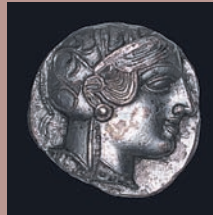


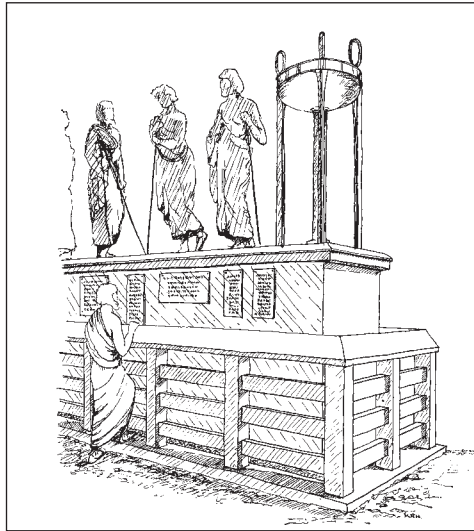
# THE ATHENIAN CITIZEN

## Democracy in the Athenian Agora



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MABEL LANG

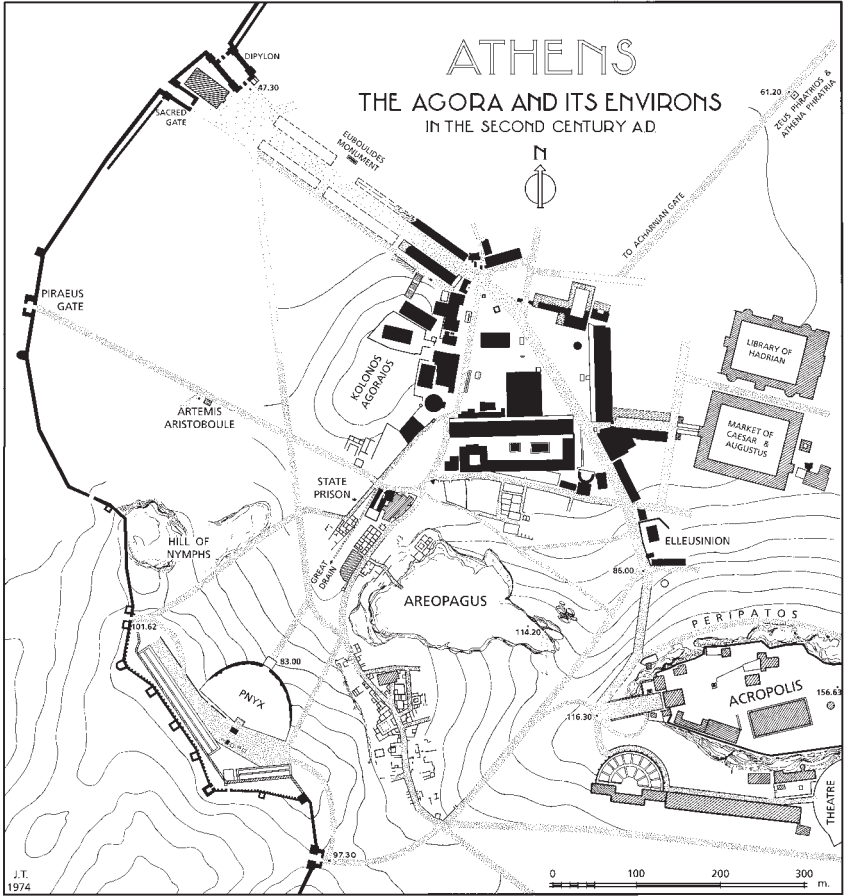
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Revised edition prepared by John McK. Camp II  
Photographs by Alison Frantz and Craig Mauzy

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AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

2004



I. THE AGORA AND NORTHWEST ATHENS IN THE SECOND CENTURY A.D.

## INTRODUCTION

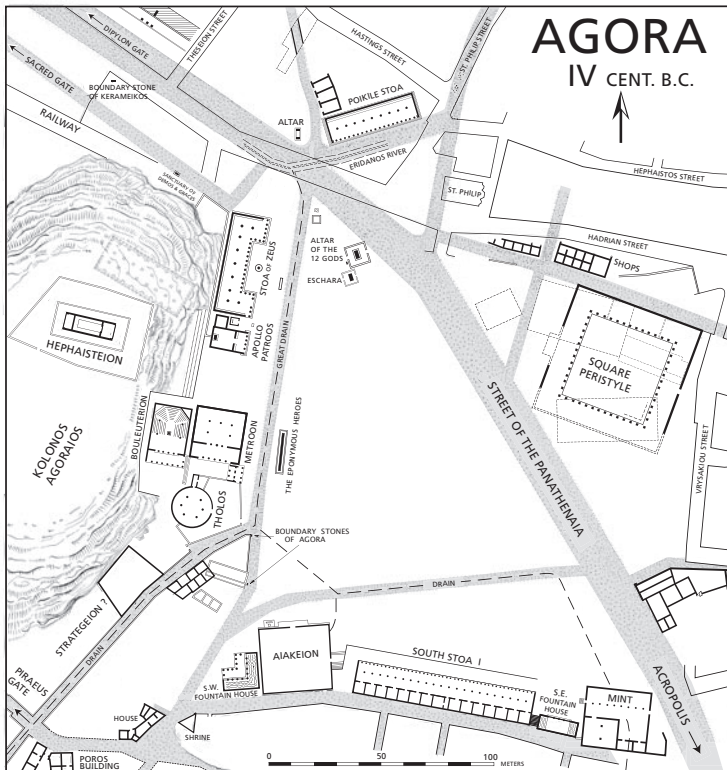
THE GOVERNMENT OF ANCIENT ATHENS concerned itself with many aspects of the lives of its citizens. In the pure democracy of Athens the government was not only of the people and for the people but also by the people to a far greater extent than is possible in the large representative democracies of the present. Because of the scope of governmental activity and the mass participation of the citizens, much machinery and paraphernalia of government were needed. It is through the material remains of this machinery found in the center of civic life, the Agora (I), that the pure democracy of ancient Athens can be most vividly illustrated.

