I

FROM CITY-STATE TO REGION-STATE

What exactly do we mean when we say that Attica in the classical period was politically “incorporated” or “unified”? If, for the purposes of analysis, we unpack the idea of the polis, we can distinguish three essential levels or sources of political unity in the Attic peninsula.

First and most fundamental, the reach of Athenian state institutions extended to the territorial limits of Attica, and this apparatus was recognized as the ultimate locus of political authority for the entire region. Second, all free, native-born, adult males in Attica were eligible to become citizens of Athens, entitling them—even obliging them—to participate in the civil, military, and religious life of the polis. From 508/7 on, enrollment took place locally in one of 139 town and village units, or demes, scattered throughout the peninsula and was administered by one’s fellow demesmen. Third, despite the unusually large size of the polis, citizens appear to have been bound to one another by a powerful and at times distinctly chauvinistic form of collective consciousness or identity. Each citizen was encouraged to imagine himself a member of a single, extended, undifferentiated community of “Athenians,” sharing with his fellows a common history, culture, and destiny that set them apart from all other such communities.

For most modern authorities, these distinctions will seem artificial and perhaps anachronistic, since it is widely felt that, unlike the nation-states of our own times, the Greek polis in general and the Athenian instance in particular...
represent an almost inseparable union of territorial state and citizen body. In this view, the Athenian “state” was in effect no more and no less than the sum of the individuals entitled to share in its administration, and thus its territorial reach cannot meaningfully be distinguished from the geographical spread of those who enjoyed the rights of full citizen membership.

If this is correct, it should follow that the unification of Attica by Athens was accomplished not so much by extending the reach of impersonal institutions but by admitting an ever wider portion of the region’s population to the Athenian citizen community. In other words, unification must have been realized simultaneously on the first two levels identified. Was this in fact the case? Or did the institutional incorporation of the region actually precede the enrollment of individuals from all parts of Attica as citizens? Whatever the answer might be, most would accept that unification on the third level, which required transformation not of institutions but of human minds and emotions, would have been somewhat more problematic and cannot be assumed to have taken place simultaneously with the admission of all eligible males to citizenship. For this reason alone, we should not expect to find that the full political incorporation of Attica was accomplished overnight in a single transformative instant.

When, then, was the critical step taken to extend the reach of Athenian laws and institutions to the limits of Attica? At what point were inhabitants of the periphery first routinely enrolled as full citizens of Athens? And since the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens in Greek antiquity are sadly now all but inaccessible to us, when do we find the first conscious attempts to encourage these individuals to share in a specifically Athenian form of political identity? Given the enormous impact of the incorporation of Attica on the historical destiny of Athens, it is clearly of some considerable interest to us to know how and when the remarkable region-state we see in classical times first came into being.

VIEWS ANCIENT AND MODERN

Ancient authors do not distinguish different stages in the unification process but, rather, see it as a single act of institutional centralization, or “synoecism” (sunoikismos). From Thucydides (2.15) on, they are unanimous that this synoecism was accomplished by royal fiat of the legendary king Theseus, long before the eras of Solon, Peisistratus, and Cleisthenes. Perhaps influenced by the seeming antiquity of this tradition, modern observers generally view political relations between Athens and Attica in the historical period as unproblematic. Most suppose that the process of incorporation must have been completed by
the end of the Dark Age (ca. 1100–700), while some scholarship would place the development as far back as the Mycenaean period (ca. 1600–1100).^2

There are three a priori reasons for questioning these reconstructions. First, such an overtly political construct as the Thesean synoecism tradition surely arose at a time when the full subsumption of Attica into the polis of Athens was not yet taken for granted. As a clear attempt to naturalize this process, the tradition presupposes a level of political self-consciousness that seems wholly out of place in the eighth or any earlier century. If, as now seems possible, the tradition was not invented until the last decade of the sixth century, we would have good reason to doubt the purported antiquity of the historical unification of Attica.^3

Second, as I have already mentioned, we might legitimately expect that a united polis in Attica could draw on sufficient manpower to make it an assertive—even dominant—force in Greek affairs of the archaic period (ca. 700–480). Yet it is generally agreed that before ca. 600 B.C., Athens was relatively insignificant on the wider stage. Even down to the end of the Peisistratid period (ca. 546/5–511/0), Athenian military ventures were essentially limited and ad hoc in nature and, as Frost (1984) has shown, probably did not involve anything we could call a regular citizen army. Around the beginning of the sixth century, the Athenians were still in a position to lose to a much smaller rival like Megara in their contest for control over the adjacent island of Salamis. At the same time, they were manifestly vulnerable to hostile insurgency from within and without: Cylon in the 630s, Peisistratus in the late 560s and mid-540s, and Cleomenes in 508/7 all managed to storm the citadel of Athens with quite astonishing ease. Although the forces of Cylon and Cleomenes were soon overcome, in none of the four cases of insurgence do we get any impression that the Athenians had regular mechanisms in place for defending themselves against internal or external aggression.^4

Some may seek to explain these shortcomings by claiming that the Athenians of the archaic period, already possessing more extensive farmlands than most other Greeks, had little to gain by expanding elsewhere and thus no need for organized military force. But this idea is belied both by the turmoil experienced during the era of Solon (archon in 594/3), which seems to have been precipitated by what Manville (1990, 122) has termed an “agrarian crisis,” and by the nature of sixth-century military operations abroad, most of which, as Frost (loc. cit.) has shown, were driven by a demand for land. Alternatively, it might be suggested that the political instability that plagued Athens from the later seventh to the late sixth century effectively hindered the state from realizing its full military potential. This is certainly a more compelling idea, though
it is still insufficient in itself to explain why there seems not to be a single moment during this entire period when the power of the Athenian state is commensurate with its size. In the end, if the archaic Athenians were so unable or unwilling to translate the unusually large human resources at their disposal into a concrete military advantage, one is left to ponder what exactly a prehistoric synoecism would have involved and why it was even undertaken in the first place. Evidently, it was not about the creation of citizen soldiers.

Third, in the late sixth century, we see the implementation of a series of measures that seem expressly designed to ensure that constituents in all parts of Attica were full and equal members of the Athenian political community. The reforms of Cleisthenes the Alcmeonid in 508/7 included not only the introduction of a procedure for enrolling new Athenian citizens in local units, or demes, scattered throughout the peninsula but also the creation of new mechanisms—in the form of ten highly artificial phylai, or “tribes”—that were calculated to encourage region-wide participation in the political, military, and ceremonial life of the polis. Again, if there was still a need for such institutions at this very late stage, one is reasonably entitled to wonder what the purported prehistoric synoecism had actually accomplished.

There are, as we shall see, a number of other, more concrete reasons for believing that the synoecism of Attica was not fully accomplished before the late archaic period. The story of unification turns out to be a good deal more complex than is generally supposed.

THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL UNION

Certain factors made the evolution of a fully integrated region-state more likely in Attica than elsewhere in Greece. Though the failure of any rival state to emerge in the peninsula is hardly proof that the process of unification was completed sometime during the prehistoric era, it clearly helps to explain how such a process was ever feasible. Moreover, the region does appear to have enjoyed a certain level of cultural homogeneity from the very earliest periods, and we can only suppose that intercourse of various kinds between the center and the periphery was regular and frequent from the time that Athens first acquired a preeminence in the peninsula.

