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Demos: Classical Athenian Democracy

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The "Sources" field lists some primary sources and some secondary sources. The primary sources (e.g. "Dem.") are those that have been exhaustively combed for evidence related to this topic. So, we have tried to include every significant bit of evidence relevant to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) contained in the works of Demosthenes and Aeschines, and in the Aristotelian Ath.Pol. The secondary sources are those that we consulted to fill in significant gaps. After assembling evidence from my primary sources, we consulted the OCD³ and the Pauly to find important citations to ancient evidence. We are in the process of consulting M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oklahoma, 1991), and P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1993) for further material.

This article is a work-in-progress. Its appearance here does not reflect how it will ultimately fit into the interactive publication of *Demos*. Some specific areas of content that await revision are: the section on decrees vs. laws (which will be re-written once the article on **Nomothetai** is complete, and the section on financial matters, which will be re-written after the article on the **Council** is done.

Our goal is to give our readers everything they need to evaluate Athenian democracy thoroughly and critically, and furthermore, to make it impossible for them to access our site without confronting issues of context and evidence.

Government Institutions

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Dem., Aeschin., Aristot. Ath. Pol.; OCD³ s.v. "**ekklesia**"; PW s.v. "**ekklesia**"; PW s.v. "pnyx"; PW s.v. "demos"; M.H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: structure, principles, ideology* (University of Oklahoma, 1999).

1. Assembly (**ekklesia**)

The **Assembly (ekklesia) (e)kkllhsi/a** was the regular gathering of male Athenian citizens (women also enjoyed the status of "citizen", but without political rights) to listen to, discuss, and vote on decrees that affected every aspect of Athenian life, both public and private, from financial matters to religious ones, from public festivals to war, from treaties with foreign powers to regulations governing ferry boats (see also **Citizenship**).

e)kkllhsi/a, e)kkllhsi-a/zw, dhmhgor-e/w, dhmhgor-i/a, a)gora/, su/nedr-os, yh/f-isma, yh/fiz-w, e)kkllhsiastiko/s, ceirotone/w, a)nticeirotone/w, diaceirotone/w, e)piceirotone/w, kataceirotone/w, proceirotoe/w.

Introduction

The **Assembly (ekklesia) (e)kkllhsi/a** was the regular opportunity for all male **citizens** of Athens to speak their minds and exercise their votes regarding the government of their city. It was the most central and most definitive institution of the Athenian Democracy. Before 462 BCE, the Court of the **Areopagus** controlled legislation in Athens, but in that year Ephialtes instituted a reform that diminished the power of the **Areopagus** and increased the power of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) of the people (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 25.2; Aristot. Ath. Pol. 27.1; Plut. Cim. 15.2; Plut. Per. 9.5). This Assembly (**ekklesia**) became synonymous with democracy. When **Aristotle** describes how democratic government was restored, after Sparta defeated Athens in 404 BCE, he says that this restoration happened when "the **People** became sovereign over affairs" (o/te de\ ku/rios o(dh=mos geno/menos tw=n pragma/twn) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 41.1). Under this government he says, the **People** administers all business "by decrees and by **law-courts**" (yhfi/smasin kai\ dikasthri/ois) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 41.2). When **Aristotle** mentions the **People** and government by decrees, he is describing the Assembly (**ekklesia**).

In the Assembly (**ekklesia**) each male **citizen** of Athens could speak, regardless of his station. The orator **Aeschines** says that the herald (kh=ruc), acting as a

sergeant-at-arms, "does not exclude from the platform the man whose ancestors have not held a general's office, nor even the man who earns his daily bread by working at a trade; nay, these men he most heartily welcomes, and for this reason he repeats again and again the invitation, 'Who wishes to address the Assembly (**ekklesia**)?'" (Aeschin. 1.27) **Demosthenes** can chide his fellow Athenians for failing to recollect certain events, because they "were present at every Assembly (**ekklesia**), as the state proposed a discussion of policy in which every one might join." (Dem. 18.273) "Everyone", in this context, refers to the body of **citizens** who were registered on the Assembly (**ekklesia**) list (pi/naka to\n e)kklhsiastiko\n) for their local district, or **deme** (Dem. 44.35). Under the Democracy of **Aristotle's** time (after 330 BCE), young men were enrolled on this list when they were 18 years old (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 42.1), then spent two years as military cadets, or **ephebes** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 42.4), after which they were members of the **citizen** body (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 42.5) (see also **Citizenship**).

Of course, some people might be better qualified than others to speak on certain subjects, and the citizens of Athens could be very critical when anyone tried to speak outside of his expertise. The character Socrates in **Plato's Protagoras** says that when the Athenian Assembly (**ekklesia**) is discussing construction, the citizens call for builders to speak, and when it is discussing the construction of ships they call for shipwrights, "but if anyone else, whom the people do not regard as a craftsman, attempts to advise them, no matter how handsome and wealthy and well-born he may be, not one of these things induces them to accept him; they merely laugh him to scorn and shout him down, until either the speaker retires from his attempt, overborne by the clamor, or the **archers** (toco/tai) pull him from his place or turn him out altogether by order of the presiding officials (keleuo/ntwn tw=n pruta/newn)" (Plat. Prot. 319b - Plat. Prot. 319c). But, Socrates continues, when the discussion is not about technical matters but about the governing of the city, "he man who rises to advise them on this may equally well be a smith, a shoemaker, a merchant, a sea-captain, a rich man, a poor man, of good family or of none" (Plat. Prot. 319d).

There is the question of participation by Athenians living in the countryside of Attica, outside the city of Athens. While these people were certainly **citizens** of Athens, it may often have been difficult for them to attend a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**). This would have been especially true when emergency meetings were called on short notice, such as the occasion that **Demosthenes**, when news of a military disaster came to the city in the evening, and a special Assembly (**ekklesia**) convened the very next morning (Dem. 18.169). This Assembly (**ekklesia**), and any others like it, must have consisted mainly of **citizens** living close to the city. And even when there was more warning before a meeting, we have to wonder how many Athenians living in the countryside of Attica would have made a 50 or 60 mile round trip to downtown Athens and back. In the 5th century we can estimate the adult male population of Athens, and thus the number of men eligible to participate in an Assembly (**ekklesia**), to have been 40,000 - 60,000, and in the 4th century, 20,000 - 30,000 (for sources and arguments, see **Population**). But the number of Athenians in attendance at a given meeting seems to have been considerably lower. Thucydides makes the statement that during the Peloponnesian War (331 - 404 BCE) there were usually only 5000 people at a meeting (Thuc. 8.72), although he may be exaggerating downwards; a better measure of regular attendance might be the fact that 6000 citizens were required for a valid vote conferring citizenship on a non-Athenian (the earliest evidence for this rule dates from 369 BCE) (IG II² 103; Dem. 24.45; Dem. 59.89).

Freedom to Speak

When the Assembly (**ekklesia**) met, the male **citizens** assembled to discuss the affairs of the city, and this discussion required that each **citizen** have freedom to speak his mind. This freedom was vital to the proper functioning of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), whether the issue at stake was some important public policy (Dem. 15.1), or the rights of a single **citizen** (Dem. 18.3). In an anecdote from the distant past, **Demosthenes** suggests that freedom of speech had a long history at Athens, and persisted despite periodic attempts to limit it. He recounts how in the 6th century BCE the island of Salamis had revolted from Athenian control, and the Athenians had forbidden anyone to propose a war to recover the island; but Solon, a real person whose place in Athenian history became subject of legend, composed a poem on the subject (poetry on the subject was evidently not forbidden), and through this ruse got around the law and convinced Athens to fight for Salamis (Dem. 19.252). By the 4th century BC, discussions of motions in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) were opened with a general invitation to all the male **citizens**, as the Herald (kh=ruc) asked, "Who wishes to speak?" (Dem. 18.191; Aeschin. 1.26; Aristoph. Ach. 46). We might note, here, that **Demosthenes** claims a certain freedom of speech to have extended even to resident **foreigners** and **slaves** (Dem. 9.3), although he is certainly not talking about participation in the Assembly (**ekklesia**), and we should wonder how much freedom these people actually enjoyed.

