

8 Archaeology and the politics of origins

The search for pyramids in Greece

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If for nothing else, the 1990s will be remembered as a period of resurgent nationalism and ethnic self-assertion. Along with this trend has come a less violent but nonetheless powerful desire to rewrite history in support of new political and social claims (Morris 1996: 172; Howe 1998: 221 n.14). In these attempts to reconstitute the past, there is an insistent effort to claim priority, whether in the process of land acquisition or in the discovery of a cultural advance. As a result, the ancient past has acquired a new relevance.

But in the case of ancient civilizations it is not always easy to discover who was there first or who initiated the great innovations. More often than not, the results of traditional archaeological research are inconclusive, and experts disagree among themselves. Wherever doubts exist, and they are plentiful in the early stages of human history, it is tempting, particularly for amateurs, to develop strategies that help to supplement lost information and construct persuasive narratives. Pseudoarchaeology is one of the most potent of these creative techniques. Its purpose is to set with certainty the priorities that have disappeared over time, to locate the innovators, whether individuals or civilizations, and to seek out and trace the relationships between disparate discoveries and events all over the world.

Pseudoarchaeology has several characteristics that distinguish it from scientific archaeology:

1. Pseudoarchaeology proceeds from the assumption that civilizations, like human beings, have family trees, and that the earlier cultures in effect beget the later. In the case of significant achievements, such as the building of pyramids, it seeks to determine priority with certainty and to proceed from the assumption that every great invention or idea can have occurred only once in human history and is spread or diffused from that one source.
2. Pseudoarchaeologists set out to confirm, rather than to test, a hypothesis. They do not try to account for all the available data but rather to seek out data that support their initial assumptions.
3. Whenever possible, they employ apparently new, previously untested methodologies that appear to give the results they desire.

4. Pseudoarchaeologists are contemptuous or dismissive of traditional methodologies and procedures (unless they conform to their needs).
5. They appeal to the imagination of their readers by suggesting that their findings have a wide application and significance.

For a detailed analysis of pseudoarchaeological "method," see Chapters 1 and 2.

The practice of pseudoarchaeology has its roots in antiquity. According to the fifth-century Greek historian Herodotus, the Egyptians believed that theirs was the oldest civilization. In an attempt to establish their priority, the pharaoh Psammetichus (Psamtek I, 664–610 BC) devised an experiment. He arranged for two infants to be raised in isolation, so that not even the people who fed them spoke to them. After two years, the shepherd who looked after the two children reported that the first intelligible word that they spoke consistently was *bekos*. Psammetichus then inquired which people called something *bekos* and discovered that it was the Phrygian word for bread. As a result of the experiment, Herodotus tells us (at 2.1–4), the Egyptians were compelled to acknowledge that the Phrygians must in fact be older than themselves.

Like many modern researchers, Psammetichus thought that he could answer a complex historical question by a simple experiment, and he did not repeat his experiment in order to see if similar results could be obtained a second or subsequent time. He also assumed that human culture was handed down like real estate or physical property from earlier to later generations. In effect, Psammetichus anticipated by 2,000 years the invention of the hyperdiffusionist model, according to which cultural influence is supposed to proceed in a linear fashion from earlier to later civilizations, so that resemblances between the practices of a later people and those of an earlier people could not possibly be coincidental (Lloyd 1975: 150, 1976: 5). But at least the pharaoh deserves credit for acknowledging that his experiment did not give him the answer that he wanted to hear. A modern pseudoarchaeologist would probably have ignored that experiment in favor of more cooperative data.

The question of priority appears to have been as important for Herodotus himself as it was for Psammetichus, because he chose to use the *bekos* story as a preface for the book that he devotes to a description of Egypt. Because Egypt was an older civilization than that of Greece, Herodotus assumed that many aspects of Greek civilization must inevitably have derived from it. When in the course of his travels he witnessed ritual practices that reminded him of what he had seen in the festivals of Dionysus, he did not suppose that the resemblances could have been purely coincidental but thought that they must have come from Egypt into Greece (2.49). He believed that the names of the Greek gods came from Egypt, because that is "what the Egyptians themselves say" (2.50.1–2). He did not find it remarkable that the Egyptian priests used the same names for the gods as he did, even though in other respects their language was different from his own, because he knew that the

Egyptian civilization was the earlier. So strong was his faith in Egyptian priority that he did not notice that his Egyptian informants were simply using the Greek names that Greek residents in Egypt had already given to the Egyptian gods (Assmann 2000: 32).

The *Black Athena* controversy

Now once again questions have been raised about Egyptian priority, specifically in relation to the civilization of ancient Greece. Were the Greeks the founders of Western civilization, or was it really the Egyptians? The debate about the origins of Greek culture came to the attention of the academic world as a result of the publication of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987). Bernal argued that classical scholars had tended to downplay or ignore Egyptian and Near Eastern influences on Greek culture because of racial prejudice and cultural arrogance. He cited Herodotus and other ancient Greeks who believed that their religion and some of their laws had derived from those of ancient Egypt and who supposed that some of their important thinkers and philosophers had studied with Egyptian priests. Although he did not say so explicitly, Bernal gave priority to Egypt, rather than to any of the civilizations of the Near East, because he sought to provide the academic credentials for a theory about Egyptian origins that has gained credence for many years among peoples of African descent (Lefkowitz 1996: 20–3). According to this theory, the Greeks had consciously borrowed or had even *stolen* philosophical and scientific knowledge from ancient Egypt. As the author of *Stolen Legacy*, one of the most influential books on the subject states: “the Greeks were not the authors of Greek philosophy, but the Black people of North Africa, the Egyptians” (James 1954: 158).

The “stolen legacy” notion is widely believed in the USA and also in the Francophone world through the writings of Senegalese intellectual Cheikh Anta Diop (Fauvelle-Aymar 2000: 27–46). Bernal and the other proponents of the “stolen legacy” idea did not appear to realize that the notion that Greek philosophy was derived from Egypt has its origins in the mythology behind Masonic initiations, which are in turn based on an anachronistic reconstruction of Egyptian civilization in an eighteenth-century French novel. The author of the novel in question, *Séthos*, was a French priest, Father Jean Terrasson. He described an elaborate Egyptian mystery system whose initiates received philosophical training in what was virtually a university. For a hundred years, *Séthos* was regarded as historically accurate, but after hieroglyphics had been deciphered, it became clear that the Egyptian mystery system portrayed in the novel was fictional (Lefkowitz 1997: 91–154; Hornung 2001: 160–1, 186–7).

Pseudoarchaeology plays a central role in this strange cultural debate, which has more to do with the racial politics of the USA than it does with ancient history (see especially Schmitz 1999: 191–249). To shore up his arguments about the extent of Egyptian influence, Bernal sought to show

that the Egyptians had invaded Greece in the third and second millennia BC and that they had left many linguistic and archaeological traces of their occupations behind them. His theories had a remarkable imaginative appeal, because they seemed to offer a means of restoring to Africa, at least intellectually, some of what Europe had taken away from it in the course of the slave trade. It was less apparent at the time when the second volume of *Black Athena* was published (Bernal 1991) how much in common his work had with that of other practitioners of armchair archaeology, such as Sigmund Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* or Immanuel Velikovsky in *Oedipus and Akhenaton*.

