

Politics of Periodization and the Archaeology of Early Greece

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Periodization is a fundamental exercise for archaeology and for historical studies in general, aimed primarily at clarity in communication. However, this exercise imposes particular modes of conceptualizing specific periods. An attractive case study for research in the historiographical processes that shape periodization is posed by the period of Greek archaeology extending from the end of the second to the early first millennium B.C.E. This study analyzes the different conceptual baggage of each of the many names used for this period and focuses on the terminological struggle between the Dark Age(s) and the (Early) Iron Age. I argue that this struggle was shaped not only by discussions within classics but also by debates in other historical disciplines and developments in the political history of 20th-century Greece. The struggle over the name of the period has served as an arena for the unfolding of broader politicized debates in classics, Greek history, and the archaeology of the Mediterranean.¹

“TOO MANY NAMES” IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY GREECE

In the first verses of the poem “Too Many Names,” Chilean poet Pablo Neruda laments the confusing multiplicity of names that artificially divide the continuum of time, only to proceed to a protest against their rigid and political use as absolute definers:²

Time cannot be cut
with your weary scissors,
and all the names of the day
are washed out by the waters of night.

Historians and archaeologists are acutely aware of this: “Life is continuous, archaeology is divisional,” as Gjerstad expressed it.³ Less well understood is the profusion of labels currently used for specific historical periods, their genealogy, and their conceptual baggage. This is particularly true of the period

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² Translation by Tarn 1990, 367.

³ Gjerstad 1944, 103; cf. Flower 2010, 6.

of Greek antiquity that extends from the end of the second to the early first millennium B.C.E. In this article, I analyze the many different names used for this period and argue that developments within and beyond academia have turned the discourse about the periodization of early Greek antiquity into an arena for the unfolding of broader politicized debates in classics, Greek history, and the archaeology of the Mediterranean.

Periodization, the process of dividing historical time into periods and of labeling these periods, is essential for focusing study of the past. It is an inescapable part of the study of history at all levels and is deeply embedded in the structure of educational systems, from course syllabi to job titles.⁴ Nevertheless, as Ian Morris explains, “periodization distorts. . . . When we draw lines through time, artificially dividing the continuous flow of lived experience, we may obscure as much as we reveal.”⁵ A defining element in the exercise of periodization is the choice of labels for specific divisions of time. Bull notes that “[e]ven the most innocent-looking historical labels are never entirely neutral”;⁶ moreover, whenever historians use any such label they are stamping their authority on it and on the associated conceptual baggage. In Morris’ words, “periodization is also characterization,”⁷ and any analysis of terms and concepts used in periodization is also an analysis of the systems of thought used in the study and interpretation of primary data. This article offers a case study of how periodization shapes our understanding of the past and of classical antiquity in particular.

As a discipline, classical archaeology is notorious—and has even been caricatured—for the conservatism it often shows in subject matter, in method, and not least in terminology.⁸ The criticism has been leveled that “in the great tradition of Classical archaeology, the term, once stated, has assumed a die-hard tenacity.”⁹ Against this background, it is surprising to realize the great variety of names used for a certain chronological period of ancient Greece and the two major shifts that swept its nomenclature in the last decades, a condition that is unparalleled in classical archaeology and the archaeology of most Mediterranean regions.

Through more than a century, classicists have called the period from 1200 to 700 B.C.E., or parts of it, by different names, often switching from one to another for no apparent reason and without explicit acknowledgement of the implications. These names include the Homeric-inspired name “Heroic Age,” the art historical “(Proto)Geometric,” the controversial “Dark Age(s),” the unpopular “Middle Ages,” and the “hard-core” archaeological “(Early) Iron Age.”¹⁰ The different names have generally been seen as compatible or even synonymous with one another. A case in point is an early work by Burn; in his title, Burn makes reference to the “Greek Middle Ages” but uses the terms “medieval,” “Heroic Age,” and “Iron Age” on the first two pages and refers to the “Dark Age” through the rest of the work.¹¹ The recently published *A Companion to Archaic Greece* is symptomatic of the persistence of this approach,¹² and problems of this kind also pervade regional and site-specific studies.¹³ A basic level of communication is apparently not hindered by this profusion of names.

¹⁰ See the seminal analyses in Morris 1997a; 2000, 77–106. Archaeologists and historians of ancient Greece often use the terms “Iron Age” and “Early Iron Age” interchangeably, and the same applies to the terms “Dark Age” and “Dark Ages.” To accommodate these discrepancies, I generally refer here to the (Early) Iron Age and the Dark Age(s). In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a consensus over the beginning of the period at 1125–1100 B.C.E. (Starr 1961, 77–8; McDonald 1967, 308, 409; Desborough 1972, 11; Coulson 1990). Snodgrass (1971) preferred the 11th century B.C.E. Moses Finley (1967, 284; 1970, 72), who was influential in the study of the period, favored 1200 B.C.E. instead, and this view has prevailed in recent years (Morris 2004, 257; Papadopoulos 2014, 181). The proposed end date ranges from 900 B.C.E. to 700 B.C.E. (Starr 1961, 77 [750 B.C.E.]; Schweitzer 1969, 10–12 [ninth century B.C.E.]; Finley 1967, 284; 1970, 72 [800 B.C.E.]; Snodgrass 1971 [eighth century B.C.E.]; Desborough 1972 [900 B.C.E.]; Schachermeyer 1980, 17–18 [900 B.C.E.]; Deger-Jalkotzy 1983 [ninth century B.C.E.]; Coulson 1990 [700 B.C.E.]; Nowicki 2000, 16 [800 B.C.E.]).

¹¹ Burn 1936.

¹² The editors of this work assert that the period is “rightly no longer called the ‘Dark Age’” (Raaflaub and van Wees 2009a, xxi), and the contributor assigned to review the subject explicitly rejects the term and refers to the “Early Iron Age” (Morgan 2009, 43). Nevertheless, many other contributors make use of the term “Dark Age,” and some even refer to the “Dark Ages” instead (Mazarakis Ainian and Leventi 2009).

¹³ A case in point is a recent overview of the history of Mesenia and Pylos. In it, some contributors call the period in question the “Dark Age” (Griebel and Nelson 2008); others call it the “Early Iron Age” (Spencer 2008); and others use both terms seemingly interchangeably (Harrison and Spencer 2008).

⁴ Bull 2005, 42–3; Flower 2010, 3–4.

⁵ Morris 1997a, 96.

⁶ Bull 2005, 43.

⁷ Morris 1997a, 96.

⁸ Snodgrass 1977, 2–6; 1987; Shanks 1996, 92–103; Morris 2004.

⁹ Papadopoulos 1998, 117.

This profusion is, however, more than an annoying inconsistency and relates to different conceptualizations of the period and the way these developed over time.

Ian Morris has discussed the periodization of early Greek antiquity in two important historiographical essays, focusing on developments within the study of classical Greece.¹⁴ This study builds on the work of Morris but takes a different approach in several respects. First, I am particularly interested in the influence of outside forces, both academic and nonacademic, that Morris has not examined. I demonstrate that the most enduring schemes used in the periodization of early Greece were first developed outside classics, especially in medieval history and European prehistory, and each was introduced to the discipline with a certain conceptual baggage. I further argue that the mostly implicit terminological struggle over the name of the period was also shaped by nonacademic forces, and the political history of modern Greece is singled out as having had an effect on the debate about the Dark Age(s) in the early 1970s.¹⁵ This inquiry demonstrates, on the one hand, how the terminology in use is shaped, and how, in turn, this terminology affects the ways in which empirical data are approached. On the other hand, it also shows how new conceptualizations can produce shifts in terminology and changes in disciplinary structures. The process of periodization is, in short, a reflexive interplay between terminology and understanding, as this case study illustrates.

GENEALOGIES OF TERMINOLOGIES: THE 19TH AND EARLIER CENTURIES

Approaches to the periodization of early Greek antiquity can be broadly divided into those that are primarily based on the evidence of texts (or lack thereof) and those that are grounded on the character of material remains. The former set includes the terms “Heroic Age,” “Middle Ages,” and “Dark Age(s),” whereas the latter covers “(Proto)Geometric” and “(Early) Iron Age.” In this section, I investigate the conceptual underpinning of these different names and the processes through which they came to characterize the period from 1200 to 700 B.C.E.

The earliest discussion of any of these terms can be found in 19th-century Britain, where the period before

the lyric poets of the seventh century B.C.E. was increasingly conceived of as a Heroic Age represented by the Homeric epics.¹⁶ In the late 19th century, Heinrich Schliemann’s discovery of the Aegean Bronze Age and Flinders Petrie’s synchronism of the fall of the Mycenaean palaces with Egypt’s 19th Dynasty identified the Heroic Age with the period before ca. 1200 B.C.E. The concept of the Heroic Age remained strong until after World War II, but the decipherment of Linear B in 1952 exposed some of its shortcomings. Finley demonstrated the discrepancy between the world that was reflected in the tablets and the one of the epics, and he argued for the down-dating of Homer’s Heroic Age to the 10th and 9th centuries B.C.E.¹⁷ The concept of a Heroic Age eventually fell into disuse, however, because of growing doubts about the historicity of a Homeric society, and the increasing appeal of archaeological interpretations of early Greek history.¹⁸

The date obtained for the end of the Aegean Bronze Age left several centuries between the Heroic Age of Homer (in the Late Bronze Age) and the archaic poets, about which little was known. Scholars of the early 20th century labeled this period the Greek “Dark Age(s)” because it was poorly documented in ancient texts, especially in comparison with the preceding Bronze Age and the later Archaic period.¹⁹ The interlude between these two well-documented periods was perceived as a dark age, in accordance with a greater tradition in world history that takes such interludes to combine the loss of written records and literacy in general with some kind of collapse of civilization.²⁰ Similar notions were developed for the Greek Dark Age(s), involving the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces and the Dorian invasion. The period has commonly been taken to have witnessed depopulation and migration,

¹⁶ Morris 1997a, 99–111; 2000, 79–88.

¹⁷ Finley 1956; see also I. Morris 1997a, 115–17; 2000, 90–2; S. Morris 2007, 59. The hypothesis that Linear B remained in use until the eighth century B.C.E. found few supporters (*Docs*¹, xxviii; Albright 1956, 164).

¹⁸ Morris 1997a, 118–24; 2000, 92–8.

¹⁹ Snodgrass 1971, 1, 22 n. 2; Morris 1997a; 2000, 88–90. On the paucity of texts, see Snodgrass 1971, 1–23 (see also the last phrase of the book on p. 436); cf. Finley 1970, 71–2. Note that the ancient Greeks had no concept of a dark age (Snodgrass 1971, 2–10; see also Murray 1980, 16–18; Whitley 1991, 5; 1993, 225–26; Papadopoulos 1993, 197; Morris 1997a, 99; 2000, 79; Snodgrass 2000a, xxv).

²⁰ Snodgrass 1967, 35; Whitley 1993, 225; 2001, 61; Muhly 2011, 45.

¹⁴ Morris 1997a, esp. 96–9; 2000, 77–106; see also Snodgrass 1971, 1–21; Murray 1980, 13–15.

¹⁵ Compare the case of Israel, where the periodization of the Iron Age is colored by modern politics (Whincop 2009, 8–9).

poverty in material culture and living standards, a sharp decline of high art, the loss of writing, the demise of contacts within the Aegean, and relative isolation from the Mediterranean.²¹

The invention of the Greek Dark Age has been traced to Murray's *The Rise of the Greek Epic* of 1907.²² Murray wrote, "There is a far-off island of knowledge, or apparent knowledge; then Darkness; then the beginning of continuous history. . . . It is in this Dark Age that we must really look for the beginning of Greece."²³ Murray placed his Dark Age between prehistory and history and considered it a new beginning for ancient Greece. He conceptualized it on the basis of Hesiod's "Five Ages of Man" and also in comparison to the Dark Ages of medieval Europe.

The concept of the Greek Dark Age(s) had its roots in the little-favored term "Greek Middle Ages." This was introduced in German scholarship of the late 19th century and had a limited appeal elsewhere, including Britain and Greece, in the following decades.²⁴ Snodgrass, followed by Morris, has credited Meyer with the introduction of the scheme.²⁵ Indeed, in volume 2 of his *Geschichte des Altertums* (1893) Meyer divided Greek antiquity from the end of prehistory to the Persian Wars into two periods: the Greek Middle Ages (to be identified with what is now called the Early Iron Age) and the End of the Middle Ages (basically the Archaic period).²⁶ In proposing this terminology, Meyer readjusted a scheme previously introduced by Bergk in his *Griechische Literaturgeschichte*.²⁷ Bergk had divided the history of ancient Greek literature into three periods: the first, or ancient period, of 950–776 B.C.E.; the second period, or Greek Middle Age, of 776–500 B.C.E.; and the third period, the new or Attic one, of 500–300 B.C.E. In Bergk's periodization, "Middle Age" seems to be a descriptive term used to designate a period that lies between two others. Meyer, however,

used this concept in a qualitative way to label a historical period dated earlier than the one signified by Bergk.

Indicative of Meyer's conception of the Greek Middle Ages is the explicit comparison he drew between the Greek and the European (esp. the German) Middle Ages.²⁸ Brief references of similar sorts have recurred in literature since Meyer, although they show a diminishing appeal over time.²⁹ These references confirm that the concept of the Middle Ages—and the Dark Age(s)—of Greece was directly inspired by that of the much later European Middle Ages. In turn, the conception of the European Middle Ages and its associated gloomy impression date from the 17th century C.E. but can be traced back to Petrarch in the 14th century C.E., who is credited with "putting the Darkness into the 'Dark Ages.'"³⁰

Clearly aware of the potential confusion between the Greek and the European Dark Ages, Snodgrass considered that "a distinction from the fall of the Western Roman Empire . . . is best served by the use of the singular form, and perhaps of small letters."³¹ Desborough, however, did not share this concern and used the plural form in distinguishing between the Early and Late Dark Ages.³² The singular and plural forms have been used interchangeably, even by the same scholars, but the former version has proven far more popular.³³

By the late 19th century, the period ranging from the end of the second to the early first millennium B.C.E. also received names highlighting the material properties of characteristic finds. The art historical designation "Geometric," which was inspired by the decorative style of the pottery of the period,³⁴ first appeared in the mid 1870s, in discussions of the work of Alexander Conze. These discussions were published in the *Annali dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* and were informed by the then-recent discoveries at

²¹ Starr 1961, 77; Snodgrass 1971, 2, 360–401; Desborough 1972, 12; Coldstream 1977, 17–18.

