



THE PERFECT PERFORMANCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC GOVERNMENT IN ATHENS (GREEK) THROUGH REFORMS (6th CENTURY BC – 5th CENTURY BC)

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Abstract. In comparison with ancient Orient nations, the Greek state was born much later and they created a new state institution which was a republic. This state was different from the government of absolute monarchies in the Orient. The state of Athens (Athènes) - an important city-state in ancient Greece, was a democratic republic and was gradually improved through the reforms that took place from the 6th to the 5th century BC. This is the first democratic republic in world history and it had a profound influence on the model of republic and democratic states in the world, especially in Europe and North America in modern times.

Keywords: democratic, republic, government, reform, Athens.

1. The process of formation of the republic in Athens

On the basis of the disintegration of the clanship due to the growing industrial and commercial economy in the Attique Peninsula (the central Greece), the division between rich and poor people became more and more profound, and conflicts of interests and society increased. This situation made the power structure, which had been established by 4 Dorians tribes to collapse because it could not solve the problems of society. Therefore, around the 7th century BC, the state was born to replace the power institution under the clan period. This state was formed on the basis of a city and then gradually expanded to surrounding rural areas to form a nation-city, state/city (polis). Each country had its own border, own political organizations, own religious life, own customs, own deities, and its population was only a few tens of thousands of people.

According to legend, the one who laid the first foundation for the state of Athens was Thérèse (Thésée) - the legendary hero [4; p.1711]. Thérèse's greatest merit was to build and organize an alliance of 4 tribes which was based on willingness and equality. He established the common government instead of four administrative organizations of 4 former clans. Thérèse divided the Athenian population who were equal members of the four former tribes, into three

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classes of people with different rights and duties, including: “nobles, farmers and craftsmen” [1; p.36] to establish the first class society in Athens. With his reforms, Thérèse initially attacked the clanship. The state organization included the power agencies, such as: The People's Congress and the Council of Elders (Aréopage). Thérèse maintained the former People's Congress, but its actual power decreased. The Council of Elders (Aréopage) which consisted of representatives of the aristocracy, had the legislative power, the judicial power, and the supervisory power and they could decide all the important affairs of the state. The position of Basileus (king of clanship) was dismissed and it was replaced by a Council of Nine Consuls (archonte) who were appointed from the aristocracy and they held the highest positions in the government in Athens. In addition, Athens in this period was divided into 48 administrative units according to regional relations. This division contributed to pushing back and restricting blood relations in the former clanship. Thus, Thérèse was considered to be the first person who dismantled the powerful institutions of the clanship and he laid the foundation for the republic in Athens.

2. Reform and Structure of the republic of Athens

The history of the state and the laws of Athens from the first part of the 6th century BC to the middle of the 5th century BC was associated with many important historical events, especially economic, political and social reforms under the dominance of the consuls of Solon (594 BC), Cleisthennes (509-506 BC), and Pericles (461 and re-elected many times).

Reform and political structure of Athens under Solon era

Solon (640-558 BC) who was a famous traveller, poet, and politician, belonged to the new slave-owning class. In 594 BC, he was elected to become a consul (archonte), when he was 46 years old. As the head of state, Solon recognized the risk of a civil war between the aristocracy and common people because they (common people) would be enslaved by debt. “In a program called the “shaking off of burdens” Solon immediately canceled the current” [2; p.90]. He was also aware of a strong conflict between land nobles (Eupatrid) who owned a lot of land and new nobles who were associated with the development of industry and commerce. Starting from tense economic, political and social context, Solon proposed reforms in various areas.

On economic reform, Solon enacted in order to abolish all debts in society and pluck all cards from fields which were symbols of land mortgage. He also forbade slave owners to turn bankrupt farmers into slaves. Moreover, he announced the decree which recognized the right of property ownership and the right of the property transfer. Finally, he carried out monetary reform, encouraged the cultivation of grapes, of olives, and ceramic production, and promoted internal and foreign trade [5; p.159].

