

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ALCMAEONIDAE

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PREFACE

As an undergraduate encountering the history of Greece for the first time, I was struck by the exciting and often bizzare quality of the events which formed the nucleus of the history of Athens. Reading the accounts and interpretations of the struggle over tyranny, the emergence of democracy, and the conflicts with Persia and Sparta, I noticed that while much remained unknown about these events, it was well established that many of the leading individuals were members of a family known as the Alcmaeonidae. Moreover, their role was considered so vital by most historians that even when individual leaders could not be identified, writers felt free to credit the family with exerting a major influence on the events which determined the history of Athens from the seventh to the late fifth century. This assertion of their importance in Athenian history was accompanied in most cases, by the inference that the conduct of the family was something less than admirable.

Any attempt to study this family is hampered by many of the same basic difficulties which confront most historical inquiry. Sources of factual information must be discovered and evaluated. Due to the expanse of time which separates us from the events, this problem is compounded. Because the information regarding the Alcmaeonidae tends to be fragmentary, the tendency to glean as much as possible from phrases or even single words makes solution of the usual problems of translation even more crucial. Finally, most writers, being interested primarily in

political development have tended to deal with what is known about the family as secondary to their primary interest.

The focus of this study will be the two prevailing interpretations of the role of the Alcmaeonidae in Athenian political life. First, all modern writers have based their interpretations of the Alcmaeonidae on the assumption that over a period of 300 years, the family participated in Athenian politics as a cohesive unit with a well defined policy. Second, most modern historians have described the presumed political activities of the family in terms which often state and sometimes only infer that its policy was pursued without regard to principle, honor, or even loyalty to Athens.

In the pages which follow, a survey of the ancient and modern historiography concerning the Alcmaeonidae will show that the evidence fails to support both of these contentions and I will offer some suggestions as to how these points of view were nonetheless adopted. In pursuance of my primary goal, a considerable amount of information about the family and individual members was compiled. Although this material was not vital to the primary objectives of the paper, it is included in the opening chapter because no such compilation can be found in an English publication.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Neil Hackett for suggesting this research topic and for his guidance and assistance during the course of the research and writing of this paper.

In addition, thanks must go to Dr. George Jewsbury for his suggestions relative to organization and content and Dr. Robert Spaulding for his careful editing.

Special recognition must go to my husband, Lyle, and my daughter, Karen, for their support and understanding during the preparation of this paper.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A.J.P. American Journal of Philology.
- C.A.H. The Cambridge Ancient History.
- C.P. Classical Philology.
- C.Q. Classical Quarterly.
- J.H.S. Journal of Hellenic Studies.
- P.W.; Real-encyclopædie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft.
R.E.
- G.E.L. Greek and English Lexicon.
- H.S.C.P. Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.
- C.S.C.A. California Studies in Classical Antiquity.
- Thu. Thucydides, Historiae.
- Hdt. Herodotus, Historiae.

All dates given in the body of the text, unless otherwise noted, are before the Common Era.

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CHAPTER I

THE ALCMAEONIDAE AND THE ALCMAEONIDS

'We have discovered, far more poignantly than the ancients ever experienced it, an enthusiasm for reliving with those who have strutted the stage of life, every scene of their drama, grand or petty, inspiring or pitiable.¹

This desire for a realism which promotes understanding is the underlying motivation for a great deal of historical inquiry. It is a particularly necessary ingredient in evaluating the role of the Alcmaeonidae in Athenian history. If a family history of the Alcmaeonidae ever existed, it has not survived. There can be no question that members of this family played a vital role in Greek history. The nature of that role and the involvement of the family as a whole is not so clear. Therefore, we can identify only those members of the family whose real or mythological exploits have caused their names to be preserved in Attic tradition. At the outset, a distinction between what is meant by Alcmaeonidae and Alcmaeonids should facilitate study. The "Alcmaeonidae" is the term employed by both ancient and modern writers as the name of a specific Greek family or descent group. In this paper, it will be used to designate a family despite the fact that it is not even entirely clear whether the name Alcmaeonidae referred to a family, a clan, or a genos. H. T. Wade-Gery believes that they did not comprise a genos, but were instead a family line within an *oikin* (household), which was a much smaller unit.² D. P. Costello, on the other hand, argues that

the "curse of Cylon" had applied to an entire Alcmaeonid genos, and thus became the source of solidarity within that genos even after that type of social organization had come to have little meaning for most Athenians. Nonetheless, both writers agree that those known as Alcmaeonidae who played such a prominent role in Athenian politics were members of a single family within the genos.³

Whatever the case may have been, ancient and modern writers agree that only those who claimed direct descent from Alcmaeon and his son Megacles II were members of the Alcmaeonidae. (The name Alcmaeonidae was not used prior to Megacles II.) Since Megacles served as archon during the seventh century, we can also establish that the family enjoyed a certain measure of wealth and that they were of Eupatrid stock, i.e., descendants of Theseus.⁴ Their origins, however, remain doubtful, as some evidence supports a tradition that the family, like the Pisistratidae, were not native Athenians, but immigrants from Pylos.⁵

There also remains considerable question as to precisely where the family lands were located. The evidence seems to indicate that their lands probably were divided among three demes which were south and southwest of Athens: Alopeke, Agryle, and Xypete.⁶ C. W. Th. Elliot, on the other hand, deduced that the Crosius base found in the district of Anavyssus was part of a memorial to a fallen Alcmaeonid and therefore, their lands were probably located in that area: "probably at ancient Aigilia, within Paralia."⁷

The most we can say about the Alcmaeonidae without fear of contradiction is that it was an ancient and illustrious Athenian family whose members distinguished themselves in the affairs of Athens from 750 until 404. The term Alcmaeonid, in contrast, refers to family members acting

as individuals. As in the case of the family as a group, relatively little is known about the individual members. Various stemmae have been proposed to delineate the family members and their relationships, but all such charts suffer from certain basic flaws.

In the first place, each begins with a presumed ancestor and traces the line from the remote, often mythical past to its more recent end.⁸ Such a stemma is subject to the problems created by the need for interpolations and the necessity of establishing a viable estimate of the length of the average generation. When such estimates range from twenty-five to forty years, it becomes clear that grounds for firm chronological conclusions remain weak. The task would be much simpler if such genealogies began instead with known individuals and then traced their way back to more remote and lesser known figures.

The following stemma is a combination of several. The major portion, dealing with the Orthagoridae and the Alcmaeonidae, was taken from one suggested by N. G. L. Hammond.⁹ In addition to well-known figures, this chart includes the names of people who may have been mentioned only in a literary source or whose name appears on ostraca. Therefore, not all would be considered Alcmaeonidae by all writers. The name of Megacles' daughter, who was married to Pisistratus, has been added due to the evidence in Mayor's paper.¹⁰ Freeman suggests that Callias' first wife was divorced from him and married Pericles, so that Callias was the half brother of Pericles' two legitimate sons, Paralus and Xanthippus.¹¹ The addition of Alcmaeonides as a brother of Megacles II resulted from the conclusions of Vanderpool's study of ostraca found in the Agora. In this same dig some 71 ostraca identified as bearing the name of Hippocrates, the son of Alcmaeonides, were found, making him third in

EUPATRIDAE

ORTHAGORIDAE

ALCMAEONIDAE

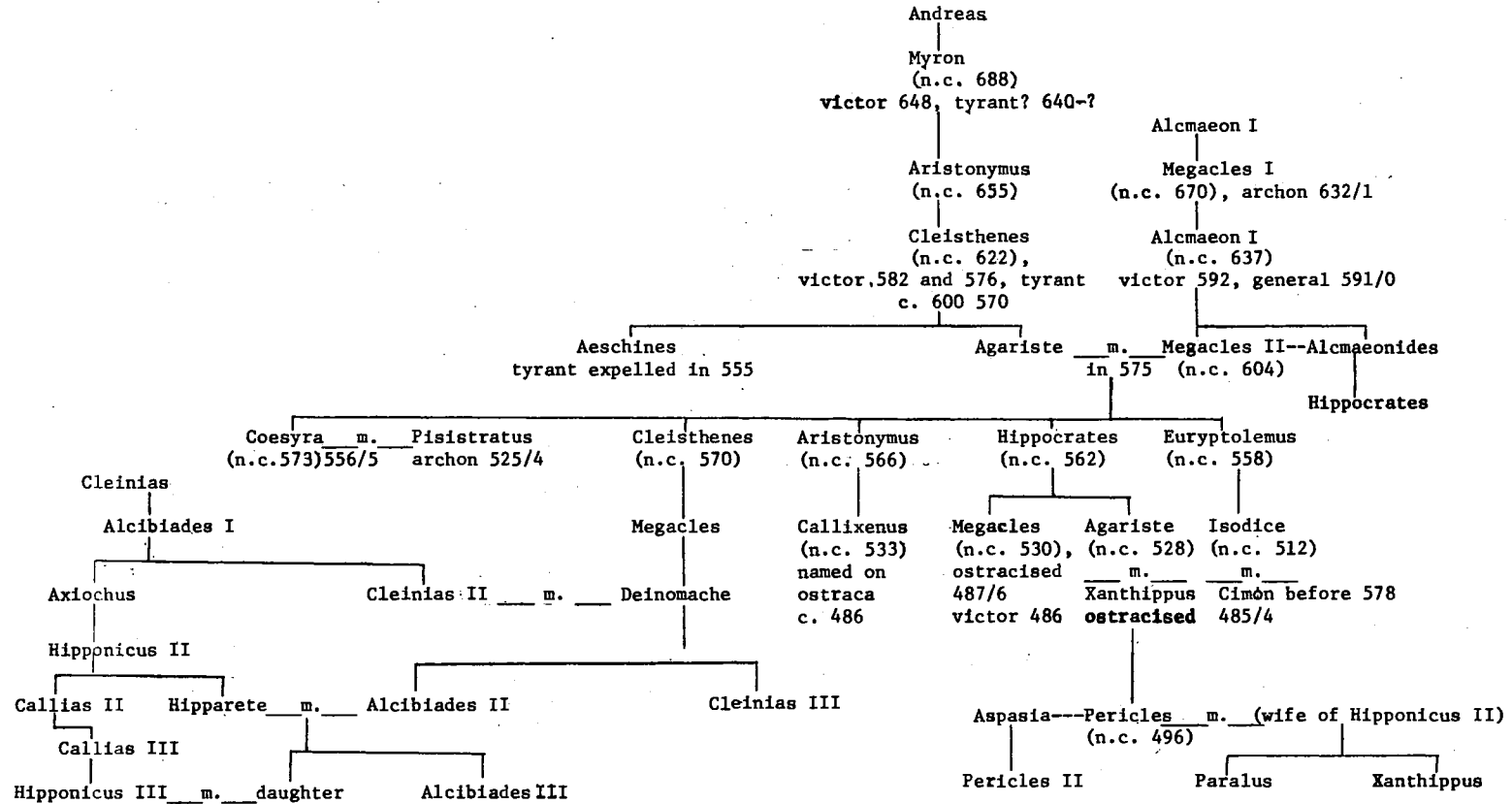


FIGURE 1. COMBINED STEMMA OF THE EUPATRIDAE, ORTHAGORIDAE, AND ALCMAEONIDAE

the order of the total, in which Callixenus was second only to Themistocles. Thus, we may assume that Hippocrates was a candidate for ostracism in the late eighties, probably in 483 or 482.¹²

Hippocrates, a nephew of Pericles who served as strategus in 426, is not placed on the stemma because his exact connection is not clear. Mayor's research indicates that he was the commander at Delium in 424 and was probably strategus in 425 as well. After the death of Pericles, Hippocrates was "chief representative of the Alcmaeonidae" and one of the leaders of the "war party." If a comment relating to him found in Aristophanes' Clouds, (614-17), can be taken seriously, he lived out the end of his life in poverty.¹³

The stemma of Pauly-Wissowa reaches back into mythology, showing Neleus as the founder of the line.¹⁴ In this study, however, we will deal only with those family members about whom some factual information exists. Thus, the story begins with Alcmaeon.

Tradition holds that Alcmaeon acquired the great fortune which became the foundation of the family's power as a result of his friendly relations with Croesus, the king of Lydia. One of Alcmaeon's sons, Megacles II, served as archon in Athens in 632 and was later stigmatized for his supposed leadership or responsibility in the killing of the supporters of Cylon, after the collapse of the latter's attempt to establish Athens' first tyranny. Apparently, the conspirators had been induced to surrender by a promise of safe conduct. By some means, Cylon and his brother escaped, but their supporters were killed. J. B. Bury has suggested that aristocratic feuding rather than protection of the state provoked the killings.¹⁵ In any case, both Cylon and the

Alcmaeonids were banished, but not at the same time and not in the same way.

There seem to have been three separate forms of banishment at that time and at least through the sixth century, yet these do not seem to have been linked to different causes, whether criminal or political. Proscription, lifelong banishment, and voluntary self exile are believed to have been the options. The apparent objective of these forms of removal from the state was the preservation of order, which was often threatened by blood feuds between the clans. Such removal carried with it social, economic, political, and religious penalties.¹⁶

Elmer Balough describes as follows the events which occurred subsequent to the Cylonian attempted coup and which led to the expulsion of the two family groups. A court of justice was convened following the revolt. Cylon and his followers, but apparently not his whole family, were condemned to "perpetual outlawry." It was decreed that by attempting to establish a tyranny they ceased to be recognized as part of the community and were therefore not entitled to the protection of the state or its gods. That being the case, Athenian custom exonerated Megacles and others who were involved in the episode and no action was brought against them at that time.¹⁷ Whether or not this is an accurate reconstruction of the events, we do know that Megacles and his family remained in the city. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Megacles was viewed as one who saved the state from tyranny. It seems unlikely, however, that the aversion to that form of government was as pronounced then as it became after the fall of the tyranny of the Pisistratids in 510.

