

**Democracy in the Peloponnese**  
***c.*550–146 BCE**

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
January 2022

## Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

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It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee (80,000 words excluding bibliography).

## Abstract

Stefano Frullini, *Democracy in the Peloponnese, c.550–146 BCE*

This thesis is a study of the nature and development of democratic constitutions in the Peloponnese between the late archaic and the mid-Hellenistic period. It investigates the emergence and permanence of democratic government in three major Peloponnesian *poleis* (Elis, Mantinea, Argos) and one federal state (the Achaean League), as well as the way in which those institutions effectively operated in those specific contexts. Its overarching aim is to reevaluate the impact of popular rule in the shaping of the historical trajectory of the polities examined and, to an extent, of the Peloponnese as a whole.

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the general features of Greek democracy, followed by a survey of the local specificities that may have had a bearing on how democratic institutions actually worked in the context of the Peloponnese. I also list the main relevant sources for a study of Peloponnesian democracy and review the existing scholarship on both non-Athenian democracy and the political history of the ancient Peloponnese from a regional angle.

The following three chapters (2–4), devoted respectively to Elis, Mantinea and Argos, follow in broad terms the same tripartite structure. In each of these chapters, the first section explores the late archaic, pre-democratic context to illuminate the environment in which democracy would later emerge; the second section reconstructs the creation and consolidation of democratic institutions, reappraising the innovative and disruptive nature of the processes of democratisation concerned; the third section follows ‘democracy in action’, i.e. how these democratic *poleis* navigated the complex international environment of the early fourth century BCE and how being democratic shaped their policy decisions.

Chapter 5 investigates the democratic elements in the constitution of the Achaean League from its foundation in 280 BCE to the Roman conquest in 146. This chapter follows a thematic structure, although each of its three sections deals with diachronic change. While the first section lays out the theoretical groundwork for a study of the League’s federal institutions and makes a case in favour of their democratic nature, the following two sections explore how – respectively – the Achaean *dēmos* and its leaders were both empowered and constrained in their political behaviour by the constitutional framework in which they operated.

The concluding chapter (6) draws from the theory of the ‘democratic advantage’ to argue that the historical performance of the democracies examined can be explained by interpreting their processes of democratisation as processes of rearrangement of the relations between internal sub-groups on a more egalitarian basis.

## Acknowledgements

And now we search among the weeds for Megalopolis and cannot find it.

(Nikos Kazantzakis, *Journey to the Morea*)

The world in which I started my PhD looked very different from the world in which I am typing these words. With so much change around me, I am deeply grateful to the people with whom I have shared some or all of this arduous journey: in different ways, every one of them has made it a bit easier and more enjoyable.

Robin Osborne has been the best supervisor I could hope for. I have truly lost count of the times I walked into a meeting with Robin feeling despondent or confused about some minor or major point, or the direction of my thesis altogether!, and left – one or two hours later – feeling optimistic, resolute and clear-headed. Paul Millett, my second supervisor, has helped me look at things from different perspectives, and I thank him for his insightful remarks on Chapters 1 and 5. Chapter 1 also benefitted from the precise and acute comments made by Hannah Willey, who examined a first version of it alongside Paul as part of the first-year registration process. I also thank Angelos Matthaiou, Marcel Piérart and Matthew Simonton, who have answered my questions and provided advice at various stages of my doctorate.

I am grateful beyond words to the Faculty of Classics and King's College: without their support this thesis quite simply would not exist. In the summer of 2019, a Faculty HAT award and a travel grant from King's funded an unforgettable two-week road trip to the Peloponnese, from which I returned with a suitcase full of ideas and Arcadian honey.

Being awarded a Craven Studentship by the Faculty allowed me to spend Lent Term 2020 at the British School at Athens. In hindsight, my time in Athens – equally divided between the BSA and ASCSA libraries, the streets I loved getting lost in and the unmissable Friday market on Xenokratous – proved the absolute highlight of my PhD. In addition to the Director (John Bennet) and the Assistant Director (Michael Loy), as well as the library staff at the BSA and the ASCSA, I wish to mention in particular Leonardo Bernardi, Kathy Donaldson, Mike Edwards, Stephen Lambert, Tulsi Parikh, Carrie Sawtell and Julia Shear for the countless stimulating conversations that made my stay in Athens invaluable.

I wish to thank my fellow Cambridge classicists, all of them, for being such a wonderfully supportive community in times when 'community' is an essential resource. I refrain from thanking them individually, but will make an exception for Lea Niccolai, *la migliore*. I also give deepest thanks to Claudia Hoßbach, Jannis Koltermann, Felix Mylius, Emma Prevignano, Nienke Ruigrok and

Silvia Simon: they were among the first people I met when I arrived in Cambridge in 2017, and one way or another most of my fondest memories from the past 4.5 years are associated with them. From across the wall dividing Cambridge from The Other Place, Davide Massimo has provided constant support, friendship and the odd PDF, and I like to think I have done the same.

Some people have been there for me since before I crossed the Channel and have continued to do so from afar. I want to thank Luca, Giulia, Elisa and Marco, as well as Enrico, Marta, and the amazing Giulia & Alexa. I also want to thank my family, broadly (not genetically) defined, for pretty much everything. Last not least, I want to thank Will, for his encouragement, for his kindness, and for all the terrible Italian songs we have sung – and will sing – together.

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of the nature, development and impact of democracy (*dēmokratia*)<sup>1</sup> in the Peloponnese between the late sixth and the mid-second century BCE. I begin with a survey, largely based on Aristotle's *Politics*, of the set of institutions and practices that the Greeks thought of as 'democratic' (§1.1). Subsequently, in §1.2, I investigate the problems and the opportunities associated with applying the 'democratic template' to the Peloponnese in particular. §1.3 contains a brief survey of the available evidence, while in §1.4 I review the existing scholarship and identify its shortcomings. Lastly, in §1.5, I provide a general outline of the present thesis, which includes four case studies and a final chapter with conclusions.

## 1.1. Greek democracy: a template

In literal terms, the word *dēmokratia* designated the constitutional arrangement under which the *kratos*, or 'power' in a political sense, resided with the *dēmos*, or the 'people'. The word seems to have been coined in Athens around the middle of the fifth century, some time after the actual emergence of popular rule in the Greek world.<sup>2</sup> It belongs to a distinctive subset of the Greek constitutional vocabulary: a group of compounds constituted by suffixes indicating 'rule' or 'power' in a more or less concrete sense (such as *-archia* and *-kratia*) combined with prefixes indicating either who wields it (the few, the 'people', the best, the one...) or the manner of its distribution (most notably in the case of the prefix *iso*).<sup>3</sup> Following the same basic principle, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1278<sup>b</sup>10–13) argued that a constitution, or political community (*πολιτεία*), is ultimately defined by the composition of its governing body (*πολίτευμα*), namely the identity of

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the obvious and profound differences in meaning, throughout my thesis I use the modern terms 'democracy' and 'democratic' to refer to Ancient Greek *dēmokratia* (see Robinson 2011, 3n4).

<sup>2</sup> The 'date of birth' of Athenian democracy was and is a controversial issue, that essentially depends on which reform between those associated with Solon, Cleisthenes and Ephialtes one sees as most radical and consequential in the process of institutional empowerment of the Athenian *dēmos*: see in general Osborne 2006, as well as Zaccarini 2018 specifically on the discursive construction of the democratic past at Athens. On the emergence of democracy elsewhere in Greece in the late archaic period, occasionally even before Cleisthenes, see Robinson 1997 (on which see below, §1.4). Although divided, the constituents of *dēmokratia* are first attested in Aesch. *Supp.* 604 (*δήμον κρατούσα χείρ*), dated to 463: Ehrenberg 1950, 521–25 (but note Pattoni 2006, 166n40).

<sup>3</sup> Ober 2008b.

who wields supreme power or sovereignty (*κύριος*) in and over the community.<sup>4</sup> *Dēmokratia* is consequently defined as the *politeia* in which the *dēmos*, as opposed to just the ‘few’, is *kyrios*.<sup>5</sup>

The *dēmos* of a given *polis* typically included all (or at least most) adult men of free status and local descent: democratic constitutions imposed no property qualifications for citizenship or public office.<sup>6</sup> But how did the *dēmos* exercise its sovereignty? Irrespective of their constitution, the institutional structure of the Greek states was remarkably homogenous across space and time: virtually all had a popular assembly, a council, magistrates, and law-courts.<sup>7</sup> In mainland Greece, during the classical period, this uniformity was accentuated by the temporary eclipse of one-man rule and the consequent spread of forms of policy-making that relied on deliberation and voting among (more or less) equal members of corporate bodies.<sup>8</sup> This means that constitutional differentiation concerned not what institutions made up the *polis* – which constituted a fairly universal and predictable template – but how large a share of the *polis*’s (adult, male, free) population was granted access to and, crucially, control of those institutions.<sup>9</sup> In light of this, the general problem of studying democracy effectively translates into the questions of (a) how the people secured and maintained institutional access and control, and (b) why this mattered, or in other words in what respect the distance between a constitution described or self-styled as ‘democratic’ and one that was non-democratic can be seen as meaningful – both from an academic point of view and in the lived experience of the Greeks subject to either rule. By combining Aristotle’s list of democratic criteria (*Pol.* 1317<sup>b</sup>17–1318<sup>a</sup>10) with what seem to have been the main shared features of ‘real-world’ Greek democracies, we can attempt to outline a combined answer to both questions.

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<sup>4</sup> The exact meaning of Aristotle’s *kyrios* has been long debated. Essentially, as Mulgan (1970) argues, it ‘refers to a simple power relation’ (518) whereby the *kyrios* is the most powerful social agent within the state and its identity can be used as a criterion for constitutional categorisation. Lane (2016, 55) suggests translating *kyrios* as ‘lord’ or ‘master’, drawing attention to its use in household-related contexts. On the coincidence of ‘state’ and ‘government’ in the ancient world see also: de Ste. Croix 1983, 286–87; Finley 1983, 8.

<sup>5</sup> See also Dem. 20.107: *παρὰ δ’ ἡμῶν ... ὁ δῆμος κύριος*.

<sup>6</sup> Sherwin-White 1978, 176; Shipley 2018, 147. See Arist. *Pol.* 1298<sup>a</sup>9–10: ‘that everyone [deliberates] about everything is democratic’; but see note 13 below.

<sup>7</sup> Strauss 2013, 24; Leppin 2013, 147. The role and identity of public magistrates, however, could vary widely.

<sup>8</sup> Finley 1983, 52; Shipley 2018, 97.

<sup>9</sup> I borrow March and Olsen’s (2006, 3) definition of ‘institution’: ‘a relatively enduring collection of rules and organised practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances’. Broadly speaking, in the following chapters I adopt the framework of ‘New Institutionalism’ as a method for thinking about institutions: see §3.2 and particularly note 250. In the words of Simonton (2017, 69), New Institutionalism ‘focuses on the ways in which institutions are situated within a complex matrix of human intention, historical context, and relationships of power’.



In a democracy, the popular assembly had absolute sovereignty (Arist. *Pol.* 1317<sup>b</sup>28–29). Nonetheless, Greek states usually distinguished between the agenda-setting stage and the final ratification of a decree, and democracies were no exception: smaller councils were entrusted with the first stage – in accordance with the so-called principle of *probouleusis* – while the assembly would deliberate on the agenda and hold the final vote.<sup>10</sup> The sovereignty exercised by the assembly could therefore be severely qualified if the *demos*, while retaining control of the final stage, was simply asked for a binary say on bills drafted by a restricted council.<sup>11</sup> This is what the political scientist Robert A. Dahl called democracy ‘*in a narrow sense*’ in his two-stage theory of the democratic process, i.e. when every citizen has access to the ‘decisive stage’ but not to the agenda-setting stage: full democracy would require universal access to the initial stage as well.<sup>12</sup> The Greek constitutions defined as ‘democratic’ usually surpassed this basic level in two ways. First, access to the agenda-setting stage was broadened by means of reduced requirements for membership of the council and/or a shorter term of office (i.e. increased turnover).<sup>13</sup> Second, the prerogatives of the assembly were enhanced and its members were granted the rights to discuss *probouleumata* freely, propose amendments and (in some cases) even initiate legislation themselves.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On *probouleusis* in the Greek world: Rhodes 1997, 475–501. While ‘*probouleusis*’ is a modern term (Rhodes 1997, 11n2), *probouleuma* is not: Dem. 18.9, 23.92; Aeschin. 3.125. On the importance of *probouleusis* in Athenian democracy: [Arist.] *Ath. pol.* 45.4; Plut. *Sol.* 19.1; see also de Laix 1973. Leppin (1999) argued that there is no evidence of *probouleusis* in democratic Argos, but see the objections in Robinson 2011, 17.

<sup>11</sup> This was famously the case in Sparta, where the ‘Great Rhetra’ laid down that the members of the *apella* could approve or reject a motion put forward by the thirty *gerontes*, but could make no motion of their own: Plut. *Lyc.* 6.3; see also Arist. *Pol.* 1272<sup>a</sup>10–12 on Crete. More generally, it is important to distinguish ‘democracy’ from ‘popular participation’: while the latter could take many forms and even present itself simply as non-formalised ‘pressure’ from the mass on elite-dominated institutions (see my argument in §4.1), democracy represented the institutionalisation of popular participation.

<sup>12</sup> Dahl 1989, 110 (his italics); see 106–30 for his theory of the process, according to which five criteria must be fulfilled for the political process to be classifiable as democratic:

1. every citizen must be given an adequate and equal opportunity for participating in the decision-making process;
2. every citizen must be given an adequate and equal opportunity for expressing a choice at the ‘decisive stage’ of the process (*de facto* the final vote);
3. every citizen must be given access to information relevant to the various political options;
4. the citizen community must be able to set the agenda for the process;
5. every adult member of the community, except for transients and mentally defective, must be a citizen.

Note that the fifth criterion is explicitly intended to exclude ancient democracies, where the citizen body was typically limited to adult free men of local descent. Dahl’s theory has been used by some historians of Greek democracy, such as Eric Robinson and Susanne Carlsson: see §1.4.

<sup>13</sup> On council membership throughout the Greek world: Rhodes 1997, 478–81. In Athens, membership was limited, in theory, to the men over 30 who belonged to one of the upper three Solonian property classes, but by the fourth century the class requirement seems to have been ignored: [Arist.] *Ath. pol.* 7.4.

<sup>14</sup> Rhodes 1997, 502–27 (esp. 516–17 on amendments). The Athenian procedure notoriously distinguished between ‘concrete’ and ‘open’ *probouleumata*: whereas the former were fully detailed, the latter were simple orders by the council to hold a discussion on a given topic (Rhodes 1972, 52–81). Rhodes (1997, 512–13) notes that in the case of ‘open’ *probouleumata* the assembly effectively had the right to initiate legislation.

Public offices (*archai*) in democratic *poleis* were designed to minimise the accumulation of power by magistrates and maximise collective oversight on them. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1279<sup>a</sup>8–13) noted that when the *polis* was organised according to the principle of equality, magistracies were to be assigned on a rotating basis (*κατὰ μέρος*), so that as many citizens as possible could hold them and enjoy the benefits accruing from doing so.<sup>15</sup> Mechanisms for securing rotation included selection methods facilitating or enforcing turnover (respectively, election and sortition),<sup>16</sup> alongside fixed, relatively short terms of office and a ban on (immediate) re-election.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, office-holders were often grouped into leaderless boards of magistrates working on an equal level, which both stimulated cooperation and thwarted the accumulation of power by individual magistrates.<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, and most importantly, in many Greek states, magistrates were required to undergo a financial scrutiny (*logos*) as well as a general examination of their tenure (*euthynai*), on an individual basis, at the end of their term of office.<sup>19</sup> The right to hold magistrates to account was seen as one of the *demos*'s most important prerogatives (*Arist. Pol.* 1317<sup>b</sup>26–28).<sup>20</sup>

Another hallmark of a democratic *polis* was the use of relatively large law-courts – intended to be both representative and difficult to corrupt – whose members were selected by election or (preferably) lot.<sup>21</sup> Some democracies paid citizens for jury service, which ensured wide popular participation by compensating poorer citizens for the loss of a day's work.<sup>22</sup> More generally, the author of the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* (9.1) finds universal access to legal protection,

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<sup>15</sup> An obvious prerequisite was the absence, or near-absence, of property requirements for holding office: *Arist. Pol.* 1317<sup>b</sup>22–23.

<sup>16</sup> On magistrate selection methods in various constitutions: *Arist. Pol.* 1300<sup>a</sup>8–<sup>b</sup>5. More specifically, on sortition and democracy, see: Hansen 1991, 235–37; Taylor 2007; Kosmetatou 2013. The election of generals was the most remarkable anomaly (but not the only one) in the otherwise sortition-based Athenian system: Athenian democrats acknowledged that, in certain strategic posts, expertise was preferable to 'pure' rotation ([Xen.] *Ath. pol.* 1.3). On election and Greek democracy see Sherwin-White 1978, 176 (but see Rhodes 1997, 533n13: 'she does not make it clear whether by "popularly elected" she means "from all the citizens" as well as "by all the citizens"').

<sup>17</sup> *Arist. Pol.* 1317<sup>b</sup>23–25 and 41; Shipley 2018, 147.

<sup>18</sup> Hansen 1991, 237–39.

<sup>19</sup> Rhodes 1997, 528–29; Fröhlich 2013, 260–64. In Athens, prospective magistrates also underwent a preliminary check before entering office (*dokimasia*), but this is almost unheard of outside Attica. The close link between accountability and democracy is affirmed in Herodotus' Constitutional Debate (3.80.6), in which Otanes states that, in a democracy, the *plethos* selects public officers by lot and holds them accountable (*ὑπεύθυνος*). By contrast, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (371), the Danaids' unfamiliarity with democratic procedure is made apparent by their calling Pelasgus *πρύτανις ἄκριτος*, 'magistrate subject to no judge'. See also *Pers.* 213, where Atossa equally defines Xerxes as *οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει* (see Pattoni 2006, 164–69).

<sup>20</sup> On this principle see Lane 2016, who notes that the democratic *demos* – unlike magistrates – was itself 'unaccountable' (72).

<sup>21</sup> *Arist. Pol.* 1300<sup>b</sup>13–1301<sup>a</sup>15, 1317<sup>b</sup>25–26; Rhodes 1997, 529–31. On large law-courts seen as representative and corruption-proof: de Ste. Croix 1983, 315.

<sup>22</sup> Pericles introduced jury pay in Athens, which constitutes the earliest evidence of public pay in the Greek world: [Arist.] *Ath. pol.* 27.3. Outside Athens, public pay is only attested with certainty in Rhodes and Iasus, and possibly in the Achaean League (de Ste. Croix 1975; O'Neil 1995, 175–79); all these examples are post-classical.

alongside the right of appeal and the ban on loans secured upon one's person, to be the most democratic feature of Solon's constitution. The *demos*'s collective role in applying law enforcement was seen as going hand-in-hand with the individual citizen's right to benefit from it.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2. Democracy and the Peloponnese

The institutions and practices surveyed in §1.1 seem to have been those most regularly associated with democracy in the Greek world. But the Greeks themselves were aware that the real-world context in which an institution operated can shape the way in which it developed and worked in practice. The so-called 'Old Oligarch', for example, talked about Athenian democracy's economic and geopolitical reliance on the sea and the impact that this had on Athenian society at large.<sup>24</sup> Aristotle noted that, even in a formally democratic *polis*, political participation would be *de facto* limited if a large share of the *demos* was occupied in farming or shepherding, and therefore regularly busy away from the urban centre.<sup>25</sup> It is in the light of the importance of such contextual factors that this thesis seeks to investigate the nature and impact of democracy in the Peloponnese. It asks how, when and why popular government emerged in the peninsula; how it was maintained and consolidated; how it worked in practice; to what extent it shaped the broader political and diplomatic history of the region.

Let us start by defining the subject with more precision. How many *poleis* were there in the Peloponnese, and how many of them were ever democratic? According to the *Inventory* curated by the Copenhagen Polis Centre (CPC), 134 *poleis* are attested in the Peloponnese for the archaic and classical period.<sup>26</sup> At least some information survives on the constitutional history of 29 of them, or one in ~4.62. This is marginally better than the data on the Greek world as a whole: we know something about the constitution of 198 archaic and/or classical *poleis* out of a total of 1,035, or

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<sup>23</sup> On equality before the law and democratic ideology see: Finley 1983, 138–39; Hansen 1991, 84. On the Aristotelian passage about Solon's 'democratic' reforms see Rhodes 1981, 159–62.

<sup>24</sup> [Xen.] *Ath. pol.* 1.19–20, 2.2–8, 2.11–16.

<sup>25</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1317<sup>a</sup>18–38, 1318<sup>b</sup>9–1319<sup>a</sup>24.

<sup>26</sup> *Inv.* 225–357 plus Kalauria (360); the *Inventory* is Hansen and Nielsen 2004. I did not include the island of Belbina (*Inv.* 359), too far to the east although Ps.-Scylax (51.2) seems to view it as part of the Peloponnese. The geographical status of Megara and its port city Pagae is problematic, but on account of Megara's close relationship with Sparta (first) and the Achaean league (later), as well as its role in controlling the Isthmus (or aspiration for doing so), they will be considered Peloponnesian cities in this work. The *Inventory*'s high total figure is not reflected in the ancient sources attempting geographic descriptions of the Peloponnese. Ps.-Scylax, for example, only listed 46/48 mainland *poleis* (I consider the Megarid to be part of the Peloponnese; Megalopolis in Arcadia is not mentioned by Ps.-Scylax but would be an easy textual emendation; on Prote, see Shipley 2004, 558) and 4 island *poleis*, plus 'many other cities' (unnamed, twice). To use Arcadia as a more specific example, while the *Inventory* lists 39 *poleis* and 31 non-*polis* settlements in the region, Pliny's survey (*HN* 4.6) includes only 30 *oppida* and 9 *reliquae civitates*.

one in ~5.23.<sup>27</sup> Out of the 29 Peloponnesian *poleis* for which some constitutional evidence is available, 27 of them – all but Sparta and Sicyon – were (at least briefly and at least probably) democratic at some point before 323 BCE.<sup>28</sup> Since Sicyon itself probably became democratic after Aratos took over in 251, i.e. still within the chronological boundaries of this thesis, I shall include it in the dataset.

While these figures suggest a considerable propagation of *dēmokratia* in the classical Peloponnese – as virtually all the *poleis* we know something about had a period of democracy – they also showcase the paucity of our evidence in absolute terms, as no constitutional data survive for more than three *poleis* out of four. We should therefore move from absolute numbers to some considerations about the type of *polis* we are informed about. Shipley noted that two groups of particularly prominent Peloponnesian *poleis* can be identified: a ‘top seven’ tier with the most extensive, populous or powerful *poleis* in the region (Argos, Corinth, Sicyon, Elis, Megalopolis, Messene, Sparta), with a combined area of 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> (about 30 percent of the Peloponnese’s total surface area), and a more ill-defined second tier tentatively made up of 13 mid-sized *poleis* (Epidaurus, Troizen, Phleious, Dyme, Pellene, Aigion, Heraia, Mantinea, Tegea, Pheneos, Psophis, Kleitor, Stymphalos), that made up a further 3,800–4,800 km<sup>2</sup>; in sum, half of the classical Peloponnese (21,500 km<sup>2</sup> in total) was controlled by fewer than one-sixth of its *poleis*.<sup>29</sup> If we cross-correlate Shipley’s tiers with the *Inventory*’s constitutional data, we find out that:

- (a) we have data on the constitutional histories of 15 of the 20 biggest Peloponnesian *poleis*, including all of the ‘top seven’;
- (b) 13 of those 15 *poleis* (all except for Sparta and Sicyon) experienced democracy before 323, and one more (Sicyon) was probably democratic after 323.

From this perspective, the limitations of the evidence appear less severe. While in purely numerical terms the set of documented *poleis* is small, it still included a large share of the land, population and resources of the whole peninsula. This has important consequences on the type of study that can be carried out. The following chapters focus on just four Peloponnesian democracies, i.e. Elis,

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<sup>27</sup> Data from Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 1338–40.

<sup>28</sup> Both figures reported by the *Inventory* (29 constitutionally documented *poleis*, 27 democracies) are conservative estimates and exclude:

- (a) towns like Troizen (*Inv.* 357), which had a council and an assembly in the classical period, and although it is uncertain whether this corresponded to democracy (and the *Inventory* does not classify Troizen as one) it is not unreasonable to assume it did (see Shipley 2018, 132);
- (b) towns controlled by democracies, such as Tiryns (*Inv.* 356) and Cleonae (*Inv.* 351) incorporated by Argos during the classical period;
- (c) federal states such as the fourth-century Arcadian League;
- (d) *poleis* that became democratic only after the classical period, e.g. Sicyon (and possibly others).

<sup>29</sup> Shipley 2018, 257 (see 17–18 for data sources).

Mantineia, Argos and the Achaean League (see §1.5): two of them (Elis and Argos) are ‘top seven’, another (the Achaean League) was a federal state that eventually came to control the entire Peloponnese, and another (Mantineia), albeit smaller in absolute terms, was consistently one of the two major players in Arcadia alongside Tegea. In different ways, these four polities were particularly active and influential in the Peloponnese thanks to their size and resources. They consequently had the means to *do things* that smaller states could not do; one of the questions that this thesis aims to answer is how democracy shaped the way in which they did what they did. In any democratic *polis*, the power of the *dēmos* – absolute in theory – clashed with the reality of how able the community was to make and enact its own choices.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the very survival of a city’s institutions relied on power relations, as stronger *poleis* were often willing and able to force constitutional change on their weaker neighbours if it suited their own interests.<sup>31</sup> Studying the more powerful democracies in the Peloponnese sheds light on how they protected their autonomy and agency while also projecting power and influence beyond their borders.

It should also be borne in mind that the Peloponnese as a physical space for political action is not a modern, ‘etic’ analytical category. It was perceived and discursively constructed as a unitary landscape, both from the outside and by its own inhabitants – which is what ultimately warrants an investigation conducted from a regional standpoint.<sup>32</sup> In this context, I borrow Börzel and Risse’s definition of ‘regions’ as ‘social constructions that make references to territorial location and to geographical or normative contiguity’.<sup>33</sup> Their definition underscores that if on the one hand the concept is only applicable to geographical areas where topography facilitates the emergence of a local identity and network of interactions, on the other hand these latter defining features are ultimately man-made. Kostas Vlassopoulos persuasively contends that the ancient Peloponnese can fruitfully be studied through the lens of regionalism, for ample evidence shows that it was constructed as an integrated entity with a character, a shared history, an identity, and even interests of its own.<sup>34</sup> I shall not repeat Vlassopoulos’ arguments but shall rather add a few relevant points. In 191, the Roman general Titus Quinctius Flamininus – attempting to persuade the Achaeans to

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<sup>30</sup> On the question of autonomy and sovereignty, with special reference to Hellenistic democracy, see Carlsson 2010, 61–79 with previous bibliography.

<sup>31</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1307<sup>b</sup>19–24, with the most notable examples of this phenomenon: Sparta would overthrow democracies, Athens oligarchies. Thucydides (1.19.1) only mentions Sparta’s sympathy for oligarchy; on Athens’ mixed record in spreading democracy before the Peloponnesian war see: Bolmarcich 2005; Brock 2009; Robinson 2011, 188–200.

<sup>32</sup> On regions and regionalism in ancient history: Reger 1994; Elton and Reger 2007; De Angelis 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Börzel and Risse 2016, 7. In vaguer but comparable terms, Elton and Reger (2007, 179–80) view regions as something essentially characterised (and held together) by ‘geography, politics and a sense of the past’.

<sup>34</sup> Vlassopoulos 2011; see also Nielsen and Roy 2009, 256–58. However, Shipley (2018, 258), with a somewhat dismissive attitude towards the abundant evidence presented, maintains that Peloponnesian identity was ‘implied, or asserted, only in passing’.

surrender the island of Zakynthos to Rome – allegedly discouraged them from sticking their head out of the Peloponnesian ‘tortoise shell’.<sup>35</sup> The implication was that the ‘natural’ political landscape of a Peloponnesian state lay within the Peloponnese itself, and any effort to expand beyond its natural borders would have been a hazard. Despite his obvious interest in the matter, the very fact that he could (successfully) use this particular argument suggests that it was not unheard of. After all insularity, as the very toponym suggests, defined the Peloponnese.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, isolation was mitigated by the Isthmus of Corinth, that provided the Peloponnese with ‘all the advantages of an insular situation without its disadvantages’<sup>37</sup> and by performing the double role of border and lifeline helped build the consciousness of a ‘Peloponnesian region’ as opposed to what lay to its north<sup>38</sup> – a key moment in this process being, I would argue, its strategic role in the Greek resistance against Xerxes’ invasion.<sup>39</sup> This overarching peninsular identity existed in parallel with that of the smaller sub-regions constituting the Peloponnese, perceived as self-contained entities with their own local specificity: while the Greeks conceived of the Peloponnese as a region, the smaller areas that constituted it were *equally* constructed as regions.<sup>40</sup> For example, Corinthia and Sicyonia were small single-*polis* regions, defined solely by their hegemonic urban centre. For Achaea, Elis, Arcadia, Messenia and Laconia, Ps.-Scylax uses in his *Periplus* the term *ἔθνος*, in the sense of a larger community bound together

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<sup>35</sup> Liv. 36.32; Plut. *Flam.* 17.2 and *Mor.* 197b (probably from Polybius: Pelling 1997, 402n184).

<sup>36</sup> Πελοπόννησος was universally assumed to derive from Πέλοπος νῆσος, the ‘island of Pelops’: Hecat. *FGrH* 1 F119 (= Strab. 7.7.1); Thuc. 1.9.2 (see also: *Cypria* fr. 16 West; Soph. *OC* 696; Dionys. *Per.* 403). Polybius (1.42.1–2) points out that it is actually a χερρόνησος (as opposed to Sicily, a proper νῆσος instead). To add to the confusion, Pausanias (5.24.7) attests to the use of Χερρόνησος to refer to an island linked to the mainland by a bridge – an ersatz peninsula. Note that Homer calls both islands and peninsulas νῆσος: Dion 1977, 151–54.

<sup>37</sup> Smith 1854, 1:1014. See also Thuc. 1.13.5: Corinth was proverbially ‘wealthy’ thanks to its control of the Isthmus (cf. Strab. 8.6.20).

<sup>38</sup> Multiple sources record the existence of a boundary stone on the Isthmus dividing ‘the Peloponnese’ from ‘Ionia’ (Strab. 3.5.5, 9.1.6; Plut. *Thes.* 25.3): despite the stories ascribing its erection to a mythical past, Harding (1994, 189–91) argues that the stone was in fact placed in the context of the fifth-century territorial disputes. If true, this would make the boundary stone story yet another moment of construction of the Peloponnesian identity (by means of ‘otherness’) during the classical period.

<sup>39</sup> After Thermopylae, the Spartans started building a wall across the Isthmus (Hdt. 8.71) and made clear that their first priority was to defend the Peloponnese (8.40.2). After Salamis, some of the spoils of war were dedicated there: the Isthmus’ symbolic and ritual importance was now comparable to that of Salamis itself and Cape Sounion (with its temple of Poseidon), where other dedications were placed (8.121.1; cf. 9.81.1). Most importantly, the decisive expedition that would end with Plataea started when the Peloponnesians – inspired by the Spartans – finally left the Isthmian wall behind and marched northwards to join the Athenians at Eleusis (9.19). The Isthmus, as a common frontier, bound the peninsula together.

<sup>40</sup> Nielsen and Roy (2009, 256) define the classical Peloponnese as a ‘network of identities’.

by a local identity.<sup>41</sup> As to the Argolid, however, the same author views it less as a region than a group of independent *poleis*, each with its own *χώρα*.<sup>42</sup>

It is in this complex and multi-layered landscape that these states found themselves operating and interacting. The physical and human geography of the Peloponnese shaped their historical trajectories and the ways in which their institutions effectively worked, so that (for example) even where a city's institutional set-up was similar to Athens', political practice was different because it played out in a different context. A key aspect of this question is the spatial distribution of the population of a *polis* in the *chōra* and its role in shaping political participation. As seen above, the relationship between patterns of settlement and political practice was clear to Aristotle, who saw the 'democracy of farmers' as the best form of democracy because dispersed settlement kept lower-class citizens away from the city, limiting their influence on policy.<sup>43</sup> Where possible, it is essential to incorporate discussions of the patterns of settlement into attempts to understand how constitutions based on direct participation worked in practice. It is important to bear in mind that the spatial distribution of the population was not static, but could change for many reasons. 'Synoikism' is the name often attributed in the ancient sources and in modern scholarship to a process of transition from dispersed to (at least partially) nucleated inhabitation, whereby previously separate settlements would merge into a new one or enlarge one of the pre-existing ones.<sup>44</sup> Of the three individual *poleis* examined in this thesis, two (Elis and Mantinea) are explicitly said in the literary evidence to have been the products of synoikism; the third (Argos) also emerged over time as a unitary urban centre from formerly discrete settlements, through an archaeologically documented process. As a moment of disruptive centralisation of the pattern of settlement, synoikism poses two methodological problems. One is that its actual impact on the human geography of the area should be quantified, which generally requires extensive archaeological investigation. The second problem is that its political significance (e.g. its connection with the local process of state formation) must be clarified, although the necessary evidence in this case is more difficult to identify. Both questions are highly locally specific and can only be addressed with careful consideration of the local context in which the process took place.

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<sup>41</sup> [Scyl.] 42–46. On the *Periplus* see in particular: Counillon 2004; Shipley 2011.

<sup>42</sup> [Scyl.] 49–54. However, the Argolid is treated as unitary by both Strabo (8.6.1, although still stressing its political division) and Pliny (*HN* 4.5.17, who describes it as centred on the Gulf of Nauplia).

<sup>43</sup> See note 25. The problem of how the *dēmos* could participate in democratic politics depending on its spatial distribution has been primarily studied with reference to Athens and its demes: Osborne 1985, 64–92; 1990; Jones 2004.

<sup>44</sup> See the general discussion of synoikism and *polis* formation in Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 115–19. Aspects of the concept of 'synoikism', as well as its limitations, are explored throughout this work; see especially §2.2 on the problems of the tradition on the synoikism of Elis.

Another example of the impact that physical geography could have on political practice is offered by the relationship between the Peloponnesian *poleis* and the sea. This relationship is well known and of great historical importance in the case of Athens (see note 24), but geography and geopolitics made the lesser-known Peloponnesian situation much more complex and variable. Throughout the *Periplus* cited above, Ps.-Scylax lists the harbours serving each coastal city as opposed to the landlocked cities ‘in the interior’ (ἐν μεσογείᾳ), which gives an idea of the varying degrees of accessibility and openness of each area. Arcadia is mentioned here as having access to the sea only through the small *polis* of Lepreon (44), which is compatible with a mid-fourth-century composition date; Lepreon did not remain Arcadian for long, leaving the region landlocked again.<sup>45</sup> The Argolid is another instructive case. Despite its proximity to the coast, Argos’ access to the sea relied in part on control of the closest harbour towns, Nauplia and Tiryns, that were definitively incorporated only in the fifth century.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, according to the *Periplus*, close-by Epidaurus enjoyed access to both the Argolic and the Saronic Gulf (50 and 54).<sup>47</sup> Access to the sea facilitated participation in trade networks, thus offering a way out of poverty for cities without immediate access to natural resources.<sup>48</sup> It opened up the possibility of seaborne military endeavours – and navies required rowers, which expanded the share of men involved in warfare beyond the upper classes.<sup>49</sup> On a less tangible level, having a port provided a city with access to the outside world, increasing the opportunities for cultural contact and interaction.<sup>50</sup> For all these reasons securing access to the sea (or stopping a competitor from doing so) could be an important political goal for a city, especially in the Peloponnese where such access was not necessarily straightforward to acquire, and once secured it could have a large impact on the type of policies a city could pursue and how it would pursue them.

A study of the Greek democracies situated in a certain region that takes into account the local specificities of that region and those democracies’ connection with it is worthwhile for at least two reasons. First, it sheds light on the local histories of the *poleis* in question. But it also advances our knowledge and understanding of *dēmokratia* in different settings and allows us to escape the Athenian democratic paradigm, showing us different ways in which popular rule could

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<sup>45</sup> See Shipley 2011, 121, as well as §2.3 on Lepreon (*Inv.* 306) and Arcadia. Pliny describes Arcadia as *undique a mari remota* (*HN* 4.6.20).

<sup>46</sup> See §4.2.

<sup>47</sup> [Scyl.] 50 and 54; see *Inv.* 348.

<sup>48</sup> Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F176 = Strab. 8.6.16) says that the Aeginetans turned to trade because of the wretchedness of the soil (ἐμπόριον γὰρ γενέσθαι, διὰ τὴν λυπρότητα τῆς χώρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων θαλαττουργούντων ἐμπορικῶς). By contrast, Kelly (1976, 73–93) argues that archaic Argos was uninterested in commerce and colonial expansion because it already controlled a fertile, wealthy, and easily defensible region.

<sup>49</sup> See Raaflaub 2007.

<sup>50</sup> On the impact of maritime connectivity in the Mediterranean: Horden and Purcell 2000, 123–72.



be institutionalised and practised. The Peloponnese is a particularly promising case study in that it had a strong sense of regional identity and contained a relatively high number of attested democracies, quite a few of which were comparatively influential and are sufficiently well documented in the available evidence. The purpose of the next section will be to identify the evidence that can be used for such study.

### 1.3. The evidence

Is it possible to study Greek democracy beyond Athens? Does enough evidence survive? The consensus used to be that the answer to both questions was ‘no’.<sup>51</sup> Such pessimism was in part due to methodological Athenocentrism: it is true that the evidence from non-Attic democracies is poorer in quantity and quality – no pamphlet or speeches survive, nor (broadly speaking) the works of local historians – but this does not mean that the evidence that does survive is intrinsically insufficient for any study; it simply means that different questions can be answered on its basis. Furthermore, recent work has greatly expanded the amount of material at our disposal. In what follows, I provide a brief survey of the evidence available for a study of Peloponnesian democracy.

I start with a list of the most significant literary sources: the historians (in chronological order) come first, followed by exponents of other genres.

- (a) Herodotus’ work contains long accounts of the evolution of intra-Peloponnesian power relations during the rise of Sparta, alongside the occasional mention of a city’s political institutions. For example his evident interest in Argive history, for which he had access to good-quality sources, makes the *Histories* particularly precious for retracing the link between Argos’ late archaic crisis, its democratisation and its international realignments (6.76–83, 7.148–52). He also referred to the Eleian attacks on Triphylia that took place in his own lifetime (4.148.4).
- (b) For the second half of the fifth century Thucydides is our main authority, but his narrative, being focused on interstate relations, leaves us in the dark about most domestic politics. There are two significant exceptions: the chapter (5.47) on the alliance of 420 by Athens, Argos, Mantinea, and Elis, that lists the respective political institutions of the contracting parties; more generally, the long narrative (5.22–83) of the twists and turns in the

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<sup>51</sup> ‘D’autres *poleis* [besides Athens, Argos, and Syracuse] encore ont, à un moment ou à un autre, connu la démocratie au v<sup>e</sup> siècle: il est inutile de les énumérer ici, tant est grande notre ignorance de leurs institutions’ (Will 1972, 1:464); ‘Many other democracies [besides Athens] existed, but our knowledge of them is slight’ (de Ste. Croix 1983, 287); ‘Nothing short of a miraculous recovery of Aristotle’s 157 lost *Constitutions* will radically alter the position’ (Finley 1983, 103). See also Robinson 2011, 186–88.

Peloponnese down to the first Battle of Mantinea (418) and the ensuing *stasis* at Argos. In both cases, interstate politics serves our purposes well: not only does it show how democracy contributed to shaping interactions, but Thucydides also illustrates the role of political institutions in carrying out foreign policy, and how (conversely) the ups and downs of international relations could reshape, even violently, those institutions.

- (c) Xenophon's *Hellenica* is a particularly valuable source. During its timeframe (411–362) the Peloponnese witnessed several crucial transformations: the union between Argos and Corinth (392–86), the Spartan defeat at Leuctra (371) and the following (partial) liberation of Messenia, the emergence of the Arcadian league, the (short-lived) spread of democracy across Achaea. All of these are duly recorded by Xenophon.
- (d) Against the backdrop of the general scarcity of Hellenistic historiography, Polybius' *Histories* is often our only literary source for the events after the early third century. Polybius can be useful for earlier events too: for example, a brief digression (2.41.1–10) informs us about an 'Achaean League' long predating its Hellenistic iteration. Livy followed Polybius closely and can sometimes be used to reconstruct the content of lost Polybian books.
- (e) Long unfairly labelled a compiler, Diodorus drew from many works otherwise lost, most notably Ephorus and other fourth-century authors. His narrative, surviving in its entirety for the years 480–301 (books 11–20), often complements the other extant sources and provides many details otherwise unknown. On multiple events of the late fifth and early fourth century we can compare his narrative with Thucydides' and Xenophon's; after 362 his is the only continuous narrative we have.
- (f) Aristotle occupies somewhat of a middle ground. His work cannot be described as 'history-writing', but *Politics* 5 and 6 are full of allusions to real politics (contemporary and earlier), often – but not always – frustratingly cursory and vague.<sup>52</sup> Aristotle's references can sometimes be employed profitably, especially because we know that they rested on the author's vast knowledge of Greek politics: Aristotle and his school wrote 158 *Constitutions*, of which only the Athenian has survived more or less intact.<sup>53</sup>
- (g) Plutarch is in a peculiar position, too. The *Lives* of the Hellenistic leaders (especially those of Aratus, Philopoemen, Flamininus) can supplement Polybius' narrative, but their focus is again on conflicts and individual actors, which often limits their usefulness in reconstructing democratic constitutions.

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<sup>52</sup> Lintott 2018, 10: 'It is only the loss of so many Greek historical works that makes it necessary for us to use [*Politics* 5] as a source'.

<sup>53</sup> Many fragments of Aristotle's other historical works, including the *Constitutions*, have been collected by Rose (1886, fr. 381–644).

- (h) Strabo and Pausanias' works are rich in local histories, myths, and historical discussions about Peloponnesian places. Almost all of Strabo's eighth book deals with the Peloponnese; seven out of Pausanias' ten books are about Peloponnesian regions. Their focus is often different from that of the historians, which makes their works all the more useful: both inform us on synoikisms, movements of peoples and local narratives about identity.
- (i) Some further information can occasionally come from:
- a. the Athenian orators, as in the Pseudo-Demosthenic (17.10) remark that Achaean Pellene was democratic in the 330s;<sup>54</sup>
  - b. Athenian drama, if we believe that the Argos in Aeschylus and Euripides had something to do with real-world Argos;<sup>55</sup>
  - c. Aeneas Tacticus' 'textbook' of military strategy (commonly called *Poliorvetica*), with numerous anecdotes on civil wars, coups, and conflicts between *poleis*;
  - d. the lexicographers, whose works can sometimes hide snippets of traditions and lost sources.<sup>56</sup>

Another major textual source of information is inscriptions, which often illuminate events ignored by the literary sources, or supplement or even contradict them. Albeit not particularly abundant,<sup>57</sup> Peloponnesian inscriptions provide precious information on the institutions issuing decrees and on the interactions between cities. As to their distribution, Shipley has noted that inscriptions tend to be found in each Peloponnesian sub-region's dominant centre (with exceptions), in a tendency that he calls 'epigraphic centralism'.<sup>58</sup> Their chronological distribution is patchy, too: 'Peloponnesian epigraphy is a series of outbursts',<sup>59</sup> which makes it impossible to retrace its evolution organically, but also potentially raises the question of what triggered one of those 'outbursts'. The editorial history of the Peloponnesian inscriptions is also exceptionally complex: since the *Inscriptiones Graecae* never managed to cover the entire Peloponnese, and new pieces continue to be uncovered, published inscriptions are often scattered across local corpora, journals, and *SEG* volumes.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the orators' use of the past: Nouhaud 1982; Westwood 2017; Canevaro 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Pattoni 2006.

<sup>56</sup> See the *gymnētes/gymnēsioi* attested at Argos, on which see note 385.

<sup>57</sup> Which could also be due to a widespread use of bronze rather than stone (Kritzas 2006, 404–5). As reported in the same publication, Kritzas is currently preparing the publication of a vast corpus of fourth-century bronze inscriptions from Argos that could radically alter the situation presented here.

<sup>58</sup> Shipley 2005, 327–28 (see also 325 for quantitative data).

<sup>59</sup> Kralli 2017, xxxii.

<sup>60</sup> Shipley 2018, 7.

Further insights can come from material evidence. Coins often play a key role in modern attempts to reconstruct the emergence of specific political communities in the Peloponnese: Elis and Mantinea are major examples (see §2.1 and §3.1). The archaeological study of settlement patterns and urban spaces is also promising, such as the work conducted by Jamieson Donati in regard to agoras and civic spaces in the Peloponnesian *poleis*,<sup>61</sup> or the study of Peloponnesian fortifications and their impact on the history of a city.<sup>62</sup>

#### 1.4. Previous studies

As a study of popular government in the classical and early Hellenistic Peloponnese, this thesis seeks to fill a gap at the intersection of the scholarship on Peloponnesian history and that on Greek democracy at large. Despite this gap, it still builds on some important work done in the field of Greek politics in recent decades. The CPC's aforementioned *Inventory* was published in 2004 as the 1,250,000-word-long culmination of a decade's collective work; not only does it bring together data on the 1,035 documented Greek *poleis* scattered across the Mediterranean, but also contains extensive discussions of particular problems such as settlement patterns, demography, *polis* identity, and inter-*polis* interaction.<sup>63</sup> A few years before the *Inventory*, P.J. Rhodes (with David Lewis) curated the most comprehensive collection of decrees from the Greek world to date.<sup>64</sup> These two works marked a sea-change in the study of Greek institutions and have made possible a new crop of studies that harnessed their potential as comprehensive collections of data. In the field of democratic studies, one major example is Eric Robinson's 2011 monograph *Democracy Beyond Athens*, which includes discussions of all 54 democratic constitutions attested in the classical Greek world outside Attica.<sup>65</sup> This was preceded by a shorter monograph – published before the *Inventory* – on the same subject but focused on the emergence of democracy in late archaic Greece: in this book, Robinson largely succeeded in showing that Athens was not the first Greek democracy, and in fact forms of popular government cropped up roughly at the same time in multiple parts of the Greek world.<sup>66</sup> In this first book, before examining the individual *poleis*,

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<sup>61</sup> Donati 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Maher 2017. See also the CPC's studies on the role of architecture, and walls in particular, in defining a *polis*: Ducrey 1995; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 135–37.

<sup>63</sup> Hansen and Nielsen 2004. For the CPC's research output: <http://www.teachtext.net/bn/cpc/>.

<sup>64</sup> Rhodes 1997.

<sup>65</sup> Robinson 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Robinson 1997.

Robinson adds a theoretical discussion on ancient and modern democracy that includes the theory of the democratic process formulated by Dahl (see note 12).<sup>67</sup>

Before Robinson and the *Inventory* itself, two important studies greatly expanded our knowledge of non-Athenian politics in the classical period and beyond using different methodologies. First, Hans-Joachim Gehrke's *Jenseits von Athens und Sparta*, published in 1986, blazed the trail for the investigation of what he called 'the third Greece', beyond the two superpowers.<sup>68</sup> After exploring the nature of society and economy in the world of the smaller *poleis*, Gehrke conducted thirty *polis* case studies divided between 'significant' (*bedeutende*), 'middling' (*mittlere*), and 'poorer' (*ärmerer*) agrarian states – with the 'middling' category further split up between cities with or without a significant maritime component. Many of Gehrke's case studies are Peloponnesian cities, which makes his findings particularly relevant for the purposes of this thesis. The second study particularly worth mentioning is James O'Neil's 1995 survey of the rise and fall of democracy from the archaic to the Hellenistic age.<sup>69</sup> O'Neil's book is roughly half as long as Robinson's *Democracy Beyond Athens* despite including the archaic and Hellenistic periods, but the greatest methodological difference between O'Neil and Robinson is that O'Neil provided a general definition of *demokratia* in advance and systematically looked for traces of democratic procedures, but in doing so relied heavily on Aristotle's ambiguous democratic taxonomy.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile Robinson adopted an explicitly 'emic' approach, relying on the Greeks' own definition of a certain constitution as 'democratic', and most importantly argued against the use of labels such as 'radical' and 'moderate'.<sup>71</sup>

Two more recent studies on non-Athenian democracy deserve a mention.<sup>72</sup> Susanne Carlsson's *Hellenistic Democracies* looks at autonomy and freedom in the Hellenistic age, with special reference to democratic constitutions.<sup>73</sup> Like Robinson in his book on archaic democracy, Carlsson also used the scholarship on modern democracy to gain insights into its ancient counterpart, and included a discussion of the applicability of Dahl's theory of the democratic process to *demokratia*.<sup>74</sup> David Teegarden's *Death to Tyrants!* investigates tyrant-killing legislation across the late classical and

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<sup>67</sup> Robinson 1997, 15–16

<sup>68</sup> Gehrke 1986.

<sup>69</sup> O'Neil 1995.

<sup>70</sup> O'Neil 1995, 1–3.

<sup>71</sup> Robinson 2011, 3: 'Did [the Greeks], as far as we can tell, label city-state x a *demokratia*? If so, then we should assume it was a *demokratia*'. For his argument in favour of reappraising the complexity of democracy without resorting to labels such as 'extreme' and 'moderate', see Robinson 2011, 217–47; see also Strauss 1987 on the dangers of using these terms.

<sup>72</sup> In addition to these see also Thomsen 2020, discussed in §6.2.

<sup>73</sup> Carlsson 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Carlsson 2010, 47–49 and 291–93.

early Hellenistic Greek world as a way of defending democracy from internal enemies through incentives to collective action, and in doing so highlights some patterns in the ways in which democracies protected themselves.<sup>75</sup> While valuable and insightful, neither of these books includes any case studies from the Peloponnese. As to the previous general works on non-Athenian democracy, such as Robinson's books, they include Peloponnesian *as well as* non-Peloponnesian cases, which fails to do justice to the social and historical conditions of the Peloponnese.

Broadening out from democracy to political history in general, the Peloponnese is well served in the existing scholarship. In addition to the numerous studies on specific sub-regions – which will be discussed where appropriate in the relevant chapters – two major monographs have recently been published, respectively by Ioanna Kralli and Graham Shipley, that deal with the Peloponnese as a whole, from a regional angle.<sup>76</sup> Both books are about the early Hellenistic Peloponnese between Alexander's time and the early second century BCE, but while Shipley's study tackles different angles (economy, war, demography, politics) through a thematic structure, Kralli's is a detailed narrative history of Peloponnesian interstate relations, and the books – as acknowledged by Shipley himself – complete each other well.<sup>77</sup> An earlier volume edited by Catherine Grandjean on the Peloponnese between the fourth century BCE and the second century CE signalled a growing interest in the post-classical history of the peninsula.<sup>78</sup> In comparison to the work done on the Hellenistic period, the classical Peloponnese has been studied less extensively from a regional perspective – perhaps due to the prominence of Sparta in this age.<sup>79</sup> The three classical case studies carried out in this thesis aim to fill that gap with respect to the question of democracy, and therefore evaluate the impact of popular rule on the political history of the Peloponnese from the late archaic period down to the Roman conquest.

## 1.5. Outline of the work

This thesis spans a total of almost four centuries. Its starting point is the late sixth century BCE, which was a key moment of political transformation in several parts of the Peloponnese. To this period can be dated both the earliest inscriptions from Olympia bearing the so-called *wratrai* (see §2.1) and, I argue, the synoikism of Mantinea (§3.1); meanwhile, at Argos, the sixth century saw

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<sup>75</sup> Teegarden 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Kralli 2017; Shipley 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Shipley 2018, xxiii.

<sup>78</sup> Grandjean 2008.

<sup>79</sup> An interesting exception is represented by the papers in Nino Luraghi and Peter Funke's volume on the decline of the Peloponnesian League in the early fourth century (Funke and Luraghi 2009), due not only to their geographical spread but also to their focus on ethnicity and the politics of identity.

an acceleration in the long process of creation of a permanent central district used as a space for public life (§4.1).

Each of the three *polis* case studies in Chapters 2–4 (Elis, Mantinea, Argos) opens with a section investigating the pre-democratic context in order to understand the environment in which democratic institutions would later emerge. It should be emphasised that these initial sections are not intended to be read teleologically, as though the pre-democratic context was somehow bound to result in democracy eventually; quite the opposite, I aim to reappraise the intrinsic strength and stability of the late archaic socio-institutional set-ups and consequently to reinterpret the emergence of democratic rule as a genuinely disruptive moment. It is to this process of transformation that the central section of each of the three chapters is devoted. In §2.2 I map the rise of the *polis* of Elis against the backdrop of the older political network centred on Olympia; in §3.2 I gauge the impact of the synoikism of Mantinea on the pattern of settlement and on political life; in §4.2 I propose a new interpretation of the link between the Battle of Sepeia fought between Sparta and Argos in c.494, its aftermath, and the Argive transition towards democracy. The final section of each chapter is focused on democracy ‘in action’, namely the question of how each of these three democracies navigated the complex and shifting network of international relations in the Peloponnese from the late fifth to the mid-fourth century, and how policy, democratic practice and various types of endogenous and exogenous tensions influenced one another. In §2.3 I argue that Elis’ constitution became more democratic in the early fourth century, but external pressures eventually caused the collapse of its democratic government; in §3.3 I follow Mantinea’s conduct as a member of the Arcadian League in the 360s, as well as its role in the break-up of the *koinon* towards the end of the decade; in §4.3 I analyse Argos’ domestic and foreign policy between the Peace of Nicias and the Battle of Chaeronea and argue that Argive democracy served not only as a way of organising collective action and policing elite behaviour, but also to facilitate and legitimise cooperation with other states against Sparta.

While these three case studies are centred on individual *poleis* in the classical period, Chapter 5 contains a further case study on a Hellenistic federal state, the Achaean League founded in 280 and disbanded by Rome in 146 following the destruction of Corinth. Due to the different timeframe and nature of the evidence as well as to the specific challenges raised by studying a federal polity, this chapter follows primarily a thematic structure, even though each subsection accounts for diachronic development. In §5.1 I analyse the key features of the Achaean federal constitution and the circumstances of its creation using ‘Rational Choice Institutionalism’ (a sub-type of New Institutionalism) as a theoretical framework, and argue that the democratic elements in the Achaean constitution were essential in ensuring the success of the *koinon*. §5.2 and §5.3

investigate how the Achaean federal institutions acted as vehicles for political action for, respectively, the *dēmos* and the elite: while the first of the two sections analyses the functioning and the evolution of the participatory practices of the *koinon*, with particular attention to the creation of the *synklētos* in c.217, the latter section explores how generals managed to pursue their policies within a democratic framework.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I propose a new explanation for the emergence and survival of democratic institutions in the cases studies in Chapters 2–5. Employing the theory of the ‘democratic advantage’, according to which democracies outperform non-democracies in international competition, I argue that the historical performance of the democracies examined here can be explained by interpreting their processes of democratisation as processes of rearrangement of the relations between internal sub-groups on a more egalitarian basis.



## 2. Elis (c.525–348)

This chapter aims to provide an analytical and narrative reconstruction of the development of democracy in the region of Eleia between the late sixth century and the middle of the fourth century BCE.<sup>80</sup> Its overarching goal is to understand to what extent the political institutions active in late archaic and classical Eleia enabled, facilitated or constrained popular rule, to reconstruct the evolution and transformation of those institutions over time, and ultimately to gauge the impact of democracy on the political history of the Eleian state in classical times.

In §2.1 I investigate the early phases of political activity in Eleia at a regional level. While most scholars have heavily relied on Pausanias' narrative of the early history of Olympia and the long conflict between Eleians and Pisatans, I build my argument largely on the basis of the epigraphical evidence in order to show that a regional network coalesced in the late archaic period around the participatory institutions based at the sanctuary of Olympia.

