

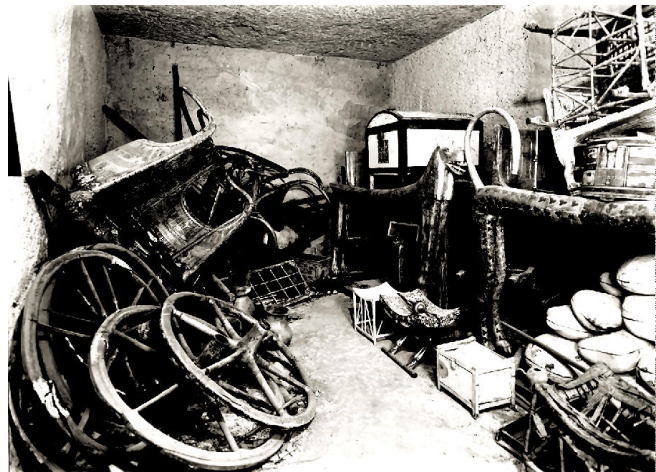
**PART I. ETHNICITY IN MEDITERRANEAN  
PROTOHISTORY**

**EXPLORATIONS IN THEORY AND METHOD**

**WITH EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS OF THE HOMERIC  
CATALOGUE OF SHIPS, THE BIBLICAL TABLE OF  
NATIONS, AND THE SEA PEOPLES OF THE LATE  
BRONZE AGE, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A LONG-  
RANGE COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK**

**BY WIM M.J. VAN BINSBERGEN**

To my brother Peter, my first scholarly role model



*Tell-tale signs of long-range connections:* The newly opened tomb of Tutankhamun (1341-1323 BCE), revealing numerous parts of spoked-wheel chariots (at the time a relatively new technology in Egypt, invented c. 2000 BCE in Kazakhstan), and leopard-skin motifs (e.g. on the stools – centre – and on the animal figurines); picture © Bradley & Malek, 1999-2004, with thanks

# CHAPTER 1. INTERDISCIPLINARY CO-ORDINATES, METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND SUMMARY, FOR PARTS I AND III

At the beginning of this study, I wish to situate my work in the intermeshing disciplinary commitments that have made up my academic work since the 1960s; briefly define my overall methodological and theoretical perspective; and acknowledge my indebtedness to a considerable number of people and institutions without which it would never have come into being.

## 1.1. Interdisciplinary co-ordinates and acknowledgements for Parts I and III

In several respects, this is the work of a Mediterraneanist-*manqué*.

Douwe Jongmans, with the assistance of Klaas van der Veen, competently and passionately introduced me to Mediterranean anthropology, and (with the assistance of Marielou Creyghton and Pieter van Dijk) intensively supervised my first anthropological and historiographical research (on popular religion in North-western Tunisia), 1967-68, under the aegis of the Department of Anthropology and Development Sociology, Amsterdam University. My debt to these colleagues is hardly smaller than that to the Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Tunis, and to the villagers of Sidi Mḥammad and Mayziya. It is these villagers' hospitality and trust which made this fieldwork a crucial reference point for everything I was to undertake as an anthropologist, historian and intercultural philosopher throughout my career. Jeremy Boissevain supervised (1968-71) the academic work I wrote on the basis of this fieldwork, and, as a Mediterraneanist, was largely responsible, in the end, for me *not* becoming one, but an Africanist instead. André Köbben, the leading Dutch Africanist anthropologist of the mid-1950s to early 1970s, was my main teacher of social-science method and theory, and this book (in its confidence that modern anthropology, as a social science, offers insightful models of socio-political organisation often superior to what alternatives circulate among historians, archaeologists and linguists) owes more than meets the eye to the intellectual seed he sowed; yet

much of what I attempt to do in the present study would be anathema to this role model of my intellectual youth (I still vividly remember the utter contempt and ridicule with which André Köbben lectured on such early-twentieth-century CE diffusionists as Elliot Smith and Perry, whereas their approach, however obsolete, theoretically barren, and one-sided, here yet appears in a more positive light). Wim Wertheim was my inspiring guide into Asia, socio-political history and scholarly political and ideological self-reflexivity, and thus a life-long inspiration. As my early teachers, Anton Reichling and Simon Dik laid the linguistic foundations, and R.A.M. Bergman the physical anthropological foundations, that made my excursions in the present book, however defective, not blind sallies into totally unknown territory. The Palestinian refugee Muḥammad Suudi taught me principles of Arabic (1966-67), without which I would never have felt at home, as a researcher, on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Half a decade earlier, my excellent teachers at the St Nicolaaslyceum, Amsterdam (Mssrs van Buren S.C.J., Bank, Hamann, and Hurdeman), taught me to read, and to love, classical Greek and Latin, and kindled my delight in the Homeric epics and in Ovid, which has proved an essential asset for the present study.

