An Introduction to
ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

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Published by:
Department of Classics
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria

ISBN-978-978-310-225-1

Printed in Nigeria by: Rubbyless Nig. Ltd. ☎08034051060

Preface

This book, *An Introduction to Ancient Greek Society,* presents the reader with an across-the-board knowledge of ancient Greek civilisation, which is requisite to the understanding of the first year course in history at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Wide-ranging subjects in the Greek culture from prehistoric period through the Classical period and to the beginning of the Hellenistic period are treated. The publication provides some background to modern educational system, technology, politics, and literature, including drama/theatre. With use of notes, efforts have been made to highlight and explain prominent appellations, which otherwise might sound strange to students. The pictorial elements of the book are also expected to be valuable.

The publication is intended to give students a fundamental knowledge of the ancient Greek history. The book, largely based on the reading materials prepared by late Professor L.A. Thompson in the 80s, introduces the first year university students to one of the foremost world civilisations. It is made more readable and relevant than the original version by the editors who have endeavoured to impart the origin of certain practices in modern society in the reader.

By using textual and iconographic evidence along with a wealth of topical allusions, emphasis is laid on some striking subjects and personalities that point to the contributions of ancient Greek society to the contemporary order.

It is hoped that the reader of this book will not only have a good orientation for understanding the enormous influence of the ancient Greek society, but will also come to know the historical legacies that continue to explain the modern world.

Map of Ancient Greece

CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Mycenaean Greece and the World of the Homeric Epics

Preview of Chapter

This chapter provides a diachronic overview of the earliest Greek period known as the Mycenaean era. It traces the socio-economic and political structure of that era and foregrounds the period by drawing on evidence found in content culled from Homer's Iliad and the epics.

The first Greek-speaking people to inhabit the land in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula[1] which we know as Greece made their entry into that land sometime between 2000 and 1900 B.C. They entered as invaders who, migrating southwards, occupied the land by force of arms.[2] They blended with the previous pre-Greek population and were culturally influenced by the pre-Greek "Bronze Age" civilisation known as **"Minoan"** (named after the mythical King Minos), whose main centre was in the Island of Crete.[3] The result of this blending was the technically advanced

[1] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.10.
[2] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.19
[3] *Ibid*, Pp. 12 – 13.

"Bronze Age" civilisation which flourished between 1400 and 1200 B.C. known as "Mycenaean"[4]. Mycenaean is derived from the name of its most important centre, Mycenae in the Peloponnese (the southern part of mainland Greece). From about 1600 B.C., Mycenae had become a warrior culture, and a centre of wealth and power. Other important centres of the "Mycenaean world" were Pylos, Argos, Tiryns, Sparta (in the Peloponnese), Athens, and Thebes. From these centres, "Mycenaean" influence spread to the Aegean Islands, the coasts of Syria and Asia Minor, Sicily, and south Italy.[5]

The most striking evidence for the early phase of Mycenaean culture is the shaft graves at Mycenae. These graves, dated around 1650 to 1500 B.C., were cut into the living rock to a depth of several metres.[6]

Summary

Archaeological findings provided evidence of the existence of economic activity of the Mycenae. Some of the findings include tombs of Kings and other artifacts such as golden jewelry, gold and silver vessels, bronze weapons decorated with scenes of wild animals inlaid in precious metals, and skillfully painted pottery. The dating of these items, locate the socio-political and economic activities many centuries before the Trojan War.

[4] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* pp..27, 32

[5] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.19

[6] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.8

Mycenaean Greece was a network of petty kingdoms, with each built on a great palace-fortress, mostly under the overlordship of others.

H.D. Amos and H.P. Lang describe Mycenaean Civilisation in the following words:

> *The main area of Mycenaean civilisation was in the Peloponnese, where the most important towns were Mycenae itself, Pylos and Tiryns, and in central Greece, where Athens and Thebes were prominent.*[8]

In economic and political structures, these kingdoms were bureaucratic states with a pyramid-like social stratification at the top of which was a king and a warrior aristocracy. The kings kept very close control of their subjects by putting in place a civil service of an exceptionally instructive and pervasive king. An arm of officials measured and counted property, collated and distributed goods, and ordered and recorded everything in minute details. Society was in general controlled in its entire doings by these army busybodies whose least report, even to the counting of a single goat, was entered on a form by a secretary in the king's palace. Records of this kind appear to have been almost the only use to which that art of writing was put.[9] The population lived clustered in villages; slavery was widespread and highly organised; labour was specialised and land tenure was

[7] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.35;

[8] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.19 Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.3

[9] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*.74

characterised by a high level of craftsmanship and extensive foreign trade in metals and luxury goods. The warrior aristocracy was a small class created by birth and fostered hereditary wealth.

The comfort and luxury in which the kings and the warrior aristocracy lived was created by the enterprise of a large commercial class – a class of merchants and traders who carried Mycenaean products as far west as Sicily, and as far east as Egypt and Palestine. Some of them settled in Crete and on the Island of Rhodes, in Cyprus and off the coast of Syria. The goods they imported from distant lands included amber (mainly from the Baltic lands), ivory, abundant gold (probably the fruits of military service by Mycenaean mercenaries in Egypt, and of successful raids, as well as of trade), and other metals. The search for metals took Mycenaean traders to central Europe, and even as far as southern England.

Fig. 1: The Lions' Gate

Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/25/Lions-Gate-Mycenae.jpg/1200px-Lions-Gate-Mycenae.jpg

The Mycenaean civilisation represents a world of impressive innovation in construction methods

No period in all Greek history surpassed the Mycenaean in uniformity, political stability, commercial enterprise and a combination of very high level of art and technical skills. The notable features of Mycenaean civilisation were its delicate ivory carvings, ornament in gold and precious stones, and its architecture made with blocks of masonry so large that later the Greeks regarded them as works of an ancient population of giants: the lintel across the doorposts of one of these buildings at Mycenaean is a single block of stone weighing about 120 tons.[10]

However, many scholars see European civilisation as a continuum from its ancient beginnings in Greece to the present day. The Mycenaean world, in fact, had its closest cultural kinship, not with subsequent Greek civilisation (despite the language continuum), but with the contemporary, highly centralised and bureaucratic states of northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt further east. The Greek world of later times was (and remains) economically, politically and culturally different. The little continuities from the Mycenaean world were fragments worked into a new, unrecognisable context. These continuities amounted to retention of the fundamental technical skills and knowledge in agriculture, pottery-making and metallurgy, and the Greek language itself (which indeed, survived all subsequent social transformations even up to the present day).

[10] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P. 43

Mycenaean civilisation came to a fairly abrupt end in about 1200 B.C.[11] Some historians attribute this to a new wave of Greek-speaking immigrant-invaders from the north called the Dorians.[12]

Summary

No period in all Greek history surpassed the Mycenaean in uniformity, political stability and commercial enterprise, combined with a very high level of art and technical skills.

What is certain is that there was a complete disruption of the Mycenaean society, at least at the top, and this disruption started a 400-year long Dark Age, "dark" in the sense that we know (and can know) very little about it.[13] When the curtain of darkness lifted, we see that the greater part of Greece is occupied by Dorians, a non-Mycenaean tribe of Greeks.[14] Although the collapse of Mycenaean society may have occurred in the same great migration of people as that which overthrew the Hittite Empire in Asia Minor and many great cities of Syria and Palestine – these violent migrants were the so-called "sea people" who penetrated as far as Egypt in the reign of the pharaoh Rames III about 1170 B.C. This large scale and violent migration was not organised as a single concerted movement; some

[11] Finley, M.I, (1965). *The World of Odysseus.* P. X

[12] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* Pp.30-32

[13] Finley, M.I, (1965). *The World of Odysseus.* P. X

[14] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.12

sections pushed in different directions at different times. In Greece, the attack came from the immediate north (whatever may have been its starting point), smashing the Mycenaean palaces and their fortress-complexes, and destroying the pyramidal social structure.

Mycenaean society was decapitated, so to speak, and the control of the palaces over the economy was removed. The surviving upper class population became considerably impoverished, but the ordinary farmers and craftsmen were not affected much. Though there was an overall reduction in population and a considerable reduction in inter-regional communication and trade, people continued farming and herding, making pottery and tools, using the same techniques as before, but with an inferior level of technical efficiency and artistry. The treasures and the large constructions of the Mycenaean world definitely became obsolete. The surviving population, together with the invaders, proceeded to build a totally new society, organised in a different way, with different values and a different economy and socio-political organisation. The entry of the Dorians into Greece may have been part of a general movement of the so-called "sea peoples" that destroyed Mycenaean civilisation; or the Dorians may have merely occupied a vacuum created by others.

Whatever the explanation, the result is the same – 400 years of "darkness" or illiteracy resulted in the crumbling of the centres of power, continuous petty warfares, migrations of tribes and smaller groups within Greece itself and eastwards across the Aegean sea, and the impoverishment

of the quality of art, politics, commerce and society. This general picture of decay and decline is relived only by: (a) the retention at, and dissemination from, Athens of pottery techniques which led to the production of some fine pottery with geometric designs; (b) the fact that the Dark Age, though an illiterate age, was the era in which a major technical revolution -that of iron-working- took place in Greece, resulting in the replacement of Bronze by Iron in the period known as the Iron Age in the Greek world.[15,16]

Summary

A significant shift in metallurgy took place throughout the Mediterranean region during the early centuries of this period. Iron replaced bronze as the principal metal used in making weapons and tools. It is for this reason that we stick with the tradition of characterising periods of history by the name of the metal mostly used at the time and refer to the Dark Age as the "Early Iron Age".

All through the period of "Darkness", the epic poetry of the Mycenaean people evolved, without the help of writing, becoming constantly enlarged and adapted generation after generation. The epic poems of Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, are the oldest surviving Greek literature. But behind these written poems lie centuries of oral epic poetry, composed, recited and transmitted by illiterate but professional bards, without the aid of a single written

[15] *Ibid.* PP.12 – 13.

[16] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.51

word.[17] Whereas Virgil or Milton could decide as a voluntary act to take a particular story (e.g. the story of Aeneas) as the subject of a long epic poem, and make it as sophisticated, learned and complicated in language, structure and ideas as each preferred, the professional bard of the Greek Dark Age had no such freedom. This was partly a matter of technique of the service limits imposed by oral composition as it was a matter of social convention. Both the subjects and the manner of composition were determined by convention. The language was rich, stylised and artificial, admirably suited to the needs of oral composition. The themes were those of a "heroic" past, believed by the bards and their listeners to have been a real past which the poet narrated rather than invented or created. [18]

The bards, composing offhand, preserved and handed them down orally from generation to generation these heroic tables.[19] This kind of composition depended on the bard having at his disposal a ready-made stock of traditional phrases – half and whole lines and groups of lines, ready-made for almost every conceivable purpose. The bard composed as he recited; he could not pause to think about what he was to say next; he must have the whole of his story in his mind before he begins, and he must have in his memory all (or almost all) the thought sequences he needed in telling a story. The sequences of the composition were often ready-made phrases, as can be illustrated by Homer's

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[17] Finley, M.I (1965). *The World of Odysseus. P.9*
[18] *Ibid.* p.12
[19] *Ibid,*

poems. In total, the poems have 23,000 lines, consisting of 25,000 repeated phrases, -short or long– ready-made phrases, supplied from the existing bardic storehouse of formulas. Interestingly, during the long period of the Dark Age characterised by bardic recitation and transmission of the heroic tales (supposedly of the Mycenaean past), the tales were transformed imperceptibly and only half consciously, at best, as they were passed from bard to bard. This perhaps resulted from the fact that the events and society about which the bards were "narrating" receded further back in time and became more and more unintelligible to the bards.

In a sense, the bards were trying to do two contrasting things simultaneously: to preserve a dying or extinct past yet be understood and believed by an audience to whom the experiences were strange and unfamiliar. To put their dilemma in perspective, consider the following historical facts. The bards had to put in words their visualisation of magnificent palaces they had never been to and which had progressively become less of the present representation of Mycenaean palaces (or any other for that matter). They tried to describe the use of chariots in warfare, a long obsolete Mycenaean practice they likely never witnessed; they tried to describe the bronze weapons of the Mycenaeans but could not prevent the talk about iron from creeping into their recitations because the war weapons had evolved from bronze to iron. The one thing which may not have been allowed was the intrusion of events which were clearly known to have occurred some time after the heroic

(Mycenaean) age; the bards endeavoured not to make this error. For others (the pictures of social institutions, attitudes and ideas, codes of behaviour), there could be no control over error, for the simple reason that the performance was strictly oral. As a result, even though a kernel that is genuinely Mycenaean remained in the Dark Age epic recitations, this kernel was ultimately very narrow, and often usually distorted. Belonging to this kernel, are, for example, the historical fact of the destruction of Troy near the end of the 13th century B.C.; the obliteration of many place-names associated with Mycenaean centres; and that of Mycenaean lords; of references to bronze, to war-chariots, and to palaces filled with treasure.[20]

[20] Finley, M.I (1965). *The World of Odysseus.* P.18.

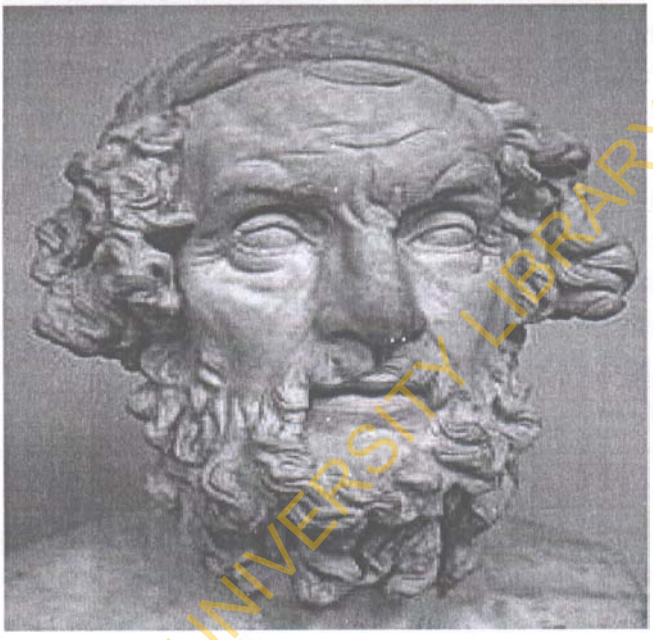

Fig. 2: ***Homer***

Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1c/Homer_British_Museum.jpg/220px-Homer_British_Museum.jpg

The return of writing to Greece between the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. (under Phoenician influence) altered the bardic situation radically. This was toward the end of the Dark Age.[21] Then it became possible to capture the ideas in

[21] Martin, T.R. (2000), Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times. P. 74

permanent form for future generations. The epic poetry had been evolving during the centuries of illiteracy and so *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* of Homer (Figure 2) appeared in written forms, among the many other epics that are all but extinct. The two epics of Homer were committed to writing at the end of the Dark Age, some time in the 8th century B.C. The world which both poems depict, if we ignore the anachronistic aspects such as the small Mycenaean kernel and some contemporary 8th century B.C. elements, is that of the earlier half of the Dark Age. The structure of the world described by Homer enables us to see early Greece in perspective.

The breakdown and decline of the Mycenaean world, along with poverty and low quality of artistry and technology, ended the earliest chapter of Greek civilisation.[22] The Dark Age was harbinger not only of the material success that came with the advent of iron-working (providing the new and most advanced metal), but also to the social, political, cultural, and fundamentally new society. The future of the Greeks rested not in place-centred bureaucratic states, but in a new kind of society forged out of the impoverished communities that survived the great catastrophe. Even in the Dark Age, there was an extension of the Greek world, foreshadowing an eventual spread over a much wider area. About 1000 B.C., Greek migrants began to establish small communities on the coasts of Asia Minor

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[22] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.24.

and its off-shore islands and eventually the entire Western edge of Asia Minor became Greek.

Summary
Homer outlines the nature of early Greece. He gives insight into the rise and decline of the Mycenaean world, capturing the poverty and low quality of artistry and technology that marked the close of that period.

The "world of the Homeric epics" (the earlier half of the Dark Age) was a world of petty kings and nobles who possessed much land (and the best land), many flocks, and lived a life of lords. Raids against other communities, and local wars were frequent. The noble's class, created by birth and fostered by hereditary wealth, was made up of a small number of highly privileged men. The noble household (*oikos*) was the centre of activity and of power – the degree of power depending on wealth, personal prowess, connections by marriage and by other alliances, and the number of retainers kept in the household. Personal courage was the first requisite in the code of honour by which these nobles lived; and this is reflected in Book 12 of Homer's *The Iliad* where one noble speaks to another as follows:

> *Why is it that we nobles are privileged above all others..., enjoying the front seat, and food, and full cup of wine, and all men look up to us as if we were gods, and we have a large cut of land beside the river banks, good land,*

of orchards and cornfields? This makes it our duty to stand in the front ranks in battle..., face with scorching battle, so that some tight-corseleted countryman of ours may say, "Truly these are great and glorious men who rule us, these lords of ours who feed upon our fattest sheep and drink the choicest of our honey sweet wines: there is indeed good strength in them, for they fight in our front ranks." My friend, supposing you and I, escaping from this war, were destined to be forever ageless and immortal, then neither would I fight in the front lines, nor would I urge you into battle where men win glory; but now, since the spirits of death stand close about us, innumerable – no mortal can escape or slip from under them – let us go forward, whether we yield glory to other men, or they to us.

Supposedly about the Trojan War, this really reveals the Dark Age values. The position of the nobles was socially justified by them. The king's position was that of judge, lawgiver and military commander. He was not subject to any formal control; his authority depended on his charisma. A weak king did not remain long enough to withstand being challenged by powerful noble rivals or outside enemies. Such king had no state apparatus or community to effectively back him up as a matter of law or tradition. This was not entirely a "jungle world". There were ceremonies and rituals

and conventions by which men lived. What was lacking was a sanction strong enough to check, or serve as something superior to effective power.

Effective power was indeed the greatest of all the social sanctions. So, in Homer's *The Odyssey*, the nobles took advantage of king Odysseus' absence to engage in scandalous behaviour towards his family and possessions, and they manoeuvred to seize his power. Sadly, the king's son, Telemachus can do nothing to stop them; he had neither a formidable group of kinsmen to turn to for help nor the community to enforce any sections of law that applied in that instance. The Society was entirely lacking a formalised constitution which could empower the powerless and often voiceless mass who could not vote in major decision-making. Only once in Homer's picture does a commoner presume to take the floor in debate (Thersites, in *The Iliad*), and he is promptly beaten and humiliated for this breach of protocol. Even warfare fell with the auspices of the nobles. Both sides consisted of heavily-armed noble combatants who sometimes may prosecute their own personal war.

Summary:
The role of judge, lawgiver and military commander was fused into the position of king who was not subject to any formal control; his authority rested solely on charismatic prudence. Thus, a weakling king could easily be toppled by powerful noble rivals within or enemies without.

The fundamental division of society was between the "order" -a juridical defined group within a population,

possessing formalised privileges or disabilities in one or more fields of activity- or "estates" of nobles and the commoners. Put differently, the division was between those who were compelled to engage in labour (commoners) and those for whom the labour was carried (nobles). Among the commoners, the men with specialist skills (seers, bards, metal-workers, wood-workers, physicians and so on) were a kind of elite. Otherwise, there was no social differentiation: the people at large worked in the fields, on the grazing pastures, in noble households. Trading was left to foreigners, especially Phoenicians, though kings and chieftains often organised raids to obtain "merchandise".[23]

It was in this period that the Greeks began to call themselves "Hellenes". In their own language, they have never referred to themselves as "Greeks". The name Greek originated from *Graeci* , a name given by the Romans.[24] In Mycenaean times the Greeks were known as "Achaeans". That name along with other variants is reflected in the Homeric epics as "Achaeans, "Argives" and "Danaans".[25] Parallelr to the usage of the term "Hellenes", from the later part of the Dark Age, the term "Hellas", a collective noun for the Greek taken as a group, was also in use.[26] Most people translate Hellas as "Greece", which today has become the name of the country, as we have Nigeria or Italy. Throughout antiquity (starting from the Dark Age reflected in Homer's

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[23] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.233
[24] *Ibid.* P.18
[25] Finley, M.I (1965). *The World of Odysseus. P.2*
[26] *Ibid.*

epics), however, there was no referent to a country by the name Greece as in the case of countries as Nigeria or Italy; Hellas was essentially an abstraction, like "the Arab world", "the west", or even "the third world". The preference for that name is suitable for the Greeks of antiquity were never united politically or territorially. However, already in the world of Homer they were conscious of a common bond of language, religion, and way of life uniting all Greeks; and in the 8th century B.C., some embryonic pan-Hellenic institutions, notably certain oracles and the Olympic Games, were already in existence. The traditional date of the first Olympic Games (776 B.C.) [27]is also the conventional starting point of what is called the Greek Archaic period (776-500 B.C.).[28]

Summary of Chapter

We examined the early Greek period otherwise known as the Mycenaean period. The activities peculiar to the period were highlighted. Overall, we classified it as the Iron Age given the transition from bronze to the use of Iron in merchandising and prosecuting war through the use of improved weaponry. The period laid the foundation for the periods that followed, our focus in the subsequent chapters.

[27] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 13

[28] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P. 4

Chapter 2

The Growth of the Greek City-State

Preview of Chapter

This chapter focuses on the turbulent history of the Greeks during the period known as Archaic, a period marked with political and socio-economic crises. In the development of the chapter, the factors that contributed to the successes and failures of the oligarchic and aristocratic political systems of Sparta and Athens are presented and illustrated using episodes from their rich history. Their military, commercial, and administrative systems supported by the existence of seemingly robust agrarian culture feature prominently in this chapter.

