

II. The Trittyes in Cleisthenes' Reforms

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This paper is an attempt to discover the motives of Cleisthenes when, in revising the Athenian constitution, he formed his tribes artificially of groups of demes, called trittyes, from each of the three regions of Attica: the coast, the city, and the inland area.¹ This is, as Walker pointed out,² a problem quite distinct from that of finding his motives for the substitution of the deme for the phratry as a basis for citizenship. The confusion of these two problems may well account for the fact that no satisfactory answer has been given for the first, a fact well illustrated by the recent discussion of the problem by Hignett, who comes to no definite conclusion and admits that no satisfactory solution has ever been reached.³

It is clear that the heart of Cleisthenes' reforms was the substitution of locality for birth as a basis for citizenship and membership in a tribe. He did this from a desire to facilitate the admission of new citizens and to break the political power of the Eupatridae in the phratries.⁴ But this, in itself, could have been done very simply by dividing Attica into ten regions. Yet Cleisthenes' system was much more complicated than this. There were four basic

¹ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21.4. This is our only ancient evidence for this part of the reforms. Herodotus, in his account of Cleisthenes (5.66 and 69), does not mention the trittyes. The problem has, of course, been much discussed by modern authorities. The most important of these are U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aristoteles und Athen* (Berlin 1893) 2.145-68; G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* 2² (Gotha 1895) 405-22; G. De Sanctis, *Atthis*² (Turin 1912) 333-45; Busolt-Swoboda, *Griechische Staatskunde* 2 (Munich 1926) 868-87; E. M. Walker in *CAH* 4.141-51; P. Cloché, *La Démocratie Athénienne* (Paris 1951) 20-30; C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution* (Oxford 1952) 129-42. The latter work is an excellent analysis of the problem and its difficulties, despite an unnecessarily strong bias against the authority of the *Ath. Pol.*

² *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 144.

³ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 141.

⁴ The first motive is that advanced by Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 21.2; *Pol.* 3.1275B.37; 6.1319B.19-27); the second is implicit in the whole change. Both are accepted by most authorities, but Hignett (above, note 1) 138-40 tries to discredit Aristotle's account. It seems to me that the two are closely related and complement one another. For the purposes of this paper, however, the question is irrelevant, since even Hignett admits (133) that there were a considerable number of new citizens enrolled, and there is no way in which the actual formation of the tribes and trittyes could facilitate their admission.

peculiarities in it:⁵ first, every tribe was composed of members from each of the three regions of Attica; second, the city was one of these three regions; third, the demes in each trittys formed a compact geographical area; and fourth, the inland and coast trittyes in some of the tribes were contiguous.⁶ Any explanation of Cleisthenes' motives must be in harmony with and account for these peculiarities.

The ancient sources help us very little in a search for Cleisthenes' motives. The only reason given for this particular phase of the reforms is advanced by Aristotle, who says that Cleisthenes wished to mix up the people.⁷ This, of course, begs the question. We want to know why he wished to mix them up in such a complicated manner, and we are forced to fall back, for an answer, upon an examination of the effects of the composition of the new tribes.

The traditional answer⁸ has been that Cleisthenes wished to break up the old rivalry of the *Pediakoi*, *Paralioi*, and *Diakrioi*, the three pre-*Peisistratid* parties.⁹ This assumes, as Walker pointed out,¹⁰ that the three regions of Cleisthenes correspond to the three regions of the parties, which they do not, and that the rivalry persisted through the tyranny of *Peisistratus* and his sons, which is very

⁵ Cf. Hignett (above, note 1) 141. He gives three of the following four points and assumes the other throughout his discussion.

⁶ For the first two peculiarities, see Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21.4. The third and fourth were established by R. Loeper, "Die Trittyen und Deme Attikas," *AM* 17 (1892) 319-433 and are now generally accepted. One exception is Walker (above, note 1) 143, who merely states that the demes in a trittys were not contiguous, but gives no reasons for his opinion. For the latest authoritative work on trittyes, see H. Hommel, *RE* s.v. "Trittyes" 330-70; "Die dreissig Trittyen des Kleisthenes," *Klio* 33 (1940) 181-200.

