

## **Coping with a new Situation**

University of Utrecht

Student: Wil Theuns

Student number: 3658260

First reader: Prof. Dr. J. Blok

Second reader: Dr. R. Strootman

Words: 31.727

## **Content**

<u>Introduction: Coping with a New Situation</u>	p. 3
<u>Methodology</u>	p. 5
<u>Chapter 1: Ritualised Friendship</u>	p. 10
The Origin and its Purpose	p. 10
Existence of <i>Xenia</i>	p. 12
Gift Exchange	p. 16
Persian Gift Giving	p. 20
Gift Exchange before the 460's	p. 23
Who were involved?	P. 25
Ideas about <i>Xenia</i> and Gift Exchange	p. 26
<u>Chapter 2: Tyranny</u>	p. 29
Before Tyranny: the Archaic Ruler	p. 29
The Origin and the Meaning of <i>Tyrannos</i>	p. 31
The Greek View on Tyranny	p. 34
<u>Chapter 3: Medism</u>	p. 44
The Origin of Medism	p. 46
A Political Tool	p. 48
<u>Chapter 4: Ostracism in Fifth Century Athens</u>	p. 52
'Ostracism' as described by ancient sources	p. 52
The Modern discussion about 'Ostracism'	p. 59
Another Perspective	p. 63
<u>Chapter 5: A View on Athenian Citizenship</u>	p. 69
Solon	p. 69
Cleisthenes	p. 72
Expectations	p. 74
<u>Conclusion</u>	p. 80
<u>Bibliography</u>	p. 86

### **Introduction: Coping with a New Situation**

In the ancient Greek world aristocratic families were related to one another via bonds, which were generally ratified through gift exchange. Such ties were made to form diplomatic, ritualised friendships. According to G. Herman, these friendships were created between persons of high birth, who ‘originated from different, and at times, drastically dissimilar social systems, and who had no previous record of social intercourse’.<sup>1</sup> Once a friendship was established, the ritualised friends were expected to assist each other in times of need: assistance in war, money-lending or taking care of a friend’s children in the form of adoption belong to the various aids. When a ‘friend’ died, his son(s) took over the position of friend.

Ancient sources speak about contacts and friendships between Greek and non-Greek elites. Works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Aristotle deliver descriptions that show Greek elites not only had ties within Greece, but also kept contact with elite families elsewhere.

Whilst Athens developed herself as a democracy, starting at the end of the sixth century B.C., the old tradition of ritualised friendship became threatened by a new idea of how to run the Athenian *polis*: over time power was given to the people who wanted a society in which equality between the citizens was pursued. In case of gift exchange, gifts were provided by the *polis* as a whole, while the receiver could only use the gift to the benefit of the state. The person who received a gift was never able to use it for private purposes.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the gift exchange between ritualised friends, receiving private gifts could be seen as an act of bribery.<sup>3</sup> This democratically laden idea complicated the old tradition of ritualised friendship.

Another threat occurred when Greece, Athens in particular, went into war with Persia (490 – 449 B.C.). During this period, democratic Athens created an image both of itself and of the other, Persia. The east was seen as barbaric, despotic and conquerable, whilst Athens was civilised, democratic and victorious. Athenian elite, who held old diplomatic friendships with Persian aristocracy, had to cope with the new situation of anti-Persian feelings amongst the *demos*. Contact with members of

---

<sup>1</sup> Herman (1987: 29)

<sup>2</sup> S. von Reden (1995: 92)

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 94

the Persian elite or Persia in general was considered as an act of medism.<sup>4</sup> As a response to the Persian Wars and supposedly to the act of medism, democratic Athens banned some members of the elite from her society, which took place in the form of ostracism. According to the *Athenian Constitution*, Cleisthenes introduced ostracism in 508 B.C., after which it was first used around 488 (*Ath.Pol.* 22), just after the first Persian War (490). The reason why ostracism was introduced is still under discussion.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Athenian Constitution*, ostracism was used to remove the threat of tyranny (*Ath.Pol.* 22). Following the orator Lycurgus (Lyc. 117-19), J. H. Schreiner argues that ‘ostracism was a weapon originally forged and used against men who collaborated with the Persians in 490 and not, as the sources state and most scholars hold, primarily as a measure designed to prevent a recurrence of tyranny’.<sup>6</sup> Athenians who were ostracised were either charged with tyrannical sentiment or medism. This suggests that the old diplomatic ties Athenian elites had with the supposed enemy were used against them.

Even though ostracism and banishment from Athens took place, it did not stop Athenian elites from holding friendships/relationships with the enemy. The general Themistocles was ostracised in 471 and charged of treason after which he fled to Persia to remain in Persian territory till his death in 459 (Thuc. I. 135-138). Herodotus mentions an Athenian embassy, led by Kallias, who went to Persia twice: the first taking place in 461 asking for a continuation of friendship between Kallias and the Persian King; the second one took place in 449 to bring peace, known as the ‘Peace of Kallias’.<sup>7</sup> While democratic Athens created a negative image of both the enemy and its relationship with Athenian elites, those who stayed true to the ritualised friendship had to cope with the new political situation. Still, such a connection was seen as something negative. What or whom should the elite have feared? Can we say something about the societal aspects the Athenian elite in fifth century Athens had to cope with, especially with the critique on their way of life? Were it the Persian Wars and the development of democracy alone that made it difficult to remain true to traditional features of elite-life, or was there more?

---

<sup>4</sup> Schreiner (1975: 84)

<sup>5</sup> S. Forsdyke delivers a broad study on the development of ostracism after 508 B.C. and shows a variety of explanatory approaches about the use of ostracism. Forsdyke, (2005: 158-f.f.)

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner (1975: 84)

<sup>7</sup> Regarding Kallias’ visit to Persia: Hdt. VII.151. The existence of the ‘Peace of Kallias’ is debatable (Rhodes (2010: 53-54))

## Methodology

In order to answer the main question, I have decided to focus on different perspectives, which, together, might form an answer. I have divided each perspective in individual chapters, starting with *xenia* and gift-exchange, followed by tyranny, medism, ostracism and Athenian citizenship. These perspectives form features of the problems or issues members of the Athenian elite had to cope with during the fifth century B.C. Next to their origin and purpose, I mainly focused on the role each perspective had on Athenian society in the fifth century. This way, the situation in which members of the Athenian elite had to live becomes clearer.

The methods I used are diverse. In order to explain what I did and why I did it, I want to discuss the methodology by chapter. Prior to this discussion, I will first say something about the ancient literature I used.

Throughout the thesis I used and studied ancient literature in order to understand each perspective separately. These sources provide crucial information, both about the past and about their own time. Even though the literature can be used to create an image of the ancient past, it comes with problems. The first problem is the transmission over time: while ancient texts were copied and thus transmitted through the centuries, reading-errors, modifications or deletions might have taken place.<sup>8</sup> Second, ancient writers modified reality themselves, only writing stories or narratives with a purpose that differed from reporting life as it was. The reason for discussing these problems is to explain that I am aware of their existence. For this reason, I used modern studies on ancient texts, such as P. J. Rhodes', *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1993).

### Chapter 1

Important for this first chapter is the creation of an image for the understanding of *xenia* and the usage of gift-exchange in fifth century Greece. One of the oldest sources is the work of Homer, which provides a possible glimpse on ritualised friendship in Greek (pre-) archaic times. It can say something about the act of *xenia* in both the archaic and the classical period. As Homer mentions the use of gifts in order

---

<sup>8</sup> L. D. Reynolds & N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (4th ed.) (Oxford 2013)

to seal a bond, modern studies on *xenia* and gift-exchange are used as well. Both historical and anthropological studies by for example G. Herman and M. Mauss provide a better understanding of the existence and the purpose of ritualised friendship in ancient societies. These studies do not only speak about ritualised friendship in ancient Greece but also give a broader explanation of the phenomenon. This might help in the creation of a fuller image on *xenia* and gift-exchange in classical Greece, Athens in particular. Ancient Greek sources do not always provide a fixed and one-sided view on the topic.

As will be discussed, Greek or Athenian *xenia* did differ from the Persian form of ritualised friendship. Moreover, the exchanging of gifts had a different purpose, even though its main function was the confirmation of a bond. For this reason I also focused on ritualised friendship and gift-exchange in Persia. Studies of M. Miller and P. Briant have been used to say something about the Persian form of *xenia*. The reason for shedding some light on ritualised friendship in Persia, in combination with the Persian way of gift giving, was because it says something about the negative view on Athenian *xenia* and gift-exchange in the course of the fifth century. It provides information about the role of the two phenomena in fifth century Athenian society.

## *Chapter 2*

Next to the chapter on medism, this chapter is used to give an understanding of the banishment of influential individuals from Athenian society. If the *Athenian Constitution* is to be trusted, both tyranny and medism were the main charges to ostracise a person from society. This chapter focuses on the role of tyranny in fifth century Athenian society, in order to understand why people were removed from Athens.

In order to say something about the role of tyranny in fifth century Athens, I started by studying the origin and the meaning of the word *tyrannos*. In the fourth century B.C. the word was used for a one-man-government, which was judged negatively by Athenian democrats, for such a constitution was the opposite of democracy. Since the *Athenian Constitution* mentions tyranny as the number one accusation in order to be removed from society through ostracism, tyranny should have been a threat against society from the beginning of the fifth century. Is this true?

By exploring Greek leadership in the (pre-) archaic period, I want to create a better view on the subject. Hesiod and Homer provide information about the good and the bad leader, but do not speak about *tyrannos*. Modern writers, such as N. Luraghi, give a better description of the origin and meaning of a tyrant in archaic times, explaining that a tyrant was first seen as a wise and just man. Over time this description and thus the meaning changed as fourth century Athenian authors considered tyranny as something opposing democracy. In order to say something about the role of tyranny in fifth century Athens, and thus to understand its function as an accusation that could lead to ostracism, a combination of theories and explanations on tyranny was made. In my opinion, there appears not to be a fixed explanation of tyranny in fifth century Athens. Even though fifth century writers as Herodotus and Thucydides provide some information, the problem occurs that tyranny was not a bad thing for everyone. It means opposing views existed/exist.

### *Chapter 3*

Next to the previous chapter, the chapter on medism has the purpose to explore the phenomenon on its origin and meaning in fifth century Athens. In line with the chapter on tyranny, the goal of this chapter is to understand the function of medism as an accusation in order to ostracise men from Athenian society. Next to ancient writers as Herodotus and Xenophon, I used modern studies to explain the word. A comprehensive study on medism by D. F. Graf provides most information, for it explores every aspect of the word. Since medism was a tool to outdo political rivals, anthropological studies by M. Gluckman and V. Hunter have been studied to understand the function of gossip and slander in ancient times. Why was slander or gossip used? And how was it used? Next to the anthropological studies, *ostraka* provide evidence for the negative view on medism, as it was inscribed on the sherds.

### *Chapter 4*

The main source for the understanding of ostracism is the *Athenian Constitution*. I used this text as a starting point, not because I believe this source provides the best information about the subject, but because both ancient and modern writers use the *Athenian Constitution* from which they discuss the institution.

Since the *Athenian Constitution* is quite late and was composed in the second half of the fourth century B.C., the information the text provides might be problematic. The last ostracism took place in 415 B.C., which is almost a century before the completion of the *Athenian Constitution*. For this reason, I studied other ancient literature, beginning with Philochoros (fourth century B.C.) and ending with Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.). These authors provide a more detailed description about the institution of ostracism and its use by the Athenian citizens. This way, a fuller image can be created about the institution in fifth century Athens.

Next to the ancient literature, I studied modern theories on ostracism. Modern writers provide different explanations on the origin and meaning of the institution. Special attention has been given to the study of S. Forsdyke, who offers a new, convincing approach to ostracism, as it brought an end to the intra-elite politics of exile.

Besides discussing both ancient and modern literature, I also studied archaeological evidence. *Ostraka* provide information about both the usage of ostracism and the reason for the banishment of Athenian individuals. As will be discussed in the fourth chapter, ca. 6000 Athenian citizens would vote. Individuals or ‘victims’ were elected. An individual would have to leave Athens for a particular amount of time if he received the majority of votes. Even though the amount of *ostraka* found can perhaps identify the ‘victims’, there appears to be a problem while using the shards as quantifiable evidence. Not all of the *ostraka* are found or can be found. Also, it is not clear if the shards were inscribed by different hands or by only a few. Pre-fabrications could have been made and used. Moreover, it is not clear if all Athenian citizens could read or write. For this reason, I do not use the *ostraka* for their quantifiable evidence. I only use them for their content, that is, for the inscriptions. These inscriptions show not only the names of the ‘victims’ but also some charges that can say something about the reason why ostracism was used in the first place.

## *Chapter 5*

The purpose of the last chapter is to explain the reason why individuals were removed from society through ostracism. By focusing on expectations fifth century Athenian citizens had of good citizenship, and more importantly of the way the leading elite

acted, ostracism and accusations of tyranny and medism might be better understood. Also, it provides an understanding on how the leading nobility should live their lives according to their *polis*.

Beginning with good citizenship in Athens in the archaic period, Solon and his transmitted poetry and laws offer a glimpse of the idea of good and bad citizenship. I have to confess that Solon's poetry comes with problems. As A. Lardinois describes, Solon's poetry was partly transmitted orally from time to time. This transmission brought forward different versions of work of Solon.<sup>9</sup> Next, Lardinois argues that parts of Solon's work were manipulated deliberately over time for various reasons.<sup>10</sup> He concludes that we have to recognize that most of Solon's work was 'filtered through the archaic and part of the classical period before it was written down and more or less fixed in the way we have it'.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to tell if we can rely on the transmitted poetry being Solon's own words.<sup>12</sup> This counts for most of the ancient written sources. I am aware of such errors. However, Solon's work is needed as it provides a glimpse on his own laws. These laws offer a good starting point, since Cleisthenes reused Solon's laws and even introduced new laws less than a century later. There is a possibility that Solon's idea of good citizenship forms the basis of Cleisthenes' laws and even his introduction of ostracism (if the *Athenian Constitution* is correct) in 508. Thus, Solon's laws on citizenship might help to understand the creation of ostracism and the reason why tyrant sympathizers and medists were hated.

I end this chapter with a short view on expectations. Work of Athenian orators, such as Demosthenes, provide information about bad citizenship, as their speeches mention forms of bad conduct that had to be punished. Even though these speeches date from the fourth century B.C., they shed some light on the expectations fifth century Athenian citizens had about the way their fellow citizens, and more importantly members of the leading elite, acted.

---

<sup>9</sup> Lardinois (2006: 19-20)

<sup>10</sup> Lardinois (2006: 28)

<sup>11</sup> Lardinois (2006: 32)

<sup>12</sup> Lardinois (2006: 15)

## Chapter 1: Ritualised Friendship

Traditional contact between members of Greek elites and non-Greek individuals, Persians in particular, became threatened by a new situation in which Athens became a democracy and Persia was seen as the number one enemy. During the fifth century B.C. this new situation undermined the power of the Athenian elites, who had to decide which side they would take: should they support their powerful *demos* or honour the tradition of ritualised friendship with the enemy? In this chapter I will explore the phenomenon of ritualised friendship, in order to understand its role in fifth century Greece, Athens in particular. It is my purpose to provide information about different aspects of ritualised friendship and how Greeks and Persians conducted them. I will begin with the origin of ritualised friendship and end with the fifth and fourth century Athenian view on the practice.

### The Origin and its Purpose

To say something about the origin and the purpose of ritualised friendship in fifth century Greek society, it is wise to look first at the pre-classical forms of such a bond. Two institutions existed, namely exogamic matrimony and *xenia*.<sup>13</sup> A combination of the two institutions was not uncommon. Female relatives could be given as brides to one's 'friend' in order to seal a bond. A person could also become a *xenos*, a guest friend.

How these forms were applied in everyday life is attested in the works of Homer (eighth century B.C.). Book VI of the *Iliad* provides information about some features of guest friendship in Homeric times, between the Lycian leader Glaukos and Diomedes, king of Argos. While they fought against each other on the battlefield in Troy, the two leaders recognised one another as *xenos*. It were their forefathers who started the friendship. Lines 122 to 242 describe the establishment of *xenia* between the Argive hero Bellerophon and Oeneus, king of Lycia. After Bellerophon's banishment by the Argive king, the hero was obliged to travel to Lycia. Here, Bellerophon fulfilled some dangerous tasks for Oeneus. Afterwards, the hero was praised by the monarch and received his daughter in marriage. Glaukos, who, in the

---

<sup>13</sup> Alonso (2007: 212)

heat of the battle, had to explain his origins to Diomedes, told this story. After recognising each other as one's *xenos*, Diomedes speaks the following words:

‘ “Verily now art thou a friend of my father's house from of old: for goodly Oeneus on a time entertained peerless Bellerophon in his halls, and kept him twenty days; and moreover they gave one to the other fair gifts of friendship. Oeneus gave a belt bright with scarlet, and Bellerophon a double cup of gold, which I left in my palace as I came hither. But Tydeus I remember not, seeing I was but a little child when he left, what time the host of the Achaeans perished at Thebes. Therefore now am I a dear guest-friend to thee in the midst of Argos, and thou to me in Lycia, when so I journey to the land of that folk. So let us shun one another's spears even amid the throng; full many there be for me to slay, both Trojans and famed allies, whomsoever a god shall grant me and my feet overtake; and many Achaeans again for thee to slay whomsoever thou canst. And let us make exchange of armour, each with the other, that these men too may know that we declare ourselves to be friends from our fathers' days.” ’<sup>14</sup>

This quotation offers more information about the existence of guest friendship between Glaukos and Diomedes. It provides information about both the rules of *xenia*, as creating friendship by exchanging gifts and keeping the bond intact by not hurting each other in battle. Moreover, the words by Diomedes put emphasis on *xenia* as a traditional bond, which suggests it had to be maintained in honour of one's forefathers: after naming the gifts of exchange, Diomedes explains he still has the cup in his palace. Apparently, such gifts reminded later generations about the friendship. I will continue my discussion about gift exchange in a later section. As was mentioned prior to the passage, Oeneus gave his daughter to Bellerophon to marry the hero. It might be seen as another measure to seal a bond between the two individuals. But perhaps it goes even further than sealing a bond through marriage: the king's daughter bore Bellerophon three sons, one of which was named Hippolochos. Full of pride,

---

<sup>14</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, VI.215-230

Glaukos explains he is the son of Hippolochos at the end of his speech.<sup>15</sup> It means Glaukos and Diomedes were both related to Oeneus.

It is hard to tell whether Homer's narratives reflect reality or not. Is it possible to use the story of Glaukos and Diomedes as an example to understand the application of *xenia* in classical Greece? According to F. Adcock, epic stories were used as a model by the Greeks to apply to everyday life. As Adcock explains, the ancient Greeks relied on examples given by epic stories such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>16</sup> They learned from the protagonists who had to deal with problems such as war, and created peace by practicing diplomacy. If this is correct, than Homer could indeed provide information about the application of *xenia* in classical Greece. Before I continue with the practice of *xenia*, I first want to explain why it even existed.

