Various approaches towards the Greek *Polis*

by J. Nicolas Coldstream

George Huxley has devoted much thought into Aristotle's enquiries into the Greek past. In particular, his penetrating discussion of 'Aristotle on the origin of the Greek *polis*'[1] prompts these pages which I offer to him as a friend and colleague for almost half a century. My approach is as an archaeologist of early Greece, looking for any valid evidence from excavated sites which may have some bearing on Aristotle's opinion of how the Greek *polis* first came into being. On this topic I wrote an exploratory paper over twenty years ago;[2] but in the light of many recent excavations, and of much careful thought concerning the nature of the Archaic and Classical polis,[3] some reappraisal is now needed: a reappraisal that may well, in its turn, need further revision before long, such is the pace of archaeological discovery. Here, then, is *un bilan provisoire*, as the French say.

Before we descend to details, a few preliminary remarks are needed to clear the ground. Aristotle envisaged the formation of the nascent *polis* as a union of villages, *komai* (*Pol.* 1252b.7), joining together for their own common good to form a state, completely autonomous and autarkic, and consisting of a central settlement closely united with its surrounding countryside. A true *polis* should be inhabited by *politai*, citizens rather than subjects: citizens enjoying rights under some form of constitutional government, rather than subjects ruled by a

[1] G. L. Huxley, 'Aristotle and the origin of the Greek polis', in *Stele: tomos eis mnemen N. Kontoleontos*, ed. V. K. Lambrinoudakis *et al.* (Athens, 1980), 258-64; also *On Aristotle and Greek society* (Belfast, 1979), 18-20.

[2] J. N. Coldstream, *The formation of the Greek polis: Aristotle and archaeology*. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 272 (Düsseldorf, 1983).

[3] Notably, the results obtained between 1993 and 2003 by the Copenhagen Polis Centre, summarised with full references by M. H. Hansen, '95 theses about the Greek *polis* in the Archaic and Classical periods', *Historia* 52.3 (2003), 257-82. The upper chronological limit of those investigations is given as 650 BC; the present paper concentrates on moves towards the *polis* before that date.

monarchy or any other type of autocracy. An emergent early Greek *polis* is thus distinct from the Mycenaean palace states of the Greek mainland, before their demise near the end of the Bronze Age.

At a time of returning prosperity after the rigours and deprivations of a supposed 'Dark Age', the pressures caused by a rapid rise of population in the eighth century BC[4] have been reasonably held to have accelerated the cohesion of the *komai*; under an established constitution, people might thus agree to live at peace with, and make common cause with, their immediate neighbours. Another possible symptom of an emergent *polis*, conducive to a sense of belonging together, has been seen in the construction of an urban temple for the cult of a patron deity in the eighth century BC.[5] As indicators of a nascent *polis*, Aristotle does not mention either a population boom or the building of an urban temple; indeed, it now appears that temples had begun to appear in the early Greek world well back in the 'Dark Age', and in places far away from what became the centres of *poleis*.[6] Nevertheless, a burgeoning of people, and the building of a temple in their midst, must surely throw some light on the cause, and on an early effect, of a centripetal movement towards organization as a *polis*.

For the hardened sceptic among ancient historians, who may doubt whether archaeological discoveries could possibly throw any light whatever on the genesis of a *polis*, let us return to the Aristotelian definition; let us enquire what sort of material evidence might be persuasive for, or at least consistent with, the birth of an early Greek *polis* in the Aristotelian sense.

Most conjectural are arguments for the autonomy and autarky of a *polis*, with a clearly defined territory in the

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[4] A. M. Snodgrass, *Archaeology and the rise of the Greek state* (Cambridge, 1977), 10-16.

[5] op. cit., 25-6.

[6] E.g. (i) Kalapodi in Phokis, twelfth century BC: R. Felsch, 'Opferhandlungen des Alltagelebens in Heiligtum der Artemis Elaphebolos von Hyampolis in den Phasen SH IIIC – Spätgeometrisch', in *Potnia: Deities and religion in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 8th International Aegean Conference, Göteborg*, eds. R. Laffineur and R. Hägg, *Aegaeum* 23 (2001), 193-200. (ii) Mende-Poseidi in Chalcidike, eleventh century BC: S. Moschonissioti, 'Excavation at ancient Mende', in *Euboica: l'Eubea e la presenza euboica in Calcidica e in Occidente*, Centre J. Bérard coll. 15, eds. M. Bats and B. d'Agostino (Naples, 1998), 255-71. (iii) Kommos in Crete, tenth century BC: J. Shaw, *Kommos* IV (Princeton, 2000), 302 ff., 700 ff.