In §2.2 I address the problem of the traditions concerning the 'synoikism' of the city of Elis in 471. I contend that these traditions are connected to the emergence of a genuinely Eleian polity, based in the Peneios valley, and its gradual appropriation of the institutions operating at Olympia. The Eleian polity had a constitution at least partly characterised by democratic principles for those who enjoyed full citizenship; at the same time, however, the Eleians gradually took over Triphylia and relegated its population to the status of free non-citizen subjects, bound to Elis by military and financial duties.

In §2.3 I survey Elis' political history from the war with Sparta of c.400 to the aftermath of the second Battle of Mantinea in 362. The key problems addressed are the constitutional significance of the war of c.400 and the crisis of the 360s. I argue that it is possible to identify some fundamental policy differences between Elis' fourth-century pro-democracy and pro-oligarchy factions, and that Arcadian intrusiveness exacerbated factionalism and instability within the Eleian state.

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<sup>80</sup> In the ancient sources 'Elis' often indicates both the city and the surrounding region, but I shall use 'Eleia' to refer to the latter. The toponym Ἠλεία (*sc. χώρα*, cf. *Λακωνική* etc.) is first attested in Thuc. 2.25.3. Eleia was roughly divided into three parts, from north to south:

1. 'Hollow Elis' (*κοίλη Ἠλῆς*, also first attested in Thuc. 2.25.3) comprised roughly the valley of the river Peneios;
2. 'Pisa' and 'Pisatis' are often used by ancient and modern authors alike to refer to the region of Olympia centred on the Alpheios valley, and I shall use it here (unless otherwise indicated) strictly as a geographical descriptor, without implying that it was a political entity;
3. 'Triphylia' lay between the Alpheios and the Neda, which marked the border between Eleia and Messenia (note that the concept of 'Triphylia' did not yet exist in the fifth century: Nielsen 2002, 233–47).

On the geography of Eleia see: Roy 2004, 489–91; Nielsen 2004b, 540–41; Bourke 2018, 11–16.

## 2.1. Elis and Olympia

By the late archaic period Olympia was a sanctuary of paramount importance in the Peloponnese. Votive offerings from all over the Peloponnese have been found on the site. Once the Olympic Games began to attract larger crowds from the seventh century, the associated marketplace became a major trading hub, guaranteeing growing revenues to the nearby communities.<sup>81</sup>

Its religious prestige and economic importance inevitably transformed the sanctuary into a political player. Several inscriptions dating from c.525 onwards have been found at Olympia; these inscriptions bear laws typically characterised by the opening formula  $\acute{\alpha}$   $\text{\textit{φράτρα}}$  + the dative of the community the provision refers to or is imposed on (e.g. Minon 20, line 1:  $\acute{\alpha}$   $\text{\textit{φράτρα}}$   $\text{\textit{τοῖς}}$   $\text{\textit{φαλείοις}}$ , ‘the *wratra* concerning the Eleians’).<sup>82</sup> The term *wratra*, connected to the PIE root \**wer* (‘to speak’), conveys a sense of sacrality, unilaterality and permanence (cf. Sparta’s ‘Great Rhetra’).<sup>83</sup> Rather than identifying the subject of the political act, the Olympic *wratrai* focus on its object, as if the identity of the decision-maker were self-evident.<sup>84</sup> The *wratrai* indicate that there was a region upon which a certain political body, *through* Olympia’s institutions, could impose legislation. The question of the political power apparently wielded by the sanctuary has usually been addressed by scholars in terms of who ‘controlled’ the latter, namely who had exclusive access to the institutions that issued the Olympic *wratrai*. In this section, I shall reassess the ‘who’ in connection with the ‘how’ and the ‘what’. The identity of the ruling group will be explored alongside the institutional structure through which Olympia ‘ruled’ and the substance of its legislative output. Through this analysis, I aim to show that, in late archaic times, the sanctuary – rather than being a mere bone of contention or an instrument for top-down rule – played a key role in enabling and facilitating peer-polity interaction and the emergence of a region-wide polity.

Literary sources describe the early history of Olympia as a long-lasting struggle for the control of the sanctuary, and the games held there between the Eleians (based in Hollow Elis) and the ‘Pisatans’ of the Alpheios valley; this struggle ended by the early sixth century with the final

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<sup>81</sup> On the archaeology of the sanctuary of Olympia, see: Morgan 1990; 2003 *passim*.

<sup>82</sup> I shall refer to Sophie Minon’s (2007) edition of the inscriptions written in Eleian dialect: by ‘Minon 4’ I mean ‘Minon 2007, no. 4’ etc. Minon’s edition contains the concordances with the previous editions, most notably Wilhelm Dittenberger and Karl Purgold’s *Inscriben von Olympia*. Throughout this section I accept Minon’s datings, generally based on Jeffery’s (1990). On the concept of ‘sacred law’, see Parker 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Mello 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Nielsen (2002, 242) suggested interpreting *wratra* as effectively a synonym for *edoxe* (e.g.  $\acute{\alpha}$   $\text{\textit{φράτρα}}$   $\text{\textit{τοῖς}}$   $x$  =  $\acute{\epsilon}\delta\omicron\chi\epsilon$   $\text{\textit{τοῖς}}$   $x$ ) but this is a complete misunderstanding of the intrinsic unidirectionality of the term. Bourke’s (2018, 89) ‘agreement’ is wide of the mark for the same reason. It has been noted that the *wratrai*’s focus on the target of legislation (rather than on the legislator) complicates their use as evidence for the constitutional nature of the Olympic state: Simonton 2017, 14–15.

Eleian victory.<sup>85</sup> The traditions on Elis and Pisa have been subject to increasing scepticism in recent studies: it has been persuasively argued that these were elaborated as a deliberate identity-making project on the part of the Pisatan communities only from the fourth century onwards.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, the historicity of the basic framework whereby the Eleians enjoyed exclusive control of Olympia from c.570 onwards after wresting it away from some local competitors is still generally accepted.<sup>87</sup> However, the theory of an exclusively Eleian control of Olympia as early as c.570 relies both on accepting the literary traditions offered by later, problematic sources, and on retrojecting what we know about geopolitical power relations in classical Eleia. An alternative to this view was proposed by Kahrstedt in 1928, who argued that archaic Olympia was administered by an amphictyony headed by an ‘Olympic Council’; this council is attested with certainty from c.400 but, according to Kahrstedt, it had been founded much earlier.<sup>88</sup> In Kahrstedt’s reconstruction, which was recently revived by Siewert and his pupil Taita,<sup>89</sup> the Olympic Council was made up of councillors (*proxenoi*) representing local communities; only at a later time would the Eleians become effective hegemon in Olympia, through the replacement of the *proxenoi* with the Eleian-appointed *bellanodikai*.

These different views of the early history of Olympia offer different answers to the question of who lay behind the *wratrai*: while the traditional view holds that after c.570 the Eleians were in full control of Olympia and therefore the *wratrai* were *de facto* enacted by them, Kahrstedt’s theory implies wide and diverse representation in institutions where the Eleians were just one of many parties. Both interpretations work on the premise that the Eleians were acting like a state long before the synoikism of 471 (on which see §2.2). More recently, Bourke, who otherwise accepted the suggestions of Kahrstedt and his followers, has questioned the very meaning of the ethnonym ‘Eleians’: rejecting the traditional interpretation of the term as indicating the communities of the Peneios valley, he took it to refer to a large and loose group of communities of *both* the Peneios and the Alpheios valley (as opposed to the people of the mountainous parts of Eleia) that did not qualify as a state in archaic times.<sup>90</sup> It is however more economical to uphold the traditional view

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<sup>85</sup> See e.g. Paus. 5.10.2. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.28 is the earliest attestation of an early Pisatan control over the sanctuary (see also 3.2.31 for unnamed claimants opposing Eleian dominance).

<sup>86</sup> The argument was first made by Niese 1910 to little success, but see more recently: Nafissi 2003; Möller 2004; Giangiulio 2009; Bourke 2018, 53–68. On this modern near-consensus see Luraghi 2008, 79: ‘everyone now agrees [that a Pisatan state] never existed as an independent political entity before being created by the Arcadians in 365 BC’. Kōiv 2013 is a recent attempt to rekindle the traditional view of an ancient Pisatan control of Olympia, but see the effective counter-arguments advanced in Bourke 2018, 61–62.

<sup>87</sup> For instance, Roy acknowledges the literary nature of the Pisa stories but – for lack of credible alternatives – still accepts the broad terms of the traditional reconstruction: see e.g. Roy 2002; 2015a.

<sup>88</sup> Kahrstedt 1928.

<sup>89</sup> For a comprehensive bibliography see Taita 1999; but see e.g. the scepticism in Roy 2015a, 276.

<sup>90</sup> Bourke 2018, 28–52 (see also 89).

(shared by both Kahrstedt and his opponents) that the Eleians were indeed a political community, even if they resided in scattered settlements with ample local autonomy.<sup>91</sup> That the Eleians were only one of several political entities in sixth-century Eleia is shown by the *wratrai* themselves, which often record enactments imposed upon them alongside other communities (see e.g. Minon 10, c.500–475; see below): there is no cogent evidence in the epigraphical material of any use of ‘Eleians’ as an all-encompassing regional ethnonym.<sup>92</sup>

Judging from the epigraphical evidence, Olympic politics appear dominated by a handful of magistrates with extensive powers over the territory subject to the authority of the sanctuary. For instance, in Minon 14 (c.475; see below) the unlocated – but certainly Eleian – communities of the Anaitoi and Metapioi enter into a fifty-year friendship agreement which is to be enforced by Olympic magistrates such as the *proxenoi*, the *manteis* and the (unfortunately obscure) *hiaromaii*. Virgilio noted that Minon 14 shows Olympia actively involved in policing the region and adjudicating between local communities.<sup>93</sup> Mello even contended that the Olympic *wratrai* were generally issued by the *manteis* themselves, their (and Olympia’s) legitimacy deriving from conveying Zeus’ own *dictum*.<sup>94</sup> The mutual relations between these powerful magistrates appear to have been regulated by a complex system of checks and balances. In Minon 15 (c.475), some officials (*γραφέας ... καὶ τοὶ μαστροί*) overturn a sentence concerning an international arbitration previously issued by two other officials. Siewert conjectured that the two unqualified officials who issue the first sentence are the *hellanodikai*, the supreme Olympic judges who according to Pausanias (5.9.4) began to be appointed ‘among all Eleians’ in 580.<sup>95</sup> Another inscription (Minon 20, c.475–50) laying out the legal protections accorded to Patrias, a naturalised citizen appointed as secretary (*grophheus*), set a penalty not only for whoever should harm Patrias, but also for the supreme magistrates and the kings (*ὄρ μέγιστον τέλος ἔχοι καὶ τοὶ βασιλᾶες*) if they failed to punish the wrongdoer properly. In that case, the *damiorgia* and one of the *hellanodikai* would issue the sentence. But if they also failed to do so, they would be held accountable for that at the *mastraa* – which rather than as a procedure (cf. Athenian *enthynai*) should be read as the abstract name of the board of the *mastroi*, just as *damiorgia* is used here in lieu of *damiorgoi*.<sup>96</sup> It is unclear from the text whether the *mastraa* outranked the sole *damiorgia* or also the *hellanodikas*, but the comparison

<sup>91</sup> On the interplay between central and local institutions, see above and Osborne 1987, 124–28.

<sup>92</sup> *Contra* Bourke 2018, 111, there is no real reason to read the *symmachia* attested in Minon 5 as a Spartan-style hegemonic alliance: as far as we know, the term genuinely designated ‘allies’ of the Eleians at that time. Furthermore, Minon 10 – inscribed ca. 25 years after Minon 5 – shows the Eleians subjected to a *wratra*, and therefore still bound to Olympia’s political enactments.

<sup>93</sup> Virgilio 1972.

<sup>94</sup> Mello 2008, 64–66.

<sup>95</sup> Siewert 1981, 235; see also Bultrighini 1990, 157–59. On the Eleian *mastroi* see Fröhlich 2004, 190–92.

<sup>96</sup> See Minon 2007, 147.

with Minon 15 supports the latter reading. Complex mechanisms of mutual oversight, such as are familiar also from early Greek laws elsewhere, regulated the relations between Olympia's magistrates.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, Minon 15 and 20 are usually dated to the early fifth century and it is unclear whether the mechanisms of oversight described in them can be assumed to have existed in the late sixth century already.

Although not much can be said about magistrates, we do hear of large corporate bodies operating at Olympia in the sixth century. One of the earliest *wratrai* (Minon 4, c.525–500) bears the final part of a sacred law prescribing the punishment for a foreigner who has sexual intercourse within the sanctuary.<sup>98</sup> The condemnation was going to be void if the defendant was not judged in accordance with the 'written [law]' (πὰρ τὸ γράφος) prescribed above. In that case, the original verdict would be replaced by another sentence (φράτρα ἁ δαμοσία). In its final, troubled lines, the inscription lays out a further procedural option. The 'full' council of 500 (βωλὰ πεντακατίων ἀφλανέως) and the assembly (δᾶμος πλαθύων) would have to be involved in order for the *graphos* to be amended permanently, apparently up to three times.<sup>99</sup> Alongside other sixth-century *wratrai* (e.g. the sets of wrestling rules in Minon 5), Minon 4 showcases the process whereby the rites held in the sanctuary came to be regulated by more detailed and comprehensive legislation: the sacred laws began to require the active intervention of institutions of increasing complexity. In this case, a council and an assembly have the power to amend the *graphos*. This seems supported by a later inscription (Minon 13, c.475) ending with the statement that *something* cannot occur without the participation of the same two institutions (ἄνευ βωλὰν καὶ ζᾶμον πλαθύοντα). The existence of an assembly is not in itself proof of anything resembling a democratic constitution: the term *damos*, especially in archaic contexts, could simply designate the decision-making body, without reference to its composition or size.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, this body seems to have only been involved in certain exceptional circumstances and not in 'ordinary' law-making.<sup>101</sup> More emphasis should be put on the mention of a 500-strong council. Unfortunately, most details of its structure and remit are unknown. It may be conjectured that the council had agenda-setting powers according to the

<sup>97</sup> See the ample evidence collected in Fröhlich 2004.

<sup>98</sup> The verb βενέοι (line 1) is generally interpreted as the Eleian equivalent of Attic βινέω: Bain 1991, 58; Minon 2007, 2:541–43.

<sup>99</sup> ἀφλανέως is a *hapax* (Minon 2007, 1:36) and almost certainly means 'complete', 'in full'; see Hsch. α 2761 (ἀφλανέως· ὀλοσχερώς). The expression δῆμος πληθύων is only attested in a problematic Attic inscription (*IG* I<sup>3</sup> 105: see Robinson 1997, 108n157); but note Aesch. *Sipp.* 604.

<sup>100</sup> *RE* col. 2425; Bultrighini 1990, 182. See the mention of a δημοσὴ βουλή in the well-known sixth-century 'Constitution of Chios' (*ML* 8, fr. C lines 2–3; see Jeffery 1956): despite Robinson's (1997, 100) scepticism, it is quite certain that δημοσὴ meant 'official' or 'public' rather than 'popular' or 'democratic' (see: Ampolo 1983; Simonton 2017, 13–14).

<sup>101</sup> Minon 2007, 2:514–15.

principle of probouleusis, but there is no positive evidence of this; on the other hand, information about (for instance) eligibility requirements or term length is entirely unavailable. In this context, the large size of the council is potentially the most informative point and requires careful consideration.

Scholars have usually avoided identifying this *bola* of 500 with the Olympic Council. If one follows the traditional view that Olympia effectively belonged to Elis from c.570, one possible way out is to argue that the council of Minon 4 was itself the *boule* of the Eleians, based in Olympia before the synoikism, and that the Olympic Council was either something else or did not exist at all in archaic times.<sup>102</sup> Conversely, as seen above, Bourke adopted Kahrstedt's Olympic Council while on the other hand denying the existence of an archaic Eleian *polis*. He argued that the Olympic Council and the *bola* of 500 are mutually incompatible and cannot have operated at the same time or within the same institutional framework.<sup>103</sup> His first point is that the south hall of the *bouleuterion* at Olympia, where the Olympic Council supposedly met, was too small to accommodate 500 councillors. Yet Hansen and Fischer-Hansen have shown that the hall was indeed large enough for a council of 500, even assuming 100% attendance.<sup>104</sup> But the core of Bourke's argument is that the *bola* of 500 was a *democratic* council, based on the possible parallel with the Athenian *boule* and the fact that it functioned alongside an 'empowered popular assembly'. Conversely, the fact that in Minon 12 (c.500–475) Deukalion is explicitly granted the qualification of *misoproxenos* (= 'equal to a *proxenos*') alongside Chaladrian citizenship suggests that not all (new) citizens had the rights associated to proxeny status, and therefore the Olympic Council must have been an aristocratic institution.<sup>105</sup> Both statements require qualification. As we do not know how meaningful the additional honours bestowed upon the Olympic *proxenoi* were, it would be unwise to rely on this to call the Olympic Council 'aristocratic'.<sup>106</sup> Bourke himself acknowledged that the *damos* of Minon 12 could simply indicate the Chaladrian 'community' with no implications regarding franchise and membership requirements; the same could be true of the *damos* of Minon 4 and 13.<sup>107</sup>

There is ultimately no cogent reason to view the two councils as separate: the very size of the *bola* of Minon 4 suggests that it was the region's supreme council based at Olympia. However, the institutions associated with archaic Olympia should broadly speaking be analysed without

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<sup>102</sup> Minon 2007, 2:511; Robinson 2011, 29. For a sceptical reassessment of the question of the Olympic Council, see Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 86–89.

<sup>103</sup> Bourke 2018, 93–94.

<sup>104</sup> Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 89.

<sup>105</sup> Bourke 2018, 93.

<sup>106</sup> Bultrighini 1990, 185–86.

<sup>107</sup> Bourke 2018, 93.

resorting to the categories of democracy and oligarchy. Since O’Neil’s important 1981 article, the epigraphic attestations of a large council and an assembly have often been taken as evidence that Eleia was democratically governed long before the synoikism of 471.<sup>108</sup> But the existence of a large council is no proof of *dēmokratia*. The Boeotian League of the decades between the fifth and the fourth century, whose constitution is known mostly from the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, may offer a comparison. The region was divided into 11 *merē*, ‘districts’ (*Hell. Oxy.* 19.3), each of which sent 60 councillors to the common *synedria* of the Boeotians that met at Thebes (19.4).<sup>109</sup> A federal council made up of 660 *boulentai* may seem ‘absurdly large ... for a state as small as Boeotia’,<sup>110</sup> but it was compatible with an oligarchic constitution: membership of town councils was restricted to those above an unspecified wealth threshold (19.2: *τοῖς κεκτημένοις πλῆθός τι χρημάτων*) and it is plausible that the same requirement applied to the federal council. Furthermore, each *meros* was also expected to provide 1,000 hoplites and 100 knights to the federal army (19.4): the procedure whereby each contingent of *boulentai* was drawn from this pool is unknown, but the point remains that although the federal council was quite large in absolute terms, relatively few hoplite-status Boeotians (and even fewer free Boeotians at large) could expect ever to serve as federal *boulentai* unless we assume that each eligible Boeotian could only serve one term as member of the council.<sup>111</sup> The same reasoning could apply to the Olympia-based *bola* of 500. But if what we know about this council does not prove democracy, then what *does* it prove?

In 1973, Finley applied the concept of ‘face-to-face society’ – previously proposed by Laslett – to the political reality of democratic Athens.<sup>112</sup> He argued that widespread political expertise was made possible by every citizen’s immersion in a dense network of interactions with his peers; democratic politics effectively depended on the fact that everyone was in close contact, day in day out, with virtually everyone else. In an influential article published in the same year, Granovetter proposed a distinction between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ social ties, characterised by different degrees of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and exchange of services.<sup>113</sup> In its original form, Finley’s theory seems particularly applicable to strong-tie networks, but the sheer size of Athens’ citizen population makes it fundamentally untenable to apply the face-to-face model to it.<sup>114</sup> Strong-tie

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<sup>108</sup> O’Neil 1981, 339–40; Robinson 1997, 108–11; 2011, 28–29. More cautiously, Rhodes with Lewis (1997, 96n1) defined the constitution attested by the *wratrai* as a ‘constitutional government’, followed by Simonton (2017, 15).

<sup>109</sup> Passage numbers follow the *BNJ* edition.

<sup>110</sup> Larsen 1955, 37.

<sup>111</sup> At the battle of Delium in 424, the Boeotian army comprised 7,000 hoplites and 1,000 knights alongside more than 10,000 *psiloi* and 500 peltasts. More than half of this army did not have full political rights: Bonner 1910, 407.

<sup>112</sup> Laslett 1956; Finley 1973, 17–18. See also Maddox 1974.

<sup>113</sup> Granovetter 1973.

<sup>114</sup> Osborne 1985, 64–65; Ober 1989, 31–33. For instance, Maddox 1974 argued in favour of the applicability of the face-to-face model to Athenian politics, but only because his view of Athenian democracy relied on the ‘Iron Law of

networks appear in fact to have an upper numeric limit. Drawing attention to a recurring pattern across space and time, Robin Dunbar argued in 1993 that ‘interacting groups’ – such that each member maintains meaningful and constant social interactions with all other members – have a maximum size of around 150 members.<sup>115</sup> Above this figure, groups tend to break down into smaller clusters connected by Granovetter’s ‘weak ties’ acting as bridges. These ties perform a key function by facilitating the flow of knowledge and the organisation of collective action among previously unrelated sub-groups.<sup>116</sup> Josiah Ober has explored the implications of the interplay between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ ties in the workings of the post-Cleisthenic Athenian *boulē*: each year, the small strong-tie networks made up by the councillors from a given deme came in contact through the council with other similar networks and built weak ties with them; over time, this enabled a constant flow of social knowledge across a vast and geographically dispersed body of amateur politicians.<sup>117</sup>

It is tempting to extend Ober’s observations to Olympia’s *bola* of 500. The pattern of settlement in archaic Eleia, dotted with agrarian villages and isolated farmsteads, was geared towards the optimisation of agricultural exploitation.<sup>118</sup> In this environment the council, by providing a communal space for recurring interactions between groups coming from different parts of the region (the *proxenoi* from each community) facilitated the emergence and consolidation of integrated ‘weak ties’ between them, strengthening region-level cooperation over time. In this context, the question as to whether the *bola* of 500 was ‘democratic’ or ‘oligarchic’ loses salience: at a minimum 500 citizens convened regularly in Olympia and performed a codified role in the legislative process, but if the terms of office were short and the eligibility requirements low a high degree of popular participation in the council will have enabled the creation of stronger and deeper inter-community networks.<sup>119</sup>

Olympia was never a city and does not qualify as a *polis* according to the CPC’s criteria, but the sanctuary emerged over time as the political centre of the entire region. The Alpheios valley was quite thickly settled, and even the settlements in Hollow Elis were not out of reach: the

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Oligarchy’ whereby a small (strong-tie) network of politicians ran the state from the top. On the size of Athens’ population, variously estimated but always in the region of the tens of thousands, see: Hansen 2004, 627 with bibliography; Akrigg 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Dunbar 1993, building upon a previous study of nonhuman primate groups (Dunbar 1992). Consequently, Ober (1989, 31) has viewed demes as strong-tie networks, given that the average deme population was around 200 adult male citizens.

<sup>116</sup> Granovetter 1973, 1363–73; Ober 2008a, 134–42.

<sup>117</sup> Ober 2008a, 142–51.

<sup>118</sup> On the archaic pattern of settlement, see: Osborne 1987, 126–27; Bourke 2018, 30–34.

<sup>119</sup> It should be noted that the central institutions based in Olympia developed in a context of large local autonomy, in which single settlements were self-sufficient from the institutional as well as material standpoint; that was to be scarcely affected by the synoikism of 471: Osborne 1987, 124–28.



distance between Olympia and the Peneios valley is comparable to that between Athens and the deme of Anaphlystos.<sup>120</sup> In the absence of major urban centres Olympia, conveniently reachable via land and water and attracting large crowds since the seventh century, was well suited to serving as a congregation point.<sup>121</sup> The process through which Olympia came to serve as the political ‘capital’ of Eleia (in addition to being its religious and economic centre) is impossible to reconstruct; the nature of the epigraphical evidence, scarce and often only loosely dated, advises against looking for traces of internal evolution. One crucial point is that the council’s meeting place, the south hall of the *bouleutērion* in Olympia, was built in the late sixth century – exactly the period in which, judging from the dating of the earliest *wratrai*, an ‘epigraphic habit’ began to take hold in Eleia.<sup>122</sup> Regardless of who exactly initiated this building project, that it was at all undertaken suggests that this period was decisive for the process of regional integration.<sup>123</sup>

It is significant that the object of several *wratrai* is the regulation of relations between local communities. Minon 14 (c.475), cited above, certifies a friendship agreement between the unlocated Anaitoi and Metapioi in the form of a *wratra*. In Minon 10 (c.500–475) the Eleians make a 100-year alliance with the otherwise unknown community of the Ewaoioi.<sup>124</sup> In both inscriptions, the relations between two local communities are regulated by means of a *wratra*, and it is a matter of dispute whether we should interpret the term as simply indicating an ‘agreement’ or rather take it literally as Olympia’s unilateral ‘decision’ imposed on them.<sup>125</sup> A way forward is offered by the reappraisal of the political implications of the prestige and authority enjoyed region-wide by Olympia, which through its institutions started acting first as a guarantor for laws and treaties and later as an active adjudicator.<sup>126</sup> From this viewpoint, Olympia’s institutions enabled the development of a network of peer-polity interaction (PPI): the Eleian communities, by sharing the recognition of Olympia’s authority, recognised one another as ‘peers’.<sup>127</sup> Whether late archaic Eleia was ‘democratic’ is an ill-posed question. More interestingly, Eleia saw the emergence of a network

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<sup>120</sup> Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 89.

<sup>121</sup> In Pliny’s time, the Alpheios was navigable as far as six miles upstream (*NH* 4.6).

<sup>122</sup> McDonald 1943, 227–28.

<sup>123</sup> See the remarks in Walter 1993, 119–20.

<sup>124</sup> There used to be a quasi-consensus on the reading *Erwaoioi* and its association with the Arcadian *polis* of Heraia, but a more recent re-examination of the inscription has demonstrated the absence of *o*: see Roy and Schofield 1999. On linguistic grounds we can be sure that the city of the Ewaoioi (like those of the Anaitoi and Metapioi) were located somewhere in Eleia.

<sup>125</sup> See e.g. Bourke 2018, 93 *contra* Mello 2008.

<sup>126</sup> Morgan 2003, 80; Capreedy 2008, 490. The principles of fairness and honesty upon which the Games were (ostensibly) built could easily be translated into the political sphere: for instance, Pausanias (5.24.9–10) describes the oaths taken by the athletes in terms that could easily apply to jurors; see also Hdt. 2.160.

<sup>127</sup> On PPI see Ma 2003. See also Minon 2007, 2:434 (followed by Roy 2015b, 145–46): ‘le nom du dieu est invoqué comme garantie de la qualité des lois, des serments ou de la sanction que constitue le bannissement’.

of interactions built upon the acknowledgement of the binding nature of the legislation issued and/or validated by Olympia and the political institutions based there, whose large size (in the absence of better evidence) suggests that a significant share of the local population was involved. The point, in other words, is that Olympia operated as a facilitator of large-scale political action. Modern scholars' all too frequent focus on 'control' and the struggle for it rests on the assumption that the sanctuary was a passive bone of contention suitable to be 'controlled'; on the contrary, from the last decades of the sixth century Olympia was a policy-making and policing node that governed the region – or rather, *through which the region governed itself* by means of the *wratrai*.

In this context, the 'synoikism' of 471 was not, teleologically speaking, the endpoint of the process of regional integration: it was a seismic shift, a discontinuity that thoroughly reshaped the political network that had emerged in the previous decades. John Ma, focusing mostly on the examples of the Peloponnesian League and the Athenian Empire, noted that during the classical period PPI was temporarily disrupted by the emergence of hegemonic networks and the transformation of horizontal inter-polity relations into relations between a centre and a (subordinate) periphery.<sup>128</sup> Eleia would represent one further instance of this trend. The rise of a major polity in the Peneios valley, which would soon claim supremacy over Eleia, disrupted the pyramid-like PPI network centred on Olympia: it is only after 471 that 'control' of Olympia becomes a meaningful problem, because for the first time a local polity could actually establish control on the sanctuary while simultaneously operating independent institutions.

## 2.2. Transforming Eleia

As early as the late classical period, some authors viewed the city of Elis as the product of a synoikism. Ps.-Scylax's *Periplus* (43), written in the fourth century BCE, calls Elis a 'condominium of cities' (*συννοικία πόλεων*).<sup>129</sup> Probably in the same century, the historian Maiandrios or Leandros (*FGrH* 492 F13 *ap. Etym. Magn.* 426.8) argued that the toponym Ἐλις derived from the verb ἀλισθηῖναι, i.e. ἀθροισθηῖναι ('to come together'), and offered the synoikism story as one of the possible 'coming together' episodes to which this verb might refer.

However, these early sources offer no details as to the chronology or dynamics of the Eleian synoikism: only later authors provide some circumstantial information. Diodorus (11.54.1) reports that in 471/0 the Eleians – who had until then inhabited multiple small *poleis* – came together to form a new *polis*. Strabo (8.3.2) notes that in Homer's time the Eleians lived 'in villages' (*κωμηδόν*),

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<sup>128</sup> Ma 2003, 33–37.

<sup>129</sup> On the date of the *Periplus* see Shipley 2011, 6–8.

and therefore when the poet mentions ‘Elis’ or ‘the Eleians’ he is talking about the region, not the city. It was only later on, after the Persian Wars (ὀψέ ... μετὰ τὰ Περσικά), that the Eleians founded a city from many neighbouring local communities (ἐκ πολλῶν δήμων ... ἐκ τῶν περιουκίδων). Strabo relates this event to a broader trend in Peloponnesian politics, whereby places that Homer only construed as regions moved towards a more centralised pattern of settlement and political administration. Diodorus’ and Strabo’s accounts contrast quite sharply in chronological terms with Pausanias’ (5.4.3) statement that it was Oxylos, first Heraclid king of Elis, who persuaded the inhabitants of the surrounding villages to relocate into the city of Elis. Pausanias alone dates the synoikism back to an early, quasi-mythical age; he is also the only author to contend that Elis became ‘bigger and wealthier’ as a direct consequence of the synoikism.<sup>130</sup>

There are two problems with taking the traditions on the synoikism of Elis at face value. One is historiographical: we are not even sure that the various accounts refer to the same event. It has been argued that Diodorus and Strabo – who agree on the chronology – drew upon a common source, probably Ephorus.<sup>131</sup> But while Strabo’s Eleians lived in κῶμαι and δήμοι before the synoikism, Diodorus (like Ps.-Scylax) calls the pre-existing settlements πόλεις in their own right.<sup>132</sup> Pausanias’ terminology agrees with Strabo’s in that he calls the pre-471 settlements κῶμαι, but he presents the main city as itself pre-existing and not *founded* by the synoikism, but rather *enlarged* by it; most strikingly, he disagrees with both earlier authors on the chronology. Moggi argued that all three authors referred to the same episode but disagreed on its date, and Pausanias’ version reflected a later backdating.<sup>133</sup> More recently, Bourke maintained that Pausanias’ account had in fact nothing to do with the fifth-century synoikism, but referred to an unrelated mythical episode and is therefore of ‘no ... historical credibility’.<sup>134</sup> All we can reasonably say for certain is that, from the fourth century if not earlier, the city of Elis was commonly seen as an ‘amalgamation of cities’; but there was no agreement (nor, clearly, reliable sources) on when, how or why this amalgamation came into being.

The second problem is historical and concerns the very nature of the event under examination. What do we talk about when we talk about synoikism? How can a statement such as ‘in 471 the city of Elis was formed through synoikism’ be empirically tested or falsified? While

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<sup>130</sup> This is a recurring element in Pausanias’ accounts of synoikisms: see 7.25.6 (Keryneia), 8.27.1 (Argos and Megalopolis).

<sup>131</sup> Roy 2002, 251.

<sup>132</sup> Minon 2007, 2:483–84; but see Moggi 1976, 1:161. Also, while Strabo’s Eleians actively ‘came together’ (συνῆλθον), Diodorus’ use of the passive form (συνωκίσθησαν) seems to take agency away from them. Incidentally, Strabo’s wording closely resembles the terminology of Aristotle’s account of how *poleis* are created from *komai* (*Pol.* 1252<sup>b</sup>).

<sup>133</sup> Moggi 1976, 1:160; see also Bultrighini 1990, 179.

<sup>134</sup> Bourke 2018, 97.

admitting that we are not really sure what ‘synoikism’ meant in practice, Roy has nevertheless argued against the historicity of a fifth-century synoikism on archaeological grounds: burials with sub-Mycenaean and PG pottery prove that the area of Elis was settled as early as the eleventh century.<sup>135</sup> Bourke has however contended that the archaeological remains are insufficient to argue that there existed a pre-471 city in the area where Elis would later be founded.<sup>136</sup> Some have attempted a third way, i.e. that the pre-existing *polis* of Elis was simply enlarged in 471.<sup>137</sup> This may be correct, but it is not what Diodorus and Strabo say: their accounts clearly refer to the creation of a completely new city.

The importance of the whole question, it could be argued, lies in its impact. To what extent does the creation of a new city in the Peneios valley *matter* in the broader history of Eleia? In what follows, I move away from the terms in which the debate has usually been framed. Rather than look for the consequences of the synoikism, I look for the causes behind the creation and success of its tradition. Even if one disregards the synoikism story, the picture provided by the *other* extant evidence on internal and external politics in mid-fifth-century Eleia is one of radical change from one political system to another. In §2.1 I contended that late archaic Eleian politics were centred on Olympia, whose *wratrai* were issued by the institutions based there: the acknowledgement of the binding nature of Olympia’s *wratrai* was a region-wide shared value and ensured that Eleia effectively worked as a PPI network. As I noted at the end of the section, the creation of an alternative political community based in the Peneios valley entailed the breakdown of this network and the emergence of what has been effectively described as a ‘bicentral polity’, headed by both Elis and Olympia.<sup>138</sup> My contention is that the ultimate purpose of the synoikism traditions was to articulate this decades-long process of political realignment. Regardless of the exact meaning that we should attribute to ‘synoikism’ in this case, the ancient authors *interpreted* the emergence of a polity in Hollow Elis in the fifth century through this lens. Consequently, in this section I survey the evidence for the emergence of an Eleian polity in Elis during the fifth century and argue that this complex process was a key driver behind the success of the synoikism traditions. Because the nature of the Eleian synoikism *per se* is so difficult to pin down, my approach is focused on the multiple concurrent processes of political change in the region, which allows attention to be paid to why the synoikism mattered in the first place, or in other words how the rise of Elis as a *polis* reshaped the political set-up of the western Peloponnese.

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<sup>135</sup> Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999.

<sup>136</sup> Bourke 2018, 28–30.

<sup>137</sup> Minon 2007, 2:483–84; Nielsen 2007, 48.

<sup>138</sup> Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 86–89; Roy 2002, 257.

I start from Olympia. The most visible development here in the mid-fifth century is the construction of the new, imposing Doric temple of Zeus Olympios. Pausanias (5.10.4) provides a solid *terminus ante quem* for the construction: the Spartans and their *symmachia* dedicated a shield in the temple after their victory at Tanagra (c.458/7), which means that it had been completed by then.<sup>139</sup> The sheer size of the building project raises the question of who had the financial means and political motives to undertake it. Pausanias (5.10.2) states in clear terms that the Eleians built it and funded its construction with the spoils of their final victory against Pisa. Pausanias' own chronology for the alleged conflict would then imply a construction date in the first half of the sixth century; but some scholars have attempted to salvage this version by assuming that Pausanias in fact referred to Elis' conquest of Triphylia in the 460s, on which see below.<sup>140</sup> Kyrieleis, for instance, admitted that we do not know much about Peloponnesian politics in the early fifth century (and therefore the context in which the temple appeared) but he still accepted the fundamental terms of Pausanias' narrative, i.e. that the Eleians built the temple as a tangible manifestation of their growing political power.<sup>141</sup> This has much attraction because, if correct, it would exemplify the process through which the Eleians not only took over Olympia, but even monumentalised their takeover. Hansen and Fischer-Hansen have even suggested that the *bouleutērion* attested at Elis by Pausanias (6.23.7) was built in the years immediately after the synoikism: the simultaneous construction of a *bouleutērion* in the centre of the new northern polity and a majestic temple in the sanctuary would potentially mark quite well the post-471 emergence of what has been defined as the 'bicentral' polity headed by Elis as its political centre and Olympia as its religious heart.<sup>142</sup> However, in studies published over several years, András Patay-Horváth has offered persuasive objections to Pausanias' narrative.<sup>143</sup> Considering it nearly impossible for the Eleians to have amassed an amount of booty sufficient to fund the temple (which he estimated to have cost around 400 talents) by pillaging the tiny towns of Triphylia, he conjectures that the necessary capital came from the immense booty taken at Plataia in 479: in this case, the temple of Zeus was a Panhellenic endeavour intended to commemorate the Greek victory, rather than an Eleian project of regional scope.<sup>144</sup> Patay-Horváth's convincing counter-hypothesis shows that too

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<sup>139</sup> Pausanias' version is supported by surviving epigraphy: see OR 112 (the dedication offered by the Spartans after Tanagra).

<sup>140</sup> Maddoli and Saladino 2007, 228.

<sup>141</sup> Kyrieleis 1997, 23–24.

<sup>142</sup> Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 86–89; Bourke 2018, 101–2.

<sup>143</sup> See Patay-Horváth 2015 for a bibliography and for the general argument outlined here.

<sup>144</sup> Notably, whether one interprets the construction of the temple as a local or Panhellenic enterprise has a bearing on the reconstruction of its east pediment. For instance, while Kyrieleis thought that the central figure of the pediment was Pelops (see note 141), Patay-Horváth's (2015, 14–15) reconstruction replaced him with Achilles on the basis of his Panhellenic interpretation of the project.

much is unknown about the context in which the temple was built: the event of its construction does not say much in itself and should only be assessed alongside other available evidence.

The numismatic evidence offers a more promising way forward. A substantial corpus of silver staters from Eleia has been widely interpreted, at least since Charles Seltman's 1921 monograph, as a 'temple coinage' minted at Olympia and closely connected to the festivals and the economic activities associated with it.<sup>145</sup> Since Zeus obverses never seem to interlace with Hera reverses (and vice versa), Seltman made a case in favour of *two* separate mints operating at Olympia, respectively 'in the precincts' of the temples of Zeus and Hera.<sup>146</sup> Franck Wojan has recently questioned many of Seltman's assumptions, reinterpreting the silver staters as Elis' own 'monnayage civique' and doubting that they were in fact minted at Olympia.<sup>147</sup> Wojan's objections are sensible, and more could be added with respect to problems in Seltman's reconstruction that Wojan does not tackle. From its very beginning, for instance, this coinage explicitly connects the Eleians with the sanctuary. In the earliest group, the obverse shows an eagle (in some cases with a snake in its claws, later replaced by a hare) and the reverse usually bears the thunderbolt and the legend FA(AE)ION.<sup>148</sup> There are several variations, but the co-existence of Zeus-related symbolism – meant to evoke the sanctuary of Olympia – and proclamation of 'Eleianness' is virtually universal in the coins.<sup>149</sup>

The identification of Eleians and Olympia makes (intentionally) clear that the two constituted a single polity. Given this, the exact location of the mint(s) becomes of relatively little consequence. Chronology is a more pressing issue, because the emergence of this coinage represents the first example of an exclusively Eleian 'claim' on Olympia. B.V. Head argued that the coinage can only have appeared after an Eleian city emerged from the synoikism of 471.<sup>150</sup> Some years earlier, however, Ernest Babelon had noted that the eagle on the earliest pieces closely resembles that on the coins from Chalcis: if similarity implies contemporaneity, and Chalcis stopped minting coins after it was destroyed by the Athenians in 507/6, then the first Eleian coins must predate the synoikism by at least thirty years.<sup>151</sup> Babelon's suggestion was forcefully embraced by Seltman, who – given his belief that the coinage was primarily connected to Olympia – saw no

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<sup>145</sup> Seltman 1921, 1. For subsequent studies, see Wojan 2015, 152–53.

<sup>146</sup> Seltman 1921, 2–3.

<sup>147</sup> Wojan 2015. Wojan also notes that no traces of mints have yet been found at either Olympia or Elis (161).

<sup>148</sup> An eagle carrying a snake represented an omen of Zeus in *Il.* 12.209; see Kraay 1976, 104.

<sup>149</sup> There are even a few cases in which the obverse reads FA(AE)ION and the reverse OΛYNIΠHION: Seltman 1921, 2. On the antiquity of the cult of Zeus at Olympia (against the theory of Hera's primacy in archaic times based on Paus. 5.16.1), a strong case is made in Moustaka 2002.

<sup>150</sup> Head *Hist. Num.* 419.

<sup>151</sup> Babelon 1907, 1:899.

difficulty in dating it before the synoikism.<sup>152</sup> But later studies of the Chalcidean coinage have argued that, whether the Athenian conquest entailed a hiatus or not, coins were minted at Chalcis until at least 465.<sup>153</sup> Colin Kraay noted that it is in fact the later Chalcidean coins that appear most similar to the earliest Eleian staters: in other words, Babelon’s stylistic argument ends up supporting the lower date for the emergence of the latter.<sup>154</sup> The earliest coins connecting the Eleians with Zeus Olympios appeared during the very period in which the new temple was being built: it is reasonable to conclude that the two endeavours were part of a single plan of reorganisation in which, for the first time, Eleian participation in Olympia began to be articulated in terms of exclusive control.

The epigraphical evidence is telling. A comparison of two inscriptions dated a few decades apart might prove particularly informative. In a *wratra* from the first quarter of the fifth century mentioned in §2.1 (Minon 12), an individual named Deukalion receives citizenship of the otherwise unknown community of the Chaladrioi and a series of attached prerogatives among which features the right to own land ‘in Pisa’. It has been sensibly argued that if the unlocated *polis* of the Chaladrioi controlled Pisatan land, it was itself ‘non loin de Pisa’;<sup>155</sup> consequently, land-owning rights seems to have been dependent upon one’s recognition as a local citizen.<sup>156</sup> A later inscription, Minon 16 (c.475–50),<sup>157</sup> contains the grant of Eleian citizenship and *theorodokia* upon two men apparently hailing from Sparta and Euboea. The first striking detail about Minon 16 is that, in a break from the usual *wratra* structure, it is stated to have been directly enacted by the Eleians (οἱ φαλείου ... ἔθειαν). Even though the inscription was kept in the Altis and concerned ritual affairs, the Eleian community reclaimed political agency by reforming the language of law-making.<sup>158</sup> Minon 16 is one of only two inscriptions (alongside Minon 15, from the same period) to contain the statement that the object in question is an ἄγαλμα Διός, a ‘pleasing offering to Zeus’. This may have been a way for the Eleians to retain the legitimacy deriving from the ultimately sacred nature of Olympia’s legislative output – in the same years in which, again, the temple of Zeus was being built – even as they essentially upended the political system of the region and reclaimed

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<sup>152</sup> Seltman 1921, 1; 1955, 96.

<sup>153</sup> Chantraine 1958; Wallace 1962, 40n4; Kraay 1976, 90–91.

<sup>154</sup> Kraay 1976, 104.

<sup>155</sup> Minon 2007, 1:87.

<sup>156</sup> Others have contended that exactly because the land in question is specified to be ‘in Pisa’ the *polis* of the Chaladrioi was outside Pisatis: Roy 2015a, 280; Zunino 2018, 43.

<sup>157</sup> Also edited as OR 127, whose editors favour a slightly lower date (c.450).

<sup>158</sup> Minon 16 should also be compared with inscriptions such as 5 (c.525–500: the Eleians and the *sym(m)achia* are forbidden from doing something) and 10 (c.475, mentioned above): in both cases the Eleians are merely one of the populations subjected to Olympia’s *wratrai*, whereas here they appear to legislate in complete autonomy. For all the weakness of arguments from silence, the striking absence of comparanda for Minon 14 (the Anaitoi–Metapioi *wratra*) after c.475 could be explained by the decline in horizontal inter-state relations between ‘third parties’.

power for themselves. After all, the *ἄγαλμα* formula seems to have been short-lived, but it should also be noted that the latest clear example of a *wratra* (Minon 20) is dated to these years, too: the adjustment likely took several years. Additionally, in the troubled second half of Minon 16 one of the two naturalised Eleians seems to receive land-owning rights in Kikysion, which according to Strabo (8.3.31) was located in Pisatis. Unlike Minon 12, here land ownership in Pisatis is explicitly attached to citizenship of *Elis*, which certainly suggests Eleian ‘control’ in the area by this time.

While the evidence with regard to Olympia (and its neighbourhood) points to a gradual and multifaceted progression towards the acquisition and consolidation of exclusive control over its institutions, the coastal region of Triphylia seems to represent a more straightforward case of political, military and economic subjection. During the Persian invasion of 480, Eleian soldiers fortified the Isthmus alongside other Peloponnesian contingents after Thermopylae (Hdt. 8.72) and the following year, the Eleian hoplites arrived in Plataea too late for the battle (9.77.3).<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile, the 200-strong contingent dispatched by the town of Lepreon – the most important Triphylian *polis*, 60 aerial km southeast of Elis – proved more punctual (9.28.4) and earned its own spot on the Serpent Column, if only at the very bottom (*ML* 27, coil 11). This, and more generally Lepreon’s autonomous policy in this phase, is proof of political independence and demonstrates that Eleian rule did not stretch beyond the Alpheios in the early fifth century.

This changed at some point in the following decades, although the evidence is scarce and vague. Herodotus (4.148.4) lists six Minyan *poleis* in the western Peloponnese – including Lepreon – and says that in his own lifetime (*ἐπ’ ἐμέο*) most of these *poleis* were sacked and possibly conquered by the Eleians.<sup>160</sup> Thucydides (5.31.2) reports that as ‘some of the Arcadians’ were gaining the upper hand against the people of Lepreon in an undated border conflict (certainly earlier than 431), the latter offered half of their own land to the Eleians in exchange for their help. After the war, the Eleians annexed the land but rented it back to the Lepreatans in exchange for a one-talent recurring tribute to Zeus Olympios.<sup>161</sup> Thucydides’ claim that Lepreon voluntarily

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<sup>159</sup> The Eleian soldiers swiftly punished the generals responsible for the delay and earned a place on the Serpent Column (*ML* 27, coil 9), so we should be wary of reading too much into this; nonetheless, the episode may betray a fundamental Eleian reluctance to commit to long-range campaigns offering uncertain returns. Nielsen (2007, 53n200) suggests that, regardless of Eleian performance, ‘it would, presumably, have been impossible to erect a memorial at Olympia which did not pay homage to the owner of the sanctuary’.

<sup>160</sup> Herodotus says only that these towns were raided (*ἐπόρθησαν*), but some scholars argue that occupation ensued: Moggi 1976, 1:162; Roy 2002, 251–52 (who dates the conquest as early as the 470s). On Herodotus’ ‘own time’, see Pelling 2019, 214–31.

<sup>161</sup> The payment was plausibly annual: Gschnitzer 1958, 15.



bowed to Eleian rule implies that it was not part of the ‘most’ Triphylian cities that, conversely, Herodotus says to have been sacked.<sup>162</sup>

An additional (if more problematic) piece of evidence could be brought in to shed light on when and how Elis came to dominate Triphylia. Strabo (8.3.30) claims that Sparta and Elis were allied during the war that resulted in the ‘last’ defeat of the Messenians, while the Arcadians and the ‘descendants of Nestor’ (the inhabitants of Triphylian Pylos) sided with the Messenians. The chronology of this conflict has long been debated, because, as Roy noted, if the qualification of the defeat as ‘final’ suggests its identification with the *Third* Messenian War fought in the 460s, the mention of the Arcadians seems to point to the *second* of the three wars, dated to the seventh century.<sup>163</sup> But a survey of intra-Peloponnesian interstate relations in the 460s may show that postulating an Arcadian presence in the fifth-century conflict is in fact unproblematic and can help attain a more solid chronology. Herodotus’ list of five Spartan victories between 479 and 458 cites the battles of Tegea and Dipaia, in which Sparta defeated – respectively – a coalition of Argives and Tegeans, and one comprising all Arcadians save the Mantineans (Hdt. 9.35.2). The two battles are undated but must have taken place in the early 460s, and Forrest argued that the Argive conquest of Mycenae (in which Argos was helped by Tegea and Kleonai) belonged to the same political conjuncture as the battle of Tegea.<sup>164</sup> The Argive-Tegean alliance came to a sudden end; Argos was absent from the battlefield at Dipaia, where Tegea commanded a vast regional alliance which, however, Mantinea had chosen not to join. In Diodorus’ version (11.65.4), the earthquake that hit Sparta at some point in the 460s prevented it from helping Mycenae withstand the Argive-led attack; whether the causal link is factual or not, the chronological coincidence suggests that Tegea’s energetic – if ultimately unsuccessful – foreign policy aimed to make the most of Sparta’s precarious situation.<sup>165</sup> The absence of Mantinea from both battles (most notably the latter) may also point to a connection between Tegean activity and the ‘earthquake war’, given that in the same years Mantinea was active on Sparta’s side against the Messenians (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3). Furthermore, the fact that Mantinea did *not* fight against Elis may be connected with – and help explain – Elis’ willingness to accept Mantinean arbitration in the later decree on the pacification of Skillous (Minon 22, c.450–25; see below). As a consequence, Thucydides’ and Strabo’s accounts can be

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<sup>162</sup> Note that in c.403/2 the Eleians claimed that they legitimately possessed the towns of Triphylia as ‘prizes of war’ (ἐπιληΐδας: Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.23), although they would later claim to have lawfully purchased the territory of Epe(i)on (3.2.30).

<sup>163</sup> Roy 2002, 259. For the earlier date: Roller 2018, 449. For the later date: Moggi 1976, 1:162; Falkner 1999, 388n18.

<sup>164</sup> Forrest 1960, 229–31.

<sup>165</sup> Diodorus dates the Mycenae campaign to 468, but his date seems to depend entirely on the connection with the earthquake as an explanation for Sparta’s non-intervention, which may have been Ephorus’ (Diodorus’ likely source for these years) own interpretation: see Tomlinson 1972, 104–5 and p.103 below.

reconciled into a single narrative. In the mid-460s, while the Spartans were reeling from the earthquake and/or busy with the Messenians, an Arcadian coalition headed by Tegea ('some of the Arcadians', without Mantinea) attacked Lepreon, possibly with the aim of gaining territory in Triphylia.<sup>166</sup> Elis stepped in, won the war (despite the intervention of other Triphylian *poleis* such as Pylos) and effectively conquered Triphylia.

Even if Eleian expansion in Triphylia occurred during a period of Spartan weakness, Sparta's apparent readiness to accept it is easily understood as part of a wider strategy to devolve the policing of the northern Messenian border to a trustworthy ally, a particularly sensible policy in the aftermath of the war.<sup>167</sup> But the acquisition of Triphylia was also a turning point for Elis' own domestic policy and constitutional history. It has been argued that the Eleians had been conducting a hegemonic local foreign policy for decades already, on the basis of evidence such as Minon 10. But the interpretation of Minon 10 as certifying the Ewaoioi's subordination to the Eleians rests on the assumption that the treasury of Olympia was effectively Elis' own private treasury by c.500: once we discard this undue assumption, nothing in the *wratra* effectively suggests that the Ewaoioi submitted themselves to Elis; in fact, the military obligations seem symmetrical.<sup>168</sup> The terms are very different, for instance, from those recorded in Sparta's earliest extant treaty with a member of the Peloponnesian League, the community of the Erxadieis (OR 128, c.450), who were obliged to follow the Spartans in war and forbidden from founding new settlements, receiving military protection in return. It should be noted that only *military* cooperation falls explicitly under the purview of Minon 10: the *symmachia*, as far as we can tell, was still true to its literal meaning. As far as the epigraphical evidence is concerned, Minon 22 (c.450–25) offers an interesting insight into the evolution of Elis' political network. The inscription prescribed that the instigator of *stasis* in Skillous pay a fine to Zeus Olympios (lines 9–14), a clear sign of intervening in a city's domestic politics with a view to the preservation of civic order.<sup>169</sup> However, it should also be noted that the Eleians are never mentioned in the preserved part of the text and that – as remained usual throughout the period – the stone was found in Olympia. The only thing that can be gleaned with certainty from Minon 22 is that the internal politics of Skillous were Olympia's business to an unprecedented extent, but we should be wary of surmising that Elis was necessarily behind this, although this is certainly plausible at this point, considering Minon 16 and Skillous' geographical

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<sup>166</sup> There is abundant evidence of Arcadian interest in Triphylia throughout the classical period: Roy 1997, 290–91. Note also that at some point in the early 460s a politically active seer from the *polis* of Phigaleia (east of Lepreon, in the disputed territory) arrived in Tiryns, possibly as a consequence of exile: Hdt. 6.83.2.

<sup>167</sup> Falkner 1999, 388.

<sup>168</sup> Meiggs and Lewis (commentary *ad ML* 17) stress that Minon 10 contains no sign of subjugation.

<sup>169</sup> On the inscription see Taita 2012 with previous bibliography.

proximity to Pisatis.<sup>170</sup> The Thucydidean evidence on Lepreon is much more illuminating, for it unequivocally proves financial – in addition to military – obligations towards the Eleians.

Some provisional conclusions. In light of the evidence surveyed so far, political change in Eleia in the central decades of the fifth century seems to have followed two main trajectories. First, the Eleian community effectively appropriated the institutions based in the sanctuary of Olympia and began using them as a tool to exercise and legitimise political control over the surrounding communities. It is important to stress the high degree of continuity involved in this process: the magistracies remained the same, the decrees continued to be exhibited in Olympia, the sanctuary and its associated rites continued to provide a source of legitimacy – as shown, for example, by the coinage. However, the coinage itself and evidence such as Minon 16 show that, within this unchanged context, the Eleian community gradually attained an unprecedented degree of authority. Second, the evidence regarding Lepreon (and possibly Skillous) suggests the emergence of clear patterns of political dependency in Triphylia towards Elis in the same years. Both processes originated from the rise of an Eleian polity in the Pencios valley beyond the constraints imposed by the Olympia-centred PPI network. While the exact link between this development and the ‘synoikism’ alleged by the ancient tradition cannot be pinned down, particularly due to the uncertainty about the very meaning of ‘synoikism’ in this case, what is certain is that it was through that concept that this transformation was articulated in Elis’ local memory, from where it must have filtered down into multiple historians’ works. The question of what ‘the synoikism of Elis’ means is therefore ill-posed, not least due to the site of Elis being so poorly excavated; it is potentially more fruitful to think of ‘the synoikism of Elis’ as the articulation of a complex transition from the political network centred on Olympia to the supremacy of Elis as the region’s leading *polis*.

For the rest of the century, Eleian politics continued to be dominated by the same two agendas, the preservation of Olympia and Triphylia (respectively sources of political legitimacy and economic and military power) at all costs. The best example of this is offered by the events of 421–18 as reported by Thucydides. The Eleians fought on the Peloponnesian side from the beginning,<sup>171</sup> but the repeated invasions of far-away Attica during the Archidamian War put a strain on Elis’ relations with its *perioikoi* and the cost of warfare ultimately led Lepreon to stop paying the tribute (5.31.3).<sup>172</sup> In fact, Lepreon immediately appealed to Sparta to rule on the payment, but before the ruling was issued Elis plundered the Lepreatis. Sparta eventually ruled in favour of

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<sup>170</sup> Minon (2007, 1:160) identifies the state authorities with the Eleians, but only on literary grounds: the epigraphical evidence does not provide

<sup>171</sup> Thuc. 2.9.3; Paus. 5.4.7.

<sup>172</sup> All the following *loci* cited in-text are from Thucydides unless stated otherwise.

