

THE
ANCIENT GREEKS

A CRITICAL HISTORY

John V. A. Fine

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To My Son
John V. A. Fine, Jr.

Preface

WHILE WRITING THIS BOOK I was often asked for what audience it was intended. The answer, beyond trying to satisfy my own curiosity and questions, is that I was thinking of those seriously interested in Greek history, whether they were undergraduate or graduate students, teachers of Classics or of other humanistic fields, and the general reading public. My aim has been not to produce a smoothly flowing narrative which can lull a reader into unthinking acceptance of the views presented, but to try to make him think. One should never forget that we, as our predecessors were, are constantly being misled because we accept too readily the views that have become sacrosanct through tradition. A history which does not constantly cause one to reflect on what he is reading and to be cognizant of the nature and ambiguities of the evidence is hardly performing the function that a historical work should. Accordingly, references to Greek art, literature, philosophy, and religion are made only as the narrative demands, for any discussion, because of the problem of space and the author's inadequacies, could be little more than a summary of the work of experts.

After finishing a book on which he has worked for years, the writer is acutely aware of the magnitude of his indebtedness. The remarkable holdings of Princeton's Firestone Library are a superb aid and inspiration to a scholar in his work. Colleagues and former students have been generous with their suggestions and criticisms. Professor Glen Bowersock I wish to thank for suggesting that I submit my manuscript to Harvard University Press. Mrs. Mary Roberts Craighill was kind enough to undertake the thankless task of preparing an index. My wife with her keen literary and scholarly mind has rescued me from many an impasse. To my son, John Fine, I owe more than it is possible to express. Despite his responsibilities to his family and to an academic field very different from mine, he found time to read my manuscript in its various stages and to give me many sound historical criticisms. No matter how discouraged I became on occasions, he always revived my spirits with never-failing encouragement and convinced me that the work must be completed. Most

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Preface

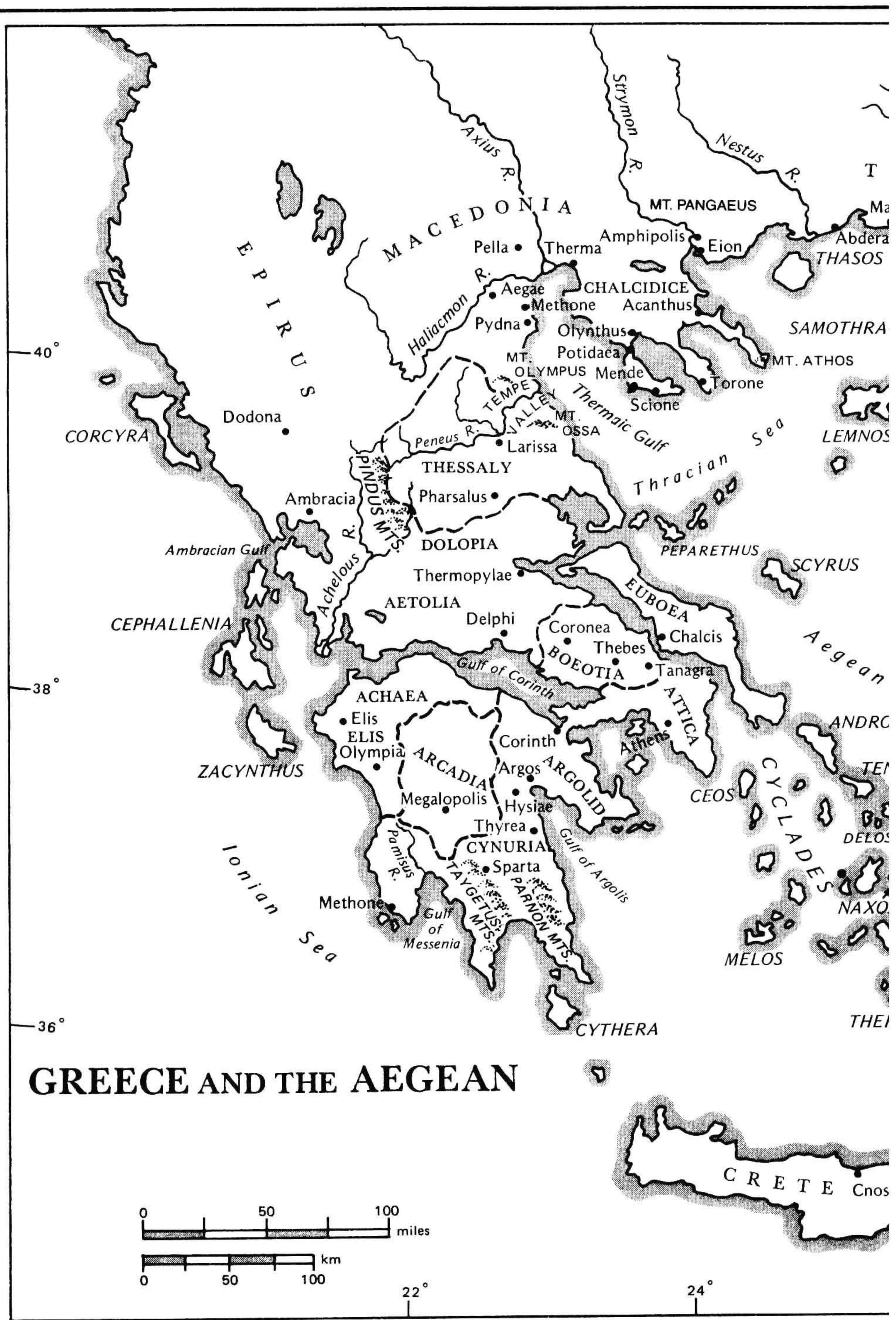
recently, his assistance in reading proof, both galley and page, has been invaluable. My gratitude to him is very deep.

