Megara and ‘the Megarians’: a City and its Philosophical School*

When Plato left Athens after the death of Socrates, he first went, along with other members of Socrates’ former entourage, to Megara. More or less nothing is known about his stay there, yet it is possible to ascertain the motives for his decision to leave his native city and relocate to a place where, in the words of the Cynic Diogenes, the inhabitants “feast as if to die tomorrow, and build as if they were never to die at all”¹. Aside from the

* I would like to thank Hans Beck for the opportunity to contribute to this volume. The origins of this article relate back to a paper on “Philosophy and the Mediterranean Wide Web. Connecting Elites and Connections in the Upper-Classes of the Graeco-Roman World”, delivered at McGill in April 2017. I am grateful to Hans Beck and his team for the invitation and the splendid time I had during my stay at McGill University. Thanks are also due to Tiziano Dorandi (Paris), Benjamin Gray (London), Peter Liddel (Manchester), Katharina Martin (Düsseldorf), and Matthew Simonton (Tempe, AZ) who offered advice and input. Anna-Sophie Aletsee (Münster) also discussed the topic with me. I am indebted to all for their generous help. Translations are generally from the Loeb Classical Library, with occasional adjustments.

geographical proximity of Megara and its oligarchic regime, the reason was, according to Plato’s student Hermodoros of Syracuse, that the fugitives from Athens were eager to meet Eukleides, a former student of Socrates himself and founder of the so-called Megarian school. Although Megara could not compete with Athens in terms of a vibrant philosophical scene, the city was by no means a place without relevance in the history of philosophy, especially in the late Classical and early Hellenistic times. This aspect is widely ignored in studies on ancient Megara, due to the prevalent force of Athenocentrism in the study of the history of philosophy.

It is not the aim of the present paper to revise this image either. Rather, this contribution elaborates on the idea that a philosophical school existed in Megara that was identified through association with its place – a school of thinkers who took their name from the city and thus were known as Megarians. It is also not my intention to outline a history of the Megarian school. Rather, I seek to locate it in the local (discourse) environment of the city; to ask for interactions between the city of Megara, its citizens and inhabitants respectively, and the school and its members; and, as far as possible, to embed the

2 On Megara’s constitutional order in the early 390s, see Legon 1981: 263 as well as Gehrke 1985: 109 with n. 15 with reference to Pl. Cri. 53b.
4 For Eukleides’ biography, it suffices to refer to Muller 2000b. According to Pl. Phd. 59c, he was present at Socrates’ death; Xenophon, however, did not mention him in his Memorabilia.
5 This is true, e.g., in respect to Highbarger 1927 (whose announced second volume on Megara including cultural aspects of the city [xi; see also Highbarger 1923: iii] was never published); Hanell 1934; Legon 1981; Gehrke 1986: 140-144.
6 In a largely unnoticed passage of the prologue to his Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, Diogenes Laertius mentions the various possibilities to name a philosophical school, among them the designation ἄπτο πόλεων (1.17). Even if it is, in general, possible to explain the origins of a name of a philosophical school, it is an unsolved question as to how and by whom philosophical schools were named and for which reason(s) a specific name was chosen. The remarks by Gigon (1960: 60) on Diog. Laert. 1.17 are anything but exhaustive; cf. also Cambiano 1977: 27-35.
7 In this respect, see von Fritz 1931; Montomeri 1984: 15-226; Muller 1988; Döring 1998: 207-237.
8 It is worth noting that, in order to avoid misconceptions, in Ancient Greek the ethnicity of the inhabitants of Megara is Μεγαρείς, pl. Μεγαρεῖς (Legon 2004: 463), whereas the name of the members of the school is Μεγαρικοί, pl. Μεγαρικόι, a term rarely attested; see Döring 1989: 296. In English the form “Megarician(s)” is uncommon (a rare exception is Bocheriski 1951: 77-102); both the inhabitants of the city and the members of the school are therefore mostly called Megarians.
Megarian school in the Megarian localscape. To achieve this goal, I will examine the presence of Megarian philosophers in Megara as well as their visibility, and engagement, in the local cosmos of the city. The first step, however, will be to address some general problems in respect to the Megarian school that make things even more difficult than the outlined approach would suggest. In the concluding observations, a remarkable piece of evidence, dating to the second century CE, will be introduced in order to demonstrate that, at a time when the Megarian school was long gone, its founder continued to be remembered as an icon of local pride.

Tracing the Megarian School

Among the various Socratic schools, the Megarians are probably the least known philosophical group, owing to the paucity of available evidence. To name only the most crucial, and probably the most astonishing of the many unsolved problems regarding the Megarians, it is far from being clear as to what extent the Megarians can be characterized as a philosophical school in the rigid sense of the term at all, and if so, what the term ‘school’ entails in their particular case.

