**CLEISTHENES**

**FATHER OT GREEK DEMOCRACY**

Cleisthenes of Athens, who came into power at 510 BC, was also known as father of Democracy. During his life time, he had successfully managed to introduce democracy in Greece. He gave most of the decisive power to citizens on deciding the important matter. He created a council whose members were chosen by the citizens, and he organized an Assembly, which consisted of normal civilians so they could vote in major government issues.

**Athenian Aristocrats**

During the 9th century BC, the Ancient Greece



Was ruled by a monarch who was advice by the

council which consisted of some of the wealthiest

Athenians in Greek.

Gradually, in 8th century BC, this group of took

control over the whole system and wiped out the monarch. This group of people was also known as the Athenian Aristocrats, and the new system was called Aristocracy, named after them.

They created the councils of Archons, whose responsibility was to manage the Athens and made important decision. However, the problem was that almost all the Archons were Aristocrats, the most powerful wealthiest group throughout the whole Athens. They held the military power, ruled the Athens freely, and the poor and normal civilian had nothing to say except following them.

Soon, in the 6th century B.C, the poor were very dissatisfied with the ruling power of the Aristocrats. Some people, known as Tyrants, saw this opportunity to gather support by the poor against the Aristocrats. Gradually, they become very powerful with the support of the poor families, who outnumbered the Aristocrats. The Tyrant became so powerful that they even have the influence on the basis of military decision and the governance.

In the 5th century B.C, a Tyrant Called Cleisthenes started the reform of the system which was under the control of the Aristocrats to turn over power to the normal civilian. The Aristocrats tried to block the reforms, since they would face the potential danger of losing all their ruling power and possibly put their property in grave danger. The Aristocrats sought help from neighboring Sparta and invaded Athens, hoping to crush the democracy. The Aristocrats failed the new democracy made Athens a much stronger nation.

**Reforms of Cleisthenes:**

The reforms of Cleisthenes had been a major leap in the development of the democracy.

Cleisthenes, instead of marking territory based on the influence of the wealthy Aristocrats in the Aristocracy, created new unit systems called Deme, Trittys, and Tribe.

Tribe is the largest unit of territory; Cleisthenes divided the Attica into 10 main tribes combining the coastal region, city region, and inland region in order to increase the united between the three main regions.

Tribe then divided into more than 30 smaller units called Trittys.

Trittys then divided in Deme, which was quite similar to the village of present days.

Each Tribe, in addition, then elected 5 members in order to form the council, with the purpose of having a unified governing system. The main role of the council, in addition, was to prepare the legislation for the Assembly to decide.

The next step of the reformation of Cleisthenes was to set up the assembly. The assembly was openly available for all men from all classes of the civilians. Once in a few months, the civilians would gather at Athens to decide the important matter. The first 6000 or 8000 men to arrive would vote on the matter related to governing, military purpose, and general right the citizen had. The assembly would also vote to approve the legislation prepared by the council.

Finally, and most probably the most distinctive feature of the Cleisthenes’ reformation was the introduced of Ostracism (see picture.)

Once in a year, assembly would gather in order to decide whether to send a man into Ostracism. The man who was received the vote for more than 6000 would have to be exiled from Athens for 10 years although he did not commit any crime. His property and his nationality of Athens would not be removed and he was free to return to Athens after 10 years. This procedure was created in order to eliminate someone who was too powerful in the society. It was also said that this was also done to avoid conflict between two most influential leaders by sending one into exile.

Please answer the following questions after you do the reading:

1. Who ruled Athens in the 9th Century BC?

2. Who took over rule 100 years later?

3. What did Archons do?

4. Why were the Tyrants popular?

5. How did the Aristocrats try to stop Cleisthenes from reforming the government?

6. What were the new "divisions" of Athens?

7. What was the Assembly supposed to do? How did it work?

8. Explain how the "ostracism" worked.