THREE CLASSES(?) IN EARLY ATTICA

IN the traditions of early Athenian history there are references to an ordering of society different from the familiar classification by agricultural production defined by Solon: Pentakosiomedimnoi, Hippeis, Zeugitai and Thetes. Instead of these names we hear in several connections of Eupatridai, Agroikoi (or Geomoroi or Georgoi) and Demiourgoi. These groups appear in a political context after the usurpation of the archonship by Damasias, 582/1–580/79 B.C. Damasias, according to the *Athenaion Politeia* (13, 2), was removed from office and replaced by 10 archons for the remainder, 10 months, of the year 580/79 B.C.: 5 from the Eupatridai, 3 from the Agroikoi and 2 from the Demiourgoi. Although this notice seems to have the validity of official record,[1] the situation itself is difficult to accept: 10, instead of the usual 9, archons, representing groups which, in name at least, have no connection with those established by the Solonian classification.[2] The names at first sight suggest that the 10 archons were representatives of a cross-section of Athenian society, of aristocrats, farmers, craftsmen and laborers. While the vesting of governmental power in the board of archons apparently has a precedent in the crisis of Kylon's conspiracy (Thuc., I, 126, 8), the number 10 should hardly apply to the archonships. We might suspect that this is a special commission, in effect suspending the Solonian constitution until the latter was put to work again in the following year. Perhaps the commissioners were formally designated as reconcilers and archons, to act without reference to the assembly as had the 9 archons of 632 B.C. Yet a governing commission with representation from craftsmen and laborers seems very surprising in an archaic Greek state.

As has been suspected, of course, such an arrangement is more at home in the political theorizing of the late fifth and fourth centuries.[3] But if the action is historical, there were in Athens *ca.* 580 B.C. three defined groups of sufficient coherence and standing in the state that it was desirable to have recourse to them at a time of political crisis. Their existence at that time would give support to the tradition that the groups had existed for some time, even if we suspect their identification as social classes.

[1] F. Jacoby, *Atthis*, p. 175. I am grateful to Evelyn Smithson of the University of New York at Buffalo for her helpful suggestions and information about the archaeological material of Dark Age Attica; agreement on the conclusions expressed below, of course, is not necessarily implied.

[2] Presumably we should infer that the three groups, whatever their nature, were not property classes. Accordingly, I have not tried to bring them into specific connection with Solon's reorganization or with his property classes. For discussion see C. Hignett, *The Athenian Constitution*, Oxford, 1958, pp. 319-321.

[3] J. Day and M. Chambers, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy*, Berkeley, 1962, p. 173.

Tradition ascribes such an ordering of Athenian society to the organization of Athenian government by Theseus. Plutarch (*Theseus*, 25) credits him with separating out the Eupatridai among the Athenians and investing them with privilege: they were to know divine matters, to furnish archons, to be teachers of the laws and exegetai of holy and secret things: in short, to be the governing group in Athens in whose favor Theseus renounced the monarchy. As distinct from the Eupatridai the Geomoroi and the Demiourgoi were to form the people, equal in themselves and each group of general benefit to the state. The Geomoroi were reckoned as useful and the Demiourgoi numerous. Other late sources [4] indicate a twofold division of Athenian society into Georgoi and Demiourgoi before Theseus privileged the Eupatridai to make Athens an aristocratic state. Can we determine the nature of the groups?

Recently two explanations have been suggested. R. Sealey [5] has argued that the groups were, *ca.* 580 B.C., regional parties, while F. Wüst and J. Oliver [6] have preferred to regard them as old, hereditary classes or castes submerged in the Solonian reorganization but familiar and usable in the crisis of 580/79 B.C. It is difficult to accept the identification as regional parties. Sketchy as the account of the years between Solon and Peisistratos is in the *Athenaion Politeia*, creation of the governing commission of 580/79 is presented as a stabilizing move after the deposition of the would-be "tyrant," Damasias. The measure was anti-revolutionary in intent, presumably designed to preserve the Solonian system. Perhaps this could have been the purpose of a coalition of regional factions, but it is pertinent to ask why, if these were the names of the factions of *ca.* 580 B.C., those of a decade or so later at the time of Peisistratos' rise were entirely different. The latter do seem to designate proper regional groups, but it is difficult to explain the Eupatridai, Geomoroi and Demiourgoi as such. Perhaps the Eupatridai, as the governing class of aristocratic Athens, with their holdings mainly in the Athenian plain, had a regional interest, but were all the Eupatridai located there? The seat of the Alkmaionidai has been placed with some plausability in the district of Anavyssos near the southwest coast, and the Peisistratidai were apparently in Brauron.[7] But what of the Geomoroi and Demiourgoi? How could magistrates' titles, as Sealey explains the terms, which were presumably ubiquitous in Attica, become labels for regional parties?

