

# HESPERIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL  
OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

VOLUME 86  
2017



Copyright © American School of Classical Studies at Athens, originally published in *Hesperia* 86 (2017), pp. 607–643. This offprint is supplied for personal, non-commercial use only, and reflects the definitive electronic version of the article, found at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2972/hesperia.86.4.0607>>.

# HESPERIA

Jennifer Sacher, EDITOR

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Carla M. Antonaccio, *Duke University*  
Angelos Chaniotis, *Institute for Advanced Study*  
Jack L. Davis, *University of Cincinnati*  
A. A. Donohue, *Bryn Mawr College*  
Jan Driessen, *Université Catholique de Louvain*  
Marian H. Feldman, *University of California, Berkeley*  
Gloria Ferrari Pinney, *Harvard University*  
Thomas W. Gallant, *University of California, San Diego*  
Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
Guy M. Hedreen, *Williams College*  
Carol C. Mattusch, *George Mason University*  
Alexander Mazarakis Ainian, *University of Thessaly at Volos*  
Lisa C. Nevett, *University of Michigan*  
John H. Oakley, *The College of William and Mary*  
Josiah Ober, *Stanford University*  
John K. Papadopoulos, *University of California, Los Angeles*  
Jeremy B. Rutter, *Dartmouth College*  
Monika Trümper, *Freie Universität Berlin*

*Hesperia* is published quarterly by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Founded in 1932 to publish the work of the American School, the journal now welcomes submissions from all scholars working in the fields of Greek archaeology, art, epigraphy, history, materials science, ethnography, and literature, from earliest prehistoric times onward. *Hesperia* is a refereed journal, indexed in *Abstracts in Anthropology*, *L'Année philologique*, *Art Index*, *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, *Current Contents*, *IBZ: Internationale Bibliographie der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Zeitschriftenliteratur*, *Numismatic Literature*, *Periodicals Contents Index*, *Russian Academy of Sciences Bibliographies*, and *TOCS-IN*. The journal is also a member of CrossRef.

## HESPERIA SUPPLEMENTS

The *Hesperia* Supplement series (ISSN 1064-1173) presents book-length studies in the fields of Greek archaeology, art, language, and history. Founded in 1937, the series was originally designed to accommodate extended essays too long for inclusion in *Hesperia*. Since that date the Supplements have established a strong identity of their own, featuring single-author monographs, excavation reports, and edited collections on topics of interest to researchers in classics, archaeology, art history, and Hellenic studies.

Back issues of *Hesperia* and *Hesperia* Supplements are electronically archived in JSTOR ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)), where all but the most recent titles may be found. For order information and a complete list of titles, see the ASCSA website ([www.ascsa.edu.gr](http://www.ascsa.edu.gr)). The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, established in 1881, is a research and teaching institution dedicated to the advanced study of the archaeology, art, history, philosophy, language, and literature of Greece and the Greek world.

# DEBT AND ITS AFTERMATH

## THE NEAR EASTERN BACKGROUND TO SOLON'S *SEISACHTHEIA*

### ABSTRACT

Debts were a structural factor in the lives of peasants throughout the ancient world. In Archaic Greece, Solon of Athens took the unique measure to cancel all debts, abolish debt slavery, and bring back those individuals who had been sold abroad. For this innovation, he drew on the tradition of periodic debt remission and liberation of debt slaves by royal decree in the empires of ancient Mesopotamia, about which he may have heard during his travels in the East. His poems about his legal reforms also display striking similarities with Near Eastern, and specifically Neo-Assyrian, official memorials. In contrast to debt slavery in the Near East, the practice at Athens was terminated forever, even though the custom of debt remission failed to become entrenched.

When Solon was invested with special powers as archon at Athens in 594 B.C. in order to solve the pressing problems of the polis, the first measure he took, according to Plutarch (*Sol.* 15.3), was the *σεισάχθεια* (*seisachtheia*), “the shaking off of burdens.”<sup>1</sup> Both the *Athenaion Politeia* (6.1, 12.4) and Plutarch (*Sol.* 15.3–4) report that this measure entailed the cancellation of all outstanding debts and a prohibition against making loans on one’s person. Unambiguous as this decision may seem, considering the oppression of the Athenian rural population as pictured in our sources, Solon’s action has evoked intensive scholarly debate—not only about the nature of the *seisachtheia* itself, but also about its background in Archaic-period Athens and Greece more widely, as well as the effects of this and related Solonian measures on sociopolitical developments at Athens.<sup>2</sup> First, since

1. We are very grateful to our hosts who invited us to present our work: Robert Rollinger, hosting the European Network for the Study of Ancient Greek History at Helsinki (May 10–11, 2013); Werner Riess, at the “Colloquium Atticum” at Hamburg (June 16, 2014); Robert Rollinger and Sebastian Fink, at the “Melammu” conference at Tartu (May 22–24, 2015); and Ineke

Sluiter and André Lardinois, at the conference “Anchoring Innovation” at Ravenstein (December 17–20, 2015); as well as to the critical audiences at each location for their responses. We also thank the two anonymous *Hesperia* referees for their useful comments. Julia Krul’s contribution to this article was partly funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung.

For the problems concerning the date of Solon’s reforms, see Rhodes 1981, pp. 120–122; the arguments of Wallace (1983) for 594 B.C. as the date of Solon’s archonship are now generally accepted.

2. For an overview of the debate on the *seisachtheia* since 1980, see Faraguna 2012.

debts appear in our sources as a major problem for the Athenian peasants, what caused them to become so heavily indebted? Was their condition due to an economic crisis, and if so, of what kind? Second, was it indeed those debts that Solon canceled, as the abovementioned sources tell us, or rather other forms of oppression, as Harris argued two decades ago?<sup>3</sup>

In our contribution to this debate, we will first argue that the *seisachtheia* indeed comprised the cancellation of debts and the prohibition of loans on one's person—and that this measure was a legal innovation unique in Archaic Greece. Building on this argument, we will then offer the hypothesis that Solon found inspiration for this idea in the legal practices of the ancient Near East. Some scholars, drawing comparisons between debt bondage in Greece and in the empires of ancient Assyria and Babylonia, have already suggested that Solon canceled debts because he may have known of a similar legal custom that existed in Mesopotamia, but no evidence has been advanced to substantiate or support this proposition to date.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the influence of the ancient Near East on the literature, religion, and material culture of Archaic Greece is now more or less generally accepted, a similar influence on (written) laws in Greece, which has been suggested by scholars since the 1930s, is still strongly contested.<sup>5</sup> In their study of early Cretan law, for instance, Gagarin and Perlman argue that “the impulse to write true legislation . . . and to display it in public spaces accessible to the community owes nothing to the Near East,”<sup>6</sup> while Van De Mieroop in his own recent study on the topic states: “not only does the phraseology of the individual clauses [in Greek statutes] parallel what we have seen in the Near East, but sometimes the content of Greek and Roman laws can only be understood in the light of those earlier works.”<sup>7</sup> As a scholar of ancient law in the broadest sense, Westbrook proposes a careful approach: “The type of evidence that we should be looking for is not simply a Greek law that resembles an individual law from somewhere in the ANE [Ancient Near East], but a Greek law that fits into a long and complex ANE tradition in the same way as individual laws within the ANE do.”<sup>8</sup> Focusing on the case of the *seisachtheia*, we will argue that Solon's measure was indeed derived from a time-honored Near Eastern legal tradition, but when applied by Solon in Athens, it came to mean something different from its original counterpart in the East.

3. Harris 1997, 2006.

4. For a comparison between Greece and the Near East, see Finley 1981a, pp. 153–155; Harris 2006, pp. 252–253. For the possible Near Eastern origin of Solon's measure, see Raaflaub 2000; 2004, p. 198; 2014, p. 429; Westbrook 2015, p. 67.

5. It is generally known that the Greek alphabet was derived from the Phoenician alphabet, but the discussion concerns mostly Near Eastern influence on Archaic Greek culture more widely. Burkert has defended such influence on

Greek religion, literature, and material culture for many decades (see esp. Burkert 1992); for Archaic Greek literature, notably Homer and Hesiod, see also, e.g., Penglase 1994; West 1997. There is no consensus on the particulars of the forms, degrees, and ways of this transmission; for ongoing work in this area, see also <http://www.aakkl.helsinki.fi/melammu>. For an early defense of Near Eastern influence on Greek law, with a list of legal parallels, see Mühl [1933] 1963. Priest (1964) shows that the expression “cutting

oaths” for making a treaty was used widely in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Greece, indicating a common source of practices and words.

6. Gagarin and Perlman 2016, p. 131, based mainly on previous work of Gagarin.

7. Van De Mieroop 2016, p. 153; he refers especially to the legal conditional clauses “whoever . . . (does this . . . will be . . .)” and “if (someone does . . .) then (. . . consequence).”

8. Westbrook 2015, pp. 66–67.

Our argument is developed in four sections. We first analyze the primary evidence on the *seisachtheia*, responding to the most prominent scholarship and especially to Harris's alternative explanation. Next, we situate the conditions of Archaic Greece in the global setting of the eastern Mediterranean world. This broad historical context provides our piecemeal information on ancient Athens with a much more richly attested, *longue durée* background of agricultural debts, debt slavery, and the measures taken against this both in Greece and in the ancient Near East. Third, comparing inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian kings Sargon II (ca. 723–704 B.C.) and Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) with poems that may be firmly ascribed to Solon, we aim both to elucidate similarities between these sets of documents that in our view are more than incidental, and to propose a hypothesis as to how Solon may have acquired knowledge of Neo-Assyrian legal and literary traditions. To illustrate our argument further, we will take into account a third source, the biblical account of Nehemiah (ca. 445–433 B.C.). Though historically unrelated to Solon's work and writings, this text offers a meaningful parallel case for studying the influence of ancient Mesopotamian legal and textual practices on a local lawgiver beyond the administrative core of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. Finally, since Solon's measures were an innovation in Athens and in Greece generally, we raise the question of their reception. Innovations need to be anchored in existing social practices and values—if necessary, in an adapted form—in order to be accepted.<sup>9</sup> We therefore offer in our conclusion some remarks on the long-term effects of the *seisachtheia*, arguing that it was only partly successful.

## WHAT DID THE *SEISACHTHEIA* ENTAIL?

Our closest primary evidence for Solon and the time for the *seisachtheia* consists, on the one hand, of the poetry ascribed to him and collected into a more or less fixed corpus in the 4th century B.C.,<sup>10</sup> and on the other, of two 4th-century authors on the history of Athens—the author of the *Athenaion Politeia* and Androtion of Gargettos (*FGrH* 324)—who reported on vocabulary and practices that were obsolete by their time of writing.

9. As described by OIKOS, the National Research School in Classical Studies, the Netherlands, anchoring innovation is a research agenda whereby “[t]he ‘human factor’ is crucial in converting inventions and new ideas into successful and actualized innovation. New possibilities need to be realized and embedded in societal practices. New ideas need to ‘land’ in the intended target-group. They must fit the thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, convictions and understanding of human actors.” For further details, see <http://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/anchoring>

-innovation; see also Sluiter 2017.

10. Stehle (2006) argues for a dominant impact of the 4th-century view of Solon on the composition of the corpus ascribed to him. We rather agree with Lardinois (2006) in regarding the Solonian corpus as consisting of an authentic core created by Solon, which as oral poetry was adapted to some extent to new audiences and purposes, and to which other, comparable lines and poems by others were added before being collected into a fixed Solonian corpus in the 4th century.

We can infer that they used other evidence than just the poems for their accounts from the word *seisachtheia* itself, which is a unique term that typically referred to Solon's measure.<sup>11</sup> In the extant poetry attributed to Solon, however, notably in fragments 4 and 36, where the speaker describes how he introduced his measures, the word does not appear, nor does any other word unequivocally referring to debt cancellation.<sup>12</sup> Although far more Solonian poetry circulated in the late 4th century than is extant today, it is unlikely that the word *seisachtheia* derived from a (lost) poem of his, since the sources featuring the word and its meaning never refer to such a poem. Besides quoting extensively from the Solonian poems, the *Athenaion Politeia* (6.1) describes the event as follows:

κύριος δὲ γενόμενος τῶν πραγμάτων Σόλων τὸν τε δῆμον  
ἤλευθέρωσε καὶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ εἰς τὸ μέλλον, κωλύσας  
δανεῖζειν ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν, καὶ νόμους ἔθηκε καὶ χρεῶν ἀποκοπᾶς  
ἐποίησε, καὶ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν δημοσίων, ἃς σεισάχθειαν  
καλοῦσιν, ὡς ἀποσεισάμενοι τὸ βᾶρος.

On gaining control of affairs, Solon liberated the people, both immediately and for the future, by forbidding loans on the security of the person; and he enacted laws; and he brought about a cancellation of debts, both private and public, which they called the Shaking-off of Burdens, since by means of it they shook off the weight lying on them.<sup>13</sup>

Androtion's view on the *seisachtheia* (FGrH 324 F34) is quoted by Plutarch (*Sol.* 15.4–5):

καίτοι τινὲς ἔγραψαν, ὧν ἐστὶν Ἀνδροτίων, οὐκ ἀποκοπῆ χρεῶν,  
ἀλλὰ τόκων μετρίότητι κουφισθέντας ἀγαπήσαι τοὺς πένητας, καὶ  
σεισάχθειαν ὀνομάσαι τὸ φιλανθρώπευμα τοῦτο καὶ τὴν ἅμα τούτῳ  
γενομένην τῶν τε μέτρων ἐπαύξησιν καὶ τοῦ νομίσματος τιμῆς.  
ἐκατὸν γὰρ ἐποίησε δραχμῶν τὴν μνᾶν, πρότερον ἑβδομήκοντα  
καὶ τριῶν οὔσαν, ὥστ' ἀριθμῷ μὲν ἴσον, δυνάμει δ' ἔλαττον  
ἀποδιδόντων, ὠφελεῖσθαι μὲν τοὺς ἐκτίνοντας μεγάλα, μηδὲν δὲ  
βλάπτεσθαι τοὺς κομιζομένους. οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι πάντων ὁμοῦ φασὶ  
τῶν συμβολαίων ἀναίρεσιν γενέσθαι τὴν σεισάχθειαν, καὶ τούτοις  
συνάδει μᾶλλον τὰ ποιήματα.

11. Plutarch used the term *seisachtheia* in other contexts to bring its associations with Solon's statesmanship or the significance of his measure for those freed from their burdens to bear on other men and situations. At *Caes.* 37.2, e.g., he describes how when Caesar was appointed dictator by the Senate, he brought home the exiles, restored the civic rights of the children of those whom Sulla had deprived of these, and improved the fate of those in debt by "a kind of *seisachtheia*" (σεισαχθεῖαι τινὶ);

and within 11 days, after taking some more public measures, he gave back his power as dictator. Obviously, the use of *seisachtheia* here is meant to underline that Caesar's policy resembled Solon's at this point in his life. In *De Alex. fort.* (*Mor.* 343c–d), Plutarch compares Solon's *seisachtheia* with Alexander's payment of the debts of his friends: the first canceled other people's debts, the latter paid them from his own pocket. In *Luc.* 20.2, Plutarch uses *seisachtheia* without an explicit allusion to Solon:

the tax-farmers in Asia Minor, whom Lucullus set out to correct, so abused and maltreated the population by forced labor to extort taxes from them that to the oppressed "slavery would seem *seisachtheia* and peace" compared to their own fate. In other words, under these circumstances described, being a slave was better than being "free."

12. For Solon as the author of these poems, see p. 622, below.

13. Trans. P. J. Rhodes, London, 1984, slightly modified by the authors.

Some writers, however, and Androtion is one of them, affirm that the poor were relieved not by a cancelling of debts, but by a reduction of the interest upon them, and showed their satisfaction by giving the name “disburdenment” to this act of humanity, and to the augmentation of measures and the purchasing power of money which accompanied it. For he made the mina to consist of a hundred drachmas, which before had only contained seventy-three, so that by paying the same amount of money, but money of a lesser value, those who had debts to discharge were greatly benefited, and those who accepted such payments were no losers. But most writers say that that the “disburdenment” was a removal of all debt, and with such the poems of Solon are more in accord.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, the writer of the *Athenaion Politeia* and Androtion both understood the *seisachtheia* to entail a relief from debts in some way, but they disagreed on what that way was exactly. Androtion connected the *seisachtheia* to the change in the measures of weights and money, which he, as well as the author of the *Athenaion Politeia* (10.1–2), believed Solon introduced, although they again disagree on the exact nature of this change.<sup>15</sup> Probably led astray by the same names used for weights of silver in Solon’s day as for later Athenian coinage, both authors apparently mistook the mina and the drachma in the accounts about Solon to be coined money (νόμισμα), even though this did not yet exist at Athens in his lifetime. But even when taken to refer to weighted silver, Androtion’s explanation of why this changed standard meant a relief of the debt burden makes no sense in economic terms.<sup>16</sup> His account of the *seisachtheia* is therefore highly unlikely.

