

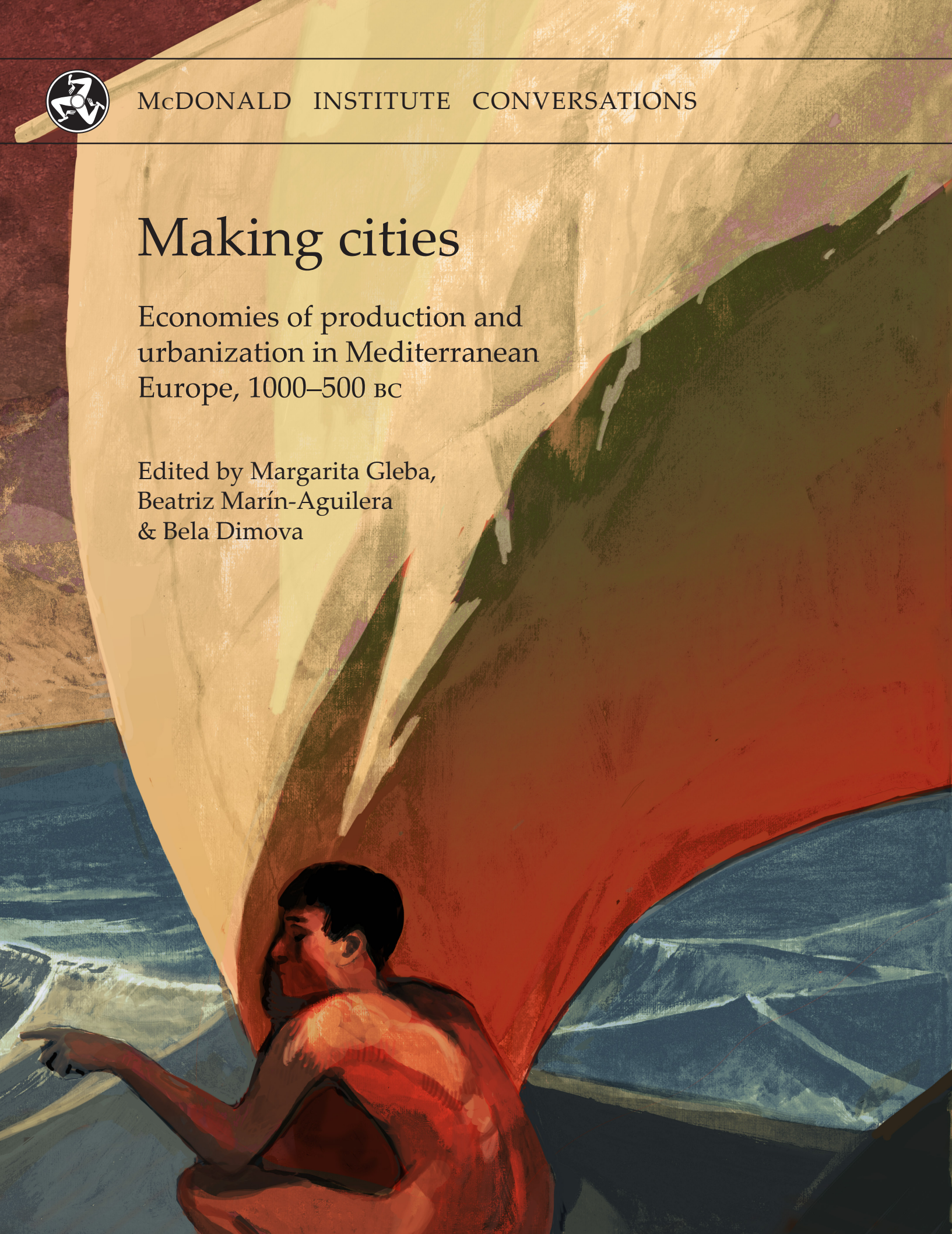


McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

Making cities

Economies of production and
urbanization in Mediterranean
Europe, 1000–500 BC

Edited by Margarita Gleba,
Beatriz Marín-Aguilera
& Bela Dimova



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with contributions from

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Chapter 7

Production, urbanization, and the rise of Athens in the Archaic period

Robin Osborne

Although evidence survives from a number of different production sites, particularly in the form of remains of metal-working, quarrying and the firing of ceramics, the vast majority of evidence for production in the Archaic Greek world comes from the produced object. But while the produced object can tell us a lot about how it was produced, and its findspot a lot about how it was consumed, turning such data into an understanding of the place of production within the economic and social life of the producing community is highly problematic. For to do that, we have to put every produced object in the context of every other object produced *or consumed* in the same society. The differential survival of different objects makes this the tallest of orders.

In this chapter, I attempt to by-pass this problem. Rather than looking for direct evidence for the economy in the evidence of what was produced and consumed, I look to the changing settlement pattern in Archaic Attica (where Attica is the name for the geographical region in which Athens lies and which became the city-state of Athens), and use the changing pottery record from those sites in order to deduce from those changing settlement patterns the changing ways in which the local economy was structured. My argument is that changes of settlement pattern give a good indication of the nature of local networks, and that local networks tell us about economic priorities as well as about social and political ties. This is a paper which tries to distinguish between different possible models of economic, social and political life, acknowledging that our data is thin, and far from randomly selected, and looking to make the most of the opportunities which its spatial distribution offers.¹

Athens and Attica are both good and bad places to undertake this exercise. They are good because the ceramic history of Athens and Attica has been relatively well studied (with some reservations to which I shall

return), and because in comparative terms we have a lot of textual evidence (i.e. we have Solon's poems and a significant epigraphic record, including material from both mortuary and sanctuary contexts). In principle therefore, we have a quite different sort of evidence against which to 'test' our interpretation of the archaeological record. They are bad places, however, because many of the richest archaeological sites are inadequately published (including the Athenian Acropolis and sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron on the east coast of Attica) and because, although the rescue archaeology record is abundant, its publication is always partial. There is only so much that can be done with the detailed archaeological record when that is a record that comes from the Athenian Kerameikos, the Athenian Agora and the west cemetery at Eleusis. Unsurprisingly, the most detailed archaeological histories of Archaic Athens are histories of its burial practices, but however rich those may be for Athenian social history (and this is itself a matter of on-going discussion), the history of burial practices is not obviously a good way into the history of the Athenian economy.²

What follows is a high-risk exercise, an attempt to tell a story not about a particular site but about a whole region. I see no alternative: if there was ever a time and place when site catchment analysis could reveal the whole economic life of a site, that is, could reveal all the sites of production and of consumption, neither Athens nor any other site in Attica settled in the Archaic period can be considered to be that place and that time. The economic history of any site in the Archaic period is going to be a history that can be understood only if we see that site, whether the site is a building in a settlement or a whole settlement, in its wider context.

