LUXURY AND WEALTH IN SPARTA AND THE PELOPONNESE

Edited by

Stephen Hodkinson

and

Chrysanthi Gallou

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The Classical Press of Wales, an independent venture, was founded in 1993, initially to support the work of classicists and ancient historians in Wales and their collaborators from further afield. It now publishes work initiated by scholars internationally, and welcomes contributions from all parts of the world.

The symbol of the Press is the Red Kite. This bird, once widespread in Britain, was reduced by 1905 to some five individuals confined to a small area known as 'The Desert of Wales' – the upper Tywi valley. Geneticists report that the stock was saved from terminal inbreeding by the arrival of one stray female bird from Germany. After much careful protection, the Red Kite now thrives – in Wales and beyond

In memory of Anton Powell:
friend, collaborator, inspirer
and editor supreme

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PART III
THE WIDER PELOPONNESE AND BEYOND

IN MEMORY OF ANTON POWELL

Stephen Hodkinson

Shortly after this volume was submitted to the Classical Press of Wales (CPW), the world of Spartan and Peloponnesian studies suffered a great loss with the untimely death in June 2020 of the press's founder and General Editor, Dr Anton Powell. Since the late 1980s Anton has been a towering figure in the field of Spartan studies. Not only has he personally authored many important and seminal articles on archaic, classical and hellenistic Spartan history and society; equally importantly, he has developed a diverse global community of like-minded academic colleagues within the International Sparta Seminar and has used the CPW as a venue for the Seminar's deliberations to appear in print. Since 1999, CPW has published no fewer than 15 books on Spartan history and its modern reception, including several monographs by international colleagues. The astounding renaissance of Spartan history over the last generation would have been impossible without Anton Powell.

It was therefore a great pleasure to us at the Centre for Spartan and Peloponnesian Studies (CSPS) when Anton agreed to add the present volume from our 4th International Conference in 2016 to CPW's distinguished list of publications. That agreement was rooted in Anton's long-standing association with Nottingham. He lived in the city for four years in the late 1980s, purposely choosing a house overlooking the Trent Bridge cricket ground from which he could view the field of play. During the summers of 1986 and 1987 Anton used to time his breaks from academic work to coincide with bowling spells by Nottinghamshire's world-renowned fast bowler, the New Zealander Sir Richard Hadlee – who was subsequently awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Letters by the University of Nottingham. Anton had a deep love for the city of Nottingham, both for its lively intellectual life and for its rich working-class culture. My wife and I had recently moved our family home to the Nottingham area and it was our physical proximity and our close personal and family friendship during those years that underpinned Anton's and my subsequent long-term academic collaborations.

Maintaining his Nottingham links in later years, Anton became a frequent visitor to CSPS. Alongside his academic talks, he used his pop-up CPW bookstall to spend much time talking with and assisting our students. It is hence a matter of great sadness to us that this volume has come to fruition at a time when Anton is no longer with us to see it in print. His death leaves a gaping hole in the personal and academic lives of many people here in Nottingham and around the world.

Fare well, dear colleague, dear friend. We will not forget you.

INTRODUCTION

Stephen Hodkinson and *Chrysanthi Gallou*

This volume is the product of the 4th International Conference of the University of Nottingham's Centre for Spartan and Peloponnesian Studies, held at the University on 14th–15th April 2016 and organised by Bill Cavanagh and ourselves.

The idea for the conference theme, 'Luxury and Wealth in the Archaic to Hellenistic Peloponnese', was prompted by the exhibition 'What is Luxury?' held the previous year at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, from 25 April to 27 September 2015 – and referenced in the volume's opening chapter by Robin Osborne, based on his keynote lecture at the conference. The opening words of the conference title were intended as a partial echo of Hodkinson's earlier monograph, *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* (2000). Introducing the new theme of 'luxury' – not explicitly discussed as such in *PWCS* – and considering its application in Sparta and in the wider Peloponnese seemed to us a stimulating way of developing further discussion of the role of wealth, especially because of its thought-provoking, and perhaps even counter-intuitive, character. A 'Spartan' lifestyle is proverbially one of austerity rather than luxury; and in ancient Greece luxury was stereotypically associated with Ionia and the oriental world rather than with the Peloponnese. The validity of these stereotypes was one of the conference's central concerns.

The advertisement for the conference outlined its key aims as follows:

> The theme of the conference is timely as it aims to stimulate scholarly thinking and dialogue into past attitudes to luxury, wealth and austerity from a historical, philological and archaeological perspective, which in turn should challenge current understandings of luxury and wealth, and generate reflection on current socio-economic conditions and possible alternatives. Luxury and wealth are positioned within their most general contexts, with emphasis placed on their relationships to past lifestyles and choices made.[1]

Several of the issues outlined in this *problématique* are taken up in various ways by contributors to this volume. The importance of analysing luxury

[1] https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/conference/fac-arts/humanities/archaeology/luxury-and-wealth-in-the-archaic-to-hellenistic-peloponnese/index.aspx.

in terms of human behaviour and lifestyle choices, and others' perception of them, rather than viewing it as innate in certain objects or things – as did the V&A exhibition – is emphasised from the start by Robin Osborne (Chapter 1). Whereas wealth, grounded in the differential distribution of resources, has been omnipresent since early human history, behaviour deemed luxurious in character has been contingent on a certain level of societal development involving the existence of conspicuous leisure – for an elite, at least – and of structured social events which provided opportunities for display. The historical Greek world reached this level only in the late seventh century. Luxurious behaviour was often represented in highly gendered terms, typically associated with women, especially in the context of religious sanctuaries, partly because the practice of male nudity in the gymnasium and in athletics offered little opportunity for display.