[4] Schol. Plato, *Axioch.*, p. 465; *Lex. Dem. Pat.*, p. 182 (*Gennetai*) indicates that the two groups, Georgoi and Demiourgoi, remained in existence until the reorganization of Kleisthenes. Strabo (VIII, 7, 1) has the names of four Estates: Georgoi, Demiourgoi, Hieropoioi, Phylakes; possibly this is a speculative identification of the four old Athenian tribes by function. Diodoros (I, 28, 5) indicates three *mere* in early Athens. All this seems part of the political theorizing referred to in note 3.

[5] R. Sealey, *Historia*, IX, 1960, pp. 178-180; X, 1961, pp. 512-514.

[6] F. Wüst, *Historia*, VI, 1957, pp. 180-182; VIII, 1959, pp. 1-10. J. Oliver, *Demokratia*, p. 30, note 30; *Historia*, IX, 1960, pp. 506 ff.

[7] W. Eliot, *Historia*, XVI, 1967, pp. 279-286; see, in particular, R. J. Hopper, *B.S.A.*, LVI, 1961, pp. 189-219; D. M. Lewis, *Historia*, XII, 1963, pp. 22-26.

The other line of explanation, which recognizes the groups as hereditary classes or castes, seems more satisfactory at first sight, but it, too, involves considerable difficulties. As Oliver and Wüst have pointed out,[8] the respective representation of the three groups in the commission should indicate an order of importance. Eupatridai were the most prestigious, Geomoroi in second place and Demiourgoi in third. But was this a hierarchic ordering by class or caste? In a situation of political crisis the prestige of power and position was needed, not that based on some old shadowy form of class distinction which Solon felt could be overlooked. Indeed, to interpret the groups as classes or castes in any formal and legally defined sense is dangerous, for, like the Greek tradition itself, such a view assumes a definitive ordering of society at some specific time. The members of the commission would have been recognized leaders of some type from their groups but how can we assume that craftsmen and laborers, who may have had no place in the Athenian assembly,[9] would have had leaders acceptable to the assembly when the commission was selected? We should seek the nature of the groups in the process of social evolution in Attica in the Dark Age and recognize that they were still potent in the early sixth century, even if disguised under the new Solonian classification.

Eupatridai

The traditional criterion for a Eupatrid was membership by descent in a great family, with the nexus of wealth, privilege, birth and prestige attached to it. No one would deny that there were such families in seventh-century Athens and there seems no reason to deny them the collective name of Eupatridai,[10] although it is interesting that Solon does not use the term. Yet we can scarcely assume that their position of social primacy and the name, which emphasizes only the aspect of good birth, originated on a single occasion, either by the act of Theseus or with the creation of the archonship. The latter was the first reservation of political privilege. It is historically more significant to see if some estimate can be made of the time and manner in which a group of great families came into existence in Attica. For the seventh century we

[8] Wüst, *Historia*, VI, 1957, p. 187; Oliver, *Historia*, IX, 1960, p. 506.

[9] Hignett, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 101.

[10] Day and Chambers, *op. cit.* (note 3), p. 173 and the articles cited in notes 5 and 6. The name Eupatrid, which stresses good birth, presumably would have been applied after the great families had become recognizable by wealth and privilege, but at a time when reaction to aristocratic rule had set in. The word is laudatory, probably coined by aristocrats to stress the one qualification which "equalizing" farmers and parvenu merchants could not obtain. The time of such reaction was in the late seventh and early sixth centuries; see W. Donlan, *Agathos-Kakos; A Study of Social Attitudes in Archaic Greece* (Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1968), pp. 120-121, 208, 210 ff. and *idem*, "The Role of Eugeneia in the Aristocratic Self-Image During the Fifth Century B. C.," *Classics and the Classical Tradition*, p. 64, note 2. Pentakosiomedimnoi seems to be specifically coined for a property qualification, presumably that of Solon, to separate the very wealthy out of the Hippeis. It is the only such specifically quantitative word in the rating list.

do have some specific evidence but for the period before that only inference from the archaeological record.

