Introduction

An Archaeology of Early Greece

In studies of early Greece, the standard narrative involves the rise of Mycenaean states, followed by their collapse, followed by a dark age. An eighth-century "renaissance" came next, with the rise of the polis, the emergence of Panhellenic ideas (and ideals), and the dispersal of Greek populations to various parts of the Mediterranean, leading to notions of an ethnocultural genesis in the early Archaic period. It is a sequence most archaeologists of Greece are fairly comfortable in accepting, even if they tend to debate the specifics—especially terms like collapse, dark age, renaissance, and so on. These debates are important, to be sure, but they do not always happen in ways relevant to wider dialogues in the archaeology of complex societies. What is more, the often divergent disciplinary priorities of Aegean prehistory, classical archaeology, and ancient history often stand in the way of more holistic understandings of the early Greek world. This book examines the development of early Greece in the comparative light of sociopolitical complexity. Are early Greek polities like other complex societies? How did they operate locally and globally, and across a variety of social and spatial scales? What can we say about cycles of emergence, collapse, and recovery? What can we gain by trying to step back from teleologies of *the state* or *the polis*? We might also ask how the small-scale Mediterranean societies of early Greece came to play such an outsized role in the modern cultural imagination. And why does that matter?

This book is about landscape, interaction, and social complexity in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Greece (ca. 1400–700 BCE). It is about how societies change over time and about the ebbs and flows of power relationships through different types of communication and material networks. It is about the analysis and explication of how societies *work*—how they constitute and reconstitute themselves—on multiple scales, ranging from the local to the regional to the

trans-Mediterranean, from the community to the polity to the interaction zone. An integrated approach to geography, connectivity, and material culture can be used to explain and interpret the sweeping changes that affected the societies of early Greece across the late second and early first millennia BCE—changes that would have long-lasting consequences for the history of the Mediterranean. The focus here is on central Greece—in Aegean prehistory often overlooked in favor of the Peloponnese or Crete—especially those regions defined by the maritime conduit of the Euboean Gulf and the land routes connecting Attica, Boeotia, Phokis, East Lokris, Malis, and Thessaly (map 1).

The study area is defined by (1) the geographical distribution of Mycenaean material culture outside of the Peloponnese and (2) our earliest geographical descriptions for how regions connect and cohere (Homer's Catalog of Ships: *Iliad* 2.494–759). Boundaries or gaps in the distribution of Mycenaean material culture to the north and west provide natural breakpoints between the contiguous regions discussed in this book (map 2), while Homer provides regional descriptions that bear a remarkable similarity to what is known from later periods. The total area therefore corresponds roughly with the modern administrative district of *Sterea Ellada*, plus Thessaly to the north and Attica to the south. In this way central Greece is set apart from the Peloponnese, the Aegean islands, and northern Greece.
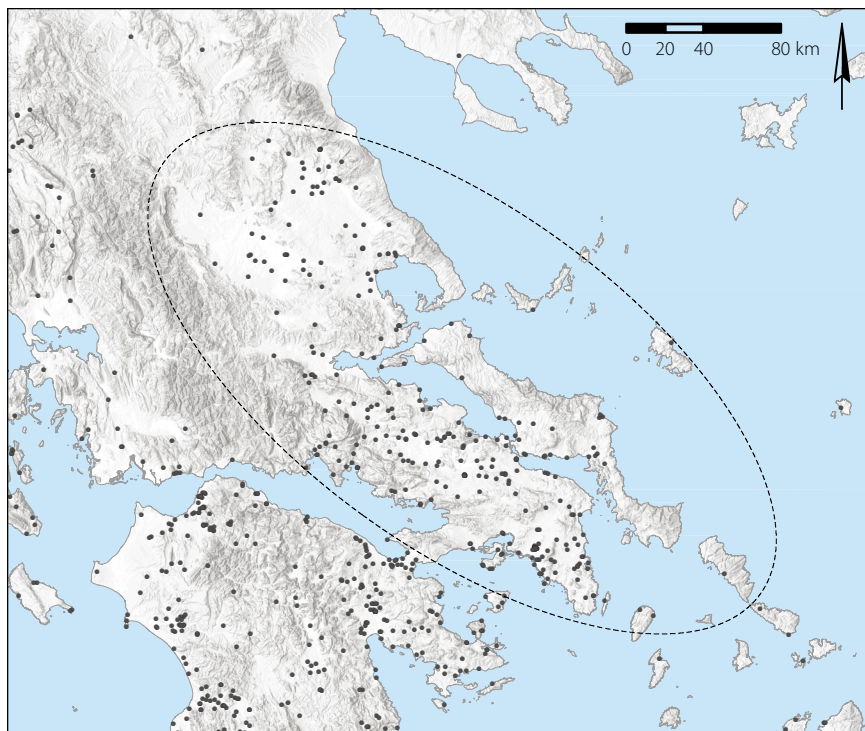
Current research on early Greece is more prevalent and interesting than ever before. There remain several key gaps, however, not least as Greek archaeology relates to the broader archaeology of complex societies. Material studies and pottery chronologies have long been a strength, and the excavations and publications of certain key sites have dramatically changed our knowledge of this period in recent years. Regional syntheses are increasingly common as well. There are not, however, recent examples of integrated studies of settlement systems (as opposed to distribution maps), multiregional comparison, or studies that aim explicitly to address the multiscalar dynamics between local, regional, and long-distance interaction. Key disciplinary divides between the study of the Bronze Age world of the Mycenaeans and the Iron Age world of pre-Classical Greece also muddy the waters between history and archaeology, where at a certain point the former tends to overtake the latter as texts become the dominant source of evidence. Finally, there are relatively few examples of modeling and comparison in the archaeology of early Greece, a fact that limits its participation in dialogues with other world archaeologies.

