

1

Problem, Background, Method

Oligarchy, the harsh and unjust greed of a few rich and wretched men arrayed against the poor majority.

—DIO OF PRUSA¹

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 συστάσα.

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 “[*oligarchôn*]” 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 *Inventary 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 *Inventary*, 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 Institutional” 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 (Duploux 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 fr. 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, Duploux (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., Koenig 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

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 Entstehung 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 indépendante 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 *Inscriptionen 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, ἐπάτρα ἃ δημοσία, 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 δὲ τῖρ τὰ γράφεια : ταῖ κα(δ) δαλέοιτο : αἶτε φέτας αἶτε τελεστὰ : αἶτε 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 ἀφλανέος καὶ δάμοι πλεθούντι, 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 πλεθούντι resembles the *dēmos plēthuōn* of IG I³ 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

know when the statutes recopied in I³ 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,

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

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, λιπαρήν πόλιν, οὐτ’ ἐπὶ δήμῳι / τρέψας οὐτ’ ἀδίκῳις ἀνδράσι πειθόμενος.
72. Cf. lines 39–52 and Solon fr. 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, Casmene 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 I³* 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, *hettōmenos*).

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

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; *LACP* 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 proxy 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 Lamprae, 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

Euripides's *Suppliants*. 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.] *Axiach.* 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. Doubtful by Hignett (1963: 321 with n2), who ascribes the story to the historian Idomeus of Lampsacus.

110. Rhodes (2000: 123) notes the possible identification of "Agasias of Acharnae," named by Plutarch, with the well-attested "Agasias of Lamprae" 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 [*oidoi*] 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

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. Καλλυκῆριοι. 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 ἠβηδὸν ἀπάγξασθαι πᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἀνήβοις τὴν πόλιν καταλιπεῖν, οἵτινες Ἐρμόδωρον <ἄνδρα> ἐωυτῶν ὀνήιστον ἐξέβαλον. B 104: τίς γὰρ αὐτῶν νόος ἢ φρήν; δῆμων ἀοιδοῖσι πειθονται καὶ διδασκάλῳ χρεῖονται ὁμίλῳ οὐκ εἰδότες ὅτι οἱ πολλοὶ κακοὶ, 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 *ochlolidoros*, "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 Achaëa, 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 Polyænus 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, Thespieae, 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 anti-democratic 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

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. εὐνηιώτατα): “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: ὡθέει τε ἐμπεσῶν τὰ πρήγματα ἄνευ νόου, χειμάρρῳ ποταμῷ εἶκελος. 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.

that picks out several salient points about oligarchy. Oligarchy is not the long-standing norm to which democracy stands as a late and irrational aberration. Instead, the oligarchic impulse first arises out of a sense of disgust toward democracy and its governing element, the people. In other words, the oligarchic frame of mind does not exist until the elite have experienced the concrete effects of the demos in power. Moreover, when they grow exasperated with the supposed defects of democratic governance, their preference is not merely for a return to the elite-led regimes of the Archaic period, where, as we have seen, the demos often played a significant role. Their new goal is a highly exclusionary system that takes the radical and unprecedented step of dispensing with input from the demos altogether. Oligarchy, in contrast to Archaic elite government, is the exclusive preserve of a narrow circle of the “best”; one of its defining elements is its refusal to “make use” (*chrasthōn*) of the demos in any way.¹³¹

Lest we think the ideology Herodotus puts in Megabyzus’s mouth was an exclusively Athenian phenomenon, we have several sources that attest otherwise. The Old Oligarch, for example, states that “in every land, the best element [of society] is opposed to democracy.”¹³² The speaker, it is true, is an Athenian, and so he may be projecting his own local perspective onto the rest of the Greek world. He expects that his audience will readily assent to this and subsequent points, however. An even more decisive piece of evidence comes from the sophistic treatise, written in the Doric dialect, known as the *Dissoi Logoi* (Double Arguments).¹³³ The author is almost certainly not an Athenian, and therefore represents a non-Athenocentric view. The seventh section of the treatise discusses the use of the lottery for apportioning political offices. The speaker gives a counterintuitive argument that, despite its reputation as a democratic device, sortition is not democratic:

They say also that it [the lot] is a good thing and exceedingly favorable to the common people [*damotikos*]. I consider it the least populist device imaginable. For in the cities [*poleis*] there are men who hate the common people [*misodamoi*], who, should the bean [*kuamos*] select them, will destroy the

131. “Let those who wish the Persians ill make use of the demos,” Megabyzus says, “but we will pick out a group of the best men,” etc. (3.81.3)

132. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.5. “The Old Oligarch” is the name scholars use for the anonymous pamphleteer whose work (probably from the last quarter of the fifth century) is included in the manuscripts of Xenophon. On this work, see Rhodes and Marr 2008.

133. A reference to a Spartan victory over Athens and its allies in this text (1.8) has traditionally been taken to refer to the end of the Peloponnesian War. There are several good candidates, however, including Tanagra in 457. I consider the document no later than the end of the fifth century. See further Graham 2010: 877.

people [*apolounti ton damon*]. Seeing this, the demos itself ought to choose men who are all favorably disposed towards it. (DK 90 B 7.5–6)¹³⁴

The author's statement is *prima facie* evidence that hatred of the people, rather than any positive program of rule, defined the oligarchic mindset in many cities other than Athens. Opponents of the people throughout the poleis of Greece wished not simply to be rid of democratic government but to destroy the common people wholesale.¹³⁵ The *Dissoi Logoi's* statement bespeaks the deep-seated revulsion and hatred felt by many of the Greek elite toward democracy.

We can productively conceive of this increasingly rigid oligarchic mindset in terms of Bourdieu's notions of *doxa*, heterodoxy, and orthodoxy. For Bourdieu, *doxa* represents the unspoken rules of the game, the status quo that passes for "common sense" among both the rulers and the ruled. Then comes heterodoxy, a decisive and self-conscious break with the norm. Heterodoxy precipitates a rearguard attempt at reestablishing the *ancien régime*—orthodoxy—which, however, in its conscientious attack on a new political alternative, rapidly evolves into something unprecedented and innovative. In Bourdieu's suggestive formulation, "Orthodoxy, straight, or rather *straightened*, opinion, which aims, without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of *doxa*, exists only in the objective relationship which opposes it to heterodoxy, that is, by reference to the choice—*hairesis*, heresy—made possible by the existence of *competing possibles*."¹³⁶ Archaic elite-led governance, on this reading, constitutes the state of *doxa* against which democracy, in times of crisis, emerges as a heterodoxical alternative. What begins as an emergency intervention of the common people into the elite's running of political affairs quickly takes on a life of its own, one with unpalatable consequences for the formerly ascendant elite. Their reaction, *oligarchia*, the explicit narrowing of the "rule of all" to "the rule of the few," is an attempt to impose an orthodoxy that is in reality a new way of dealing with a new problem.

Oligarchy was thus not simply Archaic government updated with Classical language. The engine driving Classical oligarchies was their opposition to democracy, which had characterized them *ab ovo*—more specifically, it was

134. "The bean" (*kuamos*) is literally a colored bean used for the purpose of selecting officers randomly: see Hdt. 6.109; Thuc. 8.66.1, 69.4; Andoc. 1.96.

135. One might suppose that *apolounti ton damon* means simply "put down the democracy," but the usual verb for this, in Athens and beyond, is *kataluein*, not *apollunai* (Thuc. 3.81.4, 5.76.2; Ar. *Eccl.* 453; SEG 51.1105B, line 6; *IK Sinope* 1, lines 27–28). Cf. [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.11, a list of times when oligarchs attacked the demos.

136. 1977: 169, emphasis in original.

oligarchs' shared fear of mass action on the part of the people. Oligarchs claimed many distinctions for themselves, but their most basic motive was defensive and reactionary, an attempt to prevent democracy or to overthrow it once established. This collective anxiety forged new forms of intra-elite cooperation.¹³⁷ The Archaic elite had been a particularly fractious lot. Classical oligarchs possessed, by contrast, a new nemesis against which to unite. Fear of the democratic enemy provided, in language that will be defined more precisely below, a focal point for pan-elite coordination.¹³⁸ The sources of the elite's anxiety were various: they included the threat of death or confiscation of wealth during times of political reform or revolution; taxes (in particular the *eisphora* or direct wealth tax) and liturgies; and the need to avoid demagogues, sycophants, and lawsuits.¹³⁹ Not all of these fears were always well founded, of course (in fact the risk of them was often exaggerated), and oligarchic action was frequently predicated not on stopping an impending danger but on removing even the possibility that such a danger might arise—

137. Many accounts focus too strongly on the perceived weakness of the Greek elite as a ruling group and on the competition and lack of cooperation among oligarchs. For example, Duplouy has recently argued against traditional analysis based on political regime type. He proposes instead to focus on the myriad ways in which the community witnessed, judged, and validated competing elite performance (see, e.g., 2006 *passim*). This approach may apply to the Archaic period, but it is less useful in the Classical period, when constitutions hardened into opposed regimes. It threatens to overlook changes in elite practice over time and to ignore the ways political and institutional context shapes behavior.

138. Intra-elite competition was always a problem for oligarchies (see, e.g., Hdt. 3.82.3 and the preceding note), but it was not for all that totally insurmountable. Fear of a common enemy could unite competitive elites: see Arist. *Pol.* 5.1304b23–24 (discussing oligarchs): “a common fear [*koinos phobos*] brings together even the bitterest enemies.” On fear of enemies as a driver of authoritarian government, see Smith 2005; also Slater 2010: 12 (discussing Southeast Asia), citing Evrigenis 2007.

139. In the sources cited here I place an asterisk next to non-Athenian examples, in order to indicate the extent of this kind of oligarchic reasoning beyond an Athenian context. Death and/or confiscation of wealth: Thuc. 5.4.3*; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 40.3. Taxes and liturgies: [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.13, 2.9–10; Ar. *Eq.* 924; Thuc. 8.48.1, 63.4; Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.45, *Symp.* 4.31–32; [Arist.] *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1424a24–25*, 34–35*, 1424b11–12*, 1446b24–25*; Arist. *Pol.* 5.1309a15–20*, 6.1320a20–33*; Theophr. *Char.* 26.5; Plut. *Arist.* 13.1. Demagogues, sycophants, and lawsuits: [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.14; Thuc. 3.70*, 8.54.4, 8.65.1; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.12, 22, 25, 27, 5.2.7*, 5.3.10–12*; Lys. 25.27; Arist. *Pol.* 5.1302b23–25*, 1310a3–6*, 6.1318b35*, 1319b15*, 1320a4–16*; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 9.1–2, 26.1, 28.3, 35.2–3, 41.2; Theophr. *Char.* 26.4. Note also that when it came to redistributing wealth to the community, oligarchies were not expected to pay for the maintenance of the orphans of fallen soldiers, while democracies were ([Arist.] *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1424a35–38; for historical instances of this practice, see Thuc. 2.46.1 [Athens]; SEG 57.820 [Thasos]).

it was, in other words, preventive rather than preemptive action.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, we can suspect that a prime motivator for oligarchs in overthrowing democracy was a feeling of powerlessness, to which they were not accustomed and which they felt was beneath their superior status. Oligarchs could not abide the feeling that they were at the mercy of their inferiors.¹⁴¹ Their motives were thus both material and ideological, but in any case they stemmed from worries about what the common people might do and from a supposed need to prevent this.

1.2 The World of Classical Oligarchic Politics

Now that we have surveyed the historical origins of *oligarchia*, we can turn to broad trends in oligarchic governance across the Classical period. Research in this area has been made much easier thanks to efforts such as the Copenhagen Polis Center's *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, the Stanford POLIS Project, and Teegarden's research (2014: appendix). A survey of these resources, combined with personal research and corrections, reveals just over 110 discrete oligarchic regimes known from the Classical period.¹⁴² Although historians have traditionally lamented the limited evidence available to us on Classical oligarchies, this new, systematically catalogued dataset offers us the chance to study oligarchy in a manner unavailable to Whibley in the late nineteenth century.

In what follows I treat oligarchy as a generalizable type. Forsdyke has recently called for a study of oligarchies "to show the great range of constitutions that fit under this rubric."¹⁴³ My view, however, is that we should start with the essential unity of oligarchies before exploring their diversity. Aris-

140. The risk was exaggerated, but for all that not entirely outside the realm of possibility. As Pyzyk has shown (unpublished manuscript), liturgies could be financially ruinous for those in the lower tiers of the liturgical elite; only the biggest fortunes could survive successive years of liturgical service. On the costs of Athenian liturgies, see most recently Pritchard 2015.

141. For oligarchs' belief that they should have more political rights because they supposedly contributed more to the city's well-being, see Thuc. 3.65.3*, 6.39.2*. For their sense of dishonor or outrage at being governed by "inferiors," see Hdt. 3.81.1–2; Thuc. 8.89.3; Critias DK 88 A 13; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.48; Arist. *Pol.* 5.1309a9–10*; Theophr. *Char.* 26.3. They could liken their status under democracy to that of a slave: Tamiolaki 2013. The ancient sources thus seem to me to provide a richer picture of oligarchic motivation than that given by the political scientist Jeffery Winters, viz. the defense of entrenched wealth (2011). (Note also that Winters' example of a Classical-era Greek oligarchy is—Athens. Regimes actually designated *oligarchiai* at the time do not receive treatment.)

142. See the appendix.

143. 2009: 201; cf. Leppin 2013: 157.

tole, of course, thought that there were several types of oligarchy (four, to be precise), just as there were four types of democracy.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he admits that “some people think there is only one kind of [each].”¹⁴⁵ This may indicate that the notion was in fact quite widespread. Aristotle was a hyper-analytical philosopher with a tendency to complicate conventional discourse. Most people’s notions were less nuanced. To get at the everyday reality of oligarchy, we should take seriously what others—perhaps a majority—said about oligarchy, rather than what an elite thinker with a unique teleological view of life and politics thought about it.¹⁴⁶ We can begin with the socioeconomic profile of oligarchic ruling elites.

1.2.1 *The Rule of the Wealthy*

Taken at face value, the term “oligarchy” is purely numerical. It states only that a “few” rule. The reality, as Aristotle and many others recognized, was that the identity of these “few” was almost without fail “the rich.”¹⁴⁷ Xenophon describes the antagonists in a bout of *stasis* at Rhodes in the 390s as “the demos” and the “wealthier men” (*plousiōteroi*, *Hell.* 4.8.20); in Sicyon in the 360s the two constitutional options countenanced are “democracy” and “the wealthiest men in charge” (*plousiōtatoi enkrateis*, 7.1.44). Aeneas Tacticus, the author of a fourth-century manual on how to withstand a military siege, similarly describes attacks on democracy by “the rich,” first in Argos (11.7–10), next in Heraclea Pontica (11.10bis), and finally in Corcyra (where they are called “the rich and oligarchic,” 11.13–15).¹⁴⁸ The word “plutocracy” is rare in ancient Greek, but Xenophon’s Socrates uses it to describe what are plainly

144. See esp. *Pol.* 4.1292a39–b10, 1293a10–34. Aristotle is an excellent witness for the characteristic actions and institutions of oligarchies, as well as for historical examples, but he is not necessarily correct that different kinds of action are representative of his four different forms of oligarchy. (Note also that none of Aristotle’s forms of oligarchy, not even the most moderate, comprises a majority of the male citizen population. Brock and Hodkinson (2000: 17), however, mention that an oligarchy might potentially encompass a majority. There are no known examples of this.)

145. *Pol.* 4.1289a8–9; cf. 1290a13–16, 1296a22–23.

