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THE ASSEMBLY OF IMPERIAL EPHEOS

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Introduction

Evidence from the great foundation of C.Vibius Salutaris from Ephesos in A.D. 104 provides overlooked and important information about who attended the assemblies of Ephesos at the beginning of the second century A.D., what its legislative procedures were, what the assembly did, and, possibly, how divisions of the polis sat in the assembly.¹ In addition to the information provided by the foundation of Salutaris about the assembly at the beginning of the second century A.D., there is also solid evidence throughout the Roman imperial period that the assembly could legislate on its own. As we shall see, the demos of Ephesos passed decrees which not only honored men and women, but also affected some of the most important aspects of life within the city, including the water supply of the polis, and the allocation of space for public monuments. Such legislative actions do not constitute the kind of control of an independent foreign policy which was the essence of the sovereignty of the classical and Hellenistic Greek city-state. But epigraphical evidence amply demonstrates that the assembly of Ephesos played an active and central role in the government of the polis during the early Roman empire. If this was the case at Ephesos, one of the largest and most important cities in Asia Minor, perhaps ancient historians should re-examine the idea (which has now been passed down through several generations of scholars), that the assemblies of imperial Asia Minor were simply reduced to confirming lists of candidates presented by the boulai.²

Who Attended the Assembly?

At lines 156-158 of the Salutaris foundation we learn that after the death of the founder the images of Trajan and Plotina which Salutaris dedicated were "to be placed in the

¹ For the text, see *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, Ia, Bonn 1979, no.27; hereafter all inscriptions cited from this corpus (vol. Ia-VIII 2, Bonn 1979-84) will be abbreviated as IE and then the number; see also G.Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City*, London 1991, Appendix I.

² For this assessment of the role of the assemblies of the Greek cities during the Roman period, see A.H.M.Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford 1940,177, "The assembly was still in theory the sovereign body, electing the magistrates and passing decrees. The former process was, it is true, as will be explained later, gradually reduced to the acclamation of a list of candidates presented by the council, and the latter amounted to no more than ratifying the council's resolutions. But the assent of the people was still technically necessary for the enactment of any decree which was not a matter of mere administrative routine." This idea is precisely echoed by D.Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, vol. I, Princeton 1950,640-641, "As a result of the Roman policy of restricting power in the cities to the conservative few, the Assembly, although theoretically possessing supreme power, had become little more than a confirmatory body." For a more recent repetition of this notion, see R.Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, New York 1987,51, "In many towns and in the villages which were just below civic status, the (all male) citizenry still met in assemblies. However, their main function was to acclaim the candidates for office and approve the proposals of the council or the presiding magistrates."

assembly meetings above the sector of the Boule, together with the gold statue of Artemis and the other images."³ This provision can only mean that a special block of seats in the theatre, where the assembly of Ephesos met, was reserved for the Boule as a corporate body.⁴ These lines may also indicate that the Boule of Ephesos, which had at least 450 members at the beginning of the second century,⁵ actually attended meetings of the assembly. Parallel evidence from second century A.D. Sparta would also suggest that boulai elsewhere sat in on assembly meetings. During excavations in the theatre of Sparta, archaeologists discovered a stele inscribed with the single word boules, which has been taken to indicate that a zone of seats in the cavea of the theatre in imperial Sparta was set aside for councillors.⁶

The evidence of the prescripts of over 200 inscriptions from Ephesos, which date from 321 B.C. until at least the third neokorate of the polis, may also support the idea that the Boule of Ephesos was present at meetings of the assembly. In the prescripts of these inscriptions, which usually begin with the formula ἔδοξεν τῆι Βουλῆι καὶ τῶι δήμῳ, the Boule and demos are represented as passing decrees together, with the Boule normally coming first.⁷ These prescripts probably imply that the Boule drew up and passed proposals first at separate meetings of the Boule, held in the Bouleuterion of the city, which was located on the northeastern side of the Upper Agora of imperial Ephesos. The Boule (or perhaps some subcommittee of it) then presented the proposals to the assembly for a vote.⁸ If it was the case that the Boule took an active part in meetings of the assembly, the formula of the Boule acting first, followed by the demos, which we find in the prescripts of the vast majority of Ephesian decrees, not only accurately sets out the sequence of the legislative

³ ὡ[στε καὶ ἀν]τὰς τίθε[ε]θαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ἐπάνω τῆς κελίδος τῆς βουλῆς μετὰ τῆς χρυσῆς Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἰκόνων.

