



Before *Turannoi* Were Tyrants: Rethinking a Chapter of Early Greek History

According to classical and postclassical sources, the early Greek *turannoi* were, by definition, illegitimate rulers who overturned existing political arrangements and installed rogue monarchic regimes in their place. And on this one fundamental point at least, modern observers of archaic *turannides* seem to have little quarrel with their ancient informants. To this day, it remains axiomatic that Cypselus, Peisistratus, and the rest were autocrats who gained power by usurpation. Whatever their individual accomplishments, they were still, in a word, “tyrants.” Relying mostly on evidence from the contemporary literary and material records, the paper questions this time-honored commonplace. Prior to the late sixth century, I contend, there was in fact no absolute distinction between *turannoi* and orthodox leaders in Greek poleis. The former aimed to dominate established oligarchies, not to subvert them. A *turannis* was not yet a species of political regime, illegitimate or otherwise. Rather, it was mainstream oligarchic leadership in its most amplified form, conventional de facto authority writ large.

In a bold and persuasive essay, Robin Osborne (1998: 269) has called for the “eradication” of chapters on “colonization” from surveys of early Greek history. As he points out, it is anachronistic to apply the term “colony” to the various settlements founded by Greeks in Italy and Sicily in the eighth and seventh centuries, since most if not all of them were essentially “private enterprises.” The current article makes a similar recommendation: the term “tyrant” should

This paper began life as an invited lecture, presented to the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Michigan in March 2002, which attempted to show that the political behavior of the Peisistratids did not necessarily violate the prevailing norms of the age. I am very grateful to Sara Forsdyke for inviting me to give the talk and to all those who attended and gave feedback. Many thanks also to Bruce Laforse, Nanno Marinatos, and Geoff Bakewell for reading and commenting on the manuscript of the completed article, to Steve Johnstone for his invaluable editorial advice, and to the journal’s two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments. The Interlibrary Loan staff at the Dunbar Library of Wright State University responded with admirable patience and efficiency to my numerous requests for assistance.

have no place in scholarship on early Greece. With its implicit suggestions of monarchy and illegitimacy, the word fundamentally misrepresents the men the archaic Greeks called *turannoi*.

Serious historical study of the Corinthian Cypselids, the Orthagorids of Sikyon, the Peisistratids of Athens, and other early *turannoi* has been under way now for the better part of two centuries. Yet the topic remains, in the words of a recent commentator, “one of Greek history’s most challenging black holes.”¹ All of our primary narrative sources are classical or postclassical, and all are riddled with anachronistic prejudices and assumptions. To mention only the most obvious of these, authors routinely take it for granted in their accounts that the *turannos* was by definition a malevolent, immoral figure, even though the term probably did not acquire these proverbial, pejorative connotations until sometime after the “age of the tyrants” (ca. 650–510 BCE) was over. Tales of capricious cruelty, sexual deviancy, and the like add plenty of vivid color and detail to their narratives, but little in the way of credibility.²

For those interested in exploring discursive constructions of the *turannos* figure in the classical era, such accounts of course offer a rich seam of material.³ But those more interested in preclassical actualities have increasingly come to

1. For the texts and numbering of the poems of Alcaeus, I follow Campbell’s edition in the first volume of his *Greek Lyric* (1982); for the iambists and elegists, I follow the second edition of West’s *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (1989–1992). The renderings of Greek into English are my own, though they at times draw freely on standard published translations, like those found in the Loeb editions of early lyric, elegy, and iambus and in West 1993. The following abbreviations are also used: Buck = C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects*, 3rd edition, Chicago, 1955; *IvO* = W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, *Inscriptionen von Olympia*, Berlin, 1896; ML = R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, eds., *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC*, revised edition, Oxford, 1988.

Quotation: Lane Fox 2000: 38. The more significant general works on the subject include: Plaß 1859; Ure 1922; Lenschau 1948; Berve 1954; 1967; White 1955; Andrewes 1956; Mossé 1969; Pleket 1969; Drews 1972; Lanza 1977; Kinzl 1979b; Ruzé 1989; Barceló 1993; Giorgini 1993; McGlew 1993; Cawkwell 1995; de Libero 1996; Salmon 1997. For a critical *tour d’horizon*, see de Libero 1996: 11–19. Comprehensive recent bibliographies can be found in de Libero 1996: 418–44 and K. Morgan 2003b: 277–301.

2. Even for writers of the fifth and fourth centuries, events before ca. 500 BCE belonged essentially to prehistory. For source material these authors were forced to rely on the largely mute testimony of timeworn monuments, on the often opaque musings of early poets, and above all on the vagaries of oral tradition. We can safely assume that their capacity to interpret such problematic evidence was limited at best. For lucid discussion of the issue, see e.g., Raab 1988 and Osborne 1996: 4–15. On specific source problems associated with archaic *turannides*, see Osborne 1996: 192–97; Dewald 2003: 25.

3. See, for example, Rosivach 1988; McGlew 1993: esp. 183–212; Steiner 1994: 127–85; Bassi 1998: 144–91; Kurke 1999: 65–171; Wohl 1999; 2002: esp. 215–69; Luraghi 2000. For a compelling synopsis of the various discursive functions performed by tyranny in classical Athens, see now the essays by Raab, Seaford, Kallet, Henderson, Morgan, Ober, and Osborne in K. Morgan 2003b. I stress that this paper is concerned exclusively with reexamining early *turannides* in their original archaic context. And since, in my opinion, the meaning and cultural resonance of the terms *turannos* and *turannis* shifted quite fundamentally between the archaic and the classical eras (see below, esp. pp. 211–15), recent work on the cultural history of the *turannos* figure in the

depend on other forms of evidence, especially on the testimony of archaic literature and material culture. As a result, a more complex and more even-handed picture of early *turannides* has steadily emerged over the last few decades, a picture that is in many ways different from those one finds in the pages of, say, Aristotle or Herodotus. For a variety of reasons, a growing number of scholars would now see “tyranny” as an important and perhaps a necessary transitional stage in the steady journey of the Greek polis from “aristocratic” rule to full citizen government. And more than a few have attempted to rehabilitate the reputations of certain individual *turannoi*, especially the Peisistratids of Athens, commending them as constructive innovators, even political visionaries.⁴

That said, no amount of special pleading for the “achievements” of a Peisistratus or a Cypselus has yet absolved them of history’s gravest charge, the charge of “tyranny” itself. Classical and postclassical sources are unanimous in their basic understanding of the term: *turannoi* were illegitimate rulers, dictators who overturned (or simply ignored) existing political arrangements and effectively installed rogue monarchic regimes in their place. And on this one fundamental point at least, modern observers seem to have little quarrel with their ancient informants, or, for that matter, with each other. The latest edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* offers the most succinct of definitions: a *turannis* in the archaic era was “a form of monarchy set up by usurpers” (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1568). But one can find any number of other works that make similar claims using much the same kind of language.⁵ In short, the first *turannoi* were still “tyrants,” whatever their accomplishments.

Needless to say, one rarely if ever encounters such agreement about a topic in early Greek history. Here, surely, we have something close to a watertight “fact.” But before celebrating this remarkable consensus, we should note that a number of authorities do insist on reining the standard line with certain qualifications. Snodgrass (1980: 96), for example, emphasizes that “tyranny

latter period has only a tangential bearing on the topic and cannot be addressed here in the detail it deserves.

4. Archaic *turannides* inadvertently prepared the way for more popular forms of government by shattering the elite consensus which had hitherto held sway in Greek poleis: e.g., Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989; de Libero 1996. Early *turannoi*, especially the Peisistratids, fostered political integration and the growth of civic consciousness through cults, festivals, building programs, and the like: e.g., Kolb 1977; 1981; Stahl 1987; Eder 1988; 1992; Shapiro 1989; Frost 1990; Manville 1990: 162–73; Giorgini 1993: 114; Salmon 1997; Raab 2003: 61. But cf. Anderson 2003: esp. 22–24. Alternatively, McGlew (1993) makes a case that archaic *turannoi* commonly represented themselves as agents of justice (pp. 52–86). He then goes on to contend that their particular brand of state power was later appropriated by the popular regimes that ultimately took their place (esp. pp. 183–212).

5. E.g., Andrewes 1956: 7; Finley 1970: 107; Ehrenberg 1973: 23; Jeremy 1976: 46; Snodgrass 1980: 96; Murray 1993: 137; Martin 1996: 80–81; Pomeroy et al. 1999: 106. This consensus is hardly a recent development. The idea that archaic *turannoi* were illegitimate monarchs who usurped power was long ago endorsed by W. C. A. Drumann in *De Tyrannis Graecorum* (Halle, 1812), the first systematic work on the subject, and has been something of a commonplace ever since. See de Libero 1996: 12.

had no specific constitutional framework . . . but was simply superimposed on whatever constitution the state in question already had.” The entry in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* is even more cautious: “Tyranny was not a special form of constitution . . . the tyrant might rule directly or retain the existing political institutions but exercise a preponderant influence over their working.” Far from clarifying the issue, these equivocations actually make it a good deal more opaque.

For a start, if a *turannos* did no more than “superimpose” his will on an otherwise unchanged apparatus of state, was his authority necessarily “illegitimate”? And if his “influence” was more extra-constitutional than unconstitutional in nature, and merely “preponderant” in its extent, did this make him unambiguously the state’s “ruler”? Did the establishment of a *turannis* amount to a wholesale, revolutionary shift from one regime to another, as the terms “monarch” and “usurper” would seem to imply? Or did it involve only a realignment of power relations within an existing regime?⁶

Perhaps the nature of an archaic *turannis* is less easy to define and apprehend than the conventional wisdom suggests. The first *turannoi* appear to have occupied a kind of political no-man’s land, a liminal space that the standard vocabularies of monarchy and constitutionality cannot adequately describe. Yet specialists persist in using such language. Instead of adapting their interpretive framework to fit the specificities of this particular form of political authority, they try to squeeze it into categories where it may not ultimately belong. This methodological rigidity seems to be consistent with a more general reluctance among Greek historians to formulate a conceptual apparatus that is fully attuned to the peculiar rhythms and cadences of political life in the early polis. When describing the world of the classical city-state, one can speak meaningfully in terms of “citizenship” and “constitutions,” of “political franchises” and “political rights,” of “states” as “actors,” and of distinctions between “public” and “private” domains. But as tools for analyzing the altogether more elemental, more ostentatious polis culture of, say, the eighth and the seventh centuries, such categories are of little or no service.⁷ This is not the place to attempt a comprehensive re-theorization of early Greek politics. But the paper can hopefully take a valuable step in that direction by pointing out the confusions and imprecisions that continue to retard modern efforts to make sense of the first *turannides*.

6. The notion that archaic *turannides* constituted fully fledged “regimes” of one-man rule has never been systematically challenged. That said, some recent works (e.g., Stahl 1987; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989; de Libero 1996; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000; S. Morris 2003) do recognize their “informal” character and/or their generally “aristocratic” (rather than literally “monarchic”) qualities, while others (e.g., Carlier 1984; Barceló 1993; Fadinger 1993; Parker 1996) still prefer to identify them with traditional forms of kingship. Cf. also the observations of Kinzl (1979a), who insists that the term *turannis* was used with considerable latitude to denote a range of different forms of one-man rule.

7. Cf. the remarks of Davies (1997), who also calls for something of a fresh start in the study of the early Greek state.

The primary aim of this paper, then, is to reopen the whole question of definition and challenge orthodox thinking about early *turannoi*. Seizing power in the classical era, in a state inured to the habit of citizen self-rule, a later *turannos* like Dionysius I of Syracuse might fairly be characterized as a “monarch” and a “usurper.” But back in the “age of the tyrants,” when the transformation of elite-dominated city-states into fully edged citizen-states was still some way from completion, the term *turannos* had very different implications. Operating in a minimally regulated, winner-take-all political environment, the first *turannoi* were altogether less transgressive and less exceptional than their classical counterparts. They cannot in fact be qualitatively distinguished as a group from “normal” archaic leaders. They did not challenge the “legitimate” orders of the day, and they certainly did not install their own rogue regimes of one-man rule. For most of the archaic era, a *turannis* was not a “regime” at all. The term referred rather to a conventional, if unusually dominant style of leadership that flourished in early Greek oligarchies.

To rethink archaic *turannides* along these lines, the paper returns to fundamentals. Like Osborne’s “colonization” essay and other recent work on early Greek history, it works as far as possible from contemporary evidence, both written and material. And it arrives at its findings by first reexamining the larger politico-cultural milieu of the early polis, the context in which the *turannis* phenomenon originated. The point of departure here is a simple question, one that has perhaps too rarely been asked: what in fact constituted “normal” leadership and mainstream politics in Greek poleis during the “age of the tyrants”? We can begin working our way towards an answer by reviewing the institutional make-up of the archaic city-state.

THE DESIGN OF THE EARLY POLIS

Archaic *turannides* were confined exclusively to poleis; *turannoi* are attested only in those areas of the Greek world where this particular political formation predominated: parts of the central and southern Greek mainland, the Aegean islands, the coastal fringe of Asia Minor, and Magna Graecia. No two city-states were exactly alike in their institutional arrangements. But by the second half of the seventh century, when evidence for these arrangements first begins to surface, it seems that the state apparatuses in most poleis broadly conformed to the same basic pattern.⁸

This standard form of apparatus consisted essentially of a threefold division of political labor: a corps of elected magistrates, ranging from high-ranking

8. Along with most others, I would see the “birth of the polis” as part of the general structural transformation that was experienced in the Greek world during the eighth century . Comprehensive discussions of material evidence for this “eighth-century revolution” can be found in Snodgrass 1980: esp. 15–84 and I. Morris 2000: 257–306.

executives to minor functionaries, who held their positions for fixed, usually brief, terms; a council, which might be comprised of as few as 20 members (Dreros) or as many as 500 (Elis), and which, as a rule, served as the supreme executive and deliberative body in the state; and an assembly, which, though less in official, could be claimed to represent the interests of the broader community.⁹

Early poleis were, for want of a better word, oligarchies,¹⁰ and politics would remain essentially an elite preserve down to the late archaic era.¹¹ Poorer individuals as yet had no political presence whatsoever.¹² And even if a distinctive “middle class” of hoplite-farmers had emerged by, say, the end of the seventh century, it is not self-evident that they played a meaningful role in the direction of any Greek state much before the end of the sixth. Governance during the “age of the tyrants” was instead dominated, even monopolized, by the wealthy minority of the

9. Dreros council evidence (ca. 650–600 ?): Buck 116; ML 2. Elis council evidence (sixth or possibly early fifth century): Buck 64; *IvO* 7. Generally, on the tripartite model of city-state apparatus, see e.g., Finley 1983: 57–58. Early laws which assign functions to a *dēmos* (e.g., those from Tiryns [late seventh or early sixth century; *SEG* 30.381] and from Elis [sixth or early fifth century; *IvO* 3, 7, 9, 11]) refer presumably to an assembly, while much the same kind of institution appears to be described as an *agora* in the texts of some archaic poets (e.g., Alc. fr. 130B.3; Thgn. 191; Xenophanes fr. 3.3).

10. “Oligarchy” is of course a relative term. The idea of a “rule of the few” presupposes the possibility of a “rule of the many,” a possibility that was simply unimaginable in Greece for most of the archaic era. The term is nevertheless preferable here to “aristocracy” (see following note). Hans van Wees (2000b: 52–53, 63–66) favors “timocracy,” which may indeed be a more suitable alternative.