According to Herodotus,¹⁸ Cylon was the son-in-law of Theagenes, the tyrant of Megara. Whether this relationship contributed to the war

between Athens and Megara is unclear. Nonetheless, it proved a bitter and prolonged affair in which Athens did not fare particularly well. The reported cleansing of the city and the accompanying trial and expulsion of the Alcmaeonids indicates the possibility of two forces at work against them. First, remembering the ex post facto outlawing of Cylon, Athenians may have come to believe that Megacles had not been absolved of blood guilt, and seeing the fortunes of their city declining, they may have begun to believe that, according to ancient law, the entire state was tainted, causing the present suffering. This may have created a political climate which encouraged those opposed to the ambitions of Megacles and his family to their exile. Whatever the motive or justification, the Alcmaeonids were tried and banished from the city ca. 595.

The charge brought against the family becomes important when we attempt to account for their return to the state after apparently being banished permanently. It is accepted that they returned during the Solonian period, but precisely how or when is not clear. As Hammond relates, Solon, at the beginning of his reform of the state, declared amnesty for all who had been deprived of their franchise except "those who had been exiled for bloodshed, massacre, or attempted tyranny." The Alcmaeonids were excluded from this amnesty, he writes, because they were convicted of "massacre."¹⁹ Balough, on the other hand, asserts that impiety was the charge and therefore the Alcmaeonids could return, while the supporters of Cylon, being convicted of attempted tyranny, could not.²⁰ Hammond dates their return as occurring after the retirement of Solon, but his argument is weakened by his failure to explain the legal basis for their restoration to the city.

For several reasons, Balough's position is the more persuasive. In the first place, it provides a reasonable reconstruction of the situation and the sequence of events. In addition, we know that Alcmaeon II, the son of Megacles I, was recorded as an Olympic victor in 592 and probably led the Athenian contingent in the First Sacred War against Crisa in 591. This would add weight to the argument that the family's return had some official sanction, as their position of leadership in the state was obviously regained rather quickly. It also suggests that an exile which could be ended through political action probably originated in political action.

These two episodes form a vital part of the story of the Alcmaeonids. They were preserved by family and Attic tradition, they provided enough details to arouse later suspicion but not enough to resolve it, and the Cylonian affair seemed to have been used against the family members as a convenient and sometimes potent political weapon.

Although the Cylonian attempt at tyranny had been crushed, the question of Athens' form of government remained far from decided. Pisistratus, who finally was to succeed in instituting tyranny, began his rise to power through distinguished service in the Megarian War. Later, by supposedly feigning wounds inflicted by his enemies, he convinced the Assembly that he needed a personal bodyguard. He probably first attempted to establish a tyranny by seizing the Acropolis in 561/0. He apparently managed to maintain his control through 560/59. Yet even though he probably enjoyed considerable popular support, his ambitions were thwarted by an alliance between Lycurgus of the Eteobutadae and Megacles of the Alcmaeonidae. It was probably this coalition that drove Pisistratus out of the city in 559/8.²¹

Most historians postulate that these events were the results of party actions. This question will be discussed in detail later, but a few observations concerning the general political situation in Athens are in order at this point. In the sixth century, political life and political struggles were primarily the concern of the aristocratic families. The power of the clans was weakened as the state assumed more of their functions, as can be seen through the reforms of Solon. The conflict over tyranny was dominated by leaders of the great families.

Once Pisistratus had left the city, the alliance between Megacles and Lycurgus apparently collapsed. A new coalition, based on the marriage of Megacles' daughter Coesyra to Pisistratus, was formed between the two former disputants. In a rather theatrical ploy,²² Pisistratus returned to Athens, with the assistance of Megacles, in 558/7.

When Megacles learned that Pisistratus had failed to consummate the marriage, had abused the girl, and had no intentions of ever having a child by her, the coalition disintegrated. Pisistratus then fled the city in 557/6.

In 546/5, after the defeat of the Athenian forces at the battle of Pallene, Pisistratus again returned to Attica, disarmed the populace, and firmly established the first tyranny in Athens.²³

According to Herodotus, the Alcmaeonidae fled the city following the establishment of the new government, and did not return until after the assassination of Hipparchus in 514/13.²⁴ This assumption is now subject to question due to the discovery of the fragment of an archon list published in 525/4 which names Cleisthenes as the eponymous archon for that year.²⁵ Peter J. Bicknell²⁶ agrees with Merrit's conclusion

that this name being rare in Athens, must refer to Cleisthenes the Alcmaeonid.

This new information indicates that the family must have returned to Athens some time prior to 525/4. Bicknell recognizes the logic in this supposition, but suggests, in view of the silence of Aristotle's Athenian Constitution on such an exile, that perhaps the family was not expelled when Pisistratus took power. In fact, Herodotus' Alcmaeonid sources may have misled him, Bicknell believes, in order to enhance their anti-tyrant reputation. He does not argue, however, that the family suffered no exile during the tyranny. Instead, he suggests that they may have been expelled, but their exile was probably not continuous until the fall of Hippias in 510/11.²⁷

There is no doubt, however, that the Alcmaeonidae were in exile at the time of the battle of Lepisydrion in 513, and that, together with the Spartans, they overthrew Hippias in 510. The only incident which might have precipitated their exile between 525/4 and 513, seems to have been the assassination of Hipparchus. But ancient writers make no mention of Alcmaeonid participation in the plot. It seems apparent that in view of the popularity of the fifth century tyrannicide cult and its possible use as a weapon against Pericles, had the Alcmaeonidae played any role in the murder, it would have been recorded. If, on the other hand, we do not consider such complicity as vital in explaining the exile, we can turn to Herodotus' comment that the tyranny became more harsh following the death of Hipparchus. Thus, it is possible that the Alcmaeonidae were exiled despite their innocence.²⁸

In any case, as Merrit suggests, the assumption of a short exile raises new questions about the traditional interpretations of this

period. Citing evidence that the marble facade and sculptures of the new temple of Delphi were completed between 514 and 510, he feels that new consideration should be given to a connection between the restoration of the temple and the return of the Alcmaeonidae to Athens in 510.

In addition, Merrit maintains that the conflict between Isagoras and Cleisthenes cannot be understood if one accepts the traditional belief that one remained in the city while the other languished in exile. Merrit concludes that both were in Athens until the Alcmaeonidae were exiled after the death of Hipparchus, and that it was Cleisthenes who opposed the tyranny and Isagoras who came to terms with it.²⁹

Nonetheless, Herodotus' explanation of the restoration of the family should not be overlooked. He believes that the family's receipt of the contract for the rebuilding of the temple, their lavish fulfillment of their charge, and their bribing of the priestesses resulted in the support of their cause and the "free Athens" oracles given to the Spartans. It was to this tradition of opposition to tyranny that Herodotus' sources apparently turned.³⁰

The traditions which grew out of these years of turmoil have had a profound impact on the picture of the Alcmaeonidae in both ancient and modern accounts. The concept of party politics which dominates most modern discussion of the period received much of its justification from the ancient accounts of the struggle between the various political forces in Athens. While the Alcmaeonidae were credited for their opposition to tyranny, they have been roundly criticised for the accommodation between Megacles and Pisistratus. In addition, the charade which supposedly accompanied the return of Pisistratus is sometimes referred to as evidence of the opportunism and lack of principles of the

Alcmaeonids. This same interpretation often is placed on the alleged relationship between Delphi and the family. And discussions concerning their role in the Persian Wars sometimes turn to the story of Alcmaeon and Croesus as evidence of possible friendly relations with Persia.

Although all these considerations seem to have influenced opinion concerning the family, the major importance of this period, for our purposes results from the indication that it provided the primary source of the conviction that the Alcmaeonidae were and remained a cohesive group whose goal was political power.³¹ This is due in part to the fact that they were exiled as a group and seemed to work together to achieve their return to the city. But modern research has brought into question even the assertion that all members of the family were exiled at any time.³² In any case, it should not be accepted without question that after or even during this period they remained unified.

In 510 Spartan forces led by King Cleomenes invaded Attica, defeated Hippias' forces, and drove him from the city, thus ending the Pisistratid tyranny. Herodotus believed that this action was prompted by a succession of "free Athens" oracles which supposedly were given to the Spartans. But the historian believed that the real credit for this liberation of Athens belonged to the Alcmaeonidae, who supposedly went so far as to bribe the Pythia to aid in expelling Hippias.³³ On the other hand, the Spartan king may have intervened to advance Spartan interests. This involvement may have been caused by Hippias' pro-Argive policy, since Sparta and Argos long had been bitter enemies. Another possibility is that Sparta preferred neighbors with oligarchic governments. In any case, as a result of the Spartan action the Alcmaeonidae returned from exile, and political conflict in Athens was resumed. It

may be an oversimplification to describe the period immediately following the tyranny as one of conflict between oligarchic and democratic forces, but most historians view it as such. It is apparent, however, that Cleisthenes the Alcmaeonid and Isagoras the Eteoboutid wrestled for control of the city.

Cleisthenes, the son of Megacles and Agariste who was the daughter of Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sycion, had probably led the family during its years of exile and its attempts to return. Most writers agree that he participated in the First Sacred War and that it was he who persuaded the Pythian priestess to support the family's restoration.³⁴ Unfortunately, very little else is known about his career during this early period.

The political competition between Cleisthenes and Isagoras which followed the former's return to the city in 510 vitally affected the future of Athens. There remains, however, considerable confusion as to the political implications of the events which are known to have followed the deposition of Hippias and the triumph of Cleisthenes. In 508 Isagoras was elected archon, and at about the same time Cleisthenes left the city, following a Spartan demand for "expulsion of the accursed Alcmaeonids."³⁵ Soon afterwards, Cleomenes, leading a Spartan army, invaded Attica and took control of the Acropolis. Following the expulsion of these forces by the people, the Assembly sent an embassy from Athens to seek an alliance with the Persians, and Cleisthenes and those expelled by Isagoras and the Spartans were recalled.³⁶

For the purposes of this study, the most important question which arises out of this period is one of the chronology of the embassy to Persia. Some historians view this as the beginning of the events which

brought Persian armies into Greece, and for that reason, they are vitally interested in the role of Cleisthenes in this diplomacy. The question is whether the envoys to Persia were dispatched during the same Assembly which recalled Cleisthenes. If that had been the case, then Cleisthenes could not have been involved. On the other hand, if the action occurred after he returned to the city, it probably could not have been taken without his support.

Although this episode has prompted some lively discussion,³⁷ not enough evidence is available to resolve the questions it raises. Cleisthenes is known chiefly for his reforms. Herodotus says that he took the "people into partnership"³⁸ to lay the foundation for democracy in Athens. By reorganizing the political structure of the state, he expanded the citizenship and weakened the power of the cult-centered clans which had been the primary political influence in Athens. Many writers believe that the institution of ostracism formed an integral part of this program as a safeguard against future attempts at tyranny.³⁹ But since the first known incidence of its use was in 487 against Hipparchus the Pisistratid, other writers argue that this form of exile was not part of the legislation of Cleisthenes.⁴⁰

As Cleisthenes was the outstanding Alcmaeonid of sixth century Athenian politics, two of his nephews, Alcibiades and Pericles,⁴¹ played a leading role in the political life of the city during the fifth century.

Pericles, the last of the Alcmaeonidae to dominate Athenian politics for any length of time, is one of the greatest Athenians. By 444, he had become the unrivaled head of the state, and his career marked the apex of the fortunes and the beginning of the decline of Athens. With

the coming of the Peloponnesian Wars, he convinced the Athenians to seek refuge within the city walls as the best defense against the invading Spartans. During the second year of the war, the outbreak of plague nullified what might have proven a successful policy. But the plague took a personal as well as public toll. Both of Pericles' legitimate sons fell victim to it, and in 429 he too died of some "lingering" illness. His reputation for honesty was preserved in the story that upon his death, it was found that he had not added a "single drachma" to the property he had inherited.⁴² His remaining son, Pericles II, whose mother was Aspasia, was later legitimized. This young man, as one of the generals held responsible for the defeat at the battle of Arginusae, was executed in 406.⁴³

Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias and Deinomache, was born in Athens ca. 450. Following the death of his father in 447, he was taken into the household of Pericles. Alcibiades was described by his contemporaries as a handsome, charming, intelligent, daring, and profligate young man. Although the philosopher Socrates was one of his closest associates, there is no evidence that the wisdom of that sage had any effect on Alcibiades. Perhaps Alcibiades is best remembered for his support of and participation in the disastrous Sicilian campaign of 413, and for his willingness to join the enemies of his state after he had been condemned to death as a result of the incident known as the mutilation of Hermes. In 407, he returned to Athens only to lead the Athenian forces to defeat at the battle of Notium and thus to be deprived of his command. Following the fall of Athens in 404, he was assassinated. Alcibiades was survived by a single son, also named Alcibiades, who apparently did not distinguish himself in Athenian political life.⁴⁴

Recent excavations in the Athenian Agora have added a hitherto unknown member of the family. The literary records have preserved the names of men who suffered ostracism, but not those who were candidates for that penalty. Since ostracism was reserved for men of power, it seems safe to assume that any man whose name appeared on a large number of ostraca was someone of note. In the late 1940's, among a collection of some 1,500 potsherds, some 250 were found which bore various recognizable versions of the name Callixenus Aristonymou Xypetaion. Stamires and Vanderpool are convinced that because 40% of the remaining ostraca were against Themistocles, and 10% named Hippocrates Alcmaeonidou, we can safely deduce that 482 was the year of this ostracaphoria.⁴⁵

Who was this Callixenus and why was he important enough to be a serious candidate for ostracism? Since his ostraca lay with those of Aristeides, Themistocles, and Hippocrates the son of Alcmaeonides, we can say that he must have been politically active in the second decade of the fifth century. One of the ostraca definitely identifies him as an Alcmaeonid, and others carry his demotic name as well as patronymic ---a fact which lends further support to such a conclusion, since Xypete had long been an Alcmaeonid deme.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this is the sum of our knowledge about this man.

