

SOCIAL AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN EARLY GREECE

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Abstracts



Textual and material evidence for social inequality: minding the gap

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A striking feature of the archaeological record for Early Iron Age Greece is how small are the differences among the houses, graves or votives at any given site. It is commonly inferred that Greek society knew only moderate differences of wealth and shared an egalitarian culture: occasional peaks in the display of wealth suggest that elites tried to set themselves apart, but a reversion to much less differentiation in material culture soon followed. By contrast, the Homeric epics portray an ‘aristocratic’ world in which leading families own great wealth in land, livestock and slaves, and display riches in gold, silver, bronze, ivory and purple. It is usually assumed that this is an idealised world far removed from historical reality.

The present paper suggests other ways of bridging the seemingly vast gap. Our texts suggest patterns of conspicuous consumption in which a central role is played precisely by those materials that archaeology is least likely to recover, because they are perishable or because they are rarely ‘deposited’. What does survive of Early Iron Age and Archaic Greek houses, graves and votives does not offer a good index of (differences in) wealth: the largely lost contents of houses rather than their size served to display wealth; funerals rather than burials embodied social distinction; votive deposits generally retained only the least valuable and token offerings rather than the treasures described in textual evidence. Finally, what little the texts tell us about the lives of the lower classes and enslaved implies that these most modest levels of material culture are likely to escape archaeologists almost entirely. A close analysis of the literary evidence for consumption habits is thus essential to an understanding of the archaeological record and its implications for social (in)equality.

Gender and Coming-of-Age Rituals in the Early Iron Age: Archaeology vs Historical Memory
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This paper focuses on the ways gender disparities among Early Iron Age adults can be traced in children's progression toward adulthood and the ways in which ostensibly parallel tracks for boys and girls helped reinforce the different social status of Greek men and women. While some evidence suggests that infants (and perhaps younger children) were more differentiated by age rather than by gender in the funerary and iconographic record, depictions of older childhood and pubescents become increasingly gendered, with frequent ritual demarcation of these age transitions. Most prominent among these are rituals marking the ends of childhood for both boys and girls, with apparent significant community investment in both sexes at similar ages. But were these apparently analogous ritual trackings of boys and girls actually parallel? This paper suggests that while these rituals seem to imply some gender parity for adolescents in offering ceremonial, communal celebrations of boys' and girls' progress toward adulthood, the specific roles they envisioned for children were increasingly divergent across the Early Iron Age. For girls, ritual scenes most frequently celebrate their transition from girls to parthenoi, with marriage and adult domestic roles as the primary focus of emphasis, while boys' imagery celebrates their initiation into roles of warriors and heroes, real or mythological. This paper suggests that these ritual transitions create and codify expectations for men and women's divergent roles, normalizing family and domestic contexts for women and reifying the public sphere as the world of men. As such these rituals set the scene for the eventual exclusion for women from the possibilities of citizenship and public impact. The paper concludes with a discussion of the Homeric world's two most prominent adolescents: Nausicaa and Telemachos to explore how the Greek literary tradition cemented these parallel tracks -- the end of girlhood in marriage and the end of boyhood in heroism in the public sphere.

Who Wields the Shuttle?: Women's Agency in Light of the New Materialism
Deborah Lyons | Miami University

In the absence of written records, anthropologists and archaeologists can tease out information about women's contributions to economic and social life in both ancient and later traditional societies using traces in the material record. Simple tools such as an awl or a loom weight: can be made to speak of the use that women made of them. A pioneering work in this area is Annette Weiner's 1979 book, which used women's woven productions to illuminate an entire social system based on reciprocity.

A recent trend in literary and cultural studies, the New Materialisms, can be traced back in part of the work of Arjun Appadurai on the "social life of things." Its most notable exponent in the anglophone context is Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*. Her work has found a reception among Classicists such as Melissa Mueller and Lilah Grace Canevaro who -- while not subscribing wholesale to Bennett's thesis -- use her ideas productively to examine the role of objects in ancient Greek literature.

Canevaro's 2018 book focusses on the objects made or used by women in Homeric epic. As she shows, the communicative ability of objects is often subsumed by the communicative ability of the women who know how to use them to convey meaning. Building on her nuanced approach, I take Homer as a case study to examine the effects of applying too strictly these precepts to women's production and use of textiles as sources of power and agency. Do claims about the agency of objects work to obscure and mystify women's agency in Homeric epic? If agency is disseminated throughout the system, does it not risk evaporating altogether?