A multiscalar, multiregional, comparative study presents an opportunity to put archaeological data from various parts of central Greece in dialogue with each other, with other parts of the Greek world, and with the wider Mediterranean. While the focus here is on the societies of early Greece, there is a general goal also to develop tools to better understand the behavior and trajectories of social groups in relation to their wider geographical and intercultural circumstances. In

MAP 1. General maps of the Mediterranean (top) and mainland Greece and the Aegean (bottom), showing major regions and places mentioned in the text.

this introduction, I summarize the arguments of this book in their historical and disciplinary contexts and provide a brief outline of the chapters that follow, which comprise an archaeological history from Mycenaean times to the emergence of the Archaic Greek world.

MAP 2. The distribution of Mycenaean material culture and limits of the study area (site data from the Mycenaean Atlas Project).

THE ARGUMENT

This book contains several interrelated arguments concerning the archaeology of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Greece, archaeological approaches to landscape and interaction, and the study of complex societies. Throughout this book, I argue that previous approaches to early Greece have been stymied by the diffuse disciplinary priorities of the subfields with a stake in the relevant time periods. Aegean prehistory is especially concerned with state formation and eastern Mediterranean geopolitics; Early Iron Age archaeology with "Dark Age" monikers and notions of collapse and revolution on either end of it; ancient history with the rise of the polis, hoplite warfare, and tyrannies, aristocracies, and democracy. None of these allows for a unified view of the development of the early Greek world. This book builds on the achievements of these subfields by taking a step back from them, providing an archaeological history written from the perspective of the archaeology of complex societies. The integration of landscape, interaction, and complexity perspectives provides a multiregional study of settlement and society that goes beyond descriptive historical narratives and simple dots on a map. Such

an outlook can shed much new light on this well-documented but still underappreciated period of world history.

I argue first that significant fluctuations characterize early Greek societies until the Classical period. These happen in fits and starts through the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age and exhibit a wide variety of regional patterns. The most significant variations happen in the oft-neglected span of time following the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces. I also demonstrate a need to recast our focus on the Mycenaean palatial world. Rather than seeing the palaces as the culmination of an evolutionary trajectory of state formation followed by a collapse, we might see them as historical anomalies and societal experiments, which were ultimately unsuccessful. The reconstituted societies that followed the palaces represent more a restoration of a previous mode of social organization than a fall from grace—one of simpler societies that were nonetheless engaged in complex regional and interregional networks and modes of polity. A tipping point was reached in the eighth century BCE when a media revolution (in words and images) and an intensification of settlement activity coincided to codify and disperse notions of "Greek" society in an unprecedented way—one fundamental to the emergence of the highly connected Archaic and Classical Mediterranean.

Second, I argue that vacillations in social complexity are historically contingent but have common traits that can be identified in a variety of places and times, often as a combination of mutually intensifying (or stagnating) processes. Complex societies are remarkably undertheorized outside the realm of primary state formation. We need better documented examples of secondary states, multipolity cultures, nonstate complex polities, village societies, small-scale or middle-range ranked societies, and other "in between" social formations in order to develop better understandings of modes of social organization that do not culminate in states. The prehistoric Aegean offers several case studies on this topic, and these need to be put into better dialogue with other world archaeologies. The case presented here—on the pre- and protohistory of Greece in its wider Mediterranean setting—exhibits a variety of challenges: nonlinear societal trajectories, regional variability, biased chronological representation, problematic textual and material datasets, and research traditions with conflicting priorities. Many of the same circumstances and challenges are faced by archaeologists working in other parts of the world. Maya city-states, Mississippian chiefdoms, Transcaucasian polities, and the "middle-range" societies of the American Southwest often seem to have more in common with early Greek societies—at least in terms of social organization—than the Near Eastern states and empires that were the contemporaries and neighbors of early Greeks. A comparative approach has much to offer, but in the past this approach has been used chiefly in the context of working backward from the Archaic/Classical period or in ill-fitting comparisons with contemporary neighbors, such as Hittites and Egyptians. I argue that most early Greek societies are best thought of as complex communities or village societies and should not

