

Lyttkens, Carl Hampus; Gerding, Henrik

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Carl Hampus Lyttkens
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Understanding the politics of Perikles around 450 BC

The benefits of an economic perspective

Carl Hampus Lyttkens*and Henrik Gerding**

April 2015

*Department of Economics, Lund University, Sweden.

Carl_Hampus.Lyttkens@nek.lu.se

<http://www.nek.lu.se/kontakt/nek-cly>.

**Classical Archaeology and Ancient history, Lund University, Sweden.

Henrik.Gerding@klass.lu.se;

Abstract

Perikles is usually seen as a great statesman and clever leader of the Athenians. In the mid fifth century BC, he seems however to have been in serious political trouble and may well have been in danger of losing the struggle for power and of being ostracised. The fact that his incentives changed considerably at this point in time is ignored in traditional historical accounts. In contrast, we see the fierce competition as a motivation for several important policy measures introduced by Perikles at this particular time: the pay to jurors, the new law on citizenship (which has been a puzzle to many historians), and the building projects on the Acropolis and elsewhere. Compared to traditional analyses, an economic rational-actor approach thus provides a diachronic analytical benefit by focusing on the way incentives change over time and it provides a synchronic benefit by dealing with various decisions in a common framework.

Keywords: economics; ancient history; Athens; Perikles; law on citizenship; Parthenon; payment to jurors

JEL classification: B40, K37, N43

1. Introduction

Perikles is usually presented as a great statesman and an astute politician, for many years the undisputed leader of the Athenians, and the initiator of the great building projects on the Acropolis that we still admire today. We suggest in this article that he probably was even more astute than modern scholarship has given him credit for. Concomitantly this analysis demonstrates the usefulness of an economic approach to ancient society.

In recent years, economists have increasingly been involved in the analysis of the ancient world, bringing rational-actor models to the fore.¹ For a long while, the position of Finley (1999) dominated the scene, namely that economic theory was of no use for the study of the ancient world. Finley's standpoint has however increasingly been questioned and several scholars from the vantage point of the humanities now argue for the potential usefulness of an institutional economics approach.²

Perhaps the most important characteristic of an economic approach is the focus on individual incentives (economics being deductive and individualistic). If an economist sees a change in behaviour, she immediately asks herself how and if incentives have changed at the individual level. Conversely, if the economist sees incentives changing, she is immediately on the lookout for reactions from individual decision makers. The core of rationality in the economic paradigm is the assumption that individuals have reasonably well-defined preferences over the outcomes of their actions (and strive for the best outcome for themselves). This is often (but not always) a powerful analytical tool. The following discussion demonstrates two concrete ways in which an economic rational-actor perspective can add to our understanding of antiquity, namely by focussing our attention on how incentives change over time and by placing several different actions in a common framework.³ While this paper ostensibly is focussed on explaining the activities of Perikles around 450 BC, the methodological considerations seem to us equally interesting.

Perikles introduced public pay for jurors in order to be able to compete with his main rival Kimon in popularity ([Aristotle] *The Athenian Constitution*, 27.2). This is the only major decision by Perikles that almost invariably is seen as a stratagem in the competition for power in mid-fifth

¹ Among others: Amemiya (2007); Bergh and Lyttkens (2014); Bitros and Karayiannis (2008); Fleck and Hanssen (2006); Halkos and Kyriazis (2010); Kaiser (2007); Kyriazis and Metaxas (2013); Economou, Kyriazis, and Metaxas (2014); Lyttkens (2006); Lyttkens (2010); Lyttkens (2013); Pitsoulis (2011); Tridimas (2011); Tridimas (2012).

² For example, the *Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Scheidel, Morris, and Saller (2007)); Bresson (2007, Ch. 1); Morris and Manning (2005).

³ Cf. Lyttkens 2013, Ch. 1, and Morris and Manning 2005, Ch. 1, on the relationship between economics and the humanities as approaches to the ancient societies.

century Athens. However, we believe at least two additional policies can be interpreted in this way: the law on citizenship and the great building projects on the Acropolis.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: first we provide the historical background that leads up to the days of Perikles, followed by a more detailed presentation of the 20-year segment of Athenian history that we are particularly interested in (sections 2-4). These are the years that witnessed Perikles appear on the political scene and become the leader of the Athenians. We will then discuss Perikles' actions in the years around 450 BC from an economic rational-actor perspective (section 5). We end the paper with some concluding remarks (section 6).

2. Background: the emergence of democratic institutions in Athens

In 510 BC, the rule of the Peisistratid family ended in Athens with the expulsion of Hippias, the surviving son of Peisistratos (his brother had been assassinated in 514). In the aristocratic struggle that followed, Kleisthenes of the Alkmaionid family was victorious, but only after having turned to the common people for support. Kleisthenes reformed the constitution in 508/7 and many argue that these reforms represented the birth of Athenian democracy, though it is difficult to see anything necessarily democratic in them.⁴

Whatever significance one attributes to Kleisthenes' reforms as such, they had at least two important indirect effects. Firstly, the political reorganization of Attica into 139 municipalities (demes) most probably weakened the position of the traditional aristocratic families by reducing the influence of old cultic centres.⁵ Secondly, this action by Kleisthenes set off a process where aristocratic leaders over time proposed democratising reforms to gain popular support, thereby ironically reducing the number of institutions that the aristocracy could control directly (Ober 1989; Lyttkens 2013).

The democratization process was probably significantly strengthened by the increasing military importance of the common people. The well-to-do farmers had been important since the development of hoplite warfare in the 7th century (heavy infantry in close formation), and they

⁴ Lyttkens 2013, Chapters 4.4 and 5.3. Kleisthenes did not, for example, reduce the power of the aristocratic council of the Areopagos, nor did he open up offices to the poor. "The elites could certainly hope to retain control of the state through elected magistracies, control of the debate in the Council and the Assembly, and the powers and the moral authority of the Areopagos" (Ober 1989, p. 73). Snodgrass (1980), p. 198, also notes the absence of anything that was *necessarily* democratic about Kleisthenes' reforms.