At the same time, however, this book is very much the work of a passionate Africanist, who even when temporarily turning his gaze to the northern, Mediterranean fringes of the African continent, cannot help pressing the emerging regional insights into service for the elucidation of major problems of long-range African pre- and protohistory. Without the present research, I would never have discovered the considerable evidence for Niger-Congo and other, now exclusively African, linguistic macrophyla in the Mediterranean realm; would not have realised the affinity between Ancient Greek and Bantu, in the linguistic field but also in the socio-political field; would not have critically assessed Stephen Oppenheimer's Sunda theses (probably red herrings as far as the Ancient Mediterranean is concerned, yet valuable insights for the protohistory of sub-Saharan Africa); would not have insisted on the occurrence and significance of Flood myths of large parts of Africa, and many other significant African-Eurasian continuities in

the field of comparative mythology; would not have engaged in a lexical reconstruction of the proto-Bantu life world with its indications of a homeland in a well-watered temperate climatic zone – nor would I have felt the need for a detailed statistical assessment of Niger-Congo>Bantu as a possible reflex of \*Borean hence as a specific sub-macrophylum cognate to Eurasiatic and to the majority of other modern macrophyla of the world; and, to crown it all, I would never have found the inspiration nor the need to formulate the Pelasgian Hypothesis as a viable alternative for Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* thesis, reversing his facile and seemingly politically-correct Afrocentrism for a more subtle appreciation of what sub-Saharan Africa, and Egypt, brought to the wider world and what they derived from it to begin with – especially from a belt of seething cultural innovation extending, in the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age, from the fertile Sahara to China. Work on the present project since 2000 spawned and fertilised all these Africanist projects of mine now coming into fruition in the form of book manuscripts and articles, while this book's final result in itself could not be attained without the additional theoretical, methodological and factual advances made in these Africanist projects.

As far as the Ancient Near East (including Egypt) and its connections with the Aegean and with Europe as a whole are concerned, my present argument seeks to bring to maturity many of the themes that I explored from 1996 onwards in the context of the collection I then published as a guest editor in *TAAANTA (Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society)*, under the title *Black Athena Ten Years After* (now reprinted as *Black Athena comes of age*). I thank all contributors to that collection, and all participants in the preparatory 1996 conference, for their continued inspiration. I am indebted to my sometime PhD student Fred Woudhuizen, for sharing with me, in the first place, his exciting struggle to discover 'the ethnicity of the Sea Peoples', and, more in general, his vast knowledge of Mediterranean archaeology and linguistics.

Although I must take full responsibility for the sections that appear under my name, I am thankful to Fred Woudhuizen for making extensive and constructive criticism of my contributions, and for reading their proofs.

I am also indebted to Frans Wiggermann, for bringing up this topic at the beginning of Woudhuizen's PhD trajectory, in 1998; and to him and the other members of the 1994-95 Working Group on Magic and Religion in the Ancient Near East, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar, for offering a context in which my long-standing anthropological

and historical interest in the modern Mediterranean could find a suitable addition from Assyriology and Hebrew Bible / Old Testament studies. I wish to thank my brother, Peter Broers, during many years the Hon. Secretary of the Netherlands Association for the Study of Hebrew, for introducing me, at a tender age, to scholarship in general, and more recently to the rudiments of Biblical Hebrew, through his didactic method *Qol devarim*, and through many specific discussions. It is fitting that my contributions to this book should be dedicated to him, in recognition of a great and life-long indebtedness.

Through the years, the African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands, has formed a context where my explorations at the fringe of African Studies have found a stimulating and supportive environment. I wish to thank my colleagues there, especially those in the Theme Groups on Globalisation, and on Agency in Africa. Some of them have graciously commented on earlier drafts of this study; others have contributed by driving home to me the counter-paradigmatic nature of this kind of work, and forcing me to face up to the consequences of such an intellectual stance. The first notes towards the present study were jotted down during plane flights and at airports between the Netherlands and Benin, and back, in January 2004; the bulk of the work was done during a sabbatical period at the end of the same year – although the need to get a much better grip on the comparative mythological implications of the few scraps of cultural evidence we have on the Sea Peoples (boat symbolism, aquatic bird symbolism, dress and headgear, mirror symmetry); in combination with the increasingly opening up opportunities of identifying a substantial, consensual ethnic basis for the Sea Peoples' effective military exploits in the genetic, ethnographic and literary evidence for a Black Sea / Mediterranean, Pelasgian identity from the Neolithic onward; and the development of a long-range comparative perspective on the Biblical Flood and the figure of Noah (Hebrew *Nū[a]ḥ*),<sup>1</sup> delayed the finalisa-

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<sup>1</sup> In my primarily historical and ethnic contribution (Part I) I have avoided burdening the reader and myself with attempts at specialist philological transliteration – except where I specifically quote from specialist linguistic sources such as Starostin & Starostin 1998-2008. My extensive experience in scholarly writing on Arabic and African topics has convinced me that true consistency in transliteration is impossible to achieve unless at the pain of total illegibility. In the case of well-known Greek and Biblical names, which have become an integral part of today's North Atlantic, Judaeo-Graeco-Roman-Christian heritage, I am loath to introduce the element of estrangement associated with a formal, scholarly transliteration, and I will follow, instead, the standard anglicised transliteration – hence Noah and Achilles instead of *Nūaḥ* and *Aḥilleus* or *Akhilleus*. This will also allow me to make extensive

tion of my contribution by a few years – until a new and conclusive sabbatical period early 2011.

The Africanist context will be manifest throughout my argument, and often makes for interesting and illuminating perspectives, or so I like to think. This work is one instalment in a continuous effort, in which I have engaged since 1990, to explore the very great extent to which Africa has always, in the course of past millennia, been part of the wider world, contributing to the other two continents of the Old World<sup>2</sup> as much as deriving from them. It is my firm belief that the results of this kind of long-range intercontinental and interdisciplinary research will contribute significantly to redressing the negative stereotypes that have surrounded Africa during the past few centuries, and will break down the boundaries of otherness within which Africans, and their descendants in the North Atlantic region, have been increasingly imprisoned, as a result of economic exploitation and intellectual condescension, on the part of inhabitants of the North Atlantic region.