Yet, let us consider some statements from ancient authors: Aristotle mentions the Megarians in his *Metaphysics*; Epicurus wrote a treatise entitled *Against the Megarians*; Strabo knew that Megara,

---


10 See, e.g., Muller 1988: 11. Three collections of fragments and testimonies (with commentary and partly in translation) are available: Döring 1972; Montoneri 1984; Muller 1985. See also, indispensably, Giannantoni’s *SSR²* I *Euclidis et Megaricorum Philosophorum Reliquiae [= II A-S] [p. 375–483]. If referring to ‘Megarian’ sources, I will generally restrict myself to reference the text according to its edition in Giannantoni’s *SSR²*, as well as in Döring’s collection and to mention the ancient author (and, if necessary, his work) who quotes the respective fragment. In general, I refrain from referring to the commentaries on the Megarians. It is easy to find the relevant passages.


“once even had schools of philosophers who were called the Megarian sect, these being the successors of Eukleides, the Socratic philosopher, a Megarian by birth.”

and Diogenes Laertius explained in his *Life of Eukleides* that,

“his followers were called Megarians after him, then Eristics, and at a later date Dialecticians, that name having first been given to them by Dionysius of Chalkedon because they put their arguments into the form of question and answer.”

What can be deduced from these and other testimonies is that the Megarian philosophers were a group of people who were considered to be philosophers, though distinct from other philosophers. Their technique of questioning and reasoning is labeled “Megarian(-styled)” by Plutarch in his treatise *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, when criticizing Chrysippus for his attacks on Megarian philosophers. The verb μεγαρίζω has been used by Diogenes Laertius to describe the habit of following the Megarian philosopher Stilpo, thus to “megarise”. The *Suda* (tenth century CE) also contains the entry Μεγαρίςαι.

---

13 The title is known from Diogenes Laertius’ catalogue of works of Epicurus: Diog. Laert. 10.27 [= SSR² Eubulides (= II B) fr. 17 (p. 396) = fr. 194 Döring = Epicur., p. 21 Arrighetti]. On Epicurus’ and the Epicureans’ critical attitude toward the Megarians, see Sedley 1976: 144–147.
17 Diog. Laert. 2.113 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 2 (p. 450) = fr. 163A Döring]. For μεγαρίζω and its meanings, see LSJ s.v. μεγαρίζω. See also Döring 1998: 231.
18 Sud. s.v. Μεγαρίςαι (M 388) [= fr. 163Β Döring] (transl. by D. Whitehead): τὰ Μεγαρέως δοξάσας. Στιλπνῷ γάρ ὁ φιλόσοφος Μεγαρεύς ἦν, τῆς Ἑλλάδος: ὁ δ’, τοσοῦτον ἀρρηστολογία καὶ σοφιστεία προήγη τοὺς ἄλλους, ὃς μικροῦ δεῖσα
Despite these and other comparable sources, it remains difficult to consider the Megarians as a school in terms of the general understanding of this expression. This becomes immediately clear if one considers a common definition of the concept of a philosophical school whereby a philosophical school is “[n]ot, in general, a formal institution, but a group of like-minded philosophers with an agreed leader and a regular meeting place, sometimes on private premises but normally in public.” Against this background it is evident that, for all we know, the Megarians can be seen only in a very wide sense as a philosophical school, or that they must be considered a philosophical school with loose internal ties. Some key features common to the concept of philosophical schools were not shared by the Megarians: for instance, throughout their (post-Euklidean) history they neither had a head of school (only dominating figures), nor were all persons affiliated to the Megarians based at Megara. Likewise, no regular meeting place in the city is attested.

The philosophers grouped under the name of Megarians only had some topics in common, especially logic, metaphysics and, to some extent, ethics. Although there seems to have been no larger dogmatic basic framework, a specific form of questioning and reasoning was assigned to their intellectual conversations. All of these circumstances might reasonably explain the noted changes of the naming of the Megarians (Diogenes Laertius, above).
Even though Megara was thus not a permanent center of Megarian philosophy, the name of place remained a characteristic of those who belonged to the Megarian school. Moreover, some of the philosophers called Megarian were also Megarian citizens or spent at least some of their time actually practicing philosophy in Megara. Next to Euclid, the founder of the school, Ichthyas, Philippo, and Stilpo were the most prominent protagonists.\textsuperscript{23} Their presence and role in the city will be taken into account below.