²² Murray 1907, v, 29, 33, 45–6, 50–1, 55, 59, 78–80, 83–4; Snodgrass 1971, 1, 21; Morris 1997a, 111, 113–14; 2000, 89–90. For an earlier brief reference to the term, see Tsountas and Manatt 1897, 365.

²³ Murray 1907, 29.

²⁴ Britain: Botsford 1922, 31–51; Burn 1936; see also Morris 1997a, 114. Greece: Tsountas and Manatt 1897, 365; Tsountas 1928, 67.

²⁵ Snodgrass 1971, 1, 22 n. 2; Morris 1997a, 114.

²⁶ Meyer 1893, esp. 291–92.

²⁷ Bergk 1872, esp. 302–3; 1883.

²⁸ Meyer 1893, 291, 293.

²⁹ Murray 1907, 45–6, 50, 83–4; Ure 1921; Botsford 1922; Burn 1936, 8; 1960, 11; Snodgrass 1967, 35; 1971, 22 n. 2; Davies 2009, 3.

³⁰ Bull 2005, 45; cf. Arnold 2008, 8–10.

³¹ Snodgrass 1971, 22 n. 2. The problem is clear in van Andel and Runnels (1987, 9, 146), which occasionally distinguishes between a "post-Mycenaean" and "an early Byzantine" dark age of Greece.

³² Desborough 1972. Similar notions were not missing altogether from earlier scholarship, including Starr 1961.

³³ Nowicki 2000, 15. For the popularity of the singular form, see the references in n. 208.

³⁴ Morris 1997a, 118–20; 2000, 92–4.

the Dipylon cemetery in Athens.³⁵ The origins of the style were an object of debate, with some scholars tracing it to northern Europe and arguing for its diffusion by Indo-Germanic tribes or the Dorians and others favoring the agency of the Phoenicians in the east.³⁶ Before the end of the 19th century, the style was shown to represent an Aegean development, and its stylistic and chronological relation to the Mycenaean and orientizing styles was established. By 1917, Schweitzer coined the related term “Protogeometric.”³⁷ The two styles were quickly identified with specific chronological periods, even though Desborough insisted “Protogeometric must be the name given to a *style* of pottery, and not to a *period*.”³⁸ This fusion persists to the present and characterizes some major works,³⁹ but it has been criticized for “bluntly imposing, as it does, on an unsuspecting culture the tunnel-vision of modern ceramic periodization.”⁴⁰

Before long, another material-based term, “Iron Age,” was also introduced to the study of the period. To my knowledge, the first scholar to discuss the term “Iron Age” in the context of Greek antiquity was Julius Beloch, in volume 1 of his *Griechische Geschichte* of 1893 (which was published at the same time as Meyer’s work mentioned above).⁴¹ Beloch approached the matter by integrating stratigraphic evidence from Mycenae and Homer’s references to iron with the three-age system (Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age), which had previously been developed for European prehistory. Indeed, it was the leading scholar of European prehistory Oscar Montelius that would first make systematic reference to the term “Iron Age” for Greek archaeology in the 1920s.⁴² Inspired by the poem *De rerum natura* by the Roman philosopher Titus Lucretius Carus (first century B.C.E.), the term “Iron Age”—and the three-age system in general—was formulated in 18th-century C.E. France before it was taken up by Danish archae-

ologists, and especially Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, in the second quarter of the 19th century C.E.⁴³ The European Iron Age was subdivided originally into the Early or Pre-Roman Iron Age and the Roman or historic Iron Age,⁴⁴ and more recently into an Early, Middle, and Late, or a First and Second, Iron Age. The later part of the European Iron Age is often taken to extend over several centuries C.E., or up to the time of the Industrial Revolution, which is seen as the beginning of the Age of Steel and Power Tools.⁴⁵

The three-age system was adopted over much of continental Europe and replaced designations drawn from classical literature. The classical tradition, however, persevered in the Aegean and parts of the Mediterranean, and the periodization of these regions remained based on named civilizations and cultures.⁴⁶ Archaeologists of the late 19th and early 20th century did not engage with the discrepancies of the two systems, and this eventually resulted in the confusing current state of affairs. Illustrative of this confusion is the comparative chronological table of figure 1, which can be summarized as follows: Over the central and western part of the Mediterranean, the Iron Age is used to designate a long period extending from the introduction of iron metallurgy to the Roman conquest. Conversely, in the classical lands of Greece and Italy, and also in the eastern Mediterranean, which is equally rich in historical sources, the term “Early Iron Age” prevails for the early first millennium B.C.E. but is not followed by any Late Iron Age. Instead, cultural labels, such as “Archaic,” “Classical,” “Persian,” and “Hellenistic,” are preferred for the periods down to Roman. As Snodgrass has put it with reference to Greece, “anyone who referred to it [the Classical period] by such a generalised name as the ‘Middle Iron Age’ would be assumed to be making a rather obscure joke.”⁴⁷

The Homeric-inspired label “Heroic Age,” the outdated term “Greek Middle Ages,” and the art historical designation “Proto(Geometric) period” have receded in use during recent decades and receive limited discussion in this article. The names “Dark Age(s)” and

³⁵ Galanakis 2011, 180. The term does not appear in the notable discussion of “vases of the Heroic and Homeric Age” in Burgon 1847 (cf. Cook 1997, 284).

³⁶ Cook 1997, 287–90.

³⁷ Schweitzer 1917; cf. Cook 1997, 287–88; Lemos 2002, 3.

³⁸ Desborough 1948, 260 (emphasis original).

³⁹ Coldstream 1977; Lemos 2002.

⁴⁰ Snodgrass 1998, 132.

⁴¹ Beloch 1893, 77–84.

⁴² In his two-volume review of Aegean prehistory, which appeared posthumously, Montelius (1924, 1928) made extensive use of the designation “Avant le fer” to label the entire period that his work covered.

⁴³ Daniel 1943, 13–14; 1975, 38–54; Gräslund 1987, 13–29; Trigger 2006, 104–5, 123.

⁴⁴ Daniel 1943, 26–7; 1975, 148; Gräslund 1987, 48–65.

⁴⁵ Daniel 1943, 15–17, 46–7.

⁴⁶ Daniel 1943, 7–8; 1975, 149–50. Note that scholars working in Israel adopted the three-age system after a conference held in 1922 (Whincop 2009, 8).

⁴⁷ Snodgrass 1989, 23.

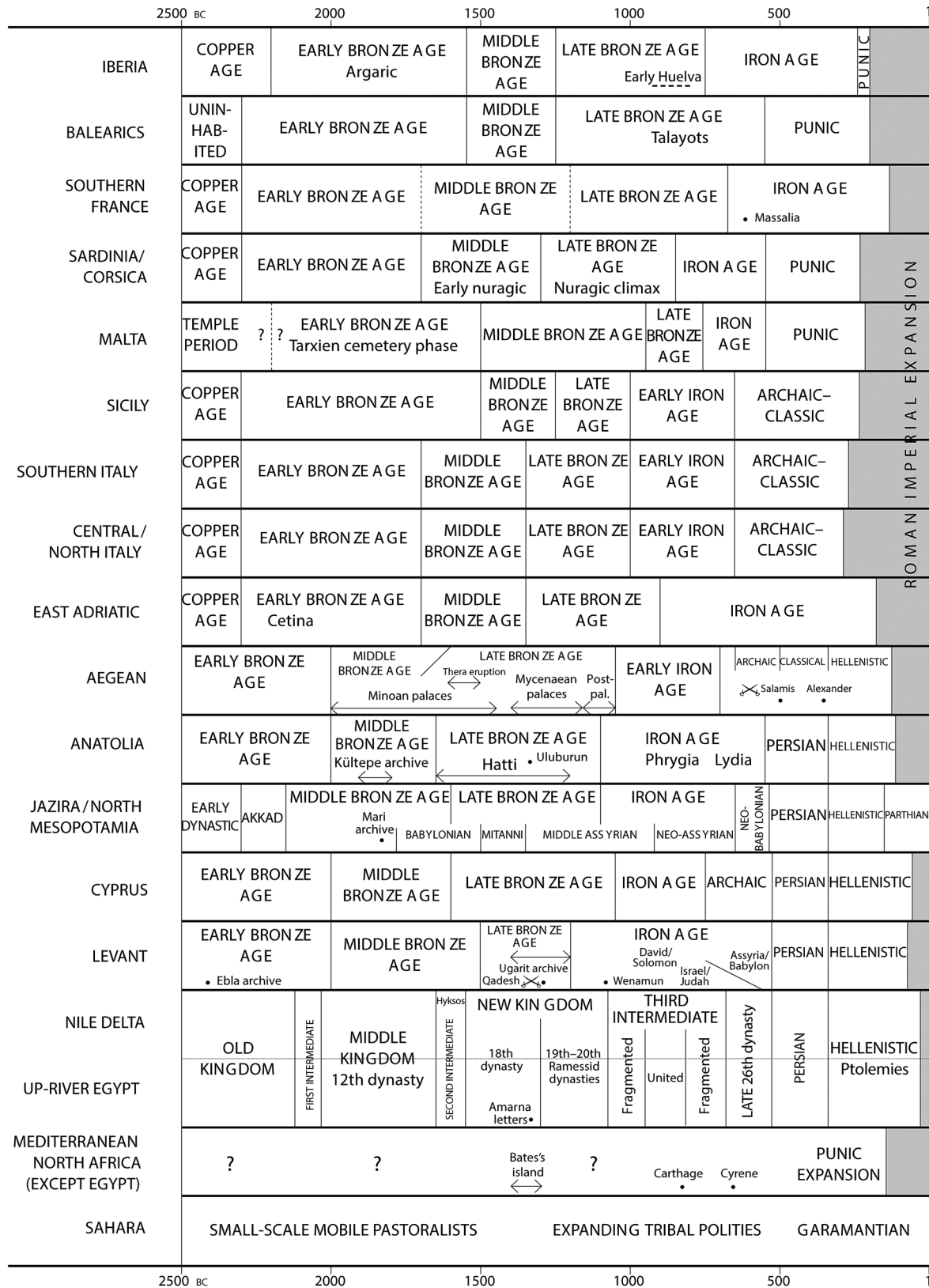


FIG. 1. Relative and absolute chronology of the Mediterranean (Broodbank 2013, 14; Geoff Penna © Thames & Hudson Ltd).

“(Early) Iron Age,” however, remain popular and perpetuate two rival notions of this contested period. Unlike Morris, who takes the two terms as synonymous,⁴⁸ I argue that it is precisely the struggle between them that has shaped the field, especially since World War II. The two terms refer broadly to the same temporal division but are shown to conform to different approaches to the period and to involve dissimilar concepts of the spatial setting of the archaeology of Greece and the Aegean.

To investigate the terminological struggle between these two persistent terms, I have quantified their occurrence in the titles of literature published from 1900 to 2009 (fig. 2). The investigation covers the synonymous terms “Dark Age(s),” “âges obscurs,” “siècles obscurs,” “dunklen Jahrhunderte(s),” “dunkle Zeitalter,” “secoli bui,” and “Σκοτεινοί Αιώνες” on the one hand; and “(Early) Iron Age,” “(premier) Âge du fer,” “(frühe) Eisenzeit,” “(prima) età del ferro,” and “(Πρώιμη) Εποχή του Σιδήρου” on the other. The quantification of titles in the graph of figure 2 is based on items retrieved from the union catalogue of four libraries that are renowned for their collections on Greek antiquity: the Blegen and Gennadius libraries of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and the Athens and Knossos libraries of the British School at Athens. Items quantified in figure 2 are stand-alone publications focused (exclusively or primarily) on the history and archaeology of the Aegean of the period. These items include monographs, in addition to volumes of conference proceedings and special lectures published as booklets. Although stand-alone publications encompass only one component of all academic output, they nevertheless constitute a high-profile and high-impact component and are particularly revealing of general trends in scholarship; they can, additionally, be defined and quantified in a relatively straightforward manner, which is not the case with articles in journals or conference volumes. The inclusion of conference articles in particular would completely distort the data, since publications of this kind were almost nonexistent before the 1980s

and have increased sharply in recent years. Journals offer a more promising field for research, but relevant databases were found to be incomplete. In contrast to figure 2, the discussion examines contents and concepts as well as titles and considers articles of different sorts and other academic output on equal footing with stand-alone publications.

The decades into which the data of figure 2 are organized are clearly artificial divisions.⁴⁹ The analysis of these data, however, is organized differently, and the sections that follow cover periods of varying lengths, which are defined on the basis of specific historiographical developments.

TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL DIVISIONS IN THE STUDY OF EARLY GREECE: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY TO MID 20TH CENTURY

By “periodizing periodization,” Morris has shown that the study of early Greece in the late 19th century to mid 20th century is characterized by the struggle between the concept of a Heroic Age and that of the Dark Age(s), especially among historians and philologists. Morris has also noted the increasing popularity of art historical designations for the period.⁵⁰ In this section, I investigate how the concept of the Dark Age(s) was gradually elaborated and how archaeologists promoted the alternative concept of the (Early) Iron Age. Particular emphasis is placed on notions of spatial (geographic) divisions embedded in the different approaches to the periodization of early Greece.

Notwithstanding Murray’s discussion of the Dark Age,⁵¹ this concept does not seem to have been particularly appealing in the early to mid 20th century. Scholarship on the historiography of the period has assembled some relevant references,⁵² but these remain few and brief, almost incidental. Likewise, figure 2 shows that there was not even one monograph featuring the Dark Age(s) in its title until the boom of the 1970s. Nevertheless, both the titles surveyed for figure 2 and the scholarship referred to miss a groundbreaking work on the period, published by Ure in 1921. Based at Reading, Ure was known at the time for his excavations at Rhitsona in Boeotia. Greece being inaccessible during World War I, Ure focused on writing

⁴⁸ The term “Dark Age” pervades the texts of I. Morris 1987, 2000. It is the (Early) Iron Age, however, that features in the titles of I. Morris 1997b, 2000, 2007. The use of the two terms as synonymous is clear in the historiographical essays by Morris. See, e.g., Morris 1997a, 97: “Before 1870 there was no real concept of a Dark Age”; Morris 2000, 77: “Before 1870 there was no concept of an Iron Age.”

