The Single Body of the City

Public Slaves and the Question of the Greek State

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Redefining the City

The Single Body of the City

Public Slaves and the Question of the Greek State*

Paulin Ismard

It seems like it was some time ago now that Pierre Rosanvallon lamented historians' neglect of the full historical importance of the phenomenon of the state.[1] Paradoxically, since the early 1980s and the crisis of the welfare state, studies on the "modern" state from its medieval origins to the present have proliferated.[2] From the perspective of administrative practices and "state-related knowledge," understood as a "system" or "organization"[3] that negotiates or clashes with society, or through a comparative or more recent "relational"[4] approach, the state has become a central object of historical enquiry.

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* This article presents part of my work on public slaves in Greek cities during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The resulting book has recently been published: Paulin Ismard, *La démocratie contre les experts. Les esclaves publics en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2015). My thanks go to Vincent Azoulay for his invaluable comments. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Greek texts cited are from the Loeb Classical Library published by Harvard University Press.

1. Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'État en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1990), 9-16.

2. On the contradictory intellectual and political climate of this "return to the state," see Alain Guery, "L'historien, la crise et l'État," *Annales HSS* 52, no. 2 (1997): 233-56.

3. Patrick Fridenson, "Pour une histoire de l'État contemporain comme organisation," *Les Cahiers du Centre de recherches historiques* 25 (2000): http://ccrh.revues.org/1832.

4. Caroline Douki, David Feldman, and Paul-André Rosental, "Pour une histoire relationnelle du ministère du Travail en France, en Italie et au Royaume-Uni dans l'entre-deux-guerres : le transnational, le bilatéral et l'interministériel en matière de politique migratoire," in *Les politiques du travail (1906-2006). Acteurs, institutions, réseaux*, ed. Alain Chatriot, Odile Join-Lambert, and Vincent Viet (Rennes: PUR, 2006), 143-59.

Annales HSS, 69, no. 3 (July-September 2014): 505–532.

Following the example of the Danish scholar Johan Madvig, historians of the ancient Greek world have employed the term "city-state" (*Staatstadt* in German) to translate the word *polis* for some time. In its most current usage this term is hardly a rigorous analytical category, since it groups together under a single descriptive heading all the sovereign political communities that were organized around a town and dominated the surrounding rural territories.[5] In this sense, the comparative ambition of the concept of the city-state has allowed historians of the ancient Greek world to dodge the central question of the specific forms of statal organization that characterized the *poleis*. The terms of the debate have of course been widely renewed over the last two decades by the research carried out under the aegis of Mogens Hansen and the Copenhagen Polis Centre. Following the immense task of drafting inventories for all the cities of the Archaic and Classical world, including a survey of uses of the term *polis*, this collective project devised several ambitious proposals designed to renew the traditional conceptual framework for thinking about the Greek city.

Among these proposals, the comparison between the Greek *polis* of the Classical era and the modern state has been central and, in this respect at least, the work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre can be seen to participate in the European historiographical currents of the 1990s.[6] The analogy relies on a dual proposition: on the one hand, it advances the idea that the Greeks thought of the city as an abstract impersonal entity, "a permanent public power above both ruler and ruled,"[7] and, on the other (and contrary to the defenders of a long tradition dating back to Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges), it rests on the assumption that there is a clear distinction between civil society and the state—two notions that supposedly found their equivalents in the Classical city in the terms *koinōnia* and *polis*.[8]

Supported by more than ten single-author or group publications, the Hansenian position has been subject to extensive critiques at the same time that it has inspired new research. By focusing the debate on the lack of a state apparatus exercising a legitimate monopoly on violence, Moshe Berent, for example, has claimed that the *polis* of the Classical period may be defined as a "stateless political community."[9]

5. On the notion of the city-state and its heuristic limits, see Jacques Glassner, "Du bon usage du concept de cité-État?," *Journal des africanistes* 74, nos. 1/2 (2004): 35-48.
6. For a synthetic approach to this collective work, in addition to the inventory found in Mogens H. Hansen and Thomas H. Nielsen, eds., *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), see: Mogens H. Hansen, "95 Theses About the Greek Polis in the Archaic and Classical Periods: A Report on the Results Obtained by the Copenhagen Polis Centre in the Period 1993-2003," *Historia* 52, no. 3 (2003): 257-82; Hansen, *Polis and City-State: An Ancient Concept and its Modern Equivalent* (Copenhagen: Munksgard, 1998). For a critical presentation, see Pierre Fröhlich, "L'inventaire du monde des cités grecques. Une somme, une méthode et une conception de l'histoire," *Revue historique* 655, no. 3 (2010): 637-77.
7. Hansen, *Polis and City-State*, 119.
8. Ibid., 88-89.
9. Moshe Berent, "Anthropology and the Classics: War, Violence, and the Stateless Polis," *The Classical Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2000): 257-89; Berent, "In Search of the Greek State: Rejoinder to M. H. Hansen," *Polis: The Journal of the Society for Greek Political Thought* 21, nos. 1/2 (2004): 107-46.

Elsewhere, studying the phenomenon of associations has led some historians to suggest a reinterpretation of the scale on which community life in the city was expressed: the *polis*, from this perspective, may be described as a state in the obvious sense that it generated a relatively autonomous civic space with regard to the entirety of social interactions. However, the civic level is only one of the many aspects of the *koinon*, the idea of a distinction between civil society and the state being a mere fantasy.[10] On the contrary, other authors have concentrated on hitherto neglected aspects of institutional life in cities, such as the powers granted to magistrates, which illuminate the various forms of autonomy from which the city's "executive" sector sometimes benefited.[11]

When they tackle the issue of the statal nature of the *polis*, these approaches refer to very different ideas—albeit ones that have rarely been formulated explicitly—of what should be understood by the term "state." Whether they cite Max Weber (rightly or wrongly)[12] to support a restrictive definition of the city as a ruling body capable of acting as a person in defense of its own interests, or are inspired by a broader political anthropology that assumes the emergence of a state as soon as a centralized power structure shows signs of even the most formal autonomy from society, the term "state" remains extremely ambiguous. Furthermore, as in the case of terms like "the market" and "the individual," there is the risk that "the state" may become a transhistorical object, employed across time regardless of the singular and varied forms it assumes in each incarnation.

In this respect, the analogy Hansen draws between the *polis* and the modern state, insofar as it is based on a historicized definition of the state, has the merit of clarifying what is at stake in the controversy. And yet the analogy encounters

10. Paulin Ismard, *La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations, VI^e^-I^er^ siècles av. J.-C.* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010). This volume is a continuation of the work of François de Polignac and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, particularly: de Polignac, "Repenser la 'cité'? Rituels et société en Grèce archaïque," in *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis*, ed. Mogens. H. Hansen and Kurt Raaflaub (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1995), 7-19; Schmitt Pantel, *La cité au banquet. Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992).

11. See the following works: Pierre Fröhlich, *Les cités grecques et le contrôle des magistrats (IV^e^-I^er^ s. av. J.-C.)* (Geneva: Droz, 2004); Lene Rubinstein, "Individual and Collective Liabilities of Boards of Officials in the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Period," in *Symposion 2011. Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte*, ed. Bernard Legras and Gerhard Thür (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 329-54.

12. See Max Weber's well-known definition in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 54: "A compulsory political organisation with continuous operations ... will be called a 'state' insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claims to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." Berent's reflections are undermined by a questionable reading of Weber. Weber insists not on the effective monopoly, but rather on the legitimate—and therefore legal—monopoly (*Monopollegitimen*) on the use of violence, since the modern state is characterized as one in which "the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it." (Ibid., 56). Such was the case in the Greek city, where the coercive power held by the civic community was ultimately greater than that exercised de facto by any other civic subdivision.

two significant stumbling blocks. The fact that in ancient sources the *polis* was referred to as a superior entity in relation to society does not necessarily imply that it had the status of a legal person with rights and duties and the capacity to contract obligations. "The civil institution of the city" remains a blind spot in ancient Greek law.[13] Above all, such an analogy between the *polis* and the modern state is particularly problematic in the context of the existence of a civic administration. It is true that several studies on the civic uses of writing have revealed a "bureaucratic" functioning within the ancient Greek city that was more sophisticated than previously thought.[14] However, from the ancien régime officer to today's civil servant, the modern state has been incarnated above all through the agents who "constitute the [state] apparatus because they are invested with power on its behalf."[15] According to Weber, the state acquires the legitimate monopoly on violence through its control over an administrative system implemented by specialized agents. Yet the "bureaucratic structure" of the modern state has no equivalent in the world of the Greek city.[16] In that sense, the study of the administrative history of the city seems fated to be confused with the well-trodden field of institutional history.