#### Existence of *Xenia*

As the narrative of Glaukos and Diomedes shows, guest friendship was created after Bellerophon fulfilled four tasks, after which Oeneus recognised him as a hero and a 'noble scion of the gods'.<sup>17</sup> It can be interpreted in different ways: (1) since Bellerophon showed himself to be a hero by overcoming Amazons, monsters and warriors, Oeneus saw him as a useful aid in times of need; (2) since Oeneus accepted Bellerophon as an offspring of the gods, the creation of a bond with such a hero brought Oeneus closer to divine aid; (3) Oeneus was simply thankful for Bellerophon's aid and offered him his friendship in return. Looking at the tasks Bellerophon had to fulfil, the fight with the Solymi, a tribe that knew the toughest men the hero fought against, is striking.<sup>18</sup> The Solymi are named again when Glaukos speaks about Bellerophon's three children. Next to Hippolochos, Oeneus' daughter bore another son, Isandros. Glaukos mentions the death of Isandros, who was killed by Ares while fighting against the Solymi. Apparently, Lycia was in a fight with the Solymi as they fought against each other for at least two generations. Perhaps the purpose of *xenia* between Bellerophon and Oeneus lies here. The first interpretation, in combination with the third, proves to be reasonable enough to understand *xenia*

---

<sup>15</sup> Homer, *Il.* VI.205

<sup>16</sup> Adcock (1975: 9)

<sup>17</sup> Homer, *Il.* VI.191 (own translation into English)

<sup>18</sup> Homer, *Il.* VI.185

was made in response to a specific need in times of war or political conflict. Modern studies show a similar explanation. In a comprehensive study on ritualised friendship in the ancient world, G. Herman explains the creation of *xenia* lies not only in the search for aid in times of e.g. war. It reaches further than that. As Herman describes:

‘(...) *xenoi* could be found providing each other assistance – and, it should be noted, substantial assistance – in solving family affairs; in avenging personal grievances; in lending money; in offering shelter, refuge or asylum; in ransoming each other from captivity; in achieving political power; in subverting governments; and overthrowing empires.’<sup>19</sup>

According to Herman, these ‘services’ can be divided into three categories: (1) ritual services (e.g. foster-parenthood); (2) private services (e.g. providing shelter and lending money); (3) political services (e.g. assistance in war and *proxenia*). To give an example on how these services were used by Greeks and Persians I focus on Alexander I, king of Macedonia (r. ca. 498-454 B.C.). As a Macedonian monarch Alexander maintained contact between Persians and Greeks. While king Darius I (550-486 B.C.) conducted his plan to expand Persian territory to the west at the beginning of the fifth century, he sent a Persian embassy to the kingdom of Macedonia (ca. 510 B.C.).<sup>20</sup> Here, the ambassadors required king Amyntas I (r. ? – 498 B.C.), father of Alexander I, to offer the Persian king earth and water.<sup>21</sup> This gift was a token of submission, which made Amyntas a vassal-king to the king of Persia. A diplomatic bond was created: Amyntas gave the Persians what they asked and organised a feast to celebrate the agreement.<sup>22</sup> The marriage of Alexander’s sister Gygaea and the Persian commander Bubares strengthened the bond between Macedonia and Persia. It was Alexander who offered his sister to the commander.<sup>23</sup> As a relative of Bubares’ wife he was able to ask services from the Persians and become related to Persia. Unfortunately, ancient sources offer no evidence of any

---

<sup>19</sup> Herman (1987: 128)

<sup>20</sup> Borza (1990: 103)

<sup>21</sup> Hdt. V.18

<sup>22</sup> Hdt. V.18

<sup>23</sup> According to E. Borza (1990: 103), as a prince Alexander could not have offered his sister to the Persian commander in 510 B.C. It was either Amyntas who gave his daughter in marriage to arrange and seal diplomatic ties with Persia, or Alexander himself who used exogamic matrimony one decade after the murder of the Persian embassy occurred. (see below)

requirement of ritual services by Alexander, such as foster-parenthood. It can only be suggested that Alexander became a foster-parent of Gygaea's son Amyntas, who became ruler of Alabanda in Caria.<sup>24</sup>

Besides Alexander's contact with Persia, the king was a *proxenos* of Athens, which is one of the political services (point 3). In Athens such a title was 'occasionally awarded to a foreigner as an honour for having performed a service that had benefited the city'.<sup>25</sup> As a *proxenos*, the honorand received the protection of the *polis*, or as M. B. Walbank summarises:

'The proxenos is placed, in short, on a par with Athenian citizens, and, often, generals and other state-officials are instructed to ensure that he be protected, with his family, from murder or other violence, and severe penalties are laid down against those who harm him, with compensation to be paid by the malefactors. This protection applies not only in Athens but throughout the Empire.'<sup>26</sup>

As the *proxenos* was regarded to be on an equal level with a citizen, he received protection from any harm. How Alexander became *proxenos* is under discussion. According to E. Borza, one of the reasons could be the king's warning about the size of Xerxes' army at Tempe around 480 B.C.<sup>27</sup> When the Persian king Xerxes (519-466 B.C.) tried to enter Greece from the north through the valley of Tempe, an army of Spartans and Athenians were posted to prevent a Persian invasion. Alexander sent messengers to persuade the Athenians to withdraw. Another option could be the provision of Macedonian timber to Athens and her naval needs around 482. After the Athenian acceptance of Themistocles' naval programme in 482, Macedonia provided wood for the building of ships. Both options are convincing. As a *proxenos* of Athens, Alexander was used by the Persians to deliberate with Athens about making peace with Xerxes. Mardonius, leading commander of the Persian army, sent Alexander to Athens because of two reasons, described by Herodotus:

---

<sup>24</sup> Hofstetter (1978: no. 128)

<sup>25</sup> Borza (1990: 108)

<sup>26</sup> Walbank (1978: 6)

<sup>27</sup> Borza (1990: 108)

‘Mardonius, [...], sent next an envoy to Athens. This was Alexander, the son of Amyntas, a Macedonian, of whom he made choice for two reasons. Alexander was connected with the Persians by family ties; for Gygaea, who was the daughter of Amyntas, and sister to Alexander himself, was married to Bubares, a Persian, and by him had a son, to wit, Amyntas of Asia; who was named after his mother’s father, and enjoyed the revenues of Alabanda, a large city of Phrygia, which had been assigned to him by the king. Alexander was likewise (and of this too Mardonius was well aware), both by services which he had rendered, and by formal compact of friendship, connected with Athens.’<sup>28</sup>

Strikingly, Alexander had to take the role as intermediary to solve a conflict between his two ‘friends’. The conflict between Athens and Persia could have placed Alexander in a difficult situation for he did not want to take sides. One way to solve such a problem was to stay neutral. Instead of becoming a participant in the war, Alexander took the role as messenger of both parties. While delivering the Persian message, the Macedonian king showed his sympathy to the Athenians, arguing to make peace, for Xerxes’ power was too great. However, it has to be mentioned that Alexander, as a vassal-king of Persia, after providing the gift of earth and water, belonged to the Persian Empire, thus acting according to the rules of Persian vassalage, whatever those may be. Alexander served Persia, while remaining a true friend of Athens. Problems arising from ritualised friendship will be discussed below.

Looking at the private services, one service in particular can be connected to Alexander, namely the provision of shelter. In the 460’s the bond between Macedonia and Athens collapsed. Alexander, as vassal-king, maintained ties with Persia, while Athens attempted to remove the Persian threat from Greece. According to Borza, Alexander offered the Athenian general Themistocles (524-459 B.C.) sanctuary at Pydna in or after 471, when the latter had been ostracised.<sup>29</sup> However, the work of Thucydides in particular does not provide clear evidence that Alexander indeed gave shelter to Themistocles. While living in exile, Themistocles was charged of collaboration with the Persians.<sup>30</sup> The Athenians wanted to arrest the general and sent

---

<sup>28</sup> Hdt.VIII.136

<sup>29</sup> Borza (1990: 121)

<sup>30</sup> Thuc.I.135

a search-team to track Themistocles down. Knowing about the accusation, the general fled, arrived in Molossia and found shelter at the house of king Admetos (date uncertain: the king reigned before 430 B.C.). Thereafter, Thucydides describes the following:

‘Not long afterwards the Spartan and Athenian officers arrived. For all their lengthy protestations Admetus refused to hand over Themistocles, but, since he wished to make his way to the King of Persia, sent him across on foot to Pydna on the Aegean coast, a town in the kingdom of Alexander. Here he found a merchant ship setting sail for Ionia, and went on board: (...)’<sup>31</sup>

Themistocles could have been a *xenos* of Admetos, since the king hid him from the search party.<sup>32</sup> There is a possibility Admetos and Alexander were *xenoi*, as Admetos sent Themistocles to Macedonia, in order to travel to Persia. Thucydides does not mention the existence of a *xenia* between the Athenian general and Admetos or Alexander. Such a friendship can only be suggested. What can be learned from the passage is that Themistocles found his refuge at the Persian court, where he, as described by Thucydides, learned the Persian language.<sup>33</sup>

*Xenia* was not only a tool to create diplomatic bonds. *Xenoi* were bound to offer certain services to assist their guest friends in various ways. As Herman mentions, these services were all based on aid between individuals. To ratify such bonds, gifts were exchanged.

### Gift Exchange

As the story of Glaukos and Diomedes showed, their forefathers had given each other gifts, creating friendship in the form of *xenia*: Oeneus gave Bellerophon a shiny red belt, and in return received a double cup made of gold.<sup>34</sup> These gifts were symbols, reminding later generations of their *xenia*. As the Homeric story shows, gifts played an important role when a bond was created, which suggests gift exchange was a way

---

<sup>31</sup> Thuc.I.137

<sup>32</sup> Thuc.I.136

<sup>33</sup> Thuc.I.138

<sup>34</sup> Homer, *Il.*VI.220

to seal bonds. However, looking at the example, the gifts are different in form and perhaps also in value. In this section I will focus on gift exchange, in order to understand the meaning of the gift and its role in the creation of *xenia*. How did the exchange of gifts ratify a bond? Moreover, what were the expectations of giver and receiver, regarding the gift?

Generally, there were two types of gifts: objects or persons. In case of the latter, the person could either be a slave or a bride. Women were given as brides with the purpose of sealing bonds between two families, as attested in the example of the marriage between Gygaea, sister of the Macedonian king Alexander I, and the Persian general Bubares. A woman was a tool in the creation and the ratification of an alliance. Moreover, her offspring further ratified the bond between the two families.

Slaves were given as part of a grander gift, as described by Athenaeus (ca. 200 A.D.). Artaxerxes (r. 465-424 B.C.), king of Persia, gave to the Cretan Entimos the following:

‘[Artaxerxes] gave him a tent of extraordinary size and beauty, and a couch with silver feet; and he sent him also expensive coverlets, and a man to arrange them, saying that the Greeks did not know how to arrange a couch. [...] He sent him also a couch with silver feet, and cushions for it, and a flowered tent surmounted with a canopy, and a silver chair, and a gilt parasol, and some golden vessels inlaid with precious stones, and a hundred large vessels of silver, and silver bowls, and a hundred girls, and a hundred boys, and six thousand pieces of gold, besides what was allowed him for his daily expenses.’<sup>35</sup>

Besides offering Entimos luxurious objects, Artaxerxes also provided slaves, girls and boys. The gifts are numerous and too grand. Here lies the difference between gifts given by the Greeks and gifts given by the Persians. Whereas the Greek gifts, as described by Homer, were simple though precious, Persian gifts were considered to be extreme. Whether the Persian gifts were indeed too grand is not clear, as the

---

<sup>35</sup> Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, II.31 (2007). Entimos was a member of a party that joined Themistocles (after his banishment from Athens) to the Persian court, where Entimos received the gifts as described (Hofstetter (1978: no. 97).

sources are Greek in origin. Exaggeration by Greek writers is possible, especially when they depict the enemy as someone who stood completely against the Greek norms and values. In *Acharnians*, a play of the Athenian play writer Aristophanes (446-386 B.C.), the bombastic gifts the Persian kings gave to Greek embassies are ridiculed. During their stay in Persia, the Greek embassy was served unmixed wine, while lying on couches and eating baked oxen.<sup>36</sup> The scene further suggests the embassy had been bribed and mesmerized by Persian riches: they attempted to persuade the Athenian *prytaneis* (the executive council) to accept the gold the Persian king offered them as a gift.<sup>37</sup> In general, Persian gifts appeared to be both large in size or in quantity, against the Greek gifts, which were smaller and less grand, as Homer describes. As M. Miller explains, the extravagance of Persian gifts in combination with great hospitality was a feature of Persian diplomatic exchange. ‘In general, luxury items of precious metal and textile were the gifts offered by the Persian king to thank his subjects, to win over potential enemies, and to welcome members of foreign embassies.’<sup>38</sup> The presentation of Persian gift exchange and hospitality by Aristophanes suggests that such behaviour differed from the Greeks, Athens in particular.

An example of how gift exchange could be abused would be the story of a Persian embassy that visited Amyntas, king of Macedonia around 510. While the king was showing his hospitality to the Persians in the form of a feast, the guests spoke to Amyntas as follows:

‘Dear Macedonian, we Persians have a custom when we make a great feast to bring with us to the board our wives and concubines, and make them sit beside us. Now then, as thou hast received us so kindly, and feasted us so handsomely, and givest moreover earth and water to King Darius, do also after our custom in this matter.’<sup>39</sup>

Whilst Amyntas was not a fool and knew that the Persians abused his hospitality, the Macedonian king could do nothing more than to accept and fulfil his guests’ wishes.

---

<sup>36</sup> Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 65-f.f.

<sup>37</sup> Aristophanes, *Ach.*100-f.f.

<sup>38</sup> Miller (1997: 128)

<sup>39</sup> Hdt.V.18

As not to make enemies, Amyntas was obliged to summon the women to sit side by side with the ambassadors. As the story goes, the Persians drank too much and began to touch and kiss the women. Amyntas feared the power of the Persians and kept silent. His son Alexander was angered by the behaviour of the embassy and sent the women away, promising the Persians they would return to them later. Alexander tricked the embassy by sending beardless youths, dressed as women, to pleasure them. Armed with daggers, the youths killed all ambassadors. Though this story has been criticised by scholars on its reliability, the celebration Amyntas organized was quite common. It was expected. Moreover, it was part of the creation of a bond, since it was a further reinforcement. As Herman describes, through the feasting and eating with a new ‘friend’, the gods became witnesses of the bond that was made.<sup>40</sup> However, it is not clear such feasting had the same purpose for the Persians, as they were visiting Amyntas in the name of the Persian king. They were visiting a vassal-king, not a friend.

Prior to the feasting gifts were exchanged. However, Amyntas did not offer a valuable object or a bride. Instead, he gave something different, something the Persians expected, namely earth and water to king Darius. As was already mentioned, Amyntas accepted his ‘unconditional surrender to Persia’.<sup>41</sup>

The objects that were given varied enormously in shape, size and form. This diversity is particularly visible in the exchange of gifts by Greeks and Persians. This is mainly because the only sources I have used so far are Greek in origin. Ancient writers present the gifts as different. What ancient writers, such as Herodotus or Demosthenes, show is influenced by the idea about gifts and friendship in their own time. Most of these sources originate from the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth century B.C. or even later, which generally provide a negative description of Persian culture, as conspicuous, extravagant in their gesture towards guests, bribing the honest man who becomes a traitor.<sup>42</sup> These sources were put together at a time when gifts were given by the Athenian *demos* as a whole. The gifts were no objects or women for personal use, i.e. for the individual receiver as we saw in e.g. the Entimos-story. They were either offerings with the purpose to return it back to the people in the

---

<sup>40</sup> Herman (1987: 66)

<sup>41</sup> Llewellyn-Jones (2014: 88)

<sup>42</sup> Especially the Athenian orator Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) describes the Persian practice of giving gifts in this way (Demosthenes, *On the False Embassy*, 19.273-274 (1989)).

form of divine offerings, the payment of communal buildings, monuments or festivals.

### Persian Gift Giving

As mentioned above, the description of Persian gifts by Greek writers suggest Persian gifts were too grand. However, this is what Greek fifth and fourth century writers suggest. We have to keep in mind that these grand gifts were given by the Persian king to an individual or a group in a formal setting. To shed some light on Persian gifts, both formal and informal, works of for example Xenophon have to be studied. Even though Xenophon is Greek in origin, he is one of the few writers who attempts to write his narratives from a Persian point of view.

One of the gifts was the robe, which was one of the ‘archetypal royal gifts’.<sup>43</sup> It was given as a symbol of power, or as Xenophon mentions ‘a mark of special favour’.<sup>44</sup> Cyrus (king of Persia ca. 559-530 B.C.) received the robe from his grandfather, after the first named the latter the most handsome man by far.<sup>45</sup> As L. Llewellyn-Jones explains, the Persian robe had extraordinary powers, for robes were tools in highlighting the hierarchy in Persian court-society. When the ruler gave a robe to a subordinate it was an indication of ‘special favour’.<sup>46</sup> The robe provided importance, a new rank or/and authority to the receiver.

Other royal gifts were jewels and jewellery, such as bracelets, necklaces and tiaras. Next to robes, these gifts highlighted a man’s position of favour to the king. Daggers, swords, horses, slaves and tents, to name a few other presents, might be regarded as gifts of appreciation, since no symbolical value, such as social ranking or status as royal favourite, is explicitly connected to these gifts by the sources.

According to P. Briant, the Persians did not regard the robes and jewels as trinkets: ‘they were the resplendent marks of the king’s favour granted to them in return for services rendered’.<sup>47</sup> Wearing these gifts granted accessibility to the level of Persians

---

<sup>43</sup> Briant (2002: 305)

<sup>44</sup> *Xen.Cyr.* 1.3.3

<sup>45</sup> *Xen.Cyr.* 1.3.2

<sup>46</sup> Llewellyn-Jones (2014: 65)

<sup>47</sup> Briant (2002: 306)

most honoured by the monarch. Persians not belonging to the honourand group of men could recognise the latter, not only by their clothes, but also due to the fact that the gifts were ceremonially given in public, surrounded by an audience.

The ‘archetypical royal gifts’, as Briant describes them, were not only given to Persians. The *Historical Miscellany* by Aelian (175-235 A.D.), provides the following information regarding royal gifts to envoys, both from Greece and elsewhere:

‘The presents given by the king of Persia to envoys who came to see him, whether they came from Greece or elsewhere, were the following. Each received a Babylonian talent of silver coins and two silver cups weighing a talent each (the Babylonian talent is equivalent to 72 Attic minae). He gave them bracelets, a sword, and a necklace; these objects were worth 1,000 darics. In addition, there was a Persian robe. The name of this robe was *dorophorikē*.’<sup>48</sup>

Besides money and precious items, such as cups and jewellery, envoys received a robe by the name of *dorophorikē* (‘given as a present’).<sup>49</sup> The robe had the purpose to be worn in the presence of the Persian king. Even though the source and its writer date from the third century A.D., other earlier writers mention similar presents.<sup>50</sup>

In general, gifts given by the Persian king were tokens of honour: golden daggers, robes, horses, golden bracelets and necklaces. These gifts were given to those who performed good actions for the king, whatever they may be. Next to these materials, favourites were sometimes provided with land, a city, a satrapy (Persian province). While receiving land, the favourites were obliged to govern their city/area/satrapy in the service of the king of Persia. Herodotus mentions king Xerxes giving the whole land of Cilicia to Xenagoras for saving the life of the king’s brother Masistes.<sup>51</sup> Themistocles was given Myus (Caria), Magnesia (Lydia) and Lampsacus (East-Turkey) by king Artaxerxes I as the king honoured him for his intelligence and for

<sup>48</sup> Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, I.22

<sup>49</sup> Liddell and Scott: δωροφορικός, <http://philolog.us>

<sup>50</sup> Hdt.IX.20; Xen.Cyr.VIII.2.7-8

<sup>51</sup> Hdt.IX.107

learning both the Persian language and customs.<sup>52</sup> P. J. Rhodes describes such gift giving of land as a ‘reflection of the Persian custom of paying subordinates in kind rather than in cash’.<sup>53</sup> However, such kindness comes with a price. The Persian king expected that after giving gifts his subordinates or favourites remained true to the king. Naturally, reciprocity or gift-and-take was present. But balance or equality of importance and power between the king of Persia and his subordinates was absent. The king had all the power: he could give and take; he could make people important and at the same time destroy them; no one could surpass the gifts given by the king, both in their quantity and symbolical and material value. As the study on the *potlatch* in the next part will show, reciprocity ends when the receiver is not able to provide the giver the same gift or even surpasses the gift received. If the latter occurs, the receiver becomes indebted to the giver, less powerful and dependent on the giver, since the latter has more power.

What became problematic in the relationship between Athenians and Persians, especially during and after the Persian Wars, is that the gifts given by the Persians were grander and perhaps more valuable than the Athenians, both individuals and as a *polis*, could provide or even outdo in return. The purpose of the Persian gift, as was discussed above, is many-sided. The gifts I am concerned with were given by Persian royalty. The purpose of these gifts was to show the appreciation from the king to his subordinates for their ‘good deeds’, sustaining the willingness to perform such deeds in the future. However, at the same time the gifts symbolised the power of the king, letting the subordinates know that they were dependent on their monarch. In return, services (or good deeds) by the subordinates were rendered.<sup>54</sup> The gift giving for the Athenians and the Greeks in general had a different function. As we saw, gifts were exchanged in order to seal a bond as *xenia*. Either sides or men were equal and the studied sources and texts showed no sign of surpassing each other’s gifts in quantity or value. Thus, the reason why Greeks/Athenians and Persians provided gifts differed considerably.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Thuc.I.138

<sup>53</sup> Rhodes (2010: 39)

<sup>54</sup> Briant (2002: 316). According to Briant, the services vary widely; showing bravery in war, saving the life of the king, defending to the death a citadel, etc.

<sup>55</sup> Briant (2002: 318 - f.f.)

### Gift Exchange before the 460's

To get an understanding of the gift exchange in the period before the rise of democracy in Athens (ca. 460's), examples have to be found in the works of for example Homer. The story of Glaukos and Diomedes has already been discussed and does not need a further explanation. Another example is the gift received by Odysseus, who receives a 'beautiful and valuable gift, (...) such as friends give to friends'.<sup>56</sup> It might be suggested pre-democratic *xenia*, in both Athens and perhaps the rest of Greece, was sealed with valuable gifts between two individuals. These gifts could be used for private purposes and functioned, as the story of Glaukos and Diomedes shows, as symbols of the existence of their bond, recognizable for later generations. The gifts Artaxerxes offered Entimos differ from the gifts described in the story of Glaukos and Diomedes. These gifts were given in large quantity and were of great value, which according to anthropological and social studies, had to do with the expectations of the giver. I will now focus on the use and value of the gift.