Lepreon and dispatched 1,000 hoplites there (5.31.4), apparently to protect it against Eleian reprisal, but Falkner suggested that Sparta's sudden interest in Lepreon was linked to the Athenian occupation of Pylos in 425 and Sparta's consequent need to tighten up its control of the Messenian border.<sup>173</sup> Shortly after this, in spring 421, Sparta's refusal to commit to the restoration of the territorial *status quo ante* of all of its allies after the ratification of the Peace of Nicias (5.31.5) drove the final wedge between itself and Elis. The Eleians refused to ratify the Peace (5.17.2, 5.22.1) and soon joined the new anti-Spartan coalition formed by Argos and Mantinea (5.31.5), which Athens would also join in summer 420 (5.46.5). In the same year, the Eleians were responsible for one of the moments of highest diplomatic tension in that phase. Since the Spartans had not yet settled the fine for garrisoning Lepreon during an Olympic truce, the Eleians banned them from the sanctuary until they would either pay up or give Lepreon back; the Spartans refused repeatedly and went home, while the coalition defended the sanctuary with an army (5.49.1–50.3). Meanwhile Lichas, a prominent Spartan diplomat, was beaten by the *rabdouchoi* for competing in the Games despite the ban (5.50.4).<sup>174</sup> As Roy noted, '[i]t is hard to avoid the conclusion that Thucydides intended his account of Elis' behaviour in 420 to be read as an exposure of Elean abuse of Elis' domination of Olympia'.<sup>175</sup> In summer 418 Elis asked the coalition to help it regain Lepreon, but the other allies opted for an attack on Tegea: 'infuriated' (*ὀργισθέντες*) for the lack of support, the Eleians went back home (5.62).<sup>176</sup>

What does Elis' conduct in 421–18 tell us about constitutional change? On several occasions the Eleians showed how important it was for them to 1) exploit their control of Olympia, as a judicial body and religious centre, to protect and further their interests 2) keep Triphylia exclusively under their own control. Elis' takeover of Olympia did not entail a change in the local institutions: what little we know points towards continuity – rather than replacing Olympia's institutions, those of Elis developed alongside the former. The only explicit evidence about Eleian institutions in this

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<sup>173</sup> Falkner 1999, 390–92; see Thuc. 4.3.2, 4.27.1. The figure of 1,000 hoplites is implied at 5.49.1. The Eleians' claim that Sparta garrisoned Lepreon during an Olympic truce (*ibid.*) suggests that the crisis unfolded in 424. According to Thucydides, Sparta also settled the *neodamōdeis* and the helots who had fought with Brasidas at Lepreon (5.34.1).

<sup>174</sup> Lichas was also involved in the peace talks with Argos in late 418 (5.76.3) and was still active in summer 411 (8.87.1).

<sup>175</sup> Roy 1998, 366.

<sup>176</sup> By the end of the century Elis had recovered Lepreon; how and when this happened are up for speculation. Falkner (1999, 393) conjectured that Elis retook Lepreon in c.409; according to Hornblower (2000, 222–23) the Spartans gave Lepreon back to the Eleians as early as c.417 in exchange for the lifting of the ban. Lepreon is called 'Eleian' in Ar. *Av.* 149, dated 414. On Elis' withdrawal in summer 418, it should also be noted that although in winter 418/7 the quadruple alliance was effectively disbanded – Argos withdrew first (5.78), followed by Mantinea (5.81.1) – Thucydides never explicitly says that Elis left it. This suggests that the Eleian army's withdrawal in the summer had actually been a mutiny without political legitimacy. In fact, Elis could never accept a permanent peace with Sparta because it would certainly mean renouncing its claim to the Triphylian *perioikis*, as suggested by the stress on *autonomia* in the Spartan treaties with Argos and Mantinea (5.79.1, 5.81.1).

phase comes from the treaty establishing the ‘quadruple alliance’ of summer 420: at Elis, the oath was to be administered (ἐξορκούντων) by the *demiourgoi* and the *thesmophylakes* and taken (ὀμνύντων) by the *demiourgoi*, the ‘magistrates’ (οἱ τὰ τέλη ἔχοντες) and the Six Hundred (5.47.9). Nothing is known about the *thesmophylakes* and the ‘magistrates’; the *demiourgoi* might be those attested in some inscriptions from Olympia,<sup>177</sup> but the term is extremely common and may as well indicate a different office based at Elis. More interestingly, Elis is said to have an oath-taking body of 600 members, certainly a council of some sort. It is often assumed that this body was a larger iteration of the 500-strong council attested a century earlier in Minon 5, perhaps due to territorial expansion.<sup>178</sup> But it is more likely that this was an entirely different council pertaining to the city of Elis, whereas the 500 remained operative in Olympia.<sup>179</sup> Again, postulating that Elis became the political capital and Olympia was relegated to religious oversight is a risky oversimplification: at least for the first decades the two centres operated alongside one another. This is well shown by the final provisions of the ‘quadruple alliance’ treaty of 420: the oath was to be taken at Elis, but the pillar with the inscription was to be erected in Olympia (5.47.10–11).

As with the earlier ‘council of 500’, the large size of the Six Hundred is not in itself evidence of democracy. Thucydides states that Mantinea approached Argos on the basis of a shared democratic constitution (5.29.1) and later Argos did the same with Athens (5.44.1); conversely, Megara and Boeotia refused to join the coalition because they felt happier with oligarchic Sparta than with democratic Argos (5.31.6). The constitution of Elis is never mentioned, and the issue of Lepreon appears to have been the only motive behind its defection (5.31.5). This may mean either that Elis was in fact not democratic, or that in Thucydides’ view the geopolitical motive explained Elis’ participation to the alliance better than constitutional affinity did. A council as large as 600 members certainly depended on a correspondingly large eligible citizen population with full political rights. One might even speculate that Elis, in its attempt to incorporate and appropriate the older and authoritative institutions based in Olympia, borrowed from the latter the basic principle of having large participatory institutions as a way to ensure region-wide political cooperation, although this time under exclusive Eleian control.<sup>180</sup> Yet this must be reconciled with

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<sup>177</sup> See e.g. Minon 13, line 3; Minon 20, line 6.

<sup>178</sup> See e.g. Robinson 2011, 30.

<sup>179</sup> From Pausanias (6.23.7) we know that Elis had its own *bouleuterion*, too, although its construction is undated, and some inscriptions from the Imperial period (e.g. *IvO* 478) mention the Olympic Council alongside Elis’ own *boulē*: see Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 86–89 (who suggest that the *bouleuterion* of Elis was built immediately after the synoikism, which is plausible but currently indemonstrable).

<sup>180</sup> According to Aristotle (*Pol.* 1306<sup>a</sup>12–16) Elis was once run by a council of 90 *gerontes* for life, which however was succeeded by a democratic constitution. Although it is possible that the council of 600 replaced the 90 after the ‘synoikism’, it is impossible to make a strong case on the basis of this passage alone. Robinson (2011, 32) suggested that the oligarchy of the 90 belonged not to the archaic period, but to the 360s (on which see below).

the fact that the free *perioikoi* in Triphylia and elsewhere were kept in a permanent state of subjection without political rights. In this respect, Elis was not unlike Sparta. But Sparta had a very small council of elders appointed for life, whereas the Eleian council seems to have been more similar to Athens'. Ultimately, the Eleians distributed power among themselves in a fairly democratic way; but used that power to consolidate and protect their control of the subject population.

### 2.3. Democracy and *stasis*

This final section investigates the development of Eleian democracy in the half-century following the end of the Peloponnesian War. Through a study of the key turning points of the period, I analyse the impact of democracy on the domestic and foreign policy pursued by democratic Elis. I also attempt to offer an explanation for the apparent increase in political instability at Elis after the end of the fifth century.

Our starting point is the war fought between Sparta and Elis most likely between 403/2 and c.400.<sup>181</sup> Shortly after the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans demanded that the Eleians grant autonomy to all their subject cities.<sup>182</sup> The Eleians' predictable refusal triggered a war at the end of which they had to surrender virtually their entire *perioikis*, destroy the forts of Phea and Kyllene, and possibly even surrender their entire fleet; they were however allowed to retain control of Olympia (and Pisatis, plausibly) because of the alleged inadequacy of the other unnamed claimants.<sup>183</sup> The war of c.400 is particularly interesting for the history of Eleian democracy because of the prominent collateral role played by some internal factions in its unfolding. There was apparently an oligarchic party at Elis, led by the wealthy pro-Spartan Xenias. Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.2.27–29) says that when Agis arrived outside the unfortified city, Xenias' faction (*οἱ περὶ Ξενίαν*) began to slaughter their opponents to seize power and hand Elis over to the Spartans. Thinking they had managed to kill Thrasydaios, 'leader of the democrats' (*τῷ τοῦ δήμου προστάτῃ*), the coupists paraded in the *agora* in arms, but Thrasydaios – in fact still very much alive – rallied the

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<sup>181</sup> Sources on the war: Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.21–31; Diod. 14.17.4–12, 14.34.1; Paus. 3.8.3–6, 5.4.8. The date of the war is disputed: Tuplin (1993, 201–5) summarises the evidence and argues persuasively in favour of a 'high' date, between 403 and 400.

<sup>182</sup> According to Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.2.21–22) the Spartans were seeking revenge for the Eleian behaviour of the past two decades, but Diodorus (14.17.6) – probably drawing from Ephorus – argued that Sparta was simply looking for pretexts (*προφάσεις*) to attack Elis. In fact, Falkner (1996) suggested that the key motive behind Sparta's aggression was an intent to consolidate its control of the western Peloponnesian seaboard. For the possibility that Sparta's primary goal was the alteration of Elis' constitution, see below. It has been supposed that, after the war, Sparta divided Elis' *perioikis* into several smaller 'vassal' leagues, potentially easier to control: Siewert 1987–1988.

<sup>183</sup> On the discrepancies in the tradition as to the terms of the peace see Roy 1997, 299–304.

democrats and won the ensuing urban battle; Xenias' *philoí* fled from the city and joined the Spartans, who temporarily withdrew. Eventually the Eleians sued for peace and agreed to grant independence to a series of perioikic communities, but were allowed to remain in charge of Olympia (3.2.30–31).

Bourke has recently argued that the Spartans did indeed establish an oligarchy at Elis in c.400 as part of the peace settlement.<sup>184</sup> The core of the argument is that the Spartans started the war having resolved to 'bring [the Eleians] back to their senses' (*σωφρονίσαι αὐτούς*), which Bourke, following an observation first made by Cartledge, takes to have strong oligarchic undertones: since the Spartans won the war, it is likely that they followed up on their original intent.<sup>185</sup> There are at least two major problems with this theory that have not yet received sufficient attention. The first problem is that *sōphronisai* is Xenophon's own word and his unabashedly pro-Spartan slant should be taken into consideration. The second is that there is really no cogent reason to interpret *sōphronisai* as bearing an oligarchic connotation *in this specific context*. It is in fact more plausible that the Spartans primarily wanted the Eleians to give up their claims on the *perioikis* – framed, by contrast, as foolish – and accept the same peace conditions that had been imposed on Argos and (more explicitly) Mantinea in late 418, namely the renunciation of all sovereignty over subject towns.<sup>186</sup> In fact, there is no record in Thucydides of the Eleians and the Spartans making any sort of deal after the collapse of the 'quadruple alliance' in 418, which suggests that the question of the Eleian *perioikis* must have remained unsettled. In Xenophon the Spartans, immediately after resolving to *sōphronisai* the Eleians, demand the liberation of the subject towns; it is only after Elis' refusal that war ensues. It is therefore more economical to imagine that the Spartans simply wanted to have the Eleians dismantle their own local hegemonic network and have them accept Spartan supremacy, than that they were actively demanding constitutional change.

Other scholars have argued independently that the defeat of c.400 should not be associated with constitutional change. Bultrighini noted that the Eleian constitution was famously stable and moderate and therefore presented no threat to Sparta; Ruggeri argued that Sparta would have refrained from imposing constitutional change in light of the backlash and instability that similar measures had generated when imposed elsewhere.<sup>187</sup> All things considered, we have no good reason to assume oligarchy at Elis after 401/0. In fact, the defeat of the pro-oligarchy faction and

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<sup>184</sup> Bourke 2018, 152 and 163–65.

<sup>185</sup> Cartledge 1987, 250–51; Bourke 2018, 152.

<sup>186</sup> Thuc. 5.79.1, 5.81.1.

<sup>187</sup> Bultrighini 1990, 246–53; Ruggeri 2004, 27–28. Ruggeri mentions the Thirty in Athens, but Argos' democratic counterrevolution of 417 (Thuc. 5.82.2; Diod. 12.80.3) is also a case in point. While Ruggeri and Bultrighini agree on the lack of an oligarchic coup in 401/0, they disagree on the question of Sparta's initial intent to facilitate one.

the consequent increase in influence enjoyed by the democrats may have effectively pushed Elis towards a more radical form of popular government. As seen in §2.2, the democratic element in the fifth-century Eleian constitution was balanced out by the fact that, after Elis subjugated Triphylia in the middle of the century, the Triphylians were kept in a state of military and political subordination. The peace of *c.*400, which deprived Elis of those subjects, forcibly spelled the end of the perioikic model introduced some decades earlier and consequently of a major system of political discrimination within the Eleian state.

There is evidence of transformations in Elis' control of Olympia roughly in the same years. According to Pausanias (5.9.4–6) in 580 two *bellanodikai* began to be appointed by lot 'among all Eleians'; in 400<sup>188</sup> the number increased to nine, divided into three committees (2→9),<sup>189</sup> and two Olympiads later (392) a tenth *bellanodikas* was added for unspecified reasons (9→10). Pausanias goes on to say that a later reform (368) would connect the *bellanodikai* board to the Eleian tribal system, namely there would be one *bellanodikas* for each of the twelve tribes (10→12). Pausanias also says that when, in 364, the Eleians lost part of their territory in a war against the Arcadians, the number of Eleian tribes (and associated *bellanodikai*) went down to 8 (12→8); a final reform (348) brought the board to 10 members (8→10), which was the system still in place in Pausanias' own time.<sup>190</sup> Most likely, the first item of Pausanias' list should not be taken at face value: the basic sense is that a long-established dyarchy was first replaced, probably shortly before the Games of 400 (and therefore immediately after the peace with Sparta), by a more complex system through two reforms enacted in rapid succession. But what do these reforms tell us about the development of Elis' fourth-century democracy?

The policy pursued by the Eleian democratic government of 400–365 should be investigated backwards, from the end. Pausanias says that the Eleians moved from ten to twelve *bellanodikai* (one per tribe) in 368 but reverted to eight *bellanodikai* in 364 because of the loss of four tribes' worth of territory in a war against Arcadia. This fits nicely with the other evidence on Elis' foreign policy in the 360s. In the wake of the Spartan defeat at Leuctra in summer 371, there was a peace conference in Athens in which the Eleians claimed that the cities of the Marganians, Triphylians, and Skillountians rightfully belonged to them.<sup>191</sup> Tuplin argued that the Eleians mentioned only

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<sup>188</sup> It should be noted that Pausanias relays the date when the reform entered into force, and that should therefore be taken as a *terminus ante quem*: if for instance 10→12 is dated to the Games of 368, it was enacted between (autumn?) 372 and (spring?) 368.

<sup>189</sup> Throughout this section I shall use these numeric abbreviations to refer to the reform in question: for instance, 10→12 is the reform of 368 (on which see below).

<sup>190</sup> The local historian Aristodemos of Elis, who probably lived between the second and the first century BCE (Ruggeri 2004, 49), also attests that in his own time the *bellanodikai* numbered ten: *FGrH* 414 F 2a/b *ap.* Harpocrat. s.v. Ἐλλανοδίκαί.

<sup>191</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.2.



these cities because they had already retaken the other former *perioikoi* (e.g. the Letrinians and Amphidolians) in the months between Leuctra and the peace talks;<sup>192</sup> furthermore, Ruggeri demonstrated that the Eleians managed to reconquer all of their former subjects, except for Lepreon and the Triphylians, between late 371 and summer 369.<sup>193</sup> This wave of expansion coincides chronologically with 10→12, enacted by spring 368 at the latest. Shortly afterwards, however, war between Elis and Arcadia broke out and the Arcadians occupied most of the Eleian *perioikis* and Olympia, celebrating the Games of 364 there with the Pisatans.<sup>194</sup> 12→8 took place by this year, and in 365 the Eleian democracy was overthrown by a pro-Spartan oligarchic faction (see below).<sup>195</sup>

To explain the various reforms reported by Pausanias and their connection with the concurrent developments in Elis' constitution, Ruggeri has proposed an elaborate reconstruction.<sup>196</sup>

- 1) 10→12 (368) proves that the former *perioikoi* retaken by Elis between 371 and 369 were immediately integrated into the Eleian state as full citizens (as they were now members of tribes and therefore allowed to take part in the elections of *bellanodikai*).
- 2) Consequently, the fact that the subsequent loss of Pisatis *and* the *perioikis* in 365 caused a reduction of *four* tribes (12→8) suggests that the Pisatans had been enfranchised at some point between the peace of c.400, when Sparta had left Elis in control of Pisatis, and 368.
- 3) Both enfranchisement reforms – that of the Pisatans (c.400 or later) and that of the former *perioikoi* (369/8) – were aimed at strengthening Elis' control of the territories and populations in question.
- 4) On the basis of Pausanias' wording, a link between *bellanodikai* and tribes (one each) is only implied in the reforms of 368 and 364. There is no explicit link in the reforms either before or after the 360s, and in fact Ruggeri conjectures that when in 363/2 the Eleians and the Arcadians made peace, the recovery of Pisatis caused the (unattested) immediate

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<sup>192</sup> Tuplin 1993, 183–84; Ruggeri 2004, 37–38.

<sup>193</sup> Ruggeri 2004, 36–42. Triphylia was still independent in 369, when the Eleians asked the Arcadians for support in retaking it; but the Arcadians rather became closer to the Triphylians and ultimately made an alliance with them (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.26). Ruggeri dates the alliance as early as 369, but the safest *terminus ante quem* for Triphylia's accession to the *koionon* is 367, when the Arcadians sent a Triphylian citizen as their representative on a mission to Susa (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.33; Paus. 6.3.9; see Ruggeri 2004, 43–44). Triphylia was strategically important for Arcadia in that it provided access to the sea from the Arcadian uplands: [Scyl.] 44.

<sup>194</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.12–32.

<sup>195</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.15–16.

<sup>196</sup> Ruggeri 2004, 35–53.

restoration of the associated tribes even though the number of *hellanodikai* would remain unchanged until 8→10 (348).

Ruggeri's argument that the former *perioikoi* recovered after Leuctra were given full citizenship is convincing and needs no further discussion, despite Roy's concerns.<sup>197</sup> However, her discussion of 12→8 fails to reckon with one fundamental problem: why would, and how could, the Eleians reform the *hellanodikai* board in 365/4, when they did not control Olympia? Pace Pausanias' focus on the history of the board in the passage at hand, the key change implied by the reform was the reduction of the *tribes* from 12 to 8; if in those years each tribe appointed one *hellanodikas*, the board reform was simply a consequence of the tribal reform. And yet it is puzzling that, in the midst of a severe crisis and while continuing to claim rightful possession of Olympia,<sup>198</sup> the Eleians concurrently changed their own constitution to reflect the loss of Pisatis. The best solution is to reject Pausanias' apparent claim that the Eleian tribes were territorial units. What Pausanias (5.9.6) actually says is that the Eleians lost the *demes* located in the area annexed by the Arcadians and therefore reduced their *tribes* from 12 to 8. The assumption that demes and tribes are closely connected derives from an Athenocentric bias, for in Athens every citizen inherited both tribe and deme membership from his father; but in fifth-century Miletus, for instance, apparently only tribe membership was hereditary, whereas deme membership (not compulsory, unlike in Athens) was probably determined by domicile.<sup>199</sup> Does this apply to Elis? Nothing is known about Eleian demes, but Pausanias' statement – provided that it is terminologically accurate – suggests that they were geographical subdivisions; conversely, the provision in Minon 16 that the two new citizens join whatever *phylē* they desired (regardless of where exactly in the Eleian territory they resided) seems to go in the opposite direction.<sup>200</sup>

It seems therefore that the loss of some demes in the war of 365 did not *in itself* cause the abolition of four tribes. To explain why then the reduction came about it is necessary to understand what tribes did. In the absence of more specific information, it is tempting to include Elis in Ruzé's sweeping observation that 'les tribus servaient généralement de cadre aux institutions délibératives et au recrutement des magistrats': it was through tribe membership that Eleian citizens exercised their political rights, as indeed suggested by the fact that each tribe appointed one *hellanodikas*. If the abolition of four tribes therefore entailed the permanent disenfranchisement of the residents of the occupied zones (who had been members of those tribes), it is more persuasive to associate

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<sup>197</sup> Roy 2002, 297–98.

<sup>198</sup> As shown, *inter alia*, by the fact that they would later label the Games of 364 an illegitimate 'Anolympiad': Diod. 15.78.3; Paus. 6.22.3.

<sup>199</sup> Piérart 1983, 14.

<sup>200</sup> As Roussel (1976, 227 and 295) notes, tribes were not territorial entities.

it with the oligarchic coup that took place at Elis in the same year (365). The pro-Spartan oligarchs restricted institutional access to the people of Hollow Elis – alongside, we might speculate, the introduction of wealth requirements – and this is proved by the fact that even after the Eleians recovered Pisatis in 363/2, the reform of 364 was not immediately reversed: the Pisatans remained excluded from tribe-based institutions despite being back under Eleian control.<sup>201</sup>

Consequently, if 12→8 was a distinctly oligarchic move, the reforms of the previous decades – the enlargement of the *bellanodikai* board, the creation of new tribes both in (probably) c.400 and (certainly) c.370 as a way to broaden access to political institutions – can be reinterpreted as genuinely democratic ones. Their aim was not simply to consolidate Eleian control but to restructure access to that control on a more equal basis. The overarching principle of this policy is the substantial rejection of the perioikic model with the hierarchical, Spartan-style organisation of the body politic it entailed. A key point here is that the only non-Eleian territory still under control immediately after c.400 was Pisatis, and other former perioikic territories would only be recovered from 371 onwards: that the Pisatans were enfranchised in c.400 is less certain, but even if that were not to be true the point remains proven by the subsequent, more solidly demonstrable enfranchisement of the *perioikoi* of c.370. Lastly, the fact that the perioikic model fell out of use after c.400 corroborates the impression suggested above that the Eleian constitution became more democratic after Xenias' faction was expelled in c.400, until the oligarchy established in 365 undid the democratic reforms.

But if Elis had been severely defeated by Sparta in c.400 and dragged back into the Peloponnesian League, how could it preserve (or even strengthen) its democratic constitution? The answer is provided by its foreign policy. Xenophon records two separate instances of loyal military collaboration by Elis on Sparta's side in the thirty-odd years between the peace of c.400 and Leuctra: at Nemea in 394 (*Hell.* 4.2.16) and twenty years later (374/3),<sup>202</sup> when Elis provided ships to a fleet put together by Sparta (6.2.3).<sup>203</sup> Elis' forced loyalty gave Sparta no reason to intervene in its internal matters; this came to an abrupt end with the Battle of Leuctra, which was the biggest watershed in fourth-century Eleian foreign policy not only because Elis immediately turned hostile against Sparta, but also because the fledgling Arcadian League suddenly began to act as a counterweight to Sparta in influencing Eleian politics from the outside. Relations between

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<sup>201</sup> Ruggeri (2004, 49) surmises that when in 363/2 the Eleians and Arcadians made peace, the *bellanodikai* remained eight but the tribal system was reformed according to the recovery of previously lost territory, thereby breaking the 'one *bellanodikas* per tribe' rule; but this is pure speculation.

<sup>202</sup> Xenophon says this happened 'immediately' (*εὐθὺς*) after the Peace of 375, but hostilities actually resumed in 373 (Cawkwell 1963, 84–88), so the fleet was probably put together in 374/3.

<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, the Eleians are explicitly mentioned as members of the Peloponnesian League in 377/6, in the context of Sparta's reorganisation plan (Diod. 15.31.2).

Elis and Arcadia broke down in early 365, when a minor skirmish for the control of Lasion in Akroreia escalated into a vast conflict: the Arcadians occupied Olympia and most of Akroreia, and even (unsuccessfully) attacked the city of Elis.<sup>204</sup>

This state of emergency caused the explosion at Elis of a long-simmering *stasis*. According to Xenophon (*Hell.* 7.4.15) two opposite factions at Elis were respectively advocating for democracy and oligarchy. Robinson believes that while ‘a strict reading would seem to require something other than either *demokratia* or *oligarchia* ... such a reading is probably oversubtle’.<sup>205</sup> However, judging from Xenophon’s phrasing and from subsequent events, it is indeed likely that neither faction in 7.4.15 was in power and Eleian democracy was then dominated by a third faction, whose agenda can be gleaned in hindsight from those of its two competitors. In 365 the Eleian democrats, banking on support from the nearby Arcadian army, seized the acropolis; an urban battle ensued, the oligarchs got the better hand and exiled 400 democrats, taking full power in town (7.4.16). The oligarchic coup entailed not only the tribal reform seen above, but also an abrupt foreign-policy realignment: while many Eleian democrats joined the Arcadians and their allies, the oligarchs secured Achaian and Spartan support.<sup>206</sup>

It is important to notice that it had long been clear to the Eleians that neither the Arcadians nor the Spartans were willing to countenance Elis’ recovery of its former perioikic subjects. The Arcadian League had effectively refused to help Elis recover Triphylia in *c.*369 (7.1.26) and by 367 at the latest had incorporated Lepreon in its own sphere of influence; Akroreia had long been contended and in the war of 365 the Arcadians occupied almost all of it.<sup>207</sup> As to Sparta, one only needs to remember the peace of *c.*400.<sup>208</sup> It seems therefore that both the pro-Spartan oligarchs and the pro-Arcadian democrats were prepared to renounce Elis’ claim to these territories in exchange for support in their bid for power. We might suppose that, by contrast, the faction that controlled Eleian politics before 365 had the preservation of Elis’ regional hegemony and territorial integrity as its utmost priority. This localistic agenda underpinned Elis’ opportunistic loyalty to Sparta in *c.*400–371, upheld only as a way to preserve a degree of internal independence: it is telling that Elis detached itself from Sparta immediately after Leuctra – as soon as the Spartans stopped being perceived as a threat – and joined the Arcadians hoping for help in retaking the former *perioikis*. From this point of view, while Elis’ internal policy was profoundly transformed

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<sup>204</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.12–14; Diod. 15.77.1–4. For the date see Stylianou 1998, 452.

<sup>205</sup> Robinson 2011, 31

<sup>206</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.15–17, 19–25, 28–32.

<sup>207</sup> On the Arcadian conquest of Akroreia see Ruggeri 2004, 149–50. On Lepreon see note 193 above.

<sup>208</sup> Note also that Elis’ former subjects were allied to Sparta in their own right in 394: Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.16. In this respect, the main difference between Arcadia and Sparta seems to have been the question of Olympia and Pisatis, for Sparta – unlike the Arcadians – was apparently happy to leave Elis in control of the sanctuary.

by the events of c.400, its foreign policy in c.400–365 shows surprising signs of continuity with the fifth century, when – as seen in §2.2 – the protection and consolidation of Eleian control over Olympia and Triphylia seemed Elis’ only concern. But when Arcadia began to influence Eleian politics from the outside, things changed dramatically.

The crisis of the 360s ended somewhat anti-climactically. In c.363 the Arcadians, likely under the influence of pro-Spartan elements, resolved to hand Olympia back to the Eleians and make peace with them (Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.35–36).<sup>209</sup> We do not hear directly about the fate of the exiled democrats, but a decree generally dated to the middle of the century (Minon 30) reports a readmission of exiles and a general act of reconciliation. The last *bellanodikai* reform mentioned by Pausanias (8→10, 348) could possibly be associated with this reconciliation, but not much can be said about the constitutional significance of either act.<sup>210</sup>

Fourth-century Eleian politics appear far more polarised and unstable than they were in the previous century. Part of this may be due to the different nature of the sources, for Xenophon and Diodorus’ narratives allow us to keep track of constitutional change in the decades after the Peloponnesian War in a much more granular way than the fifth-century epigraphical evidence ever could. And yet the latter indeed suggests that the most momentous discontinuity in that century – the Eleian takeover of Olympia – took place organically and without replacing pre-existing institutions, so it is not too far-fetched to believe that the central decades of the fifth century saw much less infighting than the decades after 404. Elaborating on the causes of the high degree of instability in fourth-century Elis, Robinson pointed at ‘external pressures’ and the growing role of ‘internal factions’.<sup>211</sup> While true, this misses the key point that the rise of Eleian factionalism and instability seems to have been closely *connected* with the increasing presence of external actors. Down to the Peloponnesian War, Elis had uneasily emerged as a local power while operating within a hegemonic network controlled by Sparta. Both in 421–17 and during the 360s, the emergence of alternatives to Sparta in the Peloponnese pulled Elis away from the Spartan-dominated *status quo* and into a fight to preserve its local authority. The glaring difference between the two otherwise similar episodes is that while the ‘quadruple alliance’ of 421–17 did not actively spread democracy, and Elis remained a member only as long as it seemed the best way to preserve its own geopolitical interests, in the 360s the Arcadian League actively cooperated with the Eleian

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<sup>209</sup> In 362, an Eleian contingent would fight on the Spartan side at Mantinea: Diod. 15.84.4.

<sup>210</sup> If tribes also increased from 8 to 10 one might speculate that there was some partial re-enfranchisement, but unlike the previous two reforms, in this case Pausanias makes no clear link between *bellanodikai* and tribes (Ruggeri 2004, 48). However, at least in Aristodemos of Elis’ time (second to first century BCE, see note 190), the Eleians did appoint one *bellanodikas* for each of their 10 tribes.

<sup>211</sup> Robinson 2011, 33.

democratic faction. As to the oligarchs, they had had Sparta's support at least since the war of c.400. It might therefore be argued that the biggest element of instability for Elis' democratic constitution was the Arcadian intervention in its support, which exacerbated internal tensions and brought the oligarchs to power in 365. The reconciliation of c.350 may have enabled a return to a constitution allowing broader political participation. Unfortunately Elis and its internal politics do not feature heavily in the narratives of the Greek world after the arrival of Philip II of Macedon: whether that reconciliation allowed the permanent restoration of Eleian democracy, we cannot tell.

### 3. Mantinea (c.550–362)

This chapter is about democracy at Mantinea in the period down to 362 BCE. The *polis* of Mantinea lay roughly at the centre of the northern half of the hourglass-shaped elevated plain that occupies the eastern part of Arcadia.<sup>212</sup> The narrowest point of the plain, near modern Skopi, was the natural border between the northern (henceforth ‘the Mantinike’) and the southern half, dominated by Tegea and the sanctuary of Athena Alea.<sup>213</sup> The Mantinike, a relatively small region in size (about 200 km<sup>2</sup>), contained several other settlements besides the main city.<sup>214</sup> One purpose of this chapter is to investigate how political institutions operated and evolved in the environment of the Mantinike, and how changes in the pattern of settlement facilitated changes in the nature of political activity.

The political and urban history of classical Mantinea is marked by two main breakpoints. The first is the foundation of the city through synoikism; the second is the period between 385 and 370. In 385 the Spartans took advantage of the fact that the peace made with the Mantineans in 417 had finally expired and put the city under siege; after the Mantineans surrendered, the Spartans demanded that they tear down their circuit wall and move back from the city to the settlements they ‘originally’ used to inhabit.<sup>215</sup> The *diokismos* (the ‘act of moving apart’), as this event is commonly known, was accompanied by the establishment of oligarchic constitutions in the rural villages across the plain. Fifteen years later, shortly after Leuctra, the Mantineans came back together, refounded their city in defiance of Spartan opposition and rebuilt their walls with help from other Peloponnesian communities, ushering in a new phase of Mantinea’s history.<sup>216</sup>

These watersheds divide this chapter into three sections. In §3.1 I examine the extant literary and material evidence on the archaic history of Mantinea before the foundation of the urban centre, and argue that on the basis of such evidence there is no reason to believe that the people of the Mantinike behaved like a political community *before* their city was founded; the implication is that the synoikism played a central role in Mantinea’s state formation process. In §3.2 I explore the development of the city of Mantinea down to 385 and the impact that the synoikism had on

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<sup>212</sup> On the geography of Arcadia, see most importantly Nielsen 2002, chap. 3. On the Mantinike specifically: Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 242–46. I adopt the spelling ‘Mantinea’ (instead of the Attic ‘Mantineia’) primarily because it appears to have been the Mantineans’ own name for their city: see e.g. *SEG* 37.340, line 6.

<sup>213</sup> But see Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 244n10.

<sup>214</sup> On the total area (less than one-tenth of that of Attica) see Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 275n128. Besides Mantinea, two settlements (Nestane and Maira) have thus far been identified with certainty, and the existence of others is plausible: Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 246–61.

<sup>215</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.3–7.

<sup>216</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.3–5; other sources in Moggi 1976, 251–54.

the regional pattern of settlement and on political activity. In §3.3 I investigate the circumstances of the second synoikism of 370, highlighting its profound difference from the foundation of the first city, and retrace the impact of Mantinean democracy in shaping the city's participation in the Arcadian League during the 360s.

### 3.1. Before the *polis*

According to the tradition, the history of Mantinea as an urban centre has a clear starting point: its foundation by synoikism. Strabo reports that Mantinea was synoikised 'by Argives' from five *dēmoi* (8.3.2). While his is the only explicit extant statement to that effect, the point seems indirectly supported by the fourth-century authors, such as Xenophon and Ephorus, who described the *διοικισμός* of 385 as the restoration of a *status quo ante*.<sup>217</sup> Behind Strabo's fuller version may well lie Mantinean oral tradition and local memory, which is why it is important to assess its actual significance for the development of the *polis* of Mantinea. 'Synoikism' can potentially refer both to the foundation of an urban centre from previously scattered settlements and to the political implications of such merger, namely the birth of a unitary *polis* as a consequence of the unification of those settlements. An analysis of the long-term impact of the Mantinean synoikism should pose the question of the exact relationship between its urban and the political dimensions, and then attempt to weave this relationship into our attempts to write the early history of the Mantineans as a political community. This becomes particularly significant in relation to the problem of the emergence of Mantinea's democratic institutions, the only solid *terminus ante quem* for which is 421.<sup>218</sup> The purpose of this section is to survey and analyse the available evidence on what the Mantinike looked like before the synoikism from a social and political standpoint; the next section will then focus on the nature and impact of the synoikism itself within such context.

The only explicit description of the Mantinike before the synoikism is again in Strabo, who describes it – alongside other similar cases elsewhere in the Peloponnese – as a *χώρα* containing

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<sup>217</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.7; Ephor. *FGrH* 70 F79 *ap.* Harpocrat. s.v. *Μαντινέων διοικισμός*. Diodorus (15.5.4, 15.12.2) is more explicit than Harpocration on the fact that the *διοικισμός* restored the ancient pattern of settlement; if – as is often the case – Diodorus drew from Ephorus, this would prove that Ephorus agreed with Xenophon on that point. Isocrates also mentions the *διοικισμός* very briefly (8.100), but the probable date of composition of the speech (c.355) tends to exclude Ephorean derivation. Xenophon says that the Mantineans were dispersed into four settlements, whereas Ephorus gives the number of *dēmoi* pre-synoikism as five. The discrepancy could be resolved in part by assuming that Mantinea itself remained partly settled after the *διοικισμός* (as stated in Paus. 8.8.9). For a collection and analysis of the textual evidence for the synoikism, see Moggi 1976, 140–56.

<sup>218</sup> Thuc. 5.29.1.



a *σύστημα δήμων*, an ‘organisation of villages’ (8.3.2).<sup>219</sup> Although Strabo says nothing about the exact meaning of his descriptor, he does note that such organisation was tight enough to allow Homer already to speak of the scattered inhabitants of these *χωραι* (Mantineans included) as single communities, even though only ‘later’ (*ὑστερον*) would the Peloponnesian *συστήματα* morph into proper *poleis*.<sup>220</sup>

Both the alleged existence of cross-community links – hence the *σύστημα* – and the historical trajectory evoked by this narrative suggest that Strabo’s framing implies a teleological view of the transition from *chōra* to *polis*, as though the former were naturally destined to evolve into the latter. But should we assume that the Mantinike before the synoikism was something like a proto-state, and that therefore the synoikism was simply the natural next step on the path towards further integration? In this section I shall argue that Strabo’s *σύστημα* was qualitatively different from a *polis* and that the foundation of Mantinea should consequently be reinterpreted as a genuinely disruptive moment in the history of the region. This is in part due to the fact that Strabo should not be taken as a reliable source for the history of the archaic Mantinike. His brief narrative of the Peloponnesians’ transition from *συστήματα δήμων* to *poleis* relies primarily on his own reading of Homer, perhaps supplemented by generalisations based on the works of later local historians; but these hypothetical historians are likely to have been equally unreliable, documenting patterns of local memory and identity rather than shedding light on real historical processes. But the difficulties in seeing the pre-synoikistic Mantinike as a proto-state go deeper than Strabo’s dubious evidentiary value. As I show below, there is simply no evidence that the Mantineans were engaged in the sort of collective and binding decision-making that characterised a *polis* prior to the foundation of the urban centre.

In his description of the Mantinike, Pausanias mentions a hill known in his time by the name of Ptolis (‘citadel’), upon which lay the ruins of ‘old Mantinea’ (8.12.7). In other words, Ptolis was the political centre of the area before the ‘new’ city was founded.<sup>221</sup> The excavations conducted by Theodora Karagiorga in 1962 proved that the site of Ptolis was the hill known as ‘Gortsouli’, c.2

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<sup>219</sup> The basic meaning of Strabo’s *σύστημα* is clear enough: an organic whole composed of different parts. For instance, Strabo elsewhere refers to the Achaean League as *τὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν σύστημα* (8.6.18). Given that Strabo’s passage features the expression in the plural (*συστήματα δήμων*), what its singular form is is potentially dubious. Like most other scholars, I assume that it is *σύστημα δήμων*; but Moggi 1991 argued – overall unconvincingly – that it is rather *σύστημα δήμου*.

<sup>220</sup> Homer does mention Mantinea at *Il.* 2.607, but the mention is too vague to illuminate what kind of community ‘the Mantineans’ composed at the time of the composition of the *Catalogue of Ships*. On this mention, see Nielsen 2002, 170.

<sup>221</sup> In fact, Pausanias’ version implies a direct genealogical link between Ptolis and ‘new’ Mantinea, as his alternative account of the foundation of the city – not explicitly through synoikism – has Antinoe leading the Mantineans from Ptolis down to the site of the new city (8.8.4; see below).

km north of the Mantinean agora.<sup>222</sup> The presence of Cyclopean walls on Gortsouli, along with sherds and other objects datable from the Geometric period onwards, suggest that the site was in use from early times. Perhaps the most interesting structure unearthed so far is an enclosure belonging to a sanctuary built atop an earlier, smaller one. Since the foundation layer of the larger sanctuary is disturbed, the demolition of the first sanctuary and the construction of the second have not yet been securely dated. The layer has however yielded finds as late as the Hellenistic period, and Karagiorga records in her preliminary report the presence of a bronze female statuette from the 450s.<sup>223</sup> Although Karagiorga's report is not detailed enough to enable definitive conclusions, there does not (as yet) seem to be any clear evidence *against* unbroken cultic activity on Gortsouli from the Geometric period onwards. Whether the hill was ever inhabited is a more difficult question. The Hodkinsons note that the only hint of settlement comes from the deposits of sherds, continuously dated from the Geometric to the late archaic or early classical period.<sup>224</sup> It seems therefore that, before the synoikism, Ptolis was a religious centre of regional remit but plausibly not a major settlement in itself.

The picture of Ptolis as it emerges from the archaeological evidence is easy to reconcile with Strabo's *σύστημα δήμων*. The people from the plain must have met there on a recurring basis to perform rites, with the sanctuary therefore facilitating the emergence of common practices and a shared local identity.<sup>225</sup> In other words, Ptolis was the centre of the *σύστημα* because it was *through* Ptolis that the *δῆμοι* gradually built patterns of interactions. However, this does not entail that such loose network centred on Ptolis was necessarily going to evolve into something tighter or more formalised; there is no evidence that the *σύστημα* had in itself the seeds of the synoikism. Olympia provides a good counterpoint, in that the epigraphic evidence from the *wratrai* shows not only that the sanctuary was involved in the issuing of proper 'political' decisions, but also that the very possibility of enforcing those decisions depended on the existence of a regional community that acknowledged them as binding on the basis of the sanctuary's authority – a phenomenon that can be directly connected to Elis' later emergence as a political community (see §2.1). In the case of Ptolis, evidence in any way comparable to the Olympic *wratrai* is as yet glaringly absent. Any argument seeking to cast Ptolis as the motor of the political integration of the plain must confront the apparent lack of positive material evidence in support of it.

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<sup>222</sup> Karagiorga 1963. Even before Karagiorga's survey, the consensus had long been that Ptolis was on Gortsouli: see e.g. Frazer 1898, 221.

<sup>223</sup> Karagiorga 1963, 89.

<sup>224</sup> Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 256.

<sup>225</sup> Amit (1973, 122–24) interpreted Strabo's *σύστημα δήμων* as a network of shared cults; see also Moggi 1976, 149.

So, what *could* count as evidence for political activity? In 480, a Mantinean contingent fought at Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.202); this represents the *terminus ante quem* for Mantinea's accession to the Peloponnesian League, which probably occurred shortly before then.<sup>226</sup> By 480, the Mantineans were thus fighting wars *qua* Mantineans, as a distinct community. There is also evidence of judicial activity around the same time: in 479 the Mantineans arrived at Plataea too late for the battle, and banished their generals from their land as a consequence of the delay (9.28). The numismatic evidence seems to match this picture. The earliest coins from Mantinea – silver triobols with the legend MA or MAN on the reverse – have usually been dated to c.500 BCE.<sup>227</sup> This dating is not based on style or archaeological context but results primarily from two considerations. A late-sixth-century *terminus post quem* is provided by the beginning of minting activity at Heraia, which is commonly taken to be the first Arcadian city to have minted coins. At the other end, the earliest examples of the so-called 'federal' coinage of Arcadia – characterised by the legend ΑΡΚΑΔΙΚΟΝ variously shortened – are dated to c.490, and it is usually believed that Mantinea served as one of the three federal mints; the federal coinage seems to have quickly superseded the local one, which would make 490 a tentative *terminus ante quem* for the early Mantinean coins.<sup>228</sup> These considerations, combined with Herodotus' narrative, allow us to conclude that the earliest evidence of political activity properly defined at Mantinea dates to the very beginning of the fifth century.

Another passage in Herodotus (4.161) could appear to contradict this statement. He reports that at some point during the mid-sixth-century reign of King Battos III of Cyrene, the Cyrenaicans invited an illustrious Mantinean citizen, called Demonax, to reform their constitution. Demonax then proceeded to divide the Cyrenaean citizen body into three tribes (*τριφύλους ἐποίησέ σφεας*) and transferred to the *dēmos* certain powers which had previously belonged to the king.<sup>229</sup> Despite the vagueness of Herodotus' description, the reform of Demonax do seem inspired by democratic principles. The division of Cyrene's citizens into tribes may have been intended to reorganise and

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<sup>226</sup> For example, there is no evidence of Mantinea taking part in the Spartan-led expedition against democratic Athens in 506: Amit 1973, 130–31. But not much weight can be put on this argument from silence, as the evidence is lacking for the relations between Sparta and virtually all Arcadian *poleis* (except Tegea) in the late archaic period (see note 241).

<sup>227</sup> Babelon 1907, 862; Head 1911, 449–50; Amit 1973, 126–27.

<sup>228</sup> On this argument: Kraay 1976, 96. Excluding the Corinthian coinage, the earliest phase of which is probably datable to the central decades of the sixth century (Kraay 1976, 79–80), the coinage of Heraia is probably the earliest in the Peloponnese, with Mantinea following closely. Williams 1965 is still the most comprehensive study of the 'federal' coinage of Arcadia; see also, more recently, Psoma 1999. Burelli Bergese (1987, 608) – following Williams (1965, 14) – suggested that Mantinea and Tegea started issuing federal coinage to fund the construction of their respective synoikised urban centres. This is however entirely speculative, and Burelli Bergese does not explain how her reconstruction would account for the fact that Mantinea had already started minting local coins before the *arkadikon* coinage made its appearance.

<sup>229</sup> On the passage, see Asheri et al. 2007, 689–90.

facilitate popular access to political power;<sup>230</sup> as to some of the monarch's prerogatives, Demonax is said to have 'placed [them] in the midst for(?) the people' (4.161.3: ἐς μέσον τῷ δήμῳ ἔθηκε), in a way that closely recalls Otanes' proposal to 'place the government (τὰ πρήγματα) in the midst of the Persians' in the context of his case for democracy in Herodotus' 'Constitutional Debate' (3.80.1).<sup>231</sup>

We could therefore conclude that Demonax's own home community – within which he was recognised as 'illustrious' – was already democratically governed in his time.<sup>232</sup> But the Demonax story does not in fact require us to assume that Mantinea was already a democratic *polis*, or a *polis* at all. If we set aside Herodotus' description of Demonax as a 'citizen', which is a plausible enough anachronism, Demonax's high status becomes easy to associate with the institutions connected with the sanctuary of Ptois rather than with the *polis* of Mantinea. That Demonax appears in a papyrus fragment (*P.Oxy.* 11.1367) with the title of βασιλεύς actually supports the possibility that he was involved in the administration of the sanctuary, if the βασιλῆες attested in one Olympic *wratra* (Minon 20, line 3) were magistrates of Olympia.<sup>233</sup> In this scenario, the story of Demonax can still work within Strabo's loose σύστημα δήμων, which (again) is probably best viewed as a local cultic network. This consideration offers a solution to a potential problem encountered by Amit, who – assuming that Demonax operated in a *polis* context, and given that the story is clearly set in the sixth century – believed that the story must necessarily have postdated the synoikism, intended in the political sense as the replacement of the σύστημα with *polis* institutions.<sup>234</sup> But if Demonax's status and actions can indeed be read in the looser context of the σύστημα, then there is no chronological link between the story in Herodotus and Mantinea's emergence as a political community.<sup>235</sup> In addition to all this, it should be noted that the story of Demonax is of dubious credibility. The same Demonax is mentioned by Athenaeus, citing Hermippos *On Lawgivers*, as the inventor of single combat: the Cyrenaeans 'imitated' him in this (154<sup>d</sup>: ζηλώτας ... γενέσθαι).<sup>236</sup>

<sup>230</sup> On this point, and with the explicit mention of Cyrenaean democracy, see Arist. *Pol.* 1319<sup>b</sup>19–27. Chamoux (1953, 141) believes that a democratic reading of Demonax's reforms is anachronistic, and argues that they should rather be taken as a transition towards archaic *isonomia*; the point remains that they represent a clear broadening of the access to organised, collective decision-making. See also Hölkeskamp 1993, who focuses on the significance of the redistribution of different groups of colonists into common subdivisions.

<sup>231</sup> On Herodotus' ἐς μέσον ... ἔθηκε and its antecedents, see Detienne 1967, 81–103.

<sup>232</sup> For instance, Robinson's (1997, 113–14) case for viewing sixth-century Mantinea as a democracy ('not overpowering, but [meriting] serious consideration') is based in part on the Demonax story, as was Fougères' argument almost a century earlier (1898, 331–36).

<sup>233</sup> On the fragment and the question of Demonax as βασιλεύς, see Waisglass 1956. βασιλεύς was a common title for magistrates and did not always designate a 'king' (Waisglass 1956, 169–70).

<sup>234</sup> Amit 1973, 126.

<sup>235</sup> Pace Nielsen 2002, 213, who takes the Demonax story as 'a fact which indicated that by this time [Mantinea] was a political community' (my emphasis).

<sup>236</sup> On the Demonax anecdote within the framework of Hermippos' tract, see Bollansée 1995.

There appears to have been a tradition that cast Demonax (‘lord of the people’) as a civilising hero of sorts for the Mantineans and creator of a cultural connection between them and the Cyrenaeans. Once we also consider the long-standing tradition that credited the Mantineans with constitutional excellence – which, however, only survives in later sources<sup>237</sup> – then it becomes plausible that by Herodotus’ time this story was simply used as a way of reaffirming a historical link between the democracies of Cyrene and Mantinea.

Therefore, the point remains that the earliest solid evidence for city-level political activity at Mantinea dates to the first years of the fifth century. The chronological relation between this activity and the synoikism remains to be clarified. In what follows, I shall argue in favour of a sixth-century date for the synoikism (as opposed to the still widely accepted fifth-century date) thus showing that none of the evidence for political activity can securely be dated to the previous period of dispersed settlement. The necessary starting point is to appreciate the radically different nature of the two main accounts of the foundation of Mantinea. Strabo’s version is built upon a model that views the Peloponnesian synoikisms as effected with outside help; in particular, Mantinea was synoikised by the Argives. In Pausanias, by contrast, the foundation of Mantinea – here *not* explicitly a synoikism – is a distinctly local endeavour: Antinoe, a female descendant of the region’s eponymous hero Arkas, led the Mantineans from Ptolis down to the site of the new city (8.8.4).<sup>238</sup> Whether it happened because of external interference or not, both accounts present the creation of the city as a moment of clear discontinuity with the past. This aspect should be reappraised as opposed to the common narratives framing the synoikism as the natural endpoint of a process of integration; since to our knowledge there was nothing inherently unstable in the *σύστημα*, the synoikism should be interpreted primarily as a response to a change in the surrounding geopolitical context. What sort of change? The most fitting candidate seems to be the beginning of Sparta’s expansion north of Laconia, into Arcadia and towards the eastern Peloponnesian seaboard, in the course of the second half of the sixth century. Following Herodotus’ narrative, at some point in this period the balance of power in the Peloponnese was irreversibly tipped in Sparta’s favour, as the Spartans secured the control of the Thyreatis by defeating Argos and had Tegea join their hegemonic network.<sup>239</sup> There is evidence that Argos

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<sup>237</sup> Polyb. 6.43; Ael. *VH* 2.22.

<sup>238</sup> Still in Pausanias’ time, the tomb of Antinoe was one of the *μνήματα προήκοντα* in the city centre (8.9.5). This suggests that the tradition crediting Antinoe with the foundation of Mantinea had a certain local resonance.

<sup>239</sup> On the Thyreatis: Hdt. 1.82; Paus. 3.7.5. On Sparta and Tegea: Hdt. 1.65–7. Herodotus dates both events to *c.*546; however, the current consensus favours postdating the alliance between Sparta and Tegea to the late sixth or even early fifth century: see the bibliography collected in Nielsen 2004a, 531.

reacted to Sparta's rise by seeking to expand its influence northward.<sup>240</sup> The eastern Arcadian plain thus came to find itself between two growing and opposed powers, and became of great strategic value. It is important to notice that, although Tegea sided with Sparta most likely at some point in the late sixth century, there is no evidence that the Mantineans (or other Arcadian *poleis* for that matter) did the same.<sup>241</sup> In fact, the well-documented enmity between Tegea and Mantinea – that saw the two communities on opposite sides on repeated occasions throughout the fifth century – may have existed in this period already.<sup>242</sup> One option is therefore to interpret the foundation of Mantinea as a way for the people of the Mantinike to protect their own autonomy from the threatening presence of Spartan-backed Tegea – and, by extension, to preserve their independence in the face of Spartan encroachment. Moggi is surely right to note that the synoikisms of Tegea and Mantinea must have occurred one shortly after (and in reaction to) the other, although the exact sequence remains difficult to establish.<sup>243</sup> But he made his remark within a larger argument in favour of dating both synoikisms shortly after the Persian Wars, whereas more recently Pretzler reassessed the available archaeological data from Tegea and convincingly suggested that the latter was probably synoikised in the late sixth century, soon after (and somehow in connection with) its accession to the Peloponnesian League.<sup>244</sup> We could consequently imagine that the Mantineans responded to the Tegeans by emulating them.

This argument effectively follows Pausanias in placing agency in the hands of the Mantineans. But let us take a step back and ask what the context of the synoikism would look like if we were to take at face value Strabo's assertion that it was effected by the Argives. We have already seen that Argos, rather than acquiesce to the rise of Sparta, pursued an active foreign policy in the second half of the sixth century (note 240). It is at least imaginable that Argos may have wanted to respond to the alliance between Sparta and Tegea by favouring the political emancipation of the Mantinike and establishing a friendly foothold in the central Peloponnese. Notably, the available evidence shows that by the late sixth century Argos certainly had the means to intervene in the Arcadian plain; furthermore, this comparatively early date has the advantage of

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<sup>240</sup> Argos won a war against Corinth, most likely at the end of the sixth century: Jackson 2000. There is evidence of relations between Argos and Athens in Peisistratos' lifetime: he married an Argive woman (Hdt. 5.94.1, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 17.3–4) and 1,000 Argive soldiers supported his third bid for power at Pallene (Hdt. 1.61.4, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 15.3).

<sup>241</sup> Nielsen's (2004a) section on Arcadia in the CPC *Inventory* fails to find solid evidence of membership of the Peloponnesian League for any Arcadian *polis* except Tegea prior to the Peloponnesian War: in most cases membership is only 'assumed'. Orchomenos, the only Arcadian city alongside Tegea to have fought at Plataea, may also have been part of the League by then (Hdt. 9.28.4).

<sup>242</sup> Andrewes 1952, 3.

<sup>243</sup> Moggi 1976, 151. The main source for the synoikism of Tegea is again Strab. 8.3.2; the city was apparently synoikised from nine demes, the names of which are provided by Paus. 8.45.1.

<sup>244</sup> Pretzler 2008.

not creating the difficulties raised by the hypothesis that Argos could and would synoikise Mantinea after the Persian Wars.<sup>245</sup>

In the current state of the evidence, a choice between Strabo and Pausanias would be unwarranted. Such a choice could also be seen as unnecessary if one believes that behind the synoikism could lie *both* a will for it among the Mantineans *and* some form of Argive encouragement. But the key point is that for any of the scenarios seen above a late-sixth-century date for the synoikism fits the circumstantial evidence better than a fifth-century one. If this is correct, the synoikism predates the earliest solid evidence for political activity in the Mantinike; whatever we make of Strabo's *σύστημα*, it was apparently only after the foundation of the city that the Mantineans began to act as an integrated, unitary political community. The purpose of the following section is to clarify what it was about the synoikism that structurally changed the nature of local politics, and more specifically how the creation of the city paved the way for the institutionalisation of popular power.

### 3.2. The impact of the *polis*

The implication of the previous section is that given the absence of substantial evidence of political activity before the foundation of Mantinea, the case for synoikism playing a decisive role in the process of state formation in the Mantinike is attractive. The purpose of this section is first to clarify *how* the synoikism effected socio-political change, and then – more specifically – to retrace the connection between the pattern of settlement in the Mantinike post-synoikism and the way in which Mantinean democracy worked in practice. That a connection exists at all between settlement pattern and political practice – at Mantinea as well as elsewhere – has long been known to scholars.<sup>246</sup> Already in 1952, Andrewes noted that if *dioikismos* and oligarchy ‘went hand in hand’ at Mantinea in 385, then ‘we may reasonably associate’ democracy and synoikism.<sup>247</sup> However,

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<sup>245</sup> The roads between Argos and Arcadia are detailed by Pausanias (2.25.1–4, 8.6.4). Of the two roads leading to Mantinea, one (*Klimax*) went north through Lyrkeia before crossing the Artemision mountain range and entering the plain from modern Pikernis. A lead tablet from the Argive agora (*SEG* 48.408), dated to the late sixth or early fifth century, identifies a man (likely an Argive citizen) by the attribute *Λυρκειεύς*, which Piérart (1997, 334–35) took to indicate his membership of a perioikic community subject to pre-democratic Argos. The tablet would then prove that by c.500 Lyrkeia had been incorporated into the Argive state, and that therefore Argos was in full control of the road to the Mantinike by then. If we take Strabo's point seriously, the state of powerlessness and isolation suffered by Argos in the decades following the Battle of Sepeia (c.494) makes its involvement in the Mantinike implausible in that period; on Argos' geopolitical weakness in those years and subsequent focus on local matters, see Frullini 2021. In supporting a 464–59 date for the synoikism of Mantinea, Demand (1990, 65) does not appear to give sufficient weight to the Argive side of the matter.

<sup>246</sup> See e.g. Osborne 1987, 113–36.

<sup>247</sup> Andrewes 1952, 2–3.

Andrewes' wording unhelpfully shies away from shedding light on the real nature of the connection. In what sense did *dēmokratia* go hand in hand with nucleated settlement? Was there a causal link between the two? If so, in what direction? Was such causation intentional, or an accidental by-product? To what extent does the available evidence from Mantinea allow us to answer these questions?

