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1

Problem, Background, Method

> Oligarchy, the harsh and unjust greed of a few rich and wretched men arrayed against the poor majority.
>
> —DIO OF PRUSA[1]

1.0 The Problem of Oligarchy

At least since the time of the poet Pindar in the mid-fifth century BCE, the ancient Greeks understood that political regimes could be classed according to rule by the one, the few, or the many.[2] Twenty-five centuries later, if one were to press Classical historians on how much attention they have paid to each type, they might respond, with some sheepishness, that two out of three ain't bad. Work has proliferated on the study of the rule of the many, *dēmokratia* (democracy). While Classical Athens has usually been the focus, scholars are starting to venture beyond the territory of Attica and beyond the constricting temporal boundaries of 508–322 as well.[3] A less intensive, but still impressive, amount of work has gone into understanding the rule of one. Scholarship has traditionally been interested in the Archaic tyrants, but more recently attention has expanded to encompass multiple forms of sole rulership in ancient

1. 3.48: ὀλιγαρχία, σκληρὰ καὶ ἄδικος πλεονεξία πλουσίων τινῶν καὶ πονηρῶν ὀλίγων ἐπὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ ἀπόρους συστᾶσα.

2. *Pyth.* 2.86–88.

3. For the Classical Athenian democracy, see especially the work of Ober (1989, 1996, 1998, 2008, 2015). For earlier studies, see, e.g., Jones 1957; Finley 1983, 1985; and the institutional studies of Hansen (e.g., his 1999). Recent work on the Athenian democracy, from a variety of methodological approaches, includes Balot 2001; Wohl 2002; Lanni 2006; Herman 2006; Christ 2012; Gottesman 2014. For ancient democracy beyond Athens, see O'Neil 1995; Robinson 1997, 2011; Gauthier 1993; Mann and Scholz 2012.

Greece, including Classical-era tyrants, Hellenistic kings, and longstanding dynasties.[4]

Studies devoted to the rule of the few, *oligarchia* (oligarchy), by contrast, are practically nonexistent. The last comprehensive treatment in English, by Leonard Whibley, was published one hundred and twenty years ago.[5] Subsequent studies, while adding to our knowledge of oligarchy, have not attempted to replace Whibley's work.[6] Moreover, historians have typically focused on the Athenian oligarchies of the late fifth century, and in particular on the oligarchic ideology that inspired them, rather than on the concrete actions of historical oligarchs from across the Greek world as they appear in the ancient sources.[7] It has rarely been asked what oligarchs in the Classical period actu-

4. For Archaic tyranny, see Andrewes 1956; Berve 1967; Mossé 1969; Barceló 1993; Steiner 1994; de Libero 1996; McGlew 1993; Kurke 1999; Anderson 2005; Lewis 2006; Morgan 2015. Studies on early Greek kingship include Drews 1983; Carlier 1984. For "sole rulership," see the articles collected in Luraghi 2013a. For Hellenistic kingship, see recently Hatzopoulos 1996; Ma 1999; Monson 2012; Kosmin 2014; Fischer-Bovet 2014. For ruling dynasties, see Mitchell 2013.

5. Whibley 1896. (Treatments of oligarchy can be found in the nineteenth-century handbook tradition, e.g., Busolt 1920: 341–69.) By bringing together many disparate scraps of evidence and organizing the little constitutional information we have, Whibley's study remains indispensable. It utilizes, however, a different definition of oligarchy from the one adopted here.

6. The other major study of oligarchy is Ostwald 2000, but it is focused more on Aristotelian terminology than on the historical practice of oligarchy. Brock and Hodkinson (2000: 16–20) briefly discuss oligarchy, making excellent points but giving too much weight to the idea of a "hoplite republic" (see below). De Ste. Croix (1981) treats class struggle in ancient Greece but spends comparatively little time on matters of oligarchic constitutional detail (283, 287–88, 291–92). See also Cartledge 2009: 52–54.

7. On the oligarchic interludes at Athens in the late fifth century and the ideology behind them, see, e.g., Krentz 1982; Raaflaub 1983, 2004: 235–47; Ostwald 1986: 337–496; Brock 1989; Lewis 1993; Lehmann 1997; Leppin 1999; Bultrighini 1999; Blösel 2000; Rhodes 2000; Heftner 2001, 2003; Németh 2006; Shear 2011; Bearzot 2013. Increasingly, historians are examining the oligarchies of the late fourth century in Athens as well: Williams 1985; Poddighe 2002; Oliver 2003b; Bayliss 2011. The oligarchic *koinon* of Boeotia has also been studied, e.g., by Larsen 1955; Cartledge 2000b. Surprisingly, studies of Aristotle's treatment of oligarchy are few, and include Mulgan 1991; Simpson 2011; Skultety 2011. The papers in Tabachnick and Koivukoski 2011 tend to treat oligarchy (both Greek and Roman) using a political thought-based approach; Cooper 2011, however, is more historical and quite in line with many of the arguments of this book. Teegarden 2014 explains how democratic anti-tyranny legislation defended against both tyranny and oligarchy, but it contains no comprehensive treatment of the nature of the oligarchic threat to democracy. Gray 2015 describes late-Classical and early-Hellenistic *stasis*, often between democrats and oligarchs, but does not attempt a new conceptualization of oligarchy. Caire 2016, on the development of the concept "oligarchy" in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries, appeared too recently to be taken into consideration.

ally did in their capacity as oligarchs.[8] What was the relationship between the rulers and the wider male citizenry (the demos) of an oligarchically governed polis? To what extent was oligarchic rule contested by popular movements? And how might oligarchs have collectively responded in an attempt to retain their power? All of these questions will be concerns of this study, which, as the title states, is primarily a political history (one that treats of the development and functioning of political institutions over time) rather than an intellectual history or a study in political thought.

It is worth asking why historians have attempted so few studies of Classical Greek oligarchy. One reason is that the evidence for oligarchic governance is so lamentably thin. Finley, for example, despaired of being able to say anything systematic about oligarchies: "Unfortunately, the information is lacking for a meaningful discussion of politics in the oligarchic Greek . . . states."[9] This claim is disputable. First, although there is admittedly much less evidence for oligarchy than for democracy, the sources that do exist—which include many important epigraphic discoveries not available to Whibley—have not been systematically collected. Second, the evidence has not been analyzed through the most productive methodological lens. When we view Classical Greek oligarchy as a species of authoritarianism, as I propose to do here, we are better able to organize and make sense of the available historical evidence.

More importantly, however, it is clear that scholars consider the topic of oligarchy less interesting because the political phenomenon is (supposedly) so overwhelmingly common. Wherever we look, whether in ancient Greece or in the modern world, we are apt to find a relatively small number of people doing the active work of governing in any given state. The early-twentieth-century political theorist Robert Michels designated this the "Iron Law of Oligarchy" (1962), from which no political organization could escape. Ober

8. Although I use the word "oligarch" throughout, there is actually no attested instance of the Greek noun *oligarchos*, on the model of *monarchos* (monarch). (One exception: Walbank would restore a genitive plural "*oli*[*garchōn*]" at *SEG* 32.161, line 5. Langdon is more cautious, leaving the space blank: Lalonde, Langdon, and Walbank 1991: 71.) The usual designation for an oligarch is the adjective *oligarchikos*, "oligarchically minded person" (e.g., Lys. 25.8), or a participial construction (e.g., "those ruling in an oligarchy," Arist. *Pol*. 4.1300a8). I do not assume that every wealthy man in a Greek polis was an oligarch. Ancient democracies allowed (in fact, required) the political participation of the wealthy, and many of them were sympathetic to the rule of the demos. In what follows I attempt as much as possible to restrict the use of "oligarch" to those ruling in an oligarchic regime or actively working to establish one.

9. Finley 1983: 63. Cf. the comments of Cartledge 2000b: 401; Forsdyke 2009: 201. Note Finley's further claim that "bits in Aristotle's *Politics* or in the Greek historians indicate that [oligarchies'] politics could be sharp and nasty." The present book would seem to support that judgment.

(1989) has decisively shown that Classical Athens defies the Iron Law, but all other Greek states remain potentially open to the charge. Some historians, therefore, might consider the ancient distinction between *oligarchia* and *dēmokratia* unhelpful and potentially misleading, since in fact all poleis were governed by a few.[10] At the same time, scholars tend to overestimate the conservatism of the Greeks outside of Classical Athens, and thus to overestimate the total number of oligarchies as well. Indeed, some assume that oligarchy was the most common type of constitution.[11]

This book takes a very different view. It contends that by confusing the "oligarchy" of Michels's "Iron Law of Oligarchy" with *oligarchia* in ancient Greece, we are in danger of misunderstanding much of ancient Greek politics. The "Iron Law" threatens to blur differences between regimes that were clear and often extremely important to political actors at the time. As much as we may want to conflate ancient Greek democracy and oligarchy—because ancient democracy seems unjustifiably exclusionary to our modern sensibilities—the labels were crucial for many contemporaries. To quote Finley once again: "'Rule by the few' or 'rule by the many' was a meaningful choice, the freedom and the rights that factions claimed for themselves were worth fighting for."[12] It would be presumptuous, therefore, to ignore or second-guess the claims of the sources. By the same token, we should not foist untested assumptions about the frequency of oligarchy onto the ancient evidence. New resources, such as the Copenhagen Polis Center's *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (*IACP*), are enabling us to begin the process of tracing constitutional developments over time.[13] Teegarden has recently demonstrated, using data taken from the *Inventory*, that "the ancient Greek world became increasingly more densely democratic during the Classical and early Hellenistic periods."[14] As this book will show, democracy not only increasingly coexisted with oligarchy in the Greek world, it also largely replaced it during the

10. Another possible interpretation is to suppose that democracies and oligarchies existed along a spectrum, at the center of which the two regimes blurred together and were largely indistinguishable. Thus proposes Leppin (2013: 147): "[T]heir genesis and their reality put democracy and oligarchy much nearer to each other than their proponents would have wished." Blösel 2014 likewise sees "moderate oligarchies" as differing little from democracies (but he assumes the widespread existence of hoplite constitutions, on which see below). I show in this book that such views are mistaken and that (in the sources, at least) most democracies are readily distinguishable from most oligarchies.

11. e.g., Morris 1996: 41.

12. Finley 1983: 9.

13. See further the data collected by Josiah Ober's POLIS project (polis.stanford.edu) and utilized in his latest book (2015).

14. 2014: 2, with appendix.

Hellenistic period. Oligarchy, as it turns out, was not "inevitable" for the Greeks—in fact, it became *less* and not *more* common over the course of the Classical period.

