

ISAGORAS, SON OF TEISANDROS, AND ISAGORAS,
EPONYMOUS ARCHON OF 508/7: A CASE OF
MISTAKEN IDENTITY

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MODERN RECONSTRUCTIONS of Athenian political development in the last decade of the sixth century B.C. employ the belief that Isagoras, the eponymous archon of 508/7,¹ is Isagoras, son of Teisandros and Kleisthenes' major political rival in the factional struggles that follow the end of the tyranny at Athens.² This belief has been derived from chapters 20 and 21 of the *Athenaion Politeia* wherein an account of Kleisthenes' contest with Isagoras, his political opponent, immediately precedes the date of Kleisthenes' reforms (at least those described in chapter 21), which is given as the archonship of Isagoras. The text is seductive: identity of the two men named Isagoras seems necessary and natural for no attempt is made to distinguish between them. Yet, the question arises, how could Aristotle³ have known identity to be the case? Herodotus' narrative, which does not mention the archonship of Isagoras, has obviously provided, directly or indirectly, the basis for the version of events in the *Athenaion Politeia* although this account is not verbatim.⁴

¹Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.74.6 and 5.1.1.

²Hdt. 6.66 and 69–74. Only T. J. Cadoux is cautious about the identity (below, note 13). The kind of complex reconstruction that depends upon it can be seen, e.g., in M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford 1969) 137–160, and in D. W. Knight, *Some Studies in Athenian Politics in the Fifth Century B.C.* (Wiesbaden 1970) 16–24.

³Or whoever wrote the *Athenaion Politeia*. I am inclined to agree with the view that the treatise is the product of Aristotle's school rather than his hand, but, for the purpose of this study, the question of authorship will be avoided. In his review of Ostwald (above, note 2) in *AJP* 94 (1973) 367–369, Mortimer Chambers properly remarks (p. 369): "we must never stop asking how the sources know what they seem to know," a sentiment that is particularly appropriate with regard to the author of the *Ath. Pol.* and to the issue raised in this paper.

⁴Fundamental in consideration of this problem is H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 135–154 (= "Studies in the Structure of Attic Society; II. The Laws of Kleisthenes," *CQ* 27 [1933] 17–29). For more recent discussion, see C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1952) 331–336; R. Sealey, *Essays in Greek Politics* (New York 1966) 28–30 (= "Regionalism in Archaic Athens," *Historia* 9 [1960] 175–177); R. Seager, "Herodotus and ATH. POL. on the Date of Cleisthenes' Reforms," *AJP* 84 (1963) 287–289; Ostwald (above, note 2) 137–160; and G. R. Stanton, "The Introduction of Ostracism and Alkmaionid Propaganda," *JHS* 90 (1970) 181–183.

material has been deleted,⁵ rephrased,⁶ reorganized,⁷ and possibly corrected.⁸ As well, additional information appears, some of which is apparently an extension of Herodotus;⁹ most, however, concerns Kleisthenes' laws but scholars cannot determine with certainty whether a text of Kleisthenes' laws existed and was used (and, if so, whether that text provided the date of the laws), or how much of the new material is simply inference. Wade-Gery,¹⁰ for example, believes that use was made of a text of the laws which contained their date, but Sealey¹¹ has argued that the new data on legislation in the *Athenaion Politeia* are the result of inference, even the date, which he suggests was assigned to the archonship of Isagoras because the writer of the *Athenaion Politeia* found the

⁵There is no mention of Kleomenes' subsequent invasion of Attica.

⁶Κλεισθένης τὸν δῆμον προστειρίζεται (Hdt. 5.66.2), as opposed to δὲ Κλεισθένης προσηγάγετο τὸν δῆμον (Ath. Pol. 20.1).

⁷In Herodotus (5.66 and 69) a description of Kleisthenes' legislation predates the expulsion of Isagoras and Kleomenes whereas the fuller account in the *Ath. Pol.* comes afterward. For further discussion of the discrepancy between the accounts of Herodotus and that of the *Ath. Pol.*, see forthcoming in *Historia* my study, "The Relative Date of Kleisthenes' Legislation."

⁸Upon the surrender of Kleomenes and Isagoras, Herodotus (5.72.2) says the Lakel-daimonians departed the country under truce and others (5.72.4) were put to death by the Athenians, yet Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 20.3) writes that *all* departed under truce. The basis of this apparent correction Wade-Gery (*Essays* 136–137) finds in Herodotus' own account (5.74.1) where it is evident that Isagoras was neither arrested nor killed, and in a decree (noted by the scholiast on Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 273) that provides for such severe punishment after the abortive invasion of Attica in force by Kleomenes.