No matter what form, a gift was powerful enough to create and maintain *xenia*. A perhaps simplistic example is marriage: a ring (in most cases it is a ring) seals the bond between two people. It ratifies the relationship and places certain obligations on the participants, as is attested by wedding vows: e.g. love each other for better or worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. Of course, *xenia* cannot be compared with a marriage but the use of a certain object as a gift, to seal a bond, is similar. However, the gift was more than a binding tool. As anthropological and social studies argue, the gift was used as a way to create reciprocity. Gift exchange 'creates a permanent debt-relationship between donors and recipients'.<sup>57</sup> According to the sociologist M. Mauss (1872-1950), 'parties rival each other with gifts'.<sup>58</sup> Together with M. Davy, Mauss studied the areas Polynesia, Melanesia and North-West America in order to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of gift exchange in pre-modern societies, i.e. to reveal the meaning of such a custom in 'early phases of historical civilisations'.<sup>59</sup> As Mauss explains, the main purpose of their comparative study is to answer the following questions: 'In primitive or archaic types of society

---

<sup>56</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, I.309

<sup>57</sup> S. von Reden (1995: 79)

<sup>58</sup> Mauss (1966: 5)

<sup>59</sup> Mauss (1966: introduction by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, ix)

what is the principle whereby the gift received has to be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?’<sup>60</sup>

Central in their research is the existence of *potlatch* in North-West America: this is a recurring meeting of Indian tribes in which each tribe, led by their chief, attempts to outdo their rivals by organizing e.g. great banquets, marriage-ceremonies, initiations and cults of great gods or ancestors.<sup>61</sup> They ‘rival each other in generosity’ by the distribution of goods.<sup>62</sup> In general, the *potlatch* is a form of a gift: a tribe has been invited by another tribe to be a guest at the *potlatch*-celebration. This gift cannot be refused, for refusal is seen as weakness, a ‘fear of having to repay’, in other words a fear of having to provide a *potlatch* that is similar or even greater in presentation.<sup>63</sup> The receiver of the gift was obliged to give in return. As Mauss described, ‘failure to give or receive, like failure to make return gifts, means a loss of dignity’.<sup>64</sup> As mentioned earlier, guest friendship and diplomacy were conducted by exchanging gifts. As the study of Mauss shows, a social code existed. Herman explains this code as follows:

‘The central message of the code was simple: a man’s gift-giving capacity, or his willingness to abide by the obligations imposed by the gift, was a measure of his moral quality. Immoral behaviour consisted of not giving, or of breaching the obligations emanating from the acceptance of a gift.’<sup>65</sup>

As Herman explains, by providing a gift the giver persuades the receiver of the latter’s ability to be and remain a civilized friend/companion/partner. *Xenoi* could be each other’s friend, but the reason that they became *xenoi* was very much influenced by their need for diplomatic bonds. In order to understand the difference between guest friend and friend, let us continue with the people involved.

---

<sup>60</sup> Mauss (1966: 1)

<sup>61</sup> Mauss (1966: 4)

<sup>62</sup> Mauss (1966: 12)

<sup>63</sup> Mauss (1966: 39)

<sup>64</sup> Mauss (1966: 40)

<sup>65</sup> Herman (1987: 79)

### Who were involved?

Within the relationship of ritualised friendship, *xenos* refers to a friend from a different area.<sup>66</sup> Two men who are both living in the same social unit are no *xenoi*: instead these men are called *philoï*.<sup>67</sup> In our time ‘friend’ means ‘someone with whom a person maintains a very cordial relationship’.<sup>68</sup> Both words can perhaps be described this way, but there are some differences. If we agree that *philos* is a friend as described above then it is only a part of the meaning of *xenos*. As mentioned above, in creating a *xenia* both parties had to ratify this bond by gift exchange. Moreover, after gifts were exchanged and the friendship had been sealed, both friends had to agree upon the rules of their ritualised friendship: offering help in times of need, lending money, providing political aid, etc.

*Xenia* was created to organise diplomatic bonds. The ones who conducted diplomacy were either individuals or groups. What is visible in the literary sources is that mostly members of the elites were the ones to create diplomatic friendships with elites elsewhere. It was not so much the purpose of creating bonds in service of their own people. Instead, members of the elite had to safeguard their own status in a world in which power, envy and intrigue dominated their lives. Nevertheless, diplomatic ties were created between kingdoms or *poleis* with the aid of the elite. In case of Athens, the contact between individuals in order to protect the *demos* against for example foes existed: a change in the practice of *xenia* occurred in the course of the fifth century B.C. Over time, the citizens of Athens were the ones who decided who should represent the whole *polis* as ambassador. The size of an embassy could vary from three to ten men. The leading figure was often a member of the elite, for he could already ‘claim to have a connection with the object state’.<sup>69</sup> Good examples of such men are Kallias, son of Hipponikos, and Ppyrilampes and his son Demos, who were all sent to Persia (in 464/449/422 B.C.).<sup>70</sup> Since they belonged to the wealthiest men in Athens, they were good candidates to visit the Persian king in Susa. According to Miller, ‘it was necessary to select envoys carefully, to include men who could stand

---

<sup>66</sup> Herman (1987: Appendix A, 166)

<sup>67</sup> Thuc.II.17.1: In 431 B.C. the population of Attica went to Athens, where their friends (*philoï*) and relatives provided shelter.

<sup>68</sup> Prisma Dictionary – Dutch (Utrecht 2001). Own translation of the word *vriend* (‘iemand met wie men een zeer hartelijke relatie onderhoudt’).

<sup>69</sup> Miller (1997: 113)

<sup>70</sup> Miller (1997: for the dates see table 5.1, 110)

most readily, and cope most gracefully with, the sight of Persian opulence in its natural setting'.<sup>71</sup> As we saw, ambassadors who went to Persia received valuable gifts, which they could not decline. The gifts an ambassador received were closely monitored by the Athenian *demos*. Charges of bribery were not uncommon: especially during the fourth century B.C. ambassadors were charged of bribery after receiving lavish gifts from the Persian monarch. The attitude about gift exchange had changed, as will be discussed in the next section.

### Ideas about *Xenia* and Gift Exchange

The development of democracy in Athens in the course of the fifth century influenced the ideas about *xenia* and gift exchange. This is due to only one reason: power to the *demos*. During the fifth century the Athenian people set 'new ideals of behaviour'.<sup>72</sup> As Herman explains, Athens and her democratic constitution in development 'imposed a way of thinking which took the city as its point of departure'.<sup>73</sup> Influential personalities (leaders, members of the elite) had to change their morals and behaviour to meet such standards. One had to be loyal to the community as a whole. The problem arose when Athenian elites had to choose between *xenia* and patriotism: since *xenia* did not match with the new standards, the elites had to become patriots and support the ideals of the people. In times of war, elites had to be either patriotic or had to choose for the traditional bond with their *xenos*, even though their guest friend was the enemy. But it is more complicated. For some members of the elite it was difficult to come to a personal solution. Men who remained loyal to *xenia* could be charged for treason, which resulted in banishment or even execution.<sup>74</sup> Herman explains the emergence of this clash between classes in the following way:

'The upper classes of the Greek city were involved in a network of alliances across community lines; the lower classes were confined within their laterally insulated communities; and the upper classes did display more solidarity with those of their kind outside their communities than they did with the lower classes inside them. The portrayal of the 'foremost of citizens' as traitors is

---

<sup>71</sup> Miller (1997: 16)

<sup>72</sup> Herman (1987: 159)

<sup>73</sup> Herman (1987: 159)

<sup>74</sup> Herman (1987: 157)

thus central to an ideology that was propagated by the *demos* to protect themselves – and the community as a whole – from external, upper-class coalitions.<sup>75</sup>

Next to the severing of *xenia*, the tradition of gift exchange lost its value. While gifts were exchanged between kings and ambassadors or *xenoi* to seal bonds, democratic Athens changed her view on the practice. As S. von Reden argues, gifts that were traditionally received by individuals for their own use were now to be given to and used by the whole *demos*.<sup>76</sup>

The private use of a gift was negatively judged. The new situation problematized the practice of ritualised friendship with all its rules and functions: continuing and honouring one's forefathers' *xenia* became difficult. In addition, the exchange of gifts, a traditional obligation of both *xenoi*, experienced the same.

As a reaction to the contacts between Athenian and Persian nobility in the fifth century B.C., democratic Athens charged some of her influential citizens for treason. Having contact with Persians was seen as an act of medism. Moreover, the Athenians considered such contact as a sign of pro-tyrannical sentiment.

In the next two chapters I will focus on two phenomena, namely medism and tyranny. Each of these words will be discussed as to their origin and meaning in the course of the fifth century, in order to understand their role in democratic Athens. Both terms could be used to threaten and overthrow members of the Athenian elite. It is the purpose of these chapters to get a better understanding of the situation of the latter group, facing accusations of having either tyrannical sentiment or Median interests.

Two questions are central, namely 'What was the origin of the two phenomena?' and 'What was their role in fifth century Athens?'. Besides answering these questions, I would like to see if there was any connection between medism and tyranny before I will continue the chapter on ostracism. There appears to be a connection between the accusations of medism and tyranny, and the punishment of ostracism. This hypothesis will be discussed and evaluated later.

---

<sup>75</sup> Herman (1987: 160)

<sup>76</sup> S. von Reden (1995: 92)

Most of the primary sources that provide information about either medism or tyranny originate from the fourth century B.C. This might be problematic if a trustworthy image on both phenomena of the fifth century has to be created. Ancient writers, orators or philosophers, such as Aristotle or Demosthenes, provided information, which was influenced by their own beliefs and convictions. Hence, the knowledge that can be retrieved from fourth century sources might be blurry and unrepresentative. However, the writers give valuable information about ideas on the phenomena in the fourth century B.C., and thus help us to create possible views Athenians had in the fifth century B.C. regarding medism and tyranny.

## Chapter 2: Tyranny

### Before Tyranny: the Archaic Ruler

At the beginning of the archaic period in Greece (eighth century B.C.) the word *tyrannos* was not in use. Rulers or leaders were mostly called *basileus*, as is attested by eighth century Greek poems. These poems provide information about ideas of the good or the bad leader. While looking at fifth and fourth century texts on the term *tyrannos*, a resemblance with *basileus* can be seen. The archaic Greek poems form a starting-point in the understanding of the phenomenon of *tyrannos* in fifth and fourth century Athens. They are thus valuable in the study of the origin of *tyrannos*. I will start this part by focusing on the Greek poems and the ideas on *basileus*.

In *Works and Days* (eighth century B.C.), Hesiod offers the following description:

‘But those who give straight judgements to foreigners [226] and fellow-citizens and do not turn aside from justice at [227] all, their city blooms and the people in it flower. For them, [228] Peace, the nurse of the young, is on the earth, and far-seeing [229] Zeus never marks out painful war; nor does famine [230] attend straight-judging men, nor calamity, but they share out [231] in festivities the fruits of the labors they care for. For these [232] the earth bears the means of life in abundance, and on the [233] mountains the oak tree bears acorns on its surface, and [234] bees in its center; their woolly sheep are weighed down by [235] their fleeces; and their wives give birth to children who [236] resemble their parents. They bloom with good things [237] continuously. And they do not go onto ships, for the grain-giving field bears them crops.’<sup>77</sup>

While referring to *basileis*, Hesiod explains the good leaders will bring peace and prosperity for themselves and for their people. Far-seeing Zeus will reward good leadership with his support. Lines 238 to 247 describe a leader who acts the opposite, receiving and creating nothing but terror (famine, pestilence, death). In response, Zeus refuses to provide any help. Still, this bad leader is called *basileus* as well. Thus,

---

<sup>77</sup> Hes., *Works and Days*, 225-237

following Hesiod, there seems to be no difference in the name, only in the act. According to Hesiod, a good leader provides justice and will not turn aside from it. What Hesiod means by justice is not clear. Strikingly, the leader's subjects agreed with the rules of justice, and for them or Hesiod a good leader remains true to these rules. Especially justice or *δίκη* appears to be a crucial element in good leadership. In the *Theogony*, another poem by Hesiod, the following is mentioned:

‘Whomever [81] among Zeus-nourished kings the daughters of great Zeus [82] honor and behold when he is born, they pour sweet dew [83] upon his tongue, and his words flow soothingly from his [84] mouth. All the populace look to him as he decides disputes [85] with straight judgements; and speaking publicly without erring [86], he quickly ends even a great quarrel by his skill. For [87] this is why kings are wise, because when the populace is [88] being harmed in the assembly they easily manage to turn [90] the deeds around, effecting persuasion with mild words; [91] and as he goes up the gathering they seek his favor like a [92] god with soothing reverence, and he is conspicuous among the assembled people.’<sup>78</sup>

Hesiod mentions the good *basileus* as someone who acts as a judge, deciding ‘disputes with straight judgements’ (line 85). He is wise and thus can be king or is king.<sup>79</sup> Because the *basileus* is wise the people rely on him. Moreover, good leaders received their wisdom and wise words from Zeus. Again, good rulers are blessed and rewarded by Zeus. Homer (first half of the eighth century B.C.) describes something similar. In the *Odyssey*, book 8, the following is mentioned:

‘For one man is [170] inferior in looks, but the god sets a crown of beauty upon [171] his words, and men look upon him with delight, and he [172] speaks on unfalteringly with sweet modesty, and is [173] conspicuous among the gathered people, and as he goes through [174] the city men gaze upon him as upon a god.’<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Hes., *Theogony*, 82-92

<sup>79</sup> According to G. W. Most, line 89 is ambiguous: the line can either be translated as “This is why there are wise kings” or “This is why wise men are (set up as) kings”. Hes. *Theo.*, note 6

<sup>80</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, 169-174

Perhaps, the difference between men lies in the fact that only a few can speak good words, words to bring justice and, as can be seen in the *Theogony* (line 90), words to persuade. These are the most powerful men, since they can persuade their fellow-citizens with their wisdom and words and thus influence life in their community. But persuasive words had to be righteous or had to follow the rules of justice.

### The Origin and the Meaning of *Tyrannos*

That leaders could influence life in their community is attested in the origin of the word *tyrannos*. In his article on one-man government, N. Luraghi argues that the usage of the word by Greeks goes back to the seventh century B.C., after it was transmitted overseas from Anatolia and parts of North-Syria. *Tyrannos* might originate from the Luwian or Syrian word *tarwanis*, which appeared to be a title carried not only by leaders, but also their subjects.<sup>81</sup> As Luraghi mentions, the title does not refer to a monarch or a king. 'It is associated with wisdom' and had a close connection with 'righteousness' and 'justice'.<sup>82</sup> According to Luraghi, '*tarwanis* means something like 'the righteous one', with a nuance of social justice understood as support for the weaker'.<sup>83</sup> As some examples below will show, 'the righteous one' came at a time when the majority, the weak, needed them most: at times of slavery, great differences between rich and poor, or struggles that existed between social groups. When the majority wanted to change rules or their social lives in general, one man could make the difference.

If the original meaning of '*tyrannos*' had something to do with the reference to the 'righteous one', is there any attestation visible in ancient Greek sources?

Herodotus (484-425 B.C.) mentions Deiokes, the first Median king, who was well educated and used his knowledge to settle 'legal disputes among the people'.<sup>84</sup>

According to Herodotus, Deiokes wanted to obtain for himself sovereign power by creating justice amongst the Medes. The story is as follows:

---

<sup>81</sup> Luraghi based this idea on studies, which I was not able to read myself due to the lack of availability. The studies Luraghi used are the following: G. C. Melchert, *The Luwians* (New York 2003); F. Pintore, 'Tarwanis', in: O. Carruba, ed., *Studia mediterranea Piero Meriggi dicata* (Pavia 1979): 473-494; A. Uchitel, 'The earliest tyrants: from Luwian tarwanis to Greek τυραννος', in: G. Herman and I. Shatzman, eds., *Greeks Between East and West* (Jerusalem 2007): 13-30

<sup>82</sup> Luraghi (2013: 136)

<sup>83</sup> Luraghi (2013: 136)

<sup>84</sup> Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000: 1)

‘As the Medes at the time dwelt in scattered villages without any central authority, and lawlessness in consequence prevailed throughout the land, Deiokes, who was already a man of mark in his own village, applied himself with greater zeal and earnestness than ever before to the practice of justice among his fellows. It was his conviction that justice and injustice are engaged in perpetual war with one another. He therefore began this course of conduct, and presently the men of his age, observing his integrity, chose him to be the arbiter of their disputes. Bent on obtaining the sovereign power, he showed himself an honest and an upright judge, and by these means gained such credit with his fellow-citizens as to attract the attention of those who lived in the surrounding villages. They had long been suffering from unjust and oppressive judgements; so that, when they heard of the singular uprightness of Deiokes, and of the equity of his decisions, they joyfully had recourse to him in the various quarrels and suits that arose, until at last they came to put confidence in no one else.’<sup>85</sup>

After creating justice, Deiokes was chosen to be a leader, for he was considered to be an honest and righteous man/judge. His leadership and decisions were accepted and cherished. However, over time Deiokes got annoyed by the growing complaints the people served before him as to receive his advice to solve their own problems. The leader started to neglect his subjects’ complaints. As a result, lawlessness and robbery broke out, creating chaos amongst the Medes. In their search for a solution, the Medes wanted Deiokes to become their king. The man agreed but requested a palace that was ‘suitable to his rank, and a guard to be given him for his person’.<sup>86</sup> As the Medes complied with the man’s wishes, Deiokes became more powerful and distanced himself from his people. As he lived in his palace, Deiokes installed new laws that made it difficult for the people to have direct access to the king: he forbade future kings to be seen by his subjects and appointed messengers who organised all communication between the people and their leader.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Hdt. 1.96

<sup>86</sup> Hdt. 1.98

<sup>87</sup> Hdt. 1.99

It is striking that an ambitious, wise and righteous man could become king even after neglecting his subjects' complaints. As the paraphrase shows, the people needed a leader, whom they knew was wise and just. As the story suggests, Deiokes wanted to become king of the Medes only if he received a palace with a personal guard to protect him from the people's complaints. Also, the new laws regarding communication between leader and subject suggest Deiokes attempted to distance himself from all his subjects. If this were the case, it would not be an impossible idea to think subjects saw the king's conduct as selfish, despotic or egocentric. However, Herodotus does not mention a negative view on Deiokes' way of ruling the Medes. According to H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, the story did not really happen in late eighth century Median territory.<sup>88</sup> The account is rather a reflection of what happened in Greece, using the Greek experience about tyranny in order to create such stories in the fifth century. In contrast to the Athenians, the Medes (or the non-Greeks) were willing to become subjects of one man to rule them all, even though he usurped all power and at the same time distanced himself from society.

Looking at the (probably fictitious) story about Deiokes, the *Athenian Constitution* presents a similar story, in which a man creates order by acting as a mediator, a creator of new laws, partly focusing on the support for the weaker. Before the year 594 B.C. Athens saw many people ending up as slaves for the few, since 'loans were secured on the person' while 'the land was divided among few owners'.<sup>89</sup> A party struggle existed which created chaos in the political arena of the day and brought tension in Athenian society. In this tumult, the people chose a new leader to govern the city. It was Solon who became arbitrator and archon in Athens. The people trusted him, since he made clear in his elegies that he cared for Athens and that he criticized the rich, who had the urge for power and money, thus bringing civil strife into the city.<sup>90</sup> Solon ended old laws and made new ones, of which the three most democratic laws were, according to the *Athenian Constitution*, (1) 'the prohibition of loans secured upon the person', (2) 'the liberty allowed to anybody who wished to exact redress on behalf on injured persons', and (3) 'the right of appeal to the jury-court and having the power of the vote'.<sup>91</sup> After Solon's laws were implemented, the people were still asking questions and worrying him about the laws. Solon decided to

---

<sup>88</sup> Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000: 2)

<sup>89</sup> *Ath. Con.* IV.4

<sup>90</sup> *Ath. Con.* V.2-3

<sup>91</sup> *Ath. Con.* IX.1

leave Athens for ten years and went to Egypt, ‘as he did not think it fair for him to stay and explain his laws, but for everybody to carry out their provisions for himself’.<sup>92</sup> In addition, Solon left because many of the notables were not content with the laws he made. Three things are striking, namely (1) Solon was chosen to change the situation in Athens by creating new laws and bringing justice in Athenian society, (2) Solon left the city because he was bothered by the people’s problems about both his laws and their own matters, and (3) Solon left Athens for ten years after which Athens still knew problems and the people ultimately needed a new leader/wise man. Regarding the ten years journey, it is striking that the *Athenian Constitution* mentions the discontent of the nobility, and even the people, that caused Solon to depart voluntarily. Perhaps there will be some similarities in the banishment of influential Athenians after the people ostracized them. I will discuss ostracism in the fourth chapter. With reference to tyranny, the *Athenian Constitution* mentions the possibility that Solon could have become a tyrant. Because of his power, Solon could reduce the powers of others and ultimately become a tyrant. But he declined, since he did not want to aggrandize himself, but rather to secure the safety of Athens.<sup>93</sup> It must be said that tyranny is here connected with the aggrandizement of one single person, who would be so powerful that he could gain all political power. As mentioned earlier, the *Athenian Constitution* was produced in the end of the fourth century B.C., a time that was influenced by negative ideas about tyranny, and *μοναρχία* in general. Still, if Herodotus and the *Athenian Constitution* are to be trusted, there might indeed exist a connection between tyranny and the wise man or the ‘righteous one’, even in Greece.

### The Greek View on Tyranny

How did the Greeks see tyrants? Were they regarded as bad or wise and just?