⁷ *Ath. Pol.* 21.2-3. Aristotle says: "He (Cleisthenes) did not arrange them in twelve tribes for this reason, that he might not have to divide them according to the existing trittyes (for there were twelve trittyes in the four tribes), with the result that the multitude would not have been mixed up." The meaning of this is not at all clear; why should the old trittyes have to become tribes even if Cleisthenes had wanted twelve? This is apparently what the author had in mind, judging from his parenthesis. We are not sure of the nature of these old trittyes; see Hignett (above, note 1) 71-74. It seems to me most likely that each of them included the members of one of the four old tribes in one region of a tripartite division of Attica (coast, plain, and hills?) different from that of Cleisthenes (coast, inland, and city) and that a statement to the effect that Cleisthenes wished to avoid the existing division led to the mistaken interpretation in the *Ath. Pol.*

⁸ e.g. Loeper (above, note 6) 428-30; Busolt (above, note 1) 419; De Sanctis (above, note 1) 341.

⁹ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 13.4; Hdt. 1.59.3 (who uses *Hypakrioi* instead of *Diakrioi*).

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 146-47.

unlikely. Furthermore, it is not in harmony with the third and fourth of the peculiarities mentioned above, which make it possible in some cases for two thirds of a tribe, the coast and inland trittyes, to form a compact geographical area. Particularly damaging to such a theory is the fact that such is the case in the area around Marathon and the hills behind, where two trittyes of the tribe Aiantis are contiguous. The same is true of the tribe Aigeis toward the south around Pentelicon and of the tribe Pandionis to the south of this.¹¹ Since this was the stronghold of Peisistratus and his *Diakrioi*, it is the first place that we should look for a splitting up of the trittyes if the motive had been a separation of the members of the old parties. But the opposite is true, so strikingly so that Beloch was even led to assume that the new tribal division must have been the work, not of Cleisthenes, but of Peisistratus, seeking to gain for himself some political advantage.¹² We may safely assume, then, that Cleisthenes' motive was not the breaking up of the old parties.

Another theory, advanced by Walker,¹³ is that Cleisthenes wished to eliminate the influence of the Eupatridae, which he says was mainly local. Again, this runs contrary to the fact of the contiguity of some of the trittyes. Cleisthenes' blow at the Eupatridae was not in his formation of the tribes, but in his substitution of the deme for the phratry and clan. The nobles' influence lay there, in the groups bound together by birth. It may have by coincidence been local to the extent that members of the same *genos* would tend to live near one another, but under the new system the situation would be the same, as they would generally remain in the same deme or trittys. Walker, in a way, seems to recognize this and says that now no family could control more than a third of the votes in any one tribe. But even such control of a tribe would have little practical political effect on the whole state, unless we assume a system of voting by tribes similar to that used at Rome; such was, of course, not the case at Athens, where the vote was always by the majority of those individuals present.¹⁴ The same assumption is necessary

¹¹ See Loeper (above, note 6) 419-21; 352-63; 367-73; and Hommel's map in *Klio* 33 (1940) 197.

¹² *Griechische Geschichte* 12.2.328-32. The theory is, of course, unacceptable as doing too much violence to the sources. If we cannot accept the unanimous attribution of the reforms to Cleisthenes, there is no point in speculating on them at all.

¹³ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 147-48.

¹⁴ Cf. Hignett (above, note 1) 135 and 141; J. A. O. Larsen, "The Origin of the Counting of Votes," *CP* 44 (1949) 175-81. This is not to say that Walker thought that

for Walker's further claim, a corollary to the first, that Cleisthenes wished to increase the power of the city, with its new citizens, his supporters. It is true that in the *Ekklēsia* this group would have had great influence because of their proximity to the meeting place, but this would have been true under any tribal arrangement. It cannot have been one of Cleisthenes' motives for the peculiar formation of the tribes.

The contrary view, held by Busolt¹⁵ and De Sanctis,¹⁶ that Cleisthenes wished to lessen the influence of the city, meets with the same objection, that the arrangement of the tribes could not affect the *Ekklēsia*, and the fact remains that the city population was given an advantage by the site of the meetings.

