

**Zeitschrift:** Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

**Band:** 46 (1989)

**Heft:** 3

**Artikel:** Homeric temenos and the land economy of the dark age

**Autor:** Donlan, Walter

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-36081>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 22.01.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Homeric τέμενος and the Land Economy of the Dark Age

By Walter Donlan, Irvine, California

Great uncertainty surrounds the interpretation of Homeric τέμενος, even though the descriptions of it are clear and consistent within both epics. Τέμενος has historical significance because the descriptions of τεμένη in Homer provide our only details about land tenure in pre-polis society. All discussions of τέμενος, therefore, revolve around the land-tenure system. Yet the Homeric τέμενος does not fit at all neatly into conventional models of early Greek landholding<sup>1</sup>. The stumbling block has been the automatic assumption that the land from which new τεμένη were taken was land already under cultivation. This paper is an attempt to place τέμενος in its proper position within the land economy of the Dark Age.

### I

Τέμενος occurs thirteen times in Homer. Four of the mentions refer to τεμένη of divinities, and appear to have substantially the same meaning as in classical Greek – an area of land assigned to the god, in which was located an altar for sacrifice<sup>2</sup>. The other nine references are to τεμένη held by living men, an institution that is not found in the archaic and classical periods<sup>3</sup>.

In Homer, τέμενος is a piece of arable land “cut out” (τέμνειν; cf. τάμον, Il. 6, 194; 20, 184; ταμέσθαι, Il. 9, 580). In all the examples, the τέμενος is held

\* This article was substantially aided by the use of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae at U.C., Irvine. I wish to thank the Project Director and staff for access to the facilities of the TLG and for their unfailing kindness.

1 For a review of the problems, with bibliography, see I. Hahn, *Temenos and service land in the Homeric epic*, *AAntHung* 25 (1977) 300–316. Τέμενος is the only land-holding term common to Linear B and Homer. A tablet from Pylos reveals a *wanaktero temeno* and a *rawakesijo temeno*, both followed by the grain sign, L. Palmer, *Mycenaeans and Minoans*<sup>2</sup> (London 1965) 99. The holding of agricultural τεμένη by the highest ranking individuals thus survived into the Dark Age. The social relations of the Mycenaean *temeno* are unknown; however, the apparently important role of the Mycenaean *damo* and the distinction between *kitimena* and *kekemena* land support in principle the view espoused here, that from earliest times the community controlled the allocation of uncultivated land.

2 Il. 2, 696 (Demeter); 8, 48 (Zeus); 23, 148 (Spercheius); *Od.* 8, 363 (Aphrodite). See K. Latte, Τέμενος, *RE* 5A (1934) 435–437; B. Bergquist, *The archaic Greek temenos* (Lund 1967).

3 There are a few, very vague, hints that the practice may have lasted after 700 in some places; e.g. Cyrene (Herod. 4, 161), Sparta (Xen. *Const. Lac.* 15, 3).

by or promised to a man of high status. In three passages the cutters-out are specifically named: οἱ Λύκιοι (for Bellerophon, *Il.* 6, 194), γέροντες Αἰτωλῶν (for Meleager, *Il.* 9, 574), Τρῶες (for Aeneas, *Il.* 20, 184). In the other six passages, the τέμενος is already in possession, and there is no information about the transaction<sup>4</sup>.

Since all the holders (or potential holders) are identified as βασιλεῖς or sons of βασιλεῖς, it has been generally assumed, with reason, that a τέμενος was granted only to men of chiefly status. It is also apparent that the grantors (those who “cut out”) were a collective – the δῆμος as a whole. In addition, the texts show unambiguously that once granted by the community a τέμενος remained in permanent possession and was inheritable by later generations. This is certain not only from Iphition’s τέμενος πατρώϊον (*Il.* 20, 391), but also from Anticleia’s statement to Odysseus that “no one yet has your καλὸν γέρας, but Telemachus unhindered τεμνενα νέμεται ...” (*Od.* 11, 184)<sup>5</sup>.

In addition to the foregoing information, the poems give some details about the kind of land that made up a τέμενος. First of all, the τέμενος is substantial. Those belonging to Sarpedon and Glaucus and to Odysseus are called μέγα (*Il.* 12, 313; *Od.* 17, 299); the piece of land promised to Meleager is πεντηκοντόγυον, “of 50 γῶαι” (*Il.* 9, 579)<sup>6</sup>. Qualitatively, the τέμενος is consistently very fertile, well-watered agricultural land. In four instances, it is said to be half orchard/vineyard and half plowland<sup>7</sup>. The τέμενος βασιλήϊον on Achilles’ shield is shown as being harvested by workers, reaping the wheat (or barley) and binding the sheaves (*Il.* 18, 550). Odysseus’ τέμενος is clearly agricultural land, since the heaps of straw and mule and cattle dung lying in his front yard are used to manure it (*Od.* 17, 297).

The fertility and moisture of the soil are emphasized. Meleager’s μέγα δῶρον was to be cut from the “richest plain of lovely Calydon ... an exceedingly fine one (περικαλλές)” (*Il.* 9, 578). Iphition’s ancestral τέμενος is located by the marshy Lake Gygaie at the confluence of the Hyllos and Hermos rivers (*Il.* 20, 391); that of Sarpedon and Glaucus by the banks of the Xanthus (*Il.* 12, 313). Alcinous’ τέμενος and “blooming orchard/vineyard” (άλωή) – which we must suppose was part of his τέμενος – were situated in a meadow (λειμών) that surrounded a grove of poplars sacred to Athena and a spring (*Od.* 6, 291)<sup>8</sup>.

4 *Il.* 12, 313; 18, 550; 20, 391; *Od.* 6, 293; 11, 185; 17, 299.

5 Possibly, though not necessarily, the τεμνή of Sarpedon and Glaucus (*Il.* 12, 313) and of Alcinous (*Od.* 6, 293) were inherited by them from Bellerophon and Nausithous respectively. For νέμομαι = to acquire legally by way of apportionment, see F. Benveniste, *Indo-European language and society* (Coral Gables 1973) 69.

6 Γῶης may have been the amount of land that could be plowed in one day, approximately one acre; but this is uncertain, see W. Ridgeway, *The Homeric land system*, *JHS* 6 (1885) 323–325; G. Thomson, *Studies in ancient Greek society. The prehistoric Aegean* (New York 1949) 317–318; W. Richter, *Die Landwirtschaft im homerischen Zeitalter* (Göttingen 1968) 14, 99.

7 *Il.* 9, 579; 6, 195; 12, 314; 20, 185.

