Introduction

This book seeks to answer vital questions about the establishment and practice of democracy (Greek *demokratia*) in the Greek world during the Classical period (480–323 BC). Its focus is not on Athens, the democracy for which the ancient testimony is most plentiful and about which there is an embarrassment of modern scholarly books. Instead, this study aims to take a comprehensive look at Classical democracies outside Athens, which are relatively rarely studied. If we are to understand the true nature of Greek democracy – a political legacy that is revered above all others from antiquity in contemporary politics, to such an extent that almost any non-democratic form of government is delegitimized – we need to know the range of possibilities for its practice, not just how things took shape in one city. Occasional comparison of the communities studied here with the Athenian democracy will be inevitable, but it will not happen systematically or frequently. One of the goals of this study, in fact, is to create a kind of database that in future will allow more detailed comparison of Athenian and non-Athenian practice than has been heretofore possible. It does not aim to do so comprehensively itself.

My previous book-length work on non-Athenian democracies, *The First Democracies*, was a very different project. There, the goal was simply to determine where and when the first democracies appeared in Greece. It covered the Archaic period (*c.* 700–480 BC) and concluded that by the middle of the sixth century *demokratiai* had formed in a number of city-states, though the thinness of the evidence precluded certainty about exactly how many there were or which had come first. But in the Classical period literary and epigraphic evidence for political history improves dramatically, enabling me to ask deeper questions in this study. The two central lines of inquiry that have driven it are: (1) how and why *demokratia* expanded as it did in the Greek world during the Classical period, and (2) what was the nature of democratic practice outside Athens.

To gather the material needed to answer these broad questions the first three chapters of this book discuss the evidence for likely democracies in fifty-four different city-states, organized by region (mainland Greece, western Greece, and eastern Greece, in Chapters 1–3, respectively). These cases do not represent every possible Classical democracy, but only those for which the available literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence presents a compelling case that popular government existed in the city-state in question at some point during the period from 480 to 323 BC. Each treatment discusses the evidence for when and how the *demokratia* came to be, with what subsequent constitutional changes, followed by consideration of the nature of its institutions and practices. Following the case studies in these three chapters are two more chapters tackling the larger issues. Chapter 4 explores the extent of and reasons for the spread of Classical democracy, considering arguments for and against seeing a preeminent Athenian role in the process and suggesting possible alternative drivers of the expansion. Chapter 5 seeks to assess the functioning of non-Athenian *demokratiai*, noting commonalities and variations among attested institutions and practices.

In identifying which states were democratic, one inevitably runs into the problem of definition. What constitutes democracy? Various criteria may be used, and one suspects that almost as many definitions can be found as there are political theorists who write on the subject.[1] Agreement might be reached on some of the general principles that a democratic order should embody – for example, decisive power in the hands of the people as a whole; a community that promotes the ideals of political freedom and equality; an inclusive citizen body – but when examining historical cases one can quickly reach the point where some tenets of democracy seem to be present and others absent, where theoretical perspective A would see democracy and B would see something else. In the ancient Greek setting the problem is compounded not just by the insufficiency of evidence (more on that below) but also by the area of overlap that existed between broad oligarchies and "moderate" democracies.[2] Such orders could share many of the same institutions, including sizable assembly meetings

[1] In *The First Democracies: Early Popular Government outside Athens* (Stuttgart, 1997), 13–16, I discussed just a few theoretical approaches, settling eventually on criteria for a democratic process worked out by Robert Dahl. These criteria include effective citizen participation, voting equality at the decisive stage, access to good information, and control of the agenda. S. Carlsson has since adopted the same criteria for evaluating Hellenistic democracies: *Hellenistic Democracies. Freedom, Independence, and Political Procedure in Some East Greek City-States* (Stuttgart, 2010), 47–9, 291–3.

