



英美文化

The British and American Cultures

主编 贺相铸



云南出版集团公司
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Chapter 1 Ancient Greek Civilization

Ancient Greeks created forms of thought and expression: myth, epic poetry, drama, arts, history and philosophy. They practiced institutions of government and developed a civic culture with independent communities or city-states. They invented politics and started a political system of democracy. The Greeks made inquiries into the fundamental issues about human life that still dominate man's intellectual pursuits today: the nature of the universe, the purpose of human existence, the functions of the state, the true education, man's relationship to divine forces, the true sources of law, and truth itself ... It was the Greeks who constructed the intellectual foundations of the Western civilization, by contemplating and seeking solutions to such issues. By so doing, they established a system of logical and analytical thought and this rational outlook has remained an important feature of the Western heritage ever since.

1. 1 Social and Political Life of Ancient Greeks

Ancient Greek civilization began to develop around 2000 B.C. The first Greek state, namely, Mycenae, existed between 1600B.C. to 1100 B.C. And by the eighth century B.C., the characteristic institution of ancient Greek life, the city-state, emerged. Greek civilization flourished and reached its height in the classical era of the fifth century B.C., which was closely identified with the achievements of Athenian democracy. After the Peloponnesian War, the Greek civilization declined. And in 338 B.C., Greece came to be conquered by Macedon and began the Hellenistic era. That is, the Greek civilization started to spread to and beyond the Mediterranean regions. In 146 B.C., Greece was captured by Romans and stopped to exist as a sovereign entity.

The ancient Greek society was made up of city-states. In the city-state, people were classified on the basis of their birth and possessions. Foreign residents and slaves were denied citizenship; women and slaves were excluded from the public life. The polis was an independent and self-contained state or

country, based on tribal bonds, founded around a town or city with its neighboring areas, and evolved into communities. There were about 150 city-states in Greece, most of which were too small to have any record. Most states had fewer than 5000 male adult citizens. The polis was the focus of public life, giving the citizens a sense of belonging and close connections. The city-state was an invention of Greeks who developed the idea of law rooted in the human community. This was a big contribution to the Western politics. (J.M. Roberts, *The New Penguin History of The World*, P180)

For most city-states, the political life generally went through such stages as monarchy, aristocracy, tyranny, and democracy. In the beginning of the society, there was generally the king at the head, but he did not govern completely out of his own will; the king was guided by a council of the chief men of the community whom he consulted; the decisions of the council and the king deliberating together would be brought before the Assembly of the whole people. And it was out of these three elements — King, Council and Assembly — that the constitutions of later Europe have grown; these are also the roots of the common forms of government, namely monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.

At the early times, the political organization was weak and loose. The true power was actually the family. The earliest Greeks lived together in family communities. Their villages were the living and gathering places of a clan or family in a wide sense. All the members descending from a common ancestor bound together by the tie of blood. The chief of the family had the power of life and death over all who belonged to the family; and with the authority of the state growing and asserting itself against the independence of the family, this power gradually passed away. The village communities were not isolated and independent; they were part of a larger community called a tribe. The tribe was the whole people of a kingdom and the territory the tribe inhabited was called its deme, which is like an administrative village or district in the modern sense. When a king became powerful and came to take control over the demes of neighboring kings, a bigger community consisting of more than one tribe would arise. When this happened, each tribe had to merge its separate political institutions into the common institutions of the whole state or the larger union.

The king was also the chief priest, the chief judge, and the supreme warlord

of the tribe. He exercised a general control over religious ceremonies unless there were special priesthoods. He pronounced judgment and justice to those who came to him to have their wrongs redressed. He led his people to a war. The king's relation to his people was conceived as that of a protecting god; that is, he belonged to a family claiming descent from the gods themselves. The kingship passed from father to son but the personal qualities had to be recognized as conditions of the kingly office because the people might refuse to accept an incompetent son who was unqualified for the tasks that his father had fulfilled. Under the kings the Greeks gradually conquered coasts and islands of the Aegean, and created city-states. And these were the two great contributions of monarchy to the Greek history.

Despite all these, the royal functions were quite limited. The king had no power to enforce his will if it did not meet the approval of the heads of the people. The king must always seek the consent and the opinion of the deliberative Council. The members of the Council should be the heads of all the clans and represented the whole tribe or all the tribes. Of the clans, certain families held privileged positions above the others and were marked out as noble because they claimed descent from Zeus, the supreme god. The Council was composed of this nobility and the future aristocracy originated from the strong authority of this Council.

