

# THE DARK AGE OF GREECE



Immanuel Velikovsky

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by

Immanuel Velikovsky

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## CONTENTS

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<a href="#"><u>A Technical Note</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Preface</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Reconstruction of Ancient History</u></a>	
<b>CHAPTER I: THE HOMERIC QUESTION</b>	
<a href="#"><u>The Setting of the Stage</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Why No Literary Relics from Five Centuries?</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Troy in the Dark Ages</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Dark Age in Asia Minor</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>The Homeric Question</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Allies of Priam</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Aeneas</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Olympic Games in the Iliad</u></a>
<b>CHAPTER II: MUTE WITNESSES</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Troy and Gordion</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Lion Gate of Mycenae</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Olympia</u></a> <a href="#"><u>“The Scandal of Enkomi”</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Tiryns</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Mute Witnesses</u></a> <a href="#"><u>A Votive Cretan Cave</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Etruria</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Sicily</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Mycenae and Scythia</u></a>
<b>CHAPTER III: WORDS SET IN CLAY</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Pylos</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Linear B Deciphered</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Greek Pantheon</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Mycenean City Names in the Iliad</u></a> <a href="#"><u>The Mycenean Dialect</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Cadmus</u></a>
<b>CHAPTER IV: A GAP CLOSED</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Seismology and Chronology</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Celestial Events in the Iliad</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Changes in Land and Sea</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>A Gap Closed</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Competing for a Greater Antiquity</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Summing Up</u></a>

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## A Technical Note

I have been asked by the compilers of the Velikovsky archive to briefly explain the present condition of Velikovsky's unpublished manuscript entitled *The Dark Age of Greece*. By contributing this explanation, I am not in any way endorsing their move to make this material available to a wider public. Velikovsky worked on the manuscript of *The Dark Age of Greece* fairly intensively during the last years of his life, drawing in part on the library research of Edwin Schorr, a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati, whom he employed for this purpose in Princeton for several summers in a row in the mid-seventies. Readers of *Pensee* know Schorr under his *nom de plume* Israel M. Isaacson, which he used to protect himself from the wrath of his professors at Cincinnati. At the time that I began to work for Velikovsky in 1976, the manuscript was still "work in progress." While Velikovsky was writing and rewriting the main text, my task was to annotate the material, drawing in part on the voluminous notes and photocopies of articles prepared by Schorr and partly on my own research. All of the annotations included in the present manuscript of *The Dark Age of Greece* were commissioned, reviewed and approved by Velikovsky.

*Jan Sammer*

In this edition Jan Sammer's annotations are distinguished from Velikovsky's text by being placed in square brackets and displayed in red letters. All such annotations should be understood as being by Jan Sammer, unless marked with the initials EMS, in which case they are by Edwin Schorr. Schorr is also the author of a dissertation on Mycenae, which Velikovsky asked him to write as a supplement to *The Dark Age of Greece*, but which is not included here.

*The Editors*

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## PREFACE

The task of my few words is to ask prominent scholars to reconsider their opinions about the dark age of Greece in the light of Velikovsky's present book. My personal difficulty is mainly caused by the fact that a short preface cannot be a scholarly treatise and therefore it is impossible to ask here all the questions which arise when Velikovsky's theory is applied to our special problem. And as I am not an archaeologist, but a Greek scholar, I am not able to control how far Velikovsky is right in questions of stratigraphy. Here I depend on his quotations of archaeological reports and it is not possible for me to decide how far his selection of passages from these reports is subjective. My difficulty is that now I have to accept the view that the period of Geometric style overlaps, at least partially, the Mycenaean and Minoan period. This is new for me, but I admit that it is not impossible that two different artistic approaches can exist at the same time.

But the most important problem in connection with the present book is how far this theory is dictated by the whole of Velikovsky's chronological system and how far his results in the present study are valid independently from it. Velikovsky puts the "true time of the events recounted in the Iliad in the second half of the eighth century and the beginning of the seventh. . . . The time in which the drama of the Iliad was set was -687; yet the poet condensed the events of more than one year into the tenth year of the Trojan siege, the time of the Iliad's action." Velikovsky came to this date because he identified the description of the battle between the gods in the Iliad with a cosmic catastrophe. His date for the conquest of Troy is unusually late. As Homer had to live after the events he describes, the space of the time between Homer and the classical Greek literature seems to me personally to be too short. But the main question is about the interrelation between Velikovsky's chronological system and the single historical facts. Or in other words: does this system solve the concrete difficulties in our approach to ancient history? The present book tries to solve such a serious problem, namely, does the so-called dark age of Greece really exist? Is the supposed span between Mycenae and classical Greece too long? Are we not in this case victim of a false Egyptian chronology, which was invented by Egyptian patriots in order to show that the Greeks were in comparison with the Egyptians mere children? Was the history of Egypt in reality much shorter than it is supposed today? If this could be shown, then the problem of the dark age of Greece would disappear. Only open-minded specialists can reject or accept Velikovsky's solutions. One thing is clear: the new book treats a real problem. It was not its author who created it. The whole complex of questions was re-opened by the decipherment of the Linear B script, when it was definitely shown that the Mycenaean were Greeks, speaking a language which was an older stage of the linguistic substrate of the Iliad and Odyssey. It is a merit of the new book that it offers an original solution for a real problem. Will there be a sufficient number of good specialists who are prepared to wrestle with the proposed solution?

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# The Reconstruction of Ancient History

The history of the ancient East is an interwoven nexus, embracing Egypt, Israel, Syria and Mesopotamia, known also as the Biblical lands. The interconnections extend to Asia Minor, to Mycenaean Greece, and to the Mediterranean islands—Cyprus, Crete, and the Aegean archipelago. The histories of many of these nations are, for most of their existence, devoid of absolute dates and depend on interrelations with other nations.

The chronologies of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece and of the Minoan civilization on Crete are built upon contacts with Egypt, for Egypt's chronology is considered reliable. In turn, the widespread Mycenaean and Minoan contacts and influences found in the archaeological sites of many countries are distributed on the scale of time by detailed study of Mycenaean and Minoan pottery and its development. This pottery is found in countries as far apart as Italy and the Danubian region.

## *Egyptian History*

Although Egypt's chronology is used to determine the dates of other cultures, Egypt had no written account of its history, and the earliest surviving effort to put its past into a narrative is from the pen of Herodotus of the mid-fifth century before the present era, regarded by modern historians as largely unreliable.<sup>1</sup>

Though various king-lists from earlier times have been preserved, it is the list of Manetho, an Egyptian priest of Hellenistic times, (third pre-Christian century) that served the historiographers as the basis for making a narrative out of the Egyptian past. The names read on monuments were equated, often by trial and error, with Manethonian dynasties and kings. The mathematics of history, it was agreed, could not be entrusted to Manetho, and is largely borrowed from the sixteenth-century European chronographers, notably Joseph Scaliger, and his sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emulators Seth Calvisius and others,<sup>2</sup> who dated in the same tables also various mythological motifs, such as the scandals among the Olympian gods or Heracles' heroic exploits.

With the reading of the Egyptian hieroglyphs achieved in the nineteenth century, some selected dates of Scaliger were used by Lepsius (1810-84) to date the monuments and thus the reigns of the kings of Egypt whose names were on the monuments. Lepsius was, for instance, of the view that Ramses II was the pharaoh of the Exodus—and thus Biblical history, too, was drawn into a comprehensive scheme on which other histories could find their first foothold. Such was also the case with "Hittite" history because of a peace treaty of Ramses II with one of the Hittite kings (Hattusilis). Manethonian mathematics, or the number of years allotted to dynasties and kings, was soon disregarded.

## *Astronomical Dating*<sup>3</sup>

Even before Young and Champollion first read the hieroglyphic texts in the 1820s, Biot and others decided that astronomical calendric calculations could be used to ascertain the dates of the Egyptian dynasties. It was known that the Egyptian civil year consisted of 365 days, approximately a quarter of a day short of the true sidereal year. Thus the calendric dates of the Egyptians would gradually have fallen out of their proper place in relation to the seasons, and made a complete circle in  $365 \times 4 = 1460$  years.

With the decipherment of the multitudinous Egyptian texts, a few references to a star *spdt* were found, and were interpreted as recording the heliacal<sup>4</sup> rising of the southern fixed star Sirius—and if from monuments it could also be learned in which months and on what day the star rose heliacally, events could be dated within the 1460-year-long "Sothic cycle." This made it possible to build a chronology of Egypt around the few dates so fixed—and much work was spent in such an effort. With this as a basis, refinement could be achieved in various ways, most notably by trying to ascertain the length of the years of a king, usually relying on the highest year of his reign found recorded on monuments. Each king counted the years from his coronation—Egypt had no continuous timetable. However, in Egyptian texts no reference to calculating by Sothic observations was ever found.

Archaeological work in Egypt showed that besides the so-called pre-dynastic times, from which the data are incomplete, the historical past was twice interrupted for centuries when the land fell into neglect. The First Intermediate Period intervened between the epochs that received the names of the Old and Middle Kingdoms; the Second Intermediate Period between the Middle and New Kingdoms; the New Kingdom consists of the Manethonian dynasties Eighteen, Nineteen and Twenty—what follows is called the Late Kingdom.

### *Hebrew History*

Hebrew history has a narrative that consists of the book of Genesis—the history of the world in which catastrophic events (the Deluge, the overturning of the Tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah) come to the fore, the latest of these coinciding with the beginning of the age of the Patriarchs which ends with the migration of the fourth generation to Egypt because of drought in Canaan. This part of the history is considered largely legendary. Following a sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus—the subject of the other four books of the Pentateuch—inaugurates the historical period. The historical events until the Exile to Babylon are further narrated in the books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Chronicles, and Prophets and the post-Babylonian period in the books Nehemiah, Ezra, and of the later prophets. Many non-Scriptural books with varying degrees of historical veracity add and take over where the Old Testament ceases its narrative.

It was agreed since the days of Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian of the days of Emperor Vespasian, that the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt took place after the Second Intermediate period, during the Egyptian New Kingdom, whether at its very beginning or several generations later. However, they disagree among themselves, some placing the Exodus under Thutmose III of the Eighteenth Dynasty, others under Amenhotep III or his heir Akhnaton of the same dynasty (the time of the el-Amarna correspondence), some placing it under Ramses II or Merneptah of the Nineteenth Dynasty ("Israel Stele"), and some as late as the Twentieth Dynasty (after Ramses III repelled the invasion of the Peoples of the Sea, supposedly in the first quarter of the twelfth century). So many various dates for the Exodus—a point that connects the Hebrew and the Egyptian histories—could be contemplated because these two histories as they are usually taught are remarkably out of contact for the entire length of the New Kingdom, and equally so for the rest of their histories, down to the time of Alexander of Macedon.

### *The Revised Chronology*

My approach to the problem of the synchronization of ancient histories took the following form. Upon realizing that the Exodus was preceded and accompanied by natural disturbances described as plagues of darkness, of earthquake, of vermin, accompanied by hurricanes and followed by a disruption of the sea, by volcanic phenomena in the desert and then by the prolonged "Shadow of Death" of the years of wandering, I looked for similar descriptions in Egyptian literary relics and found them in a papyrus ascribed to a certain Ipuwer, an eyewitness and survivor of the events. Additional data I found in an inscription carved on a stone shrine found at el-Arish on the Egyptian-Palestinian frontier. Taking the latest possible date for the events described in the papyrus Ipuwer, namely, the collapse of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt on the eve of its being overrun by the Hyksos, the date was still centuries earlier than the earliest considered dates for the Exodus on the Egyptian time-scale.

If the parallels in texts elucidated by me are not a matter of coincidence, then the test would be in whether it would be possible, in leveling the two histories by synchronizing the end of the Middle Kingdom and the Exodus, to trace contemporaneity also in subsequent generations, not yet deciding whether the Egyptian history would need extirpation of "ghost centuries" or the Israelite history extension by the insertion of "lost centuries."

The next clue in my work of reconstruction was in equating the Asiatic Hyksos (called Amu by the Egyptians) that overran Egypt, prostrated as it was by the natural disaster described in the Ipuwer Papyrus, with the Amalekites that the Israelites met on their flight from Egypt. The autochthonous Arab sources, as preserved by medieval Moslem historians, refer to a several-centuries-prolonged occupation of Egypt by the Amalekites, evicted from the Hedjaz by plagues of earthquakes and vermin, while tidal waves swept other tribes from their lands.

I could establish that the period of the Judges, when the population was oppressed by the Amalekites and Midianites, was the time of the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt and that Saul, who captured the capital of the Amalekites (el-Arish being the ancient Hyksos capital Avaris) put an end to the Amalekite-Hyksos domination from Mesopotamia to Egypt. In Egypt the Eighteenth Dynasty came into existence, thus inaugurating the New Kingdom. Was it ca. -1030, the time the Biblical scholars would assign to Saul's capture of the Amalekite fortress, or ca. -1580, the time the Egyptologists would place the fall of Avaris?

King David fought the remnants of the Amalekites; his marshal Joab invaded Arabia, while Amenhotep I ruled in Egypt; Solomon accordingly had to be a contemporary of Thutmose I and of Hatshepsut; I could establish that this queen came to Jerusalem and had reliefs depicting her journey to the Divine Land carved on the walls of her temple at Deir el-Bahari. In Hebrew history and legend she lives as the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon.

The next generation saw Thutmose III invade Judea, sack the palace and temple of Jerusalem, and impose a tribute on the now-divided country. The furnishings of the Temple, carried away by Thutmose, were depicted by him on a temple wall in Karnak. These depictions match the Biblical record of some of the Temple furnishings.

Amenhotep II was identified with the king whom an ancient epic poem portrayed as leading an enormous army against the city of Ugarit, only to be pursued to the Sinai Desert. He was further shown to be the alter ego of the Scriptural Zerah, whose enterprise started similarly and ended identically.

The last three chapters of the first volume of *Ages in Chaos* deal with the el-Amarna correspondence; if the reconstruction is correct then the time in Judah must be that of King Jehoshaphat and in Israel of King Ahab. It so happened that the books of Kings and Chronicles are especially rich in many details of the events that took place under these kings, and the numerous letters on the clay tablets of the el-Amarna archive present a perfect ground for comparison as to persons, places, names, and events. Scores of identifications and parallels are brought forth. Did Jehoshaphat and his generals and Ahab and his adversaries in Damascus exchange letters with Amenhotep III and his heir Akhnaton across the centuries?

At first we left the problem open, which of the two histories would require re-adjustment—is the Israelite history in need of finding lost centuries, or does the Egyptian history require excision of ghost centuries? Soon it became a matter of certainty that of the two timetables, the Egyptian and the Israelite, the former is out of step with historical reality by over five centuries.

A chronology with centuries that never occurred made necessary the introduction of "Dark Ages" between the Mycenaean and the Hellenic periods in Greece. Thus the shortening of Egyptian history by the elimination of phantom centuries must have as a consequence the shortening of Mycenaean-Greek history by the same length of time.

### *The Greek Past*

The theme pursued in this volume is the basic design of Greek history—the passage of the Mycenaean civilization and the intervening Dark Age of five centuries duration before the Hellenic or historical age starts ca. 700 years before the present era. This structure of the Greek past is subjected to a reexamination as to the historicity of the Dark Age.

Greek antiquity is conventionally divided into three periods—Helladic, Hellenic, and Hellenistic. The Helladic period in its later subdivision comprises the Mycenaean civilization. It ends not long after the conquest of Troy, regularly put about -1200. Its last generation is dubbed "the Heroic Age." At this point five centuries of dark ages are inserted into Greek history. The Hellenic period embraces the Ionian and classical ages, and stretches from ca. -700 to the conquest of the East by Alexander of Macedon. With his march toward the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Indus (-331 to -327), the culture of Greece was spread through the Orient and was itself modified by oriental elements; this was the beginning of the Hellenistic Age. Mycenae can be regarded as the cultural center of the Late Helladic period; Athens of the Hellenic; and Alexandria of the Hellenistic. In this scheme, as just said, the five

centuries of the Dark Age are inserted between the Helladic and the Hellenic or, in other nomenclature, following the Mycenaean and preceding the Ionian ages.

The Mycenaean Age in Greece and the contemporary and partly preceding Minoan Age on Crete have no chronologies of their own and depend on correlations with Egypt. Objects inscribed with the names of Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III and Queen Tiy of the Eighteenth Dynasty, found at Mycenae, were like a calendar leaf. Then excavations at el-Amarna in Egypt established the presence of Mycenaean ware in Akhnaton's short-lived city. Such quantities of Mycenaean ware came to light in the course of the excavations that a street in el-Amarna was dubbed "Greek Street." Since Akhnaton's capital existed for only about a decade and a half, a very precise dating for the Mycenaean ware could be evinced, thus providing a link between Mycenaean history and the established Egyptian chronology. It was therefore concluded that the Mycenaean civilization was at its apogee in the days of Amenhotep III and Akhnaton of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty.

The first and most important consequence was a radical recasting of Greek history. Since Akhnaton's conventional date was the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries before the present era, Mycenaean ware was also ascribed to the same period. By the end of the twelfth century before the present era, the Mycenaean civilization would have run its course. The Greek or Hellenic time does not start until about -700. The years in between are without history on Greek soil. There existed tenacious memories of the time of the tyrants who ruled in the late eighth and seventh centuries, but beyond that, there was complete darkness.

Thus by the 1890s the Hellenists were coerced by the evidence presented by the Egyptologists to introduce five centuries of darkness between the end of the Mycenaean Age and the beginning of the Hellenic. As we shall read on a later page, there was some consternation on the part of classical scholars when first the fact dawned on them that between the Mycenaean age and the historical Greek time there was a span, more in the nature of a lacuna, of several centuries' duration. In the end they accepted the Egyptian plan as being valid for Greece—still without having investigated the evidence on which the claim of the Egyptologists was founded.<sup>5</sup>

In *Ages in Chaos* we have seen that, with the fall of the Middle Kingdom and the Exodus synchronized, events in the histories of the peoples of the ancient world coincide all along the centuries.

For a space of over one thousand years records of Egyptian history have been compared with the records of the Hebrews, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and finally with those of the Greeks, with a resulting correspondence which denotes synchronism.

In Volume I of *Ages in Chaos* it was shown in great detail why Akhnaton of the Eighteenth Dynasty must be placed in the latter part of the ninth century. If Akhnaton flourished in -840 and not in -1380, the ceramics from Mycenae found in the palace of Akhnaton are younger by five or six hundred years than they are presumed to be, and the Late Mycenaean period would accordingly move forward by about half a thousand years on the scale of time.

Yet independently of the results attained in *Ages in Chaos*, the problem of blank centuries, usually termed "dark ages," increasingly claims the attention of archaeologists and historians. Although the enigma of "dark centuries" reappears in many countries of the ancient East, in no place did it create such discomfort as in Hellenic history. There it is an inveterate problem that dominates the so-called Homeric question: The historical period in Greece, the Hellenic Age, is ushered in by the sudden and bright light of a literary creation—the Homeric epics, of perfect form, of exquisite rhythm, of a grandeur unsurpassed in world literature, a sudden sunrise with no predawn light in a previously profoundly dark world, with the sun starting its day at zenith—from almost five hundred years that divide the end of the Mycenaean Age from the Hellenic Age, not a single inscription or written word survived.

Against this set-up the Homeric Question grew to ever greater proportions. In the light of—or better to say—in the darkness of the Homeric problem, we will try to orient ourselves by scanning some early chapters of Greek archaeology, and having done this, we should return to the problem of the deciphered Linear B script. Two timetables are applied simultaneously to the past of Greece, one built on the evidence of Greece itself, the other on relations with Egypt; thus instead of any new discovery reducing the question to smaller confines, every subsequent discovery enlarged the confines and decreased the chances of finding a solution.



## References

[one](#)[Cf. Ion Ghica, *Istoriile lui Erodos*, vol. II (Bucuresti, 1912)] [two](#)They wrote long before the Egyptian hieroglyphics were deciphered. [three](#)See my essay, "Astronomy and Chronology," Supplement to *Peoples of the Sea*, (New York, London, 1977); first published in *Pensee IVR* IV (1973). [four](#)By heliacal rising is meant the first appearance of a star after invisibility due to conjunction with the sun. [five](#)See my "Astronomy and Chronology", cited above.

# CHAPTER I: THE HOMERIC QUESTION

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## The Setting of the Stage

A traveller afoot, steadily on the road, marching from Athens westward, crosses the Corinthian Isthmus and, by continuing to the south, may arrive at Mycenae before the sunset of the second day. He follows the rocky road uphill and reaches the fortification wall of the ancient citadel. Rampant stone lions in relief crown the gate of Mycenae. Inside the gate, immediately to the right, he is shown the shaft graves of the ancient kings. The place is deserted; no village occupies the site. Resting at the gate, the traveller has before him the Argive plain, the scene of some of the most celebrated events of the human past.

Before the historical age of Greece started, called also the Ionian or Hellenic Age, Greece had another civilization. It centered at Mycenae; it spread over Greece and over the Helladic islands; vestiges of it were found in many places of the ancient world. It was closely contemporaneous with the last phase of another civilization, the so-called Minoan, centered on the island of Crete to the south. These two great cultures left cities and palaces, ruined and deserted, and rich relics—pottery of exquisite forms, and gold and jewels—but no history known to modern man. Yet of Mycenae and of her heroes such a treasure of legend is preserved in Greek lore that some of the heroes of that kingdom in the Argive plain and their contemporaries are more familiar to us than leaders of other races and other times much more recent. Agamemnon, Menelaus, Nestor, Achilles, and Odysseus are better remembered and more widely known than most of the military leaders of the great wars of our own century. Heroes of other times and nations are too often not known at all.

    Their names were . . . Ask oblivion!  
    "They had no poet, and they died."<sup>1</sup>

This is said not just of heroes but of whole civilizations.

Agamemnon and Menelaus were sons of Atreus, king of Mycenae; and legends were told about Atreus and Thyestes, brothers who quarreled over the throne, and about the sign in favor of Atreus that was seen in the sun retracing its course. These legends lived in Greek lore. Another cycle of legends centered on Thebes in Boeotia, and on the Argonaut expedition to Colchis on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea, which preceded the Trojan War by several decades.

The world of these legends, cruel and heroic and treacherous, occupied the fantasy of the Greeks; and Greek tragic poets of the fifth century, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, had an inexhaustible store of themes to draw upon.

There is hardly any problem in the entire history of literature that occupies the minds of scholars as much as the origin of the Homeric epics—the Iliad and the Odyssey—especially the question as to the time of their origin.

The Iliad tells of the events of the final stage of the siege of Troy by the host of the Achaeans under Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. The Odyssey tells of the long wanderings of Odysseus, one of the heroes of that siege, on his circuitous way home.

Tradition has it that Homer was a blind bard who lived and wandered on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor. Among the cities and islands that claimed to have been his birthplace were Smyrna, Chios, Colophon, Salamis, Rhodes, Argos, and Athens. Beyond this the tradition is very meager as to the personality of the poet and the events of his life. Several apocryphal writings pretending to tell something of him were composed in Greece, but had nothing to commend them. When did he live and create? In his great epics he described the Mycenaean world which supposedly ended almost five centuries before him; he shows a very great knowledge of that time—yet he knew the world of the seventh century, too.

There are those who argue that the author of the Iliad and Odyssey was not one man but a group of bards, or a succession of wandering poets, each of whom added of his inspiration to the epics; and sometimes it is also argued that there was no historical siege of Troy and that the story of the war is but the poet's creation. The Odyssey appears to be just a story of fancy. However, a war expedition in which many leaders, kings of cities in Greece, took part, and the capture of a fortress named Ilion or Troy, ruled by King Priam, could not be easily relegated, all and sundry, to the domain of fancy. Many Greek and Latin authors referred to it, though their source was invariably Homer. Among the early authors Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides wrote cycles of tragedies dealing with the personalities of the Homeric epics and with their families, and many other poets followed in the path of the ancient bard. Virgil's Aeneid, telling the story of the peregrinations of Aeneas, one of the defenders of Troy, is famed as emulation of Homer's Odyssey.

Through the classical period of Greece, through the Hellenistic age that followed, through the age of the Roman Empire, then through the Middle Ages, the Trojan War was the main event of the past, competing in this with the exploits of Alexander of Macedon, for whom Achilles of the Iliad served as the model. But in the nineteenth century, in the "age of reasonableness" that followed the "age of reason," the view prevailed that the Trojan War was part of the imagery of a poet and Troy itself had never existed.

However in the 1870s the skeptics were confounded by Heinrich Schliemann, an adventurer with rich imagination, who as a cabin boy went on a merchant ship bound for America that suffered shipwreck;<sup>2</sup> he was a clerk in Holland, an importer in St. Petersburg, a man not to miss the California goldrush. Having grown rich through the years of adventures, Schliemann went to Hissarlik, a low hill near the Dardanelles, on the Aegean shore of Turkey, after proclaiming that he would find Troy there. Schliemann's advance public announcement as to his intent to discover Troy was met partly with disbelief and sarcasm, but mostly with indifference. He dug, destroyed much valuable material and disturbed some of the archaeological sequence; but he discovered beneath the mound of Hissarlik the remains of seven cities, one beneath the other.<sup>3</sup>

He identified the second city from the bottom as the Troy of which Homer sang: it was a fortress, strong and rich in treasures, seemingly destroyed in a violent earthquake.<sup>4</sup>

Later scholars identified King Priam's city as the sixth from the bottom, still later as Troy VIIa.

In 1876 Schliemann, now crowned with success, went to the Argive plain in Greece, to Mycenae, to locate the tomb of Agamemnon, "king of men," the leader of the Achaeans at the siege of Troy. Soon he cabled to King George of the Hellenes that he had opened the grave of his predecessor among the five large shaft tombs which he discovered hewn in rock, with the skeletons of their occupants, with gold crowns and gold masks and much jewelry, gold vessels with oriental designs, and pottery. All kinds of voices were now heard. One scholar announced that the find and its treasures date from the Byzantine age (first millennium A.D); but in time the royal graves came to be accepted for what they were—of an era preceding the historical period in Greece—however not of Agamemnon and his house who supposedly lived in the thirteenth or early twelfth century, but of an age several centuries earlier. How was this figured out? In the buildings and tombs of Mycenae cartouches of Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III, and Queen Tiy, wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhnaton were found,<sup>5</sup> and in Akhnaton's short-lived city Akhetaton, deposits of typical Mycenaean pottery were unearthed. The age of these pharaohs in the conventional timetable belongs to the first half of the fourteenth century. Schliemann was wrong again in his identification, but right in the main: here were for all to see rich relics of the Mycenaean civilization.

Schliemann made further diggings at Tiryns, in the Argive plain, and next intended to dig on Crete, but he did not come to terms with the owners of the land, for which he made a bargain offer.

At the beginning of this century Arthur Evans, having obtained a concession, dug at Knossos on Crete and brought to light the Minoan civilization—palaces and frescoes and paved courts, a silent world of bygone days. The Minoan civilization could be traced to various stages separated by definite interruptions—Early Minoan, Middle Minoan, and Late Minoan—and it was the Late Minoan age that ran parallel with the Mycenaean age. If anything, the Minoan civilization appeared as the dominant of the two. It was Evans' excavations on Crete that established the contemporaneity of Mycenaean ware with that of the Late Minoan period. On Crete Evans also found tablets with

incised signs of two scripts, called by him Linear A and Linear B. Later tablets with the Linear B script were found in large numbers at Pylos and at other ruined cities on the Greek mainland, and still later they were deciphered. But we are ahead of our story.

## References

[one](#) Don Marquis, quoting Pope. [two](#) Of this shipwreck Schliemann wrote to his sisters in Hanover an exciting account of miraculous escape from death. In his later autobiography he exposes his letter-report as more fantasy than truth. [three](#) In *Troy and Its Remains* (London, 1875) Schliemann distinguished four cities; in *Ilios, The City and Country of the Trojans* (London, 1880) he recognized seven. [four](#) This is the view of C. F. A. Schaeffer, argued in his *Stratigraphie comparee et chronologie de l'Asie occidentale (IIIe et IIe millenaires)* (Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 225. C. Blegen ascribed the destruction to a human foe. [five](#) J. D. S. Pendlebury, *Aegyptiaca* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 53-57.

