

CHAPTER 1

The Rise of State Action in the Archaic Age

Jonathan M. Hall

In spite of criticisms that the study of early Greece has been disproportionately focused on the *polis*, or city-state (S.P. Morris 1997: 64; Vlassopoulos 2009: 12–13), it nevertheless remains the case that this institution provides virtually all of our knowledge about the nature and workings of governance in Greece in the period down to the Persian War of 480–479 BCE. This is largely a consequence of the evidence at our disposal. While archaeological evidence sheds considerable light on social, cultural, and economic developments, it is less well equipped to answer questions concerning political practices. This leaves us with literary evidence, which – at least for the Archaic period – is almost obsessively focused on the *polis*. Indeed, in Archaic Greek poetry, there is a very discernible element of prejudice against those who do not live in *polis* communities (e.g., Sappho fr. 57 Lobel-Page; Alkaios fr. 130B Lobel-Page; Theognis 53–60).

Ever since Victor Ehrenberg's seminal article on the rise of the *polis* (Ehrenberg 1937), it has been customary to date the origins of political communities back to the eighth century BCE. Certainly, this is a time when there are indications of settlement nucleation, when the first overseas communities were established in South Italy and Sicily, and when a number of sanctuaries witness a marked increase in – if not the earliest attestation of – votive dedications. It is also the eighth century that sees the adoption of the Phoenician alphabet and the re-emergence of artistic skills and technologies that had been lost when the Mycenaean palaces had collapsed around 1200 BCE, prompting some to describe the period as a “renaissance” (Hägg 1983). There are, however, some grounds for suspecting that the significance of the eighth century may have been slightly overestimated. In authors of the Classical period, the term *polis* simultaneously designates: (i) an urban center, in which administrative and judicial functions are housed; (ii) the territory controlled by that urban center; and (iii) the political community that resides in both the urban center and its hinterland. To the extent that the first definition characterizes the *polis* in its urban aspect while the second and third cast it in terms of a

territorial state and a political state respectively, the standard translation of “city-state” is not as erroneous as has sometimes been suggested (Hansen 2006c: 62–65). It is, however, clear that the urban and civic aspects of the *polis* did not develop concurrently and that the process was more gradual than talk of a “renaissance” might suggest.

True urbanization in the monumental sense is barely attested before the sixth century on the Greek mainland (I. Morris 1991: 40). Nevertheless, if by “urban center” we mean foci of settlement, more densely settled than the surrounding countryside and serving as centers for administration and economic exchange, then we can trace the urban aspect of the *polis* back to the Dark Age of the eleventh, tenth and ninth centuries. Since the earliest *poleis* emerged in areas that had been under the control of the Mycenaean palaces (Snodgrass 1980: 44), it is a reasonable inference that their roots should be seen in the shattered fragments of the centralized bureaucracies of the Late Bronze Age. Some settlements, such as Knossos on Crete or Haliartos in Boiotia, seem to have expanded gradually from a single nucleus, inhabited throughout much of the Early Iron Age; others – including Athens, Argos, and Korinth – appear to have been the result of a physical fusion of pre-existing villages, probably in the course of the eighth century (Hall 2007: 74–75). Sparta, by contrast, was still settled “in villages” (*kata kōmas*) in Thucydides’ day (1.10.2).

The exclusively urban connotation of the term *polis* is reflected in our earliest sources. In the *Odyssey* (8.555), the Phaiakian king Alkinoos asks Odysseus to name his *gaia* (“land” or “region”), his *dēmos* (probably “territory” to judge from the term’s usage in the Mycenaean Linear B tablets), and his *polis*, thus zooming in with increasing specificity on his guest’s origins. Similarly, when Tyrtaios (fr. 10W) imagines a warrior who surrenders as having to “abandon his *polis* and rich fields,” the term is clearly meant in a physical rather than sociopolitical sense. It is not by accident that when self-conscious political communities did emerge, they identified themselves as residents of the urban center, whether or not they actually lived there: so, *Argeioi* (Argives) is an adjectival form derived from the toponym Argos; *Korinthioi* (Korinthians) from *Korinthos*; *Milēsiōi* (Milesians) from *Milētos*; and so on. Contrary to what is sometimes stated, attachment to place seems to have been a primary component of civic self-identification.

In assessing the state-like aspect of the *polis*, some working definition of the state is in order, not least because it has been argued that the Greek *polis* was essentially a stateless society (Berent 1996). While it is true that Thomas Hobbes’ definition of the state as an “abstract public power above both ruler and ruled” is a conception that is rarely expressed in ancient writings, the idea is not entirely absent: Thucydides (8.72.1) seems to come close when he describes a deputation, sent to Samos after the oligarchic coup of 411 BCE with the aim of reassuring the Athenian navy that “the oligarchy had not been established to the detriment of the *polis* and its citizens” (Hansen 2006c: 57). Furthermore, while recourse to self-help for crimes such as adultery, nocturnal burglary or treason meant that the Greek *polis* did not exercise an absolute monopoly of legitimate violence (i.e., Max Weber’s definition of the state), there are, at least by the Classical period, attestations of public prisons and the formal administration of capital punishment. As Mogens Hansen (2002) points out, the concept of the “stateless society” was not originally formulated in contradistinction to definitions of the Early Modern state, but in contrast to what Myer Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard (1940) termed “primitive states,” as represented by the Zulu or the Bayankole of Africa. What distinguished,



for them, the primitive state from the stateless society was a centralized authority with administrative and judicial institutions, along with cleavages of wealth, privilege, and status, which corresponded to the distribution of power and authority. Fortunately, these are criteria that can be traced in our evidence.

