added. There is little disagreement on these questions of the direction of borrowing or of innovations. There is, however, considerable debate concerning the time of adoption and the implications of answers to this question.³¹

The earliest, well-known Greek alphabetic inscriptions date to the mid-eighth century although recently reported bronze tablets may push the date back to ca. 800 B.C. Phoenician parallels date to the late second millennium, no later than 1100 B.C. Students of Near Eastern history are arguing for a borrowing far earlier than the traditional eighth-century date, while Greek scholars continue to favor the traditional date both on the grounds of existing evidence and historical circumstances: there are no indications of writing in Greece between 1100 and 800 B.C. and the eleventh century saw little borrowing or even foreign contact on the part of Greeks.³² Moreover, the marks of an oral culture are too visible to be denied. In fact, the persistence of orality throughout the Classical period argues for a long reliance on non-written means of communication and memory.³³ Nevertheless, restricted literacy may be demonstrated for some parts of Greece even in the Dark Age, particularly if our horizons are expansive enough to include Cyprus, where the survival of a syllabic script into the Classical period is a powerful persuader of ongoing literacy in some parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Professor Stroud urges caution pending publication of the new evidence and predicts much scholarly discussion, probably a serious understatement.

³¹Recent presentation of the debate occurs in two articles in W. M. Senner, ed., *The Origins of Writing* (Lincoln, 1989): F. M. Cross discusses "The Invention and Development of the Alphabet" from its Near Eastern origins (pp. 77-90), while R. S. Stroud considers the Greek situation in "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece" (pp. 103-119).

³²J. Naveh is an outspoken advocate of the earlier dating: *Early History of the Alphabet* (Leiden, 1982). M. Bernal also argues for the earlier dating: see his *Black Athena II* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1991), esp. pp. 4-5, and "On the Transmission of the Alphabet to the Aegean before 1400 B.C.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 267 (1987), pp. 1-19.

³³W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), is persuasive in arguing for extremely limited literacy in ancient Greece, only 5 to 10% of the population of Attica in the Classical period.

RECONSTRUCTION: MYCENAEAN AGE

I began by claiming that the Bronze and Dark Ages belong in the realm of history. To justify this claim it is time to turn to the conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence. If preclassical Greece properly seeks membership in the historical domain, it is necessary to be able to put the Trojan War in a context of Bronze and Dark Age developments, to recreate the life of those who may have fought at Troy, their ancestors and their descendants, if not as individuals at least as members of a definable society. In the remaining two sections, I will employ the evidence won through the means already discussed to sketch the broad parameters of early Greece.

Most scholars would now agree that all of these generations were Greek-speakers. Even if the thesis of Colin Renfrew (described in Chapter Three) has not won widespread acceptance, the Greek language is generally thought to be in place in Greece from ca. 2000 B.C. John Chadwick, for example, writes of "proto-Greeks" entering the peninsula no later than the nineteenth century, where "they mixed with the previous inhabitants, whom they succeeded in subjugating, and borrowed from them many words for unfamiliar objects; and the mispronunciation of Greek by these aboriginals led to permanent changes in the phonetics of the language."¹

¹J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 3. A three-part discussion of the issue of the arrival of the first Greek speakers is that of J. Hooker: "The Coming of the Greeks—I" (*Historia*, 25, 1976, pp. 129-45), examines the solution that brought the first Greek-speakers to Greece after the Mycenaean collapse. "The Coming of the Greeks—II" (*Proceedings of the Sixth International Colloquium on Aegean Prehistory*, Athens, forthcoming), treats Renfrew's theory. "The Coming of the Greeks—III" (*Minos* 24 [1989], pp. 55-68), examines the position argued by Robert Drews in *The Coming of the Greeks* (Princeton, 1988), which dates the arrival to ca. 1600 B.C.

The claim of Greekness does not deny the importance of other languages and cultural elements in the development of the Mycenaean civilization. The role of non-Greek Minoan Crete has long been appreciated and recent scholarship has emphasized the weight of eastern Mediterranean influence on both Bronze and Iron Age Greece. Martin Bernal is in the process of presenting an especially spirited case for Eastern Mediterranean—Egyptian and Semitic—influence on Greek civilization.² Seeing much evidence for the Classical Greek view of their own past that links developments with Egypt and the Levant, he suggests that this tradition was undermined by the modern historiographic tradition of western Europe that spurned a Semitic origin. For the second millennium, Bernal finds a variation in the intensity of Greek cultural borrowing from Egypt and the Levant. High points occurred in the twenty-first century, at the start of the eighteenth century when he believes Hyksos' presence in the Aegean began soon after the Hyksos arrival in Egypt, in the mid-fifteenth century, at the start of the fourteenth century and in the twelfth century.

The emphasis on the importance of contact between the Aegean and the Levant is certainly correct, as the Ulu Burun shipwreck has shown so dramatically. But a unilateral direction of influence is not necessarily—or even probably—the case.

²M. Bernal, *Black Athena, The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, Vol. I: *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987); Vol. II: *The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1991). Two additional volumes are projected. A special issue of *Arethusa* (1989) was devoted to the study: J. Peradotto and M. Levine, eds., *The Challenge of 'Black Athena'*. *The Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* devoted 70% of Volume 3 number 1 (June 1990) to the issues raised by Bernal. S. Morris examines the relationship between Greece and the Levant, P. Bikai explores the role of the Phoenicians, J. D. Ray looks at the Egyptian evidence and J. Muhly, in a particularly trenchant discussion, considers the position of *Black Athena* vis-à-vis traditional scholarship in general. Several of these commentators mention the new questions and areas of inquiry that Bernal has raised. They all raise serious doubts concerning factors ignored, unproved arguments, or positions pushed too far. A perceptive review of volume two is that of J. Baines, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford: "Was Civilization Made in Africa?" *New York Times Book Review*, August 11, 1991, pp. 11-12. Trenchant analyses of Bernal's methodology are provided by J. Hall, "Black Athena: A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing?" *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 3 (1990), pp. 247-254, and S.W. Manning, "Frames of Reference for the Past: Some Thoughts on Bernal, Truth and Reality," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 3 (1990), pp. 255-274. Bernal responds to both critics on pp. 275-282.

Material remains do not indicate a single point of origin for imported goods; in fact, the external contacts betrayed by the goods are amazingly diverse.³ Contacts with Europe were also very significant in the final amalgam that is termed the Mycenaean civilization. The tholos tomb appears to have evolved outside of Greece; southeastern Europe is a leading candidate for its source and Nicholas Hammond has attempted to trace the practice of tumulus-burial southward from Albania and Epirus.⁴ The presence of large quantities of amber in Greek contexts is solid evidence for Mycenaean contact with Europe.⁵ Some scholars argue the case for an arrival of a group of warrior aristocrats into Greece during the Early Mycenaean period, whose culture has strong parallels with European cultures.⁶

For Bronze Age Greece, Minoan Crete was the culture exerting the greatest influence. We must, however, modify Sir Arthur Evans' view of Minoan primacy in every regard.⁷ No longer is it necessary, or even wise, to assert that the burst of energy, prosperity and foreign contacts occurring on the mainland around 1600 B.C. was due to intrusive rulers arriving from Crete.⁸ In fact, it is less common today to import new ruling dynasties from any other part of the eastern Mediterranean, since many sites and objects demonstrate a reliable record of unbroken cultural development from the first half of the second millennium into the second half. On the other hand, certain

³S. Piggott, *Ancient Europe* (Chicago, 1965).