countryside; these rely mainly on our assumptions of 'a local way of doing things' within a defined area seen, for example, in the regional styles of Late Geometric pottery, for which regional boundaries can be drawn;[7] but these boundaries do not always coincide with *polis* territories known from historical sources. Furthermore, some well-attested *polis* centres, such as Aigina and Megara, do not possess their own local Late Geometric style. As for constitutional government, no convincing argument can be offered until the spread of alphabetic literacy, exploited from the late seventh century onwards for the display of laws in a public place.[8] As for the secular public buildings that one might expect for the transaction of public affairs, tracess of these are hardly to be found before the sixth century – although earlier assemblies, even before any move towards a *polis* constitution, could well have met in central open spaces without any architecture, especially in spaces between the chief urban sanctuary and the residence of a ruling clan.[9]

For the cohesion of *komai*, however, there is much positive evidence from the eighth and seventh centuries, patiently recovered from the major mainland centres of Athens, Argos and Corinth over the past century, and often gathered from rescue excavations under a modern town: evidence of small villages or hamlets in the 'Dark Age', each with its own adjoining burial plot, succeeded from the late eighth century onwards by the formation of an urban nucleus with one or more cemeteries well outside the inhabited area, from which all interments were then altogether excluded.[10]

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[7] J. N. Coldstream, 'The meaning of the regional styles in the eighth century BC' in *The Greek Renaissance of the eighth century BC: tradition and innovation*, ed. R. Hägg (Stockholm, 1983), 17-25.

[8] The earliest recorded legal inscription, engraved on stone for public display, is the decree from Dreros in East Crete: L. H. Jeffery and A. W. Johnston, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1990), 315, no. 1a.

[9] In Athens, Apollodorus (*FGH* 244, F 113) preserves the memory of the oldest place of assembly in the open air on the saddle between the Areopagus and the Acropolis. This very early location for Athenian public business is centrally situated between the main sanctuary and the residence of a ruling clan. It would have preceded the shadowy 'Old Agora' of early Archaic times, envisaged as situated below the eastern slope of the Acropolis' following a clue in Pausanias i.18.3, mentioning a Prytaneion and the display of Solon's laws near the *hieron* of Aglauros: see, most recently, J. Papadopoulous *GRBS* 37 (1996), 107-28 and *Hesperia* Supplement 31 (2003), 271-316.

[10] J. N. Coldstream, art. cit. (n. 2), 13-15.

Approaches towards the formation of a true *polis* vary greatly throughout the Greek world. Nowhere was this evolution more rapid than among the first colonial settlements in the West, with which we shall begin. In due course it will be instructive to compare their record with the contemporary experience of their mother cities.

Especially enlightening are the results of recent excavations at Syracuse[11] where, according to Thucydides (vi.3.2), an armament of Corinthian colonists in 733 BC, under the leadership of the Bacchiad nobleman Archias, drove out the native Sicel inhabitants and won control of the offshore island of Ortygia, today still the old centre of the modern town. Within the Piazza Duomo at the island's highest point, above what seems to have been a sanctuary of the ousted indigenous people, remains have been found of a rectangular Greek temple (9.30 x 6.0m.) of the late eighth century. Near by is a group of square houses, carefully aligned and, to judge from copious deposits of Corinthian Late Geometric pottery found in them, belonging to the first generation of colonists. Not much later, there are signs of a regular street plan in the seventh century. In a neighbouring area earlier excavations[12] had identified a late eighth-century altar raised to Athena, together with more square houses built above a stratum of native Sicel occupation in the immediately preceding period. No interment has ever been found within the early Greek colonial settlement; on the contrary, all burials from the very beginning of the Greek colony were consigned to the large peripheral cemetery of Fusco on the Sicilian mainland.[13]

Lying under the modern town of Syracuse, only a few patches of the early Greek colonial settlement have been accessible to archaeological exploration; even so, the available evidence points decisively towards organization as a *polis* from the start, rather as a collection of disjunct *komai*. Ortygia, as Thucydides tells us, was not won without a fight. In their homeland the first colonists were of diverse origin: some came from Corinth, many others were farmers from Tenea[14] in the

[11] G. Voza, *Siracusa 1999: lo scavo archeologico di Piazza Duomo* (Syracuse, 1999), 12, pl. 3.

[12] P. Orsi, *MA* 25 (1919); P. Pelagatti, *ASAtene* 60 (1982), 117-64.

[13] P. Orsi, *NSc* 1895, 109-92.

[14] Strabo 380.

Corinthian countryside. Faced with the prospect of conflict in an alien land, they must surely have made common cause under their leader Archias and, on arrival, made corporate decisions about the layout of the new colony, and its defence.

