

EARLY GREEK TYRANNY AND THE PEOPLE

Over sixty years ago, it was written of early Greek tyranny that it 'had arisen only in towns where an industrial and commercial régime tended to prevail over rural economy, but where an iron hand was needed to mobilize the masses and to launch them in assault on the privileged classes... But tyranny nowhere endured. After it had performed the services which the popular classes expected of it, after it had powerfully contributed to material prosperity and to the development of democracy, it disappeared with an astonishing rapidity... The people regarded tyranny only as an expedient. They used it as a battering ram with which to demolish the citadel of the oligarchs, and when their end had been achieved they hastily abandoned the weapon which wounded their hands.' Thus Gustav Glotz,¹ whose view found favour with de Ste Croix.² He too concluded with appeal to Aristotle, who in a famous passage³ declared that unlike monarchy, which arises to help 'the great and good' (οἱ ἐπικεῖς) against the People, and the monarch who is appointed as one of 'the great and good', 'the tyrant comes from the People and the multitude to confront the men of note (οἱ γνώριμοι) and prevent the People being unjustly treated by them. This is clear from what actually happened, for, generally speaking, the majority of the tyrants became tyrants from being demagogues so to speak, having got themselves trusted by their abusive attacks on the men of note.' Against this view of Aristotle and all his latter-day satellites, this paper is directed.

The beginning of wisdom about the world of the early Greek tyrants is to be found in the consideration of the account given by the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* of the three 'parties' at the time of Pisistratus' rise to power (13.4–5). Unlike Herodotus who furnished no more than the names of the three parties and their leaders (1.59.3–5), the *Ath. Pol.* gave in addition an account of what each party was striving for, and many have treated this as precious illumination. If it is illumination, it is pretty queer light. Herodotus (6.131.1) designated Cleisthenes as 'the man who established the tribes and the democracy'. Yet our author will have the politics of mid sixth-century Athens no different from the constitutional wrangles of the late fifth with Megacles at the head of the *paralioi* (*sic*) striving for the moderate constitution (the μέση πολιτεία) just like Theramenes and his ilk a hundred and fifty years later (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.48), Lycurgus and the men of the Plain pursuing oligarchy, and Pisistratus seeming to be the most democratic⁴ (δημοτικώτατος εἶναι δοκῶν); which is all very suspect. Just as any threefold division is now readily classified as Right, Left and Centre, so too a fourth-century writer would easily assign to the three the labels familiar from the wrangles over the Athenian constitution from the later fifth century onwards. However the *Ath. Pol.* goes on to designate some of the supporters of Pisistratus, and so appears to know something about sixth-century politics and not to be merely guessing.

I am much beholden to Simon Hornblower of Oriel College for his comments on and criticisms of earlier drafts of this paper.

¹ *The Greek City* (London, 1929), pp. 109 and 115.

² *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London, 1981), pp. 278–83.

³ *Pol.* 1310b9–16. For ἐπικεῖς, cf. *Poetics* 1452b34 where they are opposed to the μοχθηροί. For the influence of the Aristotelian view, cf. H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen* (Munich, 1967), I. 10.

⁴ The word δημοτικός may be variously translated (see LSJ). For 'democratic', cf. *Ath. Pol.* 22.1.

'With these (i.e. the supporters of Pisistratus, which the *Ath. Pol.* termed the *diakrīoi*) were arrayed those who had been deprived of their debts, because of the resulting hardship, and also those who were not of pure Athenian descent, because of the fear this fact induced.' The fear of expulsion is intelligible; the hardship of those who had been rich enough to lend is surprising, for one would hardly expect it to be such that it drove them into supporting the 'most democratic' politician. Still, the statement is made, and one would hardly be justified in rejecting it, were it not that the *Ath. Pol.* goes on to give its reason for saying so. 'The proof⁵ of this is that after the overthrow of the tyrants the Athenians made a review of the citizen body, on the grounds that many were sharing in the status of citizen improperly.' The chapter closes with the curious and seemingly inconsistent remark that the parties took their names from the regions in which they farmed; so an essentially constitutional division is also stated to be a local one. But the 'proof' is the truly tell-tale remark. It shows that the author thought it proper to infer from the state of affairs in 510 B.C. what had prevailed in 560, a remarkable historical howler. The sixth century was a period of very considerable change in Athenian society and an author who made such an inference is worthy of scant respect.

Of course, it might be argued that although the inference from the review of the citizen body gravely discredits the author, it is still possible that what he says about the supporters of Pisistratus and of the other leaders is not worthless, that since the statements have been made, they should not be utterly rejected without good reason. But there is good reason, provided by Herodotus. Herodotus recorded without rationalising and was near enough to the events of 560 to 510 B.C. to learn by inquiry (*ιστορίη*, as he termed it) a good deal about them. Nor should we think he recorded all he knew. His method was to make an excursus when some point in his narration of the great conflict of East and West needed illumination; his excurses are, in general, strictly relevant; he does not aim to tell all he knows, but what he knows and does not have occasion to tell no doubt conditions what he does record. His account of Pisistratus and the Pisistratids makes clear that to his mind there was no question of Pisistratus being 'most democratic' or depending on or seeking popular support. The story is told entirely in the language of dynastic struggles. Pisistratus became tyrant by tricking the Athenians into allowing him to have a bodyguard of 'club bearers' which he used to seize the acropolis (1.59.4-6); his success in the war with Megara had given him popularity which he abused; he was not a popularly appointed tyrant.⁶ He was driven out by a combination of his opponents; no popular protest is recorded, and his opponents resumed their former wrangling (1.60.1). He returned by means of a marriage alliance with one of them, Megacles, again exploiting the credulity of his countrymen (1.60.3); popular demand played no part in his return. When he declined to let Megacles' daughter have a child by him and so ensured that Megacles would not be grandfather of the next tyrant, he was again expelled, again without popular protest (1.61). The first time he was driven out, he stayed in Attica and was left alone while he left Athens to his opponents, but now he 'left the land completely' (1.61.3) and did not return for ten years and then not by popular demand but with money and men gathered abroad (1.61.3-62.1). While he kept away from the city, 'those from the city' went out to meet him 'in full force' (*πανστρατιῇ*); the battle of Pallene was fought and 'the Athenians' were routed (1.62.2-63). The only hint of popular support is that he was joined by 'those of his faction in the city' (*οἱ ἐκ τοῦ*

⁵ Cf. the translation of P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Constitution* (Penguin edition, 1984) 55 – 'this is confirmed by the fact that....' There is no good reason to take *σημείον* otherwise.

