THE SO-CALLED ‘UNION’ OF CORINTH AND ARGOS
AND THE NATURE OF THE πόλις

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ABSTRACT

ROSS MICHAEL TWELE: The So-Called ‘Union’ of Corinth and Argos and the Nature of the πόλεις

(Under the direction of Fred Naiden)

This thesis revisits the political interactions between Corinth and Argos during the Corinthian War (392-386), commonly referred to by modern scholars as a unification between two πόλεις. It re-examines the various source traditions and argues that no unification program of the sort attested in later Greek history ever occurred. Argos’ involvement in Corinthian affairs was limited by Spartan interference to a merely territorial and military presence in the Corinthia, and the Argive leadership of the Isthmian Games of 390 was more closely connected to previous tensions over pan-Hellenic contests than to a sharing of political rights. It also uses this event to evaluate aspects of the theoretical and systematic model of the πόλεις advanced by M. H. Hansen and the Copenhagen Polis Centre. An anomaly like the ‘Union’ does not fit into this formulation, and only a more fluid understanding of the nature of the πόλεις can accommodate it.
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INTRODUCTION: A POLITICAL ABERRATION

In 392, a political revolution broke out in Corinth. It occurred in the midst of a war between Sparta and an alliance of politically mismatched πόλεις running the gamut from fiercely democratic Argos to ancestrally oligarchic Corinth. In this revolution, the Corinthian aristocratic leadership was massacred, and all remaining influential sympathizers withdrew into exile. The victorious democratic faction found itself in desperate need for support from another large and more stable πόλεις, and it put out feelers to both Athens and Argos. Argos, being closer to Corinth and more interested in the stability of the anti-Spartan alliance, responded.

What followed was a unique occurrence in classical Greek political history, a problem still to be solved by modern ancient historians. Simply put: Argos absorbed Corinth. On what grounds, with what motivation, to what end, by what means, to what extent, over what time span, and with what support from the Corinthians still at home—all of these aspects have been analyzed and re-analyzed, bandied about between commentators over the past sixty years. Many of these studies have located the Union of Corinth and Argos within a framework of anti-Spartan strategy; others have attempted to isolate an attested political arrangement that can be co-opted for this event; still others have used it as a vehicle for testing the comparative reliability of its ancient chroniclers.¹

¹ The responses these scholars have produced are as numerous as the routes they have taken to get there. Grote 1854 saw it as a political union held together by Argive garrisons; Bury 1913 and Beloch 1922 added to the picture the concept of integration of political rights. Griffith 1950, still regarded as the touchstone for all subsequent dialogue on the Union, introduced the proposition that the Union was a form of
This thesis considers the Union from a different approach. The past fifteen years have seen a resurgence of the debate over what concepts and identities the Greeks had in mind when they wrote of the πόλις. To the average Greek of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., the πόλις was undoubtedly the single most formative influence on his identity. Its name determined his citizenship; its territory enclosed his livelihood; its governing institutions dictated his political privileges, its class structure imparted his social order, and its cult activity shaped his disposition towards his patron gods. But what, in practical terms, did the πόλις define?

M. H. Hansen and his Copenhagen Polis Centre took on the mission of examining all ancient attestations of the word πόλις to construct a framework of concepts and meanings that the Greeks of the Archaic and Classical periods attributed to the word. Over fourteen years, the CPC published a series of volumes detailing not only the results of the investigation, but extensive catalogues of the various uses of πόλις in each of the major authors and at different stages of Greek history. Its findings have been intensely scrutinized, in no small part because of its own intellectual underpinning that lexical and semantic studies, producing lists and schemata of shades of meaning, can satisfactorily

ισοπολιτεία (though emphatically not of the Hellenistic type) that developed in two distinct stages. In his camp are Thompson 1972, Di Gioia 1974 (who liberated Corinth within the framework of the Union to nearly full political αὐτονομία), Hamilton 1979, Whitby 1984, to some extent Salmon 1984 (who is more concerned about Corinthian voluntarism in the affair than the affair itself), Bearzot 2004, and Sordi 2006. Against Griffith et alia stand Accame 1951, who settles on a συνοικισμός, followed closely though independently by Kagan 1962; Tomlinson 1972, who argued for a federation with social and political reciprocity; Tuplin 1982 and 1992, who rejected both ισοπολιτεία and the two-stage development but offered nothing in its place; and Fornís 2009, who invoked the confusion of the entire debate and the inherent prejudices of the sources to deconstruct the wigwam and argue that, in fact, no such Union ever existed at all. The standard works on Greek federations (Larsen 1968) and ισοπολιτεία (Gawantka 1975) both fail to mention the Union at all. Most current textbooks, distantly connected monographs, and general treatments (including Missiou 1992 and Edwards 1995 on Andokides, Shipley 1997 on Plutarch’s Agesilaos, and my own personal research experiences) are content to call it a political and territorial union and leave it there.
explain the ancient Greek understanding of the political concept called by the term πόλις.\(^2\)

Simply put again: the Union of Corinth and Argos defies all of the CPC’s prodigious – and prolific – schematic explications of the πόλις. One πόλις asserted control over another, but the other retained its πόλις-ness. Territorial amalgamation was nearly immediate; social and religious assimilation followed shortly thereafter; political unification was anticipated by one πόλις, perhaps by both. The πολίτευμα of one πόλις were at odds with each other, and the expatriated side summoned Sparta to dissolve the Union by force; the plot failed. Through it all, Argos retained an Argive identity and Corinth retained some form of Corinthian identity, and yet the two πόλεις were one πόλις – but, by some accounts, still two πόλεις! And all resistance to the Union (as our sources preserve it) was based on wartime strategy and power politics – not, apparently, on any complaint about the un-Greek-ness of the Union or the reinterpretation of the meaning of πόλις. In other words, as far as the Greeks were concerned, this singular, bizarre experiment was not particularly un-πόλις-like.

How can this Union, then, be accommodated by the CPC formulation of the nature of the πόλις? To solve this problem, we must first make our own foray into the problem of the nature of the Union itself. In doing so, we face the fundamental obstacle that has made the Union such a point of debate in the first place: the nature of the source material. Our only substantial account is Xenophon’s in the *Hellenika*, a work that

\(^2\) Unsurprisingly, most discussions of the nature of the πόλις take their cues from the Athenian experience, with the Spartan and Theban/Boiotian forms of πολιτεία as correctives or as supplements to the otherwise Athenocentric field. If we are to verify Hansen’s theories as applied to Greek πόλεις as a whole group, we must look to instances in Greek history when the existence of a πόλις changes in such a way as to be historically noteworthy, and attempt to extrapolate information about the meaning of the concept πόλις and interpolate this new information into Hansen’s framework. The Union of Corinth and Argos fits this need well.
frames the entire Corinthian War as a contest between Sparta and Athens for pan-
Hellenic legitimacy, and consequently relegates all activity among the other πόλεις to a
secondary position. There is not enough in Xenophon to construct a sustained narrative
of the Union from its inception in 392 to its dissolution by the Peace of Antalkidas in
386; in fact, we can only speak with any authority on its first two years.

Our other sources do not fill any chronological gaps, nor are they precisely
historical works. We have a speech by Andokides encouraging the Athenians to make
peace with Sparta in early 391, invoking Argos’ aspirations for Corinth only as a weight
in the scales of the larger debate, and we have both Xenophon’s and Plutarch’s
biographies of the Spartan king Agesilaos, which refer to the Union only insofar as their
protagonist was involved – again, only the first two years. There is Diodoros, who
provides the only comparable narrative of the war apart from the Hellenika; but his
account sets the conception of the Union at precisely the point where all of our other
sources indicate its second birthday.3 There are questions of proximity to the event
(Andokides’ and Xenophon’s contemporaneity v. Diodoros’ and Plutarch’s distance of
350-500 years), of bias (Andokides’ and Xenophon’s attested oligarchic sympathies v.
Diodoros’ and Plutarch’s sustained political disinterest), and of reliability (Andokides’
oratorical aims v. Xenophon’s narrative argument v. Plutarch’s moralizing focus v.
Diodoros’ want of intellectual rigor).

3 An account Griffith 1950 could have pointed to as further evidence for his two-stage theory (though he
chose not to press Diodoros’ testimony into his argument) and explained away by Tuplin 1982 (83, in the
same way that he criticized Griffith for trying to explain away inconsistencies in Xenophon) as a
misreading of Ephoros. Striking though their mutual discarding of Diodoros for wholly different purposes
is, both almost certainly have the right idea about Diodoros in taking his testimony at rather less than face
value. Whitby 1984 accepts it at face value, but only insofar as he had already deconstructed Tuplin’s
arguments against Diodoros that were founded on arguments in favor of Xenophon and Andokides. In
other words, Whitby does not defend Diodoros’ account, but employs it simply because nothing else is left.
We must decide which tradition to accept before we can pass judgment on the Union, and yet we cannot pass judgment on the traditions without considering their presentations of the Union in the process. This paper will give answers to both questions, examining each aspect of the Union in turn, source by source and issue by issue. We have of course consulted the commentators of the past sixty years in the course of this analysis, but we must remember that we are asking a different set of questions than they were. They looked for labels and indictments on the sources; we explicitly look for neither. We seek only an understanding of the problems of the Union and of the political theory at stake in it. What was the Union of Corinth and Argos? And, insofar as the context of the previous question allows, what was the πόλις?
A(NOTHER) RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UNION

The only way to determine into what sort of union Argos and Corinth entered will be to plot out the ‘facts’ about the Union preserved by our ancient sources and examine the merits and the implications of each. We begin where we must: with Xenophon, who provides the most complete passage we have in any ancient source concerning the visible effects of the new Argive involvement in Corinthian political affairs. It is also the passage that has suffered most at the hands of scholars seeking to confirm or deny, to various degrees, the accuracy of this account and the honesty either of Xenophon or of his own sources, who have most often been associated with the oligarchs who survived the Revolution of 392, suffering only exile. After establishing the flavor of the exiles’ response to the situation at Corinth with ὁξήντας δὲ τοὺς τυραννεύοντας, a formulation that does not exactly suggest that this report is sine ira et studio, Xenophon provides a catalogue of these visible effects, which follows here, organized on the author’s own syntactic terms:4