In the year preceding the Corinthian foundation of Syracuse, the earliest of all Greek colonies in Sicily had been established under the leadership of Theocles of Chalcis (Thuc. vi.3.1) on a strategic promontory site, Cape Schisò, not far from the Straits of Messina. The origins of the founding colonists were even more diverse than of those led by Archias at Syracuse; the Chalcidians were joined by a Cycladic contingent from Naxos after whom the colony was named. Unlike the Corinthians at Syracuse, they do not appear to have encountered native opposition.[15] Even so, the excavations of the past fifty years have revealed a pattern no less cohesive than at Syracuse. In the early colonial settlement, Late Geometric square houses were followed by a seventh-century street plan, with a clearly marked sacred area. Outside the town, the altar raised by the first colonists to their divine guide Apollo Archegetes, mentioned by Thucydides, has not yet been located; but a substantial North Cemetery has come to light.[16] Euboean influence is paramount in the earliest colonial pottery although, in the cemetery, the use of the hydria as a burial vase appears to have been a Naxian practice.[17] We do not, however, get the impression of Chalcidians and Naxians living apart in separate *komai*; no less than Syracuse, Sicilian Naxos has the appearance of a true *polis* from the start, although on a much smaller scale. Since the site was finally destroyed by the Syracusans at the end of the fifth century and lies mainly in a protected archaeological zone free of modern buildings, the excavation of this early Greek colonial town holds great promise for the future.

One generation before the foundation of the first Sicilian colonies, a similar centripetal pattern can be observed at the very

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[15] Ephorus (*apud* Strabo 267) comments on the attractions of the site for the colonial settlers: the fertility of the soil, and the insignificance of the natives.

[16] Most recently, M. C. Lentini, 'L'abitato proto-arcaico di Naxos in Sicilia', in *Le due città di Naxos: atti del seminario di studi, Giardini Naxos 29-31 Ottobre 2000*, ed. M. C. Lentini (Archeologia Viva, 2004), 28-39.

[17] J. N. Coldstream, '*The various Aegean affinities of the early pottery from Sicilian Naxos*', in *op. cit.* (n. 16), 46-8, fig. 9.

outset of Greek settlement in the West. The oldest of all the colonies, at Pithekoussai at the northwest corner of the island of Ischia, was founded well before 750 BC by a Euboean expedition from Chalcis and Eretria. In one respect, the evidence from excavation there is less informative than at Naxos or Syracuse. Lying mainly under the modern seaside resort of Lacco Ameno, the settlement of the early Greek colony has not been easily accessible to excavation; all we have is a massive rubbish deposit on the severely eroded acropolis (Monte di Vico), producing copious pottery from the colony's earliest years, together with evidence of lucrative metalworking, profiting from the import of iron ore from Elba.[18] The workshops of the smiths, however, were confined to the colony's southern limit on the Mezzavia ridge, where the prevailing north wind would have blown away from the central settlement the noxious fumes from the foundry.[19] Another corporate decision by the first colonists would have been to concentrate all burials outside the settlement in a single cemetery in the valley of San Montano. There we encounter a rare and wonderful phenomenon: a wholly unplundered colonial cemetery preserved under several metres of effluvia, of which the limits are known, but less than ten per cent has so far been excavated, already producing over 1300 burials.[20] Most recently it has been shown conclusively that Pithekoussai was more than a mere *emporion*, a commercial toehold in Italian waters; the discovery of a farmhouse on the south coast of Ischia,[21] with pottery going back to the late eighth century, shows that the first colonists were not slow to cultivate any available arable land for their subsistence. This first Greek colony in the West is thus unique, laying claim to a whole island as its *chora*.

We have briefly reviewed the archaeological record of the three early colonial sites where there is already enough evidence from excavation to bear on the question under discussion. In all

[18] D. Ridgway, *The First Western Greeks* (Cambridge, 1992), 85-100.

[19] G. Buchner, 'Recent work at Pithekoussai', *AR* 17 (1971), 64-7; J. Klein, 'A Greek metalworking quarter eighth-century excavations in Ischia', *Expedition: the Bulletin of the University Museum of Pennsylvania* 14.2 (1972), 34-9.

[20] The first 723 graves are fully published in G. Buchner and D. Ridgway, *Pithekoussai* I, *La Necropolis tombe 1-723 escavate dal 1952 al 1961* (Rome, 1993).

[21] S. De Caro and C. Gialanella, 'Novità pitecusana: l'Insediamento di Punta Chiarito a Forio d'Ischia', in M. Bats and B. d'Agostino, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 337-54.

three cases there is some confirmation of an earlier surmise that 'an effect of Greek colonisation once it began was that the *polis* became virtually the only "export model" of the Greek state'.[22]

Let us now enquire into the layout of the founding mother cities during the late Geometric period, contemporary with the first colonial foundations and their immediate aftermath.

