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From Hittite to Homer: The Anatolian Background of Ancient Greek Epic

Mary R. Bachvarova

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This book provides a groundbreaking reassessment of the prehistory of Homeric epic. It argues that in the Early Iron Age bilingual poets transmitted to the Greeks a set of narrative traditions closely related to the one found at Bronze-Age Hattusa, the Hittite capital. Key drivers for Near Eastern influence on the developing Homeric tradition were the shared practices of supralocal festivals and venerating divinized ancestors, and a shared interest in creating narratives about a legendary past using a few specific storylines: theogonies, genealogies connecting local polities, long-distance travel, destruction of a famous city because it refuses to release captives, and trying to overcome death when confronted with the loss of a dear companion. Professor Bachvarova concludes by providing a fresh explanation of the origins and significance of the Greco-Anatolian legend of Troy, thereby offering a new solution to the long-debated question of the historicity of the Trojan War.

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