A statement is necessary about the translations of sentences or passages from the ancient authors and inscriptions which appear frequently in this book. For Homer the translations are mine, but often blended with those of the numerous existing prose translations. The translations of Herodotus are mine, but sometimes colored by those of Aubrey de Sélincourt in his Penguin rendering of the Greek historian. For several longer passages I have borrowed de Sélincourt's wording, although sometimes slightly adapted. For Thucydides I have consistently used the translation of R. Crawley, which first appeared in 1876. The several quotations from Aristotle's *Politics* are indebted to Ernest Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948). For the great majority of the ancient authors, I have used, with occasional slight changes, the translations given in the various Loeb editions. In the case of three rather long inscriptions, the *Pact of the Founders of Cyrene*, the *Themistocles Decree from Troezen*, and the *Oath of Plataea*, I have used respectively, as stated in the text, the translations of A. H. Graham and of A. R. Burn. With a few exceptions, the spelling of names and places is that of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

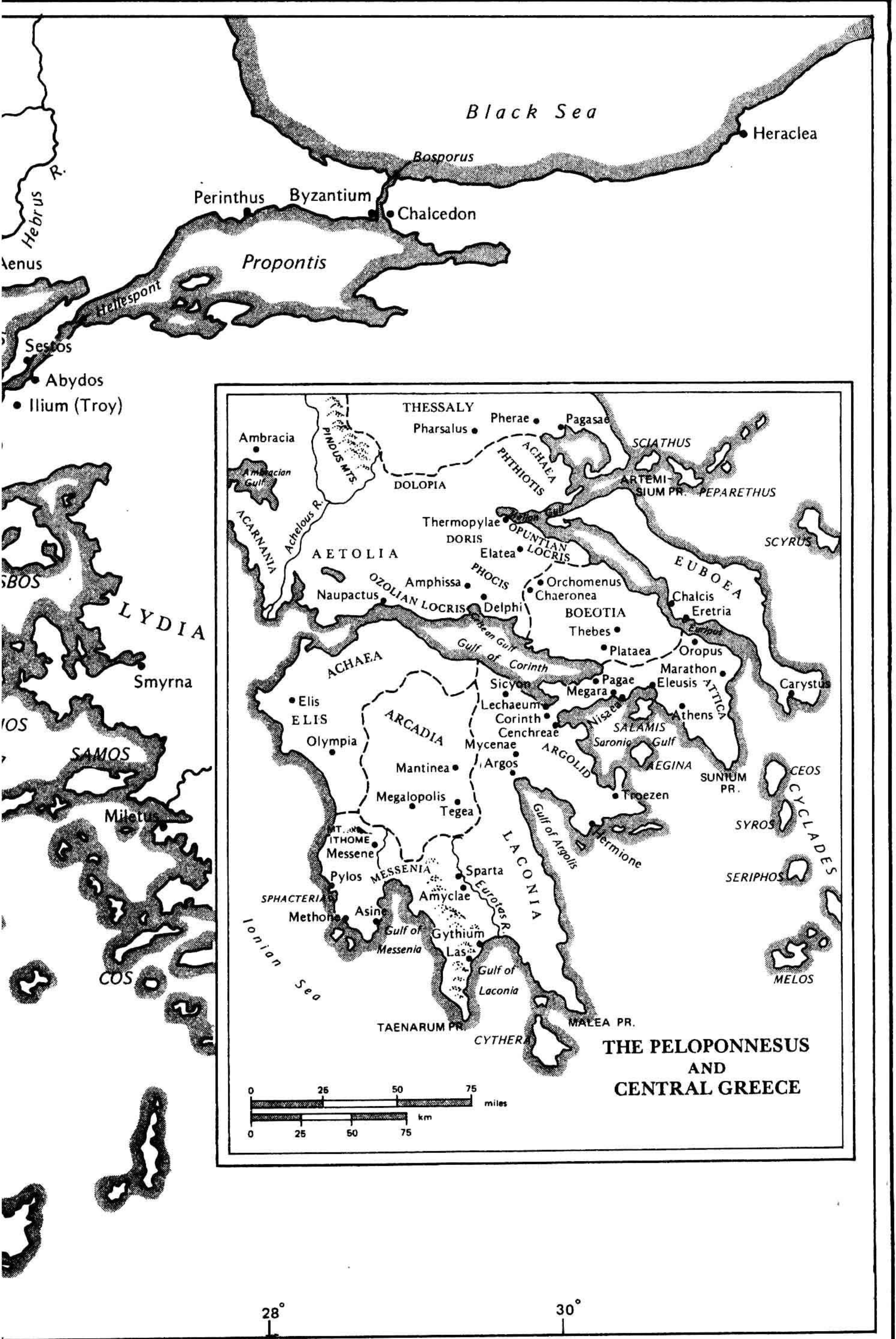
Abbreviations and short titles used in the text

Barker	<i>The Politics of Aristotle</i> , trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946)
Bengtson	Hermann Bengtson, <i>Die Verträge der Griechisch-Römischen Welt von 700 bis 338 v. Chr.</i> , 2nd ed. (Munich: Beck, 1975)
Dindorf	William Dindorf, ed., <i>Demosthenes</i> , 9 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1846–1851)
<i>Hellenica Oxyrhynchia</i>	<i>Hellenica Oxyrhynchia</i> , ed. Vittorio Bartoletti (Leipzig: Teubner, 1959)
Hicks and Hill	E. L. Hicks and G. F. Hill, <i>A Manual of Greek Historical Inscriptions</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901)