This freedom to speak was not absolute or without regulation. **Aeschines** tells us, for example, that in the early democracy (before the 5th century) **citizens** over 50 years of age could speak first, and only after those had their say could younger men speak (Aeschin. 1.23; Aeschin. 3.2). Other formal restrictions could apply, such as decrees limiting discussion of certain topics to certain meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 2.109), or even laws forbidding discussion of issues already settled in a court (Dem. 24.54). Other, less legitimate (but perhaps more effective) limits could be imposed: the crowd might raise a clamor and refuse to listen to a speaker advocate an unpopular proposal (Dem. 19.111), and this seems to have happened often enough that orators regularly asked, beforehand, not to be shouted down (Dem. 13.14).

Exclusion from the Assembly (**ekklesia**)

Individual **citizens** could lose the right to participate in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) by committing various offenses (Aeschin. 1.23). **Demosthenes** mentions legal penalties for people who attend a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) while owing a debt to the public treasury (Dem. 24.123), or who have been stricken, for some reason or another, from their **deme's** register of **citizens** (Dem. 18.132). Also prohibited from participating were: anyone convicted of prostituting himself (Aeschin. 1.72; Aeschin. 1.21; and Aeschin. 1.32, where the orator adds, "however well he speaks"), anyone who beat his father or mother, or failed to support them, or who threw away his shield in battle, or who squandered his inheritance (Aeschin. 1.28 - Aeschin. 1.30). Any **citizen** who suspected another of being unqualified to participate in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could challenge him to **dokimasia**, or "scrutiny" (dokimasi/a), whereupon the issue would be decided by a **jury** in a **law-court** (Aeschin. 1.32).

Payment for Participation

Citizens were paid for attending the Assembly (**ekklesia**), to ensure that even the

poor could afford to take time from their work to participate in their own government. **Aristotle** recognized that inclusion of all **citizens** and freedom to speak are not the only hallmarks of a democratic constitution, but that the most democratic states pay their **citizens** for attending the Assembly (**ekklesia**). He claims that in the absence of payment, the **Council** (*boulh*/) is the most democratic of magistracies (Aristot. Pol. 1317b), but in states that can afford to, and do, pay their **citizens** for attending meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), "all the **citizens** actually take part in it and exercise their **citizenship**, because even the poor are enabled to be at leisure by receiving pay" (Aristot. Pol. 1293a). A historical anecdote recorded in **Aristotle's Constitution of the Athenians** (Aristot. Ath. Pol.) further supports this assertion: In 411, when a group of Athenians temporarily overthrew the democracy and established an oligarchy, one of their first acts was to pass a law that no one should receive pay for political activity (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 29.5; and Aristot. Ath. Pol. 33.1, referring to the subsequent regime of 411 and 410). In the 4th century, when Timocrates had proposed that the Athenians loosen enforcement of penalties against those who owe debts to the state, **Demosthenes** claimed that there would be no money left in the treasury to pay for attendance at the Assembly (**ekklesia**), and he went on to equate that outcome with an end to Democracy (Dem. 24.99).

Aristot. Ath. Pol. 4.2 says that under the "Constitution of Draco", a mostly legendary period in the history of pre-democratic Athens, **citizenship** was limited to those who could afford to arm themselves. Under the laws instituted by Solon in the 6th century, the Athenians were divided into four property classes (see **citizenship**), and only those who possessed a certain amount of property could hold office (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 7.4; IG II² 30). This property qualification survived into the 4th century, but came to be disregarded--in the 4th century, candidates for office were asked about their property class, but everyone simply claimed to belong to the higher classes (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 7.4; Aristot. Ath. Pol. 47.1). Demosthenes mentions Theogenes of Cothocidae, who was appointed to the office of **Archon Basileus**, although he was so poor that his friends had to help him meet the expenses that went along with taking office (Dem. 59.72).

But even under the old system, where only the wealthy could hold office, we do not hear of any property qualification for participating in the Assembly (**ekklesia**); even the poorest citizens were eligible to meet on the Pnyx and speak their mind. As Athens became increasingly democratic, the city began to pay its **citizens** to attend the Assembly (**ekklesia**), first one obol per meeting, then two, then three (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 41.3) (see **Money**). A character in one of **Aristophanes'** comedies (produced in the early 4th century) complains that "in the old days," when the pay was only one obol, all the **citizens** stayed at home, but now that the pay is three obols, meetings are too crowded (Aristoph. Eccl. 302; see also the parody of the 3-obol payment at Aristoph. Eccl. 44). In **Aristophanes** there are several jokes about people getting to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) too late to receive their pay, which suggests that **citizens** had to be present at the beginning of the meeting in order to receive pay, or that only the first 6000 citizens to arrive got paid (Aristoph. Eccl. 290; Aristoph. Eccl. 385; Aristoph. Eccl. 395). The rate seems to have remained at 3 obols until around 388, if we can trust a passing reference in **Aristophanes' Wealth** (Aristoph. Pl. 330) (source for date: OCD³). By the 330's and 320's, the payment had increased to one drachma (six obols) for an ordinary meeting, and a drachma and a half (nine obols) for a "sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (*kuri/a e)kklhsi/a*, see below) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 62.2). **Demosthenes** mentions, in a rather vague passage, that taxation alone was not sufficient to pay for the expense of holding meetings of

the Assembly (**ekklesia**), and that various laws ensured supplemental income for that purpose (Dem. 24.97).

Meeting Places

The traditional meeting-place for the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was the open space on top of the hill of the Pnyx, (Thuc. 8.97), and the Pnyx seems to have been considered the proper place for the business of the Assembly (**ekklesia**):

Aeschines mentions a law requiring that anyone awarded a crown by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) be given the crown on the Pnyx and nowhere else (Aeschin. 3.34). In fact, if we compare Aeschin. 3.34, which specifies that the crown be awarded "on the Pnyx" (e)s th\ n *pu/kna), with Aeschin. 3.32, which specifies that it be awarded "in the Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (e)n th=| e)kklhsi/a|), we might conclude that "Assembly (**ekklesia**)" and "Pnyx" were used synonymously. The Pnyx was open to the sky, and thus meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) must have been influenced by the weather; the laws that mandated "good weather omens" before the election of military officers (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 44.4) might have been as interested in ensuring a comfortable day for discussion as in ascertaining divine favor.

When the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was to meet on the Pnyx, "hurdles" (ta\ ge/rra) were set up on the hill to separate the **citizens**, meeting in the Assembly (**ekklesia**), from **non-citizens**, who presumably would gather as spectators (Dem. 59.90). Hurdles were also set up in the marketplace (a)gora/) before meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), perhaps to channel **citizens** toward the Pnyx (Dem. 18.169). In 5th century comedy we also find jokes about people in the marketplace fleeing a "red rope" (to\ sxoini/on feu/gousi to\ memiltwme/non) (Aristoph. Ach. 20), a rope dipped in wet red paint, which seems to have been used to herd people out of the marketplace and to the Assembly (**ekklesia**). In the 4th century, when payment for attendance was sufficient motivation to ensure attendance, this red rope seems to have been used to keep people out of a meeting that was already full (Aristoph. Eccl. 379).

But the Pnyx was clearly not the only place at which an Assembly (**ekklesia**) could convene. Before a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), the Prytanies (oi(prutaneu/ontes) were supposed to post the upcoming meeting's agenda and the location of the meeting (o(/pou kaqi/zein) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.3). **Demosthenes** mentions a law (no/mos) mandating a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) in the Theater of Dionysus on the day after the Festival of All-Zeus, (the *pa/ndia); this Assembly (**ekklesia**) is to deal with, first, any religious matters, and then hear any complaints that arise from the procession or contests at the festival (Dem. 21.8). **Aeschines** mentions a session of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) held in the Theater of Dionysus after the festival of the City Dionysia (Aeschin. 2.61). He also reports a "vote of censure" (kataxeirotoni/a) being passed against a certain Meidias in the Theater of Dionysus (Aeschin. 3.52). (See also **Festivals**)

Schedule of Meetings

In the 4th century, there were 40 regularly scheduled meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) each year, four in each **prytany** (each **prytany** was one tenth of the year) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.3; IG II² 336a).

