

ROBERT W. WALLACE (EVANSTON)

## “LISTENING TO” THE ARCHAI IN DEMOCRATIC ATHENS

Many sources attest the Athenians' commitment both to personal freedom, that people might “live as they liked,” and to democracy, that the people should rule, in the Assembly, Council and dikasteria. Thus, Aristotle posits as the two fundamental principles of democracy that to plêthos is kurion, “the masses are sovereign,” and zên hôs bouletai tis, “each may live as he likes” (Pol. 1317b 5, 12). Many sources also attest how much the Athenians valued their politeia, which included administration by archai, usually translated “magistrates” or “officials,” and the laws which people were to follow. In Thucydides' Funeral Oration Perikles states, “we do not transgress the laws (paranomein), by the akroasis of those aiei en archei and the nomoi [by listening to those in office at any given time and the laws], especially those laws that are for the help of those wronged and those unwritten laws which bring an acknowledged shame” (2.37.3). In Sophokles' Antigone, Kreon proclaims, “whoever transgresses or violates the nomoi, or thinks to command those in power (kratunein), this man shall get no praise from me. But the man whom the polis has put in place, him it is necessary to hear (kluein), even in small things, and whether right or wrong. There is no greater evil than anarchy” (663-72). In the ephebic oath, the ephebes swear to euêkoein tôn aei krainontôn emphronôs kai tôn thesmôn: “to well heed those governing at any given time, and the laws” (Tod 204 lines 11-15).

Laws and archai, however, sometimes restrained personal freedoms and the power, the kuria of the demos. In consequence, the Athenians' response to laws and archai was sometimes ambivalent. This ambivalence is symbolized by the ephebes' obligation to swear to heed the archai and the nomoi; by Perikles' proclamation that the demos listened to the archai and the nomoi – and his qualification, “especially those nomoi” which help people who are wronged and “unwritten laws,” raises the question, what about other kinds of laws? –; and by Solon's law code which he made the Athenians swear not to change for a hundred years (Ath. Pol. 7.2, Plut. Sol. 25.3; cf. Hdt. 1.29.2 [ten years]). Solon is reported to have commanded, “listen to the archai, whether right or wrong” (fr. 30 West). The Old Oligarch remarks that “the demos does not wish a good government under which they themselves are slaves, they wish to be free and to rule”: eleutheros einai kai archein (Ps.-Xen. Ath. Pol. 1.8). The following pages seek to deepen but also complicate our conception of the democracy's response to archai; its response to the nomoi will be considered elsewhere.

Athens' *archai* are a rather neglected topic, except on narrow constitutional questions such as their official competence. Although D. M. MacDowell once noted that etymology is no sure guide to meaning – compare Britain's "Lord Privy Seal" – *arche* and *archôn* literally mean "rule" and "ruler." The translations "magistrates" or "officials" import a Roman or modern flavor. "Authority" may be better – although as we shall see, the base meaning of "ruling," directly attested for example in the Athenian naval *arche*, should not be forgotten.

Starting with Aristotle (Pol. 1317b), discussions of Athens' *archai* typically focus on the question how far the democracy was anxious to restrain their powers by legal and constitutional measures. Anxious the Athenians certainly were. To avoid giving too much power to any individual, the democracy filled many *archai* by lot, most *archai* were constituted in boards, often of ten, and in almost every case iteration was forbidden. Most public prosecutions were initiated by any citizen, rather than by an *arche*, and both verdicts and sentences were decided by the people. Athens had no equivalent to the *cursus honorum*. The authorities had to swear to obey the laws. They were forbidden to apply unwritten laws. Many laws consisted of instructions to the authorities, stipulating what they could or could not do. The authorities were subject to frequent scrutinies, both *dokimasiai* and *euthunai*, where penalties could be severe. *Eisangeliai*, "impeachments," were common, especially of generals, *strategoï*. Extant sources record a hundred of these, and as Mogens Hansen has noted (*Eisangelia*, p. 11), there must have been hundreds more, many resulting in death sentences. We have almost no evidence for election campaigns for elected office. On the contrary, in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* when Lamachos rebukes *Dikaiopolis* saying "Is that what you, a beggar, say to me, a general?," *Dikaiopolis* responds that he is not a beggar but a *politês chrêstos, ou spoudarchidês* – "a worthy citizen, not eager for *archai*" and a soldier, while Lamachos has been *mistharchidês* – "eager for paid *archai*" (593-97). On the standard view – and there is much truth in it – the principal task of Athens' *archai* was to carry out the commands of the courts and Assembly. To quote Mogens Hansen again (*Athenian Democracy*, p. 227, see also p. 225), "the real competence" of the *Boule* and other *archai* "was limited to bringing matters before the decision-making organs and carrying out the decisions they made."

