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THE EXILED ATHENIAN ELITES AND POLITICAL EXPERIENCES IN THE NORTHWESTERN AEGEAN

Abstract. – Peisistratus was exiled three times from the territory of Attica, the third exile leading him to the region of Thrace. This displacement granted both the tyrant and his generals – including the Miltiades – the Elder and the Younger – the title of oikistai, that is, founders of cities with the consent of the native populations. It is our view that these exiled elites fostered a new commercial activity, centered on maritime exchange between Athens and the Thracian settlements, established both on the Thracian mainland along the coastal littoral and in the region of the Chersonese. Peisistratus operated in the area between the rivers Strymon and Nestos and later at Sigeum, while the Miltiades assumed the role of "new" Thracian kings. This novel process of constructing an economic network brought about a shift in mentality and the adoption of a new mode of activity, one that facilitated the emergence of a new way of life shaped by the exiled Athenian elites in the Archaic Greek period.

Peisistratus and his *hetaireia* were exiled by their opponents on three occasions, ultimately establishing themselves in Thrace. Andrewes (1956) argues that the hoplites supported the rise of the tyrannies.[1] These rulers would pursue a "new economic process," colonizing regions through *cleruchies* and military garrisons (Raaflaub, 2013). Hanson (1995) and Duarte (2017) emphasize the importance of farmers (*geōrgoi*) and

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[1] According to Th. Rosalind (1975), Peisistratus claimed descent from the Neleids and attained the office of archon in Athens around 669/8 BC. He first rose to prominence through his success in the war against Megara (c. 565). During a period of strife among aristocratic factions – between Lycurgus and the Pedieis ("the Plain" party) on one side, and Megacles with the Paralioi ("the Coastal" party) on the other – he created a third faction, the Hyperakrioi or Diakrioi ("the Highlanders"), probably based in the mountainous region of northwestern Attica (the factions likely reflecting regional bases of support, Hdt. 1.59). He first seized power with the help of a bodyguard granted to him by the Athenians (c. 560). Isolated from the other two factions, he later returned with the support of Megacles and, if anything can be inferred from Herodotus' tale (1.60), a claim to the protection of Athena.

sailors (*nautai*) in the formation of the hoplite phalanx, which may also have included mercenary elements drawn from Thrace and Scythia (Alonso, 2024, 3). In this context, the Peisistratids and especially *the Miltiades* – the elder and the younger – emerged as "military leaders" or *oikistai* (founders of *poleis*),[2] charged with settling populations (some 700 families) either displaced by exile or generated through the process of colonization (Morris, 1991; Osborne, 2009, 75).[3] Under the Peisistratid regime, Miltiades became *oikistēs* of Thrace – that is, founder of cities. Some scholars describe him as assisting the tyrant in establishing military settlements and/or sites of gold and silver exploitation, such as the region of Rhaikelos (Sarakinski, 2014, 185–204; Lavalle, 1992, 19). According to Hammond and Griffith (1979, 68), the Athenians, beginning with the leadership of Miltiades (as *strategos*) and later of Cimon, were deeply engaged in the lower Strymon area in the early part of the fifth century.

The Eastern Mediterranean became part of this new sociopolitical dynamic in the Greek Archaic period (Guia, 2009). K. Vlassopoulos (2007) emphasizes the role of "networks of relations" and the establishment of the "oligopolitical" archetype (a less centralized form of government). Private interests can be seen overriding public ones (Mitchell, 1997; Theml, 1995). The Peisistratids exercised control over continental Thrace, between the rivers Strymon and Nestos, and later over the Chersonese, regions where gold mines were located (Starr, 2005). Here we observe the phenomenon of colonization (for instance, the foundation of

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[2] According to Eleni Triakoupoulou-Salakidou (1997, 63), the Archaic Athenian tyrants acted as leaders, mediating between settlers and native populations. Colette and Sean Hemingway (2000) observe that the ancient Greeks were active seafarers in search of opportunities, founding new cities along coastal sites stretching from the Aegean Sea to the northern shores of the Black Sea.

