

## HERO-CULTS IN THE AGE OF HOMER

‘MUCH hero-cult was directly engendered by the powerful influence of Homeric and other epics. . . . We so often hear how saga reflects cult that we are in danger of ignoring the reverse truth that cult may reflect saga; for cult was often mimetic of past events, and the memory of these was preserved mainly by saga-poetry.’

Thus L. R. Farnell, in 1921.<sup>1</sup> He was doing his best to create order out of chaos, writing at a time when it had been fashionable to explain away almost all heroes as faded deities. His method was to sort out the various categories of hero: the genuine faded deities, the vegetation spirits, the epic heroes, the ancestors, the eponymous figures, and finally the heroes who lived in historical times. Greek hero-worship has always been a rather untidy subject, where any general statement is apt to provoke suspicion; yet no one has since shown any good reason for rejecting Farnell’s groundwork.<sup>2</sup> This in itself is a tribute to the clarity and thoroughness with which he presented the literary evidence in the first place. Nevertheless, if a new edition of his book were contemplated today, it would need some substantial archaeological footnotes; indeed, during the last fifty years, every type of hero-cult has been illumined in some measure by the results of excavation—especially the cults of epic heroes, to which most of this paper is devoted; for the interval since 1921 includes most of the digging careers of Blegen, Wace, and Marinatos—to name the three archaeologists whose fieldwork has supplied in greatest measure the most abundant kind of evidence that we are looking for: that is, the evidence of veneration shown by later Greeks for the tombs of their Mycenaean predecessors.

It is fitting that we should begin with these tomb cults, as it was in his tomb that a hero’s strength was supposed to be concentrated; thus the aged Oedipus is made to prophesy aid for his Athenian hosts, and harm for his Theban fellow-countrymen, when in a later age their armies were to meet and fight a battle round his tomb.<sup>3</sup> To check the conclusion of Farnell, that these cults came into being through the diffusion of epic poetry, we should pay special attention to the votives deposited in Mycenaean tombs, and belonging to what may be called the ‘Age of Homer’: i.e. within the approximate limits of 750 and 650 B.C.<sup>4</sup> If Farnell was right, none of the votives should be earlier than this period.

In his opening pages<sup>5</sup> Farnell warns us of the distinction between tendance prompted by family affection, and genuine hero-worship. Soon after the burial, the nearest and dearest may leave offerings of food and drink for the deceased, to ease his journey into the next world, but without wishing to treat him as a superhuman power. There are indeed a few cases where later Mycenaean pots have been found in chamber tombs,<sup>5</sup> often in niches cut

An earlier draft of this paper was read in November 1973 to the Hibernian Hellenists at Ballymascanlon, Co. Louth; earlier still, much of its substance was included in a paper read at a Homeric Seminar of London University, at meetings of the Classical Association Branches of Oxford and Durham, and at St David’s University College, Lampeter. My thanks are due to all those who contributed to the discussions; and also to Dr J. K. Davies, Prof. G. L. Huxley, Mr S. G. Pembroke, and Prof. A. M. Snodgrass for making constructive comments on my draft MS.

Abbreviations, in addition to those in general use:  
DAG = A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh, 1971)  
DMR = *Studies presented to D. M. Robinson* (St Louis, 1951) ed. G. E. Mylonas  
GGP = J. N. Coldstream, *Greek Geometric Pottery* (London, 1968)

<sup>1</sup> *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921) 340, 342.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. Nock, *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944) 141 ff., especially 163; A. Brelich, *Gli eroi greci: un problema storico-religioso* (Rome, 1958) 15–16; cf. H. J. Rose, *Gnomon* xxxi (1959) 385–9.

<sup>3</sup> Soph. *OC* 616–23, 1533–4; cf. T. H. Price, *Historia* xxii (1973) 142–3.

<sup>4</sup> My reasons for believing in a Panhellenic circulations of the *Iliad* in the middle of the eighth century are briefly stated in *Geometric Greece* (London, 1977) ch. 14; the lower limit is set at c. 650 B.C. to include the careers of the earlier cyclic poets—Stasinos, Arktinos, and Lesches. Here, however, the ‘Age of Homer’ is kept within inverted commas, since this is not the place to delve deeply into the Homeric Question. Those who prefer a much later Homer are asked to read in this phrase ‘the age when Ionic epic first became widely known on the Greek mainland’; cf. M. L. West, *CQ* lxxxvii (1973) 182–3.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.* (n.1) 4f.

<sup>5</sup> M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*<sup>2</sup> (Lund, 1950) 587 f.; M. Andronikos, *Totenkult*

into the dromos, and not obviously associated with any burial; these deposits could well signify tendance. But when later offerings follow after a gap of several centuries—in fact, after the whole of the Dark Age—then we are clearly dealing with a hero-cult; that is, when the objects are nowhere near any later building, or any later burial. Perhaps this negative reasoning may seem rather unsatisfactory, and the presence of one or two later sherds may indicate no more than the accidental discovery of a tomb. In some tombs, however, there are also positive indications of cult, as we shall see later.