146. Aristotle’s discussions of “final” democracy and oligarchy (*teleutaia*, e.g., *Pol.* 4.1293a1, 6.1319b1–2) stem from his teleological model. As Hansen points out (*IACP* 82–83), the non-philosophical sources speak of a basic tripartite division between rule by one, few, and many, and do not introduce gradations.

147. *Arist. Pol.* 4.1290b1–3.

148. For Aeneas (perhaps the Aeneas of Stymphalus mentioned at *Xen. Hell.* 7.3.1), see Whitehead 2011. It is noteworthy that Aeneas never speaks explicitly of “the poor” or “the demotic” attempting to subvert a legitimate oligarchic regime.

oligarchies.¹⁴⁹ The remarks of the third-century CE rhetorician Menander of Laodicea (Menander Rhetor) on *ploutokratia* attest to several centuries' worth of association between oligarchy and wealth. Menander, whose immediate purpose is to explain to rhetoricians how to praise cities in speeches, lists three kinds of constitution: kingship, aristocracy, and democracy; to which correspond three corrupt types: tyranny, "oligarchy and so-called plutocracy," and "mob rule" (*laokratia*) (Menander Rhetor, p. 359 Spengel). Plainly oligarchy was a byword for rule by the wealthy.¹⁵⁰

The notion of "wealthy," however, is culturally constructed and historically contingent, meaning different things at different times. The comparative nature of Xenophon's phrase "the wealthier men" hints that the *plousioi* might admit of different degrees and encompass several distinct socioeconomic groups. The Aristotelian corpus suggests that, at a minimum, the "wealthy" who ruled in an oligarchy would come from the very wealthiest, those who could afford to maintain horses. Thus in a fragment of the lost *Constitution of the Cymaeans*, we read that a reformer named Pheidon (date unknown, but almost certainly Archaic) defined full citizenship according to whether a man could "rear a horse" (*trephein hippon*).¹⁵¹ The "equestrian" nature of many oligarchies is also reflected in the title of *hippeis* (cavalry) for the regime that ruled late Archaic Eretria, as well as the "horse-rearers," *hippobotai*, of neighboring Chalcis.¹⁵² We might also point to the second-highest census class of *hippeis* under the Solonian constitution of Athens, which, whether it is eco-

149. *Mem.* 4.6.12: plutocracies are those regimes where the *archai* are determined "by property assessments," *apo timēmatōn*. If the magistracies are filled by those "who fulfill the lawful requirements [*nomima*]" rather than a property requirement, the result is *aristokratia*. In actual fact oligarchs more commonly used the term "aristocracy" as a euphemism for their own rule.

150. Instances of the *plousioi* favoring or participating in oligarchy in Aristotle (e.g., *Pol.* 4.1299b25–26) are too numerous to list in full. The instances from Xenophon and Aeneas are meant to show that association of the rich with oligarchy is not confined to Aristotle and his school. See also Eur. fr. 626 Nauck, where the opposite of endowing the demos with *kratos* (i.e., democracy) is making wealth the thing that is valued (*ploutos entimos*). Thucydides, while perfectly capable of speaking of the "rich" as being oligarchic (e.g., 3.70.4), prefers the terms *dunatoi/dunatotatoi*, "powerful" and "most powerful" (5.4.3, 8.21, 47.2), and simply *oligoi* (5.82.2, 84.3—but see 3.70.4 and 8.63.4 for acknowledgment that the *dunatoi* are wealthy). The *dunatoi* are not necessarily coterminous with "oligarchs" *sensu stricto*. It is safe to say that all *dunatoi* were wealthy, but they might exercise power in a democracy as well as an oligarchy. Moreover, they did not necessarily favor oligarchy over democracy, but the great majority of those who did favor oligarchy tended to come from the ranks of the *dunatoi*. See further Lintott 1982: 92–94.

151. Arist. fr. 611.39 Rose.

152. *Hippeis* of Eretria: Arist. *Pol.* 4.1289b39, 5.1306a35–36; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 15.2. *Hippobotai*

conomic or military, shows the connection, in some regimes at least, between wealth, horse-rearing, and political power. The cavalry continued to play a role in oligarchic government in the Classical period. Indeed they may be called the *sine qua non* of a “typical” oligarchic ruling elite. There were particularly narrow and “dynastic” oligarchies that comprised only a specific clique or a group of families, but normally oligarchies defined by a property requirement included, at the very least, the horse-owning upper crust.¹⁵³ The question is how much further down the socioeconomic scale they were willing to go, and what if any characteristics defined the overall group that typically made the cut. I will return to this point shortly, after examining the mechanism just mentioned, the property requirement according to which oligarchies selected their ruling body.

The Greek word for “property requirement,” *timēma*, means in its most primary sense “property assessment.” As such assessments became important for political office-holding; however, the term came to have the secondary meaning “property requirement.” As we have just seen, Xenophon’s Socrates associates property requirements with oligarchy, which he labels a “plutocracy.” For Plato, oligarchic regimes are those in which the magistracies (*archai*) depend upon property requirements (*apo timēmatōn*, *Rep.* 8.550c, 553a). Aristotle also glosses them this way in the *Rhetoric*, where he has less time to devote to the topic than in the *Politics* (1.1365b33).¹⁵⁴ A closing passage of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* says oligarchies are of two main types: those defined by membership in a political club (*hetaireia*) and those *apo timēmatōn* (1.446b25–26).¹⁵⁵ The oligarchy headed by Phocion, imposed on

of Chalcis: Hdt. 5.77.2, 6.100.1; Arist. *Pol.* 4.1289b39; Strabo 10.1.8 (= Arist. fr. 603 Rose); Plut. *Per.* 23.2; Ael. *VH* 6.1; cf. Thuc. 1.114.1–3.

153. Whibley 1896: 126–32; cf. Bugh 1988: 120–28 and Spence 1993: 216–24 for the role of the cavalry in the oligarchic regimes at Athens in the late fifth century. See also Diod. Sic. 15.79.3, for oligarchic *hippeis* from Boeotian Orchomenos.

154. The concern is again with the *archai*: democracies are those constitutions in which the citizens distribute magistracies by lot, oligarchies by property requirements, aristocracies “by education” (*paideia*). (Note the observation below that oligarchies could also distribute magistracies by lot, just within the ruling elite.) Aristotle has a more idiosyncratic discussion of constitutions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which the three good forms are kingship, aristocracy, and a third defined *apo timēmatōn*, to be called timocratic or a politeia, while the three bad forms are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (8.1160a31–b22). This conceptualization, with its strange use of *timēmata*, makes a mess of oligarchy, aristocracy, and timocracy.

155. The section is bracketed by editors as spurious but still provides good evidence for the notion of oligarchy as defined by property qualifications. For the importance of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* for understanding Classical oligarchies see chapter 2, section 2.2.3.

the Athenians by Antipater in 321, was to be *apo timēmatōn*.¹⁵⁶ Oligarchy and wealth requirements remained so closely associated that Themistius in the fourth century CE can still speak of “oligarchies based *apo timēmatōn*” (Oration 2, p. 35b Harduin).¹⁵⁷

The process of actually assessing citizens to see if they met the property requirement tended to depend on private initiative. It was up to an individual citizen to provide the authorities with his own valuation of his property when he declared himself interested in a magistracy.¹⁵⁸ Depending on his measurement, a citizen then belonged to a specific *timēsis*, or rating.¹⁵⁹ In some regimes magistracies were distributed differentially according to the different ratings.¹⁶⁰ It seems that in most oligarchies, however, a single fixed *timēma* admitted one to the most authoritative offices.¹⁶¹ We have actual numbers in the cases of Phocion and Demetrius of Phalerum’s oligarchies: 2,000 drachmas and 1,000 drachmas, respectively.¹⁶² We hear of no further gradations within those basic

156. Plut. *Phoc.* 27.3. Cf. Diod. Sic. 18.18.4: *apo timēseōs*.

157. For further examples see Paus. 7.16.9; Luc. *Jup. Trag.* 7; Hesych. s.v. γαμύροι.

158. See Johnstone 2011: 86–88.

159. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1308b2–6.

160. E.g., the constitution of Draco preserved at [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 4.2; that of Solon, 8.1.

161. See, e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 4.1294b10, 1297b2, 5.1303a23, 1306b7–16, 1307a27–29; but see 6.1320b22–25, where the author recommends two levels of assessment. Oligarchies might change the *timēma* if they thought overall wealth was increasing and too many citizens were meeting the qualification for full citizenship: Arist. *Pol.* 5.1308a35–b10. This practice suggests that some oligarchs did not think a specific amount of wealth actually guaranteed minimal political competence (see Thuc. 6.39.1), but instead wanted to keep the circle of the ruling elite narrow for its own sake. Interestingly, the passage of Aristotle also suggests that some poleis carried out their own public assessments instead of relying on individual initiative (or they at least required all citizens to provide assessments). These would have amounted to a kind of census. Aristotle specifies that oligarchies from smaller cities might carry out their assessments every year, those from larger ones every three or five years (not counting inclusively: every two or four years). Fourth-century Athens carried out large-scale assessments of its total wealth (Dem. 14.19; Polyb. 2.62.6–7), but this was probably only among members of symmories (and so members of the elite), and it was still by self-declaration, albeit under scrutiny (Christ 2007: 63–67). In the so-called *diagramma* (ordinance) of King Ptolemy for Hellenistic Cyrene, establishing an oligarchic constitution (SEG 9.1, on which see below), sixty officials called “assessors,” *timētēres*, measure the citizens’ wealth for political purposes. In other texts the word is *timētēs* and is the Greek translation of the Latin *censor* (e.g., Polyb. 6.53.7). A recently published Imperial inscription has been interpreted as showing a *timētēs* selecting members of the council, presumably according to wealth: *Bull. ép.* 2014 no. 603.

162. 2,000: Diod. Sic. 18.18.4. 1000 (10 *mnai*): 18.74.3. (Cf. the *diagramma* of Ptolemy for Cyrene, where the ruling body is nominally the “Ten Thousand” [*murioi*] but in fact those who possess at least 2,000 drachmas. Although the figure of ten thousand looks large, Cyrene was a

amounts. Similarly, Plato says that oligarchies set “an amount of property [*plēthos chrēmātōn*], greater where the constitution is more oligarchic, less where it is less so, and they decree that he is not to partake of the *archai* whose property does not equal the stated requirement [*timēma*].”¹⁶³ In the oligarchic Boeotian *koinon* of the mid-fifth to early fourth century, the chief decision-making bodies in each of the poleis of the confederacy were four councils, “in which it was not possible for all the citizens [*politai*] to participate [*metechein*], but only those who possessed a certain amount of property [*plēthos ti chrēmātōn*].”¹⁶⁴ The property requirement thus usually seems to have been single and consistent. What might change was the selection process according to which magistrates were chosen. According to the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, within oligarchies “the laws ought to distribute the magistracies [*archai*] equally to all of those who participate in the *politeia*, and of these the majority ought to be assigned by lot, but the greatest [magistracies] voted on by secret ballot accompanied by oaths and the strictest scrutiny.”¹⁶⁵ It was crucial that all oligarchs be at least eligible for the same magistracies, even if in practice elective positions would favor the wealthiest and most influential.¹⁶⁶

huge polis, and a *timēma* of 20 mnai might reasonably be expected to exclude two thirds of the demos, if we use Phocion’s oligarchy as an example. The constitution outlined by the diagramma is definitely oligarchic: Robinson 2011: 132n204; Johnstone 2011: 102–107.) The requirements are relatively low, especially that of Demetrius’s regime, for which see van Wees 2011. For Phocion’s census, see Poddighe 1997. The regimes technically fall outside of the temporal boundaries established in the present study, but I hope to treat them at greater length elsewhere. It is worth noting that although there is a flurry of experimentation with oligarchic government at the end of the fourth century, the regimes listed failed after only a few years.

163. *Rep.* 8.551b. Cf. Thuc. 6.39.1; Arist. *Pol.* 4.1292a41; Diod. Sic. 18.18.4.

164. *Hell. Oxy.* 19.2 Chambers. The phrase *plēthos ti chrēmātōn* is partially restored, but the reading is convincing. For more on the *koinon* and its councils, see chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

165. 1424a40–24b3; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 4.1300b1–3. Elsewhere Aristotle suggests that it is a mark of oligarchies to make the highest magistracies the preserve of the highest census classes (*Pol.* 2.1266a12–14), but here he is describing the constitution of Plato’s *Laws*, which may have been exceptional.

166. Despite the fact that a wealth requirement determined eligibility for the highest magistracies, individuals who fell below that threshold in oligarchies were not necessarily considered not to be citizens. See *Hell. Oxy.* 19.2 Chambers, just discussed; [Arist.] *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1424b3–6; Isoc. 10.32. Aristotle and his school, as in many other areas, appear to have been the first to change the usual understanding of *politēs* out of a need for greater conceptual clarity and consistency, e.g., at *Pol.* 3.1275a2–5. This usage is idiosyncratic, however, as Aristotle himself admits (*Pol.* 3.1275b5–7). See further Blok 2013: 162–63. There are no ancient terms that correspond precisely to the modern distinction between “active” and “passive” citizens (Mossé 1979); one can perhaps say, however, that *hoi politeuomenoi* are usually the “active” citizens, as they constitute the *politeuma*.

What emerges from the foregoing account is that *oligarchia* was a *politeia* in which access to the authoritative magistracies (*archai*) was restricted to those in possession of a certain (usually quite exclusionary) property requirement (*timēma*), who constituted the sovereign ruling element (*kurion politeuma*).¹⁶⁷ It is important to note what this definition does not say. Oligarchy is not the restriction of the “franchise” to a narrow body of men. There would be several problems with such a statement. In contrast to the modern period, in antiquity the mere possession of the ability to vote for office-holders (the “franchise”) was not determinative of constitutional type.¹⁶⁸ In fact, as I explore below in chapter 3, oligarchies often retained a popular assembly open to all free adult male citizens.¹⁶⁹ What distinguished oligarchy from democracy was that the assembly’s role in the former was highly circumscribed, retaining little independent authority. Authority was instead invested in the *archai*, which were both more powerful than in democracies and, crucially, available exclusively to the rich.¹⁷⁰ The office that was most commonly characterized as expressing the decision of the oligarchic *politeuma* was the council (*boulē*), notwithstanding recent attempts to argue otherwise.¹⁷¹

167. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 3.1278b8–11 and the concluding statement of Ostwald 2000: 75. (I base this description on the most common type of oligarchy, but those based on family ties or specific political factions also existed.) The *politeuma* is not primarily the regime type (although see, e.g., Plut. *Mor.* 851f), but instead the circle of the adult male citizenry that is included in the authoritative magistracies. As Aristotle says, in democracies the *politeuma* is the *demos*, in oligarchies it is the few (1278b11–13). Inscriptions show that by the late fourth century the same terms were used in public discourse: in Alexander the Great’s letter to Chios, he specifies that the *politeuma* is to be the *demos* (RO 84 A, lines 3–4; not “the constitution shall be a democracy” as in the translation of RO). In the *diagramma* of Ptolemy for Cyrene, by contrast, the *politeuma* is to be the “Ten Thousand” (*murioi*; SEG 9.1, line 6). The Ten Thousand are not some sort of “restricted” Cyrenaean *demos*; they are distinct from the *demos* altogether (the *demos* is never mentioned in the document).

168. See further the discussion in chapter 3, section 3.2, below.

169. A property requirement for the *ekklēsia* is mentioned as a possibility by Aristotle (e.g., *Pol.* 3.1282a29–31, 4.1294b3–4), but at 4.1298b30–31 he speaks as if the *demos* will participate in the assembly (see below, chapter 3, section 3.3).