[2] On oligarchy, see the brief but excellent study by M. Ostwald, *Oligarchia: The Development of a Constitutional Form in Ancient Greece* (Stuttgart, 2000).

with decisive power, property qualifications for offices, and representative councils. This overlap is illustrated and exacerbated by Aristotle's flexible use of the term *politeia*, which in the *Politics* – the single best Classical source for constitutional analysis – serves triple duty as a generic term for any kind of constitutional government, a more specific one denoting a liminal order that mixes oligarchic and democratic elements (*Pol.* 1293b33–4), and one indicating an unusually responsible form of democracy.[3]

Because of the inevitable difficulties in trying to settle on a modern-theory-derived definition of democracy that would apply in all cases, a better approach (and the one followed in this study wherever possible) is to allow Greek contemporaries to decide the issue. Did they, as far as we can tell, label city-state x a *demokratia*? If so, then we should assume it was a *demokratia* (= democracy).[4] Naturally, it is not always so easy. Sometimes no contemporary author specifically identifies a state as being democratic, but only an author writing decades later (e.g., Aristotle in the *Politics* concerning a fifth- or early fourth-century *polis*). Worse, the designation might only come from an author writing centuries later (e.g., Diodorus), or *no* author uses the term *demokratia* about the state in question, but there are other reasons to believe it was democratic: it belonged to a group of states that a contemporary source implies was democratic, or demonstrated institutions and practices typically associated by Classical authors with *demokratia*. On other occasions it is possible that the constitutional term is being used tendentiously, or the term is *not* being used for tendentious purposes.

Whatever the complications are, the principle that I will follow here in trying to decide whether *demokratia* existed is whether or not contemporary Greeks *did* call or *would have* called (as best we can determine) such a state *demokratia*, not whether we from our own perspective would deem the state to have exhibited a sufficient level of popular power and participation to merit our term "democracy." The characteristics of *demokratia* according to Classical authors are critical for this approach. In *The First Democracies* I devoted a chapter to ancient definitions of *demokratia*, drawing heavily

[3] The last meaning arises when Aristotle compares correct (*orthai*) and deviant (*parekbaseis*) forms of constitutions in the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*: the philosopher refers to *politeia* and *demokratia* as counterparts, the good and bad versions of rule by the mass (*plethos*) of the citizens (*Pol.* 1279a22–b19; *Eth. Nic.* 1160a31–1161b11). See under Syracuse in Chapter 2 for a discussion of what to make of Aristotle's use of the term *politeia*, especially as regards that city-state.

[4] I will use the English word democracy as a convenient synonym for *demokratia*, i.e., a governmental order the Greeks considered to be democratic, since the only cases of democracy that matter here are the ancient variety. In doing this I certainly do not mean to equate modern democratic practice with the ancient. On comparing the two, see Robinson, *First Democracies*, 25–33.

on Aristotle's *Politics* and also surveying key passages from earlier authors.[5] A fairly consistent picture emerges regarding the institutions and ideals of *demokratia*. Commonly attested elements in definitions of *demokratia* include the primacy of the *demos* (the people), freedom and equality as guiding principles of the order, low property qualifications, use of the lot for some offices, and on occasion public pay for participation of the commons. Ostracism and accountability of the magistrates through procedures such as the *euthuna* (scrutiny of those leaving office) were also associated with *demokratia*, though not uniquely (*euthuna*) or universally (ostracism). In the opening of Chapter 5 in this book I revisit the issue, considering again Aristotle's treatment and the corroboration for it that we find in other Classical-era authors. I then go on to consider the degree to which the specified practices are collectively attested in the cases studied in Chapters 1 through 3.

The evidence for *demokratia* must be sifted on a case-by-case basis. If the only claims for *demokratia* in a particular city-state come from late authors, we should consider their likely sources and their understanding of earlier democratic practice. Allowances should be made for authorial bias and the positive or negative connotations of particular terms. Importantly, we must also expect that we will not have anything close to the full spectrum of evidence that we would like. Though the situation is better than for the Archaic period, the source material for the constitutional history of Classical states outside Athens is still spotty at best and nearly non-existent much of the time. This means emphasizing results gained from critical assessment of the evidence that we *do* have and not allowing the absence of other potentially useful information to deter us from coming to a reasonable judgment.[6] In doing all of this, one can usually arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, at least in the fifty-four cases examined here, about whether the Greeks considered (or would have considered) a state's constitution to have been a *demokratia*. Of course, scholarly opinions may still vary.[7]

It is surprising the degree to which the larger questions considered in Chapters 4 and 5 – why democracy spread and what it looked like outside Athens in the Classical period – have been quietly ignored by scholars. The

[5] *First Democracies*, 35–64.