⁴⁹ Cf. Bull 2005, 53–5.

⁵⁰ Morris 1997a, 99–117; 2000, 79–92.

⁵¹ Murray 1907.

⁵² Morris 1997a, 111, 113–14; 2000, 89–90; Muhly 2011, 48–9.

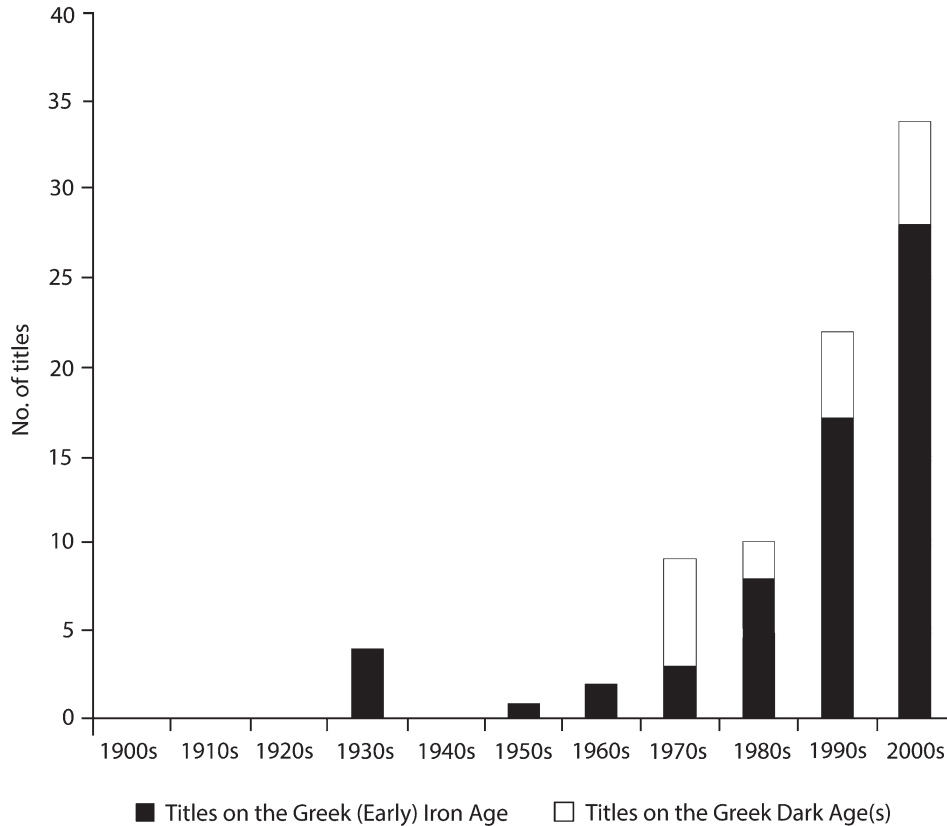


FIG. 2. Output of stand-alone publications on ancient Greece and the Aegean featuring the terms “Dark Age(s)” and “(Early) Iron Age” in their titles (based on items retrieved from the union catalogue of the Blegen and Gennadius libraries of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and the Athens and Knossos libraries of the British School at Athens). Each bar represents the number of titles in one decade, from 1900 to 2009.

The Origin of Tyranny (published in 1922), a work on the political history of archaic Greece. He also worked, however, on a side project, a small book entitled *The Greek Renaissance*, which appeared the previous year and covered Aegean prehistory, the early first millennium B.C.E., and archaic tyranny.⁵³ This publication was largely overlooked by later scholarship and remains little known,⁵⁴ probably because it was primarily addressed to “the reader who is not familiar with Greek history.”⁵⁵ It is, however, *The Greek Renaissance* that forms the basis of most later and current conceptualizations of the period.

Through this book, Ure probably became the first archaeologist to offer a synthetic treatment of a period

that had previously been the domain of historians and philologists. Unlike many of those scholars, Ure showed some concern with periodization. The book attests to an awareness of the three-age system and its applicability to Greek archaeology, and also of Hesiod’s Five Ages of Man.⁵⁶ However, Ure preferred a different scheme, which divided early Greek antiquity into three periods: prehistory, the Dark Age, and the Renaissance. Ure’s scheme explicitly elaborated on the one by Murray,⁵⁷ but it may also have been inspired by passing references of other scholars to the “dark ages/period” and ensuing “renaissance” of Greek art and culture.⁵⁸ According to Ure, the Dark Age (which he also called the Dark Ages) was characterized by a

⁵³ Ure 1921, 1922.

⁵⁴ It was even missed by those compiling the bibliography of Ure on the occasion of his 70th birthday (*An Address Presented to Percy Neville Ure* 1949).

⁵⁵ Ure 1921, vii.

⁵⁶ Ure 1921, 25–31.

⁵⁷ Ure 1921, 21.

⁵⁸ Tsountas and Manatt 1897, 365; Wace and Blegen 1916–1918, 189.

paucity of literary sources, invasion and migration, and impoverishment in art and material culture. This was not a period characterized by “the darkness of primal chaos” but rather “a temporary eclipse.”⁵⁹ Ure further identified the eighth century B.C.E. as the End of the Dark Age and treated the seventh as the beginning of the Renaissance (which continued in the sixth), during which “all the main stream of modern thought and energy first took shape.”⁶⁰ In earlier scholarship, the follow-up of the Dark Age had remained nameless; Ure’s scheme was therefore an advance in the analysis of the period. Only Meyer had previously made a comparable distinction between the Greek Middle Ages and their end, which comprised the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E.⁶¹ Ure’s more elaborate scheme, however, was preferred in later scholarship and survives to the present day.

The introduction of a renaissance had considerable bearing on the preexisting concept of a dark age. Notions of rebirth and renovation have been inherent to this term since its introduction to European history in the 14th century C.E.⁶² Thus, the concept of the Greek Renaissance was more than an embellishment of a preexisting scheme of periodization. It also reinforced the gloomy stereotype implied by contrast with the preceding period, be it the European or the Greek Dark Age. The Renaissance (later also called the Revolution)⁶³ of early Greece has become a standard chapter in reference works on Greek antiquity, with one notable adjustment to Ure’s scheme: more recent scholarship identifies the End of the Dark Age with the Renaissance and treats them as a single “episode” dating to the eighth century B.C.E. Snodgrass and also Coldstream introduced this adjustment in the 1970s.⁶⁴ Neither scholar, however, gave credit to Ure (or anyone else for that matter), which suggests that this scheme had by then become firmly established and its pedigree had been forgotten. Accordingly, the authors of the conference proceedings *The Greek Renaissance of*

the Eighth Century B.C. (1983) gave all credit to Snodgrass and Coldstream and made no reference to the homonymous book by Ure.⁶⁵

Ure’s treatment of the Dark Age was original in other respects, especially in promoting a cross-cultural approach to the concept. The British scholar made the comparison between the Dark Age(s) of Greece and the European Dark Ages more explicit than in either previous or subsequent scholarship, and he also extended it to the Renaissance. Ure’s command of the comparative material was not superficial, since at a later stage of his career he devoted a book to the European Dark Ages, specifically to Byzantium of the sixth century C.E.⁶⁶ Ure’s discussion of the Greek Dark Age(s) incorporates comparisons to the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals overthrowing the Roman empire; to the Vikings, the Angles, and the Saxons; and to King Arthur fighting against “robber barons” in the power vacuum created after Rome’s withdrawal from Britain. Likewise, Ure’s End of the Greek Dark Age and Renaissance includes comparative references to the Tudors, Florence and the Cathedral of Orvieto, the Medici family, Galileo, Giotto, Donatello, Michelangelo, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, and the flight of Byzantine scholars to the west.⁶⁷ Ure even used the parallel of the European Renaissance to argue that the earliest Greek sculpture had wooden prototypes and was inspired by the rediscovery of sculpture of still greater antiquity.⁶⁸

In a cross-cultural comparison of this sort, the emphasis on people and events in the Italian peninsula is probably to be expected. The references to British history are more peculiar but can probably be explained by the intended primary audience of Ure’s book in Britain. It may also pertain, however, to a question that has puzzled scholars; the reasons for the particular appeal that the Greek Dark Age(s) have had among British scholars.⁶⁹ Ure’s references suggest a conceptual (even if superficial) affiliation between the British Middle Ages and the Greek Dark Age(s); both were

⁵⁹ Ure 1921, 21; see also 22–6, 38–41, 61–3.

⁶⁰ Ure 1921, 4.

⁶¹ Meyer 1893, esp. 533.

⁶² Bull 2005, 44, 46.

⁶³ Renaissance: Ure 1921; Burn 1960, 58; Hägg 1983a, esp. 208–10; Pomeroy et al. 1999, 59–69; Whitley 2001, 98–101; Hall 2007, 68; Antonaccio 2011; Bintliff 2012, 227–28. Revolution: Burn 1960; Starr 1961; Snodgrass 1980; Whitley 2001, 98–101; Morris 2009; Antonaccio 2011, 242.

⁶⁴ Snodgrass 1971; Coldstream 1977.

⁶⁵ Hägg 1983a, esp. 208–10; 1983b, 7; Hiller 1983, 9; cf. Antonaccio 2011. Jack Davis and Ian Morris indicated to me (pers. comm. 2015) that Ure’s book was recommended reading in Cincinnati in the 1970s and Cambridge in the 1980s.

⁶⁶ Ure 1951, esp. 12.

⁶⁷ Ure 1921, 18, 20, 22–3, 164 (Dark Age); 73, 77, 159–65 (End of Dark Age).

⁶⁸ Ure 1921, 77, 92.

⁶⁹ Morris 1997a, 118.

unusually long and involved the collapse of centralized rule, migrations and invasions, petty kings, and epic poems.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in Britain, as in Greece, the period was followed by a renaissance. This comparison between ancient Greece and medieval Britain can also be traced in Murray's work and was subsequently explored at length by Bowra in his comparative approach to the concept of a Heroic Age.⁷¹

A different comparison between the Dark Age of ancient Greece and a modern dark age of the country may have also influenced Ure's approach. In 1917, Ure addressed the Anglo-Hellenic Union on the then-current sociopolitical troubles of Greece.⁷² In this political paper, Ure detailed how invasion and internal strife had brought the country to its knees and urged the British public to support Eleftherios Venizelos, "the greatest and most inspiring figure in European politics,"⁷³ against King Constantine I. In the paper, Ure blended modern politics and ancient Greek history. Particularly interesting for the purposes of this article was his recurring accusation against King Constantine of tyranny.⁷⁴ The subject of tyranny is central to *The Greek Renaissance* and also to *The Origin of Tyranny*, which were published shortly thereafter (in 1921 and 1922). Ure's focus on tyranny can perhaps be taken as an indication of the impact of contemporary Greek politics on the concept of the Greek Dark Age. This impact would manifest itself more clearly in scholarship of the early 1970s, when modern Greece was experiencing another dark period.

The relevance of modern Greek history remains tenuous, but Ure was clearly more interested in comparing Dark Age Greece to medieval Europe than in setting early Greece in its ancient Mediterranean context. A very different approach emerged during the 1930s, with the first publications that feature the term "(Early) Iron Age" in their titles. A close study of those publications that make up the black bars for the 1930s to 1960s (and even the 1970s) on figure 2 reveals that titles making reference to the Early Iron Age are exclusive to archaeological studies. These studies laid the foundation of a new conceptualization of the period that was considerably different from the one promoted by text-based scholarship under the terms "Dark

Age(s)" and "Heroic Age." Significantly, most of the early titles represented in figure 2 are characterized by a diachronic scope and treat the Early Iron Age together with prehistory.⁷⁵ The broad chronological scope of these works, which extends from the fourth or third millennium B.C.E. to the early first millennium B.C.E., may have influenced their authors to choose designations taken from the three-age system for their titles. The label "Dark Age(s)" would have sat very uncomfortably in those titles. Indeed, the term "Dark Age(s)" is typically found in titles with an exclusive focus on that period, as nearly all items registered in the white bars on figure 2 clearly demonstrate.

Because of its exclusive chronological focus, the term "Dark Age(s)" proved unpopular with specialists in Homeric archaeology in the 1950s–1960s. Relevant publications typically covered both the second and early first millennium B.C.E. and were therefore better served by designations taken from the three-age system.⁷⁶ Indeed, in one such work, Wace launched what is probably the earliest attack on the concept of the Dark Age(s). His little-known passage, which was published posthumously in 1962, is unique for its day and remains relevant to current considerations; it is therefore worth citing in full:⁷⁷

It is the lack of evidence about the Geometric period, particularly evidence from inhabited sites, which has in the past caused some scholars to assume a more fundamental kind of change between the Bronze and Iron Ages, and to describe the period as a "dark age." Transformation there certainly was, and civilization unquestionably fell below what had been known in the great period of the Mycenaean palaces. But present archaeological knowledge suggests that both historians and archaeologists have picturesquely exaggerated the effects of the transformation scene, and so obscured the origins of the Hellenic people and the essential continuity of culture on the Greek mainland from the Middle Bronze Age right into the Classical periods and even later.

Despite the strong arguments and confrontational style of Wace, his text did not provoke any obvious reaction, probably because it was taken to repeat his well-

⁷⁰ Cf. Ure 1917, 146.

⁷¹ Murray 1907, 50; Bowra 1957, 4–5, 7, 13, 15, 17, 18, 26–7.

⁷² Ure 1917; Sabetai 2006.

⁷³ Ure 1917, 135.

⁷⁴ Ure 1917, 147.

⁷⁵ Bossert 1937; Wiesner 1938; Heurtley 1939; Boardman 1961; Bayne 1963; Borchhardt 1972; Waldbaum 1978; Gesell 1979. From the 1980s, an exclusive focus on the (Early) Iron Age becomes more common in relevant titles.

⁷⁶ Lorimer 1950; Wace and Stubbings 1962; McDonald 1967. All systematically refer to the (Early) Iron Age but also include one or two references to the Dark Age(s).