The early period of Greek history herein known as the Archaic period was marked by two most important phenomena. First, the emergence and slow development of the *polis* (usually translated "city-state") of the characteristically Greek community-structure.[29] Second, the vast diffusion of

[29] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.16

"Hellas" in the course of about two hundred years, resulting in the geographical location of Greek communities over an area extending from the south-eastern end of the Black sea almost to the Atlantic ocean.[30]

The Rise of the Polis

As already noted, the Dark Age of "the world of the Homeric epics" lacked communities in the proper sense of the community as a political organism having formalised constitutional machinery. The process by which the Greek community in this full sense came into existence cannot be traced to a definite period in time; but it certainly was in existence in the Archaic period (by 750 B.C.), and its coming into being obviously depended on the creation of institutions that subjected even the most powerful men to formal organs and rules of authority. This was not a simple task as tension between the organs of the community and the power-drives of ambitious individuals remained a disturbing factor in Greek society for a long time after that period. But one step in the creation of the community as a political organism was the elimination of the kingship that had characterised the world of Homer's epics by the tail end of the Dark Age. This step was curiously not reflected in Greek legends and traditions, though the memory of kingship that survived in institutions like the dual

[30] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.37

"monarchs" of Sparta, who were now, not rulers, but hereditary generals and priests did.

Greek silence on the elimination of kingship greatly contrasts with the Roman's preservation of a detailed story of the abolition of the Roman monarchy and establishment of the Roman Republic. The Greek silence suggests that the Dark Age kings were petty kings whose disappearance from the scene was undramatic and unmemorable. With their disappearance, however, power passed to small groups of aristocratic families in each community who monopolised much, if not all, of the land. But these nobles were compelled to formalise the previously informal advisory bodies which we see in action in the Homeric epics. For instance, in *The Odyssey,* King Alcinous summons the "chieftains and leaders", merely to inform them of his decision, without pausing for members' comments or reactions.[31]

So, in the world of Archaic Greece, there arose councils and offices (which we call "magistracies", borrowing the word from Latin) which had defined prerogatives and responsibilities, and a machinery for the selection or election and the rotation of officials. Significantly, all of the officials were drawn from the closed "order of the landowning aristocracy. The nobles ruled as an "Establishment" using a tripodal system of authority. They drew their authority from those existing formal institutions, from their marital and kinship connections, and from the intangible authority which came from their ancestry. They could appeal to the last

[31] See Homer's *The Odyssey*

form of authority since every noble could cite genealogies tracing back to famous "heroes" whose accounts are recorded in the Homeric legends and from there, often enough, to one of the gods.

The Greek communities which evolved by these means were small and independent with their inhabitants numbering into few thousands unless subjected by external force. Following the normal Mediterranean residential pattern, they had a township-centre (even if this was no more than a village) where many of the people resided, especially the wealthy. The town square, an open space called *agora,* was the "gathering-place", but easy access was carefully maintained so that the people could all assemble there when required. Usually there was also an *acropolis* (Figure 3); that is, a hill which served as a citadel for defence. Beyond this, there was much variation from *polis* to *polis*.[32]

The town in some *poleis* (plural of *polis*) was distinctly urban, or, at the other extreme, merely rural. But, whatever the pattern in any given instance, it was true of all of them that town and surrounding countryside were conceived as a unit, not as two antagonistic entities; and this concept was built into the language which equated the community with people and not with a place. Thus the Greek language expressed the idea of "Athens" (as a community or a political unit) by a term which, literally translated, means "the Athenians". Greeks could speak of traveling to "Athens" , a reference only to the place on the map that bore that name.

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[32] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 16

Hence, they could not speak of "declaring war on Athens", since a war could conceptually be declared only on people – in this case the community called "the Athenians". The whole *polis*, town population and that of the surrounding agricultural area, was bound together not only by economics or by fiat, but also by the camaraderie fostered by their sharing a common cult and tradition, both mythical and historical.

Summary

The town square, an open space called agora, meaning "gathering-place", was well maintained so that the people could have easy access to assemble when necessary. Usually, an accompanying acropolis or hill served as a citadel for defence.

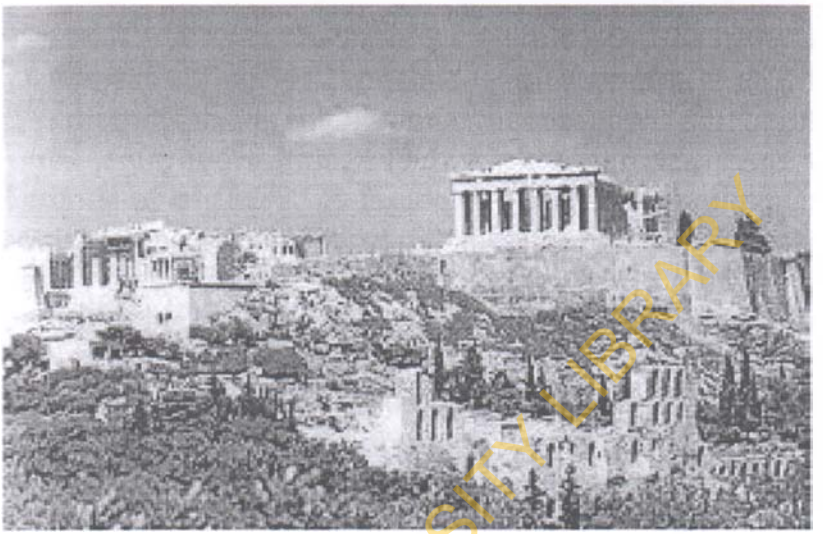

Fig.3: The Acropolis with the temple of Parthenon
Source: hellas.gr/Fly&Drive/images/Acropolis01.jpg

The rate of development among these far-flung autonomous communities or *poleis* was very lop-sided, and there were considerable variations in the way each eventually looked. The *polis* of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. was a far cry from the classical *polis* of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. But it was embryonic in the early part of the Archaic period (the 8th century B.C.). By then, the Greek world was already fragmented into numerous smaller communities. This fragmentation was partly due to the topography.

Layout of the Polis

Much of the terrain in mainland Greece and coastal Asia Minor is a chequerboard of mountains and habitation. The Aegean islands are relatively small mountains. Land communication from one pocket of habitation to another was quite difficult and sometimes near impossible, especially in the face of resistance. Understandably, in the Dark Age, when there were frequent incursions and migration of refugees, small isolated settlements became more of a constant feature. But topography could not have been the only reason for the fragmentation. The geographical peculiarity neither accounts for how the tiny island of Amorgos came to have three separate *poleis* for so many centuries; nor does it justify why the Greeks transplanted the *polis* community to Sicily and south Italy, respectively, when maintaining the status quo would have allowed for greater political unity and for embracing much larger territories under a unitary political structure as a means of self-preservation against hostile indigenes. That would have been the case given the inherent advantage of geographical conditions.

The configuration of the *polis* can be explained more as the consequence of a habit of mind amounting to a deep and ineradicable conviction about how human "living-together" ought to be arranged than solely the result of geography. The conviction that the *polis* was the only proper structure formed the basis for Aristotle's definition[33] of man

[33] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greek.* P.37.

as a *politikon zoon*, meaning "a being who is truly human only as a result of the process of living together with other men in a *polis*."

Expansion of the Polis

By the time the overseas dispersion of "Hellas" was completed in 500 B.C., the total number of *poleis* was about 1,500. Hellas now covered an enormous area, from the northern, western and southern shores of the black sea, through western Asia Minor, the Greek mainland and Aegean islands, to much of Sicily and southern Italy. It continued west along both shores of the Mediterranean to Cyrene and other Greek settlements in eastern Libya, and to Marseilles in the south of France and some Spanish coastal sites. Whenever the Greeks went, they settled on the edge of the sea, not in the hinterland.[34] Although they feared and appeased the god of the sea (Poseidon) without ever loving him, they had become the people for the fact (already alluded to) that land communication between the various pockets of habitation in the Greek homeland was slow and cumbersome, and sometimes actually impossible in the face of resistance, and that inland experience. In these conditions, the sea became the normal Greek highway; and when the Greeks were forced into a continuous movement of "colonial" expansion from the middle of the 8th century, they naturally took to living near the sea.

[34] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.17

The sea was not the only common environment feature of the Greek world. Ecologically, they shared the Mediterranean climate and vegetation, which permitted and even included an outdoor existence: summers were hot and sunny, winters mild and usually free from snow on the coasts and in the plains; olives and grapes grow freely, flowers abounded, the plains produced cereals and vegetables, the sea was rich in fish, and there was adequate pasture on the hillsides (rich pasture in places), at least for the smaller animals. Nothing was, as a rule, luxuriant, and so agriculture and animal pasturage needed constant attention. But the requirements of housing, and especially of warmth, could often be met by fairly primitive means. Only metals, and wood suitable for purposes such as ship-building, caused serious difficulties as they were short in supply and restricted, and in some cases rather distant from the localities. Fresh water may also have been a problem. Little wonder why springs and fountains were often stressed in legends and perhaps in every day life.

In the *polis* of that era, there were tensions and, increasingly, open conflicts between the ruling nobility and the rest of the population. Social crises were deeply rooted in the nature of the aristocratic society and in the ways in which this aristocratic "order" developed in the course of the Dark Age. The nobles gained their power in a time of insecurity and violence, isolation and poverty; a time in which their special virtues were needed; and in this era of insecurity, they no doubt protected their dependents though they also exploited them. Vigorous and proud, delighting in

war, athletics and hunting, with an uninhibited pleasure in wine and women, music and poetry, they lent some life and spirit to a period when life was generally hard for the poor. They were outspoken, highly individualistic, and quite immoderate in their expression of love and hate. But, by the early part of that period, the world that had needed such leaders began to vanish.

Summary

The nobles gained power in a period of anarchy and deprivation. To guarantee security and economic stability, their special leadership virtues were called to action. Doubtless, they enjoyed relative success, but, often, at the expense of the deprived dependents. Exuberance, arrogance, avarice, bellicosity, debauchery, profligacy and verve tempered those tough times.

That is why much of the aristocratic writings during the period or more precisely any surviving part of the literature, at any rate, document violent complaints about the encroachment of the "base-born" upon time-honoured privileges of the aristocratic "order". The circle of "base-born" men who felt that they could look after themselves was larger then;[35] worse yet, in the quarrelsome days of their decline, the nobles began to oppress their inferiors more

[35] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. P. 97. In the Homeric poems the captive women will be taken home as slaves, and that occasional male slaves - the victims of Phoenician merchant-pirates - will also be on hand.

recklessly than before. Slaves at that time were few and consisted mostly of captive women; and the aristocratic class used their wealth to create bonds of patronage and obligation with commoners. They lured the latter by an obligation to pay a portion of their produce and to give an amount of unpaid labour to them, even when these commoners had personal and property rights of their own.

Other factors contributed to the tension and social conflicts then. One of the factors was population growth. Neither mainland Greece nor the Aegean islands could support a sizeable agricultural population, and the population surplus could not be gainfully engaged in other sectors. Again, although the period was marked by increase in wealth, otherwise called Gross National Product (GNP), and in technical skills, the aristocracy had closed ranks after the elimination of the kings, and the noble families controlled instruments for monopolising power. The fact that every noble family claimed a link with a divine or "heroic" ancestor indicates a tendency towards the creation of an exclusive "order" of aristocrats defined by "blood". A rising standard of living among the wealthier sections of society led to greater pressure on those on the lower rung of society leading to a more diversified labour force. This invariably induced the expansion of aristocratic estates at the expense of the peasants. Many free men were forced into debt-bondage by harsh laws of debt. Aristotle[36] described the

[36] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. Pp.54 - 55

situation in these terms: "there was civil strife (*stasis*) between the nobles and the people for a long time because the poor, with their wives and children, were enslaved to the rich and had no political rights". Aristotle, of course, used "enslaved" in the sense of "grinding dependence".

The Military Under the Hoplite System

Another reason for political tension then can be traced to the military. The wealth of the aristocracy secured for the class a monopoly of the military for a long time. Metal was scarce and expensive, particularly the iron required for making weapons. About the middle of the 8th century B.C., under foreign influence, the warrior of the "world of Homer" fighting in more or less individual aristocratic combats, was replaced by the heavily armed infantryman known as the *hoplite* (See Fig. 4). The hoplite fought in mass formation. The *hoplite* system required adequate training, mass co-ordination, less focus on individual prowess, and a larger number of fighting men. Accordingly, the *hoplite* army included all citizens who could afford to equip themselves with the panoply of protective armour and weaponry. This was far beyond the reach of most citizens, and so, the *hoplite* army became an army of men of the middle strata of the society outside the closed "order" of the aristocracy.[37]

The Cavalry arm was confined to the aristocracy - great horse-breeders, who alone could supply themselves with the necessary horses. But the military role of the Cavalry

[37] Windrow, M. (2000), *The Ancient Greeks*. P. 5

was secondary to that of the *hoplite* army. They acquired a feeling of solidarity as a potential political counterweight to the aristocracy. They were "middle class" of relatively well-to-do, but non-aristocratic, farmers, merchants, shippers, and craftsmen. Since they provided the dominant force on the battlefield and had taken over from the nobility the role of being primary defenders of the freedom of their *polis*, they naurally demanded a share of the political power. In Greek culture, military service was always the basis of political rights. The demand of the "*hoplite* class", coupled with those of the suffering peasants and the squabbling for honour and power which always went on among the nobles, led to social conflict (or *stasis*, as the Greek called it).[38]

Fig. 4: The Greek Hoplites

Source:https://encryptedtbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTSasc-Joi4WSnqU4b_1LtL9QRxBm7DwAtjKr6sQM2Lbm3P2Gvg1Q

[38] Kurt A. R et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P. 166

Social tension was already evident in the 8th or early 7th century B.C. as found in the poem of Hesiod, titled *Works and Days*. In that work, the poet, also a moderately well-to-do farmer, makes clear his dislike of the nobles and their "injustice". Similarly, the lyric poet, Archilochus, wrote in the middle of the 7th century:

> *I hate the lanky officer, stiff-standing, legs apart, whose cut of and whisker is his principal renown; I prefer the little fellow with his bigness in his heart, and let his legs be bandy, it never let him down.*[39]

The crisis was exacerbated by the population explosion. Since much of Greece and the Aegean islands could not support a large population on the soil, a poet as Hesiod, especially, advocates not only late marriages (from age 30 and above), but also a strict birth control measure, recommending that "there should be one son only, to feed his father's house; for in that way wealth will increase in the home". The grievances of the "enslaved" peasants led to widespread demands for redistribution of land and cancellation of debts, as well as complaints about the aristocratic monopoly in the administration of justice and holding of priestly functions.[40] Hesiod further complained about the "bribe-devouring judges";[41] but he was in the "middle class".

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[39] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.79

[40] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks.* Pp. 38-39.

[41] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, M.L. West (Trans.) lines 36 – 40; 176-178; 299-301; 308-310.

For the lower class, economic demands and a plea for social justice took precedence over claims to political rights. Law in the hands of a traditional and closed aristocracy, self-perpetuating and secretive, in a world which had not long started to write things down, was increasingly intolerable. The citizens outside the aristocratic "order" loudly complained that, until the law became public knowledge and its administration became open and equitable, there could be no justice. The laws (constitutional, civil, sacral and criminal) had to be fixed and codified if the community was to emerge from its embryonic state in which a handful of families controlled all the resources and the sanctions.

When the demands and complaints of the non-aristocratic classes became too insistent, the ruling aristocrats resorted to the safety-valve of organised emigration-the-so-called "colonisation" movement. For a considerable period, that provided a buffer against revolution by taking off to overseas settlement, the surplus, and disaffected sections of the population of numerous *poleis*.

Summary

The exploitation of the "enslaved" peasants led to widespread demands for land redistribution, debt cancellation, and agitation for change in aristocratic monopoly, corrupt judicial system and nomination for priestly duties.

Colonisation

The lands to which these Greeks migrated were all inhabited by a variety of peoples at different levels of development, with different interests in the newcomers and different capacities of resistance.[42] The Etruscans of central Italy were strong enough to stop the Greek settlers from expanding beyond the Bay of Naples, and they sufficiently advanced to borrow from them their alphabets, much of their art, and elements of their religion.[43] But other peoples less advanced technically and socially, were in some cases reduced by the Greek settlers to a semi-servile labouring force. Others were pushed inland from the coastal areas where the Greeks settled, and in the following centuries they maintained an uneasy and complicated relationship with the settlers.[44]

Ancient accounts of this "colonisation" movement contain mythical elements that focused more on the activities of a few individuals and their quarrels rather than on the broader social aspects of life in Greece. These accounts emphasise, among other things, the various "colonising" expeditions led by "founders" of the resulting overseas Greek settlements; how the oracle at Delphi, presently a sort of pan-Hellenic organ, was consulted

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[42] Kurt A. Raaflaub et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece.* P.44.

[43] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.18

[44] Kurt A. R et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece.* P.44

frequently; how the migrants were always prepared to fight, subjugate or expel indigenes; and how colonising groups from two or more cities entered into bilateral or multilateral relationships. Though in the Dark Age the drift to Asia Minor was probably haphazard and left to chance, residents took to flight rather than disperse in an orderly fashion. This time around, the pattern the movement took was markedly different; it was an organised population shift from the *poleis* the emigrants went out from albeit in smaller numbers. Group emigration, systematically arranged by the "mother-cities" (*metropoleis*), eventually became the norm. The mother cities provided the ships, the arms and equipment, the leaders, the land-surveyors and other skilled men when the emigrants arrived. The mother-cities had little recourse to any other course of action. Nothing but compulsion could have prompted so consistent a movement on so vast a scale for so long a time. Nothing else would have made the emigrants avail themselves or feel compelled to leave their communities of birth.[45]The only thing that these various "mother-cities" had in common was a condition of crisis.

Loosely speaking, there were two long waves of colonisation (not counting the earlier, Dark Age, settlement in Asia Minor). The first, beginning about 750 B.C., and lasting until the middle of the 7th century before swinging west from the islands and coast of the Ionian Sea, to Sicily

[45] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.69.

and southern Italy and finally to Libya, southern France, and Spain late in the 7th century. The second began before 700 B.C. with some settlements visible on the Thracian coast and nearby islands, and in the Troad in Asia Minor. Soon after 550 B.C., the settlements spread to and encircled the Black sea, along with Greek communities. This spanned from then till the 6th century B.C.. Whereas the first wave of migrant population was widely shared among "mother-cities", the sharing of the second was dominated by two cities - Megara in Greece and Miletus in Asia Minor. The whole process was started by the large and wealthy city of Corinth, but the movement involved a large list of developments. An outstanding one was that migrants from two or more cities sometimes teamed up to establish a single settlement.

There came to be a Greek word for having a new settlement abroad. The word was *apoikia*, meaning "home away from home". This connotes emigration but lacks the implication of dependence inherent in the English word "colony". Each *apoikia* from the outset, and by intention, was another *polis* – an independent community, retaining sentimental, and often religious, ties with its "mother-city", while not being subject to that city either economically or politically. Indeed, as has already been indicated, some *apoikiai*, (plural of *apoikia*) had more than one "mother-city".

The colonisation movement was not, as some have asserted, chiefly motivated by commercial interests. Granted, the location of the first western *apoikia*, the island

of Ischia, had some iron ore and was a gateway to the rich, iron-bearing regions of central Italy.[46]

Again, the search for metals was always an important activity for citizens of ancient states and it does appear that the first Greek emigrants to Ischia apparently knew where they were headed, after obtaining information from traders who had already settled in the area. Regardless, the much evidence of migration driven by commercial interest did not apply in most cases of migration during the era of colonisation. In the final analysis, the central issue was that of the motivation of the men who actually migrated to settle permanently in unfamiliar, and sometimes hostile regions, without any tie whatsoever with their original *poleis*. They were not the same people as the traders who did not abandon their home-bases; and so their interests were far from identical. Nor did merchants constitute a significant element among the original settlers in an *apoikia*. When, as it happened very rarely, Greeks established a trading-post overseas, it was not called an *apoikia*; an *apoikia* was always an agricultural settlement compared with the so-called

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[46] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P. 70

"colonies" established by the Phoenicians in the western Mediterranean area.

Summary

Primarily, colonisation was motivated by land shortage and population expansion. The depth of the crisis is mirrorred in the writings of historian Herodotus about the plight of the citizens of the island of Thera (modern Santorini) in the Cyclades. As famine ravaged the Therans, they resorted to exiling fellow citizens. Some exiles, failing to find another suitable colony to settle, attempted a return but were repelled by flying arrows, forcing them to sail off again. Later, they eventually established a colony at Cyrene in modern Libya.[47]

What motivated the *apoikia* movement was a condition of crises in the various "mother-cities". The crises was severe enough to induce the mobilisation of the resources required for so difficult a venture as an overseas transplantation of ships, armour, weapons, tools, seeds and supplies, and to create the necessary psychology as well. Behind the traditional tales of personal feuds, quarrels and murders which Greeks of later times associated with some of the foundations of *apoikiai*, there lay a deeper and broader social conflict. Social crises and overpopulation in varying degrees were the real explanation.

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[47] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. p.18

A few lines in the History of Herodotus and a surviving relevant inscription both reveal something of the problem caused by the emigration that took place from the island of Thera to the coast of eastern Libya. The Therans decided to send out a male chosen by lot from each family with more than a son, while calling for volunteers. The penalty for refusal after being selected by lot was death and confiscation of property. This way, a migrant party of about 200 males, was collected. They needed to find wives among the Libyans. Such pressure and compulsion makes sense only against a background of crisis and social conflict.[48]

Law-givers and dictators in Archaic Greece

When the process of sending off surplus population and dissidents to *apoikiai* failed to eliminate the difficulties at home, the ruling aristocracy often turned to "law-givers" for a solution. The "law-givers", who are also highly respected nobles, inevitably became reformers and codifiers of the law. In contrast, the members of the aristocracy were not often allowed to become "law-givers"; and in rare cases, when that happened, such ones could not find lasting solutions to problems plaguing the society. It must here be emphasised, however, that these Greek communities had no precedent to fall back on at such periods of crisis. Men simply tried to think up novel ways to administer the state, distribute power, pass and enforce laws.