The writer of the *Athenaion Politeia*, on the other hand, treats the *seisachtheia* as a distinct measure, separate from the change in standards, and a majority of later historians, biographers, and lexicographers have followed suit. With slight variations, they all attest that the *seisachtheia* entailed the ἀποκοπή χρεῶν, which is the regular expression in the Classical era for the cancellation of debts, to which the *Athenaion Politeia* (6.1) adds “both private and public” debts and “since by means of it they shook off the weight lying on them” to clarify this exceptional word.<sup>17</sup> With the comment “which they [the Athenians] called the Shaking-off of Burdens,” the *Athenaion Politeia* effectively confirms that the word *seisachtheia* derived not from Solon’s poetry, but from a different source, on the nature of which we can only speculate.

14. Trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1914.

15. Leão and Rhodes 2015, fr. 64/1a, 64/1b, with commentary on p. 108.

16. For the value of weighted silver in Solon’s time compared to coinage, see Kroll 1998, 2008. We are as yet not convinced by Davis (2012) that the references to drachmas in Solon’s laws are such an anachronism as to invalidate this evidence altogether. For an

economic assessment, see Harding 1994, pp. 129–133.

17. See, e.g., Philochoros, *FGrH* 328 F114; Herakleides, *Epit. Ath. Pol.* 3; Hekataios of Abdera, *FGrH* 264 F25, line 1248 = Diod. Sic. 1.79.4; Plut. *Sol.* 15, *Caes.* 37.2, *Luc.* 20.2, *Prae. ger. reip.* (*Mor.* 807e); Diog. Laert. 1.45 (Solon). See also Hesch., Phot., and *Suda*, s.v. σεισάχθεια. The lexicographers respond largely to the phrase in *Ath. Pol.* 6.1, i.e., σεῖω and ἄχθος, with

καὶ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν δημοσίων. See also Martina 1968, fr. 274–296. *Arist. Pol.* 1273b36–39 says that Solon terminated the slavery of the people (δουλεύοντα τὸν δῆμον παῦσαι), but does not use the word *seisachtheia*. On Androtion’s view (*FGrH* 324 F34 = Plut. *Sol.* 15.4) that the *seisachtheia* was not debt cancellation, but a lowering of interest, see also n. 46, below.

Concerning the background to Solon's measure and his subsequent legislation, the account of the *Athenaion Politeia* (2.1–2.3) may seem straightforward, but in fact it is wrought with uncertainties. The information it provides on Solon and his time is not just incomplete; it is demonstrably a mixture of Archaic accounts and 4th-century concerns. Since the meaning of its vocabulary is also contested, as we will see below, the passage explaining the background to Solon's reforms needs to be quoted in full:

2.1 Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα συνέβη στασιάσαι τούς τε γνωρίμους καὶ τὸ πλῆθος πολὺν χρόνον. 2.2 ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ πολιτεία τοῖς τε ἄλλοις ὀλιγαρχικὴ πᾶσι, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐδούλευον οἱ πένητες τοῖς πλουσίοις καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες· καὶ ἐκαλοῦντο πελάται καὶ ἐκτήμοροι· κατὰ ταύτην γὰρ τὴν μίσθωσιν ἠργάζοντο τῶν πλουσίων τοὺς ἀγρούς (ἡ δὲ πᾶσα γῆ δι' ὀλίγων ἦν), καὶ εἰ μὴ τὰς μισθώσεις ἀποδίδοιεν, ἀγάγμοι καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ παῖδες ἐγίγνοντο· καὶ οἱ δανεισμοὶ πᾶσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν ἦσαν μέχρι Σόλωνος· οὗτος δὲ πρῶτος ἐγένετο τοῦ δήμου προστάτης. 2.3 χαλεπώτατον μὲν οὖν καὶ πικρότατον ἦν τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν κατὰ τὴν πολιτείαν τὸ δουλεύειν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐδυσχέραινον· οὐδενὸς γὰρ ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐτύγχανον μετέχοντες.

2.1 After this [the Kylonian affair] there was strife for a long time between the notables and the masses. 2.2 For the Athenians' constitution was oligarchic in all other respects, and in particular the poor were enslaved to the rich—themselves and their children and their wives. The poor were called dependents (*pelatai*) and sixth-parters (*hektemoroi*), since it was for the rent (*misthosis*) of a sixth that they worked the fields of the rich. All the land was in the hands of a few, and if the poor failed to pay their rents both they and their children were liable to seizure. All loans were made on the security of the person until the time of Solon: he was the first champion of the people. 2.3 The harshest and bitterest aspect of the constitution for the masses was the fact of their enslavement, though they were discontented on other grounds too: it could be said that there was nothing in which they had a share.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to this account, two of Solon's own poems serve as essential evidence here (Solon fr. 4 and 36 West). In the first (fr. 4 West), the speaker characterizes the problems besetting the polis and the principles guiding Athens to its destruction or its well-being. He describes the destruction that the wealthy were inflicting upon the polis by their greed and rapaciousness, bringing "wretched slavery" (line 18: δουλοσύνη) and arousing "civil strife and slumbering war" (line 19: στάσιν ἔμφυλον πόλεμόν θ' εὔδοντα), which forced "many of the poor" to go "to a foreign land, sold and bound in shameful fetters" (lines 24–25); *dysnomia* brings many ills to the city, claims the speaker, but *eunomia* reveals what is orderly and fitting (lines 31–39). The second (fr. 36 West) is the only poem in the extant Solonian corpus in which the speaker mentions the actions he himself has taken to change the deplorable condition of the polis for the better. The speaker claims to have freed the enslaved earth (lines 6–7: πρόσθεν δὲ

18. Trans. P. J. Rhodes, London, 1984.

δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθήρη) by removing the *horoi* (boundary markers), and to have “brought back to Athens, to their homeland founded by the gods, many who had been sold, one legally, another not (ἄλλον ἐκδικῶς, ἄλλον δικαίως), and those who had fled under necessity’s constraint, no longer speaking the Attic tongue, as wanderers far and wide are inclined to do. And those who suffered shameful slavery (δουλίη) right here, trembling before the whims of their masters, I set free (ἐλευθέρους ἔθηκα)” (lines 8–15). And he proclaims, “I wrote laws (θεσμοὺς ἔγραψα) for the lower and upper classes alike, providing a straight legal process (εὐθεῖαν δίκην) for each person” (lines 18–20).<sup>19</sup>

In the fractured information they provide, the *Athenaion Politeia* and the Solonian fragments partly differ, notably in factual details and vocabulary, but they also partly overlap, especially in the condition of slavery that the Athenian peasants lived in and from which Solon freed them. The questions raised by these accounts concern various aspects of the *seisachtheia* and involve distinct types of evidence and methods. First, what caused the indebtedness of the peasants, and what propelled this situation into the crisis that necessitated drastic measures to prevent the polis from falling apart? These questions address the economy of Archaic Attica, both at a structural level and in the specific context of Solon’s legal reforms. In older scholarship, feudal relationships, population pressure, and control of the land have been advanced as structural elements, aggravated by the introduction of coinage.<sup>20</sup> Currently, most scholars agree that the archaeological evidence speaks against this view: in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., there was no absolute lack of land, or a relative lack of good arable lands; nor was the increase of population such as to put pressure on the available land.<sup>21</sup> Instead, as Foxhall has convincingly argued, the main problem at Athens was the discrepancy between a small group of elites owning most of the arable land and a large group of dependent, smallholder tenants who had access to land only through them.<sup>22</sup> The wealthy landowners, keen to raise their profits but facing a lack of labor, pressured the poor further into dependency. This spiral of oppression was exacerbated by the intense and often violent competition among the elite who dominated the social and political scene of the Archaic poleis; at Athens, this led to the so-called Solonian crisis.<sup>23</sup> Yet the one-sixth of their produce that the *Athenaion Politeia* states the *hektemoroi* owed to their landlords would not seem an

19. Trans. D. E. Gerber, Cambridge, Mass., 1999. Plut. *Sol.* 13 summarizes, in one passage, the account of *Ath. Pol.* and the fragments of Solon on the conditions at Athens.

20. On *Ath. Pol.* 6.1, see Rhodes 1981, pp. 125–128; see also Gallant 1982, with further bibliography. Murray (1980, pp. 183–185) follows Fustel de Coulanges (1864) for seeing the *seisachtheia* as the termination of the peasants’ feudal dependency on a high-born nobility. For coinage as the “trigger,”

see, e.g., Yamauchi 1980; this view is now generally abandoned, since the so-called Solonian crisis preceded the circulation of coinage in mid-6th-century Attica. The preceding use of weighted bullion must have eased the change to coinage (Kroll 2008, p. 35), while the role of coined money in the rural economy of small farmers remained marginal for a long time. For drachmas as weighted bullion rather than coins in the laws of Solon, see Davis 2012, with further references.

21. Foxhall 1992, 1997; Forsdyke 2006, with additional bibliography.

22. Foxhall 1997, pp. 128–129; 2002.

23. For elite status in Archaic Greece not being based on aristocratic birth but on competition and display, requiring increasing resources, see Duploux 2006; Osborne 2009, pp. 206–213; Węcowski 2014, pp. 19–26 (with both Duploux and Węcowski drawing on work by Benedetto Bravo). For the use of violence by these elites, see van Wees 1999, 2001.

excessive rent for dependent tenants when compared with similar agricultural regimes throughout history. Scholars have therefore advanced other explanations: either it was one-sixth paid by peasants holding marginal, unproductive lands, or peasants could *keep* one-sixth for working the land, supplemented for subsistence by communal lands used for agriculture, horticulture, or grazing, until the elite took possession of such lands by force, fixing their claims with *horoi*.<sup>24</sup>

Second, which economic and legal forms did the dependency of the Athenian peasants take? By using the terms *pelatai* and *hektemoroi*, is the author of the *Athenaion Politiea* discussing two separate groups, or are they different names for the same group? How do these groups relate to the category of δούλος (slave) and its cognates, which the *Athenaion Politiea* and Solon both use to describe the condition of the *demos*? Answers to these questions on the legal categories of servile and free status and the terminology for people of that status are attained by comparative analysis of Greek laws and semantic analysis of the terminology involved.

Different approaches to this evidence lead to quite different results, as exemplified by two incisive contributions to the debate. In sets of two articles each, Finley and Harris arrived at opposite points of view on what the *seisachtheia* entailed.<sup>25</sup> A succinct discussion of their arguments may serve as a framework for our approach.

In his first article on the topic, originally published in 1960, Finley argued that “servile status” in ancient Greece comprised a vast range of rights, claims, and obligations of the master over the dependent and among the servile persons themselves, clustered in a variety of statuses laid down in laws and conventions differing from polis to polis.<sup>26</sup> Due to this variety, the terminology used for an individual in servitude usually does not cover the same legal status everywhere, but refers to a specific condition of obligation and boundedness at a particular time and place. *Doulos*, in particular, is a word with an array of meanings all circling around subjection; the actual situation it refers to needs to be established separately, case by case. Debt bondage entailed a status between slave and free, of which some cases are attested even in Classical Athens, but no clear distinction in Greek law generally existed between debt bondage and debt slavery.<sup>27</sup> Locally or for specific groups, a clear distinction might apply; for instance,

24. For economic conditions of dependent tenants, see Foxhall 1992; for one-sixth of marginal, unproductive lands, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993; for working the land of the wealthy for one-sixth of the produce, see van Wees 1999, pp. 18–24; for keeping one-sixth of rented lands and *horoi* boundary stones put on communal lands, see Link 1991, pp. 16–34, improving the account of Gallant (1982), who regards *horoi* as mortgage stones and does not address the problem of how *hektemoroi* could survive on one-sixth of their produce. Harris (1997, 2006; see also

p. 615, below) criticizes Gallant, but he does not refer to Link’s much stronger argument, nor does Faraguna (2012), who likewise regards *hektemoroi* as dependents keeping one-sixth of the produce, made to work land annexed by landowners, and the *seisachtheia* as the termination of this annexation. Leão and Rhodes (2015, pp. 112–114), convinced that the *seisachtheia* had to do with obligations (of labor?) of the *hektemoroi*, not with cancellation of debts, under the heading “Seisachtheia,” enter fr. 67 on *epimortos* (= Poll. 7.151), land farmed for a portion, and under

the heading “Ban on enslavement for debt,” enter fr. 69a (= *Ath. Pol.* 9.1) and 69b (= *Ath. Pol.* 6.1), but without the final sentence “ὡς σεισιάθειαν καλοῦσιν, ὡς ἀποσεισάμενοι τὸ βάρος,” so in effect leaving the word *seisachtheia* out of the evidence on the laws.

25. Finley 1981a, 1981b; Harris 1997, 2006.

26. Finley 1981b.

27. Finley 1981b, p. 141. On δούλευσις used for debt bondage, see Men. Her. 20–40; Lys. 12.98; Isoc. 14.48.

the *katakeimēnos* (bondsmen) in the Gortyn code could not be sold abroad, whereas the Athenian bondsmen clearly were able to be sold in foreign lands until Solon intervened.

In a second article, originally published in 1965, Finley reiterated that sharp legal and/or semantic distinctions made by lexicographers and legal historians between “slave” and “servant” and other forms of servitude do not hold for early Greece. Labor, not counting chattel slaves and hired labor, “was essentially dependent labor—clients, helots, *pelatai* or whatever else they were called—and debt-bondsmen.”<sup>28</sup> The “harsh laws on debt” led to debt bondage specifically when debts were incurred between members of different classes, gradually leading the poor into a slave-like condition, which the wealthy could actually create to obtain cheap (forced) labor. Finley held that the (legal) origins of the *hektemoroi* cannot be retrieved, but apparently they, too, were a group of dependent laborers. Solon’s *seisachtheia*, according to Finley, consisted of three steps: “(1) he abolished the status of *hektemoros*; (2) he brought back, in so far as he could, Athenians who had been sold abroad under the law, the *agogimoi*, among whom were defaulting *hektemoroi*; (3) he cancelled existing debts and prohibited debts on the person in the future, thereby freeing the debt bondsmen of his day and abolishing the category from Athens henceforth.”<sup>29</sup>

The thrust of Finley’s argument was that these servile statuses emerged in the Early Archaic age and that they were replaced, notably in Athens following Solon’s *seisachtheia*, by chattel slaves on the one hand and a category of more robust, free farmers on the other. Finley’s conception of this development of dependent labor, bondage, and chattel slavery now no longer holds, but his analysis of the varied range of labor statuses and degrees of dependence between freedom and slavery still proves valuable.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, in a 1997 article, Harris contested that Solon’s *seisachtheia* abolished debt bondage and that debt bondsmen were sold abroad as slaves. He dissociated the *seisachtheia*, which does not feature in Solon’s poems, from the removal of the *horoi*, which the poems do mention, and rightly pointed out that *horoi* were boundary stones, not mortgage markers.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he dissociated the *hektemoroi* from both the debts and the *horoi*. He argued that valuing debts at one-sixth for all *hektemoroi* is an unlikely phenomenon because debts vary from case to case; instead, the *hektemoroi* were—like the *pelatai* with whom the *Athenaion Politeia* associates them—dependents of the elite who were forced to pay a “protection” fee of one-sixth of their produce. As parallels, Harris adduced scenes from Homeric epic and Hesiod that show the powerful *basileis* (king) collecting “gifts” or clearly expecting to receive such “gifts” in return for privileges.<sup>32</sup> Between such irregular and unspecified “gifts” of reciprocity and the regular, fixed amount of one-sixth in a potentially exploitative exchange, “there is no wide gap or clear dividing line”; for Harris, in fact, the systems could even coexist.<sup>33</sup> The consistent threat and actual use of violence by the elite against the poor population and the ensuing breakdown of law and order leading to stasis resulted in the *dysnomia* Solon refers to in fragment 4. The *horoi* marked off the territories in Attica that each of these elite groups claimed as their own. The *seisachtheia* entailed the termination of this extortion, not of debts or debt slavery.