[6] For example, it is unfortunate that we typically lack indications about the presence or absence of property qualifications for citizenship in specific city-states. According to Aristotle and other authors, high qualifications would indicate non-democracy, low or non-existent ones would suggest *demokratia*. But since we simply do not know anything about this in the vast majority of cases, the silence of the sources in any one case ought not to be taken as evidence one way or the other.

[7] A good example of the necessary juggling of many factors – and disagreements about how to interpret them – comes in the case of fifth-century Syracuse (see Chapter 2, opening).

issues seem central to a proper understanding of the general phenomenon of Greek democracy. No doubt the paucity of evidence mainly explains this, though one also suspects that the sheer convenience of letting the iconic Athenian example stand in for *demokratia* overall has also played a role. Each of the last two chapters begins with discussions of previous scholarly approaches, which inevitably show Athenocentric tendencies. My conclusions place more emphasis on non-Athenocentric explanations, with what success the reader may judge. But whatever one thinks of the ideas presented here, my hope is that by collecting the material I have and asking the larger questions I do subsequent discussions may be sparked in which the large body of non-Athenian *demokratiai* will receive their due consideration.

CHAPTER 1

Classical demokratiai *on the Greek mainland (central Greece and the Peloponnese)*

This chapter discusses the appearance and nature of democracies to be found outside Athens on the Greek mainland from 480 to 323 BC. Each state considered separately below either *certainly* or *probably* experienced at least one episode of democratic government during this time period. While it is always possible – indeed, it is likely – that further examples of *demokratia* cropped up on occasion in these or other communities of the mainland, the following represent the only cases for which we have compelling evidence.

With the exception of a few of the better-attested examples, treatments are brief. The primary purpose here is to come to an understanding of how democracies arose in these places and, at least generally, how they functioned. Usually more can be said about the former than the latter. This chapter engages in very little comparison or synthesis: the fourth and fifth chapters of the book, drawing on the previous sections including this one, will pursue these goals.

The order of discussion is roughly alphabetical, though we begin with Argos owing to its importance and follow with Corinth because of the close association of its brief period of democracy with the Argive state.

ARGOS

Argos and its environs loom large in any proper reckoning of Greek history and the Greek imagination, from heroic myths to the realities of the Mycenaean age to the political, social, and economic history of the city-state in the Archaic and Classical eras. It also holds a central place in the study of Classical democracy: excepting only Athens, the Argive democracy stands above all others in terms of the quantity and variety of information available, and thus in our ability to picture what *demokratia* could look like outside Attica. Literary evidence, while scattered about in brief segments, includes some valuable testimony from such authors

as Herodotus, Thucydides, Euripides, Xenophon, Aristotle, Aeneas Tacticus, and Diodorus Siculus. Moreover, a number of inscribed decrees and other texts survive from the fifth and fourth centuries and later; and the archaeological excavations of the city carried out in recent decades have been very revealing too. From these various types of material one can glean much about how the Argive democracy functioned, institutionally and culturally.