But the Assembly of the people was even more important than the King or the Council for the future growth of Greece. It was out of the Assembly that democracy was to develop. The Assembly was composed of all the freemen of the tribe or the nation. The Assembly met together whenever the king summoned them to hear and acclaim what he and his councilors proposed.

(J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, P46-48)

In the later royal period, the city began to emerge which was to decide the future of Greek history. With the emergence of cities and towns, the city-states arose. And in the eighth century B.C., the monarchies were declining and disappearing. In Sparta, for instance, monarchy survived in a limited form while in Athens it existed as a mere magistracy. Where the monarchy was abolished, the government passed into the hands of those who had done away with it, the noble families of the state. When the nobles assumed the government and became the rulers, an aristocratic state arose. At this stage of

society, the men of the noble class were the central force of the state. Birth was the best test of excellence that could be found, and the rule of the nobles was a true aristocracy, the government of the most excellent. They practised the craft of ruling; they were trained in it, they again handed it down from father to son; no great men arose but the government was conducted with knowledge and skill. When the day approached for aristocracies in their turn to give way to new constitutions, signs of degenerations appeared.

The two great achievements of the aristocratic stage were the planting of Greek cities in lands far beyond the limits of the Aegean Sea and the elaboration of political organization. With the monarchy vanishing, the aristocracies had to create new political organization to meet the needs of the constitution that used to consist of three parts. Thus at the close of the aristocratic period came the age of the lawgivers since the idea of law began to take a clearer shape in men's minds under the aristocracies, and the aristocracies had prepared the material which the lawgivers could improve and embody in codes. And this transitional development was particularly true to Athens.

With the coming of towns and cities, the city-state became the shared inheritance and experience of the Greeks. As mentioned above, there were about 150 city-states in Greece, of which Sparta and Athens were the most powerful but sharply different in their constitutions. They had been rivals and competing for dominance.

Sparta

It was mentioned in the previous pages that royalty survived in a limited form in Sparta. The kingship was not abolished or reduced to a mere magistracy. This was actually uncommon in other city-states. Normally the Spartan constitution comprised four parts: the Kings, the Council, the Assembly and the Ephors. The first three were the original institutions and the Ephors were a later and new institution which was peculiar to Sparta.

Sparta was ruled by two kings and the one was a check upon the other. But powers of kings were largely restricted. Of the religious, military, and judicial functions, they lost some and retained others. They were the priests but not the sole priests of the community. They were commanders of the army. While

enjoying the supreme position as high-priests and leaders of the army, the kings could hardly be considered as judges any longer. The right of dealing out dooms had passed away from them.

The Spartan Council consisted of thirty members, including the two kings, who belonged to it by virtue of their kingship. The other twenty-eight must be over sixty years old; so the Council was also called the Council of Elders. The councilors held their office for life and they were chosen by acclamation in the general assembly of citizens. The Council prepared matters which were to come before the Assembly; as an advising body it exercised a great influence on political affairs; and it formed a court of justice for criminal cases. The Councilors were elected by the people but not from the people. Nobility of birth retained in Sparta its political significance and only men of the noble families could be chosen members of the Council. In this sense, the Council formed an oligarchic element in the Spartan constitution.

Every Spartan who had passed his thirtieth year was a member of the Assembly of Citizens, which met every month. The Assembly did not debate but signified its will by acclamation after hearing the proposals of kings or ephors. The people elected the members of the Council, the ephors and other magistrates; determined questions of war and peace and foreign politics; and decided disputed successions of the kingly office. Thus theoretically, the Spartan constitution was a democracy.

The five ephors or magistrates were characteristic of the political constitution of Sparta. This was probably instituted in the first half of the eighth century. But it was not until the seventh century that they began to win political power. And they must win the power in the conflict between the nobility who governed together with the kings, and the people who had no share in the government. In the struggle the kings represented the cause of the nobility while the ephors were the representatives of the people. With the progress of this practice, any Spartan could be elected as an ephor. As chosen guardians of the rights of people, the ephors were required to watch the conduct of the kings. Thus two ephors would accompany the king on warlike expeditions. They had the power to indict them or summon them to appear before them. And the judicial functions which the kings lost passed partly to the ephors, and partly to the Council. The ephors were the supreme civil court;

the Council formed the criminal court. Besides such tasks, the ephors would be responsible for the strict maintenance of the order and discipline of the Spartan state.