The seventh century saw the consolidation of political and economic power by the wealthy families of Attica, but towards its close there was also increasingly effective reaction against their hold on government when the concept of the polis became stronger. Without pressing the statement (*Ath. Pol.*, 3, 5) that archons were chosen *αριστίνδην καὶ πλουτίνδην* as a legal qualification, it is reasonable that in practice they were. Throughout the seventh century the archonships grew to a college of 9 by the time of Kylon's conspiracy in 632 B.C. The administration of the law was firmly in their hands and those of their peers on the Council of the Areopagus and in the various special courts. Extension of the hold by the wealthy on land and agricultural production in Attica brought the peasants close to revolt by the end of the century. Solon could see only two classes in Attica, the wealthy and the poor, and endeavored to reconcile them by setting up a scale by which individuals might participate in the government. It has been reasonably suggested [11] that in this period of reaction against the aristocracy the latter began to seek other justifications for their position than wealth and privilege. Perhaps the term, Eupatrid, was coined to emphasize that birth was the unbreakable barrier which closed their ranks. Obviously in the seventh century the great families had consolidated their leading position by multiplying specific forms of privilege reserved to themselves and had acquired the consciousness of class. But as great families they had existed before this and won acceptance of their primacy. Can we detect this in the archaeological record of the Dark Age?

Both tradition and the evidence of archaeology [12] attest that there was some continuity of habitation in Attica beyond the collapse of the Mycenaean organization at the end of the Bronze Age. Yet that organization was shattered, much of Attica depopulated and only Athens and a few other points became the sites of survival and refugee settlement. Perhaps a few important Mycenaean families were able to maintain themselves by holding some of their land, even acquiring more, but presumably the elaborate Mycenaean system of landholding perished. In short, we should scarcely look for the origins of many of the great Athenian families in survival from the Mycenaean Age. Nor apparently should we identify them as a conquest-aristocracy which had taken over land by occupation and was able to support itself by native labor on large estates, for there was no serf group in Attica as in Thessaly, Sparta and some of the colonial regions. In brief summary the archaeological evidence of the Dark Age seems to indicate that at the outset there was a concentration of habitation at Athens with, perhaps, a scattering on the east coast. Then, as population increased

[11] W. Donlan, note 10 above.

[12] For the end of the Mycenaean era in Athens see O. Broneer, " The Dorian Invasion. What Happened at Athens," *A.J.A.*, LII, 1948, pp. 111-114; for the archaeological record in Dark Age Attica, J. N. Coldstream, *Greek Geometric Pottery*, London, 1968, pp. 336, 341, 344, 348, 360.

and land became scarcer, there was a diffusion throughout Attica—first to sites near Athens, then to Eleusis, Marathon and the interior. By 800 B.C. at least, population was increasing rapidly on the east coast and settlement had started on the Saronic shore on the west. This process of internal colonization in Attica seems to have extended into the eighth century when the numbers of the rural population in Attica rose sharply. Of course the picture may be illusory, simply from scarcity of evidence from the countryside, but, if it is correct, there are some useful implications for understanding the nature of the three groups with which we are concerned.

As noticed above, the Eupatridai were said to have had religious and political privilege. Their land holdings were concentrated, although not exclusively, in Athens and its plain. For example, the clan of the Medontidai still owned a plot of land below the Acropolis in the fifth century.[13] They had grown to primacy in and near the later city. Presumably at the outset of the Dark Age land for farming, which was necessary for survival, was available, so that certain families were able to settle in desirable locations and by industry and proliferation of their members to extend their holdings. While we can scarcely assume that Attica enjoyed an idyllic absence of internal friction, the land does seem to have been free from invasion and great disturbance over the eleventh and tenth centuries. Generations of agrarian life enabled the survival of families and recognition of the primacy of some of them in terms of land ownership and agricultural wealth. There was no need of specific designation of such primacy, for its recognition would have been automatic and gradually extensive. We can, of course, hardly trace the rise of such families either individually or for the group as a whole, but their wealth has been recognized in grave furnishings and burial practice in the ninth and eighth centuries.

We should be cautious of identifying by its rich contents alone a particular grave as the grave of a "noble," for wealth might be won or lost in a single generation through a raid; cautious, too, of recognizing in a particular symbol a badge of class status. For example, the suggestion that the representation of a horse on certain Protogeometric amphoras marked a noble's burial is countered with the observation that the horse has a chthonic significance.[14] It is a religious rather than a class symbol. Similarly the representation in terracotta of five small granaries for grain storage found in a wealthy woman's burial need not mark her as a member of one of the Five-hundred-busheler families.[15] She may have been, but logic would compel us to recognize Zeugitai in those graves containing similar representations but with only two granaries

[13] *I.G.*, I², 871; Lewis, *Historia*, XII, 1963, pp. 22-26.

[14] C. G. Styrenius, *Submycenean Pottery*, Lund, 1967, pp. 113-114.