Of the three historical founding cities in Euboea, Chalcis lies under a large modern town and is known to us at this time only from surface sherds[23] and a well deposit recovered in rescue work.[24] At Cyme a small part of the settlement has been excavated, mainly of the early eighth century (Middle Geometric II),[25] but its full extent has yet to be determined. It is only from Eretria that we can extract any relevant topographical information. This large ancient site, extending inland over one kilometre from its harbour to a rocky acropolis, is today only partly covered by a small coastal town established in 1834 for Greek refugees from the Ottoman empire.

The first substantial[26] occupation of the site occurred soon after 800 BC, and in several respects presents a marked contrast to the pattern in the first Western colonies. The earliest houses were scattered in small disjunct groups over the plain.[27] Although some early interments were placed in a cemetery by the sea to the west of the inhabited area,[28] during the Geometric period it was the normal practice for the dead to be buried near the houses; not until the seventh century did they become excluded from the settlement. The shape of the houses – again, unlike those in the Sicilian colonies – was at first curvilinear: either oval or, more usually, apsidal.[29] Curvilinear houses may be appropriate for small and isolated communities for whom space

[22] A. M. Snodgrass, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 9.

[23] J. Boardman, 'Early Euboean pottery and history', *BSA* 52 (1957), 1-10, pl. 1.

[24] A. Andreiomenou, *BCH* 108 (1984), 37-69; 109 (1985), 49-75; *BCH* Supplement 23 (1992), 87-130.

[25] E. Sapouna-Sakellaraki, 'Geometric Kyme: the excavation at Viglatouri, Kyme, on Euboea', in M. Bats and B. d'Agostino, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 59-104.

[26] A few isolated burials of the ninth century have been found at Eretria (B. Blandin, *AntK* 43 (2000), 134-46), but no trace of any earlier settlement.

[27] See the plans in A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *From Rulers' Dwellings to Temples: Architecuire, Religion and Society in Early Iron Age Greece (1100-700 BC)* (Jonsered, 1997), fig. 101.

[28] K. Kourouniotis, *AE* 1903, I-150.

[29] A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *op. cit.* (n. 27), figs. 108-119.

is plentiful, but for a rapidly rising population in the late eighth century they become wasteful of space. They could not easily become part of a larger ensemble – a point well illustrated by a group of uncomfortably cramped houses, apsidal and oval, in a plot near the harbour of Eretria,[30] where it was not surprising that the rectangular shape was eventually preferred.

In the exact centre of the settlement, among a cluster of small apsidal and oval buildings of the early eighth century (Middle Geometric II), there arose the sanctuary of the patron deity, Apollo Daphnephoros.[31] At an early stage of the excavation, the first apsidal building to be discovered (H) was romantically identified as a copy of the first mythical temple of Apollo at Delphi (Paus. x.5.9), built of bay wood.[32] If this had been so, Eretria would possess the oldest known urban sanctuary, apparently earlier than the cohesion of an urban nucleus. More recently, however, not only has the 'bay hut' idea been found to be architecturally implausible, but this central area has produced no obviously votive material before the last quarter if the eighth century, when a long apsidal temple (Hekatompedos) was constructed, with its slightly earlier open-air altar near by. From the earlier phase, an abundance of kraters and skyphoi suggest frequent banqueting, not necessarily of a ritual nature.

An alternative explanation for the supposed 'bay hut' would make of it a ruler's dwelling,[33] in line with a general surmise that it was in such dwellings that many early Greek cults arose. If, however, one is looking for overt signs of aristocratic wealth in early Eretria, they are to be found rather in the small late Geometric cemetery by the later West Gate, where the lavish interments of warriors, with their families, were to be posthumously honoured with a hero cult within a triangular enclosure.[34]

Returning to the central area which became the sanctuary of Apollo, we might also question whether the immediate

[30] *Op. cit.* fig. 109; L. Kahil, *ASAtene* 59 (1981), 167-71, pl. 1.

[31] Most recently, P. Ducrey *et al.*, *Eretria, a guide to the ancient city* (Fribourg, 2004), 226-33.

[32] C. Bérard, *AntK* 14 (1971), 59-73.

[33] A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *op. cit.* (n. 27), 354.