The aim of these economic reforms was to liberate a large number of common people and farmers, which were enslaved by debt and they became a powerful supportive force for the

reform. This reform contributed to improving the economic status of new slave-owners and encouraged the industrial and commercial development.

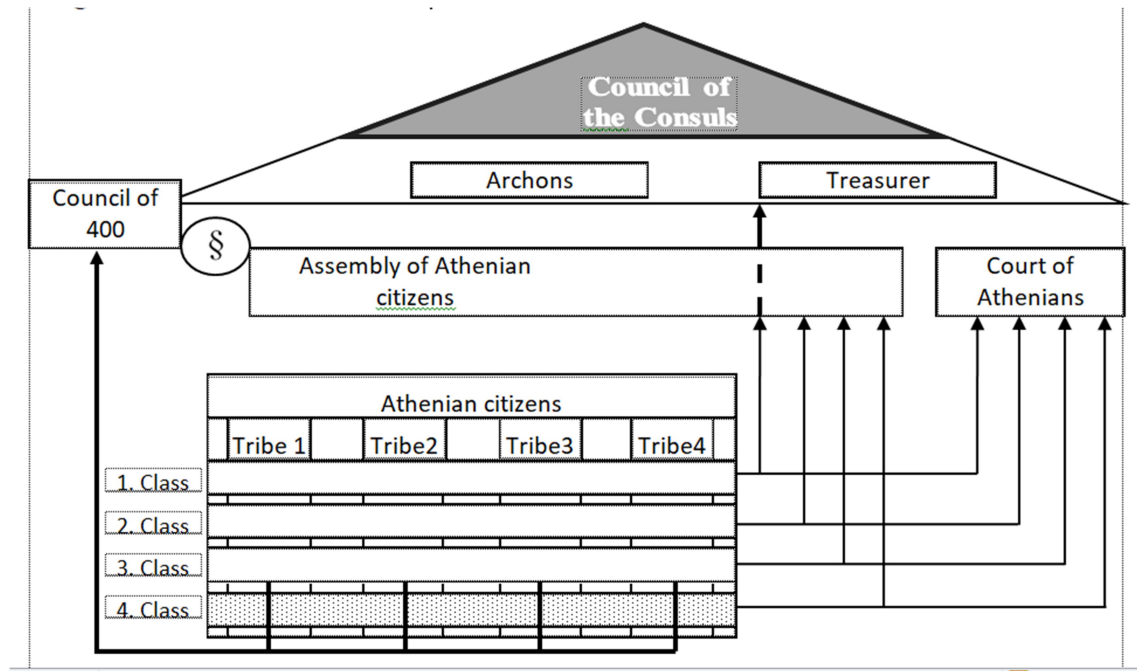
On the socio-political field, Solon divided Athens residents into different classes of interests and obligations, based on their annual income of the property (mainly in rice).

The first level included those who earned the income of 500 medimnoi or more of cereals in a year and they could join the state power agencies such as the Council of the Consuls and the Council of the Four Hundred. However, they had to contribute much to the State for constructions, to build fleets, and to organize religious ceremonies of the city.

The second class consisted of people who had income from 300 medimnoi of cereals or more and who had all of the political benefits of the first class. However, in reality, they rarely joined the Council of the Consuls. Instead, they took part in the Council of the Four Hundred and other agencies. In addition, they were supposed to serve in the cavalry, so they were often called the knight class.

The third class included people who had incomes from 200 medimnoi or more annually. This class had limited political power because they did not serve on the Council of Elders. However, they were elected to the Council of the Four Hundred, joined the infantry and they had enough wealth to equip themselves for the infantry.

Diagram 1: Sonlon Constitutions



The fourth class consisted of people who had incomes of 199 medimnoi annually or less. This class participated in the Assembly of Athenian citizens and was elected to public positions. However, they did not run or hold important positions, and they had to serve in the army and pay taxes.