N. G. L. Hammond accepts this interpretation of the ostraca and takes it a step further in locating Aristonymus and his son Callixenus in his stemma of the Orthagorids.⁴⁷ The chronology of his study makes it simpler for us to establish the known members of the family. In addition, he deduces that, in all likelihood, Alcmaeonid men married about the age of 30, the women at the age of 18. He also postulates that Megacles, Alcmaeon, Megacles II, and Cleisthenes were leaders of

the "clan" and were therefore the eldest sons.⁴⁸ This chapter has demonstrated that while a considerable amount of reliable information is available about the activities of individual Alcmaeonids, little can be asserted about the nature or behavior of the Alcmaeonidae. Yet, the careers of the Alcmaeonids are evaluated by historians within the confines of their presumed behavior as members of the family group.

Modern historians agree that the Alcmaeonidae remained a cohesive group from the time of the Cylonian conspiracy until at least the end of Pericles' life and perhaps until the death of Alcibiades in 404. The policy of the family, according to these writers, was aimed at increasing its political power in Athens. Modern researchers have felt obliged to characterize them either as an opportunistic group willing to ally with any other group in order to gain or maintain political power, or as "a great Athenian family," which acted as a group.

Upon reexamination of the ancient record, hoping to minimize the impact of inherent biases and possibly incorrect information, what evidence do we find to support the modern interpretations of the history of the family? Were the Alcmaeonidae a cohesive group or party in the modern sense over this long period? Did the family maintain a constant policy aimed at acquiring and preserving political power? Finally, if these last two questions are answered affirmatively, were these goals placed above all other considerations, even loyalty to the city itself?

FOOTNOTES

1. Duane R. Stuart, Greek and Roman Biography, (Berkeley 1928), 11-12.
2. G. T. Wade-Gery, Essays in Greek History, (Oxford 1963), 106; family: a group of related individuals who can trace their lineage to a common ancestor; genos: a family in the broadest sense.
3. D. P. Costello, "Notes on the Athenian ΓΕΝΗ," J.H.S., LVIII, (1938), 172-173.
4. Wade-Gery, Essays, 106-107.
5. D. M. Lewis, "Cleisthenes and Attica," Historia, XII, (1963), 37.
6. Ibid., 23.
7. C. W. Th. Elliot, "Where did the Alkmaionidai Live?" Historia, XVI, (1967), 279-286.
8. This would not have occurred to the Greeks, as it would not have served the purpose of genealogy.
9. N. G. L. Hammond, "The Family of Orthagoras," C.Q., L-LI, (1956), 47; For information on Alcmaeonides see Raubitschek, Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis, 388-340 (cited by) D. M. Lewis, "Cleisthenes and Attica," Historia, XIII, (1963), note 138, 37. Lewis does not support Anaxileus as a member of the family, note 138, 37.
10. H. B. Mayor, "The Strategi at Athens in the Fifth Century," J.H.S., LIX, (1939), 62-63.
11. Kathleen Green, "Portrait of a Millionaire-Callias Son of Hipponicus," Greece & Rome, VIII, (1938), 24.
12. Eugene Vanderpool, "The Rectangular Rock Cut Shaft," Hesperia, V, (1946), 274-275.
13. Mayor, "Strategi," 63.
14. P.W.; R.E., Columns 1557-1558.
15. J. B. Bury, A History of Greece, (New York 1913), 171; Mabel Lang, "Kylonian Conspiracy," C.P., LXII, No. 4, (Oct., 1967), 248 suggests the same cause for the massacre.

16. Elmer Balough, Political Refugees in Ancient Greece-From the Period of the Tyrants to Alexander the Great, (Johannesburg 1943), 2, 5.
17. Ibid., 5-6.
18. For various versions of this incident see: Felix Jacoby, Atthis, (Oxford 1949), 366, note 77; Thu. 1, 126; Paus., 7, 25, 3; Aris., A.P. 8 ch. 1; Plut. Sol., 12.
19. N. G. L. Hammond, A History of Greece to 332 B.C., (Oxford 1963), 164.
20. Balough, Political Clubs, 8.
21. Jacoby, Atthis, 193.
22. According to Herodotus, Megacles and Pisistratus had a young woman named Phya masquerade as Athena to escort Pisistratus into the city. D. M. Lewis, Cleisthenes, 24, notes that this same woman later married Hipparchus.
23. Ibid.
24. Hdt., I, 63.
25. Benjamin D. Meritt, "An Early Archon List," Hesperia, VIII, (1939), 61.
26. Peter J. Bicknell, "The Exile of the Alcmaeonidai During the Pisistratid Tyranny," Historia, XIX, (1970), 129.
27. Ibid., 129-31.
28. Meritt, "Early Archon List," 61-62.
29. Hdt., V, 63-64; Hdt., VI, 66.
30. Balough, Political Clubs, 8.
31. Bicknell, "Exile," 130.
32. Hdt., V, 63-64.
33. Hdt., V, 70-72.
34. Hdt., V, 64; 69.
35. It is not clear what the Spartan attitude toward the Alcmaeonidae was. Therefore, this attack on the family does not necessarily indicate a policy change. It is quite possible that the expulsion of Hippias coincidentally aided the Alcmaeonidae. In that case, the Spartan support of Isagoras would have been a continuation of a pro-oligarchic policy which opposed Hippias' tyranny as well as Cleisthenes' reforms.

36. Hdt., V, 73; C.A.H., IV, 80-81.
37. C.A.H., IV, 158; A. W. Gomme, "Athenian Notes," A.J.P., LXV, No. 4, (1944), 331-332; Malcolm McGregor, "The Pro-Persia Party at Athens From 510 to 480 B.C.," H.S.C.P., I, (1940), 77-78.
38. Hdt., V, 66.
39. G. R. Stanton, "The Introduction of Ostracism and Alcmaeonid Propaganda," J.H.S., XC, (1970), 180-181; Donald Kagan, "The Origin and Purposes of Ostracism," Hesperia, XXX, (1961), 393-401.
40. For a bibliography of supporters and opponents of the ostracism to Cleisthenes, see Stanton, "Ostracism," note 1, 180.
41. Stemma I, 4 of text.
42. Mayor, "Strategi," 63.
43. Ibid.
44. This inference is drawn from the absence of evidence of his political prominence. As in the case of Callixenus, however, the fact that such evidence is not now known does not preclude some new discovery.
45. George A. Stamries and Eugene Vanderpool, "Kallixenos The Alcmaeonid," Hesperia, XIX, (1950), 377.
46. Ibid., Lewis, "Cleisthenes," 23; Wade-Gery, Essays, 106.
47. Hammond, "Orthagorids," 47; see 4 of text.
48. Stamries and Vanderpool, "Kallixenos," 377.

CHAPTER II

THE ANCIENT HISTORIANS

The exploits and achievements of the Alcmaeonids were preserved in Greek legend and history which developed during the seventh through the fifth centuries. This chapter is devoted to a search of the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and the Athenian Constitution of Aristotle¹ for information regarding the political activity of the Alcmaeonidae. These three works should contain the evidence which supports the modern view that the Alcmaeonidae formed a politically cohesive group, or "party," over this period. At the same time, they should reveal whether the family maintained a consistent policy, and if so, what the objectives of that policy were. Finally if the evidence supports the existence of both a party and a policy, it should allow one to determine whether the family goals overshadowed all other considerations, even loyalty to the city itself.

A search for information concerning the Alcmaeonidae, as with any other topic of study which reaches back as far as the seventh century, requires a careful utilization of archaeology, epigraphical studies, ancient drama, and the record provided by the ancient historians. In this section, we will deal with the ancient historians. As vital as they are to our study, these sources are not without problems. It also must be recognized when evaluating their information that these writers described events which preceded them. Although they tell us a great deal

about the times, the events, and the major individuals, they show little interest in social developments or in systematic biographical information. Herodotus and Thucydides were interested primarily in the two great wars of Greek history, and Aristotle's treatise was devoted to the constitutional development of Athens. Therefore much which would be useful to us simply was not recorded by the ancient historians. Archaeology and epigraphy provide parts of the missing information, but even so, the surviving record leaves many questions unanswered except by educated guesses.²

We are also confronted with the problem of accuracy in translation. This becomes particularly important when the record is scanty. One is forced to glean as much as possible from each reference, be it a paragraph, a single word, an absence of things we might have reason to expect, or the presence of things we might not have expected. Since Herodotus' history comes to us as one of the oldest written accounts of Greek life, we must depend, at least in part, on the context of his narrative to establish the correct translation of key terms.³ Therefore, we may be faced with a circular situation in translation, i.e., Herodotus is cited as the source of the definition of a crucial term which appears first in Herodotus.

It is frequently difficult to discover precisely what a certain term meant or described when it was used in the fifth century or earlier. For example, when Herodotus records the oral tradition of the seventh century, we must be aware that at times he may preserve that record within the context of his own time.

Yet, given a situation in which all of the above mentioned impediments are removed, we are faced with the requirement of discovering

and perhaps compensating for the nature of the account itself. We need to know who the authors were, as much as possible about their probably biases, the objective of their work, and the nature of their sources.

Herodotus' history, the primary source of information concerning the Alcmaeonidae escapes none of the problems noted above. While employing this vital record, we cannot lose sight of the problems posed by his purpose, the complications of translation, and the need to compensate if possible for the biases imposed by the passage of time, Herodotus' sources, and his style.

Born in Halicarnassus, ca. 484, Herodotus was too young to remember the events of the subject of his great work, and was therefore forced to rely on the accounts of others. He states as his purpose the preservation of the deeds of the Greeks and their states in preserving their independence in the face of the Persian onslaught. Biography was neither his intent nor his achievement. His information concerning the Alcmaeonidae related directly to his purpose in most instances. As Frost observes, Herodotus demonstrates little interest in politics and so provides few details of Athenian political life. If he was aware of party activity, he did not record it.⁴ There is general agreement that for the sections which deal directly with the family, he collected his information from members of the family itself. The history probably was completed no earlier than the first years of the Peloponnesian War and no later than 425 (when a play by Aristophanes seemed to poke fun at some aspects of the historian's work).⁵

Herodotus' first reference to a member of the Alcmaeonidae occurs in that historian's discussion of the tyranny of Pisistratus.

This Pisistratus, at a time when there was civil contention in Attica between the party of the Seacoast headed by Megacles, the son of Alcmaeon, and that of the Plain headed by Lycurgus, one of the Astrolaids, formed the project of making himself tyrant, and with this view created a third faction. Gathering together a band of partisans, and giving himself out for the protector of the Highlanders, he contrived the following strategem....⁶

As a result of this plan, Pisistratus succeeded in seizing power in Athens.

However, after a little time, the partisans of Megacles and those of Lycurgus agreed to forget their differences, and united to drive him out.... No sooner, however, was he departed than the factions which had driven him out quarrelled anew, and at last Megacles, wearied with the struggle, sent a herald to Pisistratus, with an offer to reestablish him 'in power' if he would marry his daughter. Pisistratus consented, and on these terms an agreement was concluded between the two, after which they proceeded to devise the mode of his restoration.⁷

This alliance used a young woman named Phya, masquerading as Athena, to escort Pisistratus into the city and proclaim him leader of the city. Herodotus apparently believed that the Athenians restored Pisistratus because they were taken in by this deception. The alliance between Megacles and Pisistratus collapsed when Megacles discovered that Pisistratus had no intention of fulfilling his part of the agreement.⁸

This series of incidents is vital to this study because it was Herodotus' description of the type of political organizations. Because he was so removed from those events, one should recognize that he was faced with the problem of attempting to describe accurately ancient organizations without distorting them with concepts which were a part of his time. As an example, we can cite the political clubs of Athens which were particularly active around 410. Our best information indicates that these clubs formed in reaction to the Constitution of the 5,000 and the strength of the pro-tyrant forces in the city. There can

be little question that they plotted assassinations and were actively involved in political litigation. Did such clubs exist as early as the political struggles in seventh century Athens? Calhoun is convinced that they did.⁹ There are several reasons, on the other hand, to suggest that this was not the case. In the first place, it seems unlikely that such organization could have existed in an Athens which was as socially, economically, and politically unsophisticated as it was in the seventh century.

If we can take Herodotus' remarks at face value, the period of the seventh century was one of flux, with frequent shifts in loyalty, and a lack of any clearly defined object of attack as we find in 410. (Even the opposition to or support of tyranny was too weak to end or begin it without outside intervention.) Such an atmosphere seems neither conducive to nor the product of the type of intimacy and dependency required for tightly knit plotters. A further indication of this atmosphere would be the relative ease with which the seats of power changed hands. Herodotus does not mention party conflicts or incidents of violence or civil disorders such as assassinations during this period, with the exception of the earlier Cylonian affair, which he takes up later in his work.

Instead, the problem seems to be one of accurate translation. All modern translators have translated the section involved as describing the "party of the Plain," etc. This may seem to be a minor point of contention at first glance, but for this topic an understanding of the political scene in seventh and sixth century Athens, one must be as certain as possible about what Herodotus meant. One cannot find any term in the Greek version of this sequence which justifies the use of

"party" either in the modern sense or even in a more loose interpretation. It seems that a better translation of this section would be "those of the Plain...." Unquestionably, such a translation indicates a grouping of some sort, but not a highly organized, cohesive "party".

The term hetairiai was used in other works (such as Calhoun's) to describe the political clubs,¹⁰ but we find no such use of that term in Herodotus, who uses stasis to describe such groups.¹¹ Had Herodotus believed that he was describing analogous or synonymous organizations in his accounts of the seventh and sixth centuries, it seems reasonable to expect that he would have employed the same term in this case.

Lidell and Scott includes stasis among its definitions, "party and faction"¹² and Godolphin's edition translates it as faction.¹³ If we double check, however, the references supplied to support such translations are based on Herodotus, I, 59, Aeschylus' Agamemnon, line 117, and Eumenides, 311. The context of none of these references contains stasis used in such a way which justifies the translation "party." Agamemnon and Eumenides citations refer to discord and conflict, not parties.¹⁴

Circumstantial evidence also lends support to this understanding of the groups of that period. Herodotus' record clearly indicates a very fluid situation in which a man such as Megacles first opposed, then joined, then again opposed Pisistratus. It seems reasonable to deduce that these were the actions of an individual and those who supported him personally without the firm ideological position one would expect

of an organized political party. Herodotus implies as much when he describes the alliance as one between two men, Megacles and Pisistratus.

