



The lasting settlement of a murine population on a large island such as Cyprus presupposes that the founding individuals were carriers of sufficient genetic diversity. Consequently, it must have resulted from multiple events. Cucchi has also pointed out the surprising absence of morphometric drift in Cypriot commensal mice during the 2,000 years following their introduction. This is undoubtedly explained by sustained gene flow from the mainland populations to the islanders, needing only the effective participation of at least two mainland individuals in the reproductive pool of the population on the island each year (Cucchi & Vigne 2006).

This is admittedly indirect information, but unprecedented in terms of naval architecture and maritime practices. These data indicate the existence, at the latest from the beginning of the ninth millennium BC, of ships on board which mice could pass unnoticed, for example, inside bags of food, ships which were probably at least partially decked, thus with a much more sophisticated architecture than the protohistoric dugout canoes, including the one from Bracciano. Moreover, they show that at the dawn of protohistory, 11,000 years ago, navigation to Cyprus was no longer limited to isolated successful events but was sufficiently intense to allow the introduction of at least two mice per year. It is therefore possible to estimate the traffic to at least a dozen of successful crossings each year, evidence for expert maritime mastery.

The appearance of *M. m. domesticus* in Cyprus at such an early date is not surprising. On the nearby mainland, it became a commensal species at the start of the thirteenth millennium BC, at the very beginning of the first sedentary

figure 6.3

A graphic comparison between the *terminus ante quem* of the appearance of the commensal mouse (*M. m. domesticus*) in Cyprus, the pre-ceramic introduction wave of large mammals on the same island (after Vigne *et al.* 2014) and the wave of rodent migration on all five “true” Mediterranean islands (after Vigne 1999).