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A New Political Order in the Late Sixth Century BC Athens Powered by the Delphic Oracle

Abstract: After the murder of Hipparchus, the exiled Alcmaionids try unsuccessfully to overrule Hippias. A year later, Cleisthenes the Alcmaionid decides to finance the completion of the new temple of Apollo at Delphi, and the Pythia, in return, gives ultimatums to the Spartans that they should first free Athens from the tyranny before attempting further military enterprises. Moreover, Apollo decided on the new Athenian constitutional order in 508/7.[1] Through his priestess, the god confirms the new tribal reform by choosing the ten eponymous heroes- protectors of the new subdivisions of the Athenian political body. In return, Athens constructs in the Delphic sanctuary a superb new treasury. As a case study of the political role of oracles in antiquity, the present paper addresses the decisive role of the Delphic oracle in the fall of tyranny as well as in the establishment of a new democratic constitution in Athens, following the narrative of Herodotus, and by also examining the archaeological material of the period from the Delphic sanctuary.

Keywords: Pythia, Delphi, Apollo's temple, Cleisthenes, tribal reform, eponymous heroes, isonomia, Athenian treasury

Introductory remarks

In 508/7, the Athenian demos decided -in a sovereign way- to establish a new regime in its state, *isonomia,*[2] according to the political suggestions of Cleisthenes,[3] the leader

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1 All provided dates are BC.

2 See my forthcoming article (Krikona forthcoming b) on isonomia as a constitution.

3 Hdt, 5.66; *AP,* 20.1. On the Cleisthenic reforms in general see Lévêque/Vidal-Naquet 1964; Lewis 1963, 22–40; Pleket 1972, 63–81; Bicknell 1972, 1–53; Andrewes 1977; Meier 1980, 93–142; Ober 1989; Ruzé 1997, 369–387; Anderson 2000. On the time of Cleisthenes in Athens see in general Hansen 1994; Pritchard 2004; Raaflaub/Ober/Wallace 2007; Osborne 2010; Azoulay/Ismard 2011; Cartledge 2016, with further references in p. 318.

of the Alcmaionids.[4] But how did the political Athenian stage become available to Cleisthenes and his *hetairoi* to put forward some laws[5] that would change the constitutional order in Athens, which remained unchanged since the early sixth century? And how did the reforms of 508/7 become a political reality as early as the late sixth century? Would the ratification of these reforms by the Athenian assembly be enough for a new constitutional order to be accepted and not questioned, as it was established solely by the Athenian citizenry for the first time, without the help of a reformer or a tyrant, as the common practice until then dictated in the Greek world? The Delphic oracle here is pivotal in establishing the first democratic constitution in history.

The Delphic Sanctuary of Apollo

In the second half of the 7th century, the Delphic sanctuary (Fig. 1) received its first (known) monumental dedications and gradually became a Panhellenic sanctuary. Apollo spoke through his oracle, the Pythia.[6] The growing reputation of Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi for dealing with public matters from the 7th century onwards is due to its decisive role in the early stages of Greek colonization. By the fifth century, the Delphic sanctuary had proven itself the most flexible and 'international' stage of political influence in the ancient Greek world.

In 548/7, the temple of Apollo was destroyed by fire,[7] and the amphictyony of Delphi made a public plea throughout Greece and beyond for financial contributions by

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4 The 'manoeuvre' of Cleisthenes, shortly after the failed attempt at Leipsydrion, to finance the reconstruction of the Apollo temple at Delphi to exert a decisive influence, through which his main goal was going to be achieved, meaning the abolition of the tyranny in Athens, is a characteristic tactic of the political behavior of the reformer also from 510 onwards (on the demotic manoeuvre of the Alcmaionid in 508/7 see Camassa 2000 and also below). Here, it is also proven that Cleisthenes now holds the leadership of his clan. On the clan of the Alcmaionids see *AP* 20.1, 28.2; Hesychius a3097 (Harpokration): Ἀλκμαιωνίδαι·γένος Ἀθήνησιν, ἀπό Ἀλκμαίωνος τοῦ κατά Θησέα; Hdt, 6.125.1. On the fact that the family of the Alcmaionids was so rich and powerful that it gave its name to the whole clan of Alcmaionids, see Ferguson 1938, 43 fn. 3; Hignett 1952, 316.

5 On the laws of Cleisthenes, as written decisions possibly kept in the archives see *AP* 29.3. On the Athenian laws in the fourth century see Hansen 1978; Canevaro 2015.

6 His priestess had to be an older woman of blameless life chosen from among the peasants of the area. Alone in an enclosed inner sanctum (*adyton*), she sat on a tripod seat over an opening in the earth (*chasm*). According to legend, when Apollo slew Python, a serpent or a dragon that lived there and protected the navel of the Earth before the arrival of the god, its body fell into this fissure, and fumes arose from its decomposing body. Intoxicated by the vapors, the priestess would fall into a trance, allowing Apollo to possess her spirit. In this state, she prophesied. On the Delphic sanctuary of Apollo see in general Scott 2010; Scott 2014; and also Krikona 2018 regarding the Athenian dedications at Delphi.

