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Chapter 5

Fortifications

1. Introduction

Walls built in the Aegean between *circa* 1000 and 500, *i.e.* roughly between the generally accepted starting date of the Greek Iron Age and the outbreak of the Persian Wars, are the subject of the present chapter. I start with a discussion on the problems concerning the typology and chronology of Greek fortifications. I then present a brief regional survey of fortifications down to the time of the Greco-Persian Wars. This chapter owes much to the work of Franziska Lang and Astrid Wokalek in particular, two authors who have done much with regard to assembling data on Archaic Greek fortifications. In addition, I made use of the convenient index on city walls in Hansen and Nielsen's inventory of Greek *poleis*,²⁶² which is at least partly based on an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation on Greek fortifications by Rune Frederiksen.²⁶³

Fortifications offer insights into some of the issues discussed in this book's introduction, especially with regards to fighting style and martiality (walls are powerful symbols, after all). In addition, we may note diachronic developments and regional variety. But a survey of Greek walls also conjures up a number of more specific questions. What are the main characteristics of early Greek fortifications? What reasons did the Greeks have for building walls in the first place? For example, in many cases, it is clear that these defensive structures were not built solely out of military concerns, but also served as powerful symbols in their own right, unifying or dividing communities, separating town from country, the living from the dead, and so forth. And finally, what do fortifications tell us about the kind of warfare that Greeks in this period practiced? I shall attempt to provide some provisional answers in this chapter. An in-depth analysis is outside the scope of my present inquiry,²⁶⁴ not in the least because many of the sites reviewed here have not been extensively investigated.²⁶⁵

2. Problems of typology and chronology

Walls are often the only visible remains of an ancient city. Greek

262 Lang 1996; Wokalek 1973; Hansen & Nielsen 2004.

263 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 136 n. 7.

264 Fortifications shall form the focal point of my upcoming postdoctoral studies.

265 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 135.

fortifications have therefore received considerable attention, although interest in walls, towers, and gates appears to have waned in the last few decades and most of the standard books on the subject focus on either the Bronze Age or the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Walls of the Early Iron Age and Archaic period are therefore somewhat neglected,²⁶⁶ which should probably be attributed in part to the fact that all-stone walls are rare between the fall of the Mykenaian palaces and the seventh century.

Research into Greek fortifications has traditionally concentrated on understanding the chronology and morphology of ancient walls. The traditional object of study were Greek masonry styles, which are summarised in **Table 6**. Masonry styles may give a rough indication of the age of a particular (section of) wall.²⁶⁷ Walls built using curvilinear blocks—*i.e.* so-called ‘Lesbian masonry’—tend to date to the period before *c.* 490,²⁶⁸ while trapezoidal masonry is characteristic of the fifth century and later.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, while ashlar masonry was used in Archaic temples, its use in fortifications is generally assumed to be a practice of the fourth century and later,²⁷⁰ although the style was already employed in the circuit walls of Old Smyrna.²⁷¹

Uncoursed masonry	Course d masonry
Irregular trapezoidal blocks	Trapezoidal blocks
Irregular ashlar blocks	Ashlar blocks
Polygonal blocks	
Curvilinear blocks (<i>i.e.</i> ‘Lesbian masonry’)	

Table 6: Types of ancient Greek masonry (after Fields 2006, 12). In both basic types of masonry (coursed and uncoursed), the courses may be either the same height (isodomic) or they may vary in height (pseudo-isodomic).

By far the most common type of wall used by the ancient Greeks consisted of a stone sockle with a mudbrick superstructure; this type of wall is not peculiar to the Early Iron Age and Archaic period, but was also used before and since; it is by far the most common type of wall.²⁷² We also know from written sources that wooden palisades were used,²⁷³ but of these virtually no traces survive at all. The use of perishable materials in the construction of fortifications may go a long way to explain the apparent discrepancy in the evidence with regard to the Homeric notion that virtually every independent Archaic town was protected by walls of some sort.

3. A regional survey of the evidence

In her important book, *Archaische Siedlungen: Struktur und Entwicklung*

266 But note Lang 1996, 21–54.

267 However, note Whitley 2001, 314–315; Camp 2000, 42. On the continued use of Mykenaian walls, see for example Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 159–161, 245–246.

268 Scranton 1941, 43–44; Winter 1971, 88–90.

269 Scranton 1941, 98.

270 Scranton 1941, 135–136; Winter 1971, 81.

271 For a summary, see Winter 1971, 79 n. 27; *cf.* also *ibid.*, 90 n. 56.

272 Lang 1996, 28; Winter 1971, 71. Note also Winter 1971, 73 n. 12 (mudbrick walls are not by definition older than those made of solid stone).

273 *E.g.*, Hdt. 8.51.

(1996), Franziska Lang has shown that, of the 134 settlements discussed in her book, no less than 58 (a little over 43%) built an archaeologically visible fortification wall at some time between the eighth and sixth centuries.²⁷⁴

a. Western Asia Minor and off-shore islands

Settlements in Western Asia Minor and the islands just off its coast are among the earliest Greek sites to be fortified; some of these were sited on peninsulas. The common belief that fear of hostile natives 'was clearly a prime motive' for Greek settlers to build walls may be too simplistic (see below for further discussion).²⁷⁵

i. The eighth century or earlier

The earliest fortified sites in Western Asia Minor include Old Smyrna, Iasos in Karia, Kaletepe in Ionia, and Emporion (Emborio) on the island of Chios. Of these, only Smyrna initially possessed a circuit wall that protected a very large part of the settlement, while the earliest fortifications at the other sites are all found protecting their *akropoleis*.

1. Old Smyrna. The settlement itself consisted of dispersed habitation nuclei, around which was flung a large wall, perhaps as early as the late ninth century.²⁷⁶ Some believe this earliest wall, at least, was actually a retaining wall.²⁷⁷ If it is a circuit wall, it is the earliest in the Greek world.²⁷⁸ Later building phases have been dated to the middle of the eighth and the late seventh centuries. In each phase, the wall possessed a single tower. The temple to Athena, built in the seventh century, was located on a large platform that was part of the circuit wall and placed close to the north-east gate and associated tower. The walls themselves consisted of tall stone sockles topped by mudbrick. Despite its impressive fortifications, Smyrna was captured by the Lydians around 600.²⁷⁹

2. Iasos in Karia. The *akropolis* here, the highest point of the peninsula, may have been walled as early as the ninth or eighth century. Only some 80 metres of the Geometric wall have been preserved, and the fortifications underwent drastic changes in Roman times. In the North-West, a 3000 metre long wall, fitted with a wide gate and a number of towers, cut the peninsula off from the mainland. Some believe this wall was constructed in the sixth century, but it is probably much later, perhaps even fourth century.²⁸⁰

3. Kaletepe in Ionia. Kaletepe has been identified as the Karian town of Melie, but Hans Lohmann now considers it a *Fluchtburg*, to be identified with Karion Phrounion mentioned in later inscriptions from Priene.²⁸¹ The

274 Lang 1996, 21.

275 The brief quotation is from Snodgrass 1980, 32. Some of the settlements in Asia Minor occupied sites that had already been walled settlements during the Bronze Age, although not all these walls continued in use; see Lawrence 1979, 30.