28. Finley 1981a, p. 155.

29. Finley 1981a, p. 157.

30. On this conceptual framework of the development of slavery in Greece being no longer tenable, see Foxhall 1997, p. 116; van Wees 2009, pp. 451–452. Van Wees (2003) argues that the continuous state of bondage, to be classified as serfdom, of several distinct groups in various parts of Greece (e.g., the helots in Messenia, the *penates* in Thessaly) was the result of conquest, but that does not preclude the existence of individual cases of debt bondage and dependence elsewhere in Greece.

31. Harris 1997, p. 104.

32. Harris 1997, pp. 108–110. E.g., *Il.* 9.149–156: Agamemnon promises Achilles seven towns whose men will honor him with gifts; 12.310–21: Sarpedon and Glaukos enjoy the produce of lands they hold by their force; *Od.* 13.13–15: Alkinoös invites the Phaiakian leaders, who just gave Odysseus gifts, to seek recompense by collecting from the community.

33. Harris 1997, p. 110, against the distinction Millett (1991, pp. 219–220) makes between the two systems.

In a subsequent article that was first published in 2002, Harris, in emphatic opposition to Finley, argues that whatever the variety of statuses between “free” and “slave,” ancient law, just as modern law, draws a sharp line between these statuses and “real” slavery, in that the latter entails both the right of the master to use the slave in any way he deems fit, specifically to sell him or her, and the absence of a term of service—by default, a kind of slavery that is for life.<sup>34</sup> Debt bondage may be harsh, but the power of the master is bound to certain limits and a fixed term, that is, the time necessary to pay off the debt, and the bondsman/-woman has certain rights that a slave lacks, notably that s/he cannot be sold. Debt slavery obtains when, as in Attica until Solon’s time, debts are made ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν (upon security of the body); on this condition, those who default on their debts become slaves. Although Solon did terminate this practice, the term *seisachtheia* does not refer to the end of debt slavery. Moreover, the cases in Classical-period Athens previously discussed by Finley show that Solon may have abolished debt slavery, but not debt bondage. Greek vocabulary distinguishes between slave/slavery (*doulos* and its cognates), on the one hand, and debt bondsmen (*pelatai* in Attic) and working in debt bondage (θητεύω [*theteuo*] and its cognates), on the other. For Harris, there can be no doubt that Solon (fr. 4 West) speaks of people sold abroad, but by definition they cannot have been debt bondsmen, since the latter were not real slaves: “There is no need to invent some elaborate system of land tenure and dependent labor to understand these verses. Such a system is without parallel in contemporary sources for the Archaic period; to resort to this kind of hypothesis is to explain *ignotum per ignotius*.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, besides enforcing payment of a protection fee, the Athenian elite raided the Attic countryside, fetching booty and individuals whom they then sold abroad. That these things happened is illustrated in numerous passages in Homeric epic featuring *basileis* capturing people by raiding and similar actions. Ending these practices was what the *seisachtheia* itself entailed.

Harris rightly insists on the legal distinction between real slavery as defined by the master’s right to sell and the absence of term, as well as between all other statuses from slavery to freedom. In the ancient world, slaves normally became slaves because they were captured in war, in raids, or by piracy (a process called *andrapodismos* [ἀνδραποδισμός] in Classical Greek), and they were taken somewhere else to work or to be sold; any children born to them were slaves like them, that is, for life (unless manumitted), and thus liable to being sold. In this sense, there was a firm legal boundary between slaves and all other types of laborers, however burdened they might be with obligations and restrictions. In a recent analysis of the Greek terminology of slavery, Vlassopoulos shows that *doulos* (and its cognates) indicates various degrees and kinds of subjugation, which are in line with Finley’s results. He states: “Whenever a Greek wants to describe the fact that an individual, or even a whole community as a group of individuals, has become the property of someone else, they always use the verb *andrapodizo* and never the verb *douloō*. The verb *douloō* describes a relationship of power; *andrapodizo* a relationship of property.”<sup>36</sup>

The very facts about slavery that Harris justly expounds, however, undercut his own view of the *seisachtheia*. Given the conventional practice of

34. Harris 2006, pp. 249–251.

35. Harris 2006, p. 266.

36. Vlassopoulos 2011, p. 119.

slavery in Greece, slaves normally came from elsewhere, at least originally, being either Greeks from another polis or region or non-Greeks. All cases in Homeric epic and later sources of the capture and enslavement of free people that Harris cites concern raids or comparable actions in foreign countries and the sacking the cities of others, whether in Greece or beyond.<sup>37</sup> Enslaving one's *own* population was an entirely different matter; no evidence exists that suggests doing so was considered legal, permissible, or acceptable, unless the law explicitly allowed for exceptions. It is hard to believe that the *horoi* were placed in the Attic countryside in order to mark territorial divisions that allowed the elite of Attica to go slave-raiding on the other side of the fence, as it were, or even within their own territory, and firmer evidence is needed than the passages from Homer and the argument of the "breakdown of law and order," with stasis turning *politai* into *polemioi*, that Harris provides.<sup>38</sup> In addition, Harris's statement—correct, we think, although not central to his argument—that Solon did abolish debt slavery, specifically debt bondage with ultimate security on the person leading to slavery, contradicts his own claim that no one could have been sold abroad as a slave as a result of being in debt. On the current evidence, one would rather think that selling people abroad as slaves was exactly what could and in fact did happen until Solon's measures, being the exception to the rule that enslaving one's own population was irregular or illegal. Harris's abovementioned contention that the system scholars describe—that debt bondsmen being sold abroad was a practice that "is without parallel in contemporary sources for the Archaic period"—may be rebutted further by evidence we will discuss below. His argument that the elite extracted "gifts" from dependents seems plausible enough, but that these gifts were all set at a regular one-sixth has no parallel in the passages Harris offers as evidence for the Archaic age, and his argument is difficult to reconcile with the explanation in the *Athenaion Politeia* that the "sixth-part" had to do with tenancy and working the land.<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, Harris discusses several passages to demonstrate that the Athenians were still familiar with debt bondage in the Classical period. These passages do indeed show that they knew of the existence of this type of bondage—but not that it existed in Athens and certainly not on a wide scale. Lysias (12.98) refers to debt slavery of exiled Athenians ἐπὶ ξένης (in foreign lands) and Isocrates (14.48) features a Plataian, again an exile, complaining in Athens about the debt slavery of the children of the Plataians in Plataia. Menander (*Her.* 20–40) tells of a girl, Plangon, who works in the house of Laches; she is not a δούλη (slave), but a slave τρόπον τινά (in some sort of way), because she is working off a debt of her father Tibeios to Laches.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, this scene portrays the typical situation of debt bondage, but it is worth noting that Tibeios had been an οἰκέτης (house slave), who was apparently manumitted later and was now a poor dependent of Laches. In Athens, Tibeios was a slave name and was probably recognized as such by the audience.<sup>41</sup> This case cannot therefore be considered representative for free Athenian peasants generally.

Furthermore, a *pelates* is not simply a debt bondsman, as Harris takes him to be, notably in Plato's *Euthyphro* (4c), where Euthyphro refers to a dependent of his father, who treats the *pelates* in a way that legally falls

37. Harris 1997, p. 106, n. 13; 2006, pp. 266–267. To select a few: Odysseus and his men plunder the Kikonians, kill their men, enslave their women (*Od.* 9.39–42); the Achaians before Troy pay for their wine with bronze, iron, and slaves taken in raids (*Il.* 7.470–475); Achilles captures a city on Lesbos, and from the booty Agamemnon picks seven women for himself that he promises to give back to Achilles if he will return to the war (*Il.* 9.128–131, 270–273). The cases Harris adduces in the Classical era (Thuc. 1.5; [Dem.] 53.6–7) all concern raids by others, or raiding others, or being captured abroad. Harris (2006, p. 256) offers evidence (*Ath. Pol.* 52.1; Dem. 25.55; Din. 1.23) that in the 5th and 4th centuries, Athenian law prohibited private persons to enslave free persons, Athenian or non-Athenian.

38. Harris 2006, pp. 266–267.

39. Harris, claiming that the author of the *Ath. Pol.* no longer knew what *hektemoroi* really were, positions his argument against the view that the one-sixth was itself a debt, but we were unable to trace any scholar proposing this reading. Finley (1981a, p. 156) rightly notes that no ancient source equates the *hektemoroi* with debt bondsmen; hence, he proposes that they were a separate class.

40. This case is also discussed extensively by Finley; see n. 27, above.

41. See [www.seangb.org](http://www.seangb.org), s.v. Τίβειος.

between the proper treatment of slaves and that of free persons.<sup>42</sup> Apart from the passage in the *Athenaion Politeia* on Solon (2.2), which explicitly mentions *pelates* as archaic vocabulary, in Classical Attic the word is very rare, referring to “one who approaches” (Soph. *Phil.* 677, 1164; Eur. *Hyps.* fr. 2) and “neighbor” (Aesch. *Pers.* 49–50). The use by Plato (*Euthphr.* 4c) stands alone in Classical Attic prose and is thus difficult to pinpoint. Was this *pelates* a manumitted slave, like Tibeios? Is the use of the Archaic *pelates* an element in the portrayal of Euthyphro? Ancient explanations of the word *πελάτης* do not mention debts.<sup>43</sup> Like *πελάτης*, *θητεύω* (and its cognates) does not refer to debt bondage, as Harris claims,<sup>44</sup> but instead to earning one’s living by working oneself. This could be working for someone else, usually in exchange for a *misthos*—for instance, to pay off a debt, but also for other reasons. Like *δουλεύω*, *θητεύω* could connote working hard (or slaving away) for someone else, involving a broad range of statuses between free and bonded, but this was not its only meaning.<sup>45</sup> The *thetes*, the lowest property class in Athens, were not all debt bondsmen, but all those who had to work themselves for their living; they might also be doing so for others, either continuously or occasionally, to earn or supplement their living.

In sum, on assessment of the evidence, Harris’s arguments for his alternative reading of what the *seisachtheia* entailed are not convincing.<sup>46</sup> Considering the unanimous tradition that it was connected to debts, and more precisely the report in the *Athenaion Politeia* that the Athenians referred to the cancellation of debts and the termination of debt slavery

42. Harris 2006, p. 262: “As a debt-bondsman, the *pelates*, like the *katakeimemos* at Gortyn, was somewhere between slavery and freedom.”

43. Ancient commentators clarify *πελάτης* by etymologies featuring *πέλας*. Schol. Pl. *Euthphr.* 4c: (1) ὁ ἴαντιστροφῶν καὶ ὑπηρετῶν καὶ προσπελάζων. ἀπὸ τοῦ πέλας καὶ ἐγγὺς ἐκαλεῖτο ὁ δι’ ἔνδειαν προσιῶν, μίσθιος δὲ ὁ ὑπηρετῶν. (2) ἐταῖρος, συνήθης, παρὰ τὸ πελάζω, οἷον ὁ πέλας ὢν. ([1] One “who turns toward” and who serves and who comes near; it takes its name from *πέλας* and what is close; the one who goes toward you due to poverty, and the one who serves for a *misthos*. [2] Comrade, housemate, from *πελάζω*, “to approach,” as it were “the one who is *πέλας* [near].”) Lexicographers especially respond to the passage in *Ath. Pol.* 2.2 on Solon, e.g., Photius, s.v. *πελάται*: οἱ παρὰ τοῖς πλησίον ἐργαζόμενοι καὶ θῆτες οἱ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἐκτημόροι, ἐπειδὴ ἕκτω μέρει τῶν καρπῶν εἰργάζοντο τὴν γῆν.—*πελάται*: οἱ μισθῶ δουλεύοντες, ἐπει τὸ πέλας ἐγγύς, οἷον ἔγγιστα διὰ πηνίαν προσιόντες. Ἀριστοτέλης. (*Pelatai*: those who work for those who are

near; the same [are also called] *thetes* and *hektemoroi*, because they worked the land for a sixth part of the produce. *Pelatai*: those who work in service for *misthos*, because *pelas* means close by, as it were because they approach very closely because of their poverty. Aristoteles.) For this kind of etymological explanation, see Sluiter 2015. In Greek historiography on Rome, *πελάτης* is the regular translation of *cliens*. We thank Ineke Sluiter for her helpful comments here.

44. See, e.g., Harris 2006, p. 261: “a *pelates* of his, who was serving in debt-bondage (ἐθήτευεν).”

45. E.g., in a case discussed by Harris from Eur. *Alc.*, Apollo is punished for killing the Cyclopes by Zeus, who obliges him to *θητεύειν* (line 6) in the house of a mortal, i.e., Apollo is in debt to Zeus, who orders him to work off his debt. But note that Apollo is told to do so somewhere else. For other statuses, see Eur. *Cyc.*, where Silenos and his sons are captured by and hence become the *douloi* of the Cyclops (line 24; in this case, real slavery because they were captured), and so now must *θητεύειν* in

his house (line 77); Hdt. 8.137, for a case in which three brothers flee from Argos to Macedonia, where they “ἐθήτευον ἐπὶ μισθῶ παρὰ τῷ βασιλείῳ” (work as servants of the king for a *misthos*), herding the horses, cattle, and sheep.

46. See above (p. 611, nn. 16, 17) for the dissenting view of Androtion (*FGrH* 324 F34 = Plut. *Sol.* 15.3–5) that the *seisachtheia* meant reduction of interest and that the poor called it a “disburdenment” because this measure, and the subsequent revision of the monetary standards ascribed to Solon, greatly relieved their financial situation. By claiming that “the (4th-century) problems of interpretation about the term that led to the debate between Androtion and the author of the *Constitution of the Athenians*, who proposed radically different explanations of the reform,” Harris (1997, p. 107) unduly exaggerates these differences to undercut the historical probability that the *seisachtheia* was about “cancellation of debt.” It was never taken to include distribution of land, as he claims.

by this word, we therefore conclude that the *seisachtheia* entailed what the Greek tradition held it to be. Before returning to the differences between debt bondage, debt slavery, and the Greek terminology for servile statuses, however, we will first widen the perspective on debt to include the world beyond the boundaries of ancient Attica.

## AGRICULTURAL DEBT IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

An illuminating approach to the question why and how the peasants of Archaic Attica got so heavily into debt in the first place may be found in the work of economic anthropologists who investigate systems of debt and credit across the globe. Comparative approaches are well established in the study of ancient economies in general and for the current problem in particular.<sup>47</sup> We will therefore broaden the scope of our analysis systematically in two directions: (1) to anthropological work on contemporary agricultural societies; and (2) to the ancient world as a whole, that is, from the western Mediterranean to the eastern part of Mesopotamia. The rich evidence from the ancient Near East, Egypt, and the Hebrew Bible tells us, in greater detail than the Greek evidence, how the cycle from indebtedness to debt bondage and debt slavery developed. At the same time, analyzing these texts will reveal several features that are also immediately relevant to the question of the *seisachtheia*.

In the entire region, the majority of the population consisted of peasants around subsistence level and small farmers, with varying degrees of freedom and obligation.<sup>48</sup> Lending and borrowing, incurring debts, and owing obligations in return—in sum, the daily reciprocity of goods and services among neighboring people—was, and in many areas still is, the bedrock of their lives.<sup>49</sup> The comparative evidence shows that even when there is no drought or other calamity, such peasants *always* incur debts: for example, for their daily agricultural practice (through borrowing tools, sowing material, or acquiring livestock), or for occasions such as a marriage feast, a dowry, or a religious obligation.<sup>50</sup> As soon as borrowing transcends day-to-day reciprocity, the possibilities for such peasants to pay back their

47. The comparative approach, drawing on present-day precapitalist societies, has been an important ingredient of the so-called substantivist position in the long-standing debate between primitivist and modernist approaches to the ancient economy. For an excellent analysis of comparative approaches to the study of landholding in ancient Greece beyond these dichotomies, see Foxhall 1997; for comparative work on the “risk and survival households” of peasants, see Gallant 1991, esp. pp. 1–10; for the Archaic agricultural economy, see van Wees 1999, 2009.

48. For a fine analysis of the debate about “peasants” (subsistence farming, family labor, dependency) as distinguished from “(small) farmers” (consistent surplus, some servants/slaves), see Gallego 2007, with extensive bibliography, where he argues that in Greece no structural difference between the two existed, but that households grew and diminished in prosperity over time.

