

CHAPTER 5

THE ARYAN IN CLASSIC GREECE

Though the products of Greek culture are well known – foundations of the West, some say - the origins of Greek culture have been cloaked in obscurity, not least of all because much of Greek culture is known to the modern world through the medium of late Roman writers, and much of Greek mythical material, other than Homer and Hesiod, prior to the 5th century BC, is lost to us or known only through fragments. While the modern world's knowledge of the Greek people is derived primarily from documents from the 5th century B.C. through the 1st century A.D., the classical period of Greek culture was seven to twelve hundred years before that, in the 17th through 12th centuries B.C., when a number of peoples, including the Hittites and other Anatolians, Egyptians, Mycenaeans and Illyrians, converged on the Peloponessus and the island of Crete to lay the foundation of the great civilizations that were to follow.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD

The seventeenth century B.C. marked the beginning of the Semitic Hyksos period in Egypt; as the sixteenth century would make the beginning of the New Kingdom, with the country liberating itself from that Semitic domination. It also was a time of change in Asia Minor, as the Hittite Old Kingdom emerged and moved towards its glory, only to fragment into warring, foreign-dominated states two centuries later. And the Mycenaean peoples, who had established themselves in northern Greece as early as four centuries before, were preparing to swoop down on the Peloponessus and the Aegean and establish the high

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point of their empire.¹²⁶ This invasion would follow a series of devastating earthquakes which brought down the megalithic citadels of the Minoan culture of Crete, and end in the destruction and dispersion of the civilization of the Great Mother. Lastly, Illyrian tribes continued a long-term infiltration of the Peloponessos from the northeast, and left their racial memory in Greek myth.

All of the invaders were, or likely were, Aryan, with the exception of the Hyksos peoples of Egypt, and the people they governed over were rarely far removed from the Indo-European haplotype. The Egyptians, or, at least, their ruling caste and the nobility of Upper Egypt, were descendants and cultural heirs of the Sumerians.¹²⁷ The Hittites – properly called the Neshites, after their capital Kanesh – and the Mycenaean were the crest of the tidal wave of Aryan invasion, entering Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula during the great migration of the Aryan peoples out of the Aryan homeland at the base of the Ural mountains, beginning as early as 2200 B.C. and ending perhaps 1700 B.C. The Hittites entered Asia Minor and conquered the Hatti, a people of uncertain descent,¹²⁸ who gave the Hittites the name, following a trail that had been blazed by earlier Aryan tribes, such as the Luwians. The Mycenaean, named after the Greek word *μύκης*, or cap, an attribute of their god Perseus, entered Greece from the north and east, having likely settled in Bulgaria before conquering south into the Peloponessos. The Illyrians were a Germanic people living in the north and west of Greece, what is today Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Macedonia, who migrated into the southern foothills of what is now the south Slavic Balkans as part of the same migration that brought the Aryan Romans into Italy – a second mass migration from the original northern Germanic homeland of the Indo-European peoples.

¹²⁶As noted earlier, Chapter 3, there is debate as to whether these peoples entered from the northwest or northeast. I favor the northeastern hypothesis, with a parallel movement of Germanic Illyrians from the northwest.

¹²⁷See Chapter 3.

¹²⁸Though they are linked to Indo-European peoples in the Biblical account. See Chapter 4.

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THE ROOT RELIGIONS

Each of these peoples, being Indo-European, had a similar form of worship. The Illyrian form of worship is the least well known, but, based upon their ethnic roots, likely centered around a storm god that was also a god of agriculture and war. The Mycenaeans are best identified with Zeus, whose name is cognate with the Vedic *dyaus*, and is also a storm-father who commanded the lightning and slew the serpents of the chaos-waters, though they also adored the hero Perseus and the god Hermes, among others. The Hittites worshipped a storm-father they called Tarkhun in the West and Teshub in the East – Teshub being a term they borrowed from the Indo-Iranian Hurrian peoples, an offshoot of the Persians that settled in northern Mesopotamia and formed the kingdom of the Mitanni.¹²⁹ In southern Anatolia, the Hittites adopted the worship of the “Great Mother,” whom they called Kubaba – a name which eventually developed into Cybele.¹³⁰ The Hittites later adopted the Egyptian form of worship – the worship of the sun-god Re – and in their dealings with the Egyptians, after the first hundred or so years of their settlement in Asia Minor, the Hittites depicted their king or emperor with the Egyptian sun-disc over his head, claiming for him the title of “the Sun.” The Egyptian form of worship was complex and integrated several cults, but consisted fundamentally of five structures¹³¹ – one, the religion of Heliopolis, which focused on the worship of the sun; two, the religion of Amun, which was centered in Thebes and involved a variety of chthonic forces,¹³² three, the religion of Thoth, which may be a late manifestation of the worship of Amun in the northern part of Egypt; four, the religion of Ptah, who is the creator-smith and whose cult was based

