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Introduction: the argument

This book is about the rise of the Greek city-state, one of the most remarkable social formations in history. The city-state, what the Greeks called the polis, was the world's first political community; it was also the first true slave society, and within it the concept of the freedom of the citizen was first articulated. Using a combination of archaeological and literary evidence, I will argue that this uniquely important state form appeared in the eighth century BC, as a result of intense struggle within communities which were already highly stratified.

Most archaeological studies of the early state deal with general rather than specific evolution (see Sahlins 1960), and above all with the 'Big Question' of the origin of those few pristine states which emerged without the influence of more advanced neighbours. However, ancient Greece never belonged to this exclusive club. In the period covered by this book, roughly 1100 to 500 BC, the Greeks were usually in contact with state and even imperial civilisations in the Near East and North Africa, and the emergence of the state in the Aegean was a secondary process. The most interesting question to address is not so much how state institutions appeared in Greece, as why they took on the particular and historically decisive forms of the polis. In attempting to answer this question, I will make a detailed study of the burial evidence from one region, analysing it as part of the ritual expressions of the structure of the community.

Although the quest for regularities in state formation processes is very interesting, we can learn just as much from the particular study of exceptional cases; as Trigger puts it, 'Nor is there any reason to believe that important generalisations may not emerge from the detailed contextual study (as by social anthropologists) of the structural and functional significance of the idiosyncratic details of specific ancient civilizations' (1985, 26). The polis was in its structure entirely different from any other ancient state form; through an understanding of the role of class antagonism and the function of slavery in the growth of this extreme society, we can perhaps hope to appreciate more fully the internal dynamics of other types of states. The pendulum of archaeological research interests is now swinging back towards the specific evolution of particular cultures (e.g. Flannery and Marcus (eds.) 1983, 1–4), and anthropologists are even coming to recognise the ways in which the rise of the polis contributes to our understanding of the transformations which have produced the modern West (e.g. Sahlins 1985, 32–4).

In this introductory chapter, I will outline those special features of the polis which we must try to account for. The bulk of the archaeological evidence available for this period is funerary; in part 1 an attempt will be made to sketch a general approach to burial and to show its particular relevance, before turning to a detailed study in part 2. The final

chapters integrate the burial evidence with the literary record and other classes of archaeological remains, to produce a model of the rise of the polis.

The polis was not the first state society in the Aegean: the brilliant Minoan–Mycenaean palatial civilisation had flourished during the second millennium BC, before its centres were engulfed by flames around 1200. Monumental architecture, syllabic writing and the redistributive state all disappeared, but the collapse of the palaces did not leave a *tabula rasa*; in Chapter 10 below we will see some of the ways in which later Greeks subtly reworked this heroic past for their own present ends, and one of the main arguments of this book will be that a considerable degree of social hierarchy survived the twelfth-century catastrophes. The period from 1200 to 750 BC is generally known as the ‘Dark Age’, and is often seen as a time of poverty, savagery and isolation, as in Starr’s apocalyptic vision: ‘During the Dark Ages . . . men struggled to survive and to hold together the tissue of society’ (1977, 47). A general demographic and material decline after 1200 BC seems certain, but Anglo-American archaeologists have tended to exaggerate its importance: Greek society was probably always much more sophisticated than contemporary Urnfield Europe.

Trying to identify the transition from a complex stratified society to an early state can often turn into a definitional blind alley (see Jones and Kautz 1981, 14–34; Carneiro 1981, 67–71), and many anthropologists feel that the origin of salient ranking is every bit as important as the origin of the state (e.g. Service 1975; Wright 1977). The Mycenaean prehistory of the polis meant that ranking was present throughout the Dark Age. Many of the archaeological features which Flannery (1972, 403–4) suggested as defining the state begin to appear in the eighth and seventh centuries, although others are curiously absent – for example, we might note that full-time religious specialists and a central monopoly on the use of force were very rare even in the fifth century, and Wright and Johnson’s (1975) criterion of a four-level settlement hierarchy is never easy to identify. As Runciman (1982) suggests, the historical background and the proximity of more advanced societies perhaps made it predictable that the Greeks would in time develop towards state institutions, through the processes of cluster interaction (Price 1977; 1978) or peer polity interaction (Renfrew and Cherry (eds.) 1986); but it was certainly not predictable that the general evolution of the state should have taken the specific form of the polis.

