POL150

Government, Power & Political Systems

2015

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Politics in the Ancient World - Greece

Roman democracy stemmed from the Greeks.

- citizen = someone who fought to defend the city-state (polis) = got to vote.
- notion of 'citizen' as defenders of the city came from Sparta 8th C. BC.
- politika = affairs of the city-state
- Athens 750BC - 'polis' = people and territory

How did the classical *polis* emerge?
2 major transformations:
1. changes in *martial capital* (armed wealth)
- can afford to buy their own armour - believe they deserve the right to have a say in how they are governed.
2. creation of new social practices and institutions

- from kingship to warrior-citizen (1100-750 BC)
- from the warrior-citizen to the peasant-citizen (6th C. BC)

   1. First transformation (1100-750 BC - Bronze Age)
   power of kings gradually curtailed + consolidation of the polis
- emergence of a class of landowners
- produced their own martial capital (means of warfare)
- eventually forces kings to relinquish power
- demanded participation in political power & control of the governing body - 'the council'
   The urban shift:
- noble landowners moved into city (previously reserved for king's admin. and religious activity) bringing agricultural interest
- city became polis = city-state
- Athens has the city and *attica* (hinterland)
- combination makes single *polity*

   2. Second transformation
- new technique of warfare (hoplite infantry) carried out by peasantry in rural *demes* (neighbourhoods) of the polis
- Athens and other *poleis*: power-sharing (with nobility)
- ownership of large tracts of land ceased to be a necessary condition of citizenship
- peasants, craftsmen and shopkeepers who were free men were incorporated into political community as citizens
- exercised political rights
- not a transfer of power from the warrior-citizen nobility to the masses - rather an emergence of a new class of citizens
- challenge to nobility
- won the right to participate in political bodies of the polis
- challenge to political power of warrior-citizen nobility within poleis by:
  - peasants
  - craftsmen
  - tradesmen
  - other free non-noble citizenry

→ <u>Greece diverges</u> from other areas
- sharing political power opens new political spaces
- modern Western culture appropriated this Greek narrative - democracy links to these movements. (not really democracy because does not include women, slaves, etc.)

<u>Democratic Citizenship</u> = an outcome of class/group struggles within Greek culture
- values and norms have a genealogy, history of forces → to change values means social struggle
- systems become entrenched, people don't want to change them → to overthrow systems requires struggle

<u>How did democracy function?</u>
had to be 30 to be involved in leading the city
- *Archon* - 9 leaders to elect to lead city
- *Eponymous* - head of state (name ruler)
- *Basileus* - lead archon (king ruler)
- *Polemarch* - military leader (war ruler)
- *Thesmothetai*- lawmakers (6 judicial officers)
- *Eupatria* - one of 60 aristocratic families - all of the above are drawn from here - 10 yr terms (from 683 BC one yr terms)

Developing democracy
Boule (council of 500) 594 BC
- 400 members (drawn by lot) from two high census classes
  - drawn by lot = a number at random - to ensure equal representation, contribution, etc.
- prepare legislation for discussion
- 560 Peisistratos seizes power (tyrant) for 30 yrs
- 508 BC - Cleisthenes' reforms the system to try to make it more equal.
  - divided into *tribes* (all 3 different parts of the politi represented - coastal, plains, town)
  - 10 tribes, each with a general (*strategos*)

The *Ecclesia*
- 30,000 citizens (male)
- 622 BC - Draco tried to write the laws, included severe punishments (*Draconian*)
- 594 BC - Solon tried to forbid slavery
- created 4 census classes -
  Pentacosiomedimnoi (very wealthy citizens)
- Hippeis (knights); Zeugites; Thetes.
- Created Regular meetings of Ecclesia

Who's in the polis?
Athenian democracy - men are citizens. had to be/have:
- over 20 (having done 2 years in military since 18) over 30 to be in leading role
- ex-military
- father was a citizen of Athens
- *hoplite* - heavily armed soldiers in phalanx - regular non-aristocratic
- *"citizenship"* (women, children, slaves excluded)
  - women participate in civic life under guardianship of a man