The city of Mantinea does in fact appear to have resulted from a deliberate project rather than from 'organic' growth. Strabo's and Pausanias' statements to that effect appear corroborated and enriched by Donati and Sarris' recent survey of the linear surface anomalies within the walled area at Mantinea by means of remote sensing.<sup>248</sup> Their study revealed the presence of a complex orthogonal street network (north–south, east–west) throughout the walled area, which they reasonably took as evidence of city planning. The fact that the literary and material evidence concur in providing a picture of the city of Mantinea as deliberately planned warrants asking according to what principles it was built, and consequently investigating the role that the city's public spaces played in the context of the broader urban project. Building a *polis* effectively meant building a more or less well-established set of public structures and spaces; Pausanias famously declared that any *polis* worth its name needed to have government offices (*ἀρχεῖα*), a *gymnasion*, a theatre, an agora and a fountain, in addition to clear borders and relations with the outside world (10.4.1).<sup>249</sup> The politological approach known as 'New Institutionalism', that focuses on institutions as stable patterns of behaviour informing human interactions, offers a way of understanding how the creation of these spaces transformed social and political life.<sup>250</sup> The concept of 'institution' has been extended to things – initially only intangible things *produced* by institutions, such as 'stocks and shares in companies, copyrights, patents', but then also to physical objects and spaces.<sup>251</sup> My contention is that the public urban spaces of synoikised Mantinea can be viewed as 'institution–things', namely physical places designed for human interaction whose very existence reshaped the pre-existing modes of individual and collective behaviour in the Mantinike. The most important caveat is that we simply do not know how much from the site dates back to the time of the synoikism itself; even the earliest remains could potentially postdate the synoikism by several decades, thus making it impossible to demonstrate a direct causal link between their erection and

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<sup>248</sup> Donati and Sarris 2016, 365–84.

<sup>249</sup> The applicability of this second-century CE passage to classical Greece is debated: see e.g. Alcock 1995. It does however give an idea of how a well-read author with extensive knowledge of Greek landscapes, local identity and their intersection thought about that concept.

<sup>250</sup> On New Institutionalism: Hall and Taylor 1996; March and Olsen 2006. On its use in ancient history, non-exhaustively: Harris 2013, 12–13; Mackil 2013, 10–13; Simonton 2017, 69–71; Liddel 2020, 6–8.

<sup>251</sup> MacCormick 2007, 34–37 (citation from 36); Liddel 2020, 6 (who views the Athenian agora as an 'institutional thing').



the foundational act. In order to avoid this difficulty, I rather focus on the long-term impact of the most significant public structures – the existence of which was ultimately a consequence of the synoikism – and argue that the existence of the city engendered a positive feedback loop of sorts between itself and participatory political institutions. In other words, over time the city proved instrumental in the consolidation of the democratic constitution and this created a close connection between democracy and the very existence of the urban centre. As a consequence of this, the synoikism itself became – to use a modern term – a highly partisan issue, so that while democrats would support nucleated settlement, the anti-democratic faction saw the undoing of the synoikism as a key step in carrying out its agenda. To investigate the connection between democracy and the city, in what follows I turn first to the architectural projects that can be dated relatively safely to the fifth century, i.e. the public spaces in Mantinea’s ‘central district’ and the defence network composed of the circuit wall and signal towers; then I attempt to assess the impact of the synoikism on the regional pattern of settlement.

As it stands today, the agora of Mantinea – right at the centre of the street grid surveyed by Donati and Sarris – is largely the result of Roman-era makeovers.<sup>252</sup> This, combined with the fact that no systematic excavations have been conducted on the site since the 1890s, makes any speculation as to the layout of the classical agora potentially hazardous. For instance, the theatre immediately west of the agora, which apparently hosted meetings of the assembly, cannot have been built before the fourth century; the Mantinean assembly’s earlier meeting place remains unknown.<sup>253</sup> It nevertheless seems plausible that the agora was the centre of the city’s political life in classical times, too. One hypostyle hall on the north side of the agora was identified by Winter as Mantinea’s council hall.<sup>254</sup> If the identification is uncertain, dating the building is even harder, although its similarity with Athens’ fifth-century ‘Old *Bouleuterion*’ (also located in the agora) may point to chronological proximity.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, the Mantinean copy of the treaty of the ‘quadruple alliance’, ratified in 420 between Athens on one side and Argos, Elis and Mantinea on the other, was erected in the temple of Zeus located ‘in’ the agora (Thuc. 5.47.11: ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ); it seems therefore that the agora was the focal point of fifth-century Mantinea in both the religious and the political sense.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Fougères 1898, 164–65.

<sup>253</sup> Fougères 1898, 173.

<sup>254</sup> Winter 1987, 239–44.

<sup>255</sup> Winter 1987, 241. The east wall of the building is in polygonal masonry, which may suggest a fifth-century date: Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 257. Mantinea certainly had a *boulē* by 420 (Thuc. 5.47.9) and the Helisson decree examined below proves the existence of a fixed meeting place for this council by the early fourth century (*SEG* 37.340, line 21: βωλήμιον); what is at stake here is the connection between this classical building and the agora.

<sup>256</sup> Argos chose an analogous location for the display of the treaty: the temple of Apollo (Lykeios) in the agora, which still in Pausanias’ time was Argos’ *epiphanestaton* temple (2.19.3). As was customary in fifth-century Athens, the

There cannot have been an agora before the synoikism. The Argive agora developed organically over a long period, between the eighth and the fifth century, through a series of gradual and retraceable steps; the agora of Elis may have undergone a similar, although not as well documented, evolution.<sup>257</sup> At Mantinea the agora was simply planned into being, right at the centre of the orthogonal layout evidenced by Donati and Sarris' remote-sensing study. This is particularly important because Greek agoras were powerful facilitators of collective action, and therefore the centrality of the agora in the Mantinean project might be read as part of a pro-democracy project. Simonton has collected ample evidence from archaic and classical sources to show that the *dēmos* was at its most politically effective when it had the opportunity to convene and organise in the agora, to the extent that oligarchic elites often devised ways to police popular access to the *astu* and even drive the populace out of it and back to the countryside.<sup>258</sup>

Let us now consider Mantinea's defence system, consisting of a four-kilometre circuit wall enclosing the urban centre and a network of signal towers further afield, in strategic points on the borders of the plain. The wall and the signal towers have rarely if ever been examined together; in fact, the first comprehensive study of the seven extant signal towers was published only in 2018.<sup>259</sup> These towers were used to monitor access to the plain and raise the alarm in case of enemy invasion. Maher and Mowat noted that two other towers were visible from each tower; the system's redundancy guaranteed its effectiveness even in case one or more towers were to fall into enemy hands.<sup>260</sup> There are reasons to believe that walls and towers emanated from a single project. The surviving part of the circuit wall consists of a stone socle, which served as the foundation for a lost superstructure of mud bricks.<sup>261</sup> While most of the socle is made of isodomic trapezoidal blocks and was (re)built after the second synoikism of 371/0, part of the southern section was built 'in a regular polygonal style with a tendency towards coursed polygonal'.<sup>262</sup> This section is usually believed on stylistic grounds to predate the rest of the wall and to be a surviving part of

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Athenian copy was erected on the Acropolis; only in the fourth century would decrees begin to be routinely displayed in the agora (Liddel 2003). Notably, Argos – like Athens but unlike Mantinea – did in fact have an acropolis on the Larisa hill.

<sup>257</sup> On the agoras of Argos and Elis, see most recently Donati 2015, 186–205. On Argos specifically, with further observations on the political significance of the gradual development of agoras, see §4.1 here.

<sup>258</sup> For full discussion see Simonton 2017, 148–85.

<sup>259</sup> Maher and Mowat 2018.

<sup>260</sup> Maher and Mowat 2018, 456. On the practicalities of the use of signal towers in Greek *poleis*, see Aen. Tact. 6.

<sup>261</sup> This wall type is ubiquitous in Arcadia, where all extant city walls include a stone socle and a mudbrick superstructure: Maher 2017, 36.

<sup>262</sup> Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 258 (with discussion of previous bibliography). The Hodkinsons say that the polygonal section lay 'to the S. and S.E. of the circuit between [Fougères'] Gates F and I' (258); most recently, though, Maher (2017, 220n38) was unable to find it following these indications.

the wall of the pre-385 city, although in terms of absolute chronology there is hardly any basis for venturing further than a vague ‘fifth-century’ construction date.<sup>263</sup>

The foundations of all surviving signal towers are also in coursed polygonal masonry. Maher and Mowat argue in favour of a fourth-century construction date on the basis of ‘historical probability’, but offer no good explanation as to why an older technique should have been employed for the towers at a date when the Mantineans were building their own new walls in a different style.<sup>264</sup> It is much easier to assume that – on the contrary – wall and towers were built in the same period, in the fifth century, as integrated parts of a single building project. If this is correct, it is unsurprising that these towers (unlike the circuit wall) do not appear to have been torn down following the *dioikismos* of 385. Once the people of the Mantinike had been forced back into separate settlements, each with a Spartan *xenagos* in control of it, cross-plain military cooperation was no longer required or feasible, and there was no reason for the Spartans to view the signal towers as a threat.<sup>265</sup>

The most obvious effect of this defence system, taken together, is that it granted Mantinea quite a high degree of freedom from external interference and considerable resilience in the face of enemy invasions.<sup>266</sup> But there are subtler political consequences, too. The signal tower system relied on the cooperation of the communities living across the plain, and therefore on their awareness of being ‘on the same side’ against potential invaders; the walled city would serve as the common shelter of the local population – and would be perceived as such. Maher has highlighted the symbolic and cultural importance of city walls in forming a sense of ‘in’/‘out’ and therefore creating ‘the city’ as a place with distinct boundaries and identity.<sup>267</sup> The construction of a common

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<sup>263</sup> On the construction date of the circuit wall, see most recently Maher 2017, 228–29 with bibliography. Incidentally, nearby Tegea also seems to have built its own circuit wall at some point in the fifth century: the earliest implicit mentions of city walls at Tegea refer to 418 (Thuc. 5.62.2; Diod. 12.79.3). According to the suggestion above that the synoikism of Mantinea was in some way a reaction to that of Tegea, the same reasoning could be applied to the two cities’ fortification systems.

<sup>264</sup> Maher and Mowat 2018, 490–92. Maher’s systematic use of ‘historical probability’ as a dating criterion was also criticised by Rönnlund (2018) in his otherwise complimentary review of Maher 2017.

<sup>265</sup> As Maher and Mowat (2018, 484–85) note, the towers could not store artillery or be manned by more than a few soldiers at a time, so they could not serve as standalone fortresses of sorts. The local village of Nestane was also fortified at some point in the late classical or early Hellenistic period, and the Hodkinsons (1981, 247) suggest ‘[a] fourth-century date, perhaps linked with the rebuilding of Mantinea town’. But the construction of self-sufficient fortifications in one of the constituent villages better fits the years 385–370, as the walls of Mantinea had been (temporarily) dismantled and the dioikised city could no longer serve as a wartime refuge for the local population.

<sup>266</sup> This is especially true if we accept the Hodkinsons’ (1981, 286) suggestion that part of the land *within* Mantinea’s city walls was designated for cultivation.

<sup>267</sup> Maher 2017, 19–20. Notably, Ptolis/Gortsouli was not included in the circuit wall: the empty space between the northern edge of Mantinea’s circuit wall and the foothills of Gortsouli asserted the new city’s distinctive identity, independent of Ptolis, and turned the former ‘centre’ of the Mantinike into a suburban sanctuary – partially superseded, we may suppose, by the temples in the new agora. Interestingly, something similar happened at nearby Tegea: the pre-existing sanctuary of Athena Alea, active since the tenth century BCE and increasingly monumentalised

defence system is in this way a key stage in the process of formation of the Mantinean *polis*. It might also be argued that the construction of such an imposing defence network was based on democratic principles. In a recent study, Ober and Weingast have retraced a ‘recursive relationship’ between the spread of fortifications and the establishment of democracies in the Greek world.<sup>268</sup> Their main contention is that the considerable cost of maintaining circuit walls must have been largely shouldered by the elites, if anything so that they could fashion themselves as ‘partners in maintaining a secure and democratic community’ and avoid the enmity of the *dēmos*.

With its regular layout, its large central agora with clear political functions and its expansive (and expensive) fortification system, the city of Mantinea seems to have structurally facilitated the exercise of popular sovereignty. But these remarks on the material structure of the city are of little use if not combined with an analysis of how the synoikism actually transformed the pattern of inhabitation in the Mantinike. How large a share of the population of the villages of the plain moved to Mantinea after its foundation? What was the social make-up of the share who did relocate, and what were the political consequences of this?

The brief passage in Xenophon’s *Hellenica* on the *dioikismos* of 385 (5.2.7) retrospectively sheds some valuable light on the geographic distribution of different social groups in the previous period. Xenophon reports that the Mantineans were displeased with the *dioikismos* because it forced them to leave the city and build new homes in the four ancestral villages; however, the ‘property (*οὐσία*, i.e. land) owners’ were by contrast happy to move closer to their estates in the countryside, and were also pleased that the mass would no longer be exposed to the influence of demagogues under the new aristocratic constitution imposed by Sparta. The identity of the group unhappy with the *dioikismos* is left unstated, but the fact that the landowners were the ones to rejoice means that it must have been the non-landholding majority. Xenophon’s passage implies that before the *dioikismos* the members of the leisured elite owned property both in the city (where they resided) and elsewhere in the plain, and thus relied on an absentee ownership model to manage their country estates.<sup>269</sup> It was in those estates that many lower-class citizens worked, and while it is likely that many of them will have chosen to live in the vicinity of their workplace, Xenophon attests that at least some of them had taken up residence in the city before 385 – and were reluctant to leave. On the other hand, the *dioikismos* was framed by the Spartans as the restoration of an ancient *status quo* upended by the synoikism, rather than a forceful imposition. While it is easy to

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in the eighth and seventh centuries (and plausibly far more important than Ptolis), was *not* incorporated in the new urban centre after the synoikism, although it remained in use; see Pretzler 2008, 147 and 150 (with bibliography).

<sup>268</sup> Ober and Weingast 2020 (quote from 43).

<sup>269</sup> Simonton 2017, 169n72, who notes a possible parallel in Athens attested by Thuc. 2.65.2. On the evidence from Attica see also Kellogg 2013, 70.

see this claim as politically expedient, the fact that in 385 it was still easy to identify and repopulate the rural settlements suggests that they had remained at least partly inhabited and vital all along.

In order to improve our understanding of the city's impact on the regional pattern of settlement, in what follows I analyse how the existence of the city shaped the assessment of the advantages and drawbacks in leaving the *chōra* for each social group composing the population of the Mantinike. Using a loosely game-theoretical model, I assess the incentives and costs associated with urban residence – on the assumption that relocation into the town occurred only when incentives outweighed costs – and then move on to exploring how this analysis can help interpret the evidence for Mantinea's institutions and the real-world context in which they operated.

The analysis of costs and incentives is most straightforward in the case of the land-owning elite. As Xenophon shows, before 385 it was important for landowners to keep a close eye on their estates, but despite this they still chose to live in the city instead – in other words, the incentives of urban residence outweighed its explicitly laid out costs.<sup>270</sup> What were these incentives? As the Hodkinsons persuasively argued, city living allowed the landowners to put their wealth on display and to participate in the competition-driven lifestyle of the urban elite.<sup>271</sup> Political participation afforded a way not only to seek personal power and influence policy (which should not be underestimated), but also to take part in the pursuit of honours and prestige in a looser sense; crucially, this attraction remained true regardless of the constitutional system in place. This process can also be construed as a diachronic one, if we imagine reluctant country-based landowners feeling more and more peer-pressured into moving to the city (or at least establishing a second home there) for fear of 'missing out' on the social and political opportunities enjoyed by urban residents. There may perhaps have been a long-term trend towards relocation to the city for landowners, as Mantinea and its public spaces consolidated their role as the region's social and political hub. By contrast, this helps explain the urban elite's attitude towards the *dioikismos*, as once the city no longer offered these opportunities for personal affirmation, direct control of one's own estate was again seen as overwhelmingly desirable.

What about everyone else? As a first step, it is important to distinguish between farmers and non-farmers (e.g. craftsmen).<sup>272</sup> For the latter, the cost of moving was relatively low – as they were

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<sup>270</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that they chose *permanent* urban residence: it is possible that these wealthy citizens owned second homes closer to their country estates. Yet, Xenophon shows that they clearly felt limited in their ability to oversee their estates, and that consequently they spent more time in the city than they would otherwise have wished to.

<sup>271</sup> Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 288.

<sup>272</sup> However, the barrier between farmers and non-farmers was certainly porous. Some people who worked the land part-time (or less) may have sought labour in the city as a way of rounding up their income in the quieter part of the year; in the same way, when demand for agricultural labour was high, urban residents may have looked for work in the countryside.

not tied to the land – and the city offered the possibility of acquiring additional income from casual labour. In fact, the city’s attractiveness for this sort of labourer increased as more and more members of the leisured elite moved to Mantinea, for their increasing demand for luxury commodities opened up new economic opportunities there.<sup>273</sup> Farmers pose more of a problem. The first question is how long they were on average willing to walk every day to and from work. As a rule of thumb, anthropologists have argued that, in a context of subsistence farming, the maximum distance between home and fields that farmers are willing to travel is five kilometres (or one hour).<sup>274</sup> On this basis, and having observed that the city lay further from cultivable lands than the pre-existing rural villages, the Hodkinsons argued that only a relatively small share of the local population moved into the synoikised city.<sup>275</sup> The opposite view was later supported by Demand, who supported taking the five-kilometre rule less strictly, thus supposing that farmers *were* willing to travel further than that. Demand also drew attention to the fact that the large sums invested in the synoikised city (as displayed e.g. by the circuit wall) show the degree of collective commitment to the project among the Mantineans, and thus concluded that a large share of the local population took part in it and moved into the city.<sup>276</sup> Regardless of whether the five-kilometre rule is to be taken as strict or not, having to walk back and forth between Mantinea and the fields was certainly a cost – in behavioural terms – weighing on a farmer’s decision to move to the city. This remains true even though walking distances in the Mantinike were quite short compared to other areas, such as Attica; the added inconvenience compared to rural residence still requires explanation.

Sparta’s own actions in connection with the *dioikismos* ought to be reassessed in the light of this consideration. Having lost the siege, the Mantineans accepted to tear down their walls, which was Sparta’s original request; however, the Spartans demanded that they *also* leave the city and relocate to the villages (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.5). The *dioikismos* was a key step in the process by which they enforced constitutional change in the Mantinike; even without walls, the existence of an urban centre was seen as an obstacle to securing the dominance of the Laconising elite.<sup>277</sup> This is also shown by Xenophon’s remark that, after the *dioikismos* and the deployment of a Spartan *xenagos* to every village, the Mantineans served in the army with much more *zeal* (*προθυμότερον*) than they did under the democracy (5.2.7). This remark should be read in the broader context of democratic Mantinea’s chequered record as a Spartan ally in the previous decades. It was under the banner of

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<sup>273</sup> Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 285.

<sup>274</sup> Relevant bibliography is collected in Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 281n142.

<sup>275</sup> Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 279–86. They argued that only the farmers (of hoplite and sub-hoplite status) working the estates closer to the city will have found it attractive to relocate there; the others – i.e. the majority working the lands further afield – will have found it more convenient to continue residing in the *kōmai*.

<sup>276</sup> Demand 1990, 67–72.

<sup>277</sup> Note that, immediately after the *dioikismos*, Sparta exiled 60 Mantinean democratic leaders: Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.6.

democracy that Mantinea defected from the Spartan-led coalition and made an alliance with Argos in 421. In the same years, Mantinea created a local hegemonic symmarchy that included the Mainalians and the Parrhasians, based in mountainous central Arcadia; most recently, Capreeedy has persuasively argued that by creating its ‘empire’ Mantinea was distancing itself from the Peloponnesian hegemon, having lost confidence in its leadership.<sup>278</sup> It was only after losing Argos’ support that Mantinea gave up its symmarchy and came back under Sparta, although – unlike for Argos – there is no evidence that this happened in connection with an oligarchic coup (Thuc. 5.81.1). However, Xenophon’s judgement suggests that even after its surrender, Mantinea made for a problematic ally, and that this was due to its democratic constitution.

The role of the *dioikismos* in the neutralisation of Mantinea’s democratic institutions suggests that the urban population of Mantinea before 385 had reached a critical mass capable of acting as a counterweight to the elite’s attempts to monopolise (or at least control) public life. Unless the agricultural surplus was abundant, which is unlikely, non-farmers cannot have constituted a large share of the non-elite urban population.<sup>279</sup> Rather, the city must have been inhabited by a significant number of farmers who – despite the ‘cost’, in behavioural terms, of living at Mantinea rather than in the *chōra* – nevertheless chose to do so at least for part of the year. In the light of what has been said above, it is plausible that the single biggest incentive for those with little or no property to move to the city was the opportunity to gather together, strengthen their relative position compared to the propertied classes, and exercise some degree of collective control on them through the popular champions (*προστάται τοῦ δήμου*) that Sparta took care to expel in 385. As I argued with respect to the landowning elite, in this case too we may suppose that this process occurred gradually over time, with more and more country-based members of the lower classes moving to the city in the course of the fifth and early fourth century.<sup>280</sup>

Building on these observations, my final aim for this section is to investigate how the composite and shifting population distribution in the plain shaped the functioning of Mantinean democracy before 385. Excluding Thuc. 5.29.1 – the only value of which is showing that Mantinea saw itself as a *demokratia* by 421 – the most important source on the nature of fifth-century Mantinean democracy is a passage in Aristotle’s *Politics* (1318<sup>b</sup>23–27).<sup>281</sup> Aristotle describes the

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<sup>278</sup> Capreeedy 2014. On Mantinea’s small ‘empire’, see also Nielsen 2002, 367–72.

<sup>279</sup> On the climate of the Mantinike and its impact on agricultural productivity, see Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1981, 266–71.

<sup>280</sup> It is also possible that the Peloponnesian War played a role in further encouraging migration from the *chōra* to the security of the walled city, as had happened at Athens. Apart from this period, it is unlikely that the protection of the circuit wall was a significant incentive for moving into the city, as fifth-century Mantinea did not have enemies nearby and the short distances in the Mantinike easily allowed rural residents to seek shelter temporarily in case of invasion.

<sup>281</sup> But see also the institutions attested at Thuc. 5.47.9, on which see Robinson 2011, 39–40.

constitution that was ‘once’ (ποτε) in use at Mantinea as characterised by something resembling an electoral college. While the *dēmos* as a whole retained deliberative power and control over magistrates, only some citizens chosen among all (τινες αἵρετοὶ κατὰ μέρος ἐκ πάντων) were entitled to elect those magistrates.<sup>282</sup> Strange as this system must have seemed to the Greeks themselves, Aristotle stresses that it nevertheless deserved the label of *dēmokratia*. It should be emphasised that while Thucydides is describing a current state of affairs, Aristotle’s description refers back to a frustratingly unspecified past, the only *terminus ante quem* for which is Aristotle’s own time. Fougères believed – based on no evidence – that the electoral college was abolished at some point in the 330s, shortly before *Politics* was written.<sup>283</sup> It seems more plausible that the breaking point implied by Aristotle’s wording was in fact the destruction and subsequent refoundation of Mantinea in 385–70 – unlikely to have had no constitutional consequences at all – and that therefore the electoral college was operative in the pre-385 city but was replaced by the direct election of magistrates by all citizens after 370.<sup>284</sup>

In order to make progress in the understanding of Aristotle’s description, some scholars have tried to trace a connection between the *Politics* passage and an important body of epigraphical evidence. Roughly 200 clay tokens, usually dated between the fifth and the third century BCE, have been found in or near the theatre of Mantinea (*IG V.2 323*).<sup>285</sup> About half of the extant tokens, which come in five different shapes, bear a legible name with patronymic inscribed on one side. Of the inscribed tokens, about 20 bear a fifth- or fourth-century lettering whereas the others are generally considered to be later (third century).<sup>286</sup> The interpretation of this body of evidence has often been influenced by the fact that the third-century tokens bear also one of 25 letters (including ϕ) on the *verso*, which may have identified particular subsets of citizens.<sup>287</sup> If – as has

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<sup>282</sup> ‘Electoral college’ is the term used by Larsen 1950, and while it is not fully appropriate I adopt it here as a shorthand.

<sup>283</sup> Fougères 1898, 534; see also Amit 1973, 140n77.

<sup>284</sup> Lintott 2018, 180–81.

<sup>285</sup> Fougères 1898, 530–34; Svoronos 1900; Amit 1973, 141–47; Jones 1987, 150n4; Robinson 2011, 37. The current location of these tokens is unknown. Svoronos, possibly the last person to undertake an autoptic study of the tokens, appears to have done so at the National Archaeological Museum (NAM) in Athens (Svoronos 1900, 218; see also Amit 1973, 142). Dr George Kavvadias personally informed me that all tokens and coins were moved from the NAM to the Numismatic Museum. However, Dr George Kakavas (Director of the Numismatic Museum) denied that the tokens are now stored there and was unable to provide information on their whereabouts.

<sup>286</sup> On the division of the tokens into two groups (classical and third-century) I follow Hiller von Gaertringen’s considerations in *IG V.2 323*. Fougères, who found and first published the tokens, suggested a division into *three* successive groups – first: 425–385; second: 370–340; third: c.226 (Fougères 1898, 530–34). But Fougères’ chronology relies less on palaeography than on somewhat circular assumptions about links between the tokens and the ill-known historical context of their production; furthermore, the alleged ‘second group’ (370–340) comprises a mere two tokens, whose only appreciable difference from the ‘first group’ is their smaller size.

<sup>287</sup> An inscription bearing the letters ME H was found by Fougères (1898, 169) in the theatre and taken by Svoronos (1900) as meaning μέρος η´ – i.e. the inscription would mark the seats reserved for the citizens belonging to that *meros*. See also Robinson 2011, 37–38.



been suggested – each token shape represented one of the five basic subdivisions of the citizen body, then it is remarkable that the same letter appears on the *verso* of tokens of different shapes, and vice versa.<sup>288</sup> Each citizen was therefore part of two different systems of social organisation, with potentially interesting consequences on the nature of political life and the construction of social networks within the Mantinean citizen body at large.<sup>289</sup> However, the co-existence of different token shapes and ‘letter groups’ is demonstrable only in the third-century tokens.<sup>290</sup> That the system attested here was also operative at an earlier time – e.g. in Aristotle’s time – is an unwarranted assumption; the absence of letters from the *verso* of the (preserved and legible) earlier tokens actually suggests otherwise.

In fact, the very purpose of the Mantinean tokens is unknown; all the earlier pieces show is that, for whatever reason, it was important to sort citizens into five groups. A comparison with the lead tablets found at Camarina in 1987 can be instructive.<sup>291</sup> Like the Mantinean tokens, the tablets from Camarina bear names and patronymics of citizens alongside attributions to civic subdivisions, most often one of the 15 (or 18) phratries. These tablets were probably associated with a public archive: they were apparently stored folded, and the use of a metal as soft as lead suggests they were not meant to be unrolled frequently; the findspot – the temple of Athena, *polis* protectress – is also compatible with some kind of central archive.<sup>292</sup> By contrast, the clay tokens from Mantinea were not only inexpensive and easy to mass-produce but also suitable for frequent use, and the fact that they were discovered in the agora suggests perhaps that they were used for some political procedure, such as voting or jury selection. On the other hand, ‘there is something egalitarian about the equal listing of all citizens’ at Camarina, and the principle applies well to Mantinea, too.<sup>293</sup> Neither body of evidence alone is *evidence* of democracy, but both are fairly *compatible* with an egalitarian organisation of the citizen body.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Amit 1973, 142.

<sup>289</sup> Robinson 2011, 37.

<sup>290</sup> Svoronos 1900, 218; Jones 1987, 150n4.

<sup>291</sup> *SEG* 41.778–95; *OR* 124. See also: Cordano 1992; Robinson 2002; 2011, 96–100.

<sup>292</sup> As noted e.g. in *OR ad loc.*

<sup>293</sup> Quote from Robinson 2011, 99. However, this observation relies on the assumption that *all* citizens were listed in the archive; for all we know, there may have been ‘prior selection of which phratry members [were to be] recorded on a tablet’ (Osborne and Rhodes 2017, 131). In the case of Mantinea’s tokens, however, the consensus seems to be that they were issued to all citizens: Amit 1973, 144–47; Robinson 2011, 38n105.

<sup>294</sup> Some scholars (e.g. Amit 1973, 136–40; O’Neil 1981, 336–37) have associated the token system – and Mantinean democracy more generally – with the story of the Mantinean athlete Nikodoros, who wrote a law code for his hometown with help from his lover Diagoras (Ael. *VH* 2.22–3). Due to his connection with Diagoras, whose *floruit* was probably in the late fifth century, Nikodoros’ activity could be dated to the same period and somehow connected with Mantinea’s defection in 421; but Diagoras’ chronology is shaky (see e.g. the detailed discussion in Woodbury 1965) and there is no independent evidence for Nikodoros’ own *floruit*. Furthermore, Nikodoros’ only connection with democracy in Aelian’s succinct passage is the fact that Mantinea’s constitution is compared to that of Solonian

Given the difficulty of extracting any clear information from the tokens, we ought to focus on what Aristotle’s description alone can tell us. To what end would such a system have been devised in the first place? First of all, its reliance on election – as opposed to selection by lot, common in the so-called ‘radical’ democracies<sup>295</sup> – meant that aspiring members of the electoral college had to build and preserve a support base for themselves. This holds true even though electors were appointed *ἐκ πάντων*, i.e. in the absence of wealth requirements in order to be eligible for election. In a hypothetical context of dispersed settlement post-synoikism, where comparatively few people lived in the *asty* and far more resided in the rural villages closer to the cultivable fields, in practice these networks of political support must have taken the form of localised clientelistic relationships between select members of the elite and rural citizens who supported them in elections in return for various kinds of favours.<sup>296</sup>

Aristotle’s oblique *κατὰ μέρος* (*Pol.* 1318<sup>b</sup>24) may be connected to this dynamic. Although Aristotle ordinarily uses *κατὰ μέρος* to mean ‘in turns’ or ‘by rotation’ – and most scholars have taken this passage as one further example of such usage – Amit has argued that in this particular case it means ‘separately, by *meros*’, with *meros* being the technical name of one of the 25 subdivisions of the Mantinean population attested by the letters featuring on the *verso* of the clay tokens seen above.<sup>297</sup> Each *meros* would separately elect a small number of members of the electoral college, who would then gather together to elect the city magistrates. The main weakness in this argument is that it relies on retrojecting the 25 *merē* attested (as seen above) only in the third-century tokens onto the pre-fourth-century arrangement described by Aristotle.<sup>298</sup> Yet the more general possibility that Aristotle’s *merē* represented discrete subdivisions of the citizen body operating in parallel – rather than a rotational arrangement – should not be dismissed. I have previously noted that Xenophon’s account of the *dioikismos* implies that the rural villages remained at least partly vital throughout the period between the synoikism and 385; it is possible that different sections of the electoral college were separately appointed by the various small rural settlements acting as ‘parts’ of the Mantinean state, not unlike the Athenian demes each sending a contingent of representatives to the city’s *boulē*. In a context of dispersed settlement clustered around the rural *kōmai*, an electoral college thus structured would enable the creation and consolidation of a sort of fractal hub-and-spoke network. In this scenario, each village was a self-

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Athens. The parallel shows that Nikodoros’ connection with his city’s democratic constitution is *at least* as problematic as Solon’s, and the passage most likely buys into the trope of the excellence of Mantinean laws.

<sup>295</sup> Shipley 2018, 147.

<sup>296</sup> On the applicability of the concept of ‘clientelism’ to Ancient Greece, especially in the context of oligarchic control of public space, see Simonton 2017, 168–85.

<sup>297</sup> Amit 1973, 141–47.

<sup>298</sup> See Nielsen 2002, 337n116.

contained socio-geographic unit bound together by internal ‘strong links’ centred around the local notables chosen to act as electors; at a higher level, the city-based central institutions would allow those notables to come together and build (or reaffirm) intra-elite social links between themselves. Relying on the political legitimacy deriving from being elected – the institutionalisation of localised clientelistic relationships – they would go on to redistribute public offices (and decision-making prerogatives) among themselves.

An echo of this hub-and-spoke arrangement can be found in the decree bearing the so-called *suntbasis* between Mantinea and the town of Helisson, about 15 km west.<sup>299</sup> The inscription, found at Mantinea in the 1980s, is usually dated to sometime between the late fifth and the early fourth century and the *suntbasis* it bears regulated Mantinea’s incorporation of Helisson.<sup>300</sup> The Heliswasians and the Mantineans are solemnly declared to be endowed with equal political rights, to the extent that their communities would cease to be separated (lines 3–4). The egalitarian quality of the agreement is somewhat damped by the statement that the Heliswasians were to ‘bring’ their community into the Mantinean state, becoming a *komē* thereof subject to its laws. It is remarkable that the extant part of the decree bears no hint of any requirement that the Heliswasians move to Mantinea; on the contrary, the physical existence of Helisson itself is explicitly guaranteed ‘for all time’ (6–7), which must mean that the Heliswasians were not required to relocate into the metropolis even though they were now fully part of its political network.<sup>301</sup> The text also points towards the preservation of some aspects of Helisson’s local identity, striking a careful balance between integration, separation and subordination: local sacrifices and other cultic activities, apparently, would continue as usual; existing private contracts between Heliswasians would remain valid under the same terms as before (13–16).

Although the electoral college does not feature in the decree, the procedure whereby the Heliswasians would be inscribed into Mantinea’s citizen body is of particular interest. The newly incorporated Heliswasians were to register with the *epimeletai*, who would carry the list of names to the *thesmootaroi* of Mantinea; the *thesmootaroi* would then inscribe the names on boards to be published in the council hall. While the *thesmootaroi* were clearly Mantinean, it is generally assumed that the *epimeletai* were magistrates of Helisson.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, the decree specifies that any member of that list (*τις τῶν ἀπυγραφέντων*) would be able to accuse any other of not being a genuine Heliswasian. Taken together, these two elements made the correct implementation of the

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<sup>299</sup> te Riele 1987; *SEG* 37.340; *IPArk* 9; *RO* 14. See also Nielsen 2002, 330–34.

<sup>300</sup> However, Nielsen has suggested dating the stone to the 350s: Nielsen 2002, 404n460 and 448.

<sup>301</sup> As a town, Helisson survived well into the Hellenistic period: see e.g. Polyb. 11.11.6. See Nielsen 2002, 363 and 447–9.

<sup>302</sup> te Riele 1987, 180; Nielsen 2002, 332.

*synthesis* essentially the Heliswasians' own responsibility. The Mantinean magistrates entrusted their Heliswasian counterparts with the task of collecting reliable data about the social group to which they belonged, and the Heliswasian citizenry at large with that of controlling the veracity of those data; the whole operation relied on their cooperation and expertise. There were precedents, apparently: the Heliswasians would appoint one *thearoi* – an important magistrate with prerogatives concerning the Mantinean state at large – ‘as do the other *poleis*’ (8–9).<sup>303</sup> We may suppose that the representation of the peripheral communities on certain boards of magistrates with central authority was one further way of resolving the tension between localism and incorporation.

Helisson is a special case; it lay outside of the plain, much further afield than the close-by rural villages of the Mantinike, and its incorporation occurred long after the original synoikism.<sup>304</sup> But we could cautiously assume that, in a context of dispersed settlement, the dynamics informing the management of social knowledge were comparable across Mantinea's domain. Each village was a ‘bubble’ unto itself, with local residents having little contact with the public spaces in the city.<sup>305</sup> These bubbles were economically dominated by the rural estates owned by the leisured elite, which was at the centre of localised clientelistic relationships and their institutional manifestation – the electoral support networks that provided that elite with a seat in the city-based decision-making institutions. In other words, while lower-class citizens would mostly interact at a hyper-local level, the elite had institutionalised ways of establishing wider-ranging, *polis*-wide social links. An ideal world for a ruling class heavily invested in maintaining the *status quo*.

All this changes dramatically if we assume that, over time, a positive feedback loop appeared whereby the gradual spread of a ‘democratic habit’ encouraged some non-elite citizens to overcome participation costs and take part in the urban institutions, perhaps by moving to the city for at least part of the year. In turn, the increase in the level of political participation strengthened (or ‘radicalised’) Mantinean democracy, first because clientelistic relationships are more fragile in a context of nucleated settlement – as urban residents would now come in contact with more people and build larger, more fluid social networks – and second because a large urban population

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<sup>303</sup> The *thearoi* of Mantinea are also attested in Thuc. 5.47.9 as the magistrates administering the oath for the quadruple alliance of 418; see also Nielsen 2002, 360n251. It should be noted that this system partially contradicts Aristotle's ‘electoral college’-based system, as the *thearoi* seem directly appointed by the individual *poleis* within the Mantinean territory; for unknown reasons, the *thearoi* were an exception to Aristotle's rule.

<sup>304</sup> The distance in space and time, alongside the somewhat asymmetrical nature of the agreement, are the reasons why I stop short of taking the Helisson decree as a possible model of what inter-settlement relations looked like in the pre-synoikistic Mantinike. At the same time, however, some of the terms of the agreement may reflect the older *σύστημα δήμων*, such as the regulation of contracts between citizens of different villages as opposed to those between citizens of the same village.

<sup>305</sup> In Aristotle's description of ‘Mantinean-type’ democracies, these *poleis* did have a popular assembly, but in practice few citizens living in the countryside had the time or means to take part in its activities (*Pol.* 1318<sup>b</sup>11–16).

meant a more central and active popular assembly, which would pose a challenge to the magistrates otherwise in control of policy. It was in the assembly, after all, that the ‘demagogues’ feared by the landed elite (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.7) were more likely to operate. A scenario in which participation in central institutions increases is a scenario in which the elite’s grip on political life gets weaker, and such a scenario is most likely caused by a transition from dispersed towards (at least partially) nucleated settlement. The mere *possibility* of this process taking place in the pre-385 Mantinea was certainly seen as a threat by the Mantinean elite, which must have viewed the existence of the city as a necessary evil at best and eventually embraced the *dioikismos* as a way to regain its influence. Indeed, democratic rule proved impossible without the city – and indeed, by contrast, the second synoikism of 370 would itself begin as an act of collective self-empowerment, as the dioikised Mantineans came back together and voted to rebuild a common *polis* that would protect their freedom and autonomy (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.3).

### 3.3. *Polis* and *koinon*

During the 360s, the newly rebuilt city of Mantinea played a major role within the Arcadian League (henceforth in this section ‘the League’). Mantinea was one of the driving forces behind its creation in 370, one of its largest and most prominent member-*poleis* in the following years, and ultimately caused the League’s failure after it left it in 363 to set up its own hegemonic league. The primary aim of this section is to show that fourth-century Mantinea continued to be strongly committed to defending its own autonomy, and that – as was apparently the case before 370 as well – such autonomy was closely connected to democratic institutions, that seemed at once both the most invested in protecting Mantinea’s independence and the most capable of doing so. But this section more specifically investigates the link between democracy and autonomy in the specific context of Mantinea’s participation to the Arcadian federal experiment, which itself was clearly conceived as a way for Arcadia to stand up against the aspiring hegemon of the time, chiefly Thebes. Considering also Mantinea’s commitment between 370 and 363 to playing a leading role in the League, it seems that the ruling class of post-370 Mantinea sought to protect the city’s autonomy *through* federalism but also *within* the League. This complex three-way relationship between democracy, autonomy and federalism, sometimes associated with the name of the leading politician Lykomedes, actually informed Mantinean policy throughout the decade down to the break-up of 363. This should not, however, necessarily be interpreted as a moment of constitutional change away from democracy but rather as a surge in nationalism arising from disillusionment towards the federal experience. In what follows, I shall first analyse the

circumstances of the second synoikism of Mantinea in 370, and then move to closely investigating the city's conduct as a member of the League down to 363.<sup>306</sup>

In 370 the Mantineans, dioikised by the Spartans fifteen years earlier, came together once again and refounded their common city. Their resolve in the face of Agesilaos' opposition was supported by Elis and other Arcadian communities and ensured the success of the project (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.3–5).<sup>307</sup> By rebuilding their *polis* from both a physical and a figurative point of view, the Mantineans clearly sought to regain the political agency they had lost fifteen years earlier; what is particularly striking is that they appear to have done so through a democratic process marking a further discontinuity with the oligarchic constitution in place during the interregnum. That the dioikised Mantineans were ruled by oligarchies in 385–70 is attested by Xenophon not only in his account of the *dioikismos* of 385 examined in the previous section (5.2.7), but also in relation to the aftermath of the Battle of Leuctra of 371, where the Mantineans are described as *ἀριστοκρατούμενοι* (6.4.18).<sup>308</sup> In contrast to this arrangement, Xenophon says that in 370 'all [of the Mantineans] came together and voted' (*συνῆλθόν τε πάντες καὶ ἐψηφίσαντο*) to rebuild a common, walled city (6.5.3). While Xenophon stops short of explicitly linking the second synoikism with the re-establishment of a democratic constitution, it seems evident that the village-based oligarchies were replaced by the sort of city-based, plain-wide institutions that were operative before 385, and the democratic nature of these institutions is suggested by the wide (*πάντες*) participation in the vote to refound the city.

Little can be said about Mantinea's post-370 institutions, and yet it was through these institutions that the city was created anew. Xenophon frames the refoundation as the outcome of a vote – not a revolution – which means that, for the vote to have occurred at all, someone must have summoned the Mantineans to a meeting and set an agenda for it. Those who set the second synoikism in motion were likely already in a position of power in the dioikised Mantinike; but 60 prominent leaders of the democratic faction had been expelled in connection with the *dioikismos* (5.2.6), and others must have died of natural causes in the following years. On this basis, there are two possible ways to explain the sudden decision to refound the city in defiance of Sparta. One is to assume that the rural oligarchies were ousted and the democratic leadership was somehow let back in power in the wake of the Spartan defeat at Leuctra in the summer of 371 and the turmoil

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<sup>306</sup> This section is about Mantinea's role in the League; not about the League itself, which is the subject of a vast bibliography in its own right. On the history and institutions of the fourth-century Arcadian *koinon*, see in particular: Larsen 1968, 180–95; Roy 2000; Pretzler 2009; Nielsen 2002, 474–505; 2015.

<sup>307</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all references to passages in this section are to Xenophon's *Hellenica*.

<sup>308</sup> Xenophon identifies the Mantineans here as those 'from the villages', i.e. still dioikised – but it is all the more striking that he could still identify them as a somewhat unitary political community.

that ensued in the Peloponnese. But this would be an onerous supposition given that Xenophon lists the Mantineans among the allies that remained loyal to Sparta after and despite the battle (6.4.18). The other potential explanation is a change of mood *inside* Mantinea's ruling elite. Xenophon implies that this option is the correct one as he establishes a direct link between the second synoikism and the peace conference that took place at Athens some time after Leuctra, in summer/autumn 371 (6.5.1–3). At this conference Athens set out to replace Sparta as the new guarantor of the autonomy of all Greek states, and it is sometimes surmised that Athens took advantage of the occasion not only to lure certain *poleis* away from Sparta's influence, but also to actively support the establishment of friendly (i.e. democratic) governments.<sup>309</sup> Xenophon then presents the refoundation of Mantinea as the direct consequence (6.5.4: ἐξ ᾧ) of Athens' new commitment to defend the independence of all Greek states. The move to reaffirm the Mantineans' right to self-determination happened in the context of a shift towards the Athenian-led democratic front.

But it would be misleading to assume that Mantinea's democratic turn was only due to the influence of Athens. When Agesilaos came to Mantinea to try and dissuade the Mantineans from the synoikism, the city's 'officials' (οἱ ἄρχοντες) refused to summon the assembly for him, as the *dēmos* had already made an irrevocable decision to refound the city (6.5.4–5). O'Neil took this passage as evidence of the conservative nature of Mantinean democracy, in that magistrates could apparently disregard the assembly's right to be consulted.<sup>310</sup> Responding to O'Neil's view, Robinson pointed out that Athenian officials could also similarly refuse to bring foreign embassies before the assembly, and that more generally '[w]hen a state is united behind a particular course of action (as the Mantineans seem to have been ...) one would hardly expect their officials to grant public hearings to foreigners bent on changing it'.<sup>311</sup> While the comparison with Athens is appropriate, Robinson's assumption that the Mantineans were 'united behind' the synoikism project is somewhat circular, for how did they ever put that supposed unity to test if Agesilaos was denied the opportunity to change their mind? The episode seems rather to attest to a reluctance, on the part of Mantinea's newly emboldened anti-Spartan faction, to risk having Agesilaos sway the public mood and bolster his supporters in the city. This faction then used the *dēmos*'s formal vote as a legal basis to uphold the principle of unity of action. This does not, however, mean that

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<sup>309</sup> See e.g. Musti 2006, 542.

<sup>310</sup> O'Neil 1981, 337.

<sup>311</sup> Robinson 2011, 39–40. The evidence for a similar dynamic in Athens is in Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.19–20. As Robinson himself acknowledges, though, the Athenian officials in question were the members of the council of 500 – routinely entrusted with receiving foreign envoys and other foreign policy matters – whereas the status of Mantinea's ἄρχοντες relative to the assembly, or even whether they made up a corporate body or a smaller board of senior magistrates, is unknown. On the Athenian council's foreign policy prerogatives, see also Hansen 1991, 264–65.

the Mantineans were totally unanimous in their stance towards Sparta, but rather that the re-established democratic procedures offered a lawful way to solve internal disputes. After all, it was arguably thanks to these procedures that the entire process appears to have been bloodless and without mass expulsions of former opponents.

Meanwhile the situation looked very different at Tegea, where a bloody bout of *stasis* proves that the creation of the League in c.370 was a contentious issue and Mantinea's involvement in the clash sheds light on the city's foreign policy in the wake of the second synoikism. Around the same time as Mantinea's refoundation, Tegea saw a violent struggle between the conservative and pro-Spartan faction led by Stasippos on one side, and a group led by Kallibios and Proxenos who maintained that 'all the Ἀρκαδικόν should unite, and whatever [view] prevailed in the League as a whole should be binding (κύριον) upon the member cities, too' (6.5.6–9).<sup>312</sup> Mantinean intervention resolved the clash in favour of the federalists, and the followers of Stasippos were sentenced to death by the Tegeans and the Mantineans together. Xenophon's wording leaves unclear whether the League existed yet at this stage: did Kallibios and Proxenos want to *create* it or simply to *join* it?<sup>313</sup> In either case, however, the federalist victory at Tegea – achieved with Mantinean help – was decisive in giving the League the critical mass it needed to come into its own: even if the project was born at Tegea, it was Mantinea's intervention that made it viable.<sup>314</sup> It bears pointing out that the opposition between Stasippos and the federalists probably ran along the democracy–oligarchy axis, too: Kallibios and Proxenos were outnumbered by Stasippos' supporters in the board of senior officials (ἐν τοῖς θεαροῖς) but enjoyed far larger support among the *dēmos*. It seems therefore that Mantinea acted in support of a faction that was not only federalist, but also populist – both policies being apparently inherently opposed to Sparta.

Commitment to democracy and federalism informed the political career and ideology of the only Mantinean politician that we know by name, Lykomedes. Xenophon's *Hellenica* mentions him on three separate occasions. Although as a wealthy man of noble birth he was probably already fairly influential in his hometown, Lykomedes seems to have come to the fore (ἐγγενόμενος) at the regional level in 369, when his speeches on Arcadian pride and military valour won him great popularity (7.1.23–26).<sup>315</sup> While up until that time the relations between Thebes and the League

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<sup>312</sup> Stasippos' sympathy for Sparta is proved, in hindsight, by the fact that after his faction was defeated Sparta launched an expedition to avenge him (6.5.10).

<sup>313</sup> The foundation of the League is notoriously ill-known; the terms of the debate are well summarised in Roy 1974, 505–6.

<sup>314</sup> Robinson 2009, 135. After Kallibios and Proxenos' victory, Mantinea and Tegea – the two largest *poleis* in eastern Arcadia – were united against Sparta for the first time. It should be noted that during the Peloponnesian War, the simple *threat* of Tegea defecting to the anti-Spartan side (when Mantinea was already active against Sparta) was enough for Sparta to immediately levy their army and march into Arcadia: Thuc. 5.64.

<sup>315</sup> On Lykomedes' career, with special reference to his ideology as it emerges from this passage, see Bearzot 2019.



had been good, it was Lykomedes' talk of Arcadian 'exceptionalism' that drove the first wedge between the Arcadians and their Boeotian allies (7.1.22). Two years later, in 367, Theban envoys went to Susa to negotiate a new common peace with Artaxerxes. Having returned to Thebes, they summoned representatives of all Greek states to swear to uphold the new treaty. On that occasion, Lykomedes championed the opposition to Thebes' right to preside over the congress and administer the oaths (7.1.39–40). Diplomatic tensions ensued, with the Thebans accusing Lykomedes of 'jeopardising the alliance' (*ὡς διαφθείροι τὸ συμμαχικόν*) and him taking the Arcadian delegates back home in response. Lastly, in 366, Lykomedes convinced the Arcadian assembly to negotiate an alliance with Athens, which the Athenians rightly saw as an opportunity to reduce Thebes' influence on Arcadia (7.4.2–3). During the negotiations, Lykomedes was murdered by a group of Arcadian exiles, although his death did not stop the alliance from coming into force. To this general overview Diodorus adds on two separate occasions (15.62.2, 15.67.2) that Lykomedes was appointed federal *stratēgos* of the Arcadians.<sup>316</sup>

From these bits of information we can attempt to reconstruct Lykomedes' overarching political ideology. First, he was a staunch supporter of pan-Arcadian federalism as a way of limiting Thebes' influence in the Peloponnese. He also seems to have worked to secure a leading role in the League for Mantinea, and it is probably by elevating Mantinea's status within Arcadia that Lykomedes managed to extend his own influence in federal institutions. This is best shown by the Mantinean expedition against the small, Spartan-leaning Arcadian town of Orchomenos in 369/8. According to Xenophon (6.5.11, 13–14) Orchomenos refused at first to join the *koinon*, so while the Arcadian army was gathering at Asea to face an imminent Spartan offensive, the Mantineans remained at home to 'keep watch' (*ἐπιμελόμενοι*) on the Orchomenians. The Mantineans attacked Orchomenos shortly after, and while the attack was only partly successful, Orchomenos is indeed attested as a member of the League later on.<sup>317</sup> Xenophon does not name the Mantinean commander in this expedition. Diodorus also reports the attack on Orchomenos, but in his version it was undertaken not by the Mantineans alone, but by a 5,000-strong elite confederate contingent (*ἐπίλεκτοι*) commanded by Lykomedes (15.62.2).<sup>318</sup> A later passage in Diodorus (15.67.2) reads like an awkward repetition of this one: Lykomedes, having been appointed *stratēgos* of the Arcadians, led 5,000 elite soldiers against the Laconian town of Pellene and conquered it. Both narratively and logically, the attack on Pellene must have happened *after* that on Orchomenos – and

<sup>316</sup> On the federal generalship of the *koinon*, see Larsen 1968, 188.

<sup>317</sup> Peltasts from Orchomenos are still described as *φίλοι* of Sparta shortly after the battle (6.5.17). However, Orchomenos' later membership of the League is attested by *IG* V.2 1, line 46, perhaps datable to the 360s.

<sup>318</sup> That Diodorus and Xenophon refer to the same expedition is virtually proved by the fact that in both cases the Spartan commander fighting on Orchomenos' side dies in battle (Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.14; Diod. 15.62.2).

yet the second passage mentions Lykomedes' appointment as Arcadian *stratēgos*, whereas the first presents him as already leading confederate troops.<sup>319</sup> The use of federal troops against Orchomenos is also incompatible with the context in which Xenophon sets the attack, as he says that the Mantineans took care of Orchomenos while the rest of the Arcadian army was busy elsewhere. It could perhaps be added that sending 5,000 select soldiers against Pellene makes sense in the run-up to the full-scale invasion of Laconia, but such a large force would be unnecessary against a *polis* as small as Orchomenos.<sup>320</sup> I therefore suggest the following reinterpretation. Lykomedes led the Mantinean attack on Orchomenos in late 369 and added the town to the League; his success not only consolidated Mantinea's reputation and influence within the *koinon* but got him appointed general of the Arcadians – in which capacity he led 5,000 federal soldiers against Pellene. Diodorus, perhaps relying on a source that credited Lykomedes with both victories, must have assumed that he commanded Confederate troops in both cases, whereas it is more sensible to assume that this was true only in the case of Pellene.

It is also a fair assumption that Lykomedes supported democracy. His commitment to Arcadian federalism suggests that in 370 – before emerging as a leading politician – he supported the Mantinean intervention at Tegea in support of Kallibios and Proxenos.<sup>321</sup> His successful bid to persuade the Confederate assembly to negotiate an alliance with Athens in 366 suggests both that he was influential in the most democratic federal institution and that Greece's most prominent democracy was his prime target for military and political cooperation. Indeed, in hindsight, he was probably behind the flurry of alliances made by the Arcadians in 369/8, soon after the Orchomenos expedition: Elis, Argos, a failed attempt with Athens, followed by a successful one with Thebes (Diod. 15.62.3) – notably, all four *poleis* were democratic at the time.<sup>322</sup> Lykomedes' authority in the assembly also suggests that he contributed to shaping Confederate foreign policy in the mid-360s, which was more or less consistently one of support for democracies abroad, although with mixed results.<sup>323</sup>

How should the foundation of Megalopolis in 368 be interpreted within this framework?<sup>324</sup> This is potentially a key issue since Pausanias (8.27) attributes the foundation to Epaminondas of

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<sup>319</sup> The two attacks played out in the same season (369/8), and given that the office of *stratēgos* was annual (Nielsen 2002, 480) the second passage does not refer to re-election.

<sup>320</sup> The only extant indication of classical Orchomenos' population size is the 600-strong contingent it sent to Plataea: Hdt. 9.28.4. Forsén (2000, 51) calculates that the population of Orchomenos was roughly half the size of Mantinea's.

<sup>321</sup> Notably, no source links Lykomedes with the second synoikism of Mantinea, but it is at least plausible that he played a role in it: Bearzot 2019, 258.

<sup>322</sup> As attested by the CPC *Inventory* – see s.v. for the respective evidence.

<sup>323</sup> Roy 2000, 321–25; Nielsen 2002, 488–90; Robinson 2011, 42.

<sup>324</sup> The textual evidence on the synoikism of Megalopolis is collected and analysed by: Moggi 1976, 293–324; Nielsen 2002, 414–42. The date of the synoikism is disputed. Most scholars accept Xenophon's 368 dating: see e.g. Niese

Thebes but also lists Lykomedes himself as one of the oikists. The problem, however, is that quite what was at stake in the creation of Megalopolis is unclear. The old theory according to which Megalopolis was designed to serve as the ‘capital’ of the League has long been discredited.<sup>325</sup> The political importance of Megalopolis was limited in its early years, and it is also unlikely that Lykomedes – if he was in fact one of the oikists – spent much time there, given how busy he was elsewhere between 368 and his death only two years later. Epaminondas’ role is also opaque. Moggi is right to believe that while Epaminondas supported the synoikism of Megalopolis for strategic and geopolitical reasons – as a further piece of the strategy to contain Sparta within the boundaries of Laconia, alongside the foundation of Messene – he was probably not *the* formal founder of the city.<sup>326</sup> All we can say on the basis of Pausanias’ list of oikists is that it further proves the important role of Mantinea, and of Lykomedes in particular, in the League.

Lykomedes’ career came to an abrupt end when he was killed by Arcadian exiles on his way back from Athens in 366.<sup>327</sup> What Lykomedes’ murderers expected to accomplish is unclear. If – as the Athenians themselves believed – the alliance represented for Arcadia a potential shift away from Thebes and towards Sparta, then the murder cannot have been linked to a pro-Spartan plot. The alliance came into force despite Lykomedes’ death, Mantinea remained a member of the League and there is no evidence of attempts (successful or not) to overthrow its constitution. In fact, Mantinean policy did not change to an appreciable extent in the wake of Lykomedes’ death; for instance, when in 365/4 Elis occupied the Arcadian town of Lasion on the border, Mantinea duly took part in the Arcadian expedition to retake it.<sup>328</sup> There appears to have been by then a broad consensus in Mantinea regarding the city’s commitment to the *koinon* and central role in it; Lykomedes may have been the strongest advocate for those policies, but they did not die with him.

