

MANUELA MARI

*Democratic institutions in the Hellenistic cities and the Athenian model:
recent studies and debated issues*

1. At the origins of the 'vitalist' story of the Hellenistic polis

L. ROBERT, *Théophraste de Mytilène à Constantinople*, "CRAI" 113 (1969), 42-64 (42).

La cité grecque n'est pas morte à Chéronée, ni sous Alexandre, ni dans le cours de toute l'époque hellénistique. Certes, Athènes et Sparte ne jouent plus le rôle que ces cités jouaient dans la Méditerranée – ou dans l'Égée. Mais cette décadence dans le pouvoir international efficace ne change rien aux rouages de la vie civique, à son activité, à ses responsabilités et à ses dangers. Simplement les quelques grandes cités de la Grèce ont à peu près la même vie qu'ont eue toujours les centaines de cités grecques à l'époque classique: non point d'importance dans l'histoire générale, mais responsabilité de leur destin au milieu des guerres, des dangers et des piissances adverses.

2. Aristotle and Polybius on Hellenistic democracies

Aristotle, *Politics* IV 11, 1296a 13-21 (transl. H. Rackham).

καὶ αἱ δημοκρατίαι δὲ ἀσφαλέστεραι τῶν ὀλιγαρχιῶν εἰσι καὶ πολυχρονιώτεραι διὰ τοὺς μέσους (πλείους τε γὰρ [15] εἰσι καὶ μᾶλλον μετέχουσι τῶν τιμῶν ἐν ταῖς δημοκρατίαις ἢ ταῖς ὀλιγαρχίαις), ἐπεὶ ὅταν ἄνευ τούτων τῷ πλήθει ὑπερτείνωσιν οἱ ἄποροι, κακοπραγία γίνεται καὶ ἀπόλλυνται ταχέως. σημεῖον δὲ δεῖ νομίζειν καὶ τὸ τοὺς βελτίστους νομοθέτας εἶναι τῶν μέσων πολιτῶν· Σόλων τε γὰρ ἦν τούτων [20] (δηλοῖ δ' ἐκ τῆς ποιήσεως) καὶ Λυκούργος (οὐ γὰρ ἦν βασιλεὺς) καὶ Χαρώνδας καὶ σχεδὸν οἱ πλείστοι τῶν ἄλλων.

Also democracies are more secure and more long-lived than oligarchies owing to the citizens of the middle class (for they are more numerous [15] and have a larger share of the honors in democracies than in oligarchies), since when the poor are in a majority without the middle class, adversity sets in and they are soon ruined. And it must be deemed a significant fact that the best lawgivers are from among the middle citizens; for Solon was of that class, [20] as appears from his poetry, and so was Lycurgus (for he was not a king) and Charondas and almost the greatest number of the other lawgivers.

Aristotle, *Politics* V 1, 1301 b 39-1302 a 15 (transl. H. Rackham).

διὸ καὶ μάλιστα δύο γίνονται [40] πολιτεῖαι, δῆμος καὶ ὀλιγαρχία· εὐγένεια γὰρ καὶ ἀρετὴ ἐν ὀλίγοις, ταῦτα δ' ἐν πλείοσιν (...).

ὁμῶς δὲ ἀσφαλεστέρα καὶ ἀστασίαστος μᾶλλον ἢ δημοκρατία τῆς ὀλιγαρχίας. ἐν μὲν [10] γὰρ ταῖς ὀλιγαρχίαις ἐγγίνονται δύο, ἣ τε πρὸς ἀλλήλους στάσις καὶ ἔτι ἢ πρὸς τὸν δῆμον, ἐν δὲ ταῖς δημοκρατίαις ἢ πρὸς τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν μόνον, αὐτῷ δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν, ὃ τι καὶ ἄξιον εἰπεῖν, οὐκ ἐγγίνεται τῷ δήμῳ στάσις· ἔτι δὲ ἢ ἐκ τῶν μέσων πολιτεία ἐγγυτέρω τοῦ δήμου ἢ ἢ τῶν ὀλίγων [15] ἢ περ ἐστὶν ἀσφαλεστάτη τῶν τοιούτων πολιτειῶν.

