

THE DAWN OF DEMOCRACY

Classical Athenian Democracy

Most characteristic features

- Direct democracy
 - Selection by lot
 - No political parties
 - Pay to participate
- **Council of 500** representatives selected from all over Attica by lot.
Prepares agenda, calls Assembly meeting
 - **Assembly** : open to all, discuss, amends and decides on agenda set by council
 - **Magistrates** responsible for executing decision
 - Or, if somebody still disagrees decision goes to **courts** for further deliberation

Main Questions

- How did this system manage to work?
 - Importance of institutions
 - Importance of 'democratic' way of life
- How did this system come about?
 - History of institutions
 - Development of a common Athenian identity

SOURCES

- Solon's poetry
- Herodotus
- Thucydides



- **[Aristotle] Constitution of the Athenians**
- Dated 330-320s
- Genre: history of constitutions
- Structure: part 1: History of Athens and its institutions, part 2: Athenian institutions in the fourth century

STASIS



- Phaleron mass graves late 7th c. BC
- healthy young men bound and executed
- Cylonian conspiracy?

DRACO (621 BC)

- The first lawgiver of Athens (late 7th c BC)
- Famous for his harshness
(Wrote his laws in blood
lamented the fact that no harsher penalty than death)
- The only law that survived him the one about involuntary homicide

Draco's homicide law

And *or* Even if anybody kills anybody not from forethought, **he shall be exiled**. The kings shall pronounce responsible for homicide [the one who himself killed or the one?] who planned it; the appeal judges shall decide it. There **shall be reconciliation, if there are a father or brother or sons, to be granted by all, or the objector shall prevail. If these do not exist, then as far as cousinhood and cousin**, if they are all willing to grant reconciliation, or the objector shall prevail. If none of these exists but he killed unwillingly and the fifty-one appeal judges decide that he killed unwillingly, let ten members of the phratry allow him to enter if they are willing: let these be chosen by the fifty-one on the basis of their excellence. **And those who killed previously shall be liable to this ordinance**. There shall be a proclamation against the killer in the agora by those as far as cousinhood and cousin; there shall join in the prosecution cousins and cousins' sons and brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law and phratry members . . . is responsible for homicide . . . the fifty- one . . . Convict of homicide . . . If anybody kills a killer, or is responsible for his being killed, when he is keeping away from a frontier market and Amphictyonic contests and rites, **he shall be liable to the same things as for killing an Athenian**; the appeal judges shall decide

CRISIS CONTINUES

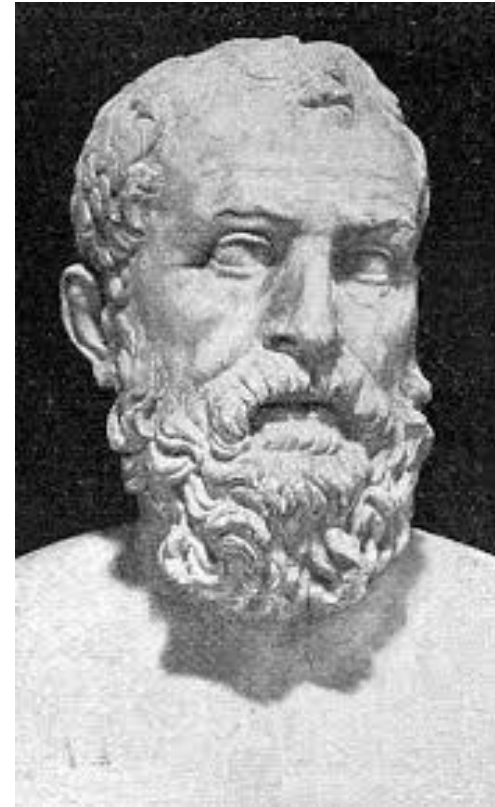
After this there was strife **for a long time between the notables and the masses**. For the Athenians' constitution was oligarchic in all other respects, and in particular the **poor were enslaved to the rich – themselves and their children and their wives**. The poor were called dependants and sixth-parters, since it was for the rent of a sixth that they worked the fields of the rich. **All the land was in the hands of a few, and if the poor failed to pay their rents both they and their children were liable to seizure**. All loans were made on the security of the person until the time of Solon: he was the first champion of the people.

Ath. Pol. 2

- land crisis, most land in hands of few
- Extensive debt-bondage

SOLON

- Athenian law-giver, one of the 'Seven Sages'
- Called in to mediate in the social crisis
- Archon 594/3 BC
- Wrote poetry
- Could have become tyrant, but didn't
- Pleased neither side and left Athens
- Travelled widely
- We know about his poems or laws from later sources (4th c. onwards)



SOLON'S LAWS

- Credited with a very wide variety of laws

And the **three most democratic features in Solon's constitution** seem to be these:

first and most important the prohibition of loans secured upon the person,

secondly the liberty allowed to anybody who wished to exact redress on behalf of injured persons,

and third, what is said to have been the chief basis of the powers of the multitude, the right of appeal to the jury-court—for the people, having the power of the vote, becomes sovereign in the government.