Much of the theoretical and comparative inspiration for the present argument derives from my work as professor of ethnic studies in the Free University, Amsterdam, 1990-98; with gratitude I recall the stimulating exchanges with my colleagues and students in that connection.

Peripherally inspired by the work of the French-German Armenologist Joseph Karst,<sup>3</sup> my approach to

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use of standard English translations of the two ancient texts that will serve as our case studies (the Homeric Achaean Catalogue of Ships, and the Biblical Table of Nations in *Genesis* 10). In the rendering of other names including Ancient Egyptian ones I will usually employ a common-sense transliteration that betrays my lack of philological pretensions. Names whose etymology plays a certain role in my argument may be rendered in more specialised transliteration the first time they occur, like Noah's name here. When the precise orthography of Egyptian words is at stake, I may employ an Egyptian transliteration font. Certain consonants are habitually underlined in Egyptian transliteration, a practice also followed in the present book. When quoting from the *Tower of Babel* etymological database, I usually stick to its Arial Unicode MS rendering of reconstructed linguistic forms. Only occasionally (and then mainly the first time a proper name appears in the text) will the original non-Latin (*e.g.* Chinese) script be used for the rendering of proper names – even though I am fully aware of the fact that the anti-hegemonic, non-Eurocentric stance that is advocated throughout my argument, would be better served by inclusion of the original scripts. My co-author Fred Woudhuizen has, in Parts II and IV, a more centrally philological argument, hence in the sections authored by him will apply different conventions on these points.

<sup>2</sup> By a regrettable Eurocentrism implied in the common usage, I will designate the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe jointly as the Old World, and North and South America as the New World.

<sup>3</sup> A reassessment of Joseph Karst's (1931a, 1931c) work on Mediterranean ethnicity in protohistory was originally part of the pre-

Mediterranean protohistory postulates, throughout this region, a five-tiered linguistico-ethnic system, where complex and protean identities, as well as regional linguistic, cultural and linguistic continuities, breed thorough hybridity, as a result but also as a precondition for incessant trans-regional maritime contacts. This is in fact a model of proto-globalisation, which owes a debt of intellectual inspiration and debate to my fellow members – especially Peter Geschiere, Bonno Thoden van Velzen, Peter van der Veer, Peter Pels, Birgit Meyer, Rijk van Dijk, Arjun Appadurai, Partha Chatterjee, Seteney Shami, Jacqueline Bhabha, Ulf Hannerz and Cora Govers – of the WOTRO<sup>4</sup> Programme on Globalization and the Construction of Communal Identities (1993-99), and of the associated International Network on Globalization.

A comparable inspiration I have derived, since 1998, from my work as professor of intercultural philosophy in the Philosophical Faculty, Erasmus University Rotterdam; the present argument contains many echoes of the discussions on interculturality, epistemology and the philosophy of historiography, conducted in that context. As a predominantly methodological and theoretical argument, with a fair input of empirical linguistic, archaeological, comparative mythological, and ethnographic, empirical data, I feel that the present study's modest philosophical relevance lies particularly in the reflection on the following topics:

- the nature of proto- and prehistorical modes of thought and their specific substantive contents, which while setting the scene for a hermeneutical approach to the Sea Peoples' world, and to our two preparatory case studies (the world of the *Iliad* and of *Genesis* 10), also constitutes a contribution to the transcontinental protohistory of thought in general, hence to the history of philosophy
- the meta-reflection on the nature of historical knowledge construction as a negotiation between *emic* (hermeneutic) and *etic* (objectifying analytical) approaches, and

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sent argument, but has now been relegated to a separate publication (van Binsbergen 2011d), so as to retain a critical distance from the inspiring, but methodologically stylistically muddled, and largely obsolete, work of the Lotharingian, French / German specialist in Armenian languages; his work moreover is, inevitably, permeated with his time's reliance on the concept of race, even though in his hands this led not to the usual adoration of the blond-and-blue-eyed somatype, but, refreshingly, to the celebration of a genetically, somatically and culturally hybrid 'Mediterranean race' (also *cf.* Sergi 1901).

<sup>4</sup> Netherlands Foundation of Tropical Research, a division of the Netherlands Research Foundation NWO.

- the meta-reflection on the historian's knowledge-political role as producing a narrative that explodes the myths of others, and at the same time lets the empirical evidence constrain, to the greatest extent possible (which is yet depressingly little), our own production and circulation of scholarly myths.

A critical epistemological perspective also opens up when I repeatedly discuss the geopolitical, Eurocentric and other paradigmatic ideological pitfalls in the context of the study of protohistory. There is a further, implied relevance for the history of philosophy: as an investigation into the processes that (according to the dominant view of the Sea Peoples Episode among specialists today) were decisive in putting an end to the Levant as the westernmost epicentre of cultural initiative in the Old World (where nearly three millennia of specialist proto-scientific thought preceded the Ionian Pre-Socratics even though the latter are alleged to be the founders of scientific rationality...).<sup>5</sup> It appears to be the demise of the Hittite empire and the weakening of Ancient Egypt by the end of the Bronze Age, which caused the focus of cultural and intellectual initiative to shift even further westward, toward Greece, Carthage and Rome. The present study, therefore, addresses a crucial moment in global cultural history, as a precondition for the rise of the Western philosophical tradition. In fact, the philosophical content of this argument is considerably more extensive, and includes (Chapters 2 and 3) explorations into the foundations of the philosophy of history and of the social sciences, with practical methodological implications for the study of ethnicity in the Mediterranean Bronze Age.