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1899, 538–39, followed by Roy 1971, 591. An earlier date (371/0, i.e. in the immediate aftermath of Leuctra) is implied by Paus. 8.27.8; Hornblower 1990 put forward an extensive argument in support of it.

<sup>325</sup> The theory dates back to at least Bury 1898 and has often been repeated as a given (see e.g. McDonald 1943, 107). All extant evidence for Megalopolis serving as ‘capital’ is later than the 360s: most notably, the Arcadian assembly met there in 348/7 (Dem. 19.10; Aeschin. 2.157). Tegea hosted the only federal meeting securely dated before 362 (Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.36) and the only entirely preserved Confederate decree (*IG* V.2 1) was found there. Therefore if a federal capital is to be identified at all, Tegea’s credentials would be stronger than Megalopolis’, at least for the 360s: see Roy 2000, 314–15.

<sup>326</sup> Moggi 1976, 314–16. A close relationship between Thebes and Megalopolis seems attested for the 350s: according to Nielsen (2004a, 521), Diod. 16.28 suggests that the two were allies. On the foundation of Messene, see: Luraghi 2008, 210–18; 2015. Part of the tradition credited Epaminondas with the second synoikism of Mantinea itself, as well: Demand 1990, 109–10.

<sup>327</sup> On the murder of Lykomedes, see Beck 1997.

<sup>328</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.12; Diod. 15.77.1–2.

364 was the high-water mark of the League, as the Arcadians conquered Olympia, set up a puppet statelet in Pisatis and celebrated the Olympic Games through it with the support of Argive and Athenian contingents.<sup>329</sup> But the conquest of Olympia also initiated the break-up of the *koinon*. As seen above, the Arcadians maintained an elite contingent, sometimes referred to as the *eparittoi*. After taking Olympia, they had resolved to fund the *eparittoi* from the sacred treasury in the sanctuary, but in 364/3 the Mantineans voted to stop appropriating the sacred funds and pay for the *eparittoi* from the member-cities' individual treasuries (7.4.33). The Mantinean stance, unpopular at first, picked up steam as other cities began to share their qualms; the Arcadian assembly ultimately passed a vote to ban the use of the treasury of Olympia (7.4.34). But the affair opened a rift among the Arcadians: when some leaders in support of using the Olympic treasury asked Thebes to intervene for fear of being put to death by the Arcadian assembly, the question of the *koinon*'s foreign policy became even more politically charged than before. The pro-Theban faction believed that unless the Thebans intervened immediately, the League would defect to the Spartan side; meanwhile, the anti-Theban faction – which Xenophon describes as having ‘the best interests of the Peloponnese at heart’, and included among others the Mantineans, the Eleians and the Achaeans – believed that Thebes wanted to weaken the Peloponnese in order to subjugate it more easily (7.5.1–2).<sup>330</sup> The long-standing internal Arcadian quarrel over Thebes was now suddenly about existential risk.

Mantineia had been vocally sceptical of Thebes' involvement in Arcadia since the beginning of the decade; thanks to its anti-Theban credentials, it was well positioned to head the emerging opposition. On the other side, it seems that Tegea took up the role of leader of the pro-Theban front, taking advantage of its relatively large size and good relations with both Thebes and many Arcadian *poleis*; indeed, despite Mantineia's disengagement, Thebes could still count on the support of most major Arcadian *poleis* – not only Tegea, but also Megalopolis, Asea and Pallantion (7.5.5).<sup>331</sup> Tegea's enduring and growing influence despite the break-up must have further convinced the Mantineans that they could no longer counterbalance their southern neighbours in the unitary Arcadian *koinon*, let alone lead it.<sup>332</sup> At the same time, considerations based on foreign policy and

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<sup>329</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.28–32; Diod. 15.78.

<sup>330</sup> On Xenophon's phrase, see also 7.4.35.

<sup>331</sup> According to Diodorus (15.82.2), Tegea became the leader of one of the two ‘parties’ (*ἐραυρία*) into which Arcadia was split after Mantineia's break with the League. Diodorus also says that Tegea's faction could count on the support of ‘the most numerous and the bravest’ of the Arcadians (15.84.4); but on this statement see the sceptical assessment in Stylianiou 1998, 513–14.

<sup>332</sup> Mantineia's fear may have been motivated by differences in size, if Forsén (2000) is correct in arguing that the population of Tegea was significantly larger – perhaps up to twice as large – as that of Mantineia. For Mantineia, the best way to preserve its autonomy *vis-à-vis* its southern neighbour was by securing support elsewhere in Arcadia

power-play should not make us dismiss other, more straightforward explanations for the crisis of 364/3. The religious reservations shown by several Arcadian cities in using the Olympic funds could very well be sincere. Some cities' desire for peace with Elis – the issue on which the rift became irreparable – was not necessarily evidence of sympathy for Sparta: except for the war for Lasion, there had been a broader movement towards peace in the Peloponnese since the Atheno–Arcadian alliance brokered by Lykomedes, and Mantinea itself was perhaps mindful (or conveniently reminded) of the support offered by Elis in occasion of the synoikism of 370 (6.5.5).<sup>333</sup> But whatever the decisive motive behind the break-up was, the key point remains that Mantinea became the centre of anti-Theban resistance in the Peloponnese, and that after 363 the intra-Arcadian rift never fully healed, with Mantinea and Tegea (and perhaps Megalopolis) probably leading separate confederacies.<sup>334</sup>

It is important to note that the explanation I have offered for the break-up does not assume that it was necessarily connected with an anti-democratic turn at Mantinea, although this has been postulated by various scholars.<sup>335</sup> There is no mention of *stasis* at Mantinea in Xenophon or Diodorus, and while arguments from silence are generally weak, Xenophon's interest in and knowledge of internal Arcadian affairs at the beginning of the decade make it hard to assume that he ignored or chose to omit an oligarchic coup. It is true that Mantinea fought alongside Sparta and against democratic Argos and Tegea in 362; but Athens was also on Mantinea's side, fighting other democracies.<sup>336</sup> We should therefore assume that Mantinea remained democratic: the striking thing about 363 becomes then its withdrawal from democratic *federalism*. But even Lykomedes' staunch federalism was qualified by two principles: the *raison d'être* of the League was to resist Theban influence, and Mantinea was to be a leading member within it. If neither condition was viable any longer, exit was a predictable outcome – and one that need not have involved the end of Mantinean democracy.

The absence of any certainty as to when (if at all) Mantinean democracy ceased to exist shows how difficult it is to follow the trajectory of one single polity in a period in which much of the evidence is concerned with the League as a whole. Most importantly, we lack virtually all information on how Mantinean democracy *worked* in practice after 370. However, the extant

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through the federal institutions (and stopping Tegea from securing that support for itself instead). The crisis may have led the Mantineans to believe that that route was no longer viable.

<sup>333</sup> On the first attempts to negotiate a general peace between Lykomedes' death and the war of Lasion, see Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.4–11.

<sup>334</sup> It was at Mantinea that the armies of the anti-Theban coalition gathered in 362, before the famous battle: Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.7. On the multiple Arcadian confederacies post-363, see Nielsen 2002, 493–96; in particular, point 3 and 9 are probable evidence of Mantinea leading its own hegemonic *koinon*.

<sup>335</sup> See e.g. Stylianou 1998, 506; Nielsen 2015, 267.

<sup>336</sup> On the disposition of the various contingents at Mantinea in 362, see Diod. 15.85.2.

evidence allows us to see how its democratic constitution – whatever the details of its workings – shaped its conduct as a member of the Arcadian *koinon*. Democracy was consistently a way for Mantinea to protect its autonomy, strengthen its internal unity, and shape alliances with other states with similar constitutions. There is no reason to believe that this was no longer true after its exit from the League.

#### 4. Argos (c.550–338)

This chapter is about democracy at Argos between the late archaic period and the reign of Philip II of Macedon. The city of Argos, continuously inhabited for 6,000 years, lies roughly at the centre of the triangle-shaped Argive plain (or ‘Argeia’), immediately to the east of the Larisa–Aspis massif that constitutes the eastern ramification of the mountain range separating the Argolid from Arcadia.<sup>337</sup> Unlike Elis and Mantinea, Argos was a major urban centre long before adopting a democratic constitution, and I argue that its transition to democracy was connected to its political incorporation of the surrounding *chōra* rather than a change in the pattern of settlement.

In §4.1, I focus on the prehistory and early history of Argive democracy. Through an analysis of the literary, archaeological and epigraphical evidence on archaic Argos, I show that although archaic political institutions were most likely dominated by the landed aristocracy, the development of public urban spaces and the traditions attributing an active political role to the archaic *dēmos* show that labelling Argos as an ‘oligarchy’ risks being misleading.

In §4.2, I argue that the Battle of Sepeia (c.494) did not have a direct impact on Argos’ institutions, but severely endangered its geopolitical position in the Argolid, prompting an aggressive reaction in the following decades. Argos emerged from this conjuncture as a *dēmokratia*, albeit a very different one from Athens – even though in 462/1 the two cities would strike an alliance predicated (also) on their shared democratic constitution, marking the beginning of an era in which constitutional affinity warranted and facilitated political and military cooperation.

In §4.3, I look at how Argive democracy navigated the century between the Peace of Nicias and the reign of Philip II. By paying particular attention to some key episodes – most importantly Argos’ participation in the Peloponnesian War, the coup of 417, the union with Corinth of the late 390s and early 380s, the *skytalismo*s of 370 and the city’s external relations around the middle of the century – I investigate both how the city’s democratic principles worked in practice in enabling and protecting popular rule, and how those principles informed Argos’ foreign policy and specifically its opposition to Sparta.

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<sup>337</sup> The history of Argos in its *longue durée* perspective, from prehistory to the present day, is the subject of Piérart and Touchais 1996. On the geography of the Argolid, see: Lehmann 1937; Tomlinson 1972, 7–47; Zangger 1993; Jameson et al. 1994, 13–56, 149–213.

## 4.1. Milling about in the agora

Thucydides says that, in the spring of 421, the Mantineans approached Argos requesting an alliance on the basis of their shared democratic constitution (5.29.1). I have noted above (p.71) that this passage provides the safest *terminus ante quem* for the establishment of a democracy at Mantinea; the same is true for Argos. However, Argos was almost certainly a democratic *polis* already by the late 460s, when Aeschylus' *Suppliants* celebrated Argos' alliance with democratic Athens; around the same time, Argos started issuing decrees with the *aliaia* (assembly) acting as its sovereign body.<sup>338</sup> But when and how did Argos become a democracy? An element that has often been seen as important in trying to answer this question is that, at some point in the mid-490s (the conventional date is 494), Argos was soundly defeated by Sparta in the Battle of Sepeia, near Tiryns.<sup>339</sup> According to Herodotus, the losses suffered by Argos at Sepeia were so serious that the city's *douloi* took over until the next generation of citizens came of age and drove them out (6.83). Some scholars have contended that this alleged revolution effectively established a first *dēmokratia* at Argos as early as the 490s, possibly followed by an 'oligarchic interregnum' when the sons of the slain citizens grew up (in the mid-460s) before the definitive democratic turn in connection with the alliance with Athens.<sup>340</sup> Others have viewed the democratisation of Argos as a longer, gradual process, which came to a conclusion in the 460s and was only loosely – if at all – connected with Sepeia.<sup>341</sup> The primary joint purpose of §4.1 and §4.2 is to make a new, stronger case for the second position. In this section, I explore the evidence on the urban and political history of Argos prior to the fifth century BCE, with the aim of reconstructing and analysing the socio-political context in which its transition towards democracy took place.

Initially, the population of Argos did not inhabit a single urban centre. The spatial distribution of burials shows that, from the EG period to the end of the eighth century, there were at least three separate settlements on the future site of Argos:

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<sup>338</sup> See below for more, in addition to Pattoni 2017 with previous bibliography. The earliest mention of the Argive *aliaia* is in *SEG* 13.239, datable to c.475 (see below).

<sup>339</sup> Herodotus' (6.76–81, plus the ensuing trial on Cleomenes at 6.82) is the longest and earliest extant narrative of the battle. Shorter accounts are in Paus. 2.20.8, 3.4.1. Like most scholars, I accept Herodotus' mid-490s date based on Sepeia's connection to the fall of Miletus (494) implied by the joint Delphic oracle (6.19 and 6.77). Paus. 3.4.1 dates Sepeia to the very beginning of Cleomenes' reign (c.520): see Bultrighini 2016, 104–37. An alleged third date (510/509) is baseless: Hendriks 1980.

<sup>340</sup> Forrest 1960, 225–26; O'Neil 1981; Gehrke 1985, 363; 1986, 115; Robinson 1997, 84–88; 2011, 7–8.

<sup>341</sup> Busolt *Gr. Gesch.* 3:114; Vollgraff 1958, 537–38; Kiechle 1960, 196n4; Wörrle 1964, 12; Piérart 1997, 333; 2000, 307; Giangiulio 2015, 30–31. A very balanced discussion, leaning towards this position, is offered by Leppin 1999, 301–4.



1. one, the largest, at the centre of the modern city, between the archaeological museum and Kalmoukou Street;
2. one on the NW edge, to the south of the Aspis hill (less well documented from the Middle Geometric period onwards);
3. one on the SW edge, near the site of the classical agora.<sup>342</sup>

Roughly at the beginning of the seventh century, burial patterns changed dramatically: very few tombs are found in the central area from this period onwards, and burial activity became limited to the pre-existing cemetery at the SW edge of the city and a new necropolis at the far north, near the modern hospital. This seems to be evidence of a transition towards nucleated settlement.<sup>343</sup> A conspicuous votive deposit on the Larisa hill, datable to the same period (750–650), could be connected to the Temple of Athena Polias or, less probably, that of Zeus Larisaios.<sup>344</sup> In the same period, the ‘double sanctuary’ of Apollo Pythaios (or Deiradiotes) and Athena Oxyderkes was built on the SW slopes of the Aspis hill, just above the Deiras ridge.<sup>345</sup> Piérart has suggested that the construction of these communal sanctuaries by the local population, at a time when they were synoikising into a continuous urban centre, marks a new stage of their political integration: they now had an acropolis with public buildings, which he takes to be one of the two ‘traits caractéristiques des villes grecques des époques ultérieures’.<sup>346</sup>

The other ‘trait caractéristique’ is the presence of an agora. This is a more complex problem. The classical agora of Argos lies to the east of the archaeological complex formed by the two theatres and the Roman baths, from which it is separated by the modern Tripoleos road.<sup>347</sup> Although most of the extant buildings here date from the fifth century onwards, some evidence suggests that the area began to emerge as the centre of the city much earlier.<sup>348</sup> The sixth century was a key moment in this process. A set of upright boundary stones marks an oval enclosure SW of the fourth-century semicircular orchestra on the N side of the agora; one of the stones bears an inscription commemorating the Seven against Thebes (*ἡρώων τῶν ἐν Θ[ῆ]βαις*), in mid-sixth-century lettering, identifying the place as a *herōon*.<sup>349</sup> Since the *herōon* must have been built at or

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<sup>342</sup> Hall 1997, 93–99. On the remarkable continuity of settlement on Kalmoukou between the PG and the Hellenistic period, see Philippa-Touchais et al. 2004, 1316.

<sup>343</sup> Hall 1997, 99; Vink 2002, 58; Donati 2015, 188.

<sup>344</sup> Courbin 1955, 314; Hägg 1992, 11.

<sup>345</sup> On the double sanctuary, see: Kadletz 1978, 93–94; Morgan and Whitelaw 1991, 83; Piérart 2006, 21–22.

<sup>346</sup> Piérart 2003, 59, following Martin 1974, 80–81.

<sup>347</sup> The best recent treatment is Donati 2015, 186–96. The French School at Athens is currently preparing an extended volume on the agora of Argos based on the ongoing French excavations on the site.

<sup>348</sup> Donati 2015, 188.

<sup>349</sup> Pariente 1992. The existence of statues of the Seven in the Argive agora (at least in the second century CE) is attested in Paus. 2.20.5.

before the time of the inscription, by the mid-sixth century the future agora was already a place of cult. There is even stronger evidence of economic activity from this period. In 1986, French excavators discovered a number of lead weights marked with different letters and two lead tablets, one of which bears the names of different kinds of merchandise, including chaff (*ἄχυρο*); these can be dated to the late sixth or early fifth century.<sup>350</sup> During the same period, the Argives built an open-air drainage conduit in a particularly flood-prone sector of the agora, N of the ‘Southern Stoa’.<sup>351</sup> Donati is certainly right to note that these projects transformed the centre of Argos ‘into something more formal and lasting’;<sup>352</sup> in fact, Piérart has suggested that the constant ‘mouvement d’aller-retour’ of the settlement centre between the Aspis hill and the district of the classical agora from the Neolithic down to the Geometric period was due to the variations in the course of the rivers Charadros and Inachos, which in the late twentieth century still threatened the city with sporadic but violent floods.<sup>353</sup> The drainage works, coupled with the more ambitious fifth-century embankment (which would remain in use for a millennium), would grant the city’s central sector an unprecedented degree of environmental resilience and, thus, permanence.<sup>354</sup>

It is debatable whether the cumulative evidence presented so far warrants describing the archaic centre of Argos as an ‘agora’. As Ruzé has noted, there are two fundamentally irreconcilable views about the evolutionary history of Greek agoras: while some scholars believe that an agora can evolve gradually and organically over time, others believe that its foundation must result from a single, collective decision to that effect.<sup>355</sup> Argos, however, does not quite fit this dichotomy. If there is evidence for public activity in the agora from the eighth century onwards, it is also true that this centuries-long process of development and monumentalisation accelerated dramatically at some point in the sixth century, and this certainly points to a deliberate intent on the part of the Argives to provide themselves at that point in time with what could be characterised as an agora. Interestingly, the evidence suggests that this project predated the establishment of a democratic constitution at Argos, raising the question of the project’s political role and significance in the political evolution of the city.

According to Pausanias (2.19.3), the most prominent (*ἐπιφανέστατον*) temple in classical and post-classical Argos was that of Apollo Lykeios, built at some point in the fifth century,

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<sup>350</sup> Piérart et al. 1987, 591; *SEG* 37.284–85.

<sup>351</sup> Pariente et al. 1998, 215–16.

<sup>352</sup> Donati 2015, 192.

<sup>353</sup> Piérart 2003, 53. For a historical analysis of the floods of the two rivers, see Fouache and Gaki-Papanastassiou 1997.

<sup>354</sup> Piérart 2003, 66.

<sup>355</sup> Ruzé 2003.

probably in the first quarter.<sup>356</sup> This temple, not yet identified, was a key piece in the city’s political landscape – it was here that the Argives were to erect their copy of the ‘quadruple alliance’ treaty of 421 (Thuc. 5.47.11) – and this temple was built in the agora and closely associated with it.<sup>357</sup> Before the fifth century, however, evidence for *stricto sensu* political activity associated with the agora is hard to come by. The earliest mention of the Argive assembly (*aliaia*) is in an inscription datable to c.475 (*SEG* 13.239), and its meeting place was the nearby ‘Theatre with the Straight Rows’, itself built in the fifth century (see below): whether *an* assembly existed or not before the democracy, there is no evidence that it met in the agora, and when *the* assembly really became Argos’ sovereign body it began meeting elsewhere. As to the council, its probable meeting place – the Hypostyle Hall – was indeed in the agora, but its construction cannot predate the second quarter of the fifth century (see §4.2).<sup>358</sup> Perhaps less surprisingly, there is no material evidence for the use of the archaic agora as a law-court, either.

Yet, by its very nature, such a place fostered cross-class interaction. Aristotle offers some practical examples as to how this would come about. In the chapter on Mantinea, I drew attention to how a dispersed pattern of settlement could, according to Aristotle, limit political participation and make a democracy naturally more ‘moderate’ (§3.2). By contrast, worse democracies were characterised by the presence of an *ἀγοραῖος ὄχλος*, a crowd constantly ‘milling about’ (*κυλίεσθαι*) in the agora that could all too easily attend assembly meetings and influence city policy (*Pol.* 1319<sup>a</sup>24–38). It is no coincidence that Aristotle’s ideal city had two agoras, one for free men to mingle and one for shopkeepers to sell their goods, in order to shield upper-class citizens from the degradation associated with trade and keep the indigent away from the centre of communal life (1331<sup>a</sup>30–<sup>b</sup>4). The sixth-century evidence shows that the Argives conducted their cultic and commercial activities all in one place, and that therefore we should imagine the centre of their city as constantly teeming with life.

Can we retrace the institutional framework in which this public space came into being? I turn now to the evidence on archaic Argive institutions in order to show that ‘oligarchy’ is potentially a misleading label for its constitution.

Institutional evidence comes primarily from epigraphy. In one inscription from Argos datable to 575–550, the statement that ‘nine *damiorgoi* ruled’ (*ἐφανάσσαντο*) is followed by a list of

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<sup>356</sup> Donati 2015, 189–90 with bibliography.

<sup>357</sup> See Soph. *El.* 7: the agora of Argos is called *ἀγορὰ Λύκειος* after the temple.

<sup>358</sup> However, Hdt. 7.148.3 could be taken to imply that Argos had a *bouleuterion* by 481.

nine names.<sup>359</sup> The list was traditionally taken as one of mythical kings until Hammond suggested reading it as the membership of a board of ‘leading magistrates’.<sup>360</sup> The use of the verb ἐφανάσσαντο, along with the effort to regulate the scenario of a vacant *damiorgia* in other contemporaneous local inscriptions, suggests that while details such as powers, term of office, eligibility and election are entirely lost, the small board of *damiorgoi* was indeed the city’s supreme authority in the sixth century.<sup>361</sup> It is tempting to link this evidence with the later traditions about the decline of Argive *basileia* in the same period and assume that while the powers of the king waned, those of the upper class – which will have monopolised the *damiorgia* – were on the rise.<sup>362</sup> However, *basileia* did not die out just yet: the existence of a *basileus* is attested with certainty until the middle of the fifth century at least.<sup>363</sup> Also, the old theory according to which the ‘aristocratic’ *damiorgoi* were replaced by the ‘democratic’ *artunai* in connection with the democratic reform has now been disproved by a fourth-century bronze tablet, found in 2000 and first published in 2006, proving that *damiorgoi* and *artunai* operated together in democratic Argos.<sup>364</sup> It is fair to say that the *basileus* was nearly powerless by the fifth century and succession was almost certainly by election, but the assumption that he had been *more* powerful before the rise of the *damiorgia* is an undue one and rests mostly on the stories about the mythical tyrant-king Pheidon: the epigraphical evidence fails to show how the *damiorgia* may have wrestled power away from the *basileus*, and therefore contributed to the demise of Argive kingship.<sup>365</sup>

However, a closer look at Pausanias and Diodorus’ accounts of such demise reveals the consistent presence of a strong popular element in these stories. Pausanias relates that the Temenid king Meltas, son of Lakedas, was ‘condemned and dethroned altogether’ (τὸ παράπαν ἔπαυσεν ἀρχῆς καταγνούς) by the *dēmos* (2.19.2).<sup>366</sup> According to a Diodorean fragment, an unnamed

<sup>359</sup> IG IV 614; SEG 11.336; *Nomima* 1.87. On the date: Jeffery 1990, 156–58. The names are of clear ‘origine héroïque’ (*Nomima*): besides Adrastos and Aristomachos, see also Sthenelas (cf. Paus. 2.16.1) and Potamos (2.15.5 on the river-god Inachos). On the Argive *damiorgia*, see Wörrle 1964, 61–70.

<sup>360</sup> Hammond 1960, 35. Another inscription, roughly from the same period or slightly more recent, lists six *damiorgoi*: SEG 11.314; *Nomima* 1.88. This is probably evidence of an unstable, fluctuating constitution: Tuci 2006, 213–14.

<sup>361</sup> IG IV 493 (αἱ μὲ δαμοργία εἶε), 506 (line 7: αἱ δὲ μὲ δαμο[ρ]γοῖ τις). These inscriptions are respectively from Mycenae and the Heraion, but I shall tentatively assume that they reflect Argos’ institutions. On the nature of the *damiorgia* see also *Etym. Mag.* s.v. δημιουργός: δημιουργοὶ δὲ ἐκαλοῦντο παρά τε Ἀργείοις καὶ Θεσσαλοῖς οἱ περὶ τὰ τέλη, i.e. ‘those in charge’. However, it is true that ‘[d]ie Notiz des Etymologicum Magnum ... ist zu allgemein, oberflächlich und deshalb ohne besonderen Wert’ (Wörrle 1964, 62).

<sup>362</sup> On the crisis of Argive kingship: Diod. 7.13.2; Paus. 2.19.2.

<sup>363</sup> See e.g. OR 126 (c.450), line 43. A *probasileus* is attested in SEG 29.361 (c.400), line 2.

<sup>364</sup> Kritzas 2006, 434. On the old theory now disproved by Kritzas’ tablet, see e.g.: Gomme et al. 1945–1970, 4:59; Tomlinson 1972, 198.

<sup>365</sup> On the traditions on Pheidon, see: Kōiv 2000; Ragone 2006.

<sup>366</sup> Lakedas should plausibly be identified with the Lakydes accused of *μαλακία* in Plutarch (*De cap.* 6 = *Mor.* 89<sup>e</sup>) and with the Leokedes, son of Pheidon, mentioned by Herodotus (6.127.3). This would make Meltas Pheidon’s grandson.

Argive king lost a war against the Spartans and handed some ancestral Argive lands over to Arcadian exiles; the *dēmos* rose up against him and he fled to Tegea (7.13.2). I shall not address the thorny problem of what events these sources refer to, and instead confine myself to stressing that in both passages – plausibly built upon a common, fourth-century tradition – the *dēmos* is framed as a key political actor.<sup>367</sup> A passage in Plutarch may illuminate what this tradition said happened at Argos after the ouster: the Delphic oracle told the Argives that an eagle would show them their next king, and soon an eagle landed by the house of one Aigon, who was then made king (*De Alex. fort.* 2.8 = *Mor.* 340<sup>c</sup>). The implication here is that the next phase of the Argive monarchy would rely on some form of legitimisation other than dynastic right. *Per se*, the traditions depicting an increasing degree of popular involvement in politics might be taken as later democratic propaganda. Yet, the archaeological evidence from the archaic period shows a transition from elaborate and wealthy tombs – markers of elite status – to fewer, simpler burials after c.700 which, following Morris, suggests social instability.<sup>368</sup> On this basis, socio-economic inequality within the Argive *dēmos* in the late archaic period appears relatively limited.

A related and potentially crucial element is the plausible existence in archaic Argos of a system of ‘citoyenneté à degrés’, which included a group of free non-citizens comparable to the Spartan *perioikoi*.<sup>369</sup> But who were these non-citizens exactly? Not only is the evidence for the extent of Argos’ domain in the plain scarce; arguably, the question has also sometimes been framed in the wrong terms. It is misleading to speak in general terms of areas ‘controlled’ by Argos, because this label lumps together the nearby smaller *poleis* (Mycenae, Tiryns, Nauplia) and the even smaller villages where no *polis* institutions are attested.<sup>370</sup> For the former group, the gaps in our knowledge are well exemplified by the case of Tiryns.<sup>371</sup> In an important 1995 article centred on the question of the control of the Heraion, Hall espoused a minimalist view of the extent of archaic Argos’ domain: before the mid-fifth century – he argued – the Argive *chōra* did not extend beyond the river Inachos, the eastern plain (Tiryns included) being outside Argive control.<sup>372</sup> His key piece of evidence for Tirynthian autonomy is a fragmentary inscription from Tiryns (*SEG* 30.380, c.600 BCE) that mentions an empowered *damos* and an *aliaia* (‘assembly’), which Hall took to signal political autonomy.<sup>373</sup> Shortly after Hall’s article, Piérart approached the question of Tiryns from a

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<sup>367</sup> On the historical evolution of Argive kingship, including the problem of its downfall, see in particular Carlier 1984, 381–95.

<sup>368</sup> Morris 1987, 183–85, followed by Piérart 2003, 60; see also Foley 1995.

<sup>369</sup> Piérart 1997, 331.

<sup>370</sup> For example: Seymour 1922, 28; Pariente 1992, 222n199.

<sup>371</sup> On the case of Tiryns, see Frullini 2021, 118–19.

<sup>372</sup> Hall 1995, 587–92.

<sup>373</sup> Hall 1995, 587. The inscription was edited by Verdelis et al. 1975, who also concluded that it proves independent status (203).

cultic rather than political perspective. He observed that in the late archaic period Argos, Mycenae and Tiryns shared a coherent system of local myths; this cultural unity is further proven by the same Tirynthian inscription discussed by Hall, for it shows that a common alphabet was in use throughout the plain. Accepting Foley's theory of an Argive control over Tiryns' religious affairs, and contrasting the evidence for cultural homogeneity in the plain with the simultaneous tendency towards particularisation elsewhere in Greece, Piérart concluded that by c.600 Tiryns and the plain must have been controlled by Argos.<sup>374</sup> As I argue in the next section, the best way to reconcile the two views is to view Argos' regional influence on a spectrum, built on networks between factions of varying intensity: acknowledging or resisting Argos' leadership was, for the smaller *poleis* of the Argeia, a matter of foreign policy.

The question of the *perioikis* is fundamentally different, because the *perioikoi* had a much stronger connection to the Argive state. That Argos employed a perioikic model of territorial control is taken for granted by ancient authors such as Aristotle and Plutarch, in their accounts of Argos' response to the Battle of Sepeia (on which see next section).<sup>375</sup> Further evidence could come from an inscription from the Argive agora (*SEG* 48.408), dated to c.500, in which an Argive citizen is qualified as *Λυρκειεύς*, i.e. a resident of the village of Lyrkeia in the western Argolid: Piérart sees this inscription as proving that the Argive citizen body in the late archaic period was organised hierarchically, with one's legal status as Argive citizen being somehow associated with the Argolic settlement one came from.<sup>376</sup>

In conclusion, based on the available evidence, what did Argos look like at the dawn of the fifth century? First, it is quite likely that the chief offices such as the *damiorgia* were effectively controlled by the upper classes. However, the later literary traditions on Argos' sixth-century history and what little we know about its social structure point to a society in which political authorities had to secure some form of (not necessarily formalised) support from the lower classes. The hierarchical structure of the Argive population, in which groups of free non-citizens settled in the surrounding villages were incorporated as *perioikoi* and relied upon for military and political purposes, may further suggest that – by contrast – full citizens enjoyed a degree of political influence.<sup>377</sup> In this scenario, the sixth-century building programme in the agora, certainly initiated by the elite, played a key role in bringing the citizenry together in an institutionalised space and providing a visible 'stage' for public life. On one hand, the citizen body would be empowered to grant legitimacy to policy-makers; on the other hand, policy-makers could hope that this form of

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<sup>374</sup> Piérart 1997, 335–36; see also Foley 1988, 127–28.

<sup>375</sup> Arist. Pol. 1303<sup>a</sup>6–8; Plut. *De mul. vir.* 4.

<sup>376</sup> Piérart 1997, 331; see note 245 above.

<sup>377</sup> For example, Scott (2005, 579) postulated that 'franchise' was extended to all 'Dorian inhabitants'.

public involvement would encourage the *dēmos* to comply more willingly with their political decisions. Dynamics such as these are widely attested throughout the archaic Greek world, and the profound co-dependency of elite and *dēmos* in them defies the traditional ‘oligarchy’/‘democracy’ dichotomy.<sup>378</sup> An obvious parallel is Sparta’s Great Rhetra, which grants the *apella* the right to be consulted regularly and provides it with large powers, while also reaffirming the right of the officials to override popular opinion should the *dēmos* speak ‘crookedly’ (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.1). In itself, a similar system could prove stable and long-lived; the purpose of the next section is to explore what exactly in the post-Sepeia crisis triggered the transformation of this arrangement into one that contemporary Greeks could unqualifiedly call *dēmokratia*.

## 4.2. Towards the democracy

The Argive defeat at the hands of Sparta in the Battle of Sepeia, conventionally dated to 494, is the earliest event in Argos’ history that can be reconstructed with some precision. The true importance of the battle, even for the ancients, lay in its consequences for Argos: according to Herodotus, after the severe defeat, Argos was so deprived of men that the *douloi* took over until the next generation of citizens came of age and drove them out (6.83). In this section, I argue that the link between the post-Sepeia crisis and the creation of Argive democracy was indirect. The battle, in itself, did not create the conditions for a widening of popular participation; rather, its main consequence was a dramatic loss of regional influence for Argos and therefore a lasting state of isolation. It was in response to this situation that the Argives, once they had recovered, undertook a process of expansion and enlarged their territory through direct conquest, in contrast to the ‘multipolar’ arrangement they had apparently accepted to operate within during the archaic period. Democracy emerged therefore in the 460s, in ill-known circumstances, as a way to reorganise access to public resources on an egalitarian basis. In the remainder of the section, I consider the impact of this reinterpretation on what else we know about the formative stage of Argive democracy, down to 451.<sup>379</sup>

Herodotus’ treatment of the consequences of the Battle of Sepeia is built upon the concept of ‘oligandry’, the demographic crisis that followed the massacre: it is because of oligandry that the remnants of Argos’ ruling class are overpowered by the *douloi*, who seize full control of the

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<sup>378</sup> See Simonton 2017, 11 with bibliography. This does not warrant calling sixth-century Argos a ‘democracy’, contra Robinson 1997, 82–84.

<sup>379</sup> This section is largely based on Frullini 2021, my own study of the impact of Sepeia on the political and constitutional history of Argos.

*archai* (6.83.1). Interestingly, the later extant ancient accounts of the post-Sepeia crisis challenge Herodotus on several details of his version – the nature of the social group involved, the (il)legality of its empowerment – but tacitly accept oligandry as the link between the battle and whatever came after it.<sup>380</sup> Therefore this point must be analysed first: did Sepeia *really* cause a shortage of adult citizens at Argos, to such an extent that the remaining men lost control of the public institutions? In his narrative of the battle, Herodotus does not provide a number of casualties. After the Spartan army led by Cleomenes disembarked near Tiryns and Nauplia, their first confrontation with the Argives was a traditional pitched battle in which ‘many’ Argives were killed, but ‘many more’ managed to seek shelter in a grove nearby (6.78.2: πολλοὺς μὲν ... πολλῶ δέ τι πλεῦνας). The bulk of the massacre occurred later, when Cleomenes had the grove burnt to the ground, thus killing the refugees therein (6.80). The implication is that the massacre was of a dramatic scale, but no figures are provided.<sup>381</sup>

In a very different context, however, Herodotus does give a number (7.148–51). In 481, when prompted to join the anti-Persian coalition at the eve of Xerxes’ invasion, the Argives claimed that an unusually straightforward oracle had told them to remain neutral in an impending war, and that they were still reeling from the ‘recent’ (νεωστῆ) loss of ‘six thousand of themselves’ (σφέων ... ἑξακισχιλίου). In making this claim in the presence of many witnesses, the Argives could expect to be believed, and indeed the Spartans themselves seemed happy to accept it as grounds for a truce.<sup>382</sup> We also know that at the Battle of Nemea, in 394, Argos fielded a 7,000-strong hoplite contingent (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.17). Therefore, positing some net long-term growth, we may assume that one century earlier Argos could field some 6,000 hoplites.<sup>383</sup> Does this mean that Argos’ entire army died at Sepeia? No, because nothing suggests that Herodotus’ 6,000 *men* were all *hoplites*. Greek hoplite armies were typically accompanied by light-armed contingents (*psiloi*) of roughly equal size.<sup>384</sup> There is evidence that pre-classical Argos, in particular, employed contingents of light-armed slaves, called *gymnētes* or *gymnēsioi* (‘naked’).<sup>385</sup> Therefore, positing equal casualties,

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<sup>380</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1303a6–8; Plut. *De mul. vir.* 4; Paus. 2.20.9. De Sanctis ([1910] 1966) argued that Diod. 10.26 refers to the Sepeia crisis, but I share the scepticism expressed by Robinson (1997, 86n83).

<sup>381</sup> Pausanias (3.4.1) seems to imply that at least 5,000 Argives were burned alive in the grove (plus an unknown number in the preceding pitched battle). Polyæn. *Strat.* 8.33 mentions 7,777 casualties but that tradition is criticised by Plut. *De mul. vir.* 4.

<sup>382</sup> O’Neil 1981, 344n95.

<sup>383</sup> This matches other estimates: Tomlinson 1972, 264 n.6; Scott 2005, 580n21. Hall (1995, 591) supports a smaller figure of 4,000, but he also views Herodotus’ casualty figure as unacceptably high.

<sup>384</sup> Hansen 2011, 242–44.

<sup>385</sup> Steph. Byz. s.v. *Χίος*; Poll. 3.83. On the military use of the *gymnētes*: Lotze 1959, 53; Welwei 1974, 1:182–93; Piérart 1997, 331. See also the *γλυμνομάχοι* in Tyr. West *IE<sup>2</sup>* fr. 23a (= *P.Oxy.* 3316), line 14, who might be Argives.



6,000 dead Argives would mean a loss of 3,000 hoplites and 3,000 *psiloi* – or a loss of 50% of all hoplites fielded, if we assume a 6,000-strong army in 494 as suggested above.

A 50% loss would have been far above average for hoplite battles, but there are at least three hints that Sepeia did not leave Argos militarily powerless.<sup>386</sup> First, Cleomenes did not even attempt to take Argos after Sepeia. In Herodotus, Cleomenes deliberately withdrew after winning the battle and was later charged with corruption for this (6.82); Pausanias (2.20.9) and Plutarch (*De mul. vir.* 4) tell a different story in which the Spartans did attack Argos but were pushed away by the civilians. Whether in 494 the Spartans was unable or unwilling to take Argos, they had no further motives to attack Argos again for the time being, given that their regional superiority had been reasserted anyway.<sup>387</sup> Second, it is possible that Argos was walled in 494, which would have increased its chances to withstand a siege.<sup>388</sup> Third, some years after Sepeia (490?) 1,000 Argive volunteers went to fight for Aegina in a war with Athens, which suggests that Argos was already rebuilding the ranks of its army.<sup>389</sup> Consequently, the real impact of Sepeia was not military – as indeed suggested by the focus across the sources on the *political* consequences of the post-Sepeia oligandry. Therefore, the next step is to assess the significance of the loss of 3,000 hoplites and determine whether it was sufficient to destabilise Argive institutions.

Let us start from the assumption that only 80% of all service-age male citizens (SAMCs henceforth) were actually sent out against the Spartan invaders.<sup>390</sup> A 6,000-strong operational army would thus yield a minimum SAMC population of about 7,500. I shall assume that these 7,500 men liable to military service were between 20 and 49 years old, as was apparently the case in Athens.<sup>391</sup> But men older than 49, while exempt from service, were still politically active. This requires defining a larger AMC (adult male citizens) group, i.e. all Argive citizens aged 20 and up.<sup>392</sup> We may also cautiously assume that the age required to hold full political rights at Argos was 30

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<sup>386</sup> Krentz 1985, 18: in hoplite battles '[t]he defeated army rarely lost more than 20%: typical is 10–20%, the average approximately 14%'.

<sup>387</sup> See Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.27: Agis refuses to capture the unfortified city of Elis because he does not *need* to (μη βούλεσθαι μάλλον ἢ μὴ δύνασθαι ἐλεῖν). The ahistorical nature of Pausanias and Plutarch's version is now widely accepted, but while Stadter (1965, 45–53) took it as literary (cf. Jacoby 1955, 45), Franchi (2012) rather viewed it as a 'folk tale' of oral origin.

<sup>388</sup> Pausanias mentions a *τείχος* (2.20.9); see Scott 2005, 573, with bibliography.

<sup>389</sup> Hdt. 6.92 – where, oddly, no mention is made of the problem of oligandry. For the dating of this conflict: Hammond 1955, 406–11.

<sup>390</sup> Hansen 2011, 245–46.

<sup>391</sup> Christ 2001, 404; Scott 2005, 583; Hansen 2011, 246–47; cf. Lyc. 1.39, Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.5. For comparison, Roman men were 'liable for conscription until the age of forty-six', but 'the republic did not expect to draft soldiers older than their early thirties': Rosenstein 2004, 84–85. For Argos, Lenschau (1938, 418) conjectures that men aged 20–55 were called up.

<sup>392</sup> 'AMC' is also used by Jameson et al. 1994, 559, but they define them as aged 18 and over.

(rather than e.g. 20), as was the case at Athens for the appointment of magistrates and jurors.<sup>393</sup> Let us then define a further category, MAMCs (magistracy-age male citizens), comprising all citizens aged 30 and up.

To extrapolate the size of the AMC and MAMC groups from that of the SAMC subset, I shall employ a ‘life table’, a type of demographic model designed to help predict the age structure of a population on the basis of parameters such as life expectancy at birth ( $e_0$ ) and growth rate. The model I adopt is based on the second version of the Princeton Model Life Tables published by Coale and Demeny (also known as the ‘Coale–Demeny tables’).<sup>394</sup> The Coale–Demeny tables have been criticised for being based on data pertaining Western populations from c.1850 onwards, and therefore misrepresenting the distribution of disease-related mortality in other places and times.<sup>395</sup> In particular, they assume that infant and adult mortality follow equal patterns, which has been shown to mean overestimating child mortality and therefore underestimating adult mortality, with potentially significant consequences for the present argument.<sup>396</sup> On this basis, Akrigg created a ‘hybrid’ model based on Coale and Demeny’s ‘Model West’, as Coale and Demeny themselves recommended in the case of an ‘underdeveloped countr[y] where there is no reliable guide to the age pattern of mortality that prevails’, but combining two different tables (level 8 for age-groups  $\leq 15$  and level 2 for age-groups  $> 15$ ).<sup>397</sup> The following calculations are therefore based on Akrigg’s ‘hybrid’ version of the Coale–Demeny tables.

According to this model, SAMCs made up 80.75% of all AMCs; thus, a SAMC cohort of 7,500 yields a total of roughly 9,300 AMCs – in other words, 1,800 male citizens above the age of 50. Within this 9,300-strong group, 6,045 men (65% of total) were MAMCs. The exact impact of the death of 3,000 SAMCs is now more intelligible.

	Before Sepeia	After Sepeia	Variation (in percentage)
SAMCs (20–49)	7,500	4,500	<b>-40%</b>
AMCs (20+)	9,300	6,300	<b>-32.3%</b>
MAMCs (30+)	6,045	4,340	<b>-28.2%</b>

<sup>393</sup> On jurors: [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 63.3. Evidence on the age requirement for magistrates is collected in Hansen 1980, 167–69.

<sup>394</sup> Coale and Demeny 1983.

<sup>395</sup> See e.g. Scheidel 2001, 3–11; Akrigg 2019, 25–29.

<sup>396</sup> See e.g. Wrigley et al. 1997, 284, which refers to 1680s England (i.e. still a premodern demographic regime).

<sup>397</sup> Coale and Demeny 1983, 25; Hansen 1985 also uses Model West. For Akrigg’s ‘hybrid model’: Akrigg 2019, 29–32.

These figures show that the service-age cohorts took a disproportionate toll relative to the population at large. According to the model, the 20–29 cohort made up about 43.3% of the SAMC group: the younger an AMC was, the likelier he is to have died at Sepeia. Consequently, the MAMC subset increased its weight relative to the larger AMC group from 65% to (at least) 69% – conceivably boosting its political influence within the city.<sup>398</sup> However, this group and the other survivors were still largely sufficient ‘if it was just a matter of filling the magistracies and other public offices’.<sup>399</sup> As seen above, there is no evidence that pre-democratic Argos had an assembly; it is likely that its council (attested from 481) existed before Sepeia, but its size and membership are entirely unknown.<sup>400</sup> We do however know that the meeting place that was most probably built for the fifth-century assembly – the so-called ‘Theatre with the Straight Rows’ (‘théatron à gradins droits’ in French scholarship) – could accommodate 3,000 people at most.<sup>401</sup> This does not imply that the sovereign political body of fifth-century Argos was that small, but it does indicate that Argos’ democratic institutions had a relatively contained operating size.<sup>402</sup> The known boards of magistrates were also quite small, such as the six or nine sixth-century *damiorgoi*, and the five *stratēgoi* and nine *hiaromnamones* in the late fifth century.<sup>403</sup> The most senior board of officials in democratic Argos comprised as few as eighty men (οἱ ὀγδοήκοντα).<sup>404</sup> In strictly arithmetic terms, the Sepeia survivors were certainly enough to man the essential offices and carry out political activity: operational continuity was not at risk.

Herodotus’ ‘oligandry’ narrative should therefore not be taken literally, but this does not mean that it has no heuristic value for explaining what happened at Argos after Sepeia. Let us return to the hypothesis of a ‘spectrum’-like model of Argive domination in the plain, whereby Argos controlled the surrounding territories by means of a patchwork of direct property relations, perioikic relations and mere ‘soft power’ in the case of the larger towns (such as Mycenae and Tiryns). The death of many landed citizens must have weakened Argos’ control over the plots they owned. As to the larger towns, there is a striking contrast between the *ambiguous* evidence regarding

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<sup>398</sup> In a recent contribution centred on the demographic toll of the Hannibalic War on the Roman Senate in 220–16, Barber (2020) reached similar conclusions by way of a similar method. He argued that virtually all of the 177 senators that died on the battlefield according to Livy (23.23.7) were part of the *imiores* age group (17–45); this granted the elderly surviving senators a disproportionate degree of influence, with major political consequences.

<sup>399</sup> Scott 2005, 582.

<sup>400</sup> The earliest mention of the Argive council is Hdt. 7.148.3 (see note 358); see also Wörrle 1964, 44–56.

<sup>401</sup> Ginouvès 1972, 17–82 and especially 77–82 on its connection with democracy; see also Robinson 2011, 9 (‘where the assembly no doubt met’). On the building more generally, see also: Vollgraff 1920, 223; McDonald 1943, 80–84; Moretti 1993, 30–32; Hansen and Fischer-Hansen 1994, 57–61; Robinson 2011, 13–14. Capacity estimates: 1,800 (McDonald), 2,300–2,500 (Moretti), 2,770–3,000 (Hansen and Fischer-Hansen).

<sup>402</sup> On other democratic meeting places: Robinson 2011, 229–30.

<sup>403</sup> *Damiorgoi*: IG IV 614; SEG 11.314. *Stratēgoi*: Thuc. 5.59.5; SEG 29.361. *Hiaromnamones*: IG IV 517.

<sup>404</sup> Thuc. 5.47.9. See: Wörrle 1964, 56–61; Ruzé 1997, 267–69; Piérart 2000, 304–5.

their relationship with Argos in the pre-Sepeia period, and the *solid* evidence of their independent attitude following the battle. Unlike Argos, Tiryns and Mycenae joined the anti-Persian coalition in 480 and sent men to Thermopylae and Plataea.<sup>405</sup> There is no reason to abandon the commonly held view that *P.Oxy.* 222 – where one *Tirynthios* (col. i 42) is listed as Olympic victor in 468 – strongly suggests Tirynthian autonomy in those years, and it is therefore extremely likely that, after Sepeia and for quite some time, Mycenae and Tiryns were in Sparta’s sphere of influence.<sup>406</sup> Considering that Mycenae and Tiryns were perfectly visible from the Larisa – thus materially increasing the sense of isolation and encirclement – I suggest reading the theme of oligandry as a metaphorical way of articulating a sudden state of powerlessness: ‘there were not enough of us’ were the terms in which the Argives themselves remembered the years after the debacle by the time of Herodotus’ visit, half a century later.

How does this reinterpretation change our understanding of Argos’ response to the Sepeia crisis? I have noted above that Argos’ regional standing relied essentially on direct land ownership, perioikic relations and foreign policy. If the first and the third elements were compromised after Sepeia, it made sense for Argos to prop up its control of the *perioikis*. The involvement of the *perioikoi* is the central point of Aristotle and Plutarch’s treatments of the Sepeia crisis. In his treatment of constitutional change triggered by the accidental growth of one part of the citizen body relative to the others, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1303<sup>a</sup>6–8) says that the Argives ‘were forced to admit [to the citizenry] some of the *perioikoi*’ (*ἠναγκάσθησαν παραδέξασθαι τῶν περιοίκων τινάς*) after ‘those in the seventh’ (*τῶν ἐν τῇ ἑβδόμῃ*) were killed by Cleomenes.<sup>407</sup> Plutarch (*De mul. vir.* 4) says that, in order to tackle the demographic crisis after Sepeia, the widows of the fallen were married off not to the *douloi*, ‘as Herodotus reports’, but to the ‘best’ of the *perioikoi*, who were also granted citizenship. Plutarch is sometimes argued to have derived his version directly from Aristotle.<sup>408</sup> But Aristotle himself must have relied on earlier works on *Argolika* that linked the *perioikoi* with Argos’ response to the crisis, and the entirely new element of the marriages strongly suggests that Plutarch drew on those earlier sources independently. We may therefore assume that at least as early as the fourth century (i.e. before Aristotle) there was a historiographical tradition centred on the use of the *perioikoi* to tackle the crisis, and that therefore took the existence of

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<sup>405</sup> 80 Mycenaean fought at Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.202) and the following year Mycenae and Tiryns sent a 400-strong joint contingent to Plataea (9.28.4). Both towns earned spots on the Serpent Column (*ML* 27, coils 6–7) and at Olympia (Paus. 5.23.2) but note that Diod. 11.65.2 seems to erase Tiryns’ participation.

<sup>406</sup> On Tiryns in 468: Piérart 1997, 348n41. On Mycenae: according to the Argive historian Acusilaus, the hero Sperton was the father of Mykeneus (*FGrH* 2 F24 *ap.* Paus. 2.16.4). This has been read as an attempt on Acusilaus’ part to ‘[project] the close ties between these two city-states during his time [i.e. after Sepeia] into the heroic past’ (*BNJ* 2 F24, commentary; see also Fontana 2012, 385 and 408).

<sup>407</sup> The ‘seventh’ was probably the day the battle was fought: Newman 1902, 4:303–4.

<sup>408</sup> Forrest 1960, 223; Tomlinson 1972, 99.

*perioikoi* at Argos for granted. Notably, even though Plutarch explicitly pitted his *perioikoi* against Herodotus' *douloi*, Bourke's analysis of the Herodotean usage of δούλος shows that Herodotus used the word figuratively to indicate political subjection more often than he did to refer to actual slavery.<sup>409</sup> There is no insoluble conflict on the identity of the social group in question as presented by Herodotus and the later tradition: Herodotus' *douloi* may well have been *perioikoi*.

The marriage story is the real innovation in Plutarch's version. Despite its curious nature, envisaging an Argive response to the crisis structured along the lines of Plutarch's story is attractive for several reasons. Most obviously, it addressed the problem of having many fertile-age widows and no men to marry them off to.<sup>410</sup> But the marriages were also a way for Argos to reaffirm its control over the 'best' *perioikoi* (i.e. the 'sub-elites' in the perioikic settlements) by letting them into the citizen body, thus reinforcing their loyalty. Finally, it probably offered a solution to the question of the fate of the dead citizens' rural estates. The Gortyn Code reports the provision that '(if the slave) goes to a free woman and marries her, their children shall be free' (G.72.6.55–7.10).<sup>411</sup> Willetts argued that, if a similar law existed at Argos, the *perioikoi* who married the widows by relocating into their households would father legitimate heirs to the dead men's estates, thus solving the succession problem.<sup>412</sup> In conclusion, Plutarch's 'marriage policy' seems clearly aimed at propping up the *status quo ante* by addressing the most dangerous aspects of the crisis – demographics, geopolitics and property relations. As such, it has nothing to do with democracy: the enlargement of the citizen body was in fact meant to preserve the power of the pre-existing ruling class.

Despite its advantages, the marriage policy had its downsides. Plutarch reports that the Argive women shunned their newlyweds and a new law was introduced whereby the women would wear beards when sleeping with their husbands. Although this story is often taken as either evidence for Argive marriage customs or an *aition* for the *Hybristika* cross-dressing festival, it may in fact perpetuate the memory of real tensions associated with the policy, perhaps by back-projecting those political tensions as personal ones.<sup>413</sup> Another hint comes from the Aegina story

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<sup>409</sup> Bourke 2011, 146–48. Herodotus' word-choice may also reveal an intent to create a narrative in which Cleomenes' impiety created a topsy-turvy world where the slaves are in charge: Piérart 2004, 178.

<sup>410</sup> With a mean life expectancy of 25, the replacement-level fertility rate was about five children per woman: 'even a seemingly moderate net shortfall of one birth per woman ... would have halved a given population within three generations' (Scheidel 2009, 137).

<sup>411</sup> References to the Gortyn Code follow Gagarin and Perlman 2016.

<sup>412</sup> Willetts 1959; Willetts' *perioikoi* were slaves, but this does not immediately invalidate his suggestion. On the possibility of the epiklerate being applied at Argos in this situation, see Frullini 2021, 124n90.

<sup>413</sup> How and Wells 1928, 2:95; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 114; Petracca 2017. It is also easy to imagine that the sudden elevation of the *perioikoi* was opposed by the surviving male kin belonging to the same generation as the 'slain', as well as by the women who saw their sons' rights endangered.

reported by Herodotus (6.92) and mentioned above. Forrest argued that the 1,000 volunteers who left for Aegina despite the Argive government's neutrality were 'a group of dissident aristocrats' at odds with what he imagines to be a democratic government.<sup>414</sup> But as I argued above, there is no reason to view Argos' involvement of the *perioikoi* as a democratising measure. The main faultline in Argos at this point is more likely to have been generational – the comparatively elderly architects of the post-Sepeia policy on one side, the young 'sons of the slain' (those old enough, at least), seeking to reaffirm their own legitimate superiority, on the other. These tensions remained largely unexpressed for the time being, but Herodotus clearly links the eventual coming of age of the 'sons' to a radical policy turn, with a ripple effect both on Argos' domestic politics and on its relations with its neighbours.

The context can again be clarified by means of a demographic model, which can help visualise the coming of age as a transition rather than as a point in time (as is effectively depicted by Herodotus). In order to reconstruct the age-structure of the Argive citizen body around the year 480, let us consider the baseline age-structure offered by Akrigg's version of the Coale–Demeny tables and apply a 40% decrease to the 30–59 cohort, rather than 20–49, and compare the two models.<sup>415</sup> If the baseline model yields a population of 100, this was down to 83.17 immediately after Sepeia and back to 88.01 in the subsequent model; the AMC group grew back from 6,300 to 7,160. This small recovery hides the dramatic change in age structure, which is due to 1) the natural death of many AMCs above 50 in the intervening years 2) the coming of age of the teenage age-groups, virtually in full force. While the MAMC group (aged 30+) went down from 4,340 to 3,900, the 20–29 cohort went up from 1,400 to 3,150; consequently, the MAMC share of the wider AMC group went from 65% before Sepeia, to 69% after Sepeia, to 54.5% around 480. This model suggests that, around the time of Xerxes' invasion, the young sons of the Argive ruling class had both the means and the motive to reassert their own agenda against the policy of appeasement and inclusion sought until then: they were now plenty enough, and the entrenchment of the *perioikoi* (and their children) in the fabric of Argive society was probably becoming more threatening by the day. The outcome was the violent expulsion of the *perioikoi* (Herodotus' *douloi*), who sought refuge at Tiryns; this must have happened in the early 470s.<sup>416</sup>

Following the expulsion, Argos seems to have entered a phase of marked expansionism. It is difficult to establish whether the link between the expulsion and this policy turn was one of

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<sup>414</sup> Forrest 1960, 225.

<sup>415</sup> Theoretically, this model describes the age structure of Argos 10 years after Sepeia, i.e. in c.494; but the hardly quantifiable impact of the expedition to Aegina (Hdt. 6.92) means that this degree of recovery was in reality attained a few years later.