Archaeologists interested in the generalities of state formation often trace some of their questions back to Plato, writing at Athens early in the fourth century BC (e.g. Haas 1982, 21–5). Self-conscious political analysis and rigorous discussion of the origin of the state were probably invented in the polis during the fifth century BC. Although many factors affect the transmission to modern scholars of different types of written documents from ancient civilisations, it is not an accident that most early states produced no comparable tradition of political introspection. The social structure of the polis gave a central role to politics, and this had major repercussions.

I will argue that in the eighth century the Greeks developed a radically new concept of the state, which has no parallels in any other complex society. The Greeks invented politics, and made political relationships the core of the form of state which they called the polis. The essence of the polis ideal was the identity of the citizens with the state

itself. This had two important results. First, the source of all authority was located in the community, part or all of which made binding decisions through open discussion. The second consequence was that the polis made the definition of the state as the centralised monopoly of force tautologous; force was located in the citizen body as a whole, and standing armies or police forces were almost unknown. The polis' powers were total: there were no natural rights of the individual, sanctioned by a higher authority; the idiom of power was political, and there was no authority beyond that of the polis (generally, see Finley 1981 a). We might also say that politics functioned as the relations of production (Godelier 1977). Of course in practice there were contradictions between the plurality of the citizen society and the unity of the state, but the contrast between the ideal of the polis as a political community of citizens and the ideals of the states of ancient Mesoamerica, Mesopotamia and even China could hardly be greater. The ethic of a polis was almost a stateless state, autonomous from all dominant-class interests by being isomorphic with the citizen body. The citizens *were* the state.

The polis

Citizenship is the key to understanding the polis. The fullest ancient account is Aristotle's, at the beginning of book three of his *Politics*, written late in the fourth century BC. For Aristotle, the essence of the citizen was the right to make judgements and to hold office, to rule and to be ruled in turn. However, as he pointed out, differences in constitutions meant that a man who qualified as a citizen in one polis might not qualify in another. Aristotle perhaps used this definition of the citizen as an ideal type, towards which the citizens of a polis should tend (Johnson 1984); in any case, he distinguished between types of citizens, suggesting that there was such a thing as 'the citizen in a subject position', who would hold office only in the more open governments. The particular type of constitution – monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, or some mixture – would determine what proportion of the citizen body as a whole was in theory 'active'. The word *politeia* gives some idea of the peculiar unity of the citizenry and the state. It meant not only 'citizenship' but also the constitution and the political way of life, and at one point (*Politics* 3.1279a26) Aristotle even equated it with *politeuma*, the word for the citizen body as a whole. To both Aristotle and Plato, the polis was a strong community, a *koinōnia*, a group with a single united aim, and the excellence of a polis was to be judged according to how far the state aimed to fulfil the common advantage of the citizens (Mulgan 1977, 13–17).

Politeia is first attested only quite late in the fifth century (Herodotus 9.34), and it is clear that its sense was constantly evolving (see Bordes 1982). This raises the question of whether it is appropriate to speak of 'the rise of the polis' at all, or whether the polis idea grew imperceptibly over many generations. One of the aims of this book is to show that there was indeed a sharp, qualitative break in the structure of Greek society in the eighth century. I am not suggesting that the polis attained a final unchanging form at this time; rather, that the idea of the polis as a *koinōnia* emerged quite suddenly, and from that time on we can speak of the existence of the polis.

