

Studying Greek History through Inscriptions

Ancient Greek Communities

Cities (*poleis*)

Demes (*demoi*)

Phratries

Associations

Confederations

Amphictionies

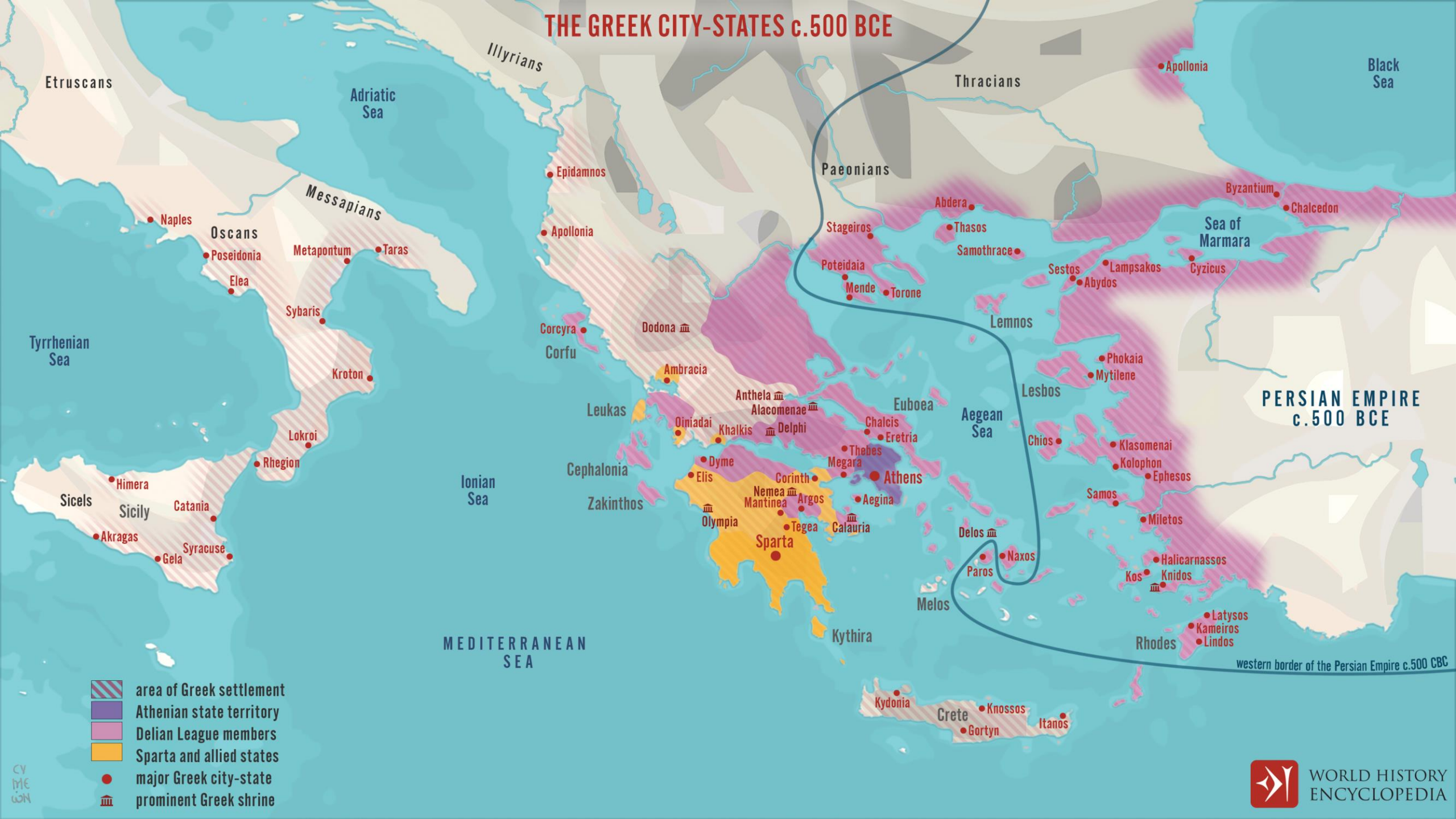
All these communities had a concrete institutional base: members, assemblies of the members, functionaries, administration, rules, finances.

Ancient Greek cities(-states) - *Poleis*

- There grew to be over 1,000 city-states in ancient Greece.
- Each city-state had its own form of governance, ranging from monarchies and tyrannies to oligarchies and democracies.
- In the collective governments (**oligarchies and democracies**) citizens were allowed to vote on and participate in making **state decisions**. In the oligarchy the richest or those of noble birth, in the democracy every citizen (women, foreigners, slaves had no political rights).
- In the **oligarchies and democracies** not only the decisions but also their implementation and the whole **management** of the state were in the hands of the citizens. In the oligarchy the management had the rich or noble citizens, in the democracy every citizen (women, foreigners, slaves were excluded).



