

## Athenian Democratic Ideology

We aim to bring together scholars interested in the rhetorical devices, media, and techniques used to promote or attack political ideologies or achieve political agendas during fifth- and fourth-century BCE Athens. A senior scholar with expertise in this area has agreed to preside over the panel and facilitate discussion.

“Imperial Society and Its Discontents” investigates challenges to an important aspect of Athenian imperial ideology, namely pride in the fleet’s ability to keep Athens fed and the empire secure during the so-called First Peloponnesian War and the Peloponnesian War proper. The author takes on Ober’s (1998) minimizing of the role the empire played in enabling the democracy’s existence. The author focuses on Herodotus’ Aces River vignette (Book 3), in which the Persians employ heavy-handed imperial methods to control water resources. Given the Athenians’ adoption of forms of oriental despotism in their own imperial practices (Raaflaub 2009), Herodotus plays the role of ‘tragic warner,’ intending that this story serve as a negative commentary on Athenian imperialism.

Moving from the empire to the *dêmos*, “The Importance of Being Honest: Truth in the Attic Courtroom” examines whether legal proceedings in Athens were “honor games” (Humphreys 1985; Osborne 1985) or truly legitimate legal proceedings (Harris 2005). The author argues that both assertions are correct, because while honor games were being played, the truth of the charges still was of utmost importance. Those playing “honor games” had to keep to the letter of the law, as evidence from Athenian oratory demonstrates. The prosecutor’s honesty was a crucial part of these legal proceedings, and any honor rhetoric went far beyond mere status-seeking. The charges had to be

addressed seriously regardless of any enmity or jostling for status between the two parties, because the jurors were voting under oath on the charges themselves and not on a popularity contest.

“Between Oikos and Dêmos: The *Sophronistes* in Lyncurgan Athens” continues with fourth-century oratory and Aristotle’s *Athenaion Politeia* in examining the crucial role that ephebes’ fathers played in choosing a *sophronistes* to oversee their sons’ military service in the ephebeia. Wanting the best for their sons, fathers would select those citizens most likely to possess *sophrosyne* – a moderate private life balanced with a loyalty to the democracy – enabling them to have a positive influence on the ephebes as they were learning how to be good Athenian citizens (North 1966; Strauss 1993; Whitehead 1993). Examination of this process illustrates the integral relationship between a model dêmos and the interests of individual oikoi (Xenophon and Aristotle), as well as one way in which rhetoric inspired confidence in the ability of the dêmos, made up of well-shepherded citizens, to make good decisions and vote wisely.

“Home Sweet Sacrifice: Oikos-Polis Tensions in Athenian Democratic Ideology” continues exploring the oikos-polis relationship. Although Athenian anti-Spartan rhetoric (e.g. Pericles’ Funeral Oration) invoked the personal freedoms and private lives allowed Athenian citizens, the interests of the polis often displaced the rights of the oikos, and democratic rhetoric required de-emphasizing family in favor of an egalitarian aesthetic and polis-loyalty rhetoric. These tensions often led to both polis appropriation of the symbols of ancient aristocratic oikoi and elite re-appropriation of those symbols (Loraux 1986; Morris 1994). In Athenian drama, legendary families (oikoi) often acted as *pharmakoi*, sacrificed for the greater good of the polis in a safe space where the dêmos

could work out politics and social relationships as a means of educating citizens through making an example out of fictional, as opposed to real, families.

- Harris, E. 2005. "Feuding or the Rule of Law? The Nature of Litigation in Classical Athens: An Essay in Legal Sociology." R. Wallace and M. Gagarin, eds., *Symposion 2001: Vorträge zur Griechischen und Hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte*. Vienna: 125–41.
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- Whitehead, D. 1993. "Cardinal Virtues: The Language of Public Approbation in

Democratic Athens.” *C&M* 44: 37-75.