From the History of Civic Administration to the History of Public Slavery

In fact, ancient writers were hardly fond of describing the precise mechanisms by which magistrates implemented the decisions of the civic community, and they shed little light on the set of skills and techniques civic institutions required to function

13. I am borrowing the term from Yan Thomas, "L'institution civile de la cité," *Le Débat* 74, no. 2 (1993): 23-44. In this respect, while Greg Anderson claims a "categorical kinship" between the modern state and the Greek city, he does not examine the status of the *polis* in law: Greg Anderson, "The Personality of the Greek State," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 129 (2009): 1-22. Whether or not the *dēmos* is a metaphor for the *polis* as a whole says nothing about it as a legal subject. As Thomas has shown, it is also critical that the city's institutions are not confused by imagining them as different "members" likely to have final recourse to a state conceived as a single entity that subsumes them.
14. Michele Faraguna, "A proposito degli archivi nel mondo greco : terra e registrazioni fondiarie," *Chiron. Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 30 (2000): 65-115; Faraguna, "Scrittura e amministrazione nelle città greche: gli archivi pubblici," *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica* 80, no. 2 (2005): 61-86; Christophe Pébarthe, *Cité, démocratie et écriture. Histoire de l'alphabétisation d'Athènes à l'époque classique* (Paris: De Boccard, 2006); Pébarthe, "Les archives de la cité de raison. Démocratie athénienne et pratiques documentaires à l'époque classique," in *Archives and Archival Documents in Ancient Societies: Legal Documents in Ancient Societies IV*, ed. Michele Faraguna (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2013), 107-25.
15. Guéry, "L'historien, la crise," 250.
16. Fröhlich, "L'inventaire du monde des cités," 670. This crucial difference led Moses Finley to describe the city as a non-bureaucratic state in *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 8.

normally. A passage from Plato's *Statesman* exemplifies this lack of interest. Under Socrates's watchful eye, three young men try to determine what constitutes the true form of royal rule (*archē basilikē*), which is the art of politics. To do so, the apprentice philosophers proceed by establishing a series of dichotomies: by clarifying ever more precisely what political skill is not, they hope to indirectly identify what it is. This is how they come to tackle the group of so-called "ancillary" arts, which although indispensable for all forms of community life—from the production of goods to ritual practice—according to them should never be equated with the art of politics. Amongst these ancillary arts there is nevertheless one skill that poses a challenge for the young philosophers: that displayed by "those who become by long practice skilled as clerks and other clever men who perform various services in connection with public offices." Due to their "administrative expertise," those who possessed this skill could claim to be bearers of the *archē basilikē*. As the Stranger acknowledges, it is out of "the class of slaves and servants in general, [where] I prophesy that we shall find those who set up claims against the king for the very fabric of his art," that the realm of politics emerges. But the young men are on the wrong track. Do these experts in public affairs possess real political power? No sooner has the question been asked than it is answered by Socrates the Younger. Since they are "servants" and not "themselves rulers in the states," these false rivals of politics cannot in any way participate in the royal function, and the Stranger is obliged to admit that "surely it was no dream that made me say we should find somewhere in this region those who more than others lay claim to the art of statesmanship; and yet it would be utterly absurd to look for them in any servile position."[17]

Socrates the Younger and the Stranger obliquely justify the ancient sources' silence on these matters by drawing a clear line between two orders: the realm of politics (a noble activity worthy of free men) and the realm of servitude (*hupēresia*). Genuine politics cannot fall under the category of administrative expertise, even one that is "universal." In fact, Plato's equation was simply a commonplace handed down and shared by the Greeks during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, one that referred to the reality of how ancient cities were administrated. In Pericles's Athens, as in the small cities of Asia Minor at the end of the Hellenistic period, many responsibilities that were essential to how cities functioned did not fall within the magistrates' jurisdiction and as such were excluded from the political sphere. Most of the men who exercised these duties were not citizens but slaves. To refer to these men the Greeks used the term *dēmosios*, which covered two inextricable elements, namely a function (working for the city) and a personal condition (that of slave). These public slaves, whose legal status should not be reduced to that of private slaves, carried out precisely the functions of civic administration that were beyond the regular rotation of magistratures, and, in this sense, embodied the only form of "bureaucracy" the *polis* had ever known.[18]

17. Plato, *The Statesman* 290b-c.

18. On the question of the *dēmosioi*'s legal status, see Ismard, *La démocratie contre les experts*, 95-130.

Ancient, Modern, and Non-European Slavery

The condition of these several thousand people, mostly attested in inscriptions, offers a privileged perspective from which to observe and question the statal dimension of the *polis*.[19] The revival of studies on slavery, conducted since the early 1980s by Africanist anthropologists and specialists in Southeast Asian history, has opened up illuminating perspectives in this area. Indeed, public slavery has become a major theme of the new anthropology of slavery. Whether they are called "slaves of the Crown," "slaves of the state," or "slaves of the court," anthropologists and historians have highlighted the crucial role played by slaves of sovereign power in an auxiliary capacity.[20] It is hardly an exaggeration to say that outside the New World, all slave societies with a "state" had recourse to such figures, and that the

19. The work of Oscar Jacob, which offers the only synthetic study on the *dēmosioi*, remains an invaluable reference for its erudition: see Oscar Jacob, *Les esclaves publics à Athènes* (Liège: H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1928). In spite of its many qualities, the study nevertheless has two shortcomings. The first is minor: it goes without saying that since 1928 the literature on the subject has been greatly renewed thanks to both the discovery of new inscriptions and rereadings of well-known literary and epigraphic sources. The second and more conclusive flaw can be attributed to the overall approach adopted by Jacob, who focused his remarks exclusively on Athens during the Classical period, even to the point of ignoring Hellenistic Delos under Athenian control. Above all, he made little effort to shed light on the strange system that might explain why the Athenians came to entrust these tasks to slaves. On public slaves during the imperial period, see Alexander Weiss, *Sklave der Stadt. Untersuchungen zur öffentlichen Sklaverei in den Städten of römischen Reiches* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2004).

20. For the work of Africanists, see: Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975); Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); John R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: F. Cass, 1985); Tora Miura and John E. Philips, eds., *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa: A Comparative Study* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000); Stephanie Beswick and Jay Spaulding, eds., *African Systems of Slavery* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2010); and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; repr. 2011). For that of specialists in Southeast Asia, see: Anthony Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983); Georges Condominas, ed., *Formes extrêmes de dépendance. Contributions à l'étude de l'esclavage en Asie du Sud-Est* (Paris: Éd. de l'EHESS, 1998); and Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, eds., *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). For a general view, see: Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*, trans. Alide Dasnois (London: The Athlone Press, 1986; repr. 1991); and Alain Testart, *L'esclave, la dette et le pouvoir. Études de sociologie comparative* (Paris: Éd. Errance, 2001). Finally, two important contributions to the study of public or royal slavery should be mentioned: Sean A. Stilwell, *Paradoxes of Power: The Kano 'Mamluks' and Male Royal Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1804-1903* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004); M'hamed Oualdi, *Esclaves et maîtres. Les Mamelouks des beys de Tunis du XVII^e siècle aux années 1880* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2011).

numbers of those subject to "royal slavery" sometimes outweighed those of private slaves. These slaves often appear as the first examples of "civil servants" at the very emergence of the notion of the state, and some have even viewed them as the secret behind the state's genesis, as if—well before the notion of the dual body of the king—the two bodies of the sovereign and his slave lay at the heart of the modern state.[21] Nevertheless, if royal slaves were a prerequisite for the emergence of a state infrastructure, they could also become a threat once the privileged position that serving the sovereign bestowed began to be passed down through kinship. The royal slave's integration into court life could result in increasing notability as well as in the creation of an autonomous corps of slaves who built new kinship networks that paralleled traditional structures of lineage,[22] giving them the opportunity to seize state power for their own benefit—a situation that Claude Meillassoux described using the neologism "anceocracy" (the power of servants).[23]

The vast majority of historians studying slavery in the ancient world are oblivious to the enormous amount of work that has been conducted by anthropologists and historians of non-European societies in an attempt to redefine the phenomenon of slavery.[24] Preferring to follow Moses Finley, who claimed that only Greco-Roman societies and those of the New World (colonial Brazil, the Caribbean, America) provide models of true "slave societies" (to be distinguished from "societies with slaves"),[25] historians of Classical antiquity have mostly tended to restrict any comparative perspective to the confrontation with the colonial world that grew out of the Atlantic slave trade.[26] It cannot be denied that the Greek city—of which Classical Athens, like it or not, is the most well-known example—belongs to the

21. For a perspective beginning with "funerary retainers," see Alain Testart, *La servitude volontaire*, vol. 1, *Les morts d'accompagnement*, and vol. 2, *L'origine de l'État* (Paris: Éd. Errance, 2004).

22. For instance, the process described for the Sokoto Caliphate (northern Nigeria) during the nineteenth century in Stilwell, *Paradoxes of Power*, 117-66.

23. Meillassoux, *Anthropology of Slavery*, 193. However, the case of the Mamluk beys of Tunis studied by M'hamed Oualdi in *Esclaves et maîtres* shows that the extension of the sovereign's authority and its privatization in favor of his servants could go hand in hand.

24. In the field of Roman slavery, it is worth consulting Walter Scheidel, "The Comparative Economics of Slavery in the Greco-Roman World," in *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105-26.

25. Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Chatto & Windus: London, 1980), 9. Finley's point of view is taken up in Nicolas R. E. Fisher's synthetic account in *Slavery in Classical Greece* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 3-4.

26. Examples from recent historiography include: Marc Kleijwegt, ed., *The Faces of Freedom: The Manumission and Emancipation of Slaves in Old World and New World Slavery* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Dal Lago and Katsari, *Slave Systems*; Dick Geary and Kostas Vlassopoulos, eds., "Slavery, Citizenship and the State in Classical Antiquity and the Modern Americas," special issue, *European Review of History* 16, no. 3 (2009); Stephen Hodkinson and Dick Geary, eds., *Slaves and Religions in Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Modern Brazil* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); Antonio Gonzales, ed., *Penser l'esclavage. Modèles antiques, pratiques modernes, problématiques contemporaines* (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2012).