[3] Irad Malkin (2012) addresses the themes of intercultural contact, identity construction, and the notion of ethnicity as phenomena of Greek colonization. The topic of Greek mobilities provides an opportunity to reconsider these issues through the lenses of "identity," "culture," and "ethnos" or "ethnicity." In another work, Malkin (2011) seeks to historicize networks of integration and communication and their transformations over time. Focusing on coastal interactions, he highlights the multiple actors who became key agents in processes of integration and retraction across the Mediterranean. He illustrates his approach through case studies involving sites around the Mediterranean – Rhodes, Sicily, the Phocaeans, and the Phoenicians. The study concludes that what emerged was a "small-world network" dynamic that rapidly reduced distances while multiplying "links and hubs," thereby enabling the flows of civilizational content and self-conscious notions of identity to overlap and proliferate. We may also note the contribution of Tsiafaki (2018, 219–242), who develops a theoretical discussion on archaeology in the Balkans, the Aegean, and Anatolia, emphasizing its intersections with society, politics, and geography. Modern political borders shape both archaeological practice and archaeological interaction. The reception of the past and the transformation of identities stand at the center of this discussion. These approaches investigate ruptures and continuities in material culture, which can be interpreted as evidence of ethnic (dis)continuities, migrations, and ethnogeneses.

Abdera) and the appropriation of the myths of Heracles (the horses of Diomedes), associated with the figure of the tyrant, as argued by Boardman (1975) and supported by Tamm (1995). John Boardman interprets the Athenian expedition of 499 in support of the Ionian Revolt as constructed in such terms, with the exploits of Heracles reflecting this kind of arrangement. The depiction of Oriental themes was one of the tyrants' strategies. Attic vases functioned as objects of economic integration, revealing the connections between Thrace and the northwestern Mediterranean. Heracles was part of the heroic imagination of the Archaic Athenian aristocracy, as Boardman has shown, and this was articulated through the socioeconomic interaction of Thrace with Attica, especially via the import of ceramic vessels. These relations extended also to Magna Graecia, where artisan-painters likewise explored themes connected to this sphere of integration.

The Peisistratids exercised some control over continental Thrace, between the rivers Strymon and Nestos,[4] and later over the Chersonese, regions where gold mines were located (Starr, 2005). We observe here the phenomenon of colonization (for example, the foundation of Abdera) and the appropriation of the exploits of Heracles (the horses of Diomedes), associated with the figure of the tyrant, as argued by Boardman (1975) and supported by Tamm (1995). By venturing into the region, the hero symbolically ratifies the colonization carried out by the Athenian aristocracy.

The Miltiades chose to pursue an alternative path, establishing themselves as royalty through marriage alliances.[5] When conducting his incursions, Miltiades controlled what we may call a "space of production" (both geographic and mythical), framed by the exploits of Heracles, Odysseus, and the Argonauts (Schmid, 2012; Duarte, 2024). The mytho-

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[4] We observe a marked Athenian interest in Thrace, and conversely a Thracian interest in Athens, beginning with the Peisistratid tyranny and the strategy of the Miltiades in the Archaic period. The place of exile "chosen" by the tyrants and by the exiled elites (some 700 families) was the basin of the Strymon River, owing to its wealth of economic resources (agriculture, metals, livestock, natural harbors, and navigable rivers). Archaeological evidence indicates a movement of Thracian tribes between the Strymon, the site of the tyrants' exile, and the Nestos, making the region a zone of strategic importance (Bouzek and Graninger, 2015).

[5] The family of Miltiades the Younger must have possessed considerable resources, for his father, Cimon – who bore the same name as his grandson – was a victor in the Olympic chariot races. His uncle, Miltiades the Elder, became king of the Thracians in 516 through marriage (Hegesippe). With the Persian advance, however, he first became an ally and later an opponent, joining in the Ionian Revolt of 499. Returning to Athens, he assumed the post of *strategos* under Cleisthenes, exerting military influence over the islands of Lemnos and Imbros. Athens thereby began to extend its diplomatic influence across the Aegean. His wealth, derived from his Thracian wife, together with his past as a tyrant, earned him many enemies, as is evident from the ostracism proceedings led by the Alcmaeonid clan and from their hostility toward tyranny.

logies surrounding these heroic narratives underscore the foundations of cities and their correlations with Athens or other Hellenic centers. Such narrative traditions constituted the cultural knowledge available to Miltiades, who, under the Peisistratid regime, lived in the company of poets such as Anacreon and Simonides, figures who celebrated this oral tradition as a shared memory between Athenians and the peoples of the East.[6]