## Imperial Society And Its Discontents

A central aspect of Athenian imperial ideology, celebrated in epideictic oratory (e.g., Thuc. 2.38.2; Isoc., *Pan.* 42), drama (e.g., Hermippus Fg. 63-Edmonds), and public decrees (e.g., *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 61, 35-41; 63, 9-19), was the pride the polis took in the power of the fleet to control the flow of resources between the imperial center and the dominated periphery. The Athenians recognized well that the thalassocracy was effective not only for ensuring their own livelihoods but also for controlling subject states and even extending dominion over non-subjects. “[F]or there is no city which does not have to import or export, and these activities will be impossible for a city unless it is obedient to the rulers of the sea,” asserted the Old Oligarch (*Ath. Pol.* 2.3). Indeed, Pericles himself considered the power of the fleet an unprecedented and unique means of control, one that made Athens’ imperial domain essentially boundless (Thuc. 2.62.2-3, with Foster 190-218). Thus, on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, if we can trust Thucydides’ account, some Greeks were trying to make this aspect of Athenian rule of the sea into the *casus belli* (1.120.2).

While scholars long have been interested in the mechanics of the Athenian thalassocracy (e.g., Hasebroek, Finley, Meiggs), and some have fleshed out its ideological import within the democracy (e.g., Loraux and Kallet), few have concerned themselves with counter hegemonic projects hostile to the empire. Ober’s study of the intellectual tradition that challenged popular rule is seminal, especially in the way it illustrates how dissenters veiled their critiques of the democracy, but lacunose in the attention it pays to the democracy’s imperial nature. Aside from an introductory chapter on the Old Oligarch, Ober does not concern himself with critiques of the Athenian

thalassocracy, perhaps in part because his current research project downplays the importance of the empire in enabling the stability and success of the democracy. I aim to fill this gap by examining Herodotus' pioneering contribution to the tradition that critiqued the Athenian thalassocracy.

Herodotus' *Histories* juxtaposes two distinct kinds of transactional systems vis-à-vis core and periphery: one, exemplified by oriental despotism, in which the imperial core benefits from the control flow of resources from the periphery to the center, much to the detriment of the periphery; and another, typified by a kind of nascent "free trade" sentiment, in which resources naturally follow a bidirectional path from the periphery to the core and from the core back to the periphery to the advantage of both spheres. My analysis will focus largely on the fascinating but neglected passage about the Persian king's control of the water resources of the Aces River (3.117), which, I contend, must be interpreted in conjunction with the extended geographical "ends of the earth" digression that precedes it (3.106-16).

The verbal and conceptual parallels between the two passages enjoin the reader to take the imperial methods of control illustrated in the Aces River episode and apply them to the empire at large. Recent attempts addressing the relevancy of this chapter to the larger narrative about the rise of the Achaemenids (3.61-88) and the further growth and expansion of the Persian Empire under Darius (3.118-60) have failed to take these chapters into consideration (e.g., Griffiths 173-77). Moreover, as Briant has argued, the Aces River vignette should "not be taken literally" (416). Rather, it is a cleverly wrought imagined world that functions as a metaphor of oriental despotism, which aims to subject even the natural world to its dominion. The Athenians' gradual adoption of oriental

forms of despotism in the management of their own empire between 479-431 is unmistakable (Raaflaub), making it likely that Herodotus' account of Persian excess serves as a negative commentary on contemporary Athenian imperial practices. Here I build upon the ideas of Fornara, who views Herodotus not as an encomiast of Athens but rather as a tragic warner who was increasingly seeing in Athens' rule a return to Persian imperial practices.

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## The Importance of Being Honest: Truth in the Attic Courtroom

The past few decades have witnessed a vigorous debate about the political and social function of the court system of classical Athens. Some scholars now represent the *dikastēria* as the locus for a “social drama” or “honor game” that overrode concerns for strict legality or truth (e.g. Humphreys 1985; Osborne 1985; Todd 1990; Cohen 1995), while others insist on the importance of legal issues, sometimes even claiming that Athenians attempted to implement a “rule of law” (e.g. Sealey 1994; Harris 2005; cf. Lanni 2006). This paper proposes that the courts were indeed viewed as the appropriate venue for honor games but that the dynamics of the social drama were not supposed to supplant the specifically legal nature of the proceedings nor the primacy of questions of truth; rather they ran parallel to them. The litigants acted out their own social drama through the courts, but the jurors were concerned to render a verdict on the charges at hand and not the honor game itself. Hence, social and political forces permeated the legal sphere but did not drastically alter its fundamental character.