According to S. Lewis, for the Greeks ‘a tyrant was not necessarily a bad leader: originally the word was used to describe a situation where one man (or a woman) who was not a monarch took and held power within a state’.<sup>94</sup>

The Greek view on a tyrant depended on the time and place. As the examples of Deiokeas and Solon showed, people were looking for a wise man, who could create

---

<sup>92</sup> *Ath. Con.* XI.1

<sup>93</sup> *Ath. Con.* VI.3

<sup>94</sup> Lewis (2009: 2)

order in times of social and political tumult. This person introduced new laws that would benefit those in need. However, as the example of Solon showed (and as other examples later will show) not everyone was content with new laws. The elite or those who had much influence in politics and society saw the wise men as rivals, people who ultimately could receive complete power in accordance with the *demos*. The relationship between tyrants and the people had to be very close, since the people could only rely on these ‘wise’ and at the same time influential men, especially at times when Athens was not a democracy. An example is given by D. Hammer, who discusses the involvement of the Athenian *demos* in the creation of tyrannical power. Hammer describes that Cleisthenes, in his struggle for political power among the Athenian elite, lost to his rival Isagoras. While the latter enjoyed power in Athens, Cleisthenes won over the *demos* ‘by promising them some political share’.<sup>95</sup> As the people were attracted by this promise and thus accepted Cleisthenes as their leader, the latter became even stronger than his opponent Isagoras. For the *demos* Cleisthenes was their hero, as he opposed the leading nobility, providing the people political power. On the other hand, Cleisthenes became a threat to the power of the nobility, since the latter had to share political power with the lower classes.

Hammer does not directly label Cleisthenes as a tyrant, though. By using the narrative of Cleisthenes’ struggle for power, Hammer explains that the *demos* had an important and sometimes decisive role in Athenian politics. This is visible in the development of democracy over time, which will be discussed below.

As the example of Cleisthenes shows, during the archaic period tyrants were more or less accepted, notably by the lower classes.<sup>96</sup> But attitudes changed during the fifth century B.C., attitudes that were influenced by the Persian Wars and the development of democracy. Athenians saw a connection between tyranny and Persia with her one-man rule. As a reaction, tyranny was considered the biggest threat to democracy. Athenian writers, who wrote after 480, were influenced by the idea of tyranny as ‘the hated opposite’.<sup>97</sup> Most of the writings about tyranny were written in these periods, i.e. the fifth and the fourth century B.C.

---

<sup>95</sup> Hammer (2005: 124)

<sup>96</sup> Lewis (2009: 10)

<sup>97</sup> Lewis (2009: 12)

There exists a handful of writers, poets, philosophers and orators who mention tyranny in both their own and previous times. In the following text, I discuss a few sources in chronological order, to first get an overview about the views on tyranny over time, and secondly to get an understanding of the ideas about tyranny in the fifth century.

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Hesiod and Homer describe the good and the bad leader. The word *tyrannos* was not mentioned and both poets only refer to *basileus*. One of the first attestations of *tyrannos* in Greek texts is a piece written by the poet Alcaeus (c. 621-? B.C.). Fragment 348 presents the following: ‘they established base-born Pittacus as tyrant of that gutless, ill-starred city, all of them loud in his praise’.<sup>98</sup> ‘They’ refers to the Mytileneans, who, according to the poet, were doomed to end in disaster. Hence, perhaps, they needed a man like Pittacus who might bring order, just as Deiokeas and Solon. The example suggests that there was a positive attitude towards tyranny. Of course, Alcaeus’ text only shows his idea about tyranny. Still, for him a tyrant was no threat. As Lewis mentioned, tyranny in the archaic period was seen as something positive: tyrants were popular. However, as Hammer showed, tyrants were partly accepted, as views between the lower and upper classes varied.

This more or less positive view on tyranny changed in the course of the fifth century B.C., after the Persian Wars. In the work of Herodotus contradictory views, though scattered, can be seen. On the one hand tyranny would be a ‘thing as unrighteous and bloodthirsty as aught on this earth’, while on the other hand tyrants were supported by gods.<sup>99</sup> An example in which both occurred is the story of Cypselus of Corinth (seventh century B.C.), who came to power after receiving an oracle at Delphi. The oracle foretold Cypselus that he would become a happy and powerful ruler, whereas his sons would be less happy. But after receiving power as a tyrant of Corinth, Cypselus sent many people into exile, robbed them of their goods and killed many people.<sup>100</sup> His son Periander continued the tyrannical reign of his father as the second tyrant of Corinth. Another description by Herodotus is the tyranny under Pisistratus who became tyrant of Athens in the second half of the sixth century B.C. Pisistratus came to power because of his military success and cleverness,

---

<sup>98</sup> Alcaeus: Greek Lyric – *Sappho & Alcaeus*, 348

<sup>99</sup> Hdt. V.92a

<sup>100</sup> Hdt. V.92

as Herodotus suggests. He received a personal guard of club bearers and allied himself with ‘the established city-politician’ Megakles.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Pisistratus presented himself together with a woman named Phya, whom the Athenians believed to be the goddess Athena, in order to legitimize his right to power with divine aid.<sup>102</sup> According to B. M. Lavelle, Herodotus’ story on Pisistratus was to provide an explanation for the reason why Athens was ‘forced to yield to tyranny’.<sup>103</sup> Since the narrative was composed in fifth century Athens, a time in which democracy flourished, people felt ashamed that they had to live under the most hated constitution (tyranny) in previous times.

The historian Thucydides (ca. 460-395 B.C.) provides information about the periods before Athens knew a democracy and mentions the following:

‘As Hellas grew more powerful and continued to acquire still more wealth than before, along with the increase of their revenue tyrannies began to be established in most of the cities, whereas before that there had been hereditary kingships based on fixed prerogatives.’<sup>104</sup>

Apparently, Thucydides sees the difference between tyranny and kingship, as the latter was legitimate, since kings could rely on ‘fixed prerogatives’. Thucydides sees a connection between tyrannies and the increase of revenue and the maritime power in the *poleis*. Growth all had to do with the self-fulfilment of the tyrants and their families:

‘The tyrants, moreover – whenever there were tyrants in the Hellenic cities – since they had regard for their own interests only, both as to the safety of their own persons and as to the aggrandizement of their own families, in the administration of their cities made security, so far as they possibly could, their chief aim, and so no achievement worthy of mention was accomplished by them, except perchance by individuals in conflict with their own neighbours. So on all sides Hellas was for a long time kept from carrying out in common

---

<sup>101</sup> Lavelle (1991: 318)

<sup>102</sup> Hdt.I.59-60

<sup>103</sup> Lavelle (1991: 318)

<sup>104</sup> Thuc.I.13

any notable undertaking, and also its several states from being more enterprising.’<sup>105</sup>

This paraphrase from Thucydides shows a striking idea about tyranny, especially in a time democracy was the desired constitution. It must be said that Thucydides remains relatively silent when it comes to sharing his view on things. But on looking closely at the text, the historian provides a two-sided description of tyranny: on the one side it delivered wealth for society, but on the other side the created wealth was only meant for personal gain, i.e. wealth for the tyrant.

Plato (ca. 427-347 B.C.) and his student Aristotle can be discussed together, because both share more or less the same ideas about tyranny. Both agree that tyranny is a form of monarchy, in which the monarch only rules out of his own interests. If a monarch rules out of the interest for the people it is called ‘royalty’ (βασιλική).<sup>106</sup> Both philosophers were analysing and discussing the best constitution possible. In the *Republic* Plato’s ideal ruler would be a philosopher-king, a wise man with moral virtue, who had the capacities to bring the state to a same condition. Unless philosophers became kings, or kings philosophers, the existing constitution would never see ‘the light of the sun’.<sup>107</sup> Plato seems to prefer monarchy to democracy.<sup>108</sup> Important for the understanding of Plato’s ideal ruler is the nature of the monarch: a man not seeking personal gain, but finding a situation that would benefit all. Monarchy in general was not the problem for Plato, but the way a ruler would rule.

A tyrant would be the opposite of the good ruler. According to Plato, who uses the person of Socrates to explain the meaning of tyranny, a tyrant is a person who continuously wants more and more power and wealth. It is as if the tyrant, described by Plato, is addicted to power, and the only thing that could satisfy him is to steal from others if his power and wealth decline. This man knows no boundaries. It is all about self-fulfilment while using others or even the whole state. But ‘the men of this sort are few’: whilst the majority is sober-minded, the ‘few go forth into exile and serve some tyrant elsewhere as bodyguard or become mercenaries in any war there

---

<sup>105</sup> Thuc.I.17

<sup>106</sup> Plato, *The Statesman*, 291.e.; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1279.b.45.

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *Republic*, V.473.d

<sup>108</sup> Lewis (2009: 82)

may be'.<sup>109</sup> If they would stay in their own city they will perform small evils: 'they just steal, break into houses, plunder temples, and kidnap, and if they are fluent speakers they become sycophants<sup>110</sup> and bear false witness and take bribes'.<sup>111</sup> 'There is no city more wretched than that in which a tyrant rules, and none more happy than that governed by a true king'.<sup>112</sup> Suggestively, Plato presents the way Greeks, and perhaps the upper layer in particular, should not live: they should not live as a tyrant does, with all the mentioned features, but live a life as sober-minded people in order to gain a properly working society.

Aristotle follows Plato in his description of the tyrant but goes more into details and uses examples. Aristotle also discusses the maintenance of tyranny, summing up all the features he could think of. A selection of this discussion is as follows:

'Tyrannies [...] are preserved in two extremely opposite ways. One of these is the traditional way and the one in which most tyrants administer their office. Most of these ordinary safeguards of tyranny are said to have been instituted by Periander of Corinth, and also many such devices may be borrowed from the Persian Empire. These are both the measures mentioned some time back to secure the safety of a tyranny as far as possible – the lopping off of outstanding men and the destruction of the proud, - and also the prohibition of common meals and club-fellowship and education and all other things of this nature, in fact the close watch upon all things that usually engender the two emotions of pride and confidence, and the prevention of the formation of study-circles and other conferences for debate, and the employment of every means that will make people as much possible unknown to one another; and for the people in the city to be always visible and to hang about the palace-gates [...]; and all the other similar devices of Persian and barbarian tyranny; and to try not to be uninformed about any chance utterances or actions of any of the subjects, but to have spies [...]. And it is a device of tyranny to make the subjects poor, [...] that the people being busy with their daily affairs may

---

<sup>109</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IX.575.b

<sup>110</sup> 'Sycophant' or συκοφάντης is a person who blackmailed, oppressed, accused falsely or used sweet words (flattery words) for their own benefit: <http://philolog.us>

<sup>111</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IX.575.b

<sup>112</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IX.576.c

not have leisure to plot against their ruler. Instances of this are [...] the building of the temple of Olympian Zeus by the Pisistratidae, [...] and the levying of taxes [...]. Also the tyrant is a stirrer-up of war, with the deliberate purpose of keeping people busy and also of making them constantly in need of a leader. [...] And it is a mark of a tyrant to have men of foreign extraction rather than citizens as guests at table and companions, feeling that citizens are hostile but strangers make no claim against him.<sup>113</sup>

Generally, by applying the mentioned measures, tyrants had three goals to achieve, namely (1) to keep the subjects humble, (2) to have them distrust each other continually and (3) to remove any opportunity to become politically active.<sup>114</sup>

Strikingly, the text shows the connection between tyrannical conduct with Persian or barbaric conduct of maintaining tyranny. As we saw in the first chapter, the usage of gifts by Persian kings to honour their subordinates is a way of keeping subjects in subordination. Next, because of the hierarchy in Persian society, with the king on top of the social pyramid, subordinates were only focused on how to please the king in order to receive rewards of various kinds and having the possibility to receive a higher social position. The need to become politically active, so as to overthrow the existing constitution, seems almost irrelevant in Persian society. As Aristotle suggests, Persian monarchy was regarded as tyrannical. It is unclear if the Persians themselves saw their king as a tyrant.

In Aristotle's view on tyranny there existed a relation between the term and something un-Greek, something from the East. He thus not offers only a negative image of tyranny in general but also about the non-Greeks, the Persians or the barbarians. This can also be seen in the part in which Aristotle discusses the tyrant's guests, who are ξενικοί, strangers from abroad who please a tyrant and are close to him. The suggestion can be made that some of these strangers were Persians, since Aristotle mentions them as certain 'role models' for Greek tyrants. Next, the mention of 'guest-friends' attests that *xenia* was still present in the days of Aristotle. In case of Athens, it means the elite might have maintained close contact with friends elsewhere, even in times in which the *demos* disapproved of. Even Aristotle disapproves and offers a glimpse of his time in which democracy was seen as the ideal type of

---

<sup>113</sup> Arist. *Politics*. V.1313a.84-1314a.13

<sup>114</sup> Arist. *Politics*. V.1314.a.15-24

constitution. That democracy and the power of the *demos* seem to exist can be seen in the examples Aristotle provides as the existence of ‘study-circles and other conferences for debate’. These public groups would stimulate the citizen’s awareness of belonging to a society that rules itself. They might refer to democratic organs, such as the assemblies, that ratify the constitution. Aristotle places the tyrant against all these features of democracy.

One other thing is striking, namely the mention of Periander, second tyrant of Corinth in the seventh century B.C. In book III of *Politics*, Aristotle describes the conduct of Periander of removing the threat of outstanding men by tyrants. Only the tyrant allowed himself to be the most powerful. Other men with the same, or more power were to be removed. This was not only the case under tyranny. According to Aristotle, oligarchies and democracies had similar measures, of which ‘ostracism has in a way the same effect as docking off the outstanding men by exile’.<sup>115</sup> The example of Periander confirms the idea of both philosophers about the tyrant as the one most seeking power.

Tyranny did exist before the fourth century and it was certainly not a creation of a democratic ideology as a contradictory constitution, but Plato and Aristotle show that it was used as such. During the pre-classical period tyranny could be seen as something positive, since it was connected to the creation of order by a wise man. In Athens, the popularity of the *tyrannos* changed by the end of the sixth and in the course of the fifth century as the people became more aware of their own collective power, in which the *demos* could decide about laws and other political matters.<sup>116</sup>

According to K. Raaflaub, tyranny, as a constitutional possibility, disappeared in Athens after 479 B.C.<sup>117</sup> The fact that tyranny disappeared lies in the development and, as Raaflaub describes, ‘in the spreading of egalitarian phenomena in the social and political life of Greek poleis’.<sup>118</sup> The year 479 marks the end of the first flow of ostracisms after the Persian Wars, in which men with possible tyrannical sentiment

---

<sup>115</sup> Arist. *Politics*. III. 1284. a

<sup>116</sup> However, discussions on this topic exist. According to Hammer, the Homeric poems shed some light on the existence of participation by the people in decision-making and other politically related matters in the pre-classical times. That the Athenian *demos* received more political power in the course of the fifth century does not attest the first signs of political involvement of the people. (Hammer (2005: 113-f.f.))

<sup>117</sup> Raaflaub (2003: 62)

<sup>118</sup> Raaflaub (2003: 62)

were banned from Athenian society. Still, Athenian citizens were pre-occupied with the idea that tyranny opposed, and thus formed a potential threat to, democracy. The fear of losing the democracy seems to have developed into a situation of paranoia in the course of the second half of the fifth century. A good example is Athens' reaction to scandals that occurred in the year 415: the mutilation of the *hermai* and the profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries. According to Thucydides, the Athenians reacted severely to the acts, for they considered them to be 'the prelude to a conspiracy for revolution and the overthrow of democracy'.<sup>119</sup> In a reaction to the citizens' fear, accusations were made against influential politicians for having tyrannical aspirations or conducting tyrannical behaviour.<sup>120</sup> One person in particular was charged for having participated in either one or both the acts: Alkibiades, son of Kleinias, was accused by those 'who had particular reason to resent the man for blocking their own path to any clear political supremacy'.<sup>121</sup> As Thucydides describes, the Athenians 'accepted any accusation whatever as grounds for suspicion, and arrested and imprisoned utterly respectable citizens on the evidence of some worthless types'.<sup>122</sup> Since 'tyranny' was a lively issue in the lives or the imagination of Athenians, ancient writers used it to create stories about tyranny which kept the fear of tyranny alive and ratified emotional reactions in the form of unsound accusations.<sup>123</sup>

To say something about the general view of the Athenians on tyranny is not easy: as e.g. Herodotus, and later Aristotle, shows the Athenians connected tyranny with something non-Greek, something Persian or eastern. This idea or view was created after the Persian Wars in the beginning of the fifth century. While democracy was developing, tyranny seems to disappear from the political scene. According to Raaflaub, this had to do with the atmosphere of paranoia towards everything that could be seen as threatening to democracy. Men, whom the *demos* thought to be too powerful and had the ambition to become tyrants (whether this was true or false), were banished from society. According to Aristotle, these men acted out of self-aggrandizement, terrorizing society in search of wealth and power. It seems the

---

<sup>119</sup> Thuc. VI.27

<sup>120</sup> Raaflaub (2003: 62)

<sup>121</sup> Thuc. VI.28

<sup>122</sup> Thuc. VI.53

<sup>123</sup> Raaflaub (2003: 68)

meaning of *tyrannos*, as someone wise and just, had come to an end during the fifth century B.C.

### Chapter 3: Medism

The negative view of tyranny as something Persian or non-Greek, suggests that the Athenians wanted to distance themselves from everything eastern. Strikingly, this was not always the case as the adoption and adaptation of Persian customs show. It was mainly the Greek upper class that was interested in things Persian. In Athens, some of their members were charged of “medism” and faced the risk of punishment. As Schreiner argues, medism could be punished by ostracism. However, according to e.g. the *Athenian Constitution* the latter measure was used to banish men who were attracted to tyranny. In order to understand if there was a relation between tyranny and medism, as perhaps two reasons for the use of ostracism, the phenomenon of medism has to be analysed.

The general meaning of medism would have had something to do with the adoption by Greeks of barbaric cultural aspects. J. Holladay explains that a term as medism could be used ‘in ancient, and modern, times to indicate people who admired the culture and institutions of another city or state and who wished to borrow some of their customs and to form close relations with them’.<sup>124</sup> Of course the term medism refers to something Persian/Median. M. Miller speaks about *perserie*, the readiness to adopt aspects from a different culture, the Persian culture in particular.<sup>125</sup> In a comprehensive study of the word and its meaning, D. F. Graf explains that the ancient Greeks used medism as a ‘specific designation for those engaged in collaboration with Persia’.<sup>126</sup>

Deriving from the word Μῆδος, Greeks used for example μηδίζω (to be on the Medes’ side) or μηδίσμοος (to lean towards Medes). The word is negative in tone, as it was used against people who appeared to have some interest in the culture of the enemy, the Persians.<sup>127</sup> An example of the act of medism is presented by Thucydides, who writes about the Spartan regent Pausanias (r. 480-477 B.C.). Pausanias maintained a good relationship with King Xerxes (r. 485-465 B.C.), since the Spartan was willing to help the Persian king in controlling both Sparta and the rest of

---

<sup>124</sup> Holladay (1978: 176)

<sup>125</sup> Miller (1997: 243)

<sup>126</sup> Graf (1979: 11)

<sup>127</sup> Ἑλληνίζω would have a similar meaning: the willingness to speak and/or to act Greek as the Macedonian kings showed, starting with Alexander I (r. 498-454 B.C.).

Greece.<sup>128</sup> After the Spartans conquered Byzantium in 478, a group of Persian men, friends of the Persian king, were taken hostage. Pausanias let them go and helped these men to return to Persia while he secretly became friends with the Persian king.<sup>129</sup> It must be noted that Thucydides suggests that a ritualized and diplomatic friendship was created, since Pausanias was willing to marry Xerxes' daughter, one of the measures to solidify a *xenia*.<sup>130</sup> Being 'friends', the regent acted differently, as Thucydides mentions as follows:

‘(...) he was then far more elated and could not longer bring himself to live in the usual manner of his people, but clad himself in Persian apparel whenever he went forth from Byzantium, and when he travelled through Thrace a body-guard of Medes and Egyptians attended him; he had his table served in Persian style, and indeed could not conceal his real purpose, but by trifling acts showed plainly what greater designs he purposed in his heart to accomplish thereafter. And so he made himself difficult in access, and indulged in such a violent temper towards everybody that no one could come near him; (...).’<sup>131</sup>

Pausanias started to adopt Persian, or to be exact Μηδικός, dress and manners, or manners he thought were Persian. Next, he distanced himself from the people, something that was considered to be typical of tyranny. According to Thucydides, the act of medism and distancing oneself from the people as a feature of tyranny (in fifth and fourth century view), are mentioned next to each other. That a distance between king and subject at Persia occurred is attested by the act of *proskynesis*, as a part of Persian court etiquette. If medism was an act of, not only dressing oneself as a Persian, but also using a certain attitude of 'Persianness' (whatever that could be), the Greeks were not very fond of it. According to Miller, the Greeks saw it as 'a sign of *hybris* and tyrannical ambition'.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Thuc.I.128

<sup>129</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 11.44

<sup>130</sup> Thuc.I.128

<sup>131</sup> Thuc.I.130

<sup>132</sup> Miller (1997: 253)

### The Origin of Medism

The origin of medism is difficult to find. It refers to the Medes, ancient Iranian people who lived in the northwest of Iran. These people fought between 550 to 490 B.C. with the Persians against the Greeks. According to Herodotus, the Greeks regarded Persians and the Medes as the same, considering them as one enemy, since they looked the same. Herodotus narrates the following:

‘But of all men the Persians most welcome foreign customs. They wear the Median dress, deeming it more beautiful than their own, and the Egyptian cuirass in war. Their luxurious practices are of all kinds, and all borrowed; (...)’<sup>133</sup>.