Fortunately for us, the stone, metals, and pottery which the Athenians used are relatively imperishable, so that we have much of this primary evidence to supplement and illustrate the literature and history written by ancient authors. These material remains, as illustrated here, fall into several classes: records inscribed on marble or lead, currency, standard weights and measures, paraphernalia of the lawcourts, tokens, ostraka, and buildings. Most important of these, perhaps, are the laws and other records published on stone for the ancient Athenians themselves. From these we may learn, through the Athenians' own words, "what seemed best to the People."





2. MODEL OF THE AGORA IN CA. 400 B.C., FROM THE SOUTHEAST



3. PLAN OF THE AGORA IN THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

## THE AGORA AND PNYX

CENTER OF PUBLIC ACTIVITY, the Agora was a large open square where all the citizens could assemble (2, 3). It was used for a variety of functions: markets, religious processions, athletic contests, military training, theatrical performances, and ostracisms. Around its edges stood the buildings needed to run the democracy: the Council House (Bouleuterion), magistrates' headquarters, archives, mint, lawcourts, and civic offices. Boundary stones, such as the one shown below (4), indicate that the Agora had well-recognized geographical limits.



4. BOUNDARY STONE OF THE AGORA, CA. 500 B.C. IN LETTERS WHICH RUN RIGHT TO LEFT THE INSCRIPTION READS: "I AM THE BOUNDARY OF THE AGORA."





5. SPEAKER'S PLATFORM (BEMA) ON THE PNYX, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

The Agora is located immediately north of three rocky heights: the Acropolis, which was Athens' citadel, sacred center, and treasury; the Areopagus, seat of Athens' oldest and most august court; and the Pnyx, meeting place of the legislative Assembly (Ekklesia). It was on the Pnyx (5) that policies initiated by magistrates and committees in the offices of the Agora were submitted to the Athenian citizens. Stated meetings were held four times a month to enact legislation, hear embassies, and deal with such matters as food supply and the defense of the country. The meetings convened at dawn, and reluctant citizens were swept up from the Agora by slaves holding the ends of a long rope wet with red paint which would mark the clothes and thus make liable to a fine anyone who lingered or attempted to evade the call of duty.



## CITIZENSHIP: TRIBES AND DEMES

EVERY MALE ATHENIAN, above and beyond the regular universal military training for service in the citizen army, was subject to universal political service. Besides being a member of the Assembly, he was almost certain, at least once in his lifetime, to be chosen by lot as one of the Council (Boule) of 500 and to serve for a year in this body which prepared legislation for the Assembly and coped, by means of smaller committees, with the day to day exigencies of administration.

In addition to his legislative responsibilities, each citizen was liable to executive duties. He might be allotted for a year's service to any of a number of committees or boards such as Treasurers, Lessors of Public Contracts, Auditors, Market Controllers, Controllers of Measures, Grain Wardens, Port Superintendents, etc. Even many of the highest offices in the land were filled by allotment and so could fall on any citizen; almost all offices could be held only for a single year. In this way maximum participation was achieved, and every man was a public servant.

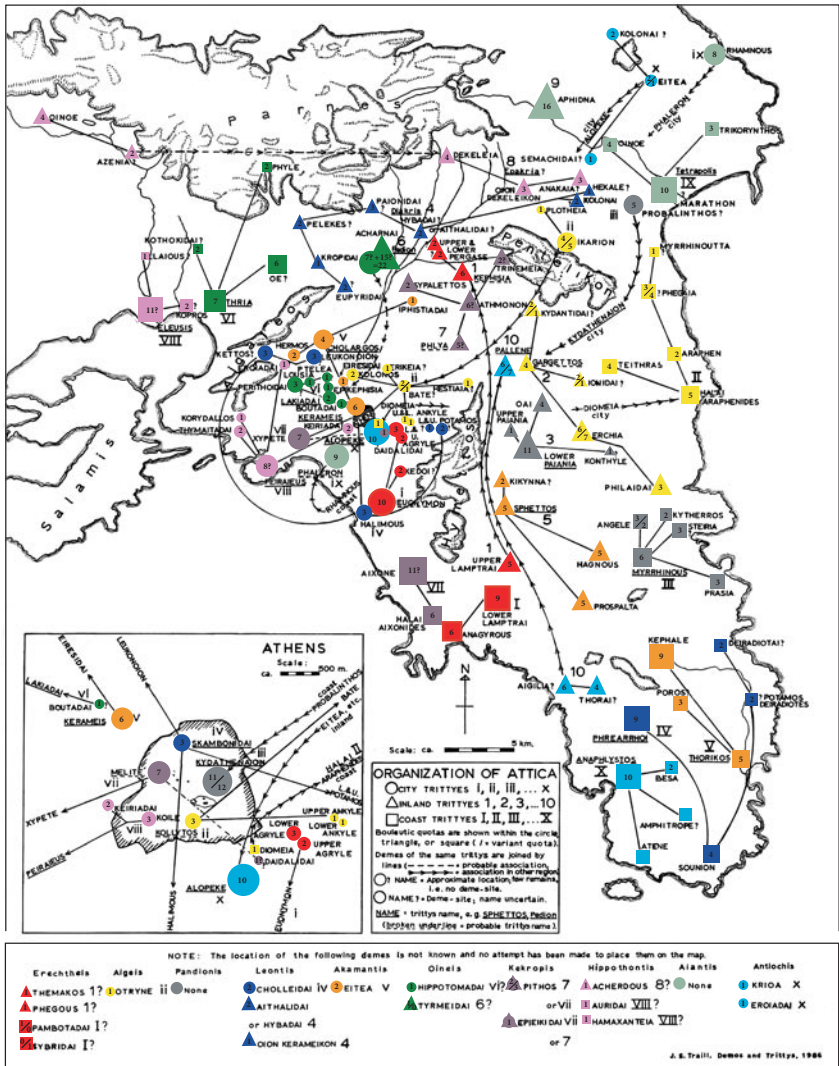
All citizens about to serve the state took an oath of office, vowing not to transgress any of the laws or to overthrow the democracy. The oath stone (6) has been found in front of the Stoa Basileios (or Royal Stoa), headquarters of the Basileus, chief religious and legal magistrate of the city. The spread of responsibility also made necessary an equally broad system of judicial control. Here again the citizen was the court of first and last appeal. All citizens were jurors, and both the size of the juries (from 200 up) and the number of courts (up to 10 sitting simultaneously) gave to all the opportunity to serve.



