

The Athenian Institution of the *Khoregia*

The Chorus, the City and the Stage

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Private wealth for public performance

Any picture of the *khoregia* as a functioning institution will be a composite image constructed from a set of fragments from a wide range of contexts and periods. For whatever its precise date of introduction as a fully-fledged civic institution, the *khoregia* enjoyed a long history in classical Athens, enduring in an identifiably stable form for the best part of two hundred years. But even with so large a period to draw from, the image must be a partial one. Much of what we miss derives from the diurnal world of interpersonal relations, that largely inaccessible level of Athenian social history in which the grand public remains of 'civic' Athens – the texts of tragedy, the speeches delivered before mass juries, the monuments – were conceived and brought into being through the complex interactions of individuals. We have few enough of those creations which the Athenians sought to expose forever to the light of the public gaze; of the means of their production within a set of social relations we catch only glimpses. The atmosphere of the *khoregeion*, where every tragedy and comedy and hundreds of choral performances came into being, is all but lost to us.

However, theatre was no matter of 'private' initiative in Athens. The *khoroï* that were at its heart were the city's *khoroï*, and with the involvement of the polis came the culture of publicity characteristic of democratic Athens. The city devoted to their production, performance and judgement the rigorous and extensive armature of control provided by the organs of democratic government. The city as a collective entity promoted the proliferation of choral performances over the classical period; it charged the leading officers of the city with their supervision; it intervened extensively in matters concerning their production, performance, judgement and record, often by means of legislation. Our picture of the *khoregia* will recognise the dominant rôle of the city, under the ultimate authority of a sovereign demos, at every stage. But essential to the institution is the management of a complex union between collective public bodies (*phylai*, the polis itself) with their representative figures (Arkhões, *epimeletai*) and powerful individual citizens and their private wealth.¹

Festivals were expensive affairs. A logic of expenditure was central to the Greek concept of religion. The gods enjoyed the consecration to them of things of material value which were also the most prized possessions of human communities – livestock, gold in the form of garlands, jewelry or on the horns of cattle, costly fabrics. A well-trained and well-equipped *khoros* was also a costly and beautiful thing.² And its value

to the god could only be increased if its quality was improved by the tempering intensity of competition. The central act of Greek religion, the sacrifice of a beast, brought benefits that could be enjoyed without conflict between mortal and god: food to sustain the sacrificing community and to unite its members through a shared meal, the savour of the burnt bones and fat to please and honour the god. So too in these other forms of expenditure for the gods, divine pleasure was by no means incompatible with great benefits for the mortal donors. In choral performance, communities honoured their gods and brought glory to themselves through this conspicuously enjoyable form of religious dedication. The very considerable benefits to the donors at the social level will be the subject of later chapters.

This book is however not a systematic study of the financing of Athenian festivals. My attention is focussed on the special *leitourgical* method of introducing the wealth of individuals – with their names attached, as it were. But it will be important to recognise that a range of methods was employed in Athens to support the classical city's famously extensive festival calendar. Funding of festivals in this highly personal way was by no means the only *possible* form: an Athenian festival could for instance support itself in part at least from the sale of spring water.³ But spring water alone could never sustain the massively elaborate choral contests for Dionysos. In my discussion of the Great Dionysia, we shall also consider such evidence as there is for the ways in which this personalised form of financing was set alongside that provided by the city itself. Collective and individual Athenian wealth were deployed together but allocated to different ends within the structure of the festival. The sheer scale of expenditure on festivals in Athens is itself worthy of consideration: it astonished later observers, and their astonishment often centred on the ephemeral and especially extravagant form of expenditure which choral performance represented. Even in the fourth century the rationality of the vast outlay by *khoregoi* was exposed to question by more than a vocal élite minority who resented this enforced imposition on their resources. Fifth-century Athenian festival culture had been buoyed up on the wealth of empire, as to a lesser extent it had been under the second confederacy in the early part of the fourth century. With those resources no longer available, *khoregic* expenditure was exposed to scrutiny in the harsher light of more straitened economic circumstances. If a strict accounting were possible of the total expenditure lavished on the grand Athenian civic festivals, such as the Great Dionysia and Panathenaia, in the period of empire, the figure for an annual outlay would probably be reckoned in terms of tens of talents.⁴ And the dozens of smaller festivals would cumulatively produce sums equal to those of their more famous siblings, to say nothing of the many festivals and other cult practices conducted by sub-groups of the city, or by different configurations of Athenians meeting collectively.⁵

A cultural revolution?

The search for origins is always an elusive and often a misguided project in cultural histories, as horizons recede and largely arbitrary criteria are invoked to mark epochal moments. Yet the attempt has some justification for an institution like the *khoregia* which, when we see it in operation, shows so many signs of formality and conscious

definition by the city. We can at least ask at what point and under what conditions it appeared as a civic institution with such distinctive qualities.⁶

Although the beginnings of the *khoregia* itself are rarely singled out for special consideration from general discussion of the early Dionysia, what passes for an orthodoxy on the subject has it that the City Dionysia was very probably the home for the first system of centralised management of the organisation and funding of its choral culture by the city, through the form of honorific obligation on its richest men which characterises the classical *khoregia*. Whether the introduction of that system is to be credited to the new social and political order of Kleisthenes or to the hands of the tyrants in the preceding decades is a matter for less agreement.⁷ There is a little evidence suggesting a centralised *khoregia* already under the tyrants. But the most telling point is perhaps that the nature of the institution does not of itself preclude an origin in either era: the *khoregia* sits easily with the needs of the tyrants and of the early democracy.⁸

There are good arguments to the effect that the 'Kleisthenic' period represents an epochal moment in the history of the Dionysia: as good, at least, as arguments come in this poorly-documented area. The competition between the great phyletic *khoroï* and their *khoregoi* in dithyramb obviously dates from a time at which the *phylai* existed. The important but much-debated epigraphic evidence of the 'Victors' List', a monument of Dionysian history erected in the later fourth century, shows a desire to go back 'to the beginnings of things'. And the beginnings to which it apparently looks have the appearance of an epochal moment some time in the last decade of the sixth century.⁹

The victors most prominently recorded by this document are *khoregoi*: only they are consistently listed for all the performance-categories, along with the *phylai* for boys' and men's dithyramb and the poets of drama. The possibility of creating such a monument late in the fourth century shows that records of khoregic victors were consistently maintained by Arkhons from an early date, and demonstrates their perceived importance throughout the entire history of the festival. For the period it covers probably corresponds with the period of khoregic funding of the festival.¹⁰ The initial date is beyond sure recovery: something approaching a consensus sees the record begin in or around 502/1, though an earlier date is equally possible.¹¹ And one needs to remember that the creators of this monument in the fourth century were also operating under constraints of evidence, and, just as significantly, with their own agenda: were it even possible for them to have traced the history of the festival back into the era of the tyrants we might well imagine that they would choose not to. If, as sometimes suggested, this monument of theatre-history did indeed form part of the 'Lykourgan' programme of regeneration of the theatre, as of the fabric and cultural life of the city more generally after the catastrophe of Khaironeia – or if it at least fitted in with its aspirations – it is surely unlikely to have celebrated the continuity of this great Athenian achievement by recording its origins in another age of tyrants.