As Osborne argues, such behaviour was very much present in the Peloponnese, including in Sparta. This argument is developed in several of the papers on Sparta in Part II of the volume. In Chapter 2 P.J. Finglass examines the subsequent transmission of the most substantial body of evidence for luxurious display in archaic Sparta, the corpus of Alkman, especially the depiction of the chorus of girls in his *First Partheneion*. The evidence that Alkman remained for centuries afterwards a key part of the Spartan repertoire – an essential step in the survival of a substantial quantity of his poetry into Hellenistic times – implies both the Spartans' continuing familiarity with such luxurious display and its continuing ideological palatability even in the classical period, normally viewed as a time of self-imposed austerity.

In Chapter 3 Chrysanthi Gallou examines archaeological and textual evidence from the archaic period for the production and dedication, both public and private, of elaborate clothing and other textiles in sanctuaries at Sparta itself and elsewhere in its territory. Owing to the non-survival of the textiles themselves, the archaeological evidence is necessarily indirect: metal dress fasteners such as pins and fibulae; tools used in the manufacture of textiles such as loom weights, spindle-whorls and weaving combs; and ivories, terracottas and miniature lead figurines depicting dressed female figures or textile models. But this evidence strongly suggests that Spartan and Lakedaimonian women participated fully in the adoption of elaborate and exotic attire seen throughout Greece around 600 BC. The evidence drops away after 500, but its indirect nature forbids any necessary conclusion about a decline in textile dedications *per se*, still less an onset of austerity, especially since this decline coincides with a general trend across the Greek world towards more simple female attire.

In contrast, in Chapter 4 Annalisa Paradiso and James Roy analyse an aspect of Spartan luxurious living that increased significantly during the classical period, one in which citizen women became involved for the first time: the most expensive and 'useless' of leisure activities, the breeding of horses for chariot-racing. They view this activity through the case of the first-ever female victor at the Olympic Games: Kyniska, the daughter and sister of kings of the Eurypontid royal house, victor probably in 396 and 392 BC. Her engagement in the sport required not only large amounts of traditional forms of wealth such as land and helots, but also considerable holdings of precious metal currency. Kyniska's behaviour after her Olympic success – commissioning for erection at the sanctuary a grandiose victory monument which far exceeded the monuments of previous victors and included a boastful inscription vaunting her unique achievement – was a striking illustration of an activity undertaken purely for show. Although her Olympic victories and their primary celebratory monuments were located outside Sparta, her preparation for the Games almost certainly involved previous displays of wealth and success at festivals within Spartan territory which would have been well-known within the Spartiate population, both female and male.

The gendered association between luxury and women highlighted by Osborne – and illustrated in different ways in the papers of Finglass, Gallou, and Paradiso and Roy – is explicitly tackled in a Spartan context in Ellen Millender's contribution in Chapter 6. Examining Euripides' repeated characterisations of assertions about Helen of Sparta's desire for barbarian luxury (τρυφή, *tryphē*), she notes that surviving fifth-century sources never associate the term with Spartan men, despite their frequent reputation for bribery and love of gold and silver. Furthermore, his representation of criticisms of Helen's daughter Hermione for her freedom of speech linked to her considerable wealth, Euripides also anticipates a somewhat different conceptualisation of the *tryphē* of Spartan women by Plato and Aristotle. In their writings *tryphē* signifies no longer luxury in the sense of extravagance, but rather the latitude enjoyed by Spartan women within their households: their excessive license to do as they pleased, owing to the lack of public training, legislation and oversight of their private activities. In Aristotle's view, it was this female license which corrupted the supposedly austere lifestyle of Spartan men, inculcating a love of money and the prioritisation of private over public interests.

Central to Millender's discussion is the argument that the meanings and applications of *tryphē* changed over time and between different texts and contexts. In his examination of Plutarch's references to *tryphē* in his accounts of Sparta, Paul Christesen (Chapter 7) likewise highlights the

broad array of meanings which *tryphē* could represent in classical texts: a sense of privilege (the original meaning when the term first emerged in the late fifth century); the quality of softness; an easy, enjoyable lifestyle; a sense of entitlement bordering on arrogance; decadence; or invidious ostentation. He also notes the problems of translation deriving from the fact that meanings of the term 'luxury' have also changed in modern times, during the last two-plus centuries largely losing their former pejorative overtones of moral disapproval. Following a line of argument perhaps initiated by the fourth-century historian Ephorus, Plutarch gave *tryphē* a fundamental role in his accounts of Sparta across his various Spartan lives: originally rampant, it was extinguished by Lykourgos, re-appeared following the Peloponnesian War, and survived the attempted reforms of Agis and Kleomenes. But what did he mean by the term? Plutarch's accounts are often cited as a major source of evidence for Spartan austerity. Considering all the relevant texts, however, Christesen argues that for Plutarch *tryphē* signified not 'luxury' as such, but rather 'decadence' or 'invidious, tasteless ostentation'. Inspired by Aristotelian ethics, Plutarch's view of the proper response to such excesses was not extreme asceticism, but a healthy mean. According to his account, in eliminating *tryphē* Lykourgos did not remove all luxury but inculcated in the Spartans an elegant simplicity which took pleasure in tasteful, beautifully-made items. Contrary to standard interpretations, Plutarch's evidence accords with earlier texts which suggest a Sparta characterised by well-mannered and restrained affluence.

The opening paper in Part III 'The Wider Peloponnese and Beyond', Alain Duplouy's discussion of funerary luxury and austerity in pre-classical Argos and Corinth (Chapter 8), starts by surveying the meaning and changing moral connotations of the term most usually associated with luxury before the emergence of *tryphē* in the later fifth century: *habrosynē*, also briefly discussed by Osborne and Christesen. Duplouy, however, eschews use of this emic, largely Eastern and Western Greek, definition of luxury (which found little echo in the early Peloponnese), applying instead the etic concept of conspicuous consumption to the archaeological evidence for funerary practices. Despite differences in the types of burials, patterns of funerary practices in Corinth and Argos followed similar, though not synchronous, sequences of change during the eighth to sixth centuries BC: early increases in the number of tombs and in the quantity and quality of grave goods; followed by complete breaks with the past with the use of new burial types and the near disappearance of grave goods; finally, the return of grave goods at a less lavish level. Duplouy rejects existing interpretations of these changes: not only those based on ethnic

divides between Dorians and non-Dorians, but also those focused on the supposed rise of aristocracy followed by a general decrease in wealth and/or by restrictive funerary legislation, and those which relate the changes to a broadening of the burial group and the emergence of the egalitarian polis. Instead, he links the changes to community development through a behavioural conception of Archaic citizenship, explaining pre-Classical Argive and Corinthian burial customs in terms of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*: the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of social groups acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. The differences between Argive and Corinthian burial customs reflect the distinctive *habitus* of the two communities. Their similar pattern of changes over time reflect comparable evolutions in each community's developing *habitus* and changing composition: from a period of lavish display, competition and social instability, through a time of restrictions and greater stratification, back (in part) to a more competitive conception of society.

