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The Agora

Photo © Gillian Shepherd
Athens in the 7th century BC

- Signs of a wealthy elite class in Dark Age Athens
- 7th century Athens ruled by the Eupatridai (“well born”) ie an aristocratic class
- NB archon = “magistrate”
- NB “tyrant” from Greek tyrannos
- Failed attempt at tyranny c. 632 BC by Kylon (married to daughter of Theagenes, tyrant of Megara: Herod. 5.71)
- c. 621-0 Dracon produced first written Athenian law code (“Draconian”)
- Tensions between rich and poor


Late Geometric Dipylon Vase
For a long time there was *stasis* [= civil strife] between the notables and the masses. For the Athenian constitution was in all respects an oligarchy [= rule by the few], and the poor were enslaved to the rich – themselves, their children and their wives… the whole land belonged to a few men. The hardest and bitterest aspect of their life as citizens was that they were slaves. They had other complaints as well, for they had no share in anything at all

*Aristotle(?)* *Constitution of Athens* 2
Megara Hyblaea
(archaic city - detail)

Image source page: http://archeoparallel.efrome.it/Megara/PicturesGallery/promenade.jpg
No.1: Solon

- Archon 594/3
- Introduced a set of reforms including:
  - A new law code
  - Cancellation of debts
  - Grants of citizenship to immigrant craftsmen
  - Ban on export of agricultural products other than olive oil
  - Organisation of Athenian citizens into 4 property classes:
    - *Pentakosiomedimnoi* (500+ *medimnoi*)
    - *Hippeis* (300+ *medimnoi*)
    - *Zeugitai (nb hoplites)* (200-300 *medimnoi*)
    - *Thetes* (less than 200 *medimnoi*)
  - Creation of the Council of 400
- Presented his reforms in poetry
While Solon was away, there was still confusion in the city, but peace reigned for four years. In the fourth year after Solon’s rule, however, no archon was elected owing to *stasis* and again, four years later, the same thing happened. After another four year gap, Damasias was elected archon and held office for two years and two months until he was removed by force. The Athenians then decided to appoint ten archons because of the *stasis* and they held power for the year after Damasias…

*Aristotle(?) Constitution of Athens* 13

In the course of time there was a feud between the men of the coast (*Paralioi*) under Megakles son of Alkmeon, and the men of the plain (*Pedieis*) under Lykourgos the son of Aristolaides. Peisistratos, with tyranny in mind, organised a third faction, collecting supporters and taking command of the men of the hills (*Hyperakrioi*) as they were called.

*Herod. 1.59.3*
No.2: Peisistratos (Peisistratids)

- Tyrant 546-527
- Succeeded by sons Hipparchos (d. 514) and Hippias (overthrown 510)
- Generally benevolent
- Furthered Athenian interests through his foreign policy
- Trade and coinage
- Centralisation of cults, reorganisation of festivals including:
  - The Great Panathenaia
  - The Great Dionysia (or City Dionysia) – moved from Eleutherai?
  - The Mysteries at Eleusis
  - Artemis Brauronia on the Acropolis?
- Development and monumentalisation of Athens

Image Source Page:

Athenian “Wappenmünzen” coin
2nd half of the 6th cent. BC?
Building C: early 6th cent.
Building F: mid 6th cent.
Building D: just after mid 6th cent.

The Heliaia or Aiakeion? 
Mid 6th cent.

27 x 31m
The Altar of the 12 Gods
(statue base: “Leagros the son of Glaukon dedicated this to the 12 gods”)

Herod. II.7 “the road … to Heliopolis is similar in length to the road from the altar of the 12 gods in Athens to the Temple of Olympian Zeus at Pisa”

IG II2, 2640 (milestone c. 400 BC: “the distance to the harbour from the altar of the 12 gods is 45 stades”)

Thuc. 6.54 (dedicated by Peisistratos son of Hippias when he was archon)
NB *Enneakrounos* fountain house
The Athenian Acropolis

- Erechtheion
- Parthenon
- Propylaea
- Temple of Athena Nike
The Old Temple of Athena (Dörpfeld foundations) Vs the “Hekatompedon” (“100 footer”)

Image source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/crazyhazy/1505737033

Image Source Page: http://www.trentu.ca/faculty/ritzsimons/AHCL2200Y/LE%2009-03.htm
Pedimental Group of lioness
Savaging bull, c. 560

Gigantomachy pediment


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The Introduction of Herakles to Olympus c. 550
Zeus, Hera, (Athena), Herakles, Hermes

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No. 3: Democracy

... next lecture