That Argos was a *demokratia* during most of the Classical period is not in any doubt. Thucydides, for one, repeatedly labels Argos a democracy in his fifth book, commenting on how the shared democratic forms of government at Mantinea and Argos, and at Argos and Athens, encouraged alliances among these states between 421 and 418 BC; he further notes that the democracy at Argos discouraged military ties between Argos and then-oligarchic Boeotia and Megara (5.29, 5.31, 5.44). Later, he describes an oligarchic coup, followed quickly by a democratic resurgence, after the battle of Mantinea (5.81–2). Various passages in Xenophon, Diodorus, and Aristotle confirm the existence of this democracy and make clear that it persisted until late in the fourth century.[1]

Exactly when Argos first became democratic presents more of a challenge, however. I have argued elsewhere that Argos achieved its earliest democratic government soon after its disastrous battle with the Spartans at Sepeia, customarily dated to 494 BC.[2] While it is possible that Argos had a moderately democratic government already in the sixth century – literary sources talk of a popular revolution overthrowing the last king of Argos, and mid-sixth-century epigraphic documents would seem to confirm that a constitutional government of some kind with regular boards of magistrates was in place – the evidence is too vague to insist on democracy. It perhaps best suits a moderate oligarchy or an Aristotelian *politeia* (a mixture between democracy and oligarchy).[3]

After the battle of Sepeia, however, popular government more obviously takes hold at Argos. Thanks to the terrible losses in that battle, a political revolution took place, our sources tell us, one involving the inclusion of

[1] Arist. *Pol.* 1302b18, 1303a6–8, 1304a27; Diod. Sic. 12.80.23, 15.58; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.44. On Aeschylus' *Suppliants* see below. The democracy was replaced by an oligarchy in 322 but seems to have returned by the end of the century (Diod. Sic. 17.57.1; M. Piérart, "Argos. Un autre democratie," in P. Flensted-Jensen, T. H. Nielsen, and L. Rubinstein, eds., *Polis & Politics: Studies in Ancient Greek History* (Copenhagen, 2000), 297–314, at 309–10).

[2] Robinson, *First Democracies*, 82–8. On the date, see below.

[3] Paus. 2.19.2; Diod. Sic. fr. 7.13.2; Robinson, *First Democracies*, 82–4. Wörrle favors a hoplite *politeia* over *demokratia*; M. Wörrle, *Untersuchungen zur Verfassungsgeschichte von Argos im 5. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (Erlangen, 1964), 101–2.

many new citizens from previously disenfranchised classes of inhabitants. Details vary by author: Herodotus (6.83) calls the newly dominant citizen body "slaves" (*douloi*), while Aristotle (*Pol.* 1303a6–8) and Plutarch (*De mul. vir.* 4) describe them as *perioikoi*, dwellers in dependent lands nearby. We probably ought to associate the newly included inhabitants with the *gumnetes*, Argives whose status has been described as "between free and slave" (Pollux, *Onom.* 3.83). This newly expanded *demos* took full control of the affairs of state, pushing Argos in a democratic direction.[4] Some features familiar to us from the mature Argive democracy (see below) probably had their start at this time, but our sources for the post-Sepeia events do not discuss institutions.

A greater uncertainty, however, concerns the exact date of the battle of Sepeia itself, and with it the timing of the consequent democratic revolution. The 494 date which I and others have used depends on rather vague implications in Herodotus' account: we know it occurred during the reign of the Spartan king Cleomenes (*c.* 525–488), and not too long before the Persian invasion of 480, when the losses at Sepeia could still be considered "recent" according to Herodotus.[5] A date in the later 490s would make good sense, therefore. But some scholars have proposed that the battle took place earlier: Aubonnet in the Budé, for example, would put it in 519 or 509; Vollgraff offers 520.[6] Nothing about these dates would surprise in constitutional terms – the earliest instances of popular governments occurred earlier still in the sixth century – but they do seem to overstretch Herodotus' use of "recent" (*neosti*). We also do not know the exact fate of the newly inclusive post-Sepeia constitutional order: it may have steadily progressed into the fully democratic state we see later in the fifth century, or the road might have been rockier, given the subsequent

[4] Robinson, *First Democracies*, 84–8; Wörrle, *Verfassungsgeschichte von Argos*, 101–11; H.-J. Gehrke, *Stasis. Untersuchungen zu den inneren Kriegen in den griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Munich, 1985), 24–6; F. Ruzé, *Délibération et pouvoir dans la cité grecque* (Paris, 1997), 254–64; H. Leppin, "Argos. Eine griechische Demokratie des fünften Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *Ktema* 24 (1999), 297–312, at 300–3. Cf. D. Lotze, "Zur Verfassung von Argos nach der Schlacht bei Sepei," *Chiron* 1 (1971), 95–109.

