

BURIAL, HERO CULT AND LANDSCAPE IN THE POLIS

BURIAL, HERO CULT AND
LANDSCAPE IN THE POLIS

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Abstract

Heroes were prominent fixtures of both town and country. Their cult was moreover both civic and funerary in nature, being celebrated in public, and being centered around the hero's bones. However, this state of affairs led to an anomaly in light of the c.700BC Greek ban on intramural burial: the remains of the hero should not have been suitable to remain in the city. There has been some recognition of this contradiction (by Morris, Antonaccio, etc.) but no fuller treatment. This thesis will examine intramural hero cult through the lens of this anomaly, which will hopefully shed additional light on: the hero's status (as either dead or alive, mortal or immortal, etc.); his place in the city and cosmos of the Greeks; his relationship to his worshipper and to the broader Greek polis (as both physical city and socio-cultural system). Chapter One presents the primary archaeological evidence, plotting the relationship between graves and settlement from SM to the Classical period. Chapter Two then examines nature of the hero and his cult, as seen in myth and in archaeological evidence. Chapter Three then synthesizes the first two, discussing (useful) pollution, the hero's powers and their connection to bones and to the Greek polis. In the end, this thesis will argue that the original anomaly—the acceptance of intramural hero cult in defiance of cathartic laws after c.700BC—was a crucial aspect of intramural hero cult, and indicative of the hero cult's wider role in the Greek polis. In transferring the symbolism of familial grave cult to public hero cult, citizens of the polis effected a link between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of civic life through a language of pseudo-kinship which was instrumental in building imagined links between unrelated citizens.

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І, на остатку, до всіх тих які розуміють ці слова: дякую.

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Thesis Introduction

Heroes were more or less ubiquitous in the world of the ancient Greeks. They were not, as the word has come to mean, simply larger-than-life figures (though of course, they were that). They were religious figures, integrated into the polytheistic religion of the Greeks as securely as the gods on Olympus. They received worship. Festivals were held in their honour. The Greek heroes were a unique religious phenomenon: not gods but, rather, dead men who nonetheless knew a sort of immortality.¹ These heroes were strange, Janus-faced figures who dwelled somewhere in between all of the stable categories that constituted Greek religious life.

Scholars have had a great deal of difficulty in answering the question of what the hero was, how his power was thought to operate, and what his purpose, in general, was. Rohde remarked that, “we get little information on the subject from direct statement as to their nature by writers of antiquity”.² As with many religious concepts, the hero's place in the universe was left unarticulated by ancient writers. Indeed, there may have been little, if any, conscious understanding of the phenomenon. It does not help matters that, even when studied with a critical eye, the heroes present a rather schizophrenic picture. The furthest Rohde would venture in defining “the Hero” was to say that one should “regard the Heroes as closely related to the Chthonic deities on the one hand, and to the dead on the other”.³ Surely any treatment of the Greek hero must admit this statement is, with some reservations, true. Of course, the heroes were also close to the gods, spatially (their cults often appeared in sanctuaries of the

¹ For the ease of both myself and the reader, I will be employing the male pronoun in describing heroes. In the case of Homer, for example, only men were heroes. Later heroes, however, could be male, female, adult or child.

² Rohde 1922, 116.

³ Rohde 1922, 116.

Olympian gods) and genealogically (they were—most of them, at least—sons and daughters of Olympians). And yet, their power more often resembled those of the Chthonic deities (for example, their regenerative, agricultural prerogatives, as well as their power over thresholds, which overlapped with the likes of Hekate). One even detects a certain ambivalence regarding the hero's place in the city: "[he is] not a model for imitation but rather a figure who cannot be ignored; his special excellence *is not integration* but potency [*italics mine*]".⁴ We see from Nagy that *bīe* was a defining part of the Homeric hero's nature, and could therefore be at odds with many civilized values. Yet the hero was very much integrated into the city.

The cults of the heroes were to be found everywhere in the traditional polis, from the furthest reaches of the countryside, to the very center of the city. Cults such as that of Palaimon at Isthmia and Theseus at Athens were extreme examples of the spatial poles a hero could occupy (the two cults represent the most peripheral and central of cults, respectively). Hero cults also existed everywhere in between. So, for example, the hero shrine of Perseus was on the road between Argos and Mycenae, and there were cults to be found both immediately inside (the West Gate Heroön at Eretria) and just outside (the joint shrine of Eteocles and Polyneices at Thebes) a city's gates. The spatial location of these cults was significant since, as De Polignac has argued, the rise of the Greek polis in the eighth century produced a new spatial logic according to which the city came to be organized, based on placement and patronage of religious sanctuaries.⁵ So, for example, sanctuaries on a polis' frontier became important, both in claiming sovereignty over one's own territory and in mediating between neighbouring states.

⁴ Nagy 1979, ix.

⁵ De Polignac 1995, 9.

Sanctuaries in the city's center, meanwhile, came to carry a force of gravity upon which the peripheral cults orbited. The cult of the heroes, as a part of this religious order, "came to belong to the mythical space of the city".⁶

If hero cult can be seen in terms of civic cult, related to the public sphere, it must also be seen as a form of grave cult, since it was almost always centered around the hero's tomb.

Rohde's insight about the hero, that he was both linked to the Chthonic powers and to the dead, is undeniably true, but leads us to an anomaly.⁷ The hero was dead, there was no denying it. The proof was in the bones, which, as we shall see, were a basic necessity for worship of the hero. By c.700BC a ban⁸ on intramural burial⁹ came into effect across the Greek world.¹⁰ Human remains were no longer welcome in the city, and in most cases intramural graves simply fell into disuse and were forgotten, while active burial moved outside the city, into concentrated cemeteries. Yet one of the main locations for heroic cult was within the city, and in other civic

⁶ De Polignac 1995, 149.

⁷ Rohde 1922, 116. For further discussion of the connection of hero cult and the grave, see: Burkert 1985, 204; Mikalson 2005, 32;

⁸ The term "ban" is almost too strong, as it may imply conscious, written legislation. Nevertheless, it is the term most often employed to describe the phenomenon. Suffice it to say that I do not believe it to have been articulated into the form of a law, or perhaps even to have been articulated at all. Instead, I will treat this "ban" as a societal expectation, verbalised or not, into which people were socialized over the course of their lives. Nevertheless, there are certain cases, as in 700BC at Athens, where the term "ban" really does seem to be accurate, especially if Morris is right, and certain social groups were actively excluded from visible burial. See: Morris 1987, 162-7.

⁹ When I use this term, I will not always refer to graves literally "within the city's walls". In many cases, especially the early ones, there may have been no walls to speak of. I will rather be referring to graves in close proximity to areas of settlement, close enough for the living to feel their presence in a quotidian context. An unease, or a sense of horror, at living in close quarters with the dead will be at the root of a movement toward extramural, or exurban, burial. Physical walls are largely irrelevant to this phenomenon, except as convenient markers between settlement and non-settlement.

¹⁰ This date has been adopted as a generalization: first, because it reflects the approximate date that Athens—our best source of grave evidence—adopted the ban; second, it coincides with a series of upheavals in the Greek world associated with "the rise of the polis", which are widely seen as being linked. As in all things, change was not uniform across the Greek world. We shall see that events unfold rather earlier at Corinth (c.750), and rather later at Argos (c.650-600).

centers, which seems to be notably out of step with normative funerary and cathartic sensibilities. How was it that heroic cults flourished in the city, when precisely at the same time there was a growing revulsion toward human remains and growing concern for purity within the city? How were the two factors—a desire to honour a city's heroes, and a general concern to avoid pollution—connected and reconciled as aspects of polis formation?

There has been some recognition of this question. Ian Morris brings up the relationship between purity and the movement of graves out of the city, concentrating on the development of new lines drawn between the sacred and polluted in this period.¹¹ He goes so far as to mention the Heroön of the Crossroads at Corinth, and states that a link between the ban on intramural burial and the rise of heroic cult seems to be compelling, but goes no further. Antonaccio, when discussing this phenomenon, mentions that this process of establishing intramural hero cults would have been "*ad hoc*" and undertaken in response (and only in response) to the discovery of graves and changes in urban context: "The response is communal but its purpose is less political than ritual"—again emphasizing the fact that the hero was not integrated into the city, as such, but was rather a dangerous and demanding figure (along the lines of Nagy's Homeric hero) who must simply be sated and appeased.¹² In fact, the Greeks did not merely respond to discovery of intramural graves, but actively imported bones into their cities (as in the case of Orestes and Theseus). As we shall see, the Greeks were not passive and fearful victims, warding off dangers they found to be concealed in the very earth they lived on.

¹¹ Morris 1988, 192-3.

¹² Antonaccio 1995, 267.

There was a method to these cults that goes beyond accident and chance discovery, which made them very much political as we shall see.

This investigation will examine hero cult and its relationship to both the physical landscape of the Greek polis and its social landscape. The seeming contradiction of intramural heroic burial, after c.700, presents a useful starting place from which to investigate the nature of the hero, his relationship to the grave and to funerary custom. Following this line of inquiry, I will be concerned to shed light on the nature of the hero, his ambivalent status, his relationship to his worshippers and his social and religious place in the Greek city of the Archaic and Classical Era.

To this end, Chapter One will center on the burial activity of four Central Greek centers—Athens, Euboia, Corinth, Argos—from the Sub-Mycenaean Period to the end of the Archaic Period (I will refer to this entity, that is to say, the city's accumulated funerary landscape, as its "tombscape"). The tombscape was a crucial socio-spatial construct in which citizens lived their everyday lives, and which affected the emerging and developed polis in ways that have not been fully investigated. The purpose of the chapter will first of all be to establish the topography of the Sub-Mycenaean and Geometric tombscape, and then that of the Archaic and Classical polis, in order to identify hero graves and situate them in the overall tombscape. In the process, the chapter will provide a substantial amount of evidence confirming the generalization that the ban on intramural burial did occur c. 700 BC, but at the same time highlighting the variation that existed between *poleis*.

Chapter Two will deal first with the hero as he appears in literature, and will outline his role in Greek religion and sketch what the requirements of hero cult were, in order to elucidate its connection to the tombscape. It will be argued that while hero cult was a form of grave cult, it was very different from other sorts of grave cults, such as tomb cult and tendance, which were predicated on very different relationships between the living and the dead. I will argue that hero cult was, in fact, not a true ancestor cult, but rather a cult of pseudo-kin, of imagined ancestors belonging to the public sphere, rather than to the sphere of the family the *oikos*. Then, coming back to the archaeological evidence presented in the previous chapter, we shall see that intramural hero cults were based on graves from earlier, pre-polis tombscapes. They were physically overtaken by the newly formed polis, appropriated and integrated into a living settlement as constitutive parts of a new civic community.

In the third chapter, returning to the initial anomaly of hero cult—being grave cult, but also being an accepted part of the urban environment—I will argue that the status of heroic remains, as either pure or impure, was ambiguous and ambivalent, and that this was fully in line with what we know of the Greek hero and, indeed, that it was central to his or her role in the city. Intramural hero cult made productive use of ambiguity to forge the communal bonds necessary to the polis: that is, to make a society of nuclear households into a community and forge symbolic links between private interests and the public good. I will argue that the hero, with all his ambiguous and paradoxical features—being dead and alive, of the past and in the present, man and demi-god—provided a strong abiding presence, through time and in space,

that allowed citizens to imagine themselves as being related to one another and to the land they occupied, through him and through his cult.

Chapter One

Introduction

The objective of this chapter will be to plot the development of burial practices (both spatially and typologically) in four major areas, between the Sub-Mycenaean Period and the end of the Archaic Period (figs.1-2): Athens, the Euboian settlements of Lefkandi and Eretria, Corinth and Argos. Moreover, I will be concerned with tracing the location of graves relative to the settlement at the time of burial and later, as the settlement area changed (to the extent that the settlement can be determined). This will be important because the location of graves, and the reaction of the living to them, would have an impact on the construction of the city, physically and mentally. Many of these intramural graves would later be used in heroic cult, as we shall explore in Chapter Two.

Spatially, it will be important to see when the inhabitants set a ban on intramural burial, in order both to observe the development of religious beliefs and to observe the spatial rationalization of the limits of the city. As we mentioned, modern scholarship tends to generalize the date for such a ban on intramural burial to c.700 BC.¹³ We will see that this generalization is broadly true: the Greeks did move toward intramural burial at the end of the Geometric period and the start of the Archaic period, which corresponded to significant shifts in how they viewed their relationship to one another, to the dead and to the spaces around them. Nevertheless, the generalization is just that, and it is not made clear enough in scholarship how broad a generalization it is. We will see it to be quite accurate with respect to

¹³ e.g. Morris 1987, 184; Osborne 1996, 83.

Athens (which is often the case). However, in the cases of Corinth and Argos, there are significant divergences. While, of course, it is not the main focus of this thesis to point out such divergence, doing so will be useful as a reminder of the variation and idiosyncrasy present in the formative Greek polis. So, while confirming the broad pattern identified as indicative of the emergence of the Greek polis in the eighth and seventh centuries, we will see that there was a great deal of variation from polis to polis, and even within the same one, at different times.

Before moving on, it would be helpful to define some technical terms, primarily dealing with the burial types most common in the Geometric and Archaic Periods. Primary inhumation—in which the body was buried in the earth, sometimes in a container, without any preparatory processes—was perhaps the simplest form of burial, since it involved the fewest steps (at least the fewest archaeologically visible steps: most of the pre-burial ritual remains unknowable unless literary sources exist). Simple pits (fig.3) or shafts (a shaft being deeper than a pit) (See: fig.4) were common in the Geometric period, though they became less common when a settlement's physical resources permitted a higher degree of burial sophistication. Pits might have small ledges to support a cover slab, most often constructed of stone. Cist burials were also common; where a shaft was lined with uncut stones, which created a protected enclosure, and usually ensured a higher degree of preservation for the contents therein (fig.5). Sarcophagi (fig.6), made of cut stone, were—for our purposes—the most sophisticated form of inhumation (elaborate built-tombs or mausoleums will not appear in the evidence we will be dealing with). Sarcophagi were mostly monolithic. The cover lid may or may not have been

attached by straps (the holes for which are evident on the stone, and may be used—as they were by Corinthian excavators—to date the sarcophagus).

Cremation represented a secondary step in the preparation of the remains.¹⁴ That is, the process of cremating the body was another step added to the preparation of the remains for inhumation. Cremation might take place directly in the grave, which is called primary cremation. This involved the burning of the body directly in a shaft or pit, along with fuel and any offerings. More offerings might be placed in the grave afterward, with a cover slab optional. Meanwhile, secondary cremation added another step, since the body was burned elsewhere and the ashes were thereafter placed in the grave, either by themselves or in an urn. The addition of a stand-alone pyre in secondary cremation, whether nearby or at some distance from the grave, was another level of elaboration and consequently another opportunity for spectacle during the death ritual and, at least in the Iron Age, was associated with the more ostentatious rites of the elite: it is the ritual we see take place in Homer and Hesiod.¹⁵ The ashes, whether inurned or not, were placed into the ground, in holes roughly equal to the diameter of the urn (should an urn be used) at the bottom of a man-sized pit (fig.7). In some cases, the urn was simply placed into a small hole at ground level, eschewing the more elaborate man-sized pit. Sometimes however, the urn was simply placed into the pit itself without a special hole (fig.8).

¹⁴ Sprague makes the point that cremation burial is still inhumation (being within the earth). It is merely the care taken in preparing the body that separates the two rites. The difference between practitioners of the two could be religious and ideological, but might also have been economic, given the added expense entailed in cremation, either of the primary or secondary variety. See: Sprague 1968, 479.

¹⁵ To put it into perspective, in order to achieve full combustion of organic matter, as was done in the most high-quality of Geometric cremations (and is what one might expect in a modern procedure), the body must be burned at 700-800°C for about six to seven hours. See: Liston 2004, 16.

Graves are generally invisible to the living unless marked in some way. Markers might take many different forms, but often large vases, such as amphorae and kraters, served this function, either being placed over the center of the grave or over the head of the buried individual (fig.7). This function might also have been fulfilled by a stone marker, usually uncut until the later Archaic period. A *peribolos* or a retaining-wall (as in the case of the Tholos cemetery at Athens) might mark off a cemetery from the area surrounding it. In the most ostentatious of cases, a large mound might be erected over the grave(s). Sometimes, the mound became a gravitational point for subsequent burials (in the case of the Toumba cemetery in Lefkandi, for example, hundreds of subsequent burials).

Athens

Athens is often mentioned in conjunction with Argos and Knossos as one of the best—if not the best—preserved archaeological domains of Iron Age Greece.¹⁶ This is especially true of the grave evidence, which is impressive and unbroken from the Bronze Age onward. The earliest post-Mycenaean settlement was centered on the Classical agora and at the base of the acropolis, and for much of the Iron Age remained concentrated round the agora area. In the Late Geometric (LG) period however, it began to spread and in the Archaic Period came to encircle the acropolis.

In the Sub-Mycenaean period (SM = 1125-1050BC = fig.9a) the settlement was centered on the agora and the western base of the acropolis, though he stresses that scattered settlements would have been scattered over a much larger area.¹⁷ Three wells have been found from this period— two of them in the agora and one beneath the acropolis.¹⁸ Morris imagines the SM settlement as a series of small, dispersed homesteads dotting the landscape.¹⁹

Nevertheless, grave evidence for the Sub-Mycenaean period is abundant: two hundred and four graves, according to Cavanagh.²⁰ They are almost all cists, and there is no separation

¹⁶ Snodgrass 1971, 198; Morris 1991, 29.

¹⁷ Morris 1987, 63.

¹⁸ Whitley 1991, 61.

¹⁹ Morris 1987, 63.

²⁰ Whitley uses Cavanagh's count. See: Whitley 1991, 95. One might question the overall representativeness of these graves, or whether there may have been other cemeteries which have not yet been discovered. This is a real methodological problem. In the case of Athens, Morris argues that the excavations have been geographically wide enough and extensive enough to be considered representative. Where this is not the case, he makes an educated guess. In other cases, archaeologists have employed formulae to try to come up with proper grave estimates, often taking into account the history of the site itself (whether or not, for example, parts of it were destroyed or damaged). An archaeologist might then try to envision the original extent of the cemetery, keeping in mind topography and the number of known graves. Snodgrass, for example, in attempting an estimate for Lefkandi's

of adult and child burial. The dominant mode of burial in this period was inhumation, which was perhaps reminiscent of Mycenaean burial practice. The majority of offerings are vases of the SM pottery style, which is quite plain and stylistically undistinguished. There is very little metal to be found from this period.

The Kerameikos cemetery, in the SM period (and throughout Athens' history), was the city's primary burial ground. At this time it was the only large cemetery in Athens, with one-hundred and twelve burials. By Morris' count, forty-six adults, twenty youth and eight children were buried here in the SM period.²¹ Beyond the Kerameikos, there was a group of fourteen cist graves on top of the acropolis: one adult and thirteen children.²² Excavators discovered a small group of cist graves at Erechtheiou St., near what would later be the Haladrian Gate. Beyond this, there were a few cists south of the future Olympieion, near the Ilisos River, and a few cists north of the acropolis, near the future Acharnian Gate. The agora yielded some graves to excavators, though these were scattered and in small groups.²³ Towards the very end of the SM period, we begin to see secondary cremations appear, which seem to foreshadow the popularity of this type of cremation in the subsequent Proto-Geometric period.²⁴ By the Sub-Mycenaean Period, we already see that there is a significant extramural cemetery—the Kerameikos—although there are, and will continue to be, a very substantial number of graves

cemeteries, merely points out that many of the graves are presumed to be still undiscovered, and by comparing the excavated area to the presumed original area of the cemetery, simply multiplies the extant grave numbers by four or five times. This less-than-perfect method might leave questions unanswered, but it does seem to be the best method available to us, trusting in the subjective assessment of the expert. For the Athenian situation, see: Morris 1987, 102. For Lefkandi, see: Snodgrass 1983, 168.

²¹ Morris 1987, 76.

²² Boardman 1971, 31.

²³ Whitley 1991, 61.

²⁴ Morris 1987, 60.

buried intramurally, scattered throughout the contemporary settlement, and that those graves would fall within the bounds of the Archaic and Classical city.

The social picture of this period is complicated. Morris posits a high degree of egalitarianism. He concluded this based both on the high number of graves in this period as well as the inclusive nature of the burial groups: cemeteries tended to be quite large in this period, probably incorporating many related families, with little sign of hierarchy or exclusion among them.²⁵ Whitley agrees with this assessment, adding a few reservations.²⁶ He points out, for example, that while poor graves are overwhelmingly uniform, being differentiated only quantitatively (for example, in terms of number of offerings, such as vases, and not type of offering), rich graves do show some qualitative difference when contrasted to the poor ones (he notes the presence, for example, of gold or glass in some graves).²⁷ Nevertheless, these rich graves are as dissimilar from one another as they are from the poorer graves, which points back to an absence of an exclusive elite identity.

The settlement in the Proto-Geometric (PG = 1050-975BC = fig.9b) period was still centered on the agora. The small settlement at the base of the acropolis seems to have disappeared in this period. Nine wells were filled, compared to the three wells of the SM period.²⁸

²⁵ Morris 1987, 78-9, 93-5.

²⁶ Whitley 1991, 65.

²⁷ Whitley 1991, 96.

²⁸ Whitley 1991, 62.

In contrast to the SM, most of the graves in the PG period are secondary cremations (of the so-called trench-and-hole variety: an urn was lowered into a narrow shaft, which was cut either into the bottom of a rectangular, man-sized grave, or by itself, starting from ground level). We do, however, see examples of primary cremation and inhumation, though they are by far in the minority. At this point we see a widespread adoption of iron as a grave offering. Weapon graves become relatively common in this period, especially in the Keremeikos. Female graves begin to feature pins and fibulae. Whitley associates this with a flowering local iron industry.²⁹

Burials continued in the Keremeikos in the PG period, which remained one of the settlement's primary burial grounds (there are forty-eight burials here in this period). The Keremeikos cemetery now had two separate grave plots. The first was on the north shore of the Eridanos River, bordering on the old SM graves, and the second—a newer, larger plot—was on the south shore. Another cemetery, at Leophoros Vassilias Sophias, had seventy-three graves.³⁰ Beyond this, however, cemeteries were very small and dispersed. There were a few agora burials, among them a few reburials in a Mycenaean chamber tomb on the site of the future temple of Ares.³¹ A child was buried in a pit in the *dromos*. Contrary to the overall picture of this era—as one of a total shift to secondary cremation—the majority of agora burials were still inhumations. When a cremation did occur there, it involved a simple, ground-level trench-and-hole burial, skipping the architectural flourishes of graves in the Keremeikos (such as cover-slabs and man-sized trenches). The cemetery to the north of the Acharnian Gate continues to

²⁹ Whitley 1991, 102.

³⁰ Whitley 1991, 104.

³¹ Boardman 1971, 35.

be used. Meanwhile, a new cemetery appears northeast of the acropolis, outside the future Diocharian Gate, near modern Syntagma Square.³² There is another small plot just to the east of this.

Morris believes that the PG period was one of increasing stratification in Athens. He comes to this conclusion based on the smaller number of graves, which stands in contrast to their increasingly wealthy contents.³³ Morris posits that at least some of the inhabitants of Athens were barred from burial in this period, or were at least disposed of in a manner that was archaeologically invisible. Nevertheless, as Whitley points out, the level of wealth actually goes down in this period (from 190 on his wealth index to 69).³⁴ He is quick to point out, however, that the wealthy graves now regularly differentiated themselves *qualitatively* from poorer ones, much more so than in the SM period. Perhaps more importantly, the rich graves begin to become more similar to one another, forming identifiable groups. For example, a large number of the Kerameikos graves are differentiated by the presence of war paraphernalia (swords, daggers, spear tips), which points to a strongly corporate warrior elite.³⁵ The richest burials, however, are female. They are extremely variable, and (as in the SM period) united only in their ostentation. It might be argued that the period is one of decline in prosperity and population, rather than any kind of heightened exclusivity. One must contend, however, with a rise in qualitatively differentiated grave goods—such as glass and gold offerings—which speaks to a much higher standard of living than in the SM period. Even if this is unconvincing, it at least

³² Boardman 1971, 35.

³³ Morris 1987, 78; Whitley 1991, 110-11.

³⁴ Whitley 1991, 111.

³⁵ Whitley 1991, 111.

speaks against any sort of catastrophic decline: presumably the creation of a warrior class would not occur in a period when bare subsistence would have been the order of the day.

The settlement remained small and dispersed in the Early Geometric (EG = 900-850BC = fig.9c) and the Middle Geometric I (MGI = 850-800BC = fig.9c) periods.³⁶ It continued to be centered round the agora, where six wells were filled throughout this period.³⁷

Burial forms are somewhat different in this period. Cremation is the dominant mode of deposition, but the cremation urn is now only sunk into the ground half way (though the urns are placed into a rectangular trench first are therefore still fully covered in earth. See: fig.7c-f). Certain categories of graves disappear in this period. Poor graves are no longer to be found, and child graves become exceedingly rare.³⁸ Weapon graves continue to feature “killed” swords (sword blades wrapped around the neck of the burial amphora). Burials begin to incorporate grave-markers: either plain stones or extremely large vases.

Grave numbers go down drastically in the Early Geometric period. There are no longer *any* large cemeteries.³⁹ The Keremeikos plots become middling in size. In the agora, a well-defined cemetery is established, but the remaining agora graves are few and far between. Nevertheless, the living and the dead continue to inhabit the same space. There are several wealthy agora burials, located between wells (and therefore presumably within the settlement). The famous “Tomb of the Rich Lady” is dated to this period, part of a small plot

³⁶ I have chosen to combine the two eras primarily because Whitley does so, seeing a certain dynamic at play in this era unique to it. See: Whitley 1991, 116.

³⁷ Whitley 1991, 62.

³⁸ Whitley 1991, 116. For extended discussion of the child graves, see: Morris 1987, 65.

³⁹ Whitley 1991, 119.

located just to the SW of the agora, on the N slope of the Areopagos (we shall return to this grave in our treatment of the Oval House in Chapter Two).⁴⁰ The remaining Athenian graves are scattered around the area of the future city. The largest of them (with no more than five graves each) are to be found at modern Odos Garibaldi, Odos Kavalotti and the later Nymphaeum.

Morris, contrasting the EG-MGI with the SM and even the PG periods, considers it to be a period of a radical assertion of elite control. He bases this primarily on the huge drop in grave numbers, as well as the almost total exclusion of children and the poor from the realm of archaeologically visible burial.⁴¹ Whitley agrees with Morris that the drop in grave numbers is the result of exclusion, rather than a drop in population. He argues, moreover, that the social groups represented by the graves become stylistically more coherent (the warrior graves of Kerameikos South, for example, all share distinct stylistic similarities, and the rich-lady burials, which in previous periods were idiosyncratic, are now more stylistically unified).⁴² Moreover, certain rites are geographically distinct. Inhumation and primary cremation rites are limited almost exclusively to the graves on the north slope of the Areopagos (which are nearly all female), while secondary cremation is still prevalent at the Kerameikos. Graves marked by kraters are only to be found at the Kerameikos (and all are male).⁴³ Whitley hypothesizes that this period would have featured elaborate funerary games and other elitist death-ritual.

The burials from the Middle Geometric II (MGII = 800-760BC = fig.9c) period to the Late Geometric I (LGI = 760-735BC = fig.9d) period are slightly more numerous than those of the

⁴⁰ Smithson 1968, 77.

⁴¹ Morris 1987, 109.

⁴² Whitley 1991, 130.

⁴³ Whitley 1991, 131.

preceding era. Inhumation returns to prominence in this period, though cremation remains common as well. Whitley and Boardman both admit that it was a matter of choice, and not custom, to inhume the dead (although Whitley is clear that making this choice was still significant).⁴⁴ Trench-and-hole cremations disappear almost entirely. Nevertheless, cremations continue to be secondary, simply being deposited, inurned, into a man-sized pit. This still implies a multi-part burial rite.⁴⁵

The Kerameikos South cemetery is the only large cemetery at this time, with sixty-eight graves from this period. The Kerameikos North cemetery is much reduced, yielding only five graves. Beyond this, there were only small cemeteries and single-grave plots. Excavators discovered seven graves at Kriezis St., four at the Dipylon cemetery, seven at Kynosarges, to the extreme south of what would become the city of Athens. The enclosed Areopagos cemetery (which we shall return to in Chapter Two) continues to receive burials in this period, and the Tholos cemetery (a site of heroic significance in the fifth century, also to be dealt with in Chapter Two) yields six burials, but beyond this there are only two isolated burials to be found in the agora.⁴⁶ Other single burials were found at the Olympieion, as well as on the Pnyx hill. Burial, therefore, remains intramural, located alongside contemporary settlement to the northwest and north of the Acropolis and agora.

Morris sees this era as one of continuing, though perhaps lessened, burial exclusion. Only a few social types were granted the privilege of burial, or at least archaeologically visible

⁴⁴ Whitley 1991, 137.

⁴⁵ Whitley 1991, 138.

⁴⁶ For the Areopagos cemetery, see: Young 1951, 67-134.

burial. Whitley points out the reintroduction of adult inhumation as complicating the picture we have of social identities operating in this period at Athens. He elaborates on this, hypothesizing that elite burial had splintered into two distinct forms in this period: the first was faithful to the form used by ninth-century elites— individuals were interred according to sex, and status was shown through elaborate grave markers (most of these graves are to be found in the Kerameikos); the second type, found in the enclosed Areopagos cemetery, and in the other cemeteries on the north slope of the Areopagos, were inhumations, without grave markers, containing large numbers of grave goods (with recurrent vase and metal-object types)— in other words, very much like SM burials.⁴⁷

In the Late Geometric II (LGII = 735-700BC = fig.10a) period, there are some radical changes in the burial landscape. For one thing, burial numbers explode to one-hundred and forty four graves. This is a huge increase over the previous two periods. Athenians switch overwhelmingly, with some exceptions, to inhumation burial: primarily of the pit variety (the trenches were slightly smaller than life-size and bodies were often semi-contracted, with knees bent). Cremations do continue in this period, however, primary cremation seems to cease. Virtually all of the cremations from this period are to be found in bronze cauldrons, which are even more ostentatious than the urns of previous periods.⁴⁸ However, grave-markers—both stone and ceramic—which were previously used to indicate status, cease entirely.⁴⁹ This is accompanied by the reappearance of child burials, all of whom are inhumed in amphorae and pithoi.

⁴⁷ Whitley 1991, 160-1.

⁴⁸ Boardman 1971, 53; Whitley 1991, 162.

⁴⁹ Whitley 1991, 163.

There is only one large cemetery at this time, Keremeikos South, which has thirty one burials. The rest of the burials are scattered over a wide area. Keremeikos North is of medium size (6-20 burials), as is the Dipylon cemetery, the cemetery at the Nymphaeum, and the enclosed cemetery in the agora. There are three small plots in the agora, one at Kynosarges in the south, one at the future junction of Metrodorou St. and Geminou St. Meanwhile, single graves remain common: three are to be found in the agora, and others are scattered throughout the future city. Burial in this period was still very much a mixture of extramural (at Keremeikos, for example) and intramural, taking place throughout the contemporary settlement, in the areas to the north of the Acropolis— an area that still included the agora (although residential use would cease here in the PA Period). Burial was therefore also very much intramural in relation to the future city, which would come to cover graves even to the extreme south.

Morris' hypothesis is that this period represents an egalitarian flowering, which resulted in the extension of visible burial rites to a broader segment of society, and consequently led to a higher (and more representative) number of graves from this era.⁵⁰ Morris suggests, and Whitley agrees with him, that elements of a proto-polis are revealed in this period. Whitley, though more cautious than Morris, admits that a breakdown in exclusivity can perhaps more broadly be associated with the development of *isonomia*.⁵¹

In the Archaic period, the settlement begins to take on its final form, expanding from a settlement concentrated on the agora, to one encircling the whole acropolis. The agora,

⁵⁰ Morris 1987, 93.

⁵¹ Whitley 1991, 179.

meanwhile, takes on its final, political form (residential activity ceases here in the Proto-Attic period). This is primarily attested by the closing of nearly all of the wells in the agora in this period. Morris hypothesizes that the five remaining wells were used for religious purposes.⁵²

Burial in the Archaic period can be sub-divided into four smaller periods corresponding to contemporary pottery styles: the Proto-Attic period (PA = 700-625BC = fig.10b); the Transitional period (TR = 625-575BC = fig.10b); the Black-Figure period (BF = 575-525BC = fig.10c); the Early Red-Figure period (ERF = 525-500BC = fig.10d). The Proto-Attic period is a period of serious decline in burial numbers, compared with the windfall of graves we saw in LGII. While the Kerameikos cemeteries remain relatively static in terms of graves, the Olympieion cemetery and the cemetery at Kynosarges both decline, and the Nymphaeum ceases to be used as a burial ground altogether. The only burial we see in the agora in this period is an infant burial.⁵³ Burial custom changes in this period: the norm is now primary cremation alone.⁵⁴

To Morris, the Proto-Attic period is—much like the previous EGI-MGII period—one of radical assertion of elite control and a restriction of burial rites to the privileged.⁵⁵ In this case, he presumes it to have been a reactionary movement against the trend set in the LG period, which was supposedly more egalitarian in character. His hypothesis is a response to John Camp's theory of drought, which posits far-reaching demographic change as an explanation for

⁵² Morris 1987, 67. Also see: Snodgrass 1983, 169-71.

⁵³ Morris 1987, 67.

⁵⁴ Morris 1987, 154.

⁵⁵ Morris 1987, 162-7.

the drop in grave numbers (based primarily on well-closures associated with this period).⁵⁶ The well-closures are dealt with by Morris, who suggests that they were the result of the politicization of the agora as a civic space. Since the agora was no longer suitable for residential occupation, the wells were not needed. Nevertheless, he notes that the Athenians were out of step with the rest of Greece in this period. At a time when the majority of other Greek cities were extending permanent political rights to a broader section of their inhabitants (he uses Corinth and Argos as examples), Athenians were waging revolutionary and counter-revolutionary war against one another.⁵⁷

In the Transitional period, grave numbers remained low. There are some signs of an increase in burial activity however. In the Kerameikos, the Ag. Triada cemetery boasts forty-one graves from this period. This increase in graves continues into the Black-Figure period, although it is crucially restricted to extramural cemeteries. The sole cemetery remaining in the city is the enclosed Areopagos cemetery. In this period, inhumation and primary cremation are both popular (the more elaborate secondary cremation is rare in this period). The subsequent Early Red-Figure period sees a significant increase in grave numbers. The Kerameikos South Mound Cemetery and the Ag. Triada cemetery show significant use between 520-400BC. The cemetery outside the Diocharian Gate shows heavy use: some three-hundred graves between the late 6th

⁵⁶ Camp 1979. For Morris' response, see: Morris 1987, 160.

⁵⁷ Morris 1987, 9.

century and the late 5th.⁵⁸ There are almost no burial within the city at this time. Those that are to be found are children's burials.⁵⁹

The Archaic period—that is, the period after 700BC—is crucially the period in which extramural burial becomes the Athenian funerary norm. Large-scale, intramural burial ceases in the Proto-Attic period, possibly as a result of the exclusion of large portions of the population outside of elite circles. There is an element of coincidence in this: the Kerameikos happens to be outside of what would later constitute the *asty* of the Athenians, and it is the primary burial ground of elites throughout Athenian burial history (the agora and Areopagos slope seem to have been the cemeteries of choice for the *kakoi*).⁶⁰ Initially, the Athenian movement toward extramural burial may simply have been a reflection of the location of the elite burial ground, located some distance from the residences of the *hoi polloi*. Nevertheless, extramural burial seems to have become something of a standard over the course of the Archaic period, because when burial privilege was broadened again in the Early Red-Figure period, Athenians—on the whole—continued to prefer to extramural burial. There are of course exceptions: the enclosed Areopagos cemetery is a prominent example. This cemetery is notably not elite in the burial forms adopted and is quite exceptional in its spatial location. Morris hypothesizes it may have

⁵⁸ Morris 1987, 87.

⁵⁹ Young 1951, 67-134.

⁶⁰ In the SM period, of course, the Kerameikos is the only major cemetery, but in the periods afterward there is evidence that the Kerameikos was indeed an elite burial ground. In the PG period it is the Kerameikos that switches over wholesale to cremation, not the agora, and it is in the Kerameikos that warrior graves make their appearance, and not in the Agora. In the EG period, when grave numbers go down drastically—apparently as a result of exclusion—it is the Kerameikos that remains a major cemetery. Even if we don't consider this *a priori* to be conclusive evidence, it is in the Kerameikos, again that warrior burials persist, and it is the only place we see with marked graves. The graves in the agora and on the Areopagos north slope are mostly inhumations. We see this trend continue in the Proto-Attic period, as well—Morris' most securely elitist period—when the Kerameikos is the only major cemetery left in Athens.

been the burial place of the Peisistratids, being well placed to show their dominion of Athenian civic life, in a space which by the Proto-Attic period, if Morris is correct, had become reserved for the living.⁶¹

The overall picture of the Athenian settlement, from SM to the end of the Archaic period, is one of growth from tiny, dispersed farmsteads in the area of the future agora and at western base of the acropolis, to concentrated growth in the agora and then growth encircling the acropolis. Sometime in the Proto-Attic period, the agora becomes devoted to a civic function, playing host to temples and administrative buildings, though admittedly of a simple and protean quality.

In conjunction with this process, the Athenian picture of burial is complicated but more or less coherent (fig.9-10). While intramural burial is common in the SM, PG and Geometric periods—with graves mixed among wells and houses—there is also a well defined cemetery located some distance from the settlement (crucially on the road into the city) at the Kerameikos, which is normally associated with elite burial. Grave numbers fluctuate wildly from period to period, and I am inclined to agree with Morris and Whitley, that this is the result of conscious exclusion of certain groups in Athenian society from burial rites. The relatively egalitarian SM period, characterized by numerous and qualitatively similar graves and grave goods, gives way to the PG and EG-MGI periods, which are marked by gradually more restrictive practices emphasizing stylistic and qualitative differences between social groups. This period in turn gives way to the Late Geometric period, in which we see the gradual extension of burial

⁶¹ He points out an impressive sarcophagus of Cycladic marble found in the cemetery as a potential coffin of the tyrant himself. See: Morris 1987, 68.

rites in MGII-LGI, and then a virtual explosion of burial activity in LGII, a period characterized as egalitarian and as the birth of Athenian *isonomia* (however short-lived). A reactionary restriction of burial rites in the Proto-Attic period sees very few new burials (and a crucial movement of graves out of urban areas). There are small increases in burial numbers in the Transitional and Black-Figure periods. Burial numbers rise significantly again in the Early Red-Figure period, in what can be considered a final movement toward a crystallized, egalitarian system of burial practice at Athens. The crucial question for us, of course, is extramural burial. We may place this change in the Proto-Attic period, which accords very closely to the popular generalization that this switch occurred c.700BC.

Lefkandi and Eretria

The site of Lefkandi lies on the Lelantine plain, between the two later cities of Eretria and Chalcis, which in the Archaic and Classical periods were the principal cities of the island. In the period after the fall of the Mycenaean palaces, it was Lefkandi that was the major site on the island, and indeed one of the most prosperous places in all of post-Mycenaean Greece. The settlement was located on the Xeropolis hill, a high outpost on the southeastern end of the Lelantine Plain (fig.11). The site is important, not only for the Dark Age economic prosperity we see there, but also for its connection to Eretria, which provides us with one of our best archaeological hero cult sites: the West Gate Heroön. Indeed, the famous “heroön of Lefkandi” is cited as a predecessor of this site. A full discussion of the Lefkandian tomb-scape will therefore be desirable, for several reasons: to offer a contrast to the tomb-scapes of *poleis* and proto-*poleis*, since Lefkandi was never, and never became, a fully-developed polis; to contrast the supposed “heroön” at Lefkandi (which I will argue was not a heroön at all: I will refer to it, rather, as the Big Hall), and its immediate environment, to later examples of hero shrines in developed *poleis*; finally, to see the ways in which Lefkandi sowed seeds that would later be productively used in the symbols and architecture of hero cult at Eretria.

In the Sub-Mycenaean (SM = 1125-1050BC) period, the excavators conjectured that the population was distinct from that preceding it, based largely on a divergence in pottery style.⁶² From this point until the settlement's destruction, however, there is a steady and unchanging population associated with the site. We have very little evidence for the location of the

⁶² Popham et al. 1980, 355.

settlement in this period (or, for that matter, until the Late Proto-Geometric [LPG] period). The Bronze Age settlement was centered on the Xeropolis hill, and although the excavators posit a new population for the site, we may assume that the new population settled on the same raised, and hence defensible, site. The later presence of settlement in this area supports this. We have no evidence for inhabitation outside of the area immediately surrounding the hill (except for the Big Hall at Toumba, whose actual domestic character is in dispute).

The only burial area that is active in the SM period is the Skoubris cemetery, to the northwest of Xeropolis (fig.11). The method of burial at this cemetery is somewhat curious. The common practice was to build a man-sized (or slightly smaller) cist—which played host to vases, burial shrouds, jewellery and other grave offerings—and to perform a secondary cremation process at a nearby pyre. Ashes were then deposited, without being inurned, into the grave. Curiously, very little of what one might expect from a cremated adult body, in terms of ash and bone, are to be found in the cists (leading one to ask what it is they did with the rest of the ash).⁶³ In some cases, what remains is essentially a cenotaph, lacking any kind of ash evidence. We even find tantalizing evidence for some form of simulacrum, in place of the body (wooden remains, jewels placed to correspond with the appropriate appendages, burial cloth).⁶⁴ Popham hypothesizes they might have discovered no more than a quarter of the four known cemeteries' graves.⁶⁵ There are twenty-one graves from this period, all of them of the cist-

⁶³ Popham et al. 1980, 210.

