

Chapter 7

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Following the Local Traces of the (Argive?) Games in Honor of Hera

The sanctuary of Hera that lies on the slopes of Mount Euboia roughly ten kilometres to the south of Mycenae is so commonly associated with the city of Argos that it seems almost maladroit to write of it as anything other than the *Argive* Heraion. The association between Hera and Argos figures prominently in the ancient tradition: Homer uses the epithet Argive Hera in the *Iliad*,¹ the famed Kleobis and Biton are, according to Herodotus, ‘of Argive stock’,² as was their mother who needed to travel to the festival of Hera in Argos, Argive coinage depicts the head of the goddess prominently, and the list could go on.³ This ancient link between Hera and Argos has been readily adopted by modern scholars as well, who almost unanimously refer to the temple as the Argive Heraion, and indeed François de Polignac’s landmark 1984 study *La naissance de la cité grecque* uses it as ‘le cas le plus éclairant’ of the fundamental role played by extramural sanctuaries in the creation of a polis community – and vice versa.⁴ Argos and the Heraion

1 Hom. *Il.* 4.8: Ἥρη τ’ Ἀργεῖη, also 5.908; This being noted, the fact that both uses are in the same metrical position suggests this recurrent use of the epithet is perhaps compositional convenience rather than an explicit effort on the part of the poet to link Hera to Argos. The ambiguity of the term ‘Argive’ in Homer also needs to be highlighted. In Homer, Argos refers to everything ranging from the home of Diomedes, the territory of Agamemnon, or the favorite city of Hera, thus it can mean either the city itself, the geographical zone of the Argive plain, or the kingdom of Agamemnon stretching from Nafplion to Corinth. To complicate the matter, the Greeks in general are described by Homer as the Argives. On this ambiguity, see Allen 1909.

2 Hdt. 1.31: γένος Ἀργείοισι.

3 Argive coins at the end of the fourth century and into the third featuring Hera are, for instance, *BCD* Peloponnesos (Leu) 1066, 1101, and *BMC* 52. The type also appears in the Imperial Period during the reign of Antoninus Pius, *BCD* 1190 and *BMC* 155–156.

4 With the notable exception of Hall 1995 and his 2012 entry to the *EAH* s.v. ‘Heraion’. Hall 1995: 577–579 discusses the Heraion in the context of de Polignac’s analytical framework. de Polignac 1984: 52 for the quotation taken above, and his discussion of the Heraion in the same chapter. The analysis proposed by this chapter aligns much more with the construct of Kindt 2012 than the old *polis*-centric model of Greek religion.

created what he describes as a cultic axis linking the city to its chora through this rural sanctuary, and the claim of Argos to this territory was reinforced with the annual procession on the Sacred Way leading from the city to its temple.⁵ The Heraion, in other words, was thus placed very much in the local cultic, political, and spatial orbit of the city of Argos. If the sanctuary has been viewed as fundamentally ‘Argive’, then it follows logically that the competitions held there would similarly fall under the same city-ethnic.

But in the context of a volume on local athletic contests in the Greek world, the curious case of the Argive Heraion prompts us to reconsider exactly what was ‘local’ about the festivals of the Hekatomboia and the Heraia that are attested at the site over nearly six centuries. Are these competitions simply ‘local’ in the sense that they are part and parcel of the local traditions of the city of Argos, or is there a rather more complicated dynamic at work? In this chapter I argue the latter: although by the close of the fifth century onwards Argos had come to dominate the administration of the games of the Hekatomboia and later the Heraia, these competitions are not simply Argive, but rather represent an agglomeration of various communities’ local traditions that were subsequently brought under the Argive banner. Much as the Heraion itself has been convincingly described by Jonathan Hall in 1995 ‘a confederate sanctuary for all of the Argive plain’, the same can be said of its festivals and their associated athletic competitions.⁶ I shall argue that the competitions of the Hekatomboia were originally part of the local cultic traditions of other communities in the Argive plain, namely Mycenae and Tiryns, but were later appropriated by the Argives as part of their consolidation of regional hegemony in the fifth century. The games of the Heraia and the Hekatomboia thus become not an illustrative case study in the idiosyncratic dynamics of local civic festivals, but rather in how traditions of cult and competition can shift from one localism to another over time and in response to various formative pressures. This chapter does not try to describe what Argive local competitions were like, but instead how and why the Hekatomboia and Heraia *became* Argive local competitions.

In order to do so, we shall begin with an overview of the explicit and implicit attestations of the earliest athletic competitions held at the Heraion and later the festival of the Hekatomboia, and then reconstruct in detail how these competitions were administered and financed in light of recent epigraphic discoveries. Following Amandry’s chronology,

5 On the cultic axis, see de Polignac 1984: 48–60, with Hall 1995: 578n3–5 for further commentary. The first certain attestation of the procession from Argos to the sanctuary comes from Herodotus in the context of the tale of Kleobis and Biton, 1.31, as told by the lawgiver Solon to Croesus of Lydia. There is, however, as Hall 1995: 594–595 notes, no reason to assume that this was a local custom dating from the Archaic Period, but could well be a fifth-century innovation.

6 Hall 1995: 613.

we shall then consider the relocation of the games to Argos itself, their new identification as the *Heraia ta en Argei* (Ἡραία τὰ ἐν Ἀργεῖ), and the international dynamics of this festival's Hellenistic *floruit*. By means of conclusion we shall consider the evolving local dynamics of cultic competitions in the Argive plain over the *longue durée*, tracking the origins of what would come to be known as the Hekatomboia and Heraia into the Archaic and Mycenaean past, and arguing for their pre-Argive origins. Localism, of course, does not imply isolation or myopia, and throughout we shall consider how these competitions respond to political and social developments in the Argive plain and beyond.

Reconstructing the Games in Honor of Hera

The literary *testimonia* for athletic competitions taking place at the Heraion have been compiled by several German, British, and American scholars since the late nineteenth century, and the site of the Heraion itself has been excavated several times since its discovery by Major-General Thomas Gordon in 1831, with minor expeditions in 1836, 1854, 1874, 1878, and 1949, and major excavations by the American School of Classical Studies under Waldstein from 1892–1895, and Blegen in 1925–1928.⁷ Despite this long and extensive history of archaeological and literary enquiry into the site, prominent gaps in our understanding of its chronology and development remain, and this is especially true when it comes to attestations of athletic competitions at the site. As is generally the case with Argive history, these competitions are only well-attested for brief periods, with a cluster of *testimonia* appearing for brief periods here and there followed by decades of silence; by nature, then, any attempt at reconstructing the longer history of the games is hindered by the limits of extrapolation and inference.⁸ The region's history always necessitates some measure of educated guesswork. This *caveat lector* is compounded by the fact that the large *corpus* of inscriptions found on bronze plaques in Argos remains a work-in-progress, with only a few samples having been published to date by Charalambos Kritzas over the past two decades. In a seminal article for the field published in 1980, Pierre Amandry added epigraphic attestations of Argive games to the literary evidence and advanced a reconstruction of their chronology which will figure prominently below. To this, we shall add further inscriptions which have since been

7 The excavation history of the site is taken from Pfaff 2003: ix–xi. See Amandry 1980: 1n2 for previous scholarly efforts to compile the literary attestations of the game, especially by *RE* s.v. 'Heraia', Farnell 1896: 18 and 249–250, and Nilsson 1906: 42–45. The principal publications concerning the site itself are Waldstein (ed.) 1902–1905, Antonaccio 1992, Hall 1995, and Pfaff 2003.