The first archaeologist to study this question was Blegen. After twenty years' experience of digging Mycenaean chamber tombs, he published a survey<sup>6</sup> of post-Mycenaean deposits from the Mycenaean cemetery at Prosymna, by the Argive Heraion. Out of the fifty chamber tombs which he had opened, no fewer than fifteen had later offerings, usually found inside the chamber, sometimes actually on the floor, more rarely in the dromos. In thirteen of these tombs, the subsequent offerings begin in the late eighth century. The pottery belonging to our 'Age of Homer' consists of jugs and hydriai for libations, and kraters and drinking cups suitable for a departed hero; mainly local, with a few Corinthian imports. One Argive LG skyphos, from Tomb 26,<sup>7</sup> was painted by a man who may have specialised in votive ware; among his other work are two rectangular plaques, one dedicated at the Heraion near by, the other at the sanctuary of Apollo on Aigina.<sup>8</sup> There were also a number of bronze finger-rings and dress ornaments. The pins are of a seventh-century type well represented at the Heraion, and one might at first think that they were offered to heroines rather than heroes; yet it is not at all unusual, in the Argolid, for pins to be found with male inhumations as well as with female.<sup>9</sup>

In summing up, Blegen observed that none of the Prosymna votives was earlier than the late eighth century; and yet he was loath to believe that the tombs had ever been forgotten. To help fill the long Dark Age gap, he cited two early ninth century pots from Mycenaean tombs at Dendra<sup>10</sup> and Thebes,<sup>11</sup> without fully appreciating that they could not have been votive offerings, since each vessel was associated with an isolated later burial. So he was led to believe in a continuous local tradition concerning the whereabouts of 'heroic' tombs; the cults at Prosymna were 'perhaps indeed still carried on by the very families whose ancestors were buried in these sepulchres . . . striking testimony for the essential continuity of race and civilisation in the northeast Peloponnesus through the long dark period of Greek history following the Mycenaean Age'.

Mycenae, as one might expect, is rich in such hero cults. Finds of the Geometric period have come to light in all nine of the tholos tombs,<sup>12</sup> and in two of the Kalkani chamber tombs.<sup>13</sup> Apart from J. M. Cook's publication of the sherds from the Kato Phournos tholos, this material has never been illustrated, and nearly all of it was lost in the Nauplia Museum during the Second World War; but, to judge from Wace's brief descriptions, it seems that none of the Geometric pieces must be earlier than LG. Greek excavators found another Geometric deposit, including part of a fine figured LG krater, inside a chamber tomb adjoining Grave Circle B;<sup>14</sup> and Schliemann's Circle A attracted a good deal of pottery from

(*Archaeologia Homerica* vol. W, Göttingen, 1968) 127. In his n. 1055 Andronikos draws attention to a 'Submycenaean-Protogeometric' deposit in a niche of a chamber tomb at Asine; the pottery is in fact LH IIIC. See O. Frödin and A. W. Persson, *Asine* (Stockholm, 1938) 178 f. fig. 144; 357; 398 fig. 260:8.

<sup>6</sup> *AE* 1937 377 ff.; *id.*, *Prosymna* (Cambridge, 1937) 263.

<sup>7</sup> *AE* 1937 386 no. 1215 fig. 9.

<sup>8</sup> P. Courbin, *La Céramique géométrique de l'Argolide* (Paris, 1966) 450 para. 16, 'peintre des plateaux à offrandes'. Cf. *GGP* 143.

<sup>9</sup> Courbin, *Tombes géométriques d'Argos I* (Paris, 1974) 117 f.

<sup>10</sup> A. W. Persson, *The Royal Tombs at Dendra near Midea* (Lund, 1951) 11, 42 fig. 24; cf. *GGP* 116 n. 6.

<sup>11</sup> A. D. Keramopoulos, *ADelt* iii (1917) 203-4

fig. 148; cf. V. Desborough, *Protogeometric Pottery* (Oxford, 1952) 195-6, 318.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. B. Wace, *BSA* xxv (1921-3) 292, Cyclopean Tomb; 295, Epano Phournos Tomb; 312-13, 'Tomb of Aigisthos'; 320, Panagia Tomb; 329, Lion Tomb; 366, 'Tomb of Clytemnestra', including terracotta figurines; 387, Tomb of the Genii; J. M. Cook, *BSA* xlviii (1953) 80 f. pl. 28c, d, Kato Phournos Tomb. From a pit in the dromos of the 'Treasury of Atreus' comes a bronze pin, said by Desborough to be like one from a mid-eighth-century burial: *BSA* xlix (1954) 263, cf. pl. 45 no. 53-636.

<sup>13</sup> Wace, *Chamber Tombs at Mycenae* (*Archaeologia* lxxii, 1932) 23, Tomb 520; 32-3, Tomb 522.

<sup>14</sup> I. Papadimitriou, *PAE* 1952 470 fig. 35; *id.*, *PAE* 1953 208 n. 1. Cf. G. E. Mylonas, *Ancient Mycenae* (Princeton, 1957) 171.

LG onwards. From its upper fill came an early fifth-century black-glazed sherd bearing the graffito *τοῦ ἡρώως ἐμυ*,<sup>15</sup> the only inscribed dedication ever found among later votives in a Mycenaean tomb.

A great step forward was taken by J. M. Cook, who joined Wace's expedition in 1950. The discovery of a shrine to Agamemnon, identified by Archaic graffiti,<sup>16</sup> spurred him on to a brief general study of the evidence from Mycenae.<sup>17</sup> He is one of the first scholars<sup>18</sup> to recognise that post-Mycenaean votives in Mycenaean tombs do not begin before the late eighth century; what is more important here, he is one of the first field archaeologists to have taken any notice of Farnell. In his view, the Argive votive deposits are evidence of hero-cults 'instituted by people who preserved no continuity of memory—and little enough of blood—some centuries after the occupants had passed into oblivion'. These cults, he adds, were suddenly instituted in the late eighth century because that was the time when the Homeric poems were beginning to circulate over the mainland of Greece, inspiring the men of the Argolid with a reverence for the heroic past.

Since the publication of Cook's article in 1953, many more of these votive deposits have been found in several regions; they lend powerful confirmation to the theory put forward by Farnell and Cook, since it remains true that no offerings anywhere—to my knowledge—are earlier than the third quarter of the eighth century. Now if the problem were confined to the Argolid, one might reply to Cook that a long gap in votives need not indicate oblivion; successive generations of local inhabitants might well have remembered the whereabouts of old tombs without continually feeling obliged to leave pots in them. But as soon as the circulation of epic poetry is brought into the argument, the problem becomes Panhellenic; we need to see where else in Greece these deposits occur in Mycenaean tombs. Fortunately, after more than a century of excavation, the evidence is now plentiful enough to allow some argument from geographical distribution; and the distribution, as we shall see, lends further support to Farnell and Cook.