⁴N. G. L. Hammond, "Tumulus-burial in Albania, the Grave Circles of Mycenae, and the Indo-Europeans," *BSA* 62 (1967), pp. 77-105, and *Studies in Greek History* (Oxford, 1973) pp. 1-25. For a summary of contact between Mycenaean Greece and the rest of Europe, see A. F. Harding, *The Mycenaeans and Europe* (London, 1984); and J. Bouzek, *The Aegean, Anatolia and Europe: Cultural Interrelations in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Göteborg, 1985).

⁵A special issue of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* Vol. 16, edited by J. M. Todd (1985) is entitled *Studies in Baltic Amber*.

⁶For example, S. Diamant, "Mycenaean Origins: Infiltration from the North?" in E.B. French and K.A. Wardle, eds., *Problems in Greek Prehistory*. Papers Presented at the Centenary Conference of the British School of Archaeology at Athens (Bristol Classical Press, 1988), pp. 153-159.

⁷For a history of the interpretation, see W. A. McDonald and C.G. Thomas, *Progress into the Past* (2d ed., Bloomington, 1990).

⁸Drews (see note 1) concludes that warriors fighting from horse-drawn chariots were responsible for the new energy. These newcomers, he believes, were the first Indo-Europeans to reach Greece from an immediate homeland in Thessaly and an ultimate Anatolian home.

structures and objects were clearly influenced by Minoan techniques if not actually imported from Crete.⁹ Thus the prevailing current view combines internal with external stimuli.

Many scholars stress the quantity of weapons among grave goods of the period, suggesting that they are a clue that the new wealth was not so much gained in legitimate trade as extorted directly or indirectly by threat, piracy, raids or outright war from weaker neighbors in Greece and apparently far beyond its borders. One theory explains the wealth as pay for mercenary service in the form of luxury goods and raw materials, drawn from many sources but collected in Egypt.¹⁰ Minoan goods were known to the Egyptians but obviously there was also direct contact between the mainland and Crete. Thus imported goods may have derived from Minoan centers, whence they were gained either peacefully through trade or by force. Feasible too is a view that Minoan artisans, not goods alone, were brought to the mainland, either willingly or as captives, to work for mainland employers. Their presence in considerable numbers would explain the extent of the Minoan influence by the later sixteenth century, accounting for the perfection of certain objects made in the current Minoan tradition as well as a more tentative experimentation with new materials and techniques and motifs that mainland taste and resources seem to have dictated. Such émigré artisans might be expected to train mainland pupils, and it would have been the grandsons and great-grandsons of these masters and pupils who gradually attained a blending of the Minoan and mainland traditions. This result was, of course, achieved in the context of continuing intimate contact with the developing art of Crete itself.

The question of interaction between Crete and the mainland centers is bound up with Crete's role in the Aegean and Mediterranean during the second millennium, and that role is as much debated now as ever in the century of study of Aegean prehistory. The picture of a "Minoan thalassocracy" is derived from the ancient tradition of a strong Minoan fleet that protected the island's "empire", by imposing Minoan naval supremacy

⁹O.T.P.K. Dickinson, *The Origins of Mycenaean Civilization, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 49 (Göteborg, 1977).

¹⁰S. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae* (London, 1960), pp. 81 f. Marinatos suggested that mainlanders were hired to assist in the expulsion of the Hyksos usurpers from Egypt.

around the eastern Mediterranean and even penetrating the waters of the western Mediterranean.

The extreme position of a Minoan dominance of political and economic nature as well as through trade is no longer viable. Chester Starr challenged the whole notion of "rule of the sea" in 1955 arguing that a situation prevailing much later was transferred to the prehistoric past in order to provide historical justification for the Athenian Empire.¹¹ A position between that of true empire and no empire at all, however, has found growing confirmation.¹² In the past thirty years, Minoan pottery has been found at many sites around the Aegean; Minoan influence is found in everyday items as well as in luxury goods, and there are features echoing Minoan architecture, tombs, religious ritual and even the use of Linear A at a number of sites.¹³ The cultural influences were not uniform, suggesting that the relationships were not the same in every case. As John Cherry has demonstrated, the first palatial period in Crete witnessed major changes in the scale and nature of palace organization. These changes seem to be associated with rapid population growth: whether as cause or effect cannot be determined. There is no doubt that the palaces served as redistribution centers and it appears that the processes involved in redistribution spurred further advances in economic activity and organization beyond the immediate territory of the palaces, to judge by remains of roads, watchtowers or caravanserais and the spread of pottery styles. The activity also extended beyond the island of Crete, flourishing through the first Late Minoan phase (traditionally dated to about 1500 B.C.), when there is a decline in imported Minoan products at many sites. At just this time, the list of Mycenaean pottery found east of the Greek mainland begins to

¹¹C.G. Starr, "The Myth of the Minoan Thalassocracy," *Historia* 3 (1955), pp. 282-291.

¹²Argued in answer to Starr's challenge by R.J. Buck in "The Minoan Thalassocracy Re-examined," *Historia* 11 (1962), pp. 129-137. The current evidence and interpretations are found in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos, *The Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and Reality* (Stockholm, 1984).

¹³M. Wiener's treatments of these issues are representative of the current re-examination of the evidence and conclusions that the evidence supports. See "The Isles of Crete? The Minoan Thalassocracy Revisited," ed., D.A. Hardy, C.G. Doumas, J.A. Sakellarakis, and P.M. Warren, *Thera and the Aegean World III*. Vol. 1: Archaeology (London, 1991), and "The Nature and Control of Minoan Foreign Trade," *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology*, Vol. 90 (Göteborg, forthcoming).

grow. Over the past century, many more mainland products have been recovered from several Aegean sites as well as locations in the west-central Mediterranean. In other words, mainlanders followed the lead of the Minoans in extending their seafaring activity and by establishing settlements. Eventually—most likely around 1450—they surpassed their teachers.¹⁴

A balanced view might be that in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries Crete lost its former predominance in Aegean and east Mediterranean commerce. Whether Minoans resisted this trend in a military sense we have no sure way of knowing, although the change in status would appear to have been gradual rather than sudden. The events revealed by excavation at Trianda on Rhodes may be instructive. A Minoan settlement seems to have been followed by a nearby one founded by Mycenaeans perhaps a century later. For several generations the two groups apparently lived side by side quite peacefully, until the Minoan settlement was hurriedly abandoned. One inference is that the agents responsible for their departure were their Mycenaean neighbors.

Finds of the past twenty years show that the spread of Mycenaean influence reached a high point in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, when increasing population as well as commercial ventures abroad apparently encouraged a good deal of emigration. While the Aegean may not have been a Greek lake, there are Mycenaean finds from the northern Sporades to the Dodecanese, and there is increasing evidence of Mycenaean activity in Asia Minor. On the mainland of Greece, Mycenaean influence has been noted farther north and east than previously known. The mounting evidence of contact between the eastern and central Mediterranean has been sufficient to produce the assessment that "a new chapter of Mediterranean archaeology is in the process of being written."¹⁵

Mycenaeans appear to have been in regular contact with highly sophisticated cultures of the eastern Mediterranean as well.¹⁶ Egyptian references to Keftiu, often identified as Cretans, are replaced in the fourteenth century with references to

¹⁴J. Cherry, "Politics and Palaces: Some Problems in Minoan State Formation" in C. Renfrew and J. Cherry, eds., *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-political Change* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 19-45.

¹⁵*Archaeological Reports for 1981-82*, p. 83. Islands, like Lipari and Sardinia, seem to have been particularly important points of contact.