I.G.	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1924–). The superscript 2 or 3 added to the volume number signifies second or third edition.
Jacoby	Felix Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> , 3 vols. with many fascicles (Berlin: Weidmann; Leiden: Brill, 1923–). The historians included are numbered consecutively.
<i>M&L</i>	Russell Meiggs and David Lewis, <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
S.E.G.	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Leiden: Sijthoff; Amsterdam: Gieben, 1923–)
de Sélincourt	<i>Herodotus: The Histories</i> , trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1954)
S.I.G.	W. Dittenberger, <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924; reprint ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1960)
Tod	Marcus N. Tod, <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions</i> , vol. II, <i>From 403 to 323 B.C.</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948)

THE ANCIENT GREEKS



GREECE AND THE AEGEAN



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1

The Early Aegean World

TO THE ANCIENT Greek the earliest history of his land was enshrined in the great Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the other heroic tales which had descended to him from the remote past, and in the ancient ruins, still visible, of places like Mycenae and Tiryns. If pressed, the educated Greek would have admitted that these epics contained much mythical and fanciful material, but they were so much a part of his heritage that they satisfied whatever curiosity he may have had about centuries long past. They entered into the very fabric of his being, for Homer played a basic role in his education, and, to the artists, poets, and orators by whom every Greek was deeply influenced, the epic tradition was a source of endless inspiration.

