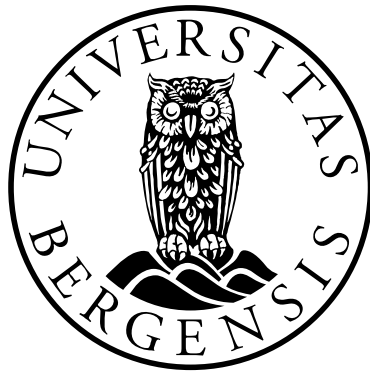


Popular power in ancient Near Eastern and archaic Greek polities

A reappraisal of Western and Eastern political cultures

Kristoffer Momrak, cand. philol.



Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

2013

Dissertation date: 19.04.2013

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Jørgen Christian Meyer at the University of Bergen for his help and encouragement in the writing of this dissertation. I would also like to thank fellow historians Assoc. Prof. Ingvar Mæhle and Dr. Eivind Seland at the University of Bergen for their help. Thanks are due to Prof. Ingvild Gilhus, Prof. Einar Thomassen, Prof. Emer. Erik Østbye, PhD candidates Christian Bull and Pål Steiner, and the other participants at the Antiquity Research Seminar at the Department for Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, for stimulating discussions. I would also like to thank Prof. Jens Braarvig and former Assoc. Prof. Jon W. Iddeng at the University of Oslo for fruitful discussions and encouragement during the writing of this dissertation.

I have benefited greatly from correspondence with scholars who kindly took of their time to read and comment on chapters. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Robin Osborne of Cambridge University, Prof. Hartmut Kühne of Freie Universität Berlin, Assoc. Prof. Ingvar Mæhle of the University of Bergen, independent researcher Dr. Erik van Dongen, Dr. Gojko Barjamovic of the University of Copenhagen, Dr. Eivind Seland of the University of Bergen, and PhD candidate Ole Christian Aslaksen of the University of Gothenburg, who all graciously offered their cogent remarks on a range of chapters as well as pointing me to literature I should consult. I would also like to thank the committee that turned down an earlier version of this dissertation, viz. Prof. Emer. Mogens Trolle Larsen of the University of Copenhagen, Prof. Robin Osborne, and Assoc. Prof. Ingvar Mæhle, for their comments and criticisms that have been a great help in revising my former thesis and writing the present dissertation.

In the course of writing this dissertation, I have profited greatly from attending a number of conferences to present ideas and meet with scholars. I would like to thank

the organisers and participants of the Norwegian-Danish mini-seminar organised by the Phrontisterium at the Copenhagen University Amager February 2006, in particular Prof. Emer. Mogens Herman Hansen, for discussion and criticism of some central claims made in a paper presenting the ambitions for this dissertation. Thanks are also due to the organisers and participants at the Norwegian conference *Fra palass til polis – den greske verden mellom bronsealdersivilisasjoner og bystatskultur* [*From palace to polis – the Greek world between Bronze Age civilization and city state culture*] held in November 2006 at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, in particular former Assoc. Prof. Jon Iddeng of the University of Oslo for discussions on defining the *polis*. I also had the pleasure of attending the *Melammu Symposia* at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, Bulgaria in 2008, and would like to thank the organisers and participants for making it a wonderful experience, in particular the organisers Prof. Mark Geller of the University College London and Assoc. Prof. Teodor Lekov of the New Bulgaria University, and Prof. Baruch Levine, Prof. Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault, Dr. Erik van Dongen, and Dr. Jorrit Kelder for discussions and correspondence.

During the writing of this dissertation, I spent a month doing research at the Norwegian Institute at Rome (2006), with a grant from the Norwegian Institute at Rome's Fund, as well as a month at the Norwegian Institute at Athens (2009), with a grant from the Norwegian Institute at Athens. I would like to thank staff and fellow researchers in Rome and Athens for making these stays nice and interesting, in particular Prof. Panos Dimas, Director at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, for stimulating discussions on the Greek *polis*. I also spent five months of 2007 and 2008 at the Freie Universität Berlin doing research in the library of the Altorientalisches Seminar. I would like to thank Prof. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Dr. Ariel M. Bagg for welcoming me and giving me access to library resources. My stay was kindly financed by the Meltzer Fund, Bergen.

Thanks are due to all colleagues, correspondents, organisers, and fellow conference participants for their criticisms, advice, and warnings. Errors or misjudgements in the present dissertation remain my own.

I would like to thank friends and family, in particular my mother-in-law Inger Eielsen for her unwavering belief in the project and her generous support. I would like to thank my fantastic wife Ingvild Eielsen Risnes and adorable daughter Agathe Evrydike for their support and encouragement.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Bjørn Qviller of the University of Oslo, whose curiosity and intellectual irreverence remains a great inspiration.

Notes on orthography

Regarding the Greek and Akkadian orthography of names of persons, places, and institutions, I have found it difficult to maintain consistency. I do not follow all the standards of English usage for Greek names. Therefore, e.g. Aristoteles will be found as Aristotle, whereas Kleisthenes is written with K, not C. For Akkadian names, e.g. Assur is given without sh, whereas some personal names not common in general works on Mesopotamian history are transcribed with sh or š. Sumerian words are transcribed in capital letters, Akkadian and Greek words are transcribed in italics.

Greek vowel quantity is only used in the transcriptions given in parentheses (), whereas Akkadian vowel quantity is indicated throughout for the sake of disambiguation. These choices have been made purely for the sake of readability, in order to assure a certain level of accuracy without an unnecessary cumbersome orthography.

The transcriptions of Near Eastern political terms follow as close as possible the established usage in the editions consulted. These will be specified throughout the relevant chapters and are summarised in *Sources* (chapter 8).

Regarding the capitalisation of titles of books and articles, I have capitalised the titles of books in the main body of the text, but not in the notes or the bibliography. Articles appear without capitalisation.

List of abbreviations

AA: American Anthropologist

AAASH: Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae

ABSA: The Annual of the British School at Athens

AJP: The American Journal of Philology

AJS: The American Journal of Sociology

AnBib: Analecta Biblica

ANET: James B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1971 [1969])

Antiquity: Antiquity: an International Journal of Expert Archaeology

AoF: Altorientalische Forschungen

AR: Archaeological Reports

ARM: Archives royales de Mari

BASOR: Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research

BCSMS: The Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies Bulletin

Belleten: Belleten – Revue publiée par la société d'histoire Turque

BMCR: Bryn Mawr Classical Review

BO: Bibliotheca Orientalis

CA: Current Anthropology

CAD: Chicago Assyrian Dictionary

CAH: Cambridge Ancient History 2nd edition (Oxford University Press 1982)

CANE: Jack M. Sasson (ed.), Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1995)

Chi.-Kent. L. Rev.: Chicago-Kent Law Review

ClAnt: Classical Antiquity

ClQ: Classical Quarterly New Series

HSCP: Harvard Studies in Classical Philology

HUCA: Hebrew Union College Annual

IPSR: International Political Science Review

JAA: Journal of Anthropological Archaeology

JANES: Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society

JAOS: Journal of the American Oriental Society

JCS: Journal of Cuneiform Studies

JDAI: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts

JESHO: Journal of the economic and social history of the Orient

J. Econ. Hist.: The Journal of Economic History

JHS: The Journal of Hellenic Studies

JMA: Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology

JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies

JRS: Journal of Roman Studies

LSJ: Liddel-Scott-Jones Greek-English Dictionary

M.A.R.I.: Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires

MEPC: Middle East Policy Council

MHE: Mediterranean Historical Review

NEA: Near Eastern Archaeology

OJA: Oxford Journal of Archaeology

OrNS: Orientalia, Nova Series

PEQ: Palestine Exploration Quarterly

PRU: Palais Royal d'Ugarit

RA: Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale

REG: Revue des études Grecques

SO: Symbolae Osloenses

Syria: Syria: Revue d'art orientale et d'archéologie

TPR: The town planning review

TUAT: Otto Kaiser (ed.), Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn 1982-97)

UF: Ugarit-Forschungen

WO: Die Welt des Orients

ZA: Zeitschrift der Assyriologie

Table of contents

Acknowledgments 2

Notes on orthography 5

List of abbreviations 6

Table of contents 9

1. Popular power in ancient Near Eastern and archaic Greek polities – A reappraisal of Western and Eastern political cultures

1.1 Introduction 17

1.2 Popular power and the problem of Athenian democracy 18

1.2.1 The Athenian example: rule by the poor 19

1.2.2 Ancient democracy: rule by the people 21

1.2.3 A sliding scale of popular participation 25

1.3 East and West – separate worlds 28

1.4 Constitutions and strategies for power 47

1.4.1 The mixed constitution: kingship and popular power 51

1.4.2 Polities as networks of strategies for power 55

1.5 Corporations and their members: the problem of equality 63

1.5.1 Equal and unequal citizens: the classical view 64

1.5.2 Equality and popular power: the modern debate 68

1.5.3 The hidden oligarchy 76

1.5.4 Defining the citizen community 81

1.6 Difficulties concerning sources to ancient politics 86

1.6.1 Further considerations of difficulties in sources to archaic Greek *poleis* 88

1.7 Prospects for a comparative analysis 93

1.8 Conclusions 95

2. Polities, citizens and social structures

2.1 Introduction 97

2.2 Climbing to state-hood: the neo-evolutionary ladder model 99

2.3 The two-sector model and the patrimonial household 107

2.4 The good society and the good citizen 113

2.5 Structure, agency and structuration 117

2.6 Habitus, schemes, and strategies 121

2.7 Agency and structure 124

2.7.1 Schemas and resources 124

2.7.2 Struggle and negotiation 126

2.7.3 Sources of power 127

2.8 New approaches to ancient societies 129

2.9 Consensual cities and urban élites 134

2.10 Conclusions 142

3. The archaic *poleis*

3.1 Introduction 145

3.2 The *polis* as city-state and citizen community 146

3.3 The *polis* in Homer and Hesiod 153

3.3.1 Homeric politics: Odysseus and Thersites 159

3.3.2 Hesiod “the peasant” 165

3.3.3 Social groups in epic poems, their values and their strategies 168

3.4 Archaic *poleis* as networks of strategies 170

3.4.1 Sparta: the *Great Rhetra* 171

3.4.2 Athens: Solon 185

3.4.3 Athens: Peisistratos and Kleisthenes 206

3.4.4 Mytilene: Alkaios 228

3.4.5 Megara: Theognis 233

3.5 Politics, the *polis* and the people 237

3.6 Conclusions 240

4. Local politics in network states

4.1 Introduction 243

4.2 The Old Babylonian state and local institutions 244

4.3 Evidence for collective decision-making in Old Babylonian texts 246

4.3.1 The *rabiānum* or “mayor” 248

4.3.2 The *puhrum* or “assembly” 254

4.3.3 The *ālum* or “city” and the *šībūtum* or “elders” 259

4.3.4 The *bābtum* or “ward” 269

4.3.5 The *Nippur Trial for Homicide* 279

4.4 The Old Babylonian legal system and strategies for power 283

4.5 Central authorities and local politics in the kingdom of Mari 289

4.6 The kings of Mari and their subjects 292

4.7 Local authorities and the king 297

4.7.1 The *sugāgum* or “chieftain”, “local leader” 297

4.7.2 The *sugāgū* in assembly 305

4.7.3 The LÚ^{meš} GN or “men of GN” 311

4.7.4 The *šībūt*^{meš} or “elders” 318

4.8 Strategies for power in local communities of the Mari state 331

4.9 Conclusions 332

5. Local powers in commercial cities and merchant enclaves

5.1 Introduction 335

5.2 Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh 336

5.3 Assur, the king, and the eponym 341

5.4 Assur and its colonies 344

5.5 Collective organs of decision-making in Old Assyrian documents 348

5.5.1 The statute texts and the *kārum* Kanesh “assembly of small and great” 349

5.5.2 The “small and great” outside the *kārum* Kanesh 354

5.5.3 The *šībūtum* at *kārum* Kanesh and smaller committees 357

5.5.4 *ālum* – “the city-assembly of Assur” 359

5.5.5 The *šībūtum* at Assur 368

5.5.6 “The sons of Assur” in treaty-texts 372

5.6 The assembly, the elders, and the community of merchants 378

5.7 Ugarit, the palace, local communities, and the merchants 385

5.8 Palace and populace: two sectors 387

5.9 Palace and populace: a hierarchy 393

5. 10 The village-communities and their institutions 396

5.10.1 “The elders” of Rakba 396

5.10.2 “The sons of GN” 399

5.11 Collective decision-making bodies in Ugarit 403

5.11.1 “The elders of Ugarit” 403

5.11.2 “The sons of the city” and “the merchants of Ugarit” 405

5.11.3 “The men of the gate” 408

5.11.4 “The men of the city” and “the sons of the city” 410

5.12 The relations between palace, local communities, and merchants 414

5.13 Conclusions 416

6. Autonomy and popular power in city-states under foreign empire

6.1 Introduction 419

6.2 The Amarna correspondence 419

6.3 Local rulers, city populations and rebels 423

6.4 The plight of Rib-Hadda of Byblos 426

6.4.1 The killing of “the mayor” of Ammiya and other cases of revolt 428

6.4.2 Trouble in Tyre 432

6.4.3 The fall of Byblos 435

6.4.4 “The elders” and “the people” of Tunip and Irqata 441

6.5 “The mayor”, the people, and strategies for power 443

6.5.1 The regicides as a symptom of class conflict 444

-
- 6.5.2 Councils, assemblies and “the men of the city” 451
 - 6.5.3 Revolt and strategies for power 459
 - 6.6 Babylonian cities and imperial authorities in the Iron Age 463
 - 6.6.1 Local authorities in the early Neo-Babylonian Empire 466
 - 6.6.2 Privileged cities in the Neo-Assyrian Empire 473
 - 6.6.3 *Mār banê* and *kidinnūtu*: citizens and their privileges 480
 - 6.7 “The sons of the city” and urban autonomy 490
 - 6.8 Conclusions 500

7. Comparative analyses of ancient Near Eastern polities and archaic Greek *poleis*

- 7.1 Introduction 505
- 7.2 From bronze to iron: breaks and continuity 506
 - 7.2.1 From palaces to *poleis* 509
 - 7.2.2 From palaces to palaces: the Near Eastern world 515
- 7.3 Revolt, civil strife, and popular power 517
- 7.4 Assemblies 522
- 7.5 “Elders” and eponyms 532
- 7.6 The palace, professionals, and local communities 538
- 7.7 Differences and similarities East and West 540

7.8 Conclusions 544

8. Sources

8.1 Mycenaean texts 547

8.2 Greek epic 547

8.3 Archaic Greek poetry 548

8.4 Classical Greek prose 549

8.5 Texts from kārum Kanesh 552

8.6 Texts from Mari 553

8.7 Texts from Old Babylonian cities 555

8.8 Texts from Amarna 557

8.9 Texts from Ugarit 557

8.10 Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian texts 558

9. Bibliography 561

1. Popular power in ancient Near Eastern and archaic Greek polities – A reappraisal of Western and Eastern political cultures

1.1 Introduction

Popular participation in politics is held to be the gift of the ancient Greeks to Western political culture and is often contrasted with the despotic traditions of the Near East. Was the political culture of ancient Greek city-states, *poleis*, with their high degree of popular participation, unique in the ancient world? Can the political practices of archaic Greek city-states be compared to political practices from Near Eastern polities? In this dissertation, I will discuss popular participation in politics of Greek *poleis* in the archaic period and investigate in which respects Greek political culture was different from and similar to practices of government in and the political structures of Near Eastern polities.¹ Popular participation in the organisation and running of polities will be studied from archaic Greek literature and ancient Near Eastern letters and administrative texts in order to determine to what degree a perceived fundamental difference between Eastern and Western political cultures is justified.

¹ By Near Eastern polities, I mean the towns, city-states, network states, and pastoralist communities of Mesopotamia and Syria. Because it would make an already expansive project too large, I will not discuss ancient Egypt in this investigation. For the same reason, I have chosen not to discuss evidence from the Hittite empire or the city-states Ebla or Emar, although these polities provide interesting examples of collective institutions in Near Eastern imperial and local polities (for the Hittite assembly (*pankuš*) and elders, cf. Klengel, "Die Rolle der "Ältesten"," 1965, 230-237; Bin-Nun, *The Tawananna*, 1975, 110-129; Beckman, "The Hittite assembly," 1982, 435-437; Hoffman, *Der Erlaß Telipinus*, 1984, 77-79; Marazzi, "Überlegungen zur Bedeutung von *pankuš*," 1984, 99; Macqueen, *The Hittites*, 1999 [1986], 76-77; Gurney, *The Hittites*, 2002 [1990], 61-67; Hoffner, "Legal and social institutions," 1995, 561; Hoffner, *The Laws of the Hittites*, 1997, 79-80; Bryce, *The kingdom of the Hittites*, 1999 [1998], 94-95; Bryce, *Life and society in the Hittite world*, 2004 [2002], 43-44; Starke, "Die Verfassung des Hethitischen Reiches," 2002, 317. For the Ebla assembly (*tātamum*) and elders, cf. Gelb, "Witnesses of the indemnity," 1984, 264; Durand, "L'assemblée en Syrie à l'époque pré-amorite," 1989, 27-29; Klengel, "'Älteste" in den Texten aus Ebla und Mari," 1989, 61; Archi, "Imar au IIIème millénaire," 1990, 29; Milano, "Ebla: a third millennium city-state in ancient Syria," 1995, 1222-1223. For the Emar assembly (*tātamum*) and elders, cf. Leemans, "Aperçu sur les texts juridiques d'Emar," 1988, 217-218; Durand, "La cite-état d'Imār à l'époque des rois de Mari," 1990, 48; Fleming, "A limited kingship," 1992, 65-71; Fleming, "Emar rituals," 1992, 61; Fleming, *The installation of Baal's high priestess*, 1992, 86; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 58; Adamthwaite, *Late Hittite Emar*, 2001, 188-189; van Exel, "Social change at Emar," 2010, 69-71).

In this chapter, I will first state my approach to the investigation of popular power in ancient polities. Then, I will discuss the view that there were fundamental differences between Eastern and Western political cultures in detail. Problems related to the study of popular power will be examined, including the definition of collective organs of decision-making and different ways of defining the citizen community.

1.2 Popular power and the problem of Athenian democracy

The view that there were fundamental differences between the political cultures of East and West is typified by the conflict between Athens and the Persian Empire in the 5th century BCE: Athens was ruled by the people, whereas the Persian Empire was ruled by an autocratic king.² Thus, the beginning of the Western political tradition is democracy, whereas the Eastern political tradition is rooted in autocracy. Athens was not only at war with the Persians; by extension, Athens represents a beginning of a Western democratic political culture, as opposed to an Eastern culture of autocratic rule, originating in the Mesopotamian city-states.

Athens is regarded among scholars as the first, even the only, real democracy in antiquity.³ It is difficult to escape the influence of the Athenian example of popular power. Therefore, in the following, I will discuss Athenian democracy and its usefulness as an example for comparison with other polities of the ancient world

² Cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 72-80; *ibid.* 241-244

³ Cf. The debate of Raaflaub and Ober in Raaflaub & Morris (eds.), *Democracy 2500?*, 1998, 31-103, discussed below (1.2.1).

regarding popular power. I will make clear what I understand with popular power and in which respects this departs from the example of Athenian democracy.

1.2.1 The Athenian example: rule by the poor

In earlier scholarship, democracy was regarded almost as a miracle, the result of the work of ingenious Athenians who refused to be the slaves of others.⁴ A more prevalent view today is that Athenian democracy was no miracle, but the outcome of long-term developments in Greek political culture in the archaic period, based on the traditions of local Greek communities of the so-called Dark Age.⁵ Still, among distinguished and influential scholars today, democracy tends to be considered unique to Athens, more specifically after the reforms of Kleisthenes in 508/7 BCE. Josiah Ober argues that democracy began in 508/7 with the revolt of the Athenian *demos* against oligarchic coup-makers supported by Sparta: here, the people for the first time acted on its own and claimed power, and thereafter, democracy was established as both a political structure and culture.⁶ Kurt A. Raaflaub is more restrictive and reserves the term democracy for Athens after the reforms of Ephialtes in 462/1: until then, the *thetes*, the Athenian poor, had been excluded from office, and only with their full inclusion in the political system after Ephialtes could there be a true democracy.⁷

The views that democracy was established with Kleisthenes or Ephialtes suppose that fundamental changes took place in Athens with the empowerment of the *demos* or the *thetes*, i.e. the urban poor. This assessment follows the statement of Aristotle that

⁴ Cf. Meier, *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen*, 1980

⁵ Raaflaub, "Power in the hands of the people," 1998, 52; Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000

⁶ Ober, *The Athenian revolution*, 1996; Ober, "Revolution matters," 1998, 74

⁷ Raaflaub, "Power in the hands of the people," 1998, 48-50

democracy is the rule of the poor.⁸ It reflects a classical tradition of Athens as a particular case of mob rule. As I hope to show in the present investigation, however, popular power can be studied as a more general phenomenon than the Athenian example. The dominance of the Athenian poor is remarkable for the ancient world, indeed, for any polity, but that does not mean that polities that fell short of Athenian standards had no popular power.

If by popular power we understand the rule of the people, or more precisely, the majority of the people, restricting discussion of popular power to the democracy of 5th century Athens seems to me overly cautious. For all the radicalism of the Athenian constitution, there were other *poleis* besides Athens that were considered democracies in antiquity. Aristotle and his pupils studied and discussed several city-states and their constitutions, some of which were called democratic, from the fact that power was held by the *demos*, the people or citizens: these include Thebes, Megara and Rhodes, where democracy was overthrown by oligarchs.⁹ Thucydides applies the term democracy to polities other than Athens, including Corcyra in his discussion of the civil war there.¹⁰ There are several ancient sources that mention Syracuse as a democracy in the 5th century, although the status of the early 5th century democracy is uncertain.¹¹ Aristotle states that the people of Syracuse changed the constitution from a “polity” to a democracy after victory in the war with Athens [in 412].¹² Also, Argos

⁸ Arist. *Pol.* 1278b6ff, *ibid.* 1279b26ff

⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 1302b21ff

¹⁰ Thuc. 3.70-81

¹¹ Robinson, *Democracy beyond Athens*, 2011, 67-72

¹² Arist. *Pol.* 1304a27-28

was a democracy in the 5th century, perhaps already in the 6th century.¹³ Thukydides mentions the assembly at Argos as the decisive institution in the *polis* [around 421].¹⁴

The existence of several Greek democracies has not been lost on modern scholars. Eric W. Robinson points out how several Greek *poleis* were ruled by the *demoi*, the people. He argues that these *poleis* therefore were democracies.¹⁵ Josiah Ober rejects this argument, insisting that Athens was unique even in a Greek context.¹⁶ However, it can be asked how useful such an exclusive use of the term democracy is. In the following, a few ancient literary examples of popular power will be discussed that show that the people made important decisions in polities other than classical Athens.

1.2.2 Ancient democracy: rule by the people

Ancient writers refer to popular power without emphasising that power was in the hands of the poor: in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, king Pelasgos of Argos receives the Danaids as suppliants not to himself, but to the city, *polis*, and therefore, it is the people, *laos*, that has to accept the suppliants. The king cannot promise any help to the Danaids before he has sought the advice of all the citizens (*astoīs de pāsi*).¹⁷ The decision to let the Danaids stay as suppliants is taken after a public discussion by a

¹³ Robinson, *Democracy beyond Athens*, 2011, 7-9

¹⁴ Thuc. 5.27-28

¹⁵ Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997

¹⁶ Ober, "Revolution matters," 1998, 81 n.11

¹⁷ Aesch. *Supp.* 365-369

show of hands.¹⁸ The Danaids praise the advice of the people (*to damion*) that rules the city (*to ptolin kratynei*).¹⁹

It may be argued that Aeschylus wrote of a mythical Argos and is not a source to the structure of a real *polis*. However, mythical Argos is a good example of a *polis* where the people have the power. Although it is an example from fiction, it shows that to Aeschylus, popular power was conceivable in other forms than the Athenian constitution after 462/1. It shows that a restriction of the discussion of popular power to post-Ephialtic Athens is too narrow, even for Greece.

Aeschylus may not use the actual term democracy, but he gets pretty close by saying that the people rule. The people, *to demion*, are referred to without distinction as the totality of citizens, not as a faction of the poor. Thus, although we cannot conclude from Aeschylus that mythical Argos was a democracy similar to classical Athens, it had a high degree of popular power: the king insists that the people have the final say. It is of interest that the king emphasises that the totality of citizens holds authority in the *polis*: the majority makes the final decisions and these are reached in open discussions in assembly, where it is important to convince the citizens, even for the king.

There is a further example of popular power in tragedy: Euripides in his *Suppliants* presents an Athens ruled by the people and king Theseus. Theseus receives the suppliant king Adrastus and Argive mothers who have lost their sons in battle over Thebes. He needs the consent of the whole city (*polei pasēi*), before he can promise

¹⁸ Aesch. *Supp.* 604-624

¹⁹ Aesch. *Supp.* 698-703

any help to the Argives, but adds that he will get their consent anyway. He explains the Argives that he needs the citizens' consent because he has made them master of the city by giving all the same rights of voting (*isopsegos polis*). Therefore, he must present the Argives' request before the assembly of citizens (*plēthos astōn*).²⁰ In an argument with a Theban herald, Theseus emphasises that Athens is not run by a tyrant, but that the people rule (*dēmos annassei*), and the poor are on par with the rich. This is taken as good news by the Theban, who thinks that the masses will be easily led by his own persuasive speech. Theseus protests, however, and claims that everyone benefits when anyone can participate with deeds or advice.²¹

Thus, equal to the example from Aeschylus' Argos, the people of Theseus' Athens are treated as sovereign in the *polis*, as a unity of rich and poor, and not as the rabble dominating their betters. Of course, this is just one side of the story; contrariwise the Theban herald in the tragedy gloats at the prospect of swaying the senseless mob to his will. Theseus emphasises the virtues of pluralism, whereas the Theban herald claims that the mob is easily led and has nothing to contribute in running the *polis*. In fact, Theseus seems to contradict himself in his praise of the *demos*, by saying that although he needs their consent, they will agree with him anyway. The above passages from Euripides should make us beware of the ideological slant to claims of democracy as mob rule or rule by the poor. Whether popular power is regarded as mob rule is a question of perspective and should not be treated as a factual description of ancient democracy.

There is further ancient evidence that popular power was not universally regarded as the dominance of the poor. Forms of public participation in politics that do not

²⁰ Eur. *Supp.* 346-358

²¹ Eur. *Supp.* 403-455

emphasise the poverty of the *demos* can be found in Thukydides: he has Perikles say that the Athenian constitution is called a democracy because the many and not the few run the city.²² Perikles also says that in democratic Athens, nobody is preferred for offices because of their economic class, but anyone can participate, even if they are poor or of low birth.²³ According to Perikles, the Athenian ideal is political participation by all citizens.²⁴

It can be argued that the passage from Thukydides, where Perikles emphasises that poor people can participate in Athenian politics, supports the view of democracy as rule by the poor. However, Aristotle emphasises that the poor dominate a democratic *polis* as the decisive element in the constitution.²⁵ On the contrary, Thukydides in the above example has Perikles point to the inclusion of the poor in the polity, not their opposition to or dominance over the well-off. From Thukydides, then, democracy can be defined as rule by the many. The participation of all citizens is considered a virtue. This indicates that the contrast between Athenian democracy and other forms of popular power is a misconception. By extension, the supposedly fundamental contrast between Greek *poleis* and other ancient polities should be critically investigated. A polity does not need to be ruled by the poor in order to have a degree of popular power.

Popular power is not and should not be called a democracy without further qualifications. However, it may be asked whether Ober (1996; 1998) or Raaflaub's (1998) restrictive uses of the term democracy is very useful (cf. 1.2.1), if by

²² Thuc. 2.37

²³ Thuc. 2.37

²⁴ Thuc. 2.40

²⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 1278b6ff; *ibid.* 1279b26ff

democracy we mean “rule of the people” and not specifically the constitution of Athens. The evidence from Aeschylus, Euripides and Thukydides should provoke a discussion of popular power that is not restricted to the specific practices of Athens after 462/1. Popular power can be defined as collective rule by the citizens based in open discussions in assemblies. However, whether all or a select group of citizens are included in these discussions will determine the degree of popular power in the polity. This will be discussed in the next section.

1.2.3 A sliding scale of popular participation

Athens can be viewed as an extreme development at one end of a sliding scale of popular participation in politics, from political dominance of the masses, i.e. democracy, to no popular participation at all, i.e. autocracy. In the present investigation, classical Athens will serve as a case of democracy, because it was ruled through collective action by the citizens, including the poor, and all state business was discussed in the public assembly. Athens after 462/1 specifically allowed all property classes to participate in politics. I will avoid the use of the term democracy unless in a further qualified sense for polities with popular participation, and rather use the terms popular power and popular participation in politics. This does not mean that I do not see popular power in politics and Athenian democracy as related phenomena.

On a sliding scale of popular participation, the two most important indicators of popular power will be collective action by the citizens and open debates in public assemblies. The polity must have councils and assemblies that are open to the citizens as part of its political and administrative structure. It is of importance for the assessment whether a council has a probouleutic function, in preparing cases to be discussed in the assembly, or a council instead reaches decisions that are subsequently announced to the assembly. It will also be considered whether a council consisted of

members that represented the community or was the preserve of an exclusive élite. The degrees of public participation in discussing and reaching decisions are important criteria for where to place a polity on the sliding scale. Decision-making by majority vote in the assembly is indicative of popular power, provided there is general access to this decision-making body. Thus, the degree of inclusion in the group of active citizens is an important factor that determines whether the people were in power or not.

The assembly as a place of debate and public announcements is indicative of popular power. An important indicator for popular power is the election of officials and representatives by the citizens, by majority vote.²⁶ Further, for a polity to be truly democratic, all citizens, including the poor, must be included among the citizens with full rights of participation, and anyone must be formally eligible to office. These criteria were not met by any ancient polity.²⁷ However, it should be possible to discern between more and less inclusive polities, and thus, to describe them as having a greater or lesser degree of popular power.

A polity does not need to be ruled exclusively by a popular assembly in order to have a level of popular participation in politics. A popular assembly or similarly inclusive public and collective decision-making body may well be part of a monarchical

²⁶ This should not be confused with modern elections of representatives: the identification of interests and political parties as known from modern representative democracies is quite distinct from the direct and personal political participation in ancient city-states. Although interest groups can be identified, the existence of political parties with lists of representatives is not known from the ancient world. As Moses Finley points out, there is a distinct lack of an electoral regime in Athens and Rome (Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 70-74). I have seen no convincing evidence to the contrary. The representatives of political parties in modern electoral democracies are quite different from the directly elected officials and representatives of polities of the ancient world.

²⁷ The *thetes* were formally excluded from taking office in Athens after the reforms of Solon. They were admitted to the assembly and the jury courts (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1274a11ff; *Ath. Pol.* 7.3). However, with the introduction of payment for jury members, poor citizens of Athens probably enjoyed a greater degree of participation in politics than in most Greek *poleis*. Whether the *thetes* were eventually admitted to take office in spite of Solon's laws will not be discussed here.

system, as was the case with the example from mythical Argos above (1.2.2). In the analyses of archaic Greek and Near Eastern polities throughout this investigation, I will focus on the above indicators for popular power to assess the degree of popular participation in politics. Polities will not be treated as closed systems or formal constitutions; rather, I will analyse polities as networks of strategies for power, for rulers, élites, and the masses.²⁸

In the following, I will define four strategies for power that together create a network of strategies that will explain the political behaviour of agents in ancient polities. Strategies for power pursued by the masses will be manifested in collective action and the making of decisions in public assemblies. I term this a broad corporate strategy: the masses are inclusive and their strategy for power involves a minimum of formal divisions between participants. A large proportion of the citizens are part of the political system. A narrow corporate strategy, on the other hand, involves a restricted collective with formal criteria for inclusion, typically wealth. Not all citizens are allowed to take part in the political system, only the ones who are rich enough. It is important that the formal criteria for participation are at least in theory attainable for anyone, e.g. a poor citizen can become wealthy and thus be entitled to full participation in politics.

In contrast, strategies for power pursued by the élite will focus on the exclusion of most citizens from participation in decision-making bodies and decisions will preferably be reached in closed councils. Exclusion is based on criteria such as birth from an illustrious family, making this élite closed to outsiders. This will be termed a broad élite strategy. On the other hand, rulers will have a rather different élite strategy

²⁸ The focus on strategies for power in the present investigation draws on Blanton et al., "A dual-processual theory for the evolution of Mesoamerican civilization," 1996, and Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004. As will be seen (1.2.3; 1.4.1; 2.8), I attempt to expand on and differentiate more closely between their concepts of corporate and élite strategies.

from that of broad élites, in the sense that they will try to consolidate the citizen body and place an insuperable boundary between their own power and that of any other citizen, what I will term a narrow élite strategy for power: the élite may regard each other as equals and share power in a broad élite strategy for power, but a ruler must emphasise his elevation above even the most restricted council and be a narrow élite.

In the present investigation, I will look for all four strategies and how they are pursued simultaneously by the different socioeconomic groups of the polity. The different strategies will manifest themselves in choices of modes of action made by agents as well as in established institutions for decision-making. The relative predominance of different strategies for power will determine where a given polity is placed on the sliding scale from democracy to autocracy. I will return to this approach to ancient politics in more detail below (1.4.2; 2.8). Suffice it to say here that an approach based on analyses of strategies for power will make it possible to compare polities East and West, regardless of their formal constitutions or political culture. This comparative approach to ancient polities will breach the traditional divide between a Western and an Eastern political culture. Before discussing the prospects of comparative analyses of ancient polities, however, I will examine further the roots of the idea of fundamental differences between East and West and the status of this view today.

1.3 East and West – separate worlds

As already stated (1.1), it is the purpose of this investigation to reappraise the view that there is a specifically Western tradition of politics with a high degree of popular power. In the following, I will investigate the reasons for this widespread opinion on world history.

The idea that there are fundamental differences between Eastern and Western political cultures is ancient. It was formulated by Aeschylus in his tragedy the *Persians* written around 470 BCE, where the Persians, who are slaves to their king, are contrasted to the Athenians who are the slaves of none.²⁹ It is stated in the tragedy, however, that after the defeat of the Persians at Salamis, the people of Asia are free again.³⁰ Thus, the picture is twofold: Persia is ruled oppressively by an almighty king and all his subjects are slaves, not free citizens. However, when the Persian imperial forces are defeated by the Greeks, the people of Asia are free. It does not seem to be implied that there are any natural reasons for the oppressed state of the subjects of the Persian king. As will be argued below, this view appears to have changed in the course of the following generations of Greek writers.

A somewhat ambiguous view of Persians and politics is found in Herodotos. Herodotos warns his Greek readers that they will probably not believe the story he is about to tell, about a political debate in Persia over the future constitution of the realm. He insists, however, that the debate he is about to relate really took place: the seven Persians that led the revolt against the pretender Smerdis held council to discuss how the country should be run now that they had dethroned the ruler. The first Persian to speak, Otanes, warns against a new monarchy, and argues that power should be in the hands of the people. Monarchy leads to uninhibited authority and will corrupt the ruler, just like what had happened to the recently deposed king. Otanes lauds rule by the people instead, what he calls equal rule (*isonomia*). It is characterised by offices being drawn by lot, officers being held responsible, and that all decisions are taken after common deliberation. A second Persian, Megabyxos,

²⁹ Aesch. *Pers.* 72-80; *ibid.* 241-244

³⁰ Aesch. *Pers.* 584-590

proposes oligarchy. He warns against the dangers of mob rule, and prefers the rule of the best men among the Persians. The third of the rebels to propose a new constitution for the Persians is Dareios. He argues that monarchy is to be preferred before all other constitutions, because oligarchy leads to strife among the rulers, whereas democracy leads to corruption of the citizens and power to demagogues or tyrants. Monarchy is the best form of constitution, then, given that the perfect ruler is king.³¹

The Persian constitutional debate is a far cry from the image of an autocratic political culture in the East. As seen in Aeschylus above, the Persian ruler was regarded as absolute, all his subjects being slaves. This explains why Herodotos warns his readers that they will not believe the discussion took place. Nevertheless, Herodotos insists the tale is true, and could obviously well imagine that Persians discussed the possibility of people's power. On the other hand, the debate ends in praise of monarchy, showing the Persian preference for autocracy. The point is, however, that Herodotos could imagine that alternatives to kingship were discussed at all among Persians.

In the *Politics* of Aristotle, a radically different view of Near Eastern politics can be found: Aristotle claims that there is a peculiar kind of kingship found among non-Greeks, where the king has powers approximating that of a tyrant. According to Aristotle, the reason is that non-Greeks are more slavish than Greeks, and Asiatics are more slavish than Europeans, so that they tolerate master-like rule without

³¹ Hdt. 3.80-84

resentment.³² Further on in the *Politics*, Aristotle attributes the lack of spirit among Asiatics to the hot climate of their home region.³³

It is quite telling that, although Aristotle explains the Asiatic lack of spirit to a hot climate, he claims that all Greeks are less slavish than non-Greeks, and thus will not tolerate oppressive rulers. Thus, the negative assessment of Asiatics is indicative of cultural chauvinism: there is a difference in political ability between Greeks and non-Greeks, a difference that can be observed in the master-like rule of Near Eastern kings. What is the reason for this negative assessment of politics in polities to the East of Greece? It may of course be based on observation of powerful kings of the East. However, the generality of the statement should provoke suspicion. How did Aristotle come to the conclusion that Asiatics are more slavish than Europeans?

The idea that Near Eastern people were only capable of obedience and unable to practice politics can be found in the ancient medical philosophy of a connection between climate and spirit. In this line of thought, the habitats of the Greeks were contrasted to colder or warmer climates, and only the Greek middle climate could produce the temperance necessary for political debate.³⁴ It is difficult to decide why Greeks started to speculate that Near Easterners were slavish because of hot climate. In my opinion, it would be logical that the symptom, slavishness, was defined first, and the reason, hot climate, was induced thereafter. The view of a great difference between Greek and Near Eastern people's potential for political reasoning that is found in Greek philosophy can be explained as a result of both real experiences of oppressive royal behaviour and philosophical speculation on character and climate.

³² Arist. *Pol.* 1285a16-1285a29

³³ Arist. *Pol.* 1327b18ff

³⁴ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1327b18ff

However, the basic contention of Aristotle is that Eastern people are slavish and unable to rule themselves, by nature, and not by climate or historical accident. This view needs an historical explanation. Why is Aristotle convinced that Asiatics are natural slaves, whereas Herodotos tells a story about Persians discussing politics?

The explanation for the cultural chauvinism of Aristotle must be sought in the development of relations between Persians and Greeks: in the 5th century, Greeks defeated a Persian invasion twice, as recorded in the *Histories* of Herodotos, a work permeated with curiosity and admiration of cultures of the Near East, Egypt in particular. Herodotos presents Persians as discussing alternatives to kingship, but as he makes clear, even when popular rule were deemed feasible, monarchy would be preferred among the Persians. Aristotle, in contrast, proposes that Near Eastern people were natural slaves and hence unable or unwilling to rule themselves. If the opinions of Greek intellectuals are any yardstick to attitudes in their own time, it can be argued that the view of Near Eastern cultures has become more negative with Aristotle than what can be seen in Herodotos. By the 4th century, Aristotle could claim that political thinking was a reserve of the Greeks; all Near Eastern people were slaves to kings. This is in contrast to 5th century opinion, when Aeschylus saw Persian rule as the reason behind Asian slavery: oppressive kings treated their subjects like slaves, but their enslavement did not result from the nature of the subjects themselves. With regard to chronology, it is no doubt of importance that during the Persian wars, the Greeks could witness how polities conquered by the Persians were allowed to keep their own constitutions as long as they obeyed the Great King, making Eastern slavery a consequence of *Realpolitik* and not of nature. The change towards an unmitigated unfavourable comparison between Greeks and their neighbours to the East can be attributed to further imperial pressure against the Greek *poleis* in the Persian Empire in the 5th and 4th centuries, resulting in Greek animosity. It can also come from experiences made by Greeks at the Persian court, where the royal person was

surrounded by much ceremony.³⁵ The point is that the Greek opinion of Asiatic slavishness developed over time; for all the authority of Aristotle, it was not a simply observed fact about the character of Asiatic people.

The negative assessment of the political potential of ancient Near Eastern polities has survived in modern scholarship. Herodotos' story about the Persian discussion of alternatives to monarchy has been found hard to believe not only among readers in Herodotos' own day, but also among the supposed modern heirs of the Hellenes in Western civilization. The Near East is viewed as the cradle of civilisation, implying that Near Eastern civilisation and its polities were more primitive than the later Western political culture; where the Near East had Oriental despotism, the West developed corporations of citizens.

The ancient *topos* of a correlation between climate and political disposition was developed by G.W.F. Hegel into his concept of a separate *Geist* for every *Volk*.³⁶ According to this concept, geography and topography are crucial to the development of cultures.³⁷ Hegel claims that "die Weltgeschichte geht von Osten nach Westen, den Europa ist schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte, Asien der Anfang". In Hegel's interpretation, like the physical sun rises in the East, so does history begin there and as the sun sets in the West, so does history have its end point there: "dafür steigt aber hier die innere Sonne des Selbstbewußtseins auf, die eine höhere Glanz verbreitet". With world history, Hegel means the history of freedom, and in this history, the

³⁵ The relations between Greece and Persia in antiquity were complex and have recently been the object of extensive research (e.g. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the fifth century B.C.*, 1997; Cohen (ed.), *Not the classical ideal*, 2000). I will not go into further discussion of this matter, however. Suffice it to say that Persia came to exemplify Eastern despotism in Greece.

³⁶ Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1970 [1832-45], 64-65

³⁷ Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1970 [1832-45], 116-120

Orient has contributed little: “der Orient wußte und weiß nur, daß *Einer* frei ist, die griechische und römische Welt daß *Einige* frei seien, die germanische Welt weiß, daß *Alle* frei sind. Die erste Form, die wir daher in der Weltgeschichte sehen, ist der *Despotismus*, die zweite ist die *Demokratie* und *Aristokratie*, und die dritte ist die *Monarchie*”.³⁸

In Hegel’s scheme, the East is the land of morning and mankind’s childhood, where only one is free and rules all others, viz. the despotic king, whereas the West is where freedom for all is realised, through an inner sunrise of the awareness of the self. Of course, the analogy of history and the sun only works from the perspective of western Europe. Seen from e.g. America, the sun rises in Europe and sets over the Pacific. Also, Hegel’s argument that everyone is free only in a constitutional monarchy is plainly absurd. However, this kind of schematic thinking on the history of the world’s cultures as a prelude to the West has proved tenacious. It invites comparison between East and West, but only from a Western perspective, as a comparison between developed and undeveloped, or primitive and mature cultures.

In fact, the danger of cultural bias also applies in the inclusion of the Near East in a comparative investigation of popular power in ancient polities. As Marc Van De Mieroop points out, “the predilection to see the Ancient Near East primarily as a precursor of the Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman legacy, tacitly presents the European cultural development as the superior one in the world and measures the relevance of other traditions only in relationship to it”.³⁹ Comparison of the Near East to Greece does run the risk of being an artificial attachment of a Near Eastern prelude to a Greek main narrative, or a search for Near Eastern origins of later Greek

³⁸ Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1970 [1832-45], 134

³⁹ Van De Mieroop, “On writing a history of the ancient Near East,” 1997, 288

institutions, with the implication that Near Eastern history is interesting only so far as it adds to the depth of European history. This must be avoided and a comparative study should therefore be from criteria that can be applied to politics both East and West, as on the sliding scale proposed above (1.2.3). Comparing Eastern and Western politics otherwise runs the risk of being reduced to measuring Eastern politics to a Western standard.

Popular power tends to be discussed from a Greek perspective. The view of democratic and republican political traditions as unique to the Western world is common in modern scholarship.⁴⁰ These Western political traditions of popular power and democratic debate are traced back to the Greeks and Romans, understood as ancestors of Western culture. Scholars claim that the Greeks and Romans are special cases in the ancient world: according to Moses Finley, politics only exists in states where “*binding* [original emphasis] decisions are reached by discussion and argument and ultimately by voting”.⁴¹ Finley states that “politics in our sense rank among the rarer of human activities in the pre-modern world. In effect, they were a Greek invention, more correctly perhaps, the separate inventions of the Greeks and of the Etruscans and/or Romans”.⁴² The divide between East and West is fundamental: Finley makes the point that “it is impossible to translate the word “freedom”, *eleutheria* in Greek, *libertas* in Latin, or “free man” into any ancient Near Eastern language, including Hebrew, or into any Far Eastern language either, for that matter”.⁴³ Finley’s views are not singular. In a recent work on world history, it is

⁴⁰ Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 53; Finley, *Democracy ancient and modern*, 1985, 13-14; Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997, 24-25; Raaflaub, “Power in the hands of the people,” 1998, 31; Fantalkin, “Identity in the making,” 2006, 204

⁴¹ Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 52

⁴² Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 53

⁴³ Finley, *The ancient economy*, 1985, 28

claimed that “Greek and Roman republican patterns of state and society were eccentric and lasted only a few centuries”.⁴⁴

The central place of Greek and Roman political practices and concepts in what is perceived as a Western political tradition has the effect that Near Eastern polities tend to be discussed in the context of an unfavourable comparison to a Greek and Roman standard. This is obvious in Finley’s claim that there are no direct equivalents for classical terms like *eleutheria* or *libertas* in the Near East. The comparison involves no definition of what these terms implied in Greek or Roman contexts; *eleutheria* or *libertas* are invoked in order to argue that their absence from Near Eastern languages makes it evident that there was no freedom for the citizens of Near Eastern polities. To assume a natural and self-evident meaning for the terms *eleutheria* or *libertas* and then look for direct equivalents to these terms in Near Eastern languages is a fruitless approach to comparative studies.⁴⁵

The claims of a specifically Western political tradition and a Greek invention of politics have been challenged several times, by Assyriologists and political scientists. One of the first and no-doubt the most influential of these heretics was the Assyriologist Thorkild Jacobsen, who in 1943 published the article “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia”.⁴⁶ Jacobsen argues that the earliest Mesopotamian city-states were ruled by the people and that rulers were controlled by public assemblies. Only later, with the rise of secular kingship and warrior rulers, did

⁴⁴ McNeill & McNeill, *The human web*, 2003, 76

⁴⁵ There is also the actual existence of terms for freedom in Near Eastern languages: AMA.GI₄ in Sumerian and *andurārum* in Akkadian are terms for freedom in the sense of release from debt and slavery (cf. Edzard, “Soziale Reformen” im Zweistromland,” 1974, 145-156)

⁴⁶ Jacobsen, “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1970 [1943], 157-170

autocracy become the norm.⁴⁷ The idea was supported by Geoffrey Evans, who published an article in 1958 elaborating on some of the points made by Jacobsen.⁴⁸ Jacobsen and Evans both pointed out the similarities between Mesopotamian assemblies and Athenian and Roman collective governance.⁴⁹ Evans concluded that although there were assemblies in some polities of ancient Mesopotamia, the political importance of these assemblies quickly receded before the advent of autocracy.⁵⁰ As will be seen, the concept of a “primitive democracy” in Mesopotamia has been quite influential with scholars, especially political scientists. It has also met much resistance from scholars of ancient history.

Political scientists have shown a great interest in tracing democracy to pre-Greek and Eastern traditions. Raul S. Manglapus claims in his book *Will of the people* (1987) that democracy originated in Mesopotamia. He imagines an original egalitarian society that continued to influence state societies and produce democratic institutions.⁵¹ However, it must be pointed out that his argument of an “egalitarian instinct of the original society” has little explanatory power in investigating popular participation in politics. It is too general a concept to say anything about how polities were organised in Mesopotamia. In Manglapus’ analysis, the supposed original democracy of Mesopotamia is treated like an independent entity with a life of its own, spreading to other parts of the world like a proselytising religion or contagious disease.

⁴⁷ Jacobsen, “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1970 [1943], 158-159

⁴⁸ Evans, “Ancient Mesopotamian assemblies,” 1958, 1-11

⁴⁹ Jacobsen, “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1970 [1943], 157-170; Evans, “Ancient Mesopotamian assemblies,” 1958, 1-11

⁵⁰ Evans, “Ancient Mesopotamian assemblies,” 1958, 11

A different approach to a non-Western history of democracy is that of Yves Schemeil, who claims that Egyptian and Mesopotamian polities were more democratic than the Greek *poleis*.⁵² He argues that Egyptian and Mesopotamian polities had multiple councils that were “certainly as democratic as the Greek *polis*” because the people could speak their mind there.⁵³ In his analysis, Mesopotamia had a tradition of polyarchy, where corporate groups representing the city population in councils and assemblies were in opposition to the rulers.⁵⁴ He concludes that the “Egyptians and Mesopotamians already knew that the essence of “democracy” was not only citizenship but the necessity to mobilize citizens; it was not only popular participation but the need to organize it”.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Schemeil cites no ancient evidence for these claims. His argument that the mobilisation and organisation of citizens is somehow the “essence of “democracy”” reveals a confusion of the very concept of democracy, making the analysis useless for a comparison between Eastern and Western political traditions: I would argue that democratic debate is the *sine qua non* for popular participation in politics, not how people are organised into corporate groups. Without public access to information and the free expression of opinion, popular power cannot be effective. Making people agree is not the same as empowering the people. In my view, an essential aspect of popular power is when the opinions of different socio-economic groups are taken into consideration, in collective decision-making bodies.

It could be argued that popular power exists where the people are allowed participation in political decision-making. However, popular power is effectively

⁵¹ Manglapus, *Will of the people*, 1987, 19-25

⁵² Schemeil, “Democracy before democracy,” 2000, 99-120

⁵³ Schemeil, “Democracy before democracy,” 2000, 104-105

⁵⁴ Schemeil, “Democracy before democracy,” 2000, 112

⁵⁵ Schemeil, “Democracy before democracy,” 2000, 116

curtailed if commoners have no influence on the agenda or no opportunity to make informed choices about which policies to support or decline. In order to wield power, the people have to be active agents in structuring their social and political environment, including making up their own opinions and forming their own agendas. The vote is not enough for popular power to exist and neither is access to the assembly. The people have to initiate their own decisions in order for popular power to exist. Agency and structuration will be discussed in chapter 2 (2.5; 2.7)

The idea of “primitive democracy in Mesopotamia” is still influential with political scientists. Recently, Benjamin Isakhan has argued strongly that there are Middle Eastern “roots of collective governance” that can prove useful to contemporary political reformers in the region.⁵⁶ From as diverse sources as the Koran to Sumerian myths, he points out that democracy cannot be claimed as a Greek invention.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, in his analysis, there is no differentiation between the interests of limited groups such as “the elders” and the wider community of citizens within the polities discussed. The resulting “primitive democracy” is too primitive for comparative analyses with Greek traditions of government, a main problem of which is exactly the opposition between limited councils and larger assemblies, i.e. rule by antechamber or rule by the people.

In his book *The Life and Death of Democracy* (2009) John Keane claims to show “for the first time” that democracy was not a Greek invention.⁵⁸ In Keane’s analysis, “the lamp of assembly-based democracy was first lit in the “East”, in lands that

⁵⁶ Isakhan, “Engaging “primitive democracy”: mideast roots of collective governance,” 2007, 97-117

⁵⁷ Isakhan, “Engaging “primitive democracy”: mideast roots of collective governance,” 2007, 102

⁵⁸ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, x

geographically correspond to contemporary Syria, Iraq and Iran”.⁵⁹ He also argues that democracy in Greece did not originate in Athens, by pointing to early inscriptions mentioning the *demos*, or people.⁶⁰ These early Greek democracies Keane sets in relation to democratic traditions of the Phoenicians that were somehow transferred to Greece through trade. The Phoenicians had in turn learned their political practices from the Mesopotamians. As evidence for these Eastern democratic traditions, he cites sources as diverse as an Egyptian story set in Phoenicia where an assembly reaches decisions, Mesopotamian myths where the gods reach decisions in assembly, and a literary text that tells of a court case in Nippur where the jury consisted of commoners.⁶¹

A problem with Keane’s thesis is that it operates with democracy as an entity with a life of its own, moving from one place to the next. Democracy is not defined against more or less inclusive forms of collective governance, except for a claim that there were different types of assembly democracy.⁶² His analysis is also marred by pure speculation, as when he tries to relate the history of democracy to an etymology of Greek *demos* from Linear B *da-mo* and Sumerian DUMU, all possible terms for “people”,⁶³ as if these terms by themselves have any weight as evidence for political practices. The evidence he cites for assembly-based democracy in Syro-Mesopotamia, such as the text *The Nippur Trial for Homicide*, where “an assembly of commoners” debates a homicide case,⁶⁴ or literary compositions containing creation myths where

⁵⁹ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, xi

⁶⁰ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 90-92

⁶¹ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 103-123

⁶² Cf. Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 97

⁶³ Cf. Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 113. DUMU is usually translated “child”, “son”, and thus, by extension, can be interpreted as “people”. The supposed parallelism of DUMU and the Greek *demos* is highly speculative.

⁶⁴ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 118-119

the gods reach decisions in assembly, ⁶⁵ is problematic. The evidence itself is not straight forward. I will return to *The Nippur Trial for Homicide* in chapter 4 (4.3.5). However, I will point out the main problems with it here, as an illustration of the difficulties of reconstructing Mesopotamian political culture from isolated texts: Marc Van De Mieroop interprets the jury at the trial as “manual labourers” and takes this as evidence of the general access to jury courts in Mesopotamian cities.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Andrea Seri claims that the jury in question probably were temple personnel and therefore not representative of the city inhabitants in general.⁶⁷ Thus, it is problematic to identify the jury in Nippur as “commoners” and take this as evidence for democracy. Keane offers no discussion of the interpretation of the text, but takes it as a given that the reading that fits his argument is the correct one. In fact, identifying the participants in decision-making processes is one of the biggest problems concerning Near Eastern polities. Therefore, it may be unwise for a political scientist, or any other scholar for that matter, to base firm conclusions on just a few texts, interpreted outside the context of ancient Mesopotamian urban culture. Further, regarding evidence from Mesopotamian myths, it is difficult to say anything about the realism of e.g. a creation myth as compared to political practices in real life. Keane’s use of this evidence is problematic because he makes no attempt to place the assemblies mentioned in the evidence within a larger political structure of Mesopotamian polities.

The idea that there were democracies before the Greeks has won little favour with scholars of Greek antiquity. Histories of democracy from a Near Eastern or global

⁶⁵ Keane, *The life and death of democracy*, 2009, 113-117

⁶⁶ Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 122-123

⁶⁷ Cf. Seri, *Local power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*, 2006, 170

perspective are seldom cited except as to be dismissed.⁶⁸ Jacobsen's "primitive democracy" in Mesopotamia is termed a "spectre" by Kurt A. Raaflaub: he instead suggests that evidence for popular participation in politics from Mesopotamia represent "non-autocratic institutions" surviving in otherwise – and necessarily – autocratic societies".⁶⁹ It is indeed easy to reject the arguments for popular rule outside Greece presented above. First, because the evidence is gathered from a vast span of time and space, it hardly applies to any specific culture that may be compared to Greek *polis* culture. Second, the term democracy is applied in a rather vague sense by the scholars professing its relevance for polities of the Near East, with no clear distinction between mass decision-making and decisions reached by limited councils. Therefore, it is difficult to establish convincing historical parallels to Greek democracy. Democracy as applied in the analyses of Manglapus, Isakhan and Keane is used as a cover-all for any kind of non-autocratic government. There is a definite Manichean tinge to their histories of popular participation in politics: the forces of democracy fight against tyranny and oppression, like a dualism of light and darkness, good and evil.

When interested in connections between Greek and Near Eastern political traditions, scholars tend to describe these in terms of diffusion, from a Mesopotamian birth-place in the first city-states via the Phoenicians in the Iron Age to a new home in Greece. There have been several attempts at setting the development of the Greek *polis* and its high degree of citizen participation in relation to contacts with the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians have been portrayed as a kind of middlemen bringing city culture and republican government to the Greeks from the Near East or otherwise providing

⁶⁸ E.g. Eric Robinson rejects Manglapus' thesis of democracy before the Greek *poleis* as speculative: Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997, 24-25

⁶⁹ Raaflaub, "Power in the hands of the people," 1998, 31

proto-types for Greek constitutions.⁷⁰ This approach has several pitfalls, the most serious being that so little is known about Phoenician city-states and their political culture. Also, the transmission of political institutions from Phoenicia to Greece is difficult to explain: why should the Greeks take foreign models for their political structures and if it happened, how? Ultimately, the placing of the Greek *polis* at the end of a development starting in Mesopotamia that was somehow transmitted by Levantine seafaring peoples is a neat story, but it is teleological and faulty. There are significant periods of Mesopotamian history that show no clear continuity of city-state culture and it cannot be claimed that the Phoenician city-state culture is the same as that of Mesopotamia. Continuities of urban life and culture are to be expected, but continuity from Mesopotamia to Greece can only be argued in quite general terms. Therefore, this dissertation will be limited to discussions of structural and practical parallels East and West, and I will not venture into questions of diffusion or influences between Greek and Near Eastern polities.

In recent years, the prevalence of a Greek perspective in studies of ancient politics has been called into question. A vocal critic of the classicist tradition, Martin Bernal claims that “conventional wisdom has been misled by Eurocentrism and anti-Semitism into the belief that Greek cities differed categorically from Phoenician ones in being “free,” whereas the latter were authoritarian if not despotic”.⁷¹ However, it is rather pointless to claim that the view of East and West as fundamentally different in terms of political organisation and ideology is a result of Western cultural chauvinism alone. This kind of criticism loses its edge in view of the considerable difficulties in saying anything certain about the Phoenician cities or Near Eastern polities in general regarding their political culture.

⁷⁰ Drews, “Phoenicians, Carthage and the Spartan Eunomia,” 1979, 45-58; Gschntzer, “Die Stellung der Polis in der politischen Entwicklung des Altertums,” 2001 [1988], 233-248; Sommer, *Europa's Ahnen*, 2000

⁷¹ Bernal, *Black Athena writes back*, 2001, 359

The view that political history began with the Greek *polis* is challenged by Kostas Vlassopoulos in his book *Unthinking the Greek Polis* (2007). He calls for a study of Greek history within the Eastern Mediterranean, from a Near Eastern perspective.⁷² According to Vlassopoulos, “if Oriental despotism is no more than a Eurocentric myth, then Greek history and the Greek polis can be viewed from a totally altered standpoint”.⁷³ A problem with Vlassopoulos’ call for new perspectives is the situation of the sources. It is not possible to discuss Near Eastern political thinking or practice at the same level of detail as Greek polities. Most Mesopotamian sources come from the palace and temples and the activities of people outside the great institutions are little documented. However, Vlassopoulos’ criticism of Eurocentrism in political history is well put. He argues against the view that democracy was discovered by Greeks as if it were “a physical entity that exists objectively”.⁷⁴ The view that there were fundamental differences between the Near East and Greece seems indeed to be based on such objectifications or reifications of “culture” and its products.

In a review of Vlassopoulos’ book, Angela Kühr argues that “we should not construct a European culture or a culture of the “West” translating it to the Ancient World, but we should not neglect either that differences existed between the Near Eastern world and the world dominated by Greek-speaking people, who distinguished their way of living by referring to a specific form of settlement: the polis”.⁷⁵ The oxymoron of her argument is obvious: Kühr claims that one should not “construct a European culture”, yet argues that there was a “Near Eastern world” with characteristics that distinguish

⁷² Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek polis*, 2007, 101

⁷³ Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek polis*, 2007, 102

⁷⁴ Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek polis*, 2007, 119

⁷⁵ Kühr, “Review of K. Vlassopoulos 2007,” 2009

it from a “world dominated by Greek-speaking people”, as if either of these “worlds” existed as natural phenomena outside analytical categories. Also, it is difficult to see how the concept of the *polis* prevents a combined study of Near Eastern and Greek polities: the Greek use of *polis* included non-Greek polities, and can thus not be said *per se* to warrant any differentiation between Greeks and Near Easterners, except in the minds of modern scholars.

There are huge differences in what is known, indeed what can be known, about Greek and Near Eastern political traditions respectively. Any comparison between Greek and Near Eastern polities is made difficult by the difference in source materials: whereas Greek writers discuss conflicts between tyrants, oligarchs and the masses and report in detail about the organisation of popular power as well as its successes and failures, the Near Eastern evidence that is most frequently cited in comparative studies consists of anecdotal or mythological literary compositions, often combined with information culled from documents of several different periods and polities. The ancient Greeks were the first to produce an analytic literature about politics. Also, they wrote detailed histories of the political life in city-states and the conflicts in and between them. This means that scholars are far better informed about Greek political thought as well as about different forms of political organisation in Greek polities than they can ever be for the Near East. Also, the lack of political analyses in Near Eastern sources means there is a lack of clear concepts available to scholars for discussing political structures of Near Eastern polities beyond the palace or temple, including collective decision-making in towns and cities. Any comparison between Greek and Near Eastern polities therefore has to deal with these fundamental differences. A particular danger lies in making a very broad definition of democracy and thereafter to place all types of collective decisions together in the same basket. A more careful approach is needed, that takes differences as well as similarities into account and places councils and assemblies in their socio-political context.

Since Finley's denial of the existence of Near Eastern politics,⁷⁶ scholars have published a wealth of comparative research on Greek and Near Eastern city-states. In particular the *Copenhagen Polis Centre* has done much to further the comparative research of polities East and West.⁷⁷ This research discusses Near Eastern polities with a view to their political complexity, in particular how city-states functioned in isolation and as nodes in city-state cultures. However, the choice of perspective runs the risk of introducing the East as a prelude to the West.⁷⁸ The comparative project of the *Copenhagen Polis Centre* is by its very name geared towards *poleis*, the city-states of Greece. The degree and nature of the participation of common people in the governance of Near Eastern polities remains controversial.⁷⁹ This is in part a consequence of the project itself: the comparative analyses of Near Eastern polities by the *Copenhagen Polis Centre* become tied to an interest in city-states that is ultimately grounded in an interest in the Greek *polis*. This means that in comparison, no city-state culture other than the Greek had any considerable degree of popular power.

The *Copenhagen Polis Centre* is not alone in this restatement of a uniquely high degree of popular participation in Greek politics. In a recent article, archaeologist Alexander Fantalkin states that the Greek *polis* is "a community of equal, local-born men, which stands in opposition to everything which the East symbolizes".⁸⁰ Thus, the image of separate Eastern and Western political worlds lives on. Having established the prevalent view that popular power did not exist in Near Eastern politics, I turn now to a closer examination of the reasons why popular participation in

⁷⁶ Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 53

⁷⁷ Especially Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000 and Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of six city-state cultures*, 2002

⁷⁸ Cf. Van De Mierop, "On writing a history of the ancient Near East," 1997, 288

⁷⁹ Cf. Larsen, "The Old Assyrian city-state," 2000, 84-85; Westenholz, "The Sumerian city-state," 2002, 30-31

⁸⁰ Fantalkin, "Identity in the making," 2006, 204

politics in Near Eastern polities is difficult to detect and how this problem can be solved.

1.4 Constitutions and strategies for power

The difficulty of determining the size and composition of decision-making groups in Near Eastern polities is a recurring problem in comparisons between Greek and Near Eastern political culture. Were decisions reached by large or small groups? More often than not, this is impossible to determine. This detracts considerably from the persuasiveness of any comparative analysis of polities East and West. A case in point is Thorkild Jacobsen who devised the already mentioned concept of “primitive democracy” for early Mesopotamian polities (1.3): in his analysis, early polities of Mesopotamia were ruled by collective organs of decision-making until the rise of despotic kings and a corresponding curtailment of popular influence in politics.⁸¹ The term “primitive democracy” has been criticised because it does not distinguish between whether decisions were taken by a large popular assembly or by a limited council, i.e. between what the Greeks termed democracies and oligarchies.⁸² This is a difficulty that is hard to resolve, especially because sources from Mesopotamia that mention collective decision-making, e.g. legal documents recording decisions made by assembly courts, seldom specify who were in the assembly or how decisions were reached. This problem cannot be avoided entirely, as it originates in the very sources to Near Eastern polities, from Mesopotamia as well as Syria and the Levant. However, there are approaches that can to a certain extent get round it. A promising approach in my opinion is to analyse power as enacted in the strategies of agents, rather than expressed in formal hierarchies, as mentioned above (1.2.3). This

⁸¹ Jacobsen, “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1970 [1943], 157-170

⁸² Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997, 19

approach will be discussed further in sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2. Some difficulties entailed in this approach will be discussed in the following.

In a monograph titled *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors* (2004), Daniel E. Fleming claims that there were significant parallels in structure between the towns of the Old Babylonian kingdom Mari and archaic Greek polities: in the Near East and Greece, inhabitants of towns pursued corporate strategies for power through collective decision-making that could challenge or obviate kings.⁸³ According to Fleming, “the preexisting social landscape for Greek democracy bears unmistakable resemblances to widespread Mesopotamian custom, whatever the particular process that led to such a radical innovation. It is difficult to understand how the various political forms leading to Athenian democracy were not constructed from the raw materials of eastern group-oriented decision making, however unique the application”.⁸⁴

A problem with Fleming's thesis is the relation he suggests between group decision-making and democracy: although decision-making collectives in Mesopotamian towns do indicate that society was not autocratic, it is of great consequence for the existence of popular power whether the entire town reached decisions together or a limited council of elders or other authority figures reached decisions. Fleming does not pursue this problem, however, but instead argues that words for town, council or assembly have a “range and fluidity” so that “fixed bodies with readily definable constituents will be hard to find”.⁸⁵ Defined collective decision-making bodies are indeed hard to find, but does this warrant that all group decision-making can be treated as evidence for a political culture that promoted the development of

⁸³ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 171

⁸⁴ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 16

⁸⁵ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 172

democracy? Indeed, the idea of a development from diverse forms of group decision-making into democracy is problematic. As will be discussed in chapter 3 (3.4.2; 3.4.3), there were specific historical circumstances that created democracy in Greece, or more precisely Athens, the best documented of Greek democracies. It does not seem likely that e.g. Athenian democracy has Mesopotamian ancestors. Democracy cannot be plausibly interpreted as an organic entity that developed from primitive beginnings into a more developed form of constitution, spreading from the cradle of civilisation in the East to become the beginnings of Western culture in Greece.

Fleming's idea of Mesopotamian group decision-making as "raw materials" for the development of democracy has been met with criticism. Andrea Seri points out that Fleming argues that "elders" in villages and among mobile pastoralists represent "survivors" from before the appearance of kings in Mesopotamian states. She argues that this approach to political studies is similar to Jacobsen's "primitive democracy".⁸⁶ Fleming argues that e.g. the elders of Uruk are powerful because they are a traditional authority. In his interpretation, "[t]he tradition of a powerful collective balance to leadership by kings may be the inheritance of a long urban history".⁸⁷ I agree with Seri that this is a weak argument. It reveals the tenacity of intellectual habits of evolutionism and cannot be said to explain the power of "elders". The claim that powerful "elders" are the result of a surviving pre-monarchical institution appears odd, because the simultaneous existence of kings and collective institutions of decision-making can be seen in much of the Mari evidence. I will discuss this evidence in chapter 4 (4.6-8).

⁸⁶ Seri, "Review: *Democracy's ancient ancestors*," 2005, 120-121

⁸⁷ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 199

As mentioned, the lack of differentiation between councils and assemblies in Near Eastern sources makes any comparison between Greek and Mesopotamian politics rather difficult. This is because a significant difference between polities in Greece was not whether there was group decision-making or not, but who were admitted to participate in the group making the decisions and who these people represented. With a large category for collective decision-making that does not differentiate between limited councils and open assemblies, any similarities found between Greek and Mesopotamian polities are bound to be quite general and superficial. What is needed is therefore a more detailed analytical framework for ancient polities. I have suggested this above (1.2.3), with a division of strategies for power into élite and corporate strategies, further subdivided into broad and narrow élite strategies and broad and narrow corporate strategies. The point is to be able to analyse political activities that are not necessarily expressed in the formal structure of the polity, but visible in the actions of situated agents.

What can be found in ancient Near Eastern sources are not constitutions parallel to Greek *poleis* as such, since practically all Near Eastern polities were kingships. However, political practices that imply popular power can be found within a greater whole. In order to understand these instances of popular power, it is necessary to look beyond the Greek terms of democracy, oligarchy and monarchy. By looking at institutions and practices for collective power within the political structure of a kingdom, it can be described as having elements of popular rule without claiming that it therefore must be termed a democracy. Popular participation can thus be possible even if the people were not the single authority in a polity. This means looking beyond the paradigm of autocratic Near Eastern polities. In my view, rather than seeing these elements of popular rule as “non-autocratic traits” in “autocratic societies”,⁸⁸ elements of popular rule make it necessary to analyse Near Eastern

⁸⁸ Cf. Raaflaub, “Power in the hands of the people,” 1998, 31

polities afresh, on new terms independent of the classicist and Greco-centric terms oligarchy, democracy, and autocracy or despotic monarchy.

In order to understand the place of popular power in ancient polities, the relationship between rulers, the élite, and the people and their respective strategies for power must be taken into consideration. This means looking beyond formal hierarchies and to look at political practices. It also means to transcend the confines of the classicist-derived vocabulary for polities, where constitutions are analysed as oligarchies, democracies, or autocracies or despotic kingdoms. The problem of categorisation was one ancient philosophers also grappled with when confronted with data for polities that did not fit just one term. In fact, the classical approach was more subtle than the analyses of modern scholars that were briefly reviewed above (1.3). A classical solution was the idea of mixed constitutions that were put together by elements from several constitutions. This will be discussed in the following.

1.4.1 The mixed constitution: kingship and popular power

The classical concept of a mixed constitution is a good model to work with in order to see different strategies for power at work simultaneously in a polity: rather than regarding a polity as equal to a specific type of constitution, the idea of a mixed constitution makes it possible to discuss e.g. popular power in a polity ruled by a king.

In his *Politics*, Aristotle claims that his ideal constitution, the *politeia*, or “polity” is a mix of traits from democracy and oligarchy. In his scheme, constitutional traits can be combined in different ways. As an example, Aristotle argues that regarding assembly-courts, it would be an oligarchic practice to subject rich non-attendants to a fine and not to pay the masses for attendance, and a democratic practice not to fine non-

attendants and to pay the masses for attendance. Oligarchic and democratic arrangements can be combined in a *politeia*.⁸⁹ To Aristotle, it is typical of a well-mixed constitution that it can be described both as a democracy and an oligarchy. He finds this especially well exemplified in the Spartan constitution, a constitution that he finds much at fault, but which serves him as an illustration of the mixing of traits from different types of constitutions. In the Spartan constitution, he sees an egalitarian education for all citizens and the popular vote over members to the council of elders (*gerousia*) as well as popular control of the ephorate as democratic traits. An oligarchic trait is the use of elections rather than choosing candidates by use of the lot.⁹⁰ According to Aristotle, in Sparta the kings represent monarchy, the elders represent oligarchy, and a democratic influence comes from the authority of the ephors, who come from the people. He adds, however, that some say that the ephors are tyrannical, and that the democratic element should rather be sought in the organisation of common meals and other daily activities.⁹¹

The argument of a mixed constitution as the best one possible is also found in Polybios. According to him, the best constitution has elements from kingship, aristocracy, and democracy.⁹² By democracy he means when the will of the majority decides, while the laws are respected and traditions are upheld.⁹³ His prime example of a well-mixed constitution is Sparta after the reforms of Lykourgos, which he sees as closely parallel to the Roman constitution.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 1294a35ff.

⁹⁰ Arist. *Pol.* 1294b14ff.

⁹¹ Arist. *Pol.* 1265b26ff.

⁹² Polyb. 6.3.5-12

⁹³ Polyb. 6.4.4-6

⁹⁴ Polyb. 6.10.1-14

Thus, Aristotle and Polybios were not foreign to the idea that a constitution can have democratic traits, although it is formally not a democracy: the masses can nevertheless have a certain influence in the constitution. This kind of mixed constitution is not a theoretical construct. There are indications that collective organs of decision-making existed in Greek *poleis* ruled by tyrants: according to Herodotos and Thukydidēs, the tyrant Peisistratos did not abolish the established collective institutions of power when he seized control of Athens, but ruled according to the laws.⁹⁵ Also, Thukydidēs claims that when Perikles was general of Athens, it was known as a democracy, but was in reality the rule of the first man in the *polis*.⁹⁶ This indicates that authoritarian one-man rule could be set through without abolishing collective organs of decision-making. Popular participation could be a part of the political structure of tyrannies. The discussion of popular power therefore should not be restricted to formal democracies, neither for Greek nor Near Eastern polities.

The existence in tragedy of kings and popular assemblies ruling together, as seen in Aeschylus' Argos and Euripides' Athens,⁹⁷ are further examples of mixed constitutions. Of course, these examples can be interpreted as purely literary phenomena. It is no doubt a model that fits well with Greek drama, with a king as a protagonist and the people as a choir. According to Pat Easterling, "the use of a loose model in which king and people are the essential categories of authority gave the tragedians great scope".⁹⁸ Beyond dramatic concerns, however, the tragedians may also be said to refer to forms of political organisation that were considered plausible,

⁹⁵ Hdt. 1.59; Thuc. 6.54

⁹⁶ Thuc. 2.65

⁹⁷ Aesch. *Supp.* 365-369; *ibid.* 604-624; *ibid.* 698-703; Eur. *Supp.* 346-358; *ibid.* 403-455 (cf. 1.2.2).

⁹⁸ Easterling, "The image of the *polis* in Greek tragedy," 2005, 53

if not modelled on historical examples, such as monarchies with active and influential citizen assemblies. As seen with the evidence from Aristotle, Herodotos, and Thukydides, a range of combinations of ruler, council, and popular assembly were known to the Greeks. To include the mixed constitution in the discussion of popular power facilitates a comparative analysis of Near Eastern and Greek polities, because the dynamics of the individual polity can be studied beyond an application of the labels democracy, oligarchy, or autocracy.

As will be seen in chapters 4, 5, and 6, there is evidence that there was power outside the palace and temples of Near Eastern kingdoms. This will form an important part of the argument in the present investigation. As will be seen, even in strictly hierarchic and rather autocratic ancient societies, such as Ugarit or Babylon, there can be found meeting-places for the negotiation of interests between the different groups in society, such as jury courts or public assemblies. It is important to try to assess what actual influence such collective bodies had. Regardless of whether they had a direct and binding influence on political decisions at the highest levels or not, it is an important point that at such junctions as jury courts, diverging strategies for power could be pursued. Information could be obtained and opinions voiced. In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I will investigate the significance of such practices and institutions, in order to discuss public participation in decision-making and what I have termed narrow and broad corporate strategies for power in Near Eastern polities. In this way, Near Eastern and Greek polities can be compared without being dependent on Greek terms for constitutions and their connotations (cf. chapter 7). I will now discuss further the concept of strategies for power and how these can be used to analyse ancient polities.

1.4.2 Polities as networks of strategies for power

Political analysis in terms of “corporate” and “exclusionary” or “network” strategies for power is an approach from anthropology that is quite useful for the study of ancient societies.⁹⁹ Richard E. Blanton et al. exemplify network strategies as where the élite of one group maintains its power in this group through the exclusive contact with the élites of other groups. The manipulation of long-distance contacts makes it possible to obtain limited commodities, services and knowledge, by which the élite gains and maintains power.¹⁰⁰ The network strategy involves “patrimonial rhetoric”, the establishment of a prestigious lineage, and “prestige-goods systems”, assuring the prestige of exotic goods as well as the élite’s monopoly of access to them.¹⁰¹

Corporate strategies on the other hand involve a cognitive code that emphasises a “corporate solidarity” between groups in society. Society is viewed as an integrated whole and its subgroups as wholly interdependent. This also applies to complex societies, where the cognitive code emphasises the interdependence between rulers and subjects.¹⁰²

Strategies for power can be recognised in different ways of organising group decision-making. In a corporate strategy, popular assemblies, or arena councils, are the places where discussions are taken and decisions are reached. Arena councils must be distinguished from élite councils; the arena council is the community-in-council, where there is an open debate on all issues, whereas in the élite council, participation as well as debate is restricted and the impression of unanimity among the

⁹⁹ These terms are found in Blanton et al., “A dual-processual theory for the evolution of Mesoamerican civilization,” 1996, 2

¹⁰⁰ Blanton et al., “A dual-processual theory,” 1996, 4

¹⁰¹ Blanton et al., “A dual-processual theory,” 1996, 5

¹⁰² Blanton et al., “A dual-processual theory,” 1996, 6

rulers is sought.¹⁰³ In societies where the élite strategy is predominant, access to participation in discussions and decision-making is restricted to a narrow élite, and decisions are taken in élite councils. In a monarchy, the king and his advisors reach decisions, whereas in an oligarchy, councils consisting of members of a limited élite wield power. None of these strategies have ever been observed in pure form, but this is how they are useful, because they can be used to analyse the dynamics between and changing positions of socio-economic groups in a polity. The approach to politics as networks of strategies will be placed in its methodological context in chapter 2 (2.8), where I will discuss its relation to other approaches to ancient polities, in particular neo-evolutionary approaches and theories of structuration and structure. Suffice it to say here that through analyses of strategies for power, instead of emphasising a dichotomy of rich and poor or a hierarchy of rulers and ruled, polities can be viewed as dynamic networks of agents pursuing different strategies for power. Also, thinking in terms of strategies rather than socio-economic groups arranged in a fixed hierarchy makes it possible to explain seemingly self-contradictory political behaviour, e.g. popular support of tyrants. Throughout the present investigation, I will investigate popular involvement in politics from the nature of interactions between socio-economic groups in the polity, through judiciary and political institutions and in less formal decision-making situations.

The model of Richard E. Blanton et al. is quite general and there is some scope for refining the terms employed. As mentioned in section 1.2.3 above, I will divide strategies into narrow and broad corporate and élite strategies. This is in order to better understand the political implications of the relative prevalence of the different strategies. All complex societies have to have a universal cognitive code for corporate solidarity: a society could not exist if there was no sense among the groups in society

¹⁰³ Bailey, "Decisions by consensus in councils and committees," 1965, 9-12; Kuper, "Council structure and decision-making," 1971, 13-16

of belonging to a whole. Conversely, any complex society has network strategies where élites use their international contacts to maintain their position, including trade and foreign policy. Corporate and élite strategies have to be part of a dynamic network of strategies for the society to function. This is indeed anticipated by Blanton et al. in their emphasis on the *duality* of the strategies for power. However, I am doubtful that the terms “corporate” and “network” cover the range of strategies employed by agents in a complex society. I therefore suggest that the strategies for power are differentiated into broad and narrow corporate strategies and broad and narrow élite strategies. In the following, I will discuss these terms in more detail and provide preliminary examples of these strategies in practice from the polities that will be examined in the present study. These different examples of strategies for power will be discussed in full further on in the relevant chapters.

The term broad corporate strategy for power will be used when large groups of inhabitants of towns or cities act collectively through public and collective organs of decision-making or in less organised collective action, like revolts. An example of a broad corporate strategy is the importance of the popular assembly and jury courts in the Athenian constitution from the 6th century onwards, discussed in section 3.4.2. A less formal example is the revolt of the Athenian *demos* against Isagoras and Kleomenes in 508/7, when the latter attempted to seize power by establishing a restricted council of élite citizens. This is discussed in section 3.4.3. From the Near East, a broad corporate strategy for power can be seen in popular revolts against the mayors of Levantine cities under Egyptian suzerainty in the Late Bronze Age. This is discussed in section 6.5. The broad corporate strategy is characterised by the people acting collectively and the citizens identifying themselves with the polity as a whole.

There are also instances where not all the people, but a group of them, distinguished by wealth and status, wield power. This group may still have the totality of the polity

in mind, but does not count all citizens as members. Although it is a form of collective strategy for power, the collective in power is defined to the exclusion of the majority of the population, often by criteria of wealth or age and experience.

Therefore, I will term this a narrow corporate strategy. In a narrow corporate strategy, the highest offices are restricted to those who belong to the narrowly defined group of eligible citizens. Power lies in councils where full access to participation is restricted. Citizens may still be a part of the political system and participate in popular assemblies in a narrow corporate strategy, but decisions are reached elsewhere and councils with limited access take care of policy-making. An example of a narrow corporate strategy is Sparta, where the popular assembly was open to all, but power lay with a limited group of Spartiates who served as ephors or sat in the numerically restricted council of elders together with the two kings, the *gerousia*. This is discussed in section 3.4.1. Another example of a narrow corporate strategy is the prerogative of the richest citizens for political office at Athens after the reforms of Solon, discussed in section 3.4.2. From the Near East, narrow corporate strategies can be seen in the Old Assyrian “merchant colony” in Anatolia, the *kārum* Kanesh, where the initiative to convene the assembly lay with the rich merchants and decisions could be reached by the rich merchants without involving the entire community. The entire community of merchants, “small and great”, could participate in assembly, but this was at the discretion of the “great”. This is discussed in section 5.5.1. An important distinction between a narrow corporation and an élite is that in a narrow corporation, anyone could in principle attain the fulfilment of the criteria for participation in the limited group in power.

Common to broad and narrow corporate strategies is an emphasis on the group and on society as an association rather than an institution. The group can be defined more or less exclusively and the criteria for participation are objective, such as wealth or age. The narrow corporate strategy is more restrictive than the broad corporate strategy regarding who are allowed to participate in councils and who are eligible to the

highest offices, but still has the larger society in mind and emphasises the interdependence of rulers and ruled in the polity. The corporate strategies involve a degree of the citizens ruling and being ruled in turn. Criteria for membership in the community of citizens, whether defined as a broad or narrow corporation, will be discussed below (1.5), regarding equality and the citizen community.

As seen with the concept of the mixed constitution (1.4.1), it is conceivable that citizens can pursue corporate strategies under a monarch. Historically, this is a phenomenon that occurs where institutions for collective decision-making are not suppressed and the monarch acknowledges the citizens as part of the polity, as subjects rather than as slaves. Thus, Peisistratos was a tyrant of Athens in the 6th century, but the people of Athens continued to participate in politics through the assemblies and offices open to them. The real opponent of Peisistratos was not the people, but the birth élite of aristocratic families. This is discussed in section 3.4.3. A different example is from Babylonia in the Neo-Assyrian period, where it can be seen that the people of Babylonian cities are acknowledged as an authority by the king and his representatives. This is discussed in section 6.7. There is not necessarily an opposition between corporate strategies for power and kingship. Both can be found in the same polity. Given the duality of corporate and network strategies at work in complex societies, the relative balance is what characterises the polity, not the isolated presence of one or the other strategy.

The corporate strategies are contrasted by élite strategies that emphasise the fundamental differences between commoners and those in power. These strategies for power also emphasise the exclusivity of positions of power. I will use the term broad élite strategy where a limited group of people are in power to the exclusion of all other citizens. Different from the narrow corporate strategy, the broad élite strategy emphasises the exclusive nature of the ruling group, typically limited by birth, divine

grace, or diverse definitions of virtue or nobility. The élite group sets itself apart from the rest of the citizenry by traits unattainable by commoners. Examples of the broad élite strategy can be seen in the Homeric poems discussed in section 3.3.1, where the *basileis* wage war for the sake of personal honour. They reach decisions in a collective, but they do not heed the assembly of fighters, the *laoi*. Their position is granted by Zeus and no commoner can match a *basileus* in combat or counsel. In the *Iliad*, the broad élite strategy is evident in the Thersites-episode in particular, where the commoner Thersites is beaten by Odysseus for speaking insolently in the assembly: the *basileis* are granted power by Zeus, whereas the commoners are deemed of no worth in council or battle. Only one shall rule, whom Zeus has given the sceptre, whereas the rule of many is a bad thing.¹⁰⁴

A similar contempt for the people outside the aristocracy evident in the Homeric epics can be seen in the poems of Alkaios, discussed in section 3.4.4. He reviles Pittakos, tyrant of Mytilene, as a base-born opportunist who has come to power by catering to the commoners.¹⁰⁵ Alkaios is sent into exile by Pittakos and longs to return with his aristocratic fellows in order to overthrow the tyrant.¹⁰⁶ Similar concerns for the privileges of the élite can be found in the poems of Theognis, discussed in section 3.4.5. Theognis complains that at Megara, people who used to live in the countryside, dressed in goatskin clothes, in his own time have become noble, while those who were formerly noble are considered base.¹⁰⁷ The broad élite strategy promotes a community of élite members, but the élite is strictly separated from the rest of the citizens and there is no chance of any commoner rising to the status of the élite. The community of élite members have little concern for the larger community of the polity

¹⁰⁴ *Il.* 2.198-205

¹⁰⁵ *Alc.* 75 and 347

¹⁰⁶ *Alc.* 129

¹⁰⁷ *Thgn. Book I* 53-68

and pursue their interests within an international frame of reference with élites of other polities. This is well attested from Greece, where the aristocrats from several *poleis* convened regularly at Olympia and other sanctuaries and thus formed a network independent of their home communities.¹⁰⁸

From the Near East, broad élite strategies for power are less conspicuous than in Greek *poleis*. In the correspondence from Old Babylonian Mari, the heads of nomadic families can be argued to form a broad élite of decision-making “elders”. However, their councils do not appear to have been explicitly restricted and their policies cannot be said to go against the integrated whole of leaders and commoners in the community as was the case in some Greek *poleis* ruled by élite collectives. The élites of Mari communities appear rather to be pursuing a narrow corporate strategy. This is discussed in section 4.8. An élite of officials existed in all Near Eastern cities, but that does not mean that they pursued the same kind of exclusive strategy for power that the Greek aristocrats did or shared the Greek aristocrats disdain for any complicity between rulers and people. The lack of evidence for centrifugal strategies among Near Eastern broad élites is presumably due to the strength of centralised leadership in the cities, with quite stable hierarchies of temples and palaces. The *stasis* so characteristic of Greek *poleis* is not attested to the same degree in Near Eastern polities. This will be discussed in chapter 7.

The strength of central authorities brings us to the narrow élite strategy. This is the kind of strategy pursued by rulers, with an emphasis on the exclusive position of the king, as a divinely favoured person endowed with supernatural qualities through his ancestry or other marks of distinction. Rather than the collectivity of aristocrats in the broad élite strategy as can be seen in Homer, the narrow élite strategy focuses on one

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Zaidman & Pantel, *Religion in the ancient Greek city*, 1997 [1992], 112-121

person. His family and retinue are only of interest through their connection with the ruler and the ruler is viewed as close to the gods or godlike himself. His actions are inspired by the gods and he answers only to them. War can be waged at his whim and the resources of the polity are at his disposal with no questions asked. Luxury is an integral part of the narrow élite strategy and international contacts with other rulers are part of the basis for the king's status. The opinions of the community are not relevant in the narrow élite strategy. The king protects the community, but as a shepherd herds his sheep, with no reciprocal relations between ruler and ruled. Examples of the narrow élite strategy can be found in the abundant inscriptions of Near Eastern kings and hymns in their honour, where their divine favour is emphasised as well as their military prowess or pious restoration of temples, always presented as personal feats performed single-handedly. Hammurapi presents himself as the shepherd of the people chosen by Enlil.¹⁰⁹ I will not discuss the narrow corporate strategy of Near Eastern rulers separately in the present investigation, but rather focus on group strategies and their relation to the central authorities. Suffice it to state here that in Near Eastern history, kings can be seen to pursue narrow élite strategies as well as broad corporate strategies: some kings were despots who waged incessant wars and let their subjects die of famine and disease; other kings were friendly to the people and respected the privileges of the city populations.

As discussed above (1.2.3), the identification of broad and narrow corporate strategies and broad and narrow élite strategies and their relative prevalence in polities will be decisive for where the polity can be placed on a sliding scale of popular power, from democracy at one end to autocracy on the other. In any given polity, different strategies for power are likely to be pursued by different groups simultaneously and it is the relative prevalence of one aspect over the others that determines the character of the political culture in question. There are also ambiguous cases where the focus of

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Cod. Ham.* 1.50

the analysis determines how the evidence is interpreted, e.g. popular support for tyranny that indicates both autocracy and popular power. As will be seen, this can be interpreted from the point of view of either the tyrant or the people, which will yield quite different results (cf. 3.4.3).

1.5 Corporations and their members: the problem of equality

The most obvious difference between strategies for power can be found in the level of exclusion from access to participation in politics and the criteria for it. Did all citizens have equal rights, and if not, in which ways were citizens differentiated?¹¹⁰ In Greek political thought, the question of differentiation between citizens hinges on two different concepts of equality, called arithmetic and geometric equality. This forms the background for modern discussions of popular rule and the lack of it. As will be seen, these two concepts of equality are of great significance for how popular power in ancient polities is regarded. Did a restricted group make out the citizen collective or was it more broadly defined? This is often confused and a thorough clearing up of inclusive and exclusive citizen groups and their political implications is therefore required. I will start with Aristotle and Plato's discussions of these matters (1.5.1), before proceeding to a modern debate on inclusive and exclusive definitions of the citizen collective (1.5.2).

¹¹⁰ I will not go into discussions of the large group of inhabitants excluded from citizenship in ancient polities, such as women, slaves, and foreigners. No doubt, the exclusion of large groups of permanent residents from politics is a significant difference between ancient and modern ideas of citizen autonomy and popular power. However, the present investigation is of ancient polities, their authorities, and their citizens, not of socio-political conditions in the ancient world in general.

1.5.1 Equal and unequal citizens: the classical view

In the *Politics*, Aristotle initially defines the *polis* as an association (*koinōnia*).¹¹¹ In a *polis*, the statesman (*politikos*) rules over free and equal persons.¹¹² Citizens (*politai*) take part in reaching decisions and verdicts.¹¹³ The citizens are equal (*isous*); they rule and are being ruled in turn.¹¹⁴

Aristotle's definition of the *polis* and its citizens may seem clear and sharp, but it has problems. In a *polis*, some offices might be limited to rich citizens, whereas the popular assembly could be open to all citizens regardless of wealth. In effect, this means that some citizens are more citizens than others, something that does not square with the definition of citizens as equal, ruling and being ruled in turn. Thus, it becomes necessary to differentiate between citizens, and to find what group of citizens is sovereign in the *polis*. This simultaneously splits both the term citizen and the term *polis* into several different categories, with separate groups of citizens and distinct types of constitutions. This was of course obvious to Aristotle, as well, and he therefore goes to great lengths throughout the *Politics* in discerning types and subtypes of constitutions and how they develop from one type into another.

Aristotle states that in democracies, the people, *demos*, are sovereign, whereas in oligarchies the sovereign group is few.¹¹⁵ In Aristotle's ideal constitution, called *politeia*, or "polity", only those who can meet a moderate property qualification can

¹¹¹ Arist. *Pol.* 1252a1ff

¹¹² Arist. *Pol.* 12155b16ff

¹¹³ Arist. *Pol.* 1275a22ff

¹¹⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 1261a38ff; *ibid.* 1277b7ff

¹¹⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 1278b6ff

be citizens. He views democracy as a deviation of polity, because it gives sovereignty to the *demos*, the poor masses. These, being poor, are bound to look only to the interests of their own group, ignoring those of the *polis* as a whole.¹¹⁶ The difference between oligarchy and democracy lies in wealth or the lack of it, because the rich are few and the poor are many.¹¹⁷

Aristotle's differentiation into poor and wealthy means that there are two distinct groups of citizens that have opposing interests. The citizens are not considered equal; they are different with regard to wealth. In the best *polis*, the *politeia*, the poor would presumably be excluded from citizenship altogether. However, in democracies and oligarchies, both poor and rich are citizens, the differentiation is between which of the groups is sovereign in the *polis*.

According to Aristotle, there is a range of democracies from moderate ones where the poor are granted access to power equal to the rich, to extreme democracies where the decrees of the multitude are superior to the laws of the *polis*. In the first kind of democracy, the laws are superior, making it close to the best constitution, the "polity", *politeia*, whereas in the latter the laws are subject to the will of the people, the *demos*, resulting in a kind of tyranny by the *demos*.¹¹⁸ Aristotle defines oligarchy as characterised by high property qualifications for participating in politics, so that the poor are excluded from having a part in the constitution.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Arist. *Pol.* 1279a32ff

¹¹⁷ Arist. *Pol.* 1279b26ff

¹¹⁸ Arist. *Pol.* 1291b20ff

¹¹⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 1292a39ff

The *polis* can thus not be considered simply a community of citizens. In the Aristotelian scheme, it is differentiated into subtypes according to which citizen-group is the sovereign, the rich or the poor. Instead of a community of equals, where the citizens are the *polis*, there is a duality of equals and non-equals, of citizens with full rights and citizens who are excluded in certain respects. The concept of being equal, *isous*, initially used by Aristotle to define the citizens, is subsequently used to define subgroups of citizens and exclude the poor from the *polis* of the rich. This double use of equality, as both describing a community and excluding from a community, is central to discussions of oligarchy and democracy, élite dominance and popular power. The two meanings of equality are particularly problematic when it comes to defining “egalitarian”: who are equal to whom in which respects?

Equality between some people implies a distinction from others. Thus, equality may as much be an organising principle of an oligarchy as of a democracy. Classical philosophers express this distinction as “arithmetic” and “geometric” types of equality; in the latter, each gets his own, whereas in the former, all receive the same. This distinction is important to have in mind when discussing popular power in ancient polities. It cannot be supposed that the citizens are an undifferentiated whole that all share the same interests.

In the *Laws*, Plato contends that giving all citizens equal privileges is in fact a form of inequality. He argues that it is just to grant more to the great and less to the lesser, according to each person’s nature, rather than granting everything to everyone in like measure.¹²⁰ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that only geometric equality is just, as in when the whole corresponds to the whole as a part corresponds to a part between two figures. In this way, privileges in the constitution should be

¹²⁰ Pl. *Leges* 757b-c

proportionate to the virtue of each citizen. This is opposed to arithmetic equality, where all citizens have the same privileges, according to their numerical qualities alone and not their virtue.¹²¹ The definitions of virtue (*aretē*) in the arguments of Plato and Aristotle do not concern the present investigation and will not be discussed. Suffice it to say that Aristotle and Plato both perceived a problem in sharing power and privileges indiscriminately and equally as long as people are unequal with respect to certain qualities, moral or otherwise. Inequality can be defined in socio-economic or purely ethical terms. The dilemma remains, whether it is just that people considered inferior receive shares equal to people considered superior. As will be seen in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6, it remains an issue in ancient polities that some citizens are considered superior to others. Thus, what kind of distribution is just, each his own or equal shares among everyone?

The distinction between two kinds of equality may seem mysterious, but it is actually a common moral distinction that people do every day: is it just and right that everyone get the same (arithmetic equality) or what they deserve (geometric equality)? The term geometric is used in the sense of proportionate, so that qualities of a said kind determines the level of political rights, e.g. much wealth or great virtue gives great political influence including access to holding all offices, whereas little wealth or small virtue gives little political influence and limited access to holding offices. With Aristotle, one could argue that the geometric kind of equality is more just: the better person one is, the more influence one has in the *polis*. Thus, according to geometric, i.e. proportionate equality, only the best citizens should have full rights. The opposite is the case with arithmetic equality, where poor and wealthy, good and bad all have the same right to participate in politics.

¹²¹ Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1131a21ff

The two classical concepts of equality have great implications for how scholars interpret popular participation in politics in the ancient world. Problems begin when one attempts to define popular rule in polities with graded citizenship, i.e. when not all citizens have the same rights. How are we to define politics in a polity where only a narrow group have full rights? After all, a narrowly defined collective of citizens in charge of a polity is still popular rule, or rule by the people. The corporate strategy, if held to be typical of popular participation in politics, equally applies to a restricted or narrow group as to a broadly defined citizen group.

There is also the question of criteria for distinction: since wealth at least in theory is attainable by all, a geometric equality based on wealth would produce a narrow corporate strategy. However, a geometric equality based on virtue (*aretē*) would produce a broad or narrow élite strategy, since virtue is presumably not attainable by everyone. Depending on the virtue and the degree to which it can be shared among several people, a group will be broader or narrower, e.g. the Homeric heroes are a broad élite because they partake in the virtue (*aretē*) of the *basileis*, whereas king Hammurapi of Babylon belongs to a narrow élite because he is chosen by the gods to rule the Babylonians. Thus, equality is a complex concept and fundamental to distinguishing strategies of power.

1.5.2 Equality and popular power: the modern debate

Similar to the classical philosophers, modern political philosophy struggles with questions concerning equality and rule by the people. What are the criteria for claiming that the people are in charge of the polity? Robert A. Dahl studies popular participation in politics from the point of view that constitutions are dependent on

“beliefs” held by the members of a society.¹²² He argues that democracy is based on a “Strong Principle of Equality”, a position where the citizens accept to rule and being ruled in turn. He defines his “Strong Principle of Equality” as a belief among members of an association “that all the members of the association are adequately qualified to participate on an equal footing with the other in the process of governing the association”.¹²³ Dahl does not claim that this is a description of democracy since the principle of equality is not necessarily applied very broadly in the given polity.¹²⁴ He adds two additional beliefs that are necessary in order for a society to be a democracy, what he calls the “Principle of Equal Consideration of Interest”, viz. that all citizens are taken into consideration in making decisions, and the “Presumption of Personal Autonomy” viz. that every citizen is the best judge of his own interests.¹²⁵

However, Dahl’s principles do not help distinguishing an oligarchy from a democracy or narrow and broad corporate strategies: the “beliefs” regarding equality among members of a group in Dahl’s argument could still be held by a small minority holding power in society. Thus, with Dahl’s principles, it becomes an empirical question whether enough people are included in the political process for it to be called a democracy, i.e. rule by the people, or an oligarchy, i.e. rule by a few. Dahl’s concepts are useful, however, because they highlight politics as consisting of beliefs about what is fair and right, and that these beliefs are subject to change. Therefore, a polity may well experience changes from a situation where an inclusive civic body is in charge to a situation where a small élite takes control, and vice versa.

¹²² Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, 1989, 30

¹²³ Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, 1989, 31

¹²⁴ Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, 1989, 32

¹²⁵ Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, 1989, 105

Dahl's focus on beliefs as an important factor in political developments has influenced Ian Morris' (2000) analysis of the development of democracy in the archaic *polis*. However, Morris' view of a belief in equality as a precondition for popular power is criticised by Erich Kistler (2004) for being blind to the differences between the masses and the élite in Greek *poleis*. The discussion is important, because it highlights problems concerning how to evaluate popular participation in politics and how the community of citizens was defined. How can equality define both the masses and the élite, and still be of use in discussing popular power?

According to Ian Morris, a "Strong Principle of Equality" was important in Greek communities of the archaic period for "the emergence of egalitarian culture within broad male citizen communities", as a group of *metrioi*, middling citizens. In his view, the ideological change towards the realisation of this principle had a democratic constitution as one possible outcome.¹²⁶ In archaic poetry and especially in Hesiod, Morris sees a conflict between what he terms a middling ideology and an élite ideology: the outcome of this conflict was that early *polis* societies of Greece abandoned élite ideals of personal excellence, and emphasised middling values.¹²⁷ In the classical *polis*, this resulted in a middling culture, a strong bond of mutual solidarity between moderate men, the *metrioi*, who conceived of themselves as being neither rich nor poor.¹²⁸

Ian Morris argues that an egalitarian culture among males in Greek communities of the archaic period was a necessary condition for the development of Athenian

¹²⁶ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 111

¹²⁷ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 161-169

¹²⁸ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 114-119

democracy.¹²⁹ This position has been attacked by Erich Kistler, who argues that the ideal of being *metrios* is in direct opposition to the egalitarian political culture of a democracy.¹³⁰

Morris' analysis of a democracy based on being *metrios*, a middling man of no extravagant tastes, may seem to indicate that the more humble citizens gained an advantage over the élite. However, it is relevant to ask who they were, these *metrioi* who wished to show distance to the extravagant élite and why they wished to do so. As will be argued below, it seems more likely that the *metrioi* were not men of moderate wealth, in the sense of commoners, but actually belonged to the élite themselves, the *aristoi*. Thus, being *metrios* does not mean to be a commoner, it means to be a moderate member of the élite.

Morris' argument for the ideological development behind Greek egalitarian political practices has been criticised exactly for coupling the ideal of being *metrios* with Dahl's "Strong Principle of Equality". Erich Kistler argues that the Greek concept of being a middling citizen, a *metrios*, belong to the élite and is in direct opposition to a "Strong Principle of Equality" that lay behind Athenian democracy.¹³¹ This means that the high degree of popular participation in politics that occurred in democratic Athens cannot be explained by the ideal of being *metrios*. Kistler's objection finds support in Aristotle, who defines *hoi mesoi*, the middling citizens, as those who are *metrios*, considered to be a group of citizens who are not rich and not poor, but in the middle.¹³² According to Aristotle, as well as the writer known as the "Old Oligarch",

¹²⁹ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 109-113

¹³⁰ Kistler, "'Kampf der Mentalitäten': Ian Morris' "elitist-" versus "middling-ideology"?", 2004, 145-175

¹³¹ Kistler, "'Kampf der Mentalitäten': Ian Morris' "elitist-" versus "middling-ideology"?", 2004, 165-167

¹³² Arist. *Pol.* 1295a25-1296b2

democracy is not rule by a citizen community of moderate and considerate equals, but rule by the poor over the rich.¹³³ This means that a constitution where *hoi mesoi* were in power would not be a democracy, and thus, Athenian democracy cannot be explained by the principle of being *metrios*. Morris anticipates these arguments by claiming that “Aristotle reshaped popular ideas of the middle way for his own ends”.¹³⁴ However, Morris’ assessment of *metrios* as belonging to the *demos*, or people, is problematic, because we know nothing about how the term *metrios* was applied outside the élite.

Erich Kistler criticises Ian Morris for ignoring the oligarchic nature of Greek male citizen communities, i.e. *poleis*. He emphasises the difference between arithmetic and geometric equality, and warns against seeing a connection between aristocratic ideals of geometric equality, which were in fact oligarchic, and a democratic strong principle of arithmetic equality.¹³⁵ According to Erich Kistler, Morris’ conflict between middling and élite ideology fits the situation in the archaic *polis*, but only in the sense of a conflict between moderate and overweening, or hybriistic, aristocrats. Thus, the ideal of being *metrios*, or moderate, which is found in archaic poets, in particular Hesiod, has nothing to do with the later development of radical democracy at Athens.¹³⁶

Against Morris’ proposed egalitarian ideology among commoners, it can be argued that the sources to the archaic period are all from the élite, and that e.g. the poetic persona of Hesiod as a middling farmer is a fiction far removed from the masses of

¹³³ Arist. *Pol.* 1290a30ff.; “Old Oligarch” 1.2

¹³⁴ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 119

¹³⁵ Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ “elitist-” versus “middling-ideology”?, 2004, 165

¹³⁶ Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ “elitist-” versus “middling-ideology”?, 2004, 166-167

any Greek *polis*. When Hesiod presents himself as a peasant farmer who fights against corrupt aristocrats,¹³⁷ this is not necessarily a source to peasant attitudes, but may be those of an aristocrat against other, more extravagant aristocrats. This will be discussed further in chapter 3 (3.3.2).

Jonathan Hall is sceptical of Morris' emphasis on an ideology of equality behind popular power. He emphasises practical inclusion in politics as promoting popular power, rather than ideas of equality. In his view, Athenian democracy was the result of revolutionary action, not ideology.¹³⁸ I agree with Hall's assessment of the importance of inclusion and practical participation for popular power. Most of all, I think it is important to place the archaic ideology of moderation and egalitarianism where it belongs, with the élite, and discuss popular power as practice, rather than ideology.

The problem of equality and democracy is pointed out by Robin Osborne, who argues that Athenian democracy was not popular rule at all, emphasising that the association of equals making out the citizens was a group created by a range of deliberate measures and historical conditions, including chattel slavery.¹³⁹ I agree that popular power and Athenian democracy are concepts that must be held separate. However, it should not be ignored that Athenian commoners were allowed more participation in politics than in most Greek *poleis*. The exclusion of non-citizens from political participation in Athens is beyond the scope of this investigation, as what interests me is how citizens and their subgroups participate in politics. However, it is of note that Athenian democracy was based on several unique conditions, including chattel

¹³⁷ Hes. *Op.* 37-39

¹³⁸ Hall, "Polis, community, and ethnic identity," 2007, 45-46

¹³⁹ Osborne, *Athens and Athenian democracy*, 2010, 30-34

slavery. This should make us suspicious of ideology as a main explanation for the development of Athenian democracy. It should also make us wary of any simplistic juxtaposition of Athenian democracy and popular power in general.

The Greek concept of being *metrios* can hardly be said to form a basis for popular participation in politics. It refers to moderation in the sense of being equal to others who are *metrioi*, and not to being equal in the absolute, or arithmetic, sense and thereby part of a broad citizen community. There is a contrast between democracy as defined by Aristotle, where the poor majority is sovereign in the constitution, and the egalitarian ideology of the élite that Morris postulates as the starting point for the development of democracy. It is doubtful whether the “middling culture” in Athens had anything to do with the poor. Morris tries to solve the problem by arguing that many Athenians owned land and therefore could be considered *metrioi*.¹⁴⁰ This seems rather desperate, and contrasts strangely with the “Old Oligarch” and Aristotle, who portray democratic Athens as mob rule, where the poor hold the rich ransom.¹⁴¹ Why is the dichotomy of rich and poor so central in the sources, if it had no basis in reality? In answer to this, Morris argues that Aristotle as well as the archaic poets wrote from an aristocratic perspective.¹⁴² It may well be that the dichotomy of rich and poor in the *polis* is overstated by poets and philosophers. However, if the élite sources cannot be trusted, how many other written sources are there?

It is not obvious to whom Greek poets of the archaic period are referring when they appeal to a “middle” part of the *polis*. The problem remains even if one does accept that it was a part of élite discourse. Was the “middle” the moderate urban élite or a

¹⁴⁰ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 142

¹⁴¹ “Old Oligarch” 1.13; Arist. *Pol.*1279a32ff

¹⁴² Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 161

group of well-off farmers? Morris admits the problem, but tries to evade it by claiming that all men could be included in the “middle”, *to meson*.¹⁴³ In his view, the possibility for democracy was an unintended consequence of an aristocratic egalitarian ideology.¹⁴⁴ It is exactly this point that Kistler elaborates on in his criticism of Morris: there can be no causal link between the “middling culture” of archaic aristocrats and the normative “middling culture” of democratic Athens.¹⁴⁵ However, Kistler does not offer any alternative explanation of the development of democracy. Thus, both Morris and Kistler reach aporetic conclusions: the emergence of Athenian democracy has no direct relation to earlier forms of political organisation in Greece, and thus, the emergence of a high degree of political participation in politics remains as unique and unexpected as ever. This reinforces the tendency to see Athens as the starting point of a unique Western political culture.

The debate between Kistler and Morris in the end leaves Athens as the only democracy in the ancient world. Their discussion is instructive, however, because it shows the difficulties in recognising popular power in the sources. In my opinion, popular power as a historical phenomenon must be studied from its manifestations in processes where the citizen community reaches decisions and governs itself. For this to be called popular power, however, it must be possible to demonstrate that the citizen community was a large group of people and not an élite few. I turn now to further discussion of popular power and the problem of élite dominance of the decisions taken by the masses.

¹⁴³ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 162-163

¹⁴⁴ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 163

¹⁴⁵ Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ ”elitist-” versus ”middling-ideology”?”, 2004, 166-167

1.5.3 The hidden oligarchy

Even in a polity where all the citizens have full rights of political participation, the situation can arise, through the apathy of the many or the conspiracy of the few, that a much smaller group, an *élite*, reaches all important decisions and controls the polity. An important general problem in the analysis of popular power is the so-called Iron Law of Oligarchy. The term was coined by Robert Michels for political movements of the early last century, and describes how a narrow ruling clique will grow out of any democratic group.¹⁴⁶ Following this reasoning, *élite* dominance in democratic organisations is inevitable.

For democratic Athens, some scholars contend that power was in the hands of an *élite*. They claim that only a limited *élite* wielded power in Athens; in the archaic period, the people were excluded from politics and the *élite* continued to dominate in the classical democratic *polis* as well.¹⁴⁷ Thus, even in democratic Athens, real power was in the hands of the *élite*, thus excluding any possibility of popular power in decision-making bodies. Scholars of the opposite position argue that the masses had considerable influence in spite of *élite* pretences of political and social hegemony; an egalitarian political ideology resulted in a constitution where decisions by the collective masses actually determined the course of politics.¹⁴⁸

Robin Osborne claims that a narrow group of powerful men ran Athens by deciding what would be discussed in the popular assembly.¹⁴⁹ Against this argument, Josiah

¹⁴⁶ Michels, *Political parties*, 1958 [1915]

¹⁴⁷ Osborne, *Demos: The discovery of classical Attika*, 1984; Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”, 2004

¹⁴⁸ Ober, *Mass and elite in democratic Athens*, 1989; Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000

¹⁴⁹ Osborne, *Demos: The discovery of ancient Attika*, 1985

Ober contends that discussions in the Athenian assembly constituted a real democracy, where the people ran the *polis*.¹⁵⁰ In his argument for élite dominance, Osborne emphasises that proposals for decrees came from a limited group from the local level of the *demes*, making the Athenian democracy a representational system, and not a direct democracy.¹⁵¹ Ober, however, argues that Athenian orators and statesmen followed rules of discourse that were laid down by the assembly, and thus followed the initiatives of the masses.¹⁵²

Osborne's dichotomy between powerful men of influence and the passive masses echoes the analysis of Aristotle that the *polis* is fundamentally divided between rich and poor, discussed above (1.5.1). However, it can be argued that common interests did exist and cooperation did occur between the élite and the masses, as seen when the Athenian *demoi* rebelled against Isagoras and the Spartan contingent at Athens in 508/7 and the aristocrat Kleisthenes reformed the political system to become more democratic.¹⁵³ Although Kleisthenes may be said to act as leader of the people, and not be one of them as such, the fact remains that rich and poor could have a common political agenda. Therefore, insisting on fundamental differences between the élite and the masses may obscure other aspects of power and power-sharing in the *polis*.

It seems that the debate over a real or imaginary Athenian democracy is polarised between an elitist view where élites dominate all decision-making without transparency of how decisions are made, and a populist view that emphasises the role of the assembly as an arena for discussions and decision-making. However, the role of

¹⁵⁰ Ober, *Mass and elite in democratic Athens*, 1989

¹⁵¹ Osborne, *Demos: The discovery of ancient Attika*, 1985, 91-92

¹⁵² Ober, *Mass and elite in democratic Athens*, 1989, 122-124

¹⁵³ cf. Hdt. 5.62-73; *Ath. pol.* 20.1-4

the popular assembly as an arena should not be underestimated: popular power is not a question of voting on every single issue as it is a situation of public debate, where the collective of citizens is informed, involved and active. Osborne's emphasis on who proposes decrees does not sufficiently take the environment in which these decrees were proposed into consideration, i.e. the assembly: far from being a situation of actual oligarchy under the name of democracy, the Athenian system where proposals were open to discussion in the assembly created an environment where people had the power to influence their own situation and the direction of decisions. In this sense, Ober's emphasis on the discourse between élite orators and the masses sheds light on how Athenian democracy worked: the power of the assembly in Athens made democrats out of the élite, while involving the masses.

It may be argued that both the elitist and mass-oriented approach overstate their cases, in their dichotomy of élite and masses and their focus on social and political hierarchy: the first position overestimates the degree of social control of the élite in a town or city environment, and the second position is overoptimistic about the ability to or interest of the masses in making independent decisions. The insistence on a strict division between rulers and ruled, or élite and masses, is typical of a broader paradigm in the study of ancient polities, known as the Early State model, that will be discussed at length in chapter 2. Suffice it to state here that an alternative approach to a model of strict hierarchy is that both élite and masses belong to the same society and meet at several junctions. Seen from this perspective, their relationship is characterised by dynamic interaction, not static hierarchy. This made popular participation in politics possible, in arenas like citizen assemblies, jury-courts and at other public meetings, where people could participate as agents structuring their own socio-political environment physically and mentally (cf. 2.5).

The assembly as a place for the negotiation of interests is useful for a more general analysis of popular power. The existence of arena councils is important for popular participation in politics and an oligarchic control of the agenda is not necessarily an obstacle to popular power in a polity. Rather, the assemblies can be regarded as places for the negotiation of interests between the rich and the poor. Thus, a narrow corporate strategy would be pursued in delegating decisions to closed councils, whereas a broad corporate strategy would delegate them to open assemblies or arena councils. In a polity where the narrow corporate strategy was dominant, as in an oligarchic *polis*, the élite in power would try to downplay competition among its members in order to appear united and unanimous to the rest of the *polis*, making decisions in closed councils. Typically, this did not work in Greek polities, and élite infighting resulted in *stasis*, civil war. In a polity where the broad corporate strategy was dominant, as in a democratic *polis*, the élite would have to adjust their strategy and compete openly in assemblies rather than trying to appear united against the masses. The élite would then still dominate much of the dynamics of the polity, but would not be able to reach decisions in ways hidden from the public. The masses would be present at debates and informed about how policies were formed, even though they might not have the resources to influence policies directly by raising issues or holding speeches.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, in broad élite strategies, the birth élite or aristocrats, would not have bothered with the assembly at all, but ruled through an exclusive council that simply declared its decisions to the assembly. Likewise, a narrow élite strategy is characterised by royal decrees, not discussion in assemblies.

Beyond strategies for power and the inclusion of the masses in the networks these strategies make out, there is a further point that should be considered: which people

¹⁵⁴ A distinction between making proposals and reaching decisions can be found in Thukydides' funerary oration of Perikles: Perikles emphasises that any participation in running the polity is better than keeping away from official business, whether it is to reach decisions for the polity or to make proposals. Participation in debate is held in high regard in Athens (Thuc. 2.40).

dominate decision-making in the polity and thereby have the most power? In his analysis of early democratic *poleis* in Greece, Eric W. Robinson tries to depart from the conflict of rich and poor, and instead uses the concept of being *kyrios*, “sovereign”: ancient democracies are defined as polities where the *demos* is *kyrios*.¹⁵⁵ Of course, as Robinson also concedes, this leaves the problem of defining who the *demos* are. To answer this, Robinson suggests that “the meaning of *demos*, then, comprises the entire citizen body, but the nature of this body will vary according to the type of polis and the extremity of its *demokratia*”.¹⁵⁶ The approach of looking for a sovereign element in the polity has the merit that when popular power is not limited to “the rule of the poor”, but more generally as the sovereignty of the people, a comparative structural analysis can be made between Athenian democracy and other forms of political organisation in Greece. Also, this kind of approach can be used to analyse non-Greek polities, in order to say something about popular participation in politics, without limiting the analysis to whether it falls short of Athenian standards or not. The idea of a sovereign element irrespective of the formal organisation of the polity throws light on situations where the masses take control of the polity or the rulers concede special rights to urban populations. Although the people cannot be said to rule the polity through a formal assembly, they can still be said to have a decisive influence in their polity, thereby having power.

As will be seen in the present investigation, although sovereign popular assemblies are hard to find in Near Eastern sources, there are indications that citizen communities, in the sense of collectives of citizens with broad access to participation, had authority in some questions. A definition of popular power as the sovereignty of the citizen community is thus quite useful for a comparative analysis. Problems concerning the definition of citizen communities themselves remain, however, for

¹⁵⁵ Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997, 37

¹⁵⁶ Robinson, *The first democracies*, 1997, 38

most ancient city-states. Who were the active citizens and how were they defined? As will be seen below (1.5.4), for Near Eastern polities the sources are ambiguous at best. Only in a few cases can we hope to be able to make a distinction between collective organs of decision-making dominated by limited élite groups and collective organs of decision-making where power was in the hands of the common people. Tentatively, the latter would be cases where the participation of the citizen community as a large group is specifically mentioned, in contrast to more restricted councils of the élite or of royal appointees.

1.5.4 Defining the citizen community

Defining the citizen community and relationships between rich and poor, élite and commoners, are not problems exclusive to discussions of the Greek *poleis*, but concern ancient polities in general. There are several examples from Near Eastern polities that illustrate the difficulties involved in defining a “people” or “group of citizens”. In the following, I will discuss the problem of recognising “the people” in ancient Near Eastern sources. Also, I will discuss problems of defining the totality of the citizen community, beyond the dichotomy of rich and poor, rulers and ruled. I will return to debates on the definition and range of meaning of specific terms in the relevant chapters throughout this investigation.