170. Note the numerous mentions of the *archai* in the Classical sources cited above, to which add Thuc. 8.53.3, Hdt. 3.80.6.

171. On this point Whibley was correct (1896: 157); *pace* Wallace 2013: 193–99, who argues that policy within oligarchies was decided by a (restricted) citizen body in an assembly. While the *politeuma* was indeed exclusive in an oligarchy, it rarely if ever met in plenary session, but instead exercised power through magistracies, especially the council. As we have seen, councils held authority in the poleis of the fifth-century Boeotian *koinon*. We also possess extensive epigraphic evidence showing transfer of enactment authority from the assembly to the council

1.2.2 *The Myth of the “Hoplite Republic”*

We can now return to the question of who, other than those able to rear horses, were typically part of an oligarchic *politeuma*. One of the most influential answers has pointed to the so-called “hoplite class,” constituting anywhere between one third to one half of the free male citizen population, the members of which might be determined by a “hoplite census.”¹⁷² Following Aristotle’s remarks in the *Politics*, which trace the expansion of political participation and power in Archaic Greece according to a military-developmental logic, scholars have postulated that the newly emergent “middling hoplite class” of the seventh century came to occupy a hegemonic political and ideological position within the polis. Such regimes could be labeled “hoplite republics,” “hoplite constitutions” (German, *Hoplitenpoliteia*), “moderate oligarchies,” or even “democracies” (as Aristotle says), which came to look restrictive only when contrasted with the more “radical” version of democracy practiced by Athens and a number of other poleis in the fifth century. The growing power of the “middling” hoplite class, the moderately wealthy yeoman farmers, can supposedly be seen in the *zeugitai* census class of Solonian Athens, whose name “yoke-men” has been taken to mean infantrymen “yoked together” in the hoplite phalanx, as well as in any constitution in

following the introduction of oligarchic government (in these cases I do not rely on the language of the enactment formula alone, which would be question-begging—perhaps democracies sometimes enacted decrees in the name of the council only—but on additional independent evidence). Athens during the Four Hundred: ML 81, lines 14–15. Eretria after the introduction of oligarchy in 411 (see Thuc. 8.64.2–65.1): ML 82. Erythrae after the King’s Peace: RO 56; SEG 31.969. Rhodes after the synoecism on the island in 408 that produced an oligarchic polis: *I Lindos* II 16, in contrast to the earlier democratic language of *I Lindos* II 16 appendix. Chios in the fifth century, when the city was known to be oligarchic (Thuc. 8.24.4 with O’Neil 1978/79 and IACP no. 840, p. 1067 [Rubinstein]), and again in the early fourth century: *PEP Chios* 76; *PEP Chios* 2; SEG 35.923. See further the power of the council in fourth-century oligarchic Heraclea Pontica (Justin 16.4.1; Polyæn. *Strat.* 2.30.2). In other literary sources the “*archai*” or “*archontes*” are considered authoritative in oligarchies (these might include the councilors, *bouleutai*): Thuc. 3.27.3, 5.84.3; *Hell. Oxy.* 18.2 Chambers. In the law against tyranny and oligarchy from Eretria, the worry for democrats is not that the assembly will become restricted but that conspirators will try to propose a *boulē* other than one “selected by lot from all of the Eretrians” (SEG 51.1105 B, lines 19–20, partly restored). The new council’s members would likely come from a restricted *politeuma*, but the latter is not envisaged as meeting in an assembly (let alone constituting the demos).

172. For the numbers, see, e.g., Pritchard 2013: 202 (the Athenian hoplites constituted about 30 percent of militarily active citizens); van Wees 2013b: 240 (hoplite farmers as 40 percent of the population in many cities).

which the *hopla parechomenoi*, “those who provided their own armor,” predominated.¹⁷³

The idea of the *Hoplitenpoliteia* has proved attractive for a number of reasons. First, it assigns a place of central political importance to the hoplites, who were undoubtedly a crucial element both in Greek military success and in the social imaginary.¹⁷⁴ Second, the eminently “common-sense,” stolid, moderate picture of the hoplite republic has afforded a conceptual third way between the two “extremes” of narrow oligarchy and supposedly “radical” democracy.¹⁷⁵ Assuming the existence of *Hoplitenpoliteiai* in long-standing oligarchies, such as those of Corinth and Thebes, helps to explain their stability; it helps the ancient Greeks live up to their reputation for “moderation in all things”; and it allows us to see democracy and oligarchy as two sides of the same coin of “republicanism,” as regimes that were different in degree rather than in kind.¹⁷⁶

Several considerations come together to dispel the notion of a hoplite republic, however, and to reveal it, ultimately, as an ideological fiction.¹⁷⁷ First, there was no seventh-century hoplite revolution. Snodgrass in 1965 had already suggested that the development of hoplite tactics and armor was gradual and piecemeal, but Frost put the point more bluntly (though no less truthfully) when he said that the so-called revolution was “one of the great non-events of history.”¹⁷⁸ Problems beset the thesis at all levels, beginning with the earliest literary evidence. Several scholars have shown that the “Homeric way

173. For Aristotle’s developmentalist military schema see *Pol.* 4.1297b16–28. For the notion of a “hoplite breakthrough” or “hoplite revolution” in the seventh century, see Lorimer 1947; Cartledge 1977: 20; Salmon 1977. “Hoplite republics” as the typical form of polis government in the Archaic period and beyond: Hanson 1995 *passim*; Samons 2004: 23; Raaflaub 2007: 121. Gehrke, in his seminal study on *stasis*, uses the *Hoplitenpoliteia* concept extensively, e.g., as a constitutional label for Andros, Erythrae, Corcyra, Mantinea, Samos, and Sicyon. *Zeugitai* as yoked in the hoplite phalanx: Cichorius 1894; Whitehead 1981. *Hopla parechomenoi*: Thuc. 8.97.1; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 4.2.

174. See Hanson 1991, 1995; Schwartz 2009; Kagan and Viggiano 2013.

175. The term “radical” is modern, and no equivalent outside of Aristotle (“final [*teleutaia*] democracy”) can be found in the Classical sources: see Strauss 1987; Robinson 2011: 218. Thucydides, for one, discusses democracies without introducing distinctions between them: Athens, Syracuse, Mantinea, and Argos are all “democratically governed,” without qualification (*pace* Hornblower *ad* 5.29.1 and 7.55.2).

176. See, e.g., Raaflaub 1989: 46.

177. I cannot give the subject the space it deserves here. My position will be stated categorically, drawing upon the relevant evidence and supporting secondary literature, but each point is, I readily admit, highly contested.

178. Frost 1984: 293.

of war,” far from placing emphasis exclusively or even primarily on the outstanding “fore-fighters,” or *promachoi*, gives evidence of a massed form of fighting in which average soldiers have a crucial role to play.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, as we have just seen in our survey of Archaic epigraphical and literary evidence, sources as early as the eighth and seventh centuries attest to the political involvement of the demos. The military and political involvement of the non-elite, in other words, did not have to await a revolution in armor and tactics.¹⁸⁰

Second, the Solonian census classes do not show the newly ascendant power of the hoplites as represented by the *telos* of the *zeugitai*. The identification of the census classes with military groups has always been a modern thesis, based on the assumption that Aristotle is ignorant on this point.¹⁸¹ If we take Aristotle’s claims seriously, however, it becomes impossible to maintain that the *zeugitai* were in any way “middling small farmers.”¹⁸² Van Wees in particular has shown that the top three census classes must have constituted a rather narrow elite of the landed wealthy.¹⁸³ This view comports with the observation that the Athenian hoplite army was relatively meager until as late as the end of the sixth century.¹⁸⁴ Solon’s constitution seems to have vested power largely in the leisured elite, rather than ceding significant authority to a broad hoplite group. It took the Cleisthenic revolution of 508/7 to transfer effective power in the polis to the demos, understood as the great majority of

179. On the importance of the masses in Homeric fighting, see Latacz 1977; Pritchett 1971–79, vol. 4; van Wees 1994; Raaflaub 2008.

180. Raaflaub 1997; Hawke 2011: 113–16; Foxhall 2013.

181. Aristotle (or rather his student) is insistent at *Ath. Pol.* 7.4 that the census classes were determined by a measurement of wealth rather than by military function. Against this thesis are the opinions of de Ste. Croix 2004; Rhodes 1993: 138; Guia and Gallego 2010.

182. Thuc. 6.43.1 has been taken to indicate that the census classes were based on military function, but Gabrielsen (2002a/b) has shown otherwise. In the same year Rosivach likewise twice demonstrated (2002a/b) that the arguments for going against Aristotle’s economic interpretation are weak.

183. See van Wees 1995, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; cf. Foxhall 1997. There is ancient evidence that Aristotle himself considered the top three *telē* a leisured elite and, moreover, that he thought there were citizens outside of those groups who nonetheless served as hoplites. In the *Politics* (2.1274a18–21) he glosses the first three classes as the *gnōrimoi* and *euporoi*, while the *Ath. Pol.* (26.1) says that in the mid-fifth century, when hoplites were drawn “from a *katalogos*,” many of the “better sort” of both the demos and the *euporoi* used to die in great numbers. The inescapable conclusion here, unless the author of the *Ath. Pol.* did not agree with his teacher, is that there were members of the demos among the hoplite army in addition to the top three census classes who comprised the *euporoi*.

184. Frost 1984; Singor 2000.

the hoplites as well as those below hoplite status.¹⁸⁵ These groups, despite the supposedly *infra dignitatem* station of the light-armed, do not seem to have been at odds, and they cooperated consistently in support of the democratic constitution.¹⁸⁶ The revolution of 508/7 is now increasingly being understood as a decisive break, rather than as the latest step in a gradual progression of power, with the supposed “hoplite constitution” of Solon’s time paving the way for Cleisthenes’s more inclusive reforms.¹⁸⁷ There was in fact no intervening hoplite constitution.

Finally, concrete, attested instances of regimes governed by the *hopla parechomenoi*—rather than “examples” which are nothing more than modern hypotheses—are exceedingly rare.¹⁸⁸ Whibley observed this already in his book on oligarchy (1896: 133), and on this point, at least, nothing has changed in the intervening century that would necessitate a reappraisal of his view. A reappraisal has nevertheless occurred, and, as we have seen, some scholars even believe that the *Hoplitenpoliteia* was an exceedingly common type of constitu-

185. See Ober 2007: 97, citing the work of Georges (1993), for the cooperation between hoplites and “subhoplites” in the new Cleisthenic dispensation.

186. Some scholars have posited a division between “thetic” and “hoplitic” ideology (Strauss 1996; Hanson 1996; Burke 2005), but Epstein (2011) shows convincingly that this conception is unsupported by the evidence.

187. See Pritchard (2010: 23–27) for arguments in favor of the position that the “association of Solonian classes and forms of military service needs to be abandoned entirely” (23). One further scholarly development that has argued against the military view of the census classes is the abandonment of the notion of a single “hoplite register,” or *katalogos*. Instead, separate, *ad hoc katalogoi* were drawn up by the generals and taxiarchs every campaign: Hansen 1985: 83; Christ 2001: 400–403; Bakewell 2007: 91–93; Guia and Gallego 2010: 258–61 (against the old view of, e.g., Jones 1957: 163; Andrewes 1981; Burckhardt 1999). Military officials might have made use of the deme registers, or *lēxiarchika grammateia*, for conscription purposes, but there is no evidence that these contained information about citizens’ Solonian census classes, or that those census designations were linked with military obligations (Jameson 1963: 399–400; Whitehead 1986: 35n130; Bakewell 2007: 92; *pace* Ostwald 1995: 378; Sickinger 1999: 55; Pébarthe 2006: 184).

188. See above, n164, for Gehrke’s assignment of *Hoplitenpoliteia* status to many poleis. Several historians have also speculated that Opuntian Locris had a hoplite constitution in the mid-fifth century, based on two pieces of evidence: 1) an inscription (ML 20) contains the phrase *ἡοποντίων τε χιλίον πλεθαι* (translated below), and 2) Diodorus’s statement (11.4.7) that the Locrians provided 1,000 hoplites at Thermopylae (cf. Hdt. 7.203.1). Some put these two facts together to speculate that the Opuntians had a hoplite class of 1,000 men and that these formed “the assembly of the Opuntian Thousand” (ML; Rhodes with Lewis 1997: 147; Beck 1999; Nielsen 2000: 114–15; Hornblower 2004a: 167; Domínguez Monedero 2013: 459–60). But the Greek cited above, which lacks definite articles, should mean “a majority out of a thousand Opuntians” (cf. *plethus* in the sense of “majority” at *IG IX 1*² 3 717 line 18, with Ruzé 1984: 257).

tion during the Classical period. The evidence, however, is meager. There are four attestations: 1) The Draconian constitution described at [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 4.2; 2) the “intermediate regime” of 411–410 which followed the overthrow of the Four Hundred (Thuc. 8.97.1; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 33.1); 3) the constitution of the Malians as described by Aristotle (*Pol.* 4.1297b12–16), the date of which, however, is unknown; and 4) the statement of the speech *peri politeias*, “on the constitution,” included in the manuscripts of Herodes Atticus, to the effect that the oligarchic regimes imposed by the Spartans tended to comprise at least a third of the population, defined as those who were able to benefit the common good “either by arms or some other ability” (section 31).¹⁸⁹ In brief, we can observe that (1) has long been identified as an ideologically charged forgery; (3) may not apply to the time period under consideration here; and (4) is almost certainly an exercise in Second Sophistic rhetoric, with probably little connection to actual events in late-fifth-century Thessaly.¹⁹⁰

The case of the intermediate regime of 411–10 requires more careful consideration. As Thucydides presents the events of 411, the original call was for a regime of those “most capable of benefiting the city with their possessions [*chrēmata*] and persons [*sōmata*],” and that these were to number no more than five thousand.¹⁹¹ It is clear from Thucydides, at least, that the oligarchs considered five thousand a *numerus clausus*. Some hoplites would, for reasons of wealth, not be included in this number. Otherwise, the Four Hundred would not have laid so much emphasis on enrolling citizens in the list and determining thereby who was in and who was out.¹⁹² Five thousand was clearly less than the total number of hoplites at the time, and in fact amounted

189. Additional evidence for the existence of hoplite constitutions might include Theramenes’s statement at Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.48 that an ideal citizenry ought to comprise those who can benefit the polis “with shields and horses,” i.e., the hoplites and the cavalry. As the Thirty never managed to enroll this group, however, Theramenes’s remarks cannot serve as evidence that such a regime existed in practice. Furthermore, we will see shortly that this statement may reflect Xenophon’s own personal ideology. Hansen (2006c: 81–82) detects a hoplite constitution behind the Eretrian inscriptions *IG XII.9 245–47* (lists of names, but see the convincing rejoinder of Knoepfler in *Bull. ép.* 2007 no. 327, ascribing the lists to a democratic regime).

190. Draconian constitution as forgery: Rhodes 1993: 86. Van Wees (2011) thinks it dates to the period of Demetrius of Phalerum’s oligarchy at Athens (late fourth century), which would further strengthen the view that the idea of the regime of the *hopla parechomenoi* did not predate Aristotle: see further below. Wade-Gery 1945 thought that Ps.-Herodes *peri politeias* might be a work of Critias, and many have cited it as evidence for hoplite regimes (Vlastos 1952: 191n7; de Ste. Croix 1972: 35n65; Cartledge 1977: 23 with n90; Brock 1989: 163). Russell, however, authoritatively assigns it to the second century CE on stylistic grounds (1983: 111).