6. OATH STONE (LITHOS) OF THE ATHENIANS, ON THE STEPS OF THE ROYAL STOA. SIXTH CENTURY B.C. AND LATER.







7. MAP OF DEMES AND TRIBES. EACH COLOR STANDS FOR ONE OF THE 10 TRIBES, EACH MARK FOR AN INDIVIDUAL DEME. THE LINES LINK GROUPS OF DEMES THAT BELONG TO THE SAME TRIBE. THE NUMBER WITHIN EACH MARK RECORDS THE NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES SENT EACH YEAR TO THE COUNCIL (BOULE) FROM THAT DEME.

Thus, the legislative and judicial branches of the government were the people of Athens, who also, as individuals, served in executive capacities and, as a group, elected the chief executives each year. Every man held his citizenship, which he inherited, through membership in a deme, a group which had its origin in a geographical unit (a neighborhood of the city or a village in the countryside) and which gave to each citizen the third element of his official name, e.g., Perikles, son of Xanthippos, of (the deme of) Cholargos. There were about 140 demes, divided among 10 tribes (7), which were the basic units for allotment, representation on boards, and military organization.

## THE EPONYMOUS HEROES

JUST AS ALL GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITY and policy stemmed from the individual Athenian citizen, so there was a center in the Agora from which the lines of power went out to all men in all fields of activity. This was the Monument of the Eponymous Heroes, a long base, surrounded by a fence, on which stood statues of the heroes from whom the 10 tribes took their names (8).

Here, by the hero of his tribe, each man, holding his citizenship through tribe and deme, was in closest contact with the privileges and



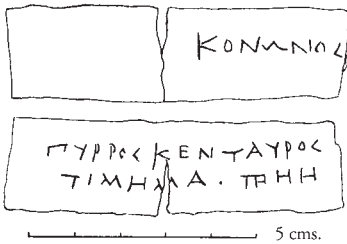
8. MODEL OF THE MONUMENT OF THE EPONYMOUS HEROES. NOTICES CONCERNING MEMBERS OF A GIVEN TRIBE WOULD BE POSTED BELOW THE STATUE OF THE APPROPRIATE TRIBAL HERO.



duties involved in his citizenship. The base served as the official noticeboard of the Athenian people, on which appeared drafts of new laws, notices of lawsuits, and mobilization orders. From the Eponymous Heroes the citizen army went out to protect, and sometimes to spread, the Athenian way of life.

## MILITARY SERVICE

AFTER THE 18-YEAR-OLD was registered in his deme as a citizen and was approved by the Council, he entered military service as a young conscript (ephebe) with other members of his tribe. "The fathers hold meetings by tribes and after taking oath elect three members of the tribe of more than 40 years of age, whom they think to be the best and most suitable to supervise the ephebes. . . . These take the ephebes and after first making a circuit of the temples then go to Piraeus and some of them garrison Munichia, others Akte" (Aristotle). When the ephebes'



9. DRAWING OF A LEAD CAVALRY TABLET, FOURTH CENTURY B.C., REGISTERING A HORSE BELONGING TO KONON, CHESTNUT IN COLOR, WITH A CENTAUR BRAND, WORTH 700 DRACHMAS.

military service was over, it was customary for decrees honoring them for their faithful service to be inscribed on stone, with the list of their names appended. The decrees often record in detail the activities of the group. One reads in part: "They made the voyage to Salamis for the games in honor of Aias; they sacrificed at the trophy to Zeus and while they were there also to Aias and Asklepios. They ran the torch race with dignity and grace. . . . They dedicated a cup worth 100 drachmas

to the Mother of the Gods in accordance with the decree. They kept harmony and friendship among themselves throughout the year."

After their two years of full-time military service, all Athenian citizens were on active service for 40 years. They could be called up at any time and asked to report with provisions for three or more days.





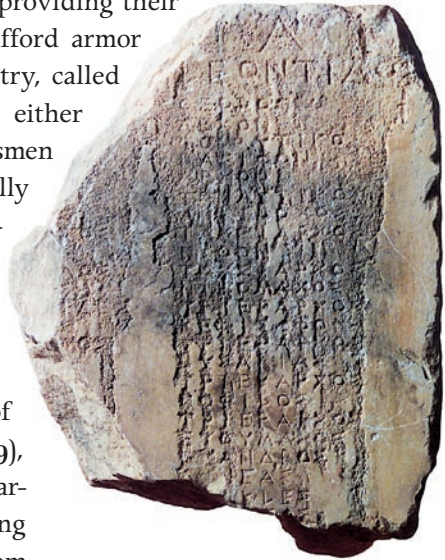
10. LEAD TOKENS, THIRD CENTURY B.C., STAMPED WITH ITEMS OF ARMOR (BREAST-PLATE, HELMET, GREAVES) TO BE ISSUED TO THE CAVALRY



11. (top) CIRCULAR TERRACOTTA TOKENS OF PHEIDON OF THE DEME OF THRIASIA, ATHENIAN CAVALRY COMMANDER (HIPPARCH) AT LEMNOS, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.; (bottom) RECTANGULAR TERRACOTTA TOKENS OF XENOKLES OF THE DEME OF PERITHOIDAI, COMMANDER OF THE BORDER PATROL (PERIPOLARCH), FOURTH CENTURY B.C.



Rich men served in the cavalry, providing their own horses; those who could afford armor made up the heavy-armed infantry, called hoplites; and the others served either as light-armed troops or as oarsmen in the navy. The cavalry actually trained on the broad street running through the Agora and the office of the cavalry commanders (Hipparcheion) lay nearby. Part of the cavalry archives consisting of assessment records of horses written on lead strips (9), lead tokens for the issuing of armor (10), and clay tokens serving to identify official messengers from specific officers have been found (11), all discarded down a well at the northwest corner of the square.



12. CASUALTY LIST, FIFTH CENTURY B.C., WITH THE FALLEN LISTED BY TRIBE

Not even at 60 were Athenian citizens allowed to give up public service; each year the class that had entered ephebic training 42 years before was called up to arbitrate in various legal disputes.