8 A methodological problem noted and discussed by Amandry 1980 throughout.

published, along with more recent work on the Argive *theōría* and Argive political history.⁹

Beginning with the early epigraphic evidence, the first mention of athletic competitions taking place at the Heraion dates to a funerary epigram found on a Doric capital discovered that was found near the Argive Heraion and currently held in the Argos Museum.¹⁰ As discussed most recently by McGowan in 1995 (pp. 628–631) and Morgan in 2007, the column commemorated the death in battle of a young man named Hyssematas, and also attested to his athletic prowess while alive. The epitaph, written in elegiac couplets, recounts how a woman named Kossina sought to provide a memorial to the young man’s virtue in battle, his prudence, his wisdom, and his athletic victories. The epitaph demonstrates a very Homeric tone, and it is clear that Kossina seeks to perpetuate the heroic memory of the young Hyssematas for subsequent generations by creating this highly visible memorial.¹¹ The column itself, as McGowan notes,¹² is also meant to resemble a turning post on an equestrian racetrack, and Kossina explicitly mentions that she buried him near the hippodrome. In the context of our current discussion, the monument sheds a great deal of light on the early character of these competitions. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that by 500 BC equestrian competitions were being held at the Heraion, and presumably these had been established for some time. These competitions must also have been fairly well known, as the first couplet of the epitaph indicates a present and future audience for the monument, and Hyssematas certainly must not have been the first *aethlophóros* at the site. We shall later turn to the Archaic connection between such funerary monuments as these and athletic competitions when we recreate the longer history of games at the Heraia, but for the moment the salient observation to be made is that athletic competitions at the Heraion pre-date Argive control of the sanctuary. In 500 BC the Heraion was still very much a regional sanctuary, and these games were already being held by the time Argos destroyed Mycenae, Tiryns, and Midea in the 460s BC.¹³ Although they, along with the sanctuary, would later be brought under the control of Argos as it consolidated its hold on the Argive plain in the 460s, these local competitions began independent of Argive auspices.

9 On the Argive *theōría*, see the definitive work of Perlman 2000 and, more recently, McAuley 2018. On the Argive calendar, Garbit 2009. On the political history of the plain in the fifth century, see Kritzas 1992 and Hall 1997. See also Piérart 2004 and his discussion of each city in the region.

10 Inventory E 210, text of the inscription CEG 136, with discussion by McGowan 1995 and most recently Morgan 2007.

11 McGowan 1995: 628n74, which highlights similarities between the inscription and Homer in both theme and language, echoed by Morgan 2007: 250.

12 McGowan 1995: 629.

13 Agreeing with Hall 1995’s reconstruction of the longer history of the sanctuary, *pace* Auffarth 2006. Hdt. 7.137; Ephorus 70 *FGrH* 56; Diod. Sic. 11.65.1–11; Strab. 8.6.11, 19; Paus. 2.17.5, 25.8; 7.25.5–6; 8.46.3 for the destruction of these sites. See also the discussions of Robinson 1997: 85, Kritzas 1992: 232.

The next set of epigraphic attestations dates to a period in which the Heraion had come under Argive control, and it is clear that efforts were being made to link athletic competitions at the sanctuary with Argos itself. A description of games held in honor of Argive Hera is found on five bronze objects (three hydriai, one lebes, and a tripod) that were inscribed with a common formula identifying them as prizes given from Argive Hera (παρ Ἡέρας Ἀργείας).¹⁴ Two of the hydriai – one held in New York, the other in Ankara – appear to be contemporaneous with each other based on stylistic grounds (perhaps even inscribed by the same hand), and have been dated to c.460–450.¹⁵ The other artefacts have been dated to the following two or three decades, thus all of these attest to competitions being held at the Heraion between c. 460–430. As is the case with other contemporary prize inscriptions, only the name of the deity in whose honor the competition was held is provided, not the specific name of the festival or competition. Nevertheless, the consistent mention of Hera Argeia by all five of these artefacts reveals that by the mid-fifth century the sanctuary of the Heraion had been re-branded as ‘Argive’, and was advertising itself as such.¹⁶ Unfortunately, these objects do not provide any specific information on the competitors who won them, or even in which events they competed.

As we shall shortly discuss in greater detail, this is part and parcel of Argive consolidation of its new control over the communities of the Argive plain which was initially gained by military conquest, but was being secured through softer diplomacy.¹⁷ We find further evidence of the appropriation of athletic competitions at the Heraion in the roughly contemporary epinikian poetry of Pindar, which also provides further details regarding the competitions themselves.¹⁸ As with the epigraphic evidence above, the exact name of the competition is not mentioned, only the fact that the athletes in question competed at Argos. Following Catherine Morgan’s analysis in 2007, though, it is clear that these

14 Amandry 1980: 213–220.

15 Amandry 1980: 213–216 with notes and figure. The hydria from Ankara is inventory number 11047 first published in 1956. The other vessels are, according to Amandry’s catalogue of objects related to competitions published in 1971: Hydriaia, nos. III A, III B, IV, the lebes III C, and the tripod had not yet been discovered at the time of publication. The tripod was found in 1977 in the great tomb of Vergina, and first published by Andronikos in 1979. See Amandry for the full publication and commentary history of each.

16 Again, agreeing with the analysis of Hall 1995 and Morgan 2007: 250–258.

17 An observation of Amandry in 1980: 216–217 regarding these objects is noteworthy: the habit of inscribing objects such as these with this kind of inscription is also found throughout the Greek world during the period stretching from the Persian Wars to the Peloponnesian War that subsequently went out of style fairly quickly. But, Amandry notes, this method of inscribing prize objects is in and of itself a custom that dates far back into the Archaic Period. It is thus highly likely that these objects came from the same competitions at the Heraion attested by the epitaph above, though now they had been re-branded as the games of Argive Hera. At any rate, this method of honoring the victors, and also the competition in which they were victorious, were likely much older. On the soft diplomacy of the plain in the years following Argive conquest, see Kritzas 1992, Hall 1997: 96–99f, and Piérart 1997.

18 On Pindar and his social and political milieu, see Hornblower and Morgan (eds.) 2007, especially the contributions by Davies, Smith, and Carey.

poems allude to games at the Heraion rather than in the city itself.¹⁹ Pindar’s *Ninth Olympian Ode* (dated to 466 BC) celebrates the wrestler Epharmostos of Opus, who had previously won victories in Nemea, Argos, and Athens (85–88).²⁰ Another athlete, Xenophon of Corinth, is praised by Pindar’s *Olympian 13* (464 BC) for being a victor at Olympia three times in the *stádion* race and the *péntathlon*; again, among the other glories won by his clan are again victories at Argos (l. 108: ἔξ· Ἄργεΐ θ’ ὄσσα καὶ ἐν). Another anonymous Athenian runner is praised by *Bacchylides 10* for his victory in spacious Argos.

But it is Pindar’s *Tenth Nemean* which most explicitly emphasizes this link between Argos and Hera. This poem in honor of the wrestler Theaios of Argos dated to around 444 BC praises the city of Danaïos as ‘Hera’s home, worthy of a goddess’ Ἄργος Ἥρας δῶμα θεοπρεπὲς l.3, and the poet later laments his inability to capture fully the glories of the city. (18–19). The second strophe (20–24) describes in detail the cultic background to the games, imploring the reader in the imperative:

ἀλλ’ ὅμως εὐχόρδον ἔγειρε λύραν,
καὶ παλαισμάτων λάβε φροντίδ’· ἄγων τοι χάλκεος
δαμόν ὀτρύνει ποτὶ βουθυσίαν Ἥ-
ρας ἀέθλων τε κρίσιν·
Οὐλία παῖς ἔνθα νικάσαις δις ἔ-
σχεν Θεαῖος εὐφόρων λάθαν πόνω

Nevertheless, wake the well strung lyre
and take thought of wrestling, since the contest for
bronze calls forth the people to the sacrifice of oxen
for Hera and to the judging of the games,
in which Ulias’ son, Theaeus, was twice victorious
and won forgetfulness of his bravely borne labors.
(transl. Race 1997).

The victories of Theaios take place in the context of a festival in honor of Hera at which oxen are sacrificed to the goddess and then wrestlers compete with one another for the prize of a bronze trophy – we can even assume that this would have been similar to the inscribed bronze trophies we have encountered above. The fact that oxen are specifically mentioned as the sacrifice to the goddess make it appear that the festival described here by

¹⁹ Morgan 2007: 250–262.