Within the Argolid, the other major source of evidence is Argos itself, where the Deiras cemetery has produced votives in at least three of the chamber tombs.<sup>19</sup> Near Corinth, an early Mycenaean chamber tomb at Galataki (ancient Solygeia) yielded a small pocket of sixth century pottery.<sup>20</sup> At Analipsis in south-eastern Arcadia, part of a figured Geometric krater showing a centaur was found in the upper fill within the chamber of a tholos tomb.<sup>21</sup>

In Messenia, deposits of LG whole pots have come to light in one chamber tomb at Nichoria,<sup>22</sup> and in at least two at Volimédia<sup>23</sup> near Pylos. Several Mycenaean tholoi in the Pylos region received pottery from the seventh century onwards, sometimes accompanied by animal sacrifices; whole deer were found in two tholoi near the village of Koukounara.<sup>24</sup> A

<sup>15</sup> L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1961) 174 no. 6 pl. 31, with earlier references.

<sup>16</sup> *BSA* xlviii (1953) 30 ff.

<sup>17</sup> In *Geras A. Keramopoulou* (Athens, 1953) 112 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Priority must be accorded to Mylonas, *DMR* i 103; but Mylonas' main concern was to argue that no such cults existed in Mycenaean times.

<sup>19</sup> W. Vollgraff, *BCH* xxviii (1904) 366–7, Tomb V; J. Deshayes, *Argos, les fouilles de la Deiras* (Paris, 1966) 215 ff., Tombs XIV and XVII. The eleventh-century amphorae from Tombs XXIV and XXXIII (pp. 68 f., 99, 246) were each accompanied by a bronze finger ring, and the latter by a long bronze pin; no bones were associated with either group, but the amphorae are more likely to have been cremation urns than votive offerings.

<sup>20</sup> N. Verdels, *PAE* 1958, 137.

<sup>21</sup> K. Romaios, *PAE* 1954 273; R. Howell, *BSA* lxxv (1970) 95 f.

<sup>22</sup> A. Choremis, *ADelt* xvi (1960) B 108, xvii (1961–2) B 95.

<sup>23</sup> S. Marinatos, *PAE* 1953 242 ff.; cf. *GGP* 98,

223. These pots are exhibited in the Museum of Chora Triphylias, as are many of the later votive offerings from Mycenaean tombs in the neighbourhood of Pylos.

J. Chadwick (*Minnesota Messenia Expedition* (Minneapolis, 1972) 109) is tempted to equate Volimédia with the Mycenaean religious centre pa - ki - ja - ne on topographical grounds; and he supposes that the tomb cults there might be a reminiscence of the place's earlier sanctity. Yet Volimédia is only one of many places in Messenia where cults grew up in Mycenaean tombs; and the case against any such cult reflecting a continuous memory through the Dark Age is presented in these pages.

<sup>24</sup> Marinatos, *PAE* 1959 176 and 1960 pl. 153b, Gouvalari Tomb 1; *id.*, *PAE* 1963 116, Akona Tomb 1. A tholos near Papoulia (*id.*, *PAE* 1955 255) yielded black-glazed pottery, probably going back to the late seventh century. In another tholos, at Tourliditsa (*id.*, *PAE* 1966 129–32 pl. 113b), the offerings include wine amphorae from Archaic times onwards.

whole ox was offered in a tholos at Boupras bay,<sup>25</sup> near Classical Pylos, but there are no associated finds to date this sacrifice. In the upper Stenyklaros plain, the tholoi at Vasiliko and Kopanaki appear to have received pottery of our 'Age of Homer'; later offerings were made in a tholos at Peristeria near the coast.<sup>26</sup>

Coming to Orchomenos in Boiotia, we find the most splendid of all Mycenaean tholos tombs, one of the very few to which Pausanias<sup>27</sup> can have had access; he gives an admiring description of its masonry, calling it the Treasury of Minyas. On the chamber floor there rests a funerary monument of the Hellenistic period, and massive evidence of a cult was found here by Schliemann who dug down from the debris of the collapsed vault through thirty feet of deposit. He mentions an ashy layer twelve feet deep, from sacrificial fires; in it were boars' tusks, knuckle bones, murex shells, and a mass of painted pottery of 'the Mycenaean, Hellenic, and Roman periods'.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, nothing is illustrated apart from a marble slab bearing part of a Hellenistic inscription dedicated to Hera Teleia, so evidently the cult was not then exclusively devoted to the local hero. Elsewhere in Boiotia, there is some evidence of hero-worship at Thebes; in one chamber tomb of the Ismenion cemetery, LG and Protocorinthian sherds, burnt and unburnt, have been reported from the upper fill of the chamber.<sup>29</sup> At Medeon in Phokis, on the north shore of the Corinthian gulf, French excavators claim that a Mycenaean tholos was still visible and accessible in the eighth century;<sup>30</sup> how could they know this unless Geometric pottery had been found therein?