8 See also *Il.* 6, 194; 20, 184; 23, 148; *Od.* 11, 184.

Only in this last description are we given detailed information about the location of a τέμενος. From the sea shore, where Odysseus had been washed up, the road to the πόλις/ἄστυ goes first past the out-fields and farmplots (ἀγροί, ἔργα, 6, 259), then past the meadow, poplar grove, and spring, “near the road” (6, 291). After this, the road crosses a narrow isthmus to the high wall around the πόλις, and thence to the ἀγορή and twin harbors. Alcinous’ τέμενος, therefore, lies outside the isthmus wall, at the near edge of where the farmland begins, “as far from the πτόλις as a man’s shout will carry” (6, 294)<sup>9</sup>. Like the other τεμένη, it is very desirable land: fertile, well watered, close to town, and by a road.

The texts are also informative as to *why* a community granted a τέμενος. The giving of a gift as compensation for service is a common feature of Homeric social relations, which are consistently expressed in terms of obligation and counter-obligation. This type of reciprocity is explicit in the cases of Meleager, promised a μέγα δῶρον by the Aetolian γέροντες in return for “coming out and defending” Calydon (Il. 9, 576), and of Aeneas, whose suppositious award of a τέμενος by the Trojans would have been for killing Achilles (Il. 20, 176).

These examples of awards for a specific service to the community are, of course, quite compatible with the notion that a τέμενος was granted to a popular chief as compensation for his ongoing obligations as a leader of the people. The high honors given to Sarpedon and Glaucus (τετιμήμεσθα μάλιστα) in Lycia, among which was the holding of a τέμενος, require them, as Sarpedon says, to fight in the forefront of the Lycians (Il. 12, 310). In Bellerophon’s case, the awarding of a τέμενος was linked to his elevation to chiefly rank, after he had demonstrated his worth as a warrior by passing several hero-tests of benefit to the people (Il. 6, 179)<sup>10</sup>.

Though no formal connection between the granting of a τέμενος and high performance as leader is indicated for the other τέμενος-holders, it is significant that all of them are distinguished in the texts as effective, popular chiefs. Thus, the young Iphition was πολέων ἡγήτορα λαῶν and his father Otrynteus (whose τέμενος Iphition inherited) was πολίπορθος (Il. 20, 383). Odysseus and Alcinous were both paramount βασιλεῖς, greatly respected by the people for their wise leadership<sup>11</sup>. Τεμένη may have been cut out expressly for them, or, just as likely, been inherited from their fathers, who had also been powerful, revered chiefs. Nausithous, the founder of Scheria, had made the original division of the plowlands (Od. 6, 10), and it is quite likely that a

<sup>9</sup> Thomson (*supra* n. 6) 360.

<sup>10</sup> See Richter (*supra* n. 6) 9.

<sup>11</sup> Alcinous: *Od.* 7, 10; 8, 387; 11, 346. 353, etc. Alcinous initiates every action in Phaeacia during Odysseus’ stay. Odysseus: *Od.* 2, 230; 4, 687; 14, 138; 19, 108, etc. As paramount, Odysseus had the personal authority to save the life and property of a lesser βασιλεύς from the wrath of the δῆμος (*Od.* 16, 418).

τέμενος was reserved for him as a γέρας<sup>12</sup>. Finally, it is instructive that Anticleia in Hades describes Telemachus as in firm possession of his father's "splendid honor" (καλὸν γέρας), though in strict chronological terms he would have been only about fourteen at the time. Telemachus, she says, "administers τεμένεα and partakes of equal feasts, to share which is fitting for a man with authority to judge (δικασπόλον ἄνδρ'), for all men invite him" (Od. 11, 185). For our purposes, what is significant about Anticleia's statement is that she portrays her grandson as enjoying the rewards and performing the duties of a respected chief.

To this point analysis of the texts has presented few problems of interpretation. Not only are the references to τέμενος clear and consistent within both epics, they also display a neat symmetry with other elements of the Homeric distributive system. Community members are allotted a parcel of arable land, κλῆρος, for their subsistence and, as members of raiding parties, are guaranteed an equal portion of the spoils. The chiefly τέμενος is to the κλῆρος as the γέρας (the extra portion of the booty reserved to the raid-leader) is to the equal δασμός<sup>13</sup>. Τέμενος and γέρας – things "cut out" or "chosen out" – thus belong to the category of "chiefly-due", the material recognition of the high position and communal responsibilities of the βασιλεύς<sup>14</sup>.

Difficulties arise, however, when we ask out of *whose* land a τέμενος was cut. The nineteenth-century thinking about land-tenure, heavily influenced by contemporary sociological theory, was that land was held and farmed under an ancient "open-field" or "common-field" system. In that scheme, the τέμενος was a grant of land, a "royal domain", given to the king by the people out of the communally tilled land. Since the land was periodically redistributed among the members of the community, no one lost his share of the common land. Though the royal τέμενος was the only type of private land found in Homeric times, it was the opening wedge of a new system of private land ownership<sup>15</sup>. "The *témenos* is the germ of private property emerging within the tribal system."<sup>16</sup>

In 1957, M. I. Finley decisively challenged this tenacious theory, rejecting the existence both of conditional tenures and of cultivated *ager publicus*<sup>17</sup>.

12 See G. M. Calhoun in A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings, *A companion to Homer* (New York 1962) 436.

13 Thomson (supra n. 6) 329–331; H. van Effenterre, *Témenos*, REG 80 (1967) 18.

14 On chiefly due see W. Donlan, *Reciprocities in Homer*, CIW 75 (1982) 158–160. As paramount, Agamemnon feels a heavy sense of responsibility for the Achaeans: *Il.* 1, 117; 2, 24; 10, 1. 91, etc.

15 Ridgeway (supra n. 6) 335–339. Cf. Leaf at *Il.* 12, 421; Ameis-Hentze at *Il.* 9, 580. See Hahn (supra n. 1) 302. A notable early exception was N. Fustel de Coulanges, *The ancient city* (New York 1965 [1864]) 60ff., for whom the "right of property" was a basic premise of Greek and Roman culture.

16 Thomson, *Prehistoric Aegean* (supra n. 6) 329. 357; cf. *Aeschylus and Athens* (London 1966) 38.

17 M. I. Finley, *Homer and Mycenae: property and tenure*, *Historia* 6 (1957) 138ff. The recent

Most scholars today agree with his conclusion that all cultivated land was held privately and permanently, without condition, and could be handed down or otherwise transferred by the owner<sup>18</sup>. The argument for a regime of private family holdings, as opposed to communal landholding, is in fact totally convincing. The Homeric household, both as a social and as a subsistence unit, was conceptually inseparable from the land (οἶκος is simultaneously house, family, work force, and property). Moreover, the social standing, pride, and religious-symbolic existence of οἶκοι were bound to the unbroken occupation of ancestral plots. It is highly unlikely that there was ever a “stage” of collective land-holding in Greece. For the Dark Age, we should accept the principle that once a piece of land was put into cultivation, the labor invested in it conferred permanent title.