²⁰ Following the Loeb Greek text edited and translated by Race 1997:

ἄλλαι δὲ δὴ ἐν Κορίνθου πύλαις ἐγένοντ’ ἔπειτα χάρμαι,
ταὶ δὲ καὶ Νεμέας Ἐφαρμόστῳ κατὰ κόλπον:
Ἄργεϊ τ’ ἔσχεθε κῦδος ἀνδρῶν, παῖς δ’ ἐν Ἀθήναις,
οἶον δ’ ἐν Μαραθῶνι συλαθεῖς ἀγενεΐων

Pindar is the same that we will later find attested as the Hekatomboia, which is a reasonable conclusion given the long-standing connection between ox-eyed Hera and these animals.²¹ The manner in which Pindar emphatically links Argos to Hera and her sanctuary is by no means accidental: according to the arguments of Jonathan Hall²² and Morgan,²³ Argos commissioned this poem at the same time as a ‘positive explosion of public and religious construction in the city center and at the Heraion between c.460 and 440, coincident with the installation of democracy’.²⁴ Such a public commemoration of the city’s ties to the Heraion through poetry which would have performed elsewhere served several ideological functions: it emphasized Argos’ claim to the Heraion over Mycenae, it linked to its recent acquisitions in the Argive plain, it touted the recovery of the Argive citizen body after the disaster at Sepeia, all the while calling to mind an older sense of elite values in aristocratic competition.

Taking all of this evidence together, a clearer picture of the fifth-century competitions at the Heraion can be reconstructed. At the very least, equestrian competitions had been taking place near the site since the late sixth century, and these were at least obliquely situated in the funerary landscape of the region. As the Heraion fell into Argive hands after the city’s expansion throughout the plain in the 460s and 450s, so too did its athletic competitions come under Argive jurisdiction. It is clear that the Argive state invested heavily in associating itself with these games, and perhaps this investment led to their expansion as well. At any rate, by the 450s we find further attestation of running competitions, wrestling, and a *péntathlon* associated with a festival honoring Hera being held at ‘Argos’ – and thus metonymically at the Heraion – involving competitors from throughout the Greek world. Presumably, equestrian events continued. The fact that this epinician poetry easily lists these competitions along with the ‘big four’ Pythian, Nemean, Isthmian, and Olympic games indicates the high standing of the games in the fifth century.²⁵ But this fifth-century repute in turn suggests a longer history for the Heraion’s games, as such competitions derived their contemporary repute in no small measure from their (perceived) archaic antiquity. It is possible that the sacrifice of oxen and cattle in honor of Hera was expanded by the Argives at the same time as the competition itself and the entire festival was re-named the Hekatomboia (mandating a sacrifice of 100 animals), but this is highly speculative.

21 Hera described as *boōpis* (βοῶπις πτόννια “Ἥρη” *Il.*1.551), analysed by O’Brien 1993: 128–138. For the association of Hera with cows and bulls, see McInerney 2010, 3–8 and 119–122. For Hera being described as a goddess of fertility, see *Hom. Il.* 14–346–51, Calame 1996: 173–185, and Motte 1973.

22 Hall 1995: 594–595.

23 Morgan 2007: 250–252.

24 Morgan 2007: 251.

25 See Amandry 1980: 229–230n33–38 for the full list of victor inscriptions and the relation of the Hekatomboia to other competitions.

The Machinery of the Hekatomboia

At some point in the second half of the fifth century, the games held in honor of Hera at the Heraion begin to be referred to publicly as the Hekatomboia. Given the propensity of earlier material to only mention the deity in whose honor games were held, or the region in which they were held, it is equally possible that the festival itself had always been called the Hekatomboia and that the appearance of the name in various documents only indicates a shift in administrative habit, not a complete overhaul of the festival. Two victory monuments set up at Delphi provide our first documents which explicitly mention the Hekatomboia by name, which allegedly detail victories won between c.490–460 in the first instance and 440–420 in the second.²⁶ These monuments, however, were erected at Delphi at some point in the first half of the fourth century and record much older victories of both athletes, so it is likely that the use of Hekatomboia reflects a contemporary habit of the inscription rather than the historical name of the competition in the fifth century. At any rate, the pattern we have seen above continues: these games in honor of Hera attract athletes from far-flung corners of the Greek world, in the case of these monuments we find none other than Theogenes of Thasos attested as having won the *dólichos* (long race) at the Hekatomboia, which figures prominently in the 1300 victories claimed by the inscription including his various exploits at the Big Four. It is noteworthy, as Amandry remarked,²⁷ that besides them the only competition mentioned by name is the Hekatomboia. Due to a fragmentary first line, the identity of the athlete whose victories are detailed by the second inscription remains mysterious, though perhaps he is the famed boxer Dorieus at Rhodes. At any rate, this monument details the anonymous pankratiast's successes at the Big Four as well as his four victories at the Panathenaia, four at the Asklepieia, three at the Lykaia, and three at the Hekatomboia. Again, the reputation and standing of the Hekatomboia are clear, given that it is easily included in such eminent agonistic company, and that it attracts the best athletes of the day to its events. It is quite likely that both of these athletes were competing in the games in honor of Hera that we encountered above rather than the Hekatomboia *proprement dit*, however the early fourth century repute of the competition is still great regardless of its specific title.

26 The two monuments are discussed by Amandry 1980: 220–223, Perlman 2000: 96, Morgan 2007: 250–251. The original inscriptions are *Syll.*³ 36, in honor of Theogenes of Thasos (see also Pouilloux 1994) and *Syll.*³ 82, potentially in honour of the fame of Dorieus of Rhodes. On Theogenes and Dorieus see their entries in Moretti 1957: no. 201, 215 (Theogenes), and 322, 326, 330 (Dorieus).

27 Amandry 1984: 220.

As have been collected by Amandry and Moretti, the agonistic program of the Hekatomboia was rich and varied, perhaps more so than previous competitions at the Heraion. The equestrian competitions attested at the site since the sixth century continue to be held into the beginning of the third century, when Nikagoras of Lindos won victories in mounted and drawn horse races at the Hekatomboia among the other major competitions of the period.²⁸ The athletic contests celebrated by Pindar and Bacchylides continued throughout the fifth century through to the end of the third, when the runner Dematrios of Tegea is celebrated for having twice won a double victory at the Hekatomboia in the *dólichos* and the *híppios* footraces²⁹ As occurred elsewhere in the Greek Mainland during the third century, in addition to these typical competitive events we also find musical contests attested for the first time as part of an agonistic festival. It is possible, as was the case in other locales, that the competitive program was expanded in the early Hellenistic Period to include artistic events as well as athletic. The Athenian *kitharōidós* Nikokles won many victories in the years leading up to the middle of the third century, among them victories at the Pythia, Panathenaia, and the Hekatomboia.³⁰

From the perspective of localism, the manner in which the Hekatomboia were administered and financed by Argos sheds further fascinating light on how the city re-appropriated a much older competition and brought it into its institutional structure. While it may have fallen under the auspices of Argive civic magistrates, the Hekatomboia sit rather distinctly in the administrative structure of Argos, which in turn reveals the delicate politics behind its integration. The gradual expansion and consolidation of Argive power during the 460s and 450s has been well discussed elsewhere, and we need not recapitulate the entire process save for a brief summation.³¹ Argive expansion in the region began with the siege and later destruction of the ancient cities of Mycenae and Tiryns, but after their victory over the other communities of the plain the military efforts of the Argives gave way to a policy of regional integration. The Argives sought to bolster their military hegemony over the region with some level of ethnic amalgamation, which was accomplished by incorporating the traditions of their subject peoples into a new ‘Argive’ regional identity. As Jonathan Hall described in detail in 1997, this involved

28 Notably the ‘Big Four’, as well as the Panathenaia, the Hekatomboia, the Lykaia, and the Pythian games at Sikyon. Moretti Cat 35, pp 85–91 and Amandry 1980: 223. IG XI 4.1164 and 1165 from Delos also mention victories in chariot races at the Hekatomboia. See Amandry 1980: 223n24 resolving the question of whether the Hekatomboia referred to in this inscription were the same as those held in the Argive plain or another festival of the same name. See also Amandry *ad loc.* for the publication history of each victor’s list.