7 Paus. 10.5.13.
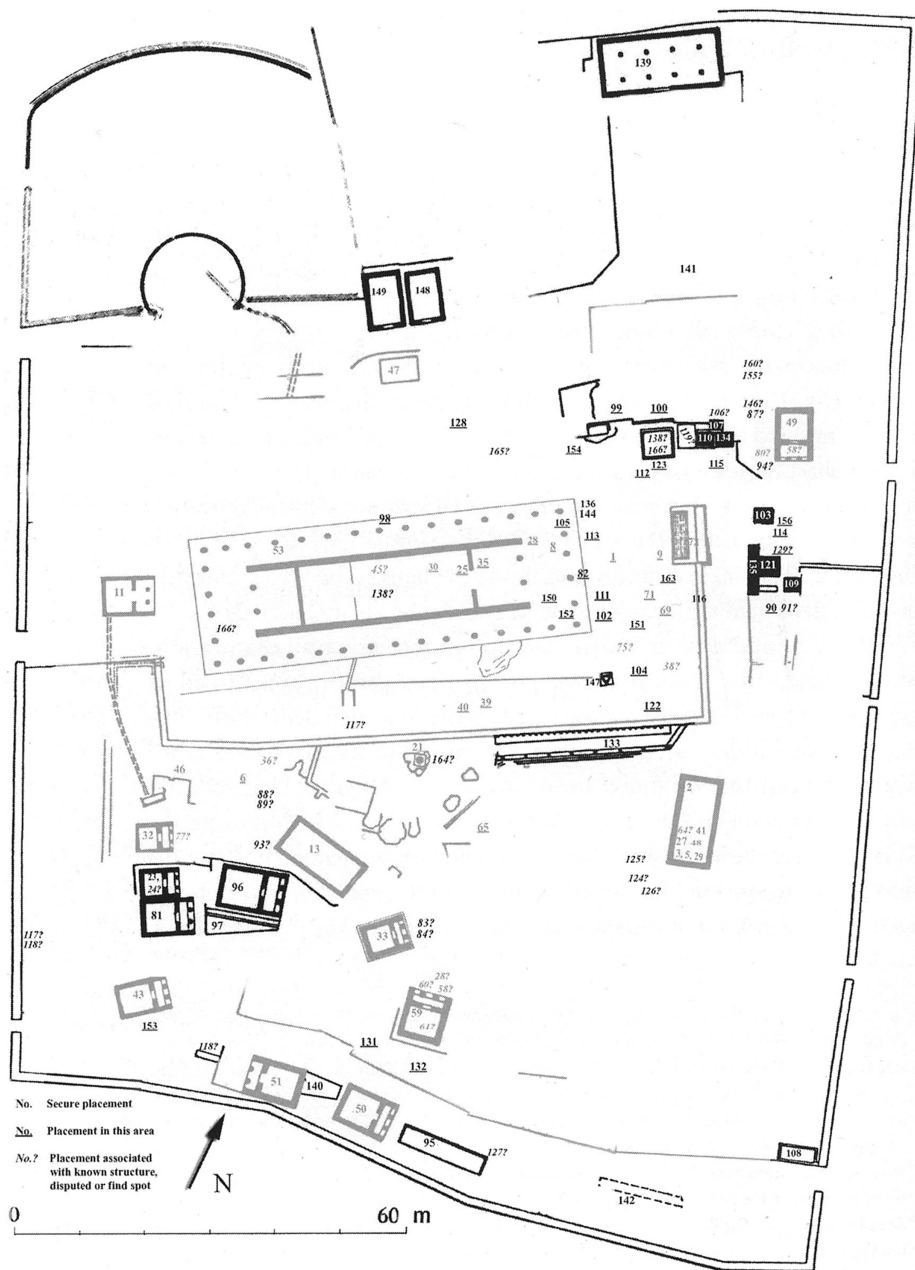
Fig. 1: Map of the Apollo sanctuary at Delphi 500-450 BC. Image: after Scott 2010, 76, fig. 4.1, courtesy of the author.

the Greek states and foreign kings to support the reconstruction of the temple. By 514, the temple was still under construction; the gathered funds did not suffice to complete the reconstruction by that time.

Cleisthenes, Delphi, and the fall of tyranny in Athens

After the tyrant Peisistratus's death, political control in Athens lies in the hands of Hippias and Hipparchus, who seem to maintain good relations with the most important Athenian aristocratic clans, including the Alcmaionids. After the death of Peisistratus in 527/6, Cleisthenes returned to Athens from exile, became the leader of his clan, and also an eponymous archon in the city in 525/4.[8] However, after the assassination of Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogeiton[9] during the Panathenaic procession of the year 514/3, the tyranny of Hippias becomes harsher.[10] The Alcmaionids decided to abandon the city once more[11] and attempted several times, however unsuccessfully, to overthrow Hippias, who enjoyed the support of the Athenian demos. The most significant attempt against Hippias led by Cleisthenes takes place in Leipsydrion in 513 but is a complete military failure.[12]

Who would be in a position to overthrow the tyrant of Athens? Sparta was the most potent military power of that time, but how and why would the Lacedaemonians decide to intervene in the political affairs of Athens, supporting the interests of Cleisthenes? The strongest ally of the Alcmaionids by that time was the Delphic oracle. The Alcmaionids maintained very close relations with Delphi since the time of Alcmaion, son of Megacles I, when around 594, he was the leader of the Athenian army during the first sacred war against Crisa.[13] Thanks to Megacles' participation in that war, the clan of the Alcmaionids gained significant power and wealth.

As mentioned above, Cleisthenes failed to overthrow Hippias's tyranny by his military force in 513, even with the support of his fellow aristocrats. He decides then to

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8 See Meritt 1939, 59–65; Meiggs/Lewis 1969, 9–12 regarding the fragment of the list with the names of the eponymous archons in Athens after the death of Peisistratus.

9 The Tyrannicides were members of the Gephyraioi clan (Hdt. 5.53–61). On the events of 514 and their different interpretations see *AP* 18; Thuc. 6.54–56.

10 *AP* 19.1; Hdt. 5.55, 5.62; Thuc. 6.59.

11 On the exile of the Alcmaionids after 514 see Hdt. 5.62; *AP* 19.3–4; Isocr. 15.232. See also Lévêque/ Vidal-Naquet 1964, 149 fn. 30; Fornara/Samons 1991, 21; Anderson 2000. On the military efforts of the Alcmaionids against Hippias after 514 see *AP* 19.4 and 20.4–5.

12 Hdt. 5.62.2; *AP* 19.3.

13 We are informed by Plut. Solon, 11.3 that Alcmaion was the leader of the Athenian forces in the first Sacred War against Crisa, a city in the valley under the Delphic sanctuary. In the attack, also participated Eurylochus from Thessaly and Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon. Alcmaion had already developed ties with Delphi, as the following passage indicates; that's why he was chosen as the leader of the Athenian troops: Hdt. 6.125.

plead with Delphi to support his political cause.[14] Only Delphi can convince the Spartans to interfere in Athenian political affairs, for who would dare to ignore the will of the god Apollo? The Alcmaionids decided to finance the completion of the reconstruction of the temple of Apollo,[15] made in limestone. Even though the contract between Cleisthenes and the Delphic amphictyony did not require anything more extravagant than that, Cleisthenes decided that the east façade of the temple would be made exclusively of Parian marble. He guarantees that the theme of the east pediment will honor this Athenian generosity (Fig. 2): the center of the pediment is occupied by Apollo's four-horse chariot framed by *kouroi* and *korai*.