That the Kleisthenic moment was perceived as a major historical rupture in Athenian culture in general and Dionysiac performance in particular is also implied, from a very different perspective, by a passage of one of 'the most enigmatic and most important of the literary texts from classical Greece',¹² the *Constitution of the Athenians* by the so-called 'Old Oligarch.' The special virtue of this evidence lies in the clarity

of the text's politics: a trenchant ideological oligarch, a self-styled outsider within the democratic environment, the author seems to correlate the inauguration of the *khoregia* (and other *leitourgiai*) directly with the democratic revolution of the late sixth century: 'The demos has subverted (καταλέλυκεν) those who engage in gymnastics here and who are practiced in *mousike* because it does not think it honourable, realising that they cannot do these things themselves' (1.13).

The 'subversion' or 'overthrow' of gymnastic and musical practice as the preserve of the noble few surely recalls, through whatever distortions worked on the historical reality by this highly tendentious author, a moment seen as particularly significant in the cultural and political history of Athens. καταλύω and its cognates regularly refer to overthrow or revolution in the political sphere. This cultural revolution which the author lays to the blame of the demos is surely the 'democratisation' of gymnastic and musical activities represented, as he sees it, by the introduction of the formal, polis-controlled leitourgical institutions of *khoregia* and *gymnasiarkhia*. The fact that the sentence immediately following this statement about the democratic cultural 'revolution' refers to the current system of *leitourgiai* implies a direct causal relation.¹³ The author of this *Constitution of the Athenians* is hardly a dispassionate compiler of facts: this is a man who in the previous paragraph could assert that in Athens 'we have established an equality between slaves and free men'. Great caution is needed in any attempt to anchor him too precisely to historical events. However, it seems fairly clear that this cultural revolution, driven by what he sees as a degenerate political ideology interfering in a sphere of aristocratic practice and introducing to it the anathema of demotic compulsion, was imagined as coinciding with the introduction of democracy itself.

Khoroi danced and sang before Kleisthenes. The 'Old Oligarch's' plangent complaints prove as much. The question for our purposes is whether there are any signs that such pre-Kleisthenic *choroi* were supported by something akin to a *khoregia* – in particular, therefore, whether any of the urban festivals fostered by the tyrants might have been the home for a pre-democratic *khoregia*. Amid the obscurity of sixth-century Athenian history, three things that are relatively well attested among the sociopolitical practices of the Peisistratids are a major concentration of cultural, political and material resources in the city; the extensive development of urban festivals as a special instance of this; and the patronage of poetic talent, including that of the most illustrious choral poets of the age: all of which are the essential enabling conditions for the emergence of a *khoregic* system. That a culture of urban choral performance, and probably of competition, existed under the tyrants is relatively clear. The alternatives for its support are basically the tyrants themselves as personal patrons; or rich aristocrats participating at their invitation, the men the 'Old Oligarch' nostalgically described as 'those who used to take care of *mousike*'. These are the direct antecedents of classical Athenian *khoregoi*.

Two fourth-century texts imply the existence of *khoregoi* at urban festivals some decades before 500: indeed in one of these, Demosthenes ascribes the law concerning *antidosis* to Solon (42.1), but that is little more than a sign that the law was perceived as of considerable antiquity in the later fourth century – or rather that Demosthenes was keen to invest it with all the authority that a Solonian parentage brought with it.¹⁴

A passage of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oikonomika* which refers to *khoregoi* in the

time of Hippias (tyrant 527–510) may deserve a better hearing. Although much of the context in which it appears – an account of the economic reforms of the tyrant – is generally rejected as anachronistic fabrication, one of the measures discussed by [Aristotle] immediately prior to the passage about *leitourgiai* – the demonetisation of coinage by Hippias – is usually accepted as having a firm historical basis. Those who reject the other reforms rarely argue the case that the author is here moving between anachronistic fabrication and more genuine historical record:¹⁵ ‘Those who were expecting to serve as trierarkh or *phylarkhos* or *khoregos* or to undertake the expense of some other such *leitourgia*, he allowed, if they wished, to commute the service for a moderate sum, and to be enrolled among those who had performed *leitourgiai*’ ([Aristot.] *Oik.* 1347a).

Much of this, it is true, is redolent of later, late fourth-century practice (the probable period of the composition of the *Oikonomika*). Yet it is not inconceivable that a memory of ancient practice should be preserved here in a form heavily coloured by contemporary arrangements. If the tyrants did indeed invite aristocrats to take up at their personal expense positions of cultural and military leadership, the provision for exemption through commuting the service to a cash contribution sounds like a plausible means to avoid exacerbating the tensions with aristocrats that were characteristic of the age.¹⁶ Of the successors of Peisistratos it is certainly Hippias, whom Aristotle characterises (in contrast to his flighty younger brother) as ‘by nature inclined to polis-affairs and of sound judgement’ (*Ath. Pol.* 18.1), whom we would most expect to have a care for economic matters, while the ‘Muse-loving’ Hipparkhos is associated with the invitation of poets to Athens and the possible institution of choral contests.

Festival ‘leadership’ is an area in which it may well have suited the tyrants’ purposes to allow leading aristocrats to share. Invited to ‘work for the people’, at the newly expanded festivals in the city, this diversion of the wealth and cultural energies of aristocrats to a centre symbolically identified with the tyrant would have served the latter’s interests, perhaps effecting at the same time a certain shift away from forms of local and gentilitian patronage and power.¹⁷ And the aristocrats themselves would have found it hard to resist the lure of an opportunity for display and performance before a civic collective of unprecedented magnitude.¹⁸

Where might these *khoroï* have performed? Peisistratos’ name is connected with the development of large-scale urban festivals, with the ‘embellishment’ of the city and the provision of new sacrifices for sacred rites (Thouk. 6.54.5). His family’s promotion of the cult of Apollo Pythios is well attested, and important changes effected by Peisistratos in the Panathenaia are likely; frustratingly, rather less well attested are actions in connection with an urban Dionysia.¹⁹ The possibility that the ancient festival of the Thargelia, devoted to Apollo Pythios, may have been a home for choral performance in the city from an early date has recently been aired by Robert Parker and deserves serious consideration.²⁰ *Khoroï* may well have danced for Apollo before the democratic reform of the festival which introduced phyletic patterning to its competitions, but their composition, nature and means of support are entirely speculative. Given the Peisistratids’ interest in the sanctuary, we might be permitted the speculation that the performance of dithyrambs in Athens under the tyrants may have found a home in the festival of Apollo so patronised. The problem with this scenario, as Parker notes, is the difficulty of supposing that Dionysos’ dithyramb ‘already formed a part of a festival of a different god a decade or more earlier’.²¹ But that

difficulty would be eliminated if in fact dithyrambs were performed competitively for Dionysos earlier than the date given by the 'Parian Marble' for the first victory in the men's contest (?508);²² in other words by giving credit to the testimony that Lasos 'first introduced the dithyramb to a competition'. That competition may well have been at a Dionysia under the tyrants. The difficulty would also disappear if, as is altogether possible, the most ancient Dionysiac festival in Athens, the Anthesteria, saw *khoroï* dance for the god in its early days.²³

Apollo Pythios certainly knew how to share with Dionysos: he did so with his most glorious sanctuary at Delphi. And the two were worshipped in some relation in Ikarion, perhaps from the sixth century. The Pythion was in close proximity to the Dionysion there, and the Pythion appears in some irretrievable function in a fifth-century decree of the Ikarians regulating the appointment of their *khoregoï* and the conduct of their Dionysia; and we have a fragmentary joint dedication from the site.²⁴ Nor is the great prize and symbol of dithyrambic contest in Athens – the tripod – inappropriate in connection with the worship of Apollo, the god of the Pythian tripod; many were dedicated to him by *khoregoï* after victory at the Thargelia. Indeed the tripod suits him rather better than Dionysos: the designation of its cauldron as the krater of Dionysos smacks of later justification and explanation of the somewhat unexpected fact that the tripod became principally and indelibly linked to the Dionysia.²⁵ It may be that the award or simply the dedication of tripods for Apollo Pythios in the context of a festival that included choral performance was in fact the first home of the 'choral tripod' in Athens, adopted thence for the Dionysia at the end of the sixth century.