⁵ Whether Kleisthenes intentionally manipulated the deme-organisation to further the interest of his family will remain disputed as it seems impossible to determine which of the irregularities actually go back to Kleisthenes (Hansen (1999), p. 48).

had saved the Athenians at Marathon in 490 BC. The landless *thetes* (the lowest of four property classes) were becoming politically influential with the growing importance of the Athenian fleet, demonstrated at Salamis in 480 BC and repeatedly thereafter.⁶

By the end of the fifth century, Athens was a direct male democracy. All major decisions were taken in the Assembly where all citizens could attend, vote and speak. Issues for the assembly were prepared by the council, where members were appointed by lot. Other magistrates were also chosen by lot, as were the jurors in the popular courts. Magistrates and jurors were paid so that also the poor could serve. The top magistracies were theoretically closed to the lowest property class, but that rule probably ceased to function already in the fifth century. An exception to the general rule of appointing officials by lot was the board of 10 generals (*strategoi*) who were elected. The generals gradually took over the political leadership after 487, when the Athenians began appointing the archons (the previously most important officials) by lottery. The generals provided military leadership but also performed various other duties. According to Plutarch, Perikles was elected general 15 years running at the end of his career.

3. Athenian politics 465-445 BC

This section provides a conventional account of Athenian history 465-445 BC, an account which ignores many details and corresponding controversies which do not concern us here. Focussing on a limited number of factors is typical for a social science (structural) approach, which aims at identifying the main driving forces in society.

In the mid-460s, we find two major factions in Athens – one associated with Kimon, son of Miltiades, and the other associated with Ephialtes and his younger colleague Perikles. Of these, Ephialtes and Perikles are usually seen as the ones mostly basing their support on the common people, with Kimon mostly leaning on more elitist groups. Political competition had remained fierce after the reforms of Kleisthenes in 508/7. This is amply illustrated by the fate of some Athenian leaders at this time: Miltiades – the hero of Marathon – was fined 50 talents in a political trial, while Perikles father Xanthippos was ostracised in 484, and so was the famous Themistokles (the architect behind the Greek victory of Salamis) in the end of the 470s. Ostracism entailed a ten-year exile, but without loss of property or citizen rights.

⁶ Kallet (2000); Raaflaub (2007), pp. 138ff; Kyriazis and Metaxas (2013).

Around 465, Kimon was on top of things. Not only had he led the Athenian forces to several important victories, the most important being the battle at the river Eurymedon against the Persians, he was also able to persuade the Athenians to send help to Sparta in 462 when they faced a revolt by the helots at mount Ithome. This was a bit surprising since the Spartans had recently tried to help Thasos against Athens. The Spartans however declined the help of the Athenians when they arrived, and Kimon returned to Athens. Kimon was also able to fight off a charge of bribery brought by Perikles at this time.

During Kimon's absence, the aristocratic council of the Areopagos (the Areopagos for short) was deprived of most of its powers. This council was traditionally the most important political body in Athens, but not much is known in detail about its functions. Its many duties had probably included the scrutiny of magistrates before they took office (Hansen 1999, p. 37). The tasks of the Areopagos were now transferred to the council that prepared issues for the Assembly, to the Assembly and to the popular courts. The anti-Spartan faction had gained the upper hand, and when Kimon returned and tried to reverse the policy, he was ostracised in 461. Around 460 Ephialtes was murdered and Perikles took over as leader of this political faction. In 457, the archonship was opened to the third property class (the *zeugitai*).

The 450s saw Athens at war with Sparta and Corinth, and engaged in a conflict with the Persians in Egypt which was not a great success (to put it mildly). The expedition to Egypt cost the Athenians 250 ships and their crews (more on this anon). In the late 450s, the Athenians began establishing *kleruchies* in defeated poleis, thus making scarcity of land less of a problem. Also in the late 450s, Kimon was back on the scene, either because his 10-year exile had expired or because he was recalled early. Very soon after his return, Kimon was given command of an expedition to Cyprus. Under his command the Athenians were victorious. Kimon however soon died, perhaps in 450. The same year there was a truce with Sparta and shortly thereafter, there was peace with the Persians (the so called peace of Kallias).

Concomitantly, in 451/0, Perikles suggested a new law on citizenship, which restricted citizenship to those who had both a father and a mother who were themselves citizens. This is one of the relatively few events for which we have a specific date because the Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution* (26.4) gives the name of the eponymous archon, the chief magistrate after whom the year was named. Perikles also introduced public pay for jurors. In 449, finally, Perikles suggests in the Assembly that the temples on the Acropolis should be rebuilt, and so in 447 the Athenians began building the Parthenon. This means that the Athenians broke the oath that they had sworn

in 479 never to rebuild the temples destroyed by the Persians.⁷ In 445, the Athenians were hit by a famine and received a gift of grain from Psammetikos, ruler of Egypt.

4. A bleak future for Perikles around 450 BC?

If you are trained as an economist, there is one conclusion that strikes you in the development described above: Perikles seems to have been in serious trouble in around 451/0, especially if we add all pieces of information together. It is important not to be misled by the very strong position of Perikles in the late 430 and assume that such was always the case. In the late 450s, the situation was arguably decidedly different. Even after Kimon's death, Perikles in all probability had to contend with powerful political adversaries. As late as 443 BC, the new leader of the aristocratic faction was ostracised.⁸ Thereafter the oligarchs went underground (but did not disappear).