⁴ See lines 222-231 of the foundation, in which Salutaris organized a distribution to 450 or more members of the Boule, to take place on 6 Thargelion.

⁵ IE 27.222-230.

⁶ See P.Cartledge and A.Spawforth, *Hellenistic and Roman Sparta: A Tale of Two Cities*, London 1989, 161.

⁷ IE 5; 6; 8. 20-21; 24B. 4; 27. 36A. 19-21; 36B. 18-20; 36C. 19-21; 261; 266; 274; 278; 280; 282D; 287 (9); 288 (5); 300; 314; 315; 428; 441; 449; 613A; 614C. 19-20; 619A and B; 621; 625; 627; 630A; 633; 637; 641; 642; 643C; 644; 644A; 647 (third neokorate); 650; 652A; 661; 664B; 665; 666A; 666C; 669; 672A; 681; 682; 685; 686; 689; 690; 692; 696; 697B; 698A; 701; 702; 708; 713; 713B; 716; 721; 728; 730; 738; 830; 834; 852; 853; 893; 951; 952; 982; 985; 986; 987; 988; 992; 1024; 1123; 1126; 1138; 1320; 1383; 1385; 1389 (fourth century B.C.); 1405; 1408; 1409, 1409A; 1411; 1412; 1413; 1415; 1416; 1419; 1420; 1422; 1428; 1431; 1432; 1433; 1434; 1435; 1436; 1437 (321 B.C.); 1438; 1440; 1441; 1442; 1443; 1447; 1448; 1449; 1450; 1451; 1452; 1453; 1454; 1455; 1456; 1457; 1458; 1459; 1460; 1461; 1463; 1464; 1465; 1466; 1467; 1470; 1473; 1474; 1484; 1500; 1536; 1537; 1541; 1555; 1559; 1578A; 1606; 1810; 1901 (1), (2), (4); 1911 (1), (3), (4); 1915 (1), (2); 1917 (2), (3), (4); 1922 (1), (2); 1923 (2), (3); 1925 (1), (2), (3); 1927 (3); 1928 (4); 1929 (4); 1935; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2049; 2050; 2059; 2061; 2062; 2063; 2068; 2069; 2070; 2317; 2908; 2926; 2943; 2949F; 2952B; 3030; 3032; 3035; 3037; 3041; 3047; 3060; 3065; 3066; 3067; 3079; 3091; 4101A; 4109; 4110; 4333; 4337; 4341.

⁸ We should remember, however, that the Boule apparently could generate decrees on its own, without reference to the demos, e.g. IE 2052; 3068.

process at Ephesos, but also highlights a somewhat overlooked fact about the relationship between the Boule and demos at Ephesos: even if the assembly spent a great deal of time simply confirming the resolutions of the Boule in the majority of cases, this still shows that the Boule and demos of Ephesos worked together in close contact and consultation throughout the year.