\section*{Prominent Members of the School}

The Platonic dialogues are often embedded in short prefatory notes. The setting of one of these prefatory dialogues, in the \textit{Theaitetos}, is located in Megara. Whether this dramatic poem is authentic or not, is not relevant in the current context.\textsuperscript{24} Briefly, the setting is the aftermath of the battle of Corinth, probably in 392 or 391 BCE (rather than in 369),\textsuperscript{25} and the scene is at one of the city gates. Eukleides, who had intended to go to the harbour, has come upon the mathematician Theaitetos of Sounion,\textsuperscript{26} who, wounded in the battle of Corinth, was on his way back to his native city. Upon his return to Megara, Eukleides runs into Terpsion,\textsuperscript{27} who had been looking for him. This encounter results in the immediate reading aloud of a conversation between Socrates and Theaitetos (and Theodoros\textsuperscript{28}) in the year before Socrates’ death; this conversation was recorded by none other than Eukleides after Socrates relayed the discussion to him, and by happy chance, Eukleides had this text with him when he meets Terpsion. More interesting than the reading aloud of Eukleides’ text by his accompanying slave in memory of Theaitetos is that Terpsion tells Eukleides that he had been looking for him in the agora.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{23} On these three philosophers, see, e.g., Muller 2000c; Muller 2012; Muller 2016b.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} Pl. \textit{Tht.} 142a1-143c8 [=SSR² I Euclides (= II A) fr. 9 (p. 379–380) = fr. 5 Döring]. See the short overview by Erler 2007: 232. On the introductory dialogue, see also the commentary by Seeck 2010: 15–17.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{26} On Theaitetos, see Nails 2002: 274–278; Narcy 2016.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{27} On Terpsion, see Nails 2002: 274; Muller 2016c.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{28} On Theodoros of Cyrene, see Nails 2002: 281–282; Macris 2018.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{29} Pl. \textit{Tht.} 142a2–3.
\end{flushright}
Whatever the veracity of this story, it must have been plausible to the readership to find the Megarian philosopher Eukleides in the agora of his native city. Unfortunately, nothing further is known about Eukleides’ public presence in Megara. Timon of Phlius in his satirical poems Silloi, noted that Eukleides “inspired the Megarians with a frenzied love of controversy”.\textsuperscript{30} This shows that in the context of mocking philosophical satires, it was obvious to credit Eukleides with some influence over his fellow citizens.

More instructive than Eukleides’ involvement in the public life of his hometown, and that of his student Euboulides of Miletus (who is mentioned in passing in an Attic comedy by an unknown author\textsuperscript{31}), is the case of Ichthyas, son of Metallos. Ichthyas was also one of Eukleides’ students. A minor player in the history of philosophy, he played an important role in the history of his hometown in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE. Diodorus Siculus sets the historical stage for us, stating that “in the city of the Megarians, when some persons endeavored to overturn the government and were overpowered by the dēmos, many were slain and not a few driven into exile.”\textsuperscript{32} It is much debated whether this passage is part of Diodorus’ description of the conditions in the Peloponnese after the koīnē eirēnē of 375 or if it relates to the aftermath of the battle of Leuktra in 371. Even though current scholarship widely accepts the earlier date,\textsuperscript{33} the later one cannot be excluded with certainty.\textsuperscript{34} A short sentence in Tertullian’s Apologeticus, often disregarded by ancient historians, is of great interest, since it provides a particular detail of this incident of stasis: “Ichthyas”, relates Tertullian, “is killed while he organizes a plot against his city.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{30} Timo Phliasius fr. 28 di Marco apud Diog. Laert. 2.107 [ = SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Euclides (= II A) fr. 34 (p. 387) = fr. 8 Döring] (transl. by R.D. Hicks): Εὐκλείδου, Μεγαρεύσῳ ὃς ἐμβαλε λύσσαν ἔρισμῳ. On this fragment, see di Marco 1989: 175-177.

\textsuperscript{31} On Euboulides, Muller 2000a. PCG VIII Adesp. com. fr. 149 Kassel and Austin apud Diog. Laert. 2.108 [ = SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Eubulides (= II B) fr. 1 (p. 389) = fr. 51A Döring].

\textsuperscript{32} Diod. 15.40.4 (transl. C.L. Sherman, modified): ἐν δὲ τῇ πόλει τῶν Μεγαρέων ἐπιχειρήσασθε τινὲς μεταστήσαι τὴν πολιτείαν, καὶ κρατηθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου, πολλοὶ μὲν ἀνηρθήσαν, οὐκ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἔξεπεσον.

\textsuperscript{33} For a concise overview, see, e.g., Stylianou 1998: 330-332.

\textsuperscript{34} See, e.g., Gehlke 1985: 110, 147 with n. 6; Jehne 1994: 64 n. 100.