A clear example of difficulties in defining the people can be found in the Old Babylonian *Codex Hammurapi*. There is a difference in status between an *awīlum* and a *muškenum*, two terms for inhabitants of the Old Babylonian kingdom. What did this difference imply and where did it come from? The term *awīlum* is sometimes translated “citizen”, but it is not entirely clear what this implies. The basic meaning of

awīlum is “human being”, more specifically “man” or “free man, gentleman”.¹⁵⁷ In some paragraphs of the *Codex Hammurapi* it denotes a man who has a higher status than those not thus signified, i.e. *awīlum* is apparently used in the sense of a “free citizen”, in contrast to a man of lower status, *muškenum* or a slave, *waradum*. In the *Codex Hammurapi*, the *muškenum* evidently has a lower status than that of an *awīlum*, but it is not clear why and in which respects. This particular contrast between *awīlum* and *muškenum* only appears in Old Babylonian.¹⁵⁸ Generally, *muškenum* means a commoner, a person not liable to service,¹⁵⁹ or a poor man.¹⁶⁰ The meaning of *awīlum* and *muškenum* in Old Babylonian will be discussed further in chapter 4 (4.3.1). Suffice it to state here that the *awīlum* appears as a person of high status in Old Babylonian. Problems begin when one meets the term *awīlum* in sources from other periods, where the status connotations of the term are not explicit. Does *awīlum* mean a common citizen or a member of the élite?

As will be seen (4.7.3), *awīlum* is also used of the inhabitants of a city or town collectively, without status differentiations, as in the evidence from Old Babylonian Mari. In fact, throughout the Akkadian evidence discussed in this investigation, *awīlum* is the most common term for “man”, “citizen”, or “inhabitant”. There are no hints in the texts to determine whether these were citizens of elevated status in relation to a less distinguished mass of citizens. When there is reference to the inhabitants of a town, the terms “the men of the city GN” (in Sumerian “LÚ^{meš} URU GN” or in Akkadian “*awīlū āl* GN”) and “the sons of the city GN” (in Sumerian “DUMU^{meš} URU GN” or in Akkadian “*mārē āl* GN”), are used apparently in the

¹⁵⁷ CAD A II, 1968, 48-57, in particular *amīlu* 3, 55

¹⁵⁸ CAD M, 1977, 272-276, in particular *muškenum* 3’c, 274-275

¹⁵⁹ CAD M, 1977, 272-276, in particular *muškenum* 1a, 273

¹⁶⁰ CAD M, 1977, 272-276, in particular *muškenum* 2, 275

same sense. It is difficult to say whether the reference includes everyone, or whether the term only applies to a distinguished group among the residents.

In the plural, *awīlūtu* means “people (old and young, male and female)” in the sense of the “population of a city or country”. This is the case in the Amarna letters from the Late Bronze Age.¹⁶¹ The Amarna letters will be discussed in chapter 6. Suffice it to state here that the meaning “people” implies a general use of the term *awīlum*, with no explicit differentiation between the statuses of inhabitants.

In the Old Assyrian tablets from the “merchant colony” *kārum* Kanesh, discussed in chapter 5, those attending the assembly of merchants are qualified by a distinction between “great and small” (*seher u rabi*). What distinguishes “the great” from “the small” is not very clear, but where they are mentioned together, it is apparently in the sense of “everyone” regardless of distinction. The distinction between “small and great” is not very widespread outside Old Assyrian texts, however.

References to inhabitants of towns and cities in Near Eastern sources can be interpreted in a collective sense. However, it would be erroneous to suppose that general references to inhabitants without discrimination means that all citizens of Near Eastern polities were equal. It is not clear who are included in the reference to e.g. “the men of GN”. It may refer strictly to a limited group or perhaps the elders of the community. This difficulty can be seen in Mogens Trolle Larsen’s argument (cf. 6.7), that in some Neo-Babylonian texts, it is clear that the inhabitants of Babylon or their elders were respected by the Assyrian kings as parts in negotiations and that the

¹⁶¹ *CAD* A II, 1968, 57-62, in particular *amīlūtu* 1c, 60

inhabitants of Babylonian cities had certain privileges in the Neo-Assyrian Empire.¹⁶² How can it be determined whether the citizens are meant, or just their elders? It appears highly likely that when the Assyrian king addresses “the city”, he implies the Babylonians as a collective, a corporate group. However, it is not clear whether this group was narrow or broad in its composition.

Collective terms such as “the city”, are notoriously ambiguous. In Sumerian and Akkadian, URU or *ālum*, “town, city” can mean a city as a social organisation in the form of a council of elders¹⁶³ a collective legal person making decisions,¹⁶⁴ or the collective of inhabitants.¹⁶⁵ The Akkadian term for assembly, *puhrum*, likewise has a wide range of meanings. It means assembly, council or group.¹⁶⁶ More specific, it is used in the sense of “city assembly, popular assembly”.¹⁶⁷ According to *CAD*, *puhrum* in the sense of “assembly” in Old Babylonian and older texts was “an official body, convened sometimes by the king, which had judicial and perhaps administrative functions”.¹⁶⁸ It is not easy to make precise distinctions between this body and others mentioned in the Akkadian texts, as they often operate together or in similar situations. According to the *CAD*, “the functional relation of this body [the Old Babylonian *puhrum*] to the city elders (*šībut ālim*) or its free members (*awīlu*) acting in judicial matters remains unclear”.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 124

¹⁶³ *CAD* A I, 1964, 379-388, in particular *ālu* 3’, 383-386

¹⁶⁴ *CAD* A I, 1964, 379-388: *ālu* 3’b, 383-384

¹⁶⁵ *CAD* A I, 1964, 379-388: *ālu* 3’c, 384

¹⁶⁶ *CAD* P, 2005, 485-493, in particular *puhru* A 1, 486-487

¹⁶⁷ *CAD* P, 2005, 485-493: *puhru* A 2’b, 487-488

¹⁶⁸ *CAD* P, 2005, 493

¹⁶⁹ *CAD* P, 2005, 493

Whether one chooses the one or the other interpretation of these terms is of course not without consequences for a socio-political analysis. The interpretation of local communities in the Old Babylonian Mari correspondence discussed in chapter 4 is a case in point (cf. 4.7.3): Daniel E. Fleming argues that in these letters, words for town, council or assembly are used fluidly and in ways that can only be made clear by context, but not so that it is possible to define institutions with fixed constituents. He decides, however, to interpret them in an inclusive sense, as a corporate entity.¹⁷⁰ How such collectives are interpreted may appear to be a question of faith.

A further example of the ambiguity of collective references can be found from the Neo-Assyrian evidence discussed in chapter 6 (cf. 6.6.2): Marc Van De Mieroop emphasises the importance of privileges (*kidinnūtu*) as an indication of the high status of Babylonian urban populations and the respect they commanded of their Neo-Assyrian rulers.¹⁷¹ However, it is not straightforward to decide whether the urban population was defined as a broad or a narrow group. It can be argued that urban inhabitants were recognised as a whole, i.e. a citizen collective with certain privileges. However, this must be investigated in each particular case: in some letters it is a practical impossibility that the entire urban population is referred to, whereas in others, the evidence is more ambiguous.

¹⁷⁰ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 172

¹⁷¹ Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 137

1.6 Difficulties concerning sources to ancient politics

Concerning political structures and practices, from the Greek side, the textual evidence, mostly literature, provides us with discussions of ideas and analyses of politics, whereas from the Near Eastern side, the textual evidence, mostly documents, provides us with the bare mention of decisions being reached or just the titles of officials and decision-making bodies. This disparity of sources makes it impossible to make a one-to-one comparison between popular participation in politics in Greek polities and popular participation in politics in Near Eastern polities. Of course, it could be conceivable to go beyond the Greek literary evidence and focus on inscriptions and other archaeological material.¹⁷² That would, however, make a comparison of structures even more difficult, since what is known about Greek political culture for the main part comes from the literary evidence. Likewise, it could be conceivable to focus on Near Eastern literary evidence rather than the documentary evidence.¹⁷³ However, this approach would tell us nothing about the reality of the political structures discussed or how representative these structures would be.

Administrative or legal documents, on the other hand, are not totally free from fiction: they may be formulaic and mention groups that did not really take part in making decisions, or at least, did not have final authority. This is evident in the *poleis* under Hellenistic and Roman rule that continued to record that decisions were reached by the *demos kai boule*, the people and council, although ruled by foreign authorities, or in imperial Rome, where all decisions were officially taken by the *Senatus PopulusQue Romanus*, the Senate and the people of Rome, although power was in the hands of the emperor. The republican background of these polities may make them special cases, preserving republican formulae out of pure conservatism. From the

¹⁷² Cf. Osborne, *Demos: The discovery of ancient Attika*, 1985

¹⁷³ Cf. Jacobsen, "Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia," 1970 [1943], 157-170; Katz, "Gilgamesh and Akka," 1987

central point of view of the Hellenistic or Roman authorities, the people's real opinion hardly mattered. However, on a local level, the involvement of the imperial authorities was limited to what was of interest to them, in particular military allegiance and the fulfilment of fiscal duties. Therefore, the formulae were probably not completely empty even in Hellenistic or Roman times. Conversely, Near Eastern documents, in particular building-inscriptions routinely attribute building-activities to the king, although other people of course did the actual construction. These factors should be kept in mind. However, in spite of these potential problems, the most sensible approach in my opinion is to compare the Greek literary evidence with the Near Eastern documentary evidence for the investigation of similarities and differences in political structures.

Scholars know more about the ideal of the Greek *polis* than life in the *polis* itself and most of their literary sources come from the restricted élite of men of letters. The ancient Near Eastern world, on the other hand, can in several cases be studied from the remains of its clay-tablet equivalent of a wastepaper basket, unedited and incomplete. These cuneiform documents range from complete archives of official letters, administrative lists, contracts, and legal documents, to scraps and discarded copies of texts. It is not possible to answer all questions about political culture in great detail. The nature of the sources simply does not allow it. The present state of knowledge is incomplete, but it is not likely that the study of more texts will change this any time soon. As seen above (1.5.4), the vocabulary for citizen corporations and decision-making bodies is fundamentally ambiguous. What, then, can be done if one wishes to compare polities of Greece and the Near East?

There is a need for a conceptual framework that can be used to investigate both Greek and Near Eastern city-states, without having to rely exclusively on Latin or Greek terms such as republic, democracy, or oligarchy. It has been suggested above (1.4.2)

how this problem can be remedied by discussing strategies for power rather than constitutions. In chapter 2, the relations between this approach of strategic analysis and more traditional approaches to political structure will be discussed, in particular the Early State model.

With these caveats in mind, a comparative investigation of polities can be undertaken. I will concentrate on the citizen community and its manifestations in the political process, rather than on constitutional nomenclature, and focus on popular participation in politics on a sliding scale rather than whether the polities fit definitions of democracy, oligarchy, or autocracy.

1.6.1 Further considerations of difficulties in sources to archaic Greek *poleis*

The epics of Hesiod and Homer provide the earliest discussions of political decision-making processes between members of *polis* communities (cf. 3.3). The value of these texts as sources to early *poleis* is controversial, however. In particular the relations between the mythical past in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and the realities of the times of Homer, conventionally dated to the 8th century, have been much debated. The uncertainties regarding the date of Homer, the nature of politics in the Homeric world, and its relations to later developments make it dangerous to base a discussion of early *poleis* on the Homeric epics. Although there is useful information provided by Homer regarding the ideologies of archaic societies, epics must be used with caution as sources to social realities. On the other hand, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were models for behaviour for the élite in Greek polities and therefore are indirect sources to political strategies and the habitus of agents pursuing these strategies (for the concepts of agency and habitus, cf.2.5; 2.6).

Hesiod is also a difficult source to archaic Greek society; his descriptions of rural town life in archaic Greece contain much of interest regarding social struggles and political life. However, Hesiod's peasant persona should not be taken at face value and his probable elite background as a leisured poet must be taken into consideration.

An exceptional source to archaic *poleis* is the so-called *Great Rhetra*, the constitution of Sparta attributed to Lykourgos (cf. 3.4.1). Parts of the *Rhetra* are preserved in Tyrtaios. Lykourgos' entire putative reforms are presented by Plutarch. The account in Plutarch is quite detailed and full of anecdotes and additional information not found in Tyrtaios. Its level of detail should be viewed with suspicion. The figure Lykourgos probably belongs to the world of myth. The *Great Rhetra* is an interesting text, however, its regulations seeming to refer to the struggle for establishing good political order. The *Great Rhetra* gives an impression of the interrelated institutions of an archaic *polis*, notably a council of elders and kings and the popular assembly, and attempts at balancing the influence of different socio-economic groups among the citizens.

Archaic poetry, or rather, the remains of it, provides sources to the inside of Greek politics and life in the archaic *poleis*. In chapter 3, I will use this evidence as indirect sources to the activities of agents in their polities and their strategies for power. I will also use epic and archaic poetry as sources to political institutions and structures of archaic *poleis*. Archaic poetry will form the bulk of evidence discussed for *poleis* other than Athens. Archaic Athens is discussed extensively by Herodotos, and his *Histories* will be used as a source to the period of Peisistratid tyranny and the reforms of Kleisthenes.

Later Greek literary sources will also be used, although this admittedly is problematic, as events and people of the archaic period tended to be reinterpreted in subsequent periods. Solon the democrat is a prominent example: Solon is regarded by some scholars as a crucial figure in the development of democracy at Athens.¹⁷⁴ Others regard him as important in the development of Athens from an aristocratic *polis* to a citizen-state, but do not see him as a democrat at all.¹⁷⁵ Several of the archaic poets had achieved mythical status by classical times. I will therefore treat the later traditions about archaic personages with great suspicion. However, it is evident that the struggles of different socio-economic groups within archaic *poleis* can be seen in the works of Theognis and Solon. This makes it possible to use archaic poetry as sources to social and political struggles. It must be kept in mind, however, that it is far from certain that anything comparable to the masses is represented in the sources to these struggles. As seen with the concept of equality in Greek political thought discussed above (1.5.1; 1.5.2), social divisions in archaic Greece are defined by the élite. It is difficult to decide to whom the poets are referring when discussing conflicting parties in archaic *poleis*. Poets are frequently speaking of the “good” against the “bad”, but the implication of these terms are not self-apparent, and seem to differ between poets according to the political situation in their native *poleis*.

The value of the archaic poets as sources is difficult to assess. Poets provide insights into the social struggles of archaic *poleis*. However, they are obviously partisan spokesmen for their own socio-economic group, the élite. Some, like Theognis or Alkaios, appear as aristocrats or members of the birth élite of their home *poleis*, others, like Solon, had an official position in his home *polis* as political reformer and mender of the laws. Solon’s poems are good sources to the struggles for power and influence in archaic Athens and the different strategies for power that were pursued

¹⁷⁴ Wallace, “Solonian democracy,” 1998, 11-29

¹⁷⁵ Raaflaub, “Homer to Solon: the rise of the polis,” 1993, 42

by citizens. However, there is a high risk that scholars project political attitudes and practices of the classical period back into agents from the archaic period: since we know that the Athenian constitution was democratic in the classical period, it is easy to interpret all developments in Athens as leading towards democracy. I will attempt to use the archaic poets as evidence for the archaic period and avoid discussion of the later reception of their poetry and assessments of their political activities. With the exception of Hesiod and Homer, all the poets discussed in chapter 3 have come down to us in fragments only. I use the Loeb editions of the archaic poets and all references are to those editions unless otherwise noted.¹⁷⁶

The archaic poets provide insights into the politics of their native *poleis*. Alkaios wrote partisan poetry from the point of view of the élite (cf. 3.4.4). His attacks on the popular tyrant Pittakos and the people of Mytilene give valuable insights into strategies of power in an archaic *polis*. Aristocratic views of social changes and *stasis* can also be found in Theognis of Megara (cf. 3.4.5). He is particularly preoccupied with social status and the collapse of values in his home *polis*. The impression from these archaic *poleis* is that of rapid changes and a wide range of strategies pursued in order to secure power and influence or avoid exploitation at the hands of others. *Stasis*, civil war, seems endemic, and exile the lot of the losing group. Complicity of the masses with popular leaders and a plethora of groups, cliques and clubs of the élite appear to have resulted in multiple lines of conflict in archaic *poleis*. Popular power in Greek *poleis* has been set in relation to an egalitarian civic ideology in archaic Greek communities, a proposal that has been debated extensively.¹⁷⁷ As discussed above (1.5), the image of the *polis* as an egalitarian citizen collective is not self-evident.

¹⁷⁶ Campbell, *Greek lyric I-III*, 1982-1991; Gerber, *Greek iambic poetry*, 1999; Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999

¹⁷⁷ Morris, *Archaeology as social history*, 2000; Kistler, “‘Kampf der Mentalitäten’: Ian Morris’ ‘Elitist-’ versus ‘Middling-Ideology’?” 2004, 145-175; Hall, “Polis, community, and ethnic identity,” 2007, 45-49

The sources to archaic *poleis* are complicated by a change of perspective from the archaic to the classical period: whereas Solon, Alkaios, or Theognis wrote poetry from a partisan perspective or at least from the point of view of their own experiences, the prose of the classical period purports to give disinterested or balanced analyses of events in the past. This is further complicated by the fact that much of the poetry from the archaic period that is preserved and thus available as sources to historians today was preserved in the works of classical writers. A case in point is the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* that offers excerpts from Solon's poetry to illustrate the development of the Athenian constitution into a democracy (cf. 3.4.2). The archaic sources have thus been made part of an analysis and are presented in a certain analytical context before modern historians make up their mind about them.

The study of archaic *poleis* is to a high degree influenced by the uneven distribution of the sources, in practice limiting detailed study to Athens and to a certain degree Sparta. This is hardly a coincidence, since several classical philosophers and sophists lived and worked in democratic Athens while celebrating a constitution modeled on that of Sparta. This has no doubt influenced the state of preservation of the available sources throughout the history of scholarship, no less since posterity has shared this particularistic interest in all things Athenian and Spartan. However, there is enough information from other *poleis* as well, to be able to give a fairly balanced picture of the political structure and strategies in archaic *poleis*.

1.7 Prospects for a comparative analysis: the Near Eastern sources

To justify the claim that there were structural similarities with regards to popular power between Greek and Near Eastern city-states, it is necessary to find situations where the people actually were in charge or at least had a decisive influence on decisions. Some suggestions were made above (1.4.2), regarding broad and narrow corporate strategies. The following is a brief summary of sources to Near Eastern polities where the existence of popular power may be established and where they will be discussed. The situation of the sources and the relevant editions used will be discussed independently for each polity or polities throughout chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The discussions of the Near Eastern evidence are organised under three different headers: chapter 4, “Local politics in network states”, concerns evidence for local institutions in cities in the Old Babylonian state and local communities in the Old Babylonian Mari kingdom. Local institutions and their relations to central authorities are investigated in particular. Chapter 5, “Local power in commercial cities and merchant enclaves” concerns evidence from the Old Assyrian merchant ventures in Anatolia to the organisation of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies. It also concerns evidence for the relations between local communities and merchant corporations of the Late Bronze Age kingdom of Ugarit. The organisation of merchant communities and the role of central authorities in polities predominantly geared to trade are investigated. Chapter 6, “Autonomy and popular power in city-states under foreign empire”, concerns evidence from the Amarna letters that were sent by petty rulers of Late Bronze Age Syrian cities to the Egyptian Pharaoh. It also concerns evidence for the internal organisation of Neo-Babylonian cities in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the position of these cities in the empire. The local decision-making bodies and the corporate identity of cities in foreign empires are investigated.

Possible examples of popular power are the local institutions of polities and communities discussed in letters from the Old Babylonian kingdom Mari.¹⁷⁸ These will be discussed in chapter 4. Further possible examples are the assemblies of Old Assyrian Assur and its merchant colonies, the *kārum* Kanesh in particular.¹⁷⁹ These will be discussed in chapter 5. Popular revolt and collective decisions may be found from the Syrian city-states of the Late Bronze Age documented in the Amarna letters.¹⁸⁰ This will be discussed in chapter 6. The Neo-Babylonian city-states under Assyrian dominion appear to have had a high degree of autonomy.¹⁸¹ This will also be discussed in chapter 6. To varying degrees, evidence from these polities and communities show how collective organs of decision-making at times had considerable influence on politics and that the people could gainsay their rulers.

In order to discuss the dynamics between élite and collective rule or narrow and broad corporate strategies and narrow and broad élite strategies for power, open collective arena councils must be discerned from closed élite councils. As will be seen throughout this investigation, there were polities where a larger part of the citizen community participated in assemblies and where large assemblies played a more significant role than in other polities. Documents that mention the existence of large assemblies of people are particularly important for testing the thesis of popular power in ancient polities, as well as instances where mass action had decisive political effects.

¹⁷⁸ Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I-III, 1997-2000; Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004

¹⁷⁹ Garelli, *Les assyriens en Cappadoce*, 1963; Orlin, *Assyrian colonies in Cappadocia*, 1970; Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade*, 1972; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976; Larsen, "The Old Assyrian city-state," 2000, 77-88; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001

¹⁸⁰ Artzi, "Vox populi," 1964, 159-166; Reviv, "On urban representative government," 1968, 283-297; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992

¹⁸¹ Larsen, "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period," 2000, 117-127; Barjamovic, "Civic institutions and self-government in Southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first Millennium BC," 2004, 47-98

1.8 Conclusions

No ancient polity outside Greece can be called a democracy by Athenian standards. However, were there polities beyond classical Athens with a degree of popular participation in politics? In the discussions of documentary evidence to Near Eastern polities in chapters 4, 5, and 6, the importance of popular participation in politics will be made apparent. By comparison with the literary evidence to Greek political culture investigated in chapter 3, I hope to be able to demonstrate the similarities of political culture between East and West and to falsify the perception that there were fundamental differences between East and West with regard to popular participation in politics. The comparative analyses are found in chapter 7.

The polities that will be investigated range from cities to towns, pastoralist camps to city neighbourhoods. Rather than claiming that popular power somehow originated somewhere in the Near East and spread to the West, I will focus on the conditions for popular power and the similarities and differences in structure between polities. The strategies for power pursued by groups within these polities will be paid particular attention, as well as the institutions through which these strategies could be realised. Indicative of popular participation in politics will be general access to arenas where information was spread, opinions were formed, and conflicting views were voiced. An important aspect is also whether the people were judged by their fellows in jury courts. Further, indicative of popular power will be the possibility for the people to reach binding decisions and choosing their rulers and officials.

I will attempt to unravel the conflicting strategies of limited élites and the masses, and how these strategies were pursued within the framework of kingdoms, cities and local

communities. In this way, it will be made clear that Near Eastern polities were more complex than the autocratic kingdoms invoked by classicist scholars. It will become apparent that Asiatics were not of a slave-like nature, but capable of political action through assemblies and councils.

In the next chapter, I will argue that the idea that there were fundamental differences between ancient Eastern and Western political developments is not simply a case of ignoring evidence to popular power in the ancient Near East. Rather, the view of popular participation in politics as unique to the Western world is a consequence of the popularity among scholars of exclusively hierarchic models to Near Eastern societies that obscure strategies of power outside the *élite*.

2. Politics, citizens and social structures

2.1 Introduction

In studies of ancient politics, the image of fundamental differences in Eastern and Western political culture is often invoked, between autocratic traditions in the East and popular power in the West. In this chapter, the methodological and theoretical background for this perceived difference in Eastern and Western ancient politics will be investigated. The politics of Mesopotamia have been regarded as autocratic, even absolutist, with all-powerful authorities based in temples and palaces.¹⁸² Scholars have regarded the division between rulers and ruled as fundamental to state formation as well as state function, corresponding to a model for early state societies termed the “early state” or the “archaic state”.¹⁸³ In contrast, the Greeks have been regarded as breakers of this tradition, in establishing *poleis*, city-states that were also citizen-states, where the people participated in government of the polity.¹⁸⁴ The view that there was a fundamental difference between Greek *poleis* and city-states elsewhere has been challenged by Mogens Herman Hansen and his colleagues at the *Copenhagen Polis Centre*, with their comparative studies of several city-state cultures. Their studies reveal the high degree of structural similarity between different city-states, from Bronze Age Mesopotamia to Early Medieval Ireland.¹⁸⁵ Still, the Greek *polis* is regarded as the only city-state with genuine *popular* rule: Near Eastern city-states are regarded as monarchies ruled by powerful kings with a strong bond to

¹⁸² Hammond, *The city in the ancient world*, 1972, 148-149

¹⁸³ Fried, *The evolution of political society*, 1967; Service, *Origins of the state and civilization*, 1975; Claessen & Skalnik, *The early state*, 1978

¹⁸⁴ Hammond, *The city in the ancient world*, 1972, 192-193; Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 52

¹⁸⁵ Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000; Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of six city-state cultures*, 2002; Hansen, “95 theses about the Greek *polis* in the archaic and classical periods,” 2003, 257-282

the divine world. Only occasionally did these kings rule in collusion with an oligarchy of élite members, referred to as elders, and never were they citizen-states.¹⁸⁶

In this chapter, it will be argued that behind this negative assessment of the possibility of popular participation in the politics of polities outside Greece are not so much fundamental differences in political structure and culture, as a tendency to look at Greek and Near Eastern polities in rather different ways: in studies of Greek *poleis*, there is an emphasis on institutions and their function, in particular the unique institutional structure of Athens, with its assembly, probouleutic council, and jury courts.¹⁸⁷ In this kind of analysis, the citizens' values and actions are motivated by the normative orientation given by the social system and its institutions.¹⁸⁸ In Near Eastern studies, on the other hand, there is a prevalence of neo-evolutionist theory and early state models that emphasises a division between rulers and ruled.¹⁸⁹ In this chapter, it will be argued that there are alternative approaches in sociological theory that make it possible to investigate popular participation in the politics of Near Eastern as well as Greek polities.¹⁹⁰ I will argue that neo-evolutionist and élite-oriented theories are part of the reason why scholars ignore evidence for popular power in Near Eastern politics: the early state model and its derivatives serve as templates for analyses that consistently regard East and West as fundamentally different with regard to political culture (cf. 1.3). I will discuss the early state model in detail first (2.2), followed by its varieties the two-sector model and the patrimonial

¹⁸⁶ Larsen, "The Old-Assyrian city-state," 2000, 83-84; Larsen, "The city-states of the Neo-Babylonian period," 2000, 125; Westenholz, "The Sumerian city-state," 2002, 27-31. For a different interpretation, cf. Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 118-129

¹⁸⁷ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 320

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Parsons, "An analytical approach to the theory of social stratification," 1949, 167

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 27-28

¹⁹⁰ The present investigation is not limited to city-states. However, the city-state is central to the present discussion of political structures and strategies for power, since city-states formed the basis for most network states and empires, and communities that existed outside the cities relevant for the present study were tied to urban centres in a political sense.

household model (2.3). Then, I will investigate the structural-functionalist approach to state institutions and political organisation (2.4). In the remaining sections of this chapter (2.5-9), I will present alternative approaches to social analysis that takes agents and their strategies into full consideration. I will show how this approach explains more material than neo-evolutionary or structural-functionalist approaches.

As will be seen in the following, in the early state, and its variety the two-sector model, as well as the alternative model of the patrimonial household, there are insuperable divisions between rulers and ruled and society is ruled from the top down. These models have no place for interaction between rulers and ruled or the mutual influence between citizens and political structure, what can be termed the dualism of agency and structure. As will be made clear in the sections 2.5-9, approaches that focus on multiple strategies for power and the role of agency in the political structure can explain polities in the ancient world better than theories based on hierarchies and reconstructions based on institutions alone.

2.2 Climbing to state-hood: the neo-evolutionary ladder model

Neo-evolutionism in the fields of ancient history and archaeology refers to the writings of anthropologically oriented scholars from the 1940s onwards that were concerned with the development of human civilisation and the state.¹⁹¹ The theory involves a succession of stages in the development of pre-industrial societies, labelled

¹⁹¹ Childe, "The urban revolution," 1959; Adams, *The evolution of urban society*, 1966; Fried, *The evolution of political society*, 1967; Service, *Origins of the state and civilisation*, 1975; Van De Mierop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997. For a short critical review, cf. Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 8-15

savagery, barbarism, and civilisation *vel sim.*¹⁹² According to neo-evolutionist theory, human societies on their way to civilisation or state-hood have evolved through a succession of such identifiable stages. Elman Service states that “mobile hunting-gathering bands, the more settled horticultural villages, and the dense, nearly-urban populations of chiefdoms and primitive empires may be viewed as evolutionary stages, each with appropriate kinds of cultural institutions”.¹⁹³ According to Morton Fried, at the top of the evolutionary ladder is a stratified society with political institutions on state level. The stratified society is characterised by an unevenly distributed access to basic resources. These socio-economic differences are protected by state institutions and the state thus develops from these relations and the institutions that protect them.¹⁹⁴ This model obviously draws on Karl Marx’ ideas about society as evolving through stages characterised by specific modes of production.¹⁹⁵ As will be seen (2.3), Marx’ model of the Asiatic mode of production in particular has played a significant role in the interpretation of Near Eastern societies. The neo-evolutionary model has a great advantage over models based on diffusion of statehood from a supposed cradle of civilisation in that it can explain the development of the state as socio-economic changes regardless of cultural contacts. However, as will be argued in the following, with its rigorous division of rulers and ruled, most of the political dynamics between citizens and the governing institutions are left out of the analysis.

A milestone in the application of neo-evolutionary theory is the monograph *The Evolution of Urban Society* by Robert McC. Adams (1966). Adams explained the separate developments of the state in early Mesopotamia and prehispanic Mexico in

¹⁹² Cf. Childe, “The urban revolution,” 1959, 3

¹⁹³ Service, *Cultural evolutionism*, 1971, 73

¹⁹⁴ Fried, *The evolution of political society*, 1967, 185-186

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 1969 [1857-1858], 375-413

purely socio-economic terms. Interestingly, he terms “urban society” in the singular.¹⁹⁶ This implies that although the development in Mexico was historically unrelated to Mesopotamia, the two are structurally parallel. Since the publication of *The Evolution of Urban Society*, the neo-evolutionary theory and its step-ladder model has been the most influential approach to state formation in ancient Near Eastern studies.¹⁹⁷ The neo-evolutionary theory has been applied to a great variety of societies, from the rise of the Zulu state in modern times to the origins of civilization in Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica, Egypt and China.¹⁹⁸ It is the focus on parallelism of structures rather than cultural diffusion that gives neo-evolutionary theory and its models its universal appeal among archaeologists and historians.

The neo-evolutionary approach can be exemplified by the work of Morton Fried, who offers an evolutionary model where society goes through successive stages of economic and political organisation measured in degrees of limited access to basic resources and formalised hierarchy. These stages are termed egalitarian, ranked and stratified society. At the top of the ladder is a stratified society that becomes a state.¹⁹⁹ Thus, ancient societies are regarded as developing state-like structures to protect privileges and organise the exploitation of economic and social inequality. The stratified society that develops into an early state has a large group of exploited that are held in place by the developing state structures and these structures do not work in their interests, but are beyond their influence. The early state is a stark contrast to the egalitarian bands of pre-state societies, where influence is distributed evenly among all members. Nothing remains of this egalitarian organisation in the early state, which can only be analysed as relations between rulers and ruled.

¹⁹⁶ Adams, *The evolution of urban society*, 1966

¹⁹⁷ Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 27-28

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Service, *Origins of the state and civilization*, 1975

Even if the simplified trajectory of an evolution in disparate stages is accepted, it may be asked how complete the transition from one evolutionary stage to the next was. Were all relations transformed when moving from the level of a tribe into an early state? It can be argued that increased hierarchy only covers one aspect of political integration, that between rulers and the ruled. It does not describe all socio-political relations between people or how society was organised at all levels. The early state has little room for strategies for power other than those of the group at the top of the hierarchy, the *élite*. The only dimension of power is leadership, manifested in the early state and its institutions. This aspect of neo-evolutionist theory is criticised by Adam T. Smith, who argues that “the State must give way to studies that investigate the active constitution of political authority”. He points out that theories of the archaic state operate with a leap to statehood rather than the active constitution of authority.²⁰⁰ Smith argues that studies should focus on conditions that create authority, rather than the state as a unit.²⁰¹ I agree that this it is necessary to study how authority is created through strategies, in order to understand ancient politics. However, Smith does not indicate how the actions of the masses can be included in a study of the constitution of authority, focusing instead on landscapes and their manipulation or utilisation by regimes as constituting factors.²⁰² In my opinion, there must be an explicit investigation of the role of all citizens, not just the *élite* and the governing institutions, in order to understand ancient polities and their politics. Agency from levels of the social structure below the *élite* is outside the early state model. This is a problem that cannot be addressed solely by looking at landscape. The

¹⁹⁹ Fried, *The evolution of political society*, 1967

²⁰⁰ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 80-81

²⁰¹ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 102

²⁰² Cf. Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 107-108

spatial dimension of Mesopotamian cities and their political implications will be discussed further below (2.9).

According to Fried, leadership is obtained through the control of the means of production. The uneven distribution of the means of production means that some will be able to exert power over others. With the institutionalisation of access to resources, society becomes formally hierarchic. The institutionalisation of private property, increased population and restricted access to land leads to exploitation of the labour of those who do not own land.²⁰³

In this scenario of the development of hierarchies, a further problem with neo-evolutionary theory becomes evident: it operates with a closed perspective on society, with no alternatives for those with restricted access to resources. If people had no alternative, the hierarchy would necessarily be absolute, in consequence of the uneven ratio of winners to losers in a zero-sum game for prosperity and the need for maintenance by force of the existing relations of property. This was, however, not always the case in developing societies in the past. As pointed out by Elizabeth C. Stone, differences in property relations do not necessarily lead to coercion, because there are alternative strategies for marginalised groups, including emigration and changes in subsistence strategies from agriculture to nomadic pasturage.²⁰⁴ It can also be argued that land ownership does not result in unbreakable hierarchies, because land can be held in common by families, so that their poorer members have at least some access to resources. In consideration of such alternatives, the strict hierarchy of an early state society is less self-evident.

²⁰³ Fried, *The evolution of political society*, 1967, 191-196; *ibid.* 224-226

²⁰⁴ Stone, "City-states and their centers," 1997, 16-17

It could be argued that the state emerged exactly as a cage to hem people in and provide workers on the available land that was controlled by the élite. However, would it not be easier to make life in the state attractive than to prevent people from fleeing? The latter approach to state formation can be found in Elman Service, also a neo-evolutionist, who introduces the concept of chiefdom as an intermediary level between egalitarian segmental societies and true states.²⁰⁵ Rather than looking at the early state as confirming and protecting socio-economic inequality, Service emphasises what he terms integrative theories: the chief is able to establish a state based on chiefdom because a state is more effective in promoting the interests of the members of society. The chief shapes the further development of society towards a state.²⁰⁶

A weakness with Service's model is that it does not explain why people would willingly give up their autonomy, other than that they would wish to avoid the negative consequences of anarchy. It can be argued that the alternative to the despotic rule of a chief is not chaos: institutionalised leadership in a stratified society does not necessarily stand in opposition to forms of popular participation in politics, institutionalised or not. However, popular participation has no place in Service's model for society's path from chiefdom to the true state; it describes the result of integration in terms of increased hierarchy.

Neo-evolutionist theory operates with a step-ladder model where the theoretical endpoint of social evolution is an early state, before the development of true states. A

²⁰⁵ Service, *Origins of the state and civilization*, 1975, 15-16; Service, "Classical and modern theories of the origins of government," 1978

²⁰⁶ Service, "Classical and modern theories of the origins of government," 1978, 27-32

mentioned above, the universal application of neo-evolutionist theory is emphasised by its advocates. Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalník, editors of a volume published in 1978 titled *The Early State*, claim that comparative studies “have demonstrated that the structure, functioning and evolution of early states of all times and places show marked similarities”.²⁰⁷ Claessen and Skalník propose a working definition of the early state as “the organization for the regulation of social relations in a society that is divided into two divergent social classes, the rulers and the ruled”.²⁰⁸ In the same volume, Ronald Cohen analyses the state as characterised by the division between rulers and ruled into a dualistic class system. The ruling group is culturally differentiated from those who are ruled.²⁰⁹ In his view, “the details of political culture focus on the value of superior-subordinate relations”.²¹⁰ Thus, early states produce “an ideological support system” to promote a political culture which legitimises hierarchical control.²¹¹

The state understood in neo-evolutionist terms is the manifestation of the relations between rulers and ruled. All social and political relations are described in terms of a subordinate-superior division. Peter Skalník emphasises that early states were characterised by the presence of a political economy, where competition for office was a key concern.²¹² However, political activity was restricted to the ruling hierarchy: “in the political sphere the division between the state and the community, the rulers and the ruled was complete”.²¹³ Thus, only the élite take part in running the

²⁰⁷ Claessen & Skalník, “The early state: Theories and hypotheses,” 1978, 5

²⁰⁸ Claessen & Skalník, “The early state: Theories and hypotheses,” 1978, 21

²⁰⁹ Cohen, “State origins: A reappraisal,” 1978, 66

²¹⁰ Cohen, “State origins: A reappraisal,” 1978, 67

²¹¹ Cohen, “State origins: A reappraisal,” 1978, 69

²¹² Skalník, “The early state as a process,” 1978, 609

²¹³ Skalník, “The early state as a process,” 1978, 610

polity and reaching decisions. As in the models of Fried and Service discussed above, popular participation in politics is impossible, or at any rate falls outside the analysis of power relations.

In neo-evolutionary theory, the Greek *poleis*, where citizens ruled and were being ruled in turn, do not fit. Presumably, Greek political practices must be regarded as exceptions to the principles of political evolution of increased stratification towards hierarchy and despotic rule. In neo-evolutionist approaches, citizens are treated as passive and powerless. The state is described in terms of hierarchy solely and does not take into consideration other possibilities for political integration, including initiatives from outside the élite and the existence of vertical ties between rich and poor that transcend hierarchy. An explanation of the state in terms of increased hierarchy based on land ownership and other relations of property ignores other processes of political and social integration, among them the self-determined wish to live in a state society and the solidarity of the citizen community. The view of egalitarian relations of power as primitive and belonging to an early stage in the process of state formation further excludes alternatives to the early state model and its hierarchic organisation.

The view of power and social cohesion found in the neo-evolutionary theory is also found in two other influential models for ancient polities, the two-sector model and the patrimonial household model that will be discussed briefly in the following, before discussing alternative approaches to the analysis of ancient polities.

2.3 The two-sector model and the patrimonial household

Scholars studying ancient societies tend to emphasise a divide between the city, as the seat of the ruling institutions, and the town or countryside, where ordinary people lived and worked. As will be seen, this approach creates an insuperable divide between rulers and ruled. Similar to the early state model discussed above, it leaves no room for political agency from the bottom of the hierarchy. For Near Eastern polities, the resulting reconstruction is that of societies with a gulf between the world of the élite of palaces and temples and the everyday world of town-dwellers and peasants; a two-sector model. In the following, I will discuss the theoretical assumptions of this model and its consequences for the models historians have constructed.

The analysis of ancient polities as dualistic structures of rulers and ruled hails from Marx' concept of an Asiatic mode of production: in an Asiatic mode of production, all property is "Gemeindeeigentum", common property that is controlled by a central despotic government.²¹⁴ The government controls local communities, but has no real connection with them; rather, it floats over them in the sense of an "über den kleinen Gemeinden schwebenden despotischen Regierung".²¹⁵ The cities are not the seat of citizen collectives, but function as centres for the exploitation of the countryside, thus "die asiatische Geschichte ist eine Art indifferenter Einheit von Stadt und Land; (die eigentlich großen Städten sind bloß als fürstliche Lager hier zu betrachten, als Superfötation über die eigentlich ökonomische Konstruktion)".²¹⁶ In Marx' analysis, the Asiatic mode of production is static, in particular because the inhabitants have no independence from the community and do not own private property. According to

²¹⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 1969 [1857-1858], 376

²¹⁵ Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 1969 [1857-1858], 377

²¹⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 1969 [1857-1858], 382

Marx, “am längsten halt sich notwendig die asiatische Form. Es liegt dies in ihrer Voraussetzung; daß der Einzelne nicht der Gemeinde gegenüber selbständig wird; daß self-sustaining Kreis der Produktion, Einheit von Agrikultur und Handmanufaktur etc. Verändert der Einzelne sein Verhältnis zur Gemeinde, so verändert er damit und wirkt zerstörend auf die Gemeinde [...]”.²¹⁷

Thus, in the Marxist Asiatic mode of production, the government is floating above the local communities. Government is based in stronghold cities that are superimposed upon the rest of the economy. The local communities have no influence on the central government and the inhabitants are not capable of taking independent action or initiating political action. As will be seen, these underlying assumptions of an Asiatic mode of production characterise several influential analyses of Near Eastern polities.

The dualism of Marx’ Asiatic mode of production is clearly seen in a model offered by I. M. Diakonoff, in which he explicitly divides the economy of the ancient world into a state-sector and a communal sector.²¹⁸ The state-sector comprises the temple and palace and is opposed to a communal sector of the countryside.²¹⁹ The model is rather similar to the early state model, but where the early state has an integrated population of subjects, albeit powerless, the two-sector model operates with a rather independent subject population. They are independent in the sense that they are outside the hierarchy, but at the same time they are powerless because they have no way of influencing the central decision-making institutions of the polity they belong to.

²¹⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 1969 [1857-1858], 386

²¹⁸ Diakonoff, “Near Eastern society,” 1982, 59

²¹⁹ Diakonoff, “Near Eastern society,” 1982, 83

A similarly fundamental difference between the political centre and the countryside is emphasised by Robert McC. Adams in his analysis of Mesopotamian cities. Adams argues that the Mesopotamian urban population consisted of a narrow circle of specialists and “members of a sharply demarcated urban hierarchy” that had little connection to the majority of the population of poor peasants. He is critical of the “frequent emphasis given to the autonomous, formally defined corporate character of the Mesopotamian city”. Instead, he argues that the Mesopotamian city was by no means a common frame of reference for the people of Mesopotamia. Rather, most people lived in insecure poverty outside cities and took no part in urban culture.²²⁰

The thin urban élite of Adams’ reconstruction of Mesopotamian city-states would have little in common with poor people in the countryside, i.e. the majority of the population. Indeed, there will always be marginalised groups that are outside any participation in politics. This group was certainly quite large in Mesopotamia. However, as will be seen, that does not mean that popular power cannot be found in local communities of towns and cities (cf. 4.3, 4.7, 5.5, 5.10, 5.11, 6.5, 6.6).

The two-sector model has been particularly influential in the analysis of so-called palace societies of the Late Bronze Age such as Ugarit. In the interpretations of Mario Liverani and Michael Heltzer, palace societies consisted of nominally unfree, but wealthy dependents of the king and nominally free, but poor members of farming communities.²²¹ The result of this approach is that the state-sector is studied from documents belonging to the palace and administration, whereas the communal sector

²²⁰ Adams, “The Mesopotamian social landscape: a view from the margins,” 1974, 7-8

²²¹ Liverani, “Communautés de village et Palais royal,” 1975, 146-164; Heltzer, “Service system,” 1988, 7-18

that consists of the peasant communities is virtually left out of the analysis of political power (cf. 5.8).

Against this approach, it can be argued that in spite of the virtual state monopoly on literacy in polities like Late Bronze Age Ugarit, there are instances when the communal sector is reported in documents from the central administration (cf. 5.10.1, 5.10.2). Thus, the division was not absolute. Against this claim, it can be argued that any mention of village life or local power reflects the interests of the central administration and is not a source to the communal sector. From the point of view of the two-sector model, all officials, councils and assemblies mentioned in the administrative records were part of the state-sector, meaning that knowledge of the communal sector is not available to scholars. However, this claim cannot be maintained facing instances where the records indicate that royal officials relied on local community institutions for making local decisions.²²² This will be investigated further in the analyses of Near Eastern polities in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Suffice it to say at this point that there is evidence that gives reasons for arguing that decisions were actually taken locally, not exclusively by the palace and its officials. Now, if the palace administration actually relied on local decisions made by community representatives and councils, the degree of central control cannot be said to be absolute. How to analyse such local activities is another matter, however, and I will return to this in the discussion of agency and structuration further on (2.7).

The two-sector model has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on centralised bureaucracies in Near Eastern polities. As an alternative approach, David Schloen suggests a model he calls “the Patrimonial Household Model” to describe the entire Bronze Age Near East as consisting of patrimonial societies. He argues that the

²²² Cf. Seri, *Local powers in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*, 2005, 132-133

king owned all land, and that there was no true bureaucracy, only households and administrative functions based on households.²²³ Thus, in Schloen's model, there is no real bureaucracy or state sector in Bronze Age Near Eastern polities. All relations of power are based on fatherly authority. This approach to ancient societies is indebted to Max Weber, who defines a patrimonial society as one where the ruler owns all the means of power and uses them through his personal dependents. His subjects are servants or plebeians and have no means of competing with his power.²²⁴ Weber's ideas are also used by Daniel M. Master, who applies the patrimonial household model to ancient Israel and finds a continuity of patrimonial power in polities from nomadic tribes to states.²²⁵

Against the patrimonial household model, it can be argued that local communities were not directly controlled by the ruler's household. As will be seen, there is evidence from several Near Eastern polities of the existence of local communities with their own councils and assemblies (cf. 4.3, 4.7, 5.5, 5.10, 5.11, 6.5, 6.6). Further, the vertical relations between the head of a household and the household's subordinate members were not the only direction of integration. Horizontal integration between individual heads of households also existed. In addition, there was horizontal integration between people outside the élite. These relations do not fit the model of a pyramidal household as the organising principle of Near Eastern polities. Therefore, a different approach is necessary, one that takes into account agency from below and the active structuration of societies by all its members.

²²³ Schloen, *House of the Father*, 2001, 255-316

²²⁴ Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, 1968, 12

²²⁵ Master, "State formation theory and the kingdom of ancient Israel," 2001, 128-131

Thus, in summary, the early state model and the two-sector model can be criticised for their too rigorous separation of rulers and ruled, between central institutions of power and local communities. However, the solution to the problem of understanding relations between central authorities and local communities does not lie in a pyramidal household model where all land was owned by the king. The household played an important role in organising the different functions of Near Eastern states, but cannot be said to be the only organising principle. Instead of describing a rigid structure, whether this was a pyramid or other pointed geometric shape, the analyses in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 will be based on the discourses of the society under discussion and the dialectical relations between rulers, the ruled, and the social structure.

As stated above (2.2), the early state model has been very influential with scholars of the ancient world. It has provided a theoretical basis for the assumption that politics cannot have existed in polities before and beyond the classical world (cf. 1.3). Alternatives to this approach will be discussed below (2.5-9). Before turning to dialectical analyses of agency, structuration, and structure, an approach that is quite influential in current analyses of Greek polities will be examined. This approach may be termed a form of structural-functionalism, an approach associated with the works of Talcott Parsons. Structural-functionalism goes beyond relations of production and makes instituted norms and generalised values the most important factors in political integration, exemplified by the analyses of Greek polities by Mogens Herman Hansen. As will be seen, structural-functionalism is a further theoretical basis for the conviction that popular power only existed among Greeks and Romans in the ancient world.

2.4 The good society and the good citizen

In structural-functionalist theory, society changes towards greater complexity as part of a process of generalised values that support this level of complexity. Talcott Parsons preferred the term “functional analysis” to “structural-functionalism”.²²⁶ Parsons’ theories on social evolution and human action quite consistently work on the premise of the positive function of the normative conditions in the social structure for perpetuating social forms. He proposes an analogy between the institutionalisation of cultural values or norms as observed in social studies and the natural selection of mutations in biology.²²⁷ Similar to Parsons, Mogens Herman Hansen argues that the institutions of a given polity, including norms of behaviour, are the main factors in determining the attainable level of popular participation in politics. Thus, in Hansen’s analysis, the democratic institutions of Athens created the democratic Athenians, not vice versa.²²⁸ In the following, the arguments of Talcott Parsons for a functionalist analysis of social structure will be examined.

Talcott Parsons analyses the stratification of society as contingent with the development of normative constraints. He argues that “through the differentiation of roles there is a differentiation in the specific goals which are morally approved for different individuals. But, so far as the society is morally and hence institutionally integrated, they are all governed by the same generalized pattern”.²²⁹ In this view, behaviour is governed by norms that contribute to maintain the structure of society and the norms are adhered to in order to preserve the social structure.²³⁰

²²⁶ Parsons, “The present status of “structural-functional” theory in sociology,” 1977, 100

²²⁷ Parsons, “The present status of “structural-functional” theory in sociology,” 1977, 114

²²⁸ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 320

²²⁹ Parsons, “An analytical approach to the theory of social stratification,” 1949, 168-169

²³⁰ Parsons, “An analytical approach to the theory of social stratification,” 1949, 174-175

Thus, Parsons claims that individuals in society relate to a commonly held morality and adhere to it in order to preserve their social status. This in turn preserves the structure of society. Parsons' view of action in general is consistent with this claim: he argues that actions can be explained by an abstraction to more general analysis in order to bring forth "the functional relations involved in the facts already descriptively arranged".²³¹ In his view, actions are directed by norms and "conceptual schemes", so that actors "try to conform their action patterns which are, by the actor and other members of the same collectivity, deemed desirable".²³² He states that "there is no such thing as action except as effort to conform with norms".²³³ In Parsons' action theory, it is important to include what he terms an "integrated value system", a system "common to large numbers".²³⁴

A weakness with Parsons' sociological analysis is that it presupposes one universal system of values in the society under study, i.e. a high degree of value generalisation. In complex societies, however, there are several value systems at work at once, depending on the perspectives of the situated agents. Parsons does not take this sufficiently into account, but claims that "the normal individual feels satisfaction in effectively carrying out approved patterns and shame and disappointment in failure".²³⁵ In this way, supposedly, good norms will produce a good society, following the supposition that any normal person will want what is best. Against this, it can be argued that a generalised morality does not define the range of strategies

²³¹ Parsons, *The structure of social action*, 1968 [1937], 49

²³² Parsons, *The structure of social action*, 1968 [1937], 76

²³³ Parsons, *The structure of social action*, 1968 [1937], 76-77

²³⁴ Parsons, *The structure of social action*, 1968 [1937], 704

²³⁵ Parsons, "The professions and social structure," 1949, 196

available to and pursued by citizens. In any society, there are competing groups and individuals with a range of perspectives on their own situation and how to achieve their goals. The world looks different to a temple scribe than to a peasant. Parsons' analysis would only apply to unitary societies or very limited parts of a given society.

A central concept for Parsons' theories of social structure and human action is "cybernetic models" for the analysis of actions: the different sectors of living systems stand in an "order of cybernetically hierarchic control relative to each other".²³⁶ Thus, in Parson's theory of social evolution, he implies that the normative constraints of society have cybernetic control of the actions of agents and also legitimise relations of power.²³⁷ However, he does not seem to consider the possibilities of dynamic relations between agents and structure or conflicting orders of cybernetic control. Instead, he argues that political evolution moves towards modern liberal democracy.²³⁸ This kind of teleological evolutionism does not explain events, such as revolts, that cannot be said to follow normative constraints. Parson's view of society does not allow for conflicting interests between different socio-economic groups, a recurring phenomenon in most complex societies.

A prominent scholar whose analyses of ancient polities can be termed functionalist is Mogens Herman Hansen. Hansen's analysis of democratic Athens reflects the view that institutions and the values they impress on the citizens explain how polities evolve: in an analysis of the Athenian political development towards democracy, Hansen emphasises that the institutions of Athens were open and public to a very high

²³⁶ Parsons, "The present status of "structural-functional" theory in sociology," 1977, 113

²³⁷ Parsons, *The evolution of societies*, 1977, 48

²³⁸ Parsons, *The evolutions of societies*, 1977, 238-241

degree and that these included courts, the council and the assembly.²³⁹ According to Hansen, the characteristic traits of Athenian democracy are connected to the political institutions.²⁴⁰ He argues that the ancient Greeks held that the best life comes from the best institutions and that therefore the democratic man in Athens was created by the democratic institutions of this specific *polis*.²⁴¹

There is no doubt evidence that supports the view that Athens was unique in its institutional structure and had a unique political culture. Does that mean that Athenian democracy was the only form of genuine popular power in the ancient world? In section 1.2, it was argued that this was not the case: it cannot be ignored that Athenian democracy shared traits with polities that did not have the same specific institutional system as Athens. Athenian democracy and popular power are not the same. However, this is exactly the underlying assumption that leads scholars to categorically deny the existence of popular participation in politics in Near Eastern societies (cf. 1.3): lacking an institutional system similar to Athens means that popular power did not exist. However, rather than working from a paradigm where society is viewed as a system of generalised norms and institutions that determine the expectations and behaviour of its members, it should be kept in mind that complex societies are not unitary: complex societies have several competing sets of norms, e.g. those of the rich and the poor, the old and the young. As will be seen below (2.5), institutions are not only shaping the members of society, members of society are agents actively choosing how to put institutions to use. Agents negotiate their position in society through institutions and sometimes outside them. Thus, society cannot be analysed from its institutions alone. Only by studying how people act, rather than presupposing their behaviour from institutional and structural analyses, the true range of political actions

²³⁹ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 311

²⁴⁰ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 319

²⁴¹ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 320

undertaken and strategies pursued by agents can be revealed, from all levels of society in ancient polities.

To focus on agents and their influence on the structure of the society of which they are members brings the present discussion into the conceptual framework of sociologists Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. As will be seen, their theories on social structure and habitus are more fruitful than neo-evolutionist or structural-functional approaches. Before discussing the alternative models provided by an approach from structuration and agency, I will present and discuss the sociological theories of Giddens and Bourdieu at some length, as well as scholars who have put their theories to use in analyses of ancient polities.

2.5 Structure, agency and structuration

It was argued above that the approaches both from neo-evolutionary theory and structural-functionalism are equally insensible to activities and attitudes of people outside the élite. This creates problems when using these theories as the basis for investigations of popular power in ancient polities. This is because societies consist of a multitude of agents that contribute to the structure of society and negotiate their lives from their individual social and economic standing, including citizens at the nether end of the social hierarchy. The aforementioned approaches to social analysis do not account for the totality of agents and their strategies in ancient societies. Therefore, they are of little use for analysing social changes initiated from the lower classes in society as well as concerted action of the citizens that transcend the divisions of rich and poor.

In the sociological terminology of Anthony Giddens, which will be discussed in the following, the dynamics of society is described as resulting from agents contributing to the structures that are shaping their own behavior. As will be seen in the following, agents have agency and the effect of their actions on structure is structuration. The possibility of a course of action is determined by the social system that in its turn is determined by the social structure. However, the actions of agents can reinforce as well as challenge the social system and have the effect of structuration, causing changes in the social structure. Therefore, following this analytical approach, all levels of society must be taken into consideration in undertaking an analysis of social structure and political action, not just the élite or the upper levels of the social hierarchy. This makes it possible to undertake a comparative analysis of polities of the ancient world that include those outside the élite. By transcending the assumption that East and West represent fundamentally different political traditions, i.e. early states vs. citizen-states, the actions of agents in the polities under discussion can be taken properly into consideration.

According to Giddens, structure is marked by an absence of the subject, whereas the social system comprises the situated activities of human agents.²⁴² I take this to mean that the social structure is beyond the direct influence of the individual. Individuals, human agents, act according to social structures and these actions and the conditions they are performed under form social systems. Giddens emphasises that “structure is recursively implicated” in social systems. The production and reproduction of social systems are the results of an ongoing process of structuration by knowledgeable human agents: “crucial to the idea of structuration is the theorem of the duality of structure [...] The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion

²⁴² Giddens, *The constitution of society*, 2007 [1984], 25

of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize”.²⁴³

Thus, the social system comprises the actions of individuals and this upholds the social structure, but actions can also change the structure. The social structure shapes the course of action taken by individuals as it is simultaneously shaped through changes in the social system through structuration. In this way, society can be understood as the product of its members, who are in their turn shaped by the society of which they are members. Although this argument runs the risk of infinite regress, the perspective opens up for analyses of society that look at how people influence the structure of societies of which they are part. Popular participation thus cannot be ruled out *a priori* in a polity dominated by institutions like palaces or temples. Action is not limited to the élite; all levels contribute to structuration. The duality of structure is important for a discussion of the structure of polities because it emphasises social structure as the result of ongoing human interaction and not as the result of a process of evolution and increasing élite dominance or the establishment of generalised values that cybernetically directs all actions. When the totality of society is taken into consideration, it becomes apparent which structural limitations and possibilities there are for popular participation in politics and which courses of action people could choose. Different from a static model of hierarchy like the early state, action from agents outside the élite can be taken into consideration. Thus, in a monarchic polity, people could choose actions that ran contrary to parts of the social structure, e.g. obedience to the king, while being informed by other aspects of the social structure, e.g. protecting their community as citizens.

²⁴³ Giddens, *The constitution of society*, 2007 [1984], 25

Giddens emphasises that a theory of structuration must recognise “human beings as knowledgeable agents, reflexively monitoring the flow of interaction with one another”. He argues that the human agent influences the social order as well as being influenced by it, “[...] the normative elements of social systems are contingent claims which have to be sustained and “made to count” through the effective mobilization of sanctions in the contexts of actual encounters”.²⁴⁴

Approaching social systems as consisting of contingent claims opens up for a much more inclusive analysis than what can be provided by the early state model: the early state model is focused on the élite as structuring and controlling the polity, whereas Giddens’ approach includes a totality of influences, high and low. It is a more nuanced and dynamic approach than the structural-functionalism of Parsons, where society has a generalised normative system that all members of society obey to the best of their abilities. Giddens’ focus on reflexivity promises more answers than the evolutionary perspective of the neo-evolutionary approach can provide. By emphasising the ongoing structuration of human societies, the view of states as the end-point of evolution falls away. It is a great advantage over neo-evolutionism to study the structure of society as the result of the actions and choices of a totality of agents, not just the élite. Their vertical and horizontal ties can be taken into consideration, beyond the hierarchy of rulers and ruled. In this analysis, the socio-political structure of a polity results from negotiations between groups and individuals in society, i.e. agents, against the background of cultural traditions and economic realities, i.e. structures. Ancient polities did not have one single generalised normative system or a single unshakeable hierarchy of socio-economic positions. They should be studied as complex networks of agents pursuing different strategies for power. Their strategies should make out the focus of political analysis, not definitions of hierarchies or institutionalised norms. In this way, comparative analyses are made

²⁴⁴ Giddens, *The constitution of society*, 2007 [1984], 30

possible, by looking beyond the structures, focusing instead on the interplay of structure, agents, and their actions.

2.6 Habitus, schemes, and strategies

It should be kept in mind that social structures tend to be quite stable: people do not necessarily change their views of the world very easily; much less act on these newly gained perspectives. The world of contingent expectations can be termed the habitus, in the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu. The concept of habitus, according to Bourdieu, means that “the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor”.²⁴⁵

As I understand this, it can be argued with Bourdieu that who you are determines what you do, in the sense that what you do is not determined by clear and articulated rules, but by internalised perceptions of what is right and proper. These perceptions are shaping possible courses of action without being actively formulated or expressed. They are being reinforced collectively among one’s peers, not explicitly as rules but as the dispositions shared by those who partake in the same habitus. It is important to

²⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, 2008 [1977], 72

notice that habitus is not a generalised normative system. Different types of habitus exist in different socio-economic groups within the same society.

The dispositions shared by the partakers of a habitus can be termed schemes, an important concept in the theory of habitus. Bourdieu explains human practice as an enactment of schemes constituting the alternatives for action within the habitus which the agent shares with the group he belongs to. The habitus is reproduced by each agent, but not automatically: “the schemes of thought and expression he has acquired are the basis for the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation”.²⁴⁶

The schemes can be changed by experience, but will more often be reinforced by the habitus, the world of expectations the agent shares with others of his group. It can be argued, then, that human behaviour, although predictable, cannot be said to be predestined or determined. The structure of society is not decided upon by an élite, it is created by all the members of the given society, with their different forms of habitus and the different schemes that inform their actions. It is not created by free improvisation, but along inherited as well as acquired schemes.

Bourdieu emphasises that practice is informed by schemes and that these cannot be regarded as theoretical rules.²⁴⁷ He defines scheme as a variant meaning of rule, “in the sense of a scheme (or principle) immanent in practice, which should be called implicit rather than unconscious, simply to indicate that it exists in a practical state in agents’ practice and not in their consciousness, or rather, their discourse”.²⁴⁸ The

²⁴⁶ Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, 2008 [1977], 79

²⁴⁷ Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, 2008 [1977], 8-9

²⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, 2008 [1977], 27

schemes, although not explicit, define the strategies of agents. Bourdieu points out that the individual strategies make out a system of strategies “defined as the sum total of the strategies through which individuals or groups objectively tend to reproduce the relations of production associated with a determinate mode of production by striving to reproduce or improve their position in the social structure”.²⁴⁹

It may be objected that in this perspective, all people are born into a certain behaviour that they will invariably reproduce. Thus, the structure of society could be explained by establishing the dominant institutions and prevailing norms of behaviour in a given society. However, a process of learning is set in motion by processes of interaction with people of other types of habitus. Thus, the theory of habitus does not imply a static view of social structure. It should be kept in mind that the stability of a social structure depends on the reproduction of schemes. Although they tend to, agents do not invariably reproduce the schemes of their habitus: their schemes are part of a structure that is determined by other agents and their schemes, as well. Thus, strategies of agents from the entirety of the polity under discussion must be taken into consideration, not just those of the élite.

Although Bourdieu’s habitus may seem agent-proof, meaning that the agent has no way to perceive his own schemes and is thus unable to knowingly change his own course of action, the idea of schemes opens for a great variety of strategies pursued within any given polity. Important for the dynamics of societies are the interstices, areas of society where power structures overlap and established borders are put under pressure. Bourdieu’s ideas of how schemes are acquired through practice can help explain how new schemes are born out of new circumstances.

²⁴⁹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, 2008 [1977], 70

It is important to have in mind that the dominant institutions in society cannot be expected to determine the actions of all the members of society. Strategies for power that cross established hierarchies must be expected. Studies of political action in any given society are not exhausted by the establishment of the position of the most powerful institutions. The strategies of all agents must be taken into consideration as contributing to the networks of strategies that make out the polity.

2.7 Agency and structure

Having presented the analytical tools for investigating societies as consisting of agents, structuration, and structure, I will now investigate further how these concepts can be used in social analyses. I will first discuss some ideas on structure from William Sewell Jr. (2.7.1). Then, I will investigate the ideas of Elizabeth M. Brumfiel on social struggles (2.7.2), followed by a discussion of Michael Mann's ideas on the sources of social power (2.7.3). As will be seen in the following, agency and structure open up for more nuanced analyses of ancient polities than neo-evolutionism and its early state model or structural-functionalism, theoretical approaches that underlie the view that Eastern and Western political traditions are fundamentally different.

2.7.1 Schemas and resources

The relations between agency and structure are difficult to unravel, and it is not possible to suppose one without the other. In William Sewell Jr.'s analysis, structure and human agency interact and produce a new structure, "the agents can (or are forced

to) improvise or innovate in structurally shaped ways that significantly reconfigure the very structures that constituted them”.²⁵⁰ Sewell wishes to avoid idealism, i.e. that ideas or mental schemas determine the material world as perceived by humans. He argues that “structure, then, should be defined as composed simultaneously of schemas, which are virtual, and of resources, which are actual. If structures are dual in this sense, then it must be true that schemas are the effects of resources, just as resources are the effects of schemas”. The term structure only applies when resources and schemas “mutually imply and sustain each other over time”.²⁵¹

Thus, it is not possible to operate with abstract mental schemas, such as an inherent love of freedom or a naturally slavish attitude, as driving forces behind political choices without taking physical resources into consideration, as well. Both schemas and resources determine the social structure. However, these qualifications to the theory of structure may be said to emphasise human agency. Structure is not solely determinant; its relation to human agents can be termed dialectic, in that agency and structure mutually determine and change each other. Therefore, the definitions of the dominant institutions do not constitute a satisfactory political analysis. Pointing out the dominance of palaces and temples or councils and assemblies is not a sufficient analysis of how societies of the ancient world were experienced by the people who lived in them.

Sewell applies the concept of agency to the structure of states: “states and political structures are consciously established, maintained, fought over and argued about rather than taken for granted as if they were unchangeable features of the world

²⁵⁰ Sewell, “A theory of structure,” 1992, 5

²⁵¹ Sewell, “A theory of structure,” 1992, 12-13

[...].²⁵² The active negotiations involved in the formation of political structures are important to keep in mind, because they invite analyses of polities as dynamic and multifaceted structures.

Sewell's point that agency and structure need to be taken into consideration when discussing struggles over political structures can be further explored with the concepts of narrow and broad elite strategies for power, as well as narrow and broad corporate strategies, discussed in chapter 1 (1.2.3 and 1.4.2). Polities are places where different groups and individuals vie for power and influence. Therefore, the strategies pursued by members of society can stand in opposition to the established structure and represent other groups than those in power.

2.7.2 Struggle and negotiation

The focus on strategies for power in socio-political analysis means to analyse societies as consisting of several competing and complimenting strategies. This is suggested by Elizabeth M. Brumfiel. She argues that in social analysis, focus should be on alliance networks based on gender, class, and faction and the realignments in these alliance networks, and not on closed systems.²⁵³ She calls for a behaviouristic approach: "[...] we must recognize that culturally based behavioural "systems" are the composite outcomes of negotiation between positioned social agents pursuing their goals under both ecological and social constraints".²⁵⁴

²⁵² Sewell, "A theory of structure," 1992, 24

²⁵³ Brumfiel, "Breaking and entering the ecosystem," 1992, 553

²⁵⁴ Brumfiel, "Breaking and entering the ecosystem," 1992, 551

The focus on negotiations implies that not only the rulers are taken into consideration, but also the ruled and their relationships with each other. Brumfiel emphasises that the perspective of human agency must be expanded to include the participation of people outside the élite.²⁵⁵ She asserts that “the history of states is the history of strategy and counterstrategy deployed by oppositional groups, leading cumulatively to the emergence of social hierarchy and its dissolution”.²⁵⁶ She suggests that specific sequences of changes in social power should be studied alternately from a subject-centred and system-centred point of view.²⁵⁷

In the present investigation, social change over time is not as central as the simultaneous existence of competing and cooperating agents and their strategies for power. It should be pointed out that societies do not only consist of oppositional groups. At least, opposition is not a stable constant. Vertical ties between the élite and humbler members of the community must be kept in mind as much as vertical divisions, and the same applies to horizontal relationships between individuals as well as groups.

2.7.3 Sources of power

An important contribution to the study of societies beyond hierarchies and bounded systems is that of Michael Mann, in the first volume of his work *The Sources of Social Power*.²⁵⁸ Mann argues that power must be analysed as having several

²⁵⁵ Brumfiel, “Breaking and entering the ecosystem,” 1992, 556

²⁵⁶ Brumfiel, “Breaking and entering the ecosystem,” 1992, 558

²⁵⁷ Brumfiel, “Breaking and entering the ecosystem,” 1992, 559

²⁵⁸ Mann, *Sources of social power*, 1986

sources.²⁵⁹ In Mann's analysis, there are ideological, economic, military, and political sources to power, meaning that power is not unitary, but has several dimensions. The organisation of society is derived from a network of actors with power derived from ideological, economic, military, and political sources.²⁶⁰

The four dimensions of power in Mann's analysis can be criticised for being somewhat arbitrary, in the sense that some of them will overlap, in particular economic, political, and military sources of power. They are useful tools for analysis, however, because they make it possible to study several dimensions of society at once, rather than supposing a unitary system. Mann's dimensions of power and their agents create not unitary structures, but networks. Mann conceives of societies as "multiple overlapping and intersecting power networks".²⁶¹ In his definition, "a society is a network of social interaction at the boundaries of which is a certain level of interaction cleavage between it and its environment".²⁶²

Mann's ideas of society as networks of interaction open up new possibilities for analysing political action. The subject and the system interact, in such a way that the system is not absolutely bounded and the subject is not absolutely determined. Mann's approach focuses on what creates power and what dissolves it, from a perspective of agents, their schemes and resources. This approach transcends the elite perspectives and institutional focus of neo-evolutionism and structural-functionalism. Political action can be analysed as conditioned by what is considered possible or proper, the expectations and ambitions that constitute the schemes that agents are informed by in

²⁵⁹ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 34-38

²⁶⁰ Mann, *The sources of social power*, 1986, 22-27

²⁶¹ Mann, *Sources of social power*, 1986, 2

²⁶² Mann, *Sources of social power*, 1986, 13

their choices of strategies for power. In this way, analyses of ancient polities will allow for different views of society co-existing within the same polity. In the following two sections (2.8 and 2.9), I will discuss recent work on ancient polities that use sociological approaches of analysing agency and structuration.

2.8 New approaches to ancient societies

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter (2.2), neo-evolutionary theory and the early state model have been widely applied by scholars to explain all ancient societies, both their development and their structure. Twenty years after Claessen and Skalník's publication of *The Early State* (1978), came a volume titled *Archaic States*, edited by Gary M. Feinman and Joyce Marcus (1998). It is interesting to note that whereas the 1978 publication of Claessen and Skalník speaks of the "early state" in the singular, the 1998 publication speaks of "archaic states" in the plural. As will be seen in the following, the perspective has been widened to include contestation of hierarchy as well as alternative trajectories to the development of states. In recent decades, approaches have become more discursive, as power is analysed in terms of social relations and not mere economic facts, e.g. people's relations to the means of production. These new approaches are dialectic, in that they highlight the interplay between social structures and human agents, and the impact of new directions in sociology represented by Giddens and Bourdieu is evident.

Richard E. Blanton, in his contribution to *Archaic States* suggests a discursive approach to archaic states, an approach, he argues, that "points to the fact that social life consist of a discursive interaction of social structure, carried intergenerationally,

and social actors pursuing varied goals”.²⁶³ To achieve this, he divides power into the subcategories of material and cognitive-symbolic dimensions that, although they are likely to be mobilised simultaneously, help illustrate trends in the evolution of archaic states.²⁶⁴ Blanton distinguishes between exclusionary power strategies and corporate power strategies. The strategies for systemic exclusionary domination are characterised by state control of prestige goods and craft specialists in the material or objective dimension and correspondingly in the cognitive-symbolic dimension by a patrimonial view of society, divine rulership, and imperialism. The corporate power strategy, on the other hand, in its material dimension is redistributive, based on euergetism, and decentralised regarding prestige-goods systems. In its cognitive-symbolic dimension, it is characterised by accountability of the ruler, commonwealth government, reflexive communication, decentralisation of sources of power, and the “semiautonomous functioning of lower-order subsystems”.²⁶⁵

Following Blanton’s analysis, power is expressed both in material relations and symbolic representations that mutually reinforce each other. The different strategies for power are pursued simultaneously, meaning that at the central level, a ruler can emphasise his own person and centralised institutions of power, whereas at the local level, communities can emphasise cooperation and communal decisions. Both strategies can be found at work at the same time, so that integration in the polity operates both horizontally and vertically. In Blanton’s terms, the strategy of the ruler is called an *élite* strategy, whereas that of the community is called a corporate strategy.

²⁶³ Blanton, “Beyond centralization,” 1998, 140

²⁶⁴ Blanton, “Beyond centralization,” 1998, 143

²⁶⁵ Blanton, “Beyond centralization,” 1998, 144-145 tables 5.3 & 5.4

As argued in chapter 1 (1.2.3; 1.4.2), in order to describe competition for power and the dynamics of communities, I find it necessary to divide the élite and corporate strategy into narrow and broad subcategories. On a general level, there is a difference of élite and corporate strategies in that the élite regards itself as a different kind altogether, whether they are a group of aristocrats or an individual king and his family, i.e. a broad or a narrow élite respectively. The broad or narrow corporations, on the other hand, hold that they have more in common than being separate. The criteria for equality will be stricter for a narrow than for a broad corporation, but at least in theory, someone from the masses can aspire to the narrow corporation given that he becomes able to meet the necessary requirements. The distinction between a broad élite and a narrow corporation must be attempted in each particular case. It is necessarily blurry and will be easiest to define when their self-assessment is available in the sources.

Recently, David B. Small has attempted to apply a dual-processual model of strategies for power to ancient Greece.²⁶⁶ He demonstrates that at ancient Priene, the archaeological record of contexts for interaction and evidence from inscriptions can be analysed to give a picture of the dualistic relationship between networking and corporate strategies for power within the polity.²⁶⁷ However, his analysis of the evidence of Priene shows that it can be difficult to discern between networking and corporate strategies, because in some contexts, a corporation will be very exclusive, exemplified by meetings of community honorands at the Panionion sanctuary.²⁶⁸ Thus, a broad élite can also be understood as a narrow corporation. The only way to definitely determine this is when the criteria for membership in the group are

²⁶⁶ Small, "The dual-processual model in ancient Greece," 2009, 205-221

²⁶⁷ Small, "The dual-processual model in ancient Greece," 2009, 209-214

²⁶⁸ Small, "The dual-processual model in ancient Greece," 2009, 217

available to modern scholars. This is unfortunately not often the case, and many arguments must remain inferential.

As argued above (2.7) the analysis of society as the interplay between agents and their strategies for power means the abandonment of models of the early state type. This is a perspective that has become more explicit among scholars in recent years. Norman Yoffee, in the book polemically titled *Myths of the Archaic State*, argues that “the central concern in studying the evolution of the earliest states is not to identify an essentialised and reified political structure (“the state”), but to explain the mechanisms through which social units that were becoming progressively differentiated were reassembled”.²⁶⁹ In his analysis of state formation, Yoffee follows Michael Mann and his approach to power, discussed above (2.7.3), as derived from ideological, economic, military, and political sources.²⁷⁰ Yoffee subsumes political power under economic power.²⁷¹ Mann and Yoffee’s approach to power as having several sources has the advantage of making power rest with several groups that together make out the totality of society.

In order to explain the emergence of states, Yoffee emphasises that “three main dimensions of power and the different means of achieving power – the struggle for control of economic resources, control of knowledge, ceremonies, and symbols, and control of armed forces – need to be co-evolving for states to emerge, since these three sources of power all reinforce one another”.²⁷² In his analysis, the formation of early states was characterised by heterarchy, different hierarchies coming together. He

²⁶⁹ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 34

²⁷⁰ Cf. Mann, *The sources of social power*, 1986, 22-27

²⁷¹ Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic state*, 2005, 34-38

²⁷² Yoffee, *Myths of the Archaic state*, 2005, 38

points out that this process might also be reversed into dissolution of the polity.²⁷³ Yoffee draws attention to the question how people came to live “in a variety of differentiated social organizations and the nature of power within these organizations”.²⁷⁴ In his analysis, contrary to the early state model, “the earliest states “integrated” these social organizations only loosely, and rulers and elites were constantly concerned to communicate a dominant way of meaning. Non-elites or peripheral elites accepted, negotiated their lives under, or struggled against these terms”.²⁷⁵ In Yoffee’s analysis, an example of these negotiations can be found in the relations between central and local authorities in Mesopotamia: law-making by Mesopotamian kings never supplanted assemblies; quite the contrary, the communities kept their decision-making organisations and developed them within city-state structures.²⁷⁶ Yoffee points out that “bureaucrats of the crown were also members of the community or of entrepreneurial families and organizations, and on the level of individuals there are many identities and social roles that cannot be neatly separated into either the community or the state, since people can be members of both”.²⁷⁷ Yoffee can thus be said to argue against the two-sector model and its separation of central institutions and local communities (cf. 2.3). The application of the two-sector model to Near Eastern societies is discussed further in chapter 5 (5.8).

Following the arguments of Yoffee, states must be examined not only as the institutions and symbols for the division of rulers and ruled. Rather, processes of both horizontal and vertical integration must be taken into consideration. This position has

²⁷³ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 38. The concept of heterarchy is defined and explored in Ehrenreich, Crumley & Levy (eds.), *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*, 1995

²⁷⁴ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 41

²⁷⁵ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 41

²⁷⁶ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 112

²⁷⁷ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 137

been argued throughout this chapter. Throughout the analyses of the present investigation, the local communities will be taken into consideration, not just in their relation to the central authorities, but also as self-regulating communities. The relations between local councils and officials and the local communities form an especially promising field of study for an investigation of popular power. This investigation is difficult, however, because so much of the available evidence strictly refers to the élite sphere of society. Against Yoffee's point about bureaucrats of the crown living in local communities, it could be argued that professionalism would prevent any consideration of local community interests by bureaucrats, and that sources to their activities would only inform us about central institutions. However, as will be seen in the analyses throughout the present investigation, there is evidence for the integration of local and central levels of authority as well as for collective decision-making that were not controlled by the central hierarchy.

2.9 Consensual cities and urban élites

Mesopotamian cities are often regarded as dominated by the great institutions of temples and palaces and a narrow élite of the powerful; the rulers, the rich, religious specialists and the bureaucrats. In this perspective, the political outlook of the population would be limited to local concerns. This political culture, in the terms of Gabriel Abraham Almond and Sidney Verba, can be described as "parochial": there is no division between political, economic or religious roles and local communities and ordinary people have no expectations of the political system.²⁷⁸ The opposite of a parochial political culture is termed a "participant culture", where individuals expect to be able to use the political system for their own ends.²⁷⁹ These are useful

²⁷⁸ Almond & Verba, *The civic culture*, 1989, 17

²⁷⁹ Almond & Verba, *The civic culture*, 1989, 17-18

distinctions for the study of ancient polities. E.g. if the political culture of Near Eastern local communities was predominantly parochial, there cannot be expected to have been much popular participation in politics in relation to central institutions. However, if there was a participatory culture among a large part of the people, the picture would be rather different. It must be kept in mind that for a political culture to move beyond a parochial orientation, there has to be connections between central and local levels. In this perspective, the concept of consensual societies becomes useful, an approach to ancient Near Eastern polities that has been advocated by Elizabeth C. Stone in particular. As will be seen in the following, consensual societies, as well as the related concept of heterarchy, are interesting models for discussing ancient societies beyond hierarchies. It has been applied to Old Babylonian cities in particular (cf. 4.3.4).

Elizabeth C. Stone argues that Near Eastern city-states should be studied not as repressive hierarchies, but as consensual societies, defined as societies characterised by “consensual arrangements among differently defined segments of society”.²⁸⁰ In her analysis, preindustrial economies of the Near East are characterised by lack of people, not land. Therefore, urban leadership has to maintain the labour force. Cities are “places where the communication necessary to forge consensus among all groups in a non-autocratic society can take place”.²⁸¹ In her argument, “the key to the consensual basis of Mesopotamian city-states lies in the structuring of the habitation zone, where both elites and manufacturing were firmly embedded in residential neighborhoods”.²⁸² She argues that the urban plans and residential data of Mesopotamian cities were similar to Medieval Islamic cities and that they “suggest an

²⁸⁰ Stone, “City-states and their centers,” 1997, 15

²⁸¹ Stone, “City-states and their centers,” 1997, 16

²⁸² Stone, “City-states and their centers,” 1997, 19-20

urban landscape made up of numerous small, face-to-face communities”.²⁸³ Thus, power was not only in the large institutions of temple and palace: in addition, heads of households competed for power in neighbourhoods and larger urban assemblies.²⁸⁴

Adam T. Smith points out that “spatial practices of urbanism and political practices of authority are not separable”.²⁸⁵ He emphasises the significance of a “dynamically changing urban landscape that is produced, in large measure, by political practices”.²⁸⁶ Smith admits that the sources to a diachronic investigation of these landscapes are hard to come by, but argues for a study of Mesopotamian cities “produced as multidimensional landscapes that assembled the power and legitimacy of complex, multi-sited regimes”.²⁸⁷ In his interpretation, Mesopotamian cities consisted of “interlinked sites of elite and grassroots authority”.²⁸⁸ He supports Stone’s interpretation of Mesopotamian cities as divided by canals into different sectors, leading to a great degree of fragmentation.²⁸⁹ In Smith’s interpretation, the Mesopotamian cities were shaped by house owners and local authorities like the “mayor”, who functioned as intermediary between the king and the people, contributing “to shape the physical environment of the city”.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Stone, “The Mesopotamian urban experience,” 2007, 221

²⁸⁴ Stone, “The Mesopotamian urban experience,” 2007, 228

²⁸⁵ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 199

²⁸⁶ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 201

²⁸⁷ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 202

²⁸⁸ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 214-215

²⁸⁹ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 219

²⁹⁰ Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 229-230

Smith's thesis is highly problematic, because he does not have the sources at hand to investigate his claims: the overall plan and extension of residential areas of Mesopotamian cities are largely unknown. Further, the idea that political practices produced urban landscapes is problematic in view of the conservatism of Near Eastern rulers and their preoccupation with renovation of temples, walls, and canals rather than the founding of new cities. The sources to different building phases and their politics that Smith would need in order to argue for the political shaping of urban landscapes are lacking. Of course, cities are shaped by the political regimes that are housed in them, but this is not a very profound observation. The evidence for a correlation between regimes, inhabitants, and urban space is simply not there. Instead, Smith argues vaguely that grassroots institutions and house owners shaped the cities, but cites no evidence for these claims. In fact, Smith's point that political regimes built city infrastructure²⁹¹ seems to contradict this. Space and Mesopotamian cities will be discussed further in section 4.3.4. Suffice it to say here that there are great methodological difficulties in arguing from city-plans to political practice.

The view of Mesopotamian cities as the integration of several face-to-face communities can perhaps overlook the ties between central institutions and the rest of the city, similar to the two-sector model that was discussed above (2.3). Marc Van De Mieroop warns against the use of a face-to-face model for Mesopotamian city neighbourhoods, because it implies a conceptual separation of local communities from the central institutions of power.²⁹² This is no doubt a prudent warning: the central institutions were important not only economically, but also politically and religiously, and would be integral parts of the lives of all citizens of the polity, albeit not necessarily on a daily basis.

²⁹¹ Cf. Smith, *The political landscape*, 2003, 228

²⁹² Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 4

Against Stone's thesis of consensual cities in Mesopotamia, it could be argued that city-plans and the distribution of artefacts say little about social organisation or solidarity between neighbours. Having a common place of residence does not necessarily imply actual social interaction between rich and poor. Thus, strict hierarchy may well exist between social groups, although they live in the same neighbourhood, as it can be observed from several pre-modern cities, including Pompey, where patrician urban residences lie on the same *insulae* as humble workshops. The lack of economic or status segregation of neighbourhoods cannot alone count as indicating consensual arrangements between rich and poor.

Consensus is a difficult term. Who are agreed and to what? How is agreement reached? Stone's argument that Mesopotamian polities needed to secure their labour force through concessions and maintained social cohesion through consensual arrangements is not altogether compelling. The control of labour can take many forms, not all of them peaceful. Societies with scarce labour can solve this problem in ways such as enslavement of its own population through e.g. debt slavery. Labour can be procured in the form of chattel slaves such as prisoners of war. The concept of consensual societies is useful, however, because it highlights the processes of negotiation between different groups in society, from the ruler to local élites to the masses, and does not focus exclusively on the decisions of rulers. Whether the masses actually had a say in politics, is a matter that has to be decided in each specific case, depending on whether they were included in decision-making groups or not.

Eva von Dassow emphasises the role of "the public" in Mesopotamian cities and argues that it represents a continuum between central authorities and the community.

She suggests that “the community (ideally) constituted itself as a public to form the state and to exercise a role in its own governance”.²⁹³ In her interpretation, Jürgen Habermas’ concept of the public sphere can be applied to Mesopotamian cities, by postulating an active oral culture of discussion and decision-making not visible in the written sources.²⁹⁴ She emphasises that “the community constitutes a public that mediates between its own members and governmental authority”. She claims that it is of minor importance to her analysis who participated in this public sphere, since there are always people that do not participate.²⁹⁵

The case for a public sphere in Mesopotamian cities cannot be said to be very strong. Von Dassow has a reductionist view of public governance where anything that is not the king’s orders is interpreted as the will of the community. Further, she ignores the problem of inclusion or exclusion from the decision-making community and insists that any public sphere have their non-attendants. This is not a very convincing argument for the existence of a public sphere that represents the will of the community. Von Dassow does not take into consideration the fundamental importance of the question of inclusion in any discussion of politics from antiquity until the present: who are included in the decision-making processes? To postulate a vaguely defined public sphere does not contribute much to further the understanding of popular power in Mesopotamian cities.

Stone argues that heads of households competed for power in Mesopotamian cities. However, she does not define their relations to the rest of the citizens. Von Dassow argues that the public mediated between its own members and central authorities.

²⁹³ Von Dassow, “The public and the state in the ancient Near East,” 2012, 174-175

²⁹⁴ Von Dassow, “The public and the state in the ancient Near East,” 2012, 177-179

²⁹⁵ Von Dassow, “The public and the state in the ancient Near East,” 2012, 180

However, she does not investigate who belonged to this public. Can this be called consensual arrangements? The important question remains; consensus among whom? With regard to the existence of popular power, it is highly problematic that we do not know who participated in reaching consensus.

Rather than arguing for consensual urban societies in Mesopotamia, the structure of central authorities, local institutions, and heads of households can perhaps better be described by the concept of heterarchy, a simultaneous existence of several hierarchic orders in a society.²⁹⁶ Heterarchy is a useful concept, because it points to the multiplicity of orders in a society. As seen above (2.8), it was used by Norman Yoffee as an alternative approach to the early state model.²⁹⁷ However, it is an ambiguous term: on the one hand, it can describe an egalitarian society where people are of equal standing and authority. On the other hand, it can describe a society dominated by several competing élites. Also, heterarchy can describe relations between the members of an egalitarian council at the top of an otherwise hierarchic society. Thus, heterarchy is not the same as a wide distribution of power, and may well indicate a narrow corporate strategy, where the heads of households dominate all decision-making, or a broad élite strategy where aristocratic leaders act independently of the rest of the community. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the available evidence with a view to both inclusion and exclusion from organs of decision-making.

The concept of heterarchy can be used to describe quite different types of societies. A good example is an analysis of David B. Small's of the economy of archaic Greek *poleis*, where he uses the model of heterarchy to argue that these polities had an underdeveloped economy where élites were outside any kind of state control and

²⁹⁶ Ehrenreich, Crumley & Levy (eds.), *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*, 1995

²⁹⁷ Yoffee, *Myths of the archaic state*, 2005, 38

therefore could build up and perpetuate a solid oligarchic powerbase and an élite heterarchy.²⁹⁸ Thus, lack of integration of élites in a central hierarchy does not necessarily mean popular power.

The concept of an élite heterarchy of sorts can also be found in the analysis of Douglas North *et al.* of societies as consisting of institutions and organisations for the generation of rent. North *et al.* argue that the main problem in explaining how states work involves how powerful individuals can be credibly committed to stop fighting. Their answer is that “controlling violence depends on the structure and maintenance of relationships among powerful individuals”.²⁹⁹ A weakness with this explanation is that it does not address how powerful individuals attain power. Much as with Small’s thesis mentioned above, North *et al.* imply that compared to the élite, the rest of society is underdeveloped. The masses cannot or will not provide resistance to the rich and powerful. The élite in the model of North *et al.* appear to exist in a void. The exclusive focus on powerful individuals in an internally integrated élite ignores the society where these individuals live and the strategies for power that are simultaneously pursued by those outside the élite. Rather, society is understood as a social contract between the powerful in order to escape annihilation. Hobbes is lurking in the background.³⁰⁰

The negotiations and struggles of the commoners should not be ignored in an analysis of politics. The approach of agency and structuration makes such an inclusive analysis possible. Social contract theories as that of North *et al.* have a myopic view of society that operates with cohesion only among the élite and their cohesion is the result of

²⁹⁸ Small, “Heterarchical paths to evolution: the role of external economies,” 1995, 71-85

²⁹⁹ North, Wallis & Weingast, *Violence and social orders*, 2009, 18

³⁰⁰ Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1 chap. 13 and pt. 2 chap. 17 quoted in Sahlins, *Stone Age economics*, 171-183

their struggle to survive as an élite. The analysis does not take the rest of society into consideration. On the other hand, generalised consensual arrangements cannot be said to adequately describe the situation in ancient polities. There is plentiful evidence to social struggle and social divisions in Near Eastern as well as Greek polities.

In the following analyses of ancient polities, perspectives from the élite as well as from the masses will be included, in order to examine the totality of the social structures. Action taken in institutions of collective-decision making and broad corporate strategies for power pursued by the masses will be emphasised, in order to examine popular power. The existence of heterarchies will be explored. The aim is to get at processes of structuration that are driven by agents from outside the élite. This will be done through analyses of procedures in collective organs of decision-making that were open to all citizens as well as analyses of instances of direct action from the masses.

2.10 Conclusions

There are several approaches to the study of ancient polities. Some of the most influential theoretical approaches in the last fifty years, the neo-evolutionary approach and structural-functionalism, quite consistently ignore the role of the masses in ancient politics outside the classical world. They have contributed to reinforce the view of a fundamental divide into Eastern and Western political traditions. The neo-evolutionists emphasise institutions that maintain the stratification of society; the state is the political expression of the division between rich and poor and creates a hierarchy of rulers and ruled. This applies to Morton Fried (1967) and Elman Service (1975), as well as other scholars working from neo-evolutionist theory and its early state model. Neo-evolutionist theory explains the maintenance of this stratified social

structure as the result of coercion, but it is also in part explained by the positive effects of state structures and organised leadership for the society in question. At any rate, the picture of early states is static; the ruled are outside politics and are viewed as passive subjects (cf. 2.2).

The early state model is functionalistic in the sense that it develops because of and is maintained by its stabilising effects on society. The model is also historical-materialistic in that the early state develops as a result of inequalities in the distribution of means of production. Talcott Parsons (1949) has a slightly different functionalist approach to the state, emphasising the positive role of normative determination in preserving the state. This is a kind of structural-functionalism, in that it emphasises the effects of generalised normative constraints in the social structures on the citizens' behaviour and how this behaviour in turn preserves the state. Good institutions produce good norms that result in good citizens. A problem with this kind of explanation is that the analysis is limited to the perspective of the ruling élite of the polity, those who are in position to enforce norms for accepted behaviour through sanctions, thereby maintaining the social structure. Initiatives and actions that break with the norms sanctioned by those in power can then only be analysed as incomprehension of said norms, willful disobedience, or subversive and destructive behaviour, rather than being the expressions of the legitimate interests of those outside or below the ruling élite (cf. 2.4).

In contrast to neo-evolutionist theory or structural-functionalism, the dialectic approaches inspired by the works of Giddens (2007 [1984]) and Bourdieu (2008 [1977]) make it possible to take the entirety of society into consideration and look at the role of structuration from below and initiatives from the masses as part of the development and functioning of polities. Dialectic and discursive analyses are more enlightening and useful than neo-evolutionist or structural-functionalist approaches

because they take more agents in society into consideration and do not regard societies as bounded systems. Rather, the discursive and dialectic approach opens for the interaction of several groups and several cultures and subcultures in a polity. The strategies of power pursued by agents in their societies, including the élite and the masses, can be studied in their relative prevalence or dominance, providing a view of the entire network of strategies that contribute to the structure of polities through structuration. Society is thus studied along several axes, vertically and horizontally. The state is not viewed exclusively from an élite point of view; the role of the masses is included in the discussion of politics (cf. 2.7.1-2; 2.8-9). With this approach, political culture in ancient polities beyond that of the central institutions can be studied. In this way, Near Eastern and Greek polities can be compared beyond their formal political structures.

In this chapter, I have presented alternative models for explaining ancient polities beyond early state models or institutionally defined polities. These include consensual societies and heterarchies (2.9). Most important for the following investigation, however, will be the analysis of ancient polities from the point of view of strategies for power, especially broad corporate strategies of the masses and narrow corporate strategies of local councils of elders in order to reveal processes of social structuration initiated by agency from outside and below the central élites and their institutions (2.7-8).

3. The archaic *poleis*

3.1 Introduction

The archaic *poleis* offer a range of interesting socio-political conflicts and solutions that give valuable insights into the politics of Greek city-states. In this chapter, relations between the élite and the masses will be explored in particular. The role of popular power in archaic *poleis* will be investigated from epic and archaic poets. From these sources, political action will be explored in institutions for decision-making as well as from action in less formal settings. Emphasis will be on the dynamics between groups of the élite, the masses, and leaders who held power alone in archaic *poleis*.

I will begin my investigation of archaic *poleis* with a brief presentation of the problems concerning definitions of the *polis* as community and locality, followed by a discussion of the so-called hoplite reform and its significance for defining archaic *polis* communities (3.2). Then, I will discuss the *polis* in Homer and Hesiod, with an emphasis on institutions for decision-making and strategies for power (3.3). The analysis of the structure of archaic *poleis* and the strategies for power pursued by their citizens will focus on Athens, Sparta, Megara and Mytilene (3.4). From these *poleis*, archaic poets provide sources to how different socio-economic groups vied for power and negotiated their positions in the social fabric of their *poleis* in the archaic period. Problems concerning equality and the unity or differentiation of the civic body in archaic *poleis* will be given particular attention.

3.2 The *polis* as city-state and citizen community

The beginning of the *polis* as city-state and citizen community is generally agreed to belong in the 8th century BCE, with the rise of complex nucleated societies with institutionalised decision-making bodies throughout Greece. These societies are held to have developed out of the homesteads and village societies in the post-Mycenaean period of the Iron Age known as the Dark Age.³⁰¹ The archaic *polis* can be defined as a community as well as a town or city. However, scholars tend to emphasise social organisation rather than urban features in defining the *polis*. Archaeologists agree that the urbanisation of Greece was a slow process and not very wide-spread until the 6th century BCE. City-walls are attested quite late in Greece, after a long hiatus from the Mycenaean period to the 6th century.³⁰² This has led to a debate whether the *polis* should be called a city-state, or if it was first and foremost a community of citizens, regardless of urban features of the settlement where the citizens lived. Mogens Herman Hansen puts a *terminus ante quem* about 650 BCE for the *polis* as a community of citizens and as a city. He argues that from 650 onwards, there are written sources to the *polis* in the sense of city-state, i.e. a city that is the centre of a state with its own constitution and citizen-body. From the middle of the 7th century, archaic poets refer to *polis* both as a political community of citizens and as an urban centre.³⁰³ This is a reasonable argument that makes good sense of the available written sources for the archaic period. Archaic poets refer to their native *poleis* as cities as well as citizen-communities.³⁰⁴ However, it should be pointed out that the 7th century is rather late compared to the cities of the Homeric epics and the earliest

³⁰¹ Morris, "The early polis as city and state," 1991, 42

³⁰² Morris, "The early polis as city and state," 1991, 40; Whitley, *The archaeology of ancient Greece*, 2001, 173-174

³⁰³ Hansen, "The Hellenic *polis*," 2000, 146

³⁰⁴ Cf. Alc. 112; 426; 130b

colonies on Sicily. When did Dark Age communities become *poleis*? What can archaeology contribute to the dating of the *polis*?

After the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces, centralised settlement is attested from archaeological finds at several places in Greece in the 11th century BCE. This evidence for early centralised communities creates problems for archaeologists regarding the date of the *polis*. Anthony Snodgrass attempts to find the point in time when centralised settlements of Dark Age Greece became centres of *poleis*, admitting that it is uncertain whether archaeology can determine when a settlement may be called a *polis*: the classic example is Sparta that never had a centralised urban core, but nevertheless was called a *polis*.³⁰⁵ However, Snodgrass argues that there are indications of significant changes from the Dark Age to the archaic period: some sites in Greece had centralised settlement and walls in the 11th century BCE, but these settlements were abandoned around 700 BCE. Snodgrass suggests that the reason why these strongholds were abandoned was a new political order towards the 7th century, when the city-state and its citizen army provided security, replacing the old fortifications.³⁰⁶

Snodgrass' hypothesis fits the view of Hansen that archaic poetry indicates a date around 650 BCE for nucleated and urbanised settlements of citizen communities in Greece. I agree with this date for the urbanised *polis* and find it convincing that literary evidence as well as archaeology suggests that the *polis* as city-state and citizen community can be placed in the 7th century. However, this date is not unproblematic:

³⁰⁵ Snodgrass, "Archaeology and the study of the Greek city," 1991, 6; cf. Thuc. 1.10

³⁰⁶ Snodgrass, "Archaeology and the study of the Greek city," 1991, 9

there were *poleis* in Sicily that were reputedly founded in the 8th century.³⁰⁷ It is hotly debated whether these *poleis* were planned settlements from the start, established by organised expeditions dispatched by their home *poleis* and led by an official founder, known as the *oikist*, or represent the results of settlements by improvised ventures.³⁰⁸ However, the exact date of the founding of these *poleis* and the establishment of their urban features do not concern the present discussion of the politics of archaic *poleis*. Suffice it to say that in the course of the 7th century, *poleis* appear to have become city-states with urban features throughout Greece and to become recognized as such in the use of the word *polis* in the sense of citizen-state and city-state.

The rather late dating at 650 BCE might seem strange compared to the conventional dating of epic literature, the 8th century, and the presence of fortified cities that are called *poleis* in the *Iliad*. Does this mean that the epics are pure fantasy, irrelevant for the study of archaic Greece? As will be discussed below (3.3), there are good reasons for including the epics in a discussion of the archaic *polis*. As will be seen, the most important communal institution of the *polis*, the *agora*, is present in the society of the Homeric epics. At any rate, any dating of the *polis* should allow for a development over time from isolated homesteads and small hamlets into city-states. More importantly for the present discussion, as will be argued, is that the social struggles typical of the archaic *poleis* can be seen in epic literature (3.3.1). I turn now to the typical institutions of the archaic *polis* and the main social divisions of archaic *polis* societies.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Thuc. 6.3-6

³⁰⁸ Improvised ventures: Wilson, "The nature of Greek overseas settlement in the archaic period," 1997, 206; Osborne, "Early Greek colonization?" 1998, 260-261. Planned expeditions: Malkin, *Religion and colonization in ancient Greece*, 1987, 183-186; Snodgrass, "The nature and standing of the early western colonies," 2004, 9

The town square, *agora*, is first attested archaeologically as part of the planned layout of a Greek settlement at the colony Megara Hyblaea in the 7th century BCE. No equally clear evidence for urban planning has been found for such an early period in mainland Greece.³⁰⁹ The development of a formally planned *agora* was an important part of the establishment of *poleis* as urbanised citizen communities. The main political centre of any *polis* was the *agora*. It was a demarcated public place where meetings were held and official business was carried out. The *polis* can be said to be centred on its *agora*. However, the public nature and mass appeal of such an open political space was countered by the private symposia, the drinking clubs of the élite. These meetings had connotations of debauchery, luxury and secrecy. Oswyn Murray points out that the symposia had a certain cosmopolitan flair, as the place to receive guest friends from abroad.³¹⁰ The private gatherings of the élite could also be suspected of having a political nature as hotbeds for conspiracy. The *symposion* is therefore a contrast to the *agora*, and the two institutions, the one private and élite, the other public and egalitarian, are good illustrations of the conflicting worlds of the few and the masses in archaic *poleis*. As will be seen from the poetry of Alkaios and Theognis (3.4.4; 3.4.5), the symposia were an important part of aristocratic ideology. Thus, from the earliest attestations to their social fabric, archaic *poleis* were characterised by public assemblies as well as restricted gatherings. The élite were not confined to symposia, however. More importantly, several archaic *poleis* were ruled by councils where only the élite had access. The dynamics of council and assembly were important in the social struggles in archaic *poleis*. The dominance of the council over the assembly is also evident in epic poetry, as will be argued below (3.3.1).

³⁰⁹ Snodgrass, "Archaeology and the study of the Greek city," 1991, 10-11

³¹⁰ Murray, "Nestor's cup and the origins of the Greek symposion," 1994, 47-54

In the archaic *poleis*, the masses and the élite have their separate spheres, but there are dynamic relations between the rich and the poor. In some *poleis*, the assembly attained a superior position. However, there is a tendency with classical scholars to downplay these dynamics and argue that *polis* societies were fundamentally egalitarian (cf. 1.5.2). Underpinning this view is the theory of the so-called hoplite reform, which I will discuss in the following.

According to the theory of a hoplite reform, the *polis* community is first and foremost defined through the citizen army of hoplites. Hoplites, soldiers with heavy equipment including shield and spears, are traceable from finds in burials from the 8th century. Hoplites provided their own equipment and thus only farmers with a certain amount of property could qualify for participation. Hoplite equipment has been claimed as the best *a posteriori* indication for the *polis*.³¹¹ An army of hoplites is regarded as essential for the development of the *polis*.³¹² The so-called hoplite reform is frequently evoked to argue that Greek *poleis* were fundamentally egalitarian citizen-collectives where only those who contributed to defending the *polis* had a part in its politics.³¹³ As I will argue in the following, the emphasis on hoplites as fundamental to Greek city-state politics gives a false impression of the *polis* as an egalitarian citizen community of soldiers. The idea of a close correlation between military prowess and political participation stands in the way of a proper analysis of the dynamics of power in archaic *poleis* between rich and poor citizens, the élite and the masses.

³¹¹ Snodgrass, "Archaeology and the study of the Greek city," 1991, 19

³¹² Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 32

³¹³ Nilsson, "The introduction of hoplite tactics at Rome," 1929, 1-11; Detienne, "La phalange," 1968, 119-142; Hammond, *The city in the ancient world*, 1972, 192-193; Finley, *Politics in the ancient world*, 1983, 53; Polignac, *Cults, territory and the origins of the Greek city-state*, 1995, 58; Bleicken, *Die athenische Demokratie*, 1995, 570; Osborne, *Greece in the making*, 1996, 176; Fantalkin, "Identity in the making," 2006, 204

The theory of a hoplite reform involves a change from heroic warfare of individual warriors, as seen in the Homeric epics, to a style of fighting where the citizens defended the city and their land as hoplites with mass tactics, the phalanx. In the phalanx, the fighters stood on line and covered each their neighbour with their shields. This is interpreted as the very image of the new citizen communities in Greece in the 7th century. To Max Weber, the *polis* was originally a warrior's guild.³¹⁴ If this was correct, however, it should be possible to establish correlating dates for the hoplites and the *poleis* they defended, either archaeologically or from texts. This correlation is not easily established. Snodgrass points out that there is no archaeological confirmation of a hoplite reform from finds of equipment: rather, the development of the hoplite panoply was a piecemeal process.³¹⁵ This may seem self-evident, but the floating date of the hoplite reform is quite significant: if the introduction of hoplite equipment cannot be dated, the claim that hoplites promoted the establishment of *poleis* as citizen communities cannot be established archaeologically.

Chronology is also problematic regarding the emergence of phalanx tactics as an alternative to the heroic fighting of epic poetry. Joachim Latacz has demonstrated that tactics quite close to that of the phalanx are found in Homer.³¹⁶ If the establishment of the *polis* as a citizen community is regarded as a departure from the aristocratic world of the Homeric heroes, the *basileis*, the presence of phalanx tactics in the 8th century world of Homer makes it difficult to argue that the introduction of the phalanx was

³¹⁴ Weber, *The city*, 1966 [1921], 220

³¹⁵ Snodgrass, "The hoplite reform and history," 1965, 110

³¹⁶ Latacz, *Kampfparanäse*, 1977, 66-67

important for the establishment of a new political order of a citizen community by the middle of the 7th century.

Recently, scholars have expressed their doubts concerning correlations between the emergence of hoplites and a specific Greek form of city-state with broad citizen participation in politics. Peter Krentz argues that no definite military reform can be established archaeologically and therefore, no hoplite-driven political reforms can be argued for the archaic period. Rather, Krentz points out that hoplites must be regarded as a stable feature of Greek communities, and not the result of military reform.³¹⁷ This view is also argued by Kurt A. Raaflaub, who assigns land-owning farmers an important place in the military and political structure of the archaic period, without assuming that the hoplites are indicative of a new egalitarian collective of citizens.³¹⁸ I agree with these assessments. The idea that the *polis* was an egalitarian community of warriors that emerged in the 7th century cannot be maintained. The correlation between shields, spears, tactics, and the *polis* as a citizen community is doubtful. This means that the *polis* should not be regarded as primarily a community of equal, self-owning farmer hoplites. Rather, archaic *poleis* were city-states with a composite community of citizens, rich and poor, with complex dynamics of strategies for power. The archaic *poleis* were not egalitarian guilds of warriors, but they were not early states with insuperable divisions between the élite and the masses, either (cf. 2.2). This is a widely debated question, however, and I will return to it further on in this chapter: problems concerning supposed egalitarian relations between warriors in the Homeric epics and the social structure of the archaic *polis* will be discussed below (3.3.1). The role of hoplites in the reforms of Solon and Kleisthenes will be discussed in sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 respectively.

³¹⁷ Krentz, "Warfare and hoplites," 2007, 79-80

³¹⁸ Raaflaub, "Soldiers, citizens, and the evolution of the early Greek *polis*," 1997, 57

To conclude this section, it should be made clear that there is no such thing as *the* archaic Greek *polis*; there were great differences between them. Some general remarks on the archaic Greek *polis* can be made, however. The *polis* can be said to be attested as a political community and city-state from lyric and elegiac poetry of the 7th century BCE. Urban features including an *agora* and public sanctuaries are attested from the same period onwards. In archaic *poleis*, the citizen community had internal divisions between different socio-economic groups. There were collective organs of decision-making such as the assembly, but there were also more restricted councils, and the relations of power between these institutions could vary significantly between *poleis* and in each *polis* over time. The dynamics between the socio-economic groups and the broad or narrow collective decision-making bodies of archaic Greek *poleis* will be explored from the evidence provided by archaic poets in section 3.4 below. As will be argued, the Homeric epics were an important part of the ideology of élite social groups in archaic *poleis*. I now turn to the epic evidence, predominantly the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, in order to investigate the earliest written evidence to the dynamics of archaic *poleis*.

3.3 The *polis* in Homer and Hesiod

It is a commonly held view among scholars that the beginnings of *polis* society can be found in the Homeric epics.³¹⁹ The transition from the societies of the epic world to the historical Greek *poleis* is difficult to grasp, however, and has been interpreted in several ways. Moses Finley argues that the epics were written down at the end of the

³¹⁹ Morris, "Use and abuse of Homer", 1986, 101-104; Raaflaub, "Homer to Solon: the rise of the polis," 1993, 46-59; Hansen "The Hellenic *polis*," 2000, 146-147

Dark Age, in a period when “a new civilization was in embryo”.³²⁰ In his analysis, the Homeric world “fits neither the Bronze Age nor the city-state world which was to come. If it is to be placed in time [...] the most likely centuries seem to be the tenth and ninth”.³²¹ However, most scholars agree today that the Homeric epics were composed in the 8th century. In the interpretation of Ian Morris, the increase in simple and uniform graves in Greece around 750, accompanied by the establishment of common sanctuaries, and the advent of writing, all suggest a new reality in the archaic period, a reality that corresponds in time with Homer.³²² Morris suggests that the Homeric epics should be analysed as ideological tools for the élite in the social upheavals surrounding the birth of the *polis* in the 8th century.³²³ Kurt A. Raaflaub, on the other hand, is convinced that Homeric society is more than a *polis* in embryo and is a predecessor of the historical *polis*.³²⁴ In his analysis of Homeric society, he emphasises that the constituent elements of the *polis* can all be found in Homer, “albeit in an undeveloped form” and that the *polis* has a central place in the society of the poems.³²⁵ A similar argument has been offered by Fritz Gschnitzer, who argues that because the Cyclopes are described in the *Odyssey* as lacking laws and councils, there had to be *poieis* in the Homeric world. He claims that “mit diesen Versen hat uns das Epos die Frage, ob bei den Griechen der homerischen Zeit Staat und Recht schon ausgebildet waren, selbst beantwortet”.³²⁶ However, laws and councils alone do not necessarily indicate a *polis* in the sense of a city-state. It should be possible to be

³²⁰ Finley: *The world of Odysseus*, 1974 [1965], xv

³²¹ Finley: *The world of Odysseus*, 1974 [1965], 43

³²² Morris, “Homer and the Iron Age,” 1997, 545-548

³²³ Morris, “The use and abuse of Homer,” 1986, 128-129

³²⁴ Raaflaub, “From Homer to Solon: the rise of the polis”, 1993, 59; Raaflaub, “Homeric society,” 1997, 629

³²⁵ Raaflaub, “Homeric society,” 1997, 629

³²⁶ Gschnitzer, “Zur homerischen Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung,” 2001 [1991], 158-159

more precise regarding what exactly is historical in Homer, for this line of thought to be convincing. This, however, does not seem to be the case. At any rate, in order to discuss the use of epics as sources of élite ideology in archaic Greece, the reality and fantasy of the epic world will be discussed in the following.

The relations between epic society and the *polis* are problematic. Epic society is impossible to place securely in any historical period and is clearly heterogenic. Scholars explain the fantastic or archaising elements in the epics, in particular the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as conscious efforts by the poet to provide an “epic distance” between his contemporary Greece and the time of the heroes.³²⁷ Raaflaub argues that “the social background of heroic poetry needed to be modern enough to be understandable, but archaic enough to be believable”.³²⁸ However, the sifting of fantastic from real elements in the epics is a rather arbitrary exercise. A case in point is the presence of kings in Homer. Were there kings in Greece in the archaic period? Scholars doubt this.³²⁹ Sarah Morris points out that kings who actually rule their communities are not attested from early Greece.³³⁰ Rather, she argues that the dynasties of local kings of the Dark Age into the archaic period can be explained as deliberate fictions made by local élites, perhaps under the influence of neighbouring royal traditions from Lydia, Egypt or Persia. Stories of ancient kings do not warrant that early Greek communities were ruled by kings.³³¹ Attempts have been made to explain kings in Homeric society as leaders in a kind of proto-*polis*. The *basileis* are

³²⁷ Snodgrass, “An historical Homeric society?” 1974, 118, 121-125; Morris, “The use and abuse of Homer,” 1986, 127-129; Dalby, “The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and their audiences,” 1995, 271, 276-278

³²⁸ Raaflaub, “Homeric society,” 1997, 628

³²⁹ Drews, *Basileus*, 1983, 116-131; Osborne, *Greece in the making*, 1996, 37; Hall, *A history of the archaic Greek world*, 2007, 120-127

³³⁰ S. Morris, “Imaginary kings: alternatives to monarchy in early Greece,” 2003, 9

³³¹ S. Morris, “Imaginary kings: alternatives to monarchy in early Greece,” 2003, 11

interpreted not as rulers of kingdoms, but as local big men, community leaders known from anthropological literature whose power was based on the giving of gifts.³³² Walter Donlan also emphasises the non-state nature of Homeric society. He analyses the *basileis* as leaders of households that “enlarged their spheres of influence by recruiting non-local supporters”.³³³ I agree to Sarah Morris’ assessment of the historical position of kingship in archaic Greece and would rather see the presence of kings in Homer as fiction than preserved fact. The alternative explanations of leadership in epic society offered by Qviller and Donlan do not establish that there were kings or kingly figures ruling communities in Iron Age Greece. Although anthropological parallels to Homeric kings can be found, this does not strengthen the claim that there was an historical Homeric society ruled by kings. Informal or charismatic leadership does not warrant royalty. Rather, as will be discussed below (3.4), archaic Greek communities appear to have been led by groups of leaders, not sovereign kings.

Scholars have pointed out that the values of the Homeric world are difficult to reconcile with a consistent system of social values that one would expect in a functioning society. The virtues of epic society appear split: aristocratic ideals of personal excellence clash with egalitarian values of community and group solidarity. This is well illustrated by the hero Achilles, who sulks by the ships to the downfall of his fellow Greeks, for the sake of personal honour. This has been observed by several scholars. Arthur W. H. Adkins points out that the distribution of prizes at the funeral games of Patroklos is a particularly clear example of the “tangle of values” in Homer: prizes are awarded according to virtue (*aretē*) as well as for prowess.³³⁴ He argues

³³² Qviller, “The dynamics of Homeric society,” 1981, 117-127

³³³ Donlan, “The pre-state community in Greece,” 1989, 24

³³⁴ Adkins, *Merit and responsibility – a study in Greek values*, 1960, 56

that these conflicting values can be taken as indication of social changes in Greece at the time of the recording of the epics.³³⁵ However, the argument of changing values is difficult to accept, because it cannot be established what was changing into what and when. Margalit Finkelberg points out that the contrast between competitive and co-operative values in Homer illustrates the difficulties of assigning the epic world to one specific historical period.³³⁶ This is an important observation. The explanation of inconsistencies in the Homeric epics as due to the transitional nature of the society of the epics is methodologically dubious. It works on the premise of “Homeric society” as a primitive or pre-political stage in Greek history. As Raymond Westbrook points, the transitional stage model poses the problem of exactly when to place these stages in the course of Greek history.³³⁷ I agree that the Homeric epics can be used as sources to ideologies of the archaic period, but it is dangerous to base a reconstruction of changes in archaic Greek societies on interpretations of the epics alone.

The political structure of Homeric society appears to be halfway between myth and reality. The kings are divine and therefore to be obeyed without question. However, several of the institutions typical of the *polis*, including councils and assemblies, are found in the epics. As Malcolm Schofield points out, eloquence in council is as much a virtue of the heroes as prowess in battle.³³⁸ However, it is obvious that the assemblies and councils of the heroes are a far cry from anything that can be called citizen rule. Finley remarks that the emphasis on eloquence in council among the heroes squares badly with the actual advice they give. He argues that their role as advisers and speakers in the assembly corresponds to their social status and not to

³³⁵ Adkins, *Merit and responsibility – a study in Greek values*, 1960, 79

³³⁶ Finkelberg, “*Timē* and *aretē* in Homer,” 1998, 26-27

³³⁷ Westbrook, “The trial scene in the *Iliad*,” 1992, 68

³³⁸ Schofield, “*Eubolia* in the *Iliad*,” 1986, 9

particular skills at debate.³³⁹ This is a very useful observation, because it places the epic world not as an early historical level of Greek political developments towards the classical *polis*, but as the expression of the values and ideology of an élite, the aristocrats of archaic *poleis*, forming one side of a contemporary whole rather than an early stage of a teleological process.

Although an historical Homeric society cannot be established, the time of Homer, conventionally dated to the 8th century, was a turning point for Greek communities. Archaeologists argue that the increase of finds, especially graves, from the Late Geometric period suggests a major population increase in Greek communities. Anthony Snodgrass dubbed the archaic period the “age of experiment”, because of the dramatic changes in the archaeological record, including the rise of centralised settlements.³⁴⁰ However, as was discussed above (3.2), the *polis* as a city-state and citizen community is not securely attested before the 7th century. This leaves a gap between the epics and the historical *polis* of about a hundred years. It is not possible to reconcile the different interpretations of epic society or decide which historical period the epics represent. As will be seen (3.3.2), this also applies to Hesiod: it is not likely that his epics give a first-hand account of the life of a peasant in the 8th century. Therefore, I suggest that rather than being regarded as a forerunner of the *polis*, epic society should be placed in the realm of archaic élite ideologies, either of the aristocracy, as in Homer, or of the self-owning leisured farmer, as in Hesiod. These ideologies pervaded the period of *polis* establishment and Greek expansion into the Mediterranean in the archaic period, from the 8th to the 5th century.

³³⁹ Finley, *The world of Odysseus*, 1974 [1965], 122-123

³⁴⁰ Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece: the age of experiment*, 1980

In the following, I will discuss the political structure and dynamics of Homeric society as it is described in the epics and set this in relation to élite ideology of the archaic period. What were the relations between the Homeric heroes and the rank and file of the army?

3.3.1 Homeric politics: Odysseus and Thersites

As discussed above (3.3), it is a moot point when and where to place the political and judiciary institutions of the Homeric epics. What the epics do tell about political organisation is that the institutions of the Homeric world were rather similar in outline to those known from archaic and classical *poleis*. As mentioned already, the society of Cyclopes is described as uncivilised, having neither laws nor assemblies.³⁴¹ This must mean that there were societies with laws and assemblies in the time of Homer. Assemblies, councils, and magistrates have a place in the communities in the epics, and the kings are part of these institutions. Some settlements are urbanised, Troy being an obvious example, with institutions for collective decision-making conducting their sessions in urban contexts.³⁴² The political institutions of epic appear as amalgams with no exact historical model. Therefore, the connection between these institutions and those of historic *poleis* will not be discussed further. Rather, in the following, what will be investigated are the epics as sources to political ideologies in the archaic period. I will first investigate the so-called Thersites episode of the *Iliad* (2.53-277) as an example of aristocratic values, before I look at the attitudes to power that can be found in the epics of Hesiod, a rather different world from that of Homer (3.3.2).

