application of poisons (a doctor is suborned to poison a water supply, p. 102; a poisoned bull is delivered by Cnopus to the Erythraeans, who eat this variant on a Trojan horse and are themselves poisoned, p. 106) to a general account of Mithradates' work on poisons and their antidotes (which could be addictive, as Marcus Aurelius found, p. 152). Particularly intriguing are the suggestion that the Ark of the Covenant may have contained germs designed to destroy any who violated it (p. 128) and that the plague that afflicted Rome after Lucius Verus' campaign in Mesopotamia may have been deliberately planted (p. 132). Just as you begin to think credulity is being stretched too far, M. comes up with a direct and convincing parallel from Afghanistan in 2001 (p. 131).

Poison is also the key to the 'sweet stratagems' noted above, which range from the poisoned honey accidentally ingested by Xenophon's troops in Asia Minor (now known as *deli bal*, 'mad honey') to the lore of poison maidens. Surely these really are a stratagem too far? They seem to be the stuff of fiction, from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Rappacini's Daughter' to Louis L'Amour's *The Haunted Mesa*. Should we believe in the poison maiden sent by the Indian king to Alexander, or even the one sent to Chandragupta and cunningly thwarted by Kautilya, author of the great work on statecraft, the *Arthashastra*? Yet in 1494 the Spanish 'intentionally chased beautiful, infectious prostitutes into the French army camp' (pp. 142–3).

The book never loses sight of the moral issues at stake in these often colourful histories. On p. 253 the author refers to the 'tragic myopia afflicting those who resort to poison weapons' and gives some sobering statistics of irreversible environmental destruction caused by their use. Nuclear material buried under the Nevada desert will remain dangerous for 100,000 years. Perhaps those who repeat history are in fact doing so all too consciously, for experts have apparently suggested the deliberate dissemination of legends (akin to the Mummy's Curse) to deter people now and in centuries to come from approaching these sites (p. 256). One hopes that this book will not give these experts further fuel for devious disinformation. Every reader will come away sobered by the fertile inventiveness of those who set out, not just to defeat those with whom they disagree, but to destroy those whom they have conveniently decreed to be evil.

The book is beautifully written and free of misprints, though I did note a few solecisms which might be corrected in the next printing: 'criteria' as singular (p. 29); 'moral questions . . . is not' (p. 30); 'no compunctions' (p. 38); 'wreaked' (for 'wrought': p. 42); 'roust' (perhaps for 'oust': p. 56); 'lay' for 'lie' (p. 61); 'a potion . . . are' (p. 92). These did not detract from the pleasure I took in the book, which deserves to be very widely read.

Institute of Classical Studies, London RICHARD STONEMAN
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni107

LIGHT ON THE DARK AGES

J. N. COLDSTREAM: *Geometric Greece 900–700 BC*, 2nd edn. Pp. 453, maps, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2003 (first edition 1977). Paper, £19.99. ISBN: 0-415-29899-7 (0-415-29898-9 hbk).

When Anthony Snodgrass brought out a second edition of his *Dark Age of Greece*, the only addition was a short (and somewhat apologetic) introductory essay which touched on matters which affected his central argument, and briefly outlined how the

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

terms of the debate had changed since 1971. No attempt was made to summarize the new discoveries of the past thirty years. In his new edition, Nicolas Coldstream has adopted exactly the opposite approach. Apart from a short preface, all the new parts of this second edition (including a substantial 'supplement' chapter, an updated bibliography, site index and notes) are at the end. This is in keeping with the stated (p. 3) rationale for the new edition—'recent discoveries and fresh research have yielded much new information concerning the Early Iron Age of Greece'. C. provides a summary of this new information in the supplement, usefully cross-referenced to the chapters of the first edition, which otherwise remain unchanged. The style is crisp, clear, and economical; the illustrations well-chosen and (with the exception of Fig. 117) of a good standard; and the overall result undoubtedly useful to scholars (such as this reviewer) who already know much about the period, and who may therefore immediately grasp the significance of, say, the re-dating of the earliest temple at the Samian Heraion (p. 400) or the finds of 'polyandria' with Late Geometric pottery on Paros (p.398).