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# Why no Literary Relics from Five Centuries?

The Dark Ages left no literary remains, not even a single word on a sherd or a few characters on a clay tablet.

M. Bowra in his book *Homer and His Forerunners* puts the problem in straight terms:

There is no evidence whatsoever that the Mycenaean script continued anywhere in Greece after c. 1200. There is no trace of writing of any kind in the sub-Mycenaean and Protogeometric periods, or indeed before the middle of the eighth century, when the new and totally different Greek alphabet makes its first appearance. Now, this is surely not an accident. A single scratched letter from this period would be enough to show that writing survived; but not one has been found. This is undeniably a most remarkable phenomenon, for which it is hard to find either a parallel or an explanation. A society seems suddenly to have become illiterate, and to have remained so for centuries. How and why this happened we do not know. . . <sup>1</sup>

Bowra expresses his wonder at "this astounding state of affairs." It "undermines any hope that the transmission of heroic poetry was maintained by a succession of written texts from the time of the Trojan War."

On the one hand, "the Homeric poems contain material which is older than 1200." On the other hand, Bowra states his conviction that we can be "reasonably confident that Homer worked in the latter part of the eighth century, since this suits both the latest datable elements in his details and his general outlook." Is this not an impasse—the poet separated from his subject by almost five centuries, with an intimate knowledge of a vanished civilization and no art of writing in between?

Alan J. B. Wace challenged this view, and in his preface to Ventris' and Chadwick's *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (1956) wrote that future discoveries and study would "undoubtedly make clear" whether the Dark Age was really dark:

The orthodox view of classical archaeologists is that there was a 'Dark Age' when all culture in Greece declined to barbarism, at the close of the Bronze Age and in the early period of the ensuing Iron Age. Even now, when it is admitted that the Greeks of the Late Bronze Age could read and write the Linear B Script, it is still believed by some that in the transition time, the Age of Bronze to that of Iron, the Greeks forgot how to read and

write until about the eighth century when they adapted the Phoenician alphabet. It is incredible that a people as intelligent as the Greeks should have forgotten how to read and write once they had learned how to do so.<sup>2</sup>

Then where are the documents, what is the testimony?

". . . Letters or literary texts may well have been on wooden tablets or some form of parchment or even papyrus; some fortunate discovery will possibly one day reveal them to us." A quarter century since this was written nothing has been found that would substantiate this hope, as nothing was found in the preceding eighty years of excavation in Greece. In the quoted passage the words "it is still believed by some that . . . the Greeks forgot how to read and write" refers to almost every classicist who agrees that the Dark Age left no written record because none was written.<sup>3</sup>

"There is no scrap of evidence," writes Denys L. Page in *History and the Homeric Iliad*, "and no reason whatever to assume that the art of writing was practiced in Greece between the end of the Mycenaean era and the eighth century B.C. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

And one hundred pages later: ". . . The Iliad preserves facts about the Trojans which could not have been known to anybody after the fall of Troy VIIa."<sup>5</sup>

Then back to the question one hundred pages earlier: "How did the truth survive through the Dark Ages into the Iliad?"<sup>6</sup>

## References

[one](#) Sir Maurice Bowra, *Homer and His Forerunners* (Edinburgh, 1955) pp. 1-2. [two](#) P. xxviii; cf. J. Chadwick, "The Linear Scripts" in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. II, ch. XIII (1971) p. 26; V. R. d'A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London, 1972) p. 321. [three](#) The contention that during the Dark Ages the Greeks wrote only on perishables does not carry weight. In Mycenaean times, and again from the eighth century on, the Greeks left writing on imperishable materials, such as baked clay or stone, as well as on perishable ones, such as papyrus or wood. The view that *all* writing during the Dark Ages was on perishable materials, none of which was found, is thus rather difficult to uphold. In *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1961) p. 17, L. H. Jeffrey convincingly disputes the "perishables" theory. [four](#) (Berkeley, Ca., 1959) p. 122. [five](#) *Ibid.*, p. 221. [six](#) *Ibid.*, p. 120. Rhys Carpenter is among those who argue that an oral tradition stretching over centuries was not capable of preserving a detailed picture of Mycenaean Greece (*Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics*); yet Denys Page and many other scholars state unequivocally that an accurate picture *was* somehow preserved.

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## Troy in the Dark Ages

The Dark Age enveloped Greece; it enveloped Troy too,

for the site is barren of deposits which might be referred to the period c. 1100-700 B.C. Not one sherd of proto-geometric pottery is known to have been found at Troy—not by Schliemann, or by Doerpfeld, or by Blegen himself. We are now in effect asking what happened at Troy during the Dark Ages of Greece, from the [beginning of] the 11th to the [end of the] 8th century B.C.: and this is the answer which we must accept—that there is nothing at Troy to fill the huge lacuna. For 2000 years men had left traces of their living there; some chapters in the story were brief and obscure, but there was never yet a

chapter left wholly blank. Now at last there is silence, profound and prolonged for 400 years.<sup>1</sup>

This observation of Denys Page, Professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge, is in the nature of amazement: out of a mound covering a ruined place, an archaeologist expects to extract stray objects that accumulated there in the space of centuries. In Troy there is "silence profound and prolonged" as if time itself had stopped.

But the same author stresses that "the Iliad preserves facts about the Trojans which could not have been known to anybody after the fall of Troy VIIa."<sup>2</sup>

Thus not only did Homer know of the kingdom and people of Mycenae that were buried for centuries of the Dark Ages, but he knew also of the kingdom and people of Troy who, too, were dead, buried, and forgotten in the darkness of the Dark Ages.

The site of Troy was reoccupied late in the seventh century; but from the fall of Troy, now put by archaeologists ca. -1260, until Homer's time, there was nothing on the surface of the mound that could disclose to the poet the many intricate details which he webbed into his epics.

It is realized that Homer knew the scene of the Aegean coast of Asia Minor of the eighth and seventh centuries; therefore, it was argued, he could not have lived in the days of the Trojan War (or shortly thereafter) in the 12th century. A poet having composed the poems in the twelfth century would not be able to introduce into them innumerable references to the Iron Age in Greece and the post-Phrygian Age in Asia Minor of the seventh century. Was the site of Troy alone in Asia Minor an archaeological void for five hundred years, following that city's destruction at the end of the Mycenaean Age?

## References

[one](#)D. Page, "The Historical Sack of Troy," *Antiquity*, Vol. XXXIII (1959), p. 31. [two](#)*Ibid.*, p. 221.

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# The Dark Age in Asia Minor

Like Greece and the Aegean, Asia Minor has no history for a period of close to five centuries. Certain scholars disagree with this verdict, but it comes from the pen of one of the foremost authorities on archaeology and art of Asia Minor, Professor Ekrem Akurgal of the University of Ankara.<sup>1</sup>

". . . Today [1961], despite all industrious archaeological exploration of the last decades, the period from 1200 to 750 for most parts of the Anatolian region lies still in complete darkness. The old nations of Asia Minor, like the Lycians and the Carians, the names of which are mentioned in the documents of the second half of the second millennium, are archaeologically, i.e., with their material heritage, first noticeable about 700 or later . . . Hence the cultural remains of the time between 1200 and 750 in central Anatolia, especially on the plateau, seem to be quite irretrievably lost for us."

The huge land of Asia Minor for almost five centuries is historically and archaeologically void. The cause of the interruption in the flow of history about -1200 is assumed to lie in some military conquest; but the Phrygians, who are supposed to have been these conquerors, did not themselves leave any sign of their occupation of the country from before -750.

Thus the explanation that the end of the Anatolian civilization about 1200 was due to the incursion of the Phrygians is not supported by archaeological finds. According to Akurgal, the repeatedly undertaken efforts to close the hiatus by relics of Phrygian art "cannot be harmonized with the results of archaeological study. None of the Phrygian finds

and none of the oriental ones found with them can be dated earlier than the eighth century." "Such results compel us to exclude from the study of Asia Minor between 1200 and 750 any Phrygian presence and heritage."

If there is no sign of Phrygian occupation for the period, are there possibly some vestiges of occupation by other peoples?

"It is startling," writes Akurgal, "that until now in Central Anatolia not only no Phrygian, but altogether no cultural remains of any people, came to light that could be dated in time between 1200 and 750." Nothing was left by any possible survivors of previous occupants, namely by Hittites, and nothing by any people or tribe that could have supplanted them. Also on the rim of Asia Minor the darkness of the Dark Age is complete: "In the south of the peninsula, in Mersin, Tarsus and Karatepe, in recent years important archaeological work was done . . . here, too, the early Iron Age, i.e., the period between 1200 and 750, is enwrapped in darkness."<sup>2</sup>

Even after only a few decades of settlement a town should leave discernible relics for archaeologists; usually under such circumstances potsherds or a few beads, or a clay figurine, are found. Ash and kitchen refuse are ubiquitous finds wherever there was human habitation. But that on an area over 250,000 square miles in extent there should, as Akurgal claims, be found nothing, not even tombs, from a period counted not just by decades but by centuries, actually a period of almost five hundred years, is hardly less than miraculous.

## References

<sup>one</sup>Akurgal, *Die Kunst Anatoliens von Homer bis Alexander* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 5-7; cf. his *Phrygische Kunst* (Ankara, 1955), p. 112. <sup>two</sup>*Ibid.*, p.7.

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# The Homeric Question

The idea of a wide gap separating the Mycenaean Age from the historical age of Greece has gained almost universal acceptance since it was first advanced more than a century ago. Because no literary documents and almost no signs of culture could be found for that long period, it came to be known as the Dark Age.

Hellenists and historians in general use the term Dark Age for the twelfth, eleventh, tenth, ninth, and most of the eighth centuries, or the period that lies between the Mycenaean and Archaic ages, the latter being the opening of the Ionian period that in due course developed into the Classical period. The time from about -1200 to -750 is the Dark Age in continental Greece, on the Aegean islands and shores, and in the interior of Asia Minor. The reader may think that the term is bequeathed to us from ancient times, from Greek historians or philosophers of the classical period. The fact, however, is that no Greek historian, philosopher, or poet used the term Dark Age or dark centuries or any substitute for such a concept; nor did Roman writers, much occupied with the Greek past, have a concept of a Dark Age for the period following the Trojan War and preceding the historical age in Greece. The term, and the concept as well, are a creation of modern scholarship in Hellenic studies for the period from which we have neither history, nor literary remains.

If, as most scholars now believe, Homer lived and created at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the seventh century, and if the Trojan War took place just before the beginning of the Dark Age, he could hardly have omitted to refer in some direct or only indirect way to the more than four centuries of the Dark Age that separated him from the epic events he described. Why did no poet—and Greece had many—ever mention a lengthy Dark Age, if only in passing? Neither Herodotus, nor Thucydides,<sup>1</sup> nor Xenophon—the Greek historians—had anything to say about a four or five centuries' span that separated the Greek history from the Mycenaean. Greece had also many outstanding philosophers; then how are we to explain that a period—not covering just a few decades, but more than four centuries—is passed over in silence by Greek poets, philosophers and historians alike? Should not Aristotle or, much later, Diodorus of Sicily or Pausanias in their voluminous writings have devoted as much as a single passage

to the Dark Age—if there was one? Neither the Roman writers, nor the chronographers of the Renaissance, applied themselves to the illumination of the Dark centuries, and it is only since the last decades of the nineteenth century that the term Dark Age in Greek history has been used.

Despite being separated by five centuries from the Mycenaean civilization of which he sings, Homer displays a surprising knowledge of details no longer existent in the Greek world of his day:

We know from the archaeological evidence that Homer attempts to archaeologize, even to take us into the Mycenaean Age . . . yet in Homer's day there was no science of archaeology, no written history to assist the historical novelist. Where then did he get these details from the past?

So writes one author in the preface to his translation of the Iliad.<sup>2</sup>

As an example of such knowledge, the author cites Homer's description of Nestor's cup with doves on its handles, a description that fits a vessel actually disinterred in the Mycenaean strata which according to the conventionally written history were deposited some five centuries before Homer began to compose his epics.

The technique of metal inlay of the shield of Achilles—described by Homer in the Iliad—was practiced in Greece in the Bronze Age and "disappeared before its close, and apparently never returned there." The boar's tusk helmet described by Homer was reconstituted by Reichel from slivers of tusk found in many Bronze Age graves. "It is difficult to imagine Homer transmitting a description of an object which we could not visualize . . . For four centuries at least no one could possibly have seen a boar's tusk helmet . . ."

On the other hand in Homer are found descriptions of objects "which cannot have found a place there before the 7th century." One such object is the clasp which fastened the cloak of Odysseus when on his way to Troy. "It points to the second decade of the 7th century as the time of the composition of the Odyssey (unless it is an interpolation, the dates of which could not be much earlier or later than the first half of the 7th century)."

If the Mycenaean Age closed with the twelfth century and Homer composed at the end of the eighth, four and a half centuries constitute a hiatus, and separate the poet from the objects he describes.

The blending of elements testifying to the Mycenaean Age together with elements the age of which could not precede the seventh and certainly not the eighth century is a characteristic feature of the Iliad. Some scholars have expended enormous efforts in trying to separate passages of the epics and ascribe their authorship to different generations of poets, from contemporaries of the events to the final editor of the poems in the seventh century. But all these efforts were spent unprofitably, and their authors at the end of their labors usually declared their perplexity. The following evaluation is from the pen of M. P. Nilsson:

"To sum up. There is considerable evidence in Homer which without any doubt refers to the Mycenaean Age. . . The Homeric poems contain elements from widely differing ages. The most bewildering fact is, however, that the Mycenaean elements are not distributed according to the age of the strata in the poems." Nilsson continued: "The Mycenaean and the orientalizing elements differ in age by more than half a millennium. They are inextricably blended. How is it credible that the former elements were preserved through the centuries and incorporated in poems whose composition may be about half a millennium later?"<sup>3</sup>

## References

[one](#)[A passage from the first book of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars* (I.17) which tells of a period of political chaos and economic deprivation after the fall of Troy, is sometimes cited as a reference to the Dark Ages. That the end of the Mycenaean Age was followed by several decades of migrations and poverty is a fact that is discussed at some length below (section "A Gap Closed"). But Thucydides' words cannot be construed as



referring to a period of time longer than a century.] [two](#)E. V. Rieu, *The Iliad*, (London, 1953). [three](#)M. P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae* (1933), pp. 158-59.

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## The Allies of Priam

I must admit that not so long ago I tended to consider the Trojan War as a legend, with more mythology in it than history: neither in its cause nor in its conduct did this conflict seem to reflect historical events. The cause of the war, according to tradition, was a seduction or abduction of the spouse of one of the Helladic chiefs; and this, we are told, raised the leaders of all Hellas to undertake a mobilization and campaign to the coast of Asia and to endure hardships for ten years, leaving their own spouses to be ravished or besieged by suitors in the meantime. And if Hissarlik is the site of Troy, there is the additional incongruity of a great war effort the goal of which was to capture a fortress occupying not much more than two acres of land (Troy VIIa)—so Carl Blegen, the last excavator of the site. And what of the participation of Ares, Athene, Zeus, and other divinities? The emphasis is on the courage and proficiency of a few single heroes who trace their descent, and in some cases even their parenthood, to various deities and other mythological figures (Thetis in the case of Achilles).

With the end of the siege of ten years' duration and the fall of Troy, the navy of the Achaeans—of which the second book of the *Iliad* gives a record enumerating the number of ships that carried the warriors from each of the cities<sup>1</sup>—is as if no more existent. Victory and triumph are followed by only a few wretched returns home. Nothing is heard of the return to Greece of the Achaeans, victorious in war, as an organized force. We hear of single warriors, like Agamemnon, the leader of the expedition, returning only to find violent death waiting for him in his own town and house or, like Odysseus, spending another ten years striving to reach home by a round-about way. Those of the heroes who succeed in returning find their wives, some faithful, some unfaithful, some in cohort with their scheming lovers and having to be avenged by their children—but little is said of the continuing royal houses, whether of Agamemnon in Mycenae, or of Menelaus in Sparta, or of Odysseus in Ithaca, or of Nestor in Pylos.

Then in a matter of hardly half a generation a curtain descends on Achaean Greece, which presumably for close to five hundred years presents only a picture of void enveloped in primeval darkness. Nothing is known of the subsequent history of these city states, the personal tragedies having ended in family blood-baths. It is as if in the theater the curtain descended for the last time, the lights are extinguished, the hall hurriedly locked, and then five hundred years of impenetrable darkness. Yet a success of the protracted expedition, if undertaken, as some scholars have theorized, to protect the marine route through the Hellespont, across the Black Sea, and to the Caucasian coast, should have made the Hellenes, having forged their national unity in war, exploit the success by expansion of overseas trade and traffic.

The curtain of darkness descends also on Troy—and the void endures there almost as long as in Greece, though it is presumed that some wretched inhabitants settled in hovels, but not before centuries passed. Of the defenders of Troy, from among those who survived the siege, we read also very little—as if they evaporated into thin air—with the exception of Aeneas and his household; and he, like Odysseus, spends a decade or so in wanderings, before reaching Italy.

Strangely, in that substantial portion of the enormous literature on the Trojan War and Troy that I consulted, I scarcely ever found a discussion of the nationality of the people of Troy.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Iliad* they are regularly referred to as "the people of Priam," their king, but this is not an ethnic designation.

Thus while it is known that the besiegers of Troy were Achaeans, also called Danaans, and it is generally accepted that they were Mycenaean Greeks—actually the last generation of them, sometimes designated as the Heroic Generation—the question of which race were the people of Priam was left unanswered by Homer. But at least let us look at Priam's allies. Here some clear indications come to the fore; and if we are still not helped in our pursuit—which nation did the Achaeans fight at Troy?—at least we see a ray of hope that, by knowing the allies we may be

guided to the proper time. By knowing the correct century of the events we may obtain an insight into the interplay of nations and races and perhaps come to realize the true reason for the conflict that summoned the Achaean host to the Troad, the region surrounding Troy.

Phrygians are named as allies of Priam;<sup>3</sup> also Ethiopians are counted among his allies. The identification of both these nations carries indications as to the century to which the most famous war of ancient times needs to be ascribed.

Of the Phrygians it is told that their origin stems from Thrace, north of Macedonia, west of the Hellespont. The time of their migration to Asia Minor is not known. No Phrygian antiquities from before the first half of the eighth century have been found,<sup>4</sup> and the opinion is expressed that Homer's reference to the Phrygians is an anachronism. It seems that in one of the earliest waves of the eighth century migrations the Phrygians moved from Thrace over the Hellespont to Asia Minor.

Tradition has it that the first king in their new domicile was Gordias, and the story of his selecting the site for his capital Gordion is a well known legend.<sup>5</sup>

The son of Gordias, Midas, is even more than his father an object of legendary motifs—whatever he touched turned to gold, he had the ears of an ass—yet he was a historical figure as well who, according to the chronicle of Hieronymus, reigned from -742 to -696.<sup>6</sup>

Soon the Phrygians came into conflict with the Assyrians who opposed the penetration of newcomers into central Asia Minor; and Sargon II (-726 to -705), the conqueror of Samaria and of the Israelite tribes, moved westward to stop the penetration of the Phrygians.<sup>7</sup> Altogether the Phrygian kingdom in Asia Minor had a short duration.<sup>8</sup> Already the Koerte brothers, the early excavators of Gordion, noted that of the royal mounds (kurgans) only three could be dated before the Cimmerian invasion of the early seventh century which put an end to the Phrygian kingdom, and probably the number of royal successions did not exceed this number.<sup>9</sup> Little is known of its history besides the fact that ca. -687 Gordion was overrun by the Cimmerians.

The Cimmerians came from the north, traversing the coastal routes of the Caucasus; their original homeland is often thought to have been the Crimea in southern Russia. They occupied Gordion, displacing the Phrygians westward, toward the Lydian kingdom and the Aegean coast. While the displaced Phrygians may have continued to live for a time in the western confines of Asia Minor, the year -687 saw the end of their kingdom.

It appears that the Cimmerians did not tarry for any length of time in Phrygia; like the Scythians, a nomadic race from the steppes of Russia, who soon followed them on the coastal roads of the Caucasus, they were but transient conquerors. The time they came from their native land, -687 or soon thereafter,<sup>10</sup> makes it quite certain that they were put on their migration by the natural events of that year—described at some length in *Worlds in Collision*:<sup>11</sup> by the world-wide upheavals, earthquakes, frightening apparitions in the sky, as well as by the changes in climate that made many accustomed pursuits and agricultural practices obsolete. -687 (or possibly -701) was also the year that Sennacherib met his famous debacle as described in the books of Isaiah, II Kings, and II Chronicles, while threatening Jerusalem with capture and its population with eviction and exile.

Phrygians as allies of Priam, in the hinterland of the Troad, in conflict with the Cimmerians, themselves pursued by the Scythians, would limit the period of the Trojan War to the years between -720 and -687.

After the passing of the Cimmerians, Phrygia was exposed to the occupation and influence of neighboring states, in particular to that of the Lydian Kingdom to the west, with its capital at Sardis. Lydia was ruled by Gyges, a great king who played a conspicuous role in the politics of the Near East. He was on friendly terms with Assurbanipal, grandson of Sennacherib, king of Assyria; then, feeling the threat of the growing Assyrian empire, he supported Egypt's rise to independence: he sent Ionian and Carian detachments to Psammetichus, king of Egypt, which enabled that country to free itself from the supremacy of Assyria.

The Homeric epics were created on the Asia shore of Asia Minor; it is most probable that Homer was a contemporary of Gyges, king of Lydia.<sup>12</sup>

This view was also offered and supported with arguments by Emile Mireaux; moreover, Mireaux ascribed also the very events of the poems to the time of Gyges.<sup>13</sup>

The Ethiopians are also listed among the allies of Priam;<sup>14</sup> the reference belongs, in all probability, to the period when the Ethiopians were one of the most honored nations. In Egyptian history the Ethiopian dynasty, and the Ethiopians' most glorious period, is dated from ca. -712 to -663, when Ashurbanipal pursued Tirhaka to Thebes, occupied it, and expelled the Ethiopian from Egypt proper. The tradition concerning Memnon, the Ethiopian warrior who came to the help of Troy, would reasonably limit the time of the conflict also to the end of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>15</sup> The possibility of an Ethiopian landing at Troy in the days of the Ethiopian pharaoh Tirhaka need not be dismissed because of the remoteness of the place: as just said, close to the middle of the seventh century, and possibly at an earlier date, Gyges, the king of Sardis, sent in the reverse direction Carian and Ionian mercenaries to assist the Egyptian king Psammetichus in throwing off the Assyrian hegemony.

Thus it seems that if the participants in the Trojan War all belong to the eighth-seventh century, Homer, who is thought to have lived at the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the seventh, must have been either a contemporary of the siege of Troy, or separated from it by one generation only.

A correct historical placement of the Trojan War may contain a clue to its real cause: we can surmise that the Helladic city-states, alarmed by rumors of hordes of Cimmerians, preceded by dispossessed Phrygians, pushing towards the Hellespont, united under the leadership of Agamemnon and moved across the Aegean sea to preclude the invasion of their land, should the migrating Cimmerians or displaced Phrygians attempt to cross the straits into mainland Greece. Troy was located in the vicinity of the Hellespont, crossed by armies in ancient times, by Alexander, by Darius I, and by other conquerors before them.

While the Greek expedition may have had some limited success, its forces were wrecked and dispersed in the natural upheavals that accompanied the fall of Troy.

## References

[one](#) See above, section "Mycenaean City Names in the Iliad." [two](#) Cf. Strabo, *Geography* XII.8.7. [three](#) Actually, repeated reference to Phrygians as Priam's allies leaves the question open whether Priam's people were not Phrygians themselves. [four](#) Ekrem Akurgal writes that their "first archaeological traces appear in the middle of the eighth century." *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey*, (Istanbul, 1970), p. 14. [[Xanthus the Lydian](#) is said by Strabo to have held the view that the Phrygians arrived in Asia Minor sometime after the Trojan War; but Strabo himself, noting that already in the Iliad they are listed among Priam's allies, concluded that the Phrygians' migration must have taken place before the siege of Troy. Then, Strabo wrote, "after Troy was sacked, the Phrygians, whose territory bordered on the Troad, got mastery over it." (Strabo, *Geography*, transl. by H. L. Jones [Loeb Classical Library: Cambridge, Mass., 1917] Bk. X, ch. iii. 22.). In order that the Phrygians could come to the aid of Priam, some modern scholars put them in Anatolia in the thirteenth century B.C. (e.g., *The Cambridge Ancient History* [3rd ed., vol. I, 19--], p. 108). Yet archaeological evidence for their presence there before the eighth century is lacking. Cf. Ekrem Akurgal, *Phrygische Kunst* [Ankara, 1955] p. 112; and idem in *Hittite Art and the Antiquities of Anatolia* [London, 1964], p. 35. Cf. also M. J. Mellink, "Postscript on Nomadic Art" in *Dark Ages and Nomads c. 1000 B.C.: Studies in Iranian and Anatolian Archaeology*, ed. by M. J. Mellink [Leiden, 1964], p. 64.) Arrian, the biographer of Alexander, explained the Phrygians' crossing into Asia Minor by their being harassed by the Cimmerians (Eustathius' commentary to Dionysius Periegetes, ed. G. Bernhardt [Leipzig, 1828], No. 322). A few decades later these same nomads were to destroy the short-lived Phrygian kingdom.] [five](#) Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, II.3; Justin, XI.7; G. and A. Koerte, *Gordion* (Berlin, 1904) pp. 12ff.; R. Graves, *The Greek Myths* (London, 1955), no. 83. [six](#) [[Eusebius Werke](#), ed. R. Helm (Leipzig, 1913), vol. VII, pp. 89, 92.] Modern historians usually calculate the date of Midas' death as -676. It was under Midas that the Phrygian kingdom reached the peak of its power, as archaeology also attests. See R. S.