From warriors to heroes: Early Iron Age weapon burial rituals and narratives of the self

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That Early Iron Age Greece was not an egalitarian society is hardly controversial. The nature of this inequality however is controversial: some see Early Iron Age society as highly stratified, others that status – or rather *aristeia* was continually being won and lost. One way of performing *aristeia* is through warfare, as heroes do in the *Iliad*. Archaeologists have frequently looked to ‘warrior graves’ to find these heroes in the Early Iron Age. ‘Warrior graves’ are an almost universal feature of the archaeological record of later European prehistory. Burials usually (but not invariably) of men accompanied by weapons appear in many parts of Europe (including the Aegean) from at least 1600 BCE if not earlier. In the Bronze Age weapons accompany inhumations – sometimes of men, but often of adolescents who would otherwise be unable to wield the large number of elaborately decorated swords that often accompany them in death. During the Iron Age cremation replaces inhumation in many (but not all) parts of Greece. Here bodies are burnt before burial, and swords either broken or bent. This ostentatious destruction, which often includes valuable antiques, recalls the descriptions of heroes’ burials in the *Iliad* (Il. 23.161-257; 24.782-804). This transition from whole to broken/burnt can be explained in terms of agency and personhood – the broken weapons and burnt bodies providing a kind of closure for the life of both persons and things. Narratives of persons and things, and stages of oral epic composition, are thus entangled, which in turn consolidates the transition from warrior to hero.

Socio-Economic Change, Gender, and Labor Allocation in the Aegean Early Iron Age

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The Early Iron Age in the Aegean was characterized by considerable economic dynamism. Facing new institutional and political conditions in the post-Bronze Age Mediterranean, communities in the Greek mainland and neighboring islands seem to have adopted diverse strategies for pursuing wealth and well-being in various spheres, from craft production to the agricultural economy. This paper reconstructs some gendered elements of economic systems in this dynamic period. It describes the likely economic changes that transpired between the end of the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age in Greece, then discusses how such changes seem to have impacted the allocation of economic tasks among gender categories. Given the limited range of evidence for gendered labor in settlement remains and in light of recent critiques of the applicability of ethnographic analogy for identifying gendered labor, the focus is on skeletal markers for labor that have been recognized in the human skeletal record. Finally, the paper considers the implications these changing allocations may have had for society. While sure answers are elusive, the available evidence indicates that the distribution of work tasks was relatively evenly spread amongst genders and that it was distinctions of class rather than gender that most strongly determined economic roles in this period of the Aegean past.

The funerary 'sequence' in Iron Age Greece, between community and society

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“The sequential analysis” is a method investigating the features of a cemetery and their combination. It allows to define what is acceptable as funerary practices and what is not acceptable. But the question is at what level this differentiation is effective: at the level of the whole community or of social groups? This paper proposes to investigate this question for the Greek Iron Age.

Formal burial or formal cemetery? Returning to the burial customs, monuments and social inequality of Early Iron Age Greece

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It's the least to say that I. Morris 1987' study on Greek (mostly Athenian) burial structures of the EIA and early archaic period was a breakthrough in the academic approach of the social evolution of Greece. The breakthrough was double. Historically, it changes the perspectives on social structures of EIA away from the then current opinion that Greek level of social inequality was low and moved to a more complex one during the 8th and 7th century BC. Methodologically, it introduces the concept of 'formal burial', borrowed from prehistorians and anthropologists. Despite all the legitimate critics on various points of Morris's argument, especially his treatment of the archaeological data (see more recently Rönnerberg), it is safe to say that these two points have become the new doxa.

In this paper, I wish to come back to the second point: the concept of formal burial. One aspect of the concept of a formal burial would be its long-standing visibility in the funerary landscape. I wish to argue that, in this regard, a dramatic shift occurred during the second half of the 7th cent. BC which saw the Greeks progressively introduce the inscribed monument in their habits. The use of stone markers and scripted formula on these stones implied a wide range of social and political mutations that have never been fully addressed neither by Morris or by his critics. We believe these alterations are more than a mere change 'of leopard skin' but testifies of a radical alteration in social hierarchies and thus of social inequalities of the Greek world.

Social contradictions in central Greece during the Early Iron Age

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Discrepancies between early Greek literature and archaeology regarding social organization are evident in central Greece, where the archaeological record has significantly expanded in recent decades. Recent archaeological and archaeometric findings provide fresh insights into social dynamics, challenging traditional essentialist models centered on kings, aristocrats, and commoners. This paper examines issues of social inequality by focusing on the organization of labor in this region through a comparative analysis of textual and archaeological evidence.