be shoehorned into narratives concerning kingdoms or states. This does not mean that such political entities did not exist in the early Greek world—they did—but they should not be considered the norm. In particular, I argue that village societies describe the form and operation of communities across much of the ancient Greek landscape, most of the time. At the same time, complex communities offer a flexible and dynamic model for understanding variation in social organization across space and time. So, within societies characterized mostly by village life, some communities are more or less complex—a feature that can be charted through time and across the landscape as a whole.

Third, settlement, mobility, and things (both as participants in and media of interaction) are three interrelated themes through which societal dynamics can be approached. These themes converge in particular coastal and inland corridors throughout the study area. Like much of the Mediterranean world, central Greece is characterized by constellations of microregions, linked by particular paths over long and short distances. While recent studies of long-term social change in the Mediterranean have emphasized the role of the sea in interactive practices, we must also consider the role of terrestrial movement through the landscape, especially in the more mundane connections of daily life. Through the use of spatial analysis and interpretative approaches to things as media, there are great gains to be made by integrating the extensive datasets of regional archaeology with previous studies that have focused on the more conspicuous evidence of large settlements, elite burials, and exotic imports. Evidence of settlement, mobility, media, and technology can therefore become proxies for social landscapes and interaction between complex communities.

In this book I examine how ancient societies operate and interact across a variety of social and spatial scales. In studying change over time, we must also pay attention to disjuncture. Rather than seeing societies of the Late Bronze Age as uniformly Mycenaean or of the Iron Age as uniformly Greek, we need also to articulate local and regional specificity and difference. Making such distinctions requires stitching together multiscalar histories that are explanatory, interpretative, and contingent. While such an approach is culturally and temporally specific, it also lends itself to a comparative perspective concerning the development of particular types of human groups.

CONTEXTS: EARLY GREECE BETWEEN PREHISTORY AND HISTORY

The centuries spanning the second millennium and early first millennium BCE saw the rise and fall of markedly varied political systems, fundamental changes in material culture, and the expansion of long-distance networks, intensifying first in the eastern Mediterranean and eventually expanding to include nearly all shores of the Middle Sea. In Greece, this period is comprised of the Late Bronze Age, or

TABLE 1 Chronology and abbreviations for the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age (LBA)
and Early Iron Age (EIA)[*]

Cultural period	Ceramic period	Dates BCE
Early Mycenaean period (ca. 1750–1400)	Middle Helladic III (MH III)	1750/20–1700/1675
	Late Helladic I (LH I)	1700/1675–1635/00
	Late Helladic II A (LH IIA)	1635/00–1480/70
	Late Helladic II B (LH IIB)	1480/70–1420/10
Palatial Bronze Age (ca. 1400–1200)	Late Helladic III A1 (LH IIIA1)	1420/10–1390/70
	Late Helladic III A2 (LH IIIA2)	1390/70–1330/15
	Late Helladic III B (LH IIIB)	1330/15–1210/1200
Postpalatial Bronze Age (ca. 1200–1050)	Late Helladic III C (LH IIIC)	1210/1200–1070/40
	Early	1210/1200–1170/60
	Middle	1170/60–1100
	Late	1100–1070/40
Prehistoric Iron Age (ca. 1050–800)	Early Protogeometric (EPG)	1070/40–1000
	Middle Protogeometric (MPG)	1000–950
	Late Protogeometric (LPG)	950–900
	Early Geometric (EG) / Subprotogeometric (SPG)	900–850
	Middle Geometric I (MG I) / Subprotogeometric (SPG)	850–800
Protohistoric Iron Age (ca. 800–700/650)	Middle Geometric II (MG II)	800–750
	Late Geometric (LG)	750–700 (or 650?)
Archaic period (ca. 700–480)	Proto-Attic; Proto-Corinthian; "Orientalizing;" Subgeometric (depending on region)	725–625
	Black-figure style	620–480
	Red-figure style	525–300s

[*] For dates up to LH III B, see Manning (2010, 23, table 3.2); from the end of LH III B to EPG, see Weniger and Jung (2009, 416, fig. 14), although I have amended this to conflate LH III C Developed and LH III C Advanced into LH III C Middle and I have included Submycenaean in LH III C Late (see Rutter 1978; Papadopoulos, Damiata, and Marston 2011 for problems with Submycenaean as an independent phase); for MPG to LG see Dickinson (2006, 23, fig. 1.1) and Coldstream (2003, 435, fig. 128); for an extension of the late Geometric period into the seventh century, see Papadopoulos (2003, 146; 2018). Note that both the black- and red-figure styles continue well after the Archaic period, albeit in different forms.

