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Funerary luxury and austerity in pre-classical Argos and Corinth: The making of citizen communities

Alain Duploux

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LUXURY AND WEALTH
IN SPARTA
AND THE
PELOPONNESE



Edited by

Stephen Hodkinson

and

Chrysanthi Gallou

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Contributors

Sophia Aneziri, Alain Bresson, Lucia Cecchet,
Paul Christesen, Alain Duploux, P.J. Finglass,
Elena Franchi, Chrysanthi Gallou,
Georgia Kokkorou-Alevras, Ellen Millender,
Sarah C. Murray, Robin Osborne, Annalisa Paradiso,
Selene Psoma, James Roy



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In memory of Anton Powell:
friend, collaborator, inspirer
and editor supreme

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PART III

THE WIDER PELOPONNESE AND BEYOND

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FUNERARY LUXURY AND AUSTERITY IN PRE-CLASSICAL ARGOS AND CORINTH: THE MAKING OF CITIZEN COMMUNITIES

Alain Duplony

Despite being a ‘tricky term’ with ‘no exact equivalent in Greek’,¹ the notion of luxury may receive, broadly speaking, two different meanings, an ancient or indigenous one and a modern or foreign one, corresponding to different approaches of the ancient sources, both textual and material.

In the ancient world, luxury was not highly valued. A great majority of the ancient sources portray it as a symptom of moral decadence, while a series of sumptuary laws were apparently designed to curb the display of wealth, notably at funerals. The debate on the use and abuse of wealth finds resonance in the Roman world with authors such as the Elder Cato, Sallust or Seneca. The controversy among these authors records the necessity for the Romans to delineate and regulate the private display of wealth and its compatibility with collective interests, as synthesized by Cicero in a well-known sentence: *odit populus Romanus privatam luxuriam, publicam magnificentiam diligit (pro Murena 36)*, ‘The Roman people disapproves of private luxury, but admires public splendour’.² A similar situation is well-attested for the Greek world, as has been emphasized by Rainer Bernhardt’s work on the critics of luxury in Greek literature and law.³ The concept of *truphē*, which arose during the fifth century as a characteristic feature of oriental people and women, was used to convey the idea that it had debilitating effects on both individuals and cities. It was a symbol of *hubris* and decadence. It initially offered a behavioural explanation for Persia’s defeat in the Persian wars, but the perspective was soon extended to

all barbarians and to various Greek cities. It was supposed that prosperity (*eudaimonia*) and unrestrained ostentation (*truphē*) could lead to arrogance (*hubris*) and destruction. This principle is well represented in Hellenistic historiography, if not already in Classical times (cf. Herodotus 1.155 and Thucydides 1.6).⁴ From that time on, starting with Euripides, Plato and Aristotle, eastern luxury and excessive license were also associated with Spartan women, offering a criticism of the Lycurgan constitution and, then, an alleged explanation for its decline.⁵ Eventually, a clearly moral perspective appears in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* (c. AD 200), which stamps *truphē* as a strongly negative and reprehensible behaviour.⁶ This perspective is explicit in book 12, which is entirely devoted to luxury. Athenaeus makes a list of nations and cities famous in history for their sumptuous lifestyle and for the dissolute behaviours of their inhabitants. In this hall of fame of corrupted nations, the first places belong to barbarians from the East (Persians, Medes, Lydians) and West (Etruscans). As neighbours of these peoples, the Ionians and the Western Greeks soon copied their lifestyle. Significantly, however, there are no Peloponnesian cities in this list of corrupted nations, although various individual Spartans have the honour of being introduced as fully depraved (especially Archidamos III, Lysandros, and the Regent Pausanias). Does it mean that, these individual exceptions granted, the Peloponnese was doomed to austerity, as standard versions have advocated?

The first point to make clear is that the moral assessment of luxury was completely different in Archaic Greece. Throughout the Archaic world, luxury (then termed *habrosunē*) was a behaviour that was highly prized by various poets. Sappho pragmatically and unashamedly stated 'I love luxury (*abrosunan*)' (*fr.* 58, l. 25 Lobel-Page) and Solon assimilated *habra pathein* to riches and comforts in food and dress (*fr.* 24, l. 4 West). In a well-known paper, Leslie Kurke established that throughout the sixth century *habros* and its derivatives functioned as 'positively charged markers of a particular aristocratic lifestyle', so nothing for Sappho to be ashamed of, while in the fifth century *habrosunē* had become a 'dirty word'.⁷ Her statement echoed a long series of studies, especially in Italian scholarship. As demonstrated by Santo Mazzarino, *habrotēs* included behaviours that were learned by the Eastern Greeks from their Oriental neighbours and were then embraced by Greek elites as a distinguishing lifestyle. As a legacy of the East to the West, luxury had become a mark of social and political distinction.⁸

The second point to make clear is that this Archaic notion of *habrosunē* does not find much echo in the Peloponnese, even if the Lydian-born Alcman portrayed young girls in purple cloaks and with Lydian *mitrai*