Elena Franchi (Chapter 9) examines a historiographical episode concerning a later period of Argive history: Herodotus' reference to the prohibition on Argive women from wearing gold following the city's defeat in the general battle that followed the 'Battle of the Champions' in the mid-sixth century. Traditional interpretations view this prohibition as a mourning ritual or as a restriction on the display of luxury goods during funerals, but Franchi argues that it also had wider implications. In Herodotus' account, the prohibition on women's wearing gold is paired with the injunction that no Argive man should grow long hair; and both restrictions are to apply until the lost territory of Thyrea was recovered. Noting the linkage between the wearing of gold and *habrosynē*, a lifestyle which combined wealth and excellence, including victory in war benefitting the whole community, she interprets the prohibition as a limitation on displaying such a lifestyle of excellence, and especially on displaying the kind of prestige generated by prowess in war, in the wake of the Argives' military defeat. Once more we see the gendered association between women and the display of luxury, as in earlier chapters.

Moving the focus from individual communities to the region at large and from individual to public expenditure and display, Georgia Kokkorou-Alevras (Chapter 10) highlights a notable contrast in the construction of sacred buildings in the Archaic period between the materials used by Peloponnesian cities and those used by cities from other regions, with a particular spotlight on the use of marble. Its regular use in temples in the Cyclades, where marble was readily available on the surface, was unexceptional; but its costly importation for use elsewhere, such as on

the Athenian acropolis in the late seventh or early sixth century, was a clear indication of magnificence. The Peloponnese mostly lacked good-quality marble and its use was extremely limited throughout the Archaic period, except on the most extravagant projects such as the sixth-century throne of Apollo at Amyklai, which utilised grey marble from Taygetos along with imported white marble from Doliana in Arkadia. An especially notable contrast became evident at Delphi from the sixth century onwards. Whereas the treasuries of other cities were typically made entirely of marble, those of Peloponnesian cities used traditional local materials such as soft limestone (poros), a material which also remained in considerable, though not exclusive, use into the Classical period at Olympia. The Peloponnesians' non-use of marble cannot be plausibly explained in terms of limited wealth or incompatibility with the Doric architectural order. It perhaps betokens a more fundamental 'conservative' religious attitude (or *habitus*) evident also in their contemporary monumental sculpture.

In Chapter 11 Sarah C. Murray highlights another, potentially related, regional peculiarity of the archaic Peloponnese. Examination of references to non-coercive acquisitive behaviour across a range of literary texts (Herodotus, Pindar and lyric poetry) reveals a consistent pattern in which references to or concerns about sudden or capricious mobility of wealth are far less common in accounts of Peloponnesian society or in works for Peloponnesian audiences compared with accounts of, or works for audiences in, central Greece or Ionia. The clear impression given is that the Peloponnese was a region marked by greater stability of wealth and fewer opportunities for getting rich quickly. Part of the explanation may lie in a lower degree of the kind of major military activity that decimated populations and their accumulated wealth. Part may also lie in fewer opportunities for upward mobility by craftsmen, especially in Sparta with its comparatively high level of disdain for such persons, its allocation of (at least some) professions according to heredity rather than merit, and its comparative lack of famous or even named architects and sculptors. Was it perhaps concern about the destabilising potential of prospering artisans rather than the corrupting potential of their products that underpinned the Spartans' reputation for material austerity?

The focus on the Peloponnese as a whole is maintained in the two papers on the Hellenistic period by Sophia Aneziri (Chapter 13) and Selene Psoma (Chapter 14), which reveal interesting continuities and changes from Murray's account of the Archaic period. Focusing on epigraphic evidence for euergetism, Aneziri highlights further indications of Peloponnesian distinctiveness, both in the limited and unbalanced nature of the evidence compared with other regions and in the unusual

and delayed development of euergetism. Evidence of benefactions for religious purposes publicly acknowledged by the community are not attested before the first century BC, when they become relatively common. Although a small number of religious donations are attested from the previous 2–3 centuries, in no case is there evidence of public recognition of the donors or their gifts. Up till the late second century there are several honorific inscriptions for donors of non-religious benefactions, especially for donations relating to the gymnasium; but from that period onwards honorific inscriptions increase markedly and the donations concern a wide range of civic purposes, a trend which continues into the Imperial period. This unusual paucity of inscriptional evidence for euergetism in the early Hellenistic Peloponnese cannot plausibly be ascribed to lack of an 'epigraphic habit' or to the absence of civic financial need. It may be better explained by political factors: the prominence of tyrants who inhibited displays of public generosity and the demands on elite resources by the Achaean League. The removal of these obstacles in the later Hellenistic period, along with ever-increasing civic financial difficulties, may have released civic benefactors to fund a wider range of community needs and to participate in the general re-organisation and financing of cults that were taking place around the Greek world.