276 See, for example, Lang 1996, 28.

277 Lang 1996, 28–29.

278 Crielaard 2009 (*Cities*), 365.

279 Coldstream 2003 [1977], 244; Lawrence 1979, 31–32; Wokalek 1973, 48–51.

280 Wokalek 1973, 32–34.

281 Lohmann *et al.* 2007, 80 and 102–103.

akropolis, a hill nowadays called Kaletepe, had a wall that was approximately 530 metres in length and built in the late eighth or early seventh century; as at Emporion, it may have served as a place of refuge and, also as at Emporion, there was only one building within this fortified part. This wall possessed no less than three gates, with a tower about 8 metres south of the east gate. This tower is 3.85 metres wide and between 5.85 and 6.0 metres in length. The lower town was protected by a 1460 metre long wall that was constructed in the late seventh or early sixth century. Some bronze arrowheads have been unearthed here that the excavator believes may be Kimmerian.²⁸²

4. Emporion on Chios. Only the top of the *akropolis* was protected by a wall some 800 metres in overall length, which was built in the period between the late eighth and late seventh centuries and probably served as a place of refuge. The gate was located on the Western side; to the North of the gate and connected to the wall a building has been unearthed dubbed the 'Megaron Hall'. The inhabited area on the slope of the *akropolis* was undefended and abandoned at the end of the seventh century, when the inhabitants may have moved to the settlement close to the harbour.²⁸³

ii. The seventh century

Relatively few sites possess remains of fortifications that can be securely dated to the seventh century. However, this issue is not peculiar to Western Asia Minor. Some later sites had fortifications that possibly had earlier predecessors. At Pergamon, for example, parts of the town's Classical and—especially—Hellenistic walls may date back to the seventh century.²⁸⁴

5. Çatallar Tepe on the north side of Mykale in Ionia. At an altitude of 780 metres, the remains of a settlement have been discovered here that possessed walls built in a non-Greek fashion. Intensive surface surveys have yielded only pottery of seventh-century date. A small cult building and associated bench of the seventh century and early sixth century were replaced by a *hekatompedon* around 560, possibly to be identified with the Panionion. Hans Lohmann believes the earlier settlement to have been the Karian town of Melie, which was destroyed at the end of the seventh century according to literary sources.²⁸⁵

6. Miletos in Ionia. The *akropolis* was fortified in the seventh century, while part of the town was also walled in the sixth to fifth century.²⁸⁶ The nearby hill of Kalabaktepe, to the southwest of Miletos, some 400 m from the Late-Classical and Hellenistic city wall, was fortified and served as the most important centre of one of the habitation nuclei that made up Archaic Miletos. The walls were constructed in two phases, dated to the last third of the seventh and the middle of the sixth centuries. A ramp leads up to the

282 Lang 1996, 24 (refuge site) and 29, 32; Wokalek 1973, 39–41.

283 Boardman 1967 (excavation report); Coldstream 2003 [1977], 285 and 288 (*skala* and *chora*); Lang 1996, 24 (refuge site) and 36 (gate); Wokalek 1973, 31–32.

284 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1374.

285 Refer to Lohmann *et al.* 2007.

286 Wokalek 1973, 41–42.

gate on the southern side of the hill; the north features remains of a terrace wall that are possibly Geometric in date.²⁸⁷

7. Vroulia on the southern tip of the island of Rhodos. This small settlement of some few hundred souls was founded in the early to mid-seventh century, possibly by people from Lindos.²⁸⁸ A narrow stretch of wall some 300 metres in length and only about 1.3 metres wide was built on only one side, across the promontory.²⁸⁹ The wall had a demonstrable superstructure of mudbrick. The settlement was clearly planned and featured two rows of rectangular houses built behind the wall. One tower-like building has been unearthed overlooking the site's sanctuary; the cemetery was placed outside the wall. As at Samos, a ditch was dug in front of the wall, possibly to make assailing it more difficult. The settlement was abandoned at early in the sixth century.²⁹⁰

iii. The sixth century

Many sites were fortified in the course of the sixth century, perhaps partly because of the threat posed by the Persian Empire. However, it will become clear that there is an increase in the construction of archaeologically visible fortifications in the sixth century throughout the Aegean.

8. Neandria in the Troad. Most of the walls were built in the fifth century as an extension to earlier sixth century walls. Perhaps the walls were extended when the town grew in size? The older, Archaic section of wall features a gate flanked by a rectangular tower. Remains of a possibly even earlier wall have been found beneath the Archaic wall that possibly date to the seventh century and may be Lydian in origin.²⁹¹

9. Hansen & Nielsen's inventory add a number of additional towns that may have been fortified in the sixth century. These include Assos (*akropolis* wall as well as parts of the town walls), Gargara (*akropolis* wall), Lamponia (town walls), and Palaiperkote (town walls). We know from textual evidence that the town of Sigeion was also fortified in the sixth century.²⁹² The high and steep *akropoleis* of Gargara and Assos are virtual citadels.²⁹³

10. Antissa on Lesbos. The *akropolis* walls may be Archaic; parts are executed in polygonal masonry and may therefore date to the sixth century, while other sections are clearly later, possibly even fourth or third century. A medieval fortress on a hill to the north partially obscures the ancient remains, and the visible parts of an apparently ancient wall have disappeared in the time since they were first reported.²⁹⁴

11. Arisba on Lesbos. The remains of a hollow wall lead away from an

287 Lang 1996, 24, 27, and 29; Senff 2000 *passim*; Wokalek 1973, 34–36.

288 Wokalek 1973, 53.

289 Franziska Lang points out that this is a very cost-effective way of protecting one's settlement (Lang 1996, 25).

290 Lang 1996, 26, 31, 41 (ditch), and 60–62; Whitley 2001, 171.

291 Lang 1996, 33 and 37 (gate); Wokalek 1973, 42–43.

292 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1373.