⁷⁷ Wace 1962, 358 (cf. 338).

known position for cultural continuity in the Bronze Age of mainland Greece.⁷⁸ The field would be shaken by a debate on these subjects only three decades later, in the early 1990s (discussed later in this article).⁷⁹

The struggle between the Dark Age(s) and (Early) Iron Age was not solely about chronological divisions; it also involved spatial dimensions. The importance of geography is clearly evidenced by the regional focus of the works surveyed for figure 2 that were published in the 1930s to 1960s and use the term “(Early) Iron Age” in their titles. These works focus on Crete, Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and northwest Anatolia,⁸⁰ a grouping that may seem odd at first glance. These regions are characterized by different geography and material culture but are all located in different corners of the north and south Aegean. Because of their locations, they are often taken to lie in the cultural periphery of the Aegean, a concept expressed most explicitly by Morris.⁸¹ All four regions lie beyond Morris’ central Greece, the “central” in this case referring to cultural rather than geographic centrality.

Most of the early publications featuring the term “(Early) Iron Age” in the title concern Crete and Macedonia,⁸² two assumed peripheries that have been considered the least typical of all regions of ancient Greece.⁸³ In his first monograph of 1964, Snodgrass used the term “Early Iron Age” systematically for Macedonia, occasionally for Crete, and almost never for the rest of Greece and the Aegean.⁸⁴ Crete and Macedonia

also monopolize the titles of the first Greek monographs on the period, which were published in the 2000s.⁸⁵ It is clearly in the peripheries of the Aegean that the term “(Early) Iron Age” first gained some prominence. The first occurrence of this term in a book title on the heartland of ancient and modern Greece (or Morris’ central Greece) came only with *Lefkandi I*, published in 1980, half a century after the first such title on the archaeology of an Aegean periphery.⁸⁶

There are different reasons why the term “(Early) Iron Age” was used for Aegean peripheries much earlier than for core areas. First, these regions (excluding Crete) were not part of the Mycenaean palatial world. Their archaeology involves considerable degrees of continuity from the Bronze Age and no serious or long-term demise at the end of the second millennium B.C.E. On the contrary, it is the seventh century B.C.E. that is usually taken as a much more salient historical watershed for these regions. In Crete, this century has been seen as the beginning of a period of recession, which some would label as a dark age.⁸⁷ Likewise, two recent reference works on the history of Macedonia treat the seventh century B.C.E. as the dividing line between prehistory and history.⁸⁸ Lastly, this century is seen as a period of major transformation in the human and cultural landscape of northwest Anatolia and Aegean Thrace, stimulated by Greek colonization.⁸⁹

The same Aegean peripheries have also been thought to have experienced relatively intense human mobility during the centuries in question, which also encouraged the use of the term “(Early) Iron Age.” Northwest Anatolia and Macedonia have been taken to have received an influx of foreign population from the Balkans during this period, as Crete, to a lesser extent, has been believed to have had from Cyprus and the Near East.⁹⁰ The designation “(Early) Iron Age” is of long standing

⁷⁸ On this position and the relevant debate, see McDonald and Thomas 1990, 258–72, 280–91.

⁷⁹ The possibility of an otherwise obscure debate in the 1960s–1970s is suggested by Snodgrass’ (1971, viii) concern that his idea of the Dark Age would perhaps be challenged “from the conviction that the Greek genius was too strong to have suffered such a setback.”

⁸⁰ Vulpe 1930 (Thrace, including Aegean Thrace); Bossert 1937 (Crete); Heurtley 1939 (Macedonia); Boardman 1961 (Crete); Bayne 1963 (northwest Anatolia).

⁸¹ Morris 1997a; 2000, esp. 195–96, 238–50. I have some reservations about Morris’ concept of central Greece and the associated notion of cores and peripheries in the Aegean of the Early Iron Age, but this cannot be discussed here because of limitations of space.

⁸² Bossert 1937; Heurtley 1939; Boardman 1961.

⁸³ Whitley 2009, 273; cf. Bintliff 1997, 30.

⁸⁴ Snodgrass 1964: “(Early) Iron Age Macedonia” on pages 45–6, 94, 100, 102, 123, 148; “Iron Age Crete” on pages 110, 175 (but “Dark Age Crete” on pp. 132, 156). The sole(?) reference to the Iron Age of a different part of Greece and the Aegean is found on page 199.

⁸⁵ Papanavvas 2001; Mitaki 2003; Tsipopoulou 2005; Kaplanidou and Chioti 2007.

⁸⁶ Popham et al. 1980. Compare the delay in extending the use of the term from the southern to the northern Levant (Whincop 2009, 9).

⁸⁷ Prent 1997 (Dark Age); Kotsonas 2002, (forthcoming); Erickson 2010; Whitley 2010.

⁸⁸ Roisman and Worthington 2010; Lane Fox 2011.

⁸⁹ Northwest Anatolia: Aslan and Pernicka 2013; see also Rose 2008, 415–19. Aegean Thrace: Tiverios 2008.

⁹⁰ Northwest Anatolia: Rose 2008, 410–11; Grave et al. 2013; Kotsonas 2013a, 28. Macedonia: Heurtley 1939, 129–30; Hammond 1972, 300–11, 370, 405–49; Fotiadis 2001. Crete: Halbherr and Orsi 1888; Kotsonas 2011, 134.

in scholarship concerning the Balkans and the Near East, in addition to other parts of the Mediterranean (see fig. 1), and its use for the Aegean regions in question clearly facilitated discussions of mobility and migration between these areas.

Unlike the term “(Early) Iron Age,” which promoted the discussion of Greece within broader geographical contexts, the alternative designations “Heroic Age,” “Dark Age(s)” and “(Proto)Geometric period” isolated Greece from the rest of the Mediterranean on the basis of textual or material evidence. The exclusionary qualities of the art historical designations in particular are illustrated by a project on ancient Mediterranean ceramics that was organized by the Union Académique Internationale in the early 1920s to early 1930s. The then newly founded union commissioned a series of essays published as pamphlets under the general heading *Classification des céramiques antiques* at precisely the time it also initiated the *Corpus vasorum antiquorum*.⁹¹ Several of the pamphlets covered Greek pottery of the first half of the first millennium B.C.E. (Corinthian, Laconian, East Greek, and Boeotian, the last authored by Ure⁹²), and all used style as the primary criterion for classification. Conversely, in the case of nearly every other region of the Mediterranean, including Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, Asia Minor, the prehistoric Aegean, Sicily, and the Italian peninsula, classification was based on chronological periods (from Neolithic to Roman), and the term “(Early) Iron Age” was used to label the material of (most of) the first millennium B.C.E.

Although the art historical approach isolated early Greece from the rest of the Mediterranean, it gained prominence over time and culminated in the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of two seminal works on Protogeometric and Geometric pottery, by Desborough and Coldstream, respectively.⁹³ The two scholars systematized the relevant evidence from much of the Aegean and placed emphasis on chronology, typology, and regional variation; they showed little interest, however, in a range of historical processes, with the exception of interregional interaction. Historian Chester Starr attacked the art historical, ceramo-centric approach, basically characterizing it as antihistorical.⁹⁴

Starr, and also Finley, developed alternative approaches to—and introduced historical agendas in—the study of the period. These developments broadened the gap between material-based and text-based approaches.

In the many editions of *The World of Odysseus*, which was originally published in 1954, Finley used absolute chronology to refer to the early first millennium B.C.E.⁹⁵ Only in one of the two appendices of the second edition did he use the label “Dark Age,” in arguing against Snodgrass,⁹⁶ obviously embracing this scholar’s terminology. However, in works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Finley systematically referred to the “Dark Age.”⁹⁷ The change in Finley’s terminological choice must have been due to the publication of Starr’s influential *The Origins of Greek Civilization* in 1961. The impact of this work on the popularity of the concept of the Greek Dark Ages has recently been fully acknowledged.⁹⁸ It remains little known, however, that a few years later, in *A History of the Ancient World* (1965), Starr would have the Dark Ages affect much of the ancient world: Greece, Italy, Asia Minor and the Near East, and Eurasia from parts of western Europe to the confines of China.⁹⁹ Starr, and secondarily Finley, revived the concept of the Greek Dark Age(s) and passed it on in the 1970s to scholars such as Snodgrass and Desborough, who are often treated as its founding fathers. Ure’s pioneering contribution had apparently been forgotten.

ALLEGORIES OF DARK AGES: ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICS IN THE 1970S

The 1970s was a fascinating period for the study of early Greece. Three monographs, by Snodgrass, Desborough, and Coldstream, synthesized the increasing quantity of primary information from mostly scattered reports into reference works that shaped the field for decades.¹⁰⁰ By the publication of these works, the prevailing conceptualization of the period passed to the hands of the archaeologists, where it has remained ever since. The professional success of Snodgrass and Coldstream in obtaining prestigious academic positions in Cambridge and London, respectively, in the mid

⁹¹ Kurtz 2004, 274–75.

⁹² Ure 1926.

⁹³ Desborough 1952; Coldstream 1968.

⁹⁴ Starr 1961, 99–102; 1974; 1992, 4–5; cf. Morris 1997a, 118–20; 2000, 92–4.

⁹⁵ Finley 1956, 47–51 (esp. 51); 1977, 44–9 (esp. 48).

⁹⁶ Finley 1977, 152–58.

⁹⁷ Finley 1967, 284–87; 1970.

⁹⁸ Muhly 2011, 46; see also Morris 1997a, 120–21; 2000, 94–5.

⁹⁹ Starr 1965, 124–29, 184–92.

¹⁰⁰ Snodgrass 1971; Desborough 1972; Coldstream 1977.

1970s to early 1980s is suggestive of the appreciation their work enjoyed and the increased general interest in early Greece.¹⁰¹

Increased interest in the period is also indicated by the first real peak in the graph of figure 2, which marks the 1970s. The graph shows that studies featuring the (Early) Iron Age in their titles largely continued at a pace established since the 1930s (resuming after the interruption caused by World War II). It also demonstrates, however, that the 1970s was the heyday of the Dark Age(s). Indeed, this was the first time this term was featured in the prominent position of a book title on ancient Greece. The first stand-alone publication so titled is Thomas' *Homer's History: Mycenaean or Dark Age?*, which appeared in 1970. This is not, however, an original work but rather a collection of articles published in the course of the preceding century, with very little use in the text of the term "Dark Age."¹⁰² It was only in 1971, with Snodgrass' *The Dark Age of Greece*, that the concept and associated period first received a synthetic monograph with an eponymous title. Desborough's *The Greek Dark Ages* followed suit in 1972, just after Starr published the first handbook on ancient Greece with a chapter by this title.¹⁰³ It was, however, in Snodgrass' work that the term "Dark Age(s)" was introduced in Aegean archaeology and was first theorized. For these and other reasons, this scholar is agreed to have had the greatest impact on the study of the period,¹⁰⁴ and he has accordingly been called "the guru of the Greek Dark Ages"¹⁰⁵ (although, as previously noted, the plural form "Ages" is Desborough's choice, not Snodgrass'). The contribution of Snodgrass receives particular attention in this section because of this consensus.

Reviewers of the monographs by Snodgrass and Desborough did not comment on the innovative terminological choice in their titles,¹⁰⁶ probably because of the contemporary increased popularity of the term "Dark Age(s)." However, this choice stands in (largely unnoticed) contrast to the terminology the two scholars had used for the period in their earlier publications,

where the term "Dark Age(s)" is missing altogether or makes only a limited appearance. Before his *Greek Dark Ages*, Desborough had written two monographs on early Greece, in which he referred to the period by different names.¹⁰⁷ Desborough's Early and Late Dark Ages of 1972 correspond to the Late Helladic IIIC and Protogeometric periods, respectively, which were the foci of his two previous monographs. In articles published as late as 1965, both Desborough and Snodgrass make no reference to a Dark Age, with the latter scholar systematically using the term "Early Iron Age" instead.¹⁰⁸ The 1965 articles by both scholars were in a journal primarily addressed to specialists in British prehistory, a context of publication that surely affected their terminological choices. Snodgrass' subject, the connection between Greece and Europe, must have also played a role. Snodgrass had previously preferred the term "Early Iron Age" in his first book, in 1964, basically his doctoral thesis, from which, however, the name "Dark Age" is not missing altogether.¹⁰⁹ The very title of the work, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons from the End of the Bronze Age to 600 B.C.*, suggests some uneasiness with the designation of the period (partly related to the author's flexible approach to his chronological termini). Nevertheless, in a companion publication to that work, which appeared only three years later (1967), *Arms and Armour of the Greeks*, Snodgrass devotes a chapter to the Dark Age, and the alternative designation "Early Iron Age" is missing altogether.¹¹⁰ In his major synthesis of 1971, Snodgrass used the two terms interchangeably, and it was actually the label "early Iron Age" that the scholar used to describe his subject in the book's preface and that Edinburgh University Press selected for the first lines of the book's dust jacket.¹¹¹

The reason for this terminological shift to the Dark Age(s) is not straightforward. The full range of gloomy phenomena that characterized the Dark Age(s) was

¹⁰¹ Morris 1997a, 122–23; 2000, 95–8.

¹⁰² Thomas 1970.

¹⁰³ Snodgrass 1971; Starr 1971, 95–7; Desborough 1972.

¹⁰⁴ Morris 1994, 39–40; 1997a, 125–29; 1997b, 537; 2000, 65–6, 98–102; Shanks 1996, 132–43; Whitley 2001, 55–7; Étienne et al. 2006, 16–18.

¹⁰⁵ Papadopoulos 1993, 194.

¹⁰⁶ Dickinson 1973; Snodgrass 1973; Starr 1974.

¹⁰⁷ Desborough 1952, 1964.

¹⁰⁸ Desborough 1965 (only absolute dates are given); Snodgrass 1965 (the only reference to a "Dark Age" is on p. 238).

¹⁰⁹ Browsing Snodgrass' (1964) volume, one finds that the term "Early Iron Age" (on pp. 1, 37, 45, 46, 94, 100, 102, 107, 110, 123, 148, 175, 178, 199, 204) appears more frequently than "Dark Age" (pp. 4, 77, 132, 144, 156, 159, 167, 189, 194, 212), but the two cover different regions (supra n. 84). The label "Early Iron Age" is systematically used for regions farther from the center (pp. 110, 160, 162, 175, 212).

¹¹⁰ Snodgrass 1967.

