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Regionalism or an Urban-Rural Dichotomy of Kleisthenic Attica?

This paper aims to cast serious doubt on the popular regionalist theory of Athens political and social development by attempting to answer two pertinent questions: Who and where were the pre-Kleisthenic regional rulers of Attica? Herodotus' (1.59) description of three regionally defined factions vying for political supremacy in Athens constitutes the cornerstone of the regionalist theory (cf. R. Sealey, *A History of the Greek City-States 800-338 B.C.*, 1977). According to this account, we get the impression that Archaic Attica was socially and politically divided among only three regional social pyramids, led by Megakles' Alkmeonidai, Lykourgos' Eteoboutatidai, and the Peisistratidai. Regionalism has been claimed to account for the power struggles among Attica's elite as well as the general rationale behind the Kleisthenic reforms. Kleisthenes supposedly reacted to this regionalism and so created his political system for the purpose of undermining regional power bases (cf. D. Lewis, "Cleisthenes and Attica," *Historia* 12 (1963) 22-40, and N. Jones, *The Associations of Athens*, 1999, for the latest discussion and bibliography). According to the theory, aristocrats had estates and cult centers concentrated in particular regions of Attica. The local residents near the estates and cult centers were the aristocrats' dependents, the bases of social pyramids. As a result, Attica would have had several regionalized social pyramids.

Undermining the cornerstone of the regionalist thesis is Herodotus' own report of faction fighting among families associated with the city and suburbs (the Alkmeonidai of Xypete and the Eteoboutatidai of Bate and Lakiadai). Peisistratus' faction name, *hyperakrioi*, betrays his urban viewpoint--surely we should not expect rural partisans to refer to themselves from the city's vantage. By locating as many late sixth-century social leaders as possible, we can see an urban-rural political and social dichotomy at the time of Kleisthenes' reforms: most of the wealthy and powerful of 508/7 registered in urban and suburban demes, with a small cluster located in northeast Attica as the exception. In addition, most of these late sixth-century leaders either had no known cult grounds of their own or had cult associations located in or near the city. This finding casts doubt on Lewis' hypothesis that Kleisthenes' *trittyes* were designed to undermine aristocratic powers focused on local cult centers. A tabulation of demes' councilman quotas reveals how the Kleisthenic reforms worked in favor of rural demesmen. By comparing these tabulations with results from the analysis of fourth-century council proposers whose demotics have fortunately been left on inscribed stone (cf. Robin Osborne's *Demos: the Discovery of Attica*, 1985), we see a systematic and practiced under-representation of fourth-century councilmen from city demes. The ratios by percentage of council representation per council decree proposers grouped by trittys are as follows: Asty: 26.4% / 26.23% Mesogeia: 38.8% / 44.26% Paralia: 34.8% / 29.51%

This discovery seriously hampers any theory espousing that many rural elite registered in city demes in an act of gerrymandering.

Pieced together these findings suggest that Kleisthenes designed a new political system to

undermine the power of the urban elite by placing greater political power in the hands of the majority, those who populated the rural regions.