29 Moretti no 44, p. 115–116. Amandry 1980: 223.

30 IG II² 3779, which is poorly preserved.

31 See the full account of Hall 1997 for this expansion into the plane, along with the more specific studies of Kritzas 1992, Pierart 1997 and 2004, Robinson 1997: 82–86, des Courtils 1992. A general narrative of the period can be found at Kelly 1972: 87–116, and see the introduction to McAuley 2018.

combining elements of the region's diverse (and disparate) mytho-historical traditions into a new coherent 'Argive' tradition; in the process, what was once local was now fused into the regional.³² In this context, it is unsurprising that Hera figures prominently as a unifying figure in this new regional tradition, given her ancient importance to Mycenae, Tiryns, and other groups of Herakleidai.³³ Bringing Hera into the Argive fold served to provide some measure of continuity to the groups that found themselves newly subject to the Argives. If their religious traditions were at least superficially unchanged, then the Argive yoke would be rather easier to bear and they would not have the desire to rebel against Argos on account of their 'ancestral repute' as they had in the 460s.

In the process of Argive territorial consolidation, Hera and her sanctuary were elevated from local to regional prominence. Hera suddenly appeared on Argive coinage of the fifth century, she simultaneously appeared as a pivotal character in the heroic genealogy of the Argives themselves, and to provide a concrete manifestation of these trends, the Argives lavished the Heraion and its competitions with money and institutional support.³⁴ Excavations over the course of the 1990s and 2000s undertaken by the 4th Ephorate of Antiquities have uncovered dozens upon dozens of bronze plaques in Argos containing inscriptions which date to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC, only some of which have been published to date.³⁵ Even a small sampling of this body of evidence, however, allows us to reconstruct the institutional fineries of Argos at the time, and in the process we learn how the sanctuary of the Heraia and its games were administered and financed. The habit of inscribing public documents on bronze plaques (*pínakes*) is an ancient Argive habit whose popularity at least partially explains the rarity of stone inscriptions in the city.³⁶ The administrative texts included on these plaques have permitted the reconstruction of not only Argos' institutional structures, but also its dialect, vocabulary, numbering system, and calendar.

32 Hall 1997: 77–106 for his full account of the mytho-engineering of the region's communities. See also Scheer 1993, 2005 and the edited volume of Bernardini 2004 on Argive mythology more generally. Kelly 1972: 200–220 for the religious development of the region.

33 McInerney 1999: 4–8, Hall 1997: 69–70, Kritzas 1992: 239. On the Herakleidai in the plain and their association with Hera. The other communities of the plain include small groups of Achaians, Pelasgids, and Dryopes, along with a few Ionians in Hermione and Epidauros, mentioned by Hdt. 6.77–78 and 127. Arist. *Pol.* 1302b33, Paus. 2.20.8–10, Diod. Sic. fr. 7.13.2; Plut. *Lyc.* 7. On the ancestral attachments of each group, see Hall 1997: 99–106.

34 See notes above, as well as Amandry 1980: 233–239 and Hall 1995: 613 discussing this as a symbolic end to the rivalry between Argos and Mycenae. See also the discussion of Morgan 2007: 250f on how poetry factored in to this outreach process.

35 Kritzas 1992 contains a publication of three plaques detailing revenue from scared lands in the Argolid. Of most interest to the current chapter is his discussion of the sacred treasury of Argos in Kritzas 2006, which analyses many of the texts that have been discovered but does not publish them in their entirety. The observations and discussion that follow below are taken from this 2006 publication. Kritzas 2006: 397–404 for the provenance of these artefacts.

36 Kritzas 2006: 404.

The majority of the texts published so far is financial in nature, and provide a rather dry account of decisions taken by the boards of various magistrates. The plaques of most interest to us are those that form part of the archives of the sacred treasury, which itself served as something akin to the Argive central bank.³⁷ These archival texts record transfers or disbursements of sums of money among various colleges of religious and civil magistrates, or payments from the state to outside contractors. It merits note that the sacred treasure of Argos is officially called the treasure of Athena Pallas, the ancient protectress of the city whose prominence outdates Hera.³⁸ As Kritzas has noted, even the funds which concern the cult of Hera are kept in the treasury of Athena, thus the former had been incorporated into the financial structures of the latter at some point after the conquest of the Argive Plain.³⁹ Hera's funds, in other words, were held in Athena's bank, which itself was probably located near the temple of Athena in Argos. When funds were deposited or withdrawn, a record of the transaction was inscribed on a plaque and placed in a stone or vase at the treasury. The impression that we gain throughout these texts is that the complex bureaucracy which had overseen the administration of the Heraion and its competitions was simply relocated *en masse* from the Heraion to Argos itself after it fell into Argive hands while still maintaining many of its distinct features. All of the following details are taken from Kritzas' 2006 summary.

The complexity of the Heraion's institutional machinery attests at once to the historical popularity of the cult and its festivals, as well as its newfound importance in Argive administration. A new college of magistrates called *ha epignóma* is attested in these texts for the first time. The board was formed of eight *synepignómōnes* (two from each tribe) and a secretary who served as stewards of the city's sacred lands, charged with depositing revenue from these lands as well as providing statements of account from time to time.⁴⁰ The sums themselves are significant, as one text lists a total of 217,373.5 drachmas in the board's account.⁴¹ There is one attestation of a board specifically identified as *ha epignóma ha ens Hérān* which leads us to wonder whether there was always separate college of magistrates tasked with maintaining lands sacred to Hera, or if this was folded in to the *epignóma* of the city as a whole. With our current documentation, however, the question

37 Kritzas 2006: 404.

38 Cf. Auffarth 2006 on the relationship between Argos and Athena.

39 Kritzas 2006: 409 and n. 29: *Hymne V (Le bain de Pallas, composé vers 270–260 av. J.–C.)*, surtout v. 51 *sq.*, 140 *sq.*, quoting directly: “Je ne pense pas que ce dépôt était dû aux circonstances de la guerre et à l'insécurité régnant dans la région de l'Héraion. Il apparaît que le trésor de Pallas, comme le prouve IG IV 554 sur laquelle on reviendra, servait de banque à l'État depuis une date ancienne et a continué à jouer ce rôle après la mainmise définitive d'Argos sur l'Argolide et la substitution graduelle d'Athéna à Héra comme déesse–patronne de la région.”

40 Kritzas 2006: 412.

41 Kritzas 2006: 412.

remains unresolved, but at any rate we do catch some glimpse of the vast funds available to these magistrates.⁴²

There is, however, little ambiguity when it comes to two further colleges of magistrates that must obviously have been long established at the Heraion and then brought into the Argive fold. There are four annual *hiaromnēmones ens Hēran*, one taken from each tribe of the re-organised civic body among whom the presidency of the college rotated every three months, and two secretaries.⁴³ This board, in Kritzas' reconstruction, represents the supreme authority in the city for religious affairs relating to the cult of Hera, and oversaw the maintenance of the sanctuary itself and the handling of funds consecrated to the goddess or confiscated from exiles or criminals.⁴⁴ This board would thus have been charged with maintaining the physical environment in which the Hekatomboia took place, as well as the sanctuary as a whole. The fact that the presidency of this college rotates among the four tribes every three months is of more importance than it may seem at first glance: given that membership in these civic subdivisions was hereditary, it seems that the rotating presidency is geared towards involving all groups of Argive society in the cult of Hera at the Heraion, even those who might not have historically had a strong attachment to the goddess.⁴⁵ In something akin to the social mixing encouraged by the Kleisthenic reforms, it appears that Argos sought to make the Heraion and its festivals a part of the cultic life of all aspects of Argive society, not just the recently incorporated Herakleidai communities to which she had been the principal goddess. The fact that representatives from all four tribes of Argos play a part in administering the cult of Hera again testifies to this Argive effort to make Hera – and the competitions in her honor – into a regional rather than local tradition.⁴⁶

We find the same conscious attempt at involving all the *phylai* of Argos in the games of Hera attested in another board of magistrates specifically tasked with organizing the Hekatomboia. A group of four magistrates entitled *Hawethlothētai* (digamma), again presumably one from each tribe, along with two secretaries oversee the planning of the festival itself and its competitions, which are again financed by sums disbursed through the sacred treasury of Athena.⁴⁷ The amount of money given towards the Hekatomboia is again significant: the records mention regular deposits of around 10,000 drachmas

42 Kritzas 2006: 412.

43 Interestingly, as Kritzas 2006: 413n48 notes, the term 'iaromnemones' has already been attested by an Archaic inscription in Mycenae (IG IV 493) and several other inscriptions in Tiryns, thus this office would seem to be of local provenance but later integrated into the Argive state.