This same evidence provides no support for the contention that the Alcmaeonidae were acting as a group. Herodotus makes no mention of the family at this point except to identify Megacles in precisely the same way he identified Lycurgus, the Astrolaid.¹⁵

Herodotus' narrative attempts to explain Pisistratus' treatment of Megacles' daughter: "...he already had a family of grown sons, and the Alcmaeonidae were supposed to be under a curse."¹⁶ As a result, Megacles joined with the "opposition faction," and Pisistratus fled the country. Those who opposed Pisistratus drew up their forces near the temple of the Pallenian Athena but were defeated by Pisistratus' army, and his rule was established in the city.¹⁷ Many of his opponents among whom were the sons of Alcmaeon, fled the country.¹⁸

This section of Herodotus' history opens the question of the notorious curse which supposedly plagued the Alcmaeonidae throughout the rest of their history.¹⁹ Just how seriously did the Alcmaeonidae and the citizens of Athens take this curse? If the record is to be believed, either there was no curse, the curse was removed, or the Athenians put very little stock in it.

Although Herodotus' explanation of the breakdown of the alliance between Megacles and Pisistratus includes the "curse" as a possible cause, he prefers an explanation based on the dynastic implications of an heir to such a match.²⁰ The fact that the family was banished only after the establishment of the tyranny and then succeeded in making good its return after Pisistratus was expelled seems to add weight to the opinion that the presence of the Alcmaeonidae was more offensive to

Pisistratus' ambitions than to the gods. Herodotus also implies that the Alcmaeonidae left the city along with other families which had opposed Pisistratus.²¹

Throughout their exile, however, the Alcmaeonidae struggled to return to Attica. With other exiles, they attempted a return by force, but were defeated at the battle of Lepisydrion. Herodotus records that the defeat did not weaken their resolve, and in another attempt, they contracted with the Amphictyons to build the Delphic temple. Perhaps in hope of gaining favor with Delphi, the new structure far surpassed that called for in the contract, having, for example, Parian marble facings in place of "coarse stone."²²

These same men, if we may believe the Athenians, during their stay at Delphi persuaded the priestess by a bribe to tell the Spartans whenever any of them came to consult the oracle, either on their own private affairs or on the business of state, that they must free Athens.²³

As a result of this constant admonition (and perhaps for reasons of their own), the Spartans marched on Athens and drove out the tyrants.

Then the chief authority was lodged with two persons, Cleisthenes, of the family of the Alcmaeonids, who is said to have been the persuader of the Pythian priestess, and Isagoras, the son of Tisander....These two men strove together for mastery and Cleisthenes, finding himself the weaker, called to his aid the common people.²⁴

This passage reinforces the view that Athenian aristocrats were so fragmented politically that no one individual could muster sufficient support to achieve and hold power. In the end, both sides successfully involved the Spartans in the advancement of their claims. Pisistratus was able to recruit forces sufficient to defeat the exiles at the battle of Lepisydrion but not sufficient to forestall the Spartans. Herodotus tells us that following the expulsion of Pisistratus, an internal

struggle ensued between Cleisthenes and Isagoras, not between the Alcmaeonidae and the Eteobutadae. There is no apparent reference in Herodotus to parties here and even when he relates that the commons were brought in to the support of Cleisthenes, no party or group is mentioned.²⁵

Despite his political eclipse, Isagoras refused to accept defeat and conspired with Cleomenes, one of the Spartan kings, to acquire the leadership of Athens. As a part of this effort, Cleomenes dispatched a messenger to the city to demand that

Cleisthenes and a large number of Athenians besides, whom he called the accursed should leave Athens. This message he sent at the suggestion of Isagoras: for in the affair he referred to, the blood-guiltiness lay on the Alcmaeonidae and their partisans, while he and his friends were quite clear of it.²⁶

Herodotus follows this narrative with a digression on the origin of the epithet "accursed." This refers, of course, to the Cylonian affair, during which a young nobleman, Cylon, attempted to establish a tyranny in the city. Unable to hold the Acropolis, the partisans of Cylon took refuge in the sacred precincts.

Hereupon, the presidents of the naval boards, who at that time bore rule in Athens, induced the fugitives to leave by a promise to spare their lives. Nevertheless, they were all slain and the blame was laid on the Alcmaeonidae.

When the message of Cleomenes arrived, requiring Cleisthenes and the Accursed to quit the city, Cleisthenes departed of his own accord. Cleomenes, however, notwithstanding came to Athens, with a small band of followers; and on his arrival sent into banishment 700 Athenian families, which were pointed out to him by Isagoras.²⁷

But even this extreme action did not end the opposition to Isagoras and when Cleomenes attempted to replace the Council of the 500 with a council of his supporters, a revolt ensued in which the forces of the Council of the 500 prevailed.

The narrative describing the conflict between Cleisthenes and Isagoras presents another example of the unstable political situation in Athens at this time. In his digression to explain the origin of the curse, Herodotus simply notes that the Alcmaeonidae were blamed for the death of Cylon's followers. He makes no mention of a trial. But it seems that Cleisthenes left the city alone and of his own accord, rather than being forced out by his fellow citizens as a response to the curse. Then after the arrival of the Spartans, some 700 families designated by Isagoras were expelled. There is no mention of the involvement in any blood guiltiness of these families at this time. In addition, such a charge of being "accursed" failed to prevent Cleisthenes and the others from later returning, which seems to indicate that the majority of the citizens of the city took little note of any such curse.

The Athenians directly afterward recalled Cleisthenes and the 700 families which Cleomenes had driven out; and further sent envoys to Sardis, to make an alliance with the Persians for they knew that war would follow with Cleomenes and Lacedaemonians.²⁸

The Athenian envoys, apparently unprepared for the demand of earth and water as symbols of subjugation, agreed to it anyway. But upon arriving home they were in disgrace for this supposedly unauthorized action. There is considerable question as to Cleisthenes' role in this affair. Clearly, Herodotus omits any mention of his involvement, and, as was discussed earlier, there is no other compelling evidence that he took part in sending the mission. Nonetheless, some historians have cited this mission as evidence of an early pro-Persian Alcmaeonid policy. They argue that due to the close ties of the Alcmaeonidae to Croesus, they could not have been ignorant of the price exacted for a Persian alliance: subjugation. This does not necessarily follow, however, since the Alcmaeonid contact with Croesus occurred some 100 years previously and at that

time the Persian Empire was not the powerful and expansive state that it was in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. Cleisthenes' thinking or policy, assuming he was involved in this mission, is not clear. But those who postulate that he adopted a pro-Persian Alcmaeonid policy at that time must present more evidence before their charge can be accepted.

The narrative of Herodotus goes on to say that it was not long before a Spartan army under Cleomenes threatened the city again, but due to dissension between the two Spartan kings, the army was turned back.²⁹

The next mention of the Alcmaeonidae occurs in Herodotus' account of the beginning and progress of the Persian Wars. In describing the Battle of Marathon, Herodotus mentions the use of a shield in an apparent attempt to signal the Persian forces after their defeat.

...while with the remainder (of the ships) the barbarians pushed off, and taking aboard their Eretrian prisoners from the island where they had left them, doubled Cape Sunium, hoping to reach Athens before the return of the Athenians. The Alcmaeonidae were accused by their countrymen of suggesting this course to them: they had, it was said, an understanding with the Persians, and made a signal to them, by raising a shield, after they were embarked in their ships.³⁰

After his account of the Persian defeat at Marathon, Herodotus begins what many have called his defense of the Alcmaeonidae.

But it fills me with wonderment and I cannot believe the report that the Alcmaeonidae had an understanding with the Persians, and held them up a shield as a signal, wishing Athens to be brought under the yoke of the barbarians and Hippias....Now the Alcmaeonidae fell not a whit short of this person (Callias) in their hatred of tyrants, so that I am astonished at the charge made against them, and cannot bring myself to believe that they held up a shield; for they were men who had remained in exile during the whole time that the tyranny lasted, and they even contrived the trick by which the Pisistratidae were deprived of their throne. Indeed, I look upon them as persons who in good truth gave Athens her freedom far more than Harmodius and Aristogeiton. For these last merely exasperated the other Pisistratidae by slaying Hipparchus, and were far from doing anything towards putting down the tyranny; where as the Alcmaeonidae were manifestly the actual deliverers of Athens, if at least it be true that priestess was prevailed upon by them to bid the Lacedaemonians set Athens free, as I have already related.

But perhaps they were offended with the people of Athens, and therefore betrayed their country. Nay, but on the contrary there were none of the Athenians who were held in such general esteem, or who were so laden with honors.³¹ So that it is not reasonable to suppose that a shield was held up by them on this account. A shield was shown, no doubt; but who it was that showed it I cannot further determine.³²

This episode has sparked the greatest interest of modern historians in regard to the Alcmaeonidae. Much has been published both accusing and defending them in this situation. The following chapter will deal with the "shield signal" literature in depth; only a few general observations about the account will be needed here. There seems to be no disagreement among modern writers that the charge and the information contained in the defense was probably reported to Herodotus by members of the family, and certainly, they would not wish to have their family name clouded with the accusation of Medism.³³ But, aside from the facts contained in the account, certain things about the record itself may shed some light on this study.

In regard to this incident we find in Herodotus VI, the first treatment of the Alcmaeonidae as a group in his history. In the past, he referred to the family as a part of his discussion of individuals who were important in Athenian politics and who were coincidentally Alcmaeonidae. Although there must have been a head of the family during the Persian Wars, and Herodotus' sources surely knew who he was, for some reason, no name is mentioned. In fact, the account of the Persian Wars contains no reference to an Alcmaeonid in a position of influence. Yet, so the reasoning goes, they must have been important at the time or such a serious charge would not have been made against them. The strongest evidence that contemporary Athenians either never heard such

a rumor or simply ignored it is the fact that the Alcmaeonidae were not attacked directly at that time. It seems likely that this charge, like the curse, may have originated in the propaganda of late fifth century anti-Periclean groups within the city.

A more remote possibility, but one worth mentioning, is that Herodotus' sources wished to enjoy the reflected glory of illustrious members of the family such as Pericles, or perhaps believed that it was better to be remembered in famously than not at all. Perhaps the omission of the names of leaders indicated nothing more than that the family was not as prominent during the late sixth and early fifth century as Herodotus' sources would have us believe.

Chapters 125 - 132 of Herodotus VI are devoted to stories of the origins of the wealth of Alcmaeon and the winning of the hand of Agariste, daughter of the tyrant of Sycion, and the genealogy down to Pericles. These are the last references concerning the family in the history of Herodotus.

Like his predecessor, Thucydides chose a war for the focus of his history. In his view, the Peloponnesian War would prove to be the most important event in Athenian history. Unlike Herodotus, Thucydides wrote contemporary history, and tried to do more than simply record events and their causes. He viewed history as a guide to future action. He believed that there were lessons to be learned from the struggle between Athens and Sparta and his history reflected that conviction.³⁴ While the question of his sources may be as critical as it is for Herodotus, his theme may obscure or distort the facts we need for this story. Utilizing long detailed speeches by major figures, he tells a compelling story

with a strong flavor of personality. But due to the fact that these were often a literary device rather than actual speeches, some care must be exercised in their use.

Unfortunately, Thucydides' history contains few references to the Alcmaeonidae and all of the information he provides about them may be found in Herodotus. On the other hand, he paints vivid portraits of the last two well known members of the family. It is interesting, and perhaps fitting, that in these two men we find what seem to be the ultimate extremes. Pericles, on the one hand, was the selfless, virtuous leader of the democracy, and though he died during the second year of the war, he became the hero of Thucydides' history. On the other hand, his cousin Alcibiades epitomized selfish disregard for the welfare of his state and duplicity and rakishness in action. Thucydides does, however, note that in the end, even Alcibiades proved loyal to his city.³⁵

Leaving personalities for a moment, Thucydides described the diplomatic maneuvers prior to the outbreak of fighting. The Spartans, he wrote, sent embassies to Athens in hope of later justifying their going to war in a defense of the gods. Among the demands carried by the mission was that the "Athenians drive out the curse of the goddess." In explanation of the curse, Thucydides digresses to trace its origin to the Cylonian affair, presenting substantially the same account as Herodotus, except that Megacles is not named. The offenders are referred to only as the murderers.³⁶ The Spartans hoped that raising the question of the curse would at least weaken Pericles' authority, though they recognized that he would not be exiled on its account. Apparently, even this modest goal was not achieved, as the only recorded action in response to the charge was the calling up of an old curse on the Spartans.

In fact, Plutarch wrote in his Pericles, that the people admired Pericles even more after this attack because they interpreted it as evidence of the Lacedaemonian fear of their leader.³⁷

We know more about Pericles and Alcibiades than any other Alcmaeonidae. For Thucydides, Pericles was the heroic figure of the war, the paragon of Athenian society, while Alcibiades occupied the opposite end of the spectrum:

....Foremost among them (the war party) was Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, a man who would have been thought young in any other city, but was influential by reason of his high descent: he sincerely preferred the Argive alliance, but at the same time he took part against the Lacedaemonians from temper, and because his pride was touched....³⁸

Yet Thucydides says little about the Alcmaeonidae as a group, and perhaps that is important in itself. For all his detail concerning the Cylonian affair, he failed to mention Megacles, and Pericles is referred to not as the Alcmaeonid, but as the son of Xanthippus.³⁹ At the same time, the writer spared little detail in regard to the checkered career of Alcibiades, but not once in his account did he explain the importance of Alcibiades' position in terms of family power. True, he notes that his descent allowed him to enjoy the power he did, but he gives not a word about the family supporting his career.⁴⁰ Although we know that political clubs were quite active at this time and that Alcibiades actively participated in them, it seems odd that no other Alcmaeonid was important enough at this time for his name to have been preserved in the history of this crucial period. Finally, no ancient writer names either Alcibiades nor Pericles as the head of the Alcmaeonidae. That being the case, it seems that while certain members of the Alcmaeonidae were important figures, the family received little

or no credit for their distinction. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that it was not an important political power at this time. It seems unlikely that Thucydides would have been ignorant of the political manipulations of such a well known family, and there is no reason why he should conceal the fact when he was so frank and complete about two of its members.

