Second Edition

THE GREEK CITY STATES

A SOURCEBOOK

P. J. RHODES

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The Greek City States

A SOURCE BOOK

Political activity and political thinking began in the *poleis* (cities) and other states of ancient Greece, and terms such as tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy and politics itself are Greek words for concepts first discussed in Greece. This book presents in translation a selection of texts illustrating the formal mechanisms and informal working of the Greek states in all their variety, from the state described by Homer out of which the classical Greeks believed their states had developed, through the archaic period which saw the rise and fall of tyrants and the gradual broadening of citizen bodies, to the classical period of the fifth and fourth centuries, and beyond that to the hellenistic and Roman periods in which the Greeks tried to preserve their way of life in a world of great powers. For this second edition the book has been thoroughly revised and three new chapters added.

P. J. RHODES is Honorary Professor and Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at the University of Durham. His numerous publications in the field of Greek history include *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*, *The Decrees of the Greek States* (with D. M. Lewis), *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 BC* (with R. Osborne) and *A History of the Classical Greek World, 478–323 BC.*

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Preface to the First Edition

The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote that 'man is by nature a political animal', that is, one for whom life can best be lived in *poleis*, or city states (*Politics*, I. 1253 A 2–3, III. 1278 B 19). The purpose of this book is to present the world of the Greek city states, through a selection of ancient texts in translation, to students of ancient Greece and to students of political institutions. Its primary concern is with how the various states were governed, though a few texts of a more theoretical nature are included; it is not intended as a source book for narrative history, though inevitably it includes some texts of importance to students of narrative history.

It is not always certain what the correct reading of an ancient text should be (cf. p. 8). I have translated what I believe to be the correct readings, occasionally but not systematically mentioning alternatives which may be encountered: some texts have to be identified by reference to particular modern editions, but these editions are cited for purposes of identification only, and I have felt free to diverge from them at points where I believe them to be mistaken.

The translations are all my own. I have consulted other translations intermittently, so when my version is identical with another this will be due sometimes to coincidence, sometimes to my finding in the other version an expression on which I could not improve. By kind permission of the original publishers, for the Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution* I have reused the translation which I made for Penguin Classics, and for a few fourth-century inscriptions I have reused the translations which I made for *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 359–323 BC*, in the LACTOR Series published by the London Association of Classical Teachers (in each case the treatment of technical terms has been modified to conform to the style adopted for this book).

The Greek alphabet differs from ours, and the rendering of Greek words and names in our alphabet presents problems. For proper names, and the more familiar words printed in roman type, I have used anglicised or latinised forms (boeotarchs, Corinth, rather than boiotarchoi, Korinthos); for the less familiar words printed in italics I have used more directly transliterated forms. The reader who knows no Greek need not worry about pronunciation: continental vowel values are authentic, but are not always used when a Greek word or name is incorporated in an English sentence; the one important rule is that the letter *e* after a consonant is used always to form a new syllable, never to modify the vowel before the consonant. (The English word *time* is of one syllable; the Greek word *time* is of two, and its authentic pronunciation can be represented approximately in English spelling as *tee-meh*.)

The indexes double as glossaries, and provide some information not provided elsewhere in this book. There and elsewhere, reference to a passage (e.g. **141**) includes the introduction to that passage. Dates (except of modern publications) are BC unless stated to be AD.

I am grateful to Mr R. Stoneman and the rest of the staff of the publishers and the printers; to Mr H. Tudor of the Department of Politics in the University of Durham, for reading a first draft and making valuable suggestions; to the University of Durham, for financial support; and to the President and Fellows of Wolfson College, Oxford, for electing me to a visiting fellowship in 1984.

P. J. R.
Durham

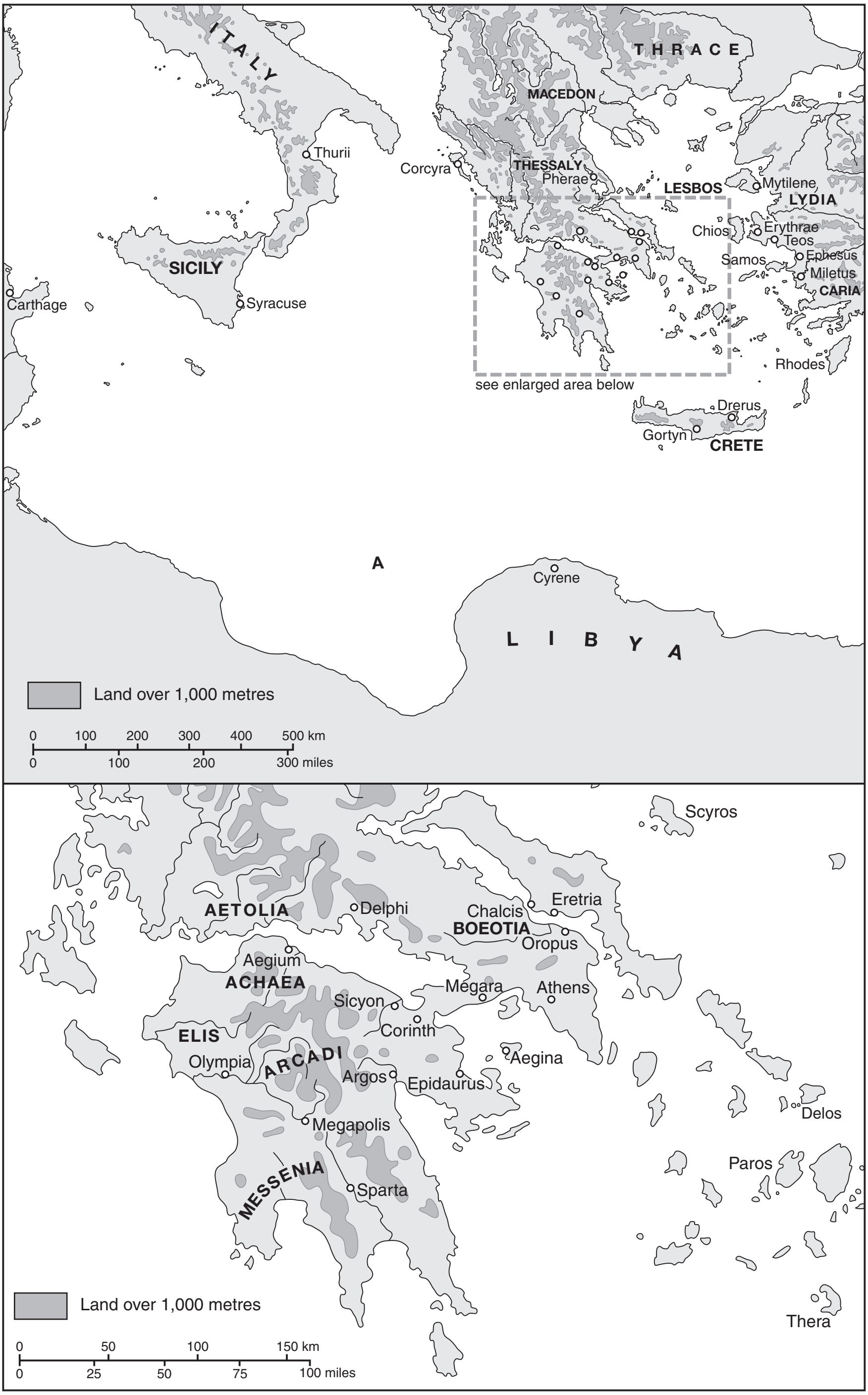
Preface to Second Edition

I am grateful to Dr M. L. Sharp of Cambridge University Press for inviting me to prepare a second edition of this book, and to Routledge (as successors to Croom Helm) and to the University of Oklahoma Press for making that possible by returning my rights in the book to me.