- σισθανόμενοι δὲ ἀφανιζομένην τὴν πόλιν – perceiving that the πόλις was disappearing
  - τὸ ὄρος ἀνασπᾶσθαι – the boundary stones being pulled up
  - Ἀργος ἀντὶ Κορίνθου τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῖς ὁνομάζεσθαι – their homeland being called Argos instead of Corinth
- πολιτείας ἀναγκαζόμενοι τῆς Ἐν Ἀργεῖ μετέχειν – being compelled to share in the πολιτεία in Argos ( nisi oüde ëéëënto, which they did not want/need? at all)
- ἐν τῇ πόλει μετοίκων ἐλαττων δυνάμενοι – having less capacity to wield influence in the πόλις than metics [had]

4 Hellenika 4.4.6.
These are represented by Xenophon as the views of those Corinthians who had fled to the Acrocorinth during the massacre, fled the Corinthia intending to go into exile, and were wooed back by the appeals of their families and promises from ‘those in power’ that they would ‘suffer nothing difficult’ – i.e., that they would not be prosecuted or persecuted upon their return.\(^5\) By ‘those in power’ Xenophon is referring to the leaders of the Revolution, who based on his own account must include representatives of all of the parties who had organized the massacre: ‘the Argives; the Athenians; the Boiotians; those Corinthians who had accepted money from the Great King; those most responsible for the war.’\(^6\) If all were present – or even if one of the non-Corinthian groups were – these returnees would have had good reason to look at Corinth as a πόλις under foreign occupation.

The implications of this situation are subtle. If these are indeed the men who held these opinions, we would be justified in expecting them to feel twinges of nostalgia for the Corinth that had existed before a new regime gave them cause to fear for their lives. Their return to their homeland would have been riddled through with hesitancy and doubt, particularly over the extent to which they could trust the revolutionaries inviting them home; they would have found the non-Corinthians among them, as ξένοι and representatives of very different political organizations, especially dubious. All the same,

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\(^5\) *Hellenika* 4.4.5. By both Xenophon’s arrangement of material and the most reasonable assumptions about the chronology, we are placed firmly in the near aftermath of the Revolution. This is only to suggest that Xenophon is not transposing the entire circumstantial milieu of the returnees’ experience of the new Corinth. Griffith 1950 missed the propagandistic element that lies behind this passage (243); but others may have overplayed it. All propaganda must begin with a kernel of truth.

\(^6\) *Hellenika* 4.4.2. Whether or not ‘those responsible for the war’ is syntactically linked to ‘those of the Corinthians who had accepted money from the Great King’ is at this moment irrelevant; since the war began as an alliance against Sparta, representatives of any and all of these groups could easily be held ‘responsible.’
the promises of security they had received would have given them a modicum of optimism – if not for the future of their homeland, then at least for their own. 7

Under these circumstances, then, what are we to make of those of the returnees who, as Xenophon tells it, thought it ‘a worthy enterprise’ and ‘most worthy of praise’ to make an attempt to take Corinth back from the revolutionaries? 8 At the very least, these men were making poor repayment for the amnesty they had received from the new men ἐν δυνάμει and imposing new strife on a πόλις already devastated by στάσις and πόλεμος. We cannot hypothesize whether they already intended to re-open στάσις at the time when the invitation was extended to them to return, but the offer of security surely emboldened them for the enterprise.

Now for the visible effects. They come in three parts: the disappearance of the πόλις, the compulsion to participate in Argive πολιτεία, and their level of influence vis-à-vis the rest of the population of the Corinthia. All three of these are framed with middle present participles, i.e., as events still in motion, which at least keeps Xenophon’s presentation of events self-consistent and suggests that whatever unification was being undertaken could not yet be called completed. The accusations themselves unfortunately did not leave archaeological remains (as boundary stones never do) or literary trails (as a change of name for a πόλις ought to have done: more below), so we must do the best we can with what records we have.

7 Why were these supporters of the old Corinthian πολιτεία (qua arrangement of political institutions) invited back at all? Presumably because Corinth needed men, both to repopulate following the massacre and to provide candidates for leadership from the ranks of those who were already well-known and respected in Corinthian affairs. These were certainly not men who were already persona non gratae in Corinth, which made their later assault on the new Corinthian πολιτεία even more disheartening to the rest of the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει.

8 Hellenika 4.4.6; ‘ἄδειον εἶναι’ and ‘ἀξιοπαινοτάτης.’
Concerning the disappearance of the πόλις, Xenophon preserves charges concerning the removal of boundary stones and the change of name. In order: where would these boundary stones have lain? Or, more broadly, where, and how long, was the frontier between the Corinthia and the Argolid? In fact, it was pretty narrow – only about 6-10 kilometers, according to the most recent estimates. The topography of the frontier is mountainous, 900-1100m above sea level, and only one major road links the two territories, passing through Tenea before entering the highlands and descending into the Argolid peninsula. The territory of Kleonai shares a longer border with the Argolid – perhaps twice as long or a little more than that of the Corinthia with the Argolid, with another connecting road – but there is no indication in any of the sources that Kleonai was ever involved in the Union, even as a buffer state.

The removal of boundary stones, then, is by no means a physically improbable occurrence. One band of soldiers could traverse the ten kilometers (at most) of highlands and remove the markers in a matter of days, if that long. The region itself was largely uninhabited (at least in any organized manner) beyond Tenea, so the Argives would have met with no local resistance. The business would have been brief.

But did it matter? If it happened, the psychological effect on the residents of the Corinthia would have been striking; but what would it mean in any tangible sense? The

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9 For this, see Sakellariou 1971, 2-6 and figs. 8-10. The suggestions concerning territorial boundaries appear to have been made based on the natural contours of the land rather than on any material evidence, which indeed is non-existent: no boundary stones remain. Sakellariou does not provide boundary lengths, apart from the estimate of 6-10 km; all further numbers are my estimates based on the figures provided.

10 Ibid., fig. 9.
fact that there were no border settlements indicates that no one would have immediately noticed any political changes, and unless we are to accuse Xenophon of ignoring (or suppressing) a major struggle along Argos’ path to the settlement of Corinth, the Argives did not have to contend seriously with the Kleonaians, or even with the Teneans, as their garrison forces passed through the Corinthia.

This lack of conflict may simply indicate a lack of organization and concerted effort among the residents of the Corinthia, but it may imply something else. Suppose the boundary stones were uprooted, as Xenophon records: does that imply by necessity that Argos ever took control of Corinthian territory, or that it did so immediately the stones were removed? Or could this removal have been essentially ceremonial (since there were no communities to be directly affected by the change), and the message it sent stronger than Argos’ ability to enforce its new dominance?

*The Union in its first year*

We can use both Andokides and Xenophon for evidence on these points, both of whom were active during these events and can shed contemporary light on the issues. But these questions refer to the broader themes of the purview of the word πόλις and the elements of statehood that it does and does not cover. We cannot answer these questions until we have examined each author’s narrative and come to a conclusion about the interpretation of the Union that each preserves.

Since Andokides’ speech predated most of the events Xenophon describes, we should begin with his observations. Unfortunately for us, Andokides as an orator, unlike Xenophon as an author, had the liberty to assume that his audience was well aware of the
situation at the time. The best we can do here is to construct a framework within which the comments Andokides does make comfortably fit.

This is not a simple task, not least because for Andokides’ purposes, Corinth was less important as a πόλις with its own problems to be addressed than as a tool – or a weapon – to be used by the alliance against Sparta. The Corinthians (of either group) have apparently not sent an embassy to Athens asking for assistance since the Revolution and the first Argive steps toward unification, and Andokides frames his argument as a response to an Argive request for Athenian assistance. For what, we cannot be sure; but Andokides’ close juxtaposition of the request with the need to deliberate ‘about Corinth’ suggests that the Argives wanted Athenian assistance in securing Corinth. But to what purpose? For Andokides, Corinth’s only usefulness was as another element in the alliance against Sparta – and not a particularly powerful element. Certainly not at the level of the Boiotians, with whose allied power, Athens apparently thought, the anti-Spartan league would have sufficient force to withstand assault by any rival. Unfortunately for Athens, the Boiotian Confederation had already entered into peace talks with Sparta by the time of Andokides’ speech, and should Athens have decided to persist in the war it would have lost its single most powerful supplementary force – probably a larger force than Athens itself could muster so soon after the Dekeleian War.

Athens, then, should have been scrambling for any other support it could get, and Corinth, as an early rallying point for the anti-Spartan alliance, might have looked worth saving for the sake of continued unity among other League members, if for nothing else. But Andokides does not see even this much worth in Corinth: if the Boiotians do make

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11 Andokides, *De pace* 24.
peace, he asks, ‘τίνος ἐστὶν ἦμῖν ἄζια Κόρινθος’? And his answer indicates that *both* protection of Corinth and the added alliance of Argos would begin to fill the gap left by the Boiotian defection, and that only in combination. We can glean from these comments that Corinth had become completely incapable of providing any military might to the alliance. The combination of several years of war, a democratic revolution, and the subsequent Argive entrance into Corinthian affairs had deprived Corinth of any independent scope for action. Its ‘protection’ might have been beneficial to the alliance’s self-image, but more probably Corinth’s only continued value to the alliance was as a buffer between Sparta and Athens, friendly to the alliance and conveniently situated to block Sparta from entering the Isthmus to march against Athens. It appears that Argos understood this and exploited Athens’ dilemma by making Athens’ assistance in securing Corinth under Argive control a prerequisite for Argos’ agreement to enter into the alliance. At this early stage, clearly, Argive influence in Corinth was shaky and not yet pursued far enough for Argos to be able to handle the task out of its own resources.

