

GREECE

IN THE MAKING

1200 - 479BC

ROBIN OSBORNE



SECOND EDITION

ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

GREECE IN THE MAKING, 1200–479 BC

Greece in the Making is an accessible and comprehensive account of Greek history from the end of the bronze age to the classical period. The first edition of this book broke new ground by acknowledging that, barring a small number of archaic poems and inscriptions, the majority of our literary evidence for archaic Greece reported only what later writers wanted to tell, and so was subject to systematic selection and distortion. This book offers a narrative which acknowledges the later traditions, as traditions, but insists that we must primarily confront the contemporary evidence, which is in large part archaeological and art-historical, and must make sense of it in its own terms.

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Robin Osborne is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of King's College Cambridge and of the British Academy. He has published widely on ancient Greek history, archaeology and art, including *Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside* (1987), *Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (1998), and *Greek History* (Routledge Classical Foundations, 2004).

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FOR JOHN,
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	ix
<i>List of tables</i>	xiv
<i>List of texts</i>	xv
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Preface to the second edition</i>	xix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xx
1 The traditions of history	1
<i>What is Polykrates to me? The necessity of archaic Greek history</i>	1
<i>History and the traditions of prehistory</i>	4
<i>The case of Cyrene</i>	8
<i>Using the archaeology</i>	15
<i>Our world under construction</i>	16
2 Setting the stage	18
<i>The natural environment</i>	18
<i>Living off the land</i>	25
<i>Human constraints</i>	29
3 The problem of beginnings	35
<i>A slate rubbed clean? The onset of the Dark Age</i>	35
<i>Migration, invasion, and decline: explaining the void</i>	47
<i>The eastern Mediterranean world</i>	52
<i>Getting organised</i>	55
4 Forming communities: The Eighth Century BC	66
<i>Growing people</i>	66
<i>The changing world of the dead</i>	75
<i>The changing world of the gods</i>	82
<i>The world outside</i>	98

<i>The eighth-century view of the world</i>	124
<i>From communities to poleis?</i>	128
5 The world of Hesiod and Homer	131
<i>The tradition of oral poetry</i>	131
<i>Hesiod's world</i>	133
<i>The world of the Iliad and Odyssey</i>	140
<i>Hesiod, Homer, and history</i>	149
6 Reforming communities: The Seventh Century	153
<i>An artistic revolution</i>	153
<i>A world at war</i>	161
<i>Sparta</i>	166
<i>Law, constitutions, and extra-constitutional rule</i>	174
<i>Settlements and mobility</i>	185
<i>A divine revolution</i>	190
7 The Greek World in 600 BC	202
<i>Athens</i>	202
<i>Women</i>	214
<i>New cities</i>	220
8 Inter-relating cities: the short Sixth Century (600–520 BC)	231
<i>Competing in a panhellenic world</i>	231
<i>Monumentalising the city</i>	248
<i>Feud and faction beyond the history of the city</i>	257
<i>Networking cities</i>	270
9 The transformation of archaic Greece 520–479 BC	276
<i>Democracy</i>	276
<i>Philosophy</i>	297
<i>Persia</i>	300
Epilogue	331
<i>Bibliographical notes</i>	336
<i>Index</i>	361

FIGURES

The following were reproduced with kind permission. While every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and obtain permission, this has not been possible in all cases. Any omissions brought to our attention will be remedied in future editions.