¹¹¹ Snodgrass 1971.

well known before that time, and there were no particular field discoveries made in the 1950s and 1960s to stir up the notion of the darkness of the period. It was probably the publication of Starr's monograph of 1961 that primarily stimulated the shift. Indeed, Snodgrass acknowledges Starr's work as "a perceptive and sympathetic work . . . which has been a valuable guide throughout."¹¹² Desborough does not draw from Starr but was certainly influenced by Snodgrass' just-published work, parts of which were known to him beforehand. Indeed, the two scholars courteously acknowledged their debt to each other, and Desborough also acknowledged having read some of Snodgrass' text, most of which was written in 1968.¹¹³ Personal communication between these two leading scholars and broader developments in the discipline played a role in the rise of the term "Dark Age(s)." However, there may have been further reasons for the terminological choice, especially by Snodgrass.

Influence by scholarship from outside Britain and the United States is unlikely. The term "Dark Age(s)" proved unpopular elsewhere, and the art historical designations "Protogeometric" and especially "Geometric" were systematically preferred. In a major work on Geometric art published in both German and English in the 1960s, Schweitzer distinguished between the "dark age," which he largely identified with the time of the Protogeometric style, and the Geometric period.¹¹⁴ More typical for German scholarship of that era was the use of art historical designations and absolute chronology, as manifested by two major publications of 1969.¹¹⁵ The same approach is found in Courbin's *La céramique géométrique de l'Argolide* of 1966,¹¹⁶ but by the mid 1970s the concept of the Dark Age(s) had reached French literature,¹¹⁷ most probably through the work of Snodgrass. French scholars, however, remained largely indifferent to the period, especially until the 1980s,¹¹⁸ symptomatic of which is the presence of only two French titles among the data gathered for figure 2.¹¹⁹

¹¹² Snodgrass 1971, viii.

¹¹³ Snodgrass 1971, viii; 2000a, xxxiii n. 1; Desborough 1972, 11.

¹¹⁴ Schweitzer 1969, 10–12; cf. Schachermeyer 1980.

¹¹⁵ Bouzek 1969 (with passing reference to the Early Iron Age on p. 115); Drerup 1969.

¹¹⁶ Courbin 1966.

¹¹⁷ van Effenterre 1974, 213–22.

¹¹⁸ As noted in Morris 1997a, 126.

¹¹⁹ Although one of these two publications is the earliest item

Varied modes of conceptualizing the period are attested in Greek scholarship, but the designation "Dark Age" appears to be thoroughly unpopular. Likewise, the terms "Early Iron Age" and the "Greek Middle Ages" make only brief appearances in university handbooks on Greek art and archaeology widely used for much of the 20th century.¹²⁰ More interesting in this respect is the *History of the Greek Nation* (*Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*), a multivolume project offering a diachronic narrative of Greek history, compiled by leading Greek academics in the 1970s.¹²¹ Although perhaps little known internationally, this work is still widely found in Greek homes and school libraries and is also used at the university level. Writing for the *History of the Greek Nation* as early as 1971, as the Dark Age(s) were becoming popular in Anglophone scholarship, Sakellariou argued against the use of the term and deemed it misleading with a reasoning that anticipated some current arguments. He argued that archaeological discoveries had yielded a considerable quantity of evidence for the culture of the period, and he added that our knowledge of it is much richer than that for many earlier periods.¹²² The approach of Sakellariou must have been influenced by the agenda of the overall project of the *History of the Greek Nation*. In the foreword to the first volume, the aim of the project is said to be to present "the continuity of the Greek world, its cultural unity and the internal integrity of Greek culture."¹²³ Additionally, the project is directly linked to the work of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, a Greek historian active in the second half of the 19th century, who first shaped a grand national narrative for the continuity of Greek history from the earliest times to the present.¹²⁴

A different volume of the *History of the Greek Nation* confirms this agenda in arguing against the concept of a Dark Age of Byzantium and the associated

counted in figure 2 (Vulpe 1930), there was clearly no follow-up in France.

¹²⁰ Early Iron Age: Kavvadias 1916, 84. Greek Middle Ages: Tsountas 1928, 67; see also Tsountas and Manatt 1897, 365.

¹²¹ See esp. *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* 1971.

¹²² Sakellariou 1971, 15 (the literature list on p. 608 includes Starr's work but not Snodgrass' monograph of 1971, which appeared too late to be consulted).

¹²³ Foreword to *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* 1970, 4 (discussed further in Kotsakis 1991, 71–2).

¹²⁴ Foreword to *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* 1970, 3. On the narrative of Paparrigopoulos and its enduring appeal, see Plantzos 2008 (with references).

notion of racial discontinuity in Early Medieval Greece. This concept was first proposed by German historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer in the 1830s and was revived in two lectures given in Cincinnati in 1962 by the Byzantine historian Romilly Jenkins.¹²⁵ The debate over the Dark Age of Byzantium was exceptional in its political and racial agenda but was occasionally seen to be relevant to the archaeology of early Greece. In his inaugural lecture as Koraeas Professor at King's College London in 1971, Byzantine historian Donald Nicol was explicit on the matter: "the Slav occupation of Greece marked a break in the history of the Greek people comparable to that produced by the Dorian conquest of Prehistoric times."¹²⁶ Archaeologists of early Greece were influenced by this debate, as evidenced by Carpenter's argument for discontinuity in Greek civilization after the collapse of the Mycenaeans, which involved comparative discussion of the Dark Age of Byzantium.¹²⁷ The increased emphasis on dark ages of Greece and associated notions of cultural breaks, which marked the 1960s and 1970s, could not be left unanswered by the *History of the Greek Nation*. Some uneasiness with such notions characterizes Greek academia to the present day and could explain the unpopularity of the term "Dark Age" in handbooks by Greek archaeologists.¹²⁸

In the year that saw the publication of the first volume of the *History of the Greek Nation* (1970), a second project of equally ambitious scope also appeared in Greece. This was a grand narrative of the military history of the Greeks designed as a coda to a major exhibition held in Athens in 1968. This exhibition is said to have attracted more than 2.2 million visitors, one-quarter of the contemporary population of Greece, in just six months.¹²⁹ The joint project of exhibition and publication was sponsored by the dictatorial regime, the junta, which ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974. In that publication, the early first millennium B.C.E. is called the Geometric period and receives little attention, unlike the Mycenaean and later periods, which are treated at considerable length. Photographs of the exhibition document the display of some drawings

of Attic Geometric (eighth-century B.C.E.) pottery but include no antiquities from this period. A panel in one of these photographs (fig. 3) is the only indication of how the period was conceived: "When the potential of the Mycenaean Greek world was exhausted, the healthy powers of the race, which Greek tradition identified with the Zeus-born Herakleids, created a new order, which became the foundation of Classical Greek culture."¹³⁰ The panel expresses the concept of the Dark Age(s) as a new beginning, which was—and still is—widespread in Greek and international scholarship on the period, but it also includes a distinctive reference to the health of the race. This reference recalls—and perhaps conforms to—the predilection of the chief dictator Georgios Papadopoulos for the use of a medical discourse into the politics of his days. This is precisely what a BBC correspondent once described as "gory surgical metaphors."¹³¹ Ironically, such metaphors of an "almost surgical break" are not altogether missing from current scholarship on the late second and early first millennium B.C.E.¹³²

The overall neglect of the period in the joint project of exhibition and publication provides a striking contrast to the choice of an image of a Geometric vase for the cover page of the two published volumes (fig. 4). One would perhaps expect here an image from Greek art of later periods, which is very rich in military scenes that are superior in aesthetic and narrative qualities. I suspect this image was chosen because of the visual similarities of its main feature to the focal point of the emblem of the dictatorial regime. The emblem was omnipresent in that period and is prominently illustrated at the end of this same publication (fig. 5), in the company of a political manifesto of the junta.¹³³ The central figure of this emblem, the soldier, is directly comparable to the soldiers of Geometric vase painting: both images are impersonalized male figures rendered in profile and in silhouette, with emphasis on two aspects of military gear, the helmet and a long offensive weapon held vertically (spear and rifle with bayonet, respectively). Dark Age Greece and Greece of the junta are visually affiliated. This affiliation sadly survives to the present day, in the choice of the meander, the

¹²⁵ Christophilopoulou (1979) argued explicitly against Jenkins 1967. For more on the debate, see Liakos 2008, 217–19.

¹²⁶ Nicol 1986, 10.

¹²⁷ Carpenter 1966, 12–14, 76–80.

¹²⁸ Syriopoulos 1983–1984, 3–4; Simantoni-Bournia 1997, 13.

¹²⁹ Έκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων 1970, 5.

¹³⁰ Έκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων 1970, 50.

¹³¹ Finer 1968; cf. Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 2004, 173.

¹³² Criticized in Papadopoulos 1993, 194; cf. Morris 1993, 207.

¹³³ Έκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων 1970, 737.

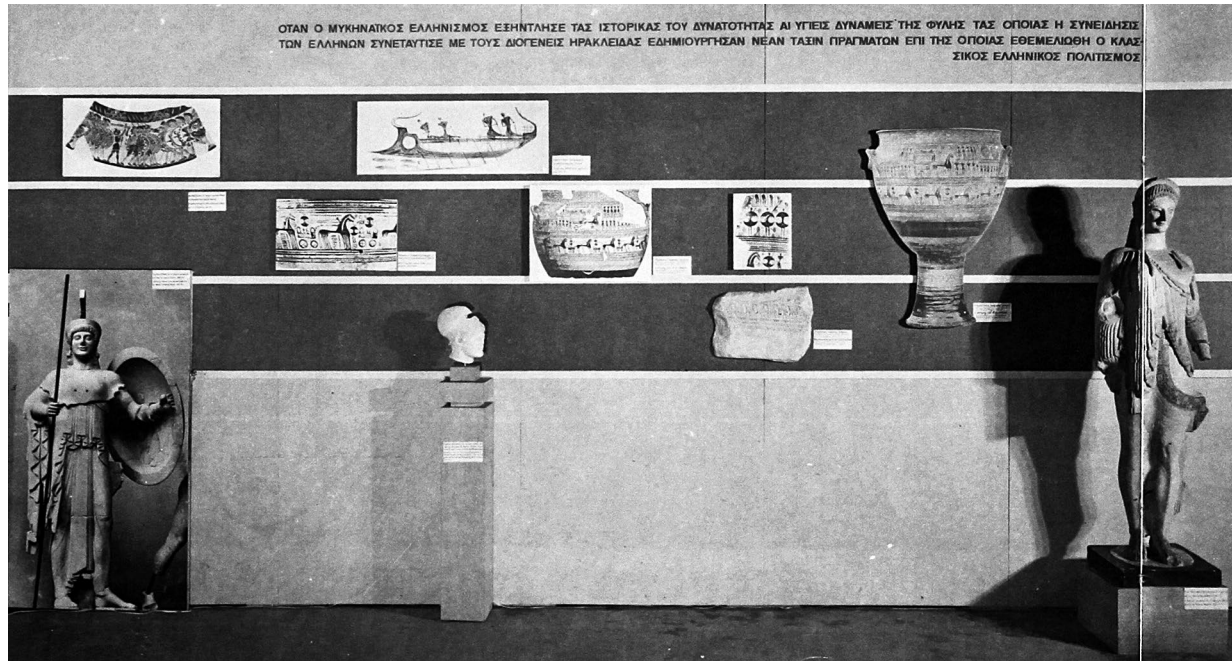


FIG. 3. Aspect of the exhibition on the military history of the Greeks held in Athens in 1968 (*Έκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων* 1970, 50).

hallmark of Greek Geometric art, as an emblem of the notorious Golden Dawn party, which is openly sympathetic to the junta.¹³⁴

In placing emphasis on the superficial visual resemblance of two very different images, the junta was clearly not promoting an affiliation of Greece under its rule with Greece during an assumed dark age (an assumption that was, in any case, unpopular within the country, as the arguments of Sakellariou suggest). Instead, the junta must have appreciated the positive qualities of the period as a new beginning and have entertained the identification of its own instruments with the arms-bearing Heracleids. As self-proclaimed “healthy powers of the race,” the colonels, like the Heracleids of the distant past, would bring a “new order” to the country.

In superficial resemblance with each other, the Dark Age of ancient Greece and the dark age of Greece of 1967–1974 involved the collapse of the preexisting political order and the alienation of the country from the

rest of the world.¹³⁵ Diachronic and cross-cultural comparisons of this sort are usually avoided in scholarship, but there are exceptions to this rule, notable among which is the enduring comparison of depopulation in Greece of the Dark Age(s) and the period of the War of Independence in 1821–1832.¹³⁶ “Doing history is political,”¹³⁷ as Arnold has stated, but comparisons involving explicit references to current politics are rarely found in studies of Greek antiquity. In 1968, however, Dow compared Dark Age Greece with modern Greece at the time of World War II and its immediate aftermath, the Greek civil war, which was fought between the armed forces of the Greek state and the military branch of the Greek Communist Party. Drawing from his own experience in the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, Dow

¹³⁵ Morris 1994, 38.

¹³⁶ Pendlebury 1939, 303; McDonald and Coulson 1983b, 322; Watrous and Hadzi-Vallianou 2004, 307. For wide-ranging comparisons on the collapse of sociopolitical complexity in world history and their relevance to the archaeology of early Greece, see the influential volume by Tainter (1988) and the full recent summary in Middleton 2010, 18–53.

¹³⁷ Arnold 2008, 22.

¹³⁴ On the choice of the meander as the emblem of the party and the title of the journal it publishes, see Χρυσή Αυγή 2012, 31 August (with recurring reference to the “rebirth” of the pattern in Greek Geometric art).