There is a great difficulty here, however. If there was no *ager publicus*, then new τεμένη would have to have been taken from private land, since, according to all interpretations of the relevant texts, the τέμενος land was land already in cultivation. Finley proposed that the recipient of a τέμενος was invited “to choose from the best of the privately held lands”. D. Hennig, in a recent study, agrees that this is the only possible solution to a difficult problem<sup>19</sup>. But this sidesteps the crucial question of the social mechanisms by which the owners of these choice farmlands were induced to give up their private holdings. Finley is not much help. He is both vague and contradictory about where the authority to give τεμένη resided (either in “royal power” or “community power”) and suggests merely that there existed “techniques for obtaining compensation”, citing *Odyssey* 13, 13–15, where the Phaeacian chiefs are advised to recoup the expense of gifts to Odysseus by “gathering among the δῆμος”<sup>20</sup>.

But this is not a matter of tripods and cauldrons, but of families giving up the land they worked. That were a gift indeed. The Dark Age polity, insofar as we can deduce it from Homer and the archaeological remains, was loosely structured. Political organs like the law court and assembly were still informal; custom set and supervised the rules of social behavior. Can we imagine a Dark Age δῆμος able, as an entity, to decide whose farmland was to make up the new

decipherment of the Linear B tablets had stimulated a revival of interest in the communal ownership and cultivation theory.

18 A. Andrewes, *The Greeks* (New York 1967) 97–98; C. G. Starr, *The economic and social growth of early Greece, 800–500 B.C.* (New York 1977) 150–151.

19 Finley (*supra* n. 17) 156, following W. Erdmann, *Homerische Eigentumsformen*, ZRG 62 (1942) 355–356; D. Hennig, *Grundbesitz bei Homer*, Chiron 10 (1980) 44. Hahn (*supra* n. 1) 313–314 concludes that Homeric τέμενος is a garbled memory of the Mycenaean *temeno*, “royal land”, managed by the Mycenaean kings for the maintenance of religious sanctuaries. Van Effenterre (*supra* n. 13) 22–26, offers an even more complicated explanation on linguistic grounds. These are pure conjectures, but point up the grave difficulties presented by the apparent mixing of communal and private ownership of land in Homer.

20 Finley (*supra* n. 17) 156. The other passages cited by Finley (*Od.* 2, 74; 22, 55) are even less relevant.

property of a βασιλεύς, and then to see to its redistribution? Few today would suggest that “royal power” possessed the means – or would be allowed – to coerce so drastic a gift, an act amounting to internal piracy<sup>21</sup>. Again, what “compensation” could possibly have been given in exchange for good cultivated land? On the other hand, the clear statement of the epics is that the giver of τεμένη was the δῆμος. This must mean that in some formal sense the land was its to give.

If we accept a system of private property in the Dark Age, there is only one possibility. New τεμένη were cut out of uncultivated (i.e., unowned) arable land and not, as traditionally assumed, from land already being farmed. This surplus arable was *ager publicus* and its distribution resided in “community power”. This can be demonstrated.

## II

From the early twelfth century to the second quarter of the eighth, all Greece was severely underpopulated. Modern estimates – based on graves, number and size of settlements, and field surveys – show a drop in population to between one-half and one-quarter of the high levels of the thirteenth century. For example, between LH III B and III C the number of known occupied sites in Laconia fell from 39 to 7, and in Messenia from 67 to 13. The population of Messenia in the eleventh century was 10 per cent of what it had been in the thirteenth century. Laconia appears to have been actually uninhabited between ca. 1050 and 950. Only four occupied sites are known in the southern Argolid between 1200 and 900; and in Boeotia only 3 of 55 Bronze Age sites were inhabited in the early Iron Age. All this “adds up to a picture of depopulation on an almost unimaginable scale”<sup>22</sup>. Although the downward spiral leveled off around 1000, and population likely began to rise gradually during the ninth century, the whole of the Dark Age may be fairly characterized as a period of abundant land and very few people.

21 Richter (*supra* n. 6) 12. This is not to say that Dark Age strong men were averse to confiscating the cultivated fields of neighboring groups, as in *Od.* 4, 174, where Menelaus contemplated resettling Odysseus and his λαοί in an outlying village in Argos after clearing out its inhabitants; cf. *Il.* 9, 149. Even within communities defenceless widows and orphans could be deprived of their ἄρουραι (*Il.* 22, 489); but the taking of land by force from fellow πολῖται was something else entirely. In *Od.* 16, 428 we have a contrary example of the δῆμος threatening to “eat up the plentiful and pleasant living” of a βασιλεύς (see *supra* n. 11).

22 A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1980) 20. For Laconia and Messenia, see W.A. McDonald and G. R. Rapp, *The Minnesota Messenia expedition: Reconstructing a Bronze Age regional environment* (Minneapolis 1972) 143; P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Laconia* (London 1979) 68. 70. 92. 118. Argolid: T. H. van Andel and C. Runnels, *Beyond the acropolis. A rural Greek past* (Stanford 1987) 98. 101. 173. Boeotia: A. Snodgrass, *An archaeology of Greece* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1987) 201. A similar drastic decline is reported for Melos and other islands: C. Renfrew and J. M. Wagstaff (edd.), *An island polity: The archaeology of exploitation in Melos* (Cambridge, Engl. 1982) 140–142. For other areas, see V. R. d’A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages* (London 1972) 19. Why this process occurred, and why it lasted

Land use and land tenure during the Dark Age reflected the demography. The tiny villages were situated near fertile plowland. The level or gently sloping farmland, within convenient walking distance of the settlement, shaded off to higher slopes, and thence to the steeper and wooded mountain lands that formed the territorial boundaries of the community<sup>23</sup>.

The coastal and alluvial plains supported plow and hoe cultivation of cereals, fruit trees, grape vines, and vegetable gardens. The moist lowland meadows and the fallow plowlands were used for grazing. As always in the Mediterranean regions, the upland slopes and mountains served as summer pasture for flocks. Lower hillslopes with thinner, rockier soil or the remote mountain valleys, under cultivation in more populous times, were left untilled. During the depopulated Dark Age there would have been little incentive to plant these marginal lands, whose lesser return was not worth the extra labor and travel time.