293 Winter 1971, 18.

294 Wokalek 1973, 38–39.

otherwise unfortified *akropolis*; some supports can be seen and parts of the wall are still filled with rocks and earth; the gate is badly preserved. A rectangular tower built in polygonal masonry and possessing a single room is located in the northeast. The wall may have been built in the eighth century;²⁹⁵ Hansen & Nielsen list a possible date in the sixth century, which would certainly better fit the tower.²⁹⁶

12. Other towns on Lesbos were also possibly fortified in the sixth century. These are listed by Hansen & Nielsen: Eresos (town walls), Methymna (town walls), and of course Mytilene, the home of the poets Alkaios and Sappho, the town walls of which were constructed in the period between the sixth and fourth centuries.²⁹⁷

13. Larissa in Aiolis, near the river Hermos. The *akropolis* was originally a 'native' town, possessing a wall and towers. The town was conquered in the eighth century, after which the Greeks continued to use the earlier fortifications for about a hundred years. New fortifications were then built in the middle of the sixth century, of which tower VIII is the earliest. The Greeks constructed their fortifications partially on top of the earlier structures; within tower VIII the excavators unearthed the remains of a predecessor built by the 'natives'. The fortifications are unique for the Archaic period because of the large number of towers. In addition, the interiors of these towers—dated to the late sixth and early fifth centuries—are often divided into rooms, a feature that generally does not appear elsewhere until somewhat later. All of the towers were rectangular in plan; a 3.4 metre wide gate was set between towers VI and VII. The currently visible remains of the wall date to the end of the sixth and beginning of the fifth centuries. The *akropolis* featured both cult buildings and houses.²⁹⁸

14. Kyme in Aiolis. The town walls were built in the sixth century.²⁹⁹

15. A number of sites in Ionia were also fortified in the sixth century. These include Ephesos (town walls dated to around 500, though traces of Hittite fortifications have been unearthed on the nearby hill of Ayasuluk at Selçuk), Klazomenai (*akropolis* walls date to the sixth century; town walls are fourth-century), Phokaia (town walls built in the first half of the sixth century), and Ionian Thebes (town walls also date to the sixth century).³⁰⁰

16. Pythagorion on Samos. The entire town was protected by a circuit wall constructed during the reign of the tyrant Polykrates (*i.e.*, 538–522). Most of the visible remains are much later, with sections dated to the fifth as well as the third or second centuries, but built at least partially on top of the sixth-century wall. The earliest sections of this wall were executed in polygonal masonry and roughly hewn stones. Polykrates had a ditch dug in front of the walls, traces of which have been found in between towers 30

295 Wokalek 1973, 38 with references.

296 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1373.

297 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1373

298 Lang 1996, 24–25 (nature of *akropolis*), 34–35 (towers and uniqueness of the site), 36 (gate); Wokalek 1973, 36–37.

299 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1374.

300 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1374; Büyükkolancı 2000 (Ayasuluk Hill).

and 31.³⁰¹

17. Teos. The wall discovered here described an oval protecting the *akropolis* and measured about 150 metres in length. The gate was located in the north east was flanked by a large bastion that measured 19.4 metres in length and 14.62 metres in width. The wall is similar in construction to that of Samos and probably dates to the sixth century. A later 100 metre long section of wall further west leads away from the hilltop and connects the *akropolis* fortifications with a wall lower down that was built in the third century.³⁰²

b. Eubolia and the Central Aegean islands

The earliest fortifications in the Aegean are not only found in Western Asia Minor, but also on the islands. Traditionally, the threat of piracy is thought to have stimulated the construction of walls, but this does not explain the heterogeneous nature of the fortifications. Why were some settlements, like Aghios Andreas on Siphnos, wholly enclosed by a circuit wall, whereas at Minoa on Amorgos only part of the settlement was protected?

i. The eighth century or earlier

The earliest walls on the islands, all dated to Geometric times, are found at Donousa (a small island between Naxos and Amorgos), Minoa on Amargos, Aghios Andreas on Siphnos, Zagora on Andros, and Xobourgo on Tenos,³⁰³ the latter may be even earlier, possibly Protogeometric.³⁰⁴ The earliest fortifications are often quite crude, made of locally available 'lumps or slivers of stone'.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, it appears as if by the time of the Persian Wars, most Cycladic islands were fortified, although much is still left to excavate and research.³⁰⁶

18. Lefkandi in Eubolia. Recent digs at Xeropolis (Lefkandi) have unearthed the remains of a previously unknown stretch of wall that, according to the excavators, does not belong to a building, but is probably part of either a retaining or town wall.³⁰⁷ As Lefkandi was abandoned by the end of the eighth century, the wall must be earlier.

19. Viglatouri-Kyme in Eubolia. A stretch of wall has been unearthed here that dates back to the Late Geometric period.³⁰⁸

20. Vathy Limerai on Donousa, a small islet near Naxos. An apsidal house and some interesting pyre cremations have been discovered here, as well as a fortification wall that was rebuilt twice during the Geometric period. The earliest remains of the wall are perhaps ninth-century in date.³⁰⁹

301 Lang 1996, 32 (bastion), 36 (gate), and 41 (ditch); Wokalek 1973, 45–46.

302 Wokalek 1973, 51.

303 Lawrence 1979, 32–34; Camp 2000, 48.

304 Refer to Kourou 2001.

305 Lawrence 1979, 32; see also Kourou 2001, 185 (with references).

306 Mazarakis Ainian & Leventi 2009, 213.

307 Whitley *et al.* 2007, 38–40.

308 Refer to Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1998.

309 Coldstream 2003 [1977], 70 (brief summary) and 415 (references); Kourou 2001, 185 ('probably a little earlier' than the eighth century; with references).

21. Minoa on Amorgos. Only part of the settlement was protected by a very narrow wall, with a tower close to the gate. The wall dates to the eighth century.³¹⁰ Interesting is the occurrence of eighth-century graves within the fortified area, near one of the gates. The burial area is itself enclosed by walls and located close to the *peribolos* of a cult site. One of the tombs contained a terracotta urn with the burnt remains of a warrior, his cremation pyre, the cremation grave of a woman, and an *enchytrismos* belonging to an infant.³¹¹

22. Aghios Andreas on Siphnos. Aghios Andreas, located at some distance from the sea, was already fortified in Late Cycladic III and these fortifications were re-used and extended in Geometric times. The Geometric houses were connected to a new stretch of wall built in the eighth century, which may actually be a retaining wall, although it has been constructed partially on top of a Bronze-Age wall. In Late Geometric times, a massive tower was added to the fortifications. In the middle of the sixth century, the *akropolis* was fortified using locally quarried marble ashlar blocks (isodomic). The *akropolis* wall encompasses an area roughly rectangular in shape and measuring some 100 by 50 metres.³¹²

23. Zagora on Andros. Zagora was settled before 800 and abandoned by 700, though the sanctuary near the summit of the town continued in use. The settlement was built on a promontory with a massive 140 metre long wall built across the neck to protect it from the landward side that dates to the eighth century. The wall had only one gate reinforced with a bastion. Some of the houses were connected to the wall. The *akropolis*, located some 150 metres from the settlement, was unfortified. Traces of three gates have been found. The sections of wall flanking the south gate jut out, giving it the impression of a bastion.³¹³

24. Ypsili Aprovatos on Andros. Remains of a large, Late-Geometric wall have been found here, with a large building attached to the outside of the wall (probably a tower).³¹⁴