I take two data sets, neither of which can claim to be complete, in my attempt to understand Archaic Athenian economic history: the first is the changing

Table 7.1. *Sites in Attica, late eleventh to seventh century BC.*

Period	No. of known sites
Late eleventh and tenth century	14
Ninth century	14
'Geometric'	23
Eighth century	53
Seventh century	57

pattern of archaeological sites, the second the pattern of pottery consumption.

The settlement history of early Iron Age Attica is relatively clear (Table 7.1; Figs. 7.1–7.4).³ I count 14 sites that have occupation during the later eleventh or tenth century; 10 of those sites and four others with occupation during the ninth century; another 23 additional sites which can be dated only by pottery defined no more precisely than 'Geometric' (15 of these do not have pottery that can be precisely dated to either ninth or eighth centuries); a total of 53 sites during the eighth century and some 57 sites during the seventh century. In terms of numbers, although the material dated to no more precisely than 'Geometric' (i.e. either ninth or eighth century) may mask a less abrupt change, we see a situation of step-change: settlement numbers were more or less constant from 1050 to 800 BC, more than tripled in the eighth century, and then remained constant until 600 BC.

But if, numerically, the story is of settlement take off in Attica after 800 BC, that story is not consistent across space. There is no human presence in the tenth or ninth centuries along the whole western coast of Attica south of Mounychia hill in the Peiraeus. That is, an area which, in the Classical period, saw a whole string of moderately sized villages that, on the basis of their bouletic quotas (see further below), can be reckoned to constitute a sixth of the Athenian population, gives no evidence at all of human presence in the period 1000–800 BC. Apart from the area around Athens itself and the northern part of the plain of Athens at Acharnai, it is the plain of Marathon, the southeast of the Mesogaia, and the harbour settlements of Thorikos in the southeast and Eleusis in the northwest alone that are occupied, with cult attention additionally devoted to gods at various mountain-tops.

The eighth century sees that west coast gap filled. Settlement thickens across the whole plain of Athens, and extends all down the west coast of Attica to Sounion. Where it does not thicken is in the north and in the centre. Eleusis remains rather isolated and, although Acharnai acquires new neighbours, the area to the north of Pendele remains unoccupied. Outside the plain of Athens settlement avoids the larger plains,

particularly the Thriasian plain and the Mesogaia, and it is striking, again in comparison with the Classical period when half a dozen villages were strung out here, that the eastern slopes of Hymettos and the adjacent plain remain empty. In the case of the Thriasian plain, where evidence is sparse at all periods, it is theoretically possible that evidence has remained undiscovered because of the geomorphological conditions. In the case of the Mesogaia the intensity of modern occupation and the presence of abundant later evidence makes it much less likely that substantial early material has gone unnoticed. Between eighth and seventh centuries there is no change of general pattern, although two sites do now appear north of Pendele.

Tenth- and ninth-century settlement in Attica seems to focus on a small number of settlements in locations made prime by the resources to which their location gave them privileged access. Eleusis commands a broad plain, but also provides a safe haven for ships and is key to important land routes west and north, as well as southeast. Acharnai commands a large plain and the foothill environment of Parnes, which in the Classical period made it famous as a source of vital charcoal, but it also stands at the cross-roads of both east–west and north–south communication routes that lead out of Attica, through the Phyle pass to Boeotia, as well as into all parts of Attica itself. Athens dominates a large plain, but has strong communication routes in all directions. Thorikos has more restricted local agricultural resources, though the neighbouring plain is not tiny and there are fertile valleys leading north, but it does have access to the Laurion area with its mineral resources which had already been exploited in prehistory; equally importantly it has a harbour offering safe haven. Brauron lies in a fertile estuary with access to wider agricultural lands inland; although it will not be important as a port later, it has more than adequate shelter for boats. Marathon commands a fertile plain, and is key to access routes to the north–east and north–west; its nearby coast would prove to have space enough for a whole Persian fleet to beach itself. Each of these settlements had its own particular religious resources: Eleusis and Brauron have their own sanctuaries from the start; Marathon links with Agrieleki above; Thorikos develops significant cult activity of its own, almost certainly including a sanctuary of Demeter – though how much of the cult activity attested by the fifth-century calendar (OR 146) was already taking place at this early date is uncertain.

There are two observations to make about these sites. First, none of them needs resources from anywhere else: whether in fact independent and self-sufficient or not, these are sites that could operate independently; this is worth stressing since it means

that these are sites that have no greater interest in forming links within Attica than they would have with forming links outside Attica. Second, and in contrast to this, they are all sites that connect, whether by land or by sea: these are all places easy to reach. Local resources may provide them with the security of knowing that they can survive without a wider world, but they have not turned their backs on that world. All the signs are, indeed, that they exploit their position, that the needs of those travelling are far from irrelevant. Although in its current form the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* comes from much later in the Archaic period, we might take as symptomatic its mention of Thorikos as the place to which pirates brought the goddess Demeter from Crete (*HHymnDemeter* 126).

All these sites are placed so as to communicate as easily with the world outside as with other settlements in Attica. The implication of their placement is surely that being part of a wider network is crucial. Whereas François de Polignac (1985/1995; 1994) thought of sanctuaries on the edge as marking borders, as telling neighbours to go away, since *we* worship *our* gods here, we might think of these sanctuaries on the edge as, on the contrary, inviting interaction – as the Eleusinian Mysteries explicitly did by opening themselves up to all Greeks.