The work thus reflects major critical topics in intercultural philosophy. My detailed analysis of the historical actors' handling of ethnic and toponymic onomastica allows us more than a glimpse of ancient, and enduring, modes of thought, and helps us to understand what transformations and distortions are involved when, upon this material, we project our present-day scientific rationality. However, from the perspective of intercultural philosophy the main relevance of my argument is that its long-range perspective on world-wide continuities in space and time brings us to realise that cultural difference and ethno-cultural boundaries are, largely, the effect of *transformative localisation* working upon a surprisingly inert, *i.e.* constant, cultural heritage going back to the Upper Palaeolithic Old World, – a heritage whose core may well be deemed to have been common to Anatomically Modern Humans (today's variety of humans, to which all present-day human populations

<sup>5</sup> Cf. van Binsbergen 2010b.

belong), for 60,000 years (60 ka)<sup>6</sup> or more, as part of the 'Out of Africa' cultural package.

## 1.2. Overall methodological and theoretical perspective for Parts I and III

This overview of my personal intellectual itinerary now allows me to characterise, in a few words, my methodological and theoretical orientation in the present study.

My argument situates itself at the interaction between a theoretical inspiration and several bodies of empirical data. From my extensive protohistorical work in North and South Central Africa, I derive an awareness of the crucial role a theoretically informed model may play in making the best of the typically defective data out of which protohistory is to be made. In the process, models must be used in a creative and flexible manner, yet if they are to lead to *explanation*, such models have to be applied explicitly, consistently, and with methodical rigour, – and they have to be applied to *all available data*, regardless of the specific disciplines that have produced and that manage these data in the first place. Hence protohistorical research is inherently interdisciplinary. Although protohistorical reconstruction on the basis of oral tradition has constituted a large part of my published work, I was initially trained as an anthropologist and development sociologist, and this has made me particularly conversant with two kinds of data that seldom play a central role in protohistorical reconstructions:

- (a) ethnographic distributions through space and time,
- (b) the inspiring light that intensively studied contemporary<sup>7</sup> ethnographic situations may cast on even the distant past of a culture area.

Initially a specialist on North African Islam and African religion, in the 1970s-1980s my work on modes of production and precolonial state formation increasingly brought me to consider models and theories of ethnic identity, state formation and political conflict that have considerably informed the present argument. Over the past twenty

<sup>6</sup> ka = kilo years, millennia; BP = Before Present; BCE, BC = Before the C[ommon] E[ra]. I take the Common Era to be the standard in world-wide modern scholarship, and have suppressed references to dating in other systems of time reckoning including the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic ones, even when applicable.

<sup>7</sup> The word 'contemporary' is ambiguous since it can mean: from our own present time, or from the period under study. Invariably, in my argument, I will use the word in the latter sense.

years, this orientation of earlier decades was enriched with the long-range problematics emanating from my comparative and historical, increasingly transcontinental, study of African divination systems, games, myths, and other highly formal complexes of symbolic production. This forced me to subsequently apply such historicised transcultural hermeneutics as I had acquired when studying religions not my own, and as I had further developed in the field of ethnicity, to narratives, sign systems, and their attending iconographies. My contributions to the *Black Athena* debate helped me to focus, once more, on the Mediterranean; to familiarise myself somewhat with the civilisation, language and script of Ancient Egypt; to critically review Egypt's relevant connections with sub-Saharan Africa and with the Aegean; and to specifically tailor, for the Mediterranean and to its Late Bronze Age protohistory, the epistemology and the politics of transcultural knowledge construction which constitute (my particular brand of) intercultural philosophy. Meanwhile, with the help of additional reading in population genetics and in long-range linguistics (especially Sergei Starostin's \*Borean Hypothesis), I increasingly engaged in explorations into prehistory, in a bid to define the geographically most extensive, and the historically most remote, context of 'knowability' (cf. Renfrew 2000) for the transcontinental connections which my comparative work on formal cultural systems had brought to light. My leading concern in all this was to establish more solid empirical and theoretical grounds for what had increasingly come to dominate my approach to intercultural philosophy and ethnic studies: the hope (rather, the certainty, based on my own extensive and prolonged personal transcultural experiences in Africa and Asia) that behind the multiplicity of worldviews, logics, religions, aesthetics, definitions of the human person, and ethnic identities, the underlying fundamental unity of humankind could be established and, from a theoretical position looking back at the distant past, could be developed into an ethics of globalisation for today and tomorrow. In this way I have sought to contribute, as a prehistorian of philosophy, to the reconstruction of humankind's oldest traceable forms of thought (for which myth and language are our richest sources of information). Specifically for this purpose I adopted, on the risky authority of others, such tools as Cann, Stoneking, & Wilson's Out-of-Africa Hypothesis,<sup>8</sup> Starostin's \*Borean Hypothesis, and Karst's hypothetical five-tiered ethnico-linguistic model for the Mediterranean Bronze Age. But finding these tools, inspiring and illuminating though they

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<sup>8</sup> Cann *et al.* 1987.