From the formation of networks between Athens and the territories under its control, we can observe the predominance of Miltiades' "private" interests over public ones (Mitchell, 1997; Theml, 1995). The framework of *stasis* created a particular political setting in which lands were recovered and appropriated. In the case of the Peisistratids, this recovery was linked to the region of Salamis and to Thracian territories, whose occupation was centered on mining areas such as the site of Rhaikelus (Sarakinski, 2014). During the rule of Hipparchus, Miltiades dominated the Thracian Chersonese in an effort to reclaim the territory that had been conquered in his father's time. Another aristocratic group that played a prominent role in this process was the Philaids.[7] This Thracian social group was incorporated into the *hetaireia* of the Peisistratids, emerging politically after the Attic *synoecism* and serving as archons and cult officials, particularly in connection with the Panathenaic *pompē* (procession) (Figueira, 1985). Vivier (1987) emphasizes that the Athenian incursions into Thrace were linked to a demographic crisis that triggered a process of colonization on the part of the Athenians. She argues that the two lower property classes, the *zeugitae* and the *thetes*, defined by Solon and retained under Peisistratus, were resettled in the region. The resulting cities took the form of *apoikiai* (colonies) with the aim of supplying raw materials to the metropolis, above all gold, silver, timber, and grain.

According to Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 3.5) and Shapiro (1983, 306), the family became a traditional lineage by holding with distinction the offices of *polemarch* and the *epilykeion* (supreme command). At the public level

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[6] In 512, Miltiades was compelled to submit to the Persian king Darius I after the latter led a great army into the region, constructed a bridge across the Bosporus, and subdued the Getae and eastern Thrace as part of his campaign against the Scythians. Since the sojourn of Peisistratus, Thrace had acquired a reputation as a supplier of mercenaries. The Peisistratids continued to benefit from this revenue until Persian control of the mines, imposed during the invasion of Thrace in 513, brought it to an end. The tyrants cultivated various relations of *philia* with regions of the Aegean (Thebes, Naxos, Eretria, the Chersonese, Argos, etc.), forming cooperative contingents. Contact with Thrace introduced to the Archaic Athenian generals a new political dimension, rooted in the importance of Thracian mercenaries and the adoption of new military tactics (Viviers, 1987, 194).

[7] By incorporating traditional Thracian families – the Geripheus and the Philaids – into the Athenian civic body, Peisistratus and Cleisthenes altered Athenian homogeneity, transforming a civic identity into an ethnic one, a change contested by the traditional families of birth.

in Athens, the council of "state" included aristocrats with the greatest economic, political, and military/naval power in Attica. Campone (2004, 148) highlights the connection between the Philaids and Ministeus, who held military command. Philaeus, the ancestor of the Philaids, is said to have been linked to Braunion at the time of Peisistratus' return. The family is thought to have exercised the office of eponymous archon during the seventh century. In this period their genealogy was constructed, paralleling that of the Peisistratids, with the Neleids of Pylos as a common ancestor and, by association, the events of Troy (Davies, 1971, 293).

Another social group connected with the Peisistratids were the Geripheus, of Phoenician origin, who settled in the Chalcidic peninsula in Thrace (linked in mythology to Cadmus). Responsible for oracular priesthoods, described as "monks," they introduced the alphabet and, through contact with the Ionians, developed writing (Havelock, 1996, 66). It may be suggested that they were responsible for transcribing Homer's oral poems into written form (the *diphtherai*, papyrus sheets covered in animal hide). This, then, represents yet another contribution of the Archaic tyrants to the establishment of *habrosynē* (the life of wealth and refinement),[8] through mechanisms of cultural transmission from the East – such as textiles, foodstuffs, and poetry – employed in the banquets sponsored by the Peisistratids.

According to the approach of Valdés Guía (2009), the exiled elites (the Peisistratids and the Miltiades) sought fame, prestige, and political power through acts of piracy beyond Attica, using maritime activity as a means of enrichment or as a response to crises, such as the exiles imposed by their political adversaries. Many military actions were led by aristocrats pursuing private interests connected with colonization (Osborne, 1998), as in the case of the colonization of Sigeum. Herodotus (5.94.2) records the war fought between Athenians and Mytilenaeans, with the participation of the Philaid[9] and Peisistratid families in the colonization

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[8] The relations between Athenians and Thracians in the Archaic period, shaped by the intervention of statesmen, provide an excellent vantage point for examining the study of *ethnos* and *ethnē* in a colonial context oriented toward the *polis*. Regionalism generated ethnicity through the practice of space. The adoption of Thracian dress by an Athenian, as part of the cultivation of *habrosynē* – an Oriental custom introduced by Anacreon of Teos and visible in the so-called Anacreontic vases as a marker of social distinction – highlights the process of communal formation in the emergence of the *polis* among Athenians and foreigners alike, promoted by an emergent aristocracy under the patronage of the Archaic tyrants (Gomes, 2018, 39–50).