Instinctively, perhaps, Bernal drew on some of the strategies employed by pseudoarchaeologists:

- He proceeded from the assumption that ideas and practices flow in one direction only, from the earlier civilization to the later, rather than back and forth, and he had a tendency to interpret influence as a sign of borrowing.
- He had an explicit goal in undertaking his research: "to lessen European cultural arrogance" (Bernal 1987: 73).
- However, unlike Freud and Velikovsky, Bernal did not turn to the world of science to find support for his theories but rather revived methodologies from the past that traditional scholars had long since discarded. Like Herodotus before him, Bernal based his theories on the few myths and mythological genealogies that connected Greece to Egypt and on analogies between Greek and Egyptian words that sounded somewhat alike. But after Egyptian hieroglyphs had been deciphered, and it became possible to read what the ancient Egyptians said about themselves, rather than to see them through Greek eyes, scholars realized that much of what the ancients had seen as connections between ancient Egyptian and Greek civilizations had been based on misunderstanding (Lefkowitz 1996: 14–15). Traditional archaeologists had long since tried to distinguish critically between myth and history, and linguists had already catalogued the relatively few loan words that had made their way in historical times from Egyptian into ancient Greek. Since Egyptian and Greek belong to different language families, they do not otherwise share a common vocabulary (Jasanoff and Nussbaum 1996: 179–80; Jasanoff 1997: 57–68).
- Perhaps because so little factual evidence could be garnered to support his theories, Bernal devoted much of his energy to encouraging his readers to distrust the work of traditional ancient world scholarship. He spoke contemptuously of the connection of Greek to the Indo-European language family as "the Aryan hypothesis," thus indirectly linking it with the racist theories of the Nazis. The characterization was doubly misleading. First, there is no doubt about the existence of an Indo-European language family, even though there will always be some

uncertainty about the exact nature of proto-Indo-European, the parent language from which the known languages derived. Second, linguists no longer believe that proto-Indo-European originated in India among the Aryans, or worshippers of the Brahmanic gods in India. Rather, it may first have been spoken somewhere in the area of the Black Sea (Hoenigswald and Woodard 2004: 535).

- Bernal characterized his approach to ancient history as a “paradigm shift” in thought, using, misleadingly, a term that Thomas Kuhn had applied to *scientific* revolutions (Baines 1996: 42). He argued that reconstruction or narrative of ancient history must always be conjectural and based on models. These narratives could be judged on the basis of “competitive plausibility,” that is, whatever gave the most credible or acceptable result. Bernal himself did not discuss the obvious limitations of his methodology, which derive from its subjectivity: who determines what is credible or acceptable? What if someone else came along with a different but equally plausible reconstruction? Who would vote on the outcome, and whose vote would count?

Bernal was able to elicit sympathy for his arguments about scholarly prejudice and historical constructions because of his stated motives. Now, however, it seems remarkable that Bernal’s attempts at reconstructions should have been taken as seriously as they were, even by students of the ancient world. The notion that facts are in effect only opinions and that history is a form of fiction has now been discredited (see especially Haack 1997: 57–63; Evans 1997: 190–1, 210–20; Fernández-Armesto 1997: 203–29; Williams 2002: 231–58). But at the time it seemed exhilarating and liberating to suppose that scholars had been prevented from seeing the truth by the social prejudices of the time.

No scholars of the ancient world were persuaded by Bernal’s theory of Egyptian invasions of Greece in the third millennium BC and during the time of the fifteenth dynasty in Egypt, when the Hyksos overlords were in power (1674–1566 BC). The theory was primarily based on Bernal’s notion of “competitive plausibility.” Bernal did not in fact conduct any new investigations or excavations but drew on what he could find in books. Many of his arguments relied heavily on myth. For example, he suggested that the elaborate irrigation systems used in Boeotia and Egyptian works on the Nile *might have* inspired the Greek myths about Heracles controlling large bodies of water. Heracles’ ancestors had connections with Egypt, through Io, who had settled there, and her great-great-grandson Danaus, who returned from Egypt to Argos in Greece with his fifty daughters.

Bernal seemed to believe that ancient writers, because they were ancient, had an accurate knowledge of their history. So he accepted their accounts at face value. He believed (Bernal 1991: 124–8) the story told by Plutarch in the second century AD about the so-called tomb of Alcmene (Plut. *Mor.* 577F). In the fourth century BC, the Spartans found a bronze inscription at

Thebes “with many remarkable characters, probably very ancient; the appearance of the characters was distinctive and foreign, most like Egyptian characters.” Agesilaus, the king of Sparta, sent for Conouphis of Memphis, an Egyptian who was believed in Plutarch’s time (second century AD) to have taught the astronomer Eudoxus and to have known Plato and other Greeks (Gwyn Griffiths 1970: 285–7). After studying the inscription for several days, Conouphis said that it dated back to the days of when Proteus was king, and Heracles had learned the script (Plut. *Mor.* 578F–79A).

Unfortunately for Bernal’s argument, the tomb and the inscription have disappeared, if they ever existed in the first place (Tritle 1996: 306–7). Conouphis, despite his genuine Egyptian name (Gwyn Griffiths 1970: 285–7), may be a character from historical fiction. The connection of this monument to Alcmena, the mother of Heracles, is certainly fictional, a product of folk tradition of a much later date. There are many other examples of ruined buildings in Greece that have acquired mythic histories that have little or nothing to do with their original time or purpose. The stone where Homer is supposed to have taught his disciples (the so-called *daskalopetra*) on the island of Chios is in fact a ruined shrine of the goddess Cybele, built hundreds of years after the poet’s death (Barber 1995: 693). The inhabitants of the village of Pityos in the north of the same island direct visitors to the house of Homer (Haniotis 1971: 173), even though the ruins identified as the poet’s house are at most only a few hundred years old.

In order to support his theory of an Egyptian invasion of Greece, Bernal managed to find two examples of that most characteristic of all Egyptian structures, the pyramid: the Menelaion in Laconia and the so-called tomb of Amphion and Zethus in Thebes. The pyramid at the Menelaion in Laconia was, in his opinion, particularly significant, because it was the Spartan “national” shrine. He argued that the presence of a pyramid at that site showed that the Spartans consciously connected their ancestry through Heracles to Egypt. The failure of traditional scholars to point that out, he argued, was a prime example of the flaws in the “Aryan” model of the history of Greece (Bernal 1987: 53–4). Bernal promised to discuss the Menelaion at greater length in chapter VI of volume II of *Black Athena*. In practice, however, he neglected to do so, without explaining why. Had he discovered that the Menelaion, the sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos, was not after all a true Egyptian pyramid? It is in fact only “a sort of small stepped pyramid, built up round a spur of rock,” dating at the earliest to the second half of the seventh century BC (Pendlebury 1930: 47). In *Black Athena Writes Back*, Bernal asserts that the Spartans used the pyramid form because they believed in “their Heraklid ‘Syrian or Egyptian’ descent” (Bernal 2001: 99). That is certainly possible, but in the absence of any explicit ancient evidence about what the Spartan kings may have thought about Heracles, it may make more sense to assume that the pyramid form was chosen in imitation of the great Egyptian pyramid tombs, or simply because terracing was well suited to the top of a hill.