1	Map of sites mentioned in Cyrene settlement account	9
2	J. W. Waterhouse, <i>Hylas and the Nymphs</i> . Copyright Manchester City Art Galleries	18
3	Labour supply and food demands during a hypothetical family life-cycle, after T. W. Gallant, <i>Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece</i> (Cambridge, 1991), figure 4.10	33
4	Distribution of sites in Late Helladic IIIA2–IIIB after O. T. P. K. Dickinson, <i>The Aegean Bronze Age</i> (Cambridge, 1994), figure 4.24	36
5	Distribution of sites in Late Helladic IIIC after K. T. Syriopoulos, <i>Eisagoge eis ten arkhaiian Hellenike historian: Hoi metabatikoi khronoi apo tes mykenaikes eis ten arkhaiiken periodon, 1200–700 p.Kh.</i> , 2 vols (Athens, 1983–4), map 2	37
6	Late Helladic IIIC Lefkandian-style pyxis from Lefkandi. Ht 0.18 m. Courtesy of Mervyn Popham	38
7	Distribution of sites 1125–1050 BC after K. T. Syriopoulos, <i>Eisagoge eis ten arkhaiian Hellenike historian: Hoi metabatikoi khronoi apo tes mykenaikes eis ten arkhaiiken periodon, 1200–700 p.Kh.</i> , 2 vols (Athens, 1983–4), map 3	39
8	Distribution of sites 1050–1000 BC after A. M. Snodgrass, <i>An Archaeology of Greece</i> (Berkeley, CA, 1987), figure 52	40
9	Sub-mycenaean amphora from Kerameikos cemetery inv. 421. Ht 0.34 m. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-Ker2616	41
10	Attic protogeometric amphora from Kerameikos inv. 2024. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-Ker4247	43
11	Karphi. Photograph: author	45
12	Lefkandi ‘Heroon’ plan. Courtesy of Mervyn Popham	56

13 Engraved near-eastern bronze bowl from Toumba cemetery (T.55.28). Courtesy of Mervyn Popham	58
14 Pendent-semicircle plate from Toumba cemetery (T.55.4). Courtesy of Mervyn Popham	60
15 Cretan protogeometric B pithos from the Fortetsa cemetery (Fortetsa 1440). Courtesy of J. N. Coldstream	63
16 Map of west Cretan ninth- and eighth-century sites	67
17a Map of Arkadian tenth- to eighth-century sites	68
17b Tenth- to eighth-century sites in the Argive plain	69
17c Tenth- to eighth-century sites in the southern Argolid, indicating the contribution of intensive field survey (after M. H. Jameson, C. N. Runnels, and Tj. van Andel, <i>A Greek Countryside: The Southern Argolid from Prehistory to the Present Day</i> (Stanford, CA, and Cambridge, 1994), figures 4.1 and 4.20)	69
18a Sites in Attica occupied in the Dark Age prior to 800 BC	70
18b Sites in Attica occupied during the eighth century BC	71
19 Two versions of changing grave numbers in Athens from the Dark Age to 700 BC and beyond: a) Snodgrass' 1980 version; b) Morris' 1987 version. After I. Morris, <i>Burial and Ancient Society</i> (Cambridge, 1987), figures 23 and 22	74
20 Increasing site numbers in Attica, the Corinthia, and the Argolid after I. Morris, <i>Burial and Ancient Society</i> (Cambridge, 1987), figure 54	76
21 Two Attic gold bands of the mid-eighth century: a) Athens 15309 from Kerameikos cemetery (gr. 72). Length 0.36 m. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-Ker596; b) Length 0.335 m. Courtesy of the National Museum, Copenhagen, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities.	80
22 Late geometric amphora from Kerameikos cemetery (gr. 72) inv. 345. Ht 0.52 m. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-NM3360	81
23 Map showing position of Perakhora sanctuary	88
24 Tripod leg from Olympia showing helmeted figures struggling for possession of a tripod. Ht 0.467 m. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-OL2032	91
25 Map showing position of Samian Heraion	96
26 Phoenician settlements and shipping routes in the Mediterranean, after M. E. Aubet, <i>The Phoenicians and the West</i> (Cambridge, 1993), figures 22 and 28	98
27 Map of distribution of Euboian pendent-semicircle skyphoi and plates after M. Popham, 'Precolonization: early Greek contact with the east', figure 2.12 in G. Tsetschkladze and F. De Angelis (eds), <i>The Archaeology of Greek Colonisation</i> (Oxford, 1994)	99
28 Map of distribution of Lyre Player Seals after <i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i> (1990), 11, figure 20	99