The next section of this introductory chapter argues for a new and distinctive historical understanding of ancient Greek *oligarchia*, based on a careful reading of the ancient sources. According to this view, *oligarchia* does not refer to just any regime in which a small number of people govern, but to a specific constitutional alternative that arose as a reaction to *dēmokratia* between the late sixth and mid-fifth century. Thus, the meaning of *oligarchia*, both as a concept and as a form of political practice, cannot be understood apart from *dēmokratia*, alongside which it developed *pari passu*.[15] Once the Greek elite perceived *dēmokratia* as a potential threat to their interests as a class, many members of the elite, working in different poleis and under differing local conditions, created what nevertheless became a broadly similar repertoire of political and social institutions designed specifically to avoid the danger of democracy.[16] The term for this bundle of defensive and reactionary techniques was *oligarchia*.[17]

15. Leppin (2013: 149–50) has similar remarks on the "twin birth" of democracy and oligarchy, but the rest of his analysis differs sharply from mine.

16. Here I should address the question of class, which has been reopened recently by the neo-Marxist account of Rose 2012. The sources cannot fail to make apparent that political struggle in the ancient Greek world could be and indeed often was organized along class lines, if by "classes" we mean those wealthy enough to live without laboring and those who had to labor for their livelihood; moreover, these "classes" exist within the larger group of free citizen males and do not, except on rare occasions, extend outside of it (i.e., to metics and slaves). This definition in itself contains distinctions from traditional Marxism, which views class as a relational marker determined by location within the mode of production. I also do not suppose that political conflict always and everywhere in history is determined in the last instance by economic forces: other factors (ethnic identity, religious belief) frequently play an important, independent role (often the determinative role). It is the historian's job to determine what the central motivations are in a given historical period, or even in a specific historical episode. The politics of Classical Greece have a strongly class-based character, but politics need not always be like that. Cf. the remarks of the non-Marxist sociologist Michael Mann, discussing different forms of conflict in history (1986: 217): "[Greece] is the first known society to have moved fully into the third level of class organization, exhibiting to us *symmetrical, political class struggle*" (emphasis in original).

17. The present view of oligarchy is therefore to be distinguished from two common alternatives. Some take the term "oligarchy," which developed in the fifth century, and project it back onto the Archaic period. The ancients themselves, including Aristotle (*e.g.*, *Pol.* 4.1289b36–38), did this. Thus Whibley (1896: 72–83) discusses the replacement of aristocracy by oligarchy during the Archaic period as regimes of wealth replaced regimes of "nobility." I would speak instead in a rather undifferentiated manner of "Archaic elite-led regimes" (see further below).

This book therefore attempts to "de-naturalize" our inherited and largely taken-for-granted ideas about oligarchy. Once we see that *oligarchia* was a specific historical reaction to another concrete phenomenon, that of *dēmokratia*, we can begin to wonder afresh at how Classical Greek oligarchy managed to sustain itself as long as it did. For if, as I will argue, oligarchy was never intended to be popular with the mass of the demos, and if the average Greek citizen of the Classical period preferred democracy to oligarchy, we may well be puzzled by how anything so unpopular managed to survive for any length of time, let alone several centuries.[18] With the situation framed in this way, the central question of this book is the following: *Given the general unpopularity of oligarchy and the widespread appeal of democracy as a constitutional alternative, what accounts for the survival of oligarchy during the Classical period?* The answer, in brief, is institutions. The understanding of institutions employed here stems from engagement with the scholarship of political scientists working within the tradition of the "New Institutionalism." New Institutionalism, in contrast to older variants, recognizes that institutions, far from simply being either instruments of raw coercion or mere reflections of existing ideology, structure behavior by influencing individuals' expectations of others' actions. Its choice of institutions strongly affects the future stability of a given political regime, in that institutions tend to produce certain "equilibrium" states of behavior. When political actors design institutions effectively, they can engender equilibria in the aggregate that no individual would have chosen left to his or her own devices. In the case of authoritarian institutions, this can mean that populations acquiesce to an unpopular regime, even in the absence of thoroughgoing coercion or a legitimating ideology. Institutions in this scenario represent a particularly effective instrument in the toolkit of the authoritarian ruler.[19]

I am also interested in this study in when precisely the concept of *oligarchia* first arose, rather than in regimes we wish to label oligarchies in hindsight. Second, some scholars believe the concept of *oligarchia* emerged relatively late in the fifth century, perhaps as a reaction to the Athenian empire or in the crucible of the Peloponnesian War (see the bibliography cited below). I locate the emergence of *oligarchia* earlier than this in the fifth century, and in a broad array of independent contexts, not simply as a result of Athens.

18. Hansen has already drawn attention both to the unpopularity of oligarchy and to the correspondingly surprising frequency of it as a historically attested constitutional type: "*Tyrannis* and *oligarchia* in the classical period almost invariably are criticized as bad constitutions . . . yet . . . the rule of few [was a] rather common form of constitution in the age of Plato and Aristotle" (*IACP*, p. 83). Cf. his 2006b: "What we really lack today is sources for a positive evaluation of oligarchy."

19. For bibliography, see section 1.3 below.

Thus, to the question of why and how *oligarchia* persisted for so long in the face of *dēmokratia*, I answer that it was likelier to survive, all else being equal, when oligarchs implemented specialized social and political institutions that kept the elite united while discouraging the demos from collective action. These institutions, which comprise the "rules" that characterized the "rule of the few," are treated extensively in chapters 2 through 5. So long as the equilibria promoted by the various institutions obtained, the oligarchic polis was stable, even when large numbers of people among the demos individually preferred democracy to oligarchy. The focus throughout is not on what ancient oligarchs and their critics said about them, or how elite thinkers theorized about them, but what they actually did. The book is thus the first attempt to collect and analyze the characteristic actions of Classical-era oligarchic states. To make these processes clearer, I frequently adduce examples from "New Institutionalist" political science literature, especially from recent studies devoted to authoritarianism. Although the parallel is by no means perfect, modern authoritarian regimes, like Classical Greek oligarchies, have also discovered institutional means of staving off democracy and shoring up their own minority-run rule.

Chapter 6, by contrast, explores what happened when these same institutions broke down. Using examples from throughout Classical Greek history, I show that oligarchic *stasis* (civil war) and regime breakdown were not haphazard but resulted from a circumscribed set of scenarios that represented institutional failure. Here, in addition to surveying the contexts most conducive to democratic revolution, I use some basic game theory to illuminate the strategic choices at play in scenarios of oligarchic collapse. Oligarchs were often incapable of cooperating in high-risk, uncertain situations. Their need to save themselves frequently outweighed the benefits that would have accrued from maintaining unity against challenges to the oligarchic status quo. Over time, these tendencies fatally undermined the oligarchic project.

Thus, in a brief afterword, I look forward to the early Hellenistic period, when *oligarchia* ceded ideological ground to *dēmokratia* and shed all pretense of being a legitimate constitutional alternative. Hellenistic Greece, despite being cast sometimes as the graveyard of democracy, in fact became the high tide of democracy in the ancient world. Recent revisionist arguments about the survival of democracy beyond the fourth century show that democracy was the institutional "rules of the game" after the conquests of Alexander.[20] By the same token, the foregoing Classical period represented the apex, not of democracy, but of oligarchy. It was the period when oligarchy was created,

20. For the revisionist stance on democracy in the Hellenistic period, see the literature cited in the afterword.

developed, but was largely abandoned as a potential rival to democracy. The arguments of this book allow us to see more clearly why and how democracy was able to step into the constitutional space abdicated by oligarchy in the late Classical period.[21]

The remainder of this introductory chapter is taken up with three tasks. First (1.1), I present the evidence for the conception of oligarchy sketched above, as a reactionary form of government concerned to prevent democracy. To put this development in context I begin by surveying the Archaic period, when it would be more accurate to speak of "elite-led regimes" rather than "oligarchy" proper.[22] It will become clear that, although the Archaic elite could assume a hostile and snobbish pose toward the common people, the demos nonetheless played a significant role in the political life of the period. Archaic elite-led government did not define itself, as Classical oligarchy later did, as a united front of the elite against the demos. At the same time, many of the institutional techniques used by Classical oligarchs *were* forged in the political furnace of the Archaic period, particularly those designed to prevent the emergence of a tyrant from the ranks of the elite. I then discuss the development of a distinctly oligarchic mindset following the advent of *dēmokratia* in

21. The book is thus in part an argument for the continuing relevance of the periodization "Classical-Hellenistic." Gray speaks of the "long fourth century" between ca. 404–146 BCE (2015: 5); Fröhlich likewise argues that a volume on "approaches to the post-classical polis" ought simply to have been called "approaches to the Greek poleis" (2014: 755, reviewing Martzavou and Papazarkadas 2013). While I agree that the term "post-Classical" is unhelpful (because it establishes the Classical period as the standard against which all subsequent ages are measured), I would insist on a turning point in constitutional history around the death of Alexander in 323.

22. I call Archaic regimes "elite-led" constitutions for lack of a better term. "Aristocracy" is too freighted with Aristotelian (but also medieval European) connotations (Duplouy 2006; Fernoux and Stein 2007; Fisher and van Wees 2015). The Archaic Greeks themselves do not seem to have known the word *aristokratia* (its earliest attestation is Thuc. 3.82.8, in the year 427; Ar. *Av.* 125 points to its being a familiar term in 414). "Timocracy," while it helpfully combines notions of honor and status, is also a later terminological invention. (In its original usage in Plato's *Republic*, it refers to a Sparta-like regime, not an Archaic elite-led constitution.) *Eunomia* is the best attested term in the Archaic period: Hom. *Od.* 17.487; Hes. *Th.* 230, 902; Solon fr. 4.32 West; Xenophanes fr. 2.19 West; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1306b39–1307a1, giving the title *Eunomia* to the poem of Tyrtaeus containing frr. 1–4 West. "Elite," which has gained currency in scholarship recently (e.g., Savalli-Lestrade 2003), remains usefully open and vague (although see the complaints of Gagarin and Perlman 2016: 55n144). Although I agree with his contention that elite status in ancient Greece was more performative and merit-based than hereditary, Duplouy (2006) downplays the importance of wealth among the Archaic and Classical elite. Here "elite" always connotes the leisured wealthy, even if such people always had to perform certain actions in the eyes of the community in order to maintain their position.

several poleis in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. Here the most important arguments will be three: that the opposition between oligarchy and democracy developed relatively early in the fifth century; that democratization, and the oligarchization that emerged in reaction to it, was a Panhellenic process, encouraged by but not solely reliant on the growth of democracy at Athens; and, relatedly, that conflict between democrats and oligarchs predated the Peloponnesian War. The war may have exacerbated political tensions within the poleis, but it did not create them *ex nihilo*.