How should we describe the situation for Perikles 451/0 BC? *Firstly*, at this time, Kimon is back in town after his long exile, as mentioned above, and presumably with his fortune intact (cf. below). *Secondly*, about 454 the Egyptian campaign ended in more or less total disaster. Thukydides (1.110.1) tells us that: "[T]his undertaking of the Hellenes came to naught after a war of six years; and but few out of many [...] escaped with their lives." According to Thukydides a total of 250 ships were lost with their crews. Blok (2009) rightly stresses the magnitude of this loss and that it must have been keenly felt in Athens. It is worth spelling out some numbers because the importance of this loss seem largely to have escaped attention: Even if we, for example, assume that 250 ships is an exaggeration by a factor two, assume that 50% of the ships were supplied by other *poleis* from the Athenian Empire, and assume that 50% of the Athenian crews consisted of metics and slaves, the implied loss of citizens still comes to more than 6,000, in other words about 10% of the citizen population.⁹ It is very hard to believe that a loss of this magnitude would not have had major repercussions in Athenian society. A major plunge in popularity for Perikles seems indicated.

⁷ The historicity of the "Oath of Plataia" can neither be proved nor disproved. In any case, by the mid fifth century the Athenians no longer felt bound by it. See Mark (1993), 98-104, and Rhodes and Osborne (2003), 446-449.

⁸ This event probably marks the beginning of the period which saw Perikles without serious contenders for power in Athens. The person ostracised was Thukydides son of Melesias (i.e., not Thukydides the historian), cf. Andrewes (1978).

⁹ Coşkun (2014) similarly notes that a loss of thousands of citizens is implied. To the loss of lives we should add the cost for replacing the ships and their equipment. Following Pritchard (2012), these costs should come to a total of more than 200 talents.

Already these two aspects of the situation in Athens suggest that Perikles' political position was severely threatened by the political opposition. *Thirdly*, not only was Kimon back but he seems to have been popular, because on his return he was more or less immediately given an important military command. According to Plutarch (*Pericles* 10.1-4), Perikles was forced to re-call Kimon, possibly before his ten-year banishment was completed.¹⁰ *Fourthly*, Kimon was having success with this campaign. The peace with Sparta can perhaps be seen as a Kimonian influence as it represents a policy reversal in Athens (Samons II (2007), p. 14).

Modern writers dealing with these years in Athenian history obviously note that Kimon was back. However, we have yet to find someone who notes the significant difference this would have made to Perikles' incentives compared to the mid-450s. In other words, modern accounts implicitly suggest that the return of Kimon was no big deal, and that it did not affect Perikles' behaviour, and they often fail to note the implications of the Egyptian disaster.

In contrast, we see the return of Kimon as an important qualitative change in Perikles' position. He probably faced a significant risk of losing his power over the Athenians to Kimon, and it would perhaps soon have been his (Perikles') turn to be ostracised. With this we resurrect the intuition of Jacoby (1954), who also argued that the intended target of the citizen law likely was Kimon and that it was the need of a weapon against Kimon and his party that motivated Perikles to propose the law. Jacoby argues persuasively that Perikles must have had a motive with the law that was in line with his general political aims. Jacoby (p. 478) also asks the right questions: "were political conditions in 451/0 B.C. such as to make it appear desirable to Perikles to get by this law a weapon into his hands against certain opponents [...] Did Perikles propose the law just at that time because he definitely had certain persons in his mind? [...] it was mainly [...] aimed at the sons of an Athenian by an alien mother [...] Kimon, who in 451/0 B.C. returned from his exile [...] This does not look like a mere coincidence" (we will return to Jacoby's reading of the situation below).

Consequently, if we assume that Perikles wished to remain in power (to further his own interest or for some other reason), we should expect that Perikles in this situation would look everywhere to find ways to beat Kimon in the quest for power and status. Any measure that strengthened

¹⁰ Some authors believe that Perikles *willingly* re-called Kimon before his 10-year banishment had ended and that this signs an end to the hostilities between the two. The relevant passage in Plutarch, however, has as its *main* message that there was hostility between the two factions and that Perikles re-called Kimon because of the latter's popularity in Athens (Plutarch *Pericles* 10.1-4). In other words, Plutarch's account tends to strengthen our view of events, namely that Perikles was in a very difficult position in 451. Not only was Kimon back, but Perikles may have been forced against his own will to re-call Kimon before his 10 years were up.

Perikles' position vis-à-vis Kimon would have received serious attention. It is in this perspective that we should arguably see Perikles' actions around 451/0.

Obviously Perikles knew that Kimon would return, ostracism being a punishment limited in time. So why had he not taken preventive action, why would he introduce new measures against Kimon only upon the latter's return? One should not underestimate the unpredictability of this situation. Perikles could not have foreseen that his own leadership would be so relatively unsuccessful, he could with reason have hoped that Kimon would die rather than return to Athens (Kimon was more than 60 years old in 450, cf. n. 16 below), and he could not have predicted that Kimon would be so successful on his return. So it seems reasonable to maintain that Perikles would be looking for new strategies to use against Kimon at the time of his return.

This disparaging view of Perikles' situation in 451 is conspicuously lacking in historical accounts of the period. The reason why it is a natural starting point for an economist is the focus on (changes in) individual incentives which is an integral part of the economic approach to social change.

Before we turn to Perikles' actions we should consider also the implications of the peace of Kallias. The end of hostilities with Persia in particular would mean that a considerable number of Athenians (probably thousands) no longer received regular pay for military service. Both hoplites and rowers in the fleet were paid one drachma per day when on campaign (Loomis (1998)). Following Ober (2010) and Scheidel (2010) this was 2.6 times subsistence pay. While this must have been welcome for the hoplites, it was not necessary for their survival, as the hoplites typically were recruited among the relatively well-off farmers.