Selene Psoma undertakes a broad survey of the evidence for luxury and wealth in the Peloponnese, embracing coins and inscriptions as well as literary evidence. She shows that, despite the initial comparative absence of euergetism from the epigraphic record, the Hellenistic period was from its earliest years a time of enhanced wealth for the region's elites – although not reaching the scale of the Greek East. Notable evidence of increased elite prosperity compared with earlier periods includes a significant increase in possession of silverware, the sizeable number of hoards of silver and sometimes gold coinage, the large number of Olympic victors, and literary evidence for major expenditures and displays, including in third-century Sparta. The region's rich range of natural agricultural and pastoral resources, especially in Elis and in newly-liberated Messenia, continued to underpin the kind of stability of wealth noted by Murray. However, Alexander the Great's conquests in the East opened up lucrative new opportunities for acquiring wealth not present in the Archaic period, such as for Peloponnesian mercenaries serving in Macedonian forces. In addition, the quantity of coin hoards is testimony to the destabilising impact on accumulated wealth of the ongoing warfare that characterised the period.

This survey has left until last two papers purposely included in the conference to examine certain important aspects of the flip-side of luxury

and wealth. Alain Bresson's paper (Chapter 5) examines Sparta's extreme socio-economic crisis – rooted in social inequality and resulting in the decline in its citizen population between 480 and 244 BC to less than one-tenth of its previous size – from the perspective of its closed economy and the resulting problem of debt. In an argument chiming with certain aspects of Murray's thesis regarding the restricted opportunities for wealth acquisition in the Peloponnese as a whole, Bresson analyses the constraints on economic development imposed by key features of the Spartan economy. The lack of market incentive for helot farmers to transform their agricultural processes stagnated potential increases in production. The prohibition of their private manumission and of their sale outside the state removed other sources of profit and cost-cutting flexibility that were available for masters elsewhere. The helots' drastically reduced purchasing power also impeded the creation of a developed market economy. The fiat iron spit currency separated domestic from foreign exchange, which was itself limited in the Classical period, as attested by the sparse finds of coin hoards or of individual coins. Limited monetisation was accompanied by the hoarding of precious metal by a minority of wealthy Spartiates. In this situation, in which the main source of wealth was a form of agriculture constrained in its productive capacity and limited to an internal market, indebtedness, a prevalent feature of Spartan society, had devastating consequences. Less wealthy Spartiate landowners who had fallen into serious debt in years when bad harvests had left them short of their mess contributions and when grain prices were high could not recoup their losses in years of good harvests, when prices were correspondingly low. If Classical Sparta was a society in which one could not get rich quickly, it was certainly a society in which increasing poverty could become inescapable.

Lucia Cecchet's paper (Chapter 12) reminds us that in Greek antiquity, as in the present-day world – including in Greece – since the financial crash of 2008, austerity could result not only from self-imposed measures or from ones designed to control expenditure and display by the rich; it could also result from measures imposed upon the poor or it could involve a deprived lifestyle necessarily adopted by the poverty-stricken. Arguing, however, that in Greek antiquity such generalised austerity affecting a broad section of a city's population differed from its modern counterpart in that it was not used as a tool for tackling economic crisis, she surveys a range of cases involving austerity, or relief from austerity, for ordinary and poor citizens. Some procedures were imposed specifically on ordinary citizens by their own state: for example, a measure against those living beyond their means and hence suspected of making their money through criminal activities; also laws attested in many cities against idleness

or unemployment. The ascription of both these class-based procedures to oligarchic Corinth should perhaps not surprise. Other procedures were, like modern punitive international sanctions, imposed by external powers: most notably, the Megarian decree imposed by the Athenians, which brought hardship in Megara to small farmers and the landless reliant on purchasing goods in the marketplace. In contrast, the poverty-driven austerity that formed an inescapable part of many people's lives was ameliorated by certain types of relief. One type involved temporary periods of ritual inversion: some focused on slaves such as at Peloponnesian Troezen, others on the free poor. The latter typically acted as safety valves for the wealthy, although ritual threats could spill over into genuine violence and occasionally even compel the rich to make concessions of debt relief, as apparently at both Megara and Corinth. (The killing of wealthy Corinthians who refused to do so adds to the picture of class-based divisions mentioned above.) More regular relief, especially in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, came from acts of euergetism by the rich, whether by native citizens or foreigners. Many of their donations or loans, including late Hellenistic examples from Argos and Kotyrta in Laconia, were made to the city at large. Some rare examples, attested exclusively outside the Peloponnese, were targeted specifically at the poor, including funding the marriage dowries of girls from poor families. Such measures, occasionally institutionalised, also strengthened the well-being of the city at large, reducing social tensions and the likelihood of conflict – as modern programmes of social welfare have done.

What, then, of the austere and unluxurious stereotypes of Sparta and the Peloponnese with which this Introduction started? Clearly, no single answer should be expected to apply over the many centuries of significant historical developments covered in this volume. In Sparta, for example, there were clear differences in the role that wealth played in the lifestyle of its citizens both between the Archaic and Classical periods and between the Classical and Hellenistic. Nevertheless, the studies in this volume suggest that, even in the more restrained society of the Classical period, the lives of Spartiate citizens were characterised more by simplicity than by austerity. Moreover, although luxurious display may have declined and altered in its character and incidence in that period, it never entirely ceased or completely lost acceptability, partly because it took new forms through activities such as engagement in chariot-racing. Its gendered association with women continued, although partly complicated by philosophical criticisms which focused on other supposedly reprehensible aspects of female behaviour. The volume's studies also suggest that in other regions of the Peloponnese luxurious display was likewise often very much present,

but never uniformly so, sometimes alternating with lengthy periods of greater restrictions, sometimes decreasing or increasing dramatically as a consequence of transformative historical events such as the Argives' loss of Thyrea or the conquests of Alexander.

That said, certain features of both Sparta and the Peloponnese explored in this volume do seem to support certain facets of the stereotype, especially in the late Archaic and Classical periods. Here again we must beware of painting a uniform picture: Corinth and Sparta, for example, differed considerably in their economies and, apparently, in their attitude towards artisans. Overall, however, a combination of interrelated factors that applied to much of the peninsula – economies largely agrarian in character, relatively limited internal markets, greater stability of wealth and fewer opportunities for self-enrichment, alongside political systems mostly inclined towards oligarchy – seems to have limited the roles of luxury and wealth in comparison with other areas of the Greek world. Even during the times of enhanced wealth and greater opportunities in the Hellenistic period, the development of euergetism was relatively delayed and luxurious displays never reached the scale of the Greek East.