¹⁶A. Yannai, *Studies on Trade Between the Levant and the Aegean in the 14th to 12th Centuries B.C.* (Oxford, 1983).

inhabitants of "the islands in the middle of the Great Green Sea" and to Tanaya, a land linked with people known to the Egyptians as Denyen, perhaps "Danaoi" familiar from Homer. The increased quantity of Mycenaean goods from the fourteenth century lends credence to the equation of Mycenaeans with some of these dwellers in the Great Green Sea. Mycenaean contact with Cyprus grows steadily in this period; and at trade depots such as Tell Atchana (Alalakh) and Ras Shamra (Ugarit), Byblos in Syria and Gezer and Lachish in Palestine, Mycenaean merchants seem to have formed part of a varied foreign population.¹⁷

Mainlanders came prepared to fight as well as to trade, as events on Crete demonstrate. Recurring earthquakes and the great Thera eruption seem to have caused heavy destruction and loss of life on Crete, making Crete, at least temporarily, an easy target for large-scale raiding. For many scholars "intrusive" mainland culture traits at Knossos point to a Mycenaean presence at that site at some time around the middle of the second millennium. The proposed new dating of the Thera eruption to the last quarter of the seventeenth century would push mainland presence on Crete even earlier than the date of ca. 1480 earlier accepted. If mainlanders did take advantage of natural disaster, assumption of power, perhaps by a group of adventurers, may have been easy, given the weakened state of the island. An early Mycenaean presence on Crete would help explain the importance of Minoan elements in the mainland culture from the early sixteenth century B.C.

No immediate jealousy of, or friction with, other Achaean powers need have developed. But the conquerors of Knossos succeeded to no ordinary situation: inheriting a well-developed, highly organized administrative system, they would have found it very much in their own interest to preserve and even extend it. The Linear B tablets make it perfectly clear that they eventually regulated production and distribution of goods, although it is at present impossible to be sure how far back this situation goes. Over time, mainland control on Crete expanded, particularly into the west of the island, and it may well have intensified.

¹⁷A. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica I* (Oxford, 1947), p. 126.

Not all scholars agree that the mainland features found on Crete indicate mainland control.¹⁸ In an examination of the material evidence, James Hooker concluded:

The alien elements, though undoubtedly present, are not so numerous or so striking as even remotely to suggest that there had ever been an invasion and a period of control by a Greek-speaking people from the mainland. They indicate nothing more than a continuation of that symbiosis of the Helladic and the Minoan which, beginning in the Shaft Grave era, became still closer in the ensuing period.¹⁹

As noted previously, Hooker further maintains that Linear B is a product of this same symbiosis: as objects, people and processes from the mainland sphere gained wider circulation, they were incorporated into the records of centers where they were known. Linear B is thus a *lingua franca* or commercial jargon resulting from the interaction between mainland and island cultures. Hooker makes the salutary observation that the kind of reasoning that led to a dismissal of Evans' theory of Cretan dominance on the mainland ought to be practiced in the issue of mainland control on Crete. While it is important to bear this observation in mind, many scholars continue to believe that mainland presence on Crete seems certain, with a consideration of subsequent developments on Crete inclining the scale in favor of occupation by Greek-speakers. In sum, Crete was essentially a Greek-speaking island by the Classical period. We may profitably envision a process occurring over several centuries through which some of the Achaeans arriving on Crete in the second millennium stayed permanently and, over time, their language tended to prevail, probably as their numbers increased. A thousand years later, though enclaves of "Eteo-Cretans" were

¹⁸M. Bernal *Black Athena II* (1991), maintains that the agents of change in the Aegean sphere were the Hyksos (basically Semitic people with Indo-European, specifically Hurrian elements). They established themselves in Crete during the seventeenth century, then, as shown by the evidence of the shaft graves, at mainland centers. The argument is not convincing. As Bernal admits: "...there is no direct proof that Crete was conquered in the late 18th century BC by Hyksos warriors from Lower Egypt." It is, he says, however, "more economical to employ this hypothesis...especially given what we know of the newly established and very aggressive Hyksos" (p. 380). His argument for Hyksos' settlement on the mainland is based on the view that the break between Middle and Late Helladic is too great to be explained by internal developments alone. Two new weapons—the chariot and the sword—point to the Hyksos (pp. 404-408).

¹⁹James Hooker, *Mycenaean Greece* (London, 1976), p. 77.

still identifiable, the island was predominantly Greek in culture and language.

Whatever the nature of their interaction, the cultures generally retained their own identities in the Bronze Age. Burial practices strongly suggest that mainland religion remained essentially distinct from Minoan. Although mainlanders borrowed much from Minoan artisans and architects, their products and buildings show noteworthy differences. And even though it may be unwise to press too far the peaceful/martial dichotomy, the militaristic character of mainland culture is everywhere apparent.²⁰ Nor should this trait be regarded as an isolated phenomenon. From western Asia to eastern and central Europe through the second millennium a martial and aristocratic stratified society was developing. Like their counterparts in the Near East, the kings of early Mycenaean times were very proud of their horses and chariots. Everywhere, the kings or chieftains and their families were buried with utmost ostentation. They mustered large labor forces and skilled architects to build monumental tombs that would one day house their families and their possessions.

In fact, the Age of Heroes in Greece can properly be said to extend back as far as the end of the Middle Helladic period. The first half of the second millennium appears to have been a time of consolidation of several basic skills: control over agricultural production, more sophisticated knowledge of metallurgy, recognition of trade possibilities and, probably, the practice of increasingly effective military techniques. The second half of the second millennium testifies to the success of those efforts as improvements in the economic basis of the society promoted larger, more elaborate political units. There is general agreement that the Mycenaean economy, even in its most advanced stage, continued to depend mainly on agriculture and stock raising. Goods manufactured from the products of animals and crops probably paid for most of the standard imports—raw materials like copper, tin, ivory and amber, as well as luxury goods manufactured abroad. It is feasible to theorize that the carefully supervised agriculture and huge flocks reflected in the Linear B tablets and the descriptions of lovingly tended gardens and orchards and vineyards in the Homeric poems already had their

²⁰E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (p. 258): "From the end of the Middle Bronze Age, militarism was so congenial to the mainland temperament that both its aesthetics and its technology focused on the trained soldier with his equipment..."

modest counterparts in the small but ambitious early Mycenaean kingdoms.

Farming and stock breeding would have formed the basis for manufacturing and processing enterprises based on surpluses of such products as oil, wine, wool, flax and hides. Beyond a certain amount of exchange of products between independent Mycenaean kingdoms, foreign trade was a necessity both for basic raw materials that were unobtainable in Greece and for many luxury goods. Its growing importance from the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries is demonstrated by the penetration of Mycenaean products—reflected mainly in the indestructible potsherd—to more and more distant points in every direction, and the greater number of exotic objects in Mycenaean contexts.

No one, I think, would deny that one product of the accelerating activity was a tendency toward centralization: from a number of citadel strongholds, rulers exercised control over human and natural resources of fairly extensive kingdoms. Results of the Minnesota Messenia Expedition indicate an Early Helladic population of approximately 4000, increasing to about 10,000 in the Middle Bronze Age and reaching at least 50,000 before the end of the Late Bronze Age. Just as the process is undisputed, so too is the general picture of the nature of control. Repeated references both in the Knossos and Pylos records to the *wanax* place this office—that of "king"—at the apex of a hierarchy of officials descending from more important state officials to lesser functionaries who exercised a local authority at a "provincial" level or, lower down on the scale, in a single town or village. The office of the *pa²-si-re-u* is of especial interest to students of later Greek history since this minor, local position in Mycenaean times seems to have survived to become the usual term for king, *basileus*, in the Dark Age and Classical period.