One of the four meetings in each **prytany** was the "Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (kuri/a e)kklhsi/a), the agenda for which included the confirmation of magistrates currently serving, issues of the food supply and defense, announcements of private

property to be confiscated, and announcements of lawsuits regarding inheritance (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.4).

In each **prytany**, there were three regular assemblies in addition to the Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**) (kuri/a e)kklhsi/a); these were simply called "Assemblies" (e)kklhsi/ai) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.3; IG II² 330). It seems likely that in the 5th century only the Sovereign Assemblies were regularly scheduled, because **Thucydides** mentions a period of 40 days in the year 431 in which there was no Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Thuc. 2.22.1); if there were four scheduled assemblies in each **prytany** at that time, 40 days could not have passed without a meeting.

Apart from the Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**), one of the remaining three was an occasion for any **citizen** who wished to present a suppliant-branch (i(kethri/a) and address his fellow **citizens** about any public or private matter that concerned him (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.6). The ability of **citizens** to voice complaints in this public forum may have deterred certain bad behavior, or at least made the perpetrators think twice. **Aeschines** recounts how some men assaulted a man named Pittalacus; on the next day Pittalacus went to the marketplace, and his attackers came up to him and tried to assuage him, because they "were afraid that their crime would be published to the whole city, since there was to be an Assembly (**ekklesia**) that day" (fobhqe/ntes o(/ te *(hgh/sandros kai\ o(*ti/marxos mh\ a)nakhruxqh=| au)tw=n h(bdeluri/a ei)s pa=san th\n po/lin par, e)ph/|ei de\ e)kklhsi/a) (Aeschin. 1.60).

The other two regularly scheduled meetings in each **prytany** were concerned, according to **Aristotle**, with "other things" (peri\ tw=n a)/llwn) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.6). Some of this other business was scheduled to happen at particular assemblies during the year. At an Assembly (**ekklesia**) held on the 11th day of the first **prytany**, the people voted on whether or not to hold an review of all the laws (no/moi) (Dem. 24.21). In the 6th **prytany**, there was discussion of whether or not to hold an **ostracism**, discussion of any information against people charged with being informers (sukofantw=n probola/s)--in this category, no more than three **citizens** and three **metics**--and discussion of people accused of failing to perform some assigned public service (ka)/n tis u(posxo/meno/s ti mh\ poihs| tw=| dh/mw|) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.5). A meeting during the 6th **prytany** was also the occasion for election of military officers (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 44.4).

At least until the middle of the 4th century the Assembly (**ekklesia**) occasionally met to conduct a trial, most often an **impeachment** (Dem. 49.10). This is a complex matter, since the laws regarding impeachment were revised during the 4th century. For a full discussion, see the article on **Impeachment**.

Assemblies do not seem to have taken place on fixed days during each **prytany**, but they did not happen on days when the **law-courts** were in session (Dem. 24.80). They seem also to have been scheduled around other important events, such as religious **festivals**. **Aeschines** is highly critical of an Assembly (**ekklesia**) that was called on the 8th day of the month Elaphobolion, a day of sacrifices to Asclepius (the orator says that this was unprecedented in memory (Aeschin. 3.67), and **Demosthenes** criticizes a motion to have the Assembly (**ekklesia**) meet on the 12th of the month Hecatombaion, a festival day for Cronus (Dem. 24.26). (See also **Calendar**)

In addition to Sovereign Assemblies (kuri/ai e)kklhsi/ai) and Assemblies (e)kklhsi/ai), there were "Called-together Assemblies" (su/gklhtoi e)kklhsi/ai); the term appears only in literary evidence (not in inscriptions) during the 4th century,

and its meaning is not entirely clear. Some of our sources seem to use it to refer to extra meetings, in addition to the normal four that happened in each **prytany**.

Aeschines mentions a time when Athens was in such a panic over Philip of Macedon's war against Amphipolis, that "there were more Called-together Assemblies (e)kklhsi/as sugklh/tous) than scheduled Assemblies (ta\s tetagme/nas)" (Aeschin. 2.72). But at other VERDANA the term seems to indicate an Assembly (**ekklesia**) called at short notice, but not necessarily an extra Assembly (**ekklesia**). During a military crisis involving Philip, **Demosthenes** says that a regular Assembly (**ekklesia**) met and disbanded, but that people continued to discuss matters in the Agora, thinking that another Assembly (**ekklesia**), a "called-together Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (su/gklhtos e)kklhsi/a), might be called at any time (Dem. 19.123). One such Assembly (**ekklesia**) was called on short notice when news came that a fleet under the command of Leodamas had been captured by Philip of Macedon (Dem. 18.73); another was called, with the hurdles set out and the trumpeter summoned, upon news that Elatea was captured (Dem. 18.169). Other examples of Called-together Assemblies are Aeschin. 2.63, where we find that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) met on two subsequent days to discuss foreign policy issues (in this case, the first Assembly (**ekklesia**) was devoted to discussion of the issues, and at the second there was only voting, without discussion [Aeschin. 2.65]), and Aeschin. 3.68, where **Demosthenes** calls for an Assembly (**ekklesia**) to meet immediately and discuss a treaty with Philip. This last provides good evidence that the term sugklh/tos e)kklhsi/a referred mainly to an Assembly (**ekklesia**) called on short notice, because an inscription shows us that at this very Assembly (**ekklesia**) a certain amount of normal business was discussed before the pressing issues regarding Philip came up for a vote (IG II² 212.53-7). Furthermore, another inscription mentions a "Called-together Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (e)kklhsi/a kuri/a sugklh/tos) (IG II² 359), which must refer to a Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**) called on short notice.

It seems, too, that extra Assemblies were not called lightly. **Demosthenes** mentions an occasion on which the **Council** chose to act on its own, because there was "no remaining Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (e)kklhsi/a u(po/loipos) in that **prytany** (Dem. 19.154).

The Conduct of a Meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**)

Officials of the **Council** called together a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), which opened with various religious rituals before the **citizens** were invited to speak and vote on matters of public business.

"Those serving as **Prytaneis**" (oi(prutaneu/ontes) (the same word, "prytaneis" refers to the governmental "months", ten each year, and to the members of the **Council** who were presiding during a given **prytany**), normally called meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.3), and posted the agenda beforehand (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.4). In the case of the special Assembly (**ekklesia**) for the ratification of laws, if the **Prytaneis** failed to call for an Assembly (**ekklesia**) on the assigned date, they were each to be fined 1000 drachmas (Dem. 23.21). If the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was to vote on some matter by ballot, the **Prytaneis** distribute the ballots (Dem. 59.90).

In the 5th century, the **Prytaneis** actually managed the conduct of a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Xen. Hell. 1.7.14), but in **Aristotle's** time (after the middle of the 4th century), the President of the **Council** (e)pista/th)s appointed nine **Proedroi** (proe/droi) for each Assembly (**ekklesia**); these were chosen from members of the

Council who were not currently serving as **Prytaneis** (oi(prutaneu/ontes) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 44.2). These **Proedroi** managed the conduct of the Assembly (**ekklesia**); deciding when to put a question to the vote (Aeschin.2.84; Aeschin. 2.68), and deciding when to cut off discussion of a matter (Aeschin. 2.67).

The People did, on occasion, override the will of the officials conducting the meetings, as when, in the late 5th century, the **Prytaneis** were unwilling to allow a vote, the **People** overrode them with menacing shouts (Xen. Hell. 1.7.14).

The selection or appointment of **Proedroi** was potentially subject to corruption, which **Aeschines** hints at on two occasions (Aeschin. 3.73; Aeschin. 2.90). In addition to these **Proedroi**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected a clerk (grammateu/s) to read documents aloud (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.5); the orator **Aeschines** served as a clerk early in his career, although we do not know whether he was the clerk appointed to read in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Dem. 19.79).