Mycenaean period, and the Early Iron Age, usually defined by the Protogeometric and Geometric ceramic periods (table 1).[1] These time periods fall within the

1. For topical and chronological overviews of the Bronze Age, see Cullen 2001; Shelmerdine 2008; Cline 2010. On the Postpalatial period specifically, see Deger-Jalkotzy 1998; Deger-Jalkotzy and

disciplinary purviews of at least five groups of specialists: Aegean prehistorians, archaeologists interested in the transitional period of the Postpalatial Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age, classical archaeologists, ancient historians, and scholars of early Greek language and poetry (see also Morris 2000, 40–41; Kotsonas 2020, 78–84). Archaeological scholarship has in general focused more on synchronic problems of characterization or classification—of artifact types or social structures, for example—than diachronic narratives of development. This is not a matter of fault, since the former is necessary in order to produce the latter, but it is a welcome trend in recent years that transitional periods have come increasingly to the fore and disciplinary boundaries are more frequently crossed (see, e.g., Foxhall 1995; Thomas and Conant 2003; Deger-Jalkotzy and Lemos 2006; Dickinson 2006; Knodell 2013; Mazarakis Ainian, Alexandridou, and Charalambidou 2017; Murray 2017; Sherratt and Bennet 2017; Lemos and Kotsonas 2020; Middleton 2020).

The different research priorities and the traditions of different disciplines further complicate the picture. Ancient historians, for example, might employ archaeological evidence in the absence of written sources, but when the documentary record becomes available it tends to take pride of place. By contrast, archaeological evidence is available across all periods. Archaeology is therefore the only way to compare the periods in question on even terms. The documentary record can and does provide useful data in different contexts, but any holistic study must start with material culture.

At the same time, the material culture priorities of archaeology are not always best suited to studies of social organization. Rather than follow the traditional division of chronological periods based on ceramic styles, I adopt a more descriptive periodization: the Palatial and Postpalatial Bronze Age, followed by the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Iron Age (see table 1).[2] While no periodization is perfect, one based on cultural characteristics beyond ceramic typology is certainly preferable in the context of societal history (and the correspondence with relevant ceramic chronologies is easy enough to follow). I refer to this period as a whole

Zavadil 2003, 2007; Deger-Jalkotzy and Bächle 2009. For recent approaches to maritime networks in Mycenaean times, see Tartaron 2013; Kramer-Hajos 2016. On the Early Iron Age, Snodgrass (1971) 2000 still provides the best overview of the period. Other key syntheses include Desborough 1952, 1964, 1972; Coldstream (1977) 2003, 1980; Morris 1987, 2000; Whitley 1991; Mazarakis Ainian 1997; Lemos 2002; Morgan 2003; Osborne 2009. See also the following recent edited volumes: Mazarakis Ainian 2011; Descoeudres and Paspalas 2015; Vlachou 2015; and Handberg and Gadolou 2017. Several recent books aim to deal with this transitional period of early Greece holistically. See, for example, Mazarakis Ainian, Alexandridou, and Charalambidou 2017; Murray 2017; Lemos and Kotsonas 2020; Middleton 2020. For longer-term views on social change in Greece, see Bintliff 2012; Small 2019.

2. Throughout the text I capitalize Palatial and Postpalatial when referring to the Palatial and Postpalatial Bronze Age as the specific period defined here; the same applies to the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Iron Age. When these words are used simply as descriptive adjectives, they are left lowercase. Knapp (2008) adopted a similar set of terms for Cyprus. There is also the example of Protopalatial and Neopalatial Crete (see, e.g., Åberg 1933; Platon 1968).

as early Greece, since it encompasses the first definable period on the mainland that ancient Greeks themselves demonstrably looked back to as part of their own past—a pre-/protohistorical time we call the Mycenaean period, but before the wide dispersal of the city-state culture that would define the historical world of Archaic Greece from the seventh century onward.