25. Xobourgo on Tenos. The site, located in the southern part of the island at some distance from the coast, may have served as a place of refuge in the Early Iron Age. A large 'Cyclopean' wall (Wall A), built using large and undressed granite boulders, was discovered here that was built either in the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, with Protogeometric and Geometric cremation graves and pyres in front of it. The finds in the burial area include a 'killed' sword and there is evidence of post-funerary sacrifices and cult.³¹⁵ An extensive settlement existed here in the Archaic and Classical periods, which reused (parts of) the Cyclopean wall. Other parts of the circuit wall were added (or rebuilt) in later periods, including a stretch (Walls AA) of coursed and dressed rectangular limestone blocks that

310 Lang 1996, 23, 26, 32; Kourou 2001, 185.

311 Marangou 2002, 207–224.

312 Coldstream 2003 [1977], 191; Lang 1996, 27 and 33; Televantou 2001 *passim*; Wokalek 1973, 47–48.

313 Coldstream 2003 [1977], 287–288; Lang 1996, 27; Wokalek 1973, 55.

314 Lang 1996, 32.

315 Kourou 2002, 258–262.

dates to the early sixth century.³¹⁶

26. Naxos. Parts of the early settlements (Neolithic and Bronze Age) are currently submerged. Modern buildings obscure much of the earlier remains, though it is clear that after the fall of the Mykenaian palaces the inhabitants moved further inland, 'possibly for reasons of defence, but they did not go very far.'³¹⁷ As the remains of the IIIIC-wall are currently underwater, it is possible that geological changes necessitated this shift further inland. In the Early Protogeometric period, the area near the Mykenaian wall was used as a cemetery; a *tumulus* was added in the Geometric period and the area may have served as a *heroön*. Both the Mykenaian ruins and the burial mound remained visible until Roman times.³¹⁸ According to textual evidence, the town of Naxos was fortified in the late sixth century.³¹⁹

ii. The seventh century

Relatively few fortifications on Euboia and the islands of the Central Aegean have been positively identified as belonging to the seventh century.

27. Oikonomos on Paros. The entire town was protected by a circuit wall built in the early seventh century. This wall is notable for being very narrow (1.4 metres), similar to the walls at Vroulia and Minoa. The nearby hill of Koukounaries was already fortified in the Bronze Age, housed a Mykenaian mansion in the twelfth, and featured a settlement in the tenth century, before being abandoned at the end of the eighth century.³²⁰ The inhabitants probably moved from Koukounaries to Oikonomos at around 700, perhaps facilitate access to the sea.

28. Aigale (Amorgos). The town wall may date to the sixth century, although the date is not secure and it may actually have been constructed as late as the fourth century.

iii. The sixth century

A number of towns on the islands were fortified in the sixth century, of which Eretria on Euboia is perhaps the most famous.

29. Paroika (Parikia) on Paros. The settlement was at least partially walled, with a rectangular tower in the north; both date to the second half of the sixth century. The *akropolis* is currently still inhabited and no ancient traces of fortifications have been discovered there.³²¹

30. Other fortified sites include Chalke on Amorgos (sixth-century town walls), Poiessa on Keos (town walls built in the late sixth century), Myrina on Lemnos (*akropolis* and town walls built between the sixth and third centuries), and Melos (the town walls date to the late sixth to early fifth

316 For further details, refer to Kourou 2001.

317 Lambrinoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001, 157.

318 Lambrinoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001, 166–167.

319 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1372.

320 Hall 2007, 77–78; Morris 2000, 198; Lang 1996, 26.

321 Wokalek 1973, 43–44.

centuries).³²²

31. Eretria in Euboia. Eretria possessed an akropolis and a harbour some 1200 metres distant. This town's circuit wall, including the famous West Gate, were long believed to have been built in the seventh century, but a sixth century now seems more likely. The wall protected only part of the settlement and was still in use by the time of the Persian invasions.³²³ Remains of a large wall or walls of early seventh-century date near the West Gate and traced in a number of other areas are now related to canalisation of the nearby river, although a double function as fortification and canalisation walls cannot be excluded.³²⁴

32. Vrachos in Euboia, Excavations here have revealed a Late Archaic fort on the Vrachos hill, a little east of the modern village of Phylla, and only some 3.5 km removed from Lefkandi. The site has been called a fort and there are no clear signs of a settlement. There is also a fort from Byzantine and Ottoman times nearby, which demonstrates that the site is clearly of some strategic importance. The ancient fortifications occupy mostly the flat top of the hill; the earliest belong to the late sixth and early fifth centuries. Large and unworked limestone blocks are preserved of the walls that enclosed an area of about 230 by 80 metres and had a superstructure of mudbrick. Later, a wall was added within this area, shortening the length to around 180 metres.³²⁵

c. Central Greece

Walls on the Greek mainland (re)appear toward the very end of the eighth century, with some sites re-using older, Bronze-Age fortifications. The total number fortifications is remarkably high, especially considering the relative dearth of similarly well-attested sites in Southern Greece, although only a small number of sites have been securely dated. Sites north of Olympos are mentioned only in passing, as northern Greece is otherwise beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

i. The eighth century or earlier

Some of the earliest fortifications in Central Greece that have been more or less securely dated are found in Epeiros, Boiotia, and Attika. Recent finds such as those at Lefkandi demonstrate that more early walls may await discovery.

33. Ephyra in Epeiros. This site already possessed a fortified *akropolis* during the Late Helladic III period that apparently remained in use from that time onwards.³²⁶

34. Aghios Athanassios, Galaxidi peninsula (Delphoi area). The strategically important *akropolis*, with a large rampart, was fortified in the

322 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1372.

323 Coldstream 2003 [1977], 178; Krause 1972 (date of the fortifications); Lang 1996, 29, 32–33, and 35; Winter 1971, 298; Wokalek 1973, 30–31.

324 Verdán 2001, 84.

325 Full report, see Sapouna Sakellarakí, Coulton, and Metzger 2002.

326 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1369.