Young, "Gordion: Preliminary Report, 1953" in *American Journal of Archaeology* 59 (1955), p. 16. [seven](#)[According to Assyrian records, Sargon's campaign against Midas and the Phrygians, which took place in -715, was the result of Midas' conspiring with the king of Carchemish against Assyria. See M. Mellink, "Mita, Mushki, and the Phrygians," *Anadolu Arastirmalari* (Istanbul, 1955). E. Akurgal, *Die Kunst Anatoliens*, p. 70; P. Naster, *L'Asie mineure et l'Assyrie* (Louvain, 1938), p. 37. Sargon's expedition was, however, not altogether successful in pacifying the region, and continuing disturbances brought Sargon several more times to the defense of his northwestern frontier; he finally met his death there in battle in -705.] [eight](#)[R. S. Young, the excavator of Gordion, estimated a period of "a half century" or more for the flourishing of Phrygian culture at the site—"The Nomadic Impact" in *Dark Ages and Nomads*, p. 54. No Phrygian presence can be recognized in the archaeology until the middle of the eighth century—and soon after the start of the seventh, about the year 676 B.C., the Phrygian kingdom was destroyed in the catastrophic Cimmerian invasion. This is also when Midas met his end (by suicide, according to Eusebius, (*Chron.* p. 92) and Strabo *Geography* I. 3. 21), and his capital Gordion was burned to the ground. The Cimmerian destruction level was found in 1956; see Young, "Gordion 1956: Preliminary Report" in *American Journal of Archaeology* 61 (1957) p. 320. Cf. also idem, "The Nomadic Impact: Gordion" pp. 54f.] [nine](#)[Gustav and Adolf Koerte, *Gordion* (Berlin, 1904). Young, "The Excavations at Yassihuyuk-Gordion, 1950" in *Archaeology* 3 (1950) pp. 196-199. The non-royal tumuli were much more numerous. A royal tomb, perhaps of Gordias, was excavated in 1957—Young, "The Royal Tomb at Gordion," *Archaeology* 10 (1957) pp. 217-219.] [ten](#)In the *Odyssey* (XI.14) there is reference to the land of the Cimmerians; and if Homer knew of the presence of the Cimmerians in Asia Minor, then the scene is not earlier than -687. [Regarding the Cimmerians and the extent of Homer's knowledge of them, the question was already discussed by various ancient authors. Strabo, for one, was certain that Homer was acquainted with the historical Cimmerians, "for surely if he knows the name of the Cimmerians [Odyssey XI.14] he is not ignorant of the people themselves—the Cimmerians who in Homer's own time, or shortly before his time, overran the whole country from the Bosphorus to Ionia. At least he intimates that the very climate of their country is gloomy, and the Cimmerians, he says, are 'shrouded in mist and cloud, and never does the shining sun look upon them, but deadly night is spread o'er them.'" (Strabo, *Geography* I.1.10., transl. by H. L. Jones. Cf. *ibid.*, III.2.12.) The Cimmerians are not mentioned in the *Iliad* by name, only in the *Odyssey*. However, the fact that the reading of the name varies in different manuscripts throws some doubt on Strabo's argument. (Cf. R. Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley, Ca., 1946) pp. 148f.) Carpenter also suggests that the Amazons in the *Iliad* ( cf. Diodorus II. 45) are the historical Cimmerians. The tales about the Amazons, in his view, arose from accounts of the warlike Cimmerian womenfolk who used to accompany the men in battle. After destroying the Phrygian kingdom and pushing the Phrygians toward the Bosphorus, the Cimmerians ravaged the western regions of Asia Minor settled by Greeks—Aeolis and Ionia (Strabo III.2.12)—attacking Smyrna, Miletus, Sinope, and other coastal cities (Herodotus IV 12). It appears that Homer refers to the Cimmerian invasion of Phrygia in the passage where he has Priam recall how once he "went into vine-clad Phrygia" and there saw "the Phrygian men with their gleaming horses, most numerous, encamped on the bank of the Sangarios. For I was mustered as an ally among them on that day when the Amazons came. But even so, they were not as many as are the glancing-eyed Achaeans." Rhys Carpenter, discussing this passage in his *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics*, (pp. 175-176) reasoned thus: . . . It is quite possible, and even probable, that the last stand [against the Cimmerians] was made behind the long great Phrygian river, the Sangarios. Here all the forces of western Asia Minor would have gathered to stop the terrible archers on horseback, who nonetheless overwhelmed them and rode westward to the sea. In the historian Diodoros, centuries later, these same horsemen are the Amazons. If they were already Amazons for Homer, the date of Priam's reference must be the year of Midas' downfall, 676 B.C. . . . If the author was an Ionian Greek of the early seventh century the most impressive and tremendous event of his lifetime must have been the Cimmerian destruction of the Phrygian empire. Of what else *could* he have been thinking when he made Priam speak of Phrygian armies gathered against the Amazons on the banks of the Sangarios? Carpenter's surmise finds some support in the following statement by Strabo (I.2.9): "The writers of chronicles make it plain that Homer knew the Cimmerians, in that they fix the date of the invasion of the Cimmerians either a short time before Homer, or else in Homer's own time." [eleven](#)Herodotus, Bk. IV. [According to Herodotus the Cimmerians were originally displaced from the Asiatic steppes by the Scythians: but it was not until the second half of the seventh century that the Scythian hordes themselves arrived on the scene and, after decimating the Cimmerians with the aid of Assyria, pushed southward to the very border of Egypt, engulfing Palestine in the process. The population fled in terror before "the noise of the horsemen and bowmen." (Jeremiah 4:29.) If the *Iliad* draws upon events of the

early decades of the seventh century, some reference to the Scythians would not be unexpected. In Book XIII (5-6) of the Iliad there is mention of a people named "the proud Hippemolgoi, drinkers of milk" and of "the Abioi, the most righteous of all men." A scholium on Homer considers these to be the tribes of the Scythians. (*Venetus A to Iliad XIII.6.*) The scholium takes the description "righteous" to refer to the Scythian custom of holding all property in common. Such customs are ascribed by Herodotus to the nomadic Massagetae (I.216.1), Nasamones (IV.172.2) and Agathyrsees (IV.104). Cf. F. Buffiere, *Les mythes d'Homere et la pensee grecque* (Paris, 1956), pp. 362-3. The same conclusion was reached by Strabo: "How then," he asked, "could the poet be ignorant of the Scythians if he called certain people 'Hippemolgoi' [mare milkers] and 'Galactophagi' [curd-eaters]? For that the people of his time were wont to call the Scythians 'Hippemolgoi' Hesiod too is witness in the words cited by Eratosthenes: 'the Ethiopians, the Ligurians; and also the Scythians, Hippemolgoi.'" (*Geography VII.3.7.*) That the Iliad is referring to some nomadic tribes appears certain. Whether it is the Scythians who are meant, and whether they had by then already left the plains of South Russia, cannot be decided on the basis of the vague Homeric reference.] [twelve](#)The dates of Gyges' reign are given as -687 to -652 by H. Gelzer and as -690 to -657 by H. Winckler. [thirteen](#)E. Mireaux, *Les poemes homeriques et l'histoire grecque*, (Paris, 1948-49). [fourteen](#)In the tenth year of the siege, after the action described in the Iliad, Priam was said to have received a contingent of Ethiopians under the leadership of Memnon. The brave Ethiopians fought valiantly against the Greeks and caused them much hardship, until Achilles finally slew Memnon and caused them to depart. Some of these traditions are very ancient. In the Odyssey (III.111-2) Nestor recalls the death of his son Antilochos who died by the spear of "the glorious son of shining Dawn," (Od. IV.185-202) which is the epithet reserved for Memnon. Later in the Odyssey the Ethiopian warrior is mentioned by name as "great Memnon." (Od. XI. 522) The epic *Aethiopsis*, a sequel to the Iliad, ascribed to Arctinus of Miletus. Later classical authors wrote extensively about Memnon, and it is not excluded that the *Aethiopsis* was among their sources. Notable among these are the accounts of Diodorus (II.22.1ff.) and of Plato *Laws III. 685C*), as well as the so-called "chronicles" of Dictys of Crete (IV.5-8, VI.10) and of Dares the Phrygian (25:33), both apparently composed in the first century A.D. Cf. also the *Posthomerica* of Quintus Smyrnaeus (Bk. II) dating most probably from the fourth century A.D.] [fifteen](#)Those called here Ethiopians actually were the inhabitants of what is today Sudan. Cf. Mireaux *Les poemes homeriques et l'histoire grecque*, vol. I, ch. iv. [Mireaux sees many parallels between Homer's Ethiopians and the rulers of Egypt's XXVth Dynasty, most notably their bountiful sacrifices to the gods (II. I,423-425; Od. I, 22-26). As several authors have noted it was these feasts that gave rise to Herodotus' story of the Table of the Sun (III.18), located on the upper reaches of the Nile. The parallel with Homer's Ethiopians is drawn also by A.D. Godley in a note to his translation of Herodotus (Loeb Classical Library, 1921). In Mireaux's view the verses of Od. I, 23-24 that tell of the Ethiopians as divided into two groups, western and eastern, is an interpolation based on later geographical knowledge.]

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## Aeneas

Following the fall of Troy Aeneas, son of Priam, a Trojan hero second only to Hector, fled the fortress; he lost his wife in the escape, himself carrying his aged father on his back and leading his young son by the hand. This is the way Virgil, in the first century before our era, imagined the beginning of Aeneas' travels; but already before Virgil, the fate of Aeneas was the subject of poetic tradition. Virgil's creation is regarded as the greatest of Roman epics; Virgil, however, studied the subject drawing on Greek authors.

Upon visiting Thrace and the islands of the Aegean Sea, and following a sojourn on Crete, Aeneas and his little band of companions landed at Carthage; there Queen Dido fell in love with him; his refusal to make Carthage his home and Dido his wife caused her, upon his departure, to take her own life.

Aeneas' further wanderings brought him finally to Latium in Italy, the land of the Latini. According to the Roman legendary tradition, he became the progenitor of the Romans through his son Ascanios, the first king to reign in the new capital of Latium, Alba Longa, of which Rome was a dependent city; or, in another version, through Numitos in direct descent from Ascanios. But a more popular tradition had Aeneas himself as the founder of Rome; the Greek historian Timaios (ca. -346 to ca. -250) followed this tradition. A still better known legend has Romulus for the founder of Rome; sometimes Romulus is made a descendant of Aeneas and Ascanios.

Rome was founded, according to Varro, in -753.<sup>1</sup>

As to Carthage, the generally accepted view is that it was founded in the second half of the ninth century; Timaios placed its foundation in the year -814. Timaios was the first to fix the chronology of the Olympiads.<sup>2</sup>

Philistos, a Greek author, born in -435, placed Carthage's foundation "a man's life length" before the Trojan War; but Philistos' dating of the Trojan War is unknown. Philistos' date for the foundation of Carthage, sixty or seventy years before the fall of Troy, is thought to be in conflict with Timaios' date because the Trojan War would need to be placed in the middle of the eighth century, shortly before the foundation of Rome. But is there a conflict between the founding dates of Carthage in Timaios and in Philistos?

A refugee from Troy in the first half of the twelfth century could not find Carthage, a city built almost three centuries later by colonists from Phoenicia; and he could not be associated with the founding of Rome either directly or by one of his descendants of several generations, the gap between -1183, the conventional year of Troy's fall, and -753, the traditional date of Rome's foundation, being more than four centuries wide.

## References

[one](#)Fabius Pictor gave -747 as the date of Rome's founding.

He was a native of Sicily, the history of which he wrote from the earliest times to -264; of that history, regarded as authoritative in antiquity, only single passages survived in authors who quoted him; Carthage is across the straits from Sicily.

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# Olympic Games in the Iliad

The recording of events in ancient Greece was by the years of the Olympiads, four years apart, the first year of the first Olympiad having been -776. An important contest at the Olympiads was among charioteers, each driving a four-horse team. Olympia was located in the district of Elis in the western part of the Peloponnesian peninsula.

Tradition has it that the Olympic games were initiated by Pelops, an immigrant from Phrygia in Asia Minor. Another account ascribes the founding of the festival to Heracles, as a celebration of his conquest of Elis.<sup>1</sup> In *Worlds in Collision* the identity of Heracles with the planet Mars was brought out from the statements of several ancient authors:<sup>2</sup> While the founding of the games was attributed to Heracles, or Mars, the festival also honored Athene, or the planet Venus. This is shown by the fact that the early games were held at eight-year intervals,<sup>3</sup> typical for Venus festivals, since eight terrestrial years equal five synodical years of Venus. Later they were celebrated every four years, or two and a half synodical periods of Venus. The eighth century was a time when the planet Mars was prominent among the heavenly bodies and caused much destruction on earth. Nestor, the future king of Pylos, was but a young man at the time of the rampage of Heracles-Mars through the western Peloponnese—he himself saw all his elder brothers killed by the god and his native Pylos burned to the ground<sup>4</sup>—but by the tenth year of the siege of Troy, Homer tells, “two generations of mortal men had [already] perished: those who had grown up with him and they who had been born to these in sacred Pylos, and he was king in the third age.”<sup>5</sup> This information permits the rough guess that some fifty to sixty years passed between the founding of the Olympic Games in Nestor's youth and the Trojan War.

In the Iliad the aging Nestor recalls that soon after the rebuilding of Pylos his father Neleus sent from Pylos a team of four horses with a chariot to race for a tripod for a competition to be held at Elis. But the fine steeds were detained by the Elean king and their driver was sent home to Pylos empty-handed.<sup>6</sup>

. . . For in Elis a great debt was his [Neleus'] due: a four-horse team of racing horses and their chariot that would have contended in the games and raced to win the tripod.

That this passage from the *Iliad* is a reference to the Olympic Games was understood already in antiquity, as we gather from a discussion of it by the geographer Strabo.<sup>7</sup> This means that Homer knew of the Olympic games and had Nestor refer to them as an event that began to be celebrated several decades before the drama that is the subject of the *Iliad*. However, it is beyond dispute that the beginning of time reckoning by Olympiads was in the eighth century, more precisely in -776. The fact that these games are mentioned as taking place when Neleus, the father of Nestor, was a young man gives some indication of the time in which the Trojan War was fought.

## References

[one](#)Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, X 43ff.; Hyginus, *Fabula* 273. [two](#)Eratosthenis *catasterismorum reliquiae*, ed. C. Robert, 1878: "Tertia est stella Martis quam alii Herculis dixerunt." Cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* iii. 12. 5-6, reporting the opinion of Varro. [three](#)W. R. Ridington, *The Minoan-Mycenean Background of Greek Athletics* (Philadelphia, 1935), pp. 82-83. [four](#)Homer, *Iliad* XI. 688-692; Pausanias II.2.2; III.26.6 and V.3.1; Apollodorus II.7.3.; Diodorus Siculus IV.68. [five](#)Homer, *Iliad*, transl. by R. Lattimore (1951), Book. I, 250-252. [six](#)Homer, *Iliad* XI. 698-701. [seven](#)Strabo, *Geography* VIII.3.30; Pausanias V.8.2.

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# CHAPTER II: MUTE WITNESSES

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## Troy and Gordion

When Schliemann dug through the strata of Hissarlik's hill, he discovered, on the second level from the virgin ground beneath, great walls of a fortress, and in the same level some treasures, all of which he attributed to Priam's Troy. His view was invalidated, and properly so, because a correlation with Egypt made it appear too early for Troy. The second level, Troy II, was shown to have been in existence during the Old Kingdom of Egypt, and thus long before the traditional date for Troy's fall. The end of Troy VI, identified by Wilhelm Doerpfeld as the Ilium of the siege, was found to have been contemporaneous with the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty of the Egyptian New Kingdom, and was therefore also too early for the Trojan War.

Carl Blegen identified forty-six layers of occupation of the mound of Hissarlik, the Troy of the excavators, but divided them between the nine strata of occupation classified by Doerpfeld. Troy VI was a well-built fortress; Blegen specified eight separate levels of occupation in this stratum alone. It ended in a violent earthquake. Blegen, however, looked for a fortress that fell not due to an earthquake, but in a siege and assault; thus he identified the Troy sung by Homer as Troy VIIa.

The sixth city of Troy is conventionally placed in the fourteenth-thirteenth centuries before the present era, a dating which ultimately depends on Egyptian chronology. Here an observation by Rodney Young, the excavator of the Phrygian capital Gordion,<sup>1</sup> needs to be cited:

"In their batter as well as their masonry construction the walls of the Phrygian Gate at Gordion find their closest parallel in the wall of the sixth city at Troy." But a gulf of time separates these two constructions in the conventional timetable.

Though separated in time by five hundred years or thereabouts, the two fortifications may well represent a common tradition of construction in north-western Anatolia; if so, intermediate examples have yet to be found.<sup>2</sup>

Still today no intermediate examples have been found. As to the date of the Phrygian Gate and wall of Gordion, Young wrote:

The Phrygian Kingdom was . . . at the apex of its power toward the end of the eighth century, when it apparently extended as far to the southeast as the Taurus and was in contact with Assyria. This period of power was apparently the time of the adornment and fortification of its capital city.

This points to the eighth century for the erection of the city wall and gate.<sup>3</sup> Eighth-century Gordion is similar to thirteenth-century Troy, yet intermediate examples of the peculiar way of building the gate and the wall beg to be found.<sup>4</sup>

## References

<sup>one</sup>Gordion, the capital of Phrygia, was excavated by the Koerte brothers at the beginning of this century. In 1950 Rodney Young led there a team and then returned for many seasons sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania Museum. The date of the Phrygian remains found at Gordion was ascribed to the late eighth and early seventh centuries before the present era. <sup>two</sup>R. Young, "Gordion 1953," *American Journal of Archaeology*, (1954). [The post-Hittite and pre-Phrygian levels at Gordion have not provided the much looked-for intermediate examples.] <sup>three</sup>[The Phrygian Gate of Gordion was uncovered in 1953 by a team from the University of Pennsylvania led by Rodney Young. It was in the form of a large double gateway with a central



courtyard. Since it belonged to the Phrygian period, its date, like that of most of the Phrygian constructions at Gordion, was put sometime in the eighth century.] [four](#)[Whereas the Trojans had a long tradition of building in stone, the Phrygian gateway appears suddenly, without any other close antecedents; nevertheless, it displays technical skills that speak of a long period of development. This apparent contradiction is also noted by Young ("The Nomadic Impact: Gordion," p. 52): “. . . The planning of the [Phrygian] gateway and the execution of its masonry imply a familiarity with contemporary military architecture and long practice in handling stone for masonry. The masonry, in fact, with its sloping batter and its more or less regular coursing recalls neither the cyclopean Hittite masonry of the Anatolian plateau in earlier times, nor the commonly prevalent contemporary construction of crude brick. The closest parallel is the masonry of the walls of Troy VI, admittedly very much earlier. If any links exist to fill this time-gap, they must lie in west Anatolia rather than on the plateau.” According to the revised chronology, the Trojan fortifications were standing and in use as late as the ninth century; the Phrygian fortifications at Gordion, dating from the late eighth, could well have been part of the same tradition of building in stone.]

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## The Lion Gate of Mycenae

The Lion Gate of Mycenae was the entrance to the city. Atop the gate, two lions rampant are carved in stone relief. Similar bas-reliefs of two lions rampant facing each other are found in a number of places in Phrygia in Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> "The resemblance in idea is complete," wrote W. M. Ramsay in 1888.<sup>2</sup> He considered the scheme "so peculiarly characteristic of Phrygia, that we can hardly admit it to have been borrowed from any other country." He found himself "driven to the conclusion that the Mycenaean artists either are Phrygians or learned the idea from the Phrygians."<sup>3</sup> "It is not allowable to separate them [the Phrygian and Mycenaean monuments] in time by several centuries."<sup>4</sup>

"The Phrygian monuments," in Ramsay's view, "belong to the ninth and eighth centuries."<sup>5</sup>

. . . The end of the Phrygian kingdom is a fixed date, about 675 B.C."<sup>6</sup> when the invasion of Asia Minor by the Cimmerians put an end to the Phrygian culture and art. Ramsay went on:

I do not think it is allowable to place the Mycenaean gateway earlier than the ninth, and it is more likely to belong to the eighth century.<sup>7</sup>

The view to which I find myself forced is as follows. There was in the eighth century lively intercourse between Argos and Asia Minor: in this intercourse the Argives learned . . . to fortify their city in the Phrygian style with lions over the gate. Historically there is certainly good reason to assign at least part of the fortifications of Mycenae to the time when the Argive kings [the tyrants of the eighth century] were the greatest power in Greece [here follow the names of several authorities among the historians who hold the same view].<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the almost universal opinion of archaeologists rejects this hypothesis....

Oriental influences found in the remains of Mycenae are "precisely what we should expect in a kingdom like the Argos of the eighth century," when this kingdom had intercourse with Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Egypt. "I wish however to express no opinion here about the date of the Mycenaean tombs and about Mycenaean pottery, but only to argue that the fortifications of the Lion Gate belong to the period 800-700 B.C."<sup>9</sup>

I quote this opinion of Ramsay with the special intention of showing how this viewpoint was invalidated.

The Egyptologist Flinders Petrie made the following reply:

"[A] matter which demands notice is Professor Ramsay's conclusion that the lion gateway is of as late a date as the eighth century B.C. This results from assuming it to be derived from Phrygian lion groups, on the ground of not knowing of any other prototype. As however we now have a wooden lion, in exactly the same attitude, dated to 1450 in Egypt . . . it seems that the Phrygian designs are not the only source of this motive for Mycenae."<sup>10</sup>

In Egypt of the latter part of the Eighteenth Dynasty a single instance of a rampant lion (not two rampant lions facing each other as at Mycenae and in Phrygia) made Petrie claim Egypt as a possible place of origin of this image rather than Phrygia. He had discovered heaps of Mycenaean ware in Egypt of the time of Akhnaton. He could not but conclude that these heaps coming from Mycenae must be dated to the fourteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Equally impressive was the discovery at Mycenae of a number of objects of Eighteenth-Dynasty date, such as objects bearing the cartouches of Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III, and Queen Tiy.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore Petrie decidedly opposed Ramsay in his estimate of eighth century for the Lion Gate and the fortification wall of Mycenae.<sup>13</sup>

Here is a case where evidence from Anatolia pointed to the eighth century;<sup>14</sup> but the Egyptologist demanded of the classical scholar that he disregard this evidence in favor of the time scale of Egypt.

The debate between Ramsay and Petrie took place before Evans' archaeological work on Crete; there rampant lions were found engraved on Late Minoan gems,<sup>15</sup> conveying the idea that Mycenae must have borrowed the image from there, from a period well preceding the Phrygian models.<sup>16</sup> Yet one should not lose sight of the fact that Crete's chronology was also built upon relations with Egypt. In the section "The Scandal of Enkomi" we shall read how Evans objected to the chronological implications of Cypriote archaeology by stressing relations between the Egyptian and the Minoan (Cretan) chronologies on the one hand, and Minoan and Cypriote on the other. In *Ages in Chaos* it was shown in great detail why the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt must be placed in the latter part of the ninth century. Thus even if Crete was the original source of the motif, Mycenae and Phrygia both deriving it thence, the dependence of Cretan chronology on that of Egypt constitutes the crux of the problem.<sup>17</sup>

Let us keep in mind that in the 1880s and 1890s classical scholars of the stature of W. M. Ramsay (1851-1939) questioned the inclusion of the Dark Ages of several hundred years' duration between the Mycenaean past and the Ionic age in Greece. And let us not overlook what was the supposedly crushing argument for wedging more than half a millennium into the history of ancient Greece.

## References

<sup>one</sup>Cf. especially the relief on the "Lion Tomb" at Arslan Tash near Afyonkarahisar (fig.) <sup>two</sup>Ramsay, "A Study of Phrygian Art," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* IX (1888), p. 369. [Ramsay, "Studies in Asia Minor," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* III (1882), p. 19—but see G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966), p. 173.] <sup>three</sup>Ramsay, "A Study of Phrygian Art," pp. 369-370. [Earlier representations of two rampant lions facing each other are known from Crete; however, it is for the carving technique on stone on a monumental scale that Mycenae seems to be indebted to Phrygia. For a link to Assyria, see L. M. Greenberg, "The Lion Gate at Mycenae," *Pensee IVR* III, p. 26.] <sup>four</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70. <sup>five</sup>[Emilie Haspels in *Highlands of Phrygia* (Princeton, 1971) dates the Phrygian reliefs at Arslan Tash to "the last third of the eighth century B.C., the period of the 'Phrygian City' of Gordion" (vol. I, p. 135; cf. vol. II, pl. 131-32). E. Akurgal, however, puts the same reliefs in the early sixth century, deriving them from Ionian, and ultimately Egyptian models—*Die Kust Anatoliens von Homer bis Alexander* (Berlin, 1961) pp. 86-90, 95. EMS.] <sup>six</sup>Ramsay, "A Study in Phrygian Art," p. 351. <sup>seven</sup>[Ramsay considered the Mycenaean relief "much more advanced in art" though "not necessarily later in date" than the Phrygian Lion Tomb: "Some Phrygian Monuments," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* III (1882) p. 257. For evidence of Phrygian influence on eighth-century Greece, see R. S. Young, "The Nomadic Impact: Gordion" in *Dark Ages and Nomads c. 1000 B.C.: Studies in Iranian and Anatolian Archaeology*, ed. by M. J. Mellink (Leiden, 1964), p. 54.] <sup>eight</sup>U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, "Oropos und die

Graer," *Hermes* XXI (1886), p. 111, n. 1, and idem, *Isyllos von Epidauros* (Berlin, 1886), p. n.1; B. Niese, *Die Entwicklung der homerischen Poesie* (Berlin, 1882), p. 213, n. 1. A. S. Murray and S. Reinach are also among those cited by Ramsay as concurring with his opinion (p. 370, n. 3). [nine](#)Ramsay, "A Study of Phrygian Art," pp. 370-71. [ten](#)Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie, "Notes on the Antiquities of Mykenae," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* XII (1891), pp. 202-03. [Petrie also attempted to fix the dates of many of the finds from the Mycenaean tombs by comparing them with objects from Egypt whose antiquity he considered to be well-established.] [eleven](#)Cf. J. D. S. Pendlebury, *Aegyptiaca* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 111ff. [V. Hankey and P. Warren, "The Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (University of London) XXI (1974), pp. 142-152.] [twelve](#)Cf. Pendlebury, *Aegyptiaca*, pp. 53-57; Hankey and Warren, "The Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age." [thirteen](#)Boardman notes that monumental sculpture of this kind is unknown in Greece from the time the Lion Gate of Mycenae was built until the eighth century: "More than five hundred years were to pass before Greek sculptors could [again] command an idiom that would satisfy these aspirations in sculpture and architecture." *Greek Art* (New York, 1964), p. 22. A few other 500-year enigmas appear at Mycenae. See the article by Israel M. Isaacson in *Pensee* IX. [fourteen](#)[In *The Sea People* Sandars points out the stylistic similarity between the Lion Gate of Mycenae and the Lion Gate of Boghazkoi. EMS ] [fifteen](#)[Some of these gems were known even before Evans' digs—see for instance the intaglio in G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, *History of Art in Primitive Greece* II (London, 1894), pp. 214 and 246, depicting two rampant lions facing each other in a way similar to that on the Lion Gate. Cf. also the gems shown in *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, ed. F. Matz and H. Bisantz (Berlin, 1964) nos. 46, 144, 145, 172.] [sixteen](#)[N. Platon, ("Cretan-Mycenaean Art," *Encyclopaedia of World Art* IV [New York, 1958], p. 109) thought that "the technique of the execution [of the Lion Gate] is clearly inspired by Cretan sculpture." But the Cretan sculptures, unlike those in Phrygia, are miniatures, and Platon needs to assume "the effective translation of a miniature theme into a major sculptural creation" (R. Higgins, *Minoan-Mycenaean Art* [New York, 1967], p. 92). Sandars in *The Sea Peoples* points out the similarity of the monumental carving style of the Lion Gate of Boghazkoi in central Anatolia to the Lion Gate of Mycenae.] [seventeen](#)[The discovery of Late Helladic III B pottery in strata excavated underneath the gate is used to establish the date of its construction.] But this pottery, too, is dated on the basis of relations with Egypt.

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## Olympia

The scholarly world without any further deliberation decided not to bring the Mycenaean Age down to the first millennium, but this decision did not eliminate the disturbing facts. At the same time another one-man battle was being carried on at the other end of the front. Greek antiquities, commonly regarded as belonging to the eighth and seventh centuries, were declared by a dissenting authority to date from the second millennium, to have been contemporaneous with the Mycenaean Age, and even to have partly preceded it.

According to the accepted view the Mycenaean ware came to an end in the second millennium, and the Dorian invasion subsequently brought a "primitive" art, a pottery with incised designs; later a pattern of painted geometric designs developed, reaching its full expression by the late eighth century. Thereafter new motifs were brought into Greek art—griffins, sphinxes and other oriental figures; this is the period of the orientalization of the art of Greece in the seventh century.

This scheme was accepted; and today, with only slight variations, it is the credo of archaeological art. According to Doerpfeld in the second millennium two or three different cultures met in Greece.<sup>1</sup>

Doerpfeld insisted that the geometric ware ascribed to the first millennium was actually contemporaneous with, and even antecedent to, the Mycenaean art of the second millennium, and that the "primitive" pottery was also of the second millennium.

The archaeological evidence for the contemporaneity of the geometric and Mycenaean ware and of all other products of these two cultures, and even of the partial precedence of the geometric ware, was the basic issue for Doerpfeld, who spent a lifetime digging in Greece. Observing that the Mycenaean Age is contemporaneous with the period of the Eighteenth dynasty, and that the geometric ware is contemporaneous with the Mycenaean ware, he referred the geometric ware also to the second millennium.<sup>2</sup> This aroused much wrath.

A. Furtwaengler, who during the excavations of Olympia in the western Peloponnesus, under the direction of Curtius, was the first to attach importance to bits of pottery, and who spent over a quarter of a century classifying small finds, bronzes, ceramics and other products of art, and devised the system of their development, disagreed on all points.