49. Davis 1977, pp. 41–69; Finley 1981a, p. 161; Graeber 2011, pp. 21–87; on credit systems in present-day peasant communities, see Hill 1986, esp. pp. 85–94. For ancient Greece, see Gallant 1991, pp. 170–196; Millett 1991,

esp. pp. 15–18. For the ancient Mediterranean basin in general, see Foxhall 1992; Horden and Purcell 2000, pp. 270–274, with numerous further references. For Rome, see n. 53, below.

50. In the Greek evidence, the regular expression for “lending” is represented by δανείζειν and its cognates. Millett (1991, pp. 27–30) argues that the word was associated with notions of “gift” before it acquired the meaning, current in the Classical age, of lending against interest, but “gift,” too, always carries the notion of a gift in return, an obligation to reciprocate.

loans are easily exhausted. When tenancy of farmlands is held on the obligation to requite with produce, money, labor, or military service, reserves are even sooner exhausted and peasants become incurably indebted to wealthier landowners or rent farmers. All of this obviously becomes worse when loans are extended by interest. Debt does not usually lead to a loan directly on the person of the farmer, but instead he is forced first to mortgage his property, such as tools or lands, then next to hand over his children and wife to become part of the indebted labor force, and finally himself, resulting in the total dependence of all on the creditor. In Archaic-period Athens, loans had even been made explicitly on the bodies (*δανείζειν ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν*; *Ath. Pol.* 6.1) of the farmers, giving the creditors full rights of ownership. Creditors were allowed to actively seek out possibilities to bring such debtors into continuous, absolute dependency, and they were often backed by laws of contract of which the debtors were ignorant and against which they were at any rate powerless, since virtually all were illiterate and did not know their rights.<sup>51</sup>

For the discussion about ancient debt bondage, it is particularly striking that in many present-day cases the boundary between debt bondage and debt slavery is in fact nonexistent. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions engaged with the problem estimate the number of debt slaves nowadays at 35.8 million globally, with the highest concentration in Mauritania, Qatar, and India. The term “slavery” is not used for their condition merely as a metaphor; it is exactly what it is. Once ensnared by a debt incurred at some point, these peasant families are set to work, often far away from home, in order to repay the money, but they are never released. Either they are caught again with new debts—real or fictitious—to be paid back, or they are simply held by force. Formally, slavery is abolished by law in the entire world, and the legally enforceable duty to pay back contracted loans would seem something essentially different from debt slavery. In reality, however, the necessity for these peasants to repay with their own labor and the absence of viable alternatives bring them into a condition of permanent debt bondage that equals slavery, including the transfer of individuals to other employers indistinguishable from sale, when creditors more powerful than they, intent on making money, are able to get away with it. Only intervention by the state or international agencies by means of law and coercion can effectively put an end to such practices; even so, the victims often fall back into the same traps due to their lack of alternatives.<sup>52</sup> In other words, even when laws draw a line between free, however bonded, and slave, such laws have little value if they can be willfully ignored with impunity.

The ancient evidence pictures precisely the same situation.<sup>53</sup> In fragment 36, Solon refers to people who had been sold abroad, “one legally,

51. For such practices, see Kara 2012; cf. Finley’s argument on creating debt dependency (p. 615, above).

52. For the data and supporting evidence, see the Walk Free Foundation ([www.walkfreefoundation.org](http://www.walkfreefoundation.org)) with [www.globallslaveryindex.org](http://www.globallslaveryindex.org); International Justice Mission (<https://ijm.org>). For the process of bonded labor turning

into slavery, see, e.g., Andrees and Belser 2009; Kara 2012. On intervention by states, see Genicot 2002.

53. The problem also existed in early Rome. Finley and Harris both discuss the legal condition of the *nexus* (debt bondsman), for which Harris (2006, p. 252) again underlines the distinction with debt slaves, stating: “The

status of the *nexus* was thus temporary and granted the creditor only a right to the debtor’s labor. It was better than that of the *addictus* and the *iudicatus*, who could be put in chains and, if their obligation was not paid off, sold across the Tiber.” Finley (1981a, pp. 156–161) emphasizes how in Rome the line between both statuses was also so thin as

another not (ἄλλον ἐκδίκως, ἄλλον δικαίως), and those who had fled under necessity's constraint," and again to others who "suffered shameful slavery (δουλίη) right here, trembling before the whims of their masters" (see p. 613, above). Among these people were those who had forfeited their bodies as security for debts and—as full slaves—had been sold legally; there were also others who were treated in the same way, although they had not given their bodies as security, and still others yet who either had fled to escape this fate or, being unable to do so, were pressed so hard as to fear the worst from their masters.

The conditions for peasants in debt were deplorable at Athens, but not only there. The available evidence shows increasing debts and the resulting social and political conflicts in many Greek poleis in the course of the 7th century B.C. Debt was surely a problem for peasants paying rising rents for the land they worked, while for (small) freeholders the risks of agricultural livelihood were aggravated by the Greek system of partible inheritance. With more than one son in the family, the plot of land was partitioned equally among the heirs, thus diminishing in size and value with every successive generation. Hesiod (*Op.* 376–378) recommended having only one son, who in his turn would have only one son, but such wishful thinking is far removed from demographic reality.

Throughout Greece, attempts appear to have been made to change or alleviate these different problems. An extant inscribed law from Gortyn, which dates to the early 5th century, designated two plots of common land for horticulture in an attempt to keep the area from being brought under private control.<sup>54</sup> Aristotle in his *Politics* (1274a22–1274b26) mentions laws in various poleis, made by famous Archaic lawgivers, that regulated inheritance, the number of land allotments (*kleroi*) per family, the size of agricultural plots, and the sale of lands. Examples given are, among others, Philolaos of Corinth (*Arist. Pol.* 1274b1–6), who made laws for Thebes *περὶ τῆς παιδοποιίας* (about adoption) to regulate the size of families, and Oxylos of Elis (*Arist. Pol.* 1319a6–14), who forbade taking loans on entire plots of land so that at least a portion would remain unaffected by debt.<sup>55</sup> Some evidence intimates the poor calling for a radical redistribution of land, which popular leaders continued to promise and which, in Attica,

to be ineffective. His view is corroborated by Dionysius of Halicarnassus's accounts of the struggle between the poor and the patrician class in the Early Republic. Note *Ant. Rom.* 5.53: "For the creditors showed no moderation in the use of their power, but haling their debtors to prison, *treated them like slaves they had purchased*" (trans. E. Cary, Cambridge, Mass., 1940; emphasis added). Manius Valerius addressing the Senate in 494 B.C. at the first *secessio plebis* (*Ant. Rom.* 6.58.3): "He declared that these things had been brought about by plotting, not on the part of the more cultivated men among the patricians, but on the part of some insolent

and avaricious men desperately eager for unjust gain, who, having advanced a large amount of money at a high rate of interest and made slaves of many of their fellow-citizens, had, by treating these with cruel and arrogant harshness, alienated the whole body of the plebeians" (trans. E. Cary, Cambridge, Mass., 1943). As is apparent from the way in which he describes the events, the situation in Rome clearly reminded Dionysius of the Solonian crisis, as he makes Manius's brother Marcus Valerius refer explicitly to Solon (5.65) in the same context, and even has king Servius Tullius (trying to ingratiate himself with the population after the death of

Tarquinius) allude to Solon's measures at Athens when he promises (more) proportionate taxation and to terminate the security of debt on one's person (4.9.7).

54. *IC IV* 43Ba; see also Link 1991, p. 115, n. 50.

55. Link (1991, p. 65) supposes that Philolaos's laws restricted the inheritance to one son, but there is no further evidence for this possibility. For Oxylos's laws, see Hölkeskamp 1999, pp. 97–98. Pheidon of Corinth (*Arist. Pol.* 1265b13–16) thought it best that the households and citizen population should remain the same, although the *kleroi* were from the outset very unequal in size.

some hoped Solon would bring about.<sup>56</sup> A particularly interesting case is the *palintokia* at Megara, known only from a later report by Plutarch (*Quaest. Graec.* 18 [*Mor.* 295d]; cf. 304e). Sometime after the expulsion of the tyrant Theagenes, according to Plutarch, the poor forced the elite to enact a law that made the creditors pay back the *tokos* (τόκος) that they, the poor, had paid to them. *Tokos* is usually translated as “interest,” and to go by this story, the most intense hatred was directed against it, while the law still provided no solution to the underlying debt problem.<sup>57</sup>

While the (scarce) evidence thus attests both to the endemic indebtedness and consequent oppression of peasants in Greece and to ineffective attempts to redress the problem, Solon is the only Greek legislator known to have actually abolished the debts themselves and the institution of debt slavery by law. The unique nature of Solon’s measures in the Greek context is an important lead for further investigation. First of all, it sheds light on the evidence contained in the poems. It is highly unlikely that the historical Solon was the author of all the poems ascribed to him—in particular, the elegiac fragments about the vicissitudes of life and the expressions of general wisdom, which closely resemble or even share lines with contemporary poetry composed by (or in the name of) Theognis, Phokylides, Mimnermos, and others.<sup>58</sup> Fragments 4 and 36, however, offer an exceptional account of the speaker’s efforts to end the slavery of the Athenian poor and to bring the fugitives and those sold abroad back to Athens.<sup>59</sup> Given that the tradition on Solon’s *seisachtheia* existed parallel to—or rather, independently from—the poems, it seems safe to conclude that fr. 4 and 36 are more closely related to the lawgiver Solon as a historical figure than many other fragments.

Moreover, the fact that the Greeks, or at least the Athenians, considered Solon’s debt reforms as something exceptional is reflected in the tradition that Solon found the idea for such a law in Egypt. Herodotos claims that Solon adopted a law from the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis, and Plato, in the *Timaeus*, has Kritias recount Solon’s visit to Egypt and the teachings of the Egyptian priests.<sup>60</sup> Diodoros, probably following the account of Hekataios

56. For hope in Athens for the redistribution of land by Solon, see *Ath. Pol.* 11.2; Solon fr. 34 West, lines 7–9. For the distribution of land over various classes and the pressure toward redistribution in Athens, Chalcis, Corinth, Thebes, Sparta, Crete, Megara, Elis, and Thessaly, see Link 1991. For promises made by popular leaders to the *demos* to alleviate these grievances in the “plebiscitary politics” of Archaic Greece, see Hammer 2005, especially regarding Megara and Athens (Peisistratos), pp. 119–123.

57. Cf. Androtion’s view that Solon’s *seisachtheia* meant lowering of interest, p. 611, above. Link (1991, pp. 133–134), noting that this measure did not abolish the debts themselves, argues that reading *tokos* as “interest” does not

make much sense, but since, e.g., Xenophon (*Cyr.* 8.3.38) uses it in the sense of a tithe of the harvest, the *tokos* was rather a very high rent for land tenancy that was to be paid in produce. Cf. Cohen 1992, pp. 44–46, for a reading of *tokos* as “yield,” “not inherently time-related.”

58. See n. 10, above.

59. See, esp., the contributions in Slings 1990. Most Archaic Greek lyric offers, in the narrator’s voice, various personae whose “I”-speech is to be understood as expressing a typical view of the world with which the listeners can identify—he or she is involved in acts, feelings, and so forth that the audience members share from their own experience. The narrator in Solon fr. 4 and 36, unlike that in many other

of his fragments, seems too specific to be a plausible “I”-persona in this sense, but rather imparts an expression of Solon’s personal perspective (see further, p. 632, below).

60. Hdt. 1.29.2: Solon departs, after he has made his laws, to Egypt, where he meets Amasis, and next goes to Lydia, meeting Kroisos. Hdt. 2.177: Solon adopts Amasis’s law that every citizen should account for his income. 5.113: Solon, when visiting Cyprus, writes a song praising the king Philokypros (= fr. 19 W). Pl. *Tim.* 20d–27b; *Ath. Pol.* 11.1: after making his laws for Athens, Solon leaves the city for Egypt. Diod. Sic. 1.65, 79.3–4: Solon first visits Egypt, acquiring laws next to be applied at Athens. See also Martina 1968, fr. 62–69.

of Abdera, asserts that when Solon was in Egypt he learned from the priests about a law of the pharaoh Bocchoris (Bakenranef, ca. 726–720), which held that loans and debts were to be made only on a person's lands, not on his body, since people's bodies belonged to the "state" (Diod. Sic. 1.65, 79.3–4 = Hekataios of Abdera [ca. 322], *FGrH* 264 F25). This particular scenario is highly implausible. The evidence for Bakenranef's law, which does not even mention cancellation of debts, is extremely weak.<sup>61</sup> The presence of Athenians in Egypt as early as 600 B.C. can probably also be ruled out, since initially a prolonged stay there appears to have been granted only to Greeks associated with Lydia.<sup>62</sup> In sum, instead of clarifying the origins of Solon's laws, this account exemplifies the Classical Greek topos of Egypt as a legendary wellspring of wisdom.<sup>63</sup>

Yet by mixing accounts that Solon traveled and gathered his expertise *before* he made his laws with a version of his vita in which he traveled far and wide *after* finishing his legislation,<sup>64</sup> these stories all reflect the tradition that Solon's experience and wisdom were rooted in his travels. Now travel, too, is a stock ingredient of the biographies of Archaic lawgivers and sages, but it is also a reflection of a reality: the existence of long-distance trade that was rapidly growing in the Archaic period and in which members of the wealthy elite were strongly involved.<sup>65</sup> In a tradition that is again independent from his persona in the poems, Solon is consistently portrayed as being active in trade and traveling widely in the eastern Mediterranean, notably to Cyprus.<sup>66</sup> One of Solon's measures, according to tradition, dealt with the export of agricultural produce, which suggests some knowledge of international markets and their effects on local production.<sup>67</sup> If this portrayal of Solon is historically plausible, could his involvement in international trade shed some light on his supposed invention of canceling debts and debt slavery by law?

61. The only source is Diodoros (= Hekataios of Abdera), who clearly displays a Greek perception of the obligations of citizens to their polis; Manetho (*FGrH* 609 F2, 3b) mentions this pharaoh, but not this law.

62. Fantalkin 2014.

63. Cf. Raaflaub 2004, pp. 199–200; 2009.

64. See also n. 60, above. The author of the *Ath. Pol.* clearly intends to weave the two elements together, explaining (5.2–3) the choice of the Athenians for Solon due to his poetry and the fact that by "his birth and reputation (τῆι δόξει)" he belonged to the elite, but that by his "wealth and walk of life (τοῖς πράγμασι)," suggestive of his breadth of experience, he could relate more to the middle class, while also recounting that Solon left Athens after finishing his laws (*Ath. Pol.* 11, 13).

65. For travel as a topos of ancient lawgivers and sages, see Szegedy-Maszak 1978; Hölkeskamp 1999,

pp. 44–47. The influential view that the Greek elite looked down upon trade has now been strongly nuanced, if not outright abandoned; see van Wees 2009. For the elite involved in trade and travels, see Raaflaub 2004, with further references.

66. *Ath. Pol.* 5.3; see above, nn. 60, 64. For his travel to Egypt for trade and to see the country, see *Ath. Pol.* 11.1; for his travels throughout Greece, to Ionia and Egypt, and his friendship with the other sages, see Plut. *Sol.* 1–13, 25 (esp. 2.1 for trade).

67. Leão and Rhodes 2015, fr. 65 = Plut. *Sol.* 24.1: prohibition of agricultural export except olive oil on the first *axón*, strengthened with a curse the archon had to speak against trespassers, with a fine of 100 drachmas if he failed to do so. We agree with Foxhall (2007, p. 17, n. 3) that the reference in Plutarch to the "first *axón*" is questionable; we intend to discuss the *axones* and their numbers elsewhere in the future.

Yet we do not share Foxhall's view (2007, pp. 17–18) that "we cannot easily fit [this law] into an historical or social context," or that the very fact that the law could not be enforced makes the law itself implausible. The emphasis must have been on the restriction of export of staple foods and the effects of external markets on internal production (cf. Leão and Rhodes 2015, commentary on p. 109) rather than on the exemption of olive oil, a much rarer commodity, as Foxhall shows. Nor was the enforcement of this law more problematic than of any other; the state had very few means to enforce any law, although Solon opened up the opportunities for legal redress. Although Osborne (1997, p. 79) calls this law "not above suspicion," he situates the assignment of responsibility for its enforcement to an archon on the basis of the general tendency of early Greek laws to charge archons with such duties.

## THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST: THE TRADITION OF DEBT CANCELLATION

At this point, we would like to draw attention to resemblances—in terms of content, not of historical context—between Solon’s poems (fr. 4 and 36 West) and three ancient Near Eastern textual sources that describe official interventions in situations of debt slavery: an inscription of the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II (ca. 723–704 B.C.), one of Sargon’s grandson, Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.), and the biblical account of Nehemiah (ca. 445–433 B.C.), specifically Nehemiah 5. Of course, these texts and the Solonian poems differ greatly in style, tone, and vocabulary—and they vary even more where their historical background is concerned. Yet, as we intend to demonstrate, their overall structure and content display striking similarities: (1) a first-person narrative from the point of view of the legislator, which in Solon’s case is unique for the extant Greek evidence;<sup>68</sup> (2) the narrator’s claims to enforce justice supported by divine protection; (3) the contrastive underscoring of the narrator’s just rule versus the greed and injustice that had previously reigned in the land;<sup>69</sup> and (4) an account of the historical achievements to which the author lays claim, being in each case (a) the release of wrongfully enslaved citizens and (b) the return of people who were sold into foreign lands.

The resemblances between these sets of texts—Solon’s poems, the inscriptions of the two Neo-Assyrian kings, and Nehemiah 5—can be explained by three types of historical relationships. First, we may see them as instances of an underlying, common literary tradition—a widely shared narrative of a wise lawgiver who absolves debts, reclaims those who were sold, and returns the property to their original owners. Second, they may reflect actual historical responses, independent but comparable, by different legislators to similar socioeconomic problems. And third, they may reveal a direct transmission of ideas, in which case we may try to identify when, where, and how this transfer could have taken place. Moreover, the hypothesis of such a direct transfer becomes more plausible if it can be connected to one of the other types of historical convergence.

The earliest of our sources, the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, belong to one of the oldest traditions of ancient Near Eastern literature. Attested nearly continuously from the early Sumerian city-states (ca. 2900 B.C.) to the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire (539 B.C.), the commemorative inscriptions of Mesopotamian kings arguably form a coherent text genre, in which the same *topoi* listed above are in fact standard ingredients: the king speaking in the first person about how the gods had chosen him as monarch, and how he considered it his duty to end the lawlessness and impiety that had reigned in the land before his rule; his return of dispersed people and their gods back to their original homes and sanctuaries, like “a shepherd who gathers the scattered flock”;<sup>70</sup> and his introduction of various social and religious reforms, which are narrated within the framework of an account of the king’s building and restoration activities.<sup>71</sup> In the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods (respectively, ca. 1300–1100 and ca. 900–600 B.C.), these literary themes were elaborated by extensive descriptions of military campaigns, composed and updated regularly as annals of the king’s

68. See p. 632, below, and n. 59, above.

69. Liverani 1995, pp. 2361–2363.

70. Marduk-apla-iddina II (“Mero-dach-Baladan”); trans. Frame 2002, p. 137, line 15.

71. For an introduction to these texts and their analysis, see Liverani 1995; for the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions specifically, see Tadmor 1997; Fales 1999–2001.

achievements. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, written in cuneiform in the Akkadian language, were placed in different locations on different media for a variety of audiences: on clay prisms buried in the foundations of the renovated temple described in the text; on copies of such prisms kept in storage in the sanctuary itself; on the walls of the royal palace, where they were engraved directly on the walls and all visitors to the throne room would pass by them; and on stelai, statues, and rock reliefs displayed throughout the empire.<sup>72</sup>

Not only do the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions perpetuate a set of stock themes that resemble Solon's boasts about his social reforms, but more specifically, from the mid-3rd millennium B.C. onward, ancient Near Eastern kings are attested undertaking measures to counter the destructive effects of debt.<sup>73</sup> The majority of our sources on that subject derive from the Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000–1600 B.C.).<sup>74</sup> On accession to the throne, and sometimes again later in cases of dire necessity, the Old Babylonian kings established *mīšarum* (justice). This included the issuing of a decree that absolved all outstanding noncommercial debts, freed debt slaves, and returned lands sold as debt payments back to their previous owners. Such measurements, indicated by the term *andurārum* (restoration), were always meant to repair existing damage; unlike Solon's later reforms, they never abolished the institution of debt slavery itself. After the Old Babylonian period, royal proclamations of *(an)durāru(m)* are attested in sources from ancient Syria during the later 2nd millennium B.C.,<sup>75</sup> and they finally resurface once more under the Neo-Assyrian empire. None of the actual decrees from that period have survived, but they are referred to in the royal inscriptions of Sargon II and Esarhaddon, as well as in letters to the Assyrian court and in a variety of private contracts from Nineveh, Nimrud, and Assur from the late 9th to the end of the 7th century B.C.<sup>76</sup>

72. In the Neo-Assyrian period, the cuneiform script and the Akkadian language (in the Assyrian and the Babylonian dialects) were still being used both for the transmission of older, standardized texts (e.g., medical and divination handbooks, as well as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*) and for the composition of new documents such as royal inscriptions, letters, and legal contracts. The royal inscriptions were written in the literary dialect of Standard Babylonian, which thereby functioned as the language of imperial authority. At the same time, however, Aramaic was rapidly replacing Akkadian as the primary vernacular language throughout the Near East; parchment scrolls written in Aramaic were used alongside cuneiform tablets for communication and administration (see Beaulieu 2006). Assyrian soldiers and merchants traveling in Syria, the Levant, and Anatolia would

have spoken Aramaic with the people they encountered, while administrative officials and scribes proficient in cuneiform were stationed in subjected cities and along major trade routes (see Zelig Aster 2007, pp. 34–39). For an analysis of the different media and languages used for the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and what this suggests about their intended audience, see Porter 1995 and our discussion, pp. 635–636, below. After the fall of the Assyrian empire, the use of cuneiform and Akkadian gradually became restricted to the Babylonian heartland; however, tablets with land sale contracts in the Neo-Assyrian administrative style, but dated between 600 and 570 B.C., have been found at sites in Syria (Sheh Hamad and Sefire; see Dalley 2003, p. 27), and the sites of Tyre and Tell Tawilan (near Petra) in Lebanon have yielded cuneiform tablets written in

Babylonian and dated to the late 6th century B.C. (Dalley 1993, p. 137).

73. Among the earliest known examples are the Reform Texts of King Iri'iniḡina of Lagaš (24th century B.C.; see Frayne 2008, pp. 249–275; some scholars render this king's name as Iri-/UruKAḡina). Among various other measures against the exploitation of the poor by local officials, Iri'iniḡina claims to have established the remission of debts resulting from tax obligations. For the economic and ideological background of the Reform Texts, see Hudson 2002.

74. Charpin 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1996, 2000.

75. See Lion 1999. Akkadian nouns and adjectives dropped the final "m" after ca. 1500 B.C., meaning that it was used in the Old Babylonian period but not the Neo-Assyrian period.

76. Villard 2007.

In the so-called Great Display Inscription of Sargon II, engraved into one of the palace walls at Khorsabad in ca. 709 B.C., several different literary devices are employed and topics addressed that, as we will see, recur both in Solon's fragments 4 and 36 and in Nehemiah 5. These are the genre-typical first-person perspective and the reference to the deities on whose divine authority the king has acted; the release of imprisoned citizens and the reinstatement of their use of certain land plots; and an element that, as mentioned, is missing from the Solonian fragments, namely, the act of debt remission itself.

*Sargon II, Great Display Inscription*

1–5: Palace of Sargon, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, governor of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, beloved of the great gods. **Aššur, Nabû, [and] Marduk have granted me kingship without equal** and have elevated my good name to the highest glory.

appeal to the divine;  
narrator's personal  
perspective

134–35: **I destroyed the prisons of the citizens of Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, and Borsippa, who were kept prisoner (at Dūr-Yakin) without having committed any transgression,** and I let them see the daylight once again.

bringing back citizens  
held prisoner in  
foreign lands

135–136: [Regarding] their fields, which long ago the Suteans had stolen and appropriated while the land was in chaos—these Suteans, people of the wilderness, I vanquished by the sword. **I reassigned to them [the previous owners] the forgotten borders of their lands,** which had become meaningless during the anarchy in the land.

reassigning land  
ownership

136–137: **I proclaimed debt remission [andurāru] for Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Larsa, Kissik, and Nēmed-Laguda,** brought their stolen gods back to their sanctuaries, and re-established their regular offerings, which had been interrupted.<sup>77</sup>

debt remission

In two inscriptions of Esarhaddon composed between 674 and 672 B.C.<sup>78</sup> that commemorate the rebuilding of Esagil, the temple of Babylon's patron deity Marduk, we again encounter the personal perspective and a direct appeal to Marduk; the proclamation of debt remission; the release and return of wrongfully enslaved citizens; and, additionally, a narrative constructing a situation of chaos and injustice that had characterized Babylonia before Esarhaddon's personal intervention.

77. The translations given here are based on Fuchs 1994, pp. 191–230, 343–351.

78. For a new dating of the

composition of these and other Esarhaddon inscriptions concerning Babylon, see Novotny 2015.

*Esarhaddon, Babylon A and C*

A I 18–33; C I 20–37: At that time, in the reign of a previous king, bad omens occurred in Sumer and Akkad. **The people living there were answering each other yes for no (and) were telling lies. . . . They put their hands on the possessions of Esagil, the palace of the gods, an inaccessible place, and they sold the silver, gold, (and) precious stones at market value to the land [of] Elam.**

local citizens being greedy and unjust (even stealing sacred property)

A II 9–14; C II 22–28: **You [Marduk] truly selected me, Esarhaddon, in the assembly of my older brothers to put these matters right . . .**

appeal to the divine; narrator's personal perspective

A V 10–15; C VII 12–17: **I established anew the remission of debts [*andurāru*] of the wronged citizens of Babylon, people (entitled to) the privileged status (and) freedom (guaranteed by) the gods Anu and Enlil.**

debt remission

A V 15–24; C VII 18–28: **I gathered the bought people who had become slaves (and) who had been distributed among the (foreign) riffraff and counted (them once again) as Babylonians. I returned their looted possessions, provided the naked with clothing, (and) let them take the road to [Bab]ylon.<sup>79</sup>**

bringing back citizens sold as slaves to foreign lands

In these inscriptions, the kings' acts of debt remission and of freeing wrongfully enslaved and imprisoned persons do not pertain universally to the Neo-Assyrian empire, but specifically to certain Babylonian cities. Both Sargon and Esarhaddon hoped, each for his own reasons, to engender support for their rule in these ancient political and religious strongholds of southern Mesopotamia.<sup>80</sup> However, as Villard has demonstrated, letters and legal documents from the Neo-Assyrian period paint a different picture. Private sale and lending contracts drawn up by citizens of three important

79. Esarhaddon, Bab. A and C: various copies on hexagonal and decagonal prisms, some unprovenanced, some found in Assur (between the crown prince's palace and the dig house; see Leichty 2011, p. 193), Babylon (purchased by E. A. Wallis Budge in Hillah; see Porter 1995, p. 56), and probably Sippar. Trans. E. Leichty, Winona Lake, Ind., 2011, pp. 195–199, 203–208; see now also online at <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap4/corpus/> (Esarhaddon 104 and 105).

80. During his 12-year war with the Babylonian king Marduk-apla-iddina II (722–710 B.C.), Sargon II strove to win the support of the priesthoods and political elites of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Uruk, and so forth by reinstating their old privileges. This included exemption from taxes, as well as military and civil conscription, of which the legal terms (*zakūtu, šubarrū*) even alternate with that of (*an*)*durāru* in Sargon's inscriptions; see Villard 2007, pp. 110–111. Esarhaddon in turn sought to

reconcile his public persona of benevolent king and builder of Babylon with the total destruction that his father Sennacherib had brought upon that city. His Babylonian inscriptions therefore reinterpret his father's violence as the wrath of Marduk, incurred by the citizens of Babylon through their own immoral behavior. Eventually, Marduk softened, appointing Esarhaddon as the noble ruler who would reestablish peace and freedom in Babylonia; see Porter 1993, pp. 97–104.

Neo-Assyrian cities—Nineveh, Nimrud, and Assur—and dating to the reigns of various kings from Adad-nārari III (911–891 B.C.) to Ashurbanipal (669–ca. 627 B.C.) or one of his successors refer explicitly to recent proclamations of *(an)durāru* and include clauses that protect the buyer or lender against financial loss in case of such a royal intervention.<sup>81</sup> Should the sold or pledged property be returned to the original owner after an *(an)durāru*, the buyer or lender will be financially reimbursed. Interestingly, the objects of the transactions and thus of the *(an)durāru* clauses include slaves, but they are treated only as commodities; the background of their servitude is not at issue. This evidence leads to the conclusion that Neo-Assyrian royal proclamations of *(an)durāru* did in fact apply to the entire empire, rather than only to the cities of Babylonia, and that they primarily entailed the return of property that had been sold or pledged against a loan under circumstances of economic pressure.<sup>82</sup>

What concerns us at present is not only the historical reality of Neo-Assyrian royal justice, but first and foremost the way in which it was described and contextualized in the royal inscriptions. The standardized, formulaic language employed by the inscriptions and the traditional ideological concepts that they express firmly anchor them in the ancient Near Eastern literary genre of the official memorial (see p. 630, below)—a genre that was found throughout the ancient western Asian and eastern Mediterranean world and one that, as we will argue, influenced Solon in the structuring and phrasing of his *seisachtheia*-related poetry.

Before we evaluate the possible connections between the Solonian fragments and the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, we will consider another ancient account of legal reforms by a local administrator that were certainly influenced by Mesopotamian literary texts and socioeconomic practices. This account, from the biblical Book of Nehemiah, or more specifically, the first-person narrative that forms the core of that book (generally termed the Nehemiah Memorial or Memoir [NM]) may thus serve as a parallel case—though not directly related historically—for our investigation.<sup>83</sup> Usually dated to the mid-5th century B.C., the NM tells the story of a Jewish courtier at Susa who becomes the Persian-appointed governor of Jerusalem. Finding the city still largely in ruins since the Babylonian conquest, he proceeds to undertake a large-scale renovation of the city walls while he struggles against the opposition of his political enemies. In Book 5, in which Nehemiah recounts the social reforms he established during the building project, we again find a description of the local elites acting unjustly and oppressing their fellow citizens, forcing them into slavery and migration; the narrator's personal intervention in this situation; the return of citizens sold as slaves and reassigning of land to them; and, finally, the appeal to the divine, which had already begun in Nehemiah 1 with his prayer to God for help.

81. While the royal inscriptions use the term *andurāru*, legal documents of this period shorten it to *durāru*. Finley (1981a, pp. 162–163) supposes that the debt cancellations in the Near Eastern empires were ineffective in reality; although he is right that the

institution of debt bondage was not abolished, these clauses show that the debt cancellations and subsequent releases and revisions were indeed effectuated.

82. Villard 2007; see also Postgate 1976, pp. 21–22; Fales 2001,

pp. 199, 332.

83. The Nehemiah Memoir is usually considered to consist of Neh. 1:1–7:5, portions of 12:27–43, and 13:4–31, although the inclusion of Book 13 is debated; see Grabbe 1998, pp. 151–152.