191. Thuc. 8.65.3.

192. The closed nature of the number Five Thousand emerges from Thuc. 8.72.1, 92.11. The

to somewhere between 10 and 16 percent of the total male citizen population.¹⁹³ Van Wees has rightly emphasized this fact, observing that the Constitution of the Five Thousand as originally proposed was meant to divide the hoplites down the middle, between what he calls “leisure-class” and “working-class” hoplites.¹⁹⁴ Guia and Gallego make the attractive further suggestion that the Five Thousand were meant to correspond roughly to the total number of *eisphora*, or war-tax, payers.¹⁹⁵ This would make sense of the reference to the Five Thousand’s ability to contribute with their possessions, *chrēmata*, first and foremost.¹⁹⁶ When the Four Hundred are overthrown, Thucydides is careful to specify that the constitution was handed over “to the Five Thousand,” but that these were now to include “as many also as could furnish their own arms” (*hoposoi kai hopla parechontai*, 8.97.1). The *kai* (also) in particular signals that the intermediate regime included more people than were originally proposed by Peisander and the other oligarchs. We should therefore not think of the intermediate regime as the proposed Five Thousand put into practice but as a different, expanded constitution.

Here, then, was an actually existing *Hoplitenpoliteia*. It is noteworthy, however, that Thucydides does not label it an oligarchy. Instead he says that “oligarchy and *stasis* at Athens” came to an end with the defection of Aristarchus to Boeotia in 411 (8.98.4). The intermediate regime was, notoriously, a “mod-

names of the 5,000 were kept secret in order to manipulate the hoplites, who would have simply assumed they were included if the 5,000 were always meant to be “all of the hoplites.”

193. Evidence for 5,000 being less than the total number of hoplites comes from *Lys.* 20.13, where it is said that the defendant, Polystratus, a *katalogeus* or “enrollment officer” under the Four Hundred (cf. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 29.5), himself enrolled 9,000 men.

194. 2006: 374. The “leisure-class” half would include the first three Solonian census classes, while the “working-class” half would include thetes. Socrates would seem to be a famous example of a “working-class hoplite”: he valued his property at only five *mnai* (*Xen. Oec.* 2.3). This would not have been enough to secure him full citizenship even in the moderate oligarchy of Demetrius of Phalerum, where the *timēma* was ten *mnai* (see above).

195. 2010: 263–64. The *eisphorai* had either increased or been first instituted in 428 (*Thuc.* 3.19.1). The total number of *eisphora* payers in the fifth century is unknown, but it was wider than the circle of liturgy-payers, who probably numbered fewer than 2000 (for discussion see de Ste. Croix 1953; Jones 1957: 23–38; Thomsen 1964: 14–23; Rhodes 1982a; Ober 1989: 128–29; Christ 2007).

196. Another piece of evidence, not adduced by Guia and Gallego, is that the original plotters of the oligarchic *coup* in 411 are described by Thucydides as being “the most imposed upon” (*talaipōrountai malista*, 8.48.1), presumably by taxes. These same men are later described as “willingly contributing [*eispherein*] money [*chrēmata*] from their own private households” now that they are paying for themselves and not others (8.63.4). The collocation *eispherein chrēmata* indicates members of the *eisphora*-paying class.

erate blending,” a *metria xunkrasis*, in the interests of the few and the many (*es tous oligous kai tous pollous*, 8.97.2).¹⁹⁷ In my view, this designation stems in part from the fact that those in charge under the regime, the *hopla parechomenoi*, comprised both the few (the leisured wealthy) and (some) members of the many, those of the demos beneath leisured status. It was the status of the hoplite army as a mediating institution, one straddling both the rich (*plousioi*) and the poor (*penētes*), that made the intermediate regime of 411–10 a constitutional anomaly, an outlier, in the normal scheme of things. Indeed, the reader gets the impression from the larger narrative of Thucydides’s history, not that the intermediate regime was one of many such regimes in the Greek world at the time, but that it was radically singular. Thucydides refuses to call it by one of the usual constitutional labels, while regimes like those of Thebes and Megara are straightforwardly called “oligarchies.”¹⁹⁸ Not surprisingly, then, this *rara avis* did not last long: as the *Ath. Pol.* says, “the demos quickly took back the constitution from these men [the intermediate regime].”¹⁹⁹ The intermediate regime thus appears to have been an emergency measure that looked forward to the restoration of full democracy; it would serve as an armed caretaker of the polis until such time as the traditional democracy could be safely reinstated. With so many members of the demos (those who were hoplites) already included in the *politeuma*, it would just be a matter of time before the regime “tipped” back into encompassing the entire free male citizenry. The *Hoplitenpoliteia* was not the norm at all; it was an unsustainable equilibrium.²⁰⁰

197. For *sunkrasis* in a political context, see Eur. fr. 21 Nauck, where such a mixing is considered superior to a scenario in which the “entirety of the poor *laos* governed without the rich men [*plousioi*].”

198. Thuc. 5.31.6. For the importance of this statement in interpreting the nature of the Theban oligarchy, see below.

199. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 34.1.

200. The literature on the Five Thousand and the intermediate regime of 411–10 is vast. Perhaps most famously, de Ste. Croix (1956) and Rhodes (1972b) disagree over whether the intermediate regime admitted the thetes. But if, as argued above, the Solonian census classes were never connected with military function, the question is instead whether the unarmed could attend the assembly. They likely could not, but for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons: meetings of the assembly at this time were perceived as under threat and required armed vigilance (Thuc. 8.93.1). It is also worth noting that the oligarch Antiphon’s trial took place during the period of the intermediary regime (Craterus *FGrH* 342 F 5b; cf. Thuc. 8.68.2 [text uncertain]), but he spoke in his defense before the judges about democracy and oligarchy as though they were good and bad things, respectively (fr. 1a Nicole). For more on the intermediate regime, and on Thucydides’ assessment of it as a *metria xunkrasis*, see Ostwald 1986: 395–411; Raaflaub 2006b: 189–90, 213–16.

Actually existing oligarchic regimes seem to have been much narrower than the *Hoplitenpoliteia*, and it is only modern scholars' attraction to the concept of the hoplite constitution that has caused them to see such regimes where there is no good evidence for them.²⁰¹ Take, for example, the constitution of Boeotia under the oligarchic *koinon* of the mid-fifth to early-fourth century. We have already seen that Thucydides explicitly calls it an oligarchy, without qualification (5.31.6). That he does not consider the intermediate regime at Athens from 411–410 an oligarchy (8.98.4) thus constitutes *prima facie* evidence that he did not think Thebes had a hoplite constitution, understood as a *metria xunkrasis*. Nevertheless, scholars have interpreted the Theban constitution along those lines. Whibley, we might note, did not, but he did not have the evidence of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, discovered in 1906. As we have already seen, a fragment of this text says that “it was not possible for all the citizens [*politai*] to participate [*metechein*], but only those who possessed a certain amount of money [*plēthos ti chrēmatōn*].”²⁰² For several reasons (none of which is very sound), numerous scholars have supposed that the *plēthos* of *chrēmata* referred to by the historian amounts to a “hoplite census,” thus making the constitution a *Hoplitenpoliteia*.²⁰³ In light of the arguments given above about military capacity and census classes, however, this point of near-orthodoxy has its problems. The very idea of an amount of money that “corresponded to” or was “the equivalent” of hoplite status is unattested in the ancient sources.²⁰⁴ As we have seen, Hansen has demonstrated that the notion

201. If the “hoplite republic” has come to seem like such a hegemonic regime type, it is largely because Aristotle and his school wished it to be one, pressing the testimony of Thucydides into their model in the process. What was a *numerus clausus* for Thucydides becomes a minimum for the author of the *Ath. Pol.* (29.5). Later, in the lead-up to the institution of the Thirty, the author can speak of three groups vying for political power, the demos, the oligarchs, and a middle group in favor of the “traditional constitution” or *patrios politeia*. As Sancho Rocher has shown, however (2007), there is no additional evidence for the existence of such a “third way” group, which is better understood as reflecting an Aristotelian preference for the “mean” or “middle” way. Aristotle himself admits that “middle constitutions” are extremely rare: *Pol.* 4.1296a36–38.

202. *Hell. Oxy.* 19.2 Chambers.

203. See, e.g., Swoboda 1910: 318; Larsen 1955: 41; Bruce 1967: 158; Gehrke *Stasis* 170; Moore 1975: 129; Cartledge 2000b: 403; Hammond 2000: 84. One “moderate” measure that did feature in the constitution was the payment of councilors at the federal level. Pay for office in oligarchies was rare, but in this exceptional case it may have been because councilors had to travel from their districts to Thebes, an atypical expense.

204. Some have supposed that we know from Pollux (10.165 = Arist. fr. 566 Rose) that a measure of grain called the *achanē*, equivalent to 45 Attic medimnoi, was “the property requirement for those to serve as hoplites” in the Boeotian polis of Orchomenos (Hanson 1995: 208;

of a “hoplite census” is a modern construction (1985: 83.) Considering the matter logically, we should find it odd that there would have been, in addition to the simple ability to furnish arms, a separate monetary amount that would be calculated to correspond to this ability. On the other hand, there is a perfectly good Greek phrase for those who could provide their own hoplite arms, the *hopla parechomenoi* discussed in the preceding pages. The Oxyrhynchus historian says nothing along these lines, but the phrase he does use, *plēthos of chrēmata*, is the exact one used by Plato in his discussion of oligarchies in the eighth book of the *Republic*, where he is clearly referring to wealth and not military capability.²⁰⁵ Since there is no other evidence that Thebes was a *Hoplitenpoliteia*, and since Thucydides considered Thebes an oligarchy, full stop, we should strongly consider the possibility that it set its property requirement higher than most hoplites could afford.²⁰⁶

How narrow oligarchies tended to be is made somewhat clearer by several scattered pieces of evidence. We have already seen that the *numerus clausus* of five thousand at Athens in 411 was at most 15 percent of the adult male citizen population. Consider, too, that one thousand oligarchic ringleaders were eventually arrested and sent to Athens as the chief instigators of Lesbos’s defection from the empire.²⁰⁷ Some have thought that this is quite large for an oligarchic class, but as Gomme and others have pointed out, the Athenian general Paches had arrested both Mytilineans and anyone else from the other cities of Lesbos he considered responsible for the revolt. The Mytilenean oligarchs within this group were probably a majority, but their numbers still could have been considerably fewer than one thousand.²⁰⁸ Historians have

cf. Bruce 1967:158; Moore 1975: 129). But as Buckler points out (1980: 286), Pollux does not say he is giving us a “property requirement” for political participation—he is simply explaining what an *achanē* is. We have no good reason for thinking the *achanē* was used for political purposes (cf. Müller 2010: 227–28n14). The one attempt at calculating the monetary equivalent of being a hoplite may have been Demetrius of Phalerum’s rate of 1,000 drachmas (van Wees 2011). This was likely undertaken under the influence of Aristotelian doctrine and was atypical practice.

205. 8.551b. Plato later implies that the excluded poor either retain their arms under an oligarchy (556d) or have them taken away (551d-e).

206. Swoboda (1910: 318n4), Gehrke (*Stasis* 170n31) and Hammond (2000: 84, 91) all draw attention to Xenophon’s phrase “all the Thebans, both the cavalry and the hoplites” (*Hell.* 5.4.9). This would indeed count as crucial information, had Xenophon not also glossed “all the Athenians” as “both the hoplites and the cavalry” (5.1.22). Since clearly there were many non-hoplites among the ranks of the Athenian citizenry, this seems to be a verbal tic on Xenophon’s part (cf. 3.5.19) rather than good evidence for regime type.

207. Thuc. 3.35.1, 50.1.

208. Gomme *HCT* 2: 325–26; Legon 1968: 207 with n11; Quinn 1971: 408n21.

guessed at a total adult male citizen population of about five thousand or more at Mytilene: thus the thousand oligarchs would represent, at most, 20 percent of the citizenry, and very probably much less.²⁰⁹

At the conclusion of the famous *stasis* at Corcyra, the entire oligarchic faction was wiped out (Thuc. 4.48.5). Thucydides does not give precise figures, but this amounted, on my calculations, to about 1,000 men at the absolute most out of a citizen population of between 7,000 and 10,000, or anywhere from 10 to 14 percent.²¹⁰ The democratic revolution at Corinth in 393 (see chapter 6, section 6.1.1) resulted, according to Diodorus, in 120 dead and 500 in exile (14.86.1). Xenophon says that the “majority and the best of the Corinthians” were on the losing side (*Hell.* 4.4.1). This probably means that the majority within the ruling class were victims of the revolution, while a minority of the Corinthian oligarchs allied with the *demos* to set up a democracy. We do not know how many were in the minority, but the two sides were probably closely balanced. Assuming a roughly equal pairing, there would have been about 1,240 full members of the Corinthian regime (120 + 500 = 620 x 2 = 1240). Even assuming that we can round up to about 1,500 to capture those from the oligarchic class who managed to stay out of the *stasis* completely, 1,500 out of an estimated adult male citizen population of 15,000 is 10 percent.²¹¹

At Tegea in 370, 800 pro-Spartan Tegeans went into exile.²¹² An unspecified number had also been killed fighting with a pro-democratic faction. As-

209. For the number 5,000, see Gomme (previous n.). *IACP* no. 798, p. 1026 (Hansen, Spencer, Williams) estimates a total population of ca. 20,000.

210. Both Wilson (1987: 97) and Hornblower (*ad* 3.74.1) err in assuming that a large number of men *in addition* to the 400 who escaped to the temple of Hera (3.75.5) were enrolled as crews of ships (for Wilson, this would mean 200 additional men). In fact, Thucydides uses the inchoative imperfect *katelegon*, “they began to enroll” (75.3), to suggest that the *prostatai* of the *demos* started to enroll their enemies as crew members. We should not assume that the list was finished. When the oligarchs saw what was happening, the ones initially enrolled ran to the temple of the Dioscuri (75.3), while the rest, 400 in number, took shelter in the temple of Hera. I do not suppose that the total number of oligarchs here exceeded 450. These men were all killed (3.81), but 500 additional people fled (85.2) and were later killed. Counting the victims of the fighting at 3.74.1, we have about 1,000 oligarchs in all. For the total Corcyrean citizen population, see Wilson 1987: 90, implying 10,000.

211. 15,000: Salmon 1984: 168. If we use Hansen’s preferred method for turning hoplite army numbers into population numbers (2011), then the 5,000 Corinthian hoplites fielded at Plataea (*Hdt.* 9.28.3) equate to around the same number, ca. 16,600. The 3,000 at Nemea in 394 (*Xen. Hell.* 4.2.17) would yield 10,000 adult male citizens, with the oligarchs at 15 percent. In either case the ruling class *per* Xenophon and Diodorus is much smaller than the total number of hoplites. For more on this episode, see chapter 6, section 6.1.1.

212. *Xen. Hell.* 6.5.10.

suming about 100 for this group, we have 900 in the oligarchic majority. We are not told how many were in the pro-democratic faction led by Callibius and Proxenus, but they were defeated in the oligarchic body of the *thearoi* and required the assistance of the Tegean demos. Assuming they were quite inferior, say about 300, we have 1,200 within the ranks of the oligarchs. Using Hansen's formula, the 2,400 Tegean hoplites at Nemea in 394 would translate into an adult male population of 8,000, giving an oligarchic class of 15 percent.²¹³

Finally, the Phliasians are said to be a city of more than 5,000 men, with a group of a little fewer than 1,000 defecting to Sparta.²¹⁴ These oligarchs, too, would amount to less than 20 percent of the citizen total (1000/5000+).²¹⁵ In addition to these figures, which represent maximums, we know of even narrower oligarchies.²¹⁶ An oligarchic class of 10 to 20 percent is higher than the Athenian "leisure class" which numbered between 1,200 and 2,000 citizens, the richest 5 to 10 percent.²¹⁷ Yet there are ready explanations at hand for why oligarchs would typically constitute more than a bare minimum of the leisured wealthy—in particular the need to co-opt influential citizens outside of the narrow band of the economic elite.²¹⁸ I would therefore suggest that the typical oligarchies of the Classical period were based overwhelmingly on the leisure class, which provided the backbone of the regime, but that they also incorporated several of the richer hoplites from the demos, who might hope to aggrandize themselves via participation in the oligarchy to the point of

213. 2,400 hoplites at Nemea: Nielsen 2002: 327.

214. Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.16.

215. The democrats were in the habit of "holding their assemblies outside," to display their superior numbers to the Spartans and the Phliasian oligarchs. Very likely we are to understand many of these 5,000 as hoplites, since the point of the public display was to drive home to the Spartans the superiority of their own militia over that of the oligarchs. For the Phliasian constitution as democratic, see Legon 1967: 326–28; *IACP* no. 355, p. 614 (Piérart); Robinson 2011: 48–50.

216. Xenophon draws our attention to the very narrow nature of the oligarchy of Pellene: *Hell.* 7.4.18. Other narrow oligarchies: the Thousand of Acragas, supposedly put down by the philosopher Empedocles (Diog. Laert. 8.66); the Thousand, again, of Epizephyrian Locri (Polyb. 12.16.10, and see the rich treatment of Redfield 2003); the "very narrow" oligarchy imposed at Megara (Thuc. 4.74.4); the Three Hundred at Heraclea Pontica in the mid-fourth century (Polyaen. *Strat.* 2.30.2); the Six Hundred at Syracuse in the late fourth (Diod. Sic. 19.4.3); the Thousand of Cyrene (*SEG* 9.1, line 35). The Three Hundred at Thasos are ambiguous (ML 83)—they could represent the entire ruling group, or could be a subset thereof—as is the council (*sunhedrion*) of 600 men at Massalia (Val. Max. 2.6.7; Strabo 4.1.5).

217. Ober 1989: 28, citing Davies 1981: 28–35.

218. For co-optation within oligarchies see chapter 3, section 3.3.

achieving true elite-level self-sufficiency. In any case, the great majority of oligarchies were significantly narrower than the one third to one half of the population that comprised the hoplites.²¹⁹

Confirming this assessment are numerous instances from the ancient sources in which it is only a subset of the hoplite army that favors oligarchy. In many cases, the majority of the hoplites can be considered members of the *demos* and broadly in support of democracy.²²⁰ To begin with Athens, Thucydides claims that when Theramenes and the hoplites were tearing down the fortification at Eëtioneia in 411, “the call went out to the crowd that whoever wanted the Five Thousand to rule instead of the Four Hundred ought to join in the deed. They dissembled by using the name of the Five Thousand, rather than saying outright ‘whoever wants the *demos* to rule,’ fearing that they [the Five Thousand] existed and that they might, out of ignorance, say something to one of them and spoil the plan.”²²¹ According to the historian, many of the hoplites, some of whom must have thought they stood a good chance of being included among the ranks of the Five Thousand, were ready for a return to full democracy, but they altered their language out of fear and uncertainty. Several readers have pointed out that Thucydides cannot have known what the hoplites were thinking, and that the passage represents his own personal interpretation of their actions.²²² Still, it is worth noting that he himself did not find it implausible that numerous hoplites would prefer a re-institution of the democratic regime to something closer to a “hoplite constitution.”

Also in Thucydides we read about a small group of Argive hoplites—one thousand to be exact—who joined with the Spartans in campaigning against

219. An active citizenry of even 10 to 20 percent is of course exceptional in world history. Ancient Greek oligarchs were not the tiny ruling elite of most other world civilizations (including the Romans), nor were they quite as exclusive as the “one percent” discussed in contemporary political discourse. Nevertheless, when considered as a proportion of the total population of a given city-state, 10 to 20 percent of the citizen male group turns out to be quite narrow. The Five Thousand of Athens, if actually put into practice, would have represented two percent of the total population of Attica (5,000/ca. 250,000). The Corinthian oligarchy of 1,500 (see above) would represent slightly higher than two percent of the total population of 70,000 estimated by Salmon (1984: 165–69). One thousand Mytilinean oligarchs (in fact it was less—see above) out of a population of 20,000 is less than five percent. Greek oligarchies were relatively large for a ruling class—larger, typically, than the 150 members above which small, informal groups become unmanageable (Ober 2008: 88), and so large enough to require formalized, impersonal institutions—but that in no way makes them broad-based or “representative.”

220. Plat. *Rep.* 8.551e implies that most oligarchies would be unable to field a complete hoplite army using the members of the oligarchic class alone.

221. Thuc. 8.92.11.

222. Rhodes 1972b: 115–16, 120; Andrewes in *HCT* 5 *ad loc.*

their polis and putting down the democracy there.²²³ These hoplites may be identical with the “thousand picked Argives who for a long time had been provided training in war at public expense,” but Thucydides does not explicitly connect the two.²²⁴ In any case they were a small group and not representative of the larger army of Argive hoplites, who were probably among the demos that “regrouped” and overthrew the oligarchy at Argos later in the year.²²⁵ If Aeneas Tacticus is referring to this oligarchic *coup* in his description of Argive *stasis*, he lends further support to the idea that the oligarchs were a subset of the hoplites.²²⁶ A group of oligarchic conspirators uses an extramural festival as an opportunity to gain control of the polis. They confiscate a cache of weapons discarded by the broader group of Argives during a sacrifice—these were probably the arms of pro-democratic Argive hoplites.²²⁷ A second Argive episode reported by Aeneas likewise illuminates a passing remark in Thucydides and again shows the division between pro- and anti-democratic hoplites. In what he calls the “second attempt of the rich against the democracy,” the oligarchs plot to bring foreign fighters (*xenoi*) into the city at night. The *prostatēs* (champion) of the Argive demos, however, learning of the plot, orders all the Argives to remain under arms all night according to tribe. As a result the rich are scattered throughout the tribes and unable to assemble and bring in the *xenoi*.²²⁸ The episode makes clear that the rank-and-file Argive hoplites greatly outnumbered the oligarchic conspirators among them.

Two final examples, this time from Xenophon’s history, complete the picture. When a democratic faction seized the acropolis of Elis sometime before 362, the oligarchic opposition comprised not the cavalry and all of the hoplites, but the cavalry and the “Three Hundred,” a select group of Elean infantry.²²⁹ And nothing better illustrates the fact that it was not being a hoplite *per se*, but one’s wealth as a hoplite, that inclined one toward oligarchy than the

223. Thuc. 5.81.2. Cf. the 700 Argive hoplites who were killed at Mantinea (Thuc. 4.74.2), who, if they were killed proportionately with the rest of the allies at a loss of 13.8 percent, came from a total Argive hoplite army of over 5,000. Krentz estimates the total forces on the Argive side that day as “some 8,000” (1985: 16).

224. Thuc. 5.67.2; cf. 76.2. Later authors did connect them: Diod. Sic. 12.75.7, 80.2; Paus. 2.20.2; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1304a25–27.

225. Thuc. 5.82.2; note that this uprising involved a “battle” [*machē*] within the city walls.

226. 17.2–4. For the identification, see Whitehead 2001 *ad loc.*, David 1986.

227. Aen. Tact. 17.3. For more on this revolutionary tactic of disarming the populace and occupying the polis, see chapter 4, section 4.3.

228. 11.7. Cf. the oligarchic plot of 417 mentioned by Thucydides (5.83.1). Stylianou 1998 *ad* Diod. Sic. 15.57.3 equates the two episodes.

229. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.16. For this elite group, see also 7.4.13 (where they are paired with the otherwise unknown “Four Hundred”) and 7.4.31, where their commander, Stratolas, is killed.

case of the *eparittoi* of the Arcadian *koinon* (confederacy). The *koinon*, which was founded as a democracy with an authoritative common assembly of “Ten Thousand,” at first maintained its elite troops, or *eparittoi*, at public expense.²³⁰ When, however, the leaders of Arcadia were accused of committing sacrilege by funding the army with the sacred funds of Olympia, the Ten Thousand decided to cut off pay to the *eparittoi*. The result, says Xenophon, was that “very soon those not able to be part of the *eparittoi* without pay [*misthos*] started to leave, but those who were able [*sc.* who were independently wealthy] encouraged one another to join the *eparittoi*, in order that they not be under the control of those men [the democratic leaders of the *koinon*], but those men under them.”²³¹ This altered group of *eparittoi*, filled with oligarchs and Spartan sympathizers, is later seen sending an embassy to Lacedaemon suggesting that the two join forces.²³² It seems that when the elite hoplite body of the *koinon* was a paid position, it was manned by hoplites happy to serve a democratic constitution. With the elimination of pay, however, it was quickly taken over by wealthy oligarchs eager to use the powerful institution to undermine the democracy from within.²³³

1.2.3 *The Spartan Constitution and Greek Oligarchies*

A further topic that needs to be addressed when discussing the relationship between oligarchies and hoplites is Sparta. As was mentioned above, section 1.1, Sparta was an atypical regime in several respects. There is no doubt that it laid extreme emphasis on its hoplite army, which was also its citizenry. According to Plutarch, Agesilaus once illustrated this fact to Sparta’s military allies in striking visual fashion. When the allies were complaining that they followed the Spartans everywhere and campaigned constantly, despite their soldiers being more numerous than the few Spartiates, Agesilaus assembled the allied army and had them sit down. He then had the herald first tell the

Three hundred “picked” Elean hoplites are also known from Thuc. 2.25.3, but their political views are unknown.

230. For the democratic nature of the *koinon*, see Schaefer 1961: 311–14; Trampedach 1994: 27–33; Roy 2000: 314; Robinson 2011: 42–43. Most scholars agree that “Ten Thousand” (*murioi*) was a nominal number, not a *numerus clausus*, and that there was no property requirement for participation. For the *eparittoi*, cf. Hesychius s.v.

231. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.34.

232. Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.3.

233. See further Pritchett 1971–79 vol. 2: 223; Lintott 1982: 232–33; Roy 2000: 316–21; Nielsen 2002: 487–90; Hunt 2007: 144–45. For a final example of hoplites defending democracy see the case of Mende in 423, discussed in greater detail in chapter 6, section 6.1.2.

potters to stand up, then the smiths, then the builders, and so on, going through the various trades (*technai*), until virtually all of the allies were standing while the Spartiates remained sitting. He laughed and told the allies it was now clear how many more soldiers (*stratiōtai*) the Spartans had contributed than they had.²³⁴

The story brings out several important and idiosyncratic features of the Spartan regime. First, the Spartiates, uniquely among Greeks, were full-time professional soldiers.²³⁵ Second, and relatedly, all Spartiates were hoplites. As Cartledge has pointed out, Sparta, instead of allowing all soldiers into the ranks of the citizenry, made certain all full citizens were soldiers.²³⁶ This arrangement notoriously depended upon an exploitative conquest state that extracted surplus resources from its subject helot population. It was only by conquering its neighbors in Messenia that the Spartans could maintain all of their citizens in professional hoplite status. Thus, while Sparta was a kind of *Hoplitenpoliteia*, it was one of unusual and unparalleled size, whose insistence on making all of its citizens hoplites was both enabled by and directed toward its vast laboring class.

It was therefore unclear to the ancients themselves what kind of regime the Spartans had.²³⁷ Herodotus says that in the Archaic period the Spartans had transitioned from being “the worst governed” (*kakonomōtatoi*) of nearly all the Greeks to enjoying *eunomia*, and he seems to assume that this trend toward good government continued down to his day. Otherwise he declines to provide constitutional labels for Sparta, despite being well aware of the polis’s central institutions.²³⁸ Thucydides echoes Herodotus’s assessment of Sparta’s *eunomia* and goes on to say that Sparta maintained its supremacy within the Peloponnesian League by “using oligarchy to maintain regimes that would

234. *Ages.* 26.5; cf. *Mor.* 21.4a; Polyæn. *Strat.* 2.1.7.

235. The episode also illustrates the fact that many hoplites from the poleis of the Peloponnese must have been relatively poor and practiced “banausic” trades. It is striking that Agesilaus does not ask the “farmers” to stand up. It is unusual to see a hoplite army with *no* small farmers in it. This is likely a distortion: Agesilaus wishes to contrast the Spartiates with the *banausoioi* within the allied forces, but this does not mean that every last member of the allies was a *banausos*. Even if there were many farmers among the allies, however, their livelihood still would have been regarded as too menial for the Spartiate lifestyle.

236. Cartledge 2001: 165. As we have now seen, the former option was not actually practiced by many.

237. With the following discussion cf. Hodkinson 2005; *IACP* no. 345, pp. 591–92 (Shipley).

238. *Hdt.* 1.65.2, 65.5, listing *enōmotiai*, *triēkades*, *sussitia*, ephors and elders. Note however that Sparta’s actions during the events at Athens in 508/7, when Cleomenes attempted to install his guest-friend Isagoras and 300 others as rulers, are in line with Sparta’s later pro-oligarchic policy (*Thuc.* 1.19, discussed below, and see above, section 1.1).

govern themselves in a manner advantageous to themselves [the Spartans] alone.”²³⁹ He does not say explicitly, however, that the Spartans themselves are oligarchs. They possess a *politeia* (1.68.1) which the Theban and Megarian oligarchs consider to be more suited to themselves than the democracy of the Argives (5.31.6), and Thucydides comments that the Spartans, in addition to the Chians, were the only Greeks he knew of who “flourished” (*ēudaimonēsan*) at the same time as they “practiced moderation” (*esōphronēsan*) (8.24.4). In making these statements Thucydides carefully avoids labeling them as one regime type or the other. They are undoubtedly hostile to democracy, however: when the exiled Alcibiades argues in front of the Spartans, he evidently thinks they will respond positively to the statement that democracy is “acknowledged to be stupidity itself [*anoia*].”²⁴⁰ Nicias also warns the Athenians, when they are debating the Sicilian expedition, that they are better off spending their time at home guarding against “a polis plotting against us through oligarchy.”²⁴¹ This obviously refers to Sparta, but it is unclear what exactly he means by the Spartans attacking Athens “through” oligarchy: most likely Thucydides does not mean that the Spartans themselves were an oligarchy, but rather that they would conspire with pro-oligarchic elements within Athens to overthrow the democracy.²⁴²

Classical sources of the later fifth and fourth centuries are similarly ambivalent about Sparta. Xenophon in his *Politeia* avoids strict labels, focusing on specific institutions and Sparta’s general mode of life without reference to constitutional terminology.²⁴³ A Spartan interlocutor in Plato’s mid-fourth century *Laws*, professes ignorance as to what to call his *politeia*, since different elements of it seem to him, in turn, tyrannical, democratic, aristocratic, and kingly.²⁴⁴ Aristotle in the *Politics* continues the theme of Sparta as a constitutional anomaly, citing the Lacedaemonians as a people who enjoy a *politeia* that is “mixed [*memigmenē*] from all of the other constitutions.”²⁴⁵ Elsewhere

239. Thuc. 1.18.1, 19. For instances of them doing precisely this in the *Histories*, see 5.81–82 (Argos, Sicyon, and Achaëa).

240. Thuc. 6.89.6. There is potentially further evidence here that hinges on a textual crux: at 4.126.2, Brasidas may tell the Peloponnesians that they have nothing to fear from a mob since they come, “not from cities where the many rule the few, but rather the fewer rule over the greater number.” For debate on this passage, see Gomme 1951: 135–36; Hornblower *ad loc.*

241. Thuc. 6.11.7.

242. For other interpretations, see Hornblower *ad loc.* For Thucydides on Sparta, see Raaf-laub 2006b: 216–20; Leppin 1999: 171–84.

