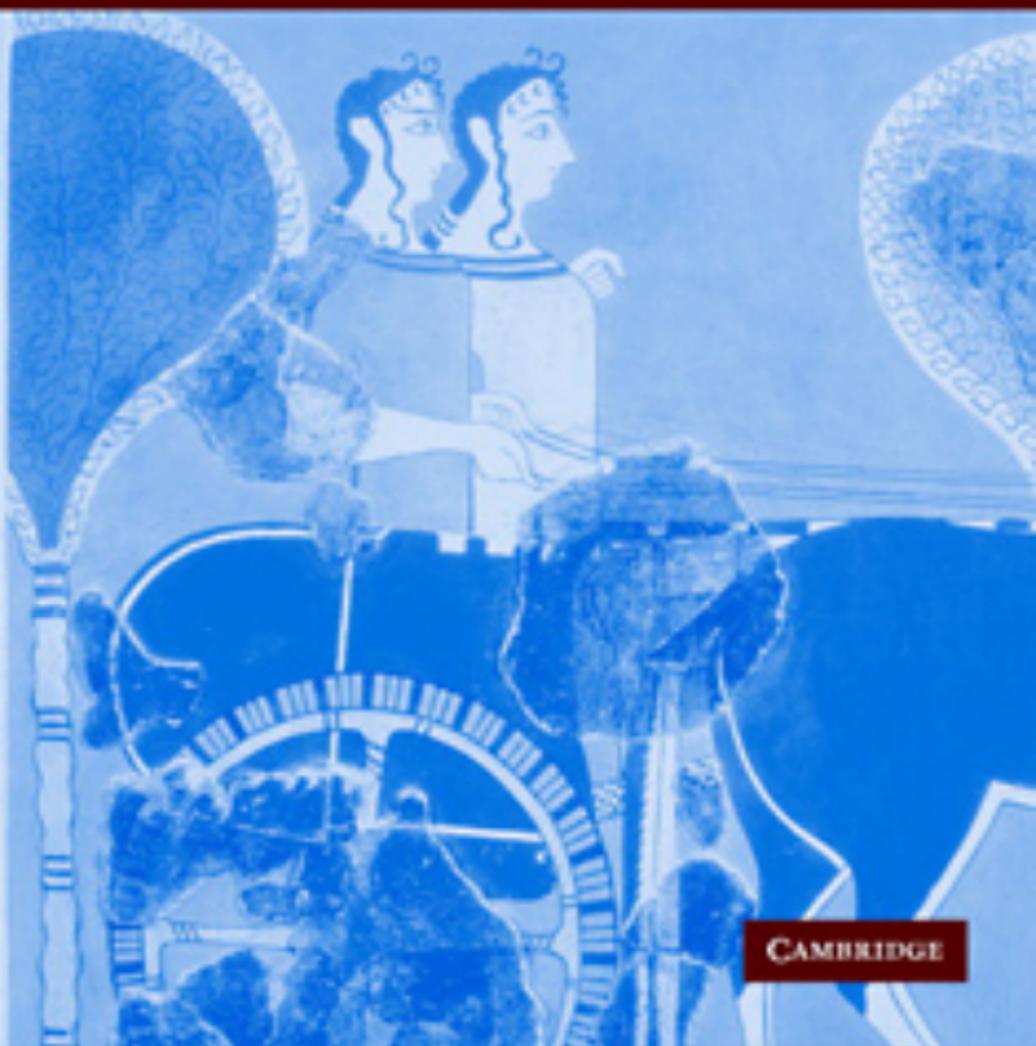


Greeks and Pre-Greeks

Aegean Prehistory and Greek Heroic Tradition

MARGALIT FINKELBERG



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GREEKS AND PRE-GREEKS

By systematically confronting Greek tradition of the Heroic Age with the evidence of both linguistics and archaeology, Margalit Finkelberg proposes a multi-disciplinary assessment of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural situation in Greece in the second millennium BC. The main thesis of this book is that the Greeks started their history as a multi-ethnic population group consisting of both Greek-speaking newcomers and the indigenous population of the land, and that the body of 'Hellenes' as known to us from the historic period was a deliberate self-creation. The book addresses such issues as the structure of heroic genealogy, the linguistic and cultural identity of the indigenous population of Greece, the patterns of marriage between heterogeneous groups as they emerge in literary and historical sources, the dialect map of Bronze Age Greece, the factors responsible for the collapse of the Mycenaean civilisation and, finally, the construction of the myth of the Trojan War.