Mycenaean society generally appears to have taken the shape of a pyramid, with a concentration of wealth and power in a few hands at or near the apex. Substantial houses within and outside the citadels, numerous chamber tombs and the complicated officialdom revealed by the tablets demonstrate the existence of an aristocratic element within the kingdoms. It remains uncertain, however, whether this stratum included "new merchant and professional classes," as Vermeule believed or was composed primarily of near peers to the king linked by feudal ties of obligation, as T.B.L. Webster argued and Chadwick has increasingly come to accept.²¹

²¹ Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, p. 156; Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer* (London, 1958); Chadwick, unpublished paper.

All agree, however, on the careful oversight of the palace economy, in a fashion very like that of other contemporary cultures in the eastern Mediterranean.²² The tablets reveal a centralized control of the use of the land, of natural resources, of labor and of finished products. Archaeological evidence confirms the importance of supervision: both workrooms and storage areas are integral parts of the normal Mycenaean palace complex and it may be presumed that the ultimate responsibility for the supervision of these areas rested with the *wanax*. Slaves seem to have been numerous and assigned to a wide variety of specialized tasks. The tablets show that over 500 slave women plus their children were attached to the palace at Pylos. Their daily rations of grain and figs are precisely recorded on the tablets. With control came taxation but, it seems, no single standard of exchange. Over time, regulations apparently tightened: for Pylos, especially toward the end of the thirteenth century, signs occur of further consolidation of palace control over production and storage.²³

The major crafts in which both free and slave workers were engaged appear to have been connected with various stages in the manufacture of textiles, especially woollens and linens; the production and trade of oil; the making of weapons and other objects of metal; carpentry; shipbuilding; and manufacture of jewelry, pottery, inlaid furniture and perfumes. The scale of industry is captured in details such as the 19,000 sheep (most of them apparently castrated males) listed on a single tablet from Knossos. And the high quality of the manufactured products is demonstrated not only by artefacts but by such descriptions as that on one tablet of "one ebony[?] footstool inlaid with figures of men and lions in ivory." Equally impressive are the quantities of specialized shapes of pottery containers for oil.

Efforts to reconstruct the social structure of Mycenaean Greece suggest that the largest portion of the population consisted of peasants living in small villages. This stratum—apparently known as *da-mo* (*damos* or *demos*) on the Linear B

²²J. Killen, "The Linear B Tablets and the Mycenaean Economy" in A. Morpurgo Davies and Y. Duhoux, eds., *Linear B: A 1984 Survey* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1985), pp. 241-305: "...the palaces controlled at least the bulk of the 'industrial' production of the kingdoms, and very likely all 'industrial' production that involved a substantial degree of craft specialization" (p. 252).

²³J. Wright, "Changes in Form and Function of the Palace at Pylos," in T. Palaima and C. Shelmerdine, *Pylos Comes Alive* (New York, 1984), pp. 19-29.

tablets—on one occasion challenged the claim of a priestess to certain land. The status of people buried in the chamber tombs is not clear but the number of tombs indicates a relatively small class of nobles with considerable wealth. It is not easy to assess the social status of soldiers and the tablets do not allow us to determine whether ordinary soldiers were drafted when required or whether there was a standing, professional force.

The question of "professionalism" bears on the whole administrative structure of the Mycenaean kingdoms and constitutes an issue of some dispute. How long-lasting and well organized were the systems we can dimly perceive in the Linear B tablets? The evidence itself makes it extremely difficult to determine how long record-keeping was practiced at the Mycenaean centers, inasmuch as the tablets were not deliberately baked but were preserved only when accidentally baked in fires that destroyed the buildings where they were kept. Thus the preserved records apparently date to the last year of the life of the palaces, although some scholars believe that there are several tablets from Pylos that do not fit with the rest of the tablets; it has been suggested that they are much earlier. On the other hand, there is evidence that record-keeping was not particularly advanced on the mainland even in the later thirteenth century. Writing was not in widespread use; there was no attested private use of writing—not even graffiti—and the administrative accounts that have been recovered are essentially lists. Aspects of life that, in other contemporary cultures, were assisted by writing are without record in Greece. Oversight of communal justice, for example, was apparently not aided by literacy as it was in the Near East.

The absence of clear indications of extensive literacy has inclined some scholars to the view that specific events occurring in individual centers led to the compilation of special records. Since all centers did not experience the same situations, records were not compiled uniformly or everywhere.²⁴ For instance, the sense of emergency which pervades the Pylos tablets may be the occasion prompting the creation of that archive. Such a view does not dismiss record-keeping from the Mycenaean kingdoms; rather, it proposes that literacy was a recent and sporadically used acquisition on the mainland. Written records surely would have

²⁴G. Mylonas, "The Wanax of the Mycenaean State," *Classical Studies Presented to Ben Edwin Perry, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 58 (Chicago and Urbana, 1969), p. 67 f.

been employed more widely had the difficulties of the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries not interrupted, and in some cases terminated, the growth of the Mycenaean states. But circumstances prevented this expansion and, in fact, seem to have completely eliminated the use of the Linear B writing system in any capacity.²⁵

Consideration of individual differences may be salutary in connection with another issue of no little importance in Bronze Age scholarship: in what sense, was there uniformity in Bronze Age Greece? Does a clearly detectable cultural koinê derive from political uniformity?

Vincent Desborough was perhaps the most outspoken advocate for placing Mycenae in a special position.²⁶ He maintained that only in terms of an overall unified political structure can one explain the remarkable phenomenon of the Mycenaean cultural koinê; and he believed that Mycenae was the center from which numerous culture traits, including pottery styles, were diffused to the rest of the Mycenaean world.²⁷

However, the position of Mycenae has been reappraised in the present generation of Aegean scholarship;²⁸ and, while the issue has not been decided, it appears mistaken to speak of Mycenaean political hegemony in the sense that Desborough described it. Although there was regional consolidation around several important centers, that process does not appear to have extended beyond each region. Present information indicates that road systems existed within but not between kingdoms. Of course, sea routes connected most capitals, which were usually on or near the coast. But, especially when navigation was closed

²⁵Bernal, *Black Athena* II, p. 5, in contrast, asserts: "it is certain that the Linear scripts and the alphabet overlapped in time, probably for several centuries. It is now impossible to maintain that the Greek Bronze and Iron Ages were separated from each other by impermeable centuries of illiteracy."

²⁶V.R.d'A. Desborough, *The Last Mycenaeans and Their Successors* (Oxford, 1968) and "History and Archaeology in the Last Century of the Mycenaean Age," *Atti e Memorie del I^o Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia* (Rome, 1968), pp. 1073-1093.

²⁷*The Last Mycenaeans and Their Successors*, p. 218: "I am firmly convinced that there was one ruler over the whole Mycenaean territory, with his capital at Mycenae."

²⁸C.G. Thomas, "A Mycenaean Hegemony? A Reconsideration," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 90 (1970), pp. 184-192.

by winter storms, supplementary land routes would have been necessary to maintain effective control from one center.

The remarkable cultural uniformity of the Later Bronze Age does not imply political centralization from one center; as Desborough himself admitted, there is no indication that any one district took the lead in fostering this uniformity. It is possible to account for the cultural unity through trade and even through migrating craftsmen. Careful analysis of the provenance of pottery has shown that elements of a common culture and similar activity do not seem to involve permanent ties or a political relationship with another mainland center.²⁹ And as the Ulu Burun shipwreck demonstrates, the international character of trade need have no political implications.