11. Archaic poetry employs a fairly broad repertoire of terms to refer to contemporary polis elites, from the value-laden *kaloi*, *agathoi*, and *esthloi* (the “good,” the “noble,” the “worthy”) to the more matter-of-fact *astoi* (“townsmen”; e.g., Solon fr. 4.6; Thgn. 41, 191). More vividly, Xenophanes (fr. 3) represents the governing class of Colophon as a throng of “no fewer than a thousand” perfumed dandies, who used to convene in the assembly in the days before the city was subsumed into the Persian empire. Doubtless the relative size of these elites varied considerably from place to place, probably comprising somewhere between 12% (van Wees 1992: 276) and 20% (Donlan 1997: 45 with n. 23) of the total population, with leading families making up perhaps no more than 5% of the whole (Donlan 1997: 47 n. 23). Nor should we think of these elites as closed, hereditary aristocracies. Given all the new economic opportunities (especially in trade) that arose amid the structural upheavals of the eighth century, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that wealth was a key determinant of elite status from the very earliest days of the polis (cf. Stahl 1987: 79–105; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989: 57–138). And given that political competition seems only to have intensified during the seventh century, encouraging a steady increase in instances of violence, property appropriation, and exile, membership of the ruling class must have become still more fluid over time. Certainly, by the sixth century, it will have been impossible for “any kind of closed elite” to sustain itself at all, as van Wees (2000b: 53) has observed.

12. Whatever its later colorings, the word *dēmos* (“people”) was almost invariably used at this time to refer in general terms to the membership of a polis community (cf. Donlan 1970). Among references in early laws and poetry to roles played by a *dēmos* in the government of various city-states (cf. n. 9 above), I know of no single example which unambiguously indicates that poorer community members were significant participants in political life. Cf. the line in the *Theognidea* (268) which describes how “Poverty” is absent from the assembly (*agorē*) and from legal proceedings (*dikai*). In Athens at least, as Raabe (1996; 1998a; 1998b) shows, members of the lowest, the class

male population that was eligible for state offices (e.g., the *pentakosiomedimnoi* and *hippeis* in Athens).¹³

What, then, was the overall rationale behind the standard tripartite apparatus? Here, our most reliable and revealing source of evidence is the corpus of early Greek laws. Though surviving items of legislation may not be truly representative of the whole, the picture they present of the principles that shaped and governed the operations of archaic polis institutions is generally consistent. As a number of recent works have pointed out, the scope of extant early laws is distinctly narrow and their competence limited. Grand intentions, like structuring relations between different status groups, are conspicuously avoided. And contrary to received wisdom, there is little evidence in the laws themselves that they were used to nurture the development of more “progressive,” egalitarian regimes. Their concerns are rather for the most part procedural, focusing more on the conduct of officials than on behavior within the community as a whole.¹⁴ In other words, the impression of the archaic state we derive from the early laws is not one of any well-articulated political order, suitably equipped to govern a relatively complex society. Still less does this entity seem to have been animated by the kind of broadly inclusive sense of civic community that was so characteristic of the polis in the classical era. The early Greek city-state, it seems, was an altogether less ambitious enterprise—a minimally structured, vaguely defined institutional space in which private interests and competition for power within the elite might be negotiated. Or, as Foxhall (1997: 119) rather bluntly puts it, archaic poleis were “little more than a stand-off between the members of the elite who ran them.”

probably had little or no role to play in political life before the reforms of Ephialtes in the late 460s and even thereafter were in various ways treated as less than full citizens.

13. Elite actors dominated the archaic political stage down to the late sixth century: e.g., Foxhall 1997; van Wees 2000b; Anderson 2003: esp. 57–76. Others are more circumspect. Robinson (1997), for example, makes a case that forms of popular government were installed in a number of poleis as far back as the early sixth and perhaps even the late seventh centuries. More generally, Kurt Raab (1997: 56–57) and Sara Forsdyke (2000) both suggest that non-elites may have had a role to play in helping to curb intra-elite feuding and bring stability to states. Arguing primarily from Homeric evidence, Raab (1993; 1996: 150–53; 1997) also maintains that non-elites participated in political deliberations as early as the eighth century, though he readily acknowledges that most states experienced sustained ruling-class domination for most of the archaic era. In his view, the “formal” integration of hoplite-farmers into the polis as a stabilizing counterweight to fractious elites did not take place until the late sixth and early fifth centuries. Though quite different in their respective details and points of emphasis, the reconstructions of Walter Donlan (1997) and Ian Morris (1987; 1996; 1997; 2000) follow a similar pattern. Both insist that the polis was animated by an ideal of citizen equality from the start, yet both concede that elites generally controlled political life in city-states for most of the archaic era. Only in the last few decades of the period, under the imperatives of a now fully emergent egalitarian ideology, were these elites finally forced to relinquish their special claims to govern on behalf of others. For further discussion of Morris’ arguments, see n. 31 below. For critique of his “teleological” approach, see Foxhall 1997.

14. Hölkeskamp’s monograph (1999) might be seen as a definitive statement of this revisionist reading of early Greek law. Cf. also Gagarin 1986: 81–96, 121–26; Osborne 1996: 186–90; 1997; Whitley 1998.

This conclusion is broadly substantiated by the institutional logic of the tripartite state apparatus itself. *Pace* Aristotle (*Pol.* 1305a15-16), the powers of archaic officials seem to have been highly circumscribed. Rarely if ever did they serve terms that lasted for more than a single year and tenure of the more important magistracies seems to have been either a once-in-a-lifetime privilege (e.g., the archonships of Athens) or renewable only after a fairly long interval (e.g., the *kosmoi* at Dreros [Buck 116; ML 2]). Moreover, in most known instances, these positions were collegiate, with responsibilities shared by a number of officials (cf. also the *dēmiourgoi* of Argos and other Dorian states). Add to this picture the councils, where de jure authority was dispersed among tens, sometimes hundreds of men, and it becomes clear that the overall rationale behind the standard polis apparatus was essentially negative: to minimize contention by strictly limiting the capacity of individuals to influence the direction of the state. Indeed, the entire system seems to have been informed by an almost paranoid aversion to entrusting any one man with significant, long-term executive authority, indicating a high level of rivalry and a correspondingly low level of trust within the ruling class. In sum, the archaic polis makes best sense if seen as a supremely cautious negotiation transacted by a group of mutually suspicious, highly competitive political equals.

Given, then, that this style of government offered the ambitious few, if any opportunities for exercising an enduring personal influence over the political process, how did the acute competitiveness of Greek elites play itself out in and around the institutions of the early polis? What kind of politics did it typically produce?

MAINSTREAM POLITICS, CONVENTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Doubtless, a good deal of political energy was invested in competition for magistracies and council seats. But it is surely a mistake to assume (as many commentators seem to have done) that mainstream archaic politics can be reduced to a series of well-regulated contests, with the political tempo obediently following the orderly rhythms of some electoral timetable. The very failure of archaic poleis to build significant leadership opportunities for individuals into the state's institutional fabric will only have helped to ensure that real power—and, to some extent, the real business of politics—actually lay elsewhere. For this failure inadvertently left open a large and essentially unregulated political space, a space where ambitious, competitive elites will have had room to cultivate a more informal, but potentially more formidable brand of leadership. Free of the constraints that came with official magistracies, this de facto authority will have manifested itself in a more transcendent, less circumscribed influence over the political process as a whole: the capacity to shape electoral and deliberative preferences and to mold consensus opinion on a continual, consistent basis.

Review of a handful of episodes from archaic Athens will help to substantiate the point. Consider, for example, the events surrounding the abortive bid for

power by Cylon in ca. 630. What prompted the eponymous archon (the highest officer of state) at the time, the Alcmeonid Megacles I, to sanction the slaughter of Cylon's supporters after they had sought sanctuary on the Acropolis?¹⁵ And why, for that matter, was it not until ca. 600 that Megacles' family was pronounced "accursed" for this sacrilege and expelled from Athens "in perpetuity"?¹⁶ The nature of the offence and the timing of the punishment only begin to make sense if Alcmeonid influence in the later seventh century extended well beyond the prerogatives of a single archonship in the year of Cylon's coup. Apparently, Megacles and his family were simply too powerful in 630, and for a generation or so afterwards, to be held fully accountable for their actions before the century's end.¹⁷ And it was presumably because of the need to preserve this de facto influence and deter any similar future threats that they dealt so harshly with Cylon's cohorts.

The critical significance of de facto authority can also be seen in the events of the period 561/0–556/5.¹⁸ The eponymous archons in the first and last of these years were, respectively, Comeas (*AP* 14.1) and Hegesias (*AP* 14.3). But neither seems to have been a leading participant in the vigorous, ongoing political struggle that was being waged in Athens at the time. According to the sources, the principals were the Boutad Lycurgus, the Alcmeonid Megacles II, and Peisistratus, none of whom is known to have held high office during the years in question. So one can only assume that theirs was a contest for a more comprehensive, less circumscribed form of leadership.

But perhaps the most clear-cut illustration of the precedence of de facto leadership over any formal, elective authority in archaic Athenian politics comes after the final ouster of the Peisistratids in 511/0. Again, our sources speak of a power struggle, on this occasion between a certain Isagoras and yet another Alcmeonid, Cleisthenes son of Megacles II.¹⁹ To be sure, when elite support briefly gave Isagoras the ascendancy, he was elected eponymous archon for 508/7 (*AP* 21.1). Yet, plainly, there was more at stake in this contest than appointment to the state's chief magistracy, since Cleisthenes himself had already held the archonship back in 525/4 and could not do so again.²⁰ In other words, the electoral outcome did not determine the prevailing power relations between the leading

15. Cylon's coup: e.g., *Hdt.* 5.71; *Plut. Sol.* 12.1–9; *Thuc.* 1.126.3–12.

16. Expulsion "in perpetuity": *AP* 1; cf. *Hdt.* 5.71; *Plut. Sol.* 12.1–9; *Thuc.* 1.126.3–12. For the date, see Rhodes 1981: 84; Camp 1994: 7.

17. Herodotus (5.62.2, 6.125.1) claims that the Alcmeonids had been prominent in Athenian public life "since the earliest times," while also noting that this prominence increased substantially during and after the lifetime of Alcmeon I (cf. p. 189 below). It was also said (*Castor, FGrH* 250 F4) that a Megacles and another Alcmeon were among the "life-archons" who purportedly ran the state after the monarchy in Athens was finally abolished.

18. *AP* 13.3–15.1; *Hdt.* 1.59.3–61.2. For the chronology, see Rhodes 1976; 1981: 191–99.

19. The main sources for these and subsequent events are *AP* 20.1–4 and *Hdt.* 5.66, 69.1–73.1.

20. Archonship of Cleisthenes: Meritt 1939: 59 no. 21; *ML* 6.

political players at the time, it merely reflected and reinforced them.²¹ Cleisthenes would of course turn the tables on Isagoras soon afterwards when he bypassed traditional elite constituencies and built a broader base of support in the Athenian assembly. And it is surely no coincidence that one of his kinsmen, Alcmeon, probably assumed the position of eponymous archon the very next year (cf. Poll. *Onom.* 8.110).

Interpersonal competition for de facto authority would continue to be the very heartbeat of Athenian politics down into the classical era, and the outcomes of the more significant elections (and ostracisms) would continue to reflect and reinforce the balance of power between the principal contestants, as Pericles' numerous generalships so eloquently attest.²² Doubtless, there were also continuities in the techniques used to acquire and legitimize this kind of authority. One imagines that the timeless advantages of wealth, intelligence, eloquence, and personal charisma were just as valuable to archaic leaders as they would prove to be for their classical successors. Likewise the ability to cultivate and mobilize important friends and allies. But in at least two respects the norms of mainstream politics in the early polis will have been quite different from those one associates with Periclean democracy.

Most obviously, while instances of interpersonal political violence were, under normal circumstances, conspicuously rare in classical Athens,²³ armed conflict between rival leaders (or the threat of such) seems to have been a more or less accepted feature of archaic political culture. Indeed, at certain times in certain places, factionalism, or *stasis*, within the elite was virtually endemic and violent confrontations occurred all too frequently. One thinks especially of mid-sixth-century Megara, and the near-Hobbesian landscape evoked in the verses of Theognis, where public life was conducted in a grim climate of "faction and civil bloodshed" (στάσιές τε καὶ ἔμφυλοι φόνοι, 51). Not without good reason, Hans van Wees (2000b) has recently compared the behavior of the city's leading families and individuals to that of organized crime syndicates in more recent times. And he is surely right to point out that "violent competition for power" was likewise prevalent in other archaic poleis (p. 66). As the poetry of Alcaeus vividly suggests, Mytilene also had more than its fair share of "heart-eating faction and civil conflict" (θυμοβόρω λύας ἐμφύλω τε μάχας, fr. 70.10–11) in the later seventh century, while Solon (e.g., fr. 4.5–25) uses comparable language to describe a similar pathology in early sixth-century Athens.

21. Of course, this is not to suggest that elective magistracies were of no significance whatsoever in the archaic era. In all likelihood, the more influential offices were highly valued and keenly contested, as the irregularities in the selection of archons in Athens in the late 590s and 580s amply illustrate. But even if the holders of such positions were the most powerful officials in early Greek states (cf. *AP* 13.2), we cannot assume that they were necessarily the most powerful *individuals* in their states during their terms of office.

22. On de facto leadership in classical Athens, see e.g., Finley 1962; Connor 1971; Ober 1989.

23. Cf. Herman 1994.

It is not difficult to understand why such a pathology developed. If the siren allure of de facto dominance lent a peculiar intensity to political competition in the early Greek city-state, the relatively unregulated conditions in which the competition was waged largely explain why this intensity translated so readily into violence. This, after all, was a time when polis communities were a long way from possessing anything like a monopoly on instruments of coercion. The state was no more than a “ragged bundle of institutions” (Foxhall 1997: 120), police apparatuses were non-existent, weapons were carried openly in public by elites, and the mobilization of armies of citizen-soldiers probably would not become standard practice in Greek poleis until the last quarter of the sixth century. Private “armies” of allies and retainers, attempts to seize power by force, assassinations, exiles, and property appropriations accordingly proliferated in a way that would have been unthinkable in the far more orderly, more civic-minded environment of classical Athens.²⁴

But even in the “age of the tyrants,” one can assume, violence remained a means to power of last resort. Of other, non-violent means to power, by far the most important seems to have been what we might loosely call image-marketing. And here we come to the second major difference between the practice of politics in archaic states and in classical Athens. Though leaders in the latter context were no less image-conscious than their counterparts in the former, there was a radical difference in their respective styles of self-representation. The likes of Pericles and Demosthenes were obliged by the more inclusive, collectivist temper of their times to present themselves and their actions as public-spirited and to flaunt their commonality with a large, socially diverse body of fellow citizens. Earlier leaders, on the other hand, needed above all to impress their peers in the governing class. In an effort to invest their authority with a measure of legitimacy, they instead stressed precisely their privileged elevation above the normal run of humankind. As Ian Morris (1996: 31–36; 1997: 10–18; 2000: 171–85) has emphasized, the articulation of superiority by the archaic Greek elite typically conformed to a well-trying formula. Essentially, it involved identification with a range of more powerful, more glamorous beings from three different domains.

The first of these was the realm of divinity. Since the latter half of the eighth century, when fledgling poleis were beginning to establish themselves in the Greek world, elite investment in sanctuaries had steadily escalated, with ever more resources lavished on cults and ceremonies, and on temples, costly votives, and other ostentatious *agalmata* (literally, “things that bring delight”). Such acts of

24. On the elite practice of bearing arms in public, which seems to have declined by the 520s, see van Wees 1998. Suffice it to say for now, literary and material evidence for the use of hoplite-style armor and phalanx-type warfare before the later sixth century does not in itself prove that states were yet levying armies of “citizen soldiers” on a regular basis. Interstate combat perhaps did not fully supplant private conflicts as the primary form of warfare in the Greek world until late in the archaic era. See nn. 61–62 and p. 213 with n. 98 below. Generally, on the “politics of exile” in archaic Greece, see Forsdyke 2000.

megaloprepeia (“magnificence”) were driven by more than a simple piety. Above all, they were public statements about the dedicator. With a kind of self-reinforcing logic, they communicated his or her special proximity to the gods, while at the same time underscoring the wealth and status which that proximity had apparently made possible.²⁵ Second, prominent archaic families commonly sought to identify themselves with illustrious heroes of yore, especially by manufacturing claims of direct descent. This particular brand of genealogical self-fashioning also goes back at least to the middle years of the eighth century. It first becomes widely visible in the material record around 750 BCE, when significant numbers of ruling-class Greeks, especially in parts of the central and southern mainland, began to venerate the anonymous, long-deceased occupants of Mycenaean tombs as “heroic” ancestors.²⁶

No less beguiling than the age of heroes was the more concrete world of the contemporary Near East, and the almost unimaginable wealth and power of the rulers of the great oriental kingdoms. Again, to engage with this domain was to appear loftily removed from the relatively humble actualities of archaic Greek society. Some influential families and individuals were fortunate enough to ingratiate themselves personally with eastern monarchs and establish military ties, formal guest-friendships, or even, in some cases, marriage alliances.²⁷ Meanwhile, back in Greece, a more oblique engagement with the East was also pursued, as the wealthy self-consciously imitated and reproduced what they took to be a characteristically oriental courtliness in their own more modest surroundings. Expensive, attention-seeking, eastern-style artifacts, whether locally produced or imported, were coveted as sanctuary dedications and grave markers, and elite tastes in hairstyles, clothing, dining practices, and other lifestyle areas came to be informed by a luxurious, “orientalizing” aesthetic, the aesthetic of *habrosunē*.²⁸

25. On this escalation in sanctuary investment, see especially Snodgrass 1980: 49–65; I. Morris 1996: 24–25, 32–33; 2000: 273–80. Importance of *agalмата* in archaic Greek culture: Gernet 1968: 93–137.