"slave society" paradigm. Whether one holds that slaves represented 20 or 50 percent of the Athenian population—that is, 50,000 or 200,000 individuals—does not in any way alter the role played by the institution of slavery in the foundation of the social order, however great this numerical discrepancy might seem.[27] Furthermore, Greek slavery during the Classical period was characterized by the importance of slave markets, which, far more than demographic reproduction alone, guaranteed the constant renewal of the slave population. The relegation of slaves to a sphere outside the civic community was another fundamental aspect of chattel slavery during the Classical period. As the property of another man who was the only person with the power to give him a name, the slave lost his original identity without acquiring a new one by, for example, integrating into his master's family. In this way, slaves became the archetypal outcasts, embodying the figure of otherness that haunts all aspects of civic life to the point where "a genuine 'synthesis' of the history of ancient slavery can only be a history of Graeco-Roman society."[28]

Yet even if the concept of "slave society" has an undeniable value as an investigative tool, contrary to what Finley has suggested it cannot be considered the unfortunate privilege of the societies of Classical antiquity and the New World[29]—any more than abolitionist discourse can be considered the monopoly of the West.[30] When the Portuguese managed to gain access to the kingdom of Kongo at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, more than 100,000 slaves were employed in all sectors of production and made up half the kingdom's population. Three centuries later, the enormous Sokoto Caliphate (southwest of Lake Chad) counted more slaves than all of the United States of America. In Africa, slavery in the great Islamic kingdoms and periphery states was not just domestic or military. It had a productive purpose that was often similar to plantation slavery.[31] Similarly, slaves were the primary workforce on large spice plantations in the kingdom of Aceh (West Sumatra) during the seventeenth century. Far from designating only Greek and Roman societies and those of the colonial world stemming from the Atlantic slave trade, the concept of "slave society" can thus legitimately be extended to a significant number of other societies. The time has come to shake up the idea of Greco-Roman slavery by introducing a deeper understanding of the

27. For a high estimate, see: Raymond Descat and Jean Andreau, *The Slave in Greece and Rome*, trans. Marion Leopold (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 65-105; Timothy Taylor, "Believing the Ancients: Quantitative and Qualitative Dimensions of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Later Prehistoric Eurasia," *World Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (2001): 27-43. For a low estimate (between 15 and 35 percent of the population), see Fisher, *Slavery*, 35-36.

28. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 66.

29. Orlando Patterson, "Slavery, Gender, and Work in the Pre-Modern World and Early Greece: A Cross-Cultural Analysis," in Dal Lago and Katsari, *Slave Systems*, 32-69, here p. 33; and Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 24 and 120-23.

30. Paul Lovejoy, "Slavery in Africa," in *The Routledge History of Slavery*, ed. Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard (London: Routledge, 2011), 43.

31. Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 24 and 120-23. See all the cases reviewed on pp. 111-28 and 174-75.

different systems of servitude, extending far beyond exclusively American cases, into its study. The work carried out by historians and anthropologists of the non-European world prompts one to question the meaning of the strange institution known in Classical and Hellenistic cities as public slavery, and thereby reconsider what is meant by the "Greek state."

Cataloguing the responsibilities assumed by public slaves is a prerequisite for such an undertaking. The task of identifying and describing the tasks performed by the *dēmosioi* is trickier than it seems, for it cannot be based on a cartography of civic activities already outlined in ancient sources. In his study of Athenian public slaves, Oscar Jacob sidestepped this problem by dividing the *dēmosioi* into three categories: "workers," members of the "police," and "employees."[32] First of all, this tripartite division fails to marshal all of the duties entrusted to public slaves, attempting instead to depict the work of slaves through the prism of professional classifications that had little meaning in the Classical city. Rather than trying to classify the tasks performed by slaves within an unlikely "chart of professions," historians of public slavery should be seeking to identify the kinds of work (or "spheres of action") that were earmarked for these slaves, along with the spaces in which they were carried out and the skills they required, in each case working out the social and political logics underpinning why a given role was assigned to them. Through the examination of these "spheres of action"—sometimes unexpected, as with the supervision of "civic marks"—one gradually begins to distinguish the outline of a field of specific practices in the city, the product of a neutralization (or suspension) of the ordinary rules of the political sphere. In this way, every aspect of this strange system under which the administration of public affairs (and therefore the administration of collective freedom) was assigned to slaves can be explored, revealing the forms of resistance by the *polis* as a society to the existence of a state as a separate authority.

The Genesis of Public Slavery

In the world of cities, the institution of public slavery goes back as far as the first decades of the Classical era. The case of Athens even suggests that there was a close link between the development of this institution and the establishment of a democratic regime. There are many reasons for this. The civic ideology of Classical Athens could not conceive of the existence of a body of people that had devoted their entire professional lives to the management of public affairs. Indeed, direct democracy required all political offices to be placed in the hands of all citizens, whether elected or more often selected by lottery. This regime also called for widespread popular participation: every citizen could participate in the Assembly, be called to the *Heliaea* or the *Boulē*, or be randomly selected to become a magistrate. However, this system presupposed a significant rotation among the citizens that held positions of political authority, since the *Bouleutai* (members of the Council of Five Hundred),

32. Jacob, *Les esclaves publics*.

the Heliasts (judges in the courts), and other magistrates were reappointed annually. In this context, an "administrative" staff that could ensure the consistent management of civic life proved to be much more necessary than when only a small elite composed of a few families passed on the duty of civic office to one another. Falling back on slave labor also allowed itinerant specialists, who sold their skills during the Archaic period by traveling where they were needed, to permanently settle in the city. Moreover, by allowing more people access to political participation, democratic regimes established a new relationship between knowledge and power. The kind of "competency" acquired through long-term familiarity with power was now inappropriate for the legitimation of political authority. Expertise undoubtedly remained essential in some areas, but the values of the democratic regime would not allow a narrow class of citizens to be entrusted with such responsibilities. The Athenians, therefore, often preferred to entrust them to slaves, which basically meant relegating this expertise outside the frame of politics. Ultimately, the new needs of the democratic system were met by the tremendous and ever-increasing expansion of slave markets from the early decades of the sixth century.

Buying Public Slaves

During the Classical and Hellenistic periods, these slaves were most often purchased by cities in markets. Indeed, when they mention the acquisition of public slaves, most inscriptions make it clear that the city bought its future servants, and this is confirmed by literary sources.[33] One must imagine relatively specialized slave markets, which could provide cities with a workforce based on the specific needs required for a particular task. What is more, Aristotle also established a link between the cities' wealth and the increase in the use of public slaves: "[other offices] are subordinate, and are the sort of services to which people when well off (*an euporōsi*) appoint slaves (*doulous*)."[34] In this sense, the growth of public slavery in fifth-century-BCE Athens was inseparable from the city's prosperity and imperialist expansion. But the acquisition of slaves could also result from a powerful benefactor's generosity. The gift could assume two different forms: either the benefactor offered his slaves to the city, as Nicomedes of Bithynia and Eumenes of Pergamum

33. For example, see Peter J. Rhodes and Robin Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404-323 B. C.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), no. 25, ll. 36-40: "So that there shall also be in the Piraeus an approver for the ship-owners and the import-traders and all others, the council shall appoint from the public slaves if available or shall buy one." In the middle of the third century, the Delians bought a slave to serve the palaestra at the city's gymnasium: *Inscriptions de Délos* (hereafter *ID*), edited by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 7 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1926-1972), 290, l. 113. Aeschines recounted that, at the beginning of the fifth century, Scythian archers had been purchased by the city, while, in the middle of the fourth century, Xenophon could not imagine any means of creating a civic slave workforce other than buying one. See: Aeschines, *On the Embassy* (2) 173; Andocides, *On the Peace with Sparta* (3) 7; and Xenophon, *Ways and Means* 18.

34. Aristotle, *Politics* 1299a.

did for the city of Delphi in the second century BCE,[35] or he allocated income from an estate to a city so it could purchase slaves.[36] However, these transfers were not always based on the strict logic of a free gift: in the small city of Tlos in the first century CE, the *dēmosios* responsible for the civic archives was "offered" to the city by a certain Apollonius of Patara, who subsequently received 300 drachmas from the civic treasury.[37] Furthermore, it is likely that the slave corps was continually reestablished through the addition of some of the public slaves' offspring, even though these individuals were clearly in a minority.[38] One of Demosthenes's speeches even suggests that some slaves who were confiscated from public debtors became the city's property. This form of acquisition was very rare, however, since cities usually chose to sell such slaves. The fact that buying slaves was by far the most common means of acquiring them was the result of a deliberate policy based on fears that such slaves, who had previously had a master and had probably already established all kinds of relationships throughout the city, would not properly serve civic interests.[39]

Once procured by the city, the *dēmosioi* were in all likelihood registered by the civic authorities, and their names were included on the lists made available to magistrates. Using these records, citizens could choose the appropriate slaves for the different tasks assigned to them. Indeed, several Athenian inscriptions from the Classical and Hellenistic periods indicate that *dēmosioi* were chosen to serve a particular function by a show of hands in the Assembly or in the *Boulē* itself, which in turn suggests that the skills of certain slaves were well known and appreciated by the entire civic community.[40]

35. Denis Rousset, *Le territoire de Delphes et la terre d'Apollon* (Paris: École française d'Athènes, 2002), 31.9 and 31.11-12 (102/101 BCE); *Fouilles de Delphes*, vol. 3, *Épigraphie*, fasc. 3, *Inscriptions depuis le Trésor des Athéniens jusqu'aux bases de Gélon* (hereafter *FD* III 3), ed. Georges Daux and Antoine Salac, (Paris: De Boccard, 1932-1943), 239.12; or Jean Pouilloux, ed., *Choix d'inscriptions grecques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), no. 12.

36. As was the case in the bequest of Archippe of Kyme, see *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (hereafter *SEG*) (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1983), 33.1039.68-67.

37. *SEG* 33.117.19-23.

38. One surprising fact stands out concerning the *servi publici* used in the Roman Republic: no citizen is known to have become a *dēmosios* following a criminal conviction. Similarly, prisoners of war do not seem to have been integrated into the corps of public slaves: see Walter Eder, *Servitus publica. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung, Entwicklung und Funktion der öffentlichen Sklaverei in Rom* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1980).

39. Jacob, *Les esclaves publics*, 10-11. It should also be noted that, in the city of Pergamum in the second century BCE, there was a difference between the slaves of the city (*dēmosioi*) and the slaves of the king of Pergamum (*basilikoi*). Only the latter group included former slaves who had been removed from other services at public debtors' expense. See Wilhelm Dittenberger, ed., *Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1903-1905), 338.20-30.