The opening of a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was marked by rituals. A sacrifice was made and carried around the area, and there was a prayer, both of these intended to purify the proceedings (Aeschin. 1.23; Aeschin. 2.158; a parody of this prayer is found at Aristoph. Thes. 314). The heralds (kh=ruc) offered the prayer (Aeschin. 1.23; Dem. 24.20). If a joke in **Aristophanes** is to be trusted, libations played some part in these rituals as well (Aristoph. Eccl. 140). The herald also called down curses (katara=tai) on anyone who would mislead the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Dem. 19.70; Dem. 23.97; there is a parody of this at Aristoph. Thes. 335). After these rituals, the Herald asked "Who wishes to speak" (ti/s a)goreu/ein bou/letai), and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was opened (Dem. 18.191; Aeschin. 1.26; Aristoph. Ach. 46; cf. a possible parody of this at Aristoph. Eccl. 130).

Checks and Balances: Probouleuma and Psephisma

While any male **citizen** was invited to speak in an Assembly (**ekklesia**) and all male **citizens** could vote, the topics for discussion and vote were limited by what amounted to a system of checks and balances between the Assembly (**ekklesia**) and the **Council**.

The Council could pass "Decrees of the Council" (boulh=s yhfi/smata)--as opposed to "Decrees of the People" (e)kklhsi/as yhfi/smata), which the Assembly (**ekklesia**) passed--but only regarding minor matters (for the terms for the two kinds of decrees, see Dem. 19.179; Dem. 23.92; for examples of Decrees of the Council, see the article on **Council**). Important decrees were passed by the Assembly (**ekklesia**). The Assembly (**ekklesia**), too, could act on certain things without any intervention from the **Council**, such as the business that regularly appeared on the agenda for the Sovereign Assembly (**ekklesia**) in each **prytany** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.4), or the annual vote on the laws that took place in the first Assembly (**ekklesia**) of the year (Dem. 24.20).

But in important matters, the **Council** and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) had to work together. The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could not discuss or vote on a matter that the presiding officials, the **Prytaneis**, did not put on the agenda, and the **Prytaneis** could not put anything on the agenda unless the **Council** had considered it first (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 45.5). The **Council** had to approve a probouleuma, or resolution (probou/leuma), which was read at the Assembly (**ekklesia**), whereupon the **citizens** could discuss it and vote on it (Dem. 19.85; Dem. 19.34).

Once the resolution came to the Assembly (**ekklesia**), it ceased to be a probouleuma and became a psephisma (yh/fisma), a "thing to be voted on" (Dem. 19.234). A very clear example of this process in action is Dem. 59.4, where the orator mentions a probouleuma passed by the **Council** asking the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to discuss and vote on how to spend a budget surplus: should it go to military preparations or to public festivals?

It seems that the **Council** could send two different kinds of probouleumata (the plural of probouleuma) to the Assembly (**ekklesia**). SomeVERDANA the **Council** would pass an open-ended probouleuma to the Assembly (**ekklesia**), which would debate it and vote on it; the ensuing decree, when it was inscribed on stone, would then begin with the words "It was decided by the **People** that..." (e)/doce tw|= dh/mw|) (IG II² 240; IG II² 337). Because the **Council** had not made a specific recommendation, the decree was credited to the will of the Athenian people. At other VERDANA, the **Council** might send a decree with a specific recommendation, which the Assembly (**ekklesia**) would simply vote on; in these cases, the ensuing decree would begin with the words "It was decided by the **Council** and the **People** that..." (e)/doce th|= boulh|= kai\ tw|= dh/mw|) (IG II² 206). In this case, because the Assembly (**ekklesia**) merely ratified the **Council's** decision, the decree was credit to the will of both.

Anyone who introduced a measure in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) that had not been approved by the **Council** was subject to prosecution for illegal procedure (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 45.5); the **Council** would try his case, but if he were found guilty before the **Council**, he could appeal his case back to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 45.2).

The relationship between the **Council** and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) seems to have been a complicated one. **Demosthenes**, for example, mentions a probouleuma being passed by the **Council** "in the hopes that it might be ratified by a deluded Assembly (**ekklesia**)" (i(/na kurw/seien o(dh=mos e)capathqei/s), which suggests that some Athenians, at least, thought the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to be more easily fooled than the **Council**, although both were composed of a cross-section of **citizens** (Dem. 23.18). The rules governing probouleumata and psephismata also seem to have been somewhat ambiguous. One dispute over the interpretation of those rules focused on a law (no/mos) that allowed the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to give an award to the **Council**, if the **citizens** thought that the **Council** had done a particularly good job; on this occasion, the **Presiding Official** (pro/edros) put a motion to the vote, and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) approved it by a show of hands (xeirotoni/a). The dispute, between **Demosthenes** and Androtion, was over the legality of this vote. Androtion claimed that because there was already a law allowing the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to make such a vote, no probouleuma was necessary; but **Demosthenes** argued that the existence of the law merely allowed a probouleuma to be passed, and any vote by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) without a probouleuma was illegal (Dem. 22.5). We do not know, unfortunately, how this particular dispute was resolved.

Voting

Most voting in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was by a show of hands (xeirotoni/a), although some votes were conducted by secret ballot (yh=fos).

Aristotle says that payment for attendance was instituted specifically to "get people

to come to vote by show of hands" (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 41.3). Even the most serious of matters were often decided by show of hands, such as the **impeachment** and condemnation of **generals** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 34.1) and the approval of formal laws (no/moi) (Dem. 24.20) (laws were more significant than decrees; see below). This method of voting limited the business of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to daylight hours, as this anecdote from **Xenophon** shows: "it was decided, however, that the matter should be postponed to another meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (for by that time it was late in the day and they could not have distinguished the hands in the voting)." (e)/doce de\ a)nabale/sqai ei)s e(te/ran e)kklhsi/an, to/te ga\r o)ye\ h)=n kai\ ta\s xei=ras ou)k a)\n kaqew/rwn) (Xen. Hell. 1.7.7). Under certain circumstances, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) would vote by "ballot", literally "pebble" (yh=fos); this was organized by **Tribes** (fulai/), with two urns, serving as ballot-boxes, for each **Tribes** (Xen. Hell. 1.7.9). Voting by ballot was limited to issues which had to be decided by a quorum of 6000 **citizens** (Dem. 59.89 - Dem. 59.90).

Once the Assembly (**ekklesia**) had approved something, the decree, its date, and the names of the officials who put the matter to the vote, were recorded and preserved as a public record of the proceedings of government (Aeschin. 2.89; Aeschin. 2.58; Aeschin. 3.75). Thus **Aeschines** could refer to a decree (yh/fisma) "as originally written" (w(s e)c a)rxh=s e)gra/fh) (Aeschin. 2.66). Other documents relevant to the Assembly (**ekklesia**)'s business were also preserved; when **Aeschines** officially declined to serve as an ambassador when selected by the Assembly (**ekklesia**), his affidavit refusing that office was preserved with the original decree in the Metroon, the Temple of Demeter (Dem. 19.129).

Decrees and Laws

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) passed "decrees" (yh/fismata) by show of hands (xeirotomi/a), but, in the 4th century at least, these decrees were not the same as "laws" (no/moi). Laws were more permanent, more universal, and therefore harder to pass; for example, a quorum of 6000 **citizens** was needed to vote on a law that named an individual (a no/mos e)p' a)/ndri)--such a law revoking someone's **citizenship**--but decrees naming individuals required no special quorum (Andoc. 1.87; Dem. 24.59).

Aeschines distinguishes between the two, once asking rhetorically why the laws are good, but the decrees of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) are bad (Aeschin. 1.177). **Aristotle** makes a theoretical distinction between laws and decrees, noting that in some kinds of democracy the laws rule, but in other kinds decrees of an Assembly (**ekklesia**) can override laws (Aristot. Pol. 1292a). Athens was the former kind of democracy, according to **Demosthenes**, who quotes a principle of Athenian governance, that "No decree, either of the **Council** or the Assembly (**ekklesia**) shall have more authority than a law" (yh/fisma de\ mhde\n mh/te boulh=s mh/te dh/mou no/mou kuriw/teron ei)=nai) (Dem. 23.87). On the other hand, the laws could determine what sorts of decrees the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could pass, such as a law that allows the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to pass a decree honoring a **citizen**, but that limits the circumstances of such an honor (Aeschin. 3.36). Based on the laws, the **courts** could disallow a decree (Dem. 23.96).