The law court speeches indicate that jurors did not compromise on their demands that prosecutors put a real, punishable offense on trial. Enemies could take their feuds to court but only if they played the game according to the rules. We must not conflate what the litigants were seeking and what the jurors were offering. Certainly, a victory in court was seen as a legitimate form of revenge, but this does not mean that the jurors saw themselves merely as arbitrators of enmities. Prosecutors were expected to tell the truth and to prove a real, specific, legal offense.

Evidence for this comes from the speeches themselves. The endless complaints of defendants about the malicious slander of their opponents (e.g., Isocr. 16.2; Lys. 9.1–2;

25.5; Isae. 11.4; Dem. 18.225; Aeschin. 2.2) only make sense if these speakers can expect to have won a substantial blow against their opponents by showing them to be lying. The effectiveness of this defense tactic is demonstrated by the response it elicited from wary plaintiffs who were careful to preempt charges of vexatious litigation (e.g., Lys. 27.8; Dem. 21.29–35). If a prosecutor wants to stir up dicastic anger against his opponents, he must couch it in terms of the manifest truth of the charges.

This is the reason for the Attic orators' apparently contradictory attitude toward feuds in the courtroom. A prosecutor might trenchantly assert that desire for revenge is the motivating factor behind the lawsuit (e.g., Lys. 12.1–3; Dem. 53.1–2), while a defendant might cite his prosecutor's enmity as a reason to question the lawsuit's legitimacy. Feuding behavior might one moment be a helpful thing for a prosecutor to cite and the next moment a liability, because enmity itself was not the issue. The issue was the possible connection between the slander of enemies and the distortion of truth, a point frequently made in Attic oratory (Isocr. 16.2; 17.1; Lys. 19.53; 25.5; Isae. 11.4; Dem. 18.225; 29.22, 27; Aeschin. 2.2). Prosecutors could deploy the rhetoric of enmity only if it strengthened their legal claims.

The importance Athenian jurors placed on the prosecutor's honesty in bringing a charge made the social drama of the courtroom more complex than a simple competition for status between two individuals. Litigants desired to strike a blow against their opponents' honor and standing in the community, but they knew that to do so they had to play the game by the rules. The issue at stake in a lawsuit was the legal question of the *pragma*, the charge on the basis of which the jurors swore an oath to cast their votes.

Both litigants were expected to address the charges at hand regardless of their ulterior motives for appearing in court.

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Between *Oikos* and *Dêmos*: The *Sophronistes* in Lycurgan Athens

Scholars long have recognized that the civic office of the *sophronistes* or “discipline master” played an important supervisory role in the Athenian ephebeia, which was in the Lycurgan period a two-year-long state-funded and -organized program of compulsory military service conjoined with civic education for eighteen- and nineteen-year-old citizens called ephebes (Forbes 1929; Pélékidis 1962; Reinmuth 1971; Rhodes 1981). In this paper I examine how the involvement of the ephebes’ fathers may have influenced the election of the ten tribal *sophronistai*.

According to the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* (42.2), the *sophronistes* was elected in a two-stage process. First, the ephebes’ fathers (and presumably the ephebes’ guardians, should they not have a father) of each tribe gathered together and chose three candidates from their fellow tribesmen, whom they thought were “best and most suitable to take care of the ephebes (βελτίστους εἶναι καὶ ἐπιτηδαιοτάτους ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῶν ἐφήβων).” Second, the three candidates (thirty in all for the ten tribes) were brought before the people in the *ecclesia*, who then elected one of them as the tribal *sophronistes*. At no point does the treatise shed light on what is meant by “best and most suitable,” nor is there any explanation as to why the fathers should have been granted the right of preselecting the candidates.