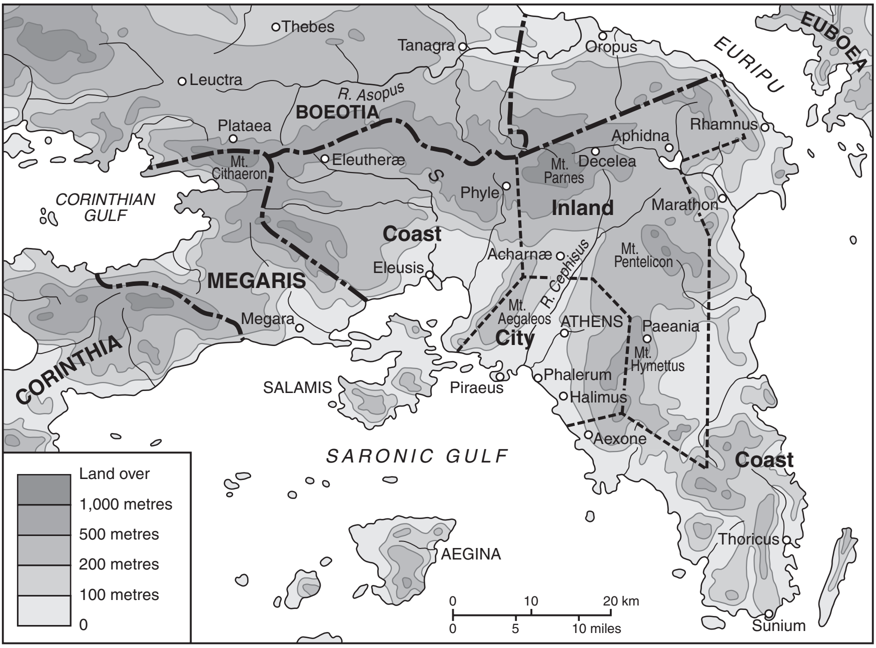
The book originated in a request from Mr R. Stoneman, then of Croom Helm, that I should compile a source book on 'Greek political systems'. In revising it I had in any case wanted not only to correct a few errors and to do some updating but also to make a clearer typographical distinction between the ancient texts and my editorial material than was possible in the first edition, and to add some further texts; and further changes in presentation and additions to the texts were suggested by the publisher's advisers. The upshot is that in this edition all the material in the first edition has been retained, but the texts are now numbered in a single sequence; in Chapter Five what was a section on 'citizens, metics and slaves' has become a section on 'citizens, foreigners and slaves', with a few additional texts; there are new chapters on women and children, on economic life and on religion (though there is some material on all of these dispersed through the other chapters); and the chapter on the Hellenistic and Roman periods has been enlarged with a section showing 'variations on a theme' (though there was more material on these periods in the first edition than one hasty reviewer supposed).

I thank all those who have been involved in any way with the production of this edition. In particular, to those thanked before for allowing me to use (with modifications) translations of my own published elsewhere, I must now add Oxbow Books as successors to Aris and Phillips, for some translations from my editions of Thucydides, II, III and IV. 1 – V. 24, and Oxford University Press and Prof. R. Osborne, for fourth-century inscriptions from Rhodes and Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions, 404–323 BC.*

P. J. R.
Durham


ITALY
THRACE
MACEDON
Thurii
Corcyra
THESSALY
Pherae
LESBOS
Mytilene
LYDIA
Chios
Erythrae
Teos
Samos
Ephesus
Miletus
CARIA
SICILY
Carthage
Syracuse
Rhodes
see enlarged area below
Drerus
Gortyn
CRETE
A
Cyrene
LIBYA
Land over 1,000 metres
0 100 200 300 400 500 km
0 100 200 300 miles
Scyros
AETOLIA
Delphi
Chalcis
Eretria
BOEOTIA
Oropus
Aegium
ACHAEA
Megara
Athens
Sicyon
Corinth
ELIS
Aegina
Olympia
ARCADI
Argos
Epidaurus
Delos
Megapolis
Paros
MESSENIA
Sparta
Thera
Land over 1,000 metres
0 50 100 150 km
0 25 50 75 100 miles

Map 1 The Greek World.


Thebes
Tanagra
Oropus
EUBOEA
EURIPU
Leuctra
R. Asopus
BOEOTIA
Plataea
Rhamnus
Aphidna
Mt.
Cithaeron
Eleutheræ
S
Mt.
Parnes
Decelea
CORINTHIAN
GULF
Phyle
Inland
Marathon
Coast
Acharnæ
R. Cephisus
Mt.
Pentelicon
MEGARIS
Eleusis
Megara
Mt.
Aegaleos
ATHENS
Paeania
City
Mt.
Hymettus
CORINTHIA
SALAMIS
Piraeus
Phalerum
Halimus
Aexone
SARONIC GULF
Coast
Land over
1,000 metres
500 metres
200 metres
100 metres
0
AEGINA
Thoricus
0
10
20 km
0
5
10 miles
Sunium

Map 2 Attica.

Introduction

1. Historical Background

The first advanced civilisation in Greece, the bronze-age Mycenaean civilisation of the second millennium, was based not on city states governed by their citizens, but on powerful kingdoms. This civilisation broke up in the twelfth century, and was followed by a dark age in which the population of Greece dwindled, partly through emigration to the islands of the Aegean and the west coast of Asia Minor, and life returned to more primitive levels.

Recovery began in the tenth century, and from *c.* 800 to *c.* 500 we have what is called the archaic period of Greek history, a semi-historical period which resembles an incomplete jigsaw puzzle in which we have the pieces to reconstruct parts of the picture but not the whole. The Greeks were now organised in some hundreds of separate states, which had developed out of the separate, self-sufficient communities of the dark age. A typical state comprised an urban centre and the agricultural land within a few miles of it; its population might be numbered in thousands, but not usually in tens of thousands. At first, it seems, these states had been ruled by kings, but there was no gulf between the kings and the nobility formed by the families which by the end of the dark age had acquired the largest quantities of good land, and before long hereditary monarchy had given way to collective government by the nobles: officials were appointed with limited tenure, to advise them there was a council of leading men, and on occasions when solidarity was important there might be an assembly of all adult male citizens.