The apparently dramatic change in the settlement of Attica in the eighth century sees settlement fill out around each of the sites prominent earlier, except Eleusis. Compared to the modest expansion seen around Acharnai, Brauron, Marathon or Thorikos, however, the number of additional settlements around and to the south of Athens itself is of a different order of magnitude. Something peculiar is happening here. The differential spread of settlements seems unlikely to be a product of differential natural increase: there must be some population movement involved here, whether this involves movement from other Athenian communities or from outside Attica.

Once more, two contrasting aspects of the spread of settlements must be stressed. The first is that there was clearly some advantage in being close to an existing centre. There is a clear preference for new sites to be closer to, rather than further from, existing settlements. All the pre-existing sites seem to have been able to offer services, whether those services were economic, religious or social, that made it attractive to stay near them. But the second feature to stress is the opposite, that it was as good to be *close* to an existing settlement as to be actually in it. It is not that Athens itself, that is settlement within the area later surrounded by the Themistoklean wall, did not grow, but however much urban density increased, suburban and periurban density increased also. The advantages of the existing

centres could be enjoyed at a distance – and in the case of Athens itself, at a greater distance than for the other centres. That is, the spread of settlement implies that one did not have to be in Athens itself, or any of the centres, all day, every day, to enjoy the advantages of association with the community. What happened within the town of Athens must be seen in relation to what went on around it.

There are two questions that we want to answer. The first is, what were the attractions that these centres offered that might be enjoyed at a distance? The second is why Athens was even more attractive, in terms of the greater extent of the settlement clustering around it, than the other centres. The very fact that the advantages of the centres could be enjoyed at a distance implies that those attractions were not the attractions of employment, nor the attractions of making trading one's main occupation.

It is a further clue to what the attractions might be that Athens proves the most attractive centre. For Athens' position was not prime if what one wanted to do was to prioritize relations with a wider Greek world – Thorikos, Brauron, Marathon or indeed Eleusis, could do that better. Any of those places might have been the Lefkandi, or at least the Oropos, of Attica. Athens' position was actually prime if, and only if, what mattered was accessing Attica itself. Athens' great advantage was that, at any point when the other communities and residents of the region of Attica decided to work co-operatively, Athens would necessarily be the centre of the hub. The greater attraction of Athens in the eighth century, when it comes to settling nearby, indicates either that it had become inevitable that the communities in the region of Attica would work together, or, more plausibly, that the communities of this region had already decided to work together.

But why should the communities of the region of Attica decide to work together? In principle, the reasons might be political, socio-political or economic. The communities presumably decided to work together either because they would not be able to continue as they were unless they did, or because they saw more opportunities created by working together than they would enjoy if they carried on separately. So were the communities of Attica under threat? Both soldiers and ships, including fighting that involves ships, appear on Attic Geometric pottery (Ahlberg 1971).⁴ Gudrun Ahlberg, who studied these scenes, argued that they should be considered scenes of reality, rather than of myth, while also acknowledging the iconographic influence of Near Eastern art, to which in particular she attributed 'the astonishingly brutal and bloodthirsty character' of the scenes (Ahlberg 1971, 110). But Ahlberg's categories are too restrictive: the imagination

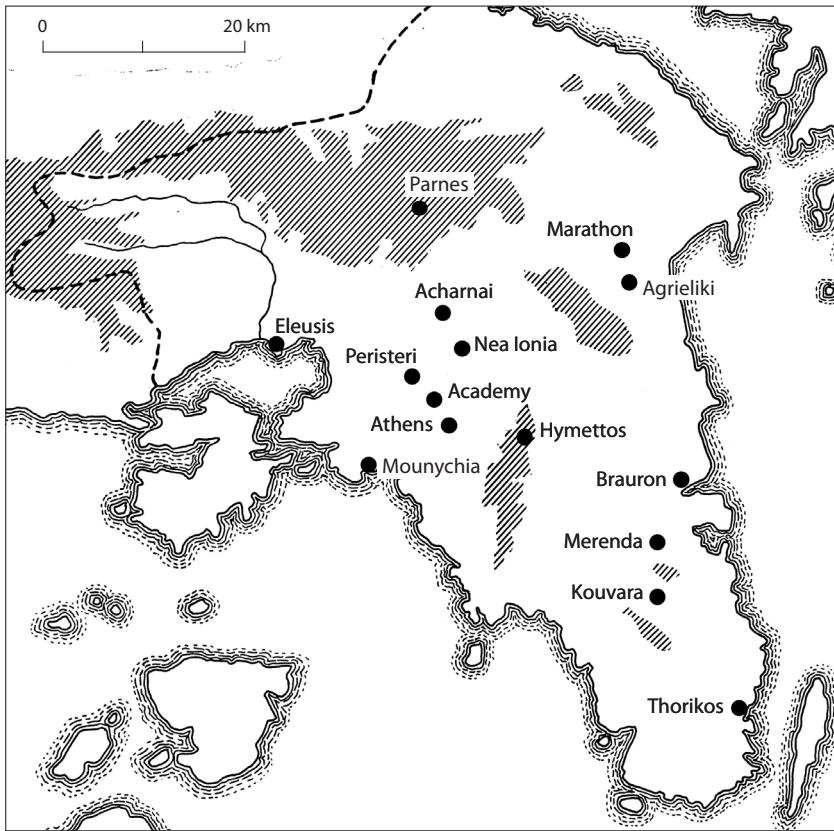


Figure 7.1. Attica, 1050–900 BC.

