

**ATHENIAN POLITICAL
COMMISSIONS,
A DISSERTATION**

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Athenian Political Commissions, A dissertation by Frederick D. Smith

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FREDERICK D. SMITH

**ATHENIAN POLITICAL
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A DISSERTATION**

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The University of Chicago

Athenian Political Commissions

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LITERATURE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

BY

FREDERICK D. SMITH

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PREFACE

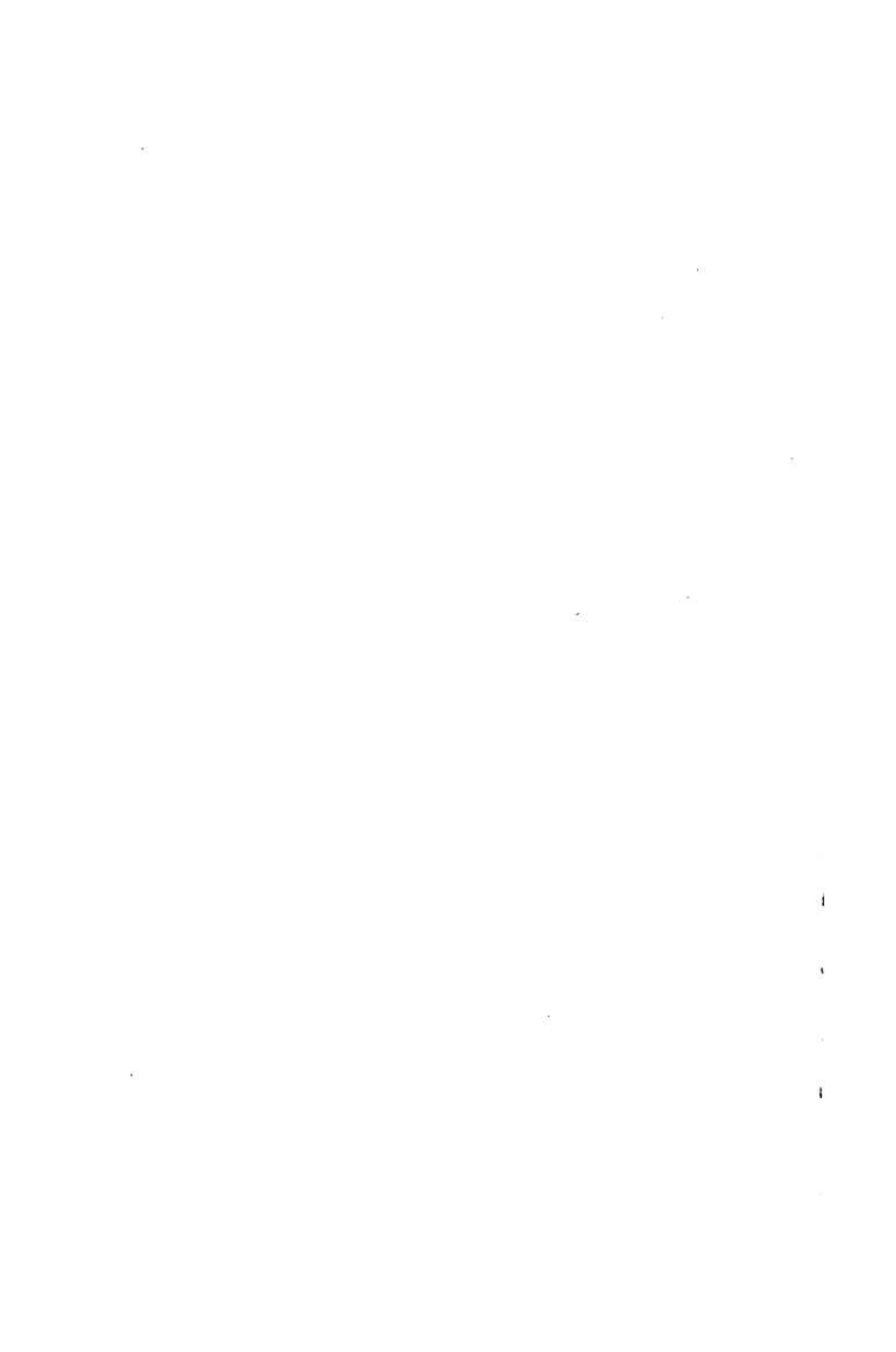
The original object of this dissertation was to deal with the entire system of commissions in Athenian government. However, the discovery of a general type of commission, which, for want of a better title, I have named Political, and the conspicuous importance of these commissions in at least two great crises of Athenian political history, led to a detailed study of this single type and to an effort to interpret afresh certain events in the oligarchic revolutions of 411 and 404 B. C.

The subject was first suggested to me by Professor Robert J. Bonner of the University of Chicago, and the dissertation in its present form resulted, almost entirely, from study under the direction of Professor Bonner in his research course in Greek history. Professor Bonner's helpful criticism has attended every step in the progress of the work.

I wish, also, to acknowledge the kindness of Dr. A. J. Ladd, editor of the *Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota*, for permission to reprint portions of an article (*Q. J. U. N. D.* Vol. VIII, 1918, No. 2) in which I published my main thesis regarding the function of commissions in the revolutionary politics of 411 B. C. This article was published in anticipation of unavoidable delay in the publication of my dissertation as a whole.

F. D. S.

Chicago, Illinois
August, 1920.



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INTRODUCTORY

The term commission in ordinary usage is applied to a temporary, irregular, and appointive office. It carries with it a suggestion of a special task to be performed, of a trust imposed, and of peculiar fitness on the part of the incumbent.

The fundamental application of the term, however, extends much further. The commission principle is the basic conception of the representative system of government, and finds illustration in all the essential features of such a government. Representative legislative and deliberative bodies are in reality commissions of the people.¹

Perhaps no modern government affords clearer illustration of this fact than that of the United States.² In this government, the legislative machinery, consisting as it does of a House and Senate made up of chosen representatives of the people, illustrates the commission principle in its widest and most fundamental application. The more specific and peculiarly American application of this principle is seen in the organization of the two main legislative bodies into smaller units known as standing committees, bearing more or less distinctive titles appropriate to the function which they exercise or to the relations which they bear toward the larger organizations of which they form a part. The object of this arrangement is to facilitate the transaction of the vast amount of business that comes before the legislature. So there has arisen in the legislatures of the government, Federal and of the various states, a system of committees as ramified as legislative business itself.³

Special matters which fall out of the usual categories of legislative business and which do not come within the acknowledged province

¹ "In its underlying ideas the word implies that something is committed by a committent. Here its sphere coincides with that of the more familiar term, representative. . . . Time has differentiated the meanings of the words committee and representative, but follow them back toward their beginnings and they approach identity." L. G. McConachie, *Congressional Committees*, p. 4.

² *Cyclopedia of American Government*. (Edited by A. C. McLaughlin and A. B. Hart 1914) s. v. Commission.

³ Regarding Committees in the legislature of the Federal government, see *Rules of House of Representatives* X and XI. Cf. Wilson, *Constitutional Government in the United States*, p. 89: "For each important subject of legislation there is a standing committee. . . . Every bill introduced must be sent to a committee. It would be impossible to think of any legitimate subject for legislation upon which a bill could be drawn up for whose consideration no standing committee has been provided."