¹²⁹The ruling caste of the Hurrians was indisputably Indo-Iranian. Whether the general population was also Indo-Iranian, or whether it was Armenian or pre-Indo-European Mediterranean white, has been a subject of dispute.

¹³⁰See Chapter 9 for a fuller discussion of the Great Mother.

¹³¹Each of these structures was dominant at a different period of Egyptian history and was based in a different region of the Egyptian kingdom.

¹³²See Chapter 10 for a fuller discussion.

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at Heliopolis; and, five, the Semitic worship of the chthonic demons Apep, Baal and Seth, who had been adopted by the northern Egyptian Semites as a representative of chaos.¹³³ These four religious cultures and their components each contributed their gods, and their people to the Mycenaean Greek culture, forming the classical pantheon as a result.

THE MIGRATION OF PEOPLES DURING THE EARLY "HEROIC" PERIOD

The Greeks long believed that their religion had come from Egypt, and there are memories of an Egyptian migration into Greece preserved in the late histories of Apollodorus and Diodorus.¹³⁴ However, the evidence for the actual origin of Greek religion is more complex than that, and it appears that the peoples of Asia Minor, the civilization of the Great Mother, and the Indo-European tradition of the Mycenaean invaders both played as substantial, if not more substantial, a role in the formation of the Greek religious consciousness than the Egyptians, though Egypt does appear to have played its role.

Greece appears to have been originally settled by peoples from Asia Minor, and one of the strongest clues to this migration is the presence of the enclitic adjectives of the Hatti language¹³⁵ in Greek deity and place names. The use of "-Assa-" for instance, found in names such as "Peloponessos" (pelop -[os]-assa-os), and also "-nyths-" is indicative of Greek adaptation of these earlier Anatolian names. These Anatolian peoples, possibly at least partially Sumerian in cultural origin, display a "long-head" type which seems to disindicate a racial origin in the Armenioid or Mediterranean peoples. They also likely formed the

¹³³I argue this throughout and in the book *Centuries of Revolution*.

¹³⁴Both are likely derived from the mythography of Pausanias, a fifth century B.C. writer who drew on earlier works and was considered definitive by the ancients, though his mythography is now largely lost. A later Pausanias wrote the mythographical travelogue that is considered definitive on many questions by modern Classical writers.

¹³⁵Hatti is the native language from which the Indo-European Hittite tongue borrowed much of its vocabulary. Hatti may also have been an Indo-European tongue of the Luwian group, but it is not well enough known to say for certain.

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Pelasgian strata that the Greeks, mythically, claimed to have usurped.

The earliest Greek migration sagas involved the settlement of Thebes by Cadmus, who is said to be a Phoenician, and is said to come to Boeotia, the central part of the isthmus of Greece north of the Peloponessos, searching for his sister Europa, who was kidnapped by Zeus. Contemporary with this is the myth of the founding of the cultures of the Peloponessos by Pelops, who is said to come to Greece from “Phyrgia,” the northern-central part of Asia Minor.¹³⁶ There are also stories of the founding of Argos by Argus, a “many-eyed” giant from Egypt, who is a favorite of Hera.¹³⁷