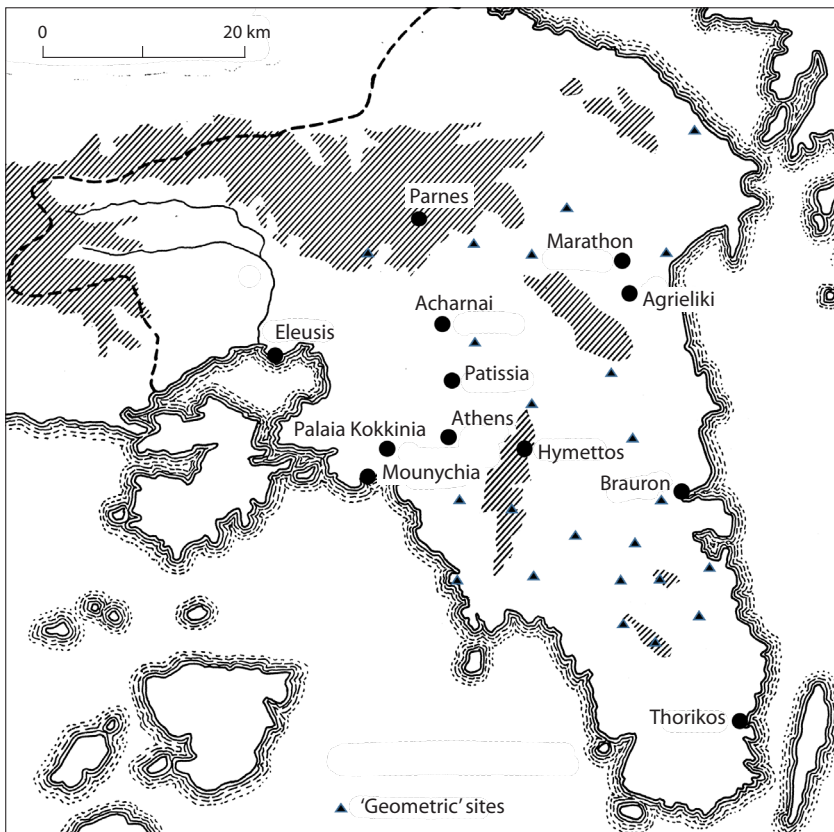


Figure 7.2. Attica, 900–800 BC.

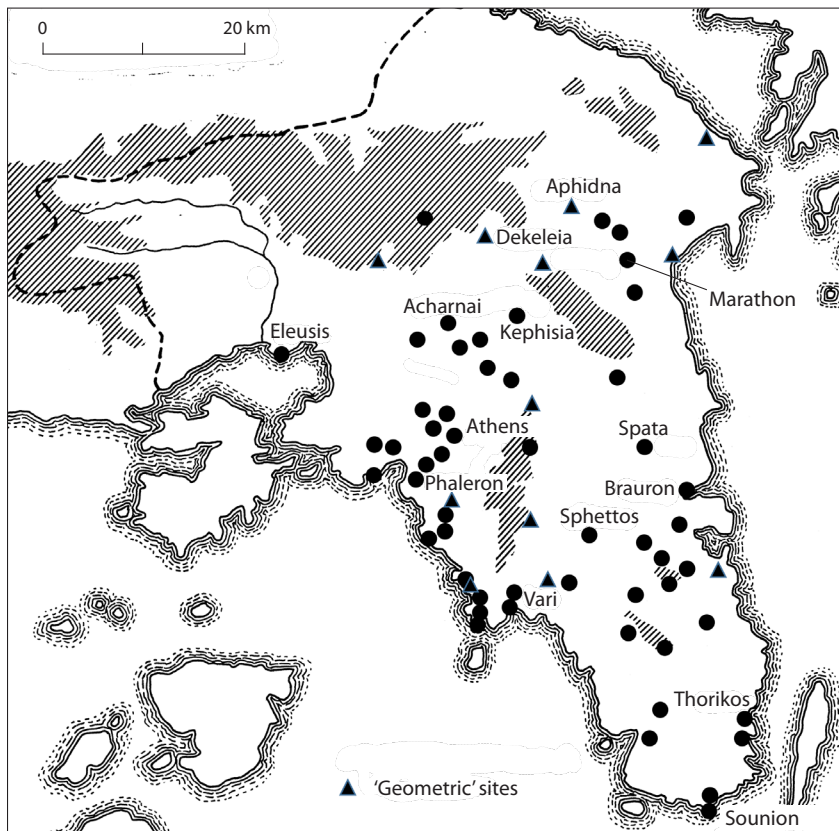


Figure 7.3. Attica, 800–700 BC.

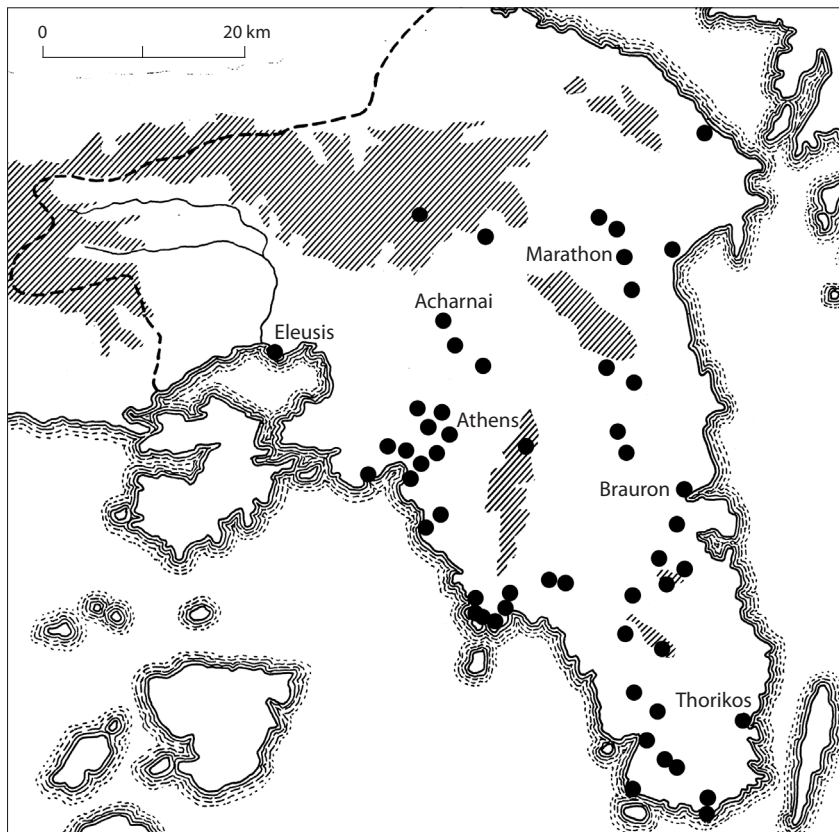


Figure 7.4. Attica, 700–600 BC.

may well have been allowed to play freely, unconstrained by myth (not least if inspired by Near Eastern scenes). But the subject on which the imagination plays remains significant. What these images reveal is that issues of war and fighting were occupying the Athenian imagination in the later eighth century, and whether in the *symposium* or at the funeral, tales of military prowess were being rehearsed. More than that, these images show that it is the hostility of the world outside, and in particular of the world across the sea, that is flagged up for discussion, and not the opportunities that that world brings.