The poet Lasos from Hermione in the Argolid is an extremely important figure in the early history of dithyramb, and he is credited with the introduction of dithyrambic contests. If these are to be located in Athens, they should be put in the context of a city festival, probably the Dionysia.²⁶ Both he and his great contemporary and rival Simonides came to Athens at the invitation of Hipparkhos, and were there remembered or imagined in later years as having been competitors.²⁷ Sixth-century Athens seems to have had fewer great native poets and major public occasions for choral performance than other cities of its age, and may well have taken advice from men like Lasos highly experienced in the international world of poetic *agones*. The tyrant's concerted attraction of leading poetic figures of Greece to Athens is explicable in terms of a cultural politics that would have had both an internal dynamic – the prestige of such figures at work in Athens increasing the citizens' pride in their city under the care of the tyrant; and an external one – for if it was not an intention of Hipparkhos to make Athens a centre of poetic culture by fostering epichoric talent through contact with these skilled foreigners, it was certainly a consequence in the longer term. Hipparkhos was later credited with the motive of wanting 'to educate the citizens, so that those subject to his rule might be as good as possible . . . and when the citizens in Athens and its neighbourhood had been educated to his satisfaction . . . with the intent to educate those in the countryside also, he set up Herms along the roads between the city and each of the demes'.²⁸ Although perhaps little more than the apologetic fiction of a later age, the contrast between the poetic performances for the good of the urban citizenry and the rural herms for the countryfolk implies that the former were remembered as part of a central cultural occasion for the 'edu-

cation of the citizenry'. The language is that so often used for the *paideia* provided by the Great Dionysia and its poetic performances in the fifth century, and is some further minimal indication that these poets may have been performing in the context of an urban festival.

One of the first fixed points to emerge from this early obscurity is the date of (509/)508, as the year of the first victory in the dithyrambic competition for men, its poetic victor Hypodikos of Khalkis.²⁹ So early a date does have its problems: it is difficult to see how the competition could have been between the new *phylai*, since Kleisthenes can scarcely have had any opportunity to present and implement his reforms until 507, when Alkmaion, probably an Alkmeonid and supporter of Kleisthenes, was Arkhon, succeeding upon the arkhonship in 508/507 of Kleisthenes' political enemy Isagoras. If we hold to 509/508 as the year of the first men's *agon*, we may need to envisage it to have been contested in some other configuration. It may be that very soon after, perhaps in the year of Alkmaion's arkhonship, that configuration was changed to fit the radical new pattern of the Kleisthenic *phylai*.³⁰ This site of major urban choral performance may have served as a kind of testing-ground for competing sociopolitical models. It is generally agreed that the Kleisthenic reforms cannot have been embedded or fully enacted until some time after that initial year, and a year or quite probably more must have intervened before the complex labour of the draughting-board can have been worked out and put in place.³¹ So the likelihood that the *kyklioi khoroi* were an early mode – perhaps the *earliest* – of organising phyletic activity in Attike should be entertained. The names of the *phylai* will have been one of the first things produced, given the importance of the authorising rôle of Apollo in selecting them, and even if the details of just how each was to be formally constituted from demes and *trittyes* were not fully clear, the idea that choral participation might as it were have *led the way* in establishing the new sense of membership in these bodies should be considered. It would not be out of keeping with all that we know of archaic Greek socio-political culture to see the 'musical' realm taking the lead in instantiating change. We might appropriately recall the fascinating passage of Plato's *Laws* (701a) in which the introduction of a 'democracy of *mousike*' in the theatre is claimed to have *induced* the spread of political liberty, or rather, as Plato saw it, of political licence.

If the introduction of major competitions between Athenian *khoroi* which were, perhaps for the first time, *kyklioi* – circular – is to be associated with the 'Kleisthenic moment', we might also reflect upon the not negligible symbolic importance of the circle as a form for the new Kleisthenic world.³² The Kleisthenic city was a powerfully *centred* and centralised city. The great circular *khoroi* brought into the centre of Athens representatives of the *phylai* for major festival interaction, just as the new structures of Kleisthenic society gave to political and military participation a new centralised focus.³³ But if these Dionysian *kyklioi khoroi* are centred at the heart of the city, we should remember that they are *multiple* and *competing khoroi*, and as we shall see, intense and aggressive competition between them was in some sense the defining character of their performance in the historical period. The various constituencies of the *phylai* did not join together to form a great single, unified *khoros* that represented the city to itself as a composite of its parts. Those parts were put into a conflict at the heart of the city.³⁴

Khoregoi were certainly given an important new function at this point. The new

dithyrambic *khoregia* offered a highly attractive rôle to these 'head men' of the new *phylai* from a social and political perspective. And the development is intelligible within the changing political climate: it made sense to give to the great and the good an important continued form of leadership, and one in which their traditional education made them excel. This was a largely symbolic rather than narrowly political form of leadership, but that opposition was not very radical or especially meaningful for late sixth-century Athens. And the introduction of a form of leadership which was not strictly political in the narrow sense but which offered a route to great public visibility and prestige must have represented a solid foundation for more stable élite pre-eminence and participation in the future. It encouraged a more ordered, if highly competitive, sharing of positions of cultural and sociopolitical prominence in an urban centre which had hitherto been largely occupied, symbolically and actually, by the tyrants, or torn by real and threatened inter-élite violence. Dithyrambic *khoregoi* led collectives which were constituted precisely so as to mediate those conflicts, performing in a central site, probably the Agora itself until some time soon after 500.

Where does tragedy fit into this fragmentary picture? The chronological priority of dithyramb over tragedy as a form is clear, but this does not necessarily help us much in tracking down their first performance-contexts in Athens.³⁵ Tragedy certainly developed in an Attike under the tyrants, and the development of its complex generic form benefited directly from their patronage of foreign poets. However, we simply cannot say whether tragedy was performed in an urban context before the time of the 'Kleisthenic' reorganisation of the Dionysia, after which it surely was, with the support of *khoregoi*. The testimony for the early practitioners – Thespis, Khoirilos, Pratinas and Phrynikhos – is both woefully inadequate and ambiguous.³⁶ It implies a rural setting certainly for much of Thespis' activities, yet the record that Khoirilos and Phrynikhos produced their work in a competitive context might better suggest an urban festival for which such records were likely to have been maintained.³⁷ The little that can be gleaned about the nature of early tragedy is not enough to help in determining whether its admission to major civic performance might better have served the purposes of a city under the tyrants or one recently freed from them. The inherent ambiguity of the genre on the matter of the pre-eminent individual – often royal and frequently tyrannical – disqualifies any view of tragedy as simply inspired by an anti-élite programme or, conversely, as an ideological apparatus of a state under the tyrants.