THE GREEK CITY-STATES c.500 BCE



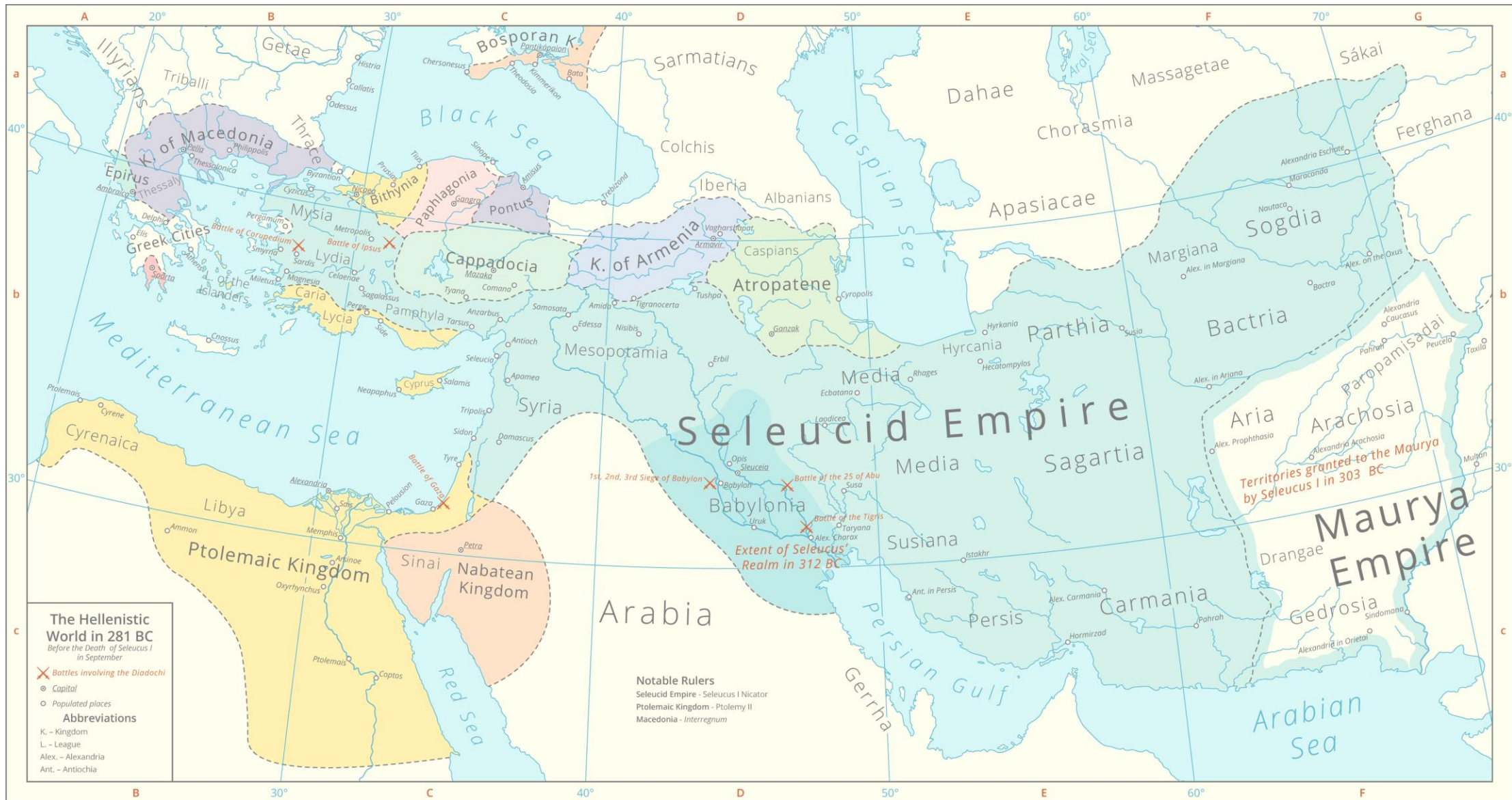
-  area of Greek settlement
-  Athenian state territory
-  Delian League members
-  Sparta and allied states
-  major Greek city-state
-  prominent Greek shrine

PERSIAN EMPIRE c.500 BCE

western border of the Persian Empire c.500 BCE

Interesting Facts about the Greek Cities

- People living in Ancient Greece did not think of themselves as "Greek", but as citizens of their city-state. For example, people from Corinth considered themselves Corinthians and people from Sparta considered themselves Spartans.
- Many of these cities, such as Rhodes, Thebes, and Corinth were also important cities during the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire.
- In the Hellenistic period many Greek cities were within a Hellenistic kingdom and during the Roman period all Greek cities belonged to the Roman empire. Under these circumstances they were no longer states, but they had still their internal structure and independency (magistrates, assemblies, councils, laws).



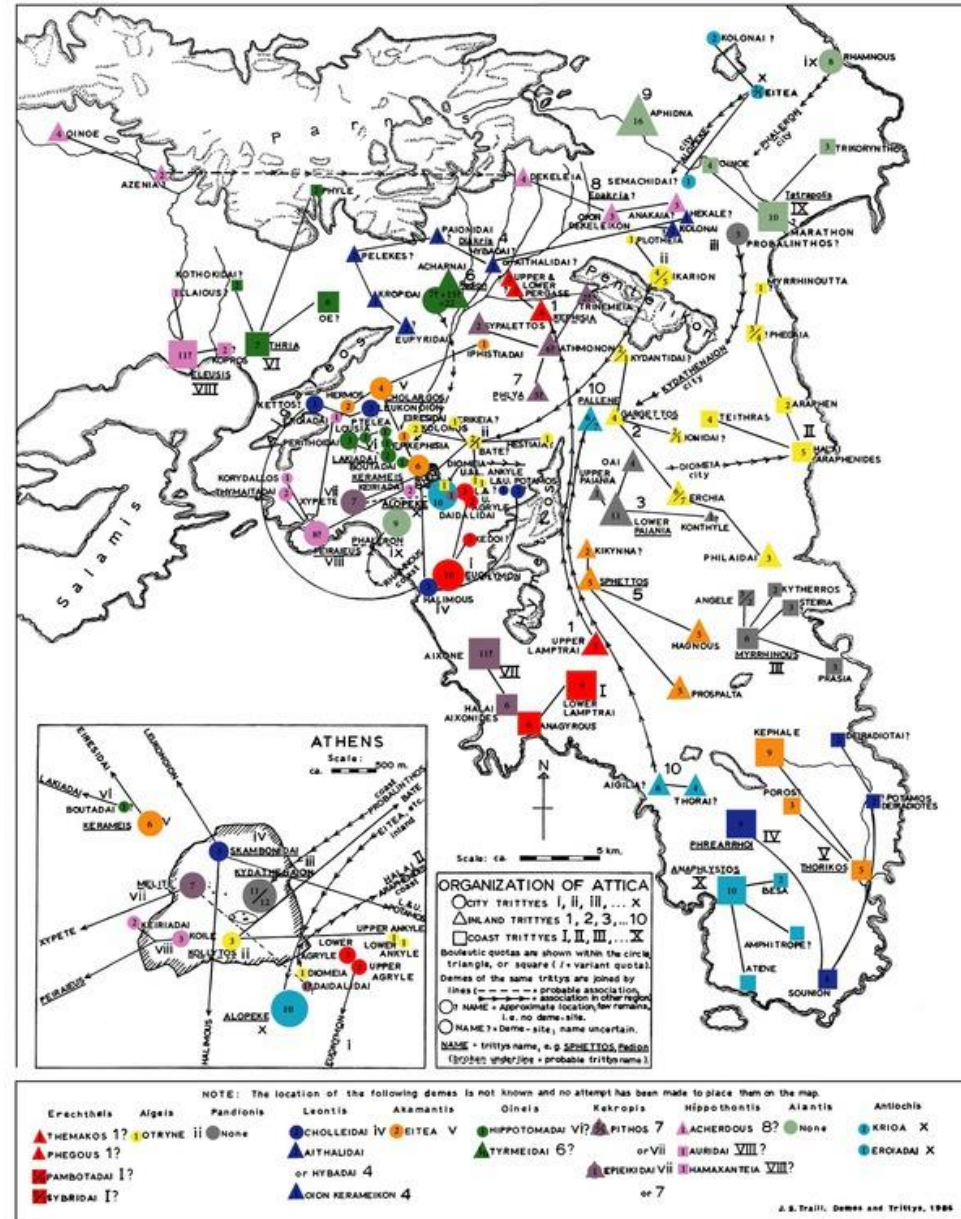
The expansion of the Roman Empire to AD 117