The rowers in the fleet were a different lot, largely made up of the landless *thetes*, who had to rely on temporary employment and similar measures for their survival. The fleet would have provided a substantial part of the Athenian population with a significant income. A fleet of 60 ships would for example need 10,200 rowers (170/ship), and if it stayed out 5 months each rower had earned enough to feed his family for a whole year. Obviously the Athenian fleet would not have been completely scrapped when a peaceful period arrived, but a major reduction in activity is practically certain. Van Wees (2000) argues that foreigners and slaves constituted the majority of the rowers, but given the size of the Athenian naval undertaking, several thousands of citizens would probably also have been engaged (the common people were mockingly called "the yo-heave-ho" by Aristophanes, after the rhythm of rowing). This meant that many citizens would

have had to look elsewhere for means to support themselves and their families. Anyone who could deliver a solution to this problem would likely have a large group of voters on his side.

5. The rationality in Perikles' activities 451-448 BC

From an economic rational-actor perspective it thus makes sense to look for anti-Kimon actions on Perikles' part at the time of Kimon's return, and conversely that any new policy introduced by Perikles at this time should be scrutinized for anti-Kimon content. The economic perspective provides two potential benefits here. It focuses our attention on how incentives had changed for Perikles compared to the early 450s and it provides a common framework for simultaneously discussing the different measures undertaken by Perikles at this particular point in time. In an historical account, on the other hand, there is a tendency to discuss each decision by Perikles in isolation, focussing on the details rather than on the structural process. We shall argue that each of the three major proposals made by Perikles during the crucial years around 450 can be seen as anti-Kimon measures.

5.1 Pay for jurors

The introduction of juror pay is presented in the Aristotelian *The Athenian Constitution* (27.2-4) as a means for Perikles to counter Kimon's wealth and gain popularity with poor majority: "Pericles first made service in the jury-courts a paid office, as a popular counter-measure against Cimon's wealth [...] Cimon had an estate large enough for a tyrant [...] supplied maintenance to a number of the members of his deme [...] as Pericles' means were insufficient for this lavishness, he [...] instituted payment for the jury-courts."¹¹ Juror pay is often accepted by modern scholars as a measure designed to favour Perikles against Kimon.

Some commentators however prefer to place the introduction of juror pay before Kimon's ostracism (Hornblower (1983), p. 37; Rhodes (1993 [1981])). The underlying notion is probably that since juror pay was part of the conflict between Pericles and Kimon and this conflict

¹¹ Towards the end of the Peloponnesian war, councillors were being paid, as well as various magistrates. It is usually presumed that these payments were introduced in connection with the introduction of public pay to jurors, but we have no firm evidence on the exact timing of these reforms. We will not discuss them here. Note that the expenditure associated with political pay would have been independent of the number of citizens since the number of positions was fixed.

emerges in connection with the stripping of the powers of the Areopagos in 462 (a decade *before* 451/0) and so perhaps this was when juror pay was introduced.

On the other hand, it makes a lot of sense for Perikles to use this weapon after Kimon's return to Athens in 451. Furthermore, the most straightforward interpretation of the chronology in *The Athenian Constitution* places juror pay *after* the law on citizenship in 451/0. Our view of Perikles' situation in 451 moreover provides a reason why this should occur shortly after Kimon's return to Athens.

5.2 The law on citizenship

We now turn to the new law on citizenship proposed by Perikles in 451/50.¹² The reason for this law has remained a puzzle for historians.¹³ It seems however possible to build a reasonably strong case for viewing the law as part of a Periklean anti-Kimon policy.

The only explanation given in our ancient sources for this law is that it was “because of the number of citizens” ([Aristotle], *The Athenian Constitution*, 26.4), which, as often noted in the literature, is not very helpful because it is difficult to find the logic in this suggestion. The manpower loss in Egypt (cf. above) suggests that there was a need for more citizens, not less. A lot of innovative effort has gone into finding possible reasons for the citizenship law that makes sense of this statement, but with limited success.¹⁴

In the modern literature, the law is often suggested to follow from the introduction of juror pay, a reflection of a “jealous desire to ensure that the increasingly valuable privileges of Athenian citizenship [...] were not shared too widely” (Rhodes 1993, p. 333). Taking a broad view of the matter, Osborne (2010) notes that “the suggestion that the law was deliberately designed to limit future access to the material and other advantages of being an Athenian citizen is not without attractions.”¹⁵ Against the specific juror-pay explanation, however, a straightforward reading of *The Athenian constitution* suggests that jury pay was introduced *after* the citizenship law, not before.

¹² [Aristotle], *The Athenian Constitution*, 26.4.

¹³ Raaflaub (1998). For a recent discussion of the meaning of the law, cf. Coşkun (2014).

¹⁴ For an overview of the efforts to make sense of this statement in *The Athenian constitution*, cf. Blok (2009), Osborne (2010), Coşkun (2014) and Rhodes (1993), pp. 331-5 and 775. Many of the explanations suffer from the fact that the citizenship law would only have had a substantial effect on the number of citizens in the long run, cf. below.

¹⁵ Osborne (2010) sees the main function of the law as a symbolic statement of the exclusiveness of being an Athenian. Similarly, Blok (2009) suggests that the law reflects a general Greek tendency to connect marriage with

Methodologically, the connection between juror pay and the law on citizenship has a somewhat *ad hoc* character. In the historical tradition, the reason for grouping them together is their almost simultaneous occurrence and the need to find an explanation for the citizenship law. In contrast, the economic rational-actor paradigm can explain not only both events but also the connection between them.¹⁶

The possibility that the law was an anti-Kimon measure is generally discounted on the grounds that it has seemed not to apply to him personally. He acted as general in Cyprus after the passing of the law, and it is usually assumed that only citizens could be generals. Hence the law could not have applied to him. By the same logic, his stint as general can be taken as evidence that the law was not applied retrospectively (since Kimon had a non-Athenian mother). It seems to us, however, that the possibility that the law was aimed at Kimon and his faction has been abandoned rather too quickly and underestimates the potential impact of such a law on Athenian politics. Thus we believe Jacoby (1954) was right in seeing party politics at play (although he does not provide the whole picture that we suggest above).¹⁷