The land tenure-system in these tiny societies could not have been very complicated. Homeric δῆμος meant both the “land” and the “people”. As the “land”, δῆμος is a well defined territorial unit; δῆμος as “people” embraces all those who live there. This identification, which was ancient in Homer’s time, shows that then, as later, the ultimate “owner” of the δῆμος was the δῆμος<sup>24</sup>. All notions of rights in land derive from this fundamental, unreflective, principle. A second principle, also obvious, is that land put into cultivation became the “private property” of the member-cultivator and his family, by virtue of the labor invested in it. A man’s land allotment, κλῆρος, was as fully and permanently his property as his house, animals, and personal belongings. As long as he remained an accepted member of the community, neither the community nor any individual was entitled to take the source of his livelihood from him.

so long, are complete mysteries. Apart from unsubstantiated hypotheses of natural disasters, like disease or famine, or wholesale slaughter by invaders (unlikely) or near total emigration (also unlikely), one can only suggest that depopulation was a symptom of the general economic decline after ca. 1200.

23 Any general description of the landscape and of land use in Greece is necessarily a composite one, because of considerable regional variation. Nevertheless, the Aegean landscape is sufficiently uniform and the ancient evidence consistent enough to construct a valid composite picture. Still very useful is A. Jardé, *The formation of the Greek people* (New York 1970 [1926]) 1–35. See now van Andel and Runnels (supra n. 22) 13–25. 31.

24 On δῆμος as the inclusive social unit and what this meant in the Dark Age, see W. Donlan, *The social groups of Dark Age Greece*, CIPh 80 (1985) 298–302; also, *The pre-state community in Greece*, SOslo (forthcoming). In the loosely structured societies of the Dark Age, any free man allowed to dwell within its boundaries was a member of the δῆμος and had a right to live off the land. But where, and how well, a man lived was determined by a variety of conditions and circumstances. Some free men, for whatever reasons, were clearly marginal, like the ἄκληρος man in *Od.* 11, 488, whose land must have been in the ἐσχατιή, cf. Ridgeway (supra n. 6) 332. Land-poor thetes and landless beggars (like Irus in the *Odyssey*) were even more marginal members of the community, but their lack of access to land was not due to structural impediments, but to individual circumstances, largely, one suspects, to lack of kinsmen.



It must be emphasized, again, that what gave land value was labor, and only worked land was private property. Land that could not be cultivated (like wooded mountain slopes) or did not seem worth cultivating (like marginal land and areas of marshy meadows) was “no-man’s-land” (or rather every man’s land), available without restriction to any community member for grazing, gathering, and foresting<sup>25</sup>. At that time, the δῆμος will have had no corporate interest in grazing and foresting rights. Such land, in abundance, was simply there, to be used by all. The primary use of this free land was for pasturing the many flocks and herds that appear in Homer as the criterion of wealth. De facto, the few men “rich in flocks”, that is, the βασιλεῖς and other important men, dominated use of these pasture lands. This was especially true of the grassy meadows (λειμῶνες) found in the plains and valley bottoms, the only suitable land for pasturing large numbers of cattle and horses, the most highly prized animals, emblematic of elite-status.

We may say with complete assurance that corporate interest was confined to the good cultivable land, that is, the deep-soiled plainlands and low slopes adjoining the πόλις. All cultivation took place within this portion of the δῆμος, called the “plain” (πεδῖον) or the “field(s)” (ἀγρός/οί) by Homer<sup>26</sup>. Although much of it was given over to grazing, the πεδῖον/ἀγρός was above all the life-sustaining grainland, the primary source of subsistence for “men who eat bread”<sup>27</sup>. The good land embraced by the terms πεδῖον and ἀγρός was the reason for settlement in the first place, and formed an indissoluble unit with the village. Κληῖροι and τεμένη came from it. The question of permanent rights in this heartland – that is, the right to work it – will have been of vital concern to every man and woman in the community. Even if we did not have the evidence of Homer, we would have to conclude that its allocation lay with the community as a whole<sup>28</sup>.

25 Richter (supra n. 6) 12–13. 42.

26 See, in general, Richter (supra n. 6) 92–93. Πεδῖον is the “plain” proper, the level land immediately adjoining the settlement, access to which is by a main road (ὁδός) from the πόλις/ἄστυ, cf. *Il.* 3, 263; 6, 393; 11, 167; 15, 681; 24, 329; *Od.* 3, 421; 15, 183; ἀγρός appears to be the cultivable land further away from town, e.g., *Il.* 23, 832; *Od.* 1, 190; 4, 757; 6, 259; 11, 188; 16, 383; 24, 212. 308. It has often the meaning of “country” as opposed to town, both geographically and culturally, e.g., *Il.* 11, 676; 15, 272; *Od.* 6, 106; 11, 293; 16, 3. 27. 150. 218; 21, 85. Though ἀγρός is “far from” town, it is still accessible by a road (*Od.* 13, 268; 17, 204), and travel time to it is not excessively long. Eumaeus travels from the furthestmost ἀγροί (pastures) to town in the space of a morning (*Od.* 16, 155. 333) and returns before dark (16, 452). Telemachus makes the same journey from dawn to early morning (*Od.* 17, 26–32). Odysseus and Eumaeus traversed this distance from late afternoon to supper time (17, 190. 260). The distance from town to Laertes’ ἀγρός was much shorter (*Od.* 24, 205); cf. 6, 259; 15, 427. Like πεδῖον, the ἀγρός is closely connected conceptually to the town as a unit (*Od.* 8, 560; 14, 263; 17, 18; 22, 47).

27 *Il.* 5, 341; *Od.* 8, 222; 9, 89. 191; 10, 101. The verb σιτέομαι is used generically to mean “eat” (*Od.* 24, 209), cf. *Il.* 13, 322; 21, 76; *Od.* 1, 349; 6, 8; 13, 261. See Richter (supra n. 6) 107.

28 “The community’s right to dispose of new land, and to control a part of it permanently

Beyond lay the uncultivated “margin” (ἐσχατιή), whose border with the arable land (ἀγροῦ ἐσχατιή) marked the boundary of communal concern with land rights<sup>29</sup>. We can assume that if any member of the community was so minded, he could automatically claim permanent rights by cultivating it. There is a probable mention of this in *Odyssey* 18, 357. The suitor Eurymachus offers the beggar Odysseus a job as a hired hand (θητευέμεν), “gathering stones for fences and planting tall trees”, in land he was cultivating ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς. This scene is significant in showing that those in the best position to improve the “free” land were men of chiefly status, like Eurymachus, with their greater resources in manpower and equipment<sup>30</sup>. We will come back to this point later, but now let us return to τέμενος.