13. BRONZE SHIELD CAPTURED FROM THE SPARTANS AT PYLOS IN 425/4 B.C. PUNCHED INSCRIPTION ON THE SHIELD: "THE ATHENIANS FROM THE LACEDAIMONIANS AT PYLOS."



For those who did not come back from war but died in battle the People raised monuments, often simple lists of names, listed by tribes in their official order (12), but sometimes with a poetic tribute to the fallen. Just as the grief was public, so was the memorial of honor and glory won, like the shields taken from the Spartans in 425/4 B.C. at Pylos and hung as trophies on the Stoa Poikile (13). One bronze shield is inscribed: "The Athenians from the Lakedaimonians at Pylos." Thucydides, in his account of the battle, comments: "Nothing that happened in the war surprised the Hellenes so much as this. It was the opinion that no force or famine could make the Lakedaimonians give up their arms, but that they would fight on as they could, and die with them in their hands."

## THE COUNCIL AND THE MAGISTRATES

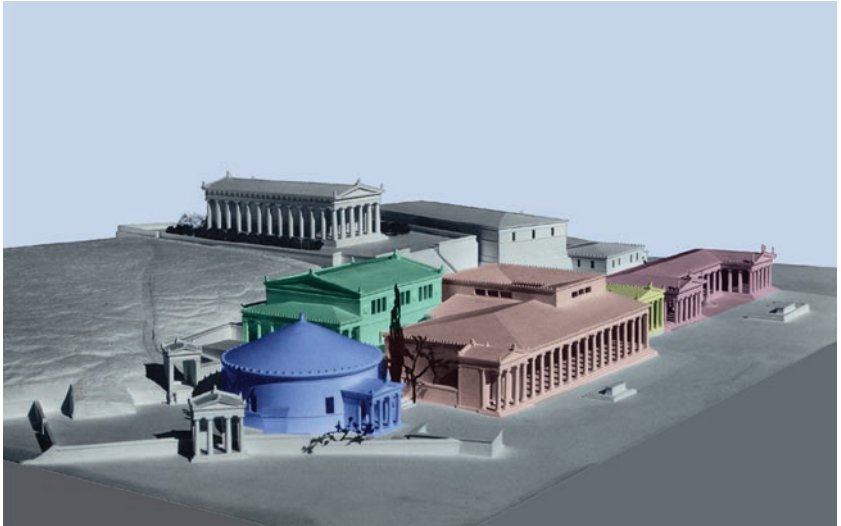
LIKE SELECTION FOR MILITARY SERVICE, allotment to the Council was organized according to the division by tribes; 50 members from each tribe acted as a unit in the Council and held the presidency (prytany) of the Council for one of its 10 prytanies, with a third of their number constantly on duty and in residence in the Tholos, the round building next to the Council House (Bouleuterion) (14, 15). The Tholos, where some responsible officials were present night and day, was the heart of the city. Various aspects of the housekeeping necessitated by the use of a public building as an official residence are attested by the excavations. An inscription found nearby honors a committee appointed to renew bedding for having done its job well. Shopping lists of provisions and utensils scratched on potsherds were found in the neighborhood. Remains of a kitchen built out on the north side of the building were found, and roundabout were many of the cups and vessels used by the men on duty. Some of them were marked as public property (16).

In addition to preparing legislation for the Assembly, the Council checked the qualifications of newly allotted officials, tried magistrates accused of mismanaging funds, inspected cavalry and ships, and worked with various boards. One of these was the Lessors of Public Contracts





14. CIVIC BUILDINGS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE AGORA, FROM THE SOUTHEAST



15. MODEL OF THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE AGORA

- TEMPLE OF HEPHAISTOS/ARSENAL ■ THOLOS ■ COUNCIL HOUSE
- METROON ■ TEMPLE OF APOLLO ■ STOA OF ZEUS



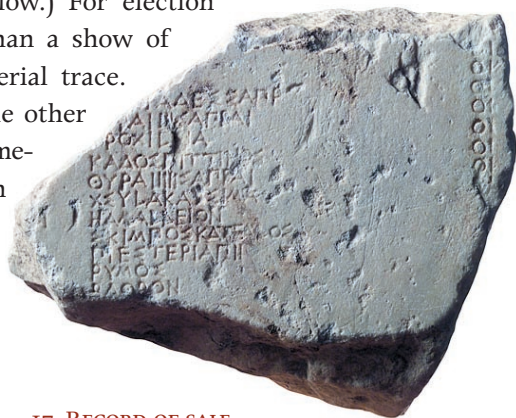


16. DRINKING CUP FROM THE THOLOS, CA. 480–460 B.C. THE LIGATURE ON THE BOTTOM (DELTA EPSILON) STANDS FOR DE[MOSION]: “PUBLIC PROPERTY.”

officers of the administration, replacing in this function the archons, whose power decreased in the early fifth century when they began to be chosen by lot. (The most important duties left to the archons were judicial, as will be seen below.) For election nothing more was needed than a show of hands, which leaves no material trace. For allotment to office, on the other hand, the machinery was sometimes simply a jar from which white and black beans could be drawn, but sometimes the large stone “machines” (kleroteria) also used in the lawcourts. Still another possible means of allotment is suggested by the small clay

(Poletai), who were charged with leasing mines and other public property and who arranged for the sale of confiscated estates. Each board of Poletai made a record on stone of its work (17). When the estates of Alkibiades and other profaners of the Mysteries were confiscated in 415 B.C., the Poletai recorded the sale of all items, which included everything from lands and a variety of produce to numbers of slaves and all sorts of household furnishings. The Poletai listed the items, with the price in front of each. In front of the price appears another figure, the sales tax, which averaged 1%.

