

I Introduction

I. 1. The Eighth Century BC¹

The significance of the eighth century for the formation of Greek civilisation and statehood has been a subject of constant discussion in recent decades. It has been considered to be a crucial period in early Greek history – almost the moment at which Greece re-emerged after the collapse of the Bronze Age Aegean civilisation in the twelfth century² – and viewed as a time when the developments of the preceding centuries combined to produce an effect equal to, or at least approaching, a structural revolution in society. Remarkable growth of the number of burials recorded from the late ninth century onwards, particularly from around the middle and in the second half of the eighth century; obvious signs of the display of wealth and status in several better-equipped graves; the growth of dedications at the cult sites and the building of the first temples; the appearance of oriental items and imitations of them among grave goods and dedications testifying the renewed contacts with the Levant as well as the desire to affirm the status by demonstrating access to exotic and precious objects; the gradual emergence of more complex settlements; and the foundation of Greek settlements in Italy and Sicily – all these features seem to indicate a growth of wealth and certain shifts in its use.³ The resumed burials and the traces of worship in the Bronze Age graves from the mid-eighth century onwards suggest an attempt to establish, culturally, contacts with supposed ancestors and thus probably the rise of interest in the supposed events of the remote past,⁴ a phenomenon paralleled in the appearance of figured scenes on Geometric pots.⁵ At the end of the century, or slightly earlier, some districts in

¹ All the dates are BC, unless otherwise stated.

² Thus the notion of the Greek renaissance of the eighth century – Coldstream 1977, 107; Hägg 1983.

³ On the importance of the eighth century see especially Starr 1961, 147 – 260; Coldstream 1977, 105 – 366; Murray 1980, 68; Snodgrass 1980, 15 – 84; Polignac 1984; Starr 1986, 23 – 33, 35 – 42; Morris 1987, especially 183 – 196; 1991, 26; 1998, 71 – 73; Morgan 1990; Osborne 1996, 70 – 136; Whitley 2001, 98 – 101, 138 – 158. On the sanctuaries see also Sourvinou-Inwood 1993; Mazarakis Ainian 1988; 1997; on the eastern exports Strøm 1990; Morris 1997, 10 – 18; on the settlements: Coldstream 1977, 303 – 316; Morris 1991, 27 – 40. See particularly on Old Smyrna: Whitley 2001, 168 – 169; on Athens: Whitley 1991, 57 – 74, 137 – 180, 5 – 198; Welwei 1992, 60 – 75; on Eretria: Mazarakis Ainian 1987; on Corinth: Roebuck 1972, Williams 1992 and Salmon 1984, 38 – 80; on Argos: Aupert 1984 and Hägg 1982.

⁴ On the tomb and hero cults (the distinction made by Antonaccio 1993; 1995, especially 6) see Coldstream 1976; Snodgrass 1980, 38 – 40; 1982; Morris 1988; Whitley 1988; 1995; Malkin 1993; Antonaccio 1993; 1994a; 1994b; 1995.

⁵ See Coldstream 1977, 341 – 357; Hurwit 1985, 106 – 124. This point depends on whether it is justified to view the scenes as representations of the heroic past (so tentatively Schade-waldt 1951, 115; Friis Johansen 1967, 17ff; Coldstream 1977, 352 – 356) or not (recently

Greece witnessed a rather sudden disappearance of these richly furnished graves, thus unifying mortuary evidence, and simultaneously an accelerating growth of dedications in the sanctuaries, suggesting that the display of wealth shifted from the private setting of the funerals to the more communal context of cult. This points to a certain change of attitudes in the society, which could be viewed as marking the rise of a communal mentality instead of the previously dominant private competition, and thus be coupled with the simultaneous emergence of the sanctuaries and temples which also presumably resulted from communal effort.