Modern authorities who recognize the difficulties involved in the above theories fall back on more general statements. Ehrenberg says, "It is generally acknowledged that his (Cleisthenes') aim was to create a uniform type of *πολίτης*,"¹⁷ applying this to the whole reform. I am not sure exactly what this means, but it cannot be taken very literally. It implies, perhaps, that all citizens should have equal rights and opportunities, and in this it certainly applies more to the change in basis for citizenship than to the formation of the tribes. The latter may have had something to do with making a man feel himself more a citizen of all of Attica than of a prescribed locality, but such an argument may be carried too far. Hignett has pointed out that one reason for the permanence of Cleisthenes' settlement was that the tribes were composed of natural and well-established local units.¹⁸ Hignett himself suggests tentatively that Cleisthenes' tribal reforms "may have been intended to transcend local barriers by bringing together men from urban, coastal, and rural districts and to develop a sentiment of union and fellowship between its members, who henceforth fought side by side in the same regiment."¹⁹ This is a possibility, but it seems a rather vague and tenuous reason for such a complicated reform, and it, too, runs

the Athenians voted by the Roman system, but that he did not analyze his argument sufficiently. For he is definitely thinking of the effect on overall government policy when he says (148) that the new system brought it about that the interests of the rural district should be sacrificed to those of the city, and yet control of individual tribes could not affect such policy, which would be decided by the *Boulē* and *Ekklēsia*.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 406-9.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 335-36.

¹⁷ "Origins of Democracy," *Historia* 1 (1950) 543.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 142.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 141.

into the difficulty of explaining why sometimes two-thirds of a tribe was one contiguous area.

This introduces, as well, the vexed question of the extent to which Cleisthenes reformed the army. It has even been claimed that he did not change it at all.²⁰ We do know that the office of *stratêgos*, at least as we know it, was not instituted until 501/0. Aristotle's notice of the innovation of that year is vague; it can mean that the office was first introduced then; it implies that the *stratêgoi* were elected by the whole people, one from each tribe.²¹ But it seems hardly likely that, when the government was changed from a basis of four tribes to ten, the army did not change with it. Certainly the new citizens brought in by Cleisthenes would have been expected to share in the responsibilities as well as the benefits of their new station. The most logical explanation is that the change to an army based on ten tribes was made in 508/7, with each tribe electing its own general until 501/0, when the *dêmos* as a whole took over the right of election.²² If this was the case, here is an area in which the new tribal arrangements would have had some effect; the generals of any of the tribes could come from any of the three regions of Attica. Or to put it another way, any and all of them could have come from the city.

But now let us return to the four peculiarities of the system²³ and see where else they would have had effect. We have seen that it was not in the *Ekklēsia*; there a majority would rule under any

²⁰ Walker (above, note 1) 142.

²¹ *Ath. Pol.* 22.2: ἔπειτα [ἐφ' Ἑρμοκρέοντος ἄρχοντος] τοὺς στρατηγούς ἡρῶντο κατὰ φυλάς, ἐξ ἐκάστης φυλῆς ἓνα, τῆς δὲ ἀπάσης στρατιᾶς ἡγεμῶν ἦν ὁ πολέμαρχος. I do not believe that the wording can be used to support any particular theory. See Hignett (above, note 1) 169–73 for the case against the introduction of the office at this date.

²² Cf. Busolt-Swoboda (above, note 1) 881. There may be further evidence in Herodotus' statement (5.69.2) that Cleisthenes made the *φυλάρχους* ten instead of four. J. L. Myres, "Cleisthenes in Herodotus," *Mélanges G. Glotz* 2 (Paris 1932) 657–66 has pointed out that this should apply to the *stratêgoi* and is probably an example of the laxness of Herodotus' technical expression. I should agree with this, but not with his citing 8.44.2 as an example of a similar laxness (when applied to Ion, *stratarchês* is as appropriate as *polemarchos*) nor with his statement that Aristotle's reference to *stratêgoi* elected in 501/0 "only serves to show that in those early years there was no occasion to call out the new tribal *στρατοί*; and incidentally serves to date the next occasion when we know that Athens was engaged in war, namely against the Boeotians and Chalcis." Besides assuming that no generals were elected unless there was a war, this ignores the fact that Herodotus (5.74) connects the Boeotian and Chalcidic campaigns with Cleomenes' attempt to restore Isagoras, which can hardly have been put off so long.