44 Kritzas 2006: 413.

45 Piérart 2004: 604.

46 On the tribes of Argos, see Kritzas 1992 and Piérart 2000, 297–301.

47 Kritzas 2006: 413–415.

towards the funds called the *hawéthlimon*, which the magistrates then spent on the sacrificial animals for the festival as well as the banquet at which panegyric competitions took place. The city, however, could and did intervene in the finances of the festival: there is at least one occasion noted by Kritzas in which the funds destined for the Hekatomboia were levied instead by the ‘eighty’ (*ogdoēkonta*), the college of civic magistrates on charge of the city’s finances as a whole. Despite the delicate measures of regional inclusion at work here, the civic magistrates at Argos were still superior. The Heraion itself must have retained at least some of the lands which had been in its control before the Argive expansion, as a significant amount of the Argive state’s revenue comes from the deme consecrated to Hera – though of course the Argives must have taken their share of this before re-disbursing it on the goddess and her competitions.

A few other groups of magistrates also play a part in the administration of these competitions which should be noted. In the Argive tradition the term *artýna* (collective noun) or *artýnai* (individuals) is used generically to refer to magistrates whose specific task is enumerated in the attributive position after the repeated definite article – thus *ha artýna ha* (function) *ai artýnai ai* (function).⁴⁸ Among these we find some very specific assignments related to the shrine and its competitions. The long history of equestrian races at the Heraion is again reinforced by the presence of ‘*ha artýna ha tas hippaphésios*, a group of four magistrates (again probably from each tribe) specifically charged with running the horse and chariot races long attested at the site. Specifically, according to Kritzas’ reconstruction, this would have been an *ad-hoc* group charged with overseeing the construction of a device controlling the staggered starts of horses competing in the hippodrome.⁴⁹ Another *artýna* is tasked with making the silver and gold cups for public banquets during panegyrics, and perhaps there are other *artýnai* who were involved in sacrificing the victims at the Hekatomboia and other festivals. Finally, the extent of Argive administrative involvement in the Heraion is further indicated by groups of *artýnai* who continued to oversee specific aspects of the reconstruction of the temple at the beginning of the fourth century. Among them we find magistrates in charge of the portal of the temple, others in charge of the finer architectural details, and yet more overseeing woodworking. A separate, specific group of magistrates oversaw the construction of the famous chryselephantine statue of the goddess herself that was installed at the temple, in the process controlling vast sums of money and precious

48 Kritzas 2006: 415–418.

49 Kritzas 2006: 414.

metals.⁵⁰ The completion of this would be commemorated with coin issues featuring the goddess' head that appear in the 370s BC.⁵¹

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this highly technical review of the games' administration. First and foremost, the sheer size of the bureaucracy involved in managing the competitions is stunning: dozens of officials serving annual terms are engaged in overseeing very specific aspects of the games themselves, the physical space, and the sacrifices in honor of the goddess. Given the long pre-Argive history of the Heraion, we must presume that these magistracies had already existed at the sanctuary when it came under Argive control, and they were simply brought into the city's administrative structure, perhaps with a change of title. At any rate, this administrative complexity of the games was likely not a purely Argive innovation. Second, and perhaps most obvious, is the depth to which the Argives involved themselves in the administration of this new sanctuary and its festivals. It is not as if the conquering Argives maintained the local *status quo* while keeping this all at arm's length from the city itself. Quite the opposite: Argos drew the cult and games of Hera fully into its own structures of civic and religious administration in a manner that echoes other contemporary vectors of regional integration. This was very much part of a calculated policy to make the Heraion into the Argive Heraion. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this complex administrative structure sought to involve the Argives as a whole in the administration of the cult of Hera and its festivals. Rotating presidencies and magistrates drawn from all four tribes of the Argive demos ensured that this cult would not be the exclusive purview of a local ethnic group, but rather sought to de-localize the sanctuary and its festivals by making them part of the cultic fabric of the region. The sheer amount of money and manpower invested in this project speaks to the traditional importance of the games, and their ideological prominence in Argos and throughout the Greek world. By involving itself so heavily in such a renowned competition, Argos was advertising its newfound influence to the broader Greek world every time the Hekatomboia were held. Lavish expenditure in the local realm ensured lavish returns in the realm of international public relations.

From the Local to the Trans-Local: The Hekatomboia outside Argos

By all accounts this effort at 'international' relations mediated through the Heraion and its competitions worked, as did the Argive effort to make the Heraion one of its local cultic

⁵⁰ All of these functions are listed and described by Kritzas 2006: 415–422, with notes.

⁵¹ Kritzas 2006: 421n26.

centers. I have discussed the ethnic dynamics at work in the lists of *theōrodókoι* from Argos, Nemea, and Epidauros elsewhere, and need not rehash the entire argument here suffice to say that these three sanctuaries drew on common ethnic ties in a collaborative manner to expand the reach of the festivals held at each shrine. This link between the local shrines, ethnicity, and external relations is certainly not limited to these fascinating theoric lists. A decree passed by Argos at some point in the late fourth century recognizes the generosity of the people of Rhodes for having lent funds necessary for rebuilding the city wall to the Argives. The decree⁵² refers to the Rhodians in lines as *syngenées eóntes tón Argeiόν*, and it was out of loyalty to their ancestral metropolis that they gave this money in the first place. A local contribution from *syngeneís* merits a local reward: the decree of the Argive damos states that the Rhodians are to be honored with a crown announced by the *agōnothētēs* of the Hekatomboia and the Nemeia during each competition's *gymnikoί agónes* (l. 19–21). Already by the end of the fourth century, the Heraion and its competitions had been so fully brought into the Argive local orbit that the sanctuary itself became a venue for Argive diplomatic relations along with the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios and the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea.⁵³

The Rhodians were not the only ‘ancestral’ Argives to be given privileges related to games held at the Heraion. A decree of Argos found at Nemea relating to the Pamphylian city of Aspendos, dated to anywhere between c.330–254 BC, recognizes the people of Aspendos as sharing common descent from the Argives and then proceeds to outline in great detail the legal and political rights that this ancestral status affords them.⁵⁴ In the process, the decree makes reference to previous laws regarding the Rhodians and the people of Soloi, and Seriphos, so this is not the only outside community to be recognized as Argive.⁵⁵ But again it is the prominence with which the Heraion and its festival figure in this decree that is of most interest to us: the cultic rights of the Aspendians as full Argive citizens are presented on an equal footing as political participation and economic status. As such, the Aspendians are to send *theōroί* bearing offerings to Zeus at Nemea, and ‘to Hera at Argos’. (l.9). These Aspendian *theōroί* are invited to join their kinsmen at the head of the procession leading from Argos proper to the Heraion, and once there are

52 SEG 19.317.

53 Stroud 1984: 216.

54 Following the text and analysis of Stroud 1984.

55 The decree for Soloi is mentioned and discussed by Stroud 1984: 201 and the ethnic of the people of Soloi appears in line 7 of this inscription. Attestations – numismatic and epigraphic – of the ethnicon of the Solians is discussed by Stroud 1984: 205n24. The decree of Seriphos is one of the more frustrating pieces of Argive evidence: found near the Temple of Zeus at Nemea in 1884 it was subsequently lost, with no photographs or line drawings. What we have of the inscription was published as IG IV 480. The similarity of this decree's phraseology with that of our Aspendian decree hints that they were contemporary.

invited to take part in the festival and competitions in the same way as all other Argives.⁵⁶ Given the practical tone of the decree and its legalistic precision, there is no reason to think that the Aspendians would not actually have taken advantage of these rights; rather, again we see Argive diplomacy mediated through this shrine and its competitions that had only been brought into the Argive locale in the past century or so.