(fr. 1 Diehl). To illustrate that fact, Thucydides opposed two very different lifestyles (1.6.3–5): an old one, *to habrodiaiton*, enshrined in luxury (such as linen undergarments and golden hair clips), which used to be common among Ionian people, and a more modest style of dressing, more in conformity with the ideas of his time, which was first adopted by the Lacedaemonians and then, after the Persian wars, by the Athenians. Of course, all this is a matter of representation, and more specifically of Athenian Classical representation. In various recently published papers, I suggest that *habrosunē* was a model of citizen performance that applied to various Archaic cities.⁹

In his discussion in this volume (Chapter 1), Robin Osborne advocates distinguishing between luxury and wealth, as well as between ‘luxury as behaviour’ and ‘luxury as things’.¹⁰ If Archaic *habrosunē* can be equated to a specific lifestyle mostly associated with Eastern and Western Greece, luxury objects were not at all lacking or prohibited in the Peloponnese. As Stephen Hodkinson has convincingly demonstrated for Sparta, over and above the false image of austerity, wealth also operated in the shaping of Spartan society; there were severe inequalities among the Spartiate population.¹¹ To deal with luxury in the pre-Classical Peloponnese, and especially funerary luxury, we therefore need to choose our definition of luxury. We do not have to equate it with the very idiosyncratic concept of Archaic *habrosunē*, but could adopt another – maybe more common – conception of luxury, simply related to the use of material wealth.

In modern languages, the word luxury denotes a state of great comfort and extravagant living; it also applies to inessential but desirable objects that are expensive or difficult to obtain. As such, luxury can be related to the notion of conspicuous consumption, as formally defined by Thorstein Veblen.¹² Strongly believing that the economy was significantly embedded in social institutions, the Norwegian-American economist and sociologist defined conspicuous consumption as spending more money on goods than they are worth, and he equated its correlate, conspicuous leisure, with the non-productive use of time for the sake of displaying social status. In the late nineteenth century, members of the leisured class, a *nouveau riche* social class which had emerged during the Second Industrial Revolution through the accumulation of capital wealth, engaged in luxurious behaviours in order to impress the rest of society through the manifestation of their social power and prestige. According to Veblen, social status is thus earned and displayed by patterns of consumption; simultaneously, people in other social classes are usually influenced by these behaviours and strive to emulate the leisured class.

The idea that consumption is used as a way to gain and signal status

could also be applied to Greek antiquity. Kenneth Lapatin simply assimilates luxury to Greek and Roman works of art that were made out of expensive materials (gold and silver, hard stones, and organic material such as ivory, fine woods, amber, pearl, coral and textiles);¹³ but other discussions inspired by archaeological enquiries make more sense of Veblen's concept. For example, Carmine Ampolo applied the notion of luxury to the Orientalising material culture of seventh-century Italy, focusing on the marvellous riches deposited in the so-called *tombe principesche*: he discussed the lavish display of wealth by Italic elites, distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative luxury in burial goods and funeral practices.¹⁴

In order to investigate the societies of the pre-Classical Peloponnese, I will adopt here the modern (and foreign) perspective of conspicuous consumption, without taking into consideration the native Greek though (mostly) Eastern- and Western-Greek notion of Archaic *habrosunē*. In this (materialistic or archaeological) sense, luxury and its antithesis, austerity, could be sensitive tools for approaching Peloponnesian material cultures, leading to interesting discussions about the making of citizen communities.

Argive and Corinthian burials: The archaeological record

As already noted half a century ago by Donna Kurtz and John Boardman, the Peloponnese is distinctive as a whole by its great uniformity of burial practice: 'inhumation in cists or pots for both adults and children is the normal practice, with minor variations of grave construction dictated by local conditions or wealth'.¹⁵ In particular, the Corinthians and Argives normally remained unreceptive to the idea of cremation during the whole pre-Classical period, with very few exceptions.¹⁶ They generally practised the placing of the corpse in a contracted position; whereas the Athenians, for example, usually preferred to place the inhumed dead in a fully extended position. Contrary to Athenian customs too, there was no substantial variation in Argos and Corinth between immature and adult burials.

For half a century, archaeological discoveries, especially on behalf of the Greek Archaeological Service as well as foreign schools, have increased to such an extent that it has often become difficult to embrace the whole documentation. Various studies, however, have successfully presented a clear view of the funerary archaeological record of pre-Classical Argos and Corinth.

*Argos*¹⁷

As everywhere in the Greek world after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilisation, the Late Helladic IIIC represents a transition between the remnants of the previous system and the new social and economic conditions characteristic of the early Greek *polis*. Throughout the Argolid, the Submycenaean period is characterised by a noticeable reduction in the number of settlements. In Argos itself, there is no topographical continuity of settlement with previous stages. Although a few burials are still associated with Mycenaean chamber tombs (e.g. Deiras T. XXIV), the known burials are now single inhumations in stone cists. Towards the end of the eleventh century, however, the whole area covered by the modern city of Argos seems to have been settled, not as a densely nucleated settlement of course, but rather through scattered nuclei, indicating a noticeable growth of the population during the Protogeometric period. These discrete settlement clusters were surrounded by groups of tombs, apparently associated with them, in the form of single inhumations in stone cists, more rarely in pit graves or *pitthoi*.