³⁴¹ *Od.* 9.112

³⁴² *Il.* 2.788-789

An important aspect of the political culture in the Homeric epics is the consistent dichotomy of the heroes and the host, between the *basileis* and the *laoi*. The *basileus* leads and the *laoi* follows, and the *laoi* is never acting independently of the *basileus*. Johannes Haubold points out that “the single agent has to keep the people safe”.³⁴³ This is a good observation. The people are constantly in an inferior position. Their leaders, the nobility, belong to a different class of beings. There are isolated statements in Homer where the heroes claim that their power and prestige comes from the people and that they owe them to fight for their protection.³⁴⁴ Fritz Gschnitzer finds evidence that the people owned the land the *basileis* ruled over and had granted them their *geras*, their privileged place in society.³⁴⁵ However, it must be pointed out that any respect for or gratitude towards the masses is seldom translated into practice. The heroes are constantly defined as over and above any of the rank and file in deed or counsel. As will be discussed in the following, relations of power between the hero and the multitude is quite consistent with elite sentiments towards the masses in the archaic period. The emphasis in Homer on egalitarian relations between the *basileis* and the inferiority of the *laoi* points towards the differentiation of status in archaic *poleis* between the elite and the masses. The differences in status between the *basileis* and the *laoi* can be seen in the Second Song of the *Iliad*, when Agamemnon wishes to test the resolve of the Achaeans and Odysseus chastises the commoner Thersites (*Il.2.53-277*). This example will be examined in detail in the following.

The situation leading up to the Thersites episode is a crisis in the Achaean camp. Agamemnon gathers the foremost heroes to a council (*boulē*) to tell them about a recent dream of his: the fall of Troy is imminent and he will be victorious that very

³⁴³ Haubold, *Homer's people*, 2000, 28

³⁴⁴ E.g. *Il.* 17.248-255

³⁴⁵ Gschnitzer, “König, Rat und Volk bei Homer,” 2001 [1980], 184-185

day. He has full confidence that this is a true omen, but decides to test the Achaeans, by encouraging them to break the siege and go home. Then, the other *basileis* are supposed to talk them out of fleeing.³⁴⁶ At the summons, the Achaean host rushes to the *agora*. Heralds strive to silence the noisy *agora* and make it listen to the *basileis*.³⁴⁷ The crowd finally falls silent, and Agamemnon rises to speak wielding a sceptre. He claims Zeus has told him they will not be able to take Troy after all.³⁴⁸ Their task being futile, they might as well go home. The *laoi* are more than willing to do so. The entire assembly breaks up and the host storms down to the ships to leave Troy for good. According to the plan of Agamemnon and the *basileis*, the *basileis* try to stop them, to no avail, until Athena inspires Odysseus to take the sceptre of Agamemnon and go rally the troops. When Odysseus meets any *basileus* or excellent man, he tries to stop him with words, by arguing how unworthy it is for such a man to be afraid, saying that “all do not know the scheme of Agamemnon; it was a scam to test your loyalty, and who knows how he will punish the Achaeans for their cowardice”.³⁴⁹ However, when Odysseus meets a commoner, he hits him with the sceptre and rebukes him, bidding him to shut up and listen to his betters, saying “the commoner is nobody in battle or in council; indeed not all can rule the Achaeans. There is no good in the rule of many (*polykoiraniē*). There must be one ruler, one king, to whom Zeus gave the sovereignty”.³⁵⁰ At last the *laoi* return noisily to the *agora*, like the waves of the sea.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ *Il.* 2.53-83

³⁴⁷ *Il.* 2.95-98

³⁴⁸ *Il.* 2.86-115

³⁴⁹ *Il.* 2.188-197

³⁵⁰ *Il.* 2.198-205

³⁵¹ *Il.* 2.207-9

The dichotomy between *basileis* and *laoi* is brought to the fore in this episode, as Odysseus claims that the commoners are of no worth at all in council or battle, whereas the *basileis* rule by the will of Zeus. The council of the heroes has devised a stratagem to test the *laoi*, who have no knowledge of what goes on in the council. This suggests a broad élite strategy, where an exclusive, but internally egalitarian decision-making group hides its decision-making processes and keeps other groups, including the majority of the people, out of the process. Odysseus calls the masses to silence by pointing to their inferiority, not to the egalitarian relations between the fighters. Rational argument and kind words are reserved for those Odysseus considers worthy, whereas the masses are treated like animals.

At the word of Odysseus, the assembly falls silent, except for one man, Thersites, who clamours and shouts abuse at the *basileis*. He is described as a notorious slanderer, who argues with the *basileis* in rude language and tries to make the Achaeans laugh with his irreverent talk.³⁵² He is further described as the ugliest man of the entire host who went to Troy, a bandy-legged, hunchbacked pinhead whose only talent is to badmouth his betters.³⁵³ Thersites reviles king Agamemnon and accuses him of wishing to continue the war for the sake of personal gain. He further mocks the Achaeans, calling them weaklings and women for not abandoning the greedy Agamemnon, arguing that the king then would see whether the common soldiery was useful or not. Finally, he calls Achilles a phlegmatic coward for not killing Agamemnon when he took away his prize, the girl Briseis.³⁵⁴ Odysseus brings an end to Thersites' tirade by making it known that if he ever hears him hurling such abuse again he will strip him of his clothing and cane him soundly, whereupon he treats him

³⁵² *Il.* 2.211-216

³⁵³ *Il.* 2.216-220

³⁵⁴ *Il.* 2.221-242

to a few blows with the sceptre. The unhappy Thersites falls silent and weeps, whereat the rest of the Achaeans laugh heartily, calling this the best of all the feats of Odysseus.³⁵⁵

The clash between the commoner Thersites and the *basileus* Odysseus is a fine illustration of the differences in rank and status and their implication for public participation in the assemblies in the Homeric world. Clearly, there is a gulf between the leaders of the army and the rest. Marcel Detienne argues that the Homeric heroes were formally equal and that the middle, *to meson*, was an important principle in dividing booty and in speaking to the assembly.³⁵⁶ In his interpretation, the social group of this egalitarian warrior class became the *polis* and their reciprocal relations are found again in the *agora* of Greek *poleis*.³⁵⁷ As seen in the Thersites-episode, however, commoners were excluded from the circle of peers, although they evidently belonged to the group of fighting men. Some scholars argue that Thersites is an egregious character. Kurt A. Raaflaub claims that the Thersites-episode does not indicate that the *basileis* were superior to the *laoi*, but is an example of bad behaviour from the rank and file.³⁵⁸ This interpretation overlooks the ideological bias of Homer, however: Thersites is described as insolent and ugly exactly to highlight his inferiority to the *basileis* and to bring home the message of the divine right to rule for the *basileis* over the *laoi* and by extension, the archaic aristocracy, over the commoners. What does this tell us about the social structure of the archaic *polis*? It seems evident that only a small minority could call themselves equals, i.e. the aristocrats (cf. 1.5.2;

³⁵⁵ *Il.* 2.244-277

³⁵⁶ Detienne, *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, 1973, 83-89

³⁵⁷ Detienne, *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, 1973, 95-97

³⁵⁸ Raaflaub, "Athenian and Spartan *Eunomia*," 2006, 394

1.5.2). Thus, popular power in the *polis* cannot plausibly be claimed to originate in this closed circle of élite members.

Detienne's analysis of the beginnings of the *polis* does not explain the transition from a limited circle of heroes to a supposedly broadly defined egalitarian civic body. In the Thersites-episode, aristocratic arrogance is more evident than anything else and the community is completely dominated by the heroes. This reveals a fundamental difficulty in supposing egalitarian relations as the basis for *polis* society. However, the episode is not unequivocal and is open to different interpretations. It can be interpreted as an élite assertion of superiority and a criticism of popular involvement in decision-making. It can also be read as a protest against arrogant leaders. Arnaldo Momigliano points out that the intervention of Thersites is "clearly considered scandalous (yet it does happen)".³⁵⁹ Kurt A. Raaflaub interprets the harangue of Thersites as an expression of general dissatisfaction with kings or big men.³⁶⁰ Criticism of the leaders is no doubt an important aspect of what Thersites is saying, but the reaction to his harangue is just as interesting and appears as the main focus in the *Iliad's* narration of the episode: nobody defends Thersites' criticism and Odysseus can punish him at will. Thus, seeing Thersites as somehow a popular voice against the élite is to read modern notions of freedom of speech into the episode. Rather, this episode appears designed to highlight the contrast between the heroes and the host, and by extension, the archaic élite and the masses. However, the Thersites-episode can be read in different ways: the criticism against the *basileis* is quite explicit and can be plausibly argued to express feelings harboured by many of the rank and file of archaic Greek societies.

³⁵⁹ Momigliano, "Freedom of speech in antiquity," 1973, 257

³⁶⁰ Raaflaub, "Homer and the beginning of political thought," 2004 [1988], 30

The evidence from the Thersites-episode is ambiguous: Thersites is described as hideously ugly, and is hardly an ideal to anyone, yet, he does gainsay the *basileis*. Likewise, the assertion that everyone supported Odysseus is perhaps exaggerated. Indeed, the bullying necessary to underpin the respect for the *basileis* may indicate that their status was not secure. The irreverent speech of Thersites can be said to represent a broad corporate strategy for power against the dominance of the *basileis*, a strategy for popular power, shared among the *laoi*: Thersites does not only say “to hell with the war”, he points out how the war benefits the powerful and harms the commoners. Conversely, the humiliating corporal punishment meted out by Odysseus reveals a broad élite strategy of marking off a distinction between the circle of *basileis* and good men on the one hand and the masses on the other. In the ideology that informs this strategy for power, the *basileis* are supposed to do the talking, they are the best in council and in battle, whereas the rest should hold their peace and do as they are told. The rule of many is a bad thing, whereas the rule of one king is the will of the gods. As will be discussed further below (3.4.4; 3.4.5), this fundamental difference between the élite and the masses can be found in some of the archaic poets. First, however, the political ideology of Hesiod will be investigated.

3.3.2 Hesiod “the peasant”

The other great epic poet of the 8th century, Hesiod, is discussed here as further evidence to attitudes to power and relations between social groups in archaic Greece. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod describes himself as a shepherd herding sheep on Mount Helicon when the Muses gave him inspiration for poetry.³⁶¹ In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod gives advice to farmers amid ethical observations useful for life in what he calls the age of the race of iron, when all mankind must work hard for survival. It is a

³⁶¹ Hes. *Theog.* 22-25

time of lies and deceit, when the strong oppresses the weak.³⁶² Hesiod complains that gift-devouring *basileis* have cheated him of his rightful inheritance, bribed by his own brother, Perses. The *basileis* are judges, but they trample justice underfoot.³⁶³ He warns that *Dike*, personified justice, is protected by Zeus and will punish those who abuse their power.³⁶⁴ Hesiod gives advice to keep good relations with one's neighbour; to invite him often and help him in whatever way one can, so that he may repay the favour should one need it.³⁶⁵

Hesiod appears as a hard-working farmer, always concerned that hunger and poverty may strike the unprepared. His concern for justice pervades the *Works and Days*, and he presents himself as the victim of injustice. The two great adversaries in his world are his lazy spendthrift brother Perses and the gift-devouring judges that have no respect for justice. He presents himself as a shepherd and a peasant. Is Hesiod a source to sentiments held by people outside the élite, even peasant attitudes? The sentiments expressed in the *Works and Days* have been interpreted as evidence for an egalitarian ethos between members of the archaic *polis* (cf. 1.5.2). Ian Morris argues that Hesiod's race of iron were peasants with a local interest, uninterested in foreign luxury, travel, or strange lands. After the race of heroes, "the burdens of Zeus inflicted on the race of iron isolated them from the past and from the wider world".³⁶⁶ In Morris' interpretation, this new outlook on life can be set in relation to "city-states dominated by internally egalitarian male citizen elites defined by descent and gender but not by wealth, and controlling excluded and fragmented groups of women and

³⁶² Hes. *Op.* 174-212

³⁶³ Hes. *Op.* 213-247

³⁶⁴ Hes. *Op.* 248-297

³⁶⁵ Hes. *Op.* 342-360

³⁶⁶ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 237-238

slaves”. He argues that “these citizens also turned their backs on the heroic past and the oriental world, but now from a sense of superiority. A narrower elite of wealth, birth, and education claimed to rise above these associations of peasants. Their ability to manipulate Lydian culture and act like heroes and even gods constituted, in their own eyes, proof of this”.³⁶⁷

Interpreting Hesiod as a spokesman for the peasants is problematic. Part of the problem lies in the nature of the source material itself, the epics. It seems highly unlikely that a peasant of the archaic period composed the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. Hesiod may have suffered injustice at the hands of judges and he may have placed much value on hard work and honesty, but that does not make him a peasant. That he composed the poems in a peasant persona is an entirely different matter, but to accept at face value his claim to be a shepherd on Mount Helicon seems rather credulous. Even if he was a person with the resources to compose two epic poems, and thus no peasant, he may be argued to voice the concerns of the peasants of his community. However, this does not make him a source to peasant attitudes, but a source to the attitudes of a wealthy landowner concerned for the poor.

Scholars have interpreted Hesiod quite differently from Morris. Erich Kistler does not accept Morris’ interpretation of peasant attitudes in Hesiod. He argues that Hesiod’s *dike* is not a concern for equality between peasants, but an expression of “vertikale Solidarität” between some members of archaic élites and the poor.³⁶⁸ In his interpretation, the advice to work hard and spend little points to the ideal of being

³⁶⁷ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 238

³⁶⁸ Kistler, “”Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ “Elitist-“ versus “Middling-Ideology”?”, 2004, 162

metrios as opposed to committing *hybris*.³⁶⁹ Kistler argues that to Hesiod, Zeus is protector of justice: justice in the sense of “korrekativer Gerechtigkeit,” the kind of justice that should prevail between rich and poor.³⁷⁰

I agree with Kistler’s point that Hesiod cannot be interpreted as a peasant or spokesman of the underprivileged. His concerns can be seen as those of a member of the *élite* directed against other, less scrupulous members of the *élite*, rather than a call for justice coming from the oppressed. Hesiod’s concerns are not for the *thetes*, the landless rural poor, but for the self-owning farmer. He can be interpreted as a spokesman for the values of a narrow corporate strategy of egalitarian relations among local landowners. However, Hesiod should not be taken as evidence for a broad corporate strategy of mass empowerment that included the poor. His appeals to *Dike* appear as a reaction to the hybriatic behaviour of other members of the landowning group and abuse of power to secure the upper hand against other landowners, including exploitation of the weak and destitute.

3.3.3 Social groups in epic poems, their values and their strategies

The values of the Homeric epics are those of the *élite*. The *basileis* are in power, simply because Zeus wants it so. They are better than everybody else and their power is not challenged. The Thersites-episode rather emphasises the *élite* perspective than it is tempering it: Thersites is no plausible challenger to the rule of Odysseus or the other *basileis*. Ideological values influenced the strategies of power available to the *basileis* as well as to the *laoi*. Although we hear little about the values and

³⁶⁹ Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ “Elitist-“ versus “Middling-Ideology”?,” 2004, 163

³⁷⁰ Kistler, “Kampf der Mentalitäten”: Ian Morris’ “Elitist-“ versus “Middling-Ideology”?,” 2004, 164

expectations of the *laoi*, it is evident that they obeyed their *basileis* and accepted this as a norm, at least as far as we can trust the *Iliad*. But of course, the whole narrative is from the perspective of the élite, and therefore, it cannot be claimed that e.g. the other fighters' laughing at Thersites' chastisement is a source to the thoughts and values of the rank and file. The strategies for power pursued by the *basileis* are that of a broad élite: it is a limited body of internally equal *basileis*, with strict demarcations against inferiors. They make decisions without the knowledge of the *laoi* and even devise stratagems to test them in secret. In a *polis*, such a group would be an aristocracy, not an oligarchy. This is because the status of the *basileis* is not from their possessions of land or livestock, but from their honour and their divine pedigree. Their social position is inherited and no outsider can attain that status no matter how much land he owns or possessions he might amass. The *basileis* use their international contacts to establish networks of men of equal status. This is rather different from the local world of Hesiod.

Hesiod's values appear as those of a concerned farmer, himself well enough off, but aware of the dangers of *hybris* and the destructive powers of greed and injustice. The strategy for power available to the subsistence farmers of his community is solidarity and mutual help between landowners. This is a narrow corporate strategy: Hesiod does not advise to give to the needy, but to give to those who can help in their turn. This community of farmers would correspond to an oligarchy, in that ownership of land is an important criterion for being a full member. However, power in Hesiod's society is not in the hands of the local farming community as a collective, but with the *basileis*. They appear as a broad élite and make decisions through deceit, influenced by bribes.

The élite values of the Homeric aristocracy and the views of a moderately well-off farmer found in Hesiod can be found again in the archaic poets that I will discuss in

the following. They form part of the world of attitudes that contributed to shaping the political structures of the archaic *poleis* of the mid-7th century. As will be seen, the perspectives of the archaic poets were diverse and sometimes complex. Attitudes to wealth, status, and justice are important for the choices of strategies for power chosen by the different agents in their individual *poleis*.

3.4 Archaic *poleis* as networks of strategies

From the archaic poets that will be discussed in the following sections, the impression is that archaic *poleis* were riddled by struggles between members of the élite, whether individual families or geographically organised groups. Commoners were also involved in these struggles, most conspicuously as followers, but sometimes also with their own agenda. These struggles and how they are discussed by the archaic poets will make out the bulk of the following discussions. I will analyse four different *poleis* separately, viz. Sparta (3.4.1), Athens (3.4.2; 3.4.3), Mytilene (3.4.4) and Megara (3.4.5). What were the dynamics of power between élites and masses? What were the conditions for popular power in archaic *poleis*?

Struggles between groups and individuals in archaic *poleis* frequently escalated into civil war, *stasis*, and sometimes had the result that one man seized power and became a tyrant. It is a fairly common phenomenon of the archaic period that the masses sided with tyrants. *Stasis* and tyranny will be discussed from the archaic poets, as well as from classical sources where relevant. I will concentrate the discussion on the power struggles of the archaic period, before 500 BCE. In these struggles, the role of the masses can be studied together with élite factions and individual contenders for tyrannical power. As will be seen, groups of the élite as well as commoners, aristocrats as well as peasants, pursued strategies for power in archaic *poleis*. The

archaic *poleis* were not simply hierarchies, but structures consisting of multiple alliances and enmities that made them networks for achieving objectives, including dominance over other, competing groups.

3.4.1 Sparta: the *Great Rhetra*

The constitution of archaic Sparta is known from the so-called *Great Rhetra*, a metric oracular response from Delphi that laid down the organisation of the polity. It has come down to us as part of Plutarch's biography of Lykourgos.³⁷¹ Since Plutarch wrote in the 1st century CE about events supposedly taking place in the 8th century BCE, the biography is a late source to the archaic period. This makes it dangerous to use: the *Rhetra* itself is probably archaic, but Plutarch's interpretation certainly is not. I will include Plutarch, however, since the parts of his information relevant for the present discussion can be confirmed from the 7th century poet Tyrtaios. The *Great Rhetra* is a difficult source. Paul Cartledge states that the *Great Rhetra* is a text "over which more scholarly ink has been spilt than over any other Greek text of comparable length".³⁷² However, it contains many intriguing hints at the political structure and culture of archaic Sparta. In antiquity, Sparta's ancient constitution was held by many Greeks to be the best in the world. Who had the power in Sparta and how and to which degree were the people active in politics?

The elegiac poet Tyrtaios gives a version of the *Rhetra* and refers to a visit to Delphi.³⁷³ However, the connection between the reformer Lykourgos and the *Rhetra*

³⁷¹ Plut. *Lyc.* 6

³⁷² Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia – a regional history 1300-362 BC*, 1979, 131

³⁷³ Tyr. 4

is tenuous. Tyrtaios does not mention Lykourgos. Finley argues that this indicates a later invention of the lawgiver Lykourgos as the man behind the *Rhetra*.³⁷⁴ I agree that the figure of Lykourgos must to a large extent be considered legendary. Rather, the reference in Tyrtaios places the political structure of the *Great Rhetra* in the middle of the 7th century.³⁷⁵ However, the chronology of the *Great Rhetra* and the relation of Tyrtaios (Tyr. 4) to the text are controversial issues and will be discussed further below. In the following, I will present the evidence to the constitution of archaic Sparta from Tyrtaios and Plutarch, before discussing who participated in politics and how.

Plutarch (*Lyc.* 6) quotes the *Great Rhetra* as giving instructions to divide the people into *phylai* and *obai*. The lawgiver was to establish a council of elders (*gerousia*) counting thirty members including the *arkhagetai*. Further, there is to be gathered in assembly (*apellazein*) at a specified place outdoors from time to time to decide upon measures. The people (*damos*) are to be sovereign (*kyrios*) and have the power (*kratos*). Plutarch explains that the *phylai* and *obai* are clans and tribes, that *arkhagetai* are the two kings, and that the meetings of the assembly, *ekklesia*, take place outdoors at a specific place because the Spartans had no halls or other buildings for this purpose. Also, he explains that the people were not allowed to introduce any measures, but had the choice of ratifying or repealing measures proposed by the elders or kings, so that the people had final word. This was soon considered unwise, Plutarch explains, and therefore an addition was made to the *Rhetra*, that sessions could be interrupted by the kings or elders if measures were made crooked by the people.

³⁷⁴ Finley, *The use and abuse of history*, 1986 [1968], 161

³⁷⁵ Cf. Moore, *Aristotle and Xenophon on democracy and oligarchy*, 1975, 110

Tyrtaios (Tyr. 4) says of the Spartan constitution that two kings ruled together with the council of elders, the *gerousia*, and only these had the right to make propositions. The popular assembly could not make any propositions of its own, but were expected to discuss the propositions of the kings and the *gerousia* in a spirit of justice and honesty.

Based on these two sources, it can be plausibly suggested that the basic structure of archaic Sparta was a powerful council including the kings and a popular assembly with circumscribed powers. This constitution was praised for its wisdom by later commentators throughout antiquity, with its combination of kings, council, and assembly, completed by the later introduction of ephors, people's representatives for controlling the kings' actions.³⁷⁶ These later interpretations are problematic, however, because they appear to judge Sparta from the point of view of a dichotomy between oligarchy and democracy, categories that were defined in the classical period, thus not immediately applicable to archaic *poleis*. Instead, the present discussion will focus on the political and social structure of archaic Sparta and the strategies for power that were available to its citizens.

It should be pointed out that the people are granted quite extensive powers in the *Great Rhetra*. However, in Tyrtaios 4, the assembly is not allowed to freely propose

³⁷⁶ Plutarch offers further details and assessments of the archaic Spartan constitution that cannot be confirmed by archaic sources. This information thus cannot count as secure evidence for the archaic constitution in Sparta. However, I will briefly recount his further account here, as his assessments have influenced the modern debate to a high degree, in particular measures supposedly taken to provide a well-mixed constitution: Plutarch emphasises the introduction of a council of elders as particularly important and refers to Plato (*Leg.* 691e), who says that Lykourgos introduced the council of twenty-eight elders to blend their wisdom with the obstinacy and vigour of the Spartans (*Lyc.* 5). According to Plutarch, the number of elders was twenty-eight, and these had a tempering function between the two kings (*basileis*) and the people (*damos*), so that none of them would achieve too much power, resulting in neither tyranny nor democracy (*Lyc.* 5, 7). Plutarch further explains that after Lykourgos had mixed the constitution, the oligarchical element was still strong. Therefore, the ephors were introduced by king Theopompos in order to preserve the constitution and the king's place in it for the future. Plutarch cites Plato (*Leg.* 692 a) as witness to this change: Plato states that the introduction of the ephors contributed to making the Spartan constitution a mixture of the right elements and provided stability (*Lyc.* 7). This was a confused issue in antiquity, however. Herodotos claims that Lykourgos invented the ephorate, whereas Aristotle claims it was introduced under Theopompos (*Hdt.* 1.65; *Arist. Pol.* 1313a26ff).

measures. Plutarch presents Tyrtaios 4 as evidence that there was made an addition to the *Rhetra*.³⁷⁷ This addition is referred to as the *Rider* and it is supposed that it was introduced to temper the original *Great Rhetra* and take away some of the powers of the people. However, the relation between the *Great Rhetra* in Plutarch and fragment Tyrtaios 4 is highly controversial. Efforts have been made to establish a relative chronology between one and the other.³⁷⁸ I will return to the debate on the development of the *Great Rhetra* below, suffice it to state here that I doubt that the *Rider* was a revision of an original Lykourgan constitution. What is important for the present investigation is what the texts can tell us about the political and social structure of archaic Sparta. I will not go into discussions of the relative chronology of the *Rhetra* and *Rider*, but treat them together as evidence for the political structure of archaic Sparta.

The *Great Rhetra* and the *Rider* were apparently supposed to establish a balance between different groups in archaic Sparta, between an élite of kings and elders on the one hand and a citizen body on the other, as well as between more and less well-off citizens. Paul Cartledge suggests that the *Great Rhetra* is the product of a crisis situation: “At a moment of supreme crisis at home and abroad this formula offered something, politically, to all the contending groups. As a result of its enactment the monarchy survived, though with diminished power. The Gerousia (Senate), which included the two kings *ex officio*, became the supreme political organ in effect, but its membership was limited numerically and (except for the kings) formally subjected to the constraint of public election though not to public accountability. The non-aristocratic *damos* was granted political recognition, indeed formal sovereignty, but

³⁷⁷ Lyc. 6

³⁷⁸ Ogden, “Crooked speech,” 1994, 87

its power of initiative was effectively bridled”.³⁷⁹ Cartledge’s argument can be said to recognise the importance of accommodating different interests for the cohesion of the *polis*. In my view, it is sensible to view the Spartan constitution as an attempt to forestall *stasis* by granting formal political participation to all citizens within certain limits. However, I would argue that it was not necessarily a specific crisis behind the process resulting in the Spartan political structure. The struggle to avoid *stasis* must have been a continuous concern in Greek *poleis*, so that there is no need to identify a single factor behind the division of power in archaic Sparta.

It seems clear that the people were formally recognised as a part of the Spartan constitution. However, the extent of their authority is difficult to ascertain. The position of the people in Sparta has been much debated. François Ollier argues that the structure of power was such that the people were dominated by the *gerousia*, to the extent that “le peuple de Sparte n’a donc qu’un fantôme de pouvoir”.³⁸⁰ In his reconstruction, the *gerousia* was in charge in Sparta and was an instrument of power for the oligarchs. This also applied to the ephors.³⁸¹ Ollier’s view is supported by most scholars. W. G. Forrest points out that the *gerousia* had enormous power in Sparta and that it did not answer to anyone outside itself, having control in all political questions.³⁸² However, he emphasises that although the assembly could not change any measures when they were proposed by the *gerousia*, the *gerousia* nevertheless brought these measures before the assembly for the final decision.³⁸³ Arnaldo Momigliano argues that Tyrtaios 4, the *Rider*, “gives the kings and the

³⁷⁹ Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia – a regional history 1300-362 BC*, 1979, 135

³⁸⁰ Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 23

³⁸¹ Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 25-26

³⁸² Forrest, *A history of Sparta 950-192 B.C.*, 1968, 46-47

³⁸³ Forrest, *A history of Sparta 950-192 B.C.*, 1968, 49

gerontes power of veto, limiting preexisting rights of the assembly. The veto controls, but does not abolish, the powers of initiative of the assembly”.³⁸⁴ It can be argued that the scholars referenced above all comply with Plutarch’s late account that emphasises popular power (cf. *Lyc.* 5 and note 376 above). Thus, their reconstructions can be claimed to be based on a late source and not on evidence to archaic Sparta. Indeed, scholars have offered alternative readings. Against the view that the people lost power to the *gerousia*, Daniel Ogden argues that the people were granted more power with time and not less.³⁸⁵ He bases his argument, however, on a highly speculative relative dating of the *Great Rhetra* and the *Rider*, claiming that the archaic wording of the *Rider* makes it older than the *Rhetra*.³⁸⁶ This does not warrant the conclusion that the people were granted more power with time in Sparta: for later periods, it is evident that power in Sparta was not in the hands of all the people, but belonged to a limited élite of kings, elders, and ephors. Therefore, I agree with Ollier that archaic Sparta was under the control of the *gerousia* and that measures were taken to circumscribe the power of the assembly.

Perhaps the curtailing of the assembly indicates that Sparta had a political structure that made broad popular participation in politics possible, but a political culture that was to a large extent authoritarian, dominated by a powerful *gerousia*? From the poems of Tyrtaios, unity among the citizen hoplites, the *homoioi*, was all-important in Spartan culture.³⁸⁷ Measures taken to avoid dissent in the assembly can be seen as attempts to preserve the appearance of unity in the decision-making bodies of the *polis* vis-à-vis the helots, the enslaved original inhabitants of the Peloponnese. This

³⁸⁴ Momigliano, “Freedom of speech in antiquity,” 1973, 258

³⁸⁵ Ogden, “Crooked speech,” 1994, 102

³⁸⁶ Ogden, “Crooked speech,” 1994, 101

³⁸⁷ Tyrt. 10; Tyrt. 11

aspect of Spartan society is quite pronounced in the classical as well as modern view of Sparta and will therefore be given some consideration in the following. Was Sparta an exceptionally cohesive *polis*? Did it have a stronger corporate identity among its citizens than other *poleis*?

Social control through education and a collective lifestyle was held to be typical of Sparta in the classical period. Xenophon wrote a *Constitution of the Spartans* in the early 4th century and had extensive personal experience of life in Sparta and among Spartans abroad. He observes that the education system makes sure that adolescents are under constant control and supervision.³⁸⁸ This also applies to adults, whose duty is to actively seek excellence in all virtues, supervised by their neighbours and fellow citizens.³⁸⁹ However, the image of an extremely cohesive society can be said to be part of a mirage created from the 5th century onwards by intellectuals who sought to highlight the shortcomings of their home *poleis* by contrasting them with Sparta. Thus, Sparta is presented as different from all other *poleis*, whereas in reality, it had much in common with them, including struggles between different socio-economic groups. François Ollier dubbed this phenomenon “le mirage Spartiate”. He argues that philosophers and politicians in 5th and 4th century Athens created Sparta as an oligarchic ideal in contrast to democracy, “une cité illusoire, mirage que les désirs s’enchantement de voir briller devant eux à l’horizon”.³⁹⁰ He suggests that Athenian philosophers viewed the Spartan oligarchy as a living past, an example of “la Grèce d’autrefois, avec ce peuple robuste et sain, fidèle à ses vieilles mœurs austères”.³⁹¹ Ollier points out that the ancient traits of Sparta’s constitution are superficial:

³⁸⁸ Xen. *Lac.* 2.11

³⁸⁹ Xen. *Lac.* 10.6-8

³⁹⁰ Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 43

³⁹¹ Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 44

although the kings of Sparta appear as survivals of the ancient past, they cannot be claimed to be an important part of the government.³⁹² He also points out that the Spartan citizens, *homoioi* or “equals”, “peers”, were similar in little more than name and that there were significant differences in wealth between citizens.³⁹³ The last point is a good observation: the élite of the *gerousia* was indeed distinguished not only by age and status, but also wealth and the kings were part of this affluent élite. The image of Sparta as a stable constitution established by Lykourgos, with unique institutions that survived from ancient days and a citizen body where everyone was equal must be regarded as a mirage. Thus, the classical image of Sparta as a collective of equals is not very instructive for an analysis of archaic Sparta. I would rather emphasise the combination of kings, council, officials, and the assembly as the most interesting feature of archaic Sparta, and the apparent attempt to preserve cohesion through a balance of authority and obedience, initiative and respect.

The Spartan efforts to accommodate several groups in the *polis* were praised in antiquity as a well-mixed constitution (cf. 1.4.1). However, to discuss an archaic constitution in terms of oligarchy and democracy as Plutarch does (cf. note 376) must be considered anachronistic philosophical speculation. This has been recognised by scholars. Moses Finley interprets the Spartan constitution as a sign of “permanent conflict” and not a “mixed constitution”.³⁹⁴ Indeed, the impression of archaic Sparta from the *Great Rhetra* and the *Rider* is not of a constitution with a definite sovereign group, but one of several interests being accommodated into a unifying structure that allowed the citizens, the kings, and the elders to pursue their interests in the *polis* and still retain a socio-political unity. Thus, Finley’s objection is well put. The political

³⁹² Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 22-23

³⁹³ Ollier, *Le mirage Spartiate*, 1973 [1933], 23

³⁹⁴ Finley, *The use and abuse of history*, 1986 [1968], 168

structure of Sparta is open for a network of strategies: by offering means of political participation to all parts of society, a balance could be achieved that could help avoid *stasis*. This does not mean that it was a harmonious or balanced mix of constitutional elements.

The main dichotomy in Sparta was between the council and the assembly, pursuing narrow and broad corporate strategies for power respectively. However, what about the kings? Did they pursue a third strategy, a narrow élite strategy for power? The peculiar institution of two kings in Sparta is held to be a unique feature of the Spartan constitution.³⁹⁵ However, they do not appear as the sovereign rulers of Sparta. Rather than survivals from a tradition of monarchy in Greece, they appear more like hereditary officials with priestly functions. The inclusion of the kings in the council of elders makes it likely that Spartan kings were hereditary officials rather than monarchic rulers. As Sarah Morris points out, kingship in archaic and classical Greece was tied more specifically to rituals, than monarchy in the sense of royal rule.³⁹⁶ True, tyrants did attain sole power similar to that of kings in some *poleis*. However, this kind of monarchic rule does not appear to be related to the sacred aspects of Greek kingship with its priestly functions. At any rate, tyranny is certainly no parallel to the position of the Spartan kings. The Spartan kings should be treated as part of the political structure of officials, council and assembly, and not as sovereign rulers.

Archaic Sparta was a polity that appears to forestall conflicts by defining and formalising the relations between the different groups in society. This is instructive

³⁹⁵ Finley, *The use and abuse of history*, 1986 [1968], 175; Moore, *Aristotle and Xenophon on democracy and oligarchy*, 1975, 116

³⁹⁶ S. Morris, "Imaginary kings: alternatives to monarchy in early Greece," 2003, 9

for reconstructing the political concerns in an archaic *polis*. The lines of conflict in Spartan society are clearly illustrated in the explicit opposition in the *Great Rhetra* and the *Rider* between *gerousia* and *damos*, ephors and kings. It is perhaps a paradox that formally equal citizens, the *homoioi*, were opposed to each other in the political structure. However, inequalities existed in real life, and these inequalities also influenced the prestige of individuals and the interests of groups of citizens. From Xenophon's *Constitution of the Spartans*, it can be seen that the egalitarian ideology regarding wealth did not work in practice: e.g. the rich contributed wheat cakes to the *syssitia*.³⁹⁷ This shows that by the 4th century, the formal equality between citizens was in word only. J. M. Moore points out that the Spartan education system was based on competition, thus creating winners and losers, whereas the ideology was equality between all citizens.³⁹⁸ Although this is evidence from the classical period, it can be argued that the Spartan constitution was a range of compromises in order to protect the *polis* by having the best hoplite army possible and at the same time maintaining peace among the different socio-economic groups of citizens. It failed gradually in the classical period, with drastically decreasing numbers of full citizens, but the archaic constitution nevertheless aimed at inclusion and compromise, rather than exclusion of the people. The Spartan political structure allows for the pursuit of strategies for power also from below, in the popular assembly, but makes it possible for the élite to maintain control through the *gerousia*. The people, on the other hand, could, at least in name, control the king and elders through the ephorate.

As mentioned above, some scholars interpret Tyrtaios as indicating a reaction in Sparta aiming at curbing the power of the *damos*. The contexts of the *Great Rhetra* and Tyrtaios 4 are unclear. Reconstructions of the situation in archaic Sparta are made

³⁹⁷ Xen. *Lac.* 5.3

³⁹⁸ Moore, *Aristotle and Xenophon on democracy and oligarchy*, 1975, 69

difficult because the chronology of the sources is disputed, resulting in widely diverging assessments of the texts available to scholars. A case in point is Hans van Wees, who offers a new interpretation of Tyrtaios 4 and the *Great Rhetra* based in part on emendations of these incomplete and difficult texts. Van Wees argues that Tyrtaios writes about victory in war and not about citizen rights, claiming that the verses of Tyrtaios 4 were written in order to prevent the people from rebelling against the authorities. The situation at the time of Tyrtaios' poem is "civil unrest in a time of war", making it necessary to calm the people and make them fight for the common cause of preserving Sparta. He does not accept that Tyrtaios is quoting the *Great Rhetra*, claiming that he is citing an oracle that refers to victory in war "if the common people obeyed kings and Elders".³⁹⁹ Van Wees suggests that the *Great Rhetra* was written after the time of Tyrtaios.⁴⁰⁰ His interpretation of Tyrtaios 4 as an exhortation to obey the kings and elders is not accepted by Kurt A. Raaflaub, who points out that the conclusions of van Wees are only possible to reach by emending and reinterpreting this rather short poem.⁴⁰¹ I agree with Raaflaub's criticism and do not believe that a restructuring of the fragmentary evidence to archaic Sparta is a fruitful approach to understanding its social realities. Exactly how Tyrtaios' poem would have a soothing effect on the rebellious people is not clear and van Wees reads much into incomplete sentences. Further, his reconstruction of Tyrtaios' motivations for composing his poem is highly speculative. Of course, it can be argued that Tyrtaios 4 is too incomplete to securely couple it with the *Great Rhetra* either, but in my opinion, the reconstruction that makes the most sense is to see the two texts as related, both aiming at the preservation of *polis* unity by granting a balanced amount of authority to the rich and the poor, the officials, elders, and the people. I cannot agree with van Wees that the people are chastised in Tyrtaios 4. Rather, they are

³⁹⁹ Van Wees, "Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* – Nothing to do with the Great Rhetra," 1999, 11-12

⁴⁰⁰ Van Wees, "Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* – Nothing to do with the Great Rhetra," 1999, 24-25

⁴⁰¹ Raaflaub, "Athenian and Spartan *Eunomia*," 396-397

actually mentioned specifically as part of the constitution with a right to take part in reaching decisions.

There have been made several suggestions that fit Tyrtaios into a scheme against popular power. In the interpretation of W. G. Forrest, Tyrtaios presents the *damos* as less powerful and important than the kings and the *gerousia* because he belonged to a group of reactionaries that wanted to revise the *Rhetra* and give the people less authority.⁴⁰² The idea that the *Great Rhetra* granted power to the people and that later changes to the constitution diminished their influence is accepted by several scholars. Anthony J. Podlecki argues that “the heart of the innovation” of the *Great Rhetra* was “calls for meetings of the citizens to be held at regular intervals”.⁴⁰³ In this sense, the *Great Rhetra* was “a significant move in the direction of “damocracy””. The supposed revision in the *Rider* found in Tyrtaios 4, however, was “a shifting back towards a more centrist or even oligarchic position”.⁴⁰⁴ In Podlecki’s analysis, in the time of Tyrtaios, “the pendulum had swung away from “damocracy” and the aristocrats began to tighten their grip once again; a decision was taken to rescind some of the legislative powers either granted to the Apella through the original terms of the *Rhetra* or wrested by it in the course of putting the *Rhetra*’s terms into practice”.⁴⁰⁵ He suggests that “Tyrtaeus’ poetic talents were enlisted to help camouflage the seam between original *Rhetra* and added rider”.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² Forrest, *A history of Sparta 950-192 B.C.*, 1968, 67

⁴⁰³ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 100-101

⁴⁰⁴ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 101

⁴⁰⁵ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 102-103

⁴⁰⁶ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 103

Podlecki's suggestion that Tyrtaios' poems camouflaged the fact that the popular assembly had lost the right to make independent decisions is unconvincing. It hinges on the assumption that the *Great Rhetra* and the *Rider* represent two phases in the development of the Spartan constitutions. However, the relationship between these two documents is controversial and cannot be securely established. Thus, the proposed relative sequence of these texts cannot be said to pull much weight. The same goes for reconstructions of developments from Lykourgos to Tyrtaios. After all, the 8th century date for Lykourgos, indeed his very existence, is doubtful. To postulate an oligarchic clique working to change the constitution from an original Lykourgan constitution by the help of the poetic talents of Tyrtaios is speculation. The Spartan *damos* could not have failed to notice that their decisions were subject to the discretion of the *gerousia*. Further, a poem stating that the assembly was subject to the *gerousia* and that this was the ancient and original arrangement would be refuted by the evidence of the *Great Rhetra* itself. This text was after all known as late as the time of Plutarch. Therefore, it seems likely that the Spartan constitution took shape gradually, from institutions that were common among *poleis* in the archaic period. It was not the work of a lawgiver named Lykourgos. The Spartan constitution can therefore be part of a general discussion of the structure of archaic Greek *poleis*. The conflict of interest in Sparta between the masses and élite was accommodated in a political structure with several levels of authority that functioned together, determined by blood, by social status, and by age.

Despite several difficulties in the sources to archaic Sparta, some conclusions can be drawn: Spartan society was militaristic to a high degree, and much of its social structure was geared to maintain unity among the citizens. There is a certain balance between the hereditary élite of the royal families on the one hand and the most prominent citizens on the other, expressed by the ephors' power over all magistrates. The *gerousia* included the kings, making it reasonable to see this as an élite council. Was this élite opposed to the ephors? It appears so, although the ephors were also

élite members. They were supposed to be the protectors of the *damos*, but their powerful position no doubt set them apart from most citizens. A further difficulty is the popular assembly, which was entrusted with the final word in decisions, but at the same time was suspected of twisting the measures brought before them. This is a rather strange situation: why is popular consent important for decisions to be made, if the people are not to be trusted? Why not ignore the popular assembly altogether? Its place in the political structure appears to reflect the need to strike a balance between the different groups of society in order to preserve the unity of the *polis*. The masses of the citizens were informed of political measures without necessarily influencing them, at least not spontaneously. The Spartan constitution provided for popular participation, but nevertheless discouraged it or circumscribed it to a high degree. The ideal of an egalitarian citizen body is an interesting contrast to the inequalities in power and influence between the majority of citizens on the one hand and the ephors, elders and kings on the other. This should arouse suspicion against claims of close relations between an egalitarian ideology and popular power. The egalitarian ideology of the Spartans was geared towards producing good hoplites, but the egalitarian relations between hoplites in the field were not matched by egalitarian relations in the institutions of power, as is obvious in the circumscribed powers of the assembly.

The network of strategies for power in archaic Sparta can only be tentatively reconstructed from the *Great Rhetra* and Tyrtaios. However, it appears that cohesion was a general objective and that there were no protests against the high degree of authority that rested with the limited councils of the *gerousia* and the ephors. It may appear that the assembly, a large and inclusive decision-making body, promoted a broad corporate strategy for power.⁴⁰⁷ However, power of initiative did lie with the

⁴⁰⁷ Conversely, it can be argued that the overall strategy of the citizens was that of a broad élite, at least from the perspective of the helots: Sparta had to defend itself against the helots, who massively outnumbered its citizens. Therefore, the citizens had to appear united against the immediate surrounding helot population. However, people who were not citizens will not be taken into consideration in the present investigation of political strategies.

more limited decision-making bodies. The *gerousia*, although including the kings, composed a narrow corporation and ordinary citizens could hope to join their ranks. Likewise, the ephors formed a council that was formally open to participation from ordinary citizens. These institutions did not actively recruit new members. Members served for life. This makes the *gerousia* and ephorate more like broad élite institutions than narrow corporations. Ordinary citizens were obliged to voice their opinions in the assembly, an institution that was stripped of its power to make suggestions and therefore without much influence. Thus, the only broad corporation in the Spartan system was explicitly curtailed, and a broad corporate strategy for power unlikely to succeed. In practice, broad élites, the elders and the ephors, wielded power and they watched over the assembly as well as the kings. The kings could not pursue a narrow élite strategy because they were part of the *gerousia* and controlled by the ephors, rather than being sovereign rulers.

3.4.2 Athens: Solon

Solon was elected archon and reformer at Athens in 594/3 BCE and famously “shook off the burdens” of Attika’s farmland. His reforms included the *seisakhtheia*, “the shaking off of burdens” and the introduction of four new property-classes, *tele*, for Athenian citizens. Also, he is credited with establishing the council of four hundred, called the *boule*, and the jury courts known as the *heliaia*. However, many aspects of Solon’s reforms are disputed. Most scholars agree that Solon liberated the people by removing *horoi*, markers placed on land from which the cultivator had to pay over a proportion of his produce, and by banning loans with one’s body as surety.⁴⁰⁸ The details of these arrangements for debt and slavery are difficult to establish, however. Solon is also credited with dividing the citizens into new classes. Most scholars agree

⁴⁰⁸ Andrewes, “Solon,” 1982, 378-379

that the division of the citizens into four classes was according to the productivity of their land and that political power was distributed accordingly. Solon is said to have strengthened the position of the commoners in three ways: loans with surety on the person were banned, any citizen could initiate a lawsuit on behalf of anyone, and all citizens could appeal to the *heliaia*.⁴⁰⁹ The definitions of the new property-classes and the role of the new council are disputed, however. In fact, most of Solon's reforms are disputed to a degree or other, and I will discuss the problems of debt-slavery, property-classes, and the new council of Solon further below. In the following, I will present the Solonian reforms with an emphasis on social conflicts and their solutions. What did Solon do and what did it mean for popular power in Athens? First, the *seisakhtheia* will be discussed from the evidence in Solon's poems, for the most part preserved in the *Athenaion Politeia*, to establish the nature of the conflicts at Athens before the reforms. Thereafter, the *tele* and the new council and jury-courts attributed to Solon will be discussed. In conclusion, I will discuss the aims and objectives of Solon and how these have been interpreted by scholars. What was the *seisakhtheia*?

In a famous poem (Solon 36), Solon claims to have shaken off the burdens of the earth "whose boundary markers (*horoi*) fixed in many places I once removed; enslaved before, now she is free. And I brought back to Athens, to their homeland founded by the gods, many who had been sold, one legally (*dikaiōs*) another not (*ekdikōs*), and those who had fled under necessity's constraint, no longer speaking the Attic tongue, as wanderers far and wide are inclined to do. And those who suffered shameful slavery right here, trembling before the whims of their masters, I set free. These things I did by exercise of my power, blending together force and justice, and I persevered to the end as I promised. I wrote laws for the lower and upper classes alike (*thesmous d' homoiōs tō kakō te k'agathō [...] egrapsa*), providing a straight legal

⁴⁰⁹ Rhodes, *A commentary on the Athenaion politeia*, 1981, 119

process for each person. If another had taken up the goad as I did, a man who gave bad counsel and was greedy, he would not have restrained the masses (*dēmos*). For if I had been willing to do what then was pleasing to their opponents and in turn whatever the others planned for them, this city would have been bereft of many men. I set up a defence on every side and turned about like a wolf among a pack of dogs”.⁴¹⁰

Solon’s claim to have freed the earth by removing the *horoi* is an important piece of evidence for the reconstruction of archaic Athens. *Horos* means boundary, landmark.⁴¹¹ According to *LSJ*, in Solon 36, it means “pillar set up on mortgaged property, to serve as a bond or register of the debt”.⁴¹² Thus, *horoi* in Solon 36 are taken to mean stones set up to indicate that loans were secured with surety in the land. The poem Solon 36 is taken by most scholars to mean that Solon cancelled debts by removing mortgage markers or boundaries.⁴¹³ The Solonian *horoi* are problematic, however, since no archaic *horoi* have been found that really fit this description. According to Josiah Ober, it is probably not possible to establish what Solon’s *horoi* were or how they looked like.⁴¹⁴ In my opinion, the *horoi* must be interpreted in light of Solon’s other measures, i.e. to provide freedom for the Athenians. Therefore, they were probably stones marking land encumbered by dues or debt. Solon states that he

⁴¹⁰ Solon 36, translation from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 157-161

⁴¹¹ *LSJ*: *horos*

⁴¹² *LSJ*: *horos* II b

⁴¹³ Not all scholars accept this interpretation. Edward M. Harris argues that *horoi* are not known to have been used as mortgage markers in the archaic period. Therefore, he suggests that Solon meant the removing of *horoi* metaphorically, as in removing boundary markers rather than mortgage markers. In this interpretation, *horos* is metaphorically indicating *stasis*, and it was the prevention of *stasis* that was Solon’s real intention (Harris, “A new solution to the *seisachtheia*,” 1997, 104-105). According to Harris, Solon achieved this by banning the exaction of protection money by the elite and weakening their grip on local farmers (ibid. 109-111). The interpretation of statements as metaphorical, as Harris does, is of course highly subjective. Why are the *horoi* used as metaphor for *stasis*? Boundary markers and the taking of sides in *stasis* may be related, but Harris’ interpretation does not convince. It should be taken into consideration that the enslavement of debtors is not likely to occur from missing payment for protection, but would rather occur through contractual arrangements tied to agricultural work and land-tenure.

⁴¹⁴ Ober, “Solon and the *horoi*,” 2006, 450

ensured that those who had been sold into slavery because of debt could return to Athens. This he claims to have done by the power of his office, and he wrote laws applicable to noble and base alike, so that all would have a fair trial. He emphasises that he did not take sides, but defended himself against both sides, like a wolf surrounded by a pack of dogs. Further, Solon insists that he did not favour the people, referred to as *demos* or *hoi kakoi*, and did not deliver the rich into the hands of the poor. He does not state that he empowered the *demos*, but that he guaranteed them a fair trial on equal footing with the élite. What were the reasons for the shaking off of burdens? What did Solon wish to achieve?

In a poem (Solon 4), Solon states that “it is the citizens themselves who by their acts of foolishness and subservience to money are willing to destroy a great city, and the mind of the people’s leaders is unjust; they are certain to suffer much pain as a result of their great arrogance. For they do not know how to restrain excess or to conduct in an orderly and peaceful manner the festivities of the banquet that are at hand...they grow wealthy, yielding to unjust needs...sparing neither sacred nor private property, they steal with rapaciousness, one from one source, one from another [...] For at the hands of its enemies the much loved city is being swiftly worn down amid conspiracies dear to the unjust. These are the evils that are rife among the people, and many of the poor are going to a foreign land, sold and bound in shameful fetters [...] This is what my heart brings me teach the Athenians, that Lawlessness (*Dysnomiē*) brings the city countless ills, but Lawfulness (*Eunomiē*) reveals all that is orderly and fitting, and often places fetters round the unjust”.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁵ Solon 4, translation adapted from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 113-117

In Solon 4, Solon warns against the rapaciousness and injustice of the powerful that will lead to the enslavement of the entire city and civil war. He complains that the poor are being sold into slavery in foreign countries, and that the problems in the city will hurt everyone. Solon praises *eunomia*, good rule, and he argues that this will put an end to unjust decisions and abuse. How did this situation arise? Who are the poor who were sold into slavery and why did this happen? A few more poems will be presented and discussed that may clarify these issues.

In a fragment of a poem (Solon 4c), Solon appeals to moderation: “You who had more than your fill of many good things, calm the stern heart within your breast and moderate your ambition”.⁴¹⁶ Solon states in another fragment (Solon 5) that he did not wish to be seen as taking sides in the conflict at Athens: “I have given the masses as much privilege as is sufficient, neither taking away from their honour nor adding to it. And as for those who had power and were envied for their wealth, I saw to it that they too should suffer no indignity. I stood with a mighty shield cast round both sides and did not allow either to have an unjust victory”.⁴¹⁷ This theme is also taken up in a fragment of a poem (Solon 37), where Solon emphasises how he did not take sides between the masses (*dēmos*) and the better and stronger: “I stood in no-man’s-land between them like a boundary marker (*horos*).⁴¹⁸

The calls for moderation are important for understanding Solon’s position in Athenian society. He is clearly addressing wrongful behaviour by the rich. However, he emphasises that he does not oppose the rich in support of the poor. He describes

⁴¹⁶ Solon 4c, translation from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 119

⁴¹⁷ Solon 5, translation from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 121

⁴¹⁸ Solon 37, translation from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 161

himself as being an intermediary between the *demos* and the powerful. Solon claims to have attempted to accommodate both the rich and the poor, stating that he stood with a mighty shield against both sides, or as a boundary marker between them. He does not take a partisan stance and does not favour the poor or the masses in particular. This is important for understanding the socio-political conflicts in archaic Athens. Rather than taking sides in a struggle between rich and poor, Solon appears to promote the unity of the *polis*. This unity was threatened by the rapacity of the wealthy and the plight of the poor, exemplified above with the selling of forfeiting debtors into slavery.

In a poem (Solon 34), Solon recalls how some people were disappointed that he did not redistribute wealth and now regards him an enemy. However, he says, “They should not. With the help of the gods I have accomplished what I said I would, and other fruitless measures I did not make; it gives me no pleasure to act (?) with the violence of tyranny or to share the country’s rich land equally between the lower and upper classes (*kakoisin esthlous isomoiriēn ekhein*).⁴¹⁹

Again, it is clear that Solon did not side with the masses, but sought to promote unity in the *polis*, perhaps out of vertical solidarity, as a wealthy man concerned with the well-being of the less fortunate. Solon emphasises that he would personally never wish to act tyrannically or do things such as confiscating the property of the wealthy and re-distribute it so that the masses and the élite possessed equal parts. This is important for understanding the position of Solon and the aims of his reforms. Much is unknown about Solon and his objectives, however. There is more information in later sources, viz. the *Athenaion Politeia* and Plutarch’s *Solon*. However, these

⁴¹⁹ Solon 34, translation from Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 157

sources contain anachronistic interpretations of Solon's intentions as well as a confusing usage of obsolete and obscure terms and references that continuously puzzle scholars. Therefore, much of what is presented here from these later sources are hotly debated issues. I will discuss the main problems briefly, but I will not go into detail in the myriad discussions of the sources to Solon's reforms and what may or may not have been his original definitions and intentions. Rather, I will focus on issues that can clarify the socio-political structure and conflicts in archaic Athens.

According to the *Athenaion Politeia* and Plutarch's *Solon*, the land in Attika in Solon's days was in the hands of a few. There were Athenian peasants, called *hektemoroi* or *thetes*, who had to surrender a sixth of their produce to work the land of the rich. They could be sold into slavery, until Solon abolished debts and forbade the selling of Athenians.⁴²⁰

Thus, according to the *Athenaion Politeia* and Plutarch, the people who were sent into slavery abroad by their creditors were peasants known as *hektemoroi*. This term is not mentioned in Solon 36, where there is only mention of Athenians sold into slavery. *LSJ* translates *hektemoroi* as those who paid a sixth or five-sixths of the produce as rent.⁴²¹ It is a notoriously difficult term and scholars are not agreed about its exact meaning. Further, the identity of the people sold into slavery and the reasons why, are uncertain. Andrewes points out it is not clear in the *Athenaion Politeia* whether the borrowers who were enslaved are identical to the *hektemoroi* and that Plutarch understood them as separate. Thus, the *hektemoroi* were peasants who farmed for the

⁴²⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 2; *Plut. Sol.* 13, 15

⁴²¹ *LSJ*: *hektemor-oi, hoi*

rich and the debtors were those who had borrowed with their liberty as surety.⁴²² Andrewes argues that yielding one sixth of the yearly produce are quite favourable terms for the lessee, so that the *hektemoroi* cannot really be regarded as very oppressed.⁴²³ He suggests that the *Athenaion Politeia* describes an arrangement where the *hektemoros* was a peasant bound to remain on land owned by the rich and to pay a sixth of their produce, but with a right to stay on this land as long as he paid, thus rights of the land accruing to both the rich and the poor. Problems with this system originated in the increasing rapacity of the rich landowners and a reduction of the *hektemoroi* to slaves.⁴²⁴ This seems to me a quite reasonable interpretation that also solves the problem of the identity of the debtors, since they can be added to the group of people that became impoverished and subject to the will of the rich landowners able to lend them grain or other resources. This solution is preferred by several scholars. Moses Finley suggests that the *hektemoroi* were farmers with no land of their own, cultivating the land of others for a share of the produce. In his view, some of the debt-slaves that Solon freed came from the *hektemoroi*, but not all.⁴²⁵ Finley argues that the debt-slaves of Solon's poems had borrowed in produce and were tied by their loan immediately with their own bodies and with property as surety. Thus, the debt-slaves had a status as un-free, but at the same time had the opportunity of paying back the loan.⁴²⁶

The interpretations of Finley and Andrewes seems to me to explain the situation of the *hektemoroi* quite well, since not all who were indebted appear to have belonged to

⁴²² Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 378

⁴²³ Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 379

⁴²⁴ Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 381

⁴²⁵ Finley, "Debt-bondage and the problem of slavery," 1981 [1965], 156-157

⁴²⁶ Finley, "Debt-bondage and the problem of slavery," 1981 [1965], 160-161

the same social group. Rather, debt-bondage appears to have been a wide-spread problem in archaic Athens, since many Athenians are reported to have been sold into slavery. However, there have been made objections to this solution, because the sixth part that the *hektemoroi* supposedly paid cannot be said to be very harsh conditions. T. W. Gallant argues that the *hektemoroi* were originally seasonal workers on the land of others, with their own land in addition. They became debt-slaves to landowners who had put previously unoccupied land under tenure.⁴²⁷ In this perspective, debt-slavery is related to economic changes, viz. increased use of marginal land and the need for labour. However, Andrewes' solution is still tenable, since he does emphasise increased rapacity of the rich as a factor. This is also mentioned in Solon 4 and Solon 4c. There is a problem with the explicit separation of the two groups, however, viz. the debtors and the *hektemoroi*. G. E. M. De Ste. Croix points out that the division of debtors and *hektemoroi* is artificial, since rent and debt in agricultural societies is often mingled.⁴²⁸ He argues that the *hektemoroi* were not a separate group from the debtors, but actually became indebted themselves, through their status as sharecroppers.⁴²⁹ In his interpretation, defaulting tenant-debtors became liable to seizure.⁴³⁰ This seems to me a reasonable inference, although it does ignore what the evidence actually says. It seems clear to me that the main problem in the time of Solon was that social inequalities were increasing to the point of crisis, when the rich were enslaving the poor.⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ Gallant, "Agricultural systems, land tenure, and the reforms of Solon," 1982, 122-123

⁴²⁸ De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 111

⁴²⁹ De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 112

⁴³⁰ De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 118

⁴³¹ There have been made other suggestions to explain the situation of the *hektemoroi*. T. E. Rihll argues that the *hektemoroi* were not cultivating the land of others, but were cultivating public land against a rent in kind of 1/6 (Rihll, "Hektemoroi – partners in crime?," 1991, 115-116). In Rihll's opinion, Solon's reforms were consequences of a situation that reduced citizens to slavery and made land lie vacant (ibid. 118). He suggests that Solon turned public land over to the cultivators who had previously rented it (ibid. 124). In this way, those who cultivated land on a lease would keep their livelihood without Solon having to redistribute the land of the rich (ibid. 125). There is a problem with this reconstruction, in that there is no secure evidence for the kind of pledge Rihll supposes, where peasants leased public land mortgaged on

The interpretation that has found most support among scholars is that the *hektemoroi* were peasants who became indebted to richer landowners in the 7th century. This process is not entirely clear. Hignett suggests that a poverty crisis had come about due to bad harvests and raids from aggressive neighbouring *poleis*, where peasants lost their land and became slaves to the rich.⁴³² However, the reasons behind this crisis are not known. The suggestion that bad harvests were the reason for the crisis seems reasonable. However, hunger does not appear to lie at the root of the problem. It was the very structure of the *polis* that was at the heart of the problem, with rich landowners oppressing the peasants with impunity. Solon did not redistribute the land, but rather attacked the existing system of mortgage loans taken on one's person.

Anthony J. Podlecki points out that Solon is preoccupied with the damaging effect of *koros*, surfeit or greed.⁴³³ He argues that the phenomenon of debt-slavery arose because farmers who were better off could provide loans to their poorer neighbours in times of crisis, at usury rates.⁴³⁴ In this interpretation, the debt-crisis was created by deteriorating yields in Athens, impoverishment of the grain producers and a shift towards olive and vine cultivation for export.⁴³⁵ Indeed, the impression from Solon's poems is that economic differences were increasing in archaic Athens (cf. Solon 4; Solon 4c). This may well be related to increased production of agricultural produce

their bodies. Also, the poems of Solon blame private persons for selling Athenians abroad, not the authorities of the *polis*. Further, it is difficult to imagine authorities in the *polis* leasing out land. Did they keep a register of vacant plots? How was the sale of slaves organised? There is no evidence to such practices in archaic Athens. Therefore, Rihl's argument that *hektemoroi* were cultivating public land against a pledge of rent does not convince.

⁴³² Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 87-88

⁴³³ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 132-133

⁴³⁴ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 135

⁴³⁵ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 138-140

for export, encouraging increased use of marginal land and leading to exploitation of available labour. Thus, Solon tried to establish rights for the poorest citizens by hemming in the opportunities of the rich for exploiting their debtors. Podlecki's suggestion that cultivation was intensified in archaic Athens is not accepted by all scholars, however. Sara Forsdyke argues that there was only modest intensification and rather places the blame for the crisis on a breakdown in social reciprocity and a population increase that resulted in unrest. In this situation, the élite became more oriented towards making a profit and began to exploit the poor to a higher degree.⁴³⁶ In this context, the rich took possession of more land and abused their power to enslave peasants. Solon removed the *horoi* to free both land and workers, in addition to abolishing debt-slavery and cancelling debt.⁴³⁷ I find this scenario quite convincing and find it more likely that more land was put to use than that crop-specialisation led to a crisis.⁴³⁸

Whose side was Solon on? Whatever the reasons behind the impoverishment of the peasants, it is clear that Solon attacks the custom of enslaving debtors. It should be pointed out that Solon's ideal of a humble life includes owning a horse and having a friend abroad.⁴³⁹ This cannot be claimed to be the expectations of the Athenian *demos* or the *thetes*. Thus, Solon is not one of the people. Rather, he appears to warn members of the élite against abuse of power and exploitation of their poorer neighbours. The poems of Solon do not give the impression of a leader of the people

⁴³⁶ Forsdyke, "Land, labour and economy in Solonian Athens," 2006, 334-335

⁴³⁷ Forsdyke, "Land, labour and economy in Solonian Athens," 2006, 338-340

⁴³⁸ Much has been made of the abolition of debt-slavery in Athens and the introduction of chattel slavery leading to a firm definition of the statuses of free and un-free (Finley, "Debt-bondage and the problem of slavery," 1981 [1965], 165-166; Mactoux, "Lois de Solon sur les esclaves et formation d'une société esclavagiste," 1988, 339; Gallant, "Agricultural systems, land tenure, and the reforms of Solon," 1982, 124). I will not pursue this discussion here, suffice it to say that the end of mortgage on the body for peasants meant that even poor citizens had rights and were thus included in the civic body after Solon.

⁴³⁹ Solon 23

aiming at a socio-economic egalitarian order. Rather, he seeks compromise between the rich and the poor. This leads us to the next element in Solon's reforms, viz. the property-classes. These are not mentioned in the poems of Solon, but are discussed in the *Athenaion Politeia*. They form an important part of the reforms attributed to Solon and are important to discuss in order to understand the structure of archaic Athens.

Solon is known for establishing property-classes (*telē*) for Athenian citizens. According to the *Athenaion Politeia*, these new *tele* were called the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, the *hippeis*, the *zeugitai*, and the *thetes* and corresponded to the amount of agricultural produce each could provide from their own land. The *thetes* produced nothing. Property-assessments were criteria for eligibility to offices (*arkhai*), but Solon retained the traditional Ionian organisation of the citizens in four tribes, or *phylai*. The poorest class, the *thetes*, only had the right to attend assemblies and jury courts, but thus participated in politics through their votes.⁴⁴⁰ The nine archons were the most powerful officials, chosen from election lists from each of the *phylai* (*klerōtas ek prokritōn*).⁴⁴¹

The property-classes have been extensively debated, but will only be discussed briefly here, with focus on the reasons for the establishment of the *tele*. Not all scholars accept that the *tele* were based on property. De Ste. Croix is convinced that the author of the *Athenaion Politeia* did not have reliable information about the property-classes and does not accept that agricultural produce was Solon's original criterion. In his view, the highest property-class, the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, was assessed according to

⁴⁴⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 7.3

⁴⁴¹ *Ath. Pol.* 8.1

ownership of land, not according to produce.⁴⁴² Further, De Ste. Croix argues that the *hippeis* and *zeugites* were not assessed according to agricultural produce, but from their service as cavalry and hoplites respectively.⁴⁴³ It is difficult to accept, however, that the tradition of property-assessments from agricultural produce was a classical invention. The military background that De Ste. Croix postulates is an interpretation that is not supported in any surviving sources, except in the names of the property-classes themselves, viz. horsemen and yoked-men, i.e. men organised in a phalanx. This cannot count as a decisive argument against the explanation provided by the *Athenaion Politeia*. De Ste. Croix claims that a man's membership of the classes of *hippeis* and *zeugites* "depended solely on his ability to perform cavalry or hoplite service".⁴⁴⁴ However, De Ste. Croix does not offer any explanation of how anyone could prove that he belonged to the cavalry or served as hoplite or how this was recorded. His interpretation is not convincing, as the most obvious and objective assessment of a man's status would be his property, not his military status. Indeed, most scholars accept the definitions of the *Athenaion Politeia*. Andrewes points out that *hippeis* and *zeugites* probably were military terms in origin, but suggests that Solon "took up existing names and gave them a precise meaning defined by law".⁴⁴⁵ In my view, this is a reasonable explanation of the terms *hippeis* and *zeugites*. Their original or etymological meaning does not define their meaning after the reforms of Solon.

Scholars agree that Solon's new classes meant that more people participated in politics. Andrewes argues that Solon opened public office to more people, by

⁴⁴² De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 32-43

⁴⁴³ De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 48-51

⁴⁴⁴ De Ste. Croix, *Athenian democratic origins*, 2004, 54-55

⁴⁴⁵ Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 385

changing the criteria from birth to wealth.⁴⁴⁶ Hignett argues that the new property-classes gave more rights to people who had hitherto been excluded from office.⁴⁴⁷ However, according to Hignett, these new people admitted to office were not *nouveau riche* landowners or merchants, but landowning aristocrats excluded from office because they did not belong to the ruling aristocratic group called the Eupatridai. Thus, the chief beneficiaries of Solon's reforms were aristocratic families that were excluded from office under a dominant aristocratic clique.⁴⁴⁸ In recent years, scholars have interpreted the new property-classes as a response to economic changes in Athens. The reforms are seen as a break with the Eupatrid monopoly of offices, making all citizens except the *thetes* eligible to most offices. According to Lin Foxhall, Solon aimed at the inclusion of a larger proportion of rich farmers and other well-off people in the running of Athens.⁴⁴⁹ This is also argued by Lynette G. Mitchell, who interprets Solon as a protector of old status distinctions in the *polis*: by accepting anyone wealthy enough into the political system, Solon could keep the elevated status of the old birth élite outside of politics and potential debate.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, scholars view these property-classes as a response to a system that excluded a high proportion of the leisured citizens. The interpretations of Foxhall and Mitchell focus on an inclusion of people of wealth, a new élite, whereas Hignett emphasises the inclusion of members of the aristocracy. In my view, it is relevant to identify the reasons for including new groups of citizens in running the polity. To me, the emergence of wealthy élites through trade and more extensive farming seems highly likely. Also, the protest of excluded aristocrats seems plausible. In this perspective,

⁴⁴⁶ Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 385-386

⁴⁴⁷ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 102

⁴⁴⁸ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 103-5

⁴⁴⁹ Foxhall, "A view from the top – evaluating the Solonian property classes," 1997, 113-136

⁴⁵⁰ Mitchell, "New wine in old wineskins," 1997, 137-147

Solon's reforms of the property-classes meant to break the dominance of the few families in power. In this way, Solon made a more inclusive polity possible.

The Solonian property-classes have been extensively debated and there is no consensus among scholars. In a recent article, Kurt A. Raaflaub claims that Solon's distribution of the Athenians into *tele* was based on military capacity and nothing else.⁴⁵¹ In his view, Greek *poleis* were fundamentally egalitarian and not polarised by differences in wealth.⁴⁵² However, this interpretation means to ignore the evidence available to us and replace it with speculation. As I have argued throughout this chapter, there are no indications that Greek communities were fundamentally egalitarian. Differences between rich and poor and the problems they created are well documented in the poems of Solon. However, Solon is not unequivocally a friend of the poor. Hans van Wees points out that, although Solon criticises the rich, he calls them *agathoi* and their victims *kakoi*. Van Wees interprets archaic Athens as polarised between the people and its leaders.⁴⁵³ In his interpretation, the masses correspond to the *thetes* and the three other property-classes are the élite.⁴⁵⁴ Van Wees argues that there was a large gap between the *thetes* and the rest of the citizens and suggests that the 10-20% of the citizens owned most of the land, whereas 80-90% lived on subsistence level.⁴⁵⁵ In my opinion, this interpretation makes good sense of the evidence from Solon's poems. The plight of the *thetes* in archaic Athens and the fundamental differences in status between the rich and the poor are well-attested. However, van Wees's numbers seem rather pessimistic: a majority of the citizens

⁴⁵¹ Raaflaub, "Athenian and Spartan *Eunomia*," 2006, 409

⁴⁵² Raaflaub, "Athenian and Spartan *Eunomia*," 2006, 414

⁴⁵³ Van Wees, "Mass and elite in Solon's Athens," 2006, 351

⁴⁵⁴ Van Wees, "Mass and elite in Solon's Athens," 2006, 352

⁴⁵⁵ Van Wees, "Mass and elite in Solon's Athens," 2006, 365-366

must have been able to live off their land and there is to my knowledge no evidence to extensive land concentrations in archaic Athens.

Solon cannot be argued to side with the poor. He is, however, associated in the *Athenaion Politeia* and Plutarch's *Solon* with measures to include the poor in politics. Not only were the *thetes* recognized as citizens, they were also granted a measure of political participation. This was done through Solon's establishment of the *boule*, a new council of four hundred, and the *heliaia*, the jury courts. This is controversial, however, because these institutions are not mentioned in Solon's poems. They are discussed at length in the *Athenaion Politeia* and Plutarch's *Solon*, where it is stated that Solon established a council of four hundred (*boulē*) consisting of a hundred representatives from each tribe in addition to the existing Areopagos council, as well as jury courts.⁴⁵⁶ According to the *Athenaion Politeia*, putting the people in charge of the *dikasteria* by establishing these courts as jury courts was among the most democratic of Solon's measures: by controlling the votes, the people became master of the constitution (*kyrios gignetai tēs politeias*).⁴⁵⁷

There is no agreement among scholars concerning Solon's role in the establishment of the council of four hundred. Herodotos does refer to a council in Athens that protested against the oligarchic coup of Isagoras in 507/8.⁴⁵⁸ This does not necessarily mean that this council was the council of four hundred attributed to Solon. Hignett is convinced that Solon was a conservative and therefore claims that "Solon retained the

⁴⁵⁶ *Ath. Pol.* 8; *Plut. Sol.* 19

⁴⁵⁷ *Ath. Pol.* 9

⁴⁵⁸ *Hdt.* 5.72

political organs of the aristocratic state”.⁴⁵⁹ In his interpretation, Solon did not create a council of four hundred to act as a probouleutic council for the assembly, because if he had indeed created a “council which prepared the agenda for a popular assembly” this would mean that he emphasised the role of the popular assembly: “the presence in a state of a probouleutic council implies the existence of an *ekklesia* with extensive and important powers”.⁴⁶⁰ Hignett does not believe that the *ekklesia* was powerful in archaic Athens. Instead, he claims that Solon’s council of four hundred in reality was an invention of the oligarchic coup makers of 411, in order to legitimate their own council of four hundred. In his interpretation, there was only one council at Athens before the reforms of Kleisthenes in 508/7, viz. the council of the Areopagos.⁴⁶¹ Hignett claims that the *ekklesia* had the same degree of influence after Solon as before and that the aristocrats in the Areopagos council decided the agenda of the assembly.⁴⁶² He interprets the *heliaia* as “the *ekklesia* sitting in a judicial capacity”.⁴⁶³ However, he doubts that Solon admitted the *thetes* to the *ekklesia* or the jury courts, because he finds this in breach of “the cautious conservative temperament of Solon”.⁴⁶⁴ Hignett’s line of argument is problematic, since Solon’s actions are interpreted from his temperament and his temperament is defined from his actions. Thus, his assessment of Solon’s reforms is circular. Hignett’s claim that the council of four hundred was an invention of the oligarchs of 411 begs the question why they would single out the number of 400 councilmen and claim this to be Solon’s original council. After all, they might as well have stuck to the Kleisthenic council of five

⁴⁵⁹ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 89

⁴⁶⁰ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 92

⁴⁶¹ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 93

⁴⁶² Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 96-97

⁴⁶³ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 97

⁴⁶⁴ Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 98

hundred and filled it with their own people. Thus, the scenario of an oligarchic invention of the council of four hundred is speculative and does not convince. Supposed that Solon indeed was a careful conservative, the establishment of a council of four hundred, hundred from each tribe, actually makes sense as a way to control the initiative of the *demos* in the assembly, because there was a property qualification for participating in this council. The Areopagos council, on the other hand, represented the oppression of the rich aristocratic landowners, and would not be conducive to an orderly assembly. Thus, given Solon's stated aim of establishing harmonious relations between the rich and the poor, a new council of four hundred makes perfect sense.

Despite Hignett's convictions of Solon's conservatism, it cannot be ruled out that there was a preparatory council for the assembly that existed independently of the Areopagos in archaic Athens. Andrewes argues that the council of four hundred was created by Solon exactly to ensure that all measures that came before the assembly were discussed beforehand, acting as a safeguard against unbridled popular participation.⁴⁶⁵ To me, this is a reasonable argument, as such a council would make sense in combination with the other measures initiated by Solon in order to include more citizens in politics.

In modern scholarship, the view of Solon is split, and he is seen as either a forerunner of classical Athenian democracy or a conservative defender of the aristocratic *polis*.⁴⁶⁶ In the following, scholarly interpretations of Solon's agenda will be discussed further. What did Solon try to do? Who did he try to help?

⁴⁶⁵ Andrewes, "Solon," 1982, 387

⁴⁶⁶ Democracy: Wallace, "Solonian democracy," 1998, 11-29; aristocracy: Foxhall, "A view from the top – evaluating the Solonian classes," 1997, 113-136; conservative: Hignett, *A history of the Athenian constitution*, 1958, 89 and 98

Scholars see Solon as a key figure in the history of Greek political culture. Kurt A. Raaflaub calls Solon the first spokesman of the *polis*.⁴⁶⁷ Michael Stahl argues that Solon was the first politician of Athens, because he perceived the problems of the *polis* as created by the people as a community and attempted to solve them with an eye to the entire community.⁴⁶⁸ Philip Brooke Manville argues that Solon was “the man who established the Athenian *polis*, and thereby created the beginnings of a formal citizenship”.⁴⁶⁹ Manville does not interpret Solon as the spokesman of any particular socio-economic group, but accepts Solon’s self-representation in his poems as a true mediator, poised between the mighty and the *demos*, like a *horos*, a boundary stone. Solon’s achievement according to Manville lay in the creation of new distinctions; his laws “gave greater definition to the community and the place of the individual within it”.⁴⁷⁰ An important change brought about by Solon was the creation of “a legal boundary between slave and free which carried immediate implications for citizenship”.⁴⁷¹ In Manville’s interpretation, the Solonian scheme of *tele* made all Athenians part of a system of formal statuses and even *thetes* were guaranteed full privileges in the assembly and jury courts.⁴⁷² Thus, Solon’s work is interpreted as an important part of the process of transforming Athens from an aristocratic society into a citizen community. In my view, these interpretations explain the poems of Solon well, with their emphasis on compromise between socio-economic groups. Solon appears as the central figure for processes of political unification in archaic Athens.

⁴⁶⁷ Raaflaub, “Homer to Solon,” 1993, 42

⁴⁶⁸ Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen*, 1987, 192

⁴⁶⁹ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 124

⁴⁷⁰ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 126

⁴⁷¹ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 132

⁴⁷² Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 146

His attempts at conciliation and equal consideration of interests of the rich and the poor reveal a great concern for the cohesion of Athenian society.

Solon is quite consistent in his poems in denying that he favoured the *demos* and instead tried to reconcile the rich and the poor. Indeed, the *demos* appears to have benefitted from the establishment of the *heliaia*. The establishment of this kind of arena council is important for the possibility of pursuing a broad corporate strategy for power. In large assemblies such as the popular courts, the people could participate actively, receive information, and act as a community of equals. However, several scholars emphasise that Solon's reforms did not benefit the poor. How was Solon's relation to the poor and their role in the running of Athens?

P. J. Rhodes is convinced that "substantial as his reforms were, [Solon] was no revolutionary, and the measures which he judged appropriate fell far short of what some of the poor and unprivileged had wanted".⁴⁷³ Jonathan M. Hall emphasise the aristocratic outlook of the archaic poets, including Solon.⁴⁷⁴ Paul Cartledge suggests that Solon was the champion for a middle way, with an introduction of political rights for rich citizens who were not aristocrats.⁴⁷⁵ Cartledge emphasises, however, that there was no popular majority rule after the reforms of Solon and denies that the popular courts were introduced by Solon, claiming that they at any rate probably were not open to the poor.⁴⁷⁶ It may be that the poorest citizens were not active in the assembly or the courts. However, in my view, it is important that all citizens were

⁴⁷³ Rhodes, *A commentary on the Athenian politeia*, 1981, 120

⁴⁷⁴ Hall, *A history of the Archaic Greek world*, 2007, 194-196

⁴⁷⁵ Cartledge, *Ancient Greek political thought in practice*, 2009, 52-53

⁴⁷⁶ Cartledge, *Ancient Greek political thought in practice*, 2009, 48

formally allowed to participate at the basic level of assembly attendance. The élite background or aristocratic outlook of Solon makes it improbable that he sought to place power in the hands of the masses. However, this does not mean that Solon did not recognise the positive effects of including the *thetes* among the citizens, in order to promote a coherent civic body of Athenians, rich and poor.

Robert W. Wallace argues that Solon was a revolutionary who worked to transform the government in Athens to grant participation to the poorest citizens.⁴⁷⁷ However, it cannot be claimed that Solon's measures aimed at making the *demos* sovereign in the *polis*, thus Solon did not try to establish a democracy. He cannot be said to promote popular power to any particular degree, either. It is important, however, that the *thetes* were included among the citizens and could participate in the collective decision-making bodies of the *polis*. Their presence there must have changed the political climate considerably. In Solon's poems, a duality of strategies for power can be said to be at work in the *polis*, viz. a narrow corporate strategy and a broad élite strategy. The new property-classes granted power to a defined corporate body of rich landowners, a narrow corporate strategy that excluded the poor from office. This was in reaction to the broad élite strategy of the birth élite of the Eupatrids that monopolized the archonship and the Council of the Areopagos. Solon wished to promote the cohesion of the civic body and attempted to forestall rupture of the social and political unity of the *polis* through legislation. However, the poor were still excluded from office. Thus, Solon's reforms follow a narrow corporate strategy for power, not a broad corporate strategy where all citizens can partake in office.

⁴⁷⁷ Wallace, "Solonian democracy," 1998, 18

Solon is not a member of the masses; he belongs to the *élite*. His narrow corporate strategy was not intended to make office available to all citizens. Interestingly, his position as reformer would be an excellent starting point for a totally different strategy for power, a narrow *élite* strategy to obtain personal hegemony. The empowerment of a reformer or champion of the masses had a double edge throughout Greek political history, as will be discussed below (3.4.3). It could lead to better conditions and more political influence for the people as well as the establishment of authoritarian rule, with little popular influence in politics. Those who feared authoritarian rule the most, however, were the *élite*, who would stand to lose all power and influence under a single ruler. These troublesome dynamics of masses, *élites*, and authoritarian leaders haunted several *poleis* of the archaic period. It is to this that we now turn, with the establishment and abolishment of tyranny at Athens and the establishment of democracy.

3.4.3 Athens: Peisistratos and Kleisthenes

The reforms of Solon did not prevent civic strife in Athens. After a period of *stasis*, the aristocrat Peisistratos seized power as tyrant. His enemies, rival Athenian aristocratic families, in time toppled the Peisistratid tyranny and reformed the political structure of Athens. In the following, I will analyse these events and investigate the strategies of power pursued by the agents involved in them. The fate of the Peisistratids, the aftermath of tyranny and the reforms of Kleisthenes are related by Herodotos, Thukydides, and in the *Athenaion Politeia*. The accounts vary to a certain extent in detail, but the main outline is clear. The point of the following summary of events is to set the stage for an analysis of the different strategies for power involved in the tumultuous period of Athenian history between tyranny and the establishment of democracy.

After his time as archon, Solon left Athens.⁴⁷⁸ In the ensuing time, the old aristocratic families fell out with each other and a period of *stasis* began.⁴⁷⁹ Peisistratos in particular came to the fore, as leader of an aristocratic faction.⁴⁸⁰ Peisistratos established himself as tyrant at Athens in steps. He was already a respected war-hero from clashes with Megara. Feigning an attack on his person by his enemies in Athens, he convinced the Athenians to grant him a bodyguard of club-bearers (*korynēphoroi*).⁴⁸¹ In a poem, Solon criticised the Athenians for having allowed such a man a personal bodyguard without considering the danger of empowering a single individual to this degree.⁴⁸² Solon was right. Herodotos relates that Peisistratos and his party seized the Acropolis for the first time in 561/0.⁴⁸³ He reports that Peisistratos was a friend of the people and moderate in his rule, but did not stay in power for long. Athens was divided by factional strife between those living on the coast, led by the Alkmaionid Megakles, the supporters of oligarchy from the inland led by Lykourgos, and the democratically minded faction from Diakria, led by Peisistratos. Lykourgos and Megakles teamed up to oust Peisistratos, who went into exile.⁴⁸⁴ Shortly after, Peisistratos was helped back by Megakles, with the help of a mock Athena steering his chariot up to the Acropolis.⁴⁸⁵ Relations with Megakles soured again, and Peisistratos fled the city and gathered new allies, money, and fighters while in

⁴⁷⁸ Hdt. 1.29-30

⁴⁷⁹ *Ath. Pol.* 11.1-2

⁴⁸⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 13.3-5

⁴⁸¹ *Ath. Pol.* 14.1-2

⁴⁸² Solon 11

⁴⁸³ Hdt. 1.59

⁴⁸⁴ Hdt. 1.60; *Ath. Pol.* 14.3

⁴⁸⁵ Hdt. 1.60; *Ath. Pol.* 14.4

exile.⁴⁸⁶ Then, [in 546/5], he returned with support from the Thebans, Lygdamis of Naxos and a troop of cavalry from Eretria. They were victorious at the Battle of Pallene, and Peisistratos seized power in Athens again.⁴⁸⁷ This time he disarmed the citizens and established tyranny.⁴⁸⁸ Peisistratos is supposed to have been a mild ruler, and did not put the Solonian constitution out of use.⁴⁸⁹ His time in power was remembered as a golden age (*hōs ho epi Kronou bios*).⁴⁹⁰

Herodotos and Thukydidēs report that the sons of Peisistratos were not as popular as their father. One son, Hipparchos was killed by Harmodios and Aristogeiton in a plot sparked by a lovers' quarrel. His brother Hippias ruled as tyrant. The Alkmaionid family was in exile, but managed to get the Spartans involved in Athenian matters and by a combined effort they chased away the tyrant Hippias in 510.⁴⁹¹

Two men were the most influential in the city after the expulsion of Hippias and the Peisistratids; the Alkmaionid Kleisthenes and Isagoras, a man from an esteemed family. Kleisthenes included the *demos* in his group of followers and became their friend (*ton dēmon prosetairizetai*). He gained the upper hand, and initiated reforms, chief among them to rearrange the *demes* by making away with the traditional four tribes (*phylai*) and dividing the Athenians into ten new tribes, named after eponymous

⁴⁸⁶ Hdt. 1.61

⁴⁸⁷ Hdt. 1.62-4

⁴⁸⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 15.1-5

⁴⁸⁹ Hdt. 1.59

⁴⁹⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 16.7

⁴⁹¹ Hdt. 5.55-65; Thuc. 6.54-59; *Ath. Pol.* 18.1-2

heroes.⁴⁹² The *demes* were divided by ten according to the tribes.⁴⁹³ The *Athenaion Politeia* reports that Kleisthenes established a new council of five hundred members instead of the old council of four hundred, now with fifty from each of the new tribes.⁴⁹⁴ Kleisthenes reorganised Attika by *demes* into thirty parts; ten in the city, ten on the coast and ten inland, and he called these parts thirds (*trittys*). He allotted three to each the ten tribes, so that each tribe had a share in all three regions (*topoi*). He made those who lived together in each *deme* into *demotes*, meaning that the citizens were called by their *deme*, and not by their patronymic.⁴⁹⁵ According to Herodotos, Isagoras tried to counter the strategy of the popular Kleisthenes by sending for king Kleomenes and the Spartans [who had formerly helped expel the Peisistratids].⁴⁹⁶ Kleisthenes went into exile, before king Kleomenes and the Spartans arrived in Athens with a small force and expelled seven hundred Athenian families picked out by Isagoras. The invaders attempted to abolish the council (*boulē*), and hand over the rule to three hundred of Isagoras' friends. The council protested, however, and Kleomenes, Isagoras and their supporters took refuge on the Acropolis. The rest of the Athenians (*Athēnaiōn hoi loipoi*) laid siege to them and drove them out.⁴⁹⁷ The Athenians sent for Kleisthenes and the other exiles, who returned.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹² Hdt. 5.66; *Ath. Pol.* 21.2

⁴⁹³ Hdt. 5.69

⁴⁹⁴ *Ath. Pol.* 21.3

⁴⁹⁵ *Ath. Pol.* 21.4

⁴⁹⁶ Hdt. 5.70

⁴⁹⁷ Hdt. 5.72

⁴⁹⁸ Hdt. 5.73

Some of the information in the stories about *stasis* in archaic Athens cannot be correct: democratic and oligarchic factions in 6th century Athens are clearly anachronistic. However, *stasis* between rival aristocratic cliques and parties was real enough, and is among the social ills addressed by archaic poets. In Athens, civil war between locally organised militias seems to have threatened to rip the *polis* apart. However, as will be seen in the following, *stasis* can also be considered part of the process towards the establishment of *poleis* as citizen communities in the archaic period. Who were fighting and what can this tell us about the political structure of archaic Athens?

The reality of the topographically defined rivals in the classical accounts of Athenian *stasis* has been questioned. In the interpretation of Michael Stahl, the *staseis*, or parties to the civil war at Athens, were unstable power groups centred on powerful and charismatic aristocrats, and not stable and geographically defined groups of clients under local patrons.⁴⁹⁹ He argues that there was no opposition between aristocratic *stasis* and the *polis*. In his view, the *polis* developed hand in hand with the completion of a development of an aristocratic order of values, including competition for honour in every field. In this sense, Stahl argues, *stasis* was part of the development of the *polis*.⁵⁰⁰ Stahl emphasises that the *staseis* consisted of aristocrats and ordinary citizens and that they were subject to frequent shifts in their composition, often involving alliances with aristocrats of other *poleis*.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen*, 1987, 100-102

⁵⁰⁰ Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen*, 1987, 88

⁵⁰¹ Stahl, *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen*, 1987, 62-63

Stahl's view of *stasis* is supported by Philip Brooke Manville, who discusses *Athenaion Politeia* 13.5 on the local factions of Attika. He argues that local networks formed the core of *staseis*, in the sense that "the aristocratic leaders of the *staseis* raised supporters from the neighborhoods of Attika where they wielded influence, and each group included a variety of statuses in property, wealth, and livelihood among its membership".⁵⁰²

The *staseis* do appear as informal groups of aristocrats and their supporters. As evident from Herodotos and the *Athenaion Politeia*, aristocratic leaders shifted their allegiance and introduced foreign aristocrats in their local struggles. The *staseis* were not political parties, client groups, or regional groups, but alliances of powerful individuals and their local supporters. These *staseis* had to be actively mobilised in competitions for power and excellence among the aristocracy. In this sense, civil war could contribute to welding the *polis* together: the *staseis* drew local people into struggles for power, strengthening the alliances between aristocrats and commoners. However, it should be pointed out that *stasis* destabilised the community as a whole. Aristocratic competition could not in the long run provide stability of government and therefore promoted changes towards quite different regimes simultaneously. With the rise of one aristocrat stronger than the others, such as Peisistratos, the rules of the game changed, and the establishment of a more predictable political community became possible. Ironically, perhaps, popular power and tyranny appear as historically related phenomena. A unified citizen community, a *demos*, in time became a recognisable political force that opposed the fractioned aristocratic groups. What role did Peisistratos have in this process?

⁵⁰² Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 160

The figure of Peisistratos is seen by several scholars as a unifying figure for the Athenian *polis* community. The tyrant period was important for the development of the physical urban space of Greek *poleis*.⁵⁰³ Tyranny is also argued to have contributed to rallying the citizens against the domination of élite families in politics.⁵⁰⁴ Manville points out that the building of temples and establishment of processions under the Peisistratids had a unifying effect on the city.⁵⁰⁵ He argues that the people of Attika became Athenians in a proper sense under the tyrants: “The identity of each individual citizen began to be drawn into the centripetal whole, and each man’s social membership matured as a share of a public, all embracing corporation”.⁵⁰⁶ This assessment makes good sense of the changes taking place under the Peisistratids: the Athenians were drawn to the centre of Athens to a new degree. This was no doubt connected to the amount of resources the Peisistratids spent on the cult of Athena and her temple on the Acropolis. The identity of the Athenians became centred on an urbanised city-centre with monumental sanctuaries.

It has been suggested that Peisistratos was a forerunner for democracy: in the analysis of John Salmon, Peisistratos recognised the potential in rallying popular support against other aristocrats and therefore “encouraged broadly democratic trends”.⁵⁰⁷ However, there are indications that the interpretation of Peisistratos as the people’s friend is overstated. In the *Athenaion Politeia*, it is claimed that Peisistratos disarmed

⁵⁰³ Knell, *Mythos und Polis*, 1990, 41-42; Kolb, “Bau, Religions- und Kulturpolitik der Peisistratiden”, 1977; Salmon, “Lopping off the heads?”, 1997, 67; Shapiro, *Art and cult under the tyrants in Athens*, 1989, 6

⁵⁰⁴ McGlew, *Tyranny and political culture in Greece*, 1993, 119-120; Salmon, “Lopping off the heads?”, 1997, 63; Van der Vliet, “Tyranny and democracy,” 1987, 85

⁵⁰⁵ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 166

⁵⁰⁶ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 171

⁵⁰⁷ Salmon, “Lopping off the heads?”, 1997, 70

the people.⁵⁰⁸ Among Peisistratos' measures to secure popular support, it is stated that he established local courts in the *demes*, with the intention of keeping people from rural Attika away from the city and otherwise see to it that they did not want to nor had the spare time for interfering in politics.⁵⁰⁹

It can be argued that the information in the *Athenaion Politeia* that Peisistratos disarmed the citizens and discouraged active citizenship does not fit the image of Peisistratos as a unifying political factor for the *demos* of Athens. Scholars have interpreted his actions in several ways. Sheldon S. Wolin argues that Peisistratos cannot be seen as a catalyst for a politically active Athenian *demos*. Rather, his actions indicate that Peisistratos was “destroying the public realm and its demotic politics”.⁵¹⁰ However, this interpretation of Peisistratos as an anti-populist tyrant does not take the whole situation into consideration. After all, there are also claims in the *Athenaion Politeia* that Peisistratos was a benign and much-loved ruler.⁵¹¹ There are other sources that indicate that the disarmament of the people was not permanent: Thukydides mentions that citizens were armed in the Panathenaic processions that were organised by the Peisistratids.⁵¹² The disarmament of the citizens is therefore doubted by several scholars. P. J. Rhodes argues that although the *Athenaion Politeia* claims that the citizens were not armed during the Panathenaic procession (*Ath. Pol.* 18.4), this was probably a deliberate misunderstanding: the tradition that the citizens were unarmed was a piece of propaganda “since it would have been less shameful that

⁵⁰⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 15.4

⁵⁰⁹ *Ath. Pol.* 16.1-5

⁵¹⁰ Wolin, “Transgression, equality, and voice,” 1996, 79

⁵¹¹ *Ath. Pol.* 16.7

⁵¹² Thuc. 6.56; 6.58

the citizens failed to rally in the tyrannicides' support if they were unarmed".⁵¹³ Thus, the event in 514 when Hipparchos was killed is held to be the reason behind a tradition of disarmed citizens. This explanation makes sense of the contradiction that Peisistratos was considered a good leader by the Athenians, yet is reputed to have disarmed them. He initially disarmed the citizens, but this was not permanent. Later historians claimed that the Athenians were unarmed in the processions, but this may be a tradition developed around the slaying of Hipparchos, son of Peisistratos and brother of the tyrant Hippias.

However, several scholars maintain that Peisistratos disarmed the people. A. French argues that Athens lacked an army of hoplite citizens before Kleisthenes. He points out that after the initial disarmament of the people by Peisistratos, "there is no suggestion that the confiscated arms were ever distributed to other sections of the citizen population, nor of any organisation employed by the tyrants to mobilise any citizen militia; indeed the organisation of the latter was one of the most urgent duties later undertaken by Kleisthenes". He claims that the Peisistratids depended on mercenaries. In his analysis, Thucydides' statement (Thuc. 3.68) that the Athenians made an alliance with the Plataeans in 519 cannot be right, because these mercenaries would not be employed abroad. Rather, he claims that "the revival of the citizen militia by Kleisthenes was a necessary prelude to any policy involving foreign alliances and adventures."⁵¹⁴ French's interpretation of the military situation in archaic Athens is problematic. There is indeed evidence that there was a citizen army in the period of tyranny. As Manville points out, Herodotus mentions several Athenian military victories under the Peisistratids (Hdt. 1.64.; *ibid.* 5.31.), including the taking of Naxos, making it improbable that there were no Athenian citizens under

⁵¹³ Rhodes, *A commentary on the Atheniaion Politeia*, 1981, 210

⁵¹⁴ French, "A note on Thucydides iii 68.5," 1960, 191

arms during the Peisistratid tyranny.⁵¹⁵ It is highly unlikely that extensive campaigns abroad, involving naval operations, would be undertaken by mercenaries. Therefore, Peisistratos probably did not disarm the citizens permanently. Thus, the connection between a hoplite army and the reforms of Kleisthenes are tenuous. This will be discussed further below.

The claim that Peisistratos oppressed the people by discouraging them from spending time on court sessions and assembly meetings in the city is also doubtful. Rhodes points out that “neither an occupied peasantry nor public works are necessarily signs of oppression”. Rather, he suggests that part of the incentive for keeping people busy was an economic objective.⁵¹⁶ Rhodes does not accept that peasants were discouraged from bringing their disputes to court. He argues that the cases that were dealt with in the new local courts were cases that had previously been settled locally by arbitrators from the local nobility. Now instead they were settled by representatives from the central authority.⁵¹⁷ This assessment makes good sense of the motivation for establishing local courts and places this initiative in the bigger picture of the tyrant’s efforts to stamp out local aristocratic power bases. Therefore, Wolin’s view of Peisistratos as destroying the public realm does not convince.⁵¹⁸

The fate of the Solonian constitution under tyranny is a good test of Peisistratos’ commitment to the common good of the Athenians. As seen above, the sources report that the council and other institutions were left alone by the Peisistratid tyrants. This

⁵¹⁵ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 163n.17

⁵¹⁶ Rhodes, *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion politeia*, 1981, 214

⁵¹⁷ Rhodes, *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion politeia*, 1981, 216

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Wolin, “Transgression, equality, and voice,” 1996, 79

is seen as an important indication of Peisistratos' intentions of consolidating the Athenian *polis*. Manville emphasises that the Athenian council of four hundred, the assembly, and the jury courts were not put out of function under the Peisistratids and that more people became active citizens. He points out, however, that Peisistratos discouraged people from taking cases that could be handled by the *demes* into the jury courts at the *agora*. In his interpretation, this means that a large number of people were participating in the political and judicial institutions of the city.⁵¹⁹ Manville emphasises that there were several centralising measures taken by the Peisistratids, in particular sending judges from the centre to the *demes* out in the countryside.⁵²⁰ This amounts to a reversion of the argument of Wolin, viz. that the establishment of *deme* courts indicates that the citizens became less active in politics under the tyrants at Athens.⁵²¹ Following Manville's interpretation, citizen participation was instead increasing under the Peisistratids. Indeed, the establishment of central institutions as well as the regulation of local decision-making processes in the *demes* should be taken as indication that the *polis* was becoming more centralised and that the citizens were more involved, rather than the Peisistratids taking over all the decision-making processes in the *polis*. There is no evidence for active meddling in decisions by the tyrants. Quite the contrary, Herodotos states that the political and judicial institutions continued to function as established by Solon.⁵²² Therefore, the picture of tyranny at Athens as a kind of absolutist monarchy cannot be maintained. Rather, Peisistratid tyranny was a period when much of the Athenian *polis* as a citizen community was formed. As was seen with Solon, the cohesion of the *polis* was an important issue at Athens. This could only be achieved by allaying strife and promoting central institutions.

⁵¹⁹ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 164

⁵²⁰ Manville, *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens*, 1990, 166

⁵²¹ Wolin, "Transgression, equality, and voice," 1996, 79

⁵²² Hdt. 1.59

The tyrant of Athens must be seen as part of the struggles for power between groups forming around aristocratic leaders and not as a foreign element opposed to the *polis* and its citizens. Kurt A. Raaflaub argues that the archaic tyrants contributed to “integrating their community”, thus “preparing the ground for a more egalitarian political system”.⁵²³ In his analysis, this happened because the tyrants’ monopoly of power made it impossible for others to compete for influence. According to Raaflaub, terms for equal rights and equal access to participation in debates, *isonomia* and *isegoria*, “are likely to have been coined in aristocratic circles as slogans to express what the elite had taken for granted previously but lost through the tyrant’s seizure of power and were striving to regain”.⁵²⁴ No doubt, the tyrant contributed to the centralisation of judiciary and political processes, to the detriment of the aristocracy and their local power bases. The tyrant is thus a figure that, together with Solon, marks a transition from aristocracy to a citizen-state, where the citizens identified themselves with the *polis* as a whole. In my opinion, to see Peisistratos solely as an enemy of the people, as Wolin does, overestimates the cohesion of the Athenians in the archaic period. After all, the peasants of Attika were clearly divided in the *stasis* between aristocrats. Further, it cannot be claimed that any of the other aristocratic leaders were any more concerned for the interests of the *demos* than Peisistratos. Rather, the rule of a tyrant made an end to aristocratic infighting and encouraged an integration of the social and political institutions of the *polis*. The tyrant contributed to creating an active *demos* with a political identity as Athenians. He did not establish popular power, however. It is to this process that I now turn.

⁵²³ Raaflaub, “Stick and glue: the function of tyranny in fifth-century Athenian democracy,” 2003, 61

⁵²⁴ Raaflaub, “Stick and glue: the function of tyranny in fifth-century Athenian democracy,” 2003, 62

The sons of Peisistratos did not manage to maintain tyranny. Hipparchos, the brother of the tyrant Hippias, was killed in 514, marking the beginning of the end. The fate of Hipparchos and its epitaph is interesting. The version the classical historians maintain, that it was a lover's quarrel unrelated to the overthrow of the tyrants, was not the one that was the most widely believed among the Athenians. Thukydides polemicized against the apparently widely held, but erroneous belief that Hipparchos was tyrant of Athens and was killed by Harmodios and Aristogeiton for the sake of Athenian freedom.⁵²⁵ There was a drinking-song, a *skolion*, known as the Harmodios-song, found in Athenaios and also alluded to by Aristophanes. It praises Harmodios and Aristogeiton as tyrant-slayers. The song is a warning to future tyrants of similar treatment. The singers threaten to hide daggers or swords in a bunch of myrtle.⁵²⁶

What does the fate of the Peisistratids tell about popular power in Athens? The people's role in opposing the tyrant is not clear. The lover's quarrel between Hipparchos and his attackers belongs in the world of the élite. The tyrant-slayers have no connection to the Spartan intervention and plotting of rival factions that eventually toppled the tyranny in 510, ending in a popular uprising against Isagoras and Kleomenes. It is striking that it was the tradition of the tyrant-slayers that became the more popular story about the end of tyranny in Athens. Scholars have attempted to explain the popularity of Harmodios and Aristogeiton. Felix Jacoby argues that the *skolion's* version became widespread in 5th century Athens as part of élite slander of Perikles as an aspiring tyrant.⁵²⁷ Victor Ehrenberg also suspects an aristocratic origin of the Harmodios-song.⁵²⁸ It does seem that the *skolion* version was not a product of

⁵²⁵ Thuc. 6.54.55

⁵²⁶ Ath. 15.50, 695ab ; Ar. *Ach.* 980

⁵²⁷ Jacoby, *Atthis*, 1949, 160

⁵²⁸ Ehrenberg, *Polis und Imperium*, 1965, 256

popular sentiments, but part of an élite ideology, a warning from the élite to their own not to become too ambitious. The élite can be seen as praising the slaying of the tyrant as part of a broad élite strategy, entailing that Hipparchos was slain by people of his own standing, from a rival élite faction, and that the people or the Spartans were not responsible for the end of tyranny. In this line of reasoning, the élite should stick together and none of its members should claim power for their own family exclusively. Regarding the spread to the general Athenian population of the view that the tyrant had been killed by two men of the élite, the discourse of politics can be argued to have changed from the archaic to the classical period: in the classical period under democracy, tyranny was perceived as the main threat to the established order, rather than the archaic threat of *stasis*. This may explain the popularity of the song among the commoners in the time of Thukydides. Also, slaying a tyrant is more dramatic than expelling him with the help of a foreign army. The older sources emphasise the role of Sparta and Kleisthenes, however, and it must be that tradition which is correct. In the aftermath of the expulsion of the Peisistratids, the *demos* took action to defend Athens from the coup-maker Isagoras. The *demos* had become an agent with its own strategy for power during tyranny, under the leadership of Kleisthenes. I turn now to the reforms of Kleisthenes.

Kleisthenes' reform of the *demes* was his most important political measure. By this reform he drastically realigned the relations between domicile and political loyalty. The change to a new system of tribes was a significant part of this process. It changed the political structure of Athens and Attika completely.

According to Mogens Herman Hansen, the most important innovation in the reforms of Kleisthenes was the distribution of *demes* to *trittyes* and tribes. In Hansen's analysis, the *demes* were the foundation of the reform. The *demes* were natural

geographical entities, in the sense of local communities, more than localities.⁵²⁹

Hansen argues that by assigning the ca. 139 demes of Attika to *trittyes* and tribes, “Kleisthenes sought to break up the old social structures and create new political entities”.⁵³⁰ This was done by assigning the *trittyes* of inland, coast, and city, by lot to the tribes, one from each region. The *trittyes* each contained a number of *demes*, and in this way, people from the different regions of Attika were assigned to the same tribe. Since the tribes were the basis for the organisation of the army and the new council of five hundred, Hansen argues, the reforms of Kleisthenes placed these institutions beyond the reach of the aristocrats’ influence over their neighbours.⁵³¹

Hansen’s interpretation makes excellent sense of the sources and provides a political rationale to this extensive reorganisation. Admittedly, the *Athenaion Politeia* is a late source to archaic Athens. However, it describes a plausible process for administrative and political reform, as a solution to prevent the frequent return of *stasis*. The council of Kleisthenes was based on the tribes, and in order to curtail domination of the council by aristocratic factions, the tribes would have to be composed of citizens from all over Attika. In this way the factions, based on the personal adherents of aristocratic leaders, could be nipped in the bud. After Solon and Peisistratos, Athens was no longer a polity consisting of feuding aristocrats and their henchmen. With the reforms of Kleisthenes, Athens became a polity where the local communities were integrated in tribes consisting of *demes* from all over Attika. The road to *stasis* was closed. The reforms also changed citizen behavior, as they took turns serving in the council according to tribes.

⁵²⁹ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 47

⁵³⁰ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 48

⁵³¹ Hansen, *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes*, 1991, 48-49

As part of the reforms of Kleisthenes, the army was organised with a contingent from each tribe, making the citizens fight alongside their tribal fellows from all over Attika. Rather than following an aristocratic local warlord, the citizen now fought for the city. The reforms of Kleisthenes were effective measures against the broad élite strategy for power of the aristocratic factions that aimed at keeping power in the hands of a few aristocratic leaders. By reorganising the territory politically, it would become harder for local leaders to recruit followers, also militarily. Because the citizens now belonged to new tribes, and these tribes were put together by people living in *trittyes* from *demes* at the coast, inland and the city, local interests of each *phyle* would be divided on several places, and reduce the influence of local powerful families.

Some scholars have argued that the Kleisthenic reform of the *demes*, *trittyes*, and tribes was not primarily a political reform, but an army reform connected to the development of phalanx tactics and the mobilisation of a citizen hoplite army. This is argued by Henri van Effenterre, who claims that Kleisthenes' reforms were intended first and foremost as a military reform, to supply post-Peisistratid Athens with a hoplite army to defend the *polis*. He claims that scholars falsely attribute a rational political prescience to Kleisthenes, a person about whom very little is known, not least his motives for the reforms.⁵³² Van Effenterre explains the political reforms of Kleisthenes as the result of Athens being organised as an image of the army.⁵³³

⁵³² Effenterre, "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation," 1976, 2 and n.4

⁵³³ Effenterre, "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation," 1976, 3-4

Van Effenterre's argument that Kleisthenes' reform was fundamentally of a military nature is supported by Peter Siewert, who argues that the organisation of the *trittyes* was for the purpose of military mobilisation.⁵³⁴ According to Siewert, there was no citizen army under the Peisistratids. There was an army of hoplites in the 7th century, but this was disbanded by the Peisistratids after the battle of Pallene in 546/5 and the troops that fought the Spartans in 511 and 510 were Thessalian mercenaries.⁵³⁵ Siewert claims that the citizen army again came into existence by 506, when the Athenian fought the Boeotians, Khalkidians, and Aeginetans. This army was either organised according to the four tribes or improvised ad hoc.⁵³⁶ According to Siewert, the hoplites of the new citizen army wanted to protect the council of five hundred from Isagoras and Kleomenes and secured its first victory in the battle against them in 507. The citizen army further mobilised ca. 9000 hoplites against the Peloponnesians in 506.⁵³⁷

It must be pointed out that Siewert's hypothesis has a rather narrow schedule for the organisation of the supposed new hoplite army. It does not seem convincing that an army of hoplites could be raised after a forty years hiatus and mobilised to protect the council of five hundred. Did Kleisthenes organise this army before he was exiled by Isagoras, in time for this new hoplite army to recognise that the council of five hundred and the reforms of Kleisthenes needed its protection? This does not seem likely. Siewert's hypothesis is criticised by Rhodes, who points out that the organisation of the *trittyes* was not very effective for mobilisation purposes: some of the *demes* that neighboured each other were not in the same *trittys*, thus not very

⁵³⁴ Siewert, *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform de Kleisthenes*, 1982, 145-149

⁵³⁵ Siewert, *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform de Kleisthenes*, 1982, 154-155

⁵³⁶ Siewert, *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform de Kleisthenes*, 1982, 157 and 157n.23

⁵³⁷ Siewert, *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform de Kleisthenes*, 1982, 166-167

effective for mobilisation. Rather, the ancient testimony that the reforms were aimed at the breaking up of old associations should not be dismissed. Rhodes is also sceptical of Siewert's timetable, where the new citizen army is in action as early as 507 and points out that the appointment of ten generals for the ten tribes was not established until 501/0. Thus, the reforms of Kleisthenes were not primarily of a military nature.⁵³⁸ The interpretations of Kleisthenes' reforms as predominantly military fail to convince. Against van Effenterre's argument that the Athenian *polis* needed to defend itself after the fall of the tyrants, it should be kept in mind that there were few periods of Athenian history without external threats. It is therefore questionable to explain the reforms of Kleisthenes as a response to outside threats. It can be argued that the most pressing threat to Athens in the time of Kleisthenes' reforms was not external invasion after the fall of the tyrants, as much as *stasis* and the reestablishment of aristocratic factions.

As discussed above, there is evidence that Peisistratos had disarmed the citizens and relied on mercenaries.⁵³⁹ However, there is also evidence that the Athenians were indeed armed after the initial establishment of the tyranny of Peisistratos: the Athenians took up the fight against Isagoras, Kleomenes, and the Spartan troops in 508/7.⁵⁴⁰ Van Effenterre argues that the Athenians were unable to prevent the Spartans from camping on their territory and taking control of the Acropolis.⁵⁴¹ However, it should be kept in mind that the Spartans did not initially come as a force hostile to the citizens of Athens. Mobilisation against them was first set in motion at signs of hostilities against the council and the occupation of the Acropolis. The main

⁵³⁸ Rhodes, "Review: Siewert (P.) Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes," 1983, 203-204

⁵³⁹ Disarmament of citizens: *Ath. Pol.* 15.3-5. Reliance on mercenaries: Hdt. 1. 64

⁵⁴⁰ Hdt. 5.72

⁵⁴¹ Effenterre, "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation," 1976, 4

problem with van Effenterre's argument is that he identifies the lack of an army as the most pressing problem in Athens after the fall of tyranny and ignores how Kleisthenes' reforms puts an end to *stasis*. By focusing on external threats and the lack of an army, he can argue that the reforms were primarily military in addition to being political, but this can only be a convincing argument if it can be shown that Athens had no army in 508/7, something that appears highly unlikely.

Kleisthenes can be interpreted as facilitating, if not himself pursuing, a broad corporate strategy for power that ensured that decisions were taken with the involvement of a large part of the population. The reform of the *demes* had significant political consequences: the reorganisation of the *demes* and composition of the new council of five hundred meant that a large number of citizens would be involved in government each year, in establishing the agenda for the popular assembly. The reforms would lessen the chances of local leaders to create cliques or bands in order to take over the *polis*. Thus, the reforms can be seen as directed against the narrow élite strategy of a tyrant as well as against the broad élite strategy of aristocratic dominance. This does not mean that Kleisthenes was a democrat. Kleisthenes, by championing the people, got the upper hand against his personal enemy Isagoras, and for him that was probably satisfaction enough.

Kleisthenes can be suspected of striving for personal power. It is a recurring double meaning to popular power in archaic sources, because it frequently comes about in complicity with some powerful individual. However, the events of 508/7 do not indicate that Kleisthenes aimed at personal power. After all, he was not even there when Isagoras and Kleomenes were chased off. Scholars have been puzzled and intrigued by the apparent independent action of the Athenians against Isagoras and

Kleomenes reported by Herodotos (Hdt. 5.72).⁵⁴² What was the role of the people? What was their strategy for power?

Walter Eder explains the initiative taken by the people as a popular struggle not to win new rights, but to keep the position and power they had gained under tyranny.⁵⁴³ In his view, Peisistratos had made it possible for the people to gain political experience in the local courts that he had established in the *demes*, as well as in the assembly and council.⁵⁴⁴ In Eder's interpretation, the tyrant thus contributed to the establishment of a "corporate feeling" among Athenians.⁵⁴⁵

As discussed above, the development of a corporate identity of the *demos* can indeed be argued to be a result of tyranny: before Peisistratos, Athens was split into factions, but after Peisistratos, the *demos* acted with their own agenda. This must have led to a different political climate in Athens, beyond aristocratic feuding and loyal local followers. Instead of a fragmented polity dominated by infighting among the élite, tyranny established a state-like authority that created a focus for citizen identity. To set this in relation to the reaction against Isagoras and Kleomenes is fruitful. In this event, the *demos* acted in their own interest to protect the established political order. What was the nature of this protest?

⁵⁴² Eder, "Political self-confidence and resistance," 1988; Ober, *The Athenian revolution*, 1996

⁵⁴³ Eder, "Political self-confidence and resistance," 1988, 467

⁵⁴⁴ Eder, "Political self-confidence and resistance," 1988, 469

⁵⁴⁵ Eder, "Political self-confidence and resistance," 1988, 469-470

Josiah Ober interprets the action of the Athenian *demos* in 508/7 as a full-on revolution. In his analysis, the *demos* protested against the attempt to dismantle the council of five hundred and to defend the measures put in place by Kleisthenes, enacted before he was exiled by Isagoras.⁵⁴⁶ In Ober's interpretation, the Athenians were not united as a corporate body by Peisistratos as much as by being the *hetairoi* of Kleisthenes. The riot of 508/7 became their act of self-definition as a people with a political identity and purpose.⁵⁴⁷

The concept of an Athenian revolution, intriguing though it is, is difficult to maintain: there is no information available as to what the people wanted to achieve and therefore, revolution is a misnomer. The Athenians chased away foreign attackers in defense of the newly established order. This cannot be called a revolution, however. There is no evidence that the Athenians aimed at overthrowing the existing order and introducing a new one. The role for Kleisthenes as revolutionary leader is also problematic. His reforms did break down the traditional recruiting ground for aristocratic factions, but that does not necessarily mean that he intended to empower the masses. It should be remembered that the people acted in his absence. To see the reforms of Kleisthenes and the people's revolt as one revolutionary process is therefore problematic. The popular uprising against Isagoras and Kleomenes provides a fascinating glimpse of direct popular participation in the politics of Athens. It is difficult not to see this instance of popular uprising in relation to the establishment of democracy. In archaic Athens at the time of Kleisthenes' reforms, a broad corporate strategy initiated by the Athenian *demos* can be discerned.

⁵⁴⁶ Ober, *The Athenian revolution*, 1996, 100

⁵⁴⁷ Ober, *The Athenian revolution*, 1996, 107

Little of the dynamics of archaic *poleis* allowed for the direct participation of the masses, other than as a passive audience. The poor were championed by a few aristocrats, but do not appear to have had an agenda of their own. It is not far-fetched to argue that a transformation in the people had to take place in order for them to take over the polity, as it happened in Athens. However, it should be kept in mind that Athenian democracy was not the end product of a one-way process. The dominance of the people was contested, exemplified by the oligarchic coups of 411 and 404. The revolt of the people is a significant manifestation of a broad corporate strategy for power, but no revolution. There is no reason to suppose that this protest would result in a stable democratic constitution. However, the reforms of Solon, the period of tyranny, and the reforms of Kleisthenes all appear to have contributed to increased popular participation in politics in Athens.

The coupling of tyranny to popular power may look like an oxymoron, but actually makes good sense in archaic Greek politics: the élite in their broad élite strategy emphasise egalitarian relations, but only among themselves, whereas the masses in their broad élite strategy are followers of strong leaders or reformers who have stepped out of the egalitarian circle of aristocrats. The result could be the dominance of a narrow élite strategy of the one, great leader. E.g. Peisistratos appears as a charismatic leader, and the people grant him a privileged position that he consolidated as a tyranny. His strategy takes on a narrow élite character when he pretends that Athena has chosen him as ruler of Athens. He takes up residence on the Acropolis and he is favoured by the gods. Therefore, he is above the broad élite strategy of the competing cliques of the other Athenian aristocrats. However, the tyrant's defeat of the other aristocrats could also lead to the dominance of a broad corporate strategy of an inclusive collective of citizens. I turn now to a rather different *polis* than Athens, viz. Mytilene on Lesbos, where the evidence from the poet Alkaios indicates struggle for power between a popular tyrant and disgruntled aristocrats.

3.4.4 Mytilene: Alkaios

The poet Alkaios wrote in a time of troubles with civil war, *stasis*, between the inhabitants of Mytilene on Lesbos. This *polis* was periodically governed by tyrants. Alkaios is an important source to aristocratic sentiments towards tyranny and provides a view from the losing side in *stasis*. The situation in Mytilene is usually interpreted as one of internal strife in the élite: the powerful family of the Penthilidai had dominated the *polis* until they fell from power around 650 BCE, apparently because they had maltreated the people. This was followed by a troubled period, and a tyrant, Melankhros, was defeated by the brothers of Alkaios together with a certain Pittakos.⁵⁴⁸ Pittakos was elected for a ten year period so that he could put the constitution in order. Alkaios went into exile, and wrote of his hometown there. He is furious with Pittakos and attacks him in poems for being of low birth.⁵⁴⁹ In the poems of Alkaios, fragmentary though they are, different strategies for power pursued by members of the élite can be seen, based in support of the people on the one hand or in the support of one's élite peers on the other.