If it is correct to follow this hint from the imagery on late Geometric pottery and to see the decision of residents of Attica to work together as driven not by a desire to embrace the possibilities which collaboration would bring – in particular the advantages of scale – but by fear, this raises some interesting further issues. Essentially, the Athenians would be shown to be gaming – deciding to cluster in a particular centre on the basis of calculations about what others might do, and trying to ensure that others' decisions did not leave them weak. Such gaming would require that there was, even when the communities were separate, some possibility of common deliberation, deliberation which had concluded that, if they did not hang together, they would hang separately. It is worth stressing that this conclusion involved rejecting the alternative of running the risk of staying apart for the advantages that coastal locations offered – and above all the high profits that might come from engaging with the wider world. To invest most heavily in settlement clustering around Athens, a place whose particular advantage was that it gave best chance of co-ordinating all of Attica, was to settle for life dominated by agriculture; not necessarily a life as a subsistence farmer, but certainly life where farming was the dominating productive activity. Life based at Thorikos or Eleusis by contrast had offered and could offer some potentially far more lucrative resources for exploitation – but with much lower security.

That Athenians were turning inwards, not outwards, is supported by what happens to the distribution of Athenian pottery: whereas Attic Protogeometric and Middle Geometric pottery (down to c. 850 BC) is widely influential outside Attica, and whereas in the early eighth century (Middle Geometric II) 'the export of Attic pottery now reaches its highest point before the sixth century', Late Geometric and Protoattic Athenian pottery (c. 760–600 BC) not only is found almost solely in Attica and the neighbouring island of Aegina but exerts little influence on pottery production elsewhere.⁵ Much of the tenth-century settlement pattern looks set to ensure that Attic communities do not become

isolated, and the influence of Protogeometric pottery on pottery production elsewhere suggests that it succeeded in that aim; the eighth-century changes in settlement pattern suggest that there was now little concern with isolation and more concern with maximizing local advantages, and the pottery distribution bears this out with heavy local demand in Attica itself but no reach beyond the region.

The evidence from the late eighth century points strongly to the formation of a self-conscious political community centred on Athens itself. The scenes of massed mourners and of processions of chariots and soldiers found on Late Geometric pottery in the cemeteries of Athens emphasize community, rather than highlighting individual achievement. The marked reduction of instances of burial in the heart of the Athens itself, and the concentration of burial in cemeteries around the city rim, points to the ordering and organization of urban space. And the marked increase in numbers of burials, not simply from Athens itself but also from Attica, must mark widespread, if temporary, inclusion in archaeologically visible burial.⁶ All of these are signs that those who lived in and around Athens were acting in a co-ordinated way that must manifest political community. The political changes created a widespread demand to display status and distinction, certainly at the moment of death but arguably also in life (one might point to the competition at *symposia* that is attested by the earliest Athenian writing of any length, the graffito on the Dipylon *oinochoe*, offering the vessel as a prize for impressive dancing). At the same time the 'increasing abundance of pottery' in Attica in the late eighth century, which Nicholas Coldstream found so 'striking' (1968/2008, 360), is an abundance of pottery being consumed locally, and suggests that there was a high degree of regional cultural identity. Whether this cultural identity itself involved political unity is harder to determine.

The settlement pattern of Attica changed little between the eighth and seventh centuries BC, but other aspects of Athenian archaeology changed markedly, in particular the repertoire of pot shapes and pot decoration, and the funerary record. The usual way of expressing what happens in the pottery is that it 'orientalizes', that is, various decorative motifs associated with products from parts east are adopted, and in general the geometric formality and stiffness are abandoned for much more free-flowing and curvilinear styles of drawing, that apply alike to figurative decoration and to surrounding patterns. But although such 'orientalizing' appears widely across Greek pottery in this period, it is certainly not a product of some new awareness of the nature of eastern art. Artefacts which displayed this style to the Greeks had long circulated

in the Greek world, but they had rarely been imitated.⁷ Now their hour came. In Attica, it came along with a turn to mythological scenes. Scholars have debated to what extent particular myths were depicted in Athenian Geometric art, where mythical creatures (in particular centaurs) are certainly shown, but the repertoire of myth found in Protoattic pottery was certainly new – Perseus and the Gorgons, the blinding of Polyphemos, the encounter between Herakles and Nessos. Although there had been fights with lions and other wild creatures on Geometric pots, with this figuring of encounters with particular instantiations of the monstrous Athenian pot painters introduced a new agenda to Athenian pottery.