Owing to this two principal varieties of constitution come into existence, [40] democracy and oligarchy; for noble birth and virtue are found in few men, but the qualifications specified in more (...).

But nevertheless democracy is safer and more free from civil strife than oligarchy; for in oligarchies [10] two kinds of strife spring up, faction between different members of the oligarchy and also faction between the oligarchs and the people, whereas in democracies only strife between the people and the oligarchical party occurs, but party strife between different sections of the people itself does not occur to any degree worth mentioning. And again the government formed of the middle classes is nearer to the people than to the few, [15] and it is the safest of the kinds of constitution mentioned.

Polybius II 38, 4-6 (transl. W.R. Paton).

[4] πῶς οὖν καὶ διὰ τί νῦν εὐδοκοῦσιν οὗτοί τε καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν πλῆθος τῶν Πελοποννησίων, ἅμα τὴν πολιτείαν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν καὶ τὴν προσηγορίαν μετεληφότες; [5] δῆλον ὡς τύχην μὲν λέγειν οὐδαμῶς ἂν εἴη πρέπον· φαῦλον γάρ· αἰτίαν δὲ μᾶλλον ζητεῖν. χωρὶς γὰρ ταύτης οὔτε τῶν κατὰ λόγον οὔτε τῶν παρὰ λόγον εἶναι δοκούντων οὐδὲν οἶόν τε συντελεσθῆναι. ἔστι δ' οὖν, ὡς ἐμὴ δόξα, τοιαύτη τις. [6] ἰσηγορίας καὶ παρρησίας καὶ καθόλου δημοκρατίας ἀληθινῆς σύστημα καὶ προαίρεσιν εὐλικρινεστέραν οὐκ ἂν εὔροι τις τῆς παρὰ τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς ὑπαρχούσης.

[4] Whence then comes it that these nations, with the rest of the inhabitants of the Peloponnese, have been content to adopt the constitution and the name of the Achaeans? [5] To speak of chance in such a matter would not be to offer any adequate solution of the question, and would be a mere idle evasion. A cause must be sought; for without a cause nothing, expected or unexpected, can be accomplished. The cause then, in my opinion, was this. [6] Nowhere could be found a more unalloyed and deliberately established system of equality and absolute freedom, and, in a word, of democracy, than among the Achaeans.

Polybius VI 57, 9 (transl. W.R. Paton).

οὗ γενομένου τῶν μὲν ὀνομάτων τὸ κάλλιστον ἢ πολιτεία μεταλήψεται, τὴν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ δημοκρατίαν, τῶν δὲ πραγμάτων τὸ χεῖριστον, τὴν ὀχλοκρατίαν.

And when that comes to pass the constitution will adopt the best name, liberty and democracy; but, in fact, it will become the worst of all governments, mob-rule.

3. Alexander, democracy, and Realpolitik

Arrian I 17, 10 (transl. P.A. Brunt).

τετάρτῃ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ἐς Ἐφεσον ἀφικόμενος τοὺς τε φυγάδας, ὅσοι δι' αὐτὸν ἐξέπεσον τῆς πόλεως, κατήγαγε καὶ τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν καταλύσας δημοκρατίαν κατέστησε· τοὺς δὲ φόρους, ὅσους τοῖς βαρβάροις ἀπέφερον, τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι ξυντελεῖν ἐκέλευσεν.

(Alexander) reached Ephesus on the fourth day, restored the exiles who had been turned out of the city on his account, destroyed the oligarchy, and established a democracy; he also ordered them to contribute to Artemis the taxes they had been paying to the barbarians.

Arrian I 18, 2 (transl. P.A. Brunt).

καὶ τὰς μὲν ὀλιγαρχίας πανταχοῦ καταλύειν ἐκέλευσεν, δημοκρατίας δὲ [τε] ἐγκαθιστάναι καὶ τοὺς νόμους τοὺς σφῶν ἐκάστοις ἀποδοῦναι, καὶ τοὺς φόρους ἀνεῖναι, ὅσους τοῖς βαρβάροις ἀπέφερον.