There are several ways in which the law on citizenship could have reduced Kimon's influence vis-à-vis Perikles, even if the law did not apply to Kimon personally (but see below on that). The general standing of the two men was significantly different in this dimension: Perikles had an Athenian father and mother while Kimon did not;¹⁸ Perikles was married to an Athenian woman, while Kimon was perhaps not or perhaps was not married at all (cf. below). Even if the law did not apply to him, it is hard not to believe that it would have been to Kimon's distinct disadvantage in the political arena that the new law implied that he only marginally escaped being disqualified from the Athenian citizenry. It would have changed the Athenians' perception of Kimon and his family.

citizenship and civic identity and suggests also that the law in practice finally created equality among all Athenian citizens.

¹⁶ Some commentators argue that the reason for the citizenship law was the distribution of a gift of grain that the Athenians received from Psammetikos of Egypt in 445, assuming that the Athenians wanted to limit the number of recipients. Along with Osborne (2010), Rhodes (1993) and others, we find this hard to believe. At the very least, the time span between the law (451/0) and the gift (445) seem too long, unless one believes with Coşkun (2014) that the law was passed not in 451/50 but instead in direct connection with the gift in 445 (cf. below). Cf. also the more drastic measures undertaken by Caesar and Augustus to reduce the number of beneficiaries for the Roman *frumentationes* (Brunt 1971, p. 380).

¹⁷ To an economist there is nothing "eccentric" about Jacoby's views, as there seems to be from a historical perspective (Rhodes, 1993, p. 333).

¹⁸ Kimon was the son of the Athenian Miltiades and Hegesipyle, daughter of the Thracian king Olorus. He was probably borne around 510 (cf. Davies (1971), p. 302). His first three sons probably had either the Alkmaionid Isodice or an Arcadian women as mother, cf. below. Perikles was borne c. 495. His father was Xanthippos and his mother the Alkmaionid Agariste.

The crucial step in becoming a citizen took place the year after you turned 18. The young (prospective) Athenian would then be presented in his father's deme and the members voted on whether he was to be registered as a citizen.¹⁹ "It was inscription in the deme that really determined full citizenship" (Hansen 1999, p. 96).²⁰ In connection with this registration, it was checked that the person was a legitimate child, had the right age, and had the correct parentage.²¹ Even if it was not retrospective, Perikles' citizenship law excluded from citizenship those already born of non-citizen mothers before 451/0 but who were not yet adult in 451/0 (Hansen 1999, p. 53). Incidentally, if this was how the law worked, it would have taken considerable time for the law to substantially affect the number of citizens, cf. below.²²

Family relations were traditionally important in Athenian politics, and continued to be so long after a property qualification replaced noble birth as eligibility criterion for offices in Athens in 594 BC. Family ties were still very important in the first half of the fifth century. Both Perikles' and Kimon's fathers had been conspicuous enough to have suffered substantially in political trials in the Athenian courts, as noted above. Hornblower argues that around 20 "almost professional" political families dominated the political arena in Athens in the fifth century. To strike against a political opponent or against his family was more or less equivalent.

Perikles' law on citizenship would presumably have excluded from politics any sons of Kimon who had a non-Athenian mother and who had not yet come of age by 451/0. This could mean all of them. The marriages and children of Kimon is a thorny issue. Not surprisingly, the discussion of their status often begins with noting that the oldest son – Lakedaimonios – served as general in 433 BC, and that he therefore must have been a citizen. However, this is not necessarily so, as it appears that the Athenians did not hesitate to use non-citizens as generals (*strategoi*) when the need arose (Dover (1970; Nails (2002); Plato, *Ion*, 451 c-d).²³ There could have been several

¹⁹ Already at the age of 3-4, the citizen-to-be was introduced to the *phratry* of his father (Hansen 1999, p. 96). The phratries were religious associations that cut across the political subdivisions.

²⁰ Cf. also Rhodes 1986, p. 111.

²¹ Hansen (1999) and (for an extended discussion) Coşkun (2014).

²² It seems a bit inconsequential to combine an explanation for the law based on the number of citizens with the argument that the law was not applied retrospectively, as many modern commentators do.

²³ Plato (*Ion*, 541 c-d) provides evidence that three non-citizens were used as generals and in similar capacities. M. J. Osborne (1983), pp. 30-31 (with footnotes), however, argues that "it is quiet inconceivable that a person who was not an Athenian citizen could become one of the ten elected generals". Osborne therefore believes that the remarks by Socrates must refer to these three men as *naturalized* citizens (we know that they all became naturalized at some point in time). However, the text in Plato is straightforward, and it seems clear that Socrates is not talking about naturalized citizens. His way of expressing himself emphasizes that they were used as generals *despite* them being non-citizens (*xenoi*). If we are looking for something inconceivable in this context, then it is rather that Plato/Socrates would call a naturalized citizens *xenos*. Furthermore, it is not necessarily implied that these three persons were elected to the board of ten generals (cf. below). Neither do we see it as inconceivable that someone with, e.g., a good military record, could be elected by the tribes even if he was not a citizen. Finding a good military leader may well have seemed more important than finding one with the correct parentage.

reasons for entrusting non-citizens with military leadership, such as an acute shortage of competent military leaders.

It is important to note that such a temporary assignment did not necessarily mean that the man had been elected to the board of ten generals. As mentioned, the members of this board had a number of other duties beside military leadership. “The Athenians could give temporary and local military command to anybody; Kleon’s appointment to command at Pylos in 425 [...] did not mean that Nicias or any other of the ten generals resigned his office or that the board of generals in 425/4 was regarded as having eleven members” (Dover 1970, pp. 391-392).