Doerpfeld chose to prove his thesis on the excavations of Olympia, on which he and Furtwaengler had both worked since the eighties of the last century. In those early days Curtius, one of the excavators of Olympia, was strongly impressed by proofs of the great antiquity of the bronzes and pottery discovered under the Heraion (temple of Hera) at Olympia; he was inclined to date the temple in the twelfth or thirteenth century and the bronzes and pottery found beneath it to a still earlier period, and this view is reflected in the monumental volumes containing the report of the excavation.<sup>3</sup>

At that time Furtwaengler was also inclined to disregard the chronological value of occasional younger objects found there.<sup>4</sup>

New excavations under the Heraion were undertaken by Doerpfeld for the special purpose of establishing that the finds, as well as the original Heraion, date from the second millennium.<sup>5</sup> But the excavated bronzes and pottery strengthened each side still more in its convictions. Each of the two scholars brought a mass of material to prove his own point—Doerpfeld, that the geometric ware, which he had himself found together with the Mycenaean at such sites as Troy and Tiryns<sup>6</sup> was contemporaneous with the Mycenaean ware and therefore belongs to the second millennium; Furtwaengler, that the geometric ware is a product of the first millennium, and especially of the ninth to eighth centuries, and is therefore separated from the Mycenaean by *einer ungeheueren Kluft* (a tremendous chasm).<sup>7</sup> Who but an ignoramus, argued Furtwaengler, would place in the second millennium the geometric vases found in the necropolis near the Dipylon Gate at Athens?<sup>8</sup> Were there not found, he asked, in this same necropolis, porcelain lions of Egyptian manufacture dating from the Twenty-sixth, the Saitic, Dynasty of Psammetichus and Necho?<sup>9</sup>

Were not also a great number of iron tools found beneath the Heraion in Olympia? The Mycenaean Age is the Late Bronze Age; the Geometric Age that of iron. It is true, claimed Furtwaengler, that a few iron objects have been found in the Mycenaean tombs—but they only show that iron was very precious at the time these tombs were built.

Both sides linked the question of the date of the origin of the Homeric epic to the question at hand. Most scholars claimed that the epics originated in the eighth century. But, according to the dissident Doerpfeld, they originated five or six centuries earlier, in the Mycenaean Age, which is also the Geometric Age.

The dispute was waged with *ungehoerigen persoenlichen Beleidigungen* (outrageous personal slander);<sup>10</sup> and a quarter century after one of the disputants (Furtwaengler) was resting in his grave the other, (Doerpfeld), then an octogenarian, filled two volumes with arguments. They vilified each other on their deathbeds, and their pupils participated in the quarrel. In the end the followers of Doerpfeld, the dissident scholar, deserted him and went over to the camp of his detractors.

But by that time he had already been completely discredited, and his obstinacy made him a target for further attacks by the younger generation of scholars properly trained in the science of archaeology, who are able at a glance to tell the exact age and provenance of a sherd. They have no doubt whatsoever that the Mycenaean Age came to a close ca. -1100 and that the real Geometric Age belongs to the ninth and eighth centuries, and for a long time now the issue has not been open to dispute.

But this does not mean that the facts ceased to perplex. According to E. A. Gardner, "fragments of geometrical vases . . . have been found on various sites in Greece together with late examples of Mycenaean pottery."<sup>1</sup>

When then did the Mycenaean Age end, ca. -1100 or ca. -700?

In this dispute between the two scholars, both were guided by the chronology of the Egyptologists, according to which the Eighteenth Dynasty ended in the fourteenth century, the Nineteenth came to a close before ca. -1200, and the Twenty-sixth Dynasty belongs to the seventh and early part of the sixth centuries. In their application of these undisputed facts to the past of Greece, both disputant scholars agreed that the Mycenaean Age belongs to the second millennium.

The Geometric Age did not follow the Mycenaean Age, but was of the same time or even earlier, argued one scholar (Doerpfeld), and was he wrong? The Geometric Age belongs to the first millennium, argued the other scholar (Furtwaengler), and was he wrong? Wrong was their common borrowing of dates for the Mycenaean Age from the Egyptologists.

In view of the fact that later generations of archaeologists followed Furtwaengler and not Doerpfeld, it is worthwhile to reproduce the assessment of the latter as an archaeologist by one who knew him and his work, herself a great figure in classical studies built on Mycenaean and Classical archaeology, H. L. Lorimer, author of *Homer and the Monuments* (1950). In her Preface to that book Lorimer writes:

I wish to record the debt which in common with all Homeric archaeologists I owe to a great figure, forgotten to-day in some quarters and in others the object of an ill-informed contempt. To Wilhelm Doerpfeld, the co-adjutor of Schliemann in his later years and long associated with the German Archaeological Institute in Athens, scholars owe not only the basic elucidation of the sites of Tiryns and Troy which ensured their further fruitful exploration, but the establishment of rigidly scientific standards in the business of excavation, an innovation which has preserved for us untold treasures all over the Aegean area. That in later years he became the exponent of many wild theories is true but irrelevant and does not diminish our debt. In his own realm his work, as those testify who have had access to the daily records of his digs, was as nearly impeccable as anything human can be. . .

This is an evaluation of Doerpfeld as an archaeologist from the hand of a scholar who did not follow the lonely scholar on his "wild theories." The archaeological work that brought him to his theories regarding the sequence of pottery styles was impeccable; and his theories were wild mainly because he did not make the final step and free Greek archaeology and chronology from the erroneous Egyptian timetable. The contemporaneity of the Mycenaean and early Geometric wares, if true, contains the clue to the removal of the last argument for the preservation of the Dark Ages between the Mycenaean and Greek periods of history.

## References

<sup>one</sup>W. Doerpfeld, *Homers Odyssee, die Wiederherstellung des ursprünglichen Epos* (Munich, 1925), vol. I, pp. 304ff. <sup>two</sup>"This geometrical style is very old; it existed before and next to the Mycenaean art, nor was it replaced by it." W. Doerpfeld, *Alt-Olympia* (Berlin, 1935) vol. I, p. 12. <sup>three</sup>*Olympia, Die Ergebnisse der von dem deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabungen*, ed., E. Curtius and F. Adler, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1890-97). <sup>four</sup>A. Furtwaengler, "Das Alter des Heraion und das Alter des Heiligtums von Olympia," *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Philologischen Klasse der Koeniglich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1906, reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (Munich, 1912). <sup>five</sup>[Doerpfeld distinguished three consecutive temples—the existing Heraion, built at the beginning of the ninth century, the original temple which, on the evidence of Pausanias (V.16.1) he dated to -1096, and an intermediate structure, which in his view was never completed. Today scholars find no basis for positing this intermediate temple and, furthermore, on the basis of the

geometric pottery found beneath the first temple, discount the "erroneous tradition" (H. E. Searls and W. B. Dinsmoor, "The Date of the Olympia Heraeum," *American Journal of Archaeology* 49 [1945] p. 73) of Pausanias which originally led Doerpfeld to his early dating of it. The Elean tradition recorded by Pausanias has the Olympia Heraion built "about eight years after Oxylus came to the throne of Elis." (V.16.1) Elsewhere (V.3.6) he puts Oxylus two generations after the Trojan War. The tradition is "erroneous" only if the Trojan War is placed in the thirteenth or early twelfth centuries. If it was in fact fought in the late eighth, the tradition then would accord well with the findings of the archaeologists who place the first temple ca. -650 (A. Mallwitz, *Olympia und seine Bauten* [Munich, 1972] pp. 85-88; H.-V. Herrman, *Olympia, Heiligtum und Wettkampfstätte* [Munich, 1972] pp. 93-94; E. Kunze, "Zur Geschichte und zu den Denkmälern Olympias" in *100 Jahre deutsche Ausgrabung in Olympia* [Munich, 1972] p. 11.) [six](#) See below, section "A Palace and a Temple at Tiryns." Only small quantities of Mycenaean ware were found at Olympia, and none beneath the Heraion. [seven](#) [Quite early on, Furtwaengler had become convinced that none of the bronzes found at Olympia could be dated before the eighth century ("Bronzefunde aus Olympia," *Abhandlungen Berl. Akad.*, 1879, IV; *Kleine Schriften*, Munich, 1912, I, pp. 339-421). In 1880 more bronzes were discovered in the black stratum beneath the floor of the Heraion (*Olympia*, vol. IV), and they seemingly confirmed a late eighth century date; this meant that the temple had to be somewhat more recent. Furtwaengler later admitted that the evidence of several small finds, indicating a much more recent date of construction of the temple, had been rejected by him at the time because it diverged too radically from accepted views. In 1906 he published his influential study of the objects newly dug up from beneath the floor of the Heraion ("*Das Alter des Heraion und das Alter des Heiligtums von Olympia*," *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen Klasse der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*) in which he concluded that the Heraion and the pottery associated with it belong in the latter part of the seventh century.] [eight](#) [The Dipylon period, so named after the funeral vessels first discovered near the Dipylon Gate at Athens by the Greek Archaeological Society in 1873-74, was dated originally to the tenth or ninth centuries B.C. According to Schliemann, Dipylon ware was at one time "commonly held to be the most ancient pottery in Greece . . . When it was recognized that the Mycenaean pottery was of a higher antiquity, it was also found that the Dipylon graves must belong to a later time. . ." *Tiryns* (London, 1886) p. 87. Of course, Mycenaean pottery was "recognized" as being "of a higher antiquity" largely because of synchronisms with Egypt.] [nine](#) [The two porcelain lions were found in tombs excavated in 1891 near the Dipylon Gate, together with "vases of characteristic Dipylon ware," according to E. A. Gardner, *Ancient Athens* (London, 1902) p. 157. However, cf. *Ramses II and his Time* (1978) in which monuments now attributed to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty are redated for the most part to the subsequent period of Persian domination.] [ten](#) Doerpfeld, *Alt-Olympia*, vol. I, p. 12. [eleven](#) E. A. Gardner, *Ancient Athens* (New York, 1902) pp. 157-58.

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## “The Scandal of Enkomi”

The lengthening of Egyptian history by phantom centuries had as with the cultures of the Orient, particularly with that of Egypt, and unavoidably embarrassing situations were in store for archaeology.

In 1896 the British Museum conducted excavations at the village of Enkomi, the site of an ancient capital of Cyprus, not far from Famagusta, with A. S. Murray in charge.<sup>1</sup>

A necropolis was cleared, and many sepulchral chambers investigated. "In general there was not apparent in the tombs we opened any wide differences of epoch. For all we could say, the whole burying-ground may have been the work of a century." "From first to last there was no question that this whole burying-ground belonged to what is called the Mycenaean Age, the characteristics of which are already abundantly known from the tombs of Mycenae . . . and many other places in the Greek islands and in Egypt."

However the pottery, porcelain, gems, glass, ivory, bronze, and gold found in the tombs all presented one and the same difficulty. From the Egyptological point of view many objects belong to the time of Amenhotep III and Akhnaton, supposedly of the fifteenth to the fourteenth centuries. From the Assyrian, Phoenician, and Greek viewpoint the same objects belong to the period of the ninth to the eighth or seventh centuries. Since the objects are

representative of Mycenaean culture, the excavator questioned the true time of the Mycenaean Age. But as the Mycenaean Age is linked to the Egyptian chronology he found himself at an impasse.

We shall follow him in his efforts to come out of the labyrinth. He submitted a vase, typical of the tombs of Enkomi, to a thorough examination. The dark outlines of the figures on the vase are accompanied by white dotted lines, making the contours of men and animals appear to be perforated. This feature is very characteristic. "The same peculiarity of white dotted lines is found also on a vase from Caere [in Etruria], signed by the potter Aristonothos which, it is argued, cannot be older than the seventh century B.C. The same method of dotted lines is to be seen again on a pinax [plate] from Cameiros [on Rhodes] in the [British] Museum, representing the combat of Menelaos and Hector over the body of Euphorbos, with their names inscribed. That vase also is assigned to the seventh century B.C. Is it possible that the Mycenae and Enkomi vases are seven or eight centuries older?"

The connection between the Mycenaean and Aristonothos vases (figs. ~~and ~~) caused "a remarkable divergence of opinion, even among those who defend systematically the high antiquity of Mycenaean art."

Analyzing the workmanship and design of sphinxes or griffins with human forelegs on the vase, the archaeologist stressed "its relationship, on the one hand, to the fragmentary vase of Tell el-Amarna (see Petrie, *Tell el-Amarna*, Plate 27) and a fragment of fresco from Tiryns (*Perrot and Chipiez*, VI, 545), and on the other hand to the pattern which occurs on a terracotta sarcophagus from Clazomenae, [in Ionia] now in Berlin, a work of the early sixth century B.C."

The problem of pottery which belongs to two different ages is repeated in ivory. The ivories of the Enkomi tombs are very similar to those found by Layard in the palace of Nimroud, the ancient capital of Assyria. There is, for example, a carving of a man slaying a griffin;

the man being remarkable for the helmet with chin strap which he wears. It is a subject which appears frequently on the metal bowls of the Phoenicians, and is found in two instances among the ivories discovered by Layard in the palace at Nimroud. The date of the palace is given as 850-700 B.C.

An oblong box for the game of draughts, found in Enkomi, "must date from a period when the art of Assyria was approaching its decline," five or six centuries after the reputed end of the Mycenaean age.

"Among the Nimroud ivories (850-700 B.C.) is a fragmentary relief of a chariot in pursuit of a lion to the left, with a dog running alongside the horses as at Enkomi, the harness of the horses being also similar." The style of the sculpture (of Nimroud) "is more archaic than on the Enkomi casket." But how could this be if the objects found in Enkomi date no later than the 12th Century? Comparing the two objects, I. J. Winter wrote:

A hunting scene depicted on a rectangular panel from an ivory gaming board of 'Cypro-Mycenaean' style found at Enkomi, with its blanketed horses and chariot with six-spoked wheel, so closely resembles a similar hunting scene on one of the pyxides from Nimroud that only details such as the hairdo of one of the chariot followers or the flying gallop of the animals mark the Enkomi piece as a work of the second millennium B.C., separated by some four centuries from the Nimroud pyxis.<sup>2</sup>

A bronze of Enkomi repeats a theme of the Nimroud ivories, representing a woman at a window. "The conception is so singular, and the similarity of our bronze to the ivory so striking, that there can hardly be much difference of date between the two—somewhere about 850-700 B.C."

"Another surprise among our bronzes is a pair of greaves. . . It is contended by Reichel<sup>3</sup> that metal greaves are unknown in Homer. He is satisfied that they were the invention of a later age (about 700 B.C.)."

Bronze fibulae, too, were found in the Enkomi tombs, as well as a large tripod "with spiral patterns resembling one in Athens, which is assigned to the Dipylon period," and a pair of scales of a balance like the one figured on the Arkesilaos vase. But such finds are separated by a wide span of time from the twelfth century.

The silver vases of the Enkomi tombs "are obviously Mycenaean in shape." "On the other hand," there were found two similar silver rings, one with hieroglyphics and the other engraved on the bezel "with a design of a distinctly Assyrian character—a man dressed in a lion's skin standing before a seated king, to whom he offers an oblation. Two figures in this costume may be seen on an Assyrian sculpture from Nimroud of the time of Assurnazirpal (884-860), and there is no doubt that this fantastic idea spread rapidly westward."

Next are the objects of gold. Gold pins were found in a tomb of Enkomi. "One of them, ornamented with six discs, is identical in shape with the pin which fastens the chiton [tunic] on the shoulders of the Fates on the Francois vase in Florence (sixth century B.C.)." A pendant "covered with diagonal patterns consisting of minute globules of gold soldered down on the surface of the pendant" was made by "precisely the same process of soldering down minute globules of gold and arranging them in the same patterns" that "abounds in a series of gold ornaments in the British Museum which were found at Cameiros in Rhodes" and which were dated to the seventh or eighth century.

Among the pottery of "the ordinary Mycenaean and pre-Mycenaean type" gems were found. A scarab "bears the cartouche of Thi [Tiy], the queen of Amenophis [Amenhotep] III, and must therefore be placed in the same rank as those other cartouches of her husband, found at Ialysos [on Rhodes] and Mycenae, which hitherto have played so conspicuous a part in determining the Mycenaean antiquities as being in some instances of that date (fifteenth century)."<sup>4</sup>

As for the porcelain, it "may fairly be ranked" with the series of Phoenician silver and bronze bowls from Nimroud of about the eighth century. A porcelain head of a woman from Enkomi "seems to be Greek, not only in her features, but also in the way in which her hair is gathered up at the back in a net, just as on the sixth century vases of this shape." Greek vases of this shape "differ, of course, in being of a more advanced artistic style, and in having a handle. But it may fairly be questioned whether these differences can represent any very long period of time."

Murray surveyed the glass:

In several tombs, but particularly in one, we found vases of variegated glass, differing but slightly in shape and fabric from the fine series of glass vases obtained from the tombs of Cameiros, and dating from the seventh and sixth centuries, or even later in some cases. It happens, however, that these slight differences of shape and fabric bring our Enkomi glass vases into direct comparison with certain specimens found by Professor Flinders Petrie at Gurob in Egypt, and now in the British Museum. If Professor Petrie is right in assigning his vases to about 1400 B.C.,<sup>5</sup> our Enkomi specimens must follow suit. It appears that he had found certain fragmentary specimens of this particular glass ware beside a porcelain necklace, to which belonged an amulet stamped with the name of Tutankhamen, that is to say, about 1400 B.C.

Murray comes to the conclusion that "Phoenicians manufactured the glass ware of Gurob and Enkomi at one and the same time." Consequently

the question is, what was that time? For the present we must either accept Professor Petrie's date (about 1400 B.C.) based on scanty observations collected from the poor remains of a foreign settlement in Egypt, or fall back on the ordinary method of comparing the glass vessels of Gurob with those from Greek tombs of the seventh century B.C. or later, and then allowing a reasonable interval of time for the slight changes of shape or fabric which may have intervened. In matters of chronology it is no



new thing for the Egyptians to instruct the Greeks, as we know from the pages of Herodotus.

With this last remark the excavator at Enkomi came close to the real problem, but he shrank from it. He did not dare to revise Egyptian chronology; all he asked was that the age of the Mycenaean period be reduced. How to do this he did not know. He quoted an author (Helbig) who thought that all Mycenaean culture was really Phoenician culture, the development of which remained at a standstill for seven centuries.

In 1896 there was found in a tomb at Thebes in Egypt a bronze patera [a shallow vessel] which in shape and decoration has so much in common with the bronze Phoenician bowls from Nimroud that we feel some surprise on being told that the coffins with which it was found belong unmistakably to the time of Amenophis [Amenhotep] III or the first years of Amenophis IV [Akhnaton]. It is admitted that this new patera had been a foreign import into Egypt. Equally the relationship between it and the bronze Phoenician bowls is undeniable, so that again we are confronted with Helbig's theory of a lapse of seven centuries during which little artistic progress or decline had been effected.<sup>6</sup>

It was necessary to assume a state of hibernation of almost seven hundred years.

The endeavor of the excavator of Enkomi was directed toward bringing the Mycenaean Age closer in time by five or six hundred years, so that there would be no chasm between the Mycenaean Age and the Greek Age. As curator of Greek and Roman antiquities of the British Museum, he constantly had before him the numerous connections and relations between Mycenaean and Greek art, which could not be explained if an interval of many centuries lay between them. He tried to disconnect the link between Mycenaean and Egyptian archaeologies and chronologies, but he felt that this was an unsolvable problem.

## References

<sup>one</sup>Murray, "Excavations at Enkomi," in A. S. Murray, A. H. Smith, H. B. Walters, *Excavations in Cyprus* (London: British Museum, 1900). <sup>two</sup>*Iraq* 38 [19 ] pp. 9-10 <sup>three</sup>W. Reichel, *Homerische Waffen* 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1901), p. 59. <sup>four</sup>Since the beginning of the present century, the conventional date of the reign of Amenhotep III has been reduced to the end of the fifteenth and the first quarter of the fourteenth century. <sup>five</sup>Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Illahun, Kahun and Gurob* (London, 1891) Plate 17. Compare also Plate 18 with two identical glass vases which are assigned to Rameses II. Murray, "Excavations at Enkomi," in Murray, Smith and Walters, *Excavations in Cyprus*, p. 23, note. Since the above evaluation of the time of Tutankhamen by Petrie, the conventional date of this king, son-in-law of Akhnaton, has been reduced to ca. -1350. <sup>six</sup>Murray, "Excavations at Enkomi," *loc. cit.*

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## Tiryns

The same problem that caused the difference of opinions at Enkomi and at the Heraion of Olympia arose at other excavated sites. To demonstrate this on another case of Greek archaeology, I chose Tiryns, south-east of Mycenae. Tiryns was excavated by Schliemann and Doerpfeld in 1884-85. Along with Mycenae, it was an important center of Mycenaean culture. On the acropolis, foundations of a palace were discovered. Together with Mycenaean ware, and mixed with it,<sup>1</sup> geometric ware of the eighth century and archaic ware of the sixth century were found, among them many little flasks in which libations had been brought to the sacred place.<sup>2</sup>

According to Schliemann, Tiryns was destroyed simultaneously with Mycenae and the palace was burned down. But his collaborator Doerpfeld, who agreed with him as to the time the palace had been built, disagreed as to when it was destroyed, and their opinions differed by six hundred years.<sup>3</sup>

From Greek literature it is known that in early Greek times, in the eighth or seventh century and until the first part of the fifth century, there was a temple of Hera in Tiryns which was deserted when the Argives vanquished the city in -460. In later times Tiryns was occasionally visited by travelers coming to pay homage to the sacred place of bygone days.<sup>4</sup>

When the excavation of Tiryns was resumed in 1905 by a team headed by A. Frickenhaus and continued in the following years, special attention was paid to the question of the time in which the Mycenaean palace there was destroyed.

On the site of the palace and, in part, on its original foundations a smaller edifice was built, identified as the temple of Hera of Greek times. The excavators felt that many facts point to the conclusion that the Greek temple was built over the Mycenaean palace very shortly after the palace was destroyed by fire.<sup>5</sup> The altar of the temple was an adaptation of the Mycenaean palace altar;<sup>6</sup> the plan of the Mycenaean palace was familiar to the builders of the temple; the floor of the palace served as the floor of the temple.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Greek temple was built in the seventh century.<sup>8</sup>

After deliberating on the evidence, the excavators refused to accept the end of the Mycenaean Age in the second millennium as the time of the destruction of the palace, and decided that the palace had survived until the seventh century. In their opinion the Mycenaean pottery was the refuse of an early stage of the palace; the terracotta figures and flasks of archaic (seventh-century) type were offerings of the pilgrims to the Greek temple of Hera. A continuity of culture from Mycenaean to Greek times was claimed; even the worship of Hera, they felt, must have been inherited.<sup>9</sup>

Frickenhaus and his team realized that their explanation required some unusual assumptions: for instance, that the inhabitants of the palace did not undertake any alteration for the entire period of more than half a millennium,<sup>10</sup> and that in one part of the palace the refuse of centuries was preserved, while in another part life went on.<sup>11</sup>

But the excavators knew no other explanation, because it was clear to them that "the fire of the palace was followed immediately by the erection of the temple."<sup>12</sup>

A decade later, when the temple of Hera was found to be very similar in plan to a Mycenaean building excavated at Korakou, near Corinth, "grave doubts" were expressed about the correctness of the above interpretations of the excavators of Tiryns, who had been "involved in a number of difficulties, both architectural and chronological."<sup>13</sup>

The critic (C. W. Blegen) agreed that the temple had been built immediately after the palace was destroyed, but he could not agree that the temple was a building of the seventh century.

How is it possible, if a Greek temple was established at the Mycenaean level in the megaron [the throne room] and if the open court before the megaron was used at its Mycenaean level from the seventh century B.C. onward,—how is it then possible that this same area was later covered over with almost purely Mycenaean debris?<sup>14</sup>

He therefore concluded that "the later building within the megaron at Tiryns is not a Greek temple" but "a reconstruction carried out toward the end of the Mycenaean Period after the destruction of the palace by fire." He also denied the significance of the capital of a Doric column found during the excavation of the temple.

Although Blegen's arguments seemed to carry weight when he denied that the Mycenaean palace had survived the Mycenaean Age by almost five centuries, they appeared without force when he asserted that the building erected on

the foundations of the palace was not a Greek temple.<sup>15</sup> Blegen's view was also questioned by an eminent classicist, M. P. Nilsson.<sup>16</sup>

Because it is as inconceivable that the Greek temple was built in the thirteenth century as it is that the Mycenaean palace stood until the seventh century without alterations, its floor not even showing signs of wear,<sup>17</sup> Nilsson confessed his inability to draw a conclusion: "The time of the reconstruction being uncertain, the question whether or not the building is the temple of Hera remains unanswerable."<sup>18</sup>

In a book on the architecture of the palace of Tiryns, another excavator of that city, K. Muller, arrived at the conclusion that the difference of opinions is irreconcilable, but he shared the view of the scholars who ascribe the palace fire to about -750 and consider the edifice a Greek temple.<sup>19</sup>

Most of the archaeologists agreed on the continuity of the culture and cult of both buildings,<sup>20</sup> but each of the attempts to bridge the chasm of almost five hundred years met with insurmountable difficulties. The answer would not be difficult if the Mycenaean Age were not displaced by this interval of time, pushed back into history, before its proper place.

## References

[one](#)[The late eighth-century pottery was found immediately above, or mixed with, Late Helladic IIIB/C wares on the citadel, in the lower town, on the plain and in a wall chamber: see W. Rudolph, "Tiryns 1968" in *Tiryns* ed. U. Jantzen (Maintz, 1971) p. 93. —EMS] [two](#)H. Schliemann, *Tiryns* (London, 1886). [three](#)See A. Frickenhaus, *Tiryns* vol. I, Die Hera von Tiryns (Athens, 1912), p. 34. [four](#)Pausanias was one of those pilgrims in the year 170 of the present era. [five](#)Frickenhaus, *Tiryns*, pp. 31-40. [K. Muller, *Tiryns III Die Architektur der Burg und des Palastes* (Augsburg, 1930), pp. 214ff., Per Alin *Das Ende der mykenischen Fundstaetten auf dem griechischen Festland* (Lund, 1962), p. 32. But see G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 48-52, who argues that the temple was built five centuries after the burning of the megaron. Cf. W. Voigt-Lander, *Tiryns* (Athens, 1972) p. 8; U. Jantzen, *Fuehrer durch Tiryns* (Athens, 1975) p. 333; H. Plommer in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 97 (1977), pp. 81-82; J. W. Wright in *American Journal of Archaeology* 84 (1980), p. 242.] [six](#)Alin, *Das Ende der mykenischen Fundstaetten*, p. 33; Jantzen, *Fuehrer durch Tiryns*, p. 33; Frickenhaus, *Tiryns I* pp. 5f.; Muller, *Tiryns III*, pp. 137ff. [seven](#)Frickenhaus, *Tiryns I*, p. ; [However, M. P. Nilsson (*The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* [Lund, 1927] pp. 475-77) thought the floor of the later structure may have been at a higher level, a conclusion which has recently been argued by Mylonas (*Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, p. 51.)] [eight](#)Frickenhaus placed it in the middle of the seventh century (*Tiryns I*, pp. 31ff.) [nine](#)Frickenhaus, *Tiryns I*, 31. [ten](#)*Ibid.*, p. 35. [eleven](#)*Ibid.*, p. 36. [twelve](#)*Ibid.*, p. 38. But see Notes for the contrary view of Mylonas and others. [thirteen](#)C. W. Blegen, *Korakou, a Prehistoric Settlement near Corinth* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens [Boston, 1921] p. 130. [fourteen](#)*Ibid.*, p. 132. [At the same time, Blegen noted, "the debris and potsherds which we should expect from the seventh century and subsequently during the period when the temple was in use, have almost completely vanished." Cf. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, p. 49. ]. [fifteen](#)[Mylonas, (*Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, p. 52) and Jantzen, (*Fuehrer durch Tiryns*, p. 33) reaffirm Frickenhaus' conclusion that the later building is a Greek temple. Per Alin (*Das Ende der mykenischen Fundstaetten*, p. 32) supports Blegen's view]. [sixteen](#)*The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* [seventeen](#)Rodenwaldt, quoted by K. Muller in *Tiryns III*. [However, see above, footnote 213 about the floor level. Rodenwaldt himself agreed with Blegen in placing the destruction of what he considered a rebuilt megaron in Mycenaean time: *Tiryns II*, p. 235, n.2. Cf. idem, "Zur der monumentalen Architektur in Griechenland," *Athenische Mitteilungen* 44 (1919), pp. 179-180; "Mykenische Studien I" in *Jahrbuch des deutschen archaeologischen Instituts* 34 (1919) p. 95 and n.2. But cf. above, n. 6 about the floor level]. [eighteen](#)[Nevertheless, Nilsson inclined more to the view of Frickenhaus that the later building was indeed a Greek temple, and not a smaller megaron of Mycenaean time; he stressed the evidence for the cult of Hera: "the thousands of votive terracottas of a standing and seated goddess and others cannot be so lightly pushed aside as is done by Mr. Blegen"; and he argued that "we know from votive deposits that there was a temple on the acropolis of Tiryns, if the building itself is not accepted as satisfactory evidence. . . Under these circumstances the doubt concerning the identity seems unreasonable." Additional sacred objects

were found by Muller in 1926 (*Tiryns* III, pp. 214ff.) in a refuse pit; they were assigned dates from the mid-eighth to the mid-seventh centuries. An attempt to explain them in the light of Blegen's theory was made by Alin (*Das Ende der mykenischen Fundstaetten* p. 32)]. [nineteen](#)Muller, *Tiryns* III, pp. 207ff. [Time did not help to reconcile the divergent views. H. Lorimer, writing in 1950 (*Homer and the Monuments*, p. 435) admitted that at "Tiryns the circumstances are obscure" yet opted for Frickenhaus' and Muller's conclusion. "It appears certain," she wrote, "that . . . the megaron remained intact and uninhabited until it perished in a conflagration probably ca. 750. It is difficult to conceive what purpose it could have served through the long post-Mycenaean period if not that of continuing to house the ancient cult." But it was against exactly such a possibility that Blegen had brought arguments a quarter of a century earlier. In the same year W. B. Dinsmoor published *The Architecture of Ancient Greece* (New York, 1950), in which he advocated Blegen's solution (p. 21 and n.1). More recently Per Alin (see above, n. 14) brought additional arguments in support of Blegen]. [twenty](#)[However, G. Mylonas had argued that the later Greek temple was built long after the destruction of the Mycenaean megaron by new settlers who followed the plan of the by then five-hundred-years-old ruins. This view is also followed by U. Jantzen in his *Fuehrer durch Tiryns* (Athens, 1975), who nevertheless sees a continuation of the religious cult from Mycenaean into archaic times (p. 33).— EMS]

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## Mute Witnesses

The divergence of almost five hundred years in the archaeological age evaluations repeats itself with respect to many sites of the Greek past. Because two timetables are applied simultaneously to the past of Greece—one built on the evidences of Greece itself, the other on the evidences of relations with Egypt—a clash of opinions in matters of age appraisal is almost inevitable.