Along with the process of economic and socio-political reform, Solon organized the Athens government as the model of a democratic republic, included the following main institutions:

Assembly of Athenian citizens (Assemblée du people): Actually, the congress of all adult males (Athenian citizens) [3; p.196] of four classes are allowed to participate. It was the most powerful institution and it was responsible for the election of other institutions of Athens. Usually, the Assembly of Athenian citizens was held once a year.

The Council of the Consuls (Aréopage) which was elected by the Assembly of Athenian citizens, was made up of the first and second classes. However, in reality, the participation of the second class in this institution was very limited.

The Council of the Four Hundred was also elected by the Assembly of Athenian citizens on the basis of four old clans. Each clan elected 100 people, which included citizens of the first, second, and third classes. Solon established The Council of the Four Hundred as an administrative institution and a state advisory institution. This function forced the Council of the Four Hundred to deal with the issues between the two meetings of the Assembly of Athenian citizens and they were required to prepare issues to discuss at these meetings.

There was a connection between the three institutions, but the document did not tell us more about how that link was.

The Court of Athenians (The tribunal du people) was elected by the Assembly of Athenian citizens in each congress. Its composition included the participation of all 4 classes. This court operated independently and it only depended on each congress. This was a Solon creation in the establishment of the Athens institutions.

Thus, compared to the old state, the Assembly of Athenian citizens, The Council of the Four Hundred, and the Court of Athenians in Solon's reform clearly demonstrated the democratic nature in Athens political and social life and it contributed to limit the power of the old aristocracy. This was the first primitive democratic republic state model in Athens and it also considered the first primitive democratic state in the world. Because of his great contributions, Solon was recognized as one of seven wise men in the Greek history [4; p.1685].

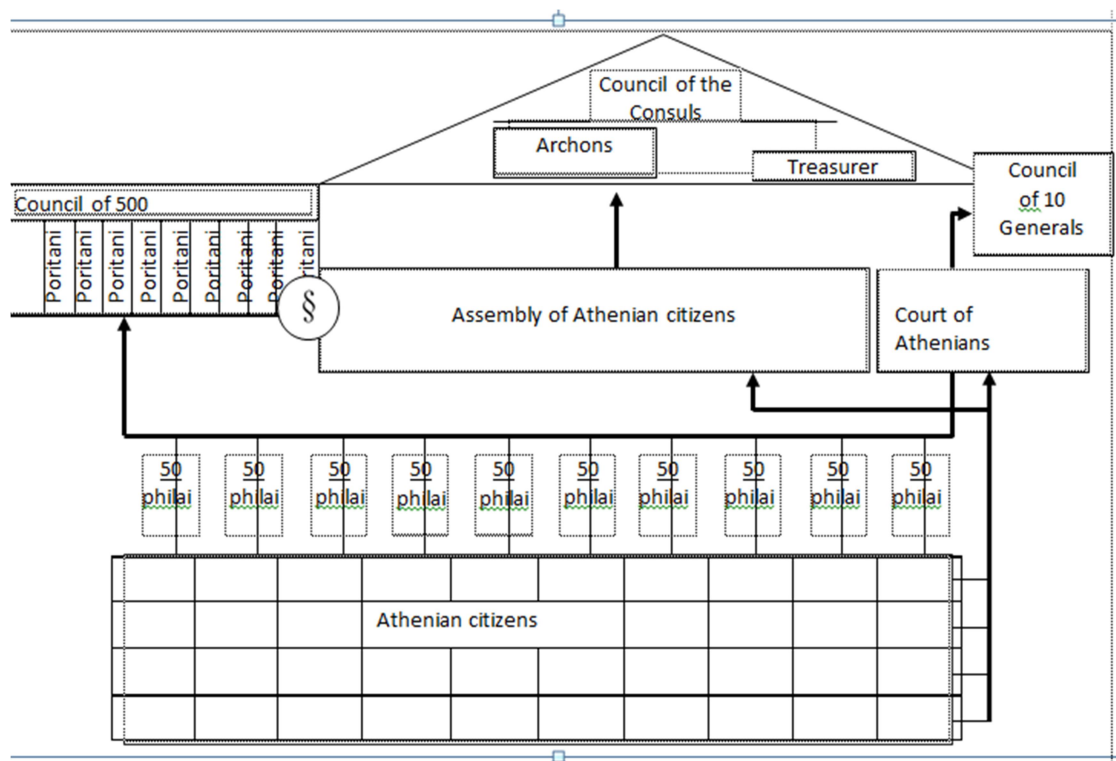
Reform and political structure of Athens under Clisthennes era