‘The Medes in the army were equipped like the Persians; indeed that fashion of armour is Median, not Persian; (...)’<sup>134</sup>.

‘(...) the Athenians, closing all together with the Persians, fought in memorable fashion; for they were the first Greeks, within my knowledge, who charged their enemies at a run, and the first who endured the sight of Median garments and men clad therein; till then, the Greeks were affrighted by the very name of the Medes.’<sup>135</sup>

That Medes and Persians were seen as alike, is made clear by Herodotus by naming other eastern groups/tribes, who fought beside the Persians presenting themselves differently in appearance.<sup>136</sup> The appearance is important here, since it refers to the way Athenians or Greeks saw the Medes/Persians. Especially the last paraphrase provides a suggestion of the Athenian/Greek view on the Medes and their dress: at first the Greeks were frightened of the Medes for they had apparently not seen these people ever before. When the Athenians, dressed in their memorable fashion, fought against the Medes, the latter got scared and run for their lives. Afterwards, the name ‘Mede’ did not frighten the Greeks any longer. The paraphrase suggests the

---

<sup>133</sup> Hdt.I.135

<sup>134</sup> Hdt.VII.62

<sup>135</sup> Hdt.VI.112

<sup>136</sup> Herodotus describes for example the Cissians, the Hyrcanians, the Assyrians and the Bactrians as dressed differently and thus easier to distinguish (book VII.62-64).

Greeks/Athenians regarded the Medes, and even Persians, as well and luxuriously dressed fighters without daring to fight. As Herodotus and other writers will show, the Medes/Persians were seen as fairly feminine opposite the self-imagined manly Athenians and their practical and ready-to-fight styled dress.

In book VII, Herodotus provides a more detailed description of the Persian dress. It must be said that this description is only about the Persian wardress, and that examples of other forms of eastern dress have to be found elsewhere. Herodotus describes the following:

‘The Persians, who wore on their heads the soft hat called the tiara, and about their bodies, tunics with sleeves, of divers colours, having iron scales upon them like scales of a fish. Their legs were protected by trousers; and they bore wicker shields for bucklers; their quivers hanging at their backs, and their arms being a short spear, a bow of uncommon size, and arrows of reed. [...] The Medes had exactly the same equipment as the Persians; and indeed the dress common to both is not so much Persian as Median.’<sup>137</sup>

The aspects Herodotus mentions about the Persian wardress did not differ from the Median. Thus, according to Herodotus, the Median and Persian wardress was quite similar. However, it did differ from the Greek style, as it appeared to be interesting enough for Herodotus to describe the wardress of the enemy. Besides describing the Persian and Median wardress, Herodotus also mentions the clothing styles of other eastern and Greek tribes or cities commanded by Persia during the Persian Wars.

In order to get a view on the formal or informal style of dressing other sources or texts have to be studied. Xenophon provides some details on the way Persian nobility dressed in everyday life. High-standing men used eyeliner to highlight the eyes, and rouge to beautify the cheeks. They wore false hair, had purple tunics and placed jewellery around their necks and their wrists. Strikingly, Xenophon labels this kind of ‘dress-code’ or appearance as Median, and describes that the Persians ‘have a much plainer style of dress and a more frugal way of life’.<sup>138</sup> As the writer suggests, Median dress was more excessive than the Persian way of appearance. In the *Anabasis*,

---

<sup>137</sup> Hdt.VII.61-62

<sup>138</sup> Xen.Cyr.1.3.2

Xenophon describes the clothes of the Persian nobility as ‘expansive tunics and trousers’ with purple coats. Some men wear bracelets and necklaces.<sup>139</sup>

The reason for the adaptation of the Median dress by the Persians is explained by Xenophon as the Persians considered the Median dress to be beautiful: ‘for he (Cyrus the Great) thought that if any one had any personal defect, that dress would help to conceal it, and that it made the wearer look very tall and very handsome.’<sup>140</sup>

The adaptation between the two groups made it difficult for the Greeks to distinguish Medes from Persians or the other way around. Moreover, the Medes, next to other eastern people, fought on the side of the Persians, which made them enemies of Greece, Athens in particular. An enemy is an enemy, no matter which appearance. In conclusion, Greeks could have considered the Medes and the Persians to be similar.

### A Political Tool

Medism was used by the fifth century Athenians as an accusation. But what was the reason for the accusation precisely? The first accusations of medism occurred directly during and after the Persian Wars, in which Athens banished many influential men from her society. Ostracism was used to remove medists from Athens. Ostracisms took place in the course of the fifth century B.C., but the measure was used mostly during the first years after the Persian Wars (490-480 B.C.). According to Graf, a connection between medism and anti-Persian sentiment existed, but the fact that medism was made into a crime was reinforced by its use as a political tool. Graf describes that ‘in a city pervaded by fear of an imminent Persian invasion, medism could be used as a propaganda instrument to slander one’s opponents and effectively destroy their influence’.<sup>141</sup> R. M. McMullin argues that the charge of medism appeared to be politically motivated: ‘an astute politician was able to use the label of medizer to inflame the *demos* and achieve the ostracism of his opponents’.<sup>142</sup> Especially at times of social and political unrest leading members of the elite wanted to outdo each other in order to gain most political power.

---

<sup>139</sup> Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.8

<sup>140</sup> Xen. *Cyr.* VIII.40

<sup>141</sup> Graf (1979: 300)

<sup>142</sup> McMullin (2001: 55)

Ways to remove one's rival was by creating slander and gossip, a method considered completely acceptable. According to M. Gluckman, the rules for the use of gossip and slander are as follows: 'The important things about gossip and scandal are that generally these are enjoyed by people about others with whom they are in a close social relationship'.<sup>143</sup> Gluckman further explains that gossip and slander maintain the 'unity, morals and values of social groups', that they 'enable these groups to control the competing cliques and aspiring individuals of which all groups are composed', and finally that they make 'possible the selection of leaders without embarrassment'.<sup>144</sup> While Gluckman based his theories on the practice of gossip in the American Indian Makah tribe and a small Welsh village in his own time, similarities with the fifth century Athenian society occurred. Gossip came from members from the upper class, who used slander against the ones from their own social class. To give an example: Gluckman suggests that to be a member of (let us say) the Athenian upper class, you had to be able to 'join in the gossip, and to be fully (an Athenian) you must be able to scandalize skillfully'.<sup>145</sup> In order to hurt a rival, one had to know everything about him. As V. Hunter explains, one had to 'dig into an opponent's past and present to find unacceptable conduct',<sup>146</sup> so as to distract a jury, an assembly, the people. The accusations in Athens were focused on a victim's 'private life, his character, his background, and/or his associates'.<sup>147</sup> It is reasonable to believe that not everything that was used as slander was based on the truth. As long as the slanderer was able to speak and persuade skilfully, every word could have been believed. Hunter shows how gossip functioned as social control.<sup>148</sup> For democratic Athens, it not only meant that equality amongst the citizens should be secured by such slander, but also to criticize a citizen's behaviour by using slander, gossip and ultimately punishment.

That the charge of medism was indeed politically motivated can be seen by some *ostraka*, which frame the victims as medizers. There exist eleven *ostraka* against the Athenian Kallias, which can be dated around the 470's, all describing Kallias as 'the Mede'. One of the *ostraka* even depicts a figure of a man, 'dressed in Persian

---

<sup>143</sup> Gluckman (1963: 313)

<sup>144</sup> Gluckman (1963: 308)

<sup>145</sup> Gluckman (1963: 311)

<sup>146</sup> Hunter (1990: 306)

<sup>147</sup> Hunter (1990: 307)

<sup>148</sup> Hunter (1990: 300)

costume'.<sup>149</sup> It is not clear if this figure is referring to Kallias or a Persian archer. Another example is an *ostrakon* against the Athenian politician Aristides (530-468 B.C.), which presents him as a medizer. The *ostrakon* reads:

Ἀριστ[είδεν]  
 τὸν Δα[τίδος]  
 ἀδελφ[όν]<sup>150</sup>

Aristides is called 'the brother of Datis', who was the Persian commander leading and fighting against the Athenians at Marathon in 490 B.C. It is clear that Aristides was charged of 'being on the side of the Medes'. Herodotus writes that Aristides was 'the best and the justest man at Athens' and does not know why he had to be ostracized. According to Herodotus, a rivalry between Aristides and the Athenian general Themistocles existed, which ended with the banishment of the first.<sup>151</sup>

The fact that both examples show medism could lead to ostracism led some scholars to believe that medism was in fact the reason for ostracism in the first place. Schreiner suggested that the punishment was 'used against men who had collaborated with the Persians in 490'.<sup>152</sup> He explains that the removal of tyrannical threat was not the main cause for the institution of ostracism. He believes that there was a relation between tyranny and medism as they were both seen as reasons to remove people from society. Tyranny was regarded as something Persian or eastern, as discussed in the previous chapter. A relation might be found in the story about Athens' former tyrant Hippias, son of Pisistratus, who, after being removed from society, fled to Persia. Afterwards, Hippias aimed at receiving back his power over Athens by the aid of the Persians. According to McMullin, Hippias can be seen as both a tyrant (which he was) and a medizer, since he fled to Persia and received aid from the Persians to redeem power in Athens.<sup>153</sup> If McMullin is correct, the connection between tyrant and medizer was created by the Athenians to dissociate themselves from people who were interested in Persian customs, and who perhaps maintained contact with Persia.

---

<sup>149</sup> McMullin (2001: 63)

<sup>150</sup> Lang (1990), Catalogue no. 21-88

<sup>151</sup> Hdt. VIII.79

<sup>152</sup> Schreiner (1975: 84)

<sup>153</sup> McMullin (2001: 63)

Since Persia was the enemy, the area ruled by a tyrannical-king (or so the Athenians thought), medism could be considered to be connected for having tyrannical sentiment, and thus for being against the Athenian constitution which was democratic. At the same time, men in charge of Athenian politics used medism as a political tool. Political leaders used terms as medist or ‘tyrant sympathizer’ as a way to outdo one’s opponent. Whether such accusations were false or not, political rivals acted towards the social situation in Athens during and after the Persian Wars. While the Athenian citizens became allergic to everything Persian, members of the ruling elite used the fear and paranoia of the *demos* to remove opponents from the political arena. It appears that the intention of removing someone from society was two-fold: the removal of threat against the democracy and the removal of one’s political opponent, the first being supported by the *demos*, the last being arranged by members of the ruling elite. In the next chapter, I will explore the punishment of ostracism, as the institution was considered to be connected with tyranny and medism.

## Chapter 4: Ostracism in Fifth Century Athens

As we saw in the previous chapters, medism and tyranny were seen as threats against democratic Athens, and used as political tools by members of the Athenian leading elite against each other. Both phenomena were connected to Persia, the enemy of the city. To remove such threats, Athenians started to ostracize influential men who were convicted of having either tyrannical sentiment or medist-interests.

Most of the ostracisms took place in the beginning of the fifth century, starting at the end of Pisistratid tyranny, during the Persian Wars. Only twelve to thirteen men are known to be ostracized, which seems to be a small amount considering that the last ostracism took place in 416 B.C. The aim of this chapter is to understand the purpose of the institution.

### ‘Ostracism’ as described by ancient sources

The majority of the ancient sources mention the name of one man who introduced the practice of ostracism. After the fall of the Pisistratid regime around 510 B.C., the Athenian politician Cleisthenes (ca. 570-507 B.C.) created new laws and would have instituted ostracism.<sup>154</sup> In this first part I want to discuss a selection of the sources that provide information about ostracism and its use in fifth century Athens, in order to understand the impact of this measure on members of the Athenian upper class.

The *Athenian Constitution* mentions Cleisthenes creating the measure of ostracism. The laws under Cleisthenes made the Athenian constitution ‘much more democratic’ than those under the leadership of Solon (ca. 594 B.C.).<sup>155</sup> Cleisthenes was aiming at the people while installing laws, of which ostracism was one. Strikingly, and perhaps also strangely, ostracism was first used around 490 B.C., roughly fifteen years after its introduction. According to the *Athenian Constitution*, ostracism ‘had been enacted owing to the suspicion felt against the men in the positions of power because

---

<sup>154</sup> It has to be mentioned that there are at least four sources that either mention Hippias or Theseus as the originators of ostracism. As D. Kagan (1961: 395) argues, ‘neither tradition is acceptable’, since the sources are problematic in their transmission: either fragments are available (e.g. Herakleides of Pontus: *FHG*, C. Müller, vol. 2 (Paris 1848), p. 208, fr. 6-7) or the sources are too far removed from the times ostracism occurred (e.g. Eusebius: *Chronicorum canonum quae supersunt*, ed. A. Schoene (Berlin 1866), p. 50).

<sup>155</sup> *Ath. Con.* 22

Pisistratus when leader of the people and general set himself up as tyrant'.<sup>156</sup> The first person to be ostracized was Hipparchos, son of Charmus, who was a relative of Pisistratus. As the *Athenian Constitution* suggests, the main reason to introduce the law of ostracism was to remove Hipparchos from society: Cleisthenes wanted to remove Hipparchos when he introduced the measure. Hipparchos would have been the leader of a group of men who were friends with the Pisistratid tyrants.

To get a better understanding of the situation in which Cleisthenes introduced ostracism (or so the *Athenian Constitution* describes) a short description about the political situation is needed. After the removal of Hippias, son of Pisistratus, around the year 510 B.C. Pisistratid tyranny came to an end. In the description of the *Athenian Constitution* ostracism was used to remove tyrant sympathizers immediately after the fall of Hippias in 510 B.C. The creation of this measure seems to be politically motivated and came into being because leading figures rivalled each other. According to the source, it was especially the tension between Hipparchos and Cleisthenes that made the latter introduce ostracism.

The first priority Cleisthenes had was to focus on the wishes of the people. By making new laws, Cleisthenes made the constitution more democratic, after which tyrant sympathizers, or people who were closely connected to the Pisistratids at the end of the sixth century B.C., were excluded from society. By satisfying the *demos*' wishes, Cleisthenes won in popularity at a time that saw political strife immediately after the fall of Hippias. Two parties were fighting for power over Athens. On the one side there was Cleisthenes, member of the Alcmaeonidae, who wanted to create a more democratic constitution by 'offering to hand over the government to the multitude'.<sup>157</sup> Isagoras, son of Teisander, who was a friend of the Pisistratids, led the other side. Cursed by his family-bloodline, Cleisthenes had to leave Athens after being expelled from the city together with 700 other Athenian households.<sup>158</sup> Isagoras regained power over Athens without any luck. The people refused to be ruled by a tyrant sympathizer and managed to install Cleisthenes as their leader, whose main purpose was to expel the tyrants.

---

<sup>156</sup> *Ath. Con.* 22

<sup>157</sup> *Ath. Con.* 20

<sup>158</sup> The Alcmaeonidae were cursed after one of their members, Megakles, killed associates of the tyrant Cylon around 620 B.C., at the altar of Athena where they were taking refuge. Because the altar was sacred, the deed Megakles performed was punished in the form of a curse. (*Ath. Con.* fragment 8)

Over time, the motive to expel an Athenian from society appeared to change. The *Athenian Constitution* mentions that for three years the Athenians banned the friends of the tyrants, beginning in the year 489 B.C. with Hipparchos. Afterwards, ‘it was also used to remove an other person who seemed to be too great’. The first man to be ostracized because of his ‘greatness’ was Xanthippos, around the year 484 B.C.<sup>159</sup> As the source suggests, tyranny was not the main motive to ostracize a person from society: a man being too great does not mean he had tyrannical sentiment or that he wanted to become a tyrant.

Next to the *Athenian Constitution*, Claudius Aelianus (175-235 A.D.) also mentions Cleisthenes as the creator of ostracism. The source is quite late and might be considered to be untrustworthy.<sup>160</sup> Writing in the second and third century A.D. Aelianus describes Cleisthenes as the creator of laws as follows:

‘Kleisthenes the Athenian, the first to introduce the need to ostracize, was the first to get the punishment.’<sup>161</sup>

Aelianus follows the *Athenian Constitution* but explains that Cleisthenes was the ‘first to get the punishment’. This seems incorrect, since, according to the other sources, it was Hipparchos who was banished from Athens as the first to be ostracized.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, *ostraka* wearing the name of the lawgiver appear to be absent. Since the description by Aelianus is so small and his narrative contains information that is hard to rely on, it can only be considered to be an example of a source mentioning the name of Cleisthenes in connection to ostracism. It cannot function as hard evidence.

If Cleisthenes was the creator of ostracism, how was it used in practice and for what exactly was it used? According to the *Athenian Constitution*, it was used to remove men who either had close contact with the Pisistratid tyrants or were tyrant sympathizers. Afterwards, ostracism was used to expel men who appeared to be too

---

<sup>159</sup> *Ath.Con.22*

<sup>160</sup> Kagan (1961: 393)

<sup>161</sup> Claudius Aelianus, *Varia Historia*, III.24

<sup>162</sup> One of the sources would be Harpokration (second century A.D.) who quoted Androtion (350-? B.C.) in his explanation about Hipparchos as the first to be ostracized (πρώτος ἐξωστρακίσθη, τοῦ περὶ τὸν ὀστρακισμὸν νόμου), in: F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, vol. 3 (Leiden 1964), 324.Androtion fr. 6

great. So at first the measure was used at times when tyranny formed a threat. Against what? Democracy? Cleisthenes and his companions? Since democracy was still in its infancy and started to really develop after the Persian Wars, could tyranny already be considered as a threat against democracy in the 490's? To get a better understanding about the situation in the fifth century other sources need to be analysed. It will be shown that tyranny or tyrannical sentiment indeed did not represent motive number one per se.

I have selected a few writers who describe the practice of ostracism with the use of *ostraka* (sherds) in order to vote. The first writer is Philochoros (ca. 340-261 B.C.) who explains the practice as follows:

‘Ostracism is as follows: The Demos takes a vote before the 8th Prytany, as to whether it seemed best to hold an ostracism. When the response is positive, the Agora is fenced off with barricades; ten entrances were left open, through which they entered according to Phyle and deposited their potsherds, keeping face-down what they had written. The Nine Archons and the Boule presided. After they added up the results, whoever received the largest number, and it had to be not less than 6,000, was required to pay the penalty: he had to settle his private affairs within ten days and to depart from the City for ten years (though it later was made five years); he still received the income from his property, but he could not come nearer than Geraistos, the promontory of Euboea. Hyperbolus was the sole undistinguished person to suffer ostracism, on account of the degeneracy of his habits, not because he was suspected of aiming at tyranny. After him the practice was abandoned, which had begun when Cleisthenes was legislating, when he expelled the tyrants, so that he might toss out their friends as well.’<sup>163</sup>

That ostracism was also a communal activity (next to a political measure) can be seen by the fact that the *demos* could vote through the use of *ostraka*. It was the multitude that could vote, i.e. adult male citizens. Next, voting appears to be done in a strictly anonymous way: since the sherds were held face-down, nobody could see each

---

<sup>163</sup> The translation was done by prof. J. P. Adams of the California State University Nortridge (Jan. 2010): <http://www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/ostracis.html>.

other's vote. This way the chance of unjust voting could have been minimized but not fully expelled. Problems occur, namely the lack of knowledge about the Athenians' ability to write or the way influential men could have influenced the average Athenian citizen by the use of words and persuasion.<sup>164</sup> I will come back to this later. What is striking is the punishment: if a victim received the largest number of votes within a total of 6,000 votes he had to leave Athens within ten days, living in exile for ten years. Interestingly, the victim was able to collect his income from his property while living in banishment. A last striking aspect is the description of Hyperbolus as the last man to be ostracized around the year 416 B.C. The reason for his punishment was 'the degeneracy of his habits' and not that the man cherished tyrannical sentiment. According to Philochoros, the latter was the reason why ostracism was used in the first place, a measure introduced by Cleisthenes to remove tyranny and friends of tyrants from society. After 416 B.C. the use of the measure ended.