⁶⁴ Burial cloth was found (in chronological order) in S38, 10, 46, SS1, P3, 22-4, T14, P10, P39B, S33, T13, S39A, T33. See: Popham et al. 1980, 212.

⁶⁵ Popham et al. 1990, 103.

cremation variety. We see only one grave outside of Skoubris, at the A. Khaliotis plot: a cist cremation, but poor and isolated.

The excavators of the site have divided the Lefkandian Proto-Geometric period into three sub-divisions. We may speak of the Early Proto-Geometric (EPG = 1050-1000BC) period as a time of slow growth and conservative cultural development. While there are no direct settlement remains, there are definite signs of contact with Cyprus and the Levant, which suggests great prosperity, especially in comparison to other PG Greek settlements. The EPG still has only one cemetery, at Skoubris, which yields twelve burials from this period. They are all cist-cremations. The number of vase offerings per grave goes up, although metal offerings remain static. There is one exception—S16—which features 19 bronze offerings (though no gold, which is present in another grave: for example, S10) and which foreshadows the singular and disproportionately wealthy burials we will see in the Middle Proto-Geometric and Late Proto-Geometric periods.

Taken together, the SM and EPG periods do seem to be a consistent and stable era in which a single elite group dominates the settlement. The graves are exceptionally wealthy, especially when compared to other areas of Greece at this time. The inclusion of various metal goods in about half of them is surprising (especially when we look at the uniform—and uniformly ceramic—offerings being interred in Athens at this time). Nevertheless, we are speaking of a fairly long period, from roughly c.1125 to c.1000. For a period of one-hundred years to be represented by thirty-four graves means that at least some exclusion had to be taking place. Snodgrass reminds us of the excavators' estimate that only about a quarter of the

site's graves had been excavated and that much of it has yet to be uncovered (estimates vary by cemetery, but in some cases, corrective multiplication of up to five times is recommended). Nevertheless, even accounting for the missing graves, Snodgrass estimates the Lefkandian burial population had only been between twenty and fifty people at any given time, which is ridiculously low, as he himself admits.⁶⁶ Lefkandi's status as a bustling, cosmopolitan port (judging by the presence of Near Eastern and Cypriot imports), and as a major ceramic exporter, meant that a high number of workers and tradesmen would have lived in the immediate vicinity. These workers, whatever their status, were excluded, it would seem, from archaeologically visible burial. It would not be outrageous to assume that the Lefkandian elites contrasted themselves precisely against these lesser classes of people, living in a highly hierarchical society of elite privilege.

The Middle Proto-Geometric (MPG = 1000-950BC) period sees the opening of two new cemeteries, both of which are also northwest of Lefkandi, at Palia Perivolia and Toumba. In this period there is more-or-less equal competition between Palia Perivolia and Skoubris in terms of grave numbers. Skoubris has four cist-cremation tombs, slightly less wealthy than in the MPG, especially in terms of metal goods. Palia Perivolia, meanwhile, has five tombs. One is a pit—though still a cremation in the Lefkandian manner, with very little ash present—three are shaft-cremations, also in the Lefkandian manner, and one is a cist-cremation. The grave offerings at both cemeteries, on the whole, are quite poor. The Toumba cemetery, in contrast, has three burials in this period of the most spectacular type. The cemetery begins with the erection and

⁶⁶ Snodgrass 1983, 168.

filling-in of a monumental wooden building over the grave of two individuals (a man cremated and inurned, and the other – a woman – simply inhumed beside him). This is the Big Hall, known also as the “heroön of Lefkandi”, which we shall treat in greater detail in Chapter Two.⁶⁷

In the Late Proto-Geometric period (LPG = 950-900BC), we see even more change. Attic ware begins to show up in Lefkandian graves (at least twelve Attic imports are to be found from graves of this period).⁶⁸ Local potters, indeed, begin to mimic the Attic style. Desborough went so far as to suggest Attic colonisation of the settlement (which is unlikely).⁶⁹ Archaeologically visible signs of settlement begin to appear on the Xeropolis hill, including both pottery sherds and remains of buildings.⁷⁰

Burial custom seems to become exceedingly fluid in this period. We find a few examples of Attic-style urn cremation, along with the introduction of pit and shaft graves. The consistency we saw in previous periods with regard to burial form disappears entirely, replaced by a combination of shaft and urn-cremation. Skoubris is abandoned entirely. Palia Perivolia has eight burials in this period, all shaft burials, some of great wealth. Meanwhile, Toumba has six burials: three shaft-cremations, two urn cremations, and a tomb of mud-brick. Toumba has many wealthy burials. However, they are not as wealthy as the graves of Palia Perivolia.

Of interest is the presence of several centaur statues, made of clay, at the Toumba cemetery. The excavators note the status of the centaur as a chthonic symbol, and note that

⁶⁷ Popham et al. 1990.

⁶⁸ Popham et al. 1980, 255.

⁶⁹ Popham et al. 1980, 361.

⁷⁰ Popham et al. 1980, 355.

this particular example has been symbolically beheaded (the head was found in a grave some distance from the one housing the body).⁷¹ It is hypothesized that the beheading of the centaur might have taken place at an enclosed platform within the cemetery: a 7.5mx3.0m stone platform that had three holes cut into it, presumably for a tripod (we will discuss this platform further in Chapter Two). The platform implies, firstly, what appears to be a cathartic ritual, on account of the tripod.⁷² The centaur, moreover, gives us some link between the Lefkandians and a Panhellenic mythology, probably in its most formative stages. The excavators have noted a number of artefacts which link Lefkandi to Thessaly and Northern Greece—the mythical home of the centaur—and this seems to have been one of them.⁷³

It is impossible to be sure what exactly the decline of the Skoubris cemetery, representing a formerly homogeneous and wealthy elite, and the rise of two new cemeteries, both characterized by new and variant burial rites, meant for Lefkandi. Nevertheless, this must have been an important moment for the settlement. The foundation of the Toumba Big Hall in the MPG, the foundation of the Palia Perivolia cemetery, and the gradual decline, and eventual abandonment, of the Skoubris cemetery were the result of choices on the part of the elites of Lefkandi. This might have been a shift in social identity, creating two groups of elite burial: one, at Palia Perivolia, characterized by an adherence to shaft burial and a high (and highly variable) number of grave offerings; and the other, at Toumba, characterized by singular and unique

⁷¹ Popham et al. 1980, 215.

⁷² It would have been used to hold the lustral waters by which, in later times, the Greeks purified their hands and bodies to ward off miasma. At a period as early as this one, we cannot be certain that cathartic practices were the same or even similar to the later Greeks. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that early tripod usage served as a template for later tripod usage, and presaged the development of stone-carved *perirrhanteria*.

⁷³ Popham et al. 1980, 355.

monumental burial (in the form of the Big Hall, around which the other graves were arrayed), and at least initially on a combination of male urn-burial and female inhumation. Morris believes the monumental burial at Toumba to be heroic, and very much in step with what would later be described by Homer and by Hesiod. In particular, he places the Big Hall “heroön” in the context of what he calls the dichotomy of “the race of heroes and the race of iron”, heroizing a particularly worthy individual upon their death, in order to both honour them, but also to remove them from the competitive, corporate milieu from which they sprang.⁷⁴ We will examine this view more closely in Chapter Two, where I will argue that it does not hold that the man buried in the Big Hall was a hero, at least not in the technical sense we mean in terms of the polis. There is, however, some ground for contending that the seeds of heroic burial at Eretria were laid in Lefkandi.

The excavators have labelled the period following the Proto-Geometric period the Sub-Proto-Geometric (SPG) period, which is to be further subdivided into three smaller periods on stylistic grounds: SPGI (900-875BC), SPGII (875-850BC) and SPGIII (850-745BC). In SPGI we see a reversion to conservatism, stylistically. Contact with the Near East remains. However, contact with Attica is cut. It remains an extremely wealthy period, however, with a great many gold rings and necklaces to be found among the burial offerings.

Once again, we can see three cemeteries in operation. Skoubris begins to yield burials again in this period: an urn-cremation (Lefkandi's last), a cist-cremation and a shaft-cremation. Skoubris' grave offerings are relatively poor in comparison to the other two cemeteries. There

⁷⁴ Morris 2000, 228-38.

are seven shaft-cremations at Palia Perivolia, which yield a great deal of wealth, and seven shaft-cremations at Toumba, which are somewhat less wealthy (except for T22, which has almost thirty metallic offerings).

The social picture of this time seems to be one of response to the social instability of the era preceding it. For whatever reason—be it through violence, decree, or some informal process— a semblance of social uniformity between the elite groups of Lefkandi seems to have come about. There is a unity in burial form not seen since the SM/EPG period. Popham, moreover, states that stylistically, the elites have opted to express this in a more traditional form of vase decoration, shorn of unwanted Attic influence.⁷⁵ There is an exception to this homogeneity in the refounded Skoubris cemetery. The burial population there, however, is small in number, and relatively poor.

This uniformity was not to last long. In the SPGII (875-850BC) period, Skoubris has four burials: two cist-cremations, a pit-cremation, and a shaft cremation, all of middling wealth. Palia Perivolia has four burials: two shaft-cremations and two pit-cremations, again of middling wealth. P45 is a double-inhumation and particularly poor. Toumba has five graves: three shaft-cremations and two mud-brick tombs. It is the wealthiest cemetery of this period. Overall, this period is characterized by a certain amount of chaos, and seems to indicate the abandonment of any social agreement reached in SPGI.

The settlement shows signs of prosperity for the better part of SPGIII (850-745BC). In Area 1 of the Xeropolis hill, the original layer of an LG building yielded pottery sherds of the

⁷⁵ Popham et al. 1980, 362.

SPGIII period and slightly earlier. Area 2 meanwhile shows a levelling layer of debris which includes SPGIII sherds between an LH layer and LG layer. Contact with Attica resumed in the years just prior to 825, after about a century's absence. However, there are signs of destruction in Area SL, on the west slope of Xeropolis, and the settlement appears to have been greatly reduced from this time onward.⁷⁶

There are only four burials dated to SPGIII. This is due primarily to the fact that Lefkandian burial ends entirely in this period. The last concordance we see with outside pottery is with the Attic MGI (roughly c.825).⁷⁷ Skoubris yields one exceptionally wealthy shaft-cremation (which contains one Attic vase). Toumba meanwhile, yields three shaft cremations, which are poorer (though still spectacularly wealthy) but contain many more Attic vases (between two and four each). The Palia Perivolia cemetery is entirely abandoned by this time.

The excavators put forth a picture of disturbance and conflict to characterize this period, and I see no reason to disagree.⁷⁸ An attack from outside is entertained, though continued settlement activity in the LG period and the consistency in local Lefkandian pottery style seem to argue against this. The excavators also hypothesize that an attack by a neighbour was the cause of the disturbance, which seems unlikely, given the relatively primitive state of development we see at Eretria and Chalcis at this time. The last hypothesis posits internal discord. The excavators were at least willing to entertain this theory, though they remark that

⁷⁶ Popham et al. 1980, 363.

⁷⁷ Popham et al. 1980, 363.

⁷⁸ Popham et al. 1980, 364.

there seems to be remarkable stability in the local population according to burial numbers (though not, I might add, according to burial custom and variability).⁷⁹

Although burials cease in the SPGIII period, after 825, settlement continues, even prospering. The evidence for this comes almost exclusively from pottery sherds found at Xeropolis.⁸⁰ There is also good evidence, however, in excavations of Near Eastern sites, where Euboian vases of this period have been found. Only Attic pots are as common at this time.⁸¹ The excavators wonder how many of these Euboian vases are Lefkandian. Again, citing the rudimentary state of Chalcis and Eretria at this point, they conclude that—almost by default—the vases must be from Lefkandi.

In the LG period (745-700BC), Lefkandi lessens in importance, while Eretria and Chalcis strengthen to the point of becoming bi-polar powers on the Lelantine plain. Popham hypothesizes that Lefkandi may have been an Eretrian outpost after 825 (given its orientation on the Xeropolis hill, facing toward Eretria).⁸² This state of affairs, in which Lefkandi remains occupied, but (presumably) no longer hosts the elite groups who once buried their dead there, continues until 700, when the site is sacked and abandoned almost entirely. It is at about this time that the West Gate burials occur at Eretria, which is likely no coincidence. Popham calls them “war heroes”, and concludes that the site of Lefkandi was a casualty of the famous, half-mythical Lelantine war between Eretria and her western neighbour, Chalcis.

⁷⁹ Popham et al. 1980, 366.

⁸⁰ Popham et al. 1980, 367.

⁸¹ Popham et al. 1980, 367.

⁸² There is a slight problem with this assessment, given the excavators' assertion that Eretria was in an extremely rudimentary state at this time. Nevertheless, it may be a matter of adopting a more gradualist approach, with Eretria's importance waxing as Lefkandi's waned. See: Popham et al. 1980, 368.

To summarize, occupation of Lefkandi resumes in the SM period after the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces, with a relatively wealthy elite burying their dead at the Skoubris cemetery. This elite group, judging by their burial remains, stays homogeneous into the EPG period, presiding over what must have been a stable and prosperous period. We see this homogeneity, if not the prosperity, end in the MPG and LPG period, starting with the opening of two new cemeteries at Palia Perivolia and Toumba. The Toumba cemetery is particularly impressive, being inaugurated by the burial of a fantastically wealthy warrior and (presumably) his wife. This man was perhaps one of the men instigating the change we see sweep the elite during this time, arranging for himself to be buried in Attic fashion— inurned, perhaps setting some precedent for what would later become Homeric burial practice, establishing the heroic burial forms we find at the West Gate cemetery at Eretria. This flux continues in the LPG and is arrested in the SPGI period, when both burial groups, now limited to Palia Perivolia and Toumba, seem to standardize their burial practice (shaft-cremation with a total exclusion of Attic ware). This concord only last about twenty-five years, and the SPGII period sees a breakdown in burial uniformity, culminating in SPGIII, when Attic ware is reintroduced and burial abruptly ends. The settlement continues, and prospers, but the elites seem to have either adopted an archaeologically invisible form of disposal, been wiped out, or moved on. Popham's hypothesis of a migration to Eretria is an interesting one, and implies that the seeds of heroic burial at Eretria were laid at Lefkandi.⁸³

⁸³ Popham et al. 1980, 368.

Lefkandi, of course, never developed a fully political culture, meeting its end just as the other cities of Greece were developing a political consciousness of their own. If Popham and others are correct, the refugees of the destruction of Lefkandi moved eastward, founding Eretria, which was to become a major polis. Unfortunately, Eretria does not have a stellar collection of burial or settlement evidence, especially for the Geometric and Archaic periods. Settlement at Eretria began, as we have said, quite late, in the Middle-Geometric period, coinciding with the troubles at Lefkandi.⁸⁴ As Popham notes, the final abandonment of Lefkandi was concurrent with the West-Gate burials at Eretria: that is, c.720-700BC. These burials do bear a striking resemblance to heroic burial at Lefkandi. The male inhabitants were cremated and buried in shrouds in bronze urns. The female inhabitants were inhumed, consciously set apart from the men on the other side of the plot— just like the Lefkandi Big Hall burial.⁸⁵ To the south of the West Gate cemetery, quite unconnected to it spatially, is another Geometric cemetery, which was outside of the main settlement area, and in later times fell outside of the Eretrian city walls. All of this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁸⁴ Popham et al. 1980, 366.

⁸⁵ Bérard 1970, 13-26.

Corinth

Corinth is interesting because it does not conform to the date of c.700BC for a switch to intramural burial. We shall see that its adoption of the ban comes slightly earlier, being demonstrably in place by the LG period. The Corinthians, moreover, exhibit what may be described as more “neatness” in their grave practice. Their burying population manages to remain surprisingly homogeneous, initially burying their dead in family plots near their houses and, when the North Cemetery is opened northwest of the city, moving the greater part of adult burials there, making ubiquitous use of monolithic sarcophagi (or, failing that, simple pits) to inhumate their dead in well-defined familial groups. The conflicting and chaotic forms seen in the Athenian burials is absent—which Morris sees as evidence both for the smooth political development of Corinth and, conversely, violent, turbid development at Athens.⁸⁶

The most ancient settlement at Corinth was Sub-Mycenaean, bordering on LHIIIC. It was more or less central to what would later constitute the city of Corinth, in the Lechaion valley (at this time still a valley, though much of the area was levelled by terraces in later times), along the road that would later lead from the isthmus to the acropolis (fig.12). The earliest settlement was primarily in the area of what would later become the agora (fig.13).⁸⁷ Nevertheless, early settlement consisted of a wider network, “of villages and small clusters of houses scattered over the area”.⁸⁸ The earliest evidence we see is a house from the very end of the LHIIIC period,

⁸⁶ Morris 1987, 9.

⁸⁷ Dickey 1992, 122.

⁸⁸ Dickey 1992, 122.

near the later Temple of Demeter and Kore.⁸⁹ The remains of another SM structure, along with a clay hearth, were found at the west end of the agora.

There are four burials associated with this period, all of them nearby contemporaneous settlement structures. One grave was found right beside the LHIIIC-SM structure near the Temple of Demeter and Kore. It was a rubble-built cist, which is a form unique to the area. The other three graves were found 90m to the east of the other SM building at the west end of the agora, close enough to have been a familial burial plot, though the presence of graves there in later times may indicate a more communal function.⁹⁰ These three graves were of the simple pit-inhumation variety.

The period between the Proto-Geometric and the Middle Geometric makes up a distinct epoch, because the inhabitants of the settlement still practiced intramural burial throughout this period. The Proto-Geometric settlement evidence is actually less abundant than that from the SM period. Excavators discovered a fill with some Late Proto-Geometric and Middle Proto-Geometric remains, just south of the Sacred Spring. An EPG well was discovered at the south side of the Agora. Evidence from the Early and Middle Geometric periods is even more scarce. From the EG period, we have little more than a retaining wall, and we have three wells from the MG period.

The burial evidence is more substantial. Burials continue to be made in the Lechaion valley from 900-750 (to the end of MGII). There are eleven burials in the Lechaion valley

⁸⁹ Dickey 1992, 130.

⁹⁰ Dickey 1992, 123.

confirmed to be from this period, but twelve others are thought by Dickey to be from this period.⁹¹ An isolated pit burial was found near the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.⁹² There are, moreover, burials at the future Potter's Quarter and the beginnings of a cemetery north of Anaploga (fig.12). Concurrent with these intramural MGII burials, we see the first burials in what would become the main Corinthian extramural cemetery, the North Cemetery, just northwest of the city walls. The initial burials found here, NC-14a-16, were found within a *peribolos* enclosure.⁹³ Subsequent graves in this cemetery were organized into distinct groups—presumably familial plots—ranging in date from MGII till Roman times.

This does not, on the whole, seem to be a time of great change at Corinth, though gradual growth does seem to be occurring. Settlement continues in the Lechaion valley, and the burial population seems to be quite small, even making some concession for exclusivity of burial. Moreover, there are really only a few wealthy graves (LPG: LV-5; MGI: LV-28, 34b) dated to this period. These few wealthy graves could presage a growing elite, which was harnessing the strategic location of Corinth, both for trade and for its limestone quarries. Moreover, signs of change are apparent, especially in MGII. While graves continue to be made in the settlement area (in ever increasing numbers), we see that they come to exist side-by-side with a bounded cemetery, well removed from the settlement area. It is noteworthy, however, that the graves in this cemetery are not necessarily wealthier than those in the settlement, so it may not even be appropriate to speak of an economic elite seeking to separate itself from the masses.

⁹¹ Dickey 1992, 124.

⁹² Bookidis and Fisher 1974, 286.

⁹³ Blegen et al. 1964, 21-3.

Nevertheless, there seems to be some trend toward exclusivity, and perhaps the creation of a more corporate attitude among those burying their dead in the North Cemetery.

The developments of the MGII period foreshadow a number of events that take place in the Late Geometric period. The settlement growth that was apparent in the late stages of the previous period now become, if not explosive, then at least significant. Excavators have found twelve wells from the LG or Early Proto-Corinthian period, as well as the remains of houses. They have also found a Late Geometric *bothros* and a basin at the Sacred Spring.⁹⁴ There was a small settlement in the Potter's Quarter.

There are ten burials dateable to the LG period and beyond from the Lechaion valley: all of them are children (in a few cases—for example, the rock-cut tombs under Temple F and the Temple of Tyche—dating proves almost impossible). The only exception to this is a small cemetery discovered in the agora, under what would become the Underground Shrine, which we will deal with in Chapter Two. The cemetery was composed of LG graves, richly adorned and, most significantly, oriented in the same direction as an Archaic altar later erected above them.⁹⁵ There are also several graves in the Potter's Quarter, in a small family plot that would be partly covered by the later city-wall, and which the excavators believed to be nearby a small settlement.⁹⁶ Beyond this group, in the Late Geometric until the Classical period, we see nearly all of Corinth's burial activity occurring in the North Cemetery, or in the smaller, Anaploga cemetery (these graves continue until the late Archaic period, and are within the perimeter of

⁹⁴ Dickey 1992, 125.

⁹⁵ Morgan 1962.

⁹⁶ Stillwell 1948, 33.

the Classical city walls, but are some distance from the main settlement of this period), or in the countryside.⁹⁷

Apart from a few important exceptions, in the LG and EPC Period, we see burial of adults in the Lechaion valley cease entirely and extramural burial at the North Cemetery become the norm. This is a change that mirrors the Athenian switch to extramural burial, although the Athenians' switch comes later, immediately following the LGII period. We see, moreover, the continued, accelerating usage of a well-bounded and increasingly rich extramural cemetery to the northwest of the settlement. Williams has posited the shift in burial as reflecting a lack of space.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Dickey points out that the opening of the North Cemetery occurred while Lechaion grave activity was at its peak: in MGII, not in LG (when Lechaion burial ceased). He links it instead to developing religious norms.⁹⁹ He goes on to point out the coincidence of the North Cemetery with a Mycenaean burial ground, and hypothesizes that the tumuli of the Mycenaean dead would still have been visible to the Geometric Corinthians. Morris believes that this was a crucial time for the Corinthians, representing, in his words, "the rise of the citizen estate".¹⁰⁰ He notes, however, the Corinthians did not suffer the same reversals as the Athenians. The burial evidence suggests an extremely stable social identity among those burying their dead in the North Cemetery.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Having, Dickey says, "less to do with the need to additional residential space and more to do with the increasingly religious character of the area". See: Dickey 1992, 127.

⁹⁸ Williams 1982, 11.

⁹⁹ Dickey 1992, 129.

¹⁰⁰ Morris 1987, 186.

¹⁰¹ Morris 1987, 185.

The Potter's Quarter yields only one burial from the Archaic period, a stone sarcophagus built into the foundations of the later city-wall. Burial continues at the Anaploga cemetery. The majority of burials, again, occur at the North Cemetery, where Corinthians continue to inhumate their dead in stone sarcophagi, initially with modest grave offerings, but increasingly with ostentatious and richly furnished ones. The dominant mode of burial group continues to be by familial plot. This is more or less consistent until the Hellenistic period, which makes it a remarkable period of stability, in terms of burial norms and burial locale.

Overall, the Corinthian burial evidence is relatively straightforward. The inhabitants were strictly committed to primary inhumation, at first in pits and then, when money and technology permitted, in monolithic sarcophagi. There were no weapon graves among the Corinthian cemeteries (the few knives found seem to have been either domestic or ceremonial), which is in itself exceptional, given the presence of weapon burials in our other sample cities. It agrees though with the image of Wealthy Corinth, a mercantile hub from very early on. Looking at burial numbers in the North Cemetery—about five hundred graves from MGII to Roman times—it would seem to have been a fairly exclusive burial ground, and suited to a tight-knit, socially homogeneous group. The Bacchiadae come to mind, whose traditional assumption of rule (747 BC) would seem to agree with the foundation of the North Cemetery (MGII). The almost ubiquitous introduction of monolithic sarcophagi in the Late Geometric period seems to indicate the burying population had access to the most cutting edge of Corinthian technologies: stone-working. The Bacchiadae were, of course, deposed by the tyrant Cypselus. It would seem though that he, and others in his circle of elites, chose to continue

burying their dead in the North Cemetery, on account of the continuing, and continually wealthy, graves to be found here after the installation of the tyranny (Cypselus was himself a member of the Bacchiadae).

With regard to the spatial location of the graves, the Corinthian graves move from an intramural distribution, near the area of the future agora in the Lechaion valley, to extramural cemeteries, both at Anaploga and in the North Cemetery. There is a transitional period in MGII in which both intramural and extramural burial takes place, but by the LG period the only burials to be found in the Lechaion valley are child graves (and the exceptional agora graves that became the Underground Shrine). Similarly, as Morris notes, a PG grave discovered by Corinthian builders in 625 was immediately declared a heroic grave, the so-called Heroön at the Crossroads, to which we shall also return in the next chapter.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Morris 1987, 193. See: Williams, MacIntosh and Fisher 1974, 1-5.

Argos

Argos was another site, like Corinth, that departed from our generalization of a c.700BC ban on intramural burial. As we shall see, a ban on intramural burial does indeed come into effect in the Archaic period. Nevertheless, it comes—at earliest—more than fifty years later than at Athens (700BC) and about a century later than at Corinth (750BC). The Argives bury intramurally longer and hold on to inhumation burial unwaiveringly, painting a rather conservative picture of the city. Nevertheless, we shall see that there is good reason to believe that something extraordinary did occur c.700BC, justifying the generalization of a sea-change in Greece in the late eighth and early seventh century.¹⁰³

Argos was one of the most populous sites of antiquity, both in its living population (most authors place it alongside Athens and Knossos in terms of major dark age population centers) and its burial evidence.¹⁰⁴ The Classical city stood on the southeastern and eastern slopes of the Larissa hill, with the Aspis hill just to the north, forming a small valley through which one of the main roads into Argos ran (and which was the site of one of the major Mycenaean [and later Classical] cemeteries. See: fig.14). The agora of the city was at its southwest corner, near the future south gate to the city.

The settlement was one of the few in mainland Greece—along with Athens— to remain continuously occupied from the Mycenaean period. Excavators have discovered SM and PG settlement remains between S70 (*Sondage 70*) and S67, on the eastern slope of the Larissa hill

¹⁰³ Morris 1987, 184.

¹⁰⁴ Snodgrass 1971, 151; Morris 1991, 29.

(figs.14-15).¹⁰⁵ The Saidin plot, which is in the central area of the later city, had settlement remains nearby, as did the Grantias plot, just northeast of it. Nearby the museum, excavators discovered an artisanal workshop.¹⁰⁶ The Berzeletos plot, in the southwest sector of the future city, yielded remains, as did S88 to the southeast of this. The South Cemetery (an extramural cemetery in the Classical Period), to the extreme southwest, yielded extensive and concentrated settlement remains.¹⁰⁷

In the SM period, we see burial continue in the Deiras Keirantis area (fig.15)—the small valley between the Larissa hill and the Aspis hill used in LHIIC for Mycenaean chamber tombs—though the Argives now switch to cist inhumation, the standard Argive burial until the Late Geometric period.¹⁰⁸ In the central area, a child burial was the first in the Bakaloianis plot (a plot which would be extremely well patronized, yielding burials well into the seventh century). The Museum plot, which is also in the central area, just near the settlement remains at the Saidin plot, yielded two burials. Meanwhile, in the southwestern area, the Kouros plot (just south of the settlement at S88) yielded seven graves, quite a high number for a single plot (at any point in Argive burial history).

In the Proto-Geometric period, there is an upswing in burial numbers, and a wider spread, geographically (fig.15). The Kypourouloulou plot, in the central area, yields a single

¹⁰⁵ Hägg 1974, 25, 92-3.

¹⁰⁶ The complex was shown to be used for silver cupellation, which Foley uses to showcase the early, advanced state of Argive metallurgy. See: Foley 1988, 25.

¹⁰⁷ LH Argos was not a unified town, and indeed resembled something akin to a figure-eight along the eastern slope of the Larissa Hill, with significant concentrations of settlement to the SW and in the C, but little in between. See: Foley 1988, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Foley 1988, 24.

burial, as does the Makris plot, just to the southwest.¹⁰⁹ The Museum plot, in the central area, yields eleven total burials: seven adults and four children (the Argives buried children variously in pithoi and kraters throughout their burial history). The Saidin plot yields seven burials: five adults and two children. Excavators discovered a single grave at the Alexopoulos/Katsaros plot, in the central area, and three adults at the OTE area just to the east. Six graves were discovered at the Bakaloianis plot: five adults and a child. The only grave from the Proto-Geometric period to be found in the southwest area (the Classical agora) is a single adult grave from the Kypseli Square plot.

On the whole, the image of Argos in the SM-PG period is one of decline from LHIIIC, but by no means a disastrous decline. The increase in graves from the Sub-Mycenaean period to the Proto-Geometric period may simply be a reflection of demographic growth. Hägg certainly believes that the SM-PG period is one of homogeneity and (relative) egalitarianism compared to the military elite that arose in the Geometric period.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, much like Athens and Corinth, the settlement seems to have been small and thinly spread, with small farmsteads dotting the landscape, though the southwestern settlement seems to have been more concentrated.

The Geometric period saw a significant increase in population and in settlement area. Settlement continues in the central area. A building was excavated at Makris, and some sort of *peribolos* was discovered in the northeast section of the future city. The settlement also seems

¹⁰⁹ Hägg 1974, 25, 92-3.

¹¹⁰ Hägg 1983, 27.

to fill out, moving into the area just west of the center.¹¹¹ Excavators have found the remains of walls near the Deiras Keirantis cemetery. Meanwhile, in the SW, activity becomes even more acute: an EG apsidal house was discovered by excavators, and later an LG house in the agora.¹¹²

Burial seems to decline greatly in the Early-Geometric period (EG = 900-825BC). We have only three extant graves from this period (fig.16).¹¹³ The Papaparaskevas plot in the southwest sees its first burials: two adults. The plot would be active until the Sub-Geometric (SG) period. The Bakaloianis plot also yields a grave: another adult. These graves are all cist inhumations. They are, moreover, quite a bit more wealthy than the graves of SM-PG, including bronze and iron pins, as well as a much higher number of vases. On top of this, there is a new development in burial: the Argives begin to make multiple use of cist tombs, creating a familial tomb by sweeping aside the bones of the previous inhabitants, sometimes with exceeding care and sometimes with callous indifference, and stacking them in the corner of the cist.¹¹⁴ The three graves of the EG are the first in this tradition, and so this period obviously sees no reuse, but the MG and LG do, and this trend continues up until the SG period.

In the Middle-Geometric period (MG = 825-750BC) we see many more tombs (twenty-three), in both the southwest and central areas (fig.16).¹¹⁵ They are almost all cist inhumations. However, we see the pit grave and pithos burial introduced in this period as well, which would become extremely important in the LG and SG periods. There are commonly no more than two

¹¹¹ Foley 1988, 27.

¹¹² Foley 1988, 27.

¹¹³ Foley 1988, 200-17.

¹¹⁴ Hägg 1983, 29.

¹¹⁵ Foley 1988, 200-17.

burials per plot, although in some cases the count may go as high as three (which is to say, the burial populations for each plot are extremely small, especially when compared to Athens or Corinth). The MG graves continue to be wealthy, surpassing the graves of the EG period. We also see the introduction of the weapon grave: there are four graves which fit into this category in the MG, bearing iron-swords and spear tips. In addition, there is another weapon grave which straddles the MG and LG periods, the Stavropoulou grave to the north of the future city, which happens to be the first of the Argive panoply burials. These burials contain arms commonly associated with the hoplite. In the case of the Stavropoulou plot, the grave merely has a bronze helmet in the hoplite style. Later panoply burials (such as T45 at the Odeion) would include such objects as greaves and a cuirass.¹¹⁶

In the Late-Geometric period (LG = 750-700BC), we see a marked intensification in burial (forty-five graves), primarily in the central area (fig.16).¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, there are still very few plots with more than three burials at this time, which is consistent with previous low-density burial practices. Moreover, these plots are still to be found in and among settlement areas. They are not however found within houses, but rather close by and in between various settlement pockets.¹¹⁸ Some of the graves of this period are particularly ostentatious and, as Hägg points out, most of the wealthy graves are cist burials.¹¹⁹ The poorer graves, by contrast,

¹¹⁶ Courbin 1974, 40-1.

¹¹⁷ Foley 1988, 200-17.

¹¹⁸ "They preferred their cemeteries to be close to, but not actually in, their settlement area". Snodgrass' statement concerns SM-PG practices, as it relates to Hägg's work – but the principle holds true in the Geometric period as well. See: Snodgrass 1976, 239.

¹¹⁹ Hägg 1983, 29-30.

are pithoi, which Foley notes were confined to the perimeter of the settlements.¹²⁰ Certainly the weapon graves from this period are all cist burials, and we see two panoply burials from this period (the Theodoropoulou grave; Odeion T45). T45 in particular was extremely large and ostentatious. The cist was over 3m long, and included various bronze and iron objects in addition to the bronze helmet and cuirass for which it has become famous.¹²¹ There is only one burial in the agora in this period. It is a child burial, and indeed seems to have been the only burial of the Geometric period to have taken place in the agora (it was found under the floor boards of an LG house).¹²²

By the end of the Geometric period, both cist and pithos had become viable burial choices, which had not been the case in the SM-PG period. The general poverty, and seemingly peripheral nature, of the pithoi seem to indicate a class of people lower in social status than those individuals buried in cist tombs (we can also note that cist tombs saw intense reuse, perhaps making them more familial and dynastic than pithoi, which were mostly single use vessels). Within the cist groups, offerings do seem to vary, but most are quite rich, characterized by a high number of metal offerings, while pithoi—when they have any offerings, at all—have only ceramic offerings. Whitley, agreeing with Hägg, characterizes Argos in the Geometric period as a “warrior aristocracy”.¹²³ This is hard to dispute, given the spatial and material disparity between the cist and the pithos, and the relationship between warrior graves and the cist burial type. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the sort of warrior burial

¹²⁰ Foley 1988, 40.

¹²¹ Foley 1988, 208.

¹²² Foley 1988, 200.

¹²³ Whitley 1991, 189.

occurring at Argos. Three of the Argive warrior burials of the Geometric period are panoply burials, and therefore invite a more complicated reading of the situation. If the rich warriors were members of a hoplite phalanx, they probably stood alongside poorer members of society, members who simply would not have been able to afford an ostentatious burial with their weaponry. If Argos can be classified as a warrior society, it must be classified as a broad-based one. On top of this, the cessation of burial in the agora may signify the beginning of its conversion to a political space, in the same way it did in Corinth and Athens.

The settlement evidence is limited for the Sub-Geometric period and Archaic period, as it is in many places in Greece (fig.17). There are still some signs of inhabitation in the central area, but of a very limited quality, primarily just sherds. An SG wall and a deposit of sherds were found in the southwestern area.¹²⁴ Meanwhile a significant architectural complex was discovered in the agora, dating to the early seventh century.¹²⁵ According to sherds and votive deposits, the first incarnation of the Aphrodision was established in the southwestern area in the late seventh century.¹²⁶

There are thirty-seven graves dateable to the Sub-Geometric (SG = 700-675BC) period and Archaic period combined.¹²⁷ Given that this represents a period of roughly two hundred years, it is not a very high number. The SG period itself yields nine graves, which makes sense given the brevity of the period. Burials cease entirely in the central area, continuing only in the southwestern area. Here we see a virtually ubiquitous switch over to pithoi among adults,

¹²⁴ Foley 1988, 30.

¹²⁵ Bommelaer et al. 1971, 397-411.

¹²⁶ Foley 1988, 30.

¹²⁷ Foley 1988, 41.

which—from c.700-630—are entirely devoid of burial offerings.¹²⁸ Multiple burials cease to occur (though they were anomalous among pithoi in the first place). Foley notes many of the plots bearing pithoi are continuations of Geometric cist plots— the new pithoi are aligned with the plots' previous graves.¹²⁹

In the Archaic period, burial continued in the southwestern sector of the future city, though there are some burials to be found in the central area.¹³⁰ All of them, however, are child or infant burials, which are known to occur in residential or intramural settings throughout Greek history. The Argives see their first concentrated cemetery in this period—in the area of the modern hospital, to the north of the city—where the burial population consists of ten offering-less pithoi (this is still hardly a large cemetery compared to, for example, the Kerameikos in Athens). To a smaller extent, we see larger cemeteries begin to develop in Kypseli Square, where we see six adult burials, and at the South Cemetery, where we see four burials, three adults and a child. There is a solitary burial at Deiras Keirantis, which foreshadows a large Classical cemetery in the area. None of the graves of this period, as in the eighth century, seem to be directly in the agora area. Nevertheless, they are well within the settlement and still seem to be nearby, and indeed between, areas of residential settlement. This remains the case until the late seventh century, when graves really do appear to empty out of the settlement entirely, concentrating outside of the city-gates as they did in other towns, like Athens and Corinth. In Argos' case these areas are the gate to the North of the city, on the road to Corinth, and the road to the south, leading into the agora. Even so, there are notable—

¹²⁸ Foley 1988, 48, 200-17.

¹²⁹ Foley 1988, 48.

¹³⁰ Foley 1988, 200-17.

if exceptional—examples of intramural burial in the Late Archaic period: a large poros tomb just to the south of the agora (c.525-500), which is built at the very end of the Archaic period. It stood above two warrior inhumations, and was accompanied by about fifty vases, along with bronze and iron weaponry.¹³¹

Morris notes that Aristotle's account of the emergence of Pheidon as tyrant of Argos can be dated to the SG period (after c.700BC).¹³² This seems appropriate. There seems to be something revolutionary in the evidence for this period, hinting at wide-ranging social changes in Argos. The graves of the supposed elites—cist tombs—disappear entirely (and permanently). Hägg notes the poor character of the pithoi that replaced them, in comparison to the rich character of the Geometric cists.¹³³ Argos moved, in a very short period, from a wealthy, outwardly militant elite to a seemingly homogeneous and unostentatious citizen body. The fact that old cemeteries continued, with pithoi placed in alignment with old cists, indicates that the old burying population may have switched over to the new form—willingly or unwillingly—rather than being wiped out in any sort of violent disturbance. Interestingly, it is attested that the Argives had a class of *periokoi* after this period, serving in their army until the Battle of Sepeia, in c.494.¹³⁴ Pollux also says that there was a class of *gymnetes* at Argos, “between freedom and slavery”.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, such subordinate groups, looking more like slaves than the *kakoi* of the Geometric period, would exemplify Morris' theory of a switch from the

¹³¹ Kritzas 1973, 132.

¹³² Morris 1987, 186.

¹³³ Hägg 1983, 29.

¹³⁴ Aristotle *Politics* 5.1303a7-8.

¹³⁵ Although Pollux, even more so than Aristotle, should be read with care, given the late date he writes at. See: Pollux 3.84.

fundamental, hierarchical relationship between *agothoi* and *kakoi* to one of contrast between free and slave, which he sees as the basis for political life in Greece.¹³⁶ We are, however, confronted with the question of grave numbers, calling into question whether this “revolution” at Argos was populist at all. After all, aren’t the grave numbers lower for Argos in this period than for previous ones? And isn’t this more likely to be a sign of growing elitism? Robin Hägg poses this question and admits it to be a puzzling one.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the evidence of a social integration between two groups, one with rich burial offerings and the other with poor ones, which ends in favour of the group with poor offerings, cannot be ignored. Destruction of Archaic layers by Classical, Hellenistic and Roman construction (as well as the modern city overlying the ancient) might account for the lack of Archaic graves and settlement evidence.

Overall, the picture we see at Argos is a complicated one. In the SM-PG period, we see a relatively homogeneous and unostentatious population, living in scattered settlements, burying their dead nearby, unfailingly in cist inhumations. In the Geometric period, the Argives seem to become more varied socially, taking on either elite or poorer burial personas, and still burying their dead intramurally, in cists, though crucially not in the agora area. The SG-Archaic period sees a radical shift away from this state of affairs. A total abandonment of the cist tomb, and a concentration of burial on the southwest area, in unadorned pithoi, sees a homogeneous and consistent burial identity emerge, perhaps under some form of compulsion.

Nevertheless, intramural burial continues throughout this period, and continues until the late seventh century (c.650-600). So whatever the deep social change that was sweeping

¹³⁶ Morris 1987, 175.

¹³⁷ Hägg 1983, 31.

the city at this time, it did not have any immediate impact on the spatial relationship between the dead and the living. At the very least, Argos is a case-study in showing the limits of early Greek tolerance for the dead in their midst.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to survey four sites and determine the relationship between burial and settlement over time (from the SM period to the end of the Archaic period). Briefly, we can say that Athens underwent numerous periods of burial activity, each with separate attitudes toward burial. In the end, the Athenians seem to have settled on extramural burial around 700BC (when burial was restricted to the very wealthy at the Kerameikos), though they did not settle on a specific mode of burial until later on. These changes seem largely to have had to do with internal social changes, reflecting underlying social identities at play in the burgeoning city. The Athenians, therefore, seem to have set the baseline for any generalization concerning the adoption of intramural burial.

Lefkandi was in some ways remarkably stable in comparison to Athens. The two sites shared contact for much of Lefkandi's existence, and when they did not, it was in reaction to the heavy influence Athens had on Lefkandian artistic culture (and surely on other aspects of the city's cultural life). At Lefkandi, a rather small group of elites buried extramurally throughout the site's history, initially in cist cremation burials, though later in more varied modes. The image we see at Lefkandi seems to be one of increasing heterogeneity between elites, concomitant to soaring wealth. The site comes to a bad end c.700BC, having already been surpassed by the *poleis* to the east and west of it, on whom—especially Eretria—Lefkandi would have a profound effect. The burial custom we saw at the Big Hall in Lefkandi was crucially similar to those employed in the heroic burials at the West Gate Heroön at Eretria, and as we

will see in Chapter Two, was an example of the polis adapting and appropriating elite burial symbols into the new institution of hero cult.