The role of Agamemnon in the *Iliad* that has been interpreted as describing a political unity during the Bronze Age may be more realistically thought to connote a position of military leadership that Agamemnon holds for the purpose of waging a particular war. Agamemnon organized a force by travelling to the lands of other kings, asking them to join forces with himself and Menelaos. When a considerable army had gathered, of which Agamemnon supplied the largest contingent of men and ships, the local kings made a vow to Agamemnon "to go home only after you have sacked strong-walled Ilion" (*Iliad* II.288, Lattimore tr.). To these reasons was added the practical observation of Odysseus that "The kingship of many is no good thing; let there be one leader, one king" (*Iliad* II.204-206). That Agamemnon's position continued only for the duration of the expedition is made clear in several passages in the *Odyssey*. Once Troy had been sacked, Agamemnon's control appears to have vanished, and when he and his followers were killed by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, the responsibility for vengeance rested solely with family members. No contest for Agamemnon's throne occurred.

What is more, archaeological evidence as well as legendary accounts suggest that the Mycenaean world was not unified, that arms were turned against other Mycenaeans as readily as they were directed at non-Mycenaeans, producing a recurring pattern in the rise and fall of various kingdoms, with no evidence of non-Mycenaean interference. Added to the simple fact of

²⁹See, for example, H. Haskell, "Pylos: Stirrup Jars and Their International Oil Trade," in T. Palaima and C. Shelmerdine, eds., *Pylos Comes Alive* (New York, 1984), pp. 97-107.

destruction is the phenomenon that the sites destroyed appear to have been experiencing exceptionally good fortune just prior to destruction. If not the center of all of Crete, Knossos certainly was a leading organizer of economic and commercial activity on the island as well as beyond it. After the difficulties at Knossos, Thebes became an important merchant city until its destruction, dated to the early thirteenth century. In the first half of the thirteenth century, much of the activity was concentrated on Argolid centers, at least in oil production and trade. Pylos too enjoyed greater activity in the second half of the thirteenth century. Coupled with the material data is the evidence of legend: Minos, a cruel tyrant, was undone by Theseus of Athens; the "Seven Against Thebes" included heroes from Argos and Kalydon as well as exiles from Thebes itself; the ruling house of Mycenae seemed bent on destroying itself; Neleus fought with his brother in central Greece, then moved to Messenia where he defeated the ruling king and established his own dynasty. If these traditions represent an authentic memory, they suggest a world not unlike that of Classical Greece, where fortunes of individual states shifted and rivalries between states fluctuated with great rapidity.

It was not a simple step from the Bronze Age into the Classical period, however. Recent scholarship has made important strides in understanding the centuries intervening between the two, known collectively as the Dark Age.

VI

RECONSTRUCTION: DARK AGE

The darkness of the four centuries between 1150 and 750 has been considerably lightened in the past three decades and, in the process, the immense significance of the period is now better understood. Not merely a trough between two peaks of flourishing civilization, it both preserved and transformed the culture of the Bronze Age. The slow, internal shaping of fundamental aspects of life during these centuries led to the culture of the Classical Age.¹ Abundant indications of continuity across the Dark Age have revised the opinion prevailing through the 1960s that the Dark Age was a time mainly distinguished by new beginnings.² So numerous are the indicators of ongoing transformation that art historians such as Roland Hampe and Erika Simon now trace the roots of Classical Greek art back into the context of the Mycenaean Age.³

The Mycenaean civilization did collapse. There is no doubt about that phenomenon. Our understanding of the downfall, however, has changed in large measure due to a willingness to consider the Mycenaean collapse as more than a local phenomenon. Additionally, today's perspective suggests that old theories may not be viable. A solution was once ready at hand in

¹Fundamental collections of the evidence include V.R.d'A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London, 1972); A.M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh, 1971); and J.N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (London, 1977). For the eighth century, R. Hägg, *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation* (Stockholm, 1983). A new compilation of the growing body of evidence is much needed.

²C.G. Starr, *The Origins of Greek Civilization: 1100-650 B.C.* (London, 1962), illustrates this position well.

³R. Hampe and E. Simon, *The Birth of Greek Art* (New York, 1981). J. Hurwit traces the development across the Dark Age in his *The Art and Culture of Early Greece, 1100-480 B.C.* (Ithaca, 1985).

the Dorian Invasion. A branch of Greek-speakers had lingered in the Balkans long after their relatives had invaded Greece, establishing the Mycenaean civilization. Learning of the wealth of their southern relatives or perhaps being propelled by others, the argument continues, they invaded and destroyed the Mycenaean kingdoms in the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries.

The evidence provides reasonably clear signs that a number of Mycenaean power centers were anticipating some kind of serious attack. The Linear B tablets from Pylos hint that all was not well just before the fire that destroyed the palace: rowers are stationed, watchers are dispatched, resources and manpower of the kingdom are being tabulated and special offerings are made to the gods. The fundamental problem is to identify a threatening foe.

Until the present generation, archaeologists and historians accepted Dorians and Herakleids as the agents of destruction, although they might differ about route and timing.⁴ It was often claimed that new cultural traits were introduced between the Bronze and Iron ages by the invaders, the most striking being the smelting, forging and casting of iron tools and weapons, cremation burial and geometric pottery. These features seemed to mark as persuasive a cultural "break" as one could desire, since they were associated with material, aesthetic and intellectual characteristics.

Reassessment during the last two decades, however, has shown that these supposed hallmarks of the Early Iron Age came into gradual use in the transitional years of the later Bronze Age. Iron technology was practiced in Anatolia in the mid-second millennium and spread gradually from there to other areas of the eastern Mediterranean, radiating southward long before it was known in Greece.⁵ Iron objects are found at Egyptian sites and are mentioned in written documents as early as the fourteenth century and forged iron artefacts are found in Greece at the very

⁴The traditional view is argued by N.G.L. Hammond, "The End of the Mycenaean Civilization and the Dark Age: The Literary Traditions," *Cambridge Ancient History* II xxxvi (Cambridge, 1964).

⁵T. Stech-Wheeler, J.D. Muhly, K.R. Maxwell-Hyslop, and R. Maddin, "Iron at Tannach and Early Iron Metallurgy in the Eastern Mediterranean," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (1981), pp. 245-267; J.D. Muhly, R. Maddin, T. Stech, and E. Ozgen, "Iron in Anatolia and the Nature of the Hittite Iron Industry," *Anatolian Studies* 35 (1985), pp. 67-84; R. Maddin, J.D. Muhly, T.S. Wheeler, "How the Iron Age Began," *Scientific American* (Oct. 1977), pp. 122-131.

end of the Mycenaean period. Cremation too is known from the Bronze Age; in some late Mycenaean cemeteries cremation burials begin to occur side by side with the usual inhumations.⁶ There is no hint that the families that chose the new rite were notably differentiated in origin or traditions. It may be that contacts with alien cultures, through war and trade, had familiarized some of the Mycenaeans with cremation. A situation where warriors died in foreign lands or where refugees were living apart from their ancestral homes may have linked up with new religious beliefs to encourage its use. Moreover, cremation of the dead was not uniformly adopted even in regions where later the Doric dialect was used.

In the pottery from the latest Mycenaean cemeteries and settlements a gradual transition in most vase shapes as well as the beginning of the new "tectonic" decorative tradition characteristic of Geometric times can already be detected. Thus, not a "break" but a continuous evolution best describes the development of pottery, so that the roots of Geometric pottery can be found in Late Mycenaean times. The final products of the eighth century look quite different from the thirteenth century work, but study of examples from the centuries between clearly shows the evolutionary stages.