Regarding the unique character of the Spartan constitution, it could not be called either royalty, oligarchy or democracy. None of these names was applicable to it; but it participated in all three. The secret of such complex constitution of Sparta lies in the fact that Sparta overcame each crisis with less violence and showed a more conservative spirit while developing on the same general path as other city-states and facing political crises. While having to pass from royalty to aristocracy, Sparta diminished the power of the kings but preserved hereditary kingship as a part of the aristocratic government. When having to advance toward democracy, Sparta gave enormous power to the representatives of people but retained both its hereditary kings and the Council of nobles. (J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, P114-118)

From the seventh to the fifth century B.C., Sparta was under a severe discipline, which got involved in every part of a man's life and controlled all his actions from his birth to death. Everything was subordinated to the art of war, and the sole aim of the state was to create invincible warriors. The whole Spartan people formed a military caste; the life of a Spartan citizen was devoted to the service of the state. In order to carry out this ideal, it was necessary that every citizen should be freed from the care of providing for himself and his family. The nobles owned family domains of their own; the community had common land, which was divided into a number of lots. Each Spartan possessed a lot, which was passed from father to son and could not be sold or divided. In this case, a citizen could never be reduced to poverty. The Helots or serfs cultivated land for their lords. A Spartan citizen had no power to grant freedom to the Helot working on his lot or sell him to another. Only the state could emancipate the Helots. The class of Helots could be the result of a series of the Spartan conquest. Though the Helots were not driven by taskmasters, their condition appeared very harsh; they were dissatisfied and ready to rebel whenever an occasion was available. As a result, the fear of a Helot revolt had been hanging over Sparta all the time. And this also hobbled their relations with other states. They feared to have their army abroad in case that its absence should tempt rebellion at home. This could be one of the

explanations that Sparta was always on the alert and its citizens were put under the strict discipline.

Freed from the care of gaining a livelihood, the Spartans devoted themselves to the good of the state, and the aim of the state was to cultivate the art of war. In Sparta, education, marriage and the details of daily life were all regulated to maintain an efficient army. Every citizen was a soldier and the discipline began from birth. When a child was born, it was submitted to the inspection of the heads of the tribe. If they judged it to be weak or unhealthy, it would be exposed to die on mountains. At the age of seven years, the boy was given to the care of a state-officer and the course of his education was entirely determined by the purpose of making him to bear hardships, training him to endure the discipline, and instilling into his heart a sentiment of devotion to the state. When reaching the age of twenty, he would enter upon military service and was permitted to marry. But he could not enjoy family life at all; he had to live with his companions in the military camps. In his thirtieth year, having completed his training and grown a true man, he obtained his full rights of citizenship.

The Spartan discipline was extended to women too, with the purpose of producing physically healthy mothers. Like the boys, the girls went through a gymnastic training; they enjoyed a freedom which was in sharp contrast with the seclusion of women in other Greek city-states.

In Sparta, the whole duty of man and the highest ideal of life was to be ready to fight with the utmost efficiency for his state. The aim of every Spartan law was to fashion good soldiers. Private luxury was strictly forbidden; the individual man had no life of his own; he had no problems of human existence to solve for himself. The Spartans were not supposed to own silver or gold until the fourth century. Before then, only an iron currency was permitted for internal use. There was little commerce within and trade without. The economy was mostly agricultural.

Despite all these, the Spartans felt a sense of superiority in being citizens of their state; they enjoyed a pride in living up to the ideal and fulfilling the obligations of their country. There was a simplicity about the manner of life enforced by the constitution; there was a completeness about the type of character developed by the constitution, which was admired by Greeks of other

city-states. There was a beauty of moderation and balance about the fabric of the Spartan constitution. To Plato, the Spartan state was the model of his ideal republic. (J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, P124-127)

The rigid social and constitutional discipline, however, made Sparta meet pressures and problems not by modifying its institutions but by resisting change. This embodied the conservative character of Spartan spirit. After the Persian war, for instance, Sparta could have become the leading power in Greece because of its extraordinary military performances in some decisive battles against the Persians. But the narrowness and short-sightedness of its policies hindered its expansion. Such lack of far-sightedness might also be an effect of its geographical location. Sparta was a land country. The Spartans were unable to adapt themselves to new conditions and reforms were unwelcome. They seldom showed the power of imagination or initiation. In Sparta, a man of exceptional ability would be regarded with suspicion. A society that aimed to “break up many into one” would definitely discourage innovation or creativity. Thus Sparta was no place for thinkers or theorists. It had no artistic or cultural achievement whatsoever.