⁹In addition to new material relating to Kleisthenes' laws and apart from the attempt to correct just considered, Wade-Grey (*Essays* 138–139) lists two further elements that he considers are inferences from Herodotus' narrative: Kleisthenes' defeat ταῦς ἑταίρειας and Isagoras' portrayal as φίλος ὁν τῶν τυράννων. In light of a contradiction with *Ath. Pol.* 20.3 and Aristotle's main source Herodotus (5.70.1; 5.72.1; 5.92a1), G. R. Stanton ([above, note 4] 183) proposes that the latter interpretation has resulted from an extraneous tradition about Isagoras. Yet Herodotus' testimony (5.74) that Isagoras was to be set up as tyrant could have provided the basis for the statement in the *Ath. Pol.* that implies Isagoras' partiality towards tyranny, or, as Wade-Gery suggests, "Aristotle interprets the rivalry between the two men, before Kleisthenes makes his democratic gesture, as a rivalry between the Tyrants' enemies (who had turned them out) and the Tyrants' friends (who had acquiesced in tyranny)."

¹⁰*Essays* 147.

¹¹*Essays* 28–29. Sealey desires to lower to 502/1 both the struggle of Kleisthenes with Isagoras and the date of Kleisthenes' laws, in part because of his reluctance to believe that Isagoras would have been so influential as archon (cf. below, notes 25–28); I share his apprehension but think it more likely that the date is a legitimate survival (T. J. Cadoux, "The Athenian Archons from Kreon to Hypsichides," *JHS* 68[1948]80) and that Isagoras the archon is not Kleisthenes' opponent. With regard to recognizable inference in the *Ath. Pol.* here and elsewhere, determination of responsibility is difficult though not critical for this paper as it matters little whether an inference is the work of Aristotle or part of the earlier Attidographic tradition; for a provocative examination of this problem, see J. Day and M. Chambers, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (Berkeley 1962) *passim*, esp. chapter one.

name Isagoras in the archon-list. However, whether the date of the reforms is a matter of inference or a survival in the text of Kleisthenes' laws, there could in either case¹² be no indication that Isagoras, the archon, was Isagoras, Kleisthenes' opponent; indeed, the *Athenaion Politeia* is non-committal. A significant observation of T. J. Cadoux is worthy of being recalled:¹³ ". . . the absence of any explanatory reference in this passage of Aristotle [*Ath. Pol.* 21.1], though puzzling, is no evidence for or against this identity." Aristotle may have thought identity to be the case; this, however, would be an assumption about Aristotle's thinking, just as it is an assumption that the two men named Isagoras are identical, be the idea modern or of late fourth century origin. In the following study I wish to consider the validity of this assumption of identity.

It is not unusual to find at Athens two or more contemporary figures of prominence with the same name; normally distinction is possible on the basis of either a patronymic¹⁴ or demotic,¹⁵ though occasionally through circumstance alone.¹⁶ However, when an attempt is made to identify with a homonymous contemporary someone known only by his single name and the fact that he was eponymous archon in a certain year, the ease of such a determination may vary. For example, Xanthippos, son of Ariphon and father of Perikles,¹⁷ was *strategos* in 479/8,¹⁸ and could not possibly be Xanthippos who was eponymous archon of that year¹⁹ and is otherwise unknown (unless he is the Xanthippos whose existence as son of Hippocrates is attested on a recently found ostracon²⁰). On the other hand, while the archon of 489/8 is known to be Aristeides,²¹ it is not clear whether he is Aristeides the "Just", son of Lysimachos, as is commonly believed, or Aristeides, son of Xenophilos and *choregos* in 477/6, as E. Badian has recently suggested in his proposal that identification of Aristeides the "Just" with the archon is nothing more than a late inference (from a name on the archon list) which is traceable to Demetrius of Phalerum, and that the famous politician's service as *strategos* in 490/89

¹² Apparently the Archon list had only single names (D. W. Bradeen, "The Fifth-Century Archon List," *Hesperia* 32 [1963] 194 ff.); the archon's name on a document is a colorless expression of date (Seager [above, note 4] 289 n. 9).

¹³ *Op. cit.* (above, note 11) 114.

¹⁴ E.g., below, notes 17, 20, and 22.