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) was responsible for creating laws, but did not pass them or repeal them directly, as it did decrees. On the 11th day of the first **prytany**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) met for ratifying the laws (e)picheirotomi/a no/mwn); the Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted approval or disapproval, first, the laws having to do with

the **Council**, then laws having to do with the nine **Archons**, and the laws having to do with other officials. If the votes expressed disapproval of any category of laws, then the last meeting of the **prytany** was set aside for discussion of those laws (**Demosthenes** adds that there were severe penalties for any officials, **prytaneis** or **proedroi**, who failed to follow this procedure) (Dem. 24.20 - Dem. 24.22). If, during those discussions, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) decided that the laws needed to be changed, it could vote, on the third meeting after that decision, to appoint of Board of Legislators, a small committee of **citizens** who would make the final decision regarding the laws; these were called **Nomothetae** (nomoqe/tai) (Dem. 24.25).

Only these **Nomothetae** could repeal a law (no/mos), but any Athenian **citizen** could propose the repeal, as long as he suggested a law to replace the one being repealed (Dem. 24.33). **Demosthenes** himself was once charged with improperly suggested the emendation of a law governing the maintenance of warships (Dem. 18.105). Whoever wanted the **Nomothetae** to repeal a law, or wanted them to enact a new law, had to write down his proposal and post it publicly near the statues of the **Eponymous Heroes**; the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could then see the number of proposed changes and allot the **Nomothetae** an appropriate amount of time for their work (Dem. 24.33). Whenever someone proposed that a law should be repealed, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) appointed five **citizens** to argue, before the **Nomothetae**, in favor of keeping the existing law (Dem. 24.23).

In addition to considering and acting upon proposals for new laws and proposals that existing laws be changed, the **Nomothetae** also undertook an annual review of all existing laws, looking for any contradictions (Aeschin. 3.38). If they found any contradictory laws, the **Prytaneis** were to call an Assembly (**ekklesia**), which would vote on how to resolve the contradiction (Aeschin. 3.39). **Demosthenes** praises this practice of legislating (tou\s no/mous tiqe/nai) as being open and democratic (par' u(mi=n, e)n toi=s o)mwmoko/sin, par' oi(=sper kai\ ta)/lla kurou=tai), and in helping the average **citizen** keep track of the laws of the city: "[The **Nomothetae** undertake their annual review] so that there may be only one law dealing with each subject, and that the plain **citizen** may not be puzzled by such contradictions and be at a disadvantage compared with those who are acquainted with the whole body of law, but that all may have the same ordinances before them, simple and clear to read and understand." (Dem. 20.93).

Any new laws proposed by the **Nomothetae** were to be published near the statues of the **Eponymous Heroes** and read aloud to the next meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Dem. 20.94).

Election of Officials by the Assembly (**ekklesia**)

A large responsibility of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was the election of public officials, both civil servants and military officers.

Aristotle says that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected **generals** (a)rxairesi/as strathgw=n), officials with civic and military responsibilities, cavalry commanders (i(ppa/rxwn), and other "War Leaders" (tw=n pro\s to\n po/lemon a)rxw=n), "in whatever manner seemed good to the people" (kaq' o(/ ti a)\n tw=| dh/mw| dokh=|); these elections happened at a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) held as soon as possible, weather permitting, after the 6th **prytany** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 44.4; also Dem. 4.26). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected ten generals (strathgoi/), and voted on which general would assume which specific duty: one commanded heavy

infantry on foreign expeditions; one took charge of the defense of Attica; one managed the military harbor at Munychia and one the harbor at "the Point" (ei)s th\ n*)akth/n); one managed the Symmories (summori/ai), which were the groups of **citizens**, called **trierarchs** (trih/rarxoi) responsible for maintaining warships; and others were dispatched wherever they were needed (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.1). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) also elected ten infantry commanders or taxiarchs (tacia/rxai) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.3). **Demosthenes** mentions being, himself, elected taxiarch (Dem. 40.34). They elected two cavalry commanders, or hipparchs (i(/pparxoi) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.4), and a special hipparch for the island of Lemnos (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.5). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected ten phylarchs (fu/larxoi), who each commanded the cavalry units contributed by one of Athens' **Tribes** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.4).

In addition to these officials, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected "stewards" (tami/as) who were responsible for the ships Paralus and Ammon, which were used for special official functions (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 61.7). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could dispatch these ships on missions and establish their budgets (Dem. 21.173). Naval architects (a)rxite/ktonas e)pi\ ta\s nau=s) were also elected by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 46.1). On at least one occasion, **Demosthenes** proposed that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) meet on a certain date to elect officials to oversee the maintenance of the city walls (Aeschin. 3.27). At one time, according to **Aristotle**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) also elected an official to manage the parade featuring a 30-oared ship that carried young people through the streets of the city during the Festival of the Dionysia (a)rxiqe/wron tw=| triakontori/w| tw=| tou\s h)|qe/ous a)/gonti) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 56.4) (see also **Festivals**).

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) chose a Treasurer of Military Funds, the Controllers of the **Theoric Fund**, and the Superintendent of Wells; all of these officials held office from one Panathaea (the All Athens Festival; see **Festivals**) to the next, four years (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.1). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected by show of hands ten sacrificial officers called "Superintendents of Expiations" (tou\s e)pi\ ta\ e)kqu/mata), responsible for making sacrifices to appease the gods (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.6), and ten "yearly Sacrificial Officers" (tou\s kat' e)niauto\n), who performed sacrifices and administered all the four-yearly **festivals**, except the Panathenaea (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.7). **Demosthenes** accuses a man named Meidias of demanding to be elected overseer of the **festival** of the Dionysia, which might suggest that a certain amount of campaigning went on for these offices (Dem. 21.15).

Aristotle says that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected, by show of hands, a clerk to read document at meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) and of the **Council** (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.5); at one time a special "Clerk of the Presidency" (grammate/a to\n kata\ prutanei/an) was also elected, but later came to be chosen by lot (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 54.3). These clerks enjoyed free meals in the Tholos (Dem. 19.249).

Demosthenes mentions a law that no commissioner (su/ndikos) elected by the people is permitted to serve more than once (mh\ e)cei=nai u(po\ tou= dh/mou xeironthqe/nta plei=n h)\ a(/pac sundikh=sai) (Dem. 20.152). But he also claims that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) elected Meidias to the offices of steward (tami/as) of the Paralus, hipparch, and superintendent of the Mysteries, sacrificer, and buyer of victims (musthri/wn e)pimelhth\ n kai\ i(eroipoio/n pote kai\ bow/nhn), which certainly suggests that there was no limit to the number of different offices a man could hold (Dem. 21.171). Just as the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could elect officials, it could also impeach them. See

Impeachment.

Foreign Policy: Sending Out Embassies

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) was responsible for the general conduct of Athens' public business, which included sending embassies to conduct business with other states.

Aristotle, after listing the two special meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) in each **prytany**, says that the remaining two meetings were reserved for "all other business" (ai(de\ du/o peri\ tw=n a)/llwn...proceirotoni/as) (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 43.6). Included in that general category were matters of foreign policy, and especially the appointment and dispatch of embassies (pre/sbeis, presbeutai/) to other states. The sources contain many specific references to embassies sent out by the vote of the Assembly (**ekklesia**). **Demosthenes** mentions embassies sent by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to discuss peace with Philip of Macedon (Dem. 18.29; Dem. 19.13), one of three **citizens** to Philip to discuss his capture of some Athenian grain ships (Dem. 18.75), an embassy to Philip asking him to make war on Persia, and a later embassy to the Persian King asking him to make war on Philip (Dem. 18.75). On one occasion we hear of a private individual, and not even an Athenian **citizen**, asking the Athenian Assembly (**ekklesia**) to dispatch an embassy: Phrynon of Rhamnus had been captured by pirates and subsequently ransomed, whereupon he asked the Athenian Assembly (**ekklesia**) to appoint an embassy to go to Philip and get Philip to help get his ransom back (Aeschin. 2.13).

