

War of the Gods

The Conflict between Matriarchy and Patriarchy during the Greek Dark Age

MELAMPUS

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Dedication
To the Mother of Melampus

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Contents

God or Goddess?	1
Darkness Visible	2
The Catastrophe	4
The Minoan-Mycenaean Culture	7
Human Sacrifice and its Denial	22
Methodology of Reading Myth	35
The History of Greek Religion in the Dark Age	40
The Reformation of Greek Religion	63
Patriarchy Full Steam Ahead	73
Conclusion	78

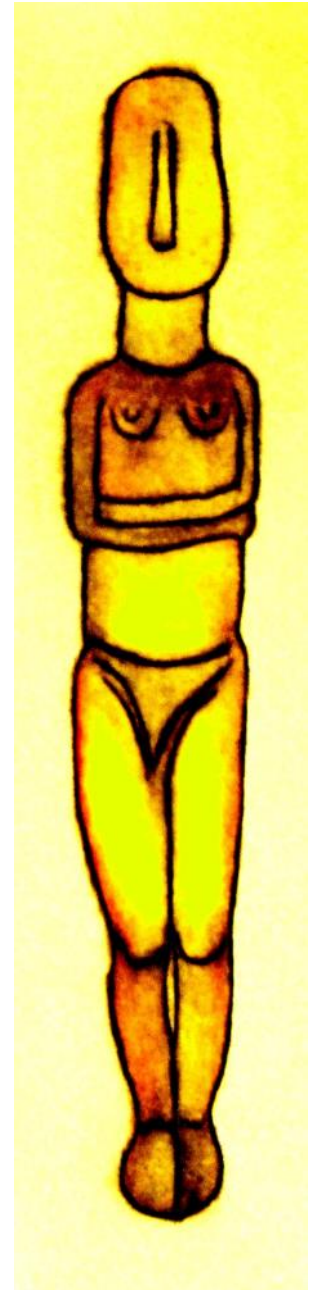
God or Goddess?

Religion encourages some behaviours and prohibits others. It legislates, among other things, on sexual relations. The Christian religion is historically associated with patriarchy: it calls upon “God the Father”, and even if it names Mary the “Mother of God” and Sophia his Bride, it has an all-male Trinity; it has preached sexual continence; it has advocated the duty of the father to bring up daughters as virgins and to remain chaste in marriage, assuring the paternity of sons and descent through the male-line. The history of Greek religion demonstrates that this ideology did not always obtain. Until very late in the historical record, men and women danced naked together at religious festivals that were devoted to fertility. Greek myth speaks of terrestrial-born gods and heroes who did not know their earthly fathers—the sons of gods, begat upon goddesses, priestesses or nymphs, such as Dionysus begotten by Zeus on Semele, the daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes, or Perseus, whose father, Zeus, fornicated with his mother Danae “in a golden shower”. There was a time when fornication was sacred.

The earliest cultures of Greece, the Cycladic and Minoan, depict only the Goddess, and where man appears in the context of divinity, he does so solely as Her dependant consort. We see only Her priestesses officiating at sacrifice. Women were important politically, socially and economically in ways that came to be unimaginable in later patriarchal epochs. They participated in the chase and fought as “Amazons” in wars. They were not the tame and mutely domesticated characters that they came to be, if not in reality, at least in representation. Imagery announces this truth—at first, we see women enthroned or officiating at sacrifice; by classical times (after 479), we see them depicted at home, weaving, or wishing farewell to men as they depart to battle. From woman triumphant to woman domesticated and humble there was a journey.

We look at Greek history through the later constructions of the Greeks themselves. The Greeks had lost the power of writing during their Dark Age (c.1200—c.750). By the time they came to write history, Greek historians, men, made the backward projection of patriarchy. The myth that male domination has some eternal source has been perpetuated by patriarchy ever since. There is a modern bias too: the contemporary bias of historians working from archaeological evidence to overlook Greek and Roman written sources that originate in an oral tradition stretching back into the darkness itself.

During the Greek Dark (c.1200—c.750) and Archaic (c.750—479) ages there was a violent, bloody and protracted conflict between matriarchy and patriarchy as a result of which matriarchy was overthrown.



*Figure 1. The Goddess
Marble statue from Amorgos
Early Cycladic II
2800—2300*

Darkness Visible

The transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was not the only transformation that took place in the darkness. There was an alteration in the very way in which people think: a change from *primitive materialism* to *Ionian consciousness*. There was the abandonment of the practice of human sacrifice.

Ionian consciousness is the cognitive structure of our own contemporary academic culture, and we are indebted to the Ionian Greeks for it. When Thales of Miletus (c.624—c.546) wrote, “All things are from water and all things are resolved into water,” a new understanding of the world had its inception. Miletus is in Ionia, so I call this way of thinking “Ionian consciousness”. In his statement Thales was the first person we know of to make a distinction between appearance and reality, between what subjectively appears to us in perception and what objectively appertains in the “real” and “external world”. It is this distinction that lays the basis for modern natural science, for it conceives of the world as existing independently of the conscious mind that perceives it—a world that may “run” mechanically according to unchanging laws of nature that operate on events in objective time. Mind and matter are thus separated in Ionian consciousness. Ionian consciousness also introduces for the first time the concept of infinity. These two ideas—objective reality and infinity—make mathematics as we know it possible, and the appearance of geometry and number theory follow hard upon the heels of the Ionian revolution, as does the atomic theory of Democritus, another Ionian thinker.

The system of Olympian religion such as we find in Homer is of a pantheon of major gods dominated by a powerful king-god Zeus; there are also myriads of other deities or older powers, such as Rhea, Mother of the Gods, and her offspring, the Titans. All these deities indulge in behaviours that are very human-like—the male gods rape women, and all of them have love affairs, commit adultery, fight bloody wars, get wounded in battle and experience the gamut of human emotions: love, anger, jealousy, envy. In Ionian consciousness, all of this becomes morally unjustifiable. A single famous quotation from the work of an Ionian thinker, Xenophanes of Colophon (c.570—c.475), sums up the whole devastating critique: “Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all the things which among men are shameful and blameworthy—theft and adultery and mutual deception.” Where there is only large and larger, there is no contradiction in the notion of a plurality of gods, but where there is infinity, only one god may occupy the supreme position, and “He” must be above all human passions. Monotheism is born, and patriarchy rationalised.

Ironically, Thales also expresses the dominant idea of the earlier stage of cognition, **primitive materialism**, when he writes, “Everything is full of gods.” Thales introduced

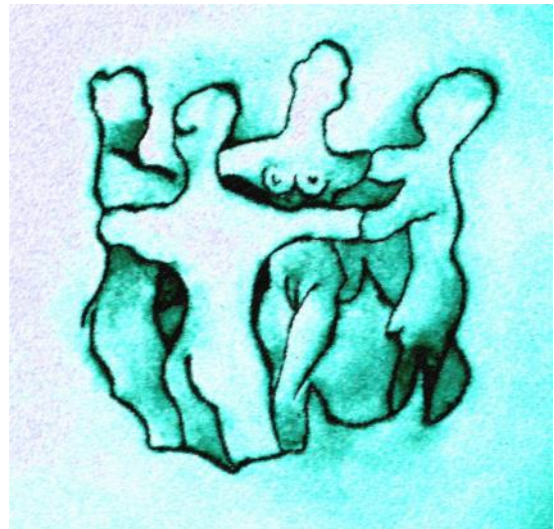


Figure 2. *Naked Dancers*
Tomb of Kamilari, near Phaistos, c.1500.
The religious context is indicated by the horns of consecration.

the new Ionian form of consciousness, but this emerged from the older one. In Primitive materialism there is no distinction between appearance (perception) and reality, and there is no concept of infinity. There is a tendency to think of time as cyclical, of events as a repetition of an eternal oscillation, like day following night, and night following day. Ancient Egyptians thought of their king as Horus while alive, and as Osiris once dead, notwithstanding the contradiction that Osiris is the father of Horus and both are married to their sister-mother, Isis; all Pharaohs are different, all yet one and the same.

The science of primitive materialism is magic. Everything is full of gods, but some things are fuller of gods than others; hence, there are sacred places and sacred objects where the gods are particularly present. The whole science of magic is laid bare in the sacred texts of the Egyptians, in the *Book of the Dead*. Or, for example, consider this extract from the *Memphite Theology of Creation*, a document originating from c.2500: "... [Ptah] is in every mouth of all gods, all men, [all] cattle, all creeping things, and (everything) that lives..." This asserts that there is a single divine presence that is found in lesser or greater degree in all things—all things are living. This system of spiritual presence is also law-like, so that man as magus can control nature—he does so through the rites of invocation, through ritual sacrifice, and, when writing is present, through inscriptions. The word has power to transform nature. To the ancient there is one-world of fused matter and spirit, of god manifest in all things, without distinction between animate and inanimate; we could also call this "material vitalism". The Egyptian magus believed that a statue made of clay could, by operation of the magic formulas inscribed upon the tomb walls, come alive within the tomb. Man is clay made animate by the divine spirit, which is also a breath, a physical thing.

Primitive materialism is also a system of primitive dualism in which the "soul" is a detachable physical part of the body—a breath primarily. In primitive materialism, there is no death of the soul. When a warrior is slain in battle, the spirit departs the body and goes somewhere else—it may inhabit the tomb, descend to the underworld, depart to a blessed isle, or ascend to the halls of the ancestors. The primitive had limited fear of death, because he did not conceptualise it as we do. Ionian cognition first made it possible to conceive of death as the utter annihilation of the person; it also made possible the idea that at death body and soul separate: the body to break apart in physical corruption to re-join inorganic material, and the soul to depart to the afterlife—be it Hades, Hell, the Isle of the Blessed, or Heaven.

We fail to take into our accounts the observation that ancient men and women did not think in the same way we do. Nowadays, no general would delay the fighting of a battle (or at least would admit to delaying one) because the sacrificial victim's liver was found to be the wrong-way round. But in the ancient world, this was standard practice. We cannot understand their polity without taking this difference of cognition into account. Furthermore, the transition from primitive materialism to Ionian consciousness was not a once-and-for-all break with the past: as if, once Thales had spoken, all were immediately enlightened. We can only understand Greek history against the background of a slow developmental change in cognition, where even at the time of Socrates and Plato, the bulk of humanity still conceived of the world through the earlier concepts. During the bitter Peloponnesian War fought between Athens and Sparta (431—404), consultation with oracles was an essential preliminary to any action, and, under pressure of war and plague, many atrocities and atavisms were committed—these are the expression of older solutions to problems presenting themselves during times of great stress, for the main solution to any practical problem within primitive materialism is sacrifice.

The Catastrophe

Our story begins in the late Bronze Age, c.2200—1900 with the arrival from the north of the “Hellenes” on the Greek mainland, an event identified by a discontinuity in material culture, indicated by the differences between Early Helladic II and Early Helladic III pottery. These migrants spoke an early form of Greek, an Indo-European language. The language of the original inhabitants is not known for certain. The Greeks had various names for these “aboriginals”—Pelasgians, Leleges and Carians—by which they acknowledged that their race and culture was a fusion of more than one peoples. During the ensuing epoch the Minoan culture, issuing from Cretan palaces such as Knossos, Phaistos and Malia, came to dominate the Greek and Aegean world. From 1600 onwards, we can talk of a distinctive “Achaean” Greek culture on the mainland known as the Mycenaean. Both the Mycenaeans and the Minoans were highly organised societies conducting extensive international trade with all parts of the known world, from Spain (silver) and Britain (tin) in the west to Egypt and Mesopotamia in the East, from the Baltic region (amber) to the north, to Libya and Ethiopia (ivory) to the south; their industry and trade were centrally administered from large palace complexes. But in the early Minoan “neo-palatial” period (c.1600—c.1380) Crete was politically dominant and mainland Greece trod after her; while in the later Minoan “post-palatial” period (c.1380—c.1200) Mycenae took the lead. It is thought that a series of natural disasters that struck Crete—the volcanic eruption of the island of Thera (an event of colossal force dated variously between c.1650 and c.1500), and earthquakes (c.1450 and possibly c.1380), weakened the Minoan economy and gave the Mycenaeans the edge. By c.1380 Knossos was occupied by Greek speaking overlords, and the non-Greek of the Minoan Linear A writing was replaced by the Greek of Linear B as the language of palace administration.

Then c.1200 a catastrophe or series of catastrophes occurred that affected the entire civilised world of the Near East; this is known collectively as the **Bronze Age Collapse**. In mainland Greece and in Crete the principal known palace centres were destroyed—Mycenae, Tiryns, Midea, Pylos, Thebes, Orchomenos, the Menelaion (“Sparta”), Knossos and Cydonia. (Athens is thought to have survived, though damaged.) The Hittite empire collapsed and disappeared. Troy was destroyed. In Syria and Upper Mesopotamia all the major cities were destroyed, including Ugarit, Aleppo and Carchemish. Destruction was also wrought upon the cities of the Levant, including Megiddo, Ashdod, Bethel and Lachish. Likewise, the major cities of Cyprus were destroyed: Enkomi, Kastro, Sinda and Kition. Egypt came under severe attack from invaders known as the “Sea Peoples”, and though it repulsed them on more than one occasion, the invasions marked the end of ancient Egyptian power and prosperity. It may surprise the reader to learn that taken overall, this catastrophe constitutes the single greatest disaster to have befallen the Western civilised world. During the Bronze Age Collapse it is likely that the population of the Near East decreased by as much as 90%.

Following the Bronze Age Collapse Greece entered a Dark Age, (c.1200—c.750), after which the Greeks once again learned to write. Then, from c.750 down to the Persian Wars, when Xerxes lead a huge force into Greece and was defeated at sea at the Battle of Salamis (480) and on land at the Battle of Platea (479), we have the archaic period. These, then, form the principal epochs of our study: (I) Before c.2100: Middle Bronze Age (“Pelasgians”); (II) c.2100—c.1600: Late Bronze Age (“Hellenes”); (III) c.1600—c.1380: Minoan phase (“Achaean”); (IV) c.1380—c.1200: Mycenaean hegemony (“Mycenaeans”); (V) c.1200—c.750: Dark Age; (VI)

c.750—479: Archaic period; (VII) 479 onwards: Classical and subsequent periods. Between the Mycenaean period and the Dark Age, lying on its boundary, occurs the catastrophe of the Bronze Age Collapse.

“Boundary” events may be associated with the other transitions: between the Minoan and Mycenaean periods there was a possible earthquake at Knossos and a “capture” of that palace by Greek-speaking “overlords”; between the Greek Dark Age and the Archaic period there was the inception of the Olympic Games in 776. Discontinuities in material culture that are marked by changes in pottery styles, architecture and the other plastic arts may be associated with these significant boundary events. They belong to the centre and pattern of the disturbances, and so help to explain them. Most significant of all was the seismic disturbance of the Bronze Age Collapse; it stands at the centre of explanation of the three great transformations that I have already indicated.

Explanations of the Bronze Age Collapse: (A) those dealing with events located on the boundary, such as the attempted invasion of Egypt by the “Sea Peoples”, which are “triggers” or “immediate consequences”; (B) those dealing with long-term causes, such as crop failure, climate change, and changes in methods of warfare; (C) those dealing with the system response to a crisis, that emphasise the vulnerability of the system prior to the crisis, and its failure following it. It seems likely that all three types of explanation are involved, but here the system response is taken as decisive. Whatever events may have triggered the destruction of this or that palace, no such trigger will account for the wholesale destruction of civilisation, or for the fact that the population did not quickly recover. The routine response of any culture to a disaster is to rebuild, so the central problem that we must address is why such rebuilding did not take place, why, in the case of Greece, a Dark Age lasting four or five hundred years followed. There is nothing comparable in all human history to the Bronze Age Collapse.

Prior to the Bronze Age Collapse, Greek society held to a matriarchal religion in the context of a cognitive structure denoted here by primitive materialism and practiced human sacrifice. At some time after the catastrophe Greek culture adopted a patriarchal religion, the cultural elite changed their cognition to Ionian consciousness, and Greeks gave up in principle the practice of human sacrifice.

Among the explanations of the category of triggers there is the explanation that the Greek historians themselves developed and elaborated—the theory of a Dorian invasion of the Peloponnese. We are now in the position to demonstrate that this theory is false. One criticism against this thesis is that there is no evidence for it in the archaeological record. However, it is the internal inconsistencies of the account that tell most decisively against it. The palaces were destroyed on or around 1200, a fact not known to Greek historians, so an invasion postulated to have taken place in 1104 cannot explain the Bronze Age Collapse.

There are other practical inconsistencies. Anyone who has visited Greece will realise that it is a mountainous country that favours defence over attack, and makes travel by foot, whether there are roads or not, very difficult. The distance between two points may be measured “as the crow flies”, but a more practical measure could be “the time it takes to walk it”. A topological map of walking distances of Mycenaean Greece needs to be made. Reports indicate that the Mycenaeans had some road network, but not such as would have made the marching of invasion armies into an everyday occurrence. Roads in mountainous countries are easily defended by posterns. When Thucydides wrote, “Mycenae was certainly a small place, and many of the towns of that period do not seem to us today to be particularly imposing,” (*Peloponnesian War*, 1.40) he cannot have visited the cyclopean ruins of that citadel’s walls, or have seen Gla, or realised that ancient Thebes occupied a ground twice the size of Mycenae. This is important: what Thucydides says about prehistoric Greece is a description of its Dark Age—he

does not know of the Mycenaean palace culture any more than Homer did. The idea of large invasion forces seems out of place with what the geography and topology of Greece suggests. We should speak of slow migrations and fusions of peoples, rather than of conquests. The impression that Mycenaean Greece was a warrior-society is, of course, affirmed by the legends, which speak of two wars of monumental proportions—a double conflict between Argos and Thebes, and the expedition against Troy. Yet Argos scarcely existed as a centre of importance in the Mycenaean age; it is true that Thebes was destroyed, and possibly twice, and there is just the shadow of a chronology suggested by the archaeological record that we can date its second destruction to just before 1200, the time of the ‘Epigoniae’ (Seven Against Thebes) of Greek legend; that would make Thebes the first of the palaces to be destroyed, just before the boundary period of the Bronze Age Collapse onto which we must place the Trojan War, if it ever took place. (The dating is by pottery styles and concerns the differences between pottery of the Late Helladic III B2 style and the Late Helladic early III C style. This boundary occurs on or around 1190.) Invasion of the Peloponnese by a Dorian horde crossing the Corinthian Gulf and then traversing a mountainous land route is highly unlikely. Perhaps a sea-borne invasion is possible.

This connects to the “Sea-Peoples” theory. In this theory the cities of Asia Minor and the Greek palaces were destroyed by sea-borne invaders. The evidence for Sea-Peoples comes from Egyptian inscriptions that point to invasions of the Delta in the third year of Merneptah, 1207, and to invasions in the fifth, eighth and twelfth years of the reign of Rameses III. Of these latter, the invasion in the eighth year is taken to be the most significant, and this is currently dated to 1177. Additionally, letters discovered at Ugarit in Syria date its destruction to between 1190 and 1185 specifically by sea-borne forces.

None of this serves to account for the Bronze Age Collapse and why that collapse lasted so long. A city or palace may be destroyed, but the people flee to the surrounding lands, return and rebuild. The Sea Peoples themselves would appear to be Achaean Greeks predominantly. Among the Sea Peoples the Peleset are identified with the Philistines, who are thought to be Greeks, and are often connected with Cretans. The forces mounted by the Sea Peoples do not appear to be very large, even in the Egyptian records, where details and numbers may be inflated by pride. The force attacking Ugarit in the letters is said to comprise no more than seven ships, not more than 1000 men, and if this force did overwhelm that city it is because the king’s forces were away defending the Hittite Empire, just as King Ammurapi states in his letter to Cyprus. So, it seems we need to postulate another Sea Peoples to attack and destroy both Mycenaean Greece and the Hittite Empire, looking upon the Sea People mentioned in the Egyptian texts and elsewhere as a secondary force of displaced people arising from the first. There is no historical evidence at all for this first Sea Peoples, though some historians have simply postulated an invasion from Central Europe, or from Sardinia or Sicily to provide a supply of missing men.

The logistics of war must also subvert this theory decisively. A sea-borne force might invade and overwhelm Pylos, but could their numbers be so great as to mount successive invasions of Mycenae and its port Tiryns, both extensively fortified, and then go on to devastate a whole land for more than four hundred years? At best, we have here glimpses of the triggers, but the underlying causes are not revealed. Thus, on the contrary, when the invasion hypothesis collapses because it is wholly empty of explanatory force, we must revert to the hypothesis of internal conflict. Among all the causes of terrible destruction, civil wars are the worse in their effects, and there is one kind of civil war that is known to bring about terrible loss of life and unprecedented cruelty, and this is a war of religion—witness the Crusades, the Thirty Years War, and the French Wars of Religion.

The Minoan-Mycenaean Culture

Descent through the female line I denote by the term *matrilineal*. Female rule to the exclusion of male participation I denote by *gynarchy*. Predominance of female power socially and politically, I denote generically by *matriarchy*. A theology that claims that the world is the manifestation of a female power, I denote by *Gaiatism*. Greek and Roman letters speak of societies that were gynarchies—of Amazons, of the women of Lesbos—but a society in which men have no rights at all is scarcely something we can imagine when dealing with ancient civilisations; one finds a structure in which both men and women have social power, but in which women are dominant, or conversely, where the rights of men are inferior to those of women. Such a mixed structure is also a matriarchy. Since the extent of female power can range from pure gynarchy down to equality, the notion of a *developed matriarchy* is pertinent: a social structure originating in some purer form of matriarchy that has been successively diluted; men have prominent roles, but society remains theologically founded upon female power, and women class-by-class have greater rights. The Etruscan civilisation was a developed matriarchy, as demonstrated in their funerary arrangements—women had larger and more elaborate tombs than men. Ancient Egypt was also a developed matriarchy. The thesis is that Mycenaean Greece was a developed matriarchy, while the earlier Minoan Crete was a matriarchy proper, and if not a gynarchy, closer to it. The grades of matriarchy progress from gynarchy, to matriarchy to developed matriarchy—they are all matriarchies, but some are more matriarchal than others.

Men have long entertained the notion that women are the “weaker sex” in ways that make them unfit for fighting or for confronting morally challenging situations, more adapted to domesticity under the “protection” of their fathers, husbands and even sons; but these norms are likely to prove to be socially constructed.

The Linear B tablets make it clear that men of the Mycenaean world did have prominent roles, some identified by titles such as *wanax*, *guasileus*, *lawagetas*, *telestas* and *hequetas*, which have been translated as ‘king’, ‘country lord’, ‘leader of the people’, ‘court official’, and ‘knight companion’ respectively. The kingdom of Pylos was also divided into sixteen regions each administered by a *ko-re-te*, who had a deputy, a *po-ro-ko-re-te*. These officials also appear to be men. Occupations are also strongly typed by gender. At Pylos, female occupations include: corn-grinding, nursing, carding, spinning, flax-working, bath-attendance and waiting.

Has all our “understanding” of the Mycenaean and Minoan cultures been contaminated by the backward projection of patriarchy? Is there any evidence to prove that the Mycenaean lived in families, or is there merely an assumption that they must have lived thus with a male head of the house, because that is the way we have lived? I can find no evidence in the Linear B tablets for what we call family life. Men and women appear to be segregated into work-groups and young boys and girls stay with their mother. The following is a typical entry.

(Aa01) *me-re-ti-ri-ja* WOMAN 7 *ko-wa* 10 *ko-wo* 6
Seven corn-grinding women, ten girls, six boys.

The expression “WOMAN” indicates an ideogram rather than a word. The translation is by Ventris and Chadwick. The work of these two great scholars is coloured by the backward-projection of patriarchy; nonetheless, they observe: “The casual references to the fathers of the children [in one tablet referring to “rowers”] also seem

to indicate that they are not the product of any regular union. The absence of men listed in their own right is surprising; women appear to predominate, and where the men are listed it is as the sons of the women.” (*Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, p.156.) Furthermore, boys of a certain age are taken from their mothers and trained separately.

(Ad676) *pu-ro re-wo-to-ro-ko-wo ko-wo* MEN 22 *ko-wo* 11
At Pylos: twenty-two sons of the bath-attendants, eleven boys.

There appears to be no separate word in Mycenaean Greek for “wife”, and no unambiguous mention of a “wife” at all; no mention of preparations for a wedding or marriage. Priests and priestesses arrange sacrifices; they do not arrange marriages, so far as we know. While we conclude that most children did not know who their father was, there is evidence of concern for paternity within the ruling class.

(Sn01.15) *ne-qe-u e-te-wo-ke-re-we-i-jo to-towe-to o-a-ke-re-se* ZE I [X nn]
Ne-qe-u son of Etewoklewes this year *took* as follows: one pair, *x X*.

(The denotation of *x X*, is not known.) The presence of a patronymic is rare and does not prove that *Neqe-u* was the biological son of Etewoklewes; he may have been adopted. Greek mythology speaks of countless occasions when a hero who did not know his father was adopted by another man: for example, Heracles was adopted by Amphitryon and Theseus by Aegeus, and perhaps not so well-known but pertinent, Ephialtes and Otus, sons of Iphimedeia by Poseidon, were adopted by Aloeus. But the fact that some of the men at Pylos are known as sons of other men is significant. The picture emerges of a developing masculinism out of a background of matriarchy.

Let us elaborate a little on *what is missing from the Linear B tablets*. We know what the people ate—mainly bread and figs—but we don’t know where they ate; we don’t know who they ate with; from the evidence presented it seems unlikely that they lived in families; while there were houses of “apsidal” design, we do not know exactly where men and women of the segregated work-groups slept; some tablets indicate that workers were assigned bedding in pairs, but the pairings are for two men, a man and his daughter, and for a woman and her daughter; hence, we do not know whether they slept alone, in groups, and if in groups, whether these were same-sex groups; we suspect that the “aristocracy” washed in baths because there are bath-attendants, but we don’t know what the common-people did for sanitation; the records do not appear to say anything about washing and laundry; the tablets say nothing about how men and women met for the sake of procreation; we know nothing about their entertainments; some preparations for a religious festival or service are indicated, but we know only a little of their festive calendar; we do not know how these festivals were celebrated; there is no reference to how the *wanax* or his officials were appointed; there are sons, but no knowledge of laws of inheritance; the absence of information about marriage has already been noted, it follows automatically that we know nothing about “dynastic” arrangements, if there were any; we know nothing about their music, poetry or literature (Linear B was devised as a language for accounting, and it is said it could not be used to record poetry, narrative or ideas); we know very little from the tablets about their theology; although extensive knowledge of land tenure is conveyed in the tablets, the background to those arrangements is obscure. We have isolated parts of the social struc-

ture, but the “glue” holding those parts together is missing. If we wish to fill in the gaps with medieval or modern patriarchy, then an argument must be constructed in its favour. It cannot be assumed.

But the tablets certainly improve our knowledge of Mycenaean civilisation—it is a question of stepping back and seeing the picture. We know that women in Mycenaean Greece could hold land on the same terms as men, and we also learn that neither men nor women needed to cite their (non-existent?) spouse when “land-ownership” was in question: they hold land as individuals. Other tablets testify that “corporations” could “own” land, as could deities.

A recent author describes Mycenaean society as “not overwhelmingly oppressive.” (Casteldon, *Mycenaeans* p.84, my underlining.) I could not disagree more; for the lower orders there was no freedom whatsoever. Though there were rural areas not attested in the tablets that fell beyond the scope of a given palace’s administration, the society depicted is one that is utterly controlled in all respects. No free-market is attested, and without a means of exchange, one could not exist. Was it possible to “run away to sea” and make a career through the sweat of one’s brow? All surplus produce is expropriated by the state machine, and the forces behind that machine are vague—at Pylos, there is the *wanax* (king?) bordering upon divine status; and more important yet, the high-priestess, who resides at a place called *pa-ki-ja-ne*, and holds more land than anyone else. Beneath them is an elite of personages, all feeding off the labour of the “servants”, “slaves” and other categories of persons. The priesthood is squatting on the shoulders of the people. Marx could have written volumes about it, and perhaps Lenin had a hand in the catastrophe that followed. Such a life would be intolerable, and furthermore, there is the shadow of something more unpleasant yet.

- (Kn02) [Possibly a calendar of ceremonies for ten days of a Pylos month, or a record of a series of processions occurring on the same day.]
 (1st) PYLOS: *perform a certain action* at the (shrine) of Poseidon and ... the town, and bring the gifts and bring those to carry them. One gold cup, two women ...
 (2nd) PYLOS: *perform a certain action* at the (shrines) of the *Dove*-goddess and of Iphimedeia and of Diwja, and bring the gifts and bring those to carry them.
 To the *Dove*-goddess: one gold bowl, one woman. To Hermes ... : one gold cup, one man.
 [Similar gifts to Zeus, Hera, and to Drimos, the *priest* of Zeus.]
 [From the second series.]
 (1st) ... To the Mistress: one gold cup, one woman.
 [Gifts of cups and women to Mnasa, Posidaeia, the ‘*thrice-hero*’, the ‘lord of the house’.]
 (Translation: Ventris and Chadwick.)

Chadwick took this as proof that ritual human sacrifice was intended. Some scholars translate a key Mycenaean term *po-re-na* from the above text directly by “sacrificial victims”, because it indicates that the persons were girded with wool fillets used at times for sacrificial animals; such a translation makes the point utterly ambiguous but is warmly disputed. Yet to say that there are many explanations for what the “gift” of “one woman” and “one man” might mean does not make it certain that human sacrifice was not practised. The other significant feature of this list is the citation of names of the gods and goddesses, some of which are members of the much later

Olympian pantheon—Poseidon, Zeus, Hera and Hermes, and others belonging to Mycenaean theology dropped out of later theology—Diwja, Mnasa, Posidaeia—while one, Iphimedeia, was later “downgraded” to the status of mother of giants. Drimos in the above is said to be “the priest of Zeus”, while others call him “son of Zeus”, making Drimos conceptually into a name of Dionysus. The suggestion “*Dove-goddess*” implicates Aphrodite.

If all the above shows that the Linear B tablets do not prove that Mycenaean Greece was a patriarchy—what then “proves” that Mycenaean Greece was a developed matriarchy? The evidence derives from three sources: (1) the iconography, which (excepting arguably the point about human sacrifice) unambiguously exposes the Minoan theology and expresses the dominant social position of women; (2) the Linear B tablets themselves; and (3) Greek mythology, which I discuss in a later section.

The iconography attests that Mycenaean religion was nothing like the “Olympian religion” that Homer and Hesiod celebrate. This is a devastating point. If the two religions were *nothing like*, then what happened between the two periods to account for the change? Jane Ellen Harrison (*Prolegomena to Greek Religion*) did partially address the question and she posited a reformation of Greek religion to have taken place in the darkness.

It is useful to have a date for Homer. Hitherto, it has been usual to date Homer early, working before Hesiod, whom it is agreed was writing c.700. Here I adopt the view expressed by Burkert and elaborated upon by Martin L. West (*The Date of the Iliad*) that the *Iliad* was written after the fall of Egyptian Thebes in 667. My general reason for dating Homer late is that the earlier we place him, the greater the disconnection between Greek iconography and Greek ideology. Study of Greek imagery reveals that the Olympian religion took its finalised form only in the C6 (at the earliest); the reign of the “tyrant” Pisistratus at Athens (third period, 547—528) was decisive in this matter—it was the “golden age” of early Athenian culture. If we place Homer mid C8 then we have a huge discontinuity between the cultural effusion of the word and that of the icon. Furthermore, the cognitive structure of Hesiod is more “archaic” than that of Homer. There are specific details in Homer that strongly suggest that the final Homeric redaction took place between 667, when Egyptian Thebes was captured by the Assyrians, and 656 when it was recaptured by the Egyptians under Psamtik I. In the following passage (*Iliad* 9, 381—4) Achilles rejects the gifts offered by Agamemnon by way of reconciliation between them.