- **Demes:** a deme was a geographical subdivision of a city-state. A deme functioned to some degree as a *polis* in miniature. Various civil, religious, and military functionaries existed in various demes. Demes held their own religious festivals and collected and spent revenue.
- **Phratries:** a phratry was a group containing citizens based on kinship. They played a prominent role in social and religious life. Their existence is known in most Ionian cities and in Athens. All citizens (with very few exceptions) and only citizens were enrolled in phratries.
- **Associations:** people who belonged to associations had a common interest or goal (religion, profession, origin). They took on organizational forms in imitation of the city in which they were based. They had laws, an assembly and magistrates, as well as priests or priestesses, and organized finances.
- The **Confederacies (*Koina*)** were incorporations of many cities in a unified political organization.
- **Amphictionies** were incorporations of neighboring states formed around a religious centre.

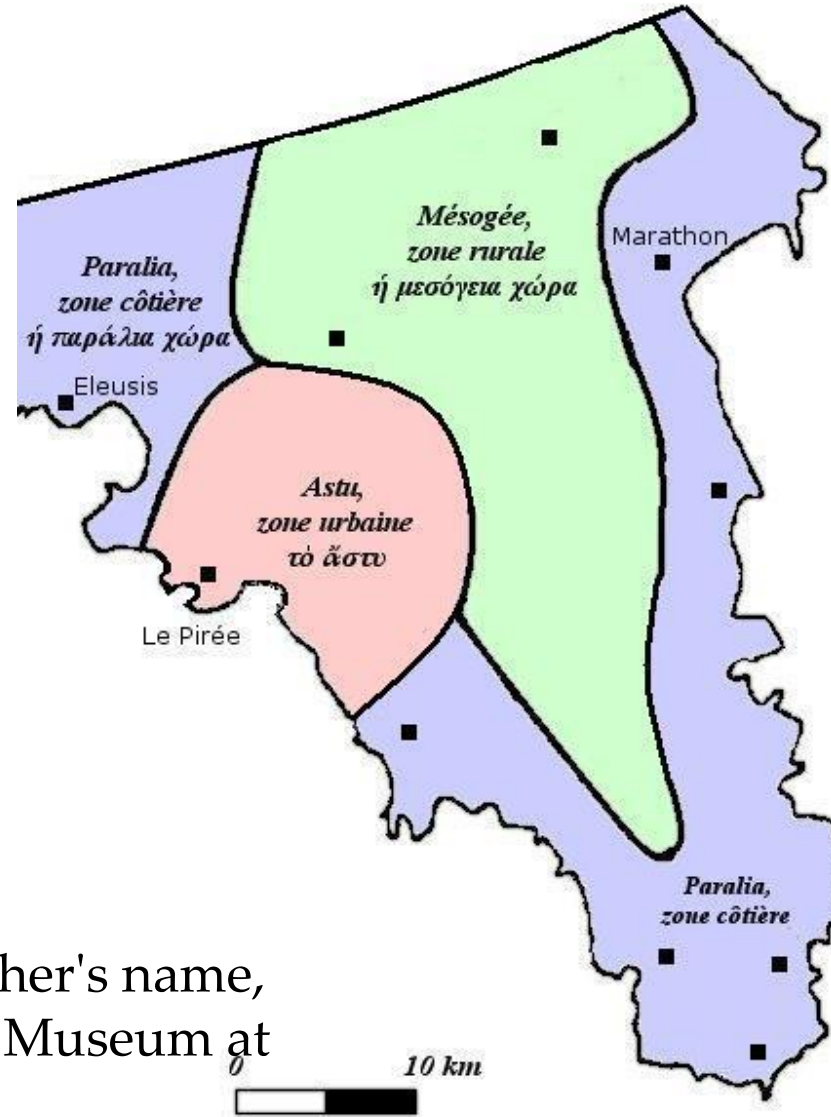
Demes, Attica

D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica, 508/7 -ca. 250 B.C.: A Political and Social Study*, 1986





Pinakia, identification tablets (name, father's name, deme) used for tasks like jury selection, Museum at the Ancient Agora of Athens



The documents of the Greek communities

The institutionalized communities mentioned above produced different categories of texts that served different purposes and were kept in the archives of these communities.