40. This was the case for Eucles and Telophilus in fourth-century Athens, as attested in Kevin Clinton, ed., *Eleusis, the Inscriptions on Stone: Documents of the Sanctuary of the Two Goddesses and Public Documents of the Deme* (hereafter *IE*) (Athens: Archaeological Society of Athens, 2005), 1.159.60-61, 1.177.12 and 205. For Demetrius in the third century, see Johannes Kirchner, ed., *Inscriptiones Graecae. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis*

Servants of the City

Unseen Hands in Civic Institutions

In fact, there were very few areas of civic administration that did not fall under the *dēmosioi*'s remit. In the Assembly, the Council, the city's courts, and even at the gymnasium, their presence was essential to the functioning of the city's institutions. In the fourth century, the *dēmosioi* were omnipresent in the management of the Athenian judicial system: they organized the lottery for the selection of judges, were involved in the allocation of magistrates to the various courts, and also counted ballot papers prior to the announcement of verdicts.[41] Similarly, in Pednelissos in Pisidia during the first century BCE, public slaves helped judges during the preparatory phases of trials.[42] In many cities, the *dēmosioi* also participated in the operations of the Assembly, whether contributing to the organization of the deliberative process or that of the vote. In Akmonia during the early imperial period, public slaves were responsible for organizing the counting of votes before handing the result to the *dogmatographoi*, who would then make a permanent record of the decree.[43] While the Athenian *dēmosioi* seem to have been absent from the Assembly, their presence in the service of the *Boulē* is substantiated. Here, one must imagine a large staff that worked alongside the prytanes and was essential to the functioning of the Council's meetings. These slaves were also sufficiently respected in the city for the Athenians to grant them the privilege of *proedria* in the theater of Dionysus from the fifth century.[44] Beginning in the late fourth century, these slaves were honored alongside the prytanes by the city, which was grateful for the work carried out in its service.[45]

Anno Posteriores (hereafter *IG*) (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1913-1940), II^2 839.52-53. At the end of the second century, Sopatrus was chosen by the *Bouleutai* by a show of hands to work with the commission in charge of melting down some of the offerings on the Acropolis: *IG* II^2 840.35.

41. Pseudo-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* 64.1, 65.1, 65.4, and 69.1; Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 5.3.

42. *SEG* 2.710.4-6.

43. Ender Varinlioglu, "Five Inscriptions from Acmonia," *Revue des études anciennes* 108, no. 1 (2006): 355-73, nos. 4.38-39 and 5.13 (64 CE).

44. *IG* I^3 1390.

45. They appear for the first time in a prytanic decree in 343/342 BCE (*Agora*, 15.37.4) and then regularly from 303/302 (*Agora*, 15.62.5.10-18). Beginning in 281/280, they were divided at the same time as the prytanes according to their tribes: *Agora*, 15.72.1.5; 15.72.2.67, 211; and 15.72.3.83, 266. See Graham J. Oliver, "Honours for a Public Slave at Athens (*IG* II^2 502 + Ag. I 1947; 302/1 B.C.)," in *Attika Epigraphika. Meletes pros timèn tou Christian Habicht*, ed. Athanassios Themos and Nikolaos Papazarkadas (Athens: Ellīnikḯ Epigrafikḯ Etaireía, 2009), 111-24, here p. 123.

Public Archives and Civic Marks

Many of the slaves of the *Boulē* worked in the *Metrōon*, the shrine of the Mother of the Gods, which was also the city's archival repository.[46] Distant heirs of the *mnamōnes* of Archaic Crete, these slaves also acted as the guardians of public memory and were regularly consulted by magistrates when they needed a particular archived document.[47] From the middle of the fourth century, these slaves all worked under the authority of the secretary of the prytanes (*grammateus kata prytaneian*). Yet it can be inferred that the secretary's authority ended where the task of classifying, conserving, and copying documents began, this being the true specialty of the *dēmosioi*, who clearly enjoyed a degree of autonomy in their work.[48] Referring to a decree that his great enemy Aeschines had supported, Demosthenes told the Athenian Assembly: "As for the affidavit of refusal, there is an entry in the record-office at the Temple of Demeter, of which the public caretaker is in charge (*ho dēmosios tetaktai*), and a decree in which he [Aeschines] is mentioned by name."[49] In addition to the tasks of classification and conservation, the *dēmosioi* were also involved in drafting archival documents. In Athens at the end of the fourth century, a public slave was thus given the task of copying a decision recorded in the archives—granting *isoteleia* (a special tax status) to a foreign resident—so that it could be inscribed on a marble stele,[50] while in Iasos in the second half of the second century BCE, a *dēmosios* called Diophantus transcribed private documents before they were turned over to the archives.[51] This duty was not without risk: in Lycia in the middle of the first century CE, the Roman governor Quintus Veranius's edict openly attacked a certain Tryphon, a public slave in charge of the civic archives in the city of Tlos, who was whipped on account of some inconvenient additions and deletions identified in documents for which he was responsible.[52] The governor emphasized that the punishment would serve as a lesson for other public slaves who might display the same flippancy.[53]

The role of the *dēmosioi* extended far beyond the scope of administrative work in large civic institutions. Among the "many tasks associated with magistracies,"

46. Pseudo-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* 47.5 and 48.1. On the public slaves of the archives, see James P. Sickinger, *Public Records and Archives in Classical Athens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 140-57.
47. *IG* II^2 463.28. See also *IG* II^2 1492B.112, in which a slave named Skylax fetches some accounting documents needed by a magistrate in the late fourth century.
48. Sickinger, *Public Records*, 145 and 158.
49. Demosthenes, *On the Embassy* (19) 129.
50. *IG* II^2 583.4-7.
51. *Die Inschriften von Iasos*, ed. Wolfgang Blümel for the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1985), 93.3-4. For the date, see Pierre Fröhlich, "Les groupes du gymnase d'Iasos et les *presbyteroi* dans les cités à l'époque hellénistique," in *Groupes et associations dans les cités grecques (III^e av. J.-C.-II^e ap. J.-C.)*, ed. Pierre Fröhlich and Patrice Hamon (Geneva: Droz, 2013), 59-111.
52. *SEG* 33.1177.10-15.
53. *SEG* 33.1177.18-19.

according to Socrates the Younger, cataloguing public property was a crucial activity. Working alongside the city magistrates, it was public slaves that kept an inventory of the objects stored in shrines and accounts of major civic building projects; when working with a magistrate on a military mission, they listed and monitored expenditures. In 353/352 BCE, the Athenians assigned a slave named Eucles the task of inventorying all the objects found in the Chalkotheke on the Acropolis,[54] while at the end of the fourth century two *dēmosioi* named Leon and Zopyrion drafted a copy of an inventory of shrine goods on behalf of the treasurers of Athena.[55] Half a century later, at the shrine of Asclepius just below that of Athena, the slave Demetrius was responsible for inventorying the offerings made in honor of the heroic doctor,[56] and in second-century, Athenian-controlled Delos, Peritas, a *dēmosios* of Macedonian origin, kept an inventory of the goods pertaining to Artemis and Asclepius over several years.[57]

But the *dēmosioi* did not only hold clerical positions in the city's major sanctuaries. In the Athenian arsenals of the Classical period, public slaves like Opsigonus (between 323 and 321 BCE) maintained the list of public equipment bought or sold by the city, as ordered by the *Boulē*.[58] These slaves even had the task of drafting accounts for construction works, as Telophilus did, for example, in the sanctuary of Eleusis in 329/328 BCE.[59] When generals undertook military operations outside the city, public slaves acting on the orders of the *tamiai* noted the exact amount of the expenses incurred.[60] They were also responsible for certifying the financial documents that were used to settle disputes at the annual presentation of the magistrates' accounts. It is thus clear that in many instances, instead of being simple copyists or clerks, the *dēmosioi* were genuine accountants, both aiding and supervising the magistrates throughout their missions. It was no doubt because of

54. *IG* II^2 120.12-13 (and *IG* II^2 1440a.6-7, three years later).
55. *IG* II^2 1492b.111.
56. *IG* II 839.41-44. Six years later, a slave who was probably the son of Demetrius, Demetrius *neoteros*, (*IG* II^2 1539.9-10), seems to have played the same role in the shrine.
57. *ID* 1444.Aa.54 and Ba.20 and 49. That Peritas was a slave is confirmed by *ID* 1442.B.75. Inventories for the temple of Apollo during the same period mention the presence of *dēmosioi* at the shrine: see *ID* 1450.A.109.
58. On these slaves at the city arsenals (*dēmosioi hoi en tois neoriois*), see Demosthenes, *Against Evergus and Mnesibulus* (47) 21, 24, and 26, discussed in Borimir Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period: A Study of Athenian Naval Administration and Military Organization in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). Opsigonus appears in *IG* II^2 1631.B.197 and C.381-82.
59. *IE* 177.1.12. Eucles played the same role a few years earlier: see *IE* 159.60-61 (from 336/335 or 333/332 BCE).
60. Demosthenes, *On the Chersonese* (8) 47, confirmed by the Scholiast to Demosthenes, *Second Olynthiac* (2) 19. On the basis of Demosthenes's speech (49) 6-8, Jacob believed he could identify a certain Autonomus, who acted alongside the steward Antimachus under the orders of the general Timothy. The hypothesis is attractive, especially since Autonomus did not suffer the same punishment as Antimachus, which seems to suggest a difference in status. Considered neutral, this *dēmosios*, who bears a surprising name, was found innocent of the wrongdoing committed by the magistrate: see Jacob, *Les esclaves publics*, 123-24.