So we cannot conclude from his position as general at Kerkyra in 433 that Lakedaimonios necessarily was a citizen – we need to examine other evidence, meagre as it is. Plutarch notes that there existed two different traditions about Kimon’s wife – Athenian or Arcadian. It also appears that Lakedaimonios was just about young enough to potentially be affected by the citizenship law.²⁴ As regards parentage, Perikles repeatedly tried to use Lakedaimonios’ lineage against him (Plutarch, *Cimon* 16, and *Perikles* 29) and against his two younger brothers. The basis for Perikles’ argument could have been either that their mother was not a citizen or that they were illegitimate children.²⁵

Furthermore, Thukydides (2.65.9) tells us that Perikles ran Athens like a one-man show for many years, including the time when Lakedaimonios was sent to Kerkyra as general. This implies that the appointment of Lakedaimonios was accepted by Perikles, something which seems much more likely if Lakedaimonios was not a citizen and thereby was not a political threat. The story about this mission – that Perikles tried to cause trouble for Lakedaimonios by providing him with insufficient resources – seems consistent with this interpretation (Plutarch, *Perikles* 29).

We know almost nothing about Kimon’s son number two (Oulios) but son number 3 – Thettalos – is reported to have indicted Alkibiades in 415, which could be taken as evidence that he was a citizen. Kimon may have had three more sons (for the total of 6). Davies (1971) suggests that we have no reason to doubt their existence, though we lack information about their lives. If they existed, these three could also have been in the line of fire for the new law. The fact that we

²⁴ Davies (1971) suggests a birthdate not later than 470 for Lakedaimonios, who served as a hipparch not later than 446 and as general at Kerkyra in 433/2.

²⁵ Plutarch (*Cimon*, 16) reports that Kimon’s wife was “Kleitorean”. Kleitor was a *polis* in Arcadia on the Peloponnese. Davies (1971), p. 304, and others however argue that “Kleitorean” should not be understood geographically but instead in an obscene sense. The latter interpretation would probably have put the citizenship status of the sons of Kimon in question, as it seems unlikely that such an obscene expression would have been used about their mother had she been a proper Athenian wife.

know absolutely nothing about them is precisely what we would expect if they had not yet been accepted as citizens in their deme. Similarly, the fact that, “the family descended into comparative obscurity” after 430 (Davies 1971, p. 308) agrees very well with viewing the Law as a (successful) Periklean measure aimed to strike at his political opponents.

Let us now turn to Kimon himself, and do so first with the analysis of Jacoby (1954). The modern argument for the law not being retrospective implicitly assumes that it was implemented as soon as it had been passed by the Assembly. As mentioned above, it is usually argued that the law did not apply to Kimon because he would not have been able to be *strategos* after the passing of the law. Jacoby (1954) however suggests another interpretation of the law. In his view, it was (deliberately) vaguely formulated, and lacked a mechanism by which it could be implemented on large scale. It could however be used in individual cases of citizenship as the need arose. Jacoby sees this as deliberate policy on Perikles part, because it gave him a weapon that could be applied to Kimon, and his sons, and many of his friends, when and if there was a need for it. Remember that it was usual Athenian practice to rely on individual initiative for keeping wrong-doers in place.

Jacoby’s case is entirely consistent with ours, though he does not emphasise in the same way the strong personal incentives on Perikles part to create anti-Kimon weapons at this particular time – Jacoby sees it instead as a part of a long-run policy to deal with the conservative party and Sparta.

This opens interesting possibilities. Once we abandon the concept of the law as something well defined that furthermore was implemented immediately after the passing of the law in the Assembly, it becomes perfectly possible that the law was retrospective from the start and that it specifically applied to Kimon. Remember that the law was passed in 451/50. Kimon was elected *strategos* for the year 450/49. This election would have taken place in February 450 (Hansen 1999, p. 234). This leaves ample room for Kimon to leave Athens for Cyprus and his command *before* the passing of the law, or at least before there was time to question his citizenship under the new law. What Perikles needed in 451 was a weapon against Kimon, and that is what he got with the law. However Kimon died before there was an opportunity to attack him with it.

A law of the kind envisaged by Jacoby (1954) is much more likely to have been passed in 451/50 than a full scale *diapsephismos* (cf. below). The situation in 445 was very different. The gift of grain was an occurrence that could not have been foreseen in 451, it necessitated a public organisation, and Perikles was much more securely in power compared to six years before.

The following reading of events suggests itself to us. The death of Kimon weakened the elite faction, and from 450 onwards Perikles' influence grew gradually (the building projects on the Acropolis began in 457 and would have added to Perikles' popularity, cf. section 5.3 below). So in 445, when the gift of grain from Psammetikos emerged, Perikles would be relatively safe in power against internal political competition. He would therefore have been in a position to organise a full-scale implementation of the law, scrutinizing large parts of the population.

On a more speculative note, perhaps the gift of grain gave Perikles a perfect excuse for conducting a *diapsephismos* with the aim of further weakening the elite faction by particularly excluding important members of the elite from the citizen body.²⁶ Even if there was now a formal procedure, there would surely have been scope for individual initiatives in pointing the finger at suspect citizens. With a majority in the Assembly behind him, Perikles could have used this opportunity to strengthen his rule. The reaction from the elite to such a measure would likely be an attempted take-over. However Perikles now had the upper hand and the new leader of the oligarchs was ostracised (as mentioned above, section 4)

We should be careful to distinguish between 1) the marginal effect on the entry of new citizens that would follow from a non-retrospective law, and 2) a revision of the roll of existing citizens – a *diapsephismos*. A non-retrospective citizenship law would affect only a minor proportion of those 18-year olds that present themselves each year to become citizens. This must be a very small group in relation to the whole citizen body.²⁷ A *diapsephismos*, in contrast could apply to a substantial group of people. A *diapsephismos* is mentioned in connection with the gift of grain to the Athenians from Psammetikos of Egypt in 445. As Coşkun (2014) points out, the great number of disqualified citizens in 445 (close to 5000 individuals or roughly 10% of the citizens) strongly suggests that the law was applied retrospectively at that time.