Democratic Athens' ambivalence to authority was reflected in contemporary discussions of politics and also in daily life. Sensitivity to civic authority could be presented positively in democratic contexts, negatively in texts opposing the democracy. Several public texts stress that officials should not oppress the people but rule "gently," *praôs*. In protesting the tax collector *Androtion's* invasion of the houses of citizens together with the Eleven, *Demosthenes* states that the authorities must not treat fellow citizens harshly except for the benefit of the *demos* (22.51). More hostile to Athens' polity, in *Xenophon's Memorabilia* (3.5.16) *Perikles* the son of the politician asks *Sokrates* when the Athenians will "obey (*peisontai*) the *archontes*," instead of exulting in scorning them. In his description of the democratic

polity, Plato (Republ. 562d) says that unless the archontes are “altogether mild (prai) and dispense much freedom (eleutheria),” the demos chastises them as “accursed oligarchs,” while those who “listen to” the archontes (ton archonton katêkouous) the demos reviles as “willing slaves” (ethelodoulous) and “zeroes” (ouden). “The demos commends and honors both in private and public the archontes (rulers) who are like archomenoi (the ruled) and the archomenoi who are like archontes. Is it not inevitable that in such a state the spirit of eleutheria should go to all lengths,” as in relations between “parents and children, teachers and pupils, young and old, slaves and owners, women and men, even animals and people?” The result is that the soul of the citizens is so sensitive that it will endure nothing of slavery, douleia. Plato associates with the democratic polity “the freedom from any necessity to archein, even if a person is qualified to archein, or to submit to rule, archesthai, if one does not wish to, or to make war when the rest are at war, or to keep the peace when others do so, unless one desires peace” (Republ. 557e). Aristotle remarks, “to live as you like ... is what being free is about, since its opposite, living not as you like, is the condition of a slave. So this is the second defining principle of democracy, and from it has come the ideal of not being ruled, not by anybody at all if possible, or at least only in turn” (Pol. 1317b 11-16, cf. 1283b 42-44). In a democracy “freedom is seen in terms of doing what one wants,” but “this is bad. It ought not to be regarded as slavery to live according to the form of government, but rather as self-preservation” (1310a 35-36). Aristotle implies that in a democracy, living according to the politeia could be considered slavery.

In daily life, resistance to authority is attested especially against military commanders. Kendrick Pritchett points out how unwillingly Greeks sometimes followed commanders’ orders, especially in democracies (Greek State at War: “Greek military discipline”: pp. 232-45). The mid fourth century military writer Aeneas Tacticus describes disastrous military discipline in what appears to be a typical democracy (ibid. p. 237). In the judgment of the younger Perikles according to Xenophon (Mem. 3.5.18-19), Athens’ fleet was good but its cavalry and hoplites were “most insubordinate” (apeithestatoi). Xenophon himself commanded an army of Greek mercenaries in the late fifth century. As he recounts in *Anabasis*, his soldiers sometimes refused to take orders from or submit to punishment by officers of other divisions (1.5.11). They sometimes refused to follow orders from their own commanders (1.3.1), at times even pelting them with stones (1.3.1). They could desert, betray their own side, or mutiny (1.3.7, 4.7). In his biography of the fourth-century Athenian general Phokion, Plutarch says, “As they marched, men would rush up to Phokion from all sides and show him what to do. They advised him to seize a hill here, send his cavalry around there, and from here attack the enemy. ‘Herakles,’ he said, ‘how many generals I see, and how few soldiers!’” (Phoc. 25). After massive desertions by his soldiers before a battle, Phokion said that he was willing to go to war “whenever I see the young men willing to hold their places in the ranks” (ibid. 12.3). Pritchett concludes (p. 243) that because commanders were

elected by their subordinates in their capacity as citizens, “discipline in the army ... differed little from that of the citizen.” He quotes with approval Kromayer-Veith: “The Roman was a soldier, the Greek in his inner being was unsoldatisch.”