‘As for his gifts, I like them just as little as I like the man himself. Not if he offered me ten times or twenty times as much as he possesses or could raise elsewhere, all the revenues of Orchomenus or of Thebes, Egyptian Thebes, where the houses are stuffed with treasure, and through every one of their hundred gates two hundred warrior sally out with their chariots and horses; not if his gifts were as many as the grains of sand or the particles of dust, would Agamemnon win me over.’ [My underlining.]

This passage illustrates the unique genius of ‘Homer’, who created it: the ideas are not stock at all, but incisive in their psychology and literary device, for Achilles will eventually accept the gifts of Agamemnon, having been brought by providence to understand himself better, and do battle with his own negative emotions, cunningly exposed here. As to date, it has been observed that Egyptian Thebes fell in 667, and that this could have acted as a stimulus for the reference. But I add here that the literary device used by Homer goes three times further, for Homer mentions not one but *three* famous cities that have been sacked and destroyed: Orchomenus in legend destroyed by Heracles and Amphitryon, Thebes destroyed by Argos in the Seven Against Thebes, and finally

Egyptian Thebes, destroyed *just recently* by the Assyrians. It is an ironic reminder of the fate of Troy (Ilium) and echoes the theme of man is but a leaf in the hands of the gods and there is no power on earth that cannot fall from hubris. These are literary allusions to other past epics, the *Minyad* attributed to Prodicus the Phocaeian (date uncertain), and the Theban Cycle, a series of lost C8 epic poems that include the *Thebaid*, occasionally attributed to Homer, and the *Epigoni*, sometimes attributed to Antimachus of Teos, who is said by Plutarch to have observed the eclipse of the sun in 753. On this basis, I conclude that Homer's redaction of his own epic took place between 667 and 656, with a date closer to 667 to be preferred because of the topicality of the reference to the fall of Egyptian Thebes. But to further confirm this, I suggest a study of the words that Homer used for the legal relations of marriage would imply a late date. For example, the first reference in the *Iliad* to legal marriage is made by Agamemnon: "For certainly I prefer her [Cryseis] to Clytemnestra, my wedded wife, since she is not inferior to her, either in form or in stature, or in mind, or in any handiwork." (*Iliad*, I, 113—115.) The term used here for "wedded wife" is *κουριδης* (*kouridies*); it specifically denotes a legal relation to a woman distinct from and more binding to that of concubine, *ἀλόχου* (*alókhou*, *poetic*, "partner of one's bed, wife"). There is no knowledge in Linear B of any such legal relations, which must come late in the historical record, and may thereby assist the dating of Homer.

In Hesiod and Homer we see the Olympian religion at an early stage. The Olympian religion is a religion of twelve high gods subordinate to a king-god, Zeus, who represents divine providence, capable of overpowering all the other eleven taken together. Each of these eleven has a developed personality and can intervene in any human sphere, yet each is also associated with a department or function, such as Poseidon, god of the sea, or Hera, goddess of marriage. In neither Hesiod nor Homer do we see all these features; nor has the list of the twelve become fixed. Hesiod knows practically nothing specific about the Olympian gods, though the whole theme of his *Theogony* is the terrible struggle for succession between the Titans and Zeus, who is clearly identified as "father Zeus in Olympus". The struggle takes place between "the deathless gods" and the "Titan gods" without reference to any action of the twelve Olympian gods except Zeus, who owes his victory mostly to the hundred-handed giants, the sons of Mother Earth, Cottus and Briareus; the participation of the twelve in this war was a later invention. Members of the subsequently established Olympic pantheon are referred to in formulaic terms, such as "Poseidon the earth holder who shakes the earth" and "Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis who delights in arrows". The references are sparse, and Athena does not appear whatsoever. Hesiod holds the nine Muses, daughters of Zeus, in very high regard, but his highest praise among the goddesses is reserved for Hecate "whom Zeus the son of Cronos honoured above all." She was not an Olympian, but from the *Theogony* she would appear second only to Zeus, and the current blessed incarnation of the Goddess. Hesiod, who is a promoter and worshipper of Zeus, is equally devoted to the Goddess, as Hecate, who is closely identified in Greek theology with Persephone, daughter of Demeter and goddess of the underworld. Hesiod demonstrates that a prerequisite to the emergence of a systematic theology of twelve Olympian gods, is a Zeus-theology—first the king, then the followers. The Zeus theology represents the emergence of a new divine order, but one could not even equate this in the thought of Hesiod with divine justice and providence—they are a blessing of heaven—Olympus—but for what, is not fully known. Hence, Hesiod represents Olympian religion in an early stage of formation.

Yet what Hesiod records is a terrible struggle in the cosmological succession myth—first one set of gods, the Titans, then another, the deathless gods—and between them a terrible war. Since the Titans owe their origin to

Mother Earth, they are representatives of matriarchy; and they are associated too with practices that the Greeks later came to regard as “barbaric”, that is, as non-Greek customs—for Cronos, the Titan king-god, consumes his offspring; if he were a man, he would be a cannibal of his own children. The concrete blessing that Hesiod celebrates through the coming of the gods, and the thing that he does know, is the end of barbarism.

The theme of Homer’s *Odyssey* is the struggle between barbarism of the Cronos type, represented primarily, but not exclusively, by the Cyclops Polyphemus, and civilisation, represented by Odysseus. The *Iliad* represents another closely related theme—the struggle between Justice (*Dike*), represented by Zeus, and arbitrary fate, represented by the advocacy of the other gods in relation to their favourites. Homer draws out the moral condemnation of the Trojans, who begin by breaking their oath over the duel between Menelaus and Paris, and progressively dig themselves into a moral quagmire. The Trojans lose the war because they are the morally weaker party, and Zeus upholds justice, even sacrificing one of his own sons, Sarpedon, in the process. But Homer’s knowledge of the Olympian twelve is almost as hazy as that of Hesiod. It is significant, too, that in his work Apollo appears in the role of foil to Athena, as much the mainstay of the Trojans as Athena is that of the Greeks, and his identification with the arts, culture and reason is not known. He is a bringer of plague. It is in the C6 that the Olympian religion is more firmly established; Hesiod and Homer represent stages in the early development; each made significant personal contributions to it. But if the Olympian religion is so late coming, what then did it replace?

This brings us back to a discussion of the Minoan-Mycenaean culture. Here a reminder that we are dealing with not one period but two: the Minoan neo-palatial period, c.1600—c.1380; and the Mycenaean hegemony, c.1380—c.1200. The thesis is that the Minoan period was a matriarchy, while the Mycenaean period was a developed matriarchy. The difference is that the degree of female social power in the Minoan phase was greater than that in the Mycenaean phase; however, the Mycenaean phase remains a matriarchy of sorts, because (a) its theology is the same theology as that of Minoan Crete; (b) mythology indicates that descent was matrilineal, and the “monarchy” was selected from the female line of high priestesses; (c) women continued to predominate in social settings. The Linear B tablets belong to the Mycenaean phase and they illustrate the varied and important roles that men undertook in that phase and may convey the impression that only men were active, though this is immediately contradicted by such facts as (a) the infrequent mention of a patronymic and the fact that most children knew only their mothers; (b) the ability of women to hold land; and (c) the fact that the chief landowners are the goddess (“the Mistress”) and her (high) priestess. But we must now proceed to discuss the Minoan phase. I shall examine this under two aspects: (A) religion and (B) social power of women.

(A) Minoan Religion. One has the feeling that the fundamental nature of Minoan religion ought to be utterly beyond dispute. The principal feature of Minoan religion was established by its first systematic researcher, Arthur Evans, who identified only two deities, a “Great Goddess” and a “Boy God” who is subordinate to her. The religion has been called a “Dual Monotheism”. The cult involved fetishes (to be explained below) of tree and stone. That this is the correct interpretation of Minoan religion is followed here. A potentially legitimate issue that arises is whether there is any evidence for a plurality of goddesses, so let us approach this question first.

The “contradiction” between one goddess and many is framed in that system of cognition that I have dubbed Ionian consciousness. The Minoans were primitive materialists for whom there was no distinction between appearance and reality such as we make. This means that the Goddess can manifest herself in different ways in all

things, there being no fundamental distinction in Minoan minds between animate and inanimate. Since the Minoans only represent their supreme deity as a goddess, then for them it is the Goddess who enters into every body, every mouth of all gods, all men, all cattle, all creeping things, everything that lives, and everything whatsoever. Therefore, She, the Goddess, has many names, and each of these may be regarded as epithets, that is attributes of Her. Hence, the monotheism of the Minoans is monotheism of concept. Conceptually, there is just a Goddess, and her subordinate consort, the “Boy God”. But the Goddess, Our Lady (Potnia, Desponia) may manifest as the Mistress of the Mountains (Cybele), as the Mistress of Animals (Artemis), as the Queen of Heaven (Urania, Athena), as Protectress (Hera), as Goddess of Childbirth (Eileithyia), as the Most Pure Barley Mother (Demeter, Ariadne), as the Maiden (Britomartis, Kore), as the Arouser of the Loins (Iphimedeia), as the Mother of the Race (Iphigenia), as the Dove Goddess (Aphrodite) and as the Bringer of Destruction or Queen of the Dead (Persephone), for “everything is full of gods” means at this stage “everything is full of Her”. Since the thought of men and women at this stage of religious cognition amounts to service of the Goddess through sacrifice in the hope of material and spiritual salvation through Her, the greater part of life is spent in trying to invoke her presence. The power of the spoken word and of ritual act go hand in hand, and at childbirth She is invoked as Eileithyia, on the threshing table as Demeter or Ariadne; always the same Goddess but invoked in different ways through her epithets or names. Furthermore, just as there is a goddess of barley and a mistress of animals, so the Goddess manifests herself to different localities: she is the goddess Sparta at Sparta, Delphyne at Delphi, Dione at Dodona, Nemea at Nemea, Mykene at Mycenae, Atthis in Attica, and so on.

In Minoan religion there is no evidence that the names of male gods represent different concepts other than that of the “Boy God”, who is called Adonis in the East, and in Greece, I take his fundamental archetype to be called Dionysus. Thus, in their original formulation, all the names of the gods that we see attested in Mycenaean documents—Dionysus, Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, Ares and Hephaestus—as well as the larger catalogue attested in Greek mythology all began as incarnations of the “Boy God”. The whole point is aptly put by Axel Persson in his *Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times* with whose interpretation of Minoan religion this pamphlet concurs.

Judging by all the evidences, the great Mother Goddess in Crete had been from the beginning a universal deity, the goddess of nature herself, like the Great Goddess in Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. ... Out of these two deities, the Great Goddess and the Boy God, there later developed a larger number of more or less distinct figures, which we meet with in Greek religious myths. In my opinion, their multiple variety depends to a very considerable degree on the different invocatory names, the *epikleseis*, of originally one and the same deity.

Martin Nilsson represents a kind of critical voice against the interpretation of authors such as Evans, Axel Persson and Jacquetta Hawkes. But here, for the sake of brevity, I must make a summative judgement on the work of Nilsson in *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, and the reader is invited to study Nilsson for him or herself to verify or question the truth of it. While investigating a lot of the material evidence relating to Minoan Religion, Nilsson is forced to concede—it seems reluctantly—the main point—there was a Goddess, there was a “Boy God”, and the women were in charge. The critical points he does make seem very obscure to me—frankly, I don’t always understand them. Against the manifest evidence of the Minoan ico-

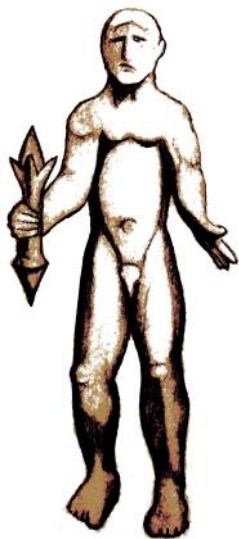


Figure 3. *Tinia*
Etruscan, Firenzuola, C5.

The Etruscan sky-god is the equivalent of Greek Zeus. As consort of Uni, the Goddess, this instance of the proto-Indo-European storm god illustrates the submergence of that archetype within matriarchal theology. Etruscan culture lagged Greek culture, and Etruria remained a developed matriarchy for longer, retaining marked matriarchal features even after Roman conquest.

nography, he strives to impose a patriarchal and Indo-European gloss. He severs Minoan Crete from the Asiatic Mainland, where he acknowledges such a universal Mother Goddess did exist and invents a new descent. He is not alone in this. Walter Burkert (*Greek Religion*) and Georges Dumézil (*Archaic Roman Religion*) represent the same bias, and it was the favoured interpretation of the Interwar period. On the issue of the Indo-European origin, Nilsson himself writes: “Frankly stated, our knowledge of the religion of the invading Greeks amounts almost to one word only ... the name Zeus, which the Greeks share with the Indians and Romans...” (p.25) Observe the assumption that there were “invading Greeks”; “migrating Greeks” is better. But, since the historicity of a migration and fusion approximates to certainty, the Indo-European “Zeus” (Proto-Indo-European, *Dyeus*, Latin, *Deus*) was transformed on encounter with the original inhabitants of Greece into an instance of the ‘Boy God’, who was also the dying god, Dionysus. Zeus was said to have been born and to have died on Crete. It is a mistake to see Greek Olympian religion as a direct instance of Indo-European religion. Indo-European religion, if it ever was distinct, was first thoroughly submerged in the collective “Greek-Pelasgian” consciousness, which adhered to the religion of the Goddess of the Mediterranean and Near East, and from thence Greece followed a religious development unique to itself.

The proof of the “dual monotheism” of the Minoans is derived from the study of their iconography, and particularly of their seal stones and signet rings. It is usual when studying this iconography to mix-up the Mycenaean with the Minoan artefacts, for indeed, as to theology, they show one and the same concept, but there is a distinction in that in Mycenaean iconography we see the emergence of a cult of the warrior, the reverence of individual combat between warriors, the love of battle and chase, and these images do not appear in Minoan artefacts. This illustrates the distinction between the two periods as between matriarchy and developed matriarchy. A single instance of an image depicting a female figure in the position of apparent reverence surrounded by female or male worshipers could not be conclusive, but it is the sheer number of these images that justifies us in calling them “icons” and inferring directly from them the

nature of their religion and theology. Surveying what the iconography as a whole tells us about the nature of their worship is conclusive. We see the Goddess in the place of central worship, saving those less frequent occasions when a male figure takes her place, where all commentators have agreed that in this the male figure is a subordinate double of the Goddess, her “Boy God” Dionysus, the primal Greek archetype of male consciousness. The interpretation is as follows: the Goddess represents the eternal divine force, that which is unalterable behind all phenomena, whether she is manifested on mountain-tops, within caves, within the sanctuaries of the palace, or in a domestic cult. As one of her most important manifestations she appears as the “Mistress of the Animals”, a divine feminine figure flanked by two symmetrically placed beasts, real or fantastic. Dionysus is the incarnation of the Spirit of Vegetation, a manifestation of a single year, or in some interpretations half-year. As in vegetation, he is born, he dies, and he is reborn. From the image of the rebirth of the *Spiritus Vegetativus* the worship-

pers derive their greatest hope of salvation. In and through the life, death and rebirth of Dionysus, through the sacrifice and resurrection of the Dying God, mankind hopes also for resurrection. Hence, while the Goddess is feared, revered, worshipped and loved, the ecstatic passion of religious love is experienced exquisitely in the cult of the Dying God, whose death is lamented by bitter tears beyond all grief, whose resurrection is rejoiced with a joy unequalled by any joy. Hence, also, in the iconography Dionysus can take the place of the Goddess and be depicted as “Master of the Animals”, but no commentator has mistaken him for the principal deity, or even as a member of a pantheon, a pantheon being a later concept belonging to the interface between matriarchy and patriarchy.

Some details are of great importance in a general survey. (1) The principal icon and symbol of the power of the Goddess comprises a representation of the Goddess flanked symmetrically by two animals. (2) The lion, of either sex, is always a representative of female power. The image of the Goddess flanked by two lions is a symbol of matriarchy. (3) The Lion Gate stands above the cyclopean entrance to the citadel of Mycenae, constructed c.1300. This image demonstrates that theologically Mycenae was a matriarchy; whatever the Linear B tablets show about the comings and goings of the men, according to this icon, they thought in their minds that they came and went for the sake of the Goddess. (4) Among the variants of the image of the Goddess, we see what is called *aniconic* representations—that is, She is represented as a column or pillar. By “aniconic” here is meant *non-figurative*. (I take an *icon* to denote an image with a religious signification; the term *aniconic* prevalent in the literature is unfortunate.) It seems likely that the incarnation of the Goddess was first experienced in aniconic (non-figurative) images—such as meteorites, pillars and wooden planks. Something about these would have suggested a divine origin; the meteorite falling from the sky is an obvious instance. Wooden planks may have been one stage on the way to figurative representation, for something about a plank invites the feeling of an unearthly presence, perhaps as a figure emerging from irregular shapes. This depiction developed in the iconography into an almost heraldic device, systematised by the icon of the pillar with two symmetrically placed beasts. It is an image of this kind that we see on the Lion Gate of Mycenae. (5) Another variant concerns the beasts; these may be any pair of animals, but the beast can also become a creature of imagination—a fantastic beast.



Figure 4. *Epiphany of the Goddess*
Minoan seal

The Goddess as "Mistress of the animals" surmounted by a double-axe icon in an epiclesis. Her head is represented aniconically.

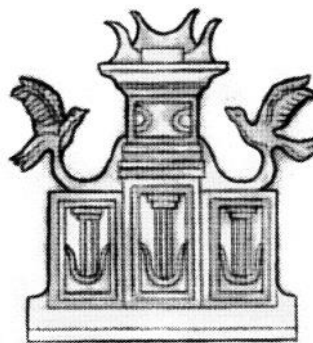


Figure 5. *Aniconic image of the Goddess*
Gold Icon, Upper grave circle, Mycenae, C16

The Goddess as a threefold pillar shrine, surmounted with horns and doves.



Figure 6
The Goddess
Minoan, from Sita

The Goddess holds the symbols of her power, the double axe, in symmetric arrangement; she wears the horns of consecration.

Hence, we see the griffin, a creature with a bird's head and beast's body, and perhaps with wings. The griffin is always a symbol of the Goddess, and an indicator of a theological matriarchy. (6) The fantastic elements appear because the Goddess is a transcendent deity who manifests herself in life. Therefore, she belongs to what we term, "super-nature". (7) The Goddess's epiphany. It is clear from the iconography that the worshippers of the Goddess did have ecstatic experience of the Goddess, as in a vision, religious experience or manifestation. This ecstatic experience is associated with drugs and with cult practices. (8) The Goddess could also appear as a bird, and hence the many representations of her as bird, or in association with birds. Each bird species was an instance of the Goddess. Hence, the association of peacock with Hera, dove with Aphrodite and owl with Athena. This also accounts for the combination of bird imagery with animal imagery, as in the griffin. (9) It follows that the image of the sphinx, which depicts a human head, the haunches of a lion and sometimes the wings of a bird, is a complex representation of the Goddess, her power and epiphany. The head should be female primarily, and the body shown with developed breasts, which are also symbols of female sexual power. Erosion both in the physical and iconographic sense can sometimes depict the head ambiguously, and suppress the breasts, but the origin of the sphinx icon identifies it with the Goddess. (10) In some theologies, for example, in the complex Near-Eastern myth of Agdistis, ancient thinkers expressed their advanced notion that the primal deity was an androgyne, both male and female, and that some primal disruption had occurred to split this figure into a female (Cybele) and male (Attis) counterpart. However, even this attempt at a kind of gender-equality expresses the theological predominance of woman, since in the splitting it is the female part that becomes the Mother, both divine and terrible, and the male part that becomes her lover, consort, and dependent plaything. (11) Another question concerns the relations between the worship of the Goddess and the cult of the dead. It may appear that the two represent different cults, and that we see a theological divide. But the fertility religion binds the two cults together, for the "Boy God" is a Dying God; he dies and is reborn, like a plant. The cult of the Goddess is also a cult of the Dead, and the Goddess as Queen of Heaven is also Persephone as Queen of the Dead. The goddess of the underworld was particularly associated with snakes, so we have her manifestation as a "Snake Goddess". Snakes associate with the dead because they emerge from holes in the ground and are chthonic animals. Because they shed their skin, they appear to undergo death and rebirth. In primitive materialism, just as the soul is a material part, so the dead inhabit a physical region—they are thought to live in tombs, migrate to Western isles or to live in the ground. Hence, at the end of winter, when nature is re-awoken, the dead also come back to life, and emerge from their pot-holes. This reawakening of the dead posed a terrible threat to the living, for the dead also need to feed on blood and other offerings, and if disturbed for some reason, for example, as ghosts of men killed in some sacrilegious way, they could become angry spirits that haunt and plague the land. They could bring famine and ruin. Therefore, the spirits of the dead, and particularly angry spirits, needed to be appeased by blood sacrifices. But the dead

could be useful too, for they could provide guidance and information to the living. Hence, they also became oracles, and there were rituals for the invocation of the dead, such as we see in the visit Odysseus makes to the Underworld. There is a distinction in later Greek concepts between games held for a funeral and games held for fertility rites. The view adopted here is that of Persson, who argues that funeral games originate in fertility rites: “It has been customary to connect the origin of the agones [games] with “Leichenspiele” or “Funeral games”; it is my opinion that these in turn go back to purely religious games of the kind we meet with here [Cretan Bull Games], which are closely connected with fertility rites. Such rites, as we know, have much in common with funeral rites.” (*The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*). (12) A “fetish” is defined as “an object worshipped for its perceived magical powers” (Chambers). The Minoans primarily had fetishes in this sense of columns (stones) and trees. The “triple shrine” at Knossos was a chamber in which “Two sacred columns stood in the side chambers, and a fifth in the middle.” Jacquetta Hawkes, who thus describes the chamber (*Dawn of the Gods*) tells us that judging “from the model represented by tiny gold plaques from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, there would have been pairs of horns of consecration in front of the columns and also on the roofs.” This arrangement exemplifies the symmetric flanking iconography of the Minoans in its most aniconic and “abstract” formation, with pairs of columns taking the place of flanking animals or griffins of other representations. This points directly to the invocatory rites of the Minoans, the practice of calling “down” the Goddess into her sacred column; her *epikleseis*. It seems that an abstract representation of the Goddess as a column was a more effective vehicle for the projection of her presence than a figurative one. (13) The renown symbols of Minoan culture, the horns of consecration, the double axe (*labrys*), and the bull-icon, are all symbolic representatives of the Goddess. (14) The tree cult or fetish should be explained as an *epikleseis* of Dionysus, the “Boy God.” Persson summarises the point.

It has long since been agreed that the vegetation cycle must have had some great significance in the Cretan religion. Some scholars have maintained from the very beginning that in the Minoan religion we have a great nature goddess and her male partner. Scholars have also been tempted to find in the great nature goddess of Crete many characteristics of the great nature goddess of the Near East whom we know by the name of Cybele, later known, in Roman civilization, as *Magna Mater*. Her male partner is therefore naturally comparable with Attis. It is also established that these deities appear aniconically in the tree [Attis, Adonis, Dionysus] and in the stone, the baetyl [Cybele, Great Mother, Goddess].

Here I have added for clarity in square brackets the identifications between the aniconic image and the corresponding deities. When we talk of the “survival of Minoan religion” in later Greek religion, we are talking primarily of the continuation of this Dionysus archetype and of the archetype of the Goddess. The life, death and rebirth of Dionysus-Attis is the fundamental mythologem (a term I will clarify below) of ancient civilizations; this can be inferred, because it appears everywhere. It has what we identify as “utilitarian” provenance: “The



Figure 7. **Minoan Gold Pendant**
Aegina

Icon representing the “Boy-God” as
“Master of Animals”.

phenomena of nature, thus [in the Attis, Adonis, Osiris myth] interpreted and represented mystically, were the great seasonal changes—above all, the death and renewal of vegetation. The purpose of the cult practices was to strengthen the declining strength of nature through sympathetic magic in order that the trees should bear fruit, the seeds ripen, and men and animals perpetuate their kind.” (Persson, *The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*.) Since this mythologem involves the ritual death of the tree-spirit, and the attempt to promote fertility by sympathetic magic it must invite a discussion of whether at one time the Minoans did ritually kill an incarnate Dionysus as in human sacrifice. All mythology points in this direction.

In all this I am primarily drawing out the salient points on the character of Minoan religion that have always been agreed by every scholar who considered the question; I take Persson’s monograph as seminal. Nilsson’s work is not an exception to this rule. As for the general pattern of thinking and the role of sympathetic magic and fetish, it was long ago laid down by J.G. Frazer, and subsequently ignored.

It is usual in the literature not to make a large distinction between iconography that is from the Minoan period of dominance (c.1600—1380), and that from the Mycenaean period of dominance (c.1380—1200). It is likely there is a common theological background of Gaiatism operating throughout both periods. But there are distinctions: (a) in the Mycenaean period we see images of men in combat and in chase, as well as women. (b) The Mycenaean frescoes have been described as derivative from Minoan frescoes and of such low artistic quality that they could be called “wallpaper”. This suggests a decrease in the religious fervour that accompanied the imagery—an implication of “loss of faith”. (c) The stock depictions in Mycenaean art of bull-leaping sports, so passionate in Minoan frescoes, have suggested to many observers that the Mycenaean did not practice such sports. The imagery is therefore consistent with an increased participation of men in society, that the Minoan period was a matriarchy proper, whereas the Mycenaean period was a developed matriarchy, that is, a social structure in which men, still theologically deriving power from the female principle, operate at all levels of society on terms nearing to equality. I postulate, therefore, a rise between the two periods of a culture of “masculinism”, the counterpart of the “feminism” of contemporary times.

The Linear B tablets all belong to the Mycenaean phase, but as those belonging to Pylos come from the time of its destruction, c.1200, there is a gap of about one hundred years between the Knossos tablets and those of Pylos. Hence, we may ask whether the interval suggests any changes in religion between the two. This question has been raised before with inconclusive results, but here I make some suggestions of my own. (a) In both sets of tablets, we see a great preponderance of female deities over male deities. In the famous tablet (Kn02, Tn316) cited above (page 9), the one with the hints of human sacrifice, we see a dove-goddess, Iphimedeia, Diwja, Hera, the Mistress (of *pa-ki-ja-ne*), Mnasa, and Posidaeia. On the other hand, we see only Poseidon, Hermes and Zeus among the male gods, and these are names of the “Boy-God” attested in classical mythology. That is a count of 7 goddesses to 3 male gods. (In other Pylos tablets, Artemis and Demeter may also be attested.) Drimios is uncertain—priest or god—and the “thrice hero” and “lord of the house” suggest heroes or demi-gods rather than gods. (b) We perhaps see the emergence of hero-worship. Hero-worship is only attested as arising in the C8 towards the end of the Dark Age, but there is just a hint here of an antecedent. Iphimedeia, on the other hand, appears as a goddess in her own right. (c) Through all the tablets the “Lady”, *Potnia*, appears most of all, and in many associations; we have met *Potnia* of the chief shrine of Pylos, *pa-ki-ja-ne*, but there at least five other shrines mentioned each with a *Potnia*. (d) There is a tendency in the Pylos tablets to associate a male god with a female god-

dess, and there is even a hint that the female counterpart is a derivative of the male, though this is probably not warranted and may be a backward projection of patriarchy. Specifically, we have Zeus and Diwia, Zeus and Hera, and Poseidon and Posidaeia. This pairing suggests that a division of theological power may have matched a division of social power. Indeed, as is well known, there was only one throne at Knossos, but at Pylos two throne-rooms have been reported (by Jacquetta Hawkes). In the absence of any definite evidence to the contrary, the throne at Knossos, which predates the period of Mycenaean dominance, must be thought of as occupied by a woman. The two thrones at Pylos (if there were two) were possibly occupied by one of either sex. (e) I suggest there is a hint that the religious configuration at Knossos has a more “archaic” character—we meet there other deities and functionaries such as the “Priestess of the Winds”, Eileithyia (Goddess of child-birth), and the Erinyes, as well as Athana, which Robert Graves suggests derives from an inversion of Sumerian Anatha, Queen of Heaven, but a powerful name of the Goddess regardless. The “Winds” are taken to be male gods by most commentators, but there is no evidence for this. The religious power devolved upon the Priestess of the Winds cannot have been trivial in a maritime power that depended for its prosperity on trade. It is a belief in primitive materialism that through sympathetic magic the winds can be controlled. In classical times, Empedocles claimed to be a weather-worker. The evidence from the Linear B tablets supports the thesis of developed matriarchy and suggests an evolution between the earlier and the later tablets, as in increased male equality. (f) The title “Poseidon” may be an indicator of this increased power. This name has been suggested by Kerényi to mean, “capable husband of the goddess Da,” where “Da” is a form of “Ge” = Mother Earth. Although this reading has been attacked by Chadwick as not proven and “circular” reasoning, if we are allowed to read “Poseidon” as “capable husband”, as I believe we are, then this is strong confirmation of the basic interpretation presented here that Mycenaean Greece was a developed matriarchy.

(B) Social power of women. There is not a single fresco from either a Minoan or Mycenaean palace that does not attest to the social dominance of women. The evidence of the iconography is overwhelming. Perhaps the single best statement of this comes from the reconstruction displayed in the British Museum of a miniature fresco from which the sacred grove and dance frescoes are fragments: female spectators, in a welter, watch women dancing; they are seated around a shrine with the aniconic (non-figurative) image of the Goddess—a double column flanked by two lower columns. The women at the centre wear elaborate “court” dress, indicative of their social power. A fresco from the cult-centre at Mycenae shows a cloaked female figure with a sword. She faces another woman who holds a staff. Between them there are two, very small, naked male figures; the size convention deployed throughout the ages demonstrates the distinction between the worshipped Goddess and the worshippers. The image also shows another standing woman, two columns, the horns of consecration and a griffin. And so, it goes on. I cannot think of a single image from this epoch that depicts a man in an unambiguous position of power. There is the famous “Priest-King” icon from Knossos—this appellation is another backward pro-



Figure 8. A female charioteer

Based upon a fresco from the citadel of Tiryns, C13, this figure illustrates the social prominence of woman in Mycenaean society. In the original two women are driving a chariot as part of a larger hunting scene. Their unblemished white skin contrasts with the red colour of their male attendants, who proceed on foot.



Figure 9. *Scene from the cult-centre Mycenae, c.1300*

Sufficient fragments of the original survive for the icon to be reconstructed. The size of the suspended male figures, here enlarged, relative to the standing female figures stresses the importance of the females, who both hold symbols of power. Their sexual power is aggressively emphasised in the size of their breasts. As three of the figures are turned towards the female on our left, this left-figure is an icon of the highest power, the Goddess; the figure on the right is her priestess. The Goddess of fertility, adored by men, is also the Goddess of war.

Gods, Chapter 3.) In addition to the encouragement to fornication, the “frontless jackets” of the women which project their bare breasts and nipples at male (and female) regard could be interpreted as an “aggressive” sexual display of social dominance. From the imagery, men in Mycenaean as opposed to Minoan representations wear more clothes, which is consonant with the thesis of emergent male equality.

Let us look at the *written* evidence from the Dark Age itself. The *Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia* (in James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*) is a hard-luck first-person narrative of an official of the Temple of Amon at Karnak journeying to the Phoenician port of Byblos to procure lumber for the ceremonial barge of the god. The story, told with ironic humour, describes the troubled conditions where trust has broken down, one can be cheated and bullied, and where piracy is rampant. Finally, he gets his timber, and the story continues.