Allying with Argos, Andokides argued, would have locked Athens into making a decision about whether it would match forces with Sparta should Sparta attack Argos. And what would the stakes of that confrontation be, at least in connection with Argos as the battleground? ‘In being defeated,’ he declares, ‘we will lose our home territory

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14 Griffith 1950 read this passage even more hesitantly, representing Argos as not having executed any imperialistic stage of the Union at all by the time of Andokides’ speech (245). Griffith discussed the Union as if ‘imperialism’ encompassed territorial, political, military, and social concerns all at once; we consider them distinct enough not to be by necessity simultaneous. By the time of *De pace*, military imperialism likely had already begun, and social imperialism had begun from the moment of the Corinthian revolution and the first invitations for help.
(χώραν) along with that of the Corinthians, and in being victorious, we will make the Corinthians’ territory the Argives’ (τὴν Κορινθίων Ἀργείων ποιήσωμεν). The discussion is entirely territorial. There is no indication here of any political arrangements at stake between Argos and Corinth; the least we can say about this is that, if such arrangements were brewing, Andokides and the Athenians had so little interest in them as to ignore them completely. But our suggestion that no such issue had been raised is supported by the Argives’ own communications with Athens concerning the alliance.

‘They request that we make war in union with them and with the Corinthians (κοινῇ μετὰ σφῶν καὶ μετὰ Κορινθίων),’ as Andokides presents it, ‘but they, making peace on their own, are not making their territory (τὴν χώραν) available to make war with.’ The most reasonable interpretation of this line is that τὴν χώραν refers to the Argives’ own territory, over which they have entertained the beginnings of peace talks with Sparta, and that neither the Corinthians nor the Corinthia are connected to Argos in any symbiotic or synchronized way. At the beginning of 391, it looks like Argos and Corinth were not only still political units unique from each other, but also territorially separate from each

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15 Ibid. 26. Tuplin 1982 argues that this statement ‘is chosen not to suggest that Corinthian territory is not yet Argive but to underline the futility of Athens’ continued participation in the war’ (79). The correct interpretation, of course, is somewhere in the middle: Corinthian territory is indeed not yet entirely Argive, but Athenian involvement in the war if successful would quickly make it so, and Athens must now choose whether it can accept that condition. Tuplin’s characterization of ‘Argive possession of Corinth’ as an ‘undesirable status quo’ may or may not be read into the speech (see the counterpoint by Whitby 1984, 303 arguing that Corinthian territory was merely an ‘object’ of interest to Athens in the war): it fits Andokides’ personal leanings, but does not in fact constitute a concrete element of his argument to the Athenians.

16 Ibid. 27. Tuplin 1982’s long linguistic commentary on elements of this section concerning whether Argos viewed itself as already holding Corinth or not (80-82) amount to little more than grammatical fireworks that look remarkably shaky when viewed in toto, as Whitby 1984 shrewdly pointed out (303-305); he comes to the conclusion that there is no need for the passage to be interpreted as looking forward to the future, as it can be read in the other direction as well. Again, the actual answer is transitive, and Tuplin’s effort to force Andokides to fit Xenophon precisely sacrifices nuance in the process.
other to the point that the former could not and did not claim any authority over the
territory of the latter.

Did they want to do so? Here we come to the trickiest statement Andokides
makes about the relationship between Argos and Corinth:

νῶν οὖν τούτο ύπόλοιπόν ἐστιν ἡμῖν, πόλεμον μὲν ἐλέσθαι καὶ νῦν ἀντι εἰρήνης,
tὴν δὲ συμμαχίαν τὴν Ἀργείων ἀντὶ τῆς Βοιωτῶν, Κορινθίων δὲ τοὺς νῦν ἔχοντας
τὴν πόλιν ἀντὶ Λακεδαιμονίων.

So now this is the remaining point for us: to choose war again now instead of peace, or [to choose] alliance with the Argives instead of with the Boiotians, or [to choose] those now holding the πόλις
of the Corinthians instead of the Lakedaimonians.17

Who is ‘now holding the πόλις of the Corinthians’? Could it be the Argives? But the
context of these juxtapositions would then require that the Boiotians were holding Sparta,
which is patently ridiculous. Can it be argued that Andokides considered the Boiotians to
have become no different from the Spartans by making peace with them? Perhaps; but
the Argives had been no better to the alliance, and were also in the process of making
peace terms if the demands they had laid upon Athens were not satisfied. Argos’
dealings have been lower than the Boiotian Federation’s, and yet alliance with them –
indeed, with both sides – is still a real possibility. This does not disprove any
identification between Spartans and Boiotians in this comparison, but it does cast doubt
on whether Andokides’ opinions of each party were negative enough to justify reading
this comparison into it.

In that case, we should not assume that the Argives are analogous to ‘those now
holding the πόλις of the Corinthians.’ This phrase would more appropriately denote the
democratic faction in Corinth that had successfully carried out the Revolution less than

17 Ibid. 32.
twelve months earlier, and the phrasing ‘those now holding’ would serve to differentiate this group, not from the Argives nor from the Spartans, but from the oligarchs that had held Corinth until so recently. This would identify the democratic Corinthians and the Argives with the same side of the war – the anti-Spartan one – but not with each other as homonymous or even intimately associated groups. And by all of Andokides’ other indications, we must understand that they were decidedly not the same group yet, as Argos was attempting to twist Athens’ arm into providing the assistance necessary to gain control of Corinthian territory; political unification feels farther off even than this eventuality. There was no συμπολιτεία, ἰσοπολιτεία, or even shared land between Argos and Corinth at the beginning of 391.\textsuperscript{18}

Now we can tackle Xenophon. As has been frequently noted by previous commentators, Xenophon does not cease to refer to Corinth as a place distinct from Argos. Among the examples:

- \textit{Hell. IV.v.1}: the cattle being kept at Peiraion by those ἐν τῇ πόλει, and the following account of Agesilaos’ assault
- \textit{Hell. IV.v.2}: the Isthmian Games, about which more below
- \textit{Hell. IV.v.11, 13}: the Amyklaians marching past τὴν πόλιν τῶν Κορινθίων and being observed by οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῶν Κορινθίων ἀστεως\textsuperscript{19}

All three of these admittedly date before the expulsion of Iphikrates in Xenophon’s narrative, but they are enough to illustrate that Xenophon has not revoked the status of

\textsuperscript{18} The Argives are thus a far cry from Griffith 1950’s representation of them as ‘that class of opportunist which does not even make its own opportunity’ (255) – or at the very least a far cry from a successful such group.

\textsuperscript{19} In this instance, I take the use of ἀστεως to refer specifically to the central locus or the ‘urban center’ of Corinth, not as a commentary on whether Corinth remained a \textit{polis} throughout the course of this event.
πόλις from the settlement that had been Corinth before the Revolution. There is, moreover, no shift that we can easily discern, as we might expect to find, in which Xenophon ceases to call Corinth Κόρινθος.

What Xenophon does introduce, however, is the mildly periphrastic phrase ἡ πόλις τῶν Κορινθίων when the Amyklaians march past.²⁰ By all accounts, ‘Corinth’ as an entity continued to exist during this period as far as Xenophon was concerned – but does he also make a distinction here between Corinth as an abstract identity and the Corinthians as a group of people who claim that identity? Perhaps he does: he certainly recognizes both ‘the Corinthians in the πόλις’ and ‘the Corinthian exiles’ as two separate groups in the context of the Isthmian Games, but neither group seems to be any more or less Corinthian than the other.²¹ Assuming that this is a deliberate choice on Xenophon’s part, is it possible that here he presents a conceptual dichotomy between the πόλις as a territorial complex with its own name and abstract identity, and the πόλις as the territorial complex of the people who belong to it?

Let us look at these three passages in greater detail to see if we can detect this.

The assault on the Peiraion

The Peiraion and Isthmian Games passages must be considered as a single unit, for two reasons. Both have parallels in Xenophon’s monograph on Agesilaos, generally

²⁰ Hellenika 4.5.11.

²¹ The distinction admits of different interpretations: Hellenika 4.5.1, concerning the cattle, gives τῶν φευγόντων and <οί> ἐν τῇ πόλει; 4.5.2, concerning the Games, gives οἱ φοίγαδες τῶν Κορινθίων. The first instance omits the adjectival τῶν Κορινθίων for both parties; this may be explained by the fact that Κόρινθον appears later in the sentence and that talk of exiles and Peiraion would naturally imply Corinth, and to prove intent on Xenophon’s part in suppressing the adjective would be impossible. The latter phrase is a perfectly normal Greek construction, with nothing around it to suggest that the exiles’ Corinthianism is diminished by their exile.
thought to predate the *Hellenika*, and differences between them may be instructive; and at any rate, in both sources the discovery of the former leads directly to the controversies of the latter. We have already noted Xenophon’s characterization of the people safeguarding their cattle at Peiraion in the *Hellenika*, but to expand the quote:

Ἐκ δὲ τούτου Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἁκούοντες τῶν φενγόντων ὅτι <οί> ἐν τῇ πόλει πάντα μὲν τὰ βοσκήματα ἐχοῖν καὶ σύζοιντο ἐν τῷ Πειραιῷ, πολλοὶ δὲ τρέφοιντο αὐτόθεν, στρατεύουσι πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κόρινθον, Ἀγησιάοι καὶ τότε ἡγουμένου. 22

After this the Lakedaimonians, hearing from the exiles that those in the πόλις were holding all of their cattle and were preserving them in the Peiraion, and that many were being nourished from the cattle, they marched against Corinth again, with Agesilaos in command then also.

The dichotomy here is exile v. πόλις-dwellers, both Corinthians by implication given the context of the passage. 23 But can we read into Xenophon a suggestion that neither party is actually ‘Corinthian,’ because he does not style either party as such? Not quite, since in his account of the Isthmian Games the exiles are explicitly τῶν Κορινθίων again. Those ἐν τῇ πόλει are never mentioned again. In the complementary account in Xenophon’s *Agesilaos*, the Corinthians in the πόλις are explicitly labeled οἱ Κορινθίοι throughout. 24 Whether this is evidence of the author’s shorthand, carelessness, or different understanding – or presentation – of the relationship between Argos and Corinth at the time of the Peiraion incident is ultimately immaterial. Xenophon understood the

22 *Hellenika* 4.5.1; translation mine.

23 The οἱ is almost certainly necessary: without it, Agesilaos would be marching on Corinth because the Corinthian exiles told them that they themselves were holding cattle in the πόλις and pasturing them at Peiraion. Not only does this make the pro-Spartan exiles the target of Spartan aggression by their own foolish admission, but it also makes for an improbably large amount of daily travel from Corinth proper to Peiraion just for pasturing purposes.