It would, of course, be methodologically reckless to assume automatically that there was no diversity of practices between different regions of Greece or that what we read in the poetry of Homer or Hesiod was necessarily an accurate reflection of how all Greek states were governed (Whitley 1991). On the basis of material cultural assemblages, Ian Morris (1998a) has identified four cultural areas – central Greece; northern Greece; western Greece; and Crete – which persisted from the eleventh century through to the sixth. While warning that these regions are neither wholly homogeneous nor always clearly bounded, Morris nevertheless draws attention to differences between them in terms of pottery decoration, metal use, and architecture and it is equally possible that the regions were also differentiated in terms of institutional practices, even if these are less visible in the material record. At the same time, however, it is important not to exaggerate the isolation or introspection of Greek communities, especially from the ninth century onwards: goods, information, ideas, and practices were freely exchanged between neighboring regions (Snodgrass 1986). Furthermore, the “Panhellenic” tenor of Homeric poetry in particular suggests that the society portrayed in the epics was broadly recognizable, even if it was not an exact reflection of any one single political community (Raaflaub 1998b).

In Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (36–41), a poem normally assigned to the beginning of the seventh century, the poet complains about the “bribe-devouring *basileis*,” who have adjudicated against him in a land dispute with his brother. Derived from the word *pa-si-re-u* (or *qa-si-re-u*), attested in the Linear B tablets, the *basileus* was a fairly low-ranking official in the Mycenaean palatial administration. By the Classical period, the term could be used in two senses. On the one hand, it was the regular Greek word for a monarch, used especially in association with rulers of non-Greek peoples. On the other, it designated a magistrate who was elected or appointed, normally on an annual basis: so, for example, the *archōn basileus* at Athens was the second-highest ranking official of the board of nine archons, charged with administering “all the traditional sacrifices” ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 57.1); a *basileus* is named in association with a *dēmarkhos* (“leader of the people”) in a decree from Chios, dated to around 575–550 BCE (M&L 8/Fornara 19); and Melantas, *basileus* of Argos, presided over a diplomatic treaty between Argos and the Cretan communities of Knossos and Tylissos in the mid-fifth century (M&L 42/Fornara 89). In Hesiod, however, the appearance of the term in the plural suggests something rather different. Similarly, in the *Theogony* (80–84), Hesiod describes how the Muses honor “*basileis* fostered by Zeus” – again, the term is employed in the plural.

Some clues as to the nature of the Hesiodic *basileis* are provided by the Homeric epics, now increasingly thought to have been composed in the early seventh century (van Wees 1994; M.L.West 1995; Crielaard 1995). As in Hesiod, governance appears to be in the hands of a plurality of *basileis*: in the *Odyssey* (1.394–395), Antinoos tells Penelope that there are “many other *basileis* of the Achaians in sea-girt Ithaka, both young and old,” while Alkinoos notes that he is one of 13 *basileis* who hold sway over the Phaiakians (8.390–391). Furthermore, the term seems to express relative, rather



than absolute, authority: in the *Iliad* (9.69), Nestor describes Agamemnon as “the most *basileus*” (*basileutatos*) of the Achaians, while Agamemnon describes himself as “more of a *basileus*” (*basileuteros*) than Achilles (*Il.* 9.160). Nor is it entirely guaranteed that the authority of a *basileus* can be inherited: Odysseus is recognized as a *basileus* of Ithaka even though his father, Laertes, is still alive and there is no certainty that his son, Telemachos, will succeed him if news of his demise proves to be well founded. The impression one gains is that the *basileis* of Homer and Hesiod are more akin to what anthropologists term “big-men” or “chieftains” than sovereign rulers (for a recent discussion of these terms: Yoffee 2005). Their authority is “achieved” rather than “ascribed,” earned on the basis of charisma and the ability to persuade, and manifested through the demonstration of military prowess and conspicuous generosity. There are no clear indications for the sort of stratified society that the model of the “primitive state” presupposes, just a world of small communities where there are leaders and followers.

