

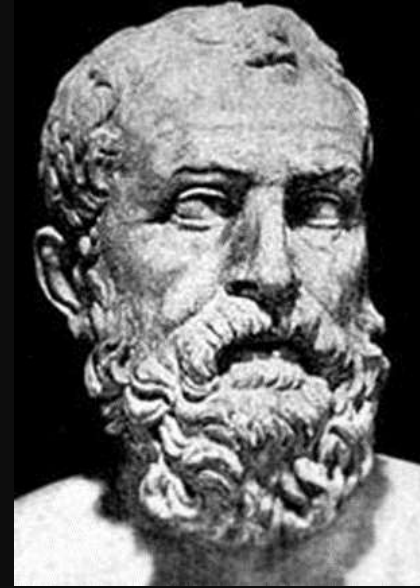


Slavery, Freedom and Politics: the
Dark Side of Democracy

Everyday Life in
Athens and Rome
(HHP4020)

Archaic Athens

- Domination of aristocratic clans (*phratries* = brotherhoods).
- Social instability:
 - Laws of Dracon (621 BC).
 - Solon Archon for the year 594/93 BC?
- Solon frees debtors and abolishes debt slavery.





Tyranny to Democracy

- Downfall of Peisistratid tyranny.
- Reforms of Cleisthenes (from 508/07 BC).
 - Demes (townships), *trittyes* (thirds), and Tribes.
 - Inland, coastal and city districts (*trittys*).
 - New Boule, new courts.

Increasing importance of slavery at Athens

- Classical period: slaves c. 10-30% of pop. in Athens?
- Thrace, Asia Minor and Black Sea region.
- Warfare, piracy and kidnapping;
 - also house-born slaves and foundlings.



Slavery and freedom intertwined?



- Seeming rise in slavery and egalitarianism at Athens with the “Democracy”? **Why?**
 - Slaves as the “other”?
 - Reduced exploitation of poor – political equality more permissible?
 - Exploitation of slaves rather than “serfs” – political freedom permissible?
 - Lack of strong patron-client relationships.



Cultural and economic factors

- Scheidel (2005 & 2008): slaves half as expensive in Athens (cf. Imp. Rome).
 - Inexpensive slaves, and high free wage labour costs.
- More limited competition for Athens (serfdom more common elsewhere?).
- Legal rights – citizen jury courts – harder for elites to exploit “peasants”.

Slavery, Politics and Administration in Athens

- Not just ideological and economic dichotomy between freedom and slavery.
- “**Public slaves**” (purchased and owned by the state) were fundamental to the operation of the democracy.
- Types of work:
 - Civic infrastructure (fixing roads, etc.)
 - Mint workers
 - Market inspectors (checking weights and coins, etc.)



Assistants to magistrates

Why would educated (slave) assistants to magistrates be so important in a direct (participatory) democracy like Athens?



Scythian archers



- Acted as prison guards, executioners and “police” (or bouncers).
- Why would the Athenians use armed slaves for these purposes?

How dependent was the Athenian Democracy on Slavery?

“A democratic system with “mass” participation only possible due to the skills and effective continuity of government brought about by slavery?
(Paulin Ismard 2017)