[5] 7.148, with 6.19, 6.77. Robinson, *First Democracies*, 84, n. 76. A date in the late 490s would also allow for the expiration of a (putative) fifty-year peace treaty with Sparta after the battle of champions.

[6] J. Aubonnet, *Aristote Politique*, vol. II.2 (Paris, 1973), 157–8; G. Vollgraff, "Ad titulos Argivos," *Mnemosyne* 58 (1930), 20–40, at 27. Ch. Kritzas suggests 505 or 494, but prefers 494, in "Aspects de la vie politique et économique d'Argos au Ve siècle avant J.-C.," in M. Piérart, ed., *Polydipsion Argos* (*BCH Supplement* 22; Paris, 1992), 231–40, at 231. D. M. Lewis offers 494 or a few years earlier in "Mainland Greece, 479–451 B.C.," in D. M. Lewis *et al.*, eds., *CAH*², vol. V (Cambridge, 1992), 96–120, at 101 with n. 16.

social strife mentioned by Herodotus when the sons of the fallen came of age.[7]

But by 470 or 460 the Argive democracy was undoubtedly firmly established and in full swing. Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, produced in the 460s, portrays a popularly managed heroic-age Argos, using phrases such as *to demion, to ptolin kratunei* ("the people, which rules the city," 699).[8] Inscriptions dated by letter forms to 475 or 450 also begin to employ the phrase "decreed by the assembly" (*aliaiai edoxe*) and other democratic formulae.[9] The practice of ostracism is attested for Argos,[10] and a potsherd possibly used in one can be dated to the second quarter of the century (see below). Around this time Argos engaged in the conquest of formerly independent states in nearby areas, including Tiryns and Mycenae, annexing the territory and resettling the lands; combined with the evidence for mid-century creation of a fourth tribe and reorganization of the phratry system, the evidence suggests that a newly aggressive Argos was attempting to integrate more closely an expanding citizen population into the political order.[11] Finally, Argos engaged in a major public building campaign around the middle of the century in and around the agora, including the "theater with straight tiers," where the assembly no doubt met, and a meeting hall (probably for a council) known as the Hypostyle Hall, among other new structures.[12] Taken together, the above evidence strongly indicates that the Argive democracy was coming into its own in the second quarter of the fifth century.

[7] 6.83 refers to the overthrow of the *douloi* by the sons of the fallen, possibly indicating that a backlash returned Argos to a more conservative political order for a time.

[8] Cf. D. Lotze, "Zum Begriff der Demokratie in Aischylos' 'Hiketiden,'" in E. G. Schmidt, ed., *Aischylos und Pindar* (Berlin, 1981), 207–16.

[9] *SEG* 13.239; ML 42. Jameson's suggestion that ML 42 may not be Argive has been firmly rejected: M. Jameson, "A Treasury of Athena in the Argolid (*IG* 4.554)," in D. W. Bradeen and M. F. McGregor, eds., *Phoros* (Locust Valley, 1974), 67–75; *SEG* 49.351.

[10] Arist. *Pol.* 1302b18–19; scholion to Aristophanes, *Knights*, 855.

[11] Kritzas, "Aspects de la vie politique et économique d'Argos"; M. Piérart and G. Touchais, *Argos: un ville grecque de 6000 ans* (Paris, 1996), 42.