⁶ Cf. Solon F 10W.

ἄσπεος στασιῶται) and 'others from the demes to whom tyranny was dearer than liberty' (1.62.1), but clearly the mass of the Athenians, those who marched out 'in full force', opposed him. The whole story, as told by Herodotus, presents an utterly different picture from that of the *Ath. Pol.*, not of an Athens divided by constitutional and social interests, but of an Attica divided by local loyalties, and when Pisistratus 'collected supporters and put himself at the head of the *hyperakrioi*, as they were called' (1.59.3),⁷ this dynast of the part of Attica 'over the hills' entered the struggle to dominate the city of Athens and so made what had previously been a straight contest between the two dynasts of the Plain and the Shore a three-cornered affair.

Either Herodotus or the *Ath. Pol.* is sadly wrong. The choice is not difficult. There is no evidence that Pisistratus did anything to benefit or deserve the support of the mass of the Athenians, or, rather, there is no good evidence. The thesis has been posed⁸ that he exploited a legacy of discontent with Solon's reforms, for according to Solon himself he had disappointed those who wanted a redistribution of land (*Ath. Pol.* 12.3). Yet there is absolutely no evidence that Pisistratus redistributed any land whatever; even the estates of disgruntled aristocrats who went into exile appear to have been left intact (cf. Hdt. 6.103.3).⁹ The only evidence that there is of Pisistratus doing anything for the poor of Attica is the statement in the *Ath. Pol.* that he made loans to poor farmers (16.2). It is however a singularly unimpressive piece, and it is worth while considering it more fully.

'And he would make advance loans (*προεδάνειζε*) of money (*χρήματα*) to the poor for their work (*πρὸς τὰς ἐργασίας*) so that they might make a living out of farming.' The word for 'advance loans' came into vogue in the 330s and the 320s,¹⁰ and it is quite uncertain what it at that time designated. One might guess that it concerned loans on which the liability for payment of interest did not begin immediately the money was borrowed. Certainly one would expect it to be something more sophisticated than an ordinary loan, and the word seems strangely ill-applied to the middle of the sixth century. Perhaps the author, to take the charitable view, meant no more than that Pisistratus made loans. But there are very unlikely to have been loans of money in that period. Athens did not, it would appear, get her silver coinage until some time in Pisistratus' tyranny, or even in that of Hippias,¹¹ and although the primitive currency of iron spits that we hear of in Sparta and know of from the excavations at Perachora¹² may have been used for commercial life, it seems much more probable that in the countryside barter prevailed (and indeed continued to prevail, for the denominations of the coinage hardly allowed for the petty dealing of everyday life). So a system of loans and repayments of money seems very inappropriate, and one is probably safe to dismiss it as pure fabrication.¹³ The writers of the fourth century were not concerned to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.¹⁴

⁷ τῷ λογῶ is not equivalent to λογῶ, which would suggest deception.

⁸ Notably by C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution* (Oxford, 1952), p. 110, who cites Plutarch, *Solon* 29.1, a passage which may well derive from fourth-century discussion.

⁹ Cf. A. Andrewes, *CAH*² III.3 406.

¹⁰ Cf. P. J. Rhodes, *Commentary* 214.

¹¹ Cf. C. M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (London, 1976), p. 55.

¹² J. B. Salmon, *Wealthy Corinth* (Oxford, 1984), p. 429 is sceptical about Corinth using spits as currency, but see Kraay op. cit. 313f.

¹³ There is the possibility that the author was referring not to loans of money, but to loans of things, which is the story that Aelian got hold of (*Var. Hist.* 9.25), but all this is improbable; those who in that world did not work starved and their families with them, and Aelian's picture of idlers in the market-place being induced by grants of seed or a yoke of oxen to refrain from plotting against Pisistratus and get on with their jobs seems a piece of fiction.

¹⁴ C. M. Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im Archaischen Athen* (Stuttgart, 1987), 66f.

That there was nothing 'popular' about Pisistratus or his sons, is, further, strongly suggested by what we are told of their rule. Although Herodotus and Thucydides both spoke of Pisistratus and Hippias 'ruling', they both explicitly asserted that the constitution was unchanged,¹⁵ save, as Thucydides added, that 'they always saw to it that there was one of themselves amongst the archons (ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς)'. There was, in short, no formal position of Tyrant; indeed the Athenians could be in error as to which of the sons of Pisistratus was the one who was really in charge. Pisistratus died in 528/7; Hipparchus was murdered in 514. Yet Thucydides twice (1.20.2, 6.54.1) felt it necessary to tell the Athenians that they did not know what they were talking about when they spoke 'about their tyrants and what actually happened'. Nor could he convince them all, for Plato in the *Hipparchus* (228b and 229b) showed that he thought that Hipparchus was the older brother and that Hippias was tyrant for a mere three years.¹⁶ Indeed Thucydides' argument in support of his firm assertion is itself not very persuasive (6.55.1).¹⁷ But he could not do better. There was no public position of Tyrant; there were no records to which he could appeal. So where a tyrant neither had public position nor plainly established himself in his countrymen's memory it is absurd to claim, as the author of the *Ath. Pol.*, whoever he was, claimed, and as Aristotle himself in the *Politics* (1305a7–24, 1310b30) asserted, that the Athenian tyranny was established through leadership of the people (δημαγωγία). The people did not come into it. Pisistratus did nothing directly for them. They did nothing for him, and had a very dim idea of who was who, and what was what.¹⁸