Some of the Athenians’ ambivalence to authority is elucidated by a familiar Greek characteristic, an unwillingness to take orders from other persons. The locus classicus for this attitude is Herodotos 7.101-4, where Xerxes protests to the exiled Spartan king Demaratos, “how is it possible that a thousand men, or ten thousand, or fifty thousand, being equally free and not being ruled by one person, should stand up to an army as big as mine? ... Being ruled by one person in our way, they might fear this man and become better than their natures,” and march against larger numbers “under the compulsion of the whip ... [By contrast,] men let loose into freedom could not do either.” Demaratos responds by stressing that the Spartans are free but fear the law as their master, and do what the law commands. Obeying the law was one thing: obeying another person was different altogether. Similar sentiments are well attested in Attic sources. “The Athenians are called slaves, douloi of no one, they are subordinate (hupêkooi) to no mortal man” (Aeschylus *Persians*, line 242). Thucydides’ Perikles stresses the point for Athens’ democracy: “freedom, if we preserve our freedom by our own efforts, will easily restore us to our old position, but to ‘under-listen’ to others (allôn hupakouein) means to lose even what we still have” (2.62.3). In *Antigone*, Kreon’s proclamation, “the man whom the polis has put in place, him it is necessary to hear (kluein), even in small things, and whether right or wrong,” echoes Solon’s command, “listen to the archai, whether right or wrong.” However, *Antigone* shows that Kreon had made a terrible error; also, his proclamation could sound suspiciously like the Greek proverb “slave, obey your master in matters just and unjust” (schol. Aes. PV 75). “Men unite against no one sooner than against those whom they see attempting to rule them” (Xen. *Cyr.* 1.2). Demosthenes (10.4) characterizes democracy as neither desiring to rule others by force nor to be slaves to another, but in freedom and law to be governed *ex isou*, equally.

It is also well known that Greeks were unhappy to work under another person’s orders (see, e.g., Arist. *Rhet.* 1367a 32, Isai. 5.39., Isokr. 14.48, Dem. 57.45). In Xenophon (*Mem.* 2.8), Sokrates suggests to the aging and impoverished Eutheros that he become an estate supervisor, as this would ensure him a viable situation in old age. Eutheros immediately rejects the suggestion as tantamount to slavery. Symptomatic of this attitude was the absence of patronage in ancient Greece. Patronage has been defined as an asymmetrical relationship involving the exchange of goods and services, which the more powerful participant – the patron – is able to exploit. Although patronage is useful in, and characteristic of, regions where many live close to the margin of subsistence, patronage in ancient Greece is conspicuous by its absence. As Paul Millett remarks, “in the ancient Greek world ... instances [of patronage] are so peripheral and so few in number that they do not appear to exert any pronounced influence on the ordering of society” (“Patronage,” p. 16). People

dependent on others were branded as kolakes and parasitoi, “flatterers” and “parasites.” In Greece the protections offered elsewhere by patronage were replaced by reciprocal relations of borrowing between “friends,” philoi. Social equilibrium was maintained “through reciprocal exchanges between people of similar status” (ibid., p. 43).