The final major ancient source useful to this study is Aristotle's Athenian Constitution. When the most complete copy of this work was recovered in Egypt in 1890, it generated great excitement among historians. For example, Classical Quarterly reserved a separate section in each issue from late 1891 through 1893 for notes and papers related to the Aristotelian treatise.

Though it was supposedly recognized, from the outset as a series of lectures by the philosopher, combined into a treatise by one or more of his students, historians of the late 1890's treated it as history. This is understandable enough, since both Herodotus and Thucydides left open so many political questions. This work on Athenian constitutional development seemed to offer new insight and understanding.⁴¹

The Athenian Constitution, like the previous works, concerned itself primarily with something other than social history. Being even farther removed in time from the events which concern this study, Aristotle's account is affected by his sources. In all likelihood, his lectures relied heavily on such sources as local histories of the fourth century Attidographers, the Atthis, and the poems of Solon.⁴² Another problem inherent in this record was the possible intrusion of the political passions of the day. By 404/5, some men had become convinced that Athens' adoption of democracy had been the cause of her fall. And men

considered "radical oligarchs," seeing that Solon's concepts were incompatible with such an interpretation, had even gone so far as to attack not only Solon's political principles but his character. Party pamphlets of the day carried such attacks and it is possible that the Alcmaeonidae, who were so closely connected with the development of the democracy,⁴³ came under attack although no evidence of this has survived.⁴⁴ Despite the assertion by von Fritz and Knapp that many fifth century political leaders were direct descendants of sixth century leaders,⁴⁵ there is no evidence of such continuity of power in the Alcmaeonid house with the exception of Pericles, for whom the inference is that he inherited leadership which had been held by his father, who was not an Alcmaeonid. Alcibiades was the only other known notable Alcmaeonid of the period, and though he participated in the political clubs, there is no evidence that his position in the state was the result of Alcmaeonid influence. Instead, his own ambition and flamboyance seem to have brought him to political power. Even so, Aristotle, like Herodotus and Thucydides, clearly depended upon family traditions for some of his information, and such sources should always be recognized as subject to extreme bias.

Unfortunately, part of the opening section of Aristotle's treatise has been lost. Nonetheless, enough survives to show that what we have is the latter part of the first chapter, a description of the trial of the Alcmaeonidae and their expulsion, which was followed by a purification of the city. If we take his account as we find it, he seems to say that those responsible for the death of Cylon's supporters had long since died. Thus the trial itself must have occurred several years, if not decades, after the events.⁴⁶ On the face of it, this poses no

problems, it was not uncommon in the ancient world to explain a modern calamity by reference to some past pollution. However, this raises some major chronological questions.

The Olympic victor list of 640 records Cylon as winner of the foot race.⁴⁷ Von Fritz and Knapp postulate that since this same Cylon attempted the coup d'etat in 632 or 628, Olympic years, he must have been rather young when he won his laurel wreath at the Olympiad. They further maintain that Aristotle implies and Plutarch (Solon, 13) states that the trial of the Alcmaeonidae and purification of the city occurred prior to Solon's archonship.⁴⁸ These events must have occurred early in the sixth century, they say, and thus it would not be generally expected that all participants would have been dead by that time.

Moreover, Plutarch recorded⁴⁹ that Alcmaeon led the Athenian contingent in the First Sacred War in 590 and at the same time Athens minted coins bearing the emblem of the Alcmaeonidae. In chapter 13, Aristotle related that Megacles, son of Alcmaeon, was one of the political leaders who opposed Pisistratus.⁵⁰ This would seem to mean that only a few years after the trial and expulsion "for all time," the family somehow returned to the city and members of it regained political leadership. Noting Isocrates, 16, 25r., Von Fritz and Knapp complete their argument that the exile was caused not by religious pollution but by political conflict, and was most likely aimed at Cleisthenes.⁵¹

Chapter 14 and 15 related the same story of struggle, alliance, and resumed conflict between Megacles and Pisistratus as found in Herodotus. But in Chapters 16-10, Aristotle says:

This is the law and the ancestral rule of the Athenians. Whoever conspires to set up a tyranny, or helps to set up a tyranny, shall lose his citizenship, and so shall his family.⁵²

For a variety of reasons, this is an interesting passage. But for our purposes, it seems to contribute to the notion that in the sixth century political acts of individuals, if carried too far, would affect their families. Had family-dominated politics been the dominant force of the day, such law penalizing the family as a result of the acts of an individual would hardly seem to have been an accurate remedy.

In his account of the exile of the Alcmaeonidae and their attempts to return to the city, Aristotle remains consistent with Herodotus, until he postulates that the close relationship between the Pisistratidae and the Argives was as much responsible for Spartan invasion of Attica as the Delphic admonitions.⁵³ If so, recognizing the long lasting enmity between Sparta and Argos, this would weaken the assertion that the Alcmaeonidae bribed the Pythian priests. Though Aristotle's argument concerning Argos is plausible, Herodotus' report cannot be dismissed lightly.

Translations of Aristotle have him say that Cleishtenes was defeated in the "political clubs" and thus forced to turn to the common people for support. The term Aristotle uses, however, is stasis, not hetairiai, which is the name of the late fifth century clubs. The fact that Aristotle must have been familiar with this term and the organizations it described, and yet, persisted in using the older term strongly suggests that he saw some definite distinction between the late fifth century clubs and the late sixth century organizations involved in the

Cleisthenes-Isagoras struggle. Thus, the translation, "political clubs," is possibly misleading.

Aristotle also records the expulsion of 700 families. Von Fritz and Knapp construe this to mean individual households, not families in the sense of all descendants of a common ancestry.⁵⁴ If so, and if only members of the Alcmaeonidae were expelled as "accursed," as most modern writers assert, why do the ancient historians not say so? Aristotle says that the Alcmaeonidae were "believed to be among those who were under the curse."⁵⁵ It is clear that others were expelled at this time as "accursed," but this charge is never made against any other family.

In recounting the return of Cleisthenes to power, Aristotle credits the Alcmaeonidae as having "played the most important part in the overthrow of the tyrants, since they almost incessantly made political trouble for them."⁵⁶ And in his summary of the leaders of the developing democracy, he listed Xanthippus, father of Pericles, as one of the leaders of the people. In his view, Pericles' successors exhorted the people to violence and attempted to satisfy all of their appetites.⁵⁷

In summary, several general observations about the record of the ancient writers seem to be in order. Herodotus' sections dealing with the Alcmaeonidae seem to be divided into two distinct parts. The difference is a subtle but unmistakable shift in emphasis which occurs with the first mention⁵⁸ of the shield signal and the later defense of the Alcmaeonidae.⁵⁹ In the earlier sections, the activities of prominent members of the family are dealt with as acts of individuals, the family name being used to make clear identifications as with non-Alcmaeonid figures. In the first reference to the shield incident no individual

is mentioned, only the family. But the real shift of emphasis occurs in the second and more comprehensive discussion of the shield incident.⁶⁰ In the earlier passage the charge is presented as a part of the narrative. But the latter is clearly a digression designed to present Herodotus' belief in the family's innocence. Much of his evidence must have come from the family itself. But that may not have been the case in the first passage. Perhaps the earlier reference, dealing only with the charge, was based on sources outside the family. But with the shield discussion and defense of the Alcmaeonidae, the full emphasis, even in reflecting back to the period of Pisistratus, falls on the patriotism of the family, rather than the deeds of particular members.

As for Thucydides' treatment, his discussion of the family as a unit is minimal and cursory with no indication of its involvement in politics as a group. His stress falls, on the contrary, on the two major members of the line in his time: Pericles and Alcibiades. His discussions treat their lineage as incidental except that Alcibiades' noble and ancient descent enabled him to rise to political leadership at a very early age. But even so, Thucydides' discussion of Alcibiades, which is unique in that it goes into such personal detail, never refers to him as an Alcmaeonid. This would lead one to believe that the historian considered this a trivial detail not worth mention.

Aristotle's account, on the other hand, has been interpreted as describing sixth and fifth century political life in terms of conflict between well defined political parties. Yet, he does not use the late fifth century term for party or clubs. Stasis, the term of Herodotus, is his choice instead, and our earlier discussion has shown the questionable basis for translating that as party.

FOOTNOTES

1. Herodotus, Historiae, A. D. Godley, (Cambridge 1966); Thucydides, Historiae, 2nd. ed., H. S. Jones and J. E. Powell, (Oxford 1942); Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, H. Rockham, (Cambridge 1938).
2. See discussion of the translation of stasis in the text 27-28.
3. G.E.L., see various translations of στάσις, 1634.
4. Frank J. Frost, "Themistocles' Place in Athenian Politics," C.S.C.A., I, (1968), 106.
5. C.A.H., IV, 35-36.
6. Hdt., I, 59.
7. Hdt., I, 60.
8. Ibid.
9. George M. Calhoun, Athenian Clubs in Politics and Litigation, (New York 1913), 11.
10. Calhoun, Clubs, 4-7.
11. Hdt. I, 59.
12. G.E.L., 1634.
13. Francis R. B. Godolphin, ed., The Greek Historians, (New York 1942); Hdt., I, 59.
14. G.E.L., 1634.
15. Hdt., I, 59.
16. Hdt., I, 61.
17. Hdt., I, 62.
18. Hdt., I, 64.

19. Ibid.
20. Hdt., I, 61.
21. I will provide a more complete discussion of the curse in the following chapter.
22. Hdt., V, 62.
23. Hdt., V, 63.
24. Hdt., V, 66.
25. The reforms of Cleisthenes are also discussed in this chapter.
26. Hdt., V, 69.
27. Hdt., V, 71, 72.
28. Ibid.; for a discussion of the law on homicide; George Thompson, Greek Tribal Institutions, London, (1961), 132-137; C.A.H., IV, 29-31.
29. C.A.H., IV, 74-75.
30. Hdt., VI, 115.
31. Godolphin, Ancient Historians, note 28, 381, argues that Herodotus' defense is unconvincing.
32. Hdt., VI, 123-124.
33. J. Day and Mortimer Chambers, Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy, (Cambridge 1949), 176. He says that simply because the Alcmaeonidae were Herodotus' probable source, this information should not be rejected out of hand. It could be possible that he accepted it because he was convinced that the explanation he relates is the correct one; F. D. Harvey, "Political Sympathies of Herodotus," Historia, XV, (1966), 224-225, sees no reason to doubt that Herodotus was an admirer of Pericles and Athenian democracy; Jacoby, The Atthis, (Oxford 1949), 187; Charles Foranara, "The Tradition About the Murder of Hipparchus," Historia, XVII, (1968), 405, argues that we should not fall into the trap of assuming that because Herodotus and Thucydides, as well, utilized sources, that they did no thinking or evaluating for themselves; A. W. Gomme, "Athenian Notes," A.J.P., LXV, (1944), 322. This defense (Herodotus') was a response to late fifth century attacks on Pericles, it was not part of the Alcmaeonid traditions.
34. Michael Grant, The Ancient Historians, (New York 1970), 78-79.
35. Thu., V, 43-45; V, 52, 54; VI, 16, 19; VI, 27, 54; VI, 61-62; VI, 74, 93; VIII, 45, 56; VIII, 63, 65; VIII, 70, 75; VIII, 81, 108.

37. Thu., I, 126.
38. Plutarch, Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans, chapter 33.
39. Thu., V, 41.
40. Thu., V, 46.
41. Pericles is not referred to as an Alcmaeonid although his mother was, by either Herodotus or Thucydides. Only Spartan propaganda, which seemed to have had little or no effect referred to this aspect of his ancestry.
41., Fifty Years and Twelve of Classical Scholarship, (New York 1968), 182; 194-195.
42. Kurt von Fritz and Ernst Knapp, Aristotle's Constitution of Athens and Related Texts, (New York 1950), 15.
43. Anthony J. Podlecki, "The Political Significance of the 'Tyrannicide' Cult," Historia, XV, (1966), 135, cites W. G. Forrest as saying "No Alcmaeonid does anything even faintly democratic after the disappearance of Cleisthenes," C.Q., X, (1960), 234, to support his remark that "It is wrong to speak of the Alcmaeonids as 'leaders of the democratic party.'"
44. Von Fritz, Aristotle's Constitution, 19.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 149.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 150
49. Plutarch, Solon II.
50. This section is so similar to the account of Herodotus that it seems likely that it was either lifted from Herodotus or a source which both used almost verbatim. Von Fritz and Knapp note the absence of any mention of the curse at this point, but if we could show that this information did come from the same sources as Herodotus' that might explain the omission.
51. Von Fritz, Aristotle's Constitution, 149-150.
52. Aristotle, Constitution of Athens, 16, 10.
53. Aristotle, 19, 4.
54. Ibid.

55. Von Fritz, Aristotle's Constitution, 162 and note 32, 158, asserts that political clubs were active during the struggle over tyranny and democracy.
56. Aristotle, 20, 2.
57. Ibid., 20, 3.
58. Ibid., 28, 2-4. Fitzgerald, "The Murder of Hipparchus," 273, maintains that Aristotle was clearly opposed to late fifth century democracy and preferred oligarchy. Jacoby, Atthis, 211, says that Aristotle's chief source of information about Athenian democracy was political literature of the late fifth and early fourth centuries, which he characterizes as "the extreme right wing opposition."
59. Hdt., VI, 115.
60. Hdt., VI, 123-124.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN HISTORIANS

In this chapter, the research and conclusions of modern writers concerning the role of the Alcmaeonidae in the major issues and events of their time will be examined. As the family's story was preserved by the ancient writers within the history of the political development of Athens and two great wars, so their fame is preserved in modern writers' observations, conclusions, and speculations about politics in Athens from the seventh through the fifth centuries.