The identity of Cadmus is disputed. It is known that the Theban state was founded near the 17th century, and was a flourishing empire which conducted trade with the Hittite states. One theory that has been expounded was that Cadmus was a member of the ruling Amunite caste who was expelled from Egypt during the Hyksos invasion; If the founding of Thebes is placed a century later, Cadmus becomes a Semitic Hyksos escaping the resurgent Amunite priesthood.. As evidence of a Semitic origin for Cadmus, the story of Cadmus’ entry into Egypt from Phoenicia and his return is often given. But while Cadmus’ Phoenician origin is not in doubt, his Semitic origins are open to question. Other scholars have suggested that Cadmus was one of the Hamitic peoples of Phoenicia.¹³⁸ A third group argue that Cadmus was a Luwian or Anatolian Aryan whose people were driven from the southeast portion of Asia Minor during the wars that accompanied the rise (or, if placed two centuries later, fall) of the Hittite Old Kingdom. Given what is said about Cadmus – particularly that, after slaying the snakes of Ares to found Thebes and living a long life, he himself became a serpent and slithered off of his throne – he was likely a representative of the culture of the civilization of the Great Mother, and that his dynasty was usurped early on by Aryan Greek forces

¹³⁶The actual Phyrgian peoples would not have been known at this time.

¹³⁷Argus and Argos are definitively equated in Apollodorus.

¹³⁸The Mediterranean branch of the white race. See Chapter 4.

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who syncretized his myth with an Indo-European culture hero.¹³⁹

It is also known that, whatever the origin of the dynasty of Cadmus, his dynasty was supplanted by an Illyrian dynasty, whose presence is recorded in the names Thyestes and Orestes, which are eponyms for Illyrian tribes. The fact that Cadmus is said to have retired into Molossia, which is the Illyrian land in the northwest of Greece, is significant in this context.¹⁴⁰ Molossia was one of the two component lands of what became, in the fourth century BC, the Macedonian empire, and the impact of the Aryan peoples of the northwest of Greece cannot not be overlooked. There is a general mythical theme in the classics of the retirement of heroes to this region¹⁴¹ that is need of further study.

Apollodorus and Diodoros also recall a Danaan migration into Greece from Egypt, and an effort has been made by Christian scholars to identify these Danaans with the Israelite tribe of Dan. But this rings as false as their identification with the Danes. One interesting and near definitive link with Egypt is the myth of Argus, eponymous founder of Argos, who is said to be many eyed. The name Osiris was interpreted by the Greeks to mean “strong eyed”¹⁴² and “many eyed,” and Argus may well represent the Egyptian god and a role of his cult in the early Argolid.¹⁴³ The fact that Io, the goddess that Argus guards over, is often equated with Isis in the later myth, and that the entirety of the family descended from the river god Inachus is associated with Egypt and with adaptations of Egyptian myth – such as that of Demeter and Demophon – further indicates that there was a strong Egyptian influence on several important city states, which left a lasting impact on Mycenaean Greek culture.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹That Cadmus is both a snake and a snake slayer indicates a dual origin. The sacredness of the serpent to Mars suggests an inversion of mythical roles.

¹⁴⁰Possibly meaning the Illyrians had carried Cadmus off; alternately, that Cadmus had become syncretized with an Illyrian god.

¹⁴¹Like Helenos of Troy.

¹⁴²Apparently “Woser-,” Egyptian “strong” and “Iris,” Egyptian (and Greek) “eyed.”

¹⁴³Argus’ slaying by Mercury is thus peculiar – perhaps a symbolic representation of the supplanting of his cult by that of Thoth in Egypt, the Greek Hermes, or even a Nordic storm father such as Odin?

¹⁴⁴Both Apollodorus and Diodoros have trouble placing Osiris into their mythical histories,

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One of the many Egyptian influences upon Greek culture is the use of the epithet as a name for the god. Classic Greek mythology is taught in school, even to this day, as if it were composed of hundreds of figures, many with the same name, but all of which are independent from each other. In other words, Greek mythology is often taught without an “epic” component. However, like the Egyptians, who almost never used the proper name of their gods out of reverence for the magical power of the name, the Greeks almost always used epithets in describing their divinities. Thus, there is Dionysius, the “god of Nysa,” Dione, “goddess,” and Prometheus “fore-knowledge,” among hundreds of others. Several of these epithets often began life as names of the same being – but, to date, no Greek Viktor Rydberg has emerged to assemble the underlying epic.