proved be, not quite sufficient to account for the rich texture and the manifest connections in the historical data at hand, I personally developed, as further background for the present argument, several additional comprehensive hypotheses:

1. The *Aggregative Diachronic Model of Global Mythology*,<sup>9</sup> *i.e.* a systematic reconstruction of such embryonic mythemes ('Narrative Complexes') as were already present in Middle Palaeolithic cultural heritage ('Pandora's Box') of Anatomically Modern Humans prior to their exodus out of Africa; the subsequent innovation and transformation of that heritage in the context of a series of specific 'Contexts of Intensive Transformation and Innovation' mainly on Asian soil, and the subsequent feed-back of the innovated and transformed product into sub-Saharan Africa in the context of the 'Back-to-Africa' movement (from *c.* 15 ka BP on), which geneticists<sup>10</sup> have recently discovered.
2. The hypothesis<sup>11</sup> according to which the Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic saw, in the consciousness of the contemporary historical actors, the succession of two cosmogonic schemes: first the horizontal Cosmogony of the *Separation of Water and Land* (implying a creator goddess as 'Mother of the Primal Waters', virginally producing her son and subsequent lover, the Land), then the Cosmogony of the *Separation of Heaven and Earth*. The latter persisted as the dominant world-view to the present time, and spread to the other continents, while from the Neolithic on this dualist scheme was revolutionised into a dialectical, triadic one, with the junior third member serving the reconnection, one way or another, of the traumatic Separation of Heaven and Earth on which the cosmic order had come to depend.
3. The *Pelasgian Hypothesis*,<sup>12</sup> which identifies as a Neolithic and Early Bronze Age cultural seedbed (yielding dozens of specific cultural traits) the region between the fertile Sahara, the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, and Western Central Asia; throughout the Bronze Age this Primary Pelasgian realm gradually expanded, to finally ramify into all four directions by the Late Bronze Age according to a 'cross-model'

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<sup>9</sup> Van Binsbergen 2006a, 2006b.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Cruciani *et al.* 2002; Coia *et al.* 2005; Hammer *et al.* 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Van Binsbergen *c.s.* 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Van Binsbergen 2011b; and the present volume, Chapter 28 and *passim*.

bringing a transformed Pelasgian heritage to Central and Western Europe (the Celtic world), Northern Europe (the Uralic and Germanic world), the Eurasian Steppe with extensions into East, South and South East Asia, and to the Niger-Congo > Bantu speaking world of sub-Saharan Africa.

*'Data reduction and interpretation through hermeneutic pattern recognition in an explicit and theoretically-informed, yet speculative, long-range historical perspective'* covers much of this cargo, and that is a characterisation that may appeal to the archaeologist, even though much of the data and the methods I employ here would at first glance not be readily recognised as archaeological. Thus I bring to the study of ethnicity in the Late Bronze Age the methodology of a long-range spatial and temporal scope that does not usually inform the analysis of the Sea Peoples, the Homeric poems and *Genesis*, but of whose illuminating effectiveness the reader will be the judge.

### 1.3. Acknowledgements for Parts I and III continued

Working away from main-stream paradigms, a long-ranger is often a lone ranger, with all the dangers of delusion and idiosyncrasy, of straying far from the discursive negotiation of intersubjectivity that is the hallmark of scientific research; and also with the risk of disciplinary and institutional isolation not to say ostracism. The transdisciplinary and counter-paradigmatic approach pursued in the present argument and in my other current work has come at a certain price. On the other hand, however, I have been fortunate that my path has crossed that of others pioneering a similar approach and sharing their vast knowledge: Martin Bernal, whose insistence on Aegean / Egyptian continuities was a revelation a quarter of a century ago, and although meanwhile far more impressive continuities in space and time have opened up in the light of which his own, simplistic pioneering position is less and less tenable, my contributions to this book would never have been written without his initial inspiration; John Argyle, whose daring comparative linguistic explorations<sup>13</sup> (however the work of a *diletante*, like my own) have greatly helped me to formulate my own ideas concerning the place of the Niger-Congo and Khoisan<sup>14</sup> linguistic families among the world's languages;

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Argyle 1994., 1999, n.d. [ 1987 ], and personal communication.

<sup>14</sup> The nomenclature of linguistic macrophyla is inconsistent and

Michael Rappenglück, a competent guide in the field of archaeoastronomy and its symbolism; Michael Witzel, brilliant Sanskritist, driving force behind the inspiring *Mother Tongue* journal and network and behind the Harvard Round Table and the International Association for Comparative Mythology, and insightful fellow explorer of the prehistory of mythology; Vaclav Blažek, a brilliant comparative linguist who in many constructive contacts over the years did not manage to make me abandon my counter-paradigmatic approaches to language, but at least managed to put across where and why they are considered to be counter-paradigmatic, or simply wrong; and Mineke Schipper and Daniela Merolla, whose inspiring programme on myth at Leiden University has greatly helped me to formulate my ideas concerning the mythical in science and the science in myth.

My wife and children have loyally and lovingly accepted the hard work spent on this study, and the concomitant domestic pressure, as the overdue tribute to a number of life-long passions on my part, which for decades have had to live in the shadow of my principal identity as an Africanist and thus had to be relegated to nights, weekends and vacations: a passion for the Mediterranean, for protohistory, ethnicity, linguistics, the comparative handling of vast expanses of space and time, and the unravelling of ancient modes of thought.