That said, the full incorporation of the entire region within a single polis structure was hardly a natural or inevitable development. At least four major impediments had to be overcome in the process. The first and most straightforward of these was size. As noted earlier, no other polis ever developed durable institutions capable of embracing a citizen community on this scale.
The majority of the population lived outside Athens itself, some perhaps as far away as a two-day journey. We cannot be surprised when Thucydides (8.66.3) tells us that individual citizens would have been unacquainted with most of their fellows. The citizen body was too large, it seems, for a plenary gathering to have been considered feasible; at least, we do not know of a single occasion when such a gathering took place. The style of collective consciousness that prevailed among this group was therefore necessarily that of an “imagined community,” and such a consciousness can hardly have arisen spontaneously. Like modern national consciousness, it must have been carefully constructed and cultivated from the center before it could take on a life of its own.\(^5\)

A second impediment was topography (see fig. 2). The unification of this peninsular region, separated as it was from its neighbors to the north and northwest by Mounts Parnes and Cithaeron, may seem, with hindsight, to have been inevitable. Yet the internal topography of Attica was less conducive to this process than was the topography of several regions that never attained the same degree of political integration. As Andrewes (1982, 362) comments:

> A unitary state the size of Attica is not normal in the Greek pattern of settlement, even when there was no division of race: Boeotians, Arcadians and Thessalians were conscious enough of racial unity, but did not unite in the Attic manner. The three plains of Attica are separated by barriers, easily surmounted but more marked than any in the Boeotian plain, or the plain of eastern Arcadia, and they could well have supported three or more independent states in a loose union or none at all.

A third impediment was the fact that rural Attica was not “virgin” territory. For the Athenian state to exert full control over this land, it had to eclipse the influence of numerous networks of authority and dependency that had long prevailed in the region’s periphery. Our knowledge of these networks is very limited. But most accept that there is some truth in the brief sketch of pre-sixth-century Attic society in the Aristotelian \textit{Athenaion politeia}, or \textit{Constitution of the Athenians} (henceforth \textit{AP}). That work describes a largely agrarian population, the majority of which depended to varying degrees—both economically and in the broadest sense politically—on a small landowning class (\textit{AP} 2.2).\(^6\)

Reinforcing these local hierarchies were a range of socioreligious organizations, chief among them being the phratries. These entities were typically dominated by influential clans, all of which appear to have used claims of kinship—whether real or fictive—to sanction existing power relations between themselves, their retainers, and their particular locality. Given these strong per-
sonal bonds between local elites and nonelites in archaic rural Attica, it seems far from likely that the latter would have automatically looked to state institutions in Athens to resolve major issues affecting their daily lives. As for the four so-called Ionian tribes that preceded the ten Cleisthenic phylai, we can only speculate about the role they might have played in early Attic society. But it seems safe to infer from the fact of their replacement in 508/7 that this role was not conducive to the region’s unification and most probably hindered it.7

Finally, if the size of the region did little to help the formation of a collective identity among Attica’s inhabitants, the existence of deep-rooted particularist sentiment in rural localities may actively have impeded the process. Granted, some broad homogeneity of material culture, dialect, values, and practice had probably long prevailed in Attica. But such empirical commonalities could not in themselves be relied on to forge a self-consciously held, specifically Athenian identity—still less to inspire feelings of loyalty to or a willingness to die for a larger collective cause. We certainly cannot assume that the inhabitants of, for example, Aphidna, Brauron, and Anaphlystos would automatically have thought of themselves as members of a single extended political community, let alone as “Athenians.” As late as the classical era, we can still find evidence for strong feelings of cultural particularism in different parts of Attica, even some lingering traces of ethnic distinctions within the population as a whole. This evidence has been discussed in a stimulating essay by Connor (1994).8 His conclusion (41) bears repeating.

Being an Athenian was not the automatic result of being born into a society in which all of the members shared the same genetic and cultural inheritances. Civic identity could not be taken for granted; it had to be constructed and reconstructed in each generation by shared myths, by participation in cults, festivals and ceremonies, and by elaborate techniques of “mixing.”

In sum, the incorporation of this diverse, dispersed, and anomalously large population into a single cohesive political unit, more region-state than city-state, was hardly a foregone conclusion. The process would have required not only a conscious effort on the part of those in power in the city but also, one suspects, a state apparatus of unprecedented sophistication. What evidence do we have, then, that the early Athenian state was willing or able to extend its administrative reach to the physical limits of Attica?
THE REACH OF THE EARLY ATHENIAN STATE

Even if the lords of Mycenean Athens did establish and rule over a unified kingdom in Attica, there is little chance that this unity survived the transition to the Dark Age. With the collapse of the hierarchies of political authority and economic exploitation that would have sustained this kingdom, society in Attica, as elsewhere in Greece, appears to have become heavily decentralized and localized. The region is, however, believed to have experienced a marked increase in population and settlement during the first three centuries of the first millennium B.C. Working from contemporary archaeological evidence, a number of authorities would like to relate this growth to an “internal colonization” of Attica by the Athenian state, a policy that, it is claimed, brought about full political unification by ca. 700 B.C.9

In support of this case, some scholars would point to evidence for homogeneity of material culture in the region, seeing, for example, the tenth-century spread of Protogeometric pottery throughout Attica as an index of advancing Athenian hegemony. Other suggested epiphenomena of colonization include a sudden increase in the value of Attic grave deposits in the ninth century and the establishment of cults in Mycenean tombs at Eleusis, Thorikos, Menidi, and Aliki Glyphadas in the eighth century. Still other scholars would see the hand of an expansionist Athenian state behind the ninth-century opening of silver seams at Thorikos and the eighth-century foundation of sanctuaries at Eleusis, Brauron, and the Academy.10

There can be little doubt that rural Attica experienced considerable migration from elsewhere during the course of the Dark Age, and it is not unlikely that some of these immigrants came from Athens itself. But the colonization hypothesis cannot inspire great confidence as long as it requires us to overlook a number of troubling and currently unanswerable questions.

For example, how can we tell from the archaeological record whether, say, the sanctuaries at Eleusis or Brauron were initiatives of national or merely local significance? After all, these and other suggested symptoms of colonization, such as the tomb cults, could easily be explained without reference to any larger pan-Attic scenario. It is just as likely, if not more so, that they reflect the efforts of an emerging rural aristocracy to express their elite credentials within their own immediate localities. And even if the agents concerned were actually Athenians, how can we distinguish archaeologically between initiatives driven by the private interests of an influential family and those representing the public interest of an Athenian state? It is difficult enough to make this distinction in
the sixth century, where we have little evidence for genuinely “public” initiatives before 510 B.C., so how can we hope to make this distinction with any confidence in the eighth century?11

Besides, at a time when hard evidence even for settlement in Athens is difficult enough to come by, what would an Athenian “state” actually have looked like? Was it already the relatively mature, self-reproducing organism we first see clearly in the later seventh century? In other words, was Athens now governed by nine annually elected archons and a deliberative body known as the Areopagus Council, made up of ex-archons? Or was this state still no more than a preinstitutional ad hoc coalition of ruling elites whose “interests” were indistinguishable from those of the dominant family at any given time? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere between these two poles, though we can hardly know exactly where. Either way, there is no evidence whatsoever for the kind of binding and durable institutional ties between the center and the periphery that might allow us to speak meaningfully of political “unification.” We should seriously doubt whether the state was yet capable of developing the political mechanisms necessary to overcome the various impediments discussed above and sustain stable, lasting control over an area the size of Attica.12

In sum, the colonization hypothesis rests on a whole series of questionable assumptions about the larger sociopolitical environment in Dark Age Attica. The hypothesis would gain considerable weight if we had evidence from the seventh or early sixth century indicating that a unified Attica was already a firmly established political reality. But this is hardly the case.

As we enter the archaic period, the likelihood of unification actually seems to recede. So marked is the decline in settlements, cemeteries, and sanctuary activity in seventh-century Athens and Attica that some now seriously doubt whether any kind of developed state apparatus could have existed in Athens at this time, let alone one capable of governing an entire region.13 I am inclined to agree with two recent studies which suggest that a systematic political incorporation of Attica could not have been attempted much before the later seventh century, a time when the first secure traces of state institutions in Athens begin to emerge from the shadows of prehistory.14 Before this point, as Manville (1990, 76) observes, the reach of the state in Attica was probably very limited and ill defined.