Clisthennes was born in the middle of the 6th century BC and was a new noble. He became a consul in 509 BC. He followed Solon's reform to consolidate and develop democracy

in Athens. During his tenure, Cleisthenes undertook several reforms (509-507 BC), most of which focused primarily on the socio-political field. He divided Athens to 10 units which were called phylai. Each phylai included basic areas such as city, inland, and coast. Each phylai was divided into 10 demoi (demes). This division was based on the residential area, and the former clan element did not have any influence to this division.

Since the reform about phylai, Cleisthenes had reformed some institutions which were established under the Solon period, towards a more democratic and radical abolition of the clanship.

Diagram 2: Cleisthenes Constitution



The Council of the Five Hundred: Based on The Council of the Four Hundred in the Solon reform, Cleisthenes expanded to 500 people based on the principle that each phylai elected 50 delegates. In order to take part in this council, delegate had to be a free male Athenian, and 18 years old or older. The number of delegates was proportional to the number of citizens in each demoi. The more voters each demoi had, the more number of delegates it would have. "This was the first time in history that the election of people's representative was proportional with the number of population" [1; p.54]. The Council of the Five Hundred was the highest administrative institution of the state of Athens, which was responsible for preparing

important work for the annual Assembly of Athenian citizens. The Council's daily work was undertaken by 50 representatives of an phylai for a term of 1/10 of a year, which was about 36 days. So, 10 phylai took turns taking over the work according to the term.

The Council of 10 Generals (10 stratèges): This new institution was called The Council of 10 Generals, in which each general represented one phylai. He had the largest income in that phylai and had military talent. These 10 generals elected their leader who could be re-elected (réélection possible). This right previously belonged to the Consuls. This institution had the connection with The Council of the Consuls in the Solon government.

Shell voting law (Ostracism): In the process of building democracy, there had been some people who opposed or threatened the security of Athens. Therefore, Cleisthennes set up the law of voting with the seashells, which were made of soil, in the Assembly of Athenian citizens in the spring of every year. The name of the rebel was recorded in the seashell. If the name of a person appeared on 6.000 seashells, this person would be deported from Athens after 10 days and for a period of 10 years. By this way, Athens effectively prevented coup d'états and ensured national security and social formation.

With the reform of the Cleisthennes, the democratic republic was consolidated in Athens. In this regime, the new slave-owners held most of the important positions in the government of the Athens. Besides, while free citizens were accepted to participate widely in politics, most women, slaves and immigrants could not participate in politics. This was also a limitation of this era. However, this reform enabled the Athens to grow in many fields in next periods.

Reform and political structure of Athens under Pericles era

After the death of the Ephialtes (461 BC), the struggle between the landlord aristocracy and the commercial aristocracy in Athens continued to happen. While the landlords aristocracy advocated to establish the aristocratic republic dictatorship, the commercial aristocracy advocated to construct the Athenian democracy. The trend of democracy overwhelmed and prevailed over the conservative trend of the landlord aristocracy. In that context, Pericles - grandson of Cleisthennes, was elected consul in Athens from 443 BC to 429 BC. He continued to reform and perfect the political system of the Democratic Republic of Athens.

Pericles's reform took place mainly in the socio-political field.

Pericles strengthened the power of the Assembly of Athenian citizens. In the Assembly of Athenian citizens, all members had the right to discuss and decide important issues of the state. This provision facilitated all citizens to participate in the Athenian government. He was also the first person who paid salaries for state officials and widely implemented social welfare regimes for poor citizens such as distributing food and giving them money to buy theater tickets.