Attica, too, has produced several of these votive deposits. The most famous instance is in the Mycenaean tholos at Menidi, the ancient deme of Acharnai. The dromos contained a full sequence of burnt votive pottery, beginning with LG kraters,<sup>31</sup> and continuing into the fifth century. At Aliko, the ancient Aixone, the dromos of a chamber tomb was found to contain a small deposit of LG vases, without any trace of burial.<sup>32</sup> A similar instance is reported from the Belgian excavations at Thorikos,<sup>33</sup> where a chamber tomb attracted pottery and figurines from the seventh to fifth centuries. In Athens itself, the fifth century lekythoi found in a rich Mycenaean chamber tomb<sup>34</sup> seem to have served a votive purpose. Eleusis offers two remarkable examples of eighth century piety towards a bygone age. A wall was built in LG times to enclose eight cist graves of Middle Helladic type, of which all but two had been built or re-used in LH III; Mylonas conjectured that this might have been the monument pointed out to Pausanias as the *heroön* of the Seven against Thebes.<sup>35</sup> Equally pious was a Late Geometric grave-digger, looking for somewhere to bury a child in a pithos. His first trench accidentally damaged a well-preserved skull from a Middle Helladic burial; he then did his best to reassemble the broken pieces of cranium, changed the direction of his trench, deposited the child's pithos with a few simple pots, and finally left a pleasant oinochoe, from the Dipylon Workshop, as though to say 'I am very sorry; kindly accept this jug of wine as my apology'.<sup>36</sup> Respect for older burials is something quite new at this time; it is foreign to the practice of the Mycenaeans, who were continually sweeping out older burials to make room for new incumbents in their family tombs;<sup>37</sup> and it is also foreign to the Dark Age,

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, *PAE* 1956 202-3.

<sup>26</sup> N. Valmin, *Bull Soc Roy Lund* (1927-8) 27, 37, Vasiliko; 47, Kopanaki (Corinthian pottery); Marinatos, *PAE* 1961 170 and 1965 113 pl. 129, Peristeria. Cf. W. McDonald and R. Hope Simpson, *AJA* lxxv (1961) 219 ff. and lxxiii (1969) 123 ff., sites nos. 22B, 24, 28.

<sup>27</sup> ix 38.2. On the question of access at Mycenae cf. Wace, *Mycenae* (Princeton, 1949) 8.

<sup>28</sup> H. Schliemann, *JHS* ii (1882) 139 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Keramopoulos, *ADelt* iii (1917) 86 and n. 1.

<sup>30</sup> C. Vatin, *Médéon de Phocide* (Paris, 1969) 29 ff. I owe this reference to Mr W. G. Cavanagh.

<sup>31</sup> H. G. Lolling *et al.*, *Das Kuppelgrab bei Menidi* (Athens, 1880); P. Wolters, *JdI* xiv (1899) 103 ff., especially figs. 18, 19, 27; J. M. Cook, *art. cit.* (n. 17)

114 and n. 4; Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966) 181 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Papadimitriou, *PAE* 1955 96 pl. 28e.

<sup>33</sup> J. Servais in *Thorikos* i (1968) 37 ff., Tomb 1.

<sup>34</sup> E. D. Townsend, *Hesperia* xxiv (1955) 189, 202, 218-19; S. Immerwahr, *Agora* xiii 184. The tomb had already been broached in the Protogeometric period for two additional burials, but without disturbing the Mycenaean incumbents.

<sup>35</sup> Paus. i 39.2, Plut. *Thes.* 29; Mylonas, *PAE* 1953 81 ff. fig. 10; *id.*, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, 1961) 62-3.

<sup>36</sup> Mylonas, *op. cit.* 62 fig. 10; *id.*, *PAE* 1955 76 pls. 24b, 25a; cf. *GGP* 32 no. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Mylonas, *DMR* I 98.

when older graves were continually being cut by new, as, for example, in the Kerameikos cemetery of Athens.<sup>38</sup>

On Delos, a circular tomb of the Middle Bronze Age attracted votive offerings from the Archaic period onwards. This was one of the very few tombs on the island which was left undisturbed by the Athenian purifiers in 426 B.C.;<sup>39</sup> the excavators, following a topographical clue in Herodotos, identified it as one of the two tombs associated in antiquity with the Hyperborean Maidens.<sup>40</sup> If this is correct, the cult can hardly have been instituted under the influence of Homeric epic; but it is mentioned here for the sake of completeness.

The only other region to produce evidence of this kind is the island of Kephallenia. Archaic and later pots have been found in a Mycenaean chamber tomb at Metaxata, indicating a cult of the dead.<sup>41</sup> The cult was evidently not continuous, but was caused by the fortuitous discovery of the tomb in the seventh century. It was found by Marinatos in a plundered state; but he supposed that the plunderers had left the first votives, partly through their qualms over rifling the tomb, and partly because of their amazement at what was—to them—a strange and unfamiliar mode of burial. If his reconstruction seems rather fanciful, he has nevertheless touched upon something extremely important, worth bearing in mind when we review these tomb cults as a whole.