²³ See above, 22–23.

system. Nor was it in the *Boulê*. It has often been pointed out that this was a body representative of all Attica, being composed of men from all three regions.²⁴ But this would have been true under any system, since all the tribes were represented; it was not necessary for each tribe to represent three regions. But when we look at the *Prytaneis*,²⁵ the situation is different. Here the fifty members of one tribe were in office for 35 or 36 days, and, if this body was also to be representative, the individual tribes had to be so. I suggest that this was one of Cleisthenes' motives. Only here, and in the election of generals by tribes, could the new system have a definite effect; elsewhere any tribal arrangement would have produced the same results. From direct evidence we know little of the duties and powers of the *Boulê* and *Prytaneis* in the early democracy, but it is generally, and necessarily, assumed that from the beginning they were as broad as we know them to have been in the fifth century.²⁶ In fact, the history of these two bodies seems to have been one of the lessening of their powers, and in the early period it is very likely that they had more than we suspect.²⁷ Larsen has concluded that immediately after the reforms "the *boule* was so powerful that it can almost be said that Athens for a few years possessed a representative government."²⁸ This would of course have increased greatly the influence of the *Prytaneis*. Being on call at all times, with one-third of their number actually living in the Agora, presiding over all meetings of the *Boulê* and *Ekklesià*, and handling foreign affairs, they would have had tremendous power, particularly if, as is likely at this early period, the *Boulê* did not meet every day. At any rate, it must have seemed wise to Cleisthenes to arrange it so that a group with such powers would represent different parts of Attica, not just one region.

²⁴ e.g. De Sanctis (above, note 1) 348; J. A. O. Larsen, *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1955) 5-11.

²⁵ U. Kahrstedt, "Untersuchungen zu athenische Behörden, IV: Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Rats des Fünfhundert," *Klio* 33 (1940) 10-12, claims that the system of *prytaneis* was not introduced until the middle of the fifth century, but he is arguing from silence. See Larsen (above, note 24) 9.

²⁶ See De Sanctis (above, note 1) 347; Hignett (above, note 1) 150-53. Cloché (above, note 1) 26 expresses the opposite opinion.

²⁷ See Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 45.1; 45.3; 49.3 for examples of powers which had been taken away from the *Boulê*. *IG* I² 114, although dated in 410/09, reflects a much earlier imposition of restrictions on that body. Larsen (above, note 24) 15-18 very plausibly connects this with Aristotle's notice (*Ath. Pol.* 22.2) of the introduction of the oath of the *Boulê* in '501/0.

²⁸ *Op. cit.* (above, note 24) 18.

But, although Cleisthenes was interested in a general representation of the three regions of Attica in each tribe, we must bear in mind that the trittyes were compact geographical areas and in some places were contiguous. It has been noted that in one case two-thirds of a tribe represented only one corner of Attica.²⁹ Aristotle's account explains this when it states that the trittyes were assigned to tribes by lot, a statement which there is no reason to doubt.³⁰ This implies that Cleisthenes cared little how the coast and inland trittyes fell and therefore was not seeking to get as widespread a geographical representation as possible. His realization of the need for some local community of interest as a basis for his new constitution would explain his forming individual trittyes from adjoining demes, but not his allowing the possibility of two trittyes of the same tribe being side by side. Therefore, since Cleisthenes was willing to leave to chance how the coast and inland trittyes of a tribe were to fall, we must conclude that he was primarily interested, not in those two areas, but in the other, the city. He must have wanted to make sure that it would be represented in all the tribes. This he did by making it one of the three regions.

But why did Cleisthenes wish the city to be represented in all the tribes — that is to say, in the important offices of general and *Prytaneis*? The answer can hardly be the same as that of Walker, discussed above,³¹ that he wished to increase his own power through that of the new citizens, his supporters. Walker's argument rests on the assumed ability of the urban trittys to outvote the other two because of its proximity and ability to attend meetings more often. But for an election of generals, held once a year, this could hardly have been the effect. And the members of the *Boulê* were apparently nominated by the process of *prokrisis* in the demes, in proportion to their population,³² so the city could have no preponder-

²⁹ See above, 24.

³⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 21.4. Hignett's comments on this passage well illustrate his attitude toward the *Ath. Pol.* (above, note 1) 135. He states that the reference to lot "may be a later conjecture to account for the anomalies of the allocation"; then he admits that no reason for their deliberate creation can be found and that "it is possible that they were accidental." What could have been more accidental than the lot?

³¹ See above, 24–25.