In the next section (1.2), I provide a synchronic overview of the key features linking oligarchies during the Classical period. I show that oligarchies defined themselves overwhelmingly by a wealth criterion, and that the threshold for full citizenship was usually set in such a way as to encompass the leisured wealthy. This section also demonstrates that the so-called "hoplite republic" was largely a myth. This concept, attested mainly in the political works of Aristotle, has entered numerous discussions as an explanatory *via tertia* between broad democracy and narrow oligarchic "dynasties" (*dunasteiai*), or juntas.[23] I show, by contrast, that attested instances of the "hoplite republic" are extremely rare, and that the arguments advanced for its widespread existence are unconvincing. An investigation into the actual makeup of the ruling groups in oligarchies mentioned in the historical sources reveals that they were quite small, including at most the wealthiest 20 percent of the free male adult population of a polis but more typically less, around 10 or 15 percent. More often than not, in fact, hoplites can be found fighting in support of democracy against oligarchy during the Classical period.

The final section of this chapter (1.3) lays out the book's methodological approach. It defines "institutions" and the "New Institutionalism" in greater detail and specifies the extent to which these ideas can be adapted and applied to the ancient world. I also introduce some concepts that will be crucial for the argument going forward, specifically "equilibrium," "common knowledge," "coordination," the "collective action problem," and a few elementary games from game theory. The proof of the legitimacy of these concepts is, of course, their usefulness for explaining the ancient evidence, which will become apparent in subsequent chapters.

1.1 From Archaic Regimes to Classical Oligarchy

To recognize the extent to which Classical-era oligarchy represented an unprecedented attack on the political participation of the demos, we must first acknowledge the considerable involvement of the common people in the

23. See, e.g., Hanson 1995 *passim*; Samons 2004: 44; Raaflaub 2007: 121.

poleis of the Archaic period.[24] Such a view, while fully supported by the available evidence, nevertheless runs counter to certain elitist theories of Archaic government that have recently gained prominence. Consider, for example, this particularly strong-worded claim by Anderson, describing the Greek poleis of the seventh and sixth centuries: "Poorer individuals as yet had no political presence whatsoever."[25] Other historians have similarly emphasized the outsize role of the elite in Archaic political life, in the process playing down or even denying any significant participation by the wider community of free male citizens.[26] There is no doubt that the elite played the leading role in the political communities of Archaic Greece. On the other hand, Greece did not have to wait until the emergence of *dēmokratia* to witness political participation by the demos. A survey of our earliest Greek texts, both literary and epigraphical, provides a corrective to the strongly elitist view.[27] What is striking is not the sudden and unexpected appearance of the demos in the late sixth century, but rather its consistent presence in the political systems of Archaic Greece, starting from the earliest times.[28] The members of the Archaic elite, while they could on occasion be extraordinarily harsh and even violent toward

24. I define the Archaic period according to convention, as the time between the eighth century and the Persian Wars in 480. The Classical period comprises 480–323.

25. 2005: 178. This blanket statement is undermined by some of Anderson's claims elsewhere, such as that many poleis of the time possessed popular assemblies (178n9).

26. See, e.g., Osborne 1996: 187; Foxhall 1997: 119; Forsdyke 2005: 19. These accounts also frequently portray the Archaic state as quite primitive. They were less developed than in Classical times, to be sure, but they were still states. Van Wees (2013a) has argued that Archaic Athens was actually quite advanced in terms of its tax-raising abilities. The thesis of Berent (1996) that the Greek polis was a "stateless society" is unconvincing certainly for the Classical period; see Hansen 2002. It may describe certain poleis of the Archaic period, but not all.

27. As Davies has observed, references to sophisticated Archaic institutions, including instances of popular participation, have been largely overlooked by "political theorists and historians of political thought, who ignore the antiquarian, and above all the epigraphical, evidence" (2003b: 326).

28. One potential problem when starting out is our definition of the term "demos." It is relatively clear that in Homeric epic, "demos" designates the entirety of the free male community apart from the elite *basileis*. I do not see why this should substantially change over the course of the Archaic period. Some scholars, however, following a basically Aristotelian line, believe that the meaning of "demos" first constricted, to comprise the "hoplites" (i.e., the wealthier part of the free population), then later shifted to mean "the poorer, non-hoplitic part of the free population." For uncertainty as to the identity of the Archaic demos, see, e.g., Koerner 1981: 204; Osborne 1996: 187; Foxhall 1997: 65; Gagarin 2008: 82. For the identification of the Archaic demos with the hoplites, see Gehrke 2009: 397; Raaflaub and Wallace 2007: 23; cf. Donlan 1999 [1970]: 225–36. Morris, however, has argued persuasively that "it is wrong to imagine a slow evolution across the archaic period from royal to aristocratic to hoplite to thetic

the common people, seem overall to have tolerated the presence of the demos in everyday political life. The mitigating factor was that that presence was limited. When democracy appeared in the late Archaic and early Classical periods, heralding a much more extensive political role for the common people, the stance of many members of the elite toward the demos hardened into what we know as oligarchy.

1.1.1 Elite and Demos in Archaic Sources

To begin with Homeric epic,[29] scholars have increasingly come to see the assembly (*agorē*) of the people (*dēmos, laos*) as an important institution in the political world depicted by the poems.[30] As Raaflaub and Wallace put it in a recent survey of "people's power" in Archaic Greece, "The assembly is a constant feature of Homeric society, embedded in its structures and customs, and formalized to a considerable degree." Although there is no formal counting of votes, no individual proposals are made from the floor, and leaders do not always keep to the decisions pronounced in the assembly, the Homeric *agorē* is nonetheless a crucial political institution. It possesses, as Raaflaub and Wallace go on to say, "an important function in witnessing, approving, and legitimizing communal actions and decisions regarding such matters as the distribution of booty, 'foreign policy,' and the resolution of conflicts."[31] The elites depicted in Homeric epic no doubt expected that the announcement of political decisions in the common space of the assembly would strengthen the resolve of individuals to uphold them, precisely because they gained normative authority through being openly announced and commonly shared.[32] Although the members of the demos are not expected to speak beyond making shouts and acclamations, their assent and even critical input are sought by the leadership, as when Agamemnon says he will "test the army with words."[33]

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power . . . from the earliest sources, 'the middle' includes all citizens" (1996: 40; for "middle" one could substitute "demos").

29. To give all of the following sources the attention they deserve would be impossible. The purpose is to establish the presence and influence of the demos.

30. Carlier 1984, 1998; Andreev 1979; Raaflaub 1997; Haubold 2000; Ruzé 1997: 68–74; Hammer 2002: 144–69; Hölkeskamp 2002; Wecowski 2011: 77–79; Werlings 2010: 47–107. For the difficulties involved in using Homeric epic as historical evidence, see Raaflaub 1998.

31. Raaflaub and Wallace 2007: 28–29. Cf. the similar role of the *laos* in Hesiod, which meets in the assembly (*Theogony* 89) and witnesses the decisions of the *basileis.*

32. Cf. Hölkeskamp 2002: 317, discussing the Homeric assembly: "Universal consent on a ruling as being 'just' may generate collective pressure on individual parties to accept and submit to it."

33. *Il.* 2.73.

The idea of the *vox populi*, although often shadowy and consigned to the dramatic background, exerts a powerful influence over the basileis.[34]

The most useful place to turn after Homer is the epigraphic record of Archaic laws inscribed on stone.[35] Werlings, who has studied the presence of the demos in Archaic law (2010), has concluded that the demos often plays an influential role in these texts, even if they are not the sole, sovereign authority of the polis.[36] For example, we possess a law from Tiryns dated to the seventh century specifying that a group of magistrates are to perform some action with respect to the public property of the polis "however the *damos* [= demos] decides [*dokei*] . . . [in an] assembly [in the] theater."[37] The language recalls the customary opening enactment clause of Classical Athenian decrees, "decided by the people" (*edoxe tō dēmōi*). Here, however, it does not name the body on whose authority the decree itself was decided, but rather a procedural step to be taken in specified circumstances.[38] The demos is not yet the authoritative voice of the polis, but it is one—important—voice within it. As Koerner puts it, discussing this example, "It is certain . . . that the *damos* could

34. See, e.g., *Il.* 9.460, *Od.* 14.239, 15.468, with Ruzé 1997: 73; Hammer 2005: 115.

35. If I spend more time on the epigraphic evidence that follows than on the literary evidence, it is because the inscribed laws may be less familiar. Important works of scholarship in the field of Archaic inscribed law include ML; *Nomima*; Koerner; Hölkeskamp 1999; Gagarin 2008. Fornara has English-language translations of several of these laws.

36. By contrast, Archaic Crete, while epigraphically rich, is impoverished in terms of mentions of the *dēmos/damos*. Nonetheless, the constitutions of the Cretan poleis seem to have been broadly in line with the picture of Archaic elite-led regimes developed here. Against a picture of Crete as exceptionally "aristocratic" (e.g., Willetts 1955; Whitley 1997), Gagarin and Perlman note that while the Archaic Cretan poleis were certainly not democratic, their governments "were composed of a mixture of elements, with the *kosmos* [an important magistrate] having clear authority in some respects but also being subject to constraints imposed by the broader community" (2016: 55). The regimes of Classical Crete, on the other hand, remain much more obscure to us, largely because the number of Cretan inscribed laws sharply decreases in the later fifth and fourth centuries. Given the paucity of evidence, I am unable to classify Classical Cretan regimes as "oligarchies" in the sense known from mainland Greece and other Greek-speaking regions. I therefore bracket the Cretan case for the remainder of the book. For Cretan political history, see Perlman 1992, 2004, 2014; Gehrke 1997; Chaniotis 1999, 2005b; Wallace 2010; Seelentag 2015.

