Alain Duplouy, The Making of the Greek City: An Athenian Case Study

What is the Greek city?

The question has been discussed for over 150 years, at least since the publication of _La cité antique_ by Fustel de Coulanges in 1864. There is no simple answer to that question and, on the contrary, a profusion of models promoted mainly by national traditions.

I strongly believe that the history of archaic Greece can in no way be reduced to an institutional history, which would lead from monarchy to democracy, nor can it be equated to a quarrel between an alleged ‘aristocracy’ – a word I banished from my vocabulary – and the _demos_. The core of the process when thinking about the making of the Greek city over the archaic period has nothing to do with the creation of institutions or the codification of laws. It is first related to the delimitation of a community. As Alcaeus and Thucydides said, _andres gar polis_, ‘men make the city’, and I will consider the _polis_ mostly as a community of citizens. The main issue is therefore to fix the limits of the citizen group. It means distinguishing between insiders (who could take part in the community) and outsiders (who were excluded or cannot afford to take part to it).

I propose to consider the making of Greek cities as a _behavioural phenomenon_. To be precise, the continuous process of community making heavily rests on collective and individual performances, behaviours or lifestyles. In order to be accepted as a citizen, one had to behave like a citizen, but also to teach their offspring how to behave like a citizen. How the citizen community was delineated? How to become a citizen? How to be accepted by the other members of the community as a worthy citizen? And, most of all, how to perpetuate such a community in a constant flux over the centuries? These are, in my opinion, the most important questions when dealing with the making of the archaic city.