[15] E. Smithson, *Hesperia*, XXXVII, 1968, pp. 83, 96. The suggestion that the term, Pentakosiomedimnos, had the legal sense of qualifying for the archonship in the ninth century (the burial is dated *ca.* 850 B.C.) raises very considerable difficulty about the time of the establishment of the aristocratic government in Athens, for the latter is usually placed in the latter part of the eighth century (Hignett, *op. cit.* [note 2], pp. 42-45).

or wine jars. Rather, these seem to be symbols of wealth. More significant for such identification would be the indications in the funerary practices of regard, as well as the ability to pay, for the continuity of the family: continuous use and safe-guarding of a rich family plot over generations, provision of special apparatus for libation and the like. Thus it seems reasonable to see in the large libation vessels appearing over some of the rich cremation graves in the Kerameikos in the late Protogeometric period [16] the beginning of such family consciousness and, more certainly, in the elaborate furniture of the Dipylon graves of *ca.* 800-750 B.C. its full fruition [17]—the pride and assertion of membership in a great house. In short, the Eupatridai, although they may not have been called that, were fully established in the early eighth century and able to assert their political privilege throughout the seventh. Presumably they had risen to prominence in Athens and had fixed their main seats of residence and estates in the Athenian plain from the outset. They had brought the state of Athens into existence.

Geomoroi

Of the three words used to describe the second group in the sources, Geomoroi, Agroikoi and Georgoi, the latter two are descriptive but Geomoroi, land-sharers, is specifically designative. It identifies a group which had been assigned shares in land and probably is the oldest of the terms. At least Aeschylus (*Supp.*, 613) used *gamoroi* to designate Athenian citizens. The term is, of course, known from other Greek states, Syracuse and Samos, where it referred to the oligarchs, but originally the word must have indicated the original settlers who shared the land of these colonies.[18] Presumably they retained and enlarged their lots, becoming an oligarchical, governing class in the Archaic period. Some of them would have been magistrates, but there is no reason, with Sealey,[19] to assign that meaning to the Geomoroi of early Athens. In Athens the Eupatridai became the oligarchical, governing group. In the Geomoroi of Athens, then, should we not recognize the ordinary farmers, substantial landholders, whom Solon classified as Zeugitai and restored to well being, as distinguished from the great families? At an early date, when legal definitions did not exist, some may have risen to "great family" status; in the seventh century many declined to the Hektemorate and to slavery, sinking in the social scale. But why should they be called land-sharers? The poor farmers of Solon's time and the landless men apparently

[16] Styrenius, *op. cit.* (note 14), pp. 114-115, 121.

[17] Coldstream, *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 349 ff.

[18] Oliver, *Historia*, IX, 1960, pp. 560 ff.; *Demokratia*, p. 30. While Oliver properly stresses the significance of the meaning, land-sharers, he explains both Geomoroi and Demiourgoi as surviving from the Mycenaean system of land tenure; this is very difficult to accept in the light of the archaeological record. Wüst identifies the Geomoroi as private, free landholders, the Zeugitai of Solon's classification (*Historia*, VI, 1957, p. 190).

[19] Sealey, *Historia*, IX, 1960, pp. 178-180.

voiced demands for a redistribution of the land, but there is no hint in tradition that the land of Attica had been formally divided among its people as in a colonial or conquest settlement.

Perhaps, however, we can envisage the origin of the Geomoroi in connection with the process of internal colonization. We do not know how the diffusion of population from Athens was carried out in the ninth and eighth centuries but there are a few hints. In Greek political speculation the clan village was held to be the kernel of the ultimate polis; some Athenian clan names were identified with demes.[20] Such a settlement has been recognized, at least in the physical form of its cemetery, at Vari.[21] We might picture the establishment of a village and the sharing of the land around it as the venture of a cadet member of a clan from the main family seat on the Athenian plain; the head of the group established a manor and distributed the land in substantial plots among his followers. As the village acquired a sense of local identity and increased in size, its own excess population and the landless men attracted to it might find plots of land to farm out in the *eschatia* or a living as shepherds, laborers and craftsmen. We might recognize the Geomoroi in the substantially found, original settlers and their descendants, and the Thetes in the newcomers and in the community's own excess. Who, then, were the Demiourgoi?