The modern mind has been more critical. When historians in the late eighteenth century and particularly in the nineteenth century turned to the study of Greek history, they usually began their books with a section devoted to legendary Greece, to which they relegated all the epic tales and also the ancient legends recounted by later Greek authors. The beginning of historical Greece was placed in the eighth century B.C., for the traditions and available information from that time on seemed more reliable. If one wanted to pick a particular time for the beginning of Greek history the year 776 B.C. was considered appropriate, since this traditional date for the establishment of the Olympic Games seemed to mark symbolically the transition from the realm of myth and legend to that of actual history. Not until modern times did startling archaeological discoveries, beginning in the last third of the nineteenth century and continuing ever since, reveal that great and completely unsuspected ancient civilizations had existed in the Aegean world.

Even before these discoveries tremendous advances had been made in the understanding of the early history of Egypt and of the peoples of the Near East. The Rosetta stone, found on the Rosetta arm of the Nile in 1799, recording in Greek, hieroglyphics, and the current demotic a decree honoring Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 196 B.C., enabled scholars, led by Jean François Champollion, to decipher the ancient Egyptian language and thus render intelligible records going back into the third millennium B.C. In the Near East in the first half of the nineteenth century the

famous Behistun (Bisitun) Monument, engraved some 225 feet above ground level on a precipitous cliff in the Zagros mountains, yielded its secrets. At great personal risk the Englishman Henry Creswicke Rawlinson managed to copy the long cuneiform inscriptions which accompanied the relief sculpture. Subsequently he and various scholars were able to decipher the inscriptions, which proved to be a proclamation of Darius the Great recorded in three separate languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (Akkadian). This brilliant and difficult achievement provided scholars with the necessary clues for interpreting other languages written in cuneiform scripts which were current at different times in the first three millennia B.C. in Asia from the Mediterranean Sea eastward into the Iranian plateau.

In the Aegean area it was the German Heinrich Schliemann who first demonstrated the existence of civilizations long before the traditional date of 776 B.C. This amazing and indomitable man, after amassing a fortune in business, set out to prove the soundness of his boyhood conviction that the Homeric poems reflected a historical and not a mythical civilization. His excavations, beginning at Troy in 1870, at Mycenae in 1874, at Orchomenus in 1880, and at Tiryns in 1885, revealed that powerful states had flourished centuries before the accepted beginning of Greek history and that some of the remains corresponded closely with descriptions given by Homer. Influenced by a tradition, persistent throughout antiquity, that King Minos of Crete had once ruled as master of the Aegean, the Englishman Arthur Evans began to excavate at Cnossos in 1899. The remarkable results of his excavations soon proved that there had existed in Crete a civilization in many ways more magnificent than the one on the Greek mainland, a civilization by which the mainland had been greatly influenced in the second millennium B.C.

Archaeological excavations have been very numerous in the twentieth century in Greece and the Aegean islands, in the Balkans, in Asia Minor, and in the Near and Middle East. Since the subject of this book is the history of the Greeks, the first question to be faced is whether the inhabitants of Greece, the islands, and Crete, whose early civilization was being revealed by archaeology, were the ancestors of the historical Greeks and the speakers of the same Indo-European language. The later Greeks, steeped in the Homeric epics, never doubted that the heroes fighting the Trojan War under the command of Agamemnon of Mycenae were their ancestors, but modern scholars had to consider the possibility that Homer had taken over a saga which Greeks, arriving at some unknown time, had inherited from their predecessors. The fact that in historical times many place names in Greece, the islands, and

Asia Minor ended with non-Indo-European suffixes like *-nthos* and *-ssos* (for example, Corinthos and Cnossos) suggested strongly that immigrating Greeks had adopted the names used by earlier inhabitants. If, then, the Indo-European-speaking Greeks were immigrants, when did they appear in the Aegean world? Linguistics and archaeology alone can attempt to answer this question.