Late Geometric period.³²⁷

35. Thebes in Boiotia. The *akropolis* was already fortified in the Bronze Age and used throughout the Early Iron and Archaic ages. The town may have had a circuit wall as early as 700.³²⁸

ii. The seventh century

For the seventh century, we may note the construction of new fortifications in recently settled areas, such as Mende in Chalkidike,³²⁹ as well as the town of Abdera in Thrakia, which was colonised in two waves, first by people from Klazomenai, and then by those from Teos, two Ionian cities in Asia Minor. Remains of an Archaic circuit wall have been unearthed here, with signs of destruction dated to the late seventh or early sixth century. This is when a large number of colonists from Teos are thought to have arrived; they rebuilt the existing wall in the late sixth century.³³⁰

36. Samothrakia. Only part of the town was protected by a wall, which may have been built as early as the seventh century, possibly close to 700. This wall had two rectangular towers. Tower A had a foundation of trachyte rocks topped by limestone blocks. Tower B had a similar foundation, but was constructed using small polygonal blocks, but was probably built at the same time as the wall itself. This last tower was close a gate some 4.5 metres wide.³³¹

iii. The sixth century

We have relatively many sites in Central Greece with fortifications that can be dated to the sixth century. Internecine warfare may have stimulated some of the building activity. We know from Herodotos that the Phokians and Thessalians were at each others' throats, at least in the sixth century. For example, he mentions how the Phokians built a stretch of wall at Thermopylai to keep the neighbouring Thessalians at bay; this wall was later re-used in Leonidas' famous final stand (Hdt. 7.176).³³² We also know of a few fortified sixth-century sites in Makedonia, such as Oisyme and Pistyros.³³³

37. Thessaly has not been thoroughly investigated, which is a shame considering the relatively large number of fortified sites. The earliest fortifications all date to the late sixth or early fifth centuries. Astrid Wokalek's list includes Agoriane Doloros (*akropolis* wall), Dranitsa Doloros (circuit wall made of large polygonal blocks with a few towers and a bastion), and Mopsion (walled *akropolis*), Gonnokondylon (a walled *akropolis*), Gonnos (a possibly Archaic *akropolis* wall with one 45 metres long stretch still standing some 6 metres tall), and Gyrtone (*akropolis* wall and

327 Baziotopoulou & Valavanis 1993, esp. pp. 198–207.

328 Symeonoglou 1985, 89.

329 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1372.

330 Lang 1996, 37 (gate); Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 2004, 240–242.

331 Wokalek 1973, 46–47.

332 On the enmity between Thessalians and Phokians, cf. Hall 2007, 282.

333 As regards the former, see Lang 1996, 25 and 33–34.

town wall).³³⁴ Hansen & Nielsen add Amphanes (town wall), Pagasai (*akropolis* wall), and Gonnos in Perrhaibia (*akropolis* wall).³³⁵

38. Similarly, much still needs to be done in Epeiros. Hansen & Nielsen, presumably using Rune Frederiksen's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, list two sites that were fortified in the late sixth or early fifth century. These are Boucheta (town wall) and Bouthroton (*akropolis* wall).³³⁶

39. Abai in Phokis. The *akropolis* walls feature curvilinear masonry, which suggests an Archaic date for the construction of its walls; Lawrence compares the style with that found at Old Smyrna, leading McInerney to suggest a date for its construction possibly as early as 600.³³⁷

40. Parapotamioi in Phokis. The walls here are badly preserved. The masonry style is curvilinear and similar to walls found at Delphoi that have been dated to the Late Geometric period. However, the walls at Parapotamioi perhaps belong to the sixth century.³³⁸

41. Elateia in Phokis. This site had a walled *akropolis* that presumably dates to the sixth century.

42. Haliartos in Boiotia. The *akropolis* walls date from five different periods, covering a range from the Mykenaian era down to Roman times. The area protected by the walls is square, with each side approximately 200 to 300 metres in length; the area appears to have been reserved for cult practices rather than habitation. The western stretch of wall is probably Archaic, made of ashlar blocks with a section in the southeastern corner consisting of polygonal blocks; it probably dates to the late sixth or early fifth century.³³⁹

43. Samikon in Triphylia. The settlement walls, built using limestone polygonal blocks, date to the sixth century, probably the time of Peisistratos. Wall section 1a possibly encompasses a small area of its own, whereas wall section 1b and wall 2 protect a larger area. The towers that have been discovered here may be later additions to the Archaic wall.³⁴⁰

44. Halai (Agios Ioannis Theologos) in Eastern Lokris. This harbour town was sited on a mountain spur. The polygonal wall was constructed around 600. The North Gate lacked a tower but the flanking eastern wall was slightly wider, making it somewhat of a bastion. The Northeast Gate was the main entrance to the settlement. This gate was flanked by a bastion and supported by a tower-like extension on the corner of the wall a little further along; a flanking wall north of this gate is later. A later phase in wall construction dates to the fourth or third century.³⁴¹

45. Larymna in Eastern Lokris. The Archaic town was founded on a peninsula. Four stretches of wall that once protected the *akropolis* have been investigated. Of these, wall sections D, F, and H featured towers. Section H

334 Wokalek 1973, 69–72.

335 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1371–1372.

336 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1369.

337 Lawrence 1979, 35; McInerney 1999, 341.

338 McInerney 1999, 341.

339 Lang 1996, 24 (cultic use of *akropolis*); Wokalek 1973, 65–66.

340 Wokalek 1973, 68–69.

341 Bouyia 2000, 68–69; Lang 1996, 32 and 35; Wokalek 1973, 64–65.

is probably the earliest stretch of wall and dates to the sixth century at least, and was possibly even constructed in the seventh century. Sections F and D contain relatively old portions of wall executed in polygonal masonry.³⁴²

46. Other fortified sites in Eastern Lokris that have Archaic remains of fortifications include the important town of Alope (modern Agia Aikaterini; *akropolis* wall), Opos (modern Atalanti), Pyrgos Kolakas (parts of the town wall feature sockles constructed of polygonal stone), and Kokkinovrachos (Archaic *akropolis* wall with sockle constructed of polygonal stones and a gate flanked by a tower).³⁴³

47. Thasos, off the Thracian coast. The island was colonised in the first half of the seventh century by Parians. The currently visible remains of the town wall and its many gates and rectangular towers date from the fifth century and only scant traces can be detected of its Archaic predecessor. This first circuit wall was built in the middle of the sixth century using polygonal blocks.³⁴⁴

48. Other sites in Central Greece that were fortified in the sixth century include Lamia in Malis (*akropolis* walls dated to the sixth to fourth centuries; the town itself was fortified around 400), Kalydon in Aitolia (the *akropolis* walls are date to the late sixth and early fifth centuries), Chaironeia in Boiotia (*akropolis* walls date to the sixth century, the town walls to the sixth to fifth centuries), Hyettos in Boiotia (the *akropolis* walls may be as early as the sixth century), and possibly Naupaktos in Western Lokris (town walls date to either the Archaic or Classical period).³⁴⁵

d. Southern mainland Greece (Attika, the Isthmus, and the Peloponnese)

On the whole, most settlements in Southern Greece were unfortified until the seventh century. Notable exceptions are those sites that possessed earlier Mykenaian fortifications (Athens, Argos, Tiryns, and Mykenai), which continued in use. If we can believe Herodotos, the first impulse of Peloponnesian communities when faced with invasion was to build a wall across the isthmus (*e.g.*, Hdt. 7.139).

i. The eighth century or earlier

Remains of ancient fortifications that date to the eighth century or earlier are attested for some sites in Attika and the Argolid, as well as on the island of Salamis. Available Mykenaian fortifications continued in use wherever possible, as at Athens (the *akropolis* dates to the thirteenth century),³⁴⁶ Tiryns (the citadel),³⁴⁷ and Mykenai (the citadel).³⁴⁸

49. Eleusis in Attika. The town is located on a limestone hill that may

342 Bouyia 2000, 69–70; Wokalek 1973, 68–69.

343 Recent overview of these sites in Bouyia 2000, 70–73.

344 Wokalek 1973, 51–53.

345 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1370–1373.