Finally, the Greek language itself reveals significant orientations. As Mark Griffith (“King,” pp. 25-26) has observed, “the Greek moral and political vocabulary is thin on words for ‘obedience’ or ‘subordination’ ... The Greek word we translate ‘to obey’ (peithesthai) in fact means ‘to be persuaded.’ as for example in the Homeric formula ‘but come, as I speak, peithometha, let us be persuaded’ (Il. 2.139, 9.26, 9.700, 12.75, 14.74, 14.370, 15.294, 18.297). Anax Agamemnon employs this formula when urging – not ordering – the assembled troops to depart for home (Il. 2.139).” In Athenian contexts, even peithomai is avoided, even when speaking about the laws. In the Funeral Oration, we have seen, Perikles says that the democracy “listens to” (akouein) the laws and those en archei. The ephebes swear to euêkouein, “listen well.” Solon’s phrase, often translated “obey the magistrates, right or wrong,” is archôn akoue kai dikaiôs kadikôs. Griffith continues, “Even the language of ‘listening’ (hupakouein, epakouein, akroasis, kluein, ktl) is fraught with a certain anxiety, since it so often carries with it the denial of the right to answer back, and thus spills quickly over into associations of passivity, loss of autonomy, and reduction to the status of mere ‘subject’ or ‘slave.’ Indeed, hupakouein, hupêkoos, ktl (and kat/epakouein) are commonly applied in fifth and fourth century literature to ‘subjects’ of a monarch – or of the Athenian ‘rule’ (archê) – and such terms as peitharchia, peitharchein (‘obedience to rule’) are extremely rare in any context.”

These data help to contextualize the Athenians’ ambivalence to the “authorities,” to following the commands of other citizens. At the same time, they also tell only one side of the story, and themselves need to be treated with some circumspection. First, it may be noticed that the statements that the Athenians did not obey the archai all come from anti-democratic sources, such as Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle. Their assertions that the demos openly defied the archai need not simply represent fact. These anti-democrats all favored authoritarian magistrates, which they thought Athens lacked. Just so, the evidence that Greek soldiers did not obey their strategoi comes from Xenophon and a life of Phokion, both of them generals hostile to the democracy. According to Plutarch (Phoc. 9), because the people frequently shouted Phokion down and raised commotions against him, he wished out loud for a cat o’ nine tails to give them a good whipping! Thucydides says nothing about disobeying commanders, even though he, too, was no fan of democracy.

It is furthermore striking that in Aristotle’s discussion of democracy (Pol. 1317), he mentions many ways in which the archai are subordinate to the demos, but he does not make the simple point that the demos also must obey the archai – an important aspect of Athenian ideology which Aristotle found it convenient to forget. In fact, despite Greek ambivalence to the individual exercise of

power, compliance with the archai in the proper exercise of their duties was an essential aspect of Athens' democracy. The ephebes swore to "listen well" to them; Perikles says the Athenians "listened" to them; Solon commanded, "listen to the authorities, right or wrong." In the early fourth century, the author of *Andokides 4* says, "Obeying the authorities and the laws – peithesthai tois archousi kai tois nomois – is soteiria for all. Whoever ignores these has destroyed the greatest protection of the city" (4.19). The Athenians honored their authorities, adorning them with garlands and protecting them in the exercise of their duties. The scholiast to *Acharnians 378* says that in *Babylonians of 426*, Aristophanes "spoke badly of [kakôs eipein] many people, for he lampooned the archai, chosen by lot and by election, and also Kleon, while there were foreigners present ... For this reason Kleon was angry and indicted (egrapsato) Aristophanes before the citizens on a charge of wrongdoing (adikia), claiming that Aristophanes had acted with intent to outrage the people and the Council ... and brought him to trial." In the early fourth century, *Lysias (9.6, 16)* mentions a law forbidding people to "abuse" (loidorein) a magistrate in his meeting place, on payment of a fine. In 348/7 *Demosthenes* states that if someone "speaks badly of" (kakôs eipein) or strikes a thesmothete or the archon in office or "anyone to whom the city grants the inviolability of a crowned office or some other honor," he will incur total atimia. The penalties for insulting a magistrate were much more severe than for insulting a private citizen, he explains, because the offender "is outraging your laws, [Athenians], your public crown of office, and the name of the city" (21.32-3). The *Aristotelian Problemata (952b 29-30)* says that if a man "speaks badly of" an authority, the penalties are "great."

To be sure, this evidence also is not simply straightforward. Aristophanes was acquitted in the suit Kleon brought against him. Demosthenes was anxious to assert the inviolability of authorities because while he was a chorus master, Meidias struck him. Demosthenes also says, "I have been told that Meidias goes about inquiring and collecting examples of people who have at any time been assaulted, and that these people are going to give evidence ... For instance, the proedros was said to have been struck by Polyzelos in your court, the thesmothete was lately struck when trying to rescue the flute girls, and similar cases." Demosthenes says that "the reason for the frequency of these assaults is the failure to punish the offenders" (21.36-37). All this will gratify any defenders of Plato's anti-democratic politics. On one side, therefore, the democracy enjoyed freedom even to the point of defying the authorities; on the other were respect and compliance with them.