Around 600 BC, Alcaeus, an aristocratic poet from Mytilene on Lesbos, wrote

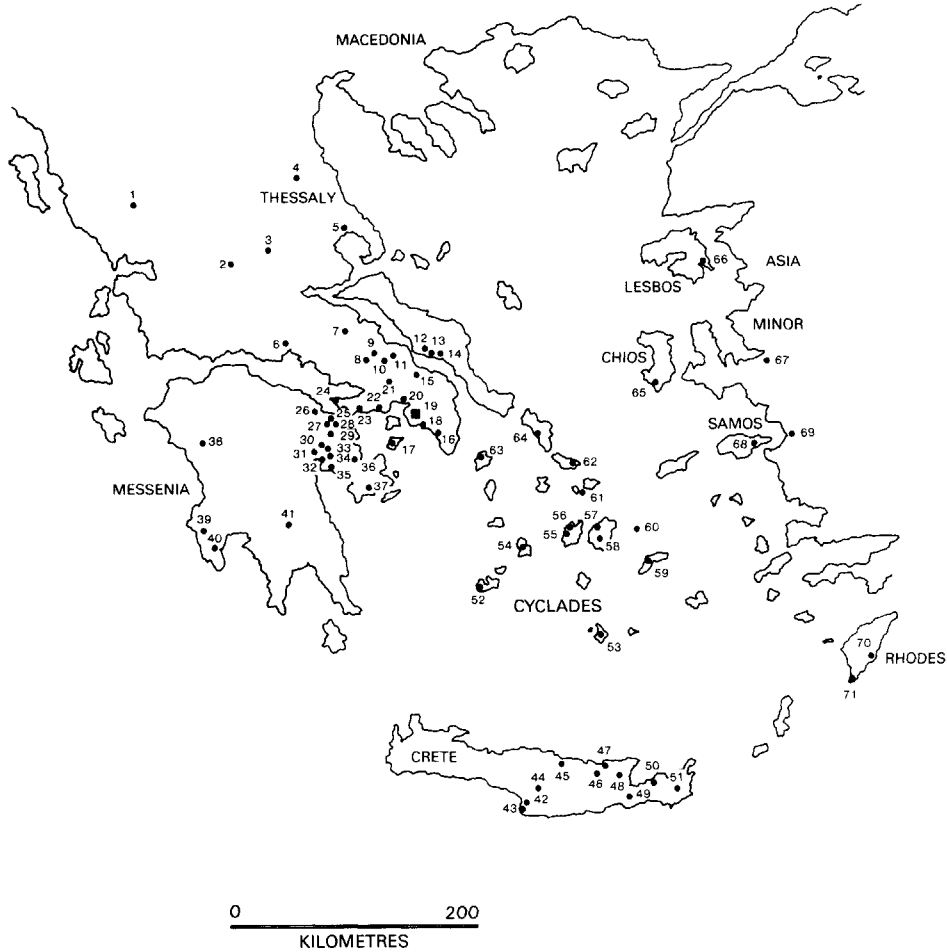


Fig.2 Sites mentioned in the text. Sites in Attica are shown in figs. 60–2 at the end of the book, with full bibliographies

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|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 17. Aegina | 48. Dreros | 47. Mallia | 26. Sicyon |
| 54. Ag. Andreas on Siphnos | 20. Eleusis | 4. Marmariani | 51. Skales cave, near Praisos |
| 10. Ag. Eleousa Pyriou | 65. Emborio on Chios | 22. Megara | 67. Smyrna |
| 8. Akraiphnion | 69. Ephesus | 23. Moulki | 27. Solomos |
| 59. Amorgos | 36. Epidaurus | 30. Mycenae | 41. Sparta |
| 16. Anavyssos | 14. Eretria | 66. Mytilene | 15. Tanagra |
| 2. Ano Dranista | 28. Examilia | 32. Nafplion | 29. Tenea |
| 33. Argive Heraion | 57. Grotta on Naxos | 40. Nichoria | 21. Thebes |
| 31. Argos | 37. Halieis | 38. Olympia | 51. Thera |
| 35. Asine | 5. Iolkos | 55. Parioikia on Paros | 34. Tiryns |
| 19. Athens | 7. Kalapodi | 24. Perachora | 58. Tsikalario on Naxos |
| 12. Chalcis | 46. Karphi | 42. Phaistos | 18. Vari |
| 50. Chondrovoulakes | 63. Kea | 3. Philia | 49. Vrokastro |
| 25. Corinth | 65. Knossos | 52. Phylakopi on Melos | 71. Vroulia |
| 61. Delos | 43. Kommos | 44. Prinias | 62. Xombourgo on Tenos |
| 6. Delphi | 56. Koukounaries on Paros | 9. Ptoon | 64. Zagora on Andros |
| 1. Dodona | 13. Lefkandi | 39. Pylos | |
| 60. Donoussa | 70. Lindos | 11. Rhitsona | |
| | | 68. Samos | |

Neither finely roofed houses, nor the stones of well-built walls, nor even canals and dockyards make up the polis: but men do.