In the interest of making this book accessible to nonspecialists, I provide a brief summary of the period in question. Aegean prehistory can be viewed as a series of booms and busts revolving around three core areas—Crete, the Cyclades, and the Greek mainland. The Early Bronze Age witnessed the development of long-distance networks, voyaging, and technological discovery in ceramics and metals, culminating in an "international spirit" that touched all three of these core zones, as well as parts of Anatolia. By contrast, the Middle Bronze Age can be seen as a period of imbalance, with relative stagnation throughout much of the Greek main-land and Cyclades, even as the first state-level societies in the Aegean emerged in Minoan Crete during the Old and New Palace periods, probably through a mix of endogenous developments and contacts with more "advanced" states in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, the island of Aegina saw significant growth in its influence throughout the Aegean. Against this backdrop—and at least partially in response to these developments—the Greek mainland underwent its own period of intensifying complexity, beginning in the MH III period with the appearance of monumental graves and more complex architectural formations. The individu-als buried in these graves (most notably the "shaft graves" at Mycenae) represent a swiftly emergent elite, at least some of whose status is tied to an exclusivity of access to exotica, particularly arriving from or via Crete. The Early Mycenaean period ends in LH IIIA with the appearance of the Mycenaean palaces, which have certain similarities to the earlier Minoan palaces—unsurprisingly, considering the material connections that had existed for some 300 years prior to the emergence of these institutions on the mainland.

The core area of Mycenaean civilization is generally considered to stretch from the Peloponnese to Thessaly on the mainland, and also to encompass the Cyclades and Crete, at least in terms of cultural influence. A Mycenaean takeover of Minoan Crete is often posited, based (among other things) on the change in administrative script on Crete from Linear A (used to record the Minoan language, which remains unknown) to Linear B (adapted from Linear A to record the Mycenaean Greek language). Mycenaean palaces are characterized by heavy fortifications (cyclopean masonry), a centralized layout focused on a megaron complex, the presence of craft specialists, an apparent monopoly over the consumption and distribution of exotica, and an administrative system that recorded tight control of certain aspects of craft and agricultural production in unfired clay tablets inscribed with Linear B. Palaces have been discovered in the Peloponnese at Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea in the Argolid, at Aghios Vasileios in Laconia, and at Pylos in Messenia. While the palaces of central Greece are more difficult to define, archaeological

sites with palatial attributes have been recorded at the following places: Athens in Attica; Thebes, Orchomenos, and Gla in Boeotia; and Dimini and Volos in Thessaly (see further in chapter 3). Kanakia, on Salamis, is also sometimes described as palatial. While we often apply the idea of the Mycenaean Palatial period throughout the Aegean, I argue here that many parts of the Mycenaean world—that is, the geographical remit of Mycenaean material culture—do not seem to have been dominated by a palace. These areas are often talked about as "provinces" or "peripheries," but I would suggest they are better thought of as simply nonpalatial.[3]

Truly palatial remains and activities are limited to the LH III period of about 200 years. After their emergence in LH IIIA2, there was a series of destructions at palatial sites throughout the LH IIIB period. These destructions are coincident with other "times of troubles" in the eastern Mediterranean that afflicted especially the Hittites and Egyptians, along with the city-states of the Levant. This is often referred to as the "Late Bronze Age Collapse" of around 1200 BCE—a series of events that continues to puzzle archaeologists and historians and to generate reams of scholarship (see, e.g., Middleton 2017a, 2020; Cline 2014; Knapp and Manning 2016; Murray 2017). This collapse is often seen as some kind of historical moment, though it is probably better seen as a process or series of events occurring over about 200 years (indeed, throughout much of the Mycenaean Palatial period).

The Postpalatial period is often dismissed as an aftermath to the collapse. Nevertheless, life went on in the twelfth to mid-eleventh centuries BCE (LH IIIC in ceramic terms). As a sort of microcosm of earlier cycles of ups and downs, LH IIIC material remains are highly variable, both regionally and chronologically. In some areas there is relative continuity at palatial and other significant sites into LH IIIC Early; in others, there is a significant break. A "revival" or "developed" stage is often highlighted in LH IIIC Middle; this is characterized by fortified sites and painted pottery depicting maritime and combative imagery, which likely signaled mobility and violence as central features of social life. In terms of cultural traits, this period has much in common with the subsequent Early Iron Age, which is distinguished by the advent and dispersal of iron technology.[4]

The Postpalatial Bronze Age and Early Iron Age are situated on the disciplinary boundaries of Aegean prehistory and classical archaeology.[5] Traditionally,

3. On the formation of Mycenaean civilization, see Wright 2006, 2008. On palaces, see Galaty and Parkinson 2007; Shelmerdine 2008; Maran and Wright 2020. On Linear B, see Ventris and Chadwick (1956) 1973; Chadwick 1958, 1976; Palaima 2010; Nakassis 2013a; Steele 2020. On provinces and peripheries, see Froussou 1999; Kramer-Hajos 2008, 2016; Feuer 2011.

4. On the Postpalatial period and LH IIIC, see Deger-Jalkotzy and Lemos 2006; Deger-Jalkotzy 1998; Deger-Jalkotzy and Zavadil 2003, 2007; Thomatos 2006; Deger-Jalkotzy and Bächle 2009.