<sup>416</sup> Willetts 1959, 499 suggests 478, followed by Vannicelli 1993, 95.

correlation or even causation – namely, whether the expulsion itself paved the way for the rejection of isolationism, or the demographic upturn begat *both* the expulsion *and* Argos’ renewed confidence in its own potential – but it is clear that the Argives were now ready to upend the state of encirclement into which they had been plunged by Sepeia. Forrest noted that two distinct phases can be discerned in the Argive expansionism of the 470s and early 460s.<sup>417</sup> First, Argos attacked Mycenae with the help of Kleonai and probably Tegea.<sup>418</sup> Diodorus (or his source) dates the attack to 468, but his date relies on an explanation of Sparta’s failure to intervene based on a synchronism with the famous earthquake (that is probably datable to the early 460s), and is therefore not necessarily authoritative.<sup>419</sup> It is nevertheless believable, and Forrest made a strong case in favour of its chronological proximity with the ill-known battle fought at Tegea between Sparta and a coalition of Argives and Tegeans.<sup>420</sup> Even though the details are murky, Argos’ foreign policy in this phase appears to have looked at the broader Peloponnesian context by seeking the friendship and support of Tegea, another second-tier Peloponnesian power with an anti-Spartan agenda. Together, they faced Sparta in the Peloponnese and also helped Argos re-establish its superiority over Mycenae.

Herodotus’ account of Sparta’s Peloponnesian engagements after Plataea lists a battle at Dipaia, in Arcadia, against ‘all Arcadians except the Mantineans’. Going by the list order, this battle took place after Tegea and this time Argos did not participate. Roughly in the same period, Argos won a war against Tiryns, where the *douloi* had taken refuge after the expulsion (Hdt. 6.83.2). These two endeavours seem to belong to a different phase of Argive foreign policy from Tegea and Mycenae: Argos no longer intervened in broadly Peloponnesian affairs and rather focused on the (re)construction of its own hegemony in the western Argolid. The exact nature of this change in policy will be explored below, but its importance should perhaps not be overstated: whether with the political support of Tegea or not, during the 470s and the 460s Argos pursued a policy of gradual incorporation of the surrounding towns that had become hostile to it in the wake of Sepeia.<sup>421</sup> Describing the synoikism of Megalopolis, Pausanias reports that the Arcadians were inspired by how Argos’ incorporation of a series of Argolic hamlets made them more powerful *vis-*

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<sup>417</sup> Forrest 1960, 225–29.

<sup>418</sup> Diod. 11.65; Strab. 8.6.19. Diodorus does not name Argos’ allies, but Strabo says these were Kleonai and Tegea. Piérart (1992, 377–82) suggested emending Strabo’s *Τεγεατῶν* to *Τενεατῶν*, thus replacing Tegea’s participation with that of the small northern Argolic community of Tenea. While this is not impossible, there is no evidence for Tenea operating as an independent *polis* before the Hellenistic period (Legon 2004, 462). Furthermore, even if Piérart’s emendation were correct, Argive collaboration with Tegea in the same years would nevertheless be independently attested by Hdt. 9.35.2 (see below).

<sup>419</sup> Tomlinson 1972, 105.

<sup>420</sup> Forrest 1960, 229–32. The battle is known only from Hdt. 9.35.2.

<sup>421</sup> Piérart 1997, 331; Sansone di Campobianco 2008.

*à-vis* Sparta (8.27.1). Pausanias' account is most plausibly imprecise in detail, as the evidence regarding the fate of the *inhabitants* of the conquered settlements is conflicting and it is very unlikely that all of them were naturalised into the Argive state.<sup>422</sup> But the *territories* were certainly incorporated by Argos, and the citadels of Tiryns and Mycenae were completely destroyed, thus eliminating potential competition for territorial control.

Particularly interesting for our purposes is the impact of this process of expansion on Argos' institutional system. This is documented by an inscription from the 450s found in the NW part of the city and briefly discussed by Kritzas (*SEG* 41.284).<sup>423</sup> In this text, the Twelve (*Δωδέκα*, a board of magistrates attested here for the first time) pay substantial but unequal sums to 12 groups, conventionally called 'phratries'. Since these 12 phratries belonged to the same tribe, the phratries probably numbered 48 in total, i.e. 12 per each of Argos' four tribes.<sup>424</sup> Kritzas, later followed by Piérart, links this financial system to the creation of a 'sacred and public land' divided into parcels (*γύαι*), a system attested with certainty from the early Hellenistic period.<sup>425</sup> It is plausible that this system was introduced in connection with Argos' expansion into the plain, as a way of reorganising the public exploitation of its resources.<sup>426</sup> Therefore, the substantial total sum paid out to the 12 phratries (63,710 drachms) was most plausibly a form of agrarian revenues, e.g. rent paid by the tenants of the publicly owned *γύαι*.<sup>427</sup> Little else can be said in detail, but two elements stand out. First, the phratries were now apparently the most important sub-unit of the state, closely connected with the administration of the *chōra* and its revenues. The growing importance of the phratries at Argos is also suggested by the naming custom attested from the 450s, whereby name

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<sup>422</sup> Moggi 1974; Frullini 2021, 129.

<sup>423</sup> Kritzas 1992, 235.

<sup>424</sup> On the Argive tribe system, see Jones 1987, 92.

<sup>425</sup> Kritzas 1992, 233–34; Piérart 1997, 333–34. See *SEG* 41.282.

<sup>426</sup> See Frullini 2021, 130 with bibliography. As a term of comparison, see Athens' decision to divide the land on Lesbos into 3,000 lots and assign 2,700 of them to cleruchs after suppressing the Mytilenean revolt in 427 (Thuc. 3.50.2).

<sup>427</sup> It may be possible to use the attested figure to calculate the extent of the 'sacred and public land', although the estimate will rely on a series of assumptions. Let us assume that the land was cultivated with wheat and that the total rent exacted was worth one-third of the value of the yield in wheat (on which see the Roman parallels in Garnsey 1988, 248–49). In this case, the land produced 191,130 dr. worth of wheat per year. At 5 dr./*medimnos*, the 'normal price' (*καθεστηκυῖα τιμή*) for wheat in [Dem.] 34.39 (see also RO 95, line 10), this equates to 38,226 *medimnoi* or ~20,000 hl wheat (1 *medimnos* = 52.5 l). Assuming that the land in the Argolid had the same yield as Attica, I adopt Garnsey's (1998, 204) tentative figure of an 8 hl/ha output, which equates to 2,500 ha. The inscription in question records the payment to 12 out of a total of 48 'phratries': if the other tribes had been apportioned the same amount of land, the extent of Argos' 'sacred and public land' was roughly 10,000 ha. Zangger (1993, 17) calculated the area of the Argive plain as 243 km<sup>2</sup> (= 24,300 ha) but defined its boundaries very generously, e.g. including the low-lying coast to the east of Asine. Once we exclude the outer edges, the area occupied by settlements and an inevitable share of non-cultivable land (e.g. the marshy coastal plains to the east and west of Temenion), the upper limit of the extent of the cultivable land around Argos was probably around 20,000 ha. This would mean that half of the Argive plain was 'sacred and public land' by the time of the inscription.



and patronym are accompanied by the phratronym, but not by the tribe-name.<sup>428</sup> Second, the entire system appears highly artificial and was perhaps the outcome of a radical institutional restructuring, perhaps associated with a reshuffle of the citizenry across state subdivisions (and a consequent breakdown of intra-tribal social ties); this evokes the presence of an Argive Cleisthenes, a towering yet unknown lawgiver.<sup>429</sup> Kritzas' argument that the phratries inscription is highly compatible with an egalitarian constitution is ultimately persuasive, and the argument presented so far in this section sheds some possible light on the background of that system. The main consequence of the Sepeia disaster for Argos was not a 'slave revolution', but a serious loss of influence in the Argolid and beyond; consequently, once the Argives had regained strength, they reacted by embarking on a process of incorporation of the surrounding territories. For unknown reasons and through an unknown process, this newly acquired *chōra* seemingly came to be organised according to democratic principles, whereby the resulting revenues were distributed to public subdivisions by way of a centrally organised system. The strong correlation between expansion, territorial (re)organisation and democratisation is perhaps the most striking feature of Argive democracy in this period.

Further information survives about other mid-fifth-century Argive institutions, which bolster the impression of a distinctly democratic arrangement, although the evidence is too scarce to allow for detail. An inscription loosely dated by Jeffery to c.475, and potentially slightly later, bears a decree granting the status of Argive *proxenos* to a man called Gnosstas, from the Laconian perioikic town of Oinous.<sup>430</sup> Little can be said as to what lay behind Argos' decision to nominate a *proxenos* in a Laconian community, which can potentially signal tension as well as friendship with Sparta.<sup>431</sup> What is particularly interesting is that the *aliaia* (assembly) appears to be Argos' sovereign body, fully in charge of issuing the decree.<sup>432</sup> The apparent absence of probouleusis in the inscription contrasts with Herodotus' account of the negotiations concerning Argos' participation in the anti-Persian coalition in 481 (7.148), where the Argive *bola* seemed fully in charge of the city's foreign policy.<sup>433</sup> Leppin went so far as to claim that there was no probouleutic procedure at all in the Argive democratic constitution, but as Robinson has shown, this hypothesis is weakened both by the general scarcity of the evidence and by the existence of *some* evidence pointing to a legislative role of the council.<sup>434</sup> However, it seems clear that over the course of the fifth century

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<sup>428</sup> Charneux 1984.

<sup>429</sup> Andrewes 1990, 177.

<sup>430</sup> *SEG* 13.239; Charneux 1953, 395–97; *Nomima* 1.35.

<sup>431</sup> See commentary *ad Nomima* 1.35.

<sup>432</sup> The only other fifth-century mention of the *aliaia* is in *OR* 126, line 44.

<sup>433</sup> See Ruzé 1997, 280–85.

<sup>434</sup> Leppin 1999; Robinson 2011, 15–20.

the assembly reclaimed a degree of authority in some specific policy sectors, such as foreign policy. The absence of information as to the membership of the council at any time makes it impossible to establish whether the *aliaia* was significantly ‘more democratic’ than the *bola*.

Robinson also stresses the significant extent of popular control over public officials. At some point in the early fifth century, the Argives adopted ostracism in some form.<sup>435</sup> The term of office for magistrates and council members was six months long, ensuring a quick turnover, although this is attested with certainty only from the early fourth century onwards.<sup>436</sup> One key piece of evidence Robinson refers to is an early to mid-fifth-century inscription, almost certainly from Argos, which grants immunity to one specific *bola* (the *bola ἀνφ’ Ἀρίστονα*, ‘chaired by Ariston’, line 2) and the associated financial magistrates over their handling of the treasury of Athena, by barring anyone from raising charges against them on that matter (*IG IV 554*).<sup>437</sup> The decree seems to imply that, absent this provision, ‘auditing by *euthuna* of outgoing officials was normal’, which would be further evidence of institutionalised popular control.<sup>438</sup> But this straightforward reading is complicated by the statement that the individual barred from bringing the specified charges was *τέλος ἔχων*, a magistrate (line 3); therefore it appears that, in normal circumstances, only officials – and not common citizens, or the *aliaia* collectively – could bring charges against other officials. Vollgraff took this as proof that Argos was in fact not yet a democracy at the time of the inscription.<sup>439</sup> Furthermore, the council depicted in the inscription is a powerful, ‘Herodotean’ one: it appears ordinarily in charge of financial matters and is empowered to counter-prosecute the non-complying magistrate (line 6). Rather than evidence of democracy, this inscription is surely a snapshot of Argive institutions at a transitional stage, as the distribution of power and mutual oversight was still in flux. The inscription refers to a specific, if unknown, state of emergency; a *polis* that decided to draw from the sacred treasury (and gave immunity to the magistrates entrusted with doing so) was plausibly in financial trouble.<sup>440</sup> At the time of the inscription, however, the chief concern was to placate the tensions surrounding that episode: it is the ‘incumbent’ (*ἀντιτυχόνσα*, line 6) *bola* that grants and enforces the immunity for the officials associated with Ariston’s former *bola*. The rationale of the measure is reminiscent of Athenian *adeia*, and although we cannot quite say what kind of emergency Argos had faced, we can see how its institutions were

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<sup>435</sup> In addition to Aristotle’s testimony (*Pol.* 1302<sup>b</sup>18–19), see the possible epigraphical evidence in Pariente et al. 1986.

<sup>436</sup> Evidence collected in Robinson 2011, 14–15.

<sup>437</sup> The Argive provenance of *IG IV 554* was questioned by Jameson 1974, but see more recently Brandt 1992 and most importantly Kritzas 2006, 410.

<sup>438</sup> Robinson 2011, 18.

<sup>439</sup> Vollgraff 1930, 27; 1958, 537.

<sup>440</sup> van Effenterre and Ruzé 1994–1995, 1:382.

dealing with its aftermath: by limiting the power of the individual magistrates while protecting the prerogatives of the collegial body.<sup>441</sup>

The transformation of political life at Argos in those years is also showcased by the unprecedented building programme around the agora between the 460s and the 450s.<sup>442</sup> On the W side of the agora, the Argives built a large square building (32.78 × 32.78m) with 16 columns in the internal space, thereby commonly known as ‘Hypostyle Hall’.<sup>443</sup> There is no explicit evidence as to the intended purpose of the Hypostyle Hall, although its structure makes it particularly suited to hosting meetings, and the similarity with comparable classical buildings at Athens and Sicyon has led most scholars to take it as Argos’ first *bouleuterion*.<sup>444</sup> Further west, to the south of the great Hellenistic theatre, the ‘Theatre with the Straight Rows’ was built around the same period to host the assembly (see note 401). Taken together, these new buildings reveal an intention to build new public spaces in the heart of the city, fully in keeping with the adoption of a participatory constitution.

The construction of new public spaces and the epigraphical evidence on institutions point to a growing formalisation of popular power at Argos by the 460s. Particularly remarkable is that both the historical process behind the formation of Argive democracy and the institutional language featuring in the sources are eminently local, resulting in a constitution that looked very different from the Athenian.<sup>445</sup> This is why looking for a Themistoclean role in masterminding Argos’ democratic turn and involvement against Sparta is potentially misleading and methodologically unsound. More likely, around 470 there was in Argos an influential faction that could both shelter the exile Themistocles and orchestrate the Argivo-Tegean alliance; then, when the allies were defeated, this faction lost sway and Themistocles had to flee.<sup>446</sup> In the same way, the nature of Argive democracy – especially as it appears from the inscription listing payments for phratries (see above) – was determined by the circumstances in which it took shape; there was probably very little in common with Athens.

In light of this, the alliance struck between Argos and Athens in c.462 is at first sight surprising.<sup>447</sup> The two cities became allies immediately after Athens left the Hellenic League formed two decades earlier against Persia, and the next decade would occasionally see them fighting Sparta

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<sup>441</sup> On *adeia* see now Esu 2021.

<sup>442</sup> On the building programme and its political implications, see des Courtils 1992.

<sup>443</sup> Bommelaer and des Courtils 1994.

<sup>444</sup> Bommelaer and des Courtils 1994, 45–46. For a more cautious judgement, see Donati 2015, 193.

<sup>445</sup> On the institutional differences between Athenian and Argive democracy, see Leppin 1999.

<sup>446</sup> Frullini 2021, 128–29.

<sup>447</sup> Sources for the alliance: Thuc. 1.102.4; Diod. 11.80.1; Paus. 4.24.7 (on which see Piccirilli 1973, 721).

together, if with mediocre results.<sup>448</sup> Although Thucydides implies that the primary reason why Athens sought the alliance in 462 was Argos' long-standing credentials as Sparta's arch-enemy (1.102.4), Aeschylus' contemporary plays suggest that the Athenian public saw the alliance as one between two democracies. *Suppliants*, dated most likely to 463, is first and foremost a dramatisation of the birth of Argive democracy, and *Eumenides* (458) celebrates the friendship between Argos and Athens in democratic terms.<sup>449</sup> The shared democratic constitution seems therefore an important part of how Argos and Athens justified their collaboration; while the link between constitutional affinity and diplomatic alignment would become commonplace during the Peloponnesian War (see below), this dynamic was still unusual in the second quarter of the century, and it is even more notable given the different ways by which Argos and Athens had developed their respective democracies. Despite their differences, the two cities recognised one another as *δημοκρατίαι* and built an alliance upon this recognition; the emergence of shared 'democraticity' as a determining factor in foreign policy is perhaps the most remarkable legacy of the otherwise forgettable alliance of the 450s.

### 4.3. Resilience and control

This final section analyses the internal and international performance of Argive democracy in the eighty-odd years between the Peace of Nicias and the Battle of Chaeronea. It focuses on a number of relatively well documented episodes of Argive history: Argos' involvement in the Peloponnesian War between 421 and 417, and particularly the political turmoil that followed the first Battle of Mantinea (418); the *skytalismos* of 370; Argos' role in the various Peloponnesian conflicts of the 360s and its foreign policy in the context of the rise of Macedonia. In analysing these episodes, I investigate how popular power and its institutionalisation shaped Argos' actions and argue that although there is no evidence of constitutional change (save for the oligarchic coup of 417), the impact of democracy in shaping Argive policy became weaker after the middle of the fourth century.

After its treaty with Sparta in 451/0, Argos effectively disappeared from history for three decades.<sup>450</sup> When the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431, it was listed by Thucydides as one of the *poleis* that opted for neutrality (2.9.2); in the following years some Athenian comedians accused

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<sup>448</sup> For different judgements on the outcome of the decade-long alliance, see e.g. Bearzot 2006, 121 *contra* Tomlinson 1972, 114–15.

<sup>449</sup> See Pattoni 2017.

<sup>450</sup> Except for a clause in the thirty years' truce between Athens and Sparta (446/5), stipulating that Argos maintained the right to entertain friendly relations with Athens (Paus. 5.23.4).

the Argives of being duplicitous, perhaps not without good reason.<sup>451</sup> Argos' substantial disengagement came to a sudden end in 421 due to a combination of factors: the long peace had brought prosperity; the thirty years' truce with Sparta was about to expire, and the Argives did not seem keen to renew it; the Peace of Nicias and the ensuing Atheno–Spartan alliance had left many Peloponnesian states unhappy and seeking an alternative hegemon.<sup>452</sup> This presented Argos with a valuable opportunity to reshape its role in the Peloponnese in the following years.<sup>453</sup> The influence of democracy on these events was effectively twofold. First, with growing clarity from the 420s onwards, democracies tended to get along with democracies (*qua* democracies). In spring 421, Mantinea sought an alliance with Argos on account of their shared democratic constitutions (5.29.1); the following year, the Argives did the same with the Athenians (5.44.1). Both passages clearly show that Mantinea viewed its democratic institutions as comparable to those of Argos, as Argos did with those of Athens – despite their significant institutional differences – and that those perceived similarities could be exploited as drivers of foreign policy. I have argued in the previous section that this was probably already true in the case of the Atheno–Argive alliance of 462, but this dynamic is much clearer in 421/0: the fact that Thucydides incorporated constitutional considerations into his treatments of the two alliances (Mantinea–Argos and Argos–Athens) suggests that, according to his sources, those considerations actually featured in the internal debates preceding the treaties. In this case, the constitutional affinity between the allied democracies facilitated (and was used to justify) their collaboration against Sparta and its allies.

The other aspect of the role of democracy worth considering is the nature of the decision-making procedures behind Argos' actions in 421–17. How exactly did Argos do what it did, and how did its democracy shape the way it did what it did? The evidence from Thucydides is particularly rich in this respect and sheds unparalleled light on the internal politics at Argos. Throughout these years, this evidence repeatedly and consistently shows that the Argive *dēmos* was in charge. In spring 421, immediately after Athens and Sparta ratified a fifty-year alliance in addition to the Peace of Nicias, Corinthian envoys stopped at Argos on the way back from Sparta to meet with some Argive magistrates, proposing that Argos set out to make alliances with *poleis* dissatisfied with Sparta's leadership (5.27.2).<sup>454</sup> The Corinthians insisted on secrecy: the Argive

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<sup>451</sup> See: Pherecr. fr. 22 Storey; Ar. *Pax* 477. Kagan (1962, 210) argued that during the Archidamian War Argos – or at least some Argives – in fact quietly supported the Spartans.

<sup>452</sup> On Argos' prosperity: Thuc. 5.28.2. On the truce: 5.14.4; 5.22.2. On the general discontent in the Peloponnese: 5.17.2.

<sup>453</sup> In what follows I limit myself to Argos' specific role in the intricate politics of the post-Nicias Peloponnese; for a broader, orderly overview of the events as recounted by (mainly) Thucydides, see Seager 1976.

<sup>454</sup> Thucydides refers to these Argive magistrates as 'those in charge' (*οἱ ἐν τέλει*). The vagueness of his label has spurred a large bibliography (on which see Tuci 2006, 240–41), but there is ultimately little point in trying to find which magistrates Thucydides had in mind.

assembly would appoint a small number of plenipotentiary diplomats in charge of the talks, in which the *dēmos* was not to take part. This has been viewed as in keeping with Corinth's own closed, oligarchic constitution.<sup>455</sup> The way in which Argos implemented Corinth's requests, however, bears signs of a significantly more democratic approach to decision-making. They decided to appoint 12 men in charge of the negotiations, but those men could not make alliances with either Athens or Sparta, as those would require approval by the Argive *dēmos* (5.28.1). It has been suggested that the choice of a board of 12 men was connected with Argos' four-way tribal system, thus ensuring that each tribe appointed (and was represented by) three diplomats.<sup>456</sup> But the more remarkable point is the clause mandating a final assembly deliberation in the case of alliances with Sparta or Athens, which was conspicuously absent from the Corinthian requests and must therefore have been pushed forward by those interested in protecting the assembly's prerogatives. This was certainly due to the fact that since Argos was seeking to cast itself as a 'third power', making an alliance with either of the two major powers would have meant aligning itself with one of the two existing hegemonies – a significant policy shift that was deemed to require a wider discussion.

Indeed, the way in which Argos reached out to potential allies under the framework of the decree of 421 shows that despite the appointment of 12 'plenipotentiary' diplomats, its corporate bodies effectively retained control of the process. In spring 420, the clause regulating Argos' contacts with Athens and Sparta was enacted for the first time as some Argive officials struck a tentative deal with Sparta, including a fifty years' truce and an arbitration to settle the long-standing dispute regarding the ownership of Kynouria (5.41.1–2). The Spartans accepted the Argive requests but demanded that the Argive assembly ratify the terms of the deal agreed on, as indeed was mandated by the decree of 421 (5.41.3). This caused delays and eventually the Argive *dēmos* lost interest in the ongoing talks with Sparta and sought an alliance with Athens instead (5.44.1–2).<sup>457</sup> Sparta's emphasis on the required assembly vote can be explained in two ways. One is that the Spartan officials knew that holding a vote was the only way to ensure Argos' total commitment to the treaty; another explanation is that Sparta was unhappy about the deal and expected that it would be voted down in the assembly.<sup>458</sup> In either case the assembly's approval, far from being a

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<sup>455</sup> Bearzot 2006, 131n92; Tuci 2006, 242.

<sup>456</sup> Tuci 2006, 241.

<sup>457</sup> The change in mood at Argos was mainly due to Alcibiades' direct intervention with the Argives (Thuc. 5.43.3)

<sup>458</sup> Thucydides says that the Spartans found the Argive demands to be 'crazy' (5.41.3: *μωρία*) but tolerated them because they were keen to befriend Argos. It is however easy to see that those demands were probably unpopular at Argos as well: the anti-Spartan sentiment was too strong to stomach a fifty years' truce, and neither party would be happy to give up its claim on Kynouria and commit to an unpredictable arbitration.

rubber-stamping exercise, was meaningful and therefore key for securing Argos' institutional commitment to upholding the deal.

Another episode suggests that Argos' corporate bodies were in fact involved even in case of talks with *poleis* other than Athens or Sparta, even though this was not made explicit in Thucydides' summary of the decree. In winter 421/0, two high-ranking Argive magistrates approached the Boeotians to negotiate an alliance (5.37.2–5); the Boeotians, having agreed to the initial proposal, promised that they would send an embassy to Argos 'about the alliance' (5.37.5: *περὶ τῆς ξυμμαχίας*). The deal fell through essentially due to the Boeotians' disinterest, and the promised embassy was never sent (5.38.4). Thucydides' account of the Argivo–Boeotian talks implies that the Twelve – assuming that the two Argives who contacted the Boeotians were two of them – were not in fact allowed (or willing) to strike alliances themselves, but only to reach out and make agreements in principle, which required further passages *at Argos* in order to become final. This is *prima facie* incompatible with Corinth's clear suggestion that the Argives designate plenipotentiary diplomats (5.27.2: *ἀντοκράτορας*) and also seems at odds with Thucydides' own presentation of the decree of 421, according to which any Greek *polis* other than Athens or Sparta could 'make an alliance' directly with the Twelve (5.28.1: *ξυμμαχίαν ποιέσθαι*). It is uncertain whether the discrepancy is due to Thucydides being inaccurate in 5.28.1, to a deliberate choice by the Argive magistrates to seek some form of popular legitimisation, or to an unattested amendment implemented by the Argives later that year that limited the (originally unrestricted) powers of the Twelve. It is however worth asking who was supposed to receive the Boeotian envoys, had they ever reached Argos. The most plausible assumption is that it would have been the council, as had been the case in 480 when the Greek envoys who came to Argos to discuss the city's participation in the anti-Spartan coalition were received in the *boulentērion* (Hdt. 7.148.3, *cf.* also the references to the *boulē* in 7.149.1–2).<sup>459</sup>

A pattern emerges from these passages: even though the inspiring principle of Corinth's request was to delegate the handling of Argive foreign policy to a restricted pool of magistrates, the city's council and assembly seem to have devised ways of remaining in control and policing the actions of those magistrates. I shall draw attention to one further instance of this, which dates to the same years but is not related to the Argive decree of 421. In summer 418, just as the Argive and Spartan armies were about to engage in combat near Argos, two Argive officials – Thrasyllus, one of the generals, and Alkiphron, the Spartan *proxenos* – privately negotiated a four-month truce

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<sup>459</sup> The Athenian council also routinely received foreign embassies (Hansen 1991, 264–65). In the decree of 420 establishing the quadruple alliance between Argos, Athens, Elis and Mantinea, the *boulē* is listed as the first body to take the oath at both Athens and Argos (Thuc. 5.47.9).

with the Spartan king Agis (Thuc. 5.59.5–60.1).<sup>460</sup> Both the Argives and the Spartans were outraged by the truce, but for different reasons. The Spartans understandably saw the truce as a wasted opportunity, given that their army was superior and had effectively encircled the enemy (5.60.2–3). The Argives seem at first to have had the same reaction, so much so that they confiscated Thrasyllus' property and almost executed him (5.60.5–6). But the Argives' outrage for the lost opportunity is qualified by two important points. First, Thucydides' account stresses that they were furious with those who had negotiated the truce 'without the people' (5.60.5: *ἄνευ τοῦ πλήθους*), suggesting that they disputed the truce not only from a *substantial* standpoint but also from a *procedural* one – a finer point that is entirely absent from Thucydides' description of the Spartan outrage towards Agis.<sup>461</sup> Second, for all their anger for those who made the truce, the Argives appear to have been curiously unwilling to undo it. Their other allies laboured to persuade them to resume the fighting, and when they all left Argos to lay siege to Orchomenos, the Argives did not join them at first (5.61.1–3). This is understandable, given how close Argos came to being attacked by a vastly superior army before the truce; its qualms with it were in fact unlikely to be substantial.<sup>462</sup> This leaves the procedural point. The real issue for the Argives was that regardless of whether they wanted a truce or not, it had been made behind the people's back; hence their immediate punishment of Thrasyllus.<sup>463</sup> Again, this episode offers a picture of the Argive *dēmos* as intent on keeping its leaders in check.<sup>464</sup>

Argos' involvement in the anti-Spartan front came to a sudden end in late 418, when the allies were defeated at Mantinea. As a consequence of the defeat, not only did Argos abruptly leave the coalition and make an alliance with Sparta, but shortly thereafter its anti-democratic faction – emboldened by the pro-Laconian realignment – seized the power in the city, establishing an oligarchy toppled by a democratic reaction shortly after.<sup>465</sup> Scholars such as Tuci and Bearzot have seen in the events of 418/7 an example of the fragile and volatile nature of Argos' democratic

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<sup>460</sup> For an analysis of the political background of this truce, see Kagan 1962.

<sup>461</sup> Previously, too, Thucydides notes that Thrasyllus and Alkiphron proposed a truce 'of their own accord and not because they had been ordered to do so by the people' (5.60.1).

<sup>462</sup> Henderson (1927, 307) estimated that Agis commanded an army of 25,000 between hoplites and cavalry and 'plentiful' light-armed soldiers, whereas Argos and its allies had 12,000 hoplites and no cavalry at their disposal.

<sup>463</sup> Kagan (1962, 215) noted that the Argives only punished Thrasyllus and not Alkiphron, but this is an argument from silence. Thucydides says nothing about the fate of Alkiphron, who is never mentioned again. Furthermore, Thrasyllus was tried in the Charadros as his was deemed to be a 'military cause' (5.50.6); given that the Charadros lies to the northwest of Argos, it is possible that the army returning from the north dealt with him first and Alkiphron met his fate shortly thereafter, in the city.

<sup>464</sup> Tuci 2006, 245; Robinson 2011, 19–20.

<sup>465</sup> Sources on the oligarchic interlude at Argos: Thuc. 5.76–82; Arist. *Pol.* 1304a25–27; Diod. 12.80.2–3; Paus. 2.20.2; Plut. *Alc.* 15.2. Some believe that Aen. *Tact.* 17.2–4 also refers to the oligarchic coup: see e.g. David 1986, 120. Thucydides (5.81.2) dates the coup to the beginning of spring 417.



institutions, but a closer look at the evidence (both Thucydidean and non-Thucydidean) shows that the coup and counter-coup are better read as proving the *resilience* of those institutions, both because the oligarchs did not have an easy time seizing power in the first place and because once they had done so, they were quickly ousted by a mass pro-democratic reaction.

The coup of 417 should be placed in the context of the difficult internal situation at Argos in the wake of Mantinea. Thucydides says that while a Laconising, pro-oligarchy faction already existed at Argos before the battle, the defeat made it easier for that faction to secure the necessary popular support for realigning Argos towards Sparta (5.76.2). This faction must have largely overlapped with the ‘Thousand’, the elite body of hoplites who had distinguished themselves at Mantinea amid and despite the overall defeat.<sup>466</sup> The existence of such factions within democracies is broadly speaking not a problem in itself so long as democratic institutions are capable of keeping them under control.<sup>467</sup> The issue in 417 is that the Argive oligarchs worked hard from within Argos’ institutions to create a favourable environment for their coup. Their first success was getting the assembly to approve a peace treaty with Sparta (5.77); not long after the treaty, the Argives formally left the coalition and made a fifty-year alliance with their former enemy (5.79). Thucydides specifies that the alliance was advocated for by the same men who had supported the peace treaty (5.78: οἱ αὐτοὶ ἄνδρες). It is important to note that while the peace treaty was being discussed the Spartans were encamped at Tegea (5.76.1) – from where access to the Argolid via the Thyreatis is unproblematic even during winter – and only after the treaty was approved did they leave Tegea and march back home (5.78). The vote must have taken in a tense atmosphere and effectively under coercion; yet Thucydides says that Sparta’s peace proposal was much debated in the assembly (5.76.3: γενομένης πολλῆς ἀντιλογίας), showing that the anti-Spartan, pro-war faction was still vocal and influential.<sup>468</sup>

Argos became Sparta’s ally and aligned itself to Spartan foreign policy, but remained a democracy for the time being – albeit one in a clearly pre-revolutionary state. This was necessarily a precarious situation. In early spring 417, the Thousand overthrew the democracy with Sparta’s active cooperation (Thuc. 5.81).<sup>469</sup> Diodorus, perhaps drawing from Ephorus, says that the coup was preceded by systematic violence against democratic leaders and a general climate of terror

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<sup>466</sup> Thuc. 5.72.3; see also Arist. *Pol.* 1304<sup>a</sup>25-27, on which see Lintott 2018, 108.

<sup>467</sup> See e.g. the remarks in Bultrighini 1990, 130 and 136.

<sup>468</sup> See Tuci 2006, 256. In the same passage, Thucydides records that Alcibiades was present at the discussion, surely lending his support to the pro-war side. It is however striking that – apart from his presence – Athens seems to have been uninterested in Argos’ drift away from the coalition, in stark contrast with Sparta’s active interventions.

<sup>469</sup> On the material support from Sparta for the revolutionaries, see also Plut. *Alc.* 15.2.

inflicted by the Thousand on the common citizens (12.80.3).<sup>470</sup> This preliminary phase must have dragged on for some time, given the gaps between Thucydides' dates for the peace treaty (5.76.1: beginning of the winter of 418), the alliance (5.78: οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον) and the coup in the early spring of 417; in other words, this series of intermediate steps shows that the coup was not directly connected to the defeat at Mantinea, which had happened several months before, but required careful planning from the inside and constant Spartan pressure from the outside. Despite this, once the oligarchs managed to seize power, they could only maintain it for four or five months before the *demos* rose again and ousted them in an urban battle.<sup>471</sup> While the sources disagree on what triggered the counter-coup, it seems clear that the oligarchs' policy of terror failed to stop the democrats from organising internal resistance. The democrats' success is all the more remarkable because (unlike their adversaries) there is no hint that they secured advance support from the outside, although they sought friendship with Athens as soon as they were back in power (5.82.5).

At the cost of two coups, Argive democracy came out stronger from the events of 418/7. The democrats handled the revolutionaries ruthlessly, executing at least a large share of them.<sup>472</sup> On one hand, this eliminated the risk of a relapse: to our knowledge, there were never any (successful) oligarchic coups at Argos thereafter, and Argos remained a loyal ally of Athens for the remainder of the war, although its subsequent participation was quite subdued compared to the hegemonic aspirations of 421–18.<sup>473</sup> But at the same time the Argive democrats seem to have been willing to mend the wounds within the citizen body, if, as Pausanias reports, they dedicated a statue of Zeus Meilichios as an act of reconciliation (2.20.2). In her study of the cult of Zeus Meilichios, Burton has suggested that the Argives chose this god as a way to memorialise an act of violence between kinsmen, and consequently placate their hostility from the underworld.<sup>474</sup> Still recovering from a painful year, the Argive ruling class seems to have found a way to combine the need to defuse the oligarchic menace with the need to bring the community back together.

Little is known about Argos in the following decades down to Leuctra, especially with respect to its internal politics. One partial exception is the short-lived *isopoliteia* between Argos and

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<sup>470</sup> According to David (1986, 119), Diodorus/Ephorus' lack of sympathy for democracy gives credibility to his allegations of oligarchic violence.

<sup>471</sup> Diodorus says that the oligarchy lasted for eight months, but this is incompatible with Thucydides' dating of the democratic counter-coup to the summer of 417 (5.82.2); see David 1986, 118 with bibliography.

<sup>472</sup> Thucydides says that the oligarchs were partly exiled, partly executed (5.82.2); however, in Diodorus (12.80.3) and Pausanias (2.20.2), the massacre seems to have been complete.

<sup>473</sup> On Argos and Athens between 417 and 404, see Bearzot 2006, 138–39.

<sup>474</sup> Burton 2010.

Corinth in place from the late 390s to the King's Peace of 386.<sup>475</sup> I shall not dwell on the complex broader political context of the union, and rather focus on what it says more specifically about the continuing role of democracy in Argos' foreign policy.<sup>476</sup> In 394/3, during the so-called Corinthian War, some wealthy Corinthian citizens, increasingly uncomfortable with the Spartan raids in their *chōra*, began to advocate for peace with Sparta; this worried the rest of the anti-Spartan coalition (Argos, Athens and Boeotia), which intervened by killing most pro-Spartan Corinthians in a surprise attack on the allied city (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.1–3).<sup>477</sup> Diodorus provides a slightly different account of the massacre, in which its chief executors are a group of Corinthian democrats (*τινὲς τῶν ἐπιθυμούντων δημοκρατίας*), acting with Argive support (14.86.1). In fact, both Xenophon (4.4.6) and Diodorus (14.92.1) agree that in the following years Argos *de facto* annexed Corinth: boundary stones were removed and the citizens of one city were granted citizenship of the other, something that the surviving pro-Spartans in Corinth saw with great apprehension; it is even possible – although highly uncertain – that the two assemblies were somehow merged.<sup>478</sup> This peculiar union was forcibly ended by Agesilaos following the peace of 386, when the Corinth was made to expel the Argive garrison and became once again 'in charge of itself' (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.34: *αὐτῇ ἐφ' αὐτῆς*). No exact information survives as to the transformation of Corinth's political institutions in connection with the *isopoliteia*, but what is clear is the specific role of democracy in shaping Argos' foreign policy: Argos' hands-on support for the Corinthian democrats and subsequent *de facto* takeover were primarily ways of ensuring that Corinth continued to fight Sparta, as in Xenophon's narrative the intervention had been triggered by the fear that it might not. Just as democracy had been the *justification* for the alliances with Mantinea and Athens against Sparta in 421/0, now it was being employed as a *tool* to keep Corinth on Argos' side; at least in this case, Argos' commitment to democracy had little to do with ideology and much to do with organising the opposition to Sparta.

We hear again about Argos in 370, in connection with the shocking act of internecine violence known as the *skytalismos* (from *σκυτάλη*, 'club'), which sheds some light on the internal situation in the city.<sup>479</sup> The longest account of this episode is in Diodorus (15.57.3–58.4), who tells us that some wealthy Argives, feeling vexed by the ruling demagogues, began to conspire against

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<sup>475</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.1–14, 5.1.34; Diod. 14.86.1, 14.92.1. Some other minor references in the ancient sources are collected in Sordi 2006, 299.

<sup>476</sup> On the union in general, see: Griffith 1950; Salmon 1984, 354–62; Tuplin 1982; Bearzot 2004; Sordi 2006; Bettalli 2012; Robinson 2011, 22–25. The actual impact of the union on Corinth's institutions is unknown and only educated guesses can be made, such as those put forward by Robinson 2011, 24–25.

<sup>477</sup> On the date, see Sordi 2006, 299; see also Tuplin 1982.

<sup>478</sup> Salmon 1984, 360–61.

<sup>479</sup> The main source for the *skytalismos* is Diod. 15.57.3–58.4. It is also mentioned in other passages which however add very little to Diodorus' narrative: Plut. *Præ. ger. reip.* 814<sup>b</sup>; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.66.5; Aen. Tact. 11.7–10.

the democracy; those accused of plotting were swiftly put to death and their property confiscated, but the *dēmos*, incited by the demagogues, began to condemn to death even all those wealthy men who were simply suspected of having joined the plot. Soon the democrats lost control of the situation and many of them were put to death too, just as they were trying to stop the persecution. In the end, some 1,200 Argives are said to have been killed before order was restored.<sup>480</sup>

Despite some superficial similarities with the coup and counter-coup of 417, such as the presence of an oligarchic faction willing to overthrow the democracy and a strong and ultimately effective democratic reaction, the *skytalismos* is a fundamentally different matter. While after the Battle of Mantinea the oligarchs leveraged their position of strength to seize power at Argos, Diodorus provides a picture of fourth-century Argos where the rich are cornered by the *dēmos* and its leaders and only resort to plotting (unsuccessfully) as a matter of self-defence.<sup>481</sup> In fact, Diodorus' narrative leaves very much open the possibility that the alleged oligarchic plot was simply a pretext used by the democrats to stir up public outrage against their opponents.<sup>482</sup> It is also important to bear in mind that the reported death of 1,200 Argives – almost one-sixth of the SAMC population according to my estimate in §4.2 – seems to have had no impact on Argos' ability to carry out engagements abroad. Just a few months after the *skytalismos*, the Argives were persuaded without difficulty to join the Arcadian-led anti-Spartan coalition (Diod. 15.62.3). It is therefore possible that the scale of the massacre ought not to be taken literally, and that the story rather attests to a widespread negative *perception* of Argive democracy in Greece, whereby Argos was seen (rightly or not) as chronically violent, factional and beset with internal strife.<sup>483</sup> However, once stripped of its more extreme features, Diodorus' account contains elements that are very much in keeping with the picture of Argive democracy that emerged from Thucydides. The fact that the demagogues eventually found themselves at the receiving end of the popular violence they initiated just as they were trying to bring the temperature down suggests that the story is essentially about the way the watchful Argive *dēmos* collectively controlled and policed the city's ruling class, regardless of its political orientation and policies – as Thrasyllus had experienced in 418. In his version of the *skytalismos*, Plutarch (*Prae. ger. reip.* 814<sup>b</sup>) added that after violence had subsided the Argives performed cleansing sacrifices around the assembly, which is reminiscent of the collective dedication of a statue to Zeus Meilichios following the counter-coup of 417 and speaks to a

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<sup>480</sup> Plutarch (*Prae. ger. reip.* 814<sup>b</sup>) gives the number of casualties as 1,500.

<sup>481</sup> The *skytalismos* should also be placed in the post-Leuctra context, when Sparta was entirely unable to protect its friends in Peloponnesian cities or even credibly threaten their opponents: Tomlinson 1972, 140.

<sup>482</sup> For instance, O'Neil (1995, 99) drew attention to the fact that the alleged plotters also saw their property confiscated, perhaps as a way to appropriate money to fund political activity (e.g. jury pay) for poorer citizens.

<sup>483</sup> See for example Isoc. 5.52, a roughly contemporary source.

recurring preoccupation with ensuring the healing of social fractures in the wake of episodes perceived as particularly traumatic.

In the years after the *skytalismos* Argos was active on the Arcadian side on multiple occasions, but generally not in a leading role. Again, as was the case with the union with Corinth, it is difficult to establish whether Argos' engagements in those years were *primarily* driven by pro-democracy or anti-Spartan principles, given that the two aspects went essentially hand in hand.<sup>484</sup> The Argive role in Euphron's rise to power at Sicyon showcases the problems posed by the evidence.<sup>485</sup> In late 368, the Sicyonian aristocrat Euphron told the Argives and the Arcadians that the best way to ensure that Sicyon remain committed to the anti-Spartan side was to establish a democracy there (Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.44).<sup>486</sup> Argive and Arcadian troops then stood next to him as he called a meeting of the people and enacted a constitution based on equal rights for all (7.1.45). Despite the scarcity of constitutional details, Euphron does seem to have seized power as a genuine democrat – with Argos therefore actively supporting the creation of a new democracy. But the situation at Sicyon seems to have degenerated quickly. Two years later the Arcadian general Aineias, judging the state of things in the city to be 'intolerable' (7.3.1: οὐκ ἀνεκτῶς ἔχειν), marched on Sicyon and deposed Euphron with the help of a group of wealthy citizens (κράτιστοι). Argos' absence from this latest development can only be explained if the nature of the Arcadian intervention against Euphron is properly understood: what exactly did Aineias find 'intolerable'? It has been suggested that the Arcadians lost their patience with Euphron due to his military failures, such as the Phleisian capture of Thyamia in 366.<sup>487</sup> But Xenophon's narrative – even if we account for some anti-democratic bias – makes clear that Euphron had turned into a tyrant of sorts: beyond Xenophon's generic allegations of despotism (7.1.46), the fact that Aineias' first action was to recall those Sicyonians who had been exiled without a decree (7.3.1: ἄνευ δόγματος) is telling.<sup>488</sup> So, while it is possible that the Arcadians turned sour on Euphron due to his military ineffectiveness, his authoritarian and populist policies must have provided them with an immediate motive for action. It is remarkable, then, that Argos did not intervene in defence of Sicyonian democracy: the

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<sup>484</sup> Argos' friendship with the Arcadians, for example, could be explained in either way. The Arcadians (along with the Argives themselves) joined the Thebans in invading Laconia twice in the early 360s: see Bertoli 2006, 287–88 for a survey of the evidence. But, as seen in §3.3, the Arcadians also seem to have systematically supported *demokratia* as a matter of foreign policy.

<sup>485</sup> The most informative source on Euphron's career is Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.44–46, 7.3.1–12; see also Diod. 15.70.3. On Euphron and his career, see: Griffin 1982, 70–74; Lewis 2004; Bertoli 2006, 288–90; Robinson 2011, 51–53.

<sup>486</sup> I follow here the chronology put forward by Stylianou (1998, 454–55). Xenophon describes pre-368 Sicyon as 'governed according to the traditional laws' (*Hell.* 7.1.44), i.e. an oligarchy.

<sup>487</sup> Griffin 1982, 74.

<sup>488</sup> The fact that Aineias collaborated with the does not necessarily mean that the coup was oligarchic in nature: see Roy 2000, 323–25.

suspicion arises that its support of Euphron's democratic coup in 368 had been primarily driven by the desire to secure that the city remain active against Sparta. Democracy and antilaconism were linked, but the latter seems to have been Argos' primary concern, with the former relegated to a welcome corollary. Argos' engagements abroad in the following years are further examples of this fundamental ambiguity. In the Battle of Mantinea (362) Argos fought against Athens, a fellow democracy – although one that was allied with Sparta (Diod. 15.84.4).<sup>489</sup> When Megalopolis summoned its allies against Sparta in a war for Orneai that Diodorus dates to 352/1, Argos, Sicyon, Messene and (later) Thebes sent contingents in aid (16.39.1–5). Out of the four *poleis* with which Argos was allied in 352/1, only one (Thebes) was almost certainly a democracy at that time; Messene *may* have been a democracy and no information survives on the mid-fourth-century constitutions of Megalopolis and Sicyon, although the latter was more probably an oligarchy.<sup>490</sup> That Argos consistently made alliances with democracies is dubious at best; that Argos consistently fought Sparta is not.

The obvious weakness of this use of democracy as a way of framing opposition to Sparta was that if a new (and perhaps more efficient) way of opposing Sparta were to emerge, then the commitment to democracy would be dropped. This is what seems to have happened after the middle of the century, when Philip II of Macedon arrived on the Greek stage. Although the origins of Argos' relations with Philip are unknown, already in 343 Demosthenes listed the Argives among the Greek communities enjoying friendly relations with Philip (19.261–62). Five years later, when the Macedonians defeated a Greek coalition at Chaeronea, Argos remained neutral (18.64). Philip seems to have returned the favour by taking Argos' side in its perennial territorial disputes against Sparta, for example by forcing Sparta to recognise Argos' rightful ownership of Thyreatis.<sup>491</sup> Alignment with Macedon became then the more effective way of opposing Sparta. There is no evidence that Argos ceased to be a democracy then, but democracy no longer served that specific purpose.

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<sup>489</sup> As I argue in §3.3, Mantinea (on the same side as Athens and Sparta in this battle) was also probably a democracy.

<sup>490</sup> See the relevant entries on the CPC's *Inventory* (Hansen and Nielsen 2004). On Sicyon, Griffin (1982, 74–75) appears sceptical on the possibility of saying anything about the city's constitution after Euphron, while Legon (2004, 469–70) in the *Inventory* cautiously favours oligarchy.

<sup>491</sup> Polyb. 9.28.7, 18.14.7; Paus. 2.20.1, 2.38.5.

## 5. The Achaean League (280–146)

This chapter investigates the impact of popular rule in the institutional history and development of the Achaean League, from its (re)foundation in the late 280s to its dissolution following the Roman victory of 146 BCE.<sup>492</sup> The cities of Achaea had a long history of political cooperation since the mid-classical period; what is novel in the period under examination is the *koinon*'s expansion from the mid-third century onwards, which turned it into a major player on the Mediterranean stage down to the Roman conquest. The overarching aim of this chapter is to reappraise the significance of the democratic element in a political construction whose democratic credentials have often been questioned.<sup>493</sup>

In §5.1, I employ the analytical tools provided by Rational Choice Institutionalism to investigate the defining features of the Achaean federal council and assembly. I argue that on the basis of the available information on Achaean federal institutions we can see the League as essentially democratic, and that its democratic features were essential in ensuring compliance and legitimacy given the effective unavailability of coercion-based modes of establishing authority.

In §5.2, I address the problem of the changing definition of what it meant to be an 'Achaean' as a starting point to investigate the impact of the *koinon* and its institutions on the non-elite citizen population at both local and federal level. I devote particular attention to the reform (tentatively dated to 217) of the rules concerning extraordinary federal meetings, and argue that this reform did not cause a democratic deficit.

In §5.3, I investigate the ways in which elite Achaean citizens operated within the League's institutions. I focus on the transformation of the role of the general (*stratēgos*) between Aratos and Philopoimen, to explore the ways in which generals could use federal institutions to their own benefit but were also constrained by them at the same time.

### 5.1. The value of equality

The purpose of this section is to lay the methodological groundwork for the analysis of the Achaean constitution. The reason for this is that the historical performance of the federal institutions as vehicles for political action, which is the subject of §5.2 and §5.3, should be judged

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<sup>492</sup> On the geography of Achaea proper, see Anderson 1954. On the foundation framed as *re*-foundation, see note 502.

<sup>493</sup> See for example O'Neil 1984–1986, 33–44; see also Bourke 2018, 3 ('During the Hellenistic period the Akhaian League became the new champion of the oligarchic cause in the Peloponnese').

in the context of their creation and development. What was the League *for*? How did its fundamental purpose shape its institutional set-up and historical trajectory? My focus in this section is largely on the early history of the League, between the (re)foundation in c.280 and the accession of Sicyon in 251, but the occasional use of the more abundant evidence from later periods will showcase the permanence of its founding principles.

The theoretical approach known as ‘Rational Choice Institutionalism’ (RCI), which is a sub-type of New Institutionalism, offers a potentially promising framework for addressing our questions.<sup>494</sup> One of the defining features of RCI is a ‘functionalist’ and ‘voluntarist’ approach to institutional change. Functionalism is based on the assumption that institutions fulfil specific functions that the actors involved in the social process value. Consequently, those actors will create institutions as a way to realise that value, and explaining the emergence of an institution ultimately becomes a matter of explaining what role (valued by the actors) the institution performs. The second aspect of the RCI approach, voluntarism, ‘tend[s] to view institutional creation as a quasi-contractual process marked by voluntary agreement among relatively equal and independent actors’.<sup>495</sup> It is a common criticism of this approach that perfect equality among the actors involved in the creation of institutions rarely presents itself in the real world; for instance, Historical Institutionalism (a different strand of New Institutionalist thought) bases its theory of institutional change on the recognition that the latter tends in fact to occur in conditions of asymmetry of power.<sup>496</sup> Therefore, the first purpose of this section is to argue that the original member-*poleis* of the Achaean League should be taken as ‘relatively equal’ actors creating institutions on a voluntary basis.<sup>497</sup> Once the applicability of RCI to the Achaean case has been established, I will set out to investigate the role of democracy in the League’s institutions by way of a functionalist analysis of its corporate bodies (council and assembly).

The arguments for viewing the *poleis* of Achaea as ‘relatively equal’ actors could be divided into *emic* and *etic* ones. The first set includes Polybius’ curt description of its inception: at some point in the 124<sup>th</sup> Olympiad (284–280) Dyme, Patrai, Tritaia and Pharai ‘banded together’ to create the new confederacy (2.41.12: *συνέστησαν*); shortly thereafter, nearby Aigion, Boura and Keryneia joined the fledgling *koinon*.<sup>498</sup> This verb suggests that by Polybius’ time, the ‘official’ history of the

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<sup>494</sup> For general introductions to RCI, with relevant bibliography, see: Hall and Taylor 1996, 942–46 and 952–53; Shepsle 2006. While RCI and its basic principles (especially voluntarism) are probably applicable to some of the other case studies in this thesis, the nature of the evidence makes the Achaean League a particularly suitable example.

<sup>495</sup> Hall and Taylor 1996, 952.

<sup>496</sup> Hall and Taylor 1996, 940–41; see also the related critique of RCI in Moe 2005.

<sup>497</sup> Pace Mackil 2013, 329–30.

<sup>498</sup> The date is at 2.41.11. My argument here relies on the assumption that Polybius, the son of a leading second-century Achaean politician, is broadly trustworthy on the League’s history and ideological basis – although he certainly



League emphasised that it arose not from one city forcing the others into a hegemonic network, but from single-minded collaboration. Especially considering Polybius' idealised view of the League, it is not advisable to place too much weight on that single verb; yet, some *etic* considerations based on circumstantial evidence support the same view. The cities of western Achaëa, traditionally numbering 12 and squeezed tight along the northern Peloponnesian coast, were of similar (small) size, resources, and presumably population.<sup>499</sup> The scarcity of land and the ease of establishing maritime networks between the coastal *poleis* must have encouraged economic specialisation and integration from early times.<sup>500</sup> None of the original members of the League had any previous experience of leadership or hegemony.<sup>501</sup> Crucially, there is scarce but unequivocal evidence of a previous history of political cooperation between Achaean cities, which were part of an ill-known *koinon* between the late fifth and the late fourth century.<sup>502</sup> The Achaeans had had a common regional sanctuary since the classical period – first at Helike, until the city was destroyed by an earthquake in 373, then the sanctuary of Zeus Homarios just outside Aigion, which would later serve as the League's permanent meeting place until 189/8.<sup>503</sup> The material and historical context of third-century Achaëa suggests that the local *poleis* were qualified to operate as 'relatively equal' political actors and that whatever form of *koinon* they were going to create would be informed by their long shared history of intensive, egalitarian cooperation. In conclusion, I shall assume that the 'voluntarist' assumption underpinning RCI largely applies to the founding members of the League.

In order to pursue a 'functionalist' analysis of the League's institutions, two basic questions must be answered: (a) what was the League supposed to accomplish? (b) how did its institutions enable the realisation of its founding purpose? Regarding the first question, a good starting point is the chapter in which Polybius outlines the League's *προαίρεσις*, which could effectively be

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embellished some of it as part of his overarching historiographical project. On the question of Polybius' reliability in this respect: Champion 2004, 122–29; Pagkalos 2018, 172–74.

<sup>499</sup> The 12 Achaean *merē* are listed by Herodotus (1.145). On the *poleis*' small size and scarce resources, see Plut. *Arat.* 9.4.

<sup>500</sup> Shipley 2018, 21.

<sup>501</sup> Kralli 2017, 148.

<sup>502</sup> Evidence collected in Morgan and Hall 2004, 474–77; see also Larsen 1968, 80–89. A *boula tōn Achaion* is attested in a fourth-century inscription (*SEG* 14.375); Hypereides mentions a *koinos syllogos* of the Achaeans at the time of Alexander (5.4). According to Xenophon, at some point before 394 the Achaeans had conquered the city of Kalydon and given Achaean citizenship to its people (*Hell.* 4.6.1). In addition to the contemporary evidence, Polybius frames the foundation of 280 as the *re*-creation of a pre-existing *koinon* which had gradually declined in the previous decades (2.41.9, cf. also 2.42.1).

<sup>503</sup> Rizakis 2013. On the League's meeting places and the sanctuary of Zeus Homarios in particular, see McDonald 1943, 98–103. On the role of Aigion as the cultic and political capital of the League in the third century, see Rizakis 2008a, 163–65.

translated as ‘policy platform’ (2.42).<sup>504</sup> Polybius describes the League as using the ‘offer’ (*προτείνοντες*) of freedom and equality of speech to attract new members, but the promise of equality is linked here to the promise of protection from whoever was attempting to ‘enslave’ (*τοὺς ... καταδουλομένους*, note the present participle) the member-*poleis*. Freedom and equality as the League’s selling point are a Polybian *Leitmotiv* that will be probed in further detail below, but the mention of protection from enslavement is particularly interesting in the light of the context in which the Achaean *koinon* was created. In the Peloponnese, the decline of Sparta since Leuctra had long given way to an enduring power vacuum.<sup>505</sup> Then, in 281, the death of Lysimachos at Kouroupedion briefly put Seleukos I on the throne of Macedon, until he was himself ousted and killed by Ptolemy Keraunos; Gonatas, son of Demetrios I Poliorketes, tried to take the throne for himself but Keraunos defeated him at Demetrias, in Thessaly.<sup>506</sup> The chaotic situation in the north may have contributed to the four westernmost Achaean cities’ decision to reassert their autonomy and revive their ancient *koinon*.<sup>507</sup>

This backdrop against which the (re)foundation of the Achaean League took place, in combination with Polybius’ statement, suggests that the *koinon*’s fundamental purpose was to allow the Achaeans to pursue a common, independent(ist) foreign policy.<sup>508</sup> This has two main consequences. First, the focus on *common* affairs meant that the *internal* affairs of the individual *poleis* were largely each city’s own business: there seems to have been a clear distinction between *τὰ κοινά* and ‘domestic’ politics, with only the former being within the remit of federal institutions.<sup>509</sup> Second, in order to organise a common policy effectively, it was crucial to ensure the pacific coexistence of the member-*poleis* within the League. This can explain the considerable amount of time and energy that the Achaean League devoted to dispute resolution between

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<sup>504</sup> On the meaning of *προαίρεσις* here, see Walbank 1957–1979, 1:234.