(Lobel and Page 1955, fragment Z 103)

and two hundred years later, Thucydides had the Athenian general Nicias say 'For men make the polis, not walls or ships' (Thucydides 7.77.7). Across these centuries, the *koinōnia* was the heart of the polis.

The citizen estate reproduced itself through descent, although, as Aristotle stressed, this was not a necessary condition (*Politics* 3.1275b22–33). The polis had many features of what anthropologists call a closed corporate community (Wolf 1957; 1966a, 86). In such a group, landholding is monopolised by insiders, and the community as a whole has a vague claim to the land transcending that of the individual household. Land cannot be alienated to outsiders. There is a tendency to endogamy, and the institutions of the community (at least in theory) favour leanings towards a rough equality between its members. But there are vital differences: in the modern world such peasant corporations are usually closed against the state – while in the polis, the community was the state. Further, in the polis only the citizens themselves belonged to the corporation; those within the residential group but without a political role – women, resident aliens, slaves – were excluded from the *politeia*.

While all poleis were based on this structure, many of their organisational features could vary, at least within certain limits. Griffith and Thomas (1981) have showed that not only all poleis but indeed all city-state societies tend to conform to a fairly standard pattern of settlement, population size, subsistence and political autonomy. The citizen body in the polis – the adult males – was not numerous; Aristotle, paraphrasing the fifth-century town planner Hippodamus, suggested ten thousand as an ideal number (*Politics* 2.1267b31), and Plato (*Laws* 5.737d–8e) recommended five thousand and forty. Some of the smallest poleis were well below Plato's figure, while fifth-century Athens had an unusually large citizen body, with perhaps 40,000 members, but scattered over an area of some 2,400 square kilometres.

Territorially, the poleis were compact. Athens, mentioned above, had few peers; most poleis had less than 1,000 square kilometres of territory. Tiny Kea, with an area of just 170 square kilometres, was until the fourth century divided into four independent poleis. The settlement pattern tended to be nucleated. Most poleis had a central town with markets, temples and a fortified acropolis, although the bulk of the population would usually live in villages. Isolated farmsteads were probably very uncommon. However, it is important to stress the unity of the town and the rural hinterland: evidence for significant economic and political divisions between town and country under normal circumstances is rare.

All poleis were technologically simple, and the vast majority of the population lived off the land, generally on very small holdings. Throughout antiquity, the trend was for an increase in the size of the estates of the elite, but the richest Greeks of the period covered in this book, 1100–500 BC, were far from wealthy by Roman or Near Eastern standards (see Finley 1985a, 97–104).

Where poleis differed most was in their constitutions, and the proportion of the

citizens who had the right to be politically active. It is likely that the citizens and their families co-existed with significant numbers of slaves in all poleis, and in some cases with legally defined resident aliens; in fifth-century Athens, these groups may have approached fifty per cent of the population, but elsewhere they were probably less prominent.

Finally, the poleis were autonomous. When the Spartans conquered and annexed Messenia in the eighth century the polis ideal was barely formed; while some would see the temporary union of Corinth and Argos in 392–386 BC as a sign of the beginning of the end of the polis. Great controversy surrounds the decline of the concept of the state as a *koinōnia*. The autonomy of the poleis was often curbed after the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC and the incorporation of the Greek states into the Macedonian empire, but many of the institutions of the polis remained intact until the first century BC. The Romans seem to have succeeded in destroying the polis principle; by the time of the birth of Christ, it had effectively ceased to exist (Ste Croix 1981, 300–26).