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[48] *Ibid*

In general, the attempts at "colonisation" failed to eliminate the crises in the various *poleis*; and the tension between aristocrats and commoners ("the few" versus "the many" as the Greeks themselves termed it) persisted. Thus, the cry that resounded for a while was "Redistribute the land and cancel debts". This precarious situation was exacerbated by factious and ambitious individuals jostling for power within the ranks of the aristocracy. In the midst of this civil strife there arose the Greek institution of the *tyrannos* (dictator). The *tyrannos* was an aristocrat who seized power by coup d'état and held it without the legitimacy conferred by constitutional authority. Interestingly, this usurpation was aided by the "middle class" men of the hoplite army.[49]

Ironically, some of such dictators ruled benevolently, putting an end to civil strife, helping to solve economic problems and advancing their *poleis* in many ways. However, uncontrolled military power was an inherent evil, becoming progressively prominent as the first generation ushered in the second or third generations since the tyrannos was succeeded by an heir. The *tyrannoi* (plural) became tyrants in the sense of our understanding of the term. So *tyrannos*, originally a neutral word, came to have the denotation and connotation conveyed by its English derivative - tyrant.

[49] Kurt A. R et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P.42

Summary

Some dictators were quite successful in their reign. Civil strife reduced significantly and the economic problems were tackled squarely. A major issue common then was uncontrolled military power which extended even to their second generation successors.

From the middle of the 7th century B.C., dictatorship spread from many *poleis* of mainland Greece and the Aegean islands, to Asia Minor, and even to the western *apoikiai*. The common denominator that trailed the reign of the hereditary successors to the aristocracy was their inability to stymie the rise in social and political conflicts. These rifts occurred within their own ranks, the wealthier comers, the growing urban population, the debt-ridden and impoverished peasantry, and extended to other states.

In every city, there were those who wanted a dictator because they felt that the necessary socio-political reforms could only be achieved by fiat. Consequently, early in the 6th century B.C. in Athens where the "colonisation" movement never took roots, there was a popular demand for Solon, an eminent and highly respected citizen, to become a dictator as was the case in neighbouring Megara and Corinth. In demonstration of a rare and noble self-denial, Solon refused, opting instead for the role of "law-giver" so as to bring about reforms by a means other than dictatorship. Generally, the essence of seeking the dictator was freedom. He was expected to liberate his *polis* from a

system instituted by a predecessor if the extant conditions became inadequate and to provide peaceful conditions for the expansion of his city's material prosperity. In many cities, the dictatorship accomplished at the expense of the traditional aristocracy precisely what it was meant to.

It was not that the dictators saw themselves as the bearers of some mysterious historic destiny or as the forerunners of democracy or of anything else. They were themselves aristocrats who wanted power and success. So, if they were intelligent and disciplined the possiblity of their gaining power and retaining it by advancing their communities was higher. For a generation or two, they were able to put an end to growing social conflicts or *stasis*, to use the parlance of the Greeks. Their entering into alliances with other Greek states through dynastic marriages and other means also became a force for peace where that was possible. Furthermore, peasant independence from economic bondage to aristocratic landowners was fostered, while trade and manufacturing was promoted. In doing so, they strengthened the sense of communal living in their various *poleis*. This was done by the construction of new civic and religious edifices while existing ones were embellished and by the promotion of festivals and splendid ceremonies that centred mainly around major religious cults. Above all, they broke the habit of traditional and old-fashioned aristocratic rule.

By the end of the Archaic period, in most *poleis*, particularly those that went through a phase of dictatorship, the form of government had evolved somewhat. Some had

become either more democratic or more oligarchical, operating at a very different level of political sophistication than previously witnessed. During the period, some among the Greeks achieved workable compromises between the competing and often irreconcilable demands of social obligation and personal freedom, a perennial problem historically. Also, it was in this period that the Greeks may, indeed, have discovered the idea of freedom as distinct from the personal, fundamentally asocial power of the Homeric chieftains, the privileged aristocratic families, and the anarchic freebooters of the early Archaic period. The failings and drawbacks, during the fledgling and mature stages of the *polis* cannot diminish this achievement.

The new freedom and the evolving community revolved around economic independence with most of the men engaged in agriculture while the others engaged in trade, manufacturing or other skills in the arts. Wherever debt bondage and other ancient kinds of dependent labour were abolished, it was necessary to turn to new sources of labour. One of such sources was chattel slave. In this form of slavery, captive Greeks, and later, "barbarians", a misnomer used by the Greeks to refer to all non-Greeks, were forced to engage in different forms of labour. The irony here is that the new Greek freedom went hand in hand with the enslavement of others including their own citizens. In Archaic Greece, slavery was unimportant; debt-bondage and clientage were the prevalent forms of dependent labour. But from the 6th century B.C., chattel slavery effectively replaced other forms of dependent labour outside Sparta. But the performance of the dictators turned out to be rather

paradoxical. The dictators who were above the law and the constitution were the same one who strengthened the *polis* and its institutions eventually. They raised the people or *demos* (in Greek) as a whole to a level of self-consciousness which then led, in some *poleis*, to government by the *demos*, signalling the advent of democracy (in Greek, *demokratia*).

A major weakness of the dictatorship stemmed from the fact that its entire success depended heavily on the charisma of the dictator. Another weakness was its seductive nature. In the *polis,* the dictator alone did not have the monopoly of capable leadership and ambition; others too may have been capable and as such also nursed ambitions. Under the dictatorship, no room for such was entertained. This made conspiracy and assassination rife. Hence, dictatorship systematically led to despotism, civil war, and either abdication or overthrow of the "tyrants". This situation degenerated even more as the generation gap extended to the third generation. Thereafter, what followed varied from *polis* to *polis*. But two states, exceptionally peculiar in themseves, emerged as the most important. The first was Sparta, which escaped dictatorship altogether, and the second was Athens, which underwent dictatorship, becoming the paragon of Greek democracy and culture, and also Greece's most important imperial power.

Sparta in Archaic Greece

When compared with the typical Greek *polis*, an unusual feature of Sparta was the peculiar relationship between the *polis*-centre, a mere village, and the surrounding territory. The *polis* community of Sparta consisted of a single class of citizens called *Spartiates* who resided in the *polis*-centre and ruled over a relatively vast subject-population. Sparta was located in a fertile plain of about 1,800 square kilometres. After she conquered and annexed the neighbouring state of Messenia between 750 and 725 B.C., her total territory amounted to some 8,000 square kilometres – more than three times larger than Attica, the (total) territory of Athens. The original Spartan territory, Laconia, was more fertile than most districts; but Messenia was more fertile than Laconia. The Spartans were, therefore, able to feed themselves without imports.[50] Laconia also possessed iron mines, a great economic reality in Greece. The main weakness of the state was poor access to the sea. The nearest available harbour was Gytheum, some 40 km to the south of the *polis*- – centre.

The Spartiates themselves did not have such a high population. The largest military contingent they ever mustered from their own ranks sometime in 479 B.C. was 5, 000 hoplites. The countryside of Laconia, outside the *polis* – centre, was occupied by free men called *perioeci*. These were Dorian Greeks like the Spartans themselves who lived

[50] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.49.

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[50] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.49.

in their own small villages, but lacked autonomy, participation in the government, and citizenship of the Spartan state. In other words, they were free but disenfranchised subjects of Sparta. There was a second group known as *helots*. The helots were serfs who were denied even personal freedom. They constituted the most numerous section of the population.[51] The serfs were descendants of the population whom the invading Dorians, ancestors of the Spartiates, met when they occupied the land at the beginning of the Dark Age. From then on, they were kept in perpetual subjugation as serfs in what extended to neighbouring Messenia which the Spartans conquered and annexed in the 8th century B.C..[52]

Still, helots possessed few rights. Despite militating conditions, they had the right to own property even though they lacked freedom of movement and control over their own lives. They were assigned by the Spartan state to work as domestic servants to individual Spartiates. Their obligation was to hand over to the Spartiate landowner more than half the produce of their labour. They maintained their own family relationships and largely lived in their own cohesive groups within villages. Each group did not really qualify for what could be called "communities". Hence, they could perpetuate their own existence, unlike the slaves in the typical Greek state who were constantly replenished by new imports when their number became depleted. From

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[51] *Ibid.* P.49.

[52] *Ibid.*

this, we can say that the helot system was one of the things that made the Spartan *polis* unique. The polis had a small "garrison" of Spartiates governing it with the co-operation of the *perioeci*, and a population of serfs many times their own number. Maintaining this system was onerous, requiring the strictest military discipline to keep it from crumbling.[53]

Modern historians have devoted thousands of pages to the analysis and description of this odd Spartan socio-economic system. Remarkably, nowhere in the extant historical literature is the system given its appropriate label – racism. This is perhaps due to erroneous perceptions of "race" which is often viewed as either a mere genetically-defined ensemble or a group simply defined by conformity to a distinct somatic type. From the perspective of sociological theory, we are now better informed. We are able to sieve from the facts of what we now recognise indubitably as racism even though sociologists have been able to isolate racism as a specific type of social situation which has no necessary connection with what is popularly called "a race" (that is, different skin colours and so on). This sociological analysis also forbids us to use the terms "race" and "racial" except with reference to the above-mentioned type of social situation.[54]

The situation type was characterised by social inequality and differentiation. The inequalities and differentiation related to somatic or cultural criteria were the basis of which particular social roles and rights, or disabilities, were ascribed to groups. These groups were socially defined with reference to their real or supposed somatic or cultural

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[53] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 124

[54] *Ibid*

identities. At least one within the group would be subjected to a system of discrimination by one or more group(s) in the same population unit. The dominating group would seek to consolidate its hold on the existing social system using some kind of deterministic ideology. This ideology regarded the individual as being necessarily powerless to save himself or his descendants. In short, he could do nothing to alter such destiny simply because he belonged to a particular group where roles, rights or disabilities have been permanently ascribed (as a group rather than on an individual basis). Of course, there was no possibility of switching group since membership was absolutely determined by descent. Thus, the groups were called "races". Race, in this sense, was strictly man-made; it was a creation by the architects of the social order. That act of creation was aptly called "racisation" of a society.

Helots, *Perioeci* and Spartiates were three races. The races were created by the dominant Spartiates who permanently ascribed to the remaining groups particular social roles and rights together with disabilities. The Spartiates further maintained their dominant position by brute force.

Every year, the Ephors, as the chief officials of the state were known, symbolically "declared war" on the helots. The object of this curious ceremony was to empower any daring Spartiate to kill a helot without being culpable. A closely related event also occurs yearly. In this one, the same officials authorised to select young Spartans (Spartiates) to spy on the helots endorsed their killing any helot deemed

as dangerous. In the early 7th century B.C., the Spartiate minority could still relax into a certain measure of civilised gaiety. As time passed, the enormous strain that came from perpetuating the system imposed on them, brought upon them an increasing grimness.

The turning point for the helots came between 650 and 625 B.C., when the helots of Messenia started a revolt.[55] The Spartans (Spartiates) then found themselves hard pressed to quell the uprising which lasted seventeen years according to some traditional accounts. Primarily, disaffection, disorder, and near-mutiny in the Spartiates ranks weakened their resistance.[56] The less affluent among the Spartiates who made up the hoplite arm of the war-machine seized the opportunity of the helot rebellion to clamour for land redistribution and greater political rights.[57]

The government responded by propagandising an ideology of *Eunomia,* meaning "obedience to the law", which proved successful. Once the Messenian helots were subjugated again, those Spartiate dissidents consigned to forced emigration. These ones later found the *apoikia* of Tarentum in southern Italy. In this case, over-population and land-shortage which often motivated such movement did not apply for Sparta's territory was very extensive by Greek standards. As outlined, the reasons were political. At the same time, the Spartans proceeded to work out a final

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[55] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P. 56

[56] Kurt A. R. et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P.36

[57] *Ibid*. P.36

solution of the twin problems of internal *stasis* and conservation of their peculiar system by holding down the helots in perpetuity. It is axiomatic that a dominant minority in a racist society must consist of people who are in principle, equals; sine racist oppression depends on oppressor-solidarity which in turn depends on a certain internal "classlessness".

The new deal worked out by the Spartans made all Spartiates "Equals" or "peers" (*homoioi*), distributing the power of decision-making among the "kings" (hereditary generals and priests), the five annually elected chief magistrates (*ephors*), the council of 30 elders, and the assembly of the people (all Equals, and male Spartiates).[58] The equality of the Equals was political, social and psychological; it was not economic for some of them had the outstanding wealth which alone enabled Greek aristocrats to enter terms in the Olympic chariot races.[59]

The equals were now a full-time military establishment. In principle, their lives were moulded by and dedicated wholly to the state and, as such, to fostering the Spartan *status quo*. Even the decision of whether a male infant should be allowed to live or die was taken away from

[58] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.55

[59] The first event is the chariot race, and it was the most spectacular of all the events. See Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.85.

the hands of its parents and handed over to state officials. This was one of the many devices which served to minimise the bonds of kinship. Thereby that potential source of conflicting loyalties between state and family ties was significantly reduced.

> ***Summary***
> *Racism in Sparta was ambivalent. Though the permanent ascription of particular roles, rights and privileges was determined by a dominant group over a weaker one where membership was by descent, race in that sense was man-made since its creation was caused by the architects of the social order within a superordinate 'society'.*

Education in Sparta

By age 7, the state took the Spartan boy away from his parents for his education and was kept in communal barracks with other males until he turned 30. He could only return to normal family life after the age of 30. This training was believed to guarantee military supremacy over subordinate population.[60] The boys were deliberately underfed so that they could develop the skills of stealth by stealing food without being caught.[61] This education was a fierce training in physical endurance, military skills and the virtue of obedience to state.

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[60] Windrow, M. (2000), *The Ancient Greeks*. p. 6.

[61] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.77

The boys were ranged in age groups under the supervision of the elders. When they grew to adulthood, they were required to continue spending much of their lives in barracks where they were grouped into regiments that had separate mess-halls. Also, it was from childhood that the Spartiates were encouraged to compete with one another. The competition never included those related to intellectual achievement or business innovation; it was restricted to those involving a show of prowess and stamina. The prizes were more honorary than material, sometimes including receiving positions of authority and leadership. Undoubtedly, this meant that in the assembly (one made up of Equals who also belonged to a highly disciplined army corps for whom obedience had been taught as the prime virtue all their lives), members could not listen to debates with an open mind, disregarding the military rank and status of the speakers.

The focus of a Spartiate's life was on a single purpose. This was possible mainly because all Equals were released from all economic concerns and activities so they could be entirely free to devote their lives to military training, mess-fellowship, and hunting. It was a sharp contrast to the way of life of the wealthy noble class in the typical Greek *polis*. In Sparta, economic concerns and activities were the responsibility of the helots and *perioeci* who, in their different ways, produced food, armoury and carried on necessary trade. While the helots worked under absolute compulsion, the *perioikoi* were beneficiaries of a monopolistic trade, free from competition from the Spartiates as well as the down-trodden serfs.

Summary

In the Classical period, older boys were sent to live in the wild as members of the "Secret Service" (Krypteia). Their mandate was to murder any helot deemed as posing a danger to Spartan existence. Spartan males who could not cope with the rigours of their childhood training fell into disrepute and did not earn the status of Homoioi, sometimes translated as "Equals". Its synonyms "Those Who are Like One Another" and "Peers" stuck as the official name for adult males entitled to the full compliments of citizen rights. Only the sons of the royal family were exempt from this long and harsh education called the agoge (guidance, training). Their exemption was to avert a potential social crisis if a king's son failed to complete the course and was then viewed as weakling. Thus the fear of failure and of public humiliation featured prominently in the Spartan way of life. [62]

Spartiates were even prohibited by law from using coined money, and outsiders were denied all access to the economy except through the mediation of the *perioeci* or of the state. This explains why there was little unrest on the part of the *perioeci*, despite their lack of autonomy and their obligation to do military service when called upon. It also explains the failure of the Spartan *polis* to develop from a rural to an urban community. But the whole system reveals, above all,

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[62] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* P. 102

the severe limitations of choices open to a society dedicated to racism when the dominant group in that society was vastly outnumbered by the inferiorised group or groups. Here lies the paradox of this form of racism: numeric strength was not one its determinants.

The Spartan system was fostered primarily by the success of its more effectively trained and adequately equipped army, incomparable to any in all Greece, and universally feared. It was gratifying to the individual to be a member of this formidable force. The sense of solidarity was heightened by the ideology of Spartiate equality and by the pretence that, in their austere barrack life, no one lived better or worse than his neighbour. Real equality could not, of course, be literally maintained, and (as has, already been indicated) some families were evidently richer, and some more influential, than others. But the pretence of a solid body of classless all-aristocratic Spartiates had its uses, as highlighted so far. That pretence was extended to economic activities as the state made efforts to obliterate economic distinctions in public social life.

The limitations of choice imposed by the racist system was also apparent in Spartan foreign policy which was centred around the usefulness of the helots. To keep the helots in check, Sparta maintained peace in the Peloponnese so that an enemy state might stir up the helots, if not by design, at least by the mere fact of engaging too much of Spartan military energies and manpower. Sparta also had to be very careful before sending an army outside the Peloponnese. By the middle of the 6th century B.C., the benefits of this policy was already being experienced. The

frequent wars and conquests ceased and were replaced by defensive alliances and non-aggression pacts; albeit natural force was used to impose alliances when necessary, and forestall defections. As a result, virtually the whole of Peloponnese had been brought into the network of the Spartan alliance by the end of the 6th century.

The alliance of Peloponnesian states under Sparta's leadership was conventionally known as "the Peloponnesian League". It was to a large extent based on fear entertained by the individual allied states of the superiority of Spartan military might coupled with the confident expectation that Sparta with her allies could resist any attempt by an external force to conquer all or part of Peloponnese. Furthermore, Sparta supported friendly oligarchic factions within the allied states so that it could always draw upon the military support of those allies whenever joint operations were envisaged.

Summary

Spartan educational system emphasised military tenacity to foster their existence. A popular story is that of a Spartan boy who stole a fox and hid it under his cloak. So he would not be caught, he did not even whimper when the fox began gnawing at his vitals; he endured the pain till he died. Such was the kind of bravery taught and encouraged by the Spartans. The boy would have been punished severely had he been caught. This is why his action is extolled afterwards by generations.[63]

[63] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P. 100

Athens

The territory of the *polis* of Athens in the district of Attica, covered some 2,500 square kilometres and typically was not as fertile as areas like Sparta's Messenia. It possessed a number of good extensive plains and two unique natural assets: a very considerable coastline suitable for beaching ships, and a rich supply of silver at Laurium. The silver was systematically mined from the latter part of the 6th century. Next only to Sparta, Athens was territorially the largest *polis* in Greece. Unlike Sparta, the size of their territory was not the product of a racist system practiced on internal subjects. Athens had neither *perioeci* nor *helots;* every one of her inhabitants, if we exclude foreign residents and slaves, was a citizen of Athens. This amalgamation or synoecism (*synoikismos*) was achieved at some unknown time before the Archaic period. This accounts for why Athens did not take part in the "colonisation" movement. Her large territory provided an outlet which other *poleis* had to find abroad. But Athens also had a better than average industrial development in the Archaic period as mirrored by her continuous record of fine pottery production. All this probably acted as a safety valve against rural depression and overpopulation.

In the end, however, not even Athens could escape the universal *stasis* of archaic Greece. The issues of conflicts within social groupings, and the clamour for dictatorship peculiat to Sparta also came up. In the second half of the 7th century B.C., crisis seemed to have started suddenly. The economic and political monopoly of the "well-sired"

families (as the Athenian nobles called themselves) came under attack from two quarters- the closed circle of the aristocracy itself, and the lower classes.

About 630 B.C., a nobleman named Cylon[64] made an unsuccessful attempt designed to establish himself as dictator by *coup*. His own wife was the daughter of Theagenes, the then ruling dictator of the *polis* of Megara.[65] Although the attempt was blocked by the aristocracy, the popular demand for a dictator latent. This is indicated by two facts. First, the ruling class were forced to turn to a "law-giver" in the person of a fellow-aristocrat, Dracon (whose name has become proverbial in the word draconian). In 621 B.C., Dracon effected a partial codification of the law. Second, there was another popular demand, a generation after Dracon, for Solon to assume the role of dictator.[66]

The respected and "well-sired" Solon rejected this role, but was appointed in 59 B.C. *as archon* (the highest post in the state). That office came with plenipotentiary powers. His mandate was to put an end to the *stasis* by a special appointment. This reveals that some among the aristocracy were ready to accept major concessions in ensuring that the clamouring opposition were pacified. Doing away with peasant bondage and clientship-dependence on the wealthy were among the concessions

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[64] Cylon and some of his friends had planned to use force to install a tyranny. See Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* P. 108.

