

This paper suggests that the practice of swearing by Hera, noted even in his own time as a mannerism of Socrates, was actually a local rather than a personal peculiarity, originating in Socrates' deme of Alopeke.

Both in Plato and in Xenophon, Socrates from time to time swears by Hera; this oath usually accompanies an expression of admiration (Dodds on Pl. *Gorg.* 449e). It was evidently a habit of the historical Socrates (imitated by one of his pupils, Aischines of Sphettos: D.L. 2.83.3), but no convincing explanation of its origin has ever been given. Oaths *nē* (or *ma*) *tēn Hērān* are otherwise extremely rare, with only two instances in all of Greek literature other than Plato and Xenophon; with the exception of Ares, Hera is the only one of the thirteen principal divinities by whom no one swears in any surviving comic text or fragment.

Little seems hitherto to have been made of the fact that in Plato and Xenophon there are persons other than Socrates who swear by Hera: Lysimachos son of Aristeides (Pl. *Laches* 181a), Kallias and his brother Hermogenes (Xen. *Symp.* 4.45, 8.12), and Lykon the father of Autolykos (*ib.* 9.1). Of these four, at least three were members of the deme Alopeke (Lykon's deme is not known for sure – the scholion to Pl. *Apol.* 23e, which gives it as Thorikos, is a blend of details which certainly relate to at least two different persons and probably to three).

It is therefore a plausible hypothesis that the habit of swearing by Hera, especially when expressing admiration, was common in the deme of Alopeke throughout the fifth century BC, and it may to some extent have been known to outsiders as characteristic of the deme. Socrates used it so frequently that it became associated with him in particular, and from him it passed to some of his pupils and associates who had no connection with his deme – to Aischines (see above) and also to Xenophon, who puts it into the mouth of at least one character in the *Kyroupaideia* (8.4.12 and possibly 1.4.12). It then disappears, to resurface only once, many centuries later, in a letter of Aristainetos (1.19.1).

This is not the only evidence that there was felt to be some kind of special relationship between the deme of Alopeke and the goddess Hera. We do not know the exact nature of this relationship; possibly Hera had a locally important cult centre in the deme (as she did e.g. at Erchia). At any rate it provides us with an interesting example of a dialect feature associated very specifically not just with a single *polis*, but with a small subpart of one.