24 Xen., *Agesilaos* 2.18.
πόλις-dwellers to be Corinthians, though we have yet to decipher what shades of meaning this nomenclature may suggest.  

Did Agesilaos, then, march on Corinth because those ἐν τῇ πόλει were doing well for themselves? Not exclusively. Between the Revolution-Union narrative and this one, Xenophon tells the story of the exiles’ appeal to Sparta for aid and Agesilaos’ assault on Corinth, which goes poorly for the πόλις-dwellers. ‘The Corinthians and the Argives’ are presented as the opposing forces who make a truce to bury their dead, which suggests that Xenophon means ‘the exiles’ when he says ‘the Corinthians’ and that the πόλις-dwelling Corinthians either no longer exist in numbers enough to settle a truce to bury their own dead, or from a different angle that the Argives essentially make up the entire population of the πόλις, whether this is to be taken numerically or in terms of πολιτεία.

Then we have Xenophon’s assertion that ‘both sides’ sent garrisons throughout the Corinthia and associated territories rather than fight with citizen armies. ‘Both sides’ must mean the Spartans plus the Corinthian exiles, and the Argives not necessarily plus whatever Corinthians still dwelt in the territory of the πόλις. The garrisons are sent to Κόρινθος (as opposed to ἡ πόλις τῶν Κορινθίων, which still has not appeared yet), which indicates that whatever πόλις-dwellers there were did not have authority enough to defend their own territory, be that authority military or political – if military, they simply

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25 Whitby 1984 suggests that Xenophon’s views on the extent of Argos’ control over Corinth may have changed between the writing of his Agesilaos, which included the clause Κόρινθον δὲ προσάληψας (2.17, ‘since they had appropriated Corinth), and the Hellenika, which omits it. He proposes that Xenophon’s collection of sources between the two works corrected his perspective on the Union. This is possible; but the answer may as well be that unlike in the Agesilaos, Xenophon had already told the story of the origins of the Union in the previous chapter of the Hellenika – why repeat it so soon? Either way, if the Agesilaos clause is interpreted territorially, there is no meaningful difference between the two accounts.

26 Hellenika 4.4.9-13.

did not have the manpower; if political, it was not in their hands to provide the defense. The Argives provided it, and they did so as a defense against the garrisons of the Spartans/exiles according to the limits of Xenophon’s presentation. It looks like Corinth has become a battleground more than a functioning πόλις, although this also cannot be entirely true if shortly afterwards Xenophon acknowledges the presence of those ἐν τῇ πόλει. But could that mean ‘the Argive garrison’? Could it even mean ‘the Spartan/exile garrison’? Probably neither: they would have little involvement with pasturing cattle, which some contingent of local civilians would normally have taken care of for the garrisons’ support – another indication of at least some non-military presence operating out of the Corinthia and most likely out of Corinth itself.

After this first attack by Agesilaos we have Iphikrates’ activities in Arcadia, the Spartans’ subsequent siege of Corinth based out of Lechaion, and the Athenians’ response of sending a military detachment along with its stonemasons and carpenters to rebuild the Long Walls τῶν Κορινθίων in short and clean order. Then Agesilaos marches on Argos for precisely the same reasons for which he will later make his (third) assault on Corinth during the Isthmian Games: the Argives are reaping fruits and making the most of the war. Agesilaos ravages Argos, returns to Corinth for the second time to

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28 Hellenika 4.4.15-18.

29 Hellenika 4.4.19. Whether Argos’ involvement in Corinth is part of this ‘reaping fruits,’ and similarly whether any Corinthian benefit from Argive involvement is to be included in the parallel phrase in the Peiraion passage, is debatable. I think not, given the exclusively agricultural and pastoral atmosphere of these passages; Sparta responds here by ravaging Argive land, and will be offended at the Corinthian cattle ranching in the Peiraion passage without any mention of other matters. Sparta is pursuing the same agricultural warfare that had been its modus operandi since the Archidamian War; is Xenophon then suppressing any specific Spartan fears of Argive-Corinthian political collaboration, or did it simply not exist?
take out the dockyards, and then returns to Sparta until the Peiraion affair comes up. So says Xenophon.

What shall we make of all of this? A few points are clear. For Xenophon, Corinth so far has meant ‘the territory within the Long Walls that can be besieged by military forces.’ This definition is not purely territorial, since the continued existence of the Walls and the need to send military power there demands that there still be a functioning population there in order for this preoccupation with Corinth to make any sense. Argos seems to be treated the same way, and by the point in the narrative that we have reached it seems to be so treated for the same reasons: the reaping of fruits and the benefiting from the war, both of which require stable populations and at least a minimal level of institutional presence, even if those institutions are social rather than political. The Long Walls are τῶν Κορινθίων, with no mention of the Argives: there is something about Corinth as defined by its walls that is still uniquely Corinthian. Up until the Isthmian Games, Corinth apparently retained a measure of territorial integrity, and Argos had not yet seen fit to make an attempt at eradicating it. In fact, Argos has evidently had no contact with the Walls at all: Spartans tried to tear them down, and Athenians helped to rebuild them. Sparta, Athens, and Argos alike recognized Corinthian individuality up to these limits.

If the stories of the removal of boundary stones are true, then in this light the nature of Argive influence over Corinth by the end of 391 must be considered as only extending into the Corinthia and not to Corinth itself. This level of interaction would certainly not suggest συμπολιτεία, since the Argives had not yet territorially reached the political center of the Corinthia. What about ἵσοσυμπολιτεία? We get the firm impression
that affairs within Corinth are not being decided by the πόλις-dwellers; but are they being
decided by the Argives? Militarily, Sparta and Argos appear to be locked in a struggle
over Corinth. Politically, Corinth seems not to be functioning at all. In fact, the turmoil
in Corinth and the Corinthia (and even to Sikyon, where the Spartans based at least one
garrison and whence Athens attempted to repel them) has been entirely too great, and the
stability of any other πόλις’ control there so ephemeral, that Argos has not had the chance
to assert any kind of hegemony over Corinth, be it social or political.

The Isthmian Games

Did Argos want to assert hegemony? Apparently, yes, and the respite of the
winter of 391/0 may finally have given it the opportunity to do so. For this issue, let us
now move on to the Isthmian Games. Here Xenophon and Plutarch diverge on many
details, some important, which we will discuss; but they agree that at the beginning of the
Games, an Argive delegation held the right of leading the sacrifices and chairing the
Games.\textsuperscript{30} The precise reason for this arrangement, and the shade of meaning attached to
it, differ slightly in each. For Xenophon, in line with his account of the exiles’ return
experience, the Argives ran the Games ὡς Ἀργοὺς τῆς Κορινθίων ὄντος – ‘on the grounds
that Corinth was Argos.’ If Xenophon’s source for this event was the same as that for the
Revolution, as seems more than likely given the role the exiles play in each account, we
should not be surprised to see the same language repeated. Plutarch’s explanation, and
by extension his view of the Union at this time, is less absolute. For him, the Argives
chaired the Games Ἀργείων δὲ τὴν Κόρινθον ἔχοντων τότε – ‘because the Argives held

\textsuperscript{30} Hellenika 4.5.1-2; Plut. Agesilaos 21.3.
Corinth then.’ Argos and Corinth need not be the same πόλις or maintain any agreements about πολιτεία for this formulation to hold good; Argos need only have military dominance over Corinth, which seems to be all that Plutarch is implying.

Neither source – nor any one ancient source explicitly, and none of the modern scholarship on the Union – invokes the rocky and openly ‘nationalistic’ history of Corinth’s and Argos’ dealings with each other in the sphere of athletics. All of them ought to: the past informs the present in particularly important and suggestive ways. Corinth was the third πόλις to institute a pan-Hellenic contest, after Olympia and Delphi (and only 6 years after the first Pythian Games); the first stephanitic games at Isthmia occurred in 580, controlled by Corinth and not to be relinquished until the Roman destruction in 146 B.C.31 The Nemean Games were first held soon afterwards, in 573.32 The competitive impetus behind the formation of these three new contests within a 14-year period is obvious; but Isthmia and Nemea enjoyed a unique rivalry. For in its earliest days, the Nemean Games were controlled by Kleonai, whose proximity to both Argos and Corinth has already been noticed and which at the time was much more closely tied to Argos than to Corinth. In fact, it appears that the Nemean agonothetai and hellanodikai were chosen from neither the Nemeans nor the Kleonaians, but from the administrative machinery of Argos.33 The Nemea, though clearly an attempt to break into the odd-year hiatuses between the other three games, was also evidently a ploy by Argos to assert its equality in pan-Hellenic influence against its closest large neighbor.

31 Miller 2004b, 103-104.
32 Ibid., 107.
33 Ibid.
It is hard to imagine Argos’ initiative in 573 as a way to bait Corinth into any kind of action; when Corinth involved itself in the Nemean Games a century later, it apparently did so from its own set of motives. Corinth’s expansion in the decades following the Persian Wars evidently included a successful assault on Kleonai shortly after Kleonai and Argos had joined forces to attack Mykenai in 465/4. Corinth was able to time its capture of Kleonai just when Argos had suddenly become embroiled in a pair of political revolutions and was unable to provide full support to their neighbor to the northwest. A scholiast on Pindar mentions that, for a brief time, Corinth controlled the Nemean Games rather than Kleonai; that datum fits nowhere else but here.  

34 There is no direct evidence of this usurpation being directed intentionally against Argos, as either part of a systematic attack plan or an uncoordinated power grab, but no great hypothetical leap is required to draw that connection.  

35 Whatever its motivations, Corinth had acquired unprecedented control of two of the four pan-Hellenic games.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Corinthian control of the Nemean Games did not last long, though we do not know under what circumstances Corinth relinquished control of Kleonai. Argos cannot be credited with a victory against Corinth in this period, nor is there evidence of an outcry over Corinth’s dual presidency from any of the other Greek πόλεις (though the idea that no such opposition existed is unimaginable: Elis in particular must have shouted with the loudest of them). Corinth’s retreat may have been motivated simply by overextension, either in military or in administrative terms: could one πόλεις reasonably preside over two sets of pan-Hellenic games? If any πόλεις could have done in

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34 Lewis 1981, 74-75; accepted independently, it seems, by Salmon 1984, 260.