In both corners, animal groups depict a lion mauling a gentle beast. The interpretation of the subject is based on the introductory verses of the Aeschylean *Eumenides*,[16] in which the Pythia stands before the temple of Apollo and narrates the god's arrival, his epiphany, at Delphi from Athens. Apollo was seen off by the Athenians and greeted with great honors by the people of Delphi and their king, Delphus. Moreover, interesting here

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14 The Alcmaionids signed a contract, as stressed below in the main text, to finance the reconstruction of the temple of Apollo to increase their political influence through the Delphi oracle, the most important Panhellenic sanctuary of the Greek world, politically speaking. We disagree with Jacoby's view (FGrHist, III b 2, 357 et seq., 454) that the Alcmaionids took advantage of the temple's rebuilding to increase their income. This view is mainly based on the passage of AP 19.4: ἀποτυγχάνοντες οὖν ἅπασι τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐμισθώσαντο τόν ἐν Δελφοῖς νεών οἰκοδομεῖν, ὅθεν εὐπόρησαν χρημάτων πρός τήν τῶν Λακώνων βοήθειαν, see also Philochorus or the scholiast of the seventh Pythionicus by Pindar, who stresses: Λέγεται γάρ ὅτι τον Πυθικόν νεών ἐμπρησθέντα, ὥς τινές φασίν τῶν Πεισιστρατιδῶν, οἱ Ἀλκμεωνίδαι φυγαδευθέντες ὑπό τῶν Πεισιστρατιδῶν ὑπέσχοντο ἀνοικοδομήσειν καί δεξάμενοι χρήματα καί συναγαγόντες δύναμιν ἐπέθεντο τοῖς Πεισιστρατίδαις, καί νικήσαντες μετ' εὐχαριστηρίων πλειόνων ἀνῳκοδόμησαν τῶι θεῶι τό τέμενος, ὡς Φιλόχορος ἱστορεῖ, εὐξάμενοι πρότερον τῶι θεῶι; and: φιλοῦντες γάρ τήν δημοκρατίαν τοῖς Πεισιστρατίδαις ἀντέστησαν καί οὕτως ἐφυγαδεύθησαν, εἶτα δανεισάμενοι χρήματα αὐτοί οἱ Ἀλκμεωνίδαι συνήγαγον δύναμιν καί ἐπιθέμενοι τοῖς τυράννοις καθεῖλον καί ἠλευθέρωσαν τήν πόλιν (Dilts 1986, or. 21, 144, 498). See similarly the comment of Demosthenes, κατά Μειδίου 21.144: ὁ Μεγακλῆς τήν θυγατέρα ὀφείλκυσε καί ᾤχετο αὐτός εἰς Δελφούς. Τότε δέ ἐμπρησθέντος τοῦ νεώ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἐκήρυξαν οἱ Δελφοί τόν βουλόμενον μισθώσασθαι πρός κατασκευήν τοῦ νεώ. ὁ Μεγακλῆς οὖν ἐδέξατο καί λαβών δέκα τάλαντα τρία μέν ἀνάλωσεν εἰς τήν κατασκευήν, ἐκ δέ τῶν ἑπτά δύναμίν τινα συνήθροισε, καί πείσας Λακεδαιμονίους βοηθεῖν ἐπί τάς Ἀθήνας Πεισίστρατον μέν οὐκέτι ζῶντα κατέλαβεν, Ἱππίαν δέ τόν ἐκείνου παῖδα τυραννοῦντο ἐξέβαλεν (Dilts 1986, 226, 11–18). We agree with Hdt. 5.66 and 6.123, who mentions that Cleisthenes merely persuaded Pythia to communicate to the Lacedaemonians the message of the liberation of Athens from the tyrants. The Alcmaionids must have maintained control over their property, part of which they should have been able to take with them, when they decided to flee from Athens in 514. Thanks to that fortune, they undertook the finance of the temple reconstruction at Delphi, which was completed in around 506, and in that way, they gained political control over other Greek city-states through the oracle. But "turning this game into a deceitful fraud against Apollo is a mere misinterpretation", as Lévêque/Vidal-Naquet 1964, 151 precisely observe.

15 Hdt. 5.62. On the archaic temple of Apollo at Delphi see Homolle 1902, 587–639; De la Coste-Messelière 1946, 271–287; Childs 1993, 399–441.

16 Aesch. Eum. 1–19.

Fig. 2: Sculptural decorations from the East Pediment of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, ca. 513 BC. Archaeological Museum of Delphi. Image: German Archaeological Institut at Athens (DAI Athen), D-DAI-ATH-Delphi 349 (Photo: Gösta Hellner), 1964. https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/94141. Archaeological Museum of Delphi (Courtesy of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-Archaeological Resources Found).

is the fact that the sculptor of this last phase of construction of the temple, at least as far as the ornament of the east pediment is concerned, appears to be Antenor,[17] as the Athenian *korai* are similar to the so-called '*kore* of Antenor' from the Athenian Acropolis.[18] This very sculptor was soon to construct the first statue group of the Tyrannicides (Fig. 3), which stands probably in the Athenian Agora after the fall of tyranny.[19]

The sanctuary of Delphi has, thanks to Cleisthenes, not only a wholly reconstructed temple but also an impressive one. The Pythia, in return, starts giving ultimata to the Spartans that they should first free Athens from the tyranny of Hippias before they attempt any other military enterprises.[20] Sparta indeed obeys the god's

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17 It is believed that Antenor had the overall supervision, if not the whole construction of the pediments and the acroterial *Nike* of the temple. The head, face and hair of the acroterial *Nike* as well as of the *korai* from the east pediment of the temple show striking similarities to the head of Antenor's *kore*. On this basis, they are attributed to Antenor. Moreover, the Nike Acroterion with the wide paryphe and the spaced folds of her skirt (see Boardman 1978, fig. 204; Stewart 1990, fig. 204) are a characteristic technique used in the *korai* of the east pediment of the temple and in Antenor's *kore* on the Athenian Acropolis.

18 Childs 1993, 411.

19 On the dating of the statue group of the Tyrannicides see below fn. 26. Suffice here to say that we should underline the significance of the fact that Antenor, at around the same time as the completion of the reconstruction of the Apollo temple at Delphi (507/6), constructs the first statue group of the Tyrannicides, which stood in the heart of the Athenian state, the agora. This indicates that Antenor's employer, Cleisthenes, aimed at initiating and promoting an anti-tyrannical cult, that of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, among the Athenians, already from around 506. The promotion of this political cult soon after the political reforms of the Alcmaionid constitutes a focal point in understanding the promotion of cults of a mainly political character, which were strictly associated with the importance of the new constitutional order in Athens.