[Aristotle] Athenian Constitution 9

SOLONIAN CONSTITUTION

Division of population in four propertied classes:

- Pentakosiomedimnoi: men whose property produces more than 500 'bushels' of grain (?)
- Hippeis: 300-500 bushels of produce
- Zeugitai : 200-300 bushels of produce
- Thetes: everyone else

Main Institutional bodies

- Assembly
- Council of 400
- Areopagus (board of ex-archons)
- Courts

How radical was Solon?

To the people (demos) I gave as many privileges as belonged to them
neither taking away their honour nor overextending it,
And those who had power and were magnificent due to wealth,
I saw to it that they had nothing shameful.
I stood with a powerful shield around both sides,
not permitting either to claim an unjust victory

Solon Fr 5

Peisistratids

- 561 and 558 BC: failed attempts to seize power
- 546-528 BC: Peisistratos rules as tyrant of Athens
- 528 BC succeeded by his sons Hipparchus and Hippias

Tyrants and the people

- Put an end to violent elite strife
 - They might have improved the economy and living conditions of lower classes
 - Enhanced civic pride through conspicuous monuments and spectacles
- But were they really anti-elite: did they really champion the interest of the masses?

End of tyranny

- 514 BC Hipparchus is assassinated by Harmodius and Aristogeiton
- 510 Tyranny falls with the aid of Spartans, Hippias flees to Persia



Isagoras and the Spartans versus Kleisthenes

Isagoras, who was on the losing side, devised a counter-plot, and invited the aid of Cleomenes, who had been his friend since the besieging of the Pisistratidae. It was even said of Cleomenes that he regularly went to see Isagoras' wife.

Then Cleomenes first sent a herald to Athens demanding the banishment of Cleisthenes and many other Athenians with him, the Accursed, as he called them. This he said in his message by Isagoras' instruction, for the Alcmeonidae and their faction were held to be guilty of that bloody deed while Isagoras and his friends had no part in it.

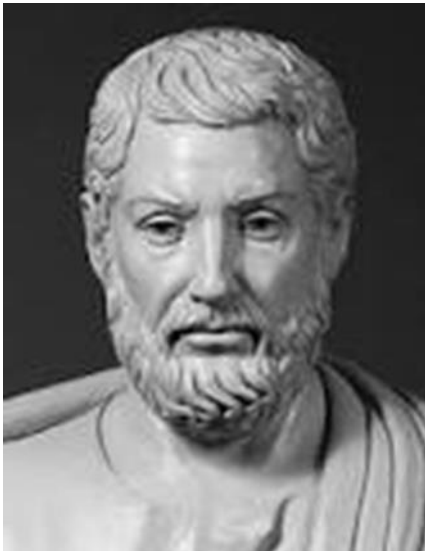
Herodotus 5.70

The people of Athens revolt

When Cleomenes had sent for and demanded the banishment of Cleisthenes and the Accursed, Cleisthenes himself secretly departed. Afterwards, however, Cleomenes appeared in Athens with no great force. Upon his arrival, he, in order to take away the curse, banished seven hundred Athenian families named for him by Isagoras. Having so done he next attempted to dissolve the Council,¹ entrusting the offices of government to Isagoras' faction. [2] **The Council, however, resisted him, whereupon Cleomenes and Isagoras and his partisans seized the acropolis. The rest of the Athenians united and besieged them for two days.** On the third day as many of them as were Lacedaemonians left the country under truce. [3] The prophetic voice that Cleomenes heard accordingly had its fulfillment, for when he went up to the acropolis with the intention of taking possession of it, he approached the shrine of the goddess to address himself to her. The priestess rose up from her seat, and before he had passed through the door-way, she said, "Go back, Lacedaemonian stranger, and do not enter the holy place since it is not lawful that Dorians should pass in here. "My lady," he answered, "I am not a Dorian, but an Achaean." [4] So without taking heed of the omen, he tried to do as he pleased and was, as I have said, then again cast out together with his Lacedaemonians. As for the rest, the Athenians imprisoned them under sentence of death.

Kleisthenes

- Of the family of Alkmaionids
- Originally friendly relationships with tyrants
- Political opponent of Isagoras
- Gained support of majority



Fragment of Athenian archon list ,
inscribed in later part of 5th c.

The archons listed belong to the period
527/6-522/1 under the tyranny of Hippias, and
include Kleisthenes, who was purportedly in
exile, during the tyranny!

