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The Reforms of Kleisthenes

Keiko ISHIDA

Kleisthenes has often regarded as a founder of Athenian Democracy. Some historians have suggested that he sought by his reforms to put an end to regional struggles and to give a blow to the noble forces. Therefore, in his reforms, the democratic side has a tendency to be emphasized. But, did he really intend to break down the noble forces?

Surely, he turned to the demes in order to have their support. At first he reorganized the tribes and satisfied their prospect of local self-government in a deme-system. However, according to our evidence, he never touched the Phratries. In the demes, the Phratries and the tribes, he could ensure the excellent position to the nobility. Next, he established the new council of five hundred. Even in this, and then, in the Strategia, the nobility could control the real policy. It seems that Kleisthenes manipulated the demes and created his institution on the compromise with the nobility.

In this way, although in the institution he gave equal political rights to all demes, in fact he did the nobility a special favor and ensured their traditional rights. Therefore, we must emphasize the aristocratic side in his reforms. Indeed the nobility was no longer the privileged class, but Athenian Democracy in the fifth century which was founded on by Kleisthenes, reminds us of the control by the *nobiles* in Rome.