The development of Argos is vigorous during the Geometric period. Although there are few occurrences of continuity of settlement with the Protogeometric period, probably due to the abundance of available space and resources, there is often, in contrast, continuity in the use of burial plots between the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. Moreover, as everywhere in Greece, the number of tombs increases, especially in the second half of the eighth century.¹⁸ Their setting now seems to indicate the existence of proper burial grounds located to the North, South and East of the settled area, even if it is probably inappropriate to speak of formal cemeteries, considering the difficulty of defining a formal settled area in the sense of an urbanized town.¹⁹ Numerous tombs, indeed, have also been found within the broader limits of the settlement, next to housing nuclei or in empty spaces probably crossed by roads.²⁰ Geometric grave-goods include pottery and metal objects. The content of the tombs differs greatly from one case to another, probably evidencing a large array of socio-economic conditions among the dead and/or the burying groups. Overall, throughout the Geometric period, cists tend to be richer in grave goods than the other types of burials, especially *pitthos* burials.

Several peculiarities for the Geometric period must be singled out. First, various graves are re-used for later burials within a generation or two of the first inhumation, the earlier offerings usually being removed and reburied in the fill above the grave. There are also several examples of multiple burials in a single grave, containing the remains of three or four, but sometimes up to six or seven individuals, within cists that are

significantly bigger than the standard size, suggesting that they were intended right from the start to serve as communal tombs. And finally, various very unusual inhumation burials of the late eighth century have been characterized as ‘warrior’ or ‘hero’ burials. The famous cuirass tomb T. 45, discovered in 1953, contains only one individual in a huge cist tomb, the longest of all; it is furnished with pottery, jewellery, bronze armour (cuirass and helmet), iron axes, *obeloi* and firedogs.²¹ At least three other large-size cist tombs, distributed all over the settled area, include armour and weapons interred with a single individual. These remarkable burials reveal, of course, some kind of funerary luxury during the later part of the eighth century.

In contrast with these lavish burials, *pitbos* and pot burials become more and more common towards the end of the Geometric period, initiating a complete break in the funerary archaeological record. Cist graves had been preferred for hundreds of years, but the type was then abandoned and suddenly disappeared throughout the whole Argolid around 700, giving way to *pitbos* and pot burials, which were usually poorly furnished. Between 700 and 630 almost all graves are indeed devoid of any offerings; it is only in the late seventh century that grave goods gradually reappear. Very few tombs are known—identified and/or published—for the Archaic period, much less than for the Geometric period. Considering it from the number of tombs alone, there may have been a thinning out of the Argive population in the seventh century, which Anne Foley has related to possible drought, disease or political problems.²² It should be noted, however, that the small number of seventh- and sixth-century burials may also be related to a mere issue of archaeological retrieval, tombs with no burial goods at all being much more difficult to allocate chronologically.

*Corinth*²³

Following the disintegration of the Mycenaean civilisation, the Early Iron Age marks a new start in the Corinthia, even if very little burial or settlement evidence is attested for the transitional period. The number of tombs increases from the Late Protogeometric on, with a climax during the Middle Geometric. Almost all pre-Classical Corinthian tombs contain single inhumations. There is no communal tomb intended to receive the dead of a ‘family’ or any functional group, whether simultaneously or consecutively over successive generations. The corpse was invariably placed in a contracted position, at least until the end of the seventh century, when a gradual shift towards a fully extended position began.

Apart from the area of Corinth, which has been excavated extensively for decades, burial and settlement evidence in the Corinthia is mostly

represented by chance discoveries or rescue excavations, so that it is difficult to assess thoroughly the spatial relationship between burial grounds and settlements. Until the sixth century, at least, the area of the later urbanized town of Corinth was settled through small clusters of houses scattered throughout the area of the city (and sometimes indicated only by the presence of wells). In this loosely settled area, graves have been excavated in the Lechaion Road valley (later the area of the Roman forum), the Potters' Quarter, the North Cemetery and, more recently, the Panayia Field and along the construction works of the high-speed railway line north of Acrocorinth, not to mention a few other isolated graves and small clusters. During the Early Iron Age, the dead were buried close to housing nuclei, rather than in common grave fields isolated from the area of habitation. From the first half of the eighth century on, the North cemetery, which had gone out of use after the Middle Helladic, gradually became a more formal burial ground, well removed from the settled areas of Corinth. This funerary zone lasted for centuries, but it never stopped the practice of burying within the larger perimeter of the settled area until the end of the Archaic period at least.