This diplomacy revolving around the Heraion was a two-way street which drew individual benefactions to Argos as well as the sort of communal ties we have encountered above. Nikokreon, king of Salamis in Cyprus (r.332–310), is praised by the Argives for having given the materials out of which the prizes of the games of Hera would be made – which at this point would still have been known as the Hekatomboia. The inscription, perhaps most importantly, captures the depth to which the connection Argos sought to establish with the Heraion had taken hold in the broader Greek cultural sphere barely a century after its integration into the region.⁵⁷ Nikokreon was motivated to provide these gifts to the sanctuary because he identified himself (and was recognized as) a Pelasgian Argive descended from Aiachos, thus in making this gift he was contributing to the cult of his ancestral metropolis – even though his ancestral metropolis did not have such a mythical or historical link to the sanctuary. For his part, along with the similar patronage of Kleopatra of Epirus at roughly the same time, such benefaction and recognition of Argive descent provided the monarch with a ticket into the local world of the Argolid, and thus by extension the Greek Mainland, through the gates of the competitions and festivals held at the Heraion.⁵⁸ But for the mechanism to be effective is contingent on the popular recognition of the Hekatomboia and its mother sanctuary as being Argive in the first place. It is only after the delicate integration of the competition into the Argive realm of local influence during the fifth century that such external relations were made possible. At any rate, by the close of the fourth century the Heraion

56 Stroud 1984: 202–203.

57 On the decree and its context see Perlman 2000: 105–111 and Miller 1978: 78–80. The decree is also discussed by Amandry 1980: 219f, and more recently by Bing 2013, especially p. 42. The traditional ties between Argos and Cyprus are discussed by Kritzas 2014. The full text of the inscription (*IG IV 583*):

ματρ[όπο]λις μοι χθών Πέλοπος τὸ Πελαζγικὸν Ἄργος,

Πνυταγόρας δὲ πατὴρ Αἰάκου ἐκ γενεᾶς·
εἰμί δὲ Νικοκρέων, θρέψεν δέ με γὰ περίκλυστος

Κύπρος θειοτάτων ἐκ προγόνων βασιλῆ,
στᾶσαν δ' Ἀργεῖοί με χάριν χαλκοῖο τίοντες,

“Ἡραι ὄν εἰς ἔροτιν πέμπων [ἄε]θλα νέοις.

My mother city is the land of Pelops, Pelasgian Argos,
and Pnytagoras my father sprang from the line of Aiakos.

I am Nikokreon, raised in the wave-beaten land
of Cyprus, king from the most divine ancestors.

The Argives set me up to give thanks for the bronze
for Hera, which I would send to the festival as prizes for the youths.

58 See McAuley 2018 and Perlman 2000 on these *theōrodókoι* and their ramifications for Argive external relations in the period.

and the Hekatomboia had become distinctly Argive, in a process that reminds us of the fluidity and malleability of local attachments both here in the northern Peloponnese and beyond.

The reach and political clout of the games of Hera would continue to expand apace into the following centuries, even as the name and location of the competition had been changed. As Amandry has discussed, the name Hekatomboia disappears around the end of the third century, though the fragmentary nature of our evidence does not allow much precision in the date or context. A decree of the Argives in honor of Alexandros of Sikyon, dated by Amandry to between 225–215, mentions that the honors awarded to him are to be announced by the Hellanodikai of the Nemeia and the Heraia during the competitions, respectively, of the Heraia and the Nemeia (l.16–18).⁵⁹ In 209, Philip V was the *agōnothētēs* of both the Heraia and the Nemean games, which were both held between the middle of June and the end of July, leading Amandry and others to surmise that they took place at the same locale – though there is no definitive proof of this.⁶⁰ By 189, however, the Heraia are attested as having been held in Argos itself, during the same time as the assembly of the Achaian League in the presence of Q. Caecilius Metellus,⁶¹ though whether this was a permanent or temporary occurrence remains unclear.

Regardless, games in honor of Hera held in the Argolid continued to feature prominently in the Greek agonistic circuit during the second and first centuries BC. Among the competitors involved in these competitions we find a cross-section of the Greek world and firm attestation of the wide range of events: Menodoros of Athens⁶² (running, boxing, *pankrátion*), Demetrios of Chios⁶³ (boxer in the youth competition), and Philippos Glaukon of Pergamon⁶⁴ (wrestler), as well as a Milesian runner (20 BC).⁶⁵ The Heraia thus continued to attract competitors from throughout the Greek world well into the Roman conquest of the Greek Mainland, and did so with a full program of athletic, wrestling, and boxing events, as well as likely musical and equestrian competitions.⁶⁶ In no small part these competitions likely remained successful because of their antique renown and archaic reputation. Amandry explains the continued importance of the Heraion and its competitions to the Argives by precisely this argument, writing that

59 Amandry 1980: 226n30 with full history of the decree in honor of Alexandros, and his discussion at 229–230 and 244–248.

60 Liv. 27.30–31, and Amandry 1980: 246.

61 Polyb. 22.10.1.

62 *IDelos* 1957, IAG 51.

63 Robert 1938, 127, Amandry 1980: 230n33.

64 IAG 58, Amandry 1980: 230–232 for the full list.

65 IAG 59.

66 For the full list of attested events and competitors, see Amandry 1980: 230–234.

‘l’Héraion demeurait, pour les Argiens, un sanctuaire vénérable par l’ancienneté des liens qui le rattachaient à leur ville’ which was at the very least maintained as part of their heritage.⁶⁷ As we have seen, the antique links between the city and the games of Hera claimed by the Argives were readily accepted by contemporary Greeks as well as by modern scholars, but as I have argued above, Argive involvement in these competitions was very much a mid–fifth century phenomenon. If they were not Argive, then by means of conclusion what can be said about the early origins of the local competitions at the Heraion?

Conclusion: Retracing the Horses’ Path

As we have seen above, Argive attempts to project archaic links between the civic community and the Heraion proceeded from a very specific set of circumstances in the 460s BC. The aftermath of the destruction of Mycenae and Tiryns, and the consolidation of Argive power in the plain in the following decades represents what Catherine Morgan has termed ‘an Argive renaissance,’ of which the poetry of Pindar commemorating the Hekatomboia ‘is only a small part’.⁶⁸ At the same time we see ‘a positive explosion of public and religious construction in the city centre,’⁶⁹ and renovation projects at the Heraion itself that coincide with the installation of democracy.⁷⁰ An elaborate programme of mytho–historical embroidery analyzed by Jonathan Hall in 1997 occurred apace, and taken as a whole this Argive strategy aimed at integrating the plain and its communities into the structures and traditions of Argos proper. In essence, the Argives were attempting to make their newly subject communities seem Argive as well, and convey the impression that they always had been. We can similarly see this integrative strategy at work in administrative structure of the city as revealed by the epigraphic evidence considered above. In this background, the reference made by Herodotus⁷¹ to the procession from the city to the Heraion in the episode of Kleobis and Biton fits neatly into a contemporary pattern. Because the story is related by Solon to Croesus of Lydia, taken at face value it seems that the procession had been taking place since early in the sixth century – thus well before the Argive conquest of the plain. But given recent arguments regarding a statue group at Delphi that has been re–identified as the Dioskuroi rather than Kleobis and Biton, Herodotus becomes the lone source of evidence for the

67 Amandry 1980: 250.

68 Morgan 2007: 251.

69 Morgan 2007: 251.

70 It is noteworthy that the first race track at the Heraion was constructed by the Argive at this time as well, as noted by Pariente, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998: 216.

71 Hdt. 1.3.1.

archaic antiquity of this practice linking the city to the sanctuary.⁷² In the mid-fifth century background we have reconstructed, Herodotus thus represents only one of many contemporary attempts to provide an Argive link to the shrine stretching back into the Archaic Period in the aftermath of their regional conquest.

