Monuments of Democracy

The Agora (marketplace) was the political heart of Athenian democracy.

Draft laws were posted amidst the monuments, administrative buildings and council chambers, public spending was debated, and justice was administered. The monuments of the Agora housed democratic institutions and honoured citizens who were considered to be exemplary.

The exhibition at Hohentübingen Castle brings the orators, lotteries and votes of ancient Athens to life. It poses three questions that are still relevant today:

How is democracy financed? Who has a say? And how can it be defended?

The city-state of Athens primarily comprised the city of Athens and its surrounding region, the Attica peninsula.

Title: Stele with Eucrates' law against tyranny – in the relief, the goddess Demokratia crowns the personified citizenry.

Informationen

VERNISSAGE
Thursday, April 30th, 2026, 7 p.m.

ADDRESS
MUT | Ancient Cultures | Hohentübingen Castle
Burgsteige 11
72070 Tübingen

OPENING HOURS
Wed–Sun, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Thu, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

ADMISSION
3 | 5 | 12 Euros (family card)
Tübingen students: free

GUIDED TOURS
with curator Nadja Mozdzen

Sun, 17.05., 4 p.m.
Wed, 17.06., 4 p.m.
Fri, 17.07., 4 p.m.
and upon request

CONTACT
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For further information see
www.unimuseum.de

Universitätsbund Tübingen e. V.
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Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
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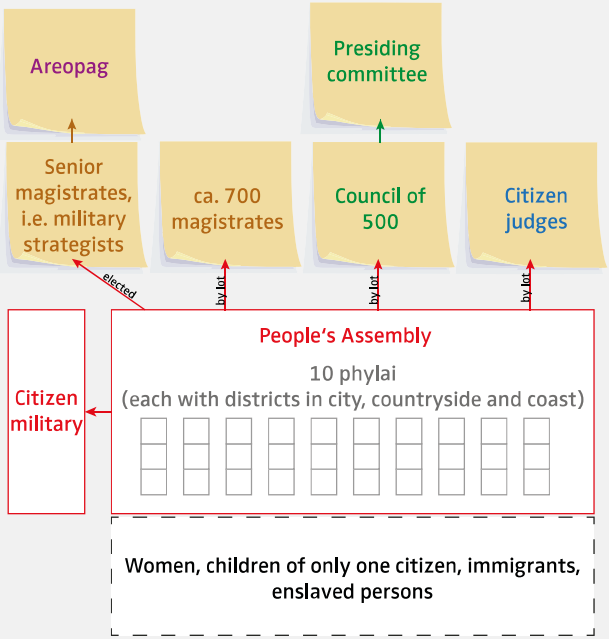
Agora

Monuments of Democracy

May 1st to July 26th, 2026

www.unimuseum.de

The rule of the citizenry



Everyone does everything?

At least, as many citizens as possible should take turns to do as much as they can.

In Athenian democracy, decisions were made by the majority of citizens – though this was limited to adult sons of two Athenians who were registered in their respective districts.

Tetradrachm from Athens: Publicly funded allowances enabled less wealthy citizens to participate.

What was the People's Assembly?

In order to break the power of the aristocratic families, the districts in the city, the countryside and the coast were divided equally into ten groups, known as phylae. These citizens formed the citizen military and the People's Assembly, where everyone had an equal right to speak.

Their debates took place on Pnyx Hill. Persuasive speakers here played a decisive role in shaping Athenian politics.

Who were the magistrates?

Most magistrates were chosen by lot. They changed frequently and were required to answer for their actions. Their most important qualification was that they were ordinary citizens.

Only a few positions, such as militars strategists, financial administrators and members of the constitutional commission, were selected based on their abilities.

What was the Council of 500?

The Council managed day-to-day political affairs and implemented decisions of the Assembly. It consisted of 50 elected representatives from each of the ten phylai which took turns to serve as presiding committee over the course of the year.

The Council published draft laws and Assembly agendas in the Agora.

Choregic monument of Lysicrates: Prestige could be persuasive. Monuments such as this one were built to honour wealthy citizens who funded choirs for religious festivals or warships.

What was the Areopag?

The Areopag court was responsible for hearing murder cases and hearing the accounts of magistrates. Originally a council of nobles, it was staffed by former senior officals who were appointed for life.

What were the law courts?

In the Agora, hundreds of citizens who had been randomly assigned to cases acted as judges.

Any citizen could bring a case concerning abuse of office or illegal draft laws. Without professional lawyers widely available, they all had the opportunity and duty to personally defend democracy in court.

Work in progress

After the civil war, the Athenians didn't take their democracy for granted. It was an enduring process, being a citizen meant active work.

Constantly, new nameplates for allotment processes were minted, laws were carved in stone and memorials were erected. All of this was intended to make democracy more secure and transparent.