That picture seems to be corroborated by the archaeological record. Dark Age settlements are typically small and display little in the way of status differentiation, save for the construction of a single, larger dwelling. The best-known example is the tenth-century Toumba building at Lefkandi on Euboia – if it is a dwelling and not a post-mortem place of worship as its original excavators believed (Popham *et al.* 1993) – but other examples have been identified at Thermon in Aitolia, Nichoria in Messenia, and Koukounaries on Paros (Whitley 1991; Thomas and Conant 1999: 32–59; Morris 2000: 225–228). Even by the eighth century, the situation is not vastly different. The 16 wealthy burials, found by the West Gate in Eretria on Euboia and dated to c.720–680 BCE (Bérard 1970), are but a fraction of the estimated population of between 1,000 and 2,000 (I. Morris 1991; Vink 1997) and are more reasonably attributed to a family than to a ruling class. Similarly, at Argos there is no evidence for aristocratic cemeteries. The much discussed “Warrior Grave” (T45), dated to the late eighth century and containing, among other grave goods, a bronze cuirass and helmet, is – contrary to what is sometimes stated – without parallel. A second bronze helmet, probably manufactured by the same workshop, is found in another grave but this is located more than a kilometer away from T45, while a third grave, containing another helmet and two spearheads, is found near the second grave but appears to be about a generation earlier. Other burials with weapons are mostly isolated occurrences and account for a tiny proportion of all the eighth-century graves excavated at Argos (Hall 2007: 128).

Two developments, both dated to the seventh century, may allow us to track the emergence of the state in ancient Greece. The first is a shift towards authority based on ascribed status, where emphasis is given to the office itself rather than the person who holds it. One indication for this shift from achieved to ascribed status may be found in the appearance of annually rotating, named magistracies in place of the more generic term *basileus*, or in the reemployment of this latter term in a more specific and constitutionally defined sense. In a law dating to the second half of the seventh century, displayed in the sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios at Dreros on Crete (M&L 2/Fornara 11), we hear of a magistrate named the *kosmos*, who could hold office only once in any ten-year period – presumably suggesting that the magistracy was limited to a one-year term. A magistracy of the same name is known at Cretan Gortyn in the sixth century, along with another official known as the *gnōmōn* (*IC* 4.14). At Athens, in the late-fifth-century



republication of Drakon's homicide law of 621/620 BCE (M&L 86/Fornara 15B), guilt is to be judged by a fixed number of *basileis* – probably four, representing each of the “Ionian” tribes, or subdivisions of the Athenian citizen body – while the verdict is to be given by 51 officials named the *ephetai*. Other magistracies that are attested in laws and decrees of the Archaic period in various Greek *poleis* are *archontes*, *prytaneis*, *dēmarchoi*, *agretai*, *platiwoinarchoi*, *hiaromnamōnes*, and *damiourgoi* (Hall 2007: 135).

A second, related development of this period is the emergence of a true aristocratic class, which held a monopoly on these new ascribed offices. This can be traced in Archaic Greek poetry by the appearance of elitist terminology, which distinguishes between an aristocratic group of “insiders,” termed variously *kaloi* (“beautiful” or “fair”), *agathoi* (“good”), or *esthloi* (“good” or “brave”) and a much wider group of outsiders or inferiors, designated as *kakoi* (“ugly” or “bad”) and *deiloi* (“cowardly” or “wretched”). In the poetry attributed to Theognis, the addressee, Kyrnos, is urged not to keep company with *kakoi*, but to eat, drink, and sit with the *agathoi*, since it is from the *esthloi* that one will learn noble things (31–35). The emergence of an aristocratic class from an ensemble of powerful individuals is probably a consequence of the archaeologically documented coalescence of small communities, each headed by their own chieftains, into larger urban societies. At Sparta, which unusually was ruled down to the Hellenistic period by two hereditary monarchs from separate families, we learn that the two royal burial grounds were located in different villages (Pausanias 3.12.8, 3.14.2). It is, then, a likely inference that when the four villages of Pitana, Mesoa, Kynosoura, and Limnai were politically unified to constitute the original *polis* of Sparta, the *basileis* of two of them refused to concede full authority to the other (Cartledge 2002b: 90–92). It may not be by accident that the seventh-century poet Tyrtaios (frs. 4, 5W) uses the term *basileis* to denote the Spartan kings, even though their official title seems to have been *arkhagētai*, or “supreme leaders” (Plut. *Lyk.* 6). In these new, enlarged sociopolitical communities, there were more potential office-holders than there were magistracies – hence the need to adopt a principle of rotation which limited both tenure of office and the number of times any one individual could hold the same magistracy.