So he [the Prince] loaded me in and he sent me away from there at the harbour of the sea. And the wind cast me on the land of Alashiya [Cyprus]. And they of the town came out against me to kill me, but I *forced my way* through them to the place where Heteh, the princess of the town was. I met her as she was going out of one house of hers and going into another of hers.

So I greeted her, and I said to the people who were standing near her: “Isn’t there one of you who understands Egyptian?” And one of them said: “I understand (it).” So I said to him: “Tell my lady that I have

jection of patriarchy; though this may depict the “Boy-God”, the delightful figure, seemingly unconsciously “one” with nature, is without connection to a symbol of social power. That the Minoans extolled and worshipped the beauty of nature cannot be doubted; their depictions of flowers and animals attest to it. Images of men seem presented for female regard; the so called “Boxing children” from Akrotiri on the island of Thera is an example; they suggest to me young men, as opposed to boys, performing. Against the cumulative weight of the evidence of all this imagery it is difficult to see how one can impose a patriarchal structure upon the society that made them.

We should also reference the mass of female figurines. Another point concerns the dress of men and women, which Jacquetta Hawkes has described so effectively. She writes of “a startling contrast between the minimal dress of the men, who appear naked except for a penis sheath, and the voluminous clothing of the women in full bell skirts and bulky hats and head-dresses.” She observes that the dress is “a frank encouragement of sexuality”—with the “frontless jacket,” and tells us that “big breasts were ... admired in Minoan Crete.” Men are shown with emphasis “on the narrow waist (enhanced by a massive metal belt) and on the cod-piece or penis sheath—a combination at least as provocative as the revelations and concealments of the women.” (*Dawn of the*

heard as far away as Thebes, the place where Amon is, that injustice is done in every town but justice is done in the land of Alashiya. Yet injustice is done here every day!”

[My underlining.] Wen-Amon then presents his plea to the Queen, which she acknowledges; she gives him shelter and the implication is that he gets home safely, for how otherwise could he write about it so eloquently? This story is attributed to the early Twenty-first Dynasty, the C11—that is, it comes from the period just following the eye of the storm that swept away up to 90% of the population of the civilized world in the Near East. Cyprus (Alashiya) is counted from archaeological evidence to have been a refuge site for Mycenaean fleeing from that storm on the Greek mainland. The troubled times are clearly identified in the story—it is a story of double-dealing and brigandage; the life of Wen-Amon is under constant threat. We see that “injustice is done in every town” except, flatteringly, in this unidentified town of Cyprus, but now complaining, and even here. A general breakdown of “law-and-order” with roving brigands and piracy is pictured. And there, in the middle of this storm, is a powerful Queen, with many houses, to whom Wen-Amon can plead for justice, and if the conversation were conducted in or translated into Mycenaean Greek, she would be called—*Potnia*—“My Lady!”

After this significant instance—a Queen rather than a King—there is other evidence from the oral tradition recorded by Homer. The *Odyssey* is all about the encounters of a wandering hero who comes time after time to barbarous places where the inhabitants try to make a meal of him and his followers, and often succeed with the followers. The civilised but notwithstanding dangerous places where he finds haven are associated with female power: Calypso, Circe and the city of the Phaeacians. Circe is an interesting case, for it seems that if Odysseus were not given divine aid, and Circe not mastered by love, she would turn him into a pig, and put him with the rest of the swine, just like his unfortunate companions. She is a potent symbol of female power, and one that must be accounted for—the obvious interpretation being that at some time in the past women really did have social power, acknowledged by Homer, though he was a fervent advocate of patriarchy. More instructive yet is Homer’s depiction of the country of the Phaeacians, because there, while there is a king, Alcinous, there is also a queen, Arete, and the reader may affirm for him or herself that she is the one with the greater power. If their house had more than one room, and if they sat on thrones, then we might confidently expect two throne rooms, just as at Pylos. The text says that they had polished thrones of silver, and Odysseus is invited to sit in one of them. He is also offered the succession to the kingship by marriage to the princess Nausicaa, a clear indication of matrilineal succession. The Phaeacian state is a developed matriarchy.

This dual division of power between men and women, between *wanax* and *wanasa*, is firmly attested in Athenian tradition, which recorded that in the archaic period the Mycenaean palace on the Acropolis was still standing; it was called the Erechtheum and was itself built upon the tomb of an earlier legendary king of Athens, Cecrops. The palace was the place of worship of Poseidon Erechtheus and Athena Polias. For “Polias” we might easily substitute “Potnia”, “Our Lady”. That there was but one palace is attested in Homer (*Odyssey* 8. 81). Both Cecrops and Erechtheus are “children of Earth” and are half man, half serpent. The serpent image associates with the Goddess, matriarchy and death. That they are called “Children of Earth” (*Iliad* 2. 547—48) indicates that they are foundlings or offspring of the temple and are reared by the temple priestesses.

Minoan culture was a matriarchy, with a single queen, and Mycenaean culture was a developed matriarchy, in which there was a complex division of power between men and women of authority.

Human Sacrifice and its Denial

That one must construct an argument in defence of the thesis that the Greeks did at some stage of their history and prehistory commit human sacrifice is nothing short of extraordinary. Nowadays, it is possible to read whole putative ‘histories’ of Greek prehistory that do not mention the topic once; that these ‘histories’ are based primarily, if not exclusively, on archaeological (material) evidence is another aspect of this fashion. If indeed the Greeks and Romans in their prehistory did practise human sacrifice, and came in their historical period to abandon it, then this transformation belongs first and foremost to the dark ages of their history and becomes for us the single most important “fact” about those ages, essential to be considered in any explanation as to why they were dark. Works that ignore the issue run the risk of being fabrications. It is a fabrication to omit, as much as it is to invent.

The fundamental principle of archaeology is that a material datum existing in the present has a history that can be inferred from the datum itself: by digging through the layers, one is literally digging through the past. But the digging happens in the present. The same principle applies to material evidences of oral tradition; the fact that the tradition is oral and comprises data that is classified as “legendary” or “mythological” does not remove its status as evidence. It, too, must be accounted for. Thus, with the oral evidence, as with the finds of archaeological digs, each datum must be examined and evaluated case-by-case. The origin of this or that aspect of the oral evidence should be attributed to a time and place.

In the sense of absolute knowledge we cannot really know history. It is always possible to deny any thesis concerning the past. Did Napoleon really enter Moscow on 14 September 1812? All conclusions about the past are a form of probabilistic reasoning. We make sense of the past based upon critical evaluation of the evidence. On this basis, my thesis is that the evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that the ancient Greeks committed human sacrifice at some time, and once accepted, is powerfully explanatory.

Plutarch (c.46—c.120 CE) states that the ancient Spartans practised a form of human sacrifice by exposing new-born babies. In this, he is our only source; therefore, the counter-argument goes, since he is our only source, he could be wrong, therefore, he is wrong, and the Spartans never did this. The shades between *possible*, *probable* and *certain* have been constantly abused by all commentators in defence of their own positions.

I do not think that Plutarch claims to have witnessed child-exposure himself, but he did claim to have witnessed the ritual ‘flagellation’ of Spartan boys at the altar of Artemis Orthia. (It was a tourist entertainment in his days.) He provides accounts in both *Ancient Customs of the Spartans* and in his *Life of Lysurgus*, writing in the latter, “for I myself have seen several of the youths endure whipping to death at the foot of the altar of Diana surnamed Orthia.” Hence, the thesis of denial goes: Plutarch had defective eyesight, and did not witness what he saw, and was mistaken, both about this and about infant exposure, even though he says he was a visitor to Sparta. The account of the flagellation is eye-witness testimony of human sacrifice. Boys are whipped to death at a religious festival devoted to an instance of the Goddess, Artemis Orthia = “murder” of a human victim in a religious context = ritual human sacrifice. It is also an instance of a transmuted ritual. Like the tracing back to ancient languages of which we have no instance, by peeling back the layers we infer that at some time in the past more explicit human sacrifice did take place at Sparta, and that the drawing of blood was a ritual instituted by way of



Figure 10. *The Sacrifice of Polyxene*
 Illustration based on icon on a black-figured amphora by the Timiades Painter.
 In the British Museum. Made in Athens. 570—550

Explicit representations of the sacrifice of men were taboo by the time figurative art was reintroduced in archaic times. The prevalent culture of misogyny in a period of rising patriarchy expressed itself in depictions of extreme violence towards women. The misogyny is rooted in the cultural memory of a time when the Goddess demanded the life of a male-consort for the sake of fertile crops.

reformation of that primitive rite. Hence, we see into the Dark Age, and discern its most fundamental fact: *the reformation of Greek religion.*

Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (written 2nd century CE) is the best, though by no means only, source we have for the oral tradition that stretches into the Dark Age. Pausanias is just another person who, according to the antithesis, was unable to see what he could see. To call the references in his work to human sacrifice *numerous* would be an understatement. The most famous of all concerns the sacrifice of a child by Lykaon and to the contemporary practices taking place at the altar of Zeus at Mount Lycaon. He implies that he was an eye-witness. Extracts from the two relevant passages are as follows.

But I believe Kekrops king of Athens and Lykaon were contemporaries, though they were not equally gifted with religious wisdom. Kekrops first named Zeus the Supreme, and decided to offer him no slaughtered sacrifices but to incinerate on the altar those local honey-cakes the Athenians today call oatmeals, but Lykaon brought a human child to the altar of Lykaian Zeus, slaughtered it and poured its blood on the altar, and they say at that sacrifice he was suddenly turned into a wolf. And I believe this legend, which has been told in Arkadia from ancient times and has likelihood on its side. (*Arcadia*, 8.3.4.)

At this altar [of Lykaian Zeus] they offer a secret sacrifice to Lykaian Zeus. I could see no pleasure in pursuing inquiries about this sacrifice; let it be as it is and as it was from the beginning. (*Arcadia*, 8.38.7.)

[My underlining.] The second of these implies that Pausanias was present. (There is a reference also by Plato to the practice contemporaneous with his times, when Socrates says, "... the story which is told concerning the tem-

ples of Zeus Lycaeus in Arcadia ... That he who tasted the human flesh which had been cut up with the other sacrifices must of necessity become a wolf.” *Republic*, 8, 565 D-E.) Pausanias did believe that a child sacrifice had taken place in ancient times, and he goes on to affirm that he believes human sacrifice might still be happening in his own times. It is the common conviction of the ancient world that at some time in the past human sacrifice was practiced. Pausanias exemplifies the normative reaction of educated Greeks and Romans to that perceived belief—which is disgust.

That human sacrifice took place is the cornerstone of the interpretation of J.G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890) and formed the backbone of that school of thinking to which Jane Ellen Harrison and Robert Graves are also connected. From the Interwar period onwards, a reaction to this “Cambridge school of ritual” set in. One of the later proponents of this hostile reaction was Burkert, whose *Greek Religion* persistently denies it. His thesis is that only animal sacrifice ever took place. Dennis Hughes outlines Burkert’s counter to the evidence provided by Pausanias and Plato (among others) concerning the Mount Lykaon ceremony: it was all stage-managed by the event organisers, who thereby attracted greater profits. “Burkert notes that the inwards of humans and animals would hardly be distinguishable and that those who partook of the communal meal were other than the priests who had prepared it. The power of suggestion, fostered by tradition, would work on the imagination just as well as the reality. Thus in Burkert’s view the participants will have believed in earnest that the sacrificial meal contained a portion of human flesh, and this belief will have contributed to the efficacy of the initiation rite.” (Dennis D. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, p.105.) This counter-argument exemplifies all the abuse of logic that is going on in the antithesis – the clumsy moves from *possible* to *probable* to *certain*. It is



Figure 11. *Theseus and the Minotaur*.
Attic vase, C5.

The Minotaur is evidently a man, and his identification with a bull is an allusion to his original character as sacrificial king-victim. The second millennium had already substituted the concept of ritual killing in a duel for the slaughter over an altar. But the Dark Age witnessed many atavisms.

just *barely possible* that it was a hoax organised by unscrupulous priests to hoodwink initiates, willing to eat human flesh, into thinking they had eaten human flesh, when in fact the scrupulous priests took great pains to make sure that they did not. From that *bare possibility* it follows *that it is certain* that human sacrifice never took place in ancient Greece. And if it is not *certain*, then what is the point of denying it?

In the context of this denial of the evidence provided for the Mount Lykaon ritual, Hughes also cites the lack of archaeological evidence: no human bones have been discovered on that mountain, therefore, he infers, no human sacrifice took place. This point exemplifies all the reasons why we should not begin with archaeology in this matter. The fact that archaeologists have not found human bones (or, to be exact, are reported to have said they have not) does not prove there never were any. They are looking in the wrong place, or the evidence has been removed. (Where are the remains of the 450,000 Mycenaeans who died after the Bronze Age Collapse?) Archaeological evidence sometimes appears to be conclusive: the sites in Crete of Mount Juktas, the sanctuary of Fournou Korifi and the “North House” of Knossos, appear *prima facie* to be unambiguous discoveries of the practice of human sacrifice. The discoveries at Knossos revealed a mass of children’s bones that had

been cut-up, which suggested to the excavators that the children were victims of cannibalism. But Hughes states that these might be secondary burials. This is true, they might be, and any number of other explanations for how those bones got there could be proposed. It is not archaeology that proves or disproves that human sacrifice took place in Greece; it is Greek tradition that does that. Then, in the context of that tradition, archaeology confirms it, or, if one does wish to cavil, at least, raises no objections.

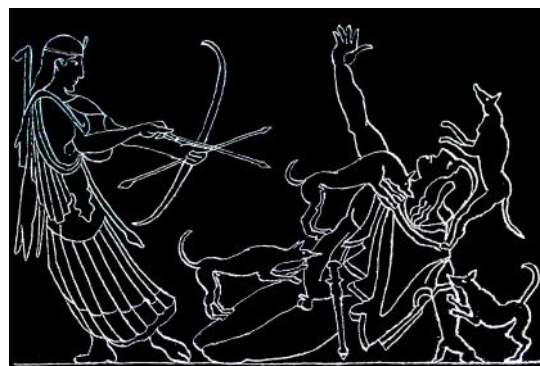
Most burials in the Late Bronze Age in Mycenaean Greece were secondary burials following excarnation—the practice of removing the flesh and organs of the dead before burial, leaving only the bones—also called “defleshing”. It is obvious, then, that material evidence of this nature cannot pronounce on cause of death, and hence is utterly incapable of giving an answer to the question of human sacrifice. Excarnation and “secondary burial” are consistent even with cannibalism, and Herodotus reports customs among “barbarian” nations where people who are about to die are sacrificed and eaten. (For example, *Histories*, 3.99 describing the customs of the Indian tribe of Padaei.)

During the Interwar epoch the myth of the Indo-European heritage was raised. It was not that human sacrifice was denied, merely that the Greeks (and Romans) never practised it—because they were inheritors of the Indo-European tradition, of “light”, of the “father”. In other words, this reaction is tainted with a backward projection of patriarchy and its “virtues”. It can be deeply distressing to think that one’s ancestors did that sort of thing, and no culture was more upset by that thought than the pan-Hellenistic culture of the Greeks and Romans; they shied away from the topic and refused to understand their own religion. But what this Interwar theology does is sever the Graeco-Roman tradition from the mainstream of Western evolution; it casts the burden of “guilt” for the practice of human sacrifice upon the Mediterranean peoples, the Phoenicians, Canaanites and Carthaginians primarily, and glancingly at the Babylonians and other peoples of the Near East. Thus Greek = Roman = Indo-European = Good and Phoenician = Canaanite = Mediterranean = Bad. And this tradition was willing to countenance that the Greeks and Romans owed their heritage to an unsoiled patriarchy, while the Mediterranean culture was a dirty work of the Goddess. This dichotomy is utterly false, and demonstrably so. The existence of an Indo-European origin for the peoples that spoke the languages derived from that root is firmly established; that any of these peoples refrained from participating in the Mediterranean culture is not. I have written above on the indecisive nature of archaeological evidence with respect to human sacrifice in ancient Greece, but would one call the evidence of the Celtic bog-bodies indecisive? Since the Celts are an Indo-European people, it is a myth (in the sense of lying fable) to suggest that Indo-Europeans could not and did not do what everyone did.

Figure 12. Artemis and Actaeon

Image from an Attic mixing bowl. C.470 by the Pan Painter.

Explicit renderings of the sacrifice of a man became taboo. Here the rendering of the death of Actaeon is laconic, elegant, and poetic; the Pan Painter deflects awareness of the terrible savagery implicit in the myth of Actaeon, destroyed at the instance of the Goddess Artemis, torn asunder by his own hunting dogs. Representations of male victims were permissible only in the context of actions of gods, whose exploits could be looked upon as divine, expressive of transcendent mysticism. Similar elegiac treatment was given to depictions of the myth of Apollo who flays Marsyas: icons illustrating this scene focus on the musical contest, not the sacrifice.



It seems likely that the first people to give up the practice of human sacrifice were the Egyptians. But, if they did so, it was upon an insecure theological foundation. To begin at the beginning, the Egyptians of the first dynasty (c.3200—c.2910) did practice human sacrifice, and in this matter, archaeology has again deigned to pronounce a firm conviction. The death of all the pharaohs of the first dynasty were accompanied by what are called “retainer sacrifices”. They count 338 people strangled in order to accompany King Djer into the Other World. Then, it seems, the Egyptians gave it up.

They came up with a sophisticated metaphysics that allowed them to substitute clay models for real people. They came to believe that a statue could be inhabited by a “soul”—which they called “ka”—and that by the incantation of mantras clay models of people could be brought to life within the tomb. Therefore, it was no longer necessary to kill people to provide companions for the king. Furthermore, even the mere mention of servants in magic inscriptions carved into the walls of the tombs in the *Book of the Dead* would suffice to bring retainers to “life” within the tomb. It was a brilliant idea, but one that suffered not only from the defect that we have discovered—that it does not work—but also from an inner inconsistency, namely, that no substitute suffices, when there is a real crisis.

The cognitive structure of the ancients, the very mode of their thinking about reality, is also something revealed by the oral tradition, evidenced too in the written record as far back as it goes. The Egyptians, and all peoples of the world, were primitive materialists. The primitive materialism of the ancients lent support to the practice of sacrifice, because it supported another belief structure that is dubbed *spiritual materialism*. This is most exemplified in the bargaining religion of the Romans, by whose time it had been honed into a system. The Romans worked on the principle that they could buy the favour of the gods: such-and-such a sacrifice (*sacra*) would reap so-much reward (*signa*). It was the foundation of their military success, if not in reality, on which we cannot comment, but because it was the ground of their superior morale in battle; in other words, they believed it, so it worked for them. But this system, which they inherited from the ancient world, and which was under constant threat of breaking up under the ideological pressure of the new way of thinking introduced in Ionia, was the underlying system of the Egyptians, the archaic Greeks, and the whole ancient world. Prior to the inception of Ionian thought, the ancients believed that the gods demanded sacrifices, and it is this belief that convinces the modern observer that they must also have provided the gods with human victims, as well as animal ones. We also have a theoretical and theological justification of this logic in a late work. It appears in a discussion reported by Porphyry, which is extraordinary as Porphyry was a Neo-Platonist vegetarian, who would not hurt a fly. Porphyry had asked Iamblichus to explain the Egyptian doctrine of sacrifice, and Iamblichus responded by sending him a treatise on the topic said to be written by one Abammon, an Egyptian priest.

THE KIND OF SACRIFICES MOST PROPER

Of such a character are some of the animals of Egypt, and in the same manner, the human being everywhere is sacred. Some of the consecrated victims, however, make the familiar relationship more conspicuous, so far as they affect the analysis in respect to the kindred and more sacred origin of the primitive elements with the Superior (divine) causes. This being accomplished, the benefits which are imparted from it are more perfect. (Iamblichus, *Theurgia, The Egyptian Mysteries*, trans. Alexander Wilder.)

[My underlining.] What this says is (a) sacrifices work; (b) human sacrifices work better than animal ones, for they are more “sacred” and “more perfect”. It is the cognitive structure of primitive materialism and its accompanying spiritual materialism that makes sense of the following extract from Diodorus.

Poseidon ... became angry with Laomedon the king of Troy in connection with the building of its walls, according to the mythological story, and sent forth from the sea a monster to ravage the land. By this monster those who made their living by the seashore and the farmers who tilled the land contiguous to the sea were being surprised and carried off. Furthermore, a pestilence fell upon the people and a total destruction of their crops, so that all the inhabitants were at their wits' end because of the magnitude of what had befallen them. Consequently the common crowd gathered together into an assembly, and sought deliverance from their misfortunes, and the king, it is said, dispatched a mission to Apollo to inquire of the god regarding what had befallen them. When the oracle, then, became known, which told that the cause was the anger of Poseidon and that only then would it cease when the Trojans should of their free will select by lot one of their children and deliver him to the monster for his food, although all the children submitted to the lot, it fell upon the king's daughter Hesioine. Consequently Laomedon was constrained by necessity to deliver the maiden and to leave her, bound in chains, upon the shore. (*Library*, IV. 42. 2 – 3, trans, Oldfather, p.475.)

According to other versions of the myth, the quarrel is about payment for the construction of the walls of Troy, though here the idea of payment is not explicit. In the above, the term translated as “king” is not *anax* but *basileus*, meaning “country lord” in Mycenaean Greek; this “king” has refused to “pay” Poseidon for the construction of the cyclopean (Pelasgian) walls. In Mycenaean Greece the fortifications of Athens, Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes and Gla went up during the period c.1350—c.1250. In classical Greek, Laomedon = “ruler of the people”; do we have here an allusion to the political structure evident at Pylos in the Linear B tablets, where in addition to the “king” (*wanax*), who is closely linked to Poseidon, we have a *lawagetas*, usually translated as “leader of the people”? In this “myth” Laomedon is associated with “the people”, but not all the people. The people are divided between those who follow Laomedon and those who follow Poseidon. The party represented by Poseidon did the building of the wall (in the myth) and/or had some objection to it, and are demanding compensation from Laomedon, but this has been refused. The obvious question is: what was the “payment” that Laomedon refused to give? Poseidon organises a civil disturbance by means of an invasion from the sea, that is, I suggest, the dams are broken and there is a flood, and the fertile coastal plains are ravaged; supporters of Laomedon are killed. The archaeology of the region near Orchomenos is instructive: around 1300 the inland swamp of Lake Copias was drained, and a series of fortifications were built to defend the resultant fertile plain, including the cyclopean walls of the huge citadel of Gla. But c.1200, Gla was abandoned and the lake was flooded. Mythology tells us that Heracles on behalf of the Thebans was the responsible leader, and celebrates the act of destruction as heroism. The result for Orchomenos, as in the myth of Laomedon, was famine and pestilence. In most variants of the myth of Laomedon, it is famine that is primarily implicated, but it is notable that in Greek mythology pestilence is the work of Apollo. Some versions of the myth say that Laomedon offended both Poseidon and Apollo, and both took their revenge. In the version provided above, a crop disease following a flood is implicated. The people then called a popular assembly, and agreed to submit to the arbitration of an oracle, here associated with

Apollo and Delphi. (Prior to c.800 the oracle at Delphi was devoted to the Goddess, Ge, the Earth. In other versions of the myth the oracle is of Zeus Ammon.) The oracle, consonant with primitive materialism, indicates that if payment by Laomedon is not forthcoming, then he may substitute a child sacrifice. This sacrifice was to be a male child, and from his own house, but he attempts to cast the lot upon the whole population; in the end, he compromises by giving up one of his daughters. I suggest we infer that the original payment was his own life and that he refused—it could hardly be a demand less than the substitute, which is a child sacrifice. Also, the idea of “payment” is a backward projection even for the Greeks—money had not been invented by this time. It is this pattern in which human sacrifice is demanded by the gods in propitiation for some offence that is overwhelmingly manifest in all Greek mythology.

It is a speculation to assert that religious conflict is involved among the causes of the Bronze Age Collapse (c.1200) in Greece. Nevertheless, we see here a pattern: some kind of refusal on the part of a leader—here *basileus* not *anax*—to “pay Poseidon”, followed by a civil disturbance, followed by famine and pestilence, followed by further civil disturbance and the institution of a plebiscite (assembly), followed by an offspring sacrifice, and this as a preliminary to yet further religious conflicts and transformations, represented by the rescue of the maiden. This underlying structure, or parts of it, is repeated everywhere in Greek mythology and tradition.

Ionian consciousness makes both human and animal sacrifices spurious, because in that cognitive structure the deity is (a) separated from the world, and (b) becomes an expression of the concept of the infinite. Hence, god becomes omnipotent and omniscient, and has no need of sacrifices. This does not determine the gender of god, but the rising patriarchy coupled this notion to their high storm and weather god and made Zeus Almighty out of him. Homer, with his conception of Zeus as the divine arbiter among the gods, governed by inscrutable principles of justice, and capable of overpowering all the other gods alone, represents a stage in the evolution of this concept. Since Homer antedates the appearance of Ionian consciousness, we see that Greek consciousness had entered by his time a period of proto-Ionian consciousness. We sense that the urge to dispense with the practice of human sacrifice was instrumental in the formation of Ionian consciousness. However, primitive materialism was not overthrown all at once, as if Thales merely had to pronounce, “All things are from water and all things are resolved into water,” to settle the question for everyone. Paganism did not collapse immediately, nor did belief in sacrifice: the bargaining aspect was enshrined in the religion of the Romans. By the first century CE, most of the Roman elite (Varro, Cicero *et al.*) were non-believers in their own pagan religion, regarding it as a state religion designed for the masses, perhaps even deliberately so. But since animal sacrifice continued to be the mainstay of religious practice in the classical and Hellenistic periods, then we also expect to see instances of human sacrifice, albeit rare, within the historical record. And that is what we do see.

According to Pliny the Elder in 97 BCE, “a decree forbidding human sacrifices was passed by the senate; from which period the celebration of these horrid rites ceased in public, and, for some time, altogether.” (*Natural History*, 30.3.) This sentence has been much debated because of its implications: (a) that there were both public and private human sacrifices prior to 97 BCE; (b) that private celebrations continued even after that date; (c) that public celebrations of human sacrifice were resumed. Regarding the latter point, Pliny (23—79 CE) could be alluding to the many horrors of the Roman civil wars, and there are accusations against both Julius Caesar and Augustus that they committed human sacrifice, though the verdict upon them is still out. But Pliny confirms the impression given above when he writes, “Our own age even has seen a man and a woman buried alive in the Ox

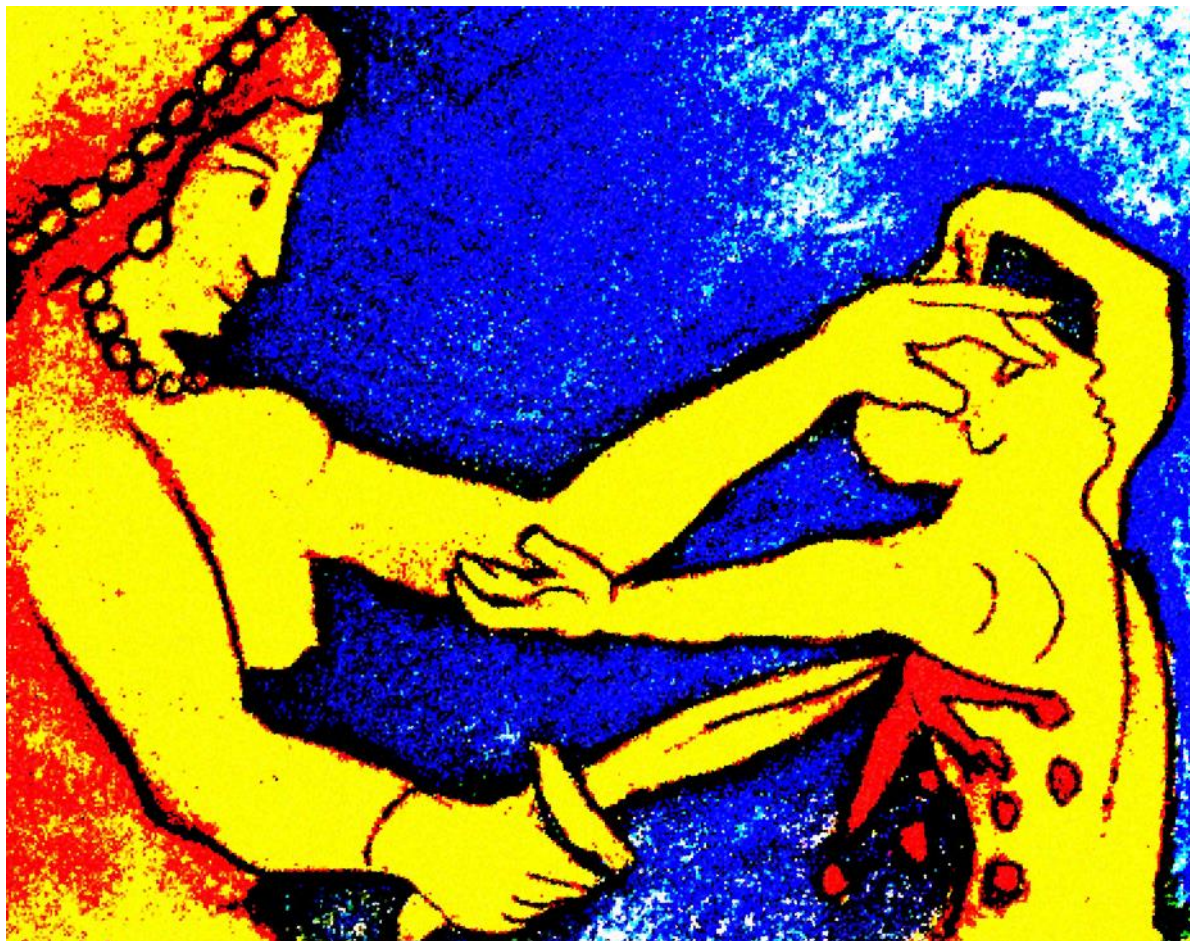


Figure 13. *Medea kills her son.* Illustration derived from an amphora from Cumae, c.330.

The myth of Medea abounds with instances of child-sacrifice. In a later aetiological wrapper, Medea kills her children in revenge for being abandoned by Jason. Euripides, in his play Medea, was able to transform the myth into an insightful investigation of the plight of subjugated womankind.

Market, Greeks by birth, or else natives of some other country with which we were at war at the time.” (Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.3.11 – 12.)

That there were public human sacrifices in the Roman past is well attested in Roman letters. In 228 BCE in the face of an invasion of the Insubres and other Gallic tribes there was a panic at Rome. According to Plutarch two men and two women, a pair of Gauls and a pair of Greeks, were buried alive in the *forum boarium*. Livy reports that in 216 the same rite was reverted to when four people were buried alive. Livy was embarrassed, as many of the Roman elite were, by the practice of human sacrifice and biased towards not reporting such events; but the history of the Second Punic War and the terror it produced in Rome as recounted by Livy suggests that there were many more sacrifices, a multitude, details of which he did suppress. The elder Pliny and Plutarch may be taken for two of the most honest men who ever lived, excelled in this respect only by Socrates and Euripides.

We have already seen that Socrates, as reported by Plato, another honest man, referenced the ritual of Lycaon, and Euripides made human sacrifice the perpetual theme of all his work. So, it is a question of whom to believe: the Interwar commentators, or Livy, Pliny, Plutarch, Plato, Pausanias, Socrates and Euripides. I place my faith in the Romans and Greeks, who after all were Roman and Greek.

The mention here of the Punic Wars is an opportunity to discuss the Carthaginians. If there was ever a people renowned throughout time for the practice of human sacrifice, then these are they. The explicit descriptions of their activities are many, but among them is his one from Diodorus Siculus.