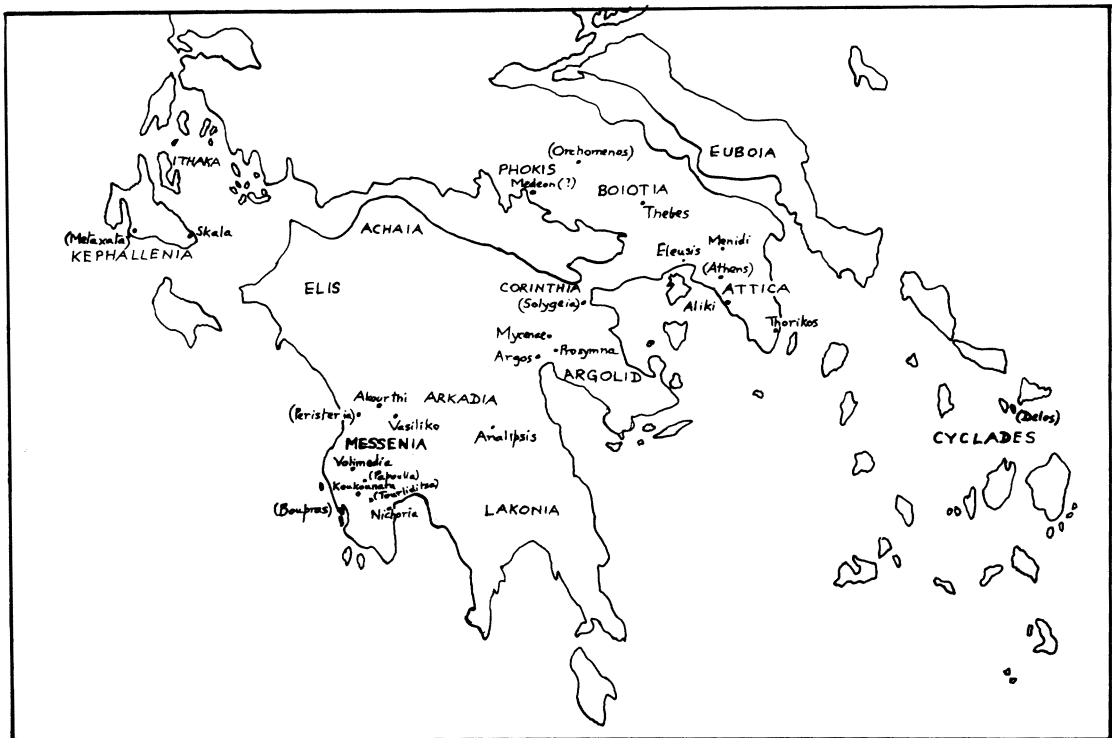


FIG. 1.—Map of southern Greece, showing where later votive offerings have been found in Mycenaean tombs. At unbracketed sites the offerings begin *c.* 750–650 B.C.; at bracketed sites, not before *c.* 650 B.C.

The map, FIG. 1, shows the distribution of the tomb cults so far known; cults which began in our 'Age of Homer' are distinguished from those where the first votives are later. That most of the evidence should come from the Argolid and Messenia is hardly surprising; these were the heartlands of the Mycenaean world. Boiotia and Attica, too, were flourishing regions in the Late Bronze Age; and it might be held

<sup>38</sup> K. Kübler, *Kerameikos* v 1.36. The plans of the same cemetery in successive phases speak for themselves: R. Hachmann, *Gött GelAnz* ccxv (1963) 54 ff. figs. 1–6.

<sup>39</sup> C. R. Long, *AJA* lxii (1958) 300 f; *cf.* Thuc. iii 104.1, 2.

<sup>40</sup> C. Picard and J. Replat, *BCH* xlvi (1924)

247 ff, especially 259; Mylonas, *DMR* i 104; *cf.* Hdt. iv 35.

<sup>41</sup> Marinatos, *AE* 1933 78 f., 97 ff.; n.b. also a brief mention of LH IIIC chamber tombs at Skala containing LG and Corinthian pottery (*AR for 1960–1*, 16).

that Athenian belief in *autochthonia*, without any change of population, could have inspired an especially strong reverence for their supposed ancestors. The cults of Kephallenia are a little more surprising; but that island certainly became an important place of refuge<sup>42</sup> in the twelfth century, when the Mycenaean world was beginning to break up. Now if we wish to believe that the Mycenaean tombs in these regions had never been forgotten, but had always been venerated by the local inhabitants, then the absence of Dark Age votives will not be the only stumbling block; one would also have to explain the many blank areas on the map. Thessaly, Lakonia, Achaia, Rhodes, and Crete were all prosperous areas during the 'heroic' period, but not one of their Late Bronze Age tombs has produced any later votives; and here we are entitled to argue from negative evidence, in view of the large numbers of tombs which have been explored in each one of these regions. If the votives result from a local memory which was continuous throughout the Dark Age, it would be natural that such honours should be paid to Agamemnon and Nestor, and their followers; but why, then, were no similar honours paid in the lands of Achilles, Menelaos, and Idomeneus?<sup>43</sup> The distribution of these deposits is curiously haphazard, if we look at them only from a Mycenaean point of view; in the blank areas, the absence of votives also demands a rational explanation.

In attacking this problem, we should bear in mind how ordinary people of the late eighth century buried their own dead. By then the Mycenaean chamber tomb and tholos tomb had long been obsolete in many parts of Greece. In a central area of the mainland, comprising Attica, Boiotia, the Corinthia, the Argolid, and Elis, the change came at the very end of the Bronze Age; individual graves then came into fashion, whether for the old rite of inhumation, or, as in Attica, for the newly introduced rite of cremation. The graves were either slab-lined cists, or rectangular pits cut into the rock or earth. In Messenia, where the evidence is still rather scanty, it seems that the change came considerably later. Near Nestor's Pylos is a small tholos tomb built and used only in Protogeometric times;<sup>44</sup> four miles away, at Tragana, an early Mycenaean tholos was re-used for a Protogeometric burial;<sup>45</sup> and another Protogeometric tholos has been discovered in the neighbourhood of Nichoria, with at least five burials.<sup>46</sup> Then, so it appears, came the change. All other Protogeometric burials from around the important Dark Age settlement of Nichoria are in apsidal cist graves,<sup>47</sup> apart from a pithos inhumation placed in the dromos of a Mycenaean tholos.<sup>48</sup> During our 'Age of Homer' we know only of isolated pithos burials from three different sites.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in the late eighth century, it is likely that the Messenians would have found a Mycenaean family tomb just as strange as did their contemporaries in Attica and the Argolid.

In the outlying parts of the Greek world, the story is quite different. Thessaly<sup>50</sup> certainly has some individual cist graves in the tenth and ninth centuries, chiefly in the Iolkos area, but these are mainly for children; at most sites, however, the tholos and the rock-cut chamber tombs remained the usual forms, especially in the north; and even at Iolkos a large tholos accumulated about seventy burials from the tenth century onwards. The Rhodians were usually cremated in individual graves during the eighth century, but there are also some chamber tombs of that time at Kameiros. Their plans remain unpublished, but from brief descriptions<sup>51</sup> they seem to be miniature versions of the Mycenaean type. Passing to

<sup>42</sup> Desborough, *The Last Mycenaeans and their Successors* (Oxford, 1964) 103 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Apart from one doubtful case in a tomb at Praisos (R. C. Bosanquet, *BSA* viii (1901-2) 242, Tomb A) where the stratification had been much disturbed, there is no archaeological evidence for post-Minoan votives in any Minoan tomb. The remarks of Diodorus (v 79.4) about the respect paid to the supposed tombs of Idomeneus and Meriones reflect the spurious pater purveyed to visitors to Knossos in Graeco-Roman times.