<sup>505</sup> Kralli 2017, 147.

<sup>506</sup> On these events see Shipley 2018, 56–58.

<sup>507</sup> On the connection with the turmoil in Macedon see Shipley 2018, 57–58. Aigion and Boura expelled their (Macedonian) garrisons in order to join the League (Polyb. 2.41.13: *τὴν φρουρὰν ἐκβαλόντες ... μετέσχον τῆς συμπολιτείας*). It seems that the only structural ‘asymmetry of power’ shaping this formative stage is external, i.e. the power vacuum that allowed the League to emerge in the first place. For some reason, as Shipley (2018, 62) noted, the Macedonian kings wasted the opportunity to snuff out the fledgling League before it became a significant force, even after the Chremonidean War; but due to the poor evidence on Achaean history before 251 we cannot quite tell why this happened.

<sup>508</sup> In the second century (and probably earlier as well) individual cities could not send embassies to ‘third parties’, but could only do so in conjunction with the rest of the League: Paus. 7.12.5; see Mackil 2013, 350–51.

<sup>509</sup> The terms of the ‘federal compromise’ in Achaea, Aetolia and Boeotia are explored in detail by Mackil 2013, 346–90. On the Achaean League in particular, see also: Aymard 1938a, 166–68; Rizakis 2015, 128. Strabo notes that the Achaeans met at the Hamarion (*sic*) to ‘discuss the matters of *common* interest’ (8.7.3: *τὰ κοινὰ ἐχρημάτιζον*). Compare the EU principle of subsidiarity as defined in Article 5.3 TEU: ‘in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States ... but can rather ... be better achieved at Union level’.

members throughout its history (on which see §5.2), but it also raised the procedural problem of devising institutions able to foster cooperation, which brings us onto the second step of the ‘functionalist’ method – how did the League’s institutions enable the stable pursuit of a joint foreign policy?

Polybius’ description of the League places great emphasis on its democratic character, also as a way for the Achaean cities to define themselves in opposition to the ‘enslavers’ against whom they were uniting their forces.<sup>510</sup> In the passage examined above (2.42), he argues that the League attracted new members by offering ‘equality and freedom of speech’ (*ἰσηγορία* and *παρρησία*).<sup>511</sup> A similar case is made in a previous chapter (2.38.6),<sup>512</sup> but Polybius here goes beyond the question of ‘outreach’ and points out the real impact this system had on intra-federal relations: all member-*poleis* were on an equal footing, regardless of when they had become part of the League (2.38.8).<sup>513</sup> Aymard argued that, in Polybius’ view, the rights and duties of the individual *poleis* within the League were comparable to the rights and duties of the citizen of a democratic *polis*, and this made the League democratic.<sup>514</sup> This is probably correct, but does not clarify the role of *demokratia* in (what Polybius viewed as) the League’s overarching mission. In Walbank’s reading, Polybius credited the Achaeans with expanding access to the benefits of democracy; in other words, Walbank seemingly took the expansion of democracy as a policy goal unto itself for the League.<sup>515</sup> Conversely, I suggest viewing democracy as a means to an end, namely as the key element that – from a ‘functionalist’ angle – enabled the League to pursue its stated goals. In the rest of this section, I analyse the functioning of the Achaean federal council and assembly and consider how their operating principles fostered compliance by creating a widespread perception of legitimacy.

Little information survives on the composition of the federal *boulē*: its size, which was probably considerable, and membership criteria are unknown.<sup>516</sup> We do however know that the council was made up of representatives from the member-*poleis*.<sup>517</sup> The observations made with

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<sup>510</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence that Boura and Keryneia joined the League in the mid-270s after getting rid of their tyrants, the former violently, the latter peacefully (Polyb. 2.41.13–14).

<sup>511</sup> These were a long-established pair of democratic ‘buzzwords’, cf. e.g.: Plat. *Rep.* 557b; Dem. 21.124; Theophr. *Char.* 28.6. The *isēgoria/parrhēsia* pairing is particularly frequent in Polybius: in addition to these passages, see also 4.31.4, 6.9.4, 6.9.5, 27.4.7.

<sup>512</sup> Here Polybius specifies that, on account of these features, the Achaean constitution exemplifies ‘true democracy’ (*δημοκρατία ἀληθινή*), on which see Champion 2018, 125–26.

<sup>513</sup> In 189/8 a reform was passed whereby the regular *synodoi* would no longer be held at Aigion, but would rotate between Achaean cities (Liv. 38.30.1–6). This would further consolidate the effective equality of the member-*poleis* inside the *koinon* (see e.g. O’Neil 1995, 126).

<sup>514</sup> Aymard 1938b, 17.

<sup>515</sup> Walbank 1957–1979, 1:234.

<sup>516</sup> On the *boulē* see the analysis by Larsen 1968, 225–27.

<sup>517</sup> Kralli 2017, 152.

regard to the archaic council based at Olympia could equally apply to the Hellenistic Achaean *boulē*: by getting together in recurring, predictable contexts to discuss matters of common interest, prominent individuals from the member-*poleis* could form ‘weak ties’ that facilitated collaboration beyond the borders of the *polis*.<sup>518</sup> Unlike in archaic Eleia, however, we have good information about the Achaean federal assembly; its evolution after the end of the third century is explored in §5.2, but its four defining features remained in place throughout its history and can be formulated as follows:

1. Membership of the assembly was open to all adult male Achaean citizens regardless of wealth – certainly all those aged 30 and above, and possibly also those of military age but younger than 30.<sup>519</sup>
2. The assembly met regularly and relatively often: in the third century, there were four scheduled *synodoi* (meetings of the League’s corporate bodies) each year, in addition to extraordinary meetings whenever necessary.<sup>520</sup>
3. The assembly had the final say on policy of federal concern.<sup>521</sup>
4. All members of the assembly enjoyed freedom of speech, as customary in Greek democratic assemblies.<sup>522</sup>

To borrow Dahl’s terminology of the democratic process, the recurring meetings at which all participants could speak up and have the final say on policy mean that Achaean citizens enjoyed ‘effective participation’ and ‘voting equality at the decisive stage’.<sup>523</sup> This makes the Achaean federal constitution democratic at least ‘in the narrow sense’. Venturing beyond the ‘narrow sense’ requires raising the question of who controlled the assembly’s agenda, which in Greek states was usually the council through the procedure today referred to as *probouleusis*. As seen above,

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<sup>518</sup> See §2.1.

<sup>519</sup> The main evidence for assembly membership is a passage from Polybius regarding the federal meeting held at Sicyon in 168, which was attended ‘not only by the council, but by all citizens over 30 years of age’ (29.24.6). This is taken by Aymard (1938a, 43–46) as proof that assembly meetings – as opposed to council meetings – saw the participation of all citizens aged 30 and above. Other scholars argue on the basis of other evidence that all male citizens of military age were members of the assembly: Walbank 1957–1979, 3:407–8; Rhodes 1997, 104; Kralli 2017, 152.

<sup>520</sup> The evidence for four regular *synodoi* per year is collected in Larsen 1955, 79–81.

<sup>521</sup> See the meeting of 229 attested in Polyb. 2.46.6. The general Aratos and the ‘leading men’ (*προεστῶτες*) of the League are said at first to be against an open conflict with Cleomenes III, but the latter’s provocations induce them to hold a vote on declaring war; the Achaean leadership ‘gathers the Achaeans’ and decides with the *boulē* to wage war. Unlike the earlier decision to maintain the status quo, the policy change only came into effect following an assembly vote. At least in the early second century, the assembly voted not by a ‘one head, one vote’ system, but by *poleis*: Liv. 38.32.1; also implied by 32.22.8–12. It is at least reasonable to suppose that this was the case in the previous decades as well. Plausibly, the attendees from each *polis* discussed the matter internally before the final vote: Kralli 2017, 154.

<sup>522</sup> In addition to Polybius’ aforementioned statements on *isēgoria* and *parrhēsia* in the League, Livy reports that the second day of the *synkletos* of 198 opened with the magistrates inviting ‘whoever wished to make an argument’ (32.20.1: *cum ... suadendi, si quis vellet, potestas a magistratibus facta esset*); see Rhodes 1997, 107.

<sup>523</sup> Dahl 1989, 108–10.

information on *boulē* membership requirements is entirely lacking: whether *polis* representatives had to meet certain property requirements (unlike assembly attendees) is unknown. Out of caution, let us assume for a moment that council membership was more restricted than assembly membership. In that case, how binding were *probouleumata* on the way the discussion in the assembly played out? The existence of formal probouleusis in the Achaean constitution is a *vexata quaestio*, as we lack straightforward evidence in either sense.<sup>524</sup> However, the surviving narratives of federal meetings show lively and consequential discussions taking place in the assembly, to the extent that even if probouleusis did occur, *probouleumata* were ‘open’ and prescribed the agenda in loose terms, leaving the assembly free to debate.<sup>525</sup>

To sum up, the significance of the democratic element in the Achaean constitution seems undeniable: it was democratic ‘in the narrow sense’ at the very least, and the importance of assembly debates suggests that it somewhat exceeded that basic level. To circle back to our initial question, how did these democratic practices help the League achieve its founding goals? One possible answer is legitimacy. Many political scientists argue that freedom of expression, for instance, fulfils an important legitimising purpose in the policy-making process, thus increasing willingness to comply with public decisions.<sup>526</sup> Livy’s account of the federal meeting of 198 suggests that the Achaeans were aware of these advantages of democratic practice (32.20.6): the general Aristainos reminded the assembly that *before* the vote every citizen had the opportunity ‘to speak and persuade’ (*dicendi ac suadendi*), so that *after* the vote everyone would defend and uphold the common decision, ‘even those who formerly disliked it’ (*etiam quibus ante displicuerit*). The two aspects went hand-in-hand; in Leninist terms, ‘freedom of discussion’ begat ‘unity of action’.

The function of the democratic component in the Achaean constitution can be further appreciated by way of a brief comparison with the older, Spartan-led ‘Peloponnesian League’. At first blush, the two international organisations appear similar: as Larsen demonstrated, in the Peloponnesian League decisions taken by the assembly were binding upon all members, and common undertakings always required final approval by the assembly.<sup>527</sup> But it has long been

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<sup>524</sup> Rhodes 1997, 481. The terms of the issue were well laid out by Aymard (1938a, 363–65), who doubted the existence of a federal council altogether (150–64). Some later scholars were critical of Aymard’s radical stance: see Walbank 1957–1979, 1:244.

<sup>525</sup> Rhodes 1997, 107. In the second century, assembly members could bring forward decree proposals in the assembly on the second day of the *synkletos*, but those decrees surely had to be related to the issue under discussion (Polyb. 29.24.10); see §5.2 below on *synkletoi*.

<sup>526</sup> See most recently Bhagwat and Weinstein 2021, 92–95 with bibliography. Freedom of expression is an essential component in two key stages of the pluralist democratic process as theorised by Dahl (1989, 111–14; 2005, 195–96) – *enlightened understanding* (ensuring that all citizens have full knowledge of the issue at stake and the possible solutions) and *control of the agenda*.

<sup>527</sup> Larsen 1932, 140.

recognised that the Peloponnesian League effectively consisted of a series of bilateral alliances between Sparta and the individual member-*poleis*.<sup>528</sup> The absence of formal cross-links put Sparta firmly at the centre of the network; in addition to this, the Peloponnesian *poleis* had different obligations towards Sparta on account of their different sizes and resources and the different ways in which they had joined the symmarchy.<sup>529</sup> This contrasts strikingly with Polybius' emphasis on the absolute equality in status between the Achaean League's member-*poleis* (2.38.8). Furthermore, the Peloponnesian League's common institutions were singularly weak in peacetime, as member-*poleis* are routinely attested as fighting each other when not fighting a third party together; by contrast, dispute resolution between members was a constant concern for the Achaean institutions.<sup>530</sup> But the most glaring difference between the two leagues is the nature of the use of common votes. It has been shown above that Achaean federal meetings featured robust debates and assembly members could propose decrees. Conversely, although 'Peloponnesian' meetings did formally include some time for debate, this was entirely subordinate to the power dynamics existing within the League, which skewed the process in Sparta's favour: since sheer fear often dissuaded representatives from smaller states from speaking up against the hegemon *polis*, votes at common meetings were effectively 'instruments of Spartan policy'.<sup>531</sup>

This degree of systemic inequality was made possible by Sparta's military resources, thanks to which it could maintain its influence (at least to some extent) by means of coercion – defined by Dahl and Stinebrickner as a form of influence characterised by the threat of physical force.<sup>532</sup> But the material conditions enabling the use of coercion in the Peloponnesian League did not exist in the Achaean League, for until at least 251 (and arguably even later) no Achaean city outpowered the others quite as significantly. Achaean's inherent tendency towards equality examined above necessarily induced the League to assert its influence in non-coercive ways; Dahl and Stinebrickner note that the authority descending from legitimacy – namely from the perception that compliance would be 'right or morally good' – is particularly 'efficient and attractive'.<sup>533</sup> We have already seen

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<sup>528</sup> See Shipley 2018, 31 with bibliography. In the literary sources the League is regularly referred to as 'the Spartans and their allies', which shows the power imbalance in it. The mid-fifth-century inscription bearing a treaty between Sparta and the Erxadieis (OR 128, see p.42) sheds light on how this network of asymmetrical alliances worked.

<sup>529</sup> As argued by Bolmarcich 2005.

<sup>530</sup> See above, in addition to §5.2.

<sup>531</sup> Lendon 1994, 171–74 (quote from 174); see also Kagan 1969, 21. On a related note, under Sparta's own constitution (the 'Great Rhetra') motions relied on a yes–no approval from the *plethos*, with no debate or introduction of amendments on the motions presented, and the kings and the 'elders' retained the power to override popular deliberations deemed inappropriate (Plut. *Lyc.* 6.3–4).

<sup>532</sup> Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003, 40; see 38–43 for their discussion of the seven forms of influence. On the evolution of these concepts in the development of Dahl's political thought: Stinebrickner 2015.

<sup>533</sup> Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003, 60.

the role of democratic practice in increasing legitimacy; the conclusion is, once again, that democracy was essential to the League's performance.

Having considered the general framework underpinning Achaean's federal institutions as a whole, the purpose of the next two sections will be to move from theory to practice and investigate the League's actual impact on how (respectively) mass and elite participated in politics.

## 5.2. Empowering the *dēmos*

This section examines the relationship between the Achaean League and the *dēmos* or 'mass', here used as a shorthand for all non-elite men with citizen status. After a brief exploration of the shifting nature of Achaean identity, I focus separately on political dynamics at the *polis* level and the federal level.

As noted in §5.1, the federal assembly included at least all Achaean citizens above the age of 30, and quite possibly all Achaean citizens of military age. But what did it mean to be 'Achaean'? In its early stages, the League had a strong ethnic characterisation; indeed, the sense of belonging to a common descent group will have facilitated interaction and cooperation between different Achaean *poleis*.<sup>534</sup> A new phase began in 251, as the Sicyonians joined the Achaean *koinon* 'although they were Dorians' (Plut. *Arat.* 9.4). Many other non-Achaean *poleis* joined the League in the following decades, until the League came to include the entire Peloponnese in 192/1.<sup>535</sup> This does not mean that the original ethnic characterisation was entirely lost in favour of a pan-Peloponnesian identity. In the 140s, the Romans could still point out the difference between the cities which were Achaean by *genos* and those who had joined the League later on (Paus. 7.14.1). Rather, the League embraced the coexistence of *multiple* local identities under the big tent of 'Achaean-ness'. The ideological side of this feature is visible, for instance, in Polybius' remark that strong *ethnē* such as the Laconians and the Arcadians freely chose – in his version – to adopt 'the name and constitution' of the Achaeans (2.38.3–4). In Polybius' time the Peloponnesian communities were all part of the *koinon*, but his wording shows that they maintained the memory of their separate regional identities. In practical terms, Achaean (i.e. federal) citizenship remained distinct from *polis* citizenship and was bestowed in addition to it.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> By Herodotus' time, the Achaeans were considered to be an *ethnos* (8.73.1). On Achaean ethnicity, see Morgan and Hall 2004, 475–77, and more generally Morgan and Hall 1996.

<sup>535</sup> On the process of unification of the Peloponnese under Achaean leadership, see Kralli 2017, 311–45.

<sup>536</sup> As seen in note 502, this was the Achaean custom as early as 389, as shown by the grant of Achaean citizenship to the people of Kalydon (Xen. *Hell.* 4.6.1). See: Rizakis 2008b, 275; Mackil 2013, 341 with bibliography.

Problems could arise if localism trumped the broader federal identity or was perceived to be in opposition to the latter. This is what Ager termed the ‘Sparta problem’, noting the *koionon*’s incapacity to integrate Sparta effectively after the annexation of 192/1 owing to Sparta’s deep-rooted local identity.<sup>537</sup> One possible way for the League to counter centrifugal forces was to emphasise the utilitarian case for federalism and federal citizenship. Again, we can see glimpses of this ideology in Polybius, who affirmed somewhat optimistically that in his time all Peloponnesians shared not only common laws and political institutions, but also the same weights, measures and coinage (2.37.10). This statement is not entirely correct – federal standards circulated alongside the local ones<sup>538</sup> – but indicates an intent to attach tangible benefits to federal citizenship, such as access to decision-making institutions and economic networks. The purpose of this section is to investigate whether the available evidence shows the League as effectively having an impact on the political and economic life of the non-elite citizens of the *koionon*, first at the local level and subsequently at the federal level.

In its early stages, the League’s expansion was strongly correlated with opposition to tyranny. The clearest examples of this date to the 270s, when at Boura and Keryneia accession to the League coincided with the end of sole rule (see note 510). In these cases, federal policy had a tangible impact on *polis*-level politics, if we assume that the removal of those tyrants paved the way to broader access to city institutions. Beyond this specific example, however, the idea of a League actively supporting ‘open’ constitutions in member-*poleis* faces two important qualifications. First, the powerful boards of federal magistrates usually known as *synarchiai* are also attested in many member-*poleis* as local public officials with large (e.g. probouleutic) prerogatives.<sup>539</sup> The available evidence does not warrant viewing the urban *synarchiai* as directly imposed by the League in an effort to homogenise political institutions throughout the *koionon*; Sizov rather suggests that the lower *synarchiai* may have emerged independently as certain *poleis* began to imitate institutions perceived as ‘Achaean’.<sup>540</sup> Whatever their origin, it remains the case that small boards of (probably elected) magistrates wielded significant powers in several member-*poleis*; the League may have opposed tyranny but did not necessarily support, let alone impose, ‘radical’ democracy at the *polis* level. The second limitation is that, from the mid-third century onwards, there is evidence of former tyrants who relinquished their position upon joining the League but went on to play a key

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<sup>537</sup> Ager 2019.

<sup>538</sup> Walbank 1957–1979, 1:218; Larsen 1968, 234.

<sup>539</sup> Sizov 2017. In his article, Sizov finds evidence of local *synarchiai* at Dyme, Aigosthena, Megara, Sparta, Troizen, Argos, and ‘with a high probability’ Epidauros and Elis (227–28). On federal *synarchiai*, see note 585 below.

<sup>540</sup> Sizov 2017, 232.



role within federal institutions; judging by their enduring political influence, it is possible that they maintained some form of authority at home.<sup>541</sup>

A case in point for the nature and limitations of the League's anti-tyrannical policy is represented by the early career of that key figure of Achaean history, Aratos of Sicyon.<sup>542</sup> Aratos was born in c.271 into an important Sicyonian family: his father Kleinias was joint chief magistrate of the city until his assassination in 264. After the death of Kleinias the young Aratos fled to Argos, where he lived in exile until the age of 20; then he organised a successful expedition against Nikokles and 'liberated' Sicyon, immediately attaching it to the League. While most of Plutarch's subsequent narrative centres on Aratos' career as leader of the *koinon*, Aratos must have maintained an eminent position at Sicyon throughout his life alongside his involvement in federal politics: after his death in 213, the Sicyonians successfully argued before the *koinon* that he was to be buried at Sicyon (Plut. *Arat.* 53.1). However, the only extant information about Aratos' policy *at Sicyon* is relayed by Plutarch right at the beginning of his career, immediately after the liberation of 251. One of his first measures was the recall of 500 exiles expelled by former tyrants (9.3); he also received a 25-talent gift from Gonatas and distributed it among his impoverished fellow citizens (11.2),<sup>543</sup> and was subsequently nominated 'independent arbiter with absolute powers over the financial matters of the exiles', alongside 15 fellow arbiters (14.2).<sup>544</sup> Aratos' interest in settling disputes is in keeping with what seem to be the two tenets of his broader political ideology: the hatred of tyranny and the belief that internal divisions made a community weaker.<sup>545</sup> On this basis, Pausanias states that Aratos allowed the Sicyonians to 'participate in politics on an equal basis', making him effectively the creator of a new democracy (2.8.3: ἐξ ἴσου πολιτεύεσθαι). Yet the extent to which Aratos seems personally in charge of major policies after 251 suggests that he was a benevolent autocrat, but an autocrat nonetheless; indeed, Strabo describes him as 'the most illustrious' of the Sicyonian tyrants (8.6.25: ἐπιφανέστατον).<sup>546</sup>

It is possible that the same phenomenon played out in other less well-documented Achaean *poleis*. While the League's ideology was built on resistance to tyranny and its federal institutions were essentially democratic, the *koinon* did not necessarily encourage (much less require) radical

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<sup>541</sup> This question is explored in detail in §5.3.

<sup>542</sup> The most comprehensive study of Aratos' life and career is still Walbank 1933.

<sup>543</sup> While many translators take the unnamed 'king' in the passage to have been Ptolemy, Shipley (2018, 110n28) persuasively argued that it must have been Gonatas.

<sup>544</sup> Here Plutarch's narrative closely resembles Cicero's (*De off.* 2.81–2), who probably also followed Aratos' autobiography.

<sup>545</sup> On his opposition to tyrants: Plut. *Arat.* 10.1 (πικρῶς μισοτύραννος); see also 13.1 on his destruction of all portraits of tyrants upon seizing power. On internal divisions: 9.3. On the permanence of these principles in Aratos' later political career at the federal level, see §5.3.

<sup>546</sup> Griffin 1982, 81; Shipley 2018, 110.

forms of popular empowerment at the local level. The focus was more on mending unresolved conflicts and building a broad internal consensus so as to minimise internal tensions; it was apparently acceptable to let strong, individual leaders take care of that high-level policy inside their respective *poleis*. This raises the question of the League’s actual involvement in the political affairs of the individual *poleis*. I shall now analyse a number of inscriptions that may shed light on the relations between the federal and the local level in the Achaean *koinion*, and the significance of these relations for non-elite citizens.

A text from the Asklepion of Epidauros, datable to or immediately before 243, lays out the terms of the city’s accession to the League.<sup>547</sup> Under these terms, the Epidaurians were to be ‘[autonomous], ungarrisoned and governed by [their own ancestral] constitution’ 3–4).<sup>548</sup> The guarantee that Epidauros would not be garrisoned is in keeping with the League’s fundamental opposition to Macedonian rule until 224, as the use of garrisons was the most visible aspect of Macedonian domination.<sup>549</sup> Furthermore, the (probable) confirmation of Epidauros’ pre-existing constitution would show that the League’s main concern was to reaffirm local autonomy and continuity rather than impose a certain institutional framework.<sup>550</sup> The decree admitting Orchomenos to the *koinion*, little more than a decade later, may show different priorities.<sup>551</sup> In the inscription, the Orchomenians are explicitly made Achaean citizens, providing clear evidence of dual – local and federal – citizenship (lines 12, 13–14, 16). All Achaean citizens were granted the right to own land or a house at Orchomenos, but could not sell those for 20 years (lines 11–13); given the concession of federal citizenship to the Orchomenians, it is extremely plausible that the latter were to enjoy *koinion*-wide property rights as well.<sup>552</sup>

The overarching aim of these provisions seems to have been the integration of Orchomenos into the economic, political and military fabric of the League. From the prospective buyers’ perspective, the provision on property rights affords a very clear example of the material benefits

<sup>547</sup> *LAEpid* 25; see lemma in Mackil 2013, 459–61 (T37). On Epidauros’ accession: Plut. *Arat.* 24.3; Paus. 2.8.5.

<sup>548</sup> I accept the integrations proposed in Peek’s *LAEpid* text. The only entirely surviving term in this sequence is ‘ungarrisoned’ (*ἀφρουρότατοι*), but it is also certain that the treaty included constitutional provisions (*πολιτεία* [χ]ρώμ[ενου]–) and it is unlikely that these provisions included the imposition of a *different* constitution. On this basis, it is plausible that Epidauros’ autonomy was also somehow guaranteed.

<sup>549</sup> On the nature of Macedonian control over the Peloponnese, including the use of garrisons: Shipley 2018, 54–73.

<sup>550</sup> There is no evidence that Epidauros was a democracy at this time; the treaty in question was probably approved by the *boulē* alone (line 37), although the fragmentary state of the text makes certainty impossible.

<sup>551</sup> *IG* V.2 344; *IPArk* 16; see lemma in Mackil 2013, 462–66 (T39). See most recently Kralli 2017, 184–88. On Orchomenos’ accession: Polyb. 2.46.2. The accession (and therefore the inscription in question) is dated between 235/4 and 229: Walbank 1957–1979, 1:242; Mackil 2013, 465. On Orchomenos’ pre-existing constitution, the most telling detail is the implication that any private citizen could normally put a proposal to the vote (line 3: *εἴτε ιδιώτας ψαφοφορέοι*), but the present treaty seems to strip him of that right: see Rhodes 1997, 108. On the measures concerning Nearchos (lines 13–17) see note 614.

<sup>552</sup> Mackil 2013, 260.

connected to federal membership; moreover, if they were not allowed to rent their property to others, this would have effectively made them a group of Achaean settlers, plausibly with the effect of making the city more loyal to the *koinon* by means of their presence. What is more unclear is whether the right to buy property was granted against the locals' will. If they did, it would imply coercion in the city's accession to the League, *contra* Polybius' claim that the League expanded by 'persuasion and argument' (2.38.7). Mackil argued that this provision recalls the Mantinean request for an Achaean garrison for protection against Aetolians and Spartans in 227: 300 Achaeans were then chosen by lot and resettled at Mantinea, where they remained to 'protect their [*sc.* the Mantineans'] liberty and safety' (Polyb. 2.58.1–2).<sup>553</sup> But a garrison was a different matter from a group of prospective buyers, who were going to bring a certain amount of money to the local economy: there was no reason for the Orchomenians to be opposed to the advantageous agreement. There is no evidence that the treaty with Epidaurus contained the same material advantages, and it is likely that the Epidaurians simply chose not to receive a garrison. The League seems therefore to have adopted a flexible approach towards the integration of its new members, plausibly driven by strategic considerations and local moods; when integration *did* occur, however, the League appears to have been institutionally well-equipped to maximise the economic impact of it.

The final part of the treaty from Orchomenos outlines the resolution of a dispute with Megalopolis about a golden statue (lines 17–21). The inclusion of this clause in the treaty regulating Orchomenos' accession shows that it was a priority for the League to facilitate the resolution of disputes involving new members when admitting them.<sup>554</sup> This raises the issue of the nature of the federal institutions' direct involvement in disputes between members. Of the large body of inscriptions attesting the Achaean efforts in that respect, two appear particularly informative.<sup>555</sup> One inscription records an arbitration between Corinth and Epidaurus on the issue of who owned a disputed border territory – 'the Sellas and the Spiraion' (line 4), most likely a stretch of land by the Saronic Gulf.<sup>556</sup> The inscription is dated to the generalship of Aigialeus and must be slightly later than Epidaurus' own accession to the League; this yields a date between 242/1 and 238/7.<sup>557</sup> In fact, Epidaurus' territorial dispute with Corinth is probably mentioned in the accession treaty seen above, alongside a future arbitration to resolve it (lines 17–19).<sup>558</sup> In this case, the League

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<sup>553</sup> Mackil 2013, 466.

<sup>554</sup> Ager 1996, 116–17, followed by Kralli 2017, 166. Megalopolis had been a member of the *koinon* since 235: Polyb. 2.44.5; Plut. *Arat.* 30.2–5.

<sup>555</sup> For a selection of relevant inscriptions with commentary, see Harter-Uibopuu 1998.

<sup>556</sup> *IG* IV<sup>2</sup>.1 71; *LAEpid* 26; Ager 1996, 113–17 (no. 38). On the location of the disputed territory: Kralli 2017, 167.

<sup>557</sup> Kralli 2017, 165 and 197n77.

<sup>558</sup> Kralli 2017, 165.

appoints (or confirms the appointment of) 151 Megarian judges, who rule in favour of Epidaurus; Corinth's appeal prompts a second judgement, delivered this time by 31 Megarian judges in Corinth's favour. Kralli persuasively argues that this procedure allowed the League to assert its authority over the two adversaries, framing itself as a problem-solving and stabilising force.<sup>559</sup> In a sense, this is the federal version of Aratos' consensus-based ideology: just as conflict between social groups weakened a *polis*, thus could conflict between *poleis* jeopardise federal unity.

The federal involvement in dispute resolution is even more tangible in a long inscription found at Messene in 2004 and detailing the resolution of a complex territorial dispute between Messene and Megalopolis.<sup>560</sup> The inscription dates between 180 and 168 and the wrangle recorded in it can be summarised by the following points.<sup>561</sup>

1. After the Megalopolitans filed a complaint at an Achaean *synodos* regarding the ownership of Endania and Pylana, Messene and Megalopolis agreed to defer the decision to a board of 17 Achaean *hagemones* chosen among leading politicians of the League (lines 1–27); however, the Megalopolitans withdrew some of their claims (41–43).
2. The Kalliatai (another local community) filed another claim against Messene and were joined in it by Megalopolis (43–47); all parties chose Aigion as their forum, and an unspecified court based there ruled 140–7 in Messene's favour (47–61).
3. After Messene filed a new complaint against Megalopolis, the federal *damiorgoi* fined the Messenians for not cooperating in the choice of forum for this new dispute and deferred to a court of six Milesian judges, that ruled unanimously in Messene's favour due to the issue having already been resolved in the past (65–90).<sup>562</sup>

This inscription exemplifies at once the complexity of some long-standing territorial disputes in the Peloponnese and the key role played by the institutions of the *koimon* in facilitating their resolution. In the case of Corinth and Epidaurus, the federal authorities confined themselves to confirming the appointment of third-party judges. With Messene and Megalopolis, in the first stage of the dispute a select group of federal officials acted as a judging committee, and in the final stage the *koinoi damiorgoi* certified the legitimacy of Messene's claim – in a procedure that Arnaoutoglou compared to Athenian *anakrissi*<sup>563</sup> – and enforced the procedure accordingly, administering a fine.

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<sup>559</sup> Kralli 2017, 166–67.

<sup>560</sup> Themelis 2008; Arnaoutoglou 2009–2010; Luraghi and Magnetto 2012. See also: Thür 2012; Rizakis 2015, 130–31.

<sup>561</sup> On the dating of the inscription: Arnaoutoglou 2009–2010, 184–85. I follow the text edited by Luraghi and Magnetto (2012), including their line numbers.

<sup>562</sup> The Milesian judges' *ratio decidendi* appears built on the concept of *res indicata*. Arnaoutoglou 2009–2010, 191–96.

<sup>563</sup> Arnaoutoglou 2009–2010, 190–91.

On this basis, the *damiorgoi* must have fulfilled the same task in the second stage. The Achaean officials could sometimes take part in arbitrations directly, but their main role seems to have been to supervise the process and provide procedural certainty.

In sum – leaving aside the question of the League’s opposition to tyranny and support of constitutional governments in its member-*poleis* – the most significant and tangible innovations brought by the League at the local level were the economic benefits of federal integration and the possibility of solving local disputes with the aid of federal institutions. The two aspects could be connected, as disputed territories were often disputed on account of their economic value, and the official recognition of the ownership of a strategic area could be a boon to a *polis*’s economy and its inhabitants.<sup>564</sup> The absence of a single dispute resolution procedure and the variability of the terms of accession to the League meant that despite the ostensible aspiration to uniformity, different degrees of integration coexisted within the *koionon* – in part due to different degrees of local commitment to the common cause. As a result, the material impact of federal integration will have been unevenly distributed.

The nature of popular participation in the corporate bodies of the *koionon* is an entirely different matter. The federal council and assembly have been described in §5.1, but there is more uncertainty around how they met. Modern scholars, only partly following Polybius’ terminology, use the term *synodos* for the regularly scheduled federal meetings (four per year) and *synklētos* for the extraordinary meetings called to discuss specific, particularly urgent matters.<sup>565</sup> While regular meetings are attested since the early days of the League, extraordinary *ad hoc* meetings seem to be a later innovation: the earliest unequivocal attestation of a strictly regulated *synklētos* dates to 200 (Liv. 31.25; see below).<sup>566</sup> Furthermore, while *synklētoi* always involved the assembly, the latter’s presence at *synodoi* is less certain. Aymard forcefully argued that both *synodoi* and *synklētoi* saw the participation of the assembly; however, Larsen carefully surveyed all the extant evidence on Achaean federal meetings and argued that after the introduction of the *synklētos* – which he dated to c.217<sup>567</sup> – participation to the *synodos* became restricted to the council, a development he saw as

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<sup>564</sup> In the case of the Messene–Megalopolis decree, see the references to *karpoi* (lines 65–70), on which see: Luraghi and Magnetto 2012, 526; Kralli 2017, 167.

<sup>565</sup> Larsen 1955, 75; see also Rizakis 2015, 124.

<sup>566</sup> I make a distinction here between ‘extraordinary meeting’ and *synklētos*, the latter representing a strictly formalised type of the former. Extraordinary meetings are attested from early on (see e.g. Polyb. 2.46.6 on an extraordinary meeting in 229; Larsen 1955, 165), but *synklētoi* had a specific format explored below.

<sup>567</sup> In connection with the reform that moved the election of the general from the spring to the autumn: Larsen 1955, 92–93. As Larsen admits, the only *terminus ante quem* for the creation of the *synklētos* strictly defined is 200 (see below), but out of convenience I refer to this reform as ‘the reform of 217’ throughout this section.

tantamount to a transition towards representative government.<sup>568</sup> In what follows, I attempt to reconstruct the changing role of mass political participation in Achaean policy-making. In order to assess the impact of the reform, I survey some particularly significant *synodoi* that took place between 229 (earliest recorded meeting) and 217 to gauge what was at stake in these meetings when we can be sure that the assembly was in attendance, and then move to the problem of the reform itself, its possible causes, and its consequences.

Between 229 and 217, there is evidence of at least three federal meetings called to elect generals, with one more indirectly suggested by a following meeting.<sup>569</sup> If the League's most important office was effectively filled by the assembly, we can suppose that the other, lesser-known federal magistrates – such as the *nomographoi* and the 10-strong board of *damiorgoi* – were similarly elected.<sup>570</sup> This bottom-up dynamic was counterbalanced by a top-down one, as magistrates wielded the exclusive power to call extraordinary meetings besides the four regularly scheduled *synodoi*.<sup>571</sup> However, in this period the only rationale for calling extraordinary meetings seems to have been the desire not to wait for the next *synodos*, given that ordinary and extraordinary meetings had the same composition and the same powers; the power to call extraordinary meetings was thus less significant than it may seem at first sight. The analysis of two particularly well documented pre-217 *synodoi* – one of the *synodoi* of 223 (probably the first), and the third *synodos* of 220 – will prove this further.

In early 223 Antigonos III Doson occupied Corinth and Argos, marched into Arcadia and, probably in February, stopped at Aigion to attend the Achaean *synodos* (Polyb. 2.54.3–4).<sup>572</sup> There, according to Polybius' brief account, Doson (a) made a statement on his ongoing campaign against Sparta, (b) consulted the Achaeans on the next steps and (c) was elected 'general commander of

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<sup>568</sup> Aymard 1938b, 133–35, followed by Rhodes 1997, 106. *Contra*, see Larsen 1955, 76–77 (with subsequent analysis of the evidence).

<sup>569</sup> 225, election of Aratos as *strategos autokrator* (Plut. *Arat.* 41.1); 219, election of Aratos II (Polyb. 4.37.1–2); 218, election of Eperatos (Polyb. 4.82.7–8). Polybius' narrative of 220 implies that the year's first *synodos* saw Aratos reelected to the generalship: Aymard 1938a, 253n6 and 263; Larsen 1955, 79. Larsen believed that elections regularly took place in *synodoi*, but the election of 225 occurred at an extraordinary meeting, '[t]hrough we may not be able to rely on the terminology of Plutarch' (79).

<sup>570</sup> On the board of *damiorgoi* see: Veligianni-Terzi 1977, 104–7; Rizakis 2015, 131. On the *nomographoi* see Kralli 2017, 191n30. The technical name of the board was probably *gerousia*: Aymard 1938a, 153–54.

<sup>571</sup> The clearest evidence from this period dates to 218, when Philip V summoned the Achaean assembly 'through the [League's] magistrates' (*διὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων*: Polyb. 5.1.6); Philip clearly wanted to pressure the League into providing him with material support for his ongoing campaign, but needed its magistrates to call the meeting for him. Walbank (1957–1979, 1:256) believes that since 223 the king of Macedon had the formal right to demand that the Achaean magistrates call an assembly, but it is equally likely that he pressured them informally. In 217, the general Aratos called a general meeting (*παρακάλεσας τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς*: 5.91.5): this episode lies right at the end of the period in question, as Larsen (1955, 170) dates the reform of 217 to the following autumn.

<sup>572</sup> Polybius uses the very term *σύνοδος* here. Walbank (1957–1979, 1:255) dates this *synodos* to September 224, but see Aymard 1938a, 268n3, followed by Larsen 1955, 167.

the coalition' (*ἡγεμῶν ἀπάντων τῶν συμμάχων*). This tripartite *précis* closely recalls later *synklētoi* (see below), and we can surmise that the debate resulted in a decree determining that the League was to join the Hellenic symmarchy and recognise Dosoḥ as its commander-in-chief. There is however no indication that this *synodos* was an extraordinary meeting; in fact, Polybius' wording seems to imply that Dosoḥ went to Aigion expecting to find the assembly already in session as prescribed by its calendar. Consequently, it is likely that the *synodos* attended to other matters too, such as the election of the magistrates for the present year.<sup>573</sup> At the same time, the issues at stake in Polybius' account of the meeting were extremely consequential: the Achaean League joined a larger coalition and recognised a foreign king as its leader, and a regular *synodos* was then empowered to make those decisions.

A similar picture emerges from the third *synodos* of 220, which took place probably in July/August (Polyb. 4.14.1–15.7).<sup>574</sup> This is an explicitly 'ordinary' *synodos* which saw the participation of the Achaean *plēthos* (*τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν πλῆθος ... ἀθροισθὲν εἰς τὴν καθήκουσαν σύνοδον*), and Polybius' narrative is centred on the anti-Aratean faction's unsuccessful attack on the general Aratos following the heavy Achaean defeat at Kaphyai against the Aetolians. Aratos managed to fend off the attack and regain the sympathy of the assembly, so much so that a decree was passed closely reflecting Aratos' own wishes; the fact that Polybius specifies this suggests that this was not always the case. Pursuant to the decree, the Achaeans were to:

1. send embassies to multiple states (including Macedon) to seek help against the Aetolians;
2. raise 5,000 foot soldiers and 500 cavalry to protect the Messenians in case of further Aetolian attacks;
3. negotiate with the Messenians and the Spartans the size of the contingents they would have to raise for the same purpose (4.15.1–4).

The measures in the decree are both varied and consequential, as they concerned both the (tentative) establishment of new alliances and the mobilisation of a large army for war. Again, these decisions were made in what Polybius describes as a 'regular' *synodos* with the participation of the *plēthos*.

The descriptions of these *synodoi* contrast markedly with those of the meetings attested in the following century. The earliest evidence for a change dates to 200 (Liv. 31.25). During a session of the Achaean council at Argos, Philip V made a surprise appearance at the meeting and tried to

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<sup>573</sup> The *synodos* that elected Eperatos to the generalship took place in February/March 218: Aymard 1938a, 251; Larsen 1955, 168. It is at least possible that in 223 Dosoḥ himself was made general of the Achaean League, as had already happened with Ptolemy II (Plut. *Arat.* 24.4): Walbank 1957–1979, 1:256.

<sup>574</sup> Walbank 1957–1979, 1:462. Larsen (1955, 80) dates this more loosely to 'midsummer'.

persuade them to join forces against Nabis and the Spartans; Kykliadas, the general in charge, replied that the assembly had been called to discuss a certain specific subject and only that subject could be discussed (31.25.9: *non licere legibus Achaeorum de aliis rebus referre quam propter quas convocati essent*).<sup>575</sup> The third-century *synodoi* make no mention at all of similar restrictions, which means that a reform had been enacted in the previous two-odd decades, probably in 217.<sup>576</sup> Following this reform, some types of policy were taken away from the purview of the *synodos* and became the prerogative of the *synkletos*, a type of *ad hoc* extraordinary meeting of the federal assembly called by the general and the *damiorgoi*.<sup>577</sup> Livy's account of the *synkletos* of 198 that resulted in the League leaving Macedon for Rome (32.19–23) shows that *synkletoni* had a fixed three-day schedule: on the opening day, ambassadors and other envoys would make statements; the second day was devoted to debate in the assembly; on the third day, a decree would be put to the vote.

The convocation of the *synkletos* was regulated by what Rhodes called one *negative* and one *positive* rule, which I shall refer to jointly as the 'dual rule'.<sup>578</sup> The negative rule prescribed that a *synkletos* could *not* be called to discuss any matter other than war, peace, and a letter from the Roman Senate (Polyb. 22.12.6).<sup>579</sup> On the other hand, the positive rule prescribed that it was mandatory to call a *synkletos* to discuss matters within its remit. This is best shown by Polybius' account of a *synodos* in 168, where envoys from the two Ptolemies asked the League for military aid; the leading politician Kallikrates successfully persuaded the presiding magistrates that considering a request of military involvement in that meeting was illegal (29.24.5).<sup>580</sup> The meeting was adjourned and a separate meeting – explicitly called a *σύγκλητος* – was called at Sicyon, which saw the participation 'not only of the *boule*, but of all citizens aged 30 and above' (29.24.6). The juxtaposition of the two meetings proves that they had different structures and competences. The second meeting effectively had its agenda set by the first: this was probably not unheard of, but will have happened only in particular circumstances.<sup>581</sup> It is difficult to take Polybius' statement in

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<sup>575</sup> A little earlier, Livy specifies that the meeting had been called to discuss whether to wage war against Nabis (31.25.3: *consultabant de bello adversus Nabim*), therefore an alliance with Philip fell beyond the scope of the subject prescribed. Note that in the quoted passage Livy uses the plural, but it is clear from other sources that the agenda for a *synkletos* necessarily included only one item of business (e.g. 32.20.4: *concilio ad eam rem unam indicto*).

<sup>576</sup> See note 567.

<sup>577</sup> The reform is explored in detail by Larsen 1968, 224–25. That the general and the *damiorgoi* had the power to call a *synkletos* is proved by Polyb. 23.5.16.

<sup>578</sup> Rhodes 1997, 107.

<sup>579</sup> Cf. 22.10.10–12; Liv. 39.33.5–7 follows Polybius closely. Larsen (1955, 90) argues that the provision regarding letters from the Roman Senate cannot antedate 198, and was probably added a few years later than that.

<sup>580</sup> The two meetings of 168 are thoroughly examined by Walbank 1957–1979, 3:408–412.

<sup>581</sup> Larsen 1955, 184; see Rhodes 1997, 107: 'a *synkletos* can but does not always have its agenda fixed by the previous *synodos*'. In many cases, the general and *damiorgoi* (see note 577) will have themselves chosen the (usually urgent) question about which they were going to call a *synkletos*.



29.24.6 as meaning anything else than that the two meetings were attended by different crowds, with (certainly) the second one being open to all male citizens over 30 and (probably) the first one to the *boulē* alone. After all, why would Kallikrates be so keen to get a second meeting if it was going to be a replica of the first?<sup>582</sup>

That said, should we follow Larsen in believing that, as seen above, *all* post-217 *synodoi* were restricted to the council and that the role of the assembly was now strictly limited to the *synklētoi*? Primarily because of the frequent ambiguity of Polybius' accounts, the question remains open.<sup>583</sup> Nevertheless, in what follows I tentatively accept Larsen's theory less because it is persuasive than out of caution: assuming that the assembly was in fact excluded from the regular *synodoi* after 217 helps pose more forcefully the question as to whether the introduction of the *synklētos* may have corresponded to a structural reduction of the influence of the *dēmos* in federal policy-making, and whether it therefore represented a moment of democratic backsliding. I argued in §5.1 that the original driving purpose of the Achaean League was to organise a common foreign policy, with each *polis* left in charge of its own domestic affairs – as long as they did not clash with the affairs of another member-*polis*, in which case federal authorities would mediate. The 'dual rule' seen above seems to show that after the reform of 217 the most important areas of federal policy (war and peace) were attended to in the *synklētos*, to the extent that one may in fact wonder what the *synodoi* did in practice after 217.<sup>584</sup> Larsen maintained that the council-only *synodoi* took care of (a) the day-to-day administration of the League and (b) the election of the chief magistrates, which already occurred at *synodoi* before 217.<sup>585</sup> In the remainder of this section, I investigate the division of labour between *synodos* and *synklētos* post-217, focusing separately on the two prerogatives of the *synodos* as here defined; then, I offer some observations on the possible motives behind the reform.

What counted as 'day-to-day administration'? Larsen's own survey of the evidence suggests that *synodoi* could in fact vote on matters of war and alliances, but only if it was about *renewing* existing wars or alliances, whereas a *synklētos* was needed in order to effect a policy change.<sup>586</sup> In 169, a federal meeting took several decisions including sending an army to Thessaly against Perseus (Polyb. 28.12). The format of the meeting suggests a *synodos*, which is justifiable since the League

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<sup>582</sup> The several possible interpretations of this passage are individually explored by Walbank 1957–1979, 3:410–411.

<sup>583</sup> See e.g. Kralli's (2017, 153–54) uncertainty, with bibliography.

<sup>584</sup> Because of this, Larsen's remark that the reform 'eliminat[ed] the use of the primary assembly except for a few extraordinary meetings' (1968, 225) is puzzling: those extraordinary meetings – which were surely more than 'a few' (see end of this section) – had absolute authority on the key aspects of federal policy.

<sup>585</sup> There is evidence that routine matters could be dealt with by restricted meetings of the senior magistrates, known as *synarchiai*: O'Neil 1995, 111–12; Mackil 2013, 343n66; Sizov 2017. As Sizov notes, in Aristotle's view handing over the day-to-day administration to small groups of magistrates – while still involving the 'many' in major legislation – did not make a *polis* less democratic (*Pol.* 4.1298a14–15).

<sup>586</sup> Larsen 1968, 227.

was already at war with Perseus and the vote executed a policy that had plausibly been decided in a previous unreported *synklētos*.<sup>587</sup> In 181, a meeting that Larsen took as an electoral *synodos* voted to accept a gift from Ptolemy V, thus renewing the League's existing alliance with Egypt (Polyb. 24.6).<sup>588</sup>

However, the division of labour between *synodos* and *synklētos* was in reality a contentious affair. Due to the (expedient?) ambiguity in the rules – what did or did not constitute a ‘policy change’ or a ‘single subject?’ – ostensibly procedural issues could become politically charged and reflect disagreements on matters of substance. The *synklētos* of 200, examined above, was summoned to discuss the impending war between the League and Nabid, but the presiding general turned down Philip V's offer to join forces against Nabid because he deemed it unrelated to the purpose of the meeting. Surely it would have been possible to admit Philip's proposal, but Livy stresses that the Achaeans saw it with suspicion anyway (31.25.8); a strict reading of the ‘single subject’ rule presented the general with the necessary legal basis to dismiss the king.<sup>589</sup> At the momentous *synklētos* of 198, the board of *damiorgoi* was deadlocked for hours on a procedural issue: five *damiorgoi* would allow a vote on making an alliance with Rome, while five argued that it was illegal to vote on anything contrary to an alliance with Philip (Liv. 32.22.3).<sup>590</sup> It is evident that (a) the real disagreement was political, not constitutional, and yet (b) the latter five *damiorgoi* were ready to use a procedural objection to stop a policy they disagreed with in principle.<sup>591</sup> The *synodos* of 168 cited above saw the same dynamic, as Kallikrates repeatedly (and threateningly) objected to the legality of the *synodos* with the aim of stalling a discussion that was heading towards a conclusion he disliked.

What fuelled the politicised conflict over procedure was certainly the ambiguity of the ‘dual rule’. Invoking the positive rule, as Kallikrates did in 168, meant reaffirming the unique prerogatives of the *synklētos* to the detriment of the *synodos*; conversely, a restrictive reading of the powers of the *synklētos* (such as the one advocated by the five *damiorgoi* of 198) could have the opposite effect. It is plausible that in some cases, certain political leaders actively sought *synklētoi* as a way of legitimising their agenda by means of a formal act of popular approval, as opposed to the more restricted *synodoi*. Some relevant examples survive in the sources besides the *synodos* of

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<sup>587</sup> See Larsen 1955, 183.

<sup>588</sup> Larsen 1955, 180.

<sup>589</sup> Furthermore, since Philip took the *synklētos* by surprise (31.25.2), his dismissal could serve the purpose to reaffirm the League's internal authority.

<sup>590</sup> The ‘anti-vote’ argument was probably built on the ‘single subject’ rule, since the *synklētos* had been called to allow envoys from the Roman-led coalition to address the Achaeans: Liv. 32.19.5–6. Curiously, the presiding general, the pro-Roman Aristainos (32.19.2), had apparently no direct say in the matter.

<sup>591</sup> Indeed, when the vote did go forward, the pro-Roman side secured a large majority in the assembly: Liv. 32.22.8.

168. In 191, the Roman general Flamininus ordered the Achaean *stratēgos* Diophanes to summon a *synkelētos* on the status of the island of Zakynthos, controlled by the League but claimed by Rome (Liv. 36.31.10).<sup>592</sup> At the *synkelētos*, Flamininus himself made the case for handing over the island to Rome while Diophanes argued against him, and the *synkelētos* voted on a decree that entrusted Flamininus with deciding on the issue, effectively accepting his request (36.32.4, 36.32.9). The status of Zakynthos had nothing to do with wars or alliances, nor does Flamininus seem to have carried a letter from the Roman Senate justifying his request; his coercive power was enough to bend the rules, and he used it for a chance to address the Achaean assembly directly. In 147, Roman envoys met the general Diaios and the chief Achaean magistrates at Corinth to demand that some major *poleis* of non-Achaean ethnicity (including pro-Roman Sparta) be detached from the League; the magistrates immediately summoned the *ekklesia*, which reacted by arresting every Spartan at hand (Paus. 7.14.1–3). Unlike in 191, the force of the crowd was steered, albeit indirectly, against Rome; the magistrates apparently sought to use the *ekklesia* to display their strength *vis-à-vis* the Roman demands. In emotionally charged situations that lent themselves to different legal interpretations, holding a *synkelētos* may have been a way for some leaders to secure a legitimacy boost.<sup>593</sup>

But as Kallikrates would learn the hard way in 168, *synkelētoi* were not mere tools meant to rubber-stamp the agenda of the leaders who summoned them. To circle back to my argument in §5.1 about the legitimising function of democratic practice, it was actually the widespread perception of the genuinely democratic nature of the *synkelētos* that made it a sought-after source of political legitimacy. One of the three days was always devoted to open debate, and in multiple cases there is evidence that the overall outcome of the *synkelētos* was uncertain – and therefore liable to be swayed by the speakers. The well-documented *synkelētos* of 198 was probably not an exception in this regard.<sup>594</sup> Even in 191, despite the clearly coercive circumstances in which the *synkelētos* took place, the general Diophanes nevertheless spoke up against Flamininus, only to be sabotaged by a pro-Roman faction in the assembly (Liv. 36.32.2–3).

These considerations on the inherent unpredictability of the *synkelētos*, in addition to the fact that some *synkelētoi* were held only because a point of order had been sustained (e.g. Kallikrates in

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<sup>592</sup> Livy calls this meeting a *concilium*; given its format and extraordinary nature, it was certainly a *synkelētos*: Larsen 1955, 173.

<sup>593</sup> Something similar may have happened in 190, when the Achaean alliance with Eumenes was unnecessarily renewed at a *synkelētos*: Polyb. 21.3b; see Larsen 1955, 174. We may suppose that the renewal was somewhat contentious and the chief magistrates sought a higher degree of legitimacy for it. In renewing the alliance the Achaeans voted to send 1,100 soldiers to Asia, apparently violating the ‘single subject’ rule in order to discuss an important decision regarding the alliance.

<sup>594</sup> See esp. Liv. 32.19.9–10.

168), raise the suspicion that there were occasions in which a *synodos* managed to legislate on something that in theory would have required a *synklētos*, only because those who desired a *synklētos* were either pressured into silence or downright defeated. A possible glimpse of this survives in Livy's account of a *synodos* dated to 174 (41.23–24). The *synodos* opened with the general Xenarchos reading a letter from Perseus, who sought to normalise the relations between Achaia and Macedon. Kallikrates argued that it was best to keep things as they were, for having friendly relations with Perseus could be perceived by Rome as a hostile act, whereas Xenarchos' brother Archon spoke in favour of Perseus. After the debate, the *principes* (i.e. the *damiorgoi*) complained of having merely received a letter, while the matter required formal negotiations; it was eventually resolved to uphold the *status quo*. Judging from Livy's account, the case for holding a *synklētos* would have been straightforward to make: as Kallikrates acknowledged, the discussion concerned a potential change in foreign policy (41.23.16–18). Most members of the *synodos* appreciated Perseus' letter and were ready to accept his proposals, which may speak to a widespread pro-Macedonian sentiment among the Achaeans at the time. In a hypothetical *synklētos*, where producing a final decree was mandatory, the pro-Macedonians could potentially carry the day; thus Kallikrates and the chief magistrates worked together to preserve the *status quo*, wishing to avoid the inherent risk of losing control over federal policy in a *synklētos* that they clearly viewed as unpredictable. Ultimately, post-217 *synklētoi* wielded large powers and influence over policy, especially (but certainly not only) whenever politicians in influential positions successfully defended its prerogatives under Rhodes' positive rule. By being largely democratic in composition and structure (owing to the time slot allocated for debate), *synklētoi* were compatible with a democratic constitutional framework.

The second major prerogative of post-217 *synodoi* was to elect magistrates, including the general. If (but only if) Larsen is right that these meetings were open to the council alone, this would represent a major democratic deficit, as the assembly would have lost control over the appointment of the magistrates who were in charge of calling it to a *synklētos*.<sup>595</sup> However, electoral *synodoi* did not take place in a vacuum: groups of non-elite citizens could still influence them from the outside. The best extant example of this was highlighted by Larsen himself.<sup>596</sup> After Philopoimen's death at the hands of the Messenians in 182, the 'adult men' (οἱ δ' ἐν ἡλικία) assembled at Megalopolis with the *probouloi*, chose Lykortas as their new general and proceeded to

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<sup>595</sup> Given that the members of the federal council were elected, the first *synodos* of the year becomes in this view something resembling an 'electoral college' (borrowing the wording used in Larsen 1950). See also Errington 1969, 6–7.

