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R. K. Sinclair

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R. K. Sinclair

Associate Professor of Ancient History,
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Preface

In the period from the middle of the fifth century to 322 B.C. the affairs of Athens were determined by a system of direct democracy involving thousands of citizens in the assembly, the courts and other institutions. The idea of participation or sharing is central to Greek thought and writing about citizenship and political life. Aristotle identified the distinguishing feature of a citizen as the possession of the right to participate in the exercise of power – in the courts, in the assembly, and in the offices of state. That definition of a citizen, he argued, applied especially to citizenship in a democracy.

The centrality of participation in the concept of citizenship is reflected in the lofty rhetoric of Perikles (as reported by Thucydides):

We find it possible for the same people to attend to private affairs and public affairs as well, and notwithstanding our varied occupations to be adequately informed about public affairs. For we are unique in regarding the man who does not participate in these affairs at all not as a man who minds his own business, but as useless. We ourselves decide matters or submit them to proper consideration, taking the view that debate is not harmful to action, but rather that it is harmful not to be informed, through discussion, before we proceed to take the necessary action.

Yet even Perikles' words imply that some Athenians were 'useless'. Three generations later, Demosthenes painted a very different picture from Perikles' vision. In a law suit in 355 he maintained that the outgoing Council of 500 had allowed itself to be dominated by 'a gang of orators'. He stressed the need for 'the majority not to leave matters in the hands of the talkers, but to offer the best advice themselves'.

The central interest of this book is the participation of citizens in the life of Athens in the period from the middle of the fifth century to 322 B.C. Both the possibilities and the realities – the manner and extent of participation, the cost and the consequences – are examined. Greek concepts and terms have been employed where appropriate, and the reader seeking clarification of an unfamiliar term may consult the index where an asterisk indicates where an explanation of the term may be found.

For Greek terms I have usually adopted direct transliteration from Greek (for example, *dēmokratia*), though occasionally I have used a form that has become firmly established in English (for example, chorus). Greek names, both personal and geographical, have long presented an intractable problem, for the goals of

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close transliteration, consistency, and the use of familiar forms cannot all be accommodated. The transliterated form of Greek names has been used as far as seemed consistent with reasonable ease of recognition. I have mostly preferred 'k' to 'c' (as in Perikles), 'kh' to 'ch' (as in Khalkidike), 'os' to 'us' (as in Dionysos), 'on' to 'um' (as in Sounion), 'ai' and 'oi' to 'ae' and 'i' (as in Aigospotamoi), 'ei' to 'i' (as in Peiraieus) and 'ou' to 'u' (as in Euboulos). In a few cases, usually place names, I have used the familiar anglicised form: for example, Athens, Corinth, Thebes. The spelling of the names of ancient writers presents special difficulties. Herodotos and Andokides are readily recognised as the historian and the orator. But I have retained forms which are firmly established in English and involve a loss or modification of the original ending (in particular, Aristotle and Plato) and on grounds of familiarity I have retained Thucydides and Aeschylus (despite the inconsistency with Aiskhines).

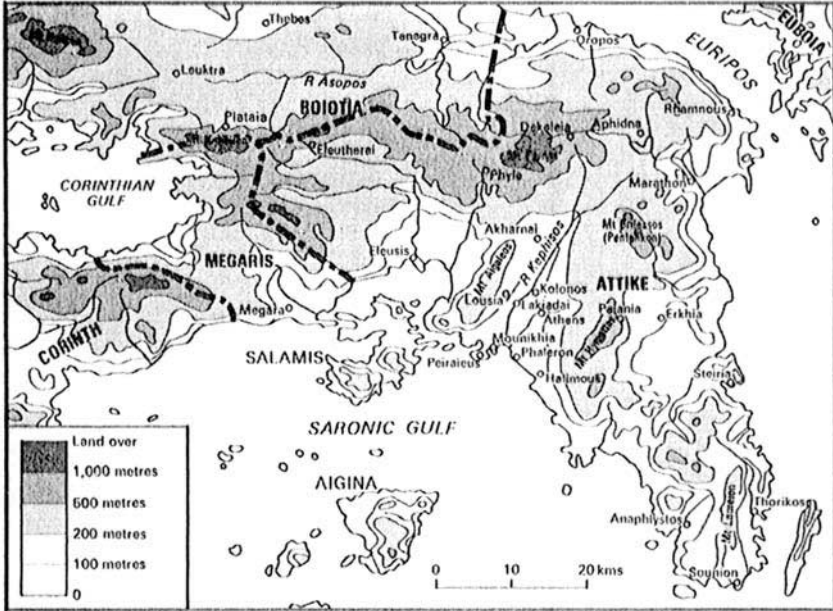
It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to many people. First, to the numerous scholars who have contributed to the understanding of Athenian democracy. The bibliography testifies to this, and the lively interest which has been evident in the last three decades is reflected in discussions that have appeared since the completion of this manuscript. The book has benefited from comments and suggestions by Dr P. A. Cartledge, Sir Kenneth Dover, Professors Chr. Habicht, N. G. L. Hammond, M. H. Hansen, D. M. Lewis and R. S. Stroud, and particularly the late Mr G. T. Griffith. Professor W. Ritchie has read the proofs. I would also record my debt to the skill and interest of the staff of the Cambridge University Press.

I would express, too, my appreciation of the support of the University of Sydney, which granted me two periods of study leave to facilitate the writing of this book, and of the hospitality of the President and Fellows of Clare Hall in Cambridge.

