6

SOME TOPICS AND ISSUES IN A SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF CLASSICAL GREECE

Chapter 5 presented some reflections on the character of archaeological sources, then considered some approaches which have taken the view that the social context of artefactuaJ remains of the past is central to interpretation, referred these back to characterisations of art, and then took a short look outside of Classical archaeology at other social archaeologies. The chapter as a whole viewed a constellation of issues around rhe essential multiplicity of material culture: its temporality and constituting relationships with contexts of design, exchange, consumption and deposition.

This chapter is an outline of several fields of interest in the project of a social archaeology. Care needs to be taken here to avoid the problems noted especially in Chapter 3- Essentialism is a term that encapsulates much of what was criticised: this holds that history and society have underlying essences or principles which lie behind their particular expressions. It was shown, for example, how Hellenism assumes an underlying character to the Greek, a Greek 'spirit' expressed in artefacts and indeed in history. Metanarratives too may take the form of an essentialism, defining the character of history prior to its experience in empirical sources. Searches for ultimate origins, of Europe and the west for example, can severely attenuate understanding, linked as they may be to ideological systems. Chapter 5 articulated several questions, without providing essentialist answers, about the character of Greek art and its relationship to the category of material culture. An attempt was made to deal with high cultural bias in conceptions of art.

Given these provisions, this chapter will consider chronology and temporality, economics and social archaeology, social change, social connections, style, religion and ritual, space and landscape. The purpose is not to go into great detail with comprehensive coverage, but to provide some flavours and a framework within which current work in social archaeology may be placed.

CHRONOLOGY AND TIME

For most of the period covered by Classical archaeologies of Greece and Rome, from about 700 BC to AD 600, changes in the style of finer ceramics

have been used to establish a chronological framework The scheme has been tested by new finds in historically dated contexts and by stratigraphy which, in providing sequence, is the basis of relative chronologies.

One problem with the framework concerns the fact that fine wares cover only a fraction of contemporary production, are geographically uneven, and are not consecutive. Another relates to the fixed historical dates. Here is to be reiterated the point made by Snodgrass that archaeological and historical (written) sources are hard to bring together because they represent different facets of historical reality. 1 will follow his treatment of this issue.

Fixing dated points in archaeological time is to do with connecting a secure archaeological context (a layer or feature of a site) with an event whose date can be established using historical sources. The most secure (chronologically) archaeological context is when it is stratigraphically undisturbed or sealed. An example is the closing of a tomb or the destruction and abandonment of a site. Bur the association of a sealed context with a historical and dated event is relatively rare. Then there is the question of what material is to be associated with the sealing event (which objects in the layer of settlement debris, which artefacts in the tomb?). So. for example, what stage in the pottery sequence was reached when Knossos was destroyed? Was it Late Minoan 11 or 111A1 or IIIA2? What was the pottery phase when Thera was destroyed by the volcanic eruption? These are typical questions which have concerned, sometimes obsessed, Aegean prehistorians, and they are not alone. Clearly much depends also upon typological identification, and the arguments over its finer details are probably without resolution.

Historical dates are often derived from artefacts imported from Egypt, datable to the reigns of Pharaohs. Here is presented the problem of the contemporaneicy of the import. It may have been traded over long distances; it may have been in circulation for a long time before deposition with later local goods. Then there are arguments about the chronology of the Egyptian Pharaohs and dynasties. Another source of historical points for a chronological scheme is dated burials, for example communal graves associated with battles (Marathon (490), Delion (424), Chaeronea (338)). These are not common. Payne's hook *Necrocorinthia* (1931), mentioned several times already, presented a chronological scheme for the early Archaic Greece and the Mediterranean which has stood for several decades with relatively minor modification. Its utility is directly related to the prevalence of exports of Korinthian pottery around die Mediterranean. The fixed points are supplied by daces of the foundation of Greek colonies: Thucydides provides 728 and 628 BC for the foundation, respectively, of Megara Hyblaea and Selinus. The question is how these dates are to be related to the archaeological remains of the colonies. It depends on what is considered to be the earliest remains of the settlement. But, of course, further examination may at any time reveal earlier deposits than those upon which have been based chronological calculations.