Regarding the explanation on ostracism by Philochoros, a similar description is provided by Plutarch (45-120 A.D.) who wrote the following:

'The method of procedure – to give a general outline – was as follows. Each voter took an *ostrakon*, or potsherd, wrote on it the name of that citizen whom he wished to remove from the city, and brought it to a place in the agora which was all fenced about with railings. The archons first counted the total number of *ostraka* cast. For if the voters were less than six thousand, the ostracism was void. Then they separated the names, and the man who had received the most votes they proclaimed banished for ten years, with the right to enjoy the income from his property.'<sup>165</sup>

Plutarch also mentions the use of the *ostrakon*. Moreover, the total amount of 6,000 votes forms a similarity. Next, the one being ostracized had to live in banishment for ten years but could still enjoy the income from his property. It is possible Plutarch used Philochoros as his source. The reason for the use of ostracism differs as Plutarch describes it as a 'humbling and docking of oppressive prestige and power' and that it was 'really a merciful exorcism of the spirit of jealous hate, which thus vented its

---

<sup>164</sup> Plutarch tells of a story about a lazy and unlettered Athenian who gave his *ostrakon* to Aristides. Not knowing that the latter was Aristides, the lazy man asked him to write down the name 'Aristides' as the one to be ostracized. (Plut.*Arist.*7)

<sup>165</sup> Plut.*Arist.*7

malignant desire to injure, not in some irreparable evil, but in a mere change of residence for ten years'.<sup>166</sup> According to Plutarch, ostracism was not introduced as a measure to punish victims for the rest of their lives. It was used as a tool to fulfil the desire to injure the ones you either hate or you are jealous of. As Plutarch argues, it was all about jealousy amongst the influential people. Tyranny was only named when jealous men wanted to remove other men from society, as to have a good reason (although untrue) to charge the victim of having anti-democratic sentiment.<sup>167</sup> This way the *demos* could be influenced and thus persuaded by the influential men to select the victim. Even though Plutarch is a source of information, the man lived and wrote almost 500 years after the last ostracism occurred. By looking at another source, Plutarch's description of the reason for the existence of ostracism can perhaps be ratified. Like Plutarch, the historian Thucydides (460-395 B.C.) wrote about the motive of hatred or jealousy amongst the upper class to remove each other from Athenian society. As we saw in the chapters on medism and tyranny, the politician Alkibiades (450-404 B.C.) faced political problems after the *hermai* had been mutilated and the Eleusinian Mysteries had been mocked in the year 415 B.C. Thucydides argues that Alkibiades was accused of both crimes 'by those who were most jealous of him as an obstacle in the way of their secure pre-eminence among the people'.<sup>168</sup> According to Thucydides, these men wanted to get rid of Alkibiades and provided fake charges against the latter, that he wanted to overthrow democracy. Ostracism is not mentioned. However, if Thucydides is right, fake charges to remove someone from society were not uncommon.

The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (90-30 B.C.) was, next to Plutarch, far removed from the practice of ostracism when he wrote his work in the first century B.C. Basing his account on the work of Ephoros (400-330 B.C.)<sup>169</sup>, Diodorus describes the banishment of the Athenian general Themistocles in the year 471 B.C. as follows:

'First of all they removed Themistocles from Athens, employing against him what is called ostracism, an institution which was adopted in Athens after the

---

<sup>166</sup> Plut.*Arist.*7

<sup>167</sup> Plutarch speaks about people's envious dislikes of others, as the motive for unjust and false accusations and the use of the word 'tyranny' to incite fear amongst the *demos*. (Plut.*Arist.*7)

<sup>168</sup> Thuc.VI.28

<sup>169</sup> Kagan (1961: 393)

overthrow of the tyranny of Peisistratus and his sons; and the law was as follows. Each citizen wrote on a piece of pottery the name of the man who in his opinion had the greatest power to destroy the democracy; and the man who got the largest number of ostraca was obliged by the law to go into exile from his native land for a period of five years. The Athenians, it appears, passed such a law, not for the purpose of punishing wrongdoing, but in order to lower through exile the presumption of men who had risen too high. Now Themistocles, having been ostracized in the manner we have described, fled as an exile from his native city to Argos.<sup>170</sup>

As Diodorus explains, the reason for the banishment of Themistocles through ostracism was because people considered the general's power too great, which could ultimately overthrow democracy. Ostracism was not a punishment for wrongdoing. According to Diodorus, it was the purpose to lower the presumption of the ones who had risen too high' in society (τῶν ὑπερεχόντων). It suggests that the law of ostracism was used to lower the chance of men becoming too powerful, and thus could attempt to remove democracy from Athens. It was not at all certain that powerful men would indeed remove the constitution, but apparently the fear of losing democracy was too great. Next to Philochoros and Plutarch, Diodorus also mentions the use of *ostraka* as a way to vote. The only part that is different are the years of living in exile, namely five instead of ten. As Philochoros already described, ten changed into five in a later period. It can be suggested that the laws of ostracism changed over time for any particular reason.

The sources just discussed mention a different motive to ostracize men from Athenian society. Tyranny or having tyrannical sympathy does not have appeared to be the main motives for using ostracism. The danger of one man receiving too much power was another motivation. As Aristotle describes, temporary banishment was installed to decline excessive predominance, which could cause strife.<sup>171</sup> Also, jealousy amongst the upper class could have been a motive to use the measure after first accusing one's opponent falsely, bringing suspicion/a wrong image amongst the people in order to remove men from the *polis*.

---

<sup>170</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library*.XI.55

<sup>171</sup> Arist.*Pol.*1302b

Assuming that democracy was still in its infancy and that tyranny might not have been considered to be a threat, can we really trust the idea that Cleisthenes introduced ostracism to remove tyrannical threat from society? The sources together show that ostracism was introduced as a tool for the upper class, to outdo one another in their aim for power over the *demos*. By using the people to vote against a (political) opponent, the ones who came to power did so by the use of ostracism, but also by the gratitude they obtained by the *demos*, who felt power was given to them by the ones in charge. Knowing that this might sound vague, I will attempt to make it clearer: Cleisthenes acted as the benefactor of the multitude by offering the people the rule of government. As the *Athenian Constitution* suggested, this way the *demos* chose the side of Cleisthenes. After some time his opponents were removed from society through the use of ostracism, a measure in which the people could personally vote. Ostracism made people believe to have ultimate power, since they could expel members of the leading upper class from their *polis*. But as the accounts of Thucydides and Plutarch suggested, the *demos* got easily persuaded by those who were most jealous, bringing forward false accusations in order to gain power and thus acted out of self-fulfilment.<sup>172</sup> In order to answer the question if it is possible to trust the idea that tyranny or having tyrannical sentiment was the first motive to ostracize people, a discussion of modern views on the institution is needed.

### The Modern discussion about ‘Ostracism’

As the sources above show, ostracism creates problems if the purpose and its origin have to be understood. Modern scholars offer various interpretations of the subject. In this second part I will focus on these interpretations in order to get a better view of ostracism and its function in fifth century Athens.

In his short essay on the origin and the meaning of ostracism D. Kagan accepts the explanation given by the *Athenian Constitution*. According to Kagan, the law was indeed introduced by Cleisthenes, who aimed mainly at the removal of Hipparchos,

---

<sup>172</sup> I base my view on the idea as given by S. Forsdyke, in which Cleisthenes’ support of the people ‘may have not been based on [...] the promise of future democratic reforms’. During the party strife between Cleisthenes and Isagoras, Cleisthenes needed to receive support from the people as not to be expelled by them. By offering them full power the latter only tried to create a safe situation for himself. This way, the idea about Cleisthenes, as the creator of democratic reforms, might be rejected. (Forsdyke (2005: 138)

leader of the tyrant-party.<sup>173</sup> In addition, the first ostracism took place in 488 B.C. after which Hipparchos was banished. The prime purpose of its introduction, however, was not to end tyranny and to remove all tyrant sympathizers from society. As Kagan states, the expulsion of Hipparchos, as the first to be ostracized, was motivated by a ‘new struggle for political supremacy’.<sup>174</sup> As we saw, directly after the fall of Pisistratid tyranny around 510 B.C. Cleisthenes was in a conflict with Isagoras because both wanted political power. It was at this time that Cleisthenes ‘took the commonalty into partnership’.<sup>175</sup> Kagan explains that this is the first time Cleisthenes presents himself as having democratic interests.<sup>176</sup> Why? Because Cleisthenes needed the people on his side. The reason why Pisistratid tyranny ended had nothing to do with the hate of the *demos* against tyranny. In Kagan’s view, Pisistratus came to power only in accordance with the people, which suggests he was popular. That tyranny ended was a result of aristocratic intrigues and power games. ‘The common citizens were apathetic.’<sup>177</sup> If this is correct, Pisistratid tyranny was still popular amongst the people even after the departure of Hippias. Thus, overthrowing tyranny would not be a practical measure to safeguard one’s position in society. According to Kagan, Cleisthenes introduced ostracism as a way to threaten Hipparchos, leader of the popular tyrant-party, to create cooperation between the two.<sup>178</sup> This way he safeguarded his position, by connecting himself to the ones the *demos* preferred. If we agree with Kagan then Cleisthenes did not intend to really expel Hipparchos. His banishment took place at the time in a different situation. After the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., Cleisthenes had already left the political arena. The influence of the first Persian War, the weakened tyrant-party after Cleisthenes’ threat, and the attempt by Hippias to redeem power over Athens with Persian aid, brought Hipparchos discredit. Having close connections to all of them, Hipparchos was the first to be ostracized in a time that saw a new struggle for power.

I believe Kagan’s argument that Cleisthenes introduced ostracism to threaten Hipparchos, to create cooperation is weak. No source provides any hint that such situation occurred. By looking more closely to the *Athenian Constitution*, a better understanding of the application of ostracism could be made. In his commentary on

---

<sup>173</sup> Kagan (1961: 400)

<sup>174</sup> Kagan (1961: 399)

<sup>175</sup> Hdt. V.66

<sup>176</sup> Kagan (1961: 297)

<sup>177</sup> Kagan (1961: 396)

<sup>178</sup> Kagan (1961: 398)

the *Athenian Constitution*, P. J. Rhodes explains that the source is created out of ‘material from Herodotus with material from elsewhere’.<sup>179</sup> If this is the case, the *Athenian Constitution* can be partly compared with the work of Herodotus. As Rhodes points out, there appears to be a problem at the start of chapter 20 of the *Athenian Constitution*, in which Isagoras is named ‘a friend of the tyrants’.<sup>180</sup> Herodotus describes the opposite: ‘(...) Cleomenes the Lacedaemonian, who had already, at the time when he was besieging the Pisistratidae, made a contract of friendship with him (Isagoras)’.<sup>181</sup> The latter suggests Isagoras was not a friend but an enemy/opponent of the Pisistratids. If that was the case, Cleisthenes and Isagoras shared the same opponent. After the fall of the Pisistratids in 510, Isagoras and Cleisthenes became each other’s political rivals, both attempting to gain political power.<sup>182</sup> In 508 Isagoras was elected archon, leaving Cleisthenes ‘defeated’.<sup>183</sup> As Cleisthenes did not have any political support, as both Herodotus and the *Athenian Constitution* suggest, he turned his attention to the people.<sup>184</sup>

As the *Athenian Constitution* describes, Cleisthenes as a new law, ‘aiming at the multitude’, introduced ostracism.<sup>185</sup> According to Kagan, the reason for the institution was to threaten and perhaps remove Hipparchos from Athens. Rhodes rejects this idea and believes it is highly unlikely. That ostracism was introduced to prevent tyranny in the future is unreliable.<sup>186</sup> As Rhodes explains, the institution ‘would have provided a more peaceful and civilised way of resolving the conflict between Cleisthenes and Isagoras’.<sup>187</sup> Ostracism could have been introduced as a way to resolve political conflicts. Cleisthenes could have used ostracism as to threaten his opponent Isagoras, receiving the support of the people due to Cleisthenes’s (democratic) laws. It was Isagoras who was the main rival of Cleisthenes. However, the fact that Hipparchos was the first to be ostracised made later Athenians believe it was Hipparchos Cleisthenes had in mind to banish from society.<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> Rhodes (1993: 240)

<sup>180</sup> *Ath. Con.*XX

<sup>181</sup> Hdt.V.70

<sup>182</sup> Hdt.V.66

<sup>183</sup> Rhodes (1993: 243)

<sup>184</sup> Hdt.V.66; *Ath. Con.*XX

<sup>185</sup> *Ath. Con.*XXII

<sup>186</sup> Rhodes (1993: 270)

<sup>187</sup> Rhodes (1993: 270)

<sup>188</sup> Rhodes (1993: 270)

In a piece about the origin of ostracism, J. H. Schreiner focuses on the purpose of the measure. By looking at the accusations, Schreiner argues that prevention of tyranny was not the main reason why influential men were ostracized. Instead, the first victims were banished because they had ‘collaborated with the Persians in 490 B.C.’<sup>189</sup> Following the speech of Lykourgos (390-324 B.C.) against the Athenian Leocrates, Schreiner explains that after the expulsion of Hipparchos, the Athenians erected a stele with a list of inscribed names of all the men who were removed from society by reason of being a traitor (προδότος) or a sinner (ἀλειτερος).<sup>190</sup> Schreiner connects the story with the ostracism of Hipparchos as the first to be punished in 488 B.C. Each time a man was expelled through ostracism, his name was inscribed on the list. To ratify this idea, the writer uses *ostraka* that speak of the reason of accusation. It is striking to read that ‘no ostrakon designates the candidate as a would-be tyrant or as a menace to the democracy’.<sup>191</sup> *Ostraka* either charge the victim of medism<sup>192</sup> or of being a sinner, as was the case with Xanthippos when he was ostracized in 484 B.C. According to Schreiner, the word προδότος refers no doubt to the charge of medism. It was the Athenian general Themistocles, who, after the battle of Marathon, wanted to remove his political opponents in order to process his idea of strengthening the navy amidst the Persian Wars. Facing rejection from other politicians, including Aristides as mentioned above, Themistocles accused men who were ‘advocating negotiations and understanding with Persia’.<sup>193</sup> However, in the case of Aristides, the original purpose of ostracism might have changed, providing evidence of a secondary function of the measure. Schreiner explains that Aristides, as the opponent of Themistocles, was expelled ‘more as a rival [...] than as a medizer’.<sup>194</sup> It is likely the general used the charge of medism or treason to remove his opponent whom the voters accused as τὸν Δά[τιδος] ἀδελφ[όν].

As we saw in the previous chapter, Graf provides a similar explanation: ‘medism could be used as a propaganda instrument to slander one’s opponents and effectively destroy their influence’.<sup>195</sup> In addition, Graf believes that the first three

---

<sup>189</sup> Schreiner (1975: 84)

<sup>190</sup> Schreiner refers here to lines 117-119 of the *Against Leocrates*

<sup>191</sup> Schreiner (1975: 87)

<sup>192</sup> In the case of Kallias, son of Kratias, ostraka have been found, dating from ca. 486/5 that show the description of ὁ Μεδος or ἐκ Μέδου.

<sup>193</sup> Schreiner (1975: 92)

<sup>194</sup> Schreiner (1975: 97)

<sup>195</sup> Graf (1979: 300)

banishments through ostracism provide the possibility that those who had relations with Hippias or the Pisistratids in general, were ‘especially viewed with suspicion after Marathon and were temporarily removed from the anti-Persian rumor-plagued society to secure the welfare of the state’.<sup>196</sup> Concerning the relationship between the Pisistratids and the Persians, Hippias went to Persia to request aid as to return to Athens and redeem full power over the *polis*. When his plan failed he stayed at the Persian court, since he probably was a *xenos* of the Persian King.

Looking at the descriptions presented above, it can be seen that ostracism was created at a time of political rivalry, which suggests the institution had something to do with the removal of a political opponent. It was more democratic, since the people (adult male citizens) could vote and thus could decide who should be banished.

It is striking that the institution first seems to have been introduced by the end of the sixth century B.C. Political strife was already common in previous times, as the *Athenian Constitution* describes.<sup>197</sup> Does this mean that political opponents were not banned from Athens before 508? Rivals were removed from society after power was taken/given by or to the winning group/individual.<sup>198</sup> Why was ostracism or a similar institution not used before? I am afraid I cannot answer this question. However, S. Forsdyke, who explains the introduction and the purpose of ostracism from a perspective that differs from the previous ones, gives a possible answer.

### Another Perspective

In a comprehensive study on exile, democracy and ostracism, Forsdyke argues that ‘both democracy and the institution of ostracism were responses to the destabilizing effects of intra-elite politics of exile’.<sup>199</sup> Forsdyke explains the politics of exile as a form of conflict in which elites, who engage in ‘violent competition for power and (thus) frequently expelled one another from their poleis’.<sup>200</sup> This politics of exile is

---

<sup>196</sup> Graf (1979: 300)

<sup>197</sup> Party strife occurred before the rise of Solon as arbitrator of Athens at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. (*Ath.Con.V*); The strife between the three factions, which resulted in Pisistratus becoming the tyrant of Athens (*Ath.Con.XIII-f.f.*)

<sup>198</sup> Pisistratus was expelled by his rivals Megakles and Lycurgos after the first seized the government of Athens (*Ath.Con.XIV.3*); Cleisthenes was banned from Athens by Cleomenes from Sparta and Isagoras, Cleisthenes’s political opponent (*Hdt.V.70; Ath.Con.XX*)

<sup>199</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 2)

<sup>200</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 1)

already attested in archaic times that saw members of the elite banishing one another to gain power in their own *polis*. Their power, so Forsdyke explains, was used in an unjust way. After people were expelled, they would go to foreign allies to receive aid in order to return home and remove their enemies in return. (As can be seen in the case of Hippias, son of Pisistratus) The fact that people could be banished easily caused political instability continuously. To end this, or at least decline this unstable situation, the course of the archaic period saw attempts by members of the elite to introduce and put into place institutional developments. For example Solon or Pisistratus tried to stabilize/bring order to their *polis* by introducing new institutions, in which the people could play a role. This way, power in the *polis* would be more balanced. According to Forsdyke, Cleisthenes recognized the importance of the *demos*'s influence on stability in political matters and proposed 'reforms by which the democracy was established'.<sup>201</sup> One of his reforms would be ostracism. Forsdyke explains the institution of ostracism as follows:

'Through the institution of ostracism, the Athenians reenacted in symbolic terms their decisive intervention in violent intra-elite conflict during the democratic revolution (508/7 B.C.) and thus reminded elites of their fundamental power in the polis. Even more important, through ostracism, the Athenians found a mechanism for distinguishing – in both practice and ideology – democratic rule from the forms of elite rule that had preceded it.'<sup>202</sup>

The power of the upper class shifted by the institution of ostracism to the *demos*, so that the latter got in charge of expelling a victim and thus could avoid the effects of destabilization of intermittent expulsions in archaic times. Two aspects are crucial here, namely (1) ostracism was only used to expel one person at the time and was considered once a year to be held, and (2) the moderation of the use of ostracism. Both aspects, as Forsdyke describes, represented ostracism as something legitimate of democratic rule, for it was seen as moderate and just, implemented by the people. However, that it was just and legitimate was partly the opinion of those who would gain some benefit from it, thus mainly political opponents and the people.

---

<sup>201</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 2)

<sup>202</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 2)

Strikingly, around ten instances of ostracism are known in fifth century Athens. As Forsdyke explains, the institution was applied moderately, only at times when people felt it was needed. Evidence shows that ‘on each occasion, the institution served to resolve potentially violent conflict between rival elite leaders and their supporters’<sup>203</sup>: Cleisthenes against Isagoras and Hipparchos, Xanthippos against Miltiades, Aristides against Themistocles (or the other way around), Ephialtes against Kimon, Pericles against Alkibiades and Thucydides, etc.<sup>204</sup> In addition, being ostracized did not mean the victim lost everything, as he could still enjoy income from his property. Moreover, the victim was only banished for ten years (in some cases perhaps five), after which he could return to his *polis*. Forsdyke speaks about the mildness of ostracism and discredits the view that the institution was ‘designed as a weapon against traitors’ and tyrants.<sup>205</sup> As she explains, ‘those suspected of aiming at tyranny in Athens were either condemned to death or banished for life along with their families’.<sup>206</sup> In case of treachery, the penalty would be more severe. The idea that ostracism was a measure to remove traitors from society is based on ‘the observation that many of its victims were suspected of connections to the Persians’.<sup>207</sup> Traitors, as Forsdyke argues, would have to stand trial and, when convicted, were either killed or expelled for life. Moreover, a traitor would lose all of his property. Amongst one of the arguments Forsdyke calls to the fore, the narrative about Themistocles is the most striking.<sup>208</sup> Themistocles was banned through ostracism in 471 B.C., but was later summoned to return to Athens to stand trial on the charge of treason. If ostracism was indeed used to expel traitors, why did Themistocles have to return to his *polis* to stand trial for the same thing he was ostracized for in the first place?

As Forsdyke rejects the charges of treason or tyranny, she discusses the accusations that are shown on the *ostraka* found. Other justifications for the institution of ostracism vary from the punishment of excessive influence and prestige to incest and adultery. Themistocles is charged because of his power, as both *ostraka* and literary sources attest. One voter accused him of being a *καταπύγον*, an

---

<sup>203</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 146)

<sup>204</sup> A list of rivals is discussed by M. Lang in: M. L. Lang, ‘Ostraka’, in: *The Athenian Agora*, vol. 25, Ostraka (1990), p. 4-f.f.