346 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 1371; Hurwit 1999, 85–98 (nature of the *akropolis*); Lauter-Bufe & Lauter 1975, 2 (earliest circuit wall perhaps around 700); Scranton 1941, 159; Wokalek 1973, 57–60.

347 Hall 1995, 587.

348 Hall 1995, 589 (with references).

already have been fortified in Mykenaian times. Only part of the town was fortified. The Geometric wall, with a sockle of crude polygonal stones, was replaced by a more monumental fortification in the sixth century (the time of Peisistratos). This wall had a foundation of flat limestone slabs on top of which a sockle of trapezoidal blocks was laid with a height of up to 1.40 metres. The superstructure consisted of mudbrick, portions of which have been exceedingly well preserved. This wall featured a number of gates, including specimens that provided flanking fire against assailants, and eight rectangular towers.³⁴⁹

50. Asine, sited on a promontory in the Argolid. Argos conquered and razed nearby Asine around 700, probably in a campaign to consolidate control over the coastal areas of the Argive plain. The currently visible remains date to the third century. However, the so-called 'Townprince's Tower', building B, is thought to date from Geometric times. It was built using large rocks that appear 'Cyclopean', but are certainly not Mykenaian.³⁵⁰

51. Salamis. The Mykenaian fortifications have been mentioned in chapter 2 of this book. During the Protogeometric period, additional fortifications were constructed.³⁵¹

ii. The seventh century

The seventh century, like the eighth, sees little in the way of new fortifications in southern mainland Greece. However, remains of seventh-century walls have been found in Korinth and at Halieis in the Argolid. Halieis is particularly interesting as it offers an example of a wall that consisted entirely of mudbrick.

52. Skala Oropou (Oropos). Remains have been found of what might be a seventh-century military camp, possibly used for Eretrian horsemen, although further research is still required. Finds within a large structure, possibly a tower of some kind, include a round, bronze shield of seventh-century date, around 60 centimetres in diameter. Alexander Mazarakis Ainian suggests that the camp may have been built in connection to the Lelantine War.³⁵²

53. Korinth. Medieval fortifications have mostly obliterated the Classical walls, which probably in turn destroyed much of the Archaic walls. Remains of an early wall have been found at the so-called Potters' Quarter on the western edge of the settlement that date to the third quarter of the seventh century; the settled area close to the temple of Apollo was not walled. Other parts of the settlement were unprotected. Scant traces of the earliest fortifications on the Akrokorinth, especially sections with a kind of 'Cyclopean' character, may date to the sixth century.³⁵³

349 Whitley 2001, 314–315; Lang 1996, 31 and 34; Lawrence 1979, 35–36; Wokalek 1973, 62–64.

350 Hall 1995, 582–583 (summary); Lang 1996, 43; Wokalek 1973, 57.

351 Refer to Lolos 2001.

352 Mazarakis Ainian 2002, 174–178.

353 Lang 1996, 25 (nature of the two settled areas) and 29; Wokalek 1973, 67–68.

54. Halieis (Portoheli) in the Argolid. The settlement lies on a small hill close to the coast. The *akropolis* was fortified in the seventh century by a mudbrick wall. This mudbrick wall was not built on top of a stone sockle, but founded immediately on the bedrock. A hollow tower once buttressed against this wall and apparently destroyed before 600. The remains of stone walls, as well as round towers revealed through underwater research, date to the late fifth and early fourth centuries.³⁵⁴

iii. The sixth century

Aside from those sites already discussed (*e.g.*, Corinth), sixth-century walls are attested at Argos, in Attika, and at three possible sites in Messenia. The existence of walled towns in Archaic Messenia is interesting considering that Sparta—itsself famous for not having a wall throughout the Archaic and Classical periods—had by then subjugated the region.

55. Argos. There are two *akropoleis* here. The earliest is Aspis ('Shield'), which was first fortified in the Bronze Age and repaired or rebuilt in the sixth century. The remains of ancient walls on Larissa have been largely obliterated by the Venetian fortress that was built on top of them, but both Mykenaian and Archaic wall remains have been found here. The town of Argos itself was fortified in the second half of the sixth century and these defences are probably younger than the fortifications on Aspis.³⁵⁵

56. Rhamnous in Attika. This coastal site may have been an Athenian fortress rather than a regular settlement; the earliest parts of the walls here date to the sixth century.³⁵⁶ However, most of the fortress dates to the fourth century.³⁵⁷

57. Eira (Kakaletri) in Messenia. The *akropolis* was protected by a 960 metres long wall. Two gates have been found here, one in the northwest and the other in the southwest. A single tower was located in the southeast; it is 6.25 metres wide and juts out 4.15 metres from the wall. The wall is built of roughly hewn stone and may be as early as 600.³⁵⁸

58. Andania in Messenia. The remains of this ancient town have been identified near the modern village of Polichne. However, the remains are scant, with only a short section of wall located to the north of the modern village that consists of a wide sockle of polygonal blocks,³⁵⁹ and therefore possibly Archaic in date.

59. Desylla in Messenia. This site itself may have been an outpost rather than a town. The walls connected two mountain tops and may date to the late sixth century, although Astrid Wokalek writes that a fifth-century date cannot be excluded.³⁶⁰

354 Lang 1996, 29; Lawrence 1979, 34; Wokalek 1973, 66–67.

355 Winter 1971, 108 n. 18; Wokalek 1973, 56–57.

356 Pouilloux 1959.

357 Ober 1985, 139 (fourth-century walls) and 183 (road).

358 Wokalek 1973, 62.

359 Wokalek 1973, 60.

360 Wokalek 1973, 61.

4. General discussion of the evidence

It must be stressed that only some of the sites discussed in the previous section have been extensively investigated and that much still remains to be done. If one browses the index of fortified *poleis* in Hansen and Nielsen's useful book, it is clear that the walls of many towns are still undated and that some of these may be Archaic; further walls perhaps also remain to be discovered by archaeologists. Nevertheless, the list presented in this chapter is up-to-date and reasonably complete.

Research into Greek fortifications has until now mostly adopted a functional point of view. Certainly, the walls surrounding a number of Greek towns provided a last line of defence against aggressors, who could be both 'natives' as well as Greeks from rival towns. Impressive fortifications could also deter potential aggressors. However, the walled city is also a powerful symbol. Fortifications may have been a joint undertaking, underscoring the inhabitants' sense of community, or they may have symbolised the ability of the town's rulers to harness available manpower and resources to undertake such a monumental building project. In the present section, I attempt to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter.

a. What are the main characteristics of early Greek fortifications?