29a and b Large scarab from Francavilla. Sibari Antiquarium. Courtesy of John Boardman	100
29c and d More typical Lyre Player Seals from Pithekoussai, after <i>Pithekoussai 1</i> (Rome, 1993)	100
30 Table of early Greek alphabets after L. H. Jeffery, <i>The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece</i> (Oxford, 1961)	102
31 Inscribed Rhodian cup (Kotyle) from Pithekoussai Cremation: a) photograph courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom, Neg. no. D-DAI-ROM-54/1050; b) drawing after <i>Pithekoussai 1</i> (Rome, 1993)	109
32 Map showing the location of the Greek settlements mentioned in Table 5	112
33 Argive late geometric II high-handled krater of c.725 BC. Photograph courtesy of Ecole Française d'Athènes. Neg. no. 27415	123
34 Late geometric bronze seated male votive figure. © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (54.789). Seated male figure, anonymous (Greek), 750-700 BC, bronze, 2 7/8 × 1 1/4 × 1 3/8 in.	125
35 Attic late geometric I krater. Ht 1.31 m. Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1914 (14.130.15)	126
36 Shield from Idaian cave. After E. Kunze, <i>Kretische Bronzereliefs</i> (Stuttgart, 1931), Beilage 1, by courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens	127
37 The site of Askra. Photograph: author	138
38 Protocorinthian <i>olpe</i> known as the Chigi vase a) whole vase; b) detail of central frieze. Courtesy of Hirmer Verlag Munich. Neg. nos 591.2036 and 591.2040	154
39 Neck and shoulder of a seventh-century relief <i>pitbos</i> from Tenos showing a head-birth. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-83-464	156
40 Map contrasting distribution of eighth-century Phoenician candelabra with that of seventh-century Phoenician metal vessels and of Phoenician 'candelabra' with papyrus leaf capitals, after H. Matthäus in P. Astrom (ed.), <i>Acta Cypria</i> , part 2, figs 10, 11, and 14	159
41 Corinthian <i>olpe</i> , from Rhodes. British Museum 1860.2-1.18. Copyright British Museum	160
42 Fragment of gold belt, Iron Age, 8-7th century BC, perhaps from Ziwiye, north-west Iran. Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum	160
43 Bronze shield blazon from Olympia. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no.D-DAI-ATH-75/1508	161
44 Early seventh-century Corinthian-style helmet made at Corinth or in the Peloponnese, from Olympia (Olympia Inv. B5615). Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-OL6017	162
45 Mask from Sanctuary of Orthia at Sparta. Courtesy of the British School at Athens	170