Certain embassies were recurring, such as the Hieronomon (i(eromnh/mwn) and the Pylagoras (pula/goras), who were ambassadors with specific religious duties; **Aeschines** mentions a decree that orders them to travel to Themopylae and Delphi "at the VERDANA appointed by our fathers" (e)n toi=s tetagme/nois xro/nois u(po\ tw=n progog/nwn) (Aeschin. 3.127).

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could appoint **citizens** to serve on embassies, but a **citizen** could excuse himself by swearing an oath (e)xo/mnumi), as **Demosthenes** claims to have done once (Dem. 19.122). **Aeschines** cites a law that says that an ambassador chosen by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) can excuse himself only by swearing before the Assembly (**ekklesia**), not before the **Council** (Aeschin. 2.95). Once an embassy was approved, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could also dispatch an Athenian warship to convey the ambassadors to their destination (Dem. 53.5). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) would also give the ambassadors instructions as to how to conduct their business (Dem. 19.6). As evidence that the Athenians regarded their ambassadors as sacred and immune from interference, we have mention of an incident in which Megara arrested some Athenian ambassadors, whereupon the Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted to exclude all Megarians from participation in the Mysteries at Eleusis (Dem. 12.4).

Once an embassy, dispatched by the Assembly (**ekklesia**), completed its mission, it was to report to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 3.125, Aeschin. 2.47). These reports were important: **Aeschines** mentions a motion to hold a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) on a sacred day, so that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could hear an embassy's report as quickly as possible (Aeschin. 3.67). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could not make foreign policy decisions until they had heard from their returning ambassadors, and we hear of at least one occasion when the business of several cities, which were engaged in multi-lateral negotiations, came to a standstill until an Athenian embassy reported to the Athenian Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 2.60).

Demosthenes accuses an embassy, which he claims reported only to the **Council**, of failing in its duty by not reporting immediately to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Dem. 19.19); and the responsibility went in both directions, since **Aeschines** suggests that an Assembly (**ekklesia**) had a right to report to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 2.121). If the Assembly (**ekklesia**) reacted favorably to the report, it could pass a vote of thanks to the ambassadors and treat them to a meal at public expense (Aeschin. 2.53). But not all reports were so well received, such as that of Epicrates, who was subject to **impeachment** and condemned to death for mishandling an embassy (Dem. 19.276). There is also a parody of an embassy's report in **Aristophanes' Acharnians**, during which a character complains that an embassy to Persia wasted the city's money (Aristoph. Ach. 60); the jokes here may reflect a common topic of discussion in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) when embassies reported their activities.

Foreign Policy: Receiving Foreign Ambassadors in the Assembly (**ekklesia**)

When ambassadors from other states came to do business with Athens, they appeared before the Assembly (**ekklesia**).

Aeschines mentions an occasion on which Philocrates moved, in the Assembly (**ekklesia**), that Athens send out ten ambassadors to Philip for the purpose of inviting Philip to send his own ambassadors to Athens (Aeschin. 3.63). Just as the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could send out embassies and hear their reports when they returned, it could also receive embassies from foreign powers. **Aeschines** mentions a motion before the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to receive ambassadors from Cersobleptes (Aeschin. 2.83), and a decree granting safe passage to ambassadors from Philip (Aeschin. 2.109). Ambassadors from Philip and other states came before the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to make their case (Dem. 7.19, Dem. 19.111). Foreign ambassadors might mount the platform to be questioned before the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 3.72). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) might vote special honors for foreign ambassadors, such as a free dinner in the Prytaneum (Dem. 19.234) or choice seats for a play in the Theater of Dionysus (Dem. 19.111).

Foreign Policy: General Issues

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) directed most of Athens' foreign policy, including making specific decisions regarding alliances and military strategy.

When the Assembly (**ekklesia**) sent out ambassadors or received ambassadors from elsewhere, it was conducting foreign policy. So, on the motion of **Demosthenes**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) dispatched five **citizens** as ambassadors to negotiate a treaty of peace between Athens and Philip of Macedon (Dem. 18.29). But the Assembly (**ekklesia**)'s powers over foreign policy extended far beyond the dispatch of embassies. When the embassy just mentioned returned to Athens, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) had to decide how to respond to the diplomatic developments. We hear of two subsequent meetings. At one, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) discussed formalizing a treaty of peace with Philip, and at the other, it discussed making an alliance with Philip (Aeschin. 2.53). When these diplomatic efforts resulted in a specific proposal, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted to make the treaty official (Aeschin. 2.82; Aeschin. 2.109; Dem. 19.14). There are other examples of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) managing foreign policy. The Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted to send Timotheus to help the Persian Ariobarzanes, who was leading a revolt against the Persian king (Dem. 15.9). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted to exclude all Megarians from the celebration

of the **Mysterries** at Eleusis, after Megara had arrested some Athenian ambassadors (Dem. 12.4). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) received a petition from Thessaly, which was asking that Philip of Macedon be admitted into the Amphictyonic Council, which was a body, consisting of representatives from several cities, that governed the shrines of Apollo at Delphi (Dem. 19.111).

One significant disadvantage of conducting foreign policy in the Assembly (**ekklesia**), on the Pnyx, out in the open, was a complete lack of secrecy. When Athens voted to make peace with Philip of Macedon (Aeschin. 2.82; Aeschin. 2.109; Dem. 19.14), the people of Phocis, who were at war with Philip, learned of this within four days, according to **Demosthenes**, because some Phocians were in Athens and overheard the proceedings on the Pnyx (Dem. 19.53; Dem. 19.59).

Conferring Citizenship, Immunity from Taxes, and Crowns

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could confer honorary Athenian **citizenship** on **non-Athenians**, or could award someone with immunity from taxes (a)telei/a), and could honor citizens with gold crowns (ste/fanoi).

To confer **citizenship**, six thousand Athenians had to vote, by secret ballot (Dem. 59.90); once **citizenship** had thus been voted on someone, only a court could withdraw it (Dem. 59.91). Among the people on whom the Assembly (**ekklesia**) granted honorary **citizenship** were Teres and Cersobleptes, rulers of Thrace (Dem. 12.8), Ariobarzanes (a Persian), Philiscus, and Charidemus (Dem. 23.141), Timotheus (Dem. 20.84), and once, after the Battle of Marathon, all male citizens of Plataea (Dem. 59.104). **Demosthenes** says, in one speech, that Meno of Pharsalus and Perdicas of Macedonia were granted **citizenship** by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Dem. 23.199 - Dem. 23.200), but at another place he says, quite explicitly, that these two were not granted **citizenship** but merely immunity from taxes (Dem. 13.23 - Dem. 13.24).

It is important to note a passage in **Demosthenes** where he says that the Athenians considered honorary **citizens** to be "real" Athenians only when it was convenient. (pw=s e)sti\ tou=t' i)/son h)\ di/kaion, o(/tan me\n u(mi=n sumfe/rh|, pole/mion ei)=nai fa/skein au)to\n th=s po/lews, o(/tan d' e)me\ sukofantei=n bou/lhsqe, poli/thn a)podei/knusqai to\n au)to\n u(f' u(mw=n) (Dem. 12.9), and that the honorary **citizenship** that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) granted to Teres and Cersobleptes of Thrace was not "real" (ou)/t' *)aqhnai/ous o)/ntas) (Dem. 12.8).

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could also confer lesser honors by passing a decree that named the honored parties "friends of the state, benefactors, and immune from all taxes" (proceni/an, eu)ergesi/an, a)te/leian a(pa)ntwn) (Dem. 20.60). Epicerdes, who saved the Athenians captured in Sicily, was granted such immunity (Dem. 20.42), as was the general Conon (Dem. 20.42). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could also pass a more simple vote of thanks, as it did for Callias (Dem. 12.6).

One honor that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could bestow was a crown. The Assembly (**ekklesia**) awarded crowns, by decree, as rewards for some service to Athens. So, Nausicles was crowned several VERDANA for spending his own money on a military expedition while he held the office of **General** (strathgo/s) (Dem. 18.114). Diotimus and Charidemus were crowned for donating shields to Athens (Dem. 18.115). Neoptolemus was crowned for raising money toward certain public works (Dem.