Contracts, leases

Accounts, inventories

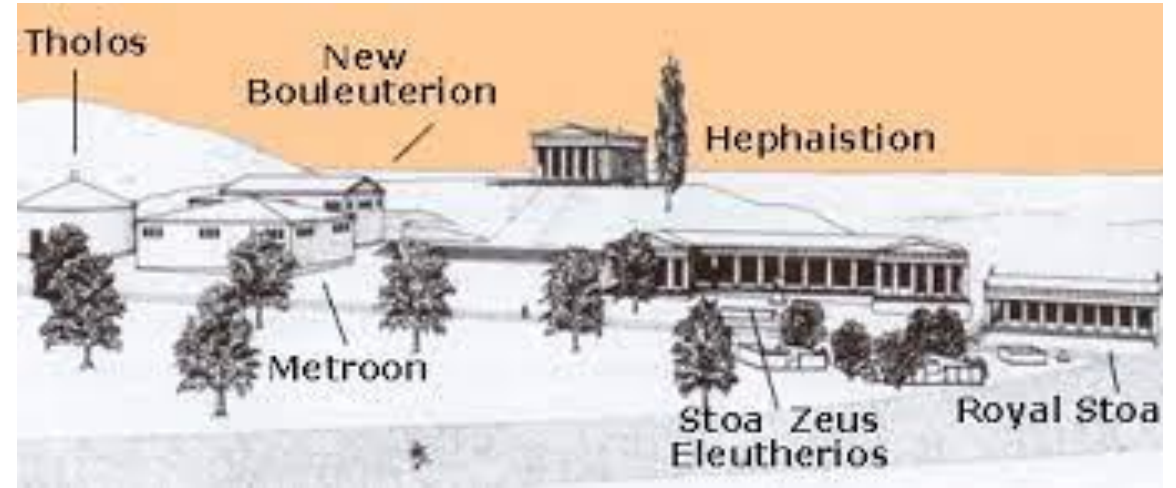
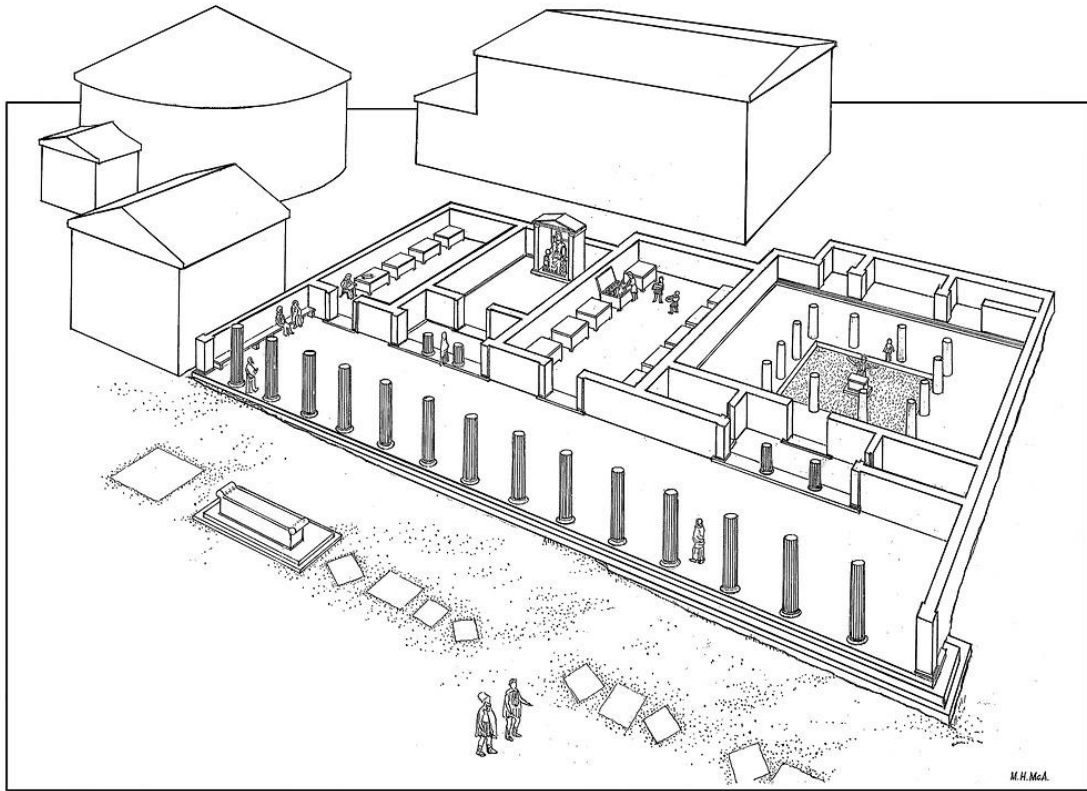
Dedications

Honorific inscriptions

Decrees

Archives

Decrees, contracts, leases, accounts and inventories were public documents, written on parchment or on papyrus. They were kept in the archives or record offices of the community. These served as depositories for the original copies of public documents. The archives of Athens were kept at the Metroon in the Agora of Athens, which were placed next to the ancient council house, was under the jurisdiction of the council and under the protection of the Meter of the Gods that had there her sanctuary shrine and protected the archives.