Consideration of the evidence for population, land use, and land tenure in the Dark Age has led to the conclusions (1) that there was surplus arable in the πεδίων/ἀγρός, which was used for grazing, and therefore was common land; and (2) that the community as a whole controlled its conversion to farmland. It is logical to suppose that τεμένη (and new κληροί as well) were taken from this uncultivated *ager publicus*. Against this is the traditional interpretation of the texts, which is that τέμενος land was already under cultivation at the time of its transferral.

Let us consider first the three passages in which nearly identical formulas are used to describe τέμενος land.

Il. 6, 194–195 (to Bellerophon):

καὶ μὲν οἱ Λύκιοι τέμενος τάμον ἔξοχον ἄλλων  
καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης, ὄφρα νέμοιτο.

Il. 12, 313–314 (to Sarpedon and Glaucus):

καὶ τέμενος νεμόμεσθα μέγα Ξάνυοιο παρ’ ὄχθας  
καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης πυροφόροιο.

Il. 20, 184–185 (to Aeneas):

ἦ νύ τί τοι Τρῶες τέμενος τάμον ἔξοχον ἄλλων  
καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης, ὄφρα νέμῃται ...

thereafter, is as fundamental as the householder’s right to his *kleros*, and no more so.” A. Burford Cooper, *The family farm in Greece*, CIJ 73 (1978) 175.

29 *Od.* 4, 517; 5, 489; 18, 358; 24, 150. The general notion of ἐσχατ- (noun, adj., verb) is location at the edge or furthest point, beyond which is something else, e.g., *Il.* 2, 616; 9, 484; *Od.* 1, 23. Thus ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆ (ἦν) is the furthest edge of the ἀγρός, beyond which was land left uncultivated; see *H. Ven.* 122. So Odysseus has goats grazing ἐσχατιῆ, while his pigs forage ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆ (*Od.* 14, 104; 24, 150), i.e., on land that is marginally cultivable; see Jardé (supra n. 23) 14; Hennig (supra n. 19) 48, n. 38. In Classical times, the evidence indicates, the ἐσχατιή was still mainly “publicly owned pasture”, which was sometimes rented out by the state; Burford Cooper (supra n. 28) 172–173.

30 T. W. Gallant, *Agricultural systems, land tenure, and the reforms of Solon*, BSA 77 (1982) 116–117. Here, at the margin, is also where the poorer citizens would live; e.g., *Od.* 5, 488.

We note that in the first and third passages, possession (νέμομαι) is potential; in the second it is actual. And only in the case of the already held τέμενος is ἄρουρα indicated to be under cultivation (προφόροιο). By itself, ἄρουρα means simply arable or cultivable land. In most occurrences in Homer it has a very general sense of “land” or “earth”, with no specific connotation of its character as plowland<sup>31</sup>. The actual condition or use of a particular ἄρουρα is identifiable only by its qualifiers or by the context<sup>32</sup>. Thus, while ἄρουρα most often (and naturally) signifies land already in use, it may also refer to arable land that has not yet been prepared or planted, as in *Odyssey* 6, 10 where Nausithous, the founder of Scheria, ἐδάσσατ' ἀρούρας, and in *Odyssey* 9, 357 where wild vines grow in the ζείδωρος ἄρουρα of the non-farming Cyclops. Ἄρουρα in *Iliad* 6, 195 and 20, 185 clearly falls into that general category of tillable land<sup>33</sup>. In his employment of the formula the poet appears to have carefully distinguished between the plowlands promised to Bellerophon and Aeneas, not yet planted, and the ἄρουρα of Glaucus and his brother, already in possession and planted in wheat<sup>34</sup>.

In the one other instance of a τέμενος promised but not possessed there are definite indications that uncultivated land is meant. Meleager's τέμενος (*Il.* 9, 579) is to be τὸ μὲν ἡμισυ οἰνοπέδοιο, / ἡμισυ δὲ ψιλὴν ἄροσιν πεδίοιο. The adjective οἰνόπεδος (ground or soil fit for wine)<sup>35</sup> occurs just three times in Homer: here, as a neuter substantive, and twice as a modifier in the phrase ἀνὰ (κατὰ) γοῦνον ἀλωῆς οἰνοπέδοιο (*Od.* 1, 193; 11, 193; cf. *Hy. Merc.* 207). Regularly in Homer a producing vineyard or orchard is called ἀλωή or ὄρχατος<sup>36</sup>;

31 *Il.* 3, 115; 4, 174; 7, 421; 10, 7; 18, 104; *Od.* 19, 433; 20, 379. Πατρὶς ἄρουρα (*Od.* 1, 407; 10, 29; 20, 193) means simply “native land”, like πατρὶς γαῖα; ἄρουρα retains this generalized meaning even when qualified by specific epithets like ζείδωρος. E.g., Odysseus, set down on the sandy beach at Ithaca, kissed ζείδωρον ἄρουραν (*Od.* 13, 354; cf. 5, 463), so *Il.* 2, 548; 8, 486; 9, 141. 283; 21, 232; *Od.* 2, 328; 3, 3; 7, 332; 11, 309; 12, 386; 19, 593; 23, 311. In these instances, ἄρουρα means simply the ground where men live, as opposed to the wilds or wasteland. Cf. Richter (*supra* n. 6) 93ff. For a more detailed analysis of the variant meanings of ἄρουρα, see B. Mader, *LfgRE* 1335–1340.

32 Grainfields: *Il.* 6, 142; 11, 68. 558; 12, 314; 13, 707; 14, 122; 18, 541. 544; 20, 226; 21, 465; 23, 599; probably also *Il.* 12, 422; 21, 405; 22, 489; cf. *Il.* 3, 246 (wine); *Od.* 4, 229 (φάρμακα).

33 See Finley (*supra* n. 17) 136, n. 4; 153, n. 6.

34 Φυταλιή, which occurs only in these three passages in Homer, is assumed to mean a producing orchard or vineyard. The word has been read on a tablet from Knossos (*pu-ta-ri-ja*), but its meaning there is uncertain. Hennig (*supra* n. 19) 41, thinks this is an old formula, “mechanically handed down”, representing the donation of τεμένη in the ninth or tenth centuries; cf. Richter (*supra* n. 6) 96. It is possible that φυταλιή was originally an adjectival form meaning “land suitable for plants”, as ἄρουρα is “land suited for tilling”.

35 So the lexica; e.g., Cunliffe: “with soil fit for producing wine; vine bearing”; Ebeling: *vinifer, viniferax*.

36 And sometimes κῆπος (garden); see Richter (*supra* n. 6) 96. Significantly, perhaps, κῆπος in Cyprus meant “uncultivated land”; H. Frisk, *Gr. Etym. Wörterbuch* I 482. Cyprian ἀλωή is also glossed as κῆποι (Frisk I 82); ἀλωή (etymology unknown) also means “threshing floor” (*Il.* 5, 499; 13, 588; 20, 496; Hes. *Op.* 599. 806). The only obvious connection between ἀλωή

the appearance of the noun οἰνόπεδον is unparalleled; it cannot mean a planted vineyard here, but rather land suitable for grapevines<sup>37</sup>.