The theory that "a period covering the seventh century and extending, perhaps, into the eighth century, was the time in which pottery and other antiquities of the Mycenae class were produced for the home market of Greece and possibly in Greece itself" (Murray)<sup>1</sup> was pronounced an "archaeological insinuation" (Evans)<sup>2</sup>

The other attempt at synchronizing the geometric with the Mycenaean ware by ascribing them to the second millennium (Doerpfeld) was called "the naivete of complete ignorance" (Furtwaengler).<sup>3</sup>

The separation of the Mycenaean Age from the Greek Age by five hundred years of Dark Age was paid for with an ever-growing mass of conflicting facts. Already in the shaft tombs of Mycenae some of the finds bore conflicting and unreconcilable evidence:

Nor . . . is the evidence of Greek excavation always as simple and convincing as it looks. It has been usual to regard all the contents of the acropolis-graves at Mycenae as dating more or less to the same period. But some of the objects from these graves can be shown, if we are not to throw aside all that we have learned of the development of early Greek art, to be of far later date than others."<sup>4</sup>

The same author admitted that the graves in Greece were as a rule not re-used. This makes the presence of objects of two different epochs in the Mycenaean graves in Greece very enigmatic.<sup>5</sup>

The epochs, as usual, are separated by close to five hundred years.<sup>6</sup>

## References

[one](#)A. S. Murray, *Handbook of Greek Archaeology* (New York, 1892), p. 57. [two](#)Evans, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 30 (1900), p. 200. [three](#)Furtwaengler, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. I, p. 456. [four](#)H. R. H. Hall, *The Oldest Civilization of Greece* (London, 1901), p. 16. [five](#)[Hall later retracted his opinion for the shaft

graves of Mycenae, but the same 500-year enigma has since been found in other Late Helladic tombs throughout the Aegean. See J. N. Coldstream's article on hero cults in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1976). EMS ] [six](#) For many more 500-year enigmas, see, Israel M. Isaacson, "Applying the Revised Chronology," *Pensee* IVR, no. 4 (Fall 1994), 5-20.

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## A Votive Cretan Cave

On Crete a long interval is thought to separate the last period of the Minoan civilization from the late Geometric period in art and history, which belong in the eighth century; six hundred years of Dark Age if Evans is right that the Minoan civilization came to its end in -1400, and four hundred years if Leonard Palmer is right in claiming that it endured to almost -1200. But if, as we maintain, the Minoan civilization continued until the eighth century or even until the later part of it, then, of course, the Minoan ware in its latest style must be found contemporary with the geometric ware and the same perplexing relations would be discovered on Crete as were discovered in continental Greece.

The Dictaeon Cave on Crete supplied the Cretan Collection in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum with many objects; the cave was a votive place in the Late Minoan III age and an abundance of bronze figures was stored there. J. Boardman published a study of the Cretan Collection and tried to classify the finds by their style and affiliation.<sup>1</sup>

Of bronze figurines of men from the votive cave he wrote: "These Cretan figures have been dated, apparently by style, to Late Minoan III. they must be related in some way to the well-known Geometric type of mainland Greece which exhibits the same characteristics."<sup>2</sup>

Of the bronze figures of women from the same cave, the author says: "Although no such figures of women have been recovered from Late Minoan III deposits [elsewhere], it is likely that the cruder specimens from the cave are of this date, although Pendlebury<sup>3</sup> thought some might be Geometric."<sup>4</sup>

The bronze male and female figurines divided the experts, with the Minoan and the Geometric ages contesting for them. Would the animal figures from the same assemblage make the decision easier?

"Again there is as yet no reason to believe that bronze animal votives were being made uninterruptedly from Minoan to Geometric times. It should then be possible to distinguish the early from the late, but it is not easy."<sup>5</sup>

Next came knives with human heads at the end of the handles. "The style of the head is exceptionally fine. . . . Its superficial resemblance to a group of Cretan Geometric bronzes is noteworthy, and although the shape of the blade and solid handle point to the latest Bronze Age, there is much in the style to be explained." The layers in which it was found "suggest a Middle Minoan III-Late Minoan I context" and this "considerably complicates the problem to which no solution is offered here."<sup>6</sup>

A "cut-out plaque from the cave . . . is of a woman with a full skirt. The dress and pose, with elbows high, seem Minoan, but the decoration of the small bosses is more Geometric in spirit."<sup>7</sup>

Thus bronze figurines, rings and plaques perplex the art expert when he tries to determine the period from which they date, and the difference frequently amounts to more than half a millennium. Will not then the pottery—vases and dishes, the hallmark of their age—throw some light on the problem?

For the storage jars with reliefs, (*pithoi*) from the Dictaeon Cave, two authorities<sup>8</sup> "imply a Geometric date." But two other authorities<sup>9</sup> "have them Minoan."<sup>10</sup>

Then what is the verdict of the fifth expert, familiar with the opinions of the other four?

"It is tempting to see in these pieces the immediate predecessors of the finely moulded and impressed pithoi of seventh-century Crete, but for these the independent inspiration of mainland Greece or the islands can be adduced, and the cave fragments are best regarded as purely Minoan in date."<sup>11</sup>

The very same features tend to confuse the experts. Some Cretan vases have a very characteristic decoration on them and it could be expected that this would help solve the problem of the age, but it does not.

There are several Cretan examples of heads or masks being used to decorate the necks of vases. . . . The example from Knossos was published by Evans as Minoan, and the signs on the cheeks thought to be signs in a linear script. The technique and the decoration tell against this. The patterns are purely Geometric. . . . The outline of the features is common in Cretan Geometric.<sup>12</sup>

In other cases the confusion is still greater when a decision is to be made between the Minoan (or Mycenaean) of the second millennium, the Geometric of the eighth century and the Archaic (of the seventh-sixth centuries).

The case of the votive Dictaeon Cave and its contents was selected here to illustrate how the problem stands on Crete. The verdict drawn by the art expert quoted on these pages did not clarify the issue by its recourse to our ignorance of what transpired during the Dark Age:

After the collapse or overthrow of the major Bronze Age civilizations of the Aegean world in the twelfth century B.C. Crete, with the rest of Greece, entered upon a Dark Age which the still inadequate archaeological record can illuminate but little and the literary record not at all.<sup>13</sup>

## References

<sup>one</sup>*The Cretan Collection in Oxford* (Oxford University Press, 1961). <sup>two</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7. <sup>three</sup>J. D. S. Pendlebury, *The Archaeology of Ancient Crete: An Introduction* (London, 1939) p. 332. <sup>four</sup>Boardman, *The Cretan Collection*, p. 8. <sup>five</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9. <sup>six</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20. <sup>seven</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43. <sup>eight</sup>F. Courby, *Les Vases grecques a relief* (Paris, 1922) pp. 42f. and Pendlebury, *The Archaeology of Crete*, p. 334. <sup>nine</sup>J. Schaefer, *2 Studien zu den griechischen Reliefpithoi des 8.-6. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. aus Kreta, Rhodos, Tenos und Boiotien* (1957); Mustili, *Annuario della R. Scuola Archeologica di Atene XV-XVI* (1932-33) p. 144, n.5. <sup>ten</sup>Boardman, *The Cretan Collection*, p. 57. <sup>eleven</sup>*Ibid.*, loc. cit. <sup>twelve</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 103. <sup>thirteen</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129.

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## Etruria

The Etruscans are thought to have arrived in northern Italy sometime before the end of the eighth century before the present era. In Etruria, between the rivers Arno and Tiber, are found vaulted structures erected by the Etruscans: they are of the type known as "false vaulting." O. W. von Vacano in his *Etruscans in the Ancient World* (1960) comments with wondering:

. . .The Mycenaean corridor design and *tholos* [circular domed tomb] structures are related to the vaulted buildings which make their appearance in the orientalizing period in Etruria—and here it is even more difficult to solve, even though the connection itself is undisputed.<sup>1</sup>

The Etruscan vaulted chambers impress one by their similarity to Mycenaean architecture. Other Etruscan structures of the seventh-sixth centuries also show such similarity.

The remains of the city walls of Populonia, Vetulonia and Rusellae, consisting of huge stone blocks which have a 'Mycenaean' look, do not date further back than the end of the sixth century B.C.: their gateways may well have had arches rounded like the entrance doors to the *Grotta Campana*, on the outskirts of Veii, which dates from the second half of the seventh century B.C., and is one of the earliest painted chamber-tombs of Etruria.<sup>2</sup>

A dilemma no less serious is posed by a vase fashioned by a Greek master who signed it with his name, Aristonothos (fig. ); between -675 and -650 he studied in Athens, then migrated to Syracuse (Sicily) and later to Etruria (Tuscany). The vase was found at Cerveteri, in southern Etruria. "There is an obvious link between the design of the Aristonothos crater and another earthenware vessel, scarcely less often discussed and more than five hundred years older, the vase known from the principal figure decorating it as 'the Warrior Vase of Mycenae.'"<sup>3</sup>

It becomes ever clearer that the end of the Mycenaean Age, put at ca. -1200, is placed so not by a true verdict.

## References

[one](#) Von Vacano, *The Etruscans in the Ancient World*, p. 81. [After the monuments of Mycenae and Tiryns received, on the basis of Egyptian chronology, dates in the second millennium, some scholars attempted to age the Etruscan tombs by five hundred years to make them contemporary with their Mycenaean counterparts: so "striking" was the similarity, so "evident" the relation of the two architectural styles, that if the Mycenaean tombs belong in the second millennium, one expert argued, the ones found in Etruria "are probably not of inferior antiquity." (G. Dennis, *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* [London, 1878], vol. I, p. 265, n.2; cf. p. 368, n. 6.) But what of the contents of the tombs, which invariably consisted of Etruscan products of the eighth century and later? The surmise that this situation reflected "a reappropriation of a very ancient sepulchre" (Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 154) was unanimously rejected by experts (e.g., A. Mosso, *The Dawn of Mediterranean Civilization* [New York, 1911], p. 393). There was no reason to suppose that the tombs had been built by anyone but the people who used them; and these people first arrived on the scene in the middle of the eighth century. The relation of these eighth-century tombs to the five-hundred-years-earlier structures of Mycenaean Greece has remained a puzzle. *The Dawn of Mediterranean Civilization* (New York, 1911) pp. 392-93; A. N. Modona, *A Guide to Etruscan Antiquities* (Florence, 1954), p. 92; S. von Cles-Redden, *The Buried People: A Study of the Etruscan World*, transl. by C. M. Woodhouse (New York, 1955), p. 180; A. Boethius and J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture* (Baltimore, 1970) p. 78 and pl. 47. The oldest is the Grotta Regolini Galassi, dated to ca. B.C.] [two](#) *ibid.*, p. 82; cf. Cles-Redden, *The Buried People*, p. 122. [Numerous other Etruscan cultural traits reflect Mycenaean models, something that would be not unexpected if, as the revised timetable postulates, the two cultures were contemporary, yet most difficult to account for if, as the conventional scheme requires, five hundred years of darkness intervened. (a) *Columns*. The types of columns used in Etruscan buildings derive from columns of Knossos and Mycenae, and have nothing in common with the Doric columns of seventh and sixth-century Greece. (S. von Cles-Redden, *The Buried People: A Study of the Etruscan World*, transl. by C. M. Woodhouse [New York, 1955], p. 35.) But it is presumed that no Mycenaean or Minoan structures were left standing in Etruscan times. Where, then, did the Etruscans find the models for their wooden columns? (b) *Frescoes*. The famous Etruscan frescoes, such as those that decorate the tombs near Veii, display an "obvious reminiscence of Crete"—however not of Crete of the Dark Ages, but rather of Minoan Crete (von Cles-Redden, *op. cit.*, p. 143). But had not the Cretan palaces with their frescoes been destroyed many centuries earlier? (c) *Burials*. The sepulchral slabs used in some Etruscan tombs, especially those bearing reliefs of men and animals, resemble those found by Schliemann at Mycenae (Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. lxxix, n. 9). Also Etruscan burial customs appear to be derived from Mycenaean models (S. von Cles-Redden, *op. cit.*, p. 150.)] [three](#) Von Vacano, *The Etruscans in the Ancient World*, p. 81. See I. M. Isaacson, "Applying the Revised Chronology," *Pensee* IX (1974), p.p. 5ff.

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# Sicily

In Mycenaean times Sicily had a prosperous civilization that carried on a busy commerce with the Helladic city-state of mainland Greece and the Minoan empire of Crete. This civilization disappears from view about the same time that the chief Mycenaean centers were destroyed, and five centuries of darkness are said to descend on the island.<sup>1</sup> Not till the beginning of the seventh century is the gloom dispelled by the arrival of the first Greek colonists.

The earliest of the Greek settlements was at Gela on the southern coast, founded by migrants from Crete and Rhodes at a date fixed by the ancient chronographers as -689. Tradition also claimed that Gela's founder was Antiphemos, one of the Greek heroes returning from Troy: and Virgil has Aeneas, the Trojan hero, sail along the southern coast of the island and admire flourishing Gela and two other Greek settlements which by all accounts did not come into existence till the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>2</sup> Besides furnishing further proof our dating of the Trojan War, these traditions are especially important in linking the Greek colonization of Sicily with the closed of the Mycenaean age, and help explain the many survivals of Mycenaean culture in the Greek colonies of seventh century Sicily.

A little to the north of Agrigento, somewhat west of Gela on Sicily's southern coast, are found tholos tombs of the Mycenaean type.<sup>3</sup> Inside of one of the tombs were found gold bowls and seal rings manufactured in a style that derives from Mycenaean gold work.<sup>4</sup> Yet neither the tombs nor the objects found inside them can be dated before the end of the eighth century. It is a puzzle how "splendid gold rings" with incised animal figures, so reminiscent of Mycenaean objects and having nothing in common with contemporary Greek prototypes could have been manufactured by Greek colonists in the seventh century if "a real Dark Age"<sup>5</sup> of five hundred years' duration did in fact separate them from the latest phase of the Mycenaean civilization. In Sicily the time between the end of the Mycenaean age and the beginning of Greek colonization is an absolute void, with a total lack of archaeological remains: even the Protogeometric and Geometric pottery which elsewhere is claimed to span the Dark Age, is absent; only late Geometric ware appears with the arrival of the Greeks.<sup>6</sup> The decorative motifs used by the Greek colonists are once more under strong Mycenaean influence; a detailed comparison of the motifs in use in the seventh century with those on Mycenaean ware caused much amazement among art historians, but not even a suggestion of how the motifs could have been transmitted through the Dark Ages.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Minoan influences were identified in the shape and decoration of pottery discovered at Gela, presenting the same problems.

All the evidence we have examined argues against a long gap between the Mycenaean age in Sicily and the arrival of the Greek colonists in the seventh century. Then why is it necessary for historians to postulate a five hundred year long Dark Age between the two epochs? Of the sherds found on the island some were fragments of "exactly the same pottery as that found in Egypt in the ruins of Tell el Amarna, the capital of Pharaoh Amenophis IV [Akhnaton] (1372-1355 B.C.)".<sup>8</sup> It was the erroneous timetable of Egypt which caused the historians to remove the Mycenaean civilization of Sicily into the second millennium, severing its links to its Hellenic successor.

## References

- <sup>one</sup>L.B. Brea, *Sicily Before the Greeks* (New York, 1966), p. 130 <sup>two</sup>*The Aeneid* Book III, lines 671-673  
<sup>three</sup>P. Griffo and L. von Matt, *Gela: The Ancient Greeks in Sicily* (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1968), p. 47; Brea, *Sicily Before the Greeks* p. 174. <sup>four</sup>Brea, *Sicily Before the Greeks* p. 175; cf. G. Karl Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome* (Princeton, 1969), p. 86; E. Langlotz, *Ancient Greek Sculpture of South Italy and Sicily* (New York, 1965), p. 15. <sup>five</sup>Brea, *Sicily Before the Greeks* p. 130. <sup>six</sup>T.J. Dunbanin "Minos and Daidalos in Sicily," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, vol. XVI. New Series, vol. III (1948), p. 9. <sup>seven</sup>Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome*, p. 83 <sup>eight</sup>Langlotz, *Ancient Greek Sculpture of South Italy and Sicily*, p. 15.
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# Mycenae and Scythia

"According to the account which the Scythians themselves give," reported the fifth-century Greek historian Herodotus, "they are the youngest of all nations."<sup>1</sup> It was the great disturbances and movements of people of the eighth and seventh centuries before the present era that brought these nomadic tribes from the depths of Asia to the doorstep of the civilized nations of the ancient East—Assyria, Egypt and Greece. Formerly the Scythians dwelt east of the Araxus<sup>2</sup>—their first settlements in southern Russia date to the end of the eighth century, about the time also that the Assyrians clashed with them in the vicinity of Lake Urmia.<sup>3</sup> In the course of the decades that followed the Scythians attained the peak of their power, menacing Egypt and helping to bring about the downfall of Assyria. Later the powerful Chaldean and Persian empires succeeded to confine them to the steppes north of the Caucasus.

The appearance of the Scythians on the scene of the ancient East coincides in revised scheme with the final years of the Mycenaean civilization; the accepted timetable, however, needs to place their arrival fully five centuries after the last of the Mycenae citadels had been abandoned.

The tombs of the Scythian kings in the Crimea were built in a way "surprisingly reminiscent of Mycenaean constructions,"<sup>4</sup> the burial chamber consisting of "enormous blocks of dressed stone set to overlap each other so as to meet in the center in an impressive vault."<sup>5</sup> To explain the use by the Scythians of the corbelled vault of the type common in the Mycenaean period, it was suggested that there must have been a continuing tradition going back to Mycenaean times, despite the lack of even a single exemplar between the twelfth and seventh centuries. "I have no doubt," wrote the historian Rostovzeff, "although we possess no examples, that the corbelled vault was continuously employed in Thrace, and in Greece and in Asia Minor as well, from the Mycenaean period onwards. . ."<sup>6</sup> We, on the contrary, must begin to have doubts about a scheme which needs to postulate a five hundred year tradition of work in stone for which not a thread of evidence exists. Stone constructions of the type, had they existed, would have survived.

Gregory Borovka in his *Scythian Art* writes of "the striking circumstance that the Scytho-Siberian animal style exhibits an inexplicable but far-reaching affinity with the Minoan-Mycenaean. Nearly all its motives recur in Minoan-Mycenaean art."<sup>7</sup>

Solomon Reinach, long ago, called attention to certain striking resemblances between Scythian and Minoan-Mycenaean art.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the design of animal bodies in "flying gallop" in which the animal is represented as stretched out with its forelegs extended in a line with the body and its hind legs thrown back accordingly, is at once characteristic of Minoan-Mycenaean art and foreign to that of all other ancient and modern peoples; it recurs only in Scythia, Siberia and the Far East."

Another example of great similarity in style is in "the Siberian gold and bronze plaques depicting scenes of fighting animals." Borovka supplies his description with illustrations. "How often are the animals depicted with the body so twisted that the forequarters are turned downwards, while the hind quarters are turned upwards? Can the agonized writhings of a wounded beast or fury of his assailant be more simply rendered?"<sup>9</sup>

"Other motives of the [Scythian] animal style, too, reappear in Minoan and Mycenaean art. We may cite the animals with hanging legs and those which are curled almost into a circle. Conversely, the standard motif of the Minoan-Mycenaean lion, often represented in the Aegean with reverted head, reappears again in Scythian and Siberian art."

The similarity first observed by Reinach and elaborated upon by Borovka is very unusual. But what appeared to them most surprising was the fact that two such similar art styles should be separated not only by a vast geographical distance, but also by an enormous gulf in time.

"How are we to explain this far-reaching kinship in aim between the two artistic schools? It remains, on the face of it, a riddle. Immediate relations between Minoan-Mycenaean and Scytho-Siberian civilizations are unthinkable; the two are too widely separated in space and time. An interval of some 500 years separates them. . . Still, the kinship between the two provinces of art remains striking and typical of both of them."<sup>10</sup>

## References

[one](#) Herodotus, *The Histories*, Bk. IV, ch. 5. [two](#) The Araxus may be either the Oxus, which flows through today's Afghanistan, or the Volga. [three](#) In the reign of Sargon II (-722 to -705). T. T. Rice, *The Scythians* (London, 1975), p. 44. [four](#) E. g., Altan Oba ("The Golden Barrow") and Tsarskij Kurgan ("Royal Barrow"). See Rice, *The Scythians*; E. H. Minns (*Scythian and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913, p. 194) also considered the plan of the tombs to be of Mycenaean derivation. [five](#) Rice, *The Scythians*, p. 96. [six](#) M. Rostovzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford, 1922) p. 78. Similar "Mycenaean type" constructions of the Scythians were found in Bulgaria (at Lozengrad), and in Asia Minor (Pontus. Caria and Lycia)—*Ibid.*, p. 77. R. Durn in *Jahrbefte der k. Arch. Instituts zu Wien*, X (1907), p. 230. [seven](#) (London 1928), p. 53. [eight](#) S. Reinach, "La représentation du galop dans l'art ancien et moderne" in *Revue archéologique*, 3e série, tome XXXVIII (1901) fig. 144 bis "Lion au galop sur une rondelle en bois mycénienne." p. 38: "Il a déjà été question d'une rondelle de bois mycénienne, découverte en Egypte, sur laquelle est figuré un lion bondissant, l'arrière-train soulevé avec une telle violence que les rattes de derrière viennent toucher le front (fig. 58). Nous reproduisons ici cette figure (fig. 144 bis) pour la rapprocher d'une plaque d'or sibérienne représentant un cheval attaqué par un tigre. Cheval et tigre offrent également ce singulier motif des membres postérieurs rejetés vers le dos et l'enclosure (fig. 114)." [nine](#) Borovka, *Scythian Art*, pp. 53-54. [ten](#) Borovka, *Scythian Art*, p. 54 Similar observations were made by Minns (*Scythian and Greeks*, p. 260), who termed a Scythian depiction of a deer with its head turned around "a Mycenaean survival." He also compared an ibex on a casket from Enkomi, Cyprus to similar Scythian depictions.

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## CHAPTER III: WORDS SET IN CLAY

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### Pylos

Pylos in Messenia, on the western coast of the Peloponnese, was the capital of Nestor, the elderly statesman in the league headed by Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, against Priam, king of Troy, and his allies.<sup>1</sup> In 1939 Carl Blegen came to Messenia to search the countryside for signs of the ancient city of Pylos with Nestor's famous palace, celebrated by Homer. Blegen selected for his first dig a prominent hilltop, a short distance from the sea, which seemed to him eminently suitable to be the site of a royal palace; and in fact, as soon as he began to lift the earth from his first trench, extensive structures began to appear, and much pottery of Mycenaean time. He soon arrived at the conclusion that the palace was Nestor's: the building he excavated had been occupied, in his estimate, in the second part of the thirteenth century before the present era—the preferred time for the Trojan War.<sup>2</sup>

Already early during the work of excavation Blegen unearthed scores of tablets written in the Linear B script, and soon there were hundreds of them. Linear B had been first discovered on Crete by Sir Arthur Evans, who found tablets with incised signs of two scripts, which he termed Linear A and Linear B. The profusion of tablets found in Pylos made the archaeologist question whether the script was Minoan or had its origin on the mainland of Greece; and when subsequently more tablets inscribed with these characters were found in other sites of the Greek mainland—at Mycenae and at Thebes—the name Mycenaean became rather regularly applied to the script.

For over a decade after their discovery the tablets were neither published nor read;<sup>3</sup> but when read—and the story will be told on subsequent pages—they were found to contain no literary text: they were regularly archive notes, dealing with taxation or conscription, or human and animal census or storage inventory. Nevertheless, interesting parallels could be drawn with the Homeric epics: Pylos is mentioned at the head of nine other towns that profess allegiance to it—both in Homer and on the tablets;<sup>4</sup> again, a seven-town coastal strip mentioned in the Iliad finds a parallel in a strip of seven coastal settlements referred to on one of the tablets. And to Blegen's great satisfaction Pylos was found repeatedly mentioned on the tablets retrieved from the palace he identified as Nestor's.<sup>5</sup> Nestor's name, however, was not found.