\textsuperscript{35} Tert. Apol. 46.16 [ = SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Ichthyas (= II H) F 3 (p. 439) = F 48 Döring]: Ιχθύας, δωμ κυριατί ινδιασ διασφατι, ὀκτιδιοτ. In the manuscripts of the Apologeticus, the name of Ichthyas is corruptly transmitted (ichthys and ichthydias). For long, this has resulted in a misleading conjecture (et Hippias; see, e.g., Tert. Apol. ed. Waltzing and Severyns; DK 86 [79] Hippias A 15 [II, p. 330]) and in the hypothesis that Tertullian had confused the sophist Hippias of Elis and Hippias, the son of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos (see, e.g. Waltzing 1931: 293-294). As Emonds (1937: 186-187) has pointed out, this was not without consequences for the evaluation of Tertullian’s quality as author and the Apologeticus’ value as a source; see,
Ichthyas' plotting and the civic strife in Megara mentioned by Diodorus relate to the same instance of *stasis*. The short remark thus provides an additional piece of information, that is: Ichthyas not only played a vital role among the oligarchic conspirators, but he was also among those who met their death in the wake of the failed coup d'état. Unfortunately, nothing more can be inferred from this detail, as most aspects regarding the context of the upheaval remain obscure.

e.g., Geffcken 1937: 282 with n. 1. However, Emonds (1937: esp. 180-184) has convincingly demonstrated that the text must be read 'Ichthyas' and he has also explained how the defective transmission in the manuscripts can be explained. All later essential critical editions of the text (e.g., CCSL I [Tert. oper. I] accept Emonds' emendation. This emendation has also been recognized and accepted in studies in the history of philosophy of the Megarians (see, e.g., Döring 1972: 100) and in the field of patristic studies on Tertullian (see, e.g., Georges 2011: 653 with n. 57).

36 See already Emonds 1937: 185-186; see Kroll 1940; F. Jacoby in FGrH 3b Noten 230; Meyer 1970: 848. Döring (1972: 100-101), however, is rather skeptical and suggests to see Ichthyas' death in the context of civil strife in 343 (on this apparently bloodless conflict between [philo-Makedonian] oligarchs and [philo-Athenian] democrats, see Legon 1981: 290-294; Gehrke 1985: 110). Döring's main argument for his suggestion – based on Diogenes of Sinope's dubious dialogue *Ichthyas* (Diog. Lært. 2.112 [= SSR² II Diogenes (= V B) fr. 124 (p. 283) = fr. 32A Döring], 6.80 [= SSR² II Diogenes (= V B) fr. 117 (p. 280-282) = fr. 32B Döring]] and consequential chronological considerations – is worth considering, even though it is far from convincing. Further investigations are necessary, even more so, if the above quoted passage by Diodorus is dated to 372. On Diogenes' problematic catalogue of literary works, see, with different positions in respect of their authenticity, Goulet-Cazé 1986: 85-90; Winiarczyk 2005.

37 Tertullian's source for his knowledge about Ichthyas remains an open question. To think of a Hellenistic (or, less probably, early Imperial) compilation of anti-philosophical polemic might not be completely misleading. In any case, it is remarkable that Ichthyas is not mentioned in Tatian's polemic against philosophers (Tat. *adv. Graec.* 2.1-3.4) whereas Plato, Aristotle, and Aristippus, who are quoted together with Ichthyas by Tertullian (Tert. *Apol.* 46.15-16), are referred to by Tatian (Tat. *adv. Graec.* 2.1-2). The attribution of the fragment on Ichthyas to Aristotle's *Megarian Constitution*, as suggested by Emonds (1937, 190-191), should be considered as doubtful. Jacoby (FGrH 3b Noten 230) has pointed out that an unknown local Megarian historian might have been the first to record the events of the Megarian civil strife of the 370s, and that this anonymous historian was the source of Ephoros, who was used, in turn, by Diodorus; see also Piccirilli 1975: 1 n. 4. The connection between the anonymous Megarian or Ephoros respectively and the unknown source of Tertullian must remain again an unanswerd question. It is remarkable, however, that Tertullian refers explicitly in his *On the Soul* to Ephoros: *BNJ* 70 Ephoros F 217 *apud* Tert. *de An.* 46. Moreover, it is not possible to allocate the 'Ichthyas-fragment' to Theophrastus' *Megarian (Dialogue)* attested in Diog. Lært. 5.44 (= Tlphr. fr. 436 no. 20 Fortenbaugh – Huby – Sharples – Gutas), 6.22 (= Tlphr. fr. 511 Fortenbaugh – Huby – Sharples – Gutas).