20 Hdt. 5.63–5; *AP* 19.4–6. See also Fontenrose1978, 121, 239, 309. For the political influence of the Alcmaionids on the Delphic oracle see Crahay 1956, 165, 280–289; Parke-Wormell 1956, 141–148; Forrest 1969, 277–286; Barrett 1972, 70. Therefore, the Alcmaionids indirectly, through the Lacedaemonians,
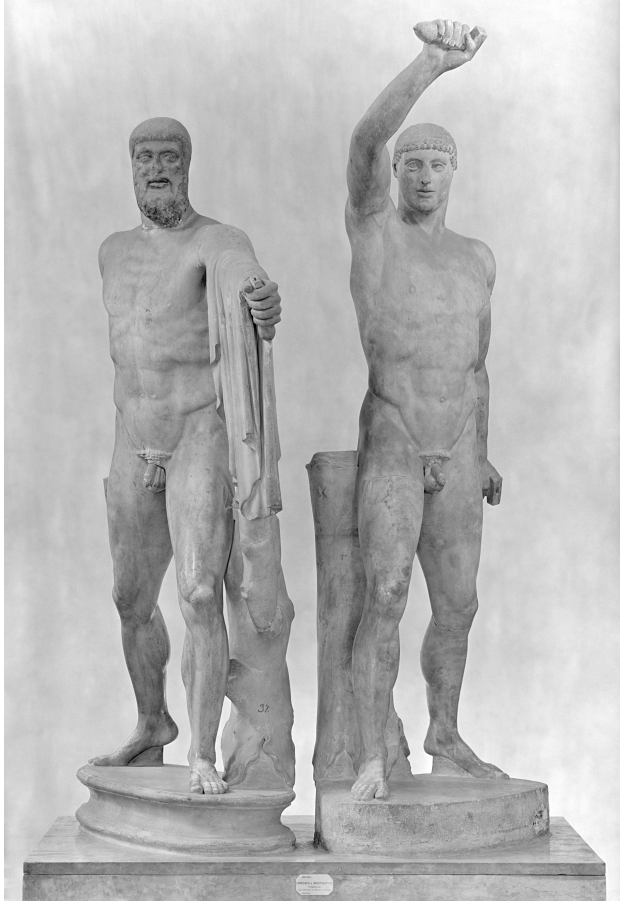
Fig. 3: Roman marble copies (2nd century AD) of statue-group of the Tyrannicides by Kritios and Nesiotes (477/6 BC), Archaeological Museum of Naples. Image: D-DAI-ROM-58.1789, Foto F.X. Bartl, https://arachne. dainst.org/entity/5569125.

will, and after two Spartan invasions into Attica, led by the Spartan king Cleomenes I and supported by Cleisthenes and the rest of the aristocrats, Hippias is forced to abandon Athens in 511/10.[21]

through the oracle of Delphi, will achieve the final abolition of the tyranny in Athens (Thuc. 6.59). On the role of the Alcmaionids in liberating Athens from the tyrannical governance see also Robinson 1994, 363–369.

21 Hdt. 5.62–65; AP 19; Thuc. 6.59.

Cleisthenes, the Athenian demos, and the introduction of a new political order in the Athenian state

Immediately after the fall of tyranny, two aristocrats fight each other over who will prevail on the political stage of Athens: Cleisthenes and Isagoras, the son of Teisandrus.[22] Isagoras succeeded in being elected as an eponymous archon of the year 508/7[23] and is now in a position to change the constitution, turning it into an oligarchy. It is not the first time that Cleisthenes has failed in his plans, but as he has previously proved, he always has an ally more potent than his enemy. This time, it is the Athenian demos. It is peculiar how he manages to gain the political favor of the Athenian demos that favored the tyrants until then.[24]

The complex tactic of Cleisthenes regarding the Athenian citizenry in the late sixth century could constitute the topic of an individual article that goes beyond the scope of the present study. However, it suffices here to be noticed that it has to do with the anti-tyrannical feelings that Cleisthenes managed to inspire in the Athenian demos through the initiation and promotion of the cult of the Tyrannicides,[25] whose statue-group made by Antenor stood in the heart of the Athenian state, possibly as early as 509.[26] Moreover, Cleisthenes's tactic is associated with the political promise of *isonomia,*[27] the slogan of the Alcmaionid, and his political suggestion in contrast to the politics of Isagoras.

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22 Hdt. 5.66.

23 Dionys. 1.74.6; 5.1.1.

24 In the most significant attack against the tyrant Hippias in Leipsydrion in 513 (Hdt. 5.62.2; AP 19.3), the Athenian demos did not participate in overthrowing the tyranny, which was purely an aristocratic initiative. In AP 19.3, it is stated that the exiles of Athens, whom the Alcmaionids were leading (Isocr. 16.26), were supported by τινες τῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἄστεως. This is completely understood, given the tremendous influence the Alcmaionids exerted on the asty of the Athenian state. By no means do we imply the existence of an urban deme. After all, the comment on the *AP*, 19.3 speaks of ἀγαθούςτε καί εὐπατρίδας, which means that the battle at Leipsydrion was an aristocratic affair, in which the demos of the *asty*, which mainly consisted of poor Athenians, who were also in favor of the tyrants, was not so much involved.

25 See in detail Krikona 2019 with references.

26 According to Plin. nat. hist. 34.17), the statue group of the Tyrannicides, made by Critias and Nesiotes in 477/6 (Marmor Parium 54; Paus. 1.8.5), replaced the first statue group, which was made by Antenor and was standing in Athens *eodem anno quo et Romaereges pulsi*, meaning since 509. On the chronology of the construction of the first statue group see Raubitschek 1940, 58 fn. 2, who dates it after the battle of Marathon. See also Shapiro 1994, 124. On the earlier dating, immediately after the fall of tyranny see Fornara 1970, 157; Brunnsåker 1971, 13–14, 40–43. On the Tyrannicides' statue groups see also Anderson 2003, 198–206; 2007; Azoulay 2014.

27 On the watchword *isonomia* as a banner of Cleisthenes, aiming at taking the demos into his political side to defeat his opponent, Isagoras see Ostwald 1969, 155–157 with fn. 2; Ober 1989, 74; Sakellariou

Cleisthenes, having gained invaluable political experience, first as an eponymous archon and then as a member of the Areopagus, during his residency in Athens since 525 under the tyrants, noticed the formation of an undercurrent of political identity, especially in the citizens of the *asty*,[28] that was in progress, mainly through the maintenance of the Solonian constitutional order.[29] The tyrants must have often summoned the assembly to inform the Athenians of their political decisions or to submit them to the citizens' judgment, seeking their ratification and unwittingly shaping the Athenians' political consciousness. Consequently, the assembly (which took place in the agora from the mid-sixth century) and the centralized political power gained political significance, as the heart of the state, the *asty*, was reinforced. Finally, as the citizen body of Athens was enlarged because of the tyrants, who gradually conferred political rights on more and more of their foreign supporters, the significance of the citizenry was raised.

Moreover, we should remember that significant religious changes took place in Athens in the sixth century, pushing forward some cults as 'national' festivals. These "national" cults not only highlighted the importance of the *asty* but led to the formation of "ethnic" consciousness in the Athenian inhabitants. Firstly, in 566/5,[30] Athena's festival was reorganized from 'Athenaia' to 'Panathenaia',[31] meaning the festival of all the Athenians; however, no literary or archeological[32] source confirms that it happened under Peisistratus, except one.[33] It is, however, certain that the tyrants, especially Hippias and Hipparchus, broadened the existing festival and the worship of Athena.[34]

1999, 106, 323–328. *Isonomia* as a former aristocratic slogan against tyranny that is being reused by Cleisthenes see Ehrenberg 1950, 530–534; Vlastos 1953, 339–347, 363–365; Vlastos 1964, 257 fn. 43, 258–261; Larsen 1948, 8; Lévêque/Vidal-Naquet 1964, 48; Touloumakos 1979, 22 fn. 65. See however the doubts against this idea of *isonomia* as an aristocratic slogan, as expressed by Ehrenberg 1950, 531. On the democratic legislation of the struggle against tyranny see in general Teegarden 2014.