The other structure cited by Bernal as evidence of an Egyptian invasion also turns out not to be a real pyramid. This is the so-called tomb of Amphion and Zethus near Thebes, a prehistoric structure that was identified in historic times with the mythological twin sons of Zeus who were said to have built the walls of Thebes. Greek archaeologist Theodore Spyropoulos excavated this tomb in 1971–3 and identified the structure as a step-pyramid or ziggurat built in the third millennium BC. By that time, the Egyptians had stopped building step-pyramids, but (as Bernal argues) the builders of the tomb may have been following an older fashion. Bernal notes that although most archaeologists have not been persuaded by Spyropoulos' arguments, they may have been motivated by anti-Egyptian sentiments. Why had "Aryanists" classified the tomb as a *kurgan* or type of burial mound found to the north of Greece, in south Russia and the Balkans if not to promote the Indo-European character of Greek culture (Bernal 1991: 124, 128–33)? But in fact the reason why most archaeologists believe that the tomb is an ordinary burial mound similar to those found throughout Greece has less to do with politics than with physical reality. The mound appears to be more pyramidal in shape than it was in antiquity, because the hill has been cut away in modern times. It is much smaller than any Egyptian pyramid, or indeed than any of the Etruscan mound tombs at Cerveteri. Nothing in the structure suggests any parallels with Egyptian burials (Tritle 1996: 321–3).

That there are no Egyptian pyramids in Greece should not surprise anyone who has some knowledge of Egyptian and Greek history and civilization. Why should the Egyptians have chosen to invade Greece, since the Greeks were not troubling them and had no natural resources to offer them? There is no reference to any such invasion in the Egyptians' own extensive records, although there was continuous trade with Greece in both earlier and later periods (Coleman 1996: 281–5). It is possible that the monumental buildings at Mycenae and Tiryns, and in particular the great *tholos* tombs, may have been inspired, directly or indirectly, by the pyramids (Matton 1966: 48–9). But even in those cases there is a marked difference of architectural style and scale, which can be accounted for by differences in religious attitude between the two cultures. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife and so devoted great energy to the preparation of tombs and the preservation of bodies. Their government was highly centralized, and great importance was attached to the welfare of their pharaoh. The Greeks had a more practical attitude toward burial and imagined that only the insubstantial souls of the dead survived the grave. Well into historical times they lived in independent city-states, and until their conquest by Philip of Macedon in the fourth century BC, the Greeks never had a single ruler.

From Egypt to Greece

Nonetheless, as students of ancient art may be surprised to discover, there are in fact remains of structures in Greece that have been called pyramids. I

first learned about these buildings not from archaeologists but on a radio talk show in 1997. I was speaking over a telephone hook-up on the Armstrong Williams show with Richard Poe, the author of *Black Spark, White Fire*, a book that argues that Greek civilization was inspired by an African ancient Egypt (Poe 1997). Poe thinks that the Egyptian influences occurred naturally, and that Egyptian ideas were absorbed rather than stolen by the Greeks. When he claimed that a decisive argument in favor of his theory was the presence of pyramids in Argos, I expressed some doubt about his statement. At that point, my connection to the radio station was cut off. Had I questioned Poe's veracity too sharply? I thought I knew what I was talking about. In all my many visits to the city of Argos and the Argolid, I had never seen any pyramids.

I later discovered that Poe most likely had in mind two buildings that receive minimal notice even in the more detailed guidebooks. In fact, until the 1990s, and the renaissance of the debate about Egyptian influence, these structures had been of interest only to archaeologists and military historians. Archaeologists had sought to identify these unusual structures with two buildings that the second-century AD traveler Pausanias had seen during his visit to the Argolid. On his way from Argos to Epidaurus, "on the right" (that is, south) of the road before one comes to Tiryns, Pausanias says that "there is a building that closely resembles a pyramid (*pyramidi malista eikasmemon*), which has carved upon it shields of the Argolic type" (2. 25.7). He was told that it was the common tomb (*polyandria*) of the soldiers who died in the battle between the legendary brothers Acrisius and Proitus for the throne of Argos (Apollodorus, *The Library*, 2.2.1). If in fact the building had been constructed for that purpose, it would have been erected four generations before the Trojan War, around the end of the fourteenth century BC. The other building that Pausanias saw was of a considerably later date. He was told that the "pyramid" at Kenchreai, to the southwest of Argos, was the common tomb (*polyandria*) of the Argives who were killed in the battle between Sparta and Argos at the Argive city of Hysiai in 669/8 BC (2. 24.7).

In his commentary on Pausanias, Sir James Frazer describes a building "commonly known" as the pyramid at Kenchreai, not far from the Erasinos River, with masonry in a style somewhere between Cyclopean and polygonal (Frazer 1913: II 213). He also saw an "ancient pyramid" with polygonal masonry at Lessa, on the way to Epidaurus, but regarded it as a different building from the pyramid decorated with shields that Pausanias had seen near Tiryns (*ibid.*: II 232-3). Frazer notes that some scholars of his day thought that these pyramids, because they were found in Argos, provided confirmation of the legend that Danaos had come there from Egypt with his daughters. Frazer notes that according to Plutarch (*Pyrrhos* 32.9), Danaos landed with his daughters at a place called Pyramia when he came to the Argolid to escape from Egypt (Frazer 1913: II 214).

So Poe was justified in saying that there had been buildings like pyramids in the Argolid, even if there were none specifically in the city of Argos,

and even though there is no indication that either of them had been built by Egyptians. In the last few years, Poe has apparently discovered the existence of additional pyramids: "A number of pyramids dot the Greek landscape to this day, structures of great antiquity and mysterious origin" (www.richardpoe.com). Why had none of my archaeologist friends ever mentioned them to me in connection with the *Black Athena* controversy, or beforehand? Bernal would almost certainly insist that the reason in both cases was political. In his view, no classicist would wish to acknowledge that there was any connection between Egypt and Greece. But there is another explanation, far less interesting from the point of view of motive but almost certainly the true one: archaeologists had long since discovered that the pyramidal buildings in Greece did not have much in common, either in form or in function, with the pyramids in Egypt.

