

Synoikismos: Formation and Form of Ancient Greek Cities

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Following the Late Bronze Age “collapse” of Mycenaean civilization (ca. 1200 BC), the formative Greek states and the palace centers that spawned them had vanished. What emerged in their wake over the course of the following centuries was the city-state or *polis*, a system with a remarkably different pedigree. Bottom-up formations rather than top-down creations, established by people and populations, rather than implemented by aristocratic monarchies. At least 1,000 such city-states existed in the Greek world, some 600 in the Aegean homeland and another 400 in colonial settings abroad. That is how successful this system proved to be. And by the fourth century BC, as much as one-third of the population of Greek urban-dwellers lived in cities that had been newly founded since the eighth century BC.

This paper will explore not only the mechanisms of Greek city-state formation, but the character of their urban core, and especially how this organization reflected their social and economic profile.