35 Lewis op. cit. would like to see coordination between Corinth and Mykenai behind the assault on Kleonai, and has the material circumstantial evidence to justify it.
the 460’s, it would have been Corinth. The sources simply are not there to tell us, but we may suspect a pan-Hellenic backlash behind Corinth’s withdrawal. At any rate, control of the Nemean Games was returned to Kleonai and, by extension, to Argos.

By the time of the Union, the athletic landscape had changed again. After the peace of Nikias, Elis and Argos both entered into the alliance against Sparta.\textsuperscript{36} Within five years, the temple at Nemea was destroyed by Spartan forces, and the Games were moved into Argive territory until 335.\textsuperscript{37} The evidence for this transfer is purely archaeological, and there is no way of knowing whether the Kleonaians were still presiding over the games under Argive auspices; but our best guess is negative. When Argos moved the Games from Nemean territory into its own, they claimed full control over the event; Kleonai must have already drifted under Corinthian influence by then. When the revolution in Corinth occurred, therefore, the status of Corinth and Argos as rival overseers of pan-Hellenic festivals was at its starkest. Memories in Argos of the Corinthian aggression 75 years earlier may also have been strong, and further rekindled by the Corinthian democrats’ invitation of Argive assistance to solidify their new regime, which Corinth had certainly not extended to Argos in their own time of need. Some in Argos must have seen this turn of events as an entitlement for Argos to assume control of the Isthmian Games – and some in Argos, who probably overlapped with the group already mentioned, would have seen this assumption of control as balancing the ledger against Corinth’s previous usurpation. In that mindset, the precise nature of Argos’

\textsuperscript{36} An alliance that Corinth emphatically did not join – a point that Griffith 1950 uses as evidence of both Corinthian fear of Sparta and Corinthian hostility to Argos.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 108.
presence in Corinth (much like the precise nature of Corinth’s presence in Kleonai) had no direct bearing on its decision to assume control of the Games.\(^{38}\)

The difference between the forms of Argive presence in Xenophon’s and Plutarch’s accounts – probably drawn by the source materials rather than the interpreters, given the tone of each narrative – is consistent with and informs each author’s account of Agesilaos’ arrival. According to Xenophon, when the Argives saw Agesilaos and his army approaching Isthmia, they ‘left behind both the sacrificial animals and the ritual meal, and in great fear they returned to the city by way of the road passing Kenchreai.’\(^{39}\)

Which city is meant is unclear in the Greek (εἰς τὸ ἄζηπ). Given Kenchreai’s location – almost due east of Corinth and due south of Isthmia – a straight-line path would suggest that the Argives were fleeing back home to Argos; but if Kenchreai were a natural stop on the road back to Argos, why would Xenophon feel the need to mention it? The detail makes more sense if the Argives took a roundabout route back to Corinth, presumably in order to avoid any of Agesilaos’ men who might be following farther behind him. That the Argives would return to Corinth should in fact be the expected solution if, as Xenophon claims, the two πόλεις were one by now; why would they travel farther, especially if they thought they had a right to chair the Games that had only just begun?

\(^{38}\) Whitby 1984, 298 follows Griffith 1950, 249 in taking for granted that ‘the Argives must have had some right to assume the presidency at the festival, even though their claim was not accepted by Agesilaos and other opponents of Argive ambitions,’ but neither pursues the point any further than that; as a consequence, neither makes any attempt to explain the particulars of Agesilaos’ usurpation and the exiles’ reclamation of the presidency. The other commentators take some kind of Argive right so much for granted that they find it not worth examining at all; the whole affair is simply a matter of power politics.

\(^{39}\) Hellenika 4.5.1.
Plutarch’s Agesilaos, on the other hand, ‘drove away those who had just performed the sacrifice to the god, and they left behind all of their prepared materials.’

This, too, is consistent with his characterization of the Union, and contrasts appropriately with Xenophon’s impression of voluntary flight on the part of the Argives. If Argos held Corinth by military force at the time of the Games rather than by political incorporation, Plutarch’s Argives are perhaps supposed to look like they have claimed the chairmanship of the Games by that same force. Military force would be required to shake Argos’ hold, like for like.

The same distinction explains the Corinthians’ (those ἐν τῇ πόλει, a phrase Plutarch does not use) response to Agesilaos’ arrival. Plutarch’s Corinthians ‘implored him to chair the Games,’ and watch the exiles take over following the Spartan’s refusal. This befits victims of another πόλις’ domination, as opposed to willing collaborators in a Union. Plutarch’s Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει either are not in a position to take over the presidency of the Games themselves, or (more likely) do not think they are. They are willing to allow Agesilaos to chair the Games because he drove away the Argives who had claimed the position improperly, and this was their show of gratitude. Agesilaos’ refusal becomes a decorous decline of a gift, and the exiles’ performance of the sacrifices and chairmanship (under Spartan security forces, apparently to keep the Argives out) as the rightful restoration of a group of unfairly banished πολίτικοι (many of them aristocrats and perhaps the natural performers of these rites before the Revolution) to their religious duties.

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40 Plut. Agesilaos 21.3.

41 Ibid. 21.4.
Xenophon’s Agesilaos, on the other hand, ‘pitched his camp in the sacred plot, he himself sacrificed to the god, and remained until the Corinthian exiles had performed the sacrifices to Poseidon and the games.’\textsuperscript{42} This is the action of a general who cares not a whit for the opinions or preferences of anyone who was at Isthmia before he arrives. He is not offered the chairmanship, and he does not refuse it; rather, he treats the entire field of the Games as a garrison site for his soldiers and makes the first completed sacrifice of the event (for himself and his own men, no doubt – not for the Corinthians). The exiles are not granted the chairmanship, nor do they treat it as if there were any doubt about their prerogative to preside – they simply perform the sacrifices and carry on, under Agesilaos’ watchful eye (which now seems to be directed more at the Corinthians \(\epsilon ν\ τῇ πόλει\) rather than an external Argive threat). And the Corinthians \(\epsilon ν\ τῇ πόλει\) have no say in the matter at all, or rather Agesilaos and the exiles give them no say and simply take matters into their own hands.

Agesilaos, therefore, assumed the direction of the Isthmian Games. By what right did he do this? We have seen usurpations of athletic contests from the previous century; is this what Agesilaos was up to? Hardly: his concrete motivation, at least on the face of it, was to restore the right of presidency over the Isthmian Games to the Corinthians. Evidently he still considered the Corinthian exiles to be Corinthians, and thus qualified for the job. Humiliation of Argos was undoubtedly another impetus for Agesilaos’ banishment of the Argives from the field, and this message was conveyed to all present no less strongly than the inability of the Corinthians \(\epsilon ν\ τῇ πόλει\) to handle the Games themselves.

\textsuperscript{42} Hellenika 4.5.2.
In what capacities, then, did Agesilaos and the Corinthian exiles serve in these games? The exiles took over the posts of hellanodikai from the Argives, this much is clear.\textsuperscript{43} If we can extrapolate from the conduct of the Olympian Games, the hellanodikai ought to have been chosen by lot by the governing council of the controlling πόλεις – the Elean Council in Olympia, and thus presumably the Corinthian βουλή at Isthmia. For the pre-Agesilean selection, based on our reconstruction of the Union, the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει ceded their right to preside to the Argives (without undue coercion on Argos’ part, by our guess). There is no indication of how Agesilaos and the exiles determined which of them would sit as hellanodikai; we may as well assume that they used a lot system among themselves, over which Agesilaos presided but de facto had no power to sway the results. In such a situation, the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει neither gained nor lost influence over the conduct of the games when Agesilaos took control. Their participation remained spectatory.

And what sort of control did Agesilaos take? The most obvious role to accommodate him is that of agonothetes, the financial organizer of and, by some definitions, president over the games. There is nothing to confirm this suspicion, largely because our evidence on the role of the agonothetes before Roman times is nearly non-existent, and evidence from the Roman period is limited to attestations of names and a pervasive whiff of the financial about his involvement. He had no role in selecting

\textsuperscript{43} It is hard to know how many hellanodikai there were for the Isthmian Games at this time. The Eleans apparently based their tally on the number of tribes that had been absorbed into the Elean union, which in the 390’s stood at nine and would be cemented at ten in the 340s (Crowther 2003, 65). By Roman times, the Isthmian Games also used ten hellanodikai; this clearly was an import from the conduct of the Olympian Games. Whether this importation had become standard in the fourth century BC is unknowable; either it had, and there were thus nine hellanodikai at the Isthmian Games of 390, or the Corinthians adopted a similar process of deciding the number by tribes (traditionally established by Aletes in the fifth generation after Herakles; Salmon 1984, 38 and 413), which would have made for eight hellanodikai.
hellanodikai, nor in selecting the athletes – the hellanodikai handled all screening and testing on that count. Even for the Olympian Games, we have no testimony of how and by whom the opening sacrifices were performed; but neither can we point to another stage of the festival when the agonothetes would publicly acknowledge his responsibility for the games. At least one of the opening sacrifices must have been performed by him, or on his behalf or under his supervision, simply because of the nature of his office. Agesilaos performed the opening sacrifice, and then stood back and allowed the exiles to conduct the games – in other words, he fulfilled the maximum range of duties that we can plausibly assign to the agonothetes. As for his fitness for the position: we have less information about how agonothetai were selected than we do for hellanodikai, but given the financial importance of the officer, he was almost certainly appointed or volunteered rather than chosen by lot; nor, given his distance from the conduct of the games themselves, did he need to be a member of the controlling community.\footnote{He certainly did not need to be in the Roman period: see Meritt 1931, 14-18.} Hence, an Argive initially held the office without any ado worthy of mention; likewise Agesilaos. His office was ceremonial; the games belonged to the Corinthian exiles.