[34] C. Bérard, *Eretria* III, *l'Heroön à la porte de l'Ouest* (Berne, 1970).

proximity of a bronzesmith's workshop[35] is consistent with the ambiance of an aristocratic dwelling. One has the impression that the first Eretrians displayed less concern for hygiene than their cousins at Pithekoussai in the siting of their metal workshops. It could be, however, that their requirements for metallic artefacts was partly satisfied from the busy industrial quarter across the water at Oropos in northern Attica,[36] which might well have been an early dependency of Eretria if we follow the logic of its local Late Geometric pottery, Euboean in style rather than Attic.[37]

Eretria, in one sense, was no less a colony than Pithekoussei, if we accept the testimony of Strabo (448) that its first inhabitants had migrated to the present site from an Old Eretria, wherever that might be.[38] At all events, we can follow what seems to be a changing pattern throughout the eighth century in the ways in which large parties of Euboeans chose to establish themselves in new localities. The almost virgin site of Eretria, soon after 800 BC, was at first settled in detached *komai*, each with its burials near by, and lacking any certain trace of an urban sanctuary until the later part of the century. Then, well before 750 BC, a colonial expedition to Pithekoussai at once decided to confine all their dead to a cemetery outside the

[35] S. Huber, *AntK* 34 (1991), 137-54.

[36] A. Mazarakis-Ainian in M. Bats and B. d'Agostino, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 191-205.

[37] Late Geometric pottery: A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *art. cit.*, 208, figs. 26-7. The same author has tentatively identified a long rectangular building at Oropos as an Eretrian military fort, perhaps manned during the Lelantine war against Chalcis: *Ergon* 2000, 38-44, figs. 34-9.

[38] In spite of the geographical difficulties in Strabo's reference as outlined by M. R. Popham (*Lefkandi* I, 423-4), Lefkandi remains the most plausible candidate for identification as Old Eretria. Reaching its apogee of prosperity in the tenth and ninth centuries, this site appears to have suffered a sharp recession around 825 BC when all its known cemeteries were simultaneously abandoned. Such a recession could have prompted a mass movement to another coastal location with a better harbour, followed in the eighth century by a decline in the size and importance of the old site. See also L. H. Sackett and M. R. Popham, *Archaeology* 25 (1972)$ 18-19; K. Schefold, *Fürhrer durch Eretria* (Berne, 1972), 18-21; J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 2nd edition (London, 2003), 90. To judge from the renewal of excavations begun in 2003 on the tableland of Xeropolis, it now appears that the settlement of Lefkandi had been continuously occupied from the twelfth century (Mycenaean IIIC) all through the 'Dark Age': see, most recently, *AR* 50 (2004), 39. While these excavations continue, it will be premature to speculate whether Xeropolis was settled in *komai* or, like Knossos (below, n. 56), preserved an urban nucleus surviving from its flourishing settlement near the close of the Bronze Age.

inhabited area, and their metal workshops in a salubrious location at its outer edge. In the designs of the four buildings on that site, initially curvilinear, there appears to have been a change towards rectilinear shapes around 720 EC, possibly after damage from an earthquake.[39] But for our first glimpse of ordinary domestic architecture in the Euboean colonies we must wait until *c.* 730 BC, when Sicilian Naxos provides a tidy pattern of square houses, quite unlike the jumble of curvilinear dwellings in the contemporary *komai* of Eretria. And one of the first actions of the newly arrived colonists was to set up an altar to their divine guide, Apollo Archegetes, which would have been the first focus of communal worship for the newly established *polis*.[40] By contrast, the cohesion of the Eretrian *polis* was largely an achievement of the seventh century, with the expansion of the settlement towards a more nucleated form, and evidence of several large corporate undertakings: the first fortification wall on the acropolis, the foundation of the heroön by the West Gate, the diversion of a river bed to save the western part of the settlement from periodic flooding and, eventually, the replacement of the apsidal *hekatompedos* by the first monumental rectangular temple of Apollo.[41]

Let us now explore the parallel case of Corinth, and survey its layout during the first years of its colony at Syracuse. We are dealing with a much larger countryside than that possessed by the nascent Eretria, a countryside whose inhabitants considered themselves no less Corinthian[42] than the denizens of the central settlement. Near its outer edge lay the village of Tenea, the modern Athikia, twenty kilometres south-east of Corinth, whose farmers, as we have noted, followed Archias to Syracuse. Settlement within an inner ring, later enclosed within Corinth's city walls, included several outlying *komai*, one of which, near the western edge, became the Potters' Quarter.[43] At the centre, in and around the area of the Roman Forum, eighth-century

[39] J. Klein, *art. cit.* (n. 19), 37; D. Ridgway, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 93.

[40] Thuc. vi.3.1. The location of this altar, 'outside the polis', still awaits discovery.

[41] Acropolis fortifications: S. Fachard, *AntK* 47 (2004), 91-109. Heroön: see n. 34. Diversion of river: C. Krause, *ASAtene* 59 (1981), 179-83. Temple of Apollo: P. Auberson, *Eretria* I, *le temple d'Apollon Daphnephoros* (Berne, 1968).