5. For extended discussions of disciplinary contexts, see also Snodgrass 1987; Morris 1994; Knodell 2013, 16–64; Kotsonas 2020. For disciplinary discussions of Aegean prehistory and Bronze Age archaeology, see Cullen 2001; Cherry, Margomenou, and Talalay 2005; Shelmerdine 2008; Tartaron 2008; Cline 2010. On the archaeology of the Early Iron Age, see Papadopoulos 1993, 1996a, 2014; Morris 2000; Kotsonas 2016; Murray 2018b.

the interest of the former ends with the fall of the Mycenaean palaces, while the interest of the latter picks up with the "renaissance" of the eighth century BCE. For a variety of reasons, the periods in between have often been referred to as the "Dark Age" of early Greece, which is thought to represent a significant decline in terms of population, connections to the wider Mediterranean world, and overall quality of life (Snodgrass [1971] 2000, 1–21). The "Dark Age" was also meant to reflect our state of knowledge regarding the period in question. The disappearance of Linear B with the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces meant that writing would not return to the Aegean world until the development of the Greek alphabet, most likely sometime in the eighth century BCE. A measurable decline in the number of known sites, representational art, and overall amount of material evidence meant simply that there was much less to say about the centuries between Mycenaean times and the Archaic period. While the quantitative metrics of decline described above are often valid, the pejorative notions and interpretive bias that the term "Dark Age" introduces have led to the adoption of the more neutral "Early Iron Age" as the predominant referent.[6]

In the Early/Prehistoric Iron Age (c. 1050–800) BCE, communities are for the most part relatively small scale and show little sign of social differentiation or contact with the outside world, with few exceptions. Structural remains are mostly simple constructions in semidispersed villages. In ceramic terms these are the Protogeometric and Early Geometric periods, in which geometric designs on painted pottery are the defining quality.[7] While these trends apply to most Early Iron Age sites, there are also examples of precociousness. Sensational discoveries at Lefkandi in the 1980s revealed that some parts of Greece were much wealthier and more widely connected than traditionally thought. A monumental building and its adjacent cemetery showed connections to Cyprus, Egypt, and the Levant as markers of elite status and authority, much as they had been in previous periods. Since then the pendulum has swung in the other direction, with regular exclamations of "new light on a dark age" attending groundbreaking discoveries and landmark studies.[8]

The final period examined in this book is the Protohistoric Iron Age (the eighth to early seventh centuries BCE or the Middle to Late Geometric periods). The archaeological record signals a major boom in this period, which is represented by a dramatic increase in settlement numbers, first on the Greek mainland and eventually in the establishment of "colonies"—*apoikiai*—in southern Italy, Sicily, and the northern Aegean (a trend that continued through the Archaic period of

6. On "Dark Age" nomenclature, see Papadopoulos 1993, 1996a, 1999; Morris 1997b, 2000; Knodell 2013; Kotsonas 2016; Murray 2018b.

7. For overviews, see Snodgrass (1971) 2000[; Desborough 1972; Coldstream (1977) 2003. On trade and the economy, see Murray 2017. On pottery, see Desborough 1952; Coldstream (1968) 2008; Lemos 2002; Papadopoulos and Smithson 2017. On settlement and construction, see Mazarakis Ainian 1997.

8. Langdon 1997; see also Morris 1992, 140. For important monographs, see Morris 1987, 2000; Whitley 1991; Lemos 2002; Morgan 2003; Langdon 2008.

the seventh and sixth centuries). This is often referred to as the eighth-century "renaissance" or "revolution." The reappearance of writing in the Aegean in the form of an alphabet adapted from the Phoenician script occurred at the same time as a rapid proliferation of visual imagery and the development of regional styles in pottery production. These changes in media of communication and representation coincided with the emergence of Panhellenic sanctuaries, which quickly became hubs of interaction for people and things in a growing Greek world. This relatively short span of time, around the middle of the eighth century, is often seen as the spark that ignited the emergence of Greek city-states across the Mediterranean in the Archaic period.

