The present short essay is intended as a continuation of the discussion published in the previous issue of *Acta Classica*. The latter attempted to describe, with the help of Mycenaean written evidence, the machinery by which Bronze Age Mycenaean culture and religious thought were transmitted across the Dark Age into archaic and classical Greek times. This machinery in essence consisted of the curious community organization which was a feature of Greek life on the mainland and throughout the eastern settlements of the Dark Age. Such closely knit communities, although primitive when compared with the splendour of the Mycenaean settlements, preserved and handed down to classical times the basic religious traditions of the Bronze Age. What changes occurred, therefore, in mythology and religious belief in the course of the intervening dark centuries were the result of organic development in the same way as the contemporary styles of pottery design and decoration arose from Mycenaean and Submycenaean forms. Even the vigorous Geometric style of the dawning archaic period still betrayed its artistic connection with Mycenaean forms, while the divergent local variations from Protogeometric times give evidence of the individual activities of single communities.

These latter may well have been isolated on the mainland after the end of the Bronze Age, but they did nevertheless share a common heritage which without doubt was deeply rooted in the Mycenaean world. The close ties between Greek and Mycenaean religious thought have long been evident, and they were clearly outlined by Martin Nilsson before our present day understanding of the mainland archaeological scene, and even prior to the decipherment of the Mycenaean script called Linear B. We can be sure that in

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1. 'Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Cult Continuity', *A.C. X*(1968).
main such ties were due to the existence of the group organization which—whatever the political upheavals at the end of the second millennium—during the Dark Age kept alive and fostered inherited religious tradition. This conclusion does imply, however, that the curious structure of the early Greek communities, which was discussed in the previous article, was not a new feature imported by some intruder who arrived in Greece in massive numbers at the end of the Bronze Age and imposed his own social system of tribes, clans, etc. on the remnants of a crushed Mycenaean world. The evidence suggests continuity of thought and institutions in Greece, but to draw this inference means swimming against the mainstream of modern opinion. Most frequently we are told that the Greek community system, which ultimately resulted in the classical polis, was a post-Bronze Age phenomenon. Only the unequivocal interpretation of the Mycenaean sources will resolve the dilemma, and we are, alas, still some distance from that. Nonetheless archaeological and linguistic understanding have progressed enough to allow us to question the commonly proposed construction of events during the Dark Age.

How far is the break between Bronze and Iron not the work of our imagination? Deeply impressed by the holocaust that engulfed the Mycenaean palaces and by insistent accounts of brutish northern invaders our minds conjure up pictures of deserted settlements, abject poverty, and the total loss of inherited culture and religious faith. 'Would that I did not live among the Fifth, the Iron, Race of men', Hesiod complained. But not all of what had gone before was lost. A good many Mycenaean social institutions, one suspects, as well as religious beliefs survived the dark centuries. We should at least be prepared to reconsider modern accounts of the period in the light of the information from the Linear documents which do strongly hint at a much older history of the peculiarly Greek group organization. The real bone of contention is, of course, the general and tenaciously held conviction that the collapse of Mycenaean culture was the direct consequence of the overwhelming incursion into Greece of the Sons of Heracles, the notorious Dorians. And yet, when closely examined, the evidence concerning a sudden large-scale Dorian presence in Greece, some two generations after the probable date of the Trojan War, proves to be tenuous. The general discussion of this point we shall leave to another occasion. At present we are concerned merely with the Mycenaean sources about com-

5. Erga 174f.
6. On this point and the relevant discussions by modern historians see the article referred to in n.1.
community organization in relation to social innovations which reputedly occurred at the end of the Bronze Age.

There is much in the Mycenaean evidence which must remain open to correction in detail, nor is it prudent to exclude the possibility of the occasional misreading, or misinterpretation, of the difficult Linear script. In general outline, however, the tablets contain ample confirmation of the existence of community groups in Mycenaean times which might have been partly governed by local, partly by military, and partly perhaps by pseudo or real kinship bonds. In other words, there is no single feature in the composition and arrangement of the Greek community groups which must needs be directly attributable either to a cultural break during the Dark Age or to specific post-Bronze developments. Thus, for example, the military tribal or community arrangement need not have been a Dorian invention imported into Greece at the end of the second millennium, but traces of similar organizations survive on the tablets, albeit in a vague form.