For more than a decade now, my son Vincent has taken care of my computer facilities, successfully adapting to ever more excessive demands, salvaging essential data after cataclysmic disasters, and thus making the present study technologically possible. The indexes to this book were compiled with software my brother and I drafted nearly a quarter of a century ago, and improved over the years. When the only type of computer still supporting this software irretrievably broke down, a total stranger, Gerard de Braconier, graciously supplied a replacement. Over the years, Kirsten Seifikar, my PhD student and fellow member

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somewhat mystifying. Thus the name Khoisan is based on a combination of two names, Khoi / Khoe and San, which identify two Southern African groups, the former historically consisting of pastoralists, the latter of hunter-gatherers. However, the common tendency among linguists is not to highlight this background by hyphenating the two names, but by contracting them into *Khoisan*, thus in a way reifying the linguistic unity argued to underlie these groups despite very different modes of production. Although my anthropological background would bring me to perceive Khoi and San as different ethnic groups, I shall follow the common (though not universal) linguistic usage. By the same token, it will be Afroasiatic and not Afro-Asiatic, Eurasiatic and not Eur-Asiatic, etc.; but the name Indo-European will stand, mainly because the succession of three vowels would cause confusion without hyphenation.



of the editorial board of the journal *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy / Revue Africaine de Philosophie*, has gone out of her way to facilitate my scholarly work by bibliographical and other library services, which I appreciate all the more since I have seldom been able to remunerate her financially.

While I am most grateful for these various essential contributions, the responsibility for the views presented in the present argument is entirely mine.

I am not sure, even, whether I can bear that responsibility. This work, inevitably, intrudes on a considerable number of disciplines for which I have no specialist training. I have done my very best to limit the inevitable damage and blunders that such a situation invites, yet every specialist will find enough cause here for distress, infurcation, or worse still, ridicule. I can only repeat here the disclaimers that I have planted at strategic places throughout the text. My principal aim, with this study, is theoretical and methodological – which is where I do have some claim to authority. However, I found I could not make a theoretical and methodological argument up in the air, but needed to consider the available empirical material in great detail in order to bring out crucial theoretical and methodological implications. I am an old hand at the protohistorical handiwork, including the analysis of oral tradition and myth, when it comes to illiterate or semi-illiterate societies of South Central Africa and peasant North Africa in the second millennium CE. Over the past decade, I have entered into current debates on Ancient Mesopotamian magic, ancient boardgames, divination, astronomy, writing systems, myths, other formal and symbolic systems, and on the merits of the *Black Athena* thesis. Against this background I just could not bring myself to entirely refrain from taking sides in the interpretation of the controversial Sea Peoples material, and in the preparatory case studies (the Homeric Catalogue of Ships, and the Biblical Table of Nations) on which I have sought to sharpen our theoretical and methodological tools for the study of ethnicity in Mediterranean protohistory. However, my readers will have understood my intentions if they heed – or, even better, dismiss on explicitly argued and empirically supported grounds – my theoretical and methodological admonitions, while taking my empirical pronouncements with a pince of salt.

## 1.4. Summary of Parts I and III

The use of ethnonyms, and even the reliance on an argument that situates cultural continuity or difference primarily in equivalence or distinction between ethnonyms as repre-

senting significant socio-cultural complexes, is one of the most conspicuous features of cultural, historical and proto-historical studies of the Ancient Near East, Ancient Egypt, and the Aegean. The ethnic model, variants of which were already utilised by the Ancient writers from Herodotus to Caesar and Tacitus, is so much taken for granted that we scarcely realise that behind this model there is a, *far from self-evident*, theory of how societies and cultures are organised, individually and in mutual contact, what keeps them together and what makes them change. Ethnicity is one of the inveterate blind spots of Ancient Studies. This is all the more remarkable, because the vast majority of authors contributing to these studies, both in Antiquity and in Modern times, have been citizens of complex states and have not identified themselves, primarily, in ethnic terms but in terms of social and professional class, universalist ideals, religion, and citizenship.

In the present project, Fred Woudhuizen and I have sought (each in our own specialist way and without necessarily agreeing with each other) to challenge the uncomfortable lack of sophistication surrounding the use of ethnicity and ethnonyms in Ancient Studies. Woudhuizen, as an ancient historian and linguist, has tackled the proto-history of the ethnicity of the Sea Peoples, bringing to bear upon his strongly empirical analysis all relevant documentary, linguistic and archaeological material that more than a century of Sea Peoples studies have considered, and adducing much material that hitherto has not been drawn into the orbit of such studies; his analyses, which have earned him a PhD from the Erasmus University Rotterdam, constitutes Parts II of the present volume. My individual contribution to the project, making up Part I and Part III, has been to concentrate on the theoretical and methodological sides of studies in Ancient ethnicity (Part I) – although, in the process, I found that it was impossible to make the necessary theoretical and methodological points without extensive and critical discussions of the empirical data, and even without taking sides in major or minor debates concerning specific empirical issues (Part III). But however much Woudhuizen and I may differ in detail and in overall disciplinary orientation, I am extremely pleased that in the end we can offer the reader a balanced synthesis, co-authored by both of us (Part IV), in which our respective views turn out to be complementary rather than diametrically opposed, and in which also a further methodological and linguistic vindication is offered of the more controversial points in our book.