Along with the new agenda on pottery go markedly different burial customs – at least in some places. The inhumation that was general in the eighth century BC is replaced in Athens itself and at Vari, Vourva and Marathon (that is, in a band running east to west across Attica from Marathon to Athens itself, plus one outlier at the southern tip of Hymettos) by primary cremation, a practice plausibly adopted from Euboea; instead of goods being deposited in the grave, goods are deposited in offering trenches; and those goods are no longer simply pots, etc., which have other utilitarian purposes, but include objects specifically made for funerary use; overall the number of archaeologically visible burials drops dramatically. There had already been marked difference from cemetery to cemetery in the eighth century, both within Athens itself (one only has to think of the extraordinary set of large marker vases from the Dipylon cemetery), and across Attica, where ‘each major site in Attica had its own distinctive burial form’ (Morris 1987, 195); but the division between the seventh-century burials was more absolute (primary cremation is not found in the large cemeteries of Merenda, Thorikos, Phaleron and Eleusis – though the last of these sites has produced only a child cemetery with *enchytrismos* burials), and where primary cremation was practised, the funerary ceremonial involved will have made every burial a moment of distinction.⁸

There is some reason for thinking that that distinction was maintained in ceramic terms also. The work of Theodora Rombos (1988) has revealed a distinctive workshop of Attic Geometric pottery whose products are found at Merenda and Thorikos. Famously, the Attic Geometric pots that dominate Greek art textbooks, the monumental Late Geometric *amphorae* and kraters from the Dipylon cemetery, come *only* from the Dipylon cemetery. They are distinctive not only in their size but also in their iconography, with a remarkably high proportion of images of rowed ships on surviving fragments.

In the seventh century BC, some offering trenches at the Kerameikos have only Corinthian pottery and some have none, and while the overall proportion of Corinthian vessels in the Kerameikos is just under 20 per cent, the proportion at Phaleron and Vari is in the region of 25 per cent, and at Kallithea over 30 per cent. At Thorikos, the proportion of Corinthian pottery in burials does not make 10 per cent, but at the votive deposit at one of the late Helladic tombs it was, down to 550 BC, the Corinthian *aryballos* that was the dedication of choice (Devillers 1988). No other assemblage resembles that at the Menidhi *tholos*, where of around 40 pots 13 are Attic *louteria*, one of them signed by Sophilos.

Two sorts of distinction seem to be involved here. One is local – adopting or not adopting what Athens is doing; insisting on organizing the dead one’s own way. The other is social, within a locality – marking oneself off from others, or indeed conforming to the particular pattern of the group with whom one associates oneself by the pots one chooses to deposit in a grave or dedicate to a supernatural power. Neither distinctive burial practices nor distinctive choices of grave goods are new – there are reasons for thinking that in eighth century Attica some chose goods that imitated the modes of depiction found on material imported from parts east and others deliberately eschewed them, and there were certainly social distinctions maintained by e.g. the decision to deposit metal goods in a tomb (see further, Osborne 2019). However, these local and social distinctions take a different form in the seventh century BC, and their continuity should not obscure the larger pattern of change over time.

The change from the eighth to the seventh century BC is so dramatic at Athens, in both the pottery and the funerary record, that it is hard to think that either the way that the Athenians represented the world to themselves or the way in which they presented themselves to the world were unchanged – for all that, there is almost no change in settlement pattern. That there may have been dramatic changes is further suggested by developments that begin late in the seventh century – the advent, for instance, at the very end of the century, of monumental statues both as votives and, more or less uniquely in the Greek world, as grave markers (D’Onofrio 1982). These indicate significant expenditure on monuments which were designed to be noticed, and to draw notice to the deceased commemorated or the individual responsible for the dedication. The historical traditions (reflected, for instance, in the account given in the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* 2 of the backgrounds to Solon’s reforms) that hold that Athenian society was sharply divided between the rich and the poor in c. 600 BC fit comfortably with this archaeological picture.

If Athens had assumed predominance in the eighth century BC because of a concern for security, the turn inwards also had economic effects. While we have insufficient evidence to characterize the economy of the tenth and ninth centuries other than speculatively, it seems not unreasonable to speculate that the Attic communities poised to look out – into the Saronic Gulf or across the Cyclades – took full advantage of chance. Although hard evidence is limited to a small number of finds on the Athenian Acropolis, and whatever it was from which some makers of gold diadems borrowed their ‘orientalizing’ style of animal representation, chance no doubt brought them Greek and non-Greek traders, offering goods that might be as desirable for their future exchange value as for their current utility (we might compare the ‘trinkets’ (*athurmata*) traded by the Phoenicians who kidnap Eumaios in the *Odyssey*). Chance offered opportunities for sudden enrichment. By contrast, in seventh-century Athens little will have happened by chance; the climate ensured that some agricultural years were good, others markedly poor, but those who owned larger properties took a larger share of the gains in years of abundance and had greater security in years of dearth. Athens seems to have established a reputation for high-quality olive oil at an early date (judging by the distribution of so-called ‘SOS *amphorae*’), but the market for quality oil is not likely to have been particularly volatile; since oil stores relatively well, poor years of olive production have a less severe effect on prices than do poor grain harvests. The striking fact that Athens plays no part in stories of the establishment of Greek settlements abroad in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, which is often interpreted as being about Athenian politics, might rather be interpreted to be about the Athenian economy. Those who were not looking for opportunities to profit by chance, but were concentrating on establishing stable agricultural wealth, were never going to be quick to take opportunities to settle abroad. Mismanagement aside, there is every reason to think that the rich in Athens in the seventh century got steadily richer. The decision to focus on Athens was a decision which linked wealth more or less exclusively to land ownership.

There is little doubt that something dramatic happened in Athens around the year 600 BC. In our literary sources, best represented by the fourth-century *Constitution of the Athenians* written by a pupil of Aristotle, this is reflected in the claims made about Solon, *archon* in 594, claims that simply assume the political unity of Attica at this point. In the archaeological record, it is reflected in a very much richer sixth-century than seventh-century pattern of building, religious dedication and grave monument, and by a massive increase

in the production, and particularly the export, of Athenian pottery. But what happened to settlement in Attica has long been obscure. The recording of archaeological material has not made it easy to distinguish sixth-century from later material, and only in some particular cases can we securely date activity to the sixth century. The best evidence for the development of the settlement pattern in Attica between 600 and 500 BC comes, in fact, not from archaeology, but from the distribution of Kleisthenic *demes* (Fig. 7.5).