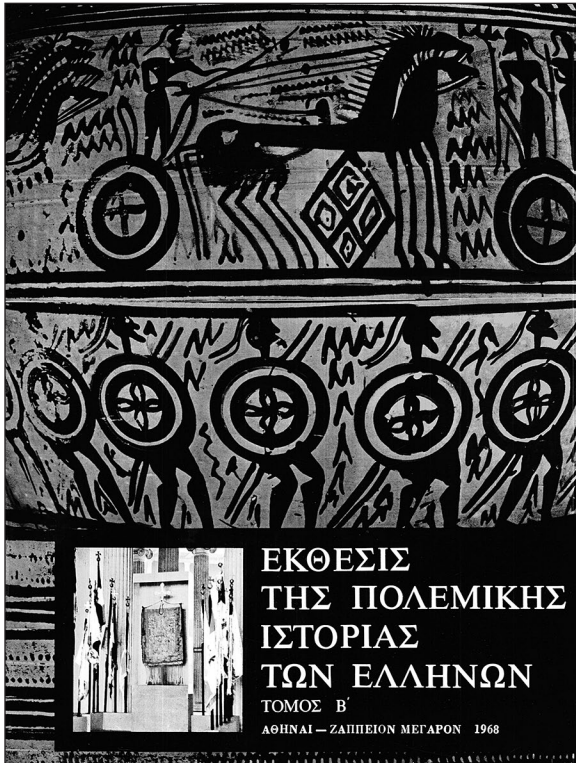


FIG. 4. The cover of the exhibition catalogue on the military history of the Greeks (*Εκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων 1970*).

likened the resilience of ancient Greeks of the Dark Age to the resilience of the Greeks of his own day. He noted that regardless of the Dorian massacres or “the German . . . and communist attacks on villages . . . Greeks are practically indestructible” and lamented that “in the Dark Age there was no Truman” to send aid to Greece.¹³⁸

Political agendas were deeply embedded in comparisons of this sort. This is particularly clear in the above-mentioned high-profile lecture that Nicol gave in London in 1971, in which he compared the Dark Age of Byzantium to that of early Greece. Nicol’s emphasis on the Dark Ages of Greece as cultural breaks was explicitly aimed at deconstructing “the awkward fictions of ‘Christian Hellenism’ . . . and of ‘the values of Hellenic Christian civilization’ so much vaunted by the present Greek régime,”¹³⁹ meaning the military dictatorship that ruled Greece in 1967–1974.

¹³⁸ Dow 1968, 119, 140, respectively.

¹³⁹ Nicol 1986, 20; cf. page 2: “Is there any thread that links



FIG. 5. The emblem of the military dictatorship in Greece of 1967–1974, copied from the exhibition catalogue on the military history of the Greeks (*Εκθεσις της πολεμικής ιστορίας των Ελλήνων 1970*, 737).

Writing at the same time as Dow and Nicol, Snodgrass developed comparisons of similar scope. In the first few lines of his first systematic review of the Dark Age, in *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (1967) Snodgrass argued for “numerous similarities” between the Dark Age of Greece and the Dark Age after the fall of the western Roman empire.¹⁴⁰ However, in the dedication of his *Dark Age of Greece*, Snodgrass introduced an allegory connecting Greek antiquity and modernity, and Dark Age Greece with the dark age of Greece in his own time. The dedication reads “to the people of Greece,” and is followed by a short passage in ancient Greek verse: “καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ’ ἔτλης.”

the Greeks of Col. Papadopoulos with the Greeks of Pericles?” Note the irony of the contrast between a founding father of ancient Greek democracy and the chief dictator of modern Greece.

¹⁴⁰ Snodgrass 1967, 35.

Rendered in the original archaic Greek, with a sophisticated vocabulary and no reference to the actual textual source, the verse has largely gone unnoticed in the many discussions of Snodgrass' contribution to the history of the period and to classical archaeology as a whole.¹⁴¹ When this verse is translated into English, the full dedication reads, "to the people of Greece / once you endured worse than this."¹⁴²

The dedication is revealed to be an expression of sympathy and a word of encouragement to the people of Greece as much as a political statement. The suffering of the Greeks at that time (the early 1970s) is unmistakably no other than that caused by the military regime. The "worse" suffering of past times is enigmatic; it can well be a generic statement, a reference to one of the many catastrophes in the history of Greece, or, given the context of the dedication, it could be taken to refer to the actual Dark Age of ancient Greece.

Snodgrass was not the only foreign archaeologist to express sympathy to the Greeks at this time and to be critical toward the dictatorial regime. Some months earlier, five esteemed classicists from the University of Oxford, including Snodgrass' former teachers and his Ph.D. supervisor, John Boardman, had sent a letter to the editor of *The Times* expressing their deep concern that the passport of an eminent Greek archaeologist, Semni Karouzou, had been withheld by the regime.¹⁴³ Entitled "A Passport Refused," the letter was inspired by the same ideals that had previously (1917) driven Ure's criticism against Constantine I on the imprisonment of Greek classicists.¹⁴⁴ However, the letter to *The Times* proved more effective and forced the dictatorial regime to suspend the ban on Karouzou.

Unlike the authors of the letter to *The Times*, and unlike Nicol, Snodgrass chose a subtle style in his dedication. His text is legible by scholars but is rather incomprehensible to laypeople, including the instruments of the regime, who were on the lookout for potential threats deemed "immoral" and "antinational." I

suspect that if those instruments had appreciated this brief statement, Snodgrass, then lecturer in Greek archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, with active research projects in Greece, could have faced problems in continuing his work in the country. It is indicative that in the early years of the dictatorship and until the end of 1969, "academic libraries had to dispose of 'communist' admissions and teaching staffs were instructed not to recommend foreign bibliography."¹⁴⁵ Censorship is agreed to have been less harsh after 1969, and a sign of this is the publication *Δεκαοχτώ Κείμενα*, a collection of 18 pieces of political literature produced by Greek authors in 1970. The *Eighteen Texts* targeted the dictatorial regime through the use of allegories and symbols, which explains why this work was quickly translated into English, French, and German and received reviews in many high-profile international journals.¹⁴⁶ Illustrative of the spirit of this publication is the first of the 18 texts, the poem "The Cats of Saint Nicholas," in which Nobel laureate poet Giorgos Seferis describes a battle between cats and snakes, which lasted over "centuries of poison."¹⁴⁷

A comparable allegory, imbued with political meaning, is concealed in Snodgrass' dedication of the *Dark Age of Greece*. In it, the scholar went further than his former teachers at Oxford to communicate a powerful and provocative, if cryptic, political message. The message becomes clear only when the ancient Greek verse is traced back to the unmentioned textual source, Homer's *Odyssey* 20.18, which describes the first night of Odysseus' return to the palace of Ithaca after his long absence. The hero enters his home disguised as a beggar, wanders among the suitors who usurped his realm, and prepares their end, while struggling at the same time to tame his fury. This is the context in which Odysseus addresses his heart in a typically Homeric manner and asks her to bear patiently, as she has "endured worse"; the time to strike will soon come.

By introducing this Homeric verse to the dedication of his book, Snodgrass not only borrowed from the poetics of the *Odyssey* but also invested in the associated story and its powerful political message (as he

¹⁴¹ Morris 1994, 39–40; 2000, 65–6, 98–9; Shanks 1996, 132–43; Whitley 2001, 55–7; Étienne et al. 2006, 16–18.

¹⁴² Translation by Shewring 1980, 243.

¹⁴³ A. Andrewes, B. Ashmole, J. Boardman, C.M. Robertson, and C.W. Woodhouse, "A Passport Refused," *The Times* (9 December 1970) 11. Snodgrass' (2000b) personal recollections are indicative of the role of most of these scholars in his education. On Semni Karouzou and the dictatorial regime, see Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 2004, 176.

¹⁴⁴ Ure 1917, 142, 145.

¹⁴⁵ Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 2004, 173; cf. Papanikolaou 2010, 176–77.

¹⁴⁶ Seferis et al. 1970 (on which, see Papanikolaou 2010, 180–82).

¹⁴⁷ The comparable term "The Dark centuries" with its poetic overtone was introduced to scholarship in the same period (Johnston 1976, 49–64).

confirmed to me in personal communication).¹⁴⁸ Much like Penelope's suitors, who mistreated the people of ancient Ithaca, the leaders of the dictatorial regime made the people of Greece suffer in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Snodgrass' words contain an allegory for the end of a dark age: the imminent fall of the Homeric suitors is likened to the much-anticipated fall of the usurpers of modern Greece. The fall was a matter of hours in the *Odyssey*, but for modern Greece, the end of the dark age came three painful years after Snodgrass' publication, in 1974. In the words of a Greek poet, "No verse today can overthrow regimes."¹⁴⁹

DEPARTING LEGACIES IN THE 1980S

Contrary to expectations from "the guru of the Greek Dark Ages," Snodgrass did not stick to this term for more than a few years. I take this as indirect evidence in support of the argument that the emphasis on the Dark Age of ancient Greece in the early 1970s was partly related to the contemporary experience of modern Greece. As early as 1977, in his inaugural lecture as Lawrence Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, Snodgrass discussed the subject of state formation in early Greece without any reference to the Dark Age. Likewise, in his *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment*, published in 1980, the term is mentioned very sparingly and only in passing.¹⁵⁰ By 1987, in *An Archaeology of Greece*, Snodgrass had abandoned this name altogether and replaced it with the term "Early Iron Age";¹⁵¹ and in 1989 he would argue, "the Early Iron Age of Greece is seldom referred to by that name, being more commonly designated by some label that indicates an unfavorable comparison with its more famous antecedent and sequel: it is 'post-Mycenaean, a 'Dark Age,' 'proto-historic,' 'pre-Classical,' or it is the 'Greek Middle Age,' from which only a 'Renaissance' could bring relief."¹⁵² Snodgrass has favored the term "Early Iron Age" ever since, to the extent that he admitted he regrets having called the period the "Dark Age" in his monograph of 1971.¹⁵³

Evidence suggesting that the 1980s was a turning point in the historiography of the period is not exclu-

sive to the work of Snodgrass. "Prior to 1980, the general feeling was that the Dark Age richly deserved its sobriquet," wrote Muhly, whereas Morris identified a paradigm shift in the study of the period in the 1980s.¹⁵⁴ At this time, Morris argues, archaeological conceptions of the period overpowered textual ones, which had previously prevailed. I agree with Morris' idea of a paradigm shift, one largely stimulated by the theoretical approaches of the Snodgrass School (discussed later in this article), and I add another catalyst for this shift—namely, archaeological fieldwork. Indeed, publications of fieldwork constitute more than half the black bar for the 1980s in the figure 2 graph. Published in 1980, *Lefkandi I* was the first stand-alone publication of an excavation that used the term "(Early) Iron Age" in its title,¹⁵⁵ a point to which I return. The publication series on Kastanas in central Macedonia contributes several items to the black bar for the 1980s. Compiled by a German team with experience in European prehistory, this series lends support to the argument that the Early Iron Age was a concept first adopted in studies of Aegean peripheries. Several of the remaining titles that make up the same bar focus on the relationship of the Aegean with Cyprus, Anatolia, and the Near East and therefore corroborate the idea that the term "(Early) Iron Age" facilitated the study of Greece and the Aegean in their Mediterranean context.

In contradiction to the superficial implication of figure 2, the 1980s was a time of implicit terminological struggle rather than of any sweeping shift. Markedly different approaches to the period were developed during that time, but there was hardly any discourse over terms and concepts. On the one hand, proponents of the Greek Dark Age(s), such as Hägg or Coulson (on whom see below), would consent that "it is beginning to become obvious that the 'Dark Ages' were not really as 'dark' as we have imagined" or that "the period may not have been as 'dark' as the name implies."¹⁵⁶ As Muhly succinctly put it, "that age does seem to be getting brighter with every passing excavation season."¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, van Andel and Runnels, in their groundbreaking work on the archaeology of the Greek countryside, concluded that "so simple a term as Iron

¹⁴⁸ A. Snodgrass, pers. comm. 2014.

¹⁴⁹ Patrikios 1998, 178 (the relevant poem was first published in 1963).

¹⁵⁰ Snodgrass 1980, 27, 35–6, 43.

¹⁵¹ Snodgrass 1987.

¹⁵² Snodgrass 1989, 23.

¹⁵³ Snodgrass 2000a, xxiv.

¹⁵⁴ Muhly 1992, 10; Morris 1997a, 123, 130; cf. Snodgrass 2000a, xxxxi.

¹⁵⁵ Popham et al. 1980.

¹⁵⁶ Respectively, Hägg 1983b, 7; Coulson 1986, 78; cf. Coulson 1990, 23.

¹⁵⁷ Muhly 1989, 298.

Age is no longer useful.”¹⁵⁸ Criticism of the two terms, and especially of “Dark Age(s),” was not uncommon from the 1980s onward. Discussion of—and argument for—the positive qualities of either of the two terms was, however, scant. Therefore, the increased popularity of the term “Early Iron Age” in the 1980s cannot be associated with the work of any particular scholar.

Suggestive of multivocality, especially within British academia, are two collective projects of the mid 1970s to mid 1990s, both centered at Cambridge. One is *The Cambridge Ancient History*, especially volumes 2 and 3 published in 1975 and 1982, respectively. In these volumes, Desborough, Snodgrass, and John Cook systematically used the term “Dark Age” for mainland Greece and East Greece (esp. Ionia), as did Boardman for the Aegean Islands (albeit sparingly).¹⁵⁹ Hammond also used this term for the Peloponnese, but in the case of Macedonia he preferred the term “Early Iron Age,” which was deeply rooted in the scholarship on that region.¹⁶⁰ The prevalence of the term “Dark Age” is clear, but a symptom of uneasiness can perhaps be traced in the specification “Late Bronze–Early Iron Age,” which was added to the entry “Dark Age, Aegean” in the index of volume 3.

The second collective project at Cambridge is of different scope and regards the series of Ph.D. theses on the period produced under the supervision of Snodgrass. In covering a variety of topics, including the rise of the Greek polis, the emergence of Panhellenic sanctuaries, and the crystallization of Hellenic identity, Snodgrass’ students (also called the Snodgrass School) traced the roots of classical Greece into the early first millennium B.C.E.; they did not agree, however, on the name of the period. Snodgrass, as chronicled above, changed his views on this name by the late 1970s and 1980s. His students, who published their first books (often based on their theses) in the mid 1980s to mid 1990s, were divided on the matter: most favored the label “Dark Age,” while some systematically preferred the term “Early Iron Age” instead, and others used both.¹⁶¹ This variety of terminology invites qualification of the provocative argument that has called the

Dark Age “a phantom that has haunted ‘the musty confines of Cambridge’ for too long.”¹⁶²

Drawing from world archaeology and social anthropology, the Snodgrass School introduced a range of innovative theoretical approaches to the study of the period and of classical archaeology in general.¹⁶³ A different approach to the period and, to an extent, its nomenclature as well, emerged with the American scholar William Coulson. Coulson was adamant on the reality of a Dark Age,¹⁶⁴ although he eventually argued for a “not so dark” version of it and was posthumously called “an Iron Age philhellene.”¹⁶⁵ In contrast to scholars such as Snodgrass, Desborough, and Coldstream, whose initial works on the period had systematized extensive bodies of material (metal weapons and pottery) from much of Greece, and unlike Snodgrass’ students who introduced social theory to the study of specific regions, Coulson’s approach to early Greece was dominated by fieldwork and the study of stratigraphy, architecture, and pottery of a single site, Nichoria in Messenia.