(Alexander) ordered the oligarchies everywhere to be overthrown and democracies to be established; he restored its own laws to each city and remitted the tribute they used to pay to the barbarians.

Alexander's letter to the Chians (SIG³ 283 = Rhodes – Osborne, GHI 84), lines 1-6 (transl. A.J. Heisserer).

Ἐπὶ Δεισιθέου πρυτάνεος παρὰ βασιλέως Ἀλε[ξάνδρ]ου Χίω[ν τῶι] δήμωι.

Τοὺς φυγάδας τοὺς ἐκ Χίου κατιέναι πάντα, πολίτευμα δ' [εἶ]ναι ἐν Χίωι δῆμον. Αἰρεθῆναι δὲ νομογράφους, οἵτινες γράψουσι καὶ διορθώσουσι τοὺς νόμους, ὅπως μηδὲν ἐναντίου ἢ τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ μηδὲ τῇ τῶν φυγάδων καθόδωι· τὰ δὲ διορθωθέντα ἢ γραφέντα ἐπαναφέρεσθαι πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον.

In the prytany of Deisitheos, from King Alexander to the demos of Chios.

All the exiles from Chios are to return and the government at Chios is to be a democracy. Law drafters are to be chosen who shall draft and correct the laws, in order that nothing may be contrary to the democracy or to the return of the exiles; and the laws that have been corrected or drafted are to be referred to Alexander.

[Demosthenes], *On the Treaty with Alexander* 10 (transl. J.H. Vince, slightly modified).

ἐπ' ἄλλο δὲ δίκαιον ἔρχομαι τῶν κατὰ τὰς συνθήκας. ἔστι γὰρ γεγραμμένον, ἐάν τινες τὰς πολιτείας τὰς παρ' ἐκάστοις οὖσας, ὅτε τοὺς ὄρκους τοὺς περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης ὤμνυσαν, καταλύωσι, πολεμίους εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς τῆς εἰρήνης μετέχουσιν. σκέψασθε δ', ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ὅτι Ἀχαιοὶ μὲν οἱ ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ ἐδημοκρατοῦντο, τούτων δ' ἐν Πελλήνῃ νῦν καταλέλυκε τὸν δῆμον ὁ Μακεδὼν ἐκβαλὼν τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς πλείστους, τὰ δ' ἐκείνων τοῖς οἰκέταις δέδωκε, Χαίρωνά δὲ τὸν παλαιστὴν τύραννον ἐγκατέστησεν.

I come to another claim sanctioned by the agreement. For the actual words are, "If any of the parties shall overthrow the constitution established in the several states at the date when they took the oaths to observe the peace, they shall be treated as enemies by all the parties to the peace." But just reflect, men of Athens, that the Achaeans in the Peloponnese enjoyed democratic government, and one of their democracies, that of Pellene, has now been overthrown by the Macedonian king, who has expelled the majority of the citizens, given their property to their slaves, and set up Chaeron, the wrestler, as their tyrant.

4. Aristotle on non-Athenian democracies

Aristotle, *Politics* IV 4, 1291b 14-30 (transl. H. Rackham).