[T]here is no reason to believe that [the] state had yet established for itself clear territorial boundaries. No traces of these survive from very early times, and . . . one cannot assume that the recognised frontiers of a later age had existed from time immemorial.
Manville argues that the existence of such boundaries are first attested in a clause of Draco’s homicide legislation, conventionally dated to the late 620s. We find there not only a reference to “frontier markets” but also what seems to be our earliest evidence for the term “Athenian” (Ἀθηναῖος) as a recognized legal category. For Manville, this evidence marks the emergence of a new self-awareness among the Athenians—an awareness that they formed a community with legally enforceable social and territorial limits. This judgment may well be correct. But unfortunately for our purposes, the clause does not state explicitly where these territorial limits actually lay at this time, and we still cannot assume they yet encompassed the entire peninsula of Attica.

We confront a similar problem with the evidence from the Solonian era. As Manville (1990, esp. 124–56) has well shown, this period almost certainly saw further attempts to clarify the nature and composition of the Athenian political community, allowing us perhaps for the first time to speak of a formally defined concept of “citizenship.” But we know all too little about enrollment procedures at this time, and the consensus view that this citizen body already included individuals from all over Attica is no more than an assumption, for which there is no conclusive support either in Solon’s poems or in ancient accounts of his various laws and reforms. We also cannot find there any evidence for new institutions or administrative mechanisms that were obviously designed to extend the reach of the Athenian state in the peninsula. It might be claimed, by analogy with the later Council of 500, that Solon’s Council of 400 was a “national” institution in this sense, drawing delegates from all over Attica to prepare the agenda for the citizen Assembly. But we know far too little about this body to make any such claim, and even its very existence is a matter of some reasonable doubt, as we will see in chapter 2.

I am not suggesting that Attic localities possessed their own developed forms of self-government. There was by now probably a kind of de facto Athenian hegemony in the region, leaving no room for any rival state to emerge. Such species of authority as did exist in the towns and villages would have remained prepolitical in the strictest sense. I also am not suggesting that relations between the center and the periphery were in any sense hostile. Contact between the two was presumably regular and frequent, and wealthy Athenians may well have possessed landholdings in the countryside. But peaceful—even productive—coexistence between urban and rural areas is one thing; complete institutional fusion of the two into a single political entity, especially one of such wholly anomalous size, is quite another. There is no good reason to suppose that areas that lay much beyond the plain of Athens were fully incorporated into the Athenian polis by the early sixth century.
The very earliest evidence we have for initiatives designed to establish formal institutional links between the center and the periphery comes from the period when Athens was under the stewardship of Peisistratus (ca. 546/5–528/7) and his sons Hippias and Hipparchus (ca. 528/7–511/0). Even these initiatives appear somewhat unsystematic and limited in ambition, illustrating the sheer practical difficulty of extending the reach of the state at this time.

From AP (16.5), we learn that Peisistratus himself used to go “into the country” [eis tén kho-ran] to resolve legal disputes in person and that he sent hand-picked magistrates to serve as “jurors among the villages” [kata dèmous . . . dikastas]. Then, in the last quarter of the sixth century, sometime between the late 520s and his assassination in 514, Hipparchus set up along the roads of Attica a series of milestones in the form of herms. Each one of these “Hipparchan herms” (Hipparkheioi Hermai) was intended to mark the halfway point between towns and villages in the periphery and the Altar of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora, a monument recently erected by Peisistratus the younger to serve as the new symbolic center of the city. The one extant herm, found near modern Koropi, marks the midpoint between Athens and the village of Kephale in southern Attica, implying that the new milestones covered the region fairly comprehensively.20

It is also quite widely suggested that the Peisistratids used national cults and festivals—notably the Great Panathenaia, the City Dionysia, the Brauronia, and the Eleusinian Mysteries—to establish ritual or symbolic links between the city and surrounding areas. While, as we shall see in the chapters to come, the majority of the proposed ceremonial developments should probably be dated to the later sixth or early fifth centuries, a more modest Peisistratid Religions-politik along these lines is certainly possible.21

Many interpret these various political and cultural initiatives as attempts to reinforce a preexisting state of unity within Attica, though few scholars have asked why there was any need for such reinforcement at this particular time. In view of the absence of any concrete evidence from earlier periods for the creation of enduring institutional links between the center and the periphery, it is certainly worth considering the possibility that these were in fact among the very first tentative steps taken in this direction. Since all of our sources maintain that Peisistratus worked within the established framework of Athenian government, we can only presume that he devised such institutions as the “jurors among the villages” because no such outreach mechanisms existed from earlier times. As things stand, we have no way of knowing how successful the
Peisistratids were in furthering the de jure unification of Attica by these means, but it seems fair to conclude that their efforts represent a formative, rather than an advanced, stage in the process.

Whatever the Peisistratids accomplished in this area, the kind of initiatives with which they are credited do not appear to have included any regular means for admitting individuals from the periphery into Athenian citizenship. Any unification that occurred would have been imposed from above, without any corresponding expansion of the political community. Nor is there any serious likelihood that this or any earlier era saw a significant growth in what we might call a “civic consciousness,” or a shared Athenian identity, among people in all parts of Attica.

To begin with, the Peisistratids conspicuously refrained from constructing a distinctively Athenian identity for themselves, let alone for others. In claiming a prestigious descent from the Neleids, the royal family of Pylos, they were comfortable presenting themselves as non-Athenians, and they seem to have shown a marked preference for symbolic association with the Panhellenic Heracles over the local hero Theseus. More importantly, it is expecting far too much of the Peisistratids to imagine that they would ever have pursued the long-term interests of the Athenian state at the expense of their own immediate private interests and their own highly personalized form of authority. Since their interests evidently did not include developing a citizen army or advancing the cause of popular government, they would have had no incentive whatsoever to build a new style of thought around such ideals as political equality, popular sovereignty, and self-determination, the hallmarks of Athenian identity in the classical era.22

New festivals, symbols, and the like may have stirred some rather vague and limited collective imaginings among the people of Athens and Attica during the Peisistratid period. But without any distinctively Athenian coloring or meaningful political content, these imaginings can hardly have amounted to any kind of shared “civic consciousness.” The process of constructing a shared form of political identity in Attica, one that would bind together the inhabitants of the entire region into an imagined community of “Athenians,” must have been still very far from completion.

The evidence discussed so far may not be decisive, but it should be sufficient to cast some doubt on the widely held view that the synoecism of Attica was accomplished long before the classical period. At most, we see only very modest and piecemeal efforts in this direction during the Peisistratid era. That said, the case depends heavily on arguments from silence and on interpretations of texts and materials that could conceivably be read otherwise. But it would obviously
gain considerable strength if we had some more positive evidence from the years
down to 510 that parts of Attica still lay beyond the effective reach of the Athenian
polis. We will now look at three items or bodies of evidence—all relating to
the sixth century—that may well support this conclusion.

THE LIMITS OF POLITICAL UNION:
EVIDENCE FROM THE SIXTH CENTURY

The first and most straightforward of these items is a brief inscription on a grave
monument set up some thirty or forty years after Solon’s reforms, on the road
between Athens and Acharnae. In standard fashion, the epitaph enjoins the
passerby to mourn the deceased—in this case, one Tettikhos. What may be re-
vealing here is the choice of language used for the appeal, since it imagines the
wayfarer to be either “a man of the city” [astos] or “an outsider” [xenos]. As
Frost (1994, 51) points out the location of the tomb on a local road out of Athens
rather than on a major thoroughfare out of the region as a whole indicates that
the category xenos here must include inhabitants of rural Attica as well as “for-
eigners” from outside the peninsula. If so, the fact that mid-sixth-century Athe-
nians still thought of their rural neighbors as “outsiders” hardly suggests that
the latter were yet considered full members of the citizen community.

Signs of a striking discrepancy in funerary behavior between the center
and the periphery during the sixth century may also re
×
fect contemporary po-
litical relations between the two areas. Of the various kinds of burial marker
used in Athens and Attica, grave stelai by far were the most common at all
times during this century in all parts of the peninsula. Not surprisingly,
use of the expensive kouros and kore statues in this function was consider-
ably less frequent. But what is perhaps surprising is the very uneven distri-
bution of these statues between city and rural cemeteries over the course of
the century.