They [the Carthaginians] also alleged that Cronus had turned against them inasmuch as in former times they had been accustomed to sacrifice to this god the noblest of their sons, but more recently, secretly buying and nurturing children, they had sent these to the sacrifice; and when an investigation was made, some of these who had been sacrificed were discovered to have been supposititious.

When they had given thought to these things and saw their enemy encamped before the walls, they were filled with superstitious dread, for they believed that they had neglected the honours of the gods that had been established by their fathers.

In their zeal to make amends for their omission, they selected two hundred of the noblest children and sacrificed them publicly; and others who were under suspicion sacrificed themselves voluntarily, in number not less than three hundred. There was in their city a bronze image of Cronos, extending its hands, palms up and sloping toward the ground, so that each of the children when placed thereon rolled down and fell into a sort of gaping pit filled with fire. (*Library*, 20.14.)

There are many other references to similar Carthaginian practices in Roman literature. The reader may also find the stories relating to the brazen bull of Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigento in Sicily, instructive.

The Interwar tradition had the tendency to draw a distinction as been good = Indo-European and bad = “Mediterranean”. Nowadays, it is common to raise doubts as to whether even the Carthaginians ever practised human sacrifice. Given that archaeologist Lawrence Stager uncovered in his excavations during the 1970s 20,000 urns at Carthage containing the ashes of infants, this “sceptical” response is extraordinary—yet Stager himself has withdrawn his original conclusions which were in favour of child sacrifice. It has been suggested that the whole idea was Roman propaganda to justify Roman “aggression”—and it is true that history recounts that the Romans provoked the Third Punic War, and the Carthaginians did everything to avoid it. What weighs against this backward projection of Mediterranean “neo-purity” is that the practice was entirely an expression of the ancient system of cognition—what I have called primitive materialism and its associated spiritual materialism and in later times bargaining religion. In the extract of Diodorus quoted above we see the Carthaginians seeking to bargain with god. Furthermore, the very authors who report that the Carthaginians did these things also report that the Romans and Greeks did it too, and for the same reasons. The Romans and Greeks did practice human sacrifice, but they also strove to give it up.

Although the Romans outlawed human sacrifice, as the above data shows, there is every reason to suppose that (a) the Romans continued the practice of human sacrifice right into the historical period; (b) even after they outlawed it, they practised it. We have here evidence of another thesis: under the influence of their Etruscan her-

itage, Rome remained a developed matriarchy until very late, even as late as the period of the Second Punic War; it is this that accounts for the strange “Roman anomaly” that they appear to have no mythology. This is because, under a late patriarchal revolution, the Romans deliberately wiped it out. They replaced their mythology with a state religion and a false legendary history that has been so successful in hoodwinking themselves and all subsequent ages that the fact that it is largely a fabrication has still not been fully digested. (It was Mommsen who first suggested it was a fabrication.) Notwithstanding the patriarchy they instituted, the Romans preserved many aspects of their Etruscan heritage, which included the custom of human sacrifice and its derivative habit of cruelty, in the form of gladiatorial contests and the use of crucifixion (immolation) as a punishment. Thus, the Romans, Etruscans and Carthaginians belonged largely to one and the same culture. It was their political conflicts that brought them into ideological variance.

It was only when Rome came into contact with Greek culture that they began to adopt the Greek attitude to things. *It was the Greeks and not the Romans who decided to give up human sacrifice.* But in rural and remote areas, such as Arcadia, the custom could continue; Greek culture was not uniform, and the tribal areas thought differently from the areas of *polis* and were more “conservative” in religion. Furthermore, when a custom has persisted for millennia under apparent divine sanction it remains as an underlying substratum to the culture—that is, Western civilisation is built over the previous epoch in which human sacrifice was normative. Under great pressure, Greeks could also revert to practices that they had theoretically come to regard as savage. We call this atavism.

One attested case in the historical record for the Greeks is the sacrifice of three prisoners of war, sons of Sandauce, the sister of Xerxes, at some point prior, during or after the naval battle of Salamis in 480. Our primary sources for this story are Plutarch’s *Life of Themistocles* and *Life of Aristides*; Plutarch references it again in his *Life of Pelopidas*; there is also background material in Herodotus’s *Histories*. Herodotus does not mention the sacrifice, and Plutarch obtained his information from a history composed by Phantias of Eresus (active c.332). The point, then, is that the account that derives from Phantias is not eye-witness testimony and could have arisen out of bias against Themistocles or Athens or both.

On a balance of probabilities, I accept the account of Phantias as historical, for it fits the psychology and norms of the times, as the following developed sequence of events shall make clear. Firstly, when the Persian emperor Darius sent ambassadors to Greece to demand submission, these men were thrown into the pit at both Athens and Sparta. The Spartans are clearly reported as looking upon this “murder” as a sacrifice, as I shall illustrate below. A culture of mutual cruelty had already been long established in relations between the two sides—both sides were prepared to bathe themselves in blood, to go beyond the point of no return in their conflict, and that as an aspect of their morale, for a struggle is more effective if it is desperate. In an earlier naval engagement at the Artemisium after the Persians captured a Greek ship, according to Herodotus, the Persians immediately sacrificed one of the Greek sailors, a man named as Leon. (*Histories*, 8.180.) The Persian prisoners that Themistocles is alleged to have sacrificed were taken by Aristides “the Just” by a surprise attack on the island of Psyttaleia. “Among these were three sons of the king’s sister, Sandauce, whom he immediately sent to Themistocles, and it is said that at the command of Euphrantides the prophet they were sacrificed to Dionysus the Eater of Flesh in obedience to some oracle.” (*Aristides*, 9.) The god in question is sometimes translated as *Dionysus Carnivorous* (Greek, *Omestes*). In the life of *Themistocles* Plutarch names his source and expresses his confidence in it:

“... this is what Phnias the Lesbian says, and he was a philosopher, and well acquainted with historical literature.” I should agree that the material alone amounts to a case of “not proven”. We could also look upon it as an atrocity, exceptional but not normative. However, that it is normative is what makes it believable.

To illustrate this, we have the work of Euripides: the situation that Themistocles is said to find himself in as described by Plutarch, is the theme of the work of Euripides; he makes his conviction that Greeks in ancient times did practice human sacrifice abundantly clear. In his dramas a leader—Agamemnon on two separate occasions (*Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Hecuba*), Creon (*Phoenician Women*), Demophoon (*Children of Heracles*)—is presented with a demand initiated by a prophet or oracle for a sacrifice from among his own family, which he cannot resist because the mob demand it. (Creon attempts to resist it, but his son voluntarily sacrifices himself.) Euripides in his dramas is commenting upon the contemporary events of the Peloponnesian War of which he is a witness—he always opposed the Athenian mob desire for atrocities. That atrocities were committed by the Athenians and the Spartans during the Peloponnesian War is not in question; but the contextualisation of these events by Euripides in his plays indicates that he thought they were more than atrocities by possessing a religious dimension, being at the behest of priests and oracles.

For example, as previously indicated, Herodotus reports that at Sparta, following the “murder” of the envoys from Darius, a curse fell upon them, which Herodotus refers to as the “anger of Talthybius”—Talthybius being in myth the herald of Agamemnon. This phrase puts us into the context of an “angry spirit” one of the “angry dead” who need appeasement. Since the killing of the envoys of Darius resulted in a curse, that killing was also a sacred event, not a “mere murder”. In this matter, we are plunged into the milieu of the thought patterns of primitive materialism: cause and effect are the same as oath-breaking and curse, or as curse and blight for which the remedy is sacrifice. Hence, to remedy the curse, the Spartans called for volunteers to sacrifice themselves “in atonement for Darius’ messengers who had been killed in Sparta.” (*Histories*, 7.134.) It demonstrates a belief in the efficacy of human sacrifice. (See also Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 2.67 which confirms this part.)

Herodotus gives us other examples of Greeks within the historical period committing human sacrifice. There are the contemporaneous sacrifices to Phrixus he describes (*Histories*, 7.197), which are believable because the logic is once again the logic of curse and remedy by sacrifice. He reports that Greeks and Carians served as mercenaries in the armies of Egyptian Psammenitus (Psamtik II) when Cambyses invaded. Prior to the battle of Pelusium (525), Phanes of Halicarnassus, originally serving with the Egyptians, had defected to the Persian side.

... the Greek and Carian mercenaries ... seized [the sons of Phanes] ... and brought them in the camp, where they made sure their father could see them; then, placing a bowl in the open ground between the two armies, they led the boys up to it one by one, and cut their throats over it. Not one was spared, and when the last was dead, they poured wine and water onto the blood in the bowl, and every man in the mercenary force drank. (*Histories*, 3.11.)

One’s reaction to this story will be based on what distinction one draws between atrocity and ritual murder; one notes the signs of ritual in these actions.

By his own admission, Herodotus is what we would call an “ethnographer” rather than a “historian”; he writes, “My business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it—and that may be

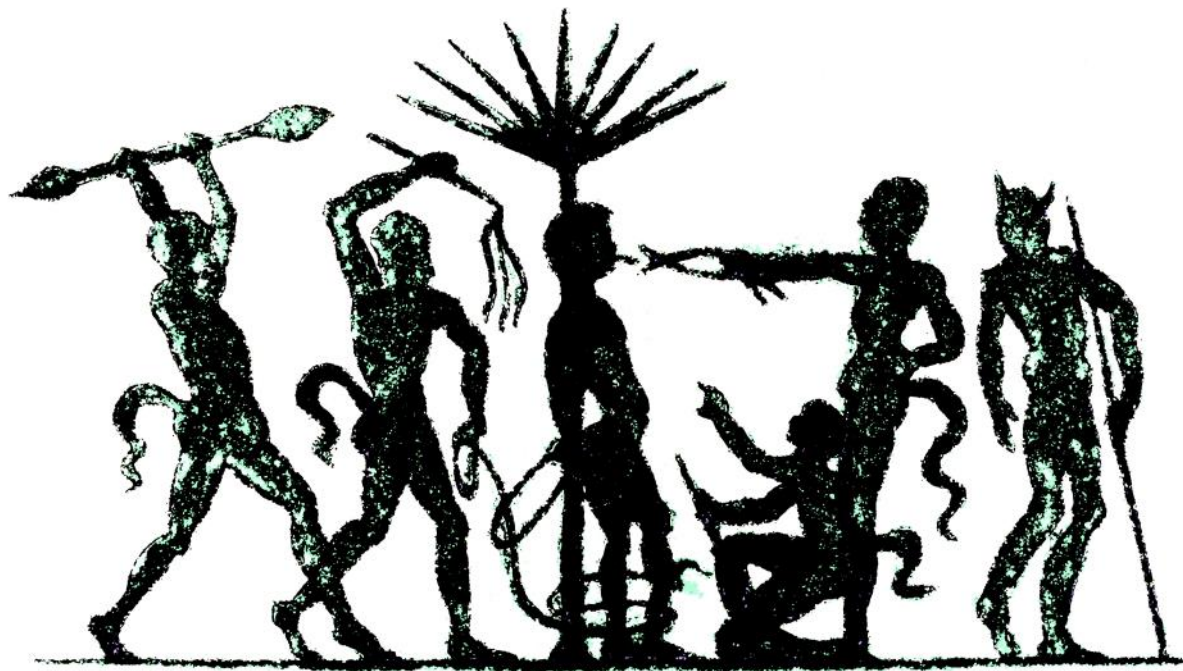


Figure 14. Illustration derived from a Greek vase, C5.

This icon is said to depict a scene from a satyr play, but expresses ideas not a part of any “entertainment”. It is a frank look at cruelty, depicting a man who is being tortured: while he is being beaten with a flail, his tongue is being pulled out by a man using tongs. Others look on and mock; another prepares to deal a blow with an oar. Cruelty has a history that cannot be separated from the evolution of religion.

taken to apply to this book as a whole.” (7.153.) He leaves the business of evaluation of sources to us; but we may at least infer that whatever he wrote down had at least been said by someone. It may, perhaps, be more important that through Herodotus we glimpse into the nature of ancient beliefs.

A second point about Herodotus is his grand theme: the distinction between barbarian—“non-Greek”—and Greek, which is akin to the distinction made in Homer between those who do not respect divine law and those who do. Writing also in the context of the atrocities of the Peloponnesian War, it is possible to see in Herodotus signs of an ethical mission—to remind his Athenian audience of what it is that makes them not barbarians. This moral purpose would not be far from that of Euripides. Hence, Herodotus is all the time reporting what Greeks believed about other nations. The litany of barbaric practices of non-Greeks is extensive—cannibalism among the Scythians—child sacrifices by the Persians—use of crucifixion (immolation) by all nations (Greeks excepted)—sacrifices by burial. Every one of the instances of a barbaric practice attributed by the Greeks to another nation was in fact a custom of their own; a case of projecting away truths too painful for self-recognition. Herodotus does imply disgust with barbaric practices, but he also reports the events in a matter of fact tone—the same tone that we find in Pliny, and every commentator, including Strabo, who can interject the following into his geography.

It was an ancestral custom among the Leucadians, every year at the sacrifice performed in honour of Apollo, for some criminal to be flung from this rocky look-out for the sake of averting evil, wings and birds of all kinds being fastened to him, since by their fluttering they could lighten the leap, and also for a number of men, stationed all round below the rock in small fishing-boats, to take the victim in, and, when he had been taken on board, to do all in their power to get him safely outside their borders. The author of the *Alcamaeonis* [an unknown author] says that Icarius, the father of Penelope, had two sons... (*Geography* 10.2.9.)

I include part of the last sentence to illustrate how Strabo can glide from an account of a ritual killing to comments on poetry.

Behind the scenes, the *Histories* of Herodotus contain intimations of other barbaric practices committed by Greeks, of which Herodotus does not approve, and is not willing to elaborate upon. The impression is that the reported cases of sacrifice are just the tip of the iceberg, what the commentators themselves could not overlook (as in Livy and the Battle of Cannae). Stories in Herodotus about Periander, tyrant of Corinth (3.48, 5.94), the murder of the survivor of the Athenian attempt on Aegina (5.87), the actions of Cleomenes king of Sparta (6.76 ff), the Aeginetan sacrilege (6.91), the Lemnian rape story (7.138) and Athenian sacrifice to Boreas (7.197) are sufficiently ambiguous and/or cruel to imply more than what was permitted to reach the page. The Greek commentators were embarrassed by Greek barbarity (a contradiction since barbarian = “non-Greek”), and only the exceptional among them—Euripides pre-eminently—had the moral strength to look frankly at it.

But what are we talking about? Human sacrifice, to be sure—but what exactly counts as human sacrifice? It is customary among the proponents of the anti-thesis of denial to attempt a definition of “human sacrifice” that is so narrow as to preclude almost all instances: “human sacrifices form a subset of ‘ritual killings of humans’, but not all ritual killings are properly called ‘human sacrifices’.” (Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, p 1.) This is no mere cavilling, for if we step back a little, then we see that all the instances of ritual killings of humans that we have hitherto cited from the historical record do not in some sense count as sacrifices—nor are they the subject of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, which is concerned with the customs of more primitive peoples. If we were discussing all cases of ritual killings of humans, then we could hardly dispute as a fact that such killings took place. Every act of immolation (crucifixion), every excessively barbaric “punishment”, every gladiatorial contest is an instance of ritual killing. Therefore, we must understand that by the time of historical period, and its written records, the practice of human sacrifice = ritual killing of humans in the context of religion had itself undergone an evolution. We infer that in the pre-historic past “sacrifice” was conducted for other purposes than the ones for which “sacrifice” was conducted in the historic period. In our quest for incontrovertible written evidence, we have slipped inadvertently into discussing a late stage of the phenomenon, one in which sacrifice was transmuted into acts of cruelty performed within a bargaining religion—what we call “utilitarian” logic. Paradoxically, that may be viewed as a debasement of an original impulse perceived as “sacred” to meet an original “divine” need. Hence, we need to begin the story all over again, and tell the history of Greek religion and its Dark Age Reformation through its monumental oral tradition—Greek mythology.

Methodology of Reading Myth

A Greek myth is founded on the oral transmission of ideas which during the historical period were written down as a narrative, and thereafter may have undergone further considerable development in textual redactions. The result is a material datum from which we infer history.

(1) The first principle, then, is to eschew entirely the disrespectful attitude to myth that enables a scholar to disregard all myth as “lying fables”, and hence not as evidence of history. The principle here is the same as that adopted by any researcher who is prepared to take mythology seriously. For example, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, writes: “... it has become clear that myths are structured by schemata, such as ‘erotic abduction,’ which are themselves structured by, and express, the realities, beliefs and ideologies of the society which produced them.” (*Reading a Myth*.) What she calls a “schemata” I call a “mythologem”.

(2) By analogy with archaeology, a given myth has been deposited through a series of stages, or redactions, some of which occurred during the oral stage and others during the written stage. For the written stages, the sequence of redactions may in some cases be established—for example, the redactions of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* can be inferred from their written records on the tomb walls. I call each redaction a *layer*. In the case of oral tradition, the layers of a myth must be inferred from the earliest written statement we have from it; so, the work of interpretation becomes a problem of deduction and evaluation, somewhat akin to investigative police-work. Myths are also grouped by tradition as belonging to mythological characters—for example, Dionysus, Heracles—and to places—for example, Sparta, Athens. Hence, the mythology of, say, Heracles, may also be regarded as a *mythological site*, and the larger the mythological personage, the bigger the site. By the first principle, every myth must also involve real people from the first; for nothing can be laid down in the psychological sphere without a corresponding material event, and vice-versa.

(3) During the historical evolution of a myth there are many layers but working backwards we discern in these layers a more fundamental element, which is a narrative symbol. I call this fundamental unit a *mythologem*. (The term *mytheme* has also been used in literary analysis—introduced by Levi Strauss.) A mythologem is a narrative element in which two motifs (ideas, images, symbols, icons, emblems) are linked by a temporal relation: first one motif, then the other. Thus, mythologems can be further deconstructed into *motifs*. But I take the mythologem to be fundamental, because myth implies a narrative. For example, the motif (image) of Perseus carrying a sword, followed by the motif (image) of Perseus holding the head of the decapitated Gorgon. The most fundamental unit of all links just two motifs (ideas) in a sequence, but this can be iterated into relations of

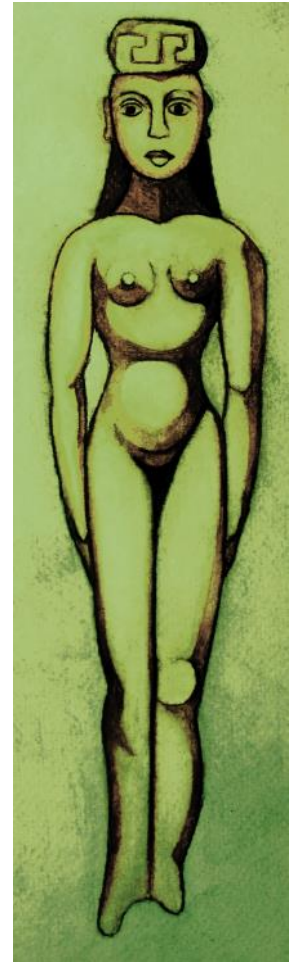


Figure 14. *The Goddess*
Illustration of an ivory figure
from the Dipylon cemetery,
Athens. c.730.

As late as 730 the Goddess
continues to be represented
with unabashed nudity.

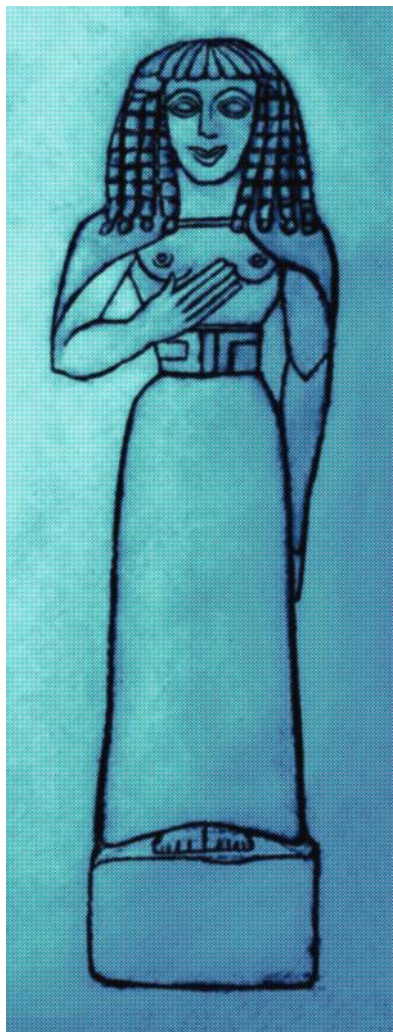


Figure 15. The “Auxerre Goddess”
Probably Cretan, c.630.

By 630 woman as goddess continues to be represented with a frontal display of bare breasts, but she presents a demure aspect that is not known in Minoan culture.

three, four or more motifs. A single image may imply a mythologem (pictorial narrative): for example, the image of a Gorgon’s head, without body, implies that it was previously severed from its body. Thus, plastic records, art, may also express a mythologem. Human imagination also has a history, and imagination is tied to symbolic, mythological thought. This justifies us in regarding pictorial images as “icons”; that is, symbolic statements of mythologems, and vastly extends the available evidence to include all imagery whatsoever. For this reason, it is essential in the work to classify all imagery by place and date so far as possible, and to correlate these elements with elements from the oral tradition. Icons (pictorial, plastic) may also go through multiple redactions, and among these redactions we reach a stage which may be called “forgetting the past”, where the icon is used freely by an artist, and yet the artist has no conscious knowledge of its origin.

(4) We follow a methodology analogous to the *comparative method* used in linguistics to reconstruct elements of languages such as proto-Indo-European. For example, and pertinent to mythology, from the structural similarity between the Greek, *Zeus*, the Latin *Iou* and the Vedic *Dyaus*, we infer a common origin, and reconstruct the Proto-Indo-European word *Dyeus*. By the same process, where two variant myths contain mythologems bearing the same internal relations, we infer that they have a common cultural source in another mythologem in which their variance did not exist. For example, Perseus saves Andromeda from Cetus is structurally similar to the mythologem Heracles rescues Hesione from the sea monster (*kitos*); therefore, we infer a common mythologem—the rescue of the maiden mythologem—from which both are derived. A common cultural experience is attested by the structural similarity between the two mythologems, in which we see only variance as to mythological characters. Another instance of this concerns the abduction mythologem. Hades abducts Persephone is structurally identical to Selene (the Moon) abducts Endymion; from this we infer that the original mythologem is that of the abduction by the Moon Goddess of the Dionysus as the Boy-God. (We infer the original form by correlation

with Minoan imagery, in which the Goddess is dominant. We cannot postulate a period of primitive patriarchy; it is simply not attested.) The abduction mythologem is arguably the fundamental mythologem of Greek religion. We also see it structurally expressed in Theseus abducts Helen (to Aphidna in Attica) and Paris (also called Alexander) abducts Helen (to Troy or Ilium). Since the abduction of the hero by the Goddess is the more primitive structure, we infer that the form Paris abducts Helen is an inversion of the earlier form in which Helen (the Moon Goddess) abducts the hero. We see a form Alexandra (*f*, “she who wards off men” or “defender of men”) ab-

ducts X , where X = the hero; we note that in Laconia there was a joint tomb of Cassandra (Alexandra) and Agamemnon; Cassandra's alternative name is Alexandra as the "sister" of Paris, also called Alexander; hence we have as the primitive form Cassandra (Alexandra) abducts Agamemnon (Alexander); Cassandra may derive from "she who shines" (the Moon) and "man", and may mean "she who entangles men"—I suggest it is a figurative expression of "she who abducts man"; Persephone, a doublet of Cassandra/Alexandra/Helen may mean "bringer of destruction"; the mythologem does point to the destruction of the hero, since he is abducted to the underworld, that is, dies. The resurrection motif also found in fundamental connection with the abduction mythologem is suppressed. The entire vegetation cycle is: The Moon (Goddess) abducts the hero (to the underworld); he returns (from the underworld); or the hero, beloved of the Goddess, dies and is reborn. Study of Greek mythology in comparison with Greek iconography indicates that the abduction mythologem is older than the rescue of the maiden mythologem. Since we expect to see a correlation between the appearance of a mythologem and historical events, this relative dating is very important evidence as to the evolution of Greek (or any) religion. The appearance of a new mythologem points to a cultural event of seismic importance, but "new" mythologems are connected to past ones. For example, the rescue of the maiden mythologem has structural similarity to the resurrection mythologem as in Goddess "rescues" hero is structurally similar to Hero rescues heroine. In the mythologem of the rescue of the maiden, what is rescued is not so much vegetable life, but society; through the salvation of the maiden, society is reborn as a one living by the rule of law, as opposed to the arbitrary rule of the monster. This points to a late stage in the history of the Dark Age, for an age when society has been rescued from the monster is no longer dark. This correlates with the material record of iconography in pottery and the plastic arts. Hence, although at some time the rescue of the maiden mythologem was projected backwards onto a mythological time predating the Trojan War, we must not suppose that this corresponds to real events; the historical, material events correlated with the psychological and spiritual events are not bound to follow the apparent order in mythology. Perseus belongs to the Dark Age, and not the Minoan-

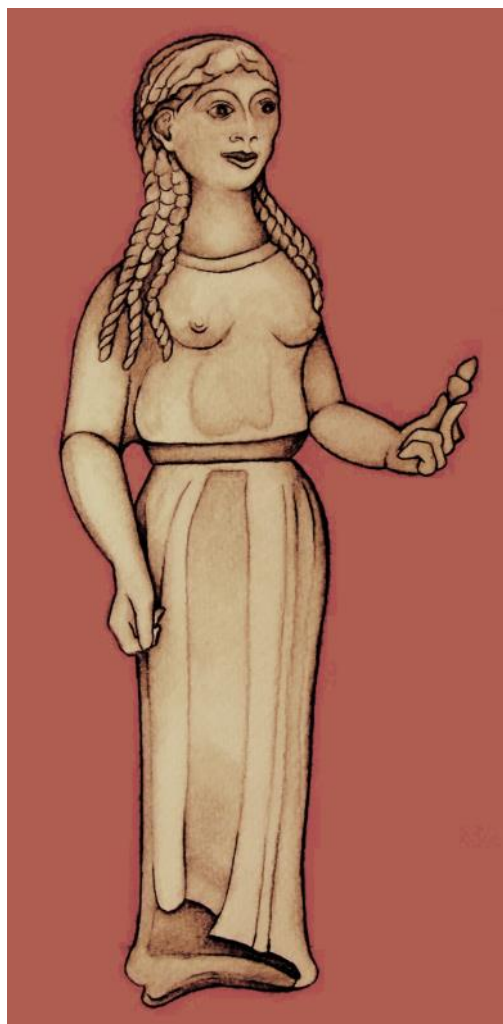


Figure 16. *The Peplos Kore*
Acropolis, c.530

The sexuality of the goddess, now represented as the maiden, is prominent, yet subdued. The original sculpture has lost its left arm, and is here reconstructed holding an acorn as a symbol of fertility and hope after a similar symbol in the Meranda Kore of the same period (550—530).

Mycenaean Age, but the abduction-resurrection mythologem is older than both. The history of religion is revealed through the history of mythologems.

(5) The human mind has two forms of memory and correspondingly two forms of reasoning: (i) the iconic memory of images and thinking through images; and (ii) the semantic memory of (abstract) meanings and thinking through them. Of these two forms of memory and reasoning, the iconic is the older, and we may associate iconic reasoning with the epoch of primitive materialism, and semantic-abstract reasoning with the epoch of Ionian consciousness; hence, also, the shift from iconic to semantic reasoning is another feature we may expect to see (and do see) in the period of proto-Ionian consciousness, from the inception of the Dark Age (c.1200) until Thales, (c.600). In earlier epochs, men and women tended to think in images rather than meanings; hence, their life-experiences were recorded as such. Hence, mythology, which arises as primitive iconic imagery is reworked by semantic reasoning, and thereby turned into narrative. By way of example, how would a person who thinks primarily in images, record the events surrounding the Berlin crisis of 1961, when the Soviet Union demanded that Western military forces be withdrawn from West Berlin? Something like this? *The god Sounio was offended by King Germania and sent a huge monster from the East. The oracle was consulted and to appease the monster the sacrifice of the daughter of King Germania, the maiden Berlina, was demanded by the monster. Jo-fo-ke-ne-da built a wall to defend the maiden. The goddess of the air, Athana-Urania, gave him a pair of winged sandals. He flew over the Maiden and showed the monster the Head of the Gorgon Nuclear. The monster cowered and returned to the terrible East from whence it came. But Sounio remained wrathful.* In interpreting mythology, we wish to reverse this process and infer from imagery to semantic meanings. That this is possible is essential to the methodology. However, reversing the process is not easy, and the task must be approached with caution.

(6) It is a principle that the grades of meaning between *possible*, *probable* and *certain* are respected. All reasoning in history is probabilistic—"absolute certainty" in the Cartesian sense or otherwise is never obtained. If the term "certain" is used of a proposition, it means something like "approximates to certainty", and indicates that in the attitude of this author, the evidence weighs in its favour. Because certainty is never obtained, reasoning in history, as elsewhere, is also dialectical—that is, for every thesis there is an anti-thesis.

(7) Since our work is based upon an oral tradition, then if a mythologem is assigned, for example, to the Minoan-Mycenaean period, there must be a credible path of transmission. The disruption of the Bronze Age Collapse poses difficulties for tracing myth into the pre-collapse stage. We need to postulate some centres of transmission. That this can be achieved is credible. Of the major centres that were destroyed, Mycenae survived in reduced form until c.1130, and even thereafter. During this cultural period, known as Late Helladic IIIC, pottery with figurative representations continued in a stylistically debased form; hence, this iconography allows us to see into the eye of the storm, which is remarkable. Athens was not destroyed altogether, and though much reduced in size and influence, it may be taken as a major survival centre for Mycenaean culture. Legend records that refugees from Achaia and Messina (Pylos notably) flooded into Athens, and this is credible; these refugees would have brought with them stories of their traditions, as well as stories about the collapse itself, which by means of iconic coding was encapsulated as myth. I think, also, we see evidence that Athens was a centre of refugees from the collapse of the Hittite Empire; though this is speculative, I suggest that some Hittite experience is expressed in Greek mythology, as well as Lydian and Lycian experience. In any given region only one site is required for continuity to be preserved; thus, for example, in the devastated region of Arcadia, archaeology indicates that the

site of the later Temple of Athena Alea at Tegea remained in use throughout the Dark Age. It is of course significant that this site is associated with the Goddess. Oral tradition is preserved, and thinking in pictures facilitates this, as it is easier and more reliable to recall a sequence of images than a sequence of words; verse and rhythmic structures assist the transmission of oral poetry, but we don't really have any definite evidence that the Mycenaeans had any.

(8) The identification of a contradiction in a mythological account, or speculation as to the construction of part of a myth, is not a reason for rejecting the whole tradition. To be specific: the construction of genealogies for gods and heroes is evidently a relatively late development in Greek religion. Such genealogies may also be motivated by later politics. For example, the genealogical descent of the Dorian kings, the Heracleids, from Heracles is very probably a fabrication of a late period—from the time of Pindar onwards (c.500). But none of this invalidates the methodology presented here: the mythologems of more archaic character are not accounted for by this observation. Therefore, it is an abuse of logic to argue: because the genealogies are late fabrications from c.500 onwards, then all myth is a late fabrication.

