I wrote this book for many reasons, several of which unfold at length in the pages that follow. A few personal notes seem warranted at the outset, however, along with some warm thanks and acknowledgements.

As I was preparing to write this book, I saw a need for synthesis in the ever-growing body of material associated with early Greece, by which I mean the Mycenaean Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, a pre-/protohistoric span of time, in which linguistic and cultural traditions related to later Greek populations can be clearly identified, but before their widespread institutionalization in the Archaic and Classical periods. Writing a book on the whole Greek world seemed impossible, however, without losing the regional specificity that has emerged as an essential concern for the period at hand. I therefore chose to focus on central Greece: a critical macro-region for the time in question, which allows for the identification of both broad trends (as distinct from the Peloponnese, the Aegean islands, and Crete, for example) and regional specificity. A key goal has been to balance discussions of well-known sites and regions with underrepresented periods and places, in order to examine the diversity and undulation of early Greek societies. What is more, it seemed to me that it was during precisely this period that central Greece became central, both within the developing Greek world and in certain wider sets of Mediterranean affairs.

From a theoretical perspective, I wanted to combine my interests in archaeologies of landscape and interaction to develop a multi-scalar approach to the study of complex societies—especially one that accounts for both variety and nonlinear trajectories in the development of social organization. Many questions have come up along the way: How can we integrate and fill gaps in large, multiregional datasets? How did human societies live and interact across multiple scales, from the local
to the Mediterranean? How can archaeological analysis cross these scales? How do the trajectories of early Greek societies relate to those of other human groups (or not)? These questions are necessarily broad, and in this book I have aimed to address them in a way that will resonate with archaeologists interested in other parts of the world as well. With this in mind, I set out to write an archaeological history relevant to people working in a variety of disciplinary traditions—archaeologists and historians of ancient Greece, as well as anthropological archaeologists concerned with the broader archaeology of complex societies.

The arguments in this book are built on the achievements of generations of previous scholars. I hope to do justice to their work in discussing it here, incorporating it into new analyses or visualizations, or reframing it in new interpretations. Even if I am in occasional disagreement with these scholars, I have tremendous respect for the efforts of fieldwork, interpretation, and publication that have allowed for the type of synthesis presented here. This book deals with a broad range of evidence and ideas, and it is inevitable that I have gotten some of it wrong. There are certainly sites, discoveries, or interpretations that I have overlooked, and the relevant dataset is ever evolving. Nevertheless, I hope to have provided some new insights concerning early Greece and the Mediterranean world, in ways that will be useful to other scholars as well.

My interests in early Greece and the archaeology of complex societies were fostered early on by teachers and mentors at the Joukowksy Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World at Brown University and at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens—particularly by John Cherry, Sue Alcock, Steve Houston, John Papadopoulos, and Peter van Dommelen. Many of the ideas in this book were initially formulated in the doctoral dissertation supervised and examined by this group.

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