The tablets, originally not fired but only dried, would have disintegrated long ago, were it not for the fire that destroyed the palace and baked the tablets. A great conflagration raged over the structure; it came rather suddenly, since most furniture, pottery, the contents of the storage rooms and archives were not removed: but humans all fled.<sup>6</sup> Blegen placed the destruction not long after the Trojan War, at the close of the Mycenaean Age.<sup>7</sup>

However, no signs of warfare, siege, re-occupation by people of another culture or occupation in general were found.<sup>8</sup>

The palace presented Blegen and his collaborators with problems not unlike those that were to occupy him later at Troy.<sup>9</sup> In the report of the excavations Blegen wrote: "In some places . . . in the upper black layer . . . were found, along with the usual Mycenaean pottery, a few glazed sherds of Late Geometric Style, as in so many other parts of the site, where similar deposits were encountered."<sup>10</sup>

### References

[one](#) The city of Pylos had a rather brief existence—according to tradition not more than four kings were its rulers from its founding to its destruction. It was Neleus, the father of Nestor, who built the city, having come from Iolcus when his brother Peleus expelled him, and settled there a mixed population of his own followers (Diodorus IV.68.6; Pausanias IV.36.1; Diodorus differs from Pausanias in asserting that Neleus was the *founder* of Pylos). Neleus brought great renown to Pylos; but later in his reign, when his sons were still only young men,

some disaster overtook the city, remembered in tradition as the destruction of Pylos by Heracles. (Iliad XI. 689.) The excavators of Nestor's palace found also remains of an earlier settlement whose violent destruction they ascribed to Neleus' occupation of the site (C. W. Blegen and M. Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor in Western Messenia* vol. I, pt. I, Princeton, 1966, p. 423.) However, it may represent the city of Neleus destroyed by 'Heracles.' A large part of the population perished: of Neleus' twelve sons only Nestor survived; but the people of Pylos rebuilt the city on an even grander scale, including a spacious palace for Nestor, who followed Neleus on the throne. Afterwards the city became involved in bitter warfare against neighboring Elis, and Nestor distinguished himself at the head of the Pylian forces (Iliad XI.602, 698-701). But by the time of the Achaean expedition against Troy Nestor was a venerable elder statesman. Homer tells in the Iliad that this king of Pylos had seen two generations of men pass—"those who had grown up with him, and they who were born to these in sacred Pylos, and he was king in the third age" (Iliad I. 250-52). From this we can judge that at least some four or five decades passed between the time of the disaster which overtook Pylos when Nestor was a young man and the Trojan War. Of those who came to Troy with Agamemnon, Nestor's was one of the few safe returns; once again he seated himself upon the marble bench in his palace, "scepter in hand, a Warden of the Achaean race" (Odyssey III. 530). Homer describes the visit of Telemachus, Odysseus' son, to Nestor at Pylos, ten years after Troy's fall—the prince from Ithaca found a prosperous city at the head of a peaceful realm, unruffled by any whiff of danger. Yet it is worth noting that Nestor took care to placate Poseidon "the earthshaker" with frequent sacrifices (Odyssey III.3f.) For evidence of the cult of Poseidon at Pylos see also M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, second edition (Cambridge, 1973), p. 279.] [two](#)[After its destruction, Pylos was abandoned and remained deserted—even the knowledge of the site of Nestor's palace was lost; it became a matter of discussion already in antiquity. Most ancients and moderns, however, have agreed in placing Nestor's palace somewhere in the vicinity of the Bay of Navarino in western Messenia. The major dissenter was Strabo, who placed Pylos farther north, in Triphylia, and his case was taken up in modern times by Wilhelm Doerpfeld. Carl Blegen's excavations in Messenia have now resolved the debate in favor of the southern Pylos. Cf. Blegen and Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor* vol. I, pt. 1, pp. 3ff.; W. A. McDonald, *Progress into the Past* (Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 229-242 ]

Ref: 170. They were published in 1951 (*The Pylos Tablets: A Preliminary Transcription*) and the decipherment was completed by 1953. See below, section "Linear B Deciphered." [three](#)*Olympia, Die Ergebnisse der von dem deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabungen*, ed., E. Curtius and F. Adler, 10 vols. (Berlin, 1890-97). [four](#)Iliad II. 591-94; Blegen and Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor*, vol. I, pt. 1, p. 419. [five](#)*The Palace of Nestor*, loc. cit. [six](#)*ibid.*, p. 424. [seven](#)*ibid.*, p. 422. [eight](#)*ibid.*, p. 422. [According to tradition, the end of Pylos came in the second generation after Nestor: "After the end of the war against Ilium, and the death of Nestor after his return home, the expedition of the Dorians and return of the Heracleidae two generations afterwards drove out the descendants of Neleus from Messenia" (Pausanias IV.3). It is assumed that there was an influx of Doric-speaking peoples into the Peloponnese after the downfall of the Mycenaean centers—the distribution of Greek dialects in classical times seems to bear this out; but the view that they were the cause of the widespread catastrophe that marks the end of the Late Bronze Age in Greece now finds fewer supporters. The Dorian bands, it would appear, descended on the weakened Mycenaean kingdoms, taking possession of a depopulated land (see above, section "A Gap Closed," n.6). The Heraclids, in Velikovsky's view, were worshippers of the planet Mars. (Cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* III. 12.5-6 on the identification of Heracles with Mars). Having been expelled from the Peloponnese one or two generations before the Trojan War, they settled in northern Greece. However, the dislocations and upheavals which marked the eighth and early seventh centuries uprooted them once again and brought them back to claim possession of their ancient homeland. But this was no mass displacement of populations; as Pausanias records, only the royal family, "the descendants of Neleus," were expelled. "The old Messenians were not turned out by the Dorians, but agreed to Cresphontes being their king, and to the partition of the land among the Dorians. And they were brought over to this compliance by suspicion of their former kings, because they were Minyae who had originally sprung from Iolcus" (Pausanias III.3). The exile of the Neleids to Attica is mentioned in numerous ancient sources. For an evaluation of these traditions in the context of recent archaeological evidence, see Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Movements of Populations in Attica at the End of the Mycenaean Period" in *Bronze Age Migrations in the Aegean* (1974) pp. 215-222. The Heracleidae appear to have advanced toward the Peloponnese from the north; being dissuaded from crossing the Corinthian Isthmus, they took to the sea and disembarked on the unprotected northern coast of Achaia (Pausanias, I.iii.6). The massive fortifications built across the Isthmus of Corinth in late Mycenaean times may have been a factor in forcing the Heracleidae to put to the sea. (Cf. O. Broneer, *Hesperia* 28 (1959), pp. 298ff.; G. Mylonas,

*Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966) pp. 219-20.) From Achaia they advanced south through Arcadia towards Elis, and then on to Pylos. The palace of Nestor, which may have sustained heavy damage due to an earthquake, was seized and put to the torch. The conquest completed, Pausanias relates, the Heraclid king who received Messenia as his share did not establish himself at Pylos, but "changed his residence to Stenyclarus." The conflagration in which Nestor's palace perished preserved many clay tablets with inscriptions in Linear B, dating from the palace's last days; they have been interpreted to indicate preparations for an enemy attack from the sea (L. Palmer, *Minos* vol. IV, p. 22; idem, *Mycenaeans and Minoans*, [London, 1962], pp. 132ff.; Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, p. 138), but this view has been questioned (D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, pp. 193ff.; V. R. d'A Desborough, *The Last Mycenaeans and Their Successors*, [Oxford, 1964], p. 223). Blegen's team found no evidence of any fortifications, in contrast to strongholds such as Mycenae, Gla and Tiryns, which were heavily fortified. The lack of defense preparations within the palace has been noted by numerous authors; on balance, the evidence does not necessarily imply destruction by a human agent, and seems consistent with the effects of some natural cause.] [nine](#)[The time of the destruction of the palace of Nestor was determined by the Mycenaean pottery found in the ruins, sealed by the layer of ashes and debris of the final conflagration. Comparing the designs on the pottery in use at the time of the palace's destruction with the established stylistic sequence of Mycenaean pottery, calibrated according to the Egyptian time-scale, the excavators decided that the end of Pylos came ca. the year -1200. (*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 421). But this date was reached at the cost of ignoring the evidence of other pottery that pointed to a much later time. In the main building of the palace, among sherds of Mycenaean vases "a not inconsiderable number stood out as of a different character: from this material it was possible to reconstruct in whole or in part four pots which may be assigned to a late Geometric phase . . ." (*Palace of Nestor*, p. 124). Blegen dated the style "perhaps to the turn from the seventh to the sixth century." The date should be revised upwards by a few decades on the basis of the work of J. N. Coldstream (*Greek Geometric Pottery*, [London, 1968], p. 330; *Geometric Pottery*, [London, 1977], p. 162) who has dated the Late Geometric style to between 750 and 680 B.C. However, the rough workmanship of the vases, with hardly any design distinguishable, makes it difficult to establish more accurate dates for them. Fragments of Late Geometric vessels were common throughout the palace: "In some places . . . in the upper black layer . . . were found, along with the usual Mycenaean pottery, a few glazed sherds of Late Geometric Style, as in so many parts of the site, where similar deposits were encountered" (*Palace of Nestor*, p. 300). If Late Geometric sherds were found next to Mycenaean ones in the level that marks the final destruction of the palace, the question must arise: when was the Palace of Nestor destroyed, ca. 1200 B.C. or some five hundred years later, ca. 700 B.C.? Blegen tried to explain the presence of these sherds by postulating "fairly widespread activity on the site in late Geometric times" (*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 294) after five centuries of abandonment—this despite his assertion that the conflagration marked "the end of human occupation of the site" (*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 42.) But such an explanation is hardly tenable in light of the stratigraphical situation described by him. Had the Late Geometric pottery been left by new occupants of the hill five hundred years or more after the burning of Nestor's palace, the remains of these vases would not have been found mixed with the ware used by the occupants of the palace at the time of its destruction. The exact position of the Late Geometric pottery merits a closer examination. (Cf. the discussion by I. Isaacson in *Pensee IV* [1973] p. 27) The pavement of the court was covered by a thin "yellowish-white clayish deposit"; immediately above it was an "extremely black layer" less than a foot deep. In "the yellowish-white stratum [which] unquestionably represents the latest phase of occupation of the palace" were found, besides fragments of Mycenaean pottery, "also some pieces of glazed Geometric ware" (*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 294). But how could fragments of eighth-century Geometric ware have come to rest on the floor of Nestor's palace? They "must somehow have penetrated from above." However, a plausible means by which such a penetration could have been accomplished is lacking. After the palace's destruction, "vegetation spread its mantle over the whole area" (*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 422). As Isaacson has observed, to penetrate to the floor of Nestor's buried palace the sherds would have needed to find their way not only through the layer of earth and vegetation, but also through the black stratum of the final conflagration, "a compact layer of smallish stones closely packed in blackish earth" (C. W. Blegen in *American Journal of Archaeology* 61 [1957]). These small stones within the burnt stratum were evidently remains of the walls which had collapsed in the conflagration and covered whatever deposit was left on the floor at the time. The evidence described here suggests an alternate conclusion to the "penetration" view: The Geometric ware belonged, as did the Mycenaean, to the last occupants of the palace and was left behind when they fled. The collapse of the building in the course of the raging conflagration sealed the deposit in place. Most of the smaller towns in Messenia suffered a similar fate,

and only a handful survived into the subsequent, Archaic age. Cf. Imre Tegye, "Messenia and the catastrophe at the end of Late Helladic IIIB" in *Bronze Age Migrations in the Aegean*, pp. 227-32.] [ten](#)*The Palace of Nestor*, p. 300.

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## Linear B Deciphered

For a long time the Linear B script did not disclose its secret to those who worked on its solution. Nor was the decipherment facilitated by the manner in which Sir Arthur Evans published the texts of the Linear B tablets—not all at once, but seriatim. When Blegen discovered the Linear B tablets on the Greek mainland in the ruins of the ancient palace in Pylos, they were ascribed to the Heroic Age of Troy, the final stage of the Mycenaean Age that ended abruptly.

Yet even after the Linear B tablets were found on the mainland of Greece their language was not thought to be Greek. The reason for that was, first of all, in the accepted chronological scale: the Ionian age, according to conventional chronology, was separated from the Mycenaean Age by five hundred years. Greek writing appears for the first time in the eighth century. Efforts to read the tablets made by classical philologists were unsuccessful, and whatever clue was tried out, the result was negative.

One of the most important and far-reaching theses of the reconstruction of ancient history is in the conclusion that the so-called Dark Ages of the Greek and Anatolian histories are but artifacts of the historians, and never took place. The Mycenaean Age ended in the eighth century and was followed by the Ionic times, with no centuries intervening, the break in culture being but the consequence of natural upheavals of the eighth century and of the subsequent migrations of peoples. Consequently the Ionic culture must show great affinity with the Mycenaean heritage; and therefore I have claimed that the Linear B script would prove to be Greek; but this was not a view that had many supporters.

In 1950 the eminent authority on Homeric Greece, Helen L. Lorimer, in her treatise *Homer and the Monuments* wrote of this script and of the efforts to read it: "The result is wholly unfavorable to any hope entertained that the language of the inscriptions might be Greek."

Nevertheless, on the occasion of addressing the Forum of the Graduate College of Princeton University on October 4, 1953, I formulated my expectations:

I expect new evidence from the Minoan Scripts and the so-called Hittite pictographs. Texts in the Minoan (Linear B) script were found years ago on Crete and in Mycenae and in several other places on the Greek mainland. I believe that when the Minoan writings unearthed in Mycenae are deciphered they will be found to be Greek. I also claim that these texts are of a later date than generally believed. "No 'Dark Age' of six centuries' duration intervened in Greece between the Mycenaean Age and the Ionian Age of the seventh century."

The address was printed as a supplement to *Earth in Upheaval*, but the last passage in the address was quoted from my *Theses for the Reconstruction of Ancient History*, published eight years earlier, in 1945.<sup>1</sup>

When speaking to the Princeton Forum in October 1953 I did not know that a young English architect was by then on the verge of publishing the solution to the riddle of the Linear B script. Only six months passed since my addressing the Graduate Forum, and the April 9, 1954 front page news of *The New York Times* made known the exciting performance of decoding Linear B by Michael Ventris. The ancient script "that for the last half century and longer has baffled archaeologists and linguists has been decoded finally—by an amateur." Ventris, an architect and "leisure-time scholar of pre-classic scripts," served as a cryptographer during World War II. The script that had been

tried without avail in a variety of languages—Hittite, Sumerian and Basque among others—was found by Ventris to be Greek.<sup>2</sup>

Ventris as a boy attended a lecture by Sir Arthur Evans on the Minoan tablets with unread scripts and, like Schliemann who since boyhood was determined to find Troy and the tomb of Agamemnon, was intrigued to decipher the script of which he heard Evans speak. Thus the greatest discoveries in the world of classical studies were made by non-specialists, a merchant and an architect.

But Ventris was not immediately on the right path. In 1949 he had sent out a questionnaire on Linear B to leading authorities on Aegean questions; he privately distributed the replies in 1950 as *The Languages of the Minoan and Mycenaean Civilizations* (known as the "Mid-Century Report"). None of his queried correspondents came upon the right trail.

In 1962 Leonard R. Palmer testified as to the stand the Hellenic scholars and Ventris himself had taken prior to the achievement; in his book *Mycenaeans and Minoans*, Palmer wrote: "Evans ventured no guess at the possible affinities of the Minoan language. That it was Greek never entered his head." Also Blegen, who was the first to find the tablets on Greek soil, "was 'almost certain' that the language of his tablets was 'Minoan' . . . Nor did the possibility that the Linear B tablets concealed the Greek language occur to Michael Ventris." He "guessed that the language was related to Etruscan . . . This wrong diagnosis was maintained by Ventris right up to the final stages of his decipherment." "It figures in the so-called 'Mid-Century Report,' which records what could be deduced by the most eminent living authorities from the archaeological and other evidence available at the time preceding the decipherment of the script. The remarkable fact stands out that not one of the scholars concerned suggested that the language could be Greek."

But a few years more and Ventris found the true solution. Even then loud voices of skepticism and opposition made themselves heard.<sup>3</sup>

But the method being perfected disclosed more and more Greek words and names which could not result from a mistaken decipherment. The entire field of early Greek civilization experienced the greatest shock since the discovery of Troy. To the even greater surprise of the scholarly world the names of the deities of the Greek pantheon, supposedly "created" by Homer and Hesiod, were found on the deciphered Linear B tablets.

The reading of these tablets in the Greek language raised the question: How could a literate people in the fourteenth century become illiterate for almost five centuries, to regain literacy in the eighth century? Thus the problem already answered in *Ages in Chaos* was brought into relief, and a heretical idea crept into the minds of a few scholars: is there some mistake in the accepted timetable? In the last century a Dark Age of five centuries' duration between the Mycenaean and the Ionian ages was forced upon the scholars of the Greek past by students of Egyptology, and in three quarters of a century this notion, first bitterly opposed, became as bitterly defended by the new generation of classical scholars, only to be confronted with the riddle of the Mycenaean tablets written in Greek more than five hundred years before the oldest known Greek inscription in alphabetic characters adapted from the Hebrew-Phoenician script.

Ventris died young, in an auto accident, soon after his triumph. One of the most tantalizing riddles of classical archaeology was solved, but not without creating some puzzling situations. The Homeric Question, instead of being solved, grew now to astonishing, one would like to say, Homeric, proportions.

## References

[one](#)In this publication, distributed only to a limited number of large libraries in Europe and America, I stated, without any elaboration, the findings to which I had come in the work of reconstruction of ancient history, thus outlining the projected *Ages in Chaos* and its sequel volumes. [two](#)Cf. J. Chadwick, *The Decipherment of Linear B* (Cambridge, 1958). [three](#)E.g., that of Prof. Beattie in *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 76 (1956), pp. 1ff.

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# The Greek Pantheon

When the texts in Linear B were read the so-called Homeric problem did not approach a solution but, contrariwise, grew more urgent, more enigmatic, more perplexing.

Since antiquity it had been believed that “Homer and Hesiod were the first to compose Theogonies, and give the gods their epithets...”<sup>1</sup> Therefore reading the names of Greek gods and goddesses on the Linear B tables from Knossos on Crete and Pylos on the mainland was something of a shock to classical scholars.<sup>2</sup> Hera, Artemis and Hermes were worshipped in Pylos. Zeus and Poseidon were worshipped in Pylos and Knossos. Athene was deified in Knossos; Dionysus name was found on a Pylos tablet.<sup>3</sup>

With Greek gods and goddesses spelled by their names on the tablets, it was conducive to recognize Apollo in a figure on a vase, singing among the Muses, or Poseidon in a figure depicted driving a chariot over the sea, or Zeus with Europa in the depiction of a bull carrying a woman. The Minotaur and centaurs were recognized as likely Mycenaean images.<sup>4</sup>

Not less unexpected were the names of Achaean heroes known from the Homeric epics when found on the Pylos and Knossos tablets, and a wealth of Trojan names, too. Ajax (called by his patronymic Telamonian) and his brother, Telamonian Teucer, have namesakes in Homer; and between them they killed two Trojans with tablet names Pyrasos and Ophleestas, and a third Simoeisios, whose fathers name, Anthemos, occurs at Knossos. Hector's name and Priam's name, and that of Tros, are found in Pylos. Achilles name is found both a Knossos and at Pylos, and Kastors at Knossos.<sup>5</sup>

In Homer Laodokos's father is Antenor and on a Pylos tablet Laodokos holds land in a village or suburb where Antenor is mayor. In Homer Laodokos is from Pylos, where the tablet with his name was found.

Aigyptos of the *Odyssey* has a namesake on a Knossos tablet; admittedly, there was no contact with Egypt during the Dark Ages and until the seventh century, and how could a bard of one of those centuries, if the epos was not yet completed in the Mycenaean Age, come upon calling a hero after the river Nile, asked T. B. Webster. The name Neritos in met in both, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and it was thought to be a misnomer for some Greek term, corrupted in the later versions of the epics to look as a private name, but the name was found on a table as that of a sheep owner. Unfortunately the establishment of Neritos as a good Mycenaean name does not help the difficult geographical problem of Ithaca's location.

The campaign of the Seven against Thebes and the sack of the city by the Epigoni are alluded to by Homer. Mycenaean names in the story are Amphiaros (Knossos), Adrastos, Eteocles, Polyphontes (Pylos). One of the sons of Eteocles in Pylos was called Alektryon, a name known from the *Iliad* (XVII.602). In Pylos a man was called Theseus and men at Knossos bore the names Selenos and Iakchos known from the *Odyssey*. The name Aeneas is read on a tablet from Mycenae. Phegeus name, found in the *Iliad* (V.10f) is found also on a tablet from Mycenae. The Trojan Pedasos (*Iliad* VI.21) had a namesake at Knossos.

Not less amazing are the attributes and adjectives accompanying the names as used by Homer and found on the tablets. The evidence of the tablets is that such formulae as Telamonian Ajax were Mycenaean titles.<sup>6</sup> Nestor of Homer has Mycenaean titles;<sup>7</sup> Agamemnon's title *wanax* is certainly Mycenaean;<sup>8</sup> king of men is a title most probably remembered from Mycenaean poetry half a millennium before Homer.<sup>9</sup>

The epithet *hippocharmes* (chariot-fighter), which is applied to Troilos in the *Iliad* and to Amythaon (a name found on the Pylos tablets) in the *Odyssey*, has been recognized as derived from the Mycenaean word for chariot.<sup>10</sup>

If five hundred years separate Homer from the tablets, is it not a cause for wonder that the poet should know these names and titles and use them for his epics?



## References

[one](#) Herodotus II.53 [two](#) [M. Ventris and J. Chadwick wondered that the tablets unexpectedly reveal the worship of gods and goddesses known from classical sources *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 275] [three](#) [M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, second ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 279, 286-288. Cf. G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 159-160; F. R. Adrados, *Les Institutions religieuses mycéniennes III Les dieux et leur culte in Minos XI* (1972), pp. 183-192; A. Heubeck, *Aus der Welt der fruehgriechischen Lineartafeln* (Goettingen, 1966, pp. 96-106.) [four](#) These and the following examples are from T. B. L. Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer* (London, 1958) [five](#) *Ibid.*, p. ; [D. H. H. Gray, *Mycenaean Names in Homer*, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 78 (1958), pp. 43-48; D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (University of California Press, 1959), pp. 197-199.] [six](#) Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer*, p. 286 [seven](#) *Ibid.*, p. 218. [eight](#) *Ibid.*, p. 121; [Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, pp. 188 and 209, n. 48.] [nine](#) Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer*, p. 107. [ten](#) *Ibid.*, p. 103; [Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, pp. 190 and 209, n. 55.]

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# Mycenaean City Names in the Iliad

Most notable among the passages in the Iliad traceable to Mycenaean times is the so-called Catalogue of Cities and Ships.<sup>1</sup>

It is an enumeration, in the second book of the Iliad, of the contributions in ships made by various cities and towns of the Achaeans or Greeks of the Heroic Age to the expedition against Troy. There are scores of localities in the list and many of them, actually about half, did not survive into the modern Ionian Age; then how could the Greek poet, separated from the Mycenaean Age by dark centuries, have had such an extensive and detailed knowledge of these localities?

Archaeological research has already identified the ruins of quite a few sites which had not been rebuilt and were not known in the classical period of Greece; and it is safe to assume that future digging will reveal more of the cities of this list. By assuming that the oral delivery from one generation to another can account for the survival of the epics, it is also necessary to assume that a long list of localities, many of them small, many of them no more extant, was capable of surviving by means of such oral tradition. But would generations of bards carry over centuries of the Dark Ages the multitudinous names of towns and villages of which nothing was extant for century upon century? It is conceivable that a few names of ancient palace cities would defy time and survive in the memory of bards. But to assume that almost a hundred names of localities that were but abandoned mounds in the time when the Iliad was put to writing survived in that manner implies nothing short of a miracle. In the view of Denys Page, "There is no escape from this conclusion: the names in the Catalogue afford proof positive and unrefuted that the Catalogue offers a truthful, though selective, description of Mycenaean Greece."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, "there is no scrap of evidence, and no reason whatsoever to assume, that the art of writing was practiced in Greece between the end of the Mycenaean era and the eighth century B.C."<sup>3</sup>

Yet "it is inconceivable that such a list should have been first compiled during or after the Dark Ages."<sup>4</sup> But is it a solution that bards transmitted all those names?<sup>5</sup> And where did the bards sing? Was not the land without palaces and with hardly any houses of occupation?

Denys Page continues on the subject with growing wonderment: "Descriptive epithets are attached to some fifty of the place names. . . . Many of the epithets are distinctive, not generally applicable. One place is a meadowland, another is rocky; one place is rich in vineyards, another is famous for its sheep; one place is rugged, another has many flowers; one place is on a riverbank, another on the seashore." "Let us ask," Page continues, "how could an Ionian poet living in the 10th or 9th or 8th century B.C. know how to describe so many places—some of them very

obscure places—all over Greece? How could he know that there were many doves at Messe (if anyone could still find the place); and vineyards at Hine (if it had not yet been swallowed up by the lake); that Aegyliips was rugged, Olosson white, Enispe windy, Ptellos a meadowland, Helos on the coast?<sup>6</sup>

And is it thinkable that the bards came to Greece from the Aegean coast of Asia Minor towards the end of the Dark Ages? But Asia Minor together with its Ionian coast was also immersed in a Dark Age; nor was there recovered a palace in which a bard upon return from Greece could sing of those Mycenaean cities, towns and hamlets—so impoverished was the Greek region of Asia Minor during the Dark Ages, with the highland of Anatolia being quite empty of any human habitation.<sup>7</sup>

The problem of the Mycenaean heritage in the Homeric poetry is staggering and remains unresolved through hundreds of volumes dealing with it; it is the despair of anyone endeavoring to solve it within the framework of the accepted chronological timetable.

## References

[one](#)See R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford University Press, 1970). [Several scholars claim the Catalogue to be a compilation of the late eighth or early seventh centuries. See Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley, 1946). J. Chadwick held a similar view. Here again is the five-hundred year controversy.] [two](#)Page, *op. cit.* [A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines and Greeks: B.C. 1400-900* (London, 1930), p. 10: "The Catalogue . . . has all the appearance of being a genuine document dating from before the Dorian invasion and the Ionian migration. . . ." ] [three](#)Page, *op. cit.*, p. 123. [four](#)Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* p. 122. Cf. G. S. Kirk, *The Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 175. [Kirk writes: ". . . Much of the substance of the Catalogue of Achaean contingents in the second book of the Iliad, which gives a complex and largely accurate survey of the Mycenaean geography, disrupted by the Dorian invasion, can hardly have been completed more than a generation or so later than the final upheaval. . ." But cf. Chadwick (*Minos* [1975], pp. 56-58).] [five](#)Cf. Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley, Ca, 1946). [six](#)Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, p. 123. [Carpenter (*Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics*, pp. 178-79) denies the possibility of such accurate transmissions and argues instead that the Catalogue points "to the situation in early archaic classical times when Pheidon had extended his rule over Argos, when a league of towns was forming in Boeotia. . ." His view that Homer wrote about *recent* events does not in fact contradict the assertions by Page and others that the Catalogue refers to Mycenaean times. Cf. also Chadwick in *Minos* (1975) pp. 56-58.] [seven](#)See section "The Dark Age in Asia Minor."

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## The Mycenaean Dialect

When Mycenaean Linear B was deciphered by Michael Ventris, it was thought to be an archaic form of Greek, preceding Homer by almost five centuries. A name was proposed for it—"Old Achaean." However, a closer examination of Mycenaean resulted in a startling conclusion expressed by A. Tovar:

"But contrary to what we expect from Greek documents of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., the Mycenaean dialect is not seen to be closer to proto-Greek than are Homer or Thucydides. If sometimes Mycenaean shows very primitive features, it also sometimes appears more advanced than the dialects of the first millennium."<sup>1</sup> John Chadwick, who collaborated with Ventris in the decipherment of Linear B, writes: "Since 1952 important new work has modified the general view and this has entailed a shift of emphasis, and the abandonment of the name proposed for this dialect, 'Old Achaean.'"<sup>2</sup>

The Mycenaean Linear B dialect was found to be best preserved in the southern (Arcado-Cyprian) group, and to be distinct from the Ionian-Attic dialect; the theory that Mycenaean was the mother tongue of all Greek dialects

conflicts with the fact expressed in these words: "But Mycenaean presents many dialectal phenomena of quite recent aspect and is in some traits as far from 'common [early] Greek' as the dialects known a millennium later."<sup>3</sup>

Against the view of E. Risch that Mycenaean was the proto-language of all Greek dialects, Tovar writes: "The weak point in Risch's argument is that it ignores the fact that against the innovations which appear in Mycenaean (and Arcado-Cyprian), Ionic shows many old forms." E. Benveniste, too, expressed his criticism of the view of Mycenaean as proto-Greek, or "Old Achaeae":

It must be admitted that according to the hypothesis maintained by Risch during this period [the 450 years between the last Mycenaean texts and the first literary testimony in eighth-century Greek] a remarkable conservation of Mycenaean was upheld in its Arcado-Cypriote dialect and a profound evolution of Mycenaean in its Ionian dialect took place. Is it not more plausible to assume that in the epoch of our tablets the Ionian (not represented in the tablets) already substantially differed?<sup>4</sup>

Four hundred and fifty years passed between the last Mycenaean texts and the first literary testimony. Is not the confusion discussed here a result of this erroneous premise? If the true figure is something like sixty years and not five hundred, all perplexities disappear.