The *polis* is central in Alkaios' poems and he writes of *stasis*, of the symposia, and also of citizen solidarity. He is insistent that the community of citizens equals the strength of the *polis*: Alkaios says that warlike men are a city's towers.⁵⁵⁰ Men who can defend themselves are the city, not stones or timbers or the skills of the builder.⁵⁵¹ Thus, it appears that the *polis* community is important to him. However, as will be seen, Alkaios is no friend of the people. The popular leader Pittakos is his stated

⁵⁴⁸ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 64-65

⁵⁴⁹ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 71-73

⁵⁵⁰ Alc. 112

⁵⁵¹ Alc. 426

enemy. It is clear from several fragments that he had a particular dislike for Pittakos. Pittakos sent Alkaios into exile and requites by reviling him as Potbelly. Alkaios longs to return from exile with his comrades and overthrow him.⁵⁵² Alkaios accuses Pittakos of being base-born and having married into a noble family.⁵⁵³ He rails at the Mytileans for having “established base-born Pittacus as tyrant of that gutless, ill-starred city, all of them loud in his praise”.⁵⁵⁴

Alkaios can be said to attack Pittakos for being an unworthy leader of Mytilene. He is described as ugly and base-born. Was this true? Alkaios’ description can be argued to be an attempt at assassination of character. Alkaios tries to convince his listeners that a leader like Pittakos, who sides with the people against the élite, will destroy the *polis*. Whether this was because Pittakos was a tyrant or because he was a former ally cannot be determined. It can be argued, however, that Alkaios is outraged with Pittakos exactly because he turned traitor on the aristocratic common cause of sharing control over Mytilene. It seems clear that Alkaios wanted to be active in politics at Mytilene than his exile and current status allows.

In a poem, Alkaios writes to a friend that he misses the city with its assemblies and councils: “I, poor wretch, live with the lot of a rustic, longing to hear the assembly being summoned, Agesilaidas, and the council”.⁵⁵⁵ He is evidently unhappy in exile and appears to have rejoiced in attending assemblies and taking part in the politics of

⁵⁵² Alc. 129

⁵⁵³ Alc. 75

⁵⁵⁴ Alc. 348, translation from Campbell, *Greek lyric I*, 2002 [1982], 383

⁵⁵⁵ Alc. 130b, translation from Campbell, *Greek lyric I*, 2002 [1982], 301

the *polis*. It appears that Pittakos is keeping Alkaios from what he regards as his rightful place in the *polis*, viz. taking part in meetings of the council and assembly.

Alkaios appears to be concerned for the well-being of the *polis*. In a fragment of a poem, he uses the metaphor of a ship-wreck to describe the *polis* troubled by *stasis*.⁵⁵⁶ In other fragments, he appears more aloof of the *polis* community and the references to an élite lifestyle are quite explicit: he describes a treasure of arms and armour worthy of the Homeric heroes.⁵⁵⁷ Alkaios celebrates the drinking of strong wine and inebriation in several poems.⁵⁵⁸ He also refers to donning garlands and perfuming the body.⁵⁵⁹ In another fragment, he claims that his brother had been a mercenary with the Babylonians.⁵⁶⁰ Thus, Alkaios is a complex poet. He is concerned for the *polis* and hates tyrants, but is clearly a connoisseur of an élite lifestyle and must be termed an aristocrat. He belongs with the political institutions of the *polis* and a life in public, but also enjoys the pleasures of private symposia.

The poems of Alkaios can be taken as evidence to how aristocratic groups strove for power. Alkaios attacks Pittakos for catering to the people and apparently wants to exclude the masses of Mytilene from taking part in ruling the polity. Pittakos is accused of betraying the fellow cause of the élite, by making himself sole ruler of Mytilene. This appears to be Alkaios' resentment of his former friend, because he does not share power with his erstwhile fellows. The élite of Mytilene evidently

⁵⁵⁶ Alc. 6; 208

⁵⁵⁷ Alc. 140

⁵⁵⁸ Alc. 346; 352; 366; 369

⁵⁵⁹ Alc. 362

⁵⁶⁰ Alc. 350

resented tyranny. Pittakos can be said to abandon the aristocratic broad élite strategy for power and makes himself sole ruler of Mytilene by the support of the people. Pittakos follows a narrow élite strategy, by making himself the only power in the *polis*, but attains power through a broad corporate strategy of rallying popular support. The people somehow or other chose Pittakos as their champion. Alkaios mentions the council and the assembly of Mytilene. It seems reasonable to infer that the people had access to a certain degree of participation in these institutions. Perhaps the decision to empower Pittakos was made in the assembly? It is evident that Pittakos sent dissident élites into exile and maintained the council and assembly, since Alkaios longs for these institutions in exile. Thus, the structure of power in Mytilene can be said to have been determined by a popular leader, a council, and an assembly. Members of the élite, who wanted to share power among themselves to the exclusion of the people, were sent in exile and the *polis* was dominated by a popular leader and the masses.

In the analysis of Podlecki, Alkaios is critical of tyrants and monarchs, because he was an “aristocrat to whom one-man rule, whatever it was called, would have been anathema”.⁵⁶¹ He points out that Alkaios took part in a failed attempt to defeat the tyrant Myrsilos at Mytilene.⁵⁶² Podlecki argues that Pittakos left the *hetaireia* of Alkaios and attained autocratic power through a “constitutionally orderly process of selection by the Mytilean *demos*”. This was because the people were tired of “destructive feuds among the noble families”.⁵⁶³ He points out that the convivial poems of Alkaios shows that he was part of an aristocratic environment of symposia and wine, with a strong degree of solidarity between peers.⁵⁶⁴ On the other hand, he

⁵⁶¹ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 66-67

⁵⁶² Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 68

⁵⁶³ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 70

⁵⁶⁴ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 75-76

argues, “it seems at least possible that Alkaios was able occasionally to rise above the selfish interests of his class and give expression to a belief, sincerely held, that the *demos* was ill-advised in acquiescing in Myrsilus’ and even legitimizing Pittacus’ autocracy”.⁵⁶⁵

Podlecki’s analysis does not take into consideration why Alkaios was against Pittakos. He seems to attribute Alkaios’ outrage at the *demos* for having promoted Pittakos to a concern for the well-being of the *demos*. Against Podlecki’s assessment, one may ask whether Alkaios’ indignation against one-man rule is an expression of concern for the people of Mytilene, or anger at the lack of aristocratic influence in running the *polis*. His indignation at the loss of a fellow fighter against tyranny indicates the latter. Thus, his concern is not for the people, but for the lack of élite influence. In this perspective, the symposia of the élite can be seen as a political front against the masses and the tyrant. Pittakos was reputed to have passed laws against drunken offences.⁵⁶⁶ This can be interpreted as a measure against the aristocrats; the drunken violence that accompanied the symposia was typical of aristocratic *hybris*. Also, symposia were good environments for political plotting. Thus, Pittakos appears as a friend of the people and an enemy of the élite. Alkaios, on the other hand, is by no measure a friend of the people, and his ideal seems to be a limited regime of the best families in the *polis*. He does claim to be concerned for the well-being of the *demos*, but this does not indicate that he wanted to grant the people any power. The people are in his opinion easily deceived. On the other hand, he longs to participate in the assembly, where presumably the hated *demos* took part. It is thus not easy to place him definitely within a particular political camp.

⁵⁶⁵ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 80

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1274b18

There is a tendency in the sources from the archaic period to refer to the masses only in relation to some great man, either a reformer or a tyrant. According to Alkaios, the people of Mytilene elected Pittakos to rule them.⁵⁶⁷ Similarly, Peisistratos started his career as tyrant with a bodyguard he received from the people.⁵⁶⁸ This is an important point to have in mind when reading sources to Greek politics of the archaic period: from an élite perspective the masses are only visible in relation to their leaders. Implicitly, these leaders are in opposition to the egalitarian circle of the élite. This is the most likely source of Alkaios' anger at Pittakos: he has broken with the broad élite strategy of the aristocratic families and claimed power for himself by catering to the people.

The hostility of Alkaios towards the people of Mytilene and their leader Pittakos is a clear example of how élite members in archaic *poleis* view themselves as modest and egalitarian, whereas the masses are condemned as inferior and greedy and the tyrant a traitor to his aristocratic peers. This kind of dynamics was also seen with Peisistratos, who became a rallying figure for the masses (3.4.3). Tyranny thus appears to have led to greater cohesion of the *demos* and in the long run to have facilitated popular participation in politics in archaic *poleis* at the expense of the aristocrats.

3.4.5 Megara: Theognis

In Athens and Mytilene (3.4.3; 3.4.4), tyranny and popular power appears as related phenomena, as two possible outcomes of aristocratic struggles for power and fragmentation of the élite. In the following, a rather different type of conflict will be

⁵⁶⁷ Alc. 348

⁵⁶⁸ Solon 11

investigated, that between the so-called good and the base, the *agathoi* and the *kakoi*, as seen in the poems of the 6th century poet Theognis of Megara. Several of his poems take the form of advice to Kyrnos, a young aristocrat. The identity of Theognis is disputed, but I will not enter this discussion here. Rather, Theognis will be taken as representative of an aristocratic outlook on *stasis*, an ideology that is expressed in the poems attributed to Theognis, regardless of their true author.⁵⁶⁹ As will be seen in the following, the aristocratic ideology of Theognis' poems is instructive for an analysis of the political culture of archaic *poleis*.

Theognis states that never have the *agathoi* destroyed a *polis*, but the *kakoi* are without restraint and adjudicate falsely for their own gain, preparing the way for civil strife and tyranny.⁵⁷⁰ He is full of derision for new people in power and states that "this city is still a city, but the people are different, people who formerly knew neither justice nor laws, but wore tattered goatskins about their sides and lived outside this city like deer. And now they are noble [...], while those who were noble before are now base". The poem continues with warnings against befriending any of these deceitful townsmen that know "neither the distinctive marks of the base nor those of the noble".⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ This position is argued by Gregory Nagy, who proposes that "the figure of Theognis represents a cumulative synthesis of Megarian poetic traditions" (Nagy, "Theognis and Megara: a poet's vision of his city," 1985, 33). Similarly, Andrew L. Ford argues that the so-called seal of Theognis, mentioned in his poems, are meant to preserve and authenticate a codified collection of standards and values for the *agathoi* (Ford, "The seal of Theognis: the politics of authorship in archaic Greece", 1985, 89) This is also argued by Lowell Edmunds, who regards Theognis as a traditional authority rather than an historical Megarian aristocrat, an aristocratic personality in the sense of a *persona* created by the poems and in the poems attributed to Theognis (Edmunds, "The seal of Theognis," 1997, 40). These analyses of Theognis solve the problem of which poems were truly archaic and which were added later, by establishing Theognis as a traditional authority, an ideological position expressed in poetry, rather than seeking a true historical figure. In my opinion, this is a very useful approach for an analysis of archaic elite ideology and politics.

⁵⁷⁰ Thgn. *Book I* 39-52

⁵⁷¹ Thgn. *Book I* 53-68, translation by Gerber, *Greek elegiac poetry*, 1999, 183

From Theognis' poems, it is evident that status could change rapidly in archaic *poleis*. This is probably related to changes in wealth. Life in the *polis* is urban and sophisticated, in contrast to life in the countryside. Apparently, new people had achieved high status in Megara, but how this happened is not clear. They are described as coming from the countryside, but the reason remains obscure. Theognis can be interpreted as evidence that *stasis* could take the form of fighting between groups of citizens of the *polis*, where one group of the élite was deriding another as inferior: from Theognis, it is clear that an important line of conflict in Megara was drawn between the good and the bad, the *agathoi* and the *kakoi*. This may be interpreted as the élite against the masses. However, in Theognis, it seems more likely that the opposing terms refer to rivalling groups within the élite, between those of noble birth and those of less illustrious families. In Theognis, much is made of the importance of not mingling with base people. Several of his poems are addressed to a certain Kyrnos, a young aristocrat. It would be rather superfluous to instruct a young member of the élite not to associate with the poor. To instruct him to stay away from those of bad family would make better sense.

In Podlecki's assessment, Theognis may have been the Solon of Megara, but without his "humanity and breadth of vision". His poems "record the autobiographical *cri de Coeur* of an outmoded and displaced aristocrat".⁵⁷² Podlecki points out that Theognis' ethics divides sharply between the virtue (*aretē*) of the few and the baseness (*kakia*) of the many. The highly valued *aretē* is the preserve of those who are of noble birth.⁵⁷³ In Podlecki's analysis, Theognis is concerned about the threat of *hybris* from the base people, who are deceiving the *demos* and lead the *polis* to perdition: whereas the good have never destroyed a *polis*, the base desire tyranny. Podlecki points out that

⁵⁷² Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 143-144

⁵⁷³ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 146-148

the motivation of the base is not known, but that Theognis is possibly warning against fragmentation of the élite and that too much power should accrue to one faction.⁵⁷⁴

The rivalry between established aristocratic élites and new groups with wealth who invaded on their privileges, seem to be the subject matter in the poetry of Theognis, and not a conflict between the élites and the masses. Thus, I agree with Podlecki's assessment of Theognis' position in Megara, although I do not see him as a parallel to Solon: there is no evidence to Theognis' role as a reformer.

The situation in Megara seems to involve conflicts between factions of the élite more than it concerns a conflict between the élite and the masses. The base people are apparently leading the *demos*, but they are not necessarily of the *demos*. What these base élite members wished to achieve is not mentioned by Theognis. Perhaps they were wealthy non-aristocrats who wanted access to office and positions of power in the *polis* and used the *demos* to gain leverage. If the suggestion that they were a faction of the élite is correct, the strategy for power suggested by Theognis entails the closing of ranks among the aristocrats to maintain a limited ruling upper class. This is a broad élite strategy for power. The *demos* appear as a threat to this arrangement, because they could lend support to the base, rogue élites with no respect for the aristocrats. The *demos* is not visible as agents with their own strategy for power, however, and what they wanted to achieve in supporting the base is not clear. Perhaps they wanted to put an end to aristocratic privilege? This must remain speculation, however, since Theognis really does not say. What he does provide, however, is a clear indication of the status-differences in the *polis* and how this was used actively in

⁵⁷⁴ Podlecki, *The early Greek poets and their times*, 1984, 149-150

rhetoric by aristocrats to brand opponents as not fit to wield power. Newcomers in power are accused of destroying the *polis*.

3.5 Politics, the *polis* and the people

The investigation of archaic *poleis* as networks of strategies for power reveals that there were great variations between the different *poleis*, for all their similarities of structure. A *polis* has a council and an assembly, as well as various other offices, and these institutions and offices are the reserve of citizens. However, the relative power of the institutions varied greatly between *poleis*. There is a danger of taking for granted that popular rule through mass assemblies was the usual situation in Greek *poleis*, because we know so much about Athens. Also, there is a danger of seeing the political dynamics in Greek *poleis* as one between oligarchs and democrats, because this is the kind of conflict that is discussed in the classical historians. It must be emphasised, however, that the archaic *polis* is an unclear concept between aristocracy and citizen community. No uniform constitution can be said to describe *the polis*.

Popular power existed in archaic *poleis*, in the form of support of leading figures. Popular hegemony is harder to find. The *demos* did take political action and did wield power and influence, but it was rarely *kyrios* in the *politeia*. What is more often the case is that power was in the hands of a broad élite of important families. This élite was urban, as seen in the example of Mytilene, where Alkaios praises the community of his peers in perfumed symposia (3.4.4). This élite also controlled the institutions for decision-making. They were threatened, however, by reformers or popular leaders who could usurp power and establish a narrow élite rule of their own family and friends. It seems like the broad ruling élite was initially defined by birth, and then increasingly by wealth, as at Athens with the reforms of Solon and his property-

classes. In practice, the broad *élite* became a narrow corporation open to outsiders who were wealthy enough to qualify. However, income was predominantly from agriculture, not trade, and Greek communities put emphasis on ownership of land in their definition of the citizens.

From the poems of Solon, Alkaios and Theognis, civil strife between different groups in archaic *poleis* can be seen in all its rancour. These poets were members of local *élites*, and they can be seen as both representing and portraying attitudes and strategies for power in the *polis*. These sources are interesting for the dynamics of power they display as well as giving hints about political institutions in archaic *poleis*.

The social conflicts that are visible through the archaic poems are not predominantly between the masses and the *élite*, but between *élites*, whether competing families or traditional and new *élites*. The masses, on the other hand, come into view as the supporters of reformers or tyrants. Tyrants and reformers were in essence the same kind of people, aristocrats who stepped out of the circle of their peers, and became champions of the people. There are details in the stories of these reformers that also indicate that these leaders could be elected by the people, making it likely that some kind of popular decision-making was in place behind the rise to power of individual leaders.

Oligarchy was a relatively late concept in the development of Greek political vocabulary. A definition of oligarchy can be found in the Persian debate of Herodotos from the 5th century. He discusses democracy and monarchy together with oligarchy. Robin Osborne argues, however, that oligarchy is not actually discussed in this debate. Rather, the dichotomy of democracy and tyranny is emphasised. In Osborne's interpretation, oligarchy first became a defined concept after the period of coups in

Athens from 412 to 404.⁵⁷⁵ This is a good observation and fits the situation described in the archaic poems, where aristocracy, tyranny, or *stasis* appear as the political alternatives, not oligarchy or democracy. Martin Ostwald defines oligarchy as when those wealthy enough to have the leisure for politics rule the *polis* or at least dominates it.⁵⁷⁶ According to Jochen Bleicken, oligarchy was a concept developed in opposition to Athenian democracy. This concept was a continuation of the archaic concept *eunomia*, which traditionally stood for the élite dominance of the *polis*.⁵⁷⁷ Oligarchy can be analysed as the rule of a propertied, leisured élite. However, an important difference from *eunomia* is the noble status of the élite in archaic *poleis* that is not an issue in oligarchies. I agree, however, that oligarchy must be considered a classical concept. The main political divisions in archaic *poleis* were defined by the aristocrats, against hybristic élite members or the masses.

The ideology of the masses is not visible in the sources at all, if they even had any. That does not mean that their actions cannot be analysed as a separate and independent strategy for power. As seen above (3.4.3), mass action against the élite factions was what brought popular power to the fore at Athens. Their strategy for power could succeed because there already were institutions for collective decision-making available that could be used against enemies of popular power, in particular the jury courts. Empowering the people could only have a lasting effect when it was corroborated by collective institutions for power. These institutions were important parts of the structure of archaic *poleis*. In the archaic period, as seen from Sparta, Athens, and Mytilene, *poleis* became consolidated citizen communities where commoners were included in the political structure. By establishing strong central

⁵⁷⁵ Osborne, "Changing the discourse," 2003, 252-253

⁵⁷⁶ Ostwald, *Oligarchia*, 2000

⁵⁷⁷ Bleicken, "Zur Entstehung der Verfassungstypologie im 5. Jahrhundert v.Chr.," 1979, 148-172

institutions, the *poleis* could function as political communities, containing and circumscribing aristocratic infighting.

3.6 Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to discern strategies for power from the epic and archaic poets. In my analyses, I have found evidence for political actions corresponding to four strategies for power that together form a network that creates the dynamics of archaic *poleis*. There was no one strategy dominating any *polis* throughout its history, but several at work simultaneously. The broad corporate strategy is the one least visible, i.e. cases where the people rule collectively through regular meetings of mass institutions, in assemblies and assembly courts. This was discernible in Athens after Kleisthenes, when all citizens had equal access to the council of five hundred. It was also visible, however, in the popular uprising against Isagoras and Kleomenes in 508/7 (cf. 3.4.3). From Sparta, the broad corporate strategy was possible in the popular assembly. However, the council of elders attempted to curtail their initiative, making a narrow corporate strategy the more dominant. With time, this developed into a broad élite strategy, where only the ephors and *gerousia*, including the kings, were influential in politics (cf. 3.4.1).

The narrow corporate strategy could be seen in Solonian Athens, where the wealthy landowners were granted access to office. This replaced the dominance of the broad élite strategy of the aristocratic families that had monopolised the archonship (cf. 3.4.2). It is of note that the broad élite strategy is the dominant strategy in the Homeric epics, forming an ideological backdrop for local élites in archaic *poleis* (cf. 3.3.1; 3.3.3).

There are but few examples of a narrow élite strategy for power in archaic *poleis*. The clearest example is tyranny, in particular the tyranny of Peisistratos: he claimed to be the divinely favoured ruler of Athens and thus elevated above the squabbles of the rest of the aristocracy (cf. 3.4.3).

An important feature of the developments in Greek *poleis* in the archaic period is the establishment of regular meetings of the popular assemblies and councils. This can be seen in Sparta and Athens (cf. 3.4.1-3). Through these regular meetings, the people had a realistic chance of participating in the politics of their community. Only by the formal establishment of the power of these collective organs of decision-making could popular power become a reality, independent of the councils of the élite.

I turn now to the evidence for strategies of power in Near Eastern polities, with an emphasis on collective decision-making and its place in the political structure.

4. Local politics in network states

4.1 Introduction

Throughout Mesopotamian history, ambitious conquerors managed to unite city-states and pastoralist communities into network states.⁵⁷⁸ In these states, the political centre was no longer the individual urban centres of city-states, but the royal court.

Governors were posted in cities and garrisons established in order to control the territory of the new state. Local political life became subsumed under a distant centre. However, as will be discussed in this chapter, there is evidence that local communities retained their local decision-making bodies. Through these bodies, the urban and pastoral communities inside network states could negotiate their position vis-à-vis the central authorities.

In the following, I will first look at texts from Babylonia, and then from Mari. These two network states were, as will be seen, quite different. Babylonia was placed in the ancient urban heartland of Mesopotamia, controlling a number of formerly independent city-states. Mari on the other hand was the seat of kings ruling over predominantly tribal communities based in towns or living as nomadic pastoralists. The evidence from Babylonia and Mari offers examples of several local institutions of self-government and their relations to the central authorities. How did local communities negotiate their position with central authorities? How were local communities integrated in the political structure of ancient Near Eastern network states? What was the role of the people in local politics? These problems will be

⁵⁷⁸ The term network state is used here to describe these states, rather than empire or kingdom, because the central authority was weak and intersected with local authorities. Thus, the kings of Mari or Babylon did not rule territories with coherent borders, but networks consisting of cities and areas under their overarching authority that retained their own local decision-making bodies (cf. Barjamovic, "Chapter 4: Mesopotamian empires," 2012, 23-24)

examined throughout this chapter, with an emphasis on collective decision-making bodies of cities, towns, and pastoralist communities of the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia. The strategies for power pursued by citizens and their relations with local and central authorities will be examined in particular.

4.2 The Old Babylonian state and local institutions

In the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1894-1595 BCE), Babylon was ruled by an Amorite dynasty of kings. At the height of its power, the Old Babylonian network state stretched from the Persian Gulf to Assur in the north, from Eshnunna in the east to Mari in Syria in the west.⁵⁷⁹ It reached its greatest extent under king Hammurapi. However, this great territory was coming apart already under Hammurapi's son and successor Samsuiluna. Knowledge of Babylonian society and politics comes predominantly from letters, legal documents and inscriptions. The Old Babylonian strata of Babylon itself are under the modern ground-water table, but there are archives found at other sites in Babylonia that shed light on the period.

The palace and the temples were the most important institutions in Old Babylonian society. The palace was the highest court of law, and because of its importance and wealth it employed the most highly skilled people in the kingdom. Employment in the palace has been called the "Babylonian dream", because life as an official or scribe meant escape from agricultural labour and menial toil.⁵⁸⁰ Every city had temples and these were important expressions of their identity. The identification of the city-gods and the cities were expressed through the main temples; the homes of the deities.

⁵⁷⁹ Goddeeris, "The Old Babylonian economy," 2007, 203

⁵⁸⁰ Sallaberger, "The palace and the temple in Babylonia," 2007, 270

However, Mesopotamian temples were not exclusively places of prayer: temples were like giant households that owned fields and workshops and employed a high number of workers, both free men and slaves. Several people were attached to the temple organisation in one way or the other, not only priests and officials, but also manufacturers and labourers, as well as private individuals and groups with various rights and duties to the sacred households.⁵⁸¹ Temple prebends, the right to parts of the income of temples, were attractive privileges that could also be sold and belonged to private people as well as groups.⁵⁸²

The palace and temples played important roles in the Old Babylonian economy. The existence of private enterprise alongside these institutions has been a moot point, because the economy has been studied mostly from texts found in palace and temple archives.⁵⁸³ Recent research has shown that private entrepreneurs were assigned to take on tasks for the temple or palace in the Old Babylonian period.⁵⁸⁴ In the interpretation of Goddeeris, the three economic sectors of palace and temple households and those of private individuals became increasingly interconnected.⁵⁸⁵ This is also argued by Marc Van De Mieroop, who finds evidence that residents in Old Babylonian Ur issued loans on behalf of temples as well as being involved in other aspects of the daily affairs of temples.⁵⁸⁶ I find these interpretations of private entrepreneurs in the economic activities of Old Babylonian palaces and temples convincing and I agree that the Old Babylonian economy was not based exclusively in

⁵⁸¹ Sallaberger, "The palace and the temple in Babylonia," 2007, 268-269

⁵⁸² Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1977 [1964], 190

⁵⁸³ Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1977 [1964], 84

⁵⁸⁴ Goddeeris, "The Old Babylonian economy," 2007, 205-206

⁵⁸⁵ Goddeeris, "The Old Babylonian economy," 2007, 204

⁵⁸⁶ Van De Mieroop, "Old Babylonian Ur: portrait of an ancient Mesopotamian city," 1992, 128

the activities of temples or the palace. Citizens played an important role in the economy of Old Babylonian institutions. Was this also the case in politics?

As will be argued in this chapter, there were institutions of city neighbourhoods and local communities where private citizens could participate in decision-making. Thus, the existence of a private sector in Old Babylonian society alongside the palace and temples also applies to local administration and politics. Scholars are not agreed on the nature of relations between central authorities and the local communities. The fact that the majority of texts concerning local institutions come from the spheres of temples or the palace is a challenge to the idea that there was a private sphere in local politics. This will be discussed further below. First, the evidence from Old Babylonian cities will be discussed.

4.3 Evidence for collective decision-making in Old Babylonian texts

The majority of Old Babylonian texts that mention local decision-making bodies are cuneiform tablets with verdicts from jury courts. Also, there is the monumental inscription known as the *Codex Hammurapi*, as well as the collection of laws known as the *Laws of Eshnunna*.⁵⁸⁷ As an illustration of the difficulties involved in understanding Old Babylonian society, I will first briefly discuss a famous passage

⁵⁸⁷ The nature of the *Codex Hammurapi* as a compilation of real laws has been questioned: Jean Bottéro argues that the *Codex Hammurapi* is not a code of law, but a “scientific work devoted to justice, it is at the same time the expression of a political idea in which justice had to occupy the first place” (Bottéro, “The “Code” of Hammurabi,” 1992, 169). Zainah Bahrani points out that “it is not each case that is at issue here, but law itself. Therefore, we can say that the subject of this monument is Law itself, as an abstract phenomenological concept” (Bahrani, “The Babylonian visual image,” 2007, 160). These are reasonable assessments in my view, as it can be argued that the very act of compiling and publishing a collection of laws is to establish Hammurapi as king of justice, receiving kingship from Marduk and protecting the weak from the strong. Regardless of whether the *Codex Hammurapi* was a formal code of law or not, it still remains a valuably historical source to Old Babylonian society, its institutions and practices.

from the *Codex Hammurapi*: §5 says that if a *dajānum*, “judge”,⁵⁸⁸ has reached a decision and put it on a sealed tablet, but later changes this decision, he is to pay twelve times the amount involved in the case, and they shall expel him from his office as judge in the assembly (*ina puhrim*) and he is banned from sitting with the judges in a case.⁵⁸⁹ What does this passage tell us about the Old Babylonian legal system, the role of assemblies, and the participation of citizens in decision-making?

As an isolated passage, *Codex Hammurapi* §5 really cannot tell us very much. There appears to have been some kind of assembly called *puhrum*, but the passage says little about what kind of assembly this was or who participated in it. This is unfortunately the case with several of the verdicts recorded on cuneiform tablets, as well: there are terms that appear to refer to councils, assemblies, and officials, but how the Old Babylonian legal system worked is nevertheless difficult to understand. Much information that is unavailable to scholars was implicit for the scribes who wrote the tablets on which modern reconstructions rely. As will be seen, a bewildering amount of terms existed for legal institutions. Terms for e.g. assembly varied from city to city in Babylonia and even within cities and the relations of one to the other are difficult to disentangle.

For all these difficulties, admirable attempts have been made to reconstruct the Old Babylonian legal system from tablets containing verdicts, as well as from the *Codex Hammurapi*. Arnold Walther’s *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen* (1917) and Édouard Cuq’s *Études sur le droit Babylonien* (1929) are indispensable reference works for students of Old Babylonian society. In this chapter, much of the discussion

⁵⁸⁸ *CAD D*, 1959, 28-33

⁵⁸⁹ *Cod. Ham.* §5: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 166; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 397-399

of institutions and officials is based on Walther and Cuq's definitions of Old Babylonian terms from legal documents and the *Codex Hammurapi*. The most important terms for the present discussion of local power are *puhrum*, "assembly", *rabiānum*, "mayor", *šībūtum*, "elders", *ālum*, "city", *kārum*, "quay"⁵⁹⁰, and *dajānum*, "judge", often appearing as a college of several judges. It is important to note that different institutions and officials frequently operate together in the texts. As will be seen, on the basis of Old Babylonian texts, it is possible to argue several different interpretations of the structure of Old Babylonian society. There is much scholarly debate on how to assess the evidence for local powers. In the following, I will discuss the relevant Old Babylonian terms for officials, assemblies, and councils from decision-making situations in a range of Old Babylonian cities, before investigating the position of local bodies in the Old Babylonian legal system and the role of the citizens in them.

All the texts referred to in the following are either Old Babylonian cuneiform tablets containing reports on adjudication and decision-making or passages from the *Codex Hammurapi* and *Laws of Eshnunna*. I will also investigate a literary discussion of decision-making processes, a text known as the *Nippur Trial for Homicide* (4.3.5). I will indicate where I change from law texts and legal documents to literary sources.

4.3.1 The *rabiānum* or "mayor"

In Old Babylonian documents, an official called a *rabiānum* is frequently mentioned together with decision-making bodies called "the city" and "the elders". He also appears on lists of witnesses in judiciary texts. The term *rabiānum* is often translated

⁵⁹⁰ The term *kārum* is often used in Old Babylonian sources about associations of merchants taking care of their business, and not the physical quay itself, cf. Kraus, "'Kārum", ein Organ städtischer Selbstverwaltung," 1982, 32. It is the *kārum* in the sense of a group of people that concerns us here.

with the title “mayor” or “burgomaster” of cities and has the general meaning of “the chief”.⁵⁹¹ A particular difficulty concerning the *rabiānum* is to define the source of his power; whether he was a representative of the city community or an official appointed by the central authorities with no prior connection to the decision-making bodies over which he presided. In the following, the evidence for the *rabiānum* as presiding official over collective decision-making bodies and as witness will be investigated, to determine whether he belongs to the municipal authorities of the local community or if he is an externally imposed royal official.

In the *Codex Hammurapi*, the *rabiānum* is mentioned together with the *ālum* in two consecutive passages: *Codex Hammurapi* §23 states that in the case of robbery where no perpetrator has been found, the robbed “citizen” (*awīlum*)⁵⁹² shall declare himself “before the god” (*mahar ilim*), and then the *ālum u rabiānum*, “city and mayor”, shall

⁵⁹¹ Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian history*, 1976, 73

⁵⁹² The usual meaning of Akkadian *awīlum* is simply “man” (*CAD* AII, 1968, 48-57). The higher status of an *awīlum* to a *muškēnum* in the *Codex Hammurapi* made Theophile Meek translate *awīlum* as “seignior”, a free man of standing, contrasted to the *muškēnum*, “a commoner” (Meek, “The Code of Hammurabi,” in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 166 n. 39). This distinction has been much debated by scholars, however, in particular in what sense a *muškēnum* was inferior to an *awīlum*. Against suggestions that the *muškēnum* were palace dependents, F. R. Kraus forcefully defends the interpretation of Meek that *muškēnum* means “a commoner”. He points out that the *muškēnum* in the *Codex Hammurapi* is always discussed relative to the palace (*ekallum*) and persons designated *awīlum*, but never alone, taking this to indicate that the term *muškēnum* covers all the inhabitants that did not belong to the temple or the palace (Kraus, *Vom mesopotamischen Menschen*, 1973, 105-109). In his interpretation, an *awīlum* belongs to an élite with connections to the palace (ibid. 117). A *muškēnum* on the other hand has no duties to the palace or the temples (ibid. 123). Kraus is supported by Reuven Yaron, who emphasises that a *muškēnum* had no duties to the state and therefore received no special protection from the central authorities. This can be seen throughout the *Codex Hammurapi*, where the *muškēnum* is systematically underprivileged compared to the *awīlum* (Yaron, *The laws of Eshnunna*, 1988, 137-142). On the other hand, she points out, the people designated *awīlum* are not identical to the palace, nor were they all connected to the temple. The sources of the distinction of this group are not well known (ibid. 151-154). The arguments of Kraus and Yaron seem to have become the *communis opinio*. In a recent handbook, Gebhard Selz argues that the *awīlum* was a person with considerable obligations to the state. In his interpretation, “the members of this class possessed full rights and the state was responsible for their welfare” (Selz, “Power, economy and social organization in Babylonia,” 2007, 283). In return for this, the *awīlum* had duties, such as the *ilku*-service, a kind of feudal obligation. This was often transferred to people of lower social status, that of a *muškēnum*, who did such tasks in return for payment. Selz emphasises that a *muškēnum*, often translated “commoner”, had no formal obligations towards the state, and therefore could expect few favours in times of crisis (ibid.). The interpretation of *awīlum* and *muškēnum* as groups of different status according to their relationship to the state seems to me reasonable and well founded in the *Codex Hammurapi* (but for an interpretation of *awīlum* as member of a ruling class independent of the palace, see von Dassow, “Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies,” 2011, 211-217). This will be discussed further below (4.4). Suffice it to state here that the *awīlum* belonged to an élite and had formal connections to the central authorities. That does not mean that they were all palace or temple dependents, but they had a status that came from their obligations to the state. I will therefore translate *awīlum* in Old Babylonian texts with “citizen”, in the meaning of a person with formal rights in and obligations to the state.

make good the lost property.⁵⁹³ In the next passage, §24, it says that the *ālum u rabiānum*, “city and mayor”, shall pay one mina to “his people” (*ana nišišu*) in case the victim of the robbery was killed.⁵⁹⁴

Who was the *rabiānum*? What was his authority? In the two above passages of the *Codex Hammurapi*, it is evident that the *rabiānum* served a function in the legal system together with the *ālum*, “the city”, in the sense of a local authority. As will be discussed further below (4.3.2-3), *ālum* was used of collective decision-making bodies. The *rabiānum* in §§ 23 and 24 are responsible for local matters together with the *ālum*, including reimbursement of stolen goods. Thus, they are evidently local authorities. The collective responsibilities of the *rabiānum* and *ālum* indicate that the first belong with the latter. However, there is no indication in the *Codex Hammurapi* whether the *rabiānum* came from the *ālum* or was imposed on the *ālum* by the king.

The *rabiānum* is not only mentioned with the *ālum*. In legal documents, he also operated with collectives known under different names. In *CT VI 47b*, dated to the reign of Hammurapi, the *rabiānum* reaches a verdict together with the *kārum* of Sippar in a case concerning a slave girl belonging to a divorced woman who is deceased. Now that the woman is dead, her ex-husband claims the slave girl, in breach of earlier arrangements.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹³ *Cod. Ham.* §23: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 167); Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 420-422

⁵⁹⁴ *Cod. Ham.* §24: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 167); Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 422-423

⁵⁹⁵ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 192-193. 713. *CT VI 47b*.

In *CT VI 47b*, it is evident that the *rabiānum* and *kārum* in Sippar worked together in a legal capacity. The *kārum* is usually the harbour area as well as the merchants' association.⁵⁹⁶ Interestingly, the *kārum* in Sippar does not appear to reach decisions in merchant matters specifically, but instead functions as a collective decision-making body for adjudication. The relation between *kārum* and *rabiānum* is not clear. He was probably a kind of chairman. It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that the *kārum* in Sippar is analogous to the *ālum* of the *Codex Hammurapi*.

There are texts that mention the *rabiānum* as witness. In *TD 73*, dated to the reign of Sin-muballit, the *rabiānum*, “mayor”, is mentioned among the witnesses in a case concerning ownership of fields.⁵⁹⁷ In *TD 155*, the *rabiānum* is mentioned among the witnesses in a case concerning the leasing of fields.⁵⁹⁸ In *VS VII 149*, reporting the verdict in a case concerning lost property, the *rabiānum* is among the witnesses.⁵⁹⁹

Thus, it can be seen that the *rabiānum* was a witness in court in cases concerning people of the city and their property. He not only participated as a chairman in meetings, but was included among witnesses, indicating his local high standing. What was the nature of his position? According to Edouard Cuq, the *rabiānum* was a “président d’une assemblée de justice composée des anciens ou des notables de la ville”.⁶⁰⁰ Thus, in his interpretation, the *rabiānum* was a *primus inter pares* of the most important people in the city and the city elders. The interpretation of the

⁵⁹⁶ *CAD K*, 1971, 231-237

⁵⁹⁷ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* V, 1911, 22. 1159. *TD 73*. The case was apparently solved by river ordeal, a special type of arbitration that involved swimming across the Euphrates

⁵⁹⁸ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* V, 1911, 26. 1178. *TD 155*.

⁵⁹⁹ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 201. 736. *VS VII 149 (VAT 6364)*

⁶⁰⁰ Cuq, *Études sur le droit Babylonien*, 1929, 356

rabiānum's position as that of chairman or president seems to me a reasonable suggestion, as the *rabiānum* is the only individually mentioned person involved in the processes of adjudication referred to above. Cuq does not go into details about how he was appointed, however. Was he appointed by the king of Babylon to supervise the decision-making bodies or was the *rabiānum* a locally elected chairman? As will be seen, scholars do not agree concerning the source of authority of the *rabiānum*.

Scholars agree that the *rabiānum* had a mediating role between local decision-making bodies and the royal court. They disagree over the source of his mandate, however. Hanoch Reviv suggests that “the *rabiānum* was a salaried royal appointee, who was responsible for the elders and the settlement”.⁶⁰¹ Thus, in Reviv’s interpretation, the king placed the *rabiānum* over the local community and he was an official who answered to the king concerning local decisions and verdicts. This interpretation has not found much support, however. Scholars have rather attempted to find the origins of the *rabiānum*'s authority in the local community. Andrea Seri suggests that the *rabiānum* was appointed by local decision-making institutions to act as the representative of these local powers.⁶⁰² Marten Stol points out that there is evidence that some towns had not one *rabiānum*, but several that were active at the same time. He interprets this as indicating that a town had several “aldermen”, of which the *rabiānum* was the “burgomaster”, and suggests that the latter office rotated among the elders.⁶⁰³ This is an interesting suggestion. However, as Dominique Charpin demonstrates, there is no evidence that the office rotated *annually*. Quite the contrary, where rotation is in evidence, the office was held for several years.⁶⁰⁴ The close connection between collective bodies and the *rabiānum* and the local focus of the

⁶⁰¹ Reviv, *The elders in ancient Israel*, 1989, 156

⁶⁰² Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 75

⁶⁰³ Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian history*, 1976, 80

⁶⁰⁴ Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 174

decisions they make implies that the authority of the *rabiānum* was that of a *primus inter pares* in the community, not of the citizens as such, but of the elders and notables. This makes the *rabiānum* appear more as a local representative than a royal appointee, meaning that Reviv's interpretation cannot be maintained.

The fact that the *rabiānum* reached decisions with the *ālum*, the *kārum*, as well as “the elders”, which will be discussed further below (4.3.3), suggests to me that the assessments of Cuq (1929), Stol (1976), and Seri (2005) are correct: the *rabiānum* was a local leader and not a centrally appointed officer. The role of the *rabiānum*, as seen from the cases referred to above, was to participate in reaching decisions in local matters concerning the disputed legal status of slaves, making compensation for robbery, and being witness in cases concerning disputed property. To reach fair verdicts that would have been accepted by the rest of the decision-makers and the local community would have required good knowledge of the community and a personal acquaintance with the other decision-makers. The *rabiānum* therefore appears as an official who originated from the same body of people that he was leading. This means that he was either a member of a narrow corporation similar to a body of elders or a broad élite of local notables. Whether “the city” and “the elders” were exclusive or inclusive corporations or élite groups will be discussed further below (4.3.3). Although he was not a royally appointed salaried official, however, the *rabiānum* must have had some sort of official standing, as well as his local authority, and was probably responsible to the king for the verdicts that were reached by “the city” or “the elders”.

As has been emphasised in this section, the local leader, *rabiānum*, frequently appears together with a collective of people that reach decisions. It appears that the judicial system of Old Babylonian cities was based not on the verdict of one person, but on

collective decisions. I turn now to an investigation of the collective decision-making bodies mentioned in Old Babylonian texts.

4.3.2 The *puhrum* or “assembly”

The Old Babylonian term *puhrum* means gathering or assembly.⁶⁰⁵ It is found in the *Codex Hammurapi*, as well as in legal documents from a range of Old Babylonian cities including Dilbat, Nippur and Sippar. There were also judges present at the *puhrum*. The nature of the *puhrum* is disputed. Was it a general assembly, an institution of the royal system of justice, or an informal term used for any kind of meeting?

In the *Codex Hammurapi* (§5), as mentioned above (4.3), the *puhrum* appears as an assembly for adjudication where judges reached their verdicts. The composition and authority of this assembly is difficult to determine. I will now discuss the *puhrum* and the judges in more detail. A judge is called a *dajānum*.⁶⁰⁶ In Old Babylonian law codes and in legal texts, the judges are often referred to in the plural.⁶⁰⁷ They appear to have reached verdicts in colleges. How they were recruited is not known. The *CAD* states that in the Old Babylonian period, “the courts seem to have been either permanent (in the larger cities) or composed of citizens and city officials, often under the presidency of a representative of the king [...]. The president of the court (in OB [Old Babylonian]) had no special title, and could be called simply *dajānum* [...]. Professional judges were at all times extremely rare. In OB, the court was in session at a special gate of the city or at the temple but in this case solely for the purpose of

⁶⁰⁵ *CAD P*, 2005, 485-493

⁶⁰⁶ *CAD D*, 1959, 28-33

⁶⁰⁷ *CAD D*, 1959, 29

making use of the sanctity of the locality or of certain cultic objects so as to establish the truth of the depositions of the parties”.⁶⁰⁸ Édouard Cuq points out that there are letters indicating that the king could summon the judges to Babylon and argues that this is evidence that the judges were subordinate to the king.⁶⁰⁹ In my opinion, Cuq’s assessment of the status of the judges is correct. Of course, all subjects of Babylonia were subordinate to the king, but the judges appear to have been instated by the king. Support for the interpretation of ties between the king and the judges can be found in the statement in the *Codex Hammurapi* (§5) that they could be expelled from office. This indicates a formal status as judge. At least the presiding judge can be assumed to have been a royal official. Does this mean that the *puhrum* was a kind of jury court or popular assembly presided over by royal officials?

§5 of the *Codex Hammurapi* shows that the judges sat in a *puhrum*, “assembly”. However, did they sit in the assembly as a separate authority, or did the judges assemble in the *puhrum*? The *dajānum* who reopened a sealed verdict appears to have been alone in his crime, and therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that the passage concerns one *dajānum*, and not a gathering of them. It is not clear, however, that he had reached this verdict in the assembly; rather, it appears that he was expelled from his office as judge in the assembly. The passage can therefore indicate that a judge who broke the terms of his duty was found guilty and condemned in the assembly. Whether the judges always presided over the assembly is not clear from this passage.

A further passage from the *Codex Hammurapi* indicates that the *puhrum* was indeed a place where sentences were proclaimed: *Codex Hammurapi* §202 states that if an *awīlum*, “citizen” has struck another *awīlum* of higher rank on the cheek he is to be

⁶⁰⁸ CAD D, 1959, 33

⁶⁰⁹ Cuq, *Études sur le droit Babylonien*, 1929, 364

struck sixty times in the assembly (*ina puhrim*) with a bullwhip.⁶¹⁰ In this passage, the *puhrum* evidently is a place where sentences were carried out: it was in the assembly that the culprit was punished. However, was the *puhrum* a place, a regular assembly, or an irregular gathering of judges, participants and onlookers?

It is not possible to establish whether *puhrum* was a regular place of assembly or rather the group of people assembled. Most likely, the latter was the case. Whether it was a regular assembly is difficult to determine, but since the *puhrum* was considered a place of adjudication in the *Codex Hammurapi*, it is likely that it convened fairly regularly. The purpose of punishment in the *puhrum*, as seen in *Codex Hammurapi* §202, must have been to make the sentence public. Presumably, regular public meetings would be required for this purpose to be fulfilled. Thus, it can be argued that *puhrum* was a public arena.

Were the sentences proclaimed in the *puhrum* also made by the *puhrum*? In my opinion, this is not clear in *Codex Hammurapi* §5 or §202. It seems likely to me that the *puhrum* condemned the *dajānum* who had changed his verdict in §5 as well as the *awīlum* guilty of striking his superior in §202. However, these two passages give no firm indications of the process. How were the accused found guilty? It is likely that it happened in the *puhrum*, since the sentences were proclaimed and carried out there, but it is not clear from these two passages alone. The *puhrum* is attested from Old Babylonian legal documents, however, which may help clarify its composition, competence and place in the Old Babylonian legal system.

⁶¹⁰ *Cod. Ham.* §202: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 175; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 639-640

In *VS VII 149*, dated to the reign of Hammurapi, two people present their case “in the assembly of the city Dilbat” (*ina puhur Dilbat^{ki}*), concerning lost goods that were later restored. The verdict is made by the city Dilbat (*Dilbat^{ki}*). Witnesses are recorded with their names and titles, among them the *rabiānum* or “mayor”, priests, and a messenger.⁶¹¹

In *CT VIII 19a*, dated to the reign of Ammisaduqa, great-great grandson of Hammurapi, owners of a field complain in “the assembly” (*puhrum*) that they have not received payment from a person who claims to have paid for the rights to till their field. The alleged buyer cannot produce a receipt for the field, and his claim is declared void.⁶¹² The text may be from Sippar.⁶¹³

In these two texts, *VS VII 149* and *CT VIII 19a*, it is clear that legal processes took place in the *puhrum* and that the *puhrum* also reached verdicts in cases. Evidently, people brought their complaints to the *puhrum*. Thus, the proposition that the *puhrum* was a regular gathering of decision-makers is strengthened. Who sat in the assembly? As will be seen, this is a vexed point, and the terminology of Old Babylonian legal documents is of little help.

There is mention, in *VS VII 149*, that “the city of Dilbat” reached a verdict. Arnold Walther interprets *VS VII 149* as evidence that the city and the *puhrum* were interchangeable terms in Old Babylonian Dilbat.⁶¹⁴ *VS VII 149* will be discussed

⁶¹¹ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 201. 736. *VS VII 149* (*VAT 6364*)

⁶¹² Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 205. 751. *CT VIII 19a*

⁶¹³ Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen*, 1968 [1917], 51

⁶¹⁴ Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen*, 1968 [1917], 49-50

further below (4.3.3). The lack of clarity concerning “city” and “assembly” is typical of the difficulties scholars face in attempts to reconstruct a legal system from the elliptical terminology of cuneiform texts. The term *ālum* is defined in the *CAD* as a city or a city as a social organisation, as well as a village or a fort. When the term is used of the city as a social organisation, it indicates its administration, the officials in charge or the elders, as well as the city as an acting legal person.⁶¹⁵ Arnold Walther was convinced that in Old Babylonian texts, the *šībūtum*, “elders”, equal the *puhrum*, “assembly”, which equals the *ālum*, “city”.⁶¹⁶ Walther’s suggestion implies that there was no distinction between “an assembly”, *puhrum*, and a meeting of “elders”, *šībūtum*. Was the assembly a meeting of elders?

If “the elders” are identical with the *puhrum*, the suggestion made above that *puhrum* in *Codex Hammurapi* §§ 5 and 202 refer to a public arena cannot be right. However, Walther’s arguments are not entirely consistent: although he suggests that “assembly”, “city”, and “elders” were interchangeable terms for the same decision-making body, he also suggests that “elders” formed part of the *puhrum*.⁶¹⁷ In his interpretation, “the elders” served as witnesses, since they knew the local inhabitants and their business well.⁶¹⁸ It is not clear to me whether Walther suggests that the *puhrum* was an assembly that included a group of “elders” that served as witnesses or whether “the elders” alone reached decisions in the *puhrum*.

P. Koschaker and A. Ungnad argue that Walther’s identification of “assembly”, “elders” and “city” is untenable, because Old Babylonian texts frequently operate

⁶¹⁵ *CAD* A1, 1964, 379-391

⁶¹⁶ Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen*, 1968 [1917], 55

⁶¹⁷ Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen*, 1968 [1917], 49-50

⁶¹⁸ Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen*, 1968 [1917], 54

with a distinction between “city” (*ālum*) and “elders” (*šībūtum*): the two terms are often paired, but they are clearly separate. Koschaker and Ungnad suggest that *ālum* and *puhrum* were interchangeable terms and that the *šībūtum* had some relation to the *puhrum*, without being identical with it. However, they concede that the position of the *puhrum* is difficult to assess.⁶¹⁹ The argument of Koschaker and Ungnad that “the elders” and “the city” are distinguished in texts and therefore must be considered to have been separate institutions seems reasonable to me. However, it is not easy to distinguish one from the other. The expression “elders and the city” also occurs in texts, discussed below (4.3.3). “The elders” appear to have been part of “the city” as a separate group or to have worked together with it as an independent authority. “The city” in turn appears to be used interchangeably with “the assembly”. It can thus be argued that the legal documents discussed above mention “an assembly” and a council of “elders” as two distinct institutions. However, as will be seen in the next section, this interpretation is not accepted by all scholars, and there are several unsolved problems concerning Old Babylonian local powers.

4.3.3 The *ālum* or “city” and the *šībūtum* or “elders”

The *ālum*, “city”, is sometimes used together with *puhrum*, “assembly”. As argued above, (4.3.2), this was the case in the city Dilbat: in *VS VII 149a*, a case was presented “in the assembly of Dilbat” (*ina puhur Dilbat^{ki}*). The verdict of the assembly is spoken not with *puhrum* as the subject, but the city Dilbat (*Dilbat^{ki}*).⁶²⁰ It could be argued that there is a change in subject in *VS VII 149*, from “the assembly” to “the city” of Dilbat, indicating that there were two separate institutions or chambers, one where the case was presented and another where the verdict was spoken. However, it does not seem very likely that a different institution from where

⁶¹⁹ Koschaker & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* VI, 1923, 148

⁶²⁰ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 201. 736. *VS VII 149 (VAT 6364)*

the case was presented would speak the verdict. After all, on what grounds could such a verdict be spoken, if the case was presented elsewhere? Therefore, it seems clear that the *puhrum* and *Dilbat*^{ki} are identical in *VS VII 149*. It can thus be considered most likely that “the city” was used of the same kind of gathering as “the assembly”, rather than being a separate institution. As seen above (4.3.2), the relation between “the city” and “the assembly” in the Old Babylonian period is disputed. In the following, evidence for decisions reached by “the city” and the *ālum u šībūtū*, “the city and the elders”, will be discussed, in order to clarify who they were.

In *TD 232*, the “city and the elders” delegate a case concerning a disputed orchard to adjudication by the goddess Ninmar at the gate of Ninmar, where the accused is to swear an oath.⁶²¹

In *TD 232*, it is evident that the “city and elders” were a local authority that could demand that the accused swear an oath at a temple. The text gives little to go on, and it is not possible to determine who “the city” was. However, supplied with the indication in *VS VII 149* that “the city” was an assembly, it seems evident that “the elders” formed a group within “the city”. The relations between “the elders” and the rest of “the city” are not indicated in *TD 232*, however. As will be seen in the following, scholars are not agreed concerning the *ālum* as an assembly or the nature of its relations to “the elders”.

Andrea Seri argues that *ālum* in Old Babylonian texts is a specific institution that constituted “influential city dwellers” similar to “the elders”. She interprets “the city”

⁶²¹ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* V, 1911, 33-34: 1194. *TD 232*

and “the elders” as two separate institutions.⁶²² Seri interprets the *puhrum* as an independent arena for negotiations involving corporate groups such as “the elders” or “the city” when necessary.⁶²³ In her interpretation, the *ālum* is in opposition to the local authority of the *rabiānum* and “elders”. She suggests that “the “city” might have been instituted by the state to counterbalance the role of the elders”.⁶²⁴ Seri’s suggestion that the *ālum* was a separate institution is criticised by Dominique Charpin as an unfortunate consequence of a naïve lexicographical approach that equals terms used in discussing decision-making with actual institutions.⁶²⁵ In his view, the *ālum* was not a separate institution, but was used about “the assembly”, “the elders”, and *rabiānum* in various constellations.⁶²⁶ I agree with Charpin that “the city” as a counterpart to “the elders” cannot be maintained. It seems evident that “the city” must be treated as a term that covers not one specific institution, but is applied more generally of gatherings of decision-makers. Marten Stol suggests that *rabiānum* and *šībūtum* “the mayor and elders” could also be called *ālum*, the “city”.⁶²⁷ Stol’s assessment seems to me to make good sense of the evidence without reading too much bureaucratic intricacy into Old Babylonian nomenclature. The diverse terms for decision-making bodies do appear to refer to the same kind of institution, and not to a wide range of bodies or committees.

There is evidence that “the city” was used as a term for an assembly in Old Babylonian Sippar. Rivkah Harris argues that “the citizens of Sippar form a corporation which is referred to as the “city” or *ālum* (URU.KI). Sometimes the “city”

⁶²² Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 154-156

⁶²³ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 179-180

⁶²⁴ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 190

⁶²⁵ Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 169

⁶²⁶ Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 179

⁶²⁷ Charpin, Edzard & Stol, *Die altbabylonische Zeit*, 2004, 676

functions along with the “elders” suggesting that the latter is a term perhaps restricted to the heads of the most influential and wealthiest families of Sippar.”⁶²⁸ Further, she suggests that “it seems that the assembly [*puhrum*] was infrequently convened and perhaps only to render a verdict in a lawsuit involving the leading citizens of Sippar”.⁶²⁹ In my opinion, Harris’ assessment of the relations between “city” and “elders” is reasonable. “The city” can be seen as the more inclusive body, of which a smaller group of “elders” are a part, but not always. However, “the elders” were not necessarily a kind of council that prepared cases for “the city” or put its decisions into practice. Harris’ arguments for regarding “the city” and “the assembly” as two separate institutions do not convince: if the assembly in Sippar was called *ālum*, it is no surprise that the term *puhrum* is not used very frequently. That does mean that the *puhrum* was infrequently convened, in sessions independent of the *ālum*.

It seems to me that since the term *ālum* is used interchangeably with *puhrum*, it meant a form of assembly. However, as seen in *VS VII 149a* concerning Dilbat, it makes little sense to argue that the *ālum* was a separate institution from *puhrum*. Seri argues that the *ālum* was a state institution introduced to counter local initiatives.⁶³⁰ This is speculative and does not explain the sources satisfactorily: to suppose that “the city” and “the elders” reached decisions separately and were in opposition seems unfounded, as long as texts mention that they reached decisions together, as in *TD 232*. Therefore, I think that “the city and the elders” held common sessions in the cases where they gave a verdict together. Why “the elders” are mentioned specifically, is perhaps because they also had other tasks that did not involve “the city”. That does not warrant that “the city” was an independent institution. Having established that “the city” cannot be separated neatly from “the elders”, but must be

⁶²⁸ Harris, *Ancient Sippar*, 1975, 59

⁶²⁹ Harris, *Ancient Sippar*, 1975, 65

⁶³⁰ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 190

considered a wide term including several decision-making individuals and collectives, I turn now to a discussion of “the elders” and their relation to “the city”. Who were “the elders”? What did they do?

Eva Dombradi has studied a wide range of Old Babylonian evidence for judicial processes, analysed them, and compiled the combinations of different actors in these processes into a list. From her analysis, it becomes evident that “the elders” are frequently mentioned either in the paired expression *ālum u šībūtum*, “the city and the elders” or as *šībūt ālim*, “the city elders”. Sometimes, the name of the city is given, e.g. *šībūt Dilbat*⁶³¹. The *šībūtum* also appear as witnesses, often together with the *rabiānum*.⁶³¹ This information is very useful for an analysis of Old Babylonian local politics. As has already been seen, “the elders” are mentioned together with “the city”, as well as the *rabiānum*, but also on their own. The distinction between “the city” and “the city and elders” is unclear. Although it has been established that the *ālum* cannot be regarded as an institution independent of the *puhrum* or the *šībūtum*, was there a separate institution called the *šībūtum*, and if that is the case, what was their mandate and authority? There are several texts that record their decisions. However, as will be seen in the following discussion, their position is difficult to determine.

In *VS VII, 7* from Dilbat, dated to the reign of Hammurapi, the *rabiānum*, “mayor”, Imgur-sin gives a verdict together with eight *šībūtum*, “elders”, of the city Dilbat in a process concerning the reclamation of an inherited field that had been sold. The two litigants come to an agreement.⁶³²

⁶³¹ Dombradi, *Die Darstellung des Rechtsaustrags* Hb. II, 1996, 23-24

⁶³² Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 207: 755. *VS VII 7 (VAT 6279)*

CT VIII, 6b, from Halhalla, a district of Sippar, dated to the reign of Samsu-iluna, concerns a process of reclamation of a field. A priestess presents a claim against a man concerning the field. She goes to persons termed *dajānum*, “judges” of Babylon and “the judges” of Sippar, and they investigate the case. Then, the *rabiānum* and *šībūtum*, “the mayor” and “elders”, of the city give testimony that she is the rightful owner of the field and the field is restored to her.⁶³³

In *Warka* 48, dated to the reign of Samsuiluna, litigants approach persons termed *dajānum*, “judges” of Larsa concerning an orchard. The *rabiānum*, “mayor”, and “judges” come together, and the case is delegated to the *šībūtum*, “elders”, of the city. The defendant swears an oath to the god Lugal-kimuna, and then keeps the orchard.⁶³⁴

“The elders” in these legal documents are called *šībūt ālim*, “elders of the city”. They reach a verdict together with the *rabiānum*, “mayor”. As argued above (4.3.1), the *rabiānum* appears to act as the foreman of “the elders” and to have his authority from the local community and “the elders”. “The judges”, persons termed *dajānum*, were apparently royal officials, to whom the king delegated responsibility for adjudication (cf. 4.3.2). Thus, it can be argued that in *CT VIII*, 6b and *Warka* 48, the case is delegated from the royal officials, “the judges”, to local powers, “the elders of the city”. This implies a distinction between official and local authorities; between judges appointed by the king and legal bodies from the local communities. Hanoch Reviv suggests that some cases involved royal judges and the elders, but that their competence and responsibilities were separate. He analyses the case in *Warka* 48, where ownership of an orchard is contested, and argues that the verdict was reached in two steps: the decision was taken by “the judges”, but “the details and legal

⁶³³ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 195. 721. *CT VIII* 6b

⁶³⁴ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 196. 723. *Warka* 48

arrangements were heard by the settlement forum at the site of the orchard”.⁶³⁵ Thus, he argues for a two-tier arrangement, where the verdict was reached by the official “judges” and the local “elders” took care of the details afterwards. *Warka* 48 indeed indicates that cases were turned over to “the elders” by “the judges”. However, and this is a serious caveat, our understanding of the Old Babylonian legal system is incomplete and the reasons for delegating cases from one institution or group to the other are unknown. The evidence discussed here actually indicates that there was close cooperation between “the judges” and “the city elders”. Thus, an opposition between official and local powers cannot be maintained. In the following, more legal documents concerning the adjudication of “the elders” will be discussed, to investigate their relations with the royal officials and the temple authorities.

CT II 9, dated to the reign of Hammurapi, is a case of disputed inheritance between two brothers. Complaint is raised with “the elders” of the cities Hudadu and Šibābum. They inspect the evidence in the case and reach the verdict that the man against whom a complaint is raised is to go to the temple of Šamaš and swear an oath on the basket of Šamaš. All he swears to as his own property, he shall keep.⁶³⁶

In *TD 232*, there is a dispute over the inheritance of an orchard. The *ālum u šībūtum*, “the city and the elders” delegate the case to the goddess Ninmar by the gate of Ninmar, where the accused is to swear an oath.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ Reviv, *The elders in ancient Israel*, 1989, 162

⁶³⁶ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 193-195: 716. *CT II 9*

⁶³⁷ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* V, 1911, 33-34: 1194. *TD 232*

M 80, dated to the reign of Hammurapi, concerns a disputed division of a house and property between two litigants. They appear before persons termed *dajānum*, “judges” and the *šībūt ālim*, “elders of the city”, and agree to a new division of the property. The *rabiānum* is mentioned among the witnesses.⁶³⁸

In these three texts, cases that have previously been settled, but are now disputed are delegated to “the elders”, who in turn either delegate them further, or settle them together with the judges. It is not stated who made the original verdicts. “The elders” are evidently legal authorities. In *CT* II 9, “the elders” of two towns are involved; the reason for this is obscure. In *CT* II 9 “the elders” delegate the case to a temple. In *TD* 232, the “city and the elders” do the same. What does this indicate? Does it mean that the temple authorities were involved in a legal capacity, or simply that the litigants were required to take an oath?

In *M* 43 (*Warka* 30), “the judges” send the litigants to the gate of the god Nin-mar^{ki}. There, “the judges of the gate of the god Nin-mar^{ki}” make them swear that their allegations are true, and then they are sent back to “the judges”. Judgement in the case is given before witnesses in the gate of Marduk.⁶³⁹ As mentioned above (4.3.2), the gates to temples were used for adjudication because of the sanctity of the temples and the presumably binding power of oaths taken there. According to Walther, in Old Babylonian cities, gates to temples often functioned as public places. Also, some gates had the names of divinities, and oaths were taken there.⁶⁴⁰ From *M* 43 (*Warka* 30), it can be seen that the temples and gates of the gods were places where oaths were sworn and there were apparently separate “judges” at the temples. It may be that

⁶³⁸ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 198. 729. *M* 80

⁶³⁹ Kohler & Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* III, 1909, 193: 715. *M* 43 (*Warka* 30)

⁶⁴⁰ Walther, “Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen,” 1968 [1917], 60

the reason for the involvement of the temples was that the cases were considered to be solvable by oath. However, the text *M 43 (Warka 30)* is an indication that the gates of the gods even had their own “judges” and were places of litigation in their own right, beyond swearing of oaths. The temples and gates of the gods were evidently important in the Old Babylonian legal system, as well as the royal officials, local bodies, and the assembly. “The elders” can then be said to cooperate with the royal officials as well as with the temple officials.

In three of the texts under discussion here, *CT II 9, TD 232, and M 80*, the *rabiānum* does not act together with “the elders”. It may be significant that he is among the witnesses in the text *M 80*, however. It cannot be ruled out that he was among “the elders” making decisions even when he is not specifically mentioned. In *M 80*, “the elders” and “judges” reach a verdict together. Again, the complexity of the Old Babylonian legal system is apparent. The text *M 80* is in my opinion clear evidence that there was no systematic opposition between official and local decision-making bodies. The central authorities of the Old Babylonian network state did not replace local decision-making bodies. Rather, they appear to cooperate in reaching verdicts. In which cases did this happen and why?

Hanoch Reviv suggests that the situation in *M 80* is that the elders are asked to verify past legal proceedings and testimonies in court. In his interpretation, this means that “the judges first had to refer to the decision made by the “city and elders””.⁶⁴¹ In his view, the “state authorities” relied on “the elders’ decisions, investigations and testimonies” because “state legislation was generally designed to complement traditional rulings but not to replace them”. The areas of competence sometimes overlapped, and there were established joint bodies of judges, officials and the

⁶⁴¹ Reviv, *The elders in ancient Israel*, 1989, 165

elders.⁶⁴² To Reviv, “the elders” and “cities” were part of the same institution, being “the heads of the settlement and the broad civic forum of local inhabitants”.⁶⁴³

From the texts already discussed, it appears evident that “the elders” looked into disputed cases and delegated them to the temples, where they could be solved by swearing an oath or judged by temple officials. It is also appears evident that “the elders” and “the judges” worked together. Cases were delegated to “the elders” by “the judges” under certain circumstances. However, Reviv’s reconstruction of the relation between judges and elders in the Old Babylonian legal system remains conjecture. It is not evident that “the judges” delegated cases to “the elders” because of their traditional authority. The shakiness of Reviv’s division into official authorities and traditional, local powers becomes evident with his supposed overlapping areas of competence and joint bodies of officials and “elders”: it is not clear what these separate areas of competence constituted. There is nothing compelling in Reviv’s argument that “state legislation” was complemented by “traditional rulings” in relation to the central authorities. His argument is based on the supposition that “the elders” were local and traditional authorities. However, as seen from a number of texts already discussed, “the elders” were an integrated part of the Old Babylonian legal system and no relic of the past. “The judges” and “the elders” were contemporary institutions that worked together, not as the result of a new, official state system imposed on traditional tribal societies, but as complementary parts of a working whole. What was the role of the people in this system?

The public nature of adjudication in Old Babylonian cities is remarkable. “The assembly” appears to have comprised varying constellations of decision-making

⁶⁴² Reviv, *The elders in ancient Israel*, 1989, 167-168

⁶⁴³ Reviv, *The elders in ancient Israel*, 1989, 156

groups and individuals who reached decisions that were later recorded on cuneiform tablets. These tablets were again brought for new rounds in court if the process was not concluded satisfactorily. Although there is little conclusive evidence, the people could probably overhear the discussions of “the city and the elders”, as some cases at least were sent for adjudication at the temple gates. Also, it seems like the assemblies in Old Babylonian cities were public gatherings (4.3.2). Possible clues to public participation at these sessions will be discussed below (4.3.5). “The elders”, probably the heads of households, had a direct influence and could participate in discussions and reach decisions, pursuing a narrow corporate strategy for power. A certain level of local autonomy may be said to have existed, with regards to adjudication. In the following, I will complete the survey of local decision-making in the Old Babylonian network state with a look at the evidence for neighbourhood adjudication in cities, in the institutions called *bābtum*, “wards” or “gates”.

4.3.4 The *bābtum* or “ward”

In Old Babylonian laws and legal documents, there is mention of the *bābtum*, a group of people that appears to have been responsible for local adjudication. The term *bābtum* is translated “ward”, “city quarter”, “district”, and “municipal authority”.⁶⁴⁴ For the sake of simplicity, I will use the translation “ward” in the following. Although it is a well-attested term, the exact meaning of *bābtum* is disputed. I will first present the evidence, before discussing its interpretation, with an emphasis on local authority and local knowledge of those convening in “the ward”.

In the Old Babylonian law collections *Codex Hammurapi* and *Laws of Eshnunna*, there are passages that define the responsibilities of the *bābtum*, “ward”. The *Codex*

⁶⁴⁴ CAD B, 1965, 9-14

Hammurapi mentions *bābtum* in three passages; §§126, 142, and 251. In §126, it says that if an *awīlum*, “citizen”, has declared his property lost when it was not, and thus has fooled *bābtašu*, “his ward”, they are to declare the facts in the case before the god, and he is to pay “the ward” double the amount he declared lost.⁶⁴⁵ §142 concerns a woman who wants a divorce. Her conduct is to be scrutinised *ina bābtiša*, “in her ward”, and if she herself has not committed any wrongful acts, but has been slighted by her husband, she is to take her dowry and go to her father’s house.⁶⁴⁶ §251 concerns an *awīlum*, “citizen” who is the owner of an ox that gores people. If *bābtašu*, “his ward” has warned him about this, but he has done nothing to prevent injury, and the ox kills a *mār awīlim*, “son of a citizen”, he is to pay half a mina of silver.⁶⁴⁷

The Old Babylonian *Laws of Eshnunna* mention *bābtum* in four passages; §§54, 55, 56, and 58.⁶⁴⁸ The passages §§54, 55, and 56 closely parallel *Codex Hammurapi* §251.⁶⁴⁹ The passage §58 concerns a wall threatening to collapse that the *bābtum*, “ward”, has informed the owner about. If he does not do anything about this, and the wall collapses and kills an *awīlum*, “citizen”, the case is brought under jurisdiction of the king as a capital offence.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁵ *Cod. Ham.* §126: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 171; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 525-526

⁶⁴⁶ *Cod. Ham.* §142: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 172; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 548-550

⁶⁴⁷ *Cod. Ham.* §251: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 176; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 677-678

⁶⁴⁸ Eshnunna was a city-state in the Diyala region north of Babylon which flourished between the end of the Ur III dynasty (2004 BCE) and the rise of the empire of Hammurapi. Jean Bottéro proposes that the laws of this city-state preceded the publication of the *Codex Hammurapi* by “only a few decades” (Bottéro, “The “Code” of Hammurabi,” 1992, 159).

⁶⁴⁹ Goetze, *The Laws of Eshnunna*, 1951-52, 132-133

⁶⁵⁰ Goetze, *The Laws of Eshnunna*, 1951-52, 133-134

It may be argued that since the *bābtum* is regulated by the official laws, this institution was part of the central authorities. However, from the laws cited, the local nature of the *bābtum* is obvious: “the ward” is expected to keep track of dangerous domestic animals and derelict buildings and warn their owners, lest damage occurs. They are also expected to have intimate knowledge of the private conduct of married couples. They deal with attempts at fraud and can impose fines. However, the death penalty appears to be the reserve of the king. Who were members of “the ward”? What was their status in relation to the central authorities? The *bābtum* or “ward” is not only mentioned in Old Babylonian laws, it is also mentioned in Old Babylonian legal documents. There is a document, *VS VII 16*, which may shed light on these questions, as will be seen in the following.

VS VII 16 is dated to the reign of Samsu-iluna, the son of Hammurapi, and concerns inheritance and disputed ownership of land. The accuser accuses the defendant’s late mother of having built a house partly onto the accuser’s property. Since the defendant’s mother had bought the plot of land on which to build her house from the accuser, the accuser wants to re-measure the whole property on which the house now stands. The defendant gathered “citizens” (*awīl^{meš}*), “the sons of the ward that he knew” (*māri^{meš} bābtim mūdīšunu*). The property was measured and “the sons of the ward” decided on a sum of silver to be paid in recompense for the infringement on the accuser’s property. The case was closed and witnessed by nine witnesses.⁶⁵¹

In this text, *bābtum* appears in the form *māri^{meš} bābtim*, “the sons of the ward”. They appear to be a group of people engaged in local adjudication or arbitration. It seems that they are associates or at least well acquainted to the litigants. Thus, the text strengthens the impression of *bābtum* as a local body. Its collective nature is evident,

⁶⁵¹ Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi’s Gesetz* III, 1909, 195-196. 722. *VS VII 16*

as “the sons of the ward” is plural. Further, they appear to have fulfilled an important function in the legal system by making decisions that required local knowledge as well as, presumably, trust from the local community.

In earlier scholarship, *bābtum* was seen as a component of the *puhrum*, interpreted as a judicial assembly. According to Édouard Cuq, “les assemblées de justice (*puhrum*) que préside le maire de la ville, ou parfois le gouverneur, se composent des anciens (*šibutum*), ou des notables (*awilum*), ou des marchands (*tamqarum*) avec leur chef (*akil tamqari*), ou encore des hommes de la porte (*mari bābtim*). Ces groupes se réunissent suivant les cas séparément ou collectivement”.⁶⁵² Thus, the *bābtum* is regarded by Cuq as one of several bodies meeting in the *puhrum*, in its various constellations of decision-makers.

It seems reasonable to argue that the *bābtum* was a kind of local authority in Old Babylonian cities, responsible for cases concerning property, derelict buildings, livestock, and family matters. Its connection with the *puhrum* is not clear, however. It does not appear to be part of the system of “mayor”, “elders”, and “city” or “assembly”: in the documents discussed above, these people regularly made decisions in cooperation with representatives of the central authorities, but *bābtum* is not mentioned in this way. Rather, “the ward” appears to function on its own, its decisions recorded on cuneiform tablets and reported to the central authorities. Of course it could be entirely accidental that the *bābtum* appears on its own in the relatively few texts that mention it. However, the local concerns and duties of the *bābtum* in the evidence cited above indicate that it was somehow external to the system of decision-making discussed so far. Therefore, I would suggest that the *bābtum* was a separate institution from any of the forms of arrangements for

⁶⁵² Cuq, *Études sur le droit Babylonien*, 1929, 358

adjudication discussed above. This is because the *bābtum* appears to be strictly local, composed of local citizens with knowledge about the local community. The inhabitants had a personal connection to the *bābtum* of their neighbourhood, as seen by the use of the personal possessive suffix *-šu/-ša* used with *bābtum*.

The peculiarly local character of the *bābtum* has long since been recognised. Albrecht Goetze argues that the *Laws of Eshnunna* §§54, 55, 56, and 58 provide clear evidence that “*bābtum* is a group of people and means “Quartier, Bezirk” and the people in charge of it”.⁶⁵³ As has been seen, this claim is fully justified by the sources: in the *Laws of Eshnunna*, the *bābtum* takes responsibility for the wellbeing of the local community. Their concerns are local, as would be expected from a municipal authority. The *Laws of Eshnunna* (§§54 and 56) state that owners of vicious animals must pay compensation if they ignore the advice of the *bābtum*. This indicates that local safety matters were the responsibility of the *bābtum*, and that they might be held responsible for loss of life if they did not report dangerous domestic animals, or faulty architecture, as in §58. The local aspect is also emphasised in the *Codex Hammurapi*, where knowledge about the conduct of local people is expected from the *bābtum*, as in §142. Goetze’s conclusion that *bābtum* was a “Quartier, Bezirk” including the people responsible has been contested by some scholars, however. Their arguments will be examined in the following.

I. J. Gelb does not accept the view that *bābtum* was a form of local judiciary assembly. Rather, he emphasises that *bābtum* under certain circumstances is used in the sense of “encampment”: in an Old Babylonian name list, he finds several Amorite names, and the Amorites are assigned to five different *bābtum*, apparently named after individuals, in the city where they lived. Gelb therefore argues that “since the

⁶⁵³ Goetze, *The Laws of Eshnunna*, 1951-52, 135

five *bābtum* are named after individuals, the word *bābtum* cannot denote as large a section as a “quarter of a city” [...], but small encampments, each probably restricted to individuals belonging to a certain grouping”.⁶⁵⁴ Gelb’s argument has found some support: Marten Stol agrees with Gelb that *bābtum* could be a “ward” within a city, but also a “section” of a tribal grouping.⁶⁵⁵

In my opinion, arguments for “encampments” do not explain *bābtum* as it appears in Old Babylonian laws or documents, where it is used of local judicial bodies concerned with city matters such as public safety from rampant animals or faulty architecture. Gelb’s interpretation implies that tribal groups retained an organisation from a tribal past inside the city-scape. However, there is nothing distinctly tribal about the *bābtum* in the *Codex Hammurapi* or *Laws of Eshnunna* discussed above; rather, focus is on local knowledge, as in a neighbourhood, and not on belonging to the same tribal group, as would be expected if *bābtum* was modelled on a tribal social organisation. Further, to explain the meaning of the term *bābtum* in the *Codex Hammurapi* and other Old Babylonian texts from a list that merely mentions the term is not a very fruitful approach. After all, the list of Amorite names does not indicate what *bābtum* means in the context. To translate *bābtum* as “encampment” does not offer much to go on in terms of interpreting its social implications. The interpretation of *bābtum* as a tribal encampment is of course not impossible, but it is a major weakness with Gelb’s argument that he takes a list of names as weighty evidence for social organisation. There is nothing in the list to suggest that the *bābtum* of the Amorites has anything in common with the *bābtum* of the Old Babylonian laws discussed above. Further, the argument that tribal units were transformed into urban social divisions is not compelling. Rather, *bābtum* appears connected to neighbourhoods, residential areas where people knew each other and their business

⁶⁵⁴ Gelb, “An Old Babylonian list of Amorites,” 1968, 43

⁶⁵⁵ Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian history*, 1976, 80

well. The warnings against letting a wall crumble in the *Laws of Eshnunna* §58 are evidence that the *bābtum* belongs in an urban context. The interpretation of *bābtum* as a social unit is fruitful, however, and it appears to have been as much a social as a physical designation, i.e. the people of a certain quarter belonged to the area of jurisdiction of the quarter's legal institution.

The definition of *bābtum* as a social group is argued by Norman Yoffee, who interprets the *bābtum* as a larger association of several related families. He suggests that “such “extended families” were characteristic elements in Mesopotamian cities and may be the key to interpreting the nature of the *bābtum*. With their own responsibilities and jurisdictions recognized by the royal administration, these associations (and their larger groupings) may have been the basis of kinship in Old Babylonian urban society, especially concerned with the allocation of special roles and property.”⁶⁵⁶

The idea of *bābtum* as a kind of extended family is intriguing. However, the evidence from Old Babylonian laws suggests to me a more physical than social definition of *bābtum*. The concern with domestic animals and buildings makes sense in a neighbourhood context, whereas the *bābtum* cannot be expected to have kept track of the oxen of family members residing beyond the neighbourhood or quarter. Therefore, I suggest that the term *bābtum* were not used of extended families, but neighbourhood associations. This interpretation finds support with several scholars, as will be seen in the following.

⁶⁵⁶ Yoffee, “On studying Old Babylonian history,” 1978, 28-29

The local authority of the *bābtum* is argued by G. R. Driver and John C. Miles, who suggest that “it looks then as if the *mārū bābtum* were neighbours who acted as jurors *ina bābtim* but were sometimes summoned to give evidence on local matters in other courts; but in either case they were persons who gave testimony of their own knowledge and not as the jury of to-day on the evidence produced before them”.⁶⁵⁷ According to Driver and Miles, the members of the *bābtum*, the *mārū*, seem “to have exercised some kind of jurisdiction over their locality, and they are found occasionally sitting as a court”.⁶⁵⁸

The local and urban character of the *bābtum* is emphasised by Marten Stol. He interprets the *bābtum* as judicial bodies of city quarters and suggests that they had a foreman who was responsible for the organisation of corvée-work, obligatory service by the citizens. In his analysis, people had a connection to the assembly and neighbourhood and the city quarter gathered in assembly to make decisions, particularly concerning family matters.⁶⁵⁹

As seen above, the local knowledge of the *bābtum* is indeed well attested from the *Codex Hammurapi* and the *Laws of Eshnunna*. The case of divorce is particularly clear, but also the responsibility of the *bābtum* for domestic animals is obviously local. How was an Old Babylonian city neighbourhood organised? How did it function as a social unit?

⁶⁵⁷ Driver & Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* vol. I, 1968, 244

⁶⁵⁸ Driver & Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* vol. I, 1968, 242

⁶⁵⁹ Charpin, Edzard & Stol, *Die altbabylonische Zeit*, 2004, 675

Elizabeth Stone maintains that the *bābtum* was a kind of neighbourhood authority and argues that the neighbourhoods of Mesopotamian cities were similar to those of medieval Islamic cities: in Islamic medieval cities “each neighborhood contained individuals belonging to all classes” and “urban institutions and ties of clientage became the dominant unifying features”.⁶⁶⁰ In her interpretation, the *bābtum* “served as the locus of the administration of justice in cases where an individual, in spite of being warned, continued a practice which constituted a hazard to his neighbors, where someone bore false witness against a member of his ward, and where a woman wished to divorce her husband”.⁶⁶¹ Stone argues that the *bābtum* reveals much of the social organisation of Mesopotamian cities. In her interpretation “the main residential units in Mesopotamian cities were small face-to-face communities or neighborhoods, probably with populations of around 500 to 1000 persons”.⁶⁶²

Marc Van De Mieroop is critical of Stone’s interpretation that neighbourhoods of Old Babylonian cities were face-to-face communities or village societies. He argues from Old Babylonian Ur that at least some neighbourhoods were organised as artisanal districts in the sense that “inhabitants of different areas had different economic interests”.⁶⁶³ In his interpretation of the architecture and texts from Ur, he does not find the kind of neighbourhoods that Stone suggested for Nippur, but rather that the domestic sites tended to be inhabited by people with the same professional interests.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁰ Stone, *Nippur neighborhoods*, 1987, 3-4

⁶⁶¹ Stone, *Nippur neighborhoods*, 1987, 4

⁶⁶² Stone, *Nippur neighborhoods*, 1987, 7

⁶⁶³ Van De Mieroop, “Old Babylonian Ur,” 1992, 125

⁶⁶⁴ Van De Mieroop, “Old Babylonian Ur,” 1992, 129

Stone's suggestion of a parallelism between Mesopotamian and Medieval Islamic cities is intriguing. However, it must be kept in mind that the evidence for urban residential areas of Mesopotamian cities is very scanty, including the Old Babylonian period (cf. 2.9). Also, as Van De Mieroop points out, the areas Stone surveyed from Nippur are quite limited, one being 20 by 40 meters, the other being 40 by 40 meters large and these two areas lying 30 meters apart.⁶⁶⁵ This is a justified criticism in my opinion, because general conclusions for Old Babylonian cities should not be drawn from such a tiny sample. A further problem is one of interpretation: the evidence presented by Stone to establish the social organisation of neighbourhoods, i.e. the distribution of house sizes, valuable materials, and scribal tools can tell much about what kind of people lived in a given area, but not necessarily much about social relations. Rich and poor may have lived side by side, as Stone suggests, but that does not mean that rich and poor people had much to do with each other. The *bābtum* was possibly similar to Medieval Islamic residential areas, but the evidence is not compelling. The idea of a face-to-face community between rich and poor seems to me particularly daring, as this cannot be read from the archaeological finds alone. To me, the argument of the *bābtum* as a neighbourhood institution common to the residents of a certain area seems reasonable, however. It may be that the *bābtum* had a mediating function between the various socio-economic groups of the neighbourhood.

The *bābtum* appears to represent a kind of village authority in an urban context. Although the neighbourhoods may not have been village communities in every respect, the *bābtum* appears to have been a restricted council, consisting of people with knowledge of local inhabitants and their families, with a local mandate. Their position was probably based on their standing in the local community as people with good knowledge of local affairs. Their authority was applied in local matters that demanded detailed personal knowledge of the neighbourhood and its residents. It is to

⁶⁶⁵ Van De Mieroop, "Old Babylonian Ur," 1992, 130

be expected that people known for their good judgement would be preferred. What formal criteria lay behind their appointment are unknown.

I have now discussed evidence for Old Babylonian institutions for decision-making from laws and legal documents. None of the texts, however, have given a clear picture of procedures for decision-making or of the recruitment of participants in the decision-making process. Therefore, I turn now to a literary text that throws light on who took part in a legal assembly and how decisions were reached, viz. the *Nippur Trial for Homicide*.

4.3.5 The Nippur Trial for Homicide

There are few sources to how trials were conducted in ancient Mesopotamia. A notable exception is the so-called *Nippur Trial for Homicide*, a Sumerian text from Nippur dated to the early second millennium BCE. It concerns a case where three men stand accused of murder, and the victim's wife is accused of covering up the crime. Therefore, the case is taken before the king Ur-Ninurta in Isin. The king orders that the case will be decided before the assembly of Nippur (PU-ÚH-RU-UM NIBRU^{KI}-KA).⁶⁶⁶ A group of nine people, including a bird-catcher, a potter, a gardener, and six others identified by their patronymics, address the assembly and accuse the three culprits and the wife of the deceased, and a discussion follows. The assembly then passes the verdict and the accused are condemned to death.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁶ The term for assembly in this text is *puhrum*; although it is an Akkadian word, it is used in a Sumerian text. This is not significant, however, since the scribal culture of Mesopotamia was based in both languages.

⁶⁶⁷ Text in Jacobsen, "An ancient Mesopotamian trial for homicide," 1970 [1959], 193-214

The text offers information about the organisation of a judicial assembly in an Old Babylonian Mesopotamian city. Although it cannot be said with certainty that the text is a description of an actual trial, the information in the text does not diverge from what can be learned about judicial assemblies from the Old Babylonian legal texts already discussed: the king could delegate cases to the *puhrum* and the sessions of the *puhrum* could involve smaller groups of decision-makers coming together to reach a verdict. Thus, the text strengthens the impression that the judicial assemblies were part of the central structure of power in Old Babylonian cities. Also, it confirms that the sessions of the assemblies were complex and could involve several groups of decision-makers. The text also provides new information not available in the texts discussed so far, viz. indications of the social status of participants in a decision-making body convened for a trial: there appears to be commoners among the nine accusers. The text also gives hints about the procedure for decision-making in the *puhrum*: the accusers are a group of nine people and they present the case to the assembly. This is followed by discussion, and the assembly reaches the verdict. It is of note that the group of nine accusers are not identical to the assembly. The implications of the information in this text are disputed, however. Who are the nine accusers and what is their social standing?

The *Nippur Trial for Homicide* has been interpreted as evidence for the participation of commoners in the assembly: Marc Van De Mieroop argues that on the basis of “the professions of some of the men who spoke out in the assembly: a bird-catcher, a potter, two gardeners, and a soldier”, it is clear that “manual labourers” had the right and leisure to participate in the *puhrum*.⁶⁶⁸ Marten Stol suggests that since a bird-catcher, two gardeners, a soldier etc. participated in the assembly, anyone might have

⁶⁶⁸ Van de Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1999 [1997], 123

been able to take part. In his opinion, it is conceivable that all citizens took part in the assembly.⁶⁶⁹

Thus, Van De Mieroop and Stol take the occupations of the nine accusers as evidence that they were commoners. The fact that they address the assembly is taken to indicate that commoners attended the assembly and reached verdicts. However, the interpretation of “bird-catcher” or “gardener” as the occupations of the accusers may be a false lead. It cannot be ruled out that their “occupations” were some kind of titles, i.e. that the nine accusers are in fact officials of some sort. That the case concerns murder and the culprits are condemned to death are indications that the murder trial is not a regular assembly-session: all the cases discussed from Old Babylonian texts above involved disputes over matters like inheritance or land-ownership that appear to have been solved by arbitration. Some texts deal with offences, but they were normally punished with fines. The impression is rather that cases involving the death penalty were delegated to officials or the king and not decided by the *puhrum*. Thus, it can be argued that the Nippur assembly does not appear to be similar to the assemblies discussed from Old Babylonian legal documents above. The *Trial for Homicide* cannot be regarded as unequivocal evidence for how the *puhrum* was organised. To me, the evidence for broad citizen participation in the *puhrum* appears quite insecure.

Contrary to the interpretations of Van De Mieroop and Stol, Andrea Seri suggests that the nine accusers in the Nippur trial are temple staff. Therefore, according to Seri, the assembly in the *Trial for Homicide* does not give any information on how local assemblies worked.⁶⁷⁰ I agree with Seri that the nine accusers are probably not

⁶⁶⁹ Charpin, Edzard & Stol, *Die altbabylonische Zeit*, 2004, 677-678

⁶⁷⁰ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 170

commoners, as some of them appear with titles. Does that mean that the assembly was reserved for the élite? The evidence is ambiguous. Even if the nine accusers were temple staff or affiliates, this does not mean that they were members of the élite. Several people were attached to the temples, not only the élite (cf. 4.2). Stol's suggestion that all citizens could participate in the assembly may be correct. However, "citizen" in Old Babylonian, as discussed above (4.3.1), is a difficult term and it is not clear whether "the citizens" are an élite or can be called the people, in the sense of the masses. This will be discussed further below (4.4).

There is no clear evidence of a powerful popular assembly in Old Babylonian cities. On the other hand, it seems clear to me that the local decision-making groups, including "the mayor and elders", had some kind of mandate from the citizens, since they met in public and anyone could bring a case to them. The assessment of popular power in the *puhrum* depends on how scholars reconstruct the relationship between the local "mayor", local decision-making groups, and "the citizens", as well as how "citizen" is defined, i.e. as a member of the élite or as a commoner.

Although the Nippur trial cannot count as evidence that commoners spoke in the *puhrum*, in my opinion, it still can be used as a source to how a meeting in the *puhrum* was organised. The procedure in the text indicates that an assembly was led by a smaller body of people. In my opinion, the narrative in the text suggests that a *puhrum* was a public judicial assembly where commoners participated, but probably only as onlookers. Discussion is said to have taken place in the assembly, but there is no definite evidence that commoners spoke there. Important functions were filled by more restricted groups. This can explain why Old Babylonian legal texts frequently refer to what appears as several bodies reaching decisions, in particular the references to "the city and elders". The *Trial for Homicide* cannot be regarded as decisive evidence, but it gives an indication to how we can make sense of the complexity of

terms for decision-making in Old Babylonian texts: the *puhrum* was a form of popular assembly where decision-making groups could present difficult cases and make decisions known to the public.

4.4 The Old Babylonian legal system and strategies for power

The actual political significance of the *puhrum* and the other organs for collective-decision making mentioned in the Old Babylonian texts has been debated extensively. There is no evidence that the Old Babylonian *puhrum* was a popular assembly in charge of the polity. In all the texts discussed above, the *puhrum* and other assemblies are judiciary, and not political assemblies. Local adjudication appears central to the Old Babylonian legal system. J. N. Postgate points out that although Hammurapi had ultimate judicial authority within his realm and had to consider appeals made to him, appeals were frequently delegated back to the existing authorities in the cities of the realm.⁶⁷¹ I agree with this assessment of Hammurapi's role in the judiciary system. It is important to keep in mind that although the Old Babylonian kingdom was ruled by a king, the local authorities played a crucial role. Who took part in the local judiciary assemblies?

An influential model for the *puhrum* is that it was an oligarchic decision-making body, reserved for a narrow élite of citizens. It is a long held view that participation in political and judicial assemblies was restricted to "local notables" or an "urban élite".⁶⁷² However, the citizens are an elusive group in the evidence. As seen above

⁶⁷¹ Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, 1994 [1992], 150

⁶⁷² Cuq, *Études sur le droit Babylonien*, 1929, 360; Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 188

(4.3.1), scholars agree that the social divisions in Old Babylonian society was between those with obligations to the palace and temples, called *awīlum*, and the commoners outside the great institutions, called *muškēnum*. An *awīlum* is a citizen. However, no agreement has been reached on the size of this group. F. R. Kraus suggests that *awīlum* has a double meaning, denoting both an élite and the population in general.⁶⁷³ This is exactly the problem: when does *awīlum* refer to an élite and when is it used in a general sense?

Kraus maintains that the persons referred to as *awīlum* in the *Codex Hammurapi* must be considered an élite with connections to the palace.⁶⁷⁴ This is a reasonable claim, since these people clearly have a privileged position in the *Codex Hammurapi*. Reuven Yaron agrees that persons referred to as *awīlum* had privileges from their connections with the palace and the temples, but emphasises that this does not mean that an *awīlum* can be defined as belonging exclusively to a palace or temple élite.⁶⁷⁵ Eva von Dassow suggests that *awīlum* was a status attained from ownership of land, in combination with duties to the palace.⁶⁷⁶ However, in her interpretation, a citizen was anyone who was not a *wardum*, “slave”.⁶⁷⁷ She argues that the difference between an *awīlum* and other citizens is that the *awīlum* has political authority: “the *awīlū* [...] were the ruling class, peers of kings and sometimes kings themselves. Hammurapi’s laws attempted to formalize this status by creating an *awīlum* class set apart from the general body of citizen-subjects, the *muškēnum*”.⁶⁷⁸ In von Dassow’s

⁶⁷³ Kraus, *Von mesopotamischen Menschen*, 1973, 97-98

⁶⁷⁴ Kraus, *Von mesopotamischen Menschen*, 1973, 117

⁶⁷⁵ Yaron, *The laws of Eshnunna*, 1988, 151-154

⁶⁷⁶ Von Dassow, “Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies,” 2011, 211

⁶⁷⁷ Von Dassow, “Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies,” 2011, 213

⁶⁷⁸ Von Dassow, “Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies,” 2011, 215

interpretation, all citizens could participate in processes of collective decision-making.⁶⁷⁹

In my view, von Dassow's claim that there was a formal élite among the citizens, with a particular political influence not shared by all citizens, cannot be squared with the claim that all citizens could take part in collective decision-making. This self-contradiction is difficult to escape. A solution can be found on a structural level: because the status of *awīlum* is attained by being a contributor to the community through duties and obligations, it is a status of being a citizen of the city-community, not as an official or temple dependent. With full citizen rights, an *awīlum* had authority to participate in making decisions in the assemblies. This means that Old Babylonian cities had a degree of popular power, but only in the sense of a quite limited body of people. The rest of the citizens that did not enjoy the privileges of an *awīlum* presumably could participate as onlookers, but did not possess political authority.

It does indeed appear that several of the decision-making bodies discussed above (4.3.1-5) were groups with restricted participation: "the elders" and witnesses to decisions are few in number. They appear to be people of standing in the city. Lists of witnesses from verdicts reached include important people like the *rabiānum* and other people with titles. The mandate of the *rabiānum* and "elders" seem, however, to have been rooted in the community and not delegated from the royal court. This can be seen in the distinction between "the judges", who appear to have been royal officials, and the local *rabiānum* and *šībūtum*, who appear to have been local representatives. Therefore, it is not self-evident that the local assemblies were restricted to an élite. All citizens may have been eligible. Even if the citizens were a minority group of the

⁶⁷⁹ Von Dassow, "Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies," 2011, 217-218

urban population, the legal autonomy of the citizens is remarkable and makes it reasonable to claim that the people of Old Babylonian cities had a degree of political power.

The identity of the participants in decision-making bodies is uncertain. The one text considered by some scholars to provide an answer to this, the *Trial for Homicide* discussed above (4.3.5), is ambiguous. It is likely that the *šībūtum*, “elders” were distinguished members of the community. Likewise, the *bābtum* appears as a body of people of high standing in the local community. The exact composition of the *puhrum* and other legal bodies is difficult to determine, however. The competences of these bodies are also elusive.

In the Old Babylonian texts discussed above, the decision-making bodies are part of the legal system and reach verdicts between citizens. It is not clear that their decisions were final. Their relation to the official judges is difficult to grasp. The decision-making bodies do not appear to have direct political influence. The fact that citizens judged each other, however, in my opinion indicates power outside the great institutions of palaces and temples, in a private sphere among citizens of Old Babylonian cities. In my opinion, open discussion in the assembly indicates that decisions were taken in the kind of meeting known as an arena council (cf. 1.4.2). This kind of meeting is characterised by negotiations between citizens rather than dictate from royal officials or community representatives. Although there is not much written evidence for the workings of “the assembly”, its mention in laws, legal documents, and literary texts indicate that it was an important part of Old Babylonian urban society. It seems plausible to me that the urban population participated as onlookers at these sessions.

The complexity of decision-making bodies in the Old Babylonian texts is bewildering. How are we to interpret the complexity of terms for decision-making bodies? Andrea Seri argues that a starting point for a study of Old Babylonian local powers “is to acknowledge the existence of multiple assemblies instead of a single institution in every city”.⁶⁸⁰ I agree that this is a fruitful approach. However, a lexicographical method of equating the terms for meetings of decision-making bodies with defined corporations leads to false conclusions, as seen with Seri’s analysis of *ālum*, “the city”, above (4.3.3). The problem remains how to identify the different assemblies and to understand how these assemblies worked in combination. As Eva Dombradi (1996) demonstrates in her systematic analysis of Old Babylonian processual documents, there were different terms for assemblies in use in different cities, without any obvious difference in organisation. Thus, in Nippur, the *puhrum* was an important organ for judicial decisions, whereas in Dilbat, the *ālum* seems to have filled the same function.⁶⁸¹ This is very useful information and underscores our woefully inadequate knowledge of the details for Old Babylonian institutions. As Van De Mieroop points out concerning *bābtum* in the *Codex Hammurapi*, “as with the popular representation of the entire town, we are also here uninformed about the membership, the competence, and the procedures of the gatherings of the inhabitants of a city-quarter”.⁶⁸² There are unfortunately no institutions of Old Babylonian society that can be said to be adequately known and this should make us careful in drawing conclusions, in particular in comparative analyses (cf. 7.4).

Striking about the Old Babylonian cities in my opinion is the close interaction between the king, officials, temples, and assemblies in the legal system. This constitutes a system that appears quite consistent throughout the Old Babylonian

⁶⁸⁰ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 166

⁶⁸¹ Dombradi, *Die Darstellung des Rechtsaustrags* Hb. I, 1996, 242-243

⁶⁸² Van De Mieroop, “The government of an ancient Mesopotamian city,” 1999, 148

network state and indicates that local powers were part of the structure of decision-making bodies of the state. In my opinion, it is of importance that officials referred to the organs of decision-making of the urban community and cooperated with them. This shows that the citizens participated in decision-making in the legal system and were part of the state. The citizens of Old Babylonian cities could make their own decisions and were judged by their fellows. This shows that urban self-government in legal affairs was established in Old Babylonian cities and that the local city institutions were part of the Old Babylonian network state. The Old Babylonian cities had local judicial institutions with citizen participation. Participation by the citizens could take the form of representation, when people of standing in the community made decisions. It could also take the form of public sessions, where the citizens could observe the making of decisions. The participation of citizens in institutions of local decision-making shows that there was a degree of local popular power. This is perhaps not surprising, since a network state cannot control every instance of local life and indeed profits from cooperation with local institutions. However, there appears to have been a high degree of local collective decisions in the Old Babylonian network state. This indicates popular power, rather unexpected in a kingdom with a ruler chosen by the gods.

The impression of the political culture of the Old Babylonian network state is not that of a despotic kingdom, but of a central authority that delegated many decisions to local levels in individual cities. The king maintained control through his officials that cooperated with local institutions. The local institutions also reached decisions on their own. The local levels of decision-making seem to me to be characterised by restricted bodies of local notables or respected representatives who followed a narrow corporate strategy for power. They were distinguished by age and experience, no doubt, but do not appear to be members of a hereditary élite or other aristocratic stratum. Titles used of individuals point to their position in the hierarchy of palaces or temples rather than a hereditary status in the community.

The local notables and elders were organised in collective organs of decision-making and made decisions in public. Their decisions were written down and could be consulted at a later stage, even contested in other organs of decision-making. The legal system was complex and some bodies of decision-making appear to have had two chambers; one limited body that presented the case and a more inclusive body that discussed the case and made the final verdict, as indicated by the *Nippur Trial for Homicide* (4.3.5). The evidence is, however, ambiguous. A powerful popular assembly is not attested for Old Babylonian cities. Rather, citizens could participate in smaller corporations, if they had the trust of their fellows and could spare the time. This is a narrow corporate strategy for power, where the group in charge is limited, but in principle open to all qualified citizens.

I turn now to a rather different network state of the Old Babylonian period, viz. the kingdom of Mari. As will be seen, the evidence for local politics in communities of the Mari kingdom indicate slightly different ways of organising power than in the ancient cities of Mesopotamia.

4.5 Central authorities and local politics in the kingdom of Mari

In the following, the composition and competence of local political institutions in the Old Babylonian kingdom of Mari will be investigated, from correspondence with the central authorities and from letters between officials of the kingdom. Relations between central authorities and local communities will also be discussed. The kingdom of Mari offers an interesting contrast to the political situation in urbanised Babylonia, because it had a considerable pastoralist tribal element in its political and

social structure that is well documented in written sources. In the Old Babylonian period, a significant part of the Mariote king's subjects lived not in cities, but in the steppe. The region of Mari, which included parts of Syria and north-western Mesopotamia, also had ancient cities, however. Several city-states thrived in the fertile river valleys of the Habur and Balih, in the Middle Euphrates region, and downstream towards Mesopotamia. The contrast and cooperation between sedentary and nomadic groups is a remarkable feature of the Mari kingdom. As will be seen, Mari offers valuable glimpses into the political structure of a network state with a significant non-sedentary population, between urban and pastoralist traditions. The first half of the 2nd millennium BCE in Syria, i.e. the Old Babylonian period, is sometimes referred to as the Amorite period, because groups of people with names in the Amorite language had risen to prominence in several important urban centres by this time. The Amorites were pastoralists immigrating from the west. In the 2nd millennium, they were integrated into the camps, towns, and cities that made out the political map of Syria and north-western Mesopotamia, the area that will be discussed in the following.

The main sources of knowledge about Syria and north-western Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period are cuneiform tablets found at Mari, the so-called royal archives.⁶⁸³ Mari is an ancient site, but the earlier periods of habitation will not concern us here. The majority of the letters found in the royal archives are from the rule of Yasmah-Addu and Zimri-Lim. King Yasmah-Addu was really the representative of his father Šamši-Adad, who ruled over an extensive territory in northern Mesopotamia. King Šamši-Adad was based in the city Ekallatum and had

⁶⁸³ The letters of the royal archives of Mari document political life and diplomacy in Syria and Mesopotamia in the early 2nd millennium BCE. Among king Zimri-Lim's correspondents was king Hammurapi of Babylon. The more than three thousand letters from Mari are being published continuously; the series *Archives Royales de Mari (ARM)* has at the time of writing (2012) reached its 31st volume. Thematically arranged translations in French with commentaries are published by Jean-Marie Durand as *Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari* (vol. I-III, 1997-2000). The evidence from Mari will be presented as my paraphrases of the texts published in the relevant volumes of *ARM* and Durand 1997-2000.

conquered much territory from the Tigris to the Euphrates. He had defeated the local dynasty of king Yahdun-Lim and his sons in the early 2nd millennium BCE. Upon Šamši-Adad's death, however, Zimri-Lim, a kinsman of Yahdun-Lim, regained the family throne. Zimri-Lim ruled Mari until the city was destroyed by king Hammurabi of Babylon in the mid-18th century BCE.⁶⁸⁴ In the present investigation, letters from the rule of Yasmah-Addu as well as Zimri-Lim will be discussed.

Recently, Daniel E. Fleming has examined the tribal organisation of the Mari kingdom under king Zimri-Lim and relations between tribal communities and the king.⁶⁸⁵ His investigation of the tribal organisation of parts of Mari's population gives valuable and provocative insights into the complexity of Near Eastern political traditions. In the following investigation, the importance of a pastoralist element in the politics of Mari will be taken into consideration together with the organisation of towns and cities. As will be seen, the tribal inhabitants were organised according to rather different principles than the city-state traditions of Mesopotamia: the pastoralist and semi-sedentary tribes were confederacies based on common ancestry and had several tiers of authority, including leaders of individual clans with their common ancestors and local heads of households with much power. Thus, it is quite different from the centralised urban organisation of power, based in the institutions of palace and temples, and urban corporations of citizens, as seen in the preceding sections on Old Babylonian Babylon (4.3ff). In Babylonia, city-states were the basis of the network state. In the Mari kingdom, the situation was a bit different: the Mari kingdom had towns and cities, but pastoral elements, as will be seen (4.7.1), were integrated in the political structure to a high degree and influenced the overall organisation of power.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 98-101

⁶⁸⁵ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004

Mari was a magnificent city, and its palace was known far and wide for its beauty: king Hammurapi of Babylon wrote to king Zimri-Lim reporting that the king of Ugarit had expressed wishes to see the palace.⁶⁸⁶ Archaeologists have uncovered that the palace had over three hundred rooms.⁶⁸⁷ A significant part of the royal archives of Mari consists of correspondence between the palace and local authorities of towns and camps. In the following, I will investigate evidence from the Mari correspondence for local decision-making, the relations between local powers and the centre of the network state, the palace at Mari. I will look for indications of how local power was organised, in particular relations between the people, the local élite, and the central authorities, in order to assess the political culture of Old Babylonian Mari.

4.6 The kings of Mari and their subjects

Before turning to the evidence for local powers in the kingdom of Mari, the political situation in the kingdom of Mari in the Old Babylonian period and its political structure will be discussed briefly. As already mentioned (4.5), there are two royal dynasties attested from the royal archives of Mari in the Old Babylonian period. One is the “Lim”-dynasty of Yahdun-Lim and his son, the second is the family of Šamši-Adad. The “Lim”-dynasty was defeated by the conqueror Šamši-Adad, who became the Assyrian king Šamši-Adad I.⁶⁸⁸ Šamši-Adad moved his capital from Ekallatum to Šubat-Enlil, set up his eldest son Išme-Dagan as king in Ekallatum, and established

⁶⁸⁶ Dossin in Schaeffer, *Ugaritica* I, 1939, 16 n. 2; Margueron, “Mari: A portrait in art of a Mesopotamian city-state,” 1995, 885

⁶⁸⁷ Whiting, “Amorite tribes and nations,” 1995, 1236

⁶⁸⁸ In Old Assyrian chronological terms, the reign of Šamši-Adad corresponds to Kanesh level Ib, cf. 5.2 and 5.5.6.

his younger son Yasmah-Addu as king in Mari. At the death of Šamši-Adad, the “Lim”-dynasty regained their hold on Mari and Zimri-Lim became the new king.

The royal family lived in a sumptuous palace far removed from the tents and dust of the steppe. Mari was an important city due to its strategic position on the Euphrates, as an important stop on the trade route from Syria to Babylonia. This position could also be dangerous. As Jean-Robert Kupper points out, the kingdom of Mari was situated between the great powers of the kingdom of Yamhad to the north with its capital Aleppo and the kingdom of Babylon to the south, and this could have unpleasant consequences in times of conflict.⁶⁸⁹ But its position in between powerful kingdoms was apparently quite profitable, as well. This is most conspicuous from the sheer size of the palace at Mari. Kupper emphasises that trade and exchange over land and along river routes promoted contact between the kingdoms of Mesopotamia, bringing cultural influences in its wake.⁶⁹⁰ Indeed, the region of Syria can be said to be a part of Mesopotamia in cultural terms. The Mari archives are written in Akkadian cuneiform, in the Old Babylonian language. The Mari kings were part of the political scene of Babylonia and Assyria.

Mari was the capital of the kingdom of Mari and the seat of the king’s palace. However, archaeologists have not found many urban features beyond the palace itself. Daniel E. Fleming points out that there has as yet not been excavated any substantial residential quarters. He therefore argues that Old Babylonian Mari was no ordinary city in the Mesopotamian sense, with palace, temples, and residential districts, but rather that it was a political centre with few urban features.⁶⁹¹ Fleming suggests that

⁶⁸⁹ Kupper, “Mari entre la Mésopotamie et la Syrie du Nord,” 1987, 173-174

⁶⁹⁰ Kupper, “Mari entre la Mésopotamie et la Syrie du Nord,” 1987, 177

⁶⁹¹ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 7

the term “city-state” should be avoided when discussing Mari, “as carrying too many associations with very different political systems”.⁶⁹² In my opinion, this is an important caveat that must be taken into consideration, in particular because so many of the groups of people discussed in the texts from Mari evidently did not live in the city. As will be seen (4.7.1), however, their leaders were ratified by the king there. Thus, the king’s palace at Mari can be seen as a centre for the negotiation of the interests of the different groups that made up the kingdom. The king was in a sense the rallying figure for several local communities. In this sense, Mari was not a city-state, but a network state centred on the person of the king. I will follow this definition of the Mari kingdom in the following investigation of its political culture.

Scholars have established that the population of the Mari kingdom consisted of several tribal confederacies that included pastoralists and townspeople. The two most important were the *binū Sim’al*, “sons of the left”, and the *binū Yamina*, the “sons of the right”.⁶⁹³ Both confederacies consisted of integrated town-dwellers as well as pastoralists, but in the time of king Zimri-Lim, control of the capital Mari was in the hands of the Sim’alites. According to Fleming, the texts in the Mari archives rarely mention the Sim’alites, because “the insider’s view is Sim’alite”.⁶⁹⁴ This seems a correct assessment, as the texts often mention confrontations or negotiations with the sons of Yamina, who are mentioned with their tribal designation throughout the Mari correspondence, whereas the Sim’alites are not.

In the texts from Mari, there is mention of groups called the Hana. Their relation to the Sim’alites and Yaminites is difficult to grasp. Robert M. Whiting interprets Hana

⁶⁹² Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 19

⁶⁹³ Whiting, “Amorite tribes and nations,” 1995, 1238

⁶⁹⁴ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 92

as “the main tribal population at Mari” and that the Sim’alites and Yaminites are “two major branches of the Hana”.⁶⁹⁵ Jean-Marie Durand and Daniel E. Fleming on the other hand interpret Hana as the designation of the tribal element of both the Sim’alites and Yaminites.⁶⁹⁶ Durand proposes an etymology for Hana from a verb for “pitching a tent” and argues that some of the Hana are actually Yaminites that have no towns.⁶⁹⁷ These questions will not be discussed further in detail. Suffice it to say that the Hana do appear in the Mari letters as pastoralist groups belonging to the tribal confederacies of Sim’alites and Yaminites. I therefore accept the interpretation of Hana as “tent-dwellers”, and will refer to them as such or as “the tent-dwelling Hana”. For the present investigation, suffice it to say that there were two main confederacies of Amorites in the kingdom of Mari, known as the *binū Sim’al*, “the sons of the left”, and the *binū Yamina*, “the sons of the right”, or Sim’alites and Yaminites. These confederacies included pastoralists as well as townspeople.

The relations between pastoralists and townspeople have often been regarded as hostile. However, scholars now emphasise the cooperation between these groups, even symbiosis, and the common origins or common identity of townspeople and pastoralists that live in the same region. Anne Porter argues that scholars misconstrue pastoralists of the ancient world as opposed to settled life. She points to the Mari correspondence as evidence that they inhabited both worlds.⁶⁹⁸ Indeed, in the letters and documents from the royal archives of Mari, the lives of the settled population and those who roamed the steppe can be seen to frequently convene. However, they appear to have been organised in quite different ways. There is a range of terms from the Mari texts that have been interpreted as specific to one or the other tribal

⁶⁹⁵ Whiting, “Amorite tribes and nations,” 1995, 1238

⁶⁹⁶ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 48

⁶⁹⁷ Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 449 n. c

⁶⁹⁸ Porter, “The urban nomad,” 2004, 74

confederacy and their sedentary or pastoralist members. According to Whiting, among the pastoralists, the term for tribe was *ummatum*. A lower level of their tribal organisation was *gayum*, or “clan”.⁶⁹⁹ Thus, the tribal organisation of pastoralists and the sedentary population of the Mari kingdom was complex. Daniel E. Fleming argues that the two main tribal confederations, the Sim'alites and the Yaminites were organised quite differently from each other. In his interpretation, the Yaminites were organised in a number of *li'mum* that were city-based political units, whereas the Sim'alites were organised in a number of *gayum* that were ruled by the king of the confederacy.⁷⁰⁰ According to Fleming, “the Yaminite and the Sim'alite tribal peoples were characterized by different social structure and political traditions. Where the Sim'alites are defined in pastoralist terms with *gayum* divisions that follow mobile Hana herdsmen, the Yaminites are divided into five tribes that can be called the *li'mums* of their kings”. Further, Fleming points out that “the Binu Yamina seem to have allowed the town a greater defining role in their social categories”, in the sense that a *li'mum* or tribe had a ruler with a fortified settlement as his seat of power, and also that Yaminite towns are often referred to with individual leaders that are called *sugāgum*, or chieftain.⁷⁰¹ These distinctions will be followed in the further discussion of Mari politics. The appointment and authority of the *sugāgum* will be discussed in particular (4.7.1).

Thus, following Fleming's analysis, the Sim'alites were politically centred on one king, the leader of the confederacy. In certain periods, when the Sim'alites were in power, their king lived in Mari. The Sim'alites were organised into *gayum*-divisions, i.e. clans, and many of them were pastoralists. The Yaminites, on the other hand, were organised in five *li'mum*, i.e. tribes, with individual kings who had their own fortified

⁶⁹⁹ Whiting, “Amorite tribes and nations,” 1995, 1238-1239

⁷⁰⁰ Fleming, “The Sim'alite *gayum* and the Yaminite *li'mum*,” 2004, 211

⁷⁰¹ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 93

towns. How were local authorities established in the Mari network state? What were the relations between local authorities, the local communities, and the central authorities?

4.7 Local authorities and the king

In the following, I will first discuss evidence for the local leaders of towns, cities and pastoralist groups from texts in the royal archives of Mari (4.7.1). Second, I will investigate politics in communities of towns and cities mentioned in the texts (4.7.2). Last, I will discuss evidence for “elders” and other local institutions for collective decision-making (4.7.3).

4.7.1 The *sugāgum* or “chieftain”, “local leader”

The *sugāgum* or “chieftain” is usually interpreted as a local leader responsible for managing the village or town and representing it with the king. According to the *CAD*, the *sugāgum* was an official in charge of tribal affairs.⁷⁰² It is not clear what relations the *sugāgum* had to the tribal communities he was in charge over, however. Was he a local community leader or a royal appointee? This is an important question in the study of Mari politics. Therefore, the office of *sugāgum* will be discussed at length in this section. I will translate the term *sugāgum* as “chieftain”, in a broad sense of local leader with no further implications regarding the nature of his authority or position.

⁷⁰² *CAD* S, 1984, 343-344

The *sugāgum* was evidently a central figure in the organisation of several of the communities discussed in the texts of the Mari archives and their relations with the central authorities. Therefore, scholars have paid the *sugāgum* much attention. According to Robert M. Whiting, each village had a *sugāgum*, and larger towns might even have several. The pastoralists also had a *sugāgum*, who was their contact with the royal authorities.⁷⁰³ Philippe Talon emphasises the role of the *sugāgum* as a local leader, whose responsibilities included the collection of taxes. The *sugāgum* paid a sum to the palace once a year.⁷⁰⁴ As will be seen, these assessments are well-founded in the texts from the royal archives of Mari and will be followed in the present discussion. It can safely be claimed that the *sugāgum* was central for the functioning of the Mari state. As middle-man between the king and his subjects, he also fulfilled vital state functions. The collection of taxes by the *sugāgum* is an important point, because it reveals much about the structure of the Mari kingdom: the king relied on local authorities in order to collect taxes. It also reveals a dual position for the *sugāgum*, in that he was a local leader of the community, while at the same time being the subject of the central authority of the king, collecting his taxes. In the following, evidence from a number of letters from the royal archives of Mari will be presented and discussed. What was the position of the *sugāgum* in his community?

In *ARM I 6*, king Šamši-Adad of Šubat-Enlil writes to his son Yasmah-Addu, king of Mari. Yasmah-Addu has formerly written concerning a census of the tribal confederation of the Yaminites, and king Šamši-Adad warns that forcing a census upon the Yaminites may cause another group of tribal pastoralists, their brothers the Rabbaites of the kingdom of Yamhad on the other side of the river to become angry and detain the Yaminites. King Šamši-Adad writes that king Yasmah-Addu should not go through with the census, but leave it to their *sugāgum*, “chieftain”, and make

⁷⁰³ Whiting, “Amorite tribes and nations,” 1995, 1240

⁷⁰⁴ Talon, “La “*sugāgūtum*” a Mari,” 1982, 57-59

him gather all the Yaminites. Also, king Šamši-Adad mentions that king Yasmah-Addu in a previous letter has discussed the Hana, “tent-dwelling pastoralists of the steppe”, whether he should redistribute fields on the banks of the Euphrates and give to them. King Šamši-Adad says about this matter that he has consulted experts: the fields are not fit for division, and there will be many complaints if they are divided. Therefore, division and redistribution of the fields should not be undertaken. King Šamši-Adad advises to distribute the fields so that each keeps his part as before, so that there is no confusion of the fields. When anybody dies or flees, his field is to be given to anyone who has none. The Hana, “tent-dwellers”, are to be submitted to a census. Those of the Hana who have fields, shall keep them.⁷⁰⁵

The situation of taking the census of the Yaminites in *ARM I 6* can be seen as an example of the *sugāgum*, “chieftain” in his dual capacity as leader of the tribal group of the Yaminites and middle-man between the tribe and the king. He appears to fill a valuable position in the king of Mari’s administration of his kingdom: the king apparently does not want to interfere directly with these tribal groups for fear of trouble and therefore leaves it to the discretion of their own local leaders to perform the census. This can indicate that the king was only indirectly in charge over groups of his subjects and preferred to go through their local leaders because these men had the trust of their communities. However, it can also be taken as evidence that the *sugāgum* was a loyal servant of the king and that the king preferred to act through his trusted man rather than confront the tribesmen directly. Thus, the text indicates that the *sugāgum* could play an independent political role, but it is open for interpretation whether this was because of his local standing in his community as entrusted leader or because of his position as a loyal servant of the king. I suggest, however, that it is the *sugāgum* as community leader that makes him the preferable agent when dealing with

⁷⁰⁵ Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*, 1950, 31-35: *ARM I 6*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 342-344

the tribal groups: if he was simply the king's representative, it would make little difference whether the *sugāgum* interfered in order not to anger the tribes.