Recently, Coşkun (2014) has made a thorough investigation into various issues surrounding the law on citizenship. Coşkun makes several important observations, and argues that many of the unresolved issues can be usefully solved by postulating that the date of the law given in the Aristotelian *The Athenian Constitution* is simply wrong. For example, Coşkun (2014) argues that the law must have been retrospective. The only problem (following Coşkun) is that Kimon was not affected by the law since he was strategos in the expedition to Cyprus in 450, which is taken as

²⁶ The main burden of the *diapsephismos* may nevertheless have been directed at the thetes, as Coşkun (2014) believes.

²⁷ Cf. Coşkun (2014).

evidence that the law was not retrospective.²⁸ Coşkun solves this problem by assuming that the correct date for the law is 445 (in connection with the gift from Psammetikos), so that Kimon was already dead. As noted above, Coşkun (2014) argues persuasively that the law was applied retrospectively in 445 BC; otherwise the reported figure for excluded citizens (5000) seems much too high. That many cannot have entered the citizen body under false flag between 451 and 445. In favour of a later date for the law, Coşkun also suggests that the motivation for the law (“the number of citizens”, implicitly too many citizens) is much more likely to describe the situation in 445, when Athens experience peace and is dismantling some of the military forces, and consequently have less need of the poor citizens as rowers. The resistance to a measure that threatened a substantial part of the population with exclusion would also have been more problematic for Pericles to gain support for in 451 than in 445.

In our view, however, the problems discussed by Coşkun (2014) can equally be solved by assuming that Jacoby (1954) is right; that the law passed in 451 was vaguely formulated but provided the basis for a prosecution of Kimon, and that the law took on a new meaning in 445 with the gift from Psammetikos and the need for a widespread scrutiny of citizenship status. It is unlikely that we will ever be sure about the circumstances of the law on citizenship. At present, we see three reasons to prefer our interpretation of events. Firstly, our view of the law makes more sense in view of the general problems for Perikles at this time. Secondly, while we obviously agree with Coşkun that there are errors in the Aristotelian writings,²⁹ these writings remain one of our best sources for the period and should not be discarded lightly. In particular, if we are to believe that *The Athenian Constitution* contains an error at this point, it seems to us more likely that the error concerns preserved memories of the motivation given for the law on citizenship (“the number of citizens”), and comparatively less likely that there is an error in the dating of the law. The list of archons was put up in the agora around 425, it was likely accurate for the fifth century, and it would probably have been available for consultation at the time of writing the *Athenian Constitution*. Thirdly, if we read Coşkun (2014) correctly, the main argument in favour of a re-dating of the law to 445 is that there was no reason to introduce a law on citizenship in 451. This however is precisely what we have provided above (section 4).

Finally, as mentioned above, Perikles and his followers are usually assumed to have based their power more on the common citizens (being responsible for having stripped the elite council of the Areopagos of power etc.) whereas Kimon and followers are taken to represent more elite

²⁸ Coşkun (2014) sides with those who believe that Kimon died in 449. As should be clear from the above, our reading of the events is unaffected by whether Kimon died in 449 or the year before.

²⁹ In addition to the examples given by Coşkun (2014), cf., e.g., Lyttkens (2013), p. 15.

circles. Traditionally, marriages across city-states have been seen as an upper class phenomenon, which would mean that the citizenship law automatically had an anti-Kimon slant. However this is now doubted. Osborne (2010), p. 247) and Patterson (2005) both suggest that by 450 BC the traditional elite marriages across *poleis* were becoming much less frequent in Athens because such connections were increasingly viewed with suspicion. The citizenship law in their view was not necessarily a dramatic change but could rather be seen as a symbolic measure reflecting a change of practice (Osborne 2010; Blok 2009; Patterson 1981, 2005). Coşkun (2014) goes one step further and suggests that inter-poleis marriages were in fact more common *outside* the elite.

Overall, it seems to us more likely than not that the law on citizenship was aimed at Kimon and his followers. It placed Kimon in a somewhat awkward position as not really a proper citizen, it may well have been aimed at him from the very beginning, and in any case it probably prevented the sons of Kimon from becoming citizens and thus eliminated the family as a political power.

It seems highly significant that it is *citizenship* that becomes an issue when the political struggle was fierce. Attempts to use citizenship in the political struggle had been made before in Athenian politics. This is important because it would a priori be much more likely that Perikles came up with a policy that had been tried before. In general, decision costs would be much lower if there were previous examples that a politician could draw upon.

5.3 Building on the Acropolis and elsewhere in Attica

Finally we come to the building activities on the Acropolis and other public building projects in Athens. Perikles was greatly engaged in the building program in Athens in the 440s and 430s. It begins with the construction of the Parthenon. Hurwit (2004) argues that the plans and suggestions were presented in 449 and work began in 447.³⁰

The Periklean building program is a thoroughly treated topic, as are the topography and chronology of classical Athenian monuments in general.³¹ A survey of these activities did not reveal any new features – the sources are well known and fundamental disputes will remain unsolved – but certain facts may be relevant for the issues treated in this article. In particular, if we accept the traditional dating, three aspects stand out.³² 1) A remarkable difference in Athenian

³⁰ Cf. Dinsmoor 1913.

³¹ See e.g. Dinsmoor 1950; Boersma 1970; Meiggs 1972; Korres 1997; Hurwit 2004.