26. The evidence is described in Coldstream 1976. Among the more valuable discussions of the practice are Snodgrass 1980: 38–40; 2000; I. Morris 1988; 2000: 267–73; Whitley 1988; Antonaccio 1995; 1998. For the contention that these tomb cults reimagined the deceased occupants as ancestor-heroes, see especially Antonaccio 1995; 1998; cf. Snodgrass 2000.

27. Generally, on the “orientalization” of Greek culture after ca. 750, see Burkert 1992; West 1997; Boardman 1999. Close ties between Greeks (*turannoi* and non-*turannoi*) and eastern kingdoms: e.g., Alcaeus of Mytilene receives military support from Lydians (Alc. fr. 69); marriage of the Lydian king Alyattes to an Ionian Greek (Hdt. 1.92); Periander and Alyattes (Hdt. 3.48.2); Alcmeon (I) of Athens and Alyattes (cf. Hdt. 6.125; Herman 1987: 88–89); the elder Miltiades and Croesus (Hdt. 6.37); Spartans and Lydians (Hdt. 1.68f., 152f., 3.47); the Cypselids and the Egyptian Saite dynasty (?) (Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F59); the Greek Theokles and the Saite dynasty (ML 7); Spartans and Amasis of the Saite dynasty (Hdt. 3.47); Polycrates of Samos and Amasis (Hdt. 2.182, 3.39–44); Polycrates and Cambyses of Persia (Hdt. 3.44–45); Phanes of Halicarnassus and Cambyses (Hdt. 3.7). On relations between East Greek *turannoi* and Darius, see p. 211 below.

28. The seminal work on Greek engagement with (and use of) the Near East in the archaic era is Mazzarino 1947. Building on Mazzarino’s findings, more recent works have explored further the political implications of this engagement. See especially Kurke 1992; I. Morris 1997; 2000: 178–85.

We might add that these three domains—the divine, the heroic, and the oriental—all converged in a fourth, the realm of the Panhellenic. If representing themselves, however improbably, as favorites of the gods, scions of heroes, and companions of eastern monarchs intentionally set the premier elite families apart from the great majority of their fellow townsmen, this conduct also brought them closer to their counterparts in other poleis. From social interactions in sanctuaries and symposia, from guest-friendships and alliances, and from the shared attitudes and assumptions that were fostered by this intercourse, there arose almost naturally a sense of comity, even solidarity among the ruling classes of different states.²⁹ Nowhere was this more apparent than at the highly select group of sanctuaries which this elite community rendered “Panhellenic” by its patronage. Here, within the rarefied precincts of a Delphi or an Olympia, the grandees of the Greek world were free to mingle with distinguished peers from other poleis and participate in extravagant, competitive displays of elite credentials, all while immersing themselves in a kind of fantasy world of chariots and gilded statues.³⁰

But far removed as these Panhellenic enclaves were from everyday life in the polis, it would be a mistake to interpret the ostentatious behavior that went on there as mere frivolous escapism. The *habitués* of Olympia were not some exotic species who spent their time preening and posturing while the real business of politics went on somewhere else without them. On the contrary, all this networking and self-promotion was very much a part of the real business of politics.³¹ At a time when

29. Cf. I. Morris 1996: 31–36; 2000: 171–85. More generally, on the formation, parameters, and significance of this distinctive, Panhellenic *Adelskultur*, see Stahl 1987 and Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989.

30. The early development of Delphi and Olympia as special enclaves for elite competitive display is discussed in detail by Catherine Morgan (1990). Cf. Sarah Morris’ (2003: 13) observation that “the sanctuary rather than the polis proper became the locale of interstate and international power in the archaic period.” On the origins and evolution of the terms *hellēnes* and *panhellēnes*, along with discussion of the various peoples who might have been included in and excluded from these categories during the archaic era, see now Hall 2002.

31. Morris himself, it should be noted (though one can hardly do full justice to his arguments in a single footnote), reads these various forms of self-promotion as the default response of an “elitist” minority to their “exclusion” from power in the polis (1996: 33). Mainstream politics, he would maintain, was instead dominated by a second category of elites, those who “assimilated themselves” to the “dominant civic values within archaic poleis” (p. 27) and accepted “the community of middling citizens as the source of legitimate authority” (p. 36). These claims seem tenuous for at least three reasons. To begin with, they are premised on the questionable supposition that the polis was impressed from the start with a distinctly “civic” or egalitarian sensibility. Of course, Morris is not alone in making this supposition (see n. 13 above). But just as the evidence adduced in support of this claim by Raab (the roles played by non-elites in deliberative contexts and, to some extent, in warfare in “Homeric society”) and Donlan (social relations in early Iron Age communities) can be interpreted otherwise, so the (mostly archaeological) evidence cited by Morris is similarly open to alternative readings. Why, for example, should the observable decline in elite funerary extravagance across central Greece after ca. 725 represent a more meaningful index of the prevailing political and ideological climate than, say, the equally observable escalation in the quantity and expense of votives dedicated in sanctuaries by elites from the same region at roughly the same time? The evidence certainly suggests that the ruling classes in central Greek states were finding new ways to articulate their privileged status in the later eighth century; it does not necessarily indicate that these

leading families were not above using force to secure and maintain authority, guest-friendships and marriage alliances with peers in other states could offer further sources of valuable manpower if competition for dominance in one's own community turned violent. Nor should we underestimate the symbolic force of such relationships. Like visible links with the heroic past, the East, and especially the gods, associations with the Greek world's most influential actors will only have reinforced the impression that one's claims to leadership were somehow natural and thus legitimate.

By way of a conclusion to this overview of orthodox archaic politics, we might sharpen the picture a little by looking in more detail at the activities of one particular prominent family. The fortunes of the Alcmeonids of Athens during the "age of the tyrants" are relatively well documented; the evidence suggests that they maintained a high level of political influence throughout the era. And since they are nowhere described as *turannoi* or revolutionaries, we can safely assume that their activities were representative of mainstream political behavior during this period.³²

As already mentioned, the Alcmeonids' influence in Athens in the late seventh century was considerable. It seems to have endured for several decades after the massacre of Cylon's supporters in ca. 630 and ended only when their rivals eventually concocted the notorious "curse" against them and had them banished from the city in ca. 600 (cf. Plut. *Sol.* 9). Later, from the time of their return from exile in ca. 561/0 to the time of their next withdrawal from Athens in ca. 546/5, members of the family were deeply involved in a vigorous three-way struggle for power with the Boutads and Peisistratids (*AP* 13.3–15.5; *Hdt.* 1.59–64). At different times Megacles II, the *chef de famille*, aligned with each of these rivals against the other, only to renege on both arrangements shortly afterwards when they had served their purpose. Such opportunism helped the Alcmeonids to become perhaps the most influential players in Athenian politics between the

new ways were any more restrained or more civic-minded than the old ones. Second, it is hard to think of many known leaders in archaic poleis who conspicuously decried or rejected the "elitist" mode of self-representation and the values which sustained it. A handful of elite poets, from Archilochus to Xenophanes, certainly were moved to criticize such behavior from various perspectives. But Solon aside, none of these authors seems to have enjoyed any great political influence. As a group, they are perhaps better seen as a loose and very diverse "community of dissent," not entirely unlike that formed by the various fifth- and fourth-century critics of Athenian democracy (cf. Ober 1998). Finally, it is something of a stretch to characterize those who did subscribe to "elitist ideology" as a "marginalized" minority (p. 33). As the Alcmeonid example (see below) well illustrates, the exclusive Panhellenic circles of the time included families and individuals who were demonstrably among the most significant players in the political life of their respective poleis. Morris is surely right to draw attention to the intra-elite "conflict of values" that was played out during the archaic era. But prior to the late sixth century (cf. pp. 211–13 below), this conflict seems to have been distinctly one-sided.

32. On Alcmeonid activities in the later seventh and sixth centuries, see now Anderson 2000; 2003: 27–30, 34–35, 67–72.

mid-550s and mid-540s, when defeat by Peisistratus at Pallene drove them from the state for a second time.³³

Undeterred by this second banishment, the Alcmeonids somehow restored themselves to public life by 525/4, when Cleisthenes held office as archon. But their peaceful coexistence with the Peisistratids proved to be short-lived. Their apparent complicity in the assassination of Hipparchus in 514 led to yet another spell in exile and at least two attempts to force a return: the ill-starred ingression that was crushed just inside the northern Attic border at Leipsydrium, and the Spartan intervention, orchestrated by Cleisthenes at Delphi, which ultimately succeeded in removing the Peisistratids from Athens for good in 511/0.³⁴ Not that the Alcmeonids' recovery of power in Athens was in any way automatic. Only after Cleisthenes' heated struggle with Isagoras, his unorthodox appeal for mass support in the Assembly in 508/7, and still another, albeit brief banishment were they finally able to regain the kind of political predominance that they had enjoyed in the later seventh and mid-sixth centuries. And even this triumph came with a certain irony. In his unstinting efforts to succeed in the old zero-sum game of archaic politics, Cleisthenes ultimately helped only to ensure that a new and very different kind of politics—a politics less amenable to manipulation by powerful individuals like himself—would now emerge to take its place.

How, then, were the Alcmeonids able to sustain their political influence in Athens for the better part of one and a half centuries? Very likely, this long-term success owed much to qualities like raw determination and ruthless ambition. But no less likely, it owed something to a talent for building a broad consent for their authority among the governing class. As discussed earlier, would-be leaders in the archaic era typically sought to encourage such consent by conforming their public image to certain well established, rather narrowly defined criteria. The Alcmeonids were apparently no different.

In lifestyle and personal deportment, they seem to have been among the most enthusiastic elite devotees of the cult of *habrosunē*; as late as the 420s, the family name was still a byword for voluptuous Asiatic tastes and manners.³⁵ Their air of languid superiority was also sustained by a suitably illustrious pedigree. Whether or not the Alcmeonids had originally belonged to a Dark Age aristocracy, they manufactured a far more glamorous kind of genealogy for themselves in due course, claiming that their *Stammvater*, Alcmeon, was a contemporary of

33. This reconstruction of the timing and location of the Alcmeonids' various sixth-century exiles is laid out in greater detail in Anderson 2000. For further discussion of events in Athens during the years 561/0–546/5, see Anderson 2003: 67–72.

34. Main sources for these and subsequent developments: *AP* 19.1–20.4; *Hdt.* 5.62–66.

35. E.g., *Ar. Nub.* 46. There can be little doubt that the Alcmeonids were prominent among those wealthy Athenian families who, according to Thucydides (1.6.3–5), had only “recently” abandoned their tastes for luxury and orientalia.

Theseus and carried in his veins the “heroic” royal bloodline of the Neleids of Pylos.³⁶ More generally, the family managed to forge a place for themselves in the forefront of Athenian consciousness by making skillful use of a wide range of media. From the sixth century alone we know of expensive sanctuary dedications, sumptuous funerary monuments,³⁷ perhaps more than one prominent building, and at least one spectacular ritual production—the Phye ceremony.³⁸ And there probably were other similar extravagances of which we now have no record.

No less impressive were their efforts to extend their social reach and visibility further afield. The marriage alliance with the influential Cleisthenes of Sicyon in the 570s (Hdt. 6.130–31; McGregor 1941) was something of a coup at the time, while Alcmeon I’s victory in the four-horse chariot race at Olympia in 592 would be the first in a long series of equestrian triumphs at the great crown games.³⁹ We also know of a sports-related Alcmeonid votive at the Ptoion sanctuary in Boeotia, and family members were probably responsible for at least one of the impressive kouroi that were dedicated at that same site in the third quarter of the sixth

36. Alcmeon as a contemporary of Theseus: Harpocration, Hesychius, s.v. *Alkmaïōnidai*. Alcmeon as Neleid: Paus. 2.18.9.

37. Known or likely dedications by the family include at least some of the celebrated early sixth-century kouroi in the sanctuary of Poseidon at Sounion (Richter 1970: nos. 2–5; Stewart 1990: 111; Camp 1994: 9) and a thank-offering to Athena for athletic victories (Raubitschek 1949: no. 317), dedicated on the Acropolis around 550 by Alcmeonides I, brother of Megacles II, and a kinsman. A range of significant funerary monuments have been recovered from the Anavyssos area in southern Attica, which can be dated to periods that the family were probably living in that location when exiled from Athens (ca. 600 to 561/0 and ca. 546/5 to 528/7; see n. 33 above). These include a life-sized kouros cognate with the Sounion dedications (New York, Metropolitan Museum 32.11.1; Jeřery 1962: 144; Richter 1970: no. 1) and, from the 540s–530s, the so-called Stele of Megacles (a colossal gravestone some 4.5 m. high: New York, Metropolitan Museum 11.185; Berlin, Antikensammlung 1531; Jeřery 1962: 147), the “Anavyssos kouros” (Athens, National Museum 3851; Richter 1970: no. 135), and a kouros now in Munich (Antikensammlung 169; Richter 1970: no. 136). The “Anavyssos kouros” is generally thought to have stood on an inscribed base which commemorated the death of Croesus “in the front ranks” (ἐνὶ προμάχοις). This Croesus was probably a son of Alcmeon I, and his death must have come at Pallene. See Jeřery 1962: 143–44 for discussion.

38. If, as is widely thought, the various *oikēmata* that were set up on the Acropolis in the middle decades of the sixth century served as “treasuries” of leading families, then one of these was very likely an Alcmeonid structure. The Phye ceremony is conventionally read as an attempt by Peisistratus to manufacture some kind of legitimacy for his “restoration” to power in Athens (e.g., Connor 1987; Blok 2000; Fadinger 2000). I have argued (Anderson 2003: 68–72) that the event should instead be seen as an attempt by Megacles II to challenge the Boutad Lyncurgus’ claims to a privileged relationship with the city’s patron goddess. I then go on to suggest that the so-called Bluebeard temple (conventionally dated to ca. 560; see now Hurwit 1999: 106–13) may have been expressly commissioned by the Alcmeonids to house the goddess following her ceremonial “restoration” to the citadel by Megacles.

