

Foundations of Muslim's Shuracracy

(Part II)



**Athenian Democracy viewed through the
interpretive lens of Islamic Ethical praxeology**

I. Athenian Democracy in the Making; Social and Historical Setting

In the fifth century BC, the Greek Poleis¹ (city-states), by contrast to their cosmopolitan Sumer counterparts, which preceded them 3500 years ago in civilization, were at this juncture of history, small independent **tribal communities**, male-dominated and bound together by **race**.

It is worth stressing that the emergence of these early towns (see left map), unlike the early city-states at **Sumer** in Iraq² (see right map), were unplanned and expanding haphazardly. They were placed for security reasons well inland and not close to rivers or seas as commercial expediency would suggest, so as to avoid potential raids by sea.

Only late in time did the *agora*; {Greek for the "**assembly**", but specifically; the "**people assembly**" in lieu of the "**assembly**"}, and the *marketplace* begin to come into sight within the polis.



These cities were in general controlled by local kingships, before becoming, after some protracted wars, dominated by **'tribal'** and **clannish** hierarchies.

In the typical Greek **Polis** of this epoch, one finds;

- a) Temples, dedicated to the local gods,

¹ Plural of Polis

² Sumerian cities were surrounded by high thick walls with broad avenues used for religious processions or victory parades. Rulers lived in magnificent palaces with spacious courtyard but most people, lived in tiny houses packed in a tangled web of narrow alleys and lanes. Artisans who practiced the same trade, such as weavers or carpenters, lived and worked in the same street. These shop-lined streets formed a bazaar, the ancestor of today's shopping mall.

- b) Amphitheatres, where the cult of **Dionysus**, the **god of fertility and procreation**, borrowed from **Asia Minor**, with; *alcoholic intoxication, orgies, human and animal sacrifices, and hysterical rampages by women called maenads, was practised in ritual celebrations*. This cult involved uninhibited dancing and emotional displays that created an altered mental state, known as '**ecstasis**'³, a sort of generalised hysteria and 'catharsis'. Greeks of the period saw theatre as *a way of releasing powerful emotions through its ritual power*. By 600 BC these ceremonies were practised in spring throughout much of Greece. The death of a tragic hero was offered up to the local gods and a **man** rather than lambs or goats were sacrificed.
- c) Gymnasiums and stadiums (left photo below). Here societal upbringing ensured that the youth develop early the hope that they may participate one day in the **Pan-Hellenic games**, where winning at the games was considered one of the highest honors attainable, as it bestowed glory and fame not only on the winner, but on his family and his city as well.



The Greek *agora* (right photo above), unlike Mesopotamian's bazaars, fulfilled a dual vital role. Indeed, apart for being a *marketplace*, where people exchanged commodities and goods, it was also *the heart of Greek cultural and intellectual life*, where exchanges of ideas flourished and new opinions and views were freely exposed in the open by thinkers and philosophers.



For tribal reasons, membership in the Greek *polis* was hereditary and citizenship in any given polis was in fact limited exclusively to an elite tribal group (groups) of *mature male people*, where *peasants, women, slaves, and resident aliens* were not part of the body of citizens.



The territory of the cities included an agrarian perimeter with a rural population settled in it. The cultivators lived within the walls of the city and went out to work in the fields every day, returning only at night. Hundreds of these independent poleis (see map above) composed the ancient Greek world and no one polis resembled completely another.

The natives, who lived within the confines of a polis, and never travelled abroad, considered everyone **else to be inferior in status**, which is a typical landmark of **isolated backward tribes**, as one would expect from any isolated society.

³ from which the word *ecstasy* is derived.

Worse of all, all those people who did not speak Greek were referred to as **barbar**, the root of the present word; **barbarian**, so recurrent in western cultures.

And while some early Greek's elites such as; **Thales** (Θαλής) (625 BC – 547 BC) , **Pythagoras** (Πυθαγόρας) (580 BC ! – 490 BC!) , and others, who happened to have travelled abroad, visiting Egypt and Mesopotamia and borrowing all their knowledge from there, to become subsequently the incontestable tutors of Greece⁴, didn't partake of these tribal phobia and biases, realizing **in situ**, that Mesopotamians and Egyptians⁵ were not only 3500 years older in term of civilisation and superior in achievement, but were also more cosmopolitan and mixed in population due to the openness of their countries.