The political reforms of Kleisthenes involved formally recognizing 139 separate communities in Attica (a handful within the town of Athens, the rest in the countryside) and giving them representation on a new Council of 500. Because each community (*deme*) had a quota of representatives on the Council, and because the total had to be exactly 500, we can be reasonably confident that the *demes* we know of from the fifth and fourth centuries were the *demes* that Kleisthenes recognized.⁹ For all that, to compare the Kleisthenic *deme* map to the archaeological distribution of seventh-century sites is not to compare like with like, it effectively shows the crucial settlement change: occupation fills in the upper plain of Athens – along the modern national highway past Marousi (ancient *Athmonon*) and Kephisia – in the eastern foothills of Hymettos, where there are a whole string of major settlements – Pallene, the Paianias, Sphettos – and in and around the Thriasian plain. All are areas that are marginally sub-prime. The eastern foothills of Hymettos, and the upper plain of Athens leading in to the lower slopes of Pendele have thinner soils than the lower plain of Athens or the southern Mesogaia; the Thriasian plain seems to have been liable to be waterlogged in winter. But they are only *marginally* sub-prime. Bringing them into cultivation will have required a certain amount of prior investment, but that investment had a high chance of being repaid. The story that Athenians do not settle abroad because they engage instead in what has been termed ‘inward colonization’, a story that does not fit the seventh century, fits the sixth.

But who was doing this ‘inward colonization’, and why? Here again we have to look to non-archaeological evidence. This comes in two forms. One is the evidence provided by what we can deduce about patterns of landholding in Classical Athens. The upshot of two simultaneous but independent attempts, by myself and Lin Foxhall, to establish the pattern of landholding, and subsequent discussion by Ian Morris, is that the distribution of land-holding in Classical Athens was remarkably egalitarian (Osborne 2010, 137 for further references). Very large estates are unattested in Classical Attica, even though we do know Athenians with

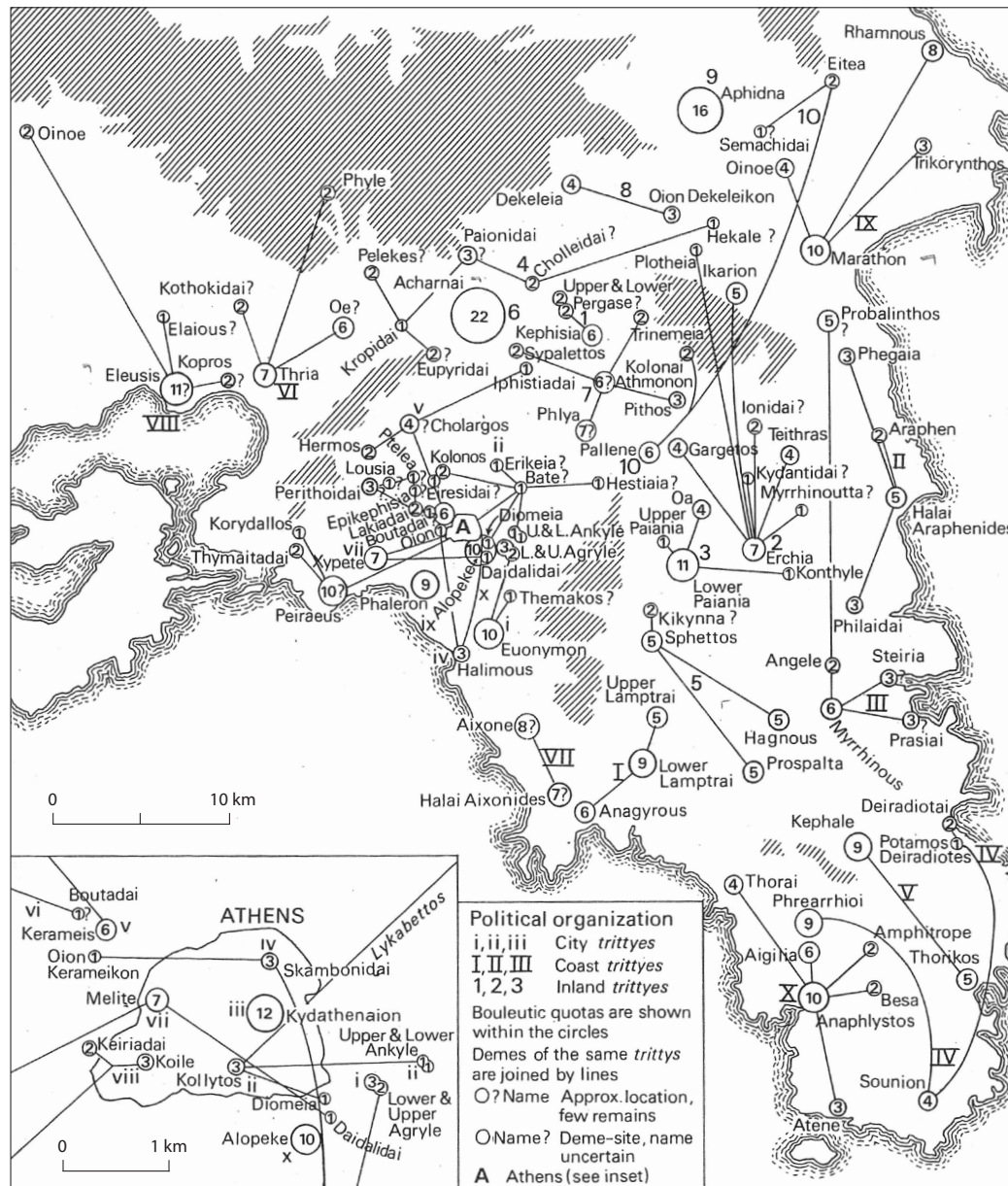


Figure 7.5. Attica 600–500 BC (after J.S. Traill, *The Political Organisation of Attica* (Princeton, 1975), map 2).

very large estates abroad. The second form of evidence is the poetry of Solon, in which he defended his own legislative action, and in which he claims to have ‘freed the black earth, once enslaved’ by removing boundary stones.¹⁰ What exactly this poetic image refers to (it does not allow us to distinguish between working the land, settling on it or owning it) is unclear, but it seems likely that we are either dealing with some sort of redistribution of land ownership or at least with removing some restrictions on the availability of land for cultivation. Between the two of them, these pieces of evidence suggest that we should imagine the expansion

into marginal land in Attica in the sixth century to have been carried out by, and to the benefit of, less well-off Athenians, who thereby managed to establish for themselves a viable agricultural base. Whether or not it was in fact the case that in the seventh-century the Athenian ‘poor were enslaved to the rich’, as the fourth-century author of the *Constitution of the Athenians* suggests (2.2), Athenians of the Classical period clearly thought that the relatively egalitarian property distribution they observed in their own time needed explanation, and looked to Solon to explain it (cf. *Constitution of the Athenians* 5.1, 6.1).