[42] C. Morgan, *Early Greek states beyond the polis* (London, 2003), 55-7, fig. 2.4.

[43] C. K. Williams II, *ASAtene* 60 (1982), 15-19, fig. 3.

occupation is represented by a scatter of grave and well deposits, indicating a central *kome* burying its dead in the immediate neighbourhood.[44] Soon after 750 BC, while the domeetic well deposits continue, this central area received no more burials. Although the massive Roman overlay has not been kind to archaeologists looking for traces of Geometric housing, these wells should not have been far distant from the dwellings that they served. We thus have some indications of a central nucleus beginning to form, a little earlier than at Eretria; the dead, meanwhile, were placed in a new North Cemetery outside the inhabited area, receiving its first interments in the early eighth century (Middle Geometric II).[45] Burials were not, however, altogether excluded from the area of settlement; for instance, there is a small plot of late Geometric graves going with the western hamlet near the Potters' Quarter.[46] It was in that area that traces of a seventh-century fortification wall came to light, thought to be a sign of the 'final urbanisation of the Corinthians'.[47]

Far away from what was to become the urban centre, the earliest Corinthian sanctuaries were established: first, the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, operating from the beginning of the Iron Age,[48] followed by the temple of Hera Akraia across the Gulf at Perachora[49] in the early eighth century. It has been argued that one function of such rural sanctuaries would have been to define state boundaries,[50] a theory that would work well in the case of Corinth. Be that as its may, the town of Corinth did not receive its own urban sanctuary until the end of the eighth century, when a scatter of votives on a low hill overlooking the central nucleus led to the construction of a monumental stone temple around 680 BC in honour of the

[44] *Hesperia* 57 (1988), 23, fig. 2, plan. C. Roebuck, *Hesperia* 41 (1972), 96-127; C. K. Williams II and J. E. Fisher, *Hesperia* 42 (1973), 1-44, fig. 1.

[45] C. Blegen, H. Palmer and R. S. Young, *Corinth* XIII, *The North Cemetery* (Princeton, 1964).

[46] A. N. Stillwell and J. L. Benson, *Corinth* XV.3, *The Potters' quarter: the pottery* (Princeton, 1964).

[47] C. K. Williams II, *art. cit.* (n. 43), 19.

[48] C. Morgan, *Isthmia* VIII, *The Late Bronze Age settlement and Early Iron Age sanctuary* (Princeton, 1999), chapter III.2.

[49] H. C. G. Payne *et al.*, *Perachora* I (Oxford, 1940).

[50] F. de Polignac, *Cults, territory and the origin of the earlier Greek state* (Chicago, 1995), chapter 1.

patron deity, Apollo.[51] In this respect, the metropolitan Corinthians were lagging behind their colonial cousins at Syracuse by at least a generation.

In our search for material evidence bearing on the evolution of the *polis*, our analysis was been concentrated on the one part of the Aristotelain scheme on which archaeological evidence can throw some light, i.e. the fusion of villages into a nuclear town, with the corollary that burials should be placed outside the town. The precocity of the early colonies in this respect, in comparison with their mother cities, must to some extent be explained by a feeling of tight solidarity among those facing possible perils in an alien land while establishing their new homes, however diverse their own origins. Of course, this process of cohesion is by no means peculiar to states that Aristotle would have recognised as true *poleis*, with constitutional governments; it can be observed, for example, at Pherai in Thessaly,[52] still under a monarchy as late as the fourth century. On the other hand, early Greek states could function vigorously while still settled in *komai*: they could found colonies, and fight wars. An extreme case is that of Sparta, fighting a Messenian war and founding its Western colony of Taras well before 700 BC. We are told that the Spartans persisted in living in villages, *obai*, four in Sparta, one in Amyklai.[53] For their public business, according to the Great Rhetra attributed to their lawgiver Lycurgus,[54] the Delphic oracle had instructed them to hold their assembly, the *apella*, 'in the space between the bridge Babyke and the river Knakion', wherever those places might be. With accurate prescience, Thucydides (i.10.2) foresaw that, in a future age, the ruins of Sparta would reveal no clue to its former power and glory. And yet we know that early Sparta was well supplied with sanctuaries which, if we follow the theory that holy places mark boundaries, might help to define the limits of the original Spartan *polis*: Artemis Ortheia down in the Eurotas valley to the east, Artemis Issoria, to the north-west, as well as the central sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos on the

[51] H. S. Robinson, *Hesperia* 45 (1976), 203-39.
[52] C. Morgan, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 92-5, fig. 2.21.
[53] Thuc. 1.10.2; G. L. Huxley, *Early Sparta* (London, 1962), 24.
[54] Plut. *Lycurgus* 6.2; G. L. Huxley, *op. cit.* 44.

acropolis.[55] Of early *obai*, however, and of early burials, traces have hitherto eluded the archaeologist.