In Athens itself, we have good evidence for the use of kouroi in funerary
contexts at the end of the seventh century and in the early years of the sixth
century. But these burial markers seem to disappear abruptly from city ceme-
teries during ca. 590–530 B.C. Although numerous grave stelai from this same
period have been recovered from the Kerameikos area alone, not a single cer-
tain funerary kouros or kore from these years has been found in any part of
Athens. And of the even more numerous grave monument bases from the
period that were discovered in the city, only two look likely to have supported
a kouros or kore, and both of these date toward the very end of the time frame
concerned. In ca. 530, the sequence appears to have been restored, and we
have evidence for three further funerary kouroi from the last quarter of the sixth century.27

When we look at the evidence from the rest of Attica for the same period, the contrast is striking (fig. 3). The sequence again begins ca. 600 B.C. or shortly thereafter, but then proceeds seamlessly through the course of the sixth century, without any observable discontinuity. For ca. 590–530 alone, we have remains of as many as ten funerary kouroi and korai, including some of the finest examples of both types, such as the so-called Phrasikleia and the kouros from Anavysos (ancient Anaphlystos; see fig. 4). Perhaps equally unexpected, all of these monuments are clustered in the southern portion of the peninsula, below an imaginary line we might draw from Vourva on the east coast to Phoinikia on the west coast.28

Drawing conclusions on the basis of this relatively slender evidence is somewhat hazardous, but the pattern here seems sufficiently pronounced to make the attempt worthwhile. What, then, are we to make of this apparent sixty-year discrepancy in mortuary behavior between the center and the periphery?

Part of the difference may of course be a result of preservation bias, given the multiple disruptions experienced by city cemeteries, especially those of the Kerameikos, in later years. That said, the same period sees no visible decrease in the use of other kinds of marker in these locations, and the absence of bases for kouroi and korai cannot be so easily explained away when those for so many other monuments have survived.

Other possible explanations are even less compelling. The likelihood that urban tastes in burial markers underwent some kind of temporary shift while those of the countryside remained stable seems distinctly remote. Nor can we simply put the discrepancy down to a wealth differential between the two areas. It is generally and plausibly believed that the greater part of the Attic elite would have established residency in Athens by the sixth century, and the unprecedented number of buildings and other monuments set up on the Acropolis during ca. 575–550 testifies eloquently to the quantity of disposable wealth possessed by this group at this time. We might therefore reasonably have expected to see an equivalent extravagance in contemporary Athenian cemeteries, sufficient to offset at least partly the vicissitudes of preservation. And we do in fact see increasingly elaborate stelai and other burial markers set up in the Kerameikos during the period concerned (see Morris 1987, 132), which only makes the absence of kouroi and korai from this location and their conspicuous presence in the poorer periphery all the more surprising.

On the other hand, it may be possible that some of the statues in rural cemeteries were set up by wealthy Athenians returning to their ancestral bur-
ial grounds. But this still would not account for their absence from the city or their concentration in only one area of Attica. Nor can family piety adequately explain why competitive elites should have preferred a relatively remote location like Anaphylstos over, say the Kerameikos for the dedication of such lavish and ostentatious items. This would seem to defeat much of the purpose of a kouros.29

Since the dictates of elite competitive display and such variables as taste and wealth would seem to favor, rather than discourage, the presence of kouroi and korai in the cemeteries of sixth-century Athens, we should face the possibility that their disappearance from these locations for a period of some sixty years was probably the result not of choice but of force. Laws curbing funerary extravagance were a recurring feature of Greek social life, and it is not hard to see how the expensive and rather provocative practice of adorning human tombs with an image like the kouros, conventionally used as a dedication to divinity, would have been a ready target for such legislation.

By happy coincidence, we do have some evidence that various items of sumptuary legislation were passed in Athens in the early sixth century, and they apparently included provisions about grave monuments. The laws are associated with Solon and thus, by most estimates, should belong to the 590s, precisely the time of the break in the kouros/kore sequence in Athenian cemeteries. The ban seems, therefore, to have been imposed relatively soon after the statue type was first used in this context and to have remained in place down until roughly the time of the death of Peisistratus in 528/7.30

If this reconstruction is broadly correct, it would also shed new light on political relations between Athens and Attica at this time. The continuing use of kouroi and korai in the cemeteries of a sizable portion of rural Attica throughout the period concerned would mean that the inhabitants of at least some part of the periphery were still not fully subject to Athenian laws. It would clearly strain credibility to try to gauge the precise extent of the state’s reach on the basis of this evidence alone. But it does seem reasonable to conclude that this reach was still limited even as late as ca. 530 B.C. This general conclusion can only be further encouraged by the fact that all the cemeteries in question were located in the south of the peninsula, the area of Attica that lay furthest away from the city itself.

Before moving on, one final question about this material should be raised: what exactly were a significant number of extremely wealthy families doing in such relatively remote locations in southern Attica at this time? Some were perhaps members of a residual rural aristocracy, while others may have been residents of Athens who possessed ancestral burial grounds lying conveniently be-
yond the reach of Athenian law and who were still willing to lavish expense on a tomb of a dead relative that would be seen by so few. But at least one of the families concerned was probably in the area for an altogether different reason, a reason that sheds further light on sixth-century relations between the center and the periphery.

The family in question are the illustrious Alcmeonids, the family of Cleisthenes the reformer. Close study of evidence for their movements and activities over the period ca. 600–525 gives us further cause to believe that parts of Attica still lay beyond the effective reach of the Athenian state at this time. Since I have already presented the relevant evidence and arguments in some detail elsewhere, I will merely summarize the case here.

During the fifth and fourth centuries, the primary residence of the main branch of the Alcmeonid family was located in Alopeke, just to the south of Athens. They were registered here as demesmen, and there is no suggestion, in any source, that they lived elsewhere as a group at any time during this period. And given their probable possession of extensive property holdings in this same area, the enrollment of cadet branches of the family in the nearby demes of Agryle and Xypete, their apparent Eupatrid status, and their long involvement in Athenian political life, which dated back at least to the third quarter of the seventh century, there is every chance that by ca. 600 B.C., the Alcmeonids’ principal homestead in Attica was firmly established in the belt of agricultural land lying to the immediate south of the city.

However, another body of evidence suggests that the family also had close connections with an area of the Attic coast far to the south of Athens, centered on the towns of Anaphlystos and Sounion. In accounts of the aristocratic infighting that gripped Athens in the middle decades of the sixth century, Megacles II, son of Alcmeon I, appears as the leader of a “party” not from the city but from the paralia (“coast”), a term believed to refer primarily to the littoral and hinterland of southern Attica. In addition, quite a wide range of monuments from this locality have been associated with the family, including the unprecedented colossal kouroi from ca. 600 that were dedicated in Poseidon’s sanctuary at Sounion and three of the aforementioned funerary kouroi from the neighborhood of Anavyssos—one of which resembles the Sounion examples in style and date, while the other two are probably from the later 540s or 530s.

The likely base of one of these later statues, the “Anavyssos kouros” (fig. 3), has also been found in the same vicinity, with an epitaph bidding the passerby to mourn the dead Kroisos, who was apparently killed “in the front ranks” [eni promakhois]. Because of the opulence of this burial marker and the epitaph’s probable allusion in the name of the deceased to a historical relationship with
the Lydian royal house, it is widely assumed to be an Alcmeonid monument. Other items possibly linking the family with this same area include the so-called stele of Megacles and a base for a stele dedicated by one Peisianax, a rare name that appears in later Alcmeonid generations. Both of these monuments date to the 530s and appear to have been carved by the same mason. Finally, an ostrakon from the 480s bearing the name Megakles Anaphlystios is open to a number of interpretations, but all point to some kind of connection between the Alcmeonids and the Anaphlystos area in the later sixth century.34

How, then, do we reconcile two bodies of evidence that appear to suggest that the Alcmeonids had homelands in two quite separate parts of Attica? Since none of the evidence for links with the south coast relates to a time later than the sixth century, some have supposed that the family must only have moved to the Alopeke area shortly before the first deme registrations in 508/7, perhaps for political reasons.35 But while it is possible that they may have hailed originally from the Anaphlystos area, the evident length and strength of the family’s associations with Athens and the area to its immediate south before the late sixth century would seem to rule out so late a move to the city. At the same time, the presence of funerary items among the evidence from the Anaphlystos area strongly suggests that the family’s domicile there was not merely a country estate but their primary residence in Attica, at least for much of the sixth century. The only reasonable way to accommodate all of this evidence is to conclude that the Alcmeonids for some reason temporarily shifted their base of operations from the plain of Athens to the south coast at least once between ca. 600 and ca. 530, ultimately moving it back again in time to register in city demes in 508/7. But what might have prompted such drastic relocations?