[9] Miltiades was a member of the Philaid family, connected to the Peisistratids. Hippias dispatched him as magistrate to colonize the Thracian Chersonese, where he established colonies with Persian support. After the Ionian Revolt of 499 BC, he rebelled and took possession of the islands of Lemnos and Imbros, acting under Athenian leadership as military *strategos* under Cleisthenes. His control of the region led political opponents to denounce him as a tyrant, pointing to his use of practices associated with that form of rule –

effort. Strabo notes that the Philaids may have sent Phrynon, who, according to the *Suda*, was officially appointed to the office of *strategos*. Sierra (2014, 71) argues that popular support alone would not have sufficed to keep Peisistratus in power without a "network of connections, alliances, and mercenaries" at his disposal. In the author's view, popular support and external assistance were not incompatible.

Sigeum, located in the Troad (Asia Minor), was the first Athenian overseas possession at the end of the seventh century BC, following an arbitration by Periander between Athens and Mytilene.[10] Nevertheless, Athens lost control of Sigeum to Mytilene until Peisistratus reconquered the site, appointing his son Hegestratus as ruler (Herodotus, 5.94). After being deposed from Athens, Hippias, son of Peisistratus, withdrew to Sigeum, where he struck a notable coin bearing an Athenian owl and the letters "HI" (*Historia Numismatica* 2, 377). During the Delian League, Sigeum displayed remarkable loyalty (IG 13.17); it normally paid 1,000 drachmas from the mid-fifth century onward, but in 418/17 it paid six times that amount, totaling one talent (ML 75).

Still in the case of Miltiades, we observe several examples concerning the exercise of power between the Ionian Sea and the Aegean. The colonies or regions controlled by the *strategos* secured Athens' commercial relations with the grain-producing areas. Following Herodotus' accounts in Books III and V, from Peisistratus to Cleisthenes, the grain harvests were under Athenian control through the agency of the *strategoi*.[11] The exploitation of metals offered the exiled Athenian elites a new economic model, no longer grounded in landholding. Under Cleisthenes' demo-

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such as the exclusion of the local aristocracy and the confiscation of land (cf. Berve, 1937).

[10] According to E. Rohde (1979, 135–47), various vase images redefine the contacts between Athenians and Thracians between 580 and 560, a process later continued by Miltiades in the period 550–540, during his control of the Thracian Chersonese. This development coincided with Peisistratus' domination of Mytilene and Sigeum. Siena-type cups attest to this relationship, depicting warriors dressed in Thracian attire. Themes involving the Amazonomachy underscore the defeat of the Chersonesians or of the northwestern Aegean over the Archaic Athenian *strategoi*.

[11] According to Julian Galego (2024), in very schematic terms, the population of Athenian citizens grew from about 20,000–30,000 adults at the beginning of the fifth century to 40,000–60,000, or even more, by 431, before falling again to 25,000 shortly after the war and then stabilizing at around 30,000 adult citizens residing in Attica for most of the fourth century. The remarkable demographic increase during the Pentekontaetia coincided with the development of the Athenian *archē*. The democratic response devised by Athens to provide resources for this growing population was the colonization of new territories. Athens in fact controlled settlements outside Attica both before and after the development of its fifth-century hegemony (for instance, Chalcis and Salamis at the end of the sixth century, or Lemnos, Imbros, and Skyros in the fourth). Nevertheless, the number of new foundations after the Persian Wars was unparalleled, owing to political and military strategies and to the urgent need for land to support a large, landless population.

cratic system, Athens came to be characterized by a robust economy based on maritime trade, artisanal production, and mining. The privileged medium of exchange was the Athenian coinage, the drachma (Cairo, 2016). The presence of the statesmen had a significant impact on the indigenous populations, particularly through the minting of coinage and the introduction of new industries (fish-salting, pottery manufacture, and textile production). In this way, the new activities on which the Athenian economy rested reverberated throughout the Aegean Sea. The foundation of colonies in continental Thrace and in the Chersonese further expanded these economic enterprises.

According to Herodotus (VI.34–39) and Plutarch (*Parallel Lives*, *Life of Cimon* 4.1–5), Miltiades the Elder was a *strategos* who defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon around 490,[12] after his return from the Thracian Chersonese, which had been invaded by Darius I. Cleisthenes appointed him *strategos* of Athens, and he launched an expedition against the Ionian Revolt, taking control of the islands of Lemnos and Imbros in 499. This system of inter-polis relations (trade network) assumed a multipolar character and produced multiple centers of power (Vlassopoulos, 2007, 145). By securing control of Lemnos[13] and Imbros, Miltiades reestablished a network of commercial relations that had existed in the region since the Bronze Age (Kouka, 2010, 147). Reviving the notion of a cultural *koinē*, these islands were interconnected by a maritime trade network encompassing diverse aspects such as modes of production, religion, urbanism, and administrative forms.