The Council also supervised the election of the generals, one from each of the 10 tribes, who were the chief executive



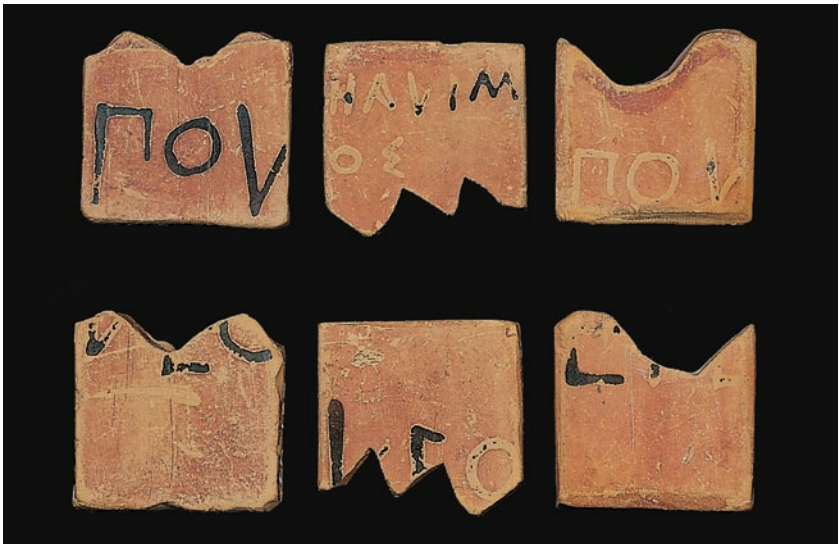
17. RECORD OF SALE OF CONFISCATED PROPERTY, 414/3 B.C.





plaques, divided into two parts by a unique jigsaw cut through the tribe name (18). Their official nature is made certain by the presence of tribe and deme names and by the fabric, which is the same as that used for official measures of capacity. On one side the abbreviation of the tribe name can be read by the parts of the letters on each half. On the other side a deme name above was to be joined, by means of the tribe name and the jigsaw cut, to “pol” (abbreviation of the name of an office) on the lower half.

The primary function of the Council was the drafting of bills to be passed as decrees by the Assembly. Oftentimes provision was made in the decree itself for a copy to be carved on stone and set up in an appropriate place. The originals, presumably written on papyrus or parchment, were deposited in the so-called Old Council House (Old Bouleuterion), which probably housed the shrine of the Mother of the Gods and the state archives. In the Hellenistic period the Metroon complex (14, 15) replaced the Old Council House and took over both its functions. In the small temple immediately to the north, dedicated to Apollo Patroos, citizens were registered.



18. ALLOTMENT TOKENS, 450–430 B.C.





19. INSCRIBED TREATY WITH THE CITY OF HERMIONE, CA. 450 B.C.

Perhaps most notable of the decrees recorded on stone are treaties and other international agreements (19). These and other inscriptions give information not found in the ancient historians. Other decrees honor citizens of other states who put themselves at the service of Athenians abroad. A typical decree of this sort praises Mikalion “as a benefactor of the Athenian people and a man who always shows himself eager to give to private individuals whatever they need. With good fortune it has seemed best to the People to praise Mikalion son of Philon of Alexandria and to crown him with a golden crown in accord with the law because of his virtue and good will toward the Athenians.”

Many decrees honor persons or groups for work well done. In this way the groups of 50 from each tribe who took their turn in the presidency (prytany) of the Council are often honored: “It seemed best to the Boule to praise the prytaneis of the tribe Pandionis for their piety to the gods and to praise their treasurer Philon son of Hegelochos of Paiania . . . and to crown him.”

In rare instances a special board of lawmakers (nomothetai) was created to draft laws of unusual significance, such as the Law against Tyranny described on the next page.





20. LAW AGAINST TYRANNY WITH A RELIEF OF DEMOCRACY CROWNING DEMOS (THE PEOPLE OF ATHENS), 337/6 B.C.



## LAW AGAINST TYRANNY

IN THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C. the Athenians were faced with the dangerous possibility of tyranny. Although the Macedonian king had guaranteed Athenian democracy in the peace following the battle of Chaironeia (338 B.C.), there was still fear, more than justified a few years later, that ambitious men, seeking the favor of the Macedonian, might subvert the government. Two years later, in 336 B.C., a law was enacted (20): "Be it resolved by the Nomothetai (lawgivers): If anyone rise up against the People with a view to tyranny or join in establishing the tyranny or overthrow the People of the Athenians or the democracy in Athens, whoever kills him who does any of these things shall be blameless. It shall not be permitted for anyone of the councilors of the Council of the Areopagus—if the Demos (the People) or the democracy in Athens has been overthrown—to go up into the Areopagus or sit in the Council or deliberate about anything. If anyone, the Demos or the democracy in Athens having been overthrown, of the councilors of the Areopagus does go up into the Areopagus or sits in the Council or deliberates about anything, both he and his progeny shall be deprived of civil rights and his substance shall be confiscated and one tenth given to the Goddess. The secretary of the Council shall inscribe this law on two steles of stone and set one of them by the entrance into the Areopagus . . . and the other in the Assembly. For the inscribing of the steles the treasurer of the People shall give 20 drachmas from the moneys expendable by the People according to decrees."



## OSTRACISM

IN ADDITION TO THE LEGAL ASSASSINATION condoned in the Law against Tyranny, a less extreme method was also available for removing powerful but dangerous men from public life. This was a formal, regular vote for exile, known as ostracism.

Each year the Assembly decided whether a vote of ostracism should be held. If a majority of the quorum of 6,000 citizens voted affirmatively, the day was set and at that time a large open area of the Agora was fenced off. In the enclosure were 10 entrances, one for each of the 10 tribes. By these the citizens entered, each with a potsherd (ostrakon) on which he had scratched the name of the man who seemed to him most dangerous to the state. Officials at the entrance collected the sherds and kept the citizens inside the enclosure until all had voted. The sherds were then tabulated; if more than 6,000 votes were cast, the man whose name appeared on the greatest number was sent into exile for 10 years. Such was ostracism, introduced as a safeguard against tyranny, later used as a weapon by rival statesmen, and finally abandoned in the late fifth century when it deteriorated into a political game.



21. OSTRAKA CAST AGAINST ARISTEIDES, THEMISTOKLES, KIMON, AND PERIKLES, FIFTH CENTURY B.C.





## 22. OSTRAKA: "KALLIXENOS THE TRAITOR" AND "OUT WITH THEMISTOKLES"

The potsherds, or ostraka, after being counted, were treated like so much waste paper. They were shoveled up and carried out to fill potholes in the roads leading out from the Agora. The big deposits of ostraka, found on the road from the southwest corner of the Agora, belong to the early years of the fifth century. Stray sherds from the whole area represent later votes of ostracism and provide the names of most of Athens' prominent statesmen (21, 22).