¹⁵ E.g., Isthmonikos of Kothokidai and Isthmonikos of Skambonidai; Megakles of Anaphlystos and Megakles of Acharnai (F. Willemsen, "Die Ausgrabungen im Kerameikos," *Deltion* 23 [1968]: *Chronica* 28–29).

¹⁶ E.g., below, notes 18 and 19.

¹⁷ Hdt. 6.131 and 7.33.

¹⁸ Hdt. 9.114.

¹⁹ *Marm. Par.* 52; Diod. Sic. 11.27.1.

²⁰ Willemsen (above, note 15) 29; see also J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford 1971) 600 for the possible identity of Hippokrates.

²¹ *Marm. Par.* 49 and Cadoux (above, note 11) 117.

makes unlikely tenure of the archonship in the following year.²² Whatever the solution of this problem may be,²³ the kind of issues that it has raised are relevant when considering Isagoras the archon.

Is there good reason for believing that Kleisthenes' opponent was not the eponymous archon of 508/7? Isagoras, in Herodotus' account, is portrayed as the leader of the faction against Kleisthenes; until Kleisthenes took the demos to his own faction, what Herodotus is describing is a return to the old aristocratic politics; surely it is a fair assumption that the leader of a great coalition of aristocratic elements at Athens, of what in fact proved to be the dominant aristocratic faction (there were, in these struggles that preceded Kleisthenes' reforms, only two major groupings²⁴), be not a youth but a man old enough and sufficiently experienced to command respect and exert authority, a seasoned politician who had made his mark: selection of the young for leadership is not in the aristocratic character. Unfortunately the age of Isagoras, Kleisthenes' opponent, is nowhere attested, but, in light of the above considerations, he is not likely to have been a young man commencing a political career. It is pertinent to inquire about the age of Isagoras, the eponymous archon. Recent consideration of the nature of the archonship by Wade-Gery, Sealey and Frost has given rise to the belief that it was a proving ground for men of promise,²⁵ that it was held more or less *ad annum* by men reaching age 30,²⁶ that we should see the archon more as *quaestor* than *consul*,²⁷ and that a politician's *floruit* postdates his archonship, the holding of the archonship initiating rather than crowning a political career.²⁸ At no time has there been a systematic study of the

²²“Archons and *Strategoi*,” *Antichthon* 5 (1971) 11–14. Badian (p. 13 and n. 32) implies that the position of *strategos* was more prestigious and important than that of archon (and held at a later age?); see below, notes 25–28, for a view of the archonship with which he agrees.

²³Davies (above, note 20) 48, notes that Aristeides' generalship in 490/89 was unknown to the Ephoran tradition preserved in Nepos and that it may be an embroidery of Herodotus 6.110; C. W. Fornara is also sceptical (*The Athenian Board of Generals from 501 to 404* [Wiesbaden 1971] 41–42).

²⁴Such is the impression created by Herodotus (5.66).

²⁵F. J. Frost, “Themistocles’ Place in Athenian Politics,” *CSCA* 1 (1968) 114.

²⁶Wade-Gery, *Essays* 146 n. 1 and 171 n. 1.

²⁷Frost (above, note 25) 114–115. Frost of course is not implying that there was a *cursus honorum* at Athens, only that in terms of significance and power the eponymous archon was more akin to a *quaestor* than to a *consul*. Certainly the archonship was a prize that could arouse violent competition, but, as Sealey has pointed out (*Essays* 20), it does not follow that the archon had the greatest power (cf. the inference of *Ath. Pol.* 13.2: $\delta\kappa\lambda\delta\tau\iota\sigma\tau\eta\tau\epsilon\lambda\chi\epsilon\tau\delta\eta\tau\alpha\mu\tau\delta\alpha\rho\chi\omega\tau$): the archonship may have been valued not because of the authority or power of the office, but because it brought admission to the Areopagus.