These and other related problems have led some to challenge the orthodoxy of the chronological systems established for Mediterranean protohistory. A notable example here is the book *Centuries of Darkness: a Challenge to the Conventional Chronology of Old World Archaeology* by P. James, IJ. Thorpe, and N. Kokkinos (1991). One approach to the problems has been resort to chronometric dating. But radiometric methods (such as that based on Carbon 14) have their own set of problems to do with their precision; nor is dendrochronology a panacea, especially with its restricted applicability

Only little account is taken of social processes that condition the design, consumption and deposition of artefacts. Some of these have already been mentioned. There is emulation, where people may desire artefacts in a style associated with social classes of a higher rank. There is inevitably a temporal delay in adopting the style, which may thereby acquire a temporal drift away from any clear and narrow chronological locale. Heirlooms are subject to curation, and the relevance of trade to chronology has been mentioned: degrees of circulation of items before deposition are vital considerations, and these are social questions.

Precise dating may not matter so much in the new social archaeologies, which are not so concerned to produce those 'counterfeit history books': chronological schemes for the sake of an interest in the control of detail. Morris, Whitley, Morgan and Whitelaw all used traditional chronological schemes, but it was not necessary to adopt the precision they sometimes claim. Fine-grained chronologies are not so relevant to broader social sketching. Snodgrass certainly managed to produce his account without having it depend upon a detailed, typologically based chronological scheme.

Criticisms have been made of the particular character of time valued in these chronological schemes. Criticism has been levelled at the narrow association of time with date and change. That time is a measurable abstract dimension and analogous to spatial coordinates has been shown to be intimately related to our contemporary Modernist appreciation of temporality. This poses serious questions for the supposed neutrality of typological schemes of ordering. It is important to consider social contexts and practices, which actually constitute time.

The biggest issue is that no account is taken of the character of archaeological time, which has been the topic of several discussions in previous chapters. A simple example will reiterate the point: if I consider the room in which I am writing, there is no one answer to the question of its date. The floor is very old, the walls have been modified several times, there is a continuity, while the machines on the desk are part of the project of mine taking that continuity forward. If it is objected that projects are not part of date, how otherwise would the room and its contents have come into being? These events and processes, these projects construct the temporality of this room which is far more than a collection of dates.

ECONOMIC PREHISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY

A major development in prehistoric archaeology over the last forty years has been the attention given to subsistence practices and evidences about economic organisation. Grahame Clark's book *Prehistoric Europe: the Economic Basis* (1952) was a landmark, but the major impetus came with anthropological archaeology emphasising the importance of society-environmental relationships. The logic is one of cross-cultural generalisation and a body of evolutionary theory holding that cultural change is centred upon subsistence practices, the material basis of society.

The influence of such ideas upon some of the social archaeologies already discussed should be clear: the emphasis in Snodgrass upon demography, for example. The ancient historian Tom Gallant has considered peasant economies in ancient Greece through a wide range of historical, ethnohistorical, archaeological and anthropological sources in his book *Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece: Reconstructing the Rural Economy* (199'1). Another influence here is economic ancient history, which will be considered more below, under trade. Interest in classes of archaeological sources other than material culture (environmental data, faunal and floral remains) is growing, particularly in Aegean prehistory. The character of the ancient economy must be a central concern of social archaeology, and certainly the development of area surveys of sites and regions, considered below, is so informed.

Concerning more mundane but enlightening economic matters, Vickers and Gill have used gold weights and values to establish comparisons between ancient and modern monetary scales. The point outlined in Chapter 3 is that pottery prices were so low as to make trade in ceramics commercially unviable. Ideas of Athenian and Korinthian potting industries in commercial competition, so often the feature of historical accounts, are in consequence likely to be severely misguided.