[65] Kurt A. Raaflaub et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece..* p.57

[66] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.46.

they were ready to reach.[67] The only hope for a successful compromise lay with an aristocrat known to have taken his stand with the underprivileged but who yet rejected the personal role of dictator. Solon had publicly placed the onus for the *stasis* on the rapacity and inhumanity of the rich, publicly reciting in the *agora* a poem of his own which we may translate thus:

> *Unrighteous are the hearts of the rulers of the people, who will one day suffer many pains for their great pride (hybris); for they do not know to restrain their excesses. They grow rich through unrighteous deeds, and steal for themselves right and left, respecting neither sacred nor public property.*[68]

The underprivileged repaid him by an appeal that he should become a dictator, a position he rejected. He accepted the extraordinary archonship and proceeded to steer a complicated course to reach a compromise between the extreme demands of the peasantry and that of the reactionary wing which entailed shaking-off burdens related to the fundamental question of peasant bondage.[69] He cancelled debts and restored freedom to the many Athenians who were tied down as involuntary "share-croppers" (*hektemoroi*) working the land of aristocrats for a share of the produce, or who had been taken into bondage as a result of indebtedness. Others who had actually been sold abroad

[67] Kurt A. Raaflaub et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P. 68.
[68] *Ibid*. P.58
[69] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.19.

into slavery were ransomed and brought back.[70] A new law was then passed forbidding for all future time the practice of mortgaging the persons of free men or women as security for debts.[71] Solon refused, however, to take the most revolutionary step of all – confiscation of parts of the large estates of the "well-sired" for distribution as peasant plots among the poorest peasants and the landless.[72]

Aristotle, writing two centuries later, was right to put the *Seisachtheia* (shaking off of burdens) foremost among the measures taken by Solon in the interests of the common people. It was this measure that made a free peasantry the base of Athenian society. Serious weaknesses still remained in the position of the peasants, but they were henceforth protected from the traditional forms of personal exploitation. Solon further strengthened this protection by making reforms in the administration of justice and codifying the law, an action which introduced clarity, certainty and public knowledge of the law into the Athenian community (*polis*) at large.[73]

On the constitutional side, the balance required was more complex, for in that sphere, there were conflicts within the "well-sired" themselves. What Solon did, however, was to create in the place of the closed "order" of the "well-sired", a formal status hierarchy based on wealth as the sole criterion. The entire citizen-body was divided into four

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[70] *Ibid*
[71] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. P.157
[72] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.283
[73] *Ibid.*

classes according to wealth measured in terms of agricultural yield. The first class included those whose land produced "500 measures" a year (a "measure" or *medimnos* being about 8 gallons). The highest offices, with a one-year tenure, were restricted to those in this class. One of the coveted offices in the class was that of the archonship. This position guaranteed admittance into the council of the Areopagus.[74] The council, a traditional body of life peers, had a general undefined supervisory authority over the state (something like the role of the Roman senate). Solon retained that coveted role in his settlement. Those in the two classes that followed were eligible for the minor offices and the new council numbering 400 (*Boule*) which was created by Solon. The fourth class, known as the *thetes,*[75] was the lowest in the hierarchy. Their produce was not up to 200 "measures" in a year. These were restricted to the popular assembly which from that time onwards doubled as an appeal court. The court was instituted to review unsatisfactory decisions of the state officials. Commenting on his work in one of his poems, Solon wrote

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[74] This council is usually called "The Areopagus" (Hill of Ares). It was a rocky height opposite the western end of the Acropolis. It derived its name from the legend that Ares was brought to trial on that hill before the assembly of the gods, by Poseidon, for murdering Halirrhothius (the son of Poseidon). It was here that the Council of Areopagus met frequently. It is also called the Upper Council, in order to distinguish it from the Council of Five Hundred, which assembled in the valley below the Areopagus, The Areopagus was the spot where the Apostle Paul preached to the men of Athens. (Smith, W. (2000), A Smaller History of Greece. World eBook Library Consortia, p. 70)

[75] *Thêtes* — Member of the lowest economic group instituted by Solon. *Thês* (the singular) gained considerable political influence in the fifth century, because they largely comprised the rowers in Athénian navy. The term was also used to identify hired workers. (Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 320).

> *I gave the common people such privilege as is sufficient, and as to the aristocracy, I saw to it that they should suffer no injustice. I stood covering both groups with a strong shield, honest comment.*

The rationale behind his reforms and their general impact were clear. He radically altered the *status quo* by formally establishing wealth from agriculture as the criterion for privilege. In principle, this made the society mobile. Any citizen who made enough money and invested it in land could hope to rise to the highest class. The wealthiest commoners were instantly eligible for the highest offices and the Areopagus. While this broke the monopoly of the "well-sired", it did not remove them from power and influence because they no doubt still formed a majority of the largest landowners (and informal respect continued to be accorded to the claims of high birth). The middle classes, including those Hoplite soldiers who held sufficient land, were given a role in government for the first time; even the poor living in the urban and rural areas were at last recognised as an active part of the *demos* as a whole, regardless of the fact that their position was still severely restricted.

Thus, the great gaps in the structure of the rudimentary *polis*, which had prevented it from functioning as a viable community, were narrowed, leaving just smaller ones. Much later, in summing up Solon's achievements, Aristotle emphasised as crucial the abolition of enslavement for debt, the creation of the right of a third party to seek justice in court on behalf of the aggrieved, and the introduction of

appeals to a tribunal of the popular assembly. The three steps were designed to advance the ideal and reality of commununality by protecting the weaker majority from the excessive and more or less extra-judicial power of the "well-sired". These measures enhanced the rule of law, an ideal which was now gradually becoming the Greek definition of civilised political organisation. They were also steps towards equality before the law, the central feature of democracy.[76]

On the completion of his reformations, Solon immediately and voluntarily went into the Diaspora for a long period, fearing that if he did otherwise, disgruntled extremists would put pressure on him to make further changes that would make him become a dictator. This fear in itself indicated failure in some sense on Solon's part. And we must note that he did fail to solve the economic difficulties responsible for the civil strife (*stasis*). Only the personal status of the peasantry, and not their economic position, was revised. The city was still unable to provide a livelihood for many of the landless and others who were struggling to eke out a living in the countryside.

Also to be reckoned as a mark of failure was the persisting factional disturbances. Constitutional machinery alone could not give internal peace, and *stasis* could not be abolished by a stroke of the pen. For some time, the reforms engendered much strife as it reduced dissatisfaction. Many of the "well-sired" resented the loss of aristocratic privileges, and many among the lower classes felt that a cleaner sweep

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[76] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece.* P.87

should have been made. Those in the latter group could be seen as extremists. These would have preferred the bloody *coup* and the dictatorship that Solon took so much pains to avoid despite the demands and counter demands of the "well-sired" who compelled retainers and followers in jockeying for high office, power and wealth during the next fifteen years. Eventually, one man, Peisistratus, rose above them all and achieved what Solon had tried to prevent – successful coup and dictatorship.[77]

Peisistratus was an influential aristocrat who claimed to come from a family-tree going back to Homer's Nestor. He had a great military reputation. Actually, he failed in his first coup attempt in 561 B.C, but eventually succeeded in 545 B.C. He then ruled until his death in 527 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Hippias who ruled for relatively short period before being overthrown in 510 B.C.[78] According to Aristotle, Peisistratus "governed the city with moderation, as a citizen rather than as a dictator". And again, "he wished to govern according to the laws without giving himself any prerogatives." The secret of his success, and of his son's, was that they left Solon's constitution in operation, though they saw to it that the annually elected archon was always a member of the family or a supporter.[79]

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[77] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.46

[78] Kurt A. Raaflaub et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P.76

[79] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.112

There was a good reason behind the success of this particularly subtle manoeuvre: irreconcilable opponents were either executed or exiled when Peisistratus invaded the city with an army of mercenaries to prosecute the coup. As dictator, he retained some of these mercenaries as bodyguards in his citadel on the *Acropolis*. Thus protected, he could afford to allow the machinery of assembly, council magistrates and courts, even the Areopagus, to keep functioning as they were before he forcefully took the reins of leadership. Still, it must be noted that no one could have compelled him to do this; it was his own volition, indicating a measure of political astuteness. It was also, in the end, one of the reasons he is accorded an important place in the history of the evolution of the Athenian *polis*.

According to Aristotle, Peisistratus won the support of the majority of the nobility and the people alike. Much as the Greek aristocracy of the time (in Athens and elsewhere) may have preferred oligarchy to rule by a man from within their ranks. They rarely carried this preference to a point of principle. So disputes between a dictator and an aristocratic individual or family were generated primarily by considerations of personal honour or status.[80] The murder of Hipparchus (younger son of Peisistratus and brother of the then reigning dictator, Hippias) in 514 B.C. was motivated by jealousy in a homosexual love affair rather than political considerations. That killing led to the hardening of the

[80] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.284

dictatorship into a cruel despotism, a reason that set off the events leading to her overthrow with Sparta as ally.

The role of Peisistratus in the democratisation of Athens was unequivocal and paradoxical. By his very existence as dictator, he breached the rule by law. Though his motives and techniques were very different from Solon's, it was he who executed the blueprint sketched out by Solon for Athens. He refused to play the game of the "well-sired" (his own peers) against the peasantry and the dispossessed. Being a dictator, he could accomplish what Solon could not. Thus it was under his regime that the peasantry finally obtained a reasonably secure and independent position on the land, with financial assistance from the state when required. Also, during his reign *stasis* was abated and the political monopoly of the "well-sired" families broken. Even with him as dictator, his achievements could not be undone, for the period was also one of peace and growing prosperity for Athens.

Nobles still continued to hold the leading civil and military offices and involved themselves in foreign relations. The circumstances and the psychology though were radically altered. Increasingly, they had become accustomed to functioning within a constitutional framework, and were now compelled to act as servants of the state and instruments of the law, rather than as arbitrary wielders of power with uncurbed license for factional activities. At the same time, the common people were now genuinely free men, and the difference between the noble and the commoner became reduced to a workable scale and proportion.

When Hippias was overthrown in 510 B.C., one wing of the aristocracy sought to return to "the good old days" of aristocratic oligarchy. The group was led by Isagoras and supported by the Spartans. They were defeated in a two-year civil war after which Cleisthenes remodeled the constitution and laid the structural foundation of Athenian democracy.[81] In this, he was much aided by a "national" spirit to which the dictators had contributed actively and concretely. Signs of this "national" spirit were to be seen in the temple-building of the dictators, in their promotion of major cults and community festivals such as the Panathenaic festival and the Greater Dionysiac festival, at which there was an annual drama competition. Furthermore, the great patronage gave to art, literature, and music. The impact of these cultural factors cannot be overlooked; and it is in no way lessened by acknowledging that the dictators' interest was on the economy.

Athens was still a largely agrarian community and the prime test of economic stability was productivity in the countryside. Peisistratus supported needy farmers with loans on easy terms. It was in his time that the class of owners of small and medium-sized farms became entrenched. This process was more aided by the fact that there was at the same time a considerable growth in the urban sector of the economy, providing an outlet for landless and marginal peasants.[82] The great attention given by

[81] Kurt A. Raaflaub et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece.* PP.103 – 104.

[82] *Ibid.* P.76.

Peisistratus to public buildings and festivals was in itself a factor in the growth of the urban sector of the economy. So too was the remarkable upsurge in Athenian manufacture of fine painted pottery. About the middle of the 6th century B.C., pottery rapidly acquired a virtual monopoly among Greek exports to other Greecian cities as the western settlement (*apoikiai*), and to the Etruscans of Italy. Athens' coinage is yet another sign of this growth: Athenian silver "owls",[83] the one genuinely international Greek currency began to be minted in the era of the dictatorship. The same period saw a tendency for accelerated migration of Greeks living in other cities to Athens, as they saw new prospects e open up for trade and manufacture, and as the city blossomed into a Pan-Hellenic cultural centre under the supervision of her dictators.[84]

The historical role of the dictators was just as important as that of Solon in moving Athens on the road to democracy. If Solon metaphorically "stood covering both groups with a strong shield", it was Peisistratus and his son Hippias who had the necessary power to do this in a literal sense. Solon's leadership was followed by a renewal of civil strife; while Hippias' by a wholly new democratic state.

Pan-Hellenic Sentiments

The very names "Hellenes" and "Hellas" subsume a certain degree of sentiment and culture common to all Greeks,

[83] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. Pp. 192 - 193

[84] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 218

despite the persistent political fragmentation of ancient Greece. "Hellas" as we have already seen, was a concept comparable with "third world" or "the west". It bore an important contrast with "the barbarian world", that is to say the world of all non-Greeks. In the last resort, those people were Greeks who felt themselves to be Greeks and whose claim was accepted widely enough by Greeks. The Greeks recognised mainly the common bond of language and "customs" – what we would call "culture". The language had a number of different dialects, but the speaker of one dialect was readily intelligible to the speaker of all other dialects, and so, language was an effective criterion to distinguish Greeks from "barbarians".[85]

Summary

Athenian educational system differed from Sparta's. Though Athenians were also concerned about the decorous behaviour of their sons, the sons were given freedom to develop freely. The state regulated education in Sparta but in Athens individuals were responsible for their son's education.

Another strong, common bond was religion as reflected in the pantheon of Greek gods. The great family of Olympian deities had Zeus at the head.[86] Homer treated them as poisons, but distinguished them from mankind using their

[85] Finley, M.I, (1965), *The World of Odysseus*. P. 3

[86] Lloyd-Jones, H. (1967). *The Greek world*. P.572

immortality and extensive power. Many ordinary men, poets and artists continued to see the gods as poisonous, despite protests from philosophers like Xenophanes and Plato. But the gods were also regarded as great custodians. Zeus controlled the sky, Poseidon the sea, Artemis was the "mistress of beasts", and so for each. The cults of Demeter and Persephone were part of rituals concerned with the fertility of the earth. Other deities were patrons of various human activities. For instance, Athena and Hephaestus, were patrons of the arts and crafts of civilisation. All these were Pan-Hellenic deities. However, a particular *polis* might appropriate one of them as its special patron. Athens, for example, claimed Athena. All Greeks recognised and honoured the whole pantheon, though each *polis* worshipped the gods of this pantheon as its own private affair. There was no equivalent of a "mother church" or "national priesthood", and no central authority on ritual, let alone "ancestral gods"; they thought primarily of the temples and altars in their own *polis*.[87]

[87] Powell, A. (Ed.), (1997), *The Greek World*. Pp. 494 - 496

Fig. 5: Procession_of_Twelve_Gods_and_Goddesses
Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/3a/Greek_-procession_of_Twelve_Gods_and_Goddesses_-_Walters_2340.jpg/400px-Greek

But there was considerable community of feeling. When Greeks spoke of "customs" they included much that could be classified as religious practice and social habits. Though details differed from *polis* to *polis*, they were broadly Pan-Hellenic and the criterion by which Greeks could be distinguished from "barbarians". This community of sentiments found its clearest expression in great Pan-Hellenic gatherings, like that which took place every fourth year at Olympia in the western Peloponnese, where the assembled Greeks, from all parts of Hellas, honoured Zeus, the patron of the festival, with elaborate athletic and musical contests, under the shelter of one of those sacred truces which intermittently interrupted inter-*polis* warfare. All on-going inter-Greek wars were automatically suspended by these sacred truces for the duration of the Olympic Games.[88]

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[88] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.266

The Olympic festival, founded (according to Greek tradition) in 776 B.C., was genuinely Pan-Hellenic. Admission was proof of an individual's acceptance as a Greek, since non-Greeks (barbarians) were not admitted, and the heralds who went around announcing the sacred truce contingent upon the festival – the truce that would last throughout the Games – went only to accepted Greek communities. Second in importance to the Olympics were the Pythian Games held at Delphi. But there were several similar festivals of more or less widespread fame.[89]

These festivals gave regular material expression to the Greek feeling of cultural unity. Greeks from all over "Hellas" came to participate or simply watch the various competitions in the Olympic and Pythian Games. The participation was not as extensive as the Isthmian and Nemean Games both held at centres near Corinth.[90] Similarly, they traveled great distances to consult the oracle at Delphi (another paramount Pan-Hellenic institution), and to a lesser extent, the oracle at Dodona in Epirus. So within these spheres, within the poetry, the drama, the architecture, the sculpture, and the athletics associated with their society, what emerged was a genuine Pan-Hellenism in the Archaic period, one that was manifest only in these spheres. Not even religion could break down the *polis*-particularism of the Greeks and the remarkable indifference

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[89] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.p. 83 - 92; Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 258;

[90] *Ibid*, 73

and even hostility among one another, which went hand in hand.[91]

Summary of Chapter

Extensively, we focused on the politics, education, trade and commerce and the belligerent dispositions in the Archaic period as mirrored chiefly in most prominent Grecian societies or poleis of the time- Sparta and Athens. Both poleis differed in their stance on war and survivalism. For Sparta survival was war itself and family ties meaninglesss except for sustaining existence through procreation. The healthy male child therefore belonged to the state which was responsible for the stringent education in the art of survivalism. Athens stood in stark contrast. Pragmatism was their watchword that was brought to bear if warfare became necessary. Thus, education was left under the purview of the family, strengthening the society from the homestead. Leaders with foresight paved way for what is today widely known and practiced as democracy.The interventions by the rhetoric prowess of these men eventually paved the way for the classical period, our focus in the last chapter.

[91] *Ibid*

Chapter 3

The Classical Polis

Preview of Chapter

This third and last chapter dwells on the completion of the transformation of the ancient Greek society in the era called the Classical Period, an era well known for compromises between the ruling and the ruled. Many of such compromises reached that allowed for more democratic governance in Athens but somehow led to the implosion of the once invincible Sparta are presented in the course of this final chapter.

Etymologically, the English word "political" comes from the Greek word *polis,* which, in its classical sense, means "a self-governing state". However, because the *polis* was always small in area and population, it became customary to render the term "city-state". Even the biggest of them (e.g. Athens) was a very small state compared to modern standards. But the term "city-state" gives a wrong connotation on two fronts. It overlooks the rural population who were the majority of the citizen-body, and suggests that the city ruled the rural areas. Both assumptions are inaccurate. The fact is that Athens, to the extent and quality of its urbanisation, stood at one end of the Greek spectrum together with a

relatively small number of other states. At the other end were many others that were not cities at all, even when civic centres were present.

The small scale of the Greek states is best indicated by estimated population figures. In 431 B.C., when the Athenian population was at its peak, the total, including men, women and children, free and slave, was about 250,000 or perhaps 275,000. With the possible exception of Syracuse in Sicily, no other Greek *polis* ever approached that figure until the era of the Roman Empire. Corinth had about 90,000; Thebes, Argos, Corcyra and Acragas each had between 40,000 to 60,000; and the rest tailed off, mostly to as low as 5,000 or less. Space was equally compact, with the exception being those which expanded by annexing neighbouring territories (Sparta, Syracuse, and Acragas) and of Athens.

The Greeks themselves had no hesitation in calling Sparta or Syracuse a *polis*. Nor did they refrain from using the term to refer to those backward regions in which political organisation and the civilisation itself were still so rudimentary. Admittedly, they were more like that described in Homer's *Iliad* than like those counterpart states which as Greek historian Thucydides notes incuded "the Ozolian Locrians and the Aetolians and the Acarnanians and others in that part of the mainland". Of course the word *polis* did not distinguish the structure of government; it implied nothing about democracy or oligarchy or even dictatorship. It meant just an independent Greek community, a political

organism, or the "true political community". Compactness was seen as a virtue, however. Thus, Aristotle held that "a state composed of too many people can not be a true *polis* because it can hardly have a true constitution. Who can be the general of a population so excessively bloated? And who can be herald, except Stentor for the amazingly loud-voiced herald of Homer,[92] whose name is proverbial in the word stentorian?". The *polis* was not simply a place; but a people acting in unison to be able to assemble and deal with common problems squarely. That was a necessary condition, though not the only one for self-government.

Ideally, self-sufficiency or economic self-sufficiency was another condition for genuine independence. But it was admitted that this could rarely be achieved, if ever, because material resources were not evenly distributed. One of such material was iron. Within the limits imposed by nature, much could be accomplished towards ensuring equitable distribution of materials. But just how much could be done? That depended partly on size. Again, the polis must not be so small that it lacked the manpower to carry on the various activities of a civilised existence, including the requirements of defence. Given adequate numbers, the problem was one of proper rules of conduct and proper organisation of social life. And there the agreement stopped. Beyond that, disagreement began. The Athenian and the Spartan

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[92] Homer, *the Iliad.* Book V.

responses were radically different. Even within a given *polis*, there was usually no single answer either. This is what led to the long complicated debate that went on in Athens as an example.

In the middle of the 5th century B.C., the Athenians adopted a law restricting citizenship to the legitimate children of marriages in which both parents were themselves of citizen stock.[93] Likely because it was deemed extreme, it was neither rigidly enforced for very long nor frequently replicated in other *poleis*. The thinking behind it was fairly typical though. Only two or three generations earlier, Greek aristocrats had often arranged marriages for their children outside their own communities, sometimes even with families of "barbarian" chiefs. Pericles, the Athenian statesman responsible for the new law, was himself a descendant of such an external marriage. So was his rival, Cimon. Now all such marriages were illegal and their offspring bastards.[94] The citizenship law reflected one line of argument in the debate on the nature of the *polis*, and of the definition of "citizenship". Today, the word "citizen" does not even carry the full weight implicit in being a member of a *polis* community. If one were not born into such a community, it was nearly impossible to get in at all. There was no routine naturalisation procedure. Even in Athens where immigrants from other Greek cities were welcomed

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[93] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997), *The Greek World*. P.227

[94] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. P.122

and given considerable freedom and opportunities, and were accepted socially, this did not hold sway. Only by formal action of the sovereign assembly could an outsider become a citizen of Athens, and very special considerations were necessary before the assembly could be persuaded. Being born in Athens, serving with her armies or behaving decently and loyally were not enough to qualify one for citizenship, if one's parents were not citizens. Xenophobic states were even more insular. Being less insular in this respect was seen as a sign of some deficiency.

In the more urban and more cosmopolitan *poleis*, therefore, a minority constituted the community proper. The majority which included the non-citizens or "foreigners" were avoided at best, except for the "barbarians", whom the permanent residents called *metics*.[95] A more numerous class that emerged after the 6th century B.C. were the slave, consisting of all the women. Whatever their rights – and that was entirely in the power of the state – these three groups suffered various disabilities as compared with the male citizens. At the same time, they were fully subject to the authority of the state in which they resided. In this last respect, their position was no different from that of the male citizens for in principle, the power of the *polis* was absolute. It was the source of all rights and obligations; her authority reached into every sphere of human endeavour without exception. There were things a Greek state customarily did

[95] The metrics were a large and economically important group in classical Athens; they provided revenue in the form of direct taxation. See: Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* P.36.

not do. It did not provide higher education or control interest rates. Even at this, the right to interfere was not in question; it merely chose not to.

If the *polis* had such limitless authority, in what sense were its citizens free men, as they believed themselves to be? Freedom in this sense was not equated with anarchy, but with an ordered existence within the community governed by an established code respected by all. That was what they fought to preserve throughout much of the Archaic period as dissidents arose. First, the dissidents were against the traditional privilege and monopoly of power possessed by the nobility, and later the unchecked power of the dictators. The fact that the community (*polis*) was the sole source of law was a guarantee of freedom, an undisputed fact. Translating that principle into practice was a different matter entirely. This brought about in the classical Greek society a difficulty which has persisted in political theory ever since. How free was the community to alter its established laws? Could the laws be changed at will, that would have meant that any faction or group could hold a community position in the state at a given moment. Would that not have been tantamount to anarchy? Would that not have amounted to undermining the very stability and certainty which were implicit in the doctrine that the "law is king"[96], a recurring cliche of the Greeks?