²⁸Sealey, *Essays* 20. A possible contradiction posed by Aristeides the “Just” is removed by Badian (above, note 22).

entire archon list for the purpose of reaching these conclusions, though each of the above writers has contributed in part, either with specific examination of certain cases, or through general consideration. Their ideas must be kept in perspective: nothing can be said about the age or political careers (beyond subsequent membership in the Areopagus) of most archons who happen to be known. However, for the period before the great reform of 487/6, where evidence exists either for the age of archons or for leading political figures who were archons, there is no conclusive proof that any Athenian politician held the eponymous archonship in his old age or after his *floruit* as a politician or, with the exception of Hippias,²⁹ at his zenith as one; clearly in some cases holding of the archonship precedes by several years a politician's known career³⁰ (or at

²⁹That Hippias did not serve as archon while his father was tyrant may be a reflection of the low prestige of both archons and the Areopagus during Peisistratos' regime. Hippias' tenure of the archonship in 526/5, when considered in conjunction with the archonships of Kleisthenes and Miltiades in the years immediately following, may indicate not only an attempt at reconciliation with hostile aristocratic families that had been in exile (C. W. J. Eliot and M. F. McGregor, "Kleisthenes: Eponymous Archon 525/4 B.C.," *Phoenix* 14 [1960] 35), but, as well, an effort to enhance and give renewed significance to the institutions of government and political life in the state. Reconciliation of the tyrants with the exiled aristocrats is considered most recently by M. White, "Hippias and the Athenian Archon List," in *Polis and Imperium: Studies in Honour of Edward Togo Salmon* (Toronto 1974) 81–95, esp. pp. 84–86, where she proposes that reconciliation began with Peisistratos himself, though, ironically, her forceful argument in favour of the later dates for Kimon's three consecutive victories (532, 528, 524), and the absence of any evidence of reconciliation before Kimon dedicated his second victory to Peisistratos, require that her view on Peisistratos' reconciliation, "... [it] is more appropriate to the later years of Peisistratos," be refined (if one conjectures strictly in terms of the evidence) to refer explicitly to the *last year* of Peisistratos' life; had Wade-Gery's earlier dating been retained (536, 532, 528 in *Essays* 155–170), attempted reconciliation of at least one former adversary could be dated to 532.

³⁰Apparently true for Miltiades, Hipparchos (son of Charmos), and Themistokles, and probably for Solon and Kleisthenes. Davies (above, note 20) 323–324, in his examination of the dates for Solon's life, advocates 630–625 as the approximate birth-date, and accepts Hignett's argument ([above, note 4] 316) that Solon's legislation postdates 580; as for Kleisthenes, he does not appear as a political force until after a second Peisistratid exile of aristocrats possibly in 514 (for the date, see Eliot and McGregor [above, note 29] 35). Themistokles' early career remains problematic; in addition to Davies' discussion (pp. 214–215), see, e.g., A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Vol. 1 (Oxford 1945) 261–262; Frost (above, note 25) 105–124; and most recently Badian (above, note 22) 7–9. It is not certain that Thucydides is referring to Themistokles' archonship with the phrase *ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ἀρχῆς ἦς κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν Ἀθηναῖος ἥρξε* (1.93.3) when his role is described in the fortification of the Peiraeus; indeed a naval policy of such import, allegedly instituted in 493/2 and dropped for ten years is rightly suspect (Gomme, pp. 261–262 and Badian, p. 8 and n. 20). But, even if the policy dates from 493/2, it may have been authored by the Boule, entrusted to the supervision of the archon, and claimed years later by Themistokles as his policy (Frost, p. 115). Further, it should be noted that Herodotus' description of Themistokles as *ἐς πρώτους νεωστὶ παρίων* (7.143) in the time of crisis before Xerxes' invasion is consistent with the view

least comes at the beginning, not the middle or the end); where the age of an archon can be reasonably ascertained, it appears to be about thirty.³¹ How likely is it, then, that the archon of 508/7 be Kleisthenes' opponent Isagoras, leader of the grand aristocratic alliance that defeated Kleisthenes before he took the demos to his faction? Let us return to *Athenaion Politeia* 21.1. The archonship of Isagoras is information additional to Herodotus' account; as a date for Kleisthenes' legislation, it is inference or has been drawn from an examination of his laws. Aristotle probably did not know any more about Isagoras the archon than we do. On balance, given the nature of the account in the *Athenaion Politeia* as seen in light of the basic dangers of identifying Isagoras, the archon, with Kleisthenes' opponent, and the probability that Isagoras, already the dominant aristocratic politician before 508/7 (being rivalled only by Kleisthenes), was not young and beginning his career (as we might expect of an eponymous archon), it may be concluded that the identity of those named Isagoras in chapters 20 and 21 of the *Athenaion Politeia* is both uncertain and unlikely.³²