Scales of pottery production have been estimated. Robert Cook estimated the rate of survival of Attic Panathenaic amphorae, a pottery form produced in fixed and known quantities for the games, as one quarter of 1 per cent. Accordingly, he suggests 500 workers were involved in the Attic pottery industry in the fifth century BC, and half that number at Korinth when production there was at its height. This is evidence again against those who adhere to Snodgrass's positivist fallacy: the considerable numbers and importance of pots in the archaeological record do not represent an equivalent importance in the ancient world.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

A beginning will be made with trade. Understanding the movement of goods still often suffers from ideas of Greek commerce. A simple descriptive account of trade allied with a common-sense understanding *of Its* economic

working (traders taking goods from point of surplus to point of demand) is still evident in many conventional archaeologies and ancient histories of ancient Greece. A trend in approaches to the Greek, economy which has developed in ancient history has brought a more anthropologically sophisticated understanding which questions the easy application to early Greece of concepts and models of economy and trade drawn from study of more modern economic systems of medieval Europe and after. Theoretical impetus has come from Marxian analysis and social history (notably in the work of Moses Finley). Many issues crystallised in the long-running debate between formalist or modernising accounts of the ancient economy. The former use general and formal concepts which are not necessarily related to the substantive field of reference, to the particular society studied. Accounts which may be described as *substantivist* or *primitivist* make use of concepts that take account of the character of the particular society studied (premodern or 'primitive'). The basic point is that there is no general category of the 'economic', but that it is embedded in wider society and varies according to society type.

The picture of the ancient economy presented in a primitivist model is of the self-sufficiency of relatively small and cellular social and economic units (from farms to towns), based on agriculture and depending little on interregional trade. High overland transport costs meant that no region could undercut another in the production of cheap essentials, and export was dominated by prestige or special items. Many now adhere to a minimalist model of ancient trade before later Classical times, considering the archaeological evidences of scale of production and its predominantly local character and lack of merchant ships.

The movement of goods, in the absence of a developed market economy, thus becomes more of an anthropological question, Sally Humphreys, in her *Anthropology and the Greeks{\97%),* has made a case for the embeddedness of the archaic Greek economy in wider social institutions. This interconnectivity has been noted as a feature of Processual modelling. Trade becomes part of a wider set of experiences. War, seafaring, raiding, and perhaps attendance at the sanctuary games were opportunities to establish personal alliances, to display prowess, to dispose of and acquire goods. Fighting, travel and seafaring were the main political outlets for young men who had not yet received their inheritance or who may have had little or no land to inherit. Travelling and joining a colony was also a means of acquiring land which had become unavailable at home. The illegitimate and therefore landless poet Archilochos led the life of seafarer and mercenary before settling as hoplite and landowner in the colony of Thasos. Carrying a few fine pots was merely a sideline.

The major advance offered by anthropological archaeology generally concerns the heterogeneity of the distribution of goods. Models of simple inter-societal links, understood through common-sense and ethnocentric categories of 'trade', have given way to heterogeneity and social embeddedness.

Traditional archaeological equations of material culture and political relations, such as colonisation and political control (represented by stylistic change), have gained a new currency in the work of Bernal, but have been transformed by work such as that of Morgan and Whitelaw, as it is realised that there is much to the workings of style and its relationship to social links.

Classical Greece was composed of many independent city states as well as *ethnoi* who did not adopt the polis form. Links between these polities (as opposed to types of society) have been foregrounded in the concept of peer polity interaction. The argument is that understanding the social changes of Classical Greece cannot remain at the level of the individual state, but city states are to be considered in their particular and historical relations with other polities. Competition and rivalry (over temple building for example). and tensions between state interests and those of aristocracies and other sections of society who moved in circles beyond the individual polity, are important.

A particular model of inter-societal (as opposed to peer-polity) linkage has been extensively referenced in explaining the 'margins' of the Graeco-Roman world; this is the theory of core and periphery associated frequently with world systems analysis.