*Nehemiah 5*

1–5 Now there was a **great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish kin**. For there were those who said, “With our sons and our daughters, we are many; we must get grain, so that we may eat and stay alive.” There were also those who said, “**We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine.**” And there were those who said, “**We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king’s tax.** Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; **our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves. . . .**”

local elite being greedy and unjust

6–7 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. **After thinking it over, I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. . . .**

narrator’s personal perspective

7–8 I called a great assembly to deal with them, and said to them, “**As far as we were able, we have bought back our Jewish kindred who had been sold to other nations; but now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!**

bringing back citizens sold as slaves to foreign lands

11 **Restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.**”

reassigning land ownership; return of interest and goods sold for paying debts

13–19 I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, “**So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise.** Thus may they be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. . . . **Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.**<sup>84</sup>

appeal to the divine

We can confidently draw a dotted line of historical transfer between Nehemiah and the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions. When Nehemiah (presumably) lived and wrote, Israel and Judah had been exposed for centuries to Assyrian and Babylonian expansionism and direct military control, to the full textual and iconographic scope of their royal and imperial ideology, and to their legal, administrative, and religious customs. Probably as a result of that cultural influence, debt remission—called *d’rōr*

84. Trans. New Revised Standard Version, 1989.

in Hebrew after the Akkadian term (*an*)*durāru*—had become part of the legal tradition of Israel itself, which ordained that debt bondage was to be terminated on a periodic basis.<sup>85</sup> That same law had become embedded into the Covenant between Moses and God, which meant that periodical debt remission was anchored in the agreement between the people and the divine. In the early 6th century B.C., King Zedekiah of Judah decreed a *d<sup>e</sup>rōr* in order to release enslaved members of the Judean community; when the slaveholders forced those they had released back into slavery, the prophet Jeremiah announced that as punishment for their transgression, God would “release” the people of Judah to the advancing Babylonian army (Jer. 34:8–22). A century and a half later, Nehemiah could graft upon that long tradition his efforts to reclaim bond slaves from abroad and to reform the Judean elite in the process.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, on the textual level, it has long been observed that the NM resembles the inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings in both form and content.<sup>87</sup> A generic connection is primarily suggested by the autobiographical, first-person perspective and by the fact that—as in the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions—the description of Nehemiah’s social and cultic reforms is embedded within an account of his building activities, notably his reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem (the so-called *Mauerbau-Erzählung*). Reevaluating the question of the NM’s literary genre, Burt has recently drawn attention back to the structural, narrative, and stylistic parallels between the NM, early-1st-millennium B.C. northwest Semitic and Persian-era Egyptian “(auto)biographies” of local rulers and officials, and the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings—which, in turn, are directly dependent on their Neo-Assyrian precursors.<sup>88</sup> He concludes that all of these texts and text corpora share characteristics of the ubiquitous Near Eastern genre of the “official memorial.”<sup>89</sup>

More than just belonging to a widespread, contemporary literary genre, however, Nehemiah also stands in a much longer tradition of Hebrew literature drawing on Mesopotamian templates. These include Assyrian literary and legal documents—in other words, texts of which Israelite and Judean authors must have been aware *before* the Babylonian exile. For example, descriptions of the Assyrian empire and renderings of direct speech by Assyrian officials in the First Isaiah, composed as early as the later 8th century B.C., have been shown to borrow imagery and even literal phrases from Assyrian court language;<sup>90</sup> it also is generally accepted

85. Exod. 21:2, Deut. 15:12 (every seven years); Jer. 34:13 (every 50 years); see also Frymer-Kensky 2001. On the relationship between Neo-Assyrian (*an*)*durāru* decrees, the Hebrew term *d<sup>e</sup>rōr*, and the Deuteronomic law of periodic debt remission, see Lewy 1958; Otto 1997.

86. Although Nehemiah’s governorship and 5th-century B.C. Judaism in general were not characterized by personal Torah-piety (see Fitzpatrick-McKinley 2003), a later tradition

(Neh. 10:28–39) portrays him as deeply concerned with the Covenant, which he makes the priests, Levites, and city officials sign anew.

87. See Burt 2014, pp. 21–45, with further references.

88. Burt 2014, pp. 95–112.

89. Burt (2014, p. 112) defines the genre as “self-presentation texts that join narrative-like passages with prayer or hymnic language, whose purpose is making a glorifying and competitive claim for the name and

memory of the protagonist, and which arise primarily (but not solely) out of a royal milieu.” He proposes that the NM combines the official memorial with the popular storytelling genre of the court tale.

90. Prominent studies include Cohen 1979; Machinist 1983; Oded 1985; see also Zelig Aster 2007 for all pertinent literature. See pp. 635–636, below, for a discussion of how the content of the Assyrian inscriptions may have reached literary authors in Israel and Judah.

among Old Testament scholars that the Covenant itself, which began as a general notion of commitment to reciprocity between the Hebrew God and His people, acquired its much more specific, precise, and legalistic format under the influence of the loyalty oaths of Esarhaddon and his son Ashurbanipal.<sup>91</sup> In other words, the NM's resemblances to Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions can safely be ascribed to close contact, both exilic and pre-exilic, between those Mesopotamian texts and the Judean literary tradition. Therefore, although Nehemiah lived long after Solon and would not have known his work, he may serve as a benchmark for our investigation into the possible Mesopotamian influence on law, letters, and social justice in the eastern Mediterranean world.

Let us now turn to the relevant passages in the fragmentary elegies of Solon. In Solon fragment 4, we see first his appeal to the deities protecting the city of Athens and a description of the misbehavior of the Athenian elite, which had led to an unsustainable situation of injustice.

*Solon, Fragment 4 West*

Our state will never perish through the dispensation of **Zeus** or the intentions of the **blessed immortal gods**; for such a **stout-hearted guardian, Pallas Athena, born of a mighty father, holds her hand over it.** appeal to the divine

But it is **the citizens themselves who by their act of foolishness and subservience to money are willing to destroy a great city, and the mind of the people's leaders is unjust**; they are certain to suffer much pain as a result of their great arrogance. For they do not know how to restrain excess or to conduct in an orderly and peaceful manner the festivities of the banquet that are at hand. . . . local elite being greedy and unjust (even stealing sacred property)

**They grow wealthy, yielding to unjust deeds. . . .**

**Sparing neither sacred nor private property, they steal with rapaciousness, one from one source, one from another, and they have no regard for the august foundations of Justice, who bears silent witness to the present and the past and who in time assuredly comes to exact retribution. . . . These are the evils that are rife among the people, and many of the poor are going to a foreign land, sold and bound in shameful fetters.**<sup>92</sup>

91. Weinfeld 1970 (with earlier literature), 1973; Otto 1999. A recently discovered copy of one such oath, Esarhaddon's "Succession Treaty," from a temple at Tell Tayinat in Hatay province in coastal southern Turkey, suggests that all those who signed the treaty received their own copy and brought it back home, where—at least at Tell Tayinat—it acquired the status of a sacred document; see Lauinger 2015.

92. Trans. D. E. Gerber, Cambridge, Mass., 1999.

In this passage, Solon invokes the deities who protect the city of Athens rather than himself personally; however, in fragment 36, he does appeal to

the goddess Ge (Earth) as a witness to his own activities.<sup>93</sup> As mentioned earlier, the *seisachtheia* itself does not appear in Solon's poems, but in fragment 36, we do see him reassigning the use of agricultural land, returning citizens who had been sold as slaves, releasing local slaves and prisoners, and emphasizing his personal involvement in all this.

*Solon, Fragment 36 West*

Before achieving what of the goals for  
which I brought the people together did I  
stop? In the verdict of time I will have as  
my best witness the mighty mother of the  
Olympian gods, dark Earth,

appeal to the divine

whose boundary markers [*horoi*] fixed in  
many places I once removed; enslaved be-  
fore, now she is free.

reassigning land  
ownership

And I brought back to Athens, to their  
homeland founded by the gods, many who  
had been sold, one legally, another not,  
and those who had fled under necessity's  
constraint, no longer speaking the Attic  
tongue, as wanderers far and wide are in-  
clined to do.

bringing back citizens  
sold as slaves to foreign  
lands

And those who suffered shameful slavery  
right here, trembling before the whims of  
their masters, I set free.

releasing local slaves  
and prisoners

These things I did by the exercise of my  
power, blending together force and justice,  
and I persevered to the end as I promised.<sup>94</sup>

narrator's personal  
perspective

As we have already discussed, the autobiographical point of view of the legislator is otherwise unattested in Greek elegiac poetry and legal texts, but it was a standard feature of Near Eastern official memorials. Furthermore, fragments 4 and 36 share with the inscriptions of Sargon II and Esarhaddon—as well as with our case for comparison, Nehemiah 5—the focus on debt remission as a central accomplishment of the narrator's rule, while also phrasing the harsh circumstances to which the ruler in question responded and the specific actions he (allegedly) undertook in remarkably similar terms. In the light of the material discussed, we therefore propose that the legislator Solon and the governor Nehemiah, both highly educated local reformers active in the immediate context of a Near

93. In other fragments ascribed to Solon, the speaker also calls upon the gods' blessing, e.g., in fr. 13, but there the "I" may be taken to be the typically impersonal narrator of Archaic-period Greek poetry, who could be almost any

man of some standing, rather than the historical actor Solon himself: "Resplendent daughters of Memory and Olympian Zeus, Pierian Muses, hearken to my prayer. Grant that I have prosperity from the blessed gods and a

good reputation always from all men" (Solon, fr. 13 West; trans. D. E. Gerber, Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

94. Trans. D. E. Gerber, Cambridge, Mass., 1999.

Eastern empire, should be regarded as historical parallels—not interconnected, but similar in their dependency on their Mesopotamian precursors. Like Nehemiah a century and a half later, Solon was inspired by ancient Mesopotamian cultural practices both for his legal innovations and for the literary texts he composed about them.<sup>95</sup>

How, then, can we reconstruct the historical setting in which Solon may have come in contact with the Mesopotamian concept of *(an)durāru*? The exchange of goods and ideas between the ancient Near East and Greece is unmistakable, particularly in the Archaic period, but identifying specific times and places is often very difficult, if not impossible. Scholars therefore apply concepts such as connectivity, contact zones, and a cultural koine, underpinned by reconstructions of the actual frameworks in which such exchanges could take place: mercenary armies, trade, skilled labor, raiding, colonies, diplomacy, and other such contexts.<sup>96</sup> Why and how such contacts worked well for the transfer of knowledge may be clarified by identifying the mediators as “bridges” in the sense proposed by the sociologist Granovetter in his classic 1973 article. Granovetter argued that groups with strong ties among each other tend to keep and reinforce the values and knowledge they share, whereas new ideas are usually brought in by members of such a group who are in contact with outsiders. Their ties with nongroup members are by definition weak compared to those within the group itself, and they can therefore function as “bridges” that guide ideas from one group to the other.<sup>97</sup>

This approach also works well for understanding Solon’s reforms. We may attribute his adoption of the idea of the *seisachtheia* to the centuries-long influence of the Assyrians over the entire area that had belonged to their empire, but more precisely to the multicultural setting of the eastern Mediterranean trade in which Solon appears to have been active. In these commercial networks, Greeks were tied together with many others, notably the Phoenicians, who acted as go-betweens everywhere. As a likely location where Solon is said to have traveled and where he may have been informed about Near Eastern legal practices, Cyprus comes to mind first, where Cypriots, Phoenicians, and Greeks intermingled, interpersonally as well as linguistically. Although Cyprus was probably never under direct Assyrian domination, there were regular military, diplomatic, and trade contacts

95. The resemblance between Solon and Nehemiah as social reformers has been observed previously, notably by Yamauchi (1980, p. 292), who merely concludes that they “were truly great men, each in his own time and country.”

96. For connectivity in the Mediterranean, see Horden and Purcell 2000, pp. 123–172; Malkin 2011, pp. 45, 205–209; on connectivity between East and West, see Rollinger 2015. For contact zones, see Raaflaub 2014; for the cultural koine, see Seybold and von Ungern-Sternberg 1993.

97. Granovetter 1973, p. 1361: “The strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.” Such a strong tie is not necessarily one of friendship in the conventional, modern sense; Granovetter discusses subgroups in neighborhoods in present-day cities of the United States. The elite of Archaic-period Athens—with strong competition drawing on shared values, a defining *symposion* subculture, frequent

intermarriage, shared economic and political interests, and political cliques—fits the terms of a group with strong ties. The same logic of weak ties means that complex or risky innovations may only be spread successfully within the community by individuals who are members of subgroups with strong ties as well as with weak ties to other subgroups. “Individuals with many weak ties are . . . best placed to diffuse such a difficult innovation, since some of those ties will be local bridges” (Granovetter 1973, p. 1367).

between the Assyrian court, the Phoenician colonists of Cyprus, and local Cypriot rulers.<sup>98</sup> Other likely places of such contact are the Greek trading posts in Syria and the Phoenician harbors themselves, which belonged to the spheres of influence first of the Neo-Assyrian empire and then of the Neo-Babylonian empire.<sup>99</sup> Archaeological evidence even shows that after the Assyrian annexations of northern Syria and Cilicia, direct Assyrian-Greek trade and the settlement of Greek traders in these regions grew and expanded during the course of the 7th century B.C., cutting out the Phoenician and Cypriot intermediaries.<sup>100</sup>

Trading networks not only suggest where Solon may have learned about the Mesopotamian tradition of cleaning the slate, so to speak, but also *how* he may have done so. Long-distance trade worked on networks of credit and debt that relied on trust—in other words, on personal relationships.<sup>101</sup> In the western regions of the former Neo-Assyrian empire, the educated elite certainly knew what a proclamation of *(an)durāru* entailed—for example, the one by Ashurbanipal or by one of the final Neo-Assyrian kings;<sup>102</sup> moreover, although *(an)durāru*, like Solon's own *seisachtheia*, only applied to agricultural (i.e., noncommercial) debts, it seems likely that some of the indebted farmers' creditors were entrepreneurs to whom debt remission may have meant financial loss—as suggested by the abovementioned Neo-Assyrian contract clauses protecting the involved parties against a *durāru* decree. Thus, Solon's trade connections may well have informed him of the traditions of debt remission in the Near East, either because their own mutual credit was involved or perhaps even because debt was an issue of shared social concern. As mentioned above, King Zedekiah of Judah, who proclaimed a *d'rōr*, was a contemporary of Solon, and news of this measure may well have traveled north along the coastal highway that connected Syria, via Israel and Judah, with Egypt.<sup>103</sup>

But the shared knowledge went beyond a common interest in debt. As we argued above, not only can Solon's *seisachtheia* be seen as a more fundamentally effective version of the Mesopotamian practice of *(an)durāru*, but his poems (fr. 4 and 36) are also strikingly reminiscent in style to the royal inscriptions of Sargon II and Esarhaddon. Unfortunately, even if we posit the existence of the official memorial as a widespread eastern Mediterranean and West Asian literary genre, and if we assume that it

98. Radner 2010.

99. Solon's travels and legal reforms are dated to the early 6th century B.C., less than two decades after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Even if the production of Assyrian cuneiform texts had almost completely ceased after 612 B.C. (but cf. Dalley 2003, p. 27), widespread knowledge of Assyrian culture among those who had been exposed to it their entire lives naturally needed much longer to dissipate (see, e.g., Dalley 2001 on the continuing circulation of Assyrian court tales). Former imperial clerks of Solon's own generation whom he may have encountered in cities on the Syro-Palestinian

or southern Anatolian coast would have received their scribal training, including in the composition of royal annals, during the final years of the reign of Ashurbanipal (see pp. 635–636, below, for a discussion on the extent of cuneiform literacy in the Aramaic-speaking world of the eastern Mediterranean).

100. Lanfranchi 2000, pp. 9–12.

101. On trust as the necessary ingredient for credit between equals, see Graeber 2011, pp. 100–106. For *eranos* loans between acquaintances, see, e.g., Millett 1991, pp. 145, 153–159. Trust between lenders and borrowers does not preclude (high) interest

charges, especially in maritime trade due to the risks involved, as Cohen (1992, pp. 207–215) points out for Classical-period Athens in particular.

102. For the possible dates of proclamations of *(an)durāru* after Esarhaddon, see Villard 2007, pp. 118–119.

103. Von Dassow (2013, p. 159) observes that “the same idea” as expressed by Jeremiah in his account of Zedekiah's botched reforms “is present” in the poetry of Solon. Her article mainly argues that the Hurrian-Hittite “Song of Release” (ca. 1400 B.C.) does *not* treat the subject of debt remission, contrary to previous interpretations.

reached and influenced Solon as it later did Nehemiah, no direct evidence exists at present that can shed light on the transmission of the Neo-Assyrian royal annals beyond or even within the cuneiform-literate world. Written translations of those inscriptions (e.g., in Aramaic) are not attested, and there is no evidence for an oral tradition around their approximate content. Yet although the debate about their intended audience and dispersal is still ongoing, we agree with Porter, Kuhrt, Liverani, Tadmor, and others that they could not only have been composed for the gods and future kings, but that their core messages, which legitimized the kings' deeds and reinforced the ideological framework that supported such legitimation, must also have targeted different groups of recipients within the Neo-Assyrian empire.<sup>104</sup>

One obvious, but not trivial, audience of all royal inscriptions were the court scribes who composed and inscribed such texts. With the advancement of their career, they must have become so familiar with, and progressively "self-indoctrinated" by, the recurring imagery and stock phrases that formed the building blocks of the annals that they could recite such passages by heart.<sup>105</sup> Inscriptions on palace walls, such as Sargon's Great Display Inscription, guided visitors toward the throne room and were thus accessible to all palace attendants, emissaries, tribute-bringers, and other guests who were either cuneiform-literate or arranged for someone to translate the texts for them.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, at least one subgenre of the inscriptions, the Royal Letters to a God, was in all likelihood ceremonially read aloud at Assur; the ample evidence of public readings of other text types and in other periods—including (*an*)*durāru(m)/mīšarum* proclamations—suggests that this may have been the case for all royal narrative compositions.<sup>107</sup> Finally, inscriptions commemorating the renovation of a temple, including our version of Esarhaddon's Babylon A and C, discussed above, were not just hidden in that temple's foundations—duplicates were also stored in temple libraries in different cities.<sup>108</sup> As Porter has argued, the significant differences in descriptive style and political perspective between Esarhaddon's various Babylon inscriptions point to a deliberate choice to adapt the content to different contemporary audiences in Babylon and Assur, respectively; likewise, apologetic passages inserted into the annals—or purposefully left out—at sensitive moments in the king's reign are best explained as taking criticism by contemporaries into consideration.<sup>109</sup>

In short, at the very least, court scribes, temple personnel, and probably other members of the core elite of the Neo-Assyrian empire were familiar with the royal inscriptions. Moreover, a secondary sphere of transmission of Assyrian royal ideology to provincial elites in the western reaches of the empire can also be reconstructed. Since these Aramaic-speaking, educated local administrators, entrepreneurs, and clergymen must have been the "bridges" connecting Solon to the world of Assyrian culture, it is important to consider this contact zone in more detail. For the case of Israel and Judah, Zelig Aster has systematically outlined the social and geographic

104. Porter 1993, pp. 97–117; 1995; Kuhrt 1995, vol. 2, p. 476; Liverani 1995, pp. 2354–2355; Tadmor 1997, pp. 331–334.

105. Liverani 1979, p. 302; Porter 1995, pp. 57–58. For the debated issue

of whether Assyrian (or earlier) cuneiform scribes used memorization as one way to copy texts, see Worthington 2012, pp. 13–15.