46	Early sixth-century lead model hoplites from the Othia sanctuary	172
47	Dreos law (Courtesy of Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford, Ann Jeffery papers)	175
48	Seventh-century sites in Attica	189
49	Delphi in its setting. Photograph courtesy of École Française d'Athènes. Neg. no. 74612	190
50	Daedalic relief from Gortyn temple. Courtesy of John Boardman	196
51	Ivory plaque with scene of Perseus and Medusa from Samos. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-SAM6029	196
52	New York <i>kouros</i> of c.600 BC. Ht 1.927 m. Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1932 (32.11.1)	198
53	Diagram of Doric order. Courtesy J. J. Coulton	200
54	Attic sixth-century amphora by the Amasis painter with a scene of worshippers of Dionysos. Courtesy of Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig (Kä 420). Photo: Claire Niggli	219
55	Acropolis of Thasos seen across agora. Photograph: author	221
56	Plan of town of Thasos	221
57	Seventh-century polychrome plate of Cycladic origin from Artemision at Thasos (Thasos Mus. 2085). Photograph courtesy of École Française d'Athènes. Neg. no. 33463	222
58	Aliko sanctuary. Photograph: author	223
59	Map of Metapontion area	225
60	Plan of Megara Hyblaia	227
61a and b	Pot manufactured at Megara Hyblaia. Louvre CA 3837. Photograph: Chuzeville. Courtesy of Musée du Louvre © Bibliothèque nationale de France	229
62	Early Panathenaic amphora, Burgon Group London British Museum B130. Copyright British Museum	233
63	Tyrrhenian amphora. Boston Museum of Fine Arts 98.916 (<i>ABV</i> 98.46)	235
64	Table of Etruscan <i>bucchero</i> shapes taken up in Athenian pottery, after N. Spivey and S. Stoddart, <i>Etruscan Italy</i> (London, 1990), figure 46	236
65	Early Phokaian electrum stater: British Museum 1893-7-6-1. Copyright British Museum	237
66	Map of cities minting coins by 480 BC	238
67	Early Aiginetan stater (11.87g). Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford	243
68	Dodekadrachm (40.45g) of Derrones, end of sixth century: British Museum BMC 1 1859-10-11-1. Copyright British Museum	244
69	Metope of Perseus and gorgon from Selinous: Courtesy of Hirmer Verlag Munich. Neg. no. 572.0435	247
70	Plan of Selinous	251
71	Temples on the Selinous acropolis. Photograph: author	251
72	Rocche di Cusa (Selinous) quarries. Photograph: author	252
73	Diagram of Ionic order. Courtesy of J. J. Coulton	254

74	Terracotta facings of the gable of the Gela treasury at Olympia. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. DAI-ATH-OL1457	255
75	Silvergilt sacrificial ox from Delphi. Photograph courtesy of École Française d'Athènes. Neg. no. 43352	257
76	Hazael's horse-bronze from the Samian Heraion. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH- 88/1029	261
77	Kheramyas' <i>kore</i> . Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. 85/466A	262
78	Eumnastos' lion from Samian Heraion. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-72/2693	263
79	Map showing those Athenian demes known from fourth-century inscriptions which can be probably located, together with a hypothetical indication of trittys affiliation	281
80	Thorikos theatre. Photograph: author	282
81	Athenian black-figure amphora by Swing Painter of <i>c.</i> 530 BC. Christchurch, New Zealand, University of Canterbury, Logie collection 41/57. Courtesy of Alan Shapiro and the University of Canterbury	292
82	Metope showing Theseus and Antiope from Athenian treasury at Delphi. Courtesy of Hirmer Verlag Munich. Neg. no. 561.0609	295
83	Late sixth-century black-figure cup known as 'Bomford cup'. Ashmolean Museum 1974.344. Courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford	296
84	Late sixth-century early red-figure plate attributed to Paseas. Ashmolean Museum Courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford	314
85a and b	Portrait ostrakon cast against Kallias son of Kratias. Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens Neg. no. D-DAI-ATH- Ker16171 and D-DAITH-ATH-Ker16172	315
86	Map showing Persian war sites	320
87	Delphic charioteer. Courtesy of Hirmer Verlag Munich. Neg. no. 561.0603	329
88	Motya youth. Courtesy of Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali, Sezione per i Beni archeologici, Trapani, Sicily	329

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TABLES

1	Rainfall on the Methana peninsula, September 1972 to August 1974	19
2	Rainfall on the south and east coasts of Sicily and on the coast and plateau of Cyrenaica	24
3	Changing numbers of pins recovered from Peloponnesian sanctuaries, c.1050–c.500 BC	87
4	Increasing numbers of dedications in sanctuaries across the Greek world, eleventh to seventh centuries	87
5	Greek settlements abroad	114
6	Cities minting their own coins by 480 BC	239
7	Major Greek temples down to 480 BC	249