Others, like the Historian **Herodotus** of Halicarnassus (Ἡρόδοτος Ἁλικαρνασσεύς) (484 BC-ca. 425 BC)  and the Philosopher **Aristotle** (Ἀριστοτέλης) (384 BC – 322 BC)  partook of this blind biased bigoted view.

Herodotus for one;

- 1) divided the world into the world of the "Greeks" and the world of the "barbarians" and he argued secondly;
- 2) that the "barbarians," or the "strangers," as opposed to the **Greek race**, are in every respect inferior people, to write without frowning⁶;

"Greeks have been from very ancient times!!!! distinguished from the barbarians by superior sagacity and freedom from foolish simpleness."

Needles to say, that one has only to remind **Herodotus**, who travelled a lot abroad, of the Greek's plethora of gods and goddesses, fashioned into their likenesses, and to whom they dedicated not only Temples of worship, but offered also humans in

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⁵ *The ancient Egyptians, unlike the isolated Greeks, were mixed in population and varied in skin colours from the "Rot"; red skin men, the most prevalent amongst them; yellow men; "Namu" of Asiatic stock, the black men; "Nahsu," and the white men "Tamhu."*

⁶ *"THE HISTORY OF HERODOTUS", translated by George Rawlinson, p. 14.*

⁷ *One wonders what their barbarian's fathers were doing while east and south of them civilisation flourished!*

sacrifices, and consulted the oracle of **Apollo at Delphi** , who could not answer their pleas, to prove amply their rooted and ingrained **foolish simpleness**.

This **Greek structural mental phobia**, which will be later incorporated in some western cultures, didn't limit itself to comparative sociology, but extended its sphere to touch also upon knowledge.

Here **Plagiarism** was at its best, to downplay the contribution of the **barbarians** to universal knowledge, and assign their achievements and their original discoveries falsely to Greeks.

This is best exemplified by the first teachers of Greece; **Thales** and **Pythagoras**, to whom the Greeks as well as the West, assign unashamedly, and up to the present, the **mathematical theorems** bearing their names, while archaeology has proved beyond the shadow of doubts, that the Egyptians as well as the Mesopotamians knew of them a millennium before!

This is a typical psychopathological condition characterized by delusional **fantasies of genius**, generally termed; **delusions of grandeur**, which the Greek themselves classified under; **Megalomania** (μεγαλομανία)

While Aristotle wrote⁸;

But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female. Wherefore the poets say, It is meet that Hellenes should rule over barbarians; as if they thought that the barbarian and the slave were by nature one.

To add⁹;

Wherefore Hellenes do not like to call Hellenes slaves, but confine the term to barbarians. Yet, in using this language, they really mean the natural slave of whom we spoke at first; for it must be admitted that some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. The same principle applies to nobility. Hellenes regard themselves as noble everywhere, and not only in their

⁸ Aristotle, "Politics", **Book I; Chapter II.**

⁹ *Book I; Chapter VI*

own country, but they deem the barbarians noble only when at home, thereby implying that there are two sorts of nobility and freedom, the one absolute, the other relative. The Helen of Theodectes says:

"Who would presume to call me servant who am on both sides sprung from the stem of the Gods? "

This kind of foolish bravado, seems to live a life of its own, since it found favour not only with the imperialist Greeks, but also with the imperialist Romans, who succeeded them on World political stage, to be subsequently espoused by all western imperialists; the Victorian colonial British, the revolutionary colonial French, the colonial Americans, the racist Nazis and the Fascist Italians among others.

A racist apprehension of 'otherness' (alterity)¹⁰ rooted deep in western consciousness, and difficult to get rid of, up to the point, where even a Pope, of the



calibre of Urban II (1042–1099) (a commemorative Statue of Urban II on the "place de la Victoire" in Clermont-Ferrand, France), whose announced credo is supposed to preach love to all, failed unashamedly, as one discovers with dreadfulness and shock in the speech he delivered at Clermont-Ferrand in France, to beguile ignorant European serfs to fight Muslim infidels in the land of Milk and Honey, saying¹¹;

"I, or rather the Lord !!!!!!!!!!!¹², beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race¹³ from the lands of our friends¹⁴. I say this to those who are present, it meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it !!!!!."