Corinth, the smallest of our four sites initially, being but a tiny cluster of huts on the site of the future Corinthian agora, came into prominence in the Geometric period. From the SM period until the end of the MG period, the Corinthians buried intramurally, like their neighbours to the southwest in Argos, between small, scattered settlements nestled in the Lechaion valley. In MGII however, the North Cemetery was opened, and by the LG period intramural burial has ceased (about fifty years earlier than at Athens). The Corinthians switched over to the impressive monolithic sarcophagus that abundant lime-stone deposits and a knowledge of advanced stone-working had afforded them. Literary sources record the city was ruled by the elite Bacchiad dynasty in this period: this seems to agree with the burial picture on the whole. The North Cemetery continued to receive Corinth's dead well into the Hellenistic period and beyond.

Argos, like Corinth, served to argue both for and against the overall generalization concerning a ban on intramural burial. The Argives adopted it quite late, but the evidence showed that the revolution that Morris was really interested in—the LG movement toward a more broadly based and inclusive form of society—did indeed occur there as well. Elite cists ceased to be used entirely in the SG period and were replaced wholesale by pithos burials. The revolution in Argos seems to have been egalitarian in character, though burial did not move to an extramural, bounded cemetery until almost a century after the switch to pithos burial. Corinth, therefore, would seem to have been an early adopter of extramural burial, Athens

seems to have set the bar in c.700BC, and Argos seems to have lagged significantly behind. Argos throws some doubt, therefore, on a direct correlation between polis-formation and extramural burial, especially since it was an innovator in hoplite warfare and would seem to have adopted an egalitarian character quite early on (it was Athens, according to Morris, that backslid into elitism).

Nevertheless, we shall see in the next chapter that intramural graves become a part of urban hero cult, and that the attendant anomaly—that this form grave cult was considered appropriate to an urban context, given the ban on intramural burial—will reveal some of the general qualities of the hero and his cult. The late adoption on the part of the Argives of extramural burial, for example, would affect hero cult in that city in important ways. Each of the Greek cities (excluding Lefkandi, destroyed before it could mature politically) would see remnants of grave plots, cemeteries and individual graves (usually in the agora) incorporated into the city. This happened in several ways: most often the graves were simply built over, as in the case of the hundreds of graves covered over in the Athenian agora, or the dozens in the Corinthian. There are cases, however, where this does not happen. Athens' enclosed Areopagos plot remains a fixture of the city until the late Archaic period. Graves at the Oval House and the Triangular Shrine in the Agora were also significant. Moreover, as we have said, the Big Hall burials at Lefkandi seem to have been quite influential on the subsequent burials at the West Gate in Eretria, which were just inside the west wall of the city. In Corinth, the Heroön of the Crossroads, built over PG graves, featured an altar in direct alignment with the graves. The Argive agora is particularly well represented with hero cults, as captured by Pausanias, who

reports dozens of hero burials. We have archaeological evidence for a hero shrine just south of the Agora, for example, built over the graves of young warriors. These and other important archaeological sites (at Delos, for example), as well as the literary evidence we have for hero cult in Greece, will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, where it will be possible to compare the two phenomena—extramural burial and intramural hero-worship—against one another and draw connections between the two.

Chapter Two

The Heroes

Having looked at the tombscape of our sample cities, with the intention of linking them to hero cult, we must now look at some of the dominant features most often associated with the hero and with his cult, in order to make more apparent what the precise connection was. The depiction of the Greek hero varies from region to region and from period to period, especially in the formative period of Greek mythology. Homer uses the term “*heros*” to refer, in a very basic sense, to a warrior, though sometimes with an implication of social superiority.¹³⁸ The heroes of Homer are better and stronger than the men of today. Homer says that “just as (the son of Tydeus) hefted a boulder in his hands, a tremendous feat— no two men could hoist it, weak as men are now, but all on his own he raised it high with ease”.¹³⁹ In these aspects of the narrative, Homer is clearly archaizing, taking the audience back to a time when such things would have been normal. The heroes, being physically stronger, are capable of much better and more glorious deeds. Beyond this, they are genealogically superior to the men of today as well, being at times only a single generation removed from the gods themselves. By assigning them these superhuman characteristics, Homer removes the heroes—to a degree—from the condition of modern man.

¹³⁸ Burkert 1985, 203; Kearns 1989, 2.

¹³⁹ Homer *Il.*, V, 336-9 (trans. Fagles): “ὁ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρὶ Τυδεΐδης μέγα ἔργον ὃ οὐ δύο γ’ ἄνδρε φέροιεν, οἷοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσ’· ὃ δέ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἶος”.

Nevertheless, the term *heros* simply means “warrior” or “fighter”, and in Homer, it seldom if ever implies any sort of veneration.¹⁴⁰ Within the narrative, the heroes are normal men and are fully mortal. This is important, because it means that in the end, their death is comparable to the death of the audience members themselves, with the same expectations of the underworld experience and of their own agency once there. Hence, Odysseus walks among the dead heroes and sees that they are mere shades, and that they are completely powerless.¹⁴¹ Achilles’ testimony is perhaps Homer’s most powerful statement on the place of the dead in relation to the living. He says that, “I should choose, so I might live on earth, to serve as the hireling of another, of some portionless man whose livelihood was but small, rather than to be lord over all the dead that have perished”.¹⁴²

There are exceptions, and we can see that the Homeric dead were not fully powerless. The *eidolon* of Patroclus is able to appear to Achilles and communicate with him (although this has been thought to be because of the transitory place that Patroclus occupies in the narrative at that point— dead but as yet unburied).¹⁴³ Odysseus finds that Teiresias is special among the dead, being gifted with consciousness without blood (and upon the consumption of blood,

¹⁴⁰ Rohde 1925, 116. There is one exception to the Homeric paucity of heroic worship. Book II of the *Iliad* mentions the worship of Erechtheus at Athens (II 546-51). This is a suggestive and tantalizing passage, but is entirely isolated in the Homeric corpus. The *Odyssey* (VII 80-1) mentions Athena entering the house of Erechtheus, but is otherwise imprecise about the status of Erechtheus and of Athena’s relationship to him. One should note, however, that the very beginnings of Greek hero cult are rooted in the eighth century, and that the cult of Menelaos and Helen at Therapne is established in this general era. The degree to which such early hero cults would have affected the narrative of Homer—or vice versa, of course—is largely unknown, in spite of vigorous debate. See: Antonaccio 1995, 155, 207.

¹⁴¹ He calls them “νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα”: Homer *Od.*, XI, 49.

¹⁴² Homer *Od.*, XI, 488-91 (trans. Rieu): “βουλοίμην κ’ ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω, ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίोटος πολὺς εἶη, ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν”.

¹⁴³ Homer *Il.*, XXII, 65. See: Vernant 1991, 187.

being able to practice his old gift of prophecy).¹⁴⁴ Odysseus promises a separate offering to the dead when he returns from his voyage—and to Teiresias in particular—which implies that some kind of rites to the dead are possible in Homer, though whether or not they take the form of an established cult is questionable.¹⁴⁵ In any case, Homer sets up an ambiguous place for the dead in his narrative: on the whole quite powerless, but on occasion showing glimpses of individual agency and considerable means.

Hesiod takes a very different view on heroes. He is much more interested in keeping them separate from mankind, and makes them a race apart in his *Myth of the Ages*, between the men of bronze and the men of iron.¹⁴⁶ In life they are separated from men by their genetic ties to the gods: “[goddesses] were bedded with mortal men, immortal themselves, and bore children resembling the gods [i.e. the heroes]”.¹⁴⁷ And where Homer tries to bring the heroes closer to his audience by showing their struggle with their own inevitable death and descent to the underworld, Hesiod bypasses this entirely, having Zeus save them from death and deposit them on the Isle of the Blessed, at the very edge of the earth.¹⁴⁸ Here, the heroes live a Golden Age lifestyle, with fruit growing in abundance, and any need for human toil absent.¹⁴⁹ The dominant characteristic of Hesiodic heroes, then, is their extreme distance from men. It is this

¹⁴⁴ Homer *Od.*, XI, 95: “αἵματος ὄφρα πῖω καὶ τοι νημερτέα εἵπω”.

¹⁴⁵ Homer *Od.*, XI, 29-32: “πολλὰ δὲ γουνούμην νεκύων ἀμνηνὰ κάρηνα, ἐλθὼν εἰς Ἰθάκην στεῖραν βοῦν, ἥ τις ἀρίστη, ῥέξειν ἐν μεγάροισι πυρὴν τ’ ἐμπλησέμεν ἐσθλῶν, Τειρεσίη δ’ ἀπάνευθεν οἶν ἱερυσέμεν οἶω παμμέλαν’, ὃς μήλοισι μεταπρέπει ἡμετέροισι”.

¹⁴⁶ Hesiod *WD.*, 156-169.

¹⁴⁷ Hesiod *Theo.*, 1019-1020 (trans. West): “αὐται μὲν θνητοῖσι παρ’ ἀνδράσιν εὐνηθεῖσαι ἀθάναται γείναντο θεοῖς ἐπιείκελα τέκνα”.

¹⁴⁸ Hesiod *WD.*, 168-70.

¹⁴⁹ “The immortality of the golden age is specifically correlated with the *suspension of a vegetal cycle*”. See: Nagy 1979, 179.

distance that makes the Hesiodic hero much less popular than the Homeric hero. For as we will see, later literature portrays the heroes as closer to, rather than more distant from, mankind.

In Archaic and Classical literature, the living hero remains superior and quite distant from the men of the present in strength and in pedigree, but also, like the Homeric hero, remains quite close to mankind in his mortality. Heroes all experience death. Oedipus really does die in Attica, despite the mysterious disappearance of his body. When he says that his corpse will drink the blood of the Thebans, he uses the term *nekus*.¹⁵⁰ The entire drama of Euripides' *Alcestis* turns around Admetos' terror of going down to the underworld. Outside of tragedy, the same rules apply. The heroes of Herodotus, whose bones become so coveted, are clearly considered to have died.

Nevertheless, the heroes of the Classical age are very much present among the living, though they themselves do not live.¹⁵¹ Not only will the sleeping Oedipus drink the blood of Athens' enemies, but Theseus declares he will be incorporated into the city itself.¹⁵² There is a paradox in the existential location of the hero: he is simultaneously present in the world of the living, through his physical remains and the manifestation of his supernatural power, and in the land of the dead. In this way, the heroes of the Archaic and Classical age are still faithful to the overall characterization of Homer and Hesiod of heroes: as liminal and ambiguous figures, existing on the threshold of worldly and otherworldly experience.

¹⁵⁰ Soph. *Oed.Col.*, 621: "κεκρυμμένος νέκυσ ψυχρός ποτ' αὐτῶν θερμὸν αἶμα πίεται".

¹⁵¹ Rohde links this to a change in the nature of the hero—incorporating "the additional notion of unending transfigured existence [outside of Hades]"—and points out this concept as delimiting the later heroes from those of Homer and Hesiod. See: Rohde 1925, 118.

¹⁵² Soph. *Oed.Col.*, 637: "χώρᾳ δ' ἔμπολιν κατοικιῶ".

Where the Archaic and Classical heroes differ most from the Homeric and Hesiodic portrayals is in their potency after death. In Homer, the shade of Patroclus has the ability to communicate with Achilles, but little else. The shade of Achilles, in the *Nostoi* of the later Epic Cycle, however, demands Polyxena's sacrifice, in addition to predicting Agememnon's demise.¹⁵³ In Aristophanes' *Heroes*, the chorus of heroes claims for itself prerogatives as diverse as the enforcement of justice and the causing of various diseases.¹⁵⁴ Heroes take on a range of important functions, from fertility to military prowess. Draco recognized this, when he exhorted the Athenians to worship both the gods and heroes.¹⁵⁵ Themistokles, likewise, ascribes Greek victory not to their own ability, but to the help of the gods and heroes of Greece.¹⁵⁶

In cult, there were many types of heroes and many functions they could fulfill. There were good heroes and bad heroes, some of whom were little better than bona fide boogeymen. Pausanias mentions one, named "Hero", who terrorizes islanders and demands human sacrifice.¹⁵⁷ These types of heroes—who might simply be labelled ghosts—served a fairly typical folk function, personifying human fears of nature and chance. Another phenomenon was hero worship that involved ritual and sacrifice, but took place in a private setting. However, this was most often considered excessive and was thought to be outside the bounds of mainstream religious practice. So, for example, a fable tells us of a man who made expensive offerings to a hero shrine he had set up in his own home.¹⁵⁸ In its moralizing capacity,

¹⁵³ Proclus *Chresto.*, 272-3, 291-2.

¹⁵⁴ Aristoph., F58 (Austin): "οἱ ταμίαι τῶν κακῶν καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν".

¹⁵⁵ Porphyrius *De Abstinencia*, IV, 22.

¹⁵⁶ Herodotus, VIII, 108.

¹⁵⁷ Paus., 6.5.7.

¹⁵⁸ Babrius, I, 63.

the fable further tells the reader that the hero himself appeared to the man and exhorted him to stop his private sacrifices.¹⁵⁹ Theophrastus lampoons the man who sets up his own hero shrine, labelling him “The Superstitious Man”, and says that, “when he sees a snake in his house he invokes Sabazius if it is the red-brown one, and if it is the holy one he sets up a hero-shrine there and then”.¹⁶⁰ We can note, however, an Athenian law, supposedly quoting Draco, which specifies that private hero worship *ought* to take place, “that the Gods, and indigenous Heroes, be worshipped publicly, conformably to the laws of the country, delivered by our ancestors; and also, that they be worshipped privately, according to the ability of each individual”.¹⁶¹ It might, therefore, be less appropriate to talk about private versus communal veneration (are individuals, after all, barred from private sacrifice to the gods?) and more appropriate to speak of ownership: an individual cannot claim a hero exclusively; the hero could only legitimately belong to the community as a whole. On account of this, the hero was not a figure who could be claimed by the individual *oikos*, and individuals who attempted to set up shrines in their household were held up to ridicule. The heroes—in worship and in Classical literature—were both communal and, as we’ve said, present in the world of the living.

¹⁵⁹ Though it should be noted that the moral of the story was to argue against excessive, and fruitless superstition, rather than private hero worship, specifically. Nevertheless, the argument is against obsessive ritual outside of the community: the author presumably has no problem with communal ceremonies.

¹⁶⁰ Theoph. *Char.*, XVI, 5 (trans. Diggle): “καὶ ἐὰν ἴδῃ ὄφιν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, ἐὰν παρείαν, Σαβάζιον καλεῖν, ἐὰν δὲ ἱερόν, ἐνταῦθα ἡρώων εὐθὺς ἰδρύσασθαι.”

¹⁶¹ Porphyrius *De Abstinētia*, IV, 22 (trans. Taylor): “θεοὺς τιμᾶν καὶ ἥρωας ἐγχωρίους ἐν κοινῷ ἐπομένους νόμοις πατρίοις, ἰδίᾳ κατὰ δύναντα.”

The Heroes' Place

Hero worship differed from that of the gods in several ways. There are always exceptions—in Greek religion it is expected as a matter of course—but scholars of religion have identified a few common features of heroic cult that are at least useful in beginning our discussion.¹⁶² The following features are by no means universal, but are common enough to come together into a collage that represents the “normative” Greek hero cult. By the time of Draco, at least, the heroes were objects of worship, and, like the gods, received offerings, though these differed from Olympian offerings (often being marked by the phrase *enagismata* rather than *thusia*).¹⁶³ Heroic sacrifice most often took place at a shrine (*heroön*), not a temple (*naos*), and most often at dusk or at night, rather than in the light of day.¹⁶⁴ In most cases, the victim was burnt whole, not shared out among worshippers.¹⁶⁵ In some cases, there was a tube by which heroes were fed blood (*haimakouria*).¹⁶⁶ Heroic worship took place at the hero's tomb.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Rohde 1925, 116-7; Burkert 1988, 190-9; Zaidman 1992, 178-84; Mikalson 2005, 40-9.

¹⁶³ Rohde points out Draco (quoted by Porphyrius in *De Abstinencia*, IV, 22) as our first written attestation of heroic cult. We know Menelaos and Helen had a cult at Therapne by at least the eighth century, but relying on archaeological evidence will take us practically nowhere in establishing any ritual norms of this cult. See: Rohde 1925, 115.

¹⁶⁴ Mikalson 2005, 40.

¹⁶⁵ There are numerous examples in which the victim is not burnt whole, and is shared out in some capacity. However, in many such cases, there is a caveat or detail that renders this a moot point. So, for example, the neck alone of the black goat sacrificed to Pelops at Olympia is not burnt whole (Paus., 5.13.2). It is, rather, given to a specific individual, the “woodsman” who provided white-cyprus wood for the sacrifice (white-cyprus is often associated with death). The Sikyonians, meanwhile, sacrifice in two ways to Herakles (Paus., 2.10.1). They eat half the meat, dedicated to his godly self, and burn the rest, as a sacrifice to his heroic self. In addition, there are simply anomalous cases in which the animal is shared out fully by the community.

¹⁶⁶ In practice, very few archaeological sites have borne out this claim. See: Antonaccio 1995, 211.

¹⁶⁷ Rohde 1925, 121; Kearns 1989, 3.

This definition will not be sufficient for our purposes. We are concerned with the worship of heroes and their relationship to space and place in the polis, which is as much a mental construct as it is a physical one. We must connect delimited, defined practice to how the hero is mapped in the Greek mind and the Greek cosmos. To do this, it is first necessary to set up a basic framework in which the hero-as-demigod operated. The Greeks engaged the world as a series of binary oppositions.¹⁶⁸ In this case, the opposition we are interested in is the contrast between Olympian and Chthonian, and the place of the hero in between.

One of the most basic levels on which such a definition must function is that of the body. The hero was, at one point, a living, breathing human being. However, when he was worshipped, it was in the form of a dead man, whose needs were therefore very much linked to those of other dead men. It meant that feeding the hero's remains became a function of worshipping the hero: he required—in the same way the regular dead did—food, drink and other worldly sustenance. His offerings, in other words, were those of the dead. This included blood-offering, *choa* libation and the full holocaust of victims (which admittedly were not standard offerings to the regular dead. Rather, they were exaggerated and aggrandized offerings for a figure more powerful and more demanding than a private ancestor— the principle, however, remained the same). This caused worship of the gods to differ from heroic worship precisely because of the different conception of the body they represented.

¹⁶⁸ This is best seen in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which presents the reader with a section of the Pythagorean table of opposites. "Bounded and Unbounded/Odd and Even/One and Many/Right and Left/Male and Female". See: Aristotle *Metaphysics*, 986a22ff.

But the Olympians certainly also had bodies. Vernant, in describing the system of worship of the Olympian deities, says that “it gathers together a multiplicity of particular divine figures, with each having its place, role, privileges, signs of honour, and particular mode of action— a domain of intervention reserved for each alone: in short, each has an individual identity”.¹⁶⁹ He further tells us that identity consists of two things: a name and a body.¹⁷⁰ This is the basis of polytheistic reciprocity: to barter, a deity must be able to be reached in a discrete time and place, by a specific name and must have a specific role to play.¹⁷¹ The Hesiodic view of the universe sees this as the ideal. To be otherwise is to devolve into a formless, directionless mass— Chaos.¹⁷²

The Olympian gods are bounded in just such a way. They have bodies: they bleed, they eat (admittedly, they don't bleed blood, nor do they eat food; to the early poets, however, to be free from dependence on blood and food was the ideal— in short, to be free of the trappings of mortality, but to still enjoy life) and they are confined to one time and place. We can see evidence for this in the mission Thetis undertakes for the sake of Achilles, going to Olympus to petition the help of Zeus.¹⁷³ She returns and informs Achilles that Zeus and the other gods have all gone to Ethiopia to feast and will return after twelve days. Her petition cannot be heard until then, since the gods cannot physically be in two places at once. Despite

¹⁶⁹ Vernant 1991, 47.

¹⁷⁰ Vernant 1991, 47.

¹⁷¹ “How could humankind institute regular exchange with the gods in which homages and benefits balance out, unless the Immortals appear in this world in a visible and specific form, in a particular place and at a particular time?”. See: Vernant 1991, 47.

¹⁷² Vernant 1991, 48.

¹⁷³ Homer *Il.*, I, 423-5: “Ζεὺς γὰρ ἐς Ὠκεανὸν μετ’ ἀμύμονας Αἰθιοπῆας/χθιζὸς ἔβη κατὰ δαῖτα, θεοὶ δ’ ἅμα πάντες ἔποντο/δωδεκάτῃ δέ τοι αὐτίς ἐλεύσεται Οὐλύμπον δέ”.

the evidence in epic that the gods are capable of completing tasks far faster than any human being—travelling vast distances and playing with time in ways that human beings are incapable of—being omnipresent is not one of their powers. Name is the second aspect of identity. It is equally important, since it allows the worshippers to communicate more effectively with the god by calling on them by their proper name, thus locating by a verbal sign the specific aspect of nature he or she wishes to petition (childbirth, rain, the sea, justice, love, etc.).¹⁷⁴ To increase this specificity, the Greeks created a set of secondary names for the gods, which both allowed them to show a greater familiarity with the god in question and to further specify the aim of their petition (Athena Nike, Poseidon Horse-Breaker, etc.). Most important for us, however, is that the Olympians have living bodies, perpetually in the vigour of life, and strictly outside the scope of death. This is in direct contrast to the body of the hero, and it is why their worship is necessarily different from that of the heroes. To worship the gods as dead would be offensive. We know this from Epimenides, who criticizes his fellow Cretans for setting up a tomb to Zeus: “They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one/The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!/But thou art not dead: thou livest and abidest forever”.¹⁷⁵

The Olympians are alive. They fall on the side of light, the male, the free, and of the living in a bipolar Greek cosmology.¹⁷⁶ They are incapable of even witnessing death— Artemis flees Hippolytus just before his death as Apollo flees Alcestis before hers. Death is one of the transitory events of human life that is not allowed to transpire in the sanctuary of the gods.

¹⁷⁴ Burkert 1985, 184.

¹⁷⁵ This is a fragment of Epimenides' *Cretica*, quoted in a 9th cen. Syriac commentary on the *Acts of the Apostles*. It was retranslated into Greek by Dr. Rendell Harris and discussed in a series of articles in the *Expositor* (Oct. 1906, 305-17; Apr. 1907, 332-37; Apr. 1912, 348-353).

¹⁷⁶ “Whoever has died is not a god”. See: Burkert 1985, 205. Also, see: Vernant 1991, 35.

Exceptions are inevitable—both Herakles and Dionysos have experienced death—but both incorporate death into their story necessarily, to fulfill their own divine functions.¹⁷⁷ The gods represent the living and eternal body.

The opposite of this is to be found in the Chthonian powers. The Chthonians do not have bodies, or if they do, they are completely mutable, shifting and unbounded. Forces such as the Earth, Sleep and Death are diffuse, in all places at all times.¹⁷⁸ Even when they have definite bodies, such as the Furies do in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, their bodies are horrible, disfigured and unstable. Aeschylus describes the Furies as, "dark, dank and disgusting... foul stench and hideous breath... and their eyes seep a repulsive, putrid pus".¹⁷⁹ The furies, while embodied, are nevertheless not properly bounded: they seep puss and fluid, emit a horrid smell, etc. These are all things that well-bounded bodies contain and keep inside. The monster Typhoeus, the son of Gaia and Tartarus, embodies this Chthonian unboundedness, simultaneously showing hundreds of visual aspects that blur into an ever changing tangle of faces, and emitting a cacophony of sound, some intelligible and some animalistic.¹⁸⁰ This characteristic unboundedness is repeated in all of the sons and daughters of Chaos (the Keres, Cerberus, etc.). The everlasting, perfect life that the gods enjoy is mirrored by the cyclical, mutable existence of the Chthonian powers.

¹⁷⁷ Burkert 1985, 205.

¹⁷⁸ Hesiod makes this clear enough, referring to the original deities as the physical earth and sky themselves. See: Hesiod *Theo.*, 116-138.

¹⁷⁹ Aesch. *Eum.*, 51-5 (trans. Meineck).

¹⁸⁰ Hesiod *Theo.*, 820-35.

If the Olympian gods, on account of their set place, their specific names, and their well-defined spheres of influence are able to be petitioned simply by setting up a sanctuary, the Chthonic powers are quite the opposite. No amount of petitioning and no amount of sacrifice can reach the Chthonic deities. The attempt to escape or avert the wrath of the Chthonic forces is one of the staple plots in Greek myth and Greek tragedy. Death is totally inescapable, and the futile attempt to avert it is the hinge around which both the myths of Sisyphus and Admetus/Alcestis turn. Death himself is described, by Hesiod, as having “a heart of iron, and his spirit within him is pitiless as bronze: whomsoever of men he has once seized he holds fast: and he is hateful even to the deathless gods”.¹⁸¹ Initially, the Furies of Aeschylus are utterly implacable: “this is our craft, fulfillment of the evil, for remembrance is respect, however much a man may beg”.¹⁸² It is the interference of Athena and the story's unique Athenian setting that allows them to be placated, which says more about the ideology behind Athenian tragedy than it does about the ability of the Chthonic deities to forgive. It is, in any case, the exception that proves the rule. The actions of the Chthonians have little if anything to do with choice or favour. Death is singularly incapable of letting anyone slip through his fingers, as the Furies (under normal circumstances) would be incapable of letting the primal blood-crime stand, even if they were personally disposed to allow some mercy. It is the Olympians who have the free-will to choose whom they bestow their favour upon. The Chthonians are mechanistic,

¹⁸¹ Hesiod *Theo.*, 764-6: “τοῦ δὲ σιδηρέη μὲν κραδίη, χάλκεον δὲ οἱ ἦτορ νηλεὲς ἐν στήθεσσιν· ἔχει δ' ὃν πρῶτα λάβησιν ἀνθρώπων· ἐχθρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν”.

¹⁸² Aesch. *Eum.*, 381-4: “μόναί γὰρ εὐμήχανοί/τε καὶ τέλειοι, κακῶν/τε μνήμονες, σεμναί/καὶ δυσπαρήγοροι βροτοῖς”.

responding to stimulus (as the Furies do) or working cyclically (Night and Day). Humanity, as in all things, falls somewhere in between.

There was no moral aspect to this dichotomy. Although the Chthonian powers might be hateful to mortals (or even to the Olympians for that matter), they were also necessary for the most basic functions of living (fertility, regeneration— these were the areas in which the Chthonic powers were most potent).¹⁸³ The problem for humanity stemmed less from their distaste for the underworld powers—though this no doubt existed—and more from the fact that the Chthonians were inaccessible to petition.¹⁸⁴ Although there were ways to access the Chthonic powers, they were not direct, and at times involved contradiction and ambiguity. One method to access the underworld was to petition an Olympian deity with some credible connection to the powers below. Demeter herself is an Olympian, but she takes on a Chthonic aspect through her—and her daughter's—contact with Hades and the underworld. This function is also to be found through her connection to the bountiful, life-giving earth itself. Her own function is to give life, but she is bestowed a deathly function as well, both because of her association with the underworld and with the cyclical earth, which represents life and death both. Similarly, other gods were petitioned by invoking aspects of their mythology that put them in contact with the underworld. Hermes is an Olympian god, but in his capacity as *Psychopompos* he leads souls to the underworld, and is a god who can create a link between

¹⁸³ “There is no devil in ancient religions, but each god has his dark and dangerous side”. Burkert is talking about the Olympians, who could be both good and bad. His statement is equally applicable to the Chthonians. See: Burkert 1985, 188.

¹⁸⁴ There were exceptions, as there were in all matters of Greek religion. At Sparta, for example, temples were erected to Sleep, Death, Laughter, etc. These entities were instrumental in the—admittedly exceptional—public culture of the Spartan State. See David 1989, 2. For Sleep, see: Paus., 3.18.1. For Death, see: Plut. *Cleom.*, 9.1; Paus., 3.18.1.

humanity and the world below. In this way, the prerogatives of the Chthonic powers—the forces of cyclical fecundity and regeneration which exist underground—became available to the Greeks.

Thus, however, we see that a neat, bipolar universe often contains ambiguous or contradictory associations. This points to one of the very basic principles of the Greek polytheistic system: that, while it exists and is situated in well established norms (the divide between the Olympian and the Chthonic, in this case) some of the most potent mechanisms by which the system operates are based on a crossover between Olympic and Chthonic. For example, Zeus—mightiest of the Olympian gods, king of the Olympian pantheon—is nevertheless worshipped in the incarnation of Zeus Chthonios, the Zeus of the Earth, responsible for the farmers' fields (though presumably in his capacity as rain-bringer)?¹⁸⁵ Zeus' cults at Corinth—Olympian and Chthonian—were situated side by side, along with a third lacking an epithet altogether.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, some of the very basic spheres of responsibility of the gods and goddesses overlapped precisely with activities they themselves could not be present for—like death, birth, intercourse, etc. Hence Apollo and Artemis' hasty exit from the stage of death, and the prohibition on sex, birth and death within the temples of the gods.¹⁸⁷ It may be that such contradictions have no direct solution, but are rather produced by contending cross-currents: first—the ideal—is the need to set up, in typical Greek fashion, a bi-polar cosmology and overall worldview, where certain activities—like birth and death—because of

¹⁸⁵ Hesiod *Theo.*, 767.

¹⁸⁶ Paus., 2.2.8: “τὰ δὲ τοῦ Διός, καὶ ταῦτα ὄντα ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ, τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ κλησὶν οὐκ εἶχε, τὸν δὲ αὐτῶν Χθόνιον καὶ τὸν τρίτον καλοῦσιν “Υψιστον”.

¹⁸⁷ Eur. *Alc.*, 24; Eur. *Hip.*, 1541-2.

their association with mortal necessity and a mechanical cycle, are incompatible with the presence of the Olympians; second—the pragmatic—is the concurrent need to assign a god to precisely these activities, because they affect the community at large and need some form of divine sanction and guidance; and finally—the narrative—is the need, brought about by the anthropomorphic form the Greeks gave their gods, to assign them recognizably human origins and activities, implicating them precisely in the activities they are supposed to be repulsed by (thus, the myriad of stories concerning the gods having sex and siring children, though dying, unsurprisingly remains entirely outside their direct experience).

Heroes were another manner by which the Greeks accessed the powers of the underworld.¹⁸⁸ They too are inherently ambiguous and liminal in the existential place they occupy. They are present both in the living world and the underworld, they are children of both gods and men, they are both potent and powerless— witness Oedipus, terrified his bones will be put to use by his enemies.¹⁸⁹ Where the powers of the underworld are bodiless, and hence unreachable, the heroes provide a link between the world above and the one below.

Hippokrates tells us, “corn comes from the dead”, and he hits the mark, emphasizing the fecund and regenerative property the hero allows access to.¹⁹⁰ Flavius Philostratus provides an

¹⁸⁸ Rohde made this point, linking the heroes with the Chthonian deities, and also made the point that the heroes were physically present among the living. However, I think that the significance of these points are only fully realized when combined with a cosmological blueprint as sophisticated and holistic as Vernant's. See: Rohde 1925, 116.

¹⁸⁹ Sophoc. *Oed.Col.*, 404-5: “τούτου χάριν τοίνυν σε προσθέσθαι πέλας χώρας θέλουσι, μηδ' ἴν' ἂν σαυτοῦ κρατοῖς”.

¹⁹⁰ Hippokr. *Vict.*, 4.92 (trans. Burkert).

interesting dialogue between a Greek and Phoenician in his *Heroikos*, in which the protagonist describes the hero Protesilaos' very physical relationship with the land and its well-being.¹⁹¹

It is not just corn that they bring about, however, but also military success. Many of the stories we hear, recounting the interference of heroes in the affairs of men, emphasize their dominating presence on the battlefield, much more so than their regenerative or agricultural exploits. Almost all of these stories involve the heroes physically manifesting themselves and defending the land they occupy. So, for example, when the Persians approach Delphi, the local heroes Phylacos and Autonoös manifest themselves physically, appearing as larger than life, fully-armed hoplites, pursuing the fleeing Persians and cutting them down.¹⁹² However, when the Aeginetans sent “the sons of Aiakos” to the Thebans (presumably their bones) to help them in their campaign against the Athenians, they fail to help at all.¹⁹³ It is in defense of Attica—and Eleusis specifically—that the Attic heroes make themselves manifest in combating the Persians, raising a great cloud of dust and uttering the *lacchos* cry of the Eleusianian mysteries.¹⁹⁴ The heroes are tied to the land, both to its fertility and to its protection.

¹⁹¹ Flav. Philostratus *Heroikos*, 4.6-10. One must note the late date of this document (2nd cen. AD). While it is useful in establishing the agricultural virtues of the hero, it contains a great number of concepts that would have been essentially alien to the Archaic and Classical conception of the hero. The hero is able to manifest himself beyond the bounds of his grave (in locations around the world, not around the neighbouring hill), and he is fully conscious of himself and his surroundings without any form of blood sacrifice. These elements, among others, point to a much more highly developed conception of the soul than (as we've pointed out already) a Greek of the Archaic or Classical period would have subscribed to. It owes more to Plato than to Homer (whom Philostratus at times vigorously denounces), and is largely inapplicable to our discussion (beyond pointing to why it is inapplicable, which is indeed useful).

¹⁹² Herodotus, VIII, 39.

¹⁹³ Herodotus, V, 79.

¹⁹⁴ Herodotus, VIII, 65.

This physical presence—their link between the world above and the world below—is what makes the hero's bones so important.¹⁹⁵ Not atypical of Greek religion, this is not without exception. There are, for example, hero cults that lack remains or a tomb. Although, as Kearns points out, most of these are later developments.¹⁹⁶ Multiple shrines to the same hero is a curious, though not uncommon, phenomenon. Often, however, there are competing claims between *poleis* for possession of heroic remains. More curious is the case of Oedipus at Athens, where there are two separate shrines, one at Kolonos, the other on the Areopagos, both claiming his burial spot. This seems to be anomalous: Kearns has devoted a full appendix item to this situation, coming up with no satisfactory conclusion.¹⁹⁷ It should be noted also (but does not seem to have been) that a hero's remains might be split up. Pausanias mentions the potency of a single shoulder blade of Pelops, which was necessary to ensure the victory of the Achaeans at Troy, as well as a tumulus in Arkadia, which was dedicated to a single finger of Orestes, bitten off in a fit of madness.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, exceptions aside, without these remains, there is no connection to the hero's power, which is the origin of the Delphic command—uttered again and again—to find the bones of So-And-So. Until the Spartans find the bones of Orestes, for example, they are doomed to lose their struggle against Tegea. Orestes' help can only be enlisted when his bones are close enough to supplicate.¹⁹⁹ In the case of the corpse of

¹⁹⁵ Rohde conjectured it might be that "the hero was perhaps thought of as bound by a spell to that place". It is unlikely, however, that the Greeks thought of it in this way - if they articulated their ideas about how the hero was rooted to the remains at all. A physical link seems to be all that was sought. They did not always need the bones, either. At Chaironea, Pausanias tells us, they worshiped a staff, said to have belonged to Agamemnon (Paus., 9.45.6.) See: Rohde 1925, 122.

¹⁹⁶ Kearns 1989, 3. Also, see: Rohde 1925, 121.

¹⁹⁷ Kearns 1989, 208.

¹⁹⁸ Paus., 5.8.1-6; 7.34.2.

¹⁹⁹ Herodotus, I, 67-9. So powerful is the need for the physical presence of the hero that Pausanias notes the empty tomb of Orestes in Tegea, "no longer enclosed", and hence without any power whatsoever: Paus., 8.54.4. It

Oedipus, possession of his bones is a *sine qua non* of securing his favour (even in defiance of his personal preferences). The bones do not even need to be incorporated into the city—as the Athenians promise—they only need to be close enough for the Thebans to make ritual offerings to them (in fact, the Thebans intend to plant Oedipus' remains on the *eschatia* between Attica and Boeotia, rather than return him to Thebes itself).²⁰⁰ An exception to this, Orestes' promise, in *Eumenides*, to the Athenians to look after their interests, come what may, is again an example of Athenian exceptionalism in tragedy, a reminder of Argos' place in the international affairs of the day and a rebuke to the actual owners of Orestes' bones— Sparta.²⁰¹

The physical link of the hero to his bones is symbolic of the local character of the hero himself.²⁰² It is, in fact, one of the key mechanisms by which a hero's local character is preserved: one cannot make offerings to the hero if one does not possess some physical connection to him. This connection to a physical object or objects goes hand-in-hand with the connection of the hero to that city and to that city alone (it is a rare thing for a hero to have no connection to the people of a land— even Oedipus had to be incorporated into Athens through the language of citizenship). It is the idiosyncratic narrative and local exploits of the hero that are played up and which give identity to a polis (something the Olympian myths can seldom do, since all *poleis* share the same gods) and it is the interconnection and rationalization of these local mythical figures, and their exploits, into larger narratives and heroic genealogies that

is interesting in its way however, given that Herodotus makes no mention of the Tegeans enclosing the bones in the first place. This is a unique example of the Tegeans mourning the loss of the bones, and indeed commemorating their *absence*.

²⁰⁰ Sophoc. *Oed.Col.*, 399-400: “ὥς σ' ἄγχι γῆς στήσωσι Καδμείας, ὅπως/κρατῶσι μὲν σοῦ, γῆς δὲ μὴ 'μβαίνης ὄρων”.

²⁰¹ Aesch. *Eum.*, 762-774.

²⁰² Burkert 1985, 205.

helps create the peculiar Panhellenic system of culturally unified but politically sovereign city states.²⁰³

²⁰³ Farenga 1998, 197.

The Scholarship: Typological Questions

A key question we need to ask is: what is the difference between a hero cult, an ancestor cult and a tomb cult? Is there one? Is the hero cult a subset of ancestor cult? Where does tomb cult fit in? One of the problems in the scholarship, I think, is that the terms have not been laid out in any formal way, or have had competing meanings attached to them, and so a series of disagreements has arisen merely from a disjunction in usage. In some cases, however, the disagreement is rooted in very real differences about the role and place of the hero in the Greek mind. I will by no means attempt to create a standard definition, but I think it will be helpful to go through some of the scholarship, to identify the ideas at stake and, at least, make clear the meanings I will be endowing these technical phrases with.

What is the difference between hero cult and ancestor cult? Antonaccio argues that hero cult was a subset of ancestor cult.²⁰⁴ This is, in a sense, true— in that heroes were imaginary ancestors in the same way that Louis Riel or the Founding Fathers might be claimed as common ancestors today.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, there is seldom any idea of a familial relationship between hero and worshipper. It was not, as the Roman cult of *imagines* was, a genealogical link. Nor was it a claim to special privilege based on such a relationship. There were, in some cases, exceptions: the kings of Sparta were thought to descend directly from Herakles (it was this distinction that assured the place of the Eurypontid and Agiad houses, although Tyrtaeus

²⁰⁴ “Heroes were a subset of ancestors and shared in the nature and prerogatives of the dead”. While it is true that heroes being a subset of ancestors does not immediately imply that hero *cult* was a subset of ancestor *cult*, I can see no reason in Antonaccio not to make this assumption. See: Antonaccio 1995, 1.

²⁰⁵ “the ‘clans’ that we meet with at Athens and in other Greek states are, as a rule, groups for which a demonstrable common kinship is no longer a condition for membership... the Hero of their common worship was regarded as the *ancestor* of their clan”. See: Rohde 1925, 124.

calls all of the Spartans “sons of Herakles”)²⁰⁶; the descendants of the colonial founders—especially at Cyrene, where they were a kingly line—enjoyed special privileges; the Athenian priestly families were sometimes tied to a specific hero, although Kearns points out that this was probably for aetiological reasons, and that they held no special claim to the hero.²⁰⁷

There were cults dedicated to anonymous ancestors known as the *tritopatores*, whose three-sided shrine in the Athenian Keremeikos was pointed out by Bourriot.²⁰⁸ They were, in Antonaccio's words, “ancestors of the third degree, [which] corresponds closely with the notion of a four-generation family memory”.²⁰⁹ The Athenians, at least, acknowledged a sort of event-horizon of three to four generations, beyond which ancestors become unknown and unknowable. Because of this, these cults seem to have been public cults of anonymous common ancestors, rather than being linked to a single family or group of families.

A third class of ancestor cult might be found in the basic cult of the familial dead. However, this is better designated by a separate term, “tendance”.²¹⁰ There was a complex set of social and legal concerns associated with tendance that had nothing to do with the way in which a polis interacted with the hero. Tendance is not fully unrelated to heroic cult, however: both deal with the dead, and so some similar forms of ritual occurred in both. The concept of “feeding” the dead is prominent in both cults. Nevertheless, the “normal” dead are more often

²⁰⁶ Tyrtaios F11.1: “Ἡρακλῆος γὰρ ἀνικίτου γένος ἐστέ”.

²⁰⁷ Kearns maintains that this is always so, at least in the historical period. See: Kearns 1989, 70-73.

²⁰⁸ Bourriot 1976, 1178.

²⁰⁹ Antonaccio 1995, 264.

²¹⁰ Referring to the tendance of the family tomb. See: Farnell 1921, 2-4, 344.

looked on with pity than with fear or reverence.²¹¹ More fundamentally, heroic cult and tendance fundamentally differed in the religious concepts they engaged as well as in the social groupings that took part in them: heroic cult engaged the public sphere, at the level of the deme, phratry or polis, while the grave cult of the regular dead engaged the *oikos* alone. Though their symbols and ritual procedures might overlap, the two institutions are distinct from one another.