37. Koerner no. 31 (see also *Nomima* I.78).

38. For further discussion, see Osborne 1997: 39–40; Gagarin 2008: 64–65; Hawke 2011: 186–87; Koerner 1985. For another early inscription containing similar language about "however the *damos* decides," see *Nomima* I.21, a law of the first half of the sixth century which is labeled a "*rhetra*" (ordinance) of the Chaladrians (perhaps a deme of Elis). For additional Elean inscriptions, see below.

have the right to decide upon important matters of the polis long before the onset of democracy."[39]

Other documents likewise highlight the demos's role as a political agent. A seventh-century Corcyrean inscription manages to fit four "demos"-based words into six lines: "This is the tomb of Menecrates the son of Tlasias, an Oianthean by birth, and the *damos* made it for him; for he was the dear *proxenos* [Oianthean representative] of the *damos*, but he died at sea, and there was public [*damosion*] woe. . . . Praximenes, coming from his homeland, made this tomb for his brother with the *damos*."[40] The repeated use of the word in such an early text has occasioned much comment, with Wallace claiming that the precociousness of the "demos" language can be explained only by the existence of a "democratic" faction at Corcyra. The epitaph is thus a "propaganda document, part of whose intent is to stress the independence and authority of the people."[41] The interstate nature of the epitaph, however, points to the possibility that it was meant especially for external consumption, and here Werlings has a more convincing interpretation: given Corcyra's antagonistic relationship with Corinth during this period, it is best to see in the use of the word *damos* "a willingness on the part of the Corcyreans to affirm themselves as an independent and autonomous city vis-à-vis Corinth."[42] Thus the *damos* would again stand for the entirety of the citizen community inhabiting the territory of Corcyra.

Next we come to the so-called "constitutional law of Chios," dated by Jeffery (1956) to ca. 575–550.[43] This famous inscription, full of references to the demos, has given rise to much speculation about the constitutional development of Chios at this time. Several earlier interpreters believe that the qualified title of the *dēmosiē boulē* ("people's" or "popular council," C.2–3, 5–6) marked it as distinct from another, more traditional council (not named by our inscription). Larsen, for example, claimed that "the existence of a 'popular' council suggests that there also was an aristocratic council."[44] The specification *dēmosiē* in the case of the Chian council does not require, however, the existence of a counterpart *boulē*. The latter assumption springs from a

39. 1985: 456: "Es ist dadurch sicher . . . dass der Damos lange vor Enstehung der Demokratie das Recht zur Beschlussfassung über wichtige Angelegenheiten der Polis besitzen konnte."

40. ML 4 (trans. Fornara 14; see also *Nomima* I.34).

41. 1970: 193, 191.

42. 2010: 126: "la volonté de la part des Corcyréens de s'affirmer comme une cité indépendente et autonome vis-à-vis de Corinthe."

43. ML 8 (trans. Fornara 19; see also *Nomima* I.62; Koerner no. 61). The label "constitutional" is misleading, as I explain in greater detail below.

44. Larsen 1949: 171. Cf. Jeffery 1956: 166; Ehrenberg 1950: 538; ML 8, p. 16; Rhodes 1993: 153.

translation of the word *dēmosiē* as "popular," but it could just as easily mean "concerned with the public business," as it usually does during this period.[45]

We still might ask how much power the demos had in Chios at this time. Again, a careful consideration of the available evidence suggests that it played an important, but not sovereign, part in the running of the polis. It was one institution among many, assigned delimited duties in special situations. Its most concrete action comes at A.7, where "the demos has been assembled." According to Jeffery's text and translation, this gathering comes after a previous string of actions dealing with official misconduct, and precedes several others. The demos thus constitutes one step in an ongoing process of dispute and resolution. Finally, although some have seen the *dēmosiē boulē* as probouleutic for the Chian assembly, this is highly speculative and, on balance, unlikely: the *dēmosiē boulē* is said to "conduct" or "exact" (*prēssetō*) "the other business of the demos" (*ta alla ta dēmo*, C.9–11), and so it likely executes decisions rather than refers or submits them to the demos.[46] Nevertheless, the demos may have played other roles in the running of Chios that this particular law leaves unspecified. As with much Archaic Greek law, the "constitution" of Chios is aimed at a particular set of problems arising around certain offices, in this case the *dēmarchos* and the *basileus*, and it outlines procedures to be followed by countervailing offices and political bodies; it does not offer an exhaustive list of the duties attached to each office. Thus it is not properly a "constitution" at all, but, as Robinson puts it, a "set of laws concerning the administration of justice, of which only a portion survives."[47] We therefore do not know what other functions the assembly of citizens might have served at this time. In any case, the Chian law does not enshrine the demos as the sovereign power of the polis.[48]

A final set of inscribed laws exhibits characteristics similar to those of the Chian law. Several inscribed bronze plaques from Olympia edited by Dittenberger and Purgold in their 1896 *Inschriften von Olympia* mention the *damos* or similar bodies.[49] None of these inscriptions is actually enacted in the name

45. See Werlings' "Annexes III: Tableau B," with thirteen entries, to which add *IPArk* 7.4. Especially pertinent is a phrase from *Nomima* I.109, ϝράτρα ἀ δαμοσία, which I interpret as also meaning "concerned with the public business"—see below. See further Werlings 2010: 158–65; Ampolo 1983; Ruzé 1997: 364–66.

46. Probouleutic: Wade-Gery 1958: 189–92, 198–99; Ehrenberg 1950: 138; Jeffery 1956: 164; Robinson 1997: 97. Executive (or the author is ambivalent): Larsen 1949: 170–71; ML 8; Rhodes 1993: 160n13; Ruzé 1997: 366; Werlings 2010: 165.

47. 1997: 90. See further Hölkeskamp 1999 *passim*, for the absence of "codes" in Archaic law.

48. Alexander the Great's letter to Chios, from two centuries later, does this unambiguously (RO 84A, lines 3–4).

49. See further O'Neil 1981b: 339–40; Walter 1993: 116–25; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 93–96; Robinson 1997: 108–11; Hölkeskamp 1999: 99–107; Minon 2007; Werlings 2010: 130–4.

of the *damos*; the more common practice is for them to be labeled a *wratra* (= *rhētra*, ordinance) for the community in question—the Eleans, the Heraeans, the Chaladrioi, and so on. The *damos*, however, undeniably plays an important role in many of them. One forbids the alteration of the document by "private citizen or magistrate or *damos*."[50] Guarducci, followed by Minon and Werlings, sees in this word a reference to the assembly of citizens.[51] At the very end of one law, something is not to be done "without the council and the *zamos plathuon* [= *dēmos plēthuōn*], 'full assembly.'"[52] A version of this phrase recurs in another law, the meaning of which is much clearer: if someone wishes to change the writings (*graphea*), he can do it up to three times, but only with "a valid council of five hundred men and a full assembly."[53] A final law contains a clause in which the *damos* possibly has the power to confirm the penalties set in the legislation.[54]

The Elean texts ultimately yield nothing certain about the constitutional history of the region. Jeffery and now Minon have argued, based on letter forms, that these documents date to the late sixth or early fifth century. Since I, for one, detect democracies apart from the Athenian one emerging around this time, I would not rule out democracy *a priori*. We cannot, however, jump to conclusions. O'Neil thinks that *IvO* 9 and 7 "clearly refer to an already existing democracy," but he assumes that only a democracy would mention the demos, which as we have seen is incorrect. Robinson, after a careful consideration of the evidence, upholds O'Neil's judgment.[55] Rhodes, however, thinks "constitutional government" is a "safer term," and I agree.[56] Consideration of the *damos*'s judgment for certain decisions does not entail democracy, as we have seen several times already, in Tiryns and Chios. Robinson claims that the council of 500, and the *dēmos plēthuōn* in particular, "resemble organs of the Athenian democracy."[57] More precisely, however, they resemble bodies found in Athens going back to Solon. Athens had a council and a fully open assembly even then, yet few would call Solon's *politeia* an instance of *dēmokratia*.[58]

50. ML 17 (trans. Fornara 25; see also *Nomima* I.52), lines 7–10: αἰ δέ τιρ τὰ γράφεα : ταῖ κα(δ) δαλέοιτο : αἴτε ϝέτας αἴτε τελεστὰ : αἴτε δᾶμος : ἐν τ'ἐπιάροι κ' ἐνέχοιτο.

51. See Werlings 2010: 141–42 with bibliography cited, and ML 17; Walter 1993: 122.

52. *Nomima* I.108.

53. *Nomima* I.109: σὺν βολαῖ <π>εντακατίον ἀϝλανέος καὶ δάμοι πλεθύοντι, line 4.

54. *Nomima* I.36: αἰ κα] δόξε καὶ τοῖ δάμοι. See also *Nomima* I.21, discussed above in conjunction with the Archaic law from Tiryns.

55. 1997: 108–11.

56. Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 96n1.

57. 1997: 108.

58. Solonian institutions: [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.3. The fact that δάμοι πλεθύοντι resembles the *dēmos plēthuōn* of *IG* I^3 105, as has been pointed out by several commentators (Lewis 1967; Rhodes 1972a: 197; Ostwald 1986: 32; Robinson 1997: 108n157), is not of much help: we do not

Therefore, in the absence of other historical evidence, I would tentatively label late-sixth-century Elis a "constitutional regime" along the lines of the other Archaic examples studied above.

There are several other instances of the demos playing a role in Archaic inscriptions, but I shift now to the literary evidence.[59] We have already noted that an assembly and a council existed in Athens from the earliest times, with a more representative council of 400 accompanying Solon's reforms in the early sixth century. Assemblies could be called elsewhere, even if they did not predominate in the constitution. Alcaeus, who lived in Mytilene on Lesbos around 600, misses the sound "of the agora [*scil.* 'assembly'] being summoned by the herald," and elsewhere he criticizes his fellow citizens for "all" praising his rival Pittacus and establishing him as tyrant.[60] "One of the Olympians set this civil war in motion," he says in another fragment, "leading the *damos* into ruin and bestowing desirable glory upon Pittacus."[61] The *damos* thus seems to have had an institutionalized role at Mytilene, and to have intervened on occasion to make decisive choices about the direction of political life.[62]

Similarly, Archilochus, writing in the seventh century, was familiar with the presence of the demos at Paros (they are "gathered together for contests" in fr. 182 West) and with their influence: he consoles one Aesimides with the thought that "no one ever did experience much pleasure who gave a thought to the censure of the demos."[63] As with Alcaeus, however, the demos can also

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know when the statutes recopied in I^3 105 were first enacted, but Ryan (1994) has argued convincingly that they go back to Solon. If that is the case, then again the phrasing is not in itself reflective of democracy.

59. See *Nomima* I.32 (Cyzicus, sixth century: the demos swears an oath to maintain a certain Manes's privileges); *Nomima* I.24 (see also Koerner no. 39; Elis ca. 500: *damos* is the direct object of indeterminable action by *damiorgia*, line 6); ML 20 (trans. Fornara 47; Locris ca. 460–450: "partake of the *damos*," line 4—this could mean "territory," or it could mean "assembly"); *Nomima* I.58 (treaty of Zancle from Olympia ca. 500: possible mention of *damos* at line 8); *Nomima* I.102 (Atrax in Thessaly, ca. 475: "thethmos [= 'thesmos'] for the *damos*"). For many of these attestations, see the discussions in Werlings 2010.