As in the Argolid, there was initially a great diversity in the forms of tombs, gradually leading to a single burial type. Cist, pit and sarcophagus burials coexisted from the tenth century to the late eighth century, when sarcophagus burials replaced the other forms of burial. Simple pit graves were common until mid-eighth century, but were then quickly and completely abandoned. Stone-built cist graves were never as popular in the Corinthia as they were in the Argolid. Like pit graves, Corinthian cist graves are attested only for the Early Iron Age, the type being completely abandoned by ca. 700. Although sporadically used from ca. 900, stone sarcophagi gradually replaced pit and cist graves, with the shift apparently complete by the end of the eighth century. Small stone sarcophagi were thereafter consistently used for inhumation of both adults and children, even if pot burials (i.e. inhumations within ceramic vessels) are also occasionally attested from the mid-eighth century on, perhaps mainly for infants and small children, whereas burial in a bronze vessel was very uncommon. The inside of the sarcophagi was usually left rough, although the interiors of very large sixth-century sarcophagi were smoothly finished, many of them being stuccoed inside and a few were even painted. Towards the end of the seventh century, stone sarcophagi increased in length simply because the dead were now increasingly buried in a fully extended rather than contracted position.

The practice of depositing non-perishable grave goods with the dead can be summarised in two successive trends. First, there was an increase in

the number of objects—mainly local fine ware drinking vessels, as well as small oil or unguent containers—deposited during the Middle Geometric period (825–750), a proliferation correlated with the high quality of offerings, with a higher percentage of precious metal finds, bronze objects, and large vases compared with other periods. In subsequent periods, there was, in contrast, a sharp decrease in grave goods, in terms of both quantity and quality. Whereas furnishings were increasingly more luxurious during the Middle Geometric period, there were virtually no grave goods in Corinth during the Late Geometric and Protocorinthian periods, that is from ca. 750 to ca. 600 – resulting of course in severe difficulties in precisely dating such graves. For the Corinthians, the cost and efforts made in the procurement or construction of stone sarcophagi obviously outweighed their interest in burial goods, even if the soft limestone used to manufacture sarcophagi was abundantly available and easily cut. Eventually, towards the end of the seventh century, in the Early Corinthian period, grave goods began again to be deposited with the dead. To quote Keith Dickey, ‘By the MC period virtually every grave received at least one object, almost at least a drinking vessel, and by LC I the number of objects in the wealthiest burials was greater even than in the MG II graves, although only rarely do the 6th century graves contain precious metal objects, bronze pins, or large vases’.²⁴

In contrast to Attica, there are very few recorded grave markers in the Corinthia (as throughout much of the Peloponnese), including a limited number of inscribed gravestones and funerary statues. In particular, there is no archaeological evidence that any monumental vase was ever set up over Geometric or Archaic graves, with the exception of MG to LG-coarse *hydriai* placed outside the grave and linked to the use of water as a purification agent for the living.²⁵ Simple stone markers were found over a few graves in the form of upright unworked poros blocks (*cippi*) and (possibly) horizontal slabs (*trapeza*). Since the lack of good local marble prevented the development of a major school of sculpture, statues only exceptionally marked the graves, including the famous *kouros* from Tenea and a few funerary sphinxes and lions.²⁶ Although the erection of grave markers seems to have been infrequent in the Corinthia, the recovery in 2010 of two looted marble *kouroi* in the Corinthian countryside and their association with an Archaic cemetery²⁷ show that the Corinthian funerary landscape, like the Athenian one, may have been marked by impressive *semata* during the sixth century, precisely at a time when grave goods had reappeared in the tombs and sarcophagi had become longer due to the new fully extended burial position of the dead.

Luxury and austerity: Socio-economic and ethnical interpretations

Overall, the sequences of Corinthian and Argive burials are very similar, although the Corinthians often preceded the Argives by half a century, at least for the initial stages.²⁸ Both sequences, alternating luxury and austerity, can be summarised as follows:

- 1) A growth in the number of tombs and an increase in the quantity and quality of burial goods, in the first half of the eighth century for Corinth, in the second half of the eighth century for Argos.
- 2) Then, a complete break in the funerary record, with the use of a new form of tomb sarcophagus burial in Corinth and *pithos* burial in Argos, and the nearly complete disappearance of burial goods, these changes happening towards 750 in Corinth and towards the end of the eighth century in Argos.
- 3) The reappearance of grave goods, although to a less lavish extent than in the Geometric period, towards 630 in Argos and a little bit later, towards 600, in Corinth.

What happened in Argos and Corinth has been a matter of debate for more than forty years. Various hypotheses have been proposed. Although none is exempt from criticism or fully convincing, they are all interesting for what they teach us about the way that Greek society has been interpreted over the past decades.