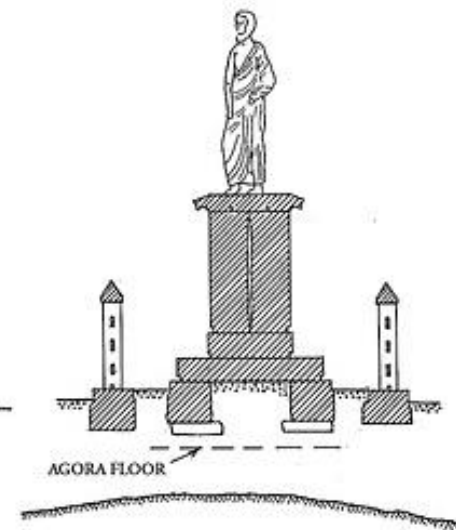
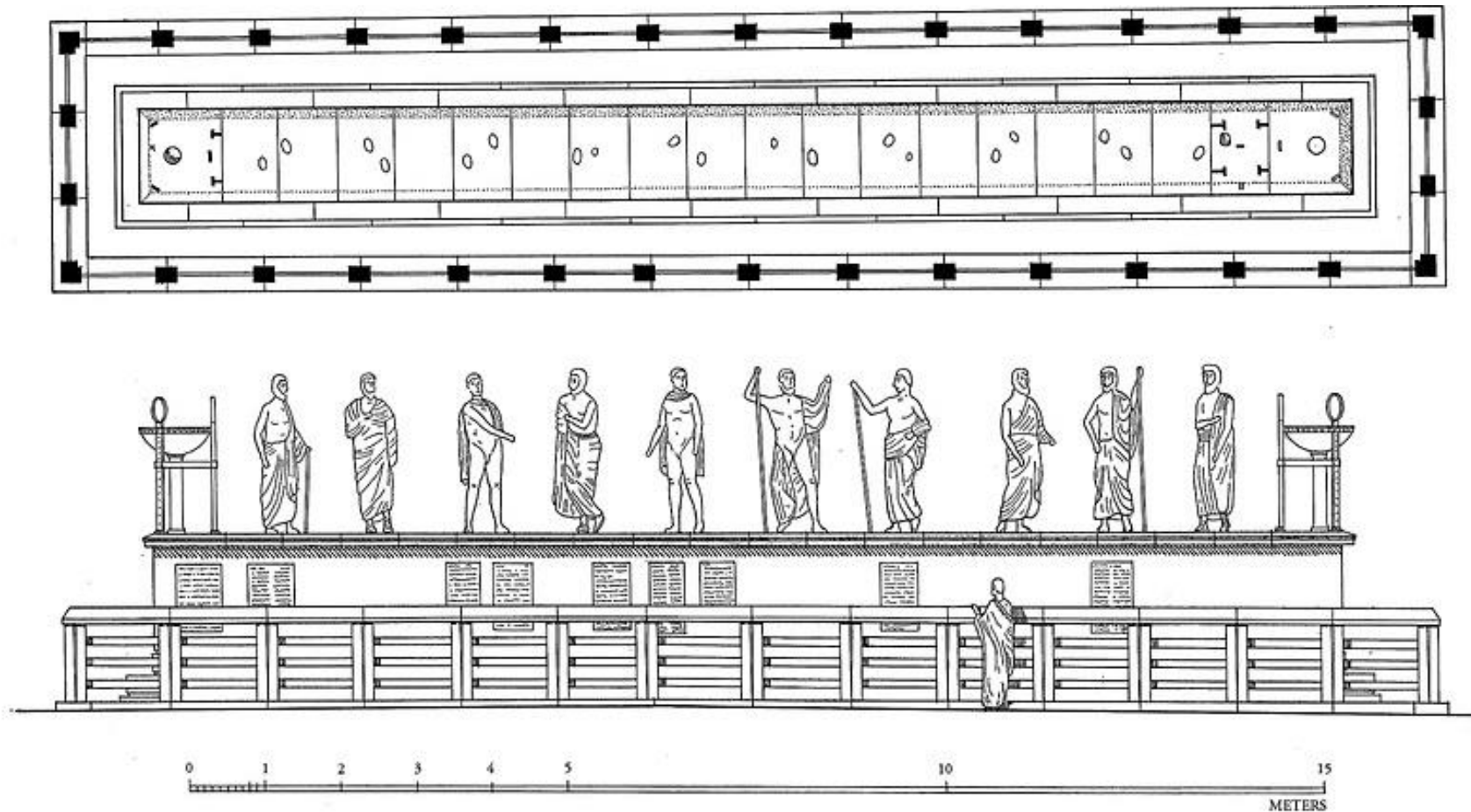


The Metroon of Athens

Written announcements

When the communities wanted to make one of these (or other) documents known to the public, they consigned it to be written on wooden tablets (*pinakes*) and whitened boards (*leukomata*) which were set up in a public place. In Athens the public space where the whitened boards were set up, was the monument of the Eponym Heroes of the 10 Athenian tribes in the Agora of Athens.

The Monument of the Eponymous Heroes in the Agora of Athens



Inscriptions

When they wanted that the public display of a document became permanent they wrote it on stone.

Which public documents in different periods and in different areas were written on stone is part of the big issue that we name “**epigraphic habit**”. Almost every community had its own epigraphic habit.

Decrees = decisions by the collective bodies of the communities

D. of the cities: decisions of the assembly or the council or both.

D. of the subdivisions of the cities: decisions of the total number of members of a deme, a phratry or a tribe, in case of subdivision of the civic body.

D. of the associations: decisions of the members of associations.

D. of Confederacies and Amphictionies: decisions of the assemblies composed of representatives of the members of Confederacies or Amphictionies.

The assembly of people (*ekklesia tou demou*)

The popular assembly was open to all male citizens as soon as they qualified for citizenship. The assembly was responsible for declaring war, military strategy and electing the *stratego*i and other officials. It was responsible for nominating and electing magistrates (*archontes*). It had the final say on legislation and the right to call magistrates to account after their year of office. It originally met once every month, but later met three or four times per month. The agenda for the *ekklesia* was established by the Boule, the popular council. Votes were taken by a show of hands (*cheirotomia*). They voted also using stones or broken pottery.

Pnyka – place of assembly of the Athenian people

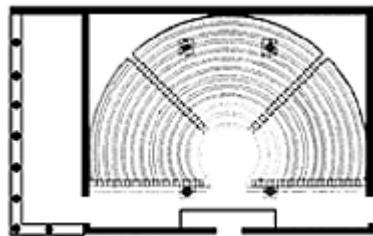
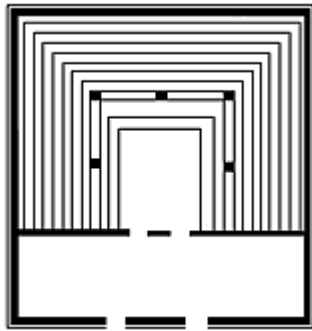


The Council (*boule*)

The council consisted of citizens (βουλευταί, *bouleutai*) appointed to run daily affairs of the city. In oligarchies *boule* positions might have been hereditary, while in democracies members were typically chosen by lot and served for one year. Little is known about the workings of many *boulai*, except in the case of Athens, for which extensive material has survived.

In Athens the Council had 500 members (50 from each of the ten tribes) who represented the full-time government of Athens.

