

Preface

The origins of this book lie back in 1994 in a proposal made by the *Labour Committee for the Democratic Accountability of Secret Services*, a grouping to which I then belonged. The proposal, which was not followed up with any organisational detail, was that secret services should be monitored for abuses of human rights, and that the monitors who undertook the task should be selected randomly. The idea was the brainchild of Dr Keith Nilsen whose general orientation was that the modern political arena was so dominated by covert factionalism that fundamental values such as truth and integrity were under serious threat. His solution lay in establishing institutions whose impartiality was not open to question.

While I understood the reasoning behind this and other similar projects advanced by Dr Nilsen, I felt that advocacy was not enough and that further investigation of the question of random selection was necessary to discover its full potential. Nor was I entirely happy with Dr Nilsen's claim that the anti-factional capacity of sortition was a self-evident truth.¹ Truths can certainly be understood from practice, but in the case of a largely discontinued practice such as sortition they have to be argued for anew and evidence (old and new) presented in support of those arguments. My main motivation for this study lay in the idea that a broadly-based and open discourse on the potential of sortition was a good thing. Such a discourse, I felt, could be taken forward by a thorough exploration of how sortition had been used and a principled analysis of the properties of the lottery process.

In 2002 I was fortunate enough to study the subject for a doctorate at New College Oxford under the supervision of Mark Philp and, initially, Elizabeth Frazer. Through the internet group of scholars

[1] Nilsen (2004). Nilsen also made proposals for the use of sortition in Iraq, details of which can be found in Nilsen (2007). He also founded the *Society for Democracy including Random Selection* in South London in 2000.

organised by Conall Boyle (aptly named the *Kleroterians*) my completed thesis then reached the attention of Keith Sutherland of Imprint Academic who was planning a series on sortition. I was delighted to be asked to be part of this exciting initiative and to be in the good company of other contributors to the subject, including, of course, Thomas Gataker.

This book is, in all essentials, a re-working of my doctoral thesis; but there are some important changes of emphasis that need to be noted. Extra emphasis is placed on the importance of the 'active context' and the 'constitutional context' of each application or proposed application of sortition. This is to help the reader to see how the level of detail advanced during the historical narratives links into the arguments about what sortition can bring to the political community. I have also added a glossary and a number of diagrams in order to help the less specialist reader to get a clearer idea of the schemes and contexts where lot was used or advocated. I have placed bibliographical notes at the end of every chapter save the last. These are designed to give the reader an overview of the main sources that I used in the research. They also give some indication of the selection of background literature that I used that would not otherwise be indicated in the footnotes. They also include details of the location of some primary documents.

In addition I have included a brief appendix on the decline of sortition. Because this question was not part of my original study plan I thought it best to make a clear separation between this short, somewhat speculative, section and the main body of the book.

I would like to acknowledge the role of Keith Nilsen in introducing me to the subject of sortition; the help of Mark Philp in keeping me on track during my thesis preparation; the help of Miriam Ronzoni and Tizziana Torresi in the translation of Guicciardini's *Del modo di eleggere...*; and the help of Antoine Vergne in tracing the documentary evidence for the French split legislature proposal of 1793.

My thanks also go to Rachel Hammersley for pointing me in the direction of the Lesueur/Rutledges draft constitution of 1792, and to Dr O. Murray for indicating how lot was used for deciding inheritance in Ancient Athens. In addition I would like to thank my (younger) fellow students at the Politics Department of Oxford University for their enthusiasm and encouragement; Conall Boyle for bringing us students of sortition together; Keith Sutherland for his initiative in bringing out the series; Barbara Goodwin for editing this work; and my wife Berenice for her help and support.