Robin Hägg took cultural discontinuity in Argive burial customs to be indicative of class distinctions based on wealth, power and nobility of birth. He regarded the reuse of graves and the tendency to have bigger cist tomb and richer grave goods in the Late Geometric phase as testifying probably to ‘the strengthening of family and kinship ties’ typical of ‘upper class families, the royalty or the aristocracy’. In contrast to a fairly homogeneous Protogeometric society, he described Late Geometric society as a ‘differentiated or stratified society’, in which social status was displayed in its mortuary customs. In the Late Geometric period, the cist graves – and especially the large and well-furnished cist graves – would have been those of the leading aristocratic families (also named ‘clans’ or ‘nobility’), whereas *pithos* burials, often completely without objects, were supposedly for the poorer people. Eventually, the complete takeover of *pithoi* in the seventh century would reflect a general decrease in wealth.²⁹ Similarly, for Corinth, the increased elaboration of burials in the first half of the eighth century should be equated, according to Keith Dickey, with a ‘burgeoning aristocracy, with the process culminating in the establishment of the Bacchiad oligarchy, which is traditionally dated to 747’, considering that the Corinthian ‘landowning elite [would]

increasingly have felt the need to emphasize their right to the land and their privileged status through increasingly extravagant funerals for their family members'.³⁰ In sum, burial differences would have been relevant to class distinctions.

Such a sharp distinction between socio-economic groups does not do justice, however, to the complexity of the archaeological record. Although it is certainly true that, in general, cist burials are better furnished with grave goods than *pitboi*, a good many Argive cist graves contained no gifts at all, and certain *pitboi* could be richly furnished. As Jonathan Hall concludes for Argos, 'this differential is hardly significant enough to posit any extreme social divisions between those who employed cist burial and those who adopted *pitbos* burial'.³¹ Moreover, such a distinction, formulated more than three decades ago, no longer fits with current knowledge about early Greek societies and their material culture. Kinship ties were probably not at the core of social organisation in Archaic Greece. Moreover, concepts such as 'clan', 'nobility' or even 'aristocracy' are reminiscent of a social model that has been harshly criticised in recent literature.³² It should be added that a stratified social order, in contrast to a ranked one, is actually split into several strictly-separated classes with no possibility of social mobility. In this sense, 'a stratified social order does not have the same need for display as a ranked one. It has nothing to prove, only something to maintain', to quote James Whitley, referring to the more austere material practices of Crete at the end of the seventh and beginning of the sixth century: 'Indeed, display[s] can be a threat to the social order, as they provide opportunities for those outside the group to compete and so undermine established hierarchies'.³³ Accordingly, the luxury displayed in Middle Geometric Corinthian and Late Geometric Argive burial practices would reveal an increase in social competition among the elite and its instability, rather than the strengthening of an already established aristocracy against a class of poorer people, while the fading of all material distinctions in death during the seventh century would indicate a stratified social order, much more so than for the previous period.

Instead of a general decrease in wealth, as argued by Hägg for Argos, Keith Dickey proposed to attribute the later disappearance of grave goods in Corinthian tombs to restrictive funerary legislation: 'for the period from ca. 750 to ca. 600 BC the Corinthians appear to have adopted funerary customs that intentionally sought to mute or eliminate distinctions of status in burial'. He postulated that the Bacchiads might 'have imposed funerary restrictions like those for the Spartan citizens on the Corinthian populace', alluding to the Lycurgan law code in Sparta.

Not democratising in its aims, the supposed Bacchiad regulation was intended 'to enhance the prestige of the ruling group and deny rank or status to all other individuals': 'by prohibiting lavish funerals the Bacchiads would have effectively denied any rival families an opportunity to express their own wealth and would-be status'.³⁴ Similarly, the reappearance of grave goods in Corinthia towards the end of the seventh century would reveal that 'this prohibition either was repealed or was no longer enforced by the end of the seventh century when the tyrant Periander reigned' and that, although the differences between individuals could have been masked for a time in death, they 'still existed in life and were bound to manifest themselves again in the funerary ritual with time'.³⁵

No sumptuary laws, however, are known at any time for Corinth. Moreover, historians are more and more reluctant to view early funerary legislation in the Greek world as being intended to curb the public display of extravagant burials. For example, as demonstrated by Josine Blok, Solon's funerary laws were not at all directed against the Athenian elite and, indeed, there was no restraint on ostentatious behaviour in sixth-century Attica.³⁶ Overall, the Corinthian and Argive societies do not appear to have prohibited individual expressions of wealth, as we can judge from local sanctuaries. In search of a global explanation for all regions in which the placing of grave goods was temporarily abandoned, one might better refer to the well-known relocation of luxury goods from tombs to sanctuaries. Since the work of Nicolas Coldstream and Anthony Snodgrass,³⁷ it has been commonplace to stress the transfer that gradually occurred in material culture from tombs to sanctuaries during the eighth century. Although the increase in votive offerings is often slightly earlier than the impoverishment of tombs, the types of artefacts once deposited in burials eventually came to be offered at sanctuaries. For example, towards the end of the eighth century *obeloi* ceased to be deposited in Argive tombs (T. 45 is probably the last one) and began to be regularly offered in sanctuaries. Similarly, the diminution of grave goods in Corinthian burials paralleled the sharp increase of dedications in Corinthian sanctuaries, particularly at Isthmia and Perachora, as early as the eighth century. Accordingly, the disappearance of such items from graves reflects not a decline in general prosperity or any sumptuary legislation, but new attitudes towards divinities, granting to sanctuaries a function in the mediation of power and prestige that was previously attributed to burials, as famously expressed by François de Polignac more than twenty years ago.³⁸