38 As far as I know, this passage has never been taken into account. See, e.g., Legon 1981 (esp. 274, 276-278); Gehrke 1985 (esp. 110); Scholz 1998; Stylianou 1998 (esp. 329-332); Robinson 2011 (esp. 40); Gray 2015; Simonton 2017.

39 It is important to underline, however, that Ichthyas' involvement in (Megarian oligarchic) politics had nothing to do with his philosophy but with his presumable social background, which induced his association with philosophy. Despite the scarce evidence, it is a plausible assumption to see in Ichthyas an offspring of the Megarian upper class. In this respect, see, e.g., the remarks by Haake 2009: 130-132, which can be applied to Megara; see also Haake 2015: 76; Nebelin 2016: 364.
The next Megarian who is visible in our sources was Stilpo of Megara (c. 360 to 280 BCE), the last and perhaps most prominent Megarian philosopher, who attracted a considerable number of students, as evidenced by his fellow citizen Philippos of Megara, also a Megarian philosopher.  

Even though Stilpo was a person who was known to the Athenian public—apparently he had taught, at least temporarily, in Athens, before being accused for religious reasons—he appears to have lived and taught mostly in his hometown of Megara. Some short pieces of information handed down by Diogenes Laertius suggest that Stilpo was a public figure in Megara known for his philosophical activity. Stilpo was also engaged in politics, according to an isolated, brief sentence in the *Life of Stilpo.* In the *Life of Diogenes,* Stilpo

---

40 Diog. Laert. 2.113 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 16 (p. 458) = 164A Döring] (transl. by R.D. Hicks): περὶ τοῦτοῦ φησὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Μεγαρικός κατὰ λέξιν οὕτως: “παρὰ μὲν γὰρ Θεοφράστου Μητρόδορου τῶν θεωρητικῶν καὶ Τιμαγόραν τῶν Γελών απέστασε, παρ’ Αριστοτέλει δὲ τοῦ Κυρηναϊκοῦ Κλειταρχοῦ καὶ Σιμμίαν ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν διαλεκτικῶν Παιωνίου μὲν ἀπ’ Αριστείδου, Δέιφνος δὲ τῶν Βοσπορικῶν Εὐφάντου καὶ Μύρμηκα τὸν Ἐξανίτου παραγενομένος ὡς ἔλεγχοντας ἀμφότερος ξηλώτας ἔχον.” = “On this let me cite the exact words of Philippus the Megarian philosopher: “for from Theophrastus he drew away the theorist Metrodoros and Timagoras of Gela, from Aristotle the Cyrenaic philosopher, Kleitarchos, and Simmias; and as for the dialecticians themselves, he gained over Paisonios from Aristides; Diphilos of Bosphorus, the son of Euphantos, and Myrmex, the son of Exaineto, who had both come to refute him, he made his devoted adherents.” See Döring 1972: 144–146.

41 Stilpo is mentioned in a fragment of Sophilos’ comedy *The Wedding: PCG VII Sophilus fr. 3 apud* Diog. Laert. 2.120 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 3 (p. 450) = fr. 185 Döring]; see Weiher 1914: 70–71. According to Diogenes Laertius in his *Life of Stilpo,* “[i]t is said that at Athens he (i.e. Stilpo) so attracted the public that people would run together from the workshops to look at him.” (2.119 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 11 (p. 453) = fr. 176 Döring] [transl. by R.D. Hicks]: Λέγεται δ’ οὕτως Ἀθηναῖς εἰσπρέπει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὡστὶ απὸ τῶν ἐγκριτῶν συνήθειν ἵνα αὐτὸν βαθαίνου).  

42 This can be reasonably deduced from the fact that the founder of the Stea, Zeno of Kition, was a student of Stilpo; see, e.g., Döring 1998: 231. In which form Stilpo’s teachings at Athens took place, is unknown.


44 Among those who settled at Megara because of Stilpo were the philosophers Asklepiades of Phlius (Goulet 1989; see additionally Haake 2010) and Menedemos of Eretria (Goulet 2005a); Diog. Laert. 2.126 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 7 (p. 452–453) = SSR² I Menedemos (= III F) fr. 1 (p. 503) = fr. 170 Döring] (transl. by R.D. Hicks): “Asklepiades of Phlius drew him away, and he lived at Megara with Stilpo, whose lectures they both attended.” (Ἀσκληπιάδου δὲ τοῦ Φλιασίου περισπάσασαν αὐτὸν ἐγένετο ἐν Μεγάραις παρὰ Στιλπών.). This happened in the late 320s; see Knopfler 1991: 171 n. 5; Döring 1998: 242. Unfortunately, it is not possible to decide whether the location of Stilpo’s teaching, which is provided in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus, and which might have Stilpo’s dialogue *Metrocles* (Diog. Laert. 2.120 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 23 (p. 461)] = fr. 187 Döring) as source, should be located in Athens or Megara: *P.Oxy.* LII 3655 = CPF I 1 99 Stilpo 2T.