¹⁰ See the Islamic viewpoint on the French section of this site under the title; "[Vivre l'altérité en Islam](#)." (Living otherness in Islam)

¹¹ See; Fulcher of Chartres' account of Urban's speech, *Urban II: Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095, Five versions of the Speech* (available as part of the Internet Medieval Sourcebook

¹² Certainly, the pope was neither the first nor the last, to confuse his fiendish thoughts with those of God!


¹³ He forgot that, "that vile race"; the Seljuk, he wants destroyed, were of the same racial stock as his Byzantine friends, all Turks, save for the Seljuk to have converted to Islam!

¹⁴ The friends alluded to by Urban II, were the Byzantines, who thought of themselves as far more cultured and superior than the barbarians of the west. The Crusades themselves were seen by them as more of an imminent danger and a calamity rather than help, since the Crusaders were Roman Catholics, representing a deadly danger to the Orthodox Church, and were bent, if they succeed in their crusades, to occupy the lands which the Byzantines considered their own, even though they lost them to Muslims and were unable to recapture them!. This apprehension of the Byzantines led them to sabotage the Poor Peter's Crusade ending it in disarray leading to its total annihilation. They endeavoured also to sabotage all subsequent Crusades. Suffice to recall that one of the reasons for the ultimate failure of the Crusades was the back biting and stabbing done by the Byzantines, when the fourth crusade attacked Byzantium

Certainly, the recent **Crusade** led by the **Arch-terrorist** of all;



President Bush¹⁵ against the **pseudo World Muslim Terrorism**, to justify the **imperialistic drive of oligarchic America**¹⁶, will go down in history, with its assorted unforgettable abuses in **Abu-Gharib's prison**, the **Felluja's massacre** of civilian population,.. as well as the harsh inhuman treatments of prisoners in **Guantanamo**, ...and other maniacal atrocities, as another remorseful big blunder in western politics, proving once more, that this is no more than **a replay** of the same sad old legacy, specially if one recalls;

- 1) That the **Sumerians**, the ancestors of present day terrorised Iraqis, have been credited with inventing, among many other things, **the plow, the wheel, the calendar, the writing**, apart from a well developed **code of Laws**, and second;
- 2) That the early Sumerian city-states¹⁷ practiced certainly some sort of **democracy**, before giving in to absolute despotic kings¹⁸, as one can infer directly from the **Epic of Gilgamesh**¹⁹, to become over time imperial powers, governing vast empires, which the isolated multitude of the Greek's Islands did permit only three millennia later, under the despotic Macedonians in the time of **Aristotle** himself, the tutor of **Alexander the Great** (Μέγας Αλέξανδρος) (*Megas Alexandros*) (356 BC –323 BC) .

And as expected, for political expediency, **Alexander**, according to the philosopher **Eratosthenes** {*Born: 276 BC in Cyrene, North Africa (now Shahhat, Libya) and Died:*

¹⁵ He is reported to have said During the presidential debate with Al Gore on Oct. 30, 2000;: *My opponent believes our military should be used for nation-building and peacekeeping instead of focusing on its primary job, which is to be able to fight and win wars.*” But four years later in May 2004 Bush said: “*I sent American troops to Iraq to make its people free!!!!, not to make them American. Iraqis will write their own history and find their own way!!!!.*”

¹⁶ *Is it not ironic! And a little bit strange that credulous Americans citizens, whom I have known as deferential people as can be., would have no other objective alternatives offered to them, save to choose to the supreme executive office, among the thousands of able politicians ,only two mediocre successive members of the same oligarchic family; Big Bush and son!? If this is not democracy going astray and perverted to pure oligarchy, then for sure it is a trade mark of Timocracy in its worse representation.*

¹⁷. *A city-state consisted of the main city (sometimes more than one city), other towns and settlements, and surrounding lands. Each city-state, like; Adab, Akshak, Badtibira, Eridu, Kish, Lagash, Larak, Larsa, Nippur, Sippar, Umma, Ur, and Uruk was an independent kingdom, but over times one would dominate part of the others or all of them..*