39. Alcmeon’s triumph at Olympia: Hdt. 6.125.5; Isoc. 16.25; schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 7; cf. Moretti 1957: 68, no. 81. Pindar’s *Pythian* 7 celebrates a victory in the same event in 486 by Megacles IV, who was ostracized at the time. The poem alludes to three previous wins by the family at Isthmia, one at Delphi, and one at Olympia (presumably Alcmeon’s). Megacles V, son of Megacles IV, would later take the crown for the Olympic *tethrippon* in 436 (Moretti 1957: 105, no. 320).

century.⁴⁰ But Delphi was apparently the Panhellenic sanctuary with which the Alcmeonids were most intimately associated. Alcmeon I led a contingent against Crisa in the so-called First Sacred War and, as noted, Cleisthenes later used his influence with the oracle to incite a Spartan offensive against the Peisistratids, undertaking in exchange to help rebuild the temple of Apollo itself. And it was these very same Delphic connections that allowed the Alcmeonids to cultivate what, one would assume, was their most prized political relationship of all—a guest-friendship with the royal house of Lydia.⁴¹

This brief account of Alcmeonid activities in the seventh and sixth centuries well illustrates how conventional de facto leadership was contested, attained, and also lost during the period. It is a story of alliances with powerful families and individuals, both Athenian and non-Athenian, of impressive building projects and attention-seeking behavior in Panhellenic sanctuaries, of lavish dedications and ostentatious funerary monuments. It is also a story that had its share of less edifying episodes—betrayals of allies, years spent in exile, and, on more than one occasion, recourse to violence. Mainstream archaic politics was indeed a highly individualistic, often ruthless, winner-take-all business. Its arenas extended well beyond the bouleuterion and the ekklesia to the sanctuary, the symposium, and sometimes the battlefield. Success, in the end, was determined less by the ballot box than by wealth, formidable connections, and, if necessary, brute force. Evidently, even in its limited role as an instrument for regulating intra-elite political competition, the state apparatus of the Greek polis was, as yet, only minimally effective.

Returning to the larger enquiry, we might then ask: how exactly were *turannoi* like Peisistratus or Cleisthenes of Sicyon so very different from “normal” oligarchic leaders like Megacles II? Where was the transgression? In a political landscape where violence was fairly commonplace, how can we distinguish between those who “usurped” power and the “legitimate” leaders who also used force to attain influence? What does “legitimacy” even mean in this context? Clearly, if we are to preserve any absolute distinction between *turannoi* and “conventional” de facto leaders, we must infer that the former not only displaced the latter but also subverted or in some way distorted the entire system which

40. Alcmeonides I's dedication at the Ptoion: *JG* I³ 1469. A kouros from the Ptoion (ca. 540; Athens, National Museum 12) is sufficiently similar to the two contemporary examples from Anavyssos (see n. 37) in date, style, and workmanship that Richter (1970: 113–17) has designated them all as signature members of her “Anavyssos-Ptoion 12 Group.” On the sudden surge in activity at the Ptoion during the third quarter of the sixth century after the disruption caused by the fire at Delphi in 548, see Schachter 1994.

41. Alcmeon in the First Sacred War: Plut. *Sol.* 11.1. Friendship with the Lydian royal house: Hdt. 6.125; cf. Herman 1987: 88–89. The Croesus mentioned in n. 37 was presumably named after the son and heir of king Alyattes to commemorate the relationship. On the significance of names as friendship tokens, see Herman 1987: 19–20.

produced them. Was this in fact the case? Were the early *turannoi* really “tyrants” after all?

To answer these questions we should now turn to look at the careers of some of these individuals in more detail. The archetypal early *turannoi* were Cypselus and his son Periander of Corinth (ca. 650–580), Theagenes of Megara (third quarter of the seventh century), Pittacus of Mytilene (late seventh/early sixth century), and Cleisthenes of Sicyon (first quarter of the sixth century). As the definitive representatives of the species, they should be our focus here, along with the somewhat better attested (and no less proverbial) Peisistratids of Athens (ca. 546/5–511/0).⁴²

FIRST AMONG EQUALS

The modern conviction that the first Greek *turannoi* were somehow exceptional among archaic leaders appears to rest on a number of widely supported assumptions, most of which echo similar suppositions made in classical and post-classical accounts of the *turannides* in Corinth, Megara, Mytilene, Sicyon, and Athens. Yet not one of these articles of faith is entirely well founded, and some are transparently baseless. Five of the more significant and commonly held of these assumptions should now be subjected to critical scrutiny.

*Archaic turannoi from different states collectively distanced themselves from mainstream ruling-class circles, preferring to operate as a kind of informal guild or corporation for their own mutual preservation and advancement.*⁴³

On the contrary, a relative abundance of evidence suggests that *turannoi* from four of the cities in question were actually prominent members of the Panhellenic chariot-racing set to which most ambitious, accomplished Greek elites aspired to belong. Theagenes chose Cylon, a recent Olympic victor, to be his son-in-law, and Cleisthenes of Sicyon was himself a noted competitor in the Panhellenic games.⁴⁴ Like the Alcmeonids, the latter also enjoyed an unusually close association with Delphi and was probably responsible for commissioning at least one prominent building at the sanctuary.⁴⁵ At different times, the Cypselids also had strong ties

42. For the purposes of analysis, the evidence for Pheidon of Argos, sometimes seen as the first Greek *turannos*, is too confused to be of any real value.

43. Ehrenberg’s (1973: 24) statement is representative: “The tyrants, by inter-marriage and common interests, formed a small international society of their own.”

44. Theagenes and Cylon: see references in n. 15 above. Cylon apparently won the *dioulos* at Olympia back in 640 (Euseb. Arm. 92 Karst; cf. Hdt. 5.71.1; Paus. 1.28.2; Thuc. 6.126.3). Cleisthenes is said to have won victories in the *tethrippon* at both Delphi (Paus. 10.7.6) and Olympia (Hdt. 6.126.2). His ancestor Myron was also credited with a win in the same event at Olympia back in 648 (Paus. 6.19.2).

45. Like Alcmeon I, he was a commander on the winning side in the First Sacred War (e.g., Paus. 10.37.4; Polyaeus 3.5), and at some point thereafter he probably commissioned a pair of

with both Delphi and Olympia, where their lavish dedications became proverbial.⁴⁶ And even if we have no solid evidence that the Peisistratids ever actually competed in the crown games, the preponderance of *Hipp-* names in their genealogy, not to mention their patronage of cults of Apollo Pythios and Zeus Olympios in Athens itself, all but confirms that they too were active in mainstream Panhellenic circles.⁴⁷

It is of course not difficult to think of examples of close cooperation between *turannoi* from different states—Periander’s storied friendship with Thrasybulus of Miletus and his marriage to Melissa, daughter of Procles of Epidaurus, come immediately to mind.⁴⁸ No less immediately, one can also think of examples of similar relations between *turannoi* and non-*turannoi*, too many, in fact, to be considered exceptions to any general rule. Pittacus of Mytilene married a Pentilid (Alc. fr. 70.6) and the Cypselids had marriage ties with the Philaids of Athens (cf. Hdt. 6.34.1, 128.2), much as Cleisthenes of Sicyon selected the Alcmeonid Megacles from a host of eligible Greeks to wed his daughter Agariste (p. 188 above). A daughter from that latter union was briefly married in the 550s to Peisistratus (*AP*

buildings at Delphi, the so-called Monopteros and Tholos (Bommelaer and Laroche 1991: 120–23). The evident strength of his ties with the sanctuary lends a measure of credibility to the story (schol. Pind. *Nem.* 9) that he even founded a local version of the Pythian games back in Sicyon. More generally, the Panhellenic reach of his reputation and influence is also indicated by his associations with the artists Dipoinos and Skyllis of Crete and the poet Ibycus of Rhegium (Griñon 1982: 57–58), as well as by the cosmopolitan roster of suitors for the hand of his daughter Agariste (Hdt. 6.127).

46. Cypselus may have built the Corinthian treasury at Delphi (Hdt. 1.14.2, 50–51; Paus. 10.13.4; Plut. *Mor.* 164A, 400D–E; Bommelaer and Laroche 1991: 153–55) and was also remembered for the extravagant bronze palm tree that he dedicated at the sanctuary (Plut. *Mor.* 164A, 399E–F, 724B). Later the Cypselids seem to have redirected their energies towards Olympia, presumably because they were aligned with the losing side in the First Sacred War. Their votive *agalmata* at Olympia included a golden phiale, which was found in 1917 (see Salmon 1984: 213 with nn. 105–107), a gold colossus (Agaclytus, *FGrH* 411 F1; Pl. *Phaedr.* 236B), and possibly the so-called chest of Cypselus (Paus. 5.17.5–19.10). The family’s ties with Delphi and Olympia may add substance to attempts to assign the early temples of Apollo (Pythios?) and Zeus Olympios (see n. 54 below) to the Cypselids.

47. Altar of Pythian Apollo dedicated by the younger Peisistratus, son of Hippias: Thuc. 6.54.6; ML 11. The Peisistratids failed to complete their colossal temple of Zeus Olympios and the Athenians apparently left it in its unfinished state as a monument to the folly of “tyranny.” See Wycherley 1978: 158–60. Other indications of the Panhellenic compass of Peisistratid interests include: the story about the sacrifice made by Peisistratus’ father, Hippocrates, at the Olympic festival and the ominous advice given him on that occasion by the Spartan sage Chilon (Hdt. 1.59.1–3); the report that Cimon, father of Miltiades IV, supposedly allowed Peisistratus to claim one of his three Olympic chariot victories (Hdt. 6.103); an inscribed circular base of a monument dedicated by Hipparchus, son of Peisistratus, at the Ptoion in Boeotia (*JG I*³ 1470; Schachter 1994), probably in the years ca. 520–514; Hipparchus’ patronage of poets like Anacreon and Simonides (*AP* 18.1); the family’s alliances at different times with parties in Argos, Eretria, Naxos, Thebes, and Thessaly (e.g., *AP* 15.2–3, 17.3–4, 19.5), and their activities in the northern Aegean (*AP* 15.2; Hdt. 5.94–95) and on Delos (e.g., Hdt. 1.64.2; Thuc. 3.104.1–2). As Brandt (1998) has suggested, the intimate connections between the Alcmeonids and Delphi during the sixth century probably explain why the Peisistratids seem to have had little or no direct engagement with that sanctuary.

48. Periander and Thrasybulus: e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 1284a17–37; Diog. Laert. 1.95; Hdt. 1.20, 5.92.f.2–g.1; Herman 1987: 121–22. Marriage to Melissa: Hdt. 3.50.1, 5.92.g.1–4; Diog. Laert. 1.94.

14.4; Hdt. 1.60.2), who himself came to power in 546/5 with the help of allies from Thebes, Argos, and Eretria (*AP* 15.2, 17.3–4; Hdt. 1.61.2–4), cities which are not known to have been “ruled” by *turannoi* at the time. Just as Theagenes, Peisistratus, and the Cypselids are all said to have supported others in their bids for *turannides* elsewhere, so it seems that “normal” leaders were also quite prepared to offer similar support to would-be *turannoi* in other states when requested.⁴⁹

Evidently, the early *turannoi* inhabited the very same politico-cultural universe as other Greek luminaries of the time; they were playing the same game of alliance negotiation and image-marketing as everyone else. There was no shadowy confederacy of dictators. In their ongoing quest for authority in their home states and in influence elsewhere, *turannoi* aligned themselves indiscriminately with “conventional” leaders and vice versa, just as men in both categories plainly coveted ties with powerful kingdoms in the East.⁵⁰ Whatever the distinction between the *turannos* and the non-*turannos*, it seems to have been of less consequence politically than the line that separated those leaders who had won admission to the exclusive circles of the Panhellenic elite from those who had not. The likes of Cypselus, Periander, Cleisthenes, and Peisistratus most certainly belonged to this glamorous communion. Indeed, we can safely say that it would have been a good deal less glamorous without them.⁵¹

*The early turannoi distinguished themselves from conventional leaders by their predilection for building self-aggrandizing, labor-intensive monuments and public amenities.*⁵²

For the hyper-schematic Aristotle (*Pol.* 1313b18–25), this was one of the definitive characteristics of the *turannos*. And it is very likely that the early *turannoi* of Corinth, Megara, Sicyon, and Athens did undertake such projects.⁵³ All are credited with erecting at least one significant edifice in their respective cities, while the Peisistratids and Cypselids were probably responsible for a range of construction initiatives, including major temples and infrastructural developments.⁵⁴

49. Theagenes supports Cylon: see references in n. 15 above. The Cypselids support the coup of an unnamed Euboean tyrant: Thgn. 891–94. Peisistratus supports Lygdamis of Naxos: *AP* 15.3; Hdt. 1.64.1–2.

50. For a list of examples of *turannoi* and non-*turannoi* who forged relations with eastern monarchies, see n. 27 above. On relationships between archaic *turannoi* and the Persian court, see also p. 211 below.

51. Other recent works which recognize the broad conformity of early *turannoi* to elite behavioral norms include: Stahl 1987; Stein-Hölkeskamp 1989; de Libero 1996; Brandt 1998; S. Morris 2003.

52. See e.g., Finley 1970: 107; Salmon 1997: 66–67; Pomeroy et al. 1999: 108.

53. Spencer (2000) notes the relative absence of ambitious building projects in archaic Mytilene. He suggests that the elite may have preferred to invest their wealth in cult activity and commercial ventures overseas.

54. Fountain house built by Theagenes in Megara: Paus. 1.40.1. Colonnade built by Cleisthenes in Sicyon: Paus. 2.9.6. Possible Cypselid projects include: early temples of Olympian Zeus (cf. Paus.

Nevertheless, for the archaic period at least, Aristotle's generalization is of very limited value.

At a time when notions of collective, "public" agency were still relatively unformed,⁵⁵ responsibility for maintaining and developing a community's infrastructure fell naturally upon wealthy families and individuals. And given a political culture that was driven by competitive acts of *megaloprepeia*, more than a few ambitious elites, *turannoi* and non-*turannoi* alike, will have been keen to embrace such responsibilities and display their munificence. We cannot be sure who commissioned, say, the first temple of Poseidon at Isthmia or the "Bluebeard temple" on the Athenian Acropolis. Yet both are too early to have been the products of any "public" building program, and neither falls comfortably within the time frames of any known *turannis* in Corinth or Athens.⁵⁶

So in their penchant for *grands projets* the early *turannoi* again reveal themselves to be active participants in mainstream political culture. If, in some cases, they erected structures that were unusually ambitious or grandiose, they did so because their resources were greater than those of other leaders and because their hold on power was more enduring, not because they were a different breed of leader altogether.

*The turannoi typically consolidated their hold on power by founding or developing major state cults, perhaps advancing the cause of "citizen consciousness" in the process.*⁵⁷

There is very good evidence that the best-known early *turannoi* were actively involved in the administration of cults and festivals in their home states. One thinks of Cleisthenes' involvement with the hero cults of Adrastus and Melanippus (Hdt.

2.5.4, 3.9.2) and Apollo (cf. Paus. 2.3.5) and a number of smaller buildings (Salmon 1984: 78, 201); an artificial harbor at Lechaëum, the *diolkos*, and a defensive circuit wall (Salmon 1984: 133–35, 136–39, 220–21). The Peisistratids most likely prepared the groundwork for what would become the Agora in Athens, erecting the southeast fountain house, the Building F complex, and the Altar of the Twelve Gods. See Shear 1994: 228–31 for discussion and bibliography. Members of the family also commenced work on the Olympieion, dedicated an altar to Pythian Apollo (n. 47 above), and set up the so-called Hipparchan Herms, milestones which marked the halfway point between the Altar of the Twelve Gods and outlying settlements in Attica ([Pl.] *Hipparch.* 228b–229d).

55. There are few indications from Athens, our best-documented archaic polis, of the existence of any such notions before the late sixth century. Among the many inscriptions of various kinds which derive from the Peisistratid era and earlier times, not a single example records a "public" enactment by the "demos," "the Athenians," or any other such agency. See e.g., Camp 1994: 9; Anderson 2003: esp. 54–55, 115–19.

56. For the date of the archaic temple and the first stadium at Isthmia, see Gebhard 1993: 159–62. The "Bluebeard temple": n. 38 above. Cf. also the arguments of Boersma (2000), who questions the assumption that all major building projects executed in Athens between 546/5 and 528/7 must have been commissioned by Peisistratus: "In all probability, different individual members of the aristocracy took the initiative for these undertakings, with the approval of the entire community" (p. 56).