(9) Another point concerns continuity of persona as a structural element of human reality. The Egyptian *Story of Sinuhe* (c.1800) and the Sumerian/Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (c.2100) reveal how remarkably like modern fiction these works are, though, upon analysis, they can be shown to be composed within the cognition of primitive materialism. The “self-awareness” of an individual from the Late Neolithic or Bronze Age would not seem to be very different from that of the modern. But we should not be confused or hoodwinked into concluding that because these people appear to be like us, that their religious reality was the same. They did not have our secularisation, and they were primitive materialists through-and-through.

(10) In our deductions we must permit a species of “fuzzy logic”. Historians are rightly concerned with “absolute chronology”, but social history is more concerned with trends. That is the kind of history that we may expect from analysis of mythologems.

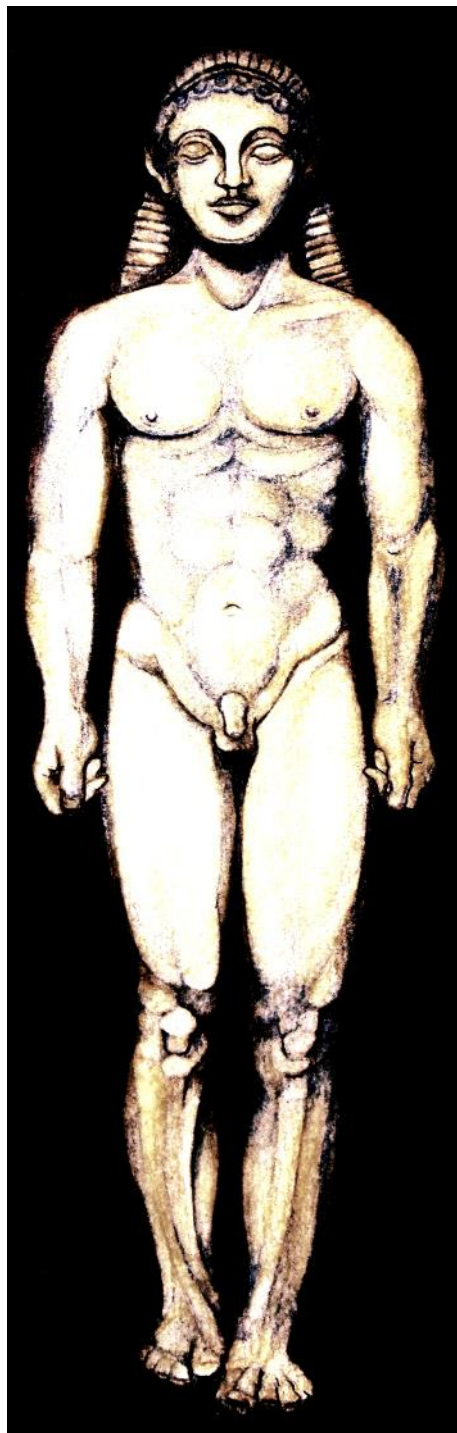


Figure 17. *Kouros*
Meranda, c.530

The kouros represent the triumph of unabashed masculinity over matriarchy.

The History of Greek Religion in the Dark Age

It remains to get on with the task of reconstructing the history of the Dark Age, as it is told through Greek mythology.

(1) **Pausanias.** A source of vast importance, a repository of data, has survived the ravages of time—this is the *Guide to Greece* by Pausanias. Pausanias may be looked upon as a religious anthropologist. He went personally to those places in Greece that he says he went to and recorded from first-hand what he saw by way of monuments and artefacts; he investigated accounts and customs concerning local traditions and religious practices. He wove into the account of his journeys material that stems from the literary heritage that he judged pertinent to the subject in hand. Pausanias is a pagan who believes in sacrifice, but he subscribes to the equally pagan tradition of the substitution of animal and non-blood sacrifices for human ones. He is explicit that these are substitutions for original human sacrifices. Within the confines of his cognition, which is reformed pagan, he is an extremely intelligent observer. It is for us a gift of inestimable value that such a patient work of religious anthropology was constructed during the classical era. For first-hand observation, recording of local traditions and recording of literary tradition he is reliable. So far as literary tradition goes, he does not evaluate his sources and tends to think that everything “old” is divinely inspired, so the material in that respect becomes a repository of mythologems, which we must analyse and evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

(2) **First and second-order mythography.** Men like Apollodorus (sometimes called “pseudo-Apollodorus”) and Hyginus may be designated as first level mythographers—that is, researchers whose aim is to record rather than analyse myth. They are repositories of mythologems. Material in Strabo relating to mythology may be classified as the work of religious anthropology. Diodorus Siculus is a second level mythographer, that is, one who builds or imposes a theory upon mythology—a salient feature of his interpretation is that he is a Euhemerist, namely that he believes that all gods originated as human beings, which was a complex position of pagan faith. One notes that J.G. Frazer was also a Euhemerist writing from the perspective of modern scientific rationalism. Some recognition of the existence of man-gods and women-goddesses inevitably arises when studying mythologems; for the incarnate kings, queens, priests and priestesses are instances of gods and goddesses, and vice-versa. It is impossible to conduct second-order mythography without constructing history too, because mythologems must correspond to a material reality as well as a spiritual one, which is a conclusion that can be avoided only by ignoring the data. If you look at it at all, you arrive at the same position.

The distinction between first-order and second-order mythography is not sharp. Whereas Apollodorus and Hyginus are largely repositories of mythologems, they too have selected from the available material, written accounts and provided an organisation, which in their cases is genealogical. Hence, they are interpreting and cannot avoid second-order mythography.

(3) **Mythologems present in pre-crisis Egyptian and Mesopotamian culture.** By the phrase “survival of Minoan-Mycenaean religion” both continuity and uniformity are implied, but this is only partially justified; there is also discontinuity. That the Mycenaeans had musical and dancing entertainments can be inferred from the remains of musical instruments—mankind has always had music. That they had an epic poetry cannot be inferred. Linear B was a language of accounting unlikely to have been used for literature. On the other hand, supposing

they did have an epic tradition, the literature of Egypt and the Near East (*Sinuhe*, c.1875 *Gilgamesh* c.1800) is useful in establishing an upper limit on what any Mycenaean literature could have looked like. Concerning the *Epic of Gilgamesh* especially: (a) it combines a species of “wisdom literature” with underlying mythologems; at the literary level, the “author” omits no occasion to turn the story into a moral tale. The worldly achievements of Gilgamesh are praised, but no opportunity is spared to point out that Gilgamesh was in truth a fool and throughout his whole life, right to the end, an infantile personality. We infer that ideation of this type of wisdom literature was already possible in Mycenaean culture, though not attested. (b) The myth records that Sumerian/Akkadian society was originally a matriarchy in which the king as priest married the Goddess, Ishtar, and was expected to pay the penalty as a ritual sacrifice. (It is known from the excavations at Ur by Wooley that the Sumerians did practice human retinue sacrifice.) The underlying mythologem represents Gilgamesh as an instance of the dying vegetation god. (c) The epic records a historic revolution in religion as the king released himself from his “obligation” to die. (d) It records also a development of the original rite in which the king as sacrificial-bull is replaced by a ritual contest between two heroes: here Gilgamesh and Enkidu. In the first revision the one kills the other, and the victor becomes king; this is shown in the episode with the giant Humbaba, who guards the Cedar forest, whom together Gilgamesh and Enkidu slaughter. In the epic when Ishtar offers to marry Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh refuses her, roundly insulting her for killing all her lovers. Then Ishtar calls for the Bull of Heaven to destroy Gilgamesh, but Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull. Enlil decides that in retribution one of the two heroes must die. From all of this, we may infer that it was possible in Mycenaean society that the original right of the Goddess to demand the life of her “priest-king” as incarnation of Dionysus may have been transmuted into a ritual involving a contest between two rival claimants. The story is the same as the one which J.G. Frazer made the foundation of his *The Golden Bough* and is strong confirmation of his conclusions. The references in the work to ritual slayings are numerous, and the connection between death and marriage to the Goddess cannot be avoided. (e) We have also the explicit rejection of human sacrifice by the High God. Gilgamesh and Enkidu sacrifice Humbaba and set his head before Enlil. “Enlil raged at them. ‘Why did you do this thing? From henceforth may the fire be on your faces, may it eat the bread that you eat, may it drink where you drink’.” (f) There are many other mythologems in the epic.

In the *Story of Sinuhe*, Sinuhe is an exile from his native Egypt. This narrative reads as closely to contemporary literature as may be, though with Egyptian preoccupations, such as a longing to return to one’s homeland and to achieve a fitting monument for a tomb, but there are mythological elements too. One of these is a doublet of the mythologem of the contest for a tribal crown—Sinuhe must “fight

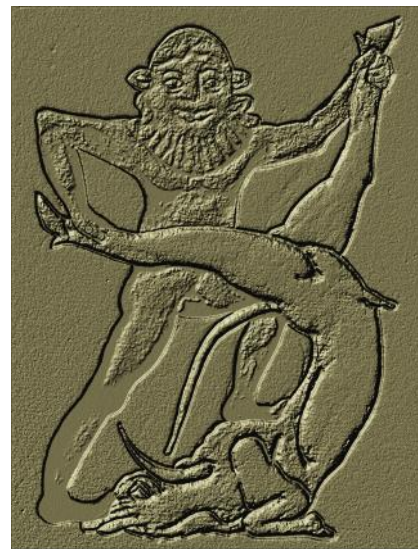


Figure 18. Gilgamesh slaying the Bull of Heaven

Illustration based on Mesopotamian terracotta relief, 2250–1900.

In view of this image, and many others like it, and of Near Eastern depictions of the Goddess as “Mistress of the Animals”, it is hard not to see Minoan religion as in direct descent from Near Eastern religion as a whole. The victim, impersonating the outgoing spirit of vegetation, was looked upon as a sacrificial bull, and named as such. While in reality the conflict took place between two men, religious sensibility early on encoded this as a ritual conflict between a man and a bull-man.

with a mighty man of Retenu”—and we may infer that this was a ritual genuinely practised in the Phoenician community which Sinuhe as exile had joined. There is also the mythologem of matrilineal descent, for Sinuhe is promoted to the position of tribal chief by being married to the eldest daughter of the headman of Retenu.

(4) **Mythologems of the Minoan and Mycenaean phases.** From the iconography in the material record for the Mycenaean-Minoan epochs we infer that their chief deity was the Goddess, to whom there was a subordinate God, Dionysus. All other gods and goddesses are instantiations of these two concepts; there are no other deities, and Olympian religion has not yet appeared, which is the fundamental discontinuity. The iconography is consistent with the element that has appeared in both *Gilgamesh* and *Sinuhe*, the substitution of a ritual contest between two men for the right to rule—we have numerous depictions of combat between two warriors from the Mycenaean phase (c.1380—c.1200). Greek myth contains innumerable instances of (a) the Goddess, (b) the ritual murder of the vegetation god-king, which is expressed in the mythologem of abduction, and (c) the ritual trial by combat. In addition, this trial by combat is associated with (d) the right to rule by marriage to the “daughter of the king” or equivalent, which represents matrilineal succession. The mythologem of succession through trial by combat followed by marriage to the heiress is concealed by the later patriarchal gloss that the heiress is the “daughter of the king”; hence, by the fiction of patrilineal descent.

Therefore, we may assign to the Minoan-Mycenaean phases all those mythologems in Greek religion that express these four ideas. Any material that is related to these four mythologems by its internal connection also belongs to these layers. In relation to the mythologem of kingly succession we find (e) the mythologem of descent from a male god, or, equivalently, of adoption by the king, or of dual parentage. In a later period the adoption ritual is attested in Etruscan iconography, where it is associated with the adoption of the king as “Hercule” subject to the Goddess, thus tied to the mythological “site” of Heracles. The mythological site of the Heavenly Twins, the Dioskouroi, is illuminated by this analysis. The motif of heavenly twins is a structure original to the Indo-European heritage, but it was submerged or transformed on contact with the Mediterranean culture. The two twins, one with heavenly father, the other with mortal father, is a complex expression of all the ideas above: (i) as a suppressed instance of two men twined through their trial by combat such that one must die; (ii) divine descent and adoption, one has a divine father, the other has a mortal father; (iii) the abduction mythologem; though often transposed by later patriarchy—as either the heavenly twins are together abducting one or more maidens, or they battle against the abductor or abductors. The myth of the Spartan Dioscouri, Castor and Pollux, fantastically combines all these ideas. Upon these layers, other layers are constructed—such as cattle-rustling; these are assigned to a later epoch.

Mythologems shall be identified by epoch (I—VI) (defined on page 4) and likely order of historical appearance (1,2,3, ...). We have: (I.1) Mythologem of the cosmological primacy of the Goddess, which expresses the theology of Gaism. (I.2) Mythologem of abduction: the ritual murder of the vegetation god-king; myth of Dionysus; mythologem of resurrection. (II.1) Mythologem of succession through trial by combat. (II.2) Mythologem of succession by right of marriage. (II.3) Mythologem of dual parentage, adoption, or divine parentage.

Not only do all these mythologems already appear in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which is very early, implicit in these mythologems is a historical evolution. We infer that the first two, the Goddess and abduction mythologems, belong to an earlier stage of religious development than the latter three. Within the first two mythologems, we also see indications of the underpinning ideology—that this is a *religion of vegetation*—and that the

priest king as embodiment of Dionysus died for the sake of fertile crops or the fecundation of nature. Bound with this is (II.4) the mythologem of the culture hero. In this the hero is associated with the Goddess as the bringer of cultivation. This mythologem is a later doublet of the mythologem of the Goddess, for it affirms her cosmological primacy, and is its real meaning: the Goddess comes first because all crops, animals and good things whatsoever are owing to Her. Implicit in these mythologems above are other ideas: (i) the right of the king to rule; hence some form of (ii) patrilineal descent, but only won by victory in (iii) ritual (bull) games. Trial by combat, for instance, established the right of the king to rule through marriage to the heiress conducted through a public spectacle or *games* dedicated to the vegetation god. Hence, we add (III.1) the mythologem of (bull) games, which we may also call, the mythologem of the Minotaur. This is the distinctive contribution of the Minoan phase.

(5) **The concept of “murder”.** The mythologem of trial by combat could also be designated the mythologem of “murder”, for it finds expression in the almost universal instance of the killing—“murder”—of one hero by another. We regard murder as an intentional crime committed for some personal motive, an action of an individual. The concept of “intention” does not belong to the ideation of primitive materialism and we never see any hero or person accused of murder in Greek mythology. We know from a C5 Athenian inscription on a stone stele that under the Draconian code of laws punishment for unintentional homicide was exile. This is probably the first appearance in the history of ideas of the distinction between intentional and unintentional killing. The laws are dated to c.624. Greek myth treats all killing as expressions of ritual slaying, not instigated by what we would call personal motives, not punishable as such, but as actions done at the behest of the gods, possibly through madness and/or possession, or simply because some god has decreed it as fate. The one who does the slaying is as much an object of pity and veneration as the victim, if not more so, since the victim, dead, has already achieved heroic status, while the slayer, as hero, must carry on living. Slaying as a motif points to the mythologem of succession through trial by combat, which shows us that any slaying was regarded as performed as a religious duty. One king had to be replaced by another, and the fundamental pattern is that the slayer simply replaces the slain as king. This mythologem is repeated so often as to indicate a normative behaviour of great antiquity. We see it in the myth of Pelops and Hippodamia, where Pelops not only kills Oenomaus, the father of Hippodamia, himself a notorious slayer of her suitors, but breaks his oath given to the charioteer Myrtilus and brutally slays him. It is from this myth that we obtain (IV.1) the mythologem of the curse. These actions would condemn Pelops according to our ideas of justice; all that happens in the mythological account is that Pelops obtains ritual purification from Hephaestus (a god?), returns to Pisa, marries Hippodamia, succeeds as king, and becomes so great a monarch that the whole peninsular is named after him—the Peloponnese—he is venerated as a hero. The rite of ritual purification is so prevalent in sources that we would regard as historical that it must have been an ancient custom: someone who has slain another goes in exile to another country, where he obtains ritual purification from the king of that country. In this we see: (IV.2) the mythologem of ritual purification: when one hero slays another, he either goes into voluntary exile or is driven into exile by the community; he is purified by another king, whom he succeeds as king.

The deflecting of guilt is seen in the motif of accidental slaying—for instance, when Perseus throws a discus at the celebration of a games, it strikes his father, Acrisius, and accidentally kills him. This motif is most likely to be a later patriarchal gloss on the underlying mythologem of trial by combat; Perseus kills his father and suc-

The theme of dismemberment in Minoan-Mycenaean seal stones.

Human sacrifice is only indirectly alluded to in Minoan frescoes in the representations of the bull games, and in the depictions of the victims of those games. The famous Hagia Triada sarcophagus represents female hierophants only participating in the sacrifice of a bull, with male attendants.



Figure 19
Seal impression from
Hagia Triada

However, Minoan seals do contain frequent images of animal and human body parts, and we may talk of a theme of dismemberment in them (figure 19).

One image depicts a decapitated man suspended from a tree; an icon of the hanged man (figure 20). A scaffolding has also been explicitly constructed for the purpose. The icon links the ritual of hanging to vegetation by representations of boughs hanging down above the decapitated body.



Figure 20
Cretan seal



Figure 21.
Mycenaean seal
from Argos

That the decapitation occurs in the service of the Goddess is indicated in seals showing the double-axe, the symbol of her presence and her right to take life (Figure 21). Two symmetrically placed birds, or cornucopia, symbolise the epiphany of the Goddess.

Nilsson (Survival, p.109) was disturbed by the presence of a decapitated man's head placed between two wild goats (Figure 22): an explicit association of human dismemberment with animal sacrifice.



Figure 22
Sealstone from
the necropolis of
Phaestus

In Cretan hieroglyphs we see frequent references of body and other parts (figure 23).



Figure 23
Cretan hieroglyphs

The hieroglyph on the left may be read as a narrative sequence of an altar, a dismembered leg and a germinating seed. On the right: an altar, the double-axe, and a symbol of growth or dismembered parts. It is possible

that the art of writing in hieroglyphs was first suggested to mankind by the practice of butchery.

ceeds him, according to ancient tradition; but a later age, "horrified" by the thought of patricide, transmutes the rite into an accident.

Another mythologem arising in this context is: (IV.3) the mythologem of the trial of the instrument of murder. In the genuinely archaic trial of the instrument of murder, a king or hero is slain by another hero, who is destined to succeed him, but it is the weapon that is ritually tried for murder and acquitted. Extraordinary as it may be, this is likely to be the origin of murder trials, historically instituted at the court of the Areopagus in Athens. Thus, the very concept of murder arises through the transmutation of an underlying mythologem in which no idea of motive, intentional act or human guilt is overtly presented. This mythologem of the trial is also related to the yet darker (V.1) mythologem of the scapegoat, or Pharmakos. In this a victim, selected to bear the guilt of the community, is driven out and ritually killed. This is likely to be a mythologem belonging to the disturbed times of the Dark Age, for in it we see yet again a substitution of one ritual (the slaying of the king) by another (the slaying of a victim, chosen on arbitrary criteria) and it is not the sort of thing that belongs to the ordered society, such as we picture the Mycenaean to be. (For the details of the Pharmakos ritual, I refer the reader to Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 4.5)

The treatment of "murder" is also exemplified in the (V.2) mythologem of madness, which is connected to (V.3) the mythologem of child sacrifice. The hero is the son of Zeus by some other goddess, nymph or maiden. As the victim of the jealousy of Hera, he is driven mad and murders his children. This is seen in the myth of the madness of Heracles. The interesting feature of this mythologem is that after the "crime" has been committed, the hero receives the sympathy of all spectators. Heracles, whom we would call a criminal of the most abject kind, a mass murderer of his own children, remains a hero. The mythologem was exploited by later Dorian (Spartan) bias to serve as an aetiological explanation for why Heracles did not become king at Tiryns; in expiation of his guilt (a later concept) he must

serve the debased, inferior usurper of the throne, Eurystheus, and perform ten labours. The crime is transmuted into the aetiological basis of his heroic saga; but all of this belongs to a much later period. The fixing of the canon of the expanded Twelve Labours of Heracles is the work specifically of Pisander of Rhodes, c.650. Heracles was even later transmuted into the archetype of the superhero with an ethical mission; this belongs to the period c.400. The superhero archetype exemplified by Heracles continues to this very day to be a prominent feature of culture, or we might say, of contemporary religion.

(6) **The Bull Games.** Already by the Minoan phase the Bull Games (Minotaur) is predominantly attested. If we assume that Minoan-Mycenaean culture was broadly “in step” with Near Eastern culture, we infer that already the Minotaur Games (phase III) are a transformed ritual stemming out of earlier rites: that is, the bull game is a substitute

for trial by combat. The coming of the Greeks (“Hellenes”, Indo-Europeans) into the Greek mainland is associated with that transition between the first and second phases; as a speculation only (not original to this paper) the Greeks established themselves as overlords and at the same time (what may be original to this paper) adopted the custom from the Near East of trial by combat, an early form of compromise between the religion of the Goddess and anything distinctive they might have brought with them. In accordance with the analysis of Dumézil those distinctive features included: (i) a high storm god, *Dyeus = Zeus*, (ii) twin gods, later fused with the *Dioskouroi*, (iii) a goddess of the Dawn (*Hausos = Eos*), (iv) a threefold tribal structure. We may add: (v) an annual tribal assembly, called in Greek *apellai*, from which the Greek god, Apollo is derived. All of these features were absorbed by the dominant pre-Greek culture, here denoted “Pelagian” after classical Greek thinkers. Though submerged, the Indo-European structures may have formed the nucleus of later religious developments; in Homer we see the Zeus-Eos pair emerge as the vehicle of divine patriarchal justice and its messenger. Everything we have seen so far affirms that patriarchal religion arose both as a result of the external fusion of Indo-European with Mediterranean culture, and as an internal development of Mediterranean/Near-Eastern culture.

It is a cornerstone of the historical analysis of the ancient world, and that explanation of the Bronze Age Collapse which makes the idea of a “system collapse” central, that the economy of the Mediterranean and Near East was an instance of “globalization”. This is a well-supported theory (for example, Cline, 1177 B.C. *The Year that Civilization Collapsed*). We expect the Minoan-Mycenaean culture to be in step with that of the Near East, and especially that of Egypt. In Egypt a developed matriarchy had emerged, and the ritual associated with matriarchy, sacrifice of the vegetation god (Osiris), was by magic rites substituted by the burial of clay statues. There is



Figure 24. *The Berlin Zeus*
From Dodona, early CS

no evidence for such practice in Minoan culture. Concerning the Minoan phase, we see from the iconography that the celebration of the bull games was their central religious rite. I infer that the bull games did for Minoan culture what statues and the *Book of the Dead* did for Egyptian culture; hence, the bull games are a form of transmuted ritual sacrifice.

We can meet firmly the demand for evidence of human sacrifice in early Greek culture. It is not disputed that the Minoans did practice bull games, in which both young men and young women (wearing male clothing) would leap over a charging bull. It is not possible that every young man or woman, however well-prepared and trained for the demanding physical feat, survived. We have icons depicting the gory results of such “failures”. It is not the successes but the failures that are the whole point of the rite, for it is the sacrifice and the shedding of the blood that meets the demands of the Goddess. Hence, there is incontrovertible evidence in the iconography of Minoan culture and in the mythologems deposited in Greek culture for the early practice, albeit already transmuted, of human sacrifice within the context of the vegetation religion of the Goddess.

Once we realise that human sacrifice as a rite also has a history, and that by the period where we encounter written evidence for it what we are seeing is nothing like the “pure rite” upon which it is predicated, then we realise that in the historical period we are seeing debased forms not far in their practice from utilitarian bargains with the underworld, or expressions of sheer uncomprehending cruelty. Then it follows that every act of cruelty in the ancient world is an expression of human sacrifice, albeit in debased form.

(7) **The dark character of Greek myth.** Very little of the Homeric cycle derives from Mycenaean oral tradition. We postulate a tradition of epic oral poetry predating Homer and observe that nearly all the names mentioned in that part of the *Iliad* that we call the *Catalogue of Ships* (Book 2) belong to real cities and towns of the Mycenaean period, as attested by archaeology. This establishes a bare continuity between the two ages, and is very important evidence for that continuity, which must be postulated as the vector of the oral tradition expressed in the mythologems; but there is only a reminiscence that such-and-such citadels and towns have been long established, that Mycenae was greatest among them, a bare recollection that there was a period of greater glory; but as to details, very bare indeed. There is no evidence in the material record for any such epic legends as belonging to that epoch. There is one survival Mycenaean image depicting a siege, but that does not amount to any firm ground on which to establish a heroic saga. Any appearance of Mycenaean Greece in Hittite written records does not indicate that Mycenae was constantly engaged in international wars; some minor interference in the Hittite sphere of interest is all that is attested. (The references to Mycenaean Greece in Hittite records are contested.) The appearance of Mycenaean Greece in Egyptian records confirms it enjoyed peaceful relations with Egypt and was a part of its extensive “global” trade network, operating out of the entrepot Ugarit. It is generally recognised that Homer’s knowledge of Mycenaean battle is scant, and more the sort of thing that would arise from clever visualisation of past times, such as we also go in for with our Arthurian cycle from the creations of the Troubadours down to Tennyson. That Homer’s language is archaic is not proof that it hails from Mycenaean literature, for it is also poetic, which implies artificial.

The atmosphere and ethos of Greek mythology is excessively disturbed and violent, and not at all what we would expect from the Mycenaean culture. Although Mycenaean citadels are heavily fortified, the obstacles to land invasion and the impression of sophisticated bureaucracy does not suggest widespread breakdown of “law and order” such as we see in the background of Greek myth. Fortifications may also be constructed against inter-

nal enemies as well as external ones, and act as symbols of social power. The picture in Greek myth is of many commercial kingdoms administered out of palace centres. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Mycenaean administrations were limited to regions in the vicinity of the huge palaces, and that other parts of Greece were less accessible and more rural. We may hypothesise a village based tribal culture for these places and that these tribal communities were less bureaucratic and more religiously conservative. The violent and dark background to Greek myth might hail from traditions of the less cultivated rural parts of Mycenaean Greece, but because it is universal and not offset by any hint of the Mycenaean palace organisation, it is more likely to hail from the Dark Age itself.

By the Late Bronze Age, and at the inception of the Bronze Age Collapse, Mycenaean Greece had developed elite military and religious hierarchies. There were governors, country lords, military commands and lieutenants. There was also a priestly elite. Female membership of the elite was closely related to religious function. Subordinate to a given priestess there were female “key-holders”, “attendants”, “servants of the god” and other functionaries. All these personages were major land-owners and owners of other persons designated as “slaves”. Recruitment to the elite is obscure. The mythologems of matrilineal and divine descent tell us that most men did not know who their father was, which is consistent with the tablets; most men were brought up by their mothers alone. Procreation among the lower classes would then be consequences of the orgiastic aspects of religious festivals. Egyptian and Mesopotamian nobles do trace their descent both by father and mother; hence, it is reasonable to suppose that among the elite more dynastic type arrangements were beginning to prevail, and this is reflected in the evidence for patronymics found in Linear B; in these cases, matronymics are not given. Thus, the elite are perpetuating their class power by restricting procreation to within their social grouping to the exclusion of the lower orders, which follow the older rules. There is no evidence of any social mobility. Power is divided between political and priestly functions, and between male and female authorities. Females are no less abundant than men in positions of power and land-tenure. The entire system serves the interest of this aristocracy.



Figure 25. **Prometheus**

Illustration derived from a Laconian black figure amphoriskos in the Vatican Museum, c.530.

The myth of Prometheus exemplifies the darkness of Greek mythology, a darkness that can only hail from a Dark Age. The liver of Prometheus is devoured daily at the command of Zeus, the High God of justice. The figure to the left in the image is Atlas, the brother of Prometheus. The oppressive nature of the mythological event is unconsciously expressed by the artist of this icon by the manner in which Atlas appears to lean forward towards Prometheus. It would take the genius of Aeschylus to reconcile this cruel punishment with divine providence. With that reconciliation Greek religion witnesses the development of the idea of man as fallen being, for it will be revealed that Prometheus interfered with the divine plan of Zeus, who hoped, by wiping out entirely the first race of mankind, to begin afresh with a new.

For Pylos, we may speculate that at the very apex of this social structure stand two figures—one male and the other female: a king, *wanax*, who has sometimes divine honours. Some commentators claim that we know his personal name, Ekhelawon, the “last King of Pylos”. But this is contested—indeed, internal inconsistencies suggest that the “king” may not even have been a person at all. Thus, significantly, it is not the existence of the Priestess that is contested, but the existence of the king.

There is a High-Priestess who serves “The Mistress” and she is called either just “the Priestess” or the “Priestess of *pa-ki-ja-ne*”. Within the elite there are very many personages, most of whom have personal names, who hold either religious, military or landed positions of power. The efficient bureaucratic mechanism evidenced by the tablets indicates that, despite the multiple positions of social prestige, the elite appears to be working as one to exploit the labour-force and resources of the state.

What is the relation of the king (*wanax*) to the deity Poseidon, who heads the corresponding academy of male gods? The High Priestess is clearly the priestess of “the Mistress”, but does the king have a priestly function? Is he the High Priest of Poseidon? Alternatively, might he in fact *be* Poseidon? Tributes are certainly made to Poseidon (among others), but are tributes made to The Mistress as well? Offerings (as opposed to tributes) are made to “Drimios, the priest of Zeus” which some translate as “Drimos, son of Zeus”; are offerings made to the king and the High Priestess as well? The designation of females as “servant of the god” could indicate that the Priestess serves *both* Poseidon and The Mistress. At the level of detail, there are unanswered questions.

Outside this structure there are other sources of social power. A third powerful figure appears, the *lawagetas*, translated as “leader of the people”. At Pylos his personal name may have been Wednaeus, who is a large landholder. It seems that there are several legal entities each called “damos”, which would appear to be “communes” since they hold communal land, and these are connected to three landed lords with the title *telestas*. In two parallel sets of tablets, tributes are made: (a) to Poseidon or to the king, (b) to the “protectors” or to Lawagetas; (c) to the damos and telestai or to Wednaeus and finally (d) to “the unencumbered land of the cult association” or to Diwiewus. The duplicate names arise because the parallel documents invite identification.

In conclusion: there seem to be four ultimate centres of power at Mycenaean Pylos: (i) the “king”, (ii) the High Priestess, (iii) the “leader of the people” and (iv) the commune. I suggest the first two head the bureaucratic elite, and the other two are outside it, and that there are signs of social tension between these groups.

(8) **Heterogeneity.** The racial mix of the Mycenaean community is heterogeneous. Study of their genetic composition (Iosif Lazaridis *et al.*, *Genetic origins of the Minoans and Mycenaean*s) indicates that Minoans and Mycenaean were genetically like each other and together derived more than 75% of their genes from the Neolithic farmers of western Anatolia and the Aegean, and the rest from the Caucasus and Iran (that is, of proto-Indo-European origin). The Mycenaean also derived some small part of their ancestry from hunter-gatherers of Eastern Europe and Siberia and have some relation to inhabitants of the Eurasian steppe and Armenia. These results are notable for being consistent with traditional views on the origins of Greeks: that they are a fusion of a predominantly indigenous population, designated by “Pelasgian” and by other terms (such as “Leleges”) in classical Greek writing, with Greek-speaking immigrants, designated “Hellenes” in a first migration (c.2200—1900) and “Achaeans” in a second (c.1600). The Linear B tablets contain countless names of non-Greek origin, as does Greek mythology, where, for example, the terminal phoneme *-eus*, as in *Odysseus*, *Androgeus*, *Capaneus*, is not Greek.