That at any rate seems to be implied by Athenian confusion about the murder of Hipparchus, but it may be replied that in that case the Athenians must have been remarkably unobservant, or deaf to rumour. Much, of course, of what the Pisistratids are said to have done, they got done by what one might term 'official channels'. When Thucydides recorded (6.54.5) that they 'exacted a five per cent tax on produce from the Athenians and beautifully adorned their city, carried on the wars and as regards religion maintained sacrifices', and goes on to remark that there was no change in the constitution, we are meant to understand that under Pisistratid influence these things were done by the magistrates. So the Pisistratid role could well have been obscured from the mass of the citizens. Likewise their names could be associated with public works,¹⁹ but not necessarily indicating more than their parts as magistrates,²⁰ and on that famous day when Hipparchus was murdered, he and his brother may have been mustering the procession as their offices for the moment required them. Thus not all that happened during the period of the tyranny will have been attributed by ordinary Athenians to Pisistratus and the Pisistratids.²¹

¹⁵ Hdt. 1.59.6, 5.65.3; Thuc. 6.54.5, 6, 55.1 and 3, 1.20.2.

¹⁶ Perhaps Plato was somewhat thoughtless on the subject, for in the *Symposium* (182c) he spoke of Harmodius and Aristogiton 'ending the rule of the tyrants'.

¹⁷ Cf. D. M. Lewis, *CAH*² IV 287f.

¹⁸ A. J. Podlecki, 'The Political significance of the Athenian "Tyrannicide" Cult' *Historia* 15, (1966), pp. 129–41 argued that the version exalting the role of the Tyrannicides in ending the tyranny was decisively fostered by Themistocles after the Persian invasion, but even if his thesis is correct it presupposes widespread uncertainty about who was who in the Pisistratid family and about how they ceased to count in Athenian affairs.

¹⁹ E.g. τὸ Ἰππάρχου τείχιον (Suda s.v.).

²⁰ There is no justification for thinking that the rules of the full democracy concerning the holding of office applied in the sixth century. Cf. W. G. Forrest and D. L. Stockton, *Historia* 36, (1987), pp. 235–40. The members of the family may have been archons repeatedly.

²¹ Much that happened between 560 and 510 may have been due to the contriving or with the assent of Pisistratus or his sons, but their method may have been to act through the archonship and their personal interest may not have been obvious to the populace. Hipparchus as a rich

There were however some things that one would think were very noticeable indeed. First of all, when Pisistratus made his first attempt on the tyranny, he occupied the Acropolis (Hdt. 1.59.6), just as Cylon in his abortive attempt of 632 had done (Hdt. 5.71.1, Thuc. 1.126.5), and when Pisistratus was restored with the aid of a very tall, good-looking woman whom he represented as the goddess Athena herself,²² he sent out heralds to proclaim that Athena was bringing back her most highly honoured to her own Acropolis.²³ One might wonder therefore whether Pisistratus and the Pisistratids continued to dwell on the Acropolis, as it were in the sight of all Athenians. That however seems unlikely.²⁴ Perhaps the family dwelt in a house adjacent to the agora, as has been supposed, and only had recourse to the Acropolis in times of special danger, as in 510 B.C. when the Spartans came to remove them.²⁵ So, although Pisistratus' two occupations of the Acropolis and the trickery that had made both of them possible must have been notorious, by the time of the third tyranny and the end of the danger of aristocratic upheaval, such acts may well have faded from the general consciousness; the constitution, formally speaking, continued unchanged, and ordinary men were not constantly being made aware that in fact things were not what they seemed.

But what of Pisistratus' bodyguard, those so-called 'club-bearers' who helped him to his first occupation of the Acropolis (Hdt. 1.59.5)? Thucydides four times refers to the hired spear-bearers who were at hand the day forty-five years later when Hipparchus was killed,²⁶ and one might suppose that Pisistratus and the Pisistratids went around for a great many years escorted by a group of thugs for all to see. This

patron of literature (cf. *Ath. Pol.* 18.1 φιλόμουσος) attracted big names to Athens (Plato, *Hipparchus* 228), who may not have much concerned ordinary citizens, but it is not to be presumed that his erection of herms (ibid. 229a) was done in any other way than that in which his nephew, Pisistratus the Younger, erected altars, viz. as archon (Thuc. 6.54.6f.). The same may be true of the fountain-house called Enneacrounus (ibid. 2.15.5). It is notable that the festival of Dionysus Eleuthereus was administered by the eponymous archon (*Ath. Pol.* 56.3–4), which has been taken as a sign of its 'lateness', but one cannot help wondering why, no matter when it was introduced, it was not simply assigned to the King Archon; perhaps the introducer, perhaps Pisistratus himself, acted during an archonship and wanted to see to the initial ceremony himself. To talk of 'policies' in all these matters is to go far beyond what is known (as F. Kolb, 'Die Bau-, Religions- und Kulturpolitik der Pisistratiden' *JDAI* 92 [1977], pp. 99–138; cf. A. Andrewes' cautious approach in *CAH* III².3 410ff.). What the Pisistratus family did may have been done largely in virtue of office and have thus prevented the people at large appreciating the tyrants' roles.

²² Cf. W. R. Connor, 'Tribes, Festivals and Processions in Archaic Greece' *JHS* 107 (1987), 46. Herodotus' account (1.60.4f.) suggests that the Athenians were genuinely deceived, but Phye, strikingly tall and good-looking, must have been known of by a good number of members of her deme at least and Connor's remark seems apposite: 'The citizens are not naive bumpkins taken in by the leader's manipulation but participants in a theatricality whose rules and roles they understand and enjoy.' It was alleged that Phye was given in marriage to Hipparchus (*FGH* 323 F15).

²³ I presume that all that the *Ath. Pol.* says of the establishment of the tyranny derives simply from Herodotus, but that its story of the disarming of the populace (15.4, 5) is a misuse of the story in Thuc. 6.58.2. Cf. P. J. Rhodes *Commentary ad* 15.4 for differing views.

²⁴ Cf. J. S. Boersma, *Athenian Building Policy from 561/0 to 405/4 BC* (Groningen, 1970), 14ff.