## References

[one](#)A. Tovar, "On the Position of the Linear B Dialect," *Mycenaean Studies*, ed. by E.L. Bennet, Jr. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1964). [two](#)J. Chadwick, *Decipherment*, p. 78. [three](#)Tovar, p. 146. [four](#)E. Benveniste in *Etudes myceniennes* (Paris, 1956) p. 263.

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# Cadmus

The classical Greek alphabet, its order of letters, and their form, were borrowed from the Hebrew-Phoenician alphabet; alpha, beta, gamma, delta, are but Grecized aleph, beth, gimel, dalet of the Hebrew language.<sup>1</sup>

In early times Greek was also written from right to left, as Hebrew is still written today.

Cadmus, the legendary hero who came to Greece from Phoenicia and founded Thebes in Boeotia, is credited with the introduction of the Hebrew or "Phoenician" alphabet to the Greek language; in its Hellenized early form the alphabet is called Cadmeian. As Herodotus tells the story,

The Phoenicians who came with Cadmus . . . introduced into Greece, after their settlement in the country, a number of accomplishments, of which the most important was writing, an art till then, I think, unknown to the Greeks. At first they used the same characters as all the other Phoenicians, but as time went on, and they changed their language, they also changed the shape of their letters. At that period most of the Greeks in the neighborhood were Ionians; they were taught these letters by the Phoenicians and adopted them, with a few alterations, for their own use, continuing to refer to them as the Phoenician characters—as was only right, as the Phoenicians had introduced them.<sup>2</sup>

However, Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, preceded by several generations the Trojan War; on this the Greek tradition is unanimous. Tradition also has it that the Cadmeian alphabet originally consisted of sixteen letters and that four additional characters were introduced later, about the time of the Trojan War.<sup>3</sup>

The Theban cycle of legends deals with the time preceding the Trojan War. Thebes in Boeotia was outside of the Mycenaean dominion. No contingent from Thebes participated with the other Greek cities in the Trojan War for, according to tradition, Thebes as a city had been reduced shortly before the new war started. With the conventional date of the Trojan War in the beginning of the twelfth century, Cadmus needed to be placed in the fourteenth: his dynasty comprised several generations of rulers before the Epigoni conquered and ruined the Boeotian Thebes; some of the Epigoni later participated in the siege of Troy.

This order of events in the semi-historical, semi-legendary Greek past conflicts with the fact that the Cadmeian alphabet has not been found in Greece before about the middle of the eighth century. Furthermore, because of certain characteristics in their form, the earliest Cadmeian letters bear the best resemblance to the Hebrew-Phoenician letters of the ninth century—as exemplified by the Mesha stele.<sup>4</sup>

But in Greece no inscription in Cadmeian letters was found that could be attributed to even so early a time as the ninth century. Therefore among the classical epigraphists a protracted debate was waged between those who claimed a date in the ninth century as the time the Cadmeian alphabet was introduced into Greece and those who claimed the seventh century.<sup>5</sup> Yet independently of the question whether the Cadmeian letters originated in the ninth or in the seventh century, it is generally agreed that the fourteenth century is out of the question;<sup>6</sup> but even should we follow the proponents of the earlier date—that of the mid-ninth century, we still would be at pains to harmonize dates so far apart as the ninth and fourteenth centuries, the date assigned to Cadmus. If the tradition about Cadmus, the originator of the Greek alphabet, has any historical value,<sup>7</sup> and if Cadmus lived in the ninth century, his descendants, participants in the Trojan War, could not have flourished about -1200.

## References

[one](#) Aleph means "ox" in Hebrew; *beth* means "house" etc. The corresponding letter names have no meaning in Greek. [two](#) Herodotus, *The Histories* V. 58 (transl. by A. de Selincourt, 1954). [three](#) [There were three traditions, each of which placed him at a different period—three, six or nine generations before the Trojan War. See R. B. Edwards, *Kadmos, the Phoenician* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 165f.—EMS] [four](#) King Mesha of Moab was a contemporary of King Ahab of Samaria. See *Ages in Chaos*, vol. I, Sections, "Mesha's Rebellion," and "The 'Great Indignation.'" [five](#) At that time the Cadmeian alphabet had not been found in Greece before the seventh century. However, since this debate between Carpenter and Ullman, an inscription of the middle of the eighth century has come to light, the earliest known inscription in Greek employing the Cadmeian letters. [six](#) Cf. the debate between Rhys Carpenter ("The Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet," *American Journal of Archaeology* 37 [1933] pp. 8-29) and B. Ullman ("How Old is the Greek Alphabet?" in *American Journal of Archaeology* 38 [1934] pp. 359-381). Cf. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *The Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet and Early Phoenician Scripts* (Ann Arbor, 1975). [Cf. also Carpenter's reply: "The Greek Alphabet Again" in the same journal, vol. 42 (1938) pp. 58-69. While Carpenter defended a date ca. -700 for the adoption of the alphabet by the Greeks, Ullman argued for "the eleventh or twelfth century or even earlier as the time for the introduction of the alphabet into Greece." A. Mentz ("Die Urgeschichte des Alphabets," *Rheinisches Museum fuer Philologie* 85 [1936] pp. 347-366) judged Ullman's proposed dates to be too low and suggested ca. -1400 as the date for the adoption of the alphabet, based on the Cadmus tradition. W. Doerpfeld, (*Alt-Olympia* II (Berlin, 1935) pp. 401-409), V. Berard *Les Pheniciens et l'Odysee* (Paris, 1927-28) held similar views. Cf. also Livio C. Stecchini, "The Origin of the Alphabet," *The American Behavioral Scientist* IV. 6 (February, 1961), pp. 2-7]. [seven](#) [M. C. Astour has suggested (*Hellenosemitica* [Leiden, 1967] p. ) that Linear B, the administrative script of the Mycenaean and Minoan, was what the later Greeks remembered as *phoinikeia grammata*, or "Phoenician letters," introduced by Cadmus. There appears to be little justification for such a view since the Linear B script had, as far as is known, no connection to Phoenicia, whereas the Greek alphabet was directly adapted from the ninth-eighth century Hebrew-Phoenician script. Herodotus' statement on the subject could not be less ambiguous. In the same book, Astour vigorously defends Cadmus' Phoenician origin (pp. 147ff.) Cf. J. Rason, "La Cadmee, Knossos et le lineaire B," *Revue archeologique* (1977) p. 79].

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## CHAPTER IV: A GAP CLOSED

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# Seismology and Chronology

Independently of my effort to construe a synchronical history starting with the common event that overwhelmed and vexed all nations of the globe—the great catastrophe that ended the Middle Kingdom—a similar effort was made by Claude F. A. Schaeffer, Professor at College de France. The reader of *Ages in Chaos* is familiar with his work of excavating Ras-Shamra (Ugarit) from the chapter carrying this title. He observed in Ras-Shamra on the Syrian coast obvious signs of great destruction that pointed to violent earthquakes, tidal waves, and other signs of a natural disaster. At the occasion of his visit to Troy, excavated by C. Blegen, Schaeffer became aware that Troy was destroyed by the elements—and repeatedly so—at the same times when Ras-Shamra was destroyed.

The distance from the Dardanelles, near which the mound of Troy lies, to Ras-Shamra is about six hundred miles on a straight line. In modern annals of seismology no earthquake is known to have affected so wide an area. Schaeffer investigated the excavated places in Asia Minor, and the archaeologists' reports, and in every place found the same picture. He turned his attention to Persia, farther to the East—and the very same signs of catastrophes were evident in each and every excavated place. Then he turned his attention to the Caucasus—and there, too, the similarity of the causes and effects was undeniable. In his own excavations on Cyprus he could once more establish the very same series of interventions by the frenzied elements of nature. He was so impressed by what he found that during the next few years he put into writing a voluminous work, *Stratigraphie comparee et chronologie de l'Asie occidentale (IIIe et IIe millenaires)*, published by Oxford University Press in 1948. In over six hundred pages supplemented by many tables, he presented his thesis.

Several times during the third and second millennia before the present era the ancient East was disturbed by stupendous catastrophes; he also found evidence that in the fourth, as well as in the first millennium, the ancient East went through great natural paroxysms, but their description Schaeffer reserved for future publications. In the published work covering the third and second millennia, Schaeffer discerned five or six great upheavals. The greatest of these took place at the very end of the Early Bronze, or the Old Kingdom in Egypt. At each of these occurrences, life was suddenly disturbed and the flow of history interrupted. Schaeffer also indicated that his acquaintance with European archaeology made him feel certain that Europe, too, was involved in those catastrophes; if so, they must have been more than continental—actually global in dimension.

Thus Schaeffer, like myself, came to the conviction that the ancient world was disturbed by repeated upheavals. We even arrived at the same number of disturbances, a common realization of their grandiose nature, and the same relative dating of these events. However, we came to the same conclusions travelling by entirely different routes. In this there was a considerable assurance of our having closely approached the historical truth.

A reader unequipped to follow Schaeffer through his large and technical volume may well let the the last chapter (*Resume et Conclusion*) impress him by its questions and answers. In concluding his book Schaeffer epitomized: "Our inquiry has demonstrated that these repeated crises which opened and closed the principal periods . . . were caused not by the action of man. Far from it—because, compared with the vastness of these all-embracing crises and their profound effects, the exploits of conquerors and all combinations of state politics would appear only very insignificant. The philosophy of the history of antiquity of the East appears to us singularly deformed"—namely, by describing the past of nations and civilizations as the history of dynasties, rather than as a history of great ages, and by ignoring the role physical causes played in their sequence.

As to the chronology—in his printed work Schaeffer follows with certain reservations, the accepted timetable. In correspondence, however, he envisaged the possibility of shortening the Egyptian history, but not to the extent claimed in *Ages in Chaos*. Then how can we be in agreement as to the times of the catastrophes?

The answer lies in the fact that both of us relate these catastrophes to the termination of the (identical) great periods in history. In other words, we are in agreement as to the relative chronology, not the absolute one.

At the end of his long discourse, Schaeffer also made clear his stand even before he became aware of my work. He wrote: "The value of absolute dates adopted by us depends, understandably, to an extent on the degree of precision obtained in the field of study of the historic documents that can be used for chronology and that derive from those collected in Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Persia."

Thus the absolute dates used in his work are dependent on chronology that in its turn depends on historical documents. But he adds: "On the other hand, thanks to the improvement of archaeological methods, today we no longer depend so completely on epigraphic documentation for an absolute chronology."

I regard myself very fortunate that the task of presenting the archaeological evidence from the lands of the Middle and Near East was performed by a scholar of great stature, Claude F. A. Schaeffer. The almost superhuman enterprise of unravelling the manifold ramifications of the recent tribulations of this planet was not committed all to one scholar.

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## Celestial Events in the Iliad

The eighth century, starting with -776, was together with the beginning of the seventh a period of great natural upheavals. Populations migrated, partly to Asia Minor, and other populations descended from the north. The siege of Troy might therefore have been an effort of the Greeks to plant a foothold on the coast of Asia Minor. The true time of the events recounted in the Iliad was the second half of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh centuries before the present era.

In *Worlds in Collision* an effort was made to recognize in the description of *theomachy* and of the natural phenomena that accompanied the battle of the gods, the events that took place in the sky and on earth between -747 and -687.<sup>1</sup>

The Trojan War was waged to the accompaniment of blows exchanged by the planetary gods—Earth (Hera), Moon (Aphrodite), Venus (Athene), Mars (Ares) and Jupiter (Zeus).

These celestial phenomena could not have taken place in the sky over Troy alone: the entire world had to witness the events, if they were not mere creations of the bard. That they were not can be deduced from the fact that these very events, witnessed in all parts of the world, are also described in sacred epics from Finland (*Kalevala*), Lapland and Iceland (*Edda*), from Mexico, Peru, India, the South Sea Islands, China and Japan, and, of course, by the poets and dramatists, annalists and astronomers, of the Near and Far East. It would require repeating close to two hundred pages of *Worlds in Collision*, actually the entire part II (Mars) of that book, should we desire here to evidence and illuminate this in some detail.

Perturbations in the celestial sphere, or Theomachy, in which Mars endangered the Earth at nearly regular intervals during this century, preoccupied the minds of men and repeatedly intervened in human history. Pestilence also broke out, and many references in the cuneiform literature ascribe its cause to Nergal (Mars). Earthquakes, overflowing, change of climate, evidenced by Klimasturz, did not spare a single land. These changes moved entire nations to migrations. Calendars were repeatedly thrown out of order and reformed—and the reader will find abundant material in the second part of *Worlds in Collision* and also in *Earth in Upheaval*, where no human testimony, but only the testimony of nature was presented; and this material could be multiplied by any dedicated researcher.

It appears, however, that in the Iliad Homer telescoped into a few weeks events that took place in the space of several decades. At least some of the events may be placed in a chronological order with the help of ancient Israelite sources: namely, on the day when King Ahaz was interred the motion of the Earth was disturbed so that the Sun set before its appointed time;<sup>2</sup> at the time of the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the days of Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, another disturbance occurred with the contrary effect: the Sun appeared to return several degrees to the east before proceeding on its regular westward path. It is asserted in the rabbinical literature that the second disturbance

rectified the effects of the first—and this is also the meaning of the sentence in Isaiah 38:8: "So the sun returned ten degrees by which degrees it was gone down."<sup>3</sup>

In Greek legendary tradition the first event took place in the days of the two brothers, Atreus and Thyestes, contesting the throne of Mycenae—when, according to Seneca, the Sun set earlier than usual.<sup>4</sup>

Yet a certain compression or amalgamating of two events, separated in time, must have taken place, for another version of the story tells of a reversal of the sun's motion. This version is recorded by Apollodorus and several other authors.<sup>5</sup>

The event described as the reversal of motion of the sun took place, as illuminated *Worlds in Collision*, on March 23rd, -687.<sup>6</sup>

The fixing of the event to the early spring of -687 is made on the strength of the information from Hebrew sources that the event took place on the night of Passover, during the second campaign of Sennacherib against Judah, the ninth campaign of his reign. The exact date for the last of this series of catastrophes<sup>7</sup> is provided by the records of the astronomical observations of the Chinese, where we learn that in the year -687, on the 23rd of March, "during the night the fixed stars did not appear, though the sky was clear. In the middle of the night stars fell like rain."<sup>8</sup>

This date is also confirmed by Roman sources—Romulus found his end during a celestial-terrestrial catastrophe connected with the planet Mars:

Both the poles shook, and Atlas lifted the burden of the sky . . . The sun vanished and rising clouds obscured the heaven . . . the sky was riven by shooting flames. The people fled and the king [Romulus] upon his father's [Mars'] steeds soared to the stars.<sup>9</sup>

Romulus was a contemporary of Hezekiah;<sup>10</sup> and the 23rd of March was the most important day in the Roman cult of Mars.<sup>11</sup>

We must not forget that the Romans and the Greeks worshipped their gods *in* the planets, not as gods *of* the planets. Invocations to the gods, such as the Homeric Hymn to Ares (Mars) are addressed directly to the planet as an astral power.<sup>12</sup>

The siege of Troy under Agamemnon followed by less than one generation the natural disturbances of the days of his father Atreus, when this king of Mycenae competed with his brother Thyestes for the crown of the realm and the Sun was disrupted in its motion.

Atreus and Thyestes, being contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah, and Agamemnon, son of Atreus, a contemporary of the latter king of Jerusalem, it seems that the time in which the drama of the Iliad was set was the second half of the eighth century, and not later than -687;<sup>13</sup> yet the poet condensed the events separated by decades into the tenth year of the Trojan siege, the time of the Iliad's action.<sup>14</sup>

Thus we come to realize that it was a rather late time; clearly Homer could not have lived before the events he described; and therefore Homer's time cannot be any earlier than the end of the eighth century. But more probably he wrote several decades after the Trojan War, when the events of the war had become enveloped in a veil due to a certain remoteness in time, and obtained a halo of heroic, god-like exploits. The Odyssey, describing the wanderings of Odysseus after the Trojan War, requires, too, a distancing between the poet and the Trojan War, on the assumption that both Homeric poems were the product of one author. If not of one, then we must assume that two poets of unique genius lived close in time to one another.

Placed in its true time, the Trojan War may obtain some historical plausibility; and, as we have seen, its mythological parts also serve, instead of obfuscation, to the elucidation of some complex chronological problems. With *theomachy* displayed on the celestial screen, the story in the Iliad gains, rather than loses, its historical validity.

## References

[one](#)See *Worlds in Collision*, section "When Was the Iliad Created?" [two](#)Tractate Sanhedrin 96a; Pirkei Rabbi Elieser 52. Cf. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, 1929) vol. VI, p. 367, n. 81. [three](#)Cf. II Kings 20:9ff.; Hippolytus on Isaiah, and sources cited above, fn. 1. [four](#)Seneca, *Thyestes*: "Not yet does Vesper, twilight's messenger, summon the fires of night . . . the ploughman with oxen yet unwearied stands amazed at his supper hour's quick coming." [Cf. Plato *The Statesman* 269a.] Apollodorus, Bk. II, ch. xii; cf. scholium to the Iliad II.106; Euripides, *Electra* 699-730; *Orestes* 996-1012; Plato, *The Statesman* 268e. See *Worlds in Collision*, section "March 23rd." [See also Iliad II 413ff. where an expected delay in the setting of the Sun during the siege of Troy is mentioned.] The other dates are -747, and -701; -776 is also connected with celestial events between Venus and Mars that did not, however, directly affect the Earth. See *Worlds in Collision*, p. E. Biot, *Catalogue general des etoiles filantes et des autres meteors observes en Chine apres le VIIe siecle avant J.C.* (Paris, 1846). The statement is based on old Chinese sources ascribed to Confucius. "The night was bright" adds the Tso Chuen commentary (J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics* vol. 15, p. 80. Ovid, *Fasti*, transl. by J. Frazer, Vol. II, lines 489ff. Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. XVIII, Chap. 27. W. W. Fowler, "Mars" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, s.v. "Ares." [thirteen](#)If to harmonize the involved chronological problems the debacle of Sennacherib's army needs to be placed fifteen years earlier (not in -687 but in -701), and the first invasion in -715, and the beginning of Hezekiah's reign in -729, then I would need to change the date for the last global catastrophe from -687 to -701 or -702. [See also *Worlds in Collision*, pp. 245-253. ". . . The time of the birth of the Iliad must be lowered to -747 at least, and probably to an even later date."] At least two conjunctions between Venus and Mars are described in the Iliad, in the Fifth and Twenty-first Books. See *Worlds in Collision*, pp. 252f.

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## Changes in Land and Sea

The celestial phenomena that pervade the narrative of the Iliad and even dominate it in books five, twenty and twenty-one, were accompanied also by terrestrial changes—Earth, called Hera, participated in the strife among the gods. In the Iliad these terrestrial disturbances are narrated too: earthquakes shook the Trojan plain amid the battle of the celestial gods.

Then terribly thundered the father of the gods and men from on high; and beneath did Poseidon cause the vast earth to quake and the steep crests of the mountains. All the roots of many-fountained Ida were shaken and all her peaks, and the city of the Trojans, and the ships of the Achaeans. And seized with fear in the world below was Aidoneus, lord of the shades . . . Lest above him the earth be cloven by Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, and his abode be made plain to view for mortals and immortals . . . So great was the din that arose when the gods clashed in strife.<sup>1</sup>

Strabo of the first century before the present era and Pliny of the first century of this era were well aware of the physical changes that the area of western Asia Minor and of the Aegean islands did undergo. Some of these changes are ascribed to the time of the Trojan War or the time closely preceding or following it; but others may refer to earlier upheavals.<sup>2</sup>

Strabo cited Democles "who recalls certain great earthquakes some of which long ago took place about Lydia and Ionia as far north as the Troad, and by their action not only were villages swallowed up, but Mount Sipylus was shattered—in the reign of Tantalus. And lakes arose from swamps, and a tidal wave submerged the Troad."<sup>3</sup>



Pliny described the changes in land and sea distribution. "Land is sometimes formed . . . rising suddenly out of the sea. Delos and Rhodes, islands which have now been long famous, are recorded to have risen up in this way. More lately there have been some smaller islands formed," and he names them: Anapha, Nea, Halone, Thera, Therasia,<sup>4</sup> Hieria, and Thia, the last of which appeared in his own time.<sup>5</sup>

Pindar said that "the isle of Rhodes was not yet to be seen in the open main, but was hidden in the briny depths of the sea"; then it was born in the darkness—the sun was absent. When the sun finally lighted the earth again, a plot of land was seen "rising from the bottom of the foaming main."<sup>6</sup>

Under the heading *Lands Which Have Been Separated by the Sea* Pliny mentions: "The sea has torn Sicily from Italy,<sup>7</sup> Cyprus from Syria, Euboea from Boeotia," and other similar instances.

Under the heading *Islands Which Have Been United to the Main Land* Pliny mentions Antissa which was added to Lesbos, Zephyrium to Halicarnassus, and the like in other places.

*Lands Which Have Been Totally Changed Into Seas:* the sea has totally carried off certain lands, and first of all, if we are to believe Plato, for an immense space where the Atlantic Ocean is now extended. More lately we see what has been produced by our inland sea; Acarnania has been overwhelmed by the Ambracian Gulf, Achaia by the Corinthian, Europe and Asia by the Propontis and Pontus. And besides these, the sea has rent asunder Leucas, Antirrhium, the Hellespont and the two Bospori."<sup>8</sup>

Pliny tells about *Cities Which Have Been Absorbed by the Sea:* Pyrrha and Antissa, Elice and Bura [on the Gulf of Corinth]<sup>9</sup> from the island of Cea the sea suddenly tore off 30,000 paces "with many persons on them." In like manner it carried off Eleusina in Boeotia, and half of the city of Tyndaris in Sicily.

And not to speak of bays and gulfs, the earth feeds on itself: it has devoured the very high mountain of Cybotus with the town of the Curites; also Sipylus in Magnesia, and formerly in the same place, a very celebrated city, which was called Tantalus.<sup>10</sup>

These descriptions by Pliny have corroborating references in other classical authors.<sup>11</sup>

Minor changes they were not: the Bosphorus tearing Asia apart from Europe, like the breaking of the Mediterranean into the Ocean at Gibraltar were major changes. Smaller changes where single cities were engulfed or isles born could have been the after-effects of the cataclysms, which for hundreds of years still agitated the distorted strata of the earth; even today they have not completely subsided. Some of these changes occurred earlier and some later, but for the most part they occurred in historical times; the memory of them survived, and the same testimony comes from all quarters of the globe.

In the effort to regard the fantastic events in the sky as pure invention or flights of poetic imagination, the terrestrial changes described by Homer were also kept out of the discussion. Actually, Carl Blegen rejected Wilhelm Doerpfeld's identification of Troy VI with the Troy of the siege because he found that the walls and structures of Troy VI had been destroyed by an earthquake apparently oblivious of the fact that the Iliad contains a description of an earthquake at the final stage of the siege.<sup>12</sup>

Thus Blegen became besieged by contradictions, derived from misinterpreting the Iliad and from following an erroneous chronology as well. To the confusion of the Furtwaengler-Doerpfeld debate,<sup>13</sup> a misreading of the Iliad brought more confusion, and made the tragedy complete.

## References

<sup>one</sup>*The Iliad*, transl. by A. T. Murray (1925), Bk. XX.56-67. <sup>two</sup>[For geological and archaeological evidence, see I. Velikovskiy, *Earth in Upheaval* (New York, 1955). Cf. Claude F. A. Schaeffer, *Stratigraphie Comparee*

(Cambridge, 1949). See also below, "Seismology and Chronology." ] [three](#) Strabo, *Geography*, transl. by H. L. Jones (1949), I. 3. 17; [Tantalus' reign is traditionally placed two generations before Atreus and Thyestes i.e., three generations before Agamemnon. Strabo goes on to tell of many other changes that occurred in the region of the Mediterranean, among them the opening up of the strait at the Pillars of Heracles, or Gibraltar.] [four](#) [The story of Thera and Therasia is told at greater length by Strabo: "For midway between Thera and Therasia fires broke forth from the sea and continued for four days, so that the whole sea boiled and blazed, and the fires cast up an island which was gradually elevated as though by levers and consisted of burning masses—an island with a stretch of twelve stadia in circumference. After the cessation of the eruption, the Rhodians, at the time of their marine supremacy, were first to venture upon the scene. . . ."—*Geography* I.3.16. On the great volcanic eruption on Thera in Late Minoan times, cf. the bibliography collected by S. Hiller, "Die Explosion des Vulkans von Thera," *Gymnasium* 82 (1975), pp. 32-74.] [five](#) Pliny, *Natural History*, transl. by J. Bostock and H.T. Riley (London, 1853), II.89. [six](#) Pindar, "Seventh Olympian Ode," transl. by J. E. Sandys (Loeb Classical Library, 1919). [seven](#) [Diodorus Siculus IV. 85: "Some say that great earthquakes occurred, which broke through the neck of the land and formed the straits [of Messina], the sea parting the mainland from the island." Cf. also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 290-91; Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales* VI. 29.] [eight](#) Pliny, *Natural History* II. 94. [nine](#) Cf. Strabo, *Geography* I.3.18; Pausanias II.25; Aristotle, *Meteorologica* I.6, II.8; Diodorus XV.49; Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales* VI.23,26; VII.5,16. [ten](#) Pliny, *Natural History* II. 93. [eleven](#) Cf. in addition to the works cited above Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Bk. VI *passim*, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Bk. XV. [twelve](#) C. W. Blegen et al., *Troy, Settlements VIIa, VIIb and VIII*, vol. IV (Princeton, 1958). [thirteen](#) See below, section "Olympia."

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## A Gap Closed

A chronology with centuries that never occurred made necessary the introduction of "Dark Ages" between the years -1100 and -750 in many areas of the ancient world; these upper and lower figures are already pulled together on the chronological timetable, and still some 400 years are unaccounted for—thus it is spoken of the "mysterious spell of Dark Ages."<sup>1</sup>

But when the hinges of history are fastened at correct levels the ghost centuries vanish and the chasm is shown to be imaginary.

Yet it cannot be denied that there was some interruption between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages in Greece and elsewhere; no smooth and evolutionary transition took place from the Mycenaean to the Ionian Age. There were great migrations in the eighth century and in the first part of the seventh. What kind of interruption, then, occurred in the entire ancient East?

In his book *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization*, (1966) Rhys Carpenter stands before observations made by a number of investigators in the archaeology of Greece and the Helladic islands and, after reviewing the evidence on the mainland in its various regions and on the islands, one by one, he comes to the conclusion:

"Despite the fact that there is no indication that the late Myceneans were driven out by any human intervention, they abandoned the south Aegean islands even as they deserted the central Peloponnese. For some reason and for some cause over which they had no control they found life in Greece and in the southern Aegean so unendurable that they could not remain."<sup>2</sup>

And Carpenter asks: "What caused them to evacuate their towns and villages?" From here on he gropes in the dark and asks, was it a pestilence or a famine, was it a change of climate? and he continues: "In the seventh book of his *History* Herodotus recounts that Crete was so beset by famine and pestilence after the Trojan War that it became virtually uninhabited until its resettlement by later inhabitants. Could Herodotus by any chance have had access to a true tradition?"<sup>3</sup>

There is a rather vague reference to the Dorian wandering: the Dorians migrated from Thrace and, moving presumably along the Adriatic coast, crossed into the Peloponnese and occupied Sparta, becoming the progenitors of

this severe and puritan tribe. In the absence of any other known cause for the cessation of the Mycenaean world, the Dorian invasion was considered as the most probable. But the Minoan civilization on Crete, which in the later stage showed much affinity with the Mycenaean, was also terminated; and the Dorian invasion was made to continue over the sea to Crete.

It was not the Dorians who dispossessed the original population of eastern and central Greece: "The Dorian Greeks," writes Carpenter, "seem to have moved into a depopulated land." (p. 16) ". . . The Dorians had nothing whatever to do with the collapse of Mycenaean civilization, since they did not enter the Peloponnese until long after the collapse had already taken place,"<sup>4</sup> It was some natural event: "A 'time of trouble' was occasioned by climatic causes that brought persistent drought with its attendant famine to most mainland Greece; and it was this unbelievable condition of their native abode that forced the Mycenaean to emigrate, ending their century-long prosperity." But was there any specific cause for the climatic change?