TEXTS

1	Pindar, <i>Pythian Odes</i> 5.77–93	10
2	Herodotos 4. 155–6	11
3	ML 5.23–51	14
4	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> 609–17	21
5	Thucydides 1.12.	48
6	Mimnermos frg. 9 (West)	48
7	1 Kings 9: 10–14	53
8	<i>Iliad</i> 6. 286–310	85
9	<i>Iliad</i> 23.629–45	92
10	Jerome's edition of Eusebios' chronological work (late fourth century AD) under 776 BC	93
11	<i>Odyssey</i> 6.2–10	95
12	Velleius Paterculus 1.4.1	121
13	<i>Iliad</i> 14. 402–6	133
14	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> 176–92	136
15	<i>Kingship in Heaven</i> Col. 1.18–35	137
16	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> 213–27	139
17	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> 630–40	140
18	<i>Odyssey</i> 11.435–53	142
19	<i>Odyssey</i> 2.25–34	144
20	<i>Iliad</i> 17.262–8	145
21	<i>Iliad</i> 2. 185–205	147
22	<i>Odyssey</i> 9.106–15	148
23	Homeric <i>Hymn to Apollo</i> 143–50	151
24	Tyrtaios frg. 10 (West) 15–20	166
25	Plutarch <i>Lykourgos</i> 6.1–8	168
26	Alkman, frg. 1.36–56	171
27	Theognis 101–12	179
28	Alkaios 69	180
29	Diogenes Laertios, <i>Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers</i> 1.96	183
30	Herakleitos, <i>Homeric Allegories</i> 5.2	186
31	Strabo quoting Antiokhos (FGH 555 F13).	192
32	Herodotos 5.71.	203

33	Solon frg. 36	205
34	[Aristotle,] <i>Constitution of the Athenians</i> 9. T	207
35	[Demosthenes] 43.62	212
36	Semonides 7.1–20	215
37	<i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> 224–35	216
38	Sappho frg. 96	219
39	ML 3.	224
40	<i>IG</i> i3 1469.	258
41	Asios frg. 13	260
42	Herodotos 3.142–143.1	265
43	<i>FGH</i> 90 F61	266
44	Athenaios <i>Deipnosophistai</i> 695ab	277
45	Herodotos 5.69	280
46	<i>IG</i> i ³ 244.C.2–10, 16–22	283
46	Herodotos 5.77.4–78	289
48	Pausanias 6.9.6–8	293
49	Hippolytos, <i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> 1.14.5	299
50	ML 27	323
51	Pindar <i>Pythian Odes</i> 1.71–80	328

PREFACE

This book has been a long time in the making. The list of those who did not write the Methuen book on Archaic Greece is a distinguished one: H. A. Ormerod and H. T. Wade-Gery were supposed to write for the old Methuen series, and J. K. Davies was initially commissioned to write for the new. That I have ended up at the end of this line I owe to Fergus Millar, who has waited patiently, has encouraged persistently but gently, and has read, and commented extensively on, the whole book.

Since Ormerod was commissioned in the 1920s, our understanding of archaic Greece has been immeasurably transformed several times over, not simply by the work of archaeologists but also by work on oral traditions. In the 1930s the leading protagonist in the use of archaeology to illuminate early Greek history was my Corpus predecessor Alan Blakeway, samizdat copies of whose lectures on the theme long influenced thinking on the subject in Oxford. Blakeway's own untimely death, and the untimely deaths of too many of his colleagues both before and during the Second World War, took the heart out of the archaeology of Iron-Age Greece in Britain. But in recent years interest in the area has been revived, in no small part as a result of the giant's stride forward in the bold use of the archaeological record to understand eighth-century BC Greece made by Anthony Snodgrass's *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment* of 1980. Here I attempt to consolidate that advance, and at the same time to face, more determinedly than has previously been done, the fact that what literary texts tell us about the events of the years before the Persian wars is a product of what individuals and groups in the fifth century BC found it in their interest to tell, and not of what actually happened.

