

Lecture 4: Politics and Reason in Classical Greece, 650-400

1. Travel and Colonization in the Wine Dark Sea: The Emergence of the Greeks, 1200-500BCE

- A. The World Agamemnon Ruled (ca. 1400-1000 BCE)
- B. Dark Age Greece (ca. 1000-750 BCE)

2. The Greek Polis and the Rise of Athens, 750-430 BCE

- A. The Polis and Greek Citizenship
- B. Varieties of Political Organization
 - Tyranny and Oligarchy
- C. Athens and Democracy
 - Refining Democracy
 - Pericles and Radical Democracy

3. Waging Wars and Writing History

- A. Greek Rationalism
- B. Herodotus and the History of the Persian Wars, 499 – 479 BC
- C. Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War, 431 – 404 BC

Varieties of Political Organization in Greece, ca. 650-450 B.C.E.

Tyranny = (Corinth) monopolization of political authority by one individual or family – not always an abuse of power, but rule was often short lived.

Oligarchy = (Sparta) a small elite group of men held political power. In the case of Sparta a military oligarchy that privileged discipline and order for the good of the citizen elite.

Democracy = (Athens) rule by the people. *Demos* = people; *crateia* (cracy) = rule. A long process of reform in Athens lead eventually the “**radical democracy**” – opening up of rule and governance to the people, specifically to the citizens of Athens.

Refining Athenian Democracy, 630-430 BCE

(a) Circa 621 BCE, Draco codified the laws of Athens and posted them on tablets in the Athenian *agora* (the market place)– turning point = in principle, Athens was now ruled by laws, not by men (made law the public business of the people).

(b) In 594 BCE, Solon reformed the government and judiciary so that there was an -- opening up of political and legal life.

(c) Around 508 BCE a another set of major reforms was undertaken by Cleisthenes, – “father of Athenian Democracy.” He divided Athenian territory in to units called demes. His reforms were based upon the evolution of the concept of citizenship and its extension to as many as possible

(d) Circa 461 BCE = Pericles (c. 495-429 BCE) became the leading politician in Athens by supporting the masses’ desire for greater democracy = he advocated **radical democracy.**

- widespread participation by all male citizens
- equal protection under the law regardless of wealth
- introduced idea of *ostracism*
- pay for public service = opened political office to poor men

Greek Rationalism: Historians and Philosophers

•**Herodotus** – 484-420 B.C.E., historian of the Persian Wars, wrote the *Histories*, using historical method of enquiry.

•**Thucydides** – 455-399 B.C.E., historian, wrote the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

•**Socrates** – 469-399 B.C.E., held many symposia (dinner parties of the *male* Greek world), wrote nothing himself.

•**Plato** – 428/7-348/7 B.C.E., pupil of Socrates, wrote such works as the *Symposium* (nature of love) *Crito* (last days of Socrates), *Phaedo* (life after death), *Theaetetus* (on knowledge), the *Timaeus* (origin of the world – only text to survive to the medieval period, translated into Latin), and most famously, the ***Republic***, also a work on *Laws* (for the governing of an ideal state.)

•**Aristotle** – 384-322 B.C.E., Plato’s greatest pupil, tutor of Alexander the Great. Wrote extensively on Ethics, Politics, and other topics; all his writings are from the notes of one of his pupils.