There is more debate over a type of handmade, unburnished pottery occasionally found in late Mycenaean levels especially in the Argolid and the Corinthia. The view of some archaeologists is that it is intrusive, while others interpret it as part of the local, handmade tradition that persisted alongside the finer wheelmade pottery.⁷ Increasingly, samples are being found in fully Mycenaean levels, suggesting that it was part of the Mycenaean tradition.

With the skepticism over the once certain indicators of newcomers, practically the only archaeological evidence that may now be connected with the traditional Dorian invasion is the destruction and burning of Mycenaean centers. An important advocate of the Dorian Invasion theory, Vincent Desborough, was increasingly troubled even by this evidence and in 1968

⁶G. Mylonas, "Burial Customs of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages," *Acta of the 2d International Colloquium on Aegean Prehistory* (Athens, 1972), pp. 113 f.

⁷A sample of the debate is the exchange between J. Rutter and G. Walberg in the *American Journal of Archaeology* 79 (1975) pp. 17-32, and 80 (1976), pp. 186-188. The debate continues in *The Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 3:1 (1990) 3-49, with discussions by Rutter and D.B. Small.

asked: "If [invaders] remained and settled, why have they left no trace? Can one only really suppose that they were so primitive as to leave no evidence, whether in some new custom or at the very least in some new artefact?... If they moved on, where did they go to? If they went back, why did they do so, leaving the good land which they could have occupied?"⁸

John Chadwick has further weakened the theory of a Dorian Invasion by adducing linguistic evidence to demonstrate features of Doric Greek in the Linear B tablets, thereby arguing for the presence of Dorians during the second millennium.⁹ The Doric elements suggest that the dialect was that of the common people and, thus, their presence is little attested in the palace-oriented world of the tablets. Dorians enter our historical and archaeological horizon only when the administrative superstructure of the palaces disappears.

Objections such as these, along with Desborough's questions, have helped to place the situation of Greece into a larger context, a perspective that is essential to proper understanding of the late Bronze Age. Just as the Mycenaeans were associated with other contemporary cultures through trade and warfare, so too did contemporary cultures experience major decline at the end of the Bronze Age. It is more than likely that the situation in Greece had some relationship to conditions elsewhere.¹⁰

The records of Egypt describe attackers in some detail. Libyans and northerners from all lands attacked the Delta region in 1231 and again, in the early years of the twelfth century, Libyans joined forces with others attempting to invade Egypt. At least one group of would-be invaders is known to subsequent history: the "Peleset" eventually settled in Palestine and appear as the biblical Philistines. The weakened Hittite kingdom was destroyed near the end of the thirteenth century. Major towns in Syria were also beset and many were destroyed at roughly the same time that larger kingdoms were threatened.

⁸V.R. d'A. Desborough, "History and Archaeology in the Last Century of the Mycenaean Age," *Atti e Memorie del I^o Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia* p. 1076f.

⁹J. Chadwick "Who were the Dorians?" *La Parola del Passato* 31 (1976), pp. 103-117.

¹⁰N.K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean, 1250-1150 B.C.* (London, 1978 and 1987), provides an excellent description of the Mediterranean picture.

Collectively the attackers have been called "the land and sea peoples." The names of some of the allies who made up the motley hordes of Sea Peoples are preserved in Egyptian documents and a few equations with known peoples such as Lycians, Sardinians, Tyrrhenians and Sicilians have been proposed, although most Near Eastern specialists remain tentative about their correctness. Even if the equations are correct, the names may refer to places where certain groups eventually settled, not to their places of origin. Some scholars have suggested that the Achaeans are represented by a group called Akawasha, but it remains problematical whether Achaeans joined the Sea Peoples in their attacks on the Near East and/or were themselves among the objects of these attacks.

Although they may not have been attacked by bands of these "land and sea peoples," the wealthy Mycenaean citadels, most of them situated near the sea, must have been tempting targets in an era of large-scale piracy, especially if enterprises like the Trojan War had lessened Mycenaean resilience against attack. The fierce barbarians of Illyria, among others, have been proposed as agents of destruction. However, as has already been pointed out in discussion of the Dorians, there is no archaeological confirmation of outsiders in the destruction levels.

Agents of destruction need not have come from outside Greece. Civil war is not ruled out as an explanation, nor is an attack by a coalition of Mycenaean powers moving against other mainland centers. The tales of the difficulties Agamemnon and Odysseus faced on their returns from Troy may be remembrances of civil strife, and may be corroborated by a pattern discernible in the archaeological record of the rise and subsequent collapse of individual power centers throughout the Mycenaean era. Perhaps a great revolt was led by the merchants, by the free peasants, by the masses of slaves, or by several or all of these elements making common cause against the autocratic kings and nobles. Or could the destroyers have been kinsmen from some of the numerous and prosperous Mycenaean "colonies" in the southern Aegean? Objections can be raised to all of these theories but one or more may be part of the picture, along with still other proposed interpretations that partially or wholly downplay human agents. Could the deforestation that may have followed the construction boom and spreading agriculture of LH IIIB have caused such serious erosion of the soil that famine, perhaps coupled with a cessation of foreign trade, produced revolution? Might there have been a widespread plague or series of epidemics

that hastened the fall of Mycenaean power and could perhaps be tied in with the increased practice of cremation burial?

Rhys Carpenter advanced the thesis that the Mediterranean experienced a major drought in the twelfth and eleventh centuries as melting of the polar ice altered the trade winds, bringing a warming trend and dessication.¹¹ Others, to the contrary, have held that there was a change to a cooler and wetter climate beginning about 1100. While the evidence does not support any theory of major climatic change, shorter term anomalies in precipitation may have seriously impeded agricultural productivity. The volcanic eruption of Thera has largely been ruled out as cause of the collapse but there may have been a later, lesser eruption contributing to the general difficulties.¹² Earthquake is another possible culprit, and at Mycenae, Tiryns and Argos, convincing evidence of destructive earthquake activity about this time has recently been found. Yet if nature were the only culprit, how do we explain the feverish construction of fortifications, the provision of access to water supply from within the walls, the dispatch of watchers along the Pylian coasts and the apparently urgent distribution of metals to Pylian smiths for the manufacture of weapons?

Several scholars see Bronze Age Greece as an excellent instance of "Systems Collapse." Colin Renfrew has made a strong case that general features of collapse and aftermath are apparent in the case of the Mycenaean kingdoms.¹³ According to this interpretation, the central administrative organs are adversely stressed until they collapse. The elite class disappears, a centralized economic structure ceases to function and population decline and settlement shifts of notable proportions follow. The aftermath is marked by a transition to a lower level of sociopolitical organization along with the emergence of a romantic myth that attempts to link and legitimate present conditions with a glorious past. Several other features predicted for Systems Collapse appear in the Mycenaean case. The collapse often requires about a century for completion; dislocations, often expressed in human conflicts, are evident in the early part of the

¹¹R. Carpenter, *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization* (Cambridge, 1966).

¹²A. Galanopoulos, *New Light on the Legend of Atlantis and the Mycenaean Decadence* (Athens, 1981).

¹³C. Renfrew, "Systems Collapse as Social Transformation," in Renfrew and K.L. Cooke, eds., *Transformations, Mathematical Approaches to Culture Change* (New York, 1979), pp. 481-506.

process; boundaries may weaken and thus invite invaders; and societal organization is likely to become more complex initially only to fall off suddenly. There is no clear, single "cause" for the collapse.