At the other extreme is the layout at Knossos, which preserved an urban nucleus without break from Late Minoan times into the Early Iron Age, and remained one of the most prosperous placed in the Aegean world until an apparent recession near the end of the seventh century. Following Minoan custom, but in contrast to the major centres of the Greek mainland, early Greek burials at Knossos were always placed far outside the inhabited area, usually in collective chamber tombs. As far back as the eleventh century, a main cemetery was established one kilometre to the north-west, the earliest and largest of several burial grounds which eventually ringed the settlement on all four points of the compass, extending over a vast area five kilometres from north to south.[56] None of these cemeteries has revealed any trace of an outlying village near by; all habitation was confined to the central town.[57] On a site continuously inhabited until late Roman times, it is hardly surprising that traces of early Greek domestic architecture should be extremely scanty; but, during over a century of excavation, enough deposits of domestic pottery from floors, pits and wells have been found, to justify the hypothesis of a cohesive urban centre of around 1250 square metres, continuously inhabited from the eleventh until the seventh centuries. The town lay mainly to the west of the ruined Minoan palace, but a recent study of early Greek finds from Sir Arthur Evans' excavations has shown that it also extended round the periphery of the old palace, which was treated as sacred ground and, apart from a small temple built probably no earlier than the fifth century, remained free of later occupation.[58]

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[55] P. Cartledge, 'City and *chora* in Sparta: Archaic to Hellenistic' in *Sparta in Laconia: proceedings of the 19th British Museum Classical Colloquium*, eds. W. G. Cavanagh and S. E. C. Walker, *BSA* Studies 4 (1998), 39-47.

[56] J. N. Coldstream, 'Dorian Knossos and Aristotle's villages', in *Aux origines de l'hellenisme: la Crète et la Grèce. Hommages à H. van Effenterre*, ed. C. Nicolet (Paris, 1984), 311-22, figs. 1-4.

[57] With the minor exception of an isolated building (farmhouse?) occupied in the tenth and ninth centuries, found under the Roman Villa Dionysus: J. N. Coldstream and E. Hatzaki, *BSA* 98 (2003), 279-306.

[58] J. N. Coldstream, *BSA* 95 (2000), 259-99 , esp. 285-8.

Between the main part of the early Greek town and the remains of the old palace, the open space of what had been the Minoan West Court could have served for large public gatherings, while the seating in the Minoan Theatral Area would have been suitable for those entrusted with the conduct of public affairs.[59] During the eighth century, three well deposits far to the north of the settlement[60] suggest a major expansion in that direction, to accommodate a rapidly rising population and, perhaps, to win room for a more spacious public centre. But it is possible that, in spite of its early urban cohesion, precocious by the standards of the Greek mainland, the advance of Knossos towards developing into a true *polis* may have been retarded by a not easily explained recession shortly before 600 BC, after which the archaeological record contracts to almost nil for the next two generations.[61] There must, however, have been an agora and public buildings at least in Classical and Hellenistic times. These have so far eluded discovery, but it is hoped that a thorough surface survey to be conducted in summer 2005 may throw some light on their possible location in this northern area, where excavations have been rare.

How far was the central nucleus at Knossos, apparently at variance with the Aristotelian scheme, typical of other early Greek settlements in Crete? Comparative evidence is not plentiful, but the early layout at Gortyn seems to tell a different story, more consistent with Aristotle. The earliest settlements, which could be construed as *komai*, lay on two adjacent hills, Ayios Ioannis and Prophitis Elias.[62] After an earthquake around 700BC both hills were abandoned, apart from a cult of Athena

[59] Late Geometric sherds found under the paving stones of the Theatral Area (*art. cit.* 272-3) suggest that it might still still have been used for early Greek assemblies. Before the emergence of the Knossian *polis* and its oligarchic constitution, the 'Royal Box', central focus of the seating, might well have been occupied by a *basileus*; as late as the seventh century, a monarchy is attested at Axos in West Crete (Hdt iv.154, a king Etearchos contemporary with the foundation of Cyrene, *c.* 630 BC).

[60] *Art. cit.*, 296-9, n. 94.

[61] J. N. Coldstream and G. L. Huxley, 'Knossos, the Archaic gap', *BSA* 94 (1999), 289-307.

[62] A. di Vita, 'Gortina in età geometrica', in *La Transizione dal Miceneo all' Alto Arcaismo: dal palazzo alla città. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma 1988*, eds. G. Musti and A. Sacconi (Rome 1991), 309-19; N. Allegro, 'Gortina, l'abitato geometrico di Profitis Ilias', in *op. cit.*, 321-30.