A life in the demes, probably at Rural Dionysia, is perhaps the most likely context for early tragedy. Ikarion, the birthplace of Thespis and the site of Dionysos' first Attic advent in myth, clearly had a strong dramatic tradition from an early date.³⁸ It is quite plausible that forms of more or less organised patronage which had been deployed at the local level played a part in the development of the central leitourgical *khoregia*. It should not be assumed automatically that patterns of institutional imitation and borrowing will inevitably and solely have seen the deme mimic the city.³⁹ The earliest epigraphic evidence we have for a body providing for the systematic organisation of a *khoregia* anywhere in Attike in fact derives from mid-fifth-century Ikarion.⁴⁰

One thing which is clear is that the tragic competition of the Dionysia was not brought under some manner of organisation along phyletic lines at the time of the 'Kleisthenic' reforms. Whether a pre-existing competition of three poets, *khoroï* (and *khoregoi*?) was left as it had been or introduced at this point, the social patterning of

the new Kleisthenic system has left no identifiable mark on it, but at the time of the reorganisation a decision must, as it were, have been taken about the place and the shape of tragedy in the city. The point has received little attention.

There ought to be a strong presumption that the three-way competition of the tragic *agon* should reflect some form of socio-political or cultic organisation. The evidence of all manner of *agones* of the archaic and classical periods, and in many cases beyond, shows that such activities were routinely shaped on the basis of particular social groupings, as of course the dithyrambic competitions were in their 'Kleisthenic' reconstruction. The tragic contest cannot reflect the old Ionian *phylai*, since they were four in number.⁴¹

The search for the significance of numbers in the absence of anything much else counting as evidence is a foolhardy undertaking. However, given the lack of any consideration of the issue, it is at least worth airing an hypothesis – entirely conjectural – concerning the 'tragic three'. There is only one well-attested tripartite division of Attike and Attic society from this period: the geographical and political division between the Paralia (the coastal region), the men of the Plain and the men 'beyond the hills', the Diakrioi or Hyperakrioi. This division (problematic as all the evidence for it is), was deemed by later writers to have reflected the struggles of the three great aristocratic factions violently contesting power in mid-sixth-century Attike in a kind of ongoing *stasis*.⁴² The author of the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* cites as one of the prime reasons for the ongoing *stasis* and the sickening of relations between these leaders, 'the desire for *nike* against one another' (τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους φιλονικίαν, 13.3). And that desire is one which animated *khoregoi* in later years.

The conflict between these three groups must have dominated much of mid-sixth-century Athenian life, and it was still deemed necessary in 507 to 'target' these *staseis* in order to achieve the boundary-cutting 'mixture' of the population desiderated by the Kleisthenic reforms. The new *phylai* were designed to dispel or mediate these divisions, while at the same time, the *trittyes*, the 'thirds' of the *phylai* which were drawn from the regions of the city, the coast and the inland demes, preserved a recollection of the existence of these old geopolitical divisions.⁴³ Perhaps, just so, the tragic *agon* – including, crucially, its khoregic component – preserved a memory of these divisions, side-by-side with the grand new dithyrambic *agon*, which sought to do away with them. One could not suppose that the three tragic 'sets' in any sense directly represented these units in either their old form or their contemporary equivalent in the *trittyes*; it would not be a question of drawing *khoreutai* or *khoregoi* from such groups.⁴⁴ They might rather be a creation of the new era serving as the basis for a poetic performance so profoundly centred on issues of social violence as well as on 'mingling' and mediation; an institutional creation which in its own form reflected that shifting history.

Fixed points begin to emerge from the darkness soon after the turn of the century. The operation of the familiar civic *khoregia* can be detected in the 490s, although we have to wait until the 470s for the names of particular *khoregoi*. The testimonia concerning another early musician and poet, Pratinas of Phleious in the Argolid, who was active in Athens composing satyr-plays and tragedy, may raise the earlier date by another decade.⁴⁵ In his one surviving fragment of any length, from a work called by Athenaios a '*hyporkhema*' but perhaps some kind of satyr-poem, the choral voice

apparently expresses annoyance at a trend in contemporary musical practice which saw the *aulos* take on a domineering rôle over the songs of *khoroï* in performances for Dionysos. Athenaios, in introducing the fragment, refers it to a period in which 'aulos-players and *khoreutai* in receipt of pay (*μισθοφόροι*) were dominating the *orkhestras*' (14.617b–c), and if it derives from early in the poet's career, we might catch an oblique glimpse of the *khoregia* at work at that time. For the emphasis on the fact that the instrumentalists and *khoreutai* of these performances for Dionysos were receiving pay, for all the problems of interpretation, almost certainly implies an environment in which *khoregoi* are operative.

This stress on pay evidently carries a negative evaluation, and the slur seems to go back beyond Athenaios (via Aristoxenos?) to Pratinas himself. Do we have here the echo of a view chiming with that of pseudo-Xenophon which saw in the introduction of a relation of pay into *khoreia* through the formal *khoregia* the debasement of an ideal – an ideal of 'amateur' and spontaneous aristocratic culture to which the involvement of *misthos* is utterly repugnant? If this somewhat precarious deduction that he was vexed by the spectacle of paid *khoreutai* can be allowed to stand on the basis of Athenaios' third-hand report of Pratinas' attitude, it may be that the Dorian poet was responding to a recent development not only in the relative balance between *auletai* and singers in performance, but to the novelty of the *khoregia* itself, and the new relations it formally established between poet, performer and 'khoros-leader'.

Our first securely named and dated tragic *khoregos* is an individual who dominated the political scene of Athens and Greece in the early decades of the fifth century. It is Themistokles, who was teamed with Phrynikhos, Aiskhylos' great predecessor and rival, in 476, in the arkhonship of Adeimantos.⁴⁶ This *khoregia* is the statesman's last attested action in Athens before his flight in exile to Persia. And he was victorious: the memorial he erected to the event succeeded in perpetuating his glory, down to Plutarch's time (who possibly saw it personally) and beyond. But Phrynikhos had produced a notorious tragedy nearly twenty years earlier, probably in 493 or 492, the *Capture of Miletos*, a work which Herodotos (6.21.2) says provoked the Athenians to fine him a thousand drakhmas 'for reminding them of their troubles close to home', the destruction of an Ionian Greek city that had rebelled against Persian power (with conspicuously little support from Athens in their hour of need);⁴⁷ and the *Souda* (φ762) records a first (?) victory for Phrynikhos in the sixty-seventh Olympiad, that is 511–508. He is the first tragedian whom we can envisage, with any definition, working under the formal *khoregic* system.

The arkhonship of Adeimantos is also the year which gives us our first securely attested victorious dithyrambic *khoregos*, Aristeides the son of Xenophilos, possibly a relative of the famous Aristeides son of Lysimakhos, who belonged to the same *phyle* as his namesake, Antiokhis. The poet in question was the great Simonides, and it is an epigram of his that preserves the victory.⁴⁸ A candidate for precedence to Aristeides' position as the earliest surviving dithyrambic *khoregos* is Hipponikos son of Strouthon, the victor who perpetuated his memory and that of his *phyle*, Akamantis, in an elaborate inscription by his poetic colleague in the *khoregia*, Antigenes. However, this epigram had no place for the Arkhon's name, and as a consequence cannot be fixed to a particular year.⁴⁹ It is generally regarded as dating from the early fifth century, perhaps as early as 490; the reference in its opening words to many previous choral victories of Akamantis suggests that the phyletic *agon* had at that date

been in operation for some time. Pindar's talents had already been lavished on an unknown Athenian *phyle* – with success – in 497/6.⁵⁰