The fathers had this privilege, I suggest, because the *dêmos* assumed that they would carefully scrutinize the worthiness of their compatriots on account of their concern for the general welfare of their sons (cf. Strauss 1993), who as ephebes had just attained civic majority and hence were eligible to inherit their share of the patrimony ([Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 42.1-2). If we consider that the *sophronistes*’ daily duties brought him into

intimate contact with the ephebes, who as youths were characterized as having a pronounced disposition to thoughtlessness and socially disruptive behavior (Dover 1974), the candidates' selection was probably based primarily on the fathers' perception of their moral characters. This explains why the minimum age requirement for the *sophronistes* was forty years, just like the *choregoi* ([Arist]. *Ath.Pol.* 56.3). The fathers were unlikely to entrust their sons to a *sophronistes* who would effectively act *in loco parentis* for two years, unless the fathers were convinced that the *sophronistes* would not exert a negative influence upon their sons' impressionable and easily corruptible minds (cf. Aeschin. 3.245-6).

This collective assessment of the candidates' morality would have reassured the *dêmos*, when they assembled to vote at the *ecclesia*, that each candidate not only possessed the democratic cardinal virtue of *sophrosyne*, a concept associated with moderate behavior in private life and loyalty to the democracy (North 1966; Whitehead 1993), but could also effectively cultivate this virtue and other important normative civic values among the ephebes during his term of office, including patriotism, piety, and devotion to the *polis* (cf. Lycurgus *Leocrates*). If we accept this, we should not dismiss the possibility that the *dêmos* may have determined their final choice for *sophronistes* on criteria other than moral character, although the *Athenaion Politeia* is silent on whether there was a general debate concerning the candidates or whether the fathers of each tribe were required to explain their selections.

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## Home Sweet Sacrifice: Oikos-Polis Tensions in Athenian Democratic Ideology

Here I look at depictions of tension between the oikos and the polis in Classical Athens that helped the Athenian *dêmos* explore how the individual family unit fit in to a democratic government and its focus on “the many.” (Cox 1997; Ober 1993 and 1998; Roy 1999.) Xenophon (*Oik.*) and Aristotle (*Pol.*; *Ath. Pol.*), both define the oikos as the building block, or smallest unit, of the polis, and an attack against an individual oikos is, at least according to the rhetoric of Lysias in *Against Eratosthenes*, an attack against the whole polis. Furthermore, Athenian anti-Spartan rhetoric (e.g. Pericles’ Funeral Oration in Thucydides Book 2) invoked the personal freedoms and private lives allowed Athenian citizens as a means of encouraging citizens that they were fighting for a way of life worth preserving, while demonizing the Spartans as war-machine automatons without any private lives.

In practice, however, the interests of the polis and “the many” often displaced what could be seen as traditional “rights” and interests of the oikos, and radical democratic ideology required de-emphasizing family, in several spheres, in favor of an egalitarian aesthetic and “loyalty to the polis” rhetoric (e.g., Morris 1994). These tensions often led to both polis appropriation of the symbols of ancient aristocratic oikoi and elite re-appropriation of those symbols or crafting alternate symbolic statements of oligarchic and lineage-focused ideology (e.g., Loraux 1986; Morris 1994; Osborne 1997). Furthermore, the degree to which “living in public view” was prized over privacy changed after the Peloponnesian Wars (Nevett 1999).

The Cambridge Ritualists (see the papers in Csapo and Miller 2009 on the work and legacy of the Cambridge Ritualists) and French theorists like Rene Girard argued that

the violence and sacrifice so prevalent in tragedy was the community's way of working out underlying tensions. In a 2006 book on online gaming, the social economist Edward Castronova cited ancient Greek drama as one of the earliest examples of what he calls a "synthetic world," a safe space in which individuals and communities can ask difficult questions and work out underlying tensions while minimizing, albeit only partially, "real-world" consequences. In addition to providing entertainment and honoring the gods, Athenian drama offered political and social critique and educated citizens, fostering a sense of community and promoting critical thinking in this shared learning experience.

In particular, I look here at examples of legendary families – *oikoi* – that often acted as *pharmakoi*, ritual scapegoats sacrificed for the greater good of the polis in the "safe" space of the dramatic festivals where the *dêmos* could work through political and social relationships through making an example out of fictional, as opposed to real, families (see also Aristotle *Poetics* on *catharsis*). Examples considered include the Atreids in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, Antigone and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *Medea*, the *oikoi* of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, and Strepsiades' household in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

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