Therefore, what happened in seventh-century Argos and Corinth has probably nothing to do with the so-called Dorian or Lycurgan austerity,

which is most probably a much later, sixth- or even late sixth-century, and mainly Spartan phenomenon.³⁹ Not only did the ‘funerary cut’ go with a contemporary ‘dedication boom’, it was also followed by the general reappearance of burial goods in both sixth-century Argos and Corinth, along with the occurrence of magnificent *semata*.

Whereas Robin Hägg took cultural discontinuity in burial customs to be indicative of class distinctions, Anne Foley proposed to relate the Argive burial evidence in the Geometric period to ethnic groups: ‘Variations in burial customs (...) may equally be interpreted as resulting from racial divisions within the population’. She assumed that there were both Dorians and non-Dorians living at Argos during the Geometric and early Archaic periods, and that ‘the non-Dorians formed a subject population to the dominant Dorian warrior class’. Accordingly, the large and richly furnished cist burials would have been used ‘with some degree of exclusivity’ by the Dorian segment of the Argive society.⁴⁰ Jonathan Hall, however, has argued strongly against an archaeology of the Dorian invasion, which has been widely advocated since the nineteenth century, and expressed doubts about the likelihood of a direct correlation between a particular grave type and an ethnic group.⁴¹ The ethnic approach has been revived recently, however, by Jean-Marc Luce.⁴² Although Foley did not apply her ethnic model beyond the Geometric period, what happened in the early seventh century, when cist tombs were abandoned in favour of *pitheos* burials, is worth considering. Is it likely that the Dorians suddenly adopted a mode of disposal that was previously associated with another, lower-status ethnic group? Does it mean that the two groups merged through a general assimilation in burial customs, or that the Dorian component of the Argive identity vanished, not to speak of an evaporation of the Dorians themselves? This subsequent theoretical development, of course, disposes of any ethnic interpretation of Argive mortuary practices.

What then was the reason? How are we to make sense of the alternation between luxury and austerity in Argive and Corinthian burial sequences? What happened in Argos and Corinth over the whole pre-Classical period could be related to what Aubrey Cannon once modelled in terms of funerary cycles. In a largely anthropological study, Cannon argued that change in funerary ostentation is often a cyclical phenomenon and that, as contradictory as it might appear, restriction can itself be an expression of competitive mortuary display.⁴³ Mortuary practices simply change because they derive meaning through contrast with contemporary and past expressions. The notion of a funerary cycle allows us to evade too radical a social or ideological interpretation of mortuary variation in terms of crisis, whether socio-economic or ethnic.

But what, then, lay behind these changes? In the following pages, I will argue that discontinuities in pre-Classical Argive and Corinthian burial customs and in material wealth invested in tombs was actually related to the changing images and structures of ever-evolving political communities.

The making of the Argive and Corinthian *poleis*

In dealing with mortuary practices and their variation in Early Iron Age Greece, Ian Morris related them to a transformation of the social structure leading to the formation of the Greek *polis*.⁴⁴ Although his ideas on the rise of the Greek *polis* were extensively discussed and (with good reasons) criticised three decades ago, they still represent a major stimulus to reflection on the making of the Greek city. According to Morris, although ‘formal burial’ (i.e. an archaeologically visible or retrievable tomb) long remained restricted to a higher stratum (wrongly) labelled the *agathoi*, a lower stratum (also mistakenly) termed the *kakoi* was suddenly allowed to be buried formally. Well beyond any possible growth of the population, as postulated by Snodgrass, Morris associated the well-known increasing number of tombs in the eighth century with a broadening of the burial group, marking the invention of the idea of the *polis* and the appearance of citizenship. Although Morris’ analysis is mainly based on the archaeological record of Athens and Attica, he also briefly alluded to Argos and Corinth.⁴⁵ In Argos, the appearance of a large substratum of poor, undifferentiated *pithos* burials alongside the richer cist graves is interpreted as the manifestation of a subordinate social group which was not very visible before 750. Morris concluded that the admission of the (so-called) *kakoi* to the formal cemeteries, but in graves very different from those of the (alleged) *agathoi*, and the subsequent disappearance of all distinctions in death would be consistent with a general model of denial of differences between the citizens of the *polis*. Similarly, he argued that Corinth provides another good example of the early *polis*, with virtually no differentiation between the citizens. For Corinth, Morris’ ideas have been endorsed and further elaborated by Dickey. While he fittingly refused to link the growing number of datable pit graves in the Middle Geometric period to demographic trends, Dickey assimilated the increased elaboration of Corinthian burials in the first half of the eighth century, followed by the dramatic changes in burial custom in the middle of the century, with the birth of the *polis*. According to Dickey, ‘the adoption of a single uniform grave form for all members of the community fits well with the notion that a funerary ideology which denied differences in status was operating’. While reflecting a

shift in emphasis away from the individual towards the community, the use of stone sarcophagi also offered the Corinthians the opportunity to differentiate themselves from other Greek communities.⁴⁶