It takes a little longer for these administrative developments to be registered in the archaeological record. At Koukounaries, Dreros, Zagora on Andros, and Emborio on Chios, open spaces may have served the function, from as early as the eighth century, of an *agora* – a term that originally meant simply a “gathering” before coming to denote a specific place demarcated for deliberative meetings and, eventually, commercial transactions. At Megara Hyblaia, on the eastern coast of Sicily, a formal *agora* seems to have been laid out only in the second half of the seventh century (Gras *et al.* 2004; cf. also Hölscher 1998b).¹ At Argos and Athens, by contrast, the evidence suggests that an *agora* was not developed before the end of the sixth century, though an earlier *agora* at Athens may have been located to the east of the Akropolis, under what is now the Plaka (Dontas 1983; S.G. Miller 1995a). A theatrical-like wooden structure at Metapontion in South Italy, dated to *c.*600 BCE, may have served as an *ekklēsiastērion*, a building housing the assembly, and *bouleutēria*, or council chambers, are attested for the sixth century at Agia Pelagia on Crete, Delos, Delphi, and Olympia (Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994). There are some hints of seventh-century buildings housing administrative functions at Koukounaries and Argos, but generally examples are few and far between (Hall 2007: 79–83).



It has been argued that the ingredients that would eventually make democracy thinkable can be traced back to a latent ideology of egalitarianism that emerged in the course of the eighth century. In examining the steep rise in the number of burials that is documented for Attika in the eighth century, Ian Morris (1987) has argued that the increase is not so much the direct reflection of demographic expansion as it is a consequence of the fact that a broader cross-section of the political community was now granted access to formal – and hence archaeologically visible – burial, thus testifying to a new, more inclusive and egalitarian ideology that constitutes the founding moment of the city-state. More recently, he has developed this idea further by identifying what he terms a “middling” doctrine, given literary expression by Hesiod and elegiac poets such as Tyrtaios, Solon, Phokylides, and Xenophanes, which excluded women, slaves, and outsiders in order to construct a community of equal male citizens. In opposition, he argues, there emerged an “elitist” ideology, represented by the Homeric epics and lyric poets such as Sappho and Alkaios, which sought to elide distinctions between Greeks and non-Greeks, males and females, and mortals and divinities in order to highlight a basic division between elites and non-elites (I. Morris 2000: 155–191; cf. Kurke 1992; for a critique, Kistler 2004).

The problem with this proposition is that elegiac poetry, no less than its lyric counterpart, seems originally to have circulated within the thoroughly aristocratic context of the *symposion*, or drinking-party. Furthermore, closer examination of what these supposedly “middling” poets wrote proves to be revealing (Irwin 2005: 57–62). Solon’s criticism (fr. 13.39–40W) of the cowardly or wretched man (*deilos*), who “thinks that he is a good man [*agathos*] and handsome [*kalos*],” or the way he justifies the somewhat conservative nature of his reforms by explaining that he did not wish “to share the rich fatherland equally between *esthloi* and *kakoi*” (fr. 34) hardly marks him out as a man of the people. Similarly, when Phokylides (fr. 12W) proclaims that “many things are best for those in the middle [*mesos*]; it is in the middle that I want to be in the *polis*,” it is entirely possible that he is advocating a position of neutrality between opposing elite factions rather than lauding the middle classes. This reading would certainly conform to other statements that he makes, including his advice to “avoid being the debtor of a base man [*kakos*], lest he pains you by asking for repayment at an inopportune moment” (fr. 3W). As for Hesiod, while he may have grievances against magistrates he considers corrupt, he never really questions the right of the elites to exercise authority, as is demonstrated by his fable of the hawk and the nightingale (*Op.* 202–212).

As far as we can tell, the holding of major office was, for most of the Archaic period, restricted to a narrow elite class that was recruited initially by birth and then, probably in the course of the sixth century, on the basis of property qualifications. At Athens, it was not until 457 BCE that the archonship was opened up to the third of the four census classes, the Zeugitai ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 26.2). To qualify as a *zeugitēs*, a citizen needed to meet a threshold of production of 200 *medimnoi* (approximately 8,000 kg of wheat or 6,500 kg of barley), which would have required plots of land of at least nine hectares (van Wees 2004: 55–57). Given that the average landholding in the Classical period was around 5 hectares, this is a not insignificant level of wealth and probably means that, even well into the fifth century, more than half the population of Attika was unable to aspire to high office. Even more surprisingly, perhaps, the position of Treasurer of Athena continued to be restricted to members of the highest property



class, the Pentakosiomedimnoi, who were required to produce more than 500 *medimnoi* a year and probably constituted, therefore, only a tiny fraction of the citizen body ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 8.1; Foxhall 1997).

Arguments for an early ideology of egalitarianism have also been made by reference to the practice of “hoplite” warfare – named after the *hoplitēs*, or heavily armed infantryman – which seems to have developed in the late eighth and early seventh centuries (Snodgrass 1965; 1993; van Wees 1994; 2000b; 2004: 47–52). The equal responsibility and cooperation that soldiers in the phalanx were expected to demonstrate is taken as analogous to their equal status in the political assembly (Hanson 1999: 400; cf. Vernant 1980: 41). Yet this verdict rests on the probably erroneous assumption that all members of the phalanx were equipped similarly and made an equal contribution to combat. Firstly, there is a question of cost. In most Greek city-states, hoplites were required to procure their own equipment. Although we know very little about the costs of arms and armor in the Archaic period, an inscription (M&L 14/Fornara 44B), probably dating to the late sixth century, which sets out regulations for Athenian settlers on the offshore island of Salamis requires them to provide their own military equipment to a value of no less than 30 drachmae. Since the daily wage for a skilled craftsperson at this time is unlikely to have exceeded one drachma at the very most, it is difficult to believe that Archaic *poleis* could have fielded effective armies if every infantryman was expected to equip himself with the full hoplite panoply of bronze helmet, cuirass, and greaves, a spear and sword, and a large heavy round shield (Connor 1988a; van Wees 2004: 52–53).