MARGALIT FINKELBERG is Professor of Classics at Tel Aviv University. Her previous publications include *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* (1998).

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY PARENTS
τοὺς ζωοὺς κατέλειπον ἰοῦσ' ἐς Ἴλιον ἱρήν

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Preface

It is almost impossible for a Homerist not to become involved, at one stage or another, in the world that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* purport to describe. My own interest in Aegean prehistory was first aroused by reading Denys Page's *History and the Homeric Iliad* many years ago. Gradually, the unqualified acceptance of Page's interpretation and conclusions as regards the relationship between the Homeric tradition and the Aegean Bronze Age gave way to systematic questioning of the assumptions from which he proceeded, which eventually led to conclusions diametrically opposed to those arrived at by Page. This, however, does not diminish the impact that his singularly stimulating book had on my work.

This book was long in the making. A number of the arguments found in it have appeared in various publication venues since 1988, but it was not until 1998 that they combined to form a larger thesis. The active participation in discussions which took place on AegeaNet, a discussion group on the prehistoric Aegean moderated by John Younger, during this very year was undoubtedly one of the factors that stimulated me to consolidate the ideas from which this book developed, and it was in 1998 again, at the Seventh International Aegean Conference held in Liège, that its main thesis was first presented. I am also much indebted to the Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem, where I spent six months in 1999 as a member of the international research group on Mechanisms of Canon-Making in Ancient Societies. The exposure to the canonical texts of other civilisations and historical periods, as well as the exchange of ideas with scholars in other fields that I experienced during this period, enlarged my horizons and gave me a fuller understanding of the role of Homer as both the custodian of the past and its creator.

The first draft of this book was completed during my term as a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, in 1999–2000. I have no doubt that the amiable atmosphere and the ideal working conditions provided by the College, as well as the first-class scholarly facilities of the University of

Oxford, were the very factors that allowed me to bring my work to completion, and I am taking this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls. Martin West was the first to read the manuscript and to comment on it; in many respects his criticism and suggestions determined the directions in which the original version was subsequently revised. Aryeh Finkelberg read each one of the new versions that appeared in the subsequent years, and his thorough and often devastating criticism was in fact the main reason why these new versions continued to emerge. Deborah Boedeker, Benjamin Isaac, Emily Lyle, David Shulman and Calvert Watkins read either the entire manuscript or parts of it, and shared with me their suggestions and queries. Among those with whom different aspects of my argument were discussed, and sometimes disputed, the points made by Elizabeth Barber, Robert Drews, Irad Malkin, Sarah Morris, Thomas Palaima, Itamar Singer and Judith Weingarten have proved especially helpful; more specific contributions of other colleagues are acknowledged in the footnotes to the relevant sections of the text. I am grateful to audiences in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Oxford, Edinburgh, Princeton, St John's and Halifax, before whom different parts of this book were presented, for their discussion and comments. I am also grateful to the Cambridge University Press team – Sinead Moloney, Anna-Marie Lovett, Jackie Warren and others whose names I do not know – for their devoted work on the production of this difficult volume, and especially to Bernard Dod for his collaboration, which went far beyond the original target of copy-editing and has led to many improvements in my argument and presentation of the material. My special thanks go to Michael Sharp, whose creative editorship has resulted in what I see as a considerable improvement of the whole book and eventually to the present version.