* * *

It remains for us to thank the many people and organisations who made the original conference a success and who have helped to turn the conference into the present volume. Pride of place must go to Bill Cavanagh, Jim Roy and Peter Davies, who made significant contributions to the conference planning as fellow members of CSPS's Management Board. Bill and Jim also chaired conference sessions, as did Ellen Millender and Paul Christesen, and critiqued several draft papers for the volume. Peter was also part of an efficient and dedicated team of conference assistants, in company with Elisavet Fergadiotou, Kendell Heydon and Vasiliki Brouma.

We are equally indebted to invaluable administrative help from the School of Humanities Management and Research Office, especially Monica Beale and Nicola Tuxford. We also gratefully acknowledge generous financial support from a variety of sources: the J.F. Costopoulos Foundation; the University of Nottingham's School of Humanities Strategic Fund and Faculty of Arts PVC Fund; and the Nottingham-Leicester Ancient History Fund. A grant from the Classical Association enabled us to provide several student bursaries.

Besides the chapters in this volume, the conference itself was graced by excellent papers from Lyndsay Coo, Thomas Coward, Kate Gilhuly and

Hans van Wees. We thank them for their outstanding contributions to the event.

Finally, we wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the small team of people who have taken over the running of the Classical Press of Wales following Anton Powell's untimely death: his wife Dr Ioanna Kralli and his friends Nancy Bouidghaghen and Professor Stephen Mitchell. We thank them for their commitment to fulfilling Anton's wishes for the publication of this volume.

PART I

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

1

THE POLITICS OF FLASHING: FROM WEALTH OF MATERIAL TO DISCLOSURE OF LUXURY IN A WORLD FULL OF GODS

Robin Osborne

Distinguishing wealth and luxury

If there was ever a time when there was no such thing as wealth, that time must have preceded the age of hunter-gatherers. As soon as resources of any sort are differentially distributed, we can talk of wealth, which is always a comparative term. The mark of wealth is to have something others lack, or more of something that others have but would like to have more abundantly.

Luxury is a different matter. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) offers two current meanings:

1) '(habitual indulgence in) choice of costly surroundings, possessions, food etc.;'
2) 'a means or source of luxurious enjoyment; *spec.* something desirable for comfort or enjoyment, but not indispensable'.

This neatly indicates the two different ways in which we think about luxury – we think about luxury as things ('means of luxurious enjoyment', as the dictionary puts it) or we think about luxury as behaviour ('choice of costly surroundings etc.'). But a closer look suggests that luxury as things is highly problematic: in the contemporary world we do not actually use the term luxury for 'something desirable for comfort or enjoyment, but not indispensable': televisions have long since ceased to be regarded by anyone as a luxury, for instance; nor is a gold wedding ring. When people said something like 'taking taxis in the winter is my little luxury', or 'having an ice cream on a Sunday is my little luxury' (phrases none of us

has probably heard for many years), which is the usage the *Shorter Oxford* seems to be imagining under sense 2, they were not in fact identifying taxis or ice creams as the luxury, it was the choice to take taxis or eat ice cream, to prefer pleasure or comfort to the small but significant economic loss entailed, that was in question.

Just how problematic it is to think that luxury resides in things emerged from an exhibition staged from 25 April to 27 September 2015 at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The exhibition was entitled 'What is luxury?', and curated by Jana Scholze and Leanne Wierzba. The curators claimed that the show addressed 'the production of exceptional objects, which demonstrate an extraordinary investment in time and hand making' and that it explored 'how attitudes to luxury are shaped by cultural concerns and personal dreams'. Using terms like 'pleasure', 'exclusivity', 'passion', 'authenticity' 'as aids to framing and focusing the interpretation of objects on display and to stimulate thinking and reflecting on the meanings of luxury', the exhibition showed many objects 'characterised by the significant investment of time and application of exceptional skill on the part of their makers'.[1] But as the reviewer in the magazine *Crafts* noted, although there was no doubting 'the levels of skill, patience, love and determination on display', how exactly the relationship of these to luxury was supposed to work was often unclear: 'I'm not convinced I got any closer to unpicking the nature of luxury by the time I left'.[2]

The V & A exhibition took the fact that something is a luxury to reside in the object itself, but luxury is something that applies to people and their behaviour – their indulgence, choice, enjoyment – it is not innate in things. As Grewe and Hofmeester have recently insisted 'Objects and practices thought to be [luxurious] in one sociocultural context are deemed profane and everyday in another such context' (2016a, 8). There are indeed features of material objects that make it possible for them to be luxuries – that they are very durable or very fleeting, very effective or very finely crafted; that they appeal to one or more of the senses because of how they feel, smell, look, sound or taste; that they are hard to come by – but none of these is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for something to become a luxury. An old-master painting stored in a bank vault contributes to its owner's wealth, but will never be a luxury. There can indeed be private luxuries, but those require that the object is enjoyed.[3]

Luxury as a moral matter

Since 'luxury' is about behaviour it is always potentially a moral issue. This makes it attractive to legislators, for whom the moral high ground is always an advantage, but not always easy to legislate about. Ancient

sumptuary laws, to which I shall return, targeted behaviour (how you bury, what you can wear in the way of jewellery), but did not always persuade people to change what they did (note all the opposition in the Roman Republic to the Lex Oppia, for instance).[4] Modern states have sometimes attempted to tax supposedly luxury things. So the Bush administration in 1991 introduced a Luxury Tax, rated at 10% on boats over $100,000, cars over $30,000, aircraft over $250,000, and furs and jewellery over $10,000. The tax had a massive effect: an estimated 100,000 people lost their jobs in yacht-building and related industries. Two years later it was deemed to have failed, and everything except the tax on expensive cars, which lasted another decade, was withdrawn. Taxing luxury items will always be vain, since living a life of luxury does not demand any particular item, it demands being perceived to behave in a particular way. Singling a particular item out for control may serve only to make it a particularly desirable symbol of luxury: repeated Japanese laws limiting the size of tortoiseshell hair ornaments in the eighteenth century only resulted in larger and thicker tortoiseshell combs being used at the end of the century than at the point when legislation was first introduced.[5]