The population of Greece grew again, to a point where states could no longer sustain all their inhabitants out of their own resources. Some reduced their population by exporting it to found colonies, mostly replica city states in places around the Mediterranean where farming land could be occupied without opposition. Some took to trade, to exchange goods of which they had a surplus for goods which they needed; and within the state, though for a long time most citizens owned some land and lived to some extent off the produce of it, men such as cobblers plying a specialised trade for a wider circle than their own household appeared. Some strong states tried to enlarge their own territory at the expense of weaker neighbours; and the nature of Greek warfare was transformed, about the first half of the seventh century, by the appearance of the heavily armed infantryman, the hoplite, and the discovery that such soldiers could be used most effectively in large numbers, in the tight formation of a phalanx. In the course of these developments some men and families enriched themselves and others were impoverished; eventually the introduction of coinage in precious metals (now dated to the sixth century) facilitated the reckoning of wealth in terms other than of agricultural land, and the transfer of wealth from some hands to others. It ceased to seem inevitable that the families which had dominated their cities at the beginning of the eighth century should continue to dominate them for ever. The availability of a simple alphabet (introduced in the eighth century) allowed the arts of reading and writing to spread, and encouraged those who distrusted the nobles to insist that the laws of their state should be made accessible in written form.

By the middle of the eighth century Sparta controlled the whole of Laconia, in the southern Peloponnese: this was a much larger area than most states controlled, and the control was achieved by conquests which left a high proportion of the population subject to Sparta, some as free men in communities under Spartan overlordship, others reduced to a state of servitude. At the end of the eighth century Sparta made further conquests to the west, in Messenia, and probably that war and the assignment of the conquered land brought to the surface the tensions dealt with by the reforms attributed to Lycurgus. The two kings (an unusual phenomenon), the nobles and the citizens of Sparta made common cause against the subject peoples: there was a reorganisation of the citizen body; the roles of kings, council and assembly in decision-making were defined; though private property was not abolished, each citizen was provided by the state with an allotment of land and serfs to work it for him; and, though family life was not abolished, the citizens were enabled to devote themselves almost full-time to a communal military life which with the passage of time was intensified and made the Spartans increasingly different from other Greeks.

In the seventh and sixth centuries tension like that which in Sparta led to the reforms of Lycurgus resulted in the seizure of power in several cities by a tyrant (a word which originally denoted a usurper, but not necessarily a wicked one). Commonly the tyrant was a man on the fringe of the ruling aristocracy, who had been able to gain military and political experience but was in a position to win the support of those who considered themselves economically or politically oppressed. He might rule autocratically or through his state's existing political machinery; though the tyranny was often popular at first, in time it in turn was felt to be oppressive, and no tyranny lasted longer than a hundred years. The nobles were not able to recover their old monopoly of power; sometimes the overthrow of a tyranny was accompanied by a new organisation of the citizen body, superseding the old organisation through which the nobles had exercised influence; and usually all who could afford to equip themselves as hoplites achieved a measure of political power.

The world of the Greek cities, like our own, excluded children from political activity; unlike our own, it excluded women, and in normal circumstances an immigrant had no right (though he might be able by the citizens' special favour) to acquire citizenship of the state in which he settled. As well as citizens and free non-citizens the population of the state commonly included slaves, who were owned by and would work for the state or an individual, as a free man could not without loss of dignity. Without slaves and free non-citizens the citizens (especially the poorer ones) would not have had the leisure which they did have to devote to politics. The substance, as well as the name, of politics was invented by the Greeks: as far as we know this was the first society in which states were governed not at the whim of an all-powerful ruler but by citizens who 'took it in turn to rule and be ruled' (cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, III. 1277 B 7–30, 1283 B 42–1284 A 22, VII. 1332 B 12–41), in accordance with agreed constitutional procedures, where policy was decided not by intrigue in the court or bedchamber but by debate in the council and assembly.

Sparta dominated Laconia and, in due course, Messenia by conquest; Athens dominated Attica by making all its free inhabitants citizens of Athens. Most other states remained much smaller, and Sparta and Athens found that there were limits beyond which they could not expand. But states found it convenient to establish various kinds of diplomatic relationship with one another, and larger units could be formed if the independence of the component city states was not totally suppressed. Religious unions could be established, like the Amphictyony of peoples interested in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi; in some regions, where no one city was able to predominate like Sparta and Athens, neighbouring cities gave up some but not all of their independence to form a federal state. Sparta, when frustrated in attempts to expand northwards in the sixth century, began attaching other states to herself by means of alliances in which she was in fact if not in theory the major partner, and at the end of the century she gave this collection of alliances the organisation which we call the Peloponnesian League.

The classical period of Greek history, from *c.* 500 to 323, begins with an attempt by the Persian empire to conquer Greece, and ends with the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great of Macedon. Persia had become the dominant power in the near east in the middle of the sixth century, and had incorporated in her empire the Greek cities on the west coast of Asia Minor. An unsuccessful revolt of these cities, from 498 to 493, had some support from Athens and Eretria; in a first invasion of Greece, in 490, the Persians captured Eretria but were defeated by the Athenians at Marathon; in a second, larger-scale invasion they overran northern and central Greece in 480, but their navy was defeated at Salamis in the autumn of that year and their army at Plataea in 479.

The Greek resistance to Persia was led by Sparta, and after the victory the Greeks carried the war back to Asia Minor under Spartan leadership. But the Spartan commander made himself unpopular, and not all Spartans were eager for overseas adventures, so in 478/7 Athens founded the Delian League of states willing to continue the war and liberate the Greeks still under Persian rule. By the middle of the century the Persians had been pushed as far back as Athens was able and willing to push them; and Athens had used the League to pursue her own interests as well as to fight against the Persians. When fighting against Persia was abandoned the League was kept in being, and treated increasingly as an Athenian empire. However, possessions on the Greek mainland which Athens had acquired in the early 450s were lost in 447/6, and in 446/5 a treaty intended to last for thirty years recognised the division of the Greek world into a Spartan bloc based on the mainland and an Athenian bloc based on the Aegean.

By this time Athens had developed a self-consciously democratic form of government. Cleisthenes in 508/7 had given Athens machinery which required a high degree of participation by the citizens; the citizens came to enjoy this participation; and in 462/1 Ephialtes took away the powers of political significance exercised by the council of the Areopagus, and transferred them to organs more representative of the citizen body. Fifth-century Greeks became conscious of the differences between democracy and oligarchy. Athens imposed or encouraged democracies in the member states of the Delian League; Sparta, though not a typical oligarchy (the citizen body was a small proportion of the population, but there was a measure of equality within that body), was seen as the champion of oligarchy, and encouraged oligarchic constitutions among her allies.