This book ends with the Persian wars. That is the conventional point at which to end histories of archaic Greece, and it is the point at which Simon Hornblower's *The Greek World 479–323 BC*, the successor volume to this in the series, begins. But I will argue, in 1.4 and in the epilogue, that the Persian wars mark a change both in the nature of Greek history and in the nature of the source material from which Greek history can be written. I begin, less conventionally, with the Dark Age of the twelfth to ninth centuries BC. I have begun there, rather than with the traditional beginning of Greek history in 776 BC, because it is following the fall of the Mycenaean palaces that the greatest discontinuity in the archaeological record occurs, and because, for all that many things change in eighth-century Greece, there is no fundamental change in the sources for the study of Greek society in the eighth century.

Although there is a line of argument running through the book, I hope that it will be of service to those interested only in part of the world which it surveys.

Such readers are, however, advised that they should read the opening chapter before attempting to use the rest of the book. Discussion of various topics, such as trade, is inevitably spread over the book, and readers are encouraged to make use of the index in order to put these discussions together again. I have endeavoured to ensure that my text adequately indicates the basis for the views which it expounds; my text has not been written in opposition to ‘rival’ histories and I have not made any attempt systematically to signal how my views relate to those expressed by other scholars who have written on the same topics. I hope that readers will find the different choices which other scholars writing about the period make in their histories *more* interesting, rather than less, as a result of reading this book. But I hope, even more strongly, that they will go away and read the Greek sources, Homer, Hesiod, Herodotos and the rest, with a new fascination and new insight. Throughout I have employed, rather than footnotes, a running bibliography, to be found at the end of the book and to be read in parallel with the chapters. This bibliography is intended to suggest the best place for an English-speaking reader to go for further information on the topics discussed; it is not intended to be exhaustive, and has not been limited to works which argue for the view of the particular issue which my text has adopted.

I am grateful to Jim Coulton, Franco De Angelis, Henry Kim, Irene Lemos, John Lloyd, David Percik, Oliver Taplin, and Stephen Todd for assistance with various topics and criticism of various draft chapters. Many other colleagues have influenced this book in less direct ways, through the stimulus of their work and through conversation, and I am grateful to them all for the generosity with which they have shared information and views. My pupils over the past decade have contributed more than they would guess to the arguments presented here, and if some parts are better constructed than others it is as a result of their work. I owe the felicitous title to my daughter Elizabeth. I am particularly grateful to Simon Hornblower, who read and commented on the whole of the first draft and whose sensitivities to style and content have not only saved me much embarrassment but have saved the reader from a much more turgid book. My knowledge of Thasos and the Cyclades has been enhanced with the assistance of the British Academy, of Sicily with that of the Oxford University Craven Committee, and of Khios and Samos with that of Corpus Christi College; I gratefully acknowledge the help of all these bodies.

In November 1977, as an undergraduate at King’s College Cambridge, I wrote an essay in answer to the question ‘Account for the differences between Coelius Antipater 11 and Livy 21.21 and between Quadrigarius 10(b) and Livy 7.9.8f’. All down the margin at one point my supervisor wrote: ‘We have a homeostatic oral culture here – aristocrats jealously hoarding their claims to pedigree and never in a position to sort out consciously where fact merged with pious fiction. The past is adjusted to the present, but not necessarily consciously or at any controllable level?’ That remark has lived with me ever since and might stand as the epigraph to this book, which is dedicated to that incomparable supervisor, John Henderson, in the hope that he may find it a step in the right direction.

*Corpus Christi College Oxford
October 1995*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this book has enjoyed a dozen years of use and abuse. My chief aim in revising this book has been to increase its usefulness to all sorts of readers. I have attempted to bring the bibliographical notes up to date, to clarify arguments which readers have found difficult to follow, to signal more clearly why it is that certain traditional topics of discussion do not figure here (notably 'colonisation' and 'the rise of the *polis*'), to offer more systematic discussion of the economy and of gender relations, and to facilitate the use of the book as a textbook by reversing the orders of Chapters 2 and 3. I have not attempted to defend myself against those who dismiss my account as one that is simply sceptical; I can only ask that they read more closely. I am grateful to all who offered suggestions and in particular to Paul Cartledge, Simon Hornblower, and Peter Rhodes for both detailed corrections and more general challenges to my views to which I have attempted to respond.