Core—periphery modelling began as pan of development theory in politics and geography, exploring the relationships between different parts of the world capitalist economy, with core and peripheral elements related to an international division of labour (the separation of raw material extraction, manufacture and consumption across different societies and states) and multiple cultural systems. For the first millennium BC, central Europe has been seen as a periphery to the city states of the Mediterranean. A demand in the Greek city states for raw materials and slaves was answered by central European societies in exchange for prestige goods. The latter ted into their own social structures as key elements in the maintenance of power relations between chiefs and their dependants. The often cited example is that of late Hallstatt society up the Rhône Valley in south-west Germany, eastern France and Switzerland, with its 'princely burials' containing rich goods imparted from the Mediterranean.

Such core-periphery models are effective in explaining the movement of artefacts and raw materials. They answer die need for social modelling rather than reliance upon simple models of trade, being therefore models that are effective at integrating data while supplying a social process. But in spite of the sophistication of the disciplinary sources, many inter-regional relations within and beyond the Mediterranean have come to be described simply in terms of economic supply and demand. So for Barry Cunliffe, for example in his *Greeks, Ramans and Barbarians* (1988). the Classical and barbarian worlds were inextricably bound together in a network of economic inter-dependence, with a core of Mediterranean consumer states and a dependent barbarian periphery supplying raw materials.

But in this simple caricature, variations in production, modes of exchange and the role of different categories of material culture are glossed over. The simple question of why Hallstatt chiefs should find these particular goods desirable raises a set of questions about material values and aesthetics, attitudes to design and symbolics. Core-periphery modelling has also, for many, come to depend on drawing boundaries. It is difficult to envisage a core, 'the Greek world', because of the lack of political and economic integration in Greece, where there is indeed no typical state form. Integration in Greece was more symbolic than economic, and variability seems as important.

In spite of the faults found with simple models of trade and commercial traffic and core-periphery linkages, fine Korinthian and Attic wares did move, but the significance of the movement docs not fit easily within common-sense sociological categories {such as economics or politics). Emphasis upon consumption brings further variability: as Korinthian pots left Korinth they became part of the experience of travel, pan of the material culture of those carrying the goods, and when they were deposited in graves in a colony's cemetery, they were part of a different context of bereavement and mortuary practices.

Core-periphery models are part of a world systems perspective. Developed by lmmanuel Wallerstein, world systems analysis works with this fact that the boundaries of a society are frequently artificial constructions, because very rarely do societies exist separately from others. There are always material and conceptual flows which require sociological understanding to be of networks of relationships rather than discrete entities which *go* under the name of a society or polity.

Susan and Andrew Sherratt (article listed in Bibliography) have presented a modernising economic model (in the sense defined above) of the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC which owes much to world systems analysis. They propose die development of an independent commercial sector uniting the Mediterranean and the east. With the erosion of direct political control of the economy (as in the bronze-using polities of the second millennium), there developed trading systems rooted in the Phoenician need to answer the demands of the Assyrian Empire. As they put it: 'the increasing scale of the near-eastern economy was a powerful motor of growth throughout the contemporary world system'. So earlier ideas of the diffusion of civilisation from the east (and associated phenomena such as Orientalising art) are seen to be about the active intervention and response of merchant enterprise. An input of capital from the east was the motivating force, with maritime expertise and capital concentration in Phoenicia. So again there are proposed patterns of commercial competition (including Korinth and Athens).

The merchant enterprise of the Sherratts may be interpreted as another metanarrative of the origins of capitalism, but they do address those archaeological connections upon some of which Bernal has also turned his attention.

Goods, people and ideas were moving and conventional ideas of separate ethnic and social units do not adequately explain the linkages. World systems are a way forward.

UNDERSTANDING STYLE

The style of material culture has featured prominently so far. Here I introduce an example of those approaches in French Classical archaeology that treat imagery as signs to be read of deep structures of meaning lying within Greek culture.

Francois Lissarague, in *Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet* (English translation 1990), has made an exploration of the Greek imagination through the images upon those pots whose forms are associated with the aristocratic drinking party, the symposion. He follows a field of metaphors relating to drink and the social gatherings. The symposion involved the shared pleasure of gathering with drinks, perfumes, songs, dancing, games, sex and conversation. They were held in rooms which seem never *to* have been very big, and they were associated with cult as at the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron in Attica. The symposion was thus an enclosed space of guests who formed a self-sufficient community of peers, and it was a social ritual with strictly codified acts.