But if luxury is a particular kind of behaviour, how are we to identify that behaviour? Not all behavioural issues have a moral dimension, and the assumption that luxury is necessarily a moral issue distorts history.[6] Vanessa and Robert Gorman have recently devoted a 450-page book to looking for *Corrupting Luxury in Ancient Greek Literature*. 'Corrupting luxury' is the expression they use for 'a widely accepted truism of Western culture that luxury corrupts' (2014, 1). They end up arguing that one cannot find this notion until the first century BC and that it is effectively a product of the Roman world.[7] In other words, what they are looking for is the *luxuria* of Sallust, and they demonstrate that no-one writing in Greek tries to express a similar idea until Sallust, Cicero and Livy have put *luxuria* and its corrupting effects onto the mental map of what Rome's empire has done to Republican Rome.

The fact that there is a word for corrupting luxury in Latin, *luxuria*, might encourage us to think that if it is Greek luxury we are keen to understand, we should find the Greek word for it. The usual candidate for such a word is τρυφή (*tryphê*), the word used by Athenaios and other later Greek authors to translate the Roman weight of *luxuria*, but not used by classical authors in that sense.[8]

So how is τρυφή used in the classical world? It turns out that τρυφή is not used at all until the later fifth century, appearing initially in Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and reappearing all over Aristophanes. Τρυφή is the mark of those who are comfortable and confident in their position, pride

themselves on it, and are a bit precious about it; τρυφή marks the behaviour of those who put themselves and their comfort and material interests first.[9] So Euripides has Theseus remark on the many distinguishing features of humanity (speech, reason, agriculture, sailing) and then say 'Do we not display τρυφή when god gives us such equipment for life but we reckon this isn't sufficient?'.[10] Similarly, he has Iphigeneia describe the three goddesses judged by Paris as 'Cypris who displays τρυφή in desire, Pallas in the spear, and Hera in the royal bed of lord Zeus'.[11] Theseus' remarks show that humankind as a whole might be self-indulgent and precious, but the term nevertheless has gendered connotations: some sort of fastidiousness and pride is expected of women, but for humans in general to display it constitutes behaviour worth noting. Grewe and Hofmeester have noted in a rather different context that, 'Gender seems to be very important in defining the meaning of a luxury object' (2016b, 306); it is even more important in defining the meaning of luxury as a practice or behaviour.

The appearance of τρυφή only in the second half of the fifth century does suggest that something changed at that point. But that change is much more that luxury acquired a particular, and particularly dangerous, political implication than that luxury itself was invented.[12] There was no shortage of individuals preening themselves on their appearance before the age of Alcibiades. Scholars have explored a range of other terms which occur in archaic Greek literature and have similar connotations, in particular ἁβρότης/ἁβροσύνη and χλιδή.[13] Signal here, though unusual in its negative overtones, is Xenophanes' description of the people of Kolophon as

> They learned useless *habrosunai* from the Lydians, while they were free of hateful tyranny, and went into the marketplace wearing purple cloaks, no fewer than a thousand in number all told, boastful, taking pleasure in their handsome coiffure, anointed with unguents of contrived perfume.[14]

Here are people who not only preen themselves on their looks, but who do so by virtue of forming close links with foreigners and turning a blind eye to matters closer to home. As with images on Athenian pots of men dressed in chitons as well as *himatia* and carrying parasols, so also here the question of whether the image conjured up is purely foreign or also feminised is hard definitively to answer on the basis of this passage alone.[15] But there is little doubt of the specifically feminine world conjured up when the similar range of χλιδή is advertised by Sophocles' Electra. She distinguishes her own position from that of her sister Chrysothemis by saying that 'I would never yield to [Clytemnestra and Aigisthos], not even if someone were about to bring me the gifts you have received,

in which you now luxuriate (χλιδᾷς)'.[16] These studies of words give us grounds for reckoning that the history of luxury, as a particular form of self-indulgent behaviour which tends to be associated particularly with women, starts before the fifth century;[17] but if they are to tell us anything about the history of luxury, these word-studies need to be more broadly contextualised. To do that, it is useful to return to the comparison of luxury and wealth, and to see where luxury is missing, as well as where luxury is present.

The birth of luxury: the literary evidence

There is a lot of wealth around in the Homeric epics. Both Greek and Trojan rulers have storehouses full of it, from which they bring suitable gifts for gods (e.g. in *Iliad* 6) or guests (Menelaos to Telemachos), or to reward or appease others (the prizes at Patroklos' Funeral Games; the goods variously offered to Achilles). Individuals distinguish themselves by the expense of what they wear – as in the gold armour of Glaukos (*Iliad* 6. 236; cf. the gold shield of Nestor, *Iliad* 8.193), or the gold jewellery worn by Amphimachos 'like a girl' (*Iliad* 2.872; cf. Euphorbos with silver and gold hair ornaments at *Iliad* 17.52).[18] That remark about the feminising effect of wearing gold and silver aside, the Homeric epics are very matter of fact about the display of wealth – notoriously it is only at the moment that he exchanges his armour with Diomedes that Glaukos' armour is revealed to be gold. Far from being useless, these stores of wealth emerge as they are used – in gift-exchanges that create on-going bonds of indebtedness that serve even to save lives.

But if there is plenty of wealth in the Homeric epics, is there any luxury? Certainly not amongst the suitors, whose behaviour is marked by excess, but not by luxury. Nor do we find a life of luxury in Phaeacia, or on Kalypso's island, or in Troy. Their modern reputation might encourage us to think of the Lotos-eaters as living in luxury, but all they have is the *lotos*, a food so delicious that it leaves them thinking of nothing else. Nor is it clear that there are individuals who luxuriate. Even Paris, for all that his bedroom is fragrant and his bed adorned with spirals (*Iliad* 3.382, 391), is not presented as living luxuriously.