Athens

Athens, however, was quite different in the historical transformations of its political and social structures.

The early situation of the Athenian constitution was like that of most other states in Greece in that the monarchy subjected to various limitations of its power passed into the aristocracy. This occurred in about the middle of the eighth century B.C. At the very beginning, the supreme of the army belonged to the monarch. To restrict the royal rights, a military commander was instituted and he was elected from the nobles and by the nobles as well. And to further weaken the monarchy, an office of archon or regent was again instituted; this post took away the most important functions of the king. At first, the regency was a life office, then ten-yearly, and ultimately annually elected by the community. This constitutional development laid the foundation of the Athenian democracy. In the beginning of the seventh century B.C., the Athenian state was in the hands of the aristocracy, represented by three yearly elected magistrates or archons. One of the archons was the supreme judge in

all civil cases. And he would declare that he was to protect the individual property on taking the office. Other functions, including the exercises of religious ceremonies, would be up to the other two magistrates.

During this period of the aristocracy, the Council of Elders was the governing organization of Athens, which was responsible for the election of the chief magistrates. And at this social stage, the free population fell into three classes: the nobles, the peasants cultivating their own land, and the public workers making livings by trade or commerce. These were classes of citizens, who had the right to attend the Assembly. There were also groups of free men who were not citizens. They were either craftsmen or small business persons. At the bottom of the society, there lived slaves. In archaic times, as what was reflected in Homeric poems, most slaves were women, the prizes of victory. But later on, the slaughter of male prisoners gave way to enslavement.

From the middle seventh to the early sixth century B.C., a further constitutional change took place as the result of social changes deriving from new economic activities. As was known, Athens was short of agrarian land and it had to depend on imports of grain. But the soil was suitable to grow the olive and Athens was rich with red clay which was good for pottery making. In addition to the colonizing movements, the cultivation of the olive and pottery industry were encouraged to respond to the pressures of land shortage and population growth. With the improvement of the sea traffic, trade between Athens and its neighboring countries was rapidly rising. With the commercial expansion came new wealth. New wealth meant new men; the new men battered away at the existing elites to get admission to the aristocracy. The aristocrats that had replaced the kings themselves became objects of rivalry and attack. While engaged in business adventures, some nobles became richer and others poorer; some freemen involved in industry increased in both wealth and importance. Land was no longer the only important source of wealth; nor was descent the mere standard of social distinction. A man's status began to be measured by how much corn or oil he owned. Thus wealth was competing with birth as a marker of political and social significance. A man would be eligible for the highest offices if his income amounted to the number required. In consequence of these changes, the state, which used to be under the control of three archons, now passed into the hands of nine. The newly added

magistrates were elected annually; their duty was to examine the defects in the laws and keep a record of judicial decisions. But this was just the case with the big proprietors and the nobles. Outside these classes were small peasants and free laborers. They were citizens but had no political rights. With the expanding sea trade, a navy was to be developed; the citizens of the poor classes were to be recruited. This would make these people important and pave the way for their political recognition at a later time.

Trade improved economy; commercial expansion intensified conflicts between rich and poor. The wealthy few grew wealthier by being greedy and oppressive. For men of small means, the conditions were getting increasingly distressing and unbearable. Small farmers were becoming landless and landless freemen were becoming slaves. The sad situation was even worsened by unjust judgments and the distortion of the law in favour of the rich and powerful. A man of extraordinary excellence was needed to deal with the social problems. Solon was the man to undertake the work of reform.

Solon was elected the chief magistrate with legislative powers and for the aim of remedying the social evils. Upon entering office, he declared to protect the property of all men, and proclaimed to cancel all debts by which the man was pledged, and free all those that had become slaves for debt. Solon's measures rescued the poor into liberty and hope; delivered the state from rebellion and disorder. Besides forbidding the enslavement of debtors by wealthy creditors, Solon encouraged farmers to specialize so that the olive oil and wine became staple exports of Athens, and grain was kept at home.