Jean-Robert Kupper takes the king's misgivings in *ARM I 6* about the census of the Yaminites and the redistribution of fields as evidence that the kings of Mari were wary of public opinion, because Šamši-Adad was afraid that the tribes would become angry.⁷⁰⁶ He argues that in the Mari correspondence, “the mouth of the city” (*pī ālim*) and “the mouth of the land” (*pī mātim*) are referred to as something the king should fear.⁷⁰⁷ No doubt, *ARM I 6* is evidence that the king was concerned about his subjects' reactions to his decisions. However, the king of Mari cannot be claimed to be special in this respect. What concerns he might express in letters to his son, would probably not be his official stance vis-à-vis his subjects, and there seems to me no reason to make much out of this passage concerning the king and public opinion. The text is interesting, however, in that it demonstrates how the king used local entrusted leaders to execute potentially unpleasant tasks, such as taking the census. To me, this again shows the dual nature of the *sugāgum*, as local leader and servant of the king of Mari. How was the *sugāgum* recruited and appointed?

In *ARM V 24*, Tarīm-Šakim, one of king Yasmah-Addu of Mari's two viziers, writes to his king. He reports that the former “man” of Tizrah (*awīl Tizrah^{ki}*) is dead and that he has been approached by “some men, the sons of Tizrah” (*awīlū^{mes} māru^{mes} Tizrah^{ki}*). These men have said that they want Kāli-Ilma to lead them (*ana šāpirutini*). The vizier Tarīm-Šakim writes that Kāli-Ilma has already given one mina of silver for

⁷⁰⁶ Kupper, “L'opinion publique a Mari,” 1964, 82

⁷⁰⁷ Kupper, “L'opinion publique a Mari,” 1964, 81-82

the palace as surety, and that he is sending him to the king so that he may appoint him *sugāgum* of Tizrah.⁷⁰⁸

Thus, *ARM V 24* provides evidence for the appointment of a *sugāgum* for the town Tizrah. The *sugāgum* is also called *awīlum* or “man” of the town. It appears that local men at the death of their *sugāgum* suggested or presented a candidate to the vizier. The vizier then reported their choice to the king in Mari. The candidate paid silver to the palace and he was sent to the king by the vizier in order to become the new *sugāgum*. What does this tell us about the appointment of the *sugāgum*? It is not clear from *ARM V 24* who selected the candidate. He was preferred by “the sons of Tizrah” (*awīlū^{meš} māru^{meš} Tizrah^{ki}*), but it is not specified how this was decided. The identity of this group will be discussed below (4.7.3), suffice it to suggest here that they were a local group of trusted men. It is difficult to determine the standing of the *sugāgum* in relation to the town for which he was responsible. There are several possibilities. Was he selected by “the sons of Tizrah”? The text does not say directly, but this seems plausible, since “the sons of Tizrah” report to the vizier. Another possibility is that he was selected by the town community and that the choice of the community was reported to the vizier by “the sons of Tizrah”. This is not indicated by the text at all, however, and must be implied by conjecture. A third possibility is that he was selected and appointed by the king. This is not what *ARM V 24* says, however; the text says that the candidate that was reported to the vizier will go to the king and be appointed by him. Since the candidate has already deposited the silver for the post at the palace, it does not appear likely that he will not be appointed once he is selected locally as candidate. There is no suggestion that the king had a choice between several candidates. The letter is interesting because it provides glimpses of two sides to the

⁷⁰⁸ Dossin, *Correspondance du Iasmah-Addu*, 1952, 43: *ARM V 24*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 208-209

process of appointing the *sugāgum*, from the point of view of the vizier as well as from the town Tizrah.

Scholars are not agreed concerning the respective roles of the palace and the local community in appointing a *sugāgum*. Daniel E. Fleming interprets *awīlū^{meš} māru^{meš} Tizrah^{ki}* (LÚ^{meš}DUMU^{meš} GN) in *ARM V 24* as “a select group responsible for the nomination of a chief to the royal administration. The travel suggests some limited number of representatives much smaller than may be envisioned for an “assembly””.⁷⁰⁹ Thus, Fleming interprets the nomination of the *sugāgum* as a decision taken by a local élite, presumably in some sort of council. It could be argued that although a small group of men came from Tizrah to inform the king’s vizier about the preferred candidate for the office of *sugāgum*, this does not necessarily mean that he was selected by this same group. However, I agree with Fleming that there is nothing in *ARM V 24* to suggest that the candidate was selected by the people of his town in a popular assembly. Thus, the men who present the new *sugāgum* to the vizier can be assumed to be involved in the selection of the candidate. They were presumably the peers of the *sugāgum*. Since he was wealthy enough to deposit one mina of silver at the palace, it appears likely that “the sons of Tizrah” was a local élite of wealthy men. The relation between the decisions of this local élite and the final appointment by the king are not clear, however. Again, as in *ARM I 6* discussed above, the evidence is ambiguous as to whether the *sugāgum* was a community representative or a royal official.

The details surrounding the appointment to the office of *sugāgum* are difficult to establish, because the texts are quite sparing with details. Therefore, scholars have offered quite different interpretations. Andrea Seri suggests that “the *sugāgum* is a

⁷⁰⁹ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 185-186

royal appointee who represents the community”.⁷¹⁰ She argues that the *sugāgum* was responsible for the military levy and diplomatic missions, but never represented the “interests of community members”.⁷¹¹ Dominique Charpin does not accept this interpretation: he suggests that the *sugāgum* was a local leader emerging from the local elders or notables, similar to a *rabiānum* (discussed above, 4.3.1).⁷¹² He argues that the king can only accept or decline a local community’s choice of *sugāgum* and points out that in the few cases where the king attempts to place an unwanted leader over local communities, trouble ensues.⁷¹³ I agree with Seri that the *sugāgum* appears to belong to both worlds; he is a local representative as well as a royal official. I disagree that he was not a local leader, however, and I find Charpin’s argument convincing, that the *sugāgum* is similar to a *rabiānum*. I do not see how the *sugāgum* does not represent the interests of his community members. Although there is no reason to view the *sugāgum* as a kind of people’s spokesman with the palace, this does not mean that his local mandate is not without importance. In *ARM V 24*, it seems most likely to me that “the sons of Tizrah” were community members: they appear to be convinced that their interests were represented by their candidate as the new *sugāgum*. The appointment of the *sugāgum*, although by a wealthy élite, appears in my opinion as a form of representation of the local community. Admittedly, it is difficult to determine who exactly the *sugāgum* represented and it is perhaps naïve to suppose that a group of elders or similar would represent the interests of all community members. In *ARM V 24*, it seems to me that the *sugāgum* was part of a group of wealthy men, and it is safe to assume that they were all interested in having a *sugāgum* from among themselves.

⁷¹⁰ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 115

⁷¹¹ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 116

⁷¹² Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 170-171

⁷¹³ Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 171-172

The background of the candidate for the position as *sugāgum* and how he was appointed are not directly stated in the text *ARM V 24*. In the interpretation of Daniel E. Fleming, the king appointed the *sugāgum*, but “the nominees may have emerged from the crucible of local politics”.⁷¹⁴ This seems a reasonable suggestion. However, the ingredients of this “crucible” are not well understood. Both Fleming and Seri argue that the *sugāgum* came from the local community, but they assess the importance of this differently. Seri emphasises his loyalty to the palace and distance from community interests, whereas Fleming argues for the local commitment of the nominee. In my opinion, the *sugāgum* emerged from a local élite and continued to be part of the local community and serve their interests. In *ARM I 6* the *sugāgum* is a local leader as well as being responsible to the king for taxes and the census. Thus, there does not appear to be any antagonism between the local communities and their *sugāgum*. In *ARM V 24*, the *sugāgum* was ratified by the king of Mari, after being appointed as a representative of the local community. *ARM V 24* can be taken as evidence for palace control over the *sugāgum* as well as for a local mandate. In my opinion, the letter *ARM V 24* is evidence that both local mandate and official appointment were necessary in order to become a *sugāgum*. Since the vizier and king are not introduced to more than one candidate, it appears to me that the most important decision was the initial local selection. The local importance of the *sugāgum* can be seen in *ARM I 6* discussed above: king Šamši-Adad advises his son Yasmah-Addu, the king of Mari, to handle delicate business with tribal groups through their *sugāgum*. In my view, this only makes sense if the chieftain was a man of standing in his own community who was trusted by his fellows. If he was not, it would be no point in bringing in the *sugāgum* in order to avoid local irritation at the census, except to have the *sugāgum* as scapegoat. However, this makes no sense, since the king aimed at avoiding trouble with “the tent-dwelling” Hana in general. I now turn to a rather different problem concerning the appointment of *sugāgum*: why

⁷¹⁴ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 72

did the candidate *sugāgum* in *ARM V 24* pay one mina of silver to the palace in order to attain his office?

According to Jean-Marie Durand, to be *sugāgum* was a coveted position, and entailed possibilities for personal enrichment.⁷¹⁵ This is a reasonable explanation for the eagerness of Kāli-Ilma to become *sugāgum* in *ARM V 24*. Among the responsibilities of the *sugāgum* was the collection of the taxes from his area and this probably had its perks. However, why did the palace demand silver? It was possibly a form of advance on taxes the *sugāgum* would later collect, but the text does not say.

The payment of silver to the palace indicates that the palace and the *sugāgum* were closely connected: not only was the *sugāgum* appointed by the king, he also contributed to the king's finances. The payment of a mina of silver also suggests that the candidate for the position as *sugāgum* was wealthy and belonged to the élite of his hometown. I turn now to an investigation of texts where several *sugāgū* or “chieftains” are gathered, in order to further clarify the nature of their local authority and their relations to the central authorities.

4.7.2 The *sugāgū* in assembly

In the following, I will examine further evidence for relations between central authorities and the *sugāgū*, “chieftains”, including texts that discuss meetings of several *sugāgū* and tribal groups. Some of these *sugāgū* are leaders of pastoralists; others are leaders of sedentary groups.

⁷¹⁵ Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 206

In *ARM* II 53, Yasmah-Addu,⁷¹⁶ the leader of the Yaminite tribe of the Yarihū, writes to king Zimri-Lim of Mari that he cannot leave with [the tribal leader] Lahun-Dagan⁷¹⁷ as planned: “men” (*awīlu*^{meš}) of the Yarihū, “chieftains” (*sugāgū*) of the Hana, “tent-dwellers”, have arrived and held him back. Yasmah-Addu also reports that the *sugāgū* of the Yaminites assembled in the town Zalpah, and went to the town Ahunā. There they parlayed with the Yaminite [leader] Sūra-Hammū,⁷¹⁸ and king Yarim-Lim of the kingdom of Yamhad to the north of Mari. The *sugāgū* of the Hana stood up and requested that Sūra-Hammū and king Yarim-Lim go to king Zimri-Lim of Mari and reclaim their villages. They threatened to kill or dethrone [the tribal leader] Lahun-Dagan if he would not go with them. Yasmah-Addu [leader of the Yarihū] warns that king Yarim-Lim, Sūra-Hammū and the *sugāgū* are on their way, and that his lord king Zimri-Lim should give them whatever they want.⁷¹⁹

ARM II 53 is evidence of the important role the tribes could play in politics between the kingdoms of Syria. The loyalty of these tribes appears shifty and unpredictable. The writer of the letter, Yasmah-Addu, warns king Zimri-Lim that the tribal leaders are underway and advises him to give in to their demands and give their villages back to them. The reference is obscure, but it appears that the king of Mari was in control of villages that the tribe of Yarihū wanted and that they formed an alliance with the king of Yamhad. However, most interesting in this text for the present discussion are

⁷¹⁶ I follow Durand’s interpretation that this Yasmah-Addu was a leader of the Yaminite tribe Yarihū (Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 449). It cannot be the king of the same name, because by the time of the reign of king Zimri-Lim, Yasmah-Addu the king had been deposed; the Yasmah-Addu in this text is therefore a namesake. His title is not given in the text, but he is apparently a *sugāgum*, “tribal leader”: his and the titles of the other “tribal leaders” in the text are inferred from the general discussion of the activities of *sugāgū* in this letter.

⁷¹⁷ His title not given in the text, but was most likely *sugāgum*.

⁷¹⁸ His title not given in the text, but was most likely *sugāgum*.

⁷¹⁹ Jean, *Lettres diverses*, 1950, 110-111: *ARM* II 53; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 448-449

not the relations between kings and tribal leaders, but those between tribal leaders and the tribesmen: it is clear from *ARM II 53* that the tribal leaders were under pressure from their subjects and could be deposed or killed if they did not please them. This is further evidence that the *sugāgum* was not a leader imposed on the community by the king. A *sugāgum* evidently maintained his position through his standing in his local tribal community. It also appears that the Hana, “tent-dwellers”, had several leaders. How this was organised is not clear, however.

The Yaminites in *ARM II 53* live in cities as well as in the steppe: there are references to “tent-dwellers” as well as villagers. The tribal leaders congregate in towns. It is not easy to identify the different groups and divisions, however. Fleming interprets the situation in *ARM II 53* as a gathering of all the Yaminite leaders, a smaller group of which were the leaders of the tent-dwelling Hana. In his interpretation, the leaders of the Hana plead before the assembly of all Yaminite leaders for negotiations with king Zimri-Lim of Mari in order that they may reclaim their home towns.⁷²⁰ In my opinion, this is a good assessment of the situation. It seems clear to me that a gathering of leaders is taking place and that only a smaller group of these leaders are demanding the villages back on behalf of the community. It is of note that the tribal groups and their *sugāgū* leaders show no specific loyalty to king Zimri-Lim of Mari and rather rely on the king of the neighbouring kingdom Yamhad. In my opinion, this is evidence that the *sugāgū* were local leaders with more loyalty to their own tribal group than to their king.

There is further evidence to the complex relations between the king of Mari and his pastoralist subjects. *ARM XXVIII 25* [A.328] is a report to king Zimri-Lim of Mari from king Yahdun-Lim of the city Karkemiš. King Yahdun-Lim reports that while the

⁷²⁰ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 47

Yaminite leader Sūra-Hammū was with king Zimri-Lim, he himself was in Ahunā. There he received news that the Yaminite Hana, “tent-dwellers”, had assembled. King Yahdun-Lim went to “the assembly of Hana” (*puhur Hana^{meš}*) with the tribal leader Lahun-Dagan and in the assembly they agreed to make peace between Sim’alites and Yaminites. They sent the [*sugāgū*]⁷²¹ of the Yaminites to Zimri-Lim to make a lasting peace.⁷²²

In *ARM XXVIII 25 [A.328]* the kings in their cities can be seen to cooperate closely with the tribal leaders and their communities of the steppe. The king of Karkemiš took part in the *puhur Hana^{meš}*, “assembly of the Hana”, together with the tribal leader Lahun-Dagan. It is not clear who participated in the assembly, but it appears as a decisive authority for establishing the policy of the tribal groups. Thus, the text throws light on the organisation of the Hana: they gather in an assembly and make decisions on war and peace. The king of Mari, it should be noted, becomes involved at a later stage and does not seem to take part in the initial decision-making process. In the further negotiations for peace, however, the tribal representatives and the king discuss together.

The Hana of *ARM XXVIII 25 [A.328]* gather in an assembly (*puhur Hana^{meš}*). It appears that a group of *sugāgū* were sent as representatives of this assembly to king Zimri-Lim for peace talks. It is of note that peace between the Yaminites and Sim’alites is negotiated in “the assembly of Hana”, with the participation of king Yahdun-Lim of Karkemiš and the tribal leader Lahun-Dagan. This shows that “the assembly of Hana” had a capacity and authority to make political decisions. Besides

⁷²¹ Restored by Durand, in Kupper, *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim*, 1998, 34 n. b. I accept Durand’s restoration of *sugāgū* in the text, as these are the most likely to have gone to the king for negotiations.

⁷²² Kupper, *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim*, 1998, 33-34: *ARM XXVIII 25*

Yahdun-Lim and Lahun-Dagan, it is not stated who took part in the assembly of the Hana. Because these two men were leaders of high status, it seems to me plausible that the rest of the participants in the assembly were *sugāgū*, “chieftains”. Whether the *sugāgū* sent to king Zimri-Lim was a smaller group of this assembly is not stated in the text.

There are few sources to how such decision-making gatherings were organised or who were allowed to speak there. However, A. 2677 mentions a form of gathering called *rihsum*. A.2677 is a letter sent from the diviner Asqudum, a *sugāgum* loyal to Zimri-Lim.⁷²³ Asqudum writes to the king and reports that the *sugāgū* of the Hana, having been ordered by the king to cleanse themselves of an impiety, needed purifiers to come to their aid. He reports that “when the Hana were gathered for a parley”, (*inuma HANA^{meš} irahisu*), “a commoner”, *muškenum*, addressed them and advised them concerning the grave impiety that had been committed.⁷²⁴ There is a lacuna where the commoner’s speech is reported.

The gathering of Hana in A. 2677 is not called a *puhrum*. Rather, they are gathered in a *rihsum*. The meeting takes place in Ida-Maras. Durand suggests that *rihsum* was a form of popular assembly among the Hana.⁷²⁵ He argues that although the meeting appears to be an assembly of the leaders of the Hana, it is a democratic feature that a *muškenum* speaks in the *rihsum*.⁷²⁶ It is indeed fascinating that a *muškenum* speaks in an assembly of *sugāgū*. Unfortunately, it is not known what the commoner said to the leaders. Also, it is not possible to determine whether it was part of normal procedure

⁷²³ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/1, 1988, 71-76

⁷²⁴ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/1, 1988, 188: ARM XXVI 44 [A.2677]

⁷²⁵ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/1, 1988, 181

⁷²⁶ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/1, 1988, 185-187

for commoners to speak in the assembly. However, the fact that a commoner addressed the assembly of leaders indicates that the people participated in these assemblies. Perhaps they were present as onlookers. I do not agree that this isolated episode can be used to argue that the Hana had a democratic institution for decision-making. However, it is evidence that commoners were present at assemblies and could speak there.⁷²⁷

The assemblies of *sugāgū*, “chieftains”, discussed above show that local collective decision-making played an important role in the local communities of the Mari kingdom. The decisions of these assemblies were reported to the king and *sugāgū* went to the king to negotiate peace. This shows that the local and central levels of decision-making were integrated. However, it also reveals that the king did not control the *sugāgū* and local communities directly: the local communities made their decisions before they sent their representatives to the king. It is not clear who took part in the assemblies of the *sugāgū*, but if the analysis of *sugāgum* as a local community leader is correct, their meetings were gatherings of the heads of local communities. It is not stated that the general population took part in these decision-making processes. However, there is one instance where a commoner rose and spoke in the gathering of the *sugāgū*. The interests of the commoners are likely to have been looked to by their community leaders. The importance of these assemblies in the Mari state is evidence for local autonomy and collective decision-making by the local leaders of towns and camps, gathering in what appears to be regional assemblies. So

⁷²⁷ There is attested a further term for gathering of people for making decisions in the Mari letters, viz. *tahtamum* or *tātamum*, found in a number of letters published by Jean-Marie Durand, from the cities Emar and Tuttul (Durand, “L’assemblée en Syrie à l’époque pré-amorite,” 1989, 27-44). Jean-Marie Durand argues that the concept of *puhrum* and *tātamum* are complementary, but not equivalent. In his interpretation, the *tātamum* in the Mari sources is a collective of people who gather to discuss juridical, economic and political affairs of the local communities. Its decisions involve the entire people, and it may be described as either a council of elders or an assembly of the people. Durand also points out that the *tātamum* is autonomous regarding the representative of the Mari king, the *hazzānum*; he cannot influence their discussion or decisions (Durand, “L’assemblée en Syrie à l’époque pré-amorite,” 1989, 37). Unfortunately, there is no information in the letters about who gathered in the *tahtamum*. Therefore, I will not discuss this kind of meeting further here, as it is not possible to determine whether a limited group of people were gathered or a more inclusive group; suffice it to say that collective decision-making bodies were known under several names and appear to have been quite common among the local communities of the Mari kingdom.

far, community leaders have been discussed. I turn now to the local communities themselves and their internal organisation.

4.7.3 The LÚ^{meš} GN or “men of GN”

In several letters from the royal archives of Mari, there are agents referred to as LÚ^{meš} GN, “the men of GN”. This appears as a collective reference to the inhabitants of the city or town. It is also used as a reference to the town itself. In the Mari correspondence there are references to “the men of GN” making decisions and negotiating with external authorities. What does this imply? Who were “the men of GN”?

In *ARM XXVI* 62 [A.4874], a diviner named Asqudum reports to king Zimri-Lim of Mari about the threat of famine due to lack of land under cultivation. The diviner reports that he has asked “the men of the city Terqa” (LÚ^{meš} Terqa^{ki}) to expand the palace fields.⁷²⁸

In *ARM XXVI* 144 [A.4334], an unknown correspondent writes to Zimri-Lim about portents of rebellion (*bārtum*) in the city Terqa. Because of the signs, he had “the sons of the city Rāpiqum” (LÚ^{dumu.meš} Rāpiqim^{ki}) confined inside the city Terqa, and the next day, new portents led him to expel them. They were resettled in villages (*ina kaprātīm*). The sender of the letter says that he has arranged with “the men of Larsa”

⁷²⁸ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* I/1, 1988, 205-206: *ARM XXVI* 62 [A.4874]

(^{lú.meš} *Larsa*^{ki}) who will join with the Sima'lites (^{lú dumu.meš} *Sima'al*) and defend the city (*ālum*).⁷²⁹

From these texts, it appears that the term ^{lú}meš GN, “the men of GN” or DUMU^{meš} GN, “the sons of GN” refers to the town as well as the inhabitants. There are also examples of the adjectival forms of town names used interchangeably with “the men of GN”. In the letters cited, the ^{lú}meš GN, “men of GN”, appear to take decisions for the community: in *ARM XXVI 62* [A.4874], “the men of Terqa” are approached by a diviner and given instructions concerning the expansion of the palace fields. It is not clear what these palace fields were, but the situation is probably connected to compulsory work or corvée-duty. It is interesting that the diviner talks to “the men of Terqa”, rather than a “chieftain”. *ARM XXVI 62* [A.4874] indicates an identification of the town with its inhabitants. If the town and its inhabitants were coterminous, how did this affect local leadership and authority? In *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334], “the men of Larsa” reach decisions of war and peace. The letter thus indicates that going to war was the collective decision of the entire town. However, the identity of “the men of Terqa” or “the men of Larsa” is not clear. It is not evident that “the men of GN” were some form of popular assembly. Why, then, are there references to decisions made by “the men of GN”? How and by whom were these decisions reached?

Daniel E. Fleming argues that ^{lú}meš GN is used to indicate the town’s activity, whereas DUMU^{meš} GN, “the sons of GN” is used about residence.⁷³⁰ In his interpretation, the inhabitants of towns were perceived as a collective. He emphasises that no institutionalised assembly is implied by ^{lú}meš GN; rather it is “only a simple

⁷²⁹ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* I/1, 1988, 308-309: *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334]

⁷³⁰ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 184

collective reference to the people of the town or land”.⁷³¹ Fleming argues for an analysis of the Mari kingdom in terms of a duality of corporate and élite strategies for power; a corporate strategy is based on collective decisions by the whole community, whereas an élite strategy is characterised by decisions taken in closed councils by a select few.⁷³² He finds evidence for corporate strategies in the mentioned collective references to pastoralist communities and towns. In Daniel E. Fleming’s analysis, the term LÚ^{meš} GN, “men of GN”, “does not indicate an assembly, never mind a gathering of some *awīlum* class of free or elite men. When it does refer to a town as a whole and is not simply identifying some limited group of its citizens, the formula provides the most amorphous definition of the people, simply in action *as* a town. This is the corporate ideology in raw form, requiring no mediating institution, however informal”.⁷³³

In Fleming’s argument, it is indicative of a corporate strategy for power that no mediating institution is involved in the decision-making of the town. Because there is no such mediating institution, such as a governor, local ruler, or chieftain, Fleming believes the people “*as* a town” took action. However, he is careful to point out that “the men of GN” are not an assembly. How the people took action as a town, Fleming does not say. Of course, it can be argued that local decision-making bodies are not mentioned in the royal correspondence, but somehow work in the background and determine the courses of action taken by “the men of GN”. This is not very compelling, however. The vagueness of the concept of “the corporate ideology in raw form” is a weakness with Fleming’s interpretation. He is careful to point out what the term “men of GN” is *not*, but he offers no further explanation of their identity or mode of action as a local collective.

⁷³¹ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 181

⁷³² Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 14-18

Andrea Seri does not agree with Fleming's interpretation of "the men of GN" as a local collective identity. She argues that the term "the men of GN" in Old Babylonian documents "does not refer to a corporate body; rather, in letters from Mari, the term was used as a polite and generic expression, meaning simply "the gentlemen".⁷³⁴ It is difficult to agree with Seri's argument that LÚ^{meš} GN or *awīlū* in the Mari correspondence are simply polite expressions. As seen with *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334] and *ARM XXVI 62* [A.4874] above, LÚ^{meš} GN, "the men of GN" are taking action as a group, they are not simply addressed as "gentlemen": in *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334], "the men of Larsa" (lú.meš *Larsa*^{ki}) undertake deliberations and negotiations. They are acting as a collective decision-making body. How did these negotiations take place? What was the authority of "the men of GN"?

In *ARM XXVI 62* [A.4874] and *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334], the LÚ^{meš} GN, "the men of GN", are addressed as a collective and act as a party in negotiations. The king of Mari and his officials refer not to community leaders, the *sugāgū*, but to the collective of the town. Does this indicate that the negotiations were undertaken with an assembly of townspeople? This is difficult to establish. The decision of "the men of Larsa" to go to war in *ARM XXVI 144* [A.4334] may have been a spontaneous reaction to the request from the city Terqa. However, "the men of GN" is addressed as a collective and acts as a collective; they are also formally recognised as a party in negotiations. Therefore, it seems to me that "the men of GN" are more than an "amorphous definition of the people" as in Fleming's analysis or a generic term for "gentlemen", as in Seri's argument.⁷³⁵ The identity of the city in *ARM XXVI 144*

⁷³³ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 182

⁷³⁴ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 170

⁷³⁵ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 182; Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 170

[A.4334] is the collective of “men of Larsa”. They make the decision to go to war. This indicates a corporate identity, although it is difficult to define. Who were “the men of GN” and how did they make decisions? A few more texts may clarify the matter.

ARM XXVI 409 [A.4001+M.14046] is from the official Yasīm-El to king Zimri-Lim of Mari. Yasīm-El is king Zimri-Lim’s envoy to the kingdom of Andarig. In his letter there is a report of a dispute over the town of Šuḥpad.⁷³⁶ Hāya-Sūmū, king of Ilān-šurā,⁷³⁷ claims that although “the men of Šuḥpad” (^{lú.meš} Šuḥpadayū^{ki}) have called for help from the Mari official Yasīm-El, king Atamrum of Andarig has occupied the town of Šuḥpad and installed a *šaknum*, “governor”, there. The Mari official Yasīm-El has gone to the town of Šuḥpad to arbitrate and preserve the peace, and he reports to king Zimri-Lim that king Hāya-Sūmū is exaggerating the situation and that king Atamrum is on Zimri-Lim’s side. “The men of Šuḥpad” (^{lú.meš} Šuḥpadayū^{ki}) swear fealty to Atamrum, and he swears an oath not to trick, kill or deport them. “The men of Šuḥpad” swear to Atamrum to stay loyal and not kill the *šaknum*, “governor”. They declare him master of the soil (*bēl epiri*). King Hāya-Sūmū goes to king Zimri-Lim to win the town back. The Mari official Yasīm-El negotiates with Atamrum, who demands that Zimri-Lim, whom he calls his senior brother, should be the judge of whom the town belongs to.⁷³⁸

ARM XXVI 435 [A.4884] is a report from the official Yasīm-El to king Zimri-Lim, and concerns a dispute over the town of Amaz between Šukru-Tešub, the king (LÚ, or

⁷³⁶ This town lay on the border between the kingdom Ilān-šurā and the kingdom Andarig

⁷³⁷ Neither Hāya-Sūmū nor Atamrum are mentioned with titles of royalty in this letter, but their high rank is indicated by the context. Cf. Charpin et al., *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, 1988, 279 n. a, b

⁷³⁸ Charpin et al., *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, 1988, 277-280: *ARM XXVI 409* [A.4001+M.14046]

“man”) of Eluhut, and Šubram, the king (LÚ, or “man”) of Susā and “district governor” (LÚ *šāpitum*) of the city Šubat-Enlil. King Šukru-Tešub is furious because the king of Susā has claimed the town, and argues that “the men of Amaz” (^{lú.meš} *Amazayu*^{ki}) have not appealed to king Šubram for an intervention.⁷³⁹

ARM XXVI 409 [A.4001+M.14046] and *ARM XXVI 435* [A.4884] provide evidence for “the men of GN” as more than a collective reference to the town’s inhabitants: “the men of Šuhpad” attempt to decide their own fate and negotiate terms with a regional overlord, king Atamrum. Further, “the men of Šuhpad” swear an oath to the king. In this sense, they are party to a treaty. In my opinion, this means that “the men of Šuhpad” refers to some kind of representatives of the community. However, the letter gives no indication to how such a treaty was made. This is a problem with several texts discussed so far: decisions are attributed to the “men of GN” but how they were made are not mentioned. Similarly, in *ARM XXVI 435* [A.4884] “the men of Amaz” appear competent to appeal for assistance from neighbouring rulers. In the letter, king Šukru-Tešub is referred to as appealing to the wishes of “the men of Amaz” in order to back up his claim to the town. King Zimri-Lim, on the other hand, is not directly involved, it seems, but has the overarching authority in the region and acts as the balancing figure in the struggles between other kings for control of towns and cities. Who exactly king Šukru-Tešub appealed to, is difficult to establish, however. The same applies to how the appeal was made.

In my opinion, *ARM XXVI 409* [A.4001+M.14046] and *ARM XXVI 435* [A.4884] are evidence that the people of individual towns, as a collective, could negotiate with outside authorities. How this was done, is not clear. The reference in *ARM XXVI 409* [A.4001+M.14046] to “the men of Šuhpad” (^{lú.meš} *Šuhpadayu*^{ki}) may seem to indicate

⁷³⁹ Charpin et al., *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, 1988, 339-341: *ARM XXVI 435* [A.4884]

that the entire town took part in reaching decisions. How the entire town reached a conclusion concerning their relations with powerful men in their region is not stated, however. It does not seem very likely that they all participated. The appeal of “the men of GN” was evidently a source of legitimation for intervention by outside forces like king Atamrum. This implies a local collective political identity for the town and the recognition of this identity by rulers in the region. How “the men of GN” were organised is not clear, however, and scholars are not agreed on how to solve this problem.

The active role of “the men of GN” in the Mari correspondence is taken by some scholars as evidence for some form of popular power in the local communities of the Mari kingdom. André Finet emphasises the role of local powers in the Mari kingdom and claims that the citizens of certain cities and areas could accept, refuse or choose their sovereign.⁷⁴⁰ Indeed, as seen above, it appears that some towns and cities were actively negotiating relations with outside rulers. Also, it has been seen that local communities could present a *sugāgum* or “chieftain” to the king for ratification: this indicates that these leaders were pointed out locally (4.7.1). However, there are no clear indications to how such negotiations were made or who participated in making decisions. It is not possible to determine whether decisions were made by popular assemblies and Finet’s suggestion that the citizens of Mari communities were autonomous collectives cannot be said to be strengthened by the evidence discussed so far. The details surrounding the making of decisions are lacking, making it difficult to determine the degree of popular power

The concept of popular power in the local communities of the Mari kingdom is controversial. Jean-Robert Kupper emphasises that there was no people’s power in

⁷⁴⁰ Finet, “Y eut-il une démocratie Mésopotamienne?”, 1982, 148-149

any community of the Mari kingdom. In his interpretation, local authority figures were all royally appointed governors and other officials.⁷⁴¹ As has been shown in the discussion of the office of *sugāgum* (4.7.1), however, the local authority figures owed their power not exclusively to the king's ratification, but to their standing in the local community. It does not appear that they could ignore the opinion of their own community. Rather, "the men of GN", understood as the totality of the people of the town could make their opinion heard and kings would listen to them. However, there is no evidence to popular assemblies in these cities. Rather, there are indications that "elders" were a group of people with authority in tribes, towns, and cities, with influence over the appointment of the *sugāgum*. In the following, more evidence for "the elders" will be examined. Was this group behind decisions made in the local communities of the Mari kingdom? Were "the elders" the real "men of GN"?

4.7.4 The *šībūt*^{meš} or "elders"

The *šībūt*^{meš} or "elders" are frequently mentioned in the Mari correspondence, sometimes more specifically referred to as "the elders" of a tribe, a place, a city, or of "the land". They clearly were some kind of local authority. Who were they? What were their areas of competence and authority? In the following, evidence for "elders" of pastoralist communities will be discussed, and then evidence for "elders" of towns and cities. As will be seen, "elders" of pastoralist tribes play an important role in negotiations between the king and local communities. The source of their authority is not clear, however. What were their relations with the central authorities? What was their standing in the local community?

⁷⁴¹ Kupper, "Les pouvoirs locaux dans le royaume de Mari," 1982, 53

In *ARM II 16*, king Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum writes to his brother king Yasmah-Addu of Mari, reporting that he is making peace agreements throughout the land. He refers to “the elders” (*awīl šībūt^{meš}*) of Zalluhān who have approached him, and he has made them swear an oath to conclude the peace.⁷⁴² The text is fragmentary.

In *ARM III 65*, the official Iaqqim-Addu writes to Kibri-Dagan, the governor of the city Terqa. He reports that Iridānum and ten “elders” of the Hana, “tent-dwellers”, are on their way to the king in Mari, and asks Kibri-dagan to notify the king.⁷⁴³

In *ARM IV 29*, king Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum writes to his brother king Yasmah-Addu of Mari concerning joyous news: military reinforcements have come to Šubat-Enlil, the capital of their father, king Šamši-Adad. He has received report that “the elders of the land” (*awīl šībūt^{meš} mātim*) came at night and met with a certain Hāliya in Šubat-Enlil. They wanted to know what was going on, and whether they were to listen to the leader of the troops. Išme-Dagan is pleased because “the elders of the land” want to make peace with him.⁷⁴⁴ The text is fragmentary.

In *ARM IV 68*, king Išme-Dagan of Ekallatum writes to his brother king Yasmah-Addu of Mari concerning a revolt by the *mātum*, “land” Hiwilat and Talmuš. The king was approached by “the main personages” and “the elders of the land” (*lú-meš we-*

⁷⁴² Jean, *Lettres diverses*, 1950, 42-43: *ARM II 16*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 92-93

⁷⁴³ Kupper, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan*, 1950, 86-87: *ARM III 65*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 590

⁷⁴⁴ Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*, 1951, 50-53: *ARM IV 29*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 103-105

d[u-tu]m* ù lú-meš šu-gi* ša mātim*),⁷⁴⁵ but he refused their gifts. He is in good spirits, and bids Yasmah-Addu not to worry.⁷⁴⁶ The text is partly restored.

These texts give the impression of “the elders” as being quite involved in several aspects of politics in the Mari kingdom. They negotiate peace. Also, they approach the king for talks, in order to bring information. Who were they? It could be argued that they are officials and that they perform tasks typical of officials, like going on missions for the king. However, the texts cited above all concern contacts between the royal sphere and the pastoralist communities of the steppe. Therefore, “the elders” appear to be representatives of the most powerful families of their tribes rather than royal officials. “Elders” among the tent-dwelling Hana are evident from *ARM* III 65. They are mentioned briefly, and it is not possible to say anything about their function or authority. In *ARM* IV 29, it appears that the pastoralist “elders” had authority separate from the king: they approach the man in charge at Šubat-Enlil to get instructions, but the king Išme-Dagan is pleased that “the elders of the land” are friendly towards him. In my opinion, this indicates that “the elders of the land” were not the king’s officials at all. It is not clear from the text whether they were sedentary or pastoralist “elders”. In *ARM* IV 68, “the elders of the land” attempt to make direct overtures to the king, albeit unsuccessfully. “The elders” act as authorities in their own right that could make peace agreements and go on diplomatic missions. “The elders” of the pastoralist groups do not appear to be royal appointees in the texts discussed above. Rather, they are involved in negotiations on behalf of their own communities, as representatives or envoys. Was this also the case with “elders” of towns and cities? This will be investigated in the following.

⁷⁴⁵ lú-meš šu-gi is the Sumerian rendering of the Akkadian *awil šībūt*^{mes}

ARM III 73 is a letter from Kibri-dagan, governor of the city Terqa, to king Zimri-Lim of Mari. Kibri-dagan has gone to the town Samānum after receiving report of a certain affair. He reproaches “the elders of the town” (*šībūt ālim*) and the *hazannu*, “chief of the district” about a reported affair. He says that such a person as the one involved in the reported affair should be sentenced to death by fire, both him and his family.⁷⁴⁷ The exact nature of the affair is not mentioned.

ARM III 17 is a letter from Kibri-Dagan, governor of Terqa. He reports that “the elders of the city” (*awīlu^{mes} šībūt ālim^{ki}*) pray to the god Dagan continually for the well-being of the king and his armies.⁷⁴⁸

In *ARM XIII 148*, Yawi-El, the king of Talhayūm, writes to king Zimri-Lim of Mari and informs him that he has sent “the elders of the city” to the king with complete instructions (*lúŠU.GI^{mes} DUMU^{mes} ālim^{ki} taklutim ana gamratim*)⁷⁴⁹ in order that the king may speak with them at leisure. He assures the king that they will provide all the information he will need.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁶ Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*, 1951, 94-97: *ARM IV 68*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 118-119

⁷⁴⁷ Kupper, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan*, 1950, 94-97: *ARM III 73*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. III, 2000, 242-243

⁷⁴⁸ Kupper, *Correspondance de Kibri-Dagan*, 1950, 32-35: *ARM III 17*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. III, 2000, 121-122

⁷⁴⁹ lúŠU.GI^{mes} is a Sumerian rendering of the Akkadian term *awīlu^{mes} šībūt*

⁷⁵⁰ Dossin et al., *Textes divers*, 1964, 155: *ARM XIII 148*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 461

A.2417 is a letter that also concerns events in Talhayūm. “The elders” (lú-šu-gi-meš)⁷⁵¹ report the death of the king of Talhayūm to king Zimri-Lim of Mari. Enemies have breached the city-wall during the night and killed him. “The elders” write to Zimri-Lim and ask for troops to protect them from further attacks. They also inform Zimri-Lim that they send a certain Asi-Nehim so that Zimri-Lim may make him their new king.⁷⁵²

In these texts, there appears to be several different referents to the term “elders” of towns and cities: “the elders” in *ARM* III 17 are praying for the well-being of the king. By doing this, they can be said to act as community representatives. “The elders” in *ARM* XIII 148 are dispatched with instructions in order to talk to the king and give him information and thus appear to be a body of advisers to the king. It should be noted that they are not explicitly called a body of advisors, however. In my opinion, they do not appear to be formal officials; rather, they seem more like community representatives sent to the king so that he could talk with them as soon as he found the time. In *ARM* III 73, on the other hand, “the elders” are held responsible for local troubles together with the *hazannu*. According to the *CAD*, the title *hazannu* is rare in Old Babylonian documents, and was possibly used in the same sense as *rabiānum*, a “mayor” or “headman” of the town or city.⁷⁵³ Dominique Charpin suggests that *hazannu* in Old Babylonian is used of the local representative of a foreign king.⁷⁵⁴ At any rate, he appears in this text as an official with local responsibilities. In A. 2417, “the elders” request that the king of Mari appoint a new king over them. Thus, “the elders” had a certain local responsibility and wrote directly to the king with their requests. This indicates that “the elders” formed some kind of

⁷⁵¹ lú-šu-gi-meš is a Sumerian rendering of the Akkadian term *awīlu*^{meš} *šībūt*

⁷⁵² Durand, “Les anciens de Talhayūm,” 1988, 98-101

⁷⁵³ *CAD* H, 1956, 163-165

⁷⁵⁴ Charpin, “Économie, société et insitutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 175

council in charge of the city together with local leaders. From the texts discussed so far, the position of “the elders” is difficult to determine. They are clearly local authorities of some sort, but their powers are ill defined in the texts.

Daniel E. Fleming argues that the Terqa elders in *ARM III 17* who pray for the well-being of the king “clearly have some sort of local status not deriving from the royal court or administration”.⁷⁵⁵ I agree that there is nothing in the text to indicate that these “elders” were royal appointees. However, it could be argued that there is nothing in the text indicating that they were not, either. Praying for the well-being of the king may have been a communal responsibility. But that “the elders” performed tasks for the community does not rule out that they were part of the royal administration. The king could very well have been involved with “the elders”. This seems to be the case with “the elders of Talhayūm” in *ARM XIII 148*, who were dispatched to the king with instructions. However, they may be community representatives that are sent on a mission for a local king without necessarily being appointed by the king of Mari. There are not any texts to my knowledge that mention the royal appointment of “elders”.

The king of Mari had his own advisory board, called *pirištum*, meaning “secret”.⁷⁵⁶ However, this council cannot count as a parallel to the local “elders”, since it was based in the palace and not in the local communities. There is evidence that other kings were advised by “elders”, however. In A.1241, Habdu-Malik reports to Zimri-Lim that he has written to Hammurabi of Kurdā concerning his absence from the taking of an oath, asking whether he has decided not to take the oath or “the elders of

⁷⁵⁵ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 197

⁷⁵⁶ Charpin, Edzard & Stol, *Mesopotamien – Die altbabylonische Zeit*, 2004, 260

the land” (lúŠU.GI^{meš}) has put pressure on him not to go.⁷⁵⁷ Charpin argues that this letter is evidence that the people could put pressure on their sovereign through “the elders” in certain kingdoms, pointing to the city Kurdā, where the king follows the advice of “the elders” regarding diplomatic decisions.⁷⁵⁸ It might be argued that “the elders” in A.1241 were royal advisors and not the people’s representatives. However, “the elders of the land” appear to have had a more independent role than acting as the king’s advisors, since there is a parallel question of whether the king has reached a decision not to take the oath or “the elders” have put pressure on him not to go. In my opinion, communication between “elders” and the king cannot be counted as evidence that “the elders” were royal officials. Rather, their power appears to have been based in their status in their local communities. What was the authority of the local elders?

In A.2417, “the elders” of Talhayūm dispatch a new candidate for leadership of their town to king Zimri-Lim to be made king. According to Jean-Marie Durand, “the elders” of the city of Talhayūm “représentent ceux qui exercent le pouvoir à un moment de vacance de la royauté”.⁷⁵⁹ In his analysis, “the elders” are stepping in for the king. However, it seems to me that “the elders” are doing more than that; they have selected the new king and sent him to be ratified. This important role played by “the elders” needs an explanation. In my opinion, “the elders” were a local decision-making body of men of high status in their community that could rule in the absence of a local leader and appoint his successor, similar to the appointment of the *sugāgum* discussed above (4.7.1).

⁷⁵⁷ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, 1988, 225-226: ARM XXVI 393 [A.1241]

⁷⁵⁸ Charpin, Edzard & Stol, *Mesopotamien – die altbabylonische Zeit*, 2004, 260-261

⁷⁵⁹ Durand, “Les anciens de Talhayūm,” 1988, 112

Against an interpretation of “elders” as local authorities, Andrea Seri argues that “elders” who exercise power during a dynastic crisis represent special cases. She claims that the interregnum of “elders” does not say anything about the authority or composition of local powers. In her interpretation “rather than a municipal authority, the elders from Mari sources were royal officials engaged in military and diplomatic issues”.⁷⁶⁰ Contrary to Seri, Dominique Charpin argues that the frequent contacts between “elders” and the king of Mari are not because they were royal officials, but because the Mari kingdom was going through a troublesome period with local unrest.⁷⁶¹ I agree with Charpin that “the elders” do not appear to be royal officials, but rather act as representatives of the local communities. How were “the elders” organised?

Daniel E. Fleming suggests that the elders of Talhayūm are not a political body, but men who “take on themselves the responsibility to speak for the town”.⁷⁶² This is, however, quite vague, and implies that the decision behind A.2417, a letter sent to Zimri-Lim, was taken by the town as a corporate entity with no mediating bodies between the town and the king. Fleming emphasises that “we must avoid importing any of the features of elite councils into our interpretation of Mari period polity unless compelled to admit them by overwhelming evidence”.⁷⁶³ In his interpretation of A.2417, it can be seen how this position leads him to draw strange conclusions, in the sense that he denies that there were any decision-making bodies in the local communities, while insisting that decisions were taken directly by the communities. I am unable to understand how a corporate strategy for power could be pursued except through some form of collective decision-making body.

⁷⁶⁰ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 116

⁷⁶¹ Charpin, “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 176-177

⁷⁶² Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 196

“The elders” of Talhayūm in A.2417 dispatch their new leader to king Zimri-Lim, and ask him to install their new leader, as well as to send troops to protect the city. They function as an authority in the absence of a local leader. Were they an ad hoc group that somehow took responsibility, or were they an institution of some permanence? This cannot be determined from the available texts. There is evidence from elsewhere in the Mari kingdom, however, viz. the twin towns Isqā-and-Qā, that may illuminate the role of “the elders” in the political structure of cities and towns, as will be seen in the following.

ARM II 75 is a report from the twin towns Isqā-and-Qā. The writer of the report has heard that “the men of Isqā-and-Qā” (^{lū.meš}*Is-qa-a ù Qa-e-em*) have been called up to go with provisions for ten days and help a certain Hammurapi.⁷⁶⁴ The reporter has therefore written to “the local leader” Yamrus-El and to “the elders of Isqā-and-Qā” (^{lū.ŠU.GI.meš}*Is-qa-a^{ki} ù Qa-e-em*). Like a single man, he writes, two hundred men, “the heads” (*qaqqadū*) of Isqā-and-Qā assembled. He addressed them “in their assembly” (*ina puhrišunu*), wanting to know what they were up to, and to which side they were turning: were they not “the servants” (*wardu^{meš}*) of king Zimri-Lim of Mari? Why, then, he asks, did they go to the aid of this Hammurapi?⁷⁶⁵ The rest of the tablet is lost.

ARM II 95 is a letter from the diviner Ašqudum and a certain Halihadum to king Zimri-Lim of Mari. They report that “the local leader” Niqmā-El and “the elders of

⁷⁶³ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 176

⁷⁶⁴ Of the city Kurdā, not Babylon, cf. Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 172

⁷⁶⁵ Jean, *Lettres diverses*, 1950, 140-143: *ARM II 75*; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. II, 1998, 171-173

Qā” (^{awīl} *šībūt*^{meš} *Qa-a*) came to them. They write that they have sent them to the king, in order that he may look into their business and then send them back.⁷⁶⁶

Qā was a rather small and peripheral town. The statuses of the local leading figures Yamrus-El and Niqmā-El are unclear, but they may have been petty kings. They were apparently not the only authorities in the town. The assembly of two hundred “heads” (*qaqqadū*) is intriguing.⁷⁶⁷ Was this group and the ^{lū}ŠU.GI^{meš}, “elders”, local collective authorities? The authorities of the local leaders Yamrus-El and Niqmā-El are difficult to determine. Horst Klengel interprets the position of Yamrus-El and Niqmā-El as “Schēch bzw. Ortsvorsteher”.⁷⁶⁸ Jean-Marie Durand interprets them as kings.⁷⁶⁹ The suggestion of Klengel that they were sheiks implies that their title was *sugāgum*. Since Yamrus-El and Niqmā-El appear together with “the elders”, it seems likely that they were local leaders. Durand’s suggestion that they were kings is equally acceptable, however: a petty king could be conceived to be addressed together with “the elders”. Daniel E. Fleming points out that these leaders have no formal designation when they are mentioned in connection with “elders”.⁷⁷⁰ It seems nevertheless a fair assessment that they were kings. Their lack of titles in the texts is probably not significant. What is more intriguing, though, is the evidence for a body of two hundred “heads” of Isqā-and-Qā. It has been much discussed by scholars and even used as evidence for popular power in these towns: André Finet suggests that the city of Qā had a division of power between a local ruler loyal to the king of Mari, the elders and the *vox populi* of the townspeople.⁷⁷¹ Who were “the heads?” The

⁷⁶⁶ Jean, *Lettres diverses*, 1950, 168-171: ARM II 95; Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 414-415

⁷⁶⁷ According to CAD Q, 1982, 100ff. *qaqqadu* means “head”, more specifically in this text, it is taken to mean simply “important people” (ibid. 107).

⁷⁶⁸ Klengel, “Zu den *šībūtum* in altbabylonischer Zeit,” 1960, 368

⁷⁶⁹ Durand, *Documents épistolaires* vol. I, 2002 [1997], 413-415

⁷⁷⁰ Fleming, *Democracy’s ancient ancestors*, 2004, 297 n.94

interpretation of the term is disputed, making it dangerous to draw firm conclusions about the existence of a *vox populi* in Mari towns from this text alone.

In the first publication of the letter as *ARM II 75*, *qaqqadū* or the “heads” was interpreted as élite troops.⁷⁷² Andrea Seri supports the view that they were troops.⁷⁷³ The military interpretation is not accepted by Daniel E. Fleming, who argues that they were heads of households.⁷⁷⁴ In his interpretation, *ARM II 75* “provides a fairly elaborate picture of group decision making”.⁷⁷⁵ He suggests that “behind the ^{lú.meš} GN formula may lie a variety of decision making bodies, in that case even two, with an individual and elders followed by a gathering of “heads””.⁷⁷⁶ Dominique Charpin also suggests that “the heads” are an élite group, separate from “the elders”.⁷⁷⁷

Fleming and Charpin in my opinion may be over-interpreting *ARM II 75*: the gathered “heads” are not making decisions; they are addressed by an official and asked about their loyalty. “The elders” of Qā, however, do appear to have authority in the town. They appear to work together with the local leader of the town. Thus, to me it seems evident that local collective bodies were involved in local decision-making, not as royal appointees, but as local representatives of the families of the community. Whether “the heads” formed a separate body of decision-makers cannot be determined, since the term *qaqqadū* is not attested in a context that describes their

⁷⁷¹ Finet, “Le trone et la rue en Mesopotamie,” 1973, 19

⁷⁷² Jean, *Lettres diverses*, 1950, 141

⁷⁷³ Seri, *Local powers*, 2005, 105

⁷⁷⁴ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 185

⁷⁷⁵ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 185

⁷⁷⁶ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 2004, 187

⁷⁷⁷ Charpin, “Économie, société et insitutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 178

actual role in the local community. There is another letter that mentions “heads” making decisions in a town, however. Perhaps this can clarify the meaning of “heads” in local communities of the Mari kingdom?

ARM XXVI 365 [A.4849+M.9640] is a letter from Yārim-Addu to king Zimri-Lim. He reports of goings on in Kasalluk. A man from Mutiabal had been taken prisoner by Elamites, and regained his freedom on the promise to incite rebellion against Babylonia. He first went to Babylon and spoke with the king there, hiding his intentions. Then he went to Kasalluk. “The men of Kasalluk” (^{lú.meš} *Kasallu^{ki}*) heard his plan and they agreed to write to the *sukkal*, or “ruler”, of Elam.⁷⁷⁸ Hammurapi of Babylon, however, soon received news of what was transpiring and sent people to Kasalluk to investigate. The rumours were confirmed, and Hammurapi summoned “the heads of the men of Kasalluk” (^{lú.meš} *qaqqadāt Kasalluk^{ki}*) and offered them to send their grain and straw, sons, and daughters to Babylon for safety, while the rest of the people stayed in their houses in Kasalluk and the sheep grazed in their countryside (*mātum*). They agreed and went home. Hammurapi sent 6000 troops and ships to take away their people (*nišū*). However, when news arrived from Elam, they all turned against Hammurapi and killed those true to him. Hammurapi dispatched a punitive mission. It was barred on the way by troops from Mutiabal, but they were victorious in the end.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁸ For *sukkal* as a royal title, cf. Potts, *The archaeology of Elam*, 1999, 162-163

⁷⁷⁹ Charpin, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* V/2, 1988, 166-168: *ARM XXVI 365* [A.4849+M.9640]

There is another letter relating to this episode, *ARM XXVI 365-bis* [M.13716], which states that troops have deported the population of Mutiabal, destroyed their houses and burned them.⁷⁸⁰

According to Daniel E. Fleming, Mutiabal is the tribal population of the town Kasalluk. He interprets “the heads of Kasalluk” as synonymous with “the Kasallukites” or citizens of Kasalluk. He reconstructs the “social framework into which such “men” would have to fit”: Kasalluk was a settled town with a collective land around it where the sheep graze. “The heads” have houses where they produce grain and they have people dependent on them.⁷⁸¹ Fleming regards this as evidence that “the heads” were “indeed heads of households”.⁷⁸²

In my opinion, the interpretation of *qaqqadū* as a local group of leaders, rather than as élite troops, is strengthened by the information in *ARM XXVI 365* [A.4849+M.9640]. It seems evident that “the heads” were a group with authority and power that was regarded by foreign rulers as capable of making decisions for the community. They apparently made decision together with the rest of “the men of Kassaluk”, making it probable that this smaller group of decision-makers had the trust of the rest of the people of the town and acted as their representatives. Thus, it can be concluded that collectives of “elders” or “heads” were important decision-making groups. They do not appear to have been identical to “the men of GN”, but to have formed separate groups in their communities.

⁷⁸⁰ Charpin, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/2, 1988, 168-169: *ARM XXVI 365-bis* [M.13716]

⁷⁸¹ Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 186

⁷⁸² Fleming, *Democracy's ancient ancestors*, 201

4.8 Strategies for power in local communities of the Mari state

In the letters from Mari, there are negotiations between community representatives and the king. Towns and cities appear to enjoy a degree of local autonomy. This also applies to pastoralist groups. There are no clear indications that local assemblies were institutionalised, or played a formal role in politics. There is evidence for *puhrum* in the sense of “assembly”, but this kind of gathering does not seem to have been a formal corporation with defined powers. Perhaps other terms for “assembly”, *tahtamum* or *rihsum* indicate more permanent institutions, but this is doubtful (cf. 4.7.2).⁷⁸³ The terminology in the letters discussed above is opaque. Behind the terms *lú šībūt*^{meš}, “elders”, and *LÚ GN*^{meš}, “men of GN”, local levels of decision-making are discerned that were not directly controlled by the king or his officials. “The elders” pursued a narrow corporate strategy for power. They were powerful men in their home communities that cooperated with the king and his officials. However, they were loyal to their own communities and had their power-base in their local status among their peers, and not from their appointment by the king.

Communities negotiated their position with external authorities from a local level as collectives, sometimes explicitly through the elders of the community. The king of Mari appear as a rallying figure for several local communities, pastoral as well as settled, in a confederation of groups and towns centred on the palace in Mari. The king’s role as mediator between the communities of his kingdom is seen in his careful handling of business between the sedentary and pastoralist groups in the kingdom. The pastoralists were as much a part of the Mari state as the towns and cities. The local communities were integrated into the kingdom, but also made many local decisions and were not regularly controlled by royal officials.

⁷⁸³ Charpin, “Économie, société et insitutions paléo-Babyloniennes,” 2007, 181

The people are not visible as active participants in decision-making, although the collective of citizens are referred to as having decided on a number of issues. In my opinion, it is likely that “the elders” reached decisions in the community, since they are mentioned as an active and powerful group, responsible for the appointment of new leaders and being sent on missions for the king. However, these decisions were probably taken in public, as seen in the frequent mention of assemblies, also out in the steppe. Thus, people were informed and could presumably voice their opinion at “the assembly”. Their representatives, “the elders”, together with their local “chieftain” probably had the final word, however. Intriguing about the Mari kingdom, is that the local communities are seen to not only reach legal decisions, but also to actually make political decisions on war and peace and act as autonomous collectives of citizens, under the leadership of heads of households or other locally entrusted people.

4.9 Conclusions

In the evidence to local decision-making in Old Babylonian network states investigated in this chapter, it can be seen that much information is missing. It is not possible to determine in detail who participated in decision-making bodies or how local authorities were established. In particular, the relations between the local communities and the palace are difficult to determine. Therefore, firm conclusions cannot be drawn. However, it can be argued that local communities within network states tend to be characterised by a narrow corporate strategy for power pursued by community representatives, often referred to as “elders”. These community representatives exercised their power through councils that reached legal decisions as well as political decisions. Admittedly, there is more concrete evidence for political action by such corporations in Mari than in Babylon, but nevertheless, local councils

appear to have played an important role in the running of communities in both of these network states.

In Babylon, the cities of the kingdom appear to have had a certain degree of autonomy, in particular regarding their legal systems. Local bodies made several of the legal decisions in the kingdom. However, it can also be seen that the local bodies were closely connected to the royal judges, so that the local system was integrated in the structure of the kingdom. It is indicative of corporate strategies for power that the citizens of the cities of the Babylonian network state were judged by their own and that decisions were made in public. It is also important that a significant part of legal decisions were made in collective bodies, with an open debate on the outcome of the case (cf. 4.3.3; 4.3.5). However, it is difficult to determine whether these collective bodies were large and inclusive or more restricted in their composition.

From the Mari evidence, it appears that local communities were autonomous to a high degree. The communities, or more precisely “the elders”, could choose local leaders and the king accepted their candidates as local authorities. The local bodies cooperated with royal officials like the viziers of the king, but the king sometimes preferred to act through local leaders, “the chieftains”, in order to maintain peace with the local communities (cf. 4.7.1). The local bodies of decision-making were thus to a certain extent integrated in the political structure of the kingdom, but also had a degree of autonomy and a local identity.

Babylon and Mari were network states ruled by kings in the Old Babylonian period. However, in the Mari kingdom, the local communities were dominated by the decisions of “the elders”, who chose the local leaders. “The elders” could also at times rule the local communities on their own. These “elders” were probably heads of

households, and as such, the people can be said to be represented in the local decision-making bodies through these heads of households (cf. 4.7.4). In Babylon, local authorities were influential and appear to have been preferred to royal intervention (cf. 4.3.3-5). Thus, on a local community level, the people of Mariote and Babylonian towns, cities, and pastoralist camps had a potential influence, although this side to local politics is little documented. However, the heads of households can also be argued to represent a brake on popular participation in decision-making, since they were a group of distinguished individuals who made decisions for the community. In the clan-based societies of the Mari kingdom, paternal authority was probably strong, and the power of “the elders” must not be confused with popular power. However, the local communities of the Mari kingdom were not ruled by foreign officials imposed on them by the king. Rather, the kings were willing to use local decision-making bodies in order to rule their kingdoms and left many decisions to the local communities.

5. Local powers in commercial cities and merchant enclaves

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will investigate the organisation of the Assyrian merchant communities in Anatolia and the structure of the city-state Assur in the Old Assyrian period. I will also investigate the political structure of Ugarit in the Late Bronze age and relations between merchants and foreign kings, as well as between central authorities of the kingdom of Ugarit and local communities. These two polities are quite different, but they also share some features that make it useful to discuss them together. Scholars agree that Old Assyrian society had a high degree of sharing of power among the élite, an élite predominantly occupied with trade.⁷⁸⁴ In the kingdom of Ugarit, scholars have found that although the polity was centred on the palace, there were local communities with a certain degree of autonomy.⁷⁸⁵ Thus, there were groups with the power to make decisions outside the palace, in Assur and its colonies as well as in Ugarit. The importance of trade in both of these kingdoms invites a discussion of the political position of merchants and how they were organised. Although Assur's trade was landbased and Ugarit's trade was seaborne, they appear to have had powerful merchants as a common feature. In addition, for Ugarit, the relations between central authorities and the local farming communities of the kingdom will be investigated, to discuss how the kingdom was ruled and how local communities related to the central powers.

⁷⁸⁴ Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade*, 1972; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976; Larsen, "The Old Assyrian city-state," 2000; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001

⁷⁸⁵ Liverani, "Communautés de village et Palais royal," 1975; Heltzer, "Service system," 1988

The political structure and culture of Assur and Ugarit will be analysed from letters, trade documents, and treaties to explore strategies for power pursued by the citizens and rulers. I will investigate evidence for local powers outside the palace and temples. To what degree was there a sharing of power in commercial cities between central authorities, merchants, and local communities? Who had a share in power?

I will first discuss the evidence from Assur, and return to Ugarit in section 5.11. Old Assyrian trade was in the hands of experts. A merchant, DAM.GAR or *tamkārum*, either owned his own merchandise or transported it.⁷⁸⁶ The Old Assyrian merchants were organised in family firms and did not depend on the palace or other institutions for their funding. Several Near Eastern cities had a specially designated area, called the *kārum*, or quay, where the merchants worked. The term *kārum* was also used for the merchants' quarter in landlocked cities, and was used in general to designate the merchants' organisation as well as where they lived and worked.⁷⁸⁷ The Old Assyrian traders had their own organisations abroad, settled in permanent quarters or colonies, and these were also called, *kārum*. How were these communities organised? How were the relations between royal authorities at home and the merchant communities abroad?

5.2 Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh

In the first centuries of the 2nd millennium BCE, what is termed the Old Assyrian period, Assur was a city in the south of Assyria.⁷⁸⁸ It was situated on the Tigris, at the

⁷⁸⁶ CAD T, 2006, 125-127

⁷⁸⁷ CAD K, 1971, 231-237

⁷⁸⁸ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 19-21

gateway southwards to Babylonia with connections to Anatolia to the west and Iran to the east.⁷⁸⁹ Inhabitants of Assur were involved in trade in materials and products from places far afield, notably lapis lazuli from Central Asia, tin probably also from Central Asia, and textiles from southern Mesopotamia that were traded for silver in Anatolia.⁷⁹⁰ Traders lived abroad in settlements inside indigenous cities and towns, but maintained contacts with Assur and were organised in family firms. Cuneiform texts found at the Assyrian merchant colony or *kārum* at Kanesh, modern Kültepe, in Anatolia show that there were several merchant families or houses in Assur.

All the documented Old Assyrian merchant colonies were in Anatolia, in Cappadocia in modern Central Turkey, or underway between Assur and the Anatolian settlements. The merchant colonies were organised as a network of settlements established in close connection to, and integrated into, local cities and towns.⁷⁹¹ The relations between the Assyrians and the local rulers of the communities where the merchant settlements were situated were regulated by treaties laying down taxes and other obligations for the merchants and guarantees for protection by the local authorities.⁷⁹² Texts from the Anatolian settlements include decisions made by the authorities of the merchant communities as well as in Assur and treaties with local authorities. These are important sources to the organisation of Old Assyrian society.

The Old Assyrian main colony was at Kanesh, the hub in a network of ca. 30 settlements. Almost all knowledge about Old Assyrian history is due to the finds of

⁷⁸⁹ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 55

⁷⁹⁰ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 14-25

⁷⁹¹ Veenhof, "The Old Assyrian merchants," 1987, 147

⁷⁹² Eidem, "An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan," 1991, 185-207; Michel & Garelli, "Heurts avec une principauté anatolienne," 1996, 288-287; Günbatti, "Two treaty texts found at Kültepe," 2004, 249-268; Donbaz, "An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe," 2005, 63-68; Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 269-277

cuneiform texts from the lower town of the ancient city Kanesh, modern Kültepe, in the vicinity of the town Kayseri in Turkey. Tablets from the archives of the Assyrian merchants were known to locals since ca. 1890, and the site was identified in 1925. Excavations by Turkish archaeologists started in 1948.⁷⁹³ The archaeological levels relevant for the present chapter are Kültepe level II and Ib, predominantly level II. Kültepe level II is ca. 1959 to 1835 BCE, and level Ib is 1800-1700.⁷⁹⁴ A fire at the end of level II preserved a high number of tablets in good condition.⁷⁹⁵ The amount of tablets dated to level II is huge. Klaas R. Veenhof estimates the number of tablets excavated at twenty thousand cuneiform tablets, from at least seventy different archives. The tablets record the activities of merchants for at least 85 years (ca. 1920-1835 BCE), and reveals a large-scale, well organised caravan trade in tin and woollen textiles against silver and copper from Anatolia.⁷⁹⁶ There are also important texts from level Ib, viz. the recently discovered treaty texts that shed light on relations between local authorities, Assur, the merchants, and their colonies.⁷⁹⁷ These will be discussed further below (5.5.6).

The Old Assyrian trade with Anatolia was organised in family firms, with the heads of the firms residing in Assur, while other family members took up more or less permanent residence in the colonies. Mogens Trolle Larsen has demonstrated that these family firms were fundamental in the structure of the Old Assyrian city-state

⁷⁹³ Veenhof, ““Modern” features in Old Assyrian trade,” 1997, 338

⁷⁹⁴ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 269

⁷⁹⁵ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 29

⁷⁹⁶ Veenhof, ““Modern” features in Old Assyrian trade,” 1997, 337-338

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 185-207; Günbatti, “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” 2004, 249-268; Donbaz, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe,” 2005, 63-68

and its colonies, an interpretation that is accepted by most scholars today.⁷⁹⁸ How were the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies organised?

At the time of the first publication of the tablets from Kültepe, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe* by Georg Eisser and Julius Lewy in 1930, scholars were convinced that Assur was the capital of a vast and powerful empire including parts of Anatolia.⁷⁹⁹ This view was accepted for a long time.⁸⁰⁰ However, when scholars realised the fundamental importance of trade for the Assyrian presence in Anatolia and the lack of a military presence, the idea of an Old Assyrian Empire was laid to rest.⁸⁰¹

In 1976, Mogens Trolle Larsen published a highly influential analysis of the evidence from Kanesh, *The Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies* that emphasises the commercial nature of much of Old Assyrian society, comparable to Medieval Genoa or Venice.⁸⁰² In Larsen's interpretation, Assur in the Old Assyrian period was an oligarchic city-state, or merchant oligarchy, and the colonies were dominated by the heads of the important merchant houses.⁸⁰³ Larsen suggests that Assur was a self-governed city, dominated by the institutions of kingship, "city-assembly" and year-eponymy.⁸⁰⁴ In the Old Assyrian period, the city covered about 35 hectares with an

⁷⁹⁸ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 55-61

⁷⁹⁹ Eisser & Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden*, 1930; Lewy, "On some institutions of the Old Assyrian empire," 1956, 14-17

⁸⁰⁰ H. Lewy, "Notes on the political organization of Asia Minor," 1964, 191; 196

⁸⁰¹ Garelli, *Les assyriens en Cappadoce*, 1963; Orlin, *Assyrian colonies in Cappadocia*, 1970

⁸⁰² Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976

⁸⁰³ Larsen, "The Old Assyrian city-state," 2000, 86

⁸⁰⁴ Larsen, "The Old Assyrian city-state," 2000, 83-85

estimated population of 7-10.000 inhabitants at Assur and 2-4000 individuals were involved in the trade covered by the excavated archives.⁸⁰⁵ Was Assur an oligarchy? What were the conditions for popular participation in politics of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies?

The bulk of discovered texts come from the merchant colonies, and nearly none come from the city Assur itself for the Old Assyrian period. This implies that much of the structure of Assur is based on indirect information, in particular reports sent to the colonies of decisions made in Assur. Much of the material from Kültepe is still unpublished and the *bit kārīm* or “colony office” has not been excavated. However, this situation does not pose insurmountable problems, as long as the incompleteness of the available evidence is kept in mind. The political structure of Assur and its colonies in the Old Assyrian period has been reconstructed by Mogens Trolle Larsen and the economic institutions of the city-state has been further analysed by J.G. Dercksen.⁸⁰⁶ I will take their reconstructions as a point of departure in the following investigation. An extensive edition of the correspondence of the merchants of Kanesh in translation with commentaries has been published by Cécile Michel, facilitating comparative studies of the Kanesh material.⁸⁰⁷ The present discussion will focus on a selection of tablets already included in the current scholarly discussions of the political structure of Old Assyrian society.

In the Old Assyrian texts, there are several terms that are difficult to translate. The term *tamkārūm* in Old Assyrian covers “the owner of merchandise or the agent

⁸⁰⁵ Larsen, “The Old Assyrian city-state,” 2000, 79

⁸⁰⁶ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976; Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004

⁸⁰⁷ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001

transporting it” as well as “creditor” in a business arrangement.⁸⁰⁸ I will use the translation “merchant” or “trader” throughout this chapter, for the sake of readability. The term *kārum* pl. *kārū* means “quay” or “port”, but in the Old Assyrian texts, it is used in the meaning “merchant colony” or “merchant settlement”.⁸⁰⁹ *Kārum* will be translated as “colony” and “merchant community” throughout this chapter. Other relevant Old Assyrian terms will be explained throughout.

5.3 Assur, the king, and the eponym

In the following, I will briefly present the main institutions of Assur and its colonies according to the analyses of Mogens Trolle Larsen and J. G. Dercksen of the texts from Kültepe,⁸¹⁰ before investigating relations between the central and local authorities and the merchant communities.

Assur was the main deity of the Assyrians, and that was also the name of their city. The king was high priest of the city god Assur. In theory, the god was ruler of the city, and the king was his steward. The king was known under several titles, among them *rubā’um*, “prince”.⁸¹¹ Larsen and Dercksen argue that the king was executive official of the *ālum*, “the city” or “city-assembly”, and used the title *waklum* when he wrote letters in this capacity.⁸¹² *Waklum* is a term meaning “overseer”, in the sense of person in charge of a group of soldiers, workers, or craftsmen. In Assyria, it is also

⁸⁰⁸ CAD T, 2006, 126-130

⁸⁰⁹ CAD K, 1971, 234-235

⁸¹⁰ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976; Larsen, “The Old Assyrian city-state,” 2000, 77-88; Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004

⁸¹¹ CAD R, 1999, 395-398

⁸¹² Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 132; Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 71

used as a royal title.⁸¹³ The identification of the king with the *waklum* will be discussed below (5.5.4). The second most important official at Assur was the *limmu*. The year was named after him, preserved in lists of eponyms.⁸¹⁴ The *limmu* is therefore referred to as the eponym by scholars. It is presumed that the eponym was chosen by lot, but how this process took place is unknown.⁸¹⁵ As far as it is possible to tell from the Kültepe eponym list (*KEL*), the eponym was one of the merchants.⁸¹⁶ Mogens Trolle Larsen suggests that the eponym was elected from among the heads of the merchant houses.⁸¹⁷ This suggestion is supported by Dercksen, who adds that since the king or other members of the royal family were among the eponyms, it is likely that the important families of Assur controlled this office.⁸¹⁸ The *limmu* had an important position in Old Assyrian society. In *Kt* 92/k 491, the eponym is explicitly mentioned as sealing the verdict of “the city-assembly”.⁸¹⁹ Thus, the eponym had a place in the most important decision-making institution of Assur. As can be seen from the letters of several officials, the king and his family were also merchants engaged in trade between Assur and its colonies.⁸²⁰ The king, the eponym, and “the city-assembly” were apparently all merchants and power was shared among them. How this sharing of power was organised will be discussed further below (5.5).

⁸¹³ *CAD A*, 1964, 277-278

⁸¹⁴ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 192; Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 52; Günbatti, “A list of eponyms from Kültepe (KEL D),” 2008, 125-135

⁸¹⁵ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 56

⁸¹⁶ Cf. Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 59

⁸¹⁷ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 211

⁸¹⁸ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 57-58

⁸¹⁹ Cayir, “Six documents containing decisions by the city-assembly and the *kārum Kanesh*,” 2008, 120

⁸²⁰ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 65-69

The Assyrians in the Anatolian colonies lived far away from Assur and their king, but messengers travelled to and fro with verdicts of the authorities at home. Several of these verdicts are preserved on tablets, and they mention the *šiprū ša ālim*, “the envoys of the city”, that were sent from Assur to the *kārū*, or colonies. These tablets are important sources to the structure of decision-making institutions in Assur and the Anatolian colonies. At Assur, important decisions were taken by the *ālum*, “the city”. This is interpreted as “the city-assembly”, an institution vested with authority to pass judgement.⁸²¹ However, as Dercksen points out, “the terminology is obscured by the use of the word *Alum* “City” to refer to the Assembly”.⁸²² As will be seen below (5.5.4), it can be established with great probability that the *ālum* in Assur was an assembly, but whether it was a plenary assembly or a more restricted council is difficult to determine. The king and eponym participated in making decisions, as well as a group called “the elders”, as will be seen below (5.5.5), but the evidence for broader participation in “the city-assembly” is ambiguous and controversial.

Decisions were taken in Assur concerning the *kārum* Kanesh and letters were sent reporting these decisions, indicating that Assur was closely involved in the business of the colonies. The *kārum* Kanesh was an Assyrian settlement in a native Anatolian context, and therefore the city-state Assur probably served as model for its organisation. Assur, however, had a king whereas the *kārum* Kanesh did not. The authority resting with “the city-assembly” at Assur suggests that the king shared power with representatives of the merchant families engaged in trade with Anatolia. Local powers in the colonies and in the city appear to have played an important part in the Old Assyrian state. What were the relations between Assur and its colonies? To what degree did the merchants abroad form autonomous communities?

⁸²¹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 153

⁸²² Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 76

5.4 Assur and its colonies

There were two terms for Old Assyrian settlements in Anatolia. The term *kārum* or “colony” is used of communities of merchants living in enclaves in Anatolian towns and cities. There is also the term *wabartum*, thought to refer to “trading posts”, smaller settlements of Assyrians abroad.⁸²³ The Assyrian authorities sent envoys with tablets to the colonies, the *šiprū ša ālim*, “envoys of the city”. “City” always refers to the city Assur, either the place or “the city-assembly”. The envoys can therefore be regarded as messengers of “the city-assembly of Assur”. This “city-assembly”, the *ālum*, is constantly referred to in letters found at the site of the *kārum* Kanesh. What were the relations between “the city-assembly” and the merchants abroad?

VS 26, 9 (VAT 9290) contains a report from a lawsuit in Assur against several merchants who had been dealing in certain textiles. The senders of the letter warn the recipient Pūšu-kēn not to become involved in the trade in these specified types of cloth. They also report that his house and children are well, and finish the letter with a warning: the orders of “the city Assur” are firm.⁸²⁴

TC 1, 24, details among other things the arrangements made in Assur to dispatch attorneys to the *kārum* Kanesh to attend to a law-suit. It also contains an order from “the city-assembly” to dispatch a certain Annali, who is to return to Assur to answer

⁸²³ *CAD U/W*, 2010, 397

⁸²⁴ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 172; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 289-290; Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade*, 1972, 126-128

charges. In closing, the letter relates details of investments done in Assur for trade, with reference to tablets stating the sums involved.⁸²⁵

From these letters, it can be seen that “the city-assembly of Assur” were involved in the activities of Assyrian traders abroad. The inhabitants of the colonies continued to be part of the city-state of Assur. The authorities of Assur were obviously concerned about and committed to the Assyrian activities in Anatolia. “The city-assembly” interfered with fines against those who transgressed embargos of specified materials including different kinds of textiles. This can be seen in *VS* 26, 9 (*VAT* 9290), where there is a warning against becoming involved with trade in certain textiles. The text on this tablet demonstrates that the *kārum* Kanesh and all Assyrians in Anatolia were under Assyrian jurisdiction, making them part of the same political and juridical structure, although physically separated by close to a thousand kilometres. The tablets with these texts come from the site of the *kārum* Kanesh. How were the relations between Assur and the other colonies in Anatolia?

BIN 6, 120 is a letter sent from the envoys of the city Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh together to all the other *kārū*, with instructions to give two named messengers protection and help to get from one *kārum* to the next.⁸²⁶

KTP 14 is a letter sent from the *kārum* Wašušana to the envoys of the city Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh. The merchants at the *kārum* Wašušana report that a new prince has succeeded to the throne of Wašanīua and wishes to take the oath. They state, however,

⁸²⁵ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 180, 184-185; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 327-328

⁸²⁶ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 248 n. 2; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 78

that the *kārum* Kanesh is their master, and urge them to send two men of the land and make the prince take the oath.⁸²⁷

Chantre 11 is a letter from the *kārum* Zalpa addressed to the envoys of the city Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh. It reports that “a tablet of the city” had reached Zalpa.⁸²⁸

The role of the *kārum* Kanesh in disseminating information from Assur to the other colonies is evident in the texts presented above. The texts suggest a hierarchy of settlements. In the tablet *BIN* 6, 120, authority is first with “the city-assembly of Assur”, next with “the envoys of the city Assur”, then with the *kārum* Kanesh and last with the merchants of the other *kārū* in Anatolia. This interpretation is corroborated by the letter *KTP* 14, where the *kārum* Wašušana calls the *kārum* Kanesh their master. The letter *Chantre* 11 seems to contradict the proposed hierarchy, since the *kārum* Zalpa received letters from Assur. Mogens Trolle Larsen argues that the letter *Chantre* 11 is evidence that letters might be sent directly between Assur and the other *kārū*, but points out that the *kārum* Kanesh was informed of such correspondence.⁸²⁹ Indeed, *Chantre* 11 was found at Kültepe, indicating that the letter to *kārum* Zalpa was made known to the *kārum* Kanesh, apparently by sending them a copy. This again indicates that the *kārum* Kanesh was at the top of the hierarchy of Assyrian settlements, since they were informed about letters to the other *kārū*. It is at any rate clear that *kārum* Kanesh was the most important Assyrian settlement in Anatolia, because it is mentioned on par with “the envoys of the city Assur” in *KTP* 14.

⁸²⁷ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 249-250; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 98

⁸²⁸ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 248-249; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 106; Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade*, 1972, 292-293

There was a hierarchy among the settlements abroad, but Assur was at the top of them all. The Assyrian settlements in Anatolia cannot be termed autonomous settlements, because they paid taxes to Assur, and the merchants abroad were held responsible for their actions in courts at home.⁸³⁰ An obvious argument for the authority of Assur over the settlements in Anatolia is the high frequency of references to “tablets of the city”: a *dīn ālim*, “verdict of the city” recorded on a *tuppum ša ālim*, “tablet of the city”, was apparently a valuable asset, as it is referred to by merchants in several letters as authoritative documentation of past verdicts and decisions.⁸³¹ The importance of “the tablets of the city” indicates the central position of “the city-assembly of Assur” in Old Assyrian society.

Although frequently in contact with the authorities in Assur, in everyday life, the Assyrian settlements in Anatolia appear to have ruled themselves through their own institutions of collective decision-making. These institutions will be discussed below (5.5). The environment of the Assyrians abroad in Anatolia was urban. The Old Assyrian colonies were established as quarters or enclaves within Anatolian cities and towns. Klaas R. Veenhof argues that the Anatolian host communities were quite sophisticated city-states, capable of absorbing vast amounts of valuable merchandise brought by the Assyrians. He points out that the Assyrians were partly integrated in the social structure of the host communities, even taking Anatolian wives.⁸³² In my view, this is a reasonable assessment of the social conditions of the Assyrians abroad.

⁸²⁹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 248-249, n.3

⁸³⁰ *Nešr. Boğ. 2* in Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 267-268; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 112-113; *KI 92/k*, 221 in Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 82-83

⁸³¹ *CCT 3*, 22b+22a in Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 96; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 349; *TC 3*, 99 in Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 168; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 354-355; *TC 1*, 46 in Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 449; *TC 2*, 21 in Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 181-182; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 452-453; *CCT 4*, 40b in Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 502-503

⁸³² Veenhof, “The Old Assyrian merchants,” 1987, 147

The Assyrians evidently found liveable conditions in Anatolian towns and cities. They had contractual arrangements with the local rulers and had their own decision-making bodies. It is to these local powers I now turn, to investigate the political culture of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies. How were local decisions made and who participated in making them?

5.5 Collective organs of decision-making in Old Assyrian documents

Several texts from the tablets found at the site of the *kārum* Kanesh contain references to decisions taken by the *ālum*, “city”, the *kārum*, “colony” and the *šībūtum*, “elders”. These appear in the texts to be collective decision-making bodies, but due to the incompleteness of the evidence, their composition is difficult to ascertain. This also applies to their competence and powers. Some texts make references to decisions made in Assur, others to decisions made by the *kārum* Kanesh or other Assyrian settlements in Anatolia. What were the composition, power, and position of these collective organs of decision-making in the political structure of Assur and her colonies?

Evidence for decision-making is most plentiful from the *kārum* Kanesh, mainly from legal texts and letters referring to trade, transactions and adjudication. Political decisions, i.e. decisions that concerned the whole community and groups or individuals that belonged to it, are also attested. Decisions appear to have been taken in plenary assembly as well as in smaller assemblies, but as will be seen, knowledge of these institutions is tantalisingly incomplete. Given the situation of the sources, interpretations of the political institutions in Assur are mainly based on knowledge of institutions at the *kārum* Kanesh. It is therefore expedient to start with an

investigation of the evidence for decision-making at the *kārum* Kanesh before discussing the structure of Assur.

5.5.1 The statute texts and the *kārum* Kanesh “assembly of small and great”

There are three very fragmentary texts, *KTP* 19, *TC* 1, 112, and *TC* 1, 123, which constitute what scholars have called the statutes of the *kārum* Kanesh.⁸³³ Since their first publication in the 1930’s, these texts have been regarded as the laws of the *kārum* Kanesh. They have little formally in common with other Mesopotamian law codes, however: the texts do not state what is allowed and what is forbidden or indicate the consequences of breaking the laws, but appear to lay down rules for procedure in reaching decisions. Therefore, I agree that the term “statutes” is more fitting than laws, and I will use it throughout the following discussion. The complex procedures for reaching decisions that emerge from the statutes are poorly understood, and it may be argued that the statute texts are too fragmentary to be used as a basis for reconstruction of the political or juridical structure of the *kārum* Kanesh. On the other hand, these statutes are practically the only comprehensive sources to decision-making in Old Assyrian communities. Therefore, the statutes will be used here as sources to the structure of Old Assyrian decision-making institutions, with the caveat that they are incomplete and that their interpretation is disputed. Who participated in decision-making at the *kārum* Kanesh? How were decisions made?

In *KTP* 19 it is stated that if it is a matter for the assembly of *saher rabi*, “small and great”, the *tupsarrum*, “secretary” shall convene them in their “assembly”, *puhrum*. “The assembly of small and great” may only be convened when the majority of “the

⁸³³ The texts referred to below are the collated texts in Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 284-287

great” decides to do so. “The secretary” is not to convene the assembly at the request of just a single person. “The small” are not to take any initiative to convene the assembly. They are not to walk around in “the gate” of the *kārum* (KÁ *kārim*). After a break, the text continues, with rules for reaching a verdict concerning silver and gold, mentioning the merchants “in the assembly” (*ina puhrim*).⁸³⁴

In *TC 1*, 112 there are rules for “the secretary” concerning how to divide a group of people at sessions of the assembly. The first group is divided into three groups for reaching a verdict. If they fail to solve the problem, the case is relegated to “the assembly of small and great”. This assembly is divided by “the secretary” into seven groups, and they will solve the case by majority vote.⁸³⁵

TC 1, 123 is a very short fragment, but it mentions “standing up”, “joining together”, “at one place”. It also mentions “the secretary” and the *būt kārum*, “office of the colony”.⁸³⁶

The texts of the statutes are fragmentary and difficult to interpret. Scholars have used the texts to reconstruct an institutional framework for the *kārum* Kanesh: the *būt kārim* or “office of the colony” and its “gate” is mentioned in the texts, understood as a complex where judicial proceedings took place.⁸³⁷ There, meetings were held by “the

⁸³⁴ Driver & Miles, *The Assyrian laws*, 1935, 378-379; Eisser & Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden*, 1930, 336-340; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 284-285

⁸³⁵ Driver & Miles, *The Assyrian laws*, 1935, 376-377; Eisser & Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden*, 1930, 334-336; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 285

⁸³⁶ Driver & Miles, *The Assyrian laws*, 1935, 378-379; Eisser & Lewy, *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden*, 1930, 334; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 286

⁸³⁷ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 101-102

great”. Dercksen suggests that they were the wealthiest merchants, who paid the *dātum*-contribution, a special tax paid to the colony authorities. They were exempt from a tax called *šaddu ’atum* that the other merchants had to pay.⁸³⁸ The statute texts also mention meetings held by “the small and great”. In my opinion, it seems fair to suppose that “the assembly of small and great” was the whole community of merchants in the *kārum* Kanesh, i.e. a plenary assembly: *KTP* 19 states when to “assemble the small and great in their assembly” (*saher rabi pahārum ina puhrišunu*). The inclusion of all merchants, “small and great” indicates a plenary assembly. What does this imply? Was the colony ruled by all the merchants in common?

The plenary assembly does not appear to have been in charge of the *kārum* Kanesh: *TC* 1, 112 gives rules on how to proceed to reach a verdict and describes what appears as two separate categories of merchants in the assembly, “the small” and “the great”. It might be argued that “small and great” is a case of merism, i.e. two parts denoting a whole. However, this makes no sense in the cases where certain actions are specified as undertaken by “the great”. Also, *KTP* 19 curtails the initiative of “the small”. Therefore, “the great” must have been more important than “the small”. These “great” merchants were probably the heads of wealthy merchant families. The formal division into two types of participants in the assembly might reflect a division of power into a more limited council of “the great” on the one hand, and a more inclusive assembly of “the great and small” on the other. However, it is probable that “the great” were the most powerful merchants, recognisable as those who paid the *dātum*-contribution, whereas “the small” were all the other merchants of the colony. Thus, “the great” appear not as a probouleutic council for the assembly, as much as an élite group. Whether “the great” was a closed élite in Old Assyrian society will be discussed further in section 5.6.

⁸³⁸ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 112-113

It can be concluded that only one group is formally recognised in the statutes with rights to initiate sessions, viz. “the great”. “The small” did not have any separate authority except together with “the great” in the plenary assembly of “small and great”. In *KTP 19*, it appears that “the great” are in charge of “the office of the colony”, the *bīt kārim*, and that “the small” are not to linger by its gate. It is stated that “the small” are not to take initiative to gather the assembly. Thus, it can be argued from the statute texts that important business was reserved for “the great” and that those who did not share this status were barred from interfering. On the other hand, the plenary assembly was expected to reach decisions when cases were referred to it, and in this assembly, all the merchants of the colony apparently participated. The plenary assembly does not seem to have had the authority to take initiative on its own. On the other hand, the statutes state that decisions would be delegated to it when the majority of “the great” decided to do so (*KTP 19*) or when more restricted decision-making bodies had failed (*TC 1*, 112). It should be pointed out, however, that the plenary assembly appears to have been divided into seven groups before a decision was reached. Thus, the decision-making processes of the colony appear to have been quite complex.

That “the small and great” was an important institution can be seen in *WAG 48-1465*, a letter sent from Buzutāya in Assur to his brothers at the *kārum* Kanesh. He says that he has obtained “a tablet from the city” and wants it to be established in “the assembly of small and great” of the *kārum* Kanesh that it was this institution, and not himself, that had sentenced a certain person to prison. He asks that both the *kārum* Kanesh and

kārum Buruṣhattum write a letter stating that said person had been imprisoned for the illegal sale of meteoric iron by “the assembly of small and great”.⁸³⁹

WAG 48-1465 was sent to private persons, but with a specific request that it be made known in “the assembly of small and great” that Buzutāya was not personally responsible for sending a person to prison. In my view, this indicates that “the assembly of small and great” was a plenary assembly one function of which was to constitute a public environment for making information known to the whole community. In *WAG* 48-1465, “the small and great” appears as the assembled community that can witness an official document, “a tablet of the city”, stating decisions reached by “the city-assembly” in Assur.

There are also tablets that refer to the workings of “the small and great”. *Kt* 92/k 354 contains a verdict of the *kārum* Kanesh “small and great”. The assembly has examined two witnesses concerning the testimony of a third person.⁸⁴⁰ *Kt* 92/k 555b contains a verdict of the *kārum* Kanesh “small and great”, concerning a dispute over debt. After securing the testimony of witnesses and the tablet stating the debts, the *kārum* will decide how the case shall be solved.⁸⁴¹

From *Kt* 92/k 354, it can be seen that the plenary assembly of the *kārum* Kanesh actually reached verdicts. Thus, “the great” did not make all the decisions in the community on their own. *Kt* 92/k 555b is evidence of the importance of the plenary

⁸³⁹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 11976, 90; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 300-301. There were embargoes on some materials, including the rare and valuable meteoric iron.

⁸⁴⁰ Cayir, “Six documents containing decisions by the city assembly and the *kārum* Kanesh,” 2008, 117-118

⁸⁴¹ Cayir, “Six documents containing decisions by the city assembly and the *kārum* Kanesh,” 2008, 118-119

assembly in solving disputes in the merchant community. Indeed, the solving of disputes between merchants through arbitration appears to be an important function of the assembly. Rather than involving the king in Assur or “the city-assembly”, the merchants in Anatolia had the means to solve their own disputes locally.

The plenary assembly does not seem to have been the highest authority in the *kārum* Kanesh. Rather, it is part of a political structure where initiative lay with a minority of wealthy merchants, “the great”. The evidence is ambiguous, however, and some texts indicate that the plenary assembly reached important decisions in the community. But it appears likely, in view of the emphasis on the authority of “the great” in the statutes, that this group was the most influential in the *kārum* Kanesh. Does this reflect the general structure of power in Old Assyrian society?

5.5.2 “The small and great” outside the *kārum* Kanesh

“The assembly of small and great” is mentioned in several letters that concern other Old Assyrian merchant colonies in Anatolia than the *kārum* Kanesh, and also attested from other Assyrian merchant settlements in Anatolia. Interestingly, the letters do not mention “the great” as a separate authority, only “the small and great” together.

TPAK 1, 44a is a letter sent from the *kārum* Kanesh, “the assembly of small and great” to the *kārum* Durhumit, “the assembly of small and great”. It concerns a request by the sons of three merchants that the documents of their fathers which are in the *kārum* Durhumit shall be opened and read, and then resealed by the *kārum* with its

seal and sent to the *kārum* Kanesh.⁸⁴² The envelope of this letter is also preserved, *TPAK* 1, 44b; it is sealed by the *kārum* Kanesh, “the assembly of small and great”, and sent to the *kārum* Durhumit, “the assembly of small and great”.⁸⁴³

KTK 1 is a letter sent by the *kārum* Kanesh to the *kārum* Burušhattum, “the assembly of small and great”, and concerns silver that has been deposited with a certain merchant. The rest of the letter concerns debt and charges against the family of the debtor.⁸⁴⁴

KTK 3 is a letter sent to “the envoys of the city” and the *kārum* Kanesh, and was sent from “the assembly of small and great” of the *kārum* Wašušana, with a warning against letting the messenger of a local Anatolian prince interfere and make trouble.⁸⁴⁵

Two of the letters presented above, *TPAK* 1, 44a and *KTK* 1 concern matters that are supposed to be discussed in public and made known to a number of persons. *TPAK* 1, 44a is sent from the *kārum* Kanesh and addressed to the respective “assembly of small and great” of each *kārum*. This indicates that the plenary assembly was the proper public place for information to be made known to everyone as well as indicating that these plenary assemblies reached decisions concerning the merchants in the colony. *KTK* 1 mentions the *kārum* Kanesh as the sender and “the small and great” of *kārum* Burušhattum as recipient. Regarding this letter, it appears more likely that the office

⁸⁴² Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 88-89

⁸⁴³ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 89

⁸⁴⁴ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 259; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 87-88

⁸⁴⁵ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 251-252; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 98-99

of the colony at Kanesh, the *bīt kārim*, had written to the colony at Burušhattum, rather than the plenary assembly. The *bīt kārim* was probably controlled by “the great”, since “the small” were not supposed to linger at its gate (cf. 5.5.1, *KTP* 19). “The small and great” of the *kārum* Burušhattum are expected to deal with instructions concerning impending lawsuits or charges. *KTK* 3 was sent to “the envoys of the city” and the *kārum* Kanesh from “the assembly of small and great” of the *kārum* Wašušana, indicating that this assembly could speak for the community.

In the letters presented above, there is no mention of separate action undertaken by “the great” or indication of a prerogative of “the great” for convening the assembly in the colonies outside *kārum* Kanesh. It appears that in Assyrian colonies outside Kanesh, decisions were reached by the plenary assemblies and that the plenary assemblies were the main authorities in these colonies. In the *kārum* Kanesh, on the other hand, the *kārum* is mostly mentioned as making decisions and sending out instructions, making it likely that the office of the colony was in charge. As seen above (5.5.1), the office of the colony appeared from the statutes to be have been controlled by “the great” merchants. It must be kept in mind that the *kārum* Kanesh was at the top of the hierarchy of Assyrian settlements in Anatolia, thus “the great” were not only dominating the *kārum* Kanesh, but also the rest of the settlements. Thus, although it does appear that “the small and great” was the highest authority in the settlements outside Kanesh, “the great” at the *kārum* Kanesh formed the highest authority in the Old Assyrian system of colonies in Anatolia. The reference to “a tablet of the city” in *WAG* 48-1465 above further demonstrates that Assur had the ultimate authority in cases concerning the merchants in Anatolia, thus detracting from local autonomy. This will be discussed further below (5.6). I turn now to further evidence for local powers in Old Assyrian communities in Anatolia. How were these communities organised?

5.5.3 The *šībūtum* at *kārum* Kanesh and smaller committees

“The great” and “the small and great” are not the only local authorities among the Assyrian merchants abroad that are mentioned in the texts from Kültepe. There are some texts that refer to *šībūtum*, “elders” of the *kārum* Kanesh. Who are they and what is their competence and powers?

KTK 20 is a letter that mentions another letter sent from the *kārum* Kanesh to an Anatolian city or town. The writer of the letter reports that he had gone to a local official to say that “the elders” (*šībūtum*) had written to him.⁸⁴⁶

KTP 4 is a letter sent to the *kārum* Kanesh from an individual whose name is lost. The text concerns negotiations with the king of the Anatolian city Kanesh. The writer of the letter has said to the king that “the elders give advice to the king and the envoys” (*šībūtum ana rubā'im u šiprī imalikū*), and asks why they interfere. He also reports to the *kārum* Kanesh that messages for the king of Kanesh arrive together with the present letter.⁸⁴⁷ The tablet is broken.

From these letters, it is not easy to gauge the competence or powers of the *šībūtum* or “elders” of the *kārum* Kanesh. Mogens Trolle Larsen suggests that there was both a council of elders and a primary assembly of all free men at the *kārum* Kanesh, “the assembly of small and great”.⁸⁴⁸ According to Larsen “it seems that the elders in

⁸⁴⁶ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 165 n. 14

⁸⁴⁷ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 262-263 n.39; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 95

⁸⁴⁸ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 166

kārum Kanesh [...] acted in some way as an executive body for the community”.⁸⁴⁹ It should be kept in mind that “elders” is not a term connected to age, but to authority and social standing. Thus, “the elders” can possibly have been synonymous with “the great” of the *kārum* Kanesh. This is difficult to determine, however. “The elders” in Old Assyrian society will be discussed further below (5.5.5).

As was seen from the statute texts (5.5.1), the political structure of the Assyrians abroad was complex. It does not appear to have been a simple bipartite structure with a council of elders and a plenary assembly. This is also seen in other texts from the *kārum* Kanesh. In addition to the decision-making bodies I presume to be hiding behind the terms “the great”, “the elders”, and “the small and great”, there are several other terms from the correspondence between Assur, the *kārum* Kanesh and the other Assyrian settlements in Anatolia that seem to cover local decision-makers. It is not clear whether all terms apply to a formal body or institution. Of the smaller bodies mentioned in the texts is the so-called “group of ten”, *ešartum*. Cécile Michel suggests that this was a kind of committee of ten people and that every *kārum* throughout Anatolia had one.⁸⁵⁰ In Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh, there were also committees that are referred to as a “group of five” *hamištum*; according to Mogens Trolle Larsen, these were independent and permanent bodies, and may have functioned as courts.⁸⁵¹ These assessments seem reasonable to me, as the number of people involved indicates a limited body of people, perhaps committees or courts. Mention of their activities in the letters of the merchants is evidence that they were involved with the business of the merchants and the city authorities.

⁸⁴⁹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 165

⁸⁵⁰ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 114

⁸⁵¹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 166

It is evident that the structure of the Old Assyrian colonies was rather complex. “The great” initiated proceedings and acted as an executive body in the plenary assembly. This may also have been the case with “the elders” Also, there were committees of a limited number of people that appear to have made decisions in certain cases. Through “the assembly of small and great” the merchant community had a degree of autonomy and collective authority. What this can tell us about the political culture of the Old Assyrian city-state will be discussed further below (5.6). I will now leave the institutions of the colonies and turn to “the city-assembly” and “the elders” of Assur.

5.5.4 *ālum* – “the city-assembly of Assur”

The statute texts and letters discussed above (5.5.1-3) hint at a complex system of committees and assemblies for making decisions concerning trade and for arbitration in the colonies. Unfortunately, for the working of the *ālum*, “the city-assembly of Assur”, the evidence is less plentiful.⁸⁵² Its decisions are known, referred to in letters or mentioned as “tablets of the city”, but the processes by which they were reached are obscure. There are very few sources from Assur itself in the Old Assyrian period. Instead, information about “the city-assembly of Assur” must be gleaned from private letters on tablets found at Kültepe. In the following, the composition and political role of the *ālum*, “the city-assembly of Assur” will be investigated.

In several of the tablets found at the site of the *kārum* Kanesh, there are references to decisions reached by the *ālum*, “city”. It is not known how frequently the *ālum* convened. There are hints at where it convened, but it is difficult to establish the size of the assembly or who participated in its sessions. J.G. Dercksen suggests that the

⁸⁵² There is a parallel use of *ālum* in the sense of “assembly” in the Old Babylonian period, cf. 4.3.3. In my opinion, in view of the importance of decisions made by the *ālum* in the texts found at the *kārum* Kanesh, the interpretation of *ālum* as “the city-assembly of Assur” seems a reasonable assessment.

“Assembly of the city” consisted of “a selected group of citizens”.⁸⁵³ On what criteria these were selected is not clear, however. As will be seen in the following, it is likely that they belonged to the élite, since the king appears to have been a regular participant at the meetings of the *ālum*. What were the relations between the king of Assur and the *ālum*?

The relations between “the city-assembly” and the king are obscured by a confusing terminology for the king as well as for the assembly. I will discuss the king and his titles first. As will be seen below, several tablets mention decision reached by *ālum u rubā’um*, “the city and the king”. Also, several letters sent from Assur to *kārum* Kanesh, reporting decisions by the *ālum*, are sent by the *waklum*. Was this the same person as the king? As mentioned above (5.3), *waklum* means “overseer”: it is the Akkadian rendering of the Sumerian term, or more precisely, title UGULA, “overseer”. Dercksen points out that *waklum* was an old title used in the Ur III period (2012-2004 BCE).⁸⁵⁴ He argues that it is used of only one person in the texts from Kültepe and that this person was the king.⁸⁵⁵ Mogens Trolle Larsen is also convinced that the person behind the title *waklum* was the king.⁸⁵⁶ He argues that “the *waklum* was the man through which the orders of the city-assembly were communicated, and it seems very probable that he functioned as the chairman of the assembly”.⁸⁵⁷ Dercksen agrees with this interpretation and adds that the eponym (*limmu*) also had a seat in the assembly.⁸⁵⁸ These seem to me reasonable interpretations; I find it plausible that it is indeed the king who is mentioned as making decisions together

⁸⁵³ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 76

⁸⁵⁴ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 70

⁸⁵⁵ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 71

⁸⁵⁶ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 147

⁸⁵⁷ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 132

⁸⁵⁸ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 76

with “the city” (with the title *rubā’um*) as well as sending letters to the colonies (with the title *waklum*). Also, because the eponym (*limmu*) was such a prominent official in Assur that the year was named after him, I find it convincing that he participated in the *ālum*. It therefore seems to me a reasonable inference that they both had seats in “the city-assembly”.

The *waklum* was probably the king acting as chairman of “the city-assembly”. Admittedly, in several of the letters from the *kārum* Kanesh, the decisions reached by the *ālum* are called *dīn ālim*, “a decision of the city”, with no mention of the king or the eponym. Thus, the presence of the king and eponym has to be inferred. However, the *waklum* is mentioned as sending some of the letters containing “verdicts of the city” to the colonies. The letters that refer to decisions reached by “the city-assembly and the king” (*ālum u rubā’um*) surely indicate that the king in Assur took part in the decisions of “the city-assembly”. In all probability, then, the *waklum*, or “overseer” and the king are identical.

I will now investigate evidence for the *ālum*’s activities. *Kt* 79/k, 101 is a letter containing an annulment of former instructions by the *ālum* concerning the buying and selling of gold. The *waklum* rectifies a letter sent previously in accordance with a law written on a stele in Assur that allows Assyrians to sell gold to each other, but makes it forbidden upon pain of death to sell it to Akkadians, Amorites, or Subarites.⁸⁵⁹

Kt a/k, 394 is a letter sent by the *waklum* and contains a verdict of the *ālum* with reference to the law inscribed on a stele in Assur. The partners involved in a failed

⁸⁵⁹ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 64-65

investment are summoned back to Assur to settle their accounts; the invested silver is to be collected in Anatolia and delivered untouched at Assur.⁸⁶⁰

Kt n/k, 1570 is a letter from the *waklum* and refers to a verdict by the *ālum* made in the *hamrum*, “the sacred precinct”⁸⁶¹ of the god Assur. The verdict is that the caravan of Kurub-Ištar shall recuperate the losses of a group of people, in accordance with the stele.⁸⁶² *Kt b/k*, 180, likewise refers to a verdict by the *ālum* in the *hamrum*; that a son has sent an attorney to *kārum* Kanesh to obtain the blood price for his dead father.⁸⁶³ *ICK* 1, 182, also refers to the *ālum* meeting in the *hamrum*, where they reached the verdict that a person will dispatch an attorney to *kārum* Kanesh to conduct business.⁸⁶⁴

Kt c/k, 1010 is a letter sent by the *waklum* that refers to a place of meeting for the *ālum*, in front of the ^{gis}KAK.EN.GAL, a “dagger”, in the holy place of the god Assur. The case concerns lost property. A certain Aššur-tāb is to swear an oath before the dagger of the god Assur that he has lost 36 pieces of cloth with no fraud on his part. The case will then be settled by the *ālum* between the others involved in this failed trading venture.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶⁰ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 65-66

⁸⁶¹ *CAD* H, 1956, 70

⁸⁶² Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 66-67

⁸⁶³ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 67

⁸⁶⁴ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 177-178; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 68

⁸⁶⁵ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 68-69

From these letters, it appears evident that the *ālum* and *waklum* were involved in the business of the merchants to a high degree: “the city-assembly and the king” can be seen to interfere in lawsuits and business transactions, and the *ālum* evidently had authority over the colonies in Anatolia and the merchants there. Larsen suggests that *ICK 1, 182* might be a case where the assembly in Assur has empowered somebody to search the house of a deceased merchant in the *kārum* Kanesh.⁸⁶⁶ The decision referred to in the letter indeed appears to involve the empowering of a person in order for him to interfere in the *kārum* Kanesh. It is of note that this was decided upon centrally, in Assur. *ICK 1, 182* demonstrates that the authorities in Assur had a degree of control over the *kārum* Kanesh. Also, the text indicates that families involved in trade had some members resident in Anatolia, and others resident in Assur. Apparently, the merchants or their family firms had goods and silver stored at home in Assur, which perhaps explains their compliance with the authorities at home. The trade with Anatolia was obviously of utmost importance for the Assyrians: not only the merchants, but the whole city including its ruler appears to be engaged in matters concerning trade with Anatolia.

Some of the verdicts of “the city-assembly” mention the eponym (*limmu*): *Kt 92/k 491* contains a verdict by “the city-assembly” given “before the two *šugariānums*⁸⁶⁷ in the sacred precinct” of Assur, concerning rent from a house. A document with “a verdict of the city”, sealed by the eponym (*limmu*), concerning a sum paid for a house and a tablet with other acquired items is to be sealed by “the king” (*rubā’um*), and they will go into “the city hall” or “house of the city” (*ana É ālim^{ki}*). After a year, one part involved in the case is to appear before “the city” and the case will be solved. If they

⁸⁶⁶ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 178

⁸⁶⁷ According to Black, George & Postgate, *A concise dictionary of Akkadian* Š, 2000, 380, this is a term for a metal tool, used as symbol in Old Assyrian judicial proceedings.

do not appear, the other part involved will appear before “the city” and “the city” will give instructions on how to solve the case.⁸⁶⁸

Kt 92/k 491 shows that the eponym and the king took part in the proceedings of “the city-assembly”. The verdict of “the city-assembly” was sealed by the eponym and the king and was kept in “the house of the city”. It is interesting to note that “the city-assembly” was responsible for laying down procedures for arbitration between members of the community.

The term for verdicts of the *ālum* that were sent to *kārum* Kanesh is always *dīn ālim*, “a decision of the city”. This indicates that the decisions referred to by the *waklum* or “overseer” are those taken by the *ālum*, as a “city-assembly”, and not by the king alone. What does this say about the political structure of Assur? Mogens Trolle Larsen points out that “the authority to pass judgement was vested in the city-assembly”.⁸⁶⁹ This conclusion is indeed borne out by the copious evidence for adjudication by the *ālum* and the importance of the “tablets of the city” in matters in *kārum* Kanesh. “The city-assembly” was evidently important for the running of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies. However, did the assembly have political power?

In the interpretation of Cécile Michel, “the city-assembly” retained the fundamental power in the community, whereas the king’s role was to execute its decisions. According to Michel, “the city-assembly” decided on foreign policy, relations with the colonies and with foreign powers. It controlled trade and acted as a court of law

⁸⁶⁸ Cayir, “Six documents containing decisions by the city assembly and the *kārum* Kanesh,” 2008, 119-120

⁸⁶⁹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 153

for the merchants abroad.⁸⁷⁰ Further, Michel claims that “the city-assembly” deliberated on matters economic and juridical, and reached decisions of a political nature, exemplified by a decision concerning the building of city-walls.⁸⁷¹ The decision concerning the city-walls is mentioned in the letter *TC* 1, 1, to be discussed below (5.5.5). The interpretations of Cécile Michel are supported by Dercksen, who argues that the *ālum* “had a political dimension: it controlled the protectionist trade policy and probably also formulated it”.⁸⁷² Thus, scholars agree that “the city-assembly” was an important political institution in the Old Assyrian state.

The *ālum* indeed appears to have had great authority: important decisions and instructions from Assur are made known to the merchant colonies abroad, in the form of a *dīn ālim*, “a verdict of the city”. The *ālum* appears to have functioned as a “city-assembly” with regards to adjudication. It acts as the collective voice of the city, with much authority. As will be discussed below (5.5.6), there are a few treaty-texts from *kārum* Kanesh period Ib that indicate that the collective authority of the king, the eponym and selected merchants was a powerful political force. It could be argued that the evidence for political powers in the texts discussed above is less conspicuous than the evidence for the *ālum*’s interests in business and adjudication. However, the interest of the *ālum* in foreign politics will be made clear below, from the treaty-texts (5.5.6) as well as in internal politics, as seen from the letter *TC* 1, 1 (5.5.5).

It is of note that there are references in some letters to decisions recorded on stelae in Assur. These decisions are mentioned separately from the decisions reached by the *ālum*. Were these decisions made by “the city-assembly” on an earlier occasion or

⁸⁷⁰ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 58

⁸⁷¹ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 76

⁸⁷² Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 77

were they the decisions of the king? Klaas R. Veenhof suggests that laws were created from verdicts of “the city-assembly” that were later written on a stele.⁸⁷³ In my view, it does seem likely that “the city-assembly” had made these decisions, as no other authority is mentioned making decisions concerning business and trade restrictions. No stele with such inscribed laws has been found at Assur, but the references indicate that it once existed. In my view, the indication that decisions of “the city” were written down for future reference is further evidence to the power of “the city-assembly”. It does not appear that the laws on the stele were made by the king. As seen above (5.4), references to embargos or trade restrictions, like *VS* 26, 9 (*VAT* 9290) show that the *ālum* was the authority behind trade restrictions, not the king alone.

The *hamrum*, or “sacred precinct”, of Assur is mentioned in connection with oaths and meetings of “the city-assembly”. Where was this? Jesper Eidem suggests that this was a separate place in or by the temple of Assur where oaths were taken.⁸⁷⁴ This seems to be a reasonable suggestion. Also mentioned is the taking of oaths before the dagger of the god Assur in letters concerning adjudication, as seen above. The *hamrum* probably refers to a part of the sanctuary of Assur. Therefore, it makes sense to have oaths taken there. Whether oaths were taken at the gate of the sanctuary or inside is not clear. However, “the sacred precinct” of Assur may indicate not only a holy place, but also a public place. Where meetings of “the city-assembly” were held in Assur is not usually stated in the texts. Larsen suggests that ordinary court meetings in Assur were held at the Stepgate.⁸⁷⁵ The Stepgate (*mušlālu*) is mentioned in a text called the Erišum-text (=Kt. a/k 353+Kt. a/k 315).⁸⁷⁶ According to Larsen, this text

⁸⁷³ Veenhof, “Evidence for Old Assyrian legislation,” 1994-95, 1735

⁸⁷⁴ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 327

⁸⁷⁵ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 150-151.

⁸⁷⁶ Landsberger & Balkan, “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Irisum,” 1950, 224-229

combines a building-inscription for parts of the Assur-temple and a stele-inscription set up at the Stepgate.⁸⁷⁷ In the text, there are descriptions of the building of different parts of the temple of Assur, including expensive embellishments.⁸⁷⁸ There are also elaborate curses condemning him who tells a lie in the Stepgate or gives false testimony.⁸⁷⁹ According to Landsberger and Balkan, the publishers of the text, the Stepgate was part of the Assur-temple, probably a monumental gate to the temple that functioned as entrance and forecourt.⁸⁸⁰ This seems to me a reasonable suggestion, since the Stepgate is mentioned in the text as part of the temple building.⁸⁸¹ The fact that sessions of “the city-assembly” and court-sessions are said to have been held at “the sacred precinct” of Assur at least occasionally, as well as at the Stepgate, may indicate that their meetings were public. Of course, it could be argued that the sessions at “the sacred precinct” of Assur were held inside the temple, but in my opinion, the taking of oaths indicates that the sessions were public, in order for everyone to witness the oaths being taken. The taking of oaths was an important part of judiciary proceedings, in order to ensure fair dealings in court. This can also be seen in the Erišum-text, where elaborate curses are supposed to prevent the telling of lies in the court that met at the Stepgate. If the suggestion that the Stepgate was the entrance to the temple of Assur is correct, the public nature of court-sessions in Assur seems securely attested.

Who participated in the assembly, other than the king, the eponym, and the wealthiest merchants? Before trying to answer this question (5.6), the evidence for “elders” at Assur (5.5.5) and the treaty texts from period Ib (5.5.6) will be discussed. As will be

⁸⁷⁷ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 150

⁸⁷⁸ Landsberger & Balkan, “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Īrisum,”1950, 224-227

⁸⁷⁹ Landsberger & Balkan, “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Īrisum,”1950, 227-229

⁸⁸⁰ Landsberger & Balkan, “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Īrisum,”1950, 232-234

⁸⁸¹ Cf. Kt. a/k 353+Kt. a/k 315, 5-9

seen, much of the debate on the composition of “the city-assembly” concerns the identification of “the elders” and the parties to the treaties between the Assyrians and cities in their area of interest.

5.5.5 The *šībūtum* at Assur

The *šībūtum*, “elders”, at Assur are attested in a few letters sent to the *kārum* Kanesh from Assur. Their identity is difficult to establish. Similar to the *šībūtum* of the *kārum* Kanesh discussed above (5.5.3), they appear to be an important body of people. Were the *šībūtum* of Assur identical to the *ālum*, “the city-assembly”?

TC 1, 1 is a letter that was sent from Assur to *kārum* Kanesh by the *nībum*, a kind of Assyrian official,⁸⁸² who reports that there is a demand for 10 minas of silver from the *kārum* Kanesh for the building of city-walls at Assur. The request for silver was decided by the *ālum*. The *nībum* reports that the *šībūtum* had planned to send a messenger (*šiprum*) to Anatolia in order to demand the silver, but this messenger had not been sent. Further, he reports that he had stopped the dispatch of the messenger of “the elders”, in order not to incur even more costs for the *kārum*. He urges the *kārum* Kanesh to send the silver for the city-walls straight away, so that the *šībūtum* will not complain. The *kārum* Kanesh is to inform the other *kārū*, in accordance with “the tablet of the city” (*tuppum ša ālim*). The *kārū* must hear “the tablet of the king” (*tuppum ša rubā'im*) and pay. If no silver is sent for the city-walls, the expenses will be covered from the funds the *kārum* Kanesh have at Assur.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸² *CAD N*, 1980, 204-205: uncertain meaning, perhaps a “spokesman”

TC 1 18 is a letter from Aššur-idī in Assur to Aššur-nadā. Aššur-idī says he has asked the *šībūtum*, or “elders”, but they will not let him have any donkey. He urges Aššur-nadā to depart quickly upon receiving the letter and go to the *kārum*, arrange his business and send him silver from there.⁸⁸⁴

The relations between the *ālum* and the *šībūtum* in *TC 1, 1* are difficult to establish. The letter was sent to the *kārum* Kanesh by the *nībum*, apparently a kind of official or body of officials at Assur. The exact meaning of the term *nībum* is not established, but scholars have suggested “spokesman”.⁸⁸⁵ J. G. Dercksen does not accept the interpretation of the *nībum* as the colony’s representative or spokesman in Assur. He suggests that “*nībum* may rather have been the designation for the office or group of officials within the City Hall specifically concerned with financial matters”.⁸⁸⁶ The exact responsibilities of this official or body of officials do not affect the present discussion, however. The function of the *nībum* in *TC 1, 1* is to inform the *kārum* Kanesh of costs incurred and to urge them to pay quickly in order to avoid even more costs. In my opinion, it is therefore likely that the *nībum* was a point of contact between Assur and the merchants in Anatolia. In *TC 1, 1*, the *nībum* appears to show concern for the interests of the merchants of the *kārum* Kanesh in Assur. Whether this means that the *nībum* was their representative in Assur, remains open to interpretation.

⁸⁸³ Garelli, *Les assyriens en Cappadoce*, 1963, 197; Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 163; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 76-77

⁸⁸⁴ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 164-165; Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 129-130

⁸⁸⁵ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 76

⁸⁸⁶ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 64

TC 1, 1 and *TC 1 18* are intriguing sources to the political structure of Assur, although the picture they provide is not very clear. In *TC 1, 1*, the *šībūtum*, or “elders” are mentioned in close connection with the *ālum*, “the city-assembly of Assur”. In *TC 1 18*, the *šībūtum* are mentioned alone. What was the position of “the elders” in Assur? In *TC 1, 1*, they appear as a kind of executive committee carrying out a decision of the *ālum*. In *TC 1 18*, “the elders” are approached by a merchant about practical matters, presumably in order to go to Anatolia. “The elders” will not help him and the merchant therefore cannot leave Assur. It is apparent from the letter *TC 1 18* that the decisions of “the elders” were influential. Their formal position in the political structure is not easy to determine, however. Were “the elders” in charge of the *ālum*? Could “the elders” detain merchants in Assur?

In *TC 1, 1*, the demand from “the city-assembly”, for silver is followed up by “the elders”, who appear to be responsible for collecting the silver for building the city-walls. In this sense, “the elders” form a kind of executive committee for “the city-assembly”. The demand for silver to pay for the city-walls is called alternately “the tablet of the city” or “the tablet of the king”. As mentioned above (5.5.4), in letters sent from Assur, the phrase *tuppum ša ālim u rubā'im*, “a tablet of the city-assembly and the king” occurs. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that *TC 1, 1* has two senders. It can be argued that the king is acting as a kind of chairman of the assembly in this text. This would solve the apparent confusion of who made the decisions and sent the letter. In my interpretation, “the city-assembly” including the king made the decision and “the elders” carried it out, indicating that “the elders” were recognised as a separate authority from “the city-assembly”. It seems plausible that this kind of executive committee could restrict the movements of merchants, as seen in *TC 1 18*. This is not surprising, however, in view of the close integration of the colonies and the central authorities in Assur, as discussed above (5.4).