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that tenure of the eponymous archonship does not mark the zenith of a political career, though Themistokles was making a name for himself by 487/6 when he appears as a candidate in the *ostrakophoria* that Megakles won (cf. Frost, pp. 115 and 124). The dating of Solon's laws to the 570's finds support of late in a paper by S. S. Markianos, "The Chronology of the Herodotean Solon," *Historia* 23 (1974) 1-20, and in the conclusions of M. Millar reached in a series of essays published in *Aretusa*: "Solon's Timetable," 1 (1968) 62-81; "The Accepted Date for Solon: Precise, but Wrong," 2 (1969) 62-86; and "Solon's Coinage," 4 (1971) 25-47. The dating of Solon's archonship, which Miss Millar attempts as well to lower to the 570's, is, in my judgment, correctly retained in 594/3 by M. F. McGregor, "Solon's Archonship: The Epigraphic Evidence," in *Polis and Imperium* 31-34.

That Thucydides is in fact referring to the year of Themistokles' archonship now seems certain in light of notes by D. M. Lewis, "Themistocles' Archonship," *Historia* 22 (1973) 757-758, and W. W. Dickie, "Thucydides 1.93.3," *Historia* 22 (1973) 758-759, both of whom are responding in part to C. W. Fornara, "Themistocles' Archonship," *Historia* 20 (1971) 534-540; nonetheless, I sympathize with Fornara's pessimistic belief (p. 540) that Themistokles' activities as archon are irrecoverable.

³¹Davies (above, note 20) provides the most recent discussion of age: pp. 323-324 (Solon), 294 (Hippokleides); 301 (Miltiades), 450-451 (Peisistratos, grandson of the tyrant), 451 (Hipparchos, son of Charmos), and 214-215 (Themistokles). All of these examples are contentious, though in each case I agree with Davies' position. The unusual circumstances early in Hippias' regime (above, note 29) will account for his and Kleisthenes' exceptional tenure of the archonship while possibly in their late forties; see Davies 446 (Hippias) and 375 (Kleisthenes), but note how quickly there is a return to the suggested norm of age thirty with Miltiades and Peisistratos. (See now H. R. Immerwahr, "Stesagoras II," *TAPA* 103 [1972] 185-186 and n. 14, who accepts an age of "about thirty" for Miltiades.)

³²To date, Attic prosopography has yielded the name Isagoras only for the archon

of 508/7 and Kleisthenes' opponent; however, the paucity of evidence for Athens of the late sixth and early fifth centuries ought to caution against an *e silentio* argument for identity.

It may be objected that Isagoras, Kleisthenes' opponent, was prevented by Hippias from holding the eponymous archonship during the tyranny and that his subsequent tenure of it was at an exceptional age (a situation not unlike that of Kleisthenes). For several reasons I find this improbable. First, since the archon list has seven unoccupied years in the period of reconciliation authored by Hippias—521/0, 520/19, 519/18, 517/16, 516/15, 515/14 and 514/13 (an eighth is possible if the doubtful year of Habron [518/17] is removed; see Cadoux [above, note 11] 112), it is by no means clear that Isagoras did not serve as archon. Second, given the extent to which reconciliation was possible (before Miltiades was archon, Kimon had been put to death at the instigation of the sons of Peisistratos [Hdt. 6.103.3]), a partiality for tyranny attributed to Isagoras (above, note 9), and his apparent status (to judge from his importance in political affairs immediately following the expulsion of Hippias, Isagoras was no insignificant aristocratic scion), it would be incredible if he had not been eponymous archon, nor held one of the other archonships.

Addenda:

(a) P. Bicknell, "Athenian Politics and Genealogy; Some Pendants," *Historia* 23 (1974) 146–161, proposes (p. 153) that Agora ostrakon P 6208, which was dated on the basis of letter forms to the first half of the fifth century by E. Vanderpool in *Hesperia, Supplement* 8 (1949) 404 and p1.59, no.21, be restored to read *Kιμον*['Ισαγόρας]. Notwithstanding other obvious and tantalizing considerations, we may have here evidence for either of those named Isagoras in *Ath. Pol.* 20 and 21.

(b) Lobel's observations and commentary on P. Oxy. 26.2438 (cited by Davies [above, note 20] 270) show that acceptance of 518/17 as the archon-year of Habron is untenable.

(c) If Miss White's argument for the later dating of Kimon's victories (above, note 29) prevails, Miltiades would have been archon in the year of Kimon's last victory and death (cf. her discussion, pp. 87–89); reconciliation, applicable, of course, for other Athenian aristocrats who had opposed Peisistratos, ought then to be coupled with an amazing tolerance during the regime of his sons.