<sup>44</sup> W. D. Taylour in *The Palace of Nestor* iii (Princeton, 1973) 237 ff.

<sup>45</sup> K. Kourouniotis, *AE* 1914 101 f., 106 f, fig. 12.

<sup>46</sup> Choremis, *AAA* i (1968) 205 ff.; *id.*, *AE* 1973 62 ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 70-4 figs. 26-7; Nikitopoulou Grave 1 contains two skeletons, the others only one.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 47.

<sup>49</sup> W. McDonald, *Hesperia* xli (1972) 228-9 pl. 40c, Nichoria; P. G. Themelis, *ADelt* xx (1965) B 207 pl. 213b, Pharai near Kalamata; *ibid.* 208 pl. 221, Pyla.

<sup>50</sup> *DAG* 154 f.; 205 f., with references.

<sup>51</sup> G. Jacopi, *Clara Rhodes* vi-vii (Bergamo, 1933) 193 ff., Tombs 82, 83.

Crete, we find that these miniature chamber tombs are the normal form over most of the island all through the Dark Age, and even into the seventh century. There are also a few diminutive tholoi, but hardly any individual graves.<sup>52</sup> At Knossos, where the sequence is fullest and most continuous, the chamber tombs are obviously a legacy from the Minoan tradition. At first, some Minoan tombs were cleared out and re-used;<sup>53</sup> but from the tenth century onwards new chamber tombs were constructed on a smaller scale,<sup>54</sup> presumably because less space was needed when the rite changed from inhumation to urn cremation. As for the other blank areas, we have no information yet concerning eighth century burials in Lakonia; eighth century Achaeans were usually buried in pithoi or individual cists, but there is also a Late Geometric tholos tomb at Pharai.<sup>55</sup>

What emerges from this analysis is that the presence or absence of Geometric and later votives probably depends on the current burial practices in each region. Post-Mycenaean Greeks were constantly coming across Mycenaean antiquities of all kinds;<sup>56</sup> the accidental discovery of a Mycenaean tomb would not excite much interest in regions where chamber tombs and tholoi were still being used for burials—hence, no votives. Contrast the amazement of an eighth century Athenian, or Argive, or Messenian, who would have been greatly surprised by any form other than a simple, individual grave or pithos. The great size of a Mycenaean tomb, and the richness of the offerings, would fill him with superstitious awe; so he would leave some offerings as a mark of respect, after his imagination had been stirred by the first Panhellenic circulation of Homeric epic—*omne ignotum pro magnifico est*. And the wish to show such veneration was by no means confined to the actual descendants of the Mycenaean; the circulation of epic—combined with the abundance of Mycenaean tombs—would explain why so many votive deposits have been found in the Dorian lands of Messenia and the Argolid, following a long gap in the Dark Age. The new inhabitants of these lands could claim no ties of kinship with the departed heroes; but the diffusion of the Trojan saga would have filled them with a general reverence and enthusiasm for anything remotely heroic.

This is no more than a working hypothesis, as there are still many lacunae in the regional evidence. But already there is enough to warn us against any facile assumption that there existed a continuous local tradition concerning the whereabouts of heroic tombs. Here and there, Mycenaean tombs were disturbed during the Dark Age; but only to be plundered, or—very rarely—to receive additional incumbents.<sup>57</sup> At Mycenae, no doubt, some of the larger tholoi were always conspicuous landmarks, because of their massive mounds; even so, the new Dorian settlers paid them no respect until the spread of Homeric epic impelled them to do so. On the other hand, many of the chamber tombs, hewn deep into a rocky slope, could easily have passed into oblivion; and I believe, with J. M. Cook, that their rediscovery from the late eighth century onwards was haphazard and accidental. Furthermore, one wonders whether each tomb was ascribed by the first worshippers to an individual, named hero. Many of the deposits continue into Classical times and—especially in Messenia—even as late as the Hellenistic and Roman periods; yet the only graffito ever found is the dedication to any anonymous hero found above Grave Circle A at Mycenae.<sup>58</sup> These votives are the private offerings of ordinary people, hearing of past heroic splendours, and paying a general homage to the men of an age more glorious than their own; in Hesiod's terms, the race of iron honouring their immediate predecessors—the godlike race of heroes who won their glory in grim battle and dread war.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The graves at Dreros (*Études crétoises* viii 18 ff.) form a very rare exception. Small tholoi were still being built in our 'Age of Homer', e.g. that at Ay. Paraskies: N. Platon, *AE* 1945–7 47 ff.

<sup>53</sup> M. S. F. Hood and J. N. Coldstream, *BSA* lxiii (1968) 205 ff., Subminoan; J. Boardman, *BSA* lv (1960) 143, Protogeometric. The ninth century hut model from Archanes, enclosing a terracotta seated goddess, has been ingeniously explained by Boardman (*BSA* lxii (1967) 66 fig. 2) as a Minoan tomb fortuitously discovered and then consecrated as

a shrine; but he attributes this unusual practice to immigrant oriental metalworkers, one of whom cleared out the Minoan tholos at Teke for re-use as a family vault. On the absence of post-Minoan votives in Minoan tombs see n. 43 above.

<sup>54</sup> J. K. Brock, *Fortetsa* (*BSA* Suppl. ii, 1957) 4 f.

<sup>55</sup> N. Kyparissis, *PAE* 1929 89 ff.; 1930 83 ff.

<sup>56</sup> E. T. H. Brann, *Agora* viii 19; J. L. Benson, *Horse, Bird and Man* (Amherst, 1970) 115 ff.

<sup>57</sup> See above nn. 10, 11, 34, 35, 48.

<sup>58</sup> See above n. 15.