The linguistic evidence is provided by clay tablets inscribed with linear scripts which excavators, beginning with Evans, have found in various parts of Crete. Of these seven scripts the significant ones for the present question are those known as Linear A and Linear B. Examples of Linear A, few in number, were found throughout Crete in archaeological levels stretching from ca. 1750 to ca. 1400 B.C.; some 3,000 examples of Linear B, of a more cursive style, were found only in Cnossos in a stratification of ca. 1400 B.C. Subsequently about 1,250 Linear B tablets were found in Pylos on the west coast of the Peloponnesus (1939) and some 50 at Mycenae (1952), dating about 1200 B.C., and around 20 in Thebes (1964) in a stratum of about 1320 B.C. Over the years many linguists have endeavored to decipher these tablets. The Linear A tablets have so far defied interpretation because of inadequate material with which to work, but in 1952 the Linear B tablets succumbed to the genius of the young English architect Michael Ventris. He proved that these tablets contained an archaic form of Greek, hundreds of years older than the earliest Greek formerly known, that of the Homeric poems. Linear B may well have developed at an early time from Linear A and other scripts in a more cursive form suitable for recording data on materials such as wood, leather, and papyrus as well as clay. When the scribes encountered speakers of Greek, whether in Crete or on the mainland, or both, they adapted some of the syllabic signs of Linear B—or devised new ones—to record their understanding of the Greek language.

These tablets, therefore, have proved that towards the end of the thirteenth century Greeks were living in Mycenae and Pylos and, presumably, elsewhere in Greece, and that some 200 years earlier they were present in Cnossos. Why is the evidence limited to these two approximate dates? The explanation probably is somewhat as follows. The decipherment of the tablets has shown that they were concerned mostly with annual inventories. At the end of the year any record which seemed of permanent importance was transferred from the sun-dried clay tablets to materials such as papyrus or wood while the tablets were softened in water so that they could be used again. The paradox of the situation is that the great conflagrations which consumed Cnossos ca. 1400, Pylos and Mycenae ca. 1200, and Thebes ca. 1320, by baking the tablets, transformed the supposedly ephemeral records into permanent ones,

whereas the supposedly permanent records of papyrus and the like perished in the fires or, if in some places they escaped burning, gradually succumbed to the ravages of time.¹

The Linear B tablets prove that Greeks were in the Aegean area by ca. 1400 but give no information on the time of their first arrival. Since no earlier documents exist, archaeological evidence alone is available for answering the question of the coming of the Greeks. Archaeology has shown that the unknown inhabitants of Greece lived under a neolithic civilization from at least the sixth millennium B.C. The transition from the later Stone Age to the Bronze Age occurred in the Aegean area about the beginning of the third millennium. It is probable that migrants from Asia Minor brought the use of metal—first copper and then, with the addition of tin, bronze—to the Greek mainland, the Cyclades, and Crete. This early Bronze Age lasted for approximately a millennium. It was towards the end of this period, or early in the next millennium, that most scholars now think that the first appearance of the Greeks should be placed. The evidence is scant and ambiguous, but unless one accepts the theory believed only by a minority that the Greeks were indigenous, no other time seems more logical.

These centuries also provide evidence for the appearance of certain Indo-European languages in Asia Minor. In 1906 the Germans began to excavate at a Turkish village, Boghazköy, in the bend of the Halys (Kizil Irmak) River, where remains of a large fortified city and of many sculptures were visible on the surface of the ground. Within a short time some 10,000 cuneiform tablets were unearthed, and it became evident that the archives of the Hittite Empire had been discovered. Among these tablets, which date chiefly from the fifteenth, fourteenth, and thirteenth centuries, three Indo-European languages were represented: Hittite, the closely related Luwian, and Palaic. In 1925 excavations at Kültepe (ancient Kanesh) in central Anatolia brought to light a large number of cuneiform tablets written by Assyrian merchants who for some three generations in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries B.C. lived and transacted business in this area. Since various Indo-European names of Hittite and Luwian types are listed in these documents, they provide proof that in the twentieth century, if not earlier, "Indo-Europeans" were living in central Asia Minor. These speakers of Indo-European languages probably entered Asia Minor by crossing the Caucasus mountains. The "original" homeland of the "Indo-Europeans" cannot be fixed precisely, but their wandering area seems to have stretched from the steppes north of the Caspian westward to the region of the Danube. From the closing centuries of the third millennium these wanderers of

“Indo-European” speech began to migrate, for various reasons and at different times, into India, the Iranian plateau, Asia Minor, the Balkans, including Greece, Italy, and many other parts of Europe,² their languages naturally developing differently as the groups lost contact with one another.

