

Boule

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In the Greek world the *boule* was an advisory and deliberative council, whose official authority covered a wide range of powers and competences, from responsibility for public matters to criminal jurisdiction. It was also called *bouleuterion* or *synedrion*, and its true nature is shown by the common use of the term *boule*, which means “counsel,” “advice,” and “deliberation” (cf. *Anecdota Graeca* 219.26 Bekker; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.12.4; Paus. 1.3.5). One of its main functions was *probouleusis*, which consisted in preparing the business of the public assembly. Composition and organization of the *boule* changed according to different constitutions: the attribution of the bouletic power to privileged members of the community or to the people, and different criteria adopted for a full or restricted participation in deliberative bodies were among the main factors that determined the difference between oligarchic and democratic governments (see Arist. *Pol.* 1275b 16–21; 1298a–b). In the Homeric poems the *boule* was the informal council of chiefs or elders (*basileis*, *bouleutai*, *boulephoroi*, *gerontes*): it is attested beside the AGORA, which was the assembly of the people, and its members gathered to advise the king (Hom. *Il.* 2.53; 2.143; 5.180; 6.114; 7.126; *Od.* 3.127; 6.54). In historical times it is possible to find a *boule* in almost every Greek state. In oligarchies it was a powerful body with limited eligibility and life membership, like the Spartan GEROUSIA and the Cretan *boule*, which were councils of elders (Arist. *Pol.* 1272a7–8, 34–5). Democracies ensured a broad participation in the *boule* thanks to large eligibility and short-term appointment. In the sixth century BCE CHIOS had a popular *boule*, which supplanted or coexisted with an aristocratic council (Meiggs and Lewis 1988: no. 8). Leagues, amphictyonies, and federal states had councils also called *synedria* (cf. BOIOTIA, where there were four councils to represent the

federation: Thuc. 5.38.2; cf. *Hell. Oxy.* 19.2; Hornblower 2008: 89–90).

In Classical Athens there were two councils: the *boule* on the hill of Ares (see AREOPAGOS) and the *boule* of the 500. The latter was very probably preceded by an earlier council created by SOLON and composed of 400 members (100 from each of the four Ionian tribes): this council functioned beside the Areopagos and its main duty was to prepare the work of the assembly (*ekklesia*) ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 8.4; Plut. *Sol.* 19.1–2). Kleisthenes (see KLEISTHENES OF ATHENS) replaced the Solonian council with a *boule* of 500 members (*bouleutai*), who were taken from each of the newly created ten tribes. The councilors were supposed to be above thirty years of age, remained in office for one year, and swore an oath at the beginning of their service ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22.2). They were remunerated and could also be expelled for misconduct. Every citizen could be a *bouleutes* twice in a lifetime. The *boule* was divided into ten sections (*prytaneiai*), during which the *bouleutai* of the same tribe (*prytaneis*) acted for thirty-five or thirty-six days as presidents of the council and the assembly. Beside its probouleitic function, the *boule* also worked as a court for many cases concerning magistracies and public matters: it attended the procedure of scrutiny (see DOKIMASTES, DOKIMASIA) of the archontes and the *bouleutai* for the following year, and participated in the examination of the conduct of officials (see EUTHYNA, EUTHYNAI) on the expiration of their term of office. The *boule* also introduced impeachments (see EISANGELIA) for major crimes against the state, and appointed a committee of *logistai*, who audited the public accounts of each prytany ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 43–9). During their presidency the *prytaneis* lived in the tholos in the agora beside the *bouleuterion*, which was the seat of the *boule*'s meetings.

SEE ALSO: Archon/archontes; Athens; Boiotian League; Democracy, Athenian; Ephialtes.

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