these accounting skills that the *dēmosioi* were occasionally included in the work of levying taxes.[61] Through their association with the same duty over a period of several years, public slaves came to personify the consistent civic knowledge and skills that could never be accrued by magistrates, who were most often selected by lottery and replaced annually. In this sense, these slaves represented a powerful instrument of supervision that the civic community could use to monitor the activity of its own magistrates. In one of his legal speeches, Demosthenes implied that the Athenians would not hesitate to appeal to public slaves if they suspected a magistrate of using his position in the city to further his own interests.[62]

Beyond their work as accountants, public slaves in Classical Athens were entrusted with guaranteeing the authenticity of the coins in circulation and ensuring that the standards for weights and measures used in the city were followed. Nicophon's law, passed in 375/374 BCE and intended to combat the circulation of counterfeit money, stated that two public slaves—one in the Agora of Athens and one at Piraeus—were to control and guarantee the authenticity of currency circulating in the city.[63] Serving the city magistrates but also assisting private individuals, merchants, traders, and whoever might need their help, these public slaves were responsible for ensuring the good quality of the coins in circulation. Each man performed his duties as "auditor" (*dokimastēs*) differently. When he was not needed by the Council of Five Hundred, the town *dokimastēs*'s role revolved around the moneychangers' and bankers' stalls in the Agora. In contrast, his counterpart at Piraeus set up his stall alongside the "stele of Poseidon" (the precise location of which is unknown), waiting for merchants and individuals to come to him to verify their coins. This *dēmosios* was responsible for safeguarding the city against the infiltration of counterfeit money. In case of dispute, these slaves were the only judges of whether the currency used during a transaction was valid. By making this law, the Athenians were probably only ratifying the existence of a role that had

61. Demosthenes, *Against Androtion* (22) 70-71.

62. Demosthenes, *Against Androtion* (22) 71. It should be further observed that the inscriptions frequently give the personal name of the *dēmosios* who was active in these accounting tasks. This sort of reference most likely assumed the value of a signature through which the inventory or accounting transaction acquired its legal value.

63. Rhodes and Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions*, no. 25. It should be noted that Athenians distinguished between counterfeits and imitations made by foreign cities in the same metal, weight, and quality as the Athenian coins. If the "auditor" came across one of these imitations, he had a duty to return it to its owner, who was allowed to use it. However, if the coin appeared to be a counterfeit—a thin layer of silver concealing bronze or lead—or if the level of silver was lower than the Athenian standard, the *dēmosios* had to shear the coin in half and offer it to the shrine of the Mother of the Gods on the Agora. The position of the *dokimastēs* was still being mentioned at the end of the fourth century: see *IG* II^2 1492.137-38 (305/304). In an overabundant bibliography, the following works on mentions of the *dokimastēs* slave in law should be singled out: Thomas R. Martin, "Silver Coins and Public Slaves in the Athenian Law of 375/4 B.C," in *Mnemata: Papers in Memory of Nancy M. Waggoner*, ed. William E. Metcalf (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1991), 21-48; Christophe Feyel, "À propos de la loi de Nicophon. Remarques sur le sens de δόκιμος, δοκιμάζειν, δοκιμασία," *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes* 57, no. 1 (2003): 37-65.

been created as early as the fifth century. Indeed, inventories from 398/397 for the temple of the Hekatompedon on the Acropolis mention "false staters in a box, marked with the public seal by Lakon."[64] This Lakon was probably the "auditor" who discovered the forged staters that the Council paid into the treasury of Athena after having confiscated them.[65] The wording of the inscription also seems to indicate that the civic seal entrusted to the slave had to be implemented before such a coin could be withdrawn from circulation.

Nearly three centuries later, the Athenians again placed public slaves in the position of guarantors of civic courts. At the end of the second century BCE, three *dēmosioi* were assigned the special task of maintaining the standards (*skhōmata*) for setting the measures and weights (*metra kai ta stathma*) used in the city. Situated in three different places in Attica (Piraeus, Eleusis, and Skias, located near the Tholos in the Agora), these slaves had to "give a copy of the weights and measures to magistrates and to all those who might seek it."[66] The *agoranomoi* and merchants alike had to seek out these slave auditors to check the official weights and measures in the event of a disputed transaction.

Whether through the use of the city's seal, the control of its currency, the management of its records, or the preservation of standards of civic weights and measures, the *dēmosioi* were closely associated with the realm of civic writing. The Greek term *sphragis*, which can refer to both the public seal and the mark tattooed directly onto a slave's body, perhaps best describes this strange identity that united the figure of the slave with "civic marks."[67] It was thus the responsibility of a man whose status was literally inscribed on his skin to act as guardian of the city's seals and writing, and it fell to a man who was statutorily dispossessed of his own identity to guarantee civic ownership. The close bond between the slave and civic marks and seals is also at the heart of the most complete surviving account of a slave revolt in ancient Greece. In the third century BCE, a slave named Drimacus was said to have fled to the island of Chios with dozens of other slaves. Hiding out in the mountains overlooking the island, they allegedly established a kingdom and placed Drimacus at its head. Having spent several years raiding and looting neighboring coastal cities, these "maroon" slaves finally reached a truce with the free population of Chios. The slave-king Drimacus—who had units of measurement

64. *IG* II^2 1388.B.61-62. The same character appears to be mentioned in a series of inscriptions dating back to the early decades of the fourth century: *IG* II^2 1400.57, 1401.44-45, 1415.19-20, 1424a.311-12, 1428.149, and 1443.207-8.

65. It is quite possible that a very similar role was played by the *dēmosioi* upon the arrival of wheat in Athens. Indeed, many indications suggest that a public slave was responsible for measuring and evaluating wheat shipments unloaded in Piraeus. In particular, see Dinarchus, frag. 8.2.

66. *IG* II^2 1013.40-41. The *dēmosioi* were placed under the authorities of the prytanes for Skias, the *epimelētēs* for the Piraeus market, and the hierophants at Eleusis. If the words of the *oiketai tēs Tholou* are to be believed, the role continued into the imperial period: see *IG* II^2 1799.25.

67. On the slave mark or *sphragis*, see Franz Joseph Dölger, *Sphragis: eine altchristliche Taufbezeichnung in ihren Beziehungen zur profanen und religiösen Kultur des Altertums* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1911), 23-31.

and weight (*metra kai stathma*) and a personal seal (*sphragida idian*) designed to inaugurate his new authority—made the following solemn announcement to the denizens of Chios by way of reconciliation: "Whatever I take from any of you, I'll take it using these measures and weights; after I take what I need, I'll seal up the storerooms with this seal and otherwise leave them as they are."[68] Did this slave-king, master of the civic standard for weights and measures as well as holder of the community's seal, really exist? The historicity of Nymphodurus of Syracuse's chronicle is contested, but as it presents itself as an account of the foundation of a *doulopolis*—a city of slaves—it should be read in light of the traditional foundation narratives of cities. When recounting the deeds that mark the rise of a city, these accounts often insist on the establishment of the great civic sanctuary and the creation of the new political community's magistracies and institutions. Within this implausible city of slaves, the creation of a civic seal and the introduction of standard weights and measures, which together underpinned the sovereignty of Drimacus's kingdom, were thus the equivalent of the foundation of the sanctuary for the civic deity and the political institutions at the heart of the only communities that could truly bear the name of "*polis*," those composed of free men.

To Serve and to Punish

Among the clerks who conducted inventories of public goods and the guardians of the city's standards and archives, one should be wary of imagining that all *dēmosioi* were gentle scholars and experts in accounting and handling public records. They often embodied the most intimidating aspect of civic authority. In the Rhodian Perea, on the local scale of the *ktoina* (civic subdivision), public slaves were given the duty of quelling civil disobedience, as a religious regulation suggested: "If someone violates this regulation the *hierothytos* [the priest in charge of the sacrifice], the public slave, and any other citizen of the *dēmos* may prevent this."[69] Public slaves were also involved in monitoring activities taking place at the gymnasium, the late Hellenistic city's "other agora,"[70] where they maintained order or patrolled the perimeter enclosure.[71]

68. Nymphodorus of Syracuse's account was passed down by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 6.265d-266e (*FGrHist*, 572 F4). See the detailed reading in Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales: And Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), especially 78-89.

69. Alain Bresson, *Recueil des inscriptions de la Périe rhodienne* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991), 102.15 (decree from Tymnus regulating the use of a shrine to Zeus and Hera).

70. In particular, see the remarks of Louis Robert, "Inscriptions d'Aphrodisias" [1966], in *Opera Minora Selecta. Épigraphie et antiquités grecques* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1989), 6:46 n. 7.

71. In reality, the *dēmosioi* were often the only staff permanently tied to the gymnasium. See: Max Fränkel, ed., *Die Inschriften von Pergamon* (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1890-1895), 2.52 (from Pergamum and dating from the first century BCE, according to Fränkel); Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, ed., *Die Inschriften von Priene* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1906), 112.110-12 (Priene, 84 CE). At Delos, they were called *palaistrophulax* (*ID* 316.117, 338A.ab.67, and 372A.98-99) or *hupēretēs eis palaistran* (*ID* 290.108, 440A.27, and 444A.27).

In this respect, the documentation from Athens is, yet again, unparalleled. A large contingent of Athenian *dēmosioi* was placed at the service of a mysterious group of magistrates, who were described in the ancient sources according to their number, "the Eleven."[72] These magistrates appear at famous arrests in Athenian history, like those of Theramenes or Phocion during the Classical period or the arrest of the apostle Paul much later.[73] They were primarily responsible for running the small building southwest of the Agora that was used as a prison (*desmōterion*), where a corps of public slaves ensured the surveillance of the detainees.[74] The office of city executioner was probably also placed under their authority.[75] There is little doubt as to why a slave was entrusted with such a role, for that was how the Athenians prevented the *miasma*—the pollution associated with a crime, particularly one committed by a citizen—from infecting the city as a whole. The lowliness associated with the slave's status immunized the community from the risk of religious pollution that it would have incurred by being involved in the murder of a freeman. When it was carried out by a slave, the crime lost its power to harm the community.