I am grateful to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for the permission to reproduce Maps 1a, b and 2a, b ('Suffixes *-ss-* and *-nd-* in Anatolia and Greece'), first published in Fritz Schachermeyr, *Ägäis und Orient* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Denkschriften, 93. Bd.: Graz and Vienna, 1967), pp. 13–15, and the University of California Press for the permission to reproduce Map 5 ('Greece according to the Homeric Catalogue of Ships'), first published in Denys Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1959), between pp. 124 and 125.

Some of the material of this book first appeared in the following publications:

- 'Ajax's entry in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*', *CQ* 38 (1988): 31–41;
 'Royal succession in heroic Greece', *CQ* 41 (1991): 303–16;
 'The dialect continuum of ancient Greek', *HSCP* 96 (1994): 1–36;
 'Anatolian languages and Indo-European migrations to Greece', *CW* 91 (1997): 3–20;
 'The Brother's Son of Tawananna and others: the rule of dynastic succession in the Old Hittite Kingdom', *Cosmos* 13 (1997): 127–41;
 'Bronze Age writing: contacts between East and West', in *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium*, ed. E. H. Cline and D. Harris-Cline (Liège, 1998): 265–72.
 'Greek epic tradition on population movements in Bronze Age Greece', in *POLEMOS. Warfare in the Aegean Bronze Age*, ed. R. Laffineur (Liège, 1999): 31–6;
 'Homer as a foundation text', in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond. Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Finkelberg and G. Stroumsa (Leiden, 2003): 75–96.

All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

Abbreviations

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
<i>AASOR</i>	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>AF</i>	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BMCR</i>	<i>Bryn Mawr Classical Review</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CAJ</i>	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
<i>CPh</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>CS</i>	<i>Cretan Studies</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
<i>HAB</i>	F. Sommer and A. Falkenstein, <i>Die hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattusili I</i> (Munich, 1938)
<i>HSCPh</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IF</i>	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JIES</i>	<i>Journal of Indo-European Studies</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>KBo</i>	Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazkoi (Leipzig and Berlin)
<i>KUB</i>	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazkoi (Berlin)
<i>MH</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>

M-W	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, <i>Fragmenta Hesiodica</i> (Oxford, 1967)
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
OA	<i>Oriens Antiquus</i>
OJA	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
PCPhS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
REG	<i>Revue des Etudes grecques</i>
RHA	<i>Revue hittite et asianique</i>
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SMEA	<i>Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici</i>
ST	<i>Studia Troica</i>
TLS	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i>
TPhS	<i>Transactions of the Philosophical Society</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

CHAPTER I

Introduction

LEGEND, LANGUAGE, ARCHAEOLOGY

The excavations of Troy and Mycenae initiated by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s opened the great era of archaeological reconstruction of Aegean prehistory. In 1900, the highly developed Minoan civilisation of Crete began to be uncovered by Sir Arthur Evans and others. Especially significant was the discovery of the Aegean scripts - Linear A, Linear B and Cretan Hieroglyphic - which accompanied Evans' excavation. In the years following these discoveries the Minoan was firmly believed to have been the dominant civilisation of the Bronze Age Aegean. It was not until 1939, when the Pylos Linear B archives were discovered by Carl Blegen and the Cincinnati expedition, that the majority of archaeologists realised what had been clear to only a few, namely, that we should speak of two Aegean civilisations rather than one: the Minoan civilisation of Crete and the Mycenaean civilisation of mainland Greece. Although Mycenaean Greece developed later and under considerable Minoan influence, it eventually prevailed, and in the Late Bronze Age Crete turned into a Mycenaean province. The former Minoan colonies became Mycenaean, and after ca. 1450 BC Mycenaean influence replaced Minoan not only in the Aegean but also in western Anatolia. In 1953, when the decipherment of Linear B by Michael Ventris was made public, it was demonstrated beyond doubt that the language of the Mycenaean civilisation was Greek. As a result, an entirely new period, that of Mycenaean Greece, was added to Greek history.