The amount and the precise nature of the change are admittedly not clear. There are proponents of a relatively gradual development of early Greece who consider the Dark Age society to have been a comparatively complex one and thus play down the significance of the eighth century changes.⁶ Recently there has been a tendency to stress the beginning of the changes already in the ninth century, also making the development which followed less radical and more predictable.⁷ And even those who point out the crucial character of the eighth century have interpreted the changes somewhat differently from one another. The partially competing conceptions of A. Snodgrass, F. Polignac and I. Morris, to recall here the perhaps most influential and widely discussed current opinions, are examples of this. The rise in the number of burials has been considered to be the result of a demographic explosion and the formation of the city state viewed as an attempt to manage the effects of growing population (so Snodgrass).⁸ Alternatively, the same data has been interpreted as a sign of the admission of common people to formal burial, from which they had been excluded earlier, indicating that the elite was losing its position to the rising lower social strata, which led to the formation of socially more egalitarian communities (Morris).⁹ Finally, the main stress has also been placed on the rise of major sanctuaries and their topography, viewing them as articulating the hegemonic and territorial claims of the embryonic states (Polignac).¹⁰ But despite these differences in interpretation, the

Snodgrass 1997; 1998, 40 – 100, especially 67ff has warned against the equation of the scenes depicted in early Greek vase painting with the subjects of the heroic poetry).

⁶ The gradualist view has been recently expressed particularly by Musti 1991; Effenterre 1985, 138 – 167; Foxhall 1995, 244 – 250. But also Morris (especially 1991) has considered the Dark Age society to have been a relatively complex one, interpreting the eighth century archaeological data as indicating a restructuring of political society: an almost revolutionary growth of political significance of the lower social strata.

⁷ Whitley 1991, 182 dates the emergence of stratified society in Athens to the ninth century. See also Osborne 1996, 40 – 51, who points out the beginnings of communal organisation in different parts of Greece not later than in the ninth century.

⁸ Snodgrass 1980, 15 – 82.

⁹ Morris 1986, 123 – 129; 1987, 8 – 9, 93 – 96 171 – 210; 1991, 40 – 49; 1997a.

¹⁰ Polignac 1984, 41 – 92. The significance of the rise of the sanctuaries is also pointed out as a central sign of polis formation by Snodgrass 1980, 52 – 63.

importance of the eighth century for the emergence (or rather re-emergence) of Greek civilisation is usually not doubted.

This archaeological evidence has regularly been combined with the data from the poetry, particularly the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Hesiodic *Works and Days*. Indeed, the composition of these poems is mostly dated to the late eighth or early seventh century,¹¹ and they are usually considered to be relatively faithful depictions of society contemporary with the poets or slightly earlier.¹² If this is true, they could provide good and reliable evidence for the realities of the supposed period of crucial social changes.¹³ The aristocratic society and competitive mentality which appears in the poems could reasonably be connected with the archaeologically visible display of wealth in the elite burials and emerging sanctuaries;¹⁴ while depictions of an organised community in the poems and the stress on social justice, which is clearer in Hesiod than in Homer, could well be viewed as reflecting the shift towards more communal attitudes at the end of the eighth century, traceable from the archaeological record.¹⁵

So the archaeological and literary evidence seems to fit together well, producing a picture of the Greek city state forming out of the accelerated development of the competitive society of the ninth and eighth centuries.¹⁶ This process has either

¹¹ The eighth century dating has been recently pointed out most vigorously by Janko 1982, 228 – 231 (linguistic arguments), Morris 1986, 91 – 94 (historical arguments), Latacz 1996, 56 – 59. The seventh century dating suggested by Burkert 1979; Van Wees 1994 138 – 146; 1994 138 – 146; West 1995; Osborne 1996, 156 – 160; Burgess 2001, 98. But see also note 118.

¹² Gschnitzer 1981, 28; Morris 1986; Donlan 1997, 40; with some reservations also Van Wees 1992, especially 53 – 58.