Furthermore, the Athenians had an astounding number of archai – Sinclair says, more than any other polis (*Democracy*, p. 69) –, most of them appointed every year. There were three archontes, and six thesmothetai, ten tamiai of Athena and ten of the other gods, ten and later twenty Hellenotamiai, tamiai of the dockyards, of trireme funds, of ships' rigging, of the Boule, of dedications, of the prytaneis, of the Two Goddesses, and of the state galleys. There were poletai, boards of thirty and then ten logistai, ten taktai, and various antigrapheis. There were ten epimeletai of the

dockyards, ten of the emporion, ten of festivals, four of the Eleusinian mysteries, and epimeletai of springs and of Nikai. There were five epistatai of Eleusis, ten of the mint, epistatai of the Brauroneion, of the navy, of the water supply, and of the Akademy. There were ten athlothetai, ten sitophulakes, sitones, teichopoioi, the Eleven, chosen by lot, five eisagogeis, boards of sunegoroi, kategoroi, zetetai, sundikoi, horistai, probouloi, and oath takers. There were ten strategoi, ten taxiarchoi who appointed lachagoi, two hipparchoi, ten phylarchoi, toxarchoi, at least three nauarchoi, pentekontarchoi, phrourarchoi, and archontes in different cities such as Amorgos. There were various boards of hieropoioi, including to the Panathenaia, Eleusis, Pythais, Delos, Delphi, Boonai, Plouton and the Furies, and Asklepios. There were overseas archai sent to klerouchies. There were epimeletai of the tribes; envoys, grammateis, and of course 139 demarchs, deme treasurers and other deme appointees. At least in the later fourth century the ephebic officers included ten elected sophronistai and one kosmetes, ten elected paidotribai and unknown numbers of didaskaloi, akontistai, epimeletai, gymnasiarchoi, plus a peripolarchos, elected theoric commissioners, a finance administrator – and of course the Boule of 500, which Aristotle and others regarded as an arche!

Whew! the Athenians do seem to have been spoudarchidai, “zealous for archai,” and according to Ath. Pol. 62.2, sometimes so far from mistharchidai that some people actually purchased archai from the demes. If the Athenians were so resentful and suspicious of “authorities,” why did so many Athenians become archai, especially in the light of the great dangers which they faced at the hands of the demes, as Ronald Knox (“Mischievous?”) and others have shown?

Three points I think are important, in order to understand Athens’ democratic authorities in their complex social and historical contexts. First, as Demosthenes stresses in the Meidias (21.31-33), Athens’ archai represented the administrative authority of the demos, the democratic administration of Athens’ politeia in which all adult male citizens “shared” (metechein). The arche’s stephanos did not honor individual distinction: it was ho humeteros koinos stephanos, “your (pl.) common crown.” According to the scholiast, when Aristophanes’ Babylonians lampooned the archai Kleon indicted him, claiming that the playwright “intended to outrage the demos and the Council.” Democracy meant the rule of the demos. In Euripides’ Suppliants (lines 406-8), Theseus remarks, “the demos rules in succession year by year, allowing no preference to wealth, but the poor man shares equally with the rich.” Hence many, probably most individuals took turns in exercising authority. The archai were distributed widely among all citizens, and made as democratic as possible, through boards, use of the lot, and non-iteration. In Politics 1317b 17-18a 3, Aristotle says that in a democracy it is essential that all citizens have the power to vote for the archai and to hold archai themselves; that everyone should hold archai in rotation; and that all archai should be allotted, except when special skills are involved. Just so, ho boulomenos, “any citizen who wanted to,” could prosecute. Athens’ hundreds of archai and other authorities – of ships’ rigging, archers, walls,

coins, and so forth – reflected the increasingly public nature of society, as more and more came under the control of the democratic *politeia*. Once they discovered that daily relations between citizens could be subject to public authority, the Athenians carried this idea further than any other polis.