Let us begin with the two "pyramids" that Pausanias saw in the Argolid. Neither, so far as we know, is still standing. The pyramid that served as a common tomb for the soldiers killed at the Battle of Hysiai was at ancient Kenchreai (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2). That town lies twelve miles southwest of the pyramidal building that stands today at Helleniko near the fountain of Kephalaria on the Erasinus River (Pritchett 1980: 67–8; Fracchia 1985: 685; Simpson 1965; Figure 8.2). The pyramid decorated with shields that served as a common tomb for the soldiers killed in the war between Proitus and Acrisius was located somewhere near Tiryns. The ruins of a pyramidal

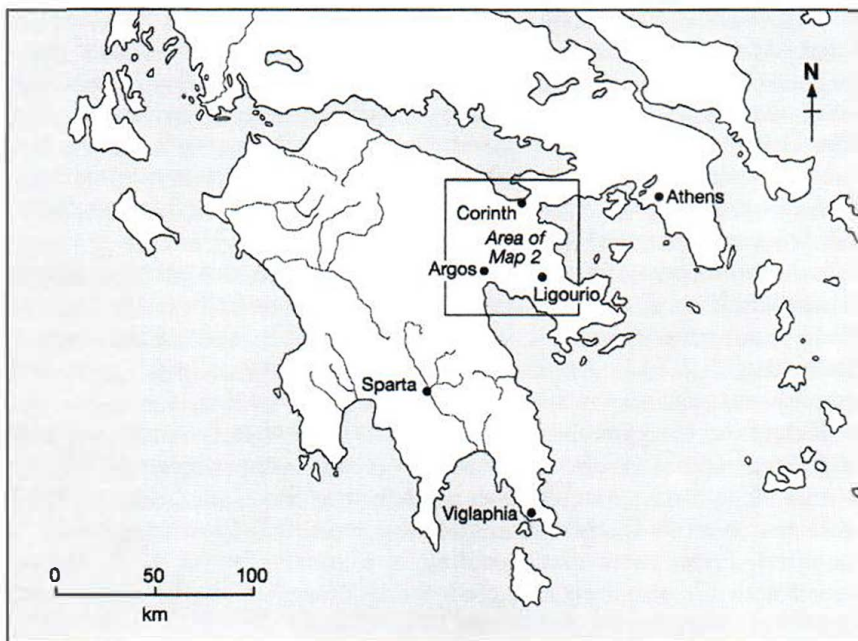


Figure 8.1 Map of Greece (drawn by B. Nelson).

building can still be found not far from Ligourio at the site of ancient Lessa, twenty miles to the east of Tiryns, to the north (that is, to the *lefthand* side) of the ancient road from Argos to Epidauros, but no trace of the buildings that Pausanias saw remains; the artistic merit of the pyramid with shields may have made it particularly vulnerable (Pritchett 1980: 70). So we will never know how closely they resembled any of the pyramids of Egypt.

Pausanias says nothing about the two pyramidal buildings that have survived at Helleniko and Ligourio (Figures 8.3 and 8.4). Aside from their inwardly sloping walls, these two buildings bear no great resemblance, either in size, masonry, or function, to any of the pyramids of Egypt. Egyptian pyramids were tombs for pharaohs and members of their families and courts, but the Argolid buildings could never have been used for burials. They have large central rooms and are much less solid than pyramids that were designed to be used as tombs (Figure 8.5). They are much smaller than the smallest Egyptian pyramids, such as that of the eighth-dynasty

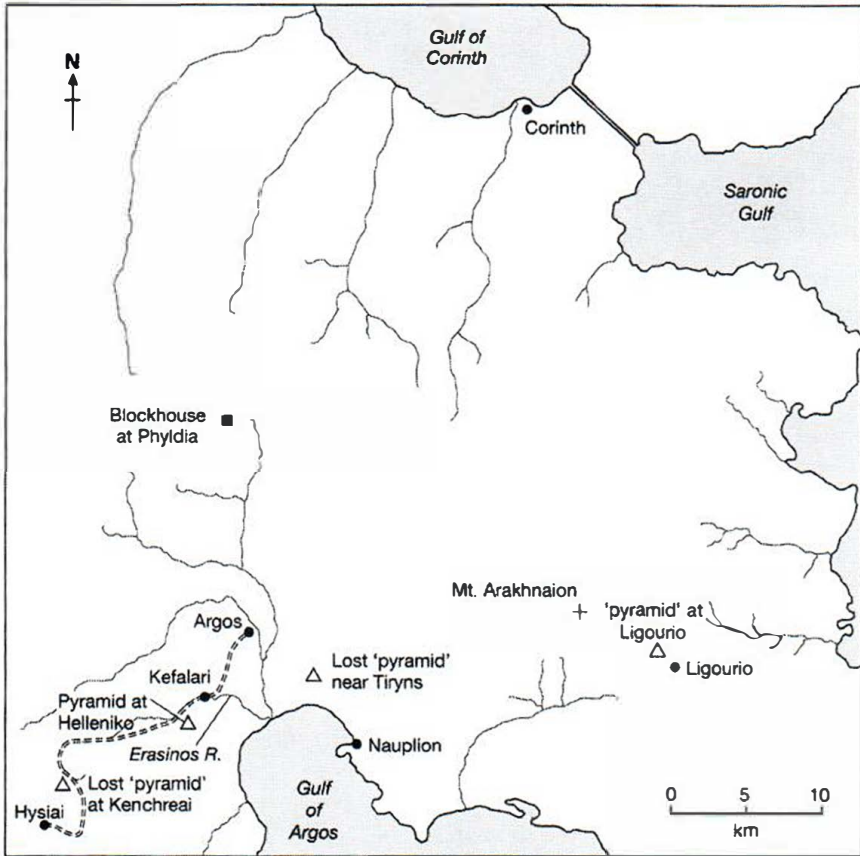


Figure 8.2 Map of the Argolid (drawn by B. Nelson).

pharaoh Ibi, the base of which is 31.5 meters (most pyramids are much larger; Lehner 1997: 17; see Figure 8.6). In fact, the sides of the Helleniko pyramid are so steeply inclined that they would have intersected before they could have formed a structure that resembled a pyramid. The floor plan of the structure is in any case rectangular rather than square (approx. 12.5 x



Figure 8.3 The "pyramid" at Helleniko (photo: A. Macres).



Figure 8.4 Remains of the "pyramid" at Ligourio (photo: A. Macres).

14 m; McAllister 1976: 445; Tomlinson 1972: 35–6). So the sloping sides could never have come together in a point, as they would on a square pyramid.

Both the Helleniko and Ligourio pyramids were excavated scientifically in August 1937 by archaeologists from the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. The excavators found that both buildings were situated



Figure 8.5 The large central room of the “pyramid” at Helleniko (photo: A. Macres).

in the countryside, in a valley; each had walls roughly 10 meters in length. Each was built with local stones, which were not shaped into uniform rectangular blocks but rather were cut along their sides so as to fit together. Since that “polygonal” style of masonry was commonly used in the fourth century BC, the excavators dated the stone structures to that period. The archaeologists’ findings were published in *Hesperia* in 1938 by one of the investigating archaeologists, Louis E. Lord (1875–1957), under the title “The ‘Pyramids’ of Argolis” (Lord 1938: 481–527).