There is the question: if the Dorian Greeks did not arrive in the Peloponnese, Crete and Rhodes as the result of an invasion in the post-Trojan War period, from whence and when did they come? The solution is simple: they were in the Peloponnese, Crete and Rhodes because they had always been there—that is, as long as any Greek-speakers were anywhere in mainland Greece. The fact that the language of Linear B, which we designate Mycenaean Greek, is linguistically closer to the Arcado-Cypriot and Attic-Ionian dialects than Dorian Greek, and that the two belong to separate branches of the great divide in prehistoric Greek language between the Western, Central and Eastern groups, does not prove that at some stage members of all three dialects did not coexist in any given region. Mycenaean is attested in Linear B to be only the dialect of the scribes, and it seems reasonable to infer, of the ruling elite. An ethnic mix is likely, and for confirmation we have a document, recorded during the historic period, but reflecting conditions of the Dark Age. When Odysseus, in disguise, pretends to his wife Penelope that he hails from Crete he says: ‘Out of the dark blue sea there lies a land called Crete, a rich and lovely land, washed by the waves on every side, densely peopled and boasting ninety cities. Each of the several races has its own language. First there are the Achaeans; then the genuine Cretans, proud of their native stock; next the Cydonians; the Dorians, with their three clans; finally the noble Pelasgians. ...’ (*Odyssey*, XIX, 176—77.) Remarkably, this passage, in addition to identifying the many language groups of ancient Crete, stresses the three-tribal structure of the Dorians. Homer, writing c.667, knows nothing about the Dorian invasion and the so-called “Return of the Heracleids”. (He has little knowledge of Heracles either.) I hypothesise that a similar ethnic heterogeneity existed in Mycenaean Pylos, as for all regions of Greece, and that the three *telestai* are the leaders of the three Dorian tribes, if not the tribes themselves.

(9) **The refusal and divine retribution.** The material in question concerns the following complex myth: a “king” refuses to “pay” a god, or omits to make sacrifice to a goddess; then follows a retribution by the god or goddess in the form of the summoning of a monster; this is in turn followed by a famine and/or plague, which is a great calamity and blight upon the land. Then the crisis is met by a hero or by some collective action by heroes and the monster is defeated. However, this victory does not truly resolve the crisis: since the monster is an instance of divine retribution, then for the hero to kill or in some other way defeat the monster is not a solution to the divine wrath that gave rise to it in the first place. Any healing is illusory or imposed by fiat; hence, it is not healing, and on the contrary, the wound caused by the original disturbance of the divine order is not closed. Greek mythology sends us clues as to why the Dark Age lasted so long. This complex myth contains component mythologems: (V.4) Mythologem of the monster of divine retribution invoked by sacrilege; (V.5) Mythologem of the blight (famine, plague); (V.6) Mythologem of the slaying of the monster of divine retribution.

I am mindful here to distinguish this last component of the complex myth from the (VI.1) mythologem of the Gorgon-slayer (mythologem of Perseus) that is like it, but has a distinct meaning and provenance. The reason for this distinction is that in the mythologem of retribution (V.4) the monster arises in response to a disturbance of the divine order, whereas in (VI.1) the monster pre-exists and is independent of any such disturbance. Mythologems (V.4), (V.5) and (V.6) belong to the Dark Age and I believe arise at the very inception of that age, on the cusp of the Bronze Age Collapse (c.1200), whereas dragon-slaying may be as late as the archaic period (after c.750), and may indeed mark the onset of the resolution of the disturbance created by the Bronze Age Collapse.

We have already seen in the myth of Laomedon an instance of all three of the above mythologems. The most famous of all instances of this complex pattern is the myth of the Caledonian wild boar, which has a doublet in

the myth of the Telmassian fox. No boar, fox, bull, lion or any other wild animal could cause the devastation that these beasts are said to bring; hence, their underlying historical reality must lie elsewhere—materially, as a civil war or other violence blighting the land through crop failure, flooding, pestilence and so forth; and spiritually, as a conflict of religious ideologies. Here is another instance of this material, taken from the pages of Pausanias.

Myth of the Marathonian Bull

The Cretans claim this bull was sent to their country by Poseidon, because Minos was the lord of the Greek sea and failed to pay Poseidon special respect. They say this bull was carried over from Crete to the Peloponnese and was one of the twelve labours of Herakles. When it was loosed onto the plain of Argos it dashed away through the isthmus and up through Attica to Marathon, killing whomever it met, including Minos's son Androgeos. Minos was convinced the Athenians must be to blame for Androgeos's death. He came over with a fleet and attacked them, and did so much damage that they agreed to take seven girls to Crete and seven boys, for the fabulous Minotaur that lived in the Labyrinth of Knossos. Afterwards the story goes that Theseus drove the bull of Marathon into the acropolis and slaughtered it to the goddess. (*Attica*, 1.27.8)

Myth can readily combine material from different epochs. The mythologem of the slaying of the monster of divine retribution (V.6) is structurally akin to the (III.1) mythologem of the Minotaur (bull games) which is itself a substituted ritual for (II.1) the mythologem of trial by combat (murder of the twin or rival), and that is also a substitute for (I.2) the mythologem of abduction, the primal murder of the god-king. Therefore, this material needs to be analysed into layers. We see that the bull of Marathon myth contains all these layers and is in part a statement of the vegetation religion. That is to be expected, for the issue is whether to pay Poseidon "special respect", and the conclusion can only be a "yes" or a "no"; a "yes" represents a conservative restoration of the original "sacred" duty, and a "no" represents a persistent rebellion.

The provenance of this material is Athens and Attica, and it may not be a Cretan myth. The distinctive material records physical and spiritual events belonging to the inception of the Dark Age. Poseidon's association with the sea, which may also record a historical aspect, is a reminder of the belief, confirmed by archaeology and Egyptian history, that Crete once held a thalassocracy of the Aegean. The crisis begins with a refusal to fulfil a sacred duty by Minos. There is no agreed etymology or meaning of the name "Minos", but it may be a title for a "king", may link to the idea of "son of Zeus" and may connect to the idea of "moon" and thereby to the Goddess. It was probably a title adopted by a man who ruled by right of marriage to the priestess or her daughter, as in a variant of the mythologem of matrilineal succession. That succession was matrilineal at some early stage of Greek culture approximates to certainty. Then the sacred duty that Minos the king has refused can only be the duty to die. That this is a phenomenon known to ancient cultures is also "certain"; that the Celts demanded it of their kings is the explanation for the death of Old Caghan Man (a bog body), who was a king. Here I cannot give all the instances of this fundamental concept, but let us iterate it once with anthropological data recorded by Diordorus.

As for the customs of the Ethiopians ... The priests, for instance, first choose out of the noblest men from their own number ... [and] him the multitude take for their king; and straightway it both worships and honours him like a god, believing that the sovereignty has been entrusted to him by Divine Providence.

... For the priests at Meroë who spend their time in the worship of the gods and the rites which do them honour, being the greatest and most powerful order, whenever the idea comes to them, dispatch a messenger to the king with orders that he die. For the gods, they add, have revealed this to them, and it must be that the command of the immortals should in no wise be disregarded by one of mortal frame. ... Now in former times the kings would obey the priests, having been overcome, not by arms nor by force, but because their reasoning powers had been put under a constraint by their very superstition; but during the reign of the second Ptolemy the king of the Ethiopians, Ergamenes, who had had a Greek education and had studied philosophy, was the first to have the courage to disdain the command ... he entered with his soldiers into the unapproachable place where stood, as it turned out, the gold shrine of the Ethiopians, put the priests to sword, and after abolishing this custom thereafter ordered affairs after his own will. (Book III, 5.1 – 6.8)

And here we have, in a nutshell, the history of the Greek Dark Age, projected onto parallel events occurring at a “later date” in “Ethiopia”.

It is important to step back from the material and, using “fuzzy logic”, grasp the picture as a whole—it points to a terrible war brought on by religious conflict over what one side perceived as the refusal to abide by a sacred duty. But the details could be very significant too. According to the Myth of the Marathonian Bull, and reading the above material “almost literally”, the war started in Crete, spread to “the plain of Argos” and then like wild-fire or a charging bull spread up the plains of the Argolid and Korinthia into the Isthmus and onto Attica. One could almost chart the fall of the Mycenaean palaces from this progress—Tiryns, Midea, Mycenae, other places of the Isthmus, and then Athens. The myth contains another mythologem: the (V.3) mythologem of (substitute) child sacrifice. There are two instances of this: Androgeos, the son of Minos, is killed in place of Minos by the conservative religious reaction (the “bull”) to his refusal; then seven girls and seven boys are also sacrificed to this “bull”. But there are other possibilities, since Androgeos means “man of the earth”, the same concept as that of the Spartoi or “sown men”, “men sprung from the earth”, then it is possible that whoever was the real person that lies behind the kingly title Minos, that person selected from among the regular non-Achaean population a substitute for himself, one of those men born of mothers who did not know their fathers; and he may even have honoured him with an adoption ritual and title of “son” before having him sacrificially killed on his behalf. The myth combines this mythologem of child sacrifice with the earlier mythologem of the bull games, where we see painted onto the very walls of Knossos, Tiryns and Pylos, young men and women competing in a bull-leaping ceremony for the chance to *avoid* being a substitute sacrifice.

That the war described in the myth was terrible should not be doubted, not only because this sequence of events is repeated time after time, but because we can see that the “resolution” in the myth is not a resolution. Minos never does pay Poseidon, so Poseidon’s wrath can hardly have been allayed; and all that happens is that his monster is slain, not likely to make Poseidon happy. The reactions to the crisis are further instances of sacrifice, with the final instance as a definite sacrifice by Theseus of the “bull” to the Goddess, slaughtered at the Acropolis of Athens. We see the close association of Poseidon with the Goddess. The crisis continues and there

is a vicious circle principle at work, a downward spiral. If everyone is busy killing everyone else, then there is no time to sow crops, and a famine ensues, no doubt assisted by those general meteorological phenomena indicative of drought that researchers have uncovered for the period. It was a hard time for everyone. Hence, a population collapse. Wars of religion are never pretty.

The idea of sacrifice of a son or daughter is substantially recorded in the anthropological data. Ancients regarded children in terms that we would describe as “property”, and this principle was even later enshrined in Roman law, where the *pater familias* had absolute authority, even as to life or death, over his family and children. The custom of sacrificing a son is recorded firmly in the Old Testament; for example, at 2 Kings 3, 26—27 the king of Moab immolates his own son to obtain a victory over the Israelites. At 2 Samuel 21, 1—7, one may read even of King David offering seven descendants of Saul to the Gibeonites for sacrifice, who were “put to death during the first days of the harvest, just as the barley harvest was beginning”, a statement of the original religious impulse behind the rite if ever there was one. Ritual human sacrifice was normative in the Hebrew society ruled by King David (c.1000) and later—and the data comes straight out of the Dark Age that followed the Bronze Age Collapse.

(10) **“Dating” of mythologems.** We use “fuzzy logic” to assign an epoch, not a precise date, to a mythologem. Generally, absolute chronology does not apply in the history of mythologems. To illustrate the principles at work, consider the Parian chronicle, an inscription carved into marble. The last event mentioned in this apparently bizarre chronology is dated 299, and scholars are agreed that the inscription was made in 264/63. The chronology presents the (VI.1) mythologem of absolute dating, by ascribing for example, the renaming of the region of Attica as “Cecropia”, the earliest event mentioned, to 1582. The purpose of the chronicle can be inferred from the bias of the events listed which is “religious”. It is a record of sacred events to which it applies fictitious absolute dates. There is also a religious-cultural bias: Hesiod, Homer, Sappho, Musaeus and Orpheus are mentioned. Finally, there is a bias towards the cults of the Aegean region and Ionian heritage. It is another source, somewhat akin to the evidence in Herodotus, indicative of what informed people in Paros in 263 thought had happened in the past, not necessarily evidence for what did take place. The document records that as late as 263 it was normative in Greek society to regard human sacrifice as sacred: for example, during the reign of Pandion, it states that “human sacrifices and the Lycaea were celebrated in Arcadia and ... of Lycaon were given among the Greeks.” It mentions a “lustration was first performed by flaying ...”; in both cases details having been subsequently effaced. The flaying is an instance of the (II.4) mythologem of Apollo and Marsyas; the ritual flaying of a defeated competitor. The dating is subject to bias: the tendency is to exaggerate the antiquity of religious events by ascribing them to ancient dates. The Parian chronicle assigns the institution of the Panathenaean Games to 1521, but we know that these games were instituted in 566 by Hipparchus son of Pisistratus. Likewise, the institution of the Isthmian games is assigned to 1259 and the Nemean Games to 1251 during the “reign of Theseus”; they were both instituted in 582; the Delphic Games are not mentioned at all. We see that any Greek dating of “ancient” events is unreliable, notwithstanding that they made a cultural norm of it. We can disregard all ancient dating as the product of later cultural bias, instances of the mythologem of absolute dating, an ideological process that serves to foster the illusion of the antiquity and historicity of legendary events. On the other hand, since the mythologems contained in the “chronology” must be assigned to some epoch or other, it follows that we must begin afresh and use their symbolic structure as well as other archaeological and historical evidence

to determine when they were introduced. (c) There is in the Parian chronology a significant gap with only one event listed between 1202 and 944. This event is significant to the Ionians – the foundation “by Neleus” (legendary King of Pylos) of the Ionian cities, assigned by the chronicle to 1077. This gap illustrates the backward projection of all the events and acts as circumstantial evidence that many of the events assigned traditionally in Greek mythology to the epochs prior to the Trojan and Theban wars belong to the Dark Age that came after it. The Trojan and Theban wars themselves thereby also become utterly legendary material and their historicity must be doubted, though that is a matter for separate evaluation. (d) But it does not follow from the unreliability of the dating that the events and mythologems recorded in the chronology are complete fabrications. On the contrary, each event must be assessed on an individual basis; the inscription itself is evidence for their historicity having derived from a firm oral and subsequently written tradition. One event is of particular relevance to our enquiry: “... a scarcity of corn happened at Athens, and Apollo being consulted by the Athenians obliged them to undergo the penalties which Minos should require ...”, which is dated by the chronicle to 1295, but significantly here attached to the mythologem of the blight and, yet again, to the mythological character of Minos. The “penalties” here are allusions to the sacrifice of the seven boys and seven girls, which is always associated with that mythologem.

(11) **The inception of the Dark Age.** In the Minos myth there is a sequence of events: 1. A sacrilegious refusal to honour a god or gods committed by the king; 2. Conflict arising as the god or gods invoke retribution. 3. Civil war in which famine, blight and/or plague result in extreme devastation. 4. Institution of substitute child sacrifice.

The mythologem of child sacrifice *looks* very old, but we must be wary, because under the influence of the mythologem of absolute dating, which is the same as the illusion of antiquity, all these events have been projected backwards into “mythological time”—the illusion of a time before the heroes, sandwiched between that epoch and the mythological epoch of the gods. Greek mythology was constructed during the archaic period under the “theory” that religious history could be divided into three broad periods: the period of the gods, the period of the “older heroes” and the period of



Figure 26. **The Warrior Vase**
Illustration derived from a large krater found at the ‘House of the Warrior Vase’, Mycenae, C12.

Five warriors march away from a woman. (Only one warrior shown above.) The significance of this krater cannot be underestimated, for it belongs to the pottery period of Late Helladic III C, and thereby to the period of the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the palaces. The men bear round shields, not the figure-of-eight shields characteristic of the Mycenaean period. Interpretation: the theme is that of departure for war, and hence this icon is evidence that the Dark Age was a period of conflict. The men march away from the female figure, who holds her hair or cap in a significant way. They depart at the behest of the woman, who is the authority figure—her gesture is one of command. All Greek mythology points to the period of the Dark Ages as one of intense conflict and disturbance. This image implies that Mycenae was a matriarchy at the inception of the war, for it is not a domestic scene of parting, such as would subsequently be depicted on white figure vases of the classical period of the C5.



Figure 27. **Naval battle**
Illustration from a krater, Kynos, C12, LH III C.

Pottery fragments from the period of the incipient Dark Age indicate that it was a period of intense warfare. In this image, one warrior uses a round shield to assault another bearing a square shield.

“younger heroes” to which the Trojan and Theban sagas belong. The likelihood that these mythologems belong to the Minoan or Mycenaean phases is low, for the simple reason that we see no corresponding iconography in the material record. While it is a bare possibility on account of the apparently “ancient” quality of these mythologems that they belong to a yet remoter time, there is also no icon corresponding to them in that period. The archaic period (c.750—480) is too late; hence, they must arise in the Dark Age, and probably at the cusp of the onset of that Age for they inform us of the causes of that terrible disturbance and describe a vicious circle principle that would perpetuate it. Furthermore, though the Greeks lost the power of writing during this period, and their sub-Mycenaean (c.1060—c.1000) and Geometric pottery (c.1000—c.730) styles are non-figurative, it is not true that they altogether or immediately lost the power of figurative representation. Hence, we can once again “see” into the darkness. The Late Hellenic III C imagery (c.1200—c.1060) we have, mostly from the Argolid region, depicts warriors setting off for battle, armed with round shields (a type not typical of the Mycenaean period) and of ships and sea-battles. Warriors depart at the instance of a female figure, so these images were made by religious “conservatives”. The theme is most definitely war; we may also infer piracy. All later historical references depict it as a very disturbed time. The figurines and animal figures of this epoch are votive offerings suggestive of obsessive ritual. Through these mythologems we see into the Dark Age, and what we see is religious turmoil coupled to famine, pestilence and extreme violence.

(12) **Mythologem of child sacrifice.** This appears everywhere in Greek mythology. The following are just some prominent examples: (a) Lycaon serves his son Nyctimus in a banquet to the gods; (b) the sons of Lycaon serve a child as a banquet to the gods; (c) Tantalos serves his son in a banquet to the gods; (d) Ino, later immortalised as Leucothea (the “White Goddess”), boils her son Melicertes; her husband, Athamas, spears their son Learchus; (e) Ino also demands the sacrifice of Prius and Helle; (f) Medea kills her younger brother Apsyrtos; she also murders her own sons by Jason, Mernerus and Pheres; (g) The daughters of Proitos, Lysippe, Hipponoë and Cyrianassa kill their own children; (h) Artemis and Apollo slaughter the children of Niobe, who insulted their mother Leto; (i) The motif of child sacrifice appears in the myth of Hypsipyle and Opheltes; (h) Heracles, sent mad by Hera, murders his children by Megara.

This mythologem has parallels in the myths of the gods: (j) Cronos eats his children. (l) Zagreus and Dionysus as Zagreus are dismembered; (m) Dictaeon Zeus is dismembered. While these cosmological myths are usually taken as arising in very ancient Greek religion, earlier than the Minoan epoch, they on the contrary derive from the Dark Ages. The hypothesis is that child sacrifice commenced during the ravages of the Dark Ages and are a substitute rite for adult sacrifice. The child need not be an infant; substitution of adult children is also implicated. Child sacrifice arose in the second millennium. But we may consider the possibility that child sacrifice and cannibalism was an atavism to an earlier primitive rite, for which the possibly cannibalised children whose remains were found in the temple at Knossos would be archaeological evidence.

Another related mythologem is (V.7) the mythologem of child burning; of immortalisation. The sacrifice of a child can hardly be undertaken without a sense of guilt; the sense of being under divine command may mitigate this emotion to an extent, but there also arose the compensatory belief that the burning of a child conferred “immortality” on the dead child. What is meant by immortality here cannot be the same as the idea of “everlasting life”, which is a concept arising in Ionian consciousness. This mythologem appears in Greek myth for example, and not exclusively in: (a) Demeter intends to confer immortality on the child Meleagros by putting



Figure 28. *Montage of imagery from the myth of Clytemnestra and the Curse of the House of Atreus*

From left to right: (i) Clytemnestra touches Aegisthus on the shoulder as he murders Agamemnon, who holds a lyre in his left hand, from a red-figure krater in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, c.460; (ii) Clytemnestra murders Cassandra, from a kylix in the Archaeological Museum of Ferrara; (iii) Orestes murders his mother Clytemnestra, thus avenging the death of Agamemnon, from an amphora in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, c. 340. The mythologem of the curse exemplifies the self-perpetuating nature of the violence of the Dark Age. By the late classical period the myth of the curse of the house of Atreus had undergone innumerable redactions, not least that of Aeschylus. The original mythologem is expressed by Cassandra (as the Moon) “abducts” Agamemnon (as sacrificial-king), and the artists cited above have unconsciously referenced this by giving Clytemnestra a double-axe as her weapon on both occasions. The men wield swords.

him in the fire, but is interrupted and he dies; (b) motif of the golden hair in the myth of Pterelaos; (c) motif in the immortality of Glaucos; (d) motif in the birth of Dionysus as son of Semele; Semele is incinerated by Zeus at the instigation of Hera’s jealousy; (e) same motif in the birth of Asclepius; (f) motif in the birth of Achilles; (g) in the myth of Meleager.

(VI.2) Mythologem of child exposure. Related to child sacrifice is child exposure; this is a transmuted ritual arising later, because the killing is not done by the parents, but the parents “give the child to the Goddess”, for it is nature that does the killing. It is a transmuted offering of “first fruits”; the myth is also strongly associated with (VI.3) the mythologem of the foundling—the adoption by other parents or by the Goddess of the foundling. Adoption is possibly an indicator of the mythologem of matrilineal descent and may contain material from an earlier epoch. Child exposure and the divine foster child are expressed in the following myths: (a) Tyro, (b) Zephus and Amphion, (c) Oedipus, (d) Teleophus, (e) Arcas, (f) Atalante, (g) Paris.

Arguably the most disturbing mythologem is (V.8) the mythologem of the Bacchic madness; of the rendering of the king. The tearing of the king limb-by-limb by women driven mad in Bacchic frenzy takes the idea of the sacrifice of the king to an exceptionally savage level. Instances of this mythologem cited by Apollodorus in the *Library* include, “Orpheus also discovered the mysteries of Dionysos, and he was buried near Pieria after he was torn apart by Maenads” (1.15); the women at Argos driven mad by Dionysus, “had their still-nursing children with them in the mountains and ate their flesh” (3.37); the murder of Pelias by his daughters at the instigation of

Medea (1.143); “The mares [of Diomedes the Thracian] ripped him [Abderos] apart and killed him”; the myth of Thracian Lycurgos: “Dionysos made Lycourgos go mad. In his raving he struck his son Dryas with an ax and killed him, thinking that he was chopping the branch of a vine. ... When the land remained infertile, the god gave a prophecy that it would bear crops if Lycourgos were put to death. When the Edonoi heard this, they led him to Mount Pangaion and tied him up. There, in accordance with the will of Dionysos, Lycourgos was destroyed by horses and died” (3.33); the myth of Pentheus, immortalised also in the play by Euripides: “Dionysus came to Thebes and made the women leave their houses and celebrate the Bacchic rites on Mount Cithairon. ... When he [Pentheus] came to Citharion to spy on the Bacchai, he was dismembered by his mother Agaue in a fit of madness, for she thought he was a beast” (3.36); the myth of Labdacos, son of Pentheus, “who was killed after Pentheus for holding similar beliefs” (3.41). If we read these last examples as specific reminiscences from Theban history at the inception or during the wake of the Dark Age, we may infer that the crisis at Thebes took a particularly violent turn.

(13) **The mythologem of the curse.** Greek oral tradition preserves the memory of the self-perpetuating, vicious-circle character of the troubles of the Dark Age. Famous instances of the curse are (a) the curse of the House of Atreus; (b) the curse of the necklace of Europhile; (c) the curse upon the house of Pelias, which is the foundation of the myth of the Golden Fleece. I illustrate this with a summary of the first of these curses.

The curse of the House of Atreus

Tantalos serves his son Pelops at a banquet for the gods. The children of Niobe, daughter of Tantalos are slaughtered by Apollo and Artemis in divine retribution for insult to their mother Leto. Pelops, resurrected, murders Oenomaus and Myrtilus, both of whom curse him as they are dying. Pelops marries Hippodamia and succeeds to the throne of Pisa. Chrysippus, a son of Pelops by the Danaid Astyoche, is murdered by Hippodamia. In an episode involving a golden fleece, the sons of Pelops, Thyestes and Atreus, contend for the throne of Mycenae. Kingship is given first to Thyestes, and then to Atreus. Thyestes commits adultery with Aerope, the wife of Atreus. Atreus murders his own son, Pleisthenes, by a former wife; he also slaughters three sons of Thyestes on the altar of Zeus, serving them to Thyestes as a dish. Thyestes commits incest with his daughter, Pelopia, raping her and fathering a child upon her. She exposes the child, Aegisthus, but this child is adopted by Atreus, who brings it up. Atreus orders Aegisthus to kill Thyestes, but Thyestes evades the plot, and reveals himself as his father; Aegisthus kills Atreus. Agamemnon, son of Atreus, drives Thyestes from Mycenae and is accepted as king there. He marries Clytaemnestra, widow of (another) Tantalos, King of Pisa, and daughter of Tyndareus and Leda. Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia, his daughter by Clytaemnestra, at Aulis to appease an angry ghost and obtain a wind for his fleet setting sail for Troy. At Troy he takes as concubine Cassandra, daughter of Priam, and has by her two sons. On return he, Cassandra and his sons are murdered by Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra. Agamemnon’s son and daughter by Clytaemnestra, Orestes and Electra, murder their mother and Aegisthus, her lover. Orestes is pursued by the Erinyes, instruments of the divine retribution of the Goddess, for crimes against mother-blood, but he obtains final absolution from Apollo and Athena at the court of the Areopagus at Athens.

This myth does not belong directly to the Mycenaean period, and we are not obliged to regard any of the characters in it as historical personages; it belongs to the boundary between the Mycenaean and Dark Age and records the turmoil of the latter. Allowing the mythologems to stand apart from the legendary material, we see exemplars of pre-Minoan layers—vegetation religion in a resurrection motif and succession through marriage to the priestess—incest with a daughter is a sign of that. The material plunges us into the chaos of the Dark Age, with bloody intrigues committed among the aristocracy, and bids to put the divine order right by sacrifices of everyone, children included, which only serve to perpetuate the problem. The resolution comes through the victory of patriarchy, explicitly rendered plain to us in the tragic trilogy, the *Oresteia*, of Aeschylus, where we also see a statement of (VI.9) the mythologem of parthenogenesis—the birth of the virgin Athena from the head of Zeus, without the labour of a mother, Zeus having swallowed her mother, the Titaness, Metis. This statement records the victory of patriarchy.

(14) **The bloody rites of Artemis.** Thus, Greek mythology points to terrible things taking place in the darkness, when the Greeks lost all powers of expression. After the brief respite in the vicinity of Mycenae, from c.1050 onwards virtually no figurative representation, either in image or word, was formed. The mind was only capable of expressing itself in the endless patterns of proto-geometric pottery—beautiful, but indicative of a deeply disturbed spirit obsessively seeking renewal. But memories of the terror were preserved also in oral traditions that are “semantic” in form, as opposed to “iconic”. In his anthropological studies of Greece, Pausanias had the opportunity to record many of these.

Pausanias records multiple instances of the continuing primacy of the Goddess in the Greece, particularly in the smaller towns and rural areas. Within the Peloponnese, the dominant deity is Artemis, who is everywhere associated with rites of the cruellest and most bloody kind. I suggest that Iphigenia was originally a doublet of Artemis, or a title given to her priestess. The cult of Taurian Iphigenia was everywhere associated with human sacrifice. Another example concerns the institution of child sacrifice at the Shrine of Triklarian Artemis, which is said to be in vengeance for the intercourse of Melanippos and Komaitho within the temple. This explanation is an aetiological wrapper from the patriarchal epoch, for in the days of the fertility religion, sacred copulation was a duty, recorded for example in the transformed ritual at Athens during the festival of Anthesteria when the Queen (Basilinna) performed symbolic, if not actual, ritual copulation with priest of Dionysus.

But the vengeance of Artemis brought down destruction on the people, the earth gave no crops, and there were strange diseases deadlier than ever before. The people had recourse to the oracle at Delphi, and the Pythian priestess accused Melanippos and Komaitho. An oracular command came that they should be sacrificed to Artemis, and once every year the boy and virgin with the most beautiful bodies were to be sacrificed to the goddess. Because of this sacrifice the river beside the sanctuary of Triklarian Artemis was called the



Figure 29. *Motifs of proto-Geometric pottery*

Albeit beautiful, geometric patterns were all that the deeply disturbed culture of the Dark Age could produce. The power of figurative representation, along with that of the written word, was lost.

Implacable river: until then it had no name. The boys and virgins who were innocent before the goddess and died because of Melanippe and Komaithe suffered the most pitiful of fates and so did their families. (*Achaia*, 7.19.2)

No question here in the mind of Pausanias that this semantically encoded material records historical events; he goes on to explain how the bloody rite came to an end; a story that belongs to the reformation of Greek religion. Other related instances in which an oral tradition of sacrifice is indicated as a historical reality include: (a) sacrifice by stoning of children at the temple of Kondylean Artemis (*Arkadia*, 8.23.6); (b) “Murder” of a priest of Dionysus at the Shrine of Dionysus at Potniai resulting in a plague to be commuted by the (implied annual or regular) sacrifice of an adolescent boy (*Boiotia*, 9.8.1); (c) The sacrifice of Koresos and Kalliroe at the sanctuary of Kalydonian Dionysus at the behest of the oracle of Dodona (*Achaia*, 7.21.1). The most significant of these oral evidences concerns Sparta.

The place called the LAKE SANCTUARY is sacred to Standing Artemis. They claim this as the idol that Orestes and Iphigenia stole from the Taurians. ... There is another piece of evidence that the Standing goddess of the Lakonians is the old barbarian idol: Astrabakos and Alopekos, the sons of Irbos and the descendants of Argis through Amphikles and Amphisthenes, suddenly went mad and when they found this statue, and when the Spartans of Limnai, Kynosouria, Mesoa and Pitane sacrificed to Artemis she cursed them through this statue with quarrels and then with murders; many of them died at her altar and disease devoured the rest. This is the reason why they bloody the altar with human blood. They used to slaughter a human sacrifice chosen by drawing lots; Lykourgos substituted the whipping of fully grown boys, and the altar still gets its fill of human blood. The priestess with the Idol stands beside them; the idol is small and light, except that if ever the scourgers pull back their strokes because of a boy’s beauty or his rank, then the woman finds the idol heavy and hard to carry; she blames the scourgers and says they are hurting her: such a taste for human blood has survived in that statue from the time of the Taurian sacrifices. (*Lakonia*, 3.16.7-10.)

This demonstrates the religious transformations taking place within the Dark Age. The practice of human sacrifice in the cult of Taurian Artemis and Iphigenia, had provoked a civil war. Eventually, the sacrificial rite was reformed by the substitution of the famous Spartan custom of scouring, bloody enough, but a symbolic substitute for the original; and a real sacrifice too, if a boy died as a result of the whipping.

With this material in hand, a reinterpretation of all the early wars of Sparta along the lines of religious conflict between conservative matriarchy and incipient patriarchy is invited. An incident known as the expulsion of the *partheniai* in the context of the First Messenian War is illuminated. This event is extensively referenced in multiple sources, though Pausanias is not one of them. The *partheniai* were illegitimate men, children of unmarried mothers from Amyclae. A civil war in Lakonia was fought by the Dorian villages against the Achaean village of Amyclae, captured c.750, and eventually these illegitimate men were forced out to found a colony at Taras (Tarentum) in Magna Graeca in 708.