18.116). **Demosthenes** himself claims to have been awarded a crown for overseeing the repair of some fortifications and for having been a good manager of the **Theoric Fund** (Dem. 18.118). A crown could be held out as an incentive, as on one occasion when we hear of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) offering a crown to the first **trierarch** to get his ship ready for sea (Dem. 51.1). The crowns awarded by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) became the property of the recipient and his family, as opposed to being hung in a temple and thus dedicated to the gods in the recipient's name (Aeschin. 3.46). There is a great deal of evidence regarding this procedure because **Aeschines** prosecuted Ctesiphon for illegally moving that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) bestow a crown on **Demosthenes**; both **Aeschines'** speech for the prosecution and **Demosthenes'** speech in defense of Ctesiphon survive (**Aeschin. 2; Dem. 18**).

The details of crowning are not particularly clear, because **Aeschines** and **Demosthenes**, naturally, present two different versions. **Aeschines** quotes a law mandating that anyone crowned by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) must receive the crown on the Pnyx (Aeschin. 3.55; compare Aeschin. 3.32 and Aeschin. 3.204, where he seems to use the word Assembly (**ekklesia**) [e]kklhsi/a] as a synonym for the Pnyx). Elsewhere he mentions this law from another direction, saying that any crowns awarded during a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) must be awarded by the **People** (dh=mos) (Aeschin. 3.42). **Demosthenes** interprets the law differently, saying that when the Assembly (**ekklesia**) bestows a crown, it may be conferred on the Pnyx, but may also be conferred somewhere else (Dem. 18.120). **Demosthenes** evidently had cited a law saying that the **People** (dh=mos) could vote to crown someone in the Theater of Dionysus (Aeschin. 3.36). According to **Aeschines**, the problem with awarding crowns in the Theater of Dionysus was this: since **non-Athenians** might be present in the Theater, such an award conferred more widespread glory on the recipient than if the crown were given on the Pnyx, and this was not fair to those who received their crowns on the Pnyx (Aeschin. 3.43).

Assemblies to deal with complaints about religious matters

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) also dealt with questions of religious ritual and accusations of impious behavior, particularly because the democracy sponsored public festivals, which were both civic events, to celebrate the glory of Athens, and religious events, to honor the gods.

There was a special meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) regularly held in the Theater of Dionysus after the festival of the **City Dionysia** (Aeschin. 2.61; Dem. 21.8, which says that this was mandated by a law [no/mos] and was to be held on the day after the **Pandia**, the **Festival** of All-Zeus). The purpose of this meeting was, at least in part, to deal publicly with any issues that arose during the **Festival**. **Demosthenes** claims to have lodged complaints against Meidias for crimes he committed during the **City Dionysia** (Dem. 21.1), and **Aeschines** mentions that a vote of censure (kataxeirotoni/a) was passed against Meidias in the Theater of Dionysus (Aeschin. 3.51). **Demosthenes** mentions the Assembly (**ekklesia**) condemning a man, the father of Chariclides. The son was an **Archon**, and the father was serving as his Presiding Official (pa/redros); the father expelled a man from the Theater of Dionysus, which was proper, since the man was in the wrong seat, but in doing so the father laid a hand on him. Thus he was deemed, by the Assembly (**ekklesia**), to have profaned the **Festival** and was condemned (Dem. 21.178). Another man condemned for profaning the **Festival** was Ctesicles, who was drunk

during the procession and struck a man with a lash (Dem. 21.180). **Demosthenes** mentions a decree, moved by Euegorus, that no one creditor may seize any property from his debtors during the **Festival**, and that if he does, a complaint may be lodged at the meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) immediately following the **Festival** (Dem. 21.10).

Other cases of religious profanation came before the Assembly (**ekklesia**). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) convicted Euandrus of profaning the **Eleusinian Mysteries** because he had won a suit against Menippus and arrested him during the **Mysteries** (Dem. 21.175). And **Aeschines** claims to have prosecuted **Demosthenes** for guest-murder (cenokto/nos), an offense against the gods, and to have convicted him "in the presence of all Athenians" (e)n a(/pasin *)aqhnai/ois), which strongly suggests that this took place at a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 3.224).

Financial Matters

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) made decisions in financial matters as well.

A topic of discussion for at least some meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was the "dole" (tou= labei=n), and whether monies should be distributed generally to all **citizens**, or only to those who provided some service (Dem. 13.1). **Demosthenes** complains, on one occasion that "we have surrendered the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to discussion of doles" (w(s peri\ tou= labei=n e)kklhsi/an a)pedw/kamen), and we might suspect that this was a popular and controversial topic (Dem. 13.3). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted on how to spend any surplus funds; on one occasion, after the **Council** had passed a probouleuma (the preliminary measure that put a piece of business on the Assembly (**ekklesia**)'s agenda), the Assembly (**ekklesia**) had to decide whether to spend surplus funds on military things or on funding public festivals (Dem. 59.4). This particular choice, defense or festivals, appears elsewhere, where the question is whether the Legislators (nomoqe/tai) should repeal a law and allow the **Theoric Fund** to be spent for military purposes (Dem. 3.10). We know that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) determined military budgets, as when Meidias was dispatched in a ship on a military mission and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) set his budget at 12 talents (see **Money**) (Dem. 21.173).

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) was the forum for accusations of financial misdeeds and the body responsible for investigating them. Dem. 24.11 mentions a decree that established a special investigation into any public money that might be in the hands of private **citizens**; this investigation brought its results to the **Council**, which then asked the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to vote for further investigations (Dem. 24.11). A man named Pamphilus, from the **deme** Acherdous denounced Hegesandrus and Timarchus before the Assembly (**ekklesia**), accusing them of having stolen 1000 drachmas from the Parthenon (see also **Money**) (Aeschin. 1.110). **Demosthenes** reports a case in which someone was charged with defrauding the treasury, and the matter went before the **Council**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (which spent a whole day on the matter), and two different **juries** (Dem. 24.9). If someone were imprisoned because he owed money to the treasury, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could agree to let him remain free as long as someone else posted bond (Dem. 24.79). However, if someone lost his **citizenship** because of an unpaid debt to a temple, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could not restore his **citizenship** without 6000 votes in his favor (Dem. 24.45).

Military Matters

The Assembly (**ekklesia**) passed decrees on military matters, beginning with votes to make preparations for war (Dem. 14.14). Since Athens relied on a citizen militia to fight its wars (see, for example, Dem. 3.4), military decisions were of immediate and vital relevance to those **citizens** as they gathered in the Assembly (**ekklesia**).

Military questions and financial questions were often inseparable, as when Philip was besieging Heraeum and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted to launch a fleet of forty ships and levy a special tax to pay for the expedition (Dem. 3.4). It was not unknown for a private **citizen** to offer, during a meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), a voluntary donation (epi/dosis) for a military expedition (Dem. 21.161). The military decisions in the hands of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) were not limited to broad political matters; while the **Council** decided, each year, whether to spend money on the construction of warships, it was the Assembly (**ekklesia**) that decided what types of warships to build that year (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 46.1). **Demosthenes**, in one speech, asks the Assembly (**ekklesia**) to vote to raise an army (to fight Philip) consisting of 2000 men, of whom 500 were to be Athenians, of any suitable age, serving for a specified period, and other specific details (Dem. 4.21); this request shows the level of detail with which the Assembly (**ekklesia**) involved itself in planning. **Demosthenes** goes beyond appropriations to strategy when he asks that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) vote that this army should wage a "war of continuous annoyance" against Philip (h(\ sunexw=s polemh/sei kai\ kakw=s e)kei=non poihsai) (Dem. 4.19).

In VERDANA of crisis, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was responsible for voting to mobilize, and the first step seems to have been a vote that the **trierarchs** (trih/rarxai) get their ships ready for sea (Dem. 50.4; Dem. 50.6). The Assembly (**ekklesia**) could set incentives for speed in this matter, and hand down punishment for inefficiency; we hear of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) awarding a crown for the first to get his ship ready, and at the same time decreeing that those who did not launch on time were subject to imprisonment (o(\s a)\n mh\ pro\ th=s e(/nhs kai\ ne/as e)pi\ xw=ma th\n nau=n periormi/sh|, dh=sai kai\ dikasthri/w| paradou=nai) (Dem. 51.4). Likewise, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could, at any time, replace one military commander with another, as when Autocles was relieved of command, and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) dispatched Menon to replace him (Dem. 50.12; see also **Impeachment**).