¹⁸ *This is the natural trend worldwide.*

¹⁹ *The real King Gilgamesh lived around 2700 BC and was worshipped as a god after his death.*



194 BC in Alexandria, Egypt)} didn't partake of the foolishness of his megalomaniac tutor, and is reported to have given in 324BC, after the establishment of his state, an oath to the officers and soldiers of his state in "Opis" near Babylon;

I wish all of you, now that the wars are coming to an end, to live happily, in peace. All mortals from now on will live like one people, united, and peacefully working towards a common prosperity. You should regard the whole world as your country, a country where the best govern, with common laws, and no racial distinctions. I do not separate people, as many narrow minded others do, into Greeks and barbarians. I am not interested in the origin or race of citizens. I only distinguish them on the basis of their virtue. For me each foreigner is a Greek and each bad Greek is a barbarian. If ever there appear differences among you, then you must not resolve them by taking to arms, you should resolve them in peace. If need be, I will act as your negotiator.

You must not think of God²⁰ as an authoritarian ruler, but you should consider him as a common father, so that your conduct resembles the uniform behavior of brothers who belong to the same family. For my part, I consider all, whether they be white or black, equal. And I would like you to be not only subject of my commonwealth, but also participants and partners. You should regard the Oath we have taken tonight as a Symbol of Love."

No wonder! That this universalistic worldview of a builder of an empire, encompassing other people than the loathsome Greeks alone, would be free of their obnoxious megalomania back home, if he is to succeed in governing his vast empire, as did before him; the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians, the Hittite and a host of others, including the Persians, who preceded the Greeks on this stage of history.

The ascendancy of the Greek polis in the fifth century BC, culminated in two important city-states; Sparta and Athens.

1) The Spartan System of Government

The Spartan city state; Sparta, located on the Peloponnesus (see map), is a union of Five Dorian villages. This military state conquered in the 8th century before the Christian era the most fertile plains in Greece; Laconia (Λακωνία), also known as Lacedaemonia and enslaved its peoples.

²⁰ Notice the use of the monotheistic God instead of the polytheist gods of Greek and Mesopotamians at this juncture of time, which could have ranked Alexander, if this quote of him is not legendary and fudged, among the monotheists!



Although the Spartans extended their territory outside their realm proper, **they did not extend their citizenship to the people conquered**. These colonized new subjects were nicknamed; (*perioikoi*)²¹, and were considered only residents of *Lacedaemonia*²², while citizenship remained limited to natives born at Sparta.

1.1) A Regimented State

In *Sparta*, the **archetype of a military state**, society was organized rigidly in a regimented state, where regulation and control of society were sought for their own sake, in order to achieve societal order and uniformity.

Boys left home at the age of seven and the State organized them into troops at this early age. They played competitive games until they are 18 years old. From the ages of 18 to 28, they lived together in barracks and at the age of 30, the state bestows on them the title of **citizenship**.

There was also a state education for girls who, though living at home, were also organized into troops. These girls met together with the boys to learn basics, music, singing and dancing.

Sexuality was more permissive than in any other polis in Greece, and after marriage (usually at 30 for men, 16 for women), the husband ate at the men's club until the age of 60 while his wife remained at home.

²¹ The *Perioeci*, or *perioikoi*, were the members of an autonomous group of free but non-citizen inhabitants of Sparta. Concentrated in the beach and highland areas of Laconia, the name derives from *περί* / *peri*, "around," and *οἶκος* / *oikos*, "dwelling, house." They were the only people allowed to travel to other cities, which the Spartans were not, unless given permission. { Wikipedia }

²² Lacedaemonia included Helots (the Laconians the Spartans made subservient.) and the *perioikoi*, but was dominated by a small class of *Spartiates*

Equality in status called logically for an equality in holding, which the Spartan state arranged by providing the citizens *with slave labourers*, called helots²³.

And since Spartan economy was based on slave labour, the slave population was enormous and kept growing with time.