But these thoughtful attempts to bring the Heraion and its competitions into the Argive local orbit in turn provide hints of the original local character of the shrine and its games. If the Argives were trying so actively to link themselves to the Heraion and the games in honor of Hera, then the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that these games were already being held in the 460s, and likely had been for some time. The broad reach of the games and the prominence with which they figured in the Greek agonistic cycle could not have been created out of nothing, so the games in honor of Hera must likewise have been widely recognized before the sanctuary passed under Argive administration. In the same vein, the complex administrative structures and magistrates responsible for the games that are attested in the fifth and fourth centuries were not likely created *e nihilo*, but must have been grafted into Argive structures with some modification. Indeed, Argive attempts to de-localize the shrine and its mythic associations speak in turn to the strength of the original attachments.

What can we say then of the extra-Argive local traditions surrounding these competitions? The perennial debate regarding the origins and territorial associations of the Heraion continues to rage in archaeological circles, and putting forward another resolution to the matter is well beyond the scope of this chapter.⁷³ Given the amount of research that remains to be done on the Heraion and its environs, ranging from a definitive catalogue of pin finds and a comprehensive study on the origins of the site's pottery finds, our picture of the early history of the sanctuary will remain fluid. In the same vein, the precise relationship between the activities and deposits associated with the 'funerary' landscape of the Prosymna tombs and their 'cultic' equivalents in honor of Hera at the early Heraion remains difficult to resolve at best. Nevertheless, some comments and reflections can be made on agonistic history of this region which at the very least provides an illustrative comparandum for subsequent traditions we have explored. I shall consider these two broad aspects of the agonistic landscape around the Heraion – here labelled the funerary and the cultic – in turn.

The epitaph in honor of the young man Hyssematas erected by Kossina near the Heraion in c.500 BC provides a fitting starting point for re-creating the earlier history of the

72 Morgan 2007: 250, following the arguments of Faure 1985 over Vatin 1982, but as she notes in n71, the resulting identification of the statue group is the same.

73 See Hall 1995 and Pfaff 2003 for the scholarly history of the Heraion.

games against a longer chronological trajectory. As mentioned above, the epitaph states explicitly that the column dedication marking the burial place of Hyssematas, the *aethlophóros*, was placed ‘near the hippodrome’ (l. 1 *pélas hipodromoío*). Following McGowan’s reconstruction, the monument itself was meant to either serve as or evoke the turning-post that was placed to mark the course of the equestrian competitions held here. There are two remarks to be made that emerge from this monument. First, the fact that there are no archaeological finds of a hippodrome at the site does not at all mean that there were not equestrian competitions held at the site. Daly in 1939 noted that the area in which the column was found was flat and level, and would provide suitable land for horse racing.⁷⁴ H. A. Harris suggests that early Greek equestrian races took place on agricultural land that was marked out for the purpose when the games were held, but was otherwise used for regular farming.⁷⁵ Any visitor to the Heraion and its immediate surroundings quickly notes how the location would lend itself well to horse racing, and indeed the terrace which pre-dates the old temple on the site provides the ideal location from which to watch these races. The absence of monumental architecture associated with games does not attest to the absence of the games themselves; here, as elsewhere in the Archaic Period, games were held within decidedly *ad hoc* confines.

Second, as noted by McGowan and Friedländer, the tone of the epigram and its language are distinctly Homeric and thus self-consciously archaizing.⁷⁶ The implication, as mentioned above, is that neither the equestrian competitions near the Heraion nor the broader habit of placing a tomb marker near a hippodrome are new innovations when this monument was erected. To the contrary: in her analysis of this and the similar monuments of Xenares, Praxiteles, and Damotimos, McGowan concludes that this use of Homeric language ‘reflects the attempt by the families and friends of the dead men to establish a link with a pre-sixth century aristocracy associated with the age of Homeric heroes’.⁷⁷ This was thus a self-conscious attempt to cast Hyssematas as an epic hero at a time in which the conventions and associations of epic heroism were well established – in other words, in 500 BC Kossima was imitating a custom that had been recognized for some time previously. Again, the implication is that this sort of funeral monument and the games held nearby conformed to a well-established pattern of elite behavior both in the region specifically and the broader Greek community. Sixth-century vases attest to the practice of using such columns as turning points in both equestrian and foot races.⁷⁸

74 Daly 1939: 168, noted by McGowan 1995: 628n75.

75 Harris 1973: 162–163.

76 McGowan 1995: 628n74 discussion Friedländer *Epigrammata*: 125–126.

77 McGowan 1995: 631–632.

78 I.e. by the Tyrrhenian Group in the mid-sixth century BC discussed by McGowan 1995: 624, Florence inv. 3773, which is an amphora with a chariot race, and other exempla discussed by McGowan *ad. loc. cit.*

The practice of heroic tomb monument serving as a race marker in an agonistic context is attested in literary sources as well: in Book 23 (lines 326–333) of the *Iliad*, before the funeral games of Patroklos, Nestor explains to his son Antilochos the course he is going to follow when he competes:

σῆμα δέ τοι ἐρέω μάλ' ἀριφραδές, οὐδέ σε λήσει.
 ἔστηκε ξύλον αὔον ὅσον τ' ὄργυι' ὑπὲρ αἴης
 ἢ δρυὸς ἢ πεύκης: τὸ μὲν οὐ καταπύθεται ὄμβρῳ,
 λαῖε δὲ τοῦ ἐκάτερθεν ἐρηρέδαται δύο λευκῶ
 330 ἐν ξυνοχῆσιν ὁδοῦ, λείος δ' ἵππόδρομος ἀμφίς
 ἢ τευ σῆμα βροτοῖο πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος,
 ἢ τό γε νύσσα τέτυκτο ἐπὶ προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
 καὶ νῦν τέρματ' ἔθηκε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Now I will tell you a most certain sign that will not escape you. There stands, about a fathom's height above the ground, a dry stump, of oak or pine, which rots not in the rain, and two white stones on either side of it are firmly set against it at the turning of the course, and on either side is smooth ground for driving. Perhaps it is a monument of some man long ago dead, or perhaps was made the turning post of a race in days of men of old; and now has swift-footed noble Achilles marked it as his turning post (transl. Murray 1924).

The sort of competition for which Nestor is preparing Antilochos in this passage seems to align quite neatly with the type of competition attested by the monument to Hyssematas: in the middle of a field there is a marker that has been designated as the turning post of a track that has been marked off for the occasion – in this case the race takes place on land outside Troy. The funerary context of this competition is also noteworthy, as these games are being held as commemoration of the fallen Patroklos. There is, of course a symbolic valence to such competitions as well, and the idea the concept of the 'racecourse of life' is found in early Greek literature and has been well-discussed by contemporary scholars.⁷⁹ As McGowan notes, however, Nestor himself is not sure whether the marker is a turning post or the grave of some earlier mortal, and this ambiguity might be precisely the point.⁸⁰ This passage of Homer, it seems, attests to an Archaic-period practice of using the funerary landscape of a region on an *ad-hoc* basis as markers for competitions held near (or indeed in honor of) these tombs. This intersection of competition and funerary monuments calls to mind the mysterious Taraxippos of Olympia, attributed to various

79 Davies 1985, cited by McGowan 1995: 629n76.

80 McGowan 1995: 629.

dead heroes by Pausanias, as well as similar phenomena at Isthmia and Nemea.⁸¹ The association of the dead (and their monuments) with competitions that took place in the same locale is thus hardly exclusive to the Argolid, but appears in local traditions throughout the Archaic world. We must not push the envelope too far and suggest that these Archaic practices reflect Bronze Age traditions of local funerary competitions, but we can surmise with more security that the sort of competition attested by the column of Hyssematas could well have its origins in Iron Age traditions reflected in the epic cycle.