This is not the place to discuss Morris' (and Dickey's) egalitarian conception of the citizen community. Like other scholars, I am strongly reluctant about the idea of equating the birth of the Greek *polis* with the rise of a so-called 'middling ideology', which is a mere retro-projection of Classical Athenian or Spartan ideals.⁴⁷ However, although Morris' conception of the *polis* must be debated again and again, the chronological variations in Argive and Corinthian burial customs can nevertheless be associated with some kind of community development through a behavioural conception of Archaic citizenship.

Usually considered as a granted status enshrined in legal criteria and institutional affiliations, citizenship is normally assimilated to membership of a previously defined political entity.⁴⁸ Instead of membership, which introduces a view from the top, I have argued in recent studies in favour of describing Archaic citizenship as a performance, thereby focusing attention on citizen behaviours.⁴⁹ Beside attending the Assembly and the Council, which imply formal institutions, the exercise of citizenship actually extended to all the areas of collective activities and individual performances: cults and burials, sacrifices and *symposia*, trade and economy, war and peace, all spheres or behaviours that contributed to sketching the outline of the citizen community. This was, in fact, the double meaning of the word *politeia* in ancient Greek: applied, on the one hand, to forms of government (usually the only one explored by modern scholarship)⁵⁰ and, on the other hand, to citizen lifestyles, also referred to as *nomoi*, *tropoi* or *epitēdeumata*.⁵¹ These are the citizen behaviours I am interested in. In the absence of a register in most Archaic cities certifying one's legal status, the rights of a citizen had to be permanently demonstrated in order to be acknowledged and accepted by others. Even the citizen community was delineated thanks to specific behaviours, especially those performed in sanctuaries and cemeteries. Adopting the normative behaviours of citizens in all aspects of one's lifestyle therefore provided, from birth to death, the best means of being acknowledged as a fellow citizen. To put it briefly, in order to be accepted as a citizen, one had to behave like a citizen.

From this perspective, the notion of *habitus*, popularised by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, can be meaningful. *Habitus* refers to the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. In Bourdieu's own words, they are 'structured structures predisposed to

function as structuring structures'.⁵² They are socially acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and tastes that are repeatedly reproduced through individual behaviours, thereby reinforcing the strength of the *habitus* itself. In sum, by adopting a particular lifestyle, in both life and death, which was valued by the whole citizen community, individuals behave in order to be accepted as fellow citizens.

Of course, in Archaic Greece, each city had its own citizen *habitus*, defining a variety of idiosyncratic patterns of behaviours that allowed individuals to be identified as citizens in their own community. What I propose here is that we should apply this conception of Archaic citizenship to the burial customs of Argos and Corinth. Accordingly, pre-Classical Argive and Corinthian burial customs, coherent as they were in their forms and sequences, functioned as citizen *habitus*, as behavioural ways of including or excluding people from the community, with the approval of all its members. Their chronological variations simply reflect the evolving *habitus* of these communities, if not their changing composition, with new groups of insiders trying to re-define burial customs to their own advantage. In this sense, the seventh-century break in the funerary record of both Corinth and Argos does not reflect any particular ethnic, social or economic crisis, nor any sumptuary legislation. After the lavish burials of the previous period and the probable social instability that they reflect, the funerary restrictions and austerity imply a more strictly stratified and closed society – similar in principle to what happened in sixth-century Crete or Sparta – which materially isolated citizen insiders in death from non-citizen outsiders.⁵³ Conversely, the reappearance of some sort of funerary luxury in sixth-century Argive and Corinthian tombs reveals the changing behaviours of these citizen communities, and probably a more competitive and open conception of them, as in other areas of the Greek world.

Notes

¹ Gorman and Gorman 2014, 25. See also the papers by Robin Osborne, Ellen Millender and Paul Christesen in this volume (Chapters 1, 6 and 7) for a general discussion of the various meanings of 'luxury' and the Greek words *habrosunē* and *truphē*.

² Most recently, Dubois-Pelerin 2016 (with bibliography).

³ Bernhardt 2003.

⁴ Passerini 1934; Schepens 2007, esp. 258–61.

⁵ On the *truphē* of Spartan women, see Ellen Millender's chapter in this volume (Chapter 6).

⁶ Most recently, Gorman and Gorman (2007; 2014), although they apply this moral disapprobation solely to Roman ethics.

⁷ Kurke 1992.

⁸ Mazarino 1947. Cf. Cozzoli 1980; Nenci 1983; Lombardo 1983.

⁹ Duplouy 2013, 2018 and 2019.

¹⁰ I am not so confident, however, that luxury behaviours were as heavily gendered in pre-Classical cities as they became from Classical times onwards.