Secondly, ancient authors suggest strongly that not all ranks of the phalanx made an equal contribution. Xenophon (Mem. 3.1.8) has a young man tell Sokrates that a general should put his best troops in the front and rear ranks and his worst in the middle, so the latter may be led by the van and pushed by the rear. Similarly, Arrian (Tact. 12.2) compares the hoplite phalanx to a knife, where the front rank serves as the blade, while the remaining ranks, though weaker, add weight to the blade. According to Xenophon (*Lak. Pol.* 11.8), the Spartans practiced complicated drill maneuvers so that the strongest should always be facing the enemy lines. Since it was only the wealthier who could afford the best protective equipment, it is quite clear that it was they who stood in the front ranks and risked the most for their homelands, which is why, both in Archaic poetry and on funerary epitaphs, elites are anxious to stress their military service *en promachois* (“in the front rank”). So, for example, Tyrtaios (frs. 10–11W) addresses most of his exhortations to the warriors fighting in the front rank, whom he describes as *agathoi* or *esthloi*, or the “progeny of unconquered Herakles,”² while an inscribed base on a *kouros*, dating to around 530 BCE and discovered at Anavysos in southern Attika, asks the passer-by to “stand and take pity beside the memorial of the dead Kroisos, whom violent Ares once destroyed in the front rank” (Jeffery 1990: 143–144). In short, the hoplite phalanx, far from expressing the egalitarianism of the body politic in its military incarnation, enshrined and perpetuated the status distinctions that characterized the early Greek *polis* more generally (Bowden 1993; Storch 1998; Hall 2007: 163–170).

If some were more equal than others within the hoplite phalanx, it remains the case that each man had his own role to perform in the defense of the city. It is not, then, egalitarianism that is the key to political decision-making in the Archaic period but rather differentiated participation – probably a relic from the small communities of the Dark



Age, where the precarious authority of the chieftain would have induced him to seek broad consensus for his decisions. Significant in this respect is the so-called Great Rhetra from Sparta. Cited only in Plutarch's *Life of Lykourgos*, its use of archaic and – even for Plutarch – arcane language argues in favor of its authenticity and if, as many believe, it is alluded to by Tyrtaios (fr. 4W; cf. Diod. 7.12.5–6), then it should date to the first half of the seventh century, making it the earliest “constitutional” document that we possess for the Greek world.³ After discussing religious and administrative arrangements, the Rhetra makes provision for the establishment of a council of thirty elders, together with the two *archēgetai*, or kings:

Having founded a sanctuary of Zeus Syllanios and Athena Syllania, having tribed the tribes and obeyed the obes, and having established a council of thirty elders together with the *archēgetai*, hold the *apellai* each season between Babyka and Knakion and so introduce and set aside proposals, but the right to speak in opposition and power are to belong to the *dēmos* . . . But if the *dēmos* speaks crookedly, the elders and the *archēgetai* are to be setters-aside. (Plut. *Lyk.* 6)

Although Plutarch – and probably Aristotle before him – believed that the final sentence was added at a later date, the combined testimony of Tyrtaios and Diodoros suggests that the power of veto was a part of the document right from the start (Cartledge 2001: 29–30). In other words, the non-elite citizen assembly (*dēmos*) may discuss and vote on motions brought to it by the aristocratic council – they are, in other words, expected to participate in the decision-making process – but their decision is not binding on the executive.

How representative was the Spartan case? For classical authors, Sparta was decidedly odd: indeed, it is the only Greek *polis* to which Herodotus (6.56–60) devotes an “ethnographic” portrait, akin to his descriptions of the institutions and customs of the Persians, Egyptians, or Skythians. Yet, recent research indicates that what has been termed the “Spartan mirage” was a product of the late sixth, if not early fifth, centuries (M. Meier 1998; Hodkinson 1998, 2000; Cartledge 2001: 169–184) and that Archaic Sparta may not have been so atypical after all. It is not that the *dēmos* lacked all representation. By the Classical period, their interests were safeguarded by five annually elected ephors – an institution whose introduction may date to the sixth century, given its absence from the Rhetra. A popular council (*boulē dēmosiē*) is attested on Chios in an inscription dated to around 575–550 BCE (M&L 8/Fornara 19) and while there is some question as to whether Solon established a popular council of 400 in the early sixth century, Athens certainly had a council of 500 by the time of Kleisthenes’ reforms in the last decade of the sixth century ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 21.3). Even at Athens, however, considerable influence was wielded by the Areiopagos, the aristocratic council recruited from former archons, down until 462 BCE, when Ephialtes stripped it of most of its vestigial powers ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25). Indeed, to return to the relationship between political and military duties, there is a good case to be made for arguing that the impetus behind the eventual establishment of democracy at Athens was the fact that, at the decisive naval victory at Salamis in 480 BCE, it was the less affluent members of the *dēmos*, crewing Athenian triremes, rather than the wealthier hoplites, who made the greatest contribution to a battle that would greatly influence the outcome of the Persian War.