28 See Krikona 2016 in detail.

29 AP 16.2; Plut. Solon, 31.3; Thuc. 6.54.6.

30 On the chronology of the reorganization see Ziehen 1949, 459, s.v. Panathenaia; Hignett 1952, 113; Davison 1958, 26–29; Shapiro1989, 19–20.

31 E.g. Anderson 2003, 174–177. On the origins of the Panathenaia see also Davison 1958, 25–26; Robertson 1985, 266–267; Robertson 1992, 91–93. On the festival of the Panathenaia see in general Farnell1986, vol. I, 294–298; Deubner 1959, 22–35; Parke 1977, 33–50; Simon 1983, 55–72; Neils 1996.

32 Cf. Boersma 2000, 49–56.

33 Scholia on Aelius Aristeides 13.189.4–5 (3,323 Dindorf). It is much probable, but still contains a significant element of conjecture, that it was Lycurgus, the leader of the Plainsmen in the 560s (Hdt. 1.59), who took the initiative of the reorganization, and whose family, the Boutadai (later Eteoboutadai) controlled the cult of Athena Polias. See also Shapiro 1989, 20–21; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000, 80 fn. 4; Anderson 2003, 162–163.

34 On the rhapsodic competitions at the Panathenaia under the Peisistratids see Plato, Hipparchus 228b. See also Davison 1958, 39–40; Shapiro 1989, 43–44; 1993, 92–107. On the building policy of the

Yet no matter how active a role Peisistratus had or had not in 566/5, the transformation of a modest festival to a major 'national' affair was a fact. The expansion of the Panathenaia as a supreme ceremonial expression of the collective identity in Athens not only raised 'ethnic' consciousness but lessened the importance of cults in local districts controlled by the elite. Through these local cults, the aristocrats used to force a great deal of political control over the citizens of the rural demes, but now their political power has gradually ceased.

As far as the establishment of the Great Dionysia, also known as the "Great (or "City") Dionysia",[35] is concerned, there is no specific indication that Peisistratus brought the cult of Dionysus to Athens.[36] It is probably more likely that the cult image from Eleutherai predated the tyranny of Peisistratus[37] and that the casual strategy of tyrants concerning the two above-mentioned major festivals of Athens was to "promote cults that had been firmly established in the first half of the sixth century, rather introduce new ones", as explicitly Shapiro underlines.[38]

Undoubtedly, while attempting to ensure their political rule, the tyrants' policy was the centralization of political power and the equation of the citizen body, as a whole, with the Athenian state. Towards these aims, Peisistratus and his sons extensively promoted the greatest two festivals, Panathenaia and Great Dionysia, as celebrations for the whole citizenry of Athens, lessening the political power of the aristocracy in the local districts. In this way, communal solidarity was emphasized, and the abstract notion of 'Athens' and 'the Athenians' was specified to the citizenry. Now, the Athenian citizens, equal with each other on this 'national' basis, could identify with this collective name "the Athenians" and the process of Attica's political unification had finally begun,[39] formulating the proper foundation for Athens to reach the ultimate stage of its unification at the end of the sixth century, through Cleisthenes' reorganization of the state.

The emerging 'ethnic' consciousness, shaped through constant tyrannical cult propaganda, would indirectly support the attachment of a greater meaning to Athenian citizenship; as Ober precisely indicates: "The Athenian masses were increasingly conscious of themselves not just in relation to inferior status groups within the state but

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Peisistratids, concerning the promotion of the Panathenaic festival (Old Propylon and Athena Polias temple ["*Archaios Neos*"]) see in general Boersma1970, 20–21; Shapiro 1989, 21–24.

35 On the festival of the Great Dionysia see in general Farnell 1909, vol. V, 224–230; Pickard-Cambridge 1953, 55–103; Deubner 1959, 138–142; Parke 1977, 125–135; Simon 1983, 101–104.

36 Cf. Kleine 1973, 26–28; Shapiro 1989, 86. For the contrary view see e.g. Parke 1977, 128–129; Simon 1983, 104. On the evidence associating Peisistratus with the City Dionysia or Dionysus Eleuthereus see Kolb 1977, 124–134.

37 But even if the cult of Dionysus was not introduced to the city by Peisistratus, this deity of popular appeal, and his festivals, was undoubtedly encouraged by the tyrants in an effort to deprive aristocrats of their political privileges, which derived from their rites in rural areas. Cf. Parke 1977, 129.

38 Shapiro 1989, 86.

39 On the cults and festivals as a fundamental part of Peisistratus' 'unification' of Athens: Frost 1990, 3–9.

in relation to other peoples and to the Athenian state itself".[40] Consequently, the formation of this political identity and self-consciousness in the Athenian Demos under the tyrants – even though still 'hypnotized' – would lead to the beginning of a new era for the city-state of Athens.

Defeated by Isagoras, Cleisthenes seeks a more potent political ally to promote his political vision. The Alcmaionid gains the political loyalty of the demos,[41] as he recognizes its political power, by underlining the political identity of the Athenian citizens and activating their political consciousness.[42] In other words, Cleisthenes recognized the absolute authority of the Demos, the majority of the Athenian citizens, in the political

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40 Ober 1989, 66–67.

41 Hdt. 5.66: ἐσσούμενος δέ ὁ Κλεισθένης τόν δῆμον προσεταιρίζεται; AP 20.1: ἡττώμενος δέ ταῖς ἑταιρείαις ὁ Κλεισθένης προσηγάγετο τόν δῆμον. Cleisthenes incorporated into his hetaireia (his existing aristocratic allies), the Athenian demos, the poorest of citizens and also non-citizens. On the *hetaireia* of Cleisthenes and his relationship with the Athenian demos see Camassa 2000, 41–56. The socalled "ἑταιρεῖαι" are usually called the aristocratic political factions, through which political influence was exercised in the late 5th and the 4rth centuries (on a brief description of their role in classical Athens see Sealey 1960, 155–156; MacDowell 1962, 190–193). Even though the existence of such *hetaireiai* in the late 6th century Athens is doubted (see Wade-Gery 1958, 138), at least in the form they have in the late 5th (in the years 415, 411 and 404), the reference of the author of the AP on hetaireiai (20.1) can indicate the rivalry between the two aristocrats, Cleisthenes and Isagoras. In this debate about gaining political power and influence in Athens, they would have mainly supported their fellow aristocrats (*hetairoi*). Therefore, when Hdt. 5.66 writes ἐσσούμενος δέ ὁ Κλεισθένης τόν δῆμον προσεταιρίζεται, he means that the demos took the place of Cleisthenes' older supporters (the aristocrats who belonged to this clan), as a greater power than his faction, and as *hetairoi* they supported each other. On the origins of the *hetaireiai* see Calhoun 1913.