Second, the need to subordinate all citizens to the common authority of the community also had a historical dimension, in that – pace Aristotle and Plato – in the fifth century Athens’ upper classes might claim to be above the community’s authority and its *archai*. In Sophokles’ *Ajax*, probably written in the 440s, Ajax is an aristocrat who refuses to submit to the community’s leaders or the people’s vote – *hoi polloi kritai*, “the masses who judge” (1247), an explicit democratic reference – which both Ajax and his brother Teuker call corrupt (440-49, 1135-37). Ajax despised the people’s judgment in awarding Achilles’ arms to Odysseus, and went on a rampage to slaughter the Greek army. Driven insane by Athena, he nonetheless succeeded in destroying undistributed (the text is specific) community property and its guards (26-28, 54, 148). The community’s leaders Menelaus and Agamemnon therefore seek to deny him a proper burial. Teuker defies them (1093-1117, 1266-1315, 1415-18), claiming that Ajax was never subject to them:

You say that you brought this man here to be an ally of the Achaeans? Did he not sail here himself, as in command of himself – *hôs autou kratôn*? How are you the strategos of this man? ... You came ruling Sparta, not *hêmôn kratôn* – in command of us,

and stressing, along with the chorus (158-71) and Ajax’s own enemy Odysseus (1332-1345), that Ajax was noble, an *esthlos anêr* (1352). Ajax’s crew are Athenians (201), but without their leader they are frightened “like timorous doves” (140). “Great and little together is best. The great do well when the little are there to help them” (155). Despite his outrageous crimes against the community which he scorned, Ajax receives an honorable burial which the play presents as worthy of approval. In the 440s Sophokles clearly had complicated thoughts about the proper relationship between traditional elites and the democratic community. He objects to the community-first ethos, because great aristocrats should not be trampled by the mob. Similarly, we have seen, and also in the 440s, Antigone’s Kreon states that people must obey the *archai* – and then proceeds to show how deficient such democratic doctrine could be, when confronted with what Sophokles thought were deeper universal values. Ajax and Antigone express reservations about the community-first ethos, probably because in the 440s the Athenian community was increasingly democratic at the expense of elites and traditional loyalties, and Sophokles’ response to these developments was ambivalent. By contrast, Athens’ citizens identified with their community, and when the community saw a need for public supervision or some administrative task, citizens readily undertook this obligation, despite any danger.

Third, the authorities had a large effect in the daily life of the city, although they had to exercise their powers carefully. Of different examples, I mention first the



Eleven: an extraordinary example, in that the demos gave eleven ordinary citizens, chosen by lot, the authority to execute other citizens on the spot if they confessed to certain crimes. How often executions occurred we cannot know. However, the Athenians were swift and brutal punishers, meting out death frequently, so I do not doubt that they did sometimes occur. According to Isaios 4.28, one year the Eleven were all executed because they did not put to death a man arrested on the spot. If an accused individual protested his innocence, he was brought before a dikasterion presided over by the Eleven. Demosthenes complains that officials in a democracy have to be *prai*, when he flames against the tax collector his opponent Androtion. However, he says nothing against the Eleven, who accompanied Androtion in his raids on private houses. The Eleven had to be careful, as we have seen; and just so, all eleven turned up to tell Sokrates of his impending execution. They had great powers which they were expected to use. They were hardly mere administrators.

Ath. Pol. 57.7 outlines the functions of the eponymous archon: “he has the oversight of orphans, heiresses, and women who at the death of their husband claim to be pregnant; and he has full power to impose a summary fine on the offenders or to bring them before the dikasterion. He lets out the estates of orphans ... and if guardians do not give the children their maintenance he exacts it.” Ath. Pol. also states that he oversaw cases concerning the maltreatment of parents and against parents accused of dissipating their estates; he decided between rival claims to guardianships; he managed the dramatic and other contests, the allotment of liturgies, and so forth. Although his own competence to fine was limited, he could levy larger fines by bringing an offender before his own dikasterion, stating the penalty he proposed (Dem. 43.75). In such cases, the archon had a good deal of discretionary power, in some cases acting as a district attorney, although he was always liable for his conduct at his *euthunai*. I note also that archons did not function as a board, and that each of them was able to chose two assistants, *paredroi*, who apparently could serve more than once – anomalies in the democracy.