This view of the polis is not universally accepted, and some of its critics must be mentioned. In a recent book, Gawantka (1985) traced the development of a tradition in German studies of the polis, culminating in Burckhardt's understanding of the word in 1898, which has largely remained with us. Gawantka's treatment of sixteenth- to nineteenth-century German historiography is convincing, but he does not demonstrate that the modern idea of the polis is not at the same time a good approximation to either the empirical realities or the ideal form of the ancient Greek states. That there were differences in ideas of the nature of the polis even in antiquity is clear enough (e.g. Thucydides 1.10.2; Pausanias 10.4.1), but the citizen estate was fundamental to the polis in a way which did not apply to the Mycenaean world or to the looser state formation called the *ethnos*, which flourished alongside the polis. (*Ethnos* is conventionally translated as 'tribe', 'nation' or 'people', which are all highly misleading.) The leaders of an *ethnos* could do most of the things that a polis did – wage war, raise taxes and make treaties, or put up public buildings; and both polis and *ethnos* had writing, temples, and similar sorts of settlement patterns (although the *ethnos* could be larger than the polis) and subsistence bases. The vital difference between them – which was fully recognised in antiquity (e.g. Aristotle, *Politics* 2.1261a29–30) – was sociological: the *ethnos* was not a political society. Gawantka's exegesis takes no account of the attitudes in the primary sources themselves.

Henri van Effenterre's *La cité grecque* (1985) rightly warns against too heavy a reliance on the fourth-century Athenocentric views of Plato and Aristotle for a definition of the early polis, but his attempt to reject the centrality of the citizen estate (1985, 24–5) is inadequate. The argument that the Minoan, Mycenaean and Classical state forms can all be called poleis in the same sense ignores the fundamental structural contrasts between the worlds evoked by Alcaeus and Thucydides and the Bronze Age palace societies. It is true that the historian of the polis can learn much from the study of the Bronze Age states (Cherry 1984), but that does not make them the same thing.

All the poleis were of course constantly changing through time, forming kaleidoscopic patterns of diversity, and the fit between any ideal type and the multiplicity of empirical

realities must be poor. However, between the collapse of the Mycenaean world in the twelfth century and the first clear expressions of the polis in Archaic literature, a series of profound structural transformations took place. These form my subject matter. My proposition is that the emergence of the citizen estate, the essence of the polis, can be directly observed in the archaeological record, and can be pinpointed in the eighth century BC.

The rise of the polis

The Greek Early Iron Age is conventionally divided into the 'Dark Age', c.1100–750 BC, and the Archaic period, c.750–500 BC. Literary sources begin with Homer around 750 BC, but the textual evidence is always scarce and difficult to interpret. The emergence of the citizen estate is largely beyond the reach of written documents. The nearest thing to a model of the evolution of the state in fact comes from Aristotle:

The first community for more than daily needs is the village. The most natural village seems to be a colony from a household, the sons and the sons of sons, whom some call 'those suckled with the same milk' (*homogalaktēs*). And because of this the poleis were at first monarchical, as are some tribes today; for they came together from monarchical parts, because each household is ruled by the eldest, so that the colonies of the family are likewise . . . The complete community of several villages is the polis, which has already almost reached the level of self-sufficiency, and having come into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the good life. Therefore the polis is wholly natural, if indeed the earlier communities are also natural; for this is their consummation (*telos*), and this nature is their end, for that which each thing is when its growth is completed we speak of as the nature of the thing, just as for a man, a horse, or a household. Further, that for which a thing exists, is its best form; and self-sufficiency is the best end. Therefore it is clear from these things that the polis is a product of nature and that man is by nature a creature of the polis (*politikon zōon*).

Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1252b16–53a3.

However, Aristotle's account was largely a philosophical construct with little or no empirical basis, and he was concerned to analyse the nature of the polis, rather than its history. Approaches to the rise of the polis must be archaeological. Some previous studies have concentrated on what I would call 'oblique' manifestations of the polis, such as population growth, 'urbanisation', fortification and temple building (e.g. Snodgrass 1977; 1980, 15–84; 1986), oblique in that they are not unique to the polis, and so provide at the very most necessary but not sufficient conditions for its identification. Others have concentrated on symbols whose meaning cannot be extracted, such as van Effenterre's argument (1985) that Bronze Age Mallia on Crete was a polis in the full sense because it had an assembly place analogous to the agora of the Classical poleis. As Snodgrass has argued (1980, 154–9), a formally laid out agora was not even a necessary condition for the polis. At Dreros on Crete, the agora may have been laid out in the late eighth century; at Megara Hyblaea in Sicily, it came only in the mid-seventh century,

perhaps three generations after the foundation of the colony; while at Athens, Corinth, Argos and Eretria – four of the most famous poleis – the agora becomes recognisable only in the sixth century.