There is not much luxury to be found in Hesiod, either. Again, we might expect Perses to be criticised for his life of luxury, or the bribe-devouring *basileis* to use the bribes to feather their own beds in a more or less literal way, but neither they nor Pandora display luxurious living. Hanging around the smithy and chattering the day away is Hesiod's image of frivolous behaviour, not spending one's resources on fine clothes or fine food and being attended by servants.

The first person in Greek literature to have a claim to be portrayed as indulging in the choice of costly surroundings, that is in luxury, is arguably the woman of whom Semonides, writing in the seventh century, says:

> A mare with delicate mane bore her. She avoids servile work and trouble and would not touch the mill or lift the sieve or throw dung out of the house, nor sit by the oven – she shuns soot. Only when she has to, does she make love to her husband. She washes off the dirt twice every day, sometimes three times, and anoints herself with scent; she has her hair always combed out, and is shaded with flowers. Such a woman is a fine sight for others, but a bad thing for the husband who has her, unless he is some tyrant or ruler who glories in his heart at such things.[19]

The 'habitual indulgence in the costly' here is acknowledged to produce stunning results and, although there is no narrative of corruption as such, it goes with behaviour incompatible with doing a wife's work.

Hipponax and Anacreon in the sixth century give us further glimpses of luxury life-styles, without using any single term to describe luxury. Hipponax offers a vignette of a luxury life that proved ruinous:

> One of them, dining at his ease and lavishly every day on tuna and savoury sauce like a eunuch from Lampsacus (ὥσπερ Λαμψακηνὸς εὐνοῦχος), ate up his inheritance; as a result he has to dig a rocky hillside, munching on cheap figs and coarse barley bread, fodder for slaves (frg. 26, trans. Gerber, quoted by Athenaios 304b);
>
> not champing on partridges and hares, not seasoning pancakes with sesame, and not dipping waffles in honey (frg. 26a, trans. Gerber, quoted by Athenaios 645c).[20]

Anacreon tells us of one Artemon who has, by contrast, gone from rags to riches:

> Once he went about in an old cap, the wasped-headdress of a Cimmerian, with wooden astragals in his ears, and about his ribs a hairless ox hide that had been the unwashed cover of a wretched shield—the scoundrel Artemon who made a fraudulent living by consorting with bread wenches and whores-for-choice, with his neck often in the stocks or else on the wheel, and his back often flogged with the leather scourge and his hair and beard plucked out; but now he goes in a carriage, wearing gold earrings and carrying an ivory sunshade just like women: σκιαδίσκην ἐλεφαντίνην φορεῖ | γυναιξὶν αὕτως (Anacreon 388, trans. Edmonds).[21]

Once more the explicit gendering of these descriptions is to be noted – 'like a eunuch', 'just like women'.

The birth of luxury: the non-literary evidence

If the literary evidence suggests that the life of luxury starts in the late seventh century, and starts with women, what about non-literary evidence? There is no question that the archaeological record is full of wealth. At different periods the goods deposited in graves are more or less varied and at some periods there seems to be some attempt to limit the degree of funerary display and control what goes into graves – something that can be shown from literary and epigraphic evidence to be explicitly attempted in the historical period. But throughout the early Iron Age, from the Lefkandi Toumba burial on, some burials are marked out by the conspicuously precious objects buried in them. The signs of riches include, in particular, gold jewellery of various sorts.[22]

But these rich objects in early Iron Age tombs nevertheless do not seem to be signs of luxury. Although there is a sense in which those choosing to bury the dead with such objects are indulging in choice of costly goods, the objects buried are treated as personal to the deceased. The objects themselves tend to be rather random – various sorts of jewellery are placed in graves; no single precious item is found repeatedly that might be taken to be the badge or token of a particular lifestyle, nothing that could signal luxury as a practice or behaviour. For all that cities come to like to legislate about funerals, that legislation is much more concerned with the ostentation of the events surrounding the burial than with clamping down on the display of luxury as such.[23]

What about the objects dedicated in sanctuaries? During the eighth century, as Snodgrass (1980, 52–4) famously showed, not only is there a very significant increase in the amount of wealth being deposited in sanctuaries, but there is a shift from depositing goods in graves to depositing them in sanctuaries. The sorts of items that mark the vast increase in dedications during the eighth century, however, are anything but luxury items – small bronze and terracotta animal figurines, pins and fibulae. But during the archaic period the nature of dedications changes markedly.[24] This is partly seen in the arrival of large-scale sculptural dedications in the form of *kouroi*, *korai*, and mounted figures, but it is also seen in the differential deposit in different sanctuaries of dedications which reflect different particular life-styles. The *kalathoi* (wool-baskets) of the acropolis sanctuary at Emborio on Chios, by contrast to the bronze belts from the harbour sanctuary there, have come to symbolize this, but they are just one example.[25]

The differential offerings at different sanctuaries well illustrate the ways in which Greek polytheism worked to offer a place of display for every lifestyle. The offerings found at a given sanctuary certainly relate to

the deity worshipped there – it is no accident that Apollo gets many *kouroi* in his Ptoion sanctuary in Boiotia, Athena many *korai* on the Athenian acropolis. But the offerings also relate to the worshipping group. This is perhaps most nicely illustrated by the tens of thousands of small lead soldiers found among the votive offerings at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. The mutual implication of worshipper and deity comes from the twin role of dedications, both as memorials of things achieved by the dedicator with the help of the deity and as 'things of delight' to the deity. So the bronze discus dedicated by Exoida to commemorate his victory over 'the great-spirited Kephallenians' in the third quarter of the sixth century clearly says something about him; the 'vaguely phallus shaped' boulder dedicated in the later fifth century at Antibes explicitly identifies itself as 'Pleaser' (Τέρπων), servant of Aphrodite, clearly saying something about the goddess to whom the dedication is made; and, although the dedicators are in fact never named, it advertises too the sorts of people who frequent and make dedications in this sanctuary.[26] Votives both put on display the nature of the deity in question and gave an impression of what sort of person the dedicator was.