The boundary between elites and the *dēmos* must always have been somewhat permeable. The poems attributed to Theognis frequently complain about intermarriage between *esthloi* and *kakoi*, with the result that those who formerly knew nothing about justice or laws but wore tattered goatskins and lived outside the *polis* have now become *agathoi*, while those who were once *esthloi* are now *deiloi* (e.g., 53, 183–92). Yet, on the cognitive level, the two categories were antithetical. That was not the case at the lower end of the social spectrum. One of the problems that Solon had to address at the beginning of the sixth century was a situation where freeborn Athenians who had defaulted on debts were being indentured to aristocratic patrons or sold abroad into slavery (Solon frs. 4, 34W; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.5–6). The solution that was adopted was to forbid loans on the security of the individual and to cancel private and public debts, liberating those enslaved in Attika and repatriating those who had been sold abroad. By establishing a lower threshold, below which freeborn members of the community could no longer fall, Solon defined the boundaries of the citizen body and, from this point on, Athenians were forced to look to chattel slavery to satisfy labor demands (Manville 1990: 132–133; Hall 2007: 191–196).

Sparta adopted a different solution to the problem. At some point, probably in the eighth century, the Spartans extended their influence over northern Lakonia by forcibly bringing neighboring communities into a relationship of dependency: these “perioikic” cities, as they are called, continued to exercise autonomy in their internal affairs but were bound to follow Spartan leadership in military enterprises (Shipley 1997). A more drastic strategy was followed in southern Lakonia, where territory was annexed and former residents enslaved as helots, forced to contribute a share of their agricultural production to their Spartan masters. From the end of the eighth century, the Spartans began to extend helotage into Messenia in the southwest Peloponnese and there are some hints that, by the sixth century, they also had designs on southern Arkadia (Hdt. 1.67–68; 1.82) and Kynouria, on the eastern seaboard of the Peloponnese (Hdt. 1.82; Paus. 3.2.2). There is some scholarly discussion as to the degree to which conflict in the Archaic period was driven by a desire for territorial conquest (van Wees 2004: 19–33): certainly, issues of honor and vengeance, along with the promise of enrichment from the spoils, are the reasons that are normally invoked by ancient authors in connection with such conflicts. Ultimately, however, the acquisition of further land was of little use unless provision was made to procure labor. The Thessalians also seem to have exploited their neighbors by making some of them *perioikoi* and subjugating others (the *penestai*) to a serf-like status similar to the helots (Sordi 1958; Lehmann 1983; Hall 2002: 139–144, 167–168), and evidence for the exploitation of dependent populations also exists for Sikyon, Argos, Syrakuse, Byzantion, Herakleia Pontike, West Lokris, and Crete (van Wees 2003).

The effect of – if not the intention behind – these conquests was to solidify the boundary between the free, if not fully enfranchised, citizen body and exploited populations who were excluded entirely from the politics of consensus. Self-cognizance of the contours that defined citizenship could, however, be reinforced by inclusion as much as by exclusion. At certain times, city-states might take the decision to incorporate neighbors into the citizen body. Such actions would often occasion a reordering of the *phylai*, or tribes – the political and military subdivisions of the *polis*, across which all citizens were distributed. Around the middle of the sixth century, Demonax of Mantinea was invited



to Kyrene in Libya to reform the tribal system there, following the devastating loss of seven thousand soldiers in a battle against the Libyans and after a prolonged period of discord between the various groups resident at Kyrene as well as between the *dēmos* and its monarchic rulers (Hdt. 4.161). The fact that one of three new *phylai* was designated for descendants of the original settlers from Thera and the *perioikoi* seems to indicate that the latter had recently been incorporated within the Kyrenean citizen body. A little earlier, the tyrant Kleisthenes reformed the tribal system at Sikyon, in the northern Peloponnese (Hdt. 5.68), and it is tempting to view this as one of the consequences of an assault that Sikyon is supposed to have launched on the nearby Achaian city of Pellene (Anaxandridas *FGrH* 404 F 1). Certainly, the appearance of a new tribal name at Argos, the Hyrnathioi, is attested for the first time after the Argives conquered and annexed the territories of Mykenai, Tiryns, and Midea in the 460s BCE (Piérart 1985). It may even be that the reforms of Kleisthenes of Sikyon's homonymous grandson, which replaced the original four Athenian *phylai* with ten new tribes, was partly designed to integrate newly enrolled citizens from rural communities in southern and eastern Attika (Anderson 2000; Anderson 2003: 123–146; Hall 2007: 218–225).