I have dwelled at such length on the funerary context of these competitions because this is of critical importance to anchoring these games in the unique landscape near the Heraion. An element of the region that is often overlooked by those considering the Classical temple is the extensive necropolis located near the prehistoric settlement of Prosymna near what would become the Heraion. Carl Blegen excavated the region in 1925, 1927, and 1928, in the process discovering fifty three chamber tombs that had Mycenaean origins but continued to be frequented into the Geometric and Archaic periods.⁸² Subsequent expeditions have since discovered more tombs, and the sheer size of this necropolis and the number of deposits at the site is remarkable, especially considering there is no indication of an earlier Mycenaean palatial settlement at Prosymna, unlike Athens, Mycenae and Tiryns.⁸³ The presence of extensive Geometric period material in these Bronze Age tombs suggests that there were ritual activities at these sites centuries after the initial burials. It would be excessive to conclude, as Blegen initially suggested, that these offerings represent continuous ancestor worship of Bronze Age burials by relatives in the Geometric and Archaic periods, and it seems rather more likely that this activity represents ritual activity at the site of what was presumed by later residents of the region to have been heroic burials from the Bronze Age.⁸⁴ The subsequent re-use of many tombs in the Geometric and Archaic period likewise attests that this region was a very active funerary – and thus ritual – landscape well before the Argive conquest of the plain in the fifth century.

Can we presume that competitions would have regularly accompanied this local funerary activity? Several artefacts dating from the Mycenaean through to the Archaic Period discussed by Donald Kyle suggests that we can indeed. According to his analysis, Linear B documents attest to the presence of chariots in funerary contexts, and images on

81 Paus. 6.20.15–19.

82 As discussed by Antonaccio 1992: 86. It is noteworthy how much of the scholarship on the Heraion focuses on the temple itself, not the broader *témenos*.

83 On the Mycenaean-period geography of the plain, see especially Darcque 1998 and Dabney 1999.

84 Antonaccio 1992: 99 with discussion of the scholarly history of this notion in n40–42. As she argues, it would be somewhat excessive to make a connection between this apparent hero cult and the goddess Hera herself, and we should not view the two cults as being equivalent.

pottery suggest that races were held as part of funeral rituals. A thirteenth-century amphora from Tiryns has been identified as depicting a seated goddess of the underworld on one side, and racing chariots on the other.⁸⁵ A larnax found in a chamber tomb in Tanagra contains images of a funeral procession with mourners and burial scenes on parts of its front and top panels, while its side panels show a variety of competitions: two-horse chariots racing, duels, and hunting.⁸⁶ The presence of ritualized competition in a funerary context is also attested after the Mycenaean Period, and Kyle argues that Dark Age funerary games continued to be held but on a smaller scale than their Bronze Age predecessors. Scenes on late Geometric vases from Attica and Boiotia seem to suggest that contests of boxing, chariot races, and horse races continued as part of aristocratic funerals, with an increasing emphasis on the prize awarded to the victors.⁸⁷ It is not difficult to imagine a scene akin to these attested on Archaic vases taking place in the area of the Heraion in the eighth or seventh centuries: the flat plain lent itself well to horse racing, and there was no shortage of funerary monuments that could be used as a turning post. Perhaps the enigmatic Old Temple Terrace of the Heraion with its massive Cyclopean retaining wall, provides a venue for this ritualistic competitive activity. The terrace dates to roughly the seventh century, its purpose remains unclear though it lacks any architectural elements built on to it, though it was clearly used regularly given the number of pottery sherds throughout the terrace and the brunt irregular area in its centre which well have been an altar.⁸⁸ Deposits at the terrace indicate a flurry of seventh century activity but ongoing use of the site in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Perhaps this flattened area, highly visible from around the plain, provided the hub of ritual competitive activity at the site. At any rate, it seems sound to suppose that competitive activity near the Heraion could well have taken place in the eighth and seventh centuries amid this funerary landscape, and that such competitions were not initially associated with the cult of Hera.⁸⁹

How then does Hera enter the picture? As argued above, we do not need to follow in the footsteps of de Polignac and Antonaccio in explicitly associating the construction of temples such as the Heraion with the emergence of polis communities in the Archaic period. In the case of the Heraion, we do not need to look exclusively towards Argos as the only community which drove the development of the site. First, we must not commit

85 Kyle 2007: 49 and n22, citing Kilian 1980 and Decker 1982–3.

86 Kyle 2007: 50.

87 Kyle 2007: 90–92, and also Roller 1981, who concludes that funeral games were commonplace from the eighth century onwards, and goes so far as to suggest, in the summation of Kyle 2007: 356n28 that ‘originally non-funeral Panhellenic games took on funeral associations.’

88 Antonaccio 1992: 89, 100.

89 On the broader landscape of the region during this period, see Foley 1988.

Snodgrass’ ‘positivist fallacy’ by presuming that, as Hall put it, ‘an absence of dedications at the sites of future sanctuaries precludes earlier cultic enactment.’⁹⁰ Simply because we have no explicit Geometric attestations of a cult to Hera this does not mean that there was no cult to Hera at the site. As Hall has demonstrated, the eastern half of the Argive plain contains an extensive cult system dedicated to Hera, with a consistent set of similar votive objects in honor of the goddess deposited at various sites stretching from the Heraion to Tiryns, Mycenae, and other rural religious sites.⁹¹ The objects found at the Heraion itself are consistent with this general pattern of dedications to Hera, and it is likely that from an early date the site of the future Heraion was associated with the goddess. Hall goes on to argue that Hera was likely the principal deity honored in the urban cults of Tiryns and Mycenae, based on material finds in the cities along with literary references linking the goddess to each community.⁹² Mycenae itself is linked to the Heraion by a road leading from its citadel, and today the walk from Mycenae to the Heraion is much easier than from Argos to the Heraion – as indeed it would have been in antiquity.⁹³ The picture that emerges, thus, is that the site of the future Heraion was originally part of a larger cultic network dedicated to the goddess among the communities of the eastern Argolid.⁹⁴ The site itself would thus have been the location of ritual activity in honor of Hera since, by inference, the eighth or seventh century at the latest. The spike in monumental building activity at the site can accordingly be viewed as part of the broader shift identified in the second half of the eighth century away from investment in grave offerings and towards investment in sanctuaries.⁹⁵ It is likely that as the *témenos* of Hera was made more distinct, the local funerary competitions which were taken place in the region were either made to coincide with a festival of the goddess, or re-associated with her cult. The games continued to be held, just under a different pretext as the Heraion became a more clearly defined cultic center.

In sum, I would argue that there are two distinct local trends unique to the site which intersected at the Heraion to produce the games in honor of Hera that we have explored above: first, the regular occurrence of competitions in the region associated with its Bronze Age funerary landscape; and second, the site’s increasing prominence as a node of the cultic network to Hera in the Eastern Argolid. These two trends then collided at some point in the late eighth century, and the two local traditions were fused into what

90 Snodgrass 1987: 38.

91 Hall 1995: 596–597 and especially fig. 5.

92 Hall 1995: 596–598.

93 With my thanks to Professor James Whitley (Cardiff) for this observation in personal discussions of the topic.

94 It is noteworthy also that, as Hall 1995 argues, Argos itself does not fit into this regional pattern of dedications to Hera.

95 Snodgrass 1987: 52–54 and Hall 1995: 578.

we can identify in the early fifth century as the games in honor of Hera. Although initially the Heraion itself and its festivals were associated with Mycenae, Tiryns, and the communities of the eastern Argolid, after these came under Argive dominion in the 460s, they along with their ancestral sanctuary were carefully redefined as ‘Argive’ by the mechanisms described above. In the process, local cultic traditions of festivals and competitions were re-associated with another locale – in this case, Argos. This thus represents a very different process than the emergence of extramural, rural sanctuaries connected with the emergence of polis communities that de Polginac argued was at work with the Heraion and Argos. Instead of this polis-centric view of local religion and its associated competitions, we find in the games at the Heraion a fitting example of a uniquely local religious tradition established over centuries that was grafted into the mechanisms of a fifth-century polis only much later. It was at this point in the 460s that the games in honor of Hera became the games in honor of *Argive* Hera, though by then they had been well established as a prominent fixture on the Panhellenic agonistic circuit. In this sense, we find that these competitions are a fitting exemplar of the complex interplay between local religious traditions and a unifying Panhellenic religious sensibility identified by Julia Kindt in 2012.⁹⁶ As an illustrative case study, these games in honor of Hera speak to the long penchant for continuity in Greek local religion, as well as the sacrality of place, not of polis.

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⁹⁶ Especially chapter five of Kindt 2012.

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