On the basis of these reforms, Pericles retained the principal institutions in the Athens government, but he added some specific provisions to those institutions in order to expand democratic rights of Athenians.

The Assembly of Athenian citizens had the highest authority. According to the law (451 BC), Athenians who were free citizens, male, 18 years old or older, and especially their parents were Athenians, could take part in this institution. The Assembly of Athenian citizens had the right to decide major issues of the country such as war and peace; establish or pass laws; and supervise other institutions. In addition, the Assembly of Athenian citizens also had the right to elect state officials, to review the important work of the Court, and to provide food to the city.

The Council of the Five Hundred was established by the Assembly of Athenian citizens by voting. This institution held administrative and advisory functions. After the Cleisthenes reform, it also became the representative agency for Athens on foreign affairs and had the right to manage state finance.

The Council of 10 Generals was also elected by Assembly of Athenian citizens. Functionally, this institution led the state army and implemented the foreign policy. However, it was controlled by Assembly of Athenian citizens and its officials were not received salary. The Court of Athenians was the highest judgment and judicial oversight institution of the Athens. A lot of people participated in the jury. Under Pericles period, there were 6,000 judges, who were elected annually by the Assembly of Athenian citizens by voting. There was no prosecutor office in Athens, so Athenians could file a lawsuit and they could prosecute or defend themselves. In the trial, after listening to confrontation of the two parties, the Court of Athenian would organize a closed session in order to make the final judgment.

The government of Athens under the Pericles administration created the most favorable conditions for Athens citizens to gain the basic political rights of the Athenians, such as the right to stand for election, the right to elect officials of the government, and supervisory rights of citizens in the Assembly of Athenian citizens. Athens under Pericles period was a state that reached the peak of ancient democracy and established the "golden age" in ancient Greek history. But the government of Athens was still limited. For example, many slaves, expatriates, and women in Athens did not have civil rights which made them to be pushed out of the political life of Athens, although they had many contributions for the development of this city-state.

3. Remark

3.1. Greece was the first state in the world to create and follow republic, and the Athens built a state of a republic and democracy and it gradually improved from the beginning of the

6th century BC to the second half of the 5th century BC. This state played an important role in the development of the Greek civilization in the 5th century BC. The ancient Athenian democratic regime has profoundly influenced the state organizational model of European nations nowadays.

3.2. In three reforms, Solon's reform was the most important. It created an economic breakthrough and promoted commercial development. Thence, it created favorable conditions for social-political reforms, which includes the reform of Cleisthenes and Pericles. The Solon reform also strongly influenced Rome under the rule of Servius Tullius (578-535 BC).

The process of perfecting the Democratic Republic of Athens was associated with the process of limiting and depriving the economic privileges and political interests of the aristocracy and gradually increasing the democratic rights (*démocratie*) for citizens (*citoyen*).

3.3. The Assembly of Athenian citizens often organized to meet by *tenure*. Their *tenure* popularly was 1 year. It was the highest institution, which Athenians could show their ownership in the election of state institutions such as the Council of Consuls, Council of the Four Hundred or Five Hundred, and the Athenian Court. The Assembly of Athenian citizens had the right to decide issues of war and peace; build or pass laws.

3.4. However, the democratic nature of Athens had some limitations. First of all, the Athens population accounted for only about a quarter of the population (about 90,000 free people) and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population (about 365,000 slaves, 45,000 expatriates, female, male who their father or mother were not Athenians) were not considered citizens. Thus, they were excluded from social and political life, even though they are the main labor force of Athens.

4. Conclusions

The perfecting of the democratic republic in Athens (ancient Greece) was a long process, taking place over a century (from the 6th to the 5th century BC) associated with 3 mainly reforms. Thereby, it is clear that there is a close relationship and interaction between political institution reform and socio-economic reform in the process of perfecting this state model in ancient Greece.

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