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[96] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997), *The Greek World*. P.524

In reality, the answer in each instance depended on the interest of the respective protagonists, one which often triggered yet another question: Whose law? The emergence of the common people as a political force in many *poleis* was witnessed in the sixth century B.C. as against their demand for a full share in government; oligarchs raised the defence of the "sanctity of the law", a code which, did not recognise every citizen's right to a fair trial, to a minor share in government. Perhaps this restriction extended to sharing in the ballot system and other new and important features of social organisation. The high civil and military offices, and policy-making was the preserve of men of birth and wealth. But now, *eunomia* (the well-ordered state ruled by law), which had once been a revolutionary slogan, stood for the *status quo*. The less privileged replied with *isonomia*[97] (equality of political rights). Since these had numeric superiority, *isonomia* led to *demokratia* (democracy), and to the argument that it is the "people's law" that is king. So, in the Greek *polis* the most serious divisions were caused by the issue of who should rule, "the few"? or "the many"? And always, the answer was complicated by external affairs, by war, and by hegemonies or imperial ambitions.

External Danger

Because of their geographical situation, the mainland Greeks were for a long time free from direct foreign pressure of

[97] *Isonomia* means "equality before the law", and it was a slogan of the democrats in the social conflicts of the Peloponnesian War. Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.84

attack. Not so, however, with the settlements to the east and west. Apart from frequent troubles with less advanced people like the Scythians to the north, of the Thracians to the west of the Black sea, there was a more serious matter of the powerful and advanced non-Greek empires. In Asia Minor, the Greek cities came under the suzerainty of the Lydians (under King Croesus) in the 6th century B.C. Then the rise of the aggressive empire of Persia and its rapid conquest of the Near East including the Lydians and the Greek cities of the Asia Minor posed a serious threat to Carthage. Sparta at this time was clearly the most powerful single state in Greece and the head of the largest and most coherent alliance, the so-called "Peloponnesian League". It is uncertain how constantly the leaders of Sparta kept the Persian menace in mind, but the Greek states under immediate Persian threat always appealed for Spartan help, though this help was seldom forthcoming. Conversely, Greek states at loggerheads with Sparta tended to seek Persian help.

Persian rule of the Greek cities of Asia Minor meant payment of tributes, loss of independence, and subjection to passivity in foreign affairs; but the cities retained their economic and cultural freedom. Where Persia impinged most on their internal life was in her backing of dictators, an action that ultimately led to revolt in 499 B.C. The Greek cities that revolted immediately asked the mainland Greeks for help. Unfortunately, they received none except for twenty ships from Athens and five more from Eretria. Despite the poor support, it took Persia the better part of a decade to

quell the uprising and regain complete control of the vassal territory. She followed up her success with two massive invasions of mainland Greece, the first in 490 B.C. and the second in 480 B.C.[98]

Many Greek communities followed up their refusal to help the Asiatic Greeks by surrendering in fright to the Persian invaders. Thus, they earned the contemptuous appellation of "*Medizers*" afterwards. Although Sparta was backed by the Peloponnesian League, and had the most powerful army on the side of the Greek partly because of internal difficulties and partly because of strategic miscalculation(the decision to locate her base of resistance in the Peloponnese) the Spartan contribution to the defence of Greece was in the beginning not as effective as expected. The Athenians beat off the first attack at Marathon in 490 B.C. before the arrival of Spartan support.[99] In the second Persian invasion, the Spartans showed what they could do when tested, in two decisive battles at Salamis. The Athenians, persuaded by Themistocles, their leading statesman, hurriedly enlarged their navy, withdrew from their city when the Persians came, allowing it to be. Then, with their allies, they smashed the invaders in a great sea-battle. When the external danger had been repelled, Athens and Sparta, two very different states in character and tradition, were left in a tussle for the leadership of Greece.

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[98] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks.* P.23.

[99] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.65

Athens

Athens lay at the crossroads of Greece and was a busy centre of trade and manufacturing. Its chief agricultural product was olive oil, grown mainly for export. Its harbour town, Piraeus, was one of the greatest ports in the Mediterranean. In contrast, Sparta, the rival nation for the hegemony of Greece for more than a century after the Persian war, was secluded in the remote valley of the Eurotas. Eurotas was a self-sufficient agricultural state which used iron bars as its own currency. Athens was thronged with strangers, both visitors and permanent residents (metics). At Sparta, however, outsiders were unwelcome and were periodically expelled.[100] Athens had become a great naval power, especially since 483 B.C. under the influence of the outstanding leader, Themistocles. For Sparta, their strength lay in her hoplite infantry. The Athenians beautified their city with splendid temples and superb statues.[101] But Sparta looked like an overgrown village. Athens produced great drama as the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and the comedies of Aristophanes[102] and was the home of the great historian Thucydides and of philosophers like Plato. Sparta boasted no such art, no literature, and

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[100] The Spartans were notoriously xenophobic and actively discouraged foreigners from residing in their territory even on a short-term basis. See: Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.114.

[101] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* P. 53.

[102] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.8

played no part in the intellectual life of Greece. Her racist system made her dissipate her energies on other things. While Sparta clung stubbornly to an archaic political and social system, and was intensely conservative, Athens was progressive, burgeoning with new ideas and thus, the inventor of democracy.

Although both Solon and Peisistratus in their different ways established some of the groundwork of the development of Athenian democracy by weakening the archaic system which favoured the political monopoly by the "well-sired" families, the idea of democracy was not in their minds. The change, when it came, was abrupt. It followed the toppling of the dictator Hippias in 510 B.C. albeit with help from Sparta and a two year civil war which ensued. The architect of the new type of government was Cleisthenes, a member of a notable "well-sired" family. Cleisthenes was no theorist, and he seemed to have become a democrat almost by accident, turning to the common people when he urgently needed their support in the confused struggle to fill the vacuum left by the deposed dictator. His recourse was novel. Having committed himself to a major innovation, he along with his advisers created the institutions which he thought was required to meet the new objective. While he retained what he could of the old, he did not hesitate to demolish and make bold and radical inventions. His reforms, in 507 B.C., diminished still further the area in which aristocratic influence might be effective.

The most conspicuous reform was the abolition of the four Attic tribes based on kinship, and its replacement with ten so-called "tribes" which were mere political "constituencies" based entirely on district of residence.[103] Under the new constitution, each of these districts annually selected by lot fifty male citizens over the age of 30 as members of the council. Membership was thereby increased from the Solonic 400 to 500, and all male citizens over 30 were now admissible. In effect, aristocratic patronage ceased to be the main principle of social and political organisation. Notwithstanding, much prestige was still attached to the nobility of birth. Election by lot translated equality of opportunity from an ideal to a reality. Nevertheless, poor men who had to work for a living could not afford to miss work in order to serve on the council or sit in the jury-courts. It later took the intervention of two other statesmen to bring the democratic constitution to its final development. Sometime in the 460s B.C., the statesmen, Ephialtes and Pericles, introduced the cash and carry mode of getting an office. This permitted the poor man to sit on the council and jury-courts or to hold office when the lot fell upon him. It was now one of the positive peculiarities of Athens that poverty was no bar to public service.

The number of men serving on the Assembly, the council, the jury-courts and the large number of rotating offices in this new system ran into several thousands. So

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[103] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.284.

began a direct participation in business of government widely shared among the citizen-body and an uncommon degree of direct political experience cutting right across the class structure.[104] The distribution was not an even one still. In particular, the rural population was in practice under-represented in ordinary circumstances because of their distance from the *polis*-centre and the attendant challenges of long travels. Given this situation, of the men who actually gave the leadership and formulated policy at the top, very few are known to have come from the lower classes. Such was the prestige that the Athenian people continued to attach to birth and education. This though did not negate the fact that the choice of leaders was now in every sense the people's choice.

The *demos* in the sense of "the people as a whole", or the citizen-body was sovereign. Aptly then, the system was called *demokratia* a reference to "power in the hands of the people" (democracy). The citizen-body acted through its Assembly. Decrees were passed in the official language, "by the *demos*", and not "by the *ecclesia*" the Greek word for times in every 36-day period. Every male citizen who had turned eighteen (that is to say, a total of about 40,000 men) was eligible to attend whenever they chose, except for a few who lose their civic rights for one offence or another. Obviously, only a small fraction of the 40,000 came; but those who were present at any single meeting were the

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[104] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.85

demos on that occasion, and their decision was recognised as law binding on the whole people. Then, by a curious extension of this principle, it was held that the jury-courts, selected by lot from a panel of 6,000 volunteers from among the above-mentioned 40,000 men, were also equal to the whole *demos* in matters which fell within their competence.[105]

Direct participation was the key to Athenian democracy. There was neither representation nor a civil service or bureaucracy in any significant sense.[106] In the sovereign Assembly, where authority was essentially total, every male citizen over eighteen had (in addition to the right to attend whenever he pleased) the right to enter the debate, propose amendments and vote on the proposals. Such proposals were concerning war and peace, taxation, cult regulation, army levies, warfare, public works, treaties and diplomatic negotiations, and anything else, major or minor, which required a governmental decision. Much of the preparatory work for these meeting was done by the *Boule*, (the council of 500 chosen by lot for one year, fifty from each of the ten "tribes" or districts). Again, every one of the 40,000 or so male over eighteen was now eligible for the *Boule*, except that no one could be a member more than twice (two separate non-consecutive years) in his life time. Then there was a large number of officials, of varying importance, most of them also selected by lot for one year. The few exceptions to this rule included the ten generals (*strategoi*) limit, and

[105] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks.* Pp.106 - 107
[106] *Ibid,* P.107

temporary *ad hoc* commission for diplomatic negotiation (embassies) and the like. Nor was there any hierarchy among the offices. Regardless of the significance or insignificance of any post, every holder was responsible directly and solely to the *demos* itself, in the *Boule* or the Assembly (*Ecclesia*) or the courts, and not to a superior office-holder.

Amateurism was implicit in the Athenian definition of democracy. Every citizen was considered qualified to share in government by virtue of his standing as a male citizen over the age of eighteen. In practice, his chances of playing a part were much intensified not only by the wide use of lottery as the mechanism of selection, but also by compulsory rotation in the council (*Boule*) and most offices. Though the pay was sufficient to compensate a man for the wages he might have lost to a craftsman or labourer, it was not higher than that. Hence, no one could count on office-holding as a regular livelihood, or even as his best means of livelihood. At the same time, a large *polis* like Athens, with its (by Greek standards) complex fiscal, naval and diplomatic affairs, absolutely needed full-time politicians to guide and co-ordinate the work of more or less temporary amateur participants. And it necessarily found them among the men of wealth who alone had the required leisure to devote themselves wholly to public affairs.

Down to the 430s B.C., these men were drawn entirely from the old "well-sired" families and other large-landowning families. Then "new-men" broke their monopoly. These include men like Cleon, Cleophon and Anytus whose leisure was provided by slave craftsmen working in their

"industrial" establishment. Thereafter, the balance of leadership in democratic Athens perhaps leaned more on the side of these "captains of industry", punctuated occasionally by really poor men who worked their way to the top, not without suspicion that monetary corruption played some part in their rise.

It became increasingly common to refer to these "leaders" as orators, almost as a technical term and not just as a description of their particular abilities in that direction. Because the Assembly alone made policy and held control in conjunction with the courts, not only over the affairs of state but also over all officials, military or civil, leadership of the state lay in the Assembly. It met in the open, on a hill near the Acropolis called the Pnyx, and thousands gathered there to debate and decide. The Assembly, in a word, was a mass-meeting; and to address it required, in the strictest sense, the power of oratory since it has no fixed composition and attandance was not based on being chosen. It had no political parties or "Government" and "opposition", nor any other principle of organisation.[107] The president for the day was chosen by lot from the members of the council on the usual scheme rotation; motions were made, argued and amended, and the votes were taken, all in a single sitting in most cases. Any one who sought to guide the Assembly in its policy-making had to appear on the pnyx and present his reasons. Neither the holding of office nor a seat on the council was a substitute. A man was a leader so long - and

[107] Osborne, R. (2000), *Classical Greece 500–323 B.C.* p. 49.

only so long, as the Assembly accepted his programme in preference to that of his opponents.

A Critical View of the Athenian Democracy

Ancient and modern critics of the Athenian democratic system have not been sparing in their condemnation. The first complaint is that the "new men" who appeared as leaders after the 430s B.C. (after the most distinguished of all the democratic leaders, Pericles) were demagogues, pandering to the *demos* in the Assembly and the courts at the expense of the higher interests of the state. For such critics, *demos* means "the common people", the lower classes", with the pejorative overtones of all reactionaries or right-thinking men, as they would call themselves, going as far back as the world of Homer. Interestingly, the democrat's reply, then and beyond, was that *demos* meant the "whole citizen body of adult males". On the wider issue of demagogy, no doubt not all the men who achieved political eminence in Athens were selfless altruists; and mass-meetings on the scale of those on the Pnyx invited emotional and even inflammatory speech-making. But dishonest politicians and excessive rhetoric were not a new phenomenon. They were also common before that period. Besides, there is enough evidence to suggest that the overall record and achievement of the assembly remained creditable to the end.

It is a fact that the Athenian state often followed a consistent line for long periods, and in each instance, identified with the policy of one individual or of one small

group. For all their experience, most citizens were unable to cope with the intricacies of finance or foreign affairs and tended, quite rightly, to give their support to those full-time politicians whom they trusted and on whom they could always exercise a check. Hence, Pericles in the 5th century and Demosthenes in the late 4th century were not the only ones permitted to develop long-term policies. Less famous men like Thrasybulus or Eubulus in the intervening years also did.

It is also a fact that Athens never ran short of men of the highest ability who were willing to devote themselves to politics, though the rewards were largely honorific and the personal risks were considerable. Political conflicts among these men was often sharp, and the issues were serious and not just shadow-boxing for prestige or personal status. The conduct of war, military strategy, public finance, and hegemonies were matters worthy of passionate debate and they were indeed, passionately debated. Aspirants to leadership positions could not do otherwise, and in a system lacking in the presence of mediating institutions as political parties and state bureaucracy, such men lived under constant tension. It is not surprising that they often reacted violently, seizing the occasion to crush opponents; or that the *demos* was sometimes impatient with what it saw as failure. So, leaders were from time to time fined in the courts, or "ostracised" (that is, sent into exile for ten years without loss of property or social disgrace), or sent into ordinary

exile on criminal charges; and a few even met death judicially or by assassination.[108]

On the behaviour of the sovereign assembly, there were undoubtedly, some instances of repression, sycophancy, irrationality and outright brutality in the nearly two centuries of the history of Athenian democracy. But these instances were few, and Athens in this period was remarkably free of the universal Grecian malady of sedition and civil war (*stasis*). Twice, there were oligarchic coups, in 411 and 404 B.C. respectively. These were short-lived though with the first occurring because of the severe stress of a war that Athens was losing, and the second because of the brief success enjoyed as a result of the backing of a victorious Spartan army. What is notable here is that several supporters of the oligarchic coup of 404 B.C. had been involved in the earlier coup of 411 B.C., and had been left in peace to carry out sedition the second time. Deservedly then, they were labelled using the derogatory epithet "thirty Tyrants". On this issue, even so staunch a supporter of civil liberties as John Stuart Mill thought that the Athenian *demos* were perhaps too good-natured:

> *The Athenian "many", of whose democratic irritability and suspicion we hear so much, are rather to be accused of too easy, good-natured and confidence, when we reflect that they had living in the midst of them the very men who, on the first show of an opportunity,*

[108] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.60

were ready to compass the subversion of the democracy.[109]

By the middle of the 5th century B.C., the "few" (*hoi oligoi*) and the "many" (*hoi polloi*) among the Athenian citizens had established a satisfactory work balance – had achieved a system that was virtually *stasis*-proof. For the "many", the state provided both significant material benefits and a very considerable share in government. For the "few", ironically, a fairly numerous class, it provided the honours and satisfactions that went with political and military leadership. Political success and economic prosperity served as unifying factors, making it possible to meet the enormous costs of office and of the navy, without which the participation (and even the loyalty) of thousands of the poorest citizens would have been uncertain at best. The system was sustained by an active sense of civic pride, civic responsibility and close personal identification with *polis*. So, the wealthy shouldered a heavy burden of financial charges and the main military burden, while the *demos* accepted leadership from their ranks.[110]

One of the leading slogans of democracy was freedom: freedom of speech, thought and action. It entailed the right of the individual to think, say and do what he liked within the limits of the law. Plato thus noted that "the city is full of liberty and free speech, and everyone in it is allowed to do

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[109] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. Pp. 77 – 78.

[110] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. Pp. 311 - 312

what he likes. This being allowed, it obviously follows that each man can plan his own life as he pleases". But Plato and other critics of the system regarded this situation as deplorable, arguing that it resulted in the citizens being all different instead of being more uniform as was the case with the Spartiates. Against them, democrats like Pericles proudly boasted: "We live as free citizens not only in our public life but in our attitude to one another in the affairs of daily life: we are not angry at our neighbour if he behaves as he pleases; we do not cast sour looks at him, which if they do no harm, cause pain". So, in democratic Athens, a playwright like Aristophanes could not only produce comedies which ridiculed the basic institutions of the state, but was also awarded prizes for so doing. Philosophers and political theorists like Plato, Isocrates and Aristotle could similarly publish their radical attacks on the whole democratic ideal, and live unmolested. This was very different from Sparta where as Demosthenes puts it, "one is not allowed to praise the Athenian system or that of any other state; far from it. You have to praise what conforms to Spartan institutions".

The second great slogan of democracy was equality: equal right for all citizens before the law, and for male adult citizens an equal voice in deciding public issues and an equal share in the actual government of the state. Those who objected to this argued that government was a skilled art which should be restricted to experts – an elite of wise men holding responsible power. Arguments of this kind made much of the "absurdity" of the system of selection by lot, "when no one will be willing to employ a pilot or a carpenter

or a flute-player selected by lot, though the mistakes made by these categories of men cause far less harm than mistakes in public policy".[111]

Democrats, however, were certain that the merits of the system outweighed its defects. In the first place, they had a certain faith in the collective wisdom of the masses. As Aristotle says:

> *A large number of men who are not individually good can nevertheless be better than the few best when they combine – not individually, but as a whole, just as subscription dinners can be better than those provided at the expense of one person. For each of the numbers has a bit of virtue and judgement; and, by combining, the mass as it were becomes one man with many hands and feet and senses.*

Democrats further argued that in most political questions, the ordinary citizen was the best judge of issues which affected his own welfare. On this point, Aristotle says:

> *About some things, it is not the maker who is the best or only judge. For instance, it is not the builder who can judge a house, the occupant will be better; and similarly a steersman is a better judge of a rudder than*

[111] Kurt A. R et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece.* P.17

a carpenter, and the guest a better critic of a meal than the cook.

Admittedly, some argued about the democrat that concerning technical questions, the expert knew best; but most political issues depended on moral considerations; and on these, everyone was equally qualified to judge, since nature had implanted in all men a sense of decency and fair play. The *demos* did in fact listen to expert advice on technical questions, even booing and shouting down speakers, however eloquent, who tried to interrupt the expert but did not know their facts. On general issues, however, the *demos* listened to any speaker, noble or simple, rich or poor, because they thought that they were all qualified and entitled to state their views. The principle of equality did not mean non-recognition of merit. According to Thucydides, Pericles observed that "when a man is distinguished in any way, he is more highly honoured in public life, not as a matter of privilege, but in recognition of merit. On the other hand, anyone who can benefit the city is not debarred by poverty or by the obscurity of his position".

By and large, the democratic system also maintained social justice. Greek political theorists were inclined to argue that if democracy meant the rule of the majority, it was the poor who actually exploited the rich and not vice versa since in each *polis*, the poor were the majority and the rich the minority. Therefore, democracy, was in fact, the rule of the poor over the rich. Aristotle even went so far as to suggest

that if one could find a *polis* in which the rich were in a majority and the poor a minority, and in which that majority ruled over the minority, it would still not be a democracy. That merely shows how far wealth rather than numbers had come to be associated in people's minds with oligarchy. The normal peace time expenditure of democratic Athens was covered by mining loyalties, customs dues, and other indirect taxes. A direct property tax was only raised occasionally for war expenses and the average annual rate of this tax was (in our opinion) absurdly low. It was equivalent to an income tax of 2½ kobo in the naira (back in 1980s). The richest citizens had to perform in rotation, certain financial obligations called liturgies. In a sense they were commissioned to produce tragedies and comedies at great festivals, pay the actors, the dancers and the singers, and provide the costumes and "props". They also served as captains of warships, maintaining these warships in sea-worthy conditions. But most rich Athenians seemed to have taken a pride in these public duties involving maintaining smart looking warships or producing a great play; many spent more than they were legally obliged to spend.

Modern critics have often reproached the Athenian system regarding the position of expatriate residents and Athenian women. As has already been noted, citizenship depended on descent, and the political community was conceived as an enlarged family-group. In such a situation, expatriates from other Greek *poleis* naturally did not share the full freedom and equality enjoyed by citizens. But they enjoyed full protection of the law and shared the burden of

taxation and military service on an equal basis with citizens. Their main disability was that they could not hold land or houses – they could rent them. But they felt no grievance at not being admitted to the family-group of Athenian citizens, and many of them were deeply attached to their adopted city, and assisted it in times of stress.

Summary

Women were marginalised in Greece. They had no participation in social and polical life, seen as the exclusive preserve of the men. They were restricted and tied to the oikos, with minimal contact with the outside world. Pericles attests to this in his famous speech at a funeral service: The greatest honour a woman can have is to be least spoken of in company of men, whether in praise or in criticism. The import is unequivocal- Athenian women had no right to be heard of or even discussed!

As for women, their exclusion and disabilities were culturally based. In particular, there was the notion that full rights were linked with the obligation of military service; and so, full rights were restricted to male citizens over the age of eighteen. Culturally based also was the institution of slavery, and all men of means, whether Athenian or expatriate (metics) owned slaves. Democratic social justice in its full force was by a cultural bias, adjudged as compatible with slavery. But opponents of the Athenian system still had this complaint:

> *At Athens slaves and aliens enjoy the utmost license. You are not allowed to beat them; a slave will not make way for you in the streets. I will tell you why. If it were the law that a slave or an alien or a freedman might be beaten by a citizen, one would often strike an Athenian in the erroneous belief that he was a slave; for the common people and the alien are no better dressed than slaves.*[112]

The democracy did more than provide a high level of administrative efficiency and social justice. It gave the citizens a rich cultural life. Athens prospered as did no other classical Greek state. The greatest of their boasts was that she was the "school of Hellas".[113] In two centuries, she produced an incredible succession of superb writers, artists, scientists and philosophers. The state itself created great public buildings and adorned them with sculptures. To date these structures are still counted among the world's masterpieces. Then there were the festivals of music and drama for which Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides (among others) wrote their tragedies, and Aristophanes and others their comedies.[114] Between the year 500 and 300 B.C., there were not many important figures in Greek cultural life who

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[112] *Ibid,* pp.154 -155

[113] Powell, A. (2001), Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C. p. 158.