³² Unfortunately the dating of many of these building projects is uncertain. For example, the timing of many of the projects depends on the likewise uncertain status of the Plataia Oath (above n. 7). Furthermore, we do not know

building activities (regarding both scale and emphasis) between the first and the second half of the 5th century BC. 2) A conspicuous lack of building activities in Athens in the 450s (no large public work was initiated after the *Stoa Poikile* – around 460 BC – and the Long walls were probably completed by the end of 458³³). 3) In contrast, after the absence of building activities in the 450s, there is a veritable avalanche of building projects in the 440s that must have been launched in the years immediately following the Peace of Kallias early in 449 BC. The list of projects undertaken 450-430 BC is impressive and includes, for example, on the Acropolis the Parthenon with its sculptures, the Propylaia, the Brauroneion, and outside the Acropolis the Hephaisteion, the middle long wall, the temple at Sounion etc.

Gerding (2014) has suggested that building activities in the Roman republic may have been a way to foster client-relationships, since building activities would give employment to the urban poor, and selection of workers could have been geared to the clients of the builder. Something similar may well have taken place in Athens. In fact, it is well-known that Plutarch argues that one of Perikles' major objectives was to put the idle masses to work. Hurwit (2004, p. 95) dismisses this as a fabrication on Plutarch's part, as did Frost (1964) before him; they both argue that this is an anachronism since unemployment was a big problem in Plutarch's time but not in Perikles' Athens. However, Plutarch may have had a good point, either because he knew what he was talking about or because he was just plain lucky. As described above, precisely just before Pericles brought up the issue whether to rebuild the Acropolis in the Assembly, a considerable number of Athenian *thetes* would effectively have become unemployed. They had earned a substantial income from acting as rowers in the Athenian fleet, but with peace with both Sparta and Persia, this source of income was reduced and looked uncertain in the future.

Even if Kimon was dead by the time Perikles proposed the building program (which is not certain), his faction presumably did not vanish with his death. For example, the oligarchic element tried to take over in 443 BC, as noted above.

The peace with Sparta and Persia from ca 450 and onwards created a new situation in Athens. Some of the money that had been used to deal with the threat from Persia could now be allocated to other uses. The building projects on the Acropolis and elsewhere were not peanuts. Salmon (2001) has estimated that during the 25 year period 450-425, the stonework involved in

anything about the timing of the concomitant building activities in Peiraieus which were substantial (city wall, harbours, ship sheds etc.) People working in Peiraieus would however have been less likely to take part in the meetings of the Assembly.

³³ Work on the Long Walls between Athens and Peiraieus was undertaken in the early 450s (Salmon 2001, p. 198), coinciding with increased tension between Athens and Sparta following upon the mount Ithome episode and the ostracism of Kimon. Cf. also Conwell (2008), who dates the construction of the walls to 462-258 BC.

these enterprises engaged on average 1000 persons per year, day in and day out. This represents a substantial amount of employment and would have made a number of citizens very grateful to the proposer.

A potential counterargument would be that the rowers did not in fact work on the building projects. Of course some of the work will have been carried out by foreign specialists and some by slaves. Feyel (2006) however shows that the building projects in Attica differ from other projects in Greece precisely by almost exclusively using local work force.

In addition to Athenians engaged in the complex stone work, the building projects will have entailed many other kinds of work (roadwork for the transport of stone, supplying and tending draught animals, digging foundations, felling wood, making scaffolding, building workshops etc.) which will have fallen on the local *thetes*. Furthermore, the presence of foreign craftsmen will have generated demand for food, lodging, and other goods and services. In other words, the economic impact would have been considerably greater than the number of Athenian stone masons in itself suggests.

Another potential objection would be that those engaged in building the Parthenon had previously been engaged in other large Athenian building projects and hence just moved from one project to another, never leaving any room for ex-rowers. However, there seems to be no great building projects in the period 455-450 which could have played this role.

Assembly meetings in Athens were not huge gatherings and a group of, for instance, 500 faithful voters could be very important. We do not know by how great a margin Perikles used to win the votes in the Assembly. Hansen (1999) suggests the attendance was probably around 5-6000 citizens (Hansen 1999, pp. 130ff) and there was a physical limit because the capacity of the area where the Assembly met was probably circa 6000. If the relative strength of the two parties in the population was around 55-45, this translated into a need for those about to lose the struggle of 500-700 votes to carry the day.³⁴ Consequently, it wouldn't be surprising if Perikles saw as an important benefit of the building program that a number of potential voters in the Assembly would owe their income to his proposal for rebuilding the acropolis (not necessarily the *only* benefit). In addition, to the extent that a significant part of the citizen body could no longer look to serving as rowers in the fleet as a likely source of income, the political benefit would have been even larger. Additionally, those who worked on the Acropolis were stationed in Athens, and

³⁴ The Athenians had to use coercion to get sufficient numbers to attend the Assembly in the years after the Peloponnesian War (cf. Hansen 1999, pp.130-132).

hence belonged to those who were more likely than others to attend the Assembly, which met around 40 times per year, and most of the time for only half a day.

6. The importance of perspective

The economic rational-actor perspective helps us understand Athenian politics in the fifth century BC. It does so by focusing our attention on individual incentives and how these evolve over time. It helps us identify what kind of evidence we ought to be looking for, and sometimes suggest other explanations than traditional historical accounts.

Already a brief look at the evidence suggests that the incentives for Perikles to look for new weapons to use against his political opponent Kimon increased greatly with Kimon's return just before 450. As it turns out, all three sets of actions by Perikles at this time could easily have been motivated by the need to strengthen his position vis-à-vis Kimon: the pay to jurors, the law of citizenship, and the large building projects.

A rational-actor perspective thus provides a diachronic analytical benefit by focusing on the way incentives change over time. It provides a synchronic benefit by dealing with various decisions taken at a specific point in time in a common framework and it can handle several seemingly divergent developments simultaneously.

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