The term “tomb cult” has been associated with tendance, quite understandably, given its emphasis on the tomb.²¹² This usage can be confusing, however, as Antonaccio notes, because scholars sometimes use the same phrase—“tomb cult”—to designate ritual activity at Bronze Age chamber tombs in the Iron Age and beyond. Tomb-cult, in this latter sense, is controversial, given the lack of real evidence (most tomb cults involve no more than a few anonymous Iron Age sherds left in the *dromos* or chamber of a Bronze Age tomb). Coldstream associates this activity with the rise of epic poetry, and a knowledge of the Homeric heroes, and so de-emphasized the ancestral aspect of the cults.²¹³ Scholars such as Whitley and Antonaccio have pointed out the anonymous nature of those worshipped (in contrast to later hero sites, which most often worshipped known heroes), and the comparatively small window in which ritual activity took place (sometimes taking place only once), which they associated with activity of a more ancestral nature.²¹⁴ I, for my part, am much more inclined to agree with the latter

²¹¹ Garland 1985, 12.

²¹² Garland 1985, 107.

²¹³ In doing so, he was following in the footsteps of Lewis Farnell, who first advanced the idea that hero cults had arisen primarily from the spread of epic. J.M. Cook later advanced this theory, incorporating archaeological evidence. Coldstream's however, is the most well known argument. See: Coldstream 1976, 8.

²¹⁴ Whitley 1988, 174; Antonaccio 1995, 246.

and say that tomb cult is ancestral in nature and essentially unrelated to the hero cult of the Archaic and Classical period (which is not to say that BA tombs could not be the site of hero cult, as the tomb of the Hyperboreans at Delos was, only that, when it was, it was not “tomb cult”).

Hero cult, then, was not at all ancestral cult, but rather represented a transference of its symbolism. There is no familial relationship between the worshipper and the hero. The relationship is more often to be found between the hero and the polis, or perhaps with smaller, though equally public, corporate groups. Burkert summarizes it well, saying that, “the hero cult is not an ancestor cult at all; its concern is with effective presence, not with the chain of blood across generations”.²¹⁵ This is not a moot point, since scholars from Rohde to Antonaccio have presumed hero cult to function at least in part to legitimate elite claims to power.²¹⁶ It is my contention that they do not do so at any time.²¹⁷ To do so is to go against the very thing that makes the hero a hero— his ability to transcend flesh, and to occupy a place between men and the chthonic powers below, through his bones, not his sinew or his blood, which had long since rotted away. So taxonomically, hero cult is neither ancestor nor tomb cult—although it includes imaginary ancestors and tombs in abundance. Its use of these motifs is entirely symbolic, and is something we shall discuss further in Chapter Three.

²¹⁵ Burkert 1985, 204.

²¹⁶ “Corporate worship of heroes by the *polis* was an ambiguous act; it both united the worshippers and divided them by giving honor to ancestors claimed by aristocrats”. See: Antonaccio 1995, 8.

²¹⁷ Kearns tells us the *genos* never enjoyed—at least in the historical period—the prerogative of exclusive, idiosyncratic hero cult. Priestly families are somewhat anomalous, having heroic names attached to their own. She goes on to emphasize, however, that this was probably aetiological and mythical in nature, rather than being a cultic claim on that specific hero. In any case, priests, by their very function, as hereditary carriers of privilege, are anomalous in the polis. A similar exception occurs at Sparta, whose kings could trace their descent all the way to Herakles. See: Kearns 1989, 70-73.

Heroic Places

Having now discussed the defining characteristics of hero cult, their meaning, and hero cult's distinction from tomb cult and from tendance, we may return to the tombscape we surveyed in Chapter One. There we looked at four major tombscapes: Athens, Corinth, Argos and two Euboian settlements. We will revisit these sites, looking at hero cult and where it fell in relation to old graves. In addition to revisiting these sites, we will look at two sites on the island of Delos. In reviewing these archaeological sites, a basic rubric will be put into play. It is important that a site, in order to be considered a hero cult, display the following characteristics: be located in a public setting, since this is the realm of commonly shared institutions, of which hero cult was one; display aspects of prolonged worship, whether they be votives, an altar, a shrine, or other signs of ritual (this is a part of separating it from the phenomenon of tomb cult, which itself continues right up until the Classical period); be demonstrably connected to a grave or graves, since we have seen that physical relics are normally a necessity in heroic cult (sites that are on an axis with graves, or encircle them, or otherwise engage them spatially will be easiest to connect with heroic worship). We will see that (with the exception of Lefkandi) graves of the Bronze and Iron Age will be central features around which Archaic and Classical hero cult will necessarily center.

One of the most important discoveries of the last twenty five years, at least in the realm of Greek archaeology, has been the "heroön" at Lefkandi, which I have called the Big Hall. We mentioned it briefly in Chapter One, but it deserves a fuller treatment. It—a massive, apsidal structure of mud-brick—was discovered at the heart of the Toumba cemetery, far outdoing

anything else being built in Greece at this time (MPG). The building was fully 50m in length and 9m in width, with an east-facing entrance and a storage room in the western apse (fig.19).²¹⁸ The main room contained two small platforms—the one “mud-plastered” and the other covered in small pebbles—which were identified as feasting circles of the type seen in “tomb cult” (though for obvious reason, this structure cannot be related to that particular phenomenon).²¹⁹ The structure is conjectured to have perhaps had a second floor, and a thatch roof (fig.20). The building stood for a short time before being demolished, filled-in and covered over by a large tumulus.

At the center of the structure were two deep shaft graves, dug in parallel to one another. The first contained the inhumed remains of four horses (two of whom had iron bits in their mouths). Horse burial is quite rare in Greece, though in the case of the Toumba cemetery, we see that it found some favour: Toumba revealed a second, slightly later, horse burial in T68.²²⁰ In the shaft next to the first, excavators found the remains of two individuals: one inhumed and the other cremated and inurned. The inhumed was female, richly adorned with golden rings, hair spirals and numerous pins. An iron knife with an ivory handle lay next to her head, leading to speculation of *sati*-style human sacrifice by the excavators.²²¹ The second body—a male—was cremated and placed in a bronze amphora, which was crushed when the wooden roof of the shaft collapsed. The amphora itself was preserved well enough to reveal it

²¹⁸ Popham 1993, 29-31, 52-6, 97-8.

²¹⁹ For the feasting circles, see: Antonaccio 1995, 236.

²²⁰ Popham et al. 1993, 21.

²²¹ Popham et al. 1993, 21.

was of Cypriot manufacture, from the 12th century. The amphora held the cremated remains, along with a linen shroud and iron weaponry (a sword and spear).

The meaning of the building has been much debated.²²² Much of the debate has centered on the function of the structure before it was buried. On the one hand, it is argued that the building served a residential function before the death of its inhabitants, and after their death served a purely monumental function.²²³ If this is true, and the building was a residence first and death monument second, it means that the significance of the labour invested in it cannot be read as *a priori* evidence that the Lefkandians wished to aggrandize the man after his death. Rather any aggrandizement would have been a functional extension of his life. On the other hand, if the building was erected after the death of the individual, it would mean that 500-2000 man-hours were spent building a monumental structure to commemorate him (which, incidentally, was only in use for an extremely short time).²²⁴ Given the colossal material investment inherent in such a project, this would have changed the specific significance of the act, and would mean the Lefkandians—and not just the deceased, seeking to aggrandize himself in life by building a splendid residence—considered the individual to be of unprecedented importance. In other words, the first hypothesis places the onus on the deceased, who built the structure for himself while alive, in an attempt to aggrandize himself and to live in grand fashion. The material investment, moreover, had a more practical purpose and was not entirely conspicuous in its mode of consumption. The second hypothesis places the emphasis on communal consensus, or at least on corporate consensus on the level of extended

²²² Popham et al. 1993; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 56; Antonaccio 1995, 237-9; Morris 2001, 221.

²²³ Kalligas 1984, 256; Calligas 1988, 230; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 56.

²²⁴ Popham et al. 1993, 56

family or elite group. Moreover, the mode of consumption is entirely conspicuous and not at all practical, and says something more about the importance of this specific individual, whose burial is unique and unrepeated in Lefkandian history.

There is not enough evidence to decide the matter definitely. Although the residential hypothesis was rejected by Popham upon excavation, his assertion has suffered criticism.²²⁵ Nevertheless, there is no evidence for inhabitation of the area, since the site is some distance from the Xeropolis Hill, where Mycenaean and later inhabitation centered. The building, moreover, shows almost no signs of prolonged use.²²⁶ This seems to argue for the building being erected after the death of the individuals. Plastered walls seem to indicate the building was intended for repeated use (funerary feasting has been put forward as a possible use for the structure).²²⁷ Inhabited or not, the building did not stand long. The thatch roof collapsed, and the whole structure was eventually filled in. A huge krater, damaged by illegal bulldozing early in the excavation, is conjectured to have been a marker of some sort, which would have marked the spot of the deceased after his tumulus had been erected.²²⁸ The area became the center of the newly formed Toumba Cemetery, with the deceased as its founder.

Antonaccio has pointed out the fact that to call the building a heroön must be anachronistic.²²⁹ I wholeheartedly agree. She points to the fact that there was no trace of repeated cult activity at the site. The immediate surroundings do, however, show signs of some

²²⁵ Popham et al. 1993, 100. For the critics, see: Calligas 1988; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 53-7; Morris 2001, 221.

²²⁶ Popham points to an almost complete lack of compression on the floor layer. See: Popham 1993, 100.

²²⁷ Antonaccio 1995, 239.

²²⁸ Antonaccio 1995, 238.

²²⁹ Antonaccio 1995, 241.

sort of ritual function. Cuttings at roadside are conjectured to have been for a monumental tripod of some sort. Next to the tripod was a stone platform, 7.5m in length and 3m in width, which the excavators associated with ritual activity, though its nature remains shrouded in mystery.²³⁰ There is no indication, however, that this was not simply an area for purification before entering the cemetery. Moreover, as we have already said, hero cult implies features and associations that are, both physically and socially, not present at Lefkandi. It is true, the burials within the structure are very much reminiscent of Homeric burial practice, as scholars have noted.²³¹ Nevertheless, it is not burial practice that imitates epic in this case, since the structure is dated to several centuries before the recording of Homer, but rather epic that imitates burial practice. Even if we can call the site “heroic” (in that there are some similarities to be found with Homer, and in that the individual was aggrandized and honoured), there is little evidence that the site was any sort of hero shrine, in the technical sense. Ian Morris has argued not only for the “heroic” nature of the site, but also that the Greek hero can be traced back to the eleventh century BC, based on the Toumba evidence.²³² It is an interesting argument that connects the 12th cen. amphora, the monumental structure, and the unconventional method of the burial. He observes that “this funeral tore the fabric of time and space”, which he reads in terms of the setting aside of a superior man from his fellows.²³³ He then identifies this with the role that heroization served in Archaic and Classical Greece.²³⁴ But for all the similarity we see between the Lefkandian “hero” and the Greek hero, we see just as

²³⁰ Popham et al. 1980, 214.

²³¹ Antonaccio 1995, 243.

²³² Morris 2001, 231.

²³³ Morris 2001, 228.

²³⁴ Morris 2001, 230-1.

much difference. There is no evidence for continued ritual activity, besides the platform. Moreover, the area becomes the stage for further, active burials, something that never happens in Greek hero cult. Without the qualities implicit in continuous worship (a permanent shrine or structure, a pit or altar for sacrifice), isolation from the “regular” dead, or the underlying social structure of Archaic and Classical hero cult—i.e. the polis— we simply cannot consider the Toumba founder to be a hero, in the strictest sense. The most we can infer in this case is that the structure at Toumba was a monumental burial place for a man of outstanding social importance, which has elements of tendance and ancestral associations attached to it.

Nevertheless, there is some truth to what Morris says about Lefkandi’s “hero”. It may be that the most distant seeds of hero cult, instituted to separate an outstanding individual from his elite peers, might lie in eleventh and tenth century Lefkandi, and that these beliefs and practices were later taken over by an emerging political society. Lefkandi’s connection to Eretria, which we touched on in Chapter One, is significant when we take into account the significant concordances in practice between the Lefkandian Big Hall and the West-Gate Heroön, which shows an appropriation of elite values by the newly emerging polis. These private distinctions, practiced in familial grave cult, became public hero cult, appropriate to the civic ethos of the new era.

The West-Gate Heroön is often cited as a prototypical case of intramural hero worship, falling as it does within the limits of the later walls, just inside the West Gate of what would become the city of Eretria.²³⁵ Excavators found sixteen burials, which they dated to a span of

²³⁵ Bérard 1970, 68-9; Antonaccio 1995, 233; DePolignac 1995, 30; Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 53-4.

about forty years at the end of the eighth century.²³⁶ The burials mirror those of the Lefkandian Big Hall, and hence also Homeric, burial: most of the male burials were secondary cremations wrapped in funerary cloth, with offerings of weapons; the burials were divided by sex, with the burials at the west half of the plot being predominantly female inhumations, and the ones at the east end being male.²³⁷ Bérard, on the basis of the shape of the amphorae of Tomb 6, dated this earliest grave to c.720.²³⁸ The burials seem to have ended at some point in the Sub-Geometric/Archaic period (c.685). Most graves were richly adorned: the females were buried with spirals, rings, bracelets and pins, as well as a majority of the cemetery's pottery, and its only gold band; the males were also buried with pins and ring, but, as we have said, received weapons in addition.

The cemetery went out of use in the early seventh century. Around 680, a triangular platform was laid down over the graves in order, presumably, to mark them (fig.21). It is apparent that there was a delay between the cessation of burial and the construction of the triangular platform, because a layer of clay intervened between the two.²³⁹ The triangle, moreover, did not cover all of the graves, nor did the semi-circular *peribolos* that encircled it, which was another sign that the area had lain dormant for some time, and that some graves had fallen into total obscurity. A *bothros* (a pit about 1m deep) was set up just to the southwest of the enclosure, being in use from the last burial and the building of the triangular enclosure

²³⁶ Bérard 1970, 90.

²³⁷ Bérard 1970, 90.

²³⁸ Antonaccio points out that part of the criteria for his decision might have been the rich nature of this particular burial, which is what might have led him to speculate it was a founding figure of some sort. See: Bérard 1970, 24-5; Antonaccio 1995, 230.

²³⁹ Martin 1975, 48-52.

down to the middle of the seventh century. To the south of this was a structure that has been identified as an altar. Around 650, the pit was abruptly filled and a two-room structure—dubbed “the *oikos*”—was built over-top it.²⁴⁰ Its north wall was aligned with the southern side of the triangular platform. Domestic ware and votive figurines were found among the debris, and a small votive shield was found in a well next to the structure. Bérard identified this “*oikos*” as a *hestiatorion*, where ritual feasting took place for those buried under the triangular platform.²⁴¹ Another building to the southeast, Building P—a five room complex—was also assigned this role, being aligned on an axis with the *oikos*. Activity at this site was most intense in the seventh century, and gradually declined until the late fifth, when both buildings were razed to the ground and new ones—on a different axis—replaced them.²⁴²

There has been some debate over the relation of the graves and buildings to the growing city of Eretria. Bérard noted the stream to the northwest of the site had been terraced and diverted. This represented the delimitation of a nucleated settlement—indeed, the future fortification wall followed the route of this terrace. According to him this occurred in the LG period— that is, before the graves had been closed and the buildings erected.²⁴³ He took this to mean that the graves themselves should be considered intramural, since they fell within the later fortification wall, and that the family was burying their dead within the boundaries of an already nucleated settlement. Krause disagrees with him, identifying Phase 1 of the terrace construction (which may have included an early version of the fortification wall) as

²⁴⁰ There are no full accounts of the excavation here. For the closest thing to one, see: Bérard 1969, 74.

²⁴¹ Bérard 1970, 65.

²⁴² There have been attempts to link the fourth-century complex that was built atop this area with the graves and the triangle. See: Antonaccio 1995, 232.

²⁴³ Bérard 1970, 68-9.

contemporary to the closing of the graves, the erection of the triangular marker and the digging of the *bothros*.²⁴⁴ A sandy layer identified the terracing and the closing of the graves as being contemporary to one another. Therefore the closing of the graves attended the formation of a nucleated settlement. The layer of clay, however, between the graves and the triangle suggests that the cemetery's closure and the erection of the triangle was not immediate, but rather that there was a discontinuity in burial activity some time earlier than the triangle's construction. Nevertheless, the three events can be seen to be closely linked: first, at some time in the first quarter of the seventh century, burial at the West Gate cemetery ceases, whether through the termination of the family line or through communal decree— the final burials are contemporary to Phase 1 terrace construction of the stream to the northwest, and the cessation of burial is indicative of the formation and delimitation of a nucleated settlement, within which they fell; second, c.680, after a period sufficient for a layer of clay to form over the graves, which shows a period of inactivity, a large triangular platform, a *peribolos* and a *bothros* pit are constructed on the spot. It would seem the original burials were not intramural, in the sense that they were located in the nucleated settlement area.²⁴⁵ Rather the cemetery's end seems to have come as a result of synoicism, evident in the terrace construction and the diversion of the stream, which replaced the natural landscape with an artificial boundary coterminous with the later fortification wall. This was followed by the construction of

²⁴⁴ The graves and the Phase 1 terracing construction were in the same sandy layer, dated by pottery sherds to the first quarter of the seventh century. See: Krause 1972, 179-83.

²⁴⁵ Antonaccio notes that there are some habitation remains in the area, but proposes a solution whereby the graves were dug near some settled areas, which settled areas not yet incorporated into a nucleated settlement. The formation of community is, in her mind, a direct antecedent to the terracing and the building of the triangle, etc. See: Antonaccio 1995, 234.

monumental architecture on the spot of the cemetery, following not the conventions of tendance, but rather of heroic cult practice.

Those buried at the West Gate have been conjectured to be city founders and Lelantine War heroes.²⁴⁶ For our purposes, a more important question might be to ask who the worshippers were. Was it the family who worshipped the dead men and women under the triangle? Was it a larger communal group? It seems most likely that before the construction of the terrace and the cessation of burial, any ritual activity that took place on the spot would have been familial in nature. But the disuse of the cemetery and the simultaneous erection of a new boundary for the nucleated settlement indicate a fundamental shift in the nature of the rites that took place there. The digging of the *bothros* and the establishment of the *oikos/hestiatorion* indicates a move toward ritual more akin to hero cult, as does the involvement of a larger group of people outside of a close-knit familial group, especially with the establishment of the five-room Building P. That the worshipping group was expanded, and that some degree of communal control was exerted over the cult activity at the site has largely become the established consensus among scholars.²⁴⁷ So, for example, both Bérard and De Polignac have interpreted the West Gate Heroön as signalling a devolution of power. Bérard framed this in terms of moving from monarchy to aristocracy, while De Polignac spoke of a movement from centralized, familial power to power in the hands of a wider, more impersonal group. In summary, this site exhibits all of the relevant criteria inherent in heroic cult, and is

²⁴⁶ Bérard 1982, 101; De Polignac 1995, 132. Antonaccio questions the association with the Lelantine War. See: Antonaccio 1995, 235

²⁴⁷ Bérard 1972, 223-6; 1972; De Polignac 1984, 140-51. For a dissenting opinion, which makes the case for the later and more sustained involvement of the family of the hero (though I find it unconvincing, overall), see: Crielaard 1995, 47-52.

established at a crucial moment, when the community was defining itself spatial (and in the process of doing so, brought active burial at the West Gate cemetery to a close), and, afterwards, was reinterpreting the topographic features now defined as “internal”, in opposition to those things now “external”. Therefore, the graves, familial in nature until c.680BC and now being inside the newly consolidated “city”, were appropriated by the public sphere as a heroic shrine.

There is an interesting site in Athens that parallels the triangular platform at Eretria. It is just to the southeast of the *tholos*, near the entrance to the agora (fig.22). In the fifth century, the area was marked by a triangular enclosure, of which the north wall is our only real evidence (fig.23).²⁴⁸ The enclosure was marked by three *horos* markers that read “TO HIERO”, and—at least from the street—there was no entranceway.²⁴⁹ The shrine probably served a non-ritual function, being cordoned off and inaccessible. The area itself seems to have been in use since LG and PA times, judging by the earliest layer of fill found on site.²⁵⁰ At the west end of the later triangular enclosure, there was a shallow pit in the bedrock and it is hypothesized that an ash urn might once have been buried there.²⁵¹ Nearby, where the exact center of the triangle would fall, was a rectangular slab.²⁵² The triangular enclosure was built over this spot, possibly as part of the Periclean building project, filling in what Lalonde calls the “proto-hieron” (the ash-urn and slab), in the fifth century. It seems to have been destroyed shortly after this, however.

²⁴⁸ Lalonde 1968, 123.

²⁴⁹ Lalonde 1968, 128. It is conjecture to say that the site was inaccessible, since much of the structures walls were destroyed in the Byzantine period. Nevertheless, it would be consistent with the triangular *abata* of Delos. See: Antonaccio 1995, 122.

²⁵⁰ Lalonde 1968, 131.

²⁵¹ Thompson 1968, 60; Antonaccio 1995, 122.

²⁵² Lalonde 1968, 132.

Young mentions the huge influx of people into the city at the end of the fifth century, during the Peloponnesian War, and speculates that the sanctuary was perhaps inhabited by displaced residents of the countryside (a layer of marble chips suggests the area saw active use in some capacity at this time).²⁵³ A second *temenos* was built in the early fourth century to replace it.²⁵⁴

There are good reasons for supposing some connection to the dead, as well as a connection to heroic cult. The most obvious link to a chthonic cult of the dead—be it ancestral or heroic—is the triangular shape of the final building. It is reminiscent of the sixth-century Athenian *tritopatreion* at the Keremeikos, and also to the Delian *abata*, which are linked to the dead and to cults of ancestors.²⁵⁵ Even more striking is its resemblance to the West Gate Heroön at Eretria, which we have already mentioned as a site of elite tendance converted to heroic worship by a burgeoning polis. Extensive damage to the site has meant that no graves were found there but, as we noted earlier, a niche on the east side of the structure suggests a likely spot for an ash-urn burial. Moreover, Homer Thompson has noted the location of the triangular structure as being nestled in a hotbed of chthonic activity, and links it to the Oval House to the southeast (which we shall soon discuss). The rectangular stone in the center of the structure has been interpreted as a *bomos* (a sort of low altar) for the proto-*hieron*.²⁵⁶ Two horse and rider figurines were pulled from the LG/PA layer, as well as dozens of ceramic

²⁵³ Lalonde 1968, 132.

²⁵⁴ Lalonde 1968, 133.

²⁵⁵ Antonaccio 1995, 122, 264.

²⁵⁶ Lalonde 1968, 132.

discs.²⁵⁷ It may be significant, moreover, that the area came to be dedicated to a sacral function in the PA period, precisely when Athens switched over to extramural burial. One might also note the important location the sanctuary occupied, overlooking the agora, and placed, as Thompson points out, “at a point from which no less than six roads radiated”: one of them leading up to the Areopagos, another to the Pnyx. It is possible that, as with the West Gate Heroön, an earlier grave, falling in the later, developed civic center, was turned into a heroic shrine. Ultimately, if we cannot identify whether or not this is a shrine to an anonymous ancestor, a named hero, or some other chthonic force, we can at least note the very public, chthonic character of the shrine.

We can propose this more confidently of the so-called Oval House, a Geometric structure on the west slope of the Areopagos, on the spot where we noted, in Chapter One, a prolific cemetery (fig.22). A low, circular wall enclosed one undisturbed grave—an EGI child inhumation—and possibly two other graves, which were damaged.²⁵⁸ A group of graves, meanwhile, were located immediately outside the enclosure, dated to EGI-MGI.²⁵⁹ The stone socle wall was built sometime after the EGI child grave was dug. Burr suggests it was originally a house, built on top of a child's grave when the area converted to a more residential character.²⁶⁰ Antonaccio does not agree, and points to the fact that the famous EGII rich-lady burial was found right next to the building (though separate from the larger group of graves).

²⁵⁷ Lalonde interprets the discs as nothing more than jar-stoppers. He does note, however, that one was made flat, not cut from a jar – as the others were. It had a hole bored through the center, and seems to be unique among the discs. See: Lalonde 1968, 131.

²⁵⁸ Burr 1933, 554.

²⁵⁹ Antonaccio 1995, 124.

²⁶⁰ He was convinced of this by the domestic nature of the implements found within. See: Burr 1933, 636.

The rich-lady burial was a trench-and-hole cremation, and much of the ash from the urn was shown by excavators to have been dumped within the stone socle enclosure. Excavators, seeing the dumping of the ash as a symbolic act, have posited a very early chthonic function for the Oval House.²⁶¹ A large number of votive deposits were found in the house, not unlike those found at another site thought to be a heroic cult, at Menidi.²⁶² The stratigraphy indicates the structure was used from the EGII period until the LG period, perhaps to host funerary feasting.²⁶³ After this, a rectangular *temenos* was built around the Oval House, yielding sherds that range from PA to the fourth century. Thompson notes that, along with the triangular structure to the northwest, the Oval House was probably to be linked with the “cult of the dead” in the fifth century.²⁶⁴ I would say, given their association with the dead, but also their public and communal setting and number of votive deposits, that both sites must have been linked to a heroic function. However, we cannot certainly identify the triangular enclosure as a shrine, since we lack any definite graves or any definite altar. The Oval House, on the other hand, with its votives, and a very definite relationship to the surrounding graves, can be confidently classified as a heroic shrine. Thompson points out the proximity of the two sites,

²⁶¹ Smithson 1968, 78; Antonaccio 1995, 124. They were not aware, at the time, that the Rich Lady was pregnant. According to Liston, as a result of modern skeletal analysis, it has been determined that the woman, in her mid-twenties, died four to six weeks before the full term of her pregnancy. What this means in symbolic terms is beyond the scope of this argument but it may well be crucial to an interpretation of this burial. See: Liston 2004, 7.

²⁶² Burr wanted to see these as remains dumped from the Shrine of the Semnai after the Kylonian Conspiracy. This is not only tenuous, but the continued use of the site argues against its use as a simple dump (Antonaccio 1991, 125). See: Burr 1933, 637.

²⁶³ Burr 1933, 637; Antonaccio 1995, 123.

²⁶⁴ Thompson 1968, 60.

and their placement on a strip of land between two major roads. He suggests the two sites might have formed a larger complex of heroic, chthonic or ancestral worship.²⁶⁵

Another site of interest is located immediately southwest of the Tholos (fig.22), which we will call the Tholos Cemetery. The site was centered on a cemetery of medium size, which was active from the last quarter of the eighth century until the second quarter of the seventh (fig.24).²⁶⁶ The cemetery was set against the Kolonos Agoraios to the northwest, which formed the western-most edge of the enclosure. In the Geometric period, a retaining wall was built to protect the graves, surrounding them on the south, east, and north sides. The site required a retaining wall because the cemetery itself was actually higher than the road around it. The burial population practiced both cremation and inhumation.

According to Young, at the end of the Geometric period, an enclosure wall was built to further protect the graves, which stood to a maximum height of 1.3m.²⁶⁷ The *terminus ante quem* for this wall is dated by a layer of PA sherds, which means the cemetery was enclosed just as the other Athenian cemeteries in the Agora—and indeed, within the city—were going out of use. There were two burials subsequent to this, but—as we see in other places within the settlement area—they were child graves. The precinct seems to have remained untouched after this point, as a feature of the Archaic Agora, until the end of the sixth century, when parts

²⁶⁵ Thompson 1968, 60.

²⁶⁶ Young 1939, 11.

²⁶⁷ Young 1939, 8.

of the wall were scavenged, and the site is generally described by Young as having been “abandoned”.²⁶⁸

The precinct wall was rebuilt in the early fifth century, and seems to have coincided with much building in the immediate vicinity. It is not altogether clear what the purpose of the construction was, but it cannot have been to restore the cemetery to its former preserved state, since wells had already been dug some decades prior to restoration efforts.²⁶⁹ One of these wells, dug in the southwest end of the cemetery, struck two cist inhumations: Grave XXI and XXII (fig.24).²⁷⁰ The contents of the graves were removed, except for an iron knife in XXI. The skeleton in Grave XXI was left more or less as it was found, except for the right arm, which was either destroyed by the diggers or taken as a token (fig.25).²⁷¹ Grave XXII is a little more complicated, since it seems to have been disturbed not once but twice: the first time in the digging of Grave XI, directly above it, while the cemetery was still in use; and the second time in the digging of the well. Nothing was preserved of the skeleton but the femur bones.

The two graves fall directly under the northeast end of the building archaeologists have identified as the *Strategeion*.²⁷² The wells, revealing the graves, were dug at some time in the sixth century, and preceded the building by some time. We cannot be certain that the Athenians were still aware of the discovery of these graves when the *Strategeion* was built, but there is reason to think so. We know that graves of heroes were integrated into a number of

²⁶⁸ Young 1939, 11.

²⁶⁹ Young 1939, 12.

²⁷⁰ Young 1939, 98.

²⁷¹ Young posits the diggers discovered the grave through a cutting on the side but subsequently dug down from directly above.

²⁷² Travlos 1978, 21.

public buildings throughout Greece. For example, Megara's *prytaneion* housed the bones of the heroes Euippos and Ischepolis.²⁷³ In another case, again in Megara, in reply to the question of how they could become prosperous following the rejection of kingship, the oracle at Delphi told them "to take counsel with the majority".²⁷⁴ They thought this meant the dead, so they built their *bouleuterion* on top of the heroes' tombs. The Heroön of Alkathous, again in Megara, doubled as a public archive.²⁷⁵ Curiously, it is not Alkathous' remains that are contained within its walls, but his wife Pyrgo's and his daughter Iphinoe's (maidens offered a lock of their hair here before their wedding). At Sparta, the hero Tisamenos was, according to Pausanias, buried under one of the *phiditia* dining halls which were such a prominent staple of the Spartan citizen lifestyle.²⁷⁶ One finds such examples at Athens as well. In Aristophanes' *Wasps*, Philokleon urges his son—upon his death—to "gather me up, give me a funeral, and bury me under the court railing".²⁷⁷ He goes on:

Lord Lycus, my nextdoor hero – for you enjoy the
same things I do, the tears and wailings of each
day's defendants, and of course chose to live where
you could best hear them, the only hero eager to
seat himself next to a weeper – now pity and
rescue your very own neighbour, and I vow never
to piss or fart on your fence!

²⁷³ Paus., 1, 42, 2: "ἐν δὲ τῷ πρυτανείῳ τεθάφθαι μὲν Εὐίππον Μεγαρέως παῖδα, τεθάφθαι δὲ τὸν Ἀλκάθου λέγουσιν Ἰσχύπολιν".

²⁷⁴ Paus., 1, 42, 3: "καὶ οἱ καὶ ἄλλα ὁ θεὸς ἔχρησε καὶ Μεγαρέας εὖ πράξειν, ἣν μετὰ τῶν πλείονων βουλευέσονται. τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος ἐς τοὺς τεθνεώτας ἔχειν νομίζοντες βουλευτήριον ἐνταῦθα ὠκοδόμησαν, ἵνα σφίσιν ὁ τάφος τῶν ἡρώων ἐντὸς τοῦ βουλευτηρίου γένηται".

²⁷⁵ Paus., 1, 42, 3.

²⁷⁶ Paus., 3, 1, 3: "Τισαμενοῦ δὲ τὸν νεκρὸν Ἀχαιῶν ἐν Ἑλίκῃ θαψάντων, ὕστερον χρόνῳ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς σφίσιν ἀνειπόντος χρηστηρίου κομίζουσι τὰ ὀστέα ἐς Σπάρτην, καὶ ἦν καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔτι αὐτῷ τάφος, ἐνθα τὰ δεῖπνα Λακεδαιμόνιοις ἐστὶ τὰ Φειδίτια καλούμενα". Pausanias does not mention which dining hall, although there was more than one.

²⁷⁷ Aristoph. *Wasps*, 386 (trans. Henderson).

Although Aristophanes playfully implies the hero chose to be buried in a law-court, presumably this is an aetiological (and whimsical) statement, and the order was in fact the reverse: the law-court was built over the existing tomb of the hero. We have other examples of such practices from outside Attica, as well.

This seems to have been the case of Grave XXI of the Tholos Cemetery, which was discovered by builders and incorporated into a public structure. It is widely agreed that this structure is the *Strategeion*,²⁷⁸ and if this is so, then we also have direct, epigraphic evidence that some form of hero worship took place here. An inscription from the second century AD marks a votive offering to the hero *Strategos*.²⁷⁹ An older inscription, from the second century BC, records an offering set up, again, to the same hero.²⁸⁰ We can see there would have been nothing anomalous about the tomb of a hero being contained within a public building. Indeed it served as a vital link between the everyday life of the living community and their communal ancestors, the heroes (Lycus in administering justice, Euippos and Ischepolis in making communal decisions, *Strategos* in guiding the decisions of the Athenian generals, and so on), something we will come back to in Chapter Three.

²⁷⁸ For the identity of the building, see: Thompson 1978, 100. Thompson, moreover, is in agreement that there was definitely a cult to the hero *Strategos* in this place.

²⁷⁹ *IG II²*, 1035, 53:

--- Προ των προβο[λ]ων θυουσιν η[ρ]ω[ι]
Στρατηγωι

²⁸⁰ Merritt 1946, 221:

[--- Απολ]οδωπου Οτρυνευς στρατηγησας
Επι τους σπλιτας επ[ι ---]
[αρχοντος] ηρωι Στρατηγωι ανεθηκεν

Another Athenian site that, on the face of it, looks to be of interest is a small Geometric cemetery located just to the west of the Areopagos, which we referred to in Chapter One as the “enclosed Areopagos cemetery”.²⁸¹ It was like the Tholos Cemetery in that it was a grave plot that remained a visible fixture of the Archaic city. Unlike the Tholos Cemetery, however, it saw renewed use, after the PA period, in the mid-sixth century. This makes it completely exceptional within the city of Athens in this period, since the city switched to extramural burial in the PA period. The wealth and grave population of this cemetery spiked in the late sixth century, notably in the time of the Peisistratid tyrants. This is precisely the connection that Morris draws, pointing out a particularly opulent sarcophagus of island marble as the possible resting place of Peisistratus himself.²⁸² Whether this was the case or not, the fact that the area was in active use in this period means that it cannot have been the center of any sort of hero worship (unless the Peisistratids were actively engaged in heroizing their own ancestors, which is not altogether impossible, but perhaps out of the realm of reasonable speculation). In any case, the site was largely forgotten in the post-Peisistratid period. There is no evidence of active use of the area for another purpose until the fourth century, when houses were built over top the now forgotten cemetery.²⁸³ The Areopagos cemetery cannot be considered a site of hero worship, since as we said earlier, one must distinguish between tendance of ancestors and the communal worship implicit in the cult to a hero.

In Corinth we see several examples of agora-based heroic cult. The first site is centered on a group of four PG graves, just northeast of the *bema* (fig.26)— the so-called Heroön of the

²⁸¹ Young 1951, 67.

²⁸² Morris 1988, 67-8.

²⁸³ Young 1951, 74.

Crossroads. These four graves were very early in the Corinthian burial sequence, dating to the very beginnings of any kind of settlement in this area. The graves seem to have been forgotten, and were paved over by a roadway, lying dormant until the EC period, when Grave 72-4 was discovered and looted.²⁸⁴ However, the coverslab was replaced, and by the LC period, at least, an enclosure had been built overtop the graves (fig.27).²⁸⁵ It is clear the builders of the sanctuary were not entirely certain of the locations of all of the graves, since 73-4 was partly covered over by the eastern sanctuary wall. Nevertheless, the one grave of which they were certain became central to the structure, lining up on an axis with the building's entrance. The earliest use of the enclosure is dated by a stratum that included a BF Attic amphora, which featured a scene of Herakles battling Amazons. A series of horse and rider figurines were found among the offerings at the site.²⁸⁶ Two rectangular blocks of poros were sunk in the southeastern part of the shrine (about .11m deep). They were identified as either *stelai* or as table legs.²⁸⁷ Just south (.3m) of the eastern block, a triangular stone was found, sunk into a sandy fill. Two coins (one Argive, the other Corinthian) were found in the same fill, according to Williams, "adhering to one another", along with a *phiale*.²⁸⁸ The *temenos* continued to be used, undergoing various alterations, until the destruction of Corinth in 146 BC.

There has not been very much scholarly discussion of this site. When mentioned, it is brief, and the author almost always takes for granted that it was, in fact, an intramural, agora

²⁸⁴ Williams et al. 1974, 5.

²⁸⁵ Williams et al. 1974, 5.

²⁸⁶ Williams et al. 1974, 5.

²⁸⁷ The eastern block, amazingly, was found still standing when the area was excavated in 1973. See: Williams et al. 1974, 4, 6.

²⁸⁸ Williams et al. 1974, 4.

hero site.²⁸⁹ Indeed, I see no reason to disagree with this assessment. This site, more than any other we have seen so far, seems to meet almost all of the criteria of hero cult. Being in a public place—the city's agora—the cult is almost certainly public in character. It lasted for a considerable period—right down to the city's destruction—and had a distinct shrine, which clearly centered on the grave of the hero (Grave 72-4). The few votives found either point to a heroic cult (the Heraklaic amphora, the horse and rider figurines)²⁹⁰ or are curious enough to defy categorization (the coin offering). It is a very clear case of ancient and forgotten graves being rediscovered, and incorporated into a developed political culture as hero cult. Finally, it might be said that a hero would have been perfectly at home in this place, at the crossroads. Such a location would have suited the liminal and ambiguous nature of the hero.

Another Corinthian hero site, to the southwest of the Crossroads Heroön, in the south-central area of the agora, is the so-called Underground Shrine (fig.26). It was uncovered when the excavators looked under a layer of cobblestone and revealed four LG graves (fig.28).²⁹¹ They were rectangular, rock-cut graves with poros coverslabs (which are exceptional in Corinth, at any time). The graves were richly endowed, one featured a half-meter tall krater.²⁹² Grave C, a woman's, contained gold spiral earrings, a bronze ring, iron pins with ivory end-pieces. Four of the graves—A, B, F, G—were paired, falling on a perpendicular axis to one another. Each grave was connected to its partner by a shallow shelf, on which was laid a large iron spit. In each case, the grave pair featured one grave more richly furnished and better built and one poorer and of

²⁸⁹ Williams et al. 1974, 1; Morris 1988, 193.

²⁹⁰ Broneer considers the horse and rider figurines to be of a heroic nature. See: Broneer 1942, 129.

²⁹¹ Morgan 1937, 543.

²⁹² Morgan 1937, 543.

lower quality. Oddly it is the two female graves—B and F—that are the better furnished. The men made do with smaller, rougher graves. These have been interpreted as husband/wife burials.²⁹³

Just south of the burials was an enclosure, surrounding a meter-deep pit, in the center of which was a poros foundation for an altar (fig.29). The east wall was abutted by another poros block, perhaps for a cult statue.²⁹⁴ There was no west wall, only four rectangular holes for columns. Though separated by a short distance, the entrance and altar of the shrine were on an axis with the graves, which the excavators could only explain as symbolic.²⁹⁵ The pit was covered with bones of pigs and lambs, which are animals particularly associated with chthonic cult.²⁹⁶ The building and altar were set up in the sixth century. The excavators point out that this is around the time of the last burial in the area.²⁹⁷ While this is true, this particular burial is of a small child or infant. The burials around which the cult was based were from the LG period, around the time that active burials were in the last stages of being moved to the North Cemetery.

In fact, this is important, and might contribute to an overall picture of the site. The four graves—A, B, F, G—must have been among the very last to be buried in the agora. They must

²⁹³ Morgan 1937, 544.

²⁹⁴ Morgan 1937, 545.

²⁹⁵ Morgan 1937, 546.

²⁹⁶ Morgan makes this point without elaborating on it. See: Morgan 1937, 546. It is not quite as clear-cut as she says, however. Certainly some animals were less liked than others. However, there seem to have been few animals that were clearly considered to be chthonic and “of the night”, and even fewer that were forbidden from being consumed. The closest we can come to seeing whether certain animals were chthonic or not is to note that the author *On the Sacred Disease* told patients to abstain from dog, pig, goat and deer— all of them animals associated with the eating of dung, just as, not coincidentally I think, was Hekate (she was an eater of corpses, also). See: Parker 1983, 360.

²⁹⁷ Morgan 1937, 546.

have been conspicuous, presumably by virtue of a marker, since two centuries later their location was well enough marked to align a shrine on an almost perfect axis with all four graves. They were probably undisturbed, since not only were the coverslabs unmolested and the contents intact, but the spits from the shallow shelves between the graves were still in place. This must be an example of a site that was caught in the transition from a pre-political to a fully political environment. It may very well have been a site of tendance and ancestral veneration, at first— much as the West Gate burials at Eretria might have been. Over time, however, there is no doubt the graves were incorporated into a poliadic hero cult. The sixth century shrine is probably the culmination of this process. It remained a functioning shrine until the fourth century, when the agora was rebuilt.²⁹⁸ At that point, the pit was filled, and the area was paved over. Over the pit, to commemorate the site of the former shrine, builders laid down an elaborate mosaic of a griffin devouring a horse, which the excavators consider a chthonic scene in keeping with the former use of the area.

Of interest to both of these sites is a deposit of terracotta figurines, glass, coins and other objects found in a room at the west end of the South Stoa. This curious collection was conjectured by Davidson to have been from a shop selling votives appropriate to the shrines in its immediate vicinity (a vicinity that included both of the heroic shrines we have just mentioned).²⁹⁹ Broneer identified five groups of votives in this deposit that could be of use in hero cult: reclining figures; mounted figures; votive shields; *stelai* featuring snakes and helmets;

²⁹⁸ Morgan 1937, 546.

²⁹⁹ Davidson 1942, 127.

standing female figurines.³⁰⁰ He links these votives to other *stelai* found in Corinth that depict what appears to be chthonic feasting (fig.29). A male figure reclines, eating and drinking, alongside a seated female. Worshippers on the left—perhaps a family—bring an offering of a pig, while to the right, a boy offers something to the man. Underneath the table, a snake rises from a coiled position. A horse looks in through the window. These objects are connected to the heroic cults in the agora, although we are unable to say which objects were used in which cult.