There is more semantically coded material in Pausanias, and some of it points to firm oral traditions stretching into the darkness. The story of the political evolution of Argos (*Corinth*, 2.19.1) preserves an oral tradition

repeated by Plato in the *Laws* (683) in which we see the original Mycenaean structure with King Temenos, and a subordinate “Leader of the People”, here as battle-commander, Deiphontes. Matrilineal succession through marriage of Deiphontes to Hymnetho, the daughter of the king, is illustrated. Her position as priestess is suppressed. A civil disturbance arises, the succession being opposed by the sons. The violence of the confrontation is not presented in the account, and a peaceful transition to the rule of law is suggested. We cannot determine who the individuals were, but this is another broad summary of events of the Dark Age, saving the violence is merely alluded to. The developed matriarchy of the Mycenaean structure is replaced through conflict by a patriarchal one. The story is taken up in the account of the war at Epidaurus, whose people sided with Deiphontes and Hymnetho in the quarrel and split from the other Argives. Argos only rose to power during the Dark Age, so this material records a tradition of events belonging to the darkness.

(15) **The mythologem of the war with Amazons** (V.9) records actual bloodshed in battle between men and women. Depictions of combats between male and female warriors became highly fashionable by archaic times, expressive of the misogyny that developed among politically dominant men; they adorned their temples with paintings and friezes depicting the theme. Women-hating patriarchy also revelled in depictions of the ritual sacrifice to appease the angry ghost of Achilles of Polyxena, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, after the capture of Troy, giving rise to images that can cause the unsuspecting observer’s hair to stand on end. Mythology iconographically records many such wars between men and women, but there is also semantically coded material of an oral tradition that they are no mere fantasy. That there really were Amazons cannot be doubted. Certain geographical regions were associated with them, such as Lycia and Lydia, both renown in the descriptions of Herodotus for their matriarchal customs; the region around Ephesus was especially notable for them; Amazon tribes were known in Libya and Scythia, and most famously in

Pictorial representations of Amazons in Late Helladic IIIIC pottery fragments.

The whirlwind storm of the inception of the Dark Age corresponds to pottery of the LH IIIIC period, 1190—1130. Some of the pottery fragments contain images suggestive of female warriors.



Figure 30. **Motif**

From a pottery fragment found at the proto-Geometric cemetery of Voudeni near Patras, LH IIIIC.

*Under the backward projection of patriarchy the assumption is that any depiction of a warrior must be of a man. However, the breasts in this image are too large to be unambiguously representative of a man. It is a hypothesis that this image represents a female warrior. The image involves no other indication of masculine gender—other related images of men indicate beard growth. Greek myth talks of wars in which female warriors are said to have come from the Aegean islands to support the beleaguered matriarchy of the mainland. We see also in this image the symbol of a bird, suggestive of a cult identification. Bird imagery continues in the archaic period to be strongly associated with female power. The spikes have been interpreted as indicating a hedgehog helmet, but, if that is what it is, there is no reason why a female warrior should not similarly arm herself. The figure is naked, and appears to be rowing. The famous burial of “the hero of Lefkandi” is accompanied by a Queen, who is buried with a pair of gold breastplates very like the image of the fragment (Popham, *Antiquity* vol. 56, 1982). In another backward projection of patriarchy, Popham speculates that the Queen may have been sacrificed to accompany the male warrior, but provides no evidence to support his claim in his article, or why, if sacrifice is indicated, it might not be the other way around.*



Figure 31. **Motif**
From a pottery fragment
found at the proto-Geometric
cemetery of Voudeni near
Patras, LH IIC.

A second image depicting a figure with suspiciously large breasts, or breast plates, otherwise naked. The figure has been assumed to be carrying a long sword inside a fringed case. However, this object is not definitely being held by the figure, and it might represent a sceptre.



Figure 32.
Male figurines, C8 and C7.

Figurines of men and horses were used as votive offerings on cauldrons and temples; some were cast into the fire at religious festivals. The idea expressed is that of the substitution of a living victim by the offering. The idea expresses the same obsessive character as that of the patterns of geometric pottery, indicative of disturbed times.

the valley of the river Thermadon in Asia Minor. But Amazons could be found in ancient Greece too, for we see them depicted on the walls of the Mycenaean palaces—riding in chariots, presiding at parades and participating in the chase. Pausanias records the following tradition from Tegea in Arkardia.

There is a figure of Ares in the market-place of Tegea, in relief on a stone tablet; they call him the Woman-feaster. At the time of the Lakonian War and the first expedition of King Charillos of Lakonia, the women laid an armed ambush below the hill now called Wardress Hill; the main forces had engaged with acts of daring and memorable male courage on both sides when the women appeared and broke the Lakonian line; the most daring of them all was Marpessa whom they called the Sow, and Charillos himself was one of the Spartan captives. They let him go without a ransom, under oath to the Tegeans that the Lakonians would never campaign against Tegea again: an oath that he broke. The women on their own with no man present slaughtered a victory sacrifice to Ares and gave the men no share of the sacrificial meat. This was how Ares got his title. (*Arcadia*, 8.48.4)

Thus tradition records that Tegea was a matriarchy and capable of fielding female warriors that could overpower a Spartan force of men.

The myth of Theseus records an invasion of Athens by Amazons, which superficially appears absurd, but may be a trace from Hittite history. Greek tradition associates a fierce tribe of Amazons with the river Thermodon in Asia Minor (for example, Diodorus 2.44.1). In Hittite tradition the kings of Hatti were in constant warfare with the Khatti people who are said to occupy precisely the same geographical region. (Observe the similarity of names between Hatti and Khatti—could this be a civil war?) The identification of the Khatti people with the Amazons is invited, and I wonder if there is just a faint trace in Greek legend of the wars between the Hittites and the Khatti. The Hittite empire disappeared suddenly in the Bronze Age Collapse, and the Khatti are implicated among the causes of that collapse.

For the main part Greek men were fighting with Amazon women, because there were always Amazons throughout Greece. The war with the Amazons at Athens is just a faint trace of real conflict there, and there were tombs to prove it. The Athenians showed graves of the Amazons Antiope, who deserted to Theseus, and Molpadia, who killed Antiope. The Megarans had a grave of Antiope's sister, Hippolyte, who was said to have escaped the battle at Athens and died of grief at Megara.

We find in Greek tradition traces of another much larger conflict whose locus is Argos, in which Perseus appears as the male protagonist and the women, identified as Maenads rather than Amazons, are motivated and lead by Dionysus and Ariadne. The mythologem is several times embroidered. These are details provided by Pausanias.

The near-by memorial is called the memorial of Choreia the maenad; they say she and other women came to Argos in Dionysos's troops, and when Perseus won the battle he murdered most of the women: the rest were buried together, but since this one had a special position, they made her a private memorial. (*Corinth*, 2.20.2)

On the right of the sanctuary of Leto is the shrine of Flowering Hera; in front of that is the grave of the island women of the Aegean who went on campaign with Dionysos and died in battle against Perseus and the Argives. They call them the sea-women. Opposite the memorial of these women is a sanctuary of Pelasgian Demeter, named from its founder Pelasgos, whose grave is not far off. (*Corinth*, 2.22.1-2)

In some versions Perseus is said to have killed Dionysus and/or Ariadne. The details cannot be deduced in any degree of certainty, but the mythologem points to real violence between men and women. It also suggests that the conservative matriarchy could draw on the support of forces from the Aegean islands. This tradition is recorded elsewhere in what may be a doublet of this mythologem—the myth of Thracian Lycurgus (*Iliad*, 6, 129–41). We infer that among all the conflicts of the Dark Age, there were attempts to suppress the cult of Dionysus, which resulted in bloody wars. Dionysus (that is, the matriarchy) was able to call on forces drawn from the Aegean islands, and men and women fought each other.

Pausanias records another startling variant of the generally accepted legend of Perseus according to which Perseus



Figure 33. "Primitive Zeus"
Pottery shield from a burial at Knossos c.900.

This fascinating image hails out of the Dark Age. Jaquetta Hawkes (*Dawn of the Gods*) describes it thus: "Primitive Zeus confronts the Earth Goddess," but she supplies no explanation for how she arrived at this interpretation. To begin with a description: the standing male figure holds what appears to be an incense burner in his right hand; in his left, he holds a swan. The swan image is repeated two more times. He is within an enclosure, signified by the "roof" above his head. A cauldron is situated to his left, under which another figure emerges from the ground. Interpretation: this would seem to be an invocation of the dead, something akin to the visit to the underworld described in the *Odyssey*. The sex of the spirit that is evoked from the earth is not indicated, but I suggest is male, an ancestor. The swans, an image that occurs repeatedly in Dark Age and Archaic Age material, denotes a cult or totem association. We recall that Zeus coupled as a swan with Leda; the result of their union being Helen (of Troy) and Castor, one of the Dioscuroi. Leda means "Lady" and the swan image designates a matriarchal connection. An invocatory séance is being performed in the service of the Goddess at her shrine; it represents a consultation with an oracle.



Figure 34
Early Geometric icon, c.900–875.

The symmetry of the composition of this C.9 icon indicates the continuing power of the Goddess into that century. The swastika is also thereby identified as an emblem that has a cult association with matriarchy.

The end of the Greek Dark Age



Figure 35
Protogeometric image
 Kerameikos, Athens, c.975–950.

The end of the Dark Age is marked by the reappearance of figurative art. A representation of a horse appears under the wavy meander.

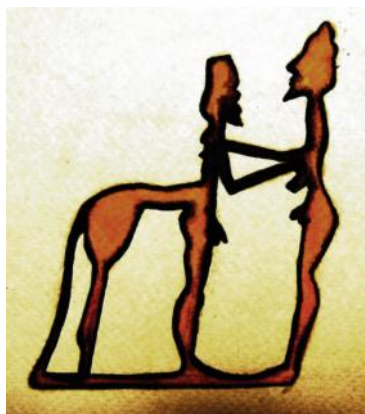


Figure 36
Bronze group
 In the Metropolitan Museum
 c.750–735.

A centaur “confronts” a man. This may be an early representation of the myth of the battle between Heracles and the centaurs. This sublime bronze work is yet primitive and crude, and out of step with the sophistication of Homer. Hence, an early date for Homer is not likely. We expect to see the plastic arts keep time with the non-plastic.

swapped the kingdom of Tiryns for Mycenae with his cousin Megapenthes. In Pausanias’s version, Perseus “persuaded Megapenthe, daughter of Proitos to exchange crowns, and taking hers he founded Mycenae.” (*Corinth*, 2.16.3) This makes Megapenthe into a woman, and is consistent with the interpretation here emerging that Perseus represents forces of patriarchy in conflict with matriarchy, and the picture of a dual monarchy at the Mycenaean palaces. If so, it records an initial compromise between the two sides of the conflict, with the priestess-Queen taking Tiryns as her base, and Perseus taking Mycenae. In Greek legend Perseus dies at the hands of “Megapenthes”, so it is possible that matriarchy gained the upper hand in his case, or for a period. It is hardly to be doubted that two such evenly matched forces over the centuries did not fight each other to exhaustion. But, if Perseus was a real person, and he might have been, then whatever happened to him personally, the forces of patriarchy that he represented won in the end. For that is the content of the (VI.4) mythologem of the dragon slayer. The very image of the Gorgon that Perseus is said to have decapitated stands for female power—it is the symbol of matriarchy. And whether Perseus the man decapitated any female priestesses in battle or otherwise, the mythologem of Gorgon slaying stands for the eventual victory of patriarchy, in which terminus we have the end of the Dark Ages. We must glancingly mention other mythologems associated with the war of the Dark Ages: the (VI.5) mythologem of the war of the Gods—the war between the Gods and the Titans; and as an expression of the ever cyclical and resurgent nature of this war—the subsequent (VI.6) mythologem of the battle of the Gods with the Giants.

The Reformation of Greek Religion

Patriarchy defeated matriarchy; in a parallel development, transformed rites were substituted for human sacrifice. The first development finds expression in several mythologems: (VI.5) the mythologem of the dragon-slayer, Perseus and the Gorgon Medusa; (VI.7) the mythologem of rape, of Zeus and his many “loves”; and the summative (VI.8) mythologem of cosmological succession, in which the Olympians replace the Titans as rulers in heaven. The (VI.6) mythologem of the giants’ revolt records a late attempt by matriarchy to rebel against the authority of the rising patriarchy.

The iconography records that the final victory of patriarchy occurred relatively late within the archaic period and continued to be accompanied by violence. The Lelantine War (c.734—c.680) began over a dispute between Chalcis and Eretria in the island of Euboea over the use of the fertile Lelantine plain. It is said to have involved coalitions of all the Greek states, and to have coincided with the Spartan first war of conquest of Messenia (c.735—c.715). The violence continued. This is recorded in the imagery for the period, but that imagery also records the ongoing social prominence of women. Figurative representation had by this time returned to Greek art, but the greatest earliest exponents of the new forms, the Dipylon Master (active c.760—c.750) and the Hirschfeld Painter (active c.750—c.735) still give primacy in their paintings of funeral processions to a dead woman, a Queen or Priestess surely, mourned by countless female attendants, and buried in ceremonial pomp with processions of chariots and soldiers bearing traditional Mycenaean figure-of-eight shields that could hardly be of practical use in the era of hoplite warfare that deploys the round shield in mass formations. In other words, in the 8th female domination and social prestige had not yet been broken. The same conclusion arises from study of the icon of the seated female goddess—an

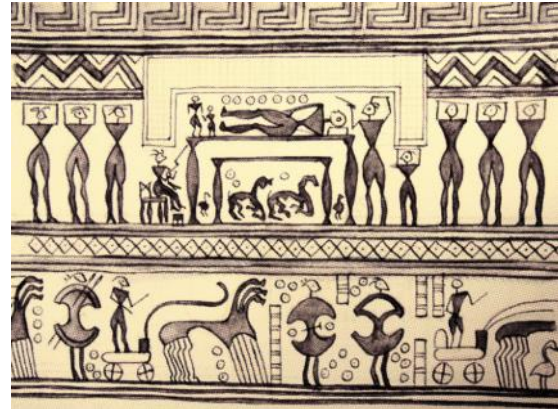


Figure 37

Krater, grave marker

Hirschfeld Painter, Metropolitan Museum, c.750—735.

Depicted is a scene of lamentation for a deceased male figure. Figurative representation has returned, found in the interstices of the endless patterns of geometric art. The iconography of this scene is highly significant. The dead man is placed on an altar or bier. To the left we see figures of a woman and child. She holds in her arm a rod or sceptre, a symbol of authority. Her status is also shown by the fact that



she sits on a chair or throne and has a footstool. We may infer that she officiates at the ritual lamentation, a clear indication of continuing female power in the priesthood. She may be the “wife”, but either she or another officiating woman appears to the right of the bier, also with a rod and accompanied by a child.

Apart from the deceased man and the child, whom we presume to be the male successor of the man, only women appear in the upper segment. The women are shown in the state of lamentation, by the icon of rending of the hair, a survival from Mycenaean times. Underneath the bier, there wild goats in mourning. Therefore, nature also mourns the passing of the hero. Hence, the man is an incarnation of the *spiritus vegetativus* or akin to it. This is a fertility rite. Matriarchy has not yet been overcome by patriarchy in the 8th. The emblem of a swan appears several times (only shown twice in the illustration), indicative of a cult association. In the lower segment, men appear in procession paying their respects to the dead man. They bear figure-of-eight shields, emblematic of Mycenaean matriarchy, an indication of ceremonial, for they would have been useless in the context of contemporary Greek hoplite warfare. The Dipylon Master’s greatest work depicts a similar scene of lamentation, but for a dead “queen” rather than a “king”.



Figure 38
An amphibious assault
Image from a middle geometric II skyphos, Eleusis,
c.800–760

Imagery points to continuing conflict at the closure of the Dark Age (c.750). The ship is identified as belonging to the cult association identified by a swan, and the defenders use Mycenaean figure-of-eight shields. The reverse side of the skyphos depicts a battle with slain warriors.



Figure 39
A departure
Image from an Attic late geometric IIA krater found at Thebes, attributed to the sub-dipylon workshop,
c.735

The image is reminiscent of the Warrior Vase, as a man “takes leave” of a woman as he departs on a large ship with two rows of oarsmen. The context is not necessarily war. The ongoing power of women is attested—the woman holds a circular object in her hand, surrounded by dots indicative of radiation; it is a symbol of power. On the prow (not shown above) is the symbol of a swan. The image also shows a figure-of-eight shield. Even on the boundary between the Dark and Archaic ages, men served the Goddess.

women. Contrast that with the image from Knossos of the exclusively female audience of priestesses watching over dancing female nymphs and male bull-leapers and the imagery tells the whole story: what need is there of any argument? How can the fundamental pattern be opposed? How can its monumental significance be denied or ignored? When men meet in an exclusively masculine environment to complete, friendly and hostile rivalry is a stimulus to further development. They compare their local traditions, and (VI.10) genealogical mythology is born; (VI.11) the myths of collective actions both draw them together in one culture and emphasise their distinct

age-old emblem of female authority that would eventually be usurped by Zeus—the statue of Zeus made by Phidias for the Temple of Zeus at Olympus (435) represented him enthroned, replacing by a god the place hitherto occupied by a goddess: men by that time had won. But by 700 they had not won—not yet.

Monster-slaying is the content of the Perseus mythologem. A Corinthian pyxis (a cosmetic box, therefore part of the female toilette) from c.680—c.650 illustrates the “contradiction”. One side presents the traditional image of matriarchal dominance—the Goddess flanked by two winged griffins—the other shows Heracles fighting the triple-bodied monster of Geryon. The image of three bodies is a symbol of the Goddess, who manifests herself threefold, and thus the painter has unconsciously expressed his divided commitment to both ideologies—no contradiction in emotion—and logic had not yet been born. Greek mythology was born. By this, I mean that all those stories, myths, legends that we call “Greek mythology”—the stories about the gods and their loves, about the heroes and their struggles, and of the Trojan and Theban cycles, all those were laid down in this epoch. There is no evidence in the iconographic record that “Greek mythology” existed before this time—c.680 is almost the earliest date—and coincides with Hesiod (c.700) and Homer (c.669)—the conscious and deliberate fabricators and architects of Olympian religion, but not without the same contradiction as the painter—for Hesiod particularly loves the Goddess, and Homer is no stranger to her either, even if his Goddess is Athena, the transformed vision of female divinity within an ultimately masculine order.

The traditional date for the institution of the Olympic Games (776) is a significant event on the boundary between the Dark Age and the Archaic Period. It marks a stage in the victory of men, because at these games only men compete, and symbolic of their male preserve, they compete naked to the exclusion of all

contributions. We see the birth of the myths of Troy and the Theban wars. The watchword of male society is (VI.12) *agon*—strife, struggle, competition in athletics, culture and war. The favourite depictions of Greek art shall henceforth come to be exemplars of struggle (agony)—the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs; the battle with the Giants, and the battle with the Amazons.

The Reformation of Greek Religion resulted in not one but two religions coexisting usually in harmony, but sometimes not. Mycenaean-Minoan religion is a vegetation religion, whose central concern is the promulgation of the fecundity of nature, the growth of crops and all things; the Goddess is its chief deity, and she appears as one among many only because nature has so many facets, both as to purpose and as to place. It is pantheistic only in the sense that the Goddess is everywhere. Olympian religion is a religion of the High Father who administers Justice and Providence; he is the ultimate guardian of the moral law; his central concern is to direct fate and see that oath-breakers are punished. The breach of oath, rather than the kidnap of Helen, is the moral failing of the Trojans in Homer's *Iliad*; the moral cause of their downfall. So, it is no accident that the idea of punishment in the afterlife appears as the (VI.13) mythologem of eternal punishment; at this stage, the concept of Hell as a place of damnation is born. There is no evidence for the existence of Hell in earlier Greek religion.



Figure 40

Myth of Perseus and Medusa

Schematic representation of the image circling the Eleusis amphora by the Polyphemos painter, active in Aegina or Athens. Eleusis Archaeological Museum, c.670—650.

The artist is famous for his dramatic rendering of the blinding of the Cyclops Polyphemos by Odysseus and his men, painted onto the neck of this amphora. Part of the representation of the myth of Perseus is damaged and reconstructed above; we assume that Perseus decapitates Medusa with a sickle, as in the canonical myth. From left to right—Athena; Perseus; the head and wings of Medusa, an ambiguous symbol, possibly a tree or body part; vegetation; the body of Medusa; the two Gorgon sisters of Medusa, Stheno and Euryale fleeing. This image is of great significance in the history of Greek religion, marking pictorially the victory of patriarchy over matriarchy; it comes within the same decades as Homer's final redaction of the *Iliad* (c.677). Commentators have observed that the artist, in his endeavour to picture what a Gorgon would look like, has shown their heads in the form of cauldrons, thus, unconsciously or otherwise, associating these monsters with cult and sacrifice. The myth is not yet fixed at this date, as Stheno and Euryale, the sister-Gorgans, were later to be identified as immortals—only Medusa, mortal, could be killed. Significant events at Athens must have taken place between 730 and 670, though the historical and legendary material for that period is scant. The reformation at Athens was cemented one hundred years' later by the reforms of Epimenides conducted under the aegis of Solon (594), and during the era of Pisistratus (547—527), which was one of patriarchy and Olympian religion "full-steam ahead".

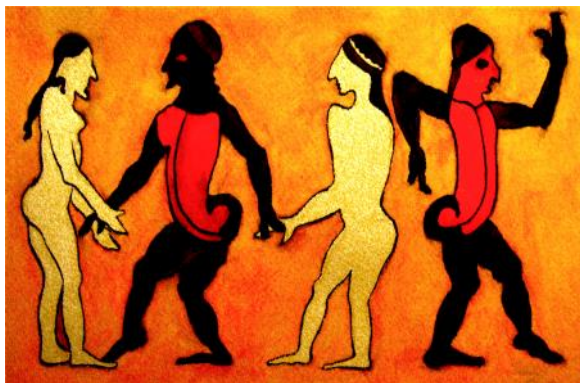


Figure 41
A komos

Icon from a column krater, from Kaza, Elefheres in the style of the Komast workshop, 580–570.

Men, partly clothed, dance with naked women at a religious festival. The religion of fertility and the Goddess continued to be celebrated at all times of the ancient world, while the Olympian patriarchy was created as a superstructure.

While they engaged in extensive commerce, the ancient Greeks were predominantly agriculturalists; the bulk of their hoplite armies comprised yeomen farmers; at the upper end of the social ladder were aristocrats, who rented out land, or had the land cultivated on their behalf by a mixture of free and bound labour—the serfs in the Spartan state, called Helots, were no better than slaves. In other words, the primary concern of religion with nature could not be transmuted. Hence, Greek religion divided into two parts: firstly, there was the superstructure of the Olympian gods, the official rulers in heaven and administrators of justice; they evolved into departmental gods and a pantheon was constructed. Secondly, the old fertility religion was reformed into a system of symbolic and transmuted rites. We call this Chthonic religion; it is a religion of the earth in which that which is buried and is reborn, as vegetation, is closely related to that which lives underground, the worship of ancestors and heroes, the realm of the dead, who could walk the earth as angry ghosts or be summoned. The distinction between Olympian and Chthonic religion is encapsulated in the differences of sacrificial ritual. In Olympian religion the animal victim, called an “offering”, is sacrificed with head pointing upwards upon a high altar to the gods; the sacrificial meal is divided between gods and men, with men gaining the better portions, and the feast is conceived of as a communal meal with the gods. In Chthonic religion the animal victim, called a “sacrifice”, is slain with head pointing downwards upon a low altar or directed towards a trench; the blood drains downwards and the offering is burnt as a holocaust—no part of the victim being consumed by the worshippers. By the classical age, Greeks pictured super-nature as divided between upper and lower realms; they worshipped and sacrificed to both.

The theme of transmuted sacrificial rites, and the abandonment of the obligation to provide a human victim, provides the substance of many a story from Greek letters. The plot is the same everywhere; so prevalent that it is impossible to deny that it records a historical process. We have (VI.14) the mythologem of substitution.

The statues in the river at Potniai ... they call the goddesses. ... There is also a SHRINE OF DIONYSOS the Goat-shooter. They once got drunk at a sacrifice and committed the outrage of murdering Dionysos’s priest. They were immediately seized by plague, and the cure came from Delphi: to slaughter an adolescent boy to Dionysos. A few years afterwards they say the god substituted a sacred billy-goat to take the boy’s place. They show you a well at Potniai where they say the mares go raving mad when they drink the water (*Boiotia*, 9.8.1—2).

This material encodes mythic (iconic) and historical (semantic) content; the mythic aspects point to the original matriarchal layers, with the connection of Dionysos to the Goddess, and the emblem of Demeter, the mares; it

also indicates the terror of the Bacchic frenzy. For a more developed variant of the same mixture of myth and history, we have the continuation of the rites of Triklarian Artemis:

This is how they say the human sacrifices to Artemis came to an end: Delphi had already sent a prophecy that a foreign king would come to their country with a foreign divinity, and stop the ritual sacrifice to Triklarian Artemis. When Troy fell and the Greeks divided the spoils, Eurypylos son of Euaimon received a chest with a statue of Dionysos in it; they say it was made by Hephaistos and the gift of Zeus to Dardanos. ... So Eurypylos opened the chest and saw the statue, and as soon as he saw it he went out of his mind: that is, he was usually raving mad, but now and then he came to himself. Being in this condition he did not make the voyage to Thessaly, but to the gulf of Kirra, and he went up to Delphi to ask about his illness. They say the oracle told him that when he found the people offering a foreign sacrifice he should install the chest for worship and live there. The wind carried Eurypylos's ships to the coast near Aroë; he landed there, and came on a boy and a virgin being taken to the altar of Triklarian Artemis. He could easily see this was the sacrifice, and the people of the district remembered this oracle, seeing a king they had never seen before and suspecting that he might have a god inside the chest. So Eurypylos got rid of his illness and the people got rid of their sacrifice, and the river got its modern name, Placation.

The title of the god inside the chest is the Overlord; his chief worshippers are nine men chosen freely by the people for their personal prestige, with the same number of women. On one night of the festival the priest carries out the chest: that is the privileged night, when the boys of the district go down to the river of Placation with wreaths of wheat-ears on their heads, the way they dressed them in antiquity to be taken to Artemis for sacrifice. (*Achaia*, 7.19.3—7.20.1)

The religion of Dionysus had originally required the sacrifice of a human victim; but here it is reformed. This mythological history also contains the motif of madness that follows the opening of a chest containing a god or relic. (For example, we meet the same mythologem in the Athenian story of the daughters of Erechthonios.) The nature of the madness is unexplained in all cases; I suggest calling it "madness" is a later patriarchal and aetiological gloss on the rites of sacrifice and an allusion to Bacchic frenzy. Hence, the material above also records an example of (VI.15) the institution of the cult of a hero. This momentous religious development began from 850 onwards. The ideology may be reconstructed. The chest contains the remains of some dead hero, whom may be presumed to have been sacrificed in some earlier epoch; hence, the substitution of the remains of the chest for the rite of the sacrifice of a living victim. The throwing of effigies of men and animals into bonfires, graves or pits has a similar motive. The cause of the disturbance of the Dark Age was the demand for human blood within the context of matriarchal religion, and the refusal to meet that demand; human nature has found a way out by compromise—an earlier sacrificial-hero will suffice, and effigies may be substituted for persons. The institution of the hero-cult stimulated interest in the histories of the occupants of the Mycenaean tombs which housed their remains; questions were asked, and legends sprang up. In other words, it is a working hypothesis that the legendary material of the hero cycles was invented in the C8 in response to this demand. Working on fragments of oral tradition the earliest epic poets developed sagas of heroic exploits; Homer came a little later, and transformed two of the crude romances into great art and profound religion by combining that material with a Zeus-theology.



Figure 42

The wedding of Peleus and Thetis

Part of the icon from the Sophilos Dinos, a black-figured wine-bowl from Attica, c.580–570.

Peleus welcomes his wedding guests—a procession of gods and goddesses. A work of monumental significance to the evolution of religion. Sophilos has written the names of the deities depicted, indicative of the fixing of the canon of Olympian religion, for those who look upon the vase may not have known who the figures represent. Sophilos is teaching the Olympian religion. The iconography is also being fixed—for example, Iris as messenger carries a staff and points backwards in a gesture announcing the guests, and Dionysus carries a vine. The image of Dionysus is illustrative of the reformed conception of the sacrificial god-victim, now polite and respectable. In an act of unthinking masculinism, Sophilos has omitted to include the intended bride, Thetis, in the representation. He is the first artist to sign his work—the inscription under the portico of Peleus’s house reads, “Sophilos made me”.

From right to left the whole procession comprises: Iris, Demeter, Hestia, Chariklo, Leto, Dionysus, Hebe, Cheiron, Themis, Nymphs, Zeus and Hera, Graces, Poseidon and Amphitrite, Muses, Ares and Aphrodite, Apollo and Hermes, Moirai, Athena and Artemis, Oceanos and Thethys, Eileithyia, and finally Hephaestus.

for sacrifice may re-surface, expressing itself even as a demand for a human victim as “more perfect”, and it is this which lends credence to those accounts in antiquity of the continuation of the rite at Rome, Athens and elsewhere. The “logic” that leads devout people to conclude that the gods demand a human victim is framed in that system of cognition that I have called primitive materialism. Hence, the resolution to the problem of human sacrifice, and of all sacrifice whatsoever, can come only with the end of that system. The rejection of the theoretical justification for sacrifice of any kind comes at the price of a new religion altogether. It was the Greeks who paved the way for this.

It seems that the Greeks became struck by the horror of human sacrifice and first felt the divine impulse to do away with it before any intellectual position against sacrifice was developed. But this impulse was first grasped by individuals, and the oral tradition records that the reformation was the work of inspired prophets, and that some of these men gave their lives in the service of humanity, for they were themselves sacrificial victims. However, in the material it is difficult to discern more than a trace of the historical personages.

The motif of compromise between the two halves of the religion is also expressed in (VI.16) the mythologem of the divine marriage, the Heiros Gamos. This is a celebration of the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera, that could be duplicated at the mortal level—one of the most popular themes of black-figure vase painting was the icon depicting the marriage of mortal hero, Peleus to immortal goddess Thetis, the mother and father of the demi-god Achilles. In a sense, every marriage is an instance of this divine marriage—an impulse to bring the two religions, of the matriarch and patriarch, together in harmony. Another instance of this mythologem is the marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia. This is a transformed mythologem of the original marriage or union of Dionysus (as Boy-God) to his mother, the Goddess.

The desire for harmony is as fundamental in human nature as the impulse to discord, but harmony is not always easy to achieve, and the substitution of one blood rite by another, or by a symbolic non-blood rite, does not remove the underlying motivation for sacrifice. Hence, in times of stress, the perceived need

(1) Orpheus is preeminent among these teachers and became the eponymous founder of the yet further reformation of Greek Religion that is known as Orphism, to which Pythagoras may be said to have been a follower. The religious significance of this second reformation, which owes nothing directly to any person of the name Orpheus, cannot be underestimated. (Important sources for the historical aspects attaching to the myth of Orpheus are Pausanias, *Boiotia*, 9.30.3—5, Diodorus 1.23, Conon, *Narratives* 45 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI. 1—85.) Some points concerning the possible historical person of the Dark Ages, and his first reformation: (a) this movement is associated with the rejection of all blood-sacrifice whatsoever and vegetarianism. (b) The legends connect Orpheus with misogyny and patriarchy; he is said to have been dismembered precisely for his refusal to participate in the orgiastic rites of women, and in his violent death, we discern the fundamental mythologem of ritual human sacrifice as well as an act of revenge on the part of matriarchy against masculinism. (c) Orpheus is said to have advocated a form of monotheism in the worship solely of Apollo as the Sun. (d) Orpheus is said to have travelled to Egypt; this is another recurring motif in the legendary material relating to the reformers of Greek religion. This is credible as history, because it is generally accepted that Egypt first and for a long time alone in antiquity gave up the rite of human sacrifice; I suggest that this is in part the motive of the great praise heaped on Egyptian religion by commentators such as Herodotus and Diodorus. During this Dark Age we anticipate that as connections with the Levant and Egypt were re-established, Greek religious thinking was influenced by the ideas they found, and we also anticipate human vectors of such a development.