Poliouchos which persevered on the Ayios Ioannis hill with a large seventh-century temple and rich votives. All domestic life, meanwhile, moved down to the plain below where another seventh-century temple was erected for the patron deity, Apollo Pythios. Here, so it seems, is a case where the consolidation of a *polis* was hastened by the forces of nature.

The pattern is similar at Lato, overlooking the gulf of Mirabello, where the early settlement appears to have been divided between two disjunct sections on two hill slopes, until some consolidation came in the fourth century with the establishment of an *agora* on the saddle between the two hills.[63] Neither Gortyn nor Lato, however, has roots in the Minoan past; this might explain why early Greek settlements there, *de novo*, resemble those on the mainland, as envisaged by Aristotle. At Knossos, by contrast, complete continuity of occupation from the latest Minoan town, with no sign of rupture at the end of the Bronze Age, ensured against any fragmentation into *komai*. This continuity of settlement finds a reflection in Aristotle's remarks on the continuity of Cretan law, from the legendary Minos to the incoming Dorian ruling caste.[64]

We find yet other approaches towards the creation of a *polis* on smaller Aegean islands, some of which developed several *poleis*, others only one. Among the latter, Andros offers an especially instructive example. Palaiopolis, the site of the Archaic and Classical *polis*, was hardly settled before 700 BC when two earlier sites on rocky promontories, Zagora[65] and Hypsele,[66] were both depleted of their inhabitants. They might qualify as large *komai*, if their decline was occasioned by a migration to the new *polis*, blessed with better natural amenities, especially for the supply of water; indeed, a shortage of water might well explain the abandonment of the settlement at Zagora, for which the

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[63] O. Picard, in J. W. and E. E. Myers and G. Cadogan, *The aerial atlas of ancient Crete* (University of California, 1992), 154-9, with references. In the light of recent excavations, the early dating of *agorai* at Dreros and Lato (*art. cit.* n. 58), 298, 95) can no longer be sustained.

[64] *Pol.* 1271b, concerning Dorians from Sparta settled at Lyttos; G L. Huxley, *GRBS* 12 (1971), 505-07.

[65] A. Cambitoglou *et al.*, *Archaeological Museum of Andros* (Athens, 1981); J. N. Coldstream, *op. cit.* (n. 38), 305-09.

[66] C. A. Televantou, *AD* 37 (1982), B 353-6 and *Andriaka Chronika* 21 (Andros, 1993), 197-208.

only natural springs lay well outside the inhabited area. Desertion of the older sites, however, was not total: as also happened on the Ayios Ioannis hill at Gortyn, both places preserved their sanctuaries, for which temples were built in the sixth century. And Zagora, which enjoyed its heyday in the eighth century, already possessed some of the features of an embryonic *polis*: a tidy accumulation of rectangular stone-built houses, a chief's dwelling looking across a possible assembly area towards an open-air sanctuary, and a massive fortification wall protecting the only landward access to the site. Little thought, however, was given to streets, and the houses are arranged in disjunct clusters, each one appropriate for a *genos* or clan. At Hypsele, still under excavation, the layout is not yet clear. At all events, Andros offers exceptionally favourable terrain for enquiry into how an island polis evolved, given that neither the *komai* nor the *polis* sites are encumbered with post-ancient building.

Manifold are the various approaches towards a *polis*, especially in the eighth century: *komai* gradually enrolled into a nuclear *polis* (Athens, Corinth, Argos); *komai* superseded by a *polis* founded on a new and more favourable site (Andros, among other Aegean islands); *komai* never cohering into an urban nucleus, but nevertheless functioning vigorously as a *polis* (Sparta); an urban nucleus surviving from the Late Bronze Age (Knossos) but, after a local reverse, perhaps delayed in its progress towards becoming a true *polis*; and, among Greek colonists in Italy and Sicily, organization *de novo* as a *polis*, meeting the possible dangers of an alien environment. For all these variations on the themes of Aristotle's explanation for the genesis of the *polis*, archaeological discoveries can now offer some enlightenment. For pessimism on these matters expressed three decades ago,[67] today there is now no further need.

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[67] J. N. Coldstream, *op. cit.* (n. 38), 369: '.... the material record may never be able to shed much light on this topic', a view expressed in 1975.

Abbreviations

AD	*Archaiologikon Deltion*
AE	*Archaiologike Ephemeris*
AntK	*Antike Kunst*
AR	*Archaeological Reports*
ASAtene	*Annuario dells Scuola Italiana in Atene*
BCH	*Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*
BSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
FGH	*Fragmenta Graecorum Historicorum*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
MA	*Monumenti Antichi, Academia dei Lincei*
NSc	*Notizie degli Scavi d'Antichità*