Kleisthenes' reforms (507 BC)

- **Assembly:** all male citizens > 20 years old. Pnyx could fit around 6000
- **Council of 500:** 50 from each tribe, selected by the demes. Each month of the 10 month administrative year a tribe in charge: prytanis.
- **Courts:** all male citizens > 30 years old. Variety of courts
- **Areopagos:** composed by ex archons. Still powerful under Cleisthenes
After Ephialtes' reforms (461BC) its judicial functions limited to homicide cases.
- **Magistrates:** originally elected open only to top 2 classes.
After 487 BC selected by lot, except the 10 generals. From 458/7 open to zeugitai

10 tribes, instead of 4

30 trittyes (thirds),
instead of 12

139 demes

tribe

City trittys

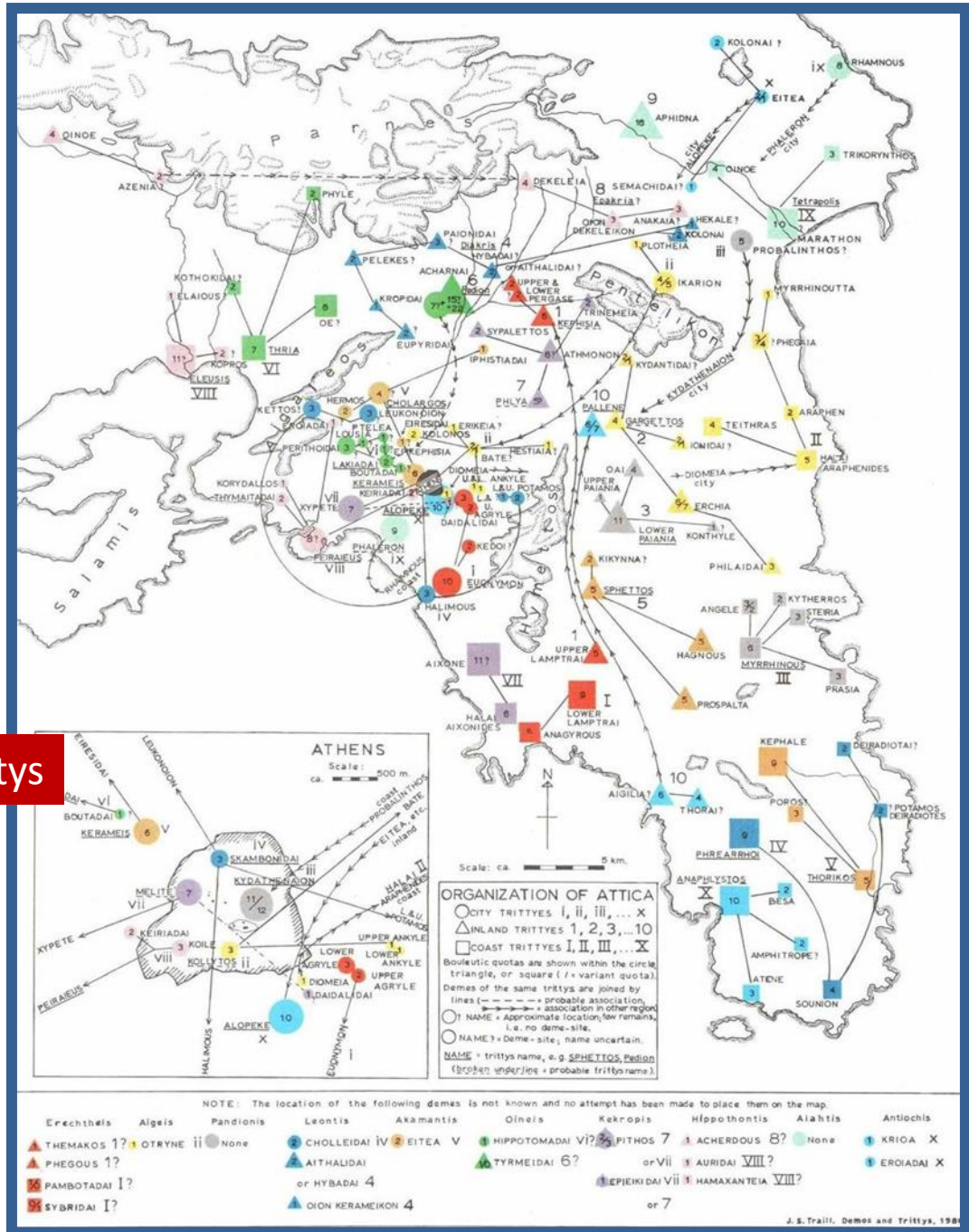
Inland trittys

Coastal trittys

deme

deme

deme



Mixing up the people

...He first divided the whole body into **ten tribes instead of the existing four, wishing to mix them up**, in order that more might take part in the government; from which arose the saying, 'Don't draw distinctions between tribes,' addressed to those who want to inquire into people's clans.

Next he made the Council to consist of five hundred members instead of four hundred, fifty from each Tribe, whereas under the old system there had been a hundred. **This was the reason why he did not arrange them in twelve tribes, in order that he might not have to use the existing division of the Thirds (for the four Tribes contained twelve Thirds), with the result that the multitude would not have been mixed up.**

He also **portioned out the land among the demes into thirty parts, ten belonging to the region in and around the city, ten to the coast, and ten to the inland district**; and he gave these parts the name of Thirds (trittyes), **and assigned them among the Tribes by lot, three to each**, in order that each Tribe might have a share in all the districts.

[Aristotle] Constitution of the Athenians,

Athens versus Sparta

SPARTA

- KINGS
- GEROUSIA
- EPHORS
- ASSEMBLY

ATHENS

- COUNCIL
- ASSEMBLY
- COURTS
- MAGISTRATES
- AREOPAGUS