Thus, even if the assembly confirmed many resolutions of the Boule, it does not follow from this that the demos of Ephesos only met to rubber-stamp the decisions of the Boule. There is, in fact, explicit and continuous epigraphical evidence from the first century B.C. until after the third neokorate of the city that the demos of the polis, acting alone apparently, passed honorary decrees for men and women, including not only members of the imperial family, but also local dignitaries.⁹ More importantly, we find the demos dedicating an altar of the god Sopolis in A.D. 120,¹⁰ and twice during the first century A.D. involved in maintaining the water supply of the city: in the first instance, between A.D. 4 to 14 passing decrees related to alterations or repairs of canals, or contracts for their repairs,¹¹ and second, during the proconsulate of Calvisius Ruso in A.D. 92/93, bringing water to a fountain dedicated originally to Domitian.¹²

Furthermore, it was apparently the demos which was responsible for allocating space within the city walls for use in building projects. In a fragmentary inscription dated by its editors to sometime between A.D. 4 and 14 we learn that it was the demos alone which gave the place in the city where the Pollio monument was to be located.¹³

The Boule was not the only civic body which apparently attended these meetings at which the demos clearly acted on its own on some occasions. It is explicitly stated in the Salutaris foundation that the silver image of Athena Pammousos which Salutaris dedicated in the addendum to the main foundation was to be placed "at every regular assembly, above the sector where the Paidēs sit."¹⁴ Rawson took this to mean that the image of Athena Pammousos was to be placed above the sector where freeborn boys sat during games or shows, in other words, not during the meetings of the assembly.¹⁵ However, from the context in which the clause appears, outlining how the image of Athena Pammousos was

⁹ IE 740B, an honorary decree for Zopyros from the first century B.C.; 4111, for P.Curtius Propinquus during the late Republic; 255A, for Germanicus Caesar; 258, for the Younger Drusus; 263C, for Domitia Longina; 614B, for Laevia Paula; 615, for M.Antonius Pythodorus; 674, for T.Flavius Iulianus during the reign of Antoninus Pius; 682A, Gerillanus; 683B, Ammion; 1546, Numerius Gerillanus Flamma; 781, an honorary decree for an unknown dedicatee, probably after the third neokorate.

¹⁰ IE 1233.

¹¹ IE 2018; for the interpretation of the fragmentary inscription see E.L.Hicks, *Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum*, III, 2, Oxford 1890, no. 528.

¹² IE 419.

¹³ IE 405B, line 5, δοθ[έντος ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου].

¹⁴ Lines 468-469, τιθῆται κατὰ πᾶσαν νό-μιμον ἐκκλησίαν ἐπάνω τῆς κελίδος, οὗ [ο]ἱ παῖδες καθέζ[ο]νται.

¹⁵ E.Rawson, "Discrimina Ordinum: The Lex Julia Theatralis," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 42, 1987, 91.

supposed to be incorporated into Salutaris' procession of type-statues and images, all of which certainly were carried into the theatre by the Ephebes during all meetings of the assembly, it follows that it is just as likely that this clause implies that the Paidēs actually sat in on regular meetings of the assembly. The Paidēs then, as well as the Ephebes who actually carried Salutaris' type-statues and images into the theatre, probably attended the regular meetings of the assembly.

To these very same meetings, as a result of another provision of the addendum to the main foundation of Salutaris, the Chrysophoroi and hieroneikai escorted the type-statues dedicated by Salutaris, and received a place in the theatre in the first sector, where the image of Concord stood.¹⁶

Thus far it is clear that at least some part of the Boule, probably the Paidēs, certainly the Ephebes, the Chrysophoroi, and the hieroneikai attended at least some of the meetings of the assembly at Ephesos. But where, or rather what, is the demos which is so prominent in the decrees of the assembly? Again, the foundation may clarify not only this question, but also how the demos may have been seated at meetings of the assembly.