The coercive power placed in the hands of the *dēmosioi* was, especially in Athens, embodied by an urban police force composed entirely of slaves.[76] At first glance, the matter is disconcerting: at no time did the Athenians imagine that public safety could rest on a body of citizens that would have a monopoly on violence, and during the Classical period there was never any police force in Athens other than the body of slaves that was made available to different magistrates. Ancient authors named the slaves that historians have grown accustomed to calling "Scythian archers" in the following terms: *Toxotai* (archers), *Scythai* (Scythians), or *Speusinioi*, named after the man who founded the corps of slaves, Speusinius.[77] Formed between

72. Lysias, *Against the Corn Dealers* (22) 2; Pseudo-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* 52.
73. For Theramenes, see Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.54-55 and Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 14.5.1-4. For Phocion, see Plutarch, *Phocion* 35.1 and 36.1. Their intervention in the arrest of the Athenian generals returning from Arginusae in 406 should also be mentioned: see Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 13.102. For Paul, see Acts 16:23-36.
74. Plato, *Phaedo* 59c and *Crito* 43a. The delegation of such a task to public slaves was common in many cities, for Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia and Pontus, asked the Emperor Trajan whether to respect this custom in the second century CE: see Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.19.1.
75. Aeschines clearly refers him as a *dēmosios*: see Aeschines, *On the Embassy* (2) 12, and all the evidence presented by Jacob, *Les esclaves publics*, 81-82.
76. In 403, the Thirty allegedly constituted a variant of this body, recruiting three hundred slaves carrying whips to control the city: see Pseudo-Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* 35.1. For the exact status of these three hundred *mastigophoroi*, see Paolo A. Tuci, "Arcieri sciti, esercito e Democrazia nell'Atene del V secolo a.C.," *Aevum* 78, no. 1 (2004): 3-18, here pp. 13-14.
77. The ethnic composition of the group is, however, less clear-cut than it seems. One cannot rule out the possibility of the Thracians or the Getae serving in this body, which the Athenians continued to present as Scythian. On the role of Speusinius, see: Pollux, 8.131-132; Souda and Photius on the topic of *Toxotai*; and the Scholiast to Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 54. See also Paolo A. Tuci, "Gli arcieri sciti nell'Atene del V Secolo a.C.," in

the end of the Persian Wars (479 BCE) and the Peace of Callias (449 BCE), the corps was made up of three hundred slaves when it was founded, but may have reached around a thousand archers by the late fifth century.[78] The primary mission of these Scythian archers, who were armed with a whip and very likely a bow and perhaps a small dagger, was to ensure public order in the city. If the comedies of Aristophanes are to be believed, few places in the city of Athens escaped their intervention: in both the Assembly and the Council as well as during festivals and at the markets, these slaves were the custodians of public order. There is little evidence of the Scythian archers' activity dating from beyond the first two decades of the fourth century. Many historians have concluded from this that the Athenians disbanded the group, since the cost of maintaining it had probably grown too expensive. This hypothesis calls for a certain amount of skepticism, however. Rather than the police force composed of slaves, was it not the primary source that treated this entity, namely ancient comedy, that disappeared during the first decades of the fourth century?[79]

Artisans Serving the City

Unlike the archivists of the Metrōon or the *dokimastēs* of the Agora, many public slaves performed tasks that required no particular expertise. Public slaves working in civic mints evidently fell into this category.[80] Above all, numerous *dēmosioi* worked on civic construction projects. Thus, in the middle of the second century, Eumenes II of Pergamum provided the city of Delphi with slaves (*sōmata*) who assisted in repairing the theater of the Panhellenic sanctuary.[81] A century later, the Thasians made public slaves available by decree to a certain Stilbon "for the repair and construction" of a sanctuary in the city that was probably dedicated to Artemis.[82]

Il cittadino, lo straniero, il barbaro, fra integrazione ed emarginazione nell'Antichità, ed. Maria Gabriela Angeli Bertinelli and Angela Donati (Rome: Bretschneider, 2005), 375-89.

78. See the dense discussion in Jacob, *Les esclaves publics*, 64-72; the detailed account in Tuci, "Gli arcieri," 376; and the synthesis in Jean-Christophe Couvenhes, "L'introduction des archers scythes, esclaves publics, à Athènes: la date et l'agent d'un transfert culturel," in *Transferts culturels et droit dans le monde grec et hellénistique*, ed. Bernard Legras (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012), 99-119, here p. 103.

79. Some, like Couvenhes, trace their disappearance to the end of the fifth century: see Couvenhes, "L'introduction des archers scythes," 116. The date 378/377 has, however, generally been retained because it corresponds to the appearance of the *syllogeis tou dēmou*, who subsequently appear to have maintained order in the Assembly. Virginia J. Hunter is much more circumspect—and rightly so, in my opinion: see Virginia J. Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits 420-320 B.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 148-49. Referring, around 325, to the rope that protected the meetings of the Council of the Areopagus and the proclamation of the *hupēretēs* (who requested that all spectators leave the place of public meetings), Demosthenes might in fact be alluding to the Scythian archers: see Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton I* (25) 23.

80. See the Scholiast to Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1007.

81. *FD* III 3.233.

82. Julien Fournier and Clarisse Prêtre, "Un mécène au service d'une déesse thasienne : décret pour Stilbôn," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 130, no. 1 (2006): 487-97, ll. 9-12.

However nothing offers a more lively portrait of a building site in the ancient Greek world than the accounts of the construction site at Eleusis inscribed by the Athenians in the middle of the fourth century. In this project, public slaves can be identified performing very different tasks, such as transporting stones to the shrine, weighing tools before the shrine's architect, and accounting work for expenses incurred by the magistrates.[83]

Serving the Gods

Finally, the ways in which the *dēmosioi* participated in the religious life of cities should not be disregarded. In many cases, the presence of public slaves involved a form of delegation of competence by the civic authorities, who assigned part of their slave-labor force to the authorities of different shrines. This was the case for the *dēmosioi Eleusinothen*, slaves of the city of Athens who were placed in the service of the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone.[84] At the end of the second century, the city of Delphi's decree in honor of Nicomedes III of Bithynia and Queen Laodike stated that slaves were offered by the king "to the deity and the city." These slaves undoubtedly figured as civic property assigned by delegation to the sanctuary.[85] The epigraphy of sanctuaries shows the extent to which a large number of public slaves assisted priests in the organization of ritual activities.[86]

Serving in a sanctuary was one thing, but exercising priestly functions was another. Although the priesthood was primarily conceived of in Classical Athens as a form of magistracy, the priest who officiated as part of a civic cult was placed in an intermediate position between the community and the gods, a role that required him to be unquestionably honorable. It is therefore striking that priesthoods were sometimes entrusted to the *dēmosioi*, as evidenced by an inscription at Delos where, during the second half of the second century (139 to 137 BCE),

83. On the *lithagōgountēs dēmosioi*, see *IE* 159.49-50 and very likely also l. 62 (336/335 or 333/332). On the *epistatēs* of the *dēmosioi*, see *IE* 177.62 (329/328) and 159.58 (336/335 or 333/332). On the slave in charge of accounting, see *IE* 177.12 (329/328). On the slaves who weighed tools, see *IE* 157.26-29 (336).

84. *IE* 159.44.

85. Rousset, *Le territoire de Delphes*, 31.9 and 11-12 (102/101 BCE). In Hellenistic and imperial Asia Minor, it is sometimes difficult to establish a functional distinction between the *dēmosioi* and sacred slaves, who were described as *hierodouloi*: at the beginning of the imperial period in the shrine of Zeus Labraundos, under the control of Mylasa, public slaves and sacred slaves were paid through the sanctuary's funds and were both subject to the same punishment should they fail in the mission entrusted to them. See Jonas Crampa, *Labraunda: Swedish Excavations and Researches*, vol. 3, *The Greek Inscriptions*, part 2, *13-133* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute in Athens, 1972), nos. 56, 59, 60.7-8, and 69.

86. In Athenian Delos during the first and second centuries, the *dēmosioi* played an important role in the management of cults to foreign gods around Mount Kynthos: see *ID* 2232 (107/106), 2234 (106/105), 2249 (107/106), 2250 (108/107), 2251 (108/107), 2252 (108/107), 2253 (106/105), and 2628a (108/107). At the sanctuary of Zeus Kynthios and Athena Kynthia, the name of the *dēmosios* who played a similar role is missing: see *ID* 1892 (97/96).

Athenians entrusted the priesthood of the cult of Serapis to a *dēmosios* for two consecutive years.[87] This exceptional decision no doubt reflects the civic authorities' temporary takeover of the shrine for unknown reasons.[88] Before the priesthood was finally granted to citizens, the city apparently took control of the cult by entrusting its practice to public slaves. In any case, the inscription confirms that there was no ban prohibiting a *dēmosios* from becoming priest of a cult.

The variety of tasks assigned to the *dēmosioi* recalls an obvious fact: far from demarcating a specific area of productivity, the *douleia* primarily delimited a legal status. While dozens of public slaves could work together on the same site (as observed at Eleusis in the fourth century) or in the service of the same institution (such as the *Boulē*), they performed many different roles. Beyond a shared servile status, the Eleusinian stone carrier and the man charged with keeping the construction site's accounts actually had very little in common. The degree of specialization or expertise reflected in their work—and consequently their purchase price—could vary greatly. Slaves working in city mints did not have the scarce and highly sought-after expertise of the *dokimastēs*, who were in charge of verifying the authenticity of the coins circulating in the city. Similarly, while some public slaves were sufficiently known to the Athenians to be assigned a particular task by a vote in the Assembly, slaves who swept the streets or ferried stones on construction sites were no more than anonymous faces. In this way, their shared identity as slaves concealed very different stations in life.