Athenian Bouleuterion, Agora of Athens [Old and New Bouleuterion]



The procedure of an Athenian decree

- In Athens, no decree could be enacted by the assembly without first being brought before the council for consideration. Though this arrangement limited the sovereignty of the assembly in theory, in actual practice, the assembly could request that the council deliberate on particular issues.
- The Council would meet to discuss and vote on “Preliminary decrees” (*probouleumata*, προβουλεύματα), and any of these that passed the Council’s vote went on for discussion and voting in the Assembly.
- Any male citizen was invited to speak in an Assembly and all male citizens could vote.
- Only councillors, principal magistrates, and boards of magistrates had the right to bring forward proposals for discussion in the council.

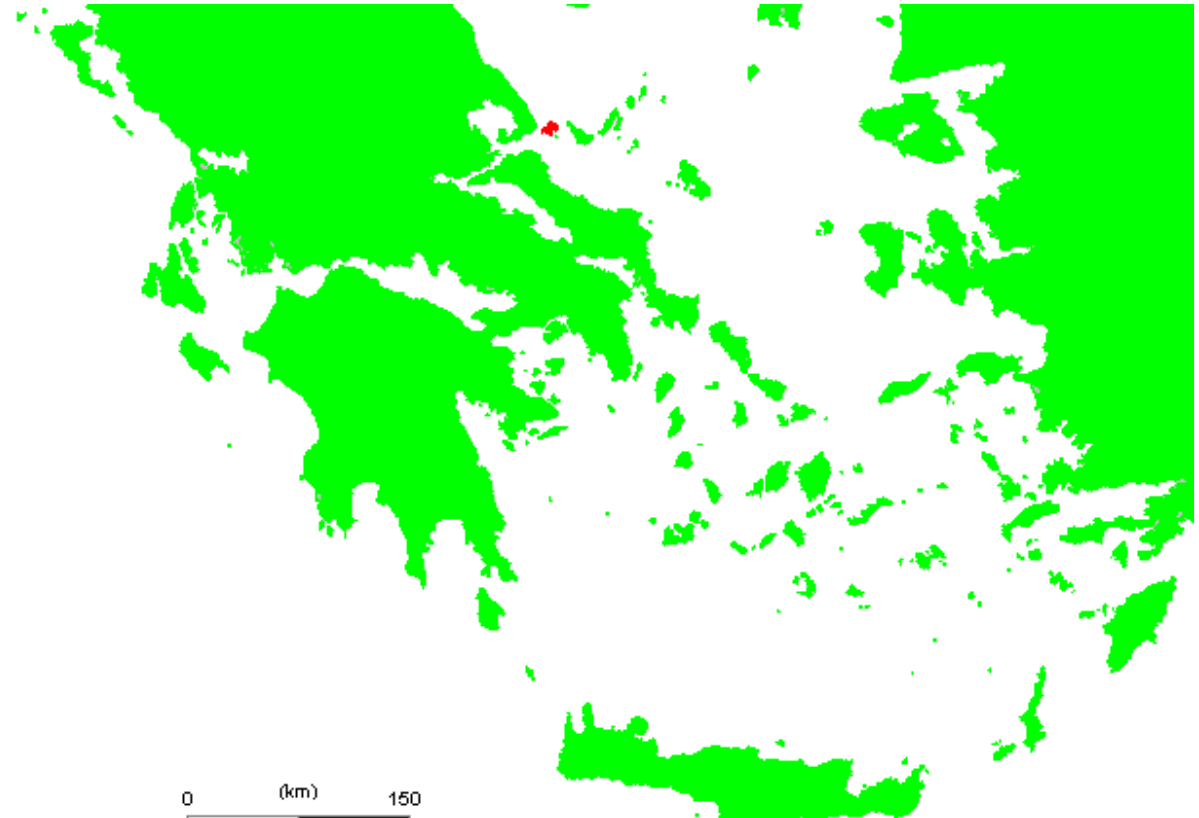
- In Athens, each assembly meeting began with sacrifice and prayer, following which the presiding officers (*prytaneis* before 378/77 BC., thereafter *proedroi*) would bring forward the published agenda, which listed the preliminary resolutions of the council. These were read out by the herald and a vote was taken to decide whether each preliminary resolution should be put to a vote immediately or discussed further and perhaps amended.
- Only after a preliminary resolution had received the approval of both the people (through the assembly) and the council did it become a decree. This two-tiered act of passage is communicated in the enactment formula “resolved by the council and the people [i.e., the assembly]”. The secretary of the assembly was responsible for recording the details of the passage of the decree, its final wording, and instructions concerning the deposit of these in the public archives. These were used as exemplars for the engraver.

Proxeny decree for Oiniades Palaiskiathios IG I³ 110, Athens, Akropolis, 408/7 BC.

W. Mack
Proxeny and Polis:
Institutional Networks in
the Ancient Greek World,
Oxford 2015



Skiathos



θεοί·

ἔδοξεν τῆι βολῆι καὶ τῶι δήμ-
ωι· Ἀντιοχὶς ἐπρουτάνευε, Εὐκ-
λείδης ἐγραμμάτευε, Ἴεροκλ-
5 ἦς ἐπεστάτε, Εὐκτῆμων ἦρχε
v

Διειτρέφης εἶπε· ἐπειδὴ ἀνή-
ρ ἐστι ἀγαθὸς Οἰνιάδης ὁ Παλ-
αισκιάθιος περὶ τὴν πόλιν τ-
ῆν Ἀθηναίων καὶ πρόθυμος πο-
10 ιέν ὅτι δύναται ἀγαθόν, καὶ ε-
ὔποιεὶ τὸν ἀφικνόμενον Ἀθη-
ναίων ἐσκίαθον, ἐπαινέσαι τ-
ε αὐτῶι καὶ ἀναγράψαι αὐτὸν