But the most important contribution made by Solon was his reform of the constitution. Solon made no change about the existing social stratification based on property; instead he added the free labourers as the fourth class and gave them certain political rights. They could be employed as troops or marines. The free labourers were not eligible for any of the state offices but they got admission to the meetings of the Assembly. This gave them a voice in the election of the magistrates. What's more, Solon instituted the courts of justice out of the whole people, including the free labourers. The judges were enrolled by lot; the poorest man could have his turn. Any magistrate abusing his office could be accused before the people in such courts; this invested the people with a supreme control over the magistrates or the administration.

Having in the hands the appointment of the magistrates and the control of their conduct, the people possessed in theory the sovereignty of the state. This opening of the general Assembly to the lowest class of people was a crucial step towards the democratic direction. And the institution of the judicial courts out of all citizens laid the foundation of popular government. Solon shaped the framework and constructed the framework of democracy for Athens.

Despite much criticism from both the rich and the poor, Solon succeeded in avoiding the internal strife and gaining social peace. His constitutional reform was not based on the idea of giving equal shares to all alike irrespective of merit, but on the notion of giving shares proportionate to the merit of those who received them. Solon's reform was built upon equity and fairness according to difference and diversity. What Solon sought was to restore the righteous order that was founded on justice, which was the foundation of a good state. In Solon's case, he could have seized the power and become the tyrant in Athens. He didn't. After completing his reform, Solon left Athens so as to see whether his reform would stand the test of time. (J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, P173-177) As a statesman, Solon set up the model for the ancient Greek politicians, a model of political leadership and order founded on impartiality and justice. Solon was the first statesman of wisdom in the Greek history who properly practised the combination of his intelligence and humanity in political life.

Thanks to Solon's reforms, the political rights were more or less extended to the poor classes of people. The political power and social influence of the rich and privileged classes, however, were hardly touched. This, along with the growth of the local parties, was becoming barriers to the social progress. As what occurred in other city-states in the second half of the sixth century, Athens also went through tyranny. A tyrant was a competent and influential man, who took the leadership by some illegal means. In ancient Greece, however, the tyrants were usually aristocrats and civilized men. They were different from being the violent anti-intellectual vulgarians in the modern world. Some of them were even classified into the Wise Men. Pisistratus in Athens was a good example of such a tyrant. Under his twenty years' administration (546-527 B.C.), Athens changed much. Pisistratus helped the poorer farmers by distributing land from confiscated estates, and building an aqueduct to give Athens a

much-needed water supply. He was also concerned to increase the international importance of Athens by attracting some well-known men to help him in his courts. He encouraged the forms of art, like sculpture and vase-painting, which could be exported to other places. One of his cultural policies was even more significant. Pisistratus reorganized some of the national festivals on a big scale, and Dionysus was one of such festivals. In enlarging this festival, Pisistratus for the first time gave public status to a new art — tragic drama. The first tragic contest took place in 534 B.C. And since then on, the tragic drama was given dignity by being incorporated into Dionysus. Under this enlightened ruler, both epic poetry and tragic drama were given public status. To the close of this century, tyranny came to its end in Athens. Then came the third outstanding statesman in the history of Athens, Cleisthenes. (Kitto, *Greeks*, P104-106)

In 508 B.C., Cleisthenes, a reformer like Solon, invented new laws to organize the society. First of all, he divided the Athenian state into three geographical locations: the city region (Athens), the inland region and the coast region. Every region consisted of demes or small districts. He then changed the tribal system by dividing up the original four tribes based on birth into ten and gave them names chosen out of the legendary heroes. Each new tribe was composed of three parts, which were respectively contained in the three regions. And the citizens of all the demes included in the three divisions of each tribe became fellow tribesmen. Thus the ten new tribes, based on the artificial arrangement, replaced the four old tribes, based on descent. By mixing up the population, Cleisthenes weakened the political strength and social significance of the aristocrats in their own dwelling places. And the political factions could no longer compete for the leading position in the country.

To diminish the influence of birth and enhance equality among citizens in the society, Cleisthenes introduced a new way to designate a citizen. Based on the new system of tribesmen, the first list of demesmen decided the deme of all their descendants. A man might change his home and live in another deme, but he still officially remained a member of the deme to which he originally belonged. A man was identified by his deme instead of his descent. Thus locality took the place of kinship in distinguishing citizens. This was a big step forward in the constitutional reform and a significant progress in political life..

Still to reduce localism, Cleisthenes devised a Council of Five Hundred based