However, Lord and his colleagues did not find any evidence that the two pyramids, or the structure of similar size without sloping walls in Phykta near Nemea, could ever have been tombs. No indications of any burial were found in any of the buildings. Their doors fastened from the *inside* (*ibid.*: 527). No pottery remains excavated from beneath the floors of the “pyramids” dated to a time earlier than the late fifth century BC (Scranton 1938: 528–38). None of the Egyptian objects listed in Pendlebury’s catalogue were found in these buildings (Pendlebury 1930). A fragment of an inscription found in the Ligourio pyramid dates from the late fourth century BC (Scranton 1938: 537). In 1941, archaeologists completed the excavation of a pit in the Ligourio pyramid and found no potsherds dating to a time earlier than the fourth century BC (Frantz and Roebuck 1941: 112). Neither building could have been used as a watchtower, because their situations do not offer sweeping views of the surrounding areas. Fragments of pottery, coins, and fragments of inscriptions found in the “pyramids” suggest that the structures were reoccupied in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Scranton 1938: 528–38).

In August 1939, Lord investigated the remains of three other slightly smaller buildings in the same region, each built using polygonal masonry.

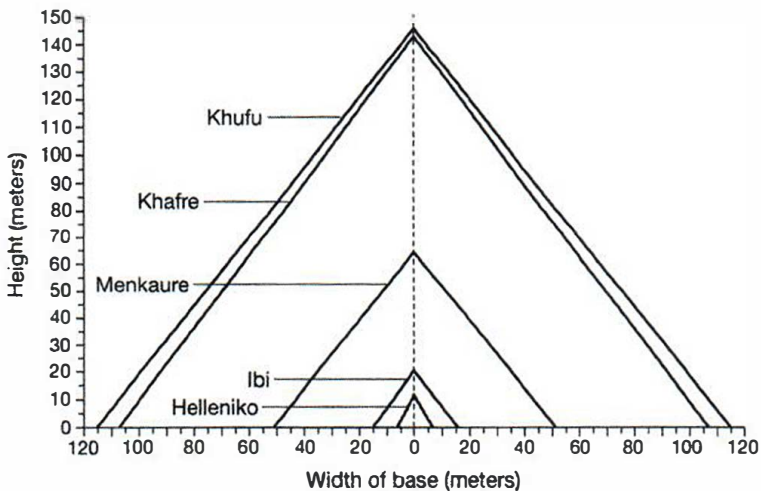


Figure 8.6 Comparative size of Egyptian and Greek pyramids (drawn by B. Nelson).

These he took to be "blockhouses" or stations along ancient roads that had been used as control points during times of invasion or political upheaval (Lord 1941: 93–109). There was considerable chaos in the countryside in the 360s BC and again in 351 (Tomlinson 1972: 143). As a result of his investigation of the buildings in the 1970s, Mark Munn suggested that they had been constructed with sloping walls in order to accommodate ladders or stairs along the offset of the walls, leading to higher stories made of brick and wood (Munn 1983: 333). Although from time to time they may have been used as fortifications, Munn argued that the Argolid buildings might also have been used for storage of water or of large amounts of liquid, such as olive oil, or for storage of dry goods. Circumstantial evidence led him to believe that they were multipurpose farm towers, privately constructed and owned (Munn 1982: 278, 1983: 334–5).

Munn's conclusions were supported by an investigation undertaken in 1982–3 by Helena Fracchia of a "pyramid" near Viglaphia on the coast of southern Laconia (see Figure 8.1). This structure had been identified by Pausanias as the tomb of Kinados, one of Menelaus' steersmen (3.22.10). If that had been its true function, it would date from the twelfth century BC, the time of the Trojan War. However, it is even more likely that the building was associated with local legends about Menelaus, because later generations did not quite know exactly what it was, like the tomb of Alcmene in Thebes or the house of Homer on Chios described above. Fracchia's investigation showed that like the "pyramids" in the Argolid, the Viglaphia building was not a perfect square and was relatively small (17.5 × 16 m); nor had it ever been used as a tomb. Pottery remains dated no earlier than the fourth century BC. Like the Argolid pyramids, it is located on a hill in a valley, without a wide outlook, has a door facing east, and provisions for water storage.

Fracchia also conducted a survey of the pottery remains at the Argolid pyramids and confirmed that they dated from *c.* 350 BC onwards. She found close analogues to the three Greek "pyramids" in the Crimea, where there are pyramidal towers dating to the fourth–third centuries BC on ancient farms (e.g., Dufkova and Pecirka 1970: 145–6). These rural structures may have been used for storage and production, as well as for occasional housing of workers (Fracchia 1985: 683–9). Christos Piteros investigated the buildings at Helleniko and Ligourio again in 1995; he concluded that in both structures the walls of the ground floor inclined inward "for stability reasons" and that each supported a second or third story (now lost) made of mud-dried brick (Piteros 1998: 372). Analogues can still be found in Greece from the Byzantine era (*ibid.*: 351).

So Poe's assertion about the presence of Egyptian pyramids in Argos proved after all to be misleading. The "pyramids that dot the landscape in Greece" are in fact few and far between, and in any case they are not real pyramids. It is true that none of the so-called pyramids can be dated with precision, because no ancient source mentions them. Archaeologists have

used pottery remains and masonry style to determine the probable time of their original construction. In so doing, they have relied on criteria for dating that are based on knowledge accumulated and re-evaluated by many different specialists over many years. Admittedly, however, this method of dating buildings and discovering their probable use is based on analogy rather than absolute certainty.

From Greece to Egypt

Caution on the part of archaeologists can be mistaken for hesitation, and natural reluctance on the part of archaeologists to make final pronouncements can be understood as a sign of uncertainty. The temptation to question supposedly subjective criteria such as style becomes greater when researchers want to use archaeological remains to confirm a particular theory, especially when politics of some kind are involved. The methodology of conventional archaeology is unromantic in the extreme; surely it is much more interesting and exciting to think of the structure at Helleniko as a pyramid than as a multipurpose farm tower.

Here is where parascientific research and pseudoarchaeology come into play, especially when investigators are eager to assign originality to a particular civilization. As we have seen, such archaeology is characterized by its rejection (often on cultural or moral grounds) of traditional methodologies, and a desire to use myth as history, or to assume that history, especially if inconvenient, is no more accurate than myth. Whenever possible, pseudoarchaeologists will come up with new, previously untested, methodologies, and seek to impress their audience with an array of specific technical data.

Inevitably, perhaps, a Hellenocentric theory arose to counter the Afrocentric theory that Bernal and Poe sought to support. According to the new theory, the Greeks invented the pyramid form, which was later adopted and developed by the Egyptians. In 1992, a study of the dating and significance of the Argolid pyramids was undertaken under the auspices of the Academy of Athens, the results of which were later published in their *Proceedings* (Theocaris and Veis 1995). In this article, academician Pericles Theocaris, in collaboration with Georgios Veis, described how they had used thermoluminescence (TL) in surface layers from the stones to determine the dates of the two Argolid pyramids. In the past, the TL method had been employed primarily to distinguish ancient pottery from modern fakes, but the authors suggested that the same technique could be used to date limestone blocks, since they too would have been exposed to sunlight during the course of construction. According to their calculations, the pyramid at Helleniko could be dated to 3240 ± 640 BC and the one at Ligourio to 2520 ± 680 BC. The article described in detail how the TL experiments had been conducted. A site survey was undertaken as well, using magnetic and electromagnetic measurements. The authors compared the Argolid pyramids with similar buildings in Egypt and Anatolia dating to the third and

second millennia BC, using advanced structural techniques; they also mentioned the pyramidal edifices found near Thebes and in Styliadha (Stylis) in Phthiotis.