Coulson’s engagement with the terminology of the period in this work is very peculiar, and volume 3 of *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece* is the only primary publication in Greek archaeology featuring the Dark Age in its title (*Dark Age and Byzantine Occupation*). Not only was Coulson the first (and basically the only) author to use the qualitative term “Dark Age” to describe formal distinctions in a stratigraphic sequence, but he also used this label to replace the art historical designations widely used for ceramic chronology. Coulson’s scheme for Nichoria involved the following phases: Dark Age I (1075–975 B.C.E.), Dark Age II (975–850 B.C.E.), Dark Age II/III (850–800 B.C.E.), Dark Age III (800–750 B.C.E.), and Late Geometric (750–700 B.C.E.). Coulson, together with McDonald, explained this scheme as follows: “We follow current practice in referring to this period as the ‘Dark Age,’ in preference to ‘Early Iron Age’ or ‘Protogeometric/Geometric’ period.”¹⁶⁶ In following “current practice,” the two scholars were adhering to a choice McDonald

¹⁵⁸ van Andel and Runnels 1987, 101.

¹⁵⁹ Edwards et al. 1975, 1073; Boardman et al. 1982, 1022.

¹⁶⁰ Heurtley 1939; Hammond 1972.

¹⁶¹ Dark Age: Whitley 1991; Osborne 1996; Shanks 1996. Early Iron Age: Morgan 1990; Hall 1997. Both terms: Morris 1987.

¹⁶² Papadopoulos 1993, 197.

¹⁶³ Morris 1994, 39–40; 1997a, 125–29; 1997b, 537; 2000, 65–6, 98–102; Shanks 1996, 132–43; Whitley 2001, 55–7; Étienne et al. 2006, 16–18.

¹⁶⁴ McDonald and Coulson 1983a, 3; 1983b, 327; Coulson 1990, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Brogan 2011 (with a biography of Coulson).

¹⁶⁶ McDonald and Coulson 1983a, 3.

had made in preliminary reports and earlier volumes of the excavations at Nichoria;¹⁶⁷ this choice, however, contrasted with the slightly earlier preference of the same scholar for the term “Early Iron Age.”¹⁶⁸ Also, the choice was far from “current practice” in the study of stratigraphy.¹⁶⁹ Such practice would have left cultural labels out of the stratigraphic phasing of the site, and numerical designations would have been the expected choice for the phases of Nichoria.

The nomenclature of the ceramic sequence of Nichoria was no less idiosyncratic. Coulson, with McDonald, felt reasonable uneasiness with the “system of relative chronology that depends mainly on data from east central Greece.”¹⁷⁰ They considered this system inapplicable to Messenia and had some critical remarks about the terms “Submycenaean” and “Protogeometric.”¹⁷¹ Coulson grounded his Dark Age sequence on two requirements: the need to distinguish between a ceramic style and the chronological period in which that style flourished, and the higher potential of the term “Dark Age” to accommodate regional variation in pottery styles (which I find unconvincing).¹⁷² In labeling the ceramic sequence of Nichoria, Coulson must have been influenced by Desborough’s twofold division of the Dark Ages and his publication of the “Dark Age pottery” of Lefkandi (a title that sits uncomfortably in the final publication of the “Iron Age” of this site).¹⁷³ The influence of Desborough is indicated by the repeated references to his work in the introduction to volume 3 of *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece* and is more explicitly acknowledged in two later publications by Coulson.¹⁷⁴ From the mid 1980s to the early 1990s, Coulson attempted to extend the peculiar ceramic sequence he had introduced to the rest of

Messenia, Laconia, and parts of western Greece.¹⁷⁵ His approach did not prove popular, but archaeologists active in Messenia still cannot escape his terminological “legacy.”¹⁷⁶

Much more influential was the publication of *Lefkandi I*, singled out above as the first stand-alone publication of an excavation using the term “(Early) Iron Age” in its title. *Lefkandi I* is a landmark in other respects as well. Published in 1980, half a century after the first use of the term for titles about archaeology in Aegean peripheries, this volume is distinguished as the first occurrence of the term in a book title about the heartland of ancient and modern Greece. The choice of the term “Iron Age” for the title of *Lefkandi I* is not explained by the British editors. It cannot, however, be directly associated with the widely recognized influence of the discoveries at the site on dispelling the notion of the Dark Age of Greece. This influence was largely based on the finding of the monumental building and associated rich burials at Lefkandi Toumba, which was made at precisely the time *Lefkandi I* was printed (1980).¹⁷⁷ The editors’ choice of the term “Iron Age” might best be explained by the chronological range of the site of Lefkandi: from the Early Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age, without archaic or later occupation. The lack of any narrowly defined classical past at Lefkandi suited its occupational history better to the long-established three-age system, which was very familiar to the project directors, prehistorians Mervyn Popham and Hugh Sackett. The excellent quality of *Lefkandi I* and the historical significance of the site, which became most apparent with the discoveries at Lefkandi Toumba, appears to have affected the dissemination of the term “(Early) Iron Age” over much of Greece from the 1980s.

One fieldwork project perhaps affected by this development was the American project at Kavousi in Crete. Targeting the archaeology of the early first millennium B.C.E., the Kavousi project had its first field season (a cleaning campaign) in 1981, with more intensive fieldwork commencing in 1987. The agenda of the Kavousi team was clearly inspired by that of the excavation at Nichoria, and Coulson, codirector at Kavousi,

¹⁶⁷ McDonald 1972; Lukermann and Moody 1978, 92–5; Sloan and Duncan 1978, 74–6.

¹⁶⁸ McDonald 1967 (esp. pp. 417–21 for Greece in general and p. 232 for Messenia in particular).

¹⁶⁹ Snodgrass (1984, 152) criticized Coulson’s choice, but Popham (1988) praised it.

¹⁷⁰ McDonald and Coulson 1983a, 7.

¹⁷¹ McDonald and Coulson 1983a, 4; 1983b, 316; cf. Coulson 1991, 44–5.

¹⁷² Coulson 1990, 10–11; cf. Nowicki 2000, 16.

¹⁷³ Desborough 1972, 1980. Desborough died a month after finishing the manuscript of the latter work (in July 1978), and this could explain why his title does not conform to the terminology used for the rest of the volume.

¹⁷⁴ McDonald and Coulson 1983a; Coulson 1985, 29; 1990, 9–11.

¹⁷⁵ Coulson 1985, 1986, 1991.

¹⁷⁶ For criticism, see, e.g., Lemos 2002, 8–9. On his terminological “legacy” in Messenia, see supra n. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Lemos 2002, 140–47.

embodied the link between the two projects.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, this vocal proponent of the Dark Ages abandoned that term in the context of the new project and referred to the Early Iron Age instead.¹⁷⁹ The traditional preference for the last term within Cretan archaeology, and in the work of one of Coulson's codirectors, Geraldine Gesell,¹⁸⁰ may explain this change. Among archaeological projects focusing on the (early) first millennium B.C.E. in Greece, Kavousi was innovative in its focus on a cluster of sites in their regional, historical, and ecological contexts.¹⁸¹ Incorporating recent developments, especially in American New Archaeology and Aegean prehistory,¹⁸² the project integrated excavation with surface survey, placed emphasis on landscape, and involved environmental analyses, soil micromorphology, ceramic petrography, and ethnoarchaeology.

Largely excavated by prehistorians and explored with agendas and fieldwork methodologies that were mostly developed in Aegean prehistory, sites such as Kavousi and Lefkandi brought the Early Iron Age closer to the Bronze Age rather than to the Classical period. The abandonment of these two and a number of other Aegean sites ca. 700 B.C.E. offered indirect support for this view. Unlike the scholars of the Snodgrass School, who theorized the period and viewed it primarily as a new beginning, Coulson and a few other archaeologists of the 1980s who had a stronger background in excavation conceived of this period as part of a much longer narrative. Nevertheless, Coulson failed to express this effectively in his terminological scheme and, with other like-minded archaeologists, refrained from arguing for his approach in any detail. The divergence of approaches developed in the 1980s first became confrontational in the 1990s.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE DARK AGE AND THE FORGING OF THE AGE OF IRON: 1990S TO THE PRESENT

Beginning with the grand syntheses of the 1970s, the study of the period can only be termed a success

¹⁷⁸ On the legacy of the Minnesota Messenia Expedition (MME) in the 1980s, see Fotiadis 1995, 60–1. On MME, the Kavousi project, and Coulson, see Brogan 2011, 20–1.

¹⁷⁹ Gesell et al. 1983.

¹⁸⁰ Gesell 1979.

¹⁸¹ Gesell et al. 1983, esp. 393–94; Coulson 1990, 23.

¹⁸² Summarized in Snodgrass 1987, 67–131, 202–5; van Andel and Runnels 1987; Coulson 1990, 22–3; Shanks 1996, 128–49; Whitley 2001, 55–9; Morris 2004, 262–64; Étienne et al. 2006, 16–18.

story: “Within a single generation, a conspicuously neglected episode of protohistory has changed into an intensely studied field” wrote Snodgrass in 1998, clearly impressed by “the ranks of symposia and other collective works on the Early Iron Age of Greece, which continue to appear at the rate of more than one a year, to say nothing of the numerous monographs.”¹⁸³ Indicative of these changes was the new round of professional success of several specialists of the period in the mid 1990s to mid 2000s, this time not only in Britain (with the notable exception of Cambridge) but also in the United States.¹⁸⁴

Figure 2 illustrates Snodgrass' description: interest in the period has grown rapidly since the 1970s and especially the 1990s. The number of titles recorded for the 2000s is more than double that for the 1980s. As in previous decades, British and American scholarship dominates and French titles are largely missing, but the 2000s attest to new developments. The first titles in Greek—no fewer than seven—appear in that decade, and all but one refer to the (Early) Iron Age; this number would be considerably higher if publication of finished Ph.D. dissertations was both more frequent and more rapid. On the other side, most titles using the term “Dark Age(s)” are in German and Italian, three and two respectively.

The relative demise of the term “Dark Age(s)” is largely due to the heavy criticism it attracted in the 1990s. As early as 1990, Coulson, the vociferous advocate of the Dark Ages, expressed some puzzlement over problems of definition.¹⁸⁵ The term “(Early) Iron Age” was favored instead because it is less “pejorative” or “judgmental,” avoids the traditional identification of certain pottery styles with specific periods, and hints at a major cultural development with long-lasting effects—namely, the introduction of iron technology;¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Snodgrass 1998, 132.

¹⁸⁴ Examples include Carla Antonaccio at Wesleyan University and then Duke, Catherine Morgan at King's College London and later at Oxford, Ian Morris at Chicago and then Stanford, Irene Lemos first at Edinburgh and later at Oxford, and James Whitley at Cardiff. Morgan and Whitley have also been directors of the British School at Athens.

¹⁸⁵ Coulson 1990, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Less pejorative: Étienne et al. 2006, 49; I. Morris 2007, 211; Papadopoulos 2014, 181. Less judgmental: Papadopoulos 1996, 253; see also Whitley 2001, 61; Dickinson 2006, 7; Kotsonas 2013b. For the problematic identification of pottery styles with specific periods, see *supra* n. 40. The term refers to the introduction of ironworking in Snodgrass 1987, 170; 2000a, xxiv; Whitley 2001, 78–84; Dickinson 2006, 7; Étienne et al. 2006,

it is also less ambiguous than the designation “Dark Age(s),” which has been used for different periods of world history, most notably for the European Middle Ages (which had originally been one of its attractions). Skepticism about the applicability of the term “Early Iron Age” has been infrequent and has concerned the late 12th to early 11th century B.C.E., when iron objects were rare in the Aegean. The alternative proposals “transitional Bronze Age–Iron Age period”¹⁸⁷ or simply “transitional period”¹⁸⁸ have not been adopted. Likewise, there has been no support for the opinion that the term “Early Iron Age” is “confusing” and “a curious intrusion from the traditional division of prehistoric archaeology which is not necessary in Greek archaeology.”¹⁸⁹ What is “curious” and “confusing” is actually this notion of an intrusion across some sharp disciplinary division.

The divergent approaches to the name and conceptualization of the period that emerged in the 1980s came into direct conflict in the early 1990s. The controversy raged, especially over the concept of a new beginning for Greek culture ca. 1000 B.C.E. Sarah Morris wrote that “[a] major modern factor keeping Bronze and Iron Ages artificially apart is the concept of a ‘Dark Age.’”¹⁹⁰ Likewise, Papadopoulos argued, “What is a mirage is the Dark Age and the deliberate distance maintained between the second millennium and the culture of Classical Greece.”¹⁹¹ Echoing the earlier criticism by Wace (but independent of it), the two scholars argued that the concept of the Dark Age is problematic in prolonging the epistemological “great divide” between prehistoric and classical archaeology. In response to these arguments, some scholars have expressed some concern that there is a “hidden academic agenda behind arguments for continuity.”¹⁹² This seems unjustified. In the light of observations made above, it should come as no surprise that heavy criticism of the notion of the Dark Age(s) came from Papadopoulos, who developed his approach to the period primarily through archaeological fieldwork, specialized in the archaeology of an assumed Aegean

periphery (Chalkidike in Macedonia), and was familiar with the emphasis on historical continuities that pervades Greek academia.¹⁹³ Likewise, Morris’ strong preference for the term “Early Iron Age” can be explained by her focus on the connections between Greece and the eastern Mediterranean,¹⁹⁴ a subject that had long been better served by this term rather than the term “Dark Age(s).” Significantly, ca. 1990 experts in the archaeology of Cyprus and the Near East also criticized the concept of a Greek and eastern Mediterranean Dark Age.¹⁹⁵

Sarah Morris and John Papadopoulos directed their criticism at Snodgrass and his students. Starr, however, had promoted the concept of the Dark Age as a new beginning before Snodgrass, and much more emphatically than he: “The pattern of civilization, however, which we call ‘Greek’ and which has directly influenced all subsequent Western history, was evolved only in the centuries between 1100–650 B.C.” His work abounds in similar statements.¹⁹⁶ Using a vocabulary that is very different from that of Starr, Snodgrass and his students defended their conception of the period on several occasions.¹⁹⁷ However, they have hardly upheld the term “Dark Age” itself, and Ian Morris has accepted that this has had an unfortunate impact on the study of the period.¹⁹⁸

The terminological shift from “Dark Age(s)” to “(Early) Iron Age” involved more nuanced conceptualizations not only of temporal dimensions of Greek antiquity but also of spatial ones. The gravity of these spatial dimensions has been overshadowed by the temporal side of the debate but is no less significant. The term “Dark Age” is characterized by geographic exclusivity, as evidenced by relevant literature. The data collected for figure 2 suggest that relatively few authors have extended the use of the term “Dark Age” beyond Greece—namely, to the Balkans and the Levant or to Italy.¹⁹⁹ Nominally speaking, the concept of a dark age Mediterranean was mooted only in the titles of two collective works on the chronology of the region, which,

59. Papadopoulos 2014, 180–81.

¹⁸⁷ Dickinson 2006, 7. Dickinson admits, however, that the term is not economic.