Neither of these approaches is satisfactory, in that they do not touch on the core of the polis, the *koinōnia*, and neither offers the possibility of understanding the nature of society between the fall of the palaces and the rise of the polis. For long it was held that early Greece had an Indo-European ‘tribal’ structure, with Morgan-style gentile groups sharing property, and evolving into the State through the decline of the family (Fustel de Coulanges 1980 [1864]; only slightly modified by Francotte 1907, 96–105; Glotz 1929, 18–32). Many of the excesses of this view were quite rapidly shed, but the tribal myth, with an evolution from kinship to politics as the organising principle, on the lines of the blood-to-soil argument of classical evolutionist anthropology, has only recently been exploded (Roussel 1976; Bourriot 1976; Donlan 1985; Finley 1985b, 90–3). The supposed tribal survivals in the Classical poleis of the fifth and fourth centuries have been shown to have been absent in the seventh and sixth centuries, and not to appear at all in the looser ethnos states, commonly assumed to have been less developed and hence more ‘tribal’. As Snodgrass points out (1980, 25–6), this makes the problem of understanding Dark Age social organisation that of the archaeologist.

In early Greece, the archaeological record almost always means the archaeology of graves. Archaeologists of all schools are agreed that burials should be studied in the light of settlement and cult evidence; but, for much of the Dark Age, such evidence is scarce indeed. This imbalance in the archaeological record will be a problem familiar to archaeologists working in many parts of the world.

The main body of this book is given over to the analysis of the archaeological evidence. In the first part, I attempt to formulate explicit theories of the complex relationships between burial and society, and to demonstrate their relevance to early Greece. It will be argued that burials are to be treated as the material remains of self-representations of social structure through the agency of ceremony. My method in the second part of the book is to begin with a full study of the material available from Attica, the united town and countryside of Athens. Athens was perhaps rarely typical of the poleis, but provides not only the bulk of the literary evidence, but also the fullest archaeological sequence. The Attic data have been quite fully studied, and the chronology is relatively fine grained. Further, the consistent use of single burial allows a more refined analysis. By tracing changes through time in the structure of the funerary record and analysing these in the light of the literary evidence, it may be possible to follow the emergence of the polis. I propose to show that the idea of the state of the citizens emerged in the mid-eighth century, but that Athens was different from the other early Greek states, and returned to a social structure we might label ‘pre-political’ around 700 BC. The funerary evidence supports the widely held assumption, based on the accounts of Herodotus and Aristotle, that the citizen estate made a rather sudden appearance at Athens in the last decade of the sixth century as a consequence of Cleisthenes’ reforms, but I will further argue that this legislation only represents the formal recognition of long-term changes in political and social thought in sixth-century Attica.

The argument

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The propositions will be justified by asking questions which are answerable from the archaeological evidence. I will first try to show that formal burial within spatially defined cemeteries was considered a primary symbol of the social group monopolising full membership of the community, through lineal descent from the dead. It will then be argued that throughout the Dark Age, formal burial of this type was limited to a restricted age and rank group which, using the terminology of the early Greek poets, I will call the *agathoi* (the 'good men'); that this system of ideas was overturned c.750 BC, but only briefly; that a reaction had set in by the early seventh century, with a return to the limited use of formal burial; and that the burying group widened during the sixth century, but that the pattern of Classical Athenian funerary behaviour was established only c.510 BC.