45 Diog. Laert. 2.114 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 35 (p. 468) = fr. 162 Döring]; Diogenes uses the word πολιτικῶτατος. The sentence on Stilpo as a political man is not related to the surrounding context. Rather, it follows
is mentioned alongside the Athenian Phokion as one of the students of Diogenes of Sinope, who became active in politics.\textsuperscript{46} It can be reasonably assumed that Stilpo was involved in Megarian affairs (certainly with no intention to realize philosophical ideas), because of his likely membership in the Megarian elite. Such a social background for a philosopher in late Classical and early Hellenistic times would not be surprising; on the contrary, this would be expected.\textsuperscript{47}

Whatever the authenticity of further information on Stilpo’s biography might be, its overall impression supports the image of the philosopher who was a member of Megara’s upper class. According to a certain Onetor, as Athenaios reports in book 13 of his \textit{Learned Banqueters}, Stilpo had, next to his wife, a \textit{hetaira} named Nikarete,\textsuperscript{48} who “was a quite refined courtesan and was particularly attractive because of her ancestry and her education, since she had been a student of the philosopher Stilpo.”\textsuperscript{49} Even though we sense a certain topicality here – the prominent theme of “the philosopher and the \textit{hetaira}” –, this does not prevent us from drawing certain conclusions from this reference.\textsuperscript{50} Philosophy and hetairism were integral parts of the lifestyle of the male elites of Greek cities in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Diogenes’ lengthy remarks on Stilpo’s pupils and is followed by his more detailed observations on his family relations. It is worth noting, however, that the opposite image of Stilpo as a man who has chosen to live in tranquility (\textit{i.e.}, beyond politics) is present in Plutarch’s \textit{Life of Demetrius} 9.9 [= SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 15 (p. 455) = fr. 151B Döring]. On contrasting images of the lives of philosophers, see, e.g., Haake 2013a: 85-88.
\item Diog. Laert. 6.76 [= SSR\textsuperscript{2} II Diogenes (= V B) fr. 138 (p. 291) = fr. 149 Döring]. On Phokion and Diogenes, see Gehlke 1976: 192-193, 197 with n. 87.
\item See, e.g., the results of Haake 2007.
\item \textit{FGrH} 4A Onetor 1113 F 2 \textit{apud} Diog. Laert. 2.114 [= SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 17 (p. 459) = fr. 155 Döring] (transl. by R.D. Hicks): Καὶ γυναῖκα ἤγαγεντο καὶ ἔταιρα συνή Νικαρέτη, ὡς φησί ποι ταῖς Ὀμήρωρ. – “He married a wife, and had a mistress named Nikarete, as Onetor has somewhere stated.” On Nikarete, see Kroll 1936; Goulet 2005b. On Onetor, Goulet 2005c.
\item Athen. 13.596e [= SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 17 (p. 458-459) = fr. 156 Döring] (transl. by S.D. Olsen): Νικαρέτη δὲ ἦ Μεγαρίς οὖς ἄγγελις ἦν ἔταιρα, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονέων ἐνεκα καὶ κατὰ παιδεῖαν ἐπέραστος ἦν, ἤκροτο δὲ Στίλπνως τοῦ φιλοσόφου. – “Nikarete of Megara was a quite refined courtesan and was particularly attractive because of her ancestry and her education, since she had been a student of the philosopher Stilpo.” – The Cynic Krates probably mocked Stilpo’s relationship with Nikarete in an undertone of sexual ribaldy; SSR\textsuperscript{2} II Crates (= V H) fr. 67 (p. 549) \textit{apud} Diog. Laert. 2.118 [= fr. 180 Döring], On \textit{hetaira} in Athenaios’ work, see McClure 2003: 27-58.
\item A further anecdote regarding Stilpo and a \textit{hetaira}, Glykera, can be traced back to Satyros: Satyr. fr. 19 Schorn \textit{apud} Athen. 13.584a [= SSR\textsuperscript{2} I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 18 (p. 459) = fr. 157 Döring].
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Classical and Hellenistic periods. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that Stilpo, who was married and had a daughter, took a hetaira who descended from a noble Megarian family.