ὅτι μὲν οὖν εἰσι πολιτεῖαι πλείους, καὶ διὰ τίνας [15] αἰτίας, εἴρηται πρότερον· ὅτι δὲ ἔστι καὶ δημοκρατίας εἶδη πλείω καὶ ὀλιγαρχίας, λέγωμεν. φανερόν δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων. εἶδη γὰρ πλείω τοῦ τε δήμου καὶ τῶν λεγομένων γνωρίμων ἔστιν, οἷον δήμου μὲν εἶδη ἐν μὲν οἱ γεωργοί, ἕτερον δὲ τὸ περὶ τὰς τέχνας, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ ἀγοραῖον τὸ περὶ [20] ὦνῃν καὶ πρᾶσιν διατρίβον, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ περὶ τὴν θάλατταν, καὶ τούτου τὸ μὲν πολεμικὸν τὸ δὲ χρηματιστικὸν τὸ δὲ πορθμευτικὸν τὸ δ' ἀλιευτικόν (πολλαχοῦ γὰρ ἕκαστα τούτων πολύοχλα, οἷον ἀλιεῖς μὲν ἐν Τάραντι καὶ Βυζαντίῳ, τριηρικὸν δὲ Ἀθήνησιν, ἐμπορικὸν δὲ ἐν Αἰγίνῃ καὶ Χίῳ, πορθμευτικὸν [25] δ' ἐν Τενέδῳ), πρὸς δὲ τούτοις τὸ χερσητικὸν καὶ τὸ μικρὰν ἔχον οὐσίαν ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι σχολάζειν, ἔτι τὸ μὴ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων πολιτῶν ἐλεύθερον, κἂν εἴ τι τοιοῦτον ἕτερον πλήθους εἶδος τῶν δὲ γνωρίμων πλοῦτος εὐγένεια ἀρετὴ παιδεία καὶ τὰ τούτοις λεγόμενα κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν [30] διαφορὰν.

That there are then several forms of constitution, and what are the reasons for this, [15] has been stated before; let us now say that there are several varieties both of democracy and of oligarchy. And this is clear even from what has been said already. For there are several classes both of the people and of those called the notables; for instance classes of the people are, one the farmers, another the class dealing with the arts and crafts, another the commercial class [20] occupied in buying and selling and another the one occupied with the sea—and this is divided into the classes concerned with naval warfare, with trade, with ferrying passengers and with fishing (for each of these classes is extremely numerous in various places, for instance fishermen at Tarentum and Byzantium, navy men at Athens, the mercantile class at Aegina and Chios, and the ferryman-class [25] at Tenedos), and in addition to these the hand-working class and the people possessing little substance so that they cannot live a life of leisure, also those that are not free men of citizen parentage on both sides, and any other similar class of common people; while among the notables wealth, birth, virtue, education, and the distinctions that are spoken of in the same group as these, form the classes.

Aristotle, *Politics* VI 4, 1318b 21-27.

ἔτι δὲ τὸ κυρίους εἶναι τοῦ ἐλέσθαι καὶ εὐθύνειν ἀναπληροῖ τὴν ἔνδειαν, εἴ τι φιλοτιμίας ἔχουσιν, ἐπεὶ παρ' ἐνίοις δήμοις, κἂν μὴ μετέχωσι τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν ἀρχῶν ἀλλὰ τινες αἰρετοὶ

κατὰ μέρος ἐκ πάντων, [25] ὥσπερ ἐν Μαντινείᾳ, τοῦ δὲ βουλευέσθαι κύριοι ὄσιν, ἱκανῶς ἔχει τοῖς πολλοῖς· καὶ δεῖ νομίζειν καὶ τοῦτ' εἶναι σχῆμά τι δημοκρατίας, ὥσπερ ἐν Μαντινείᾳ ποτ' ἦν.

And also, if they have any ambition, to have control over electing magistrates and calling them to account makes up for the lack of office, since in some democracies even if the people have no part in electing the magistrates but these are elected by a special committee selected in turn out of the whole number, [25] as at Mantinea, yet if they have the power of deliberating on policy, the multitude are satisfied. And this too must be counted as one form of democracy, on the lines on which it once existed at Mantinea.

5. A 'great convergence' or a series of different experiences?

M. CANEVARO – B. GRAY, *Introduction*, in CANEVARO – GRAY 2018, 1-18 (6).

The existence of a roughly uniform constitutional polis-scape increased the scope for peer-polity interaction, and produced a distinctly polycentric world. Within this world, political change and innovation emerged from the interaction of a variety of loci, rather than from the hegemonic pull of particular centres, which had often been the pattern in the Classical period. As a result, while the constitutional model towards which the early Hellenistic poleis converged has much in common with fourth-century Athenian democracy, this was not in any way a convergence towards the Athenian model. In fact, Athens, because of foreign interference and oligarchic experiments, was rather slow in fully joining the 'great convergence'.