The impression made by the discovery of Troy was so strong that for a long time most scholars took it for granted that for all practical purposes the Homeric poems, which had directly stimulated Schliemann's excavations, should be approached as an authentic document originating in Bronze Age Greece. Many a reconstruction of the religion, society, economics and institutions of Mycenaean Greece published in the first

half of the twentieth century proceeded from this assumption. This period in Homeric scholarship produced such epoch-making studies as *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* and *Homer and Mycenae* by M. P. Nilsson (1932 and 1933), *Homer and the Monuments* by H. L. Lorimer (1950), *From Mycenae to Homer* by T. B. L. Webster (1958), and was crowned with two great syntheses, *History and the Homeric Iliad* by Denys Page (1959) and *A Companion to Homer* by A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (1962). Ironically, the years in which the two latter appeared were precisely the time when the pendulum of scholarly opinion as regards the historical value of the Homeric poems swung back.

In the 1950s, a radical shift began to take place in the evaluation of Homer's historic background. More than one factor was responsible for this development. The picture of Mycenaean society that emerged after the decipherment of Linear B led to an increasing understanding that the Homeric poems are by no means a direct reflection of that society; the study of the Homeric formulae showed that, contrary to what the pioneers of oral formulaic theory had believed, the traditional language is characterised by a high degree of flexibility and adaptation, so that it is absolutely out of the question that everything we find in Homer could have arrived untouched from the Bronze Age; finally, it was shown that the picture of society arising from the Homeric poems properly belongs to a later period. This last conclusion was almost entirely due to the work of M. I. Finley, whose articles and especially the book *The World of Odysseus* (1954) opened a new era in the historical study of Homer. As a result, a new consensus has arisen, which locates the historic background to the Homeric poems in the first rather than in the second millennium BC.

Finley himself placed the formative stage of the Homeric epics in the so-called 'Dark Age' (ca. 1050–ca. 800 BC). Yet, the argument that made it difficult to see in Homer a direct reflection of Mycenaean Greece also holds good as regards the hypothesis that a poet who presumably lived in the eighth or even seventh century BC was describing a society which preceded him by two hundred years. As Ian Morris put it in a seminal article, "Trying to find tenth- and ninth-century societies in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is just as misguided as looking for the Mycenaean." That is to say, if the Homeric epics do allow for the reconstruction of a consistent social and historical picture, this picture would rather belong to the time of the poet himself. That is why contemporary scholarly opinion tends to see the eighth century BC as providing the appropriate historic

background for the Homeric poems. Today, 130 years after Schliemann's discovery of Troy, the issue of 'Homer and Mycenae' is no longer considered substantial by the majority of scholars.²

At the same time, it seems that reaction to the older scholars' fundamentalist approach to the Greek heroic tradition has gone too far. It should not be forgotten that we owe our very knowledge of the existence of Mycenaean Greece to the stimulus that the poems of Homer furnished to Schliemann and others more than a hundred years ago. As Nilsson demonstrated in the 1930s, the cities identified by Homer as capitals of the kingdoms of heroic Greece were significant Mycenaean sites. In an article published in 1974 Antony Snodgrass convincingly argued that the contradictions in Homer's depiction of social institutions cannot be resolved and should be interpreted to the effect that, rather than reflecting a concrete historic society, the Homeric poems offer an amalgam created as a result of centuries-long circulation in oral tradition. If we also take into account that the language of Homer is a *Kunstsprache* consisting of different historic layers of the Greek language, including the earliest ones; that his formulae for weapons exhibit a combination of Bronze Age military technologies with those of the Archaic period; and that the same mixture of different historic periods is characteristic of his view of death and the afterlife, it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least some parts of what we find in Homer must go back to earlier periods, including the Bronze Age.³

Finally, the comparative evidence makes it abundantly manifest that, whenever a heroic tradition can be correlated with written evidence, it can often be shown to have preserved a memory of momentous historic events, such as wars, migrations or foreign invasions. It would therefore be anachronistic to approach epic tradition with modern criteria of historicity and on the basis of this to deny it all historical basis whatsoever. To quote *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* by David P. Henige, the subtitle of which, *Quest for a Chimera*, speaks for itself: 'No one who has worked extensively with oral materials will deny their value as historical