²⁵ There is one remarkable detail in the story of the expulsion of Hippias which one is at a loss to explain, viz. that he was given five days in which to clear out of Attica (Hdt. 5.65.2). The *ostracisés* were given ten days to settle up their legal business. Was Hippias given five days to finish his illegal business? or just to pack his bags? And what were the important People doing this while? If the former tyrant was not all that noticeable when he was there, another five days would not matter perhaps.

²⁶ 6.55.3, 56.2, 57.1&4, 58.2.

may however be quite wrong. Pisistratus' bodyguard were citizens equipped with the weapon of thuggery²⁷ and perhaps a mere fifty in number;²⁸ the hired spear-bearers who appear in Thucydides' account were perhaps quite different. In the fifth century Athens was policed by three hundred Scythians armed with bows and arrows, badges of office perhaps rather than for use by mere slaves against citizens.²⁹ The origins of this curious corps are quite obscure, but perhaps Andocides (3.5) was not wrong in assigning them to the period after the Persian Wars. Who then were the policemen of Athens before that? The point of having Scythian slaves is obvious enough; Athenians might be reluctant to arrest fellow citizens and even, in a comparatively small society, afraid of revenge. So these hired spear-bearers may be the sixth-century equivalent of the fifth-century Scythians. Only such an hypothesis, at any rate, can salvage the Athenians' credit. They might well have been confused as to whether Hippias or Hipparchus was the real man; both of them could conceivably have had their own bodyguard. But if after the death of Hipparchus Hippias was known to have his tyrant's bodyguard, the Athenians would have had to be remarkably unobservant ever to think, at however great an interval, that the tyranny was ended with the murder of Hipparchus.³⁰

All in all, it would seem that the tyranny was little felt or noticed by the Athenian people. Those who were fully aware of how power was being exercised and on whom the tyranny did indeed weigh heavily were the members of the other leading families, the Eupatridae, the men described in the Leipsydrian drinking song as

‘good and of good fathers born
who then made plain what sort of men their fathers were.’
(*Ath. Pol.* 19.3)

When Pisistratus triumphed, they had been faced with the awkward choice of retiring like the Alcmaeonid family into exile or of remaining to kiss the rod. Those who chose the latter were kept submissive by having their sons taken as hostages and placed on Naxos in the tender care of Lygdamis installed as tyrant by Pisistratus (Hdt. 1.64). Those who had gone into exile either behaved like Cimon the father of Miltiades the Younger who came to terms with the Pisistratus family and returned to his estates (κατήλθε ἐπὶ τὰ ἐαυτοῦ ὑπόσπονδος Hdt. 6.103.3), or joined with the other rebels and kept on trying to effect their return by force until they fortified Leipsydrian on Mt Parnes and came to disaster. In these various ways the Athenian tyranny showed what it in essence was, *viz.* a domination of aristocrats by one of their own kind. Their methods were well exemplified, one supposes, by the murder of Cimon by men lying in wait for him by night (Hdt. 6.103); whether or not it was the Pisistratids who were responsible for this dark deed, it at least shows what was considered credible. When Pisistratus stood trial before the Areopagus, if we may believe the story in Aristotle

²⁷ In Mytilene ‘clubs’ were used to cow rival aristocrats (Ar. *Pol.* 1311b28).

²⁸ Plut. *Solon* 30.3.

²⁹ Busolt-Swoboda, *Griechische Staatskunde* 979f., V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes* (1962 edition), p. 175.

³⁰ The most inconvenient evidence might be thought to be Hdt. 1.64.1, where Pisistratus ‘having got Athens for the third time’ is said to have ‘established the tyranny with many mercenaries’ (ἐπικούροι, a word he does not use elsewhere of the tyranny at Athens). But perhaps these mercenaries assumed a more regular role in the course of time. The exaltation of the tyrannicides began early; their statues were carried off by Xerxes (Paus. 1.8.5, Arr. *Anab.* 3.16.7).

(*Pol.* 1315b21), perhaps a similar violent act was the occasion; he was, of course, in no danger of being convicted by a body packed with his supporters, but on the surface all was legal and dark deeds by night were the favoured method.

Afterwards the descendants of those who had not gone into exile and stayed there while the Pisistratus family flourished doubtless covered up the truth. For the Alcmaeonids, it was easy. Although Clisthenes had been eponymous archon in 525–4³¹ (perhaps having presumed that with the death of Pisistratus the ‘troubles’ were over and it was safe to return), the family had played a leading part in securing the downfall of Hippias and could safely affirm that they had remained in exile for the entire duration of the tyranny (*Hdt.* 6.123). The family of Cimon was less happily placed, and when the younger Miltiades was in 493 put on trial for having been tyrant in the Chersonese (*Hdt.* 6.104.2), he had a lot to explain away. Long ago the thesis was advanced³² that the story of Miltiades’ plan to destroy the bridge over the Danube and so leave Darius to his fate in Scythia (*Hdt.* 4.136–9) was derived not from the events of 512 (or whenever the ‘Scythian’ expedition occurred) but from what Miltiades said in his defence in 493 (*Hdt.* 6.104.2). For various reasons one may accept this, and, further, it is to be suspected that a large part of the account of the family given by Herodotus is derived from the same apologia (*Hdt.* 6.34–41, 103–4). Miltiades the elder was not one of those who had retired from Attica after the battle of Pallene and it has often been suspected that although Herodotus (6.35.3) said that he ‘resented the rule of Pisistratus and wanted to get away’, he was nonetheless ‘powerful’ (*ibid.* §1) and went with the compliance of Pisistratus. The story (6.34f.) is curious. A group of wild Thracians were told by the Delphic oracle to invite the first man to entertain them on their way from Delphi to become their ‘founder’ (or ‘settler’); Miltiades happened to be sitting in the porch of his house as they were passing and chanced to offer them hospitality; they told him what the god had said and asked him to obey; their story straightaway convinced Miltiades, in as much as he was resentful of the rule of Pisistratus and was wanting to get away; so having got the approval of Delphi, he went off to the Chersonese taking every Athenian who wished to share in the expedition; he got hold of the land and ‘those who had brought him there made him tyrant.’ Thus Miltiades played the part enjoined by Delphi; let those reproach who dare to question the god’s command. It all looks, in short, like apologia. If Miltiades did resent the rule of Pisistratus, he could have left with the others who did, and ‘taking every Athenian who wished to share in the expedition’ looks like a public act. How did they get there if not on ships provided by those in power? But the story was good enough for 493.