106. Zelig Aster 2007, pp. 12–18.

107. Liverani 1979, pp. 301–302;

Porter 1993, pp. 112–115. On Sargon's Letter to Assur, see Oppenheim 1960, esp. pp. 143–147; Grayson 1980, pp. 157–158; Tadmor 1997, pp. 331–332.

108. Porter 1993, pp. 111–112.

109. Porter 1993, pp. 95–110.

spheres of interaction between the former and Assyrian “claims of empire” in the late 8th century B.C.<sup>110</sup> From the first moments of political interaction between Assyria and the Jewish kingdoms, diplomatic emissaries were able to familiarize themselves with typical Assyrian phraseology through visits to the palaces at Khorsabad, Nimrud, and Nineveh, audiences with Assyrian personnel in neighboring regions, and messages from the king read aloud in their own cities by royal officials.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, throughout the empire, including the Aramean kingdoms and later in Israel itself, the Assyrian kings erected inscribed stelai along the routes taken by the army, at important road junctions, in the capitals of vassal states, and at sites of victory and conquest.<sup>112</sup> Finally, in annexed states like Israel, the Assyrians established numerous administrative centers in provincial capitals and along major trade routes, such as the abovementioned coastal highway. These centers employed Assyrian scribes who mastered both Aramaic and Akkadian as well as deportees from Babylonia who were settled there.<sup>113</sup> Both groups will have been able to translate the stelai to educated locals and even, as the years went by, to teach locals to compose letters, legal contracts, and administrative records in cuneiform, as required for their dealings with the Assyrian authorities.

We can reasonably assume that this situation was similar along the entire Syro-Palestinian and southern Anatolian coast.<sup>114</sup> Between the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.), when Isaiah was already able to paraphrase Assyrian literature, and the fall of Harran in 609 B.C., several generations of educated local officials, scholars, and businessmen in harbor towns and provincial capitals not only spoke Aramaic with their foreign contacts, but also possessed at least some basic knowledge of the cuneiform script, and had an impression of the literary style of the Assyrian court scribes. That multilingual world—which for more than a century had been closely interconnected through trade networks and a tightly knit imperial administration—had only very recently seen the collapse of the official infrastructure when Solon traveled there. The genre of the official memorial, which had been known throughout the northwest Semitic realm since the early 1st millennium B.C., along with its specific Neo-Assyrian features, was still freshly present in the collective knowledge of that region’s literate society. Through them, the boasts of Sargon and Esarhaddon to have restored order after a period of social injustice, including the royal debt remissions which were an actual recent memory in the entire empire, reached Solon and functioned as a template for his own commemorative poetry.

110. Zelig Aster 2007.

111. Zelig Aster 2007, pp. 12–18, 39–43. Apart from the famous example of the Assyrian field commander (*rab šaqē*) addressing the city administrators and the people of Jerusalem in Hebrew (Is. 36; 2 Kings 18), of which the historicity is disputed, Zelig Aster discusses additional textual and iconographic evidence for direct oral com-

munication between Assyrian military officers and city representatives over the city walls.

112. Zelig Aster 2007, pp. 22–26, 29–34.

113. Zelig Aster 2007, pp. 34–39. Note his statement on p. 39: “Traders and travelers, resident in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judah, would have had contact with the inhabitants of these

locales and would have disseminated knowledge of Assyrian claims of empire, transmitting the motifs and imagery used in these claims.”

114. Porter (1995, p. 59), e.g., argues similarly for the Neo-Hittite state of Sam’al (modern Zincirli) in southern Turkey (modern Gaziantep Province).

## CONCLUSIONS: DEBT AND ITS AFTERMATH

Debts were a structural factor in the lives of peasants and small farmers throughout the ancient world. Either by the simple fact that they continued to accrue or due to specific circumstances, such as drought or excessively greedy and merciless creditors, these debts could bring the debtors and their families into recurrent, if not chronic, debt bondage. Outright slavery due to debt—without a fixed term and empowering creditors to sell their faulting debtors—did exist, either because local laws allowed it, or because the creditors got away with it. Throughout the ancient world, persons in positions of authority took measures to counter these practices, driven both by compassion for the victims and by concern for the destabilizing effects of debt bondage and debt slavery on the social and economic life of their states. The most prominent and long-standing of these measures were the regular debt remissions and liberations of debt slaves by royal decrees issued by the kings of the Mesopotamian empires. Theirs was a focused, single responsibility toward the gods for justice in their realm, and the debt remissions were embedded in the concomitant ideology of the king's duties, piety, and power.

In ancient Greece, the situation of the peasants seems to have deteriorated in the 7th century B.C. due to increasing pressure by the landowning elite, spurred on by a highly competitive lifestyle. Various countermovements against the problems of debt are reported, but Solon is the only Archaic lawgiver known to have canceled by law all existing agricultural debts. He was following the example of the Mesopotamian remission decrees, but he also went beyond that model by abolishing debt slavery. In Granovetter's terms, the elite of Archaic Athens appears as a community with "strong ties," among whom Solon introduced the idea of debt cancellation and termination of debt slavery from the Near East, acting as a "bridge" due to his "weak ties" with informants familiar with the tradition of *(an)durāru*. His measures were a legal innovation that he could introduce due to the special powers granted him.<sup>115</sup> But did they last?

Solon's debt cancellation seems to have been a one-time affair. It apparently concerned only agricultural debts, like the decrees in Mesopotamia, and the sources recount the discontent of the elite who lost their outstanding credit, as well as the disappointment of the poor that the land was not subsequently redistributed (*Ath. Pol.* 11–12; Plut. *Sol.* 16). These complaints reflect something more fundamental than the inevitable resentment of parties with opposite interests following an intervention into their problems. An episode in the *Athenaion Politeia* (6.2–3) recounts how friends of Solon, whom he had informed of his intention to cancel the debts, at once, and behind his back, took out loans to buy lands and then found themselves wealthy landowners, cleared of their debts after Solon's decision. Surely apocryphal, the episode attests to the distrust that debt cancellation as such evoked—indeed, the author of the *Athenaion Politeia* tells the story with the intention to clear Solon from disrepute. For Plutarch (*Sol.* 15.2–3), the *seisachtheia* fits a list of Athenian euphemisms: it was called a "shaking off of burdens," but in fact it was a cancellation of debts (*ἀποκοπή χρεῶν*).<sup>116</sup>

115. Raaflaub (2004) convincingly points out that imported ideas (unlike imported goods) depended on persons of influence and authority in the receiving society in order to be spread and accepted.

116. Nonetheless, according to Plutarch (*Sol.* 16.3), the Athenians also saw the advantages of Solon's measure and offered a public sacrifice (*thysia*), which they also called *seisachtheia*. If historical, the sacrifice, too, was a single event; no regular festival of the *seisachtheia* is known at Athens.

In Greece, the cancellation of debts was apparently regarded as unjust, a form of cheating, since it made the property of citizens vanish—an act typical of tyrants, as pictured in Plato's *Republic* (565e–566a):

ἄρ' οὖν οὕτω καὶ ὃς ἂν δήμου προεστῶς, λαβὼν σφόδρα πειθόμενον ὄχλον, μὴ ἀπόσχηται ἐμφυλίου αἵματος, ἀλλ' ἀδίκως ἐπαιτιώμενος, οἷα δὴ φιλοῦσιν, εἰς δικαστήρια ἄγων μισαίφονῃ, βίον ἀνδρὸς ἀφανίζων, γλώττη τε καὶ στόματι ἀνοσίφω γεύόμενος φόνου συγγενοῦς, καὶ ἀνδρηλατῆ καὶ ἀποκτεινύῃ καὶ ὑποσημαίνῃ χρεῶν τε ἀποκοπὰς καὶ γῆς ἀναδασμόν, ἄρα τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ἀνάγκη δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ εἵμαρται ἢ ἀπολωλέναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἢ τυραννεῖν καὶ λύκῳ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι;

And is it not true that in like manner a leader of the people who, getting control of a docile mob, does not withhold his hand from the shedding of tribal blood, but by the customary unjust accusations brings a citizen into court and assassinates him, blotting out a human life, and with unhallowed tongue and lips that have tasted kindred blood, banishes and slays and hints at the abolition of debts and the partition of lands—is it not the inevitable consequence and a decree of fate that such a one be either slain by his enemies or become a tyrant and be transformed from a man into a wolf?<sup>117</sup>

Debt cancellation and redistribution of lands, according to the assumption in this passage, are among the transgressions tyrants usually commit to gain popular support while threatening all citizens who own some property—acts on a par with bloodshed of his own kin and fellow citizens by abuse of the existing institutions. At Athens, the cancellation of debt was prohibited by law, as was the redistribution of property, a decision taken probably at some point after Solon.<sup>118</sup> In sum, it seems that in Greece debt cancellation was regarded as an action that typically only a *single* ruler would and could take, overruling the (propertied) citizens, as was indeed the case in Mesopotamia; the concomitant ideology that the kings restored a primordial state of justice by debt cancellation was typically lacking in Greece. Solon, only temporarily in full charge with the citizens' consent, could not take his measure beyond this single intervention, in the absence of a tradition in which he could anchor his innovation.<sup>119</sup> It is notable that even in the 4th century, when Solon's fame as a lawgiver was

117. Trans. P. Shorey, Cambridge, Mass. 1935, repr. 1970.

118. And. 1.88; law *ap. Dem.* 24.149. Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 56.2, where it is said the Eponymous Archon proclaims that all will keep what they had when he entered office. These laws apparently made no distinction between agricultural debts and all other forms of credit, notably maritime loans. That such a law already existed before Solon would seem unlikely, since, to go by the evidence, no one in Greece had ever

come up with the idea of debt cancellation before.

119. Plutarch seems to make a similar observation. In *Sol.* 16, noting the discontent of both rich and poor after the *seisachtheia*, he compares Solon to Lykourgos, the lawgiver of Sparta, who was more successful in making all his citizens equal. But the latter, according to Plutarch, could work with other means: he was a descendant of Herakles and had been king in Sparta for many years; he used force rather than persua-

sion; and by making all citizens roughly equal in wealth, he brought unanimity to his polis. Solon could not bring about such a long-lasting security, however, as he was a man of the middle, but he made the most of the powers granted to him, which relied on the trust that the citizens put in him. In the end, the tradition recorded by the historical sources impart that he famously refused to either be or act like a tyrant; see fr. 32 (= *Plut. Sol.* 14.8); fr. 33 (= *Plut. Sol.* 14.9–15.1); fr. 34 (= *Ath. Pol.* 12.3).

at its height, the tradition around the *seisachtheia* was not recast into an account of unmitigated success, nor was his authority invoked to reconsider the prohibition on debt cancellation.

Yet the abolition of debt slavery due to security on the body *did* last; we hear no more about debt slaves after Solon. Apparently, abolition of slavery *of Athenians*, unlike the cancellation of debts, was supported by a majority in the polis, and from this fact we may tentatively infer that this measure could draw on existing values. To implement and solidify the legal termination of debt slavery, moreover, Solon's institution of the popular court must have been vital; at least complaints could be filed there, with some hope of success, against those who attempted to pressure debtors into undue degrees of servitude. Indeed, the *Athenaion Politeia* (9.1) evaluates his legislation exactly in this manner: what was most beneficial for the *demos* were the prohibition of securing loans on the person, the possibility for anyone who wished to exact redress for injustice, and the right of appeal to the jury court. Harris is surely right that Solon did not abolish debt bondage—that is, paying off one's debts with one's labor—but the relative silence in our evidence from the classical age suggests that the problem diminished over time, at least in scale. It seems that the expanding democracy and economy of Athens, both due to the empire and beyond it, offered poor citizens opportunities to earn or supplement their incomes as alternatives for incurring debts.

## REFERENCES

- Andrees, B., and P. Belser, eds. 2009. *Forced Labor: Coercion and Exploitation in the Private Economy*, Boulder.
- Beaulieu, P.-A. 2006. "Official and Vernacular Languages: The Shifting Sands of Imperial and Cultural Identities in First-Millennium B.C. Mesopotamia," in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures* (University of Chicago Oriental Institute Seminars 2), ed. S. L. Sanders, Chicago, pp. 187–216.
- Blok, J. H., and A. P. M. H. Lardinois, eds. 2006. *Solon of Athens: New Historical and Philological Approaches* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 272), Leiden.
- Burkert, W. 1992. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Revealing Antiquity 5), trans. M. E. Pinder and W. Burkert, Cambridge, Mass.
- Burt, S. 2014. *The Courtier and the Governor: Transformations of Genre in the Nehemiah Memoir* (Journal of Ancient Judaism Suppl. 17), Göttingen.
- Charpin, D. 1987. "Les décrets royaux à l'époque paléo-babylonienne, à propos d'un ouvrage récent," *AfO* 34, pp. 36–44.
- . 1990a. "L'andurārum à Mari," *Mari* 6, pp. 253–270.
- . 1990b. "Les édits de 'restauration' des rois babyloniens et leur application," in *Du pouvoir dans l'antiquité: Mots et réalités* (Cahiers du Centre Glotz 1), ed. C. Nicolet, Geneva, pp. 13–24.
- . 1996. "Le 'bon Pasteur': Idéologie et pratique de la justice royale à l'époque paléo-babylonienne," in *Les moyens d'expression du pouvoir dans les sociétés anciennes* (Lettres orientales et classiques 5), ed. M. Broze, Leuven, pp. 101–114.
- . 2000. "Les prêteurs et le palais: Les édits de *mīšarum* des rois de Babylone et leurs traces dans les archives privées," in *Interdependency of Institutions and Private Entrepreneurs. Proceedings of the 2nd MOS Symposium (Leiden 1998)* (Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 87), ed. A. C. V. M. Bongenaar, Leiden, pp. 185–211.
- Cohen, C. 1979. "Neo-Assyrian Elements in the First Speech of the Rab-šaqqē," *JOS* 9, pp. 32–48.
- Cohen, E. E. 1992. *Athenian Economy and Society: A Banking Perspective*, Princeton.
- Dalley, S. 1993. "Nineveh after 612 B.C.," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 20, pp. 134–147.
- . 2001. "Assyrian Court Narratives in Aramaic and Egyptian: Historical Fiction," in *Historiography in the Cuneiform World. Proceedings of the XLV<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique internationale*, ed. T. Abusch, Bethesda, Md., pp. 149–161.
- . 2003. "The Transition from Neo-Assyrians to Neo-Babylonians: Break or Continuity?" *ErIsr* 27, pp. 25–28.
- Davis, G. 2012. "Dating the Drachmas in Solon's Laws," *Historia* 61, pp. 127–158.
- Davis, J. 1977. *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Anthropology* (Library of Man 5), London.
- Duploux, A. 2006. *Le prestige des élites: Recherches sur les modes de reconnaissance sociale en Grèce entre les X<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècles avant J.-C.* (Histoire 77), Paris.
- Fales, F. M. 1999–2001. "Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: Newer Horizons," *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 13, pp. 115–144.
- . 2001. *L'impero assiro: Storia e amministrazione (LX–VII secolo a.C.)*, Rome.
- Fantalkin, A. 2014. "Naukratis as a Contact Zone: Revealing the Lydian Connection," in *Kulturkontakte in antiken Welten: Vom Denkmodell zum Fallbeispiel. Proceedings des internationalen Kolloquiums aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstages von Christoph Ulf, Innsbruck, 26. bis 30. Januar 2009* (Colloquia antiqua 10), ed. R. Rollinger and K. Schnegg, Leuven, pp. 27–51.
- Faraguna, M. 2012. "Hektemoroi, isomoiria, seisachtheia: Ricerche recenti sulle riforme economiche di Solone," *Dike* 15, pp. 171–193.
- Finley, M. I. 1981a. "Debt-Bondage and the Problem of Slavery," in *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. B. D. Shaw and R. P. Saller, London, pp. 150–166.
- . 1981b. "The Servile Statuses of Ancient Greece," in *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. B. D. Shaw and R. P. Saller, London, pp. 133–149.
- Fitzpatrick-McKinley, A. 2003. "Ezra, Nehemiah, and Some Early Greek Lawgivers," in *Rabbinic Law in Its Roman and Near Eastern Context* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 97), ed. C. Hezser, Tübingen, pp. 17–48.
- Forsdyke, S. 2006. "Land, Labor, and Economy in Solonian Athens: Breaking the Impasse between Archaeology and History," in Blok and Lardinois 2006, pp. 334–350.
- Foxhall, L. 1992. "The Control of the Attic Landscape," in *Agriculture in Ancient Greece. Proceedings of the Seventh International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 16–17 May, 1990* (*ActaAth* 4<sup>o</sup>, 42), ed. B. Wells, Stockholm, pp. 155–159.
- . 1997. "A View from the Top: Evaluating the Solonian Property Classes," in Mitchell and Rhodes 1997, pp. 113–136.
- . 2002. "Access to Resources in Classical Greece: The Egalitarianism of the Polis in Practice," in *Money, Labour, and Land: Approaches to the Economies of Ancient Greece*, ed. P. Cartledge, E. E. Cohen, and L. Foxhall, London, pp. 209–220.
- . 2007. *Olive Cultivation in Ancient Greece: Seeking the Ancient Economy*, Oxford.
- Frame, G., ed. 2002. *Rulers of Babylonia from the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157–612 B.C.)* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Babylonian Periods 2), Toronto.
- Frayne, D. R., ed. 2008. *Presargonic Period (2700–2350 B.C.)* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods 1), Toronto.