The two reports about the Isthmian incident illustrate two different traditions about the relationship between the Corinthian exiles, the Corinthian πόλις-dwellers, and the Argives. For Xenophon (or more precisely, for his sources), the Union had reached a stage that Argos could consider complete (whatever that should be taken to mean – see below), giving them the right to chair the Games, but not so secure a stage that the Argives were willing to stake their lives on it. The Union was full, but not settled, and the Argives were willing to take a small hit now in order to protect their ability to
establish it further afterwards. For Plutarch, the Union was one-sided and far from pleasing to the πόλις-dwellers, being rather the product of Argive aggression than mutual negotiation. The Argives were not willing to hand over a right they had earned by muscle, and Agesilaos had to respond in kind to expel them from the sacred plot.

Xenophon’s account makes out the Argives and the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει to be willing but weak; Plutarch’s makes them militarily mismatched enemies. Xenophon’s smells of both anti-Argive and anti- πόλις-Corinthian sentiment; Plutarch’s is simply pro-Agesilaos.

Then we have the very brief account by Diodoros:

εὖθυ δὲ τῶν Ἰσθμίων ἐπελθόντων διεφέροντων περὶ τῆς θέσεως τοῦ ἀγώνος· καὶ πολλὰ φιλονεικησάντων ἐκράτησαν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ τοὺς φυγάδας ἐποίησαν θείναι τὸν ἀγώνα.

Since the Isthmian Games were coming up just then, [the Lakedaimonians and the Boiotians-Athenians-Argives-Corinthians] quarreled over the chairmanship of the games; and after much contention the Lakedaimonians gained the upper hand and they made it so that the exiles chaired the games.\textsuperscript{45}

The two sides διεφέροντο, with the Lakedaimonians φιλονεικησάντων. This looks more like Plutarch’s account than Xenophon’s, although ‘driving out’ the Argives (ἐξήλασεν) and ‘quarreling’ with them have substantially different implications – there could theoretically be no military activity here at all (though this is highly improbable, merely conceivable). This suggests a tradition about the Union in which nothing was settled at all at the time of the Isthmian Games, and in which both the exiles (with Spartan brawn) and Argos had some claim to their presidency that needed to be resolved through some kind of protracted ‘quarrel’.\textsuperscript{46} Diodoros also omits the fact, which both Xenophon and

\textsuperscript{45} Diodoros, \textit{Bibliothèke} 14.86.5.

\textsuperscript{46} We have already seen that Diodoros places the event of Argos’ forced takeover of Corinth after Iphikrates’ assault on the Spartans (aided by ‘some of the allied forces in Corinth’, 14.91.2), and thus later
Plutarch record consistently with each other, that the Argives returned after the Spartans and the exiles departed and re-enacted the Games entirely.\textsuperscript{47} This obstacle was not about to deter Argos from achieving the sublimation of Corinth, whatever form they intended it to take.

There is one somber footnote to the account of the Isthmia, preserved in Xenophon: a few days after the games had ended, the temple of Poseidon was seen to be on fire. The culprit was then and remains unknown.\textsuperscript{48} All we have to go on is an account by Pausanias about a conflict at Olympia in 399/398, in which Sparta attacked the Eleans in continued retribution for the alliance of 420 and ruined the temple of Hera.\textsuperscript{49} Agesilaos is not attested to have been the Spartan commander at this event; nevertheless, the blame probably does not lie with the Argives.

\textit{The Peace of Antalkidas}

After this event, our sources go silent until the Peace of Antalkidas in 386 and its requirement that τὰς δὲ ἅλλας Ἑλληνιδὰς πόλεις καὶ μικρὰς καὶ μεγάλας αὐτονόμους ἀφεῖναι (‘all the other Hellenic πόλεις, both small and large, be returned αὐτονομία’).\textsuperscript{50} The matter of Ἰφικράτης’ activity around Corinth and Argos is, in fact, largely a non-issue than the Isthmian Games. Therefore, the Corinthian exiles and their Spartan backup had to ‘quarrel’ with the entire anti-Spartan alliance to get their way. We have, once again, a self-consistent account, and a thoroughly different one from the other two.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Hellenika} loc. cit.; Plut. \textit{Agesilaos} 21.5-6. For Xenophon, the Argives are reclaiming what is theirs by established political arrangement; for Plutarch, they are reclaiming what is theirs by overpowering military force. Either way, neither’s account is compromised by retaining this fact.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.} 4.5.4.

\textsuperscript{49} Pausanias 5.20.4-5 (as in Miller 2004b, 187-188).

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Hellenika} 5.1.31.
in our formulation of the Union. If there remained a separate community of Corinthians throughout that was not under any obligation to call themselves Argives, and direct Argive involvement in the affairs of the Corinthian πόλης was as minimal as we have argued, then the way Iphikrates interacts with them no longer presents any special challenge to our theory. Nor is there any special reason to believe that further steps were taken by Argos after the Iphikrates affair to consolidate authority in the Corinthian πόλης, nor has there ever been reason to believe so; arguments from silence go both ways, and both ways are equally counterproductive. We see no evidence that the relationship between Argos and Corinth was changed by or after Iphikrates’ appearance on the scene, and thus no evidence for any progression in the Union beyond what was already occurring at the same pace as before Iphikrates arrived.

The Sardis conference can be similarly disposed of in a few lines. It is in fact not greatly different from the situation encountered after the Peace of Antalkidas, as we shall see: Argos does not want to return αὐτοκρατορία to Corinth, its rationale being that it would lose its hold on Corinth and all the work it had done would be brought to naught. Again, though this could refer to a political stranglehold as well as a territorial one, it need not. Whether the conference took place before or after the Isthmian Games (we cannot say for sure, since Xenophon places it in his separate narrative of the naval war),

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51 See, in contrast, Griffith 1950, who made his movements the foundation for his two-stage theory (246-247). Tuplin 1982, in his usual way, complicates the question by introducing grammatical quibbles (78), a tactic for which Whitby 1984 rightly upbraids and corrects him (300) – though without substantially altering the effect of the passage as a whole, which we argue (as do both Tuplin and Whitby) serves merely to confirm the narrative we have already pieced together.

52 A piece of the puzzle treated in earnest for the first time by Tuplin 1982 (77), coming to the same conclusion for the purposes of his own argument (one-stage unification), namely, that the text does not exhibit any real change in the nature of the Union. Whitby 1984’s rejoinder (299) adds nothing special; again, the passage is merely fuel on whatever fire each commentator has kindled.
the time lapse between the two events cannot have been great. If the conference came first, we can deduce from the state of affairs at the games that there was no real change in the Union; if the conference came second, it is unlikely that the Union had recovered or progressed very far in the interim following Agesilaos’ considerable interference at the games. In short, the Union as presented by Xenophon underwent no notable development throughout the second half of the Corinthian War, and searches for evidence in these two incidents turn out ultimately to be based on overly broad concepts of ‘imperialism’ and ‘αὐτονομία.’

Xenophon, the only one of our sources to consider how the clause given above from the Peace applied to Argos and Corinth, represents οἱ Κορίνθιοι as in violation of this clause in that they did not send away the Argive garrison (οὐκ ἐξέπεμπαν τὴν τῶν Ἀργείων φρουράν). For Xenophon, the presence of Argive military forces in the Corinthia (indeed, at Corinth itself – ἐὰν ἄποικεν ἐκ τῆς Κορίνθου) indicated a loss of αὐτονομία on the part of the Corinthians. Agesilaos apparently agreed, threatening military action against both sides if the garrison did not leave Corinth. Both sides acquiesced, though grudgingly, and αὐτὴ ἔφη αὐτῆς ἢ τῶν Κορινθίων πόλεως ἐγένετο – ‘the πόλεως of the Corinthians itself became in charge of itself [again].’

What does this passage not say about the relationship between Argos and Corinth? Most obviously, it does not say that Argos was maintaining any kind of political presence in Corinth at the time: there were no magistrates to be dismissed, no

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53 Ibid., 5.1.34.

54 See Tuplin 1982, 78, who again comes to the same conclusions as befits his argument and helpfully reminds the reader that ‘Xenophon depends on his reader’s recollection of [previous passages in the Hellenika about the Union] to enable him to understand what he is talking about’ – i.e., that Xenophon’s narrative (however we interpret it) is all of the same cloth, and that the reader necessarily encounters it only piece by piece does not cast aspersion on Xenophon’s ability to coordinate a narrative.
new laws to be overturned, and no institutions to be dissolved or reinstated, at least as far as Xenophon knew – or cared. The Argive presence in the Corinthia appears still to have been military only, since only a garrison – and only one garrison at that – comes into question here. So unless the garrison was exceptionally large or well-placed at Corinth, the actual Argive presence, in terms of numbers, was minimal.

And not unwelcome. Both the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει and the Argives had to be threatened before the garrison was dismissed. Their motivations for resisting the dismissal are obscure, but we can imagine the mental discontinuities that the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει in particular must have experienced when the Spartans, against whose aggression they had so happily received the Argive garrison for defense, suddenly threatened a war against them if they kept the garrison! A major element of the Corinthians’ hesitation to dismiss the Argives must have been a deep-seated distrust of Sparta, to the point that they doubted the likelihood of Sparta’s abiding by the treaty’s αὐτονομία clause for very long. This would have been mixed with the sobering recognition that Corinth probably could not have fielded a military defense force of its own, should subsequent events have called for one, after so many years of semi-existence as an independent actor. The Argives seem not to have had any greater trust in the acceptance and enforcement of the Peace. We cannot say what might have happened if the Corinthians had agreed to dismiss the garrison but the Argives had refused, or vice versa.

55 This is clearly a different situation from that in Boiotia, where the Thebans attempted to speak on behalf of the entire region of Boiotia, and Agesilaos had already begun a muster of allied and perioikic troops before the Thebans agreed to grant αὐτονομία to the Boiotian πόλεις (Hellenika 5.1.32-33). Since this amounted to the dissolution of the Boiotian Federation, we can infer that some political arrangements between Thebes and the other federated πόλεις would have to have been dismantled as a result of this αὐτονομία -granting process – most saliently, the Boiotarchoi over Plataia, Skolos, Erythrai, and Skaphai (Hellenika Oxyrhynchia XVI.3). Garrisons did not figure prominently in the Federation’s methods of self-control.
versa. But any extrapolation based on Xenophon’s treatment so far of the relationship between the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει and the Argives would point to their support for the garrison remaining mutual.

Which account do we prefer?