On this line of reasoning, Philip Betancourt suggests that the kingdoms may have become too specialized to adjust to economic difficulties. The Mycenaeans may have relied too fully on a few items in their agrarian production, a particularly ominous situation in view of the attested dramatic rise in population. "Thus a destruction or a series of crop failures from any cause would not only have eliminated much of the food supply for an entire year, it would also have seriously upset the industrial picture and the trade that depended on it."¹⁴

An attractive feature of this explanation is that it allows for differing local conditions and reactions. It also appropriately links events in Greece with those of the larger Mediterranean. The "land and sea peoples" may have been moving because they had experienced similar economic disasters; similarly, their movements may have precipitated fundamental upsets in the productive systems of the advanced cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. Certainly, the activities of marauders would have disrupted trade which had become international by the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries. Since the Mycenaeans were active participants in Mediterranean commerce, their economy would have been hard hit by harassment and interruption of foreign trade.

Interruption of trade and crop failure do not explain the actual destruction of the palaces, but the collapse of the entire system does suggest an answer. The mechanisms of the redistributive economies were controlled by centralized administrative systems. If the palace officials were unable to correct malfunctions, the local units comprising each kingdom could have become severed from the administrative machinery and thrown on their own resources. The Linear B tablets from Pylos signal that all was not well within that kingdom: taxes were in arrears, bronzesmiths were short of raw materials. Simultaneously, the palace appears to have been intensifying its control over production.

Most of the Mycenaean centers experienced difficulties and eventual destruction, but the others have left no tablets to provide details about local conditions. The physical evidence indicates

¹⁴P. Betancourt, "The End of the Greek Bronze Age," *Antiquity* 50 (1976), pp. 40-47, p. 44

that there were local differences in results, which strengthens the view that there were local differences in causes as well. If we are persuaded by the explanation of Systems Collapse, lack of cooperation among kingdoms is no longer puzzling. While it may have been contrary to Mycenaean psychology to unite—even against a common enemy—in this situation there would have been no single, recognizable common enemy. The enemy was both external and internal, human and natural. There was plenty of warning of difficulties. In fact, the situation may well have worsened in some regions because of the flight and attack of people from other collapsing kingdoms. Some kingdoms may even have cooperated: the wall across the Isthmus may have been a cooperative defensive measure. But since the enemy had many forms, regionalism marks the period of Mycenaean collapse just as it characterized earlier developments.

While the agent is still in doubt, current archaeological work has made it possible to describe the results of destruction with some accuracy.¹⁵ In spite of destruction at some centers before 1200 B.C., many show signs of continued habitation through most of the twelfth century. Mycenae, Tiryns and Athens are perhaps the best cases of duration and it seems that settlement at Athens was unbroken from the Bronze Age into the Classical period. The legendary tradition that Athens served as a point of refuge during the difficulties at the end of the Bronze Age may well rest on fact.¹⁶

We cannot estimate the proportion of Mycenaean inhabitants who survived the tribulations of the twelfth century. Wherever intensive exploration has been carried out in the areas of the Mycenaean kingdoms there is impressive evidence of drastic depopulation in the decades following 1200; Anthony Snodgrass has described "a picture of depopulation on an almost unimaginable scale."¹⁷ Thus Lefkandi, a prosperous community

¹⁵H. van Effenterre, *La seconde fin du monde. Mycènes et la mort d'une civilisation* (Toulouse, 1974).

¹⁶J.A. Bundgaard, *Parthenon and the Mycenaean City on the Heights*, Publication of the National Museum of Denmark, Arch. Historical Series xviii (Copenhagen, 1976); S. Diamant, "Theseus and the Unification of Attica," *Studies in Attic Epigraphy, History and Topography presented to Eugene Vanderpool; Hesperia* supplement 19 (Princeton, 1982), pp. 38-47; C.G. Thomas, "Theseus and Synoicism," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-anatolici* 23 (1982), pp. 337-349.

¹⁷A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece*, p. 20.

by Dark Age standards, had a population of about fifteen people in the eleventh century. Mycenaeans who had apparently fled to, or already lived in, marginal and inaccessible areas such as the central and northwest parts of the Peloponnese (Arcadia and Achaea) seem to have fared better, preserving a simplified version of the Mycenaean way of life for several generations. Both tradition and archaeological evidence inform us that many refugees from major centers escaped by ship. The Ionian islands sheltered a fair number, and there are indications in the following generations that some trade developed between Cephallenia and central and eastern Europe. While the Aegean Islands did not escape the difficulties, as the recently excavated settlement at Koukounaries on Paros shows graphically, still there was strong Mycenaean continuity eastward across the central Aegean as far as Cyprus, where there is increasing archaeological confirmation for two waves of new Mycenaean settlers in the late thirteenth century. The Mycenaean element was vigorous enough on Cyprus to warrant perpetuation of a linear script. Tom Jones proposes that it is no coincidence that *basileus* became the title of the king in Cyprus: a leader of a small group of colonists might be a *basileus* rather than the more prestigious *wanax*.¹⁸ The relationship between the two enclaves of archaic Greek in Peloponnesian Arcadia and Cyprus is useful confirmation of the material evidence.

The major puzzle remains unanswered: what happened to the rich agricultural areas formerly occupied by the great Mycenaean powers? Very few of the burned or abandoned Mycenaean sites seem to have been immediately reoccupied, and new settlements dating from the twelfth and eleventh centuries are very scarce. Were the majority of these once fruitful lands lying untended? Where are the traces of people? Those who still believe in an immediate Dorian occupation argue that the conquerors were just another group of Greeks with an essentially similar, though much less sophisticated, culture. The early Iron Age villages are supposed to have been small and scattered, with flimsy buildings constructed of perishable materials, whose inhabitants had little in the way of portable wealth or durable artefacts.

Another thesis is that pastoralism, particularly cattle raising, increased significantly in many areas, not replacing but supplementing settled agriculture. In a review of the evidence, Snodgrass concluded that the apparent desertion of hundreds of

¹⁸Personal communication.

Mycenaean sites, together with later reoccupation and memory of their names, could be explained as the result of intermittent visits by pastoralists.¹⁹ One Mycenaean site that was reoccupied in the Early Iron Age, Nichoria in Messenia, has produced evidence of a major upsurge in the proportion of cattle. At several other sites, including Eretria and Lefkandi, there are remains of small, simple structures beneath the more permanent structures of the later Dark Age; the small structures could be explained as seasonal abodes of short-term visitors and the crude handmade pottery has been seen as a product of migratory peoples who did not regularly use a potter's wheel.

Some would bring pastoral newcomers—perhaps Dorians—to Greece at this time, a century or so after the first destructions.²⁰ Confirmation has been sought in skeletal remains from Athens and Argos, interpreted by certain anthropologists as showing characteristics of a new strain of northern origin in the population. There is, however, no agreement on this verdict even among anthropologists. Rather than the products of newcomers, there is a growing tendency to see so-called "new" objects of this period as borrowings, many of which were part of the late Mycenaean culture. New settlements have strong Mycenaean characteristics, implying continuity at a reduced level rather than innovation during the twelfth and eleventh centuries.²¹

Pastoralism is not attested for all parts of Greece, however. Merle Langdon rightly argues against this theory for Attica and the objection is salutary in the larger respect of pointing to the intensely regional character of the early Dark Age.²² Regionalism became even more pronounced as population dwindled. Initially, the evidence shows that survivors preserved a general continuity of Mycenaean culture, although at a less sophisticated and poorer

¹⁹A. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece*, pp. 193-209.

²⁰V.R.d'A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London, 1972), and Z. Rubinsohn, "The Dorian Invasion Again," *La Parola del Passato* 30 (1975), pp. 105-131, who argues that there was no direct link between the destruction of the Mycenaean civilization and the arrival of the Dorians who entered Greece only ca. 1000 B.C.