There was, however, more to be explained away. The younger Miltiades might seek to excuse his having been a tyrant within a Persian satrapy with his story about the bridge over the Danube, and attribute to Delphi the family’s involvement with the Chersonese, but nonetheless he had been archon in 524/3 with the blessing of the Pisistratids who had sent him out to take over when his brother’s death left a vacancy in the dynasty, in this way a tyrant established by the tyrants. The younger Miltiades dealt with the charge. Although he might seem to have been very much in with the Pisistratids, they showed their fear and distrust of the family, he claimed, by having, his father, Cimon, murdered by night outside the Town Hall. The tale is not convincing. Cimon certainly was murdered but his son would have had to be incredibly innocent not immediately to suspect the Pisistratids if relations had been at all strained. Yet they are said (6.39.1) to have treated Miltiades well as if they were

³¹ Meiggs-Lewis, *G.H.I.*² no. 6.

³² G. Thirlwall, *The History of Greece* (1846 edition) II 486ff.

not guilty of his father's death. Now Miltiades became archon within four years, or possibly in the very year, of that event.³³ He could not have been better placed to investigate the murder. Why did he not instantly suspect the Pisistratids and fly to his brother in the Chersonese? Perhaps the accusation against them was all part of the apologia of 493. Perhaps the father had been murdered because he had come to terms with the Pisistratids, murdered by a hand hired by émigré opponents. It is at least possible. The whole of the Miltiades family story may have been put forward in 493 to dissociate them from the Pisistratids with whom they had collaborated all too closely.

The whole drama was played out amongst the leading families. Those who stayed were perforce friends of the tyrants, as Isagoras is alleged to have been (*Ath. Pol.* 20.1). He quickly turned his coat when a greater power, to wit, Cleomenes of Sparta, came on the scene (*Hdt.* 5.70.1), but before that his staying in Athens marked his 'friendship', i.e. his submission. He was no doubt typical of those who found their way through the archonship into the Areopagus in the second half of the sixth century. But for the rest, the mass of the people, things went on very much as they had while still only Lycurgus and Megacles were in contention. The people had not established Pisistratus in power, nor maintained his sons, and was largely unaware of the true state of affairs. The tyranny at Athens was in no sense popular.

'The people' of course existed, as the poems of Solon attest.³⁴ He claimed to 'have brought together the people' (F36 *ξυνήγαγον δῆμον*); he spoke of leaders of the people (F5 *δῆμος δ' ὧδ' ἂν ἄριστα σὺν ἡγεμόνεσσιν ἔποιτο*), who could be men of 'unjust mind' (F4.7), and through whom the people could fall into slavery (FF9,11). How, then, is the picture presented in these poems to be reconciled with the unimportance of the people under Pisistratus and the Pisistratids?

When, in 632 or 628, Cylon with his friends made his attempt to seize the Acropolis, the Athenians according to Thucydides (1.126.7) came in full force against them 'from the fields' (*ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν*)³⁵ but, wearying of the siege, returned whence they had come, and there seems to have been somewhat the same sort of dispersion seventy years later. Herodotus, it is true, speaks of both 'the Athenians from the city' and the demes (1.62.1, 60.5), and there is no way of knowing how numerous those 'from the city' were, but after the battle of Pallene Pisistratus sent his sons on horseback to encourage 'each to go away to his own property' (1.62f.) and so there was no further opposition. By 510 B.C. things were very different. There was by then a people for whose support Clisthenes could appeal, and with whose support he became far superior to his rivals (*πολλῷ κατῦπερθε τῶν ἀντιστασιωτέων* – *Hdt.* 5.69.2). The cause of this was quite simply, it may be suggested, the growth of the population of Athens itself, of which there are various signs. Firstly one notes the large number of Athenians available for settlement on the land of the Hippobotai of Chalcis in 505 (*Hdt.* 5.77.2). Presumably not all of these four thousand came from farms in Attica;

³³ Opinion has differed on the date of Cimon's death. Cf. H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford, 1958), 158, who preferred 528/7, but if Herodotus had thought that Cimon won his third victory while Pisistratus was still alive and was murdered shortly after Pisistratus' death, one would expect him to have made that plain at 6.103.3. If, however, Cimon was murdered in 524/3, it will have been very shortly after his son became archon, which would be improbable only if it was indeed Hippias who was responsible, which one doubts.

³⁴ References to Solon's poems are given for M. L. West (ed.), *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (Oxford, 1972).

³⁵ Thucydides (2.14.2) notes that 'the majority were used ever to dwell in the country'. Aristotle (*Pol.* 1305a19) remarks that in the period of the tyrannies the *δῆμος* lived *ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγρῶν*.

a good number most likely came from Athens itself. Secondly and most notably there is the fact that when Themistocles rebuilt the walls of Athens in winter 479/8, the circuit of the walls was, according to Thucydides (1.93.2), extended in every direction.³⁶ No doubt he allowed for expansion, but too large a circuit would have been indefensible, and an all-round expansion argues that the city population had been increasing.³⁷ Since Athenian democracy was inevitably to a large extent rule by those who dwelt in or near the City as opposed to those scattered throughout Attica, growth of the city population was a necessary condition for the development of such a democracy. Clisthenes succeeded in 'establishing the democracy' (Hdt. 6.131) because by 510 there was a large enough city population to support him.