The arrival of proto-Greeks in Greece in the years around 2000 B.C., then, would be in conformity with ~~what little is known about the wanderings of other Indo-European-speaking peoples and particularly with the appearance of the Hittites and Luwians in Asia Minor.~~ For several centuries these proto-Greeks spread over much of Greece, destroying various settlements and gradually blending with the natives. Archaeology has revealed the existence in this period of many communities in the Peloponnesus, central Greece, and Thessaly, but here it will be sufficient to comment only on the better-known Mycenae. In the course of his excavations there, which began in 1874, Schliemann unearthed six royal shaft graves containing nineteen skeletons of men, women, and children, and a staggering amount of treasure, largely of gold, including golden masks on the faces of the men. The finding of these graves caused Schliemann to send his famous telegram to the king of Greece announcing that he had discovered the graves of Agamemnon, Cassandra, and their companions, killed by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus on their return from Troy. This emotional reaction is certainly more understandable than that of a learned scholar who, outraged by Schliemann’s flamboyant character, insisted that one of the gold masks was a product of Byzantine art representing a portrait of Christ. Archaeologists have subsequently proved that these shaft graves and another grave circle discovered later should be dated to the late seventeenth and the sixteenth centuries. The wealth revealed was, and still is, startling, for little information is available on early Mycenae, but it shows clearly that the Mycenaeans at that time, through trade or possibly piracy, were familiar with products from the north (amber) and artifacts from the Cyclades, Crete, Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt.

In the first half of the second millennium Crete was by far the most civilized region in the Aegean area. In the early centuries at sites like Knossos and Mallia in the north and Phaestus in the south, regular cities began to develop and large palaces were built. With the introduction of the potter’s wheel, probably from Anatolia, ceramics made remarkable advances, and some of the most beautiful Cretan vases which have been discovered belong to this period. Metalworkers and gem cutters also produced excellent work, and before the middle of the millennium painters were decorating the walls of palaces with wonderful frescoes. In

the course of the seventeenth century many Cretan cities suffered severe damage from earthquakes, but recovery was rapid, and the palaces were rebuilt and greatly enlarged.

The Cretans, or Minoans as they are often called from the mythical king Minos, had considerable influence on the emerging Greeks of the mainland, as the shaft graves revealed. Archaeology discloses that the Cretans had many contacts with the old civilizations of the east in Egypt, Syria, and Anatolia. The French excavation of Mari (Tell Hariri) on the middle Euphrates is particularly interesting in this connection.³ In this Sumerian and Semitic city the palace of the king, a huge complex containing the royal quarters, administrative offices, workshops, and storerooms, was surprisingly similar to the palace at Cnossos in its general plan and in many architectural features; in addition, the frescoes which miraculously were preserved at Mari are reminiscent in technique and style of the famous Cretan frescoes. Since the palace at Mari was destroyed by Hammurabi about 1759, and the great palace at Cnossos with its remarkable frescoes was not built until the seventeenth century, it seems clear that the influence ran from east to west. Other buried cities might yield similar or even more telling evidence.⁴ These influences and the personnel to execute them presumably reached Crete through Ugarit (Ras Shamra) on the northern Syrian coast, which French excavations in the 1930s proved to have been an important meeting place for Egyptian, Hittite, Mesopotamian, Syrian, Cretan, and Mycenaean products and ideas.

In the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries Crete attained the acme of its greatness. So far as one can tell from the silent records of archaeology, it looks as if some sort of cultural, and possibly even political, union was achieved in the island under the leadership of Cnossos. Archaeological finds, especially the pottery, reveal the spread of Cretan influence over the Cyclades, the Peloponnesus, and areas of central Greece. It is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle the relationship between Crete and the mainland in this period. There is no necessity, however, to postulate a Cretan conquest of Greece as Evans did. The lords of Mycenae and other mainland communities were powerful figures, much impressed by Cretan culture and glad to employ Cretan artists and craftsmen and to have them teach the local population, but they apparently were proto-Greek rulers. Actually the evidence seems to suggest that by the fifteenth century, Mycenaean (that is, mainland) power was waxing whereas Cretan power was on the wane. This tendency can be illustrated from the excavations at two sites. At Miletus, on the west coast of Asia Minor, and in Rhodes Cretan colonies of the sixteenth century had, to