60. Frr. 130b.18, 348 Liberman.

61. Fr. 70. Cf. also fr. 129, where Alcaeus claims to ward off pains from the *damos*.

62. Page (1955: 177) supposes "*damos*" to comprise the wealthy, a contradiction in terms. Forsdyke (2005: 45–48), while noting that the "all" in question in fr. 348 need not refer to the Mytilenean demos (cf. Romer 1982), ultimately decides based on other evidence that it does; but comparing the Mytilenean case with Athens and Megara, she claims that the common people had no "self-consciousness" and that their role in electing Pittacus was orchestrated by elite patrons (47). Wallace (2009: 423) by contrast claims the lines "clearly document the early *demos*'s power."

63. Fr. 14. Bowie (2008), drawing our attention to the boastful epigram of the Parian/Thasian

be an object of ridicule and serve as an unflattering point of comparison. According to late sources, Archilochus insulted someone as a prostitute with the words "demos" and *ergatis* (worker).[64] Archilochus's fellow iambographer Hipponax, from sixth-century Ephesus, hopes that an enemy might suffer "a horrible fate by a pebble [*psēphis*] from the *dēmosiē boulē*": the phrase brings together the images of a vote in a popular body as well as a communally exacted death by stoning.[65]

From the corpus of elegy, Theognis, while providing plenty of sententious phrases about the difference between good and bad, high and low, does not actually say much about the political structure of Archaic Megarian society. An "agora" is mentioned, in conjunction with *dikai* (lawsuits?), and is said to be free of "poverty."[66] This is little to go on, but the collocation of the terms and their close resemblance to the picture painted by Hesiod suggest that certain cases were heard in the agora before a popular assembly.[67] The corpus says little about the demos or *laos*: a speaker fears that the *kakoi*, who are probably to be identified with the *hegemones* (leaders) from a few lines before, will destroy (or perhaps corrupt) the demos, giving rise to a tyrant.[68] There is, of course, also the famous passage where the *laoi* are said to be different.[69] Otherwise the "empty-headed" demos is mainly lambasted for not giving a good man, "an acropolis and a tower" of the demos, his due, and for being excessively slavish (*philodespoton*).[70] Yet there is one passage that suggests that the demos was a consolidated and even powerful political group: at lines 947–48,

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magistrate Aceratus (*Nomima* I.80), who was perhaps elected by the demos, suggests that Archilochus is consoling (or even mocking) Aesimides over a recent political rejection at the hands of the demos.

64. Fr. 242 West.

65. Fr. 128.4 West. The phrase *dēmosiē boulē* appears in the "constitutional law" from Chios (ML 8), as we have seen, but I do not think its use by Hipponax can be pressed to illuminate the makeup or constitutional nature of the Chian institution.

66. Thgn. 266–69. The lack of constitutional specificity may be because the Theognid poetic tradition is Panhellenic rather than narrowly Megarian: Nagy 1985.

67. Cf. Hes. *Th.* 89. The absence of *Penia* from this scene could be celebratory of Megara as a whole (it is a flourishing city), or it could be more normative, in the sense that the agora is not a site where poverty-inducing penalties are inflicted upon members of the elite (most likely by each other, not by the demos).

68. Thgn. 45.

69. Thgn. 53–68. On these lines, see further chapter 4, section 4.1.

70. Thgn. 233–34, 847–50. The language of this section is extremely harsh ("kick the empty-headed demos, beat it with a sharp stick, and put a burdensome yoke on it"); one can imagine later Classical-era oligarchs reciting it at symposia with relish (cf. Lane Fox 2000: 45–51). We possess definite evidence for the reception of Theognidean poetry among Classical oligarchs:

the speaker vows to "beautify" (*kosmēsō*) his polis, "since I did not hand it over to the demos, nor do I obey unjust men."[71] Although the speaker does not make clear what he means by "handing over" the polis to the demos, it sounds as though there are two competing groups of citizens, the demos and the unjust. The speaker may have thought the demos was amenable to a tyranny.[72] If the lines are grouped with the ones immediately preceding them, the speaker then says that he belongs to the "middle path" and will not favor either group. While I am hesitant to say that *dēmokratia* was a viable alternative at the time, there is no denying that the demos represents a significant social and political force in this particular Theognidean passage.[73]

Finally, there is the thorny case of Sparta. Historians once thought that Sparta held first place in constitutional precociousness—as exemplified by the seventh-century Great Rhetra—before falling into a kind of self-imposed backwardness.[74] Thommen, however, has convincingly argued that the content of the Rhetra, despite its guarantee that the *damos* have *kratos*, is anything but radical: instead, the Rhetra serves to regularize the meetings of an assembly that is in many respects similar to the Homeric one. Thommen plausibly sees in the assembly's fixedness and institutionalization a mechanism for preventing the manipulation of the *damos* by individual members of the elite. Since the Spartan assembly could not originate policy or even override the veto power of the elders, its involvement represents a balanced arrangement of powers, as in other Archaic poleis, rather than the supreme power of the *damos*.[75]

In sum, by the late sixth century many poleis possessed complex political structures with local variations on the common pattern of assembly, council, and magistrates. It is likely that no significant discussion went on at meetings of the assembly, nor did the leaders expect the wider community to do much

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the Athenian oligarch Critias adopted the Theognidean image of setting the "seal of one's tongue" on a song for his poem to Alcibiades (DK 88 B 5). Cf. Xen. *Symp.* 2.4.

71. πατρίδα κοσμήσω, λιπαρὴν πόλιν, οὔτ' ἐπὶ δήμωι / τρέψας οὔτ' ἀδίκοισ' ἀνδράσι πειθόμενος.

72. Cf. lines 39–52 and Solon frr. 9, 34, 36, 37 West.

73. As the Theognidean corpus contains poems from different times and places, this particular section may originate from a time when democracy had become a constitutional possibility, but there is no way of knowing.

74. For the Great Rhetra (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1–4) as a possible early form of democracy, see Hornblower 1992: 1; Hansen 1994: 33; Raaflaub and Wallace 2007: 39.

75. Thommen 1996: 38–44, 2003: 39–41. Cf. Meier 1998, 2002. This perspective was largely anticipated by Cartledge, e.g., his 2001: 35. Van Wees's revisionist interpretation of the Rhetra (1999) is unduly insistent that the *damos* during this period must have experienced complete subservience to the elite. For the constitutional complexity of Sparta during the Classical period, and for its relationship to Classical oligarchy, see section 1.2.3 below.

other than approve their directives. The assembly served mainly as a means of communication by which elites attempted to disseminate their proposals to the widest possible audience. The involvement of the common people, who had an interest in seeing the elite cooperate, could also have served as a "commitment device," a potential source of sanction beyond the direct control of the elite that would allow them to "credibly commit" to one another in their intra-elite dealings.[76] Finally, the people themselves occasionally asserted their collective presence and demanded further political concessions when the elite overstepped their bounds, whether toward one another or toward the demos.[77] The sources suggest all of these developments. What is certain is that the demos was anything but a nonentity during the Archaic period.

But neither was it sovereign, *kurios*. Effective power seems to have resided in elite councils—*boulai*—with presiding officials, and in powerful magistrates.[78] Judging from the Solonian example, these offices were restricted to the wealthiest citizens. Moreover, scholars are right to insist that much—although not all—of the Archaic legislation we possess is concerned with power-sharing, limitation of centralized influence, and checks and balances among the elite, beginning with the prohibition against the same man serving as *kosmos* within ten years at Dreros (ML 2).[79] While I agree in part with those (e.g., Gagarin 2008, Papakonstantinou 2008) who think that the impetus for some of this regulation originated outside the ranks of the elite, it need not exclusively have come from there, and in many, perhaps most instances, the members of the elite themselves are likely to have arrived at power-sharing mechanisms that mitigated costly civic strife. The demos played a part in civic life, but except in extraordinary circumstances, the

76. For the idea of the demos as a commitment device, see Fleck and Hanssen 2006.

77. See van Wees 2008: 35, who speaks of the Archaic community's "long-established habit of intervening in elite *stasis* and its equally old habit of asserting its own interests, violently if necessary"; cf. Papakonstantinou 2002: 15.

78. Council (sometimes with presidents): *Nomima* I.44 (see also Koerner no. 47; Naupactus ca. 500: *preiga* [council of elders], line 10); *Nomima* I.107 (see also Koerner no. 27; Argos or Halieis ca. 480: council presided over by Ariston); "constitutional" law of Chios ML 8: *dēmosiē boulē*. Officials: *Nomima* I.101 (see also Koerner no. 24; Mycenae, sixth century: *damiorgia, hiaromnamones*); Koerner no. 25 (Argos ca. 575/500: *damiorgia, amphipolos*); Koerner no. 29 (Argos, mid-sixth century: *damiorgia*); *Nomima* I.78 (see also Koerner no. 31; Tiryns, seventh century: *platiwoinarchos, hiaromnamon*); Koerner no. 35 (Arcadia, sixth or fifth century: *damiorgia*); *Nomima* I.80 (Thasos ca. 500: *archon*); *Nomima* I.18 (Sicily, Casmenae ca. 500–450: *gamoroi, archai*); *Nomima* I.72 (Delphi, early fifth century: "the fifteen"). See further Harris 2006: appendix.

79. Foxhall 1997: 120; Osborne 1996: 174–85; Forsdyke 2005: 26; Harris 2006: 304–312; Hawke 2011.

elite's attitude toward the demos was not primarily one of fear or anxiety, but rather of paternalism or mild contempt. Attention was largely focused on conflicts among the elite themselves, which, as Forsdyke has shown (2005), could threaten to tear the community apart. It took a "perfect storm" of conditions in several poleis all around the same time to produce *dēmokratia*, which, by triggering elite unity and reaction, made the costs of abandoning sustained political participation too high to endure. In other words, once *dēmokratia* emerged, the members of the demos could not afford to relinquish power for fear of elite reprisals. Democracy helped create the reasons for its own perpetuation.