Scholars agree that “the elders” were somehow connected to “the city-assembly of Assur”. Their exact relation to “the city-assembly” is not clear, however. Cécile Michel interprets “the elders” as core members of “the city-assembly”. In her interpretation, they were a part of “the city-assembly”, but this assembly also counted other members who did not belong to the group of “elders”.⁸⁸⁷ J. G. Dercksen similarly interprets “the elders” as “an influential group within the City Assembly”.⁸⁸⁸ Mogens Trolle Larsen is convinced that “the elders” were an executive committee of “the city-assembly” in the sense that “the elders formed a specially privileged body of men who were entitled to act on behalf of the assembly and carry on separate negotiations”.⁸⁸⁹

“The elders” do appear to have the authority to take decisions independently of the *ālum*, as seen in *TC* 1 18, when they refused to help Aššur-Idī to reach Anatolia. Also, in *TC* 1, 1, they can be seen to have an independent capacity as executive committee to send a messenger to Anatolia to collect the silver for the city-walls. What does it mean, however, that “the elders” were core members or an influential group in “the city-assembly”?

It is easy to imagine “the elders” as some kind of council that worked together with “the city-assembly”. However, it is difficult to determine this, since the formal composition of the *ālum* is not known. It is possible that “the elders” reached decisions together with the king and the eponym, forming the entire *ālum*. However, there is a group of slightly later sources, the treaty-texts dated to *kārum* Kanesh level

⁸⁸⁷ Michel, *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish*, 2001, 58

⁸⁸⁸ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 64

⁸⁸⁹ Larsen, *The Old Assyrian city-state*, 1976, 164

Ib, that might provide a more secure answer to the problem of the composition of “the city-assembly”. These will be discussed in the following.

5.5.6 “The sons of Assur” in treaty-texts

From a few texts dated to Kültepe level Ib (ca. 1800-1700 BCE), there is evidence that treaties were made between Assur and Anatolian kingdoms, including Kanesh and Hahhum, as well as the Syrian kingdom Apum. The Kültepe level Ib period corresponds to the rule of king Šamši-Adad I of Assyria, a conqueror king who established an empire in northern Mesopotamia and parts of Syria (cf. 4.6). Assur continued to be an important trading city in this period.⁸⁹⁰ The first treaty to be discussed, L87-442 + 447 + 1331, was made between the Assyrians and the Syrian kingdom Apum.⁸⁹¹ The second, Kt. 00/k 10, was made between the Assyrians and the Anatolian kingdom Hahhum.⁸⁹² The third treaty to be discussed, Kt. 00/k 6, was made between the Assyrians and the Anatolian kingdom Kanesh.⁸⁹³ Who were the parties to these treaties? How were the treaties negotiated from the Assyrian side?

In L87-442 + 447 + 1331, Till-Abnû, the king of Apum, makes a treaty with “the city Assur” (*ana ālim^{ki d} Aššur*), concerning “a son of Assur” (*DUMU^d Aššur*) “going up or going down”, and anyone belonging to the *kārum* in Apum.⁸⁹⁴ The king is sworn to be

⁸⁹⁰ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 60-61

⁸⁹¹ Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 185-207

⁸⁹² Günbatti, “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” 2004, 249-268

⁸⁹³ Günbatti, “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” 2004, 249-268; Donbaz, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe,” 2005, 63-68

⁸⁹⁴ Col. I 24-29 (transliteration and translation in Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 195-204)

truthful to the merchants, “the city of Assur” and the *kārum*.⁸⁹⁵ The oath concerns “the city of Assur” any “son of Assur” (DUMU *Aššur*), “going up or going down”, and the *kārum*.⁸⁹⁶

The tablet is too broken to determine what exactly the terms of the treaty were or what the treaty covered. The text is edited by Jesper Eidem, who points out that in the treaty between the king of Apum and Assur, the king swears “to the Assyrians, i.e. representatives of the “city of (divine) Assur, the son(s) of (divine) Assur in transit (lit. “going up or going down”) and the *kārum* in your city””.⁸⁹⁷ In Eidem’s interpretation, the treaty was presented “by the Assyrian representatives” in speech to the king of Apum. The king is addressed in the 2nd person singular.⁸⁹⁸ Eidem analyses the treaty as a unilateral agreement: the Assyrians wrote down the terms, while the king of Apum was in control and did not need to specify his taxes or duties in the treaty, because he could seize whatever he wanted by force, should he so wish. Eidem suggests that “it was the traders who needed guaranties that the obligations were kept within certain acceptable bounds in addition to guaranties of free passage, protection, etc.”.⁸⁹⁹

I agree with Eidem’s assessment that the treaty is made between the Assyrian merchants as a group and the king of Apum. It is of interest that “the sons of Assur” is used as a specification of the term “city”. Thus, it can be argued that the

⁸⁹⁵ Col. III 1-14

⁸⁹⁶ Col. III 14-20

⁸⁹⁷ Text: Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 203 (col. I 24-29); Interpretation: Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 329

⁸⁹⁸ Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 195; Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 329

⁸⁹⁹ Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 191

representatives of the merchants were part of “the city”. In my opinion, this indicates that “the city” was a collective of the Assyrian merchants, and not restricted to “the elders”, the king and the eponym. It appears from this treaty that the representatives of the collective of merchants made the treaty with the king of Apum. The king of Assur is not even mentioned, although he may be included in the term “the city”.

Kt. 00/k 10 contains a treaty between Assur and Hahhum regulating relations between “the sons of Assur” (DUMU Aššur), “the sons of the colony at Hahhum” (DUMU *kārim Hahhim*) and “sons of Hahhum” (DUMU *Hahhim*). It is stated “the sons of Hahhum” shall not reach verdicts concerning “a son of Assur” or “a son of the colony at Hahhum” based on the testimony of anyone from Hahhum.⁹⁰⁰ Further, in case an Assyrian is murdered, they are to hand over the killer to the Assyrians.⁹⁰¹ It is specified that the treaty concerns relations between “the sons of Hahhum” and any man from the *kārum* Hahhum or “son of Assur” “going up or going down”.⁹⁰²

The parties to this treaty are not possible to identify further, because the tablet is broken where this information presumably would be given. However, it is interesting that the responsible party from the Hahhum side is addressed in the second person plural “you”. In L87-442 + 447 + 1331, the address is second person singular “you”, i.e. the ruler of Apum. What this implies for the organisation of Hahhum is difficult to conclude from one text alone. Veenhof argues that the treaty was made between Assur and Hahhum, formulated as a treaty between the Assyrians and a few “magnates” as treaty partners. He suggests that these magnates may be a local

⁹⁰⁰ Col. II 1-6 (transliteration and translation in Günbatti, “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” 2004, 256-260)

⁹⁰¹ Col. IV 15-22

⁹⁰² Col. IV 23-29

oligarchy at Hahhum or an intermediate arrangement in the absence of a local king.⁹⁰³ These suggestions seem reasonable to me. It is difficult to determine whether the collective of “sons of Hahhum” was a permanent oligarchy or an intermediate arrangement. The number of people involved is not mentioned. Thus, the oligarchic nature of the (intermediate) collective rule in Hahhum is conjecture. It seems likely that a relatively small number of people were involved in the conclusion of the treaty, however, since it would be impractical for a large assembly to make a treaty. This is also the case for the Assyrian side, since they probably had to travel to Hahhum to conclude the treaty.

In the treaty from Apum, there is a distinction between Assyrians “going up or going down” and “the sons of the *kārum*”. Similarly, in the treaty from Hahhum, there is a distinction between Assyrians and “the sons of the *kārum*”. According to Veenhof, the treaties are formulated in this way, in order that there is a clear distinction between permanently resident merchants living in a *kārum* and caravan traders or other merchants coming to Apum or Hahhum. He suggests that this was because these cities were important road-stations on the way to Anatolia and Assur wanted to protect both types of merchants.⁹⁰⁴ This seems to me a reasonable explanation, and makes sense of the phrase “going up or going down”, used of merchants. These can be considered to be merchants in transit.

Kt. 00/k 6 is a treaty concerning relations between “the sons of Assur” (DUMU ḏAššur) and “the sons of Kanesh” (DUMU *Kaniš*).⁹⁰⁵ It states that if the blood of “a

⁹⁰³ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 194-195

⁹⁰⁴ Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 201-202

⁹⁰⁵ Kt. 00/k 6, 1-2 (text in transliteration and translation in Donbaz, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe,” 2005, 63-65). These two lines of the text are restored, as the text is broken. Günbatti does not accept the restoration, and would rather have names of gods in these two first lines (Günbatti, “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” 2004, 251). Throughout the rest

son of Assur” is shed in Kanesh, they will surrender the perpetrator to the Assyrians.⁹⁰⁶ It is also stated that if “a son of Assur” incurs debt with “a son of Kanesh” and the debtor runs away, no other “son of Assur” can be seized in his stead. Also, when the corvée is levied, no “son of Assur” can be drafted.⁹⁰⁷ The treaty is concluded with an oath taken by “the sons of Assur” and “the chief executive of Kanesh” (GAL *Kaniše'im*).⁹⁰⁸

Veyzel Donbaz suggests that the treaty Kt. 00/k 6 between Assur and Kanesh “seems to record bilateral conditions agreed to by both parties: the Assyrians and the local Anatolians. This contrasts with what we know from the other two Old Assyrian treaties, which present only the unilateral conditions relating to the Assyrians”.⁹⁰⁹ Indeed, as was seen in Eidem’s analysis of the treaty in L87-442 + 447 + 1331 between Apum and the Assyrians, the Assyrians appear as the ones in need of guarantees. Why was the treaty with Kanesh different? This is not possible to answer from the text itself, but it may be an indication that the Assyrians were more involved with the local community in Kanesh than in the other kingdoms for which we have treaties, making it important to regulate relations between the community of Kanishites and Assyrian traders, and not just the relations between the local authorities and the Assyrians.

of the text, however, the people involved are “the sons of Assur” and “the sons of Kanesh”, making it probable that the treaty concerns bilateral agreements.

⁹⁰⁶ Kt. 00/k 6, 37-42

⁹⁰⁷ Kt. 00/k 6, 71-79

⁹⁰⁸ Kt. 00/k 6, 86-88

⁹⁰⁹ Donbaz, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe,” 2005, 63

Eidem emphasises that although L87-442 + 447 + 1331 is from Kültepe level Ib, thus post-dating the most intense period of trade between Assur and Anatolia, “a significant trait is that the treaty was concluded not with the king [of Assyria], but with the city of Assur, a clear echo of the political structure in Assur in classical Old Assyrian times”.⁹¹⁰ It should be kept in mind that the composition of “the city-assembly” in “classical Old Assyrian times”, i.e. level II at the Kültepe site, is actually not that well attested. However, with the information available from these treaties, it can be argued that a collective organisation of authority appears to be a correct assessment of the structure of “the city-assembly” in Assur, as suggested above.

These three treaties show that there were negotiations between the merchants of Assur and foreign kings. It is of interest that the treaties were made between “the sons of Assur” and the local authorities: to me, this suggests that the collective of merchants could act quite independently and formed an authority in their own right. The king may have participated in formulating the Assyrian side to the treaties, as a member of “the city-assembly”. However, the treaties are quite specific in using the plural for the Assyrian side to the treaty, indicating that several people were involved in making the treaties. It indicates that the Assyrian party to the treaties was understood as a collective. Any royalty among the Assyrians is anonymous, and this also applies to the party from Hahhum. This shows that in the period Kültepe Ib, “the city” as a collective decision-making body was important in Assur and that foreign relations were handled by the merchants as a group. There is no mention of *waklum* or *šībūtum*. In my opinion, this means that the treaties were made by the community of merchants and that “the city” included the merchant community or representatives of the merchant houses, not just “the elders”, the king, and the eponym.

⁹¹⁰ Eidem, “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” 1991, 195; Veenhof & Eidem, *The Old Assyrian period*, 2008, 329

5.6 “The assembly”, “the elders”, and the community of merchants

The Old Assyrian city-state was ruled by a king, who was a member of “the city-assembly” and reached decisions there together with the eponym, “the elders”, and probably the wealthiest members of the merchant community. It appears that a cooperative environment existed between the merchant families of Assur. They all profited from the trade in silver, tin, and textiles. There are two features of the political culture of Assur in the Old Assyrian period that point to collective rule: the *ālum*, “city-assembly”, in Assur and the *kārum seher rabi* “the colony small and great” in the colonies. For the latter, texts from the *kārum* Kanesh indicate that there are good reasons for interpreting “the colony small and great” as a plenary assembly: this assembly is the only local authority mentioned in the colonies subordinate to the *kārum* Kanesh. It appears to have been under the authority of “the great” in the *kārum* Kanesh, but nevertheless played an important local role. The plenary assembly appears as the place of adjudication in the colonies outside Kanesh and as their main decision-making body. In the *kārum* Kanesh, on the other hand, it is evident from the statute texts that a complex system was in place for decision-making that emphasised “the great merchants” and the *bīt kārim*, the colony office.

The *kārum* Kanesh was master of the other colonies in Anatolia, and therefore, it cannot be claimed that any plenary assembly was sovereign over the Assyrian communities in Anatolia. Rather, the wealthiest merchants, “the great”, were in charge. These “great merchants” in turn took their orders from the *ālum*. From the frequent references to *tuppum ša ālim*, “tablet of the city”, it is evident that “the city-assembly” of Assur had great authority also in the colonies abroad. Whether “the city-assembly” had plenary sessions is difficult to establish, because most sources do not mention explicitly who met in the *ālum*. The king took part, evident from the importance of the *waklum* for carrying out the decisions of the *ālum*. That the eponym

also sat in the *ālum* can be inferred from the importance of this office at Assur, giving the name of the year, as well as sealing verdicts of “the city-assembly” (cf. 5.3).

The *ālum* met by “the sacred precinct” of Assur, the *hamrum*, and at the Stepgate. This can be interpreted as a restricted space inside a sanctuary or as a public place by the entrance to a sanctuary. Therefore, how many people participated at the sessions or whether the sessions were public is difficult to establish. As was seen from the level Ib period treaties between Assur and the authorities of other polities (5.5.6), the Assyrians formulated their treaties between “the sons of Assur” on the one hand and the foreign king or council on the other, making it probable that the entire merchant community was party to the treaty. Whether all the Assyrians also participated in establishing the Assyrian side of the treaty, in a plenary assembly at Assur can only be guessed at, but does not seem very probable. Rather, a more restricted group presumably conducted the Assyrian side of the negotiations.

In my opinion, the evidence for Assur must be held separate from that of the colonies, since it seems clear that “the city-assembly” and “the elders” in Assur had far wider powers than any of the assemblies in the colonies. Thus, although the plenary assembly appears to be the main institution for adjudication in the subordinate colonies this does not mean that a plenary assembly was the highest authority in Assur. The independent role of “the elders” in Assur appears to me as a parallel to the relationship between “the great” and “the small” merchants in the *kārum* Kanesh. The structure of power places much authority in the hands of a restricted group of “great merchants” or “elders” that work closely with the most important officials in Assur, the king and the eponym. On the other hand, if “the elders” were an executive committee, it is a bit odd that they are mentioned so seldom in the texts, compared to the frequent references to the *ālum*. The problem of identifying “the elders” may be solved if they are interpreted as hiding behind the term *ālum*, in the sense that most

decisions made by “the city-assembly” were actually made by a sort of council consisting of the king, the eponym and “the elders”. This is difficult to prove, however, and there clearly are situations, such as the contribution from the colonies to the city-walls at Assur reported in *TC* 1, 1 (cf. 5.5.5), where “the elders” are mentioned separately from the *ālum*. It seems therefore warranted to suppose that the *ālum* was more inclusive than a council of “elders”. In my opinion, “the elders” were part of “the city-assembly”, but not the complete “city-assembly”.

It is tempting to term the Old Assyrian political structure oligarchic, because of the apparent dominance of “the great” in the statutes of the *kārum* Kanesh and the important position of “the elders” of Assur. In this interpretation, the plenary assemblies reach no independent decisions, but are convened for the sake of announcements, rather than being arenas for debate. Assur and its colonies could thus be termed merchant oligarchies. This is an influential model for Old Assyrian society: Mogens Trolle Larsen compares the Assyrian settlements in Anatolia to Venetian and Genovese merchant houses that possessed a home office and established offices in enclaves abroad.⁹¹¹ Paul Garelli offers a different model that emphasises a balance of power between different groups in Old Assyrian society. In his analysis, the structure of the Old Assyrian city-state was a polity where the eponym, “the elders” and the popular assembly functioned as counters to the power of the priest king of Assur. In Garelli’s interpretation, “the great” of the *kārum* Kanesh equal “the elders” of Assur, and “the small and great” equal “the city”, as a popular assembly.⁹¹² Thus, whereas Larsen emphasises that power was concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest merchants, including the king and the highest officials in Assur, Garelli argues that there were checks and balances between the king and the people in the Old Assyrian political structure.

⁹¹¹ Larsen, “The Old Assyrian city-state,” 2000, 81

The model of a merchant oligarchy is the more fruitful in my opinion, because the sources regarding political institutions and offices invariably also concern matters of trade. The king and all the eponyms were apparently merchants. As Dercksen demonstrates, the eponyms in the Kültepe list of eponyms (*KEL*) were all merchants and the office of eponym was a routine part of their career, not an office attained at a high age.⁹¹³ This indicates that merchants were actively involved in city-state politics as part of their commercial career. The whole of Old Assyrian society appears to be geared towards trade. This view may be skewed by the fact that the archives found at the site of the *kārum* Kanesh concern trade and business. Part of the reason why the merchants and their “elders” appear to be the most influential and politically active group in the Old Assyrian city-state may be because the archives studied are from a community of merchants. However, there is not much evidence regarding the rest of Old Assyrian society. Trade does appear to be the most important activity in Assur in the Old Assyrian period. There is no comparable evidence for a formally constituted and active “people”. The closest would presumably be the group of “small merchants”. Garelli’s model cannot be maintained, as there is not sufficient evidence for the reconstruction of a system of checks and balances between the king, the people, and other groups in the polity. The king appears rather to be a part of the decision-making institutions of the merchant community. This indicates that power in the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies was in the hands of an élite or a narrow corporation of wealthy merchants. As will be argued in the following, they were a narrow corporation rather than an exclusive élite.

⁹¹² Garelli, “Pouvoirs locaux en Assyrie,” 1982, 77-78

⁹¹³ Dercksen, *Old Assyrian institutions*, 2004, 59

“The great merchants” can be seen to form a narrow ruling group that shares power between its members. They had the wealth and authority to demand a preeminent place, being successful merchants and payers of the *dātum*-contribution. Their social and political status is connected to their activities as traders. Thus, they are not an élite in an aristocratic sense. It is their success as merchants that make them “great”. “The small merchants” were not excluded from decision-making processes, as they presumably would have been if Old Assyrian society was an oligarchy. The plenary assembly of “small and great” was an important part of the structure of decision-making in the Anatolian colonies. It was apparently here that information was made public. The importance of the plenary assembly of “small and great” in *kārum* Kanesh and the other Assyrian settlements in Anatolia indicates that the merchants formed corporations with a certain level of consideration of the opinions of all its members.

It can be argued that the king, “the elders”, the heads of the wealthiest merchant houses, and the eponym worked together in the *ālum* as a closed élite, to the exclusion of the rest of the Assyrians. However, I would argue that they pursued a narrow corporate strategy for power: they appear as a limited group, but their decisions were made for the city and all the merchants together as a community. They were not a closed élite, as their sessions appear to have been open to non-participating listeners, being held at “the sacred precinct” of Assur. On the other hand, they were not a broadly constituted corporation of all the merchants, as there were evidently differences in status between “the elders” and the rest, or the king and the rest, as well as between “the small” and “the great”. The king may have been on par with “the elders” and the eponym, but that does not mean that he was under the authority of a large assembly of the people.

In a similar fashion to Assur, “the great” in the *kārum* Kanesh do not appear as a closed élite, since their sessions were open under certain (albeit badly understood)

circumstances, to all the merchants, “small and great”. Therefore, “the great” pursued a narrow corporate strategy; they are a small group of decision-makers that operate in close contact with the rest of the community and sometimes make decisions together with them. In the other colonies, the plenary assembly seem to have greater power than in Assur or the *kārum* Kanesh. Thus, it can be argued that locally, the merchants could pursue a broad corporate strategy of power including all merchants, reaching decisions together in assemblies of “small and great” merchants. Thus, the local merchant communities had a degree of participation by all members of the community in reaching decisions.

The Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies appear to be based on an organisation of power where a narrow corporation of wealthy merchants, including the king, were at the top of society. There appears to have been no autocratic ruler, a palace or temple élite, or a hereditary aristocracy. It can be argued that the common source of power for the king and the elders was the trade in metal and textiles in Anatolia, and that this resulted in a sharing of power among the richest and most successful merchants. The king had a special status, as the steward of the god Assur. This does not seem to have influenced his position in relation to the other merchants, however, as decisions were made together with them in “the city-assembly”.

In the treaties between Assur and foreign kings (cf. 5.5.6), the merchants conduct the making of the treaty for the Assyrian side. This indicates that the merchants as a group could represent the polity and negotiate on par with foreign kings. It can thus be argued that the sharing of power between the king and the merchants was due to the commercial nature of the Old Assyrian city-state economy. The whole community was geared towards trade, encouraging a narrow corporate strategy of cooperation between the most powerful merchants that also occasionally included the broader, more inclusive group of all merchants. In the colonies outside Kanesh, the merchants

appear to have been organised in a more egalitarian fashion. The broad corporate strategy among the merchants can be due to their common interests as a group of foreigners living in enclaves among the Anatolians. Although the Anatolians had a sophisticated culture that was able to absorb large quantities of luxury textiles and metals, the Assyrians would be anxious to protect their interests and guard themselves against transgressions of the treaties with local kings. In particular, the Assyrians would have had an interest in evading taxes and duties and protect their privileges. This would presumably be best looked after in an atmosphere of cooperation, encouraging a broad corporate strategy of equal consideration of interests, where decisions were taken in an arena council, “the assembly of small and great” (cf. 1.4.2).

In the *kārum* Kanesh, the situation appears to have been different, and power lay with “the great”. This may have been due to the prominent place of this colony in the hierarchy of Old Assyrian settlements in Anatolia, making a more hierarchic structure of power expedient here for the transmission of instructions and swiftness of decision-making. However, in Assur and in the *kārum* Kanesh, the most prominent merchants were also part of the more inclusive sessions of the *ālum* and “the small and great” respectively. Old Assyrian society thus had a concept for the totality of merchants and in this sense, the most powerful in society had close connections to the rest of society and a community of interest with them: in Old Assyrian communities, “the great” as well as “the small” were part of the polity.

Having investigated evidence for the organisation of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies, I have found that there was a complex structure of decision-making where several agents participated. Power appears to have been shared between several institutions and families, with an emphasis on wealth and experience as criteria for

authority. I turn now to Late Bronze Age Ugarit, to investigate relations of power between the different sectors in society and their institutions for decision-making.

5.7 Ugarit, the palace, local communities, and the merchants

Ugarit was a city-state and important trading centre placed between the great imperial powers of the Late Bronze Age.⁹¹⁴ The city was ideally situated on the coast of north-western Syria: it lay on a key location for the exchange of goods between Anatolia and Egypt, the Aegean and Mesopotamia. Ugarit was ruled by a king, who resided in a sumptuous palace. However, several of the inhabitants were farmers and lived in the countryside. What were the relations between central authorities and the local communities? How did the importance of trade influence the political structure of Ugarit?

In the Late Bronze Age, the aggressive great powers of the Hittite empire, Mittanni and the Egyptians fought over influence and control in Syria and Palestine. Probably because of its importance for trade, Ugarit was able to negotiate treaties with these powers. As will be seen (5.11.2), some of these treaties were made directly between merchants of Ugarit and foreign rulers. In the best documented period of Ugarit, the years immediately preceding the destruction of the city and its palace around 1190 BCE, the city-state was under Hittite sovereignty, and answered to the Hittite regent of Syria resident at Karkemish. Karkemish was an important city for Hittite interests in Syria: it provided a link between the Anatolian plateau and the Syrian plain. The Hittite ruler was the Great King of the empire, and beneath him, he had members of

⁹¹⁴ Ugarit/Ras Shamra is an ancient site, occupied from the Neolithic period (cf. Akkermans & Schwartz, *The archaeology of Syria*, 2003, 47). Only the Late Bronze Age period will be discussed here.

the royal family acting as regional rulers, who in their turn controlled local princes of cities and districts. Ugarit's position was regulated by treaties and it had its own local ruler, not a foreign governor.⁹¹⁵

The history of Ugarit is well documented. Excavation at the site of Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra, started in 1929. The deciphering of texts found during the Ras Shamra excavations shows that Ugarit was a city-state of international importance. Tablets from Ras Shamra are written in Akkadian and Ugaritic, and there are also texts in Hurrian. Ugaritic is a Semitic language closely related to Phoenician and Hebrew. The Akkadian texts were written in cuneiform, whereas the Ugaritic texts were written in an alphabetical system of cuneiform signs peculiar to Ugarit.⁹¹⁶

Ugarit was a metropolitan commercial city. Several models have been proposed for its political structure. Some scholars have seen it as a pyramidal society where the king and his palace controlled everything.⁹¹⁷ Others view Ugarit as a kind of mercantile oligarchy.⁹¹⁸ The most influential model, however, has been the so-called two-sector model, where the palace is strictly separated from the local communities.⁹¹⁹ These models will be discussed below (5.8). How did the socio-political structure of Ugarit accommodate the interests of the palace, the local communities, and the community of merchants?

⁹¹⁵ Cf. Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 305-314

⁹¹⁶ Cf. Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 301-303

⁹¹⁷ Schloen, *House of the Father*, 2001

⁹¹⁸ Bordreuil, "An efficiently administered kingdom," 2000, 190

⁹¹⁹ Heltzer, *Rural community*, 1976; Heltzer, *Internal organization*, 1982; Liverani, "Communautés de village," 1975

5.8 Palace and populace: two sectors

From the palace archives excavated at the site of Ugarit come lists with a bewildering range of categories for people with different relations of dependence to the palace. Analyses of the vocabulary of lists and letters have been important in the reconstruction of the social structure of Ugarit. An influential model for Ugaritic society is a dualistic model proposed by Michael Heltzer.⁹²⁰ He emphasises the distinction between a palace sphere and a sphere of village- communities. In his analysis, the people listed as “the sons of the king” belonged to the palace. The people listed as “sons of GN” on the other hand belonged to the village sphere. The palace employed large numbers of people of several professions. These are listed on tablets from the royal archives as receivers of service-grants and distributions, and are called *bnš mlk*, “sons of the king”, in Ugaritic; the Akkadian term is *ardē šarri*, “the king’s servants”.⁹²¹ Separate from these in Heltzer’s analysis was the “main mass of the freeborn population” of Ugarit that was called *mārū māṭugarit*, “sons of Ugarit”.⁹²² More precisely, they were non-professionals that lived in village-communities, paid taxes and performed duties collectively, and are referred to collectively in texts as *bnšm*, “sons [of GN]” in Ugaritic; the Akkadian term is *mārū*, “sons [of GN]”, GN usually being a village name.⁹²³

Heltzer’s dualistic scheme is based on two texts in particular: the Akkadian texts RS 17.238 (*PRU* IV, 107-108) and RS 17.130 (*PRU* IV, 103-105). In these texts, the inhabitants of Ugarit appear to be divided into two distinct groups of people, viz. “the

⁹²⁰ Heltzer, *Rural community*, 1976; Heltzer, *Internal organization*, 1982

⁹²¹ Heltzer, *Internal organization*, 1982, 11-12; *ibid.* 23-48

⁹²² Heltzer, *Rural community*, 1976, 5-6

⁹²³ Heltzer, *Rural community*, 1976, 7-18; *ibid.* 63-74

servants of the king” and “the sons of Ugarit”.⁹²⁴ In the following, I will present these texts, before discussing Heltzer’s dualistic model in detail. How were the relations between palace and populace in the political structure of Ugarit?

RS 17.238 is an instruction of the Great King of the Hittites to Ugarit concerning fugitives from Ugarit: any “servant of the king of Ugarit” (*arad šar^{māt}ugarit*), or “son of Ugarit” (*mār^{māt}ugarit*), or “servant of a servant of the king of Ugarit” (*arad ardi šar^{māt}ugarit*) who is going to join the *hapiru*,⁹²⁵ the Great King will return to the king of Ugarit (*šar^{māt}ugarit*).⁹²⁶

RS 17.130 is an edict of the Hittite Great King to the king of Ugarit, regulating the relations between merchants of a Hittite port city called Ura and the people of Ugarit. The document is styled from one king to the other.⁹²⁷ The treaty is made by the Great King between “the sons of Ura, the merchants” (*mārū^{M al}ura^{amil M} tamkārū*) and “the sons of Ugarit” (*mārū^{M māt}ugarit*).⁹²⁸ The merchants of Ura are not to reside in Ugarit during the winter, and they may not buy houses or land there.⁹²⁹ In the case of forfeited loans, a merchant of Ura may not take land or a house in Ugarit. Any forfeited property becomes the property of the king of Ugarit. The creditor may take the debtor and his family away as slaves.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁴ Heltzer, “Service system,” 1988, 9-10

⁹²⁵ *Hapiru* is an Akkadian term for landless peasants turned lawless marauders, cf. chapter 6

⁹²⁶ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 107-108: PRU IV 17.238, 3-10

⁹²⁷ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 103-105: PRU IV 17.130, 1-4

⁹²⁸ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 103-105: PRU IV 17.130 6-10, 35-38

⁹²⁹ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 103-105: PRU IV 17.130 11-19

⁹³⁰ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 103-105: PRU IV 17.130 20-34

On the basis of these texts, Michael Heltzer divides society at Ugarit into three main groups: free peasant, royal dependents, and slaves. The main population consisted of free village peasants. These are the people referred to as “the sons of Ugarit” (*mārū^M mā^{āt}ugarit*) in the texts from Ras Shamra. The second group of people was “the servants of the king” or “the royal dependents” (*ardē šarri*). The Ugaritic equivalent of this term is *bnš mlk*, “a son of the king”. A third group were “the servants of the servants of the king” and the slaves.⁹³¹ In Heltzer’s model, craft specialisation was important in the royal economy and the workers were organised into gangs that were paid by the palace. The royal dependents, called “the sons” or “servants” of the king, received land plots in return for their services, on the condition that they were not idle.⁹³² The land belonged to the king and to free village peasants, and could be alienated.⁹³³

Heltzer’s model appears to make good sense of the texts from Ugarit and to explain the different terms used for social categories. The royal dependents included officials, priests, and warriors. However, as will be seen (5.9), there is evidence that the division of society was not as neat as Heltzer supposes and that there was no hard and fast division between “the royal dependents” and the rest of the population of Ugarit. Before discussing this evidence, however, the implications of Heltzer’s model will be considered in more detail.

⁹³¹ Heltzer, “Service system,” 1988, 10

⁹³² Heltzer, “Service system,” 1988, 12-13

⁹³³ Heltzer, “Service system,” 1988, 10-11

In Heltzer's model, land is owned either by the king or by peasants living in village-communities. Land-ownership is the key to a person's status. There is an important divide between the free villagers, "the sons of GN", who owned land, and the dependents of the king, "the sons of the king", who received land or means of livelihood from the palace. However, the royal dependents had a higher status than the free peasants: the royal dependents were part of the palace hierarchy and had access to the centre of power, whereas the peasants were cut off from any form of political influence. Heltzer's dualistic model implies that the city and the countryside were opposed to each other. In the kingdom of Ugarit, two modes of production were pursued simultaneously: the palace economy based on the royal dependents, their land grants, and craft-production on the one hand and the domestic mode of production of the peasants on the other, from which they paid taxes to the palace.

The two-sector model has been very influential in Ugaritic studies. The division between the palace and the village-communities is fundamental in most reconstructions of Ugaritic society. In the analysis of Juan-Pablo Vita, the society of Ugarit was centred on the king. He was the central figure in foreign relations, in the army and in religion.⁹³⁴ The king had a prefect, the *sākinu*, who complemented the king and was his deputy when needed.⁹³⁵ The administration of the city-state was large and complex.⁹³⁶ In contrast to life in the capital that was dominated by the palace, life in the villages was characterised by the village-community, consisting of groups of families. The legal representatives of the villagers were "the elders" (*šībūtum, abbū*). The palace representative in the village was the *hazannu*, or "mayor".⁹³⁷ Thus, Vita's reconstruction of Ugaritic society follows the dualistic

⁹³⁴ Vita, "The society of Ugarit," 1999, 468

⁹³⁵ Vita, "The society of Ugarit," 1999, 468-469

⁹³⁶ Vita, "The society of Ugarit," 1999, 473-474

⁹³⁷ Vita, "The society of Ugarit," 1999, 483-484

scheme of Heltzer. What about the temples, then, of which there were several in Ugarit? Were they also part of the palace sphere? Edward Lipinski argues that the king also controlled the priests, since they belonged to the dependents of the palace and were allotted fields and received food, wine and other means of subsistence from the king. Therefore, in Lipinski's analysis, the temple economy was incorporated into that of the palace.⁹³⁸ Thus, according to Heltzer, Vita, and Lipinski, all parts of Ugaritic society fell either into the palace sphere or the village sphere.

The two-sector model has the perhaps surprising implication that the people of highest status also had the least independence. As Ignacio Márquez Rowe points out, if freedom is defined by access to the means of production, the free population of Ugarit were numerous and poor, whereas the palace dependants were few and wealthy, but unfree.⁹³⁹ In this perspective, an alternative interpretation of the material from Ugarit suggests itself: "the sons of the king" can be interpreted as a wealthy élite of officials of the palace and "the sons of Ugarit" as the rest of the population. However, as will be seen (5.10.1), there appears to be no consistent correlation between wealth, urban residency and status as "son of the king".

Analysis of land ownership is fundamental to the attribution of statuses to the various groups of the population of Ugarit. It must be remembered that although Ugarit was a city with much trade, agriculture was the most important sector of the economy. From the archives of Ugarit, Heltzer has found clear evidence that the king owned much land and that production for the palace took place on farms or fortified manors called *gt* in Ugaritic, *dimtu* in Akkadian. He has also found evidence that villagers had to

⁹³⁸ Lipinski, "The socio-economic condition of the clergy," 1988, 136-137, 149

⁹³⁹ Rowe, "The king's men in Ugarit," 2002, 2

work for the palace on occasion and performed a corvée known as *pilku*.⁹⁴⁰ Taxes were levied on land and flocks owned by families belonging to the village-communities.⁹⁴¹ Liverani argues that the palace in Ugarit systematically exploited the countryside by establishing a system of the farms called *gt*, where conscripted workers toiled to generate a surplus. The village communities, on the other hand, consumed almost their entire surplus locally.⁹⁴² In his analysis, the palatial system was imposed on village communities with a heritage hailing back to the Neolithic. The palace and the village communities thus represent two distinct systems.⁹⁴³ In Heltzer and Liverani's analyses, the village sector had some ties to the palace sphere in the two-sector model: the peasants paid taxes and performed corvée-duties, but owned their own land, in contrast to the land grants of the royal dependents that were held on the condition of service to the palace.

In addition to agriculture, trade was an important part of the economy. Ugarit traded overland and overseas.⁹⁴⁴ Trade was conducted by the *tamkārū*, "merchants". According to Heltzer, they were royal commercial agents, but sometimes managed their own commercial operations, too. They received land allotments from the king and therefore belonged to the group of royal dependents.⁹⁴⁵ In the analysis of Liverani, all trade in the Near Eastern Late Bronze Age was centred on the palaces, with large regional patterns of exchange.⁹⁴⁶

⁹⁴⁰ Heltzer, "Service system," 1988, 9

⁹⁴¹ Heltzer, "Service system," 1988, 10

⁹⁴² Liverani, "Ville et champagne dans le royaume d'Ugarit," 1982, 253

⁹⁴³ Liverani, "Ville et champagne dans le royaume d'Ugarit," 1982, 251

⁹⁴⁴ Heltzer, "The economy of Ugarit," 1999, 441-444

⁹⁴⁵ Heltzer, "The economy of Ugarit," 1999, 440

⁹⁴⁶ Liverani, "The collapse of the Near Eastern regional system at the end of the Bronze Age," 1987, 69

In Heltzer and Liverani's interpretations, every part of Ugarit's society and economy fit the two-sector model. The palace is involved with agriculture and trade with its own agricultural production-centres and its own commissioned merchants. However, as will be seen, the position of the merchants in Ugarit may not be as easily accommodated to the two-sector model as Heltzer and Liverani imply. As will be seen (5.11.2), there is evidence indicating that the merchants were not dependents of the king of Ugarit.

The model of two sectors of society has been applied to all aspects of Ugarit society, from military to religion, agriculture and trade. Ugarit appears as a centralised and bureaucratic palace state, with a rural population that lived in semi-autonomous villages and paid taxes to the palace. The two-sector model is not without its problems, however. First of all, it can be argued that there is a methodological problem in the reconstruction of the entire Ugaritic society on the basis of three terms found in RS 17.238. Further, the two-sector model cannot account for all the evidence to the socio-political organisation of Ugarit. As will be seen, there is evidence for "sons of the king" living in the village-communities (5.10.1). First, however, alternative models for the socio-political structure of Ugarit will be investigated.

5.9 Palace and populace: a hierarchy

The two-sector model of palace dependents and a village sector has been criticised in recent years. The model is attacked by P. Vargyas, who interprets the three categories of people in RS 17.238, i.e. "the servant of the king of Ugarit" (*arad šar^{māt}ugarit*), "son of Ugarit" (*mār^{māt}ugarit*), and "servant of a servant of the king of Ugarit" (*arad ardi šar^{māt}ugarit*), as belonging to a society divided into officials, free farmers, and

slaves.⁹⁴⁷ In his view, the main divide in the society of Ugarit was that between rich and poor, not between palace dependents and others.⁹⁴⁸ Therefore, he argues, the term “son of Ugarit” (*mār māṭ ugarit*) does not mean a person belonging to the village-community, but is simply a member of the free population, regardless of whether he was a royal dependent or a member of the village-communities.⁹⁴⁹ In the interpretation of Vargyas, Ugarit was a territorial state with an agricultural base, where the highest levels of society were occupied by people close to the king.⁹⁵⁰ Thus, in Vargyas’ interpretation, “the servants of the king” are officials, whereas “the sons of Ugarit” are everyone else who are free. Some of the free population were dependent on the palace for their subsistence, other were peasants. In Vargyas’ view, there was no separate village sphere separated from the palace.

As will be seen (5.10.1; 5.10.2), against Vargyas’ interpretation, the villages of the kingdom of Ugarit did have a political structure that functioned independently of the palace and the royal “mayors”. Thus, Vargyas’ model of a hierarchic territorial state does not explain all the evidence. Against the view that Ugarit was a territorial state, it can be argued that the city Ugarit, where the palace was situated, was the political centre and identity of the state, and not the territory: in the address of the Hittite king in RS 17.130 (cf. 5.8), the Hittite king first greets the king of Ugarit and then “the sons of Ugarit”. The political identity of Ugarit can thus be argued to be the person of the king and “the sons of Ugarit”, in the sense of the central authorities and the citizens. In my view, this indicates a city-state, rather than a territorial state.

⁹⁴⁷ Vargyas, “Stratification sociale à Ugarit,” 1988, 114-115

⁹⁴⁸ Vargyas, “Stratification sociale à Ugarit,” 1988, 122-123

⁹⁴⁹ Vargyas, “Stratification sociale à Ugarit,” 1988, 114

⁹⁵⁰ Vargyas, “Stratification sociale à Ugarit,” 1988, 123

The two-sector model is also attacked by J. David Schloen.⁹⁵¹ He argues that society at Ugarit should be understood in terms of a pyramidal patrimonial household with a father at the apex, what he calls “the Patrimonial Household Model”. In this model, everyone is subsumed into a household, and the head of a household is subject to the head of a greater household. Thus, the king of Ugarit is the head of his kingdom and owns all land, but in his own turn, he is part of the greater household of the Hittite Empire where the Great King is at the apex.⁹⁵² Schloen dismisses Heltzer’s model of a royal service system at Ugarit, calling it an anachronistic application of the Marxist Asiatic mode of production⁹⁵³ (cf. 2.3).

A model similar to Schloen’s patrimonial household model is suggested by Ignacio Marquez Rowe. He argues that the palace dependents at Ugarit were not dependents holding royal grants, but were actually bound by an antichretic personal pledge. This is a pledge that involves labour as payment of interest on a loan. In Rowe’s interpretation, what has been interpreted as palace dependents were debtors who laboured temporarily for the king to pay off debt. Their status was between that of free and enslaved.⁹⁵⁴ Rowe suggests that these “king’s men” were bound by personal debt rather than a promise of service to the crown in return for a royal grant.⁹⁵⁵

Schloen and Rowe both argue against Heltzer’s two-sector model by emphasising the power of the king and the élite in an integrated pyramidal hierarchy. They dismiss the idea of a separate village sector in the social structure and include all who do not

⁹⁵¹ Schloen, *House of the Father*, 2001

⁹⁵² Schloen, *House of the Father*, 2001, 50-53

⁹⁵³ Schloen, *House of the Father*, 2001, 188-194

⁹⁵⁴ Rowe, “The king’s men in Ugarit,” 2002, 9

⁹⁵⁵ Rowe, “The king’s men in Ugarit,” 2002, 17

belong to the palace in a poor majority dominated by a wealthy élite. However, as will be argued in the following, the models of a two-sector economy or a pyramidal hierarchy do not explain the evidence for the organisation of power in the village sector or the relations between village communities and the central authorities.

5. 10 The village-communities and their institutions

In the two-sector model, the villagers in their village-communities are integrated in the palace economy as tax-payers, but they have no access to or influence on central decision-making bodies. Rather, the villages are collectively responsible for paying taxes and villagers are addressed as groups of people, not as individuals. In the following, evidence for decision-making bodies of the village-communities will be investigated. What were the relations between local decision-making bodies and the central authorities?

5.10.1 “The elders” of Rakba

There are a few texts from the archives of Ugarit that provide insight into local decision-making bodies of the villages. RS 20.239 refers to a decision taken by the *šībūtum*, “elders” in the town of Rakba and includes a list of “elders”. In the following, I will present the text and discuss what it can tell us about the political structure of the villages of Ugarit. Who were “the elders” and what was their authority?

RS 20.239 is a complaint from a certain Mada’e sent to “the prefect” (*sākinu*) of Ugarit, concerning oxen of his that “the men of the town Rakba” (*amīlū^M āl rakbaia*)

have stolen. Mada'e refers to previous letters concerning his cattle, and demands that if "the prefect" will not conclude the case, "the elders of the town Rakba" (*amīl M šībūtu^M ša^{al} rakba*), where the cattle was stolen, must go to the temple and swear an oath. "The elders" are named Babiyanu, son of Yadudana, Abdu and his son, Addunu his brother-in-law, and someone called the "Chief of a Thousand" (*amīl akil lim*).⁹⁵⁶

RS 20.239 has attracted much scholarly attention and has been taken as evidence for the organisation of local self-government in the village-communities, independent of the palace. Mario Liverani takes RS 20.239 as evidence that the villages had councils of "elders" and that the decisions of "the elders" were the expression of the political will of each village. He points out that the list of "elders" in RS 20.239 includes only five names, some of whom were kin, and argues that "le collège des anciens n'est point un organe de "démocratie" main c'est justement l'expression des forces internes du village".⁹⁵⁷ Liverani's assessment is supported by Michael Heltzer who takes RS 20.239 as evidence for councils of "elders" in the villages of Ugarit. In Heltzer's opinion, the list of "elders" in RS 20.239 reveals that membership in the local councils were limited to a few wealthy families: he emphasises that "the elders" of RS 20.239 "by no means comprised a democratic institution". He argues that at least three of them are relatives and one is a high-ranking royal official. Heltzer therefore concludes that "the characteristic feature is that the eldership was distributed among members of one family".⁹⁵⁸

In the interpretations of Liverani and Heltzer, the village-communities were dominated by the most powerful families. From RS 20.239, Heltzer even sees power

⁹⁵⁶ Nourgayrol et al., *Ugaritica* V, 1968, 141-143: RS 20.239

⁹⁵⁷ Liverani, "Communautés de village," 1975, 154

⁹⁵⁸ Heltzer, *The rural community*, 1976, 79

limited to one family in a village. In Liverani and Heltzer's interpretations, local power was in the hands of small councils of local powerful families and royal officials resident in the village or owning land there. I agree that the names on the list of "elders" indicate that they were all from the same family, including a father, his son, and a son-in-law. How was this council organised and how were the members recruited? There is not much to go on in this short text, but "the elders" appear to be community representatives who are expected to take an oath on behalf of the community concerning stolen cattle, whence the appeal by Mada'e to the *sākinu*, "the prefect", that "the elders" come and answer for the theft of his cattle.

It is odd that the person titled "Chief of a Thousand", apparently a royal official and therefore one of the royal dependents, is a member of the council of "elders" of the village Rakba. There does not seem to be a rigorous division between the two sectors of palace and village: rather, the impression is that certain local families and royal officials formed a local élite. Liverani and Heltzer emphasise that the council of "elders" was not democratic, but reflect the local relations of power between families. G. Bunnens points out the intermediate role of "the elders" of Rakba, as spokesmen for the community in answering to the accusations of theft. However, in his interpretation, "the elders" are essentially a passive group, only answering to direct accusations and not taking any independent initiative.⁹⁵⁹ However, it can be seen that "the elders" provided a service for the rest of the community by going to the temple and swear an oath concerning the stolen cattle of Mada'e. Although they did not take any initiative in representing their community, they did undertake the journey to go and defend their fellows against the accusations of theft. As community representatives, the elders appear to be held responsible on behalf of the entire community. This is an important aspect of the council of "elders" in RS.20.239. Thus, the relations between the community and its leaders was in a sense hierarchic, in that

⁹⁵⁹ Bunnens, "Pouvoirs locaux et pouvoirs dissidents en Syrie," 1982, 132

the council members probably were members of a wealthy family and sat in the council together with a royal official. However, their position does not appear to be very privileged, as they were expected to serve the community by swearing oaths on its behalf. Also, they were held responsible for the actions of their fellow villagers.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence available for “the elders” of the village-communities and therefore difficult to draw firm conclusions about local decision-making bodies. There is more evidence for the populations of towns and villages, referred to collectively as “sons of GN” in texts from Ugarit, to which I now turn.

5.10.2 “The sons of GN”

Throughout the texts from Ugarit, villagers or townspeople are referred to collectively as *mārū*^{al}GN, “sons of GN”. There are texts where “the sons of GN” act in a judiciary capacity and take part in lawsuits. In others, “the sons of GN” are held collectively responsible for misdeeds committed in their town. Some texts also contain verdicts of the Hittite overlords, viz. the king in Karkemish and the Great King of the Hittite empire. Who were “the sons of GN”? What was their authority?

RS 17.299 contains a verdict made by a certain Baba. Baba, another person named Qadidu, and “the sons of the town Halpi-the-Great” (*mārū*^{M al}*halpirapši* [??]) reached a verdict. Qadidu said that his “brother” (*ahu*) was killed in Halpi-the-Great. “The sons of the town Halpi-the-Great” answered Qadidu [...].⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁶⁰ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 182: PRU IV 17.299

RS 17.234 contains a verdict made by Initeshub king of Karkemish between “the sons of the town Shatega” (*mārū^{M al}šatega*) and “the sons of the land of Ugarit” (*mārū^{M mā}ugarit*). The case concerns murder.⁹⁶¹

RS 17.229 contains a verdict by Hattushili III, the Hittite king. It concerns the merchant Talimmu, whose merchants have been killed in the town Apsuna (*^{al}apsuna*). Talimmu therefore went with “the sons of Apsuna” (*mārū^{al}apsuna*) for adjudication in Ugarit, and “the sons of Apsuna” paid a fine.⁹⁶²

RS 17.288 contains a letter from the king of Ushnatu, a neighbouring kingdom to Ugarit, sent to the *sākinu* or “prefect” of Ugarit. It concerns theft. The king of Ushnatu complains that thieves in his kingdom go to the town of Araniya in Ugarit, and that “the sons of Araniya” (*mārū^{al}araniya*) receive the stolen goods. He therefore wants them brought to justice.⁹⁶³

In all these texts, “the sons” of the towns or villages are referred to as a collective. Their identity is not easy to establish. According to Heltzer, “the term “sons” refer to the main mass of the freeborn population, without special reference to social differences”.⁹⁶⁴ Indeed, in RS 17.234, “the sons of GN” are referred to as an undifferentiated group that is held collectively responsible. Therefore, they can be interpreted as “the citizens of GN” or “the people of GN”. However, in RS 17.229 “the sons of GN” are referred to as a group that travelled to participate in

⁹⁶¹ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 173-174: *PRU* IV 17.234

⁹⁶² Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 106: *PRU* IV 17.229

⁹⁶³ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 215: *PRU* IV 17.288

⁹⁶⁴ Heltzer, *The rural community*, 1976, 6

adjudication. It appears that under certain circumstances, “the sons of GN” were expected to travel to participate in adjudication, as well as to pay fines. This does not indicate that “the sons of GN” were “the people of GN”. Therefore, contrary to Heltzer’s model, “the sons of GN” cannot always refer to an undifferentiated collective of all the villagers, but must in some cases refer to a smaller group of people, perhaps a corporate body.

Mario Liverani argues that the village-community had a kind of autonomy: although the palace placed a *haza'n* or “mayor” in the towns as the king’s agents, the village-communities also had institutions ^{such as the council of “elders”} to represent them.⁹⁶⁵ As mentioned above (5.10.1), there are only a few direct references to “the elders”. The references to “the sons of GN” are far more numerous. I suggest that in at least some cases, “the elders” are hiding behind the more inclusive term “sons of GN”, in the sense of a limited group or corporation.

In my opinion, RS 17.229 indicates that “sons of GN” could refer to local decision-making collectives, and was not only used for collective references to the village-community. It appears that the Hittite overlords addressed the town populations directly and that the villages were expected to act on the instructions of the king. There are some texts that indicate that “the sons of GN” were a limited group, such as RS 17.299 and RS 17.229. In these texts, “the sons of GN” are a party in legal processes concerning murder committed in their area. In my view, this makes it likely that they were a corporate body of limited size and not the entire village-community. Quite the contrary, it appears to me that “the sons of GN” represented their community and acted on its behalf: “the sons of GN” were addressed by foreign authorities as representatives of the whole community. I therefore suggest that the

⁹⁶⁵ Liverani, “Communautés de village,” 1975, 154-155

term “the sons of GN” in some texts refers to a limited decision-making body that took oaths on behalf of the community and represented them in cases concerning transgressions committed in the town or by townspeople. Although little evidence is available for the size and composition of these decision-making groups, it is likely that they were similar to “the elders” of RS 20.239 (cf. 5.10.1), a small group of men from wealthy families that could travel and represent the community in legal processes. Since the Hittite king addressed “the sons of GN” directly and not through the palace of Ugarit, the villages may appear to be independent of the central authorities. However, why does the “prefect” of Ugarit act as middle-man in RS 17.288 between the king of Ushnatu and “the sons of Aranyia”?

In RS 17.288, the *sākinu*, “prefect” of Ugarit, dealt with the local community of Aranyia on behalf of a foreign king. Also, in RS 20.239, the *sākinu* turns to “the elders of Rakba” in order to conclude the case of stolen cattle (cf. 5.10.1). Therefore, “the sons of GN” and “elders” can be said to be integrated in the political structure of Ugarit. They are not treated as an anonymous collective, but appear to be representatives of the local communities that communicated with the central authorities. Thus, the texts discussed above provide evidence against the model of two separate sectors of Ugaritic society: there were local decision-making bodies in the village-communities, but they were integrated in the Ugaritic city-state.

All the evidence discussed above (5.10.1-2) concerns towns and villages outside the city Ugarit. The countryside appears more politically integrated in the city-state than Heltzer and Liverani assume. I now turn to evidence concerning groups of people in Ugarit itself. Merchants played an important role in Ugarit’s economy. Were there independent merchant communities at Ugarit? In the following, evidence for decisions made by collective bodies of merchants and other groups in Ugarit will be

investigated to determine who participated in making decisions in the city and how these bodies were integrated in the structure of power of the kingdom.

5.11 Collective decision-making bodies in Ugarit

Among the texts from Ugarit, there are several letters from the Hittite overlords that are addressed collectively to merchant groups. These letters contain instructions and verdicts. The identities of the groups addressed are difficult to establish, and scholars are not agreed on who they were or what their position in Ugaritic society was. Who were these groups of people and why did the Hittite overlords address them, and not the king of Ugarit?

5.11.1 “The elders of Ugarit”

The first group I will discuss are “the elders of Ugarit”. RS 17.424 C+397 B is addressed to the *sākinu* or “prefect” of Ugarit from a foreign king, of the neighbouring kingdom Amqī (?) and mentions the *abbū^{al} Ugarit*, “elders of Ugarit”. The king of Amqī complains about a certain Ardu, who is titled *amil akil kārīm*, “foreman of the quay authorities”, concerning taxes on merchandise. The king of Amqī demands of the *sākinu* that the *abbū^{al} ugarit*, “the elders of Ugarit”, look into the matter concerning taxes levied on “merchants who walk on foot”.⁹⁶⁶

RS 17.424 C+397 B is a difficult text for several reasons. It is not clear who wrote the letter. Nougayrol, the editor, suggests the king of Amqī, a powerful city-state

⁹⁶⁶ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 219-220: PRU IV 17.424 C+397 B

kingdom in Syria. This seems plausible, as the letter apparently concerns relations between neighbouring powers. A further problem with the text is the term *abbī^{al} ugarit* “elders of Ugarit” or perhaps better “fathers of Ugarit”. It is a well-attested honorific term and can be used of “elders”.⁹⁶⁷ However, in RS 20.239, the term *šībūtum* was used of “elders”, not *abbū*. This is probably of little consequence, however, and I assume that the *abbī* are a group of “elders”.

It is not clear what the king of Amqi expects of “the elders of Ugarit”. This is a problem for interpreting RS 17.424 C+397 B. It is after all difficult to determine what kind of decision-making body these “elders” were, if it cannot be established what they decided on. What is of interest, however, is that the *sākinu* received a letter with instructions to make “the elders” look into business concerning international relations. Unfortunately, the letter is one of the very few instances where “elders” are mentioned for the city Ugarit itself, and firm conclusions cannot be drawn.

The reference to merchants in RS 17.424 C+397 B is interesting: as will be discussed below (5.11.2-3) there are several more texts from Ugarit that refer to groups of merchants. The relation between “the elders of Ugarit” and the taxes on “merchants who walk on foot” is obscure, however. The exact meaning or reference of the term “merchants who walk on foot” is unclear. It is not improbable that these merchants were engaged in trade with Amqi, but the reading is not certain. I turn now to groups of merchants operating in what appears as a decision-making capacity.

⁹⁶⁷ CAD A I, 1965, 71-72

5.11.2 “The sons of the city” and “the merchants of Ugarit”

There are agreements found on tablets from Ugarit that regulate relations between merchants and “the sons of GN”. Who were these merchants? Why are the treaties formulated as agreements between groups of people and not between the rulers of city-states or principalities?

RS 17.146 contains an agreement that Initeshub, king of “the country and city Karkemish” (*māt al kargamis*), made between “those of the country and city Karkemish” and “those of the country and city Ugarit” (*māt al ugarit*).⁹⁶⁸ The treaty between the two cities concerns murder in Karkemish of “the king of Ugarit’s merchants” (*amīl tamkārī ša mandatti ša šar māt al ugarit*). If “the sons of Karkemish” (*mārū^M māt al kargamis*) catch the murderers, they are to pay compensation for goods lost and a price for each life taken. The goods will be compensated according to the declaration of “the brothers” (*ahhū^M*) of the murdered merchants. “The sons of Ugarit” (*mārū^M māt al ugarit*) are to swear an oath concerning the declaration of the lost goods.⁹⁶⁹ If “the sons of Karkemish” are unable to find the killers, they are to go to Ugarit and declare this under oath (*ina māmīti itammuni*), and that they do not know the whereabouts of the missing merchants or their goods. Then, they only pay a price for each life taken and do not recompense any goods.⁹⁷⁰ The same rules apply for “merchants of the king of Karkemish” killed in Ugarit, only that if “the sons of Ugarit” are not able to find the murderers, they are to go to the town Nubana (*al nubana*) or the town Gurata

⁹⁶⁸ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 154-157: PRU IV 17.146, 1-5

⁹⁶⁹ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 154-157: PRU IV 17.146, 6-18

⁹⁷⁰ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 154-157: PRU IV 17.146, 19-27

(^{al}*gurata*) and declare this under oath to “the brothers” of the merchants.⁹⁷¹ The treaty ends with a curse against altering the agreement.⁹⁷²

In this treaty, the regional overlord, the king of Karkemish, draws up a mutual treaty between “the sons” of either city, Karkemish and Ugarit. He appears as a kind of arbiter. Who were the parties to the treaty? It may seem that “the sons of the city” refer to the people of Ugarit and Karkemish. However, in my opinion the detailed instructions for adjudication and satisfaction of demands from the colleagues of the merchants rather suggest that a particular group of people is meant and not all the inhabitants of the cities. It appears more likely that “the sons of the city” are identical with the merchants in RS 17.146.

RS 17.146 has been used as evidence to argue that Ugarit was a city with a high degree of citizen participation in politics: Hanoch Reviv emphasises that the king of Ugarit is not mentioned as party to the treaty in RS 17.146 and that the king of Karkemish is not a direct party, either. Instead, Reviv argues, “the sons of the city” were responsible, as a body of citizens, for carrying out the agreement. According to Reviv, “the emphasis is placed, therefore, on the collective responsibility of those directly involved – the citizenry of the cities, for the kings were not party even if they were the principal beneficiaries of the fruits of these agreements”.⁹⁷³

Reviv’s interpretation is problematic: if “the sons of GN” are the citizenry, how was the entire citizenry held responsible? As seen in other situations of collective adjudication (5.10.1), part of the process for determining guilt was to go to a specified town or temple and swear an oath. This does not square well with the idea of a broad collective responsibility of

⁹⁷¹ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 154-157: PRU IV 17.146, 28-44

⁹⁷² Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 154-157: PRU IV 17.146, 45-53

⁹⁷³ Reviv, “Urban self-government in Syria-Palestine,” 1969, 292

all the citizens. To me, it appears more likely that the merchants were “the sons of the city” in RS 17.146 and they were the ones who had to go and swear an oath.

Who were these merchants? Heltzer interprets the *tamkārū ša mandatti* as “trade agents of the king or those who pay him taxes”.⁹⁷⁴ This might well have been the case, but it should be kept in mind that the king of Ugarit is not referred to in RS 17.146. It seems like the merchants were a group that was viewed as a separate party in treaties. Thus, it can be argued that there were corporate groups of merchants in the cities similar to “the elders” in the villages. This is indicated by the clause in the verdict demanding that “the sons of Ugarit” are to go to specified towns to swear an oath, suggesting that the *mārū^M mā^t al^{al} ugarit* was a group of people and not “the citizens” in general. Whether this group was identical with the merchants is difficult to determine, but seems plausible, since they are referred to as the aggrieved party and would be the ones interested in hearing the oaths.

The relations between the king and the merchants are difficult to determine. It seems that some trade was under the control of the king in the sense that he commissioned merchants. However, it is not the king of Ugarit that the king of Karkemish holds responsible for murder of merchants or loss of goods. Rather, such cases appear as the responsibility of the merchants themselves and their organisation. Does this mean that the merchants were royal officials, held responsible as part of the palace organisation? In my opinion, the merchants appear to have a separate organisation from the palace, since they are mentioned as party to the treaty by the king of Karkemish, without any mention of the palace of Ugarit or the king. If “the sons of the city” are identical to “the merchants of Ugarit” in RS 17.146, they appear to have been party to treaties and to have had their counterparts in other cities. Thus, it can be argued that the merchants were organised in corporations that were recognised as parties to treaties by the rulers. Therefore, the merchants can be said to have had an autonomous status, at least to a

⁹⁷⁴ Heltzer, “The economy of Ugarit,” 1999, 440 n.87

certain degree. This is probably the reason why they could communicate directly with the king of Karkemish.

5.11.3 “The men of the gate”

In the tablets from Ugarit, there are treaty-texts that mention other groups beside merchants that appear as parties separate from the palace. As will be seen in the following, one such group is “the men of the gate”. Who were they?

RS 18.115 contains a treaty between Karkemish and Ugarit made by king Initeshub of Karkemish. It concerns the murder of merchants from either city. If “the sons of Karkemish” do not succeed in apprehending the murderers of a merchant of the king of Ugarit, “the sons of Ugarit together with their men of the gate” (*mārū^M mā^t al^{al}ugarit qadu amīlī^M ša bābišunu*) are to go to Karkemish, where they are to swear to the loss of their brothers’ goods and be reimbursed by “the sons of Karkemish”.⁹⁷⁵ If they find dead people (?) but no murderer (?) has been caught, “the sons of Karkemish and their men of the gate” are to go to Ugarit instead, and swear that they do not know the murderers, and that these merchants, their silver, their donkeys and all their other belongings are gone.⁹⁷⁶ If merchants of the king of Karkemish are killed in Ugarit, and the killers are caught, then “the sons of Karkemish and their people of the gate” shall go to Ugarit to obtain reimbursement there.⁹⁷⁷ If “the sons of Ugarit” are unable to satisfy “the sons of Karkemish” with regards to presenting the killers, “the sons of

⁹⁷⁵ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 158-160: PRU IV 18.115, 3-10

⁹⁷⁶ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 158-160: PRU IV 18.115, 12-18

⁹⁷⁷ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 158-160: PRU IV 18.115, 20-26

Ugarit” are to go with “their men of the gate” to the town of Nubana or Gurata and swear to their ignorance, and then pay wergild.⁹⁷⁸

RS 18.115 is quite similar to RS 17.146 discussed above (5.11.2) and contains some of the same difficulties. The groups involved in the treaty are difficult to recognise. What is meant by “their men of the gate”? It has puzzled scholars and no agreement has been reached. Hanoch Reviv points out that the term *mārū^M mā^{āt} al^{al}GN qadu amīlī^M ša bābišunu*, “the sons of the country and city GN with their men of the gate”, is only found on this tablet. He suggests that it refers to a body connected to “the sons of the city” and a gate where oaths were sworn. In his interpretation, this body was “the elders”, “who, most likely represented the “sons of” the city at the oath ceremonies binding the agreements.”⁹⁷⁹

A. Leo Oppenheim does not accept Reviv’s interpretation of RS 18.115. Oppenheim suggests instead that the term *mārū^M mā^{āt} al^{al}GN qadu amīlī^M ša bābišunu* refers to strangers allowed to live inside the gates of Karkemish, as foreigners living in separate quarters or streets.⁹⁸⁰ Why foreigners who were not even allowed inside the city are mentioned in treaties between Ugarit and the king of Karkemish, however, is not clear to me: RS 18.115 states that “the men of the gate” of Ugarit are supposed to go to Karkemish together with “the sons of the city” to swear an oath in Nubana or Gurata. In my opinion, this speaks against Oppenheim’s interpretation of “their men of the gate” as some kind of resident foreigners. The fact that they are expected to travel somewhere else on the king’s instructions to swear an oath indicate that they were a corporate body belonging in Ugarit. Reviv’s suggestion that “men of the gate”

⁹⁷⁸ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 158-160: PRU IV 18.115, 27-34

⁹⁷⁹ Reviv, “Urban self-government in Syria-Palestine,” 1969, 293

⁹⁸⁰ Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1977 [1964], 78

in the treaty is evidence for a body of “elders” is a tempting solution to the problem of establishing their identity. However, in the text it is stated that “the sons of the city” and “the people of the gate” go together, not separately, to swear the oath. Therefore, it is difficult to see that “the people of the gate” was a group of “elders” representing some kind of citizen-assembly of “the sons of GN”. Also, “the people of the gate” are not mentioned in RS 17.146 (cf. 5.11.2), where it is stated that “the sons of the city” shall go and swear the oath. Why are “the elders” not involved in that case, if they are involved in the treaty in RS 18.115?

The problem of the identity of “the men of the gate” cannot be solved without more texts that mention them in context. It should be added that Reviv’s suggestion is based in his conviction that “the sons of GN” are the citizens. As has been argued above (5.11.2), this interpretation is not acceptable, as “the sons of GN” in some cases clearly refers to a restricted group and not a large assembly. Therefore, I suggest that “the men of the gate” was a corporation involved in adjudication and taking oaths, as part of the groups of merchants involved in the treaty. In my opinion, they are not mentioned in all treaties precisely because they are subsumed under the terms “sons of the city”, in this context meaning the merchants.

5.11.4 “The men of the city” and “the sons of the city”

In the texts hitherto discussed, the difficulties in identifying the different parties to treaties from Ugarit are apparent. There are “men of the city” and “sons of the city” in the Ugaritic text, terms that in some circumstances appear to refer to a few persons, and in other cases to refer generally to the residents of a town or city. In the following, some more examples will be discussed, in order to shed light on the meaning of these difficult terms.

RS 17.230 contains an agreement made between king Initeshub of Karkemish (*māt kargamis*) and “the men of the land Ugarit” (*amīlū māt ugarit*). If “a man of Karkemish” (*amīlu ša māt kargamis*) is killed in Ugarit, and the murderer is caught, they will pay a triple compensation for that “man” (*amīlu*) and the goods that disappeared with him. If the murderers cannot be found, they are to pay a triple compensation for his life, and for the goods, as much as disappeared with him. The compensation will be the same for “a man of Ugarit” killed in Karkemish.⁹⁸¹

The treaty in RS 17.230 is made between the Hittite overlord at Karkemish and the *amīlū* or “men” of Ugarit. “The men of Ugarit” are held responsible for loss of life and goods of “men of Karkemish”. Who are these “men of GN”? Are they a different group of people from “the sons of GN”? As an explanation for the use of these two separate terms, Hanoch Reviv suggests that the term “the men of Ugarit” (*amīlū māt ugarit*) means all the citizens of Ugarit, whereas the term “sons of Ugarit” (*mārū māt al ugarit*) means “the merchants of Ugarit”. He argues that since RS 17.230 does not mention “the men of Karkemish”, “it should be assumed that the king of this city would compensate Ugarit if so sued. Thus, it appears that a civic institution of the “sons of Ugarit” and its representatives could sue not only their foreign counterparts but also the ruler of a foreign country.”⁹⁸² In his analysis, “the citizen-body appears not only as a body representing the city, but possibly also as the civil institution for the execution of such agreements throughout the kingdom”.⁹⁸³

Like his interpretation of “the sons of Ugarit” (cf. 5.11.2), Reviv’s interpretation of “the men of Ugarit” is problematic. First, it contradicts his suggestion that “the sons

⁹⁸¹ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 153-154: PRU IV 17.230

⁹⁸² Reviv, “Urban self-government in Syria-Palestine,” 1969, 294

⁹⁸³ Reviv, “Urban self-government in Syria-Palestine,” 1969, 291

of GN” was the citizenry.⁹⁸⁴ Second, the situation of loss of life and goods of “the men of Karkemish” is quite similar to the other treaties discussed above that concerned merchants of Ugarit and other cities. The treaty clearly does not concern all “citizens of Ugarit”, but lays down rules for compensation in cases where life or goods are lost. Why would the citizens of Ugarit become involved in the affairs of merchants of Karkemish? Reviv’s interpretation rules out merchants being involved, but it should be asked what other “citizens of Ugarit” would become involved with foreign powers concerning travelling merchants. I would rather suggest that similar to the texts RS 17.146 and RS 18.115 discussed above (5.11.2-3), RS 17.230 is about relations between merchants of Ugarit and merchants of other cities. They do not appear to be royal officials, however, since their conduct is negotiated directly with a foreign ruler, rather than coming from their own king. Reviv’s distinction between “men of Ugarit” and “sons of Ugarit”, is rather tenuous and there is no independent evidence that there was a formally constituted citizenry at Ugarit that made treaties with foreign kings. The difficulties of separating “the men” from “the sons” will be made clear in the following from the analysis of a few further texts from Ugarit.

RS 17.158 contains a verdict from a case where king Initeshub of Karkemish (*šar mā^t kargamis*), “a merchant who serves the king of Tarhudashi” (*amīl tamkāru ardu ša šar mā^t tarhudašši*), and “the sons of Ugarit” (*mārū^M mā^t ugarit*) “have gone to court” (*ana dīni išniqu*).⁹⁸⁵ “The sons of Ugarit” stand accused of the murder of a merchant from Tarhudashi, and the king of Karkemish rendered the judgement that the accuser shall swear to the facts, and “the sons of Ugarit” are to pay a fine in compensation. The tablet is a receipt that must be presented if someone should wish to open the case for a retrial.⁹⁸⁶ The case is followed up in RS 17.42, where the same merchant as in

⁹⁸⁴ Cf. Reviv, “Urban self-government in Syria-Palestine,” 1969, 292

⁹⁸⁵ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 169-171: PRU IV 17.158, 1-4

⁹⁸⁶ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 169-171: PRU IV 17.158, 5-25

RS 17.158 swears that he will not complain further in this case, and that “the sons of Ugarit” are to behave likewise.⁹⁸⁷

RS 17.145 mentions a person called Aballa, who goes to court with king Initeshub and “the sons of Ugarit” (*mārū^M mā^tugarit*). Aballa claims that the merchants dependent on him have been killed in Ugarit. The king judges that “the men of Ugarit” (*amīlū^M mā^tugarit*) are to pay compensation for the slain merchants. The text includes an instruction that the tablet must be presented if anyone wishes to reopen the case.⁹⁸⁸

RS 17.158 and RS 17.145 are quite parallel cases. Thus, it can be seen that there are no clear distinction in the texts from Ugarit between “sons of GN” and “men of GN”: in RS 17.145 “the men of Ugarit” (*amīlū^M mā^tugarit*) are held responsible for the same crimes as “the sons of Ugarit” in RS 17.158. “The sons of Ugarit” in RS 17.145 appears as a body that could be sued and meet litigants in court. A parallelism can also be observed between RS 17.230 above, where “the men of Ugarit” pay compensation, and RS 17.158, where “the sons of Ugarit” pay compensation. It is difficult to discern a difference between when “the sons” were held responsible and when “the men” were held responsible. In my opinion, a sensible solution to this problem is to assume that the two terms are used interchangeably for the same group of people in these letters, viz. the merchants.

⁹⁸⁷ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 171-172: PRU IV 17.42

⁹⁸⁸ Nougayrol, *Archives internationales*, 1956, 172-173: PRU IV 17.145

5.12 The relations between palace, local communities, and merchants

Treaties were drawn up by the Hittite regional overlord between the merchants of different cities without the direct intervention of their rulers: the *amīlū^{M mā}ugarit*, “the men of Ugarit” and the *mārū^{M mā}ugarit*, “the sons of Ugarit” appear as parties to treaties. These groups appear as bodies of merchants with an autonomous status within the kingdom of Ugarit. The treaties demonstrate that bodies of merchants could operate independently of their king and manage their own affairs. The Hittite regional overlord signs treaties with these collective bodies, rather than with the king of Ugarit.

There are also other collective bodies that manage their own affairs in the texts from Ugarit: the village-communities appear as collectives, “the sons of GN”, from the texts of the royal archives. In certain cases, “the sons of GN” appears to be a council of “elders”. The difference between the townspeople and “the elders” can only be read from context.

It is interesting that merchants and local village-communities had their own collective decision-making bodies. This indicates that the palace did not control everything and that a degree of local autonomy was existed within the kingdom. However, the recording of the activities of these institutions in the royal archives does suggest that there were close ties between these local councils and the palace administration. Also, officials appealed to these local bodies. In some cases, officials appear to have participated in them. Thus, it cannot be claimed that the village-communities were independent of the palace and belonged to an autonomous sector. This also applies to the bodies of merchants. Rather, the local decision-making bodies of the village-communities and the merchant corporations were integrated in the city-state. This is indicated by the concern of the authorities to record cases that involved these bodies.

Several decisions in the kingdom of Ugarit appear to have been made in local councils and adjudication was clearly not the preserve of the palace. In the village-communities, “elders” attended courts in order to defend their community against accusations of theft, as seen above (5.10.1). Although “the elders” formed a restricted group, their duties appear to be as representatives of the local community. Therefore, their strategy for power can be called a narrow corporate strategy.

It is interesting to note that the merchants had a semi-independent position in the kingdom. This is probably due to the importance of trade at Ugarit. Although the merchants were sometimes commissioned by the king of Ugarit, the treaties discussed above (5.11.2-4) are made between the Hittite overlord and groups of merchants directly. The merchants formed a collective, but little is known about how this collective was organised. It can be assumed that adjudication was made through representatives of the merchants, similar to “the elders” that represented their local communities. Thus, the merchants pursued a narrow corporate strategy, where a restricted group represented the others in court cases.

Ugarit had an extensive royal family and a wide range of palace officials. However, there appears to have been corporate groups within the city-state that were not directly subsumed in the palace hierarchy. The village-communities appear to have been less independent than Heltzer (1976; 1982) and Liverani (1982) claim, making local decisions, but being integrated in the structure of power of the city-state. On the other hand, the merchants appear as more independent than their two-sector model allows for. This also applies to the patrimonial household model of Schloen (2001). The merchants had their own collective identity and status as party to treaties with foreign rulers, meaning that they were not royal dependents controlled by the palace or subject to the patrimonial authority of the king.

5.13 Conclusions

The political cultures of the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies and Late Bronze Age Ugarit have in common that corporate bodies played an important role in their daily affairs, legal decisions and perhaps also in politics: in Ugarit, corporations of merchants made agreements with the Hittite king and the Hittite viceroy in Karkemish (cf. 5.11.2). The same can be seen from the treaties between Old Assyrian merchants and the kingdoms of Anatolia and Syria (cf. 5.5.6).

From the Old Assyrian material, it can be seen that the wealthiest merchants formed a powerful group in the city-state together with the king. In the Old Assyrian colonies, the wealthiest merchants seem to have dominated decisions. Thus, a collective of heads of wealthy merchant houses were in power, and not the king alone. Collective decision-making was important in the city-state of Assur as well as in the Anatolian colonies. However, there was no popular assembly in charge of the polity (cf. 5.6). In the material from Ugarit, the merchants do not seem to have taken part directly in running the state. They were organised in corporations that made their own agreements with foreign powers, but that does not mean that they were an independent political force (cf. 5.12).

The polities discussed in this chapter were dependent on trade and this may explain the powerful position of the merchants. The kings were not despots. Rather, corporations played a semi-independent role in the polities and made their own agreements with foreign powers.

From Ugarit, there is evidence that power in the local communities was in the hands of corporations of “elders” or “the sons of GN”: royal officials communicate with “the elders” or “sons of GN” concerning adjudication in the local communities and between these communities and outsiders. The term “the sons of GN” does not always refer collectively to towns or villages, but is sometimes used in the sense of a corporation (cf. 5.10.1-2). The communication between central authorities and the local communities through these local corporations indicates that “the elders” and “sons of GN” pursued a narrow corporate strategy for power, in the sense that they answered to the community and represented them with the central authorities. Popular power existed only so far as the local communities could influence their “elders” or other representatives. The king seems to have interfered with the local communities through his officials, and it cannot be claimed that the local authorities influenced the decisions of the central authorities in Ugarit.

6. Autonomy and popular power in city-states under foreign empire

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the political identity and capacities of the people of a few Near Eastern city-states will be investigated, with a view to local collective action and relations between the local ruler and the people. In particular, correspondence between city-states and their imperial overlords will be discussed, in cuneiform texts from Levantine city-states of the Amarna period of the Late Bronze Age and Babylonian city-states of the Iron Age.

From archives of the imperial authorities of Amarna Age Egypt and several archives of Iron Age Assyria and Babylonia, there are letters that shed light on local political life. I will discuss local revolts reported in cuneiform texts of the Amarna correspondence from a perspective of the local communities, in order to analyse their strategies for power. I will also discuss relations between the Assyrian king and his Babylonian vassal cities in the Neo-Assyrian period, from letters sent to the authorities of local city communities. The privileges of the urban population will be paid special attention.

6.2 The Amarna correspondence

The Amarna correspondence consists of letters written in Akkadian cuneiform on clay tablets. It is named after Tell el-Amarna in Egypt where the tablets were excavated. Tell el-Amarna is a mound that covers the ruins of Akhetaten, capital of ancient Egypt

under Pharaoh Akhenaton, also known as Amenophis IV. Scholars refer to the period covered by the letters from Tell el-Amarna as the Amarna Age. It encompasses the 14th century.⁹⁸⁹ The letters come from Akhenaton's royal archives and concern relations between the great and lesser powers of the Late Bronze Age, including their diplomatic relations with Egypt. Almost all the tablets are written in Akkadian, the international language of the Late Bronze Age.

The Amarna letters were collected, collated, organised, and published in transliteration with German translations by the Norwegian scholar J. A. Knudtzon in the early 20th century.⁹⁹⁰ Knudtzon's edition is largely still current, although new fragments have been added to the corpus. His translations are now superseded by the complete and annotated translations with commentary by William L. Moran into French and English.⁹⁹¹ Throughout this chapter, Moran's English edition has been used extensively. It should be noted that the translations of certain Akkadian terms in the idiom of the Amarna correspondence are controversial and sometimes affect the interpretation of entire passages, and I will refer to diverging views where this is relevant.

The contents of the Amarna letters fall into two categories, the international correspondence and the vassal correspondence. The international correspondence unearthed at Amarna contains communications between Egypt and other imperial powers of the Late Bronze Age, viz. Assyria, Kassite Babylonia, Mittanni, the Hittite empire, and several minor kingdoms and cities. Differences in rank are explicit in the letters and the rulers are referred to as either Great or Minor kings. The Great kings

⁹⁸⁹ Cohen & Westbrook, *Amarna diplomacy*, 2000, xiii

⁹⁹⁰ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915

⁹⁹¹ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992

were those who ruled internationally respected empires, whereas the Minor kings ruled less distinguished realms. The Great kings referred to each other as brothers and thus regarded each other as peers. Several Amarna letters concern exchange of precious gifts between Great kings. Mario Liverani has dubbed this phenomenon a “Great Power’s club”.⁹⁹² I agree that this is a fitting description, as it catches the international, yet intimate character of the relations between rulers: Great kings of the Amarna correspondence wrote to each other as brothers and friends. The Minor kings, on the other hand, show humility in their letters to more powerful rulers, including the Pharaoh.

Generally speaking, the Amarna period was a rather stable period politically speaking, in the sense that there was no single hegemonic power, but a balance between several powers. Mario Liverani points out that the Amarna letters bear witness to a general acknowledgment among kings of the existence of several centres of power, in contrast to the ideology of universal empire.⁹⁹³ The correspondence between the Great kings will not be discussed in the following, however. Rather, I will discuss cities of the Levant documented in the so-called vassal correspondence. These are letters that were sent between Pharaoh and his governors in city-states of the Levant and Syria. The letters sent to Pharaoh from local petty kings loyal to Egypt have much to say about local affairs in the Levantine city-states. As will be seen (6.4), the several letters sent by Rib-Hadda, the governor of Byblos to Pharaoh are particularly informative sources, as he wrote frequently and was deeply involved in local political upheavals.

The letters from Rib-Hadda to Akhenaton belong in a context of imperial politics. The region of Syria and the Levant was a border area for several empires, notably Egypt

⁹⁹² Liverani, “The Great Powers’ club”, 2000, 18

⁹⁹³ Liverani, *Prestige and interest*, 1990, 288

and the Hittites. Rivalling great powers generated war and intensified local conflicts. As will be seen below from the letters of Rib-Hadda (6.4.1-3), local rulers appealed to Pharaoh for help against their enemies. In these letters, there are frequent references to a threat posed by groups called the *hapiru*. The *hapiru* were apparently groups of landless and lawless people in the wilderness of Syria and Palestine. Under the leadership of a certain ‘Abdi-Aširta and his sons of the nascent state of Amurru, bands of *hapiru* were threatening to overthrow the city-based rulers that were loyal to Pharaoh.

The local rulers of Syrian cities appear to have had difficulties controlling their subjects; from the reports of Rib-Hadda in his letters, the people seem disaffected and revolt to be imminent. The threat of revolt is a recurring subject in his correspondence, with appeals for military support from the Pharaoh and his Syrian garrisons. The position of local rulers apparently depended on support from their imperial overlords. The *hapiru*, on the other hand, had the advantage of a local powerbase in the wilderness and the fact that the rivalling Great powers in the region, Egypt and the Hittites, were distant and involved in local affairs only indirectly.

Especially interesting for the present investigation is the apparently quite independent role of the people or groups of citizens in some cities in relations with the local rulers and with the Pharaoh. In the following, I will discuss the structure of power in the city-states of Syria and the Levant in light of the vassal correspondence, in particular the letters sent from Rib-Hadda of Byblos to Pharaoh. Emphasis will be on letters that report instances of popular resistance to and negotiations with local rulers and the *hapiru*.

6.3 Local rulers, city populations and rebels

From the Amarna correspondence, it can be seen that local rulers sometimes had a difficult position as local governors serving foreign and for the most part distant kings. Local rulers were ruling as kings over cities that can be called city-states, while at the same time serving a foreign overlord. The city-states were not independent of imperial control, and therefore were not autonomous political units. As will be seen, they were rather in a position of semi-autonomy, where Pharaoh and his local garrisons intervened only rarely.

Despite the generally amicable relations between the Great powers of the Amarna age, the region of Syria and the Levant was an international hot spot in the Amarna period. The Hittites controlled the northern parts of Syria and the Egyptians were in the south. In the east lay the kingdom of Mittanni that also interfered in the region. There were occasional clashes, trapping the local city-states between competing imperial armies. As will be seen from the letters of Rib-Hadda, discussed below (6.4.1-3), the empires installed local kings as governors, as well as regional officials from the imperial hierarchy to maintain control.

Imperial government was not uniform. Ingolf Thuesen points out that there were different tactics of foreign control in Syria: the northern towns under Hittite control had rulers from local dynasties, whereas towns of the southern region of Syria were ruled by officials from Egypt. He suggests that in Syria “the situation can best be described as a city-state culture consisting exclusively of dependent city-states”.⁹⁹⁴ However, the level of dependence on foreign powers does not appear to have been very great. Nadav Na‘aman points out that the local rulers were not regarded as

⁹⁹⁴ Thuesen, “The city-state in ancient western Syria,” 2000, 62

Egyptian “mayors” or “governors” in the full sense of the term, i.e. as Egyptian officials. They had to answer to the Egyptian court administration for all that happened in the cities in their charge. However, locally, “the mayors” regarded themselves not as officials of a foreign power, but as proper kings, with royal power over their local subjects and in relations with their neighbours.⁹⁹⁵ Na‘aman’s observations on the position of local rulers are supported by the vassal letters of Rib-Hadda, in which he calls himself ruler of Byblos and refers to his fellows in other Levantine cities as rulers.⁹⁹⁶ In the Amarna letters, local rulers are referred to with a range of Akkadian terms, as either *šarru*, “king”, *bēl*, “lord”, or *awīlum*, “man”, as well as *hazannu*, “mayor”. I will refer to local rulers with the term “mayor”, as this is the established term in Moran’s translation of the Amarna letters (1992). The Egyptian officials in the southern region of Syria had regional responsibilities and did not rule individual city-states, like “the mayors” did.

In the vassal correspondence that will be discussed in the following, the main threat to “the mayors” of the cities of southern Syria was not imperial armies, but local troubles. A rising dynasty that would eventually establish a new kingdom called Amurru was attacking several cities under Egyptian sovereignty, supported by lawless bands called *hapiru*. Their ranks seem to have been filled by landless peasants and other malcontents that had left their homes and gone to seek their fortune as marauding robbers.⁹⁹⁷ As cities fell to the forces of Amurru and the *hapiru*, city-dwellers also joined the *hapiru*. Moran suggests that the establishment of Amurru

⁹⁹⁵ Na‘aman, “The Egyptian-Canaanite correspondence,” 2000, 131-132

⁹⁹⁶ E.g. *EA* 75; *EA* 89; *EA* 92

⁹⁹⁷ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 320

began with the conquests of a certain ‘Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru.⁹⁹⁸ In the letters of Rib-Hadda, it is described how ‘Abdi-Aširta and his sons with their *hapiru* forces came out of the wilderness and laid siege to city after city. Mario Liverani points out the literary qualities of Rib-Hadda’s reports about ‘Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru, as stereotyped “scoundrels” and doubts their historical connection to semi-sedentary rebels.⁹⁹⁹ This will be discussed further below (6.4). Regardless of its connections to the *hapiru*, Amurru was real enough. Alan James points out that Amurru eventually was established as a Syrian kingdom, at the expense of other city-states in the region.¹⁰⁰⁰ Amurru became a kingdom after the fashion of other local polities in Syria. The structural similarities and differences between bands of *hapiru*, the kingdom of Amurru and the city-states of the Levant will be discussed further below (6.5).

As will be seen in the following sections (6.4-6.4.4), the Amurru leaders and their *hapiru* forces are reported to have attacked cities, as well as inciting revolt among the citizens against their “mayors”. In several letters sent to Pharaoh, there are reports that the people have chased “the mayors” of their cities away: “the mayors” write to Pharaoh for military support and complain that they are left on their own against the *hapiru* and rebel leaders that take over cities and chase away or kill the citizens who refuse to join them.¹⁰⁰¹ In the following, the townspeople’s reactions to the *hapiru* threat will be investigated, from letters sent by Rib-Hadda of Byblos to Pharaoh.

⁹⁹⁸ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, xxxiii

⁹⁹⁹ Liverani, “Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer,” 2004, 98-104

¹⁰⁰⁰ James, “Egypt and her vassals,” 2000, 116-117

¹⁰⁰¹ E.g. EA 74; EA 101

6.4 The plight of Rib-Hadda of Byblos

A Syrian “mayor” and his struggle with *hapiru* of the wilderness and unrest among the townspeople are well-documented by the letters from Rib-Hadda, the “mayor of Byblos”. He appears as one of the most ardent correspondents of the Pharaoh. His many letters reveal much of interest concerning the political situation in the city-states of the Levant in the Amarna period. They provide an inside view of a local ruler under pressure from both external forces and a disaffected local population.

As “mayor” of Byblos, Rib-Hadda wrote several letters to Pharaoh with appeals for help against *hapiru* attacks led by ‘Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru. From his letters, it appears that roving bands of *hapiru* operated in league with the ambitious leaders of Amurru, who wished to establish their rule over cities of the region and establish their new kingdom. ‘Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru led the *hapiru* in several successful raids against cities in southern Syria, in order to establish the kingdom of Amurru and consolidate its power. The mayors that were loyal to Pharaoh appealed to Egypt for reinforcements or an Egyptian intervention. This was not to arrive, however.

The Amarna letters are invaluable sources to the history of Syria in the Late Bronze Age. However, being personal letters, they must be interpreted and cannot count as disinterested accounts of historical events. As pointed out by Mario Liverani, the Amarna letters are not statements of fact, but persuasive messages made by their authors.¹⁰⁰² Liverani emphasises that ancient literary texts must be examined for what they can tell about themselves as texts and about the time when they were written, rather than being mined for historical kernels of truth hiding beneath and between the

¹⁰⁰² Liverani, “The Great Powers’ club”, 2000, 17

words.¹⁰⁰³ He argues that Rib-Hadda's complaints to Pharaoh follows a literary idiom he identifies as "the righteous sufferer": Rib-Hadda denounces 'Abdi-Aširta and his son Aziru as *hapiru* leaders, not because they actually were leaders of desert brigands, but because this is a stereotype of "the enemy".¹⁰⁰⁴ Liverani does not accept that the cities in question are actually taken by *hapiru* in a concerted campaign, as Rib-Hadda repeatedly claims, but that the local revolts must be seen as part of an "alternating and unstable process that changes with the balance of power".¹⁰⁰⁵

I find Liverani's rally for an analysis of letters as literary texts rather than as repositories of ancient facts stimulating. Rib-Hadda should not be taken as a neutral witness to goings on in his native city and its environs: in his letters to Pharaoh he seeks an effect, not to report on historical fact. I agree with Liverani that the local revolts of Syrian cities must be regarded as more comprehensive than the opportunistic instigation to revolt by lawless foreigners. The uprisings should indeed be seen as part of the dynamics of local politics. However, the Amarna letters, and not only those of Rib-Hadda, do emphasise the role of the *hapiru* and their leaders, and this should not be ignored, regardless of literary parallels to "righteous sufferers", Biblical or otherwise. Although the *hapiru* were probably not behind all the attacks on the local kings, it seems highly likely that turmoil and unrest created opportunities for political changes in the Syrian cities, including the slaying of "mayors".

In the Amarna letters, an important element in the tactics of the *hapiru* and their leaders appears to have been to bring over the local populations to their side and incite revolt against the cities' "mayors". The letters of Rib-Hadda are particularly

¹⁰⁰³ Liverani, "Model and actualization," 1993, 42–48

¹⁰⁰⁴ Liverani, "Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer," 2004, 102

¹⁰⁰⁵ Liverani, "Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer," 2004, 104

interesting for what they have to say about the role of the townspeople in the revolts incited by the *hapiru* and their leaders. In the following, evidence concerning several cities will be discussed, including Ammiya (6.4.1), Tyre (6.4.2), Rib-Hadda's own city Byblos (6.4.3), as well as Tunip and Irqata (6.4.4). All the letters are sent from "the mayor" Rib-Hadda, except from the two latter cities, where "the citizens" or "the elders" of Tunip and Irqata write to Pharaoh. All the cities in question were affected by rebellion, popular uprisings, and struggles for power. In the following, I will present and discuss the evidence, before turning to the scholarly debate on the evidence for popular protest and popular power in the Amarna letters.

6.4.1 The killing of "the mayor" of Ammiya and other cases of revolt

In the letters from Rib-Hadda, there are several reports of cases of regicide and revolt in Syrian cities. Who were behind these killings? What does revolt say about popular power?

In EA 74,¹⁰⁰⁶ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh complaining that *hapiru* are threatening the city Byblos. Rib-Hadda claims that only Byblos and two other towns are left to him, all other villages in the mountains and along the sea are lost to the *hapiru*.¹⁰⁰⁷ The *hapiru* are led by 'Abdi-Aširta, who is instigating revolt by saying to "the men of the city of Ammiya" (*amēlūt^{al}ammia*) that they should kill "their leaders" ([E]N-*lakunu?*) and become like the *hapiru* and live at peace.¹⁰⁰⁸ 'Abdi-Aširta is planning an

¹⁰⁰⁶ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 372-377; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 142-145

¹⁰⁰⁷ EA 74, 19-22

¹⁰⁰⁸ EA 74, 23-30

attack on Byblos, and thereafter a revolt against all “the mayors” (*amēlūtu hazanutu*) of the country.¹⁰⁰⁹

In *EA 75*,¹⁰¹⁰ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh again about the threat the *hapiru* pose to Byblos. The fields cannot be tilled.¹⁰¹¹ The *hapiru* have killed “the mayor” of Irqata, and “the men of Ammiya” (*amēlūt^{al} ammi^m*) have also killed “their lord” (*bēla[š]u*).¹⁰¹² The situation is worsened by Hittites and the Mittanni fighting in Syria over vassal territories.¹⁰¹³

EA 74 and *EA 75* are evidence that the people of several of the Egyptian controlled city-states of Syria were in revolt. In the letter *EA 74*, there appears to be an opposition between “the men of the city of Ammiya” (LÚ.MEŠ/*amēlūt^{al} ammia*) and “their leaders” ([E]N-*lakunu*?). Who were “the men of the city of Ammiya”? There is no indication of the size of the group of “the men of the city”. It is not clear whether ‘Abdi-Aširta actually spoke to a limited group of people called “the men of the city of Ammiya” or whether the city population in general is meant by this expression. The reference “the men of the city of Ammiya” can thus be to a limited group of important people or the townspeople in general.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *EA 74*, 30-38

¹⁰¹⁰ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 376-381; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 145-146

¹⁰¹¹ *EA 75*, 15-21

¹⁰¹² *EA 75*, 25-34

¹⁰¹³ *EA 75*, 35-48

In the *CAD*, the term *amīlūtu* GN/LÚ.MEŠ GN in the letter *EA 74, 25* is interpreted as “the population of a city or a country”, more specifically “the people of GN”.¹⁰¹⁴ Who were the people, however? If the decision to kill “the mayor” was taken by the entire city population, it is nevertheless not clear how this was done. This problem will be discussed further below (6.5).

There are further problems in *EA 74*: the possible reading of ([E]N-*lakunu?*), “their leaders” in the plural is tantalising. Since the reading is not secure, very little can be concluded from it. Perhaps “the lords” are “the mayor”, Pharaoh, and an Egyptian governor in Syria? In my opinion, the inference of *EA 74* is that the population of cities and towns were collectively protesting against their established leaders.

However, the interpretation of the *amīlūtu* GN/LÚ.MEŠ GN as “people of the city” in the sense of citizens is controversial, and will be discussed in section 6.5.2.

The events referred to in *EA 75* demonstrate the seriousness of the threat the *hapiru* and their leaders and local revolts posed to “the mayors”. Why the local population revolted and joined the *hapiru* is not clear. In *EA 74* and *75*, the revolt appears as an outside as well as an inside threat. “The men of Ammiya” (*amēlūt^{al} ammi^m*) are referred to in *EA 75* as the killers of “their lord”, but as in *EA 74*, we get no information who exactly these men were or how they were organised.

In *EA 74*, it appears that ‘Abdi-Aširta addressed a restricted group of people in the cities in order to bring them to revolt: thus the reference to “the men of the city of Ammiya” (*amēlūt^{al} ammia*) is apparently to a small group of people and not to the entire city population. It would after all be easy for the mayor of Ammiya to forestall

¹⁰¹⁴ *CAD* A II, 1968, 60. Orthography varies, and *amēlūtu* is also common.

a rebellion if a leader of the *hapiru* urged the people to revolt in a general assembly in the city. However, the rebellion in Ammiya does not look like a conspiracy planned by a small group of people. The event in *EA 75* in the city of Ammiya is reported by Rib-Hadda as a revolt and killing of “the mayor” and it is noted together with the attack of the *hapiru* on Irqata and slaying of its “mayor”. This seems to me evidence that “the people of the city” refers to the entire population of the city and that it took part in a general uprising. There is no reference to supporters of “the mayor” in Ammiya, or evidence that there could be put up any effective resistance to the rebels. Therefore, large undifferentiated groups appear to be the forces behind the killing of “the mayors” in *EA 75*; the *hapiru* in Irqata and “the men of Ammiya” in Ammiya.

From *EA 74*, the rebellion in Ammiya appears to have started with outside instigation, followed by mass action against “the mayor”, reported in *EA 75*. However, it cannot be ruled out that the role of outside forces is exaggerated by Rib-Hadda in his letters. In this interpretation, the local initiative was the more important factor. Indeed, for the revolt to succeed without intervention from people loyal to “the mayor”, the rebels must have been quite a large group. The reference to “the men of the city” therefore appears to be to all the men of the city, and not a small group or a conspiracy. It appears like the city population could be addressed by outside instigators of rebellion and that they could take collective action against their “mayor”. If this interpretation is correct, the *amīlūtu* GN/LÚ.MEŠ GN in *EA 74* and *EA 75* took power into their own hands: “the men of Ammiya” make the decision to kill their mayor collectively and they rebel against their mayor as an undifferentiated mass. It should be pointed out, however, that the reason they revolted was to change their allegiance to the *hapiru* and their leaders, not to establish a government by the people or other alternative to kingship. The political significance of townspeople killing the local “mayors” in Syrian city-states will be discussed further below (6.5.1).

6.4.2 Trouble in Tyre

From the letters of Rib-Hadda, it appears that no city was spared the troubles of rebellion. Inner strife between contenders for power had an important role in this unrest. What can the rise to power of usurpers tell about the political situation in Syrian cities and the role of the people in establishing or toppling leaders?

In *EA* 89,¹⁰¹⁵ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh about trouble in Tyre: he complains that in “the city of Tyre” (*al-šuri*), they have killed “their mayor” (*hazannašunu*), but Pharaoh makes no inquiry. Rib-Hadda claims that he knows the truth in the matter and that the killers are lying, feigning allegiance to Pharaoh. Rib-Hadda points out that he had married his sister to “the mayor” of Tyre and was formerly on good terms with the city, but now they have killed their “mayor”, as well as Rib-Hadda’s sister and her sons.¹⁰¹⁶ He writes that Pharaoh should inquire about “the mayor” and that the city is afraid and does not support “the mayor”, but that they are unable to do anything. He reminds Pharaoh that “the mayor” of Tyre is very rich and his residence renowned for its wealth. With the latest turn of events, ‘Abdi-Aširta is in control of parts of the coast.¹⁰¹⁷

In *EA* 101,¹⁰¹⁸ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh¹⁰¹⁹. He reports that ‘Abdi-Aširta is dead.¹⁰²⁰ “The men of Tyre”, “the men of Sidon” and “the men of Beirut” (*amēlūt*

¹⁰¹⁵ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 420-425; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 162-163

¹⁰¹⁶ *EA* 89, 15-29

¹⁰¹⁷ *EA* 89, 39-67

¹⁰¹⁸ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 452-455; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 174-175

¹⁰¹⁹ The sender and recipient are unknown, but were probably Rib-Hadda and the Pharaoh (cf. Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 174 n. 1)

¹⁰²⁰ *EA* 101, 1-10

^{al}GN) were now all friendly to Amurru.¹⁰²¹ Rib-Hadda asks whether these cities do not belong to Pharaoh, and recommends placing “a man” (*amēlum*) over each of them so that the ships of Amurru cannot enter these ports.¹⁰²²

In *EA* 89 the slaying of “the mayor” of Tyre is reported. Apparently, his successor was not loyal to Pharaoh. In *EA* 101, Tyre is on the side of the *hapiru*, so the new “mayor” in Tyre indeed appears to have sided with the rebels, if he was not killed too, sometime between the writing of *EA* 89 and *EA* 101. In *EA* 89, it appears that Rib-Hadda is reporting that there is a new “mayor” in Tyre unknown to Pharaoh. This would explain Rib-Hadda’s insistence that Pharaoh inquire into the facts in the case. Rib-Hadda refers to the former “mayor” of Tyre as his “brother”, and they appear to have been on good terms. He warns against the new “mayor” of Tyre, however, that he is not loyal to Pharaoh and that he is not popular with “the people of Tyre”. Also, Rib-Hadda adds that the city of Tyre is afraid. It can thus be argued that there were three parts involved in the situation in Tyre as reported by Rib-Hadda, viz. the former “mayor” of Tyre, now dead, that was allied to Rib-Hadda, the new “mayor” who is responsible for the death of the former “mayor”, and the inhabitants of Tyre who do not want the new “mayor”. However, it is not clear from *EA* 89 how the new “mayor” attained his position, in particular whether Pharaoh formally instated him. It appears that Pharaoh was not involved at all, since he has made no inquiry into what has happened, but this may also be hyperbole on Rib-Hadda’s part.

Rib-Hadda implies that he knows something that the Pharaoh knows not: the new “mayor” and his supporters are not loyal to Pharaoh and they are not popular with the rest of the city of Tyre. Of course, the accusations of disloyalty smacks of slander.

¹⁰²¹ *EA* 101, 18-25

¹⁰²² *EA* 101, 25-31

Rib-Hadda's most pressing concerns were presumably that his sister had been killed and that the former "mayor" with whom he was on good terms had been killed and replaced by one of his enemies. Thus, the change of ruler in Tyre was against Rib-Hadda's personal as well as political interests, yet he describes it as an affront to Pharaoh. The impression from *EA 89* is nevertheless of a city divided: in Tyre, the "mayor" was not killed collectively by "the men of the city", but by somebody from Tyre who became "mayor" with the support of a few people of the city. In *EA 101*, "the men of the city" from Tyre are reported to be loyal to Amurru, but that does not necessarily mean that they were behind the slaying of "the mayor" of Tyre in *EA 89*. However, in *EA 89*, the new "mayor" appears to be loyal to 'Abdi-Aširta, hence Rib-Hadda's warning to Pharaoh that 'Abdi-Aširta was now in charge of the coast with the killing of the old "mayor" of Tyre. If Rib-Hadda is right that the new "mayor" of Tyre is a usurper, unawares of Pharaoh, it gives an impression that Pharaoh did not directly involve himself in the appointment of "mayors" in Syria. Rib-Hadda may seem to appeal to Pharaoh in order to make him react to his own advantage in a quarrel with the new ruler of Tyre.

The impression from *EA 89* is one of virtual autonomy in Tyre. Also, it appears from *EA 101* that Egyptian authority in Syria had become weak. Rib-Hadda reports that the people of three port cities were friendly to Amurru and that they granted use of their ports to ships of Amurru. If *EA 101* is compared to *EA 89*, the situation in Tyre appears to have changed, and "the men of the city" are not opposing their "mayor", as Rib-Hadda claimed they were doing. They are, however, supporting Amurru. Perhaps Rib-Hadda is exaggerating the support for the old "mayor" of Tyre in order to move Pharaoh to intervene in local affairs? There are apparently no "mayors" loyal to Pharaoh in Tyre, Sidon, or Beirut, since Rib-Hadda is questioning Pharaoh whether these cities belong to Egypt and is pointing to the need to place "a man" (*amēlum*) in each of the cities. Does this mean that there were no rulers there at all, and that "the men of the city" were in control? Apparently the townspeople have seized power and

the cities are for the time being without “mayors”. However, from *EA* 101, it cannot be said with certainty who “the people” were, or how they were organised.

6.4.3 The fall of Byblos

Rib-Hadda’s own city Byblos eventually fell to his enemies. However, he appears to have had substantial support even after his fall from power. What does this tell us about the political situation in Byblos and the opportunities of the people for choosing their leaders?

In *EA* 77,¹⁰²³ Rib-Hadda requests a ship from Egypt to come and take away those in Byblos who still support him. The *hapiru* are rapidly taking over the country. Rib-Hadda says he is afraid “the peasants” (*amēlūt hu[pši]*) will strike him down.¹⁰²⁴ In *EA* 81,¹⁰²⁵ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh saying that ‘Abdi-Aširta has urged “the men of Byblos” (*amēlūt [URU gubl]a*) to kill their lord and join the *hapiru* like Ammiya has done.¹⁰²⁶ He reports that people were trying to kill him.¹⁰²⁷

In *EA* 91,¹⁰²⁸ Rib-Hadda is alone, all his cities except Byblos have been taken by the *hapiru*. He complains to Pharaoh that “my own men” (*am[ēl]ūtia*) are hostile to him,

¹⁰²³ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 382-387; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 147-148

¹⁰²⁴ *EA* 77, 26-37

¹⁰²⁵ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 392-397; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 150-151

¹⁰²⁶ *EA* 81, 6-13

¹⁰²⁷ *EA* 81, 14-24

¹⁰²⁸ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 428-433; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 164-165

and that his grain has been plundered.¹⁰²⁹ In *EA* 92,¹⁰³⁰ Rib-Hadda complains to Pharaoh that ‘Abdi-Aširta had been informed that no help would arrive, and so had been emboldened to attack.¹⁰³¹ He also reports that he had been promised help from “the mayors” of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre, but that it had not arrived.¹⁰³²

In *EA* 102,¹⁰³³ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh and complains that he is left all alone. Enemies are pressing on every side. He cannot go anywhere, and his house is an empty house.¹⁰³⁴ He says that the city Ampî is at war with him, and that “the magnate” (*amēlu rabū*) and “the lords of the city” (*amēlūtu beli alim^{lim}*) are allied to the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta, Rib-Hadda’s enemies.¹⁰³⁵

In *EA* 138,¹⁰³⁶ Rib-Hadda writes to Pharaoh to tell how he has lost control over Byblos. “The men of the city of Byblos” (*amēlūt al gubli*) wanted to join Aziru, a son of ‘Abdi-Aširta, when he had taken the city of Sumur, Rib-Hadda’s last stronghold apart from Byblos.¹⁰³⁷ Rib-Hadda states that he tried unsuccessfully to suppress the rebellion. “The city” (*ālu^{ki}*) had turned against him. Rib-Hadda’s brother tried to speak to “the city” (*ālu^{ki}*) and there was a discussion where the outcome was that “the

¹⁰²⁹ *EA* 91, 14-23

¹⁰³⁰ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 432-435; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 165-167

¹⁰³¹ *EA* 92, 16-24

¹⁰³² *EA* 92, 29-40

¹⁰³³ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 454-459; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 175-176

¹⁰³⁴ *EA* 102, 8-19

¹⁰³⁵ *EA* 102, 20-28

¹⁰³⁶ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 578-587; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 221-225

¹⁰³⁷ *EA* 138, 34-38

lords of the city” (*amēlūtu bel āli^{ki}*) joined the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta.¹⁰³⁸ Rib-Hadda then went to Beirut to get help, but when he returned from Beirut, Byblos was full of rebel troops. “The residents” (*aššābu*) favoured Rib-Hadda, protesting that as long as he was alive, he was still in control of them and could report their rebellion to Pharaoh with fatal consequences for the rebels. They chased away the troops of Aziru.¹⁰³⁹ Rib-Hadda reports that half the city supported Aziru, and half were on Pharaoh’s side. Eventually, Rib-Hadda lost. He received no help from Egypt and went into exile in Beirut.¹⁰⁴⁰ The rest of the letter is full of complaints to the effect that without the help of Pharaoh, Byblos is lost to Rib-Hadda and his sons forever while the city is secure in the hands of the supporters of Aziru. The people of Byblos write to him in Beirut and ask where the troops of Pharaoh are, but Pharaoh appears to have abandoned him.¹⁰⁴¹

From *EA 77* and *EA 81*, Rib-Hadda appears increasingly desperate: the regicide citizens of Ammiya supported the *hapiru*, and they appealed to Rib-Hadda’s subjects to dispose of him in similar fashion to their own “mayor”. “The men of Byblos” (*amēlūt [URU gubl]a*) as well as “the peasants” (*amēlūt hu[pši]*) were turning against Rib-Hadda. Thus, these letters together give the impression that Rib-Hadda was surrounded by threats and that the rebellion was out of control. However, his reports should perhaps not be taken at face value. Liverani points out that Rib-Hadda’s lone stance against the forces of chaos and evil is a quite consistent feature of his correspondence: “The process is not becoming increasingly serious, with more and more abandonment: it is always at the maximum level of seriousness”.¹⁰⁴² In

¹⁰³⁸ *EA 138*, 39-50

¹⁰³⁹ *EA 138*, 51-70

¹⁰⁴⁰ *EA 138*, 71-80

¹⁰⁴¹ *EA 138*, 80-138

¹⁰⁴² Liverani, “Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer,” 2004, 108

Liverani's interpretation, Rib-Hadda suffers from "siege psychosis".¹⁰⁴³ This is a good observation, and it should be kept in mind that there are no sources available to actually corroborate Rib-Hadda's repeated claims of being alone in a sea of treachery. Thus, although it can be argued from Rib-Hadda's letters that there was unrest in several cities in Syria, his presentation of the sequence of events and his own role in them must be considered a biased report.

The collective reference to Byblos as "the men of the city Byblos" (*amēlūt* [URU *gubl/a*]) in *EA* 81 is of note. The term "the men of Byblos" is used parallel to the name of the other regicide city, Ammiya. It is not possible to determine from the term itself whether "the men of Byblos" was a large or small group, whether it was a corporate group or a spontaneous uprising. In the context of the letter *EA* 81, however, they appear as a large group of men, a body that was identified with the city, could be addressed directly, and could act as a collective against their ruler.

In *EA* 91 and *EA* 92, the impression is that all the coastal cities had defected to the *hapiru*, either as a collective decision of "the men of the city" as was seen in *EA* 81, or by the establishment of a usurper: none of the local rulers in *EA* 92 were willing to help Byblos against the *hapiru*. The Egyptian officials were evidently not interested in supporting Rib-Hadda, and left it to his neighbours "the mayors" of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre to come to his aid, which they did not. The former "mayor" of Tyre had been killed, as mentioned in *EA* 89 discussed above (6.4.2), and Rib-Hadda was apparently no friend of the new "mayor" there. Pharaoh and the Egyptian officials' negligence of Rib-Hadda is curious and reveals that the concerns of Rib-Hadda were not those of Egypt. Rib-Hadda's reference to "my own men" (*am[ēl]ūtia*) as hostile to him in *EA* 91 can either mean generally that the people were against him or that some specific

¹⁰⁴³ Liverani, "Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer," 2004, 104

people were against him. This does not appear clearly in the text, but in the context, it seems safe to conclude that the people in general were against him.

From *EA* 102, it appears that at the death of ‘Abdi-Aširta, his sons inherited the leadership and continued their campaigns against the cities of Syria. It seems like the rebels have made allies of the authorities in the city Ampī to make them defect from Egypt and help them against those cities that remained loyal to Pharaoh: Rib-Hadda states that in Ampī, “the magnate” (*amēlu rabū*) and “the lords of the city” (*amēlūtu beli alim^{lim}*) made an alliance with the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta. The identities of “the magnate” or “the lords of the city” are not clear. That *EA* 102 refers to first one person and then a group of persons seems beyond doubt, but whether they are to be understood as a unit or as opposing agents is not clear. They appear as the authorities in Ampī. They do not appear to have started a revolt against any “mayor”, but rather to have gone over to the rebels. This would imply that “the magnate” was “the mayor” himself, who had joined the rebels in a campaign against Rib-Hadda and Byblos. It cannot be ruled out, however, that Rib-Hadda’s report is tendentious. The enmity between Ampī and Byblos could very well have started without the intervention of the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta. Rib-Hadda’s accusations against Ampī is in line with his other letters to Pharaoh where the *hapiru* get the blame for everything. Local politics may well be at the root of the conflict, rather than marauding *hapiru*.

EA 138 seems to indicate that “the men of the city” in Byblos acted on their own and with authority while their mayor Rib-Hadda was exiled in Beirut, perhaps even before Byblos was lost. After the defeat of Sumur, “the city” turns against him. There was apparently no unanimity and Rib-Hadda insists that there were parts of the city that supported him: “the city” had initially turned against him and “the lords of the city” wanted to defect to the rebels. Therefore, Rib-Hadda was forced to leave Byblos. However, Rib-Hadda attempted to return, and at that moment the city appears to have

been split: there are rebel troops present in the city, but “the residents” support Rib-Hadda, apparently in fear of retribution for defecting to Aziru. They try to chase away the rebels, but the other half of the city are against Rib-Hadda, who is at any rate incapable of securing any troops from Pharaoh. Some of the people of Byblos are said to have written to him in Beirut and asked about troops from Egypt. This indicates that even with their “mayor” exiled, not all supported the new regime in Byblos that was loyal to Aziru. In *EA* 137, Rib-Hadda reports that his younger brother seized power in Byblos and turned the city against him in order to give it over to the sons of ‘Abdi-Aširta.¹⁰⁴⁴ This sets Rib-Hadda’s fall from power in a different light than would have been the case if foreign troops had instigated a revolt. Thus, outside forces are blamed by Rib-Hadda, whereas there were in fact the dynamics of local powers inside the Syrian cities that triggered the events he reports to Pharaoh.

The situation of getting the city against him in *EA* 138 is paralleled by *EA* 91, where Rib-Hadda says his own men turned against him. The identification of the people with the city in *EA* 138 is paralleled by *EA* 81, where “the city” and “the men of the city” appear to be interchangeable terms. The identity of these people unfortunately does not appear clearly from the texts. In *EA* 138, however, it is clear that Byblos was a city where the people were divided over how to deal with the *hapi* and whether they should support their “mayor” or not.

The letters from Rib-Hadda to Pharaoh indicate that there were groups of citizens capable of making decisions on their own in Byblos and other city-states of Egyptian-controlled Syria. The nature of these groups is difficult to determine from the texts; some appear as large gatherings, others as more restricted groups of people. The composition of these collectives, their standing in the political structure and the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 218-221: *EA* 137, 14-26

strategies for power they may be said to pursue will be discussed further below (6.5.2; 6.5.3). I turn now to letters from two other towns in Syria, viz. Tunip and Irqata.

6.4.4 “The elders” and “the people” of Tunip and Irqata

In addition to the letters of Rib-Hadda concerning the regicide city-states and his own endangered situation, there are two letters in the Amarna correspondence that are of particular interest for the study of local autonomy in Syrian cities, from the cities of Tunip and Irqata respectively. Here, collectives, and not “the mayor” write to Pharaoh. What does this tell us about the organisation of power in these cities?

In *EA 59*,¹⁰⁴⁵ “the sons of the city of Tunip” (*mārē al dūnip^{ki}*) write to Pharaoh.¹⁰⁴⁶

They ask to have the son of their own local ruler returned from Egypt and installed as their new “mayor”.¹⁰⁴⁷ They write that they fear Aziru will attack and defeat them, and appeal for Egyptian help.¹⁰⁴⁸

EA 59 is evidence that not only “the mayors” could write to Pharaoh. “The sons of the city of Tunip” appear as somehow representing the people of Tunip. It is not possible to decide whether all the people or a small group of them were writing, but the concern of the letter would be relevant to all the people of Tunip. It is interesting that “the sons of Tunip” take initiative to influence Pharaoh’s choice of “mayor”. The people behind the letter evidently wish for a “mayor” to rule them. They do not

¹⁰⁴⁵ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 342-347; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 130-131

¹⁰⁴⁶ *EA 59*, 2

¹⁰⁴⁷ *EA 59*, 13-17

¹⁰⁴⁸ *EA 59*, 25-38

appear to wish to establish any kind of alternative to kingship. The standing of “the sons of the city of Tunip” is ambiguous; they have the authority to address Pharaoh on behalf of their city, but they do so in order to have a “mayor” to rule the city. Tunip cannot be claimed to be ruled by a collective of people, but they do appear to have had a certain interim authority.

In *EA* 100,¹⁰⁴⁹ there is a message from “the city Irqata and its elders” (*alirkata u amēlūt šib[ū]tiši*) to Pharaoh.¹⁰⁵⁰ They express their loyalty to Pharaoh and their intention to guard the city from the traitors to Pharaoh seeking to destroy it.¹⁰⁵¹

The letter *EA* 100 is further evidence that not only “mayors” wrote to Pharaoh. The message of “the city Irqata and its elders” to Pharaoh is that they were loyal to him. Parts of the letter are very difficult to make sense of. According to William L. Moran, the people of Irqata refer to a “mayor” that was formerly placed over them by Pharaoh, but who was now dead and that part of the sense of the letter is that “Irqata and the elders” defend themselves against accusations of disloyalty to Egypt.¹⁰⁵² I agree that “the city Irqata and its elders” appear to await further instructions from Pharaoh, and thus the situation where no “mayor” is in charge seems temporary and extraordinary. The relation between “the city” and “the elders” is not clear, but the reference to both “elders” and “city” may be significant. This will be discussed further below (6.5.2).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, 1915, 450-453; Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 172-173

¹⁰⁵⁰ *EA* 100, 1-4

¹⁰⁵¹ *EA* 100, 20-32

¹⁰⁵² Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 172 n. 6

6.5 “The mayor”, the people, and strategies for power

In the following, I will discuss interpretations of the letters of Rib-Hadda and others to Pharaoh and what these letters can tell us about the political culture of city-states under foreign empire in Syria. Are these instances of regicide and revolt manifestations of popular power? The evidence from Tunip and Irqata (6.4.4) weighs against interpreting regicide as evidence for anti-monarchic sentiments in the city-states of Egyptian-controlled Syria: there seems to me no reason to suppose that the townspeople wanted to rid their cities of kings as such. After all, they ask Pharaoh for a new “mayor”. What can be argued, though, is that regicide and revolt give indications that the townspeople, either collectively or in more restricted groups, were actively involved in decision-making processes behind the revolts. This did not necessarily happen because there were outside forces instigating revolt. Rather, initiative can be seen to have lain with the city-dwellers, who could make themselves felt as a force to be reckoned with. I will discuss this in more detail below (6.5.2).

In the regicide cities, it is of interest that the townspeople appear divided over issues of policy and support different alternatives for who should rule the city they lived in: in *EA* 89, Rib-Hadda claims that the slaying of “the mayor” of Tyre was done in complicity with Amurru and the *hapiru* and that the new “mayor” and ‘Abdi-Aširta were in cahoots. In *EA* 138, Byblos is split between those who support the old “mayor” Rib-Hadda, and those who want to join Aziru and his *hapiru*. These two instances may indicate that enemies from the outside could provide the means for a change of rulers in the city. However, it seems evident from these two examples that the townspeople were not always agreed whether to revolt. It should be taken into consideration that Rib-Hadda is writing to Pharaoh in order to place the blame for Syrian unrest on Amurru. However, the troubles might just as well originate inside the cities. Given that Rib-Hadda is our only source to these events, this cannot be determined. However, the *hapiru* were probably not responsible for the inner conflicts of the regicide cities.