After the peace of 446/5 Athens accepted that she could not expand on the Greek mainland, but did not accept any other limits to her expansion. Thus she might yet become so powerful as to threaten Sparta's position in Greece, and in 431 Sparta responded to pressure from her allies and embarked on the Peloponnesian War to destroy the Athenian empire. At first Athens seemed invulnerable to what Sparta could do against her; but in 415–413 Athens squandered her resources in an unwise campaign in Sicily, from 412 Sparta was able to enlist the support of the wealthy Persians, and in 404 Athens had to acknowledge defeat. The Athenian democracy was no longer justified by success; but oligarchic régimes in 411–410 and (set up with Spartan backing) in 404–403 were unpopular and short-lived, and in fourth-century Athens the democracy was universally accepted, if not always with enthusiasm.

Sparta decided the peace terms without consulting her allies, and her conduct then and afterwards soon made her more unpopular than Athens had been. Within a few years a reviving Athens joined several of Sparta's former allies in the Corinthian War against Sparta. Meanwhile Persia exacted her price for supporting Sparta in the Peloponnesian War: complete control of Asia Minor, including the Greek cities on the west coast. For some years Sparta fought halfheartedly against Persia to secure a better deal for these cities, but the two wars were too much for her, and in 387/6 she finally abandoned the Asiatic Greeks in the Peace of Antalcidas. This was a new kind of treaty, a Common Peace, which tried to settle all the disputes among the Greek states on the basis of freedom and independence for all except those on the Asiatic mainland; but Sparta as the deviser of the treaty tried to enforce interpretations of it which by weakening her enemies would advance her own interests. Athens acquired considerable support when in 378 she founded the Second Athenian League to resist Spartan imperialism.

But Sparta's appearance of strength belied the reality. The citizen population was declining rapidly; the army, expert at fighting on traditional lines, could not cope with opponents who developed new tactics. At Leuctra in 371 the

Theban-dominated federation of Boeotia defeated Sparta in a major battle. In the years that followed, the Boeotians supported the foundation of an Arcadian federation to the north of Sparta, and in alliance with the Arcadians liberated Messenia from Sparta; the Peloponnesian League broke up, as some members were impelled to make peace with the Boeotians but Sparta herself could not do so without acknowledging Messenia's independence; and Athens found it convenient to abandon the original purpose of her Second League and side with Sparta against Boeotia.

The sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi had been politically unimportant since the oracle had predicted success for the Persian invasion of Greece in 480, but after Leuctra Thebes tried to revive the importance of Delphi and used the Delphic Amphictyony to impose fines on her enemies, Phocis (in whose territory Delphi lay) and Sparta. The Phocians reacted in 356 by seizing Delphi, and the Amphictyons declared a Sacred War against them. Philip II of Macedon, a semi-barbarian kingdom in the north of Greece, proved stronger than any of his predecessors, gained a foothold in Thessaly, and in 346 enabled the Amphictyons to win the war. Some Greeks were happy to collaborate with Philip, but others, including Demosthenes in Athens, saw him as a threat to Greek freedom. At Chaeronea in 338 he defeated an alliance headed by Athens and Thebes, after which he imposed a Common Peace treaty and organised the mainland Greeks (except Sparta, whose continued opposition he could ignore) in the League of Corinth. A Common Peace and a league were reassuringly familiar to fourth-century Greeks, but they provided a framework through which the Greeks were subjected to Philip: for the major states, which had been accustomed to lead rather than to follow, this did represent a serious loss of freedom.

Since the beginning of the fourth century it had often been said that the Greeks' finest hour was when they were united against Persia, and that they ought to combine against Persia again. Persia was the natural next objective for a Macedon which had conquered Greece: Philip was preparing to lead the Macedonians and Greeks against Persia when he was murdered in 336; his son Alexander the Great invaded in 334, and conquered the Persian empire. Thus Greek culture and the Greek language were exported to the near east, and Greek city states, with Greek institutions and Greek and Macedonian inhabitants, were founded in various places. Alexander died in 323, with no heir capable of succeeding to his position (nominally he was succeeded by a mentally defective brother and a baby son). The more ambitious of his generals competed for power, and the empire broke up.

The period from Alexander's death to the Roman conquest is known as the Hellenistic period. Three large kingdoms emerged, those of the Antigonids in Macedon, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria; there were smaller kingdoms in Asia Minor; and under the shadow of these warring kingdoms the Greek cities tried to assert what independence they could. In many respects life continued very much as before. The kings required flattery, and sometimes obedience, but they often found it politic to promise that they would respect the freedom of the Greek cities, and on the Greek mainland and in the Aegean islands most cities were free from direct control by any of the kings for much of the time. Manoeuvring between an Antigonus and a Ptolemy was not unlike manoeuvring between Sparta and Athens.

Two leagues of states, based on parts of Greece which had not been prominent in the classical period, now became important: the Aetolian League and the Achaean. Unlike the Peloponnesian and Athenian Leagues, these were not dominated by single states which used them as a means of extending their own power: each began as a regional federation, and then attached to itself members from outside its own region. Aetolia developed from the backward people of the classical period to the League of the Hellenistic, and its influence started to grow after it played a leading part in repelling Gallic invaders who attacked Delphi in 279. The Achaean federation of the classical period broke up at the end of the fourth century, but it was revived from 281/0 and acquired its first member from outside Achaea, Sicyon, in 251/0.

Sparta returned to prominence briefly in the second half of the third century. In 243 king Agis IV proposed an enlargement of the citizen body and a cancellation of debts and redistribution of land, but was thwarted by his opponents. In 227 Cleomenes III remodelled the constitution in order to force through economic and social reforms; but he also challenged the leadership of the Achaean League in the Peloponnese, and in 224–222 the Achaeans enlisted the help of Macedon to defeat Sparta.

Rome first impinged on the Greek world when she made war on Illyrian pirates, and acquired Corcyra and other cities in the north-west of Greece, in 229, and announced her success at the Isthmian Games in 228. In 215 Philip V of Macedon supported Hannibal of Carthage against Rome, and from 212 Rome made alliances with Aetolia and other enemies of Philip. At the end of the Second Macedonian War, in 196, Philip's kingdom was confined to Macedon proper and he was made a 'friend' of Rome, while the Greek cities were declared to be free; in 167 the Antigonids were ousted and Macedon was divided into four republics; in 146 Macedonia was made a Roman province, with the states of Greece attached to it but not included in it.

The next stage in Rome's eastward expansion was the acquisition of western Asia Minor, as the province of Asia, when Attalus III of Pergamum bequeathed his kingdom to Rome in 133. Mithridates VI of Pontus (northern Asia Minor) overran that province and won support in Greece in 89–88, but in 66–63 Pompey the Great finally defeated him and acquired for Rome not only the whole of Asia Minor but also the Seleucid kingdom in Syria. The kingdom of the Ptolemies in Egypt came to an end with the suicide of Cleopatra VII in 30; and the anomalous position of Greece ended when it was made into the province of Achaia in 27. Even after that, Greek cities retained their traditional institutions, but now they had purely local autonomy as municipalities of the Roman empire.