1.1.2 The Emergence of Democracy

Dēmokratia was not simply a spontaneous movement by the newly awakened masses, nor was it a gift from elite to demos. Instead, it had (at least) three necessary conditions: 1) times had to be bad enough to give the demos good reason to risk uniting for political change; 2) certain members of the elite had to be alienated from the status quo enough to ally with the demos against their peers; and, crucially, 3) the members of the demos had to form a mass movement powerful enough that renegade members of the elite in question felt they had no choice but to offer power to the common people. Elite and demos had interacted in the past, but only sporadically and usually with limited aims.[80] This was due to the demos's relatively weak bargaining position, which itself was a result of material conditions (relative poverty and thus greater need for risk management, for example; low levels of urbanization) that affected the likelihood of sustained collective action. With an increase in wealth and urbanization, however, the ability of the demos to demand more from the elite made significant political reform the only choice for a renegade member of

80. While I do not have space to discuss tyranny at length, I will point out that one such interaction might be for (at least some) members of the demos to help a member of the elite achieve tyrannical power. A strongly elite-centered view, which denies the common people any role in the "age of the tyrants," has gained prominence recently (Cawkwell 1995; Anderson 2005). This position can stand only by ignoring the evidence of Solon's poetry, and as Luraghi has recently suggested (2015: 80), popular support for tyranny may also be apparent in the story of Peisistratus's bodyguard. Cawkwell (1995: 81) cites low urbanization as a reason for the demos' not having an active role during the "age of the tyrants." By contrast, I consider low urbanization to be precisely the reason why demotic political action often took the form it did, as occasional support for tyrants. It was a principal-agent relationship in which the principal (the demos) had little time for politics and so entrusted a representative with the responsibility of reining in the elite. (And in keeping with principal-agent relationships, there was a potential problem that the tyrant might exploit his position.)

the elite.[81] Yet the elite leader still had an important role to play. When members of the elite fell out with one another, they produced just the sort of people who could serve to coordinate the demos and strengthen its chances of surviving conflict with the elite. The key variable for the emergence of *dēmokratia* was the demos, however. Simply put, no member of the elite would have offered the kinds of reforms promised by Cleisthenes of Athens unless he felt there was no alternative.[82]

To begin with Athens, like many I view the events that took place in 508/7 not only as a major turning point in the political history of Athens, but as the beginning of its democracy.[83] This is what Herodotus reports, and the author of the *Ath. Pol.* follows him.[84] Herodotus also points to multiple occasions post-508/7 on which people remembered the demos as having exercised sovereign decision-making power: the treaty with Aristagoras; the decision about the "wooden wall," where the ambassadors to Delphi came "before the demos"; and the lynching of Lycides, who as a member of the council wanted to introduce a peace treaty with the Persians "to the demos."[85] Herodotus also notes that the Spartans, after the counterrevolution led by Isagoras failed, grumbled that they had "handed over the polis to an ungrateful demos."[86]

Scholars have wondered whether Herodotus misunderstood Cleisthenes's role and its significance for democracy in particular. There are scraps of contemporary evidence, however, that point to the prominence of the demos after 508/7. For example, the phrase "*dēmou kratousa cheir*," "ruling hand of the

81. See Morris 2004; Ober 2015: 81–84, 87–88 (32 percent of the Greek population living in urban centers in the fourth century); Bresson 2016: 199–206 (and note esp. his claim that growth "accelerat[ed] during the Archaic period," 199). For the relationship between urbanization and democracy, see Arist. *Pol.* 3.1286b20–21.

82. My account is thus much more "bottom-up" than that of Fleck and Hanssen 2006, who see the extension of power to the demos as a rational measure taken by the elite in order to credibly commit to certain wealth-maximizing strategies. As I have shown, the Archaic elite were already perfectly capable of utilizing the demos as a commitment device, but without full democratization. *Dēmokratia,* at least when it first emerged in Greece, was not a peaceable agreement between elite and mass but instead a forceful, sometimes violent, usurpation of political power by the demos. By the same token, I take a different position from that of North, Wallis, and Weingast, who see the extension of political rights in history as a grant by the elite (2009: 25). This is not the case in Archaic Greece.

83. Argued for most vigorously by Ober 1993, 1998, 2007; cf. Forsdyke 2005: 133–43; Cartledge 2007: 164; Hansen 1994; Pritchard 2010: 1. *Contra* Raaflaub 2007; Anderson 2003: 80; Ostwald 1986: 15–19.

84. Hdt. 5.66.2, 5.69.2 [twice], 5.78, most explicitly at 6.131.1; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 20.1, 20.4.

85. Hdt. 5.97.2, 7.142.1, 9.5.1.

86. Hdt. 5.91.2.

demos," from Aeschylus's *Suppliants* (line 604), points to the existence at the time (as early as 477) of the concept of *dēmokratia*.[87] Furthermore, we possess several Athenian decrees enacted in the name of the demos, conventionally dated to the period immediately following Cleisthenes's reforms. Here the demos not only plays a role in the political system, as in the earlier Archaic inscriptions studied above, but actively proclaims the polis's decision in its own name.[88] Finally, there is an overlooked piece of evidence in an epigram of Simonides, which praises Athens for a military victory (presumably Marathon): "If it is necessary to honor whoever is best, daughter of Zeus, the demos of Athens alone accomplished this."[89] Werlings thinks Simonides is being intentionally playful with his claim that the "demos" was "best" (*aristos*), normally a contradiction in terms in the minds of the elite.[90] From all these considerations, it seems highly likely that power in 508/7 was transferred to the demos.

How and why had this change come about? Interpretations range between the Cleisthenes-centered (Ehrenberg 1950; Lewis 1963) and the demos-centered (Ober 1993). The Cleisthenic view has its own set of internal debates about the relative altruism or opportunism of its central figure. As Ostwald has rightly pointed out, if Cleisthenes had been some sort of "ideological democrat" all along, he presumably would not, along with the rest of the elite, have at first rejected the demos (Hdt. 5.69.2). Likewise, a pure opportunist probably would have solidified his and the Alcmaeonidae's place in the new regime much more securely.[91] He thus appears to be neither of the two extremes. In any case, any view of Cleisthenes's actions must take into account that the ultimate outcome did not constitute business as usual: the new system was a constitutional breakthrough. A more demos-centric view acknowledges this point, but it in turn must come to terms with the fact that the revolution would not have happened without Cleisthenes's initial offer to the demos.[92] The demos had the numbers and the willpower to effect the revolu-

87. Ehrenberg 1950: 522; Raaflaub 2007: 108. Cf. also lines 368–69, 398, 517–18, 600–1, 605–7, 699. Scholars used to date this tragedy with near certainty to the year 463, but Scullion (2002: 90) has shown that the reasons behind this argument are weak and that the play could have been produced as early as 477.

88. *IG* I^3 1, 4, 5. See further Anderson 2003: 52.

89. Fr. 86 West: εἰ δ' ἄρα τιμῆσαι θύγατερ Διός, ὅστις ἄριστος, / δῆμος Ἀθηναίων ἐξετέλεσσα μόνος.

90. Werlings 2010: 169.

91. Ostwald 1986: 17–18. Cleisthenes's opportunism might have been limited by the circumstances, however: see below.

92. As is well known, Cleisthenes appealed to the demos when he was "getting the worst of it" in his struggle with Isagoras (*hessoumenos*, Hdt. 5.66.2; cf. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 20.1, *hēttōmenos*).

tion, but they lacked the resources and political savvy that a figure like Cleisthenes could provide. Therefore someone (it need not have been Cleisthenes himself) had to play a Cleisthenes-like role in order to get any sort of revolution started, but that figure's initial moves would have been heavily circumscribed by his perception of the demos's strength at the time.[93] If an initial offer fell far short of the demos's minimum expectations, the renegade member of the elite risked activating a movement that he could not control.[94]

Thus I am convinced that both elite and demos played crucial roles in the revolution of 508/7. Without some signal by a member of the elite to set it in motion, the uprising would never have taken place, but the content of the "reform bill" (Andrewes 1977) offered by Cleisthenes was determined in large part by the power of the demos. The question then arises of how Cleisthenes gauged the strength of the people. Many have speculated that the experience of the Solonian constitution and of the civic reforms and festivals instituted by the Peisistratids consolidated the Athenian civic body and helped the common people to develop a collective political identity.[95] Several recent events had also likely created anxiety among the demos about the status of their citizenship in 508/7.[96]

The other factor that cemented the new political order was the interference of the Spartans. Their involvement elevated the struggle to the level of external war, thus further uniting the demos against perceived enemies of its constitution. The collective memory of the event given voice in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* (lines 273–82), when a chorus member "recalls" besieging the Spartan king Cleomenes on the acropolis, confirms this.[97] Yet we should not overlook the effect Cleomenes's actions would have had on the decisions of the Athenian elite. By "playing favorites" and attempting to install Isagoras and three

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For situations in which elites break with the oligarchic status quo to establish a democracy, see chapter 6, section 6.2.3.

93. Ober readily acknowledges these points (2007: 86): "Cleisthenes plays an important role in my story, but he is not the lead actor. [. . .] [Cleisthenes's] surprise move suggests that he was aware of a desire for political recognition on the part of the demos."

94. Cf. Solon fr. 37.7–8 West: "He [a tyrant] would not have restrained the demos, nor would he have stopped before he had taken the cream from the milk."

95. Snodgrass 1980: 115–18; Manville 1990: 162–73; Salmon 1997; Lavelle 2004; Hammer 2005: 121–23; Forsdyke 2005: 79–80, 125–27; Raaflaub and Wallace 2007: 42–43; Ober 2007: 89–90; Stahl and Walter 2009: 149–51. See also the point above that Athens was wealthier and more urbanized by this time.

96. It is tempting to think that there was active resistance to the *diapsēphismos* carried out in 510, which deprived certain people of citizenship ([Arist]. *Ath. Pol.* 13.5: see Fornara 1970; Manville 1990: 173–91; Anderson 2003: 4).

97. Ober 2007: 90.

hundred of his allies, Cleomenes likely split the elite and drove the remaining members of the upper classes into the open arms of the nascent democracy.[98] This interclass defensive partnership, as well as the stunning military success of Athens in its battle against Boeotia and Chalcis in 506, goes a long way toward explaining the stability of the Athenian democracy in its early years.[99]

Turning from Athens to other early democratizers, we often see similar dynamics at work. I do not suppose that Athens was the first example of democracy after which all future instances patterned themselves. Instead it appears that *dēmokratia* was an idea whose time had come in the late sixth century. After centuries of the Greek poleis experimenting with self-government, conditions were ripe in several places for the outbreak of a regime controlled by the demos. Robinson has emphasized this point in his indispensable book on early Greek democracy.[100] He examines the evidence for democracy in several poleis outside Athens, the most convincing cases being Argos, Mantinea, Naxos, and Syracuse.[101]

One factor not necessarily stressed by Robinson is the importance of external interference in the consolidation of democracies. As we saw in the case of Athens, Cleomenes's support for Isagoras and his faction was a crucial condition for strengthening the resolve of the citizens to support the new constitution. This was not the first or the last time Sparta attempted to install a pro-Spartan ruling elite. As both Yates and Bolmarcich have shown, already in the mid-sixth century Sparta was interfering in other poleis' sovereignty to bolster its own hegemony.[102] By the fifth century, Thucydides can say explicitly that Sparta maintained its power through the cultivation of oligarchies.[103] We can dismiss the idea that Sparta's sixth-century allies were known as "oligar-

98. Hdt. 5.72.1–2; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 20.3. Note that one hundred years later, the involvement of the Spartans in the regime of the Thirty also allowed the Athenians to remember it in part as an external war: Loraux 2002; Shear 2011.