²¹At Nichoria, even though habitation was interrupted, there was an unbroken cultural thread. W.A. McDonald, W.D.E. Coulson and J. Rosser, *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece III: Dark Age and Byzantine Occupation* (Minneapolis, 1983).

²²I am indebted to Professor Langdon for his counsel on many issues of early Greek history.

level. The term "sub-Mycenaean" denotes both the aspects of continuity and of lowering of standards. Foreign contacts continued to diminish and, gradually, features of the old Mycenaean culture, such as burial in chamber tombs, faded away at many places.

If pastoralism characterizes the early Dark Age, resettlement marks the later part of the period, and the nature of the settlement pattern is linked to one of the ever popular and most important issues in ancient Greek history, the emergence of the *polis*. Notable is the variety of perspectives now brought to the subject.

Chester Starr has provided a general review of the discussion, arguing that the *polis* was the result of late eighth century crystallization of various developments reaching back to about 1000 B.C.²³ A number of scholars have come to appreciate the value of anthropological models in tracing the rise of the *polis*. Particularly deft in this regard is the work of Walter Donlan, who finds the embryo of the *polis* in the chiefdoms of the ninth century.²⁴ Rather than a sudden emergence, the *polis* is seen as the product of gradual transition in response to such factors as rising population, renewed contacts with the larger Mediterranean world and growing social and economic diversification.²⁵

New approaches to the study of antiquity have significantly influenced the study of the *polis*. We now have a much better idea of the nature of such communities, thanks to survey archaeology which allows us to look beyond the centers into the countryside, revealing the fundamental social and economic constants of Greece. A splendid account is that of Robin Osborne, *Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek*

²³*Individual and Community: The Rise of the Polis 800-500 B.C.* (New York and Oxford, 1986).

²⁴W. Donlan, "The Pre-State Community in Greece," *Symbolae Osloenses* 64 (1989) pp. 5-29. I have reached a similar conclusion by other means: "From Wanax to Basileus: Kingship in the Greek Dark Age," *Hispania Antigua* 6 (1978), pp. 187-216, and "Homer and the Polis," *Parola del Passato* 106 (1966), pp. 5-13.

²⁵A. Snodgrass treats these conditions in sensible fashion in several discussions notably "The Formation of the Greek City-State," *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 79 (1982), p. 27 f., and *Archaic Greece*.

City and Its Countryside.²⁶ The thesis that the political center was permeated by the country at every level is demonstrated with respect to the Classical period but, in point of fact, is equally true of preclassical Greece. Traditional archaeological evidence is also being used in creative ways to further our knowledge of the early *polis*. Nicholas Coldstream has investigated the growing diversity of pottery styles in connection with the *polis* regionalism evident by the Archaic period; Ian Morris has studied the nature of burial practices as well as the spread of cults at tombs in the context of the rise of the *polis*; the rise of monumental temples has also been used to indicate the firming of regional borders.²⁷

The new archaeology has also entered the lists in contention for a true explanation of *polis*. For instance, the model of peer polity interaction argues the development and persistence of the Greek form of polity through the interactive relationship of various similar communities within a network. Rivalry and emulation among independent communities connected by geography and shared culture can lead to a particular form of polity common to all.²⁸

More traditional approaches to the problem continue, as evidenced by Robert Drews' inquiry into the meaning of the

²⁶London and New York, 1987. And for a fully diachronic account see T.H. van Andel and C. Runnels, *Beyond the Acropolis: A Rural Greek Past* (Stanford, 1987).

²⁷J.N. Coldstream, "The Meaning of the Regional Styles in the Eighth Century B. C.," in R. Hägg, *The Greek Renaissance* (Stockholm 1983), pp. 17-25; I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City State* (Cambridge, 1987), and "Tomb cult and the 'Greek Renaissance': The Past in the Present in the 8th Century BC," *Antiquity* 62 (1988), pp. 750-61; A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece* (London, 1980), pp. 55-65; and for a case study of the evidence of temples see C. A. Roebuck "Some Aspects of Urbanization in Corinth," *Hesperia* 43 (1974), pp. 485-493.

²⁸C. Renfrew and J. Cherry, eds., *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-political Change* (Cambridge, 1986). The model is presented by Renfrew in an introductory chapter (pp. 1-18), and applied to Greece by Snodgrass in chapter three "Interaction by design: the Greek city state," pp. 47-58. The intervening chapter is an application to Bronze Age Crete by J. Cherry, "Polities and Palaces: Some Problems in Minoan State Formation" (pp. 19-45) .

Greek word *basileus*.²⁹ Reconstructions of the developments of particular polities continue to appear and a number of scholars of early Greece find that many of the developments they describe began in the Dark Age. Paul Cartledge on Sparta, Graham Shipley on Samos and J.B. Salmon on Corinth exemplify more recent publications of this sort.³⁰

With the discussion of particular city-states I have slid into Classical Greek territory. This is no longer a transgression since one of the main contributions of recent work has been to show the continuity between what were once thought to be distinct cultures. A graduate student of mine recently remarked that having grown up in the new climate of opinion that sees much continuity between periods, theories of discontinuity seem strange to her. We have come a long way from the view of a fabulous age of Greece which must have no place in history. All categories of evidence—archaeological, linguistic, traditional—point to the correctness of the general conclusion that there was continuity linking the Mycenaean with the early Iron Age and persisting down to Archaic and Classical times. And if not unanimity, there is at least strong consensus that the Homeric poems contain episodes, descriptions of artifacts, names, as well as at least a few linguistic and stylistic traits that can only be explained on the theory that they were handed down from Late Bronze Age to Homer's time in a continuous oral tradition.

So we return to our point of departure, the Trojan War. At the beginning of this study, it served to demonstrate the current directions in the study of preclassical Greece. But it also demonstrates the historical nature of the once-mythical past. In his assessment, "What the Greeks Thought of Their Early History," Antony Raubitschek has argued that the Greek themselves conflated the "mythical" and "historical" in their perception of the past. They accepted as actual events the stories

²⁹*Basileus: The Evidence for Kingship in Geometric Greece* (New Haven and London, 1983).

³⁰P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History 1300-362 BC* (London, 1979); G. Shipley, *A History of Samos, 800-188 B.C.* (New York, 1987); J.B. Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth* (Oxford, 1984). Athens requires a similar treatment.

remembered in the epics.³¹ Modern scholarship, in other words, has led us first away from and now back to the Classical Greeks' view of their past.

³¹First presented as a session of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association meetings held in San Diego in the summer of 1975; published in *The Ancient World* 20 (1989), pp. 39-45.

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The influence of Carl Roebuck instilled a belief in the desirability of seeking origins of institutions and ideas, and of doing so with the aid of a wide range of research tools. Thus an interest in Classical Greece led first to study of the Dark Age and soon to investigation of Bronze Age culture. Much of her publication deals with preclassical Greece on such subjects as early kingship, the origin of the *polis*, "Dorian Invasion," Linear B and oral tradition. Her books include a second revised edition of *Progress into the Past* with William McDonald (Indiana University Press, 1990), *Paths from Ancient Greece* with contributions from six other colleagues (Brill, 1988), *The Earliest Civilizations: Ancient Greece and the Near East 3000--200 B.C.* (University Press of America, 1982), *The City-State in Five Cultures* with Robert Griffith (Clio Press, 1981) and *Homer's History: Mycenaean or Dark Age?* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970; repr. Krieger, 1976).