The proposals of archaeologically invisible disposal for parts of the population and the link between formal burial and full membership of the community might seem surprising, but I hope to show that both have a firm evidential basis. In the final part of the book, it will be suggested that the widening of the burying group c.750 BC was part of a panhellenic trend, which, in the light of other evidence, must be seen as the rise of the polis concept, whereby (probably for the first time in history) state organisation was founded on the principle of citizenship. It will be argued that the radical transformation of the community in the eighth century should probably be understood as the result of the struggle of dependent peasants against a Dark Age aristocracy. The extent to which relations of dominance were overturned varied from one polis to another; at Athens, it seems that the nobility successfully reasserted themselves after 700 BC. Ultimately, the old-fashioned type of polity was unable to succeed; the struggles of the seventh and sixth centuries eventually tipped the balance decisively towards the polis concept, recognised in the far-reaching reforms effected by Cleisthenes.

The proposition of changes in the membership of the cemeteries has been arrived at through consideration of the *structure* rather than the *content* of the archaeological record. Instead of comparing forms of burial customs through time and space, it will be possible to trace changes in the principles which guided funerary behaviour and in the concept of the community. The use of role theory and componential analysis, outlined in Chapters 2 and 5, allows an advance beyond purely empirical considerations. Previous studies have been primarily descriptive or chronological in aim, mainly because of a failure to formulate explicit theories linking the observable data with the behaviour which produced them. I will begin by considering such theories on a general level, and will then move on to primary literary and iconographical evidence which can be used to support the relevance of the models to this particular case.

This diachronic, contextual approach to the archaeological evidence has its roots in some of the recent criticisms of the nomothetic goals of the New Archaeology as well as in historical practice. The 'post-processual' archaeologists have stressed the importance of the particular situation in understanding the material record, but so far there has been little closely argued empirical research to follow up the reaction against the positions of the 1970s. Most studies have been very short papers, often in the Cambridge *New directions in archaeology* series. One notable exception is Richard Bradley's *The social foundations*

of prehistoric Britain (1984): but even here, the huge subject – nearly four millennia of British prehistory – meant that Bradley could not present his researches in very much depth. I hope that the present book may partly fill the gap.

There is some danger here of falling between two or even three stools, in that the theoretical and methodological perspectives of ancient historians, prehistorians and Classical archaeologists tend to be very different (Snodgrass 1977, 2–7; 1985), but I will try to write in a manner comprehensible on both sides of what Renfrew (1980) has called the ‘Great Divide’. Neither ancient historians nor Classical archaeologists have made much use of the advances in archaeological theory and method of the last quarter-century. This is an unfortunate situation, given the great quantity of archaeological evidence available from the Mediterranean civilisations, and the general excellence of the typological and chronological studies. When rigorous theory has been applied to these vast bodies of data, as for the Aegean Bronze Age, there have been significant results (e.g. Renfrew 1972; 1985). Processual archaeologists wishing to test laws may find the Mediterranean a congenial climate, particularly given the sometimes rich literary evidence from Classical Greece and Rome; while ancient historians and Classical archaeologists will learn much to their advantage from closer study of the methods of prehistoric archaeology. A rapprochement can only be to the benefit of all parties.

The Early Iron Age in Greece

I will use the rest of this chapter to provide a background for the study of the burials. First, a brief description of the chronological system and its limitations is in order, and after this, a summary of normative burial forms, for those unfamiliar with the archaeology. The chapter closes with an overview of developments in the eleventh to sixth centuries, and a discussion of the literary sources. Much is disputed in this period, and the account given at this stage will be a very bare one, intended merely to allow those new to Greek history to orient themselves.

Chronology

The chronological system for the Early Iron Age is based on pottery styles. There are many problems in the conventional dating, and, since absolute chronology is often important in the arguments of Chapters 4–7, I will discuss some of the difficulties here at the outset.

The dates given to Athenian vases derive from the fundamental path-breaking studies of J.M. Cook (1934/5), Desborough (1952), Coldstream (1968) and others, and for the sixth and fifth centuries from the connoisseurship of Beazley. The studies have been largely stylistic, with little stratigraphical basis (often because no adequate stratified sequence existed). A few ‘fixed point’ synchronisms have been established, and the ceramic sequences have been stretched between these to make a continuous sequence. The standard periodisations for the Attic sequence and the accepted absolute dates are shown in table 1.

Athens was not the only production centre for fine pottery in the Aegean, and other regions had their own sequences. Inevitably, the overall picture is complex and often confusing. Figure 3 summarises some of the main local chronologies. The relative dates