Carpenter surveys the available evidence: G. Welter, in a monograph on the island of Aegina, maintains that it became uninhabited after the Mycenaean Age. V. R. d'A. Desborough holds that the island of Melos had been abandoned by its Mycenaean inhabitants. Discussing the island of Kos, Desborough "was puzzled at finding 'no clue as to the cause of its final desertion' in Late Mycenaean times. 'There must have been some serious disaster,' he decides. . . . 'It can hardly be supposed that there was a complete depopulation, and yet there is no clear evidence of continuity into the Protogeometric period.'"<sup>5</sup>

Carpenter stresses here, too, "a definite instance of interruption of cultural continuity."<sup>6</sup>

In his search for climatic changes and physical upheavals Carpenter comes to cite three cases, during the Libyan and Ethiopian dynasties in Egypt, when unseasonal and excessive flooding took place in Egypt: in the eighth century, under the Libyan king Osorkon II, the Nile rose, breaking all the dykes;<sup>7</sup> in the days of Shabaka, the Delta was repeatedly flooded and earth was heaped against the towns to protect them;<sup>8</sup> and in the sixth year of Taharka, "the land was like the sea."<sup>9</sup>

But how could these instances in Egypt of the eighth and early seventh centuries help to understand what happened in Greece at the end of the Mycenaean Age if this end occurred shortly after -1200?

Carpenter goes on:

Even more spectacular, but somewhat insecure chronologically, is the inference from circumstantial evidence that the Hungarian plain, an immense tract of comparatively low-lying land in which a number of large rivers converge, must have become almost totally submerged early in the first millennium B.C. How else shall we explain the fact that the rich and active phase of the Hungarian Bronze Age known to archaeologists as Bronze IV and dated by Alberg as lasting from about 1000 to about 850 B.C. (the drought period in Greece!) met, in Alberg's words, 'an unexpected and sudden end . . . after which the country is without any discoverable sign of occupation and seems deserted'?<sup>10</sup>

The words in Carpenter's preface to his 1966 book reveal that were he to follow Plato, quoted by him, he would have been led to the realizations familiar to readers of *Worlds in Collision* and *Earth in Upheaval*. I quote from Plato's *Timaeus* in Carpenter's translation. The speaker is an Egyptian priest and the listener is Solon, one of the Seven Wise Men of antiquity.

. . . All this, though told in mythic guise, is true, inasmuch as a deviation of the celestial bodies moving past the earth does, at long intervals, cause destruction of earthly things through burning heat. . .

So this is the reason why among us here oldest traditions still prevail and whenever anything great or glorious or otherwise noteworthy occurs, it is written down and preserved in our temples; whereas among you and other nations that chance to be but

recently endowed with the art of writing and civilized needs, at stated turn of years there has recurred like a plague brought down upon you a celestial current, leaving only an unlettered and uncivilized remnant; wherefore you have to begin all over again, like children, without knowledge of what has taken place in older times either in our land or in yours. . . .<sup>11</sup>

As set forth at great length in *Worlds in Collision*, part II, the world in the eighth and seventh centuries before the present era was going through a series of natural catastrophes, with frightening apparitions in the sky, disturbances in the position and direction of the terrestrial axis, drastic changes in climate, and subsequent mass movements of populations. The Cimmerians descended from Russia into Asia Minor and engulfed the Phrygian kingdom. Dorians presumably reached Crete, Latins were pushed from their homeland into Italy by newly arrived tribes—these were only a few of the migrating hordes that then moved in many directions all around the globe. The Minoan civilization of Crete did not succumb to the Dorians; it succumbed to the ravages of nature, and if the Dorians reached the devastated island, it was only because in desperation they looked for any room to move into, and there was nobody able or willing to defend the island from invaders.

Digging on Crete Arthur Evans arrived at the conclusion that each of the various stages of civilization on the island had come to its end in enormous natural paroxysms until the last of the stages found its end in the overturned palaces and cities, not to be rebuilt again.<sup>12</sup>

The interruptions in the flow of Minoan civilization had baffled Evans until the day when he experienced an earthquake on Crete. Now he understood the nature of the agent of the destruction that he observed in the ruins of the palaces: the agent was not an enemy reaching the island; and from that moment Evans filled his volumes on Knossos (*The Palace of Minos*) with the evidence of seismic catastrophes that terminated the great ages of Minoan civilization.<sup>13</sup>

Spyridon Marinatos detected a devastation ascribed by him to an overwhelming wave coming from the north and sweeping over the mountainous island and carrying also ashes of volcanic eruptions.<sup>14</sup> "A normal earthquake, however, is wholly insufficient to explain so great a disaster."<sup>15</sup>

That climate changed, and repeatedly so, between the eighth and seventh centuries is well documented, and since the works of the Scandinavian scientists A. Blytt, R. Sernander<sup>16</sup> and others, and also of H. Gams and R. Nordhagen<sup>17</sup> of Germany, no effort needs to be spent to prove the point anew. The change was global, as the work of Helmut de Terra in Mexico<sup>18</sup> and the inquiry of C. E. P. Brooks and F. E. Zeuner<sup>19</sup> amply document. Of the changes in nature many eloquent descriptions were left by their contemporaries, by Assyrian annalists and Hebrew prophets, and also in many other documents of the literate peoples of the world.

Migrations were the consequences of destruction of domiciles, subsequent plagues, and of changes in climate that made agricultural experience dependent on former climates inapplicable. The climate in Europe that changed in the eighth century to dry and warm changed soon again to wet and cold.<sup>20</sup> This double change is documented equally well in the New World (Helmut de Terra).<sup>21</sup>

The upheavals of nature continued through the major part of the eighth century and climaxed in the last great cosmic disturbance which I was able to date on March 23rd, -687.<sup>22</sup>

The Mycenaean age came to its end in the catastrophic events of the eighth and seventh centuries—thus there were no Dark Ages between the Mycenaean Age and the Greek or Ionian Age. Whether the catastrophic changes that accompanied and followed these upheavals were by themselves enough to cause the end of the Mycenaean Age, or whether the migrations and invasions contributed, the great Mycenaean age came to its close not before the eighth century was over. There were no dark ages in between.

Certain changes did take place between the end of the Mycenaean and the beginning of the Ionian ages—but they are better understood not by assuming four or five hundred intervening dark years, but by the very fact of

dislocations created by catastrophes. Cities with their palaces crumbled; surviving populations migrated and were partly replaced by new settlers—in the case of Greece by the Dorian invaders, the returning Heraclid Greeks who at an earlier date had migrated northward.

These upheavals of nature were responsible for the break in continuity that is found in Greece, in Asia Minor and in many other places. There was a disruption in occupation of lands and a discontinuity in civilizations. But there were no Dark Ages and the four centuries inserted between the Mycenaean and Greek periods are unreal. Thus we have the explanation of the fact that so much in common is found in the late Mycenaean and early Greek ages, and also an explanation of the fact that no literary relics and scarcely any archaeological ones are found from the four or five centuries of the presumed Dark Ages, and yet that, on the other hand, there *was* some break in continuity.

## References

[one](#)M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," *Journal of American Archaeology* vol 63, no. 1 (January, 1959). [two](#)R. Carpenter, *The Discontinuity in Greek Civilization*, (Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 58. [three](#)*Ibid.*, p. 59; Herodotus VII. 171. [four](#)P. 52. [V. R. d'A. Desborough emphasizes that the abandoned sites were not occupied by any other race: "Nowhere is there any evidence of settlement by new peoples." This fact "has very serious consequences for the traditional conception of the Dorian invasion." See *The Last Mycenaean and Their Successors* (London, 1964), pp. 251-252. Cf. idem, "History and Archaeology in the Last Century of the Mycenaean Age," *Incunabula Graeca* XXV.3 (1968), pp. 1076-77; E. Vermeule, "The Decline and End of Minoan and Mycenaean Culture" in *A Land Called Crete* (Northampton, Mass., 1967), p. 86; A. Andrewes, *The Greeks* (London, 1967), p. 33.] [five](#)Carpenter, *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization*, p. 58; Desborough, *The Last Mycenaean and Their Successors*, pp. 157-58.. [six](#)Carpenter, loc. cit. [seven](#)*Ibid.*, p. 72. [J. R. Breasted, *The Ancient Records of Egypt*, (Chicago, 1906), IV, Sec. 743. Cf. J. Vandier, *La famine dans l'Egypte ancienne* (1936), p. 123. The date of this inundation, calculated by Carpenter, is -776, the very year assigned to the first Olympiad; however, the basis of this calculation is the accepted chronology of the Libyan Dynasty, which is questionable. The description of the inundation may actually refer to a later upheaval.] [eight](#)Carpenter, loc. cit.; Herodotus (II. 137) describes the construction of massive earthworks during the reign of Sabacon (Shabaka); these were evidently flood control measures. [nine](#)Carpenter, loc. cit.; cf. the Coptos Stele of Taharka in V. Vikentiev, *La haute crue du Nil et l'averse de l'an 6 du roi Taharqa* (Cairo, 1930). [ten](#)Carpenter, *Discontinuity*, p. 74. [eleven](#)Carpenter, *Discontinuity*, p. vii; the quoted passages are from *Timaean* 22 C-D and 23 A-B; cf. *Worlds in Collision*, section "Phaethon." [twelve](#)Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* (1921-1935); cf. *Earth in Upheaval*, section "Crete." [thirteen](#)*Earth in Upheaval*, section "Crete." [fourteen](#)Marinatos, "The Volcanic Destruction of Minoan Crete," *Antiquity* XIII (1939), pp. 425ff. [For a review of the extensive literature, cf. Hiller, "Die Explosion des Vulkans von Thera," *Gymnasium* 82 (1975), pp 32-74. L. Pomerance has suggested that the collapse of Thera and the resulting tsunami devastated not only Crete, but the entire East Mediterranean basin at the end of the Late Helladic IIIB ceramic phase—*The Final Collapse of Santorini (Thera)*, *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* vol. XXVI (Goeteborg, 1970).] [fifteen](#)Marinatos, "The Volcanic Destruction of Minoan Crete," p. 429. [sixteen](#)R. Sernander, "Klimaverschlechterung, Postglaziale" in *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte* ed. Max Ebert, VII (1926). [seventeen](#)"Postglaziale Klimaaenderungen und Erdkrustenbewegungen in Mittel-Europa," *Mitteilungen der geographischen Gesellschaft in Muenchen*, vol. XVI, no.2 (1923), pp. 13-348. [eighteen](#)*Man and Mammoth in Mexico* (London, 1957). [nineteen](#)Brooks, *Climate through the Ages* 2nd edition (New York, 1949); Zeuner, *The Pleistocene Period* (London, 1945). [twenty](#)[Carpenter dated the change to a dry climate to before -1200; he posited "a northward shift of the Saharan drought zone into southern Europe," (p. 10) with the resulting famine causing the abandonment of large areas, no longer able to sustain the large populations characteristic of late Mycenaean times. The shift was reversed, in his view, in the eighth century, with the return of a wet climate. Carpenter's inability to explain the cause of these shifts has invalidated his thesis in the eyes of many of his colleagues—cf. H. E. Wright, "Climatic Change in Mycenaean Greece," *Antiquity* 42 (1968), p. 126. For a recent review of the physical evidence for Carpenter's thesis, see R. A. Bryson, H. H. Lamb and D. L. Donley, "Drought and the Decline of Mycenae" in *Antiquity* 48 (1974), pp. 46-50. Cf. P. Betancourt, "The End of the Greek Bronze Age," *Antiquity* 50 (1976), pp. 40-45. Cf. also J. Camp, "A Drought in the Late Eighth Century B.C." in *Hesperia* 48 (1979). The shifts in the Earth's climatic zones, if real, would have been a direct consequence of shifts in the

inclination of the terrestrial axis in the eighth and early seventh centuries, as documented in *Worlds in Collision* (esp. sections "Poles Uprooted" and "A Hemisphere Travels Southward") and in *Earth in Upheaval*.] [twenty-one](#) *Man and Mammoth in Mexico*, p. 76. [twenty-two](#) *Worlds in Collision*, section "March 23rd."

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## Competing for a Greater Antiquity

The date of Trojan War is traditionally placed in the beginning of the twelfth century before the present era: this tradition goes back to Eratosthenes, a Greek scholar in the employ of Ptolemy III Euergetes in the third pre-Christian century. He calculated that the last year of the ten-year-long siege of Troy fell in the year that in the modern calendar corresponds to -1183.<sup>1</sup>

This date is still upheld today by many scholars—a very unusual case of adherence to a chronological computation made over twenty-two centuries ago, and dealing with an event presumably nine hundred years earlier.<sup>2</sup> In antiquity some other, differing calculations were made, too,<sup>3</sup> but that of Eratosthenes survived until our time as the conventional date of Troy's fall. Only in recent years has a trend showed itself among the Homeric scholars to remove the date in question by a few decades into the past<sup>4</sup>—into the thirteenth century: with the chronological scheme arranged according to the timetable of Egyptian history, certain advantages were seen in moving the Trojan War to greater antiquity than the inroad of the Peoples of the Sea into Egypt, computed to have taken place in -1174.<sup>5</sup> Eratosthenes, however, did not connect in any way the events that took place in the days of Ramses III with the Trojan expedition.

Was there any special intent in Eratosthenes' effort to place the Trojan War more than nine centuries before his own time? If his motive was to prove that the Greeks were an ancient nation, then his reasoning should be viewed as tendentious. This is, in fact, the case.

When the Greeks under the leadership of Alexander of Macedon subjugated Mesopotamia and Egypt, and soon thereafter established there Greek dynasties of Seleucus and Ptolemy, and introduced the Greek language and Hellenistic civilization, the erudites in what was once Babylonia and equally so in Egypt felt an urge to prove to their conquerors that they, the conquered, belonged to cultures more exalted, because more ancient. Berosus, a Chaldean priest who flourished in Babylon in the first part of the third century, wrote his famed *Babyloniaca*, or, as History of Babylonia and Chaldea, and in it he stretched the history of his land and nation to a gargantuan length. In order to do so he ascribed unnatural lengths of reign to earlier kings and also invented kings (his list largely disagrees with the cuneiform king-lists).<sup>6</sup>

Manetho—a Greek-writing Egyptian, and a contemporary of Berosus—composed under Ptolemy II Philadelphus the story of his nation, and a few passages from it are preserved by Josephus; his genealogies of kings and dynasties are preserved in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, Pamphilus, Eusebius, and Julius Africanus.<sup>7</sup>

The regnal years ascribed to single Manethonian dynasties (30 in number until shortly before the arrival of Alexander in Egypt) are excessively long: kings are often invented—no monumental confirmation of the existence of many of them was ever found; complete dynasties were invented by him, too. Like Berosus, Manetho tried to impress the Greek masters with the fact that his nation was already ancient when the Greeks only began to emerge from their barbarous state.

Such an attitude toward the Greeks was already expressed almost three centuries earlier in the narrative of the priest of Sais to Solon as told in the *Timaeus* by Plato. Because of written records stored in their temples, the Egyptians were aware of the past of their land, "so this is why among us here oldest traditions still prevail, and whenever anything great or otherwise noteworthy occurs, it is written down and preserved in our temples, . . . [but] you and other nations that chance to be but recently endowed with the art of writing and civilized needs at stated turn of years there has recurred like a plague brought down upon you, a celestial current, leaving only an unlettered and uncivilized remnant, wherefore you have to begin all over again like children, without knowledge of what has taken place in older times in our land or in yours. . ."<sup>8</sup>

The same pride in the antiquity of the nation is found also in the narrative of another priest of Sais, a hundred years later, who gave the following account to Herodotus: From their first king until Sethos, the king-priest who was about to meet Sennacherib in battle when the latter's host was destroyed by a natural cause, 341 generations passed. Calculating three generations to a century, Herodotus found that it would comprise 11,340 years<sup>9</sup>—quite a long time if we should consider that from the foundation of Rome to the present day not even a quarter of such time has passed.

When the Egyptians came under foreign domination they experienced an even greater need to impress their masters with the excellence of their culture and its duration, in order not to be counted as barbarians; they wished to provoke and sustain a feeling of admiration on the part of the subjugators. Such claims could produce in the Greeks a feeling of their own inadequacy and inferiority—they had, since their first contacts with the Egyptians, developed for them a feeling of respect bordering on awe, whereas to the Persians, despite the magnificence of their court and bearing, the Greeks applied the name "barbarians." With excessive claims as to national antiquity the orientals were combatting their own feelings of shortcomings as politically subordinate nations.<sup>10</sup>

Eratosthenes was a contemporary of Manetho and Berossus. Born in Cyrenaica, he was of Greek origin. In his calculations of the time of the Trojan War he was evidently guided by the same motive as Berossus and Manetho, namely, to show the antiquity of his nation; the date of -1183 for the end of the Trojan War served that purpose.<sup>11</sup>

The "Dark Age" inserted between the Mycenaean and Ionic ages originated in the old calculations performed by Eratosthenes as to the time of the Trojan War, and on the reliance of modern historians of Greece on Egyptian chronology and order of dynasties as offered by Manetho; both them lived in Egypt in the Ptolemaic age in the third century before the present era. It is not excluded that Eratosthenes based himself on Manetho.<sup>12</sup>

However, neither Eratosthenes, nor before him Homer, nor any other Greek historian or philosopher ever referred to such a Dark Age;<sup>13</sup> it is a creation of modern historians. But they found support for its historical existence in the Egyptian chronology built on Manetho's list of dynasties—the Mycenaean Age was dated by the archaeologically documented contacts of Mycenaean sites with Egypt. Thus Eratosthenes found support in Manetho and Manetho in Eratosthenes.<sup>14</sup>

## References

<sup>one</sup>Eusebius, *Chronicle* in Eusebius, *Werke* (Leipzig, 1913), vol. VII, p. 60. Cf. J. Forsdyke, *Greece Before Homer* (London, 1956) pp. 28ff. <sup>two</sup>[A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines, and Greeks: B.C. 1400-900* (London, 1930) pp. 52-54: "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the traditional date of the Trojan War, 1194-84, adopted by Eratosthenes and more or less tentatively accepted in so many modern books, is absolutely worthless" being based on Eratosthenes' "wild overestimate of the average length of a generation." Cf. idem, "Dates in Early Greek History," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 55 (1935) pp. 130-146. Cf. also D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (University of California Press, 1959) p. 96, n. 159: "(the date) given by Eratosthenes is nothing but a guess proceeding from flimsy premises which could not possibly have led to a scientific calculation." Another writer adds: "sober historical judgement must discard the ancient chronological schemes *in toto*; they are nothing more than elaborate harmonizations of myths and legends which were known in later times and have no independent value whatever for historical purposes." (G. Starr, *The Origins of Greek civilization: 1100-650 B.C.* (New York, 1961) p. 67.] <sup>three</sup>Herodotus, for instance, put the Trojan War a little more than 800 years before his time, or ca. -1250. Appian dated it after the founding of Rome, traditionally put at -753 or -747. <sup>four</sup>C. Blegen et al., *Troy*, vol. IV (1958) pp. 10-13 and idem, "The Mycenaean Age. The Trojan War, the Dorian Invasion, and Other Problems," *Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple* (Princeton, 1967) p. 31. Cf. also G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966) p. 215. <sup>five</sup>See I. Velikovskiy, *Peoples of the Sea*, (Doubleday: New York, 1977). <sup>six</sup>P. Schnabel, "Die babylonische Chronologie in Berossos Babyloniaca," *Mitteilungen, Vorderasiatisch-ägyptische Gesellschaft* (1908). See also F. Cornelius, *Berosus und die Altorientalische Chronologie*, *KLIO* 35 (1942) pp. 1ff. <sup>seven</sup>See the volume *Manetho* in the Loeb Classical Library. <sup>eight</sup>Transl. by Rhys Carpenter in *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization*

(Cambridge University Press, 1966) p. vii. [nine](#)Herodotus II. 142. [ten](#)Isaac Newton (*The Chronologyes of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, [London, 1728]) recognized this hidden intent of Berosus and Manetho and therefore refused to give them credence as chronographers. Cf. Frank Manuel, *Isaac Newton, Historian* (Harvard University Press, 1963). [eleven](#)[Eratosthenes allegedly relied on the Spartan king-lists to establish his chronology; in part he may have been influenced also by Manetho. But since the date he gives is identical to that computed by Ctesias, it is acknowledged that it was Ctesias' writings which actually formed the basis of Eratosthenes' system. Since antiquity scholars have questioned the reliability of Ctesias. Cf. the opinion of Plutarch in his *Life of Artaxerxes*; also Forsdyke, *Greece Before Homer*, pp. 68-79.] [twelve](#)[Eratosthenes became librarian of the Library of Alexandria in -240, and must have had access to Manetho's writings.] [thirteen](#)V. R. d'A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London, 1972) p. 321; A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh, 1971) pp. 1-21. [fourteen](#)[As early as the fifth century, writers like Hekataeus and Herodotus (II.145) put the Trojan War into the 14th-12th centuries—they, too, were misled by the Egyptians. See for example the above-mentioned story told to Herodotus by a priest of Sais.]

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## Summing Up

Having started on a journey that first took us to Mycenae, but then also to Tiryns, Olympia, Pylos and a number of other ancient sites on the mainland of Greece and the Peloponnesos, also on Crete, Cyprus, the Troad and the interior of Asia Minor, we found at all sites one and the same embarrassing problem: close to five hundred years between conflicting evidences or discordant views. The list of archaeological sites discussed could be enlarged to encompass almost every excavated place in the area, with hardly any of them standing a chance of escaping the very same perplexing state of affairs.<sup>1</sup>

What I call here "the perplexing state of affairs" often took the form of a dispute—to which of the two ages, separated by nearly half a millennium, does a stratum, a building, or a tomb belong? The holders of conflicting views are usually at equal disadvantage in meeting archaeological facts that, with the conventional chronological scheme not questioned, point simultaneously to two widely separated ages. Was Tiryns' palace rebuilt in the Mycenaean or in the Ionic Age—in other words, in the Bronze Age or in the Iron Age? And if the first alternative is selected, how could it be that for almost five hundred years the building lay abandoned, unoccupied by any of the twenty intermediate generations, since they left nothing of their own, no relic whatsoever? The alternative situation is equally beset with perplexing evidence.

Are the Mycenaean lions, carved in the peculiar position of standing erect on their hind legs facing a pillar that divides them, contemporary with similar Phrygian monumental sculptures, and if not, how does one explain the many centuries' gap? How is it that the wall of the Phrygian Gate at Gordion is built like that of Troy VI, if some five hundred years separate them? In what way does one explain the affinity of Mycenaean art of the pre-twelfth century with the art of Scythia, the Danubian region, and Etruria of the eighth and seventh centuries? Was the great strife between Furtwaengler and Doerpfeld ever resolved? Because two timetables are applied simultaneously to the past of Greece, a clash of opinions is almost inevitable.

How is it that Greece and the entire Aegean area of the Mycenaean Age suddenly became depopulated, with scarcely any traces of human activity surviving? And if such was the case, how is it that so many details of Mycenaean life, habits and armaments were well known to Homer who knew equally well the life, habits, and armaments of the eighth and seventh century, though a Dark Age of several centuries' duration intervened?

When the decipherment of the Mycenaean Linear B script, to the surprise of many Hellenist scholars proved the language to be Greek, the so-called Homeric problem did not approach a solution but, contrariwise, grew more urgent, more enigmatic, more perplexing. The historians were startled because the Minoan-Mycenaean inscriptions are ascribed by them at the latest to the twelfth century, and the earliest Greek texts were of the eighth century. How could a people that was already literate forfeit its literacy so completely for over four hundred years?



The very fact that none of the Greek philosophers, historians, geographers, statesmen or poets ever referred to a Dark Age preceding the Ionic Age and separating it from the Mycenaean Age, should have been enough to cast doubt on the soundness of the overall construction.

Wherever we turn—poetry, arms, architecture, arts—the same Nemesis disturbs the excavator, the explorer and the critic, and from all sides the very same problem in various forms mockingly stares in the face of all of them, whatever their persuasion.

Where lies the root of all this confusion, a root hidden from sight and discussion? The Mycenaean Age in Greece and in the Aegean, as well as the Minoan Age on Crete, do not have an absolute chronology of their own, and this is not disputed. As I have already stressed on several occasions on preceding pages, the dating depends on contacts with other countries that have an absolute chronology of their own, and Egypt was selected for that purpose.<sup>2</sup>

When a cartouche of Queen Tiy was found at Mycenae, that stratum was dated accordingly to ca. -1400. When in the short-lived city of Akhet-Aton, built by Akhnaton and abandoned in the same generation, Mycenaean ware was found in profusion, the ware was regarded as contemporary with Akhnaton, and was dated to the fourteenth century. We have already dwelt on the subject, but it needs repetition in the light of what was brought to discussion all through the foregoing chapters and sections. In an extended examination of the Egyptian chronology its structure was put on a scale and found wanting. Now it is clear that if there is a miscalculation in Egyptian datings, the error must have spread through more than one land and vitiated more than one nation's chronology.

The problem is once more thrown to Egypt. In *Ages in Chaos* we have seen that, with the fall of the Middle Kingdom and the Exodus synchronized, events in the histories of the peoples of the ancient world coincide all along the centuries.

For a space of over one thousand years records of Egyptian history have been compared with the records of the Hebrews, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and finally with those of the Greeks, with a resulting correspondence which denotes synchronism.

In Volume I of *Ages in Chaos* it was shown in great detail why Akhnaton of the Eighteenth Dynasty must be placed in the latter part of the ninth century. If Akhnaton flourished in -840 and not in -1380, the ceramics from Mycenae found in the palace of Akhnaton are younger by five or six hundred years than they are presumed to be, and the Late Mycenaean period would accordingly move forward by about half a thousand years on the scale of time. If the ages of Amenhotep III, of Tiy and of Akhnaton, need to be reduced by about five hundred years, classical studies could take a deep breath.

Actually, when in the eighties of the nineteenth century, the Hellenists were coerced, upon the evidence presented by Egyptologists, to introduce those five dark centuries, they did it only after a period of protest and resistance. But now that three generations of historians have lived with those dark centuries as a historical reality, it is even more difficult to part with them. Nevertheless, sooner or later, they will have to part with the phantom centuries, and have the history of Greece and the development of its writing as a normal process without a four-hundred-year gap.

The conclusion at which we have arrived is this: between the Mycenaean and the Ionian Ages there was no Dark Age, but one followed the other, with only a few decades intervening. The natural catastrophes of the eighth century and of the beginning of the seventh brought an end to the civilization that centered at Mycenae in Greece, to cities and citadels and kingdoms; even the profile of the Greek mainland changed and many islands submerged and others emerged. These changes moved entire nations to migrations in the hope that beyond the horizon fertile lands, not damaged by unchained forces of nature, awaited the conquerors. This explains the break in continuity—the change is not due to some intervening dark ages that left no vestige of themselves, but to the paroxysms of nature and the migrations.

Classical studies have been troubled by many unresolved situations, archaeological and cultural. The field has been plagued by the presence of the Dark Age—a presence only schematic, never in effect. It engendered and continues

to engender an ever-growing scholarly literature. If it can be shown that the Egyptian timetable is off its hinges, the bondage of these studies and their dependence on Egypt may terminate.

The removal of the Dark Age from the historical sequence unshackles what was for centuries shackled and releases the scholarly endeavor from travelling on the same circular paths with no exit from the modern version of the Cretan Labyrinth. Moreover, it rehabilitates scholars accused of ignorance or negligence, their having been guilty only of not perceiving that the problems they dealt with were not problems at all, as soon as unreal centuries are stricken out.

## References

[one](#) See the article of Israel M. Isaacson, "Applying the Revised Chronology," *Pensee* Vol. IV, no. 4 (1974), pp. 5-20. [two](#) "The Aegean prehistorians have no choice but to adapt themselves to the Egyptologists"—J. Cadogan, "Dating the Aegean Bronze Age Without Radiocarbon," *Archaeometry* 20 (1978) p. 212.

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