The material or archaeological narratives outlined above are complemented (and often muddled) by the arrival of new datasets: texts in the form of early Greek writing and the mythohistorical narratives that come from Homer, Hesiod, and later authors referring to this period (e.g., Herodotus and Thucydides). In *Works and Days*, Hesiod explicitly discusses daily life in his own times (probably the later part of the eighth century BCE). Homer, whose poems were the product of a centuries-long oral tradition, contains a sort of conflative temporality, blending cultural elements of his own days with those extending backward at least to the Palatial period (and probably beyond), together with everything in between.[9] So, in addition to what we can detect archaeologically, we also have the task of parsing later myth or misconception from useful information about the societies under study—of detecting past realities and material trends amid mythohistorical glimpses of an imagined past (as in the cases, for example, of the Trojan Legend, the Seven Against Thebes, or the Lelantine War).[10] The problematic nature of the evidence means that it has most often either been overemphasized or dismissed entirely in archaeological discourse (see, e.g., Dickinson 2020). In this book, I aim for a contextual middle ground: I argue that some texts can be useful for telling us

9. The date and identity of Homer are the subject of an entire subfield of scholarship. See, for example, Wace and Stubbings 1962; Nagy 1996; Morris and Powell 1997; Snodgrass 2017. Dates typically range from the eighth to the sixth century BCE, with general agreement that a formative period of codification happened during this time, regardless of whether the works were yet in written form and well defined. I do not engage with questions of the date or historicity of a poet named Homer, though this book assumes that most elements of the Homeric poems were present by the end of the eighth century. The bibliography on "Homeric society"—the amalgamated society that Homer describes—is also huge. See, for example, Lorimer 1950; Finley 1954; Vermeule 1964; Carter and Morris 1995; Morris and Powell 1997; Snodgrass 1998; Latacz 2004; Gottschall 2008; Ulf 2009; Sherratt and Bennet 2017.

10. Works on early Greece with disciplinary roots in ancient history often begin with the Mycenaean period and protohistorical periods that follow, although archaeological evidence is often superceded in favor of the documentary record when the latter is available. Studies of Archaic Greek history are therefore much more rooted in sources derived from the later part of the period (the seventh and sixth centuries BCE), reflecting a very different set of priorities than those of the present book. On the historiography of Archaic Greece, see Davies 2009. For recent syntheses and companions, see Hall 2007; Lane Fox 2008; Osborne 2009; Raaflaub and van Wees 2009; Cartledge and Christesen, forthcoming. On dissonances between the interests of historians and archaeological data, and the interests of archaeologists and historical data, see Foxhall 2013.

TABLE 2   Term searches for chronological periods in the Nestor
bibliographic database (December 2020)

Term	Number of occurrences
Late Bronze Age	1195
Mycenaean	3133
Palatial	346
Postpalatial (+post-palatial)	80
Late Helladic	164
LH	156
IIIA	120
IIIB	97
IIIC	181
Early Iron Age	650
Dark Age	249
Protogeometric	79
Geometric	312

certain types of things and in some cases may reflect more or less specific aspects of social memory, even if they cannot be taken at face value.[11] In this way the societies of early Greece are neither entirely prehistoric nor entirely historic, but in most cases are more aptly termed protohistoric. That is, they themselves did not produce intentional histories, and the documentary record they did leave behind does not compare well with sources available to historians of the Archaic period (seventh to sixth centuries BCE) onward.

Of the periods covered by this book, the Mycenaean Palatial period and the eighth century BCE have received by far the most attention. This is reflected in the major discrepancies in the bibliography concerning the periods covered here (see table 2). One problem is that, because these "boom" periods are not regularly viewed alongside more than cursory treatments of the following and preceding periods, our understanding of how they came to be is hampered. While the amount of scholarship on the period between the fall of the Mycenaean palaces and the eighth century has increased dramatically in recent years, there is still a tendency to compartmentalize these in-between years as something separate from what comes before or after them. Much recent work forwards the goal of spanning the "iron curtain," a dark age mirage that separates the Bronze and Iron Ages in disciplinary terms (Papadopoulos 1993, 195; 2014, 181). Yet very few studies seek to assess the material systematically and to explain social change from the "Mycenaean" world of the Late Bronze Age *through* the emergent "Greek" world of the eighth century. It is still far more common for researchers to express interest in bridging such a gap while remaining for the most part on one or the other side of

11. See recent approaches by Mac Sweeney 2016, 2017; see also Wallace 2018.

it.[12] This book provides a diachronic history of early Greek society from the Palatial Bronze Age to the Protohistoric Iron Age with equal treatment for all periods. The focus on central Greece particularly highlights the importance of regionalism, comparing and contrasting the landscapes of central Greece not only with each other but also with other parts of the early Greek world.

SUMMARY: A GUIDE TO WHAT FOLLOWS

This introduction has outlined the basic arguments of this book and situated them in their wider historical and disciplinary contexts. In chapter 1, I present a theoretical framework that combines elements of landscape, interaction, and complexity in order to provide a new approach to synthesis in the archaeology of early Greece. A combined relational and spatial approach to modeling and interpreting sociopolitical geography is widely applicable, but it is particularly useful when focused on diachronic change. The multiscalar perspective developed here, taking as a starting point the mesoscale of a multiregional synthesis, offers the opportunity to focus on a specific case study with a view also to bigger-picture processes that involve the wider Mediterranean world.