Argos presents a few examples that are likewise interesting. The city is a somewhat contradictory site, given our interest. One would assume that Argos, with its late practice of intramural burial, would present a treasure-trove of heroic sites. Certainly, Pausanias describes it as a wonderland of heroic shrines and memorials. The barrier to discovering these sites lies in the modern city overlying the ancient. This is unlike the site of ancient Corinth, which has minimal development overtop it, and unlike modern Athens, which has been endowed with vastly greater resources to excavate it.

Nevertheless, heroic sites have come to light. At the Kannelopoulos Plot, in the southwestern part of the city, an Iron Age cemetery became the focus of a late sixth century cult. In the seventh and sixth century, infant burials were interred alongside the Geometric, adult cist graves.³⁰¹ In the late sixth century, a structure was constructed overtop the cemetery—the excavators called it a *sekos*, made of large poros blocks—the northern wall of which overlapped the coverslab of an Iron Age cist grave, leaving the grave halfway inside and

³⁰⁰ Broneer 1942, 129.

³⁰¹ Antonaccio 1995, 212.

halfway outside the structure.³⁰² The grave and the structure above were, according to Antonaccio, “quite precisely aligned” with regard to the axis on which they fell. Within the structure, several pits contained human bones, grave offerings and other miscellany transported from another location (Antonaccio mentions a particularly interesting item: a human skull inside a vessel, the meaning of which is unknown).³⁰³ Excavators removed about a hundred and fifty vessels from this fill, which ranged from Corinthian to Attic ware, and included other votives, such as figurines, lamps, knucklebones, shield straps and boot soles. The excavators conjectured, based on the votives, that this was a hero shrine to young warriors.³⁰⁴ A bench was installed in the Classical period—for purposes unknown—and the whole complex was replaced in the third century by a pi-shaped structure. Ritual activity continued here until the fourth century AD. Activity may also be linked to a structure just to the north, perhaps of Classical date, which yielded a relief of a man leaning on a staff, with a snake at his feet.³⁰⁵

The excavators themselves were sceptical about the relationship of the cist (which was covered by the north wall) with the structure above it.³⁰⁶ They considered it a coincidence that the two were in approximately the same area. Nevertheless, they do not deny the area is cultic, probably even heroic, judging by the remains and votives. It may very well be the case that the site and the graves were unrelated. However, I would point out a few things that might be pertinent here. The first is that the position of the grave might only have been half-

³⁰² Antonaccio 1995, 212.

³⁰³ Antonaccio 1995, 212.

³⁰⁴ Kritzas 1973, 133.

³⁰⁵ Antonaccio 1995, 214.

³⁰⁶ Antonaccio makes clear this was the case, citing a personal communication with Kritzas in 1985. See: Antonaccio 1995, 213.

remembered. It is clear that the position of the graves at the Heroön of the Crossroads were not all remembered, nor at the West Gate at Eretria. The second item of importance is this: Antonaccio makes the point that the grave and the wall were quite “precisely” related to one another. It is quite possible that this grave was meant to be the object of worship. Certainly the builders seem to have forgotten its exact location, but have managed to remember the axis that it lay on, and the approximate space it lay under. Of the sanctuary's status, we must call it a heroic cult. It combines elements of ritual, votive offerings, and chthonic objects (including one of our only archaeological pieces of evidence for heroic bone transfer), in a communal setting, and it does so over an extremely long time (it is one of the longest lived heroic cults for which we have archaeological evidence).

Another site of heroic interest at Argos is an enclosure, surrounding a series of posts made of limestone. One of the posts was inscribed ΕΡΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΘΕΒΑΙΣ, showing that it was dedicated to the Argive fighters who, in myth, attempted to sack Thebes. It is somewhat rare to find a monument that spells out its association quite so obviously. There were, however, no graves to be found here. It is true that graves were often invented for heroes. Pausanias makes it clear that he does not believe certain *poleis'* claims for ownership of heroic remains (he makes it clear, however, that the local population really did believe it).³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, in this particular case, he makes it clear that the Heroön of the Seven Against Thebes at Argos was not considered to be the tomb of the heroes. He makes no reference to any kind of worship or ritual, and the lack of any altar at the site seems to support the contention that such ritual did

³⁰⁷ Paus., 2.23.3.

not occur here. This seems to have been only a memorial.³⁰⁸ It is interesting, however, that—by Pausanias' time, at least—the term “heroön” did not necessarily imply worship.³⁰⁹

Of interest, for our purpose, are two sites on the island of Delos. The first is the so-called Tombs of the Hyperboreans. Herodotus describes two known tombs: the first to Laodike and Hyperoche; and the second to Arge and Opis.³¹⁰ He describes an elaborate and idiosyncratic series of rituals centered on the two virgin pairs every year. He specifies the location of the two tombs as being in or around the Artemision of Delos. Arge and Opis' were just behind it, Laodike and Hyperoche's actually within the limits of the sanctuary. Delian excavators have identified an LH chamber tomb—just in front of the Stoa of Antigonos—as being the tomb of Arge and Opis.³¹¹ We have only very late archaeological evidence for a shrine atop the tomb (from the first half of the first century BC), but Herodotus' narrative, describing the rites in detail, pushes back the date to the fifth century. In all likelihood, it was established before this time, though we have no evidence for when or under what circumstances (was the tomb stumbled upon, or was it always known?). The shrine featured a *prothusia* (a sacrificial bench) in place of an altar. Meanwhile, some effort has been made to identify a structure at the entrance of the Artemision as the other Hyperborean tomb.³¹² As Antonaccio points out, the

³⁰⁸ Paus., 2.20.6.

³⁰⁹ We may compare this to Eleusis, where Pausanias and Plutarch both specify the graves of the Seven to be (Plut. *Theseus*, 29, 5; Paus., 1.39.2: “ἔστι καὶ μετ’ αὐτὸ τάφοι τῶν ἐπὶ Θρήβας”). Mylonas has related a group of MH-LH graves to Pausanias' site. There has, however, been significant criticism of this point of view, and Antonaccio points out the fact that the graves were merely marked off. We don't know what this means. Certainly there does not seem to have been any engagement of the site in continuous ritual or worship. However, the point, in this case, is that if we were to expect the grave to be at either site, it would be at Eleusis and not Argos, based on the testimony of Pausanias and Plutarch. See: Mylonas 1961, 62-3; Antonaccio 1995, 114.

³¹⁰ Herodotus, IV, 32-5.

³¹¹ Antonaccio 1995, 184.

³¹² Antonaccio 1995, 186.

only reason to think this is the other tomb is its structural similarity to a chamber tomb, as well as its location at the entrance to the Artemision. It has no actual graves. It seems clear that, at the very least, the first site—the chamber tomb—is a heroic shrine, judging by the relation of the site to an LH tomb, the site's public location and the evidence for continuous sacrifice. The second may very well have been, though we cannot say for certain.

The second site at Delos we will examine is the Archegesion of Anios, the mythical founder of Delos. The Archegesion itself was a long, sixth century rectangular building on a N-S axis, housing a series of small, square rooms (fig.30).³¹³ Just to the east of the south-most room, four Archaic graves had been preserved in antiquity, and were the center of the cult's activity. We know the specific object of the cult—Anios the Founder—by inscribed sherds found onsite. To the northwest, a square, paved court held an ash altar, which was also built in the sixth century, and was off limits to the public (according to a fourth century inscription).

The two sites in Delos are of course useful in themselves as evidence for intramural heroic worship. Of particular interest, however, is the fact that these graves were not removed in the Athenian purge of the island, when all of the graves within sight of the sanctuary of Apollo were expunged.³¹⁴ How can this be possible, unless the Athenians perceived a fundamental difference between the two kinds of bones? This is a question to which we shall return in Chapter Three.

³¹³ Antonaccio 1995, 218.

³¹⁴ This presumably refers to visible distance and not line-of-sight: for how can one see a grave, aside from the marker? The text refers to *nekrous*, not *mnemata*, as the offending objects. The Greek suggests the former to be the case, that it was a matter of radius from the temple. See: Herodotus, I, 64: “ἐπ’ ὅσον ἔποψις ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ”.

Conclusion

Let us summarize. Depictions of heroes vary, but there does seem to be a common element of ambivalence in their nature. Homeric heroes are strong in life, genetically descended (but inferior to) the gods, and are feeble in death. Hesiodic heroes are superior to mortals in life, and in fact do not feel death at all, but are removed to the liminal corners of the earth, where they engage in a Golden Age lifestyle (freed from mortal shackles) while ostensibly remaining mortal. In the Archaic and Classical Ages, heroes are superior in life—half-gods that they are—and follow the mortal path to Hades afterward. Nevertheless, they are both absent and present in death, their power both diminished and in some ways enhanced. Their cult reflected this, as mortals sought to gain favour with the heroes by nourishing their remains. Their cult reflected their idiosyncratic needs. Unlike the gods, the heroes need blood, not smoke, and so are fed through tubes (which we have not seen archaeologically in this survey) or pits. The physical presence of the hero is normally a requirement for cult, and so his bones becomes a central aspect of hero cult. This feature is both indicative of and contributes to his local character.

Heroic figures are ancestors, but only in the public imagination. They were not familiarly related to or traceable to any particular bloodline (exceptions having been noted). Hero cult, therefore, cannot be called ancestor cult. It involves no overt claim to blood tie and does not operate within a private social structure, such as the *oikos*. Hero cult always operates on the level of public institutions, whether polis, phratry, deme or otherwise. Heroic cult should be considered separate from tendance, as well, since—although some basic ideas of nourishing

the dead are engaged—the basic social implications of the act, and the social groups engaged by household tendance, are quite different.

At Lefkandi, we saw that the “heroön” was no heroön at all, but an elaborate site of tendance and possibly ancestor cult. However, the elites burying their dead at the West Gate cemetery at Eretria would use precisely these symbols to show their separation from the larger community. In the early seventh century, however, these very symbols would in turn be appropriated by the wider community into heroic cult, involving communal worship, an altar, permanent structures, as well as a clear emphasis on the graves of the heroized dead. At Athens, we see a similar triangular monument, clearly marked off as sacred, and possibly centered around an old grave. We can consider it a heroic site, and perhaps a hero shrine. The Oval House, however, is clearly a heroic cult sanctuary, involving public space, prolonged use, votive activity and graves in abundance. The Tholos Cemetery gained new significance in the early Classical period. Two of the graves were incorporated into a public structure, probably the *Strategeion*, in a manner reminiscent of literary reports from Pausanias and Aristophanes. This is a good example of heroic cult of a type we rarely see archaeologically, different from a stand-alone shrine, but still fully significant for the city. The Areopagos Cemetery on the other hand, cannot be considered a hero cult, interesting though it is. It is rather a bizarre example of post-PA intramural burial, at the heart of the city, during the supremacy of the Peisistratid tyrants. It does help us, however, to delimit what usage of the tombscape can be legitimately considered to be heroic and what cannot. Corinth perhaps, of all the cities we have seen, offers the purest and most prototypical heroic sites. Both the Heroön of the Crossroads and the Underground

Shrine are public places, with long histories of ritual activity, and both have demonstrable connections to Iron Age graves. The Argive Kannelopoulos shrine fits this bill as well, located inside the Classical city, centered not only on graves, but on imported human remains, and yielding a great number of votives over an extended period of time. Meanwhile, both of the Delian hero sites incorporate these elements, while additionally showing us that heroic remains were fundamentally different from mortal remains. All of these sites were begun in the Archaic or Early Classical period, and all of them center on old graves, which, in one manner or another, were uncovered in a public place (often the agora), and were often—for reasons we shall discuss in the next chapter—integrated into the living city.

Chapter Three

Introduction

In Chapter One we looked at the tombscape of three cities—Athens, Corinth and Argos, as well as two of the Euboean settlements of the Lelantine Plain—from the Sub-Mycenaean Period up to the Classical period. It was noted that around 700 BC, as a part of a larger trend across the Greek Mediterranean, these cities ceased burying their dead within the limits of the city (we noted in Chapter One that Argos was an exception, adopting the ban significantly later). This period has traditionally been associated with a general shift in values and priorities that attended the emergence of the Greek polis. In Chapter Two we looked at the Greek hero and found him to be a liminal and ambiguous figure, embodying a series of contradictory characteristics. We also looked at several archaeologically attested, intramural hero cults. It was noted that these hero cults were centered on old graves, which we had first seen in Chapter One, and which had been swallowed by the living settlement, remaining in an area now considered unsuitable for human burial. These graves were rediscovered and reinterpreted in the Archaic Period, becoming shrines to half-mythical demigods. This now leads us back to the anomaly of hero cult that we talked about in the introduction: the presence of grave cult in the city, despite the ban on intramural burial. This reflects a larger anomaly: that, while these graves and the rites associated with them were associated with the private sphere, they were appropriated by the public sphere in the Archaic period and these sites—formerly private plots—were now in public locations, such as the agora; nevertheless, hero cult retained both elements— it was grave cult and civic cult at the same time.

This ban on intramural burial was precisely the issue faced by the Sikyonians, who, wishing to bury Aratus within the city and to honour him, nevertheless were unable to reconcile this desire with their own prohibition on intramural burial. They consulted the Delphic Oracle, which instructed them to replace black mourning clothes with white and to sing joyous songs, rather than the funerary dirge. Thus, by a sort of sleight of hand, the Sikyonians buried Aratus in the city.³¹⁵ Unable to obtain the privilege, for a friend, of burial within the city walls, Servius expressed his exasperation with Athenian burial practices thus: “I could not induce the Athenians to grant him a place of burial within the city, as they alleged that they were prevented by religious scruples from doing so; and it is a fact that they had never granted that privilege to anyone”.³¹⁶ We saw in the last two chapters that this explicit ban had been in place for centuries.

Thus it remains to be asked: what was the status of heroic bones with regard to the ban on intramural burial; what quality differentiated them from regular bones; what did this have to do with the heroic qualities of ambiguity and liminality; and finally, what does all this have to do with the hero's place in the city? I will therefore begin the chapter by addressing purity and pollution, as it is understood by anthropologists and by scholars of Greek religion. This will be followed by a discussion of the attested reactions of the Greeks to remains found in the midst of their cities. We shall see that there were three potential reactions: heroizing the dead; reburying them; and casting them out. Nevertheless, as we shall also see, the remains of the hero are not so easy to classify as either pure or impure, a situation that will require some

³¹⁵ Plut. *Arat.*, 217.

³¹⁶ Cicero *Ad Fam.*, 4, 12, 3 (trans. Shuckburgh).

explanation. Having looked at concepts of pollution and the Greek reaction to perceived pollution, we will look at how the hero affected the Greek perception first of time and then of space. After this I will outline the concept of “useful pollution” and how it was related to the remains of the hero and to the bones’ perceived (im)purity. I will end the chapter by arguing for a connection between the effect of the hero on time/space and the useful pollution inherent in his remains, and arguing that these aspects of heroic cult were what made it relevant to the creation of citizen community beginning in the early Archaic period.

Purity and Danger

The debate over purity is a long one. Productive speculation was largely stifled in the nineteenth century by the school of thought put forward by J.G. Frazer, who sought to make very concrete divisions between “religion” and “magic”, placing cathartic ritual into a realm of savagery it no longer occupies today.³¹⁷ Durkheim was perhaps closer to the mark, placing ritual purity in the context of community and in defining and maintaining corporate groupings, though he too considered cathartic ritual and other forms of “magic” to be separate from religion.³¹⁸ It was not until Mary Douglas’ pioneering work *Purity and Danger* that it was shown that the two phenomena were linked, and indeed are indistinguishable elements of a complex system of symbolic action that make up and define the community.³¹⁹ She showed, moreover, that modern society exhibits the same sort of behaviour as the “primitive”, since she frames purity and its pursuit as a science of division, based on communal and psychological ideas of what should exist where. It is equivalent to, in our modern conception, health and hygiene, which rests on a very specific idea of what the ideal state of cleanliness is (dirt is removed not by blood sacrifice, however, but by soap). The motive is the same, even if the specific schema of separation is different.

³¹⁷ And so Frazer could make a statement like “Taboos of holiness agree with taboos of pollution because the savage does not distinguish between holiness and pollution”. This statement, in isolation and shorn of its explicit racism, is actually not without its merits, as we shall see. In Frazer’s conception however, all impurity that was linked to material phenomena was shelved under the rubric of “magic” and became irrelevant to any sort of intercultural comparison, since these were irrational elements confined to primitive societies. See: Frazer 1911, 224.

³¹⁸ Mary Douglas notes that, if Durkheim had followed the internal logic of his own work, he would have seen “magic” as simply another symbolic act, and therefore fully religious in its significance. See: Douglas 1966, 27.

³¹⁹ Douglas 1966, 50.

A concern with purity, in any system, involves attempting to avoid pollution, of which there are two kinds: the impure, which is to say corporeal pollution (often stemming from material causes such as bodily waste, death or birth, and often envisioned as an contagious, daemonic force, outside of the purview of the gods) and the sacred, arising from the anger of a deity (often the result of a specific act, intentional or otherwise, calling down the wrath of that god on an individual, or perhaps a whole community). In the end, these two distinctions are idealized, synchronic categories, whose specific features differed from period to period and from place to place. Nevertheless, the distinction is an important one. Corporeal pollution represents a mechanical, contagious taint, “with the same ruthless indifference to motive as a typhoid germ”³²⁰, which was in and of itself a danger to the individual and community. Divine Anger, on the other hand, was a mark, placed on an individual on account of his own action. It was also a danger to the community, but not on account of contagion, but rather on account of the inherent danger of finding oneself in close proximity to the afflicted individual.³²¹ The connection of daemonic powers to corporeal pollution stands, ostensibly, in contrast to the connection of the gods to the second category of divine pollution. Nevertheless, as Vernant points out, there are cases in which *daimones* are seen as agents of the gods as well, blurring

³²⁰ Dodds 1951, 36.

³²¹ Parker makes an excellent analogy, comparing the danger of divine vengeance to the danger of a shipwreck (almost inevitably cause by divine vengeance in the ancient Greek world: Hom. *Od.* III, 133; Aesch. *Sept.* 602-4; Antiphon 5, 82; Eur. *El.* 1350): when one man is marked for disaster, everyone finds themselves at the bottom of the ocean. See: Parker 1983, 9 n.39.

the two categories.³²² While corporeal pollution—as a form of dirt or stain—can simply, in most cases, be washed away, divine anger must be dispelled by other means.

In most cases—in anthropological study and certainly in the case of ancient Greece—the two conceptions of pollution are observed simultaneously, alongside one another. This has led to speculation that, in “primitive” cultures, the two types of pollution—the one demonic, corporeal and the result of contact with the impure, the other from the gods and the result of contact with the pure—were in fact one and the same. The fact that pollution could come from material circumstances was a problem for early anthropologists, who were often theologians (Christianity does not recognize the power of the corporeal to pollute the soul). This was very much in Eliade’s mind when he pronounced of the primitive that “the sacred is at once ‘sacred’ and ‘defiled’”.³²³ The pure and impure were apparently elided by the savage, because the status they conferred—whether through pollution or consecration—resulted in the separation of the individual from the community, making them dangerous and quite literally “untouchable”. The effect was the same, and because of this, the idea arose that the sacred, in the savage mind, was as repulsive and terrifying as the polluted (and vice versa).³²⁴ The duality of the sacred was a quality Frazer considered to be a good indicator of whether a religion was primitive or not (indeed, he considered the “magical” elements of primitive religion—i.e. the

³²² Vernant 1980, 121. Rohde linked Classical pollution to attacking “daemonic” forces, and laments the competition in later Greek thought between “ethics” (divine pollution) versus mechanical catharsis (corporeal impurity, which was seen by him to be largely absent in the Homeric world). See: Rohde 1925, 294-6.

³²³ Eliade 1958, 14-5.

³²⁴ “It is supposed to be a mark of primitive religion to make no clear distinction between sanctity and uncleanness”. See: Douglas 1966, 9.

belief in an impersonal pollution and the cathartic ritual attached to it—not to be religious at all, but a detritus to be removed if one was to reach the core of a culture's beliefs).

The thesis of the sacred and polluted being one and the same in primitive cultures has endured, though not without challenge, and not without undergoing important changes, shedding much of its colonial-era racism and its roots in theology. Douglas was concerned to show that the two types of pollution—impersonal pollution and divine pollution—almost always exist side by side in any social system (in Christendom as much as Polynesia), and are seldom easily distinguished.³²⁵ She connects the two types of pollution by showing that both involve crossing established symbolic lines between what is permitted and what isn't—be it connected to the physical or not, intentional or not. Nevertheless, she also stresses that the sacred and polluted are conceptually separate, stemming from different metaphysical sources. She notes moreover that the physically and spiritually polluted can paradoxically be used for powerful and sacral functions (we shall return to this later in the chapter), joining the two opposite poles into a neatly rounded circle.³²⁶

Vernant, discussing ancient Greek purity specifically, contends that the sacred and polluted existed side by side, and stressed that pollution could be both intentional and unintentional, subjective and objective, internal and external, often at the same time.³²⁷ He cites the common etymology of the Greek word *agos* (defiled, polluted) and *hagos* (pure, consecrated). Moreover, he places these concepts in a religious and social universe in the way

³²⁵ Douglas 1966, 140.

³²⁶ Douglas 1966, 196.

³²⁷ Vernant 1988, 114-5.

that Douglas outlines in her work, effectively bringing cathartic practices and concerns over purity out of the dustbin of obsolete and forgotten social customs and into a living world, relevant to the community and to its concerns. It is his contention therefore, that, regardless of the different methods by which one is polluted/consecrated—whether by material, defiling *miasma*, or by falling under the *agos* of a specific god or goddess—the end result is the same: the individual is rendered untouchable and dangerous to the ordinary person and to the city as a whole.³²⁸ In this, he stresses the symptom rather than cause (which is odd, given his concern to conduct a structural reading of purity). Robert Parker stresses that although the end result (untouchability) is the same, there are really two distinct causes of pollution in the Greek world.³²⁹ To incur the wrath of the gods is to become the subject of *agos*, either by transgressing their rules or insulting them in some way. By contrast, to come into contact with something that is physically polluting is to be exposed to *miasma*, such as approaching a corpse or being present during birth.³³⁰ Both, however, may occur simultaneously. Murder creates *miasma*, by virtue of creating a corpse to radiate it (this falls under the category of “dirt”, i.e. matter out of place). Murder may additionally result in *agos*, depending on the intentions of the perpetrator, or on whether or not it was considered “justified”. The two result in the same outcome and can be so intertwined at times as to become indistinguishable. Nevertheless, there are two separate factors at work here. Both corporeal pollution and divine pollution had a role to play in Greek society, but we must remember that the two are conceptually different,

³²⁸ Vernant 1988, 127.

³²⁹ Parker 1983, 8.

³³⁰ Theophrastus (*Char.*, XVI, 9) makes it clear it is a matter of proximity that exposes one to *miasma*. So, for example, the Superstitious Man will not approach a corpse, or tomb, or woman in child-birth, claiming it to be “expedient not to be polluted” (which itself implies that purification can be a simple matter of mechanical ritual).

even if they achieved the same end. In this, Parker agrees with Mary Douglas, that the sacred and polluted were not conceptually the same, even if – at times – things that were ostensibly polluting were used in sacral ritual. The ancient Greeks did not consider the sacred to be polluted and the polluted sacred (there was, for example, no revulsion attached to the Olympian gods). Human bones were not sacred. As “matter out of place”, they would have radiated miasma, regardless of whose bones they were or the circumstances surrounding the death.

Bringing Out the Dead

There are several instances in the extant literature of the living stumbling on the dead in their midst. This could occur for example, as we saw in the archaeological evidence, in the construction of roads or temples. The literature provides crucial evidence for the different reactions to the discovery of bones in the city. It did not, in every case, involve heroization or tomb cult. There were three options: heroize the remains; or, leave the bones as they were, covering them back up; or, cast them out of the city entirely. It is hard to say which of the three was the most common response (although, as we shall see, it is easy to see that the second—reburying the remains—is the most problematic and least favoured). Most likely, the reaction of the community and its mode of action depended on the specific circumstances surrounding the initial discovery.

We have focused on cases where the action taken was to heroize the remains. There are, furthermore, examples of this in the literature as well. Concerning our two most famous examples—the discovery of the bones of Theseus and of Orestes—the discovery of Theseus' bones must be discounted, since they were found outside of any settlement.³³¹ Orestes', however, were found under the shop of a blacksmith in Tegea, where the Spartan Lichas, after some initial difficulty, managed to smuggle them away to Sparta.³³² In this case, they were clearly recognized to be the bones of a hero, and were treated as such, even if their heroic commemoration took place elsewhere. Other examples exist. In Argos, while conducting repairs on the Temple of Cretan Dionysos, a tomb was discovered and the remains unearthed.

³³¹ Plutarch *Theseus*, 36; *Kimon*, 8; Paus., 3, 3, 7.

³³² Herodotus, I, 66-8.

Pausanias says that “an earthenware coffin was found, and that it was Ariadne's... [Lycheas] himself and other Argives had seen it”.³³³ The term “earthenware coffin” (κεραμέαν) probably indicates a pithos. As we saw earlier, moreover, Babrius' fable tells us of a man who discovered a grave in his house.³³⁴ He promptly sets up a hero shrine.

This specific scenario—unexpectedly coming across remains of the old tombscape in the midst of the living settlement and then heroizing them—agrees with at least some of the cases we saw in the last chapter: the Heroön of the Crossroads and the Underground Shrine at Corinth; the Tholos Cemetery and the Strategeion at Athens; the Tombs of the Hyperboreans at Delos. So, in both of the Corinthian examples, we saw that excavators struck tombs while building in the agora (at the Heroön of the Crossroads, the first tomb discovered was looted for relics). The Athenian Tholos Cemetery was rediscovered while digging a well under the future Strategeion, which was built on top of the ancient cemetery. The Hyperborean tombs became associated not only with the yearly sacrifice to Apollo, which came from the far north, but were also in very close proximity to the sanctuary of Artemis (one tomb was behind the sanctuary, the other was immediately inside the entrance).³³⁵ The other archaeological cases involved similar processes, but were perhaps more gradual in their manner of integration (since the tombs were not “rediscovered”, *per se*). These sites integrated tombs that were already known, but no longer acceptable, into a new social landscape (for example, the Heroön of the West Gate). Nevertheless, we see that the clash between old and new is the same in all of these

³³³ Paus., 2, 23, 8: “κεραμέαν εὕρεθῆναι σορόν, εἶναι δὲ Ἀριάδνης αὐτήν καὶ αὐτός τε καὶ ἄλλους Ἀργείων ἰδεῖν ἔφη τὴν σορόν”.

³³⁴ Babrius, I, 63.

³³⁵ Herodotus, IV, 32-5.

cases, and that in all cases a deliberate decision was made to heroize the remains and to integrate them actively into the living city.

This, of course, was not the only option. Reburial would seem to have been an option, *prima facie*, though, in reality, it was practiced infrequently at best. The incident involving Orestes' bones may have been an instance of heroization for the Spartans, but it was simultaneously an instance that portrays the Tegeans (or, at least a Tegean) reburying the uncovered bones. It was the blacksmith himself who tells the Spartan about the bones, and he admits that he had stumbled on them while digging a well, but covered them back over and left them alone.³³⁶ In this case, there is an implicit critique of the Tegean blacksmith's actions, who does not realize the boon he is denying his city (and moreover, not recognizing the danger in allowing the Spartan to dig them up).

The third option was to cast the bones out of the city. Disinterment and expulsion of the remains of the dead was an act most often portrayed as deliberate and practiced on known individuals, symbolically severing the ties that the deceased had with the community. So, for example, the historians tell us of the "accursed", who butchered the members of the Kylonian conspiracy. They themselves were exiled, and their ancestors removed from their graves and cast out of Attica.³³⁷ The body of the tyrant Hieron, meanwhile, when the Catanaeans retook Aetna, was cast out of the city in a deliberate act of rejection.³³⁸ There are fewer surviving examples in which the casting out comes as the result of an accidental discovery of bones,

³³⁶ Herodotus, I, 68.

³³⁷ Thuc., I, 126; Plut. *Solon*, 12.

³³⁸ Strabo, 6, 2, 3.

perhaps because it makes for a relatively uninteresting story. When an example is recounted, it almost assuredly contains elements that are bizarre or fantastic. Pausanias relates the discovery of a body in the Temple of Hera at Olympia.³³⁹ The body was found caught in a crevice in the roof, fully-armed. This curious find was explained by the Eleans as a remnant from an ancient war between the Eleans and the Spartans, when fighting had advanced all the way to the Sanctuary at Olympia. This particular foot-soldier, wounded, took refuge on the roof and apparently never woke. His corpse was taken outside the Altis and buried, along with his armour. The most famous incident survives in the account, which we have already mentioned, of the two purifications of the island of Delos, when the tombs of the dead were moved out of polluting range of the Temple of Apollo (all except the tombs of the heroes; the Hyperborean tombs and the tomb of Anios Archegetes were spared).

We can be sure that such concerns about the dead existed for the Greeks by at least Hesiod's time. Hesiod warns against the miasma emitted by the tombs of the dead.³⁴⁰ He shows himself to be interested, moreover, in the science of division. Therefore, the separation of the nail from the finger, although a necessary act, nonetheless renders the detached fingernail aberrant because it separates the nail from its appropriate context— the finger.³⁴¹ Cutting one's fingernails, therefore, is not an appropriate activity for a festival, since doing so would introduce an aberrant element into a situation belonging to the gods, the representatives of

³³⁹ Paus., 5, 20, 4. He chides himself, saying that he "must not omit the story told by Aristarchus, the guide to the sights at Olympia".

³⁴⁰ Hesiod *WD.*, 751-2.

³⁴¹ Hesiod *WD.*, 742-3.

stable order. Similarly, one should not, “stained with semen”, turn to face the household fire.³⁴²

It is not that the semen necessarily pollutes in all circumstances—it is a necessary substance for the continuation of life—however, it is inappropriate in the presence of the personification of Hestia, the pure and unsullied goddess of the hearth. Circumstances, therefore, dictate the pure and the impure in Hesiod, not the object itself.³⁴³ It is the same later on, in the case of the Coan purity law, which exhorts the citizens, in the case that a bone of a man is found in the city, to cast it out, unless it is holy.³⁴⁴ The bones of the regular dead—after the ban on intramural burial—no longer belonged in the agora. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the bones of the hero had a very important place in the agora after this period, and therefore were without pollution, as a nail is on the finger.

We can see that the option of reburial, when it was employed in literature, was used to show precisely why a city should not rebury remains found within its walls. This would have been for two reasons. The first is that, should the bones be those of a hero, there should be no reason to rebury them. To do so would be to deny the polis a valuable resource (as we saw in the case of Orestes). The second is that, if the bones are not those of a hero, but rather of an ordinary man or woman, they have no place in the city, according to the conventions adopted after c.700 BC.³⁴⁵ If purity is a science of division—that is, demarcating those things that belong

³⁴² Hesiod *WD.*, 733.

³⁴³ So, Parker tells us that blood is impure when spilled in the act of murder, but certainly not while pumping through one's veins or on the sacrificial altar. See: Parker 1983, 55. This is not a new idea, moreover. E. J. Salisbury had this to say in 1935, in a book about gardening: “We can in fact only define a weed, *mutatis mutandis*, in terms of the well-known definition of dirt— as matter out of place. What we call a weed is in fact merely a plant growing where we do not want it”. See: Salisbury 1935, 151.

³⁴⁴ Sokolowski 1969, 154B 17-32.

³⁴⁵ Servius' letter, as we saw earlier, showed that the ancients themselves consciously acknowledged this ban. Similarly, we saw Aratus of Sikyon, who could not be buried within the city until the Oracle at Delphi had provided

within a space from those that do not—then we can see that the bones of the hero “belong” in the city, and should be kept and heroized, while the bones of the regular dead do not, and must be removed, but never simply reburied, since this would not solve the problem of pollution. This might be the key to understanding the conundrum of the purification of Delos. It may not be a matter of the bones of the heroes being left within site of the Temple of Apollo *in spite* of their miasma, as though the costs and benefits of such an arrangement were weighed, and it was decided that the negative outweighed the positive. Rather, it might be because, as objects that belonged in a civic context, objects that had their place within the city, they emitted no miasma at all.

This interpretation is not without problems however. Heroic remains do seem to carry some pollution. For example, Olympian priests were not allowed to attend heroic ceremonies.³⁴⁶ This may well be an example of a higher standard of holiness attached to the priest. Certainly, heroic shrines were not thought to pollute sanctuaries themselves.³⁴⁷

Nevertheless, it was thought important enough that the priest could be contaminated by it and

a loop-hole, through which the Sikyonians could ignore their own burial law. Plutarch, in addition, points out the exceptional example of Sparta, which apparently flouted these funerary conventions altogether (Plut. *Lyc.*, 27). “Lycurgus made most excellent regulations in the matter of their burials... he did away with all superstitious terror by allowing them to bury their dead within the city... so that they were not confounded by them, and had no horror of death as polluting those who touched a corpse or walked among graves”. Whether Lycurgus overturned an existing ban or whether this was simply an aetiological explanation for Spartan deviancy is unclear, since, archaeologically, Spartan burial evidence is largely non-existent (Morris 1987, 179).

³⁴⁶ The priestess of Demeter at Cos, for example, was forbidden from entering the heroön, or partaking in the sacrifice. At Cyrene, priests were barred not only from the shrine of Battus, but also from that of the *Tritopateres* and Onymastos the Delphian. See: Parker 1983, 39, 336; Nock 1972, 577-8.

³⁴⁷ This may have more to do with a general ambiguity about the method by which pollution was spread. Certainly, there are occasions in which the concern seems to be spatial (the purification of Delos). The presence of the *perirrhanterion* at Isthmia, within the sanctuary (near the altar), would argue for a more temporal concern (the priest purified himself before sacrifice, not before entering the sanctuary itself: the lustral bowl was placed where it was for convenient purification at the *time* of the sacrifice, not to safeguard the whole sanctuary). Thus, we may be left with a bizarre—indeed, paradoxical—situation in which a heroic shrine exists in a sanctuary, is avoided by the priest who presides there, but is nonetheless not thought to pollute the sanctuary as a whole.

be rendered unfit to stand in the presence of the gods. Moreover, at Olympia, a worshipper could be rendered unfit to worship at the Temple of Zeus by eating any of the sacrifice dedicated to Pelops (which was a black goat— an appropriate sacrifice for the dead).³⁴⁸ At Pergamum, the same sort of ban applied to those who had sacrificed to Telephus: they were banned from entering the Temple of Asclepius, unless they purified themselves.³⁴⁹ These examples cannot simply be ignored. It may well be that the bones of the hero were indeed seen as dangerous, or at least, their association with the chthonic was acknowledged and was an explicit part of their utility. It would have been hard, in any case, to ignore that they were indeed human bones, and therefore associated with death, even though—belonging in the agora—they were deemed appropriate and in their proper place.

In the final chapter of *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas makes clear that there is power on the threshold that, when a culture finds a way to access it, can result in some of its most powerful rituals.³⁵⁰ So, for example, she tells us that the Lele people, who, ordering the world of men and animals along rigid lines of classification, find the Pangolin an especially troubling beast: “it is scaly like a fish, but it climbs trees. It is more like an egg-laying lizard than a mammal, yet it suckles its young. And most significant of all, unlike most small mammals its young are born singly. Instead of running away or attacking, it curls in a modest ball and waits for the hunter to pass”.³⁵¹ Such transgression of boundaries would normally result in disgust,

³⁴⁸ Paus., 5, 8, 3.

³⁴⁹ Paus., 5, 8, 3.

³⁵⁰ “The danger which is risked by boundary transgression is power. Those vulnerable margins and those attacking forces which threaten to destroy the good order represent the powers inhering in the cosmos. Ritual which can harness these for good is harnessing power indeed”. See: Douglas 1966, 199.

³⁵¹ Douglas 1966, 208.

and indeed, the Lele do not eat the Pangolin regularly, but sacrifice and consume it ritually in a specific fertility ceremony. In this way, they harness the transgressive quality of the animal and succeed in achieving a “union of opposites which is a source of power for good”.³⁵² Any revulsion or pollution is negated by the union of opposites. Indeed, the Lele deny the Pangolin has died at all (we may perhaps see parallels to the living death of the hero, who “sleeps” under his country’s soil). Vidal-Naquet describes just such “power on the threshold” in his conception of the “Black Hunter”, an idea which he extends to a large number of transgressive rituals.³⁵³ So, for example, before joining the ranks of the hoplite phalanx, the *ephebe* is exposed to a number of alternative life-styles (including solitary hunting, raiding, being ritually paraded in drag) and is then ritually reintegrated into the citizen ranks as a hoplite. His exposure to transgressive elements is a device that strengthens his future integration into the polis. Surely we must see some similarity between the Pangolin and the hero in this instance, who, because he unites the cosmic order within his body and spirit—being alive and dead, present and absent, powerful and powerless—is paradoxically pure, being a force for good in the community, as well as polluted.

And so, both metaphysical explanations render the hero’s bones fit for the city. It is a difference in conception that serves to separate the two. The first conception renders the heroic remains pure by classifying them as ritually pure from the start, as a simple matter of division: they are pure because they belong in the place they occupy. The second conception renders them pure, paradoxically, by acknowledging their polluting aspect: it was the special

³⁵² Douglas 1966, 209.

³⁵³ Vidal-Naquet 1986, 116, 120.

property of the hero's bones that they could be used to harness protean cosmic forces, doing good for the community and thereby becoming good themselves in the process. Where the first merely hypothesizes that the hero was acceptable and thus pure, the second explains why. Moreover, the second deals more deftly with certain unavoidable exceptions such as the exclusion of Olympian priests from heroic cult and the necessity for ordinary worshippers to purify themselves after taking part in the cult of the hero. It also is more in keeping with the dominant characteristic of the hero— his ambivalence. We are still left with questions, however: why are the remains of the hero so important? If they allow access to powerful forces, what are these forces and why are they good for the community?

The Hero in Time

It might be tempting to divide the traditional (i.e. Archaic) hero—heroized in a distant and foggy era—from the hero who was heroized in the historic present (men such as Brasidas or Hieron). The latter would seem to be a break with tradition and introduce an element of shallow and opportunist propaganda into what had previously been a pure and unsullied practice. To maintain this, however, one must maintain that the Greeks did not believe in the historicity of their own ancient heroes, and that, to them, myth was not a retelling of events (more or less) as they actually happened. Reading the Greek historians themselves, this is clearly not the case. Herodotus, although he disputes a strictly literal reading of Homer, does not deny that the Trojan War occurred.³⁵⁴ He retells many an incident in which heroes intervened directly in the affairs of men, and seldom tries to cast doubts on the truth of these stories. One of the very last stories he tells is of the Persian Artayctes, who, as governor of Elaios, defiles the “house” of the hero Protiselaos: “he sowed the sacred enclosure for crops and occupied it as his own; and he himself, whenever he came to Elaius, had commerce with women in the inner cell”.³⁵⁵ Artayctes’ gruesome death was foreshadowed by the hero, who caused dried fish to jump and flap while they were frying, as if alive. The power of the hero was thus confirmed, and goes without criticism from Herodotus. The list of Spartan kings, meanwhile, was preserved and went all the way back to Herakles.³⁵⁶ Snodgrass comments on the apparent accuracy of the list, which—either by design or by coincidence— put the age of

³⁵⁴ Herodotus, I, 3-4.

³⁵⁵ Herodotus, VIII, 116-22.

³⁵⁶ Herodotus, VII, 204; VIII, 131. Herodotus recounts the pedigree of the Agiads and Euryponitdai respectively.

heroes at some time in the 13th cen.³⁵⁷ Even the great rationalist Thucydides does not deny that the Trojan War was a historic event (nor does he doubt the historicity of “mythical” figures, such as Minos of Crete).³⁵⁸ This tendency was not confined to early history. By the time of Pausanias, in the second century AD, stories of the Trojan War, the foundation of cities, and tales of heroic exploits were still being told as though they were historical events (the furthest Pausanias will go in disputing the historicity of the heroes is to assert that a specific city or village is incorrect in their view of events or in their own claim). The hero was not a mythical figure in the way that we conceive of myth, he was historical because myth was historical (even when it was contentious).³⁵⁹

The hero inhabited time in several ways. The first was through narrative. Local chiefs were mythologized and incorporated into a larger myth structure early in the Geometric Period. Vincent Farenga traces the progress of the hero from private ancestor to public ancestor, who was first conceptualized through new forms of funerary lament and genealogical poetry that we see in Homer and Hesiod.³⁶⁰ These new figures, shorn of their association with living members of the community, were incorporated into the new polis as common civic ancestors. The value of the hero in poetry was that he helped articulate the community's history to itself, but just as importantly, helped articulate it to the outside world. In the Geometric period, the local

³⁵⁷ Snodgrass 1971, 12.

³⁵⁸ Thuc., I, 4.

³⁵⁹ Veyne describes it thus: “historical truth was a vulgate authenticated by consensus over the ages”. To insist on a view of the past that went against the popular consensus (through such means as detailed foot-notes, etc.) was to “force the consensus” on the merits of one's own work, rather than letting posterity run its course. See: Veyne 1988, 5.

³⁶⁰ Farenga uses the examples, respectively, of the funeral lament for Patroklos and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* to illustrate the prominence of these literary forms in the eighth and seventh century. See: Farenga 1998, 196-7.

histories of Greece coalesced into a Panhellenic history that made the local regional and the regional national.³⁶¹ This had progressed to an advanced state by the time of Homer, whose *Catalogue of Ships* provides a systematized account of the heroes and their cities of origin.³⁶² Myth, as a device, was instrumental in showing where the hero fit into a narrative of the past, and myth together with ritual tied that past to the present.