The spread of settlement during the sixth century BC certainly indicates that agriculture continued to be fundamental to the Athenian economy – as indeed the persistence of the Kleisthenic *demes* indicates that it would go on being during the Classical period, despite the claims made by some modern scholars.¹¹ But this does not mean that the only economically and socially significant activity was farming. Athenian fine pottery can, I think, tell another story. As early as the early sixth century, we can show that the works of different Athenian potters and painters were differently distributed across the Greek world (Osborne 1996). Markets knew what there was to buy, and what it was that they needed. Although the economic importance of pottery itself should not be underestimated, this distribution pattern depends upon sixth-century Athens being deeply embedded in a trade network in which pottery will have been only one of many types of items.

The settlement pattern's indication of an Attic network, together with the ceramic record's indication of both local distinction and insertion in a Mediterranean market, suggest an Athens emerging as a community large and diverse enough for its members to create demand for distinctive goods – goods that marked out wealth, for sure, but also marked particular claims to identity, made in part in relation to goods from other parts of the world. That demand could be satisfied by accessing goods from elsewhere (Corinthian pots), but it also selected local production differentiated not only in form and style but also in quality (the Acropolis and the Menidhi *tholos* tomb alike are marked by the high quality of painted pottery dedicated there; the votives at Thorikos are, by contrast, poor). By the middle of the sixth century sculpture, too, was offering a means of distinction, and once more the Athenian Acropolis led the way, with the extraordinary sequence not only of *korai* but of equestrian statues, modified *kouroi* (one carrying a calf, one wearing a *chiton* and *himation*) and other figures, which far outclassed anything that Eleusis, whose *korai* are all under life-sized, or indeed Sounion, despite its early flourish of monumental *kouroi*, could match.¹² Such differentiation is the mark of an urban community since it depends on density of social relations, not merely on a size of population.

What happened in eighth-century Attica may well have been enabled by the outward-looking past, which established, for instance, a far-flung market for Athenian oil marked by SOS *amphorae*. But arguably what drove Athenian production (not just of pottery but, we might speculate, of other goods of distinction, including textiles), and indeed ended by putting it in a position to dominate the central Mediterranean, as Attic black-figure pottery in the sixth century will do,

was the demand created by a community that was not just unusually large, but was also simultaneously keen to identify as a single, but increasingly differentiated, community. We see the tensions of that differentiation in the political history of the late seventh and sixth centuries, but we see its economic effects in the range, variety and quality of sixth-century Athenian pottery. Whatever the Athenians thought they were doing in the eighth century, it turned out to be a matter of *reculer pour mieux sauter*.

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Notes

- 1 I revisit here the material which I have discussed in Osborne 2018, but my emphasis in this discussion is rather different.
- 2 The most ambitious account of Athenian burial practices in the Archaic period remains Morris 1987, about which see Osborne 1989 and 2009, 68–82.
- 3 I use as a database the material collected by D'Onofrio 1995, updating and correcting Osborne 1989 and Morris 1987. This database is in need of further up-dating, but is sufficiently robust for the purposes of my analysis here.
- 4 Fourteen out of 15 examples of fighting on land in Greek Geometric pottery, and 12 out of 13 examples of fighting involving ships, are from Athens (the other two from Argos); all 14 Attic scenes of fighting on land, and 10 of the 12 scenes of fighting involving ships come from the late Geometric period. Statistics from Ahlberg 1971, 107.
- 5 For Attic Protogeometric and its influence see Coldstream 1968/2008, 336; Boardman 1998, 15; for Middle Geometric Coldstream 1968/2008, 344–5, 348–9 (quotation); for Late Geometric Coldstream 1968/2008, 360–1. For the distribution of Protoattic pottery see Morris 1983.
- 6 All of this has long been known and documented; the classic analysis is Morris 1987; for further discussion see Osborne 1989; 1996–2008, 68–77.
- 7 I discuss these issues further in Osborne 2019.
- 8 On differences between Geometric burials across Attica see Morris 1987, 195. For seventh-century burial see especially Houby-Nielsen 1996, 44–6 n.16, and more generally Houby-Nielsen 1992; Whitley 1994; D'Onofrio 2017, 260–1.
- 9 For further discussion of the possibility of post-Kleisthenic change see Osborne 1996/2009, 278–88.
- 10 Solon frg. 36, quoted by Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 12.4; for further discussion see Osborne 1996/2009, 204–13.

- 11 In my view it is impossible to understand how Athens and Attica sustained the density of population that we know them to have sustained in the fifth and fourth centuries if we adopt the low figures for agricultural productivity argued for by Moreno 2007.
- 12 Data usefully collected by Karakasi 2003, tables 10 and 14.

Abbreviation

OR = Osborne, R. & P.J. Rhodes (eds.), 2017. *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478–404 BC*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Making cities

Large and complex settlements appeared across the north Mediterranean during the period 1000–500 BC, from the Aegean basin to Iberia, as well as north of the Alps. The region also became considerably more interconnected. Urban life and networks fostered new consumption practices, requiring different economic and social structures to sustain them. This book considers the emergence of cities in Mediterranean Europe, with a focus on the economy. What was distinctive about urban lifeways across the Mediterranean? How did different economic activities interact, and how did they transform power hierarchies? How was urbanism sustained by economic structures, social relations and mobility? The authors bring to the debate recently excavated sites and regions that may be unfamiliar to wider (especially Anglophone) scholarship, alongside fresh reappraisals of well-known cities. The variety of urban life, economy and local dynamics prompts us to reconsider ancient urbanism through a comparative perspective.

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