It is a particular pleasure to have been able to make these revisions back in the collegial company of John Henderson.

King's College Cambridge
September 2008

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologische Anzeiger</i>
<i>ABSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Athenische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>ANE</i>	Amélie Kuhrt, <i>The Ancient Near East</i> (London, 1995)
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>BR</i>	T. J. Cornell, <i>The Beginnings of Rome</i> (London, 1995)
Buck	C. D. Buck, <i>The Greek Dialects</i> (3rd edn, Chicago, IL, 1955)
<i>CEG</i>	P. A. Hansen (ed.), <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. n.</i> (Berlin, 1983)
<i>FGH</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–)
Fornara	C. W. Fornara (ed. and trans.), <i>Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War. Translated Documents of Greece and Rome</i> , vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1983)
<i>GW</i>	S. Hornblower, <i>The Greek World 479–323 BC</i> (3rd edn, London, 2002)
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (Berlin, 1873–)
<i>JDAI</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of the Hellenic Society</i>
<i>LSCG</i>	F. Sokolowski (ed.), <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> (Paris, 1969)
<i>ML</i>	R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis (eds), <i>A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC</i> (rev. edn, Oxford, 1988)
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (London, 1898–)
<i>PCPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>

THE TRADITIONS OF HISTORY

WHAT IS POLYKRATES TO ME? THE NECESSITY OF ARCHAIC GREEK HISTORY

As soon as you ask why a nation's political or economic institutions, or social relations, are the way they are today, you start to delve into history. If you want to understand why the British Parliament has the powers it does, or operates in the way it does, then one of the first things you need to know is what happened in the seventeenth century with the Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution. If you want to know why the countryside looks as it does, why country roads meander, why fields are odd shapes, you need to look back into the past history of the ownership and exploitation of the land. If you want to know why non-conformism is so strong in Wales, then you have to look at patterns of evangelism in the past, but also at patterns of political power and of economic deprivation. Studying British history is not a patriotic duty engaged in by chauvinists, it is something any inquisitive person, who wants to understand the society of which he or she is part, continually finds it impossible to do without.

But the history of a foreign country, 2,500 years ago and more? Is that not a luxury, merely a way of keeping the inhabitants of ivory towers out of mischief? Comforting though it might be to think that we can isolate our own history from what has happened to the rest of the world, we cannot. If what Parliament is in Britain today has been shaped by past events, it has also been shaped by what people have thought and written about government and its institutions. And as soon as you look into what has been thought and written on such matters in this country you find that it has been profoundly influenced by what has been thought and written elsewhere. And what has been written elsewhere has itself been shaped by what has happened elsewhere again. Because ancient Greece and ancient Rome have in the past enjoyed a special status in European thought, in a very few moves one finds oneself back with the political writings of Aristotle, and the practice of democracy at Athens. Time and again, in pursuing the history of our own society in order to understand its present forms, we find ourselves pursuing myths about ancient

Greece and through them the history of ancient Greece. John Stuart Mill was even prepared to claim that the Battle of Marathon, when the Athenians and Plataians defeated a Persian invasion force, was a more important event in English history than the Battle of Hastings.

You may imagine that, on this argument, there will be no end to the pursuit of the past: are we not entering an infinite regress that will end with us shuffling through the history of man from the stone age on? The answer to that is 'No', and it is 'No' for two very significant reasons, which themselves point up the importance of Greek history. The first is that it is only with the Greek world that we begin to get the sort of source materials that enable us to do the sort of history that lets us ask our own questions and hope to get answers. We have chronicles from earlier times, such as those available in the history books of the Old Testament, but it is from the Greeks of the classical period that we first get critical history, history that is conscious that people tell different stories about past events, history that tries to understand why events occurred and what their significance was, and is not satisfied with answers in terms of the commands of a political or religious leader. It is with the self-governing Greek states of the classical period that we begin to be able to see how a political system worked in detail, and to understand the structures of power on more than a personal level.