There is also the well-known Minoan influence upon the Mycenaean Greek culture. In the southern part of Anatolia and the islands of Cyprus and Crete two cults dominated – that of the aforementioned “Great Mother”, and that of a bull-god who wielded the double-axe—the Minotaur.¹⁴⁵ Minoan bull-games seem to have originated in that island and to have spread to Egypt and to other Near Eastern cultures, and are thought to be preserved in the bull-leaping contests of southern France where, unlike the Spanish bull-fights where the bull is slain, the toreador leaps over the bull at a precise moment when the bull is attempting to throw him, landing safely behind the animal. The worship of a bull-god, often associated with the worship of Baal, is known in Phoenicia and in Carthage, and further affirms what the 19th century B.C. “Tale of Sinuhe” tells us, which is Crete was settled by “Menus from Fenkhu” – Minos of Phoenicia. It has further been suggested that this Minos was a form of the Near Eastern moon-fertility deity Min, though this is far from established. The strongest influence of Crete on late Mycenaean Greece,

and he is also syncretized with other figures, such as Dionysius. A fuller discussion of this is in Chapter 9.

¹⁴⁵The Great Mother also has a consort. These myths are discussed in Chapter 9.

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other than the borrowing of the bull as a symbol by Zeus, was the “Great Mother” and the cult of her serpent consort, remains of which have been found in the palace at Pylos, one of the undisputed sacred sites¹⁴⁶ uncovered in the Mycenaean period.

Interesting, though, in the context of the worship of the “Great Mother,” is that such worship is not widely attested to Mycenaean Greek culture, and the symbols of the “Great Mother” are almost always cast in a negative light – particularly in the many stories of the hero who slays the serpent. Serpents are rarely positive figures – though they have been known to accompany goddesses such as Athena – and the symbols of mother worship usually take on a negative aspect. Further, the ultimate Greek mother figure – Ge, the Earth – is certainly Indo-European in origin, and her story is derived from that of the “sacred cow,” which is the universal inheritance of the Aryan peoples. Linguistically, it is of the same root as the Vedic term “Gaus” and the Iranian term “Geush,” both meaning “cow,” and captured in the “Audh” of the Nordic primeval cow-mother “Audh-humla.” Thus the later “Great Mother” figures such as Cybele and Demeter as Isis are almost certainly imports from outside the proto-Mycenaean religion.¹⁴⁷

The Mycenaean themselves are known to have brought a large number of deities into the Peloponnese, as the few Mycenaean shrines and “Linear B”¹⁴⁸ god lists that have been found generally contain twelve to twenty-four statues or names, often with a dozen major gods and then a group of smaller statues or names placed in a way as to suggest they are supporting deities. The earliest Mycenaean god list, from the 13th century B.C. in Pylos, and thus well after integration of Mycenaean and Minoan culture, gives seven names – Poseidon,

¹⁴⁶“Scholars” dispute whether certain idols and other ceremonial goods that have been found indicate a sacred site, like a temple, or some personal shrine or other mundane form of worship.

¹⁴⁷Feminine religious archetypes are discussed in Chapter 9.

¹⁴⁸An early form of Mycenaean Greek written in Minoan script.

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Hermes, Zeus, Hera, Pere,¹⁴⁹ Iphimedeia,¹⁵⁰ and Diuja.¹⁵¹ The first four survived into the Roman era; the last three are considered “obscure,” meaning there is no agreed interpretation of who they are. Contemporary Hittite inscriptions also attest to Greek heroic figures such as Hektor and Agamemnon.¹⁵²

THE LATE HEROIC PERIOD AND THE TROJAN WAR

Mycenaean Greek society was destroyed in the late 12th and/or early 11th centuries by a series of invasions from the Dorian Greek peoples. However, just prior to this, the events of the greatest Mycenaean epic, the Trojan War, played out, as the Greeks of the Peloponnesos united to destroy the kingdom of Asia-Azzawa and the related city-state of Ilos-Wilusa, or Troy.¹⁵³

Troy itself had been inhabited since perhaps c. 3000 B.C., and until “Troy IV” – the fourth layer of archaeological debris found at the Trojan excavation site – it had been inhabited by people of pre-Hittite Mediterranean-Anatolian stock.¹⁵⁴ Beginning in Troy IV, the Mycenaean peoples clearly established themselves in the city, and by Troy VII, Priam, his elders and their people were certainly of Indo-European stock.