2 This change of perspective is made immediately obvious from a comparison between the 1962 *Companion to Homer* by Wace and Stubbings on the one hand and *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung* by Joachim Latacz (1991) and *A New Companion to Homer* by Ian Morris and Barry Powell (1997) on the other. While all the historical chapters in the old *Companion* discuss various aspects of the Mycenaean background of Homer, only one contribution in each of the recent volumes deals with the Bronze Age.

3 Snodgrass 1974; cf. Finkelberg 1998b: 25–8. On language see e.g. Ruijgh 1967; on weapons Gray 1947; on death and afterlife Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 12–13, 73–6, 89–92.

sources.⁴ A more detailed discussion as regards the historical value of traditional stories will be postponed until [the next section](#). At this point, it suffices to say that to propose a more nuanced approach to the issue of the historicity of Greek tradition is one of the purposes of this book.

Similarly, the accumulation of data regarding the Bronze Age Aegean, and in particular its relationships with the contemporary civilisations of the Near East, has created a need for fresh approaches. While dramatic new insights have been achieved in the study of this topic in both archaeology and linguistics, relatively little has been done in terms of their integration into a larger picture. Moreover, and perhaps more important, very little attention has been paid to the fact that various processes in Western Asia on the one hand and the Eastern Mediterranean on the other did not develop independently of one another but are linked in a complex network of relationships. This concerns first and foremost the new assessment of the dispersion of Bronze Age Anatolian languages and its relevance to the issue of the so-called ‘pre-Hellenic’, or ‘Aegean’, substratum, one of the focal points of this book.

The study of the Anatolian languages is today about one hundred years old. Spectacular results have been achieved during this period in the discovery, decipherment and interpretation of documents written in Hittite, Palaic, Luwian, Lycian, Lydian and other Anatolian languages, and a new scholarly discipline, that of Anatolian studies, has emerged. At the same time, it would be no exaggeration to say that this discipline has not exerted any substantial influence on our construction of the prehistory of Greece. The contacts between Anatolian studies and Classics are only too rare and mostly affect isolated cases, such as the much-discussed ‘*Abhiyawa* problem’. Many current theories of Greek prehistory still proceed from assumptions that can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century. However, the data thus far accumulated in the field of Anatolian studies are significant enough not only to throw a new light on these assumptions but perhaps even to challenge them.

As early as 1896, Paul Kretschmer drew scholarly attention to the fact that since the suffixes *-nth-* and *-ss-*, often attested in place-names in Greece, Crete and Asia Minor, cannot be identified as Greek, they should be taken as pointing to the existence of a pre-Hellenic linguistic substratum. In 1928, J. Haley and C. W. Blegen, in their seminal article ‘The coming of the Greeks’, showed that the distribution on the map of Greece of the geographical names identified by Kretschmer and others as

4 Henige 1974: 191. Cf. Hainsworth 1984: 112–13, Kirk 1990: 43–4; Finkelberg 1998c: 87–8.

belonging to the pre-Hellenic substratum closely corresponds to the map of distribution of Early Bronze Age archaeological sites.⁵ This allowed the authors to associate the pre-Hellenic substratum with the people who inhabited Greece till the end of the Early Bronze Age and to move the date of the Greek arrival in Greece, formerly believed to have taken place ca. 1600 BC, to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2050–2000 BC).⁶

But what about the linguistic identity of the Aegean substratum? It is well known that the suffixes *-nth-* and *-ss-* on the basis of which it was identified are closely paralleled by the suffixes *-nd-* and *-ss-* of the languages of Asia Minor attested in the Classical period, such as Lycian, Lydian and Carian. The discovery and decipherment of Hittite and other Bronze Age Anatolian languages has shown that they are closely related to the languages of Asia Minor and that the suffixes *-nth-* and *-ss-* should be identified as typically Anatolian or, to be more precise, Luwian. Thus, the place-name *Parnassos* has consistently been analysed as a possessive adjective typical of the Luwian language, formed from a root which is likewise Luwian, for the word *parna* means ‘house’ in both Luwian and Lycian.⁷ This evidently gives us a new perspective on the much-discussed issue of Near Eastern influences on Greek civilisation, which has recently received a substantial boost in M. L. West’s *The East Face of Helicon*.⁸ To the best of my knowledge, this perspective has not yet been fully explored.