Certain key transformations in Greek social and cultural history warrant closer attention, beyond the settlement and mortuary patterns typically used to reconstruct premodern social structures, patterns often biased in ways that distort their social implications. For instance, the prolonged absence of fortifications in Greek settlements after the collapse of the palatial states, while their eastern Mediterranean counterparts continued to build and maintain monumental walls, appears to be more related to internal social organization and labor management than to external threats. Similarly, changes in the spatial organization of sanctuaries and votive practices, related to the management of cults, were shaped by shifts in social structures and collective labor. Although migration is a natural and common human behavior, it often served as a response to social injustice and as resistance to rising inequality, as implied by textual evidence. Additionally, the widespread adoption of technological innovations like the alphabet among the broader Greek population contrasts sharply with the control of other forms of writing by ruling elites in other parts of the premodern world. Finally, archaeology provides valuable opportunities to reconstruct early Greek modes of production, correcting the biases present in early Greek literature. This reconstruction is essential for understanding the modes of exchange and consumption that have been central to archaeological research in previous decades.

Warriors, Rich Ladies and Invisible Children? Social and Gender Differentiation at Athenian Gravesites during the Early Iron Age

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Research on Athenian funerary contexts of the Early Iron Age has often focused on few outstanding groups: graves with weapons, rich female graves, monumental tomb markers. Although these may rather generally attest to the economic prosperity of those responsible for the furnishing of the respective burials, it remains disputed which conclusions on the status of the deceased can be drawn based on the grave goods. This paper will add to this discussion by including the spatial scale: in which contexts have such ›wealthy‹ graves been found, what is the composition of the respective burial sites, can we differentiate cemeteries of lesser from those of higher prestige? What are the patterns of inclusion/exclusion of women, children, and infants? And in which way are the known burial sites representative of the total population? Since reliable bioarchaeological data is mostly lacking, an analysis of the entirety of the Athenian contexts must use rather broad (and not in every case securely assigned) categories of men, women, children, and infants; but when attention is paid to the graves' chronology and the discussion surrounding ›formal burial‹ is taken into account, even such a broad analysis provides revealing insights into changing patterns of social and gender differentiation in Athenian gravesites of the Early Iron Age.

Cretan Women Across the Iron Age

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Crete offers us one of the best opportunities to look at the dynamics of women's roles and identities across the Iron Age in Greece. The preceding Bronze Age has a rich scholarship, informed by iconography, burial, and the Linear B records at Knossos. Our knowledge of classical Greece beyond Athens is often reliant on the import of Athenian models or on texts with Athenian perspectives and agendas. On Crete this is ameliorated somewhat by native epigraphic sources. The Cretan post-palatial Bronze and Iron Age is punctuated by images of women. These can be strikingly varied across the timeframe. Our view is hampered by a burial habit that can obscure the identities of individuals in death. But, even here, there are insights to be gleaned along with the occasional spectacular find. Long-standing tropes frame our understanding of gender in Iron Age Crete, male associations and rites of passage, female priestesses and nature goddesses. More broadly, it has long been recognised amongst Greek archaeologists that the major fluctuations in social organisation across the Iron Age must have impacted on gender roles. This paper will seek to synthesise the data that is currently available on Crete and lay it alongside the more extensive discussions of changing gender across the Iron Age arising from data sets like the Attic burial record.

Social and Gender Inequality in Early Iron Age and Early Archaic Dodecanese

Matteo D'Acunto | University of Naples L'Orientale

This paper presents a comprehensive study of how archaeological contexts can shed light on social and gender aspects of the Early Iron Age and Archaic Dodecanese, with a particular focus on Rhodes and Kos (10th–6th centuries BC). Male graves with weapons and prominent female burials reflect selective, high-status burial customs from the 10th to the mid-8th century BC. Special attention will be given to the Serraglio necropolis on Kos, particularly regarding how subadult burials represented social distinctions and age groups. From the second half of the 8th century BC, new inclusive burial practices and forms of social differentiation began to emerge, signaling changes in social behavior as the process of polis formation unfolded. Sanctuaries

also reflect this pivotal shift in the 8th century BC. The acropoleis of Rhodes demonstrate the rise of identity cults centered on Athena, highlighting the development of civic identities, while dedications of figurines and other votive offerings indicate distinctions of gender, age, and social rank. The final part of the paper will explore the shifting external connections of the Dodecanese, from the Early Iron Age—when relationships with Cyprus and the Levant were dominant—to the Archaic period, when Egypt and the central Mediterranean began playing key roles in the evolving trade networks managed by the East Greek cities. This shift provides insight into the rise of elites who controlled trade from the Aegean to the central Mediterranean.