πρόξενον καὶ εὐεργέτην Ἀθη-
15 ναίων καὶ τὸς ἐκγόνοσ ἀυτοῦ, κ-
αὶ ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἀδικῆται ἐπιμέ-
λεσθαι τὴν τε βολὴν τὴν αἰεὶ β-
ολεύουσαν καὶ τοὺς στρατηγ-
ὸς καὶ τὸν ἄρχοντα τὸν ἐν Σκι-
20 ἀθωι ὃς ἂν ἦι ἐκάστοτε· τὸ δὲ ψ-
ήφισμα τόδε ἀναγράψαι τὸν γ-
ραμματέα τῆς βολῆς ἐν στήλη-
ι λιθίνῃ καὶ καταθεῖναι ἐμ π-
όλει. καλέσαι δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπ-
25 ἰ ξένια ἐς τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἐς α-
ὔριον v Ἀντιχάρης εἶπε· τὰ μὲ-
ν ἄλλα καθάπερ τῆι βολῆι, ἐς δ-
[ἐ τ]ῆγ γνώμην μεταγράψαι ἀντ-
[ὶ τοῦ "Σ]κιαθίου", ὅπως ἂν ἦι γεγρα-
30 [μμένο]ν, "Οἰνιάδην τὸν Παλαισ-
[κιάθιον"].

- **Gods.**
The Council and the People decided. Antiochis was the prytany. Eukleides was secretary. Hierokles was chairman. Euktemon was archon. Dietrephes proposed: since Oiniades of Palaiskiathos is a good man with regard to the city of Athens and eager to do what good he can, and does good to any Athenian who arrives in Skiathos, to praise him and inscribe him as a proxenos and benefactor of Athens, and his descendants;

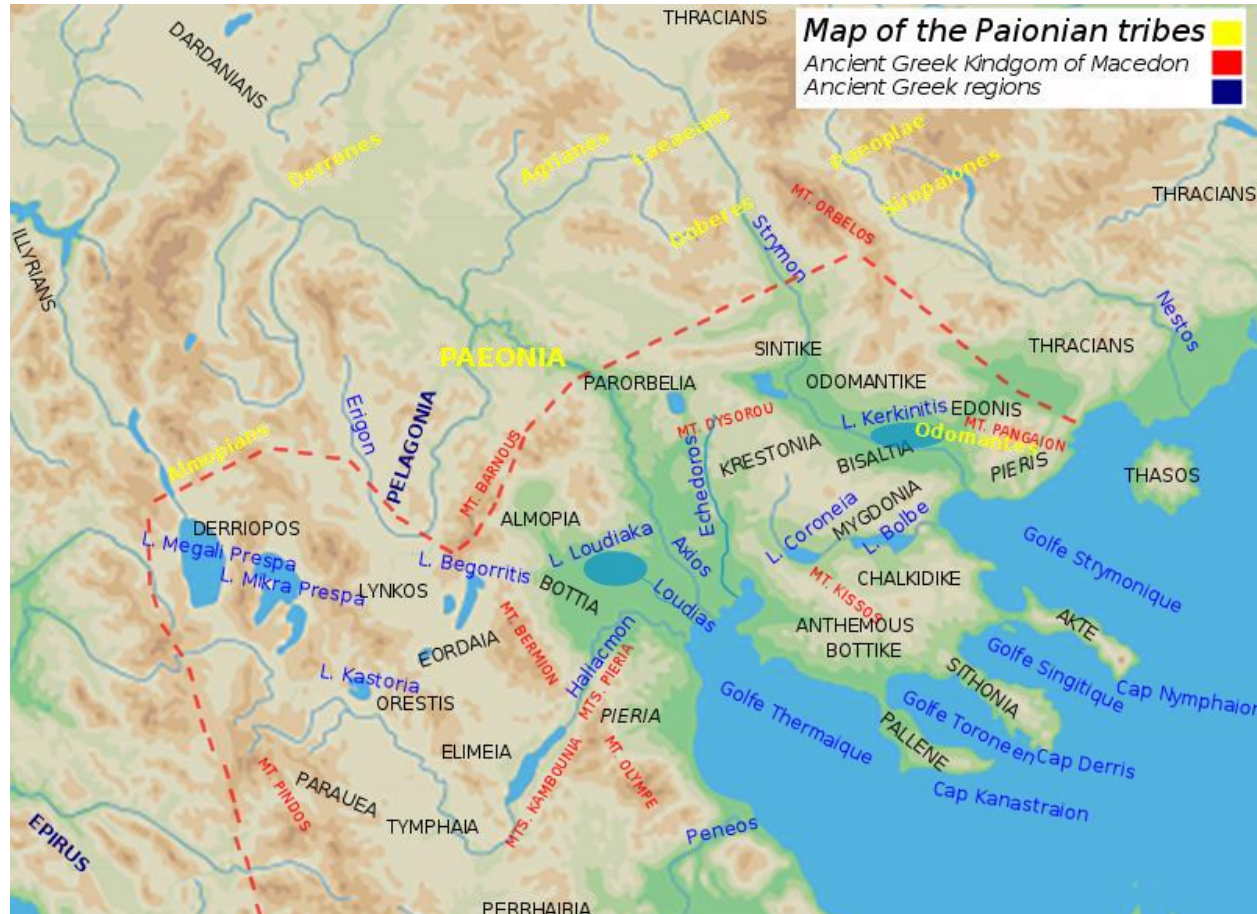
and there shall take care, so that he suffers no harm, the Council in office at any time and the generals and whoever the officer in Skiathos may be on each occasion; and the secretary of the Council shall inscribe this decree on a stone stele and set it down on the acropolis; and to invite him also to hospitality in the city hall tomorrow. – Antichares proposed: in other respects in accordance with the Council, but in the proposal a correction shall be made for 'of Skiathos', so that there shall be written, 'Oiniades of Palaiskiathos'.

**Citizenship decree for Audoleon, king of the
Paionians**

IG II³ 1, 871, Athens, Akropolis, 285/4 BC

[M. J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens*, 4 vols,
1981-1983]

Paionia



Stater of Audoleon (315-285 BC)



In the archonship of Diotimos, in the twelfth prytany, of Pandionis, for which Lysistratos son of Aristomachos of Paiania was secretary.