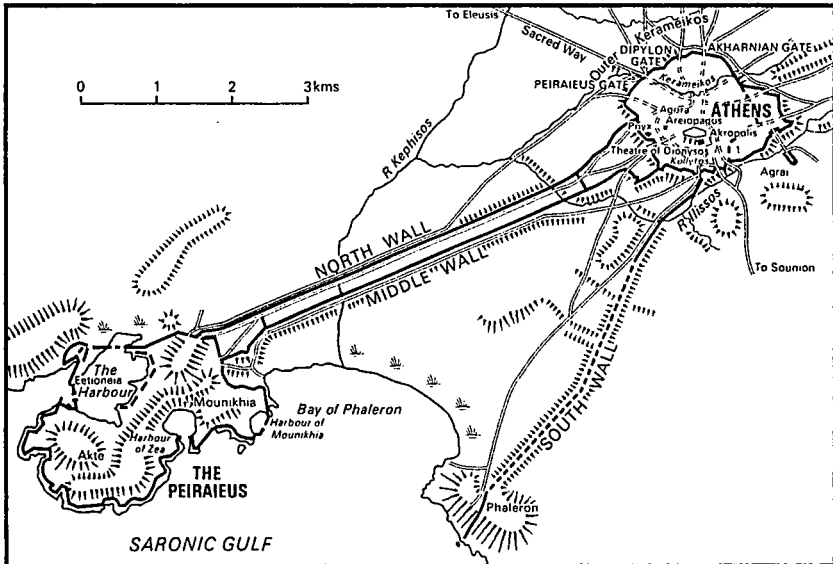
My wife Pat has, with our daughters, given assistance and support at every stage: it is to her that this book is dedicated.

University of Sydney
June 1987

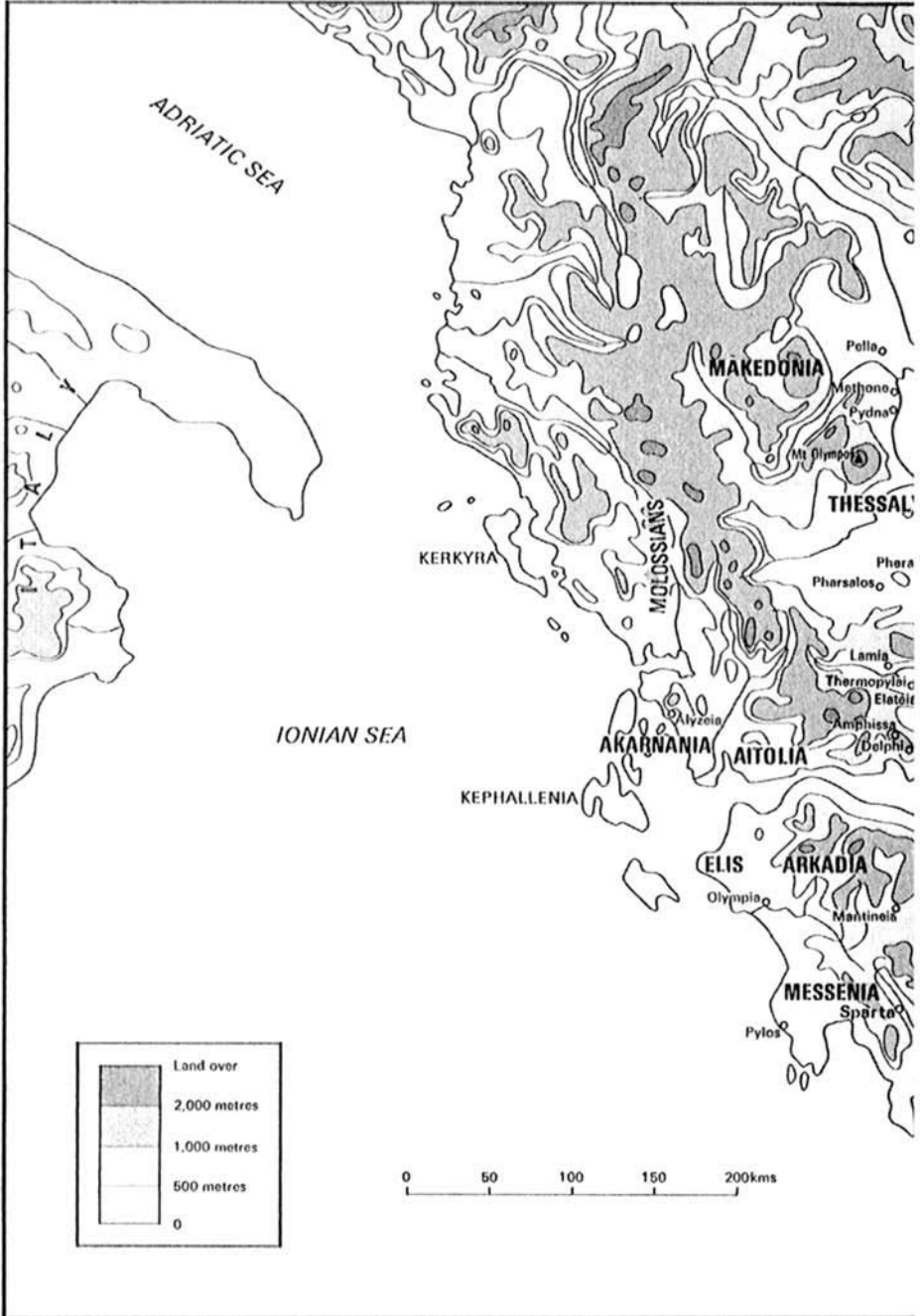
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Athens and the Peiraius



Greece and the Aegean

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