³² *Arist. Ath. Pol.* 62.1. See J. W. Headlam, *Election by Lot at Athens*², revised with notes by D. C. Macgregor (Cambridge 1933) 187–88 and 196–200; Hignett (above, note 1) 150 and 226–27; Larsen (above, note 24) 9. The *prokrisis* of the members of the *Boulê* during the early period is only an assumption, but a natural one. It must be remembered that we have no direct ancient evidence at all for the method of

ance of power in such elections. Furthermore, most of Cleisthenes' new citizens must have been artisans with no qualifications for generalship nor the leisure to serve on the *Boulê* without pay.³³ But this raises a point which indicates the answer to the problem. For those who had the qualifications and the leisure were, in general, the nobles. And furthermore, the majority of these Eupatridae lived in and around the city. We have a definite statement to this effect in one of the lexicographers,³⁴ and this is borne out by Gomme, who has pointed out that most of the noble families of Athens belong to the city demes.³⁵ Wade-Gery has very plausibly attributed this phenomenon to the location of the Eupatridae at Athens as the king's council in the *synoikismos* attributed to Theseus.³⁶ These families must have kept their land, and influence, in the territory from which they came, but their residence was in, or near, Athens. These Eupatridae were by tradition, and continued to be down to the Second Peloponnesian War, the group most interested and capable in military and governmental affairs. To divide Attica simply into ten tribal areas would have put a majority of such men into one tribe. Therefore it was necessary to devise a system by which they could be spread into all the tribes, while still using locality as the basis for citizenship. This Cleisthenes did by making the city one of the three regions.

To sum up, Cleisthenes, having substituted locality for birth as a basis for citizenship, having changed the military arrangements based on tribes, and having determined on a council of 500 representative of all Attica, was faced with the necessity of devising a system by which the Eupatridae, his enemies, perhaps, but still the

appointment, duties, or rules for rotation as they were set up by Cleisthenes. On the vexed question of the introduction of *klerôsis ek prokritiôn*, see Hignett (above, note 1) 321-26 and the references there cited.

³³ Until the introduction of pay for members of the *Boulê*, it seems hardly possible that the restrictions on re-election to that body could have been in effect; the two must go together. There is no actual evidence for the date of the introduction of pay, but no one would put it before the period of Pericles and the payment of jurors. See Walker, *CAH* 5.103; Hignett (above, note 1) 219-20.

³⁴ I. Bekker, *Anecdota* 1 (Berlin 1814) 257: *εὐπατρίδαι ἐκαλοῦντο οἱ αὐτὸ τὸ ἄστυ οἰκοῦντες*. . . . Further, in Aristotle's account of Leipsydriôn (*Ath. Pol.* 19.3), the Alcmaeonidae are said to have been joined by *τινες τῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἄστυος*, who must be equated with those celebrated as *ἀγαθοὺς τε καὶ εὐπατρίδας* in the scolion quoted in the same passage.

³⁵ *The Population of Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (Oxford 1933) 37-39.

³⁶ "Eupatridai, Archons, and Areopagus," *CQ* 25 (1931) 1-11.

men of ability, could be used to advantage in the military and in the new and rather powerful position of *Prytaneis*. This necessity and, to a limited degree, a desire to make the *Prytaneis* representative of all of Attica, account for the first two of the peculiarities of his system, namely, that there were three regions and that the city was one of them. The third peculiarity, that the trittyes were compact geographical areas, shows that Cleisthenes realized that artificiality could be carried only so far and that there must to a degree be a community of local interest to hold his system together. And finally, the contiguity of the trittyes of some of the tribes shows that it was the representation of the city, and not the scattering of the members of a tribe as widely as possible, that was uppermost in Cleisthenes' mind.

This solution was, I believe, a tribute to Cleisthenes as a clear-sighted and practical statesman. The greatest danger to the new democracy lay in the nobles. A more vindictive man might have put them all in one tribe, where their frustrated ambitions would have led to intrigue. But Cleisthenes used them and won them over by giving as many as possible the chance to serve in the new government. There was always a double check on them in the elections and in the *Ekklēsia*. The lack of any real aristocratic intrigue for almost 100 years shows how well Cleisthenes succeeded in integrating the nobles into the democracy. And this may help to explain why, in 411, after the introduction of pay for governmental service and the rise of the demagogues from the lower classes, some of the oligarchs looked back to the constitution of Cleisthenes as their desired ancestral constitution.³⁷

³⁷ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 29.3. Wade-Gery, "The Laws of Kleisthenes," *CQ* 27 (1933) 19–21, argues that this oligarchic interest in Cleisthenes was only in his method of changing the constitution, but see Hignett (above, note 1) 130.