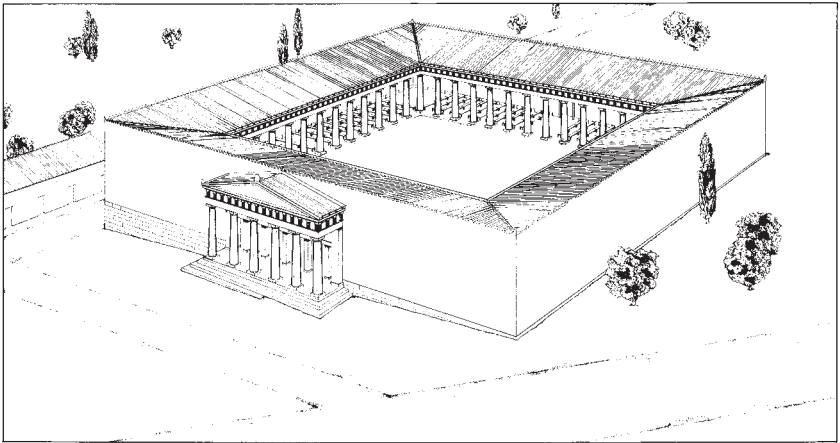
Themistokles son of Neokles of Phrearrioi, who was soon to become the hero of the Persian War and later to be exiled for pro-Persian sympathies, was a strong candidate for ostracism in 483/2 B.C. It was his chief opponent, Aristides son of Lysimachos of Alopeke (nicknamed "the just"), who received the greatest number of votes that year and so was ostracized. Kimon son of Miltiades of Lakiadai was voted into exile in the late 460s probably because of his opposition to the radical democrats whom the young Perikles had recently joined. Perikles himself, about whom Thucydides says "by report it was a democracy, in fact a rule of the first citizen," was never ostracized, but there were votes against him nonetheless. For some citizens, casting a vote was not enough. A few ostraka preserve some rather more violent sentiments. One of the votes against Themistokles adds "Out with him!" Another ostrakon, with the name of Kallixenos, who is not known to us from literary sources, designates him as a "traitor" (22).



## JUDICIARY AND LAW COURTS

THE LAW COURTS OF ATHENS, a city notorious throughout Greece for the litigiousness of her citizens, were both numerous and large. Several of these lawcourts were in the immediate vicinity of the Agora, including the Square Peristyle (23), which in the fourth century replaced a similar but less regular structure of the fifth century. In one of the small rooms of this predecessor was found a curious container (24): two up-ended water channel tiles fixed in the floor. Inside were found one small bronze ball probably used in the kleroterion, a device for the allotment of jurors to courts, and six jurors' ballots (25). Each is inscribed "official ballot"; on some a letter in relief seems to designate the jury-section. The hub of the ballot indicated the verdict (solid for acquittal, hollow for condemnation), so that each juror, holding one ballot in each hand with the thumb and forefinger covering and concealing the ends of the hub, could deposit the one which represented his vote in the official receptacle and put the other in the discard bin.

The possibility of corruption presented a problem that constantly exercised the Athenians and which they attempted to solve in a variety



23. LAW COURT (SQUARE PERISTYLE) AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE AGORA, CA. 300 B.C.

of ways, chief of which were the large size of the juries and the last-minute allotment of jurors. Each citizen-juror had a bronze or wooden ticket (26) on which were inscribed his name and a letter indicating to which of the 10 jury-sections he belonged. He went at dawn to the kleroteria (27) of his tribe where he deposited his ticket in a box labeled with his section letter. When the tickets of all those seeking jury-duty had been deposited in the 10 boxes, they were pulled out at random and filed in the slots of the two kleroteria (28), each of five columns, with one column being devoted to each section-letter. The archon in charge, having learned how many courts were to be filled and wishing to fill his tribe's quota of the total number of jurors, put into the funnels at the top of the kleroteria as many balls (white for the number to be allotted and the remainder black for those to be dismissed) as there were tickets in the shortest column. Everyone below that point was immediately excluded. The balls, having passed down the tube, were then let out at the bottom. The first ball determined the lot of the first row



24. "BALLOT BOX" FOUND UNDER THE STOA OF ATTALOS, LATE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.



25. INSCRIBED JURORS' BALLOTS, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

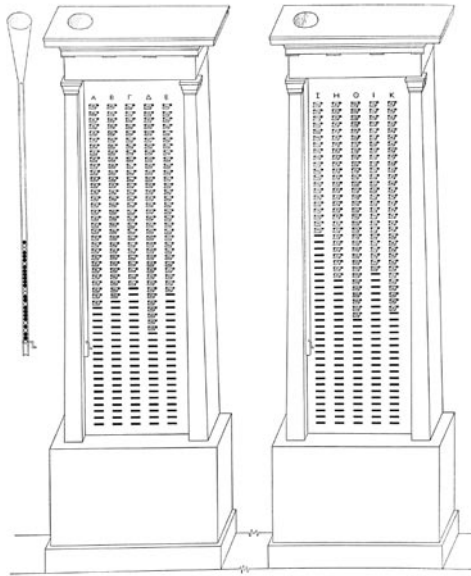
26. BRONZE JUROR'S IDENTIFICATION TICKET (PINAKION), INSCRIBED WITH NAME, PATRONYMIC, AND DEME, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.







27. ALLOTMENT MACHINE (KLEROTERION), THIRD CENTURY B.C.



28. RESTORED DRAWING OF ALLOTMENT MACHINES



across all five columns: if it was white, the citizens became jurors for the day; if it was black, they were dismissed.

The lot of each succeeding row was determined by the color of the next ball. The tickets of the allotted jurors were given to the archon in charge, who, having identified each man, allowed him to draw from a box a bronze ball inscribed with a letter indicating the court to which he was assigned. The archon then placed his ticket in the box destined to go to that court, so that the juror could receive his pay and reclaim his ticket only in the court to which he had been allotted.