No examination of Stilpo as a public figure and a politically relevant person can leave aside what may be considered the most popular anecdote about any Megarian philosopher in antiquity. According to Diogenes Laertius, Ptolemy I and Demetrios Poliorketes held Stilpo in high esteem:

“Ptolemy Soter, they say, made much of him, and when he had got possession of Megara, offered him a sum of money and invited him to return with him to Egypt. But Stilpo would only accept a very moderate sum, and he declined the proposed journey, and removed to Aegina until Ptolemy set sail. Again, when Demetrios, the son of Antigonos, had taken Megara, he took measures that Stilpo’s house should be preserved and all his plundered property restored to him. But when he requested that a schedule of the lost property should be drawn up, Stilpo denied that he had lost anything which really belonged to him, for no one had taken away his learning, while he still had his eloquence and knowledge. And conversing upon the duty of doing good to men he made such an impression on the king that he became eager to hear him.”

It cannot be denied that Diogenes’ remarks regarding the interest of Ptolemy and Demetrios in Stilpo are topical insofar as they belong to the huge amount of comparable

---

52 Stilpo’s daughter, who was married to Simmias of Syracuse (Muller 2016a), a friend of her father, is attested by Diogenes Laertius: Diog. Laert. 2.114 [= SSR² I Stilpon (= II O) fr. 17 (p. 459) = fr. 153 Döring].
statements regarding Hellenistic monarchs wishing to demonstrate good relations with philosophers. The anecdote on Demetrios’ offering and Stilpo’s refusal should be read as one of the neat stories illustrating the failed attempt of a king to attract a philosopher as well as the topical antagonism between “the wise” and “the powerful”. Yet, all this does not necessarily mean that both rulers did not attempt to be on good terms with Stilpo – especially for political reasons. It is quite plausible to take such a royal effort as the historical nucleus of the whole story.

Although not much is known about the political situation in Megara at the end of the fourth century BCE, it is nevertheless possible to give an impression of the historical situation and to contextualize Ptolemy’s and Demetrios’ attempts to attract Stilpo. We hear that there was a change in the constitution, which has to be considered as part of the fierce power play in the Greek world in the early Hellenistic period. According to Diodorus and Plutarch, Demetrios abolished the oligarchy and restored democracy after he had conquered the city in 307 BCE – all of which probably occurred in a situation of internal conflict in Megara. It is conceivable that Stilpo, as a member of the civic elite and possibly as a prominent figure, might have been a person who was considered a potential partisan of both Ptolemy and Demetrios, instrumental in their attempts to gain control of Megara.

Between the early fourth and the late third century, then, several members of the Megarian school appear to have been present in the city. Due to the fragmentary nature of our sources, however, it is difficult to see the details of this developing story. We are left with a more general impression. The magnitude of this philosophical imprint on the local discourse world of Megara is impossible to assert.

In a similar vein, it is difficult to infer insights from other Greek cities with respect to a public discourse on Megarian philosophers and philosophy in Megara. Since the early

55 In this respect, see Haake 2013b: 181-184.
56 On this antagonism in general, see Dorandi 2005a and Haake 2013b: 182.
57 Diod. 20.46.3; Plut. Demetr. 9.8; cf. Gehrke 1985: 110. See also the contribution by Klaus Freitag on Demetrios’ engagement in Aigosthena.
Hellenistic period, epigraphic evidence has been of great importance in this respect.\(^{58}\) Unfortunately, no relevant inscriptions are currently known from Megara.\(^{59}\) Another possible source to shed light on the public opinion and discourse on philosophers and philosophy has also been entirely lost: Megarian comedies.\(^{60}\) It is no other than Aristotle, who, among other comic traditions, also mentions the existence of a local Megarian comedy tradition in his *Poetics*.\(^{61}\) Whatever the peculiarities of this Megarian comedy might have been,\(^{62}\) we might reasonably assume that philosophers, as public figures, were presented in the corresponding plays.\(^{63}\)

**The Megarikoi – from School to an Icon of Local Pride**

For nearly two hundred years, Megarian philosophers were part of the history of Megara. Yet even though they were involved in the public and political life of the city at times, it is difficult to measure their imprint on the local cosmos. Likewise, it is more or less impossible to pinpoint a Megarian impact on the thinking of the Megarian philosophers, especially because of the outlined characteristics of the Megarian school. We must content ourselves with the rather general assessment that Megarian philosophers were recognized by their compatriots in a certain, locally distinct fashion. Moreover, it is likely that such fashion in the perception of philosophers was never static nor homogenous, but malleable over time and depended on who the philosopher was. It is equally reasonable to assume that next to the local Megarian public discourse on Megarian philosophers were various discourses resting upon the social background of the respective speakers.\(^{64}\) It is plausible to postulate that Megarian philosophers would be, at any rate, responsive to local incidences

---

58 See Haake 2007. For one of the earliest pieces of epigraphic evidence for a philosopher, a Delphic honorary decree for Menedemos of Pyrrha (Bousquet 1940-1941: 94-96), a student of Plato (Dorandi 2005), see Knoepfler 2010.
60 In this context, Haake 2007: 6 n. 33, 9-10, 279.
63 The philosopher and philosophical themes were not only topics in Attic comedy, as the example of Epicharmos of Syracuse illustrates; see, e.g., Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012: 87-95; Willi 2012: 58-63.
64 In this context, see the general remarks in Haake 2007: 5-6.
– if not in their philosophical thinking, then at least in their acting as social beings and 'political animals'.