If then it is claimed that the People was unimportant as a political force right down to 507, what is to be said of the People in the time of Solon? The People did meet in assembly, formally speaking, and when the nine archons were, according to Thucydides (1.126.8), entrusted with the task of dealing with Cylon in 632, it was probably by means of an assembly. So when Solon (F 36) says 'I gathered the People together' (*ξυνήγαγον δῆμον*), one might wonder whether something new had happened; previously there had been leaders of the People (F 5) but now, it has been claimed, 'the People had arrived in Athenian politics.'³⁸ But what Solon did for them chiefly³⁹ concerned the land they farmed, 'the black Earth... previously enslaved, now free' (F 36), and whether the People should be said to have arrived as an enduring force in Athenian politics depends very much on the view taken of the nature of the agrarian crisis. This is too large a topic for discussion here. I must content myself with asserting that Solon was concerned with an epidemic rather than an endemic evil; he was concerned with debt but he did nothing radical to cure the causes of men needing to borrow; yet although Solon did no more than remove the symptoms of the disease, no more is heard of agrarian unrest. That is why the People brought together by Solon relapsed into its former condition and, for the most part dispersed throughout Attica, did not become a force in Athenian politics. The growth of the urban populace was necessary for that, and this happened during the tyranny. When Clisthenes made his appeal for support, the People asserted itself.

So much for Athens and the power and importance of the People in the age of the tyranny. But was it all very different elsewhere?

In the last forty years much has been heard and much made of the emergence of the hoplite. Homeric warfare has been represented as essentially the duels of aristocrats little affected by the presence of a mass of common churls, but once wealth was sufficiently widely spread for a large number of citizens to be able to buy their own armour and once the hoplite panoply had been developed, all was different and these citizens fighting side by side, conscious of their power on the field of battle, began to assert themselves in the field of politics.⁴⁰ A passage of Aristotle's *Politics*

³⁶ The very existence of a sixth-century wall has been denied, but the discussion of H. Lauter Büfé and H. Lauter 'Die vorthemistokleische Stadtmauer Athens nach philologischen und archäologischen Quellen' *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1975 1-9 puts the case for such a wall convincingly.

³⁷ It may be noted that since pottery was an urban industry, the ever greater spread of black-figure ware in the sixth century (cf. B. L. Bailey, 'The export of Attic Black-figure Ware' *JHS* 60 [1940], 60-70) is suggestive, for presumably other urban industries were also increasing.

³⁸ A. Andrewes, *CAH* III².3 387.

³⁹ Solon's measures touching the position of the humblest citizens in the constitution have been much debated, but, to judge by the *ἀναρχία* after Solon (*Ath. Pol.* 13), their effect was too slight to check the abuse of power by prominent individuals.

⁴⁰ Ian Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society* (Cambridge, 1987), 196 states the view well.

(1297b 16–25) provides a convenient text; the first form of constitution after monarchy consisted of those who did the fighting, a constitution of the cavalry men for a start, but later as citizens grew and the hoplites formed the real strength (*τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις ἰσχυσάντων μάλλον*), the number sharing in the constitution increased. So Aristotle has pronounced and for some that is the end of the matter.

The theory has however sustained a mortal blow. It has been shown by J. Latacz that Homeric warfare has been misrepresented and that the notion of a revolutionary change in the introduction of the hoplite phalanx is false.⁴¹ At what stage in the long development of Greek warfare Aristotle's comment might be valid could vary greatly from state to state. What is undeniably clear is that in the case of the state of which we are most reliably informed, Athens, the occurrence of tyranny had nothing whatsoever to do with hoplites or a hoplite class. When Cylon made his attempt, he did so with the support of a number of admirers of his athletic prowess and a military force provided by his father-in-law (Thuc. 1.126.5); the hoplite class, in so far as there was any such class, came to town and tried to eject him. Solon says he was urged by friends to make himself tyrant (Plut. *Solon* 14 = FF 32, 33, 33a W) but it is clear that the People on whose support he might count were impoverished, not the comparatively prosperous citizens who were hoplites. As to Pisistratus, there were as many hoplites opposed to him as in his support, and to judge by the battle of Pallene probably more (Hdt. 1.63). So in the case of Athens, tyranny had nothing to do with the alleged hoplite class. Nor was Athens unique. At Samos, Polycrates made his attempt with the help of fifteen hoplites (Hdt. 3.120.3) and maintained his power with mercenaries from abroad and Samian archers (ibid. 3.45.3), whilst in Mytilene, if we may trust Aristotle who for once eschews talk of people and popular leaders, the oppressive ruling clan of Penthilidae were dealt death by one Megacles assisted by his friends (*Pol.* 1311b26–30), dynasts feuding and nothing more, just as in Athens. The hoplite hypothesis, in short, is not in the best of health.

Thucydides' statement on the subject (1.13.1), however, retains its full force.

Δυνατωτέρας δὲ γιγνομένης τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ τῶν χρημάτων τὴν κτῆσιν ἐτι μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον ποιουμένης τὰ πολλὰ τυραννίδες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι καθίσταντο, τῶν προσόδων μειζόνων γιγνομένων (πρότερον δὲ ἦσαν ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γέρασι πατρικαὶ βασιλείαι).

It is a curious sentence with two genitive absolute clauses separated by the statement 'As a general rule tyrannies were established in the cities', and the point of this form of sentence seems to be that the first genitive absolute generally provides the setting (i.e. 'As Greece was becoming more powerful and was putting still more value than before on the acquisition of wealth'), but the second genitive absolute is concerned to contrast the vast personal wealth of the men who became tyrants with the strictly fixed incomes of kings (i.e. 'the incomes (*πρόσοδοι*) becoming greater where previously there were hereditary kingships on the basis of fixed emoluments (*γέρεα*)').⁴² (The word translated 'incomes' is normally translated 'revenues' and supposed to apply to the revenues of the cities, but the sense here preferred is not unique in Thucydides and is common enough in the Orators,⁴³ and above all it gives

⁴¹ J. Latacz, *Kampfparänese, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos and Tyrtaios* (Munich, 1977).

⁴² Hdt. 6.56 recounts the *γέρεα* of the Spartan kings but omits their 'incomes'; Plato *Alcibiades* 122d–123a fills the gap, as too [Xenophon] *Lac. Pol.* 15.3.