People and objects on the move: Migrating memories, antiques, and social power in Early Iron Age Cyprus

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This paper discusses some prestigious artefacts (i.e. bronze rod tripods and four-sided stands, ivory mirror handles, gold rings, and inscribed bronze bowls) that were excavated in some exceptionally rich Early Iron Age burial contexts at Palaepaphos and Kourion in western Cyprus. Despite their diversity, these objects exhibit some shared patterns: First, they were certainly made at an earlier date than their contexts indicate; second, they were deposited in the tombs at roughly the same period; third, they all seem to have been manufactured in Enkomi at the other end of the island. This site flourished during the Late Bronze Age but was gradually abandoned in the course of the 11th century BC, when some of its inhabitants were relocated to nearby Salamis. The evidence presented here indicates that others may have taken a diverging path which brought them to Palaepaphos, the new power centre that had emerged on western Cyprus in the previous century, at a time of intense movements of peoples both from abroad and from within the island. It is in this context of social upheaval and transformations of the sociopolitical landscape of the island that these antique objects moved across the island. Their importance was related precisely to their provenance and antiquity, as well as to their inherent association with the elite, in other words, to the unequal opportunities that different groups had to possess them. These qualities may have enabled the owners of these objects to claim a hereditary link to a memorable place, and to a splendid, albeit recent, past. By displaying them in funerary rituals, these privileged individuals were possibly trying to restore an ideology based on elite insignia of the past and to consolidate their identity and status in the new social order of the Early Iron Age. These artefacts offer, therefore, the opportunity to discuss social memory and the uses of the past in the construction of individual or group identity, and, most importantly, to approach these issues from the ground up, at the level of specific archaeological contexts, rather than exclusively relying on theoretical reasoning.

Social Inequality and its Persistence: A Look at the Early Colonial World of the Greeks

Frank Bernstein | Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main

If one wants to show "regional variabilities in social organisation", according to the aim of the symposium, a look at the colonial world of the Greeks seems promising – and not only because of its vastness. For the question posed in the call for papers as to whether mobility and migration, as I may add, were "a means of reshaping social relations" is indeed an obvious one. Mobility and migration were not only a means, they were certainly also a promise to overcome the social boundaries given at home, however much such hope may have disappointed individuals time and again. "Social inequality", understood as the unequal distribution of material goods such as unfree labour, land, livestock and means of exchange, as well as immaterial resources such as political participation and power and the resulting restricted living

conditions and opportunities, intensified towards the end of the "Dark Ages" due to accelerated social differentiation. The movement referred to as "colonisation", which began in the 8th century and resulted in new settlements abroad, was probably driven by such developments. However, the notoriously controversial question of the extent to which social inequality understood in this way was the driving force behind the colonisation movement will not be addressed. What is of interest is the hardly surprising fact that it perpetuated itself in the New World of the Greeks, even though the founding of a new settlement offered the possibility of a "reorganisation of social relations". How little effort was made to balance social differences through egalitarian property relations, for example, and how quickly social inequality was reproduced among Greek immigrants, is not only striking, but above all in need of explanation. The paper examines the evidence and enquires into the accelerating factors behind the persistence of social inequality in the colonial world of the Greeks.

A view from the West: Gender and Social Inequalities in Early Iron Age and Archaic Age Southern Italy

Francesco Quondam | University of Vienna

From the earliest stages of their development, the Greek poleis of Magna Graecia and Sicily elaborated their own funerary language, characterized by specific forms of more or less overemphasized representation of age, gender and social inequalities. This language differed substantially from the traditional forms of funerary representation typical of the indigenous communities of Southern Italy and Sicily: from the 7th century BC onwards, the intensity of contacts with the growing communities of Greek migrants was also reflected in the traditions of funerary rituals, leading to even substantial changes in the forms of funerary representation of the local groups.

At the beginning of the Archaic period, the variability of funerary rituals in the growing Greek communities is, however, very wide: this aspect reflects differentiated and original processes of representation of age, gender and social inequalities, which in turn reflect the variability of the processes underlying the genesis of these communities.

The aim of this communication is to provide a broad perspective on the inequalities as expressed in the funerary rituals of Southern Italy and Sicily during the Archaic Age: the primary focus will be the poleis communities, analyzed from a comparative perspective both in their affinities and differences, and in relation to the traditions of the indigenous groups residing in the same regions.