<sup>205</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 154)

<sup>206</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 154)

<sup>207</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 154)

<sup>208</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 155)

asshole.<sup>209</sup> Megacles who was ostracized in 486 B.C. was accused of his great wealth and luxurious lifestyle. In addition, *ostraka* connect him with arrogance, ambition and ostentatious display.<sup>210</sup> Kimon was expelled through ostracism in 461 B.C. One voter accused him of incest with his sister Elpinice. Next to these accusations, which I find quite personal in their motivation, Forsdyke also mentions *ostraka* that speak about victims bringing pollution, as pestilence and famine, into the *polis*. According to Forsdyke, the use of ostracism to prevent such pollution ‘may be associated with scapegoating and other types of rituals’ for expelling individuals.<sup>211</sup> The connection between ostracism and ritual might be attested by the use of inscribed pieces of pottery, as *ostraka*, and ‘the practice of inscribing curses on various materials in order to harm a personal enemy’.<sup>212</sup> If ostracism can be seen as a form of a collective ritual, it perhaps helps to explain the various perspectives on the measure, as presented by ancient sources. The motive for collective ritual is influenced by the situation over time: ritual practices constantly change and take over new conditions and modifying the laws or rules that existed in the community. Thus, if ostracism can be regarded as a ritual, it helps to understand why the charges against the victims vary. However, I am not certain that they changed while the accusations on *ostraka* appear to be of one and the same kind, namely personal opinion with a gossipy undertone. As Forsdyke explains, ostracism took place at times when influential men became rivals in their search for political power. Political and social unrest were the results. Would it be unthinkable that these rivals brought gossip and slander upon each other just to persuade the people to stand on their side? The examples of Themistocles against Aristides, and a group of elites against Alkibiades as described by Thucydides, suggest precisely that. Ultimately, they could have influenced people’s votes by lying, promising and bringing to the fore false accusations.

In sum, Forsdyke sees ostracism as a measure to outdo the archaic politics of exile and regulate a just and honest manner to expel influential individuals temporarily from society. The motivations to remove someone through ostracism had, according to Forsdyke, nothing to do with tyranny or treason. Punishment would be in both

---

<sup>209</sup> On the ostraka see S. Brenne, *Ostrakismos-Testimonien*, vol. 1, Historia Einzelschriften 155 (Stuttgart 2002), T1/147, T1/150. On the literary sources see Demosthenes, *Against Aristocrats* (trans. A. T. Murray) (London 1938), 23.205; Plutarch, *Themistocles* (trans. B. Perrin) (London 1914), 22

<sup>210</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 156)

<sup>211</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 157)

<sup>212</sup> Forsdyke (2005: 157)

cases more severe. Rivalry and the fear of mass expulsion amongst members of the elite, and ultimately political unrest, would be more fitting. Regarding the *ostraka* and their inscriptions, Forsdyke sees the similarity with cursing tablets and collective ritual.

The scholars seem to object to the idea that ostracism was introduced to remove tyranny, in any form whatsoever, from Athenian society. That Cleisthenes was the one who first introduced it is not doubted by any of them. He would have introduced it to perhaps blackmail Hipparchos and the tyrant party. He could have installed it to bring power to the multitude. That it was used for the first time after the first Persian War in 490 is a fact the scholars agree upon. The situation brought political unrest, and rivalry between members of the leading nobility was its cause. The rivalry ended when the *demos* decided to ostracize a person to create order in society. This happened approximately ten times in the course of the fifth century. Strikingly, a victim only had to live in exile for ten years, keeping his property during the period of banishment. This is still an aspect that is hard to understand. Following Forsdyke's idea of the connection between ostracism and collective ritual, perhaps there is a way to explain the mildness of the institution. After ten years the tension between rivals could have been weakened and the threat of political instability would not have occurred anymore. J. Ober provides another explanation. According to Ober, the fact that ostracism was mild has something to do with the obligation to obey the will of the people. Ober explains the mildness of ostracism as follows:

‘(...) ostracism was a way of expelling from the community any individual who threatened the national consensus, especially by publicly advocating ideas or acting in ways that threatened the values of political society. Ostracism also served as a public demonstration of the binding nature of democratic decisions on an individual. [...] The ostracized citizen was morally, as well as legally, bound by the will of the people; their decision might be arbitrary and irrational, but he was obliged to obey it. [...] Having obeyed the will of the people, having accepted the consensual covenant that bound all members of the state, the ostracized man was allowed eventually to

return to the group, with his citizenship, as well as his status and property intact.<sup>213</sup>

When a person becomes too great, too influential, becomes a threat against the national consensus, whatever that might be, he could be expelled from society. If a person would be banned, he had to agree with the decision of the people, his fellow-citizens. His absence from society would bring peace at times of political and thus societal unrest. By obeying the will of the people, he proved himself to be a good fellow-citizen. After living in exile, the ‘victim’ could return to Athens where he was still considered to be a citizen. I consider Ober’s idea about ostracism valuable, because it provides information about expectations Athenians had about citizens and their role in society. Citizens were expected to do what was best for their community. In case of ostracism, citizens had to leave their *polis* as to end political unrest in society when they became too great and rivalry with opponents existed. It suggests that having too much power was seen as something bad. Or was it just the way the victims acted because of their power? As was also discussed in the previous chapters, excessive behaviour, providing precious gifts to *xenoi* and also receiving them for personal use, aiming to rule alone out of self-fulfilment (*μοναρχία*), were considered to be undemocratic. In the next chapter, I want to focus on the way Athenians and their democratic constitution thought about and experienced good citizenship. What did the multitude expect from their fellow citizens, and most importantly from their leading nobility? This might be a difficult question, not easy to be answered. However, a glimpse on the subject might either ratify or negates the idea on the motivation to ostracize.

---

<sup>213</sup> Ober (1989: 74)

## Chapter 5: A View on Athenian Citizenship

In order to say something about the expectations Athenian citizens had about the way their fellow citizens, and more importantly members of the leading elite, acted, I will start by looking at the pre-classical ideas about citizenship. I begin with Solon, who became the archon and lawgiver of Athens in the year 594 B.C. Solon's laws were created as a response to the political and social situation in Athens. His laws, or so the *Athenian Constitution* implies, were reinstated and perhaps modified by Cleisthenes in 508 B.C. If the laws of Solon were reused and reinstated by Cleisthenes, Solon's laws can form the basis in which the Athenian expectations of the good citizen in the fifth century can be understood. The laws of both men can provide us with a better understanding of the democratic view on good/expected citizenship in fifth century Athens. Also, the laws might shed some light on the institution of ostracism and its use to remove threats against Athenian society.

### Solon

As we saw in the chapter on tyranny, Homer and Hesiod agree about the features of both the good and the bad leader. The good leader brings peace and prosperity for himself and for his people, the bad leader brings the opposite: terror, famine, and pestilence. Next, justice was an important aspect from which an eighth century leader was expected to rule and to act. Both leader and subjects agreed upon the rules of such justice, whatever the rules were. As R. K. Balot remarks, the decision about what was just and unjust depended on the gods.<sup>214</sup> It were the gods who punished wrongdoings and blessed just actions. Still, human interpretation on what the gods regarded just or unjust was required. According to Balot, justice was normative: guidelines on how to be a good or a bad leader existed.<sup>215</sup>

So what was just and what not? The work of the Athenian lawgiver Solon, who became archon of Athens in 594 B.C. when the *polis* was burdened by problems due to elite materialism, political divisions, social unrest and a great difference between rich and poor, provide some information.<sup>216</sup> Solon was chosen to bring order to society. As discussed in the methodology of this thesis, difficulties exist when

---

<sup>214</sup> Balot (2006: 24-25)

<sup>215</sup> Balot (2006: 25)

<sup>216</sup> Balot (2006: 42)

Solon's work is studied and used. Even though his poetry was transmitted through later sources<sup>217</sup> and thus has to be read with caution, it still sheds some light on the way members of the Athenian elite acted, as self-aggrandizing individuals who were searching for loftiness.<sup>218</sup> Of course, the poetry only provides one side of the story and generalisations about the elite as greedy and arrogant can easily be made. But Solon's work helps to understand sixth century expectations on what is just and good and what is not.

What was justice in the Greek *polis*, and more importantly for this thesis, in the Athenian *polis*? According to J. A. Almeida, fragments of Solon's poetry, especially fragments 4 and 36<sup>219</sup>, help us to understand Solon's idea about *dike* or justice.<sup>220</sup> While the *polis* developed during the archaic period, a certain idea about justice was created. For Athens, or so Solon implies, justice was deeply rooted in the earth of the *polis*.<sup>221</sup> The gods created its foundations.<sup>222</sup> Justice was presented as a divinity, together with order (Eunomia) and disorder (Dysnomia). It were the august foundations of Justice/*Dike* (σεμνὰ Δίκης θέμεθλα) that brought and would safeguard justice in the *polis*: '(...) the august foundations of Justice, who bears silent witness to the present and the past and who in time assuredly comes to exact retribution'.<sup>223</sup> In Solon's time justice did not prevail as he seems to imply Athens was sick and weak because of an 'inescapable wound' created by her inhabitants.<sup>224</sup> In fragment 4, Solon discusses Justice as threatened by townsmen themselves in their desire for property. It were the members of the leading nobility who neglected the foundations of justice, and because of their arrogance and self-aggrandizement were willing to destroy the *polis*.<sup>225</sup> The gods themselves could not destroy Athens, for 'stout-hearted' Pallas Athena guarded it. Only the Athenians could bring the *polis* to ruin. However, the august foundations of Justice, deeply rooted into Athenian soil, would exact retribution when the time of punishment was right. As Almeida explains, the unjust

---

<sup>217</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Solon*; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*; Demosthenes, *On the Embassy*; Athenian Constitution; Diodorus Siculus, *World History*, e.a.

<sup>218</sup> Balot (2006: 41)

<sup>219</sup> Fragment 4 is transmitted through the work of Demosthenes, *On the Embassy*. Fragments 4a, b and c, as well as fragment 36, are mentioned in the *Athenian Constitution*.

<sup>220</sup> Almeida (2003: 209)

<sup>221</sup> Almeida (2003: 211)

<sup>222</sup> Almeida (2003: 212)

<sup>223</sup> *Greek Elegiac Poetry* – Solon, frag. 4.14-16 (2003)

<sup>224</sup> Solon, frag. 4.16

<sup>225</sup> Solon, frag. 4.5-7

deeds of the ‘*agathoi* (well-born members of society) will become their own punishment’.<sup>226</sup> Because of the behaviour of the *agathoi* Athens became an unjust city. To make the city just, order or *Eunomia* was needed, for it reveals ‘all that is orderly and fitting, and often places fetters round the unjust’.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, order ‘makes the rough smooth, puts a stop to excess, weakens insolence, [...] and puts an end to acts of sedition and to the anger of grievous strife’.<sup>228</sup>

After Solon’s description of the foundations of justice and the evils within the *polis* in fragment 4, he continues by explaining how he attempts to heal the *polis* by restoring the foundations of justice in fragment 36. One aspect in the latter fragment is striking, namely that Solon wrote laws ‘for the lower and upper classes alike, providing a straight legal process for each person’.<sup>229</sup> The main theme of fragment 36 is slavery, as Solon presents it as the outcome of the unjust behaviour of the elite. However, the *kakoi* (the people or the ill-born) are to be blamed as well, since they are guilty for bringing general injustice into the *polis*.<sup>230</sup> According to Almeida, Solon implies that the masses had to be restrained, as his words suggests societal unrest:

‘If another had taken up the goad as I did, a man who gave bad council and was greedy, he would not have restrained the masses. For if I had been willing to do what then was pleasing to their opponents and in turn whatever the others [i.e. the masses] planned for them, this city would have been bereft of many men.’<sup>231</sup>

Unrest was caused by both *agathoi* and *kakoi*. Both had to be restrained. By connecting force with justice, Solon attempted to enforce just behaviour among citizens, using laws to create egalitarianism between the well- and the low-born.<sup>232</sup> As Almeida mentions, Solon ‘had to correct, to the extent of his legitimate power, the badly skewed relationship between the *agathoi* and the *kakoi* in Athens’.<sup>233</sup> For Solon, as Balot explains, ‘true well-being could be found only if citizens showed self-

---

<sup>226</sup> Almeida (2003: 214)

<sup>227</sup> Solon, frag. 4.32-33

<sup>228</sup> Solon, frag. 4.34-37

<sup>229</sup> Solon, frag. 36.18-20

<sup>230</sup> Almeida (2003: 227)

<sup>231</sup> Solon, frag. 36.20-25

<sup>232</sup> Almeida (2003: 232)

<sup>233</sup> Almeida (2003: 236)

restrained and mutual respect within the Athenian political community'.<sup>234</sup> Citizens' deeds or behaviour could influence the health of the *polis*. That the citizen and his deeds are connected with the well-being of the *polis* is suggested in fragment 4 as Solon explains that 'the public evil comes home to each man'.<sup>235</sup> According to Balot, the self-interest of a citizen could only be pursued if citizens sought happiness in the *polis*.<sup>236</sup>

The meaning of justice at the end of the archaic period in Athens is difficult to explain, since laws or a concrete description of justice are absent. Justice depended on certain rules, foundations created by both humans and 'gods', or so Solon implies. What is striking in the poetry of Solon is that the well-being of the *polis* is the most important. Only if the citizens live a restrained life, with the respect for fellow-citizens, a *polis* could flourish. The idea of the connection between the individual and the *polis* continued in the classical period as a criterion for being a good or a bad citizen. The *polis* was regarded to be the *patris*, the father of all its children, the citizens.<sup>237</sup>

### Cleisthenes

Cleisthenes became the chosen leader of Athens after the fall of the Pisistratids. Having removed his political opponent Isagoras, Cleisthenes focused on a new political situation in Athens: he broadened the opportunity for more citizens to partake in the government, which made his laws 'much more democratic than those of Solon'.<sup>238</sup> The reason could be threefold. The first option is that the tyrannical rule of the Pisistratids obliterated<sup>239</sup> the laws of Solon as the *Athenian Constitution* describes.<sup>240</sup> Cleisthenes introduced new ones as the institution of ostracism. What is striking is that the removal of Solon's laws only seemed to threaten the rights of the well-born, as chapter XVI of the *Athenian Constitution* implies. When Pisistratus had

---

<sup>234</sup> Balot (2003: 45)

<sup>235</sup> Solon, frag. 4.26

<sup>236</sup> Balot (2006: 46)

<sup>237</sup> Liddel (2007: 139)

<sup>238</sup> *Ath. Con.* XXII.1

<sup>239</sup> According to J. Ober, Pisistratus did not obliterate Solon's laws, but maintained them instead: Ober (1989: 69).

<sup>240</sup> *Ath. Con.* XXII.1

all the power he was ‘kindly and mild in everything, [...] and moreover he advanced loans of money to the poor for their industries, so that they might support themselves by farming [...] And in all other matters too he gave the multitude no trouble during his rule, but always worked for peace and safeguarded tranquillity.’<sup>241</sup> The ones who were not happy were the well-born, as the balance of political power was damaged by a one-man rule. As we saw above, Solon created laws that would benefit both *agathoi* and *kakoi*, so that order and balance was created in society, which was damaged by Pisistratid tyranny. When Cleisthenes became the chosen lawgiver, he reinstated the laws of Solon and created new ones in order to recreate such balance and a democratic constitution.

The second option has perhaps something to do with the laws themselves. Whereas one of Solon’s laws decided that office holding was defined by the wealth of households, Cleisthenes broadened the opportunity for more citizens to hold office and thus become more influential in Athenian politics. According to J. Ober, after the Pisistratid regime there was an awareness of ordinary citizens, seeing themselves as Athenians.<sup>242</sup> This awareness developed over time and was able to grow because Pisistratus took power and control away from the other Athenian elites. As a result their significance as legitimate rulers and influential well-born citizens lessened.<sup>243</sup> The elites were thus considered to be less important, which brought a sense of significance and a civilian self-consciousness amongst the masses.<sup>244</sup> By the time Cleisthenes became leader of Athens, he had to deal with the masses as self-conscious Athenians. This is why Cleisthenes, while struggling against Isagoras for political power, turned his attention to the people.

A third option could be the urge Cleisthenes felt to take over political power over Athens, as the chosen leader of the *polis*. By focusing on the multitude and promising the masses that power will be theirs, he was hoping to overcome his political rival Isagoras, thus using the people as a tool in receiving political power.

I believe all options are valid, but what is important for the understanding of the good and the bad citizen is the fact that Cleisthenes used Solon’s laws, if the *Athenian Constitution* is correct, to bring balance and order in the division of power amongst the citizens. They were all members in the same constitution in which they

---

<sup>241</sup> *Ath. Con. XVI.2, 7*

<sup>242</sup> Ober (1989: 67-68)

<sup>243</sup> Ober (1989: 67)

<sup>244</sup> Ober (1989: 67)

were able to participate in the government. A certain justice or order was created in which every citizen had more or less the same rights. When such order was being threatened measures were taken, as the institution of ostracism implies. As Forsdyke argues, it ended the destabilizing effects of intra-elite politics of exile. Members of the elite, who were all searching for ultimate power and so removed each other from society in order to gain it, brought chaos to society, just as Solon describes in his poetry. One way to remove the threat of well-born men becoming too powerful was to remove them from society. This way, the well-being of Athens was safeguarded, and thus the well-being of her citizens.

Having a better view of the ideal type of society in which justice and order prevails, what can be said about the expectations citizens had of their fellow-citizens, both well- and low-born? As discussed above, the citizen had to be self-restrained and respectful towards fellow-citizens and the *polis* at large. Self-interest could only be pursued if the citizen sought happiness in the city. The acts a citizen performed had influence on the well-being of his own life as the life of the *polis*.

### Expectations

‘For the man who hates his child and is a bad father could never become a safe guide to the people; the man who does not cherish the persons who are nearest and dearest to him, will never care much about you, who are not his kinsmen; the man who is wicked in his private relations would never be found trustworthy in public affairs; and the man who is base at home was never a good and honourable man in Macedonia, for by his journey he changed his position, not his disposition.’<sup>245</sup>

The text above is part of a speech by the Athenian orator Aeschines (389-314 B.C.) against Ctesiphon. What is striking in this part of the speech is that the individual is connected with the *polis* and his fellow-citizens. As mentioned above, every form of behaviour and actions a citizen performed influenced his surroundings, both private

---

<sup>245</sup> Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon*, 3.78

and public. A good citizen would focus on the creation of mutual self-interest between the citizen and the *polis*. The citizen had to benefit both the city and the individual. Solon already implies the existence of this ‘idea’ in his poetry. Still, two centuries later the same idea about what a citizen should do or not do existed. The fact that I call this an ‘idea’ or an ideology is because this was easier said than done. According to M. R. Christ, individuals varied (and still vary) widely:

‘Because individuals varied widely in the extent to which they embraced this view and because shrewd, self-serving behaviour was always a temptation, the city faced an ongoing challenge: to persuade and, if necessary, to compel citizens to perform their civic obligations.’<sup>246</sup>

In order to compel citizens to act according to civic obligations, and thus attempt to decline any self-serving behaviour, it was important the city considered and respected the interests of all male Athenian citizens. Equality and freedom for all citizens were necessary to realize this, but to what extent? Generally, a citizen could do what he wanted, as long as he did not threaten fellow citizens or the *polis* at large. Threat came from citizens, such as self-centered politicians, as e.g. Thucydides and Solon explain, who searched and fought for power and were ‘led by private ambition and private greed’.<sup>247</sup> Such men were willing to perform acts or to make decisions to satisfy their own future.

As Christ explains, self-interest and (what Christ calls) ‘the practice of shrewdness’ go hand in hand.<sup>248</sup> In some instances shrewdness had to be practiced in order to satisfy one’s self-interest, even if it was not in accordance with the interest of the community. Christ argues that ‘the practice of shrewdness was an integral feature of social and civic life’.<sup>249</sup> Examples can be found in law-courts. As I described earlier, Alkibiades was (perhaps) falsely accused by political opponents who wanted to remove him from society, for Alkibiades would have blocked their path to gain political supremacy. Another example is Themistocles who accused his political rival Aristides of ‘medism’. Both examples might attest the use of slander, not to gratify the self-interest of the *polis*, but to satisfy one’s own interest.

---

<sup>246</sup> Christ (2006: 15)

<sup>247</sup> Thuc.2.65

<sup>248</sup> Christ (2006: 35)

<sup>249</sup> Christ (2006: 35)

One way to diminish or to attempt to remove bad citizenship would be the ‘punishment’ by the whole community. ‘Punishment’ was arranged by means of public discourse, since, or so Christ argues, Athenians did not want to force free men to act as good citizens by using ‘bureaucratic and legal mechanisms’.<sup>250</sup> That the ‘punishments’ were communally arranged can be explained by the fact that all the citizens had to protect their community. Aristotle explains it as follows:

‘(...) the citizens, although they are dissimilar from one another, their business is the security of their community, and this community is the constitution (...)’.<sup>251</sup>

Democracy had to be protected, as Aristotle suggests. Here, we find ourselves in the fourth century B.C. In the fifth century, following the argument of Forsdyke, ostracism was a way to end strife between political opponents, and ultimately to remove societal unrest. This way, the Athenians could indeed secure their community.