Wine was considered an ambiguous drink and this is expressed in the play about meanings and allusions. Many of the games have wine as their point of departure (it is nor just a drink) in addition to the vases which become toys or bodies that are handled and in turn manipulate the drinker. Cups are made with body parts or as sculpted forms; there is a class of trick vases which seem magically to fill themselves, playing with hydraulics; others spill over the tricked drinker. Metaphorical links are made with metal-working, with pictures of forges. Flute and bellows could take the same name - *aulos;* wine was compared with fire.

Wine and the symposion appear as a realm of otherness, with men pictured dressed as Scythians or as women. The mixing bowl was focus (wine was not drunk neat). Symbol of hospitality, the word *krater con* mean symposion. It was a special artefact, an *agalma* (candidate for a gift to the gods). Play is made upon the wine-dark sea *{oinops pontos),* with wine, navigation, sea and symposion united. Pottery vessels may indeed be sea vessels. Herakles the master drinker is pictured upon one pot in a *dinos.* One of his labours was to go beyond the ocean to the island of Erythia to steal the cattle of Geryon, triple-bodied giant. On the way he shot at the sun because of its heat and in admiration of this audacity he was given a golden vase in which to cross the ocean.

It is not possible to do justice here to the richness of Lissarague's revelations. His interpretation opens up understanding of the symposion as a locus for metaphor and illusion, both poetic and visual, defamiliarising the stock

Figure 6.1 Herakles at sea in a *dinos.* Attic red figure cup, early fifth century BC

images of the Classical banquet in a Hollywood epic. This richness of everyday textures connects with new views of the symposion as social institution. Some ancient historians, among them Oswyn Murray, have come to see the symposion as i major focus of male political and social association, a structuring feature of Classical society. Here again definitions of gender identity may he interpreted as vital components in understanding the Greeks.

Whereas conventional connoisseurship and art history deals with artefacts in terms of artist *2nd* overarching stylistic change, work such as that of a Structuralist pedigree, represented by the work of Lissarague in this section, has shifted .men [ion to the consumer of the artefacts and images. Hence there arc increasing calls for viewer-centred readings of ancient artefacts. The (mixed) metaphor refers to the artefact as text to be read or interpreted. Contexts are here again so vital (the symposion for LissAragu^s images).

Many Attic pots turn up in Etruscan tombs, with their designs complementing the aristocratic tastes of the deceased. The image and the viewer may be taken as the important matters; the painter and the potter, focus of the interest of connoisseur, can be argued to 6e almost irrelevant. Etruscan tombs were not galleries of artists but of images relating to experiences of death.

RELIGION AND RITUAL

The apparent remains of what today is classed as religious form a major category of evidence for the Classical archaeologist. The great excavations of sanctuaries were informed by very different interests to those of contemporary social archaeology. Cemeteries have been a major source of artefacts, but their analysis in archaeology has come a long way in the last two decades. Colin Renfrew pioneered new Processual approaches with a study of the cist tombs of the early Bronze Age in the Cyclades. The work of Ian Morris was considered in some detail in the last chapter. In stressing social context, such studies have contributed to the anthropological truism of the embeddedness of religion and ritual. Here may be mentioned a classic study by the Marxist anthropologist Maurice Godelier, which showed how religion could function as part of the economic structure of society *{Marxist Perspectives in Anthropology,* English translation 1977), and nor simply be concerned with spiritual matters. The importance of religion to the ancient economy has been much stressed, with great justification, by Snodgrass. It is no longer possible legitimately to separate out from wider social analysis religious and ritual matters.

SPACE, SURVEY AND LANDSCAPE

Francois de Polignac argued for a tight connection between sanctuaries and the spatial organisation of the early Greek city state, indeed its very origins. This brings me to the long-standing interest in the Greek landscape which goes back to early travellers such as Choiseul-Gouffier and William Martin Leake.