In this way, the present study reflects and combines

my long-standing interest in a number of topics:<sup>15</sup>

- the theory and methodology of ethnicity (the designation of my chair at the Free University, Amsterdam, 1990-98);
- ethnic processes in the Mediterranean region in the Bronze Age as well as today;
- the struggle to critically explore the conditions for valid intercultural knowledge production across spatial and temporal boundaries;
- long-range research into world cultural history, in an attempt to assess whether there are any fundamental transcontinental connections between the major continental currents of cultural history, and whether it is possible to make out any fundamental and universal features of human thought, symbolisation, religion, and culture;
- and finally (as the most long-standing, constant, and intense of these personal passions): the theory and methodology of protohistory, *i.e. creating history where previously no history yet existed*, notably at the borderline of prehistory, where documentary sources are absent – and at the borderline of myth.

My approach to ethnicity in protohistory is not simply invented from first principles as a purely theoretical exercise, but has been developed in the course of four decades in the concrete research practice of investigating

1. oral history in a practically illiterate peasant society in North Africa (18-20th century CE)<sup>16</sup> and
2. formalised oral traditions as confronted with fragmented individual oral historical accounts in South Central Africa (16th-20th century CE).<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the specific argument that follows would never have been written unless as a by-product of my supervising Fred Woudhuizen's PhD project on 'The ethnicity of the Sea Peoples' (*cf.* Woudhuizen 2006a). It was in response to Woudhuizen's historically and archaeologically rich draft texts that I realised the need for an application, to the Late Bronze Mediterranean, of such conceptual, theo-

retical and methodological sophistication as the study of ethnicity has reached with regard to both present-day Africa and the multicultural societies of the North Atlantic region today. I have been greatly inspired by Woudhuizen's data and arguments, and I have gratefully acknowledged so at various points in my text. My present study therefore is an attempt to make, fully written out on paper, the translation from Africa-inspired ethnic studies to Mediterranean Bronze Age studies.

This study has the following structure:

Mainly on the basis of my Africa-based expertise in ethnic studies, I shall first briefly present, in Chapter 2, an abstract general discussion of ethnicity within the scope of social science research. This will introduce some of the important concepts and theoretical insights I will appeal to for an approach to ethnicity in the Late Bronze Age. We will see that ethnicity is much more than the classification of human individuals in terms of an ethnic label; *ethnicity is in the first place a way of creating a wide-ranging, supra-local socially (politically, religiously, economically) structured space as a context for social, economic, political, military and ritual interaction over a relatively vast area*. To highlight these aspects I shall repeatedly stress how ethnicity has at least three constituent aspects: *ethnicity is*

1. *a system of mental classification into a finite number of specific, named ethnic groups,*
2. *a socio-political structure, notably a device to turn the overall, neutral geographical space into an ethnically structured space accommodating a number of concrete named groups in interaction, and*
3. *a process, involving both the interaction of these ethnic groups over time, and the dynamics (emergence, maturation, change, decline, replacement, etc.) of the overall ethnic space they constitute together; of this process we distinguish at least two important movements:*
  - a. *ethnogenesis*,<sup>18</sup> *amounting to the redefinition (through changes in the classification system) of the overall ethnic space so as to accommodate a new ethnic group (often with repercussions for the other groups already recognised within that space)*
  - b. *ethnification*, *as the internal process of 'taking consciousness' through which members of an essentially non-ethnic category in the socio-economic-political space redefine their*

<sup>15</sup> For bibliographical details, in general, and specifically on my output on these topics, see the cumulative bibliography at the end of this book.

<sup>16</sup> Van Binsbergen 1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1971d, 1980a, 1980b, 1985a, 1985b, 1988b, and forthcoming (a).

<sup>17</sup> Especially van Binsbergen 1992a, and further 1987b, 2008b, 2010c.

<sup>18</sup> *Cf.* Mühlmann 1985.

*identity increasingly in ethnic terms (usually under the influence of a local elite).*

In Chapter 3 I shall approach ethnicity in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age as a specific research problem, entering into a discussion of the specific empirical, methodological and theoretical problems that arise in this situation of protohistory (characterised by a paucity of empirical data) and suggesting possible solutions. Here I will especially address historians' well-known and understandable reluctance vis-à-vis systematic theorising.

Before we then proceed to two case studies that will highlight the specific methodological and theoretical difficulties of the study of ethnicity in the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean, Chapter 4 presents, as *prolegomena*, themes in long-range linguistics. Here we will familiarise ourselves with the \*Borean Hypothesis which reconstructs hypothetical parent forms of the lexica of most of today's languages, in the form of an Upper-Palaeolithic hypothetical language to which the name \*Borean has been given. Against this background we will try to identify, in addition to the obvious and recognised languages available on the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean scene, uninvited guests so far largely overlooked by scholarship: mainly Niger-Congo>Bantu, a language macrophylum now exclusively spoken in sub-Saharan Africa, whilst in the Egyptian context we shall highlight indications of the Uralic phylum (and of the shamanism that is often associated with that phylum). Finally we will draw these elements together in the formulation of a hypothetical five-tiered linguistico-ethnic model for the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean, according to which that region by that time was already subject to conditions of proto-globalisation, under which linguistically homogeneous populations were not the rule, but every area typically displayed a plurality of language phyla, in an hierarchical socio-political arrangement where the dominant strata predominantly spoke Indo-European and / or Afroasiatic (linguistically relative newcomers), whereas the subaltern strata spoke older scions on the \*Borean tree, often relegated to the status of submerged substrate languages.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I shall seek to apply at least some of the principles outlined in the preceding chapters, to two well-known texts from the Early to Middle Iron Age which scholars have since long recognised as important pointers to ethnic structures in the Late Bronze Age: the Homeric Achaean Catalogue of Ships, and the Biblical Table of Nations in *Genesis* 10. A close reading of these texts specifi-

cally with the aim of identifying aspects of ethnic classification, structure and process will reveal some hitherto unnoticed ethnic traits; will help us to test out some of the methodological and theoretical notions developed more in general in the earlier chapters; will remind us of the fact that often the protohistorical situations we seek to interpret in ethnic terms, are in great measure merely mythical; and will help us prepare for what Fred Woudhuizen and I have chosen as our *pièce de résistance*: the question of the ethnicity of the Sea Peoples.

