



Qatar University
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Introduction to Urban Design & Planning

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The Polis By: H.D.F. Kitto

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Introduction

The polis was made for seeking of social life. It means respect for the entirety or the unity of life. Looking for efficiency or rather a much higher idea of efficiency, an efficiency that occurs not in one section of life, but in life itself. Kitto explained in his book the problems that the Greeks faced because of this turning point; Significance, economics, geography and duties towards a successful polis.

Author Background

Humphrey Davey Findley Kitto (Fig.1) was born in (February 1897). He lived 85 years until he died in (January 1982). He was a British classical intellectual of Cornish ancestry -his roots and origins linked in Cornwall-. He was born in Stroud, Gloucestershire in the United Kingdom.

He was studied at The Crypt School, Gloucester, and continues his education in St. John's College, Cambridge. He awarded his Ph.D. from the University of Bristol in 1920. After that, he became a Orator at the University of Glasgow in Greek in 1920 and continued in which about 24 years until 1944. At the same year, he turns back to the University of Bristol where he became a Professor in 1962. He focused on researches about Greek catastrophe. In addition, translation of Sophocles works.



(Fig.1)

He wrote a book called "In the Mountains of Greece", explains his trip in that country, with unimportant minor reference to the ancient times. In 1952, he published " The Greeks" that became a standard text. This book covered the ancient Greek culture and traditions. Eventually, after his retirement, he trained foreign students, studied abroad program at College Year in Athens (CYA), Greece.

More Than a City-State

Polis is a Greek word, which is translated to be "city-state". The translation as "state" is improper and away distinct than polis. The mean of polis was more than just a state as H.D.F. Kitto mentioned in his book *The Greek* (1950)¹ (Fig.2). The contemporary comprehension of the aim of the "state" is that it should protect the

¹ LeGates, R. & Stout, F. (2011). *The City Reader*. 5th ed. London, UK: Routledge.

capability of people to be joyful, alongside stipulate general security and preservation, perceive contracts, guarantee internal serenity, insure the prosperity in lifestyle of the people and the enactment of justice laws. The main intention of the modern state is to allow its people to substitute merchandises and services by defending them against fierceness and violence through themselves and residents. The modern state was not interested in the ethical situation of the inhabitants unlike the ancient polis, which was aimed at the gladness of creatures.



(Fig.2)

Size and significance

Since long time ago, philosophers had concentrated on the size. If we look to Aristotle's politics and Plato's Republic, we will find that Plato points out that we should have 5,000 citizens to have a perfect city. He is visualizing a polis on the regular Hellenic scale; certainly he denotes that many standing Greek poleis are too small which are less than 5,000 citizens in reality. On the other hand, Aristotle mentioned that, by vision, each inhabitant should be able to know all the others. Also, he clarifies that it is impossible to have a polis of ten citizens, because it will destroy the meaning of independent. Therefore, it is ridiculous to have a polis of a hundred thousand, because it will be hard to control it correctly. For example, if there is a wife and four children in one home with a moderate number of servants, we will end up with a million communities. Aristotle believes that a self-governing or an independent 'state' that house a huge number of population is just a joke. In the end, size does not mean everything. Kitto stated "We should not commit the vulgar error of confusing size with importance".

Economics and geography



(Fig.3)

The transportation of goods was difficult because of the physical barriers (Fig.3) that Greece has made except by sea, but it was not efficiently used with confidence. Furthermore, the diversity, which allowed quite a small area to be reasonably independent for a people who made such small material, desires on life as the Greeks. These two points lead us on the same path. There was no magnificent economic interdependence in Greece, no mutual pull between the various parts of the state and strong enough to face the aspiration of the Greek to live in small societies. In addition, in some cases, it is emphasized that the physical character of the Greece forced to have an independent polities system. The idea is astonishing; exclusively to those who like to have one magnificent clarification of any phenomenon, but it is not true in all situations. Of course, it is understandable that the system could not have existed unless the physical subdivision of the country helped. For instance, Egypt is a country, which relies completely on the appropriate controlling of the Nile overflow, and thus must have a dominant government. However, there are countries cut up fairly as much as Greece. Scotland as an example, which have not ever improved the polis-system; and contrariwise in Greece there were many neighboring poleis, such as Corinth and Sicyon, which remained independent of each other though, between them, there was no physical divider that would extremely inconvenience a modern cyclist. Over and above, it was indeed the hugest parts of Greece that certainly not developed poleis, or not until later days. Communications were comparatively easy which leads the polis to be succeeded in those parts.