The answer is surely exile, which the family is known to have experienced on more than one occasion in the sixth century. And this solution is born out by the dates of the evidence from the south coast, which neatly coincide with two periods when the Alcmeonids were probably banished from Athens. The first of these periods of exile began in ca. 600 B.C., when the family was expelled “in perpetuity” for its role in the massacre of the Cylonian conspirators some thirty years earlier.36 As far as we can tell, it lasted until ca. 560, when Lycurgus, head of the Boutad family and leader of the “party” from the “plain” (pedion) of Athens, allowed the Alcmeonids to return to the city in exchange for their help in deposing Peisistratus, who had just mounted his first coup. If we suppose that this exile of roughly forty years was served not outside Attica but in the far south of the peninsula, this would put us in a good position to explain not only the presence in that area of the extravagant Sounion dedications and the cognate kouros from the cemetery at Anavyssos
but also why later authors saw the urbane Megacles II as leader of a “party” from the “coast” at the time of Peisistratus’s first bid for power.37

The second exile came some fifteen years later, after the Alcmeonids’ defeat by Peisistratus at Pallene in ca. 546/5. Since it is unlikely that the family would have returned to the city before Peisistratus’s death in 528/7 yet clear that they had done so by 525/4, when Cleisthenes assumed the archonship, this second banishment probably lasted for a little under twenty years. Again, all of the later remains from the Anavyssos area have been independently dated to precisely the same twenty-year period, suggesting that this was for a second time the family’s base of operations during a time of exile. If so, we also have a particularly satisfactory aetiology for the Kroisos grave monument. Presumably, he was killed “in the front ranks” at Pallene, but his family’s defeat in the battle and their subsequent departure from Athens meant that he could not be buried until their return to the residence-in-exile at Anaphylustos.38

On the basis of these striking correspondences, it can be stated with some confidence that the Alcmeonids’ historical associations with the south coast of Attica in the sixth century derived directly from terms of exile spent in that location during the periods ca. 600–560 and ca. 546–526 B.C.39 For the purposes of our larger inquiry, this finding is obviously significant. It is universally assumed by ancients and moderns alike that exiles from Athens at all times during the historical period were required to leave Attica altogether. But this appears not to have been the case. Even as late as the 530s and 520s, they were free to set up residence in marginal areas of the peninsula, where they lived, it seems, undisturbed by the state or its laws. We can therefore hardly avoid concluding that these areas were still considered to lie outside the Athenian polis proper at this time.40

The Alcmeonids were not the only family to experience exile during the course of the sixth century. If the preceding reconstruction of their movements is along the right lines, we might expect to find some evidence that other prominent families also spent time as exiles in the Attic periphery, evidence that would confirm the overall argument while also perhaps giving us a general idea of the limits of the state’s reach in Attica at this time. There are in fact a surprising number of distinguished families who have known links with peripheral locations, and the concentration of expensive funerary kouroi and korai in the far south of Attica in the sixth century suggests that the Alcmeonids may not have been the only exiles in the margins during the period.41

Two other plausible candidates are the Gephyraioi—the family of the Tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton—and the branch of the Lycomidai to which Themistocles belonged. Both are known to have controlled time-hon-
ored cults in the plain of Athens, suggesting that the two families enjoyed deep roots in that area. Yet, for some reason, both were registered as demesmen in distinctly marginal locations far from the city and with which neither is known to have had any other kind of significant association—the Gephyraioi at Aphidna, near the border with Oropia; Themistocles’ family deep in the south of the peninsula, at Phrearrhioi. Since the Gephyraioi certainly went into exile under the Peisistratids and since Themistocles’ Lycomidai conceivably suffered the same fate, we might infer that they registered in these areas only because they had moved there as exiles and had not yet had time to reestablish themselves in the city before deme enrollments began in 508/7.42

The Alcmeonids aside, perhaps the clearest illustration of exile within Attica is provided by the Peisistratids themselves. Peisistratus has often been seen as an outsider in sixth-century Athenian politics, a kind of provincial warlord who took advantage of turbulence among more established families to raise his own family to power. Yet not one of our main sources for the family’s activities—Herodotus, Thucydides, and AP—characterizes the Peisistratids in these terms. And everything we hear about them before Peisistratus’s first coup in 561/0 suggests that they were in fact a well-connected Eupatrid family of considerable accomplishment and, as prominent actors in the Athenian political scene, must have long made their base in the city. Peisistratus himself had earlier been elected polemarch and appears to have led some kind of military venture against Megara. An ancestor of the same name, perhaps his great-great-grandfather, is said to have served as archon more than a hundred years earlier, in 669/8 B.C. The tyrant was almost certainly a relative of the illustrious Solon, and more than one source reports the tradition that the two were also lovers. Meanwhile, on the wider stage, the Peisistratids seem to have been established members of that glittering Panhellenic set that pursued interstate marriages and equestrian competition.43

If the Peisistratids were very clearly not provincial arrivistes in the mid-sixth century, why have moderns so often portrayed them in these terms? The main reason seems to be their association with the area of the deme Philaidai—around Brauron, on the east coast of Attica—and the assumption that this, rather than Athens, was the site of their primary residence in the region. Yet there is no explicit evidence for any ancestral property at Brauron, and not one of our three main sources for the Peisistratids ever refers to a permanent residence outside Athens itself. Granted, we have the testimony of two sources (one minor and one late) where we find the vague claim that the family were simply “from Philaidai.”44 But as we shall see shortly, the value of these reports may be minimal.
The only other evidence we have for an association with the Brauron area is found in *AP* (13.3–5) and the text of Herodotus (1.59), where it is recorded that Peisistratus was the leader of a “party” from the “hill country” during the trilateral stasis with Megacles and Lycurgus that apparently marked the years before his final rise to power in 546/5. If, as most believe, the term used for “hill country” in *AP*, *diakria*, refers to the northeastern portion of Attica, extending south along the coast possibly as far as Brauron, there may be some grounds for thinking that the Peisistratids were provincial outsiders. But even this testimony is problematic.45

To begin with, the stasis of the second quarter of the sixth century was probably not as our sources describe it. As Hopper (1961, esp. 194–208) has demonstrated, the existence at this time of three regional “parties” of the plain, coast, and hills, each with its own distinctive political and economic agenda, is improbable. In any case, neither Herodotus nor the author of *AP* expressly states that Megacles and Peisistratus were actually “from” their respective party localities or even resident there at the time; the latter (*AP* 13.5) is in fact careful to suggest that they merely “farmed” there. As we have just seen, Megacles’ presence in the *paralia* in 561/0 was most likely the result of exile. Though he doubtless had supporters in that area, there is no reason to believe that his “party” from the coast was anything more than his own extended family, which he wished to have restored to Athens.