⁴³ H. Berve, op. cit. 519 'nach seinen Sprachgebrauch sind mit *πρόσοδοι* die staatlichen Einkünfte gemeint.' But at Thuc. 1.4 the *πρόσοδοι* of Minos come to him not to the state. Cf. L.S.J. s.v. II for the use of the word to denote personal income in the Orators as well as in Plato

point to Thucydides' remark in parenthesis concerning the wealth of kings.) Thus for Thucydides the early tyrants were essentially rich men. He says nothing of hoplites or of popular support.

How did Thucydides come to formulate such a judgement? It occurs, admittedly, in the so-called Archaeology and one might wonder how much notice should be taken of such statements about early Greek history. But Thucydides would not have made such a statement if he did not have what seemed to him adequate grounds for making it, and his methods are not beyond the reach of our imagining. In addition to a critical assessment of oral tradition,⁴⁴ Thucydides possessed what one might term the antiquarian eye. The man who at Sparta not only remarked the inscription on the grave of Pausanias (1.134.4) but also pondered the discrepancy between Spartan power and the buildings from which it was controlled (1.10), no doubt was similarly alert at Olympia or at Delphi, or indeed in any of the leading cities of Greece. The tyrants left testimony of their riches, both in their own cities and in the national shrines, and a Thucydides would not fail to appreciate them, or to ponder the significance of any inscriptions (cf. 6.54.7). Above all, however, there was the testimony of the poetry of the archaic age, available to Thucydides in its fulness,⁴⁵ nor would he be as much in the dark as we are about when particular poets wrote. When one considers what a rich mine for us the surviving fragments constitute, it becomes plain that from the full texts of these early poets an intelligent person could obtain a full understanding of the sort of circumstances in which tyranny arose. Thucydides' statement was not a stab in the dark.

In fact, all the indications we have in the fragmentary evidence bear out Thucydides. Perhaps the most illuminating are the poems of Solon, who wrote after one attempt at tyranny and before another and who felt moved to explain why he did not aspire to tyranny himself (F 32–3a). His concern is constantly with wealth and wealth dishonourably acquired by the sort of person who is indifferent to what befalls him 'if he can get abundant wealth and be tyrant of Athens for a single day' (F 33.5). The age of tyranny was clearly the age of unprecedented wealth, when surpluses of perishable produce need no longer perish, but could be transmuted into imperishable, i.e. lumps of gold and silver (F 24). It was an age when a Colaeus of Samos could return from Tartessus with immense wealth, though not, of course, to be compared with Sostratus of Aegina (Hdt. 4.152) but doubtless much in excess of what mere kings received, an age when an Alcmaeonid could return from a visit to Sardis a very much richer man (Hdt. 6.125).⁴⁶ Navigation which opened up the wider world to colonisation, made possible also great new wealth, encouraging ambition. 'The love of money and the arrogance that goes with it' against which Solon railed (*Ath. Pol.* 5.3) belonged to a world in which money counted most, birth less and less. Alcaeus preserved the sneer of a Spartan 'Money's the man. No poor man is good or honoured' (Page *LGS* 169), for, as Solon declared (F 15), 'many evil men are rich and good men poor'. 'Wealth has confounded birth' (πλούτος ἔμειξε γένος) in the words of Theognis (190),⁴⁷ and the connection between wealth and tyranny is made most

Laws 847a (e.g. Andoc. 4.11 ἰδίαις ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν προσόδους κατεσκευάσατο, Aesch. 3.173 τὸν βίον οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων προσόδων πορίζεται...). The word used in Hdt. 1.64.1 for Pisistratus' income is σύνοδοι.

⁴⁴ It is easy to belittle this. Cf. Rosalind Thomas, *Oral tradition and written record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 3 'oral tradition provided most Greeks with a knowledge of their history.' But Thucydides was on his guard against τὸ μυθώδες (1.21.1, 22.4).

⁴⁵ He refers to 'the poets' six times in the Archaeology.

⁴⁶ For the date, cf. J. K. Davies, *Athenian propertied families* (Oxford, 1971), p. 371.

⁴⁷ Cf. lines 523ff.

clearly by Archilochus (F 19W) 'I do not care for the wealth of the gold-laden Gyges...I have no desire for mighty tyranny.' The poets indeed bear out the Thucydidean view.

Herodotus too illuminates. Tyrants and would-be tyrants looked to their own sort for a wife. The son of Cypselus married the daughter of the tyrant of Epidaurus (Hdt. 3.50.2), just as Cylon had married the daughter of the tyrant of Megara (Thuc. 1.126.3) and as Hippias looked to the son of the tyrant of Lampsacus for his daughter to marry (Thuc. 6.59.3). So Herodotus' story of the wooing of Agariste (6.126ff.) shows well the sort of person a tyrant or would-be tyrant was. The tyrant of Sikyon, Clisthenes, was so rich that he could be represented as having at Olympia issued an invitation to any Greek who deemed himself worthy of the hand of his daughter, to come to Sikyon and for a whole year, at Clisthenes' expense, compete for his favour. At the end of the year Clisthenes gave each of the disappointed suitors a talent of silver.⁴⁸ He was clearly a rich man, and while he sought a son-in-law who was both physically and intellectually the best, plainly only rich men competed. In the early sixth century to compete at Olympia no doubt required more than an athletic frame, but the details Herodotus gives of the competitors is especially revealing. The list was notably short. From the West, no more than a man from Siris and one from Sybaris, which latter 'attained the greatest degree of luxury' at a time when luxurious Sybaris was at its zenith. From the Peloponnese, allegedly, a son of the tyrant of Argos, Pheidon, and amongst others an Arcadian whose father was rich enough to entertain all comers, and an Elean, Onomastus ('Famous') son of Agaïos ('Enviably'), names presumably reflecting fact as well as aspiration. From Athens, Megacles son of the man who filled his socks with gold-dust, and Hippocleides, 'preeminent among Athenians for his looks and for his wealth'. From Euboea, only one man, from Eretria 'in full flower at this time', as Herodotus adds in explanation, while from Thessaly came a member of the Scopadae, a family famed for riches (cf. Plut. *Cim.* 10.5). Such were the aspirants to the hand of Agariste, and although we can only guess by what telling and retelling the story came to Herodotus, it certainly illuminates the values of the world of the tyrants.