It is no longer entirely clear that the processes outlined above were seriously interrupted by the appearance, in the seventh and sixth centuries, of “tyrannical” regimes in several Greek city-states. Our understanding of this phenomenon is hampered by the fact that very few of the sources for tyrants are genuinely contemporary and are largely the product of elite families who sought to claim the credit for opposing, or even expelling, autocrats from their cities. A case in point would be the Alkmaionidai of Athens, who went as far as to admit to bribing the Delphic oracle in order to claim the credit for the expulsion of the tyrant Hippias in 510 BCE (Hdt. 5.62–63). Furthermore, the common view of the tyrant as, in some sense, “extra-constitutional” owes much to later political theorists and especially Aristotle who, as the tutor of Alexander the Great, was anxious to distinguish illegitimate forms of monarchy from legitimate ones. In reality, tyrants, who were inevitably drawn from the ranks of the elites (de Libero 1996), engaged in exactly the same tactics of force, violence, and persuasion as their aristocratic rivals, and their aim was to dominate, rather than subvert, the oligarchies that governed Archaic Greek *poleis* (Anderson 2005). Despite the generally negative tone of our literary testimony, the tyrants are not said to have suspended the normative mechanisms of governance. The Orthagorid tyrants of Sikyon are said to have “treated their subjects moderately and in many respects enslaved themselves to the laws” (Arist. *Pol.* 5.9.21) while at Athens, Hippias' father, Peisistratos, later had the reputation for administering everything “according to the laws” ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 16.8). Thucydides (6.54.5) agrees, saying that under Peisistratos and his sons, “the city continued to use the existing laws, save that they would always take care that one of their own party occupied the magistracies.”

In closing, it may be useful to turn to two spheres of activity that were not completely monopolized by the *polis* – namely, religion and the economy. The establishment of a monumental urban temple, such as the temple of Apollo Daphnephoros in the center of Eretria, was once thought to be one of the clearest indications for the emergence of the *polis*, since it presumes that the state has taken the responsibility for the cult of its presiding deity but can also command the loyalty of its citizens (Snodgrass 1980: 33, 52–54; Coldstream 2003: 338–339). In truth, it is difficult to establish on precisely



whose initiative such constructions were undertaken, but François de Polignac (1995) has noted that the earliest monumental sanctuaries are often not those in the urban center but those situated in the countryside at some distance from the city, and he argues that the function of such sanctuaries was to mark out the territorial limits of the *polis*. The problem with this hypothesis is that it assumes the early conjunction of the three definitions of the *polis* as an urban center, its territory, and its political community, which, as we have seen above, are more probably the result of a longer-term evolution. Furthermore, the literary testimony on which de Polignac bases his argument is invariably late while the archaeological evidence seems to tell a different story. At the sanctuary of Hera, which is situated 8 km northeast of Argos and which constitutes de Polignac's archetypal example, the material assemblages seem distinctly different to those known from Argos and it may be that the Heraion did not become an exclusively Argive sanctuary until the 460s, when Argos destroyed the neighboring communities and incorporated their citizens (Hall 1995).⁴ At the sanctuary of Poseidon on the Korinthian isthmus, cult activity is attested from around the middle of the eleventh century, almost three centuries before any urban settlement can be documented at Korinth (Gebhard 1993; Morgan 1994).

Other supposedly "extra-urban" sanctuaries appear to have a more international constituency. At both the sanctuary of Hera Akraia at Perachora, near Korinth, and that of Hera on the island of Samos, the vast majority of the late-eighth- and seventh-century metal dedications is of non-Greek manufacture. The sheer quantities, together with the occurrence of Egyptian mirrors dedicated with hieroglyphic inscriptions to the goddess Mut, would suggest that not all of these dedications can have been prestige items procured by Greek elites and that these sanctuaries served as nodal points within cultic networks that were widespread and that made little or no distinction between different ethnic populations (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985). It is, however, the so-called Panhellenic sanctuaries which constitute the most obvious example of religious organizations beyond the control of a single *polis*. Evidence for cultic activity at Olympia dates back to the tenth, if not the eleventh, century and suggests that the sanctuary originally served as a neutral meeting place for chieftains from Arkadia and Messenia (Morgan 1990: 57–85). The sanctuary seems not to have come under the control of the *polis* of Elis until the first quarter of the fifth century. Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi, on the other hand, while originally under the management of a local community, came to be administered by an *amphiktyony* or consortium of communities from central Greece – probably in the course of the seventh century (Hall 2002: 134–154). Yet the representatives who sat on the Delphic Amphiktyony were appointed not by *poleis* but by *ethnē* – that is, populations such as the Thessalians, the Boiotians, the Phokians, or the Lokrians (Aeschin. 2.115–116). Cities such as Sparta or Priene, on the Anatolian coast, could only be represented on the council by virtue of their affiliation to the Dorian and Ionian *ethnē* respectively. It is also worth noting that the evidence for purpose-built administrative buildings is often earlier at sanctuaries such as Olympia and Delphi than it is for many *poleis*, prompting Ingrid Strøm (2009) to suggest that it was the administration of sanctuaries that served as a template for *polis* governance, rather than vice versa.