The second way that the hero inhabited history was through ritual. In ritual, however, the hero ceased to simply be a figure from the past, as he was in myth alone, and actually came to be a presence in the living community. Burkert identifies ritual as a key component by which the past, the present, myth, ancestors and their descendants are brought together into a unified complex of signs and identities, as employed, for example, in initiating the young into the history, ideology, and present community of the polis.³⁶³ Thus the myths and images of Theseus, for example, were a part of a general cultural memory, which is to say, a view of the past, but they were also highlighted, retold and recreated every year in a festival—the Theseia—that ritualized and codified Theseus' place in the city. Games, feasting and sacrifice accompanied the telling of myths, providing for the recreation of the past, but also forging a present connection to Theseus. For, if Burkert is correct to say that sacrificial killing is “the basic experience of the sacred”, and that the gods are present for that moment in the mind of the participant, surely this was even more true of the heroes.³⁶⁴ Theseus, though departed, was simultaneously present during his festival, and in particular, at the moment of sacrifice at his

³⁶¹ Farenga 1998, 196.

³⁶² Homer *Il.*, II, 484-760.

³⁶³ Burkert 1983, 56.

³⁶⁴ Burkert 1983, 2-3.

tomb.³⁶⁵ Similarly, Oedipus, though “sleeping”, awakes to drink the blood offered him and to commune with his fellow citizens.³⁶⁶ The departed had come near, the dead were alive, and the past came into alignment with the present. While myth, by itself, managed to place the hero in chronological time, and to articulate his function in the cultural landscape, time itself was rearranged by ritual and by interaction with the hero, which brought him into the present, as well.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ There are a few examples that make the presence of the hero at the moment of sacrifice clear. For example, the cult of Eteocles and Polyneices at Thebes (Paus., 9, 18, 3) has but one sacrifice. When the animal is offered, however, the flame reportedly splits in two. The Theban cult of Herakles, which is described in the same passage, dramatizes the hero's presence in like fashion. When he is offered sacrifice, smoke rises from a nearby stone. These may well be idiosyncratic, theatrical flourishes on the part of the Thebans, but the act itself reveals a genuine belief in the presence of the hero at the moment of sacrifice. It is in keeping with Homer's depiction of the underworld heroes (*Od.*, XI, 228-31), who respond so eagerly to the blood offered them, as well as to Oedipus' description of the state of rest he inhabits, sleeping until his bones are soaked in blood (Sophoc. *Oed. Col.*, 621-2). The hero, while always present in some capacity, finds himself suddenly invigorated and brought into full consciousness by the blood of the living.

³⁶⁶ Sophoc. *Oed. Col.*, 621-2.

³⁶⁷ In the same way that Morris says that the Lefkandi burial “tore the fabric time and space”, this must have been the experience of the participant of the heroic ritual. In Chapter Two, I disagreed with Morris' statement (mostly for narrowly pedantic reasons). I must admit here, however, that his statement captures quite eloquently the metaphysical process that the heroic ritual enacts. See: Morris 2001, 228.

The Hero in Space

Burkert, in an article that deals with the circumstances surrounding the building of early Greek temples, lists three reasons a temple might be built, which, to varying degrees, seem also to apply to the building of heroic shrines: assuaging the deity; miraculous circumstance/oracular command; and mapping the city.³⁶⁸ For our purposes, mapping the city will be the most crucial function of heroic cult (though we shall see that heroic cult fulfilled the other two purposes as well), and the one that deals most explicitly with the hero's relationship to space.

One reason for founding a cult might be that a hero had not been properly honoured by his fellow Greeks. So it was, in myth, that the miraculous appearance of the shade of Achilles prompted the grisly sacrifice of Polyxena.³⁶⁹ The Delphians, who previously distained the tomb of Neoptolemus, which was just to the side of the Temple of Apollo, awarded him heroic honours after he intervened on their side in battle.³⁷⁰ Theophrastus, though engaging in satire, makes clear that certain signs signified the presence of the hero. The sacred snake that the Superstitious Man sees in his house, for example, is sign enough for him to declare the spot sacred and to set up a small hero shrine.³⁷¹ So we see that miraculous appearances could inspire cult. It was the same for oracles, which inspired their share of hero cults as well. The

³⁶⁸ Burkert terms it "planning the city". I have called it "mapping to city", to avoid the misconception that this was a conscious, pre-determined policy on the part of the city. See: Burkert 1996, 24-6.

³⁶⁹ Proclus *Chresto.*, 272-3.

³⁷⁰ Paus., 1, 4, 4.

³⁷¹ Theophrastus *Char.*, XVI, 5. This is in keeping with the imagery we saw in the last chapter. In Corinth, the *stelai* found in the South Stoa featured a snake rearing up underneath the feasting table. A relief from Argos, found just north of the Heroön of the young warriors, featured a man leaning on a staff, with a snake coiled round its base. See: Broneer 1942, 129; Antonaccio 1995, 214.

bones of Orestes and Theseus were both sought out in answer to an oracle. Kleomedes of Astypalaia went mad after being denied victory in the Olympic games and, in a feat of Samson-like strength, pulled down the supporting columns of a school and killed a large number of children.³⁷² He was pursued to the sanctuary of Athena, where, having climbed into a chest, he disappeared entirely (a miracle on the order of Oedipus' mysterious transformation). When asked, the Pythia informed the citizens of the city that they ought to worship Kleomedes, for he was Greece's last hero (he was not, in fact, Greece's last hero). Here we see both miracle and oracle. One can likewise imagine, having just unearthed a tomb or series of tombs—whether at Athens or Corinth, Argos or Eretria—an initial impulse would have been to send a representative to Delphi (or to another oracle) to inquire after the nature of the remains. Thus the oracle played a crucial role in guiding the actions of the city.

Hero cults also performed a clear function in articulating the city in terms of space and boundaries.³⁷³ We see, for example, in the case of Eretria, that the Heroön of the West Gate was one of the key markers of the *astu's* frontier, lying just within the city's walls and by a city gate. It existed at a liminal point, on the threshold that straddled inside and outside.³⁷⁴

Similarly, the Heroön of the Crossroads in Corinth served another liminal function, existing on

³⁷² Paus., 6, 11, 6.

³⁷³ De Polignac compares it to the role played by the frontier shrines of the Olympians, such as the Argive Heraion and the sanctuary of Isthmia. See: De Polignac 1996, 140.

³⁷⁴ De Polignac tells us that "transitoriness was a feature common to all the candidates for heroization in the second half of the eighth century"—referring to their shared place in both the "aristocratic" world of the heroes and the more egalitarian world that followed it. It is an interesting thought that, perhaps, it is precisely this characteristic that was the original "paradox" of the hero, that is, this is the reason they were associated from that time forward (c.750) with ambiguity and liminality. De Polignac's work certainly leans toward such an interpretation—on the next page, he launches into an analysis of the liminal Heroön of the West Gate (straddling the divide, both of the interior and exterior of the city, and of political and pre-political society at Eretria). See: De Polignac 1995, 133.

the meeting point of roads. The Triangular Hieron/Oval House complex in Athens also stood at the crossroads of several streets leading into and out of the agora. This is not to say that all heroic shrines existed in liminal spaces, but it seems to have been one of the physical spaces that heroes lent themselves particularly well to, given their own ambiguous and liminal nature.

In addition to marking limits, heroic cult was also instrumental in marking the center. The *archegetes* was buried in the urban center, most often in the agora, and served to center and anchor the civic identity of the citizenry, in contrast to liminal cults.³⁷⁵ This is the role of Erechtheus, said to have been buried underneath the Erechtheion, who was driven down by the onslaught of Poseidon's trident (or in another version, incinerated by the lightning bolt of Zeus).³⁷⁶ In De Polignac's schema of space and the city, this would be (along with the cult of Athena that it complements) a centric cult, anchoring the peripheral cults of the countryside. The Tholos Cemetery was a central element in the later Strategeion, just as the Megarian *bouleuterion* was attached to the "majority", the Megarian dead. These central civic locations were lent a symbolic gravity by the presence of heroized ancestors.

Whether on the frontier or in the center, however, the tombs of the heroes formed very definite nodes of power, the root of which lay in their bones, which were themselves discreet objects existing in space, allowing the citizenry of the new polis to order and reorder the space around them. The bones were objects imbued with the symbolic capital to form boundaries, to anchor buildings and institutions to the space they occupied. We can note the empty Tegean tomb of Orestes (however dubious its origins), unbounded and unhonoured because there

³⁷⁵ De Polignac 1995, 145.

³⁷⁶ Eur. *Ion*, 281; Hyginus *Fabulae*, 46.

were no longer any bones there.³⁷⁷ However ornate and well-built the shrine of the hero was, its function was predicated on the presence of heroic remains, which were the linchpin in heroic cult (their presence—even when imagined—was “known” to all of the participants, who had heard the myths of acquisition their entire lives).

³⁷⁷ Paus., 8, 54, 4.

The All-Embracing Pangolin

The bones of the hero are the fetish around which the focus of cult and ritual centers. They were the immortal architecture of the body, the element that did not rot away or decay, and which offered a bridge to the past through their resistance to its ravages.³⁷⁸ Bones were proof the hero was present. The bridging of past and present through the awakening of the hero occurs by feeding his physical remains, and hence can only be achieved at a specific place— his tomb.

Many elements that were combined in heroic cult were, on the face of it, contradictory and at odds with one another. He was above all a liminal figure, who bridged death and life, purity and pollution, strength and weakness, freedom and slavery. The hero existed in, and played off of, paradox. So, for example, a unity was achieved between cosmological opposites through the hero, who stood liminally between the poles of Olympian and Chthonic. Standing between these two opposites, the hero represented elements of both. He is immortal, but knows death, has great power but also knows mortal necessity. He was paradoxically in both places at once— half way to heaven and half way to the underworld, and everywhere in between. It may be that the hero has been so hard for scholars to define precisely because his function for the Greeks was to be ambiguous. Mary Douglas tells us that, “if [the Lele] consistently shunned ambiguity they would commit themselves to division between ideal and

³⁷⁸ Vernant 2002, 52.

reality. But they confront ambiguity in an extreme and concentrated form”. Thus they achieve a productive union between the two—which I will call “useful pollution”.³⁷⁹

By bridging the opposites, the hero achieved a cosmic good, in the same way the Pangolin did for the Lele.³⁸⁰ And, like the Pangolin, he achieved this union precisely because his remains were, in a way, polluted. His benefit was not confined to fertility, however (though he was definitely a conduit for the regenerative powers of the underworld). In fact, it would seem that his role extended far beyond this admittedly crucial area. Thus we see the hero take an active role in defending the land he occupies, confirming his authority over thresholds: he was a sort of gate keeper. He was also, as we saw, a crucial element in making the polis' history something immediate and experiential. These three elements—time, space and useful pollution—came together in the remains of the hero, who, as we shall see, served as a conduit of sorts for the citizen body to articulate its own vision of community to itself and to others.

³⁷⁹ Douglas 1966, 210.

³⁸⁰ Douglas 1966, 209.

Conclusion

Before further tying the three elements together, let us quickly recap the chapter. We began with a brief explanation of purity and pollution, in general anthropology and in the ancient Greek mind. The Greeks considered human remains to be inappropriate within the city. We saw, moreover, that there were numerous responses to the problems posed by the discovery of human remains in the city. Looking at literary sources, we saw that the two most common responses to this situation were either to keep the bones or to cast them out of the city entirely. These two choices corresponded to the issue of whether or not the bones were considered heroic or not: if they were, they were kept; if they were not, they were not kept. This principle can be seen most concretely in the purification of the island of Delos by the Athenians, who cast out the regular graves, but allowed the tombs of the Hyperboreans and the Archegeion of Anios to stay. We discussed two possible explanations for this phenomenon, of which only the second seemed convincing: either the bones of the heroes were deemed “appropriate” to the agora and were, hence, entirely pure; or, the bones retained some of their transgressive connotations—they were, after all, human bones—and became “useful” precisely because their polluting quality granted access to primal and otherwise inaccessible forces, and afterward became paradoxically pure (and therefore acceptable in the city). Then, looking at literary evidence, we introduced the hero as being relevant to Greek conceptions of time and space. The last section expanded on the idea of useful pollution and proposed a link between the three—time, space and pollution.

In order to understand the full significance of hero cult, we must also consider it in the context of the polis as a socio-political system. Starting in the ninth and eighth centuries, Dark Age Greece enjoyed a sustained boom in economic prosperity and demographic growth.³⁸¹ While the causes of this Renaissance are varied and controversial, its ultimate effect was the formation of new territorial states, integrating previously disparate communities— a process the Greeks themselves referred to as synoicism.³⁸² The integration of simple village communities into large scale, complex societies required new political ideas and institutions.

Dark Age society was a society of households. The nuclear *oikos* was the basic unit of a society, linked to other households by personal, informal bonds, such as friendship and marriage.³⁸³ There was no larger whole, no abiding sense of community or nationhood greater than the concrete and contingent bonds of personal alliance. Leadership was limited to a big man or chieftain. The *basileus* wielded informal power, based on his merits as a fighter, speaker and a holder of social currencies like material wealth and sons of fighting age.³⁸⁴ What larger forms of social integration existed were provided by common bonds between households and to the household of the *basileus*. In the eighth century, some chieftains had extended their influence so far that they had managed to encompass whole territories, rather than simply a lone village or two: they became “paramount *basileis*”.³⁸⁵ This territory-level chieftainship saw

³⁸¹ Snodgrass 1971, 416-36; Coldstream 1979, 71, 109-67.

³⁸² So, for example, in the Argolid, the material cultures—in the realms of vase painting style, method of burial, etc.—of settlements like Argos, Tiryns and Mycenae came to be more and more similar through the eighth century. Meanwhile, notable exceptions, like Atticizing Asine, were wiped out c.700BC. See: Coldstream 1979, 152-3. See also: Snodgrass 1971, 415.

³⁸³ Donlan 1999, 284-5, 288.

³⁸⁴ Finley 2002, 82-6.

³⁸⁵ Raaflaub 1991, 49-50.

the beginning of a new scale of integration and sense of community: no longer simply on the village level, but rather the proto-political country or fatherland.³⁸⁶ This state of affairs gave way c.700 BC to an entirely new political order.³⁸⁷ The chieftain ceded his place as sole, informal leader and was replaced by a system of formal, elected magistracies and by formal, written laws.

In the polis that emerged in the following centuries, the individual household, which was not bound to others through any sort of extended kinship structures—like clan or tribe (the Athenians tribe was non-kin association)—and which placed a great deal of emphasis on its own autonomy, had to be integrated into a complex, differentiated society.³⁸⁸ This entailed the integration of families with no personal bonds to one another, hailing from different socio-economic strata, geographical locations and earning their living in very different ways. They had to be integrated, over and above these differences, into an imagined community, having a higher common interest and identity— as Argives, Corinthians or Thebans, for example. In other words, they had to come together as citizens, sharing impersonal bonds and belonging to an abstraction: the polis.³⁸⁹ In the polis, moreover, where the autonomy of the household was a primary concern and was reflected in the rejection of a separation of government and people—where instead the citizenry themselves were the State—participatory self-government required a strong attachment to the city and to the public interest.

³⁸⁶ Farenga 1999, 182.

³⁸⁷ Morris 1987, 184-8; Ober 1991, 57; Whitley 1991, 162; Donlan 1999, 295.

³⁸⁸ Parker tells us that "Athenians in general have no great interest in their grandfather's grandfather" and that this belies a "much flatter conception of family history" than in other societies. See: Parker 2005, 10. For a treatment of the *genos* as a broader unit of family than the *oikos*, and as having a three to four generation limit, see: Bourriot 1976; Roussel 1976.

³⁸⁹ For imagined community in general, see: Anderson 1983.

In the past, on the village level, community could be created through face-to-face contact. However, the new territorial nation, by virtue of its size and population, could not provide such ties. Moreover, there was no familial basis for this enlarged community, either. As we noted earlier, the *oikos* was the basic unit of society. While this remained the case after 700BC, no larger kinship structure emerged to provide any sort of wider bond between citizens. Rather, the wider community that emerged was an imagined one between strangers— a horizontal comradeship between citizen men belonging to very different socio-economic strata and hailing from different geographical provenance. The polis was also unique, in that, while a form of political nation was created, a centralized, autonomous State—distinct from its citizenry—was not. Rather, the Greek citizenry were the State.

Hero cult helped create the imagined community of the polis by mediating between public and private spheres. In the first place, hero cult was—in the religious, mythological and symbolic forms it assumed—grave cult, which was associated primarily with the practice of tendance and therefore with the *oikos*.³⁹⁰ It was the responsibility of household, and especially of its women, to look after the tending and feeding of its ancestor's remains. Heroic ritual—a re-enactment of ancestral veneration—was therefore loaded with symbolic cues (the *haimakouria*, the *choa* libation, the mood of mourning and the wailing) which evoked the private, and not the public, sphere represented by tendance. The two spheres overlapped in hero cult. Despite this overlap, hero cult, as we have discussed, was decisively public. It superimposed private symbolism overtop an institution that was—in its narrative and in the

³⁹⁰ For treatment of grave cult as familial, see: Garland 1985; Parker 2005, 23-36.

social units it engaged (on the level of deme, phratry or polis)—very much public. Hero cult was as an insertion of the private sphere into the public, and indeed a subordination of the private to the public.

One key feature of the polis is that it abides through time as an abstract entity, a nation. It is abstract because it is not dependent on its living members for its existence, but is rather a collective mental construct passed on, through education and socialization, from generation to generation. It is, so to speak, greater than the sum of its parts. The nation, therefore, as a unit, outlasts any mortal man, and extends itself through time, from a distant—and in some cases totally forgotten and misty—past and into the equally uncertain future.³⁹¹ In addition to existing *through* time, the imagined community of the nation exists *in* space, as a stable and well-defined entity. The land defined as a polis' becomes associated powerfully with the people and citizenry of the nation as a birthright and a fatherland.³⁹² The geographical bounds of the nation are seen as fixed, immutable and as inalienable property of the nation's citizens (there is some overlap, therefore, between time and space).³⁹³ Thus, the nation abides through time and in space, quite apart from the individual citizen, who is subject to death and must leave an heir as his replacement in the community.

The citizens of a polis believed, as a given, that they were related to one another, albeit at a level of remove and in civic terms. One can see this in the Athenian idea of autochthony

³⁹¹ Anderson 2006, 9-10.

³⁹² "Something of the nature of this political love [btw. citizen and nation] can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describes its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*) or that of home (*heimat* or *tenah air...*). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied". See: Anderson 2006, 143.

³⁹³ Anderson 2006, 7.

and in the Theban myth concerning their own origins, sprung from the teeth of the dragon and sown by Cadmus himself. The Athenians and Thebans did not think themselves to be blood descendants of the autochthons, and not every nation considered itself to be autochthonous, but they considered themselves nevertheless born from the common soil of their own land. These are examples of a national narrative that tied citizen, myth and the land together in a pseudo-familial relationship. This fictional brotherhood provided a deeper continuity than blood, since few Greeks would have been able to trace their descent past the third generation—a line of descent too shallow to allow for the complicated web of relationships that sustain some societies. One can contrast this to the extended familial descent lines of Javanese villagers, who see themselves as springing from a known line of direct ancestors, and who contrast their own lines to others in the village.³⁹⁴ They have no word, in fact, for “society” in its abstract sense at all. The Archaic and Classical Greeks, however, created their own abstract society precisely by doing the opposite: first, by forgetting their ancestors after about three or four generations (these came to be embodied in the catch-all Tritopatores); second, by taking advantage of this *tabula rasa* to imagine a relationship between all members of the community. Some sort of persuasive symbolic connection was needed to effect this relationship between the *oikos* and the poliadic, impersonal community. The pseudo-kin organizations of tribe, *genos* and phratry served such a function. Hero cult was a practice that took place within such institutions of association, in the sense of action and belief practiced in the context of these organizations, from the local to the polis-wide level. It allowed citizen to imagine two of the necessary conditions for a poliadic society: first, an abstract identification between citizens,

³⁹⁴ Anderson 2006, 6.

in lieu of face-to-face connections; second, a lessening of the centrifugal pull of the *oikos*, whose symbols were appropriated and made use of by the city. When the citizenry did these two things, imagining the polis as an entity that existed through time was possible: the nation existed as a permanent entity, membership of which was claimed as a birthright by citizens, who imagined themselves to be an extended family of which the hero was a part. Thus, through the symbolic connection hero cult provided, citizens could imagine a link between generations of men, *through* time—and not just *in* time—creating a community that outlasted the individual and extended from generation to generation.

The polis, moreover, was a consistent and fixed presence in space. Hero cult, given its status as grave cult, should not have belonged in the public spaces of the polis— be it on the level of the deme, rural sanctuary or in the *astu*.³⁹⁵ But it did: the ancient Greeks believed that the hero belonged in all manner of public places. This is especially significant in cities proper, for two reasons: the city was the prime public space in the ancient polis—small wonder *poleis'* most important hero cults were located inside it; the c.700BC ban on intramural burial made the entire city a protected zone, theoretically, and therefore made hero cult particularly transgressive within its bounds. This transgression however, was never an impediment to hero cult, in the city or in the country. In fact, it was this idiosyncratic quality that allowed hero cult to play the role it did. The insertion of private, pseudo-familial elements into public spaces was a visual and symbolic cue for citizens: they themselves were a family of families. The coming together of citizens to the hero's shrine to worship was a function of this. This was reinforced

³⁹⁵ This thesis has, of course, been preoccupied with intramural hero cult, being the most well documented and excavated type of hero cult. Nevertheless, the hero existed in rural and semi-rural environments, as well. A separate study would be necessary to fully explore his relationship to these extra-urban spaces.

by the fact that membership in certain civic institutions—the deme or phratry, for example—was indeed hereditary, and reinforced a pseudo-kinship between the individual, his fellow citizens and the hero. Moreover, the perennial reconstitution of these relationships between citizens, on the basis of imagined ancestry, served to map and define the polis through the abiding figure of the hero, who was so connected to the land and to its preservation. This was especially true on the polis level. During the hero's festival, all citizens were reminded of their own connection to one another and to the land they occupied.

The hero, therefore, by a combination of qualities—"useful" pollution, presence *through* time, presence *in* space—and an idiosyncratic place in the mythological cosmology of the Greeks—alive and dead, between men and the gods, resembling both Olympian and Chthonian—became a key mechanism by which political community was forged in the Archaic and Classical periods. The hero, as he was consciously represented in the narratives of the Greeks—as a figure of deep contradictions, but who was nonetheless indispensable to the community—reflected a deeper, problematic dynamic at play in the polis— but also one of the solutions to it: the perennial tension between *oikos* and polis, between private interest and public life.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has argued for a strong and logical connection between a polis' tombscape, beliefs about pollution, heroic cult and the emergence of the polis. I began with an anomaly: that although hero cult was a form of grave cult, hero shrines could be located in the city. This was anomalous in light of the Greek ban on intramural burial, which meant that grave cult had no place in the space of the living. Looking at the implications of heroic cult as both civic cult and as grave cult provided a heuristic opening for examining the nature of the hero himself, his status—living though dead, human though immortal—and his place in the Greek cosmos and city.

I began, in the first chapter, by tracing the tombscape, both in time and place, of four geographical areas—Athens, Corinth, Argos, and the two Euboian settlements of Lefkandi and Eretria—between the Sub-Mycenaean Period and the end of the Archaic period. This chapter, first of all, traced the difference in geographical distribution of graves, most importantly between the Geometric and Archaic/Classical period. It showed that the adoption of the ban on intramural burial was not simultaneous among the Greek cities. It confirmed the ban was in place at Athens. Corinth and Argos however, did not hew rigorously to 700BC as a date for instituting the ban. In Corinth it seems to come slightly earlier. In Argos, however, it does not seem to have come about until the late seventh or early sixth century, more than a century later than Corinth. This chapter furthermore identified graves later to be used in heroic cult, locating them in their original context—that is to say, their location in relation to settlement

and other burials during the period of their use as graves—and their situation in the later landscape at the time when they were rediscovered and turned into hero shrines.

In the second chapter, we began by discussing the hero himself, his cult and the types of characteristics associated with him in literature. Moreover, we discussed his religious role and his place in Greek cosmology, as well as the status of hero cult as distinct from ancestor and tomb cult. The hero was above all an ambiguous figure, embodying contradictory and paradoxical characteristics. He was both dead and alive, of the past and in the present, mortal and immortal. Possession of the hero's bones was central to cult. Thus Bronze Age or Iron Age tombs were sometimes turned into hero shrines during the Archaic or Classical periods. These tombs, after the ban on intramural burial, were inappropriate to the urban environment, and were subsequently reinterpreted as heroic graves, around which cult was established. This association of heroic cult with local graves was a common occurrence, and it both contributed to and was reflective of the overwhelmingly local character of the hero, who had strong ties to the landscape of the polis. Heroes, moreover, were civic ancestors. Finally, the worship of the hero was never coterminous with ancestral tendance, since the status of the dead man was very different from the status of the hero: one was dead; the other, while dead, was also very much alive and present in the community.

The third chapter sought to build on the findings of the first two, by engaging the full implication of hero cult based on human remains. Returning to the original anomaly of heroic cult—that although heroic cult was a form of grave cult, rendering it out-of-place in the city, it was nevertheless accepted as a major element in the urban landscape—the chapter started

with a brief overview of pollution, both from an anthropological perspective—primarily from the comparative, universalizing perspective of Mary Douglas—as well as from a more specifically Greek perspective. Looking at literary examples of Greek reactions to the discovery of intramural graves, it was concluded that the bones of the hero were indeed polluted and that this very fact formed a crucial element of heroic cult. The remains of the hero were not reconciled to the ban on intramural burial. Heroic cult was transgressive: the polluted remains were a means by which powerful, liminal forces were marshalled by worshippers. The Greeks engaged ambiguity, as Mary Douglas says “in an extreme and concentrated form”, and created something positive from it.³⁹⁶ Hero cult’s role as grave cult and as civic cult forged a bridge between the private *oikos* and the public, communal sphere. The relationship between the two was expressed in terms of a grammar of time and space, which told Greek citizens that though private interest was an important part of their imagined community, it was always subordinated—in a relationship of family to superordinate civic family—to the larger interests of the communal unit, be it the deme, phratry, *genos* or the polis as a whole. Moreover, it served to tie them together as members of a persisting, abstract nation, and to tie them to the land itself, as a collective inheritance, a fatherland, through their connection to the powerful, abiding presence of the hero.

This is well illustrated by an instance from Pausanias, which we first saw in Chapter Two (Paus., 1, 43, 2.):

³⁹⁶ Douglas 1966, 209.

When Agamemnon's son Hyperion, the last king of Megara, was killed by Sandion for his greed and violence, [the Megarians] resolved no longer to be ruled by one king, but to have elected magistrates and to obey one another in turn. Then Aesymnus, who had a reputation second to none among the Megarians, came to the god in Delphi and asked in what way they could be prosperous. The oracle in its reply said that they would fare well if they took counsel with the majority. This utterance they took to refer to the dead, and built a council chamber [*bouleuterion*] in this place in order that the grave of their heroes might be within it.³⁹⁷

The foundation of the Megarian *bouleuterion* is an illuminating example that outlines the foundation of a heroic cult. The Megarians may have discovered a series of graves while renovating a road or repairing the foundation of a building (as we saw, for example, in the case of the Heroön of the Crossroads in Corinth). Whatever the form the discovery of these graves took, the narrative of Pausanias is wonderfully evocative of a time of transition from pre-political to political society. The devolution of power from Megara's last king to a group of citizen magistrates who would "obey one another in turn" is exactly the trend that seems to have swept Greece c.700BC. "Taking counsel with the majority"—that is, with the heroes—however, shows the new consciousness that had sprung up in the Megarians: a consciousness of themselves as being connected broadly, as citizens, with the generations who had come before them. Moreover, it was a consciousness that those generations of heroes existed in the present, not as the absent family members of tendance, but as active citizens and guardians of

³⁹⁷ “Ὑπερίονος δὲ τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος οὗτος γὰρ Μεγαρέων ἐβασίλευσεν ὕστατος τούτου τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποθανόντος ὑπὸ Σανδίωνος διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ ὕβριν, βασιλεύεσθαι μὲν οὐκέτι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς ἐδόκει σφίσι, εἶναι δὲ ἄρχοντας αἰρετοὺς καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος ἀκούειν ἀλλήλων. ἐνταῦθα Αἴσυμνος οὐδενὸς τὰ ἐξ δόξαν Μεγαρέων δεύτερος παρὰ τὸν θεὸν ἦλθεν ἐς Δελφοὺς, ἐλθὼν δὲ ἡρώτα τρόπον τινὰ εὐδαιμονήσουσι· καὶ οἱ καὶ ἄλλα ὁ θεὸς ἔχρησε καὶ Μεγαρέας εὐπράξειν, ἣν μετὰ τῶν πλειόνων βουλευσώνται. τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος ἐς τοὺς τεθνεώτας ἔχειν νομίζοντες βουλευτήριον ἐνταῦθα ὠκοδόμησαν, ἵνα σφίσι ὁ τάφος τῶν ἡρώων ἐντὸς τοῦ βουλευτηρίου γένηται.”

the polis. The citizens who served in the *bouleuterion* therefore, as they did so in the presence of their imagined ancestors, were reminded of their own civic relationship to the men they served beside. This reconstitution of civic bonds was repeated with every new batch of magistrates. Indeed, more broadly, it would have taken place on an almost everyday basis for every citizen, repeated constantly in the polis' complex and redundant network of hero cults—in the city at large, in one's phratry, with one's fellow demes-men and on the level of the nation as a whole. Hero cult allowed strangers to see themselves as brothers, to transcend their narrow household interests and believe in a community that warranted their first loyalty.

Figure 1

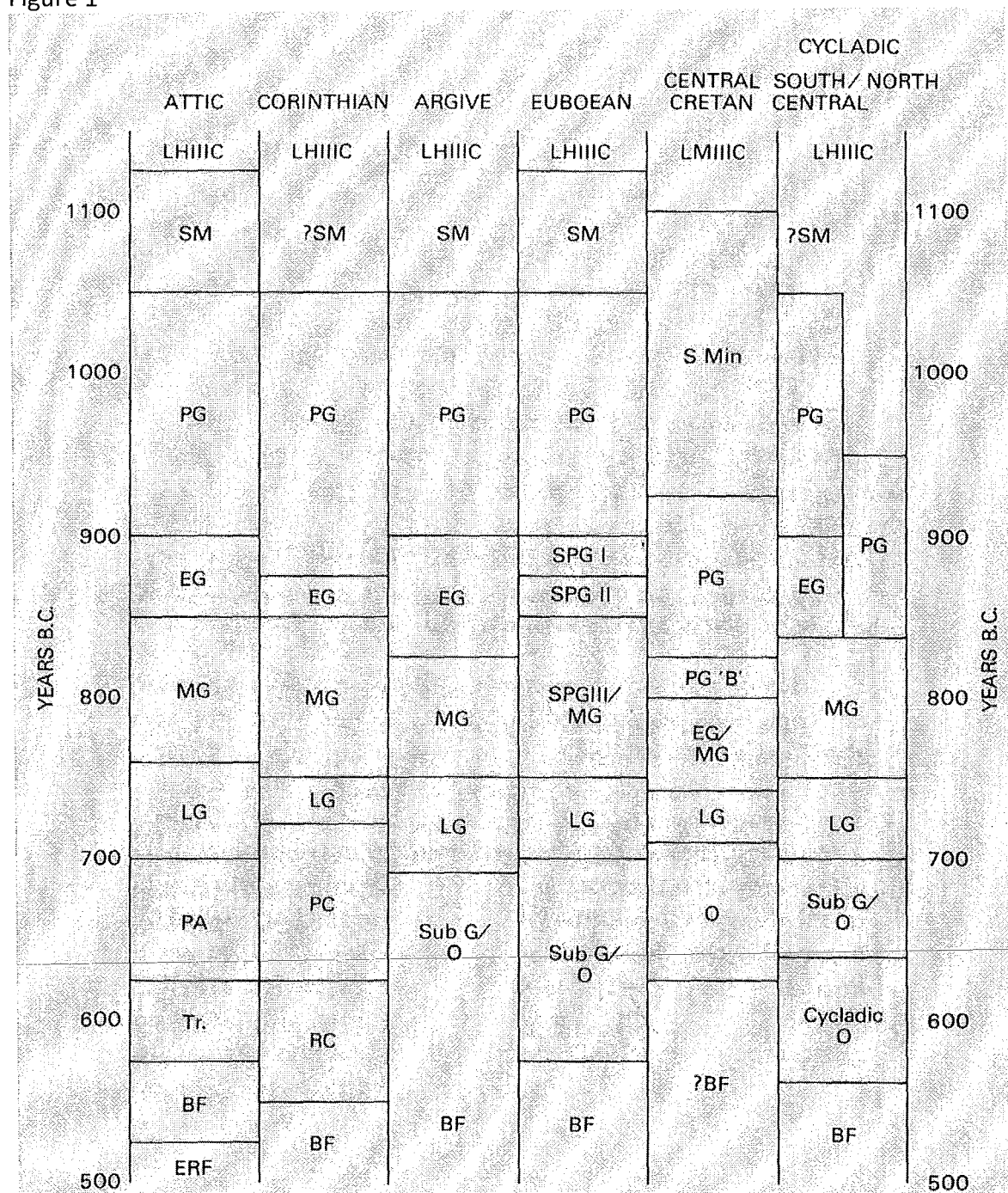


Fig.3 Local pottery chronologies. The five regions shown are those referred to most often in the text. The abbreviations used are: LH IIC, Late Helladic IIC; LM IIC, Late Minoan IIC; SM, Submycenaean; SMin, Subminoan; PG, Protogeometric; PG 'B', Protogeometric B; SPG, Sub-Protogeometric; EG, Early Geometric; MG, Middle Geometric; LG, Late Geometric; SubG, Sub Geometric; O, Orientalising; Cyc O, Cycladic Orientalising styles; PC, Protocorinthian; RC, Ripe Corinthian; PA, Protoattic; Tr, Transitional; BF, Black Figure; ERF, Early Red Figure. The best general survey of pottery styles is R.M. Cook (1972)

Figure 2

| <i>Style</i> | <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Absolute dates</i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Submycenaean | SM | c.1125–1050 BC |
| Early/Middle Protogeometric | EPG/MPG | c.1050–975 BC |
| Late Protogeometric | LPG | c.975–900 BC |
| Early Geometric I | EG I | c.900–875 BC |
| Early Geometric II | EG II | c.875–850 BC |
| Middle Geometric I | MG I | c.850–800 BC |
| Middle Geometric II | MG II | c.800–760 BC |
| Late Geometric Ia | LG Ia | c.760–750 BC |
| Late Geometric Ib | LG Ib | c.750–735 BC |
| Late Geometric IIa | LG IIa | c.735–720 BC |
| Late Geometric IIb | LG IIb | c.720–700 BC |
| Early Protoattic | EPA | c.700–675 BC |
| Middle Protoattic | MPA | c.675–650 BC |
| Late Protoattic | LPA | c.650–624 BC |
| Transitional | Tr | c.625–575 BC |
| Black Figure | BF | c.575–525 BC |
| Early Red Figure | ERF | c.525–500 BC |

Figure 3



a. Pit Grave near Northeast Stoa

Figure 4

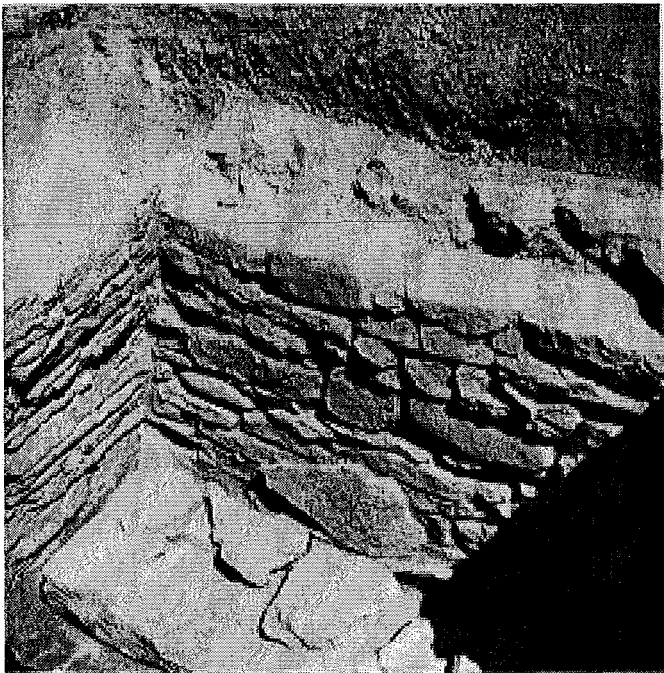


Fig. 13. Shaft grave beneath floor of Room 97 from W

Figure 5

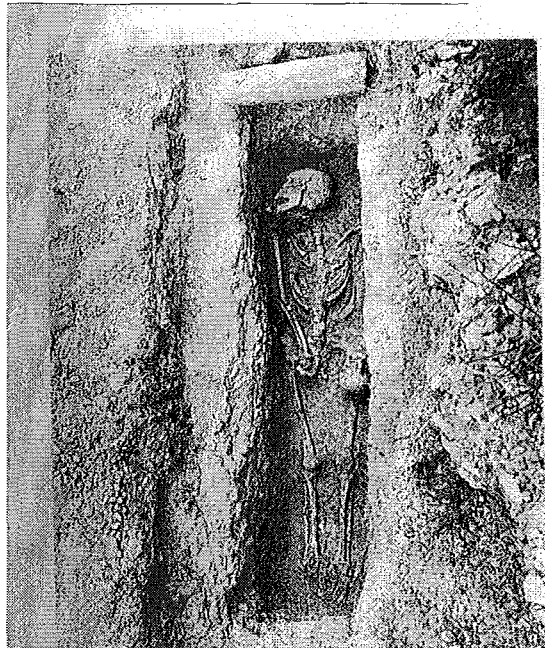


Plate 12 Submycenaean cist grave J 9:2 in the Agora
(photo courtesy of the ASCS Athens, Agora Excavations
and Professor Evelyn Smithson)

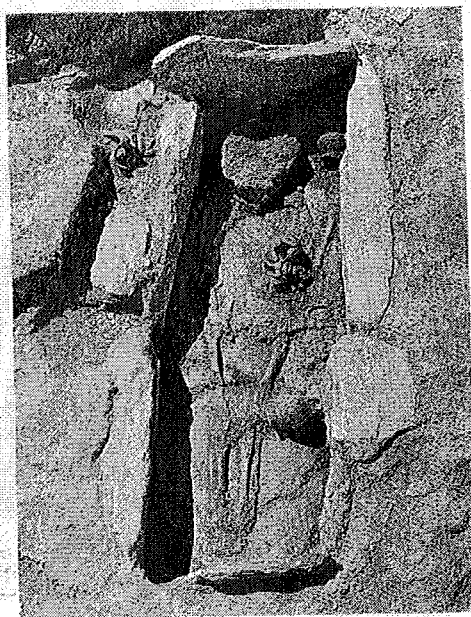
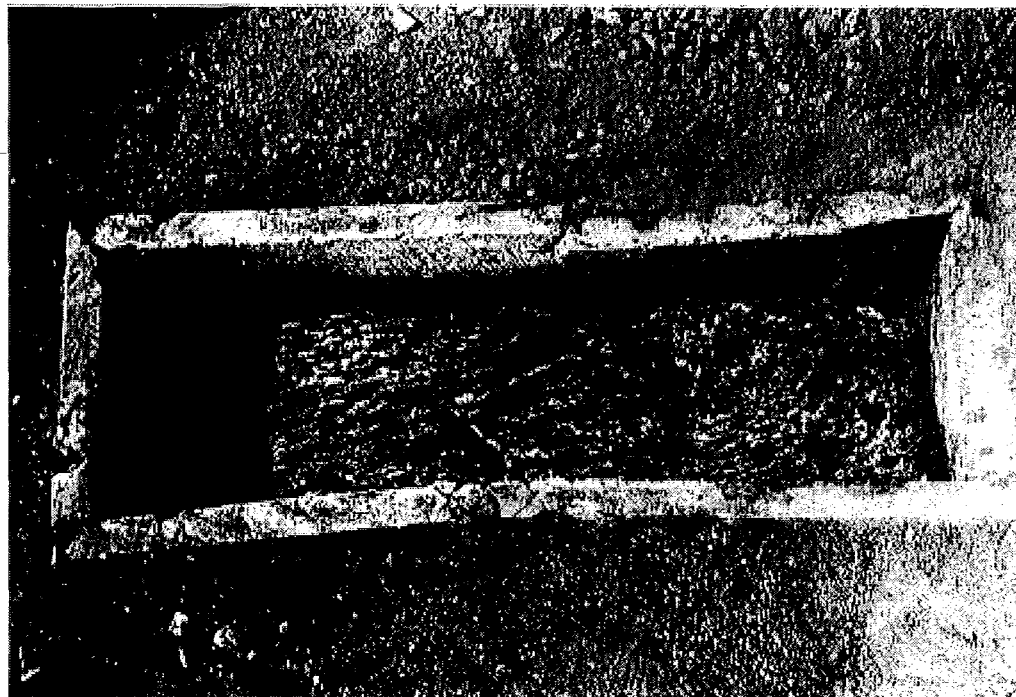


Plate 13 Submycenaean child's cist grave Q 8:6 in
the Agora (photo courtesy of the ASCS Athens,
Agora Excavations and Professor Evelyn Smithson)