Thucydides is, it would seem, right as far as he went. Should he have gone further? He said nothing about the rising political consciousness of hoplites, nor of the emergence of a People that knew and used its power. Should we stick with Thucydides, or follow Aristotle?

Something has already been said about hoplites, but it must also be remarked that the shadowy figure of Pheidon, king of Argos, is much in evidence in the discussion of the importance of hoplites.⁴⁹ How did a king become a tyrant? Aristotle spoke of a number of such cases (*Politics* 1310b18–27), but specified only Pheidon, nor did he say how or why they 'exceeded their hereditary rights and aspired to more despotic rule'. Now if Pheidon was as successful militarily as he is commonly represented, his success would have made him in all probability a highly regarded king like Theopompus of Sparta but not necessarily more than that, and it is wanton to suppose that in consequence of his success he became tyrant. More relevant perhaps is his establishing the system of weights and measures that bore his name (Hdt. 6.127), which suggests a concern with commerce⁵⁰ whereby his personal income came greatly

⁴⁸ Bullion presumably, so early in the sixth century, if he really did give a talent of silver. Perhaps this detail should warn against taking the story literally.

⁴⁹ Considering that there is no agreement even about the date of Pheidon (cf. Berve op. cit. 518), the part he plays in so many discussions about the rise of tyranny is surely his most notable achievement.

⁵⁰ He gave his name to a type of oil can. Cf. L.S.J. s.v. *Φειδων*.

to exceed the royal emoluments. Whatever the truth of that, the connection made between hoplites and the rise of tyranny is wild. Athens is the only case of which we are less than meagrely informed. There, no matter how successful and cohesive the hoplites were on the field of battle, in times of peace they were divided by local loyalties and being scattered through the countryside they did not come together for action save rarely. Why should it have been different elsewhere?

Would-be tyrants, however, it has been argued needed some force to succeed in their attempts and so hoplites were in a sense a necessary part of their rise.⁵¹ Polycrates and his fifteen hoplite supporters seem to be a sufficient answer to that. If more is needed one has only to recall the circumstances of Pisistratus' first two attempts. But, it will be countered, the would-be tyrant needed some popular support, or at any rate tolerance if he was to succeed; Cylon's attempt failed because he lacked such support, whereas those who succeeded will have had it.

It would be folly to deny tyrants any popular support. Solon's championship of the impoverished put him in his friend's view in a position to become tyrant (F32-3a), and it may well be the case that others used such situations to establish themselves. It did not happen at Athens; Pisistratus had won himself a good reputation by his generalship against the Megarians (Hdt. 1.59.4), and he used it to trick the people into allowing him to maintain a bodyguard by means of which he proceeded to seize power. But elsewhere men may have used popular support to attain their ends. What must be emphasised, however, is the flimsiness of the evidence adduced for such a view. In the Hellenic parts of Nicolaus of Damascus' *Histories*, he was, it is generally agreed, drawing on the work of the fourth-century historian Ephorus,⁵² and when one considers how unsatisfactory the fourth-century account of the tyranny of Athens is, one is little inclined to take very seriously what Nicolaus has to say about the tyrannies at Corinth and Sikyon. One detail, however, has been seized upon. 'Cypselus ruled Corinth mildly, neither having bodyguards nor being hateful to the Corinthians' (F 57.8),⁵³ this shows, it is claimed, that Cypselus ruled with the support of the People.⁵⁴ But the prized detail is worthless, if at any rate one believes Herodotus. Herodotus (5.92ε2) recounted that Cypselus, having become tyrant, exiled many Corinthians and deprived many of their property and by far the largest number of their lives. If he did all that, be he ever so popular with the mass of the Corinthians, he must have walked, and slept, in danger of reprisals, whether by kinsmen or by hired avengers, unless he had men to protect him. The statement is not to be taken literally. In fourth-century discussions of the age of the tyranny there was a broad classification of the tyrants into those on the one hand who, like Pisistratus, ruled more like a citizen than a tyrant, *μᾶλλον πολιτικῶς ἢ τυραννικῶς*, and, on the other, those who like Periander paraded their power and importance and did not conceal the fact that they were guarded. Thus somewhat vague traditions about these notable figures of the seventh and the sixth century were given precise expression by writers of the fourth who did their best, which was their worst, not only for Pisistratus and the Pisistratids but also for all the tyrannical kind. After all, the fourth century thought it knew about tyranny. It had only to look to Syracuse, whose tyrants rate more frequent mention in Aristotle's *Politics* than any of the early tyrants, and it is

⁵¹ Cf. J. Salmon, 'Political hoplites?' *JHS* 97 (1977), 84-101, esp. 97 and 100f.

⁵² Cf. F. Jacoby *FGH* II. c p. 248 *ad* F 57.

⁵³ Cf. Aristotle, frag. 610 (1556a9ff.) from Diogenes Laertius 1.98.

⁵⁴ Cf. Salmon, art. cit. 97 'it is perhaps worth noting that Cypselus found it unnecessary to maintain a bodyguard when he achieved power; that makes it as good as certain that he could rely on hoplite support, which in turn makes it more than likely that they had given him help in the revolution itself.'

without a blush that he lumps them all together, Dionysius with Pisistratus and Cypselus and Theagenes of Megara (1310b29, 1305a26). Dionysius was a demagogue. All the rest were assimilated.

The new and dominating element in Greek society in the seventh and sixth centuries was the emergence of rich men. Herodotus (5.92ζf.) has Thrasybulus of Miletus, when he was asked by Periander the safest way of controlling Corinth, vividly advise him to cut down those who were eminent like the outstanding ears of corn; which was indeed an apt metaphor. Some were growing tall in their riches, and the one who grew tallest would not suffer rivals. The People did not come into it. The age was the age of dynasts. Thucydides was right, and Aristotle and the fourth century generally and all his latter-day satellites wrong.

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