Neutralized Politics

Slaves ensured the civic community's surveillance of its magistrates with an expert eye, performed ignominious tasks so that citizens would not have to, and provided an essential workforce for major civic building projects—the Greek cities had no shortage of reasons for keeping slaves in their service. Certain positions even conferred de facto power on the *dēmosioi* over members of the civic community. Yet Platonic philosophy only understands the *dēmosioi*'s function under the paradigm of "service" (*hupēresia* or *hupēreteia*), as opposed to the power of authority—*archē*—available to the magistrates. In Book 4 of *Politics*, Aristotle identifies all the roles that he considers necessary in civic life in order to arrive at the most accurate definition of a magistracy. He goes on to explicitly distinguish political functions from economic functions and subordinate functions (*hupēretikai*), which usually fell to slaves. Having made this distinction, he concludes by dismissing the latter category from the

87. *ID* 2610.2-3. On this inscription, see Laurent Bricault, "Les prêtres du Sarapieion C de Délos," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 120, no. 2 (1996): 597-616.
88. Weiss, *Sklave der Stadt*, 186; more caution is shown by Bricault, "Les prêtres du Sarapieion." For another, more mysterious case in Rhodes, see *IG* XII 1.31. It is possible that in this instance the *dēmosioi* collectively took over the functions of public worship in honor of Zeus Atabyrios.

sphere of the *archai* without a hint of ambiguity.[89] The *dēmosioi* were not magistrates, and their activity was considered foreign to the world of politics.

Public slaves were certainly paid, and on a scale that seems to have been quite similar to the sums paid to magistrates during the Classical period.[90] To understand what distinguished a *dēmosios* from a magistrate, one must look elsewhere. The city's political calendar was based on the annual replacement of magistrates and, for all those who were randomly selected by lottery, on the principle of non-iteration, which specified that no citizen could hold a magistracy for two consecutive years. The *dēmosioi*, on the other hand, often remained tied to the same job for several years in a row due to their specific skills, and Gustave Glotz did not hesitate to evoke the "hidden power" that these slaves in fact wielded over their "apparent masters," the magistrates.[91] In fourth-century Athens, Opsigonus worked under the orders of two different magistrates in the city's arsenals, just as Eutuchides served at the shrine at Delos for three consecutive years in the late second century. During the imperial period at Akmonia, the slave Hermogenes even held the position of vote-counter at the Assembly for seventeen years in a row! Furthermore, these slaves did not fulfill their duties in a collective way. The vast majority of inscriptions present the *dēmosios*'s work as being undertaken by one slave alone. Even when several public slaves worked together on a common task, there is no evidence that they were organized under a collective structure with each member being jointly liable. Instead, all the evidence points to the understanding that the procedures for overseeing magistrates, which lay at the heart of civic life, did not apply to public slaves.

It should also be noted that some tasks in Classical Athens were reserved for slaves because of the expertise they required, like those of the *dokimastēs* in charge of checking the currency circulating in the Agora and in Piraeus. This simple fact provides an exemplary demonstration of one of the essential components of democratic ideology during the Classical period: the deliberate exclusion from politics of expert knowledge, which was perceived as a threat to the democratic order. It was not that the democratic system was the "dictatorship of the ignorant," as Plato claimed. The expert *dēmosios* was in fact the product of an original civic epistemology, which emphasized the horizontal exchange of knowledge between equals and implied, in return, the relegation of expert knowledge from the political sphere.[92]

The institution of public slavery is thus indicative of the division at work when it comes to defining the political sphere itself. Of course, the political culture of ancient Greece was broader than what is sometimes blandly understood as

89. Aristotle, *Politics* 1299a.
90. Thus, *IE* 177.4-5 and 159.60.
91. Gustave Glotz, *La cité grecque* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1928; repr. 1953), 304.
92. For an initial approach to the question, see Paulin Ismard, "Public Slaves, Politics and Expertise in Classical Athens," *Center for Hellenic Studies: Research Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (2013): http://wp.chs.harvard.edu/chs-fellows/2013/08/30/public-slavery-politics-and-expertise-in-classical-athens/. See also Ismard, *La démocratie contre les experts*, 131-65.

"politics," for it cannot simply be summed up as the competition for power within civic institutions. Citizenship was also expressed in many areas of civic life (such as religious practices, the economy, and customs), which extended far beyond simple affiliation with an institution.[93] But it is also true that the boundaries of the political sphere in the city were enacted through a rigorous division, which relegated to the margins—or to an "offstage" area—techniques and knowledge that were necessary for the administration of public affairs. Emerging from a suspension of the rules governing the political field, the *dēmosioi*'s activity can therefore be said to concern a form of *neutralized* politics.

A "Public Service" in Classical and Hellenistic Cities?

While the political philosophy of the Classical period gave no particular name to this sphere of action, defining it negatively in contrast with the order of the *archē*, an Athenian decree from the late second century suggests there might be another—positive—definition at work within the civic rhetoric. The decree required the *dēmosioi* in charge of weights and measures to file in the civic archives a copy of the list of objects received by their predecessor, which they were in turn meant to pass on to their successors. If they did not respect this ruling, it stated, "they shall not be allowed to receive wages for any *eleutheria leitourgia*."[94] In the literal sense of "free service," the expression *eleutheria leitourgia* is difficult to understand. It differs from the more common expression found in civic decrees, which used *politikē leitourgia*—or "service to the city"—to refer to the action of a public doctor or an important magistrate in the service of his fellow citizens. Compared to this conventional formula, *eleutheria leitourgia* clearly refers to a somewhat different reality, and some have translated the expression by the term "public service."[95] But there is a reason why this notion is difficult to translate: "*eleutheria leitourgia*" can only be rendered as "public service" in the city if "public" is substituted for—or equated with—freedom.

Far from trivial, therefore, the expression provides a glimpse of the unique infrastructure that bound together the status of the citizen and the public sphere in the ancient city, superbly demonstrated by Yan Thomas. In the ancient world, freedom was not understood as a fact of nature that the law was designed to protect.

93. Vincent Azoulay and Paulin Ismard, "Les lieux du politique dans l'Athènes classique. Entre structures institutionnelles, idéologie civique et pratiques sociales," in *Athènes et le politique. Dans le sillage de Claude Mossé*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel and François de Polignac (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), 271-309.

94. The expression is the result of a reconstitution that leaves little doubt, since it is based on the comparison between two inscriptions of the same decree: lines 53-54 of *IG* II^2 1013 can only be restored in light of *SEG* 24.147.5, according to Benjamin Meritt, "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 7, no. 8 (1938): 77-160, no. 27.

95. This is, for example, the translation proposed by Michel M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; repr. 2006), 240.

Nothing was more foreign to the ancient city than the present-day naturalistic conception of freedom, which makes it an individual right firmly anchored in the natural order of the world and existing prior to the formation of any political community. Instead, the citizen's freedom was understood as the product of the city's very existence, the result of a set of institutions and practices that constituted civic life. In legal terms, the citizen's freedom was thus identified with the public sphere in a way that no one in the city could wrest away: in the same way that public or sacred goods were inappropriable, a citizen could not sell himself for the profit of a third party and be divested of his or her liberty. At the foundation of any city, wrote Cicero, lie "things serving for common use, which we call public," among which were included all public goods and places, the use of which mapped out the boundaries of the citizen community.[96] In other words, citizen status was primarily linked to the common use of public goods and was not an individual quality, founded in nature, that city laws were responsible for protecting. In this sense, says Thomas, who offers a modern-day perspective on this adage that is as surprising as it is productive, "Citizenship cannot be separated from certain collective utilities, which today are called public services, although it is clear that originally these services were what defined the city by being irreducible and permanent in themselves."[97] If "public" and "free" are used interchangeably, then the community of citizens may ultimately be considered reducible to those persons entitled to share in common goods and services. But the formula *eleutheria leitourgia*, which likens the work of the public slave to a "free service," also illuminates—by omission—the singularity of the slave's condition. What this expression in fact does, in its own way, is summarize the paradox at the heart of the "Greek miracle"—an experiment in political freedom whose essential nature rested on slave labor. In order for these public services to exist, without which citizenship itself could not have existed, there also had to be slaves. This fact puts the *dēmosioi* in the paradoxical situation of being both the outcast third party and the guarantor of civic order. Whether verifying the coins in circulation, maintaining order in the city, controlling magistrates' campaign spending, or watching over the city archives in the Metrōon, these slaves placed in the city's service were the agents of communal liberty.

The *Polis* against the State?

Nevertheless, what the singular system of public slavery reveals about what might properly be called the statal dimension of the Greek city remains to be seen. Here, a comparative detour into the realm of social anthropology is required. This field of study has continuously highlighted the role of royal slaves in the creation of political authority or a state apparatus that expands its influence at the expense

96. Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 91.
97. Yan Thomas, "L'indisponibilité de la liberté en droit romain," *Hypothèses* 1 (2006): 379-89, here p. 387.

of inherited power.[98] Among both the Umayyads and the Abbasids in the early days of Islam, in the African kingdoms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or in Han China, the same story seems to repeat itself: slaves tied to the service of the sovereign are transformed into perfect instruments of his power once he begins to assert his authority against members of his own family.[99] The use of slaves is easily explained. With no right to form kinship structures, they were unable to exercise power in the name of their family, which might otherwise challenge royal power. Excluded from the sphere of kinship and with no rights other than those granted by the sovereign (which could be easily revoked), the slave in no way compromised the charismatic appeal that underlay the ruler's power. The slave also appeared to ward off any threat of the bureaucratization and routinization of power. In this sense, the role of the royal slave grew out of a paradox: while he was simultaneously involved in asserting a form of sovereign authority liberated from the structures of lineage, his true function was to cover up the scandal that any kind of state apparatus represented.