In support of their argument, the authors reconstructed the ancient road from Argos to Epidaurus so that Pausanias might have seen the Helleniko pyramid on his right, rather than on his left, on his way to Tiryns. That way, it was possible for them to identify the Helleniko pyramid with the pyramid with shields that Pausanias believed to be the tomb of the soldiers killed in the battle between Proitus and Acrisius, the traditional date of which fitted in with their proposed TL dating. The shields on the Ligourio pyramid (which they dated to the second millennium BC) were supposedly an indication of connections with the other civilizations in the eastern Mediterranean that had also begun to use shields at the same time. They remarked on the close relationship between the Egyptians, Hittites, and "proto-Greeks" during that period of history. Detailed measurements undertaken by the authors showed another possible link to Egypt. The axis along which the two Argolid pyramids lie is virtually the same parallel as the azimuth of the dog star, Sirius (Sothis or Sopdet in Egyptian) at the time of its heliacal rising (*c.* 19 July) during the periods of their respective construction (Theocaris and Veis 1995: 232–4). The heliacal rising of Sothis (that is, the time when the star's rising is closest to that of the Sun) was important in the Egyptian calendar because it coincided with the annual inundation of the Nile. The dates of the Sothic cycles (2781–77 and 1321–17 BC) are fundamental in Egyptian chronological records and in establishing the chronology of the Mediterranean region (Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 42, 276).

Two more articles about the TL were published in English-language journals, with further details and rather more conservative conclusions. An article by Theocaris in collaboration with Ioannis Liritzis and Robert Galloway of the University of Edinburgh suggested rather later dates of 2730 \pm 720 BC for the Helleniko pyramid and 2260 \pm 710 BC for the Ligourio pyramid. They also used TL to determine the date of a Mycenaean wall and found it to be reasonably accurate (Theocaris *et al.* 1997: 399–405; Hammond 1997a: 18). The TL dating indicated that the Argolid pyramids were roughly coeval with the pyramids in Egypt.

A second article provided further control data by using TL methodology to determine a date for the foundation wall on the western side of the polygonal retaining wall beneath the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Using scrapings from a piece of marble from an inter-block surface, they arrived at a date of 420 \pm 300 BC, which corresponds roughly to the known archaeological age of the foundation wall (550 BC). They reached the conservative conclusion that although TL dating had too large a margin of error to be used to date architectural structures precisely, it was still helpful "in differentiating between periods of construction that are far apart, or revising established views based on typology of finds or masonry of the structure"

(Liritzis *et al.* 1997: 479–96). In his summary of the work undertaken by Liritzis and his colleagues, Norman Hammond, writing as the archaeological correspondent of *The Times*, suggested that the TL method had promise: “This newly developed chronicle of sunlight may well illuminate unexpected corners of the past” (Hammond 1997b: 24).

Nonetheless, questions remain about the reliability of the new methodology. In the case of the Argolid buildings, the research appeared to have been undertaken in order to establish an early date for these buildings rather than to determine the reliability of TL dating in general. If Theocaris, Veis, Liritzis, and Galloway had begun by first using TL on buildings of known date to establish a baseline and had then applied their techniques to the unusual buildings in the Argolid, their research might have appeared to be more objective. But as it was, their initial experiment was not blind or double blind, and control data were supplied only later. Why had they picked these particular buildings to examine? Why not also examine the building with polygonal walls at Phytia, which Lord had investigated along with the two pyramids? Theocaris and Veis indicate in the first paragraph of the academy paper that they chose the structures at Helleniko and Ligourio because they were *pyramids*. As such, they had particular valence in the current controversy about the origins of Greek civilization.

There were other problems as well. The TL dating, as the researchers admitted, was only very approximate: a methodology that is accurate within ± 200 –750 years can only serve as a rough guide. The other pyramidal structures they mention do not support their argument. As we have seen, the so-called tomb of Amphion and Zethus near Thebes is not a pyramid. The only surviving ancient structure at Styliidha in Thessaly is not a pyramid but rather a long wall made of large rectangular and trapezoidal blocks (MacKay 1976: 697). The wall has some inclined stones, but these are upward-slanting “jogs” used to accommodate the rising terrain (Lawrence 1979: 351–2). Since the structure at Helleniko could not have been the pyramid that Pausanias saw near Tiryns, it had no known association with the Mycenaean period and could not have been the tomb for the soldiers slain in the mythical war between the brothers Proitus and Acrisius.

Then there is the question of how the samples for TL dating had been selected. In each case, the stones used in constructing the pyramids might have been recycled from earlier buildings; if such stones were not exposed to light in the course of a later reconstruction, they would endow the newer version of the building with a greater antiquity than it was entitled to. In any case, even if more experiments were undertaken, and the TL dating turned out to be a helpful determinant of date, that still would not prove that the two structures in Argos are pyramids, or that they had any connection with the Egyptians. It is in fact not particularly significant that the Argolid buildings appeared to be oriented in relation to the axes of the azimuth of the star Sirius or Sothis at the time of its heliacal rising. The Egyptians measured time by the rising of Sothis but used sightings of the constellation

of Orion (Sah, the consort of the goddess Sothis or Sopdet) for the orientation of pyramids and sun temples, at least in the early part of the third millennium. Orion is the focus of the "air shafts" in the Great Pyramid, perhaps because it is the intended goal of the *ba* or soul of the pharaoh (Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 234). The Egyptian pyramids in general are aligned with the cardinal points of the compass, as determined by sightings of the Great Bear (north) and Orion (south) constellations (*ibid.*: 42; Lehner 1997: 106, 212). In fact, the Argolid "pyramids" are not so precisely sited; the building at Ligourio lies at an almost 45° angle to the cardinal points of the compass (Lord 1938: 33, 39).

Aside from these questions about the ways in which the researchers made use of the scientific data that they collected, it is possible to discern in their Academy of Athens report (Theocaris and Veis 1995) some affinities with the work of pseudoarchaeologists. Why did they not attempt to make clearer distinctions between myth and history? Why did they disregard the work of prior archaeologists in the late 1930s, which had been verified in the 1980s by the independent investigators Munn and Fracchia? Was it not at least misleading to say that "no other excavation or dating work was undertaken until 1992," when the academy-sponsored researchers began their inquiry (Theocaris *et al.* 1997: 399)? Ignoring the work of previous researchers perhaps does not quite amount to outright contempt for traditional scholarship (#4, page 181), but their research was undertaken to confirm a theory (#2). They employed a novel and previously untested scientific methodology (#3), and they appealed to the imagination of their readers (#5) in supposing that the Argolid pyramids had some meaningful connection with astronomy and religion.