This Spartan's worldview, harsh as it was, will endure the passage of time to find favour, even in modern times, with the colonizing hegemonic powers of both;

a) Colonial Europe in the nineteenth century, which used to call the citizens of their respective colonies pejoratively; indigenous, aboriginal peoples, native peoples, first peoples and autochthonous and

b) The imperial United States, which supplanted Europe and following faithfully in its footsteps, since obeying both the same colonial paradigm of Sparta and Athena.

One can see easily in these two colonialist experiences, that the **interconnection between Spartan's domestic and colonialist policy was mirrored exactly by Europeans and the United States' domestic and foreign policies.**

The parallel is so blatant as to conjure up the adage of old; "**nothing is new under the Sun**".



The late liberal **William Graham Sumner** (1840-1910) was the first to pin down this analogy in the West, even before the emergence of the United States on World's stage as a gruesome colonial Imperial Power, to predict fatefully its leviathan's future behaviour;

The United States **was a democracy in name** but a **plutocracy**²⁴ in fact; because the masses tend to be "**ill-informed, unorganized, and more or less indifferent,**" a "**compact body, with strong wishes and motives, ready to spend time, money, and labor,**" will generally be "**able by energetic action to lead the whole body.**" Hence we should not be surprised to find **wealthy elite dominating nominally popular institutions.**

²³ These are conquered people who became Spartan serfs, as the Messenians were.

²⁴ A plutocracy is a form of government where the state's power is centralized in an affluent social class. The degree of economic inequality is high while the level of social mobility is low.

And he diagnosed with deep insight the military drive behind these plutocratic elites;


Militarism, expansion, and imperialism **will all favor plutocracy**;

In the first place, war and expansion will favor jobbery, both in the dependencies and at home.

In the second place, they will take the attention of the people from what the plutocrats are doing!!!!.

In the third place, they will cause large expenditures of the people's money, the return for which will not go into the treasury, but into the hands of a few schemers.

In the fourth place, they will call for a large public debt and taxes, and these things especially tend to make men unequal, because any social burdens bear more heavily on the weak than on the strong.

The late President of the United States (1890 – 1969) , a military himself and World War II hero, didn't miss this Spartan's social calling to warn his citizens, though to no avail!;

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

And suffice to mention the false pretences and justifications advanced by this modern mastodon **plutocracy**, to invade Iraq, in flagrant defiance of international laws, and against the wishes of a large segment of the American population itself, and the spending of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money, badly needed home to alleviate many social ills, on **corporate mercenaries** to wage, by proxies', the dirty protracted war of this neo-cons elite, all in the name of a virtual **democracy**, which ceased to exist even back home, to remind us of this structural built in **unethical Spartan's behaviour**.

Needless to say, **from an Islamic ethical perspective**, that this inhuman **praxis** is favouring **the few** against the wills of **the many** and is not contributing to the well being of all citizens, as societal justice would require. A blatant perversion of the people's will, that true democrats should strive to amend and correct, by replacing it with

a more representative responsible government, as verse 7 of Surat 59; “Al-Hashr” (Exile, Banishment) (الحشر) stipulates;

مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ.

What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from the people of the townships,- belongs to Allah,- to His Messenger and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; **In order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you.**

1.1) Peculiarities of the Spartan’s constitution

The Spartan’s constitution shows two particularities, worth mentioning here. It was both;

- 1) **A dual monarchy**, allowing for two kings to govern the state and decide issues of war and peace, and
- 2) A mix of **monarchy, oligarchy and democracy** all in one.

- **The monarchic element** was represented by the **dual kings**,
- **The oligarchic element** was represented by a **Council (gerousia) of elders** composed of twenty-eight men over the age of sixty, holding office for life!. The elders were consulted before any proposal was put before the **Assembly of Spartan citizens** and had important judicial functions too.
- **The democratic element** was represented by an **Assembly (apella)** composed of all male citizens **over thirty years of age**.

And while in theory, the Assembly was vested with final authority on all issues, the praxis showed rather the opposite, since the role of the Assembly was confined solely to the non gratifying task of ratifying decisions already decided upon by the elders and the two kings.

This is a fraudulent Praxis from an Islamic perspective, since it voids the social constitutional contract of its spirit and perpetuates the

rules of the few over the many, the later having only to obey without questioning.

End

To be followed by Part III

The Athenian System of Government