243. *Ages*. 1.4, listing democracy, oligarchy, tyranny, and kingship, suggests Xenophon considered Sparta a kingship (*basileia*).

244. Plat. *Leg.* 4.712d–13a.

245. Arist. *Pol.* 2.1265b33–35. See further Pseudo-Archytas 34.15–20 Thesleff = Stob. 4.1.138.

in the same book, however, he says that due to the power of the ephors, who were elected from the whole demos, the *politeia* has deteriorated from an aristocracy to a democracy (1270b6–17). In book 4, meanwhile, the Lacedaemonians are an example of a “polity,” (*politeia*), Aristotle’s term for the intermediate category between democracy and oligarchy (1294b13–34). He is forthright, however, about the Spartans’ hostility toward democracy, citing their practice of putting down democratic regimes during the Peloponnesian War (5.1307b22–24). In the corpus of Attic orators, Sparta is sometimes labeled an oligarchy outright (Dem. 20.108) or else is closely connected with oligarchy (Lys. 12.58–59).²⁴⁶ A political dialogue from the period, preserved on papyrus, illustrates well the uncertainty surrounding what to call Sparta. One speaker asks whether the ability to speak well is more beneficial in a democracy or in an oligarchy. He then rephrases the question: Here, or in Lacedaemon? He goes on to say that the difference between the two constitutions (*politeiai*) is that “here” (in Athens, presumably, if the speaker is Socrates) the many are those *politeuomenoi* (“taking part in politics”), while there it is the few. In other words, “here there is a democracy, there an aristocracy” (Merkelbach 1949: 57). It is unclear whether the speaker equates “oligarchy,” “the participating of the few,” and “aristocracy” and applies them all equally to Sparta, or if he thinks the Spartan aristocracy is a special subcategory of oligarchy. In any case, the text indicates that the constitutional nature of Sparta was, in its own day, deemed quite complex.

Despite the fact that theirs was an atypical constitution, whose characteristic features were difficult if not impossible to replicate, the Spartans were emulated by oligarchs throughout the Greek world. Aristophanes has his chorus of elitist knights beg indulgence from the demos (represented by the theater audience) for their long hair, a typically Spartan trait.²⁴⁷ In the *Wasps* the connection between Sparta, wearing one’s hair long, and anti-democratic sentiment is even clearer. The chorus accuses Bdelycleon of being “hateful towards the people” (*misodēmos*) and (somewhat confusingly) “a lover of monarchy,” “conspiring with Brasidas and wearing fringes of wool and growing out your beard untrimmed.”²⁴⁸ The laconizing tendencies of oligarchs within

246. Isoc. 3.24 straightforwardly labels Sparta an oligarchy.

247. Ar. *Eq.* 579–80.

248. Ar. *Vesp.* 474–76. The passage seems to conflate Sparta with tyranny rather than oligarchy (cf. 464–65 just preceding, where *turannis* is linked with “the long-haired Amynias”); also Ar. fr. 110 K-A, from the *Farmers*, in which a speaker refuses to plant a “Laconian fig” because it is *turannikon* and *misodēmon*). Already by this time, however, the two terms were becoming conflated: cf. Thuc. 6.60.1 and Raaflaub 2003: 83. For more instances of long hair, pro-Spartan sentiment, and elitist leanings in Aristophanes, cf. Ar. 1280–85.

Athens really come to the fore, however, during the regime of the Thirty, in particular in the figure of Critias.²⁴⁹ According to Xenophon, Critias said that the Thirty were working with the Lacedaemonians to set up “the present *politeia*,” which, in contrast to the demos, would remain faithful to the Spartans; he is explicit, moreover, in calling the Thirty’s regime an *oligarchia*.²⁵⁰ Later he claims that the *politeia* of the Spartans is regarded as “the finest of all” and cites the example of the ephors as a reason to condemn his enemy Theramenes.²⁵¹ Critias is careful to specify the Spartan constitution as something other than a typical oligarchy, but also to draw attention to the close connection between Sparta and oligarchs and to the sense of emulation oligarchs had toward their patrons.²⁵²

The same is true in other poleis. Already during the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides had noted oligarchs’ tendency to call in the Spartans during bouts of *stasis* with the demos.²⁵³ This trend only accelerated during the period of the Corinthian War and the King’s Peace. The Spartans receive requests for aid from wealthy oligarchs in Thasos, Rhodes, Phlius, Sicyon, Tegea, and the Arcadian *koinon*, who are frequently said to “Iaconize.”²⁵⁴ By the mid-fourth century it could be taken for granted that an oligarch, including one from outside Athens, would admire the Lacedaemonians: Isocrates assumes this when he says he ran his Panathenaic speech by a former pupil who had “taken part in politics [*politeuomenon*] in an oligarchy” and who had chosen to praise Sparta.²⁵⁵ Sparta’s *politeia* might be admired, praised, and theorized about by the oligarchic elite; Sparta itself might supply material aid and training to Iaconizing oligarchs throughout the Greek world; but no sympathetic oligarchy seems to have actually instituted the extensive hoplite regime for which Sparta was famous.²⁵⁶

249. Critias the son of Callaeschrus, an associate of Socrates, poet, political thinker, and extreme oligarch during the rule of the Thirty. For the fanatically anti-democratic imagery on his gravestone, see below; on his life and works, Bultrighini 1999.

250. Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.24–25.

251. For Critias’s comments about the ephors, see chapter 2, section 2.2.

252. Critias wrote an entire prose *Politeia* of the Spartans, now lost except for a few fragments, presumably similar in style to that later composed by Xenophon (DK 88 B 32–37). He also wrote a separate treatise in verse on Sparta (DK 88 B 6–9).

253. Thuc. 3.82.1; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1307b22–24.

254. Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.32 (*lakōnistai* and the Spartan harmost Eteonicus expelled from Thasos), 4.8.20, 5.3.10–13, 6.5.10 (and cf. 6.4.18, *lakōnizontes*), 7.1.44 (*lakōnizein*), 7.5.3. As we have seen already, such groups rarely if ever comprised the entire hoplite infantry.

255. Isoc. 12.220.

256. This is to say nothing of the fact that the Spartiate elite shrank rapidly in the fourth century and the ranks of the hoplite infantry had to be filled with various subordinate popula-

1.2.4 Public Perceptions of Oligarchy in the Classical Period

Finally, to round out this section, we may ask about the self-presentation and public perception of oligarchies during the Classical period. An extended discussion of oligarchs' practices of image projection can be found in chapter 5.²⁵⁷ For now I wish to focus on the picture of oligarchs in Greek popular discourse and in inscribed decrees, which, as Hansen has pointed out, is almost uniformly negative.²⁵⁸

Tellingly, no Greek oligarchy ever advertises itself publicly as such, although oligarchs could speak within their own ranks about the desirability of *oligarchia* for themselves.²⁵⁹ Oligarchs could opt for the neutral-sounding *politeia* (constitution),²⁶⁰ and in more propagandistic moments they hailed their *eunomia* (good order)²⁶¹ or tried to appropriate *aristokratia*.²⁶² This latter

tions: *hupomeiones*, *perioikoi*, helots, and so on. For Sparta's resemblance to a "typical oligarchy" by the mid-fourth century, see Hodkinson 2000: ch. 13.

257. See esp. section 5.2.

258. *IACP* p. 83.

259. For oligarchs candidly using "*oligarchia*" when "among friends," see [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.20; Thuc. 3.62.3, 8.48.4–5; Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.17, 24, 26. Critias's grave monument supposedly showed a personified female *Oligarchia* setting fire to *Dēmokratia* (DK 88 A 13 = schol. *ad Aeschin.* 1.39); we should note that this was a private act undertaken by the friends of a rabidly anti-democratic individual and that it was erected safely after his death.

260. *Politeia*: at *Hell. Oxy.* 18.3 Chambers, the author describes democratic revolutionaries as putting down the "*politeia*" of the Rhodians and setting up a democracy. At Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.42, oligarchic Achaeans ask that Epaminondas and the Thebans not change their *politeia*. "*Politeiai*" has been restored at RO 41, lines 25–31, where it refers to the governments of oligarchic Arcadia, Elis, and Achaea.

261. Thuc. 8.64.5; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.8, 9; Bacchyl. 13.186; Pind. fr. 52a.10 S-M; see Andrewes 1938. (A new authoritarian claim for "*eunomia*" can be found in a recently discovered statue base for Idrrieus the son of Hecatomnus, which says that he led the people of Iasos from suffering to "good order": Nafissi 2015, esp. 79–81.) The virtue of *sōphrosunē* was also often stressed: Thuc. 3.65.3, 3.82.8, 8.2.4.4, 8.64.5; Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.23; Eur. *Hipp.* 983–1035; Plut. *Mor.* 295c; see North 1966. The elite were the *kaloï kagathoi*, the "beautiful and good": Bourriot 1995.

262. *Aristokratia*: Thuc. 3.82.8 (for which see Graham and Forsythe 1984), 8.64.3; Ar. *Av.* 125 (where it is a pun on the name Aristocrates but clearly refers to a non-democratic constitutional alternative); Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.47; Heniochus fr. 5 K-A (personified *Dēmokratia* vs. *Aristokratia* [clearly *Oligarchia* is meant]); Diod. Sic. 15.79.3. Despite the attempts by Aristotle and others to argue that aristocracy was a true form, to be distinguished from oligarchy by its lawfulness (e.g., *Pol.* 3.1279b5), in practice different people called the same basic regime different names according to argumentative need and political preference. Note that Menander Rhetor advises speakers to praise cities governed plutocratically as "aristocracies" (p. 360 Spengel).

term, however, was content-free and could be used to refer to democracies.²⁶³ Over time, for various reasons, oligarchies lost the discursive battle with democracies over the idea of tyranny and were conflated with tyrants. The process started early—awareness of the fine line between tyranny and certain narrow forms of oligarchy probably begins in the mid-fifth century—and by the late fourth century was nearly complete.²⁶⁴ An increasing number of inscribed decrees specify that the constitution of a polis is to be a democracy and that oligarchies and tyrannies are equally to be opposed.²⁶⁵ Strikingly, no decree survives that takes the opposite tack, explicitly instituting oligarchy and conflating democracy and tyranny as illegitimate alternatives. Nor do we possess any inscription that describes episodes of unconstitutional revolution in which “the demos was in power” or the ringleaders were “those in control during the democracy,” as we do in the case of Athens and Erythrae under oligarchy.²⁶⁶ While we possess numerous attestations of cults devoted to both Demos and Demokratia, of statues depicting Demos and Demokratia, and even of ships named “Demokratia,” both in Athens and beyond, no polis is known to have done the same with the concepts “Oligoi,” “Oligarchia,” or even “Aristokratia.”²⁶⁷ Oligarchy, from the time of its first appearance in our

263. Isoc. 12.131; Plat. *Men.* 238c-d. The only instance of *aristokratia* on stone, from Isyllus of Epidaurus’s inscribed hymn to Apollo and Asclepius (*IG IV² 1 128.3*, Hellenistic), is compatible with democratic government, since the *damos* is mentioned multiple times. Other decrees of Hellenistic Epidaurus attest to a demos as well as a *boulē*, strongly indicating (but not guaranteeing) democracy.

264. For dynastic oligarchy as closest in form to tyranny, see Thuc. 3.62.3. For the conflation of oligarchs with tyrants, see Eur. fr. 275 Nauck (accepting the emendation of Hense); Thuc. 6.60.1; the tyrannicide-like assassination of the oligarch Phrynichus in 411 (Thuc. 8.92.2); *Hell. Oxy.* 18.2 Chambers (Rhodes in 395); Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.9 (the liberation Thebes in 379); and the decrees cited below. The philosopher Democritus labeled nondemocratic regimes (so, presumably, both oligarchy and tyranny) as “despots” (*dunastai*): DK 68 B 251. See also the afterword.

265. RO 41, lines 25–26 (terms of alliance specifying the demos rather than a tyrant or an oligarchy as the regime at Athens, 362); *SEG* 51.1105 (Eretria, mid-fourth century); *IK Ilios* 25 (early third century); *Tit. Cal. test.* xii (Cos/Calymna, mid-third century or earlier).

266. *IG II² 448*, line 61 (late fourth century, describing the regime of Phocion); *SEG* 28.60, line 81 (decree for Callias of Sphettus, 270/69); *IK Erythrai* 503, line 2 (probably early third century). Cf. the decree for Demosthenes proposed by his nephew Demochares *apud* Plut. *Mor.* 851c: Demosthenes “was in exile because of the oligarchy, when the demos had been put down.”

267. For the cult of Demokratia in Athens, see *IG II² 1496*, lines 131–2, 140–1. Although the inscription dates to the 330s, the cult probably began with the restoration of democracy in 403. There was a statue to Demokratia in the agora by the time of Demetrius Poliorketes in the late fourth century: *SEG* 25.149 with Raubitschek 1962. Demos and Demokratia appear together in the famous relief crowning the Eucrates law, RO 79. For other depictions of the personified Demos, see Glowacki 2003: appendix. In the Hellenistic period there was a cult for Demos and

extant sources, was unpopular, and it remained so. A remark of Aristotle's is revealing in this regard: He is discussing the issue of whether the polis remains the same when new political regimes come to power. The question is important in that newly installed democrats might refuse to fulfill contracts (*sumbolaia*) made under tyrannies or oligarchies; the basis of their refusal being, he says, that those regimes depend on force and are not established with the common good in mind.²⁶⁸ Aristotle contests this democratic claim by arguing that many democracies, no less than oligarchies and tyrannies, are based on the domination of one class or faction over others. That he had to make the argument in the first place, however, suggests that the majority held to a "common-sense" notion that democracy much more than oligarchy or tyranny represented the will of the community, and that the other two were coercive regimes at base. In making a clever point, therefore, Aristotle reveals that most people took for granted the illegitimacy of oligarchy.²⁶⁹ The description of oligarchy given by Dio of Prusa, which serves as the epigraph to this chapter, would therefore likely have found approval among the majority of Greek men at the end of the fourth century: "Oligarchy, the harsh and unjust greed of a few rich and wretched men arrayed against the poor majority."²⁷⁰

1.3 Methodology

This final section of the introductory chapter lays out the methodological approaches employed by the book, defines terms, and introduces several

the Charites (Mikalson 1998: ch. 6). For a ship named *Dēmokratia*, already "old" in 374/3 when its existence is recorded, see *IG II²* 1606, lines 59–60. For cults and personifications along these lines outside of Athens, see Isager and Karlsson 2008 = *SEG* 58.1220; *F. Delphes* III.4.163, lines 25–28; *IK Kyme* 13, lines 2–4; *IG Bulg.* I² 320. See further Aubriet 2012: 202–4 and, for political personification generally, Messerschmidt 2003; Neils 2013. The only known personification of Oligarchia comes from the grave relief of Critias, discussed above, but cf. Heniochus fr. 5 K-A (personified *Aristokratia*, likely depicted as a prostitute along with *Dēmokratia*).

²⁶⁸ *Pol.* 3.1276a8–13.

²⁶⁹ The same thing applies to the conversation between Pericles and Alcibiades preserved in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.2.40–46): it is assumed that democracy is legitimate and tyranny and oligarchy are not until Alcibiades cleverly argues that decisions of the democratic majority also constitute acts of force.