The Hittite invasion reshaped the politics of Asia Minor, and, in the late 15th century BC, the Hittites, who had become divided after the collapse of the Hittite “Old Kingdom,” were united into the “empire” under king Suspillusimas. Suspillusimas began to challenge Egyptian power in what would

¹⁴⁹The boundary or boundary-crosser, suggestive of the later role of Hecate, as Hermes has been already named.

¹⁵⁰Iphi-medeia means “strong counsels” or “good counsels,” suggestive of Athena.

¹⁵¹There are several possibilities and no context in which to evaluate this epithet.

¹⁵²Hittite inscriptions. See Chapter 7, under the discussion of the Hittite language and the Trojan War.

¹⁵³It is possible that these were separate entities, but the Greeks are said to have attacked cities up and down the western coast of Anatolia, and almost certainly in the territory of Azzawa.

¹⁵⁴Whether leaning culturally more toward the Mediterranean or toward Sumerian Mesopotamia is uncertain.

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become Palestine, also waging relentless war on the Mitanni, the traditional enemies of the Hittites in the West.¹⁵⁵ In the West, the Hittites' most powerful enemy was the kingdom of Azzawa, which is believed to be the land that gave the name "Asia" to the world's largest continent. The Egyptians under Horemheb backed Azzawa, a recently released vassal of the Hittites – against the Hittite emperor in an effort to open a second front against the Hittites. The Egyptian policy was to attack the Hittite Empire through direct conflict in Palestine and Syria, and proxy war along its west border, and this continued until the Hittites were finally destroyed in the mid 13th century B.C.

With Egyptian backing, Azzawa seems to have become an aggressively expansionist state, and there is indication it conflicted with the Greek states in the Aegean and on the islands surrounding Asia Minor, particularly Rhodes. Hittite diplomatic texts tell of confrontations between Azzawa and Ahhijawa, a name often read as the "Achaeans."¹⁵⁶ At one point, the king of the Ahhijawa is referred to as Attarissiyas, and this has been read by many as either Atreus, the father of Agamemnon, or Agamemnon the Atreides (son of Atreus) himself. The city of Troy itself appears in Hittite documents as Wilusa, and Hittite documents record an attack on Wilusa by king Attarissiyas of the Ahhijawa in approximately 1230 B.C., within the timeframe generally accepted for the occurrence of the Trojan war.

IN SUMMARY

Greece is a bit of a puzzle to the modern scholar, in part because of the manner in which cultural and religious history – "mythology" – has been taught over the centuries, and in part because our sources for Greek history are not the

¹⁵⁵The Mitanni, as Hurrians, were related to the tribes that had subjugated the Hittite peoples during their interregnum.

¹⁵⁶A principle of the Hittite language is that it often creates double-letter diphthongs out of single syllable components in other languages. Also, in the Semitic and Hamitic tongues, the letters "h" and "k" are very close – Middle Egyptian, for instance, consists of 24 basic consonant and semi-vowel sounds, of which six are variants of what we pronounce as "h" and "k".

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founding documents of the Greek culture, but late tellings of a glorious past half a millennia or more past when they were committed to paper. Further, there is the confusion that the Roman religion, whose development was very distinct from that of Greece, created when it adopted most of the Greek pantheon and then syncretized it with Near Eastern and Egyptian deities.

Greece was a cultural lake into which many Aryan and proto-Aryan rivers flowed. Its culture was both a product of the Aryan-Mycenaean conquerors from the northeast, of Germanic conquerors from the northwest, of the Indo-European peoples of Asia Minor, of the Indo-European cognate in Egypt, and of other influences – some likely Semitic, others pre-Indo-European and Asian – whose impact was of a less positive nature.