As individuals and perhaps as a group, the Alcmaeonidae were involved actively in Athenian political history, and little has been written which deals with them outside that arena. Yet, as one reads works dealing with the politics of the period, one is struck by certain inescapable impressions about the family---impressions which seem to have been accepted totally by most modern researchers.

The first is that beginning as early as the Cylonian conspiracy, the Alcmaeonidae actively participated in the political life of Athens as a cohesive group or party. Secondly, that from this period through the fifth century, the family consistently pursued a policy designed to achieve and maintain control of Athenian politics. And finally, that this policy was so paramount that it overshadowed all other considerations, even loyalty to their city.

In order to discover just how these conclusions were reached and supported, we will examine the record as it relates to three major periods in Athenian history in which the Alcmaeonidae or some member of the family played a significant part: the Cylonian incident of 623, the reforms of Cleisthenes, and the shield incident of 480.

Before we begin the discussion of the modern record, a precise definition of "party" is needed:

Any one of two or more bodies of people contending for antagonistic or rival opinions or policies in a community or society: especially, one of the opposing political organizations striving for supremacy in a state as a political or religious party.¹

A political party, therefore, is an organization of men with a similar ideological position on a range of questions. This, of course, requires both internal discipline and loyalty. In the works we are about to discuss, the term "party" is used often, but it remains to be seen if the evidence shows that kind of organization just described.

The works of the late nineteenth century historians often betray a certain impatience with what they consider Herodotus' lack of interest in politics, the unanswered questions raised by his seeming inconsistencies, and his pro-Alcmaeonid bias.² In attempting to understand the Athenian political system and its development, they have been stymied by the ancient historian's seeming disregard for things political. When a relatively complete copy of Aristotle's Athenian Constitution was identified in 1890, historians were excited by its promise to resolve so many nagging questions.³ It seemed to offer authoritative information on the very subjects omitted or left unclear by Herodotus. Even more important, however, it seemed to describe Athenian politics as an orderly array of competing forces roughly analogous to modern

parties.⁴ This would give historians more assurance than before in reconstructing events and their causes when none of the ancient sources was definitive.

Modern writers have accepted Aristotle's picture of politics dominated by political parties in preference to the seemingly chaotic political situation which Herodotus described. Thus, as will be seen in the discussion which follows, Aristotle's treatise has eclipsed Herodotus' history as an authoritative representation of Athenian politics. Remembering the criticisms of the Constitution outlined in the earlier chapter, it will be interesting to attempt to discover precisely why it has been so overwhelmingly preferred.

Writing in the Cambridge Ancient History, F. E. Adcock and E. M. Walker refer to two differing ancient accounts of the successful struggle of the exiled Alcmaeonidae to return to Athens. Although both accounts agree that the Pythian oracles were instrumental in the Spartan expulsion of the Pisistratid tyranny, their explanations of the cause of that aid differ markedly. Herodotus wrote that Delphic support resulted both from bribery and the contract which the family undertook to help rebuild the Delphic shrine, a task which was fulfilled with such generosity that the family was held in special favor by the priest. Aristotle's treatise relates what Adcock and Walker characterize as a "malignant and cynical tradition which found acceptance at Athens in the fourth century." In essence it reported that the Alcmaeonidae diverted part of the building funds to bribe the Pythian priestess to support their cause. Of these two possibilities, Adcock prefers the second.⁵ Though later he notes that the Spartans had good reason to intervene in Athenian affairs with or without the "free Athens" oracle,

he remains convinced that the Alcmaeonidae must have needed the money to pay for the battle of Lepisydrion. This was the only source of such funds that he could imagine,⁶ and it is the only argument he offers.

Following his description of possible motivations for Spartan intervention, it is not clear why he preferred Aristotle's account over that of Herodotus. Nonetheless, the picture he draws is one of a group so dedicated to returning to Athens that they would stoop to any means to achieve that end.⁷

This return of the Alcmaeonidae to Athens accompanied the expulsion of the Pisistratid tyrant, Hippias. E. M. Walker maintains that this resulted in the division of the political groups in Athens into three parties: the supporters of Pisistratus, who remained in the city; the old aristocratic "faction" led by Isagoras; and the Alcmaeonidae, whose popularity had risen due to the ouster of Hippias, and were probably one of the most important Athenian clans.⁸ It is in this context that he interprets the struggle between Isagoras and Cleisthenes which culminated in the famed reforms of the latter.⁹ Elaborating on that struggle, he relates two accounts. Herodotus reported that Cleisthenes began his reform of the constitution before Isagoras appealed to the Spartan king, Cleomenes, while Aristotle maintained that the reforms were enacted only after the failure of Isagoras and Cleomenes to gain control of the city. Walker says he prefers Aristotle's account because it is clear and precise while Herodotus' is vague and unclear.¹⁰ His preference, then, was based not on the superiority of the evidence but upon the fact that the newly found account of Aristotle seemed to explain aspects of the Athenian society and politics of this period while

Herodotus' account of political development was both "superficial and inaccurate."¹¹

Herodotus, Walker writes, "shows little insight into the political situation of each successive phase (of political development) and it may be surmised that the traditions which he follows were far from impartial."¹² Referring to the only instance in Herodotus' record which could be interpreted as describing a "party type" political organization, namely the old "Hill, Coast, and Plain factions," he maintains that they were no longer in existence in the fifth century. The failure of Herodotus to record additional parties and his approach to the political activities basically as struggles between individuals and their supporters seems to be the source of Walker's criticism.

Walker seems to be saying, in addition, that the most important aspect of the Athenian Constitution was not that it presented incontrovertible new evidence, but that it offered a system. In trying to understand a period about which so little reliable information exists, an ordered, predictable system makes it possible for men to formulate reasonable theories to take the place of evidence. Thus, the Athenian Constitution offered Greek historians a way to make sense out of what had been a chaotic situation due to the dearth of hard evidence. So what happens is that when the factual account of Aristotle conflicts with that of Herodotus, the former is preferred. When there is no conflict, and the facts provided by Herodotus are inescapable or useful, that account is accepted and utilized within the political context of Aristotle.¹³

This is what we see when Walker refers to the Athenian mission to Sardes (Hdt., V, 73). He argues that since Herodotus was pro-Alcmaeonid,

he attempted to conceal Cleisthenes' supposed role in this fateful mission. Cleisthenes must have been in power at this time and dispatched the mission with instructions to render earth and water (which is contrary to the account of Herodotus), having "calculated" that when the assembly had a choice between Sparta and subjugation to Persia, they would accept the latter in order to save the democracy.¹⁴ This argument ignores the Athenian defeat of Spartan attempts at domination of her politics and the fact that Persia would have been more likely to reestablish the tyranny. He contributes no evidence which would support the belief that the Persians would allow the democracy to continue.

That notwithstanding, Walker moves from this supposition to the conclusion that

....the first chapter of the long squalid history of medism had been written....For all that, the fact remains, and it is a fact that should never be forgotten, that the first Greek statesman to invoke the intervention of Persia in the politics of Greece itself was none other than the founder of Athenian democracy.¹⁵

Later in his discussion, Walker refers to this same mission as "Alcmaeonid" overtures made to Sardes in hope of ending Persian support of Hippias. By referring to this action not as one of Cleisthenes as he had earlier, he has made it the action of the Alcmaeonid family as a whole.¹⁶ But again, nothing Herodotus unequivocally supports this; only the imposition of the Aristotelian political construct on an ambiguous passage can account for such conclusions.

Other instances of this party conflict are seen by Walker in the Athenian response to the Ionian revolt and the election of Hipparchus, son of Charmus, to the archonship in 496. In the former instance, he calls the twenty ships a small¹⁷ number and sees the recall of the

Athenian forces after the first major Ionian defeat as clear evidence of three parties, two of which were roughly equal in power. A swing party's support was required for action: "...the only party with whom common action can be assumed is that of the Alcmaeonidae."¹⁸ His argument for this position lies in his earlier postulated pro-Persian policy of the Alcmaeonidae. On the question of the archonship he writes:

The evidence of a coalition here is irresistible. Can it seriously be maintained that the supporters of the exiled tyrant, fourteen years after the fall of the dynasty, could have carried their candidate by the mere votes of their own party? Once more the Alcmaeonidae must have felt themselves constrained to fall into line with their old rivals.¹⁹

The evidence may be irresistible, but it has not been presented. One could argue outside the party context that the fact that Hipparchus was related to Pisistratus is not evidence that he ran for the archonship on anything but his own reputation.

This concept of parties active in the early fifth century was expanded by George M. Calhoun in Athenian Political Clubs. The first recorded action of parties or clubs was the seventh century Cylonian revolt, he maintains. The "hetaery" or club, "is evidently an institution of great antiquity." Looking back to the Homeric setting, he sees in such an organization as *εταῖρος* men of common age, status, and a sharing of social events. In Herodotus I, 59, *στᾶσις* is the term usually translated as party or faction.²⁰ But Calhoun asserts that Aristotle "conclusively establishes" that such clubs existed prior to the struggle of Cleisthenes and Isagoras.²¹ It is in Aristotle, too, that he finds the evidence to support his contention that such clubs formed the dominant component in the struggle of Isagoras and Cleisthenes. Citing Plutarch and Aristotle, he argues that Themistocles and Pericles were

supported by such parties. In the case of Alcibiades, the evidence does support such clubs, but neither Herodotus nor Thucydides suggested such organized support of the earlier leaders.²²

The role of the Alcmaeonidae in the Persian Wars is treated much the same as in the previous period. The attacks upon Herodotus are an integral part of the negative interpretation of the Alcmaeonidae. Writing partially in response to the attacks upon Herodotus as a reliable source,²³ R. W. Macan defends his history, but not the reputation of the Alcmaeonidae.

His approach to the famous shield signal at Marathon demonstrates his evaluation of their activities. The only evidence, if one stretches the meaning of the term, is Herodotus' report of the rumors and his rejection of them. Using this as a point of departure, Macan writes that the fact that Herodotus mentioned the rumors and felt constrained to reject them indicates that the "suspicion attached to the Alcmaeonidae was inveterate and required refutation in his day."²⁴ Continuing his negative argument, Macan asks why the shield incident should be the one event seized upon, "unless there was something unfortunate, if not unpatriotic in the conduct of the Alcmaeonidae at this juncture." It cannot be shown, he goes on, that the family played an honorable role at that time as none of its members was celebrated as heroes.²⁵

Yet, despite this questionable reasoning, Macan is willing to accept the conclusion that the Alcmaeonidae were likely participants in what he and most other historians consider an act of treason.²⁶ As J. A. R. Munro writes:

Abundant evidence [exists] that Athens was undermined by intrigue and conspiracy and that Hippias had a secret understanding with a powerful party in the city.²⁷

Reading on, one finds that his evidence is tenuous at best. First, he argues that families which were former supporters of Hippias had joined Cleisthenes and the Alcmaeonidae because his reforms contained concessions to their interests. Second, they (in fact, Megacles) had aided Pisistratus in his return to the city and "they might likewise bring back Hippias." Finding Herodotus' apology for the family "very damning," he argues that additional evidence is the fact that none else was blamed for the incident. "Can we doubt," he goes on, "that he gives us their own defense?"²⁸ Among other similar pieces of evidence, Munro states:

....It can hardly be denied that the Alcmaeonidae in their struggle with the Eupatrids of the Plain leaned to Persia, while their rivals relied on Sparta...

He seems quite willing to dismiss the aid of the Spartans in the first expulsion of Pisistratus, although there is no hard evidence that this was an alliance; instead, it could be argued that it was coincidental that the Spartan action aided the Alcmaeonidae. At any rate, from this body of evidence, Munro feels free to conclude:

....So now on the *eve* of Marathon, we find the Alcmaeonidae and the Persians leagued against Miltiades and the Spartans.It is strange that the Medism of the Alcmaeonidae has ever been doubted.²⁹

After including more evidence of the same sort, Munro states his main reason for accepting this point of view. "Given its (the argument's) full weight, it clears up the strategy of both sides."³⁰ The mystery of the shield signal is solved, the sailing of the Persian ships around Sunium makes sense, and even the choice of Marathon as a landing site is more understandable. Out of the sparse and conflicting account of Herodotus, Munro places this "party" construction on the known events, and is thus able by interpolation to come to a very tidy

conclusion. "The plan of the campaign was governed by an arrangement between Hippias and the Alcmaeonidae."³¹

Munro's portion of the Cambridge Ancient History demonstrates why he considers this reconciliation of old enemies so logical. The Alcmaeonidae turned to the Persians in this situation because they feared the Spartans would drive them out. Thus, their only choice was to come to terms with Hippias in order to "restore the monarchy and by sacrifice of the form preserve the substance of the democracy."³²

Accepting this conviction of the Alcmaeonidae as a treasonous party, E. M. Walker's account of the post Marathon period is built upon the party concept. The "evidence points to"³³ four parties with the Alcmaeonidae in collusion with the pro-Hippias forces. In the trial and conviction of Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, and the election of Aristiedes he sees the activity of the parties and the ascendancy of the Alcmaeonidae. Miltiades was prosecuted by an Alcmaeonid, an indication of the strength of the party. Aristiedes was a close intimate of Cleisthenes, and Walker infers that he was a member of the Alcmaeonid party³⁴ because he was opposed to Themistocles³⁵ and shared supreme command with Xanthippus in 479 after the fall of Themistocles. And finally, the prosecution of this architect of the Greek defeat of the Persians by Leobotes, son of Alcmaeon is interpreted as a triumph for the party.³⁶

The amazing implication of all this is that the treasonous family dominated politics after the war so completely that they were able to eliminate these major figures through a coalition with the conservatives or the conservative party which was probably opposed to Themistoclean democracy. The impact of these theories, often accepted

without question, is demonstrated by the absence of documentation to justify such sweeping generalizations about the Alcmaeonidae.

Although the historians previously cited in this chapter hold divergent views on almost every major question, they are in basic agreement that political parties existed and dominated Athenian politics at least as early as the late sixth century and that the Alcmaeonidae functioned as a cohesive group in which all members worked within the party structure to promote the power of the family.