6. Two different 'Athenian models'

A. MAIURI, *Nuova silloge epigrafica di Rodi e Cos*, Firenze 1925, nr. 11.

col. I [— — — — — — — — — —]

1	Βοιωτιακός	
	Ἀρίσταιχος	
	Κλέων	ἐ[ν]
	Φαιδώνδας ἡ περὶ ο[— —]	
5	Περὶ τῆς Ἀθήνησι	
	νομοθεσίας πέ[ντε]	
	Περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι πολι[τειῶν]	
	Ἡγησίου. οἱ Φιλαθηναῖοι	
	Ἀσπασία	ἐν
10	Ἀλκιβιάδης	ἐν
	Θεοδέκτου τέχνης τέσσα[ρα]	
	Ἀμφικτυονικός	ἐν
	Θεοπ[όμ]που Λακωνικός	ἐν
	Π[αν]ιωνικός	ἐν
15	[Μαύσ]ωλος	ἐν
	[Ὀλυμ]πικός	ἐν
	[Φίλι]ππος	ἐν
	[Ἀλεξά]νδρου ἐγκώμιον	ἐν
	Ὑπὲρ τῶν Οἰπ[ύ]	ἐν
20	[Ὑ]πὲρ τοῦίου	ἐν
	Πρὸς Εὐαγόραν [Κυ]πρια[κῶ]ν δ[ύο]	
	Ἐπιστο[λή] πρὸς [Ἀντίπα]τρο[ν ἐν]	
	Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς]	

25 Ἀλέξαν[δρον]
 Παναθηναϊκό[ς — — — — —]
 Καταδρομή τῇ[ς Πλάτωνος]
 διατριβῇ[ς — — — — — — —]
 Θεοπόμπου ἄλλου.
 Περὶ βασιλείας ἔν.
 col. II [— — — — — — —]
 16 Π[— — — — —]
 Ὑπ[ἐρ — — — — —]
 Ὑπ[ἐρ — — — — —]
 vacat
 20 Διονυσί[ου — — — — —]
 περ[— — — — — — —]
 Περὶ τῶ[ν — — — — —]
 Περὶ παιδ[— — — — —]
 [Διοδό?]του π[— — — — —]
 25 Ἀρμοδ[— — — — —]
 Δαμοκλείδα [— — — — —]
 Περὶ γενέσ[εως — — — — —]
 Πρὸς Ἀλέξ[ανδρον — — — — —]
 Ἐρατ[ο]σ[θέ]ν[ος] — — — — —

7. Local variations and differences: the example of Hellenistic Macedonia

M. MARI, *Macedonian Cities under the Kings: Standardization or Variety? A View from Amphipolis*, in M. Kalaitzi – P. Paschidis – C. Antonetti – A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets (eds.), *Βορειοελλαδικά. Tales from the lands of the ethne. Essays in honour of Miltiades B. Hatzopoulos*, Athens 2018, 179-197.

Different dating formulae from Macedonian civic documents:

Amphipolis: the *epistates*, usually along with the priest of Asclepius
 Anthemous: three *archontes*
 Beroea: the *epistates*; later an unspecified *hiereus*; in the gymnasiarchal law, the *strategos*
 Kassandreia: the priest of Lysimachus or an unspecified *hiereus*
 Mieza: the *epistates* along with the priest of Asclepius, and sometimes with the *tagoi*
 Morrylos: the *strategos*
 Philippi: the *archon*, or an unspecified *hiereus*
 Thessalonike: an unspecified *hiereus*, sometimes along with the *epistates* and the *tamiai*

Joint presence of a chief magistrate and of a board of ‘assessors’: a few examples of local peculiarities:

Amphipolis: three *archontes* and the eponymous *epistates*
 Anthemous, Apollonia: three *archontes* acting themselves as eponymous officers
 Dion: both the generic term *archontes* and the typically Macedonian *peliganes* are attested, along with the *epistates*
 Mieza: two *tagoi* along with the *epistates*
 Morrylos: three *archontes* and the eponymous *strategos*

Philippoi: both one single *archon* and a board of *archontes* are attested; the *epistates* is absent
Thessalonike: five *dikastai* along with the *epistates*

8. Athenian epigraphic habit as a model

Ch.W. Hedrick, jr., *Democracy and the Athenian Epigraphical Habit*, "Hesperia" 68 (1999), 387-439 (390-391).