The noun ἄροσις occurs only here and at *Odyssey* 9, 134, in a description of an uninhabited island opposite the land of the Cyclopes. It contains both meadows (λειμῶνες) and ἄροσις λείη, level land suitable for plowing, but obviously uncultivated. So too, the ψιλὴν ἄροσιν of Meleager's τέμενος is best taken as ground good for plowing, bare of trees and brush, but not yet worked<sup>38</sup>.

The μέγα δῶρον promised to Meleager by the Aetolians was not the best of the cultivated land, but rather the right to cultivate unworked land in the πεδῖον. Such a procedure did not deprive households of their farmplots, and therefore required no compensation and imposed no economic hardship on the people. In fact, as we shall presently see, the τέμενος played a functional role in the Dark Age land economy.

### III

There are indications that τεμένη were allocated from land that required improvement, most prominently poorly drained bottomlands. Frequently in Homer the πεδῖον is described as cut by a river, in whose floodplain were marshy, thickly vegetated meadows<sup>39</sup>. As was said above, these uncultivated meadowlands (λειμών, also ἔλος, “marsh”) were used for grazing horses and cattle<sup>40</sup>; but the texts make it clear that they were also considered good for vines and fruit trees. The deserted island off the coast of the Cyclopes' land, lush and wooded, would have made a “fine settlement”, as Odysseus notes with a farmer's eye (*Od.* 9, 131–135):

“For it is in no way bad, and would bear all things in season. For on it are λειμῶνες by the shores of the gray sea, watered and soft (ὕδρηλοι μαλακοί); the vines would be imperishable. And on it is ἄροσις λείη; always, season after season, they would reap a very deep grain crop, since the subsoil is very rich.”

This land is exactly like the well watered land of the Cyclopes opposite, which spontaneously yielded wheat, barley, and vines but was used solely for

“orchard/vineyard” and “threshing floor” is that both are levelled, improved ground; cf. LfgrE, s.v. ἄλωή.

37 Later, of course, as infilling occurred, οἰνόπεδον signifies a producing vineyard; e.g., *Theognis* 892. Cf. Richter (*supra* n. 6) 97, n. 698.

38 So Richter (*supra* n. 6) 95. Lattimore translates correctly: “The half of it to be vineyard and the half of it unworked ploughland of the plain to be furrowed.” Mader, LfgrE (1333) takes it as an already tilled piece of common land.

39 *Il.* 2, 461, 467; 4, 483; 5, 597; 6, 506 (= 15, 263); 11, 492; 12, 283; 16, 151; 17, 747; 20, 221; 21, 300, 350; *Od.* 4, 602; 14, 473; cf. *Il.* 5, 87; 9, 151 (= 293); 10, 466; 12, 283; 23, 122; *Od.* 5, 72; 11, 539, 573; 24, 13; Hes. *Theog.* 279.

40 *Il.* 2, 775; 6, 506; 11, 677; 14, 445; 15, 630; 16, 151; 18, 528, 574; 20, 221; *Od.* 3, 421; 4, 601; 21, 48; *H. Merc.* 72; *H. Cer.* 174; cf. *Il.* 4, 475; 22, 309. See Richter (*supra* n. 6) 41–43.

pasturing sheep and goats (cf. 108. 167). Trees and grapevines, watered by four springs, grow in wild abundance around Calypso's cave, surrounded by moist, flowery λειμῶνες (Od. 5, 63).

The lushness of the meadows, which made them attractive for gardens, was offset by their susceptibility to overwatering. In a flood simile, a river, swollen by winter rains, "scatters" the dikes (γέφυραι) built to restrain it (Il. 5, 87–92; cf. 16, 384):

"Neither do the bulwarks (ἔρκεα) of the blooming ἀλωαί hold it back as it comes on suddenly, when Zeus' rain lays heavy, and many fine ἔργα of industrious men are ruined by it."

To prepare the wetlands for cultivation, which might involve extensive drainage and irrigation works, and then to maintain them, required a large workforce. In addition, vines are especially labor intensive. In the Homeric world only the few top houses had the labor (and the metal tools) needed to work this kind of land on a sizeable scale.

As we saw earlier, the τεμῆνη in Homer are composed both of orchard/vineyard and plowland, and are regularly situated by a water source. Alcinous' τέμενος is explicitly said to be located in a λειμῶν<sup>41</sup>. Though the evidence is by no means conclusive, the language of the poems suggests a standard procedure for the cutting out of a τέμενος. The garden portion (φυταλιή, ἀλώη) would be taken from moist meadowland; the arable (ἄρουρα, ἄροσις), assuming that it lay adjacent, would no doubt be better drained, but still requiring works to convert it into grain-producing fields<sup>42</sup>.

Τεμῆνη might also be cut out of other land besides moist bottomland, though the principle remains the same. There were no λειμῶνες on Ithaca or the other islands, as Telemachus pointedly informs Menelaus (Od. 4, 602). Though it is "rugged" and lacks the level meadows that are necessary for horsebreeding, Ithaca is nevertheless very good for grain (σῖτος) and produces wine and a variety of timber; it has good pasture for goats and cattle. There is constant rainfall and dew, and abundant water sources (ἄρδμοί)<sup>43</sup>.

In this land of steep wooded hills and narrow, sloping sea plains, Odysseus held a τέμενος μέγα (Od. 17, 299; cf. 11, 185). We are told only that it was manured, but that is sufficient to show that it was a garden (orchard/vineyard)

41 *Od.* 6, 291; cf. *Il.* 2, 695; 23, 148.

42 On protection of arable land by banks and dikes, see Jardé (supra n. 23) 39–42; Stubbings in *Companion to Homer* (supra n. 12) 528. Proximity of pasture and tillage: *Il.* 12, 283; *Od.* 4, 601; gardens and grainlands: *Il.* 14, 122. The description of the ἀλώη in the Shield (*Il.* 18, 561) shows that κάπετος and ἔρκος were part of a protective system against overwatering; cf. Richter (supra n. 6) 106–107. Aristotle says that during Trojan War times Argos was marshy (ἐλώδης) and therefore incapable of supporting more than a few inhabitants, while now it is drier and thus well cultivated (*Meteorologia* 352a).