57. E.g., Finley 1970: 107; Snodgrass 1980: 115–18.

5.67–68) and of the Cypselids' probable patronage of cults of Zeus and Apollo (see n. 54). One perhaps thinks especially of the Peisistratids and the great array of ritual activities with which they are commonly associated.⁵⁸ But again, the primary problem with the proposition is that *turannoi* hardly had a monopoly on such activities. As we saw earlier (pp. 183–84), the cultivation of visible, public links with gods and heroes was a central feature of orthodox politics at this time; in pursuing such links, the *turannoi* in fact only add to the suspicion that they may not have been so distinctive or so politically transgressive after all.

The case of Athens is particularly revealing here. Evidence for Peisistratid involvement with the cults of Zeus Olympios, Apollo Pythios, and the Twelve Gods is beyond dispute (see nn. 47 and 54), and similar links with other Athenian cults are certainly conceivable. But the general case for a distinctively “tyrannical” style of *Religionspolitik*, including the claim that this use of cult encouraged the growth of civic consciousness, depends in large part on the strength of the Peisistratids' associations with major, “national” festivals, notably the Great Panathenaia, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the City Dionysia. And since recent work is increasingly inclined to minimize these associations, the entire case may be a lot more tenuous than once thought. The foundation of the Dionysia cannot be verified before the last decade of the sixth century, and, if Connor (1990; 1996) is correct, the festival was contrived precisely to celebrate deliverance from Peisistratid domination. On the other hand, the Mysteries and the penteteric version of the Panathenaia were almost certainly established some time before the Peisistratids' ascendancy; it now seems that the family made one or two minor adjustments to the latter and had no observable influence on the former at all.⁵⁹ Again, we cannot be sure who did introduce these two great festivals, but the likeliest candidates would be members of other prominent Athenian families, men who were not remembered as *turannoi*.

*The turannoi were usurpers or revolutionaries, who broke the elite stranglehold on power by exploiting popular discontent with aristocratic government.*⁶⁰

Of all the information furnished by ancient sources about the early *turannoi*, perhaps no single item has had more influence on modern thinking than Aristotle's much-cited opinion (see especially *Pol.* 1310b9–16, 29–31; cf. *AP* 13.4–5) that

58. See references in n. 4 above.

59. Connor 1990 makes a persuasive case for downdating the City Dionysia to the end of the sixth century. On the foundation and early history of the Mysteries, see especially Clinton 1994; Anderson 2003: 185–94. On the evolution of the Great Panathenaia, see now Anderson 2003: 158–77. In all likelihood, neither the Mysteries nor the Panathenaia acquired their more “nationalistic” characteristics until after the expulsion of the Peisistratids.

60. The long list of authors who have implicitly or explicitly endorsed this or similar propositions begins with Plaß (1859) and includes Glotz (1929: 109, 115), Pleket (1969), Finley (1970: 106–107), Jerrold (1976: 46–47), Ste Croix (1981: 278–83), and Salmon (1997: 62–63).

these men were populist leaders. It is this claim in particular that has encouraged scholars to look for connections between *turannides* and the dawning of civic consciousness. And it is this claim above all that gives credibility to the widely held ancient view that *turannoi* were quite unlike conventional archaic leaders; as “champions of the people,” they attracted mass support and thus had both the means and the motive to overthrow traditional “aristocratic” regimes and replace them with something entirely new.

It is rather disappointing, then, to find that Aristotle makes so little effort to substantiate his claim and repay posterity’s faith in his notion of the demagogue *turannos*. Most conspicuously, he gives us no real idea of the specific contribution made by the putative non-elite supporters of *turannoi* to the transformation of their political landscape. Clutching at another dubious Aristotelian observation—the remark that the early *turannoi* acquired their popularity through their prowess as “generals” (*Pol.* 1305a7–8), many have inferred that this contribution related in some way to the emergence of a “hoplite class” at around the same time.⁶¹ But any such inference is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the fact that not one of our archetypal *turannoi* was demonstrably swept to power by an army composed exclusively of his humbler fellow citizens.⁶²

Was it nevertheless common practice for would-be *turannoi* to position themselves as “champions” of the masses? No doubt a number of the men who went on to establish *turannides* will have had their share of non-elite supporters. In the highly charged atmosphere of archaic politics, some may well have sought to exploit various forms of popular discontent to build a wider following outside their usual elite constituencies. However, there is no compelling reason to believe that

61. Cypselus (Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F57), Orthagoras of Sicyon (P. Oxy. 1365), and Peisistratus (Hdt. 1.59.4) are all said to have held official military positions before becoming *turannoi*. At one time or another, all three may well have commanded military forces, but these will almost certainly not have been the “national” armies of citizen soldiers that Aristotle clearly has in mind. See p. 213 with n. 98 below. Early *turannoi* typically found a power base in a “hoplite class”: e.g., Andrewes 1956: 36–38; Forrest 1966: 104–105; Snodgrass 1980: 111–13; Murray 1993: 141–44. Hoplite armor first appears in the archaeological record in the later eighth century, and battle scenes in the Homeric poems indicate that fighting in mass infantry formations was already familiar in the Greek world by ca. 700 (e.g., Latacz 1977; van Wees 1994). But this evidence does not necessarily entitle us to infer that an evolving, self-conscious hoplite class was ready to assert itself as a political actor by the mid-seventh century.

62. Raafaub (1997: 53–57) suggests that the sociopolitical significance of early phalanx warfare has been overstated. Meanwhile, the argument (e.g., Snodgrass, previous note) that hoplites actually showed their support for *turannoi* by doing nothing, i.e., by not intervening to prevent their power bids, seems weak. If, as this argument presupposes, the hoplite class already possessed the collective wherewithal to organize a campaign of non-cooperation with elite leaders, what was there to prevent them from participating more actively in these power bids, making victory that much more assured? Surely the more natural explanation for the non-participation of citizen hoplites in these actions is precisely that they did not yet constitute a distinct “class,” with their own interests, identity, or capacity for self-organization. Cf. also the observations of Drews (1972), who suggests that *turannoi* benefited from the new mode of warfare, but contends that the hoplites in question were typically *epikouroi* (“allies” or “assistants”) rather than citizen soldiers.

such tactics distinguished or defined the *turannoi* as a group. Indeed, ancient accounts of the rise of these individuals offer no decisive evidence for any meaningful popular involvement of any kind, as George Cawkwell (1995) has shown in a recent paper. His conclusion (p. 86) is terse, but appropriate: “The people did not come into it.”

Besides, as we have just seen, the kind of public persona fashioned by Cypselus et al. hardly encourages us to see them as populists, let alone as revolutionaries. Their *megaloprepeia*, their carefully cultivated links with Delphi and Olympia, and their extensive networks of influential connections all strongly suggest that they wished to be measured by the very same standards as other elite leaders. Why would they have wanted to change a political system in which they so clearly excelled? If these men really were class traitors, they had a peculiar way of showing it. Perhaps modern faith in Aristotle’s idea of the populist *turannos* is a little misplaced.

That said, it is still not easy to determine exactly how and why the first *turannides* were established. What, for example, are we to make of the story that Theagenes of Megara came to power by slaughtering the cattle of the rich (Arist. *Pol.* 1305a26)? Apparently, the anecdote is meant to attest to Theagenes’ credentials as a populist subversive. But what little else we know about him suggests that he was nothing of the kind (cf. nn. 15, 44, and 54 above). If there is any truth to the story at all, the bovicide can be easily explained as a self-interested attempt to damage the property and standing of rival fellow-elites. It was most probably not a call to revolution.

Somewhat more complex is the case of the *turannoi* of Sicyon. The Orthagorids are said, rather improbably, to have dominated the city for fully one hundred years. But sources for this “dynasty’s” chronology and genealogy are irredeemably confused. The figure of Orthagoras, the purported founder of the line, is little more than an aggregation of folk-tale motifs, political calumnies, and theoretical musings. The story that he parlayed a successful military “career” into a position of political dominance is no more likely to be true of him than it is of Cypselus or Peisistratus.⁶³ And even if we are generally much better informed about Orthagoras’ eventual “successor,” Cleisthenes, the one extant ancient account of his path to power—involving the deception of one brother and the murder of another (Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F61)—likewise strains credibility.

63. See n. 61 above for references to military offices held by men who later became *turannoi*. Orthagorid “rule” for a century: Arist. *Pol.* 1315b13–14; Diod. 8.24. As we see clearly in the slightly less extreme case of Peisistratus, posterity was prone to exaggerate the duration of early *turannides*. The author of *AP* (14.3, 15.1; cf. Hdt. 1.59–61) assigns him two substantial *turannides* in the years before the battle of Pallene. In all probability, neither of these periods in power, if such they were (cf. Anderson 2003: 67–72), lasted for more than a matter of months. See Rhodes 1976; 1981: 191–99. Grierson (1982: 40–47) gamely tries to reconcile the many genealogical and chronological inconsistencies in ancient accounts of the Orthagorid “dynasty.” But even her own attractive reconstruction seems to require an alarming degree of scholarly ingenuity. For tales of Orthagoras’ rise to power, see Andrewes 1956: 57–58; Grierson 1982: 47–48.

Similar later embellishments of course bedevil reports of the rise of both Cypselus and Peisistratus. But here at least we are told enough to allow us to read between the lines and establish a very basic sequence of events. The two cases are in fact remarkably alike. Both *turannoi* attained their position by force; in the process, both overcame families (respectively, the Bacchiads and Alcmeonids) with whom they had some kind of connection by marriage; and in both cases the defeated party promptly departed into exile.⁶⁴ Most scholars would also characterize the actions of Cypselus and Peisistratus in much the same way—as attempts by renegades to usurp state power. However, the interpersonal nature of the struggles in question points to a less transgressive, more straightforward scenario: Cypselus and Peisistratus were seeking only to supplant rivals as leaders, not to subvert an entire political order.

An even more clear-cut example of this particular scenario comes from Mytilene. As the fragments of Alcaeus fully, if at times eloquently reveal,⁶⁵ a culture of *stasis* seems to have consumed the energies of the city's most prominent families and individuals in the later seventh century.⁶⁶ *Stasis* meant factionalism not revolution; the aim of the parties involved was to dominate the existing oligarchic regime, not to overthrow it. And, as fragment 70 of Alcaeus indicates, it was precisely out of Mytilene's "heart-eating faction and civil conflict" (θυμοβόρω λύας ἐμφύλω τε μάχας) that Pittacus emerged as *turannos*. In other words, he did not come to power by means of some singular coup against the "state." Rather, he acquired his authority by somehow prevailing over other would-be *turannoi* in an ongoing, open contest for personal dominance. This conclusion is corroborated in fragment 348 (Arist. *Pol.* 1285a35), where Alcaeus reprimands the Mytileneans because they "established base-born Pittacus as *turannos*" (τὸν

64. The rise of Cypselus: Hdt. 5.92; Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F57–60. Cypselus' mother was said to have been a Bacchiad. For the rise of Peisistratus, his relations with the Alcmeonids, and his ultimate victory at Pallene, see the references on p. 187 with n. 18 above.

65. It may well be the case that "Alcaeus," like "Homer" or "Theognis," ultimately became little more than a poetic persona, a rubric for a Panhellenic tradition of poetry or song under which multiple individuals might over time compose or recompose works of similar diction, style, and content. Cf. especially Nagy 1985; 1990: 52–115 and the comments in I. Morris 1996: 25–28. But like Forsdyke (2000: 236 with n. 19), I do not think that the traditional character of Alcaeus' poetry entirely compromises its value as historical evidence. In what follows, I assume only that the poems correctly represent the most well-known names and events of Mytilenean history in the lifetime of the historical Alcaeus, and that their characterization of the style of politics practiced at the time is broadly accurate. It seems to me fundamentally unlikely that an author working consciously in the "Alcaeus" tradition would make significant errors in these areas. For convenience, I follow conventional practice and speak of "Alcaeus" throughout as if he were a single author identical with the historical figure described in the poems.

66. A brief summary of events in Mytilene during this era can be found in Strabo (13.2.3). For modern reconstructions, along with discussion of vexed chronological issues, see Page 1955: 149–243; Andrewes 1956: 92–99; Berve 1967: i. 91–95; de Libero 1996: 314–30. Contemporary political culture is analyzed by Kurke (1994), and related archaeological evidence is presented and discussed by Spencer (2000). Both suggest that the root cause of the *stasis* was the impact of new, mercantile wealth on the traditional sociopolitical order.

κακοπατρίδαν Φίττακον . . . ἐστάσαντο τύραννον) of their city, “acclaiming him loudly with one voice” (μέγ’ ἐπαίνεντες ἀόλλεες). Whatever the exact nature of the procedure alluded to here, the word *estasanto* (“established”) plainly cannot be referring to any process of usurpation or revolution. More likely, it describes some kind of public process whereby his fellow townsmen acknowledged Pittacus’ preeminence and hailed him by common consent as *primus inter pares*, now that his dominant position in the state was unchallenged.

Some early *turannoi*, like Cypselus and Peisistratus, seem to have come to power in times of *stasis* by force of arms. Others may have acquired their preeminence in less adversarial circumstances, using little or no violence. But neither of these scenarios necessarily involved any fundamental transgression of contemporary political norms. And in none of the cases examined above did the formation of a *turannis* self-evidently mean the subversion or overthrow of an existing order. When violence was used, it was directed against rival leaders not against the “state” as a whole. This was conventional political competition not revolution; later ancients were simply unwilling or, more likely, unable to recognize the distinction.

*Dispensing with existing political arrangements, the turannoi ruled their states illegitimately as dictators.*⁶⁷

Even if the *turannoi* of the various states in question all came to power by what were for the time conventional means, is it still possible that their authority thereafter was somehow qualitatively different from that of normal leaders? How did existing institutions fare under their sway? Did their assumption of power mark, in effect, a change of regime to a new form of one-man rule?

Though nothing is known about the political vitality of Megara at the time of Theagenes, a couple of reminiscences about Cleisthenes of Sicyon may be revealing. The first is Aristotle’s brief remark (*Pol.* 1315b15–16) that the Orthagorids “were for the most part slaves to the laws” (πολλὰ τοῖς νόμοις ἐδούλευον), a judgment that does not obviously hint at any radical discontinuity in the operations of the state apparatus. The same might be said of another anecdote, the well-known story that Cleisthenes changed the names of the four *phulai*, or tribes, in Sicyon (*Hdt.* 5.67–68). Regardless of his purposes here,⁶⁸ he evidently assumed that these institutions would continue to perform their customary civic functions

67. For references, see pp. 175 with n. 5 above.

68. Herodotus’ claim that the name-changes were anti-Dorian in intent is almost certainly incorrect. While it is true that the triad of Hylleis, Dymanes, and Pamphyloi was commonly found in states that considered themselves Dorian, some of these states (e.g., Argos, Troezen, and Epidaurus) also had additional tribes. So we cannot assume, as Herodotus plainly does, that the fourth tribe at Sicyon, the tribe to which Cleisthenes himself belonged (and the only one of the four whose new name had positive connotations), was reserved for non-Dorian residents. See the comments of Hall (1997: 9–10).

while he was in power.⁶⁹ So even if Cleisthenes did make adjustments to the machinery of Sicyonian government, there is no need to suppose that he acted through anything other than the normal procedural channels. Nor, it appears, did his reforms amount to any kind of radical overhaul of the state, let alone to a wholesale change of regime.