99. As Forsdyke (2005) has shown, the greater stability resulting from demotic control over the power of banishment (in the form of ostracism) also likely contributed to the consolidation of the democracy. The cult of the tyrannicides probably served as a source of unity as well: Anderson 2007: 120–24.

100. See esp. Robinson 1997: 65–73, 127–30.

101. As noted above, section 1.1.1, I do not think the Olympia bronze plaques definitively prove democracy in Elis in the late sixth century. The early fifth century, around the time of the synoecism of 471 (Diod. Sic. 11.54.1; Strabo 8.3.2), seems a more likely time.

102. Yates 2005; Bolmarcich 2005; de Ste. Croix 1972: 89–166 and 333–42. This is especially true in the case of Tegea, where internal interference by Sparta is attested in an early treaty, portions of which survive in Plutarch's *Greek Questions*: *Mor.* 292b, 277b-c = Arist. fr. 592 Rose; see Jacoby 1944; Braun 1994.

103. Thuc. 1.19.

chies," but Sparta, through its meddling, may have unwittingly created several of the early democracies against which oligarchy arose. It is striking that several early democratizers, such as Argos, Elis, and Mantinea, came from Sparta's periphery in the Peloponnese.[104] The late-sixth-century democracy at Eretria, spearheaded by an elite man named Diagoras, may also have arisen in part from Spartan interference.[105]

1.1.3 Early Elite Reactions to Dēmokratia

As much as the demos and (certain parts of) the elite might have at first cooperated in the new experiment known as *dēmokratia*, some members of the elite quickly came to oppose the phenomenon. This section argues that elite reaction to democracy, which would form the ideological basis for *oligarchia*, began simultaneously with the outbreak of *dēmokratia* in the late sixth and early fifth century. Many scholars, taking a very cautious approach to the sources, suppose that *oligarchia* was a rather late concept, arising in the latter half of the fifth century, and perhaps in specific opposition to the Athenian democracy.[106] By contrast, I show that resistance to the power of the demos appears early on in sources whose reliability we should not *a priori* discount.

104. For Argive democracy, see Piérart 2000; Robinson 1997: 82–88, 2011: 6–21. Mantinea: Gehrke *Stasis* 101–3; Robinson 1997: 113–14; *IACP* no. 261 (Nielsen), p. 519. Elis: Robinson 1997: 108–11. Certainly, Sparta interfered in those states in the later fifth and fourth centuries: in Argos in 418/17 (Thuc. 5.81.2; cf. Paus. 2.20.2; Diod. Sic. 12.80.2); in Elis around 400 (Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.27–29; Paus. 3.8.4; 5.4.8); in Mantinea in 385, when it dioecized the polis (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.1–7; Diod. Sic. 15.5.4–12; the resulting dioecized community was not a normal oligarchy, however—see chapter 4, section 4.4).

105. Diagoras overthrew the oligarchy known as the *hippeis* because he had been unjustly treated in the matter of a marriage (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1306a35–36; for more on this episode, see chapter 6, section 6.2.3). As this oligarchy was allied with the Peisistratids of Athens ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 15.2), Diagoras' *coup* probably came after the fall of the latter in 510. A fragment of Aristotle tells us that the Eretrians set up a statue to Diagoras after he died in Corinth, "in the course of being conveyed to Sparta" (fr. 611.40 Rose). Perhaps the Spartans, allying with the fallen *hippeis*, had arrested Diagoras on the grounds that he was a tyrant or enemy of Sparta (cf. Hdt. 5.70.1, 9.37.1; Xen. *Hell.* 1.3.19; Plut. *Pel.* 5.3). Knoepfler has shown that an early Eretrian proxeny decree, with democratic enactment formula, is not evidence for the early years of Diagoras's democracy, since it was inscribed in the third quarter of the fifth century (2001a: 73, analyzing *IG* XII *Suppl.* 549a). Nonetheless, he has elsewhere called Diagoras "a kind of Eretrian Cleisthenes [the democratic reformer of Athens]" (*Bull. ép.* 2014 no. 219). For the monument to a democratic founder, see the discussion in chapter 5, section 5.2.4.

106. Raaflaub 1989: 37–41. Ostwald (2000: 23 with n43) thinks a Periclean context is too late given the evidence of Pindar and Herodotus, but even he is willing only to say that oligarchy seems secure as an oppositional concept to democracy as late as 423, with the production of

For example, we already saw that Herodotus could put words into the Spartans' collective mouth to the effect that they had handed over Athens to an "ungrateful" (*acharistos*) demos.[107] Herodotus thought that resentment could be expressed toward the demos itself already in 507/6. Considering this fact, as well as the literary and now material evidence we possess for the predominance of the demos during the period between Cleisthenes's reforms and the Persian Wars, we should not be surprised when we read in Plutarch's *Life of Aristides* that already in 479 certain impoverished elites had plotted to overthrow the democracy.[108] Plutarch is our only source for this episode, but we should not therefore dismiss it out of hand.[109] As Rhodes has pointed out, the (likely) appearance of one of the conspirators, Agasias of Lamptrae, on ostraca of the period lends credence to the story.[110] Furthermore, claims that the phrase *katalusis tou dēmou* is "too early" beg the question.[111] While it is true

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Euripides's *Supplices*. Bleicken (1979: 169–71) thinks *oligarchia* arose in the subject states of the Athenian empire; this does seem to be part of the story, especially in cases like Samos, where a democracy was briefly imposed in 440 (Thuc. 1.115.2–3), and Boeotia, which experienced democracy after Oenophyta in 457. There were likely "homegrown" oligarchs in Athens as well, however, beginning at least as early as the reforms of Ephialtes in 462 and perhaps going back to 479 or earlier (see n111).

107. Hdt. 5.91.2. The demos's lack of *charis* (grace, thanks) was an elitist commonplace later on: Theophr. *Char.* 26.4; [Plat.] *Axioch.* 369a; Plut. *Dion* 38.5, 42.1. Elsewhere in Herodotus, the tyrant Gelon describes the demos as the "most disagreeable living-mate" (*sunoikēma acharitōtaton*, 7.156.3). Andrewes (1956: 135), followed by (Kurke 1999: 132), supposes that this piquant phrase represents Gelon's *ipsissima verba*. This would constitute anti-populist discourse about 20 years after the remark about the "ungrateful demos" Herodotus attributes to the Spartans.

108. Plut. *Arist.* 13.1: *sunōmosanto katalusein ton demon*. For the important decisions undertaken by the demos during this period, see above, citing Hdt. 5.97.2, 7.142.1, 9.5.1; cf. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22.3 (*tharrountos . . . tou dēmou*), 22.7, 23.1. Siewert et al. (2002) assemble the new ostraca from the Kerameikos, primarily from the 470s, and combine them with previously known examples: for these as evidence of demotic power in the early fifth century, see Forsdyke 2005: 175–77; Thomas 2009: 23; Mann 2007: 73–74; Kosmin 2015: 122. Elite dissatisfaction with democracy might also be seen in the positive portrayals of the conservative Cimon by his foreign contemporaries Stesimbrotus of Thasos *FGrH* 1002 F 4 and Ion of Chios *FGrH* 392 F 13, 15.

109. Doubted by Hignett (1963: 321 with n2), who ascribes the story to the historian Idomeneus of Lampsacus.

110. Rhodes (2000: 123) notes the possible identification of "Agasias of Acharnae," named by Plutarch, with the well-attested "Agasias of Lamptrae" from the ostraca (see Brenne 2002: 46: 17 instances).

111. Ostwald (1986: 177) asserts that the expression *katalusis tou dēmou* "cannot antedate the reforms of Ephialtes," but this assumes what it needs to prove. Many scholars situate the emergence of an explicitly oligarchic ideology at the earliest in the 440s, when Pericles and

that the democracy's immense success early on largely accounts for the elite's general acceptance of the new regime, pockets of resentment and resistance were still a persistent feature of Athenian life, reaching back to the earliest days of the democracy.[112]

If the powerful and successful polis of Athens could have its anti-democratic critics so early, we should not be surprised if smaller, more vulnerable poleis experienced more destructive pro- and anti-democratic *stasis* in the early days of democracy. Herodotus tells us of conflict between the demos and the elite in Aegina in the 490s, in Syracuse ca. 491, and in Naxos ca. 500.[113] The Ephesian philosopher Heraclitus might also represent an early example of an anti-democratic thinker: he is quoted as blaming "all" the Ephesians for banishing his friend Hermodorus, the "worthiest" man among them. He also chided certain people for "obeying the singers [*aoidoi*] of the common people [*dēmoi*] and making use of the crowd [*homilos*] as teacher, not knowing that the many are bad, but the few good."[114] On this basis many scholars have

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Thucydides the son of Melesias were political rivals (Plut. *Per.* 11.1–3; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 28.2; see, e.g., Connor 1992: 63n54). Ostwald (1986: 186) argues that Thucydides was the spokesman of the *oligoi* but that there is "no indication of antagonism toward the democratic institutions of Athens as such." Cf. Frost 1964; Hölkeskamp 1998. I do not see how these views are compatible with the clear statement of Thucydides on the aborted oligarchic conspiracy at Athens before the Battle of Tanagra in 457 (1.107.4); and if this stands, Plutarch's comment about 479 looks more plausible.

112. Cf. Mann 2007: 115.

113. Aegina: 6.88–91: Nicodromus of Aegina, a prominent member of the elite who held a grudge against the Aeginetan oligarchs for exiling him on a previous occasion, plotted with the Athenians to betray the island to them. He allied himself with the demos of Aegina, 700 members of which were supposedly killed by the "fat cats" (*pachees*) in retaliation. See further chapter 2, section 2.5, with literature cited. Syracuse: 7.155.2. The landholders (*gamoroi*) had been driven out by a coalition of the demos and the slave population, the so-called *Kallyrioi*. See further Marm. Par. *FGrH* 239A.52; Arist. fr. 586 Rose *apud* Phot. s.v. Καλλικύριοι. The polis had recently lost a battle near the river Helorus, and the members of the elite were further split by an internal dispute between two erotic rivals (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1303b20–26 and Plut. *Mor.* 825d, discussed below, chapter 2, section 2.5, and chapter 6, section 6.2.3). Further discussion: Robinson 1997: 120–22. Naxos: Hdt. 5.30.1, discussed above. Again, the pejorative label *pachees* is used. See Robinson 1997: 117–18.