Chapter 2 discusses the archaeological and landscape context of central Greece and the regions that comprise it. The analysis of land routes and potential interconnections between sites has been carried out in several individual areas previously, but it is only by articulating a wider whole that landscapes, coastscapes, and seascapes can be brought together to traverse regional boundaries that—while real concerns—are necessarily fluid and permeable. By combining archaeological data accumulated over several decades with geographical and environmental data that has not previously been considered in this context, fresh perspectives are offered on both microregional and larger-scale patterns of settlement.

The heart of this book (chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) provides a diachronic explication of social dynamics across local, regional, and trans-Mediterranean scales. The chronological arrangement corresponds with the four principal periods under study: the Palatial Bronze Age (chapter 3), the Postpalatial Bronze Age (chapter 4), the Prehistoric Iron Age (chapter 5), and the Protohistoric Iron Age (chapter 6). These four chapters provide an integrative study of a variety of related, though seemingly divergent, social phenomena, including shifting and coexisting modes of polity (from palaces to village societies); the disappearance of Linear B and the adaptation of the Greek alphabet from the Phoenician script; the technological

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12. There are important exceptions, to be sure, although these tend to be focused on thematic aspects of society or a particular issue. Dickinson (2006) divides his synthesis topically into sections on craft, trade, and settlement. Murray (2017) focuses on the economy—namely in terms of trade, economic and population decline, and eventual recovery. Zurbach (2017) offers a text-based approach to land and agricultural labor. Bintliff (2012) and Small (2019) examine settlement and social complexity across these periods, though as parts of studies with much wider chronological remits.

transition from bronze to iron as the dominant utilitarian metal; and major shifts in the nature of long-distance maritime interactions. The detailed study of these four periods is bracketed by discussions of state formation that occur on either side of it: the emergence of the Mycenaean palaces and the formation of Archaic Greek poleis.

Each historical chapter proceeds in three general parts: (1) The core of each chapter is a discussion of settlement evidence and what this can tell us about the political landscapes of various parts of central Greece. (2) Each chapter turns next to technologies and media of interaction, focusing on a particular sociotechnological process of special significance for the interstitial role it played. In the Palatial Bronze Age I focus on Linear B and exotica as centralizing features for political authority. In the Postpalatial period evidence of pottery production indicates new patterns of connectivity, especially in the Euboean Gulf. In the Prehistoric Iron Age new pyrotechnologies emerge as relevant to both pottery and metal production, which can be tracked especially through their rapid dispersal. In the Protohistoric Iron Age we see a media revolution in the proliferation of writing and figural imagery in an increasingly multicultural Mediterranean world. (3) The final part of each chapter comprises a discussion of the wider Mediterranean context with which early Greek societies were inextricably intertwined, albeit in very different ways throughout the periods in question. The reflexive approach taken here examines how interconnectivity affected the communities of central Greece in particular, as well as the impacts of Greek communities on the wider world stage.

This framework and the resulting interpretations offer several contributions relevant to the archaeology of Greece in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, as well as to the archaeology of complex societies: (1) an integrative approach to landscape, interaction, and social complexity; (2) a demonstration of the effectiveness of network and complexity thinking as explanatory and interpretative frameworks in writing an archaeological history; (3) an analysis of power relationships, the construction and legitimation of authority, and conceptions of landscape, seascape, and distance; (4) a dynamic model of social organization in a diachronic framework; (5) a synthesis of social change in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age central Greece that questions or nuances a variety of previous models. These contributions are drawn out in the conclusions of this book, which reflect first on Greece in transition—especially the diversity of the political landscape and how central Greece becomes central in wider Mediterranean spheres—and second on the comparative insights the case study of early Greece offers, especially to wider studies of nonlinear trajectories in complex societies and archaeologies of protohistory.

From the outset, it should be clear that this book deals with a long span of time (ca. 1400–700 BCE) in a large geographical area, ranging from the local landscapes of central Greece to the vast expanse of the entire Mediterranean basin. Such an approach fills a void in Mediterranean archaeology and history, which has

become quite good at site-specific and microregional studies, as well as the grand syntheses in the style of Braudel (1972), Horden and Purcell (2000), and Broodbank (2013). There are fewer examples that aim explicitly to focus on a mesoscale and examine past interactions across both maritime and terrestrial environments. It is precisely the need to articulate interactions between the local and the global that drives the narratives here. To that end, I examine the development of early Greece as a contingent archaeological history. The central focus is on the changes and reformations of sociopolitical organization across a well-connected culture area (central Greece) that exhibits both regional distinctions and connection to a wider interaction zone (the Mediterranean). The development of regional trends, in dialogue with local and interregional processes, provides insights into notions of territoriality, regionalism, polity, and identity that are only evident when considered together.