[114] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P. 166

were not Athenians or persons associated with Athens for at least part of their career; and these included some of the most caustic critics of the Athenian system. The tolerance of that system allowed free range to speculation and discussion of new ideas. So, Athens not only produced great thinkers of her own, but attracted others from all parts of the world. No critic of the Athenian citizen, found much to admire in the state often held up as the ideal opposite of Athens, namely Sparta. He and those who thought like him conveniently forgot that in Sparta, they would never even have begun to think, let alone be permitted to teach freely as they did in Athens.[115]

Summary

Athenian girls were also at the receiving end of chauvinist system. Unlike their brothers, they were not privileged to attend school. Their education was informal as mothers taught chores as cooking, cleaning, weaving and caring for the oikos. Chauvinism was promoted in how the houses were modelled to have women living in separate quarters in the remotest and protected section of the house which did not have a link door to the men's rooms. All females were condemned to carry out their chores there.

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[115] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.125

Socio-Economic Life

About a third or slightly more of the citizens of Athens lived in the urban districts. The free non-citizens, barred by law from owning land, were concentrated in the city and the harbour town, Piraeus. So were many of the slaves. The purely demographic consequence was that the city of Athens and the Piraeus were each more populous than a majority of Greek states taken as a whole. This urban quality of Athenian life was of greatest importance, a necessary condition for the power and much of the glory of the state. Nevertheless, the tenacity of the attachment to the soil must not be overlooked as the urban dwellers included a considerable number whose economic interest in whole or in part, remained in the land. Three quarters of the citizen-families owned some landed property, although that was not always enough for a livelihood. It was the wealthier among these who resided in the city. The true rural dwellers, when they all had to be evacuated to the safety of the city at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war in 431 B.C, "were depressed, and they bore with bitterness having to leave their homes and hereditary shrines". (*Thucydides II.16.2*).

In the city were some hundreds of families of outstanding wealth. There were citizens living on the income from their estates and, occasionally, on investment in slaves. In the city also were non-citizens whose economic base was trade or manufacture or money-lending. Cimon, an opponent of Pericles and a member of one of the greatest of the old "well-sired" families possessed (according to Aristotle) "the fortune of a dictator", and he "supported many of his fellow-

demesmen, every one of whom was free to come daily and receive from him enough for sustenance. Besides, none of his estates was enclosed, so that "any one who wished could take from its fruits". Another wealthy noble, Nicias, was reported to have owned 1,000 slaves. The rich were free to devote themselves to politics or learning or just idle away their time. Nicias did not employ his 1,000 slaves directly, but hired them out on a *per-diem* rental to entrepreneurs holding concessions in the silver mines at Laurium.[116] Even those, like Cleon, who made use of their slaves in their own manufacturing establishments, were (or at least could be, if they wished) men of leisure; their businesses were managed in the same fashion as large landed estates- by slave managers and foremen. (Xenophon, *Poroi* 4.15–16) [117]

Summary

Most households had a slave or two. Slaves ran errands as fetching water from the public fountains, going to the market, grinding and baking the corn. They also cleaned, spun, weaved and dyed wool for the clothes of the entire household under the supervision of the woman of the house. She automatically inherited those duties and chores in the event that the household had no slave. [118]

[116] Powell, A. (2001), Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C..p. 286.

[117] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997) *The Greek World*. P.31.

[118] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.146

The number of Athenian slaves has been estimated at 60,000 - 80,000. The heaviest concentrations were in the mines and in domestic service. The latter included thousands of unproductive men and women kept by men of means because it was the thing to do. In agriculture and manufacturing, the slaves were fewer in number, and they were outnumbered in these branches of the economy by the free peasants and the free independent craftsmen. Nevertheless, it was in these productive areas that the significance of slaves was perhaps the greatest, because they released from economic concerns (and for a land or leisure) the man who gave political leadership to the state and in large measure the intellectual leadership as well.[119] The overwhelming mass of Athenians, whether they owned a slave or two or not, were largely occupied with procuring a livelihood, and many never rose above the minimum standard. There were many poor families in the countryside, and probably even more in the urban areas. Yet Athens in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. remained free from the usual Greek troubles arising out of a depressed and often dispossessed peasantry; and even the poor often found time and the opportunity to participate in the pubic life of the community, both in government and in the rich festivities associated with the cults of the state. A third of the adult male citizens had sufficient means to be classed as hoplites.

Every adult male citizen and metic was liable to military service. The cavalry and the hoplites (the two wealthier

[119] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997) *The Greek World*. P.31.

sectors of the fighting force) had to provide and maintain their own equipment, and they received from the state nothing more than a *per diem* allowance while on duty. Most in the army were conscripted and thus not professional in any modern sense. In addition, it was a strictly upper and middle class institution. The navy, by contrast, was altogether different especially in organisation. Command of warships was distributed among the richer citizens who were also responsible for a considerable part of the operation costs, while the crew were paid professionals. Some 12,000 men were so engaged normally up to eight months in the year. For the urban poor, the navy was thus an important source of livelihood.

Sparta

It has been said that Sparta had two separate histories. One was based on internal exploits and the other on external exploits. After about 600 B.C., not a single Spartan citizen was known as participating in any cultural activity. Their famous "Laconic speech" (a proverbial term derived from the name of the original Spartan territory, Laconia) was really an indication of the fact that they had nothing to say and the final consequence of the peculiar way of life that they

had chosen to adopt for themselves.[120] Sparta's cultural senility was the inevitable result of her social and political structure (discussed in more detail in chapter 2). Yet Sparta appealed to many old-fashioned reactionary Greeks as the embodiment and champion of traditional ideals; and such admirers included quite a number of intelligent Athenians. The main explanation of this is perhaps the fact that Greeks, like most people, were impressed by power. Sparta remained for many centuries the great military power of Greece, with an army trained and disciplined as no other Greek army was, since most Greek armies were only levies of amateurs. [121]

The Spartans, moreover, had a reputation for courage, steadfastness and devotion to duty. They were never beaten in a straight fight until the battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C. when they were defeated by the Theban army. Besides, Sparta was for a long time characterised by political stability, which was

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[120] Martin, T.R. (2000, *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* P. 100). The Spartan way of life was strictly restricted to keep the Spartan army at tip-top strength; no individual had the luxury of choosing how to live. Boys lived at home until only their seventh year, when they were taken away to live in communal barracks with other males until they were thirty. They spent most of their time preparing young males for the hard life of a soldier in war, exercising, hunting, training with weapons, and being acculturated to Spartan values by listening to tales of bravery and heroism at common meals presided over by older men, for they were not permitted to speak at will. (Our word laconic, meaning "of few words," comes from the Greek name for Sparta's territory and the people who lived there.) . The standard of discipline was very harsh.

[121] *Ibid.* P.94

something exceptional in the Greek world.[122] In the mind of the foreign observers (especially if that observer also had oligarchic sympathies), this aspect weighed more heavily than the racism, repression and terrorism of the Spartan system, on the one hand, and the social injustice inherent in the fact that a tiny elite of Spartiates was supported by the labour of a resized population of serfs many times their number, on the other hand. Such men admired Sparta as a model of the closed society, and rejected the mode of the open society with its factional politics, its acceptance of the Demos as a political force, its frequent "lack of discipline" and its recognition of the dignity and claims of the individual. Aristotle however, saw the Spartan system as defective, arguing that the size and population of the Spartan state as a whole ought to have enabled it to have an army ten times the size of that which it recruited from tiny Spartiate citizen-body of Equals.

In Sparta, helot revolts (especially the Messenian helots) were always smoldering and occasionally burst out in full fledged rebellion. In 424 B.C., the Spartans, nervous at the

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[122] *Ibid.* p. 225. Spartan hopes of achieving lasting power in these decades of turmoil after the Peloponnesian War were dashed in 371 B.C, when a Theban army commanded by the Epaminondas defeated the Spartan army at Leuctra in Boeotia. The Spartans lost the battle when their cavalry was pushed back into their infantry ranks, disrupting the phalanx, leading to the killing of their king and commander, Cleombrotus. So many Spartan hoplites were killed and wounded, causing their army to finally retreat. Theban army then invaded the Spartan homeland in the Peloponnese

possibility of a helot uprising, invited helots to enlist in the army as volunteers. Two thousand volunteers were enrolled on the offer of freedom as a reward; they were never heard of again.[123] What kept the helots enslaved and prevented still more frequent rebellion was the growth of Sparta into an army camp, with a Spartiate citizen-body of professional soldiers bred from childhood for two qualities: military skill and absolute obedience, free from (and indeed barred from) all other vocational activities and interests; living a barrack life; always ready to take the field strength against any enemy, helot or outsider. Their needs were not met by the helots and *perioeci*; their training was provided by the state. Their obedience accrued from their education and by a set of law which tried to prevent economic inequality and any form of gainful pursuit among this elite citizen-body. The whole system was closed in against outside influence, whether person and goods or imports. No Greek state could match Sparta in its exclusiveness or its xenophobia.[124]

Ancient political theorists, conveniently forgetting or ignoring the defects of the Spartan system, often praised its governmental structure as a model of the "mixed constitution" which supposedly provided a balance between monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements. The two hereditary kings (army generals) and the council of Elders (*gerousia*) were part of the mixed governmental structure,

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[123] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 124

[124] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.114.

with 28 members being elected for life from among citizens over the age of sixty. The assembly which included all Spartiates could neither ignite action nor amend proposals submitted to it; it could only approve or voice them down and members showed little independence of judgment to avoid being on the negative side of rigid discipline and socio-political instability. Hence, the assembly was at best a passive one. Most powerful of all were the five ephors, elected annually from all the Spartiate citizens. They had a general supervisory position over the affairs of the state as well as important judicial functions.

Spartan discipline and military prowess (the Spartan army was a professional army in a world of citizen militias and mercenary bands) elevated the nation into a major power, far beyond what her size would otherwise have warranted. Her first and only unwavering concern was peace at home, in the Peloponnesian. This she never fully achieved, but came near to iachieving through the instrumentality of the Peloponnesian League as explained in Chapter 2. The league gave Sparta military assistance, and it was this help, together with troops levied from among *perioeci*, which built her strength in numerical terms to major proportions. Until the Persian wars of the early 5th century B.C., Sparta was undoubtedly the greatest Greek military force on land. But thereafter, the story is one of decline. Her xenophobic society was marked by a steadily decreasing population of Spartiates; continuous warfare after 431 B.C., put unbearable pressure on a system that was not designed for such. Lack of vision and mental inflexibility, whether in

politics or social matters, proved ruinous in time of military success.[125]

Hegemony, Wars and Ideological Conflicts

The Persian invaders of Greece in 480-479 B.C. may have been badly beaten, but they were far from being crushed. It was generally assumed that they would return for a third attempt at the conquest of Greece. Ordinary prudence, therefore, required combined anticipatory measures on the part of the Greeks. Especially since some of such measures had had to be taken primarily in the Aegean Sea and on the coast of Asia Minor rather than on the Greek mainland, it was natural that the leadership should be given to Athens, the state with the strongest naval power. A league of Greek states (*poleis* of the Aegean islands, and Asia Minor coast) was organised under the hegemony of Athens, with its administrative centre on the island of Delos. So evolved the epithet "Delian league". The league was planned on the system of contribution by individual member-states either in ships and sailors or in money. Within a decade or so, the league had cleared the Persia fleet from the Aegean Sea.[126]

As the danger from Persia passed (at least the immediate danger) the old desire for complete autonomy began to reassert itself. As the dominant league member land leader, Athens controlled the activities of the league,

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[125] *Ibid.*

[126] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.93

and this control inevitably involved some partial loss of *polis* autonomy among members for the duration of combined anti-Persian effort. But Athens refused to allow withdrawal of members from the league and forcibly put down attempts of member-states to withdraw, and also extended her control by interference in the internal affairs of member-states when it seemed necessary. Part of the problem was that the Greek world was now dominated by two super-powers - Sparta and Athens, and that those super-powers were also separated by political ideology. Athens was the beacon of the democratic idea while Sparta was of oligarchy and reactionary government. Each interpreted the support of its own type of system in other states as its own interest. At the same time, in each of the other *poleis,* the wealthy and the nobility tended to sympathise with Sparta, and the masses with Athens; the few versus the many, as the Greeks themselves put it.

Athens was able to benefit from their ideological warfare by extending her control over the state of Delian league, to the extent that all but three member-states, after 456 B.C., were contributing money ("contribute") to the league instead of ships and sailors. This made it possible for Athens to transfer the headquarters of the league from Delos to Athens, and to use the leagues' funds as she thought fit. Incidentally, the funds equalled the public revenue generated from internal sources within Athens itself.[127] The development may be seen as imperialistic as distinct from

[127] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.93

mere hegemony insofar as Athens maintained a tight control over the member-states without actually subjecting them to direct rule. Still, the masses in those states preferred things that way since Athenian over lordship guaranteed democracy. The transition to imperialism can be dated back to 454 B.C.[128]

For the next quarter – century, the Athenian "empire" was the most important single fact in Greek affairs, and the great Athenian statesman, Pericles became the dominant figure in Athenian public life. His policy was expansionist, though highly controlled and disciplined. He greatly strengthened the Athenian connection in Thrace and southern Russia, which had strategic significance and were especially important as the main sources of Athens' vital grain imports. Pericles also came to terms with Persia in 449 B.C. But Athenian relationships with Sparta, the other Greek super-power, were increasingly difficult. The two power blocks came into open conflict first in the 450s and then, in a major war from 431 to 404 B.C. (the Peloponnesian war).[129]

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[128] *Ibid*

[129] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.43

Summary

Pericles political career and achievements was pivotal in rise of Athens as the model democracy. As an Athenian statesman, orator, and general, he commanded and led Athens in the Peloponnesian War against rival state, Sparta. He also provided support for education and art, helping Athens to earn a reputation for being the centre of intellectual and artistic culture that period. His reign was so remarkable that the period came to be named as the 'Age of Pericles', a time when Athens was leader of the Delian League, the coalition of Greek city-states that was formed in 478 B.C. to fight the Persian War.

We present Thucydides historical account of the violent conflicts as well as the state of moral chaos below:

> *So revolutions broke out in city after city, and in places where the revolutions occurred late the knowledge of what had happened previously in other places caused still new extravagances of revolutionary zeal, expressed by an elaboration in the methods of seizing power and by unheard-of atrocities in revenge. To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party*

member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defense. Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect. To plot successfully was a sign of intelligence, but it was still cleverer to see that a plot was hatching. If one attempted to provide against having to do either, one was disrupting the unity of the party and acting out of fear of the opposition. In short, it was equally praiseworthy to get one's blow in first against someone who was going to do wrong, and to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all. Family relations were a weaker tie than party membership, since party members were more ready to go to any extreme for any reason whatever. These parties were not formed to enjoy the benefits of the established laws, but to acquire power by overthrowing the existing regime; and the members of these parties felt confidence in each other not because of any fellowship in a religious communion, but because they were partners in crime. If an opponent made

a reasonable speech, the party in power, so far from giving it a generous reception, took every precaution to see that it had no practical effect.

Revenge was more important than self-preservation. And if pacts of mutual security were made, they were entered into by the two parties only in order to meet some temporary difficulty, and remained in force only so long as there was no other weapon available. When the chance came, the one who first seized it boldly, catching his enemy off his guard, enjoyed a revenge that was all the sweeter from having been taken, not openly, but because of a breach of faith. It was safer that way, it was considered, and at the same time a victory won by treachery gave one a title for superior intelligence. And indeed most people are more ready to call villainy cleverness than simple-mindedness honesty. They are proud of the first quality and ashamed of the second.

Love of power, operating through greed and through personal ambition, was the cause of all these evils. To this must be added the violent fanaticism which came into play once the struggle had broken out. Leaders of parties in the cities had programs which appeared admirable—on one side political equality for the masses, on the other the safe and sound government of the aristocracy—but in professing to serve the public interest they

were seeking to win the prizes for themselves. In their struggles for ascendancy nothing was barred; terrible indeed were the actions to which they committed themselves, and in taking revenge they went farther still. Here they were deterred neither by the claims of justice nor by the interests of the state; their one standard was the pleasure of their own party at that particular moment, and so, either by means of condemning their enemies on an illegal vote or by violently usurping power over them, they were always ready to satisfy the hatreds of the hour. Thus neither side had any use for conscientious motives; more interest was shown in those who could produce attractive arguments to justify some disgraceful action. As for the citizens who held moderate views, they were destroyed by both the extreme parties, either for not taking part in the struggle or in envy at the possibility that they might survive.

As the result of these revolutions, there was a general deterioration of character throughout the Greek world. The simple way of looking at things, which is so much the mark of a noble nature, was regarded as a ridiculous quality and soon ceased to exist. Society had become divided into two ideologically hostile camps, and each side viewed the other with suspicion. As for ending this state of affairs, no guarantee could be given that would

be trusted, no oath sworn that people would fear to break; everyone had come to the conclusion that it was hopeless to expect a permanent settlement and so, instead of being able to feel confident in others, they devoted their energies to providing against being injured themselves. As a rule those who were least remarkable for intelligence showed the greater powers of survival. Such people recognised their own deficiencies and the superior intelligence of their opponents; fearing that they might lose a debate or find themselves out-maneuvered in intrigue by their quick-witted enemies, they boldly launched straight into action; while their opponents, overconfident in the belief that they would see what was happening in advance, and not thinking it necessary to seize by force what they could secure by policy, were the more easily destroyed because they were off their guard.

Certainly it was in Corcyra that there occurred the first examples of the breakdown of law and order. There was the revenge taken in their hour of triumph by those who had in the past been arrogantly oppressed instead of wisely governed; there were the wicked resolutions taken by those who, particularly under the pressure of misfortune, wished to escape from their usual poverty and coveted the property of their neighbors; there were

the savage and pitiless actions into which men were carried not so much for the sake of gain as because they were swept away into an internecine struggle by their ungovernable passions. Then, with the ordinary conventions of civilised life thrown into confusion, human nature, always ready to offend even where laws exist, showed itself proudly in its true colors, as something incapable of controlling passion, insubordinate to the idea of justice, the enemy to anything superior to itself; for, if it had not been for the pernicious power of envy, men would not so have exalted vengeance above innocence and profit above justice. Indeed, it is true that in these acts of revenge on others men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing those general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress, instead of leaving those laws in existence, remembering that there may come a time when they, too, will be in danger and will need their protection.

— Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, translated by Rex Warner (Penguin, 1972; pp. 242–245

Pericles with the Corinthian helmet. *Source: Wikipedia*

Pericles grew up in an era of Greek democracy, and rose to become a powerful statesman. He sponsored many social programmes and laws such as giving a waiver to the poor to attend the theatre for free. The state bore the cost of their admission into the theatre. He also promulgated a law which forbade women to wail publicly at the death of their loved ones. Hence his famous funeral speech: "The greatest honour a woman can have is to be least spoken of in company of men, whether in praise or in criticism". In 454 B.C., Pericles moved the headquarters of the Delian League from the neutral island of Delos to Athens. This gesture symbolised Athenian powerful position in the League, and essentially marked the beginning of Athenian imperialism. Consequently, the other city-states in the Delian League came under the firm control of Athens. Pericles also moved the League's treasury to Athens. During his rule, Athens developed the idea of Acropolis, the lofty citadel that held the most important buildings, temples, and the agora. Modifications were later made to the Athenian Acropolis. These include the introduction of new artistic and architectural styles in the history Europe. The most notable of these buildings was the Parthenon, a massive temple to Athena, the patron goddess of Athens,

with a gigantic statue of the goddess. Thus, Athens grew in wealth and power under Pericles.[130]

The long Peloponnesian war ended in 404 B.C. with the defeat of Athens by the Spartan alliance with Persia. The defeat naturally led to the dissolution of the Athenian "empire". The war was, therefore, a disaster not only for Athens, but for all Greece. It disrupted the one possible road towards some kind of political unification, although unification under Athenian leadership would have been one imposed by an ambitious *polis*. Sparta and her allies fought the war under the slogan of restoring to the Greek cities their freedom and autonomy. She "honoured" that aim first by effectively returning the Greeks of Asia Minor to Persian suzerainty as the means of payment for the Persian gold without which the war would have been lost. The second way was by attempting to establish a tribute-paying empire of her own, with military governors and garrisons on the corpse of the Athenian empire. That effort, deemed weak, did not last a decade. In the 4th century B.C., the power vacuum in Greece became a lingering issue, despite the effort of Sparta, Thebes, and Athens to assert some form of hegemony. The final solution was given none of the Greek *poleis* themselves, but by Macedonia under King Philip 11 and his son Alexander the Great, which after 338 B.C. came to dominate the whole Greek world and much of the non-Greek world too by its military might.

[130] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece.* P.108.

The Decline of the *Polis*

At the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C.,[131] Philip of Macedon defeated a coalition of Greek armies and became effective master of Greece. He then summoned all the states to the congress at Corinth where a league of the Hellenes was founded. There the king was appointed head and commander-in-chief with two explicit mandates. The first was to orchestrate an invasion of Persia on the pretext of revenge for the Persian desecration of Greek shrines 150 years earlier. The second was to employ the combined strength of the member-states to proscribe unlawful capital punishment or illegal exile. Put directly, in no *polis* "shall there be execution or banishment contrary to the establishment laws of the *poleis*, nor confiscation of property nor redistribution of land, nor cancellation of debts, nor freeing of slaves for purposes of revolution."