These points raise some highly important questions, and we are bound briefly to take issue with those aspects which may have affected the development of Greek religion from Bronze Age times. The chief problem inevitably, as we noticed, involves the Dorians. Since the admittedly scattered, but nevertheless direct, Mycenaean evidence suggests that the Dark Age and archaic tribal community arrangement in essence continued Mycenaean tradition, how is it possible to reconcile this finding with the close association of the phylae with the Dorians, if we believe that the latter arrived on the scene at the end of the second millennium and substituted their own customs for the accepted Mycenaean ones? In literary tradition, we noticed, the term phylae was connected with the three Dorian tribes probably as military units. Since the Dorians are generally assumed to have overwhelmed the Mycenaean world at the end of the second millennium, the phylae system with its neat subdivision into phratries and gene should have been the product of the Dark Age.9 It seems a pity to disturb such a tidy sequence of events, but there are several difficulties which cast doubt on this reconstruction.

While the phylae apparently, there is no certainty in this, were peculiarly Doric institutions, phratries were not. If anything this ancient Indo-European term came to be attached to Ionic popular groups.10 However, phylae and phratries, as well as gene, most likely were originally independent organizations which may, of course, have come together in the Dark Age,

8. Discussed in Acta Classica see n.1.
9. E.g. Andrewes, The Greeks 20. We cannot here discuss the interesting proposals of S. Hood, The Home of the Heroes, London 1967,66; 126; etc., that Greek speaking peoples did not arrive on the mainland before the end of the thirteenth century and that the invaders in Middle Helladic were of Anatolian origin. Cf. the review by A. M. Snodgrass in J. H. S. 88 (1968) 213f.
10. For discussion and sources see the paper cited in n.1.
but there is no proof of this and Nestor’s advice in *Iliad* II, 362f. hints at a pre-Dark Age combination of at least the first two units. The leader of each *phyle* was the king, *phylobasileus*, and Hammond convincingly argues that this was the title of the chiefs of the three Dorian tribes which tradition says attacked the Mycenaean empire. But the *basileus* was a well established functionary in the Mycenaean hierarchy, so that, unless we suppose the extraneous Dorians to have independently coined the title, its use to describe the community leader presupposes prior acquaintance between Dorians and Mycenaeans.

Homer does little or nothing to resolve the problem. The Dorians are mentioned only once as living in Crete. This is very strange, for, although Nilsson concludes from Homer’s disinterest that the poem represented conditions prior to the Dorian invasion, we know that epic composition was continuous from Mycenaean times and included at least Dark Age customs. Therefore, if the Dorians dramatically crushed the Mycenaean world some two or three generations after the Trojan War, one might expect the event to be rather more clearly reflected in epic tradition. As it is the Dorians are ignored by the Achaelean Catalogue. Yet in the same Catalogue we hear of the Heraclid Tlepolemus who brought his contingent of nine ships from Rhodes to join the Achaean fleet. Literary tradition, of course, connected the Heracleidae with the Dorians from well before the Trojan War, so that we are not surprised to read in Homer that Tlepolemus, one of Heracles’ sons, had settled Rhodes according to the known system of the Dorian three *phylae*. This notice, together with *Iliad* II, 362f., and the reference to Dorians in Crete in the *Odyssey*, plainly suggest the conclusion that the Homeric audience was familiar with the Dorians and their customs in the Mycenaean world as a presence which required no special mention.

Their absence, like that of the Heracleidae, from the Catalogue Hammond explains by supposing the list to have covered an area to the north bordering on Leucas and therefore excluding Epirus and part of Thessaly which then harboured most of the Dorians. But we know now that both Thessaly and Epirus, especially Dodona there, had been in contact with Mycenaean culture, so that a line south of Leucas might well be thought an arbitrary

17. τριχθα ... κατακρολαδόν, *II.* II, 668.
division. Is it not possible that in the thirteenth century the Heracleidae and
the Dorians, as a clan and a race, did not send men to join the expedition
against Troy and therefore hardly merited separate mention? One now begins
to suspect that by the end of the second millennium the Dorians, as far as
culture and beliefs are concerned, were integrated in the Mycenaean world.