²⁷⁰ 3.48. He goes on to criticize democracy as well, of course, employing typical anti-democratic *topoi*: the demos is wild, variegated, and ignorant, and liable to be whipped into a frenzy by unscrupulous demagogues (3.49). Here, though, as with other criticisms of democracy, the demos is spared the charge of intentional malice. It is stupid and prone to viciousness, but this is not entirely its fault (the paternalistic tone is obvious). For the association of oligarchy with greed, see Balot 2001: 179–233.

important recurring concepts. The most fundamental concept used is “methodological individualism.” This approach assumes that the basic unit of analysis, through and out of which large-scale political and social phenomena arise, is the discrete (human) individual, who makes purposeful choices.²⁷¹ Supra-individual entities, which in the present case include such important concepts as the demos and the polis, remain meaningful in the sense that contemporary actors endow them with cultural import and, crucially, base their own actions on belief in them. Ultimately, however, these entities depend upon the aggregate shared beliefs of individuals, which can change.²⁷²

Since I cannot address all of the reasons for adopting methodological individualism, I will emphasize here that it respects the important fact that individuals cannot read one another’s minds, and that therefore collective action depends heavily upon individuals’ anticipation of others’ actions. This consideration is crucial when considering any group effort. It militates against the assumption that groups of individuals with a shared interest will necessarily act upon that interest. Quite often, as an extensive scholarly literature within the social sciences has shown, welfare-enhancing collective action fails to occur because of choices at the individual level.²⁷³ This does not mean that collectivities do not exist—I take it for granted in this book, for example, that the group identity marker “member of the demos” was well defined, that it was embraced by certain individuals, and that it suggested to those individuals certain desirable ways of acting collectively. I do not for that reason assume, however, that “the demos” always and everywhere acted in its own self-interest. There was no supra-individual “collective consciousness” of the demos that determined its actions. If the members of the demos were to act together—to challenge an oligarchy, to establish a democracy, to enact policies within a constitutional structure—they had to make a sufficient number of individual decisions to produce group action in the aggregate.²⁷⁴ Numerous

271. See Elster 2007: ch. 1; for a critical view, see Lukes 2006. Note that although I speak throughout the book of individual oligarchs, I am aware that they did not act in isolation but were members (usually the heads) of households (*oikoi*). Sometimes members of an elite *oikos* in an oligarchy quarreled, especially when only certain individuals in the family were able to participate in the regime (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1305b2–16). My working assumption, however, is that *oikoi* cooperated internally, and that we can still productively think of oligarchies as the result of choices made by individuals.

272. I do not mean that the relevant social actors are necessarily *aware* of the dependency of a concept like the polis on their aggregate beliefs—they do not typically operate under the assumption that their concepts are merely social conventions that can be dropped. What I do mean is that when such concepts change, it is because enough people have changed their minds about them, for whatever reason.

273. Olson 1965; Hardin 1982; Ostrom 1990: 5–6.

274. Thus methodological individualism maintains that human beings, rather than classes,

times, and for various reasons, they failed to do so. As will become clear, oligarchic stability and the institutions that produced this stability were premised on the assumption that the members of the demos could be induced *not* to act together.

It is important to say briefly what methodological individualism is not. It is not a theory of individual preference that posits selfishness as the motivation for all human action. Max Weber, who employed methodological individualism, was adamant that the approach did not entail psychological egoism or any other self-centered conception of the human mind.²⁷⁵ Methodological individualism is not equivalent to treating individuals as the *homo economicus* known from some strong forms of neoclassical economics, in which individual utility, reducible to cash value, determines choice.²⁷⁶ It leaves open the possibility that a person will act for reasons of self-sacrifice, love, duty, or honor—but insists that it is he or she who is acting, and not some collective entity.

Furthermore, the potential problems of collective action identified by a methodologically individualist approach are not intractable, and can in fact be mitigated by cultural ties, norms, and other forms of nonmaterial, ideological conditioning. In other words, the individuals considered by methodological individualism are not radically alienated from one another; are not self-seeking monads with no consideration of others' claims or interests; and are frequently able to overcome what would normally be barriers to collective action through socialization, communication, and solidarity. As a shorthand, we can subsume these factors under the concept—increasingly common in social science literature—of “social capital.”²⁷⁷ The Nobel Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom, for example, was beginning to incorporate considerations of social capital into the study of collective action toward the end of her life.²⁷⁸

nations, or other groups, have intention and make decisions. We can speak of “the few” doing something, “the demos” doing another—and I do speak this way in this book—as long as we recognize that these group efforts are the product of aggregate individual choices. The failure of collective action is the limit case that reveals the ultimate dependence of group action on individual decisions.

275. Weber 1978: 18: “It is a tremendous misunderstanding to think that an ‘individualistic’ *method* should involve what is in any conceivable sense an individualistic system of *values*.” See further the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* s.v. “methodological individualism.”

276. For *homo economicus*, see, e.g., Becker 1976.

277. Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; critical overview by Seubert 2009. See now Kierstead 2013 for an account of the Athenian democracy that utilizes the concept of social capital.

278. See her 1998 and 2000, building on her earlier work (1990) concerning “governing the commons”—on which see further below.

These trends, coupled with other attacks on the traditional economic picture of human beings as purely rational utility maximizers, have only increased in recent years, and they conform to what the Greeks themselves tell us about how they conceived of motivation, group identity, and collective action.²⁷⁹ As Aristotle notes, a community of citizens (in other words, a polis in the Greek context) is not merely an alliance, “a surety to one another of justice,” nor a place established simply “for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange,” but a joint project undertaken for the sake of the good life.²⁸⁰ In another famous passage, he notes that human beings, those “political animals,” alone out of all animals possess speech (*logos*), which sets forth the expedient and the inexpedient, and thus the just and the unjust, which are claims upon others.²⁸¹ The Greeks thus well understood the importance to human beings of communitarian values, of identifying with others, and of coming to collective agreement through the mutual exchange of views.²⁸²

Several important models of group behavior follow from the premises of methodological individualism. Two of them are “coordination” and (what is a subset of group coordination) “collective action.” Coordination describes a situation in which two or more individuals desire the same outcome but must align along a similar choice of action in order to bring it about. A standard example of a coordination problem in the literature is the decision of which side of the road to drive on. Left or right works equally well, but the drivers must arrive at a conventional agreement in order for traffic to proceed safely. Once agreed upon, moreover, neither party has a reason to change his or her side of the road unilaterally: this would greatly increase the likelihood of accident. Everyone’s interests are served by adhering to the original agreement, even if it was arbitrary. They can do no better by changing their course of action.²⁸³

279. Attacks on *homo economicus* have come from prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979) and experimental psychology and economics (Henrich et al. 2005; Camerer and Fehr 2006), among others.

280. Arist. *Pol.* 3.1280b8–12, 30–32, 39.

281. Arist. *Pol.* 1.1253a9–15.

282. See further Balot 2006: 14–15: “We find within Greek political thought approval of individual autonomy, innovation, private freedom, and equality of opportunity,” yes also the belief that “individuals were defined by their attachments to their families, religion, and communities and, furthermore, that individuals became happy through participating in the traditions and culture of their poleis.” The work of Christ has demonstrated from the opposite direction that despite a strong communitarian streak in Greek thinking, the Greeks (and especially the Athenians) well understood self-interest and individual choice (see his 2006, 2012).

283. On coordination, see Lewis 1969; Sen 1967; Chwe 2001; Skyrms 2004.

The whole schema, however, hinges upon the ability of the players to signal their intentions to one another early on. Normally participants have no reason to hide their preferences, since everyone benefits from an open airing of views and communication costs nothing. If, for whatever reason, others' preferences remain unknown, however, coordination can fail to occur. People would rather do nothing than risk embarking on a course of action which others might be unwilling to undertake. The importance of this fact comes out especially in situations of anti-authoritarian revolutionary upheaval. Suppose that of the subjects of an authoritarian regime each is individually willing to join with the others in overthrowing the regime; he or she will openly oppose the regime, however, only if s/he is certain that others are willing to participate as well. Authoritarian rulers thus have an interest in maintaining their subjects in ignorance of one another's preferences.²⁸⁴

The ancient Greeks saw clearly that authoritarian rulers who wished to rule over unwilling subjects could attempt to undermine civic ties in order to weaken the opposition. Aristotle notes that the tyrant who wishes to preempt opposition to his rule must reduce the overall social capital of his subjects: by getting rid of "schools and other meetings for discussion," he undercuts public-mindedness and communal solidarity. "Familiarity [*gnōsis*]," Aristotle explains, "is what produces trust [*pistis*]," but the tyrant keeps his people ignorant of one another and therefore incapable of collective action, in the process strengthening his regime.²⁸⁵ I argue that a similar dynamic obtained in oligarchies, where the ruling elite had to worry that the demos might come together and overthrow the constitution. Where oligarchs succeeded in decreasing the stock of social capital, we ought to expect increased difficulty in coordinating democratic revolutionary action.²⁸⁶

An important corollary to the problem of coordination, as well as a potential means of overcoming it, is the notion of "common knowledge."²⁸⁷ Common knowledge is not simply the idea that two people both know the same thing. Common knowledge obtains in a two-person scenario when person A knows thing X, person B knows X, person A knows person B knows X, person B knows that person A knows X, and each knows that the other knows the

284. See Kuran 1995 on "preference falsification" under authoritarianism. Teegarden 2014 puts this point to excellent use in his study of ancient Greek anti-tyranny legislation.

285. Arist. *Pol.* 5.1313b5–6.

286. Thus I am not claiming that highly individualistic decision-making was always and everywhere the norm; instead, this kind of strategizing increased in high-risk authoritarian scenarios where the ruling powers purposefully engendered distrust among the populace.

287. For the connection between coordination and common knowledge, see Chwe 2001. Historians of ancient Greece who have already realized the importance of Chwe's work include Ober (e.g., his 2008: 114–15) and Teegarden (2014: 37–39).

same about him/her. If any link in this chain fails, there is no common knowledge. The importance of common knowledge for coordination comes through clearly in the authoritarian context described above. Subjects of an authoritarian regime may be individually willing to cooperate to overthrow the regime, but only if others are willing as well. Suppose an individual citizen receives a flyer in the mail calling for a protest against the regime. In the absence of confirmation that other citizens have received the same flyer, the individual is not likely to attend the rally, for fear of being the only one there. If, by contrast, a clandestine group manages to place a poster advertising the rally in a prominent public place where citizens are allowed to congregate, the poster becomes a matter of common knowledge: citizen A has seen the poster, but also knows that citizen B has seen it, and that they each know this about the other. In such situations, individuals may feel empowered to express their true feelings. By learning that at least some people share their opposition to the regime (in an environment that had previously been tightly monitored and controlled by the ruling group), citizens may more readily dare to speak out themselves. The result, well known from contemporary studies of revolution, can be a cascade of coordinated behavior powerful enough to topple the ruling power.²⁸⁸

A subspecies of the coordination problem is the collective action problem. Unlike coordination problems, in which the players are assumed to have no reasons to defect from cooperation so long as preferences are signaled clearly, the problem of collective action describes a situation in which self-interest ruins the possibility of shared gain.²⁸⁹ The most famous example of a collective action problem is the so-called Prisoner's Dilemma, known from game theory.²⁹⁰ Imagine two prisoners, A and B, brought in separately by the police on suspicion of a crime. The police lay out the following choices for each suspect: 1) if A informs on B, A will go free and B will face maximum jail time, and vice versa; 2) if A and B both inform on each other, they will both go to jail, but with reduced sentences; 3) if A and B both refuse to inform on each other, the police have no choice but to set them free after a year. Each prisoner must then make the decision whether or not to inform on the other. Their decisions occur in isolation of each other, with no knowledge of how the other is choosing; they must make their choice based on what they expect the other will do. The possible outcomes of the "game" can be repre-

288. Kuran 1989 (on the "sparks" that light the prairie fires of revolution; see further chapter 6, section 6.1.2); Lohmann 2000; Scott 1990: ch. 8.

289. The most famous statement of the problem is in Olson 1965.

290. Hardin 1982 first showed that the problem of collective action and the Prisoner's Dilemma are equivalent.

mented stylistically as follows (A's outcomes are listed first in the parentheses, B's second):

		<u>Prisoner B</u>	
		Tell	Don't Tell
<u>Prisoner A</u>	Tell	(-10, -10)	(0, -20)
	Don't Tell	(-20, 0)	(-1, -1)

FIGURE 1. The Prisoner's Dilemma

Here the numbers represent the amount of time spent in jail, but they also track the prisoners' preference ordering: each prefers 0 to -1 to -10 to -20.

For both players, the "dominant strategy" is to tell on the other person. Strictly speaking, this is because the "Tell" option always has a better outcome. If Player A is comparing his or her possible outcomes from choosing "Tell" over "Don't Tell" (top square over bottom square), -10 is better than -20 and 0 is better than -1. It is thus rational for both to choose a strategy of "Tell." The solution to the game is for both to choose "Tell" and renege on each other, but then both go to jail, in this case for ten years. But it was possible (just not rational) for both to choose "Don't Tell," so that they would go to jail for only one year. Individual rationality has led to a suboptimal group outcome.

Classical Greek oligarchs counted on their political institutions engendering Prisoner's Dilemma-like collective action problems among their subjects. If they could make the common people's livelihoods, or even their very lives, depend upon cooperation with the regime rather than cooperation with their fellow citizens, they could stymie collective action. So long as the members of the demos viewed the potential costs of collective action as outweighing the potential benefits of overthrowing the oligarchy and establishing a democracy, they would fail to initiate resistance. The targeted inducements utilized by the oligarchs included rewards for informants, positions of authority or material gain within the regime itself, and threats (explicit or implicit) against potential subversives.²⁹¹

At the same time, the members of the oligarchy faced their own set of collective action problems, most of them stemming from the fact that (in most

291. See especially chapter 3.

cases, we might guess) an oligarch preferred the outcome of his being tyrant over cooperation with his oligarchic peers.²⁹² Oligarchic stability was constantly threatened by the possibility that some individual or subgroup within the ruling elite would discover a means of acquiring sole domination. I conceive of stable oligarchic government as the cooperative solution to an “iterated” Prisoner’s Dilemma. Social scientists have found that the possibility of continued (“iterated”) play creates an opportunity for sustained cooperation over time. If the game is going to persist indefinitely, cooperation makes rational sense.²⁹³ Oligarchs resemble participants in such a game. Each member of the elite in a hypothetical two-person struggle for power would like to take advantage of the other’s naïve trust, in the process becoming tyrant. Such an outcome is represented by the lower-left and upper-right quadrants in figure 1. In the upper-left quadrant, we have the equivalent of double defection, in the Greek case meaning ongoing *stasis*. Since the two members of the elite are going to be playing the game seemingly without end, however, it becomes rational to cooperate: why continuously harm one another if they can get by on their second-best option, represented by the lower-right quadrant? Oligarchy is thus a cooperative long-term equilibrium that represents the overcoming of short-term gain.²⁹⁴

292. The desirability of tyranny is a commonplace in the sources: Archilochus fr. 19 West; Solon fr. 33 West; Xen. *Hier.* 1.9; Ar. *Eq.* 1111–19; Plat. *Gorg.* 471a–d, 491e–92c, *Rep.* 8.568b–c. This positive assessment of tyranny might be critically interrogated by philosophers like Plato, who wished to show that it was incorrect, but it was taken for granted by the average Greek. This does not, of course, mean that Greeks desired to be *ruled* by a tyrant, only that they wanted to *be* one. (Anyway, it was beyond the reach of the vast majority of people.) Anderson argues that tyranny did not have a negative connotation during the Archaic period but that tyrants were instead de facto leaders who enjoyed “broad consent for their authority from among the governing class” (2005: 187); this is, in my view, to take too sanguine a view of the ability of the Archaic elite willingly to acknowledge superiority in another. If a man became tyrant, it was because he enjoyed access to some means of power over his rivals which they lacked. For oligarchic preference orderings, see further chapter 6, section 6.2.1.