Meanwhile, the “party” of Peisistratus is an even more nebulous entity, playing no visible role in any of his attempts to take power in Athens. Aside from a reference to the landing at Marathon just before his victory at Pallene in 546/5 (Hdt. 1.62.1), there is no specific mention of the *diakria* or its inhabitants in our accounts of the three coups. In the case of the first, Peisistratus is clearly already in Athens, and since all the action takes place in and around the city itself, it seems reasonable to conclude that he was living there at the time. The second coup (such as it was), in 556/5, sees him recalled by Megacles from an unspecified place of exile, and he appears to have returned alone. As for the third coup, Herodotus (1.62) tells us vaguely about “partisans from the city” [*ek tou asteos stasiōtai*] and “others from the villages” [*alloi ek tôn dēmôn*] who joined Peisistratus at Marathon before the march on Athens. But the main body of his force seems to have been made up of non-Athenians (see also *AP* 15.2).46

There is, then, no good reason to doubt that Peisistratus and his family were established residents of the city by the middle of the sixth century. But if he was not operating from the *diakria* during these years and if no groups or individuals from the area seem to have supported his political activities, how did the tradition of the “party” of the “hills” arise?
One of the more significant details omitted by our sources for this sequence of events is the location of Peisistratus’s first period of exile, from ca. 560 to ca. 556. However, we do have one tantalizing hint about this location. As Sealey (1960a, 163–64) has pointed out, Herodotus’s (1.61.2) description of Peisistratus’s second departure into exile emphasizes that on this occasion he “left the country [i.e., Attica] altogether” [apallaseto ek tèskhôrês to parapán], which indicates that his first exile was spent somewhere on Attic soil. The ease with which he was later recalled by Megacles adds weight to this supposition. Since this is the only point in the narrative of Peisistratus’s rise to power when he cannot be localized either in Athens or outside the peninsula as a whole, I propose that the site of his residence-in-exile was in the diakria, perhaps in the area of Brauron. Whether he was also based there during the second exile must remain an open question—though, as the Alcmeonid case attests, wide involvement in affairs abroad did not necessarily preclude a residence in the Attic periphery at this time. Either way, we have a compelling explanation for Peisistratus’s otherwise murky association with northeast Attica, which seems to derive not from long-term residence but, like the association of the Alcmeonids with the south coast, from experience of temporary exile in the area.

If we accept this explanation, we can also safely dismiss the tradition of a tripartite regional stasis in the middle decades of the sixth century. By the time that Herodotus came to record our earliest version of the tradition, it was widely believed that Attica had always been unified and thus that exile from Athens had always entailed expulsion from the entire peninsula. Though it was clearly remembered that Megacles and Peisistratus had links with different areas of the periphery, the nature of these links were no longer understood. Hence, to explain the incongruous presence of such urbane individuals in the eastern and southern margins of Attica, surviving memories of a genuine interfamily rivalry between Boutads, Alcmeonids, and Peisistratids were inflated to suggest a larger regionwide struggle. The result was an appropriately grand, mostly fictitious narrative of an elemental conflict between the men of the plain, the coast, and the hills.

As for the tradition—first found in the Platonic Hipparchus (228b)—that the Peisistratids were “from Philaidai,” it may mean no more than that the family was thought to have come from there at some point in the distant past before moving to Athens, much as the Gephyraioi were said to be originally “from” Boeotia or Eretria (Hdt. 1.57). But another explanation is also possible.

I have argued that the primary residence of the Peisistratids in Attica during the sixth century, times of exile aside, must have been in Athens itself, not in the diakria. Pinpointing their location within the city is far from easy. But
it is striking that three separate individuals associated with one particular part of Athens, the Kollytos neighborhood, appear at important points in later records of Peisistratid family history.

First, there is Hipparchus, son of Charmus. Archon in 496/5 and the first person known to have been ostracized from Attica (in 488/7), Hipparchus was the most prominent representative of the extended Peisistratid clan left in the city after the expulsions of 510. As a grandson of Hippias—and perhaps even a direct descendant of Hippocrates (the father of Peisistratus), through a cadet branch of the family—he is the closest relative who is known to have enrolled in a deme. His deme was Kollytos. Second, we have the woman at the center of the well-known Phye ceremony, the preamble to Peisistratus’s second coup. Herodotus (1.60.4) claims that she was from the deme Paiania, while AP (14.4) records a rival tradition that traced her origins to Kollytos. It is hard to fathom why this seemingly innocuous detail should have become a matter of dispute, but a known Peisistratid association with Kollytos would conveniently explain why the variant tradition took the form it did.

Finally, there is the supporter of Peisistratus who notoriously proposed that the future tyrant should be awarded a bodyguard in the Assembly, thus precipitating the first coup in 561/0. Two variants of his name have come down to us, Aristion (AP 14.1) and Ariston (Plut. Sol. 30.3). Given the ignominy this act would have brought his descendants, it is not hard to imagine how different versions of the name might have arisen. I suggest that the more likely original version in the tradition was Ariston, a name linked with the family of Plato (it was held, in fact, by Plato’s father), who was definitely related to the Peisistratids and whose members also registered as demesmen at Kollytos. We might infer, then, that the author of AP either reproduced or directly invented the less embarrassing variant Aristion out of deference to the family of Aristotle’s teacher.

As speculative as this reasoning may be, the links of all three of these Peisistratid associates with the Kollytos neighborhood make for a particularly suggestive coincidence. In the absence of any compelling alternatives, I tentatively propose that this was the location of the family’s residence in Athens during the sixth century. And it may be an equally suggestive coincidence that the earliest work known to assert expressly that the Peisistratids were “from Philaidai” is associated with Plato, himself a relative registered at Kollytos. Whether the claim is based on knowledge of an early ancestral connection with the Brauron area or is merely a hopeful inference from Peisistratus’s well-known, though actually very tenuous, links with eastern Attica during the stasis of the mid–sixth century, it would clearly have helped to distance Plato’s family from their troubling personal association with the tyrants of old.
Whatever the case, we have good reason to believe that Peisistratus himself
spent at least one period of exile, from ca. 561/0 to 556/5, at a location in the
Attic periphery, presumably somewhere in the diakria, possibly at Brauron. If
so, we can add this case to the growing body of testimony from the second and
third quarters of the sixth century that suggests that large sections of rural At-
tica still lay effectively outside the polis proper at this time. While we cannot
hope to plot the territorial limits of the polis with any precision, the concen-
tration of funerary kouroi and korai in southern Attica and the presence of ex-
iles in places like Anaphlystos, Aphidna, and perhaps Brauron seem to indicate
that these limits did not lie a great distance beyond the plain of Athens and the
natural boundary formed by Mounts Aigaleios, Pentelikon, and Hymettos.51

Putting all this together, we have no evidence that any conscious attempt
was made before the Peisistratid period to create institutions linking the cen-
ter and the periphery of Attica, and we do have various items of testimony that
suggest that substantial parts of the Attic periphery lay beyond the de jure reach
of the Athenian state down to the last quarter of the sixth century. It is likely
that the tyrants made some effort to extend this reach. But their initiatives seem
limited, unsystematic, and concerned more with promoting the family’s own
highly personalized form of authority in the region than with building any
durable, meaningful form of citizen community. Unless the tyrants pursued
other, similar initiatives of which we are currently unaware, it seems reason-
able to conclude that in 511/0 B.C., when they were finally forced out of Athens,
the unification process was still some way from completion. It would not re-
main so for long.

THE REFORMS OF CLEISTHENES

In the end, it took only a brief siege of their Acropolis stronghold by a com-
bined force of Spartans and Athenians to depose the Peisistratids and expel
them from the city.52 Though the main branch of this family would long oc-
cupy a unique place in the bestiary of Athenian public memory, they would
never again play a role in the running of the city they had dominated for the
best part of three and a half decades. While our two principal sources for events
in Athens in the late sixth century, Herodotus and AP, are hardly extensive, they
are sufficiently detailed to allow us to outline the developments that immedi-
ately followed.

With Hippias and his family departed for Sigeion on the banks of the Sca-
mander, a power vacuum inevitably emerged. De facto leadership of the state
was contested by two individuals of noble birth, Isagoras, son of Teisandros,
and Cleisthenes the Alcmeonid, a man known to have held the archonship in 525/4 B.C. According to our sources, Isagoras won significant majority support among the elite, which would explain his election to the archonship for 508/7 B.C. Undaunted, Cleisthenes then took the extraordinary step of appealing beyond this constituency to ordinary Athenians, in the hope of securing mass support. In exchange for their favor, he proposed a radical reorganization of political life in Athens and Attica that seems to have met with wide approval.