114. DK 22 B 121: ἄξιον Ἐφεσίοις ἡβηδὸν ἀπάγξασθαι πᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἀνήβοις τὴν πόλιν καταλιπεῖν, οἵτινες Ἑρμόδωρον <ἄνδρα> ἑωυτῶν ὀνήιστον ἐξέβαλον. B 104: τίς γὰρ αὐτῶν νόος ἢ φρήν; δήμων ἀοιδοῖσι πείθονται καὶ διδασκάλῳ χρείονται ὁμίλῳ οὐκ εἰδότες ὅτι οἱ πολλοὶ κακοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί. (The last phrase may be a reuse of a famous saying of Bias, the "majority are bad": Diog. Laert. 1.88.) The Hellenistic philosopher Timon of Phlius remembered Heraclitus as *ochloloidoros*, "mob-abuser." See further Donlan 1978: 98n4, 106n19; Kahn 1981: 179.

posited a democratic revolution in Ephesus during Heraclitus's lifetime.[115] In these instances we see examples of the phenomenon noted by Donlan in his study of the changing uses of the word "demos," whereby Greek society gradually came to be divided into opposing social groups perceived as having distinct interests.[116] While it is likely that the actual term *oligarchia* was not yet in circulation during these early years, the idea that the wealthy elite could resist the encroachments of the demos and assert their own, exclusive claims to power seems certain.[117]

When we move to the Peloponnesian War, the next period for which we have good historical sources, we see that Athens and Sparta had not in fact "brought on and fostered violent . . . political antagonism between the rich and the poor," but that intense *stasis* was a fairly common feature of polis life, which the two sides subsequently used to their advantage.[118] In a few places we do read that the warring powers interfered directly in the constitutional order of other states without invitation from a fifth column (e.g., the Spartans at Sicyon and Achaea, Thuc. 5.81–82), but there are many instances in which *stasis* enjoys an independent logic. For example, about the *stasis* at Epidamnus that begins Thucydides's war narrative we learn that "the demos expelled the powerful."[119] If we follow Aristotle on this (*Pol.* 5.1304a13–17), the conflict began when a quarrel over a marriage within the ranks of the oligarchs led to the weaker party reaching out to the demos.[120] Civil strife therefore had nothing to do with "great power" politics in this instance but with purely local

115. See Gehrke *Stasis* 57–58; *IACP* no. 844 (Rubinstein), pp. 1071–72. It is possible that the democratic regime Heraclitus complained about was introduced by the Persian commander Mardonius in 494 (Hdt. 6.43.3).

116. Donlan 1999: 225–36.

117. Note that Polyaenus records *stasis* between democrats and oligarchs at Corinth during the reign of Archidamus (probably the fifth-century king: *Strat.* 1.41.2) and at Tegea during the time of the Spartan Cleandridas (ca. 460, 2.10.3; see further Braun 1994: 44–45).

118. Bradeen 1960: 263. Many, including Bradeen, rely heavily on Thucydides' statement (3.82.1) that over the course of the war the whole Greek world was convulsed, with the demos bringing in the Athenians and the oligarchs the Spartans. But while the war made the situation more common in occurrence and worse in outcome, it did not initiate the basic phenomenon (see next note). Cf. those passages where Thucydides implies that citizens have often fought with each other regardless of the actions of Athens or Sparta (4.92.6, 6.17.4, 38.3).

119. 1.24.5. For the importance of this episode for the larger narrative, see Ober 1998: 70–73; Price 2001: 274–75. In its progression from provincial civil strife to widespread destruction, the Epidamnus *stasis* resembles the conflict between the demos and the *pachees* on Naxos (Hdt. 5.30.1, see above), which led to the Ionian Revolt.

120. See Gehrke *Stasis* 60–62; Robinson 2011: 128. For further discussion of the Aristotle passage, see chapter 6, section 6.2.3.

conditions. We learn of similar episodes of *stasis* at Plataea, Colophon, Megara, Rhegium, Leontini, Thespiae, and Samos.[121] Even in situations where factions appealed to one great power or the other, the initiative often originates on their end and not with an overture by Athens or Sparta.[122]

Elite attitudes toward the demos emerge from the sources of this time as increasingly hostile and implacable. Perhaps most famously, in Herodotus's so-called Constitutional Debate, the pro-oligarchic speaker Megabyzus delivers a tirade against democratic government that reads as a "greatest hits" of anti-populist invective.[123] Nothing is "more stupid" (*axunetōteros*) or "more hubristic" (*hubristoteros*) than the "worthless crowd" (*homilos achrēios*).[124] To escape the hubris of a tyrant, only to fall victim to the hubris of the "unrestrained [*akolastos*] demos," would be intolerable.[125] The demos has "received

121. All of the following are treated in the relevant sections of Gehkre *Stasis*: Thuc. 2.2.2 (see Hornblower *ad loc.* for this episode as casting doubt on the extreme "Aussenpolitik" view of Ruschenbusch 1978: 31), 3.34.1 (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1303b7–10; ML 47), 3.68.3, 4.66.1, 4.1.3, 5.4.2–3, 6.95.2, 8.21.

122. As Brock (2009) has shown (cf. Ostwald 1993, 2002), Athens had a spotty record of actively promoting democracy among the member states of the Delian League. Robinson (2011: 188–200) has a detailed discussion and refutation of the notion that the spread of democracy was due solely to Athens.

123. 3.81. For this passage, and for the "Constitutional Debate" in general, see esp. Bleicken 1979: 151–58; Robinson 1997: 48–50; Ostwald 2000: 14–20. It purports to describe a debate in the later sixth century between three Persian interlocutors, who advocate respectively for democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. I do not believe that the "Constitutional Debate" took place; nevertheless, I am in agreement with Robinson (1997: 50) that the passage reveals that Herodotus considered it perfectly plausible that people in the late sixth century might speak in terms of tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (or rather *isonomia*). Certainly, I think the tripartite model used by Herodotus was well developed before the Peloponnesian War.

124. At Thuc. 6.39.1, the Syracusan demagogue Athenagoras claims that oligarchic opponents of democracy will say that democracy is not *xunetos*, "intelligent." Critias's tombstone (see below) also labeled the "accursed people" (*kataratos dēmos*) hubristic: DK 88 A 13. For the worthlessness of the crowd, see the fragment of Heraclitus, DK 22 B 104, cited above. The so-called "Stadiasmus Patarensis" inscription from the first century CE describes the majority (*plēthos)* as undiscerning *(akriton): SEG* 51.1832, lines 25–29, and see the afterword.

125. The "mob" is similarly *akolastos* at Eur. *Hec.* 607. Other attestations of supposed democratic *akolasia* include [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.5 (where the demos also suffers from *amathia*); Plat. *Rep.* 8.555c; Isoc. 7.20; Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F 62; Plut. *Mor.* 295d, 304e-f. Sometimes the antidemocratic language of "restraint" becomes more specifically equestrian: Plutarch says that oligarchs upbraided the Spartan king Pausanias for releasing the Athenian demos when it had been "bridled by oligarchy" (i.e., ruled by the Thirty) (*Lys.* 21.4); this may reflect late-fifth-century language. An anonymous comic poet also quoted by Plutarch (Comic. Adesp. 700 K-A *apud Per.* 7.6) compares the Athenian demos to a horse that has broken free of restraint: "it is

no education," it understands neither what is noble nor what is proper.[126] In a memorable image, the demos "rushes falling headlong into politics mindlessly, like a river swollen by winter weather."[127] Megabyzus's solution to the inveterate stupidity and vice of the demos is to "pick out a company [*homiliē*] of the best [*aristoi*] men and hand over power [*kratos*] to them." Megabyzus does not hesitate to point out that the interlocutors themselves, as Persian nobles, will be included among this group, and he predicts that a group of the best men would produce the best deliberations (*arista bouleumata*).[128]

The content of Megabyzus's speech, as well as its position in the order of the "Constitutional Debate," is highly significant. Notably, the debate does not begin with Megabyzus laying out the benefits of oligarchy on grounds of precedent. He does not say that oligarchy is the traditional way of doing things in many communities, that it is a tried and tested political method, or that it has a much longer track record of success than democracy.[129] In fact, his argument for the superior deliberations of oligarchy is based on probability rather than on empirical evidence. It is merely "likely" (*oikos*) that the best men will come up with the best policies. The bulk of his speech is devoted to lambasting the demos. Many scholars have thought that Herodotus does not give oligarchy its due; that he prioritizes Otanes's defense of democracy because he is more interested in it as a constitution, and in fact favors it; or perhaps that oligarchy is relatively uninteresting to Herodotus because, in its more "moderate" forms, at least, it was too similar to democracy to occasion much comment.[130] In fact, Herodotus has crafted a speech for Megabyzus

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outrageous and no longer tolerates obedience, but bites at Euboea and rears up at the islands." The sophist Antiphon used the word "*euēniōtata*," "most obedient to the rein," in his treatise *On Like-mindedness (Homonoia)* (F 70 Pendrick = Harp. s.v. εὐηνιώτατα): "'Obedient to the rein' means gentle and moderate and not troublesome; the metaphor is from horses." Antiphon may have been thinking of an idealized, obedient demos, which would submit to oligarchs in a state of *homonoia*. See also Brock 2013: 121.

126. Cf. Eur. *Supp.* 420–22: the Theban herald criticizes democracy on the grounds that, even if a farmer managed not to be unintelligent (*amathēs*), his work would keep him from participating in politics.

127. 3.81.2: ὠθέει τε ἐμπεσὼν τὰ πρήγματα ἄνευ νόου, χειμάρρῳ ποταμῷ εἴκελος. The demos is similarly associated with a lack of *nous* by Heraclitus (DK 22 B 104). The hydraulic imagery finds parallels at Isoc. 15.172 and Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.18. See Brock 2013: 61–62, with additional examples cited.

128. Hdt. 3.81.3.

129. Megabyzus does not actually say "oligarchy," but Herodotus ascribes advocacy of it to him. The use of "*oligarchia*" by Herodotus is the earliest instance of the term we possess in the extant sources, unless the Old Oligarch predates the historian, which is unlikely.

130. See Ostwald 2000: 19; Raaflaub 2004a: 236; Osborne 2003: 252–53.

(continued...)

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Literary Sources

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