Figure 6



a. Grave I-37 from south

Figure 7

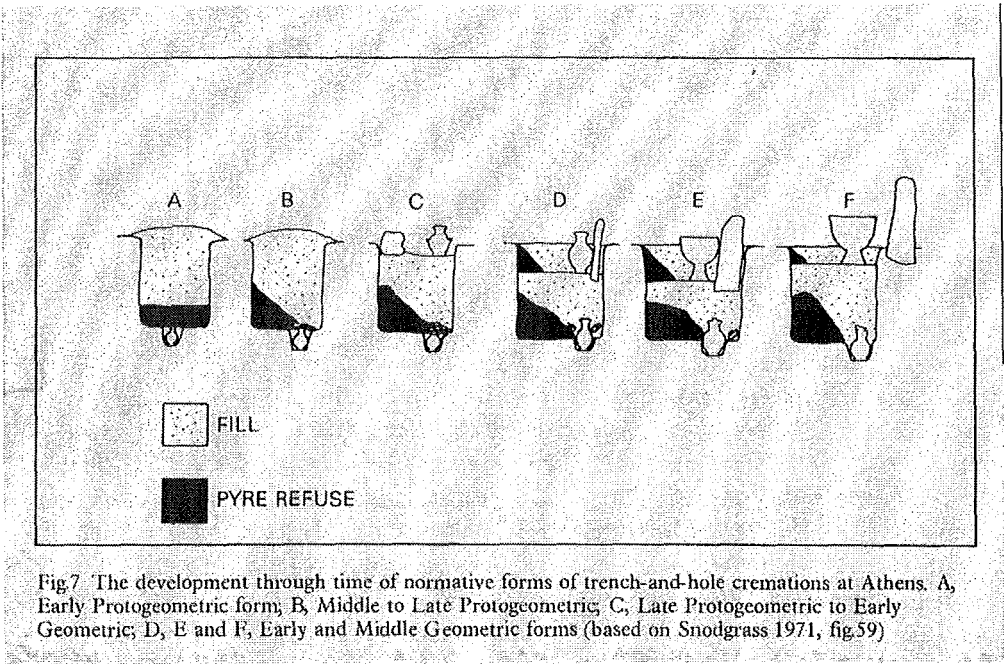


Figure 8

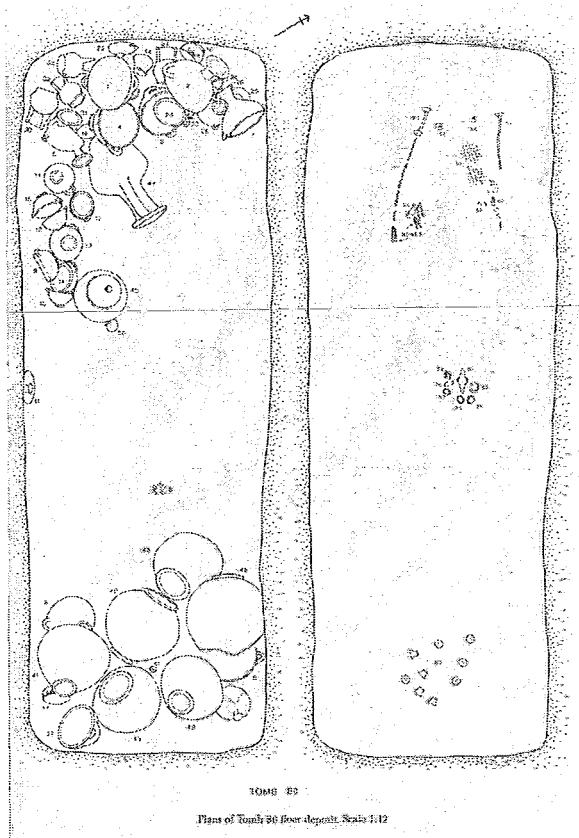


Figure 9

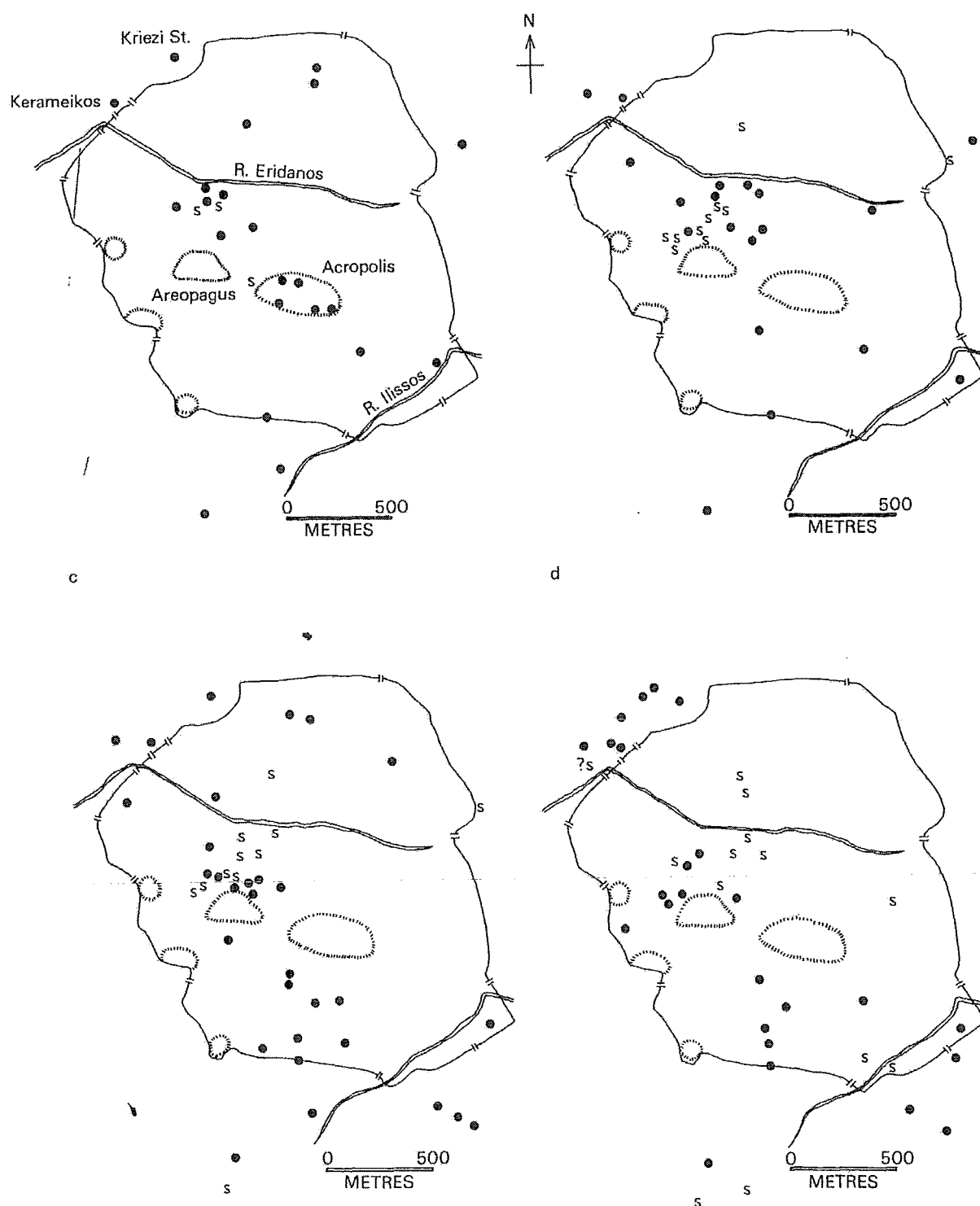


Fig.17. Placing the dead: cemeteries are marked by solid circles, and traces of settlement are marked 'S'. The walls around the city are fifth-century BC, and are shown for topographical reference only (a) Submycenaean; (b) Protogeometric; (c) Early and Middle Geometric; (d) Late Geometric I

Figure 10

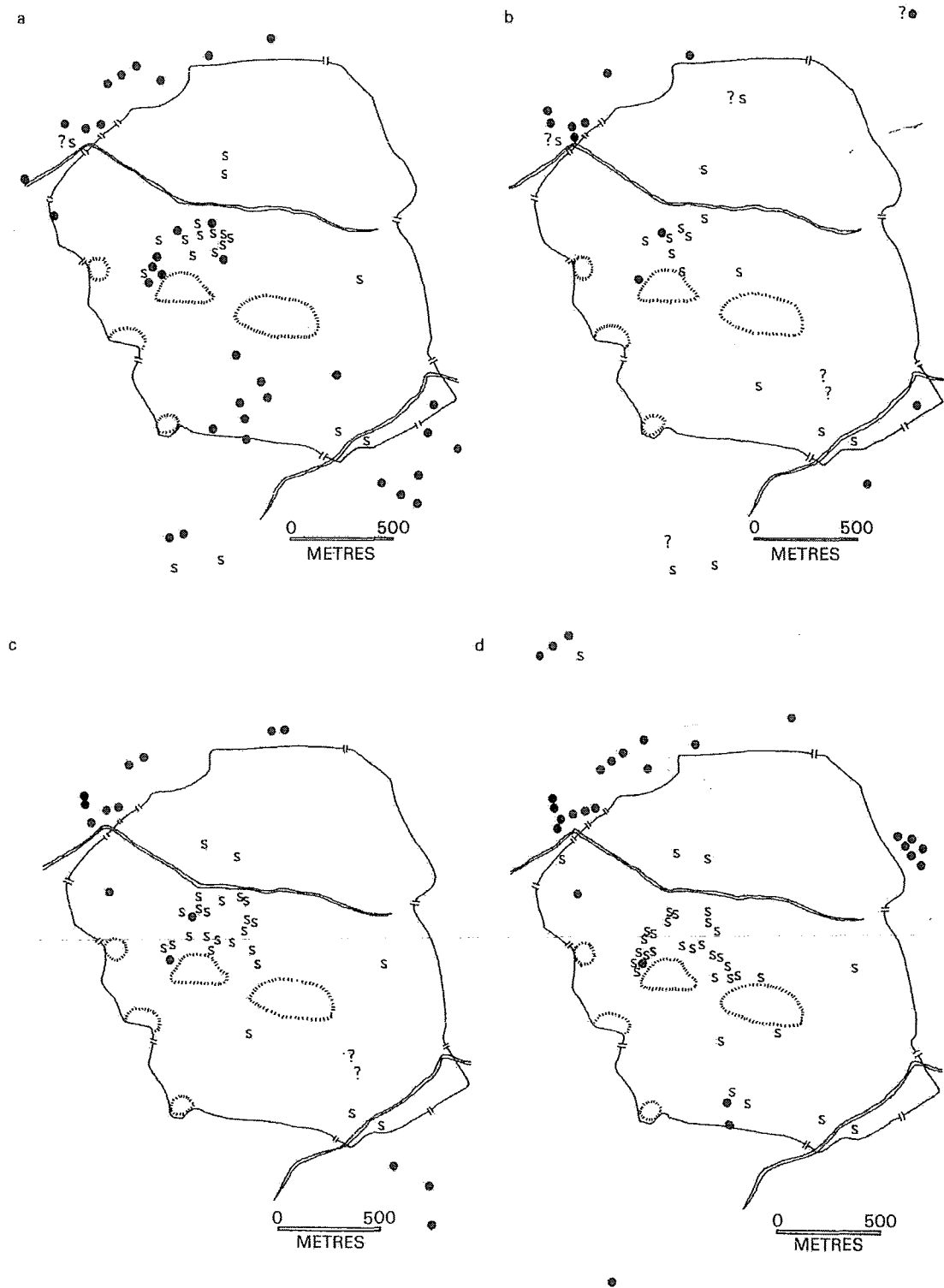
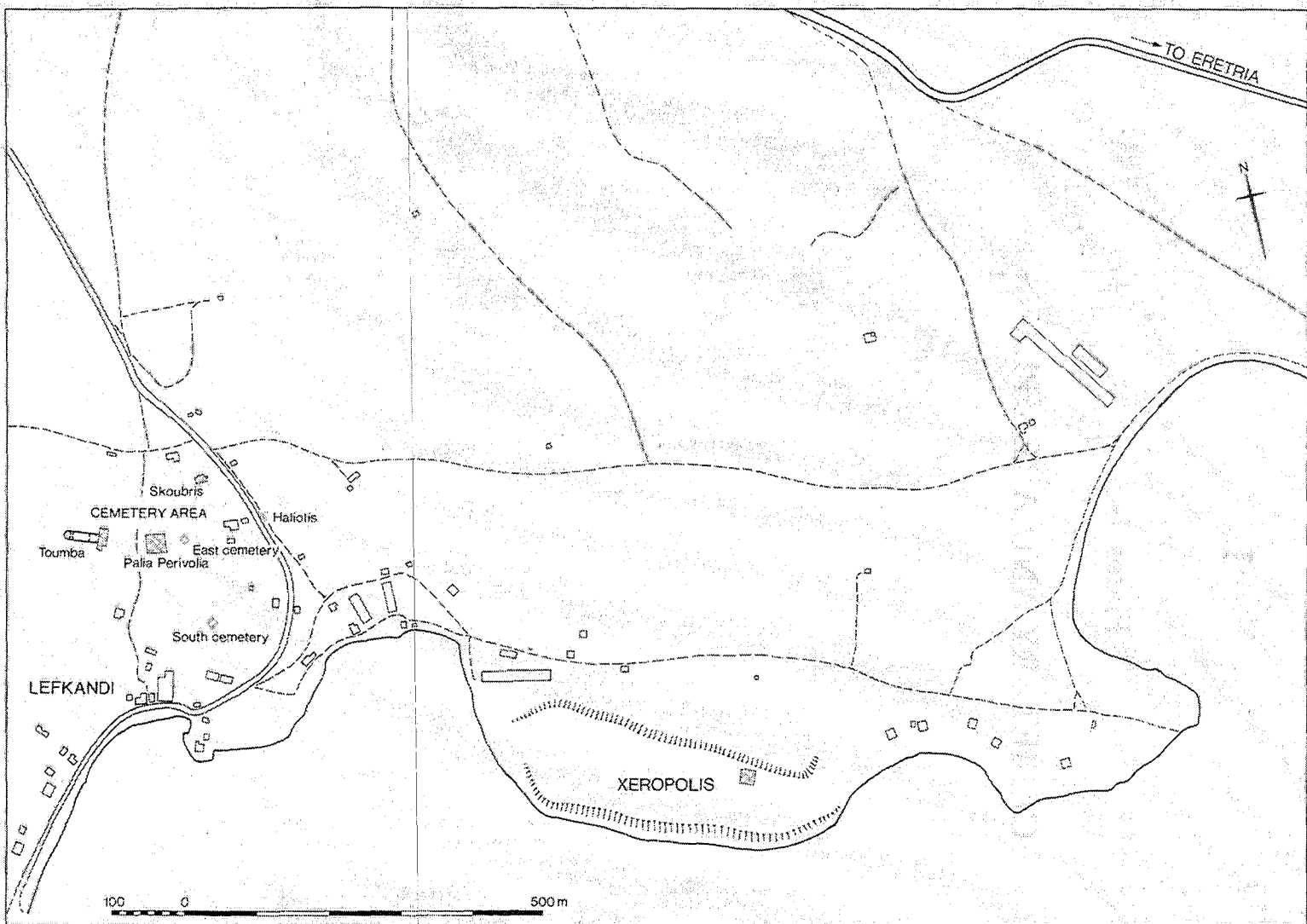


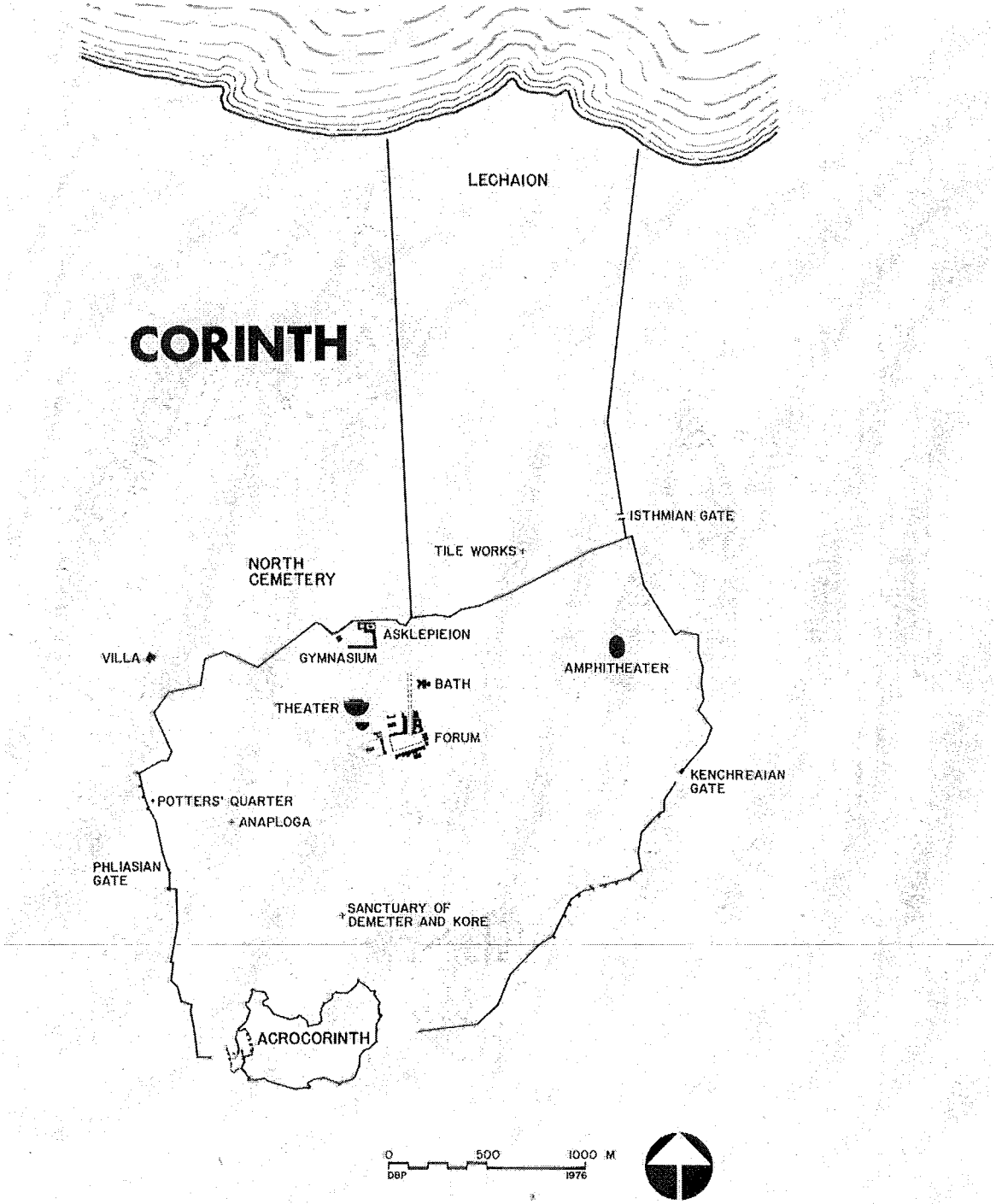
Fig.18. Cemeteries and settlement at Athens: (a) Late Geometric II; (b) Protoattic and Transitional; (c) Black Figure; (d) Early Red Figure

Figure 11



Lefkandi. Plan showing the relative positions of the settlement 'Xeropolis' and the cemetery area.

Figure 12



PLAN V. SITE OVERVIEW

Figure 13

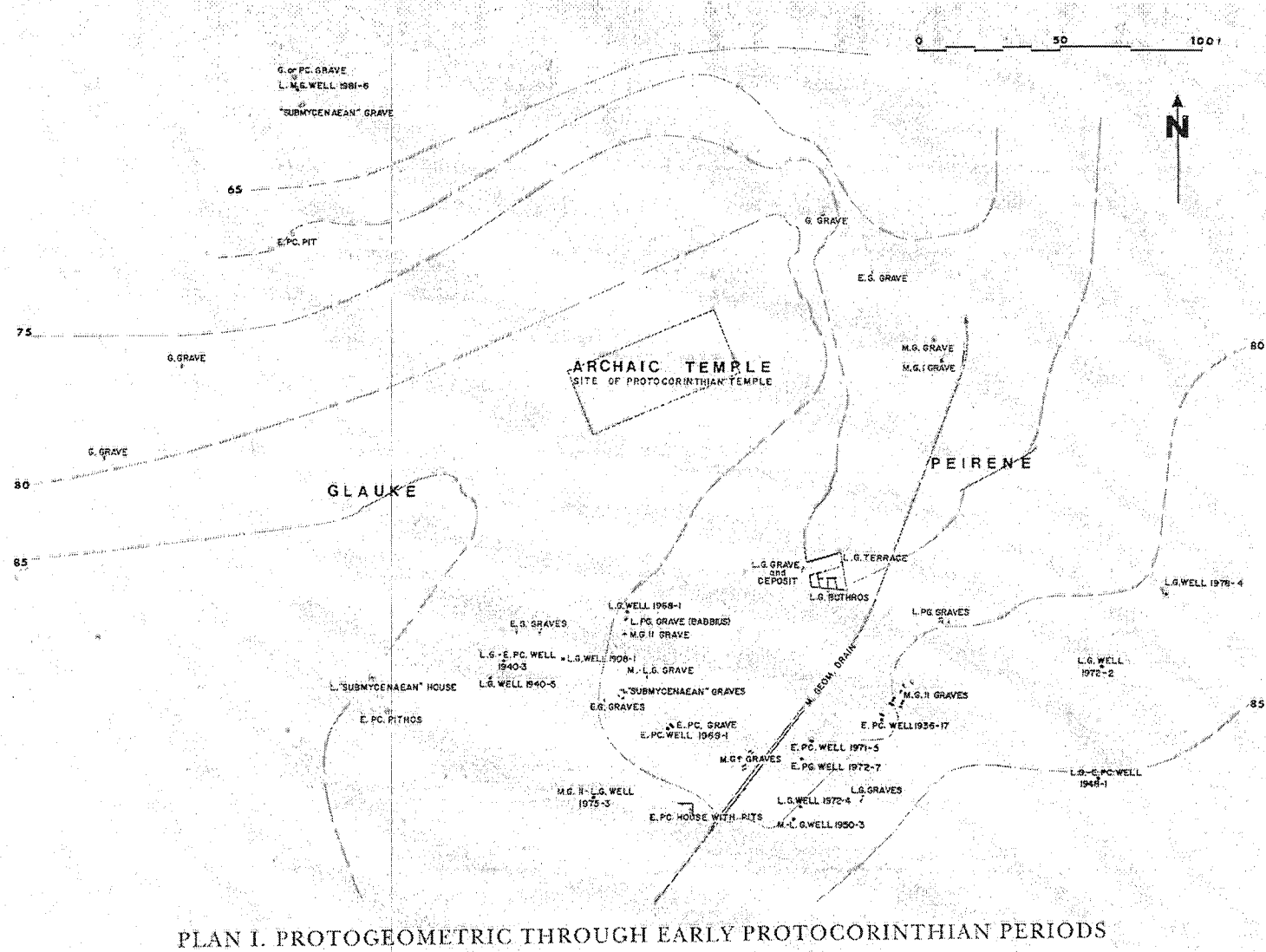
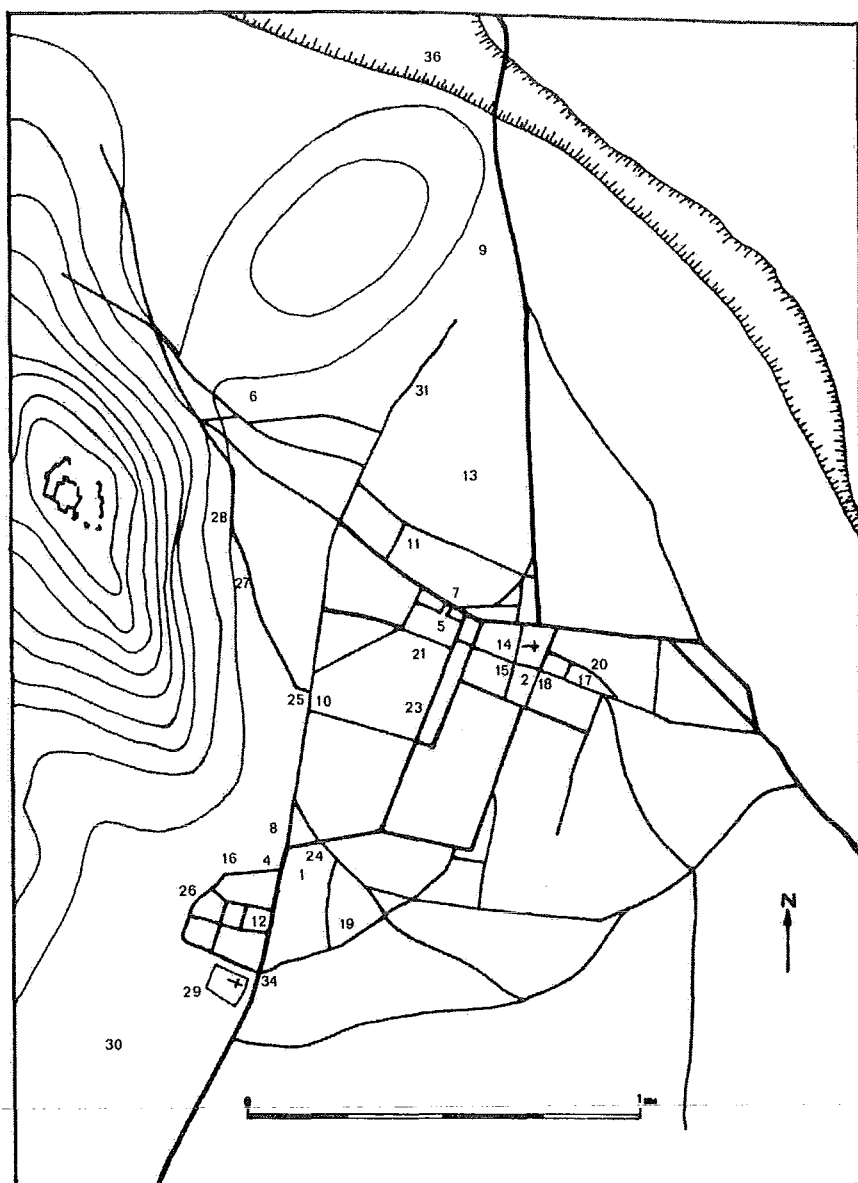


Figure 14



- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Agora | 13. Laloukiotis | 25. Skliris |
| 2. Alexopoulos and Lynkitou | 14. Makris and Phlessas | 26. Sondage 34 |
| 3.* Atreos/Danaos St. junction | 15. Museum area | 27. Sondage 70 |
| 4. Bakaloianis | 16. Odeion area | 28. Sondage 74 |
| 5. Bonoris | 17. OTE | 29. South Cemetery area |
| 6. Deiras-Karantanis | 18. Papanikolaou | 30. Stadium area |
| 7. Giagos | 19. Papaparaskevas | 31. Stavropoulou |
| 8. Granias | 20. Paraskevopoulos | 32.* Stranka |
| 9. Hospital | 21. Phloros | 33.* Theodoropoulou |
| 10. Iliopoulos | 22.* Presvelos-Bobos-Pagonis | 34. Tripolis 26 St. |
| 11. Kypouropoulos | 23. Raptis | 35.* Tsouloucha |
| 12. Kypseli Square | 24. Sirouni | 36. Xerias River |

MAP 6. Map of Argos showing areas where eighth- and seventh-century graves have been found. (Map after Hägg, *Gräber*, with permission). * indicates plot not located on map.

Figure 15

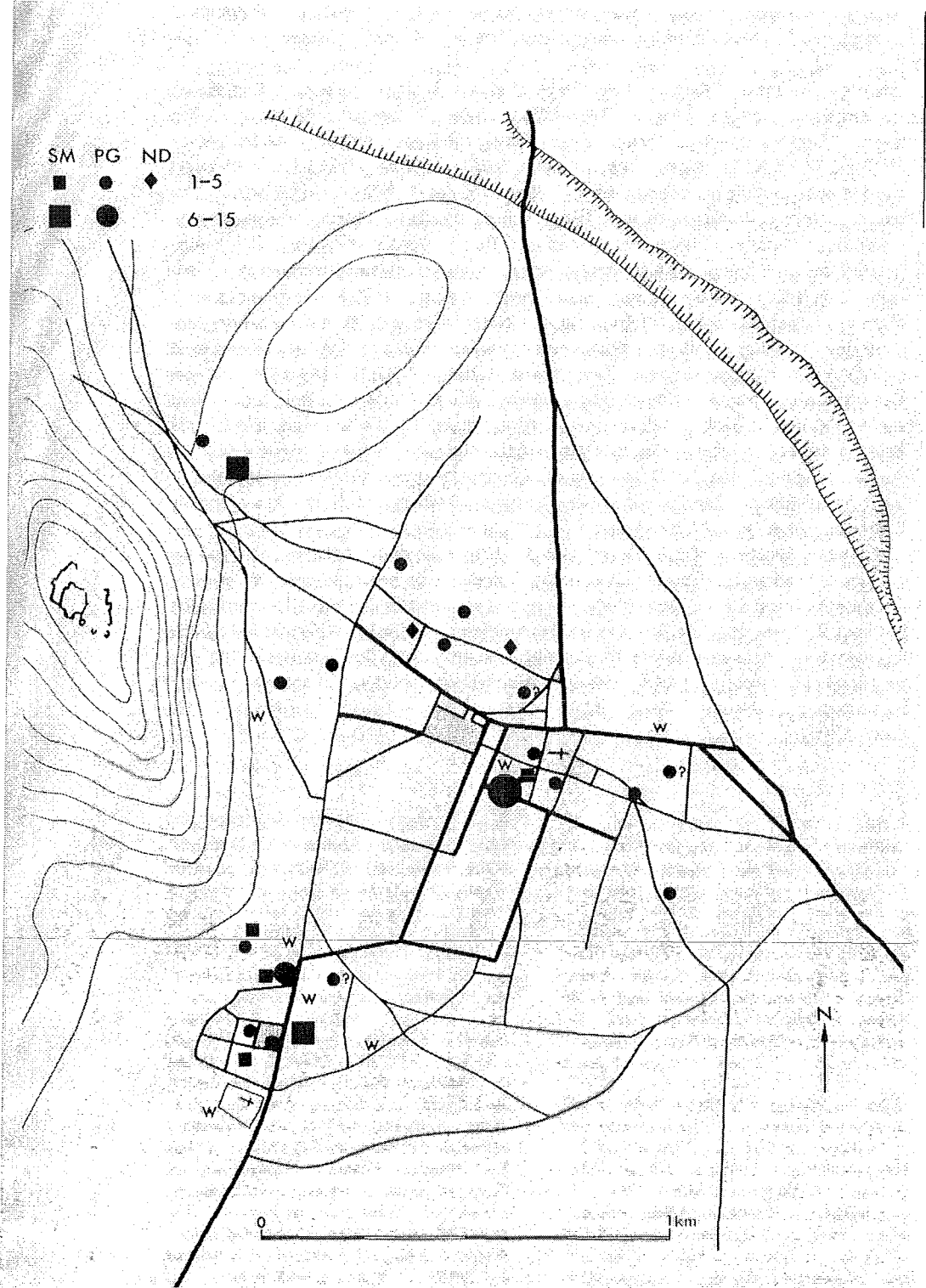
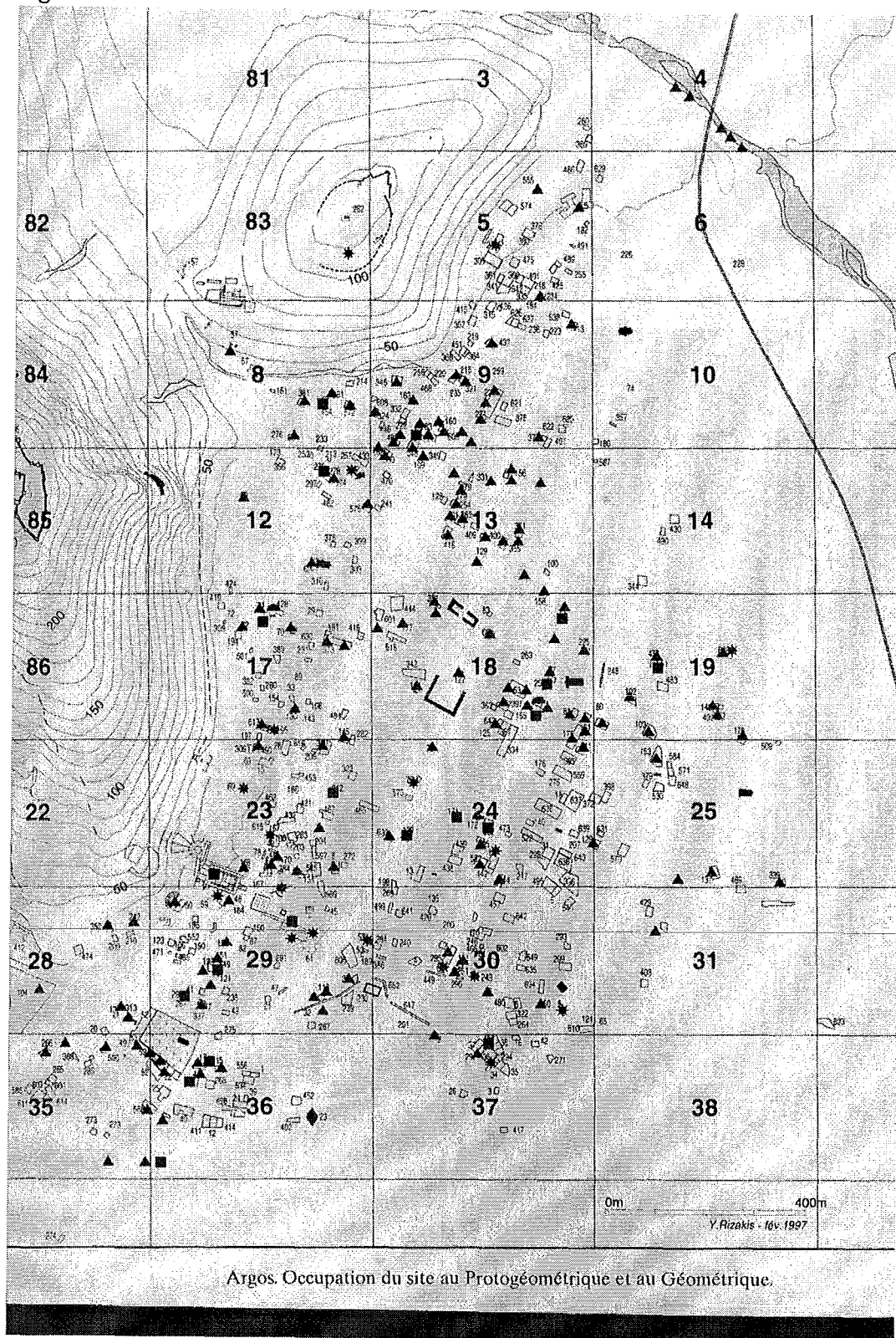


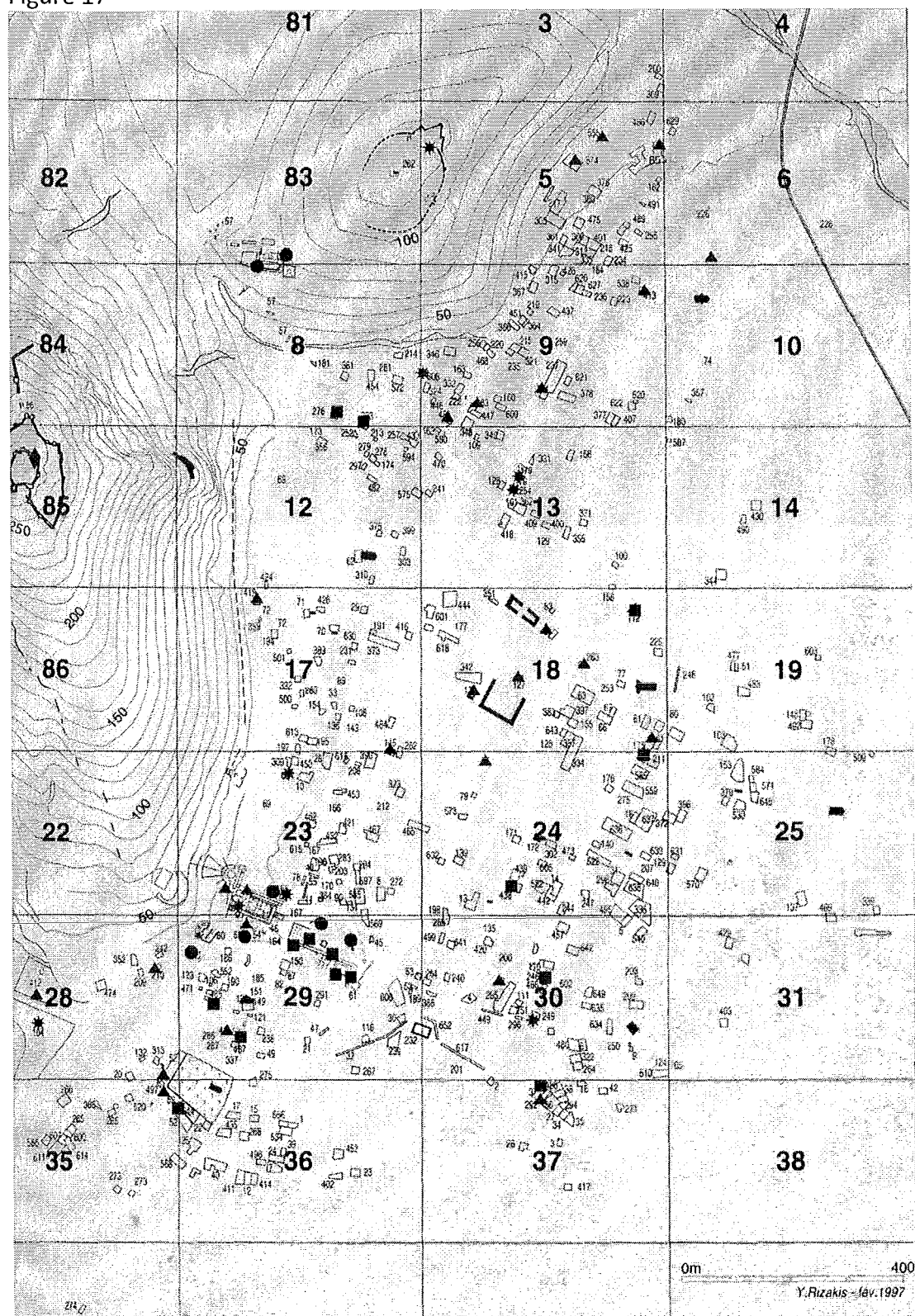
Abb. 5. Argos. Die Verbreitung submykenischer und proto-geometrischer Funde. (W = Wohnbezirk, Siedlung; die Anzahl der Bestattungen wird durch die Größe der jeweiligen Symbole veranschaulicht.)

Figure 16



*Key: Triangle=Tomb(s). Square=Settlement Evidence. Circle=Object Found. Diamond=City-Wall Evidence.

Figure 17



Argos. Occupation du site à l'époque archaïque.