The kleroterion illustrated in 27 has 11 columns and was probably used not in the courts but in the Council House (in the period when there were 12 tribes) for the selection of committees representing all tribes except that holding the presidency. The slots for the tickets are clear; on the left side can be seen the attachments for the tube. There would have been some simple mechanical contrivance at the lower end of the tube for letting the balls out one at a time.

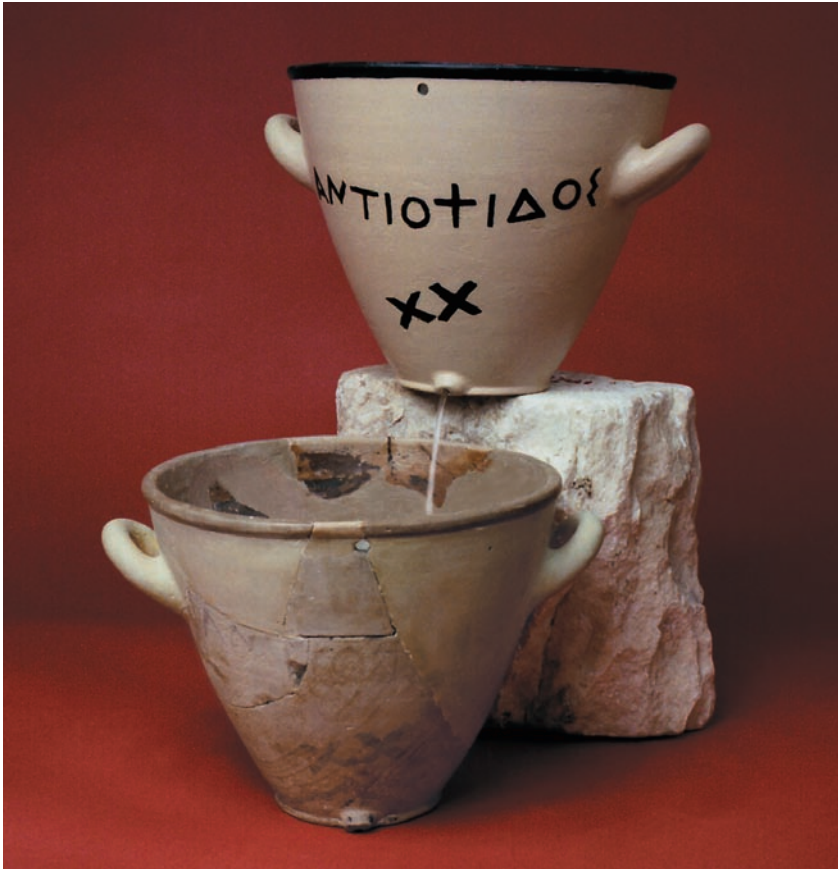
Once the jury was assembled in a particular court, cases were presented. Plaintiff and defendant both made their own pleas and were limited in time in accordance with the amount of money involved or the seriousness of the offense. Time was measured by a klepsydra, or water clock (29). These clay vessels, which were made in a variety of sizes to measure various lengths of time, could be filled only up to the overflow hole just below the rim. When the speech began, a slave appointed to this task pulled the plug from the small bronze tube in the base. As the klepsydra emptied (30) and the pressure decreased, the jet of water declined somewhat so that the speaker could with practice estimate the time left to him.

The klepsydra illustrated in 30 is marked with the name of a tribe, Antiochis, and was probably used in the Council House when that



29. WATER CLOCK (KLEPSYDRA),  
FIFTH CENTURY B.C.





30. MODEL OF A KLEPSYDRA IN ACTION

tribe was presiding in the Council. The two XX (chi's) stand for two choes (about six quarts), the amount of water that the vessel holds. Two choes time (about six minutes) was allowed for the rebuttal speech in cases involving less than 5,000 drachmas. One of the speechwriters, Isokrates, makes his client speak as follows: "Now about the other men he has plotted against, and the suits he has brought and the charges he has made, and the men with whom he has conspired and those against whom he has sworn falsely, not twice the amount of water would be sufficient to describe all these."



## ATHENIAN CURRENCY

MANY OF THE SPECIALIZED administrative boards have left material traces of their activities. Most prolific of these were the moneyers, or Overseers of the Mint. Throughout her history Athens was noted for the purity of her coinage (31), which was highly valued all around the Mediterranean. Because of the representation on the reverse the coins were called “owls,” and Aristophanes thus refers to coins made from silver mined at Laurion in his advice to the Athenians in the *Birds*:

Little Laureotic owlets shall be always flocking in,  
You shall find them all about you, as the dainty brood increases,  
Building nests within your purses, hatching little silver pieces.

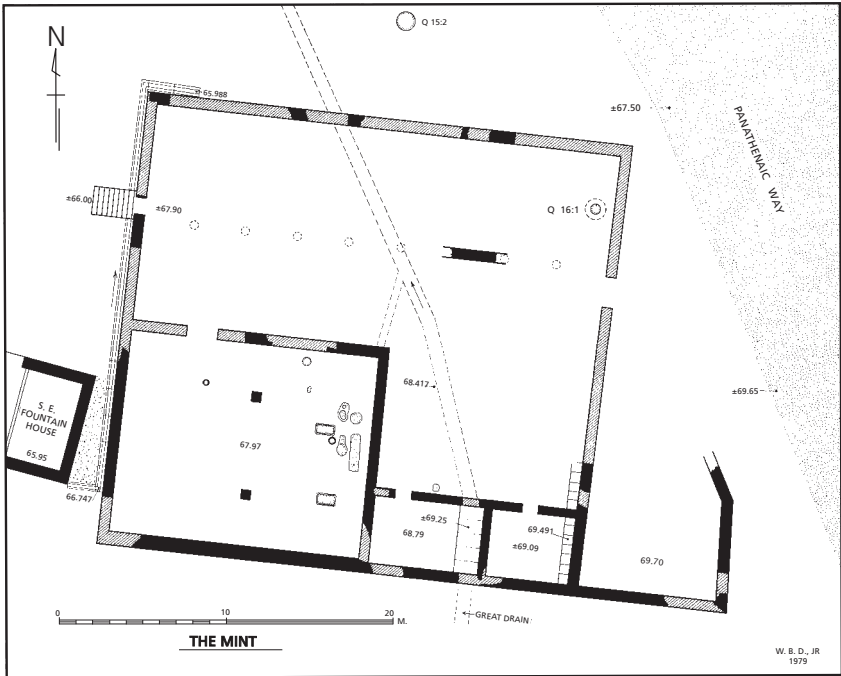
In the troubled years toward the end of the fifth century the same poet expressed something of what her coinage meant to Athens:

Yea, for there, our sterling pieces, all of pure Athenian mold,  
All of perfect die and metal, all the fairest of the fair,  
All of workmanship unequalled, proved and valued everywhere.