We have, then, four different interpretations of the Union of Corinth and Argos from four different sources, only one of which tells anything like a complete story and all four of which have strong and inherent prejudices that come into play in their representations. Andokides favored oligarchic ‘governments’ and was attempting to subvert the Athenian and allied desire to continue the war by emphasizing the risks that Athens would be compelled to take on if it persisted. Xenophon also sympathized with aristocratic forms of ‘government,’ but he was writing from hindsight and a perspective that could interpret the process in light of the resolution. Diodoros wrote almost 350 years after the Union affair occurred, and probably did not appreciate the complexities and false starts of the unification process. Plutarch wrote still 150 years later, at a time when Greek αὐτονομία was essentially meaningless, and he used individuals and events of the past more for moral illumination than for historical instruction.

56 Diodoros’ account of the Argive invasion of Corinth in 390 must be either misinterpreted or misplaced. Even if we admit that Xenophon was not above distorting or even concealing events that undermined the narrative he wished to present, we can hardly believe that he would have ignored an outright Argive military assault on Corinth culminating in the capture of its acropolis as being unhelpful to his already anti-democratic and anti-Argive slant. Nor was it Argos’ custom at any other stage of the Union to impose itself upon the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει in such a forceful and unilateral way; nor, for that matter, had the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει displayed any notable signs of discontent with the Union as it was. This event was either misplaced from an account that originally placed it in 392, or the account refers to a strengthening of the Argive presence in the wake of Agesilaos’ and the exiles’ usurpation of the Isthmian games and the destruction of the temple of Poseidon, which we find the more likely solution.
It is Xenophon’s account that we ought to accept. Andokides’ formulation is not incompatible with it, especially given the very early stage of the Union that his speech represents: the Union took another year and a half to consolidate itself to a stage where the Argives could claim the right to perform religious duties, and that only when no external threat was near, so unification as a thing only hoped for in the winter of 391 does not feel at all out of place. Not only is Plutarch’s account designed to serve Agesilaos as opposed to Argos or Corinth, but its author also had no intention of presenting the history of the Union, and we would not be surprised if his account were based at least partially on that of Diodoros, whose command of the nuances and the timeline of the Union raise more questions than it answers. Xenophon’s own account, when interpreted conservatively and without interpolations from other (later) sources, is internally self-consistent throughout his narrative and does not claim any more aggressiveness on Argos’ part or passivity on the πόλις-dwelling Corinthians’ part than would be reasonable in the climate of war and the shadow of Sparta. This last point, noticing as it does the hints of Argive and πόλις-Corinthian rationality that appear in Xenophon’s narrative, just may give us the license to look at this author’s account of the Union as more sympathetic to Argos and Corinth than we would expect it to be – perhaps the most persuasive reason to take him at his word.

With all of this established, specific reference to those accusations levied by the returning exiles concerning the forced sharing in Argive πολιτεία or their comparative influence with metics hardly seems necessary. To draw the argument together concretely: we cannot deny that, in regard to the πολιτεία issue, Xenophon seems to contradict himself by consistently referring to the residents of the Corinthian πόλις
instead of to Corinthians. These just may be called Argives in a narrowly technical sense, but they do not personally identify with that label, Xenophon does not identify them by that label, and – most importantly – the Argives appear to be in no mood to force them into accepting that label. As far as the metic issue is concerned, the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει are no more or less likely in our model to be treated like resident aliens by the Argives as they are still to be regarded as Corinthians, since the Argives have not been particularly forceful with their imposition of political uniformity.

The explanation in Xenophon’s defense, in fact, is obvious: the charges levied by the returning exiles applied only to themselves. They were shunned by their former neighbors, and they parlayed their resentment at the societal changes in Corinth into these charges. Invited back by families and friends though they were, the returnees would nonetheless have been viewed by the supporters of the new democratic regime as traitors to their πόλις, and not entitled to be called Corinthians under the new government. To that end, the exiles felt about as welcome in Corinthian affairs as a metic would have done – that is, not welcome at all.

The matter of the Argive πόλις feels like a slight exaggeration on the exiles’ part, but it comes in the same vein as the metic complaint. One can imagine catcalls from disapproving Corinthian democrats encouraging the exiles to go join the Spartans; at least

57 A suggestion that Tuplin 1982 raises (76), but does not pursue quite as far as we do. He also suggests that the ‘metics’ might in fact be a term for those Corinthians who consider themselves ‘Argives’ now (following Griffith 1950), but only as a formality – and at any rate, the logic behind this suggestion makes little sense, and assumes an amount of rancor on the exiles’ part against their democratic compatriots that simply does not come out in Xenophon’s text, where the dominant mood is one of isolation.

58 Griffith 1950 interpreted this comment as ‘effective merely as a piece of rhetoric’ because of the decline in aristocratic status that the exiles suffered upon their return, or else a commentary on the unification of Corinthian and Argive citizenships (248). For our purposes, social status has much less to do with this complaint (though not nothing to do with it; the social fall surely added to their sense of belittlement and their neighbors’ jeering, but the tensions ran deeper even than that.
they would have shared some ideas about good government. Heckling about Argive πολιτεία, on the other hand, would have come off as a *non sequitur*. Perhaps we ought to think of this matter as a sense, felt strongly by the exiles, that that they were no longer welcome as Corinthians and that, since Argos was the only other strong presence in Corinthian affairs at the time, they would be forced to apply for Argive πολιτεία in order to stay in their ancestral land. This they were wholly unwilling to do, and when they decided to stage a counter-revolution, it was based on a feeling that their own people had rejected them and they had nowhere else to turn – except to Argos, in mental surrender.

Now we can move on to the important questions: What sort of Union was it? And how does it fit into the CPC’s model of the πόλις – if at all?
Let us begin with Bearzot’s comment on Xenophon, which we alluded to above:

It is interesting how Xenophon reflects here an absolute incompatibility between the \( \pi\o\l\i\z \) of a city and alternative \( \pi\o\l\i\t\i\z \) (whether talking about \( \i\o\s\o\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \) or federal \( \s\o\m\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \)) and a total lack of comprehension between the supporters of the new “Polis-übergreifende Herrschaftsorganisationen,” … and the exponents of the traditional view of the \( \pi\o\l\i\z \): to transform the \( \pi\o\l\i\t\i\z \) of a city into an \( \i\o\s\o\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \) is equivalent in fact to \( \o\f\o\a\n\i\z\o\s\o\i\\z \), and thus to become involved in the development of a \( \s\o\m\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \) involves the serious risk of ‘disappearing’, in primarily a conceptual rather than a physical sense, as an autonomous city.\(^{59}\)

This passage refers to the complaints of the Corinthian exiles upon returning to Corinth in 392. What we have seen, however, is an attempt at unification that apparently never achieved the formulation of any new \( \pi\o\l\i\t\i\z \) arrangements, unless it did so between the Isthmian Games and the Peace of Antalkidas – and in that case, we must assume that Xenophon either had no information on how (or how easily) they were reversed or did not consider it noteworthy. If any aspect of the Union has met with universal agreement among modern commentators, it has been the sheer uniqueness of the event, and those who have argued for \( \i\o\s\o\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \) or \( \s\o\m\p\o\l\i\t\i\z \) have stressed that no other arrangements of its kind are known until the Hellenistic period, and even then the circumstances and policies are quite different.

Let us limit ourselves, therefore, to the Union that Xenophon does inform us about (based on sources for which we can less readily find reasons for doubt): the Union that sought and achieved a firmly planted military presence in the political center of the

\(^{59}\) Bearzot 2004, 35, referring by the German to Funke, P. 1994, \( \text{Staatenbünde und Bundesstaaten} \).
Corinthia, but that does not appear to have made any further progress towards unification in πολιτεία. How can this situation fit in the πόλις model established by the CPC?

The πόλις, in the findings of the CPC, could refer both to the location of physical settlement of a group of people and to the community of settlers itself – the city and the state. In its fullest form, πόλις referred to the existence of both senses as a single unit. The territory of the settlement was considered an integral part of the community, and the πόλις in its ‘canonical’ sense referred to the community of residents involved in institutionalized political systems exercising itself upon the territory claimed by the community (whether in its settlement pattern or through later acquisitions). Thus, the πόλις-city was only a πόλις if it was the political focal point of its state, and the πόλις-state was only a πόλις if it had a city as a political focal point. By the Classical period, the πόλις had achieved the definition of ‘city-state.’ Of course, to be properly called a πόλις the settlement/community needed to be of a certain size: larger than a κώμη village, large enough to assert itself over the territory it claimed as its purview.

Hansen was quick to recognize and methodical to illustrate everything that his definition does not entail. He does not suggest that the ‘city-state’ of the πόλις possessed the amount or types of bureaucratic institutions that characterize later city-state civilizations, nor was it expected to.⁶⁰ Hansen also wanted to erase from scholarly thought the belief that the institutional integrity and freedom of action of the πόλις required αὐτονομία. The CPC found that no such necessity existed: a substantial number

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⁶⁰ Hansen’s detractors, most notably M. Berent, have criticized him for holding to the idea of the πόλις as an institution centralized enough to be justly called a State. Berent prefers to classify the πόλις as a stateless society, a community that relies more on self-help initiative than on arms of the governmental structure for maintaining order and stability.
of πόλεις existed as dependents of another πόλις, whether by traditional relationship or through political or military arrangements. Hansen’s itemized Typology of Dependent Poleis re-introduced the concept that a πόλις could exist in subjection or subservience to another without losing its particular identity as a πόλις. It also sought to revise scholarly understanding of such events as the Peace of Antalkidas that ended the Corinthian War, which demanded that αὐτονομία be returned to all πόλεις that possessed it when the war began. These non-autonomous πόλεις had not ceased to be πόλεις, as we might have thought before: they had simply lost their full independence of action, and they retained all of the essential settlement and community features that constituted the πόλις.

We shall start small, as it were, with this schematic of fourteen different types of dependent πόλεις, to see in which category Corinth fits best – after all, we cannot deny that Corinth had become a dependent πόλις to Argos certainly by the time of the Isthmian Games – and what the implications might be for its broader application in Hansen’s model. Three of these categories seem possible candidates:

- ‘a πόλις situated inside the territory of a larger πόλις’ (1)
- ‘a πόλις which persists as a πόλις after a συμπολιτεία with another πόλις’ (9)
- ‘a πόλις which is at the same time a civic subdivision of another πόλις’ (14)

Hansen admits the occurrence of overlap between categories; so shall we.