Seating in the Assembly

Near the end of the section where the complete list of type-statues and images dedicated by Salutaris is enumerated, it was ordered that the type-statues, during each regular assembly and at the sacrifice performed on the first day of the archieratic year, were "to be deposited in the theatre by the fitting people, on the nine inscribed bases in three groups over the blocks set out as the dedication on the bases and the dedication in the bequest for the Boule, the Gerousia, the Ephebeia, and (each) tribe."¹⁷ Since all the type-statues and images of the original foundation were set out in groups of threes, and dedicated to the Boule, the Gerousia, the Ephebeia, tribe Sebaste, the tribe of the Epheseis, the Karenaeans, the Teians, the Euonumoi, and the Bembinaiοi, this at least raises the possibility that the order of dedicants in the foundation reflects the seating arrangement within the assembly itself. Further, it might suggest that the major component of the demos was the members of the tribes, 1500 of whom benefited financially from the lotteries of the Salutaris foundation.¹⁸ Who was entitled to vote from among the other groups who attended, on what issues, and in what order, is uncertain. At least one decree of the Boule, the demos, and the Gerousia

¹⁶ Lines 437-440; 470-477, especially 475-477, τίθεται[ι] κατὰ πᾶσαν ἐκκλησίαν [ἐπάνω] [τῆς] σε-λίδος, οὐ οἱ ἱερονεῖκαι κα[θέζ]ονται.

¹⁷ Lines 202-207, τὰ δὲ προγεγραμμένα ἀπεικονίσματα [ἀποτιθέσθω]σαν κατὰ [πᾶσαν νόμιμον ἐκκλησίαν] καὶ τῆ τῆ νέα νομηνία ἔτους ἀρχιερατικῆς ἐπιτελουμένη θυσίᾳ ἐν τῷ [θεάτρῳ] ὑπὸ τῶν καθηκόντων ἐπὶ τὰς κατὰ σε-λίδας τεθειμένας καὶ ἐπιγεγραμμένας θ' βάσεις [ἀνά γ', ὡς ἡ ἐπὶ] τοῖς βᾶ-θροῖς καὶ ἡ ἐν τῇ διατάξει βουλευτικῆς, γερουσίας, ἐφηβείας καὶ φυλῆς καθιέρωσις.

¹⁸ Line 246f. of the foundation text.

exists,¹⁹ but the relationship of the Ephebeia, and other civic bodies which apparently attended the assembly, to the legislative process is not known.

When did the Assembly Meet?

From another provision of the Salutaris foundation, related to the occasions when the type-statues and images dedicated by Salutaris were ordered to be brought into the theatre, we discover that there were twelve sacred and regular assembly meetings each month in the city.²⁰ If the previous hypothesis about joint meetings of the Boule and assembly is correct, the provision referring to the twelve sacred and regular assembly meetings each month in the city should mean that at least some members of the Boule and demos of Ephesos sat down together and conducted the sacred and secular business of the polis each month during the early second century A.D.

Conclusions

At the very least, the Salutaris foundation shows that the Boule or some members of it, probably the Paidēs, the Ephebes, the Chrysophoroi, and the hieroneikai attended the regular meetings of the Ephesian assembly. At these meetings, which took place in the theatre regularly throughout the year, the Boule or representatives of it probably made previously prepared proposals to the demos, which consisted mostly of the members of the tribes. The Gerousia and the Ephebeia may have sat in on these meetings of the assembly. Evidence from many different civic groups attending the meetings of the imperial assembly at Ephesos throughout the year should lead us to re-examine the long-lived myth of the apathetic and politically powerless demos of the imperial Greek polis, which merely ratified the resolutions of the Boule.²¹ We have seen that the demos of Ephesos did not merely play a confirmatory role in the legislative process, or one restricted to passing honorary decrees, even when the demos acted without reference to the Boule or any other body. The demos of Ephesos, meeting as the sovereign assembly of the polis in the theatre during the imperial period, could, and did take responsibility for managing some of the vital resources of the polis.

Wellesley

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¹⁹ IE 657A.

²⁰ Lines 53-54, ἐν ταῖς ἑκάστον μῆνα ἄθροισο-]μέναις ἱερα[ῖς τε καὶ] νομ[ίμοις ἐκκλ]ησίαις; I do not take this clause to mean that the assembly met twelve times each month.

²¹ See A.H.M.Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford 1940,177.