There remain, however, a few writers who reject one or both of these propositions. Basically, they maintain that the evidence does not support the existence of real party organizations so early in Athenian history.

Lionel Pearson, writing in 1937, held that even during the Periclean period parties as we know them did not exist. Had they, he argued, it seems unlikely that we would know only the names of the leaders. At least one of the major lieutenants would also have been noted, he argued. He also pointed out the absence of a Greek term which meant "party." Finally, he argued that ostracism was not a feature of party politics, but a method of eliminating for a time certain strong individuals. His treatment of the Alcmaeonidae, however, was that of a cohesive group which he viewed as unique, because of its "long period of leadership."³⁷

This approach to the Alcmaeonidae was also questioned by A. W. Gomme in 1944, as illustrated in the following passage:

We habitually speak of the Alcmaeonidae as of a family so close knit that every member of it, and every-one connected with it, must be a member of the same party and always work together. Thus Xanthippus' prosecution of Miltiades in 489 is taken to prove either the recovery of the Alcmaeonidae from the disgrace of the previous year, or that there had been no disgrace; the prosecution of Themistocles ca. 470 by Leobotes, son of Alcmaeon is proof that the former and the Alcmaeonidae had always been enemies: even Aristides must be brought within the family circle so that his archonship in 489, in spite of the part he had played at Marathon, may be in keeping with the family triumph. This kind of argument is due to an unintelligent adoption of Herodotus' language in his accounts of the overthrow of the tyranny and the shield episode (because of the polemics of 450-430 B.C.); yet, there is little evidence for it. Aristotle says that in the 80's Megacles was of the tyrants' party and that Xanthippus was not, and though the value of this statement is doubtful, it cannot simply be ignored; and Cimon was as closely connected by marriage with the Alcmaeonidae as Xanthippus. Though the later attacks on the Alcmaeonidae were aimed at Pericles, there is no reason to suppose that he carried the whole family with him in his political career; and it is wrong to assume without further proof a more closely knit organization a generation earlier.³⁸

Frank J. Frost, in two papers, also disputes the existence of parties and the cohesiveness of the Alcmaeonidae. Discussing Plutarch's account of the mid fifth century politics as class struggle, Frost maintains that "...to identify the Athenian aristocracy of this generation with a political party, or to relate the politics of the period as a contest between two distinct theoretical *πολιτισμοί* is to fall into error."³⁹ Plutarch's account should not be approached as having any particularly original new information about fifth century politics. His work relied primarily on the traditional concepts as contained in the fourth century schools. Frost considers Aristotle's Politics an attempt to apply the "methodology of the biological sciences" to politics. The weakness in such an approach is that historical events often do not conform to a system of any kind.⁴⁰

Frost sees individuals loyal to particular leaders rather than to parties.⁴¹ Looking at the career of Pericles, for example, he observes that his supporters came from all segments of Athenian society, and in particular from those very chrestoi who were supposedly the opposition party. Their men

...are best represented by men like the various Calliae: ambassador, financier, and general; by Andocides, the orator's grandfather, who traced his family to Hermes and Odysseus; by Metiochus, the perennial office holder, who is possibly a connection of the Philiad family; by Cleinias the Alcmeonid, and many others of his clan; by Sophocles...."⁴²

This coalition of representatives of the great families, the merchant class, and the army is "typical" of Athens in the fifth century. But these were not men allied on the basis of a common ideology. Instead, they worked together in a practical approach to politics which served the best interests of the participants. Frost dismisses the hetairiai, which Calhoun considered so ancient, as basically "right wing opposition" which occurred later as a response to the rise of oligarchic forces in the state in the late fifth century.⁴³ Frost follows this same general point of view in a later paper referring to the conclusion of Walker, Wade-Gery, and McGregor, among others, that Miltiades was forced into an alliance with Themistocles by Alcmaeonid attacks which eventually resulted in his conviction. Frost observes that this is an assumption, not a demonstrable fact.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, what Frost criticizes is not an isolated instance. The work of the modern writers in regard to the Alcmaeonidae has necessarily been based on a great deal of inference and supposition. And if this is remembered, these viewpoints are valuable. On the other

hand, later historians, utilizing such suggestions have often slipped into the practice of transforming them into statements of fact.⁴⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. Funk and Wagnalls, New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, (New York 1963), 1802.
2. C.A.H., IV, 167; J. A. R. Monro, "Some Observations on the Persian Wars," J.H.S., XIX, (1899), 190-191.
3., "The Newly Discovered Treatise of Aristotle," C.R., V, (1891), 1-2, 69, as an indication of the impact of this new discovery, the 1891 issue of C.R., V, No. 1-7 devoted separate sections devoted to the Constitution; C.A.H., IV, 141, "It is not an exaggeration to say that it is noon-day compared with twilight." (The period prior to the Constitution compared to that following its discovery.)
4. Ibid.
5. C.A.H., IV, 13.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.; Daniel Gillis, "Marathon and the Alcmaeonids," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, X, (1969), 133-45; H. T. Wade-Gery, Essays in Greek History, (Oxford 1953), 86, comments on Alcmaeonid treachery; Malcolm McGregor, "The Pro-Persian Party at Athens from 510 to 480 B.C.," H.S.C.P., Supplement I, (1940), 92, asserts that "Alcmaeonid ambitions and lust for personal power, coupled with an utter lack of scruples, left the Alcmaeonidae without enduring political friendships in Athens and bitterly detested abroad." (No citation.)
8. C.A.H., IV, 138.
9. Ibid.; George M. Calhoun, Athenian Clubs in Politics and Litigation, (New York 1970), 10-12, argues that political clubs probably existed as early as the Cylonian Revolt and that action was the first recorded instance of club activities in Athenian politics. He goes on to say that these early clubs were roughly parallel to those in 411.
10. C.A.H., IV, 139.
11. Ibid., 141.
12. Ibid., 167.

13. This approach is characteristic of almost all of the authors discussed in this paper.
14. A. Jarde, The Formation of the Greek People, (New York 1926), 271, maintains that the Alcmaeonidae may have sought Persian support to counterbalance the Spartan support of the aristocratic party.
15. C.A.H., IV, 158; A. W. Gomme, "Athenian Notes," A.J.P., LXV, No. 4, (1944), 321-322, offers an alternative to this charge against Cleisthenes; McGregor, "Pro-Persian," 77-78, fails to see how submission to Persia would have preserved the democracy. On 78-79 he offers an alternative interpretation of the evidence; "Medism" did not exist prior to Marathon, wrote Victor Ehrenberg, From Solon to Socrates, (London 1968), 136.
16. C.A.H.; IV, 168.
17. McGregor, "Pro-Persian," 80-81 refers to Hdt., V, 97, 3 to support his argument that twenty ships did not constitute half-hearted support when that number is compared to the size of the Athenian fleet prior to its expansion. Herodotus, he notes, did not use any qualifying "only," when he related the number.
18. C.A.H., IV, 168; C. A. Robinson, "The Struggle for Power at Athens in the Early Fifth Century," A.J.P., LX, No. 238, (1939), 232-237, rejects this conclusion.
19. C.A.H., IV, 169; McGregor, "Pro-Persian Party," 84-85, proposes that Hipparchus was elected in an attempt to appease Persia.
20. See 23-25 in the text for a discussion of the translation of this term.
21. Aristotle, Athenian Constitution, 20, 1.
22. Calhoun, Clubs, 10-12.
23., Fifty Years and Twelve of Classical Scholarship, (New York 1968), 185.
24. R. W. Macan, Herodotus, The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books, 2 volumes, (London 1895), 169; McGregor, "Pro-Persian," 86-87, maintains that this story originated during the time of "bitter opposition to Pericles."
25. Macan, Herodotus, 168.

26. Ibid., 169; A. T. Olmstead, "Persia and the Greek Frontier Problem," C.P., XXXIV, (1939), 312, "...the Alcmaeonidae actually did signal by shield from Cape Sunium." McGregor, "Pro-Persian," 88, acquits the Alcmaeonidae of treason; A. R. Burn, Persia and the Greeks, the Defense of the West, c. 546-487 B.C., (London 1962), 252, maintains that lack of evidence makes such a charge unsupportable but, earlier in his narrative (187-188; 227, 264) he seems to lose sight of that fact.
27. J. A. R. Munro, "Some Observations on the Persian War," J.H.S., XIX, (1899), 190; McGregor, "Pro-Persian," 92, "...there is no evidence of party strife at this time and it is hazardous to create it by theory."
28. Munro, "Some," 191; Macan, Herodotus, 169, notes that the fact that Plutarch does not bring the charge of being pro-Alcmaeonid against Herodotus should not be forgotten; Felix Jacoby, Atthis, (Oxford 1949), 187, remarks that although Pericles and his circle were probably Herodotus' sources for this information, Thucydides also "wished to absolve the Alcmaeonids."
29. Munro, "Some," 191; P. K. Baillie Reynolds, "The Shield Signal at the Battle of Marathon," J.H.S., XLIX, (1929), 102, believes that the Alcmaeonidae were involved in a plot with the Persians and the signal was to notify them that it had failed; C. A. Robinson, "Struggle," 234, argues that there is no reason to believe that the Alcmaeonidae could not be both anti-Spartan and anti-Persian; H. G. Hudson, "The Shield Signal at Marathon," American Historical Review, XLII, (1937), 443, also disputes their guilt; George Grote, The Persian Wars, (New York 1912), 46-50, accepts the notion that the shield signal was probably a signal to the Persians, but he believes that the Alcmaeonidae were blamed more out of political conflict than evidence. There was no sign at the time that they were considered traitors; F. Maurice, "The Campaign of Marathon," J.H.S., LII, (1932), 13-24, suggests that the signal could have been Greeks signaling Miltiades on the movement of the Persian ships; Frank J. Frost, "Pericles and Draconides," J.H.S., LXXXIV-LXXXV, (1964-65), 69-72, The "...worst charge against Pericles recorded in Plutarch made no mention of a curse." Embezzlement or mismanagement were the charges he cited. (Had a charge of family Medism been realistic, it seems likely that it would have been used.); Arnold J. Toynbee, Greek History from Homer to Heraclius, (Boston 1950), 183, argues that the Alcmaeonidae were not involved in the signal; Ehrenberg, From Solon, 132, says that most of the stories relating a pro-Persian policy of the Alcmaeonidae "only reflect earlier or later domestic divisions."
30. Munro, "Some," 192.
31. Ibid., 196.
32. C.A.H., IV, 32.

33. C.A.H., IV, 265.
34. C.A.H., IV, 266; Robinson, "Struggle," says that his election and eventual conviction of Miltiades were not "signs of triumph of the treacherous Alcmaeonidae: they were simply the manifestations of factional struggle; see also, Burn, Persia, 225.
35. It is interesting that with all of the concentration on party alignments that Themistocles is treated by Walker and the others as an individual, not the leader of a party; A. Podlechi, "The Political Significance of the Athenian Tyrannicide Cult," Historia, XV, (1966), 138; C. A. Robinson, "Athenian Politics 510-486 B.C.," A.J.P., LXVI, (1945), No. 263, 252. Burn, Persia, 227, sees a coalition including the son of Miltiades which was designed to "break" Themistocles; McGregor, "Pro-Persia," 87, refers to Themistocles as "playing his own individualistic game..."
36. C.A.H., IV, 266.
37. Lionel Pearson, "Party Politics and Free Speech in Democratic Athens," Greece and Rome, XIX, (Oct., 1937), 41-50.
38. Gomme, "Notes," 324-325; Clara M. Smertenko, "The Political Sympathies of Aeschylus," J.H.S., LII, (1932), 234, maintains that there is no evidence of party strife in Herodotus. What she describes is political struggle between individuals.
39. Frank J. Frost, "Pericles, Thucydides, son of Melesias, and Athenian Politics Before the War," Historia, XIII, (1964), 386-387; Erich S. Gruen, "Stesimbrotus on Miltiades and Themistocles," C.S.C.A., III, (Berkeley 1970), 92.
40. Ibid., 387.
41. Burn, Persia, 263, "...family factions, united by personal loyalties, not political parties united by programme (sic)."
42. Frost, Pericles, 388.
43. Ibid.
44. Frank J. Frost, "Themistocles' Place in Athenian Politics," C.S.C.A., I, (1968), 116.
45. Peter J. Bicknell, "The Exile of the Alcmaeonidae during the Pisistratid Tyranny," Historia, XIX, (1970), 130, remarks that, "There can be no doubt that this was the Kleisthenes, the Alkmeonid leader responsible for famous reforms and notorious alliance with Persia." Although Bicknell does not cite the source as "fact," it seems likely that it owes its origin, at least in part to Walker's work in the C.A.H. as discussed in this text on 57-60.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The first chapter of this paper summarized the supportable facts concerning the Alcmaeonidae as a group and the Alcmaeonids as individuals. In the course of that discussion, it became apparent that scant information about the Alcmaeonidae has been preserved. On the other hand, though many questions remain unanswered, a significant amount of factual material concerning the Alcmaeonids has survived.

In the second chapter, a survey of the major ancient historical sources failed to yield convincing examples or evidence of political activity of the Alcmaeonidae. In particular, no incontrovertible evidence of a family political policy or treason as an outgrowth of that supposed policy was discovered. That being the case, it seems worthwhile to attempt to explain how the modern accounts and interpretations developed.

The primary focus of modern historians has been the development of political life in Athens and fifth century foreign policy. Most writers have assumed that the dominant feature of political life was party conflict. Acceptance of this concept allowed writers to insert the known facts into the mold of party activity and propose plausible reconstructions where facts were lacking. It was this process, combined with willingness to ignore or dismiss ancient accounts which did not support such a construct that produced the modern conclusion that the prominent

Alcmaeonids were only the tip of an iceberg of Alcmaeonidae power and policy.

Although historians may disagree on the nature of that policy, two basic conclusions have emerged. First, all writers have agreed, either by statement or inference, that the family remained a cohesive, politically oriented unit throughout the archaic and classical periods. Second, though the opinion is not unanimous, the prevailing evaluation of the family suggests that they adhered to a single policy throughout the period--a policy designed to maintain and increase their political power, without regard for loyalties, morality, or convictions.