A similar conclusion recommends itself when we consider the case of the Cypselids. The only recorded memory of a connection between a state institution and a family member is Aristotle's report (fr. 611.20) that Periander set up a council ἐπ' ἐσχάτων ("on extreme matters"?), whatever that might have been.⁷⁰ Some have suggested that the Cypselids maintained or even established what would become the primary organs of the classical Corinthian state, namely the eight *probouloi*, the Council of 80, and the system of eight tribes upon which the composition of the council was based.⁷¹ Sadly, no hard evidence is available to decide the issue. They were of course notorious in later times for their cruelty and caprice, qualities associated firmly with authoritarian forms of one-man rule in the minds of authors from Herodotus on (e.g., 3.48–53; 5.92). But even if Periander did have his own wife killed or ordered the castration of 300 Corcyreans, such outrages would not necessarily tell us anything conclusive about the nature of his political authority. As it happens, more than one source (e.g., Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F57; Arist. fr. 611.20) insists that he and his father were actually quite moderate. And whatever Periander's personal proclivities, a man known for fundamentally violating the norms of political behavior is unlikely to have been chosen to arbitrate a dispute between Athens and Mytilene over important territorial rights in the northeastern Aegean. Still less likely is it that such a man would have been celebrated only a matter of decades after his death as one of the seven great sages of ancient Greece.⁷²

The very same observation can of course be made about Pittacus, an even more proverbial member of that illustrious septet.⁷³ And however unreliable their

69. On the nature and functions of tribes in Greek poleis, see especially Roussel 1976.

70. For speculation, see Salmon 1984: 199 n. 55, 206.

71. Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGrH* 90 F60) claims that the "demos" of the Corinthians established the council and the *probouloi* soon after the fall of the Cypselids. Salmon (1984: 199–201, 205–209, 413–19) begs to differ, insisting that the Cypselids were responsible for introducing the *probouloi* and the council as well as the eight tribes on which these institutions were based. Cf. also Berve 1967: i. 18. For bibliography, see Salmon 1984: 205–209.

72. Periander and the dispute over Sigeum: e.g., Apollod. *FGrH* 244 F27; Hdt. 5.95.2. The tradition of the Seven Sages appears to have been established sometime before the end of the sixth century. See now Martin 1998 for discussion of the tradition's evolution. At least seventeen different individuals were included at different times among the seven. But Periander, along with Bias, Solon, Thales, Cleobulus, Chilon, and Pittacus, was a fixture on what comes closest to being an original canonical list. Predictably, the inclusion of Periander among the Seven Sages was perplexing to later ancients. In his own version of the list of sages, Plato (*Prot.* 343a) replaced him with Myson of Chen. See Martin 1998: 111.

73. The notion that the famously enlightened Pittacus might once have been a *turannos* was no more comprehensible to later ancients than the inclusion of Periander in the roster of the Seven Sages.

accounts may be, later authors emphasize that Mytilene experienced no serious political irregularities under his stewardship. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1274b18–23) insists that he made no “constitutional” changes whatsoever, but merely introduced a number of new laws. Diogenes Laertius (1.74–81) emphasizes Pittacus’ concern with due process, telling us of one of the various laws that he made, of his famous dictum that “painted wood” (i.e., written law) was a city’s best protector, and even of a prose treatise he wrote entitled *On Laws*. Most compelling, though, is the testimony of Alcaeus, Pittacus’ one-time ally and bitter adversary. While the poet complains on more than one occasion that Pittacus (presumably during his time as *turannos*) was “devouring” their city (fr. 70.6–9, 129.21–24), he also indicates elsewhere that his rival’s sins did not in fact include any fundamental disruption of the normal rhythms of political life. This comes in fragment 130B.3–5, where the poet speaks wistfully from exile of “longing to hear the assembly summoned . . . and the council” (ἰμέρρων ἀγόρας ἄχουσαι καρυ[ζο]μέννας . . . καὶ β[ό]λ[η]ας). If, as is generally assumed, this exile was experienced while Pittacus held power in the city, we can only suppose that a *turannis* at this time did not necessarily involve the suspension of key state institutions. Whatever legal innovations the *turannos* may have made, the political process in Mytilene seems to have carried on more or less regardless. Here at least, *turannis* and oligarchy were not mutually exclusive.

But the strongest evidence for political continuities under the early *turannoi* comes, surprisingly, from Athens. Given the Athenian state’s concerted efforts to demonize Peisistratid leadership as a monstrous departure from hallowed political traditions,⁷⁴ one expects to find our sources littered with tales of trickery, malice, and arbitrary behavior. In this, of course, we are not disappointed. We are also told of one or two fiscal and juridical innovations, notably the institution of the peripatetic δικασταὶ κατὰ δῆμους, the “jurors among the villages” (*AP* 16.5). But none of these initiatives necessarily compromises the overall impression of a political order little disturbed. In fact, our most valuable ancient accounts provide a striking number of indications that the oligarchic state apparatus functioned more or less normally while the Peisistratids were in power.

From indirect references in anecdotes of dubious authenticity, like the story of Peisistratus’ voluntary appearance before the Areopagus on a murder charge

Some resorted to blatant special pleading to explain the apparent anomaly. Strabo (13.2.3) claims that Pittacus “used his monarchy to overthrow the powerful” (εἰς . . . τὴν τῶν δυναστεϊῶν κατάλυσιν ἐχρήσατο τῆ μοναρχίᾳ) and later “restored the city’s autonomy” (ἀπέδωκε τὴν αὐτονομίαν τῆ πόλει). Alternatively, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1285a31-b4) construes Alc. fr. 348 to mean that Pittacus in fact held some kind of extraordinary, elected office, something he calls an *aisumnēteia*. This “legitimate” form of *turannis*, he supposes, conferred emergency powers on Pittacus to address a specific problem (continuing insurgencies by exiles like Alcaeus) for a fixed period of time. Neither author seems to have considered the possibility that the term *turannos* might have had more positive associations in Alcaeus’ day than it did in their own.

74. See especially Thomas 1989: 238–61; Taylor 1991; Lavelle 1993; Castriota 1998; Anderson 2003: 197–211.

(*AP* 16.8), to the explicit statements in all three of our main sources (*AP* 14.3, 16.2, 8; *Hdt.* 1.59.6; *Thuc.* 6.54.5–6) that the family steadfastly refrained from making any “constitutional” changes, the textual evidence offers a remarkably consistent impression of institutional continuity. True, Thucydides (6.54.5–6) maintains that the family took care to ensure that major offices were always filled by relatives and allies. But besides reinforcing the point that the normal rhythms of political life continued largely uninterrupted during the *turannis*, this claim also inadvertently confirms that the Peisistratids exercised their authority in a manner that was entirely normal for the time.⁷⁵

More revealing still is the testimony of the well-known archon list fragment (Meritt 1939: 59 no. 21; *ML* 6). If this concrete evidence for the appointment of eponymous archons in the mid-520s conclusively decides the issue of institutional continuities, the presence of names from rival families among the appointees points to an even more fundamental kind of continuity. The elections of the Philaid Miltiades and the Alcmeonid Cleisthenes may attest to the consummate skill of the Peisistratids in building coalitions among influential and formerly hostile peers, or it may even suggest that the family’s control of the state during this period was not quite as watertight as our sources imply. Either way, the list reveals that a phenomenon whose absence is usually taken to be the very hallmark of a *turannis* was still very much alive and well in Peisistratid Athens, namely, politics. So, far from being neglected or abandoned, the institutional life of the state and even the practice of politics were apparently in a condition of some good health under the *turannoi*. Here, as in Mytilene, a *turannis* did not mean the end of political business-as-usual. Apparently, the “rule” of the Peisistratids was not such a monstrous departure from tradition after all.⁷⁶

Even if one or two of the first *turannoi* really were capricious, cruel, or immoral individuals, this did not make them political deviants. And if, as later sources stress, some of them actually were moved to use bodyguards and have opponents exiled or even killed, this behavior was probably not exceptional

75. As noted earlier (pp. 182–83), the archonships of Isagoras in 508/7 and Alcmeon in 507/6 show that appointments to major offices would continue to reflect prevailing interpersonal power relations even after the end of the *turannis* of the Peisistratids.

76. Further corroboration for this conclusion may come from the Acropolis. The Peisistratids were quite probably responsible for some of the small buildings, costly equestrian statues, and korai that were set up on the citadel during the years 546/5–511/0, but their names are conspicuously absent from the inventory of known dedicators. Given the political capital to be gained at this time from *megaloprepeia* of all kinds, it seems significant that the sanctuary activities of wealthy families were much the same under the Peisistratids as they had been in earlier times. This continuity of practice suggests that at least some semblance of political competition also continued during the period of the *turannis*, presumably because the Peisistratids were either unable or unwilling to prevent it. See Hurwit 1999: 116–21. Of all the family’s innovations, perhaps the only one that seems to possess a distinctly authoritarian flavor is the network of “Hipparchan Herms” (n. 54 above). Each herm bore the legend “This is a monument of Hipparchus” (μνημα τὸδ’ Ἰππάρχου), followed by some kind of gnomic injunction like “Do not deceive a friend” ([Pl.] *Hipparch.* 229a-b).

for the time. From the evidence assembled above, we can make a strong case that there was in fact no absolute distinction between early *turannoi* and orthodox oligarchic leaders. The two groups conformed to much the same general standards of public conduct, favored much the same overall style of self-representation, and pursued the same de facto species of political power. The difference between them lay in the quantity rather than the quality of the power attained. The influence of families like the Alcmeonids was always, apparently, constrained and counter-balanced by that of other powerful families and individuals or coalitions thereof. The *turannos*, on the other hand, had no such rivals. He was, by definition, a man who had decisively prevailed over all competitors, usually by overmatching them in self-promotion, by excelling them in the capacity to attract allies, and/or by defeating them in hostile confrontations. As a result, his de facto authority was free to assume a less tempered, more hegemonic form, leaving him essentially unchallenged as the dominant force in the state. In other words, to become a *turannos* was to claim the role of first among equals. And in so far as the claim had broad support within the community, this informal hegemony or supremacy enjoyed a measure of legitimacy.⁷⁷

So the early *turannoi* were neither revolutionaries nor usurpers; they were not dictators or quasi-monarchs; nor were they in any sense renegades or traitors to their class. Their authority was not so much unconstitutional as extra-constitutional. Forged in the uniquely superheated furnace of mainstream political competition in the archaic Greek polis, a *turannis* was “normal” leadership in its most amplified form, conventional de facto authority writ large. As such, it represented neither an alternative nor a threat to the established oligarchies in which it flourished. It was not a distinct category of regime altogether. In the end, what really separated the *turannoi* as a group from other oligarchic leaders was their uncommon skill and success as political operators.

To test these conclusions, we should now consider one further body of evidence. Alcaeus is the only author who provides intelligible first-hand information about any specific early *turannos*. But he and a small handful of other poets from the “age of the tyrants” also refer to *turannides* in a more general, allusive fashion. What, then, were the meanings attached to the term *turannos* by these writers and their contemporaries? What images and associations did it typically evoke at this time? And how could this same term have equally described both illustrious, larger-than-life figures like Cypselus and Peisistratus as well as, say, Pantaleon,

77. If a *turannos* achieved his hegemonic position by virtue of the acquiescence or willing deference of most of his peers, some kind of formal, public acknowledgement of his newfound supremacy may well have taken place. Fragment 348 of Alcaeus (pp. 197–98 above) appears to describe just such an eventuality. On the other hand, if the tyrant attained his position by decisively defeating his principal rivals in battle or by somehow encouraging their withdrawal into exile, there would presumably have been no need for any formal process or ceremony of recognition. The reconsecration of power relations within the state will have been self-evident to all.

Demophon, and Pyrrhus of Elis, or Athenagoras and Comas of Ephesus, about whom history records next to nothing? What made all these individuals *turannoi*?

THE *TURANNOS* FIGURE IN EARLY GREEK POETRY

The word *turannos* was not Greek in origin. Most believe it was borrowed from an Anatolian language, perhaps Lydian.⁷⁸ Whatever the term meant in this native tongue, one imagines that it was domesticated for use in the Greek world around the middle of the seventh century, when the first Greek *turannoi* seem to have emerged (cf. Hippias of Elis, *FGrH* 6 F6). We are distinctly fortunate, then, to find a few examples of terms based on the stem *turann-* in poetic texts written very shortly after such words first entered circulation. Together, these examples are sufficient to give us at least a general sense of the initial resonance of the word *turannos* in the Greek language.

Two occur in poems of Archilochus. In one (fr. 19), the poet speaks, we are told (Arist. *Rhet.* 1418b28), in the voice of Charon, a carpenter:

οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγεω τοῦ πολυχρύσου μέλει,
οὐδ' εἶλέ πώ με ζήλος, οὐδ' ἀγαίομαι
θεῶν ἔργα, μεγάλης δ' οὐκ ἔρέω τυραννίδος·
ἀπόπροθεν γάρ ἐστιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐμῶν.

I have no interest in the possessions of Gyges, the one with so much gold, nor has jealousy of him yet overcome me. Nor do I envy the works of the gods, and I have no desire for a grand *turannis*; that is beyond my sights.

As we might expect of a word borrowed so recently from elsewhere, the term *turannis* in fragment 19 plainly retains a certain exotic flavor. In the eyes of a seventh-century Greek “everyman” (as imagined by an elite poet), the lot of the *turannos* would seem to be something literally “remote” (cf. *apoprothen*) from daily experience, indeed as unimaginably remote as the splendors of an oriental court or the wondrous works of divinity. Nor is there here a trace of any stigma attached to the term, political or otherwise. To judge from the obviously contrarian drift of the sentiment expressed in the poem, it was already axiomatic by this time that a *turannis* was every bit as desirable as it was, for most Greeks, unattainable. Fragment 19 thus offers us a brief glimpse of a kind of prelapsarian image of

78. Speculation about the term’s non-Greek ancestry has yielded quite a variety of etymological reconstructions. See e.g., Hegyi 1965; Pintore 1983; Giorgini 1993: 48–55; Parker 1998: 145–49. In the absence of any firm consensus on this issue, one can only guess at the original sense of the term in its source language. Perhaps it actually meant “king” (cf. Andrewes 1956: 21–23), or, more probably, it was an honorific title used of kings, meaning something like “lord” or “master” (cf. Berve 1967: i. 3–6). On the word’s semantic range in Greek in the archaic and classical eras, see e.g., Andrewes 1956: 21–22; Berve 1967: i. 3; Drews 1972: 138; Cobet 1981; O’Neil 1986; de Libero 1996: 23–38; Parker 1998.

the *turannos*. There was once a time, it seems, before all the fear and the loathing, when the feeling he most commonly stirred in the breasts of others was envy.

The second example from Archilochus (fr. 23.17–21) seems to confirm this impression. Though the text is somewhat uncertain because of the condition of the papyrus (P. Oxy. 2310 fr. 1) on which the passage in question occurs, the general sense is clear enough:

πόλιν δὲ ταύτην . . .] . [. . .] ἐπιστρέ[φρα]ι[
 οὔ]τοι ποτ' ἄνδρες ἐξε[πόρθη]σαν, σὺ δ' ἐ
 ν]ῦν εἶλες αἰχμηῆι καὶ μέγ' ἐξήρ(ω) κ[λ]έος.
 κείνης ἀνασσε καὶ τ[υραν]νίην ἔχε·
 π[ο]λ[λοῖ]σ[ι] θ[η]ν ζ[η]λωτὸς ἀ[νθρ]ώπων ἔσειαι.

You move about this city [which?] men have never sacked, but you have now taken it with the spear and have won great glory. Rule over it and hold on to your *turanniē*. Surely now you will be envied by many men.

Since the words appear to be addressed to a woman (*gunai*, 8), there may well be an erotic metaphor at play here.⁷⁹ But whether the possession and domination of the “city” is to be taken literally or figuratively, the *turanniē* in question is again notably free of any negative associations. Though this domination may have been acquired by violence (*aikhmēi*), it is here unambiguously presented as a source of prestige (cf. *kleos*) in the eyes of others. Again, it appears that contemporaries like Cypselus of Corinth and Theagenes of Megara must have been more envied than loathed.

A near contemporary, Semonides, reveals a further aspect of the popular image of the *turannos* in the mid- to late seventh century. The revelation comes in his notorious poem (fr. 7) about the different “breeds” of women, specifically in the passage (57–70) which describes the woman who is “born from” the “luxurious, long-haired mare” (ἵππος ἀβρῆ χαϊτέσσα). After recounting this woman’s disdain for menial tasks and her unhealthy obsessions with personal hygiene, unguents, haircare, and bodily adornments, Semonides concludes (67–70):

καλὸν μὲν ὦν θέημα τοιαύτη γυνή
 ἄλλοισι, τῷ δ' ἔχοντι γίνεται κακόν,
 ἢν μή τις ἢ τύραννος ἢ σκηπτοῦχος ἦ,
 ὅστις τοιούτοις θυμὸν ἀγλαΐζεται.