Despite these obvious problems with the research undertaken by Theocaris, Liritzis, and their colleagues, the two long-neglected Argolid pyramids suddenly acquired a political significance. An article about the academy-sponsored project had appeared in a Greek newspaper in 1992, and in 1994 the popular journal *Davlos* ("Torch") published an article about the Helleniko and Ligourio buildings, with photographs, measurements, and diagrams showing how they could be reconstructed as pyramids. The author of the article, Vasileos Katsiadramis, argued that the pyramid near Helleniko had been used as a *heroon*, or shrine for a hero, and that its small size, in contrast to the large size of its Egyptian counterparts, could be explained by the nature of Greek religion, which reserved the greatest honors for god rather than man, in contrast to the tribute paid to human pharaohs by the Egyptians. In its Greek manifestation, the pyramid form was superior to that of its Egyptian counterparts in its restraint and modesty. The tombs, in his opinion, provide silent testimony to true ancient history that had long been ignored (Katsiadramis 1994: 9215–36).

Katsiadramis' article looked scientific, with its lists of measurements and geometrical reconstructions and its citations of ancient sources. More extravagant claims about the priority and importance of Greek pyramids were

made in two accompanying articles. The first of these, by Panagiotis Hatzioannou, claimed that twenty-six pyramids are scattered throughout Greece and asserted that the "pyramid" on the peak of Mt Taygetos was comparable to the Great Pyramid of Egypt. He cited the opinion of scholars and academicians that the Greek pyramids antedated the Egyptian pyramids by 1,200 years. He argued that pyramids are geometrical constructions, that Pythagoras invented geometry, and that the first-century BC geographer Strabo explained how to determine the circumference of the Earth by means of an arithmetical formula (2.5.3–4). Hatzioannou offered further "proof" from symbolism and language: the pyramid form has a mystical meaning in Orphism and in the Greek mysteries; the word "pyramid" derives from *pyr* (fire), which means light and fire and sun in ancient Greek; the corresponding Egyptian word is *kbouti* or *kboufu* (Hatzioannou 1994: 9216–24).

The other short article cited Pausanias' descriptions of the two pyramids that he saw in the Argolid and provided background information about the feud between Proitus and Acrisius. Its author, Diamantis Koutoulas, also noted that Pausanias' testimony was confirmed by a statement in Diodorus Siculus that the legendary King Minos of Crete built a pyramid as a tomb for himself as well as the famous labyrinth (1.89.3; Koutoulas 1994: 9233).

In fact, none of the arguments produced by these three authors did much to support the case for the priority of the Greek pyramids, at least among archaeologists. Hatzioannou mentioned only in passing the TL study that had been sponsored by the Academy of Athens, since the results had not yet been published. The notion that the top of Mt Taygetos was a pyramid appeared to be a fantasy; the conical shape of the peak is the result of a natural phenomenon (Lazos 1995: 114). In any case, it would have been impossible to build a pyramid on a mountaintop using the technology available during the third or second millennium BC. The three *Davlos* authors approached the ancient sources with a naive confidence in their reliability. They did not doubt that the pyramid tomb of Minos mentioned by Diodorus had actually existed. They did not consult any of the scholarly work that had been done on Diodorus' historical technique and his uncritical approach to local legends. They did not ask whether Acrisius' grandson, the hero Perseus, had literally been the founder of Mycenae. They did not question the veracity of Plato's account of Atlantis, which is almost certainly a complete fiction (Nesselrath 2002: 42). They made no attempt to distinguish myth from history.

Another problem was that the *Davlos* authors (and Theocaris, Liritzis, *et al.*) had ignored the work on the pyramids and similar buildings undertaken by Lord and other scholars. They did not seem to realize that the buildings at Helleniko and Ligourio could not have been the two pyramids mentioned by Pausanias. They also did not take advantage of the available etymological dictionaries. How had Hatzioannou managed not to discover that the word *pyramis* has nothing to do with light? The *y* in the root of the ancient Greek word for fire, *pyr-* is short, not long as in *pyramis*, which is cognate

with ancient Greek *pyros* (wheat). The geometrical structure was in fact named after a kind of wheat cake (Chantraine 1984: II 958; Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 233). Khoufu or Khufu, the pharaoh whom the Greeks called Cheops (2551–2528 BC), is the builder of the Great Pyramid (Lehner 1997: 108–9). His name has nothing to do with light; rather, it is an abbreviation of the phrase *Khnum-kuefui* (“Khnum [the ram-god] protects me”; Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 152).

In 1995, historian Christos Lazos published a much more sober and objective discussion of the pyramid question. He reviewed all the reports about the pyramids and provided in appendices excerpts from the articles by Lord and Scranton and those of the Academy of Athens researchers. But while he expressed some real doubts about the theories of the Hellenocentrists, he noted that there was constant communication between the Egyptians and the Greeks, and he suggested that no final determination could be made until new diagnostic measures were discovered (Lazos 1995: 128).

It was certainly true that the chronology of the *Davlos* articles was so shaky that their arguments could equally well have been used to bolster the Afrocentric theory of Egyptian priority. No doubt it was these articles, or some report of them, that were the ultimate source for Poe’s statement about pyramids dotting the landscape of Greece (Poe’s wife is a Greek-American who has “multitudinous social and professional contacts in the Greek community”; Poe 1997: xx).

When professional archaeologists objected to the earlier dating proposed by the TL researchers, *Davlos* writers responded with contempt, characteristic #4 of the strategies employed by pseudoarchaeologists. Traditional archaeologists, they alleged, were blindly adhering to the dogma of “light from the East.” Ancient myths and texts supported the TL dating and the priority of the Greek pyramids; human civilization began not in the Near East, as claimed in the Old Testament, but in Greece (Koubalakis 1996a: 10355, 1996b: 10417–20). When archaeologist G.A. Pikoulas argued against the TL theory of dating (Pikoulas 1996: 60–3), Katsiadramis, the author of the first *Davlos* article about the Argolid pyramids, responded by accusing him of childishness (1996: 10873–81). Katsiadramis presented trajectory calculations to show that such a tower would have been inadequate for defense with the kinds of weapon that were in use during the Hellenistic era. He claimed that Pikoulas’ reconstruction of the Helleniko pyramid as the base of a fourth-century tower was reminiscent of a construction with a child’s Lego™ blocks. Ridicule can be an effective tool, but I know from my own experience that demonizing an opponent is a device most often employed when better arguments are not available. Poe, for example, claims that my objection to the Afrocentric “stolen legacy” notion derives from adherence to orthodoxy: “how far our universities have drifted from the Greek ideal – the very ideal Lefkowitz purports to defend” (Poe 1997: xiv). Perhaps Katsiadramis was not aware that the remains of such

towers still exist in Greece (Lawrence 1979: 189–91; Ober 1985: 130–80). There is a fourth-century tower, with walls that slant inward, still standing on the island of Kea (Kazamiakis 2003: 24–7).