In his *Attic Nights*, Aulus Gellius reports a story that his teacher, the Platonic philosopher Taurus, told his students, for uplifting reasons, that

“[t]he Athenians had provided in one of their decrees that any citizen of Megara who should be found to have set foot in Athens should for that suffer death; so great was the hatred of the neighboring men of Megara with which the Athenians were inflamed. Eukleides, who was from that very town of Megara and before the passage of that decree had been accustomed both to come to Athens and to listen to Socrates, after the enactment of that measure, at nightfall, as darkness was coming on, clad in a woman’s long tunic, wrapped in a partly-colored mantle, and with veiled head, used to walk from his home in Megara to Athens, to visit Socrates, in order that he might at least for some part of the night share in the master’s teaching and discourse. And just before dawn he went back again, a distance of somewhat over twenty miles, disguised in that same garb.”

At first glance, many readers might see in this narrative, staged on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, nothing more than a story propagated in the philosophical circles of Athens at the time of the Second Sophistic. Yet such a view does no justice to the tale

---

65 On (L. Calvenus) Taurus, see Lakmann 2017: 238–248.
67 Even though the story might be of limited historical value, it is somewhat surprising that it is almost completely ignored in scholarship on the relations between Megara and Athens on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, the so-called Megarian decree(s) in particular. A rare exception is Zahn 2010; see also de Ste. Croix 1972: 246. The general ignorance must be all the more surprising since Gellius’ wording of the decree (7.10.2: … *ut qui Megaris civis esset, si intulisse Athenas pedem prenus esset, ut ea res ei homini capitalis esset …*) is an obvious reminder of the respective phrase in
and its diffusion. It is possible that it must remain an open question of when, where, and by whom this story was invented, but it was only depicted in Megara itself, found on the obverse of a local coin from the second century CE, most likely from the reign of Hadrian. The reverse shows the famous statue of Artemis Soteira by the Classical sculptor Strongylion, while the obverse depicts a male head looking to the right, bearded and veiled, wearing an earring. Since the magisterial publication of Giovanni Angelo Canini’s *Iconografia*, cioè disegni d’imagini de famosissimi monarchi, regi, filosofi, poeti ed oratori dell’antichità (1669), the portrait has been identified with the Megarian philosopher Eukleides.

---

68 The *Quellenfrage* regarding the decree of Charinos as handed down by Plutarch in his *Life of Pericles* (Plut. Per. 30.3: … ὃς δὲ ἂν ἐπιβητή τῆς Ἀττικῆς Μεγαρέως, θανάτῳ ζημιοῦσθαι, …). It is not possible to consider this aspect in the current context. It should be noted, however, that the passage of Gellius (who might have known Plutarch’s text; see Lakmann 1995: 228) on the Athenian decree relating to the Megarians is placed in the context of the complex debate on the Charinos decree; see, e.g., Connor 1962; Cawkell 1969; Fornara 1975; Sealey 1991; Stadter 1984; McDonald 1994. For a very short orientation, see Samons 2016: 270 n. 50.

69 On the cult image of Artemis Soteira, which is attested by Pausanias (1.40.2-3), see *LIMC* II 1: 655 no. 419, 657 no. 448-449. On Strongylion, see *DNO* II: 415-427, esp. 415-417 no. 1.

70 *BMC Attica* 121 no. 43 with pl. XXI.14 = *RPC* III i, no. 408 with *RPC* III ii: pl. 19,408. See Canini 1669: 119 with pl. 89; Richter 1965: 120 with fig. 576; Schefold 1997: 416 with fig. 298; Hellmann 2000.
At a time when the Megarian school had long disappeared from the philosophical scene, for some four hundred years or so, Eukleides’ native city took pride in its well-known son, the first of the Megarian philosophers, and minted a series of coins with his portrait that visualized the tradition of Eukleides’ guile and perils he had once endured in his efforts to attend Socrates’ philosophical lessons in Athens. As with many other Greek communities under Roman rule, Megara too expressed its local identity by referring to an intellectual hero of the past, with coins showing the founder of a philosophical school named after his own birthplace: Megara.

**Bibliography**


---


253