The history of the introduction of comedy to the khoregic system at the Dionysia is rather more straightforward. Aristotle writes of the Arkhon having granted a *khōros* of *komoidoi* 'late' (*Poet.* 1449b1–2): that is, the provision of polis-controlled khoregic support was some time in coming after that for tragedy and dithyramb. The year may have been 486, the first victorious poet Khionides the Athenian.⁵¹ 487/6 is a significant year of democratic reform, for it also saw the introduction of ostracism and probably the opening of the arkhonship to the *hippeis*, with selection by lot (though from an elected shortlist: [Aristot.] *Ath. Pol.* 22.5). Before that date, Aristotle makes explicit, 'they were volunteers' (ἑθελονταὶ ᾗσαν). 'They' are presumably the *komoidoi*, the poet-actors and their choral troupes. The introduction of the comic *agon* to an official status at the City Dionysia is likely to have been in part a recognition of its increased importance as an instrument of social and political critique as well as of entertainment within its democratic context, and the provision of *khoregoi* selected by the Arkhon was a sign of how seriously the city regarded comedy's function.⁵²

Festival *leitourgiai*

Khōroi for Dionysos were not the only agonistic performances assured a secure material base through 'public service' – far from it. Before considering the operation of the *khoregia* in detail, another level of context needs to be surveyed against which its distinctive qualities will take on greater definition. A great network of *leitourgiai* supported the city's culture of festival competition (nor was it restricted to competitive performance); and other social groupings of a scale smaller than the city itself – most notably the *demes* – employed the *khoregia* and other festival *leitourgiai* to support their own, largely independent, festival culture.⁵³ The production of drama by means of *khoregia* takes place within an environment where similar structures were used to support a vast array of ritual practices: torch-races between the *phylai* for Athena, Prometheus and Hephaistos; militaristic group dances by males of various ages for Athena; a trierarkhic regatta from the Peiraieus to Cape Sounion; huge phyletic banquets; the superintendence by blue-blood Athenian girls of the weaving of the great *peplos* of Athena. The support of drama by rich Athenians as *khoregoi* should be seen within this diverse range of occasions for comparable forms of communal leadership by the élite. As Pauline Schmitt Pantel has put it, 'le choix de ce qui fait l'objet d'une liturgie n'est pas indifférent'.⁵⁴

Serving Dionysos: the City Dionysia

The Great Dionysia is quite probably the first home of the leitourgical *khoregia* in the city of Athens. It always remained the pre-eminent occasion for choral performance, both dramatic and dithyrambic. The city festival in Elaphebolion can be seen as forming a climax, in terms of scale and prestige, to a series of Dionysian festivals in

the sacred calendars of Athens and Attike beginning in winter, in the month Poseideon, with the celebration of the local Dionysia in the demes; then seeing the Lenaia in the next month (Gamelion) held in the city and followed by the new-wine festival, the Anthesteria, in the month before the City Dionysia (Anthesterion). Each of these included agonistic performances of various kinds; all of them, with the probable exception of the Anthesteria, with competitive performance of drama supported by *khoregoi*. Their different participants – as organising communities, performers and spectators – gave each a distinctive quality which affected the experience of serving as *khoregos* for each.

The khoregic requirements of the Great Dionysia reflect its unquestioned pre-eminence as Athens' principal choral festival. From the time at which comedy was admitted to leitourgic support, twenty-eight of the city's richest men were needed each year to organise and fund the choral performances of the Dionysia: ten to lead the ten *phylai* competing in the performance of men's dithyrambic *khoroi*, each of them fifty strong with members of the phyle; and the same number for the boys' age-group in this *agon*. Three *khoregoi* were needed for the tragic (and satyric) *agon*, where *khoroi* of twelve citizens competed without any known affiliation to a sub-group of the polis and a further five were needed to lead the groups of twenty-four citizen *komoidoi*, who also performed without any known principle of representation.⁵⁵

This complement of twenty-eight Dionysian *khoregoi* can be regarded as standard for most of the fifth and fourth centuries. One major development in the life of the theatre and the programme of the festival will have had ramifications in the realm of funding: the introduction, in various stages, of reperformance. We should imagine the deme Dionysia, with their more flexible patterns of performance, as an important context from an early date for reperformance, although they hardly constituted a 'repertory' circuit. The first identifiable step in this crucial process as it concerned the City Dionysia was the decision of the Athenian demos to provide for the production of the works of Aiskhylos after his death, in recognition of their value to the city. Whatever deformations the tragic *khoros* may have experienced in the fourth century, it is hardly possible that these productions of Aiskhylos dating from the middle of the fifth century could have done without the full material and organisational support provided by *khoregia*, implying a properly trained *khoros*. The Athenians apparently passed a decree to the effect that 'a person wishing to produce work of Aiskhylos should receive a *khoros*.'⁵⁶ The implication seems to be that a would-be producer (and note the generalised use of the democratic ὁ βουλόμενος, the citizen-volunteer) was guaranteed one of the three regular tragic *khoroi* up for competitive award each year, as though the status of Aiskhylos in the city were adequate to ensure his works an automatic passage through this preliminary stage of selection by the Arkhon.⁵⁷ A passage of Philostratos speaks of Aiskhylos, 'invited back to the Dionysia even when he was dead' (*Life Apoll.* 6.11), winning new victories with his old plays; and the opening of Aristophanes' *Akharnians* (9–12) sees Dikaiopolis, some thirty years after Aiskhylos' death, recall the 'tragic pain' he suffered as he sat in the theatre, expecting to hear the herald announce Aiskhylos, to hear instead the cry of 'Bring on your *khoros*, Theognis.' These latter both suggest that when Aiskhylos was to be reproduced under these conditions, his plays were an integrated part of the traditional tragic *agon*, not outside it, as was to be the case with the more systematic production of 'old' tragedies and comedies in the fourth century.

The arrangements for the financing of these are rather less clear. A performance of 'old' tragedy is known for 386, perhaps as a one-off; it appears on a more regular basis from 341–339. 'Old' comedy is known for 339 and perhaps more regularly from 311. The inscription in the *Fasti* relating to the first of these reproductions uses the expression 'The *tragoidoi* produced in addition an old drama', παλαιὸν δράμα πρῶτο[v] παρεδίδξαν οἱ τραγ[ωιδοί, with the parallel expression for comedy. The force of the verb παρεδίδξαν must be, as Pickard-Cambridge noted, to signal that this single 'old drama' was an 'extra', a new addition to the programme; and the introduction of the information concerning these performances more systematically in the production records or *Didaskaliai* in later years by the expression παλαιᾷ 'with the old (sc. tragedy or comedy)' implies that this was the sole work produced, given that on the same inscription, the names of the poets of all three or five competing entries are listed for new tragedy and comedy. It was probably not until the third century that a competition between 'old' dramas was introduced to the Dionysia.⁵⁸

The fact that these performances found an established place in the programme of the fourth-century festival demonstrates a very high degree of recognition of their importance by the polis, and is in itself an indication that they may have been funded leitourgically. The Lykourgan period will have been of special significance. Large sums of money, public and private, were lavished on the fabric of the theatre in this age, the age of the construction of the first stone theatre of Dionysos in the city. The attention given to the three great tragic masters of the past by Lykourgos (in the 330s), particularly in relation to the security of their texts, suggests that the city, shaken by Khaironeia yet economically more resilient than it had been for decades, was much concerned for the healthy condition of its dramatic patrimony. Some form of support from public funds for these performances is thus likely. They were held up as a foundation-stone of the heritage of the city itself, and one can easily imagine a willingness on the part of potential *khoregoi* to be associated with the production of the works of these icons of a glorious past, in a time when the reflex to look to that past as a place of lost value and grandeur is commonplace.