This broadly painted picture is not unfamiliar to the world of the Greek city. Insofar as they handled the running of the civic administration beyond the regular rotation of magistrates, the presence of the *dēmosioi* was a reminder of the inconvenient irruption of the state into the affairs of a civic community that, by claiming to make the orders of the *archē* (authority) and the *koinon* (the community) coincide, imagined that it was self-transparent. The mere existence of these "public officials" attested to the limits of a city's self-institution. Thus, by entrusting slaves with these types of tasks, which, while essential, were carefully kept outside the political realm, the Athenians attempted to conceal the bureaucratic or administrative dimension inherent to the functioning of democracy by projecting it onto a figure of

98. The following are cases taken from very different contexts: Sunil Kumar, "Service, Status, and Military Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate: Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in Chatterjee and Eaton, *Slavery and South Asian History*, 83-114; Pierre Mounier, "La dynamique des interrelations politiques : le cas du sultanat de Zinder (Niger)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 154, 39, no. 2 (1999): 367-86; Emmanuel Chinenyengozi Ejiogu, "State Building in the Niger Basin in the Common Era and Beyond, 1000-Mid 1800s: The Case of Yorubaland," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46, no. 6 (2011): 593-614; Claude Tardits, "Le royaume bamoum," in *Princes et serviteurs du royaume. Cinq études de monarchies africaines*, ed. Claude Tardits (Paris: Société d'ethnographie, 1987), 107-35, here pp.131-34; Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Captifs ruraux et esclaves impériaux du Songhay," in Meillassoux, *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, 99-134; and Sato Kentaro, "Slave Elites and the Saqāliba in al-Andalus in the Umayyad Period," in Miura and Philips, *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa*, 25-40. For a quite different approach, which does not view the institution of royal slaves as radically breaking with categories of lineage, see Emmanuel Terray, *Une histoire du royaume Abron du Gyaman. Des origines à la conquête coloniale* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).

99. Paradoxically, this power could even be passed down through the union between the sovereign's slaves and princesses of "royal" lineage, as was the case in the sixteenth-century Ottoman court. While these imperial sons-in-law were chosen, as an act of gratitude and a mark of honor, from amongst the sultan's *kul* slaves and to the detriment of the original princely sons-in-law, such a union did not grant them "a real place in the ranks of the royal family." See Juliette Dumas, "Les perles de nacre du sultanat. Les princesses ottomanes (mi XV^{e}-mi XVIII^{e} siècle)" (PhD diss., EHESS, 2013), 121.

absolute otherness. In other words, the use of slaves made it possible to conceal the inevitable chasm between state and society as well as between the necessary administration of public life and the democratic ideal.

In this sense, the institution can be analyzed in terms of "resistance to the state," a phrase coined by Pierre Clastres.[100] Let us briefly recall the two fundamental aspects of the "Copernican revolution" raised in *Society Against the State*.[101] The first consists in not conceiving the state in terms of a form of unification (or universalization) that achieves the common good against the division of the social group, according to the contractual tradition of Classical-era political philosophy, but instead imagining it primarily as a force for separation. According to this perspective, the essence of the state's institution consists in the establishment of a power struggle, which is itself the cause of all forms of social division.[102] The state is thus a "structure separate from society, which divides society from the outside while claiming to unify all its features." The second aspect amounts to considering primitive society as a fully political society with, at its heart, an ongoing process through which the community as a whole continuously reasserts its control over each of its components, making it impossible to establish any form of power that could be detached from it: "The essential feature (that is, relating to the essence) of primitive society is its exercise of absolute and complete power over all the elements of which it is composed; the fact that it prevents any one of the sub-groups that constitute it from becoming autonomous; that it holds all the internal movements—conscious and unconscious—that maintain social life to the limits and direction prescribed by the society."[103] In this sense, the chieftaincy of the Tupi-Guarani tribes considered by Clastres seems to represent nothing more than a simulacrum of separated power, its function essentially consisting in embodying the community as a unit. "Under the obligation of innocent speech," the chief does not seem to have exercised any form of power.[104]

At the same time, Clastres attributes to the Greeks the origin of Western society's singular tendency to see "the essence of politics in the social division between the dominant and the dominated, between those who know and therefore

100. Claudia de Oliveira Gomes has suggested viewing opposition to the tyrannical model in the Classical city in terms of resistance, using the work of Clastres as a starting point: see Claudia de Oliveira Gomes, *La cité tyrannique. Histoire politique de la Grèce archaïque* (Rennes: PUR, 2007). I myself doubt that it is possible to speak of the growth of the state apparatus in tyrannical cities (see my review in *Annales HSS* 64, no. 5 (2009): 1167-69), but Oliveira Gomes's perspective, which does not address the issue of public slavery, does touch on something indisputable about the Classical city when she refers to the existence of "the statist ideology of a stateless society" (p. 148).

101. Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989). The term "Copernican revolution" refers to the first chapter of the work, "Copernicus and the Savages."

102. Pierre Clastres, *Recherches d'anthropologie politique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1980), 204-6.

103. Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 212. He goes on to add: "Primitive society, then, is a society from which nothing escapes, which lets nothing get outside itself, for all the exits are blocked."

104. Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 218; Clastres, *Recherches*, 105 and 175-77.

command and those who do not know and therefore obey," citing Heraclitus, Plato, and Aristotle to support his argument.[105] For him, this Greek point of reference is the obstacle that renders the notion of political thought at work in primitive society incomprehensible to us.[106] And yet a historian of the city has difficulty situating himself or herself in the Greece evoked by Clastres, who, calling upon the One over Many argument, refers more to Platonic metaphysics than the reality of civic communities during the Classical and Hellenistic eras. Nicole Loraux has even remarked that the historian of Greece can generally feel "on familiar territory among Clastres's Indians."[107] Reading *Society Against the State* has, furthermore, played a key role in the psychoanalytical direction Loraux has taken in her work, seeing in Clastres's notion of the "exorcism of the state" a process that could be formulated in terms of the unconscious and repression. The "division" of the city, so dear to Loraux,[108] should thus be read in light of Clastres's concept of indivision, which she interprets as "division glimpsed, measured to the full extent of its destructive power, and lucidly rejected."[109]

Can the Athenians of the Classical period be seen as the distant cousins of the Tupi-Guarani tribes? In any case, it should be clarified that the ancient Greek city did not, as Clastres suggested, conceive of political authority in terms of "dominant and dominated," "those who command and those who obey," or "those who know and those who do not know."[110] The "magistrates" of the city did not "represent" the *dēmos*, they were delegates or envoys and theoretically remained under the permanent control of all citizens. Aristotle also states that political power was distinct from domestic power in that "the ruler should learn by being ruled."[111] A city in which the same people always obeyed and others commanded was a city "consisting of slaves and masters, not of free men."[112] In the ancient Greek city, the principle of reciprocity at the heart of political organization resulted in the rotation of responsibilities and the lottery system, two institutional practices that underpinned the equality of the civic body. It should also be added that, unlike the present-day conception of the expert-governor, the Athenians of the Classical era did not consider that mastery of specific knowledge or expertise could legitimize the possession of political authority.

105. Ibid., 186; Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 216-18.
106. Clastres, *Recherches*, 148.
107. Nicole Loraux, "Notes sur l'un, le deux et le multiple," in *L'esprit des lois sauvages. Pierre Clastres ou une nouvelle anthropologie politique*, ed. Miguel Abensour (Paris: Le Seuil, 1987), 155-71, here p. 157.
108. Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, trans. Corrine Pache with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books 2002).
109. Loraux, "Notes sur l'un," 164.
110. Ibid., 162.
111. Aristotle, *Politics* 1277b.
112. Aristotle, *Politics* 1295b.

As soon as this is recognized, it becomes clear that the issue of whether the Greek city can be considered state-like gains nothing from being expressed as a clear-cut alternative between equating the *polis* with a "stateless" society and likening it to the modern state. Understood from a more flexible perspective, the dynamic that the *polis* maintained with the statal form instead results from a tension that, by the very nature of Greek political thought, had to remain unresolved. It is true that the *polis* was a community of citizens exercising their sovereignty through political institutions over a clearly specified territory. Of course, power occupied a prominent place in the city and, in this minimalistic—even derisory—sense,[113] the city was a state. And there was indeed a form of power to which all members of society could relate, even if this political stage was not set apart from the community in order to transcend it. But it is no less true that the existence of a state as an administrative center—or separate authority—was problematic for a civic community that planned to uphold all forms of power in the constitution of its own communal life.

In this respect, the development of public slavery at the beginning of the Classical period can be parsed as a mark of "resistance" on the part of civic society to the emergence of a state apparatus—or, in Clastres's words, a type of "coding" through which society intended to preserve its own indivision.[114] That was what this surprising institution was all about: at the same time as they were authorizing slaves to do work that bestowed on them de facto power and expertise, cities dishonored these offices through the inherent lowliness linked to the status of those who enacted them. In theory, the use of slaves—"animated tools" in the hands of the people—ensured that no administrative apparatus could obstruct the will of the *dēmos*. By making the people who were in charge of running it invisible, the city prevented the rise of a state that could establish itself as an autonomous authority and, if the situation arose, turn against it. This kind of provision thereafter endowed the public slave with a unique status as the city's own institutional blind spot, the person who could hold up a mirror reflecting the enigma of the state. Pierre Vidal-Naquet has brilliantly suggested that the artisan was the "hidden hero of Greek history."[115] What if the public slave was the hidden hero of the Greek state?

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113. According to Castoriadis: "There can be, there has been, and we hope that there will again be societies without a State, namely, without a hierarchically organized bureaucratic apparatus separate from society and dominating it ... . A society without such a State is possible, conceivable, and desirable. But a society without explicit institutions of power is an absurdity into which both Marx and anarchism lapsed." Castoriadis, "Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime," trans. David Ames Curtis, *Constellations* 4, no. 1 (1997): 1-18, p. 1.
114. Clastres, *Recherches*, 109.
115. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World*, trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 9.