42 The way Cleisthenes defeated Isagoras is stressed by the author of AP 20.1–2 as ἀποδιδούς τῷ πλήθει τήν πολιτείαν. On the vast debate concerning the meaning of this passage see Wade-Gery 1933, 21; Hignett 1952, 126 ff, 130, 393–394; Ostwald 1969, 155 ff; Lévêque/Vidal-Naquet 1964, 51–53; Rhodes 1993, 248. We do not know when exactly the political reforms, proposed by Cleisthenes, were ratified by the Athenian assembly. Based on the narrative of AP 20–21, it must have happened after the summer of 508, meaning after the election of Isagoras as an eponymous archon. We do not agree with Knight 1970, 18–20; Bicknell 1972, 41 fn. 158; Pleket 1972, 74–76 that Cleisthenes managed to pass his proposals between the election of Isagoras (spring of 508) and the time before he began his archonship the summer of that year, meaning while the president of the assembly was still Lysagoras. In regard to the interpretation of the above-mentioned reference ἀποδιδούς τῷ πλήθει τήν πολιτείαν, we will agree with Ober 1996, 50, who precisely notes that in 508/7: "the demos rejected the archon Isagoras as the legitimate public authority", as well as with Ostwald 1969, 157 that "the debate to the ecclesia was in effect the first application in practice in Athens of the principle of *ἰσονομία*". I believe that during the year 508/7, while Isagoras was the president of the Athenian assembly, the demos, and mainly the poorest Athenian citizens, but also those aristocrats in favor of Cleisthenes and the non-citizens as well, who wanted what the slogan of *isonomia* promised, ignores the sovereign power of the eponymous archon of that year. We do not know if Cleisthenes is in a position to submit his proposals to the assembly as laws (as he was *τοῦ πλήθους προεστηκώς*, AP 21.1), and if these laws are indeed ratified officially that year or the next one, as we believe and stress below. However, it seems highly likely that the majority of the people, who had been gathered at that time in the agora, eager to support the political promise for *isonomia*, claiming to decide in a sovereign way for the political future of their

decision-making process, using the slogan of *isonomia*, which the poor Athenians would probably interpret as a promise for political equality.[43]

The Athenian assembly urgently met in the agora in 508/7, while its president was Isagoras, as the eponymous archon of the year. Cleisthenes submits his proposals to the assembly, mainly the proposal for a tribal reform,[44] which by then must have been just an idea in favor of his promise for *isonomia* in the city rather than an actual complex plan, and the people, citizens, and non-citizens, especially those who had been deprived previously from their civil rights, because of the so-called '*diapsephismos*',[45] have been gathered in the agora, yelling, as we can assume, according to Lewis, "all the power to the ten tribes".[46] Isagoras, failing to control the Athenian masses, sent for help to the Spartan king Cleomenes, who expelled Cleisthenes and his whole clan from the city and attempted to dissolve the *boulē* (probably the council of Areopagus) and establish an oligarchy of 300.[47] However, the ordinary people, along with probably the councilors of the Areopagus, trapped Isagoras and his Spartan allies in the Akropolis for two days. On the third day, they made a truce, allowing Cleomenes and Isagoras to leave Athens for good.[48]

The constitutional change became a reality through the ratification of the laws by the Athenian assembly, which were submitted there by Cleisthenes after his return to Athens the following year, in 507/6, when the president in the assembly was some Alcmaion as the eponymous archon of the year.[49] The new constitutional order in Athens of the late sixth century was based mainly upon tribal reform, which led to integrating the citizenry and, consequently, to the reorganization of Attika. It maintains the division of Attika into three parts, the *asty*, the *paralia*, and the *Mesogeia*, and new demes are also created alongside the preexisting rural demes. Demes from all three

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state, threatened the political authority of Isagoras, who called immediately the Spartan king Cleomenes I soon for military help against Cleisthenes and his political allies.

43 On the notion of political equality in archaic and classical Athens see Cartledge 1996; Morris 1996; Morris 2004; Raaflaub/Wallace 2007.

44 On the tribal reform see Hdt. 5.66.2, 69; AP 21; Aristot., *Polit.* 6.1319b 23–29. Notably, Herodotus and the author of the AP differ on what aspects of the Cleisthenic reforms choose to highlight. Herodotus highlights the creation of ten new tribes, while the author of the AP discusses the importance of the demes that are nevertheless an essential part of the tribal reform. Perhaps this different approach of the author of the AP may be justified by the fact that the functioning of the later Athenian Democracy is based on the Cleisthenic demes.

45 AP 13.5.

46 Lewis 1963, 38.

47 Hdt. 5.72; AP 20.3. On the oligarchy as constitution see Simonton 2017.

48 See again Hdt. 5.72; AP 20.3. It is interesting here to notice that the Athenian demos, even though in favor of the tyrants until their fall in 511/0, only two years later, this *demos* decisively revolted against Isagoras and decided to change the state's constitution.

49 Pollux 8.110.

parts of Attica, through the so-called "*trittyes*", will, from now on, constitute the ten new tribes[50] (Fig. 4).

Cleisthenes also precisely defines the Athenian political identity. From 507 onwards, every existing citizen had to register in one of the ca. 140 demes throughout Attica. These demes constituted a self-defined body of citizens who would be politically equal and make the final decisions regarding local affairs. Via this critical role, the political consciousness of the Athenian citizens was emphasized and promoted, rendering the main archonship of the decision-making process, meaning the assembly, dominant.

Important here is the fact that each of the ten new tribes will be protected by an eponymous hero, and through the newly-introduced political cult of the 'Ten Eponymous Heroes', the Athenians will be worshiping the unification of Athens and its communal solidarity.[51] That cult is another significant hero cult of Athens, among that of the Tyrannicides and Theseus. It contributes to bringing the Athenian citizens closer to their democracy, alongside their military achievements and their protector-goddess Athena.[52]

According to this new tribal system, a new advisory council of 500, which would be responsible for preparing the agenda for all the assembly meetings, is created.[53] The delegates, chosen within the demes, had to cooperate with other citizens from all over Attica as equals. Moreover, the new tribal organization defined how the Athenians would fight their wars. On the one hand, united, but also separated according to the tribe to which each citizen belonged.