Franziska Lang identifies four main types of fortification walls, namely: (1) walls that protected only the highest part of a settlement (the *akropolis*), as at Emporion on Chios; (2) walls that protected only one side of a settlement while the other was protected by a precipice, as at Vroulia on Rhodes; (3) walls that enclosed only part of a settlement, as on the island of Thasos, and; (4) walls that completely enclosed a settlement, as in Old Smyrna. This last type of fortification became increasingly more common from the seventh century onwards.³⁶¹ To this typology, we may add so-called 'outposts', small fortified sites at some distance from a settlement, such as at Vrachos.

Unfortunately, as Lang points out, the remains of the earliest walls in many places are often too fragmented to say anything conclusive about them.³⁶² In some instances, the remains may even have wholly disappeared.³⁶³ However, some general characteristics can be gleaned from the evidence. It is clear that in some rare cases the walls were accompanied by trenches, such as at Vroulia (Rhodes) and Samos.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, towers tend to be relatively rare in the Archaic period; in many cases, a wall only had a single tower.³⁶⁵ In half of the sites examined by Lang, there is a tower close to a gate, and in a few instances both tower and gate may have been

361 Crielaard 2009, 364.

362 Lang 1996, 23–24.

363 Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 135.

364 Lang 1996, 41; Winter 1971, 269–272; cf. Hdt. 3.39.

365 Winter 1971, 291–292, observes that true towers did not appear until the fifth century and that these were probably inspired by fortifications in the ancient Near East. Greek walls with multiple towers, as well as freestanding stone watchtowers, invariably date to the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

fortified to create a gatehouse or bastion.³⁶⁶ Konstantin Nossov observes that in myth, such as the Trojan War and the story of the Seven against Thebes, the armies focussed their assaults on the gates (rather than the walls).³⁶⁷ Sometimes, a smaller doorway or postern also allowed access to the settlement,³⁶⁸ or between the *akropolis* and the lower town.³⁶⁹

In some cases, only part of the settlement has been fortified. Franziska Lang points out the difficulty in interpreting the nature of early Greek settlements whenever only parts of them were fortified. As examples she cites Miletos (with nearby Kalabaktepe), Korinth (with its fortified 'Potters' Quarter'), and also Eretria, and Argos. In all these sites, only parts of the settled areas were fortified, while others were left unprotected. Lang argues that these areas were probably all autonomous, not in the least because these areas are often separated by cemeteries and smaller burial plots. Only later, especially from the late sixth century onwards, do these habitation nuclei congeal into a single community; this process was called *sunoiikismos* by the Greeks (hence, synoecism).³⁷⁰

The earliest fortifications are found in Western Asia Minor and on the islands; Krete—not discussed—also featured fortifications from an early time onwards. These new constructions usually date to the ninth or eighth century. In some cases, such as at Mykenai and Tiryns, but also some of the islands, earlier Bronze-Age fortifications continued in use and were often repaired and extended in the course of the Geometric and Archaic periods. Fortifications are rare for Southern Greece, while quite common in Central and Northern Greece, even if many of these are built only in the sixth century.

Early circuit walls are rare; the case of Smyrna is, as stated before, exceptional. There is some variety as regards construction. Most walls consist of stone sockles, sometimes founded on the underlying bedrock, and have a superstructure made of mudbricks. The seventh-century walls of Halieis in Boiotia are exceptional in that they were built entirely out of mudbrick. Geometric and Archaic fortifications possessed at least one gate, often a relatively wide one, sometimes reinforced by a bastion. Early walls usually possess no more than one tower, often flanking a gate; walls with multiple towers are a feature of the later sixth century and beyond.

b. Why were (some) early Greek settlements fortified?

It is often assumed that fear was the main force behind the decision to construct walls. The early circuit wall around Old Smyrna (no. 1, above) may have been erected because the inhabitants feared attacks from the 'natives' whose country they had just invaded.³⁷¹ However, Smyrna is exceptional. Most towns in Asia Minor did not construct walls until some

366 Lang 1996, 31–32.

367 Nossov 2005, 29.

368 Lang 1996, 40–41.

369 Winter 1971, 234.

370 Lang 1996, 25–26.

371 Winter 1971, 20.

time after they had been founded, and a few sites have been continuously inhabited from the Late Bronze Age onwards (such as Ephesos and Miletos).³⁷²

i. Practical reasons: defence and internal order

Greeks may have built fortifications for reasons other than hostile natives. If we stay within the realm of purely functional explanations, it should be pointed out that Greek towns were perfectly capable of warring with each other,³⁷³ so that the growing power of, and threat posed by, neighbouring Greek cities may have been an important reason for communities to build walls. It is interesting that wall at Zagora on Andros (no. 23) protects the town from the landside; the seaside is protected by steep cliffs.³⁷⁴

Furthermore, there may have been purely practical reasons for constructing fortifications, especially walls in newly established settlements. The founders may simply have desired to set the boundaries of the settlement, perhaps to make allotting of the available farmland just outside of the town easier.³⁷⁵ In this way, walls were used to demarcate the inhabited area and to make it easier to structure the new settlement. A possible example is Vroulia in Rhodes (no. 7), which may have been settled by people from Lindos.

ii. Walls as dividers: the natural and social orders

However, a wall is also a potent symbol that can be used to mark or divide space. Based on an examination of Homer's *Iliad*, Stephen Scully has argued persuasively that the walled city was synonymous with the permanent, divine order. The city-wall separates the wild and chaotic countryside from the ordered, human community that is the city itself. Scully writes that 'Homer strongly sets Achilles' inhumanity against the *polis* order, the city wall deservedly "divine" for its protective, if tragic, embrace of civilisation.'³⁷⁶ Walls feature in the extant literature as one of the defining characteristics of (politically independent) towns, and despite recent attempts to disentangle the notion of walls being integral to the conception of Greek cities, McK. Camp argues 'that a substantial circuit wall was the *sine qua non* of the Greek *polis*.'³⁷⁷

The sacred nature of walls is made even clearer in those cases where religious or otherwise cultic buildings are closely connected to a town's defences. At Emporio on Chios, a structure called the 'Megaron' was built up against the eighth-century fortification wall, opposite the main gate,³⁷⁸ something similar is also encountered at Kaletepe. At Old Smyrna, a seventh-century temple to Athena was built atop a large platform that