So such a woman is a fine sight for others, but a bane for her husband, unless he be a *turannos* or a scepter-bearer, a man whose heart delights in such things.

As in fragment 19 of Archilochus, the *turannos* is here represented as an exotic figure far removed from the normal run of mankind, closer to the rulers of

79. Cf. West 1974: 118–20.

great kingdoms than to the inhabitants of a humble Greek polis. But where in Archilochus this exotic detachment was primarily a function of extraordinary wealth and power, Semonides suggests that it was also a function of personal style. Like a Midas or a Gyges, the *turannos* is believed to inhabit an alien world of luxury, or *habrosunē* (cf. *habrē*, 57), a space where men can afford to maintain frivolous, self-indulgent wives as beautiful *agalmata* (cf. *aglaizetai*, 70).⁸⁰

Three other archaic poets display a more complex response to the *turannis* phenomenon. In the pertinent verses of Alcaeus, Solon, and Theognis we find for the first time more than a trace of negativity. Yet even here, *turannoi* are not obviously characterized as usurpers or illegitimate rulers, and two of the authors openly acknowledge that the *turannos* was generally admired by society as a whole.

The most important evidence in Alcaeus for attitudes towards *turannoi* comes in fragment 70, though the word itself does not appear in the text. After bewailing Pittacus' expedient marriage alliance with the powerful Penthilidai, his unscrupulous power-sharing arrangement of the past with Myrsilus, and his reprehensible "city-devouring" behavior (cf. *δαπτέτω πόλιν*, 7) at the present time while in power (i.e., as *turannos*), the poet continues (10–13):

χαλάσσομεν δὲ τὰς θυμοβόρω λύας
 ἐμφύλω τε μάχας, τάν τις Ὀλυμπίων
 ἔνωρσε, δᾶμον μὲν εἰς αὐάταν ἄγων
 Φιττάκωι δὲ δίδοις κῦδος ἐπήρ[ατ]ογ.

And let us relax from heart-eating faction and civil conflict, which some Olympian god has stirred up, leading the people to ruin, while bestowing delightful glory on Pittacus.

We can safely infer from this passage that Alcaeus' hostile characterization of Pittacus' *turannis* here and elsewhere is driven by personal animus; it is not representative of the author's or his society's feelings about *turannoi* in general. The last line of the passage unambiguously suggests that a *turannis* was seen by the poet and his contemporaries as a mark of distinction and special divine favor, and such a view could not logically have coexisted with a belief that all *turannoi* were, by definition, a malign influence on their communities.⁸¹ Besides, as a prominent participant in Mytilene's "faction and civil conflict" (see esp. fr. 69), the historical Alcaeus had very probably struggled hard to establish a *turannis* himself, whether for a political associate or to gratify his own personal ambitions.

80. Cf. also the remark of Kurke (1992: 95): "In context, the fact that this woman is born from a 'luxurious horse' is not fortuitous, because great wealth was required for *hippotrophia*, the keeping of horses."

81. Hence, in fr. 348 (pp. 197–98 above) Alcaeus does not reprimand his fellow Mytileneans because they had supported the establishment of a *turannis* as such, but because they had bestowed this signal honor on the unworthy, "base-born" Pittacus. On the special talismanic, god-given power associated with the idea of *kudos* (cf. fr. 70.13) in the archaic era, see Kurke 1998b.

By contrast, another politically active author, Solon of Athens, apparently declined an opportunity to become a *turannos*, and tells us as much in two poems. In one (fr. 33), he playfully imagines the incredulous response of an average fellow-Athenian to his decision. So great was the prestige attached to *turannides* throughout the Greek world at this time, it seems, that such a man would have gladly given up everything to be *turannos* in Athens for but a single day (cf. τυραννεύσας Ἀθηνέων μοῦνον ἡμέρην μίαν, 6). So in his eyes, the poet imagines, Solon's rejection of the bounty offered by god (cf. ἐσθλὰ . . . θεοῦ διδόντος, 2) can only have been the result of a failure of nerve and wits alike (cf. θυμοῦ θ' ἄμαρτῆ καὶ φρενῶν ἀποσφαλείς, 4). In the other poem (fr. 32), Solon understandably feels the need to answer this kind of ridicule (cf. also Plut. *Sol.* 14–15) and offers his friend Phocus a kind of apologia for his extraordinary decision. While recognizing that he has damaged his public reputation by refusing to become a *turannos*, he insists that he feels no shame; one does not need a *turannis* to be politically effective and successful:

εἰ δὲ γῆς ἐφεισάμην
πατρίδος, τυραννίδος δὲ καὶ βίης ἀμειλίχου
οὐ κατηψάμην μίανας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος,
οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι· πλέον γὰρ ὧδε νικήσειν δοκέω
πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

If I spared my fatherland, and did not grasp a *turannis* and untempered force, bringing stain and disgrace upon my good name, then I am not at all ashamed; this way I think I will win more people over.⁸²

So what was it about *turannides* that Solon found so hard to accept? Why was he so intent on defying the conventional political wisdom of his age? An answer is perhaps suggested in fragment 9:

ἐκ νεφέλης πέλεται χιόνος μένος ἠδὲ χαλάζης,
βροντῆ δ' ἐκ λαμπρῆς γίγνεται ἀστεροπῆς·
ἀνδρῶν δ' ἐκ μεγάλων πόλις ὄλλυται, ἐς δὲ μονάρχου
δῆμος αἰδρίη δουλοσύνην ἔπεσεν.
λίην δ' ἐξάραντ' (οὐ) ῥάδιόν ἐστι κατασχεῖν
ὑστερον, ἀλλ' ἤδη χρή (τινα) πάντα νοεῖν.

82. The participial clause *μίανας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος* (“bringing stain and disgrace upon my good name”) is usually understood to refer to the loss of reputation Solon would have suffered had he become a *turannos*. But surely, since *kleos* (“good name”) is measured by the opinions of others, it means the opposite. It is precisely because he refrained from becoming a *turannos* that his reputation actually did suffer, as fr. 33 makes clear. Besides, if his community disapproved of *turannois*, why would Solon feel moved to insist that he felt no “shame” about refusing to become one? I borrow West’s (1993: 81) translation of the closing sentiment (“this way I think I will win more people over”), though the reference here is obscure. Another poem (34.7–8) also associates *turannides* with violence, but uncertainties in the text leave the nature of the association unclear.

Storms of snow and hail come from a cloud and thunder comes from a flash of lightning, while a city's destruction comes from its great men, and out of ignorance a people succumbs to slavery under a *monarkhos*. Once a man is raised too high, it is not easy to restrain him thereafter. Now is the time to see all this coming.

If the dominant discourse about *turannides* at this time invested the phenomenon with a heady profusion of positive associations, we might see in this poem the first traces of serious discursive resistance. Both Solon and Alcaeus are critical of a political culture which encouraged the “great men” to pursue their winner-take-all struggles for power at the expense of a community's collective well-being. But where Alcaeus' judgment of the system is evidently colored by bitterness at his adversary's success, Solon speaks in generalities. He suggests that zero-sum political competition is always and inevitably unhealthy, since it is liable to produce a winner who, in the absence of rivals, is dangerously free from any effective constraint.⁸³ Solon's efforts to deglamorize the *turannis* phenomenon by emphasizing its negative aspects may also explain his preference for the term *monarkhos* over *turannos*.⁸⁴ The latter, as we have seen, had a powerful imaginative appeal, suggesting power, wealth, luxury, and divine favor. The former, meanwhile, perhaps served to challenge the popular image of *turannides*, stripping away the mesmerizing allure and the mystique to expose the stark political actuality that lay beneath.

But might the use of the term *monarkhos* imply that early tyrants really were illegitimate “rulers” after all? Unlike others, Solon may have seen the *turannis* phenomenon as a perversion of conventional leadership. Yet he nowhere states or clearly hints that it was a different kind of regime altogether. Indeed, by blaming *monarkhia* on the “ignorance” of the Athenians themselves (fr. 9.4), he suggests that it was well within their power to prevent what he saw as this abuse of the system. The point is developed further in fragment 11:

εἰ δὲ πεπόνθατε λυγρὰ δι' ὑμετέραν κακότητα,
 μὴ θεοῖσιν τούτων μοῖραν ἐπαμφέρετε·
 αὐτοὶ γὰρ τούτους ἠϋξήσατε ῥύσια δόντες,
 καὶ διὰ ταῦτα κακὴν ἔσχετε δουλοσύνην.
 ὑμέων δ' εἷς μὲν ἕκαστος ἀλώπεκος ἵχνεσι βαίνει,
 σύμπασιν δ' ὑμῖν χαῦνος ἔνεστι νόος·
 ἐς γὰρ γλῶσσαν ὄρατε καὶ εἰς ἔπη αἰμύλου ἀνδρός,
 εἰς ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν γιγνόμενον βλέπετε.

83. Cf. especially fr. 4.5–22, which offers a more graphic description of the lawlessness, or *dusnomia*, which results from excessively adversarial political competition. From a rather different perspective, McGlew (1993: 86) suggests that Solon was “the first of the Greeks to present a genuine political understanding of tyranny.”

84. A word based on the *monarkh-* stem is first attested in Greek at Alc. fr. 6.27 (*monarkhian*), though the poor condition of the papyrus prevents us from knowing exactly how it was used there.

If you have suffered grief through your own fault, do not lay blame for this on the gods. For you yourselves have increased the power of these men by giving them your pledges,⁸⁵ and that is why you suffer wretched slavery. Each one of you treads in the fox's tracks, yet you are all collectively oblivious. You stare at the wily man's tongue and his words, but pay no attention at all to what he is doing.

Thus, continuing his efforts to puncture the mystique of *turannides*, Solon insists that it is men not gods who make *turannoi*. Even if some might use “untempered force” (fr. 32.2) against rivals to secure their position, their authority always depends in the end on the consent of the political class. Much as Pittacus in Mytilene sought and found confirmation of his *turannis* in universal “acclaim” (fr. 348), so in Athens those who aspired to a similar political station used “tongue” and “words” (i.e., persuasion) to win the all-important “pledges” of support. In both cases, we can infer, these leaders enjoyed some real measure of legitimacy. So Solon's use of the pejorative vocabularies of monarchy, slavery, and destruction in connection with *turannoi* should probably not be taken at face value. This, again, is discursive resistance. Solon's emotive language does not represent the realities of an archaic *turannis* any more “truthfully” than does the dominant discourse which it was expressly framed to oppose.⁸⁶

From Athens we pass, finally, to mid-sixth-century Megara, and to a passage of Theognis (39–52) where the author frets that his city might soon “give birth” to a *turannos*.⁸⁷ Like Alcaeus and Solon, Theognis unambiguously indicates that *turannoi* (he too prefers the term *mounarkhoi* [52]) typically emerge from situations of severe faction and conflict among the state's “great men” (cf. ἡγεμόνες, 41; στάσιές τε καὶ ἔμφυλοι φόνοι, 51); again, it appears, the *turannos* is the last man standing in an ongoing political contest waged within the polis, not an opportunistic insurgent who challenges the “state” from without. And also like

85. There is some dispute over the reading of the word ῥύσια in line 3, translated here as “pledges.” Most editors, including West, print ῥύματα (literally, “deliverances” or “protections”) and, on the assumption that τούτους (“these men”) earlier in the line somehow alludes to Peisistratus (see following note), they interpret the word very loosely to refer to bodyguards. The reading ῥύσια (“pledges” or “sureties”), attested in the version of the poem cited by Diogenes Laertius (1.51), is preferred and defended by Linforth (1919: 207). My interpretation of line 3 is certainly speculative, but perhaps no more so than any other.

86. Like later ancient authors (e.g., Diod. 9.20.2; Plut. *Sol.* 30), modern commentators tend to assume that the *monarkhos* in fr. 9 and the *toutous* in fr. 11 refer specifically to Peisistratus. I agree with Rihill (1989: 278–80) that this is most unlikely on chronological grounds. She speculates that the references may be to Draco.

87. This is the only passage in the Theognidean corpus that has a direct bearing on our topic. In 1203–1206, probably the work of a later poet, the author asserts that he would refuse to attend the funeral of an unnamed *turannos* and assumes that the feelings are mutual. But in the absence of any context, it is hard to make much of the passage. For the date of the “genuine” verses by Theognis (perhaps only 19–254), see now Lane Fox 2000: 37–40; van Wees 2000b: 52 n. 2. Like van Wees, I see no compelling reason to doubt the ancient chronographic tradition which dates the poet to the time between the 57th and 59th Olympiads (552–541). Against West's (1974: 65–68) attempt to raise this date by nearly a century, see Lane Fox 2000: 37–40.

Alcaeus and Solon, Theognis implies that a *turannis* ultimately required some kind of sanction from the community. Degenerate as politics in Megara may have become, there will be no *mounarkhos*, he suggests, so long as the “townsmen” remain “sound in mind” (ἀστοὶ . . . σαόφρονες, 41). So even if the author saw his putative *turannos* as a harsh, heavy-handed kind of leader—in his words, a “corrector of our outrageous behavior” (εὐθυνητῆρα κακῆς ὕβριος ἡμετέρης, 40), there is no evidence in his text that *turannoi* were in fact usurpers or, in any meaningful sense, “rulers”; indeed, here, as elsewhere in archaic poetry, there seems to be good evidence to the contrary.

In short, the *turannoi* of Solon and Theognis, however negatively represented, seem quite different from the renegade dictators who haunt classical and postclassical recollections of archaic politics. Moreover, the antipathy felt by the two poets towards these leaders was clearly not shared by many of their contemporaries. For most Greeks of this period, the term *turannos* called to mind an individual of enviable, even proverbial good fortune, one blessed with god-given authority, extraordinary wealth, and a lifestyle furnished with the most sumptuous amenities that the known world could provide. And this popular impression of the *turannos* as a kind of miniature, local equivalent of the almost mythical beings who presided over the great kingdoms of the Near East can hardly have been accidental. As we have seen, the first *turannides* arose in a political culture which expected leaders to represent themselves, however improbably, in precisely these terms. All would-be *turannoi*, it seems, fancied themselves hailed someday as the Midas or the Gyges of their respective polis communities.⁸⁸

Indeed, it was presumably because the most successful leaders consciously and consistently courted this very comparison that an oriental term came to be used to describe them in the first place. One can only guess whether the word *turannos* was originally borrowed to utter such courtly eulogations or to mock them. Either way, the Greeks used the word initially to refer simply to the “dominant” or “preeminent” man in the state. And in the context of early oligarchies, this meant the individual who, by virtue of his singular accomplishments, connections, and personal qualities, had eclipsed all peers in the governing class and won recognition as the unchallenged leader of the community.⁸⁹

88. This is not to imply that early *turannides* bore any literal resemblance to traditional monarchies, eastern or otherwise (contra e.g., Fadinger 1993 and Parker 1996). On the broadly positive or neutral connotations of the term *turannos* in the archaic era, see also O’Neil 1986; de Libero 1996: 37–38; Parker 1998. Cf. Simonides fr. 584 Page, where it again seems to be assumed that a *turannis* was, under normal circumstances, an enviable estate. Needless to say, there must have been many who, for one reason or another, felt aggrieved at particular *turannoi*. But the evidence suggests that few shared Solon’s conviction that all *turannides* were by definition problematic.