Acropolis

Acropolis is the fortress or more like a stronghold (Fig.3) of the entire society and the heart of its public life. The town, which almost constantly flourished up around this, was called by another word, 'asty'. However, the meaning of 'polis' denotes to be either the citadel or the entire people, which, as it were, 'used' this citadel. Another synonym is 'Epidamnus that is a polis on the right as you cruise into the Ionian gulf'. It is not like saying Doha is a city on the right as you sail up the Arabian Gulf, for Qatar is not an independent city-state which might be at conflict with Bahrain, but only an urbanized area with a only local management. Thucydides' is a word indicates that there is a city – a very tiny one – called Epidamnus, which is the political center of the Epidamnians, who live in the region that is the center of the town. It is not the capital where Epidamnians whether they stay in one of the villages in this region or the city itself.

In this context, our 'state' is 'polis'. The real business of ruling might be contingent to a sovereign, according to traditional uses they act in the name of all, or to the top of specific honorable families, or to owners of some property as council of citizens, or to all the citizenries. All these lead us to the natural forms of 'polity'; all were pointedly distinctive by the Greek from Oriental royal, in which the ruler is undependable, not holding his controls in trust by god's grace, but thinking of

himself as a god and law to be. The polis will collapse without a governor. If there was reckless authority there was no polis.

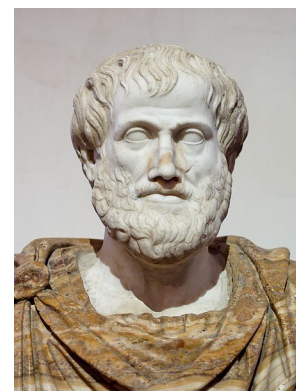
Justice

It is conceivable for a member to appeal to all his fellow citizens personally because of the mass of the polis. That what he would do naturally if he thought that another partner of the polis had hurt him. It was the common supposition of the Greeks that the polis took its foundation in the aspiration for Justice. Individuals are not following the law, but the polis will see to it that damages are rectified. It will not be by state-justice, for such it could not be functioned except by individuals, who may be as unfair as the original perpetrator. The pain side will be sure of gaining fairness and honesty only if he can pronounce his crimes to the whole polis. Therefore, the word now means 'people' indefinite uniqueness from 'state'.

Duty

'It is everyone's duty to help the polis'. One's community, one's trade union, one's denomination, are substances that mean something to us at once, but 'work for the superiority of a community', nevertheless a marvelous passion, is to most of us unclear and weak. In previous years before the war, what did most parts of Great Britain know about the miserable areas? How much do investors, coal miners and laborers understand each other? Every Greek knew that the 'polis' was complete, absolute and perfect. See how agriculture, trade and industry merged into one another. Even with the complainers and plotting a coup, it is difficult for them to hide what they are and their bad intentions. The whole life of the polis, the connection between its parts and the small scale of things were much simpler to realize. Consequently, saying 'It is everyone's responsibility to help the polis' was not to express an acceptable sense but to address the simplest and most important shared awareness.

Aristotle (Fig.4) once remarked 'Man is a political animal'. What Aristotle meant is 'Man is a creature who lives in a polis'. He wanted to prove in his Politics², is that the polis is the only skeleton that people can completely recognize their spiritual, moral, social and intellectual dimensions. The polis was an organic group, based on the relationship, huge families, turning the life as much as possible into family life for giving it a spirit of cooperation and affection instead of family quarrels.



(Fig.4)

² conrole, J. (2006). The Polis in Aristotle's Politics. Retrieved from <http://federalistpublicola.com/2008/03/24/the-polis-in-aristotle's-politics/>

Relevance to the city of Doha



(Fig.5)



(Fig.6)

Do we actually can consider the State of Qatar as a Polis in its actual sense? If we mentioned Dubai in particular, the first image that would come to our minds is Burj Al Arab (Fig.5); we could sense that the character of the polis dominates it. They are universally known even that some of them thought it was the capital of United Arab Emirates (UAE) instead of Abu Dhabi, which means it is successful like a polis. On the other hand, there is no actual link of what is meant by polis with the State of Qatar, but we can say that Qatar on its way to become, as well. They are now actively engaged for the renaissance of its community by its active participation. For example, the World Cup 2022 that aims to embrace the world in one country, one community and one passion exactly like the polis. In addition to Qatar's vision in 2030 (Fig.6), this is a turning point that will take Qatar to become more worldwide not only a city-state.

Conclusion

'Polis' may mean 'the entire communal life of the people, ethical, cultural, economical, political'. In the end, this clarifies not only the polis, but also much of what the Greek thought of and seek for which is social life. People wanted to play their own part in running the concerns of the society. When we understand how many of the essential, exciting and thrilling behaviors of life the Greek experienced through the polis, they were all feeling freedom of the open air within the vision of the acropolis.

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