It is the advertisement of what sort of person the dedicator was, that is, effectively the advertisement of their customary behaviour, that is most significant in this context. When in Aristophanes *Wealth* 842–9 the just man, newly enriched by a Ploutos who can now see, proposes to dedicate his old clothes to the god, Karion points out that this is problematic: χαρίεντα γ' ἥκεις δῶρα τῷ θεῷ φέρων – 'Those are charming gifts you have brought to the god!' (849). In general, we are left merely to guess which dedications were reckoned out of place at a particular sanctuary, but from the end of the sixth century there survive various inscribed sanctuary regulations that seem to seek to place restrictions on what sorts of identities dedicators can advertise.

The luxury of Peloponnesian sanctuaries

A text from Sparta, known only from a copy made by the Abbé Fourmont in the eighteenth century, appears to outlaw dedication of any fabric not woven on the instructions of the *polianomos*.[27] The text is incomplete and, with the original lost, a great deal of uncertainty surrounds this example. But if Beattie's reconstruction is correct, we have here a sensitivity to what garments it is appropriate to display, to show off, in this sanctuary, probably a sanctuary of Demeter.

More common, and more important for the discussion of luxury, are the sacred laws, again predominantly from the Peloponnese, that seek to control not what worshippers dedicate but what they themselves wear.

A bronze tablet from north Arcadia dating to somewhere around 500 BC forbids the wearing of a ζτεραῖον λῶπος, on pain of having to dedicate it or suffer a harsh penalty: 'If a woman wears a garment made of the skin of a wild beast, it is to be consecrated to Demeter Thesmophoros. If she does not consecrate it, may she die a bad death for her conduct unfavourable to the cult'.[28] Later inscriptions show wearing of jewellery and other particular clothes being regulated. So a third-century regulation from Dyme forbids women at festivals of Demeter from wearing more than tiny weights of gold, or coloured or decorated clothing, or make-up, or from playing the *aulos*.[29] A regulation of similar date from the sanctuary of Despoina at Lykosoura insists that the only gold that can be brought in is for dedications, and that there should be no brightly coloured or black clothing, and no shoes, rings, flowers, or braided hair.[30] Even more elaborate are the regulations made in the first century BC or first century AD, and perhaps in special circumstances, for the Mysteries at Andania in Messenia.[31]

These prohibitions have sometimes been seen in the context of pollution, but although the combination of prohibition on gold and coloured clothing with prohibition on pregnant or breast-feeding women in the Lykosoura regulations might seem to justify this, it is important to put these prohibitions also into the context of what we know about festivals. The accounts of festivals from the archaic period on that make it clear that they were occasions for dressing up and showing off.[32] The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* mentions the Ionians in their long chitons (ἑλκεχίτωνες) gathering for a festival of Apollo on Delos and imagines what someone seeing them would say:

> a man who came upon them on that occasion when the Ionians are all together would say that they were immortal and ageless. For he would see the charm of them all and would feel delight in his heart when he set eyes on the men and the women with their beautiful girdles and their swift ships and their many possessions.[33]

The (probably) sixth-century poet Asios of Samos similarly talks of those who

> combed their flowing locks and went, all dressed in fine garments, to the sanctuary of Hera; their snow-white linen robes adorned with cicada-shaped golden brooches reached to the floor of the broad earth; their hair, with golden grips, waved in the wind and skilfully-crafted bracelets encircled their arms.[34]

In Sparta too Alkman, in describing the demands made by Hagesichora, describes how the girls' chorus is decked out when he writes 'no such

abundance of purple is available as to come up [to her demands], nor high-wrought serpentine bracelet of solid gold nor Lydian headband, pride of dark-eyed girls; nor the hair of Nanno'. Hagesichora is herself described earlier as having hair that has 'the bloom of undefiled gold'.[35]

Those described (or imagined) by Asios and Alkman were advertising their indulgence in choice of costly possessions. The trope of the imagined spectator employed in the *Homeric Hymn*, and the trope of having one member of the chorus comment on the other members in Alkman, reinforce the sense that these are gatherings to watch, not simply to take part in. What is going on here is not private between worshipper and deity. Sanctuaries in general, and festivals in particular, put behaviour on display and hence provide the context luxury demands, a context where how an individual luxuriates in her costly possessions can be observed. The stronger the sense that certain forms of display were or were not appropriate for a given sanctuary, the stronger the statement made, one way or another, when that (appropriate or inappropriate) display was put on. In a museum exhibition, the trailing chitons or the gold cicada-brooches become mere signs of wealth. Wear them, or dedicate them, within a sanctuary and they become a statement of luxury, a matter of *indulging* in the costly.

The gender of luxury

We observe again here that luxury is gendered. It is sanctuaries of Demeter and Despoina that advertise their restrictions, and they advertise their restrictions specifically with regard to behaviours that are either directly attributed to women or characteristic of women worshippers. It is the chorus of young girls which catches the eye of Alkman, as well as the self-regarding eyes of its participants, and although both the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Asios are scrupulous in making their language inclusive (by use of masculine plurals), the particular features that are noted – beautiful girdles, trailing robes, golden hair-grips and brooches – are predominantly characteristic of women (though the 'swift ships' of the *Homeric Hymn* are no doubt the ancient equivalent of the characteristic modern man's luxury, the sports car, but they are not displayed in the sanctuary, and are only in question because this is a festival on Delos to which people have travelled over the sea).[36]

Wealth is in question as soon as it is possible to compare different material circumstances. Luxury comes into question only when there are social situations which provide opportunities for conspicuous display in a context of conspicuous leisure. Only then can indulgence in choice of costly surroundings be observed. We cannot have luxury until we have