This clearly summed up the change that came to be associated with Greek politics from the end of the Peloponnesian war (404 B.C.). It was not possible or even thinkable that the Greek state should organise to maintain the status quo in the Greek world at large. *Stasis* had always been a problem, but Greek states especially the more powerful ones had in the past reacted to *stasis* in other states from point of view of their own interests, intervening in other states to protect vested interest and support whichever ideological camp in those states that was seen

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[131] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997), *The Greek World*. P.27

as being their favour. As for ties with Persians, the Greek state with disagreements one with the other were not averse to seeking Persian aid to prosecute their interest. Such rifts often began from sports in the later stages of the Peloponnesian war. From 404 B.C., Sparta became dominant again for a decade or so, but was later defeated by Thebes at the battle of Leuctra in 371 B. C. After this defeat, she rapidly declined into a minor state. The reason is not farfetched. That defeat, their very first suffered in a straight battle took away their invincibility. The military machine no longer held terror for other Greek states; and the Spartan state became vastly reduced in size with the liberation of Messenia and its helot population as a consequence of the Theban victory.[132]

Thebes and Athens had both attempted to wield absolute power by assuming the position of the hegemonic state of Greece. This met with litte success. At that time, the half-Greek kingdom of Macedonia had filled this vacuum. For some time, some Greeks, like the Athenian Isocrates, had been publicly advocating a pan-Hellenic invasion of Persia. This was seen as the sole means capable of diverting the Greek state from fighting one another for the sake of self-preservation through the use of booty to fill depleted Greek state treasuries. It was also seen as a means of opening new territories for Greek emigration, a move which would in turn reduce the social and economic problems of the

[132] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p. 245

poleis as the great "colonisation movement" of the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. had done. All this remained a mere dream until Philip of Macedon imposed himself as the saviour. Since he was not a full-blooded citizen, he could at best be an "honorary Greek", whose own motives and interests were fundamentally not the same as that of those of the Greeks he was to lead.[133]

The success of Philip and his son, Alexander the Great, showed that the political difficulties which were rooted in the fragmentation of Greece into numerous small *poleis* could only be solved by an imposition, whether by a powerful polis or by a powerful outside force. Greeks had accepted this as an axiom since the end of the Peloponnesian war. Some, like Isocrates, had, therefore, proposed the pan-Hellenic peace. But no one suggested political integration of the *poleis* into larger units, and no one was able to suggest how to overcome the poverty of Greek natural resources and low level to technology, except by an invasion of Persia. That was the historic Greek solution to their socio-economic problems. With an agrarian crisis looming, the available option was either revolution or an organised emigration or some form of pressure upon their immediate neighbours.

Now, in the 4th century B.C, the areas open to "colonisation" were severely restricted, and the relative weakness of formerly powerful Greek states like Athens and Sparta led to endless inter-Greek warfare between 404 and 338 B.C. War, everyone recognised, was a natural fact of

[133] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece.* P.108.

life. It was a normal instrument of policy which the Greek deployed frequently. They did not actually seek war, but they did not go to great lengths to avoid it either. War was seen as an action to be deferred not one to be altogether avoided. In this period, the option open to Greek *poleis* for the solution of economic crises were, as discussed, much more restricted than it was in earlier times. That was why "emigration" took the new form of overseas service in mercenary armies. Between 399 and 375 B.C., there were no less than 25,000 Greek mercenaries on active service at any given moment somewhere or the other. After 375 B.C., the figure rose to 30,000. At the same time, there were also a very large number of political exiles.

These phenomena of numerous footloose mercenaries being ready to sell their services to foreign and mostly non-Greek states irrespective of "national" and political considerations, marked a further decline of the polis as a community. This was also observed in the proliferation of numerous political exiles from the various *poleis*, mirroring a situation of the constant *stasis*. The more a *polis* had to hire its armed forces, that is, the greater the dependence on mercenaries, the clearer it became that the state could not satisfy its citizens economically, especially by providing land. So, more and more of these citizens went elsewhere to live. Likewise, the more the *polis* failed to maintain some sort of equilibrium between the "few" and the "many", the more the number of its political exiles, and the more it was populated by outsiders, whether exiles and other free migrants from other cities or emancipated slaves.

All these developments made the "community" less meaningful and less real, hence, the decline of the *polis* in the 4th century B.C. Commanders of armies, for instance, had in the past been politicians and statesmen as well, models of *polis* amateurism; now they were professional soldiers outside of politics who, for the most part, had no political influence. These have often served foreign powers as mercenary commanders as well as served their own *polis*. To a large extent, this new development was due to inadequacy of public funds in the *poleis*. It spelled doom for the *polis*, because it became a cleavage in the responsibility of the citizen in his community, weakening the sense of communality.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, it should perhaps be admitted that the time for the *polis* was now obsolete. This called for a different form of political organisation and structure. The polis, as community and self-governing state, was a brilliant conception which flourished in practice only for so long as the conditions were right for it. It required a rare combination of historical and institutional circumstances for the polis to flourish. When those circumstances prevailed, the members of the *polis* succeeded, capturing slaves and attracting exiles on an unprecedented scale. Beyond that, the polis was able to reconcile differences and certain inequalities within the polity. Such was the historical greatness of the Grecian society where the human mind and

spirit were capable of producing countless feats in literature, in art, in philosophy and science, in government and in political theory, blazing the trail for our modern societies that have refined the structures that existed in the small and mighty poleis of the Archaic and Classical Greek periods.

Summary

War was the norm rather than the exception. It was a policy instrument used to foster their very existence. Thus, their attitude towards war was ambivalent- circumventable, yet inevitable.

Appendix

Women (Sparta)

Until he was thirty, a Spartan husband was not allowed to live with his family, and even newlywed men were expected to pay only short visits to their brides by sneaking into their houses at night. Spartans believed that this would make their intercourse more energetic and therefore their babies only one of the Spartan customs of heterosexual behaviour that other Greeks found weird[134].

Of all Greek women, Spartan women were the only ones who enjoyed relative freedom.[135] Spartan girls exercised with boys while scantily dressed. To the other Greeks, this was dishonorable.[136] Spartan women and girls, like their male counterparts, could own private property such as land, for they received their portion of their property early in life and during marriage while their parents were still alive. However, the property and land the girls inherited were equal to one-half of what their brothers would get as their own inheritance. In later Spartan history, as a result of incessant wars fought by the Spartans, many families lost their sons, and the male population reduced drastically (especially during classical period). As a result, more women became land owners. Spartan men were seldom at home, so, the

[134] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* pp.247 - 248; *Martin, T.R. (2000), Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.102

[135] *Ibid.* P.78

[136] *Ibid. p.*101

women took charge of the *oikos* and co-ordinated the affairs of the household, instructed their sons, daughters as well as the slaves.

Spartan women exercised more power in the *oikos* (household) than did women in other Greek city-states. There was a pressing need to reproduce healthy sons for the Spartan army. Thus, a married Spartan woman with an infertile husband could have children by another man provided all parties concerned agreed to it.[137] Spartan women, like their male counterparts, were known to be brave following the physical training they received from infancy. They took as their martial creed the sentiment expressed by the legendary advice of a Spartan mother whose son was going to war. While handing her son his shield, she said "Come home either with this or on it".[138]

Women (Athens)

The lives of Athenian women were circumscribed by the responsibility of managing their household while their men (husbands) spent the greater part of their lives outside - meeting with their male friends, partaking in politics, and farming and doing other outdoor activities of the polis. Athenian wives were entrusted with the management of the *oikos* (*oikonomia*), from there we got the word "economics". The Athenian households depended on Athenian women. They were expected to raise healthy

[137] *Ibid. p.*102
[138] *Ibid. p.*197

children for the city-state, weave cloths for the family's clothing, cook, keep the family's financial accounts, supervise and instruct the domestic slaves as well as nurse them when they were sick.[139]

Unlike the Spartan women who took part in physical training alongside their men, Athenian women were confined to the *oikos*; they were only allowed to participate in public life during religious rituals, funerals and state festivals. Certain religious festivals were for "women-only", where women were priestesses especially in the cult of the goddess, Demeter, goddess of Agriculture.[140]

Slavery

Much is not known in the Dark Age about slavery except for the poems of Homer and Hesiod. Homeric and Hesiodic poems often made use of words such as *dmos*, *doule* and *douleios*, revealing relationships between/among free and "unfree" people of the Dark Age.[141]

The Origins of Slavery

The origins of slavery are not completely understood as slavery was certainly in existence by the end of the eighth century B.C. According to Homeric poems, most slaves were obtained by piracy, kidnapping, or warfare. Eumaeus,

[139] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P. 81.
[140] Osborne, R. (2000), *Classical Greece 500–323 B.C.* p.76
[141] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. P.98. See Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P. 83.

Odysseus' swineherd, for instance, was captured and sold into slavery as a child. Enslavement is the fate of women and children in historical times whenever their city fell. Hesiod in his Works and Days advocates that an ox and a "bought woman" are an essential part of a small farmer's holding. In the Archaic Period, many Greeks became enslaved as a result of debt bondage. Debt bondage was a temporary status, and at least some who entered it would have later bought back their freedom. In practice, however, it was a very difficult condition to escape from, and, more frequently than not, it became not only permanent but also hereditary. One of the great achievements of Solon (in 594 B.C) was to free all Athenians who were enslaved as a result of debt bondage, which was a common practice in all parts of the Greek world.[142]

Greek society was highly stratified in terms of class, race, and gender. Thus, they created a "class" which they called citizenship. This class distinguished the people, and defined their status in the society. Thus, the citizens were those whose parents were Greeks while those outside this category were not regarded as citizens. Those regarded as citizens had full legal and political rights, and they enjoyed personal freedom.[143]

To the ancient Greeks, working for someone else for wages was considered rather disgraceful. However, many

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[142] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. pp. 106; 114
[143] Finley, M.I. et al (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece.* p.164

poor citizens earned their living by doing just any available work.[144]

In the Archaic Age, the formation of the city-state as a new political form encouraged slavery and the acquisition of slaves as the demand for labour increased with the development of the city-states. Therefore, there was increase in demand and acquisition of slaves from the neighbouring territories. Once slaves were acquired, they became property of their owners. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, defined slaves as "they were a sort of living possession".[145]

Sparta subjugated the entire population of the city-state of Messenia and turned them to slaves. These slaves were called "helots" and they worked the land of the Spartans, performing all of the agricultural duties. The helots outnumbered the Spartans possibly by as much as ten times. Thus, the outnumbered Spartans had to work hard to suppress the helots from revolting.[146]

Only a few people were born slaves, many were acquired from distant and neighbouring territories. Slaves who worked outdoors worked in places such as silver or gold mines, and farms. Some of them were potters, and metalworkers. They also had the responsibilities of accompanying their masters to the market.[147]

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[144] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.85

[145] *Ibid,* p.84.

[146] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. P.49.

[147] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.86

Rich landowners appointed one of their numerous slaves to oversee the work of other slaves on the site. Slave owners could punish their slaves with impunity or even kill them without fear of retribution.[148] However, in classical Athens (in the classical period), murder of slaves by their owners was not encouraged; although when it happened, all that was required of the master was ritual purification. Even though some slave owners avoided beating or punishing hard-working slaves to the point of inflicting severe injury on the slave as no slave owner would want to destroy his property as that would amount to economic loss.

Sources of Slaves

There were various ways by which a person could have become a slave in ancient Greece. Greeks enslaved their fellow Greeks, especially those defeated in war, provided they were not members of the same polis as their conqueror.[149]

Birth

Some slaves might have been born into slavery as the child of a slave. Any child born of slave/slaves assumed the status of its parents.

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[148] *Ibid.*

[149] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* P.65 -66

Wars

As a result of incessant wars fought by the Greeks, human beings were part of the spoils taken by the victorious side.The cost of a slave in ancient Greek times varied depending on their appearance, age and attitude. [150] Slaves who were healthy, attractive, young and submissive, could sell for as much as 10 minae ($180.00), while the old, weak and stubborn slaves might have been sold for as little as 1/2 a mina ($9.00). Many times, after winning a large battle, when there were many prisoners of war, there would be a large supply of slaves on the slave market; the implication of this was that the price automatically went down.

Kidnapping

Slaves were bought/imported from North and East Greek territories as pirates captured or kidnapped and sold their people to slave dealers, and the slave dealers, in turn, sold the slaves to the Greeks at a higher rate. Thracians and other slaveholding people found it easier to enslave people from other climes than to enslave their fellow Greeks, especially, those defeated in war.[151]

Exposure

Some of the slaves might have been exposed as infant, meaning that the parents abandoned their newborn baby

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[150] *Ibid. 65*

[151] Kurt A. R et al (2007), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. P. 50.

upon a hillside or at the gates of the city to die or be claimed by a passerby.[152] Exposure of newborns was widely practiced in ancient Greece. The Greeks believed in raising healthy children for the state. Therefore any baby born with congenital deformity would be exposed, as nobody wanted to raise such child. Any baby meant for exposure would not be directly killed by the parents; it would be put in a clay pot or jar and abandoned by the roadside. The decision to expose a child was usually the father's. After a woman had a baby, she would show it to her husband. If the husband accepted it, it would live, but if he refused it, it would be exposed. However, in Sparta, the decision was made by a group of elders. Nevertheless, exposed babies had the chances of survival as some passersby might pick them up and nurse them. Thus, some of them were sold into slavery or used as slaves by the person who rescued them.

Conditions of slaves

Male slaves were sent to do agricultural and industrial work, while slave women were the worst-hit, not only because of their gender but also because of their underprivileged status in the social hierarchy. They were assigned a variety of domestic duties such as shopping, fetching water, cooking, cleaning, child-care, and wool-working.

Most female slaves were often subjected to sexual exploitation and physical abuse. However, no female slave could say "no" to her master or any member of her master's

[152] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). These Were the Greeks. P. 146

household if they wanted to have a sexual relationship with her. Children born of master-slave copulation were disposed off because female slaves were prohibited from rearing children. However, if the child was allowed to live, it automatically took the status of its mother – slave.[153]

Slave women were allowed to take part in some religious festivals and could be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries[154] which were celebrated in honour of Persephone.

Domestic slaves enjoyed better treatment as some of them were treated almost as members of their masters' family. They were even allowed to take part in the family religious rituals. They were instructed and supervised by the woman of the house whose duty it was to ensure that the household slaves were kept busy.

According to Xenophon in his *Oeconomicus*, slaves were prohibited from getting married, as marriage was deemed the social privilege of Athenian citizens.

However, the life of a mineworker or ship's crewmember was a life of misery and danger. As a result of the grueling work and dangerous conditions of their work, they usually did not live long.[155]

[153] Martin, T.R. (2000), Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times. P.85.

[154] Eleusinian mysteries were held in September in honour of Demeter and her daughter, Persephone. The celebrants purified themselves in a sea, walked in a great procession over mount Aigaleos to Eleusis. See Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks*. 75

[155] Garland, R. (2009), *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. P.108

Female slaves could also endear themselves to their mistress. There is evidence that close relationships developed between female slaves and their mistresses who took them in as confidantes. The female slaves always accompanied their mistresses on excursions and other outdoor activities.[156]

Sometimes, slave owners freed their slaves voluntarily, while some made promises of freedom at a future date, and this promise of freedom spurred the slave to work harder and behave well in order to secure the promised freedom. Nevertheless, freed slaves never became Greek citizens; rather, they were called freedmen, and they mixed among the population of resident foreigners – metics. They continued to render help to their former masters when called upon.[157]

Classes of Slaves.

There were different categories of slaves. Some slaves enjoyed better conditions while others endured all kinds of cruel treatment.

Household Slave

There are different categories of slaves. There are public slaves, household or domestic slaves, temple slaves, and chattel slaves. The household slaves cleaned the house, cooked, fetched water from public fountains, helped their

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[156] *Ibid*

[157] Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997), *The Greek World*. P. 69

mistresses with spinning and weaving of cloths for the entire household as well as taking care of the children of the *oikos*. They also accompany their master to the market.[158]

Chattel Slavery

Chattel slavery became widespread in ancient Greece after 600 B.C. Slaves became too cheap to the point that even low income earners could afford to have one or two slaves. By the fifth century B.C., some poleis could boast of increased number of slaves which was placed at as much as one-third of the population of the entire citizen population.[159]

Public Slaves

There were slaves owned by the city-state, thus, they belonged to the people. This category of slaves lived on their own, and performed specialised tasks as prescribed by the city-state. Public slaves were saddled with the responsibility of certifying the genuineness of the polis' coinage. Other responsibilities included acting as assistants to the citizens' magistrate responsible for arresting lawbreakers. The official executioner of the city of Athens was also a public slave.

Temple Slaves

Temple slaves were those attached to the temple. They had no individual owners, rather, they belonged to the god of

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[158] Martin, Thomas R. (2000). *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times*. P.66; Powell, A. (Ed.). (1997), *The Greek World*. P.31

[159] *Ibid, p. 49.*

the temple where they lived, and worked as servants of the deity. For instance, there were female temple slaves at the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth. Those slaves were called sacred prostitutes; they were companions to sailors and men who came to the temple of Aphrodite, their earnings were used in the maintenance of the temple.[160]

Slave Revolt

In 413 B.C., following the repeated defeat of Athens, Sparta built their army base near Athenian silver mine, Athens suffered a great deal of loss as farming/agriculture became increasingly precarious, Athens relied greatly on food imported by sea. As a result of that, twenty thousand public slaves who were owned by the city-state, and worked in Athens' silver mines could no longer feed; hence they crossed to Spartan camp. The loss of these slave miners to Sparta dealt a big blow to Athens as the revenue generated from the mine came to a halt.[161]

Prehistoric Greece

Prehistory means "the period before written records". This period has its beginning in the movement of early peoples from Africa. The prehistoric history of Greece dates back to tens of thousands of years ago, towards the end of Stone Age.

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[160] *Ibid,* P.67

[161] Powell, A. (2001), *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.* p.101.

Stone Age

Stone Age is the era when human beings had only stone, bone and wood as tools and weapons against enemies and wild beasts, as there were no developed technologies for metal tools and implements. Hence, the people could not cultivate crops. However, human natural environment began to experience remarkable changes about ten to twelve thousand years ago with the technological advancement and development of agricultural implements. The Stone Age is traditionally divided into: Paleolithic Age and Neolithic Age. Paleolithic means Old Stone, while Neolithic means New Stone. The Paleolithic Age precedes the Neolithic Age, and this period is roughly dated back to ten to twelve thousand years ago.[162]

Paleolithic Age

Paleolithic Age lasted between 11.000-3.000 B.C. During the Paleolithic Age, human beings lived like hunter-gatherers as they roamed about in the wild, hunting games, fishing and gathering plants – grains, fruits, vegetables and nuts. Thus, in search of these, they journeyed far and wide and migrated from place to place. And these hunter-gathering people who migrated from distant land populated Thessaly, a part of northern Greece during the last part of the Paleolithic period. Just about the same time, Europe experienced a mass emigration as modern type of human beings migrated from Africa to Europe, thus, replacing the

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[162] *Ibid, P. 5*

earlier population of hunter-gatherers. Within this period, humans had already developed spoken language, although the art of writing was not yet in practice. The Stone Age gave way for the Bronze Age. The period is characterised by a rapid growth of population as well as rapid development of trade.[163]

Neolithic Age

The Trojan War was the last exploit of the Mycenaean Age. About 1300 B.C or a little later, pirates from unidentified places (suspected to have come from somewhere in Asia Minor) began to attack Greek ships and even mainland Greece. These incessant raids by these marauders were so destructive that they made trading by sea so perilous hence the export of Mycenaean pottery virtually ended. Thus, around 1100 B.C, Mycenae itself was attacked and destroyed.

During the Neolithic period, agriculture had just spread after its invention. Women were believed to have been responsible for playing a major role in the invention of agricultural tools since women in hunter-gathering societies were the ones gathering and preparing food. While their men were out hunting and fishing, the women were gathering food – vegetables and grains as well as finding ways to make the vegetables edible.[164]

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[163] Martin, T.R. (2000), *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times.* P.14

[164] *Ibid*

Glossary

Acarnania, District of ancient Greece bounded by the Ionian Sea, the Ambracian Gulf, Mount Thyamus, and the Achelous River. Originally a tribal unit, Acarnania developed into a federal state with generals and other magistrates, a council, and an assembly by the late 5th century B.C; its capital was at the city of Stratus. With Athenian help, in the early years of the Peloponnesian War it repulsed Corinthian and Spartan attacks and enlarged its territory. In 388 B.C, it was compelled by Sparta to give up the Athenian alliance. It later came under Athenian, Theban, and Macedonian rule. In 314 B.C. The Acarnanians established a confederation of newly founded cities; but frontier disputes with Aetolia culminated in the partition of their country between Aetolia and Epirus.

Achaeans, Any of the ancient Greek people, identified in Homer, as the Greeks who besieged Troy. The Achaeans constitute one of the collective names for the Greeks in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The other common names by which they are known are Danaans and Argives.

Acropolis, Central, defensively oriented district in ancient Greek cities, located on the hill and containing the chief municipal and religious buildings such as the agora and the partheneon. Because the founding of a city was considered a religious act, the establishment of a local home for the gods was a basic factor to be considered in Greek city planning. The acropolis contains the Parthenon and other notable buildings.

Aegean Islands, A Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

Aeschylus, One of the three great dramatists of classical Athens; born around 525/524 B.C, died 456/455 B.C at Gela, Sicily.

Aetolians, District of ancient Greece, located directly north of the Gulf of Corinth and bounded by Epirus (north), Locris (east), and Acarnania (west).

Agamemnon

The supreme commander of the Greek expeditionto Troy, as described in Homer's poem, *The Iliad*.

Agoge

Spartan public education system (literally "a leading forth") intended to weaken pupils' ties to the family and strengthen their ties to the state.

Agora,

An open space that served as a meeting ground for various activities of the citizens in ancient Greece. Every citizen was expected to spend time in the agora both to learn about public affairs and to gossip.

Alcinous, In Greek mythology, he was king of the Phaeacians, son of Nausithoüs, and grandson of the god Poseidon. In Homer's *The Odyssey* (Books VI–XIII), he was father of Nausicaa; he hosted and entertained Odysseus who had been cast by a storm onto the shore of the island, and was brought home by Nausicaa.

Alexander the Great, Born 356 B.C at Pella, Macedonia; died June 13, 323 B.C. He was king of Macedonia, reigned after

his father, Philip (336–323 B.C). He overthrew the Persian empire, carried Macedonian arms to India, and laid the foundations for the Hellenistic world of territorial kingdoms.