¹³ With the exception of Van Wees 1992; Seaford 1994, 1 – 190 and Osborne 1996, the studies of the early Greek society have almost invariably assumed that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* date from the eighth century (see for example Murray 1980, 38; Gschnitzer 1981, 28; Welwei 1983, 37; Hurwit 1985, 71 – 124; Morris 1986, 91 – 94; Raaflaub 1993, 45; Rose 1997; Thomas and Conant 1999, XXV) and sometimes the date is tacitly assumed without any explicit statement (e.g. Snodgrass 1980). The possibilities of later dating (see notes 11 and 118) are thus usually ignored. There is of course disagreement about whether the society depicted in the epics should be understood as that which preceded the formation of the polis (so Finley 1965, 74 – 130; Spahn 1977, 29 – 58; Murray 1980, 38 – 68; Quiller 1981; Runciman 1982; Stein-Hölkenskap 1989; Donlan 1989; Ulf 1991; Walter 1992, 29 – 44), in which case it is often read as that of slightly earlier period than the time when the epics were composed, or whether the polis, at least implicitly, is already present in the poems (so Luce 1978; Murray 1980, 57 – 68; Gschnitzer 1981, 42; Scully 1990; Van Wees 1992, 25 – 58; Raaflaub 1993, 46 – 64; Osborne 1996, 149 – 151, 157).

¹⁴ See Murray 1980, 38 – 39, 49 – 55.

¹⁵ On the political society and communal ethic in the Homeric epics see Luce 1978; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 1 – 37; Scully 1990, 100 – 113; Raaflaub 1993, 46 – 59.

¹⁶ The eighth century as the crucial period for polis' emergence was suggested already by Ehrenberg 1937a. See also Morris 1987, 8 – 9, 93 – 96 171 – 210; 1991, 40 – 49; Snodgrass 1991; Raaflaub 1993, 77; Whitley 2001, 165 – 194, the last two inclining to a more gradualist view.

been interpreted as the formation of collegial aristocracies in place of the previously dominating petty chiefs who appear in the epics as the ruling *basilees*,¹⁷ or, somewhat heretically, as the emergence of the commoners from the state of suppression and political insignificance in which they had existed during the preceding centuries of aristocratic domination.¹⁸ In any case, the decisive phase of the process has often, though not invariably, been placed close to the end of the period, to the second half of the eighth century. This relatively short period has thus emerged as a point which marked the formation of the social and political relations that framed the realities of the subsequent Archaic era.

I 2. The Ancient Tradition and Its Critics

This discussion of the re-emergence of Greek civilisation and the possible formation of statehood at the end of the Dark Age and the beginning of the Archaic era is usually based on two basic groups of sources: the evidence from archaeology and early Greek poetry. But there is one more possible group of sources that has not been paid much attention in recent years: the accounts of the later ancient historians about the early history of Greek cities. Admittedly, these accounts do not contain anything explicitly about state formation in the eighth century. The Greeks in the Classical period and thereafter believed that the origins of their cities, apart from the colonies outside the Aegean, must be sought in much earlier times – in the Heroic Age or its time of collapse, caused by the invasion of Dorians and Herakleids in the twelfth and eleventh century according to the ancient chronologies.¹⁹ But there is also some possible data about the events of the end of the Dark Age and the early Archaic era.²⁰ There is the set of stories about the crises which led to the emigration and the foundation of the colonies,²¹ the tradition

¹⁷ Andreev 1979; Quiller 1981; Runciman 1982, 356 – 370; Welwei 1983, 36 – 42; 1992, 487 – 494; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989, 15 – 56; Donlan 1989, 298 – 305; 1997, 40 – 45.

¹⁸ Morris (see note 9). For recent discussion of the developments leading to the polis formation in Ancient Greece see also Raaflaub 1993; 1997; Funke 1993; Davies 1997; Ungern-Sternberg 1998.

¹⁹ On the mythic origins of the Greek states in general see Simon 1990. The best known case is probably Theseus' synoicism of Athens (Thuc. II 15 – 16) and his foundation of Athenian democracy (see Ruschenbusch 1958, 408 – 415). On the supposed (re)formation of the states in Argos, Sparta, Messenia and Corinth after the Herakleids' invasion see below Chapter II 1.

²⁰ It is not so in the case of Athens (the state often taken, at least implicitly, as a basic example for the development of the Archaic Greek city state) where the only 'event' known from the eighth century is the deposition of the archon Hippomenes because of he had killed his daughter (Arist. fr. 611. 1 Rose; Nic. Dam. FGrH 90 F 49).

²¹ For a detailed overview of the evidence see Sakellariou 1990, 33 – 129.