The sovereignty of the Athenian demos from the late sixth century on the political decision-making process is based upon a newly introduced political idea, *isēgoria*,[54] meaning the freedom of debate in the assembly and the 'Council of 500'. We can trace the importance of the newly-established constitution, which is based upon political equality, through Herodotus, who projects the democratic ideology of the fifth-century Athenian citizens, associating their political selves and their constitution with Athenian military might.[55] Herodotus[56] clarifies that Athens, meaning the Athenians themselves, who are at last identified with their state, are strong and conscious of their strength because of the newly-born constitution, which is closely associated with freedom.

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50 On the tribal reform see above fn. 44.

**51** See Ober 1989, 66–67; Krikona 2016, 6.

52 On the matter see again Krikona 2019 with references.

53 On the existence of a council of 400 in the Archaic period, which could have been merely expanded by 100 more councilors after 508/7 in Athens, see Bartzoka 2012 with references. We agree with the author's arguments that doubt its existence in sixth-century Athens.

54 On the notion of *isēgoria* and the dating of its introduction see Forrest 1966, 268–269; Griffith 1966, 115–138; Lewis 1971, 129–140; Raaflaub 1980, 28–34; Ober 1989, 119. As a notion, introduced by Cleisthenes see Will 1967, 396–397; Loraux 1981, 415 fn. 22; Sakellariou 1999, 106, 323–328.

55 See in detail Krikona 2018b with references.

56 Hdt. 5.78.
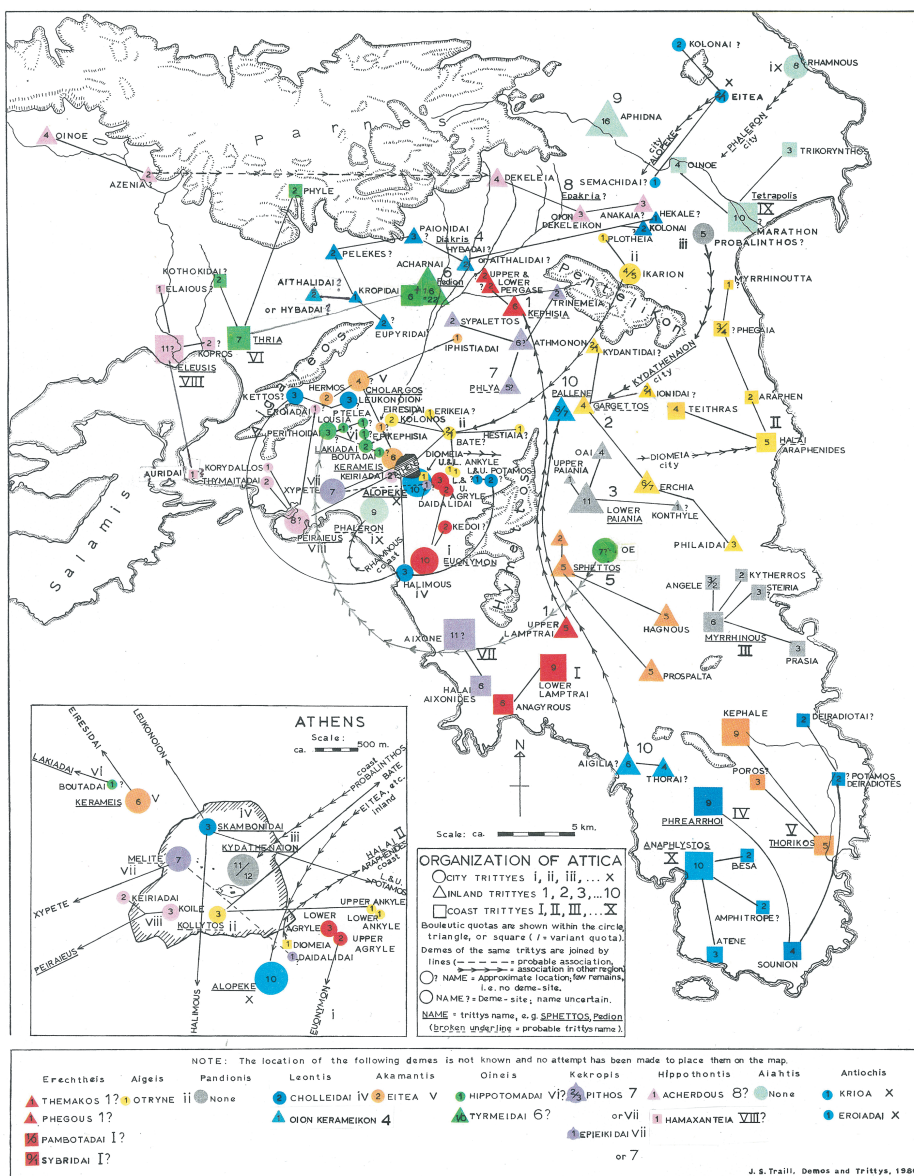
Fig. 4: The territory of Attica after the political reforms of Kleisthenes, showing tribal representation in the Athenian Boule. The figures within each circle indicate the number of representatives sent from that township or deme; lines between circles indicate tribal affiliations of the demes. (J.S. Traill, Demos and Trittys. Epigraphical and Topographical Studies in the Organization of Attica, Toronto, Athens 1986: color map, courtesy of the author).

The role of the Delphic oracle in the late sixth-century change of the Athenian constitution

Having analyzed the most striking aspects of this new Athenian constitution in the late sixth century and its importance for the political future of the Athenians that are going from now on to claim the hegemony of the Greek world, rivaling the Spartans, we should bear in mind that the political sovereignty of the masses in the decision-making process of the Athenian state is an entirely innovative and daring idea for the standards of the archaic era,[57] and not easily acceptable. We see that religion in Athens under the democracy in the fifth century served mainly political purposes, as the power of religious practices, along with the power of symbolism. Also, the basis of the imagined history became one of the most precious tools in the arsenal of the newly-born democracy, associating firmly a political reality, the emergence of the political sovereignty of the demos with military might, and the image Athens has for its military self-concept among the other Greeks. However, this was not the case of late sixth-century Athens before the Persian wars that changed everything concerning Athenian political identity and consciousness.