- Frymer-Kensky, T. 2001. "Israel," in *Security for Debt in Ancient Near Eastern Law* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 9), ed. R. Westbrook and R. Jasnow, Leiden, pp. 251–263.
- Fuchs, A., ed. 1994. *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, Göttingen.
- Fustel de Coulanges, N. D. 1864. *La cité antique: Étude sur le culte, le droit, les institutions de la Grèce et de Rome*, Paris.
- Gagarin, M., and P. J. Perlman. 2016. *The Laws of Ancient Crete, c. 650–400 B.C.E.*, Oxford.
- Gallant, T. W. 1982. "Agricultural Systems, Land Tenure, and the Reforms of Solon," *BSA* 77, pp. 111–124.
- . 1991. *Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece: Reconstructing the Rural Domestic Economy*, Stanford.
- Galleo, J. 2007. "Farming in the Ancient Greek World: How Should the Small Free Producers Be Defined?" *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* 8, pp. 1–21.
- Genicot, G. 2002. "Bonded Labor and Serfdom: A Paradox of Voluntary Choice," *Journal of Development Economics* 67, pp. 101–127.
- Grabbe, L. L. 1998. *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Old Testament Readings), London.
- Graeber, D. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, New York.
- Granovetter, M. S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, pp. 1360–1380.
- Grayson, A. K. 1980. "Histories and Historians of the Ancient Near East: Assyria and Babylonia," *Orientalia* 49, pp. 140–194.
- Hammer, D. 2005. "Plebiscitary Politics in Archaic Greece," *Historia* 54, pp. 107–131.
- Harding, P. 1994. *Androtion and the Atthis: The Fragments Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Clarendon Ancient History Series), Oxford.
- Harris, E. M. 1997. "A New Solution to the Riddle of the *Seisachtheia*," in Mitchell and Rhodes 1997, pp. 103–112.
- . 2006. "Did Solon Abolish Debt-Bondage?" in *Democracy and the Rule of Law in Classical Athens: Essays on Law, Society, and Politics*, ed. E. M. Harris, Cambridge, pp. 249–269.
- Hill, P. 1986. *Development Economics on Trial: The Anthropological Case for a Prosecution*, Cambridge.
- Hölkeskamp, K.-J. 1999. *Schiedsrichter, Gesetzgeber, und Gesetzgebung im archaischen Griechenland* (*Historia* Suppl. 131), Stuttgart.
- Horden, P., and N. Purcell. 2000. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Malden, Mass.
- Hudson, M. 2002. "Reconstructing the Origins of Interest-Bearing Debt and the Logic of Clean Slates," in *Debt and Economic Renewal in the Ancient Near East* (The International Scholars Conference on Ancient Near Eastern Economics 3), ed. M. Hudson and M. Van De Mierop, Bethesda, Md., pp. 7–58.
- Kara, S. 2012. *Bonded Labor: Tackling the System of Slavery in South Asia*, New York.
- Kroll, J. H. 1998. "Silver in Solon's Laws," in *Studies in Greek Numismatics in Memory of Martin Jessop Price*, ed. R. Ashton and S. Hurter, London, pp. 225–232.
- . 2008. "The Monetary Use of Weighted Bullion in Archaic Greece," in *The Monetary Systems of the Greeks and Romans*, ed. W. V. Harris, Oxford, pp. 12–37.
- Kuhrt, A. 1995. *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 B.C.* (Routledge History of the Ancient World), 2 vols., London.
- Lanfranchi, G. B. 2000. "The Ideological and Political Impact of the Assyrian Imperial Expansion on the Greek World in the 8th and 7th Centuries B.C.," in *The Heirs of Assyria. Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project, Held in Töörminne, Finland, October 8–11, 1998* (Melammu Symposia 1), ed. S. Aro and R. M. Whiting, Helsinki, pp. 7–34.
- Lardinois, A. P. M. H. 2006. "Have We Solon's Verses?" in Blok and Lardinois 2006, pp. 15–35.
- Lauinger, J. 2015. "Neo-Assyrian Scribes, 'Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty,' and the Dynamics of Textual Mass Production," in *Texts and Contexts: The Circulation and Transmission of Cuneiform Texts in Social Space* (Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 9), ed. P. Delnero and J. Lauinger, Boston, pp. 285–314.
- Leão, D. F., and P. J. Rhodes. 2015. *The Laws of Solon: A New Edition with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Library of Classical Studies 7), London.
- Leichty, E., ed. 2011. *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 B.C.)* (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4), Winona Lake, Ind.
- Lewy, J. 1958. "The Biblical Institution of *D'rör* in the Light of Akkadian Documents," *ErIsr* 5, pp. 21–31.
- Link, S. 1991. *Landverteilung und sozialer Frieden im archaischen Griechenland* (*Historia* Suppl. 69), Stuttgart.
- Lion, B. 1999. "L'andurāru à l'époque médio-babylonienne d'après les documents de Terqa, Nuzi, et Arrapha," in *Nuzi at Seventy-Five* (Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 10), ed. D. I. Owen and G. Wilhelm, Bethesda, Md., pp. 313–327.
- Liverani, M. 1979. "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. M. T. Larsen (Mesopotamia 7), Copenhagen, pp. 297–317.
- . 1995. "The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. M. Sasson, New York, pp. 2353–2366.
- Machinist, P. 1983. "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103, pp. 719–37.
- Malkin, I. 2011. *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Greeks Overseas), Oxford.
- Martina, A., ed. 1968. *Solon: Testimonia veterum* (Lyricorum graecorum quae exstant 4), Rome.
- Millett, P. 1991. *Lending and Borrowing in Ancient Athens*, Cambridge.
- Mitchell, L. G., and P. J. Rhodes, eds. 1997. *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece*, London.

- Mühl, M. [1933] 1963. *Untersuchungen zur altorientalischen und althellenischen Gesetzgebung* (Klio Suppl. 29), repr. Aalen.
- Murray, O. 1980. *Early Greece*, Glasgow.
- Novotny, J. 2015. "New Proposed Chronological Sequence and Dates of Composition of Esarhaddon's Babylon Inscriptions," *JCS* 67, pp. 145–168.
- Oded, B. 1985. "The Babylonian Embassy Narrative (Isaiah 39 = 2 Kings 20:12–18): Historical Event but Fictitious Prophecy?" *Snaton* 9, pp. 115–126.
- Oppenheim, A. L. 1960. "The City of Assur in 714 B.C.," *JNES* 19, pp. 133–147.
- Osborne, R. 1997. "Law and Laws: How Do We Join Up the Dots?" in Mitchell and Rhodes 1997, pp. 74–82.
- . 2009. *Greece in the Making, 1200–479 B.C.* (Routledge History of the Ancient World), 2nd ed., London.
- Otto, E. 1997. "Programme der sozialen Gerechtigkeit: Die neuassyrische (*an-*)*durāru*-Institution sozialen Ausgleichs und das deuteronomische Erlassjahr in Dtn 15," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 3, pp. 26–63.
- . 1999. *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (ZATW Suppl. 284), Berlin.
- Penglass, C. 1994. *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod*, London.
- Porter, B. N. 1993. *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 208), Philadelphia.
- . 1995. "Language, Audience, and Impact in Imperial Assyria," in *Language and Culture in the Near East* (IOS 15), ed. S. Izre'el and R. Drory, Leiden, pp. 51–72.
- Postgate, J. N. 1976. *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster.
- Priest, J. F. 1964. "Ὅρκια in the *Iliad* and Consideration of a Recent Theory," *JNES* 23, pp. 48–56.
- Raafflaub, K. A. 2000. "Influence, Adaptation, and Interaction: Near Eastern and Early Greek Political Thought," *The Heirs of Assyria. Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project, Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8–11, 1998* (Melammu Symposia 1), ed. S. Aro and R. M. Whiting, Helsinki, pp. 51–64.
- . 2004. "Archaic Greek Aristocrats as Carriers of Cultural Interaction," in *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World: Means of Transmission and Cultural Interaction. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project, Held in Innsbruck, Austria, October 3rd–8th, 2002* (Melammu Symposia 5/Oriens et occidentis 6), ed. R. Rollinger and C. Ulf, Stuttgart, pp. 197–217.
- . 2009. "Early Greek Political Thought in Its Mediterranean Context," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. R. K. Balot, Malden, Mass., pp. 37–56.
- . 2014. "Ideen im Reisegepäck? Sachliche und methodologische Überlegungen zu frühgriechischen Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen im interkulturellen Zusammenhang des Mittelmeerraumes," in *Kulturkontakte in antiken Welten: Vom Denkmodell zum Fallbeispiel. Proceedings des internationalen Kolloquiums aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstages von Christoph Ulf, Innsbruck, 26. bis 30. Januar 2009* (Colloquia antiqua 10), ed. R. Rollinger and K. Schnegg, Leuven, pp. 403–439.
- Radner, K. 2010. "The Stele of Sargon II of Assyria at Kition: A Focus for an Emerging Cypriot Identity?" in *Interkulturalität in der alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten, und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Philippika 34), ed. R. Rollinger, B. Gufler, M. Lang, and I. Madreiter, Wiesbaden, pp. 429–449.
- Rhodes, P. J. 1981. *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*, Oxford.
- Rollinger, R. 2015. "Old Battles, New Horizons: The Ancient Near East and the Homeric Epics," in *Mesopotamia in the Ancient World: Impact, Continuities, Parallels. Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium of the Melammu Project, Held in Oberurg, Austria, November 4–8, 2013* (Melammu Symposia 7), ed. R. Rollinger and E. van Dongen, Münster, pp. 5–32.
- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. 1993. "Solon's *Hektemoroi* and Pisistratid *Dekatemoroi*," in *De agricultura: In memoriam Pieter Willem de Neeve (1945–1990)* (Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology 10), ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, R. J. Van der Spek, W. C. Teitler, and H. T. Wallinga, Amsterdam, pp. 13–30.
- Seybold, K., and J. von Ungern-Sternberg. 1993. "Amos und Hesiod: Aspekte eines Vergleichs," in *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die nahöstliche Kulturen und die Griechen* (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien 24), ed. K. A. Raafflaub and E. Müller-Luckner, Munich, pp. 215–239.
- Slings, S. R. ed. 1990. *The Poet's I in Archaic Greek Lyric. Proceedings of a Symposium at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, Amsterdam.
- Sluiter, I. 2015. "Ancient Etymology: A Tool for Thinking," in *Brill's Companion to Ancient Scholarship*, ed. F. Montanari, S. Matthaios, and A. Rengakos, Leiden, pp. 896–922.
- . 2017. "Anchoring Innovation: A Classical Research Agenda," *European Review* 25, pp. 20–38.
- Stehle, E. 2006. "Solon's Self-Reflexive Political Persona and Its Audience," in Blok and Lardinois 2006, pp. 79–113.
- Szegedy-Maszak, A. 1978. "Legends of the Greek Lawgivers," *GRBS* 19, pp. 199–209.
- Tadmor, H. 1997. "Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *Assyria 1995. Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, Helsinki, pp. 325–338.
- Van De Mieroop, M. 2016. *Philosophy before the Greeks: The Pursuit of Truth in Ancient Babylonia*, Princeton.

- van Wees, H. 1999. "The Mafia of Early Greece: Violent Exploitation in the Seventh and Sixth Centuries B.C.," in *Organised Crime in Antiquity*, ed. K. Hopwood, London, pp. 1–51.
- . 2001. "The Myth of the Middle-Class Army: Military and Social Status in Ancient Athens," in *War as a Cultural and Social Force: Essays on Warfare in Antiquity* (Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 22), ed. T. Bekker-Nielsen and L. Hannestad, Copenhagen, pp. 45–71.
- . 2003. "Conquerors and Serfs: Wars of Conquest and Forced Labour in Archaic Greece," in *Helots and Their Masters in Laconia and Messenia: Histories, Ideologies, Structures* (Hellenic Studies Series 4), ed. N. Luraghi and S. E. Alcock, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 33–80.
- . 2009. "The Economy," in *A Companion to Archaic Greece*, ed. K. A. Raafaub and H. van Wees, Malden, Mass., pp. 444–467.
- Villard, P. 2007. "L'(an)durâru à l'époque néo-assyrienne," *RAssyr* 101, pp. 107–124.
- Vlassopoulos, K. 2011. "Greek Slavery: From Domination to Property and Back Again," *JHS* 131, pp. 115–130.
- Von Dassow, E. 2013. "Piecing Together the Song of Release," *JCS* 65, pp. 127–162.
- Wallace, R. 1983. "The Date of Solon's Reforms," *AJAH* 8, pp. 81–95.
- Węcowski, M. 2014. *The Rise of the Greek Aristocratic Banquet*, Oxford.
- Weinfeld, M. 1970. "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90, pp. 184–203.
- . 1973. "Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West," *JAOS* 93, pp. 190–199.
- West, M. L. 1997. *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford.
- Westbrook, R. 2015. *Ex oriente lex: Near Eastern Influences on Ancient Greek and Roman Law*, ed. D. Lyons and K. Raafaub, Baltimore.
- Worthington, M. 2012. *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism* (Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 1), Boston and Berlin.
- Yamauchi, E. M. 1980. "Two Reformers Compared: Solon of Athens and Nehemiah of Jerusalem," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. G. Rendsburg, R. Adler, M. Arfa, and N. H. Winter, New York, pp. 269–292.
- Zelig Aster, S. 2007. "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims of Empire to Judah in the Late Eighth Century B.C.E.," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 78, pp. 1–44.

### *Josine Blok*

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ART HISTORY  
DRIFT 6  
3512 BS UTRECHT  
THE NETHERLANDS  
j.h.blok@uu.nl

### *Julia Krul*

DURHAM UNIVERSITY/LEIDEN UNIVERSITY  
RIVIERFOREL 14  
2318 ME LEIDEN  
THE NETHERLANDS  
j.h.e.krul@hum.leidenuniv.nl