2. The Texts

In choosing material for this book I have had two objectives, which occasionally have pulled in opposite directions: to give the best evidence for the various points which I wished to make, and to give a reasonable cross-section of the evidence available to the student of the Greek city states.

The Greeks rediscovered the art of writing, and adapted the Phoenician script to produce their alphabet, in the eighth century. The earliest written evidence on the city states is to be found in poetry. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, masterpieces attributed to Homer at the end of a long tradition of oral epic poetry, tell stories set in the Mycenaean world four or five hundred years earlier, and combine details from that time, details from the poet's own time and details from the intervening centuries; Tyrtaeus and Solon, involved in crises in their own cities, address their fellow citizens in verse; Theognis deplores challenges to an aristocratic society. Poetic literature continues to be relevant to our study in the classical period: fifth-century Athenian tragedy, though its plots are usually set in the legendary past, sometimes throws light on the authors' own world; and Athenian comedy of the late fifth and early fourth centuries was very much concerned with current issues.

One of the demands faced by the aristocrats of archaic Greece was that the laws should be accessible to the citizens, and from the seventh century we begin to find laws and other public documents inscribed, usually on stone, occasionally on bronze; Athens after the reforms of Ephialtes in 462/1 published documents on stone to an unprecedentedly great extent. Coins are another form of public document. The Greek cities do not provide such a rich variety of designs and legends as the Roman empire was to do, but Greek coins can tell us something about the states that issued them, and in this book I cite coins as evidence for the status of cities within a federal organisation.

Greek literature in prose began in the fifth century, and two fifth-century writers produced historical works of high quality. Herodotus wrote a history of the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians, from the 540s to the war of 480–479, on a discursive plan which allowed him to include a great variety of material on the Greeks and their neighbours in the archaic period; Thucydides wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War, from 431 to 404 (but nothing on the years after 411 was ever published), with stricter criteria of relevance than a modern reader might like, but including a sketch of the growth of Athenian power from 478 onwards. Political theory, with discussion of how states ought to be governed, is found from the second half of the fifth century (the *Athenian Constitution* preserved with the works of Xenophon argues that Athens' democracy is bad, because it promotes the interests of the bad citizens rather than the good, but is stable and good at achieving its objects); systematic analysis of how states actually were governed begins in Aristotle's school in the second half of the fourth century (the *Athenian Constitution* attributed to Aristotle, one of 158 *Constitutions*, gives a history of the development of the democracy at Athens followed by an account of the working of the constitution in the author's own day). Further material is available to us in speeches written for debates in an assembly or trials in a lawcourt and subsequently published (no doubt in an improved version): we have a large number of Athenian speeches written between *c.* 420 and *c.* 320, and Isocrates wrote his political pamphlets in the form of speeches.

We have no more Greek speeches after *c.* 320 (until speeches were published in the very different circumstances of the Roman empire), and the poetry of the Hellenistic period avoids themes of political relevance; but large numbers of histories were written, local or general, covering a short or a long period; and large numbers of states published their documents. The greatest of the later Greek historians is the second-century writer Polybius, who was taken to Rome as a hostage, was captivated by Rome, and wrote an account of Rome's expansion between 264 and 146. Part of Polybius' history survives; it was a major source for the history of Rome written in Latin in the time of Augustus by Livy, and part of that survives.

Survival is a major problem. Since the invention of printing, texts that have been published have been made available in large or very large numbers, and have been reprinted on various occasions, so that there can be few texts published in quantity of which not a single copy from any printing now survives. The survival of Greek documents on stone or metal depends on what has happened to the objects since they were first inscribed, and on where exploration and excavation have been possible. A literary work was 'published' if one hand-written copy, or a few, passed out of the hands of the author, and it survived only if fresh copies were made in succeeding generations: the libraries of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds contained only a fraction of the works that had once been published, and we now have texts of only a fraction of the works which we know to have been in those libraries. Sometimes the fittest has survived, but not always: we possess about a third of the general history written in the first century by Diodorus Siculus; but Diodorus was not an original researcher or even a reliable summariser, and we should be much better placed if instead we possessed Ephorus and the other sources which Diodorus used. There is also the problem of accuracy. Copyists repeat their predecessors' mistakes and make new mistakes of their own, and after generations of successive copyists we cannot always be sure of recovering the words which an author originally wrote. Texts inscribed on stone or metal, or written on papyrus, are closer in time to the originals than texts in medieval manuscripts, but they too can contain errors, and they rarely survive complete with every letter legible.

Finds of papyrus, almost all in Egypt, have given us older texts of works already available in medieval manuscripts, and also works not otherwise preserved (such as the Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution*, and speeches by Hyperides). There are many works of which we have only 'fragments', quoted in works which do survive more or less complete: most of what we have of the poetry of Tyrtaeus, and all that we have of Solon, has come down to us in this way; much of what we know of the Aristotelian *Spartan Constitution* comes from the use made of it in Plutarch's *Lycurgus* (which specifically cites 'Aristotle' in a few places, and very probably depends on this source in many more places, though we cannot be sure precisely how many). Thus works written under the Roman empire, like the geography of Strabo, the *Lives* and essays of Plutarch and the guide-book of Pausanias, owe part of their importance to what they preserve from earlier works now lost.

A few texts from a still later period are used in this book. In the later Roman empire, and the Byzantine empire which succeeded it in the eastern Mediterranean, the study of classical texts continued. Summaries of long books were made for those who did not want to read the originals (like that of Pompeius Trogus' history by Justin). Introductions (*hypotheseis*) to and commentaries ('scholia', so their writers are known as scholiasts) on texts were produced; lexica explaining names, words and institutions were compiled; one man would condense the work of a predecessor and add material from another source or contributions from his own learning. Some of these scholars perpetrated glaring mistakes, but others were intelligent men, widely read both in works which survive today and in works now known to us only through their use of them; some were men of distinction in other fields, such as Photius, the ninth-century AD patriarch of Constantinople, to whom we owe not only a lexicon but also notes made in his very extensive reading. Over fifteen hundred years separate the earliest texts used in this book from the latest, and another eleven hundred years separate the latest from today.

In this book [square brackets] are used: in the texts, to enclose explanatory matter which I have inserted; in the references, to enclose an author's name when a work was attributed to him in antiquity but probably or certainly was not written by him (in Index I these works are distinguished by an asterisk before the title). —— or – – – indicates a lacuna in the original text; ... indicates an omission by me from the original text.