¹¹ Hodkinson 2000.

¹² Veblen 1899.

¹³ Lapatin 2015.

¹⁴ Ampolo 1984a; 1984b.

¹⁵ Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 180. See also Vlachou 2012, 368–9; Luce 2011. For Classical and Hellenistic burials in the Northern Peloponnese, Dimakis 2016.

¹⁶ See the recent discovery in Argos of an early seventh-century cremation in a bronze urn covered by limestone slabs: *Archaeology in Greece Online* (<https://chronique.efa.gr/>) no. 293.

¹⁷ Besides the work of the Ephorate, recorded annually in *Archaiologikon Deltion*, the main references are: Courbin 1974; Hägg 1974; Foley 1988, 34–52; Barakari-Gleni 1998; Touchais and Divari-Valakou 1998; Barakari-Gleni and Pariente 1998; Pappi 2014; Farnham 2016, 365–71. To these well-published records should be added the short notices of *Archaeology in Greece Online* (<https://chronique.efa.gr/>) nos. 293, 1434, 1435, 1437, 1439, 1441, 2411, 3825, 3827, 3832, 3841, 3842, 3845, 3853, 3859, 3872, and 3880. For a comparison with newly available archaeological evidence from Sparta, Christesen 2018.

¹⁸ For a full picture and figures, see conveniently Tandy 1997, 46–50 (according to Snodgrass's burial counts).

¹⁹ On the definition of the settled area, period by period, Marchetti 2013.

²⁰ As noted recently by Christesen 2018, 340, 'burials continued to take place in the heart of Argos' urban fabric throughout the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods'.

²¹ Initially published by Courbin 1957.

²² Foley 1988, 50–1.

²³ The main references are: Blegen, Palmer and Young 1964; Dickey 1992; Morgan 1999, 395–7, 406–9, with a gazetteer of sites in Appendix 4; Pfaff 2007, to be supplemented by *AR* 53 (2006–7), 13–14 and now by Sanders *et al.* 2014; Giannopoulou *et al.* 2013. To these well-published records should be added the short notices of *Archaeology in Greece Online* (<https://chronique.efa.gr/>) nos. 101, 2492, 2493, 3803, and 4437. Slane 2017 deals with burials ranging in date from the fifth century BC to the sixth century AD. For a comparison with newly available archaeological evidence from Sparta, Christesen 2018.

²⁴ Dickey 1992, 139.

²⁵ Farnham 2016, 374–6.

²⁶ Most recently, Kokkorou-Alevras 2011.

²⁷ *Archaeology in Greece Online* no. 1424.

²⁸ The comparison can now be extended to Spartan burials: Christesen 2018, 352. While grave goods were largely the same in all three communities in the Protogeometric and Geometric periods and similarly absent during much of the seventh century, there was no reappearance of burial goods in Sparta in the sixth century.

²⁹Hägg 1980, 1983, 1998, broadly followed by Pappi 2014, 172–81 (with an unnecessary emphasis on kinship as a structuring principle of society).

³⁰Dickey 1992, 136–7.

³¹Hall 1997, 126.

³²Duplouy 2006, 2017; Fisher and van Wees (eds) 2015. There is, most unfortunately, a recent revival of old kinship theories for Athenian society: Alexandridou 2016, esp. 354–5; Dmitriev 2018; see however Humphreys 2018, 319–60.

³³Whitley 2010, 182.

³⁴Dickey 1992, 3, 105–8. The idea is still accepted by Christesen (2018, 352) and tentatively applied to Sparta, referring to ‘an unusually high level of state control’.

³⁵Dickey 1992, 139–40.

³⁶Blok 2006.

³⁷Coldstream 1977; Snodgrass 1980, 52–8.

³⁸Polignac 1996.

³⁹According to van Wees (2018a; 2018b) the Spartan shift towards austerity is not to be dated earlier than 515–510.

⁴⁰Foley 1988, 34–52; 1998.

⁴¹Hall 1997, 122–8.

⁴²Luce 2011.

⁴³Cannon 1989.

⁴⁴Morris 1987.

⁴⁵Morris 1987, 183–7.

⁴⁶Dickey 1992, 137–8.

⁴⁷Among others, Hammer 2004 and Kistler 2004 have been very critical of Morris’ de-contextualised reading of Archaic texts and material culture.

⁴⁸On the main trends in definitions of Archaic Greek citizenship, Duplouy and Brock (eds) 2018.

⁴⁹For a full description of the behavioural approach, Duplouy 2018. On performative citizenship beyond ancient Greece, Isin 2017.

⁵⁰From the monumental *Staatsrecht* of nineteenth-century German historians to the research and publications of the Copenhagen Polis Centre.

⁵¹On the various meanings of the word *politeia*, Bordes 1982.

⁵²Bourdieu 1977, 72; 1990, 53. See also Duplouy 2014, 657.

⁵³I follow here the distinction between ‘ranked’ and ‘stratified’ societies, applied to the Cretan cities by Whitley 2010.

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