[12] Leppin, "Argos," 299–303; K. Barakari-Gléni and A. Pariente, "Argos du VIIième au IIième siècle av. J.-C.: synthèse des données archéologiques," in A. Pariente and G. Touchais, *Argos et l'Argolide: topographie et urbanisme* (Paris, 1998) 165–78 at 166; and A. Pariente, M. Piérart, and J.-P. Thalmann, "Les recherches sur l'agora d'Argos: résultats et perspectives," in Pariente and Touchais, *Argos et l'Argolide*, 211–31 at 213; Piérart and Touchais, *Argos*, 42–52; J.-F. Bommelaer and J. Des Courtils, *La salle hypostyle d'Argos* (Athens, 1994); J. Des Courtils, "L'architecture et l'histoire d'Argos dans la première moitié du Ve siècle avant J.-C.," in M. Piérart, ed., *Polydipsion Argos* (Paris, 1992), 241–51; R. Ginouvès, *Le théatron à gradins droits et l'odéon d'Argos* (Paris, 1972); J.-C. Moretti, with S. Diez, *Théâtres d'Argos* (Athens, 1993), 30–2. Cf. I. Morris, "Beyond Democracy and Empire: Athenian Art in Context," in D. Boedeker and K. A. Raaflaub, eds., *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 59–86 at 82; and T. Hölscher, "Images and Political Identity: The Case of Athens," in Boedeker and Raaflaub, eds., *Democracy, Empire*, 153–84 at 163–9.

The nature of Argive democracy

The institutions and procedures of the democracy at Argos have recently become a matter of some debate. Wörrle's comprehensive 1964 study of the constitution is still the standard work on the subject, but the picture it paints has had to be modified in important ways by the archaeological discoveries made since then. Studies by Piérart, Kritzas, Ruzé, and others have built on Wörrle's treatment to add new detail and depth to our understanding of the Argive system of government.[13] Basic features of the constitution included a popular assembly, called the *aliaia*, a council (*bola*), and another group or council called the Eighty with financial and judicial responsibilities. There was also a variety of officials, including the prominent *artunai* – possibly the chief magistrates, though the word is most often used generically – and treasurers, generals, secretaries, religious and tribal officials, ad hoc boards, and others, including a *basileus* chosen annually and used to date years.[14] The exciting find of numerous Classical-era financial documents from the treasury in an Athena sanctuary – only partly published at the time of this writing – has already deepened our understanding of important aspects of the constitution, especially as concerns different officials.[15]

Deliberation in the state appears to have been handled probouleutically. That is, a council discussed topics first, which were then passed on to the *aliaia* for a final decision. Inscribed documents of official enactments from the fifth and fourth centuries usually begin or end with the phrase *aliaiai edoxe*, "decreed by the assembly." *Damos* appears intermittently as part of the formulae used (e.g., *edoxe toi damoi*, "decreed by the people") only in the later fourth century. Importantly, documents sometimes also contain information about who was president of the council – "X presided (*areteue*)" or "X presided over the council (*areteue bolas*)" – which would seem to confirm prior consideration of these matters by the council.[16]

[13] Kritzas, "Aspects de la vie politique et économique d'Argos"; Ruzé, *Délibération et pouvoir*, 241–88; Piérart, "Argos"; Leppin, "Argos." More generally, M. Piérart in *Inventory*, 604–5.

[14] *Artunai* as the name of magistrates is unusual (though Epidaurus once had councilors called *artunoi*, Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 291E); it is possible that the *artunai* at Argos replaced as top officials the *damiourgoi*, who appear in archaic Argive inscriptions but not in Thucydides 5.47.9 (Gomme, *HCT* and S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, 3 vols. [Oxford, 1991–2008], ad loc.)

[15] See below. Ch. Kritzas, "Nouvelles inscriptions d'Argos: les archives des comptes du trésor sacré (IVe s. av. J.-C.)," *CRAI* (2006), 397–434, and "Literacy and Society: The Case of Argos," *Kodai Journal of Ancient History* 13/14 (2003/4), 53–60.

[16] P. J. Rhodes, with D. M. Lewis, *The Decrees of the Greek States* (Oxford, 1997), 67–8, 70–1, 476, with 475–8 generally. Ruzé, *Délibération et pouvoir*, conveniently tabulates the most relevant documentary data at pp. 265–6.