<sup>59</sup> *Erga* 156–65.

We now pass to two sanctuaries in honour of named heroes, illustrating a more public aspect of early hero-worship; neither cult is anywhere near a tomb, but, like the tomb cults, both sanctuaries were founded under the influence of epic poetry.

Agamemnon's shrine<sup>60</sup> lies in an outlying part of Mycenae, almost a mile south of the acropolis, and nowhere near any of the royal tombs (i.e. the tholoi and grave circles). The reason for its siting remains a mystery; J. M. Cook wondered whether this spot might have been thought to be the *agros* of Aigisthos where, in the Homeric version of the story,<sup>61</sup> the king was murdered. At all events, there is no doubt about whose shrine this is, since the votives include several sixth-century graffiti mentioning Agamemnon's name. The offerings begin in the late eighth century and continue without break until 468 B.C., when the small town of Mycenae was destroyed by the Argives. The other sanctuary is that of Menelaos and Helen at Therapne three miles south of Sparta, founded just before 700 B.C. above the debris of a Mycenaean settlement.<sup>62</sup> We must leave on one side the question of whether Helen was, after all, a local faded goddess;<sup>63</sup> the relevant point here is that the foundations of both hero shrines—at Mycenae and at Therapne—coincide with the diffusion of the Trojan War cycle. Here, perhaps, we may see the earliest overt attempts by Dorian states to annex the central figures of Mycenaean saga as their own local heroes—long before the Spartans were at pains to seize the bones of Orestes.<sup>64</sup>

The influence of epic may also lie behind the veneration paid to the warriors who lived during this 'Age of Homer', especially the warriors of the Lelantine War. Thus the burial of Amphidamas, the Chalcidian leader, is celebrated with funeral games, in the grand heroic manner; the games at which Hesiod won his tripod for song.<sup>65</sup> Whether Amphidamas became the object of a hero-cult we cannot yet know, since Chalcis has not yet afforded much scope for archaeological excavation. But about his Eretrian opponents there can be no doubt, thanks to one of the most exciting discoveries of the current Swiss excavations. On a small rise just inside the later West Gate, a triangular *heroön* was founded in the early seventh century, and during the next hundred years accumulated a deep deposit of pottery, figurines, animal bones, and wood-ash.<sup>66</sup> The recipients of these gifts had all been buried under and around the triangle, within the period 720–680 B.C.:<sup>67</sup> six adult cremations in bronze cauldrons, and nine inhumation graves containing children and adolescents. Four of the cremations were associated with offensive weapons, always broken or 'killed'; the earliest one occupies a place of honour, round which the other five cauldrons were arranged in a semicircle. This warrior's possessions mark him out as a prince, an *ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν*: he had four iron swords, five iron spearheads, one spearhead of bronze (a Mycenaean heirloom which may have served as his sceptre<sup>68</sup>), and a Phoenician double scarab of serpentine with a handsome gold setting. This cemetery is surely the preserve of a powerful and privileged *genos*, whose menfolk had died in battle against the Chalcidian foe; they were buried with full military honours, and then posthumously worshipped as the guardians of their city.

We have so far been concentrating our attention on those hero cults which began not earlier than the second half of the eighth century, and which were directly inspired by the Panhellenic circulation of Homeric epic; this is the theory first advanced by Farnell, which receives ample confirmation from the archaeological record. We must now consider three hero-cults of higher antiquity, where the first votives may go back well before the 'Age of Homer'; if Farnell's hypothesis is sound, then we must find some other common factor to

<sup>60</sup> See above nn. 16, 17.

<sup>61</sup> *Od.* iv 517; J. M. Cook, *art. cit.* (n. 17) 113.

<sup>62</sup> Wace *et al.*, *BSA* xv (1908–9) 108 ff.; for the earliest pottery see *ibid.* 150 and *CVA* Cambridge i pl. 3 nos. 116, 120. It is to be hoped that we may learn more about the beginning of this cult from the current excavations, resumed in 1973; H. W. Catling, *AR* for 1973–4 14 f.

<sup>63</sup> Farnell, *op. cit.* (n. 1) 323 ff.

<sup>64</sup> *Hdt.* i 67–8.

<sup>65</sup> *Erga* 654–7.

<sup>66</sup> C. Bérard, *Eretria* iii (Berne, 1970), especially chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>67</sup> Andronikos (*Gnomon* xlvi (1974) 631–3) challenges the association between triangle and graves, but offers no alternative explanation for the votive deposit. A divine cult seems out of the question, since the offerings cease in the sixth century.

<sup>68</sup> Bérard, *MusHelv* xxix (1972) 219 ff.



explain the institution of these cults. Homer himself was aware of hero-worship, and we should begin with the only hero-cult which he describes in detail.

Erechtheus, so we are told,<sup>69</sup> was established by his patron goddess Athena in her own rich temple, in her own city; as the years went by, the young men propitiated him with bulls and sheep. By the time of the Trojan War, he should have been dead for at least two generations; the Athenian contingent was led by the feeble Menestheus, in himself the weightiest argument against this passage being a later, Athenian insertion.<sup>70</sup> Where was the centre of Erechtheus' cult? Presumably on the Acropolis, and within the Mycenaean palace whose exiguous traces lie under the Old Temple of Athena; if this is so, erosion and later foundations may have removed all early traces of the cult, prior to the building of the Erechtheion. It has been suggested that, after the ruin of the Mycenaean palace, the cult of Erechtheus was moved to within the Cyclopean bastion later occupied by the successive temples of Nike, only to be moved back again to the newly built Erechtheion so as to be closer to what had by then become the centre of Athena's cult.<sup>71</sup> According to this theory, the *πυκνὸς δόμος*<sup>72</sup> of Erechtheus is equated with the not very *πυκνὸς* masonry of the Mycenaean bastion; and the centre of his cult, within the bastion, would have been a square altar for burnt offerings, later to be surrounded by the foundations of the Archaic temple of Athena Nike.<sup>73</sup> Within this altar, terracotta figurines were found in the excavations of the 1930s; the excavator<sup>74</sup> first called them Archaic, then Mycenaean, then Submycenaean; more recently, Marinatos<sup>75</sup> agreed that they are Submycenaean. While they remain unpublished, it is difficult to form any opinion—apart from a mild scepticism about cults being moved backwards and forwards, and a general feeling that *πυκνὸς δόμος* ought to mean an independent building, and not merely part of a fortification.