Above all, however, the new assessment of the linguistic provenance of the Aegean substratum is directly relevant to the question of the identity of the population groups that inhabited Greece before ‘the coming of the Greeks’. This question bears directly upon that of the terms in which the identity of the ‘Hellenes’ themselves is to be approached. Since the issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity in ancient Greece have recently become the focus of a lively scholarly discussion, I will address them separately in a later section.

5 Kretschmer 1896; Haley and Blegen 1928: 141–54. Cf. Caskey 1973: 139–40.

6 According to the minority opinion, represented by James Muhly, Robert Drews and others, the arrival of the Greeks should be synchronised with the emergence of the shaft graves of Mycenae at the end of the Middle Helladic period (ca. 1600 BC). Alternatively, John Coleman proposes abandoning the current dating of the ‘coming of the Greeks’, arguing that it was one of the waves of the Kurgan peoples that brought the Greeks to Greece ca. 3200 BC. See further Drews 1988: 16–24; Carruba 1995; Coleman 2000.

7 See Laroche 1957 and 1961; Heubeck 1961: 50–2; Palmer 1965: 30, 343, 348. Cf. Drews 1997: 153–7; Finkelberg 1997a: 7; Renfrew 1998: 253–4. Cf. also Parnes and Parnon, mountains in Attica and Laconia (I am grateful to Oliver Dickinson for drawing my attention to these names).

8 West 1997. See also Burkert 1992; S. Morris 1992.

Together with the issues of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of the pre-Hellenic population of Greece, I will discuss the terms on which cultural interaction between Greeks and pre-Greeks was made possible, the duration of this interaction and its eventual impact on the civilisation of historic Greece. The book will address these questions by systematically confronting the Greek tradition of the Heroic Age with the evidence of linguistics and archaeology.

The analysis of the standard corpus of Greek genealogy carried out in Chapter 2 demonstrates that the heroic genealogies acted as an inventory not only of the 'descendants of Hellen' but also of other descent groups. At the same time, even those who did not count as descendants of Hellen were nevertheless considered 'Hellenes' in historic Greece. This heterogeneity of Greek genealogy strongly suggests that, rather than founding their group identity on belief in a common descent, the body of 'Hellenes' as it is known to us from the historic period perceived itself as an ethnically heterogeneous group.

The even spread of the suffixes *-ss-* and *-nth-* over western Asia, Greece and Crete strongly suggests that the so-called pre-Hellenic populations of Greece were of Anatolian stock. If true, this would lead us not only to Anatolia but also farther east, for the simple reason that the Anatolians of Asia, Indo-Europeans though they were, cannot be taken separately from the great civilisations of the Near East. As the archaeological discoveries of recent years show, the Bronze Age Aegean was in close contact with these civilisations. The degree to which this new assessment of the linguistic and archaeological evidence at our disposal may affect the terms of the current discussion of the cultural identity of Aegean civilisation will be examined in Chapter 3.

The archaeological record shows little or no break in continuity in the material culture of Greece for the second millennium BC. To quote the standard account of the period as given by John Caskey, 'From the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age onward there was no real break in the continuity of cultural development, in spite of the several spectacular advances and retreats that occurred, and therefore the people of Middle Helladic times must be looked upon as the first true Greeks in the land.'⁹ At the same time, the 'coming of the Greeks' postulated by older scholars can hardly be envisaged as a single historic event. To quote Caskey again,

9 Caskey 1973: 139.