‘The Dorians regarded Zeus as their special god ... Their other special
god was Apollo of Pytho’. But we learn from the Linear B documents that
both these deities already belonged to the Mycenaean pantheon long before
the Dorians are supposed to have ended Mycenaean civilization. In fact, the
Indo-European Zeus probably had come to Greece at the beginning of
Middle Helladic.

There is no need to try and explain the Dorians away, who were firmly
fixed in literary tradition, but we may be forced to admit that their rôle in
extinguishing Mycenaean culture has been exaggerated. It is really a matter
of timing. The dramatic recession of mainland civilization at about 1100 B.C.,
the pronounced migratory movements eastward at the time, together with
seemingly novel methods of burial and the appearance of new artefacts, have
frequently led to the conclusion that a foreign culture arrived on the scene.

A few scholars, like Rhys Carpenter, have tried to explain events at the
end of the Bronze Age by discovering signs of climatic change in Greece
which temporarily made conditions there intolerable. This theory is still
subject to convincing proof, and most archaeologists connect the events of
this period with the irruption of the Dorians as an alien cultural force.

In the present state of our knowledge we cannot quarrel with a proposal
that the Dorians were the chief, or one of the chief, causes of political
unrest in the Mycenaean world. Literary tradition is quite explicit regarding
the continual friction between Achaeans and Dorians or Heracleidae. But,
as far as the end of the Bronze Age is concerned, we may well be dealing with
a kind of internal conquest without serious consequences to the religious
life of the early Greeks. From what has been said above it appears that
the religious customs of the Dorians were compatible with those of the
Mycenaean late in the second millennium. Zeus was as much a special
god of the Dorians as of the Mycenaean, not to mention the part he played

19. On Dodona see now the report of S. Dakaris’ most recent Mycenaean finds (IIIC)
beneath and about the sanctuary, in Arch. Report for 1967/8, 13f. Contrast H.W. Parkes,
The Oracles of Zeus, Oxford 1967, 20 and n.l., where the author cites Nilsson, Gesclh. I,
280ff. More relevant is p. 427 where Nilsson leaves the question open, ‘Sei es, daß der
Zeuskult in Dodona ein Relikt aus der griechischen Vorzeit, sei es, daß er ein fremder... ist.’

20. Hammond, op. cit. 40, who suggests that the Dorians might have ‘brought their
worship of Zeus from Dodona’, since Epirus was one of their strongholds.


22. Compare with this the view, occasionally expressed, that the changes on the main-
land were due to internal revolution while the Achaean leaders were absent before Troy.
See Desborough, Last Mycen. 223, who does not really agree with the suggestion.
in the Heracleidae clan. If basileus was the title of the commander of a Dorian phyle the same name equally served to describe the head of a Mycenaean community. Such common institutions suggest mutual familiarity of some standing.

The Dorians may have been a disruptive force in Late Mycenaean, but newcomers they were not. Nor does this conclusion, with the possible exception of an established Dorian presence in the Argolid, really conflict with the literary tradition, for Dorian tribes had been in the orbit of the Mycenaean world for anything up to six generations before the Trojan War.23 They were a race of wanderers, criss-crossing Thessaly and central Greece during the second half of the millennium in continuous contact, one must suppose, with the Mycenaeans. In fact, when Herodotus24 constructs the Dorian royal genealogy of Deucalion – Hellen – Dorus, he does not so much describe historical figures as establish the rightful place of these tribes in the Mycenaean world from the earliest days of Greek pre-history.25

Let us then try to lay to rest the concept of the Dorians as primitive destroyers of Late Mycenaean culture. What transpired in these years on the political front we can only guess at, but concerning religious tradition we are entitled to conclude that the fundamental ideas of gods and cult survived the fire and destruction of the last troubled years of the millennium.

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