Religious and financial conservatism caused the Athenians to keep the archaic representations of the owl and Athena long after advances



31. ATHENIAN SILVER COINS, WITH ATHENA AND OWL, FIFTH–SECOND CENTURIES B.C.



32. PLAN OF THE MINT, SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE AGORA, CA. 400 B.C.

in art and technique outmoded them. The unit of the coinage was the drachma, which represented a day's wage for a skilled workman in the late fifth century. Half a drachma (three obols) was the juror's daily pay at the same time. The New Style coinage, introduced in the Hellenistic period, modernized the representations and added the amphora (oil jar) and names of officials.

Found in the neighborhood of the building now identified as the Mint (32) (southeastern corner of the Agora), a bronze rod and blanks cut from it (33) show one of the early stages in the manufacture of coins. Bronze coins issued by Athens in the Hellenistic period were made in this way. The building identified as the Mint is a large rectangular structure, over 25 meters long on one side and, in addition to the coin blanks, it produced evidence of industrial activity such as furnaces and large water basins. It cannot have been the only mint used by the



Athenians as it dates to 400 B.C., far too late for much Athenian coinage, and analysis of the industrial debris indicates that only bronze and no silver was worked in the building.

The Athenians carefully guarded the quality of their coinage against fraud. An inscribed law of 375/4 B.C. describes the procedure to be used to prevent counterfeit money from circulating in the Agora:

“Resolved by the Nomothetai, in the archonship of Hippodamas; Nikophon made the proposal: Attic (Athenian) silver currency is to be accepted when [it is shown to be] silver and bears the official die. Let the public Tester (dokimastes), who sits among the [bankers’] tables, test in accordance with these provisions. . . . If anyone brings forward [foreign silver coinage] which has the same device as the Attic, [if it is good], let the Tester give it back to the one who brought it forward; but if it is [bronze] or lead at the core, or counterfeit, let him cut it [immediately] and let it be sacred to the Mother of the Gods, and let him deposit it with the Boule (Council)” (missing words are restored in square brackets).

Examples of counterfeit coins, slashed and removed from circulation, have actually been recovered in the excavations.



33. BRONZE ROD AND COIN BLANKS FROM THE MINT, THIRD–SECOND CENTURIES B.C.



## STANDARD WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

THE CONTROLLERS OF MEASURES (Metronomoi) have also left us many samples of their work. One set of bronze weights (34), inscribed as standard weights of the Athenians, are surmounted by molded symbols which serve as a visual key to the particular unit or fraction. The large unit (stater), weighing nearly two pounds, is designated by a knucklebone, the quarter by a shield, and the sixth by a turtle. These weights, found near the Tholos, probably belonged to one of the official sets that, as an extant decree provides, were deposited for public comparison on the Acropolis, in the Tholos, at Eleusis, and at Piraeus.

A lead weight (35), with an amphora symbol and a legend marking it as one-third of the stater, belongs to a somewhat later period. This weight, which may have been used in a shop, has been stamped by the Controllers of Measures with their official seal, depicting the seated statue of a god.

Standard measures, marked as official and stamped with coin-like representations of Athena's head and the double-bodied owl, were also found near the Tholos. Only the small unit of the liquid measures is preserved; this little jug (36) holds one kotyle (about half a pint). The dry measures are cylindrical vessels well adapted both for emptying and leveling off; one (37) holds about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  quarts; the other (38) about  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint. The somewhat different shape of a second-century measure (39) seems especially designed to fill a function outlined by a contemporary law: "Sellers of Persian nuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pine nuts, chestnuts, Egyptian beans, dates and any other dried fruits normally sold with



34. SET OF OFFICIAL STANDARD BRONZE WEIGHTS, CA. 500 B.C.

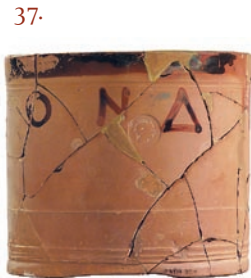


these, also lupines, olives, and pine kernels shall use a measure of the capacity of three half-choinikes (about 1½ quarts) of grain leveled off, selling them heaped up in this choinix which shall be five fingers deep and have a lip one finger wide. . . . If anyone sells in a smaller container, the appropriate authority shall immediately sell the contents by auction, pay the money to the public bank and destroy the container.” The lead seal fixed in the side of this vessel shows the same seated statue of a god which appears on the stamped lead weight.



35. COUNTERMARKED LEAD WEIGHT, FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

A standard of a completely different sort (40) gives further indication of the many activities over which it seemed best to the People to have some control. The tile standard was set up outside a late addition to the civic offices in the Agora, where it must often have been the meeting place of irate buyers and makers of roof tiles so that an offending product could be compared with the standard. That the same standard had been in use for centuries is witnessed by the fact that fifth century tiles have the same dimensions.



36. OFFICIAL LIQUID MEASURE, FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

37. OFFICIAL DRY MEASURE, WITH VALIDATING STAMP AND PAINTED INSCRIPTION READING DEMOSION (PUBLIC PROPERTY), FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

38. OFFICIAL DRY MEASURE OF BRONZE, LATE FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

39. OFFICIAL NUT MEASURE, LATE SECOND CENTURY B.C.







40. MARBLE STANDARD FOR TERRACOTTA ROOF TILES, FIRST CENTURY B.C.

## EPILOGUE

Nothing can better sum up the Athenian ideal of citizenship than the words which Thucydides makes Perikles speak in the Funeral Oration at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War: “We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. . . . In short, I say that as a city we are the School of Hellas.” ❖