Figure 18

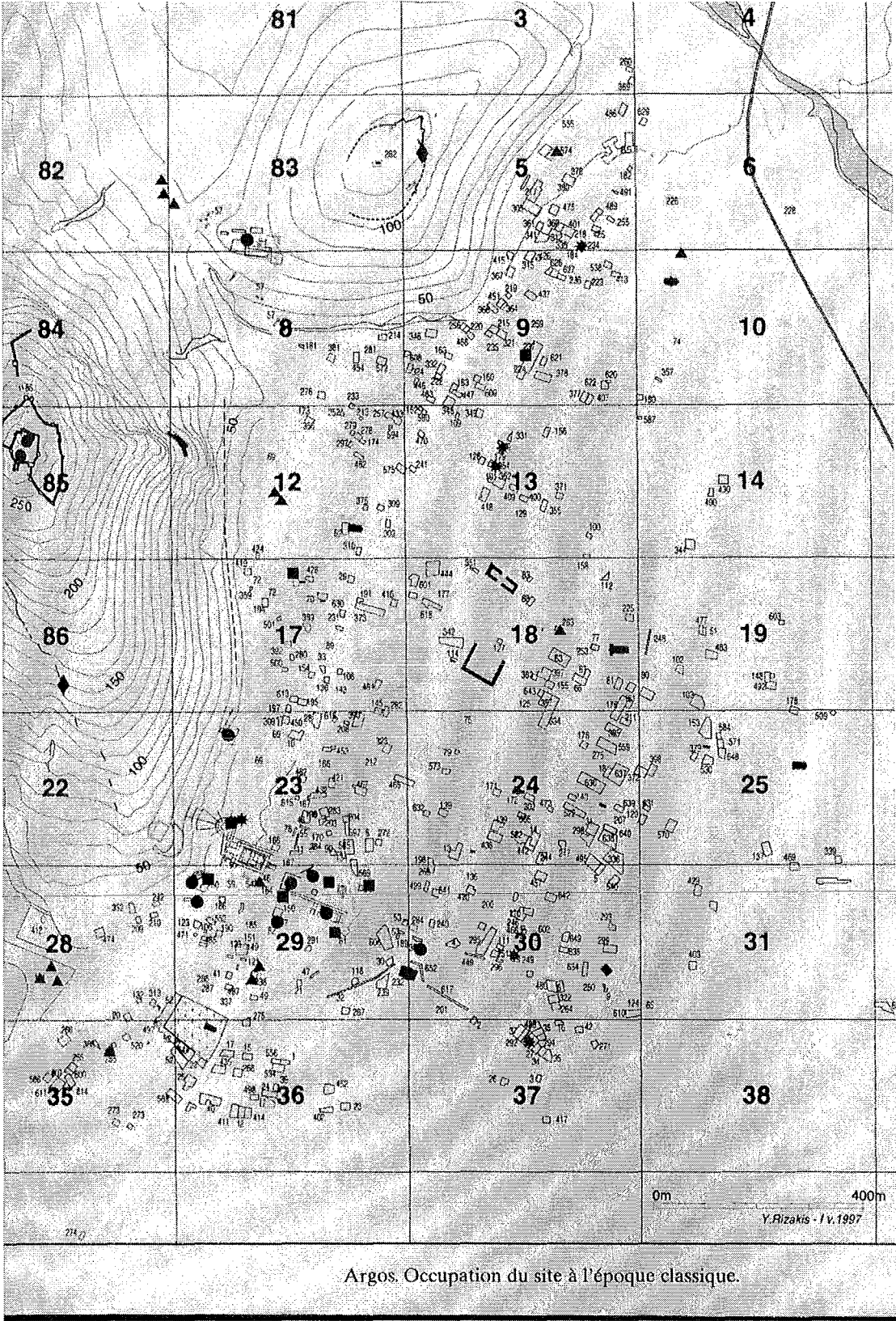


Figure 19

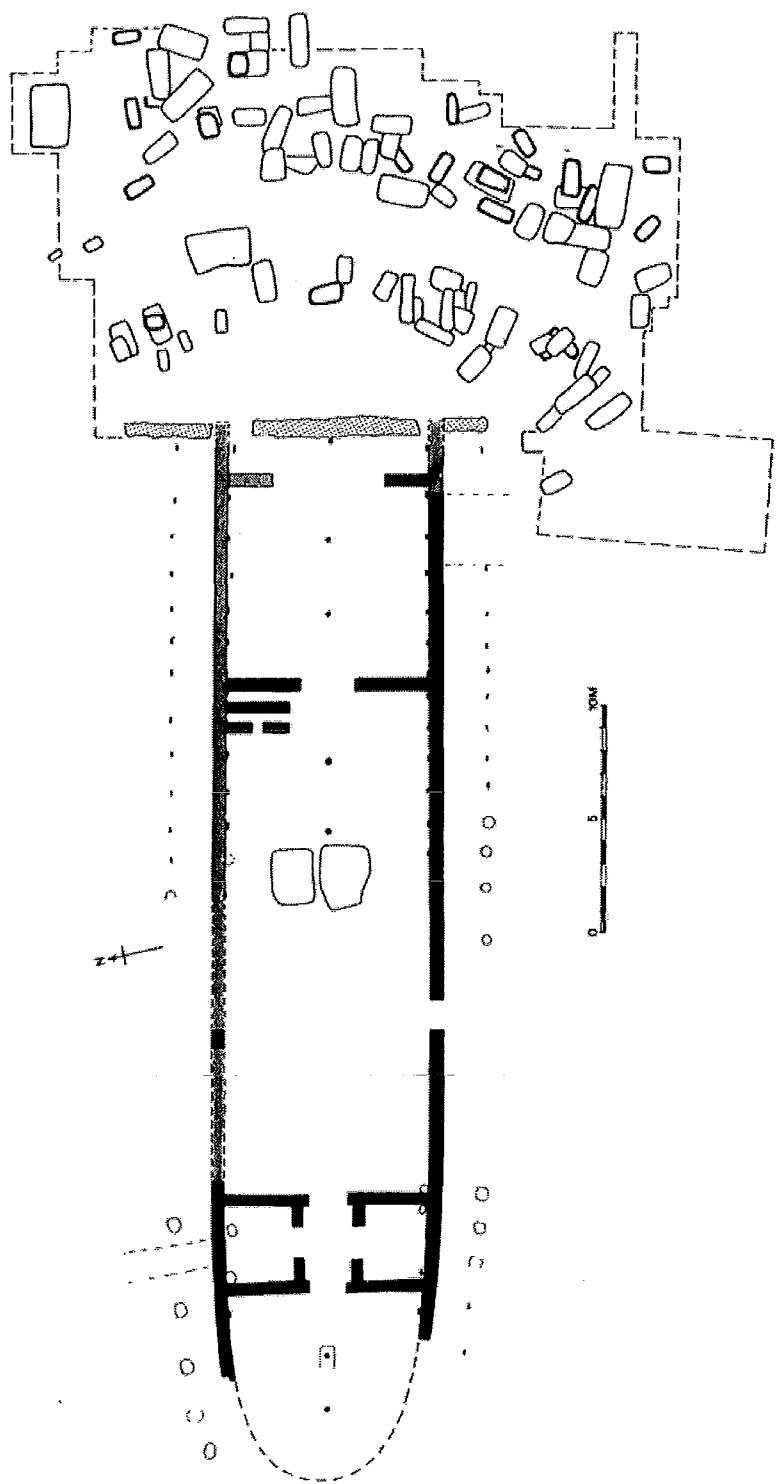


Figure 20

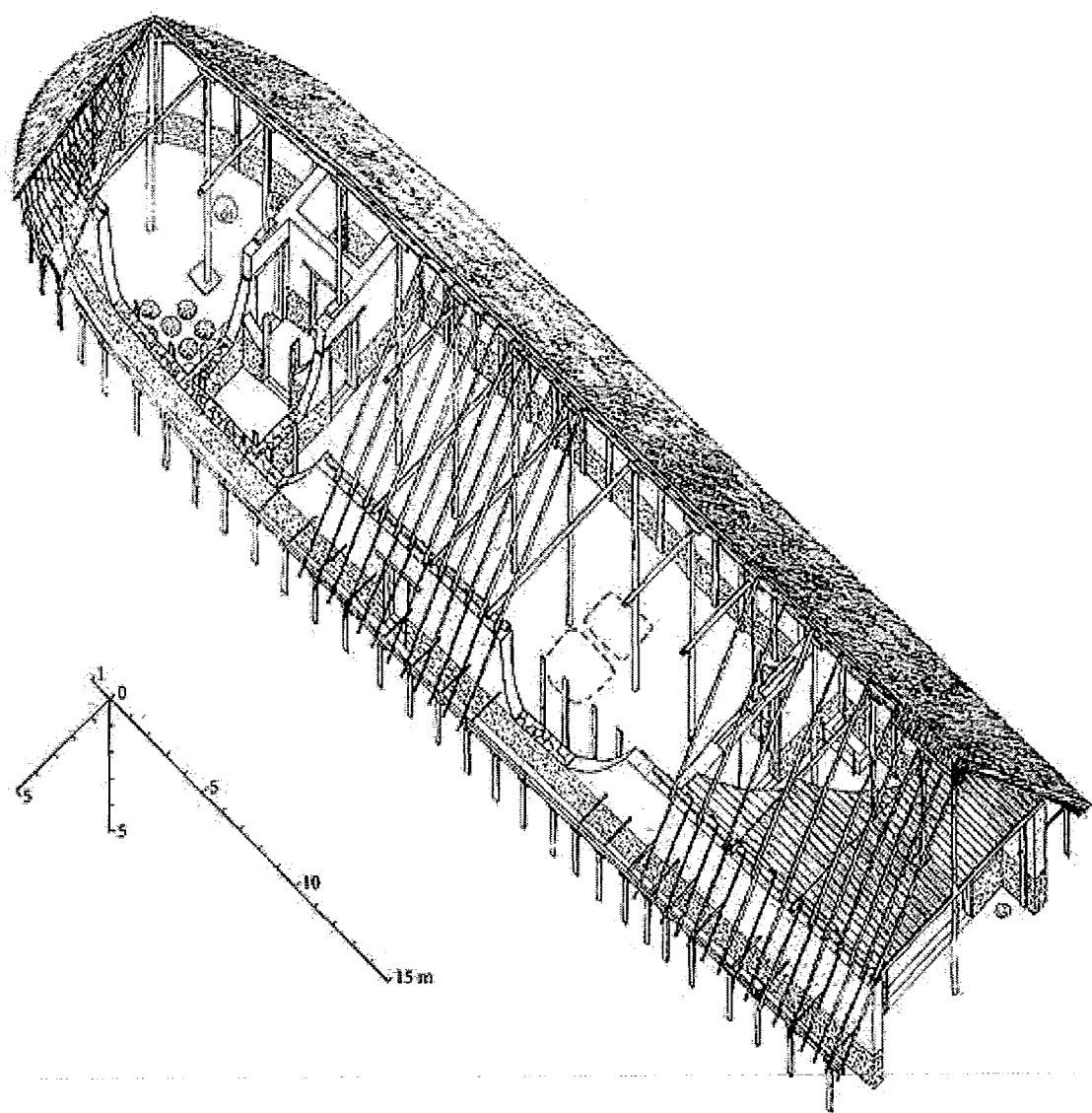


Figure 21

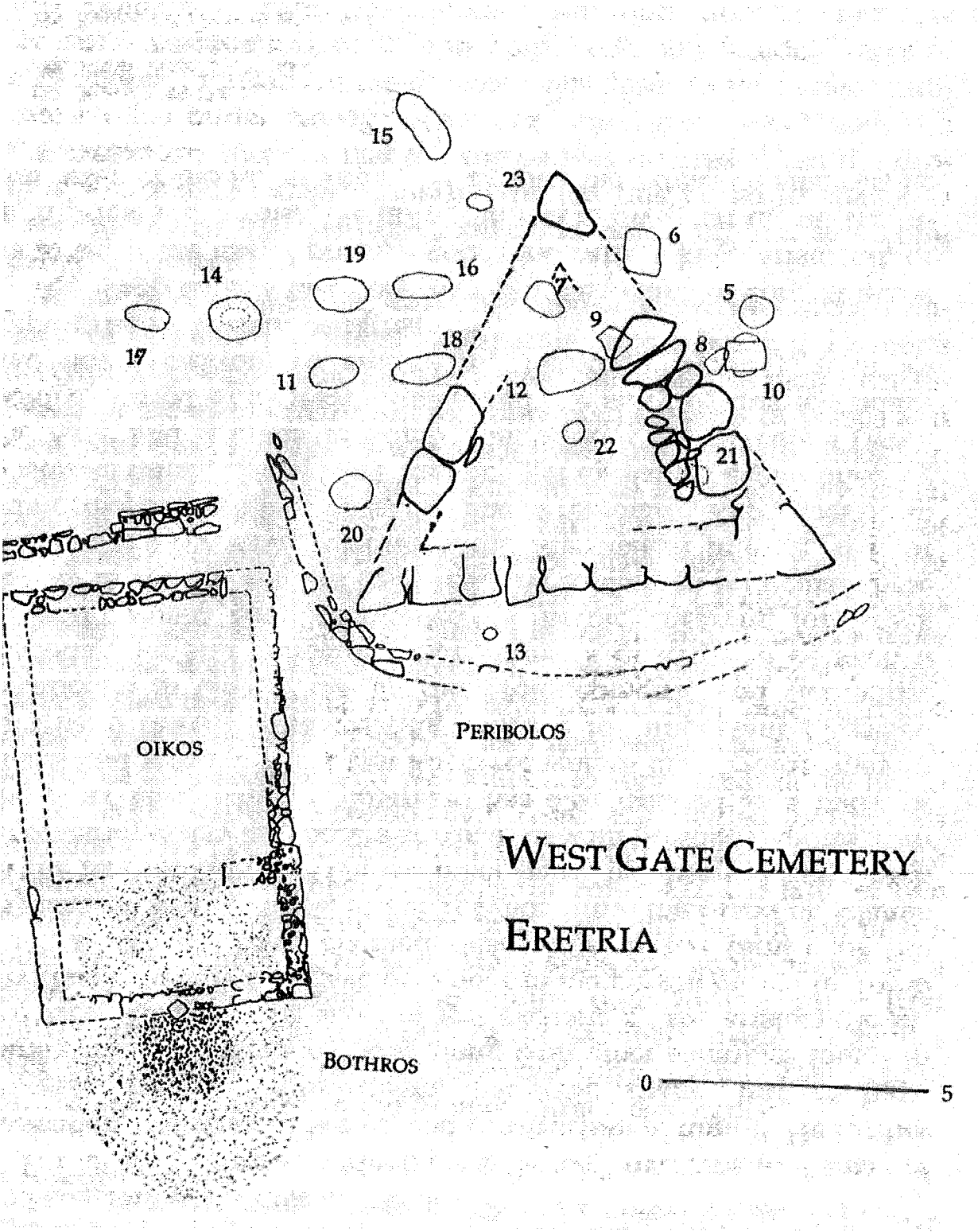
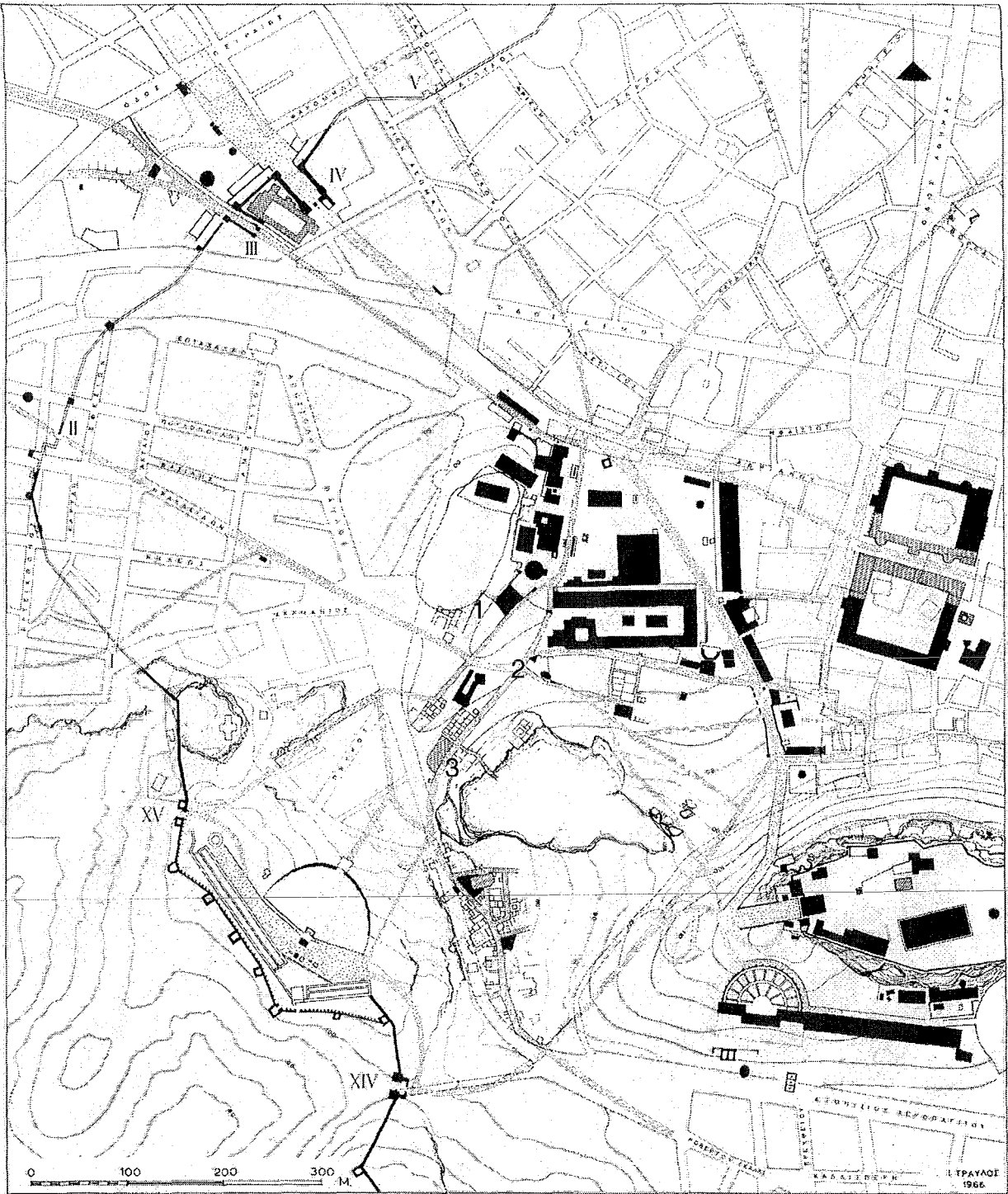


Figure 22



1: Tholos Cemetery. 2: Triangular Hieron and Oval House. 3: Areopagos Cemetery.

Figure 23

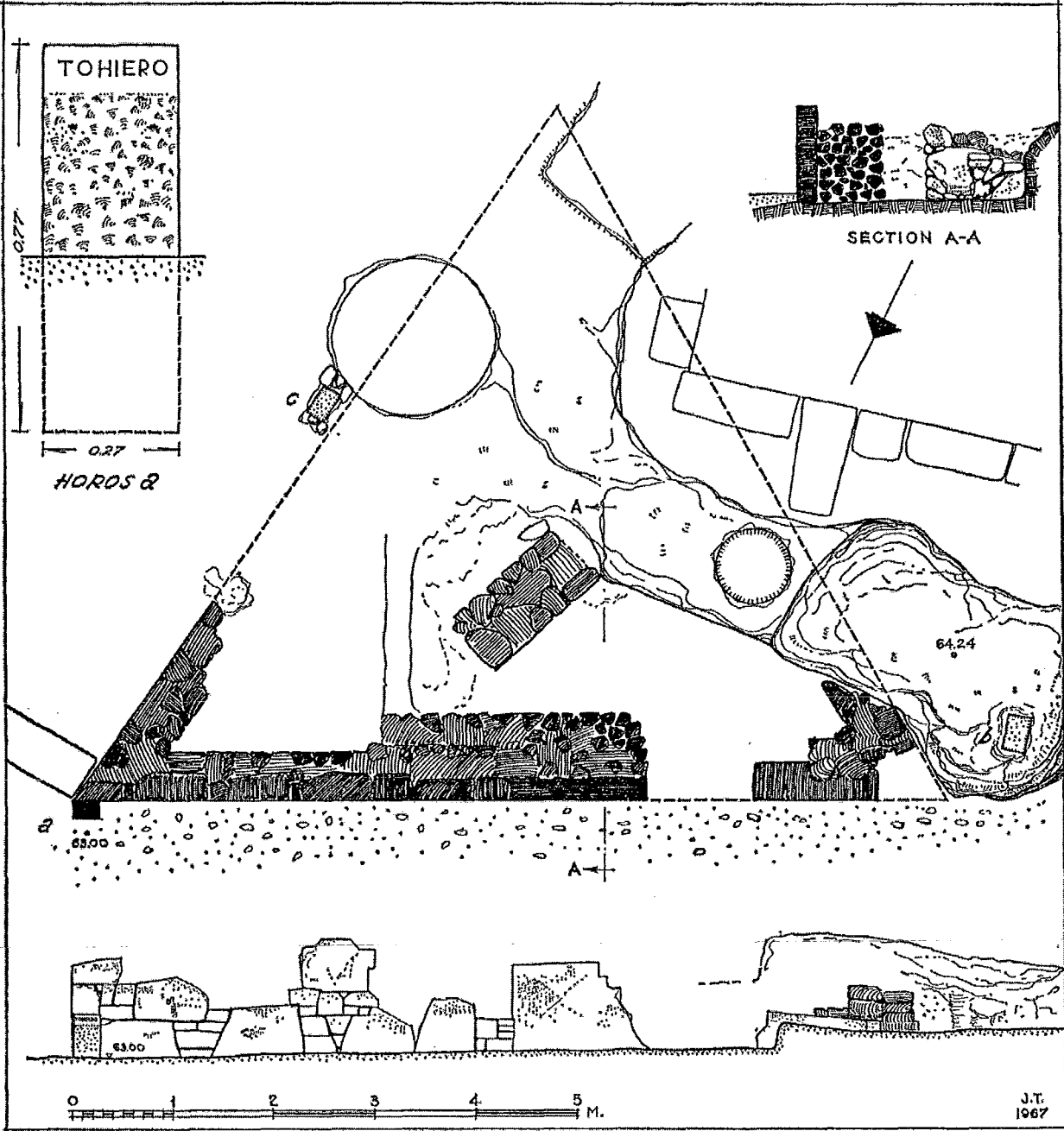


Figure 24

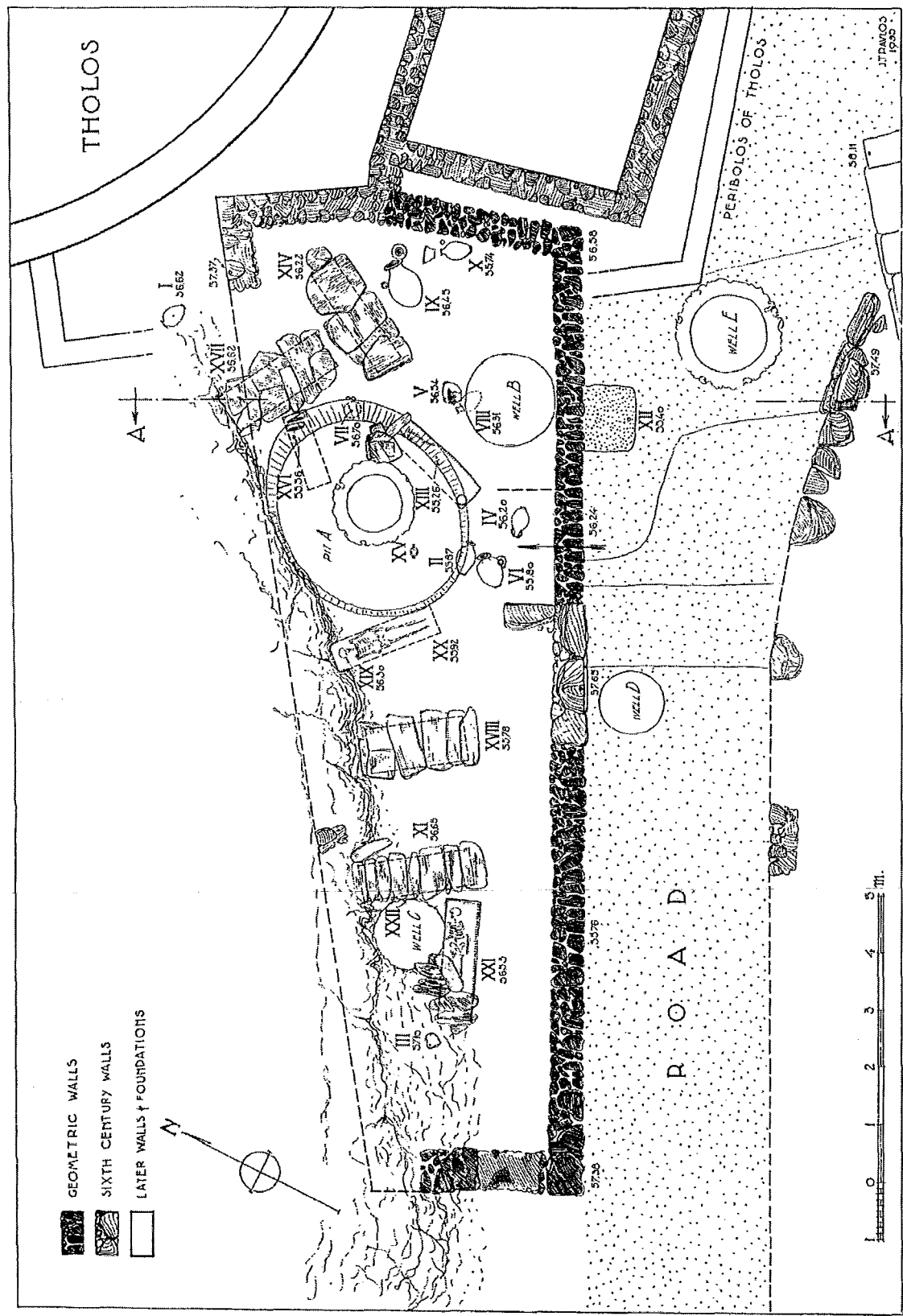


Figure 25



Figure 26

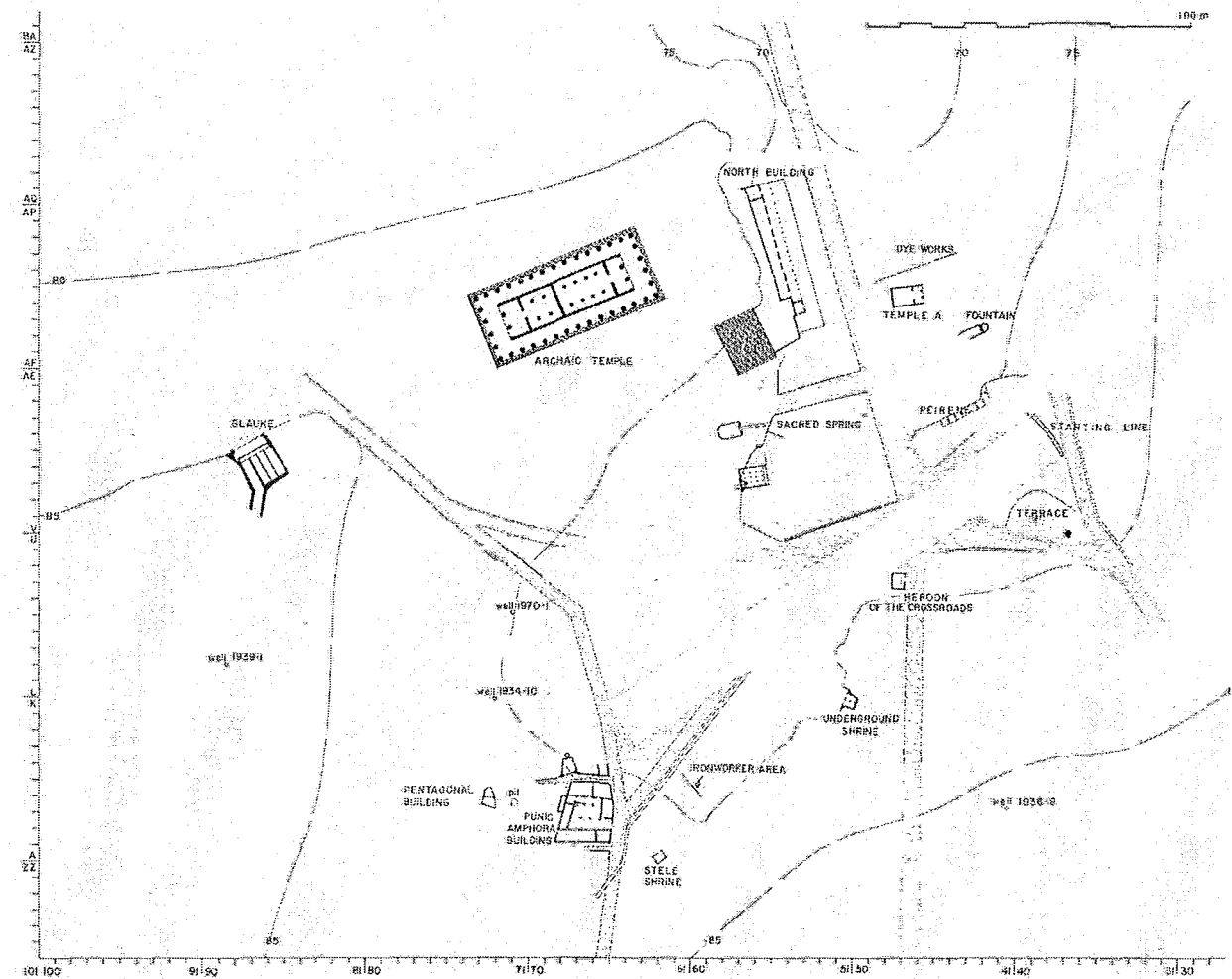


Figure 27

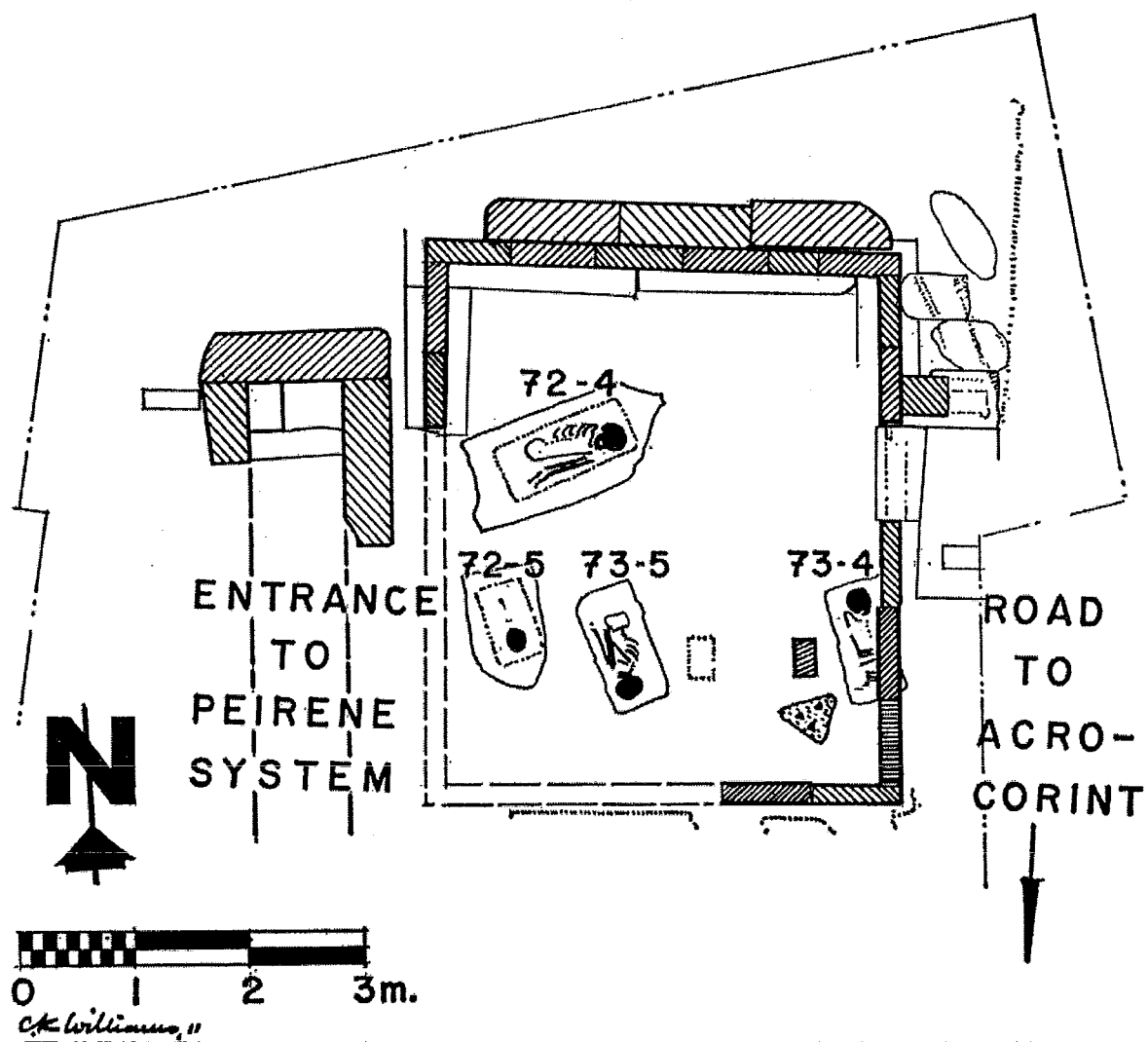


Figure 28

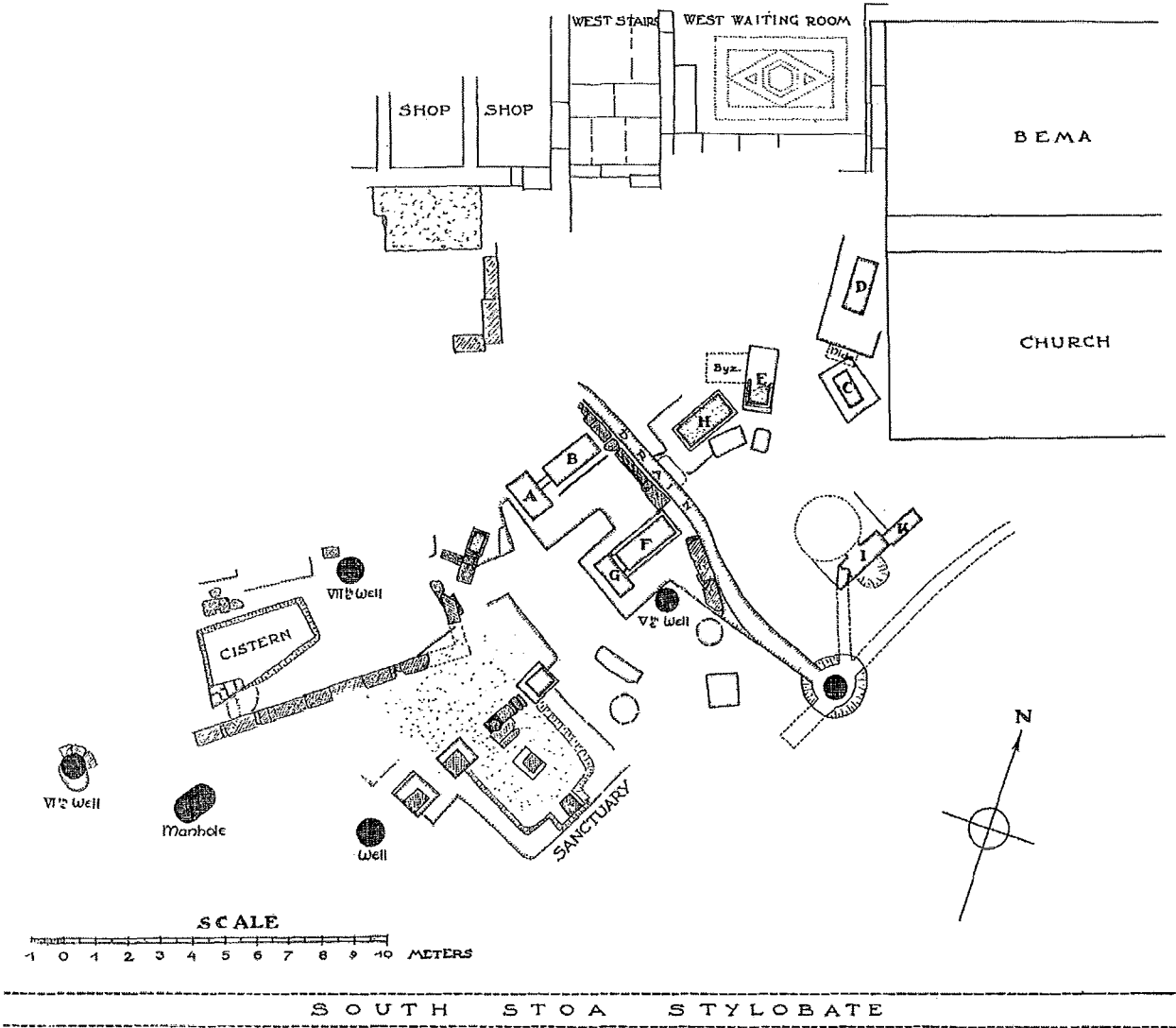


Figure 29

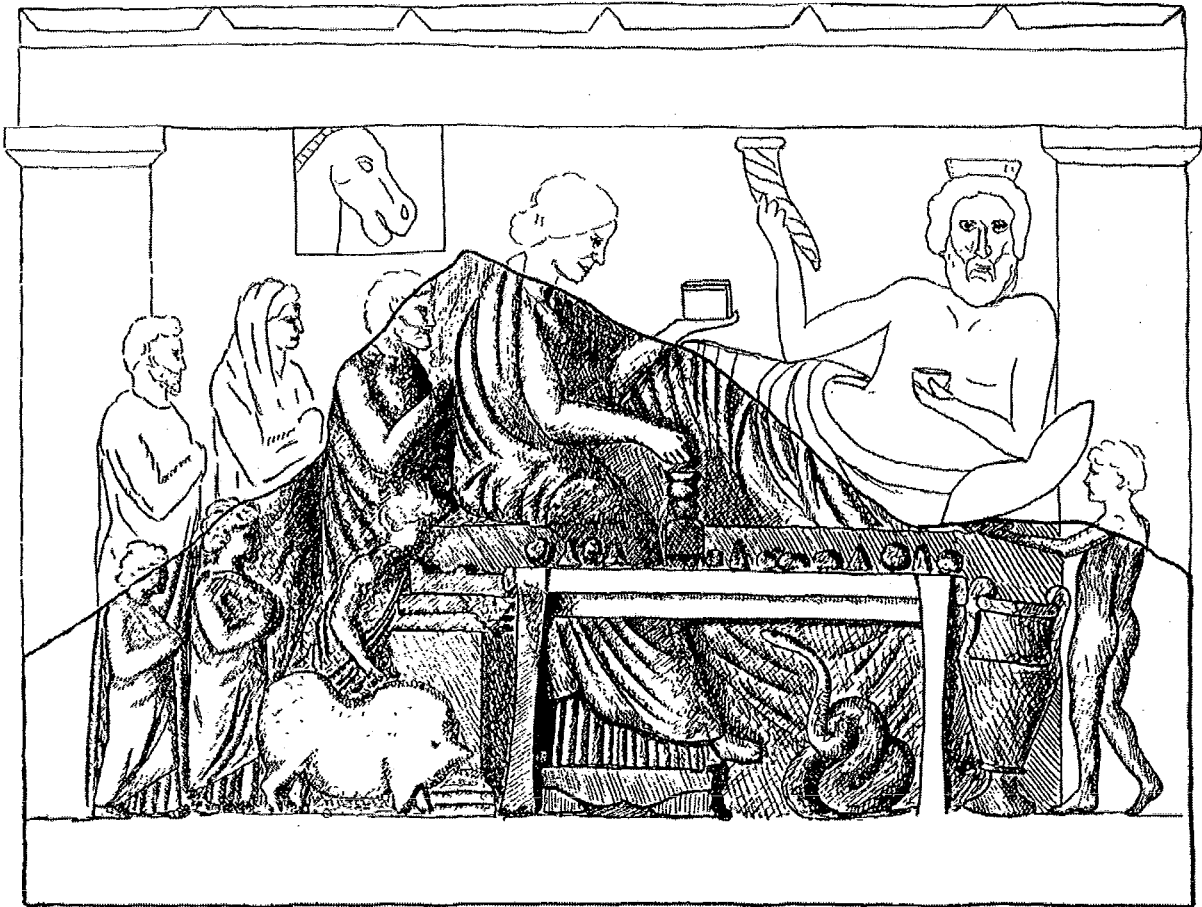
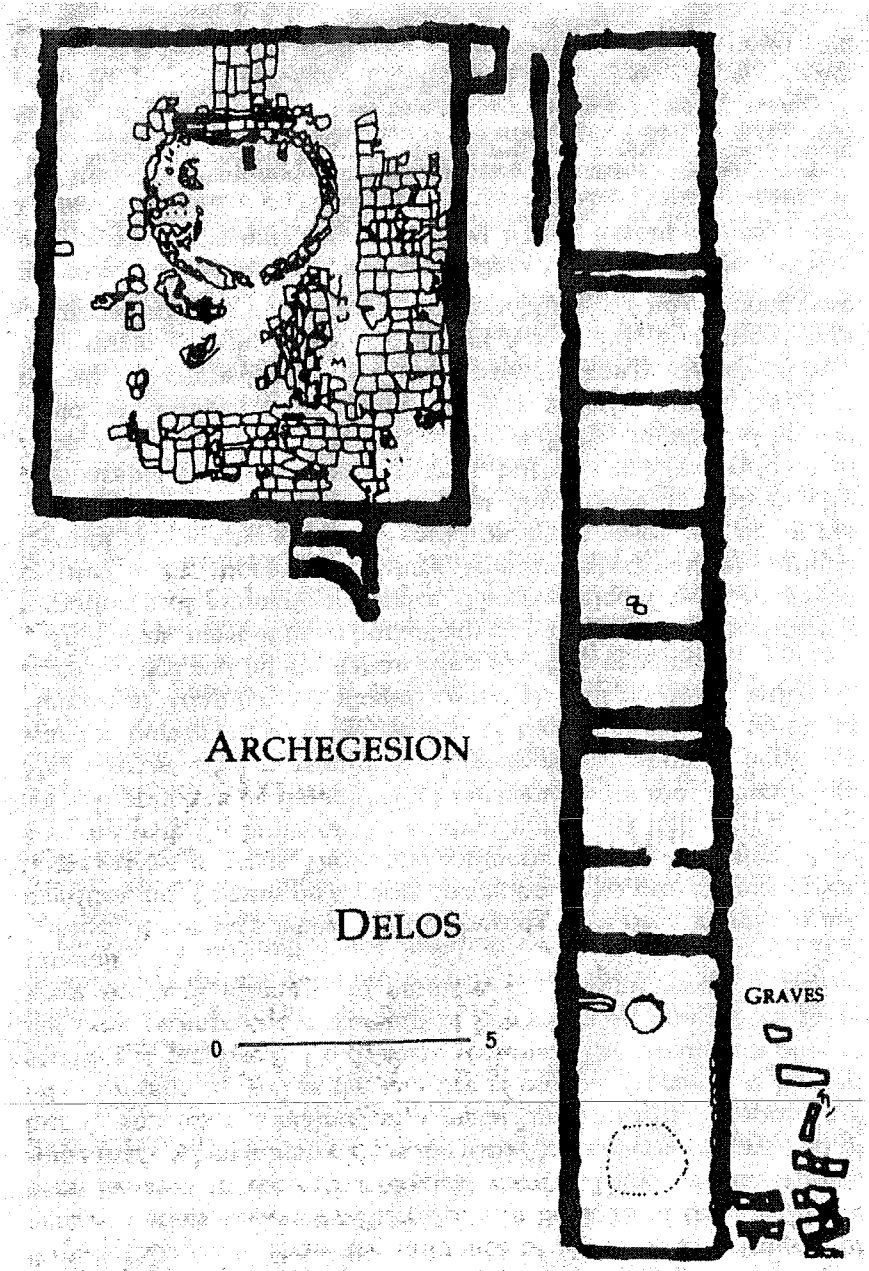


Figure 30



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