There were clearly diverging political initiatives taken by the people in Tyre and Byblos. This seems to me to imply means of communal decision-making. However, very little is mentioned concerning how decisions were made, we only hear of “the city” or “the lords of the city” or some similar group deciding to support one side or the other. How to interpret this evidence will be discussed in the following.

6.5.1 The regicides as a symptom of class conflict

The regicide cities in the Amarna letters have been interpreted as symptoms of social unrest by several scholars, interpreting the *hapiru* as role models for a political alternative to kingship.¹⁰⁵³ Pinhas Artzi argues that the revolts in the Levantine cities were motivated by a Hittite expansion into Syria: because of the Hittite intervention, new possibilities, and new political ideas and practices were introduced that set several cities in turmoil.¹⁰⁵⁴ In this situation, claims Artzi, there was a new possibility to actually change one’s overlord.¹⁰⁵⁵ In Artzi’s interpretation, the landless *hapiru* represented new ideals of freedom. Because of the *hapiru*, the possibility of “a free-will alliance between the ruler and the “people” and between themselves” was considered.¹⁰⁵⁶

The idea that the *hapiru* offered an alternative to the hierarchy of the city is also suggested by Mario Liverani, who argues that ‘Abdi-Aširta was a tribal leader and not

¹⁰⁵³ Artzi, «Vox populi» in the El-Amarna tablets,” 1964, 159-166; Liverani, *Three Amarna essays*, 1979

¹⁰⁵⁴ Artzi, “Vox populi,” 1964, 159-160

¹⁰⁵⁵ Artzi, “Vox populi,” 1964, 160

¹⁰⁵⁶ Artzi, “Vox populi,” 1964, 165-166

a king, and therefore had no solidarity with “the mayors” of the city-states of Syria and Palestine.¹⁰⁵⁷ The rebellion of ‘Abdi-Aširta in his opinion is to be understood as a social revolt of landless peasants and refugees against the city-dwellers, a “revolt of the commoners against the ruling class which holds the political and economic power”.¹⁰⁵⁸

The *hapiru*, then, are held to represent a different culture from that of the cities, one of free-will alliances between leaders and people. Can it be maintained that the *hapiru* introduced new concepts of power or new political structures that were not based on monarchy in the cities they are reported to have attacked? This seems doubtful: in *EA* 89, it is evident that a new “mayor” was established in Tyre by supporters of ‘Abdi-Aširta and the *hapiru*. Rib-Hadda even claims in this letter to Pharaoh that the people did not want the new “mayor”. If Rib-Hadda is to be believed, the letter *EA* 89 shows three things: first, the *hapiru* did not make it possible for the city to have a ruler of their own choice, in fact, in Tyre, the opposite was the case. Second, there was a concern among “the mayors” that the people should accept them as rulers, hence Rib-Hadda’s warning to Pharaoh that the usurper at Tyre was unpopular. Third, at Tyre, there is a new “mayor” installed after the killing of the former “mayor”. Thus, Artzi’s argument of a new concept of free-will alliances between rulers and ruled cannot be said to find support in Rib-Hadda’s report on regicide in Tyre.

Even if Rib-Hadda is wrong in supposing that the people of Tyre did not want their new “mayor”, there does not appear to have been any fundamental changes to the political structure of Tyre under the influence of the *hapiru*: the view that the *hapiru* represented ideals of freedom is not corroborated by the establishment of the kingdom

¹⁰⁵⁷ Liverani, *Three Amarna essays*, 1979, 20

¹⁰⁵⁸ Liverani, *Three Amarna essays*, 1979, 18

of Amurru in the region. There is no evidence that there was any more concern for the people's wishes in this kingdom than in any other in the region. Rather, the establishment of Amurru was through conquest of neighbouring city-states.

A free-will alliance between rulers and ruled as envisioned by Artzi could be argued to be typical of a tribal arrangement of semi-sedentary societies, hence being transferred from the semi-sedentary *hapiru* to the city-dwellers. However, tribal organisations cannot be claimed to have less strict bonds between rulers and ruled than city-states. The hierarchy of a tribe is expressed in terms of kinship; a lineage where relations are defined in genealogical terms.¹⁰⁵⁹ In anthropological theory, the elementary family is held to be the basis of kinship systems.¹⁰⁶⁰ Thus, in my opinion, it should be kept in mind that the authority held by a leader of a tribe, in the sense of an elder or a patriarch, is not less than that of a king in a city-state, albeit expressed not in terms of royalty, but in terms of kinship. One difference between urban and tribal social organisation is that a tribe tend to disintegrate into smaller groups when situations of serious dissent arise. This is a phenomenon observed by anthropologists among semi-sedentary tribes.¹⁰⁶¹ Clearly, a city does not have this degree of flexibility: the strategy of splitting up the tribe is facilitated by a semi-sedentary lifestyle. The authority of the individual group leader is still significant, however, and discussions take place between heads of households that are in their own right leaders in their own households. As M. Fortes and E. E. Evans Pritchard point out concerning lineage systems, "stability is maintained by an equilibrium at every line of cleavage and every point of divergent interests in the social structure. This balance is sustained by a distribution of the command of force corresponding to the distribution of like,

¹⁰⁵⁹ Evans-Pritchard, "The Nuer of the southern Sudan," 1950 [1940], 284; Dumont, *Introduction to two theories of social anthropology*, 2006, 8

¹⁰⁶⁰ Dumont, *Introduction to two theories of social anthropology*, 2006, 20-21

¹⁰⁶¹ Cf. Evans-Pritchard, "The Nuer of the southern Sudan," 1950 [1940], 279

but competitive, interests amongst the homologous segments of society”.¹⁰⁶² Thus, I would argue that the idea of tribes as basically democratic is a false lead. It cannot be claimed that power in a tribal group is shared by all members of the tribe: tribes have positions of authority that necessarily cannot be filled by everyone at once. Further, to choose their own leaders and follow them into the wilderness in search of new pastures would hardly be applicable to the city population of e.g. Tyre. The supposed freedom of tribal societies thus could not easily have been transferred to city-states, even if it did represent new ideals of free-will alliances.

Liverani’s view of the *hapiru* appears to be based on a model of class conflict. However, it should be pointed out that the commoners of the Syrian city-states would be the first to suffer from the raids of landless refugees like the *hapiru*. Rib-Hadda states in *EA 77* that his own peasants are against him. This may be taken as evidence that the peasants were joining the marauders. However, this cannot be taken as an indication of class conflict. What other alternatives did the peasants have when their farms and crops had been burned than to join the robbers, if possible? It can be seen that the ruling class was not done away with in any of the regicide cities; their old positions were merely occupied by new people. There was no general revolt against “mayors” as such, nor can it be claimed that the revolt of the *hapiru* brought about changes in sentiment towards royalty. An example is given by the city Irqata (*EA 59*), where the people write to Pharaoh for a new “mayor” and wish to have a son of their former “mayor” to rule over them.

A Marxist approach of class struggle in analysing ancient societies works on the premise of a divide between rulers and ruled as the only relevant relation of power (cf. 2.3). This seems to invite the naïve interpretation that anyone fighting against

¹⁰⁶² Cf. Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, “Introduction,” 1950 [1940], 14

established leaders is fighting for freedom for the people. However, there is no evidence that “becoming like the *hapiru*” meant political freedom. Instead, city-dwellers were invited to become robbers and join in the looting of the next city down the road. In the end, ‘Abdi-Aširta and his *hapiru* established the kingdom of Amurru. The view that ‘Abdi-Aširta and his *hapiru* were in opposition to the urban ruling class can only be maintained if one looks away from the fact that ‘Abdi-Aširta was also a ruler. There is no evidence that any of the *hapiru* or the regicide cities had more political freedom as a result of these revolts.

The tone of Rib-Hadda’s letters to Pharaoh is that Pharaoh does not care to interfere against Amurru in support of his “mayors”, indeed, from the letter EA 89, it appears that Pharaoh was not informed about who was “mayor” in an important city such as Tyre. Mario Liverani argues that the reason for Pharaoh’s tardiness in reply is that Rib-Hadda was a “peripheral bureaucrat”, and that the Egyptian silence equals a “no” to his requests for troops.¹⁰⁶³ However, Pharaoh appears exactly as negligent of the other cities in the region, including wealthy Tyre with its command of the coast. Does this imply that Pharaoh was not concerned to keep these cities?

Perhaps Pharaoh’s reason for not sending troops was that it did not matter who ruled the cities, as long as the area as a whole was under the control of Egypt? With the rise of Amurru, it would be possible to make an arrangement directly with its ruler, rather than wasting resources on keeping the established “mayors” in power in their cities. This can explain why Rib-Hadda’s appeals to Pharaoh for help and reports about “mayors” being chased away met with so little response from Pharaoh. However, ‘Abdi-Aširta was eventually killed, apparently on Pharaoh’s orders, so evidently no arrangement was entered between Pharaoh and Amurru, at least not initially. Thus,

¹⁰⁶³ Liverani, *Three Amarna essays*, 1979, 5

Pharaoh's lack of intervention does seem to indicate that he had no particular plan to dominate Syria through Amurru rather than "the mayors". This is further evidence that the *hapiru* did not bring any fundamental political changes to the region. The cities were ruled as before and Egypt saw no reason to intervene.

According to Nadav Na'aman, "Pharaoh was slow to react, but once he made up his mind and decided to operate, he was able to carry out his decision with no real opposition. Following such a decision, 'Abdi-Aširta was caught and killed". Na'aman emphasises that "the perspectives of the ruler of the empire were entirely different from those of his vassals".¹⁰⁶⁴ Na'aman's suggestion that the perspective of Rib-Hadda was very different from that of Pharaoh can indeed explain the lack of reaction to Rib-Hadda's letters. The revolts related in the letters to Pharaoh and the responses to them reveal that the cities of Syria were left mostly to their own devices. "The mayors" had much local responsibility and the cities were practically on their own. That a new "mayor" could usurp power by killing another and still be accepted without intervention by Pharaoh, as seen in *EA* 89, reveals the lack of concern in Egypt for the details of government in the cities of Syria and indicates that the cities had a certain degree of autonomy. Liverani argues that Pharaoh's silence gives away Rib-Hadda's role as an alarmist, trying to draw attention to his own endangered position as "mayor" by claiming that Syria was under attack and overrun by rebels.¹⁰⁶⁵ I agree that Rib-Hadda's appears to relate all events to the machinations of his enemies. What may have been the case was most likely business as usual: competition for power in and between cities, driven by local factions in a cyclical process of domination and defeat.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Na'aman, "The Egyptian-Canaanite correspondence," 2000, 137

¹⁰⁶⁵ Liverani, "Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer," 2004, 105-108

It is interesting to note that Rib-Hadda in *EA* 89 emphasises the lack of support among Tyrians for the usurper in his appeal to Pharaoh to react. Apparently, it was of relevance to Rib-Hadda whether a “mayor” was supported by the people or not. This reveals that struggles for power were connected to popular sentiments.

The political culture of the city-states of the Levant as it can be reconstructed from the Amarna letters appears to me not as insensitive to the concerns of the people as Liverani claims.¹⁰⁶⁶ In *EA* 100, “the city of Irqata and its elders” appeal to Pharaoh to have a “mayor” of their choice installed. Thus, it cannot be claimed that the people and their “mayors” were in a permanent conflict. Quite the opposite appears to be the case, as the people and “the elders” expected that they could influence Pharaoh’s choice of “mayor”. In *EA* 89 the people of Tyre appear to have been divided over the new “mayor” who had established himself with the support of ‘Abdi-Aširta, showing that the people were concerned about who was “mayor” and that conflicts could arise in the city because of this. Likewise, in *EA* 138, there is conflict between groups of the people in Byblos whether to join the *hapiru* and abandon Rib-Hadda, showing that the people actually believed they had a choice. In my opinion, Rib-Hadda reports about his supporters to Pharaoh because he thought it important that the people supported him. From his letters, his position as “mayor” appears in fact to be more dependent on local public support than on his position as an Egyptian vassal.

The *hapiru* and their leaders are described by Rib-Hadda as addressing the people of Syrian city-states in order to win them over and join the revolt against “the mayors”. However, it cannot be claimed that the *hapiru* introduced a free-will alliance between rulers and ruled. Neither did the *hapiru* introduce ways for the people to decide themselves who was to be in power. Rather, as will be discussed below (6.5.2), there

¹⁰⁶⁶ Cf. Liverani, *Three Amarna essays*, 1979, 18

were already means for the townspeople to decide on such matters, before the *hapiru* arrived and instigated revolts. This is evident from the repeated appeals to “the men of the city”: the course of action decided upon by “the men of the city” can be seen as mass action within the political structure of the city, rather than a new strategy introduced by the peoples of the steppe. Thus, the people of the Syrian city-states reached decisions and opposed their rulers not because of the *hapiru*, but in a situation of crisis. This was perhaps precipitated by the *hapiru* presence, but may equally well have been driven by purely local conflicts.

To what degree can regicide and revolt be claimed to represent popular power? As will be seen in the following, scholars have widely diverging views on the significance of decisions made by “the sons of the city” in the Amarna letters.

6.5.2 Councils, assemblies and “the men of the city”

A few scholars take the Amarna letters as evidence for formally organised popular power in Syrian city-states. Hanoch Reviv claims that the typical Syrian city-state was ruled by the council of elders, the people and the king. In his opinion, there were representative institutions and self-government in the cities of Syria and Palestine, “either along-side local rulers or entirely in the absence of any central authority”.¹⁰⁶⁷ Reviv argues that some Amarna letters reveal instances where authority was held by “the town” or “the men of the town”. However, he points out that it is difficult to determine whether this was the normal situation or merely reflects internal crisis and political upheaval.¹⁰⁶⁸ Reviv points to the reference in *EA* 138 to exchange of letters between Rib-Hadda and “the men of Byblos” (*amīlū^{al} gubla*) where they declare that

¹⁰⁶⁷ Reviv, “On urban representative government,” 1969, 284

¹⁰⁶⁸ Reviv, “On urban representative government,” 1969, 286

they will no longer support him against the rebels. In Reviv's interpretation, this is evidence that the citizens had discussed the further policy of the city. He takes the episode as an indication that "in matters of decisive importance the citizen-body was constituted in its entire forum".¹⁰⁶⁹

It is not clear what terms like "the men of Byblos" really imply in the Amarna letters. Was it the people in general or a restricted group? This problem has in fact been met in all the evidence investigated so far for ancient Near Eastern polities (cf. 4.3.2; 4.7.3; 5.5.4; 5.5.6; 5.10.2; 5.11.2; 5.11.4). Therefore, it is dangerous to claim that the Amarna letters discussed here are evidence for a politically influential "people". Reviv is right in being careful in his conclusions. It is evident that "the men of GN" had authority in some questions, but which "men"? As already noted above (6.4.1), the *CAD* translates the term *amīlūtu* GN/LÚ.MEŠ GN in the Amarna letters as "the people of GN".¹⁰⁷⁰ It is not obvious, however, that this implies all free male citizens. *EA* 138 does not say that the entire citizen-body was constituted to make decisions, as Reviv claims. It refers to "the men of Byblos", but their identity is not clear. There is little indication of how they were constituted, organised, or reached their decisions. In my opinion, to conclude that Syrian city-states were ruled by citizen assemblies is therefore premature from the evidence in *EA* 138 alone. On the other hand, it is obvious that "the mayor" was not the only authority in Byblos, and that "the men of GN" in Syrian city-states had ways of reaching decisions against their "mayor" and effectuate them. How are we to assess action taken by the "men of GN" in the Amarna letters?

¹⁰⁶⁹ Reviv, "On urban representative government," 1968, 290

¹⁰⁷⁰ *CAD* A II, 1968, 60

Benno Landsberger interprets the situation in Tunip in the letter *EA 59*, when “the sons of the city” write to Pharaoh to have a new “mayor” established, as evidence for a kind of “republican” organisation of the city.¹⁰⁷¹ Landsberger’s “republican” interpretation is supported by Hanoeh Reviv, who further argues that Irqata in the letter *EA 100* was organised as a republic: the people were in power, either with “the elders” being an integral part of “the town” or acting as representatives or executives of “the town” in the sense of “the people of the town”. In his interpretation, Irqata was ruled by “the people” and “the elders” in cooperation.¹⁰⁷² As will be seen in the following, however, this interpretation is controversial.

Moran suggests that the king of Irqata in *EA 100* died at the hands of ‘Abdi-Aširta and the *hapiru*.¹⁰⁷³ He interprets this as a situation parallel to that in Tunip described in *EA 59*, and argues that both Tunip and Irqata wrote to Pharaoh and asked for new “mayors” to rule them. In his opinion, any “republican” traits the political organisation of Tunip had were of a temporary character.¹⁰⁷⁴

Gösta W. Ahlström is critical of any concept of popular rule in Syria. He concedes that “it is true that in some instances a city ruler was dethroned or killed and the city “elders” stepped in as caretakers, but there is no information to indicate how long such a situation lasted. It can in no way be labelled a democratic government; it may have been a temporary leadership under the city’s aristocrats”.¹⁰⁷⁵ In Ahlström’s interpretation, the terms “lords of GN” and “men of GN” both refer to an aristocratic

¹⁰⁷¹ Landsberger, “Assyrische Königsliste und ”Dunkles Zeitalter”, 1954, 61 n. 134

¹⁰⁷² Reviv, “On urban representative government,” 1969, 287-288

¹⁰⁷³ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 173 n.6

¹⁰⁷⁴ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 131 n.1

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ahlström, “Administration of the state,” 1995, 589

body of leaders, a body that originated from an élite group that he identifies with an *amīlu/awīlu* class of citizens. In his interpretation, it is possible that “lords of GN” and “men of GN” were the elders of the community, the city council, or evidence of an oligarchy, but he emphasises that the terms are not clear.¹⁰⁷⁶ The interpretation of Ahlström is supported by Hector Avalos, who argues that the terms “lords of GN” and “men of GN” refer to elders in the competence of judges.¹⁰⁷⁷

The republican interpretations of Landsberger and Reviv founder on the fact that in Irqata as well as in Tunip, the normal situation was that power was in the hands of a “mayor”. This implies that whatever means of popular power existed, whether “councils” or “assemblies” or both, they coexisted with the position of “mayor”. Reviv suggests that the powers of “the elders” and the masses were part of the city-states structure side by side with “the mayor”.¹⁰⁷⁸ However, this does not answer who were included in “the men of GN” and Reviv’s claim of popular sovereignty in Syrian cities cannot be said to be substantiated by the evidence he adduces. Evidently, “the sons of the city” (*mārē^{al}GN*) in Tunip were capable of doing without a “mayor”, at least for a while, yet they sent for a new “mayor” anyway. Local collective rule seems a possibility, as seen in EA 100, where “the city Irqata and its elders” (*^{al}irkata u amēlūt šib[ū]tiši*) were able to fend for themselves, and wrote to Pharaoh to express their loyalty in order be on good relations with him. It appears that whatever the capacity of “the elders” and “the people” to wield power, they realised this potential within a structure of kingship, and not in opposition to it.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ahlström, “Administration of the state,” 1995, 590

¹⁰⁷⁷ Avalos, “Legal and social institutions,” 1995, 622

¹⁰⁷⁸ Reviv, “On urban representative government,” 1969, 284

Against Ahlström and Avalos' interpretations of "the elders" as aristocrats or judges, it should be pointed out that the Amarna letters do not discuss "the men of the city" or "the lords of the city" in their capacity of judges. There may have been councils of elders acting in this capacity in Syrian cities, but that is not what is discussed in the Amarna letters from Tunip or Irqata, or the letters of Rib-Hadda. I think Moran's assessment of the situation in Tunip as temporary is correct: the people or their representatives took care of business only temporarily. Thus, the Amarna letters reveal that being ruled by a "mayor" was the normal situation for Syrian city-states in the Late Bronze Age. Nevertheless, the competence of "the sons of the city" or "the elders and the city" is interesting. They do not appear to be in opposition to "the mayor" as such. The people of the cities were evidently capable of governing themselves, at least temporarily, but they do not appear to want to do away with their "mayors" permanently.

Ahlström interprets "the men of the city" and "the lords of the city" as one defined corporate group of aristocrats, despite how they appear in the Amarna letters: "the men of the city" are referred to as groups that were appealed to by outside forces and as mobs that killed their mayors, not as aristocratic groups. The identification of "the lords of the city" with "the men of the city" is not borne out by the texts: in *EA* 138, "the lords of the city" appear in opposition to "the residents". After the decision to join the *hapiru* has been taken, "the men of Byblos" still write to Rib-Hadda to inquire about him and the troops of Pharaoh. In *EA* 102, "the magnate" and "the lords of the city" of Ampî appear together. They have joined the *hapiru* and are at war with Rib-Hadda and Byblos. This is not a situation parallel to the regicide cities, however, where "the men of the city" attack their "magnate" and chase him away. It should be kept in mind that a collective of citizens does not have to be formally organised in order to have authority and influence in a city. They may revolt or give their support to one or other contender for power without being a formal assembly in charge of the polity. The "men of GN" can pursue a broad corporate strategy for power without

actually ruling the city-state. Therefore, Ahlström's arguments against popular power in Syrian city-states are not very convincing.

Admittedly, the evidence for smaller or larger groups of people in the cities of the Amarna correspondence is difficult to interpret. It would be folly to suppose that all groups of people were formally constituted political institutions, like popular assemblies or councils with regular sessions. However, the variety of terms used for active agents in the Syrian city-states of the Amarna letters must have an explanation. For Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut, terms for ruler include "mayor" (*hazannu*) and "man" (*amēlum*), and he is confronted by people called "the men of the city" (*amēlūt al'GN*).¹⁰⁷⁹ In *EA* 102, concerning the city Ampī, other terms for people and groups in authority is used than for Sidon, Tyre, and Beirut. In Ampī, the terms "magnate" (*amēlu rabū*) and "lords of the city" (*amēlūtu belī alim^{lim}*) are used of the people making the decision to join the *hapiru*. Moran translates *amēlūtu belī alim^{lim}* as "lords of the city" and interprets them as property owners.¹⁰⁸⁰ If Moran is correct in this interpretation, this may indicate that the city Ampī had a restricted council of property owners that were influential with "the magnate" of the city. This would mean that "the lords of the city" are not identical to "the men of the city", thus contrary to what Ahlström claims, but in accordance with the definition of "the men of the city" from the *CAD*, as "the people of GN".¹⁰⁸¹ It can be argued that if Rib-Hadda saw no difference between "the lords of the city" and "the men of the city", why did he refer to a group in Ampī as "the lords of the city"? Why not simply call them "the men of the city"? In view of these considerations, I suggest that "the men of the city" as attested in Byblos, as well as Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut are "the people" in the sense of a broadly constituted group

¹⁰⁷⁹ Cf. *EA* 89, *EA* 101

¹⁰⁸⁰ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 175-176 n.5

¹⁰⁸¹ *CAD* A II, 1968, 60

of urban residents. However, there is no clear evidence that these or any other groups were formally constituted and recognisable as corporate bodies.

The term “the lords of the city” (*amēlūtu bel alī^{ki}*) is used not only for people in Ampī, but also for people in Byblos.¹⁰⁸² Moran points out that there is an apparent opposition in *EA* 138 between “the residents” (*aššābu*) and “the lords of the city” (*amēlūtu bel ālī^{ki}*). He suggests that this may indicate that “the residents” were of inferior status, in contrast to “the lords of the city”.¹⁰⁸³ In the Amarna letters, there are in fact five different terms used to refer to the inhabitants of Byblos, “the city” (*ālu^{ki}*),¹⁰⁸⁴ “the men of the city Byblos” (*amīlū al gubla*),¹⁰⁸⁵ “the residents” (*aššābu*),¹⁰⁸⁶ “the lords of the city” (*amēlūtu bel ālī^{ki}*),¹⁰⁸⁷ as well as “peasants” (*amēlūt hu[psī]*).¹⁰⁸⁸ The different terms must have been used for a reason. However, it cannot be claimed that Rib-Hadda had specific corporate bodies or political institutions in mind. I suggest that the terms “the city” and “the men of the city” were used interchangeably in the sense of the townspeople in its entirety when there are instances of direct action taking place in public. This interpretation, however, is difficult to square with references in the Amarna letters to talks between the *hapiru* and “the men of Byblos”. Is this to be seen as a conspiracy between some powerful men of Byblos and the rebels, or as an assembly meeting where the rebels try to win over the city in its entirety? The texts are open to interpretation. Perhaps no specific institution is meant at all, but that the

¹⁰⁸² *EA* 138

¹⁰⁸³ Moran, *The Amarna letters*, 1992, 224 n.15

¹⁰⁸⁴ *EA* 138

¹⁰⁸⁵ *EA* 81; *EA* 138

¹⁰⁸⁶ *EA* 138

¹⁰⁸⁷ *EA* 138

¹⁰⁸⁸ *EA* 77

people of the city had agreed amongst themselves that they should defect from Rib-Hadda.

I suggest that since there are references to specific groups such as “the lords of the city”, “the residents” and “the elders”, in the Amarna letters, there was a difference between broadly and narrowly defined groups. The broader groups are then generally referred to as “the men of Byblos” or “the city”, and are the masses that rise up in revolt against “the mayors” and their retinue. “The men of the city” appear as susceptible to appeals from outside powers, and could mobilise in opposition to their own rulers.¹⁰⁸⁹ I therefore interpret them as the free male population receiving information in the form of rumours and hearsay and acting as a mass uprising of collective disaffection with “the mayor”.

The distinction between “the men of the city” and “the lords of the city” in Byblos is not clear. In *EA* 138, “the men of the city” want to defect and “the lords of the city” take the decision to join Aziru, whereas “the residents” at a later stage protests against the decision to defect. Later, the people of Byblos write to Rib-Hadda, apparently because they still supported him. The city is described by Rib-Hadda as split, and the continued unanimity is shown when “the men of Byblos” continued to write to Rib-Hadda after he left Byblos for Beirut. Does this imply that “the men of Byblos” disagreed among themselves? To me, it certainly appears that way, and I take this as further evidence that “the men of the city” is the free, adult male population in general, and not an aristocratic council. It appears that there were groups with diverging interests in the city that could act as agents in changing their political situation. These are tantalising glimpses into a network of power strategies between different groups of the city, below the level of the local ruler or his distant imperial

¹⁰⁸⁹ *EA* 74, *EA* 81, *EA* 138

overlord. Unfortunately, little can be securely established about the composition or competence of these agents or groups of agents.

To me, the Amarna letters suggest that there were levels of government beneath the position of “the mayor” in his palace. Local power was in the hands of the townspeople. How this was organised is difficult to say, but the evidence points to the existence of several authorities in these cities, and not just “the mayor”. This implies that “the mayor” was not all powerful. Rather, it can be argued that there was a political sphere beyond the palace and the upper strata of the socio-political hierarchy of the city-state.

6.5.3 Revolt and strategies for power

The regicide cities that had killed their own local leaders are said to have joined the *hapiru*. By this, they apparently accepted Amurru as their new master instead of Egypt. It seems that the new local leaders that came to power in the cities were loyal to Amurru. However, Rib-Hadda may be exaggerating the situation, emphasising the role of outsiders in instigating revolt, in order to downplay local disaffection. At any rate, it cannot be claimed that the regicide cities introduced any new political structure to the city-states of the region in the sense of increased popular power or popular rule. The involvement of the people or groups of the people in the upheavals does give insight into the socio-political fabric of these city-states, however, and strategies pursued for power and influence.

From the Amarna letters, the political structure of the city-states of Syria appears to include the masses, more limited groups of influential people, as well as “the mayor”. This speaks against interpreting these city-states as strictly hierarchic monarchies. The

presence of multiple groups in struggles for power in the cities of Syria is noted by W. F. Albright and William L. Moran: they interpret the situation in Tyre as reported in *EA 89* as an example of factional strife, where an opposition to “the mayor” were in league with ‘Abdi-Aširta and promoted a usurper as the new “mayor”. Albright and Moran argue that although the faction of the usurper claims to be popular with the people, Rib-Hadda reports to Pharaoh that the usurper and his faction were not popular and that the people were afraid. In the interpretation of Albright and Moran, the people of Tyre were afraid of their new “mayor”. Albright and Moran also point out that Rib-Hadda warns Pharaoh that the wealth of the palace at Tyre was a source of power that could fall in the hands of the *hapiru*.¹⁰⁹⁰

The suggestion that there was factional strife at Tyre is intriguing, but it should be pointed out that the parties to this strife are difficult to unravel. There were apparently two “mayors” involved and the new one is responsible for the death of the old one. Also, it seems clear that Rib-Hadda wants Pharaoh to believe that the new “mayor” is disloyal to Egypt and in league with ‘Abdi-Aširta. If the interpretation of Moran and Albright is correct, that the Tyrians were against their new “mayor”, but intimidated into keeping quiet, this would indicate some kind of popular resistance to the new ruler. This can explain Rib-Hadda’s claim in *EA 89* that the city was afraid. Who were the killers of the former “mayor”? They are not identified, and it is confusing whether “they have killed the mayor” means the people of Tyre or a smaller group, whether some kind of conspiracy supported by ‘Abdi-Aširta or an open revolt against “the mayor”, or if it refers to the usurper and his immediate supporters. The usurper does not have the support of the people of Tyre, it appears. What, then, was the claim to power of the usurper? This is not clear. However, it cannot be ruled out that Rib-Hadda’s accounts of a conspiracy with ‘Abdi-Aširta are false and that the new “mayor” is actually supported by a local faction. As already noted, it is of interest that

¹⁰⁹⁰ Albright & Moran, “Rib-Adda of Byblos,” 1950, 163

Rib-Hadda argues that it is of relevance whether the city accepted their “mayor” or not. The lines of conflict are not clear, however. The factions do not appear to be very sharply defined and their political aims, beyond that of installing a new “mayor” can only be guessed at.

Ingolf Thuesen proposes a model for the development of social organisation in Syrian city-states as oscillating between different types or levels. Over the centuries, he perceives a pattern of change from village into city-state, and from city-state into territorial empire. When empires collapse, society reverts to the level of organisation of the village or town.¹⁰⁹¹ Thuesen interprets this as due in part to the geographical diversification of Syria: the land is split into pockets or natural enclaves that favour a city-state culture of self-governing urban centres.¹⁰⁹²

Thuesen’s explanation for the existence of self-governing city-states in Syria is reductionist and invites accusations of environmental determinism. It should be kept in mind that the region has been integrated into practically all empires of the ancient world. Thus, periods of self-government were more the result of historical processes and imperial ambitions of neighbouring powers than deep rivers and high mountains. Thuesen’s metaphor of oscillation between different levels of organisational complexity can be quite useful, however. The dynamics between rulers, subjects and rebels as reported in Rib-Hadda’s letters to Pharaoh can be interpreted in light of an oscillation in strength between different strategies of power. In a strong and stable kingdom, a narrow élite strategy for power can be said to be dominant: the king is acknowledged as a near divine being and rules without an opposition, together with his family and trusted officials. This is not seen in the Amarna letters, however. Here,

¹⁰⁹¹ Thuesen, “The city-state in ancient western Syria,” 2000, 64-65

¹⁰⁹² Thuesen, “The city-state in ancient western Syria,” 2000, 61

the king is already challenged by Pharaoh's imperial might and reduced to a "mayor". Also, in some cities, the people want him removed. The people follow a broad corporate strategy of revolt against their ruler in Byblos and Tyre. In Tunip and Irqata, on the other hand, the evidence suggests that a narrow corporation of elders were in charge. They do follow a corporate strategy, albeit narrow, in that they appear to have the community as a whole as their frame of reference and do not attempt to seize power for themselves. Rather, they send for Pharaoh to install a new "mayor".

Beyond the analysis of societies as levels of organisational complexity, with Thuesen's model of a circular development from village into city-state, and from city-state into territorial empire, and back into village, the cities can be analysed as places for the negotiation of interests between different socio-economic groups inside the city as well as with forces outside. In this way, popular power in the sense of broad corporate strategies for influence can be seen from the mass revolts against "the mayors". Thus, in the city-states of the Amarna correspondence, the masses were part of the struggles for power and supported one or the other leader in their bid for influence. When power was in the hands of "the elders", it can be said that a narrow corporate strategy for power was dominant. However, it appears that "the people" and "the elders" worked together in periods when no "mayor" was in place, and thus pursued a broad corporate strategy for at least a limited time. It should be noted that this does not mean that a popular assembly was in charge in the cities under discussion, only that "the people" pursued strategies for power as a group in order to change their own situation. Thus, "the people" was politically active, but it did not rule the polities.

I suggest that the ideologies and strategies behind the revolt of "the people" against "the mayors" must be sought in the urban culture of these cities and not be blamed on outsiders, whether Amurru or the *hapiru*. Thus, Syrian city-state culture had a degree

of popular participation in politics. The people could protest against their rulers and install new ones. Also, the people or smaller groups thereof could hold the reins of government in their city in the absence of a ruler.

From evidence from a much later period, the Iron Age of Babylonia, it will become evident that a civic culture of urban autonomy and popular participation existed in Mesopotamia. As will be seen in the following, this urban political culture could thrive also under formal imperial control.

6.6 Babylonian cities and imperial authorities in the Iron Age

In the Iron Age, Mesopotamia was dominated by empires that introduced a new level of interference in local affairs, with garrisons placed throughout conquered territories and regular impositions of tribute. The Neo-Assyrian Empire conquered Mesopotamia, including the ancient city-states of Babylonia, from the late 10th century onwards.¹⁰⁹³ Babylon restored its power under king Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562) and established the Neo-Babylonian Empire.¹⁰⁹⁴ As will be seen in the following, the relations between Assyrian kings and Babylonian cities can be studied from letters sent between the city populations and their foreign rulers. From the Neo-Babylonian period, there is evidence for the local organisation and administration of cities in the empire. Below, the status of the city Nippur in the early Neo-Babylonian period will be discussed (6.6.1), followed by an investigation of the political organisation of Babylonian city-states under the Neo-Assyrian Empire (6.6.2-3). I will

¹⁰⁹³ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 478-501

¹⁰⁹⁴ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 589-590

present and discuss sources to urban autonomy and the political organisation of Babylonian city-states in the Iron Age and investigate the role of citizens in the governing of the polities (6.7). What was the political situation in Iron Age Mesopotamia?

The cities of Babylonia in the Iron Age were heirs to Mesopotamian urban traditions, with ancient temples forming the foci of civic identity. In the first millennium BCE, Aramaic and Chaldean tribal groups settled in southern Babylonia and established their own tribal lands. Scholars agree that they did not predominantly migrate to the ancient cities, but established independent communities and kingdoms. Mogens Trolle Larsen describes the situation in southern Babylonia as the existence of “cities as islands, so to speak, in a sea of tribal lands”.¹⁰⁹⁵ According to Gojko Barjamovic, when the Assyrians started to consolidate their influence over Babylonia, they “encountered a monarchy that had fragmented into city-states, each headed by an individual holding one of the traditional ancient titles of city administrator, and whose functions the Assyrians found similar to those of their own governors”.¹⁰⁹⁶ What was the status of these ancient Mesopotamian cities in the Neo-Assyrian Empire? How were the city-dwellers organised?

The city-dwellers were organised differently from the tribesmen. J. A. Brinkman points out that the inhabitants of the ancient cities in the 1st millennium identified themselves by family descent and sometimes by city or town, whereas the Chaldean and Arameans retained their tribal affinities.¹⁰⁹⁷ According to Brinkman, “in the late

¹⁰⁹⁵ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 117

¹⁰⁹⁶ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government in southern Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC,” 2004, 53

¹⁰⁹⁷ Brinkman, *Prelude to empire*, 1984, 11; Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 32-33; Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 121; Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government in southern Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC,” 2004, 49

eight and seventh centuries, when the Assyrian monarchs came to rule either directly or through intermediaries in southern Mesopotamia, they increased efforts to establish solidarity between themselves and Babylonian city-dwellers. They pursued a tactic of attempting to separate this urban population from the tribesmen; in times of unrest, they appealed directly to the men of Babylon for support against Chaldean and other rebels, such as Mukin-zeri and Shamash-shun-ukin".¹⁰⁹⁸ As will be seen (6.6.1; 6.7), the Chaldeans and Arameans appear to have had a tribal identity different from the city-based identity of the city-dwellers. Therefore, Brinkman's assessment seems correct. The tribesmen cannot be said to have been integrated into the ancient cities, since the Assyrian kings made alliances with the ancient cities against Chaldeans and Arameans. Because of the presence of tribal groups with their own polities and the lack of an effective central power, southern Babylonia appears to have been fragmented. As will be seen further below (6.7), the threat of the tribes and the Assyrian reaction to their presence apparently led to a high degree of autonomy for the city-states of the region.

In Mogens Trolle Larsen's analysis, Babylon was no longer effectively a capital of a territorial kingdom in the Iron Age as it had been in the Old Babylonian and Kassite periods. Therefore a "resurgence of a city-state pattern of political organisation appears to have become possible".¹⁰⁹⁹ Gojko Barjamovic emphasises that foreign centres favoured local government in city-states under their dominance, because of the practical problems with direct control, distance being a crucial factor.¹¹⁰⁰ In Barjamovic's interpretation, local communities were left to govern themselves for practical reasons. Thus, granting local autonomy was a means of maintaining

¹⁰⁹⁸ Brinkman, *Prelude to empire*, 1984, 22

¹⁰⁹⁹ Larsen, "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period," 2000, 118

¹¹⁰⁰ Barjamovic, "Civic institutions and self-government in southern Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC," 2004, 47

control.¹¹⁰¹ In the following sections, several aspects of local autonomy in Babylonian cities in Iron Age empires will be discussed. What was the extent of the cities' autonomy and what did it mean? This will be discussed in section 6.7. What does a privileged position of a city within an empire tell about the status of its citizens and their power in their polity? These questions will be discussed in sections 6.6.2, 6.6.3, and 6.7. Before turning to these questions, I will discuss evidence to the local autonomy of Nippur in the early Neo-Babylonian period, to investigate relations between local authorities and imperial authorities in Iron Age Mesopotamia.

6.6.1 Local authorities in the early Neo-Babylonian Empire

From the early Neo-Babylonian period in Nippur, there are texts that are taken to constitute an archive of the local “governors”, titled *šandabakku*, dated to between 755 and 732.¹¹⁰² Nippur was a city formally under the authority of the king in Babylon. The archive is a collection of 113 cuneiform texts that were found in a secondary context as lining in a burial. Their publisher, Steven W. Cole, interprets the tablets as constituting the *šandabakku*, or “governor” of Nippur’s archive, providing evidence that the local governor in Nippur ruled quite independently of the central government in Babylon.¹¹⁰³ This interpretation is accepted by several scholars.¹¹⁰⁴ The debate on Cole’s interpretation of the nature of this collection of tablets will be referred further below. As a point of departure, I will follow Cole’s interpretation that the tablets indeed belonged to the local governor and concerns political matters. Who was in power in Nippur in the early Neo-Babylonian period? What were the relations

¹¹⁰¹ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government in southern Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC,” 2004, 48

¹¹⁰² Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor’s archive from Nippur*, 1996, 1-6

¹¹⁰³ Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 5; *CAD Š*, 1989, 371-373

¹¹⁰⁴ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 122; Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2010, 1. Objections to Cole 1996 in van Driel, “Eighth century Nippur,” 1998, 336-337

between the central Babylonian authorities and the local governors of Babylonian cities?

In Cole's interpretation, there are three governors in the archive from Nippur. Most of the letters are to one called Kudurru. Further, there is a letter to one called Ēteru and one called Ērešu.¹¹⁰⁵ What can these letters tell us about relations between the Babylonian king and the individual cities of the kingdom?

In letter no. 8, the king writes to Ēteru and complains that his men and cattle have been abducted by Ēteru and demands their return. The king declares that if the men and cattle are not returned, he will have Ēteru as his enemy. If the men and cattle are returned, however, they will be friends.¹¹⁰⁶

Letter no. 8 indicates that the king of Babylon did not have great authority over Nippur: he seems forced to demanding his men and cattle back in writing, with a promise of future friendship. This does not indicate that Ēteru was a subject of the king. The situation preceding the letter is not known. Cole suggests that the cattle were in fact stolen by Chaldean tribesmen and that the king in Babylon asks Ēteru to intercede.¹¹⁰⁷ This is not clear from the text, however.

¹¹⁰⁵ Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 7

¹¹⁰⁶ Text in Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 86; Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 52-53

¹¹⁰⁷ Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 50

Letter no. 16 is from Adu(m)ā' to his lord [the *šandabakku* of Nippur]. He says he has spoken to Mukīn-zēri concerning a dispute between the *šandabakku* and a certain Iqīša. Also, he has news about Bīt-Dakkūri: they have seized a river-crossing from Nippur and are joining forces with Mukīn-zēri.¹¹⁰⁸

In no. 16, the recipient is warned against a gathering of troops by the tribal kingdom of Bīt-Dakkūri. This kingdom was in conflict with Nippur. There is also reference to a certain Mukīn-zēri. A man by this name is known as a usurper in Babylon and it is highly likely that the Mukīn-zēri of no. 16 is indeed the Chaldean king of Babylon. According to Cole, Mukīn-zēri in no. 16 is the chief of the Chaldean tribe Bīt-Amūkāni, king of Babylon from 731 to 729.¹¹⁰⁹ In my opinion, no. 16 can be taken as evidence that Nippur had to deal with tribal groups on its own, indicating that the local leader, the *šandabakku* of Nippur, and the local community were autonomous. The king of Babylon appealed to them for intervention, probably because he was powerless to intervene himself.

Letter no. 18 was sent from Kudurru [of Nippur] to Mukīn-zēri [of Babylon]. It concerns a patrol from Bīt-Yakīn that has stolen four men and five donkeys belonging to people in Nippur and sold it on to dealers in Uruk. Kudurru writes that “the people of Nippur” (LÚ.EN.LÍL.KI.MEŠ) have written to Mukīn-zēri on behalf of “the citizens” (DUMU.MEŠ) who have been plundered by Bīt-Yakīn. Kudurru bids Mukīn-zēri intercede with Uruk so that the men and donkeys can be returned.¹¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰⁸ Text in Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 89; Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 67-69

¹¹⁰⁹ Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 68

¹¹¹⁰ Text in Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 90; Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 72-73

In no. 18, Mukīn-zēri of Babylon appears to be entrusted to intercede with Bīt-Yakīn on behalf of “the citizens of Nippur”. Bīt-Yakīn was a Chaldean kingdom. The relations between the ancient cities and the tribal groups were complex. According to Cole, the leaders of Bīt-Amūkāni and Bīt-Yakīn were allies, but Nippur also formed an alliance with Bīt-Amūkāni.¹¹¹¹ Indeed, this would explain why Kudurru writes to Mukīn-zēri, since he was the leader of Bīt-Amūkāni as well as (temporarily) king in Babylon. Kudurru writes on behalf of “the people of Nippur”. Nippur appears to be on its own in dealing with the Chaldean kingdoms and their leaders, and to be in a position of negotiation with the king in Babylon, rather than being his subject. The political landscape of Babylonia seems fragmented and the tribal groups operate as they wish, unimpeded by any central authority among the ancient urban centres. In no.18, the situation is quite complex, with a Chaldean king in Babylon being appealed to for help in hostilities between tribal confederations and ancient cities. However, Nippur does not appear to be ruled by central authorities in Babylon or any other city in the region. It seems to have been independent in its decisions. Further, “the people of Nippur” appear as an independent group, writing to the king in Babylon, and thus can be said to constitute a separate authority from the *šandabakku*.

In letter no.33, Kudurru [of Nippur] writes to a certain Gulūšu concerning the commission of repair work on the ziggurat in Dēr. Also, the salvage of a war-chariot that had been lost in the marshes is discussed.¹¹¹²

¹¹¹¹ Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 73

¹¹¹² Text in Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 93; Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 97-99

No. 33 indicates that Nippur had control over the city Dēr. Thus, Nippur's power was quite extensive. Cole suggests that the letter was written before the Assyrian conquest of Dēr around 738.¹¹¹³ This seems a reasonable suggestion, given that Nippur would hardly commission the repair of a ziggurat in Dēr if the city was under foreign control. The mention of a war-chariot is intriguing, but unfortunately, there is no indication in the text what battle said chariot was used in.

The letters from Nippur are intriguing evidence for local affairs in an ancient urban centre in the early Neo-Babylonian period. What is the significance of these letters? As mentioned above, Steven W. Cole interprets the letters from Nippur as evidence that Kudurru, Ēteru, and Ērešu, the recipients of these letters, all had the title *šandabakku* and were “governors” of Nippur. He argues that “governors” of Nippur were powerful men in the mid-8th to mid-7th century period of Assyrian domination of Babylonia: the letters indicate that the Assyrians and their king in Babylon left the city-states of Babylonia to their own devices and that these cities were virtually autonomous.¹¹¹⁴ In Cole's interpretation, “the *šandabakku* of Nippur was an influential political figure in the mid-eight century and often governed independently of the crown. The governor joined in political alliances with the tribal chiefs around him and ruled a city whose economic ties reached to the middle Euphrates, Assyria, the Zagros highlands, and to Uruk and the Chaldeans near the Persian Gulf”.¹¹¹⁵ He takes no. 8 and no.33 as evidence for the power and independent position of the *šandabakku* of Nippur: the governor of Nippur is expected to sort out the Babylonian king's stolen cattle and he builds ziggurats in the city Dēr.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹³ Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur*, 1996, 99

¹¹¹⁴ Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 45

¹¹¹⁵ Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 50

¹¹¹⁶ Cole, *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612*, 1996, 50

Cole's interpretation is accepted by Mogens Trolle Larsen, who argues that the archive is evidence that the Babylonian city-states were independent of central authorities in Babylon.¹¹¹⁷ Larsen further argues that if Nippur was independent, "the other Babylonian cities further away from the traditional political centre must have been similarly free to pursue their own interests".¹¹¹⁸ The independence of Babylonian cities is also argued by M. Jursa, who points out that this situation could arise because of a combination of weak monarchy and "the arrival of population groups of non-Babylonian origin, in particular Chaldeans and Arameans, and to some extent also Arabs". In this situation, "some of the old cities in the central alluvium seem to have enjoyed de facto independence or at least a high degree of autonomy, from the central government and its seat in Babylon".¹¹¹⁹ In my opinion, the evidence from Nippur is well explained by this scenario. As will be seen below (6.2-3), a privileged position for the ancient cities of Mesopotamia was a common feature of imperial policies in the Iron Age.

As has been seen, the governor in Nippur is interpreted by several scholars as operating independently of the Assyrian vassal king in Babylon. The texts discussed above do indicate that the Babylonian king was little involved in the business of Nippur. The tribal kingdoms neighbouring Nippur appear to communicate directly with the governors of the cities, and not with any central authorities in Babylon. But do the letters constitute a governor's archive?

¹¹¹⁷ Larsen, "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period," 2000, 122

¹¹¹⁸ Larsen, "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period," 2000, 122

¹¹¹⁹ Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2010, 1

Cole's interpretation of the letters from Nippur is criticised by G. van Driel, for exaggerating the political content of the letters. He argues that most of the 133 texts in the archive are letters concerning business and ransom of captives, rather than politics. In his interpretation, this indicates that the texts are a merchant's archive, and not that of a *šandabakku*.¹¹²⁰ Van Driel points out that the *šandabakku* is not mentioned by title in the address of the letters. Therefore, he argues, the correspondence was not official, but private and belonging to a merchant.¹¹²¹

Against van Driel's objections, it should be pointed out that the letters also contain references to negotiations with tribal chiefs and the king of Babylon. Although negotiations concern the return of prisoners or stolen cattle, they also refer to warfare and strategy. In my opinion, the letters discussed above are therefore clearly political, and beyond the scope of interest of a merchant. The letters can thus be used as evidence for the local government of Nippur in the mid-8th century. They are evidence of the weak control of the king of Babylon over the ancient cities of Babylonia. As seen from the letters discussed above, there was no authority in Nippur higher than the local governor in the mid-8th century. "The people of Nippur" also appear to have been an authority in their own right. The governor acts on par with other local leaders, including the kings of tribal confederations and does not appear to be the subject of a ruler of the vassal kingdom of Babylonia. Van Driel's objections cannot be said to change the impression of decentralised authority in 8th century Babylonia. What was the nature of this autonomy? How was it expressed and who took part in it? These questions will be discussed in the following (6.6.2, 6.6.3, and 6.7).

¹¹²⁰ Driel, "Eighth century Nippur," 1998, 336-337

¹¹²¹ Driel, "Eighth century Nippur," 1998, 334

6.6.2 Privileged cities in the Neo-Assyrian Empire

The ancient cities of Babylonia gradually came under Assyrian control from the middle of the 8th century. Yet, as will be seen in the following, there is evidence that they enjoyed a number of privileges under Assyrian rule. Among other things, the Assyrian kings granted citizens of the ancient cities of Babylonia tax-exemptions and the right to a trial in their own city. These privileges were called *kidinnu*, pl. *kidinnūtu*, and means “privileged status”, used of a city or temple personnel.¹¹²² It has been suggested that these privileges were set up in written form in prominent places in the cities.¹¹²³ The privileges of ancient Babylonian cities such as Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon are known from several sources. There were also privileged cities in Assyria. In the following, I will investigate a few cuneiform sources, viz. an inscription, a literary text, and a letter that mention these privileges, in order to establish the status of ancient cities and their citizens in the Neo-Assyrian empire.

In an Assyrian inscription, the *kidinnūtu* of the people of Assur and Harran is mentioned: Sargon claims he rehabilitated several cities and re-established their freedom. He restored the *kidinnūtu* of the cities of Assur and Harran.¹¹²⁴

From this inscription, it can be seen that Sargon prided himself in granting privileges to the cities Assur and Harran. However, the inscription gives no information about what these privileges were or who enjoyed them. Information about this can be found elsewhere, however: there is a 1st millennium literary text known as *Advice to a Prince* that among other things gives a detailed account of how a prince should treat

¹¹²² CAD K, 1971, 344-345

¹¹²³ Van De Mierop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 135; Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 615-616

¹¹²⁴ Luckenbill, *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia II*, 1975 [1927], §78

cities under his rule. It contains warnings against royal abuse of the privileges of Babylonian cities and their citizens, including Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon.¹¹²⁵

The *Advice to a Prince* warns against denying due legal process to a citizen of Sippar or of Nippur. It also warns against taking money from the citizens of Babylon as well as denying Babylonians due legal process. It is stated that “if (he) [the king] imposed a fine or imprisonment upon a son of Sippar, Nippur, or Babylon, the city where that fine was imposed will be razed to its foundations and a foreign foe will enter the place of imprisonment. If he called up the whole of Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon to impose forced labour on the people aforesaid, requiring of them service at the recruiter’s cry, Marduk, sage of the gods, deliberative prince, will turn his [the king’s] land over to his foe so that the troops of his land will do forced labour for his foe”.¹¹²⁶ The advice mentions further privileges, including exemption from contributing fodder and conscripted soldiers. Also, the king is not to nullify contracts of “the sons of Nippur, Sippar, or Babylon”, nor alter their steles, or put labour obligations on them. Officers in charge of temples are not to impose forced labour upon these citizens.¹¹²⁷

It is of note that the *kidinnūtu* that Sargon granted to Assur and Harran were granted to the cities, whereas the *Advice to a Prince* states that the privileges are granted to

¹¹²⁵ *Advice to a prince* is an Akkadian text dated to the 1st millennium; it is known from tablets from 7th century Nineveh and Neo-Babylonian Nippur (Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 612). Benjamin R. Foster suggests it was addressed to Merodach Baladan, an 8th century king of Babylonia (Foster, *From distant days*, 1995, 391). Whoever the advice was addressed to, it gives insight into the position of the cities of Babylonia in the Iron Age in relation to foreign rulers.

¹¹²⁶ *Advice to a prince*, translation adapted from Foster, *From distant days*, 1995, 391-392 and Lambert, *Babylonian wisdom literature*, 1960, 110-115. A copy of the Akkadian text with transliteration and translation can be found in Cole, *The early Neo-Babylonian governor’s archive from Nippur*, 1996, 268-274.

¹¹²⁷ Foster, *From distant days*, 1995, 391-392 and Lambert, *Babylonian wisdom literature*, 1960, 110-115

“the sons of GN”. Thus, privileges were granted cities as well as their citizens. The identity of “the sons of GN” in *Advice to a Prince* is difficult to determine. The fact that privileges were granted to cities as well as “the sons of GN” makes it difficult to establish whether these privileges applied to everyone in the city or the citizens as a specific group of people. As has been seen (4.3.1; 4.4), this problem is not easily solved. It will be discussed further below (6.6.3; 6.7). In the following, the significance of *kidinnūtu* will be discussed. What does it mean that a city is privileged in an empire?

Scholars interpret the privileges of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon as an expression of their relatively autonomous status in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Their *kidinnūtu* formed an important part of the identity of ancient Babylonian cities and were apparently related to the high status of their temples. Brinkman points out that “citizens in major cult cities especially in the northwest alluvium held privileges of exemption from taxes, corvée, and army service”.¹¹²⁸ Dandamayev interprets *Advice to a Prince* as “a political pamphlet predicting misfortunes for the ruler who violates the privileges and rights of the sacred Babylonian cities”.¹¹²⁹ He emphasises that the ancient cities of Babylonia and Assyria had sacred privileges, including “local self-government with exemption from taxation, forced labour, military service, as well as a guarantee against illegal imprisonment”.¹¹³⁰ Grant Frame emphasises that “the old cult centers [...] were used to receiving special privileges with regard to such matters as taxation, corvée duty, and the administration of justice”.¹¹³¹ He points out that the

¹¹²⁸ Brinkman, *Prelude to empire*, 1984, 7

¹¹²⁹ Dandamayev, “Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.,” 1995, 24

¹¹³⁰ Dandamayev, “Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.,” 1995, 23

¹¹³¹ Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 216

citizens of the ancient sacred cities were granted the special privilege of direct appeal to the Assyrian king.¹¹³²

As seen in the excerpt from *Advice to a Prince* cited above, the privileges of citizens of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon were exception from corvée, taxes, military service, and the right to trial in their own city. These three cities had ancient temples to the gods. As Brinkman, Dandamayev, and Frame point out, the status of these cities as cult centres can explain the privileged position of their citizens. Thus, there was a distinction between the people of these ancient cities and the other inhabitants of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Amélie Kuhrt argues that the *Advice to a Prince* is evidence for a sense of citizenship in Babylonian cities, in the sense that the urban community are called “the sons of the city” and an individual citizen is referred to as “a son of the city”.¹¹³³ In her interpretation, the inhabitants of Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon were recognised as having certain rights and privileges in their relations to the king. If the king infringes on the rights of the citizens of these cities, he will reap disaster. In Kuhrt’s interpretation, “the sons of Sippar/Nippur/ Babylon [...] in effect, dispute the king’s right to exercise absolute sovereignty, and even deny his authority in some aspects of jurisdiction: taxes of all kinds, labour service, army service and the right to exact fines are repeatedly singled out as demands that the king may not make without divine punishment descending on him”.¹¹³⁴

¹¹³² Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 217

¹¹³³ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 612

¹¹³⁴ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 614

It could be argued that the *Advice to a Prince* is a literary exercise, with an idealistic or partisan view of city autonomy, and not a source to Neo-Assyrian politics in relation to the Babylonian cities. However, there are other sources to corroborate the historical importance of city privileges. *CT 54 212* contains a 7th century letter addressed to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. It is presented and discussed by Erica Rainer. In the letter, “the writer speaks of the exemptions that have been the prerogative of the privileged cities Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon, and insists that Nippur is as privileged as Babylon”. Apparently to illustrate his point, the writer quotes the last five lines of the *Advice to a Prince*.¹¹³⁵ The letter is fragmentary, but the tendency is quite clear. I agree with Rainer that the stress on urban privileges and the quotation from the *Advice to a Prince* shows that privileges were a live issue with the ancient cities of Babylon.

Amélie Kuhrt takes the quote of the *Advice to a Prince* in *CT 54 212* as evidence that “Babylonians definitely used the tract as a framework for conducting a dialogue with kings (including powerful conquerors like the Assyrian monarchs) and to exert pressure on them”.¹¹³⁶ I agree with Rainer and Kuhrt’s assessments of *Advice to a Prince* as a source to the historical existence of city privileges and their great importance. In my opinion, the interpretation of Dandamayev, Frame, and Kuhrt that “the citizens” of Babylonian cities were recognised and respected parties in dialogue with the Assyrian king makes sense of the *Advice to a Prince* and its warnings against disrespecting these privileges. As seen from Rainer’s example above, the *Advice to a Prince* was actually referred to in letters. The reference to city privileges of Nippur in *CT 54 212* is evidence that the privileges of the ancient cities were a practical issue in the Iron Age, and not only a theme in literature. The combined evidence of the stele granting privileges to Harran and Assur, the *Advice to a Prince*, and *CT 54 212* show

¹¹³⁵ Rainer, “The Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel* in practice,” 1982, 320

¹¹³⁶ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 614

that privileges were granted to cities and their “citizens” and were a part of the administrative practices of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. More examples of these privileges will be discussed below (6.6.3).

The great antiquity of the Babylonian cities and the sanctity of their temples no doubt contributed to the respect paid to them by the Assyrian rulers. On the other hand, advice against transgressions and warnings against the terrible divine punishments that will follow indicate exactly that transgressions were taking place. Thus, the impression that rulers respected the cities and their population may prove exaggerated. The *Advice to a Prince* is nevertheless evidence that the cities and “the sons of GN” were treated together as parties in arrangements with the kings of Assyria. “The sons of GN” appear to have a status as a corporate body: “the sons of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon” are referred to as identifiable groups with certain stated and guaranteed rights. Who were they? Is the reference to the entire urban population or only a privileged few? This problem will be discussed below (6.6.3; 6.7).

Why did the Assyrian king indulge the Babylonian cities with so many privileges? It was suggested above that the sanctity and antiquity of these cities, or more precisely, their temples, commanded great respect. However, it may also have had a more practical side. Van De Mieroop argues that the protected status of Babylonian cities was taken very seriously and that the Assyrian king used the cities as “outposts of their rule in an often hostile countryside”.¹¹³⁷ He suggests that “the Assyrian kings needed to maintain good urban contacts, especially with the cities of Babylonia, in order to secure their rule of the area”.¹¹³⁸ I agree that the Assyrian concern for the privileges of the Babylonian cities probably had a more pragmatic side than just the

¹¹³⁷ Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 135-136

¹¹³⁸ Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 136

respect for their temples. In view of the threat of tribal confederacies and usurpers discussed above (6.6.1), it seems to me a prudent policy for the Assyrian kings and their vassals in Babylon to keep on good terms with the ancient cities of Assyria and Babylonia. However, what were the options for Babylonian cities? Could they simply abandon their allegiance to Assur and seek other protectors? Could they opt for self-government?

In *ABL 327*, a letter addressed to Esarhaddon, an official of Nippur reports that people everywhere hate Nippur for its allegiance to Assyria. The official is ill and cannot appear in person before the king, but he sends his brother and ten *mār banê*, or “citizens” of Nippur. He urges the king to support Nippur and to provide the city with water by digging a canal. If the king does not provide water, the inhabitants of Nippur will desert the king.¹¹³⁹

ABL 327 shows that the Babylonian cities could threaten to change their political allegiance if the Assyrians did not accommodate their demands. Whether this was an effective strategy cannot be answered from *ABL 327*, but it does indicate that the cities thought they could profit from threatening to transfer their allegiance. They appear de facto autonomous, since the free negotiation of allegiance would give them great leverage with the central authorities. Therefore, although they were formally under a foreign king, they could make decisions on their own. This does not indicate self-governance, but it is evidence that they could manage their own relations to external imperial powers. Amélie Kuhrt interprets *ABL 327* as evidence that “cities could expect to obtain protection by threatening the Assyrians that they would side with the enemy if no action was taken to help them”. To Kuhrt, *ABL 327* indicates that a dialogue took place between the king and the cities, “so protecting and

¹¹³⁹ *ABL 327* in Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia*, 1967, 175

privileging cities can be seen to be not just a one-way benefit extended by a king to a city, but a framework within which cities could exert pressure on the Assyrian king as well”.¹¹⁴⁰

I agree with Kuhrt that *ABL 327* gives the impression of a bargaining situation: the king appears to be under obligation to protect the Babylonian cities. Also, it indicates that a dialogue between the king and local officials and citizen representatives was taking place. It can be presumed that good and peaceful relations with the cities of Babylonia were important to the Assyrian king and not only a question of antiquarian or religious respect. *ABL 327* is evidence that Esarhaddon did not rule over Nippur by force alone, but through contractual relations with the local city authorities. What were these local authorities? As will be seen in the following, details about the organisation or competence of the authorities of Babylonian cities under Assyrian rule in the first millennium have been much debated and are imperfectly known. This is in part due to difficulties in determining the exact meaning of a number of important terms, including words for “citizen” or “assembly”. These and similar difficulties will be discussed in the following.

6.6.3 *Mār banê* and *kidinnūtu*: citizens and their privileges

It is not easy to establish who were included in the privileges granted by Assyrian kings. How can this be determined? In *ABL 878*, a letter sent by the Babylonians to Ashurbanipal, the Babylonians appear to be complaining that a royal official has

¹¹⁴⁰ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 538

killed a Babylonian. The Babylonians claim that not even a dog can be put to death when he has entered the city. All who enter the city are free.¹¹⁴¹

ABL 878 is not very well understood, and the cause for the complaint of the Babylonians is not altogether clear. The claim that not even a dog may be harmed may be dismissed as hyperbole.¹¹⁴² However, Mogens Trolle Larsen suggests that *ABL 878* expresses civic pride in Babylon and that even persons of low status enjoyed full civic rights in Babylon.¹¹⁴³ This seems a reasonable interpretation: in my view, the use of hyperbole in *ABL 878* indicates that the Babylonians considered their privileges to apply to everyone; to all Babylonians.¹¹⁴⁴

What is the point of the Babylonian complaint to Ashurbanipal in *ABL 878*? It clearly has something to do with jurisdiction. Amélie Kuhrt suggests that “the point of the letter seems to be that the inhabitants of Babylon alone have the right of initial jurisdiction over anyone within the limits of the city. No one can be executed without a decision by the city authorities; even people claiming to act for the king have no right to infringe the city’s rules – such behaviour would be an offence affecting the

¹¹⁴¹ *ABL 878* in Dandamayev, “Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.,” 1995, 24

¹¹⁴² Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 615

¹¹⁴³ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 125

¹¹⁴⁴ It may be argued that there is evidence supportive of inclusive citizenship in Mesopotamian cities in the folktale *The Poor Man of Nippur*: in this story, a poor man, who is a citizen of Nippur, is wronged by a mayor and takes an elaborate revenge on him (text in Foster, *From distant days*, 1995, 357-362). Amélie Kuhrt points out that the poor man is termed “son of city X”, identifying him as a member of an urban community. The Akkadian text is on a 7th century tablet (Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 612). However, it should be kept in mind that the text is a literary composition. The date of its composition and its direct relevance to the Neo-Assyrian letters discussed above may be questioned. The story can nevertheless be taken as evidence that being a citizen was not considered indicative of élite status.

whole urban community”.¹¹⁴⁵ In my opinion, this is a good explanation for the Babylonian complaint. It appears that the Babylonians could address the king directly and demand that he honoured their privileges. However, we are no closer to determining the nature of the “city authorities” or what is implied by “the whole urban community”. As will be seen in the following, there is evidence that there were status differences in Babylonian cities that speak against an interpretation of a general application of privileges to all inhabitants of the cities.

In a 7th century inscription of Esarhaddon, the king’s restoration of Babylon and the return of deportees is discussed. The Babylonians are called *sābē kidinnu*, “entitled to release” by the gods Anu and Enlil. They are returned from slavery and their *kidinnūtu* are re-established. Their tax-exemption is reaffirmed.¹¹⁴⁶

Thus, the people protected by the privileges entailed in the *kidinnūtu* are referred to as *sābē kidinnu*. They are “entitled to release”, i.e. they are not bound by the duties to the king that were otherwise imposed on the subjects of Assyria. However, with the term *sābē kidinnu*, we are still no closer to understanding the identity of these people. Who were exempt from duties? What was their social standing?

The concept of *kidinnūtu* is used by scholars to argue that several Mesopotamian city-states enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in the Iron Age. Hanoch Reviv explains the *kidinnūtu* as “established in the religious and political traditions of several Mesopotamian cities” and argues that their citizens were *sābē kidinnu*. This status was bound to the communal status of the city and was conferred on the city and its

¹¹⁴⁵ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 615

¹¹⁴⁶ Borger, *Die Inschriften Esarhaddons*, 1967 [1956], 1-6 (§2 Ass. A)

population.¹¹⁴⁷ However, were the privileges extended to everyone living in the city? This is not clear from the evidence and scholars are not agreed on this important question. Amélie Kuhrt suggests that in the Esarhaddon inscription, “*kidinnūtu* appears to represent a whole package of city-rights, a kind of “charter of autonomy”, which marks their renaissance as “Babylonians””. She finds support for this kind of formal privilege in *ABL* 878 mentioned above, where the Babylonians refer to their *kidinnūtu* and claim that anyone who enters the city are free and protected.¹¹⁴⁸ In Kuhrt’s interpretation, only a limited number of inhabitants in Babylonian cities, called *mār banê*, were part of the citizen body and protected by these privileges.¹¹⁴⁹ Thus, *kidinnūtu* are held to be reserved for *mār banê* by some scholars. Who were the *mār banê*?

In Mesopotamian legal and administrative documents of the Iron Age, several individuals are referred to as *mār banî*. The term is difficult to interpret and is disputed among scholars because it is used of a wide range of people, from high officials to manumitted slaves. According to the *CAD*, the Akkadian term *mār banî* is used of free persons or citizens. It is used as a term to distinguish a free person from a slave. Further, the *CAD* states that it is also used in texts from the 1st millennium in the sense of “nobleman”.¹¹⁵⁰ Scholars have interpreted the *mār banê* as a form of aristocracy,¹¹⁵¹ as members of the upper class working within the greater organisation of temples,¹¹⁵² as well as a citizen body including rich and poor urban property

¹¹⁴⁷ Reviv, “*Kidinnu* - Observations on privileges of Mesopotamian cities,” 286

¹¹⁴⁸ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 615

¹¹⁴⁹ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 617

¹¹⁵⁰ *CAD M*, 1977, 256-257

¹¹⁵¹ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 618

¹¹⁵² Renger, “Goldsmiths, jewelers and carpenters of Neobabylonian Eanna,” 1971, 498-499

owners.¹¹⁵³ The translations “full citizen” or “citizen with full citizen rights” are also used.¹¹⁵⁴ Thus, the range of the term *mār banî* is disputed, as is the identity of the people called *mār banê*. It is important to define who belonged to this category in order to understand the organisation of Babylonian cities. If the *mār banê* formed an aristocracy, the urban autonomy of ancient urban centres in Babylonia would not concern very many city-dwellers. This discussion is related to the definition of *awīlum* in Old Babylonian (4.3.1 and 4.4). Who were the citizens of Mesopotamian cities?

Amélie Kuhrt suggests that “the legally definable citizen-body” in Babylonian cities in the Iron Age was a wealthy élite called the *mār banî* that monopolised cultic duties.¹¹⁵⁵ According to Kuhrt, poorer people were excluded from cultic duties as well as from active participation in “the city-assembly”.¹¹⁵⁶ Thus, in Amélie Kuhrt’s interpretation, the *mār banî* was an élite that controlled civic and cultic functions in Babylonian cities. Similarly, Grant Frame suggests that participation in the assemblies of Babylonian cities was limited to “full citizens”, emphasising, however, that it is uncertain who was eligible to form part of the assembly and that the term *mār banî* is incompletely understood.¹¹⁵⁷ In fact, there appears to be no single recognisable élite called *mār banê*. Rather, the term is used for people of quite different socio-economic status. In the following, the connection between *mār banê* and the temples will be discussed.

¹¹⁵³ Dandamayev, “The Neo-Babylonian citizens,” 1981, 47-48

¹¹⁵⁴ Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 231

¹¹⁵⁵ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 618

¹¹⁵⁶ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 619

¹¹⁵⁷ Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 231

M. Jursa argues that temple prebends, rights of income from the temples' economic activities, provided a vital economic link between the temple and the city and its élite: the city élites were consecrated as priests and had income rights from the temples. However, he points out that the temple personnel had clear social distinctions: below the level of prestigious families were craftsmen and *širku*, temple slaves that lived in families, but were bound to the temple.¹¹⁵⁸ In my opinion, this distinction provides a good explanation of the temple communities and their role in the cities. Thus, the élites were connected to the temples by cultic duties and economic privileges, but this was not their only area of distinction. Conversely, not all who were connected to the temples can be said to belong to a socio-economic élite. What can this tell us about the status of *mār banī*?

In manumission texts, Raymond Westbrook finds evidence that slaves could be manumitted by their masters to status of *mār banī* and at the same time have the status of *širku*, “temple slave”. In his interpretation, the two terms give better meaning as a pair than as opposites: the owner who pledged his manumitted slave as temple slave would be doing a pious act and the manumitted slave would enjoy the status of free citizen and not risk being sold into the service of a new owner. Rather, he would have a future in a temple household upon his master's death.¹¹⁵⁹

The combination of two statuses may seem a good solution to the apparent contradiction of one person being both *mār banī* and *širku*. However, Westbrook's argument is not unproblematic. He does not really explain the distinction between a status of *mār banī* and that of *širku*. If the two statuses could be held by the same person simultaneously, it makes the interpretation of *mār banī* as “free citizen” rather

¹¹⁵⁸ Jursa, “Cuneiform writing in Neo-Babylonian temple communities,” 2011, 186

¹¹⁵⁹ Westbrook, “The quality of freedom in Neo-Babylonian manumissions,” 2004, 106-107

ambiguous. After all, being pledged to a temple does not mean you are free. If a person of the status of *mār banī* belonged to the upper class in Babylonian society, it appears strange that manumitted slaves could attain this status. Therefore, the status of *mār banī* appears to have cut across socio-economic differences. On the other hand, it is not necessarily the case that slaves were poor and destitute. To belong to the temple, even as a slave, was probably a source of high social status. However, an élite with members formally bound to a temple appears strange. As seen above, Jursa argues that the temple artisans and temple slaves did not belong to the same socio-economic group as the families that held temple prebends.¹¹⁶⁰ I find this argument convincing. However, why are “temple slaves” and *mār banê* conflated in texts? What was the nature of the group called *mār banê*?

The identity of the *mār banê* is difficult to ascertain and scholars have interpreted the available evidence quite differently. Johannes Renger argues that the artisans working in workshops of the Eanna temple in Uruk belonged to the *mār banê*, because their names appear in lists of people of this status.¹¹⁶¹ He is convinced that the craftsmen “were usually members of the upper class, the *mār banê*, who worked within the greater organization of a temple”. Among the craftsmen there were also people who were *širku*, pledged to the temple as slave labour, and Renger suggests that “as far as their work was concerned their situation was not too much different from that of the craftsmen who were *mār banê*”.¹¹⁶² Renger views the *mār banê* as a kind of nobility, and argues that several of the craftsmen mentioned in texts from Eanna “were among the members of a body of nobles (*puhur mār banê*) before whom investigations concerning the property and other matters of Eanna were undertaken by the

¹¹⁶⁰ Jursa, “Cuneiform writing in Neo-Babylonian temple communities,” 2011, 186

¹¹⁶¹ Renger, “Goldsmiths, jewelers and carpenters of Neobabylonian Eanna,” 1971, 494-496

¹¹⁶² Renger, “Goldsmiths, jewelers and carpenters of Neobabylonian Eanna,” 1971, 499

administration of the temple”. In his interpretation, craftsmen were *mār banî* but could become *širku* “under particular circumstances”.¹¹⁶³

It is of interest that Renger maintains that the craftsmen belonged to the nobility, but at the same time worked side by side with people that were not free. It should be asked in what sense the status of *mār banî* was anything like an upper class status, if it included craftsmen working on equal footing with slaves. However, the status of not being free does not seem to have prevented a *širku* from becoming a *mār banî*, as argued by Westbrook above. In my opinion, the interpretation of *mār banî* as a nobility does not explain the evidence satisfactorily. Several scholars are sceptical of this interpretation, as will be seen in the following.

The interpretation of the status of *mār banî* as a class of nobles is criticised by M.A. Dandamayev. He has found several references to the *puhur mār banê*, “assembly of the *mār banê*”, and argues that it is mentioned in connection with private matters as well as temple matters.¹¹⁶⁴ From documents of the 7th to 4th centuries from Babylon, Dilbat, Nippur, Sippar, Ur, Uruk, and other cities, Dandamayev has found the names of 264 *mār banê* and been able to determine the occupations of several of them, from city governors to shepherds in the service of temples. Of the 217 *mār banê* only mentioned by personal name and patronymics, Dandamayev has used prosopographical data from records where these people are mentioned, in order to “determine their social standing, occupational and financial positions”. He finds that there were “artisans, bakers, brewers, butchers, tenants of temple and privately-owned fields” among them.¹¹⁶⁵ Therefore, he suggests that the term *mār banî* covers free-

¹¹⁶³ Renger, “Goldsmiths, jewelers and carpenters of Neobabylonian Eanna,” 1971, 498

¹¹⁶⁴ Dandamayev, “The Neo-Babylonian citizens,” 1981, 45-46

¹¹⁶⁵ Dandamayev, “The Neo-Babylonian citizens,” 1981, 47

born property owners in the cities, both poor and wealthy, and that the people of *mār banī* status were a privileged group of citizens, not nobles.¹¹⁶⁶

M. Jursa is dubious of Dandamayev's argument that *mār banē* formed a separate class of citizens with seats in the assembly or other collective decision-making bodies. He points out that the existence of a citizen class is difficult to argue, since it cannot be said to be a difference in privileges of the *mār banē* compared to other free men in Babylonia.¹¹⁶⁷ Instead of a citizen class, Jursa argues that the propertied urban élite, in particular the priests, were members of the city-councils and assemblies. These institutions, argues Jursa, consisted of elders, notables, temple officials, as well as secular members of society that together formed an oligarchy.¹¹⁶⁸

The interpretation of Dandamayev has the advantage that it takes into consideration the wide range of occupations of the people called *mār banī* in legal, economic and other documents. Thus, he is able to prove that they did not form a class or a cohesive social group, but shared the title of *mār banī*, which meant that they were "free citizens". However, I agree with Jursa that a class of "free citizens" cannot be said to be well attested. The title of *mār banī* is difficult to equal with one particular socio-economic status or civic or cultic institution. Some *mār banē* held temple shares, or prebends, but that does not mean that they belonged to the temple organisations. These prebends could be obtained by people outside the temple. Against Dandamayev, it could be argued that the professional groups counted among the *mār*

¹¹⁶⁶ Dandamayev, "The Neo-Babylonian citizens," 1981, 48. Dandamayev points out that *mār banī* in the sense of nobleman is attested from the Persian period, but only from the Behistun inscription of Dareios I and other Persian inscriptions as an Akkadian translation of an Old Persian term (Dandamayev, "Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.," 1995, 26). He rejects the meaning "nobleman" as based on a false interpretation of the Old Persian term *amāta*, a *hapax legomenon* translated with Akkadian *mār banī* (ibid. 27).

¹¹⁶⁷ Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2011, 57-58

¹¹⁶⁸ Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2011, 58

banê were those of temple functionaries, and not free artisans. However, the span in occupations from military to artisanal to academic among the *mār banê* suggests that they actually were occupied outside the temples and did not all belong to the temple organisation.

As discussed above, in Kuhrt's analysis, the term *mār banî* refers to a broad élite within the urban population, a form of aristocracy, rather than an inclusive collective of citizens. Thus, reference to Babylonians in the Assyrian inscription of Esarhaddon is not to "the people", but a limited group of high status. However, this interpretation may be too narrow. In my opinion, the *Advice to a Prince* refers to "sons of GN" in what appears as a general sense, as the inhabitants of Babylonian cities (cf. 6.6.2). Also, the letter of complaint to Ashurbanipal, *ABL* 878 discussed above, insists that everyone is protected by the city's privileges. Therefore, I am inclined to support the interpretation of *mār banî* as a general term for "free property owner". If this is correct, the evidence indicates that the privileges of the cities imply a more inclusive reference to Babylonians in the sense of the inhabitants or urban residents of Babylon. However, it cannot be claimed that there was a recognisable "citizen class". The conflation of specific and general use of these terms is a serious difficulty for our understanding of the nature of Neo-Babylonian urban government. It appears that the group of people taking part in assemblies and councils were urban property owners that belonged to a socio-economic élite connected to the temples, but not exclusively.

In my opinion, the evidence for *mār banê* of humble occupations and low economic status presented by Dandamayev (1981) is a weighty argument against Renger's interpretation (1971) of the status of the Eanna craftsmen as members of a class of nobles. Dandamayev's interpretation of the *mār banê* as property owners explains the *mār banê* craftsmen better than Renger's interpretation of the craftsmen as somehow belonging to the nobles or upper strata in society. However, Jursa (2011) is right in

criticising Dandamayev's thesis: there is no recognisable "citizen class" with special rights in the cities that distinguish them from others that were free, but not *mār banê*. Further, free-born property owners can be said to be an élite in their own right. At any rate, the definition of the *mār banê* as property owners and not as nobility fits well with a more general meaning of the term "sons of GN", as a collective with influence and power in the cities. This will be discussed further in the following. Who were "the people" in Babylonian cities in the Iron Age?

6.7 "The sons of the city" and urban autonomy

The debate over the identity of those enjoying *kidinnūtu*, the "privileges" of Mesopotamian cities, is not resolved, as seen above (6.6.2; 6.6.3). In part, the debate is one of definitions: was there a class of citizens in power in Mesopotamian cities, was there a class of nobles, or was there an oligarchy of influential city-dwellers drawing authority from ownership of property, temple affiliation, or palace positions? As seen above (6.6.3), *kidinnūtu* can be taken as indicative of freedom and popular power, in the sense that the urban population as a whole was a privileged group of people in relation to foreign rulers. However, popular power is a difficult concept to apply to Mesopotamian cities, because the people in power are hard to identify. If the urban dwellers that took part in councils and assemblies were a narrow élite of temple affiliates, wealthy property owners, or palace officials, there cannot be said to have been much popular power or freedom in Mesopotamian cities. On the other hand, if the people who took part in councils and assemblies were representatives of the urban population in general, the picture is quite different. The problem is that recent research appears to straddle these two reconstructions, proposing that the urban population was free and autonomous in a social structure where power was in the

hands of a propertied oligarchy.¹¹⁶⁹ In the following, I will investigate more evidence for relations between foreign kings and the city-populations of Babylonia in the Iron Age, in order to establish the identity of these city-populations involved in negotiations, how they were organised, and how they communicated with foreign powers. Were “the sons of the city” a limited élite or a general free city-population? How were they organised as collective decision-making bodies?

In *ND 2632*, a letter sent by two Assyrian officials to Tiglath-Pileser III, they relate that they stood outside the Marduk Gate of Babylon to talk to “the man of Babylon” and a Chaldean. “The sons of the city of Babylon” stood together with “the man of Babylon” and the Chaldean before the gate. The two Assyrian officials tried to bring “the “sons of the city of Babylon” over to their side and make them abandon the Chaldean. They argued that the Babylonian *kidinnūtu* were firmly established. However, “the sons of the city of Babylon” would not discuss the matter with them. “The Five” and “the Ten” were present, but would not come out.¹¹⁷⁰

ND 2632 is evidence for communication between Assyrian officials and “the Babylonians” during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727). The Assyrian officials appear to be addressing a governor of Babylon or other local official together with “the Babylonians” and a Chaldean. Thus, the Assyrians communicate directly with “the Babylonians”. “The Babylonians” are said to ignore the Assyrian attempts at engaging in a discussion over the Chaldean present in the city. The Assyrians appear to expect “the Babylonians” to reach decisions concerning their political allegiance, i.e. whether to support Assur or the Chaldean. Who were “the Babylonians”?

¹¹⁶⁹ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004, 58; Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2010, 58; von Dassow, “Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies,” 2011, 217-218

Mogens Trolle Larsen interprets the situation in *ND 2632* as one where members of the council of elders in Babylon come out of the gate to parlay with the Assyrians, in the presence of representatives of a Chaldean king. In his interpretation, “this was a normal procedure used by the Assyrians in their diplomatic contacts with rebels: much easier to persuade them than to have to call in the army”. He argues that the situation “surely indicates that the citizens of a city such as Babylon had civic institutions by way of which they could undertake negotiations and in other manners represent the interests of the community i.e. an assembly which could even function to some extent independently of the local king”. This institution, Larsen argues, was the *puhrum*, or “assembly”, attested from several Mesopotamian cities. He assumes that the *puhrum* consisted of the elders of the community. Although there may have been a popular assembly, as well, he maintains that “we have no real knowledge of how such an institution might have functioned”.¹¹⁷¹ I agree that a popular assembly is difficult to argue from the mention of “the Babylonians” making decisions. Probably some limited body was involved in the decision-making processes or negotiations with the Assyrians. What were the relations between this limited body and the rest of the urban population?

“The elders” are well-attested in Mesopotamian cities, also for the Neo-Babylonian period. M. A. Dandamayev points out that the *šībūtum* of 1st millennium documents make decisions “together with the principal temple officials and governors of the cities”. He argues that “elders” acted as “representatives of their own cities” before the king. In his interpretation, “the elders” were an important part of “the popular assembly”, the *puhrum*. As the most influential of the citizens, they “acted as

¹¹⁷⁰ Text in Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 125; Cf. Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city*, 1997, 137

¹¹⁷¹ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 125

representatives of the assembly, and made decisions, instead of gathering all the members, that is the *mār banī*".¹¹⁷² Dandamayev's interpretation of the *mār banē* as a group of "citizens" was discussed above (6.6.3): as argued above, it is not evident that there was a distinct group of people with citizen status and privileges, as opposed to other city inhabitants.¹¹⁷³ The nature of the *puhrum* as a "popular assembly" is doubtful, since it cannot be determined whether all citizens participated there. However, "the elders" may well have formed a local authority for the city-communities and joined in sessions that included other decision-making bodies in the cities. The interpretation of "the elders" as community representatives seems a reasonable suggestion, although the nature of this representation, i.e. how they were appointed, is difficult to ascertain.

Barjamovic points out that there is an emphasis in *ND 2682* on the importance for the Assyrians of convincing the Babylonians, admitting that the identity of the people the Assyrians try to convince is not clear.¹¹⁷⁴ In his interpretation, the term Babylonians, "sons of the city of Babylon", when used in technical contexts such as negotiating peace or apprehending criminals, refers to "an *institution* [original emphasis] that holds authority on behalf of the community and bears its name". This is because he finds it improbable that "a community of thousands" could "issue a common declaration".¹¹⁷⁵

Barjamovic suggests that the Babylonians in *ND 2682* were a small group, a representative institution that took part in negotiations on behalf of the Babylonians.

¹¹⁷² Dandamayev, "Neo-Babylonian elders", 1982, 40

¹¹⁷³ Cf. Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2011, 57-58

¹¹⁷⁴ Barjamovic, "Civic institutions and self-government," 2004, 60

¹¹⁷⁵ Barjamovic, "Civic institutions and self-government," 2004, 56

Was this group “the elders”, as suggested by Dandamayev and Larsen above? In my opinion, it is indeed difficult to imagine a situation where thousands of Babylonians conducted negotiations with two Assyrian officials. However, does this mean that “the Babylonians” and “the elders” were identical? Barjamovic argues from probability: it is more probable that a small group met with the Assyrians than the entire Babylonian population. However, there is nothing in the text to directly suggest that this small group was “the elders”. Further, if indeed representatives they were, how was this representation organised? Dandamayev’s suggestion that “the elders” were the representatives of a popular assembly founders on the lack of firm evidence for a popular assembly. In my opinion, “the elders” were probably a group of people of standing in the local community, giving them authority to undertake negotiations with the Assyrian officials. How they obtained this mandate is not clear. Perhaps they were the ones conducting negotiations in *ND 2682*, but this is not certain.

In several letters from the Assyrian royal archives, there are references to “the sons of the city” that make decisions and appear as envoys or officials of their cities. Also, “the elders” are attested in this capacity.¹¹⁷⁶ In Barjamovic’s interpretation, the term “the sons of the city” refers to an institution with limited access to participation. He suggests that the Babylonian city-states were organised with a “distinction between a (relatively small?) number of old families, allowed by tradition and accumulated wealth (and a surplus of time) to hold the main secular and religious positions in the city, and a larger segment of the population who had less extensive rights and obligations toward the community, but who also had some political influence”. He argues that it is likely that “the city” (*ālum*) and “the assembly” (*puhrum*) were

¹¹⁷⁶ Cf. Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004

“interchangeable terms”. In his interpretation, there was a “lack of distinction between the community and its ruling institution (“the citizens”)”.¹¹⁷⁷

Barjamovic seems to imply that there were two groups of citizens in Babylonia, one small group that consisted of the rich and constituted “the citizens”, “city” or “assembly” in formal contexts, and a larger group of citizens that was not part of the civic institution that reached decisions. Thus, in the analysis of Barjamovic, Babylonian cities had an élite that held positions in the civic and temple institutions, whereas the less wealthy had limited access to any of the institutions of power in the cities, but still had some political influence. However, this influence is not well defined in Barjamovic’s reconstruction. In the following, some more texts will be discussed that may shed light on the structure of power in 1st millennium Babylonian cities.

In *ABL* 301, Ashurbanipal sends a letter to the inhabitants of Babylon. He urges them to abandon the usurper that they are currently supporting. Also, he reminds them of the privileges that he has confirmed for them.¹¹⁷⁸

The letter is addressed to “the Babylonians”. However, which Babylonians received the letter? In Larsen’s interpretation, “under normal circumstances it would certainly have been delivered to the elders of the city”. Larsen weighs the equally unattractive alternatives of the letter being read out in front of the elders (without any interference

¹¹⁷⁷ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004, 58

¹¹⁷⁸ Text in Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 124; Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia*, 1967, 169-170

of the usurper) and the letter being a purely literary effort. He concludes that it was “put across to the Babylonians, but we are not in a position to say how”.¹¹⁷⁹

It is indeed difficult to determine how “the Babylonians” could receive a letter that urged them to change their political allegiance. It is evident that a group of people was involved and that this group was addressed by the king. However, is it necessary to suppose that the usurper and the Babylonians were together at the time of reading the letter? The situation in Larsen’s interpretation is that the elders and the usurper king were together at the time of the opening of the letter, but could not the Babylonians have gathered independently of the usurper? The reference to “the Babylonians” again suggests a limited body of people, but their relation to the rest of the community is not clear. Were Babylonian cities ruled by an oligarchic élite or were commoners involved in making decisions?

Several scholars argue that in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, local candidates for leadership in Babylonian cities came from local élites and were appointed by the Assyrian authorities. In Larsen’s view, the local élites “suggested to the Assyrians who would be acceptable to them, and they were directly involved in determining such matters as political allegiance”.¹¹⁸⁰ Grant Frame argues that “certain families in a city or province, presumably the leading families constituted a “ruling class” which tended to provide the chief officials”.¹¹⁸¹ However, Frame points out that the city-governor “was appointed and dismissed by the king and was responsible only to him”.¹¹⁸² Frame observes that the governors often went to see the king and argues that

¹¹⁷⁹ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 124

¹¹⁸⁰ Larsen, “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” 2000, 123

¹¹⁸¹ Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 228

¹¹⁸² Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 228

“personal contacts with the king and his advisors were important for an individual who wished to obtain an official position, to maintain it, and, eventually, to secure favours and positions for his friends and relatives. The king was unlikely to bestow offices on, or show favour to, someone he had not already met or someone who had not been vouched for by an individual he trusted. Thus officials tended to come from the same families since they automatically had access to court”.¹¹⁸³

Against the view that officials were primarily dependent on royal favour, Barjamovic argues that local temple administrators and governors alike came from certain rich and powerful families, but were *primi inter pares* and cooperated with a “larger civic organisation termed “the citizens of the city”, “the city elders” and/or “the city assembly””. He suggests that these “civic organisations” were dominated by “the prominent families in the city”.¹¹⁸⁴ However, as will be discussed further below, there is evidence that the civic organisations operated in public, opening for a more general participation in the making of decisions.

Barjamovic argues that in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, “the empire often chose to cultivate close bilateral relationships with existing political institutions in the city-states, and used the promise of relative political autonomy and economic privilege as bargaining chips in an attempt to bind them to the central power and nurture their mutual competition to distance them from one another and their neighbouring tribal communities”.¹¹⁸⁵ Thus, in his interpretation, the Assyrians pursued a strategy of divide and conquer. However, it could also be maintained that it was not the fear of a unified revolt that promoted the extension of privileges to Babylonian cities, as much

¹¹⁸³ Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history*, 1992, 230

¹¹⁸⁴ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004, 55

¹¹⁸⁵ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004, 52

as the practical side of maintaining peaceful relations with established urban communities in ancient cities. These urban communities do appear to have been dominated by a limited number of wealthy families, as Frame (1992) and Larsen (2000) suggest. It is nevertheless interesting that civic bodies were influential in Mesopotamian cities, regardless of how broad or narrow their composition were. It should be asked why local autonomy was so coveted by the Babylonian cities that this was considered decent bait by the Assyrians. The privileges cannot be fully understood by only looking at one side of the contract. For the promised autonomy to be attractive there must have been a strong local political identity in the Babylonian cities as well as institutions in place that could run the politics in question. It seems likely that the Assyrian appeals to Babylonian city autonomy could only be effective if self-government was an integral part of Neo-Babylonian urban culture. It is not the autonomy of the local governor that stands out in the letters, as much as the independent positions of “the sons of the city”. How did the Assyrian kings comply with the will of the people in Babylonian cities?

In *ABL* 340, there is a report to king Esarhaddon from a certain Mar-Issa, who amongst other news forewarns the king that he may receive false reports from the *šākin tēmi*, “the commandant”, of Babylon the “the sons of Babylon” (DUMU.MEŠ KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI) have thrown lumps of clay at him. The Babylonians had protested against taxes laid on them, because they were destitute, and “the commandant” has falsely accused some of them of throwing lumps of clay at his messengers, thereafter imprisoning some Babylonians. A judge in Babylon is detained in house-arrest, and it is rumoured that he had incited the protests against the taxes.¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸⁶ *ABL* 340=SAA 10, 348 in Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian scholars*, 1993, 283-284

This text indicates that some officials were concerned that the Assyrian king received truthful reports about the actions undertaken by “the sons of the city” and how they felt about the policies of the king. It appears that the raising of taxes is considered unlawful in the present situation and that the commandant has transgressed against the Babylonians. It is of interest that “the sons of Babylonians” are reported to have pelted the messengers of the commandant with lumps of clay. Barjamovic suggests that the text indicates some sort of public announcement of the planned gathering of taxes and a corresponding negative public reaction.¹¹⁸⁷ Kuhrt takes the episode as indicative of popular resentment of Assyrian rule.¹¹⁸⁸ I agree with these assessments. In my opinion, the report indicates that information and decrees were made known to crowds, who could react violently and protest against unwanted policies. Further, a judge is accused of inciting revolt, indicating that “the commandant” thought it plausible that local figures of authority could incite the people to protest against the king’s decrees. The concerned official writing to the king apparently hopes that the king will not punish the Babylonians, because they are innocent of the throwing of lumps of clay. They are reported to have protested against the taxes, however, and this seems to be considered a legitimate reaction by the writer of the letter.

The strategies for power that were pursued by the Babylonians can only be tentatively analysed: “the sons of the city” are not adequately identified; making any reconstruction based on their position vis-à-vis the Assyrian king insecure. If “the sons of the city” formed an élite council consisting of members of the most prominent families, their strategy for power would presumably be that of a broad élite, with closed meetings and covert negotiations with the Assyrian king and his representatives. However, this does not seem to be the case. In *ND 2632*, it appears that negotiations between “the sons of the city” and the Assyrians took place openly,

¹¹⁸⁷ Barjamovic, “Civic institutions and self-government,” 2004, 66

¹¹⁸⁸ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 586-587

by the city-gates. This indicates that the Babylonians as a collective were onlookers to the negotiations led by “the sons of the city”. In *ABL* 340, “the sons of Babylon” are accused of throwing lumps of clay at the messengers of “the commandant” of Babylon and “the commandant” himself, indicating that decrees were made known to crowds and that the people could protest in public. Thus, “the sons of the city” were more probably following a narrow corporate strategy, as representatives of the community: they were observed by the community and negotiated on their behalf. The emphasis on persuasion from the Assyrian side, as seen in *ABL* 301, is further indication of a corporate strategy: there was no ruling élite with which the Assyrians could come to an understanding; rather, the entire Babylonian population needed to be convinced that their interests were best served by supporting the Assyrians and their policies. This is actually indicative of a broad corporate strategy, where decisions are made in arena councils and the community is in charge of its own affairs collectively. In this interpretation, the legitimacy needed for the Assyrians and “the sons of the city” was provided by the openness of the negotiations, taking place at the gates before the assembled Babylonians. The entire community of the Babylonians needed to be convinced, it was not enough to obtain the allegiance of a broad élite of local notables.

6.8 Conclusions

Under foreign empire, local kings of Near Eastern cities became governors or the foreign authorities installed a governor of their own. Most of the evidence discussed in this chapter consists of letters sent between local rulers and the imperial overlord, from the correspondence from the archives of Pharaoh found at Amarna, as well as the archives of Neo-Assyrian kings, local rulers, and other local authorities. However, as seen in several of these letters, the king or governor was not the only local authority (cf. 6.4.3-4; 6.7). There were local groups that held considerable

economical, ideological, and political power. The local urban populations appear in some letters to have been quite influential. There is evidence of groups of people with authority from the urban population. They are referred to as “the elders” or “the sons of/men of GN”, and these terms are often translated as “citizens” by modern scholars. The evidence is difficult to assess and scholars do not agree on the identity or powers of these bodies, or indeed if they were corporate groups at all (cf. 6.5.2; 6.7). How the identity and capacities of “the citizens” are interpreted will to a high degree determine how popular power in city-states under foreign empire is assessed.

The information on local polities and their inhabitants available in the sources is determined by what was of interest to central authorities. The everyday concerns of the local city communities are not likely to be recorded. Extraordinary occurrences are likely to be reported to the imperial authorities, however. Also, when the need arose for the local authorities to take specific action, the imperial authorities wrote to them. Otherwise, much of the local business of the city-states under foreign empire is likely to have been beyond the scope of the royal archives. There are some texts that shed light on local affairs, however: I have chosen to discuss texts from the Amarna correspondence and Iron Age Babylonia together in this chapter, because these texts provide insight into local autonomy and instances of the local city population making decisions independent of or in response to the foreign imperial authorities, even independent of their local ruler. Instances of revolt or unrest are situations that were reported to central institutions (6.4.1-2; 6.7). Through reports on these events, a glimpse of local political practices is provided. Strategies for power can be observed that are not from the top of the hierarchy, but from below, from the city-dwellers. In these reports of local events, city-state politics can be observed in cities that were formally under the authority of an imperial overlord.

In the Syrian city-states discussed in the Amarna correspondence, local rulers are kings locally, but also “mayors” under Egyptian authority. It seems that the split identity between being a local king and the vassal of a foreign power caused difficulties for the local rulers: since they were not proper Egyptian officials, they do not seem to have been able to draw effectively on official Egyptian resources. They appear as outsiders in their relations with Pharaoh. Simultaneously, they had obligations to maintain control in their cities, predominantly from their own resources. In the Amarna correspondence, as seen above (6.4), it is usually the local kings who write to Pharaoh. However, it is also clear that Pharaoh was acknowledged and well established as the main authority in southern Syria: there are a few instances where “the people” or “the people and the elders” write directly to Pharaoh (6.4.4). Thus, the main power appears in the last instance to have been Pharaoh, whereas the local rulers came to occupy a relatively weak middle position between being officials of a foreign power and being local kings under the authority of a foreign ruler. This situation was dangerous for the political stability of the region, not primarily because of the intervention of foreign powers, but from social unrest and the establishment of new local dynasties that challenged “the mayors”.

In the material from the Amarna correspondence and the letters of Neo-Assyrian kings, there are several instances of direct communication between foreign rulers and the inhabitants of towns and cities. In the letters of the Amarna correspondence that were sent from Rib-Hadda of Byblos to Pharaoh, contact between the people of Byblos and the foreign ruler ‘Abdi-Aširta is referred to indirectly: Rib-Hadda reports that ‘Abdi-Aširta and his *hapiru* are trying to win over the townspeople of the region, including his own subjects, to the side of the rebels (6.4.3). In correspondence sent between the Neo-Assyrian king and his subjects in the Babylonian cities, the king addresses “the people” directly, and “the people” also send letters to the king (6.6.1-2). It is thus evident that some form of civic body could be addressed by a foreign ruler and that this civic body could be expected to make decisions for the town or city.

It is also evident that there was communication between foreign rulers and this civic body. This indicates that there was recognition of a civic body as a competent and authoritative party in discussions. The foreign rulers did not go through officials in the situations reported in the Neo-Assyrian letters, but rather appealed to the civic body directly. However, it is difficult to determine who belonged to this civic body; whether it was a body of “elders”, a general assembly, or other kind of gathering.

In neither of the groups of evidence discussed in this chapter it is possible to determine who were included in these civic bodies. Three different scenarios can be argued: 1. A foreign authority addresses the people in the sense of all “the citizens”, in a popular assembly. 2. A foreign authority addresses the people in the sense of “the elders”, as an élite group of the rich and influential city-dwellers. 3. A foreign authority addresses “the elders” as representatives of “the people” and sometimes appeals to “the people” in assembly as well.

The first alternative implies that the people of towns and cities were large corporate groups and that they were organised in an assembly that could reach decisions independent of governors or local officials. The second alternative implies either that the town or city was represented by a council of “elders” or that a clique of influential and wealthy heads of families reached decisions for the inhabitants. Both alternatives have to take into consideration the fact that the evidence operates with what appears as inclusive as well as exclusive terms for the civic body, within the same polity. Thus, in some of the texts that have been discussed, there is an address to “the sons of the city”, apparently in the sense of everyone, and in others in a narrow sense as “the lords of the city” or “the elders” (cf. 6.5.2; 6.7). Neither of the alternatives can be entirely correct: the choice cannot stand between the ruler addressing either a broad corporate group in power or an élite group in power.

This leaves the third alternative, where the people are somehow represented by “the elders” or “the sons of the city” in a limited sense. In this interpretation, the evidence for sessions of elders and other élite groups is taken into consideration, as well as the evidence for inclusive and less formal gatherings of the inhabitants of towns and cities. The picture that emerges of city-state organisation under foreign empire in the Near East is that the inhabitants had their own separate decision-making bodies that could act independently of their governors and officials and have direct contact with foreign rulers. These decision-making bodies do not appear to have been formally constituted. Little is known about how they were organised. It seems that the people took part in or at least were witnesses to decisions, but that the authority in the town or city was with a more limited body of heads of households or representatives of élite families. Thus, there were popular politics in the city-states under foreign empire: there is evidence for semi-autonomous cities in the Levant in the Late Bronze Age and in Mesopotamia in the Iron Age, where the people could reach decisions independent of officials and rulers. However, the relationship between the people and the more limited decision-making body is difficult to unravel and the two often cannot be separated in the sources.

7. Comparative analyses of ancient Near Eastern polities and archaic Greek *poleis*

7.1 Introduction

Popular power in ancient Near Eastern and archaic Greek polities has proved hard to find. In the preceding chapters, it has been established that there were active agents involved in the structuration of society coming from outside the hierarchy of palace and temples of Near Eastern polities and outside the circle of aristocrats in Greek *poleis*. These agents included elders, groups of merchants, and citizens gathered in assemblies. However, it has been a recurring problem to identify the socio-economic status of these agents. More specifically, a broad citizen group in power is rarely attested. In most Near Eastern polities, decisions were made by limited groups of people belonging to élites, usually with ties to the palace or temples, if not actual officials. It cannot be argued that all evidence from Near Eastern polities to political initiative taken by agents outside the temples or palace means evidence for popular power or agency from below, outside the élite. This must be determined in each specific case. Similarly, in archaic Greek *poleis*, politics were dominated by the élite, in aristocratic factions or in the form of individual bids for tyrannical power. However, some Greek *poleis* show clear tendencies for an active role played by the people and their constitutions provided for a formal place of the *demos* in the political structure. What are the differences and similarities between Greek and Near Eastern polities regarding popular power?

The following comparative analyses will focus on evidence for challenges to despotic rule and aristocratic dominance. These challenges took the form either of élite heterarchy or agency from below. I will investigate evidence for strategies for power that cross the established hierarchies of city-states, network states, and empires. From

the Near Eastern evidence, the agency of agents outside the palace and temples in relation to the structures of the polities where they live will be emphasised. Particularly important for the comparative analyses of popular power will be the structuration by the people of their own socio-political environment through agency in broad or narrow corporate strategies for power. Before turning to a comparative discussion of evidence for popular power, however, I will discuss aspects of comparing Iron Age societies to Bronze Age societies. As will be seen, for Greece, the transition from Bronze Age to Iron Age is held to entail fundamental changes in socio-economic organisation. In the Near East, on the other hand, there is a great degree of continuity from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age. This may be used to argue against a comparison between Greek polities in the Iron Age and Near Eastern polities in the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Therefore, I will discuss this transition from bronze to iron in the following and investigate what consequences this change had for the political history of Greece and the Near East.

7.2 From bronze to iron: breaks and continuity in Greece

From around 1200 BCE, bronze was superseded by iron as the most important metal in the ancient world. This was related to a collapse of trade connections and the demise of several centres of kingdoms and empires (cf. 7.2.2 below). The international contacts necessary for the making of bronze were interrupted. This did not mean that long-distance contacts ceased: the Iron Age was an age of vast empires in the Near East. However, in Greece, the end of the Bronze Age meant a considerable slump in international contacts compared to the Mycenaean period. The change from bronze to iron in Greece has been set in relation with the development of local communities where power was shared by a collective of males.¹¹⁸⁹ It is supposed

¹¹⁸⁹ Morris, *Archaeology as cultural history*, 2000, 155-191

that a series of economic and ideological changes set in in Greece, resulting in egalitarian *poleis* taking over from the hierarchic and internationally oriented Mycenaean palaces of the Late Bronze Age. This thesis has its opponents, protesting that sharing of power did not reach beyond a circle of élite men in archaic Greece (cf. 1.5.2). However, it seems evident that the organisation of the *polis* is a far cry from the centralised bureaucracy of the Mycenaean palaces and their powerful rulers. Admittedly, there is a tradition in Greek authors that there were kings in Greece in the Dark Age. This is controversial, however. Several scholars maintain that the kings in Iron Age Greece belong in the world of myth, embellishing the earliest generations of archaic and classical aristocratic lineages.¹¹⁹⁰ The survival of Late Bronze Age kingship into the archaic period is doubted by several scholars: the specific role the Mycenaean rulers played in the palace societies was discontinued with the fall of the palaces.¹¹⁹¹ I agree with these assessments and do not believe that hereditary kingship was a regular feature in early *poleis*. Rather, power in archaic *poleis* was held by aristocratic élites that ruled collectively.

The collapse of the Mycenaean palaces was part of great changes in Greece. The difference between the Mycenaean world and the archaic *poleis* is striking. What lies behind this change? The independent, relatively small communities typical of the Greek *poleis* have been explained in light of a new local focus and local empowerment after the spread of iron technology in the wake of the breakdown of international trade at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the demise of the palace élites. William H. McNeill claims that “a more democratic era dawned as iron-wielding invaders overthrew ruling elites that had based their power on a monopoly of

¹¹⁹⁰ Drews, *Basileus*, 1983, 116-131; Osborne, *Greece in the making*, 1996, 37; Hall, *A history of the archaic Greek world*, 2007, 120-127

¹¹⁹¹ Wright, “From chief to king,” 1995, 75; Palaima, “The nature of the Mycenaean *wanax*,” 1995, 131-132; Palaima, “*Wanaks* and related power terms,” 2006, 69

chariotry".¹¹⁹² Few archaeologists would concur to this view. Antony M. Snodgrass argues that the sociological importance attributed to iron "seems today quite unjustified" because "its introduction was far too complicated a process to have a direct influence on the known events of history".¹¹⁹³ I agree that metallurgy alone cannot explain the structure of the archaic *poleis*. However, the transition to iron may be argued to be indicative of a turn towards local, rather than regional or international power bases for political organisation in the Greek world. It must be emphasised that the qualitative division between Bronze Age and Iron Age politics is not absolute. As will be argued below (7.2.1), there may have been similarities between archaic *poleis* and local communities controlled by the Mycenaean palaces.

The diminished importance of bronze meant that trade in tin, formerly organised by the palaces, lost its position as a main source of power and prestige. The locally oriented nature of Greek Iron Age polities is reflected in their use of local iron that could be procured without regular contacts with a trans-regional trade network. However, as will be discussed below (7.2.1), the change from bronze to iron in Greece did not necessarily mean that local communities outside the palace centres were organised very differently in the Mycenaean period compared to the archaic period: the palaces were gone and their officials were no longer part of local politics in the archaic period, but the local communities in Greece probably continued their existence from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age. What changed politically in Greek communities in the transition from palaces to *poleis*? Did Greek politics change into something incomparable to Near Eastern political culture?

¹¹⁹² McNeill, *The pursuit of power*, 1982, 12-13

¹¹⁹³ Snodgrass, "Iron and the early metallurgy in the Mediterranean," 1980, 368-369

7.2.1 From palaces to *poleis*

Greek society in the Iron Age cannot be studied in isolation from its Late Bronze Age background. The first complex societies in Greece are the so-called palatial societies of Crete and the Greek mainland, the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations. The Mycenaean palaces of the mid-second millennium BCE were all destroyed around 1200 BCE, the end of the Late Bronze Age, called the Late Helladic III period. This was followed by a Submycenaean period of continued settlement at several sites, ending around 1050. The first monumental building in Greece in the Iron Age was erected around 900, at Lefkandi.¹¹⁹⁴ Thus, the LHIII period is followed by a Submycenaean period with a certain degree of cultural continuity from the world of the palaces. This period is followed by the Geometric period from around 1050. At the end of the Geometric period, scholars usually place the Homeric world, around 700 (cf. 3.3). The gap between the palaces and the *poleis* may seem to be quite small. However, there is a world of difference between the *oikos* of Odysseus and the palace at Mycenae, Pylos or Tiryns.

Despite a certain continuity of culture and a narrowing window of ignorance about the period between the fall of the palaces and the epics of Homer, it can be maintained that a Dark Age followed the collapse of the palaces, with an overall decline in social complexity in Greece. There was a continuation in language and religion. The degree of social continuity is disputed, however. Ian Morris argues that the “second-generation” of Greeks after the collapse of the “first-generation” society “had only distorted memories of the first, but these notions of a lost heroic age were central to second-generation culture”.¹¹⁹⁵ Thus, if Morris’ suggestion is correct, the people of archaic Greece remembered the Mycenaean period as a heroic age, but more

¹¹⁹⁴ Cf. Whitley, *The archaeology of ancient Greece*, 2001, 77-90

¹¹⁹⁵ Morris, “The collapse and regeneration of complex society in Greece, 1500-500 BC (version 1.0),” 2005, 2

as distorted notions of a glorious past than true memories of the socio-economic organisation of Late Bronze Age palace culture in Greece. Other scholars see a greater degree of continuity (cf. 3.3). Kurt A. Raaflaub argues that epic society must have existed at some point, beyond the epic poet's deliberate epic distance.¹¹⁹⁶ As is evident from the Homeric epics, Mycenaean centres such as Mycenae or Pylos, were indeed remembered as important places. However, equally evident from the Homeric epics is that all memory of the palace society with its Linear B script and centralised redistributive economy was lost in the Iron Age. It is difficult to accept that a society resembling that of epic must have existed, as Raaflaub claims. It is even more difficult to accept that this society was a continuity of the Mycenaean palaces. How can scholars hope to sift what are fantastical elements from true memory? It should be accepted that there is a gap between Late Bronze Age and Iron Age Greek culture, material as well as socio-political. Does this mean that the Greek *polis* is incomparable with Bronze Age societies?

The political economy of the Mycenaean Late Bronze Age palace society was characterised by the mass of the population being agricultural producers whose surplus was redistributed by a restricted élite and a palace-centred bureaucracy. This may be said to correspond to the palace economy of Near Eastern polities, often termed a two-sector economy (cf. 2.3; 5.8). Although the palaces did not control everything, important resources were controlled by the palaces and redistributed by them in a centrally organised bureaucracy of sorts. In contrast, the *polis* society of the archaic period was characterised by independent land-owners who were citizens and warriors of their communities and ruled their own polities in collective institutions of decision-making, in what may be termed citizen-state. Thus, in the palatial societies, all power was in the hands of the palace, whereas in the citizen-states, power was with the community. However, these terms are too general to adequately describe the

¹¹⁹⁶ Raaflaub, "Auf dem Streitwagen des Sängers," 2011, 351

degree of popular power in a polity, as local decisions can be made by the people in a predominantly palatial society and redistribution can take place in a citizen-state. I can therefore see no fundamental structural incommensurability between palatial societies and citizen-states.

The most important sources to Mycenaean society are the Linear B tablets. These are for the most part lists of rations and supplies left behind by scribes, and provide glimpses into a brief period in LH IIIB when these clay documents were accidentally preserved in fires of destruction. From these tablets, Mycenaean society has been reconstructed. How were the Mycenaean palace-societies organised?

The *wa-na-ka* or *wanax* was the highest authority in the Mycenaean states and is usually referred to as a ruler. There were also local leaders known as *lawagetai* and *basileis*. The palaces were the centres of the Mycenaean polities.¹¹⁹⁷ Carol G. Thomas argues that central authority was not absolute, because local leaders possessed impressive holdings.¹¹⁹⁸ Indeed, local authorities appear to have had much influence. The *qa-si-re-u* or *basileus* was responsible for the distribution of bronze to local smiths, meaning that he controlled important resources.¹¹⁹⁹ However, against Thomas' argument that the central authority was not absolute, it can be argued that the *basileus* as local leader was exactly an agent of the central authorities, responsible for the distribution of bronze from the palace.

¹¹⁹⁷ Recently, Jorrit Kelder has argued that the Mycenaean palaces were all integrated in a single regional kingdom (Kelder, "A great king at Mycenae – an argument for the *wanax* as Great King and the *lawagetas* as vassal ruler," 2008, 1-26; Kelder, *The kingdom of Mycenae*, 2009). This is an intriguing suggestion, and if it can be proved, would definitely change the image of continuity from palaces to *poleis*. The debate on a possible Mycenaean kingdom will not be pursued here, however.

¹¹⁹⁸ Thomas, "The components of political identity in Mycenaean Greece," 1995, 351-352

¹¹⁹⁹ Cf. PY An 261 (= tablet 40 in Ventris & Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 1956), this text is discussed further below.

The identity of the *basileis* is not easy to establish. Pierre Carlier suggests they may have been leaders of a local *gerousia*, or council of elders.¹²⁰⁰ This is an intriguing suggestion, and indeed, there may have been local councils led by the *basileis*. There is not much evidence for this, however, because the Linear B texts concern economic transactions, not political decision-making processes. The political relations between a local *basileus*, *gerousia*, and the central authority cannot be reconstructed from the Linear B tablets.

Life in the village communities is largely left out in the Linear B sources. Alexander Uchitel points out the existence of two terms, *da-mo* and *do-e-ro*, in the Linear B tablets from Pylos and suggests that “the category of population called *da-mo* largely remains outside the control of the central authority of Pylos”.¹²⁰¹ Thus, the impression of centralised control in the Linear B tablets may be a result of the nature of the sources, being administrative texts from the palace. Mycenaean societies in the interpretation of Uchitel appear as polarised into a central palace and an independent rural population. How different were the local communities of the Mycenaean period from the archaic *poleis*?

The exact meaning of Mycenaean political terms is difficult to assess. It is beyond doubt that some of these terms survived into the language of the *poleis*. In the Homeric epics, and later Greek language, *basileus* is the most common word for king or chief.¹²⁰² *Anax* is used in the sense of lord or master.¹²⁰³ The *da-mo* or *damos* is

¹²⁰⁰ Carlier, “*Qa-si-re-u* et *qa-si-re-wi-ja*,” 1995, 362-363

¹²⁰¹ Uchitel, “The archives of Mycenaean Greece and the ancient Near East,” 1985, 28

¹²⁰² *LSJ*: *basileus*

recognisable in *demos*, the common people in the countryside or the sovereign people, the free citizens.¹²⁰⁴ A continuity of some decentralised, local Mycenaean social institutions into the Dark Age is likely. However, it is not permissible to reconstruct Mycenaean society from later Greek usage of terms found in Linear B. Local continuity of settlement and certain aspects of culture are likely, but the disappearance of regional authority must have had a profound effect on political culture in particular. The hiatus in the use of written language is quite telling. It must be assumed that the changes from bronze to iron meant a decentralisation of power, obviating the use of archives, without assuming that this necessarily equals local collective rule by the people.

Cynthia Shelmerdine emphasises that in Mycenae “the real power of the king and his administrators was to harness the diverse resources of a Mycenaean state, both human and material, to the distinct advantage of themselves”.¹²⁰⁵ In this perspective, the rise of palaces on the Greek mainland can be viewed as a result of a process where an élite managed to allocate important resources to itself, building up a basis of power through redistribution. This led to a centralisation and concentration of power. This is not the only aspect of Mycenaean society, however. Ian Morris points out that the palace did not control the whole society: there are references in Linear B to property outside palatial control.¹²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, a striking feature of the Linear B tablets is the emphasis on hierarchy and centralisation: valuable materials were distributed from the palace centre, e.g. bronze to the bronze-smiths, as seen from Linear B lists of bronze allocations, where a *basileus* is responsible for the distribution of bronze to a

¹²⁰³ *LSJ: anax*

¹²⁰⁴ *LSJ: dēmos* II and II

¹²⁰⁵ Shelmerdine, “Mycenaean palatial administration,” 2006, 84

¹²⁰⁶ Morris, “The collapse and regeneration of complex society in Greece, 1500-500 BC (version 1.0),” 2005, 4

gerousia of bronze workers.¹²⁰⁷ The produce of the local farmers was collected by the palace for storage and recorded on Linear B tablets. It can be argued that there may have been local communities outside the palace where farmers owned their own land. However, as already mentioned, there is little evidence to how these local communities were organised. The Linear B sources tell us about an acquisitive centre eager to secure resources for itself, but little about local conditions. In a few texts, there are hints at the existence of local *basileis* and *gerousia*.¹²⁰⁸ However, this evidence is difficult to interpret, as there is little more to go on than the terms themselves, with no context that could have told us what they implied in Mycenaean society. Thus, it must be maintained that palace societies were more centralistic than the later *poleis*. The ruler in his palace was a different type of authority than the councils or assemblies of citizens in archaic *poleis*. Therefore, it can be argued that the change from bronze to iron accompanied great socio-political changes in Greece.

Scholars argue that the citizens of Greek communities of the Iron Age held the citizen-assembly as their highest authority.¹²⁰⁹ Indeed, the assembly was important in polities of the archaic period, as seen in the Homeric epics, Hesiod, and the archaic poets. It can therefore be argued that collective decisions were authoritative in several *poleis* (cf. 3.3-4). However, access to the assembly cannot be claimed to have been universal in all *poleis*, even among citizens. It cannot be claimed that the *polis* emerged as an inclusive political community by nature. The citizen collective was

¹²⁰⁷The evidence for the distribution of bronze by a *basileus* and the existence of a *gerousia* on a local level is PY An 261 (= tablet 40 in Ventris & Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 1956). This tablet has been interpreted as evidence for the central organisation of metallurgy. However, there are suggestions that the bronze workers were a local community and not palace dependents: Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy argues that PY An 261 is a list of leaders and members of a kinship group, or sib, from regions outside the palatial centre, that were summoned to the palace to perform work as smiths (Deger-Jalkotzy, "Working for the palace: PY An 261," 1998-1999, 68-76). This is an interesting argument, but I will not pursue this debate further. I accept the interpretation that the people in PY An 261 were bronze workers that received their raw materials from the palace.

¹²⁰⁸ Cf. Deger-Jalkotzy, "Working for the palace: PY An 261," 1998-1999

¹²⁰⁹ Morris, "An archaeology of equalities? The Greek city-states," 1997, 100-102

narrow and in several *poleis*, only a circle of élite peers were in power. *Poleis* were not characterised by popular power; popular power was one possible outcome of the power-struggles in Greek communities.