89. Cf. White’s (1955) interesting comparison with the use of the term *princeps* in the Augustan era, which is cited with approval by O’Neil (1986: 38). Both words were used to recognize the undisputed political preeminence of an individual leader, though neither denoted an official title or position. If *turannos* was a generic term for the “dominant” man in the state, it would also help to explain why, in some later poetic texts (e.g., Aesch. *Cho.* 479; Soph. *OT* 128), derivatives of

If this really was the original sense of the word *turannos* in Greek, one might then guess that *turannides* were a much less remarkable and more routine occurrence in the archaic era than our later sources would lead us to believe. And scattered references in the early poets tend to strengthen this supposition. Generalizations about *turannoi* in the poems of Archilochus and Semonides imply that they were already a very established, familiar feature of the political landscape by the later seventh century, even if we now know the names of only a few of them. So too the allusions to *turannides* in the verses of Solon, particularly in fragment 11, all but confirm that the Peisistratids were not the first men to be hailed as *turannoi* in Athens, while similarly vague references in the Theognidean corpus may indicate that Theagenes was not the last or the only *turannos* in Megara. And then there is the case of Mytilene, where at least three different men savored the spoils of a *turannis* during the turbulent years of the later seventh century.⁹⁰

Such evidence should be enough to deter any lingering urge to essentialize the *turannis* phenomenon and view each instance as a singularly traumatic, paradigm-shattering, transitional episode in the lifetime of a Greek city-state. These were not extraordinary, maverick formations that subverted established oligarchies from without, clearing the way for some new kind of politics to emerge in due course. On the contrary, as a form of leadership that evolved within those very oligarchies, *turannides* were shaped and sustained by the same ruggedly individualistic political culture that animated their host regimes. Granted, certain *turannoi* may have inadvertently hastened the transition to a more civic-minded style of politics. But this was not what made them *turannoi*. And even in Athens, where the case for ascribing transformative powers to *turannides* receives its strongest support, it still took an exercise in social engineering of unprecedented ambition and complexity, a project initiated several years after the eviction of the Peisistratids, to remake the political culture anew (cf. Anderson 2003).

HOW *TURANNOI* BECAME "TYRANTS"

Before closing, it seems appropriate to offer at least a brief attempt to explain how and why the semantics of the term *turannos* experienced such a dramatic metastasis between the archaic and the classical periods. Since the positive image of *turannoi* was ultimately conditioned and sustained by the very values and assumptions that informed political culture as a whole, it seems reasonable to suppose that this semantic change was prompted by some broader shift in the political environment. Two such shifts were set in motion in the Greek world in

the word can still be used in a neutral fashion to describe the rule of "legitimate" monarchs. As Andrewes (1956: 22–23) observes, poetic diction is inherently more likely than prose to preserve traditional usages.

90. Tradition remembered Pittacus, Melanchrus, and Myrsilus as *turannoi* (e.g., Page 1955: 151–52, 179–89), and we may assume there were others.

the latter half of the sixth century, and both, in all likelihood, encouraged later Greeks to view *turannoi* from a new and fundamentally different perspective.

The first came in East Greece in the 540s, when city-states in that region were absorbed into the Persian empire. Though, to all appearances, politics continued much as normal in these states thereafter, the political dynamics within them were often distorted by the new circumstances. As Austin (1990) has emphasized, this was especially true during the reign of Darius (522–486), who involved himself more actively and consistently than his predecessors in the affairs of Persia's Greek subjects, usually by cultivating ties of mutual benefit with useful individuals. And since the personal favor of a supreme regional hegemon obviously carried more political weight than the support of fellow townsmen, increasing numbers of *turannoi* apparently came to seek and depend upon the imprimatur of Darius for their legitimacy, depriving local politics of any vestigial integrity or meaning in the process.⁹¹ The *turannis* phenomenon will thus have become somewhat detached from the highly competitive political milieu that originally produced it, as *turannoi* came to be seen more and more as agents or stooges of an arbitrary, monarchic regime. From there, it was but a short step to seeing all *turannides* as arbitrary monarchic regimes in their own right.⁹²

But the semantic fate of the word *turannos* was probably sealed in the free poleis of central Greece during the period ca. 525–480, when political culture in many of these states appears to have experienced a significant overhaul.⁹³ Experiments in popular government are attested in a small handful of locations at

91. The clearest illustration of these numbers comes in Herodotus' catalogue (4.137–38) of the *turannoi* who guarded Darius' Danube bridge. The old view (challenged by e.g., Graf 1985; Austin 1990; Luraghi 1998) that the Persians pursued a conscious "policy" of imposing *turannoi* on Greek subjects and ruling through them misses the point. Since *turannoi* will have emerged anyway in these East Greek states, Persians or no Persians, it would be more accurate to say that Darius merely helped determine who those individuals would be and how they would sustain themselves in power. The only clear-cut examples of *turannoi* being imposed on Greek states seem to be those of Syloson on Samos (Hdt. 3.139–49) and Coes in Mytilene (Hdt. 5.11). Since neither of these states were Persian subjects at the time, we might see here an attempt to control the behavior of poleis which lay beyond the direct reach of the empire but close enough to its margins to cause trouble. In the subject cities on the coast of Asia Minor, which had no real power over their external affairs, such a direct, interventionist approach would have been unnecessary. Cf. Luraghi's (1998) argument that *turannoi* in Persian-controlled poleis occupied an "ambiguous" position, somewhere between that of imperial official and indigenous ruler.

92. See also Austin 1990: 289, 306 on the negative impact of Persian associations on Ionian perceptions of *turannides*. Raabe (2004) contends that the Greek opposition between freedom and tyranny was essentially fixed by the experience of the Persian wars. McGlew (1993: 131–56) argues that the "language of political liberation characteristic of the classical polis" emerged somewhat earlier, "not from the experience with Persia, but out of the death throes of tyranny" (p. 131).

93. The origins and full compass of this process are still only dimly understood. For discussion, see especially the studies by Ian Morris cited in the following notes. For convenience, I follow his practice (1998a: 13) of using the term "central Greece" to refer to "most of the *poleis*" on the islands and shores of the Aegean. Key items of archaeological evidence from this region from the years ca. 550–500 are summarized in Morris 1998a: 31–36.

this time, most notably in Athens.⁹⁴ But elsewhere too we see signs of a quite fundamental change in the values and attitudes that informed public life. All over the region, the muscular individualism of preceding centuries seems to have steadily receded in the face of a burgeoning civic consciousness, and the polis was substantially reimagined as a collective enterprise devoted to the pursuit of a single common cause.

Hence, over the course of this forty-ve-year span, one sees a new restraint in the behavior of elites in central Greece; mortuary practices became significantly less ostentatious, the use of marriages to underwrite political alliances between prominent families declined appreciably, and the time-honored habit of bearing arms in public was fully abandoned.⁹⁵ More generally, a substantial body of evidence from the period indicates that polis communities were nally supplanting powerful individuals as the primary actors on the wider Greek stage. Temples and lavish sanctuary votives were now more likely to be dedicated by states than by wealthy families, and numerous poleis began to introduce their own distinctively marked, “o cially” authorized coin issues.⁹⁶ At the same time, the infant genres of epinician and tragic poetry seem to articulate an unprecedented concern to reconcile the status and achievements of outstand-

94. For synoptic studies of these and related changes in Athens between 508 and 490 see now Rausch 1999 and Anderson 2003. Evidence for popular forms of government introduced in other states in the later sixth and early fth centuries is discussed in e.g., Robinson 1997; I. Morris 1996: 36–37; 2000: 186–87. Doubtless, as Raab (1996: 153) has emphasized, the extent to which different poleis embraced new political ideals in the late archaic era “depended on the specific situation in each community.”

95. Burials in Attica and beyond became poorer and more homogeneous between ca. 500 and 425: I. Morris 1992: 108–55; 1998a: 32; 1998b: 64–67. Arms-bearing in public: van Wees 1998: esp. 352–62. Writing about changes in marriage practices in Athens after the late sixth century, Vernant (1980: 50) observes that “matrimonial unions no longer have as their object the establishment of relationships of power or of mutual service between great autonomous families; rather, their purpose is to perpetuate the households . . . to ensure . . . the permanence of the city itself through constant reproduction.” And he is probably right to suggest that the law of 451, in prohibiting marriage with non-Athenians, was “simply legalising” what had “for some time” been “a state of fact” (p. 57).

96. Athens affords particularly clear illustrations of the shift in *mentalité*. The first truly “public” war grave and victory monument, and the earliest records of state business transacted in the name of the demos, all date to the last decade of the sixth century. See Anderson 2003: 54–55, 115–19, 151–57. Snodgrass (1986: 55–56) cites examples of possible one-upmanship in temple building in eastern and western Greek states between the mid-sixth and the early fth centuries. As for dedications (cf. Snodgrass 1989–1990; I. Morris 1996: 40), surviving votive inscriptions from Delphi and Olympia also help us to document the contemporary rise in civic consciousness. A study I am currently preparing will show that the proportion of (inscribed) votives dedicated at the two sanctuaries by states (i.e., by “the Athenians” and the like) as opposed to individuals more than doubled between the late sixth and mid-fth centuries. Though the earliest Greek coins date to sometime before 560, the practice of sanctioning “o cial” issues is not widely adopted by cities on the islands and mainland until later in the sixth century. See Osborne 1996: 250–59 for a clear, up-to-date summary of the subject. More generally, on the role of coinage in the “Greek cultural imaginary” in the archaic and classical eras, see now Kurke 1999. Kurke regards state-issued coinage as an “assertion of sovereignty” by the city concerned, stressing not only its independence from other cities but also the transcendence of its authority over that of any “internal elite” (p. 13).

ing individuals with the larger collective interests of their communities.⁹⁷ But stirrings of civic consciousness are perhaps most clearly visible in the military domain. There is good reason to believe that battles between citizen armies from rival states did not fully supersede private conflicts as the prevalent form of warfare in the Greek world until late in the archaic period. And it was probably not until the era of the Persian Wars that the hoplite phalanx, the ultimate expression of citizen solidarity, began to assume its definitive classical form.⁹⁸

In this new, more civic-minded milieu, the very idea of one man holding an unchallenged personal sway over the direction of the state will have come to seem anathema. To establish a *turannis* would now involve the transgression of new norms; it would now, by definition, require revolution. So it is tempting to infer that at this point the word itself acquired a new pejorative coloring in common parlance. Dislocated from its original politico-cultural context, the term *turannos* for the first time suggested an illegitimate autocrat. For the first time, that is, it meant something close to our own word “tyrant.”

In fact, we do not have to rely entirely on inference to trace this process of semantic change; it unfolds right before our eyes in Athens in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. There, the need to cast Cleisthenes’ ambitious experiment in collective rule as a return to old ways led to the creation of the legend of the “Tyrannicides,” the story that Harmodius and Aristogeiton effectively restored an “ancestral” form of popular government when they ended the “tyranny” of the Peisistratids by killing Hipparchus. Specious as this tale may largely have been, its rapid and energetic promotion through a state cult and various public monuments did much to shape posterity’s judgment of both Athenian “constitutional” history and of the place within it occupied by Peisistratus and his family.⁹⁹ In the process, the Tyrannicide story also essentially fixed and perpetuated the new image of the *turannos* in Athens and perhaps elsewhere. He had now become the lord of a

97. Epinician and tragedy as sites of tension and negotiation between mass and elite: Kurke 1991; 1998a; I. Morris 1996: 37–39; 2000: 187–89.

98. Private conflicts are attested down to the early fifth century and probably predominated earlier. See Raab 1997: 52, with bibliography in n. 19. It is perhaps not a coincidence that displays of multiple hoplite panoplies in the domestic halls of elites, signifying power and the ability to mobilize formidable private armies, seem to have gone out of fashion during the first half of the sixth century. Hans van Wees (1998: 365, drawing on Gröschel 1989: 83–85) would relate this latter development to a broader shift, whereby military service came increasingly to be seen as a civic obligation rather than as a private arrangement between elites and their followers. He suggests that this perceptual shift was essentially completed “by the end of the archaic age.” Cf. Frost (1984), who questions the existence of any regular mechanism for levying a citizen army in Athens before the reforms of Cleisthenes. Late development of the classical hoplite phalanx: van Wees 2000a: 155–56. The emergence of the citizen army as the principal actor in Greek warfare in the late archaic era, along with the experience of the Persian Wars, seems to have precipitated a wide array of changes in the ceremonies and protocols associated with organized combat. See Krentz 2002: esp. 34–35.

99. On the genesis of the tradition of the Tyrannicides in Athens and the representation of the new order of 508/7 as the restoration of an older, “ancestral” order, see Anderson 2003: 204–206.

criminal enterprise, a despot who willfully deprived his fellow citizens of their time-honored entitlement to collective self-rule.¹⁰⁰

Whether or not they were influenced by developments at Athens, other states like Corinth must also at this point have indulged in a similar revisionism (cf. Hdt. 5.92). All over the Greek world, it seems, the earlier *turannoi* were now viewed through fresh eyes, and their place in collective memory was accordingly adjusted to fit the changing self-image of their respective polis communities.¹⁰¹ Those who did not readily conform to the new usurper-dictator archetype—those whose “rule” was undistinguished and short-lived and whose paths to power were stained with little or no blood—might be allowed to recede conveniently into oblivion, taking the original sense of the term *turannos* with them. In the meantime, that irrepressible fabulist impulse of the Greeks safely ensured that larger-than-life characters like Cypselus, Periander, and Peisistratus, once the most illustrious leaders of their time, would more than deserve the perpetual ignominy to which they now found themselves consigned. The whole idea of an “age of the tyrants” was thus a figment of the late archaic imagination; early Greek “tyranny,” as we have come to know it from the writings of later antiquity, was essentially no more than a discursive construct.

CONCLUSION

In the end, the salient difference between, say, Peisistratus and a later *turannos* like Dionysius I was not so much a matter of the extent or even the nature of the authority exercised. It was above all a matter of context. Dionysius could only have acquired and maintained his iron grip on Syracuse by subverting decades of popular government and effectively replacing it with a purpose-built apparatus of one-man rule. Peisistratus, on the other hand, was free to snatch power from his rivals by force, dominate Athens for nearly two decades, and establish his sons in power for many years thereafter, all without threatening what passed at the

100. Thus, I think it distinctly unlikely that the Athenians enacted any “laws” or other formal measures against *turannides* before the final expulsion of the Peisistratids in 511/0. Indeed, such measures were probably unimaginable before the invention of the tradition of the Tyrannicides. As for ancient claims (e.g., *AP* 16.10; *Plut. Sol.* 19.4) that laws against *turannides* were in force in Athens from the time of Solon or earlier, we need only observe that evidence from Solon’s own poetry suggests otherwise; while certain poems (see previous section) represent the *turannis* phenomenon as problematic, they nowhere indicate that it was yet considered “illegal.” The Athenians would later pass at least two laws against *turannides*, proposed by Demophantus in 410/09 (*Andoc.* 1.96–98) and Eucrates in 337/6 (*SEG* 12.87), the former of which is commonly understood to be at least partly a republication of an archaic law. For recent speculation about the provisions of a Solonian law against “tyranny,” see McGlew 1993: 112–15. For summary and discussion of measures enacted against *turannoi* in Athens and elsewhere, see now Ober 2003: 222–28 and Raabe 2003: 69–70.

101. On the spread of what he calls “tyrant-killer ideology” beyond Athens, see Ober 2003: 226–28. On the role of the Peisistratid *turannoi* in the collective memory of later Athenians, see references in n. 74 above. More generally, for works exploring the perpetuation of “tyranny” in the cultural imagination of classical Greeks, see the citations in n. 3 above.

time for the established political order. Judged by the very different standards of their respective eras, the former was thus an illegitimate autocrat, while the latter was seen by most of his contemporaries as the very model of a strong, glamorous leader. The Greeks may have called both men *turannoi*, but it would be imprecise, not to say outright misleading for us to call both men “tyrants.” Such was the profound gulf which separated the political norms of the archaic polis from those of its classical successor.

It was precisely because they failed to appreciate the depth of this gulf that authors like Herodotus and Aristotle conflated archaic *turannoi* with their later counterparts. Like all Greeks of the classical era, these authors simply took it for granted that politics in Greek poleis had always been the relatively well-regulated, civic-minded affair that it was in their own day. And it was for much the same reason that these same later authors drew an absolute distinction between the early *turannoi* and “normal” archaic leaders. Yet the first Greek *turannides* arose, as it were, organically out of the mainstream political culture of early oligarchies; Cypselus, Peisistratus, and the rest came to dominate their states by working within the prevailing political arrangements, not against them. In other words, they were playing the very same game as other ambitious elites of their time; they just played it more effectively. The most important and influential of these leaders should always figure prominently in books on archaic Greek history, while chapters on “tyranny,” like those on “colonization,” properly belong elsewhere.

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