(1) at first sight seems almost inarguable: we have seen that Xenophon never ceased to call Corinth a πόλις, and that Argos had managed to achieve territorial mastery in the Corinthia without any sign of drastically affecting the working of the local administration. But in Hansen’s formulation, this type of dependency does not preclude the dependent πόλις’ possession of territory that can still be called its own. For his

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61 For the Typology of Dependent Poleis, see Hansen 1997, 29-37.
example he chooses Mykalessos, a dependency of Tanagra that nevertheless sat on an expanse of land that shared its name.\(^{62}\) That land remained distinctly Mykalessian, despite – or in tandem with – the larger Tanagran supremacy. In that case, we should assume that the local authorities at Mykalessos πόλις exercised the kind of control over Mykalessos χώρα that any πόλις would exercise over its χώρα, namely the primary association of all residents of the χώρα with the administrative body of the πόλις, and the πόλις as the default location for adjudication and deliberation for those residents – with the exception that the authorities at Tanagra πόλις could probably overrule the administrative body of Mykalessos πόλις if its governance over Mykalessos χώρα was unsatisfactory, or if the issue at hand affected Tanagra πόλις or χώρα more, or at least no less, than it did Mykalessos πόλις or χώρα. In other words, the political hierarchy would be absolute, with Tanagra at the top.

Did Corinth govern its own χώρα while under Argive control? We cannot say, but signs point to ‘no’. We have already seen the weakness of Corinthian institutions after the Revolution, the Argive occupation, and the Spartan onsloughts of the next two years. The garrison remained the unifying force between Argos and Corinth, and Xenophon’s use of the phrase ἡ πόλις τῶν Κορινθίων strongly suggests that some essential role of the πόλις that had previously made it worthy of being called ‘Corinth’ had been lost. The Corinthians were still Corinthians, but Corinth was not still Corinth. Now in Hansen’s formulation, the single most essential feature of the πόλις is its relationship to its ‘hinterland’ (χώρα), and that every πόλις has a χώρα ‘inextricably

\(^{62}\textit{Ibid.}, 31.$
linked’ to it.⁶³ This would seem to imply that the πόλις-city exercises governance over its χώρα in some form; and Corinth seems not to have done.

We should probably rule out, then, Corinth as a πόλις functioning in the ‘usual’ manner, exercising authority over its χώρα and thus retaining one of the essential features of a πόλις as state; we also find compelling grounds for not including it under dependency type (1). And yet, the administration of ἡ πόλις τῶν Κορινθίων, in what little capacity remained to it, still rested with the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει. In that respect, the relationship between Argos and Corinth would match the parameters of (1). But the χώρα issue indicates that the Union must have been of a type with less detachment between the two parties than (1) can allow.

(9) would perhaps be the preferred option for those who argue that a συμπολιτεία occurred between Argos and Corinth. This option would allow Corinth to retain its πολιτεία without sacrificing its authority over its own χώρα, and would also justify Argos’ presence in Corinth and indicate shared authority over the entire χώρα. Can we conceive of the Corinthian χώρα as shared property? By our reading of Xenophon, such an arrangement is not impossible; but the evidence is lacking, and what signs we have seen of Argive creep into Corinthian χώρα, especially taking into account its military nature, suggests otherwise. Would the final achievement of συμπολιτεία, if that was what Argos desired, have restored control of the Corinthian χώρα to the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει? Again, conceivable, but a counter-factual scenario that cannot be relied on for this argument.

Furthermore, Hansen’s chosen example is that of Mantinea and Helisson, dating from about the same time as the Union. The συμπολιτεία makes an exchange of

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magistrates one of its fundamental elements; the political machinery of each πόλις feeds off of the other, and the two become governmentally symbiotic. We do not find any support for this kind of system between our two πόλεις. In fact, the relationship is demonstrably lop-sided from the beginning; we can return to the matter of the athletic contests for this point.

The account of the Isthmian Games, whatever we might say about Agesilaos’ intervention, leaves a definite taste of Argive supremacy and πόλις-dwelling Corinthian subservience – and this was the extent of Argive dominance while Sparta remained a nearby threat. If the Nemean Games were held on schedule the next year, Xenophon’s silence about them strongly suggests that they occurred without any distinctive or controversial features such as, for example, the presence of Corinthians among the hellanodikai or other administrators of the games. The Corinthians never took a role in the Nemean Games; the Argives chaired the Isthmian Games even when no πολιτεία arrangements seem to have been in place. This is far too imbalanced to support any kind of συμπολιτεία arrangement. So (9) cannot fit, at the very least through 389 and probably throughout the Union, unless the συμπολιτεία was reached later than there were any games left to hold, which also feels unconvincing.

(14) presents possibilities previously unexplored by commentators on the Union. What if Corinth had become a (very large and heavily populated) κόμη of Argos? It would retain those of its own local political institutions required to maintain the ἄστυ, as well as its ability to make such laws for itself as pertained directly to the functioning of the ἄστυ and not to those matters in which Argos would be able to assert its direct involvement. But it would lack a βουλή, depriving it of scope for independent action.
against another πόλις; its residents would not be able to continue calling themselves Corinthians in any way that would be exclusive of their larger Argive citizenship, though Corinth would remain a separate ἀστυ from Argos; and it would not be expected to exercise control over the χώρα outside of those tracts that were proper to the κόμη itself. The Argive garrison would still be an unusual feature of this arrangement, but rather less so considering the size, population, and recent history of the new κόμη. The garrison would have been only a cautionary measure, and one which the πόλις-dwelling Corinthians would greatly have appreciated in case another revolution were to arise.

All of this fits together neatly, except for one point: as far as Xenophon was concerned, there was some entity in association with Corinth that could continue to be called a πόλις, not just an ἀστυ. At any rate, given the size of Corinth, it would have been downright laughable if not insulting to the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει to call their ἀστυ a κόμη, even if it had conceivably held the same status as a κόμη in relation to Argos. Theoretically, it would also have been able to maintain its own festivals and games, and here the Nemea-Kleonai-Argos relationship may be informative. Whether we consider Kleonai a πόλις or a κόμη, it held control of the Nemean Games, under Argive auspices, for 160 years; Argos emphatically denies the Corinthians ἐν τῇ πόλει a commensurate right in regards to Isthmia. Once again, the relationship appears to have been something more imbalanced than this.

Nothing in Hansen’s typology of dependent πόλεις, then, can support the uniquely erratic set of relationships that we find between Corinth and Argos. Argos was very clearly in control of everything that projected into the wider Greek world, namely command of territory and presidency of religious festivals (when not overpowered by an
outside party); and yet Corinth survived in some way as a πόλις distinct from the πόλις of Argos in contemporary parlance.
CONCLUSION: ARGOS, CORINTH, AND THE ABSTRACT πόλις

The Union of Corinth and Argos, as we said at the beginning of this study, was an anomaly. Never before and never afterwards in Greek history had an attempt to amalgamate two πόλεις gone so well and so poorly at the same time. Territorially and militarily, it was an unquestionable success; socially, even, the ties that held together the Corinthians and Argives living in the Corinthia and the Argolid were psychologically strong enough to kill the desire to separate again in both parties when the terms of the Peace of Antalkidas were made known. Politically, Corinth was protected from further internal strife by the Argive presence, but full unification was never actually achieved: too many distractions got in the way at the beginning for the movement to pick up enough steam to push ahead. In the sphere that mattered most, the Union was a failure.

The rest of the Greek world knew this. They never stopped associating the term πόλις with Corinth, even when it had to all intents and purposes been subsumed into the Argive sphere of influence. Something about the way in which Corinth continued to exist made it worthy of the term. We are unable to define precisely what that something was. Hansen and the CPC would offer the explanation that the term πόλις can mean ‘territorial center,’ or ‘town,’ or ‘political hub,’ or any combination of these meanings, and thus find a neat category into which the Corinth of 392-386 would fit. As his taxonomies currently stand, however, there is no place to put the Union. It is a curious feature of the CPC’s published works, and perhaps a telling one, that the entire Union
goes so unnoticed as almost to have been deliberately ignored. For an event as groundbreakingly inventive as this to be represented in its oeuvre by little more than a catalogue of uses of ‘πόλις’ in the Hellenika suggests that it has long been known that there is no room for the Union in the Copenhagen inn.

Does that mean that the Union violated the rules of πόλις-ship? We think we can say with confidence that its contemporaneous reporters did not believe that to be true. Does it mean that the existence of the Union is enough to overturn everything the CPC has done to determine the full range of meaning encapsulated in ‘πόλις’? That would be too extreme: the Polis Project has opened up new ways of thinking about the πόλις without which studies like this one would not have been possible. Many of its findings, and particularly the reminders it regularly provides that ancient and modern statehood were very different concepts, will move the scholarly debate on the nature of the πόλις forward for decades to come.

Does it mean that the schemata of the CPC’s studies are too rigid? That it certainly does. For all that it keeps reminding its readers that the πόλις was an idea that the Greeks as a whole community innately understood in ways that we no longer can, its typologies, numbered lists, and impeccably-organized spreadsheets obscure the very fluid and perceptive nature of the πόλις that it seeks to illuminate. The Greeks did not think of the πόλις as a permutation of territorial, administrative, and communitarian factors, nor did they gauge what sense of the term ‘πόλις’ they wanted to convey every time they used the word. For them, ‘πόλις’ had a much simpler, and yet much subtler, meaning than anything the CPC’s formulations can construct. It was a meaning that supported both Sparta in all its political stability and Messenia in all its shifting statuses, and a great
many shades of gray in between. It was a meaning that included the Union of Corinth
and Argos in ways that permitted the Union to be thought of as one πόλις and two πόλεις
at the same time. The CPC has no room for that; but if we want to create a definition of
‘πόλις’ that most accurately reflects the ancient Greek perception of it, we must find a
way to make room for it, or we will be stuck with a label that makes the ancient Greek
system of political theory look far more disciplined than it was.
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