Attempts to estimate the number of published Greek inscriptions can never be better than provisional. In its general outlines, however, the quantity of preserved Athenian inscriptions relative to those of other Greek city-states is not in doubt. (...) A reasonable but not too conservative estimate of the number of Attic inscriptions currently known would probably be in the region of 20,000. The distinctiveness of the size of this corpus emerges when it is compared to the number of inscriptions brought to light by investigations elsewhere in Greece. (...) (W)e might guess that the total number of published Greek inscriptions is somewhere in the vicinity of 100,000. If that estimate is even vaguely accurate, Attic inscriptions would account for about 20% of the total – an extraordinarily high percentage. Even if the total were twice as high, Attic inscriptions would still account for a remarkable 10% of the whole. (...) Whether or not these numbers should be ascribed to something like a "democratic ethic", there does appear to be some peculiar connection between the practice of erecting inscriptions and the city of Athens.

9. Athens outside the 'great convergence'

P. FUNKE, *Poleis and Koina: Reshaping the World of the Greek States in Hellenistic Times*, in BÖRM – N. LURAGHI 2018, 109-129 (111).

What in 229 BCE may have appeared to the Athenians as an unacceptable loss of autonomy in reality presented a chance to reposition the polis in the reconfigured political landscape after Alexander the Great without surrendering it in its basic form. It was no coincidence that Athens was surrounded by communities organised in federal states. When in 224 BCE a Hellenic League was founded under the leadership of Antigonos III Doson, this league, unlike its predecessors, was not comprised of individual communities, but rather was exclusively comprised of federal states with different legal frameworks. And after Sparta had been forced to join the Achaian League as a result of the defeat at Sellasia in 222 BCE, Athens remained the only polis in the whole of Greece which was not a member of any federal state.

SH.L. AGER, *Interstate Arbitrations in the Greek World, 337-90 B.C.*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1996: the only episodes involving Athens are nrs. 132 (a possible Athenian arbitration between Akarnania and Ambrakia in 166); 140 (Roman support to a Delian-Achaian claim against Athens in 159/8); 141 (a Sikyonian arbitration, on Roman request, between Athens and Oropos).

L. ROBERT, *Les juges étrangers dans la cité grecque*, in E. von Caemmerer et al. (eds.), *Xenion: Festschrift für Pan. I. Zepos*, Athens-Freiburg/Br.-Cologne 1973, 765–782 (= Id., *Opera minora selecta. Epigraphie et antiquités grecques*, V, Amsterdam 1989, 137-154 = Id., *Choix d'écrits*, éd. par D. Rousset avec la collaboration de Ph. Gauthier et I. Savalli-Lestrade, Paris 2007, 299-314) (777-778).

Cela dans tout le monde grec (...). Il y eut pourtant des exceptions. Etant donné le nombre des documents et leur variété géographique, ce n'est pas un hasard si dans deux villes on ne constate pas l'appel aux tribunaux étrangers, – deux villes également et différemment glorieuses: Athènes (...) et Rhodes (...). Il y eut aussi des conséquences pour les droits grecs et pour le droit grec. Toujours les tribunaux étrangers ont jugé d'après les lois de la ville où ils siègent (...). Il y avait donc adaptation et uniformisation des droits des cités par une classe

de citoyens éclairés, qui multipliait son expérience juridique et approfondissait son expérience politique. (...) Il se formait une classe – certes très ouverte – de iuris periti, un personnel politique qui a la pratique et qui est entraîné à la réflexion sur le droit et sur la politique.

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