Final Bronze and Early Iron Age (1050–740 BC) central Mediterranean: evidence of social inequalities

Marco Pacciarelli | University of Naples Federico II

Clear forms of inequality are recognizable in the central Mediterranean already during the ancient and middle Bronze Age (21st-14th centuries BC). A phase of strong growth of socio-economic complexity occurred in Italy and other regions between the 12th and 11th century BC, with the formation of a distinct elite and of embryonic forms of centralisation and ideological legitimisation of power, in which also women played a significant role. The 10th century BC corresponds to a historical turning point, especially in the mid-Tyrrhenian area. In Latium vetus we see a greater political integration between small- and medium-sized communities by the establishment of forms of central power legitimized by symbolic-religious meanings, and stably transmitted across generations. Southern Etruria during the same phase experiences a profound geopolitical restructuring, which leads to the abandonment of the

majority of the previous small/medium villages and to the formation of new very large and powerful protourban centers. During the first phase of the Early Iron Age (925-825 BCE) at least at Tarquinia the formation of protourban communities corresponds to the emergence of a stable political-military power, further legitimized through cultural prerogatives, permanently centralized within a single group, and regularly passed on. This stability of power was one of the preconditions for the development toward the prominent forms of socio-economic complexity increasingly and clearly detectable in the funerary record since the 8th century BC.

Social and Gender (In)equality in Iron Age and Orientalizing Etruria

Alessandro Naso | University of Naples Federico II

The sets of grave goods are our main source for Etruscan society. The Etruscan elite furnished their tombs with extraordinary sumptuousness, following a specifically “barbarian” custom that began in the second half of the eighth century BCE and reached its peak in the seventh. They include luxury items of various provenances, which testify to the considerable capacity for assimilating outside influences. Archaeological evidence shows that the Etruscans received objects and ideas relating to a new way of life from the Near East, while mythology came from Greece; and from both they received cultural models. This original mixture determined a new type of culture, which allowed both men and women to play important roles in society. The great importance of women in Etruscan society is already visible in the seventh century. The epigraphic and the iconographic records allow us to speak of princesses and queens rather than wives of princes and of kings. The epigraphic record includes female names, which are often connected to specific functions. The inscriptions on the clay wine vessels consistently declare that the containers are female property, further showing the importance of the female role in the banquet.

Some specific finds from rich male and female burials allow us to assume for the deceased a probable role as priest. Bronze cult chariots, already documented in central Italic graves from the ninth century onward, attest to religious rites involving the use of water. The deposition of such items in tomb groups—mostly belonging to males, but in few cases to females—may be interpreted as relics of such ceremonies or else as objects referring to the possible role of the deceased as priest. In the scenes engraved on the wooden throne from Verucchio, belonging to early seventh cent. BC, women are acting as priestesses.

The possible effects of economic activity in a wider Mediterranean context on social relations in Early Iron Age Greece

Susan Sherratt | University of Sheffield

There is little doubt that the Early Iron Age in Greece (c. 1050 – c. 700 BC), as in other parts of the Mediterranean, was a time of increasing economic interaction and of increasingly wide and diverse manifestations of mobility. That it was also a time of sporadic hostile encounters by sea is suggested by some of the imagery of the period. At the same time, it seems probable that increasing interaction stimulated increasing consciousness of the self-identities of groups, which went hand-in-hand with increasing consciousness of the group identities of others.

There can also be little doubt that this was also a period of changing social relations within, as well as between, communities, and possibly also in gender relations. The extent to which such changes are clearly detectable in the archaeological record, and the extent to which we can see them being stimulated by economic interaction, are, however, somewhat less certain. This paper will contemplate some of these, as well as other issues, which often arise from the ambiguities of archaeological interpretation.

*Interpreting Social Inequalities in Iron Age Greece via Multiple Scales of Analysis***Tamar Hodos** | The University of Sydney

This symposium has explored manifestations of social and gender differences across Iron Age Greece as expressed through material culture. Case studies have ranged from micro-scale examinations of specific contexts to macro-level reconsiderations of economic activities and developments. This contribution compares and contrasts these diverse scalar and topical approaches to assess how, collectively, they can help us better understand the mechanisms of social life in ancient Greece. It does so using globalisation theory, a multi-scalar interpretative framework that explicitly advocates concurrent bottom-up and top-down perspectives when assessing the nature and manifestations of complex connections and influences between communities. In so doing, it also reflexively enables us to refine how globalisation can be used as an interpretative framework more effectively.