After examining both the agreement among historians and the method of their presentation of their conclusions, one must begin by looking for the evidence which supported those two conclusions. Although the presentation of evidence does not in and of itself identify the truth or falsity of a contention, it is reasonable that a certain burden of proof should fall upon the proponents of a particular position.

With this in mind, the research began with a survey of the works of modern writers, seeking their justification for their interpretations of the role of the Alcmaeonidae in Athenian history. It quickly became apparent that historians have not seriously questioned whether the family behaved as a unit or not. References to supposed family policy, action, and influence indicated that the concept of unified family activity has been accepted without question. Therefore, what may be only allegations have been treated as fact, requiring neither explanation, discussion, nor documentation.

Despite this tendency to assume rather than prove unity, writers began their discussions of policy which was a presumed outgrowth of it.

In these discussions, footnotes referred to the ancient writers as well as to recent historical opinion. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides were vital as they are the nearest we come to primary source material. Aristotle's Athenian Constitution, due to its theme of political organization, was also treated by most writers with the respect usually accorded primary accounts. The most frequently cited modern reference was the Cambridge Ancient History, and that is why it has played such a major role in the third chapter of this paper.

To demonstrate, however, the development of modern opinion concerning the Alcmaeonidae, I have chosen Daniel Gillis' paper "Marathon and the Alcmaeonids." This paper is particularly suitable because it is representative of the research techniques and writing style of most historians in dealing with the Alcmaeonidae. Moreover, it is one of the few works devoted exclusively to them. It was published in 1969 and can be considered current work. Finally, as I noted earlier, his notes include many of the works which I have used in preparing this paper, giving me a familiarity with his modern sources.

Looking first at his title, it is clear that he considers the terms Alcmaeonids and Alcmaeonidae synonymous. This question of terminology seems to reflect his failure to recognize the distinctions which exist between them. Without documentation or explanation, he assumes throughout his work that the family acted in concert from the time of Cleisthenes through the Persian Wars.

Using a tried and true debating technique, he opens his paper with a brief summary of the opposition to the position he will attempt to forward. Needless to say, no such summary less than a page in length can be considered a balanced presentation of the other positions in

comparison to his argumentation, which proceeds for eleven pages. This is not objectionable in itself, as the purpose of his article is the presentation and defense of his own position; but it does give one an impression of an objectivity which the remainder of the paper denies.

His theory is that the Alcmaeonidae were in collusion with the Persians and were thus traitors to Athens at Marathon. The evidence he presents is both misleading and inadequate. For example, rather than arguing that the family had demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with Hippias and the Persians, he maintains that the presence of evidence of earlier opposition to Hippias and tyranny in general is not enough to clear them of complicity.¹ This is followed by an attempt to convince the reader of his charges by inference rather than evidence.

First, he attempts to prove that the Alcmaeonidae had long been Medizers. Readily admitting that there is no evidence that Alcmaeonids were the envoys to Sardes, an idea not encountered elsewhere, he writes that "there is good reason to believe that they were and that Cleisthenes, a leading member of the family, had sent them."² E. M. Walker's work is cited³ as the source for this conclusion. On the pages referred to, Walker wrote:

It has been generally recognized that this (Herodotus, V, 73) is one of those passages in which the influence of the Alcmaeonid tradition can be detected. It is an obvious inference from the phrasing that the embassy was sent soon after the recall of Cleisthenes; that is, it was sent at a moment when his influence was at its height....It follows that the policy of sending the embassy to Sardes must have been the policy of Cleisthenes himself....⁴

Included with Walker's argument is the section in Herodotus from which he drew the following conclusion:

The Athenians directly afterwards recalled Cleisthenes, and the seven hundred families which Cleomenes had driven out; and further, they sent envoys to Sardes, to make an alliance with the Persians, for they knew that war would follow with Cleomenes and the Lacedaemonians....⁵

Although Gillis cites this section as the ultimate source of his conclusion, the chronology is not clear enough to establish his or Walker's point. One could interpret this section as saying that both the recall and the charge to the envoys were issued by the same Assembly, as Foranara argues. Since most of those who might have supported Cleisthenes would have been still out of the city, it would be difficult to support the contention that this was his policy.

Walker's interpretation is possible, but he produces no compelling evidence. His primary justification is the historic relationship, enshrined in charming legend, between the king of Lydia and Cleisthenes' great great grandfather. It seems highly questionable, since Walker cites no other evidence in support of his contention, that this relationship had not only been maintained but transferred to the Persian conquerors of Lydia. (The fact that the Alcmaeonidae probably had trading interests does not seem adequate support for such an assumption.)

Herodotus does not report that Cleisthenes the Alcmaeonid had any hand in the Sardes contact. Moreover, he states that "...on their return to Athens, they (the envoys) fell into deep disgrace on account of their compliance."⁶ We can be certain that by the time the ambassadors returned to Athens, Cleisthenes and those of his persuasion had returned to the city and that he was responsible for policy. As evidence in support of Cleisthenes' non-involvement in the dispatch of the mission, this seems equal to or better than that of Walker's in support

of his involvement. But, the real point is that the record simply is not clear enough to support the kind of conclusions that Walker makes and that Gillis carries into his discussion.

It is even more important to recognize the way in which Gillis uses those conclusions. By incorporating them into his argument as he does, he implies that they are more than opinion. They are utilized as facts and therefore enjoy the guise of evidence. He takes the same approach in arguing that someone with "Medist sympathies" prevailed upon Athens to withdraw her support of the Ionian revolt. Noting that Herodotus fails to name those responsible for the withdrawal of Athenian forces, he remarks that "...he (Herodotus) speaks simply of the Athenians. But who led Athens?"⁷ Clearly, his inference here is that the Alcmaeonids did, thus supporting his contention of a pro-Persian policy.

These are not isolated examples, taken out of context; these are representative of Gillis' approach to the question of Alcmaeonid treason in 480. In addition to this approach to the evidence, his word choice creates a vivid impression of the Alcmaeonidae in the reader's mind:

The Persians always chose the best Quislings they could find;⁸ The family, because of its earlier treachery in murdering the adherents of Cylon's coup, in spite of Herodotus' assigning blame elsewhere, had been sent into exile under a religious curse;⁹ Revenge takes time. (Referring to the ostracism of Themistocles);¹⁰ This is firmly in the Alcmaeonid's tradition of filling present needs by sleeping with all kinds of bedfellows.¹¹

On closer examination, it is clear that what appear to be statements of fact are often repetition of unfounded rumors or very imaginative inferences presented forcefully with language highly charged with prejudicial overtones.

Gillis' primary means of supporting his contentions is the discounting of Herodotus as a reliable source regarding events in which the Alcmaeonidae may or may not have been involved. Walker, among others accuses Herodotus of pro-Alcmaeonid bias¹², but Gillis does not identify his source when he condemns him as the "house historian" of the Alcmaeonids, nor does he provide any convincing evidence for that charge.¹³

As we have discussed earlier, there can be no question that Herodotus gained much of his information about the family traditions from the family. But within his work, he has reported facts which he considered doubtful and said so. There is no question that he defends the Alcmaeonidae, as does Thucydides, in this situation. But it is dangerous to lose sight of the fact that Herodotus' work was published or read¹⁴ in Athens and that his integrity was at stake. Many who heard his account were as familiar with the events he described as he was. It does not seem likely that he would have been taken very seriously if he had been nothing more than the pawn of a particular family faction.

Moreover, that Herodotus defended the Alcmaeonidae and probably gained much of his knowledge from the family does not mean that he did not believe what he said. After all, the Persian Wars had been a terrible experience for Athens, and Herodotus has never been accused of dis-oyalty to his city. In light of the bitterness that war-time treason engenders, it is hard to imagine any Athenian historian who would falsify his record on behalf of known or strongly suspected traitors.

It seems that Gillis' primary support of his criticism of Herodotus is his evaluation of the defense of the Alcmaeonidae. He does not attempt to disprove the facts in it; rather, he maintains that the family

would have been able to produce a more convincing defense had they really been innocent.

Why, it might be argued, should Herodotus not have been content to leave the burden of proof on the defamers of the Alcmaeonids? Simply because of the persistency of the rumor, which was strong enough to provoke such an energetic response from a normally genial writer. But it deserved a better response than this...¹⁵ He would have done his friend Pericles a better service by skillfully destroying them with irrefutable proofs. The point is that there were none.¹⁶

Although one can become too legalistic in historical discussions, in this case it is clear that Gillis simply does not produce convincing evidence in support of his position. Plausible reconstructions are not facts and should not be used as evidence. There is no evidence that the rumors were persistent or if they were, that does not compel us to believe that that inspired Herodotus' defense. As for proving the negative, the difficulties of such a task have long been considered so great that the proof lies with the accusers.

Yet, most of the works discussed in this paper fall into the same practice when referring to the Alcmaeonidae. The writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tend to be more free in their characterizations of the family than later ones. Nonetheless, the notion that the Alcmaeonids behaved as a political unit throughout the period has been maintained, and the impression of them as treacherous opportunists has survived in spite of the fact that there is not sufficient evidence to prove such contentions.

That being the case, the following is a possible explanation for the treatment of the Alcmaeonids. In the first place, modern historians have not, by and large, been as interested in social history as in political history. This may reflect, at least in part, the neglect of

social history by fifth century historians, for whom the lives and actions of men became important only as a result of their impact on the state.

The primary cause, however, seems to have been the acceptance by most historians of the concept that Athenian politics was characterized by political parties from the seventh century on. Although a detailed discussion of the question is beyond the scope of this paper, certain remarks seem to be called for. This concept seems to have resulted from the political construct which was outlined in Aristotle's Athenian Constitution and from inaccurate translation of a crucial term.

In regard to Aristotle's work, Frost argued that the acceptance of political parties is an error which resulted primarily from the impact of this work:

Generations ago it was almost heresy to suggest that Aristotle could be anything less than clear, and some of these passages, when the treatise was first discovered on papyrus, were used to show that the great philosopher could not possibly have written such a web of errors. Criticism since that time has shown that previous generations underestimated the extent to which Aristotle was dominated by his theories of political behavior, and the extent to which he forced an interpretation of the facts to fit his theories.

It is now clear that he believed the whole human political experience could be reduced to symmetry and order, like any other field of human knowledge; that politics could be ranged in some sort of spectrum; and that certain opposing forces were at work within every polity, causing it to incline now toward rule by the few and now toward rule by the many. In Athens specifically, he saw two parties emerging after the Cleisthenic reform, one of the *gnorimoi* and one of the *Demos*, and he seems to have assigned every famous Athenian to one or the other party. Modern scholarship has done valuable work in showing where he found his historical data; but it is not so clear that his political interpretations are anything but his own, except for the canon of political reforms derived from the constitutional theory of the Academy.¹⁷

As he observes, neither Herodotus nor Thucydides suggested that parties dominated political life. In addition to Frost's conclusions, another explanation for the prevailing interpretations may be found in Herodotus.

In the first place, I think it is quite possible that the similarities between that section of Herodotus, and Aristotle¹⁸ indicate that Aristotle used Herodotus' history as a source for his discussion of early politics. Secondly, as Herodotus used *στῶν* in his discourse, so did Aristotle, both in 13,4 and 14,3. As we discussed earlier, a translation of *στῶν* as "party" seems dubious on philological grounds. Yet, English writers consistently translate it thus. In the end, the imprecise translation may be as responsible for the prevalence of the party concept as the political system described by Aristotle. Remove the word "party," replace it with "those of," and the result is quite different.

As for the generally accepted belief that the Alcmaeonids behaved dishonorably in political life, without the party construct that argument is severely weakened. If we interpret the politics of the period as Frost does, their actions look quite differently. "There is...more than enough evidence to show that the extraordinary success of Pericles was based on a union of hearts---a system of loyalty to persons rather than ideas."¹⁹ In this context, the relationship between Megacles and Pisistratus, the Alcmaeonids and the Spartans, and the other supposed examples of duplicity of the family policy become instead the actions of individuals. As Frost continues, "it is this type of coalition regime... that is typical of Athens in the fifth century. Such associations were based on practical considerations and lively self interest rather than ideology."²⁰

The best description of the situation is A. W. Gomme's observation:

The tradition about the period from 510 to 483 is, in fact, both consistent and credible, provided we do not try to fill too many of the details by the help of imaginations inspired by conventional views of party politics.²¹

And so it was with the Alcmaeonidae. This was a family which produced some of Athens' greatest figures. At times, such as during their exile, it probably did act in concert, but there is not sufficient evidence to support the belief that the family functioned after that time and through the fifth century as a unit, holding to a single policy aimed at power for benefit of the family. There is scant evidence, moreover, to support the often quoted charges of treason, treachery, duplicity, or even family inspired murder. If for no other reason, the contributions of their members to the greatness of Athens require that such charges not be leveled without far more evidence than scholars have produced to date.

FOOTNOTES

1. Daniel Gillis, "Marathon and the Alcmaeonids," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, X, (1969), 136.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., note 12.
4. C.A.H., IV, 157-58.
5. Hdt., V, 73.
6. Ibid.
7. Gillis, "Marathon," 136.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 141.
11. Ibid., 142.
12. See earlier discussions of criticisms of Herodotus.
13. Gillis, "Marathon," 145.
14. Michael Grant, The Ancient Historians, (New York 1970), 29.
15. Gillis, "Marathon," 139.
16. Ibid., 140.
17. Frank J. Frost, "Themistocles' Place in Athenian Politics," C.S.C.A., I, (1968), 110-111.
18. Compare the similarities of Hdt., I, 59 and Aristotle's Athenian Constitution.
19. Frost, "Themistocles, Thucydides, Son of Melesias, and Athenian Politics Before the War," Historia, XIII, (1964), 388.
20. Ibid.
21. A. W. Gomme, "Athenian Notes," A.J.P., LXV, No. 4, (1944), 330.

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