1 The Homeric State

The earliest surviving works of Greek literature are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, epic poems attributed to Homer. The poems were written *c.* 750–700, and represent the culmination of generations of oral poetry. They tell stories of the late Mycenaean world, the *Iliad* an episode in a siege of Troy by the combined forces of the Greek states which was believed to have taken place early in the twelfth century, and the *Odyssey* the delayed return of Odysseus to Ithaca after that siege. Whether there is any truth behind the stories is disputed; it is certain that details were incorporated in the epic tradition at various times between the Mycenaean age and Homer's own age. The states which Homer depicts are simpler than the Mycenaean states, with none of the bureaucracy attested in the Linear B tablets, and with no peaceable intercourse between states except on the basis of guest-friendship between noble families. In this respect the world depicted is most like that of the 'dark age' between the Mycenaean age and the time of Homer. There was no one time when life was exactly as depicted by Homer, but the world which he depicts is important, because it was believed by classical Greeks to be the world out of which their own had developed.

The poems are composed as much of phrases forming part or the whole of a hexameter line as of individual words. For metrical convenience the Greeks can be called Achaeans, Argives or Danaans (Hellenes, the classical Greek name, is used by Homer not of the Greeks as a whole but of one particular Greek people: cf. passage 77), Troy can be called Troy or Ilium, any god or man can be called son of Y instead of or in addition to X.

The word *basileus*, which in classical Greek came to mean 'king', is used either of the kings or of the other nobles, so I translate it as 'prince' (except in those occurrences in passage **1** where only 'king' conveys the meaning): the word *anax*, used of the gods, of kings in relation to their states and of masters in relation to their households, and not used in classical Greek prose, I translate as 'lord'; in the Mycenaean Linear B tablets the king was *anax* and there were *basileis* below him.

Homer's word for an 'assembly' of adult male citizens (in the Greek army at Troy, of soldiers) is *agora*, which in classical Greek occasionally has that meaning but is used more often of the main square of the city, considered both as its political centre and as its commercial centre, i.e. market place: the normal classical word for 'assembly' is *ekklesia*. His word for a more restricted 'council' (of nobles in the city, of commanders of individual contingents in the Greek army) is *boule*, which has the same meaning in classical Greek. His normal word for 'people', the citizen body (or the army at Troy) and in particular the ordinary members of it, is *laos*, which is rare in classical Greek prose (but is used in the documentary language of some states); there is one occurrence in passage **11** of the most frequent classical word, *demos*, which I translate there as 'commons', and one in passage **13** of *plethos*, used in classical Greek of the people in respect of their large number, which I translate there as 'the men of the crowd'. A 'herald', *keryx*, in Homer's world and in classical Greece, is a man with a loud, clear voice who makes proclamations on behalf of the ruler or officials (for another use of heralds in classical Greece see passage **452**).

1. Odysseus' household

The *Odyssey* begins twenty years after Odysseus, king of Ithaca, has set out to fight in the Trojan War, and ten years after the war has ended. Odysseus' son Telemachus has not yet asserted himself; he appears to be heir by right to the family property but not necessarily to the kingdom as well. Many of the nobles of Ithaca have descended on the household and are living and feasting there, hoping that Odysseus will be presumed dead and his wife Penelope will marry one of them. The goddess Athena has appeared to Telemachus and urged him to take action.

> The suitors made a noise in the shadowy hall, each of them praying that he might share Penelope's bed.
>
> The wise Telemachus began to speak to them: 'Suitors of my mother, your insolence is outrageous. Let us now dine pleasurably, without shouting, since it is a good thing to listen to a minstrel like this one, who has a voice like the gods. But in the morning let us all go and sit in the assembly, so that I can speak bluntly and order you to leave the hall: you can find your meals elsewhere, going from house to house and eating your own provisions. If you think it is better and more agreeable to destroy one man's livelihood and not pay for it, then go ahead and devour it; and I shall call on the gods who live for ever, and pray to Zeus to give me requital, that I may destroy you in my house without paying for that.'
>
> So spoke Telemachus. They all bit their lips, and were amazed at the boldness of his speech. Then Antinous son of Eupithes addressed him: 'Telemachus, it must be the gods who have taught you to speak boldly and boastfully. May the son of Cronus never make you king in sea-girt Ithaca, though the kingship would be yours by inheritance.'
>
> Wise Telemachus said in reply, 'Antinous, though what I say may provoke you to envy, I should be glad to accept the kingship if Zeus gave it to me. Would you say that is the worst thing that can happen to a man? It is no bad thing to be a king: immediately one's household is enriched and one gains greater honour. In sea-girt Ithaca there are

> many other princes, young and old, and one of them may have the kingship when godlike Odysseus dies; but I shall be master of my own household, and of the slaves whom godlike Odysseus won for me in war.'
>
> (Homer, *Odyssey*, I. 365–98)

2. An assembly summoned in Ithaca

Telemachus summons an assembly, the first for twenty years. Any of the nobles can summon an assembly; there are heralds to proclaim the summons, and in the assembly a herald hands a sceptre to the man who takes the floor to speak.

> When early-rising, rosy-fingered dawn appeared, Odysseus' son rose from his bed, donned his clothes, slung a sharp sword from his shoulder and bound fine sandals on his smooth feet. As he set out from his chamber he looked like a god. Immediately he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to summon the long-haired Achaeans to an assembly. The summons was given, and the people quickly gathered. When they were all collected together, Telemachus went to the assembly, with a bronze spear in his hand; he was not alone, but was accompanied by his swift dogs. Athena endowed him with wonderful charm, and all the people admired him as he approached. The elders made way for him, and he sat in his father's seat.
>
> The first to speak was the hero Aegyptius, a man stooping with age and full of knowledge. His son, the spearman Antiphus, had gone with godlike Odysseus in the hollow ships to Ilium the city of horses, but the savage Cyclops when making ready his last meal had killed him in the recesses of the cave. Aegyptius had three other sons, Eurynomus, who had joined the suitors, and two others, who still remained in their father's house; but he could not forget Antiphus, and continued to grieve and mourn for him.
>
> He spoke, with tears streaming from his eyes: 'Listen to what I have to say, Ithacans. We have had no assembly or meeting since godlike Odysseus departed in the hollow ships. Who has summoned us now? What great need has inspired one of the young men, or one of those who are older? Has he heard news that the army is coming, news which he is the first to hear and wants to make known to us? Is there some other matter of public concern which he wishes to declare and speak of? I think he is a fine and blessed man. May Zeus fulfil for him the good that he purposes in his mind.'
>
> So he spoke, and Odysseus's son was glad at what he said. He did not remain seated long, but decided to speak. He stood in the middle

> of the assembly, and the herald Pisenor, a man skilled in wise counsel, placed the sceptre in his hand. Taking it, he began by addressing the old man.
>
> (Homer, *Odyssey*, II. 1–39)

3. The assembly closed

Telemachus and other nobles speak, and Zeus sends an omen whose significance is disputed. The last speaker accepts Telemachus' proposal that he should be given a ship to search for news of Odysseus, and without any vote or declaration of the assembly's will closes the meeting.