In a conventional but effective study, Adamasteanu has used air photographs to access the archaic land apportionment in the territory of the Greek colony of Metapontum. But whit I want to concentrate on in this section is the recent development of geographical survey in Classical archaeology, which puts the discipline at *i* forefront of methodological innovation. As well as drawing on the tradition of topographical interest, survey in Greece is as much an effect of the importance given to survey and the systematic study of regions in New and Processual archaeology.

These survey projects use intensive field walking to record systematically the traces of all human activity in a given region. This supplies data relevant

to demography, and integrates Information about environmental changes, agriculture, landholdings, communications and infrastructures. The bias of documentary sources is on the urban elite. Survey, in contrast, justifies itself simply in that it focuses attention on the rural base of Classical antiquity. It is cheaper than excavation and 'non-invasive', but has required many years of groundwork and is only now beginning to supply new insights into the workings of ancient society. The low profile of survey projects has been ascribed to the lack of application of the method to traditional problems in archaeology and history. Debate within the field has also been a little inward-looking, focused mainly on methodological issues.

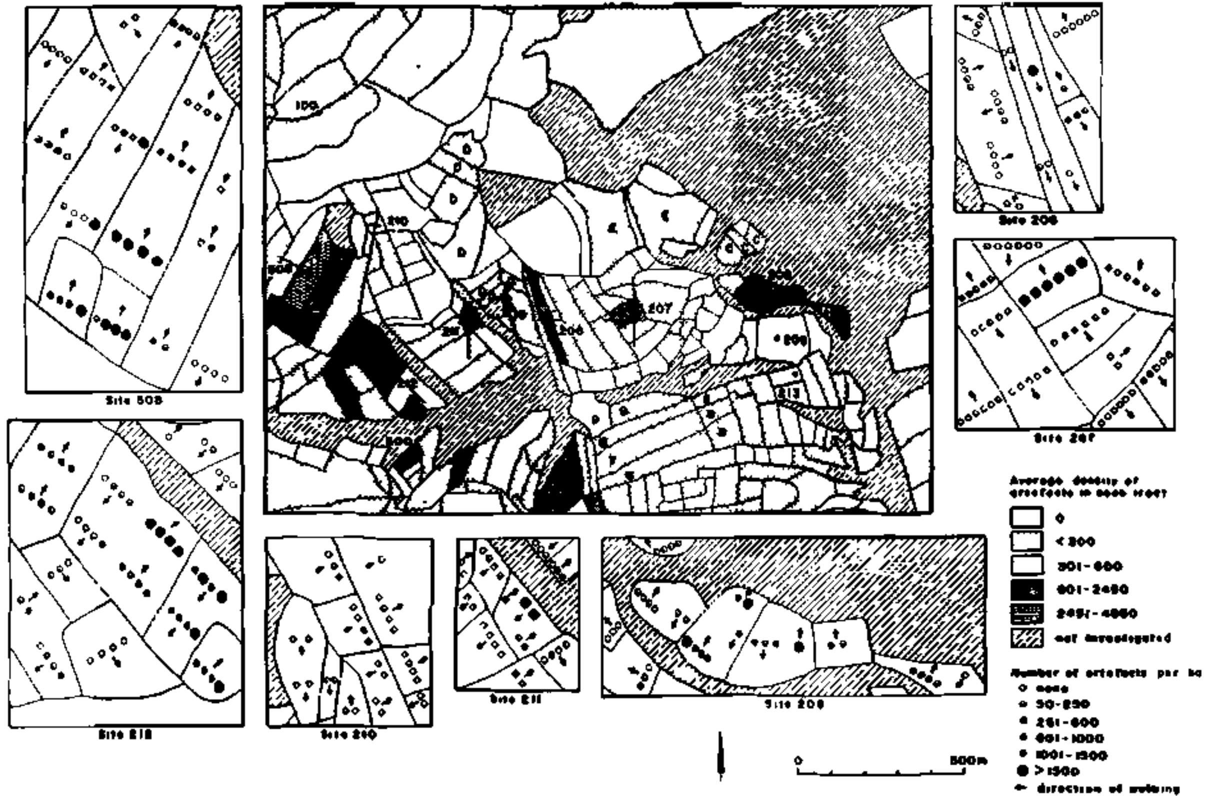
The consensus among its practitioners is for intensive survey with quantified observations and controlled artefact collection. What this means is line-walking by team members no more than 15 to 20 metres apart, with the generation of artefact samples as large as an excavation. The results are 100 times as many sites located than in earlier, less intensive surveys. For example, the Nemea Valley Archaeological Project dealt with 5,000 tracts, each of 1 or 2 hectares. For each were recorded data on visibility, environment and contemporary land use and information about several categoric of artefact for each 100 metre section of the traverses covered by fieldworkers. The result was a considerable amount of data necessitating computer manipulation.