43 The landscape of Ithaca: *Od.* 1, 186; 4, 601; 9, 22; 11, 184; 13, 233. 344. 407; 14, 96; 20, 185; 15, 503; 24, 205. 358.

rather than a grainfield<sup>44</sup>. Just such a piece of land is Laertes' ἀγρός, located ἐπ' ἀγροῦ, far from town, to which Laertes had exiled himself out of grief for Odysseus<sup>45</sup>. He had "acquired" it (κτηάτισσεν) many years before – it was flourishing when Odysseus was a small child (παιδνός). Now Laertes lived there permanently with the δμῶες: an old Sicilian woman, who took care of him, old Dolius, and their six sons, who worked the ἀγρός along with the retired chief. It is vineyard, orchard, and garden; Homer refers to it variously as ἀλωή (6), ὄρχατος (4), κῆπος (2)<sup>46</sup>. It is a large operation, with a permanent house and shedding, growing many vines and many fruit trees: fig, olive, pear, and apple.

Not surprisingly, considering the topography of Ithaca, Laertes' garden was located on hilly ground. No doubt Laertes' men had to clear the land of thick vegetation and construct terraces and channels to hold the soil and protect it from the frequent heavy rains. Many years later, it still required a large permanent staff. When Odysseus visits it, Dolius and his six sons are out gathering stones and other material to be ἀλωῆς ἔρκος (24, 224). Laertes himself spends his declining years in constant, backbreaking toil on it<sup>47</sup>.

Was Laertes' orchard/vineyard a τέμενος, or was it "free" land reclaimed by Laertes, like Eurymachus' land ἀγροῦ ἐπ' ἐσχατιῆς (Od. 18, 357)? Scholars are divided, and the Greek (24, 205–207) can support either meaning<sup>48</sup>. I incline towards the former interpretation because Laertes' garden is consistently said to be in the ἀγρός, not on the margin. It is highly likely, in fact, that Laertes' ἀγρός was the garden τέμενος of Odysseus, mentioned in 17, 299. The identification is supported by one important piece of evidence. In 4, 735, Penelope requests someone to tell Δολίον ... γέροντα, δμῶ' ἐμόν ... [ός] μοι κῆπον ἔχει πολυδένδρον to inform Laertes about Telemachus' journey from home. Plainly, she is referring to the κῆπος of Laertes, which here, as Laertes' son's wife, Penelope calls her own.

To summarize, τεμένη taken from moist meadowlands in the πεδίον and τεμένη cut out of steeper land in the ἀγρός share common characteristics. Both are potentially rich farmlands that require improvement to make them initially productive, and a great deal of attention to keep them up.

44 M. Jameson, *Agriculture and slavery in classical Athens*, *CIJ* 73 (1978) 129. Though grainfields were not manured, they will have benefited from the droppings of animals pasturing on the fallow stubble.

45 *Od.* 1, 190; 11, 187; 24, 205. 336.

46 For the nuances of these terms, see Richter (*supra* n. 6) 96–97.

47 Cf. the epithets τετυγμένος (24, 206), ἐκτιμένη (24, 226. 336). On the importance of terrace walls and drainage ditches, see Jameson (*supra* n. 44) 128. In the modern Argolid this is "hard, time-consuming work", and terraces often collapse from lack of maintenance. The wealthiest farmers pay for such work to show off their status; cf. van Andel and Runnels (*supra* n. 23) 145–147.

48 κτεατίζω and μογέω can refer to war in Homer, but more often mean simply "acquire" and "toil".

All this leads to the conclusion that as a social and economic transaction the δῶρον of a τέμενος was more balanced and more integrative than has been generally perceived. Let us quickly review the social relations. The advantages to the recipient are obvious. First and foremost, the award was a γέρας, a mark of signal honor from the δῆμος. Second, the possession of additional arable in the πεδῖον/ἀγρός was a material benefit. Chiefs had large households to feed, and their position obliged them to set an abundant table. In addition, a surplus over consumption helped to support a growing (since 900) activity in the manufacture and trade of luxury goods<sup>49</sup>. Yet it is significant that half of τέμενος land was devoted to orchard and vineyard, that is, to the abundant production of fruit and wine. The garden portion of a τέμενος was thus something of a luxury, a showplace that proclaimed the owner's high standing in the community. That is clearly the nature of Alcinous' ὄρχατος τετράγυος adjacent to his house – a true wonder of fruit trees, vines, and vegetables, all ripening at different times of the year, irrigated by two springs<sup>50</sup>. Every family will have had a vegetable plot, and most will have had some trees and vines; but only the richest would have extensive orchards and vineyards, since these are so labor intensive. To possess an unending abundance of fruit and wine, things that enhance the quality of life, was a very visible proof of preeminence. Thus, though we should not minimize the practical aspects of the δῶρον, it is clear that its essential value was that of a status symbol<sup>51</sup>.

The δῆμος benefited as well. The other side of chiefly privilege is *noblesse oblige*. The gift of arable land to βασιλεῖς imposed a counter obligation to be generous with its fruits. This entailed liberality on a day-to-day basis, as well as a special type of generosity; for there were times when the chief's surplus of grain was needed to lighten the effects of drought, flood, blight, or enemy raid<sup>52</sup>. Such big and little acts of public generosity confirmed the chief's authority as leader and bound him and people closer together. A further symme-

49 J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (New York 1977) 50–71.

50 *Od.* 7, 112. This is not part of Alcinous' τέμενος, which lay outside the town, though its nature is the same.

51 Orchard/vineyards are conspicuous items of chiefly property in the *Iliad* as well. Artemis was angered because Oeneus failed to offer her the first fruits of his ἀλωή and sent a wild boar to tear up the δένδρα μακρά (*Il.* 9, 533). Tydeus had πολλοὶ φυτῶν ὄρχατοι, as well as abundant grainfields and flocks (*Il.* 14, 122). The marginal land cultivated by Eurymachus is orchard/vineyard (*Od.* 18, 357). Cf. *Il.* 21, 36, 77; Richter (supra n. 6) 141, 145. Though the *Iliad* records some trade in wine (7, 467; 9, 71), wine and olive oil were mainly for domestic consumption.

52 A large 10th–9th century building at Nichoria, identified as a “chief's dwelling”, appears also to have had important communal functions, and was possibly a “collection-distribution center for the whole village”; W. A. McDonald et al., *Excavations at Nichoria III* (Minneapolis 1983) 53; cf. 58, 324, 358. Similar Dark Age buildings elsewhere, e.g., the so-called “heroon” at Lefkandi, may have had like communal functions; M. R. Popham et al., *The hero of Lefkandi*, *Antiquity* 56 (1982) 169–174. Evidence for the distributive functions of chiefs in Homer is limited, aside from the generous distribution of meat to friends and followers, see Donlan

try is evident in the circumstances of the transaction. The creation of new arable may be seen as a kind of public works, in that it produced an extra source of grain, close to the population center, on which the community had some moral claim in times of shortfall. This was accomplished entirely at the expense of the recipients, who were the members of the society best equipped to do it. Furthermore, the reclaimed land was from “common” pasture, i.e. land that was already heavily utilized, if not monopolized, by the elite for grazing their large herds and flocks.