The *stratego*i had the right to attend the Council and address it without special leave; they could order meetings of the Assembly; they appointed *trierarchic* liturgists; they were elected and could be reelected. As Ath. Pol. 61.2 notes (trans. Rhodes), “when in command the *stratego*i have full power to arrest a disobedient man, to cashier and to impose a summary fine; but they do not normally impose fines.” Xenophon’s Sokrates says “it is the task [of the *stratego*i] to make the ruled [tous *archomenous*] both listeners and well obedient [katêkoous, *eupetheis*] (Mem. 3.4). The *stratego*i were so powerful that they were subject to constant scrutiny and also frequent punishment, as I have noted.

Finally, even some public slaves (*dêmosioi*) exercised significant powers. The *dokimastês*, slave coin tester in the market, had the authority to confiscate coins from citizens if he judged them to be counterfeit (Stroud, “Law”). The only people allowed to touch a citizen’s person without fear of legal action were public slaves, the three hundred Scythian archers who served as Athens’ police force. These slaves,

owned by the demos, symbolized public order and the demos's power. In addition, it seemed not so problematic to obey or even be manhandled by a person so clearly an inferior.

In the *Politics* Aristotle sums up his remarks on the *archai*: “roughly speaking then, we may say that the *archai* are those to whom it has been granted to deliberate (*bouleuesthai*) about certain things and to judge (*krinai*) and to order (*epitaxai*), and especially the latter, since to give orders is more fitting of *arche*: *archikôteron*” (1299a 25-28). Aeschines mentions as a distinguishing mark of an *arche* that he could levy fines, *epibolas epiballein* (3.27). Such statements contrast with contemporary descriptions of the *archai*, as in the passage quoted earlier, that their “real competence ... was limited to bringing matters before the decision-making organs and carrying out the decisions they made.” Athens' authorities did not swear to follow the demos or the Assembly. They swore to follow the law, and the demos swore to “listen to” them.

Finally, the Athenians chose to be *archai*, “rulers,” because of the power, honor (time), and authority that ruling bestowed on them. As Aristotle says (*Pol.* 1281a 31-33, see also 1287a 11-18, 1290b 12 and 1305b 4), “we call the *archai timai*, and if the same persons hold the *archai* all the time, the rest must be without time.” The democratic formulation “to rule and be ruled in turn” is surely significant. We do not say that our officials rule, but that they serve the people. The Athenians loved freedom, they were unhappy to serve or to obey – one wonders if anyone was ever called Plato's *ethelodoulos* – but they clearly did love to rule. In Athens' naval *arche*, the member states were openly called *hupêkooi*, “under-listeners.” Just so, to denominate their authorities the Athenians never changed the word *arche*. Ruling, *archein*, was a pleasure, and so Athens each year had hundreds of “rulers,” even though in a democracy that sometimes also meant being ruled. In compensation, the Athenians sometimes expressed resentment at their authorities, and endeavored to make sure that for personal purposes no one abused the public power that he enjoyed.

In a wider sense, Athens' *archai* reflect the growth of the power of the demos and, simultaneously, its progressive self-identification as a ruling elite. Further documenting these trends, the growth of slavery freed the demos from manual work in order to govern and to fight – two elite occupations. Also indicative are the spread of education, public baths, palaistras, and symposia in the ubiquitous androns (for example in Hippodamos's Peiraeus), the demos's erection of great monuments and buildings, and their appropriation of myth as their own history.

As Greeks, *eleutheroi*, and democrats, the Athenians could resent taking orders from other individuals, and hence could sometimes resist *archai*. As the Old Oligarch remarks, “the demos does not wish a good government under which they themselves are slaves, they wish to be free and to rule”: *eleutheros einai kai archein*. At the same time, the administration of the polis was an essential part of the *politeia*, provided it was conducted by representatives of the demos acting in the common interest. The

Athenians publicly honored and swore to listen to these persons, all the while attempting to make sure they did not overstep their authority, whether legally, emotionally, or ideologically. And in return for “listening,” ruling – *archein* – was a pleasure which most Athenians enjoyed.

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