(2) The myth of Melampus, like that of Orpheus, is projected onto legendary time before the Trojan War; it is not difficult to show that any such projection results in internally inconsistent chronology and genealogy. The mythologems present in the Melampus material belong to the Dark Age. In them we see a strong trace of a real historic personage, a healer who instituted a reformation at Argos. (Important sources for the historical tradition are Pausanias, *Corinth*, 2.18.4, Herodotus, 2.49, Diodorus, IV.68.3 – 69.1 and Apollodorus, 1.102.) Some points: (a) The tradition reports that Melampus cured the madness of the women of Argos, who were instigated by Dionysus. As a result, Anaxagoras (“king of the market-place”), son of Megapenthes, made a three-fold division of the kingdom with Melampus and his brother Bias. It is fascinating, that through the linking motif of the name of Megapenthes, these events are located in the generation after those attached to Perseus, and I am reminded that in one tradition this is Megapenthe, a woman, not a man. By connecting the two stories, we have here an account that reads almost like a history of religious wars spread over two generations. In the first generation, female warriors supported by contingents drawn from the Aegean islands went on the rampage but were killed by Perseus and his men. There followed a separation of the kingdom between Mycenae (patriarchy) ruled by Perseus, and Tiryns (matriarchy) ruled by Megapenthe, a priestess. However, in the ensuing violence, Megapenthe killed Perseus and another violent insurrection of female warriors scourged the land. Melampus instituted the reformed rites of Dionysus, associated with phallus worship, and peace was concluded. (b) Herodotus also associates the reformed rites specifically with importation from Egypt and cites Cadmus of Tyre as the vector. In this, Cadmus is also becoming an important character who is assuming a historical presence belonging to the conclusion of the Dark Age. He is specifically cited by Diodorus as being the originator of the Phoenician alphabet; Diodorus attributes to Orpheus a “Phrygian poem” composed using “Pelagic letters”. (He attributes the use of Pelagic letters also to Linus and Pronapides, the “teacher” of Homer.) (c) Pausanias remarks, “The Argives are the only Greeks I know divided into three kingdoms.” Whenever we see the mention of a threefold division of power, we

suspect the Dorian three-tribe structure, and this gives a hint that the civil war also involved conflict between Dorian and Achaean tribes. (d) The myth also records that Melampus secured his kingship by marriage to Iphianeira, the daughter of Megapenthes. This is an instance of the mythologem of matrilineal succession. The extract from Herodotus is so instructive that it merits full quotation.

2.48: In other ways the Egyptian method of celebrating the festival of Dionysus is much the same as the Greek, except that the Egyptians have no choric dance. Instead of the phallus they have puppets, about eighteen inches high; the genitals of these figures are made almost as big as the rest of their bodies, and they are pulled up and down by strings as the women carry them round the villages.

2.49. Now I have an idea that Melampus the son of Amythaon knew all about this ceremony; for it was he who introduced the name of Dionysus into Greece, together with the sacrifice in his honour and the phallic procession. He did not, however, fully comprehend the doctrine, or communicate it in its entirety; its more perfect development was the work of later teachers. Nevertheless it was Melampus who introduced the phallic procession, and from Melampus the Greeks learned the rites which they now perform. Melampus, in my view, was an able man who acquired the art of divination and brought into Greece, with little change, a number of things which he had learned in Egypt, and amongst them the worship of Dionysus. I will never admit that the similar ceremonies performed in Greece and Egypt are the result of mere coincidence—had that been so, Greek rites would have been more Greek in character and less recent in origin. Nor will I allow that the Egyptians ever took over from Greece either this custom or any other. Probably Melampus got his knowledge of the worship of Dionysus through Cadmus of Tyre and the people who came with him from Phoenicia to the country now called Boeotia. The names of nearly all the gods came to Greece from Egypt.

In these extracts, Herodotus has dropped his ethnographic approach of reporting only what people say, and is speaking on his own account. The only error of Greek scholars in relation to this and other material is to attribute all such material to the pre-Trojan epoch rather than to the boundary between the Dark Age and Archaic period, c.750, when the Greeks were learning to write using Phoenician script. That almost universal error in dating is even challenged by Herodotus in this very passage, when he writes, “Greek rites would have been more Greek in character and less recent in origin.”

I must emphasise the role of methodology in all of this interpretation. I do not claim to “know” that any of the above material is historical, or that if it is, to be able ascribe to it an absolute date; I let the fuzzy logic and the mythologems do the work. These mythologems belong to the conclusion of the Dark Age—for they spell the end of that darkness by the institution of reformed rites and belong to the period when writing is being learned. As such the material contains the important (VI.17) mythologem of the Egyptian origin of the reformed religion of Dionysus and attaches to that the motif of the human vectors: Cadmus, Orpheus and Melampus.

Fundamental to the transformed rites is the substitution of puppets, figurines and symbolic rites, blood and non-blood, for human sacrifice. The fertility religion of the goddess most certainly encouraged copulation; here we see that an actual practice of fecundation of the priestesses is replaced by a phallic procession. It seems in the

legend of Melampus that the people as a whole solved the problem, and there is a hint that this resolution took place at a public assembly held in the market place—the agora, presided over by a president—Anaxagoras.

(3) In Musaeus, Linus, Olen, Manto and Mopsus we have other potentially legendary and/or near-historic figures associated with the reformation, but the information is scant.

(4) Hesiod is no mere shadow and an important figure of the reformation. His *Theogony* represents an important statement in the history of religion; it would be wrong to see it as built on too long a tradition. Material in it is likely to have been imported from neo-Hittite sources, but its novelty should not be overlooked either, for the mythologems are transformed. He is the author of the mythologem of cosmological succession. It is really his invention and marks the new phase of Greek religion. By this cosmology the Greeks most definitely understood that their religion had been reformed, and that the older and more barbaric rites that formerly they had practised, represented by the order of the Titans are replaced by the civilised rituals of the Olympians. It was for this reason that when Greeks discussed the religion of other nations, they did not hesitate to ascribe to them worship of Cronos where they saw barbarism. A passage in which Diodorus attributes the sacrifice at Carthage of the “noblest of their sons” to Cronos has already been quoted. The same applies to their discussion of Tryian Melqart, whom they connected with Heracles. (They were not alone—coins issued by Hannibal during the second Punic war bore the inscription “Hercules-Melqart”.) But the Greeks were keen to distance *their* Heracles from the Phoenician one, who, connected to Cronos and identified with Hebrew Moloch, was a Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice. The whole of Hesiod’s *Theogony* proclaims to the Greek world, “We do not do this anymore”. But, like other reformers, Hesiod is said to have met a violent death, recorded by Thucydides (3.36.9) and Pausanias (*Boiotia*, 9.35.5).

(5) Another reformer was Epimenides of Crete. The legendary material concerning him I shall omit, but there is a detail of considerable historical significance recorded by Plutarch in his *Life of Solon*. In the preliminary, Plutarch tells the story of the sacrilege committed by Megacles, one of the family of the Alcmaeonids, against the supporters of Cylon during an attempted coup. These men were ritual supplicants at the shrine of the Furies on the Acropolis, when they were stoned to death and otherwise killed by Megacles and other archons. This incident is the source of the legend of the curse of the Alcmaeonids, which reverberated all the way through Athenian history. Archaeologists think they have found the mass grave of these men; the bare skulls seem still to cry out in



Figure 43

Sphinx

The crowning ornament of the east pediment of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi, before 524.

In this icon the feminine character of the Sphinx has been suppressed—she is depicted without breasts. The Sphinx is emblematical of the ambivalent feelings of both ancients and moderns to feminine power. The Goddess has both a benign and terrible aspect—as Queen of Heaven she is the bringer of fertility and all good things—as Queen of the Underworld, she is the bringer of death, destruction and sacrifice. Reviled as the author of riddles in the myth of Oedipus, she ever retains her charisma, mysterious and worshipful.



Figure 44
Mother enthroned with child
 Boetian terracotta figurine, c.450–440

utter pain. As the event was called a crime, and the throwing of any man into a pit or slaying in the Acropolis must be thought by some as favoured by the gods, this is an archaeological find that merits discussion under the heading “sacrifice”. But this story is in itself an aetiological wrapper for events taking place at Athens that have even wider religious signification.

In this situation they [the Athenians] sent to Crete for Epimenides of Phaestus ... He made the Athenians more punctilious in their religious worship and more restrained in their rites of mourning; he did this by immediately introducing certain sacrifices into their funeral ceremonies and by abolishing the harsh and barbaric practices in which Athenian women had indulged up to that time. But his greatest service, which he achieved by various rites of atonement and purification and by erecting places of worship, was to sanctify and consecrate the city and make people more amenable to justice and better disposed to live in harmony with one another (*Solon*, 12).

From Thucydides (1.126) we know that the purification also involved the digging up and expulsion of the corpses of the Alcmaeonid family. The economic, social and political aspects of

Solon’s reforms have been much discussed; what has been omitted is their religious dimension—which is social too, in that this purification represents a definite limitation of female rights and rites. One would like to know for certain to what is meant by the phrase “harsh and barbaric practices” that are attributed to the Athenian women; there is a definite anti-feminist tone in the account offered by Plutarch.

Patriarchy Full Steam Ahead

(1) The victory of Olympian religion was not cemented at any early stage of Greek history; it was not all “done and dusted” by the time Xerxes was leading his invasion force into Greece or with the inception of the Classical age (479). The iconography is very revealing, and it tells the story explicitly—within the Geometric period there is very little evidence of the Olympian religion and icons from that period still identify the Goddess as the prime object of veneration, and the funeral cult as its greatest expression.

Figure 45

Zeus

Imaginative depiction of the Statue of Zeus sculpted by Phidias, c.435 for the Temple of Zeus, Olympus.

This illustration seems to owe more to a romantic C19th tradition than to ancient Greece. However, the iconography is pertinent. The description of the statue, now lost, given by Pausanias talks of Zeus enthroned, crowned, holding a sceptre surmounted by an eagle in his left hand, Nike (victory) in his right; at the feet of the throne are four more Victories (not depicted here), and representations of Theban boys carried off by Sphinxes, of Apollo and Artemis killing the children of Niobe, and of Hercules and the Amazons.

The sculpture confirmed the victory of patriarchy—the Storm-god had now usurped the throne and emblems of the Goddess; his right to rule was stressed by iconography that rejects the crimes of the previous epoch, symbolised in the abduction of the Theban boys by the Goddess in her ambivalent but terrible form of the Sphinx. The victory of the male order is symbolised by the battle between Heracles, son of Zeus, and the Amazons. Justice against the “sacrilege” of women, albeit mysterious, is executed at the behest of male power by his divine agents—Apollo and Artemis.

The statue was transported to Byzantium, where it was probably destroyed by fire in 475 CE. No representations of it survive.





Figure 46
Women in a domestic scene
 Illustration of an image from a *Lekythos*
Eretria, by the *Nikon Painter*, c.470—460.

A wife, opening a work-box, instructs a maid.

(2) Within the darkness it is not possible to be too certain as to what party or state stood for what. But, there is not a single political event, not a single war that can be considered wholly apart from its religious dimension. When I read in the oral tradition that the First Messenian War was provoked by the murder of Lakonian king Teleklos at the joint sanctuary of Artemis of the Lake (Pausanias, *Messenia*, 4.4.2-4), I immediately think of human sacrifice, for this was ever the demand of Artemis, and I see religious ideology at work. We think of the Spartans as the epitome of patriarchal rule, but this is owing to their later identification with that institution, and we omit those details that indicate that women at Sparta enjoyed greater rites than in any other Greek state. Thus, in this war between Messenia and Lakonia we cannot infer that the Messenians were conservatives and the Spartan innovators. However, the general pattern stands forth: in the wake of the war, the Spartans expelled from their own peoples those men born without known fathers, whom they called the *Partheniai*. Hence, Sparta took a step towards patriarchy, and this was cemented further in the legendary reforms of Lycurgus, though it is likely that just as at Athens, the whole process stretched right the way into the classical period.

(3) But along with my rejection of the current vogue for writing history from archaeology alone, I do believe that there is a sufficiently reliable oral tradition for a good deal of actual history to be written, even of a political nature, about the early Greek states. The early history of Sparta is quite well known; out of the darkness more than a faint glimmer of light emerges for Athens, and so on. There is no change in the constitution of this or that state that cannot carry religious implications. In 508 Cleisthenes at Athens changed the number of tribes from four to ten—a monumental statement of religious reform. What relation did this reform have to the changes made by his grandfather at Sicyon, among which was a change of cult and renaming of the tribes?

(4) Among those periods that are most significant in the adoption of the Olympian religion is that of the rule of the Pisistratids at Athens (547—510). The list of pro-Olympian monuments and institutions brought in under this regime are too numerous to mention here. Furthermore, it is surely significant that in the wake of the overthrow of Hippias, son of Pisistratus, the temple of the Twelve Gods that was started under his rule was never completed until the Roman times of Hadrian.

(5) In general, it makes no sense to ask: on what day of the week in which year of absolute chronology was such and such a religious belief adopted? The impossibility of finding answers to such questions should not prevent us from seeing the general pattern. Mythologems are assigned to periods not to specific dates.

But in some cases, the invention of a mythologem can almost be dated. Consider the Homeric *Hymn to Delian Apollo* as a case study; this hymn was probably composed by Cynaethus of Chios, and Burkert argues that the

date was in 522 when it was composed for Polycrates of Samos. The poem celebrates the adoption of Delos as the Ionian cultic centre of the worship of Apollo, and barely mentions Artemis, whom as we know from archaeology was the original occupant of Delos. It contains a mythologem new to that time. Homer and Hesiod both know that Apollo is the son of Leto, and Homer connects him with Delos, but he also calls him “wolf-born” (*Iliad*, II. 101), which implies an earlier version of the birth of Apollo. The *Hymn to Delian Apollo* contains much information of a specifically historical aspect: (a) that the adoption of Delos, a rocky island, was difficult is encapsulated in the motif of the birth pains of his mother Leto, which lasted nine days; (b) that it is a cult of the Ionians and specifically adopted by a confederacy of the Aegean islands, but not one of the places mentioned was willing to host the cult for fear of reprisals, Delos being adopted because of its lack of population; (c) that the birth of Apollo—the institution of the Apollo cult—was opposed by the cult of Hera; (d) that the transformed Apollo cult stands for a stage in the victory of the patriarchal Olympian religion in which Zeus is pre-eminent, and that the first words

Apollo utters—“The lyre and the curved bow shall ever be dear to me, and I will declare to men the unfailing will of Zeus”—declare him to be the patron of music and the organ of the Providential Will of the Father—none of this being known either to Homer (c.667) or Hesiod (c.700). One of the mythologems thereby expressed is:

(VI.18) Mythologem of the Birth of Apollo: (i) at Delos, (ii) as the patron of music (emblem, lyre), (iii) as the patron of the Delian (transformed Ionian) cult games, (iv) (from Leto) as the result of a hard labour, (v) against the opposition of Hera, (vi) with the belated assistance of Eilithyia, goddess of birth, (vii) as the providential organ of the will of the Father.

All of this may be dated specifically to a cult event possibly held in 522 at Delos itself under the aegis of Polycrates of Samos, who at that time had established a thalassocracy in the Aegean. This datable religious event marks a monumental stage in the victory of patriarchal Olympian religion; formerly, in the *Iliad*, Apollo had been an opponent of the divine will of Zeus, now he becomes his chief ally. The *Hymn* contains other mythologems of older provenance.



Figure 47

Man and woman

Illustration of an image from a Lekythos Eretria, by the Achilles Painter, c.450.

This has been described as a scene depicting the departure of a warrior, but investigation of the imagery indicates ambiguity. The female figure is clad only in a transparent garment covering her upper body; the male figure is scarcely wearing more clothing. Although he shows her a helmet and carries a shield, the context is sexual, and their relationship ambiguous. Women have been transformed from dominant figures of society and religion into objects of male regard.

(VI.7) Mythologem of rape: Zeus (Apollo, Poseidon, Ares, Hermes, etc.) marries or rapes a goddess or woman and has offspring by her.

(VI.19) Mythologem of the Wrath of Hera: the marriage to or rape of multiple goddesses and mortal women by Zeus is made against the vehement opposition, jealousy and persecution of Hera—that persecution of Hera extending to the goddesses, the mortal women, and all their offspring.

The institution of the Delian Games (date uncertain) is one among a series of religious events of great significance. The original name of Delos was Ortygia and as such it was sacred to Artemis, where her cult was celebrated from time immemorial, and where her famous Horn Altar was situated.

Religious History of Delos

Early religious history of Delos: Delos was a cult centre of Artemis, where she was worshipped at her Horn Altar, said by Plutarch to have been one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. The island was a cult centre of the Mycenaean period, for which no Olympian religion is attested. The festival involved games celebrated by Ionians, attested in Homer as mentioned by Thucydides (*Peloponnesian War*, 3.104).

546—528. Sometime during the tyranny of Pisistratus or his sons at Athens, the Athenians performed the first purification of the island of Delos. The Poros Temple of Apollo was first constructed. The purification involved the removal of burials from the area surrounding the temple to the nearby small island of Rhenea.

525. Polycrates of Samos allied with Cambyses in his war against Psamtik III of Egypt. Polycrates defeated an attempted rebellion against his rule. Sparta in alliance with Samian rebels attempted to invade the island of Samos, but Polycrates was victorious and the Spartan force withdrew after forty days.

522. A ceremony was performed for Polycrates of Samos. Possible date for the composition of the *Delian Hymn*, and the adoption of Delos as the birthplace of Apollo. According to Thucydides, Polycrates had the island of Rhenea dedicated to Delian Apollo by binding the island to Delos with a chain (3.104). Later in the same year, Polycrates was tricked by Oroites, Persian governor of Ionia, captured and crucified. The Persian emperor Darius installed Syloson, a brother of Polycrates, as puppet ruler of Samos.

422. During the Peloponnesian War the Athenians conducted the second purification of the island of Delos. All graves were moved to Rhenea, and another temple of Apollo was constructed. The Athenians expelled the Delians from Delos and they were given by Pharnacles II, Satrap of Persian Phrygia, the town of Atramytrum in Asia Minor. The Athenians celebrated “for the first time” the Delian Games. The Ionian games had been or were transferred to Ephesus, cult centre of Artemis. Thucydides, rarely for him, cites religious motives for these actions: the purification was conducted “no doubt because of some oracle” (3.104) and he states that the Delians were expelled for “some crime committed in the past” (5.1).

421. Thucydides states: “About the same time in this summer the Athenians reduced Scione. They put to death the men of military age, made slaves of the women and children, and gave the land to the Plataeans to live in. They also brought the Delians back to Delos—a move suggested both by the Athenian misfortunes in battle and by an oracle from the god in Delphi.” (5.32)

411. We presume that not all the Delians returned to Delos, because in this year Tissaphernes, Satrap of Persian Lydia and rival of the Phrygian satrapy, had all Delians settled at Atramytrum massacred; after which, he went to make “sacrifice to Artemis” at Ephesus—this being the very last statement of Thucydides in his *History*.

In the fuzzy logic we see at work a religious transformation in which the exclusive use of Delos as a cult centre of Artemis is replaced by a dual religion. The process is associated with a renaming of the island from “Ortygia”, associated exclusively with Artemis, to “Delos”, associated with both Artemis and Apollo. Thus, Olympian religion usurps the Minoan religion of the Goddess, whose embodiment here is Artemis. Pisistratus may be accounted a promoter of the Olympian religion, for his “tyranny” at Athens was a period of Olympian religion full steam ahead. The fuzzy logic invites connection with the underlying issue of human sacrifice, that issue being much suppressed in the material as it has come down to us. This is implied by the very strong connection between Artemis and human sacrifice, such as we see attested particularly in Pausanias. A question that must be answered in all events is why the Athenians needed to remove the burials from Delos. We note that if there were sacrificial victims in the material record, then these have been deliberately removed by the later institution of the patriarchal Olympian religion, which would be another good reason why archaeology is so indecisive in this matter. The hint of something terrible is conveyed by Thucydides’ ambiguous explanation for the expulsion of the Delians. It has been inferred from the “Delian speech” of Hyperides (343) that the crime was some murder by the Delians of Aeolian visitors to the islands; occurring on a sacred island, performed by priests, such a murder surely has religious content and we may infer sacrifice, or something akin to it. It is impossible not to consider it as a possibility. The conflict of ideologies at Athens is reflected in their schizophrenic reversal of policy the following year in bringing the Delians back. We see the cognition of primitive materialism at work throughout the whole saga, because of the way the favour of the gods is being addressed through contradictory oracles. The original exclusive cult of Artemis is transferred to Ephesus, where she was ever the manifestation of the Goddess. The murder of Polycrates by crucifixion (or immolation) indicates a religious dimension. The massacre of the exiled Delians is something that cannot be disconnected from religious ideology—Phrygia was known to be religiously conservative, which may account for the Delians finding refuge there, but Tissaphernes more or less “sacrifices” them to Artemis at Ephesus; at the least, he cannot have felt to be working against Her divine commands, since he immediately celebrates at her temple, having bathed his hands in Delian blood. The fuzzy logic tells us one main thing: whatever else is concerned in these actions, they are also an expression, even “late” in the historical period, of religious conflict, and that the adoption of the dual cult of Apollo and Artemis at Delos was strenuously opposed by the earlier cult of the Goddess; in the course of that conflict both sides were prepared to bloody their hands not just with animal victims. We have another mythologem arising in this epoch: (VI.20) the mythologem of the divine siblings. Apollo and Artemis are born of the Goddess and together are the divine expression of the power of Father Zeus.

Conclusion

The next step would be to make a complete concordance of all mythologems of Greek religion, complete with cross references to their sources. I do not think that the methodology here is at all ambiguous. It is quite easy to recognise mythologems in any given material once one accepts that it is appropriate to look for them. The idea of a mythologem is scarcely new in principle, and all serious second-order mythographers, from Diodorus to J.G. Frazer have deployed it. What has been a great source of error has been the chief mistake inherited from the Greeks themselves, who in their desire to build a cultural history for themselves projected mythologems onto legendary times before the equally legendary Trojan War; we see these could not have belonged to that period, and we must infer they arose during the Dark Age and reflect the religious history of that age. It is this tradition of taking legend for fact that has unwittingly led to the denigration of the whole oral tradition represented by Greek mythology as altogether lying fictions. We see that the recent trend towards jettisoning the whole oral tradition and starting afresh with archaeology alone has been a much-needed corrective, and we can be heartily grateful for it, though it is now essential to go beyond that one-sidedness and treat the oral tradition with the respect it deserves.



Figure 48
Suicide of Ajax
Icon from a belly amphora by Exekias, c.530

Immortality: the Groundwork to the History of Western Consciousness

Part One: Primitive materialism

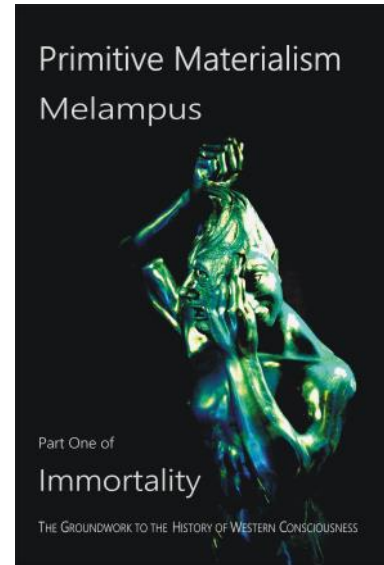
Christianity. The problem of shadow in Christianity—of split-consciousness—how the religion of love transforms itself into a religion of repressed desire and cruelty—implying a need for a further reformation of Christianity. The crisis of Christianity—the impossibility from within contemporary consciousness of maintaining the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture—the need to read Scripture as a layered text of multiple historical recensions and redactions—the implied need to revitalise religion as a vehicle of ongoing revelation. The need for a reformation of Christian theology as confronting not retreating from the layered aspects of the text. That Christianity through its crisis and shadow problem has constellated an opponent of terrible power in contemporary academic Positivism and in the materialism of popular culture.

Philosophical Anthropology. Human cognition is divided into three epochs—primitive materialism, Ionian consciousness and Kantian consciousness. Ideas of human identity and immortality are relative to cognition. Exploration of the cognition of primitive materialism. Early stages under primitive materialism of the concept of immortality. Primitive dualism and primitive spiritual materialism.

History of Religion. History of Egyptian religion outlined through analysis of the recensions of the *Book of the Dead*. History of Greek religion in the Dark Ages, analysed through the oral and written tradition of Greek myth. The War in the Dark Ages between Matriarchy and Patriarchy. Explanation of the Bronze Age Collapse as the product of this terrible and catastrophic war. Analysis of grades of matriarchy. Definition of the political and social structure of a developed matriarchy. The analysis of myth—the central concept of a mythologem as a narrative linking two or more images (motifs)—comparative method. Evolution of Greek religion into a dual religion—of Olympian and chthonic religions—reformation of the religion of the Mycenaean-Minoan Age during the Greek Dark and Archaic ages—reformation of the religion of Dionysus—rise of Orphism—Zeus theology of Hesiod and Homer. Theory of archetypes – evolution of the archetypes of Greek and Western consciousness. The archetypes of Heracles and Apollo.

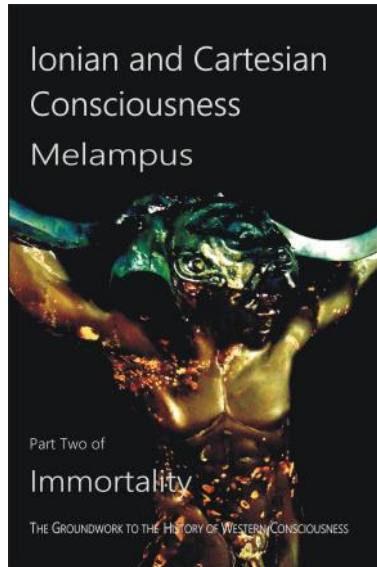
The Crisis of the First Millennium BCE. The need to overcome the practice of ritual adult and child male sacrifice within the context of the matriarchal religion of fertility stimulated the emergence of proto-Ionian consciousness. The transformation of human consciousness took place in Greece from the inception of the Dark Age and thereafter.

History of pre-historic Greece. All the above constitutes a radical transformation of our understanding of ancient Greek history.



Immortality: the Groundwork to the History of Western Consciousness

Part Two: Ionian and Cartesian Consciousness



Philosophical Anthropology. The character of Ionian consciousness—the distinction between appearance and reality and the concept of infinity. The emergence of the Either/Or as Either: materialism and despair, Or: puritanical dualism and the shadow problem. The concept of immortality within Ionian consciousness and the phenomenology of the Self/Soul Kantian distinction between the Self and Cartesian soul—the Cogito and the Sum. The empirical ego, ego illusion and states of consciousness. Bundle theory of the self—refutation of the interpretation of the doctrine of anatta as the utter impermanence of the self. The body-soul problem from within Cartesian and Kantian consciousness compared. Argument of Parmenides for the immortality of the soul. Doctrine of the mirror—relation between empirical “incarnate” and transcendent self. Phenomenology of remorse and despair. The transcendental deduction in the work of Plato as a proof of the immortality and/or transcendence of the Self-soul. Philosophy of perception in Plato and Kant. Universals, forms and

the Form of the Good. The transcendental deduction of Kant. Concept of objective time. Phenomenology of subjective time. Impossibility of deriving subjective time from objective time.

History of Religion. The crisis of paganism—withering critique of the morality of paganism from within Ionian consciousness—the rise of patriarchal religion—concept of monotheism—transformation of the Storm-God into Zeus Almighty. Rise of the doctrine of Fall. Further transformation of the archetype of Dionysus—evolution of the archetypes of Prometheus, Lucifer and Heracles. Development of orphism—mysteries of Eleusis—irony and the critique of Aristophanes. Contribution of Plato and the emergence of Platonism. The construction of hell and the emergence of the concepts of purgatory and eternal damnation. Emergence of the concept of redemption. Hypothesis that Persian (Mazdeism) and Indian (Buddhism) religious movements arose from stimulus from the Ionian cognition of the West rather than a converse movement. Idealistic monism of Parmenides.

History of Rome and Roman religion. Radical explanation of the “Roman anomaly” (that Rome appears to have no mythology) as the product of a late patriarchal revolution within Rome and the construction of a State religion. Thesis that Rome was until late—the time of the second Punic War—a developed matriarchy along the lines of Etruscan society. Analysis of Etruscan religion. Analysis of the Roman Twelve Tables. Thesis that legendary Roman history is a fabrication arising from this late revolution in Roman religion and society. Practise of ritual human sacrifice at Rome and vestiges of the original matriarchal religion within Roman religion. Evolution of the Roman archetype; Roman piety and the Roman bargaining religion of sacra and signa. History of the episode occurring at the time of the Peloponnesian war known as the mutilation of the Hermae—vindication of the actions and character of Alcibiades.

Immortality: the Groundwork to the History of Western Consciousness

Part Three: Kantian Consciousness

The Either/Or. Either: materialism and despair, Or: puritanical dualism and the shadow problem. Despair arising from the Roman ideology of Stoicism. Plotinus—Neo-Platonism and its intellectual difficulties. Emergence of medieval consciousness—the theology of Augustine—rise of the split-consciousness psyche, of the evolution of cruelty, and of the Christian shadow problem. The doctrine of salvation through faith alone—implicit rejection of the doctrine of freewill and the threat of Manichaeism.

History of Hebrew religion and the construction of the Old Testament.

History of the Hebrew religion from the time of Solomon to the Christian epoch. Analysis of the Old Testament into its historical layers. The Wellhausen multiple source theory. Reform of Josiah. Mazdeism. Evolution of Judaism during the exilic and Hellenistic periods. Sadducees and Pharisees. Apocalyptic and other literature. Syncretism of Hebrew religion with Plato. Work of Philo of Alexandria. Constellation within Judaism of the saviour archetype. Emergence of the doctrines of atonement, wisdom

(Sophia) and Trinity. Emergence of the Word/Son/Logos archetype. Identification of all the Christ-archetypes within the theology of Paul and John. Impossibility in contemporary consciousness of maintaining the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Splitting of the Dionysus archetype into Christ/Word and Satan/Devil.

The Rise of Positivism. Positivism constellated in response to the shadow problem of Christianity. The wilful overthrow by Positivism of Kantian philosophy and regression to modern stoicism – contribution of G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The rise of modern despair in response to the conception of death as the utter annihilation of the person. The need to overcome this despair. Refutation of the golem project to create artificial intelligence and thereby prove the validity of the reverse transcendental deduction. Modern functionalism. Materialism as (inauthentic) faith. Failure of positivism to resolve the “paradox of incarnate existence”.

Visionary experience and phenomenology. Visionary experience of pure light – the shekinah. Plotinus and Philo. Human identity analysed in relation to the visionary experience of pure light. Centres of consciousness. Phenomenology of desire as a refutation of the doctrine of the fall and the Reason/Flesh dichotomy.

Kantian consciousness and Immortality. Moral argument for the existence of God. Kantian argument for immortality as the postulate of pure practical wisdom. Incarnate life as the moving image of eternity. Kantian, subjective consciousness. The distinction between the transcendental (noumena) and the empirical (phenomena). The phenomenology of experience. The need for acausal explanation. The transcendental synthesis of subjective time. Kantian consciousness and the spirit world. The Euripidean interpretation of the gods as archetypes of human nature. Concluding remarks on immortality.

Socratic wisdom. The need to abide by the Socratic doctrine of our ignorance. Modesty and humility. The need to recognise faith and choice as the ground of authentic living.