The mostly symbolic value of the τέμενος is explained by the fact that wealth and prestige were not measured in land but in animals. Large-scale slaughtering of animals for feasts was the principal mode of chiefly largesse. Generous feasting of associates and followers was the standard way to win esteem and gain new supporters. Since good grainland was plentiful, and only a few unfortunates lacked the means to grow their own bread, chiefly distribution of grain would be an extraordinary measure, reserved for emergencies. And in the highly localized, subsistence-based economies of the Dark Age, there was scant possibility of bulk transport of grain as an exchange commodity. Thus, even for the βασιλῆες there was little incentive to expand grainfields. Jameson puts the matter succinctly. The Dark Age “king can do little with large estates of arable land and their surplus (and so does not possess them) whereas cattle are conspicuous for status and useful for ritual and social functions”<sup>53</sup>.

In other words, landownership was not a means of social control in the Dark Age. The fundamental fact of the chieftain economy is that the surplus production of the politically ambitious (consisting primarily of animals) had to be continually and lavishly *expended* in exchange for authority.

#### IV

We have succeeded in assigning τέμενος its proper role and importance in the social economy. Though τέμενος was a single, and rather minor, element of the economy, it was completely harmonious with all the other elements of the internal exchange system. The gift and acceptance of a τέμενος functioned as a mechanism of integration, conferring benefits on giver and receiver and strengthening the ties between them. As an economic transaction the τέμενος exemplified the ideals of fairness and balance. As a social transaction it reit-

(supra n. 14) 163–166. On the other hand, feasts of meat also included bread and wine. More to the point, both Homer and Hesiod say that good rulership promotes the fertility of the soil, animals, and women (*Od.* 19, 109; *Op.* 225). I take these as references to good management and generosity rather than to any “magical” qualities inherent in the chieftainship. For a concrete example, see *Od.* 7, 131: the πολῖται of Scheria have their local water supply from one of Alcinous’ springs.

53 Jameson (supra n. 44) 126, n. 21.



erated the ethics and values of the contemporary political system: honor and prestige, competitive display, gift and obligation. Its chief significance for us lies in its strong affirmation of the personal and reciprocal nature of the ruler-people relationship during the Dark Age.

At some point, certainly by the early seventh century, the custom of giving τεμένη to living men was discontinued. The reason why is clear. A sharp rise in population during the early eighth century put pressure on the land. For the first time in 400 years farmland became scarce. A major consequence of land shortage was the decline of large-scale herding, inefficient in terms of land use, in favor of cereal production. Henceforth wealth and status were measured by land ownership and not by the size of flocks and herds<sup>54</sup>.

Thus the process began whereby a few families came to own a disproportionate share of the land. Exactly how this was managed we are not told, but it is easy to guess. Since the basis of livelihood was now scarce, control of it meant automatic social control – without the expense of feasting. Given this incentive, the important men would have marshalled all their power and resources to acquire more fields. The free land outside the ἀγρός, formerly little exploited, but now worth the effort of cultivating it, could be easily appropriated by men with the manpower and the “capital”. The *ager publicus*, from which the τεμένη were cut, was just as easily taken over. When proprietary rights to land near the settlement became a high priority, the elite could base their claim on customary use, since their cattle and horses had pastured in the λιμῶνες and their sheep and goat flocks had dominated the hillier grazing grounds for generations. Against any other claim to these lands, the βασιλεῖς could assert, “this is our land”<sup>55</sup>. Indeed, as the texts make clear, they already possessed squatters’ rights to the theoretically “common” pastures. Odysseus has a full-time staff of herders in the ἀγρός, living there amidst a complex of pens, folds, and other “works”. And, as we have repeatedly emphasized, only the elite had the ready means to convert moist pasturelands to plowlands.

However it was accomplished, in the competition for land the chiefly class was the clear winner; and in a comparatively short time (three or four generations) this group was transformed from near subsistence farmers to profit-

54 Snodgrass (supra n. 22) 19–25. 35–37. 55; Gallant (supra n. 30) 115; O. Murray, *Early Greece* (Stanford 1983) 47. 65–66. 107–108. Despite controversy over the suddenness and extent of the rise (I. Morris, *Burial and ancient society* [Cambridge, Engl. 1987] 156–159), there can be no doubt that most of Greece experienced a significant increase in population during the eighth century nor that this was an event of the utmost importance. Even the thinly populated, poor-soiled southern Argolid “experienced a steady expansion of settlement” around 750, leading to infilling of the landscape, including the cultivation of “virgin” marginal land; van Andel and Runnels (supra n. 23) 104–105.

55 See Snodgrass (supra n. 22) 38–40; Murray (supra n. 54) 177. 184–185. Prudent marriages among the endogamous elite would have been another strategy for consolidating landholdings in the cultivated πεδίον. It must be emphasized that what was at stake was not simply land, but land in the πεδίον/ἀγρός, i.e., the best land, near the population center.

motivated gentry, whose status as aristocrats depended on the production of large saleable surpluses of agricultural goods<sup>56</sup>. This was the fundamental premise of the polis economy; for the rest of Greek history the need to turn a profit from the land intimately affected every layer of society and every aspect of social life.

The τέμενος is part of the history of that momentous change, and, though minor in itself, has been a valuable aid in describing the evolution of the process. Τέμενος has also served as a dynamic symbol of the change. Its awarding commemorates the traditional system, in which the ideal relationship between leaders and δῆμος was one of fairness, mutual obligation, and generosity. Its passing marks the emergence of a different system, in which the leader-people relationship was characterized by injustice, exploitation, and greed<sup>57</sup>. In its surviving form – a δῶρον by the δῆμος to a tutelary deity or benefactor hero – there is a reminder of the old ways.

56 After about 750, the economic options of the landowners became considerably greater. As producers of surplus cereal crops, the elite will have gained an important economic edge over subsistence producers. As time went on, they could exploit the seasonal labor of underemployed farmers, further increasing their profits. The elite could also opt to keep using meadowlands for horses and cattle, considerably reduced in number and therefore of even higher status. Or (after 700) they could cultivate olives and vines on a large scale as cash crops. On this “ascending spiral” of economic superiority, see, in general, Gallant (*supra* n. 30) 116–117. For the southern Argolid, see van Andel and Runnels (*supra* n. 22) 105–106, 167–168.

57 Amply recorded by Hesiod at the beginning of the seventh century and by Solon at the end.