> Leocritus son of Evenor said in reply, 'Mentor, you are a trouble-maker and out of your mind. What a proposal to make, that the people should put a stop to us suitors. It would be hard for them to have to fight against a large number for the sake of our meals. If Odysseus of Ithaca himself were to come and find the noble suitors feasting in his house, and purposed in his heart to drive us from the hall, his wife would have no joy in his coming, greatly though she longs for him, but he would meet a miserable death on the spot if he tried to fight against our large numbers. What you have said is unfitting. But come, let the people separate, each to his own lands, and let Telemachus be helped on his journey by Mentor and Halitherses, who are long-standing friends of his father. However, I believe he will wait long in Ithaca trying to obtain news, and will never make this journey.'
>
> So he spoke, and quickly closed the assembly. The men separated, each to his own house, and the suitors went to the house of godlike Odysseus.
>
> (Homer, *Odyssey*, II. 242–59)

4. Agamemnon as most princely

The Greek army at Troy is represented as comprising contingents from the separate cities of Greece, that from each city or group of cities commanded by its own king. The commander in chief is Agamemnon, king of Mycenae: he is of superior standing to the other kings, since he commands, although it is not he but his brother Menelaus king of Sparta whose wife Helen has been abducted and on whose behalf the war is being fought. Thus Nestor is able to say to Agamemnon:

> 'Then, son of Atreus, you must give the lead; for you are most princely. Give a banquet to the elders. That is appropriate for you, it is not unfitting: your huts are full of wine, which the ships of the Achaeans

> bring daily over the broad sea from Thrace; you have all the means of entertainment, and you rule over many men. When many have gathered, you must take the advice of whoever gives the best counsel.'
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, IX. 68–73)

5. Agamemnon superior to Achilles

When Agamemnon offers to make amends for his offence to Achilles, he says:

> 'Let him submit to me, in so far as I am more princely, and in so far as I can claim to be his elder by birth.'
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, IX. 160–1)

6. An assembly of the Greek army summoned at Troy

The Greek army, with its contingents from separate states, is itself like a state: Agamemnon son of Atreus, the commander in chief, is 'king'; the kings of the other states are prominent among the nobles; the ordinary soldiers are the ordinary citizens, who are expected to listen and occasionally to indicate their approval or disapproval but not play a more active part.

The story of the *Iliad* begins when the captured daughter of a Trojan priest of Apollo is awarded to Agamemnon as a prize, and he refuses the father's offer of a ransom. Apollo vents his wrath on the Greeks, until an assembly is called, not by Agamemnon but by Achilles, king of the Myrmidons (and son of a human father and divine mother).

> For nine days the god's arrows fell on the army. On the tenth Achilles called the people to an assembly: the thought was put in his mind by the white-armed goddess Hera, who was anxious for the Danaans when she saw them dying.
>
> When they were all assembled together, Achilles of the swift feet stood up among them and spoke: 'Son of Atreus, I think now we shall soon be driven back and sent home, if indeed we escape death, since both war and plague are breaking the Achaeans. But come, let us ask some prophet or priest, or interpreter of dreams (for dreams too are from Zeus), to tell us for what reason Phoebus Apollo is so angry, whether he is dissatisfied with some prayer or sacrifice. Perhaps he will be willing to accept the savour of sheep and full-grown goats, and save us from ruin.'
>
> Thus speaking, he sat down again. There rose among them Calchas son of Thestor, by far the best of augurs, who knew what was, what was to be and what had already been, and who by the art of divination which Phoebus Apollo had given him had guided the ships of the

> Achaeans to Ilium. He spoke in a spirit of loyalty to them, and said, 'Achilles, dear to Zeus, you bid me speak of the wrath of the far-shooting lord Apollo. I will speak, then; but you must undertake and swear to me that you will graciously support me with your words and your hands. I think I shall anger the man who has great power over all the Argives and whom the Achaeans obey. A prince is mightier when he is angry with a man of inferior rank; for even if he holds down his rage on that first day he bears the grudge in his heart afterwards until he can satisfy it. Tell me, then, if you will protect me.'
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, I. 53–83)

7. Nestor's speech to the assembly

Calchas explains that Apollo is angry with Agamemnon; Agamemnon insists that if he is to give back the priest's daughter he must have another prize, and decides to take the girl awarded to Achilles. Achilles comes near to killing Agamemnon, but is restrained by the goddess Athena.

> So spoke Peleus' son, and, throwing to the ground the sceptre studded with golden nails, he took his seat. Atreus' son on the other side was wild with rage. Then up stood Nestor of the soft words, the clear speaker from Pylos, from whose tongue flowed speech sweeter than honey. He had already seen two generations of mortal men come to birth, live and die in holy Pylos, and was lord over the third. He spoke in a spirit of loyalty to them, and said, 'Alas, what great grief is coming to the land of Achaea. Priam and his sons would rejoice, and the other Trojans would feel great joy in their hearts, if they learned the whole truth about this quarrel between you two, who excel all the Danaans in counsel and in war. Listen to my advice: you are both younger than me; before now I have spoken to men even better than you, and they have never despised me ...
>
> 'So you should accept my advice, for it is better to accept advice. Agamemnon, great though you are, do not take the girl from him, but leave her, since she was first awarded to him as a prize by the sons of the Achaeans. And you, son of Peleus, do not presume to contend against the prince, since a sceptre-holding prince to whom Zeus has given glory has a portion of honour which is not the same as yours. Though you may be stronger, though a goddess was your mother, he is mightier, since he is lord over a greater number ... So the two men opposed each other, fighting with quarrelling words; and they dissolved the assembly beside the ships of the Achaeans.
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, I. 245–61, 274–81, 304–5)

8. Agamemnon summons a council and another assembly

Agamemnon takes the girl from Achilles, and Achilles and his men remain at Troy but take no part in the war. Achilles' mother Thetis persuades Zeus to let the Greeks without Achilles fare badly, and Zeus sends Agamemnon a false dream indicating that he will now be able to capture Troy. Agamemnon begins by summoning not a full assembly but a council of leaders.

> The goddess Dawn reached high Olympus, proclaiming the light of day to Zeus and the other immortals. Agamemnon ordered the clear-voiced heralds to summon the long-haired Achaeans to an assembly: the summons was given, and the men quickly gathered. But first he held a council of the great-hearted elders beside the ship of Nestor prince of Pylos. When he had called them, he prepared a subtle plan.
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, II. 48–55)

9. Agamemnon plans to test the men

Agamemnon tells the council of the dream, but plans to test the spirit of the men by proposing to abandon the siege.