Miltiades also extended his control to other regions, such as Lampsacus in Mysia, an important port and center of wine and fruit production, a colony contested between Phocaeans and Milesians (Strabo XIII.1.18). Another area that figured in his naval strategy was the island of Paros.[14]

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[12] Peisistratus and Miltiades the Elder controlled mining regions along river courses rich in mineral resources. Both became known as founders of colonies or military settlements dedicated to the exploitation of products traded across the Mediterranean. These new *poleis* created a new form of convergence, arising from the contact between Greeks and non-Greeks. The region of the Strymon River in Thrace offers a clear example of this interaction between regions (Cole, 1975, 42–44).

[13] In the fifth century, Lemnos was an *apoikia* or *cleruchy*, making it clear that the Athenians on Lemnos actively occupied a fragment of Attica across the sea, as Herodotus emphasizes (Ellis-Evans, 2015).

[14] When the revolt was crushed and the Chersonese devastated by the Persians, Miltiades was forced to flee to Athens, where, in 490 BC, he was elected one of the *strategoi*. In the same year, he persuaded the Athenians to confront Persia at Marathon and played a central role in the Athenian victory, determining both the moment of attack and the tactics that enabled the Athenians to envelop the Persian forces on both flanks. Afterwards, Miltiades was given command of an Athenian fleet sent to attack Paros. He was severely wounded in the campaign, which ended in failure, and for this he was brought to trial and condemned to pay a fine of fifty talents. Before he could raise the funds, however, Miltia-

According to Miltiades' own account, the conquest of the island promised great quantities of gold, a proposition framed within the ideal of reclaiming ancient trade routes. Another hypothesis concerning his designs links them to the dispatch of Ionian settlers by Athens for the purpose of colonization, thereby establishing an ethnic identity (Thucydides IV.104; Strabo X.5.7). Yet another strand of historiography (Labarbe 1971; Garlan 2000; Sierra 2013) describes Miltiades' invasion as motivated purely by political reasons, namely retaliation against the Parian Lysagoras, who had insulted him at the Persian court. In this view, the *strategos* violated the rule that resources be devoted to defensive purposes, the principal function of the *polemarchia*.[15] Such a personal initiative led to his prosecution on charges of tyrannical intent. From a strategic perspective, Miltiades further provoked outrage by invading the temple of Demeter Thesmophoros in an inappropriate manner, thereby incurring the goddess's wrath. Wounded while attempting to observe the rites, he died twenty-six days after returning from the failed expedition (Develin, 1977, 571–577).

We may infer, in conclusion, that Miltiades drew upon a tradition reaching back to earlier times in order to exercise control in the Aegean, establishing interconnections between Athenian colonization and the conquest of islands or regions bordering the sea. The narratives emphasize possession of land through the founding of colonies and cities, with Athenians or Greeks portrayed as the initiators. There is an ongoing debate over whether these ventures reflected public interests – direct administration by Athens – or the private ambitions of aristocratic families, with the economic and commercial dimension emerging as a compelling hypothesis, particularly after the defeat of Aegina, when new markets opened and exiled elites sought new lands. The colonies in the Chersonese were independent of Athens, yet the metropolis continued to exercise control. The Athenian *polis* oversaw the supply of grain, timber, metals, and slaves (Foxwall, 1998) – components that we may regard as essential to the practice of "late colonization," carried out under the aegis of the "polemarchy" or the "strategy" exercised by Athens.

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des died of his wounds. His son, Cimon, went on to become the most prominent Athenian leader of the 470s and 460s, and the debt of his father was discharged.

[15] According to Amy C. Smith (2011), political rivalry can be discerned through the imagery of historical individuals. Aelius Aristides, for instance, refers to the statues of Miltiades and Themistocles in the Theater of Dionysus at Athens. Such evidence underscores the political *agon* between Athenian statesmen and their process of heroization (Breckenridge, 1968). Both *strategoi* employed naval fleets to establish Athenian hegemony over the Aegean Sea, highlighting the rivalries between the *zeugitae* (horsemen – the Philaid clan) and the aristocracy/*thetes* (sailors – the Leontid/Lycomid clan), rivalries rooted in Cleisthenes' territorial reform yet also connected to foreign groups through kinship ties.

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