The second reason is still more striking. It is not entirely a European myth that in the classical Greek world we find the origins of very many features which are fundamental to our own western heritage. Whole modes of thought and expression have their fount and origin in Greece between 500 and 300 BC: self-conscious abstract political thought and moral philosophy; rhetoric as a study in its own right; tragedy, comedy, parody, and history; western naturalistic art and the female nude; democracy as theory and practice.

But this western tradition of the Greek origins of western civilisation, like the classical Greeks' own traditions about their past (see below, pp. 4–8), is also political, and no respecter of history. It is not only absurd to pretend that the buck stops dead in classical Greece, it is also to turn a blind eye to the socially embedded nature of human achievement. In Greek mythology the goddess Athene was born direct from the head of Zeus, but in ancient history as in modern history even the most startling discoveries and inventions have antecedents, and would not have occurred had previous conditions not been right. Therein lies the fascination with the Greece of the pre-classical period: can we recover the conditions which made the developments, the inventions, of the years 500 to 300 BC possible? What were the circumstances that brought about the revolution in the way the whole western world has thought and expressed itself ever since? We owe it to ourselves as humans to refuse the strategy of our tradition, a strategy which is far from politically innocent, which points to Athens' democracy as if that explained everything; and we owe it to ourselves to acknowledge the place which the heterogeneity of Greek experience within a pan-Mediterranean context had in the creation of that far from uniform classical Greek world.

If much of the attraction of studying archaic Greece lies in its *end*, and we must be unashamedly teleological, there is no less attraction in its beginning. In 1200 BC Greece looked much like any near-eastern society. The Mycenaeans were highly organised and, in their way, highly civilised. The language they spoke was Greek but, like several near-eastern neighbours, they wrote in a syllabary (so-called Linear B) and used writing to record the accounts of a complex and very hierarchical state organisation. Although their monuments and their figurative art certainly differ in detail from that of their near-eastern neighbours, it is difficult to feel that they differ in kind. But then something remarkable happened which we still cannot pretend that we understand: Mycenaean civilisation on the Greek mainland and islands collapsed. For the best part of two centuries, the traces of human occupation in Greece are exiguous, and, when the material remains increase again, the debt in material culture to the Mycenaean world is small. The Greeks kept their language, but they lost the tradition of writing it, and apart from some convenient ruined monuments upon which to hang their myths, the Greeks of the eighth century seem to have owed little other than that language and those myths to the Greeks of the twelfth century.

The Greeks of the ninth and eighth century were hardly in a 'state of nature', but they do give us a chance to see, from almost the very beginnings, the development of a political society and of a cultural identity. Through close examination of the material remains we can trace the formation and reformation of social groups, the contacts between groups both within and outside the Greek mainland, the links with other cultures of the near and middle east, and the effect which those contacts had at the material level. And, by a stroke of extraordinary fortune, we can get into the structures of thought of these communities through the survival of the two great epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, both the result of a single mind working upon materials which had been transmitted and elaborated orally over a period of centuries, and also through the two much more individual works of a single historical figure, the long hexameter poems known as the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, by a man named Hesiod who lived in a small community in central Greece around the year 700 BC.

The challenge that faces the student of archaic Greece is this: how to understand how the small communities of men and women scattered over mainland Greece, the Greek islands, the coast of Asia Minor, and, before long, over the coasts of Sicily, south Italy, and the Black Sea too, developed from the low level of organisation and poverty of material culture that we see in the ninth century BC, to the communities that laid the foundations of the culture and political organisation of the western world of the fifth and fourth centuries. In studying the society and conditions of archaic Greece, we study also the conditions of our own emergence as a civilised society and as civilised individuals in the western world.

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