The proposal bypassed the traditional legislative channels and was ratified, it appears, by popular acclaim in the citizen Assembly; implementation of the reforms duly began. Outmaneuvered in this surprising fashion, Isagoras appealed in desperation to his friend King Cleomenes, hoping to use Spartan force to strangle the new order at birth. Cleomenes immediately dispatched an order demanding the expulsion of Cleisthenes and his family from the city on the pretext of the Cylonian “curse,” before materializing there himself with a small armed force to intimidate the Alcmeonid’s supporters into following suit.

The king then turned his attentions to political institutions, ordering the dissolution of the Council of 300, the heart of the new order, apparently intending to install an oligarchic regime of three hundred under Isagoras in its stead. Here, however, he met with unexpected resistance from the five hundred councillors, prompting him to occupy the Acropolis. This move succeeded only in provoking even more unexpected hostility, precipitating what seems to have been a largely spontaneous two-day assault on the citadel by the population at large. Overmatched, Cleomenes and his cohorts were escorted from the city under a truce, while Isagoras’s coconspirators were imprisoned and ultimately executed. What would prove to be the last coup in Athens for nearly a century was thus brought to a violent, if decisive, conclusion. Cleisthenes and his fellow exiles were recalled, and in the absence of any further opposition, the transformation of the Athenian state could safely continue. In the following year, Cleisthenes’ kinsman Alcmeon was elected archon, further confirming that the reformer and his associates were the dominant political force in the polis.

Reconstructing the contents of this transformation from the combined testimony of Herodotus, *AP*, and other items of circumstantial evidence, we see a wide range of innovations in political life. Those that pertained primarily to the operations of central government in Athens will be examined shortly in chapter 2. But of more immediate interest is the introduction of a series of institutions that were expressly designed to link Athens with settlements all over Attica (fig. 5). The point of departure here was probably the creation of what Ostwald has termed “a new political substratum” of demes (*démoi*). These were
mostly small settlements and neighborhoods throughout Attica, which were specially designated to serve as political units on the local level. Each adult male with a native-born father was to enroll in his local deme as an Athenian citizen, and the demes were henceforth assigned the primary responsibility for controlling admissions to the citizen body and for recording enrollments in official registers, known as lexiarkhika grammateia. Membership in one of these new units, the basic prerequisite for citizenship, was to be hereditary, and each demesman was to use a “demotic” (a moniker derived from the name of one’s deme) as part of his own public identity. The demes were also to enjoy a limited degree of self-government, each with its own assembly, cults, and demarch and the right to contribute a fixed quota of delegates to a new national council.

As satellites of the central government in Athens, the demes thus collectively formed a new grassroots level of public administration, offering a range of opportunities for individuals in all parts of the peninsula to participate directly in the political life of the polis. At the same time, ongoing interaction between elite and nonelite as citizen-equals in these miniature corporations must have helped to neutralize the political dimension of the various forms of personal dependency that had long defined the relationship between the two groups in the localities of Attica.

The institutional space between local and central government was then bridged in the first instance by creating thirty intermediate political units, known as trittyes, each comprised of a number of demes, from one to as many as nine. To give these new associations some immediate substance, they too, like the demes, were assigned their own property and cults.

The trittyes were then themselves used as components in the creation of larger, more complex political units. Three trittyes—one each from the city, the coast, and the hinterland of Attica—were combined by lot (see AP 21.4) to form ten new phylai, or “tribes.” For the tribes to become anything more than highly synthetic institutional mechanisms, they had to be given some cultural substance, and they were accordingly endowed with features—such as eponymous heroes, cults, and assembly places—reminiscent of the hereditary and pseudohereditary socioreligious associations that had long been a feature of the Attic landscape. Not the least important of these older groups were four shadowy entities known as the Ionian tribes, which, according to the sources, Cleisthenes new phylai were expressly designed to replace.

The immediate purpose of the new tribes was twofold. First, each of the phylai was to supply fifty delegates on an annual basis to a national council (boule) in Athens that was to form the institutional heart of the new order. This
so-called Council of 500 was apparently designed to replace an earlier Solonian Council of 400, and its functions were probably limited in its first phase to probouleusis, that is, to setting the agenda of motions to be submitted for deliberation in the popular Assembly (ekklesia). Each tribal delegation of fifty was made up of contingents supplied by the constituent demes according to their relative size within the tribe, and it was thus ensured that all localities in Attica were represented at this important stage of the political process. However, since it is likely that councillors were chosen by election rather than by lot before 487/6 B.C. and that eligibility was limited at least initially to members of the top three wealth classes, the new Council would in reality have been somewhat less than fully representative of the citizen body.59

Second, the ten tribes also formed the organizational basis for a national citizen army. First introduced in 508/7 or shortly after and remaining little changed down to the end of the classical period, the new system required each phyle to furnish one of ten annually elected generals (strategoi), along with detachments of infantry and cavalry. While participation again was limited, likewise excluding members of the lowest wealth class, the thetes, who were too poor to supply their own equipment, the new procedure for levying a citizen army may well have been the first such to be instituted in Athenian history.60

But why was the new system of demes, trittys, and tribes so remarkably complex? Both at the level of the trittys and at that of the tribe, we can see a degree of self-conscious manipulation that must be explained if we are to understand the larger rationale behind the reforms. We should look first at the trittys.

While the majority of these entities were simply aggregates of demes from the same general locality, modern research has revealed a number of striking anomalies where one or two demes were located some considerable distance away from the bulk of the demes in their trittys. To take a well-known instance, the deme Probalinthos was not assigned along with Marathon, Trikorynthos, and Oenoe—its fellow members of the Marathonian Tetrapolis—to the coastal trittys of the tribe Aiantis, nor even to the adjacent coastal trittys of Aegeis; rather, it was assigned to the trittys of Pandionis, which had its center at Myrrhinous, far to the south. Such “unnatural” groupings can only have been deliberate, and a variety of explanations for them have been proposed.61

Most would agree that there was some attempt here to neutralize the influence of the localist sentiment associated with cult organizations like the Tetrapolis on national institutions, especially the new Council. Similarly, the so-called Tetrakomoi—Piraeus, Phaleron, Thymaitada, and Xypete—were distributed among three different tribes, while Hekale and Pallene, which
served as significant cult centers in their respective parts of Attica, were both linked to trittyes far from their immediate localities. More problematic are attempts to relate this kind of “gerrymandering” directly to the Alcmeonids’ own partisan political interests. Clearly, it may have damaged the ability of those families who controlled the cults in question to draw political capital from their position. But until we find conclusive evidence that families hostile to the Alcmeonids were singled out for such treatment, it is probably better to see this institutional separation of elites from their traditional constituencies simply as part of a more general concern to limit the impact of local interests on the political process.

As for the suggestion, frequently made, that Cleisthenes sought to give his family members a privileged position in the new order by having them enroll in city demes that would give them a foothold in three different tribes—Erechtheis (Agryle), Cecropis (Xypete), and Antiochis (Alopeke)—the case again is far from watertight. In Alopeke, where the main branch of the Alcmeonids was enrolled, their fellow demesmen included a number of other prominent families whose consistent support and friendship could not necessarily be assumed, while both Xypete and Agryle were located some distance from the center of gravity in their respective trittyes. But in general, we know far too little about the other families registered in these various demes and trittyes to draw any firm conclusions, and we cannot even be sure that the distribution of Cleisthenes’ family among demes of three different tribes was not in fact a positive disadvantage, as is often presumed to have been the case for other families or local organizations supposedly split up in this fashion under the new system. At the same time, the assignment of the coastal trittys that included Anaphylstos to Antiochis may well have helped to reinforce Alcmeonid influence over that one particular tribe, though if the report that trittyes were assigned to tribes by lot (AP 21.4) is correct, any benefit here will have been the result of good fortune rather than self-interested contrivance.