7.2.2 From palaces to palaces: the Near Eastern world

The transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age in the Near East was less dramatic than in Greece, although important changes took place. Around 1200, a process of widespread collapse set in where some cities were destroyed, notably Ugarit. Other cities were abandoned, such as Hattusha, capital of the Hittite empire. The Hittite empire itself disappeared from the political map of the Near East.¹²¹⁰ The Iron Age was different from the Bronze Age in the Near East in important respects. Amélie Kuhrt points out that Babylonia suffered crises from in the 11th century and were invaded by Elamites and Arameans.¹²¹¹ Scholars agree that fundamental social and technological changes took place after 1200 in the Near East. Liverani argues that the collapse of the palaces entailed the breakdown of centralistic dominance in trade, opening up for independent agents. Also, technological changes meant that local ore became more important than imported metals.¹²¹² In my opinion, this is a reasonable assessment of the structural changes that followed the collapse of the palaces and their exchange systems. However, it should be pointed out that several of the ancient centres soon re-established themselves as hubs in the trading systems of the Iron Age after the collapse around 1200, most prominently the Phoenician cities of the Levant.¹²¹³ This does not mean that there were no significant changes in the Near East in the Iron Age. Jursa emphasises that new Aramean tribes claimed a place on the

¹²¹⁰ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 385-386

¹²¹¹ Cf. Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 374-381

¹²¹² Liverani, "The collapse of the Near Eastern regional system," 1987, 70-71

¹²¹³ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, 1997 [1995], 401-410

political map of the Near East in the Iron Age.¹²¹⁴ In the Iron Age, the camel became an important animal for draught and personal transport. Also, alphabetical scripts became widespread within the cuneiform cultures of Syria and Mesopotamia.¹²¹⁵ I agree that these are important changes in Mesopotamian culture. However, continuity of settlement, cult and intellectual heritage is conspicuous in Mesopotamia. There is no hiatus in the Near East to the same degree as the transition from the Mycenaean to the archaic period in Greece, with its temporary suspension of written records and the total abandonment of the Linear B script.

It can be argued that the greatest difference between Near Eastern societies and those of Iron Age Greece is the lack in Greece of central authorities on a regional level among archaic *poleis* and the absence of stable leadership based in strong institutions. The palaces were never re-established in Greece, whereas they survived in the Near East and continued to thrive. Centralised leadership in Greece could have emerged in the form of a unified élite or a single ruler, but few, if any hereditary kingships were established in Greek *poleis* in the archaic period. Sparta is the obvious exception, but even there, the kings were circumscribed by the power of officials (cf. 3.4.1). The absence of stable central authorities in Greece is characteristic of archaic *poleis*. This resulted in heterarchy and fierce competition within the élite, *stasis*. Apparently, only with the establishment of tyranny in Greece, it became possible for the people to constitute themselves as a defined people, rather than being tied to the authority of local aristocrats. This tendency to élite heterarchy is not seen in Near Eastern polities. There, rulers sought to give the impression of absolute authority. As has been seen throughout the preceding chapters, however, the population of several cities and pastoralist communities were recognised as parties in discussions and treaties (4.3.3; 4.7.2; 5.4; 5.5.6; 5.10.2; 5.11.2; 5.11.4; 6.4.3; 6.4.4; 6.6.2; 6.7). In spite of the

¹²¹⁴ Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2010, 1

¹²¹⁵ Jursa, *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia*, 2010, 48

differences in Greek and Near Eastern political traditions, with small city-states characterized by rivaling élites on the one hand and ancient urban centres with temples and palaces on the other, the politics of local communities, towns, and cities can be compared. The local communities of cities in the Near East can be compared to the citizen-communities of the archaic *poleis*. What were the strategies for power available to these local communities? How did people take part in decision-making in the polities where they lived?

7.3 Revolt, civil strife, and popular power

Throughout the present investigation, instances of revolt have been discussed (3.4.3; 6.1-3). These revolts can be seen as expressions of popular power: revolt does not only reveal a weakness with the central authorities, but is a manifestation of an intention by the people to act as agents in structuring their own socio-political environment. Revolt may not lead to lasting changes and it may not grant the people power unconditionally and indefinitely, but popular revolt momentarily sets the hierarchy of society out of play and makes it possible for the people to set the agenda. Popular revolt can take several forms, from destructive riots to more contained protests. When the people are acting as a collective and are taking power into their own hands, they may be said to pursue a broad corporate strategy for power. However, the group revolting does not necessarily speak for the entire citizen community. A problem that has been met repeatedly in the Near Eastern sources to revolt is that of identifying the groups involved in the revolt (cf. 6.5). I will return to this further below in this section.

From Greek sources, one particular instance of revolt is the protest of the Athenian *demos* against the attempt of Isagoras and the Spartans to dissolve the council in

508/7 BCE (cf. 3.4.3). It can be argued that with this act, the Athenians as a people intervened to secure their access to decision-making bodies as well as to put an end to destructive *stasis* between aristocratic leaders. This *stasis* had prevailed in the period before Peisistratos' rise to power as tyrant and threatened to flare up again. In my analysis, the Athenian *demos* was pursuing a broad corporate strategy for power: as a collective the Athenians take direct action and chase away the usurper Isagoras and his foreign troops. In the following decades, the Athenians established a democracy where even the poorest citizens were guaranteed a degree of participation in politics. A similarly empowered people cannot be found in Near Eastern polities. However, there are several episodes of revolt in Near Eastern sources, particular the Amarna letters. These will be discussed in the following.

From the Late Bronze Age Syrian cities of Ammyia, Tyre, and Byblos, the Amarna letters contain reports that there were instances of revolt (cf. 6.4.1-3). In these cities, "the mayors" installed by the Egyptian Pharaoh were chased away or killed. "The citizens" or groups of them were responsible, and the episodes appear to be protests against "the mayors", in support of the rising kingdom of Amurru. It should be pointed out that new rulers were installed in all these cities after the revolts. Thus, there is no evidence that the people took control of the decision-making bodies or that the people became sovereign in the constitution. The identity of the groups revolting is difficult to establish. As I have argued in chapter 6, however, "the men of GN" is used in the Amarna letters to refer to the collective of townspeople (cf. 6.5.2). The revolts show that the people could mobilise as a group and become agents with their own corporate strategies for power.

The term for people, "the men of GN" or "the sons of GN", apparently has a range of referents in the Amarna letters, from a restricted group of elders to the townspeople or citizens in general. It is not always clear who are hiding behind this term, and the

interpretation of the sources will vary widely after how the term “the men of GN” is interpreted. Thus, an interpretation where “the men of GN” are interpreted as a council of “elders” can be used to argue for a reconstruction where a local élite of powerful men pursue a broad élite strategy for power. On the other hand, the council of “elders” can be interpreted as a collective of heads of households pursuing a narrow corporate strategy for power, sharing power among themselves as community representatives. Also, if “the men of GN” are interpreted as a collective of citizens, in the sense of “the people”, a reconstruction where “the people” pursue a broad corporate strategy can be argued. In certain instances in the Amarna letters, it seems to me quite clear that it is the townspeople as a collective who act in the uprising (cf. 6.5.2). In the regicide cities of the Amarna age, the city-population act in revolt against their rulers. It should be pointed out that there is also evidence that there were competing groups within the regicide cities, so that there is no reason to suppose that there was a united popular uprising behind every instance of revolt. Quite the opposite appears to have been the case, in fact: e.g. the population of Byblos was not united in their opinion of their ruler Rib-Hadda, according to Rib-Hadda’s own reports to Pharaoh (cf. 6.4.3).

To me, it appears evident that the people of Athens and the people of Ammiya, Tyre, and Byblos were knowledgeable agents pursuing their own strategies for power. The Athenian *demos* and “the men of GN” acted in the capacity of agents challenging the prevailing structure of power in their polities. The Athenians challenged the establishment of a Spartan-supported oligarchy and reacted in the face of danger of continued civil strife (3.4.3). “The men of GN” in Byblos, Ammiya, or Tyre did not want “a mayor” controlled by Pharaoh, but opted for rulers loyal to Amurru (6.4.1-3). Thus, the people of these cities dictate the foreign policies of their cities and attempt to install the leaders of their choosing. There is an important difference in that the Athenian *demos* seized power, taking the reins of the city-state into their own hands, whereas the people of the Syrian cities installed new rulers or asked Pharaoh to

provide new rulers for them. However, the people in Syrian cities through their revolts nevertheless demonstrate that they were capable of throwing sitting rulers and to rule themselves in the interstice before a new king was installed (cf. 6.4.3-4). Of note in the Greek and Syrian examples is the existence of several groups in the struggles for power (cf. 3.4.2 and 6.5.2). In the following, these competing groups will be discussed from a perspective of civil war.

As mentioned above (7.2.2), the Greek *polis* in the archaic period was plagued by *stasis*, civil strife between factions, groups consisting of aristocrats and their supporters. From the archaic poets (cf. 3.4.2; 3.4.4-5) it is evident that aristocratic or élite leaders defined the goals for civil strife. The goal was more often than not personal power for the leader of the faction, resulting in the loss of influence and power for the other aristocrats. This can be observed in the poems of Alkaios (3.4.4), where Pittakos is accused of making himself leader of the people in order to achieve power in Mytilene. It is implicit in this criticism that Alkaios would rather have his own aristocratic faction in power. For Alkaios, a crucial difference between the preferred aristocratic rule and unacceptable tyranny seems to be that Pittakos is seeking power for himself, whereas Alkaios' own perspective appears to be that the élite should rule collectively. The lines of conflict do not appear to have been between clearly formulated ideologies or constitutions, but struggles between groups of aristocrats and élite leaders that catered to the masses. From Theognis (3.4.5), it can be observed that the élite could be divided in *stasis*, and that the different groups in the conflict could be more or less friendly to the people. There are no obvious democratic parties visible in the sources to these conflicts however, in the sense of a party of the people acting for the people, in the sense of commoners or the masses. Members of the élite sought power with the complicity of the people, but they did not intend to give power into the hands of the people. This means that the people could be powerful in their role as supporters of an élite leader, but not that they achieved lasting power. As mentioned above, the obvious exception to this is the Athenian

demos in 508/7 that acted on their own alternative with no leader present in the city (3.4.3). Kleisthenes would have been a clear candidate for such a leading role, but he appears to have been in exile at the time. Therefore, the people came to the fore as their own liberators from Sparta and the oligarchs.

Civil strife can be observed in the regicide Syrian cities in the Amarna correspondence (cf. 6.4.2-3). In *EA* 89, there is a report from Tyre that some people have killed “the mayor” and set up a new one that the people do not want (6.4.2). In this situation, a group of citizens act in order to replace the current ruler with a new one. The citizens in general apparently did not want the new ruler. This can be interpreted as a parallel to archaic *stasis*, where groups of citizens were mobilised by members of the élite in order for them to gain personal power. The opposition to the new “mayor” at Tyre reveals that there were diverging opinions on who should rule. The people are reported to regard the new “mayor” as a usurper, but were too afraid to say anything once he was in power.

There are further examples of civil strife from the Amarna letters: in *EA* 138, there is a report from the deposed “mayor” Rib-Hadda of Byblos that half the city had supported him and the other half had supported the rebels (6.4.3). Rib-Hadda left Byblos after “the lords of the city” declared that they supported the rebels. Not long after, Rib-Hadda tried to return and was supported by “the residents”. In the ensuing struggle between loyalists and rebels, “the mayor” lost and went into exile. This can also be seen as a parallel to archaic *stasis*, with groups in support of different political goals competing for power in the city. However, different from the examples of civil strife in Alkaios or Theognis (3.4.4-3.4.5), there is no direct evidence in *EA* 138 for élite leaders seeking power in complicity with the *demos*. Rather, “the lords of the city” and “the residents” appear as groups with goals and objectives in their own right. “The men of Byblos” are also mentioned, writing to Rib-Hadda in exile. It is

not possible to distinguish these as a separate group comparable to the *demos* of Mytilene, however, that supported Pittakos to the chagrin of the aristocrats. “The lords of the city” and “the residents” may be interpreted as élite groups vying for power. Their identity is difficult to establish, however. “The residents” may have been a popular faction (cf. 6.5.2), meaning that the struggles in Byblos were between the élite and the masses. This is not certain, however, and cannot be determined as long as “the residents” cannot be defined more accurately.

From the examples in *EA* 89 and *EA* 138, it can be seen that the cities Tyre and Byblos, though formally city-states ruled by “mayors” who answered to the Pharaoh, did not work as hierarchic pyramids with the ruler at the top. There are instead crossing lines of interest between higher and lower levels in the hierarchy of the polity. Groups of citizens pursue strategies for power in support of or in opposition to the ruler, but they also rely on their own collective strength. It is difficult to identify the different groups discussed in the letters. They were probably not corporate groups with regular meetings. However, decision-making assemblies are frequently encountered in Near Eastern sources. It is to this evidence that I now turn, in order to compare further aspects of Greek and Near Eastern political culture.

7.4 Assemblies

As has been seen repeatedly in the preceding chapters there are great difficulties in defining important aspects of Near Eastern assemblies. Who participated in them? How often did they meet? What authority did they have? These questions can only be answered tentatively (cf. 4.3.1-5; 4.7.1-4; 5.5.1-6; 5.6; 5.10.1-2; 5.11.1-4; 6.5.2; 6.7). This is in contrast to the Greek evidence: as was seen in chapter 3, assemblies and councils are quite well attested for archaic *poleis* and played an important role in their

political structure. A direct comparison of Greek and Near Eastern political institutions is difficult. In the following, I will compare the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian assemblies to assemblies of archaic Greek *poleis*. I will also discuss how the citizens of Neo-Babylonian cities were organized in decision-making bodies. These Near Eastern assemblies are rather well attested, albeit inadequately documented concerning their composition and competence. As will be seen, however, they may provide parallels to archaic Greek political practices.

In several Near Eastern texts, the Akkadian word *ālum* is used for “city” and “city-assembly”, creating a difficult double meaning. Was the whole city gathered in assembly or did the assembly represent the whole city? I have argued that the latter was the case for some cities, including Old Babylonian cities (4.3.3) and Old Assyrian Assur (5.5.4). However, there is the third possibility that “the city” was a restricted council and not a representative body at all. Again, this is difficult to determine due to our incomplete understanding of Akkadian political concepts and terms (cf. 1.5.4). Throughout the sources discussed in this investigation, the Akkadian word for assembly, *puhrum*, is used of small gatherings as well as large congregations. Thus, the terminology creates problems for a comparative analysis of institutions. However, this does not mean that there were no political practices identifiable from ancient Near Eastern sources comparable to those of archaic Greek *poleis*. In the following, evidence for assemblies from Mesopotamian cities will be compared to collective decision-making in Greek *poleis*.

The Old Assyrian “city-assembly” is an interesting case of collective decision-making in Mesopotamia. What does it imply when “the city” and “the city-assembly” are called the same, i.e. *ālum*? It would be rash to suppose from homonymy that the *ālum* was an assembly of all Assyrians or all citizens of the Old Assyrian city-state. The *ālum* reached decisions concerning the important trade in metals and textiles with

Anatolia and made treaties with foreign powers (cf. 5.5.4; 5.5.6). It is also attested that the *ālum* made decisions about rebuilding the city-walls of Assur (cf. 5.5.5). It appears the wealthiest merchants had leading roles in the *ālum* and there are no indications of large citizen-assemblies being convened regularly at Assur. Although “the city-assembly” was an important, perhaps the most important institution for decision-making in the Old Assyrian city-state, the people cannot be said to be sovereign in the polity of Assur. It is nevertheless of note that the *ālum*, as an assembly that included the king, the eponym, and the wealthiest merchants, was a collective authority and not a royal council: decisions were made by the *ālum*, not the king alone. The Old Assyrian city-state had complex institutions for making decisions that were binding on the whole community and that included representatives of the community.

“The city”, *ālum*, as a term for assembly is also well-attested in Old Babylonian legal documents, along with the term *puhrum*, “assembly”. There are no indications in these documents, however, that the *ālum* was a citizen-assembly in the sense of a gathering of all citizens for political decision-making. It rather appears that the *ālum* was a limited body of people making decisions in legal matters. The participants at the sessions of the *ālum* may have included a large number of citizens as onlookers, but the lists of witnesses suggest that the active participants were few and of high rank, including “the mayor” (cf. 4.3.1). The assemblies appear to have held meetings in public, and officials could be subjected to scrutiny there (cf. 4.3.2): in the *Codex Hammurapi* a judge who is accused of misconduct in office must answer in “the assembly”, *puhrum*. If he is found guilty, he must pay a fine in relation to the amount involved in the case, and he is expelled from his office as judge in “the assembly.”¹²¹⁶

In Old Babylonian legal documents, “the city-assembly”, *ālum*, and “the assembly”, *puhrum*, appear from city to city as parallel or, more probably, identical institutions. Both terms seem to refer to collective legal bodies that made decisions for the community. In Old Babylonian legal documents, officials of the king sometimes preside over the meetings (cf. 4.3.1-3). Thus, these assemblies were at least in certain cases dependent on officials of temples or the palace. This ties them to the central institutions of the Old Babylonian state. However, the assemblies appear as mainly local decision-making bodies that co-existed with central authorities and occasionally cooperated with them, rather than being state institutions. The mayor’s authority was rooted in the local communities of the cities (cf. 4.3.1). Thus, the power to make decisions was not centralised at the court of the Old Babylonian kings, but resided partly in local assemblies. This is important, because it shows that citizens of Old Babylonian cities were judged by their own community.

It does not seem a fruitful approach to treat all terms for decision-making gatherings as evidence for formally constituted institutions. In my opinion, what the several assemblies mentioned in Old Babylonian texts show is that there were local levels of decision-making where community representatives were in charge. These local community representatives were expected to be well informed about their local community (cf. 4.3.4). Apparently, arbitration was an important part of the legal system of Old Babylonian cities and this was done by local collective decision-making bodies, sometimes together with officials. This shows that the local and central authorities overlapped at certain stages. The local perspective of the collective decision-making bodies, however, ensured that they looked to the interests of their fellows. Thus, there was a local political level that cooperated with representatives of

¹²¹⁶ *Cod. Ham.* §5: Meek in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, 1971 [1969], 166; Viel, *Complete code of Hammurapi* vol. II, 2005, 397-399

the central authorities. This is indicative of popular power, in the sense that there was power outside the direct control of the palace or temples.

The difference is great between an archaic Greek *polis* and an Old Babylonian city. In the *polis*, there was nothing comparable to the central institutions of palace and temples. Greek temples did not play the same economic role as those of Mesopotamian cities. Also, there was a huge difference in scale between archaic *poleis* and Mesopotamian cities. However, as mentioned above, on a local level, comparisons can be made: Old Babylonian cities had assemblies and councils for adjudication where commoners had access, at least as onlookers (cf. 4.3.2; 4.3.5; 4.4). Thus, power did not rest with the king, his officials, and the temple officials alone. There were also local levels of decision-making, and these local levels were integrated with the central authorities through officials that cooperated with them, without dictating their operations. Some of the local communities of Old Babylonian cities, called *bābtum*, were neighbourhoods with their own institutions for adjudication (cf. 4.3.4). This is quite similar to institutions of a *polis* community where citizens were judged by their equals, in local assemblies. The local nature of the *bābtum* is evident from the nature of the cases it was responsible for; cases that demanded intimate knowledge of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The *bābtum* is then rather similar to the Athenian *demes*, the smallest local units out of which the late 6th century *polis* was constructed (cf. 3.4.3). The *demes* had their local institutions for adjudication. This is quite similar to the role played by the *bābtum* or quarters within Old Babylonian cities, as the smallest local authority, concerned with family matters and conducting its meetings locally.

As has been seen throughout chapter 4, 5, and 6, Mesopotamian cities appear to have had a collective identity and collective organs of decision-making. Different from the Old Assyrian material (5.1-6), where it is evident that the king of the city-state Assur

participated in the *ālum*, the Old Babylonian kings apparently did not frequently participate in assemblies (4.3-4.3.5). This is most likely an effect of the establishment of network states in the Old Babylonian period, where the ruler was not the king of a city-state, but ruled over several cities distributed over a vast territory. It appears that the assemblies retained their local importance in the cities under Babylonian rule. The king was not bound by their decisions, however, and the assemblies do not appear to have had political power. The decisions reached by the *ālum* or *puhrum* in the Old Babylonian legal documents concern legal matters, in particular disputes between citizens regarding real estate, and not politics (4.4). This is different from the role of “the city-assembly” in the Old Assyrian city-state that made decisions of a political nature (5.6). In the Neo-Assyrian period, it is evident that the local communities of the Babylonian cities were conducting their own affairs and made decisions concerning political allegiance (6.7). Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish how the local communities were organized. It seems like “the sons of the city” formed a group of representatives for the local city community. Evidence for “elders”, “sons of the city” and “the assembly” are difficult to disentangle and it does not appear that Babylonian cities had powerful popular assemblies formally distinguished from other gatherings of decision-makers. However, the Assyrian kings had to address and convince collective bodies of citizens in open meetings, indicating that the people were well informed of political goings on and probably could influence decisions by clamouring or shouting.

In Greek *poleis*, popular power and assemblies were closely connected. The legal system of Athens with its jury courts was dominated by the masses from the 6th century. It is not evident that the Old Babylonian *ālum* or *puhrum* were similar to the judiciary assemblies of Athens, however. At Athens, after the reforms of Kleisthenes all citizens could participate in assembly-sessions and systems were devised to ensure that the entire citizenry took part at one point or another in decision-making processes (3.4.3). This is not documented for Near Eastern polities. It may be that the entire

citizen population was present at decision-making gatherings in Neo-Babylonian cities, but that does not mean that they participated directly in making decisions.

Who participated in the Old Assyrian, Old Babylonian, and Iron Age Babylonian assemblies? From the Old Babylonian evidence, it appears that the assembly met in public, but the decisions seem to have been taken by a restricted group of people. This indicates a narrow corporate strategy for power, where community representatives reach decisions for members of their own community, the citizens. The Old Babylonian public jury courts are similar to the Athenian jury courts established by Solon, in the sense that the citizens were judged by their fellows. However, there is no certainty concerning how jurors were selected in the Old Babylonian cities, so the parallel cannot be taken far. It may be that commoners were members of the juries, but the evidence adduced for this, in particular the *Nippur Trial for Homicide*, cannot be regarded as conclusive (cf. 4.3.5). From the Neo-Assyrian evidence, it can be argued that a large number of people were present at the meetings of the assemblies, but this is not certain (cf. 6.7). One of the ancient Near Eastern assemblies whose workings are documented in any detail is the assembly of the Old Assyrian *kārum* Kanesh. This will be discussed in the following.

As mentioned already, the evidence from the Old Assyrian city-state indicates that decisions were in the hands of a restricted number of people. However, there is evidence for more inclusive assemblies in other communities of the Old Assyrian period: the Old Assyrian city-state had a number of trading-settlements in Anatolia. There, Assyrian merchants lived in a commercial quarter called the *kārum*, “quay”, and they lived by their own rules inside Anatolian city-states. The best documented of these settlements is the *kārum* Kanesh. From the so-called statute texts of the colony, it appears that its highest authority was the assembly of “the great” (5.5.1). “The great” were presumably the wealthiest and most influential merchants. If the assembly

of “the great” decided to do so, an assembly of “the small and great” could be gathered. However, “the small” merchants were not allowed to convene an assembly. As the wealthiest in the colony, “the great” merchants were in charge of the *bīt kārim*, the office of the colony. The merchants were in regular contact with the authorities at home in Assur. Also, the merchants in Anatolia were members of family firms that had their bases in Assur. Some of their business had to be taken to Assur for adjudication by “the city”. Quite regularly, the authorities in Assur, “the city”, wrote to the colonies and gave them instructions. These instructions were passed on from the *kārum* Kanesh to the other colonies in Anatolia.

It appears that the *kārum* Kanesh convened a general assembly only in exceptional cases and only at the orders of “the great”. Therefore, it can be argued that power was in the hands of the heads of the wealthiest merchant houses. In the colonies subordinate to the *kārum* Kanesh, “the small and great” appear as the main authority and no separate role for “the great” is mentioned (5.5.2). These colonies answered to the *kārum* Kanesh, who in turn answered to “the city”. Thus, there was no powerful citizen-assembly comparable to those of Greek *poleis* in the Old Assyrian city-state or its colonies.

It could be argued that the Old Assyrian city-state was a heterarchy, because there were several groups of wealthy merchants in power. Thus, Old Assyrian society was not ruled by a cohesive ruling group, but by the representatives of several merchant houses, among them the king. However, it cannot be said that the individual merchants were in a position to act independently of “the city” and pursue their own political agenda. They co-operate in common decision-making bodies and are subject to the authority of these bodies. Rather, the structure of the Old Assyrian city-state can be termed oligarchic, in the sense that the heads of several families were sharing power, to the exclusion of the less successful merchants: oligarchic polities emphasise

distinctions between the ruling minority and the rest of the inhabitants by establishing criteria for participation that cannot be met by the majority of the population. Thus, the rest of the population is actively excluded (cf. 1.4.2). This appears to have been the case in Assur and the *kārum* Kanesh, where “the small” were only consulted at the discretion of “the great”. Thus, only the heads of a limited number of wealthy merchant houses had power in the polity.

The relations between the wealthiest families and the rest of the population of Assur are not well documented. Indirectly, from the sources for the *kārum* Kanesh, there are indications that the concept of a general assembly, “the great and small” was established in Old Assyrian politics, but this cannot be proved beyond doubt (cf. 5.6). At any rate, this body was not sovereign in the polity. Rather, “the city” was, as an assembly that included the king and the eponym. The wealthiest merchants appear to have taken turns in making decisions and serving in the most important offices. The king was not a despotic leader, but one of several leaders in the community, who all met in “the city”. What are the similarities and differences between the Old Assyrian city-state and the archaic Greek oligarchies? What strategies for power were pursued in the Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies?

The dominance of “the great” and their sharing of power with the king in “the city” indicate that the polity was characterised by a narrow corporate strategy for power. “The small” could only act when “the great” wanted them to. Therefore, popular power in the sense of agency from below is not to be expected. This is comparable to the situation in archaic Sparta, where the polity was dominated by a *gerousia* that included the kings: the popular assembly, *apella*, could not propose any separate measures (cf. 3.4.1.) On the other hand, evidence for a general assembly in the Old Assyrian city-state is not conclusive and it does not appear that such an assembly was regularly convened. The parallel lies in the strategy for power, where a narrow

corporation of formally equal powerful people rules the polity in compliance with the broader segments of the citizenry. Thus, commoners are not excluded from participating completely, but their participation is circumscribed. Commoners are excluded from taking political initiative on formal criteria, i.e. lack of belonging to “the elders”, as in Sparta, or “the great”, as in Assyria. It is important, however, that citizens could attain to this group given that they came in possession of enough wealth and attained the social status necessary for joining the group with direct access to power. Thus, the ruling group was not a closed élite: it was formally a distinguished part of the collective of citizens and its qualities of distinction were not in principle beyond the reach of commoners.

The evidence for assemblies in the Old Assyrian city-state and the Old Babylonian cities indicates that the wealthiest members of the community were regularly involved in running the polities, by making legal and political decisions. They did so in complicity with the king and his officials. In the Old Assyrian city-state the king took part in the meetings of “the city-assembly”. In the cities of the Old Babylonian network state, on the other hand, the city-assemblies normally operated without the king. The relation between the citizens who participated in the city-assemblies and the rest of the citizens cannot be securely established. It is likely that the rest of the citizens were onlookers in legal processes, but this must remain conjecture. General assemblies do not appear to have been in charge of the polities of the Old Assyrian city-state or the cities of the Old Babylonian network state. This is in contrast to the Babylonian cities of the Iron Age, where it is evident that “the sons of the city” were in charge of the polity and answered to the Assyrian king and his envoys (cf. 6.7). Although it cannot be determined whether “the sons of the city” were a large group of citizens or a more restricted group of community representatives, it seems evident that the collective of citizens were in charge, and not a council controlled by the Assyrians. The Assyrian kings frequently granted privileges to the Babylonian cities and these were considered to apply to all the people in the city (cf. 6.6.2). Thus, the

cities of Neo-Assyrian Babylonia appear to have had a great degree of autonomy. The polity was in the hands of the collective of citizens, through their representatives who undertook negotiations with Assyrian kings and other rulers.

It cannot be claimed that Mesopotamian assemblies played the same role as they did in archaic Greek *poleis*. They were not the place for the expression of the will of the masses. However, the Mesopotamian assemblies do represent a collective identity for the city. They facilitated decision-making processes made by the community for the community, albeit through heads of households, wealthy merchants, and other distinguished members of the community. I turn now to evidence for smaller decision-making bodies in Near Eastern polities, often referred to as “the elders”. These groups may have been decision-making élites. Does their influence and importance mean that power was in the hands of a narrow élite in Near Eastern polities?

7.5 “Elders” and eponyms

Throughout the evidence discussed for political traditions of Greek and Near Eastern polities, “elders” frequently appear in a decision-making capacity. Who were they? What was their position in the community? In the following, “the elders” of Old Babylonian Mari and Assur will be discussed. In earlier research on popular decision-making in ancient Near Eastern societies, much emphasis has been placed on a “primitive democracy” from tribal institutions (cf. 1.3-4). In this line of reasoning, cities are viewed as part of the development of an increasingly hierarchic form of society. Thus, pastoralists are egalitarian and democratically minded, and city-states ruled by kings still have remnants of the original egalitarian institutions. When the king of a city-state establishes an empire, despotism emerges and most traces of the

original egalitarian order disappears.¹²¹⁷ From this paradigm, scholars have argued that whenever there is evidence of communal-decision making in Near Eastern polities, i.e. decisions made by “elders”, this is a remnant from pastoralist traditions. In the Old Babylonian period, the Amorites have provided the pastoralist alibi for explaining the presence of communal organs of decision-making in cities.¹²¹⁸ It should be pointed out, however, that the Mari evidence shows that there were close ties between sedentary and pastoralist populations: they often belonged to the same tribal confederations (4.6). The argument that collective organs of decision-making were somehow being transferred to an urban environment by pastoralists does not explain this evidence very well. Collective decision-making by elders belongs equally in urban and pastoralist contexts and thus it cannot be claimed that the cities had less room than pastoralist societies for collective decision-making in their political structure. “The elders” should not be seen as survivors from a pastoralist political tradition, but be analysed in the context they appear in the sources. As will be discussed in the following, their position is comparable to that of Greek “elders”, in particular the Hesiodic *basileis* or the Spartan *gerousia*.

In the Mari evidence, local leaders of both sedentary and semi-nomadic communities, the *sugāgū*, convened for assemblies. The *sugāgum* was a local leader that was selected by “the elders” of his community and who had authority as judge and leader. In this sense, he is reminiscent of the *basileis* in Hesiod, who were responsible for arbitration and sometimes convened in assemblies, as well (cf. 3.3.2). Different from the Homeric *basileis*, who formed an élite with a position unattainable by the commoners, the *basileis* of Hesiod appear as local notables that were not above criticism from the local community. However, it is likely that Hesiod himself

¹²¹⁷ Cf. Jacobsen, “Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia,” 1970 [1943]

¹²¹⁸ McKenzie, “The elders in the Old Testament,” 1959, 404; Klengel, “Zu den *šībūtum* in altbabylonischer Zeit,” 1960, 365

belonged to the social stratum of the *basileis*: his peasant persona appears as a literary device and not evidence of his social background or perspective. The *basileis* of the *Works and Days* appear as more of an aristocratic élite than the *sūgāgū* in Mari, who were actually selected by their community “elders”.

The *sugāgum* and “the elders” of Mari communities were local powers that took care of the interests of their fellow townspeople. In particular “the elders” appear as important for the functioning of local politics, and they could step in in case a local leader died (cf. 4.7.4). “The elders” were probably heads of households. The local selection of the *sugāgum* by “the elders” suggests that they were members of the local communities where they had authority, and not appointed royal officials. The semi-autonomous status of local communities of towns and camps throughout the Mari kingdom does not signify a despotic king at the top of a strict hierarchy, but rather that communities were left to decide on local matters themselves. What does this tell us about popular power in local communities of network states like Mari?

“The elders” can be fit into several reconstructions of local politics. They can be viewed as an oligarchic group of powerful individuals, heads of prominent families or households that dominated their local communities. This was seen in Sparta (3.4.1), where the *gerousia* included the kings. Sparta can be said to fit a hierarchic model, where a limited council monopolises local decision-making and actively excludes the rest of the villagers or townspeople. Was this also the case in Mari communities? The Mari “elders” appear as community representatives more than a ruling group. “The elders” can be viewed as representatives of the interests of the different households in the town or village. This fits with a consensual model, where the relations of power are characterised by negotiations in order to accommodate the interests of the entire community (cf. 2.9). Admittedly, the sources rarely provide evidence that enables us to determine the relations between “the elders” and the rest of the local community.

However, the position of “the elders” as local authorities is evident from their important role in the selection of candidates for local leadership. There is no evidence for a conflict of interests between “the elders” and the rest of the local community. Therefore, it seems likely that “the elders” in the Mari sources represent the interests of the community.

The strategy for power that “the elders” pursue in the local communities of the Mari kingdom is that of a narrow corporation: they form an elect group, but reach decisions for the community, including the negotiation of peace. They represent their community and meet with kings or their representatives, either by going to the palace or by receiving envoys in their home community in open meetings (cf. 4.7.4). Although they were a limited group, they represented the entire community and worked openly. The recruitment of “elders” was probably from among the most influential families of the local community. Therefore, they cannot be claimed to be a broad corporation that included all citizens. However, their decisions were for the local community, made from a local perspective and not from the court of the king in Mari. Therefore, they cannot be said to pursue élite strategies of power, whether broad or narrow: if they were a local aristocracy distancing themselves from the rest of the community by blood or rank, they would be following a broad élite strategy, but that does not seem to be the case. This is a marked contrast to the Homeric heroes: they form a council that is explicitly the reserve of the *basileis*, with their extraordinary powers of deliberation and cunning (cf. 3.3.1). It is quite similar to the role of elders in Sparta, however, where the elders are distinguished representatives of the community, as discussed above concerning Sparta and the Old Assyrian assemblies (7.4). The Spartan *gerousia* was opposed to the masses and the *apella*, however (cf. 3.4.1). What was the position of “the elders” in Near Eastern polities? I now turn to the Old Assyrian evidence for “the elders”.

In the Old Assyrian city-state, it appears that “the elders” of Assur executed decisions of “the city-assembly”: they were responsible for collecting silver from the Old Assyrian colonies in Anatolia to pay for fortifications back in Assur. The relations between “the city” and “the elders” are not well attested. However, it seems that they were quite different from the community elders of the local villages and towns of the Mari kingdom. Rather than being a group responsible for the community in relations to the king and for selecting local leaders, “the elders” at Assur appear as a form of executive committee of “the city-assembly” that included the king (5.5.5).

From the Old Assyrian city-state, there is also evidence that there was a council of “elders” at the *kārum* Kanesh (5.5.3). This group may have been the same as “the great”, the wealthiest merchants of the colony. In the *kārum* Kanesh, the assembly of “the great” was in charge of the polity. The assembly of “the small and great” was the more inclusive assembly, but it was only convened at the discretion of “the great”. Therefore, it appears that in the Old Assyrian city-state as well as in its colonies, the wealthy merchants were the most influential, and that those outside this group had little influence on what was discussed. Because there was an assembly of “the small and great” at the *kārum* Kanesh, it is tempting to argue that there was a balance of power between “the elders” on the one hand and the people in the plenary assembly of the *kārum* Kanesh on the other, but as far as the statute texts of the *kārum* go, it does not appear that the plenary assembly had any decisive power. The Old Assyrian city-state or its colonies do not seem to have a defined division of power between “elders” and a popular assembly, as was the case in Sparta (cf. 3.4.1).

“Elders” act as decision-making collectives in most ancient societies. Their relation to central authorities in complex societies can be seen to vary greatly, from local intermediary authorities in network states to councils integrated in the decision-making authorities in city-states. “Elders” are attested from Greek *poleis*, but more

common are different forms of councils where the citizens participated according to specific criteria of membership, either age, wealth, or both. In Near Eastern city-states, “elders” had considerable power. This is probably related to the dominance of the heads of households in local communities of the Near East, in city-states and network states alike. Further, the dominance of the heads of households can be set in relation to the importance of clans, large groups of families united by fictitious ancestors, in Near Eastern societies. The councils of Greek *poleis* were different, as they often cooperated closely with popular assemblies, by preparing cases for the assembly (cf. 3.4.3). However, Greek councils could also be exclusive gatherings specifically geared towards making decisions without the participation of the masses, as seen with the Homeric *boule* (cf. 3.3.1).

Further evidence for the political dominance of important families in Near Eastern city-states is the position of the Old Assyrian *limmu*, known as the year-eponym. He was responsible for taxes and duties, and the year in which he served was named after him and inscribed on a list (cf. 5.3). The translation of *limmu* by the Greek term eponym implies a similarity between the *limmu* and Greek offices. Indeed, there are parallels, but also differences. The position of *limmu* was apparently an office that was shared between the merchants, not as the pinnacle of their career, but no doubt a prestigious position. After all, the person in office gave his name to the administrative year. This has a parallel at Athens, with the office of archon that was monopolised by rich, noble families before the time of Solon.¹²¹⁹ In Athens, the archon was an eponymous office; the name of the holder of this office was given to the year in which he served and preserved in a list. The similarity between the Assyrian and Greek eponymous offices, that the year is named after the person in office, was pointed out long ago.¹²²⁰ However, there are also important differences: the archonship in Athens

¹²¹⁹ Cf. *Ath. Pol.* III.1-3

¹²²⁰ Hanell, *Das altrömische eponyme Amt*, 1946, 90-92

was the most important office in the polity, whereas the *limmu* of Assur was not: in Assur, the king held the most important office, whereas Athens had no king. It is nevertheless interesting that the Assyrian élite took turns in office and that the office was eponymous. It shows that the important families of the Old Assyrian city-state were integrated into the structure of power and shared power with the king. It is not evidence for popular power, but it shows that power was shared among several families in the polity. In the Old Assyrian city-state, through institutions like “elders” and offices like the eponym, power can be said to lie with the heads of households and not with only one individual household, that of the king. In Athens, the eponym lost political influence with the establishment of democracy after 508/7. The parallel is nevertheless important, because it shows that non-hereditary offices were important in both Assur and Athens.

7.6 The palace, professionals, and local communities

The Near Eastern polities discussed throughout this investigation were all centred on palaces, albeit with local variations of degree. The local communities had their own institutions of power, but these local powers were more or less connected to the central authorities in the palaces. The palace played a political role at e.g. Ugarit that is not paralleled by anything in any Greek *polis*. The palace was the political and economic centre of the polity. However, there were also groups within Ugaritic society that communicated with outside powers, without the intervention of the king (cf. 5.12). Thus, the Ugaritic kingdom can be described as a city-state rather than a palace society, with semi-independent groups that could operate with their own agenda: there is evidence that the merchants of Ugarit was in a rather autonomous position and made agreements with foreign rulers without the intervention of their own king (cf. 5.11.2). There is also evidence that the local communities of towns throughout the kingdom were autonomous and reached decisions collectively (cf.

5.10.1). The palaces of Late Bronze Age societies did not centralise all decisions. The merchants of Ugarit appear to have been organised in corporations that were acknowledged by outside forces. The local communities were semi-autonomous, although royal officials are in evidence as taking part in their local decision-making bodies.

As mentioned above (7.2.1), the archaic Greek *poleis* had no parallel institution to the Mycenaean or Ugaritic palaces. At Ugarit, the merchants appear as semi-independent corporations, but they belong to the palace sphere, since their business was recorded in the royal archives. It is therefore difficult to establish a separate strategy for power for this group separate from that of the palace or to find any parallel between the position of the merchants and that of any social or professional group in archaic *poleis*. Greek *poleis* tended to emphasise the relation between landownership and citizenship and leave trade in the hands of outsiders. However, the position of the merchants in Ugarit shows that Ugaritic society was not strictly hierarchic or controlled by the palace.

The local communities of Ugarit offer more in terms of institutions parallel to those of archaic *poleis* (cf. 5.10.1-2). The corporate identity of the village community as a whole and the powerful council of “elders” indicate a structure of power similar to a polity of the *polis*-type, where the citizens equal the polity. “The elders” of Ugaritic local communities pursued a narrow corporate strategy of power, as representatives of their local community. They received instructions from palace officials and were thus integrated to a certain degree in the structure of the state. However, the local communities cannot be said to have had any influence on the politics of the kingdom of Ugarit.

7.7 Differences and similarities East and West

There were important differences between archaic Greek and ancient Near Eastern polities. The rarity of kingship in Greece is an important contrast to the ancient Near East. On the other hand, there are plentiful examples of local decision-making taking place beyond the direct control of the palaces of Near Eastern polities. Nevertheless, the citizen-assemblies had a position in Greek *poleis* that is not comparable to any of the corporate bodies mentioned in the Near Eastern documents discussed throughout this dissertation.

It could be argued that the Babylonian cities in the Iron Age were ruled by a community of citizens (6.7). As has been seen, however, the identity of these citizens is disputed and it does not seem likely that a broad citizen collective was in charge of the polity. The frequent references to discussions between “the sons of GN” and royal officials indicate rather that a limited group of citizens represented the city than a broad collective institution. On the other hand, the Greek institutions for collective decision-making should not be taken as evidence for popular power without further qualifications. As was seen from the sources to archaic Greek *poleis*, it is conspicuous that the élite fought for power by gaining control of the councils. Theognis complains that all sorts have been admitted to the council and assembly in Megara (3.4.5). In Athens, Solon is credited to have admitted more commoners to the council and assembly, breaking the monopoly of the élite (3.4.2). In Mytilene, Pittakos attained power through the assembly, and this curtailed the power of his aristocratic former allies (3.4.4). Thus, it can be seen that the archaic *poleis* was not characterised by powerful citizen-assemblies, but by struggle between élite factions, aristocrats, and wealthy landowners over the control of collective decision-making bodies.

It is not the absence or presence of a single feature that determines whether “fundamentally different” is a tenable description of the relations between Eastern and Western political culture. As has been seen, there are several common features as well as several distinguishing characteristics. In spite of all the sources available to us for the study of Near Eastern societies, there are significant areas of social and political reality for which there is very little information. Marc Van De Mieroop argues that there has been little research on the city in Mesopotamia because scholars have been convinced that the king’s power was absolute, “leaving little room for urban government independent of the king”.¹²²¹ However, can it be claimed that there was independent government in Mesopotamian cities when all officials were ratified by the king? The evidence examined in the preceding chapters suggests that there were several points of contact between local decision-making bodies and the king’s officials. It seems that in e.g. Old Babylonian cities, either the officials presided over meetings or delegated cases to them (4.3.1). It could be argued that local decision-making is left out of the cuneiform documents available to modern scholars, because it was outside the sphere of official interests. From the evidence discussed in the preceding chapters, I have no doubt that there were groups in ancient Near Eastern polities that were not part of the palace-organisation. However, it is difficult to say anything with certainty about their composition or competence. Also, it seems clear that the palace interfered with the local decision-making bodies. The king and his officials were involved in adjudication from time to time and did not leave this to an autonomous collective of citizens. This was not the case in Greek *poleis*, where central authorities appear to have been collective in their organisation.

The Near Eastern evidence for a wholly independent citizen community that reached decisions in a popular assembly simply is not there. Van De Mieroop argues that “the proceedings were not written down because they were of no importance. It was only

¹²²¹ Van De Mieroop, “The government of an ancient Mesopotamian city,” 1999, 140

the trial verdict that was considered significant enough to be recorded”.¹²²² This is a good point, but cannot count as evidence for a popular assembly with defined and recognised powers. The lack of documentation cannot be used as evidence that the people were in charge. As long as the composition, competence, or *modus operandi* of the assembly is not documented, it is not possible to decide whether the assembly was a kind of élite council or arena council. Further, the majority of sources from local communities indicate that there was involvement of officials at some point in collective decision-making processes, in the sense that the local decision-making bodies were integrated with the officials of the state. To hypothesise that there were several decisions taken that were not documented cannot be taken as a compelling argument for local popular power. It can be demonstrated that political life in Near Eastern towns and cities existed, but not that a formally constituted popular assembly was in charge of any polity. Why did not the people seize power in ancient Near Eastern polities?

An explanation for the lack of formal popular power in Near Eastern polities can be attempted from the traditional strong position of the king in Near Eastern societies that would discourage the development of institutionalised popular power. As has been seen, however, several Near Eastern polities, including Old Assyrian Assur and Old Babylonian Mari, do not fit the model of a despotic kingdom. Therefore, the explanation for the apparent lack of popular power in Near Eastern societies cannot lie with the institution of kingship alone.

In can be argued that the palace dominated foreign politics through warfare and trade and that everyone from royal officials to local leaders were bound to the king through oaths and forms of ratification of candidates for local leadership. This made the king

¹²²² Van De Mieroop, “The government of an ancient Mesopotamian city,” 1999, 150

the focus of political identity rather than the community of citizens. However, as has been seen, the king did not control local decision-making and the representatives of the people participated in assemblies for adjudication. Also, there are sources indicating that the citizens of certain cities were respected as a party in negotiations, as a group of citizens (cf. 6.6.2; 6.7).

Perhaps the question whether there was popular power in Near Eastern polities is wrongly put? A definition of popular power as the dominance of a popular assembly in the polity at any rate makes the answer easy: no. However, as has been seen, the people were not passive subjects, either. As can be seen from a wide range of sources, the population of towns and cities were addressed as collectives capable of making their own decisions (cf. 4.3.3; 4.7.2; 5.4; 5.5.6; 5.10.2; 5.11.2; 5.11.4; 6.4.3; 6.4.4; 6.6.2; 6.7). It does not seem that they made these decisions in popular assemblies, however. There are many aspects of decision-making that are not understood, but none of the evidence discussed in the preceding chapters can be taken to indicate that a plenary assembly was the highest authority in any Near Eastern polity. Attempts to define the people as a corporation that somehow reached decisions in ways unknowable by scholars lacks conviction: it cannot be assumed that where there are no sources to how decisions were made, all the citizens had a say. The notion of an anonymous collectivity in decision-making rather obscures than explains the political structure of local communities.

The lack of formal popular power in ancient Near Eastern polities can be explained by the powerful position of the king and his officials in Near Eastern polities: as long as royally appointed officials formed the top of the political hierarchy, the local collective decision-making bodies could not become sovereign in the polity. The royal officials were involved with the local decision-making bodies and the local communities were not autonomous. Most important, they were not in a position to

elect the most important officials in the polity from amongst themselves, only intermediary leaders. The king was usually not elected, since his position was hereditary.¹²²³ The most important decisions were taken by the palace. Although local leaders were selected by “the elders”, these leaders did not influence the central authorities on behalf of their local communities. Although local communities selected their own local leaders and had collective decision-making bodies that wielded power in the polity, the palace and the temples continued to be the dominant organisations in the states, whether network states or city-states. Placing Near Eastern polities on a sliding scale from despotism to democracy, it can be concluded that they were all further towards despotism than democracy. The people and their representatives were not insignificant, however. There were popular politics within political structures dominated by the temples and palaces, the king and the élite.

7.8 Conclusions

In view of the discussions undertaken and conclusions drawn throughout the present investigation, the picture that Eastern and Western political traditions are fundamentally different because all Greek polities were ruled by citizen-assemblies and all Near Eastern polities were ruled by kings cannot be maintained. As was seen from the evidence to politics in archaic Greek *poleis*, their politics were often dominated by the élite (cf. 3.4.1-5). The élites were divided into factions that were centred on powerful landowners and they fought each other for dominance in their home communities. The people are mentioned as supporters of tyrants and only in connection with tyrants do they appear as active in politics. A notable exception is Athens in 508/7 when the *demos* rose against Isagoras and the Spartans (cf. 3.4.3).

¹²²³ There is a text discussing a conspiracy against the Old Akkadian king Naram Sin, where a certain Iphur-Kishi is raised to kingship by the assembly of the city Kish (Jacobsen, “Iphur-Kīshi and his times,” 1978-9, 6). However, to my knowledge, this example of royal election is quite unique and none of the kings discussed throughout this dissertation are known to have been elected by an assembly.

The bulk of archaic poetry that handles political themes, however, refers to inner political strife between factions of the élite. This indicates that the people of archaic Greek *poleis* only became unified and politically active corporations that pursued a broad corporate strategy for power after their cities had suffered tyranny. Sparta is an example of a *polis* where no tyrant attained power. In this *polis*, the constitution did not allow any political initiative to the people and power was in the hands of the *gerousia* and the kings (cf. 3.4.1). However, if tyranny was such an important factor in promoting a broad corporate strategy among the people and making them convert their mode of action from subordination to agency, why did not the same take place in the Near Eastern polities ruled by kings?

The kings of several Near Eastern polities, as has been seen, actually did allow a degree of local autonomy and recognized local communities as parties to negotiations (cf. 4.3.3; 4.7.2; 5.4; 5.5.6; 5.10.2; 5.11.2; 5.11.4; 6.4.3; 6.4.4; 6.6.2; 6.7). The local communities did reach decisions regarding their own rulers. They determined the direction of foreign politics and could make truces and alliances with foreign rulers. However, power seems to be concentrated in the hands of a few heads of households and not to have been shared by all citizens. Why did not the entire free male population demand a say in politics? As has been argued, there are good reasons for assuming that the local free male population did take part in decisions, or at least were present when decisions were reached (cf. 4.3.1-5; 4.7.1-4; 5.5.1-6; 5.6; 5.10.1-2; 5.11.1-4; 6.5.2; 6.7). Thus, they could follow a narrow corporate strategy for power where “the elders” acted as their representatives and in this way rule themselves. In Greece, the broad élite strategy of the aristocrats often led to factional strife between groups within the élite. This is largely absent from Near Eastern polities and can be explained by the dominance of the king and the priests as the legitimising factors for all local positions of power. The result was that local positions of power were controlled by the institutions of palace and temples, more specifically, by the king. There were no local aristocratic factions to the same degree as in Greece and

apparently no aristocratic leaders that relied on the people to attain the upper hand in their fight against other aristocrats. This may have prevented the people of ancient Near Eastern polities from pursuing broad corporate strategies for power.

The choices of strategies for power are informed by structure (cf. 2.5-6). The stability of the palace and temple structure in Near Eastern polities meant that charismatic leaders did not strive to attain power through the people to the same degree that they did in archaic Greek *poleis*. In Greek *poleis*, on the other hand, the chaos that ensued from the breaking down of broad élite strategies of a united aristocracy led to a polarised relationship between the *demos* and the tyrant, resulting in an empowered, self-conscious people.

There were corporate strategies for power in Greek and Near Eastern polities, but the stability of the institutions of palace and temples meant that Near Eastern citizens were not politicised in the same way as they were in Greece. In archaic Greek *poleis*, the instability of élite rule led to the breakdown of élite strategies, whether broad or narrow, and made corporate strategies the most attractive choice for the citizens. Their agency changed the structure of Greek *poleis* into communities ruled by citizen-assemblies. This did not happen in the Near East. Although the citizens occasionally revolted against their king, they replaced him by a new king (cf. 6.4.2). Also, although e.g. the Babylonians, “the sons of Babylon”, made treaties with foreign rulers, Babylon was not ruled by a citizen-assembly (cf. 6.7). Thus, the difference in popular power in the Near East and Greece is that in the Near East, people could influence their own situation through a narrow corporate strategy where local heads of households acted as their representatives in councils such as “the city” or “the elders”, whereas in Greece, the masses with citizen status pursued broad corporate strategies and sometimes succeeded in establishing direct popular rule in citizen assemblies.

8. Sources

The following bibliography lists the text editions and translations of Greek and Near Eastern sources used. The source references are to editions of Greek and ancient Near Eastern texts in original and translation.

8.1 Mycenaean texts

Deger-Jalkotzy, Sigrid: “Working for the palace: some observations on PY An 261,” in John Bennet & Jan Driessen (eds.), *A-NA-QO-TA – Studies presented to J. T. Killen* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca 1998-1999), 65-81

Ventris, Michael & John Chadwick: *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1956)

8.2 Greek epic

Allen, Thomas W. (ed.): Homer: *Opera* vol. III-V (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1912-1920)

Most, Glenn W. (Loeb edition): Hesiod: *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006)

Schirnding, Albert von & Ernst Günther Schmidt (ed. and transl.): Hesiod: *Theogonie; Werke und Tage* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1997)

West, Martin L. (ed.): Hesiod: *Theogony, edited with prolegomena and commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997 [1966])

West, Martin L. (ed.): Homer: *Ilias* vol. I-II (Stuttgart & Leipzig: Teubner 1998-2000)

Østbye, Peder (transl.): Homer: *Odysseen* (Oslo: Gyldendal norsk forlag 1922 [1996])

Østbye, Peder (transl.): Homer: *Iliaden* (Oslo: Aschehoug 1994)

8.3 Archaic Greek poetry

Campbell, David A. (Loeb edition): *Greek Lyric I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2002 [1982])

Campbell, David A. (Loeb edition): *Greek Lyric II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2001 [1988])

Gerber, Douglas E. (Loeb edition): *Greek Iambic poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999)

Gerber, Douglas E. (Loeb edition): *Greek Elegiac poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1999)

Jacoby, Felix: *Atthis: the local chronicles of ancient Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1949)

Kaibel, Georg: Athenaios: *Dipnosophistarum Libri XI-XV et indices* (Leipzig: Teubner 1890)

Lobel, Edgar & Denys Page (eds.): *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997 [1955])

West, Martin L.: (ed.): *Iambi et elegi graeci* vol. I-II (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998 [1971-72])

8.4 Classical Greek prose

Burnet, John (ed.): Plato: *Opera* vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993)

Henderson, Jeffrey (Loeb edition): Aristophanes: *Acharnians. Knights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998)

Hude, Karl: Herodotos: *The histories* vol. I-II (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1927)

Illinois Greek Club (Loeb edition): Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, Onasander (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1943 [1923])

Kovacs, David (Loeb edition): Euripides: *Suppliant women. Electra. Heracles* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998)

Mathieu, Georges & Bernard Haussoullier (eds.): Aristotle: *Athenaion Politeia* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1930)

Mørland, Henning (transl.): *Herodots historie* vol. I-II (Oslo: Aschehoug 1960 [1998])

Mørland, Henning (transl.): Thukydides: *Peloponneserkrigen* vol. I-II (Oslo: Aschehoug 1962 [1999])

Paton, W. R. (Loeb edition): Polybios: *The histories* vol. I-VI (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966 [1923])

Perrin, Bernadotte (Loeb edition): Plutarch's *Lives: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1948 [1914])

Rachham, H. (Loeb edition): Aristotle: *Nicomachean ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1934)

Ross, W. D. (ed.): Aristotle: *Politica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1957)

Ross, W. D. (transl.): Aristotle: *The Nichomachean ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009)

Saunders, Trevor J. (transl.): Plato: *The laws* in John M. Cooper (ed.), Plato: *complete works* (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing company 1997), 1318-1616

Sinclair, T. A. & Trevor J. Saunders (transl.): *Aristotle – The politics* (London: Penguin Books 1992 [1962])

Smith, C. Forster (Loeb edition): Thukydides: *The Peloponnesian War* vol. I-IV (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1951 [1919])

Sommerstein, Alan H. (Loeb edition): Aeschylus: *Persians. Seven against Thebes. Suppliants. Prometheus bound* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009)

Tjøstheim, Inge (transl.): Xenofon/Aineias: *Fra antikkens krigskunst* (Oslo: Aschehoug 1994)

8.5 Texts from *kārum Kanesh*

Eidem, Jesper: “An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan,” in D. Charpin & F. Joannès (eds.), *Marchands, diplomats et empereurs* (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les Civilisations 1991), 185-207

Eisser, Georg & Julius Lewy: *Die altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1930)

Donbaz, Veyzel: “An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe,” in *JCS* vol. 57, 2005: 63-68

Driver, G. R. & John C. Miles: *The Assyrian laws* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1935)

Günbatti, Cahit: “Two treaty texts found at Kültepe,” in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Assyria and beyond: studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten 2004), 249-268

Günbatti, Cahit: “A list of eponyms from Kültepe (KEL D),” in Cécile Michel (ed.), *Old Assyrian studies in memory of Paul Garelli* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten 2008), 125-135

Landsberger, Benno & K. Balkan: “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Īrisum, gefunden in Kültepe 1948,” in *Bulleten* vol. 14, no. 54, 1950: 219-268

Larsen, Mogens Trolle: *The Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag 1976)

Michel, Cécile: *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish* (Paris: Les editions du Cerf 2001)

Veenhof, Klaas R.: *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade and its terminology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1972)

Veenhof, Klaas R.: ““In accordance with the words of the stele”: evidence for Old Assyrian legislation,” in *Ch.-Kent L. Rev.* vol. 70, 1994-95: 1717-1744

8.6 Texts from Mari

Charpin, Dominique et al.: *Archives épistolaires de Mari I/2. ARM XXVI.* (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations 1988)

Schaeffer, Claude F. A.: *Ugaritica I* (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1939)

Dossin, George: *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*. ARM I. (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1950)

Dossin, George: *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils* (suite). ARM IV. (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1951)

Dossin, George: *Correspondance de Iasmah-Addu*. ARM V. (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1952)

Dossin, George et al.: *Textes divers*. ARM XIII. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale 1964)

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Archives épistolaires de Mari I/1*. ARM XXVI. (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations 1988)

Durand, Jean-Marie: “Les anciens de Talhayūm,” in *RA* vol. 82, no. 2, 1988: 97-113

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. I (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 2002 [1997])

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. II (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 1998)

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. III (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 2000)

Jean, Charles-F.: *Lettres diverses*. ARM II. (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1950)

Kupper, Jean-Robert: *Correspondence de Kibri-Dagan – gouverneur de Terqa*. ARM III. (Paris: Paul Geuthner 1950)

Kupper, Jean-Robert: *Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim*. ARM XXVIII. (Paris: Éditions recherché sur les civilisations 1998)

8.7 Texts from Old Babylonian cities

Dombradi, Eva: *Die Darstellung des Rechtsaustrags in den altbabylonischen Prozessurkunden* Halbband I-II (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1996)

Driver, G. R. & John C. Miles: *The Babylonian laws* vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968)

Goetze, Albrecht: *The Laws of Esnunna* (=The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research vol. 31, 1951-1952)

Jacobsen, Thorkild: "An ancient Mesopotamian trial for homicide," in Moran (ed.), *Toward the image of Tammuz*, 1970 [1959], 193-214

Kohler, J & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band III (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1909)

Kohler, J & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band V (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1911)

Koschaker, P. & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band VI (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1923)

Lambert, W. G.: *Babylonian wisdom literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1960)

Meek, Theophile J. (transl.): "The code of Hammurabi," in Pritchard (ed.), *ANET* 1971 [1969], 163-180

Viel, H.-Dieter: *The complete code of Hammurabi* vol. II (Munich: Lincom Europa 2005)

Walther, Arnold: *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen* Band VI Heft 4-6 (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR 1968 [1917])

8.8 Texts from Amarna

Knudtzon, J. A.: *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln I* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1915)

Moran, William L. (ed.): *The Amarna letters* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1992)

8.9 Texts from Ugarit

Dietrich, Manfred, Oswald Loretz & Joaquín Sanmartín: *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*. KTU. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 1995)

Nougayrol, Jean (ed.): *Palais Royal d'Ugarit IV - Archives internationales. PRU IV*. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale 1956)

Nougayrol, Jean, Emmanuel Laroche, Charles Virolleaud & Claude F. A. Schaeffer (eds.): *Ugaritica V Mission de Ras Shamra tome XVI* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale 1968)

8.10 Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian texts

Barjamovic, Gojko: "Civic institutions and self-government in Southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first Millennium BC," in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Assyria and beyond: studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten 2004), 47-98

Borger, Rykle: *Die Inschriften Esarhaddons* (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag 1967 [1956])

Cole, Steven W.: *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur* (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications 1996)

Dandamayev, M. A.: "Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.," in *BCSMS* 30, 1995, 23-29

Foster, Benjamin: *From distant days* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press 1995)

Lambert, W. G.: *Babylonian wisdom literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1960)

Larsen, Mogens Trolle: "The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period," in Mogens Herman Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag 2000), 117-127

Luckenbill, Daniel David: *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1975 [1927])

Oppenheim, A. Leo: *Letters from Mesopotamia: official, business, and private letters on clay tablets from two millennia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1967)

Parpola, Simo: *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian scholars* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press 1993)

Rainer, Erica: "The Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel* in practice," in Diakonoff (ed.), *Societies and languages of the ancient Near East*, 1982, 320-323

9. Bibliography

A

Adams, Robert McC.: *The evolution of urban society: early Mesopotamia and prehistoric Mexico* (Chicago: Aldine 1966)

Adams, Robert McC.: “The Mesopotamian social landscape: a view from the margins,” in Moore (ed.), *Reconstructing complex societies*, 1974, 1-20

Adams, Robert McC.: *Heartland of cities – Surveys of ancient settlement and land use of the central floodplain of the Euphrates* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 1981)

Adamthwaite, Murray R.: *Late Hittite Emar – The chronology, synchronisms, and socio-political aspects of a Late Bronze Age fortress town* (Louvain, Paris & Sterling, VA: Peeters Press 2001)

Adkins, Arthur W. H.: *Merit and responsibility – A study in Greek values* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1960)

Ahlström, Gösta W.: “Administration of the state in Canaan and ancient Israel,” in *CANE* vol. I, 587-603

Akkermans, Peter M. M. G. & Glenn M. Schwartz: *The archaeology of Syria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003)

Albright, W. F.: “An unrecognized Amarna letter from Ugarit,” in *BASOR* no. 95, 1944: 30-33

Albright, W. F. & William L. Moran: “Rib-Adda of Byblos and the affairs of Tyre (EA 89),” in *JCS* vol. 4, no. 3, 1950: 163-168

Almond, Gabriel A. & Sidney Verba: *The civic culture: political attitudes and democracy in five nations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications 1989)

Andrewes, A.: "Solon," in *CAH* vol. III, pt. 3, 1982, 375-391

Archi, A.: "Imar au IIIème millénaire d'après les archives d'Ebla," in *M.A.R.I.* vol. 6, 1990: 21-38

Aro, Sanna & R. M. Whiting (eds.): *The heirs of Assyria* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project 2000)

Artzi, Pinhas: "'Vox populi" in the El-Amarna tablets," in *RA* vol. 58, 1964: 159-166

Avalos, Hector: "Legal and social institutions in Canaan and Ancient Israel," in *CANE* vol. I, 615-631

B

Bahrani, Zainah: "The Babylonian visual image," in Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian world*, 2007, 155-170

Bailey, F. G.: "Decisions by consensus in councils and committees," in *Political systems and the distribution of power* (London: Tavistock Publications 1965), 1-20

Barjamovic, Gojko: "Civic institutions and self-government in Southern Mesopotamia in the mid-first Millennium BC," in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Assyria and beyond: studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten 2004), 47-98

Barjamovic, Gojko: "Chapter IV: The Mesopotamian empires," in P. F. Bang & Walter Scheidel (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the ancient state: the Near East and the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012 [in print])

Baurain, Claude & Corinne Bonnet: *Les Phéniciens – Marins des trois continents* (Paris: Armand Colin Éditeur 1992)

Beckman, Gary: “The Hittite assembly,” in *JAOS* vol. 102, no. 3, 1982: 435-442

Bernal, Martin: *Black Athena – The Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization* (London: Vintage 1991 [1987])

Bernal, Martin & David Chioni Moore: *Black Athena writes back* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press 2001)

Bin-Nun, Shoshana R.: *The Tawananna in the Hittite kingdom* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag 1975)

Black, Jeremy, Andrew George & Nicholas Postgate: *A concise dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2000)

Blanton, Richard E.: “Beyond centralization – Steps toward a theory of egalitarian behavior in archaic states,” in Feinman & Marcus (eds.), *Archaic states*, 1998, 135-172

Blanton, Richard E., Gary M. Feinman, Stephen A. Kowaleski & Peter N. Peregrine: “A dual-processual theory for the evolution of Mesoamerican civilization,” in *CA* vol. 37, no. 1, 1996: 1-14

Bleicken, Jochen: “Zur Entstehung der Verfassungstypologie im 5. Jahrhundert v.Chr. (Monarchie, Aristokratie, Demokratie),” in *Historia* Bd. 28, H. 2, 2nd Qtr., 1979: 148-172

Bleicken, Jochen: *Die athenische Demokratie* (Paderborn, München, Wien & Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh 1995)

Blok, Josine H. & André P. M. H. Lardinois (eds.): *Solon of Athens – New historical and philological approaches* (Leiden & Boston: Brill 2006)

Bondi, S. F.: “Les institutions, l’organisation politique et administrative,” in Krings (ed.), *La civilisation Phénicienne*, 1996, 290-302

Bondi, S. F.: “La société,” in Krings (ed.), *La civilisation Phénicienne*, 1996, 345-353

Bordreuil, Pierre: “An efficiently administered kingdom,” in *NEA* vol. 63, no. 4, 2000: 190-191

Borger, Rykle: *Die Inschriften Esarhaddons* (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag 1967 [1956])

Bottéro, Jean: “The “Code” of Hammurabi,” in Zainab Bahrani & Marc Van De Mieroop (transl.), *Mesopotamia – Writing, reasoning and the gods* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 1992), 156-184

Bourdieu, Pierre: *Outline of a theory of practice* (transl. Richard Nice) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008 [1977])

Brinkman, J. A.: *Prelude to empire: Babylonian society and politics, 747-626 B.C.* (Philadelphia, PA: Distributed by Babylonian Fund, University Museum 1984)

Brumfiel, Elizabeth M.: “Distinguished lecture in archaeology: breaking and entering the ecosystem – Gender, class and faction steal the show,” in *AA*, New series, vol. 94, no. 3, 1992: 551-567

Brumfiel, Elizabeth M.: “Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies: comments,” in Ehrenreich, Crumley & Levy (eds.), *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*, 1995, 125-131

Bryce, Trevor: *The kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999 [1998])

Bryce, Trevor: *Life and society in the Hittite world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004 [2002])

Bunnens, G.: “Poivoirs locaux et pouvoirs dissidents en Syrie au IIe millenaire avant notre ere,” in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 118-137

Burkert, Walter: *The Orientalizing revolution – Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press 1995)

Burkert, Walter: *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis – Eastern contexts of Greek culture* (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press 2004)

C

Carrier, Pierre: “*Qa-si-re-u et qa-si-re-wi-ja*,” in Robert Laffineur & Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier (eds.), *Politeia – Society and state in the Aegean Bronze Age - Proceedings of the 5th International Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994 II* (Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique 1995), 355-364

Cartledge, Paul: *Sparta and Lakonia – A regional history 1300-362 BC* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1979)

Cartledge, Paul: *Ancient Greek political thought in practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009)

Cayir, Murat: “Six documents containing decisions by the city assembly and k̄arum Kaneš,” in Michel (ed.), *Old Assyrian studies in memory of Paul Garelli*, 2008, 117-124

Charpin, Dominique: “Économie, société et institutions paléo-Babyloniennes: nouvelles sources, nouvelles approches,” in *RA* 101, 2007, 147-182

Charpin, Dominique, Dietz Otto Edzard & Marten Stol: *Mesopotamien 4: Die altbabylonische Zeit* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag 2004)

Childe, V. Gordon: "The urban revolution," in *TPR* vol. 21, 1959: 3-17

Claessen Henri J. M. & Peter Skalník (eds.): *The early state* (The Hague, Paris & New York: Mouton Publishers 1978)

Claessen, Henri J. M. & Peter Skalník: "The early state: theories and hypotheses," in Claessen & Skalník (eds.), *The early state*, 1978, 3-29

Cohen, Beth (ed.): *Not the classical ideal – Athens and the construction of the other in Greek art* (Leiden, Boston & Cologne: Brill 2000)

Cohen, Raymond & Raymond Westbrook (eds.): *Amarna diplomacy – The beginnings of international relations* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2000)

Cohen, Ronald: "State origins: a reappraisal," in Claessen & Skalník (eds.), *The early state*, 1978, 31-75

Cohen, Ronald & Elman R. Service (eds.): *Origins of the state: the anthropology of political evolution* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues 1978)

Cole, Steven W.: *Nippur in Late Assyrian times c. 755-612* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project 1996)

Cole, Steven W.: *The early Neo-Babylonian governor's archive from Nippur* (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications 1996)

Cowgill, George L.: "Distinguished lecture in archaeology: beyond criticizing New Archaeology," in *AA*, New series, vol. 95, no. 3, 1993: 551-573

Crumley, Carol L.: "Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies," in Ehrenreich, Crumley & Levy (eds.), *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*, 1995, 1-5

Cuq, Edouard: *Études sur le droit Babylonien* (Paris: Librairie Oientaliste Paul Geuthner 1929)

D

Dahl, Robert: *Democracy and its critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1989)

Dalby, A.: "The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and their audiences," in *CIQ* vol. 46, no. 2, 1995: 269-279

Dandamayev, M. A.: "The Neo-Babylonian citizens," in *Klio* 63, 1981: 45-49

Dandamayev, M. A.: "The Neo-Babylonian elders," in Diakonoff (ed.), *Societies and languages of the ancient Near East*, 1982, 38-41

Dandamayev, M. A.: "Babylonian popular assemblies in the first millennium B.C.," in *BCSMS* 30, 1995, 23-29

De Ste. Croix, G. E. M.: *Athenian democratic origins and other essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004)

Deger-Jalkotzy, Sigrid: "Working for the palace: some observations on PY An 261," in John Bennet & Jan Driessen (eds.), *A-NA-QO-TA – Studies presented to J. T. Killen* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca 1998-1999), 65-81

Dercksen, J. G.: *Old Assyrian institutions* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het nabije oosten 2004)

Dercksen, J. G. (ed.): *Assyria and beyond – Studies presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het nabije oosten 2004)

Detienne, Marcel: "La phalange: problèmes et controverses," in Jean-Pierre Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Mouton 1968), 119-142

Detienne, Marcel: *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque* (Paris: F. Maspero 1973)

Diakonoff, I. M.: "The structure of Near Eastern society before the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.," in *Oikumene* 3, 1982: 7-100

Diakonoff, I. M. (ed.): *Societies and languages of the ancient Near East – Studies in honour of I. M. Diakonoff* (Warminster: Arts & Phillips Ltd. 1982)

Dombradi, Eva: *Die Darstellung des Rechtsaustrags in den altbabylonischen Prozessurkunden* Halbband I & II (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1996)

Donbaz, Veyzel: "An Old Assyrian treaty from Kültepe," in *JCS* vol. 57, 2005: 63-68

Donlan, Walter: "The pre-state community in Greece," in *SO* vol. 64, 1989: 5-29

Drews, Robert: "Phoenicians, Carthage and the Spartan Eunomia," in *AJP* vol. 100, no. 1, 1979: 45-58

Drews, Robert: *Basileus: the evidence for kingship in Geometric Greece* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1983)

Driel, G. v.: "Eighth century Nippur," in *BO* 55, 1998: 334-345

Driver, G. R. & John C. Miles: *The Assyrian laws* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1935)

Driver, G. R. & John C. Miles: *The Babylonian laws* vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968)

Dumont, Louis: *Introduction to two theories of social anthropology – Descent groups and marriage alliance* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books 2006)

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 26 vol. I (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations 1988)

Durand, Jean-Marie: "Les anciens de Talhayūm," in *RA* vol. 82, no. 2, 1988: 97-113

Durand, Jean-Marie: “L’assemblée en Syrie à l’époque pré-amorite,” in Pelio Fronzaroli (ed.), *Miscellanea Eblaitica*, 2 (Florence: Dipartimento di linguistica Università di Firenze 1989), 27-44

Durand, Jean-Marie: “La cité-état d’Imar à l’époque des rois de Mari,” in *M.A.R.I.* vol. 6, 1990: 39-92

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. I (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 2002 [1997])

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. II (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 1998)

Durand, Jean-Marie: *Documents épistolaires de palais de Mari* vol. III (Paris: Les éditions de Cerf 2000)

E

Easterling, Pat: “The image of the *polis* in Greek tragedy,” in Hansen (ed.), *The imaginary polis*, 2005, 49-72

Eder, Walther: “Political self-confidence and resistance: the role of the demos and plebs after the expulsion of the tyrant in Athens and the king in Rome,” in Yuge & Doi (eds.), *Forms of control and subordination in antiquity*, 1988, 465-475

Edmunds, Lowell: “The seal of Theognis,” in Lowell Edmunds & Robert W. Wallace (eds.), *Poet, public, and performance in ancient Greece* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1998), 29-48

Edzard, Dietz Otto: “‘Soziale Reformen im Zweistromland’ bis ca. 1600 v. Chr.: Realität oder literarischer Topos?” in *AAASH* vol. 22, 1974: 145-156

Effenterre, Henri van: "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation," in *REG* vol. 89, 1976: 1-17

Ehrenberg, Victor: *Polis und Imperium: Beiträge zur alten Geschichte* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag 1965)

Ehrenreich, Robert M., Carole L. Crumley & Janet E. Levy (eds.): *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies* (Arlington, VA: The American Anthropological Association 1995)

Eidem, Jesper: "An Old Assyrian treaty from Tell Leilan," in D. Charpin & F. Joannès (eds.), *Marchands, diplomats et empereurs* (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les Civilisations 1991), 185-207

Evans, Geoffrey: "Ancient Mesopotamian assemblies," in *JAOS* vol. 78, no. 1, 1958: 1-11

Evans-Pritchard, E. E.: "The Nuer of the southern Sudan," in M. Fortes & E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African political systems*, 1950 [1940], 272-296

F

Fantalkin, Alexander: "Identity in the making: Greeks in the eastern Mediterranean during the Iron Age," in Alexandra Villing & U. Schlotzhauer (eds.), *Naukratis: Greek diversity in Egypt* (London: British Museum Press 2006), 199-208

Feinman, Gary M.: "Scale and social organization – Perspectives on the archaic state," in Feinman & Marcus (eds.), *Archaic states* 1998, 95-133

Feinman, Gary M. & Joyce Marcus (eds.): *Archaic states* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Schools of American Research Press 1998)

Ferguson, Yale H.: "Chieftdoms to city-states: the Greek experience," in Timothy Earle (ed.), *Chieftdoms: power, economy, and ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 169-192

Figueira, Thomas J. & Gregory Nagy (eds.): *Theognis of Megara – poetry and the polis* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1985)

Finet, André (ed.): *La voix de l'opposition en Mesopotamie* (Brussels: Institut des hautes études de Belgique 1973)

Finet, André: "Le trône et la rue en Mesopotamie: l'exaltation de roi et les techniques de l'opposition," in Finet (ed.), *La voix de l'opposition en Mesopotamie*, 1973, 2-27

Finet, André (ed.): *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie et dans les régions adjacentes* (Brussels: Institut des Hautes Etudes de Belgique 1982)

Finet, André: "Y eut-il une démocratie mésopotamienne?", in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 144-151

Finkelberg, M.: "*Timē* and *aretē* in Homer," in *CIQ* vol. 48, no. 1, 1998: 14-28

Finley, Moses I.: "Debt-bondage and the problem of slavery," in Finley, Shaw & Saller (eds.), *Economy and society in ancient Greece*, 1981 [1965], 150-166

Finley, Moses I.: *The world of Odysseus* (New York.: Viking Press 1974 [1965])

Finley, Moses I.: *Politics in the ancient world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983)

Finley, Moses I.: *The ancient economy* Updated edition (Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press 1999 [1985])

Finley, Moses I.: *The use and abuse of history* New edition (London: The Hogarth Press 1986)

Finley, Moses I.: *Democracy ancient and modern* (London: Hogarth 1985)

Finley, Moses I., Brent D. Shaw and Richard P. Saller (eds.): *Economy and society in ancient Greece* (London: Chatto & Windus 1981 [1965])

Fischer, Nick & Hans van Wees (ed.): *Archaic Greece: new approaches and new evidence* (London: Duckworth 1998)

Fleming, Daniel E.: *The installation of Baal's high priestess at Emar- A window on Ancient Syrian religion* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1992)

Fleming, Daniel E.: "The rituals from Emar: evolution of an indigenous tradition in second-millennium Syria," in Chavalas, Mark W. & John L. Hayes: *New horizons in the study of ancient Syria* (Malibu: Undena Publications 1992), 51-61

Fleming, Daniel E.: "A limited kingship: Late Bronze Emar in ancient Syria," in *UF* 24, 1992: 59-71

Fleming, Daniel E.: "The Sim'alite *gayum* and the Yaminite *li'mum* in the Mari archives," in Nicolle (ed.), *Nomades et sédentaires*, 2004, 199-212

Fleming, Daniel E.: *Democracy's ancient ancestors – Mari and early collective governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004)

Ford, Andrew L.: "The seal of Theognis: the politics of authorship in archaic Greece," in Figueira & Nagy (eds.), *Theognis of Megara – poetry and the polis*, 1985, 82-95

Forrest, W. G.: *A history of Sparta 950-192 B.C.* (London: Hutchinson 1968)

Forsdyke, Sara: "Land, labour and economy in Solonian Athens: breaking the impasse between archaeology and history," in Blok & Lardinois (eds.), *Solon of Athens – New historical and philological approaches*, 2006, 334-350

Fortes, M. & E. E. Evans-Pritchard: "Introduction," in M. Fortes & E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African political systems*, 1950 [1940], 1-23

Fortes, M. & E. E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.): *African political systems* (London, New York & Toronto: Oxford University Press 1950 [1940])

Foxhall, Lin: "A view from the top – Evaluating the Solonian classes," in Mitchell & Rhodes, *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 113-136

Frame, Grant: *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. – A political history* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut 1992)

French, A.: "A note on Thucydides iii 68.5," in *JHS* vol. 80, 1960: 191

Fried, Morton H.: *The evolution of political society – An essay in political anthropology* (New York: Random House 1967)

Fustel de Coulanges: *La cité antique* (Paris: Librairie Hachette 1969 [1864])

G

Gallant, T. W.: "Agricultural systems, land tenure, and the reforms of Solon," in *ABSA* vol. 77, 1982: 111-124

Garelli, Paul: *Les assyriens en Cappadoce* (Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve 1963)

Garelli, Paul: "Les pouvoirs locaux en Assyrie," in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 76-91

Gelb, I. J.: "An Old Babylonian list of Amorites," in *JAOS* vol. 88, no. 1, 1968: 39-46

Gelb, I. J.: "ŠĪBŪT KUŠURRĀ'IM," Witnesses of the indemnity," in *JNES* vol. 43, 1984: 263-276

Giddens, Anthony: *The constitution of society* (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press 2007 [1984])

Goddeeris, Anne: "The Old Babylonian economy," in Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian world*, 2007, 198-209

Goetze, Albrecht: *The Laws of Eshnunna (The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research vol. 31, The American Schools of Oriental Research 1951-1952)*: v-197

Gschnitzer, Fritz: "König, Rat und Volk bei Homer," in Trümper & Schmitt (eds.), *Frühes Griechentum*, 2001 [1980], 182-198

Gschnitzer, Fritz: "Die Stellung der Polis in der politischen Entwicklung des Altertums," in Trümper & Schmitt (eds.), *Frühes Griechentum*, 2001 [1988], 233-248

Gschnitzer, Fritz: "Zur homerischen Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung: Grundcharakter und geschichtliche Stellung," in Trümper & Schmitt (eds.), *Frühes Griechentum*, 2001 [1991], 142-164

Gschnitzer, Fritz: "Phoinikisch-karthagisches Verfassungsdenken," in Trümper & Schmitt (eds.), *Frühes Griechentum*, 2001 [1993], 249-260

Günbatti, Cahit: "Two treaty texts found at Kültepe," in Dercksen (ed.), *Assyria and beyond*, 2004, 249-268

Günbatti, Cahit: "A list of eponyms from Kültepe (KEL D)," in Michel (ed.), *Old Assyrian studies in memory of Paul Garelli*, 2008, 125-135

Gurney, O. R.: *The Hittites* (London: The Folio Society 2002 [1990])

H

Hall, Jonathan M.: *Hellenicity – Between ethnicity and culture* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press 2002)

Hall, Jonathan M.: *A history of the archaic Greek world ca. 1200-479 BCE* (Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing 2007)

Hall, Jonathan M.: "Polis, community, and ethnic identity," in H.A. Shapiro (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to archaic Greece*, 2007, 40-60

Hammond, Mason: *The city in the ancient world* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1972)

Hanell, Krister: *Das altrömische eponyme Amt* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup 1946)

Hansen, Mogens Herman: *The Athenian democracy in the age of Demosthenes* (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers 1991)

Hansen, Mogens Herman (ed.): *The ancient Greek city-state - Symposium on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, July, 1-4 1992* (The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters: Copenhagen 1993)

Hansen, Mogens Herman: "Pollakhos polis legetai (Arist. Pol. 1276a23) – The Copenhagen inventory of *poleis* and the Lex Hafniensis de Civitate," in Mogens Herman Hansen (ed.), *Introduction to an inventory of poleis* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters 1996), 7-72

Hansen, Mogens Herman (ed.): *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag 2000)

Hansen, Mogens Herman: "The Hellenic *polis*" in Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000, 141-187

Hansen, Mogens Herman (ed.), *A comparative study of six city-state cultures* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab 2002)

Hansen, Mogens Herman: “95 theses about the Greek *polis* in the archaic and classical periods: a report on the results obtained by the Copenhagen Polis Centre in the period 1993-2003,” in *Historia* 52, 2003: 257-282

Hansen, Mogens Herman (ed.): *The imaginary polis* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters 2005)

Harden, Donald: *The Phoenicians* (London: Thames & Hudson 1962)

Harris, Edward M.: “A new solution to the *seisachtheia*,” in Mitchell & Rhodes, *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 103-113

Harris, Rivkah: *Ancient Sippar – A demographic study of an Old-Babylonian city (1894-1595 B.C.)* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 1975)

Haubold, Johannes: *Homers people: epic poetry and social formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000)

Haubold, Johannes: “The Homeric *polis*,” in Hansen (ed.), *The imaginary polis*, 2005, 25-48

Hegel, G. W. F.: *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag 1970 [1832-45])

Heinz, Marlies: *Altsyrien und Libanon* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2002)

Heltzer, Michael: *The rural community in ancient Ugarit* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag 1976)

Heltzer, Michael: “Royal economy in ancient Ugarit,” in Edward Lipinski (ed.), *State and temple economy in the ancient Near East II* (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek 1979), 459-496

Heltzer, Michael: *The internal organization of the kingdom of Ugarit* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag 1982)

Heltzer, Michael: "The Late Bronze Age service system and its decline," in Heltzer & Lipinski (eds.), *Society and economy in the eastern Mediterranean*, 1988, 7-18

Heltzer, Michael: "The economy of Ugarit," in Watson & Wyatt (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic studies*, 1999, 423-454

Heltzer, Michael & Edward Lipinski (eds.): *Society and economy in the eastern Mediterranean (ca. 1500-1000 B.C.)* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters 1988)

Herzog, Ze'ev: *Das Stadttor in Israel und in den Nachbarländern* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern 1986)

Hignett, C.: *A history of the Athenian constitution to the end of the fifth century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1958)

Hodkinson, Stephen: "The development of Spartan society and institutions in the archaic period," in Mitchell & Rhodes (eds.), *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 83-102

Hoffmann, Inge: *Der Erlaß Telipinus* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag 1984)

Hoffner, Jr., Harry A.: "Legal and social institutions of Hittite Anatolia," in *CANE* vol. I, 555-569

Hoffner, Jr., Harry A.: *The laws of the Hittites – a critical edition* (Leiden, New York & Cologne: Brill 1997)

Isakhan, Benjamin: "Engaging "primitive democracy": Mideast roots of collective governance," in *MEPC* vol. 14, no. 3, 2007: 97-117

J

Jacobsen, Thorkild: "Primitive democracy in ancient Mesopotamia," in Moran (ed.), *Toward the image of Tammuz*, 1970 [1943], 157-170

Jacobsen, Thorkild: "Early political development in Mesopotamia," in Moran (ed.), *Toward the image of Tammuz*, 1970 [1957], 132-156

Jacobsen, Thorkild: "An ancient Mesopotamian trial for homicide", in Moran (ed.), *Toward the image of Tammuz*, 1970 [1959], 193-214

Jacobsen, Thorkild: "Iphur-Kīshi and his times," in *AfO* vol. 26, 1978-79: 1-14

Jacoby, Felix: *Atthis: the local chronicles of ancient Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1949)

James, Alan: "Egypt and her vassals: the geopolitical dimension," in Cohen & Westbrook (eds.), *Amarna diplomacy*, 2000, 112-124

Jursa, M.: *Aspects of the economic history of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2010)

Jursa, M.: "Cuneiform writing in Neo-Babylonian temple communities," in Radner & Robson (eds.), *The Oxford handbook in Cuneiform culture*, 2011, 184-204

K

Katz, Dina: "Gilgamesh and Akka: was Uruk ruled by two assemblies?" in *RA* vol. 81, 1987: 105-114

-
- Keane, John: *The life and death of democracy* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009)
- Kelder, Jorrit: "A great king at Mycenae – An argument for the *wanax* as Great King and the *lawagetas* as vassal ruler," in *Palamedes* 3, 2008, 1-26
- Kelder, Jorrit: *The kingdom of Mycenae* (Amsterdam: PhD-dissertation Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2009)
- Kirk, G. S.: *The Iliad: a commentary* vol. I: books 1-4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985)
- Kistler, Erich: "'Kampf der Mentalitäten': Ian Morris' 'Elitist-' versus 'Middling-Ideology'?" in Robert Rollinger & Christoph Ulf (eds.), *Griechische Archaik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2004), 145-175
- Klengel, Horst: "Zu den *šibūtum* in altbabylonischer Zeit," in *OrNS* vol. 29, 1960: 357-375
- Klengel, Horst: "Die Rolle der "Ältesten" (LÚ.^{MEŠ}ŠU.GI) im Kleinasien der Hethiterzeit," in *ZA* Band 57, 1965: 223-236
- Klengel, Horst: "'Älteste" in den Texten aus Ebla und Mari," in Marc Lebeau & Philippe Talon (eds.), *Reflets des deux fleuves – Volume de mélanges offerts à André Finet* (Leuven: Peeters 1989), 61-65
- Knell, Heiner: *Mythos und Polis- Bildprogramme griechischer Bauskulptur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1990)
- Kohler, J & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band III (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1909)
- Kohler, J & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band V (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1911)

- Kolb, Frank: "Bau-, Religions- und Kulturpolitik der Peisistratiden," in *JDAI* 92, 1977: 99-138
- Koschaker, P. & A. Ungnad: *Hammurabi's Gesetz* Band VI (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer 1923)
- Kraus, F. R.: *Vom mesopotamischen Menschen der altbabylonischen Zeit und seiner Welt* (Amsterdam & London: North-Holland Publishing Company 1973)
- Kraus, F. R.: "'Kārum", ein Organ städtischer Selbstverwaltung der altbabylonischen Zeit," in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 29-42
- Krentz, Peter: "Warfare and hoplites," in Shapiro (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to archaic Greece*, 2007, 61-84
- Krings, Véronique (ed.): *La civilisation Phénicienne et Punique* (Leiden, New York & Cologne: E. J. Brill 1996)
- Kühr, Angela: "Review of K. Vlassopoulos 2007," in *BMCR* 2009.1.16
- Kuhrt, Amélie: *The ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC* vol. I-II (London & New York: Routledge 1997 [1995])
- Kuper, Adam: "Introduction: council structure and decision-making," in Audrey Richards & Adam Kuper, *Councils in action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1971), 13-28
- Kupper, Jean-Robert: "L'opinion publique a Mari," in *RA* vol. 58 no. 1, 1964: 79-82
- Kupper, Jean-Robert: "La voix de l'opposition a Mari," in Finet (ed.), *La voix de l'opposition en Mesopotamie*, 1973, 166-178
- Kupper, Jean-Robert: "Les pouvoirs locaux dans le royaume de Mari," in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 43-53

Kupper, Jean-Robert: “Mari entre la Mésopotamie et la Syrie du Nord à l’époque paléo-Babylonienne,” in Nissen & Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamia und seine Nachbarn*, 1987, 173-185

L

Landsberger, Benno: “Assyrische Königsliste und “Dunkles Zeitalter”,” in *JCS* vol. 8, no. 2, 1954: 47-73

Landsberger, Benno & K. Balkan: “Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Īrisum, gefunden in Kültepe 1948,” in *Bulleten* vol. 14, no. 54, 1950: 219-268

Larsen, Mogens Trolle: *The Old Assyrian city-state and its colonies* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag 1976)

Larsen, Mogens Trolle: “The Old Assyrian city-state,” in Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000, 77-88

Larsen, Mogens Trolle: “The city-states of the early Neo-Babylonian period,” in Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000, 117-127

Latacz, Joachim: *Kampfparänese, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos und Tyrtaios* (Munich: Beck 1977)

Leemans, W. F.: “Aperçu sur les texts juridiques d’Emar,” in *JESHO* vol. 31, no.2, 1988: 207-242

Leick, Gwendolyn (ed.): *The Babylonian world* (New York & London: Routledge 2007)

Lewy, Hildegard: “Notes on the political organization of Asia Minor at the time of the Old Assyrian texts,” in *OrNS* vol. 33, 1964: 181-198

Lewy, Julius: "On some institutions of the Old Assyrian empire," in *HUCA* vol. 27, 1956: 1-79

Lipinski, Edward: "The socio-economic condition of the clergy in the kingdom of Ugarit," in Heltzer & Lipinski (eds.), *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 1988, 125-150

Liverani, Mario: "Communautés de village et Palais royal dans la Syrie du IIème millénaire," in *JESHO*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1975: 146-164

Liverani, Mario: *Three Amarna essays* (Malibu: Undena Publications 1979)

Liverani, Mario: "Ville et campagne dans le royaume d'Ugarit. Essai d'analyse économique," in Diakonoff (ed.), *Societies and languages of the ancient Near East*, 1982, 250-258

Liverani, Mario: "The collapse of the Near Eastern regional system at the end of the Bronze Age: the case of Syria," in Michael Rowlands, Mogens Trolle Larsen & Kristian Kristiansen (eds.), *Centre and periphery in the ancient world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), 66-73

Liverani, Mario: *Prestige and interest – International relations in the Near East ca. 1600-1100 B.C.* (Padova: Sargon srl 1990)

Liverani, Mario: "Model and actualisation – The kings of Akkad in the historical tradition," in Mario Liverani (ed.), *Akkad – The first world empire: structure, ideology, traditions* (Padova: Sargon srl 1993), 41-67

Liverani, Mario: "The Great Powers' club," in Cohen & Westbrook (eds.), *Amarna diplomacy*, 2000, 15-27

Liverani, Mario: "Rib-Adda, righteous sufferer," in Mario Liverani, Zainam Bahrani & Marc Van De Mieroop (eds.), *Myth and politics in ancient Near Eastern historiography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2004), 97-124

M

MacDonald, John: "An assembly at Ugarit?," in *UF* vol. 11, 1979: 515-526

Macqueen, J. G.: *The Hittites and their contemporaries in Asia Minor* (London: Thames & Hudson 1999 [1986])

Mactoux, Marie-Madeleine: "Lois de Solon sur les esclaves et formation d'une société esclavagiste," in Yuge & Doi (eds.), *Forms of control and subordination in antiquity*, 1988, 331-354

Malkin, Irad: *Religion and colonization in ancient Greece* (Leiden, New York, Copenhagen & Cologne: E.J. Brill 1987)

Manglapus, Raul S.: *Will of the people – Original democracy in non-Western societies* (New York, Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press 1987)

Mann, Michael: *The sources of social power* vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986)

Manville, Phillip Brook: *The origins of citizenship in ancient Athens* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1990)

Marazzi, Massimiliano: "Überlegungen zur Bedeutung von *pankuš* der hethitisch-akkadischen Bilinguis Hattušilis I," in *WO* Band 15, 1984: 96-102

Margueron, Jean-Claude: "Mari: a portrait in art of a Mesopotamian city-state," in *CANE* vol. II, 885-899

Marx, Karl: *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwürfe)* (Frankfurt a.M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt 1969 [1857-1858])

Master, D. M.: "State formation theory and the kingdom of ancient Israel," in *JNES* vol. 60, 2001: 117-131

- McGlew, James F.: *Tyranny and political culture in ancient Greece* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press 1993)
- McKenzie, John L.: "The elders in the Old Testament", in *AnBib* vol. 10, 1959: 388-406
- McNeill, J. R. & William H. McNeill: *The human web: a bird's eye view of world history* (New York: W. W. Norton 2003)
- Meier, Christian: *Die Entstehung des Politischen bei den Griechen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1980)
- Michel, Cécile: *Correspondance des marchands de Kanish* (Paris: Les editions du Cerf 2001)
- Michel, Cécile (ed.): *Old Assyrian studies in memory of Paul Garelli* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten 2008)
- Michel, Cécile & Paul Garelli: "Heurts avec une principauté anatolienne," in Arne A. Ambros & Markus Köhbach (ed.), *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 86. Band, 1996, *Festschrift für Hans Hirsch*, 277-290
- Michels, Robert: *Political parties: a sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracies* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press 1958 [1915])
- Milano, Lucio: "Ebla: a third-millennium city-state in ancient Syria", in *CANE* vol. II, 1219-1230
- Miller, Margaret C.: *Athens and Persia in the fifth century B.C.: a study in cultural receptivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997)
- Mitchell, Lynette G.: "New wine in old wineskins – Solon, *arete*, and the *agathos*," in Mitchell & Rhodes (eds.), *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 137-147

-
- Mitchell, Lynette G. & P. J. Rhodes (eds.): *The development of the polis in archaic Greece* (London & New York: Routledge 1997)
- Momigliano, Arnaldo: "Freedom of speech in antiquity," in Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the history of Ideas* vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner 1973), 252-263
- Moore, Charlotte B. (ed.): *Reconstructing complex societies* (Cambridge, MA: Supplement to *BASOR* no. 20, 1974)
- Moore, J. M.: *Aristotle and Xenophon on democracy and oligarchy* (London: Chatto & Windus 1975)
- Moran, William L. (ed.): *Toward the image of Tammuz and other essays on Mesopotamian history and culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1970)
- Moran, William L.: *The Amarna letters* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1992)
- Morgan, Kathryn A. (ed.): *Popular tyranny: sovereignty and its discontents in ancient Greece* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press 2003)
- Morris, Ian: "The use and abuse of Homer", in *ClAnt* vol. 5, no. 1, 1986: 81-138
- Morris, Ian: *Burial and ancient society – The rise of the Greek city-state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987)
- Morris, Ian: "The early polis as city and state," in Rich & Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *City and country in the ancient world*, 1991, 24-57
- Morris, Ian: "Homer and the Iron Age," in Morris & Powell (eds.), *A new companion to Homer*, 1997, 535-559
- Morris, Ian: "An archaeology of equalities? The Greek city-states," in Nichols & Charlton (eds.), *The archaeology of city-states – cross-cultural approaches*, 1997, 91-105

Morris, Ian: *Archaeology as cultural history* (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 2000)

Morris, Ian: "The collapse and regeneration of complex society in Greece, 1500-500 BC (version 1.0)," in *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics*, 2005: 1-15

Morris, Ian & Barry Powell (eds.): *A new companion to Homer* (Leiden, New York & Cologne: Brill 1997)

Morris, Sarah P.: *Daidalos and the origins of Greek art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1992)

Morris, Sarah P.: "Imaginary kings: alternatives to monarchy in early Greece," in Morgan (ed.), *Popular tyranny*, 2003, 1-24

Murray, Oswyn: "Cities of reason," in Oswyn Murray & S. R. F. Price (eds.), *The Greek city: from Homer to Alexander* (Oxford: Clarendon 1990), 1-25

Murray, Oswyn: "Nestor's cup and the origins of the Greek *symposion*," in Bruno D'Agostino, & David Ridgway (eds.), *Apoikia - I piu antichi insediamenti Greci in Occidente: Funzioni e modi dell' organizzazione politica e sociale - Scritti in onore di Giorgio Buchner* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale 1994), 47-54

N

Na'aman, Nadav: "The Egyptian-Canaanite correspondence," in Cohen & Westbrook (eds.), *Amarna diplomacy*, 2000, 125-138

Nagy, Gregory: "Theognis of Megara: a poet's vision of his city," in Figueira & Nagy (eds.) *Theognis of Megara – poetry and the polis*, 1985, 22-81

Nichols, Deborah L. & Thomas H. Charlton (eds.): *The archaeology of city-states – Cross-cultural approaches* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press 1997)

Nicolle, Christophe (ed.): *Nomades et sédentaires dans le proche-orient Ancien* (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations 2004)

Nilsson, Martin P.: “The introduction of hoplite tactics at Rome: its date and its consequences,” in *JRS* 19, 1929: 1-11

Nissen, Hans-Jörg & Johannes Renger (eds.): *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. / [XXV. Rencontre assyriologique internationale Berlin, 3. bis 7. Juli 1978]* (Berlin: Reimer 1987)

North, Douglas E., John Joseph Wallis & Barry R. Weingast: *Violence and social orders: a conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009)

O

Ober, Josiah: *Mass and elite in democratic Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1989)

Ober, Josiah: *The Athenian revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1996)

Ober, Josiah: “Revolution matters: democracy as demotic action: response to Kurt Raaflaub,” in Raaflaub & Morris (eds.), *Democracy 2500?*, 1998, 67-85

Ober, Josiah: “Tyrant killing as therapeutic *stasis*: a political debate in images and texts,” in Morgan (ed.), *Popular tyranny*, 2003, 215-250

Ober, Josiah: "Solon and the horoi: facts on the ground in archaic Athens," in Blok & Lardinois (eds.), *Solon of Athens – New historical and philological approaches*, 2006, 441-456

Ober, Josiah & Charles Hedrick: *Demokratia: a conversation on democracy, ancient and modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1996)

Ogden, Daniel: "Crooked speech; the genesis of the Spartan rhetra," in *JHS* vol. 114, 1994: 85-101

Ollier, François: *Le mirage Spartiate* (New York: Arno Press 1973 [1933])

Oppenheim, A. Leo: "A new look at the structure of Mesopotamian society," in *JESHO* vol. 10, no. 1, 1967: 1-16

Oppenheim, A. Leo: *Ancient Mesopotamia – Portrait of a dead civilization* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 1977 [1964])

Orlin, Louis Lawrence: *Assyrian colonies in Cappadocia* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton 1970)

Osborne, Robin: *Demos: The discovery of classical Attika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984)

Osborne, Robin: *Greece in the making 1200-479 BC* (London & New York: Routledge 1996)

Osborne, Robin: "Early Greek colonization? The nature of Greek settlement in the West," in Fischer & van Wees (ed.), *Archaic Greece*, 1998, 251-269

Osborne, Robin: "Changing the discourse," in Morgan (ed.), *Popular tyranny*, 2003, 251-272

Osborne, Robin: *Athens and Athenian democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010)

Ostwald, Martin: *Oligarchia: the development of a constitutional form in ancient Greece* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2000)

Otto, Eckart: "Zivile Funktionen des Stadttors in Palästina und Mesopotamien," in Manfred Weippert & Stefan Timm (eds.), *Meilenstein – Festgabe für Herbert Donner* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 1995), 188-197

P

Palaima, Thomas G.: "The nature of the Mycenaean *wanax*," in Rehak (ed.), *Aegaeum 11 - The role of the ruler in the prehistoric Aegean*, 1995, 119-141

Palaima, Thomas G.: "*Wanaks* and related power terms in Mycenaean and later Greek," in Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy & Irene S. Lemos (eds.), *Ancient Greece: from the Mycenaean palaces to the age of Homer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2006), 53-71

Parsons, Talcott: *The structure of social action* (New York: Free Press 1968 [1939])

Parsons, Talcott: "An analytical approach to the theory of social stratification," in Parsons (ed.), *Essays in sociological theory pure and applied*, 1949, 166-184

Parsons, Talcott: "The professions and social structure," in Parsons (ed.), *Essays in sociological theory pure and applied*, 1949, 185-199

Parsons, Talcott (ed.): *Essays in sociological theory pure and applied* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press 1949)

Parsons, Talcott: "The present status of "structural-functional" theory in sociology," in Parsons (ed.), *Social systems and the evolution of action theory*, 1977, 100-117

Parsons, Talcott (ed.): *Social systems and the evolution of action theory* (New York: Free Press 1977)

Parsons, Talcott & Toby Jackson (ed.): *The evolution of societies* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1977)

Podlecki, Anthony J.: *The early Greek poets and their times* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press 1984)

Polanyi, Karl: "Ports of trade in early societies," in *J. Econ. Hist.* vol. 23, no. 1, 1963: 30-45

Polignac, François de: *Cults, territory and the origins of the Greek city-state* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press 1995)

Porter, Anne: "The urban nomad: countering the old clichés," in Nicolle (ed.), *Nomades et sédentaires*, 2004, 69-80

Postgate, J. N.: *Early Mesopotamia – Society and economy at the dawn of history* (London & New York: Routledge 1994 [1992])

Potts, D. T.: *The archaeology of Elam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999)

Pritchard, James B (ed.): *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1971 [1969])

Q

Qviller, Bjørn: "The dynamics of the Homeric society," in *SO* vol. 56, 1981: 109-155

R

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Homer and the beginning of political thought in Greece," in Eric W. Robinson (ed.), *Ancient Greek democracy – Readings and sources* (Malden, Oxford & Carlton 2004 [1988]), 28-40

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Homer to Solon: the rise of the polis – The written sources," in Hansen (ed.), *The ancient Greek city-state*, 1993, 41-105

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Soldiers, citizens, and the evolution of the early Greek *polis*," in Mitchell & Rhodes (eds.), *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 49-59

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Homeric society" in Morris & Powell (eds.), *A new companion to Homer*, 1997, 624-648

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Power in the hands of the people: foundations of Athenian democracy," in Raaflaub & Morris (eds.), *Democracy 2500?*, 1998, 31-66

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Stick and glue: the function of tyranny in fifth-century Athenian democracy," in Morgan (ed.), *Popular tyranny*, 2003, 59-93

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Athenian and Spartan *Eunomia*, or: what to do with Solon's timocracy?," in Blok & Lardinois (eds.), *Solon of Athens – New historical and philological approaches*, 2006, 390-428

Raaflaub, Kurt A.: "Auf dem Streitwagen des Sängers: Die Suche nach einer historischen "epischen Gesellschaft"," in Christoph Ulf & Robert Rollinger (eds.), *Lag Troia in Kilikien? Der aktuelle Streit um Homers Ilias* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2011), 341-374

Raaflaub Kurt A. & Ian Morris (eds.): *Democracy 2500?* (Atlanta, GA: American Philological Association 1998)

Radner, Karen & Eleanor Robson (eds.): *The Oxford handbook in Cuneiform culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011)

- Rainer, Erica: "The Babylonian *Fürstenspiegel* in practice," in Diakonoff (ed.), *Societies and languages of the ancient Near East*, 1982, 320-323
- Rehak, Paul (ed.): *Aegaeum 11 - The role of the ruler in the prehistoric Aegean* (Liège: Université du Liège & University of Texas at Austin 1995)
- Renger, Johannes: "Goldsmiths, jewelers and carpenters of Neobabylonian Eanna," in *JAOS* vol. 91, no. 4, 1971: 494-503
- Reviv, Hanoch: "On urban representative institutions and self-government in Syria-Palestine in the second half of the Second Millennium B.C." in *JESHO* vol. 12, no. 3, 1969: 283-297
- Reviv, Hanoch: "Kidinnu – Observations on privileges of Mesopotamian cities," in *JESHO* vol. 31, no. 3, 1988: 286-298
- Reviv, Hanoch: *The elders in ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press 1989)
- Rhodes, P. J.: *A commentary on the Athenian Politeia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981)
- Rhodes, P.J.: "Review of Siewert (P.), *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes*," in *JHS* vol. 103, 1983: 203-204
- Rich, John & Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (eds.): *City and country in the ancient world* (London & New York: Routledge 1991)
- Rihll, T. E.: "Hektemoroi – partners in crime?," in *JHS* vol. 111, 1991: 101-127
- Robinson, Eric W.: *The first democracies* (Stuttgart: Frank Steiner Verlag 1997)
- Robinson, Eric W.: *Democracy beyond Athens – Popular government in the Greek classical age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rowe, Ignacio Márquez: "The king's men in Ugarit and society in Late Bronze Age Syria," in *JESHO*, vol. 45, no. 1 2002: 1-19

Roussel, Denis: *Tribu et cité* (Paris: Les Belles Lettre 1976)

S

Saggs, H. W. F: *The Babylonians* (London: The Folio Society 2002 [1988])

Sahlins, Marshall: *Stone Age economics* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter 1972)

Said, Edward W.: *Orientalism* Reprinted with a new preface (London: Penguin Books 2003 [1978])

Sallaberger, Walther: "The palace and the temple in Babylonia," in Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian world*, 2007, 265-275

Salmon, John: "Lopping off the heads? Tyrants, politics and the *polis*," in Mitchell & Rhodes (eds.), *The development of the polis in Archaic Greece*, 1997, 60-73

Sasson, Jack M. (ed.): *Civilizations of the ancient Near East* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons 1995)

Sasson, Jack M.: "The king and I – a Mari king in changing perceptions," in *JAOS* vol. 118, no.4, 1998: 453-470

Schemeil, Yves: "Democracy before democracy," in *IPSR* vol. 21, no. 2, 2000: 99-120

Schloen, J. David: *The House of the Father as fact and symbol – Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2001)

Schofield, M.: "*Eubolia* in the *Iliad*," in *CIQ* vol. 36, 1986: 6-31

Selz, Gebhard: "Power, economy and social organization in Babylonia," in Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian world*, 2007, 276-287

Seri, Andrea: "Review: *Democracy's ancient ancestors: Mari and early collective government*. By Daniel E. Fleming," in *JAOS* vol. 123, no. 1, 2005: 119-121

Seri, Andrea: *Local power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia* (London: Equinox Publishing 2005)

Service, Elman R.: *Cultural evolutionism: theory in practice* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1971)

Service, Elman R.: *Origins of the state and civilization* (New York: Norton 1975)

Service, Elman R.: "Classical and modern theories of the origins of government," in Cohen & Service (eds.), *Origins of the state: the anthropology of political evolution*, 1978, 21-34

Sewell, William H., Jr.: "A theory of structure: duality, agency, and transformation," in *AJS* vol. 98, no. 1, 1992: 1-29

Shapiro, H. A.: *Art and cult under the tyrants in Athens* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern 1989)

Shapiro, H. A. (ed.): *The Cambridge companion to archaic Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007)

Shelmerdine, Cynthia W.: "Mycenaean palatial administration," in Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy & Irene S. Lemos (eds.), *Ancient Greece: from the Mycenaean palaces to the age of Homer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2006), 73-86

Siewert, Peter: *Die Trittyen Attikas und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1982)

Skalnik, Peter: "The early state as a process," in Claessen & Skalnik (eds.), *The early state*, 1978, 597-618

Small, David B.: "Heterarchical paths to evolution: the role of external economies," in Ehrenreich, Crumley & Levy (eds.), *Heterarchy and the analysis of complex societies*, 1995, 71-85

Small, David B.: "City-state dynamics through a Greek lens," in Nichols & Charlton (eds.), *The archaeology of city-states*, 1997, 107-118

Small, David B.: "The dual-processual model in ancient Greece," in *JAA* vol. 20, no. 2, 2009: 205-221

Smith, Adam T.: *The political landscape – Constellations of authority in early complex polities* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press 2003)

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: "The hoplite reform and history," in *JHS* vol. 85, 1965: 110-22

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2000 [1971])

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: "An historical Homeric society?" in *JHS* vol. 94 1974: 114-125

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: *Archaic Greece - The Age of Experiment* (London: Dent 1980)

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: "Archaeology and the study of the Greek city," in Rich & Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *City and country in the ancient world*, 1991, 1-23

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: "The rise of the *polis*- the archaeological evidence," in Hansen (ed.), *The ancient Greek city-state*, 1993, 30-40

Snodgrass, Anthony M.: "The nature and standing of the early western colonies," in Gocha R. Tsetskhladze & Franco de Angelis (eds.), *The archaeology of Greek*

colonisation – Essays dedicated to Sir John Boardman (Oxford: Oxbow Books 2004), 1-10

Sommer, Michael: *Europas Ahnen – Ursprünge des Politischen bei den Phönikern* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2000)

Stahl, Michael: *Aristokraten und Tyrannen im archaischen Athen* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden 1987)

Steinkeller, Piotr: “City and countryside in third-millennium southern Babylonia,” in Stone (ed.), *Settlement and society*, 2007, 185-211

Stol, Marten: *Studies in Old Babylonian history* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 1976)

Stone, Elizabeth C.: *Nippur neighborhoods* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago 1987)

Stone, Elizabeth C. (ed.): *Settlement and society – essays dedicated to Robert McCormick Adams* (Los Angeles, CA: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA 2007)

Stone, Elizabeth C.: “City-states and their centers – The Mesopotamian example,” in Nichols & Carlton (eds.), *The archaeology of city-states*, 1997, 15-26

Stone, Elizabeth C.: “The Mesopotamian urban experience,” in Elizabeth C. Stone (ed.), *Settlement and society*, 2007, 213-234

T

Talon, Philippe: “La “sugāgūtum” a Mari: Un pouvoir local récupéré,” in Finet (ed.), *Les pouvoirs locaux en Mesopotamie*, 1982, 54-68

Thomas, Carol G.: "The components of political identity in Mycenaean Greece," in Robert Laffineur & Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier (eds.), *Politeia – Society and state in the Aegean Bronze Age - proceedings of the 5th International Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994* vol. II (Liège : Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique 1995), 349-354

Thuesen, Ingolf: "The city-state in ancient western Syria," in Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of thirty city-state cultures*, 2000, 55-65

Trümper, Catherine & Tassilo Schmitt (eds.): *Frühes Griechentum: Historische und Sprachwissenschaftliche Beiträge* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2001)

U

Uchitel, Alexander: "The archives of Mycenaean Greece and the ancient Near East," in Michael Heltzer & Edward Lipinski (eds.), *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (ca. 1500-1000 B.C.)* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters 1988), 19-30

V

Van De Mieroop, Marc: "Old Babylonian Ur: portrait of an ancient Mesopotamian city," in *JANES* vol. 21, 1992: 119-130

Van De Mieroop, Marc: "On writing a history of the ancient Near East," in *BO* vol. 54, no. 3-4, 1997: 286-306

Van De Mieroop, Marc: *The ancient Mesopotamian city* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999 [1997])

Van De Mieroop, Marc: "The government of an ancient Mesopotamian city: what we know and why we know so little," in Kazuko Watanabe (ed.), *Priests and officials in the ancient Near East* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter 1999), 139-161

Van der Vliet, Edward Ch. L.: "Tyranny and democracy – the evolution of politics in ancient Greece," in Henri J. M. Claessen & Pieter van de Velde, *Early state dynamics* (Leiden, New York, Copenhagen & Cologne: E. J. Brill 1987), 70-90

Van der Spek, R. J.: "The Babylonian city," in Amélie Kuhrt & Susan Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press 1987)

Van Exel, Vincent J.: "Social change at Emar: the influence of the Hittite occupation on local traditions," in *RA* vol. 104: 65-86

Van Wees, Hans: *Status warriors: war, violence and society in Homer and history* (Amsterdam: Gieben 1992)

Van Wees, Hans: "Tyrtaeus' *Eunomia* – Nothing to do with the Great Rhetra," in Stephen Hodkinson & Anton Powell (eds.), *Sparta – New perspectives* (London: Duckworth with The Classical Press of Wales 1999), 1-41

Van Wees, Hans: "Mass and elite in Solon's Athens: the property classes revisited," in Blok & Lardinois (eds.), *Solon of Athens – New historical and philological approaches*, 2006, 351-389

Vargyas, Peter: "Stratification sociale à Ugarit," in Heltzer & Lipinski (eds.), *Society and economy in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 1988, 111-123

Veenhof, Klaas R.: *Aspects of Old Assyrian trade and its terminology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1972)

-
- Veenhof, Klaas R.: "The Old Assyrian merchants and their relations with the native population of Anatolia," in Nissen & Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamia und seine Nachbarn*, 1987, 147-160
- Veenhof, Klaas R.: "'In accordance with the words of the stele": evidence for Old Assyrian legislation," in *Chi.-Kent. L. Rev.* vol. 70, 1994-95: 1717-1744
- Veenhof, Klaas R.: "'Modern" features in Old Assyrian trade," in *JESHO* vol. 40, no. 4, 1997: 336-366
- Veenhof, Klaas R. & Jesper Eidem: *The Old Assyrian period (Mesopotamia Annäherungen 5)* (Fribourg: Academic Press 2008)
- Ventris, Michael & John Chadwick: *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1956)
- Villing, Alexandra (ed.): *The Greeks in the East* (London: The British Museum Press 2005)
- Vita, Juan-Pablo: "The society of Ugarit," in Watson & Wyatt (eds.), *Handbook of Ugaritic studies*, 1999, 455-498
- Vlassopoulos, Kostas: *Unthinking the Greek polis – Ancient Greek history beyond Eurocentrism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007)
- Von Dassow, Eva: "Freedom in ancient Near Eastern societies," in Radner & Robson (eds.), *The Oxford handbook in Cuneiform culture*, 2011, 205-224
- Von Dassow, Eva: "The public and the state in the ancient Near East," in Gernot Wilhelm (ed.), *Organization, representation, and symbols of power in the ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2012)

W

Wallace, Robert W.: "Solonian democracy," in Raaflaub & Morris (eds.), *Democracy 2500?*, 1998, 11-29

Walther, Arnold: *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen* Band VI Heft 4-6 (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR 1968 [1917])

Watson, Wilfred G. E. & Nicolas Wyatt (eds.): *Handbook of Ugaritic studies* (Leiden, Boston & Köln: Brill 1999)

Weber, Max: *The city* (transl. and ed. Don Martindale & Gertrud Neuwirth) (London & New York: Free Press 1966 [1921])

Weber, Max: *Politik als Beruf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot 1968)

West, Martin L. (ed.): *Hesiod: Theogony, edited with prolegomena and commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997 [1966])

West, Martin L.: *The East face of Helicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1999 [1997])

Westbrook, Raymond: "The trial scene in the *Iliad*," in *HSCP* vol. 94, 1992: 53-76

Westbrook, Raymond: "The quality of freedom in Neo-Babylonian manumissions," in *RA* 98, 2004: 101-108

Westenholz, Aage: "The Sumerian city-state," in Hansen (ed.), *A comparative study of six city-state cultures*, 2002, 23-42

Whiting, Robert M.: "Amorite tribes and nations of second-millennium western Asia," in *CANE* vol. II, 1231-1242

Whitley, James: *The archaeology of ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001)

Wilson, John A.: "The assembly of a Phoenician city," in *JNES* vol. 4, no. 4, 1945: 245

Wilson, John Paul: "The nature of Greek overseas settlement in the archaic period - *Emporion* or *apoikia*," in Mitchell & Rhodes (eds.), *The development of the polis in archaic Greece*, 1997, 201-207

Wolin, Sheldon: "Transgression, equality, and voice," in Ober & Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia: a conversation on democracy, ancient and modern*, 1996, 63-90

Wright, James C.: "From chief to king in Mycenaean society," in Rehak (ed.), *Aegeum 11 - The role of the ruler in the prehistoric Aegean*, 1995, 63-82

Y

Yaron, Reuven: *The laws of Eshnunna* (Jerusalem & Leiden: The Magnes Press & E. J. Brill 1988)

Yoffee, Norman: "On studying Old Babylonian history: a review article," in *JCS* vol. 30, no. 1, 1978: 18-32

Yoffee, Norman: *Myths of the archaic state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005)

Yuge, T. & M. Doi (eds.): *Forms of control and subordination in antiquity* (Leiden: Brill 1988)

Z

Zaidman, Louise Bruit & Pauline Schmitt Pantel: *Religion in the ancient Greek city* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997 [1992])