As in the first edition, the aim is to 'shed light' on the 'Dark Ages', and the underlying assumption is that 'new finds' do so in a fairly straightforward and unambiguous manner. New finds, however, do not make for a new framework—the 'supplement' chapter follows the structure of the first edition very faithfully. Nor is there any change in the overall approach—which is art historical rather than historical, with a strong regional focus. This makes for some startling omissions, and, perhaps inadvertently, reveals much about C.'s underlying assumptions. Chief amongst these is the idea that 'Geometric Greece' is a coherent entity, an intelligible field of study. 'Geometric Greece' is defined as those regions of the Aegean (and parts of the western Mediterranean) making use of the Geometric style of pottery—presumed in some sense to be isomorphic with Greek speakers, or at least those regions of the Aegean likely to be 'advanced'. This definition, in practice, excludes the one region of (modern) Greece where new finds have not merely changed, but have revolutionized our picture of the early Iron Age—namely Macedonia. Only the Chalcidian colonies of Mende and Torone are noted, and not the *toumbas* of Assiros, Thessaloniki, and Kastanas. But why is this? Is it because the Macedonians did not manufacture Geometric pottery? They certainly imported it, just as did the Etruscans (whose sites and finds, for example Quattro Fontanili at Veii, are discussed). Or is it because, living in *toumbas* or *trapezas*, they cannot have been 'advanced'? Or because, since Demosthenes, doubt has been cast on the Greekness of ancient Macedonia? But if adoption of the Geometric style is the criterion for inclusion, then why spend so much time on ninth-century Crete and Euboea, both regions which (like Macedonia) continued to use their own versions of the earlier Protogeometric style until at least 800 B.C.? The reply may well be that it would be absurd to exclude either Knossos or Lefkandi from any survey of early Greece, but this is an argument that could be made with equal force for many sites in Macedonia.

The other omission is stated more openly (p. 3) 'we cannot deal here with theoretical reconstructions of early Greek society, often based on anthropological analogies far removed in space and time'. Why on earth not? What possible interest does the archaeology of 'Geometric Greece' have to the wider scholarly community, or indeed for the students of classical archaeology, ancient history, or classics for whom the paperback is presumably intended, if it is not to 'shed light' on this most fundamental of historical questions? C. does not quite manage to keep to this ordinance. He cannot avoid making references to the 'king' or 'royal clan' (p. 373) of Lefkandi, terminology that begs a whole host of questions about reconstructions (anthropological or

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

otherwise) of early Greek society. Nor does C. avoid touching on early Greek religion and the emergence of the *polis*, neither topic being one that can be intelligibly discussed without reference to some notion of early Greek society.

Who, then, is this book for? In scrupulously avoiding social questions, it does not appear to be aimed primarily at students (who will need a guide for such controversies), nor at a younger generation of postgraduate or postdoctoral scholars. It does indeed shed new light, but on some very old questions. C. has written a book for his contemporaries, and we still lack a truly up-to-date synthesis of the early Iron Age of Greece.

British School at Athens JAMES WHITLEY
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni108

ARCHAIC GREEK STATES

M. Kõiv: *Ancient Tradition and Early Greek History. The Origins of States in Early-Archaic Sparta, Argos and Corinth.* Pp. 427, maps. Tallinn: Avita Publishers, 2003. Paper. ISBN: 9985-2-0807-2.

The task that Mait Kõiv sets himself in this book is both historiographical and historical—namely, 'to investigate the value of the tradition about the early Archaic history of Argos, Sparta and Corinth . . . and to consider in which way this what [*sic*] can be relied on in these accounts could shape our understanding of the development of these regions in the given period' (p. 33). The problem, all too familiar to anybody who studies archaic Greece, is that the vast majority of our narrative notices for this period derive from Hellenistic and Roman authors writing centuries after the events they purport to describe. K. seeks to establish the classical source for these authors—Ephoros, more often than not—but then argues that such synthetic accounts are based on oral traditions whose basic stability is guaranteed by the fact that their centrality to community consciousness imposed limits on free invention. Many of the events described—e.g. the Spartan conquest of Lakonia and Messenia, the destruction of Argolic Asine, the colonization of the west, the oligarchy of the Bakkhiads at Korinth, and the legislation of Lykourgos—seem to date from the eighth century and, by setting them against the evident structural changes documented in the material record at this time, K. concludes that they constitute valuable traces of the pivotal process whereby states emerged in the Peloponnese.

K. begins (Chapter 1) by describing the nature of the available evidence and by defending what might be termed a 'neo-positivist' method against the scepticism that is currently popular before turning to a summary of the literary sources and archaeological evidence (Chapter 2). He next (Chapter 3) defends Pausanias' eighth-century dating for Spartan expansion against classical authors (Pindar, Herodotos, Ephoros), who dated it immediately after the Heraklid invasion, pointing out how Sparta's hegemony was articulated mythically by subordinating the Amyklaian 'Tyndarid' genealogy to that of Sparta (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 considers the origins of the Lakonian *perioikoi* and helots, as well as the legislation attributed to Lykourgos, whose association with Spartan *eunomia* was, according to K., already well established by the time of Tyrtaios.

Following a summary of literary accounts of the early history of Argos and Korinth (Chapter 6), K. examines (in Chapter 7) the evidence for the Argive king/tyrant Pheidon, preferring the eighth-century date that Ephoros and Pausanias

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni108 Published online by Cambridge University Press