In any case, as Raaflaub (1998a, 40) points out, the wide consent apparently enjoyed by Cleisthenes’ reforms should caution us against looking too hard for blatantly self-serving elements in their design. The inclusion of such elements cannot be discounted, and few would deny that some form of gerrymandering took place in the assignment of demes to trittyes. But to focus almost exclusively on a handful of anomalies (as some modern accounts do) and reduce the reforms as a whole to an elaborate exercise in partisan politics is to ignore the overall architecture of the new system. The trittyes, after all, were no more than an administrative convenience, devised only to bring
the new tribes into existence. Hence, the rationale behind the “unnatural” composition of some individual trittyes is essentially incidental or secondary to the larger rationale behind the unusual decision to create all ten tribes from three distinct units of population, one each from the city, the coast, and the hinterland.

Turning to consider this larger rationale, we should clearly ask first why the tribes were not drawn simply from ten different subregions of Attica. Ancient sources are of little help here; only two of them (AP 21.2–3; Arist. Pol. 1319b 19–27) offer any kind of explanation, and their suggestion that the purpose was merely to “mix up” [anameixai, anamisgesthai] the population of Attica raises more questions than it answers. Part of the explanation, as has long been recognized, surely relates to a need to ensure that all tribes contained a contingent from the city, where most politically experienced and influential families were concentrated. But why, then, were there three components in each tribe and not merely two, one rural and one urban?

Most observers are agreed on the larger purpose at work here. This has been variously expressed as an attempt “to transcend local barriers . . . and to develop a sentiment of union and friendship [throughout Attica]” (Hignett 1952, 141), to “restructure” the regional community and give citizens from all over the region a “political” or “civic presence” in Athenian public life (Meier 1990, 53–81), or simply to encourage “the unification of the state” (Rhodes 1981, 253–54). The view is perhaps best summarized by Ostwald (1988, 316).

Each tribe contained . . . a cross-section of the whole of Attica, since every region was represented in it. It embodied yet transcended the limits of locality, and will have helped each member of a tribal assembly to view Attica as a whole. What regional differences there were could thus be settled at tribal meetings, so that they would not surface on the state level and cause the constitutional structure to be riven apart by disparate local interests.

These explanations are surely along the right lines, but they all beg a further question: if Attica had long since been unified, as all seem to believe, why was there still a need in the last decade of the sixth century to “transcend local barriers,” to neutralize “disparate local interests,” to nurture sentiments of “union and friendship,” to “restructure” the extended citizen community, and to encourage “the unification of the state”? If all of these tasks were still to be completed, how meaningful is it to speak of a united Attica before this point? Even as late as 508/7, it seems, the work of synoecism was far from over.
In view of the evidence presented in this chapter, it makes much better sense to see Cleisthenes’ reforms not as a kind of reinforcement of a preexisting state of unity but as the decisive step in the process of unification itself. As far as we can tell, this was the first systematic attempt to establish binding institutional links between the center and the periphery and incorporate all of Attica formally within the Athenian polis. The result was less the restructuring of an old political community than the creation of a new one.

Through the new demes, even the most far-flung inhabitants had immediate access to Athenian citizenship and were now, for the first time, routinely enrolled as full members of the polis community. At the same time, the new tribes provided unprecedented, institutionally secure opportunities for all eligible males to participate directly in the political and military life of the city. So, too, the tripartite composition of the phylai not only ensured that no tribe fell prey to the interests of a single locality or subregion but also encouraged all citizens to see themselves as part of a regionwide political community as they rubbed shoulders with fellows from very different parts of Attica in the new tribal assemblies, Council of 500, and national army.

We might see the Council itself as the cornerstone of the whole system, the critical link between the center and the periphery, where the multiplicity of diverse local interests could be negotiated and resolved into a single national agenda. The presence here of delegates from every locality in the peninsula helped to guarantee that all constituencies, even those who were too busy or lived too far from Athens to attend the Assembly, would always have a voice, however indirect, in the deliberative process. Hence, the outcomes of this process could with some reason be said to represent the collective will of the entire community.

In the end, it seems that the unification of Attica did indeed take place on two levels at once. The Athenian state finally extended its institutional reach throughout the peninsula precisely by setting up the first regular mechanism for admitting the inhabitants of the periphery to Athenian citizenship. However, unification on the third level cannot have taken place overnight. While the highly artificial composition of the new tribes would certainly have paved the way for an emerging pan-Attic collective consciousness, only time, shared experience, and not a little active encouragement from the center would forge this unusually large and diverse citizen body into a cohesive community of “Athenians.” This process of identity construction will be a recurring focus in future chapters as we look at a range of other innovations in public life that were introduced over the subsequent two decades.
Three problems remain, and all relate to our sources for the reforms. First, it is true that neither Herodotus nor the author of AP directly associates Cleisthenes’ measures with the process of unification in Attica. However, this difficulty can be easily removed when we consider the extraordinary appeal of the Thesean synoecism tradition. Not coincidentally, as we shall see in chapter 5, this tradition was probably invented in the last decade of the sixth century, precisely the time the new national order was first established. And by the time that Herodotus came to inquire about Athenian history, it would not be surprising if the historical significance of the reforms of 508/7 had been eclipsed in the collective memory by the more resonant purported achievement of Cleisthenes’ heroic predecessor.

Second, what evidence is there that the Athenian citizen body was substantively increased — perhaps even doubled — in the late sixth century, as my reconstruction implies? Neither of our main sources describes a mass enfranchisement of rural citizens in their accounts of the reforms. However, to explain Cleisthenes’ supposed enforcement of the use of new demotic titles in place of patronyms, the author of AP (21.4) does refer to the enrollment of what he must have thought were a substantial number of “new citizens” [neopolitai] at this time. He is distinctly vague about the identity of these individuals, though he presumably equated them with those described elsewhere (13.5) as “men of impure descent” [hoi toi genei me katharoi], who were apparently deprived of citizenship following a “review” [diapēphismos] held shortly after the expulsion of the Peisistratids. Meanwhile, with similar vagueness, Aristotle (Pol. 1275b34–39) tells us that Cleisthenes “enfranchised many free and unfree resident aliens” [pollous . . . ephuletuse xenous kai doulous metoikous].

Perhaps the only safe conclusion we can draw from these notoriously problematic passages is that the number of neopolitai enrolled in 508/7 was large; this is stated as a fact in one source and clearly implied in the other. We then have to wonder what so many “resident aliens” or “men of impure descent” were doing in Athens at this time. As others have noted, the most likely candidates for this status are the immigrant craftsmen apparently lured to Athens by Solon (see Plut. Sol. 24.4) and the former mercenaries employed by the Peisistratids. But surely the numbers of men involved in either case would not have been particularly significant. If, then, our sources’ identification of these new citizens as resident aliens is probably no more than an assumption based on knowledge of later practice, who exactly did comprise the large group of neopolitai apparently enrolled in the late sixth century? If, as I have argued, it was only at this point that inhabitants of rural
Attica were first routinely registered as Athenian citizens, the question would then have a very neat answer.  

Third, while neither of our main sources for Cleisthenes’ reforms equates the measures with the synoecism of Attica, both associate them firmly with the evolution of democracy in Athens, but it is hardly self-evident how the reforms as they describe them might have brought about this particular outcome. This problem needs to be addressed in somewhat greater depth. In chapter 2, I will look in more detail at the politics of the regime that governed the newly united Attica, before drawing conclusions about the overall motivations behind the transformation of 508/7.

There can be little doubt that Athens had been the dominant settlement in Attica for some centuries before the Cleisthenes’ reforms. We can certainly believe that the city and its surrounding region throughout this time enjoyed an unusually close relationship, resulting in regular contacts of various kinds and quite a high level of cultural homogeneity between the two. But none of these factors presupposes the full political integration of the entire peninsula or makes this process a foregone conclusion. Not until the Peisistratid period do we see the first tentative attempts to establish the kind of de jure institutional links necessary to make unification a political reality. But the success of these efforts was apparently very limited. If the arguments presented in this chapter are plausible, we cannot meaningfully speak of a functionally united Attica before 508/7. Even at this late date, it still required an institutional apparatus of unprecedented complexity and sophistication to overcome enduring impediments to unification and transform the Athenian polis from a city-state into a fully integrated region-state, a polity far larger than any hitherto seen in the Greek world.