Hardly less obscure is the cult of another old Attic hero, Akademos. Excavations<sup>76</sup> have furnished him with an elaborate seven-roomed building of mud brick, built in the late eighth century, not far from the later Gymnasium. This 'sacred house' was full of sacrificial ash deposits, animal bones, and pottery from LG onwards; one room contained a circular hearth with four levels of ash. Adjoining this shrine were the foundations of an Early Bronze Age house; the excavator thinks<sup>77</sup> that this may have been accidentally discovered in the eighth century, and identified with Akademos, a founder-hero of Athens, for whom the shrine was then built. But the cult may well go back further than this; there is another votive deposit, 150 yards away but still within the sanctuary area, containing about 200 kantharoi of a type common in the late tenth and early ninth centuries.<sup>78</sup> Akademos, like Erechtheus, was an ancestral hero for the Athenians, remembered in local tradition independently of epic; in fact, he is quite outside the epic cycles known to us.

Perhaps one should give a similar explanation for a possible cult of Odysseus on his native island, which may also have begun well back in the Dark Age. The Polis cave on Ithaca produced a long sequence of finds, beginning with kylikes perhaps of the eleventh century B.C., and continuing into the first century A.D. Even if one doubts whether the earliest pottery affords evidence of a cult,<sup>79</sup> the bronze tripod cauldrons must surely be votive; the series of tripods runs parallel with that of Olympia, beginning with two examples of the small, functional vessels which are unlikely to be later than 800 B.C.<sup>80</sup> The Hellenistic

<sup>69</sup> *Il.* ii 546 ff; cf. T. H. Price, *art. cit.* (n. 3) 130, 136 f.

<sup>70</sup> R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford, 1970) 56.

<sup>71</sup> C. Kardara, *AE* 1960, 165 ff.

<sup>72</sup> *Od.* vii 81.

<sup>73</sup> N. Balanos, *AE* 1937 785 fig. 13.

<sup>74</sup> *BCH* lx (1936) 455; lxii (1938) pl. 50B; lxiii (1939) 289.

<sup>75</sup> *Apud* S. Iakovides, *Hé Mykenaiké Akropolis* (Athens, 1962) 186 n. 361.

<sup>76</sup> P. D. Stavropoulos, *PAE* 1958 5 ff.; H. Drerup, *Griechische Baukunst in geometrischer Zeit* (*Archaeologia Homerica* vol. O, Göttingen, 1969) 31 f. with further

references; *DAG* 398. Another similar 'sacred house' was built at about the same time at Eleusis, outside the main sanctuary of Demeter (Kourouniotis, *PAE* 1937 42 ff. and *RA* xi (1938) 94 ff.); it, too, may have served as a sanctuary in honour of local heroes.

<sup>77</sup> Stavropoulos, *ADelt* xvi (1960) B 34.

<sup>78</sup> *PAE* 1958 8 f. pl. 6; for the kantharoi cf. Desborough, *op. cit.* (n. 11) pl. 12, nos. 2031 and 2026.

<sup>79</sup> Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London, 1972) 88.

<sup>80</sup> S. Benton, *BSA* xxxv (1934-5) 58 nos. 1, 2; 64 fig. 14; 113; B. Schweitzer, *Greek Geometric Art* (London, 1971) 168 fig. 101.

terracottas throw some light on the recipients of these offerings: part of an actor's mask bears a dedication to Odysseus,<sup>81</sup> and other graffiti are addressed to the local Nymphs<sup>82</sup> who are depicted in some of the reliefs. A Hellenistic inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander mentions an Odysseion on Ithaka<sup>83</sup> which conducted Games in honour of Odysseus; the excavators of Ithaka would like to view the tripods as dedications by early victors at these Games.<sup>84</sup> It would not be surprising if Odysseus had had a share in the cult from the beginning; he was an ingenious and memorable prince, whom many Ithakesians would have been proud to claim as their ancestor. Life on the island continued through the Dark Age, without any obvious break, and without any marked change of population; so perhaps this is a rare case where the cult of a Homeric hero grew up quite independently of epic influence, in memory of a local ruler; but this could only happen where there is enough racial continuity.

In brief: between the Mycenaean world and the 'Age of Homer' there are two kinds of continuity which bear on the rise of hero-cults; and they pull in opposite directions. First, a continuity in tomb types works against the establishment of impersonal 'heroic' cults in tombs; they arose under the influence of epic poetry from the late eighth century onwards, but only in regions where a Mycenaean collective tomb would have seemed utterly strange to the local inhabitants of those times. Secondly, where there was racial continuity, some local heroes may have been venerated all through the Dark Age, long before the circulation of Homeric epic; when the epic cycle became widely known, more cults for named heroes might grow up in regions where there had been no such continuity—for example, in the Dorian Peloponnese. Attica enjoyed an especially rich variety of hero-cults because both the essential conditions are fulfilled there: an abrupt change in tomb types, but a continuity of people.

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<sup>81</sup> Benton, *art. cit.* 54 fig. 7; *BSA* xxxix (1938-9) 43 no. 63.

<sup>82</sup> W. Heurtley, *BSA* xl (1939-40) 11 f.

<sup>83</sup> O. Kern, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander* (Berlin, 1900) no. 36.

<sup>84</sup> Benton, *BSA* xxxv (1934-5) 53; Heurtley, *loc. cit.* (n. 82).