The economy of the Archaic Greek world was based predominantly on agriculture, followed by pastoralism. Despite arguments to the contrary (Hanson 1999: 25–176), all the evidence suggests that, for much of the Archaic period, the vast majority of



freeborn Greeks were engaged in agriculture for subsistence, producing only modest surpluses which could be exchanged in local markets. Longer-distance exchange, primarily in luxury items, was initially in the hands of elite entrepreneurs. The change comes in the second half of the sixth century when the evidence of archaeological field surveys indicates an intensification of agricultural practices, which would have led to the production of greater surpluses. This is also the period at which pictorial art begins to portray a discernible distinction between purpose-built merchant vessels and warships. A new mercantile class had emerged which derived its livelihood from long-distance commercial transactions but such traders were, at best, marginal members of the political community – probably because of the impossibility of being permanently resident in the *polis* and therefore being able to participate in its decision-making processes (Hall 2007: 237–249).

Since the recent discovery that the earliest coins were minted in smaller denominations than was previously thought (Kim 2002), scholars have been more inclined to give credibility to Aristotle's opinion (*Pol.* 1.3.13–14; *Eth. Nic.* 5.5.10) that coinage was introduced to serve as a medium for the long-distance exchange of commodities. It is not, then, by accident that the earliest silver coins in Greece – those of Aigina, Korinth, and Athens – were minted shortly before the middle of the sixth century (Kroll and Waggoner 1984). It is not that the notion of currency was absent from Greece prior to this. Two Cretan laws – one (*IC* 4.1) of the late seventh or early sixth century, the other (*IC* 4.8) of the sixth – prescribe fines that are measured in cauldrons or tripods while the presence of iron spits (*obeloi*), often in bundles of 6 or 12, in funerary and cultic contexts throughout many parts of Greece is plausibly interpreted as representing the existence of a proto-currency, especially since the later denomination of the *drachma* (“handful”) was made up of 6 *obeloi*. Such proto-currencies could certainly serve the purpose of the political community, whether as disbursements or fines, although they might also be employed to award prizes to athletic victors or provide daughters with dowries. The introduction of coinage allowed for a less bulky and more convenient medium of exchange, whose value was guaranteed by the emblems stamped upon them (Schaps 2004: 94–110). Many *poleis* – especially cities such as Aigina, which were more heavily dependent upon commercial revenues due to the scarcity of homegrown agricultural resources (Figueira 1981: 22–64) – minted their own coins; the possibility of selling these for anything up to 5 percent more than their face value offered one possible source of revenue to the issuing authority (Kroll 1998). On the other hand, a good number of *poleis* were content to recognize the currencies of other Greek city-states and only minted their own currencies late, if at all (T.R. Martin 1995). In short, there is only very slight evidence that Archaic Greek city-states pursued or directed economic policies (Bresson 2000).

The examples of religion and the economy offer a salutary reminder that the *polis* was but one of a series of overlapping and cross-cutting networks of power and authority rather than the atomistic building block that governed the totality of relationships between communities in the Archaic Greek world. This becomes more patently visible in the succeeding Classical period with the emergence of hegemonic alliances and federal states, whose origins – though now largely obscured – certainly date back to the centuries before the Persian War (Larsen 1968: 104–121). Nevertheless, and largely due rather to the nature of the evidence at our disposal than to ideological choices, it is the



polis that provides us with the best evidence for the nature of governance and the rise of state action in the Archaic period.

NOTES

- 1 Arguments that an *agora* was conceived from the moment of foundation in the last third of the eighth century are not entirely convincing, given the scattered and unfocused nature of the settlement at this date. See Hall (2007: 107–110).
- 2 Only members of the Spartan royal households and related aristocrats could claim descent from Herakles, thus proclaiming an ethnic heritage that was different from that of most of the “Dorian” population. See Hall (2002: 80–81).
- 3 See, however, van Wees (1999), who argues that Tyrtaios cannot be referring to the Rhetra. For a response in defense of the chronological priority of the Rhetra, see Hall (2007: 184–187).
- 4 Strøm (2009) also argues against early Argive control of the Heraion, though, on the basis of the archaeological finds, she thinks that it came under Argive influence in the course of the seventh century. Nevertheless, her argument that it had to be Argive by about 575 BCE because of an inscription from the sanctuary (*IG IV.506*) that mentions a *damiourgos* is not compelling. Although this is a magistracy that is attested at Argos (*IG IV.614*), it is just as likely that a magistrate with the same title also exercised jurisdiction at the Heraion, especially since a board of nine *damiourgoi* seems to have held office at Argos, while at the Heraion a situation is imagined in which there is no *damiourgos*.