Anytus, Son of Anthemion, was an ancient Athenian politician. He served as a general in the Peloponnesian War, and was later a leading supporter of the democratic movements in Athens. He was opposed to the oligarchic forces behind the Thirty Tyrants.

Apoikia, An apoikia is a colony, settlement or a polis established abroad by a 'mother city' at home (home away from home).

Archaic period, The earliest phases of any civilisation; the term is most frequently used by historians to denote the period of artistic development. In ancient Greece, the archaic period is placed about 650 to 480 B.C (the date of the Persian sack of Athens).

Archilochus, Poet and soldier, the earliest Greek writer of iambic, elegiac, and personal lyric poetry whose works have survived to a considerable extent.

Archon, In ancient Greek society, the chief magistrate or magistrates in many city-states. The office became prominent in the Archaic period, when the kings were being superseded by aristocrats.

Areopagus, Earliest aristocratic council of ancient Athens. The name was taken from the Areopagus (Ares' Hill), a low hill northwest of the Acropolis, which was its meeting place. The council or Areopagus met to try cases of homicide, murderous wonderings and arson. The council consisted of

ex-archons under the presidency of the king-archon. Membership continued for life and was secured by having served as archon, an office limited to the "well-sired".

Argive, A citizen of ancient Greece who besieged Troy, especially those from Argos or Argolis.

Argos, Árgos was probably the base of Dorian operations in the Peloponnese (1100–1000 B.C), and from that time onward it was the dominant city-state of Argolís. Under the Argive king Pheidon (7th century B.C.), Árgos was the leading city-state in all the Peloponnese until the rise of Spartan power. The name Árgos was applied to several districts in ancient Greece. Historically, the Argolís was the easternmost portion of the Peloponnesian peninsula, and the city of Árgos was its capital. Agamemnon, Diomedes, and other heroes from Argolís' fertile plain were prominent figures in *The Iliad* of Homer.

Aristocracy, Government by a small privileged class or by a minority consisting of those felt to be best qualified to rule. As conceived by the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, aristocracy means the rule of the few best - the morally and intellectually superior - governing in the interest of the entire population.

Aristotle, Ancient Greek philosopher and scientist, born in 384 B.C. died 322 B.C. He was one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history. He was the author of a philosophical and scientific system that became the framework and vehicle for both Christian Scholasticism and medieval Islamic philosophy.

Aristophanes, Ancient Greek comedian, his works have been preserved in greatest quantity. He is the only extant representative of the Old Comedy.

Artemis, Virgin goddess of wild animals, vegetation, and of chastity and childbirth; and protectoress of hunters. She was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo. Artemis was identified by the Romans with Diana.

Asia Minor, A geographic region located in the south-western part of Asia comprising most of what is present-day Turkey. The earliest reference to the region comes from tablets of the Akkadian Dynasty (2334-2083 B.C).

Athena, In Greek mythology, virgin goddess, she is the Patron goddess of Athens, goddess of war, handicraft, and practical reason, identified by the Romans with Minerva. She was the daughter of Zeus, produced without a mother, she emerged full-grown from her father, Zeus' forehead. She was the favourite child of Zeus, thus, she had great power. Athena was probably a pre-Hellenic goddess and was later taken over by the Greeks.

Athens, The leading city of Ancient Greece in the first millennium B.C, and its cultural achievements during the 5th century B.C laid the foundations of western civilisation.

Attica, (Also known as the Attic peninsula), ancient district of east-central Greece; Athens was its chief city. It is a historical region that encompasses the city of Athens, the capital of Greece. It is a peninsula projecting into the Aegean Sea, bordering on Boeotia to the north and Megaris to the west. Attica attracted maritime trade. In early times there

were several independent settlements there, highlighting Eleusis, Athens, and Marathon.

Barbarian, The word "barbarian" was used to describe all non-Greek-speaking peoples, including Persians, Egyptians, Medes and Phoenicians. The ancient Greek word "*bárbaros*," from which it derives, meant "babbler," In the Greek ear, speakers of a foreign language made unintelligible sounds ("bar bar bar").

Bards, A poet, especially one who writes passionate, lyrical, or epic verse. Bards were originally Celtic composers of eulogy and satire.

Black sea, A vital trading center in ancient Greece. The Black Sea was navigated and its shores colonised by the Greeks as early as the eighth century B.C and later by the Romans in the third to first centuries B.C.

Boule, The council at Athens, consisting of 500 members, chosen annually by lot, fifty from each tribe. A boule existed in virtually all ancient Greek city-states. The main duty of the Boule was to deliberate and prepare measures to be presented before the Ecclessia. In Athens in 594 B.C, Solon did not abolish the Council of the Areopagus, rather, he created a boule of 400 to guide the work of the assembly, or Ecclesia. Cleisthenes increased the membership of the Athenian Boule to 500 in 508 B.C.

Bronze Age, A historical period characterised by the use of bronze, and in some areas proto-writing, and other early features of urban civilisation. It was a period of time between the Stone Age and the Iron Age when bronze was used widely

to make tools, weapons, and other implements. The Bronze Age succeeded the Neolithic Age.

Bronze Age civilisation (also named Minoan after the legendary king) lasted well over one thousand years, attaining its peak in later stages between about 1650 and 1450 B.C.[165]

Cavalry, Group of soldiers who fight on horses.

Chattel slave, An enslaved person bought and owned forever, and whose descendants are automatically enslaved. Chattel slaves are treated as complete property, to be bought and sold.

Cimon, Athenian statesman and general who played an active part in building up the Athenian empire in the period following the Greco-Persian Wars and whose conservatism and policy of friendship with Sparta were opposed to the policy of Pericles. His greatest military victory was the defeat of a Persian fleet at the mouth of the River Eurymedon in Pamphylia in 466 B.C.[166] The death of Aristides and ostracism of Themistocles left Cimon without a rival in Athens for some years and he became very influential. However, this influence dwindled as that of Pericles increased.

Cleisthenes, Athenian statesman, founder of Athenian democracy; served as chief archon (highest magistrate) of the city-state (525–524 B.C). Cleisthenes successfully allied himself with the popular Assembly against the nobles in 508 B.C and imposed democratic reform.

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[165] Amos, H.D and Lang, A.G.P. (1982). *These Were the Greeks.* P. 13
[166] Finley, M.I. (1981), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*. p.43

Cleon, First prominent representative of the commercial class in Athenian politics, he became leader of the Athenian democracy in 429 B.C after the death of his political enemy, Pericles. In the Peloponnesian War he strongly advocated an offensive strategy. When Mytilene, which had revolted against Athens, fell in 427 B.C, Cleon proposed that all its citizens be put to death and the women and children enslaved.

Cleophon, Athenian statesman, one of the dominant figures in Athenian politics until the end of the Peloponnesian War. He came to power in 410. He led the people to reject Spartan peace offers after the Athenian victory at Cyzicus in 410 B.C. and again after Arginusae in 406 B.C, as his political predecessor Cleon had rejected similar offers in 425 B.C. Even after the decisive defeat of the Athenians at Aegospotami, when the Spartans blockaded Athens, Cleophon continued to urge resistance, but the situation became desperate and he was arrested and condemned to death in 404 B.C.

Corcyra, An ancient Greek city on the island of Corfu in the Ionian sea, adjacent to Epirus. It was colony of Corinth, founded in the archaic period. Corcyra prospered rapidly; but unlike most Corinthian colonies, it maintained an independent and indeed hostile attitude towards the mother city.

Corinth, Greek city, one and a half miles south of the isthmus which connects the Peloponnesus with central Greece. Its territory was small and unfertile; but its geographical

location made it an important commercial and industrial centre, and it was famed for its wealth and luxury.[167]

Crete, Island in the Mediterranean. Its fertile soil produced corn in abundance, copper was mined, and purple dye was extracted from the murex.

Croesus, Last king of Lydia (reigned 560–546 B.C.), who was renowned for his great wealth. He conquered the Greeks of mainland Ionia (on the west coast of Anatolia) and was in turn conquered by the Persians. Croesus succeeded to the throne of his father, Alyattes, after a struggle with his half brother. He completed the conquest of mainland Ionia begun by his father by capturing Ephesus and other cities in western Anatolia.

Cylon, Athenian of noble family, who won an Olympic victory in 640 B.C. In 632 B.C, in an attempt to establish himself as a tyrant, he led an armed insurgence and seized the Acropolis (in a coup), but he failed.

Danaans, Another name by which Homer referred to the Greeks who besieged Troy.

Delian League, Confederation of Ionian Greek city-states, under the hegemony of Athens; with its headquarters at Delos. Delian League was founded in 478 B.C., dissolved at the end of the Peloponnesian war in 404 B.C.

Delos, Smallest island of the Cyclades, headquarters of the Delian League.

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[167] Smith, W. (2000), A Smaller History of Greece. World eBook Library Consortia. P.1.

Delphi, (Also called Pytho). The oracle that was consulted about important decisions; famous for its temple and oracle of Apollo.

Demeter, Goddess of Agriculture, especially, of corn; daughter of Cronus and Rhea, and sister of Zeus, by whom she became the mother of Persephone. She was identified by the Romans with Ceres.

Dionysiac, Relating to the festivals of Dionysius.

Dodona, An important ancient Greek oracle of Zeus, located in Epirus, second in fame only to Delphi.

Dracon, Author of the first written code of laws at Athens. The laws of Draco carried death penalties for almost every transgression. These cruel Draconian laws were abolished by Solon, except those that have to do with homicide.

Draconian, (In relation to the laws of Dracon), excessively harsh and severe.

Ecclesia, Assembly of citizens in a Greek city-state.

Ephialtes, (1). Milian traitor who, while Leonidas was defending the pass of Thermopylae, guided the Persians. (2). Athenian statesman who supported Pericles against Cimon. His democratic reforms limited the power of the Areopagus.

Ephors, Title given to the highest magistrates at Sparta. They were five in number, elected annually. The board of ephors had almost unlimited powers in both home and foreign affairs. They presided over meetings of the Gerousia and Apella. They ensured that the king ruled according to law, they also decided civil actions at law, regulated taxation,

negotiated with foreign ambassadors and sent out military expeditions.

Epirus, District of north-western Greece; bounded north by Illyria and Macedonia, east by Thessaly, South by Acarnania and the Ambracian Gulf, and west by the Ionian Sea.

Eretria, Coastal town of Euboea, on the Epirus about 15 miles south of Chalcis.

Etruscans, A highly civilised people. Many features of Etruscan culture (religious and political) were adopted by the Romans from whom the Romans.

Euripides, Last of the great Greek tragedians.

Gerousia, The council of elders at Sparta. Council of elders (from *gerôn*, meaning old man), consisting of 28 elders and the two kings. The *Gerousia* prepared all business which was to be submitted to the *Apella*, and also had power to nullify perverse decisions of the *Apella*. This council formed the highest executive committee of the state.

Gytheum, The harbour and arsenal of Sparta. It is a city on the eastern shore of the Mani Peninsula, and a former city in Laconia, Peloponnese, Greece.

Hegemony, The dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimate norms and ideas. Hegemony derives from a Greek term that translates simply as "dominance over" and that was used to describe relations between city-states.

Hektemoroi, Dependent farmers who cultivated the land of the privileged on the condition that they would yield 1/6 of the farm produce rather than paying rent on the

farmland. According to Aristotle (in his *Athenaion politeia* 2&10), these hektemoroi who were legally independent could be sold as slaves should they not pay the agreed portion.

Hellas, The Greeks of classical times called their country Hellas, and themselves Hellenes.

Hellenes, The name used by ancient Greeks to designate the inhabitants of the peninsula as opposed to the barbarians.

Helots, Spartan serfs, said to be the original inhabitants of Laconia who were enslaved by the Achaeans before the Dorian conquest. Later, following the second Messenian war, the Messenians were reduced to the status of helots; in other words, they were state slaves bound to the city but assigned to individual Spartiates to cultivate their farmlands.

Hephaestus, Greek god of fire, divine smith and patron of craftsmen. He was son of Zeus and Hera, and husband of Aphrodite. The Romans identify him with Vulcan.

Herodotus, Greek Historian, born at Halicarnassus around 484 B.C.

Hesiod, Earliest of the Greek didactic poets, lived probably at the very end of the 8th century B.C. Two major works of his have come down to us: *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

Hipparchus, Son of Peisistratus.

Hippias, Son of Peisistratus

Hoi oligoi, The few.

Hoi polloi, The many (as opposed to *hoi oligoi*).

Homer, Author of the two great Greek epic poems, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey.*

Homeric, In relation to Homer.

Homeric Epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey.*

Hoplite, Greek heavy-armed infantry, organised on basis of tribes and property qualification. They wore bronze helmet, breastplate and greaves, and carried a round shield. Their weapons consisted of iron sword and 9-foot spear.

Ionia, A narrow piece of land with adjacent islands on the west coast of Asia Minor, bounded north by the Maeander and east by Lydia. During prehistoric period, Ionia was colonised by Ionian Greeks.

Isocrates, An ancient Greek rhetorician, was one of the ten most influential Greek orators of his time. Isocrates made many contributions to rhetoric and education through his teaching and written works.

Laconia, South-eastern district of Pelopennesus, capital of Sparta. It is said that the history of Laconia is the history of Sparta.

Liturgies: producing tragedies and comedies at great festivals, paying the actors, dancers and singers and providing the custumes and "props", serving as captains of warships, and maintaining these warships and keeping them in sea-worthy conditions.

Leuctra, Village in Boeotia, on the road from Palataea to Thespiae. Hear, the Spartans and their allies were defeated by Epameinondas in 371 B.C.

Lydia, District of varying boundaries in Asia Minor. The original territory seems to have consisted of the upper Hermus region and the plain of Sardis; but two of its monarchs, Alyattes and Croesus gradually extended their dominions to form a commercial empire which included the whole of Asia Minor west of the river Halys, with Sardis as its capital.

Lydians, The Lydians are said to have been highly civilised at an early date, the first people to coin money around 700 B.C. They were also celebrated for their music and their system of physical training.

Macedonia, The kingdom of Macedon is said to have been founded by Perdiccas I around 700 B.C. Little was known of it until the reign of Amyntas I. Philip II enlarged its boundaries and eventually conquered the whole of Greece; his son, Alexander the Great established a vast empire. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C, the empire dissolved, but the kingdom remained powerful until conquered by the Romans in 148 B.C.

Marathon, A village on the north coast of Attica, 22 miles from Athens by one road and 26 by another. Here, the famous battle between the Persians and the Athenians and Palataeans was fought in 490 B.C.

Megara, A Greek city-state between Attica and Corinth, bounded North and south by the Corinthian and Saronic gulfs respectively.

Metic, Resident alien in a Greek city-state, obliged to pay certain taxes, though certain privileges were sometimes granted to individuals, the metic had no citizen right; he

could neither vote nor hold office, nor could he transact legal business except through the medium of a patron.

Miletus, City of Asia Minor, renowned for its woolen fabrics known as *milesia vellera.* It is geographically located in the territory of Caria but belonged to Ionia politically. Thus, it is one of the twelve cities of the Ionian confederacy.

Minoan, Of or relating to the ancient civilisation of the island of Crete in ancient Greece. The Minoan civilisation was a Bronze Age Aegean civilisation which flourished from 2700 B.C to 1450 B.C, finally ending around 1100 B.C. It heralded the Mycenaean civilisation.

Minos, In Greek mythology, he was king of Crete, son of Zeus by Europa, and brother of Rhadamanthus.

Mycenae, One of the oldest cities in Greece, situated in Argolis about nine miles from Tiryns. It was one of the most important centres of prehistoric Bronze Age civilisation in mainland Greece. It is the legendary royal city of Agamemnon. During the fifth century B.C, it was attacked by Argos, starved until it surrendered, and finally destroyed.

Nemean Games, Like the Olympic Games, They were one of the four great athletic festivals of Greece, held biennially in honour of Zeus. they were said to have been founded by Heracles after he defeated the Nemean Lion.

Odysseus, In Greek legend, son of Laertes and Anticleia; husband of Penelope, and father of Telemachus by Penelope. He was famous for his courage, wits and eloquence. He was among the Greeks that led the expedition that ruined Troy. His exploits and adventure after the destruction of Troy form the major part of Homer's *The Odyssey.*

Oligarchy, Government by the few, especially tyrannical power, exercised by a small privileged group of people for corrupt or selfish purposes.

Olympic Games, The foremost national festival of the Greeks, celebrated once every four years at Olympia in honour of Zeus. The festival was in two parts: presentation of offerings, and the contests. The festival lasted five days. Women were neither allowed to participate in the game nor watch.

Panathenaic, Relating to annual Athenian festival in honour of Athena, held in the late summer (August), also called the greater Panathenaea. It was celebrated every four years, with extraordinary luxury.

Parthenon, Paramount temple of the Greek goddess, Athena on the hill of the Acropolis at Athens.

Peisistratus, Tyrant of Athens in the fifth century B.C. When Solon withdrew from Athens after reorganising the constitution, three conflicting groups emerged, each named after the location of their territory. One group was the party of the coast, led by the Alcmaeonid Megacles. This group appeared to be striving after a moderate form of government. The second group named after the Plain, was led by Lycurgus,[171] they advocated for an oligarchy. The third group was that of the High-lands, and was led by Peisistratus who had a deceptive reputation of an extreme democrat. When Peisistratus appeared in the Agora, he showed recent wounds he sustained while escaping assassination from his political opponents. The people believed him and assigned a bodyguard of fifty men to him. With these bodyguards,

he turned against the people and seized the Acropolis in 560 B.C. However, in 555 B.C, a combined force of the other two opposing groups led by Megacles and Lycurgus expelled him.

Peloponnesian War, Name given to the battle between Athens and Sparta, involving their allies. It lasted for twenty seven years (431 – 404 B.C.), and ended with the defeat of Athens.

Pericles, Athenian statesman, born 490 B.C. His father, Xanthippus commanded the Athenian squadron at the battle of Mycale in 479 B.C. By 469 B.C, Pericles was regarded as the leader of the democratic group in opposition to Cimon.

Perioeci, Free non-citizen inhabitants of Sparta. mainly in the coastal highland areas of Laconia and Messenia.

Perioikoi, Plural form of Perioeci. (*See Perioeci*).

Persephone, In Greek mythology, she was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Identified with Proserpina by the Romans. In Attica, she was worshipped as Kore.

Persian Wars, Battles fought between the empires of Persia and the Greek city-states.

Philip of Macedon, Name adopted by the five kings of Macedon.

Phoenicia, Coastal territory of Syria, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Libanus range. The Phoenicians were basically traders who had to always travel by sea. This essentially made them the greatest navigators of their time.

Plato, Greek philosopher.

Pnyx, Original meeting place of the Ecclesia.

Polis (Poleis *pl*), Name given to ancient Greek city-state. The polis centred on one town, usually walled, but included the surrounding countryside. The town contained a citadel on raised ground (acropolis) and a marketplace (agora). Government was centred in the town, but citizens of the polis lived throughout its territory.

Poseidon, Greek God of the sea and earthquakes. Poseidon was a brother of Zeus, and of Hades, god of the underworld. When the three brothers deposed their father, the kingdom of the sea fell by lot to Poseidon.

Pylos, Name of three towns on the west coast of Peloponnesus.

Pythian Games, One of the four great Hellenic athletic festivals, celebrated at Delphi in honour of Apollo.

Rhodes, Island of the Aegean. At the beginning of the historical period, it was inhabited by Dorians. At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, it was a member of the Delian League, and later joined the Spartan alliance and became the main base of the Spartan fleet.

Salamis, Island off the west coast of Attica. It forms the southern boundary of the bay of Eleusis. It appears to have been colonised from Aegina. Salamis was an independent state until about 620 B.C. when it was seized by the Megarians, and was regained from them by the Athenians about twenty years later under Solon.

Serfs, Member of a servile feudal class bound to the land and subject to the will of its owner.

Sicily, Island of the Mediterranean. The fertile soil produced wheat in abundance. Other valuable products were wine, saffron, honey, almonds and fruits.

Solon, Athenian legislator/lawgiver, born 639 B.C. Solon became famous during the contest between Athens and Megara.

Sophocles, One of the three great Athenian dramatists.

Sparta, Greek city-state, located in a plain on the right bank of the Eurotas. Sparta was a very important centre of Aegean civilisation in the 2nd millennium B.C.

Stentor, Herald of the Greeks before Troy. His voice was said to be as loud as that of fifty men put together.

Syracuse, City of Sicily, founded by Corinthian and other Dorian colonists in 734 B.C.

Telemachus, Son of Odysseus and Penelope.

Thebes, City of Boeotia, located in a plain surrounded by mountains. Thebes is often told about in Greek legend.

Themistocles, Athenian soldier and statesman, born in 528 B.C. He came to limelight in 483 B.C when he helped to secure the ostracism of Aristeides. When he anticipated a Persian attack, he persuaded the Athenians to move their naval base from Phalerum to Peiraeus.

Thera, Name of Island of the Cyclades from which Cyrene was founded.

Thersites, Name of the deformed, uncouth and pompous person among the Greeks at Troy.

Thrace, A vast territory of country bounded on the North by the Danube, on the south by the Propontis and Aegean. On the east by the Euxine, and on the west by the river Strymon and the Eastern part of Illyrian tribes. According

to Herodotus and Thucydides, Thrace was populated by people of various tribes.

Thrasybulus, Athenian statesman, he played a major role in overthrowing the government of the four hundred in 411 B.C. He was banished by the Thirty tyrants but he returned to expel the Ten and restore democracy in 404 B.C. In 390 B.C., he commanded the Athenian fleet in the Aegean and recovered much territory for Athens before he was murdered by the inhabitants of Aspendus in Pamphylia in 388 B.C.

Thucydides, Greek historian, born at Halimus in Attica. He wrote the history of the Peloponnesian War.

Tiryns, A city of Argolis; one of the most important centres of Mycenaean culture in prehistoric times.

Well-sired, Of noble birth.

Xenophanes, Greek philosopher, and poet; and founder of the Eleatic school.

Zeus, In Greek mythology, the chief of the Olympian gods, the controller of the universe. Identified by the Romans with Jupiter. Zeus was a son of Cronus and Rhea, a brother to Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Demeter, Hera, and was also married to his sister, Hera. Zeus is called the father of gods and men, the most powerful among the immortals.

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