The acting community appears to have had the principal responsibility for these productions, and from the point of view of their history, this represents a crucial step towards the formation of more organised and mobile guilds. As much is generally assumed from the use of the terms '*tragoidoi*' and '*komoidoi*' in the *Fasti*, apparently of their performers as a whole, rather than specifically of *khoreutai* or actors; and, in particular, from the reference to the principal actor in the official inscriptions recording these productions: (e.g.) 'In old (tragedy): Neoptolemos, with the *Iphigeneia* of Euripides' (IG II²2320 for 342/1). It seems likely that the more or less formal associations of fourth-century actors, centred around illustrious principals like Neoptolemos, took on much of the organisational burden for these reproductions, probably with supporting funds from the state (whether leitourgical or not). The reperformance of Attic drama outside Attike had for some time provided a context in which groups of theatrical professionals developed the skills of performing a repertoire; and it had begun to provide some actors with a new and substantial form of funds. As to the question of choral participation in fourth-century productions, some of the same considerations apply as for the fifth-century reperformances of Aiskhylos: despite the increased focus on actors and their art in this period, little more than

uncritical adherence to a belief in the model of 'choral decline' allows us to suppose that these reperformances would have had no *khōros*, or a reduced team. Many of them will have been fifth-century tragedies to whose integrity the *khōros* was essential. It is hardly credible that these reproductions should have been lacking one of their fundamental components, given too that Lykourgos was so anxious to rescue the texts of the Great Three tragedians from interference by later hands, and to have their *ipsisima verba* available for consultation by the citizenry, that he arranged for their deposition in the public archive.⁵⁹

However much overshadowed by the spectacular *khoregia*, there were a number of other means through which individual wealth and expertise were employed at the Great Dionysia. The most significant of these is the office known as the *hestiasis*, and this was organised, like the dithyrambic *khoregia*, on a phyletic basis. The *hestiator* or 'banqueter' provided the wherewithal for great phyletic banquets held during the festival. This was an important duty, if of much less 'durable' glory than that to be derived from competitive *leitourgiai*. There will have been one such man for each *phyle*, appointed by it rather than by the polis, and the duty is also attested for the Panathenaia.⁶⁰ Perhaps the oldest, most widespread and fundamental form of paternal generosity – feasting one's less well-off peers – was thereby brought within the ambit of a system managed by the city. This was more than the subsistence support provided regularly to its citizens by the democratic city in the form of civic pay and other distributions, since we should imagine a sacrificial feast of some scale and quality.⁶¹ Yet neither is it quite the same as the direct, paternal feeding of one's less well-off peers practised to some advantage by men like Kimon. The recipients were the members of the democratic *phylai*, a larger pool than could ever be treated to culinary largesse at an individual's residence, and the shared meal will have served to reaffirm the identity of those somewhat artificial groupings. While the *hestiasis*, like all *leitourgiai*, could include an element of compulsion, the beneficent *hestiator* was doubtless himself a beneficiary of a great store of goodwill and 'honour' that represented a more than purely symbolic return for his outlay. The remark of Xenophon's Sokrates that his rich friend Kritoboulos would find himself 'bereft of supporters' if he were to stop 'dining the citizens', although ostensibly pitying him this expensive obligation, points to the real power that lay at the base of such collective feasting.⁶²

For most of the classical period ten wealthy men were also needed to serve as the 'overseers' or *epimeletai* (ἐπιμεληταί) of the Dionysia each year, and to draw on their personal wealth for the preparation of the great *pompe* or procession which opened the festival proper on the tenth of Elaphebolion.⁶³ These men are never referred to as *leitourgists*, although we are told on the authority of the [Aristotelian] *Athenaion Politeia* (56.4) that they used to be elected by the demos and outlayed from their own pockets the expenses necessary for the office. Under these circumstances they were thus elected officials who used their own, not public, funds towards the conduct of the festival, and their activities were virtually indistinguishable from *leitourgical* service. At some time not long before the writing of the *Ath. Pol.*, a change took place such that the *epimeletai* were appointed by lot by the *phylai*, one from each, and were given one hundred mnai for their tasks.⁶⁴ This change can be related to parallel developments of the period which shifted some of the burden of festival expenditure from the shoulders of individuals to the polis; and to the similar 'decentralisation' of

responsibility for the appointment of comic *khoregoi* from the Arkhon to phyletic authorities.⁶⁵

The *epimeletai* were the Arkhon's assistants: he had formal responsibility for the *pompe*. Although their office was clearly subordinate to that of the Arkhon, and lacked the glamour of competition, the fact that they used their own wealth and were intimately associated with the procession, an occasion of maximum display, will have made the *epimeletai* figures of high public profile and recognition. Theophrastos chose to illustrate the nature of his Oligarchic character through a vignette depicting a debate in the Assembly on the office of *epimeletes*: when the demos is considering whom to appoint to assist the Arkhon in overseeing the *pompe*, the Oligarch expresses the opinion that the men chosen should have full powers (δεῖ αὐτοκράτορας τούτους εἶναι, 26.2). And when others propose that ten be elected, he says 'One is sufficient – but he must be a real man.' The desire not to circumscribe the powers of the officer, and not to dilute them by sharing them in a college, are the marks of the oligarch; the usual complement of ten *epimeletai* is more 'democratic'. But although characterised as 'oligarchic', the association made in this scene between personal wealth, power and a sense of 'manhood' is certainly present also in the democratic environment of leitourgic service.

Processional *leitourgiai*: place and service in the city

If the office of *epimeletes* for the Dionysia's procession was never fully assimilated to the form of a *leitourgia*, an ambivalence of a different kind touched the central ritual act of participation within the procession itself. The grand civic *pompai* – especially those of the Dionysia and Panathenaia – were acts of symbolic, communal self-constitution. The right to participate, placement within the procession, what one carried and wore – these were carefully controlled and designed to reflect one's position on a map of social rôles. What is especially relevant here is the fact that a number of these formalised ritual rôles appear to have had the status of a *leitourgia*, but they rarely attract attention in discussion of the leitourgic system.

Above all, these offices demonstrate in a particularly lucid fashion the way in which the sense of honour and prestige which powered the leitourgic system was one whose terms were set and managed by a civic and social élite. By making this area of festival participation, which was very directly centred on notions of status and identity, subject to the leitourgical system of honorific obligation, the power structures which underlay that system become all the more apparent. At one level, all forms of representative participation in the festival *pompe* were deemed honorific: from the pride of place at its head as the *kanephoros*, the blue-blood Athenian young woman decked out in gold and carrying the basket full of barley-grains and hiding the sacrificial knife; to the representatives of the metic community carrying trays, water-jugs and sun-shades, and wearing distinctive crimson tunics. To be included in one of the most illustrious acts of worship and self-display by the assembled city was generally deemed a source of pride. Yet the fact that in an area of civic life as poorly documented as this we can find traces that not all metics at least regarded these duties as an unambiguous honour – and, moreover, that neither did the Athenians who

endowed them with it – shows how the *leitourgic* system was here being used to enforce a system of social differences in which not only Athenian civic status, but wealth and high birth were accorded a special place in one of the democratic community's most symbolically charged acts of self-display.