> 'I shall order the men to flee with their many-benched ships; then you on every side must restrain them with your words.'
>
> So speaking, he sat down. There stood up among them Nestor, the lord of sandy Pylos, who spoke in a spirit of loyalty to them, and said, 'My friends, leaders and rulers of the Argives, if any other of the Achaeans had told us the dream, we should have said it was false, and have turned our backs on it. But now the man who has seen it is the one who can claim to be by far the best of the Achaeans; so come, let us see if we can arm the sons of the Achaeans.'
>
> On saying this, he led the way out of the council, the sceptre-bearing princes rose and obeyed the shepherd of the people, and the people hurried towards them. Like the tribes of swarming bees, proceeding out of a hollow rock in endless succession, and flying in clusters to the spring flowers, some groups lighting here and some there, even so did many tribes proceed in ranks from the ships and the huts to the assembly by the broad beach. Rumour, the messenger of Zeus, hastened to spread like wildfire through them; and the men gathered. The assembly-place was in confusion, the earth groaned as the people took their seats, and there was a great noise. Nine heralds called out to control them, to make them cease shouting and listen to the princes cherished by Zeus. The people sat down in haste, obediently taking their seats and ceasing their chatter.

> Up stood the ruler Agamemnon, holding the sceptre made and worked by Hephaestus ... Leaning on this, he addressed a speech to the Argives: 'Dear heroes of the Danaans, servants of Ares, great Zeus the son of Cronus has cruelly entangled me in dire ruin. Previously he promised and undertook to me that I should sack well-walled Ilium and then return home; but now he has contrived an evil trick for me, and orders me to go to Argos in failure, after losing a great many people.'
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, II. 74–101, 109–15)

10. The men fail the test

The men fail Agamemnon's test and, far from wanting to fight on, are eager to depart.

> 'But come, let us all do as I say. Let us flee with our ships to our home country, for we shall no longer be able to capture Troy of the broad streets.'
>
> So Agamemnon spoke, and he stirred the feelings in the hearts of all those in the crowd who had not heard what he said to the council. The assembly was moved like the long waves of the ocean, when the south-east wind from father Zeus in the clouds bursts on the Icarian Sea to set it in motion, or as when the west wind moves the thick-standing crops, blowing violently on them and bending them by the ears: even so was the whole assembly moved. The men hurried shouting to the ships, and the dust beneath their feet was lifted up into the air. They urged one another to take hold of the ships and drag them into the divine sea; they cleared out the slipways; they took the ships' props away; and the shouting of the men as they began to set out for home reached up to heaven.
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, II. 139–54)

11. Odysseus reconvenes the assembly; Thersites reproaches Agamemnon

That is not what Agamemnon had intended; and Odysseus, prompted by the goddess Athena, calls the men back to the assembly, treating the leaders more tactfully than the ordinary men. Thersites, one of the ordinary men, dares to make a speech.

> 'But go now among the people of the Achaeans; do not refuse. Restrain each mortal with your mild words, and do not let them drag their curved ships to the sea.'
>
> So spoke Athena. Odysseus heard the voice of the goddess as she spoke; and he went at a run, throwing off his cloak, which was collected

by his attendant, the herald Eurybates of Ithaca. He went up to Agamemnon son of Atreus, took from him the family sceptre, which lasts for ever, and went with it among the ships of the bronze-clad Achaeans.

When he came across a princely and eminent man, he went up to him and tried to restrain him with mild words: 'Sir, it would not be right to intimidate you like an inferior man; but take your own seat and make the rest of the people sit down. You do not yet know clearly the intention of Atreus' son: now he is testing the sons of the Achaeans, but soon he will press hard on them. Did we not all hear what he said in the council? I fear he will be angry and punish the sons of the Achaeans. Princes cherished by Zeus have a high spirit: wise Zeus gives them honour and favours them.'

But when he found a man of the commons shouting out, he struck him with the sceptre and addressed a rebuke to him: 'Sir, sit quietly and listen to the speech of those who are mightier than you. You are unwarlike and cowardly, and of no account either in war or in counsel. We Achaeans here cannot all be princes, and a multiplicity of leaders is no good thing: there must be one leader, one prince, to whom the position is granted by the son of Cronus of the crooked counsel.'

So he went through the army, giving commands to them. The men hurried again from the ships and the huts to the assembly, with a noise like that of a wave of the loud-roaring ocean, when it surges on the long beach and the sea resounds.

The others kept their seats, in good order on the benches; the one man to complain was Thersites of the unbridled lips. He had a mind filled with many undisciplined words, to no good purpose, not under control, for quarrelling with the princes, so as to make him a source of amusement for the Argives. He was the ugliest man who had come to Ilium: he was bandy-legged and lame in one foot, his shoulders were humped and bent in on his chest, and on top he had a peaked head with thin hair growing on it. He was particularly hated by Achilles and Odysseus, with both of whom he used to quarrel. But on this occasion he shouted out a string of complaints against godlike Agamemnon. He shouted aloud at Agamemnon and made a speech upbraiding him, at which the Achaeans were wondrously angry and indignant in their hearts.

(Homer, *Iliad*, II. 179–224)

12. Odysseus rebukes Thersites

Thersites attacks Agamemnon's treatment of Achilles, Odysseus reacts angrily, and the men support Odysseus.

> So spoke Thersites, upbraiding Agamemnon the shepherd of the people. Quickly godlike Odysseus stood beside him, looking at him grimly, and reproved him with a stern speech: 'Thersites, you speak fluently but without thought. Put an end to it; do not quarrel with the princes. I declare that of all who came to Ilium with Atreus' son there is no mortal worse than you. Kindly do not speak with the princes' names on your tongue, to attack them and protect your journey home. We do not yet know clearly how this affair will end, whether we sons of the Achaeans shall go home in success or in failure. And now you sit upbraiding Agamemnon son of Atreus, the shepherd of the people, and make a mocking speech, because the Danaan heroes give him many gifts. I tell you, and my words will be fulfilled, if I find you out of your mind as you are now, then let Odysseus' head no longer sit on his shoulders, may I no longer be known as the father of Telemachus, if I do not take you and strip your clothes off you, your cloak, your tunic and all that covers your shame, give you a humiliating beating and send you weeping to the swift ships.'
>
> So he spoke, and he struck Thersites on the back and the shoulders with the sceptre. Thersites doubled up. Large tears dropped from his eyes, and a bloody weal appeared on his back where the golden sceptre had hit him. He sat down frightened, and in his pain with a helpless look wiped away a tear. The men, discontented though they were, had the pleasure of laughing at him. One man looking at his neighbour would say, 'Yes, indeed, Odysseus has many great achievements through giving a good lead in counsel and making arrangements for the war, but this is the best thing he has ever done among the Argives, stopping this wretched slanderer from speaking. Certainly Thersites' proud spirit will never again presume to upbraid the princes with words of complaint.'
>
> So spoke the men of the crowd. Odysseus the besieger of cities stood holding the sceptre; and owl-faced Athena in the likeness of a herald called the people to silence, so that both the nearest and the farthest of the sons of the Achaeans might hear his speech and ponder his counsel.
>
> (Homer, *Iliad*, II. 243–82)

13. Responses to speeches in another assembly

It was presumptuous of an ordinary man like Thersites to make a speech, and the mass of ordinary soldiers was glad when Odysseus rebuked him (passages **11–12**). It was proper, however, for the ordinary men to give a mass response to the speeches of their betters, cheering in approval or showing their disapproval by an ominous silence.