372 Lawrence 1979, 32 (Melia and Miletos); Winter 1971, 106–107 n. 14 (Miletos).

373 As pointed out by Coldstream 2003 [1977], 250.

374 Snodgrass 1980, 33.

375 See, for example, De Angelis 1994, 107 n. 15.

376 Scully 1990, 53.

377 Camp 2000, 47; see also Hansen & Nielsen 2004, 135–137.

378 Lang 1996, fig. 66.

formed part of the circuit wall and was located close to the north-east gate and tower. Jan Paul Crielaard suggests that 'this was how Smyrna's inhabitants honored Athena as their patron goddess protecting their city and walls.'³⁷⁹

A wall could also physically separate one part of the population from another. In many cases (such as at Corinth, Minoa, Miletos, and others), fortifications were constructed around only part of the settlement, either the *akropolis* or part of the inhabited area. The question naturally arises who were protected and who were left unprotected. These questions are important, but they cannot be answered without further, detailed study, which I shall undertake in the near future.

iii. Walls as indicators of status, wealth and power

Furthermore, walls could also serve as indicators of status, especially wealth and power, built to compete with rival settlements. Greek communities in Asia Minor may have built their fortifications in order to compete with the fortified Lydian towns further inland.³⁸⁰ Excavations at Sardis have revealed a seventh- or sixth-century section of wall that is very similar to the fortifications at Smyrna, consisting as it does of a large stone socle executed in polygonal blocks on the west side and ashlar blocks on the east, some 30 metres in length and a staggering 18.5 metres in width, topped by a mudbrick superstructure.³⁸¹

Walls can also be interpreted as the physical manifestation of the ability of a specific ruler or, more broadly, a ruling elite to mobilise available manpower and resources. As such, a magnificent wall is a statement regarding the might and wealth of a town's rulers. Strong leaders were necessary to undertake such building projects. According to Herodotos, ancient Samos was surrounded by walls during the reign of Polykrates (who died *c.* 522).³⁸² Water was provided to the city of Samos (modern Pythagoreion) by a tunnel dug under the supervision of Eupalinos of Megara during the reign of Polykrates (Hdt. 3.60). The tunnel or aqueduct measured over a kilometre in length.

In some cases, walls may have been used by ancient aristocracies to reinforce their social positions and their claims to power. At Eretria, two burial plots from the end of the eighth century and attributable to families belonging to the local warrior-aristocracy, were located near the two roads leading out of town. Later, hero cults were installed here and, near one of them, the later West Gate was built in the seventh or sixth century. The wall served to separate the world of the living from the world of the dead, but the ancestors may have been thought to protect the city from harm. The gate itself allowed easy access between the two realms, and we should

379 Crielaard 2009, *Cities*, 365.

380 See Greenewalt & Rautbaum 2000.

381 Lang 1996, 28–29 (summary of excavation and additional comments).

382 However, of the original Polykratean circuit virtually nothing remains; the visible stretches of wall there are Hellenistic in date; see Winter 1971, 108–110 n. 19 and 295–296.

presumably imagine the ancient elites here to periodically pay homage to their ancestors by passing through gate, thereby also reinforcing their own image as protectors of the city.³⁸³

c. *What do fortifications tell us about the nature of early Greek warfare?*

Finally, what does the construction of fortifications say about the style of warfare that early Greeks engaged in? The general assumption is that many sites in the period down to the late sixth century remained unfortified and intricate siege techniques were hardly known simply because there was no pressing need for defence: military disputes were settled on open ground using hoplite phalanxes.³⁸⁴ However, there are a number of objections to this interpretation.

It is true that siege warfare remained rudimentary until the fifth century, when scaling ladders and battering-rams made their first appearance in the Greek world,³⁸⁵ even though these items were long known in the ancient Near East (as we shall see in the chapter on the iconographic evidence). In fact, only one battering ram from the Greek world is known, a fifth-century bronze sheath from the front part of the wooden ram itself, decorated on the sides by a ram's head.³⁸⁶ Peter Connolly states, perhaps too strongly, that 'Without the stimulus of mature siege warfare the system of fortifications showed no developments in the 600 years that followed the fall of Mycenae.'³⁸⁷

However, this does not mean, *a priori*, that all military disputes were honourably settled using hoplite phalanxes. Firstly, Greek walls may only need to have deterred relative small armies or groups of raiders; large armies were perhaps only a feature of the later sixth century or Classical period. Secondly, it is possible that more practical concerns, such as fear of starvation on the part of the defenders, or the need to return home quickly on the part of the attackers (to defend their own homes, look after their property, and so on), negated the need for protected sieges, with most defenders taking the fight to the enemy once they saw their crops getting slashed and their farms burnt.³⁸⁸

Furthermore, the fact that archaeologically visible remains of fortifications have been found in only a relatively small portion of the total number of settlements does not necessarily mean that most sites were indeed left unprotected: in some cases, the remains may have wholly disappeared, or the original fortifications consisted of wooden pallisades that have rotted or mudbrick that has long since washed away. However, by the Classical period, we know of a few sites that were thought to have never had any defences, such as Elis and, most famously, Sparta.

383 Cf. also Ebbinghaus 2005.

384 Refer to this book's introduction for further discussion and references.

385 Winter 1971, 85–86 n. 44; Van Wees 2004, 139.

386 Currently on display in the museum at Olympia.

387 Connolly 1998 [1981], 274.

388 Plato *Laus* 778d; Alkaios fr. 426 West. On agricultural devastation, see in particular Hanson 1998 [1983].

5. Conclusions

Fortifications are an important feature of the Geometric and Archaic periods; in some cases, earlier Bronze-Age fortifications were reused. Walls protected either the *akropolis* or part or whole of the town. The earliest are found in Asia Minor and the islands, but a considerable amount of towns in Central and Northern Greece were also fortified, especially during the sixth century. By contrast, the number of fortified sites in Southern Greece is comparatively small, although this number increases in the course of the sixth and fifth centuries.

Military concerns may have been among the reasons to construct fortifications. However, walls may have served only as a deterrent and to slow attackers down: towers are rare and in myths most sieges consists of assaults against gates during which the attackers also attempt to climb the walls (see also, especially, chapter seven). Non-military explanations appear equally valid. When founding a new settlement, a wall was one way to demarcate the area to be occupied by the actual town. But walls also had a symbolic function, as dividers. They separated the civilised town from the wild and unruly chaos beyond (farmland excepted!). Walls could also be used for political or social purposes, for example to divide the population of a town (which begs the question why some people were left unprotected). Finally, walls indicated the status, the wealth and power, of the local elites who presumably ordered their construction.

The notion that an honourable mode of fighting, especially the hoplite phalanx, did not require the use of fortifications cannot in my opinion be sustained. After all, the earliest fortifications predate the supposed introduction of the hoplite phalanx and then remain more or less unchanged for several centuries. Furthermore, changes are to be noted only from the later sixth century, when walls become more monumental (stone) and protected by multiple towers: this period also offers the strongest evidence as regards the possible existence of hoplite phalanxes, as we shall see in later chapters.