Everything we hear about the office of *kanephoria* shows that it was felt to be one of the highest ritual honours available for the girl and – just as importantly – for her family. And although we know little about the manner of her selection, the honour was one fought for and available only among a small number of aristocratic Athenian families.⁶⁶ It was the insult of not having his sister granted the rôle of *kanephoros* at the Panathenaia that was said by some to have driven Harmodios to tyrannicide. This seems to be a case where the civic system of *leitourgiai* was applied to an area of ritual practice the preserve of noble families, without infringing on the prerogative of those families by widening access to it.⁶⁷ Limited evidence suggests that the cost of equipping a *kanephoros* may have been undertaken not simply by her family or the city but by a *leitourgist*.⁶⁸ But if, as is perhaps more likely, the hypothetical *leitourgia* was the recognised duty and honour of the father to equip his daughter from the resources of their great house, the principle that '[e]ven in a democracy, the wealthy may supersede everyone else for ceremonial purposes' is shown to operate in this most important of symbolic, ritual duties, where, even more directly than was the case with the major *leitourgiai*, the wealth and idealised beauty of the houses of the *kaloi kagathoi* were granted pride of place, to be gazed upon by the huge audience of citizens and visitors.⁶⁹

The case of the processing metics is pointedly different. A representative group of metics was required to participate in certain major festival processions in special dress, carrying accoutrements that signified their status, and to do so perhaps in silence. Men carried bowls, their daughters water-pitchers and parasols. That these duties are known to have been demanded by law marks their very different character from the *kanephoria*; and they were certainly *leitourgiai* in the strict sense.⁷⁰ As such, they differ very significantly from other *leitourgiai* – indeed, they are unique – in that they fell as obligations on a particular, minority status-group outside the Athenian citizenry, and they consisted in large part in placing that collective in a markedly inferior status-position. The point is made all the more forcefully by the fact that the metics were probably excluded from participation in the very sacrifice in which this procession culminated.⁷¹ However one assesses the ideological tenor of these and other 'demands' made on or 'honours' accorded the metic, in this case they were being required to 'serve the people' in a very special sense, by displaying the inferior status they occupied within its midst, and without the lustre given other *leitourgiai* by competition.

The point could hardly be clearer than in the case of the *skiadephoria*, where metic daughters were required to carry sun-shades to cover the *kanephoros* in the procession – the second-class daughter protecting the most prized daughter of all the Athenians. In a passage intended to illustrate the burgeoning of Athenian *hybris* as a consequence of the city's prosperity, Aelian interprets the metic processional *leitourgiai* as a wilful expression of Athenian superiority – as, indeed, a form of *hybris*.⁷² This view clearly represents a partial and extreme position, one pole of an evaluative discourse concerning these honorific obligations. Another position is represented by the explanation of metic participation in processions as a concession to their desire to be included

in cult, so that they should be ‘better-disposed’ to the city.⁷³ Modern critics tend to adopt one or another of these evaluative extremes, but both could certainly have been held by different people at the same time.⁷⁴ The latter position – what might be seen as the city’s ‘official’ interpretation of the metic *leitourgiai* in keeping with its collective self-image as adopting an inclusive and generous stance towards outsiders – is in fact less audible in our sources.

A clear asymmetry is at work here: while these obligations fell on the metic community for the symbolically charged moments of festival procession, the Athenian citizen by contrast was invited to participate in the Dionysiac procession wearing what he liked (echoes here of the democratic notion of ‘to live as one pleases’ idealised, for instance, in Thouk. 2.37.2–3) and carrying a wineskin, the token of direct participation in the occasion as a festive one in honour of Dionysos (and doubtless a practical accoutrement for refreshment along the way).⁷⁵ There is, of course, no question of legally-enforced participation here. The metic, by contrast, was required to wear the purple *khiton* designating his status; and the objects carried clearly symbolised the secondary, if ‘supportive’ and perhaps productive rôle played by metics in Athenian society.

The point that these hierarchical status-differences were not only keenly felt by both sides, but that the occasions of the great civic processions were perceived as highly significant, public, moments on which these identities were created and reinforced, further emerges from a brief but illuminating fragment of Deinarkhos’ speech *Against Agasikles*.⁷⁶ Agasikles was alleged to have been a foreigner who had bribed the people of Halimous to enrol him in their deme; Deinarkhos composed a speech for the prosecution. In the relevant fragment, some males are mentioned who ‘will go up to the Akropolis as ephebes rather than as *skaphephoroi*, not having you [the demos] to thank for their citizenship, but this man’s silver’. These are the sons of Agasikles, who, it is alleged, will participate in the great procession of the Panathenaia as ephebes, the flower of the future citizenry of Athens, not as the metic bowl-carriers (that they should in justice be). The speaker delivers the allegation with a tone of righteous indignation, and he can evidently count on this indignation finding receptive ears in his citizen audience. The point of choosing this moment in particular as the one to epitomise the gulf of status between citizen and metic is clear, even from so brief a fragment. This evidence, deriving as it does from the sphere of the popular courts, is a good indication of the way the ‘honour’ of *skaphephoria* could be seized upon as a clear index of the lack of honour of the metic by comparison with the citizen. The comic poets’ punning confusion of the *skaphephoros* with the *skapheus* or ‘ditch-digger’ is another; as are the indications, hugely significant given the poverty of our sources, that these obligations encountered some resistance.⁷⁷ The ideology which construed the leitourgical duty of *skaphephoria* as an honour is one working in the interests of a greater civic identity, an identity based on a clear sense of hierarchy and power.⁷⁸

The Lenaia

The Lenaia was the second most important of Dionysos’ urban festivals, and somewhat older than the City Dionysia. Its contests were restricted to drama, and comedy

seems to have been the senior genre.⁷⁹ The festival appears to have been less concentratedly focussed around the *politai* than the Dionysia: the absence of phyletic *khoroï* and the permitted involvement of non-Athenian *khoreutai* and metic *khoregoi* point in this direction. The Lenaia is often described as having a 'domestic' character: the classic statement is that of the Lenaian comic hero of Aristophanes' *Akharnians* himself, Dikaiopolis, who in his great speech of advice and self-defence locates the Lenaia as a site from which to advise the city without restraint: '... we're by ourselves, and it's the Lenaian *agon*, and there are no foreigners here yet; for neither tribute nor troops have arrived from the allied cities'. (The latter remark contrasts the Lenaia with the City Dionysia, at which the imperial tribute was produced and displayed before the theatre-audience.) 'This time we are alone, ready-hulled; for I reckon the metics as the civic bran' (504–8).⁸⁰ The absence of a sense of being on show to the world beyond Attike at this mid-winter festival seems to have had the effect of inducing a willingness to grant a rôle in it to a wider spectrum of society and, perhaps, to scrutinise sensitive issues of 'internal' concern with greater rigour.

Perhaps reflecting its antiquity, the Basileus rather than the Eponymous Arkhon was the civic official in charge; but at whatever date dramatic performances began at the Lenaia, they received formal civic recognition, as expressed through a *khoregic* base, some time later than the Great Dionysia – around 440 for comedy and perhaps a little later for tragedy.⁸¹ It may well have been the increased popularity of drama that encouraged the creation of Lenaian *khoregiai*. If it was indeed a creation of the 440s, it is tempting to associate it with Perikles, and his politics of 'always devising some public spectacle, banquet or procession in the city, and educating the polis with not uncultured pleasures' (Plu. *Per.* 11.4). This inclusion of rich metics in the cultural life of the city may have been intended as a recognition of their importance at a time when their inferior status had recently been given sharper focus by Perikles' citizenship laws.