<sup>596</sup> Larsen 1955, 178.

invade Messenia (Plut. *Phil.* 21.1).<sup>597</sup> There are two main problems with this brief passage. One is the mention of the *probouloi*, which could just be what Plutarch (or his source) called the members of the Achaean *boulē*.<sup>598</sup> It is trickier to reconcile the election of Lykortas with the law according to which if a sitting general died, his predecessor would automatically take over until the next *synodos* (Polyb. 38.15.1). Lykortas cannot have been Philopoimen's immediate predecessor, as he had already held the generalship in 184 and since Achaean law forbade immediate reelection, he had not been eligible to run in 183.<sup>599</sup> Larsen's reconstruction runs as follows:

1. Philopoimen's predecessor (whom Larsen supposed to have been Archon) became 'acting' general and called the next regular *synodos* to hold the election;
2. at the *synodos*, the council (Plutarch's *probouloi*) elected Lykortas, Philopoimen's hipparch, as the next regular general;
3. the role of the mass of adult men (i.e. the army) will have been 'confined to exerting influence'.<sup>600</sup>

The first problem with this reconstruction is that although Plutarch's treatment is more cursory and less reliable than Polybius' would have been, it is still difficult to accept that he would have failed to mention Archon altogether. More generally, however, Larsen's reading is too narrowly legalistic and seems to downplay the weight that a large, distraught army waiting at the doorstep could have on how institutions operated in practice: even though he importantly recognised the possibility that the mass exerted influence over the electors, he saw this role as relatively unimportant compared to the 'actual' electoral college. In 2006 Chakrabarty, a historian of modern India, published an important essay on the difficulties of weaving popular unrest into historical narratives.<sup>601</sup> These difficulties have to do with the nature of the historical record, which is often produced by elite actors, and with the ideologies that tend to influence modern Western historians, in that their desire to construct teleological narratives clashes with the disorderly and unpredictable nature of mass unrest.<sup>602</sup> One of Chakrabarty's key recommendations is to recognise these forms

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<sup>597</sup> On the debate around the date of Philopoimen's death, with a definitive case for May/June 182, see Errington 1969, 241–45.

<sup>598</sup> Larsen 1955, 178. In addition to this passage, the term *πρόβουλος* appears four times in Plutarch's *Lives*. In all four cases it refers to (loosely defined) high magistrates: on two occasions it may refer to members of a council (*Cor.* 25.1; *Cam.* 23.5); on one occasion the Roman consul is effectively glossed as a *proboulos* (*Rom.* 14.4); on another occasion – the only other mention in a Greek context – it seems to refer to delegates from various *poleis* (*Arist.* 24.1). While vague, these attestations suggest that taking the *probouloi* of *Phil.* 21.1 to be the Achaean *boulentai* is not incompatible with Plutarch's usage.

<sup>599</sup> Polyb. 23.16.1; on the ban on immediate reelection see Plut. *Arat.* 24.4.

<sup>600</sup> Larsen 1955, 178.

<sup>601</sup> Chakrabarty 2006.

<sup>602</sup> Chakrabarty 2006, 95–98. Chakrabarty's theories have been used, for instance, to analyse collective military resistance in the late Roman Republic: see Machado 2020.

of collective action as inherently political, rather than something that occurs *outside* politics.<sup>603</sup> If the Achaean assembly had been excluded from elections since 217, it had certainly retained the power to influence those elections by means of its strength – the same strength that could be harnessed for political purposes in the more formalised *synklētos*. The events of 182 were particularly dramatic, but similar dynamics may have occurred relatively often, whenever there was a risk that the *synodos* would choose an unpopular general. An effective *stratēgos* would need to command the loyalty of the federal army; surely it was wise for the *synodos* to take the popular mood into account when picking the next one. In this view there is no real opposition between the electoral college and the mechanisms of popular pressure; rather, they appear complementary. In the words of Gottesman, who studied ‘street politics’ in democratic Athens, ‘extra-institutional pressure translates into an institutional outcome’.<sup>604</sup>

The picture that emerges from this section is that of a *dēmos* strongly empowered by the League’s institutions, and that – crucially – remains ultimately in charge over time, although in different forms. But we can only speculate as to what led the Achaeans to reform federal meetings and create the *synklētos*. O’Neil suggested that the *synodoi* of the late third century began to suffer from low attendance, in connection with the League’s expansion (and consequent increase of the average distance one had to walk four times a year to attend the *synodos*).<sup>605</sup> This is only partly convincing, because it does not justify the need for a *formal* change and also because *synklētoi* were called quite frequently as well.<sup>606</sup> It is more plausible that the reform had something to do with institutional efficiency. Even if post-217 *synodoi* were *not* restricted to the council, it is likely that the three non-electoral *synodoi* attracted comparatively few attendees, as few people will have been interested in day-to-day administration; many more will have been keen to vote on matters of war and peace whenever *synklētoi* were summoned. Formally dividing the ‘important’ federal meetings from the others will have helped the average Achaean citizen prioritise which ones to go to, given the considerable cost in time and lost work involved in attending. The argument still holds if *synodoi* were formally restricted, as the Achaean council may have found it more convenient to keep the less contentious matters under the control of a relatively small group (compared to the federal assembly), in which debate will have been more manageable. Ultimately, the reform of 217 must have been driven by a desire for efficiency, although the continuing centrality of the *dēmos* confirms that efficiency did not come at the expense of democratic legitimacy.

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<sup>603</sup> Chakrabarty 2006, 103–6.

<sup>604</sup> Gottesman 2014, 89.

<sup>605</sup> O’Neil 1995, 131.

<sup>606</sup> For example, at least six *synklētoi* took place just between 192 and 188: Larsen 1955, 172–75.

### 5.3. Empowering the elite

In this final section, I explore the relationship between the Achaean political elite and the democratic institutions of the League; the purpose is to investigate how elite actors operated within federal institutions to further their own agenda, and how those institutions in turn constrained elite behaviour. For the purposes of this section, I use ‘elite’ in a primarily institutional rather than social sense: ‘elite actors’ are the comparatively few magistrates in charge of leading and executing federal policy, as opposed to the members of the League’s larger corporate bodies.<sup>607</sup>

My focus here is on the figure of the general (*stratēgos*), the most important Achaean official. Polybius says that for the first 25 years after 280 the Achaean cities elected two generals and one secretary (*grammateus*), then in 255 they decided to elect only one general every year and ‘trust him with everything’ (2.43.1–2: *τούτῳ πιστεύειν ὑπὲρ τῶν ὄλων*).<sup>608</sup> The motive behind this reform is left unstated and is difficult to reconstruct, but it is clear in hindsight that the switch paved the way for the later rise of prominent leaders. In part, the overwhelming influence of the *stratēgos* on federal policy may be an optical illusion due to Polybius’ penchant for ‘Great Man’ narratives and personal acquaintance with many leading politicians of his time; but even accounting for some historiographical distortion, the importance of the *stratēgos* seems undeniable. In addition to leading the federal army in military campaigns, the general could call extraordinary meetings and actively lobby for policies in those meetings. The emergence of the single *stratēgos* as effectively the head of state of the Achaean League recalls similar developments not only in the contemporary Aetolian League, but also in the short-lived Arcadian League of the 360s, where the general quickly became the League’s most important political figure.<sup>609</sup>

But the powers of the general were also limited by a system of checks and balances. The assembly, as well as *ad hoc* courts of federal judges (*dikastai*), could impose fines on generals; on at least one occasion a *hypostratēgos* (deputy general) was condemned to death, and it is a fair assumption that generals could receive the death penalty as well.<sup>610</sup> The interplay between the large powers wielded by the general and the constraints placed on him by the federal institutions

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<sup>607</sup> However, these magistrates will have been upper-class citizens most of the time anyway: O’Neil 1984–1986.

<sup>608</sup> While Polybius simply says that the Achaeans ‘nominated’ a general (*καθιστάνειν*), Strabo explicitly describes the post-255 generalship as elective (8.7.3: *ἕνα χειροτονεῖσθαι στρατηγόν*). Strabo’s *praxis* may be believed to have been influenced by Polybius, but he certainly had access to other sources: Roller 2018, 487.

<sup>609</sup> On the Aetolian general see Larsen 1968, 208, especially the clause according to which the general was one of three federal officials who could not be seized as hostages. On the Arcadian general, see the survey of Lykomedes’ career in §3.3.

<sup>610</sup> In 148, the general Damokritos was sentenced to pay a 50-talent fine because of ‘treachery’ (Paus. 7.13.5: *ἅτε ἀνδρὶ προδότῃ*). Later, the deputy general Sosikrates was condemned to death: Polyb. 38.18.2–3. See: Aymard 1938a, 182–83; Larsen 1968, 236–37.

represents one of the driving tensions underpinning the history of Achaean politics. One clear example of these tensions is visible in the law that forbade the immediate reelection of a sitting general for the following year (see note 599). This law may seem to have drastically limited the chances for a general to entrench his personal influence, in favour of constant turnover. In reality, Aratos, for instance, managed to retain control in his ‘off’ years between generalships by favouring the election of either his son Aratos ‘the Younger’ or close allies such as Timoxenos.<sup>611</sup> Conversely, whenever the political climate was particularly fraught, the prospect of a forced yearly turnover (which nullified the potential advantage of incumbency) may have encouraged the emergence of factional leaders through whom opposing factions could hope to win over the electorate. A glimpse of this inter-faction competition *via* leaders is visible in the generalship election of 218: Aratos was the outgoing general and his son was his natural successor, but Apelles – the guardian of Philip V – formed a vast coalition with opponents of Aratos and managed to get the ineffective Eperatos elected to the generalship (Polyb. 4.82). The continuous competition at the very top could indeed contribute to reinforcing the centrality of the general.

The rest of this section is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the political career of Aratos, the first prominent personality in the League’s history and quite possibly its most successful general ever; the second part is centred on Philopoimen, who represents a radically different type of politician. My aim is to illuminate the changing nature of the generalship down to the early second century, through its two most important (and best-documented) holders, and put forward some tentative observations on the role of the elite within the League’s broader institutional framework.

The most consequential decision Aratos of Sicyon ever made was also one of the most important events in Achaean history. In 251, having liberated Sicyon, he added it to the League; not only did the *koinon* acquire its biggest member-*polis* yet, but Aratos himself would rapidly become a prominent figure in federal politics, coming to hold his first generalship in 245.<sup>612</sup> This evolution makes Aratos a precursor of a wider trend in Achaean history, whereby leading politicians in Peloponnesian cities would voluntarily attach their *polis* to the *koinon* with a view to gaining influence and prestige at the federal level.<sup>613</sup> The small loss in sovereignty suffered by the city, further limited by the federal institutions’ general lack of interest in the internal affairs of the member-*poleis*, would be outweighed by the greater opportunities for personal advancement

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<sup>611</sup> See the election of Aratos the Younger in 219 to succeed his father (Polyb. 4.37.1) and the election of Aratos himself after Timoxenos the year before (4.7.10). That Timoxenos was Aratos’ close ally is proved, among other things, by the fact that he would be Aratos’ candidate in 218 (4.82.7).

<sup>612</sup> On the League’s reasons for admitting Sicyon, see Kralli 2017, 159.

<sup>613</sup> On this pattern see: Larsen 1968, 312; Kralli 2017, 176.



afforded by the access to the significantly larger resources of the *koinon*. It should be noticed that this phenomenon is distinct from tyrants choosing to abdicate and join the League out of fear for their own personal safety. That some city rulers did so is attested since the early days of the League: in c.275, the tyrant of Keryneia chose to abdicate and join the *koinon*, but only after being reassured by the Achaeans that his personal safety (*ἀσφάλεια*) would be guaranteed (Polyb. 2.41.14–15). The speech given by the general Aristainos to the Spartan king Nabis in 195 is almost a manifesto of that trend (Liv. 34.33.2): Aristainos encourages Nabis to imitate the neighbouring tyrants, who gave up their authority (*deposito imperio*) and secured a safe and honourable old age (*non tutam modo sed etiam honoratam ... senectutem*).<sup>614</sup> But what Aratos did was fundamentally different, for his aim was not self-preservation – he does not seem to have had much to fear after his conquest of Sicyon – but self-aggrandisement.

However, Aratos' remarkable later career and legacy should not overshadow the fact that in 251 the League consisted of a number of relatively small and ethnically homogenous coastal *poleis*. While the League would eventually go on to become a major power, in Aratos' time that outcome – and therefore the possibility of pursuing a long-haul, high-stakes 'power politics' – was far from guaranteed. Because of this, Aratos' role in adding Corinth to the *koinon* in 243 (during his second generalship) becomes even more important, because control of Corinth and the Isthmus arguably gave the League the critical mass needed for the subsequent cycle of expansion.<sup>615</sup> According to Plutarch, Aratos advocated for the recovery of Acrocorinth on the basis that freeing it from Macedonian control would benefit not only Achaea but all Greece, as it would deprive Macedon of its most important outpost in the region (*Arat.* 16.2). Plutarch's narrative frames the conquest of Acrocorinth entirely as Aratos' own personal achievement, and whether the forces under his command were Sicyonian or federal is left somewhat unclear.<sup>616</sup> However, once Acrocorinth fell into Aratos' hands, he spoke to the Corinthians 'on behalf of the Achaeans' and persuaded them 'to become Achaeans', i.e. join the League (23.4), which reaffirms the federal nature of the enterprise. Indeed, immediately after these events, Megara, Troizen and Epidaurus chose more or less freely to join the *koinon*, turning it into a major Peloponnesian power virtually overnight.<sup>617</sup> These successes endowed Aratos with great prestige, allowing him to retain the generalship every

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<sup>614</sup> See Shipley 2018, 123–24. In the decree on the accession of Orchomenos to the League (*IG V.2 344*), one Nearchos is granted legal immunity alongside his sons (lines 13–17); if Nearchos was the ruler of Orchomenos prior to the accession, this provision may represent one further example of a local ruler seeking legal protection while attaching his city to the *koinon*.

<sup>615</sup> The 'liberation' of Corinth is briefly treated by Polybius (2.43.4), but a fuller account – surely based on Aratos' autobiography – is provided by Plutarch (*Arat.* 18–24).

<sup>616</sup> At the very end of the battle of Acrocorinth, part of Aratos' army joins him from Sicyon (Plut. *Arat.* 22.6): were these soldiers Sicyonian or did Sicyon simply serve as the logistic base for the (federal) assault on Corinth?

<sup>617</sup> Plut. *Arat.* 24.3; Paus. 2.8.5; cf. Polyb. 2.43.5 (on Megara).

other year under the banner of the defence of Greek liberty against Macedonian interference (Polyb. 2.43.7).

The earliest evidence that Aratos paved the way for a new pattern in how individual ambitious politicians navigated federal institutions comes from the career of Lydiadas, tyrant of Megalopolis from 251.<sup>618</sup> In 235, Lydiadas chose to step down as tyrant and attach Megalopolis to the League, and according to Plutarch this was done partly due to envy towards Aratos' successes, partly out of self-preservation ('to free himself from hatred and fear') and partly for the benefit of Megalopolis (*Arat.* 30.2–5). The emphasis on self-preservation recalls the pre-Aratean trend seen above, but it is also clear that Lydiadas was in it for personal gain – and his interest in protecting Megalopolis from (Macedonian) garrisons points to a desire to challenge Aratos' monopoly of the rallying cry of Greek autonomy.<sup>619</sup> Lydiadas' wager paid off: he was elected to the generalship in 234, 232 and 230, and his ascent in federal politics meant that '[f]or the first time Aratos had serious competition'.<sup>620</sup>

The following decisive moment in the League's growth occurred in 229, when the death of Demetrios II caused several Argolic tyrants – previously supported by him – to abdicate and attach their cities to the *koinon*. Polybius mentions Hermione, Phleious and most importantly Argos, ruled by Aristomachos II (2.44.3–6). That Aratos played a role in the post-229 wave of expansion is suggested by Polybius, who reports that Aratos promised gifts and honours to the tyrants joining the League (2.44.3: *μεγάλας δωρεὰς καὶ τιμὰς*). With reference to Aristomachos II of Argos specifically, Plutarch says that Aratos promised him the generalship in exchange for his accession, and explicitly encouraged him to imitate Lydiadas (*Arat.* 35.1).<sup>621</sup> Interestingly, Lydiadas feared that the accession of Argos would be seen as Aratos' own personal accomplishment, and unsuccessfully attempted to pit the federal *boulē* against him (35.2–3). His apprehension suggests that by the 220s, any successful Achaean general had to prove himself capable of enlarging the League and recruiting new members of the ruling class, and Aratos did so by way of the promise of larger honours than the individual *poleis* could ever offer. The key role of honour and self-aggrandisement in this growth strategy, which makes the Achaean League somewhat similar to a modern pyramid scheme and is probably what Polybius meant in saying that the League grew 'by persuasion' (2.38.7), formed an important part of Aratos' political legacy.

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<sup>618</sup> On the date of Lydiadas' rise to power: Walbank 1933, 44. On Lydiadas' life and career more generally: Close 2017, 71–77.

<sup>619</sup> On Lydiadas' motives: Kralli 2017, 177–78.

<sup>620</sup> Kralli 2017, 178.

<sup>621</sup> Aristomachos II was elected Achaean *stratēgos* in 228 and executed in 224 (see below); on his life and career: Shipley 2018, 114–15.

Another central feature of Aratos' political career was his apparent commitment to playing by the rules, *within* institutions rather than against them, and seeking consensus rather than confrontation – a feature that was already explored above with reference to his political activity at Sicyon after 251 (see §5.2). Aratos' penchant for consensus politics may be partly due to his family background: his father Kleinias was *philos* and *xenos* of 'the kings', i.e. the rulers of Macedon and Egypt, despite the enmity between those kingdoms (Plut. *Arat.* 4.2).<sup>622</sup> Plutarch pithily calls him a 'politician by nature' (10.1) and ascribes his accomplishments to his personal relationships and his mild character (*Phil.* 8.4). A concrete example of this habit is provided by Polybius' account of a meeting that took place at Megalopolis in 217 following Cleomenes' sack of the city (5.93). The impoverished Megalopolitans were deeply divided on the strategy that would have to be adopted against Sparta and on whether to preserve the existing laws imposed upon them by Doso; Polybius reports that Aratos did everything he could to reconcile the two factions, and got them to agree on a settlement (5.93.9).<sup>623</sup> The nature of the meeting is slightly unclear: it seems that the only attendees were Aratos and the Megalopolitans, and Polybius goes on to say that *after* this meeting Aratos went on to attend a federal *synodos* (5.94.1). However, Aratos assisted the Megalopolitans in an official capacity: the resulting settlement was an Achaean decree (5.93.1: τῶν Ἀχαιῶν δόγμα) and a copy of it was set up in the Homarion (5.93.10). It seems clear, therefore, that Aratos solved the dispute drawing from his personal political skills, but at the same time the settlement is clearly framed as an Achaean achievement.

Further light on Aratos' relationship with federal institutions is shed by his tenure as *stratēgos autokratōr* in the latter part of the Cleomenean War.<sup>624</sup> In 225, in response to the risk of Corinth defecting to the Spartan side, Aratos was given full judicial powers to prosecute those suspected of *lakōnizēin*.<sup>625</sup> Later, at a federal meeting at Sicyon, he was made general 'with full powers' – apparently a distinct office from 'ordinary' generalship – and given a personal bodyguard (Plut. *Arat.* 41.1). Other than the bodyguard, it is difficult to assess the significance of the special office bestowed upon Aratos compared to the generalship; the latter continued to exist, with Aratos' close ally Timoxenos being elected *stratēgos* at least twice between 225 and 221.<sup>626</sup> Tarn suggests that the *autokratōr*, unlike the ordinary general, could hold his office on consecutive years and that Aratos remained continuously in office until 221.<sup>627</sup> If correct, this theory has two important

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<sup>622</sup> Shipley 2018, 109.

<sup>623</sup> Aratos had recently been reelected to the generalship for the current year: Polyb. 5.30.7; see Larsen 1955, 169.

<sup>624</sup> On this office and the chronological problems raised by the sources: Walbank 1933, 170–73 with previous bibliography.

<sup>625</sup> Plut. *Arat.* 40.2; *Cleom.* 19.1.

<sup>626</sup> Evidence collected in *BNP* s.v. *Timoxenus*.

<sup>627</sup> See Tarn in *CAH* 7:863, followed by Porter 1937, lxxix–lxxx.

consequences. First, Aratos more or less voluntarily gave up his extraordinary position at the end of the crisis associated with the Cleomenean War. Second, the censure he received for his unlawful execution of Aristomachos of Argos in 224 (Plut. *Arat.* 44.4) was made while he was – and remained – in office. There are indeed further examples of situations in which federal institutions pushed back against Aratos or otherwise held him accountable, even though none of those ended his long career. In the early 230s, Aratos led an attempt to oust Aristippos, tyrant of Argos; the coup failed and in an ensuing arbitration the Mantineans ruled that the League was to pay 30 minas in damages to Aristippos (Plut. *Arat.* 25.4–5).<sup>628</sup> The fine was presumably paid with federal funds, but Aratos was personally responsible for the incident and his reputation must have suffered as a consequence. An even more explicit example is offered by the events following the death of Lydiadas (then hipparch) in a battle near Megalopolis in 227.<sup>629</sup> After the defeat, the Achaean assembly voted to strip Aratos of his access to federal funds and mercenaries paid for by the League (Plut. *Arat.* 37.3). These various hints suggest that the checks and balances operating in the League in Aratos' time were still powerful and effective, and while Aratos was undoubtedly the most influential politician of his day, his status was continuously challenged and checked by a series of institutional devices and practices – the effect of which was arguably strengthened by Aratos' own apparent unwillingness to depart from legality and consensus politics.

Philopoimen's policies and career diverged from Aratos'. Philopoimen was born in 252 into a prominent Megalopolitan family and held the generalship eight times between 209 and his death in 182.<sup>630</sup> His political ideology – that informed his evolving relationship with the other institutions of the *koimon* – had two fundamental tenets: the value of liberty as a supreme aspiration, and a rejection of Aratos' consensus politics in favour of the pursuit of conflict and antagonism. Philopoimen's use of 'liberty' seems to have been deliberately flexible and ambiguous. First, Achaean liberty is connected from the beginning to military self-sufficiency: in Plutarch's *Life*, Philopoimen's first political accomplishment is a radical reform of the federal army, which made it more powerful and efficient (*Phil.* 9). This is interestingly framed as a conscious break with Aratos, who had taken the League closer to Macedon following its poor showing in the Cleomenean War, and had therefore made it permanently dependent on outside military help; conversely, Philopoimen's reforms were primarily intended to guarantee that the League could

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<sup>628</sup> The *terminus ante quem* for this anecdote is Aristippos' death at Kleonai in c.235: Plut. *Arat.* 29.1–4.

<sup>629</sup> Polyb. 2.51.3; Plut. *Arat.* 36–37; *Cleom.* 6.4–7.

<sup>630</sup> On Philopoimen's life see Errington 1969. Specifically on the dates of his birth and death, see 241–5.

fight alongside the major powers of the time on an equal level, thus preserving its autonomy.<sup>631</sup> However, his ‘liberty’ had also a more traditionally anti-tyrannical (without being necessarily pro-democratic) meaning: Plutarch reports that in 192, when Sparta was annexed to the League following the death of Nabis, the Spartan nobility hoped to find in Philopoimen the protector of its *eleutheria* (15.5). Despite Pelling’s scepticism about this anecdote – and indeed Philopoimen’s own later conduct towards Sparta – there are few reasons to doubt that Philopoimen may have been palatable to a local aristocracy invested in the *status quo* and scarred by Nabis’ radicalism, and even if the story is spurious, it may reflect narratives and traditions associating Philopoimen with the defence of aristocratic liberty.<sup>632</sup>

The other key aspect of Philopoimen’s behaviour towards federal institutions is his ‘pugnacity’ (*φιλονικία*).<sup>633</sup> Part of this antagonism played out within institutions, in legal terms, and concerned the attitude that the League was to adopt towards Rome. One chapter in Plutarch’s *Life of Philopoimen* provides an example of the relationship between Philopoimen and his perennial adversary Aristainos: with Roman interference in Achaëa on the rise after the defeat of Antiochos III, the general Aristainos supported a policy of subservience towards Rome, while Philopoimen – still influential despite being an *idiōtēs* – advocated the preservation of Achaëan liberty (17.3–4). The rivalry between Philopoimen and Aristainos over Rome is also the subject of a Polybian passage (24.11–13). Interestingly, in Polybius’ narrative neither of them questions Rome’s superior strength compared to Achaëa, but while Aristainos is ready to disregard Achaëan law to appease the Romans, Philopoimen would at least object whenever a Roman request ran foul of Achaëan law. It is readily seen that, in practical terms, the difference in attitude between the two was minimal. Indeed, Plutarch reports that Rome wanted the League to recall a group of Spartan exiles, which Philopoimen opposed only to accept the request the following year, once elected general: his resistance was not due to an ideological opposition to Rome, but rather to his desire to make the recall look like his own decision. This suggests that the ‘Roman question’ was to Philopoimen primarily a way for him to shape his political identity and perform his influential status within federal institutions. A similar dynamic played out in the early 190s, when Philopoimen was staying in Crete and the Megalopolitans tried to exile him permanently due to his prolonged absence, which they perceived as a betrayal; Philopoimen took his revenge first by supporting the *diōikismos*

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<sup>631</sup> That Philopoimen used ‘liberty’ as a rallying cry to build his own political identity is shown e.g. by his appearance at the Nemean Games of 205, where he was greeted by the crowd as the restorator of Greek freedom and dignity: Plut. *Phil.* 11.2–3.

<sup>632</sup> Pelling 1997, 221n99, who stresses the fact that Livy gives no indication of actual support or help given by Philopoimen to the Spartan nobility; see also Errington 1969, 110–11.

<sup>633</sup> Plut. *Phil.* 3.1; cf. also *Comparison of Philopoimen and Titus Flamininus* 1.4, 1.7.

of many villages surrounding Megalopolis and then by favouring the creation of an anti-Megalopolitan faction in the League (13.7–8). This contrasts markedly with the other occasions in which he clearly favoured his own native *polis*, and further shows that his main concern was to use these tensions to strengthen his personal position within federal institutions, rather than pursue a specific policy.

But unlike Aratos, Philopoimen seems to have been willing to violate the rule of law in order to increase his personal influence: his ‘pugnacity’ was also *against* (and not just *within*) institutions. In 201, after Nabis’ conquest of Messene, Philopoimen tried to convince the sitting general Lysippos to mount a counter-attack, but since Lysippos would not do so, Philopoimen resolved to call up the Megalopolitans alone and lead a private expedition against Messene (Plut. *Phil.* 12.4–6).<sup>634</sup> In 192/1, some agitations in Sparta induced the general Diophanes to move against the city – with Roman support – but Philopoimen stopped Diophanes and Flamininus from entering Sparta (16.1–3). Plutarch defines this act as ‘illegal ... but noble’ (16.3: οὐ νόμιμον ... ἀλλὰ μέγα) which encapsulates the motives behind Philopoimen’s grand gestures. Yet even in this case, once back in the generalship, Philopoimen backtracked and adopted a hard stance on Sparta, executing internal agitators, tearing down the city walls and even changing its ancestral constitution (16.4–9).

Did Philopoimen’s personalistic and antagonistic approach to politics damage the core tenets of Achaean institutions in the long run? It is difficult to say whether he actually increased the centrality and power of the general: Aratos was in some respects an even more prominent political figure, and part of Philopoimen’s importance in the extant narratives of the time may be ascribed to Polybius’ own admiration for him.<sup>635</sup> On the other hand, the possibility of a *fil rouge* connecting Philopoimen’s attitude to the constant infighting between second-century generals is attractive. These later generals would usually clash on the question of Rome’s growing presence, as Philopoimen and his adversaries did before them. But the growth of Rome as an exogenous stressor was arguably not any individual Achaean politician’s responsibility; the issue is how the institutional structure reacted to this new stressor.<sup>636</sup> It seems therefore that the Achaean system *in itself* fostered an atmosphere of competition within the elite at its very top. Some ambitious members of this elite could compete for the generalship and take advantage of the benefits and clout associated with it. But the federal constitution put pressures and constraints on those individuals – such as judicial accountability and the ban on reelection, which probably favoured

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<sup>634</sup> On the date: Pelling 1997, 210n62 with bibliography.

<sup>635</sup> When Philopoimen died, it was Polybius who carried the urn filled with his ashes to Megalopolis: Plut. *Phil.* 21.3.

<sup>636</sup> On Roman–Achaean relations post-200: Leenen 2011.

factionalism – and ultimately created a permanently ‘insecure’ environment for them. Unlike Aratos, Philopoimen repeatedly attempted to circumvent these constraints by pursuing personal, extra-institutional forms of self-empowerment; but by and large his example did not start a slippery slope. The democratic component of the League’s institutions managed to keep the elite fundamentally in check until the Romans abolished the *koinon* in 146.

## 6. The impact of democracy in the Peloponnese

In this final chapter I seek to put forward a new unitary explanation for the development of democratic constitutions in the classical and early Hellenistic Peloponnese. In his 2011 book on democracy outside Athens, Robinson explained the spread of *dēmokratia* in terms of ‘peer polity interaction’ (PPI); in his view, the normalisation of democratic ways of government in the fifth-century Greek world occurred primarily thanks to the itinerant sophists, who ‘learned and taught techniques of popular political power’ and provided their audiences with new political skills and habits.<sup>637</sup>

While this suggestion does a good job of exploring how the cultural and social groundwork was laid for the later emergence of largely comparable democratic constitutions in many parts of the Greek world, it does not answer the more immediate questions of how and why in certain *poleis* democracy prevailed over pre-existing, non-democratic forms of government and survived for extended periods of time as the ‘only game in town’.<sup>638</sup> Consequently, this chapter moves beyond PPI and – focusing on the Peloponnesian case studies explored in previous chapters – offers an explanation of the spread of *dēmokratia* that draws on the framework provided by ‘democratic advantage’ (DA) theory, i.e. the idea that democracies outperform non-democracies in interstate competition.<sup>639</sup>

In §6.1, I briefly explore the scholarship on DA and while noting its limitations, I make a case for the general usefulness of DA as an interpretive framework for my case studies.

In §6.2, moving beyond the traditional principles of DA, I suggest that we read the processes of democratisation in the case studies considered in this thesis as essentially processes of egalitarian rearrangement of the relations between existing groups, and the survival of those democratic constitutions over time as a form of success. The aim then becomes to explain the correlation between inter-group equality and long-term stability, on which I put forward a few suggestions. Lastly, I tentatively tackle the issue of democratic failure: if the evidence shows that democracy was an efficient form of organisation, how can we account for the instances where it collapsed?

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<sup>637</sup> Robinson 2011, 207–16 (quote from 216). On PPI, see primarily Ma 2003 with previous bibliography.

<sup>638</sup> To use the effective expression adopted by Linz 1990, 158.

<sup>639</sup> For a survey of recent works on the democratic advantage see Schultz and Weingast 2003, 3–4 (and see below). For a recent application of this theory to fifth-century Athens see Ober 2010.



## 6.1. Democratic advantage and its limitations

Underpinning the modern scholarship on DA is the claim that, empirically, democracies outperform non-democracies. If that much is true, it then becomes a matter of pinning down the reasons for this performance gap. As Schultz and Weingast note, this claim has become general only recently, mostly owing to the outcome of the Cold War, which saw the democratic Western bloc outliving communism; as a consequence of this, the scholarly discourse on DA usually relies on very recent evidence and interpretative frameworks.<sup>640</sup> In this section, after a brief survey of the main strands of DA theory, I explore the problems that come up when we try to apply its standard form to ancient democracy. The aim of the following section will therefore be to redefine some of the key terms of DA in order to salvage its basic tenet and (I argue) its heuristic value.

One strand of studies on DA has focused on the economy; democratic institutions, the argument goes, lend democracies an economic edge over non-democracies, and it is such economic edge that translates into a higher success rate in international competition. For example, according to Lake, democratic institutions limit the state's ability to extract rents from society, eventually making democratic economies more resource-efficient than non-democratic ones.<sup>641</sup> More recently, Schultz and Weingast have argued that democracies enjoy a superior borrowing power because representative institutions make the state more accountable towards its lenders, which is a structural incentive to pursue a stable economic policy.<sup>642</sup> These approaches tend to rely largely on modern evidence: for instance, Schultz and Weingast's two relevant case studies are the Anglo-French wars between 1689 and 1815 and the Cold War. By contrast, an economy-centred explanation of DA is much more difficult to apply to ancient states because even in the cases where the surviving evidence allows to study the economic performance of the ancient Greek *poleis* over time, it is usually impossible (in particular outside classical Athens) to correlate the fluctuations in economic performance with constitutional change.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> Schultz and Weingast 2003, 3–4. Given that DA was a direct product of the post-1989 *Zeitgeist*, one may wonder whether the more recent rise of non-democratic powers has reduced the appeal of this framework. Hopefully, the discussion shows that its driving tenet may still be of use.

<sup>641</sup> Lake 1992, esp. 30–32.

<sup>642</sup> Schultz and Weingast 2003, 6–16.

<sup>643</sup> The yet-unpublished fourth-century bronze tablets from Argos (Kritzas 2006) will probably shed light on the city's economy during the Corinthian War, but even in that case they would hardly allow generalisations in time and space. On the economy of the Hellenistic Peloponnese, with remarks on the problematic nature of the evidence, see Shipley 2018, 159–242.

Other scholars, while maintaining a similar focus on democracy's 'edge' in warfare, have sought explanations in non-economic factors and particularly in the environment in which democratic leaders operate. For example, Bueno de Mesquita et al. moved from the assumption that politicians operating in democratic environments rely on delivering successful policies in order to remain popular and to secure re-election. In the case of warfare, success is defined as either fending off an invader or winning a war of aggression. In the first case, democratic decision-makers have an incentive to increase their war effort and mobilise more resources; in the second case, crucially, leaders will choose to initiate only the wars they view as relatively winnable. Therefore, the comparatively good track record of democracies in wars is largely due to a selection bias at the decision-making stage.<sup>644</sup> Reiter and Stam also relied in part on the theory of target selection but also argued that democratic armies routinely outperform non-democracies on the battlefield, essentially due to superior morale and merit-based career progression.<sup>645</sup>

The limitations of this classical approach as far as *ancient Greek* democracy is concerned are clear. The first obvious issue is that DA was built with modern democracy in mind, with all that entails with respect to the quantity and quality of the available evidence. This is particularly visible (as seen above) in the discussions revolving around economic factors, which simply cannot be investigated in regard to ancient states; but the same could be said about (e.g.) Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s focus on the role of leaders. First, Greek democracy relied primarily on direct involvement rather than elections and representation; *elected* officials played a comparatively small role, therefore the formalised mechanics of seeking to preserve one's political influence through reelection on the basis of popularity were less important than the dynamics of informal persuasion driving collective action in assemblies. Admittedly, those who became influential in the assembly by repeatedly advocating successful policies probably ended up in a position that was similar to that of elected policy-makers; but the non-formalised and fluid nature of their position of influence makes it very difficult to associate them with specific instances of political agency and related successful outcomes. Second, in the present case studies – and unlike for instance democratic Athens – the textual evidence contains few names of individuals and political actions are often framed as carried out by nameless groups.<sup>646</sup> In fact, the sparse cases in which the evidence casts light on particular politicians and their careers (e.g. Aratos of Sicyon, Philopoimen of Megalopolis, Lykomedes of

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<sup>644</sup> Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; see also Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995. Their interest lies primarily in the so-called 'democratic peace', i.e. the theory according to which democracies do not fight each other, but the evidence for 'democratic peace' in ancient Greece seems almost non-existent: Robinson 2011, 237–40 with bibliography.

<sup>645</sup> Reiter and Stam 2002.

<sup>646</sup> Rhodes (1997, 492) noted that the proponents of decrees and amendments tend to remain unnamed in the epigraphical evidence from the Peloponnese.

Mantineia) are methodologically challenging because they are embedded into ‘Great Man’ narratives that overemphasise individual agency and obscure collective action. Consequently, a leader-centred approach should at least be complemented with approaches emphasising the impact of participatory institutions on the *collective* behaviour of larger groups.

DA’s focus on warfare is also problematic. Furthermore, while (e.g.) Reiter and Stam’s approach helps explain why democratic constitutions *continue* to exist once they are in place – a democracy may preserve its right to constitutional self-determination by fending off enemies, and its continuing military success will strengthen its existing institutions – it does not in itself clarify the circumstances that favour the *creation* of a democratic constitution in the first place. This is a blind spot generally shared by most treatments of DA, that fail to consider the specific historical contexts in and from which the democracies they examine came into being. In a 2011 article, Friedman criticised the concept of ‘democratic consolidation’ as inherently teleological and ethnocentric, because it generally measures the newer democracies of the Global South up against an ideal paradigm based on Northern liberal democracy.<sup>647</sup> In response to this framework, Friedman argued that *all* democracies are in fact incomplete and in constant evolution, and may eventually take different shapes without ceasing to be classifiable as democracies.<sup>648</sup> Friedman’s critical remarks are particularly important with reference to DA, and even more so when one looks beyond modern-day democracy, because they underscore the problem of identifying the advantage-triggering commonalities that exist across multiple democracies despite the social and historical differences between the ways in which the democratic ‘template’ is substantiated in the real world and evolves over time. At the same time, it is important to stress that despite these pitfalls DA and its ideological underpinnings can be extremely valuable as a starting point, because they encourage us to look at democracy (and of Greek democracy) through the lens of concepts such as historical performance, competition and selection. We simply need to rephrase the terms of the issue. The scholarship on DA will not do; but the basic question of whether democracy ‘worked better’, and if so why, can still be a good one to ask.

## 6.2. Democracy as network

The natural consequence of the previous section is that if we want to use DA as a framework in a context such as the historical trajectory of Peloponnesian democracy, its basic elements – ‘democracy’ and ‘success’ – must be (re)defined in a way that accounts for the specific nature of

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<sup>647</sup> Friedman 2011.

<sup>648</sup> Friedman 2011, 42.

the evidence in question. First, regarding the ancient Greek context, I define as *success* for a democracy the emergence, permanence and persistence of democratic institutions as ways of organising a political community despite the presence of internal factions invested in trying to replace those institutions (more or less violently) with non-democratic ones. My aim is to ask what it was about *dēmokratia* that made it an effective and resilient framework for governing certain Greek states as opposed to other forms of government. My emphasis on diachronic change (or lack thereof) and *internal* stability is arguably the main difference between my approach and most of the modern scholarship on DA, characterised by a focus on interstate competition.<sup>649</sup>

Second, I propose viewing an egalitarian rearrangement of the relations between pre-existing social groups within political communities as the fundamental defining feature of the four democracies examined here. Broadly speaking, the establishment of democratic constitutions appears to have been associated with transformations of the institutional ties between the variously defined sub-groups making up the political community. *Dēmokratia* was therefore a way of bringing together groups, or renegotiating the pre-existing relations between them, so that they could operate on an equal (or less unequal) footing within the framework of a larger polity.

The applicability and implications of a group-based interpretation of these democracies will be explored below, but it should be emphasised at the outset that such interpretation can be situated within a broader trend in the current scholarship on Greek political history that employs the concept of ‘group’ and theoretical models related to it (e.g. network theory) to produce new insights. In his recent monograph on Hellenistic Rhodes, Thomsen has focused on how political associations and networks effectively enabled a small ‘magisterial elite’ to secure and maintain control of public offices even though that elite operated in a democratic framework.<sup>650</sup> As Thomsen has noted, one important strength of a group-focused approach is that it avoids the dangers of an exclusively institutional approach, which tends to ‘equate political institutions with political practice’.<sup>651</sup> Shifting the focus from the citizen community in its entirety to the multiple groups (private and public) that interacted inside it shows not only that political outcomes were often shaped by non-political agents and constraints, but also that the changing relations between those groups could cause *political* change even in the absence of *constitutional* change strictly defined.<sup>652</sup> In an even more recent edited volume on private associations in the Greek world, Paganini and Gabrielsen set out to study the regulations of those associations with a threefold

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<sup>649</sup> On stability as success (and vice versa) in ancient political thought, a paramount example is the pseudo-Xenophonic *Constitution of the Athenians*: see esp. 1.1 and 3.1, as well as *passim* throughout the work.

<sup>650</sup> Thomsen 2020.

<sup>651</sup> Thomsen 2020, 5.

<sup>652</sup> Thomsen 2020, 7–8.

approach – descriptive, comparative and ‘contextualising’ (i.e. by studying associations within their own society).<sup>653</sup> Paganini and Gabrielsen drew attention to a number of contemporary studies in ancient history that employ methods borrowed from the social sciences to map out the interlocking social networks making up ancient communities. One prominent example is the (mostly Athens-centred) volume edited by Taylor and Vlassopoulos, who reject the usual focus on elite male citizens in favour of networks and communities cutting across citizenship boundaries, in order to reevaluate how subaltern individuals (women, non-citizens, the poor) negotiated their social status to improve their personal conditions.<sup>654</sup>

The link between the processes of democratisation examined in this thesis and the reorganisation of inter-group relations is most evident in the two *poleis* said by the literary tradition to have been created through synoikism, Elis and Mantinea, as the concept of ‘synoikism’ implies organising and institutionalising the relations between pre-existing (and previously separate) communities. In the cases of Elis and Mantinea the ‘groups’ in question can be identified with the dispersed settlements from the pre-synoikistic period, but the two processes differed in important ways. As seen in §3.1, there is no solid evidence that Mantinea was a *polis* in the political sense before the foundation of the city; the synoikism was therefore connected to the process of state formation in the Mantinike. The creation of the city entailed the creation of shared public spaces – such as the agora – where members of the local community could come together in both institutional and extra-institutional contexts. The city’s regular plan and even-sized plots have been seen as suggestive that the synoikism was informed by democratic (or at least loosely egalitarian) principles.<sup>655</sup> Elements such as the clay tokens found near the theatre and the literary traditions on the *dioikismos* of 385 (framed in the terms of a return to an older condition) suggest that the synoikism did not cause the complete disappearance of the pre-synoikistic settlements as markers of local belonging and identity; rather, the city served as a hub linking those hyper-local identities to one another and allowing them to interact.

As I noted in §3.2, the decree regulating Mantinea’s incorporation of the nearby village of Helisson (*SEG* 37.340) may shed light on the institutional nature of those inter-settlement relations – despite some important caveat, such as the chronological distance between the decree and the synoikism and (consequently) the fact that Mantinea already had a long history as a city prior to the decree, which means that the incorporation did not cause the creation of a new city from scratch. But these limitations notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that the decree reveals and

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<sup>653</sup> Gabrielsen and Paganini 2021 (see 4 for this methodological point in particular).

<sup>654</sup> Taylor and Vlassopoulos 2015.

<sup>655</sup> See Donati and Sarris 2016, 395 with more general bibliography on the link between urban planning and egalitarian principles, especially Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994.

implies a strong interest in defining the fields in which Mantinea and Helisson were to remain separate and those in which they were to merge into an integrated polity, and how their integration was going to work.

Mantineia's participation in the Arcadian League during the 360s showcases the same principles at play on a different scale: Mantinea was now not (just) a hub for interactions between sub-groups, but one of the sub-groups interacting inside of a larger community, the *koinon*. The workings of the League's federal institutions are imperfectly known due in part to the nature of the evidence and in part because the League was only united for less than a decade, roughly from 370 to 363. However, in the context of the *stasis* of Tegea at the beginning of the League's history, Xenophon put in the democratic leaders' mouth the statement that the policy that prevailed in the Confederacy was to be complied with by all the member-*poleis* (*Hell.* 6.5.6). Considering that federal policy was discussed and approved in a democratic assembly (the 'Ten Thousand'), this statement can be taken to represent the principle that Arcadian citizens from different *poleis* were to come together in communal institutions, produce policy according to egalitarian procedures and commit to abiding by them. To use Ober's terminology for the process of political participation, the Arcadian federal institutions facilitated the 'aggregation' of the citizen bodies of the member-*poleis* and their 'alignment' towards a common policy.<sup>656</sup> Given the significant differences in size and resources among the various Arcadian *poleis*, the equality between them inside the *koinon* effectively consisted in the balance of power between the major cities, particularly Tegea and Mantinea; indeed, as I argued, the break-up of the League was caused to a significant extent by Mantinea's fear of finding itself sidelined as Tegea got closer to Thebes.

Elis is at first sight a very different case. The late archaic network centred on Olympia seems to have been relatively egalitarian, given that the epigraphical evidence shows that the sanctuary was the principal node through which the local communities interacted and that the latter respected its authority and decisions. In fact, the rise of the Eleian *polis* in the fifth century seems to have been connected with a crisis of this 'peer-polity' model and its replacement with a hegemonic network led by Elis. The creation of Elis as an urban centre is framed in the literary sources as a synoikism, but to the present state of our knowledge, the scarcity of the evidence and the archaeological under-exploration of Eleia make it very difficult to understand how the Eleian synoikism played out in practice. It seems however very likely that the communities of the Peneios valley came together and established their domination over the lands to the south – especially Triphylia, as Herodotus and Thucydides report – during the mid-fifth century.

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<sup>656</sup> See the relevant chapters in Ober 2008a.

How did this process of expansion and subjection correlate with the development of Eleian democracy? There is surprisingly little evidence that Elis was a *demokratia* before the end of the fifth century. For example, Elis' participation to the anti-Spartan coalition after 421 seems to have been motivated primarily by its desire to consolidate its control of the southern half of the western Peloponnesian seaboard to Sparta's detriment – as opposed to Argos, Athens and Mantinea, which are said by Thucydides to have been 'natural' allies due to their shared democratic constitutions. The only hint that Elis was somewhat democratic in that period is the large size of (what was probably) its council, the 'Six Hundred' mentioned in the oath for the 'quadruple alliance' of 420 (Thuc. 5.47.9), as large participatory institutions tend to imply a correspondingly large eligible citizen population. But we know next to nothing about this body's prerogatives and nothing at all about such details as term of office and whether council members were allowed to serve more than one term. However, in §2.3 I argue separately that (a) the Eleian *stasis* of c.400 resulted in the establishment of a more democratic constitution that remained in place until 365 and (b) the government of 400–365 integrated the former *perioikoi* of the areas around Elis as full citizens into the Eleian state. The two points are probably related, in that the Eleian democratic government was probably somehow invested in the elimination of the hierarchical system previously in place – in which the Eleians were citizens and the population of the surrounding domains was relegated to the status of *perioikoi* – and in fact the oligarchic faction that took over in 365 seems to have promptly rolled back the democratic government's enfranchisement reforms. The extension of Eleian citizenship rights to the communities that had previously been treated as subjects seems therefore to have been closely associated with the democratic government of 400–365 and pursued as a distinctly democratic policy: the democratisation of Elis brought about a rearrangement of the legal status of the social groups within the state in a (temporary) move away from the perioikic model previously in place.

The role of synoikism in the development of Argos as a (democratic) *polis* is arguably more complicated as *two* successive synoikisms can be identified in the city's archaic and classical history, both playing a key part in the process of state formation. Over the course of the late archaic period, a change in the pattern of settlement at Argos paved the way for the gradual emergence of an area deliberately conceived as a permanent public space, which would later evolve into an agora. As was certainly the case at Mantinea, this communal space facilitated social interactions and therefore participation in public life; that the *dēmos* in archaic Argos played a prominent (if not necessarily formalised) role is also suggested by the literary evidence. There is however no evidence that Argos' constitution was democratic at this stage – for instance, the assembly appears in the epigraphical evidence only from the second quarter of the fifth century onwards – and in fact the literary

sources imply that late archaic Argos relied on a perioikic model of territorial control, which included a free non-citizen population in a state of military, political and economic subjection. In the twenty-odd years after the Battle of Sepeia (c.494), Argos came to dominate most of the surrounding plain and incorporated it (and its population) into the Argive state. On the basis of the epigraphical evidence, I argue that the ill-known process of democratisation of Argos in the 460s included crucial reforms organising public access to the economic resources provided by the newly annexed territories. The introduction of the *phratry* as a civic subdivision seems to have been geared towards ensuring relatively equal access to public funds. The coexistence between groups with different interests caused conflict on several occasions: in §4.2 I argue that different generations will have had different attitudes towards the enfranchisement reforms in the wake of Sepeia; later on, internal tensions resulted in violence on at least two occasions (417 and 370). This may explain, by contrast, a certain Argive preoccupation with reconciliation – see for example the statue of Zeus Meilichios dedicated by the Argives after the *stasis* of 417 (Paus. 2.20.2) – and it is indeed remarkable that the oligarchic faction at Argos never seems to have posed a major risk for the democratic government after 417, with the possible partial exception of 370. Argive democracy, which has often been seen as unstable and prone to infighting, was in fact remarkably resilient.

The Achaean League represents a different case primarily on account of its scale: its constituent units were *poleis* and at its peak the *koinon* came to include the entire Peloponnese. The central question is therefore the League's institutions facilitated fair and equal relations between the multiple member-*poleis*; as I argue in §5.1, the evidence from Polybius certainly proves that this was the case. The circumstances of the foundation of the League in 270 and the relative strength of its founding members strongly suggest that the project was egalitarian and 'horizontal' in nature from its very beginning. In fact, the democratic nature of the federal institutions allowed each city to participate on an equal footing: for example, during federal meetings each *polis* held its internal discussion and vote before the final *koinon*-wide vote (see note 521). As the League expanded, the differences in size and resources between the member-*poleis* caused the larger members to exert disproportionate control over some of the federal institutions, most notably the generalship.<sup>657</sup> However, some institutional innovations allowed the League to limit the geographical centralisation of power, most importantly the law according to which federal assemblies would rotate between cities (Liv. 38.30.1–6), with an obvious impact on the patterns of political participation (as it was now more likely for the people living far from Aigion, the old 'capital', to be able to travel to the assembly). The aspect of political participation and access to decision-

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<sup>657</sup> O'Neil 1984–1986, 39–44.



making does not exhaust the issue: the epigraphical evidence repeatedly showcases the League's institutions busy solving inter-*polis* disputes by means of increasingly complex and refined legal procedures. Peaceful coexistence was fundamental for the League's survival, and it was dynamically attained through arbitration processes that were certainly seen as fair by all parties involved, or else they would not have been complied with given the apparently poor coercive capacity of the League's institutions.

A comparative analysis of the evidence therefore supports a reading of the processes of democratisation of the Peloponnese as dominated by the renegotiation of inter-group relations. What remains to be explained is why this matters – namely, how egalitarian inter-group relations could explain DA in the contexts examined here. I shall tentatively flag up four major factors.

The first point is that equal and fair access to decision-making procedures enabled different local groups to voice and advance their interests and resolve their disputes with other groups. Equal access to policy-making and dispute resolution mechanisms for different groups will have encouraged them to comply with communal decisions because they will have been more likely to perceive those decisions as legitimate. As I argued above and in §5.1, this point was particularly relevant in context of scarce coercive capacity (such as the Achaean League).

The second, partly related point is that democratic institutions offered ways of organising collective action on a larger scale and facilitated horizontal communication and cooperation across groups that had formerly been divided or hierarchically organised. As seen in §2.1, 'weak links' between different groups facilitated the flow of social knowledge across the wider population. But Taylor argued that access to social networks was particularly valuable for non-elite citizens, because it enabled them to accrue social capital in larger communities and reap the material benefits of social mobility.<sup>658</sup> A case in point is, potentially, Argos' absorption of the *perioikoi* after Sepeia: by gaining access to the Argive citizen community and (according to Plutarch's version) marrying Argive women, the former *perioikoi* acquired a better status and became part of the political community – a controversial development that exacerbated the internal tensions but also probably paved the way for the establishment of a fully democratic constitution in the city (see §4.2).

Inter-group equality does not mean that groups could not be internally 'vertical': settlements, member-*poleis*, civic subdivisions will still have been themselves divided into social strata. My third point is that egalitarian inter-group institutions provided ambitious citizens from the in-group elites with opportunities for competition and self-affirmation.<sup>659</sup> However, a combination of

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<sup>658</sup> Taylor 2015.

<sup>659</sup> See in particular the Achaean 'tyrants turned generals' in §5.3, but the same phenomenon will have been replicated elsewhere.

factors – intra-elite competition itself, the need for popular support and the higher effectiveness of collective action due to the previous two points – will have placed significant constraints on those elite citizens; in fact, as Demosthenes famously noted, that competition made it easier for the *dēmos* to control and restrain elite behaviour (20.108).

My fourth and final point is that the institutionalised cooperation between distinct groups facilitated the emergence of an overarching local identity dividing the *polis* (i.e. its constituent groups) from the outside. For example, for the late archaic communities that interacted and policed each other through the sanctuary of Olympia, the recognition of the sanctuary's authority may have been a key element of their shared identity. This phenomenon may explain why the democratic *poleis* under examination appear to have been remarkably successful at protecting their autonomy. At least between the 460s and the 360s, it was under the banner of democracy that Argos organised its domestic and international efforts against Sparta. In the early fourth century, I argue, the paramount interest of Elis' democratic government was to protect the integrity of its territory and its right to constitutional self-determination from Spartan interference. During the 360s, Mantinea's participation in the Arcadian League was founded on the two principles of democracy and autonomy from (in particular) Thebes. Even in the Achaean League, it was inside the *koinon*'s democratic institutions that the Achaeans seem to have been repeatedly willing and able to mount resistance against the Romans.

I have so far argued that the four Peloponnesian democracies became democratic by reorganising the relations between the distinct social groups that composed them, and that there were certain intrinsic advantages to egalitarian system of inter-group relations that granted these democracies an overall degree of stability and effectiveness. In this final section, I aim to address one possible counterpoint: the problem of the end of these democracies, i.e. why their inherent strengths were sometimes insufficient for staving off institutional collapse. This question is severely affected by the nature of the evidence, which sheds some light on the origin and development of these constitutions but is generally curiously silent on their breakdown. This is particularly true for Elis and Mantinea. Pretty much nothing is known about Mantinea's post-classical constitution, except for the third and most recent group of clay tokens from the theatre, which raise far more questions than they answer.<sup>660</sup> The 'first' Eleian democracy was overthrown by an oligarchic coup in 365, but there seems to have been a reconciliation (with readmission of exiles) about 15 years later, and no constitutional evidence survives for the following century or

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<sup>660</sup> But see Zoumbaki 2021 for a recent study of the religious associations attested at Mantinea in the late Hellenistic period.

so.<sup>661</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, the question is particularly clear in the case of the Achaean League: in 146 the Romans won the Achaean War and dismantled the *koinion*, whose participatory institutions had been active and vital until the very end. Achaean democracy was therefore snuffed out from the outside; the rise of the generalship from Aratos onwards and the growing factionalism after the death of Philopoimen had placed considerable stress on the system, but ultimately it was the clash with Rome that caused its downfall.

Argos is a more difficult case. As I argued in §4.3, there is no reason to believe that Argive democracy was inherently weak or unstable during the classical period: on the contrary, it proved resilient on multiple occasions. We know however that it was ruled by a series of well-documented tyrants in the middle decades of the third century.<sup>662</sup> Virtually no information survives about the internal politics at Argos in the first three decades of the third century, which makes it impossible to reconstruct the transition from democracy to tyranny.<sup>663</sup> One possible hint comes from the honorary decree for Alexandros of Sicyon issued by Argos and tentatively dated by Moretti to the early third century (*ISE* 41): since the decree repeatedly mentions a board of *stratagoi* (led by a secretary) with ample constitutional prerogatives, Moretti follows Schwahn in suggesting that the Argive tyranny derived in some way from the generalship.<sup>664</sup> Nothing more can be said on the basis of our current information.

The problematic state of the evidence in the cases in question advises against overplaying the issue of institutional collapse in the context of DA. In three out of four cases we simply do not know when, how or why those democracies came to an end; in another case (the Achaean League) we know that it had most likely *very* little to do with democracy as such and much to do with outside aggression. I shall therefore confine myself to what the evidence does show. It shows that, as far as we can see, these democracies were effective in creating and adopting novel ways of organising social and political relations; these institutional practices could be shaped by context-dependent local factors as well as the international backdrop against which a city's process of democratisation and/or state formation took place. It is indeed quite surprising that this level of variation did not stop these democracies from seeing each other as fellow democracies and cooperating as such. *Demokratia* ultimately appears to have been a way of organising collective action both *within* a state and *between* states. In the Peloponnese, it proved effective for both purposes.

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<sup>661</sup> A man called Aristotimos became tyrant at Elis in 272, with help from Gonatas, but nothing is known about the socio-political background and context in which the coup took place: Shipley 2018, 111–12.

<sup>662</sup> Landucci Gattinoni 2006, 325–35; Shipley 2018, 113–15.

<sup>663</sup> Landucci Gattinoni 2006, 325.

<sup>664</sup> See Moretti's commentary *ad ISE* 41, as well as Schwahn in *RE Suppl.* 6 col. 1095.

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