On the twenty-fifth of Skirophorion, the twenty-fifth of the prytany, Assembly. Of the presiding committee Philomelos son of Philomelos of Halai was putting to the vote and his fellow presiding committee members.

The People decided. Simonides son of Hegemon of Hagnous proposed: since Audoleon king of the Paionians both from earlier times has been of good will to the Athenian People, being of service and joining the effort for the freedom of the

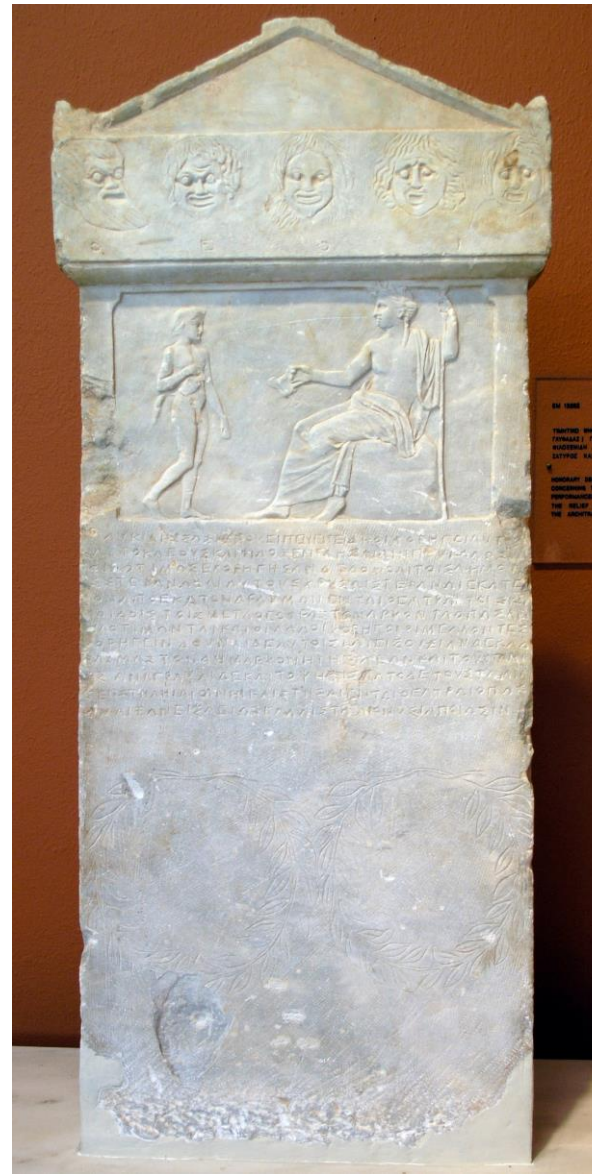
city, and when the People delivered the town, on learning this he was delighted at the success that had occurred, considering that the preservation of the city was as one with his own, and he is of service both individually to Athenians spending time with him and those arriving in the country; and he has given a gift of grain to the People of 7500 medimnoi from Macedonia at his own expense, having delivered it to the harbours of the city; and further he announces that in the future he will be of service by joining the effort

for the deliverance of the Piraeus
and the freedom of the city,
for good fortune, the People
shall decide: to praise king
Audoleon son of Patraos of Paionia
for his excellence and good will for
the
Athenian People and to crown
him with a gold crown,
and to announce the crown at the
tragedy competition of the Great
Dionysia; and the board of
administrators shall
manage the making of the
crown and the announcement;

and he shall be Athenian,
and his descendants, and it shall be
possible for him to enrol in the tribe and
deme and phratry that he wishes;
and the prytany that
is allotted to preside next
shall put the vote about him at the
next Assembly, and the
court presidents shall bring for him
the scrutiny of the award to
the court whenever it is
possible; and they shall stand a bronze
statue
of him on a horse in the Agora; and the
board
of administrators shall manage
the making and the setting up

Honorific decree of the *deme* of Aixone for two *choregoi* SEG 366, 186, 313/2 BC

P. Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia. The Chorus, the City and the Stage*, 2003



- θεοί.
- [Γ]λαυκίδης Σωσίππου εἶπεν· ἐπειδὴ οἱ χορηγοὶ Αὐτ[έα]-
- ς Αὐτοκλέους καὶ Φιλοξενίδης Φιλίππου καλῶς [κα]-
- [ι] φιλοτίμως ἐχορήγησαν· δεδόχθαι τοῖς δημότ[α]-
- [ι]ς στεφανῶσαι αὐτοὺς χρυσῶι στεφάνωι ἐκάτε-
- 5 [ρ]ον ἀπὸ ἑκατὸν δραχμῶν ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ τοῖς κω-
- μωδοῖς τοῖς μετὰ Θεόφραστον ἄρχοντα, ὅπως ἂν
- [φ]ιλοτιμῶνται καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι χορηγοὶ οἱ μέλλοντες
- [χ]ορηγεῖν, δοῦναι δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ εἰς θυσίαν δέκα δ-
- ραχμᾶς τὸν δήμαρχον Ἡγησίλεων καὶ τοὺς ταμί-
- 10 ας, ἀναγράψαι δὲ καὶ τὸ ψήφισμα τόδε τοὺς ταμία-
- ς ἐν στήλῃ λιθίνῃ καὶ στῆσαι ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ, ὅπως
- ἂν Αἰξωνεῖς ἀεὶ ὡς κάλλιστα <τὰ> Διονύσια ποιῶσιν.

Gods. As proposed by Glaukides son of Sosippos; since the choregoi Auteas son of Autokles, and Philoxenides son of Philippos, well and honourably served in the choregia: it is resolved by the demesmen to crown each of them with a golden crown worth 100 drachmas in the theatre during the comedies *in the year* after Theophrastos was archon, in order that the other choregoi who will serve in the choregia may seek honour too; and that the demarch Hegesilaos and the treasurers shall also give to them 10 drachmas for a sacrifice; and that the treasurers shall engrave this resolution on a stone stele and erect it in the theatre, in order that the Aixonians may always stage the Dionysia in the best manner possible.