The sorts of features encountered in surveys of this sort include terraces, roads, bridges, quarries and mines, caves (used for cult, burial or habitation), pottery and lime kilns, cisterns, wells, graves, oil and wine presses, chipping floors used in tool manufacture, isolated towers, animal folds, agricultural storage sheds, farmhouses and rural sanctuaries. It seems clear that landscapes were full of features in Classical times and sometimes may have approached dangerously high population densities.

The plotting of densities of artefacts has shown that the definition of a site is an interpretive matter. The threshold for a scatter of artefacts to be classed as a site is generally taken to be 30-50 sherds per 100 square metres, but there is great variation from region to region and from period to period. Nor are artefacts distributed in neat areas corresponding to ancient sites: there is considerable spread or 'haloes'[1].

Clear also are off-site artefact scatters. These are taken by the main protagonists of intensive survey (John Cherry, Anthony Snodgrass, Sue Alcock, Jack Davis and John Bintliff to name some) to be not just surface garbage or background noise, but valuable evidence for agricultural practices. So the question of the origin and character of these scatters has come to be a question of manuring - deliberate fertilisation of the cultivated landscape using animal manure and household rubbish incorporating pottery - hence the archaeological visibility.

Manuring is an issue of real importance related to intensity of land use, methods of cultivation, and systems of land tenure. It has been questioned whether manuring can account for the artefact scatters on its own, and



F;^wrc tf.2 Intensively surveyed block of land to the west of the Tretos Pass, Nemea Valley, Greece. *(Source:* Susan E. Alcock, John F. Cherry and Jack L. Davis. 'Intensive survey, agricultural practice and the classical landscape of Greece', in *Classical Grace: Ancient Histories and Modem Archaeologies,* ed. Ian Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

impressive calculations have been made involving amounts of rubbish, likely rates of manuring, periods of cultivation, and ploughing techniques. Whatever die disagreements, the result is changing views of Classical and early Hellenistic cultivation. The standard model, extrapolated from early modern and present-day Greek agriculture, is of nucleated residence at a distance from fields. Regular fallowing accompanied fragmented landholdings with long-distance seasonal transhumant pastoralism, because animals could not be kept on small dispersed parcels of land and because the adoption of fallow precluded fodder crops. There is thus a fundamental divorce of arable *firming* from stock husbandry.

In this extensive system, manuring could only be light, but this does not fit with the findings of field survey. A new model proposes intensive agriculture and a close association of arable farming and stock. Cereal and pulse rotation, rather than biennial fallow, produced fodder crops, which in cum enabled animals 10 be kept in sufficient quantity and close to the arable land to produce fertilising manure. Landholdings were of moderate size. The implications of this agricultural model for the type *of* stock which could be kept is significant. Horses become an expensive luxury, and draught animals are of less importance than in an extensive system. There are connections here with that association of horses with wealthy aristocracies.

With its impressive calculations of household faecal wastes and manuring races, such economic modelling is far removed, it might seem, from the aesthetics of arc style. We are firmly within the everyday, and we do well to remember the importance of the landed citizen to the early Greek city state: without them there would have been no 'Greek miracle'.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Interpenetrations of everyday life and broader social modelling reveal both the need for anthropological understanding and awareness of difference or variability. Social archaeologies may better conceive their object not as 'societies' but social networks which do not respect the political and geographical divisions of today and which may have deep resonances though the cultural imaginary of the ancient Greeks.