The two case studies have a parallel composition. They first situate the document under study (Achaean Catalogue of Ships, and Table of Nations) in its specific historical context, seek to understand its place in the longer work (the *Iliad*, the Bible) in which the document is incorporated, and try to understand the document as a text, against a necessarily brief overview of the abundantly available scholarly literature. Both documents turn out to have, indeed, a strongly mythical and cosmological orientation which we first need to appreciate before the document can be used as a historical source on Late Bronze Age ethnicity. I address the question of how to use Early to Middle Iron Age data in a bid to reconstruct ethnicity in the, immediately preceding, Late Bronze Age. The treatment of both documents concentrates on the question of the identification of the onomastic material (ethnonyms and toponyms) they contain. For the Achaean Catalogue of Ships we arrive at a coherent view, which adds a few new minor points to the study of ethnicity and political organisation in the Homeric Age. I also discuss the relevance, for Sea Peoples Studies, of the Homeric images of the Greeks before Troy. For the Table of Nations however, the problems of onomastic identification turn out to be truly dramatic and, to judge by the extensive literature reviewed, virtually insurmountable, even if an extensive discussion of the genealogical format of the Table of Nations equips us with additional analytical tools.

Some of the underlying questions that inform an attempt at ethnic analysis of the Table of Nations turn out to be:

- must the document be considered the work of the integrating conscious mind of Early to Middle Bronze Age Syro-Palestinian actors, and be interpreted in terms of their own specific historical knowledge and experience, or can it be considered an accidental sediment of very disparate and heterogeneous onomastic, ethnohistorical and especially mythical fragments from all over the Ancient World, with possibly

a much deeper time scale?

- may we expect pure, monolithic linguistico-ethnic groups, or is hybridity the standard format of ethnicity already by the Late Bronze Age – as it is today under globalisation? is such hybridisation a sign of proto-globalisation, already in the Late Bronze Age?

After these more general discussions in Part I, Fred Woudhuizen will take the floor in Part II with his detailed, state-of-the-art specific discussion of the ethnicity of the Sea Peoples, on the basis of the few available primary documents and of the vast secondary literature.

When he has presented his well-argued and well-documented case, the theoretical and methodological viewpoints developed in Part I will allow us to raise one fundamental ethnicity-related question that remained unanswered in his otherwise impressive synthesis: *how was it possible that the Sea Peoples, coming from such geographically dispersed origins, could identify sufficiently with one another to form a formidable force capable of dealing a lethal blow to the Hittite empire and of permanently weakening the Egyptian state?* Woudhuizen's answer is in terms of a shared Indo-European identity and of Urnfield expansion pressure, engendering an adventurous motivation to go and plunder the wealth of very distant kingdoms. In Part III I question this solution, and I offer an alternative interpretation of the Sea Peoples data, in terms of *relatively peripheral and archaic segmentary groups seeking to counter, by a combined eastbound and westbound movement, encroachment by the nearby states of Hatti and Egypt*. From this alternative perspective the Urnfield and Indo-European factors appear less than exhaustive and conclusive as an explanation for ethnic identification

among the Sea Peoples (also in view of the non-Indo-European linguistic elements I will identify in Chapter 4). Thus, I propose to attribute such ethnic identification to the Sea Peoples' conscious affirmation of an extended circum-Mediterranean identity that, I submit, had existed since at least the Early Bronze Age – an ethnic awareness for which 'Pelasgian' is proposed as a suitable analytical term, even though the polysemy of this term throughout the nearly three millennia of its use inevitably invites confusion and misunderstanding.<sup>19</sup> From what few scraps of factual information we have concerning the Sea Peoples' culture and worldview, I argue that these manifest a Pelasgian orientation. I make this claim against the background of a very extensive list of Pelasgian traits. My Extended Pelasgian Hypothesis sees the Pelasgian cultural substrate (after developing in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages in a region extending from the fertile Sahara to Central Asia) expand in all four directions – Central and Western Europe; Northern Europe; the Eurasian steppe and beyond; and sub-Saharan Africa. This process effectively carried Pelasgian traits across half the globe, using the technologies of chariot and seafaring as main vehicles of spread. My discussion makes it possible to reconsider alternatives for the eastbound movement as propelled by the Urnfield expansion, which modern scholarship (*cf.* Kimmig 1964) has favoured in the last few decades, and which also Woudhuizen adopts as his main explanatory model.

After this extensive second opinion, we two co-authors will come back in Part IV in order to clinch this book's argument, anticipating major criticism especially from the linguistic side, and demonstrating that our apparently so divergent views are yet complementary and even largely overlapping.

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<sup>19</sup> *Cf.* van Binsbergen 2011b.