There were probably five productions of comedy as a rule,⁸² and only two or three of tragedy (the figure was three for at least part of the mid-360s):⁸³ there were, of course, more comic than tragic 'slots' at the Great Dionysia too (five as opposed to three of tragedy), but at that festival three sets of tragedies signified twelve individual works, and so the overall amount of tragic (and satyric) drama was considerably greater than the comic. At the Lenaia, on the other hand, it seems that tragedians ordinarily competed with two tragedies only and no satyr-play;⁸⁴ so there were usually four tragedies and five comedies. There was thus a demand for at least two tragic and five comic *khoregoi* each year, appointed directly by the Basileus.⁸⁵

We can form some idea of what made the production of a Lenaian *khoros* distinctive, and our sense of its character is to some extent determined, as it was for the Athenians, by contrast with the arrangements for the greater urban festival. The primacy of comedy at the Lenaia seems to go hand in hand with a generally inferior status of the festival in terms of the prestige to be won by poet, performer or *khoregos*. The Lenaia evidently served as a stepping-stone to – and a place to be demoted to from – the more prestigious competitions of the Great Dionysia. The different status of the two competitions was perhaps even acknowledged by a formalised mechanism for regulating access of aspiring poets and actors: a fourth place for a comic poet at the Great Dionysia may have led to his being 'pushed back again to the Lenaia'.⁸⁶ The power and value of a Dionysiac victory were quite finely calibrated: a

fourth or worse meant demotion to the lesser competition for a poet; presumably it was also possible to 'win one's way' somehow back up to the other *agon*. And it may have been effectively if not formally necessary for a poet to serve an 'apprenticeship' at the lesser festival before being granted access to the Dionysia. The relative prestige-value of victory and of the right to be seen in the public eye competing at the two festivals could hardly be more sharply drawn than this.⁸⁷

It is entirely in keeping with the hierarchy of prestige between the two dramatic festivals that there was a major legal distinction concerning the recruitment of the choral personnel of the Lenaia. Metics could serve as *khoregoi*, and *khoroï* could include foreigners.⁸⁸ The significance of this involvement in the city's choral culture of those not fully members of the political community needs to be stressed, especially given the importance of *khoreia* as a prime means of communal self-definition. The commentator to whom we owe these details explicitly links them causally: foreigners could participate in a Lenaian *khoros*, since metics also served as *khoregoi*. This association between foreign choral *leadership* and choral *membership* is an example of the recurrent close association, in practical and ideological terms, between *khoros* and *khoregos* – something to which I shall often return. When metics were permitted to be *khoregoi* it was perhaps natural that they be allowed to recruit from among 'their own', as it were, from among resident aliens and perhaps also from non-resident foreigners.⁸⁹ The concession to metics will have been made a virtue to the benefit of all: the economic basis of Lenaian drama was thereby more secure, and the talents of the numerous foreign musical practitioners in Athens could be employed at a major Athenian festival. It would surely be wrong to imagine that *only* metic *khoregoi* could employ foreigners; such a potential benefit will not have been granted the metic and denied the citizen. The 'rule' of 'same-status' choral membership and leadership was very probably relaxed to this significant degree.⁹⁰ Metic and citizen *khoregoi* will have been competing directly and for the same prizes.⁹¹

It was presumably up to the Basileus to include among the pool of potential *khoregoi* for the Lenaia the upper tier of the economic élite among the metics. These would have been readily identifiable by virtue of the generally tight controls exercised over the registration of metics. Voluntary *khoregiai* were perhaps not uncommon among wealthy metics, keen to establish a position of goodwill for themselves among the community at large. And given the relatively high degree of metic wealth, and the small number of leitourgical duties we know them to have been liable to perform, metics may have dominated the profile of Lenaian *khoregoi*. When calculating the number of those exempt from leitourgic service, Demosthenes makes a clear distinction between 'political' (πολιτικάι) *leitourgiai* and 'those of the metics' (αἱ . . . τῶν μετοίκων, 20.18, cf. 20). It need not follow that these two groups did not overlap at all (since he is examining potential performers, not the services themselves), but there his words do imply a familiar distinction at the level of service. Demosthenes asserts that there will be no more than five metics exempt at any one time (20.20); he later agrees to assume for argument's sake that the number could be as high as ten (20.21). Since the *trierarkhia* is not relevant to this calculation, this small number of metic leitourgist could consist largely of Lenaian *khoregoi*. The Lenaia normally needed seven *khoregoi* each year – a figure which interestingly falls precisely between the two numbers proffered by Demosthenes.⁹² We can identify only a tiny group of certain or probable Lenaian *khoregoi*. But most of these are metics, and we know of no certain

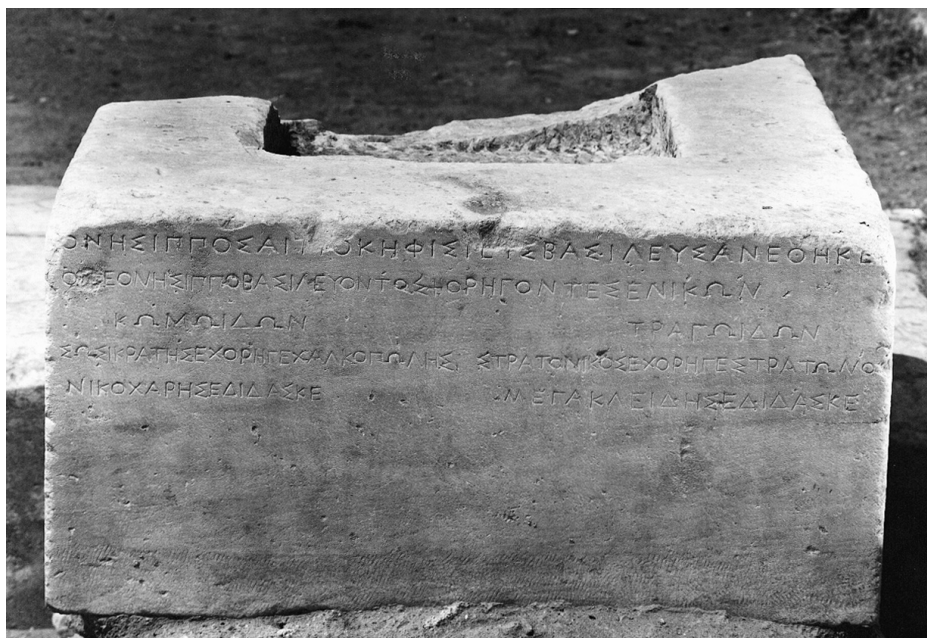


Fig. 1. The khoregic monument for tragedy and comedy (Lenaian) of the Arkhon Onesippos, found in the Athenian Agora.

case of a citizen *khoregos* for the Lenaia.⁹³ The possibility that metics dominated the choral competition at the Lenaia should be entertained.

Some regard this involvement of the metics in major *khoregiai* for the city's most prestigious cultural form primarily as an honour accorded them in recognition of the important part they played in the life of the city, and no doubt such an interpretation carries some weight. As Whitehead writes: '... at the elite end of the status hierarchy, *leitourgiai* played their part in the ideology of the metic by inviting him to affirm his acceptance of the ideology of the polis itself'.⁹⁴ But the 'honour' was clearly a carefully delimited one, given the evident second-ranking of the festival as a place to gain prestige. Their siting in the comic language of Dikaiopolis' political and festive metaphor is consistent with this institutional and legal position: they are the eminently useful, but less pure and refined, bran that would be sifted out of the meal to make flour. Their place in the city was thus neatly, symbolically described by this allowed form of festival participation, as was their perceived value to it, which was predominantly an economic one.

The point is brought home with clarity by the remains of a khoregic monument of an altogether unique form among those extant (**figure 1**). It is the sole surviving example of a monument recording victories at the Lenaia, and was erected on the steps of the Stoa of the Basileus in the Agora – an extremely conspicuous location – by an Arkhon himself, Onesippos, at some time near the end of the fifth century.⁹⁵ It was in the shape of a herm, itself an interesting and unique variant in the known range of khoregic monuments. It is the only known case of an Arkhon erecting such