293. See Axelrod 1984. It does not make rational sense if the precise number of games to be played is known: then it makes sense to defect rather than cooperate on the last game, since there is no further game to keep the players cooperative. But if one is going to defect on the last game, one should defect on the second-to-last game (since the last game is now a lost cause), then the third-to-last game, and so on, until one finally works back (through “backward induction”) to the conclusion that one should defect on all the games after all.

294. We will see in chapter 6, section 6.2.1, how this equilibrium could easily break down with the introduction of new and unforeseen sources of power. Note also that oligarchs had to deal with their own version of the “tragedy of the commons”—the process whereby individuals deplete a common resource by acting self-interestedly. In a Greek oligarchy, the worry was that individual oligarchs would choose to exploit members of the *demos*, thinking that the conse-

The basic concepts of methodological individualism, coordination, common knowledge, and collective action problems have now laid the groundwork for an understanding of the present book's approach to institutions. As mentioned in the opening section of this chapter, a new and distinctive set of approaches to institutions has emerged under the title of the "New Institutionalism."²⁹⁵ Older forms of institutionalism either catalogued the elements of political institutions in list-like fashion, or explained institutional variety as reflective of the underlying structures or values of society.²⁹⁶ By contrast, the New Institutionalism focuses on the ways in which institutions are situated within a complex matrix of human intention, historical context, and relationships of power. Although there are several varieties of the New Institutionalism, this study adopts methods most closely associated with "Historical Institutionalism." In the words of sympathetic commentators, Historical Institutionalism

quences of their personal actions would be negligible. In the aggregate, however, their behavior might precipitate democratic resistance (see chapters 3 and 6, on scenarios when oligarchic abuse leads to revolution). Oligarchs had to monitor one another's behavior, but they were unwilling to establish a "Leviathan"-like central authority in order to do so (this would represent too great a diminution of their personal power). We can think of the institutions they devised instead as an interesting take on Ostrom's notion of "governing the commons" (1990), in which the users of a common resource maintain it through "self-government" rather than through either privatization of property rights or establishment of a powerful central state.

295. For the application of New Institutionalism methods to the study of ancient history, see already Frier and Kehoe 2007; Ober 2008: 8 with n12; Müller 2011: 356–60; Mackil 2013: 10–13; Bresson 2016: 15–27.

296. There is a longstanding tradition within ancient historiography of studying the political institutions of the Greek city-states. My promotion of New Institutionalism is in no way intended to downplay the importance of studies in this tradition, without which research on ancient politics would be impossible. Within this group of institutional studies, one strand, largely Anglophone, has examined the institutions of the Classical Athenian democracy (e.g., Hansen 1983 and 1989 on the assembly; Rhodes 1982b on the council). Another strand, this time largely Francophone, has documented the institutions of the Greek cities of the Hellenistic period and later, attested primarily through inscriptions. Publications in this vein are ongoing (e.g., Gauthier 1985 on civic benefaction; Fröhlich 2004 on *euthuna* or accountability procedures; Feyel 2009 on the *dokimasia* or scrutiny of officials; Chankowski 2010 on the *ephebate* or training of young men). Works in the French tradition tend to emphasize the diversity of institutions within the Hellenistic Greek world and their variation from polis to polis, as well as their gradual development over time. The sources necessary for conducting this sort of analysis of Classical Greek oligarchy, however, are lacking. A New Institutional approach allows us to pick out commonly shared features of Classical Greek oligarchies in general and, more importantly, to explain how oligarchic practices (institutions) kept oligarchs in power.

conceptualize[s] the relationship between institutions and individual behavior in relatively broad terms, . . . emphasize[s] the asymmetries of power associated with the operation and development of institutions, . . . emphasizes path dependence and unintended consequences [in institutional development], . . . [and] integrate[s] institutional analysis with the contribution that other kinds of factors, such as ideas, can make to political outcomes. (Hall and Taylor 1996: 938)²⁹⁷

The appeal to the historian in this description should be clear. It remains to explain what it means by institutions and how they work.

In line with other practitioners of the New Institutionalism, I define institutions as “sets of action-guiding rules established to constrain behavior through controlling the sequence of action, the information available to participants, and the participants’ perceptions of the expected outcomes from their actions.”²⁹⁸ Institutions are especially important for political regimes because they have the potential to induce equilibrium states of behavior among individuals in which no participant has a reason to alter his or her action unilaterally. When the equilibrium state in question is one of acquiescence, the regime enjoys basic stability. In other scenarios, of course, the purpose of an institution might be to produce an equilibrium state of cooperation. Several of the earliest exercises in New Institutionalism explained institutions as mechanisms for overcoming collective action problems, and thus for allowing people to enjoy the gains to be had from mutual cooperation. The result is democracy and the rule of law.²⁹⁹ This is a particularly rosy picture of the purpose of institutions. As commentators have pointed out subsequently, institutions can just as easily be used by authoritarian rulers to oppress their subjects and consolidate their own power. Those in a position to establish new institutions at the onset of a regime enjoy an enormous advantage, and they can use it for autocracy as often as (perhaps more often than) for democracy.³⁰⁰

A more recent crop of New Institutional literature has therefore examined the effect of institutions under authoritarian political conditions. For these authors, institutions do not enable citizens to pursue their interests or to achieve common goals collectively, but instead restrict individual freedom of action for the purpose of promoting elite authority. Authoritarian institutions include elite councils, co-opted parliaments, rigged elections, patronage

297. Hall and Taylor 1996: 938. For other overviews of Historical Institutionalism, see Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Clemens and Cook 1999; Thelen 1999; and Pierson and Skocpol 2002.

298. Compare the definition of Weingast 2002.

299. Shepsle 1986: 74; Weingast 2002: 670.

300. Bates 1988; Knight 1992; Moe 2005. Much of the criticism of traditional New Institutional analysis involves the charge that it ignores asymmetries of power.

networks, censorship of the press and of civil society, and coercive state apparatuses such as the secret police.³⁰¹ As the political scientist Milan Svolik has argued, these institutions tend to address two central problems of authoritarian governance: the problem of authoritarian power-sharing (regulating relations among the ruling elite) and the problem of authoritarian control (managing a discontented and potentially unruly citizenry).³⁰² Political scientists studying the institutions in question have found that they provide a third way between the two extreme and often impractical measures of total ideological hegemony and total repressive violence. In other words, few authoritarian regimes possess the willpower or the resources necessary either to indoctrinate their subjects entirely or to keep them down by pure force. Well-crafted institutions afford authoritarians a much less time- and labor-intensive method of controlling unwilling populations.

I have made the decision to treat Classical Greek oligarchy as a kind of authoritarian regime along these lines (in fact a very early example of one), *mutatis mutandis*.³⁰³ Various sources cited over the course of this chapter have made it clear that, despite appeals to greater “good order” (*eunomia*) and “moderation” (*sōphrosunē*), oligarchies were on the whole much more repressive than democracies. Aristotle straightforwardly labels them “more despotic” (*despotikōterai*), while Plato has Socrates say in the *Republic* that oligarchies are established either through force of arms or through terror, and that the rulers must henceforth forcibly restrain the discontented masses through “oversight” (*epimeleia*).³⁰⁴ Most oligarchies throughout the Classical period seem to have operated on the notion that they had to struggle to survive against the popular tide of democracy.

301. For an overview of the New Institutional approach to authoritarianism, see Magaloni and Kricheli 2010. See further Barros 2002; Svolik 2012; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2006; Gandhi 2008; Brownlee 2007; Simpser 2013; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Stokes 2005; Blaydes 2010; Levitsky and Way 2010.

302. 2012: 2. Strikingly, Svolik uses Aristotle’s statement about the twin dangers facing oligarchies (*Pol.* 5.1302a8–11, which serves as the epigraph to chapter 6 below) as the epigraph to his first chapter.

303. I do not consider oligarchies totalitarian regimes on the order of those that have existed since the twentieth century. Totalitarian regimes aim for complete ideological conditioning of the subject population and the minute control of every aspect of civil society, concepts that most Greeks, including oligarchs, would not even have understood (except perhaps Plato in the *Republic*). For the important differences between totalitarian and authoritarian states, see Linz 2000.

304. *Arist. Pol.* 4.1290a28; *Plat. Rep.* 8.551b, 552e (and cf. *Leg.* 4.710e, where oligarchy is said to contain “the greatest number of despots [*dunastai*]”). For the importance of the term *epimeleia* for understanding oligarchic relations of clientelism, see chapter 4, section 4.4.

If oligarchies were authoritarian states, however, they were a very specific historical variety of them. De Ste. Croix compares the holdings of Classical Greek landholders with the huge estates of later Roman senators in order to “place in better perspective the relatively mean little estates possessed by even the ‘aristocracy’ of Classical Greece.”³⁰⁵ Josiah Ober has likewise recently shown, using the available quantitative data, that wealth distribution was relatively egalitarian in Classical Greece, with Gini coefficients (a standard measure of inequality) falling well below the extremes found in other societies, including some modern liberal democracies.³⁰⁶ The comparative paltriness of the Greek upper class’s landholdings has crucial implications for our understanding of oligarchy. These regimes were weak, not only absolutely speaking, in the sense that all Greek poleis’ state apparatuses were rudimentary, but also in that the Greek elite never amassed enough wealth so as to consolidate a stable and impenetrable state edifice against popular agitation. Several factors, both external and internal to the elite, mitigated against inequality: not only was there a strong ideology of citizen male egalitarianism, but the members of the elite themselves were also so suspicious of centralized power—that is, of a single man (tyrant) acquiring it—that they likely prevented too unequal a distribution of property.³⁰⁷ Thus a combination of egalitarian economic institutions and political decentralization prevented the hoarding of wealth within a central ruling class, at least until later historical developments, including the rise of immense kingdoms and the involvement of Rome, changed the political and economic landscape.

Classical oligarchies thus lacked the raw coercive power exercised by more exploitative societies in later historical periods, such as European settler colonies or even the Roman Empire. On the other hand, they did little to ingratiate themselves to their subjects, and they eschewed any pretense of being “populist” authoritarian regimes such as existed in the twentieth century and continue to persist today.³⁰⁸ While some oligarchs no doubt honestly believed that their preferred political arrangements were to the ultimate benefit of so-

305. De Ste. Croix 1981: 120.

306. See Ober 2015, esp. 90–93 with fig. 4.2. Cf. Bresson 2016: 149 (emphasis added): “In the democratic city-state, or at least in the run-of-the-mill city-states of the Classical period (*not all of which were democratic*), land ownership was relatively widely distributed.”

307. Runciman 1990 stresses this point, esp. p. 364, where he calls the poleis (even the oligarchic ones) “far too democratic” to create “a close concentration of economic, ideological, and coercive power in the hands of a compact, self-reproducing elite.” For the extensive spread of an ideology of egalitarian male citizenship throughout mainland Greece by the end of the Archaic period, see Morris 1996: 41.

308. Populist authoritarian regimes might include Mexico under the PRI (Magaloni 2006) and Argentina under Perón.

ciety, in that each “kind” of person under an oligarchy would get what he or she “naturally” deserved and the polis would be stable and well-governed, they were also aware that their goals were often most easily obtained, not by persuading the members of the demos of the rightness of their program, but by violent imposition.³⁰⁹ This unpopularity, coupled with the severe (but not insurmountable) sense of competition felt between members of the elite, again impresses upon us the considerable feat achieved by stable oligarchies and the need to explain it. As I have indicated, their survival is best understood in terms of the operation of their political institutions within the context of the ancient Greek polis.

In the chapters that follow, I test the following theory: Given that Classical Greek oligarchies were authoritarian regimes, which faced internal pressure both at the intra-elite level and in relations between elite and demos, successful institutions should be those that a) kept the fractious elite in an equilibrium of unified cooperation, while b) engendering an equilibrium state of inaction among the members of the demos. In addition, a key feature underpinning the success of these institutions should be the greater organization afforded oligarchs by their smaller numbers. On the assumption that a smaller group can more easily overcome barriers to collective action than a larger one, we should see oligarchs taking advantage of both their own closer familiarity with each other and the greater size and disorganization of the demos.³¹⁰ The theory, while informed by the study of contemporary authoritarianism, is not

309. For overviews of oligarchic justificatory ideology see Raaflaub 1983: 524–34; Ostwald 2000: 21–30; Rhodes 2000: 128–35. The Thirty at Athens claimed at the onset of their regime that they were “purifying the city of unjust men and turning the rest of the citizenry toward virtue and justice” (*Lys.* 12.5), but what little good will, if any, they enjoyed from the demos was quickly squandered. According to Xenophon, Critias and other hardcore members of the Thirty were implacably opposed to the demos from the beginning (*Hell.* 2.3.24–26). It is true that Aristotle recommends that citizens of democracies and oligarchies be “acculturated and educated in the constitution” to ensure stability (*Pol.* 5.1310a16–17), but he does not indicate how often oligarchies actually practiced this (let alone achieved it). The rest of the *Politics* suggests that ideological differences between oligarchs and democrats were more often insurmountable.

310. Cf. Teegarden 2014: 172: “Nondemocratic regimes will have political institutions and practices that control common knowledge so that people raise their revolutionary thresholds [the point at which they are willing to engage in resistance] and thus become atomized.” Note that my definition of “institution” encompasses social practices not typically included among political institutions more conventionally understood; this will become most apparent in chapters 4 and 5. Fröhlich has criticized the “purely institutional” approach to the Greek city represented by the *IACP*, saying that it gives us a picture of a “city without society” (2010: 667–75, quotation at 673). I hope to give some indication in this book of how power permeated the society and culture of oligarchic poleis in addition to the formal political bodies.

simply a modern import. The initial impetus for formulating the theory arises from the ancient sources themselves, which paint oligarchy in an almost uniformly negative light. If we take the sources seriously that oligarchy was unpopular, we should inquire into the sources of oligarchic regime stability, which become much more mysterious. A theory provides a rigorous means of both testing the evidence and explaining a puzzling phenomenon. If the theory helps to organize and to elucidate the extant evidence, the exercise in theory-building and -testing will have accomplished its task.³¹¹

I do not suppose that mine is the last word on Classical Greek oligarchy. I have, however, attempted to treat the phenomenon in a thorough and rigorous way, and to say something decisive about the general practice of oligarchy. No doubt others will dispute elements of the argument: its geographical and conceptual scope; its methodologically individualist approach; its focus on conflict instead of cooperation; and its elevation of institutions over ideology, just to name a few possibilities.³¹² While parts of the book will read to some as traditional, others will seem radically novel. I consider it to be an invitation to consider an important topic of Classical Greek history using a particular methodological lens.

311. The book does not aim to be an exhaustive list of every last oligarchic institution. I focus on those that maintained oligarchic control in the face of potential resistance, which on my reading were the most important anyway.

312. The majority of the evidence comes from the best-known poleis of mainland Greece, the Aegean, Asia Minor, and the West. I have not given as much attention to what have traditionally been considered more “marginal” regions of the Greek-speaking world—Thessaly (Granger 2011; Mili 2015), Crete (see above, n36), Macedonia (Hammond 1989; Hatzopoulos 1996)—nor on political entities beyond the polis, such as tribes, federations, and kingdoms (Morgan 2003; Mackil 2013; Mitchell 2013). With respect to ideology, I have downplayed its potential effects on oligarchic regime stability, both because I think the ideological appeal of oligarchy to the demos was weak, and because the effects of ideology are so difficult to measure. One of the chief methodological goals of this book is to indicate the extent to which political acquiescence can be explained by institutional success, without ideology having to enter into the picture.