Demiourgoi

Murakawa, in his study of Demiourgoi,[22] accepts both the reality of the governing commission of 580/79 B.C. and the existence of the three groups in Dark Age Attica, explaining the Demiourgoi as common people of various occupations. He ascribes the place of the latter in the governing commission to the high development which trade and industry had reached by 580 B.C. However, to judge by Athenian pottery production and export, trade and industry were only beginning to rise in the first quarter of the sixth century; the community was still agrarian, so that craftsmen and laborers would hardly have had political weight. Murakawa, despite his thorough study of the Demiourgoi in the capacity of magistrates, does not explore the possibility that they may have formed such a group in pre-Kleisthenean Attica. Generally speaking, Demiourgoi were important officials of the whole state in some Doric communities, as in Argos, or promoted to that status from local office when the state synoecized, as in Elis. But in Arcadia and Achaea they seem to have remained local officials, while in Phocis they are known as the officials of a phratry.[23] In Classical Athens, of course, the name applied to such local officials was Demarch, not Demi-

[20] Lewis, *Historia*, XII, 1963, p. 26.
[21] Eliot, *Phoenix*, Suppl. V, *Coastal Demes of Attica*, Toronto, 1962, p. 39.
[22] K. Murakawa, *Historia*, VI, 1957, pp. 385-415.
[23] Murakawa, *op. cit.* (note 22), pp. 390-391.

ourgos. Hesychius [24] explains that Dorian Demiourgoi were equivalent to Demarchs in Athens but there is no documentary evidence that the former term was used there for a local official who may have been the predecessor of a Demarch. Yet Kleisthenes did create new demes in his reorganization, as well as using those which existed, so perhaps he felt that a remodeled label would have been helpful.

There are some general indications that Demiourgoi may have designated local officials, village heads, in the pre-Kleisthenean state. As noticed above,[25] one tradition indicates that the Demiourgoi, along with the Geomoroi, were in existence until the time of Kleisthenes. The same tradition defines both groups as Gennetai. Presumably, then, the Demiourgoi were clansmen and landholders, hardly to be identified as workers at various occupations. Murakawa, however, does seem to be correct in trying to account for the Demiourgoi as a product of various local conditions in the Dark Age rather than as survivals of some Mycenaean institution, e.g., workers on the *damos'* land or officials of the *damos*. If the archaeological record in Attica of breakdown and diffusion of population, which would have involved a change in the system of land tenure, is correct, we should hardly try to explain the institution in terms of survival. Logically Homeric usage of the term might contain some hint, but perhaps Homeric Demiourgoi were more at home in trans-Aegean Ionia than in Ionian Attica. In any case, the Demiourgoi were few in number in the Homeric community and are hard to define as a homogeneous group. Some, like the heralds, were members of the community, while others, like bards, were strangers to it. All may have shared the sense of availability to the Homeric public, but in post-Homeric times, some, like the Kerykes of Athens and the Talthybiadai of Sparta, emerged among the notables, while others became magistrates, and still others, craftsmen and laborers. Presumably explanation of the different lines of development lies in the local conditioning factors which shaped institutions in separate parts of Dark Age Greece.

We might suggest that in Attica the Demiourgoi appeared in connection with the internal colonization and the establishment of village and town life. As villages and towns were formed, the interests of their inhabitants would begin to focus on local concerns and gradually become a community interest. In some degree this might be directed by a clan leader, but what if there were two or more clan groups in a locality? The substantial landholders, the Geomoroi, would have a common local interest and the same social status. This could be expressed by the selection of a local official in a common assembly—of a Demiourgos. That is, all Demiourgoi were probably Geomoroi but not all Geomoroi would become Demiourgoi. All the Geomoroi of Attica would be members of the assembly of Athens when the localities coalesced into a single state and would select their state officials from the Eupatridai but the

[24] Hesychius, *s.v.* Demiourgos. Lewis notes that the earliest occurrence of Demarch seems to be in Demosthenes, XXI, 182 (*Historia*, XII, 1963, p. 26, note 48).

[25] Above, note 4.

Demiourgoi would remain local officials and so be properly representative of a local interest. The time for the appearance of the Demiourgoi thus seems to be the several centuries of internal colonization, culminating in the eighth century, while the pressure to maintain them would have been generated in the egalitarian movement of the seventh century, when the Geomoroi were being depressed and the reaction to the Eupatridai mounted.

As Wüst and Oliver have noticed,[26] there does seem a balance in the commission of 10: 5 were Eupatridai, while the other 5 had a homogeneous, non-Eupatrid character. Collectively the whole commission represented the landholders of Attica and continued, if not in Solonian terms, at least the Solonian intent of the reorganization of 594 B.C. It is hardly surprising that the state reverted to a more even keel and that it was a full generation, not until 546 B.C., before Peisistratos was able to found his tyranny firmly.

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[26] Above, note 6.