¹⁸⁸ Syriopoulos 1983–1984, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Nowicki 2000, 16.

¹⁹⁰ Morris 1989, 48.

¹⁹¹ Papadopoulos 1993, 195.

¹⁹² Whitley 1993, 227.

¹⁹³ Papadopoulos 2005.

¹⁹⁴ Morris 1992.

¹⁹⁵ Muhly 1989, 298; 1992, 16; Dever 1992, 99, 108 (inspired by Albright 1956).

¹⁹⁶ Starr 1961, 3 (with comparable references on pages xi, 4, 47, 78).

¹⁹⁷ Snodgrass 1998, 134; 2002; see also Morris 1993, 215.

¹⁹⁸ Morris 1993, 208; 1994, 15–16, 39.

¹⁹⁹ Deger-Jalkotzy 1983; Maaskant-Kleibrink 1997.

ironically, were aimed precisely at dispelling the notion of a dark age.²⁰⁰ The term “Dark Age” cuts off the Aegean from the rest of the Mediterranean in the same way that the designation “Third Intermediate Period” still isolates Egypt from the rest of the (Early) Iron Age Mediterranean (see fig. 1). By deciding in favor of the Early Iron Age, archaeologists of Greece escaped the relative seclusion that characterizes Egyptology and embraced a more cosmopolitan, Mediterranean outlook for the discipline. From the perspective of Mediterranean history and the increasing emphasis this has received in the last 15 years,²⁰¹ the Dark Age is an exclusionary and therefore a problematic concept. The term “(Early) Iron Age” and its pan-Mediterranean scope serve the field better, especially since this was the period when the region was first conceptualized as a unity, and the time its inhabitants started sailing from one end of it to the other.²⁰² In spatial as in temporal respects, the term “Early Iron Age” is in full agreement with current conceptions of the period and promotes a more nuanced understanding of its significance for the archaeology of the Aegean and the Mediterranean.

The terminological shift to “(Early) Iron Age” came along with changes of approach. Indicative of this is the work of the Ph.D. students of Irene Lemos, first in Edinburgh and more recently in Oxford. Not all their theses have reached publication to date,²⁰³ but it is already clear that they do not conform to the theoretical tradition of the Snodgrass School. Instead, they integrate theoretical and methodological considerations with empirical expertise in studies of material culture and bottom-up analyses of specific regions and phases of Early Iron Age Greece and the Mediterranean. Most of the authors of these theses have been trained in archaeological fieldwork at Lefkandi, in the new phase of excavations directed by Lemos, and have shaped their approaches to the field on the basis of evidence from this site. Notwithstanding variation in the work of these scholars, their writings conform to the view that “the label ‘Dark Age’ can finally be discarded.”²⁰⁴

It is hard to find any current specialist in the period who is openly sympathetic to the designation “Dark

Age(s),”²⁰⁵ and younger scholars seem to avoid it altogether. This perhaps makes the resilience of the term in the 2000s (see fig. 2) all the more surprising. This resilience is, however, more apparent than real: the term increasingly appears within quotation marks,²⁰⁶ and it can be exclusive to the front page of a book and missing altogether from the text.²⁰⁷ Discussion of the Dark Age(s) also persists in handbooks and encyclopedia articles published during the last two decades,²⁰⁸ where, however, the concept is typically treated as an outdated one. Consensus has emerged that “the Greek Dark Age was in fact neither as Dark nor such an Age as we used to think”;²⁰⁹ or that “too much was happening in Early Iron Age Greece to warrant the term ‘dark age.’”²¹⁰ Some even argue that “the only thing ‘dark’ about Early Iron Age Greece is our knowledge of it and the traditional concepts applied to the period.”²¹¹

The resilience of the Dark Age(s) must partly be due to the appeal that the imagery of light and dark exercises on academics, book editors, and the general public alike. The popularizing book by Ure and the poem by Neruda discussed above are just two examples of the appeal of this imagery in nonacademic literature. The same imagery is also emphasized in the titles of scholarly publications, public lectures, museum exhibitions, and collective works accompanying such exhibitions on early Greece.²¹² Clearly,

²⁰⁵ Coulson 1990, 7–11; Coldstream 1998, 5; Dickinson 2006, 8, 238–41.

²⁰⁶ Deger-Jalkotzy 1983; Baurain 1997; Coldstream 1998; Emlyn-Jones and Yamagata 2006; Hattler 2008; Mazarakis Aini-an 2011.

²⁰⁷ Baurain 1997; Langdon 2008.

²⁰⁸ See, e.g., Osborne 1996, 35–65; Papadopoulos 1996; Shanks 1996, 132–43; Pomeroy et al. 1999, 41–81; Morris 2000; Whitley 2001, 77–101; Hölscher 2002, 33–5; Dickinson 2006; Étienne et al. 2006, 49–50; Lemos 2006; Hall 2007, 59–66; Raaflaub and van Wees 2009b; Morris and Powell 2010, 72–92 (upholding the notion of the Dark Age); Dickinson 2011; Bintliff 2012, 210–11; Kotsonas 2013b; Mazarakis Aini-an 2014, 2230; Naerebout and Singor 2014, 71–3. For further criticism, mostly in earlier works of a different nature, see Sake-llariou 1971, 15; Syriopoulos 1983–1984, 3–4; Morris 1992, 140; Papadopoulos 1993, 194–95; Lemos 2002, 2.

²⁰⁹ Ridgway 2000, 181.

²¹⁰ Papadopoulos 1996, 254–55.

²¹¹ Papadopoulos 1996, 255.

²¹² Langdon 1997; Coldstream 1998; Brandherm and Trachsel 2008; Lemos 2008. Add the photographic exhibition *Lefkandi Out of the Dark*, 21 January–31 May 2008, which was held in the Stelios Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies (photographs by Ian Cartwright, text by Lemos). In this case, the darkness also referred to the inaccessibility of some of the

²⁰⁰ James et al. 1991; Brandherm and Trachsel 2008.

²⁰¹ Sherratt and Sherratt 1992–1993; Horden and Purcell 2000; Morris 2005; Broodbank 2013; Knapp and van Dommelen 2014.

²⁰² Broodbank 2013, 20.

²⁰³ Thomatos 2006; Kotsonas 2008a; Wallace 2010; Pappa 2013.

²⁰⁴ Lemos 2002, 2.

the contrast of dark and light has been deemed particularly effective in popularizing the field to students and the general public, as well as appealing to funding institutions.²¹³ On the contrary, no mysterious allure is conveyed by the alternative designation “Early Iron Age.” Finley could have written of it: “I concede this is neither a dramatic nor a romantic way to look at one of the great cataclysms of history. One could not make a film out of it.”²¹⁴

Current scholarship holds a balanced view of this contested period. In recent handbooks the traditional view of it is maintained as the modest beginning of the “classical miracle” rather than as a period of resilience after the collapse of the Mycenaean sociopolitical system.²¹⁵ However, there is widespread agreement on calling it the “Early Iron Age.” Conceived as part of the three-age system, the Aegean Early Iron Age is nominally closer to prehistory than to later chronological periods, which are named after different cultural criteria as “Archaic,” “Classical,” and “Hellenistic.”²¹⁶ The period is also no longer discussed exclusively by classical archaeologists. Dickinson has offered an integrated analysis of both the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, in what is probably the only recent synthetic work by a prehistorian, rather than a classical archaeologist, on the transitional period that spans the two fields.²¹⁷ Likewise, there are two companion volumes on the archaeology of Greece and the Mediterranean that treat the Aegean Early Iron Age together with (part of) the Bronze Age.²¹⁸ Lastly, Snodgrass recently invited Aegean prehistorians to extend their scope to the Early Iron Age.²¹⁹ Conversely, the once powerful hold of classical archaeologists and ancient historians over the period is loosening, and

objects, which are kept in archaeological storerooms.

²¹³ In so arguing, I am in disagreement with Tainter (1988, 197–98), who finds that dark ages are unappealing to funding institutions and the general public.

²¹⁴ Finley 1968, 161 (with reference to the fall of the western Roman empire).

²¹⁵ See, e.g., Osborne 1996; Whitley 2001.

²¹⁶ Such criteria were systematically applied to the chronology of different periods of Greek antiquity, but, to my knowledge, this was never done for the entire chronological spectrum. Such a process would have resulted in an internally consistent—but practically unworkable—scheme involving the Heroic Age, Dark Age, Renaissance, Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods.

²¹⁷ Dickinson 2006 (the scope is praised in Kotsonas 2008b).

²¹⁸ Knapp and van Dommelen 2014; Lemos and Kotsonas (forthcoming); cf. Deger-Jalkotzy and Lemos 2006.

²¹⁹ Snodgrass 2012; see also Renfrew 2003, 317–18.

several new studies of classical Greece and the Mediterranean take 800 B.C.E. or 700 B.C.E. (the period of the first alphabetic texts) as their starting point.²²⁰ A traditional “great divide” is collapsing, carrying along the divisive concept of a Dark Age.

On the contrary, the term “Early Iron Age” is central to the new conceptualization of the period. This conceptualization can be traced back to the 1990s,²²¹ but it only triumphed in the last few years, as evidenced by its endorsement by professional frameworks and the advertisement of relevant job titles by high-profile departments of classics in Britain and the United States. In 2011–2012, the University of Cambridge advertised a position in the “Prehistory of the Aegean, Bronze Age and/or Iron Age.” Shortly after, in 2013–2014, the University of Cincinnati advertised a position in the Aegean and Mediterranean Iron Age.²²² In those same years, the departments of history and archaeology of the Universities of Athens and Ioannina in Greece planned to advertise similar positions but did not do so because of the economic crisis that swept the country. These developments formally acknowledge the Early Iron Age as a distinct field of study, initiate its admission into formal academic structures, encourage its treatment as a subject area that is not subordinate to classical archaeology, and endorse its potential to bridge traditional divisions of time and space in the archaeology of Greece and the Mediterranean.

OUT OF THE DARK

The introduction of the Early Iron Age as a new field of study into formal academic structures comes 120 years after the *annus mirabilis* of 1893, when Meyer and Beloch pioneered two very different names for—and concepts of—the period. This latest development also comes more than 40 years after the publication of the two grand syntheses of the early 1970s that used a third name in shaping the study of the period. In this article, I explained why classicists have approached the period with different terms and concepts, some text-based, others material-based, some developed within the discipline, others inspired by the medieval history and prehistory of Europe. I argued that the

²²⁰ Horden and Purcell 2000; Alcock and Osborne 2012; Haggis and Antonaccio 2015.

²²¹ Morris 1997a, 127–29.

²²² Only Bronze Age specialists were short-listed for the Cambridge position. On the contrary, all those short-listed for the position at Cincinnati worked mostly on the Early Iron Age of the Aegean.

periodization of early Greek antiquity was also affected by nonacademic forces, and I established that political developments in modern Greece played some role in the emphasis given to the concept of the Dark Age(s) ca. 1970. Like Aegeanists, medievalists have recently challenged the bleakness of the European Dark Ages, and one scholar has even done so under the provocative title *Barbarians to Angels*.²²³ I cannot envisage a Greek equivalent, like *Dorians to Agathoi Daimones*, even if Ure once compared the appearance of Dorian Greeks to that of Anglo-Saxon medieval saints.²²⁴ It is clear, however, that world history attests to a broader trend toward the twilight of dark ages.

In Greek archaeology, the concept of the Dark Age(s) has waned since the 1980s and survives only as a fossil of antiquated notions about the period. It is understandably still used by scholars of an older generation, but it is not used by younger ones, who systematically refer to the Early Iron Age instead. Twisting the meaning of Hesiod's words, one could deduce, "For now truly is a race of iron" (Hes., *Op.* 170). Unlike the poet's age, however, this is not a time of hardship for scholarship on the period, which has thrived in the last three and a half decades, at the same time that the term "Early Iron Age" has become the preferred name for the period.

This analysis established that the term "Early Iron Age" was first introduced into the archaeology of Aegean peripheries in the 1930s and did not reach the core area of ancient and modern Greece until half a century later, with the landmark publication of *Lefkandi I*. This is a notable case of a conceptual inversion of the core-periphery relationships that pervade the study of the Aegean of this period. The increased appeal of the term "Early Iron Age" can best be explained by the potential it possesses for bringing down two iron curtains that separate Greek archaeology from related disciplines.²²⁵ First, as part of the three-age system, the Early Iron Age brings early Greek antiquity closer to prehistory and alleviates the impression of a sharp break between the two, which was exaggerated by the concept of the Dark Age(s). Secondly, this same term involves a novel approach to the spatial setting of Greek antiquity by promoting the study of Greece and the Aegean in their Mediterranean context and by facilitating comparisons with neighboring regions, in whose historiography

this term is deeply rooted. The alternative term "Dark Age(s)" clearly lacks both these qualities; it isolates the period in question from earlier and later periods, only covers parts of the Aegean, and detaches this region from the rest of the ancient world. This isolation cannot be maintained any longer, particularly since the study of ancient Greece as a whole is undergoing a paradigm shift toward a broader, Mediterranean perspective. Central to this shift is the dismantling of traditional barriers, including those of terminology.

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²²³Wells 2008.

²²⁴Ure 1917, 146.

²²⁵On the iron curtain separating the second and the first millennia B.C.E., see Papadopoulos 1993, 194; 2014, 181; S. Morris 2007, 59.

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