What kind of acts or forms of behaviour were seen as bad? Finding a straight answer is difficult for different reasons. As we saw in the previous chapters, bad behaviour or the description of such behaviour was used at times when rivals wanted to outdo one another. Political strife or feuds between elite families were one of the causes. Whether it was medism or self-aggrandizement, all were publicly discussed at e.g. assemblies and law-courts. In order to damage an opponent’s status, the accuser had to bring forward the opponent’s ‘opinions or way of life which were at odds with the norms of the group’, i.e. the Athenian citizens.<sup>252</sup> Descriptions of bad or odd actions can be found in the works/speeches of orators such as Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.). The main focus of such speeches is on the behaviour of members of the elite. It means that our understanding of what is good or bad conduct in fifth century Athenian society is based on the behaviour of the well-born. Of course there are sources that mention the behaviour of the masses, such as *The Old Oligarch* by Pseudo-Xenophon (the second half of the fifth century B.C.).<sup>253</sup> But in line with ostracism, of which only well-born citizens were the ‘victims’, their conduct deserves more attention. As Ober

---

<sup>250</sup> Christ (2006: 16)

<sup>251</sup> Arist.*Pol.*3.1276.b

<sup>252</sup> Ober (1989: 208)

<sup>253</sup> Pseudo-Xenophon, *The Old Oligarch*

presents it, Demosthenes delivers a variety of bad conduct in his speeches.<sup>254</sup> One of such acts is luxuriousness or decadence. As Demosthenes mentions in his speech against Meidias:

‘He has built at Eleusis a mansion huge enough to overshadow his neighbors; he drives his wife to the Mysteries, or anywhere else that he wishes, with a pair of greys (white horses) from Sicyon; he swaggers about the market-place with three or four henchmen in attendance, describing beakers and drinking-horns and cups loud enough for the passers-by to hear.’<sup>255</sup>

Demosthenes used the ostentatious display Meidias would have performed against him. Meidias was showing off his wealth in public, as he walked on the market place together with his comrades.

Other forms of bad conduct are arrogance or excessive pride (*hubris*). Again in the speech *Against Meidias*, Demosthenes presents and accuses Meidias of his arrogance and *hubris*. Meidias presented himself as the rich man, paying for the liturgies and the special war taxes, placing himself (or so it seems) into the role of important member of the city.<sup>256</sup> As Demosthenes presents it, Meidias, by calling himself a special paying member in society, distances himself from the masses and regarded himself to be a better man. If Meidias, because of his arrogance and *hubris*, demonstrated his superiority, it was not ‘easily tolerated by those who accepted the validity of egalitarian political principles’.<sup>257</sup>

The mentioned forms of bad conduct, as presented by Demosthenes, all form a threat against the idea of equality, order and justice, as they form the basis of a healthy Athenian society as discussed above. As mentioned at the beginning of this part, it is difficult to explain what was considered to be bad or good conduct. Of course, there existed ideas about right or wrong, just or unjust. I believe a part of the problem lies in the function of oratory. The goal of orators such as Demosthenes was to persuade the people by their oratory skills (invention, disposition, diction, action and memory<sup>258</sup>). If persuasion was reached, Demosthenes could win the case and

---

<sup>254</sup> Ober (1989: 206, f.f.)

<sup>255</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Meidias*, 21.158

<sup>256</sup> Dem.21.153

<sup>257</sup> Ober (1989: 209)

<sup>258</sup> Rutherford (2005: 81)

outdo his rival, even if lies were needed. By modifying facts and placing the facts in a nice persuasive story, even the best orator could turn a good conduct into a bad one. I believe the ideas about behaviour in general were very flexible and could be modified if a convincing oration was delivered.

By looking at Solon's laws, I was aiming to form a basis, a context, from which the idea on good citizenship in the course of the fifth century could be understood. Justice was an important aspect that could create order in society. Next, equality, political equality that is, between citizens was important as well, as it supported order and balance within political power amongst citizens. When Cleisthenes became leader of Athens in 508, he reused or reintroduced laws of Solon and created new ones. One of these new laws was the institution of ostracism. Again, equality between citizens was important, as they had a sense of a shared political responsibility. As discussed, this awareness was already created at the time Pisistratus was tyrant of Athens: political power was taken from the Athenian elite. This way, the masses knew that they were not dependent on the well-born. The people could make political decisions themselves. Cleisthenes, who gave power to the people in order to outdo his rival Isagoras in his struggle for political importance, supported this idea.

Bad citizenship was placed against the idea of equality amongst citizens. Moreover, bad citizenship did not connect with the idea of justice. As both Solon and Demosthenes discussed, self-aggrandizement, *hubris* or arrogance, luxuriousness or decadence, were seen as forms of bad conduct. Such conduct was often connected to the lifestyle of the well-born. These accusations came to the fore in public settings, at law-courts or assemblies, at times of political rivalry. Moreover, the same charges were written on *ostraka* as discussed in chapter 4. Whether the described accusations were true or false, the Athenians negatively judged them, as such bad behaviour was considered to bring disorder and ultimately chaos in society. Next, bad behaviour did not match with the conduct of the good citizen, for he lived a restrained life, with the respect for fellow-Athenians. Such conduct would benefit the well-being of the *polis* at large.

Ostracism, as discussed, was introduced and afterwards used to banish men from society who became too great, and thus could form a threat against the well-being of the Athenian *polis*. As *ostraka* show, forms of bad behaviour were used to accuse influential men in order to remove them from society. The poetry of Solon and

the speeches of Demosthenes underscore the negative view on such behaviour. In addition, the institution of ostracism brought order in the politics of exile in archaic times, as discussed by Forsdyke. People could vote themselves and thus could decide who had to leave society for a particular period of time. But the fact that citizens were easily persuaded with clever words by people such as Demosthenes or even Cleisthenes, challenges the thought that ostracism was a genuine and honest measure to remove threats from a democratic society: lies may have occurred to overcome political rivals and thus false accusations could banish men from the *polis*. Whether such measure was honest or not, the citizens had the feeling they could decide about political matters in order to keep order within their Athenian community.

## Conclusion

Ritualised friendship or *xenia* had the purpose to create diplomatic ties between elite or aristocratic families. In archaic Greece, such friendships were important in various ways. Friends or *xenoi* had to offer help in times of different need: in times of war, in lending money or in the protection of each other's spouse or children. Moreover, *xenia* was considered to be honourable and respectable, for it was traditional, a phenomenon that went from father to son. Ways to seal such friendships was through the exchange of gifts.

In Athens, the traditional bonds between elites and their *xenia* with other elites, both within Greece and elsewhere, became threatened by new developments in the course of the fifth century B.C. Two developments were highly influential, namely the Persian Wars and the development of democracy in the *polis*. Former contact between Athenian elite families with Persian aristocracy, prior to the Persian Wars, was criticised as Persia was considered to be the enemy of Athens. During and after the Persian Wars, members of the Athenian elite, who had contact in any form with Persian nobility, were closely watched by fellow-Athenians and were sometimes accused of medism or of having tyrannical sentiments. The latter accusation was formed by the idea that tyranny, a constitution that stood directly in opposition to democracy, was something eastern, Persian, since Persia had a king, a despot in Athenian eyes.

The fact that gifts were exchanged between individuals did not tally with the democratic sense of equality between Athenian citizens. Especially after the "democratic revolution" in the second half of the fifth century, the idea of equality amongst Athenian citizens made it difficult to exchange gifts between *xenoi*. Gifts had to be given by the community as a whole. In addition, received gifts were gifts not to be used by individuals but by the Athenian *polis* at large.

Accusations of medism or having tyrannical sentiments could lead to banishment from Athenian society, as they were considered to threaten the developing Athenian democratic constitution. According to ancient sources, ostracism was introduced and used to outdo such threats. All though *xenia* and gift-exchange were criticised, Athenian members of the elite continued having ties with elites elsewhere, even in Persia.

Can we say something about the societal aspects the Athenian elite in fifth century Athens had to cope with, especially with the critique on their way of life? Were it the Persian Wars and the development of democracy alone that made it difficult to remain true to traditional features of elite-life, or was there more?

In this thesis, it was my aim to discuss related subjects separately. In this way I could analyse various aspects that form important bricks in order to build an answer.

Starting with *xenia* and gift-exchange, I answered the question how to understand their role in fifth century Athens? Beginning with the origin and the purpose, Homer provides information on the use and the creation of ritualised friendship and the importance of gift-exchange. *Xenia* was made in response to a specific need in times of war or political conflict. Herman argues that *xenia* was created out of the need for particular services such as foster-parenthood, the lending of money and to assist in times of war. Such services were arranged between individuals only. To ratify *xenia*, gifts were exchanged. The gifts could either be an object or a person. In case of the latter, women were used as brides to seal the bond. Slaves were part of the gift.

Differences existed between Greek and Persian gifts. The former were, as Homer describes, simple though precious, whereas the latter are presented by Greek writers as extreme, numerous and too grand. A part of the difference lies in the difference in culture. Another part had something to do with expectations. Whereas Greek *xenoi* considered themselves as equals and thus gave equal gifts, Persian gifts differed from Greek gifts because the giver, the Persian king, regarded himself to be of higher importance than his Greek friend. His purpose of providing gifts was to safeguard his position by making himself important as king. His subjects relied on him, for they could gain both social and political status by receiving gifts from the king.

For the fifth century Athenians, who had a strong sense of equality amongst citizens, receiving gifts from the Persian king was criticised for it damaged a balanced relationship of equality between *xenoi*. Thus, the willingness of members of the Athenian elite to be submissive to the Persian king, the enemy of Athens at the beginning of the fifth century, was regarded a shameful act. Suspicion arose because such an act was seen as an act of medism, the willingness to adopt Persian custom and behaviour. Also, contact with Persians could be considered as a sign of pro-tyrannical sentiment. In addition, over time gifts, which were traditionally received by

individuals for their own use, were now to be given to and used by the whole Athenian *demos*.

To understand the accusations of medism and tyrannical sentiment in Athens in the course of the fifth century, I further focused on both phenomena on their origin and meaning, to understand the situation of members of the Athenian elite facing such accusations.

During the pre-classical period tyranny could be seen as positive, for it was connected to the creation of order by a wise and just man at times of political and social unrest. Over time, this view changed: during the fifth century the Athenians became aware of their collective power. They could decide about laws themselves. Moreover, as Plato and Aristotle show, tyranny was considered the opposite of the so-called ideal type of constitution, namely democracy, in the fifth and fourth century B.C. After the Persian Wars, tyranny was seen as something non-Greek, something Persian, and thus as a threat. Members of the Athenian elite, who had contact with Persia, could be accused of having tyrannical sentiment.

In case of medism, the accusation came to the fore after members of the Athenian elite were suspected of adoption and adaptation of anything Persian. This could be the adoption of for example Persian dress or customs. However, medism as an accusation could be used after contact between Athenians and Persians occurred. Adoption and adaptation were not the main reasons to accuse someone of medism.

Both accusations were used as political tools. They were effective at times of political rivalry between members of the elite to outdo each other in their struggle for political and social power. Slander and gossip were used to hurt the opponent's status.

In the fourth chapter, I discussed the institution of ostracism and its impact on members of the Athenian elite. Introduced by Cleisthenes in 508 B.C., ostracism was believed to remove any threat against democracy from society. Some ancient and modern writers believe medism or having tyrannical sentiment were the main reasons for the use of the institution. However, on Plutarch's and Diodorus Siculus's response, ostracism was introduced and used at times of political rivalry. In order to stabilise the banishment of elites by their political opponents in archaic times, ostracism, in Forsdyke's view, had the purpose to let the masses decide by way of votes which member of the ruling elite should leave Athens for a particular period of

time. Ostracism was a measure to bring order in times of political and social unrest. It was a democratic institution as the citizens could vote themselves. However, they could be influenced by the persuasive oratory members of the Athenian elite presented before them.

I ended this thesis with a short view on Athenian citizenship. The purpose of this last chapter was to answer the question: ‘What did the multitude expect from their fellow citizens, and most importantly from their leading nobility?’. Beginning with Solon, his laws were created to bring stability into a *polis* that suffered from chaos, due to the conduct of the well-born. Members of the ruling elite were accused of self-aggrandizement, loftiness and the urge to have more property. Justice between citizens was damaged and had to be repaired. One important way to heal justice was to change the conduct of the citizens, because citizens and their deeds were connected with the well-being of the *polis*. Only if the citizens lived a restrained life with the respect for fellow-citizens, a *polis* could flourish.

Cleisthenes reused some of Solon’s laws after he became leader of Athens in 508 B.C. After the Pisistratid rule, order and balance between citizens had to be created. In the view of the *Athenian Constitution*, Cleisthenes’ laws were more democratic than those of Solon. Citizens were able to be more politically active. Moreover, ostracism, as it was introduced in 508, gave the people a possibility to remove influential men from Athenian society. In this way, the well-being of Athens was safeguarded and thus the well-being of her citizens.

A citizen should act according to the expectations of the *polis* at large. It means that arrogance, self-aggrandizement and *hubris* (to name a few) were negatively judged. Equality between citizens was important, and hence no one was better than the rest.

To determine what was considered to be good or bad conduct is difficult, since lies and persuasion could make good conduct look like bad conduct. Conduct as *hubris* or arrogance was often connected to the lifestyle of the well-born. The accusations of such conduct came to the fore in public settings, at law-courts or assemblies, in the context of political rivalry. As the words of orators easily persuaded the people, accusations based on false information challenge the thought that ostracism was a genuine and honest measure to remove threats from a democratic

society: lies may have led to overcome political rivals and false accusations could banish men from the *polis*.

Finally, can we say something about the societal aspects the Athenian elite in fifth century Athens had to cope with, especially with the critique of their way of life? Were it the Persian Wars and the development of democracy alone that made it difficult to remain true to traditional features of elite-life, or was there more? Members of the Athenian elite did not end their *xenia*. Nor did they reject the phenomenon of gift-exchange as it was an important part in the creation of ritualised friendship. These aspects became threatened by two developments, such as the Persian Wars and the development of democracy in Athens, which were convenient developments at times of political strife: opponents could be connected to the Persian enemy as some of them were *xenoi* of the Persians. Gifts might have been exchanged and the accusation of medism was easily made. Next, if a member of the Athenian elite was a friend of the Pisistratids, a connection with tyrannical sentiment could have been easily made as well. These accusations took place in the beginning of the fifth century. Over time the accusations shifted, or so it seems, to charges of becoming too great and too influential in a society that developed itself as a more democratic community in which equality prevailed. It were the members of the Athenian elite themselves who threatened themselves and each other. They were the ones who knew each other best, as the studies of Gluckman and Hunter argue. The well-born could orate, talk persuasively, knew each other's background and history, and thus could attack the political opponent defensively or easily. That such political strife, and slander and gossip with it, was not new in the fifth century is attested by the political chaos that occurred during the sixth century. Solon mentions it in his poetry. The Pisistratid regime both ended and started strife and chaos. And even when this regime ended in 510, political strife occurred again between Cleisthenes and Isagoras. Even in the sixth century members of the Athenian elite were removed from society. Ostracism, as Forsdyke explains, ended the intra-elite politics of exile, thus making it a bit harder to banish an opponent from society without the agreement of the *demos* at large. One could only remove his rival with the use of ostracism. In order to do that, he had to make himself loved and his opponent hated. Slander, gossip and lies in general were tools. The ingredients were someone's background, character,

combined with occurrences that were taken place at the time, such as the Persian Wars or the development of democracy.

## **Bibliography**

### Primary

Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* (trans. N.G. Wilson) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1997)

Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* (trans. C. D. Adams) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1919)

Alcaeus: Greek Lyric – *Sappho & Alcaeus* (trans. D. A. Campbell) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1990 repr.)

Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* (trans. S. Douglas Olson) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., rep. 2007)

*Athenian Constitution* (trans. H. Rackham) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2004 repr.)

Aristotle, *Politics* (trans. H. Rackham) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2005 repr.)

Aristophanes, *Acharnians* (trans. J. Henderson) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., rep. 1998)

Claudius Aelianus, *Varia Historia* (trans. J. G. DeVoto) (Chicago 1995)

Demosthenes, *Against Meidias* (trans. W. Heinemann) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1939)

Demosthenes, *On the False Embassy* (trans. C.A. Vince) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., rep. 1989)

Diodorus Siculus, *Library* (trans. C. H. Oldfather) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1987)

*Greek Elegiac Poetry* – Solon (trans. D. E. Gerber) (Oxford rep. 2003)

Herodotus, *Histories* (trans. G. Rawlinson) (Hertfordshire 1996)

Hesiod, *Theogony* (trans. G. W. Most) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2006)

Hesiod, *Works and Days* (trans. G. W. Most) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2006)

Homer, *Iliad* (transl. A.T. Murray) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1924)

Homerus, *Ilias* (trans. M.A. Schwartz) (Amsterdam 2011)

Homerus, *Odysee* (trans. M.A. Schwartz) (Amsterdam 2011)

Homer, *Odyssey* (rev. G. E. Dimock) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1998 rep.)

Plato, *Republic* (trans. P. Shorey) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2003 repr.)

Plato, *The Statesman* (trans. W. R. M. Lamb) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2006 repr.)

Plutarch, *Aristides* (trans. B. Perrin) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 2006 repr.)

Pseudo-Xenophon, *The Old Oligarch* (trans. W. Heinemann) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1984)

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (trans. M. Hammond) (Oxford 2009)

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (trans. C. Forster Smith) (Cambridge, MA., LOEB Classical Lib., 1928)

Xenophon, *Anabasis* (trans. L. Llewellyn-Jones) (2014)

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* (trans. L. Llewellyn-Jones) (2014)

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* (trans. W. Miller) (London 1914)

### Secondary

Adcock, F., *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece* (London 1975)

Almeida, J. A., *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon's Political Poems* (Leiden 2003)

Briant, P., *From Cyrus to Alexander* (trans. P. T. Daniels) (Eisenbrauns 2002)

Alonso, V., 'War, Peace, and International Law in Ancient Greece', in: K.A. Raaflaub, *War and Peace in the Ancient World* (Oxford 2007), p. 206-225

Balot, R. K., *Greek Political Thought* (Oxford 2006)

Brenne, S., *Ostrakismos-Testimonien*, vol. 1, *Historia Einzelschriften* 155 (Stuttgart 2002)

Borza, E., *In the Shadow of the Olympus* (New Jersey 1990)

Christ, M. R., *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens* (New York 2006)

Forsdyke, S., *Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy* (Oxfordshire 2005)

Gluckman, M., 'Papers in Honor of Melville J. Herskovits: Gossip and Scandal', in: *Current Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Jun. 1963), p. 307-316

Graf, D. F., *Medism: Greek Collaboration with Achaemenid Persia* (London 1979)

- Hammer, D., 'Plebiscitary Politics in Archaic Greece', in: *Historia*, band 54/2 (Stuttgart 2005), p. 107-131
- Herman, G., *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge 1987)
- Hofstetter, J., *Die Griechen in Persien* (Berlin 1978)
- Holladay, J., 'Medism in Athens 508-480 B.C.', in: *Greece & Rome*, vol. 25, n. 2 (Oct., 1978), p. 174-191
- Hunter, V., 'Gossip and the Politics of Reputation in Classical Athens', in: *Phoenix*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 1990), p. 299-325
- Jacoby, F., *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, vol. 3 (Leiden 1964)
- Kagan, D., 'The Origin and Purposes of Ostracism', in: *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. 30, n. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1961), p. 393-401
- Lang, M. L., 'Ostraka', in: *The Athenian Agora*, vol. 25, Ostraka (1990)
- Lardinois, A., 'Have we Solon's verses?', in: A. Lardinois & J. Blok, *Solon of Athens: New Historical and Philological Approaches* (Leiden 2006), p. 15-35
- Lavelle, B. M., 'The Compleat Angler: Observations on the Rise of Peisistratos in Herodotus (1.59-64)', in: *The Classical Quarterly*, vol. 41, n. 2 (1991), p. 317-324
- Lewis, S., *Greek Tyranny* (Devon 2009)
- Liddel, P., *Civic Obligation and Individual Liberty in Ancient Athens* (Oxford 2007)
- Llewellyn-Jones, L., *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559 to 331 BCE* (Edinburgh rep. 2014)

Luraghi, N., 'One-Man Government', in: H. Beck, *A Companion to Ancient Greek Government* (Oxford 2013), p. 131-145

Mauss, M., *The Gift* (trans. I. Cunnison) (London rep. 1966)

McMullin, R. M., 'Aspects of Medizing: Themistocles, Simonides, and Timocreon of Rhodes', in: *The Classical Journal*, vol. 97, n. 1 (Oct. – Nov. 2001), p. 55-76

Miller, M., *Athens and Persia in the fifth century BC* (Cambridge 1997)

Ober, J., *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (New Jersey 1989)

Raaflaub, K., 'Stick and Glue: The function of tyranny in fifth-century Athenian democracy', in: K. A. Morgan, ed., *Popular Tyranny* (Austin 2003), p. 59-93

Reden, S. von, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London 1995)

Reynolds, L. D., & Wilson, N. G., *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (4th ed.) (Oxford 2013)

Rhodes P. J., *A History of the Classical Greek World, 478-323 B.C.* (Oxford 2010)

Rhodes, P. J., *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1993)

Rutherford, R., *Classical Literature* (Oxford 2005)

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H., 'The tyranny of Peisistratos', in: H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, *Peisistratos and the Tyranny* (Amsterdam 2000), p. 1-15

Schreiner, J. H., 'The Origin of Ostracism Again', in: *Classica et Mediaevalia*, F. Blatt (London 1975), p. 84-97

Walbank, M. B., *Athenian Proxeny of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Toronto 1978)