Other Matters

It is important to remember, in the face of all of these specific actions by the Assembly (**ekklesia**), that this body could pass a decree on almost anything, as long as the **Council** presented a probouleuma (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 45.5). In certain matters the Legislators (nomoqe/tai) could bring special matters before the Assembly (**ekklesia**), such as **impeachments**, audits of **generals**, or prosecutions for improper legislation (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 59.1). The **Areopagus**, too, could bring matters before the Assembly (**ekklesia**), such as a report on the subject of private residences being built on the Pnyx (Aeschin. 1.81). And certain business seems to have happened in the presence of the Assembly (**ekklesia**), but without necessitating a vote or a decree, such as the **Archons** assigning flute players to tragic choruses (Dem. 21.13). So when we hear of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) approving a law (no/mos) stating that if any one of the captains of the ferry-boats, which traveled between the mainland and the island of Salamis, should capsize his boat, he is to lose his job (Aeschin. 3.159), we should not necessarily assume that governance of the ferry-boats was an ongoing part of the Assembly (**ekklesia**)'s

agenda, only that this was an issue that seemed sufficiently important for the Assembly (**ekklesia**) and the Legislators (nomoiqē/tai) to take it up on one occasion.

Disorderly Conduct, Corruption, and Manipulation

Meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) were not always orderly affairs. Orators seem to have resorted to theatrics from time to time, such as in the 5th century when Cleophon came forward, drunk, wearing armor, and threatening anyone who wished to make an arrangement with Sparta (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 34.1). According to **Aeschines**, **Demosthenes** once threatened to drag away, by the hair, anyone who advocated peace with Philip (**Aeschines** explicitly compares this incident to Cleophon's antics many years before) (Aeschin. 3.150). **Aeschines** also mentions Timarchus throwing off his clothes and leaping around "like a gymnast" to punctuate some point (Aeschin. 1.26). **Aristotle** blames the late 5th century politician Cleon for this sort of behavior, saying that he was the first to use "unseemly shouting and coarse abuse on the platform" (επι\του= βη/ματος α)νε/κrage kai\ ε)λοιδορh/sato, kai\ περιwσα/μενος ε)δhμhγο/rhse), and to hitch up his cloak (Aristot. Ath. Pol. 28.3). In addition to the antics of speakers, the assembled crowd could get rowdy. **Demosthenes** laments that many **citizens** would come to the Assembly (**ekklesia**) for "diversion" (παρε/ργws) rather than for serious deliberation (Dem. 17.13). When Philocrates tried to speak in favor of an unpopular motion, according to **Demosthenes**, the Assembly (**ekklesia**) "raised a clamor" and refused to listen to him, forcing him to step down (qorubou/ntwn u(mw=n kai\ ou)k ε)qelo/ntwn a)kou/ein au)tu=, katabai/nwn a)po\ tou= βη/ματος) (Dem. 19.111).

There were laws against such behavior. **Aeschines** quotes a law that if anyone who spoke off subject, failed to speak on each proposition separately, spoke twice on the same subject on the same day, spoke abusively, interrupted, shouted disapproval, or laid hands on the Presiding Officials (pro/edroi), then that person could be fined up to 50 drachmas for each offence, and under certain circumstances, the Council could vote to fine him even more (Aeschin. 1.35). But, as the evidence suggests, this law was not uniformly or consistently enforced, a fact that **Aeschines** laments (Aeschin. 3.2).

Misbehavior of a more serious kind was possible, as well, and was the subject of debate in the Assembly (**ekklesia**). **Aeschines** mentioned a decree, proposed by one Demophilus, that was to set certain punishments for attempts to bribe member of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 1.86). **Aeschines** accuses **Demosthenes** of bribing "hirelings" (μισqofo/roi) to attend meetings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) and vote a certain way (Aeschin. 2.72). And **Aeschines** elsewhere complains of corruption deeper than specific instances of bribery, claiming that the Presiding Officials (pro/edroi) are not chosen fairly, but by a corrupt process (Aeschin. 3.3).

Short of bribery, but equally subject to accusations, complaints and condemnations by the orators, were efforts to manipulate the normal workings of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) and the government generally. For example, **Aeschines** argues that **Demosthenes** proposed a decree sending ambassadors to Thermopylae and Delphi "the VERDANA appointed by our fathers" (ε)n toi=s tetagme/nois xro/nois u(po\ tw=n progo/nwn); this decree was a ruse, **Aeschines** claims, to prevent those ambassadors from being at Thermopylae for an important meeting of the Amphictyonic Council, the body that governed the sanctuaries at Delphi (Aeschin. 3.127). In another passage, **Aeschines** makes a complicated argument that **Demosthenes** manipulated the **Council** into passing a certain probouleuma for

consideration by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 3.125). And again, **Aeschines** criticizes Callias for delivering, as his own words, a speech that **Demosthenes** had written for him (Aeschin. 3.95). In his turn, **Demosthenes** claimed that a cabal was formed against him (susta/ntwn), that set in motion all sorts of indictments, audits, and **impeachments** (grafa/s, eu)qu/nas, ei)saggeli/as). **Aeschines** claims that **impeachment** (ei)saggeli/a) was often used when a prosecutor preferred to argue a case before the Assembly (**ekklesia**), thinking that it would not be successful if argued before a **jury** (Aeschin. 3.4).

The Dangers of Bad Government

The Athenians themselves were well aware of the potential dangers of direct democracy as exercised by the Assembly (**ekklesia**), and the orators, particularly, mention them often. **Demosthenes** says, "A man can do no greater wrong than by telling lies to a popular Assembly (**ekklesia**); for, where the political system is based upon speeches, how can it be safely administered if the speeches are false?" (Dem. 19.184). He complains of partisanship and the dangers it poses to orderly process: "You conduct your politics by syndicates (summori/as); each syndicate has an orator for chairman, with a **general** under him, and three hundred to do the shouting." (Dem. 2.29). He complains that the Assembly (**ekklesia**) was given to hysteria, describing how, on one occasion, someone broke into the Parthenon and stole a few oars, and at the ensuing meeting of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) "all those coming forward to speak" (oi(pario/ntes a(/pantes) cried that the democracy was overthrown and all the laws were null and void (Dem. 13.14). **Aeschines** complains that actions by the Assembly (**ekklesia**) could interfere with justice, noting an occasion on which a **jury** acquitted someone of corruption, not based on the evidence, but on the fact that the Assembly (**ekklesia**), earlier, had awarded him a crown (Aeschin. 3.10). He also complains of the reverse, that lawsuits (or the threat thereof) could stand in the way of proper deliberation in the Assembly (**ekklesia**) (Aeschin. 3.146).

The most famous example of the Assembly (**ekklesia**) behaving rashly and inconsistently comes from **Xenophon**. He describes the case of the **generals** at the battle of Arginousae in 406 BCE, who were accused of failing to rescue the survivors of the ships that had sunk in the battle (the account begins at Xen. Hell. 1.6.24). These men were put on trial for their lives, and when the **Prytaneis** refused to put the matter to a vote in the Assembly (**ekklesia**), arguing that the proceedings were illegal (the generals should have been tried individually, not all at once), the Assembly (**ekklesia**) overrode them, and the **Prytaneis** gave in out of fear of the crowd (Xen. Hell. 1.7.14 - Xen. Hell. 1.7.15). The **generals** were condemned to death and executed, but after it was too late, the Athenians had a change of heart, and the Assembly (**ekklesia**) voted a complaint against "those who had misled them" (oi(/tines to\n dh=mon e)chpa/thsan) (Xen. Hell. 1.7.35).

The affair of the Arginousae generals was one of the darkest moments of the Athenian democracy, an over-reaction following the temporary oligarchic revolution of 411 BCE. It is, we think, important to see this affair as the Athenians saw it: an isolated example of excess in an unfolding experiment in democratic government.