In 1998, archaeologist Christos Piteros published a very careful new report on the Argolid pyramids, with new photographs. He reviewed the articles by Theocaris, Liritzis and their colleagues and concluded that (1) their chronology was unacceptable because it was based on an experimental methodology that had not been sufficiently tested; (2) there was no archaeological record of pyramids in the Argolid in the Mycenaean era; (3) the masonry of the walls of the two structures was not Mycenaean; (4) no Mycenaean pottery was found in the two Argolid “pyramids”; (5) the comparison with Egyptian pyramids was misleading, because of structural differences; and (6) there is no real doubt about the dating of the structures to the fourth century BC. He pointed out that the Helleniko pyramid could not have been the same building that Pausanias saw on his way from Argos to Epidaurus, as the academy researchers had mistakenly supposed (Piteros 1998: 369–71).

Nonetheless, at least as far as I can determine, the arguments and evidence adduced by experienced archaeologists like Piteros has in no way dampened the enthusiasm of the Hellenocentrists. No new evidence from TL dating has been adduced; instead, there seems to be an increased reliance on evidence from mythology, the possible significance of astronomical measurements, and astrology. In 1997 (too late for Piteros to have discussed it in his 1998 article), Liritzis published a popular book about the two Argolid pyramids, based on his earlier work. Once again, he does not try to show why the findings of Lord and other archaeologists should be disregarded, and he again asserts that the sites were not investigated during the period 1938–91, despite the work of Munn and Fracchia. Instead, he defends and develops the Hellenocentric interpretation of the two “pyramids.” Again he brings up the argument that the presence of shields on the pyramid at Ligourio help to place it the third millennium BC, but without acknowledging that the Ligourio structure cannot have been the same building near Tiryns that Pausanias saw, which was supposed to have been the tomb of the men killed in the battle between Arcisius and Proitus.

In the book, however, Liritzis makes a new suggestion about the orientation of the two Argolid “pyramids.” Using measurements and charts, he argues that the long corridors in the two Argolid buildings are aligned in relation to the belt of the Orion constellation and suggests that this orientation explicitly connects them with the Egyptian pyramids. He claims that this connection is acknowledged in the Greek myths, which preserve a record of the settlement of Argos under Inachus and of his descendants’ subsequent settlement in Egypt, and finally of the return of Danaus (the great-grandfather of Proitus and Acrisius) to Argos. Liritzis acknowledges that the Ligourio pyramid is not aligned with the heliacal rising of Orion but rather with the stars in the belt of Orion during the period between the

fall equinox and the winter solstice. This new alignment for the Ligourio pyramid makes it conform with the highly eccentric "Orion correlation theory" proposed by Robert Bauval, who argued that the pyramids at Giza were oriented with the stars in Orion's belt (Liritzis 1998: 162). As if in confirmation of the significance of this revised siting for the Ligourio pyramid, Liritzis cites passages from Hesiod to show that for early Greek farmers the setting of Orion (*c.* 4 November) was a good time to plow their fields (*Works and Days* 615; West 1978: 312). But since the setting of the Pleiades and Orion can be seen with the naked eye, there is no reason, either practical or mythological, why they should have sited their buildings in order to track or represent the movements of these stars.

In 2001, Koutoulas published an article about the so-called tomb of Amphion and Zethus, based on Spyropoulos' earlier work, dating it to 2500–2000 BC. The article also suggested that the tomb has a particular astronomical orientation, facing east towards the constellation Taurus. That orientation in itself is significant, Koutoulas argues, because Taurus has a connection with the ancient settlement of Thebes: Zeus took the form of a bull when he abducted Europa, the sister of Kadmus, the founder of Thebes (Koutoulas 2001: 23). This suggestion is a perfect example of strategy #5 of pseudoarchaeology, which encourages readers to make imaginative leaps that enable us to connect everything with something significant, and with the deeper meaning of the universe, while ignoring the much more realistic possibility that the siting of the "tomb of Amphion and Zethus" had no particular significance, either in relation to the stars or to anything else. In the world of pseudoarchaeology, the possibility of meaninglessness or coincidence is unacceptable. The reference to Europa and the bull is in fact irrelevant to the question of the astronomical orientation of the tomb. Rather, it is a conjuring trick that lends to Koutoulas' argument a sense of completeness and solidity, like the many measurements cited in the other Hellenocentric materials, or far-fetched etymologies.

Ultimately, what drives the search to find the builders of the first pyramids is more than a desire to be the first inventor of something great. Behind it also lies suspicion, an envy that does not easily allow that other nationalities or ethnicities might have had the ability to do something remarkable. Similarly, behind the desire to show that philosophy was invented in Egypt we can find a deep resentment of the acclaim that has for so many centuries been lavished on the ancient Greeks by people of European descent. The yearning is so strong that it overrides the absence of evidence. It allows intelligent people to support the "stolen legacy" proposal and encourages them readily to accept speculative "proofs," such as those provided by pseudoarchaeology. As Michael Shermer has said about leading Afrocentrist writer Y.A.A. ben-Jochannan: "He takes a valid point about the influence of ideology on knowledge, stirs in the ignorance or apathy of an audience about historical events, adds a few historical facts and a series of eccentric inferences about the past, and makes pseudohistory" (Shermer 1997: 35).

Hellenocentrists resort to the same tactics. Their desire to show that Greeks invented pyramids is fueled by resentment of the Afrocentrists' attempt to deny the Greeks the credit for the achievements of their ancestors. In this case as well, the desire for priority is so compelling that it encourages the use of speculative dating procedures and reliance on mythologies and even on coincidences.

It should go without saying that both parties would be better served by the search for the truth, wherever it might take them. Does it really matter who invented the pyramid, when undeniably the greatest examples of the genre in the Mediterranean area are to be found in Egypt? On the other hand, why try to insist that the Egyptians invented philosophy or invaded Greece when it is clear from what they wrote that they had other interests? I do not believe that the two pyramidal buildings in the Argolid can tell us anything about either Egypt or Greece that we do not already know from other contexts. I am sure that they would have remained obscure had it not been for the politics of the debate about the origins of the Greek achievement.

If at some time in the future thermoluminescence or some other new dating system, once thoroughly tested, can show that the Argolid "pyramids" should be dated to an earlier period, we should all be prepared to reconsider the question of what these buildings are and why they were constructed. Even if the walls of the Helleniko structure could be assigned with confidence to the middle of the third millennium, a much more accurate method than TL would be needed to show that they predated the construction of the Great Pyramid in Egypt. In any case, we should remember that these are not the pyramid-like buildings that Pausanias saw, and that aside from their inwardly slanting walls there is nothing specific to connect them with Egypt. But until a real reason is found to revise their dating, on the basis of the information now available there is no reason to disregard or dismiss the work of archaeologists since 1937 that identifies the Argolid structures as fourth-century multipurpose farm towers. This determination of their function deprives the "pyramids" of their drama and significance, but, unlike pseudoarchaeology, at least it reflects our best-informed understanding of what happened in the past.

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