At the end of the sixth century, specifically in 507, the political sovereignty of the demos was based on a completely radical idea. The Athenians needed the blessings of the gods to dare to establish this innovative constitutional order[58] we described above, which would make them masters of their state and defenders of their political freedom and grant them political and military confidence. Cleisthenes appeals once

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57 *Isonomia*, as an autonomous type of constitution, appears in several Greek city-states (such as Chios, Eretria, Mantinea, Argos, Cyrene, Ambrakia, Megara etc.) of the period between 550 and 479; see in detail Birgalias 2009; Robinson 2011. However, only in the case of Athens do we possess more details on its most important aspect: the sovereignty of the demos in the decision-making process, especially when it is introduced as a notion and political promise and established as a constitution. Moreover, only in the case of Athens *isonomia* is transformed, constitutionally, into a democracy in the fourth century, even though the introduction of the term *dēmokratia* is happening in the first half of the fifth century; see Hansen 1986, Farrar 1988, Cartledge 2009. In all the other cases, *isonomia* is succeeded by a new tyranny or an oligarchy. In the case of Athens, although unique, we should still bear in mind that the newly-introduced notion of political equality of the late sixth century did not refer yet to all aspects of Athenian political life. In other words, the concepts of *isokratia* and *isonomia* would not become a political reality in Athens, not at least until the mid-fifth century or even later.

58 One of the most characteristic cases of constitutional change in a Greek state, after the blessings of the Delphic Apollo, is none other than Sparta, when in the early Archaic period, it confirmed the laws for the establishment of an oligarchy in Lacedaemon (the Great *rhētra*) with the help of the Delphic oracle. On the Spartan *rhētra* see Plut., Lycurgus 6.1–10; Diod. 7.12.6 (= Tyrtaeus 3a). Moreover, Aristotle quotes six lines of Tyrtaeus, probably deriving from the poem "*Eunomia*" by later authors, which referred to an oracle brought from Delphi (Tyrtaeus, fr. 1b GP. The poem was mentioned by Aristot. Polit. 1306b and Strabo 8.4.10). On the Spartan *rhētra* see in detail Beattie1951; Jones 1966; Forrest 1967; Lévy 1977; Cartledge 2001.

more to the Delphic oracle to overcome the political problem of ratifying laws that were not introduced by a reformer but by the citizenry itself. He submitted to the Pythia a list of one hundred names of Athenian heroes, and Apollo chose ten of them,[59] the ten eponymous heroes, as protectors of the new tribes. In this way, Apollo confirmed the decision of the Athenian demos to change the Solonian constitution of its state into *isonomia*, the foundation of the later democracy.

Once again, Delphi has helped Cleisthenes to make his political plans a reality. But what does Apollo receive in return as a token of the gratitude of the Athenian demos? We believe that the Athenians, after the political reforms proposed by the Alcmaionid Cleisthenes, decided to replace their older treasury at Delphi, probably dated in the time of the Peisistratids,[60] with an impressive new treasury[61] (Fig. 5).

This new marble treasury is constructed on the southwest side of Apollo's temple. On the treasury's south flank, a statue-group dedication mirrors the eponymous heroes of Athens. On this flank, the Athenians later lay Persian spoils from the battle of Marathon as dedications to Apollo, according to the inscription on the façade.[62] However, the most interesting here is its metopes, which express the new political reality of Athens after establishing a new democratic constitution in the polis and are easily associated with the later hegemonic claims of the Athenians after their victory at Marathon. The apparent balance of Theseus' and Heracles' forces (or of the Ionian and the Doric identity),[63] depicted on the sculptural decoration of the structure, seems to correspond to Athenian late sixth-century claims to be considered -in a Panhellenic scale- as an equal force to Sparta, which by then had established its power in the Peloponnese through its Peloponnesian League.

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59 *AP* 21.5–6. The ten names chosen by Apollo were Ἐρεχθῆΐς, Αἰγηΐς, Πανδιονίς, Λεωντίς, Ἀκαμαντίς, Οἰνηΐς, Κεκροπίς, Ἱπποθωντίς, Αἰαντίς and Ἀντιοχίς (named after the mythical Antiochus, son of Heracles and Meda). See Aelius Aristeides 13.192 (and Scholia on it, Dindorf, p. 331), 46.215; Paus. 10.10.1; Pollux 8.110. See also Fontenrose 1978, 310.

60 On the older Athenian treasury at the same position in Delphi see Dinsmoor 1912, 488–492; Audiat 1933, 55–58; Jacquemin 1999, 57, 145, 246, 315 fn. 85.

61 On the early dating of the Athenian treasury see Dinsmoor 1912, 482, 492; Dinsmoor 1946, 86–121; Lippold 1950, 82; Alscher 1961, 234–236 fn. 117; Harrison 1965, 9–11; Kleine 1973, 94–97; Brommer 1982, 68 with fn. 8; Floren 1987, 247; Bankel 1993, 169–170; Rausch 1999, 129–132; Partida 2000, 50–70; Fittschen 2003; von den Hoff 2009, 96–104; von den Hoff 2010, 164–166, and the forthcoming article of mine (Krikona forthcoming a). On the construction and dedication dating after Marathon see De la Coste-Messelière 1957, iv. 4; Agard 1923; Cooper 1990, 317–318; Büsing 1994; Amandry 1998, 87; Neer 2004.

62 On the inscription see Meiggs/Lewis 1969, 35 fn. 19; Jacquemin 2012, 41–42.

63 See Neer 2004, 76; von den Hoff 2009, 100–101.

Fig. 5: The Athenian treasury at Delphi. Image: © Courtesy of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-Archaeological Resources Found.

Conclusion

The role of the Delphic sanctuary and the political influence of its oracle in the establishment of the democratic constitution in Athens in the late sixth century and the progressive dominance of the Athenians in the Aegean in the fifth century have been more than pivotal. The Athenian democracy would not have been a political reality in the classical period without the support of the most influential religious center of the ancient Greek world, Delphi.

The domain of the god Apollo is often wrongly considered, from antiquity till nowadays, as nothing more than a political tool that operates exclusively according to social networking and bribery. However, the relationship between Athens and Delphi in the late Archaic period, which the present paper addressed, is one of the most characteristic cases of the Delphic oracle's decisive role in a Greek state's political affairs. The wealthy clan of the Alcmaionids, with its leader, Cleisthenes, finances the completion

of the new temple of Apollo at Delphi in around 513, and the oracle, in return, encourages the Spartans to intervene militarily in the political affairs of Athens, overthrowing the tyrannical governance of Hippias. Soon afterward, Apollo ratified the Athenian tribal reform, upon which the establishment of the new isonomic constitution was based, initiating a glorious new era for the Athenians, both politically and militarily. Athens, in return, dedicated an impressive treasury to Apollo in around 500, as well as other offerings in the early fifth century at the Delphic sanctuary.

It becomes evident, therefore, that the Delphic oracle supported specific political interests in exchange for funds, offerings-dedications, and helped to maintain its focal political influence worldwide throughout antiquity, but this does not mean that Delphi was not above all a religious center, and that the amphictyony, which operated this center just knew very well the art and the privileges of *δοῦναι καί λαβείν.*[64]

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