Classical Athenian Archival System ~Anagrapheus and Demosion~

Yayoi Tsutsui
Master of Arts in Archival Science from Gakushuin University, Tokyo, Japan. E-mail: 10195023@gakushuin.ac.jp (by March 2011)

Introduction
ICA says that archives are fundamental to democracy, accountability and good governance. When we learn about the origin of archives, it is important to consider the origin of democracy. This presentation shows the timeline of classical Athenian democracy and the establishment of Metroon so-called "Central Archives of Athens", explained with two keywords, Anagrapheus and Demosion.

History of Democracy in Classical Athens
622/1 BC: Drakon’s Constitution; the first written code
594/3 BC: Solon appointed Archon of Athens, institutes democratic reforms
507 BC: Kleisthenes reforms democracy (creates demos)
490 BC–449 BC Greco-Persian Wars
487/6 BC: Athenian Archonship becomes elective by lot
449 BC: Athenian Archonship becomes elective by lot
461 BC: Ephialtes reforms and limits the powers of the Court of Areopagos
454 BC: The treasury of the Delian League is moved from Delos to Athens
451/0 BC: Pericles introduces a new citizenship law
447 BC: Athens begins construction of the Parthenon, at the initiative of Pericles
431 BC: The Peloponnesian War begins
430 BC: An outbreak of plague
429 BC: Death of Pericles
415–413 BC: Athenian expedition to Sicily
411 BC: The democracy in Athens is overthrown by Oligarchic coup of Four Hundred; replaced by Five Thousand, then by democracy in 410.
410–400/399 BC. Revision of the laws
404 BC: Athens surrenders to Sparta, ending the Peloponnesian War. Sparta introduces an oligarchic system, the Thirty Tyrants, in Athens.
403 BC: Democracy restored
399 BC: Socrates is executed in Athens on charges of impiety and corrupting Athenian youth
338 BC: Makedonian King Philippos II defeats Athenians and Thebans at Chaeronea
336 BC: Philippos II assassinated, Alexandros (the Great) succeeds
330 BC: Orations: Demosotheres xviii, On the Crown; Aeschines iii, Against Cleon;
Lycurgos, Against Leocrates
323 BC: Death of Alexandros
322–323 BC: Athenian youth

Crisis of the Democracy (BC 411 and 404)
A crisis of democracy in 411 BC, the Boule, the 500-member, lottery-chosen governing council of Athens, appointed Anagrapheus (“codifier”) to examine and revise the laws and decrees of the state. The Anagrapheus was supposed to do the survey and collect materials from both inside and outside of the Bouleuterion, the Boule’s building, which brought about a need for more space. As a result, a new building was constructed for the assembly in the last decade of the fifth century BC. The old building remained as office space, where legislative and administrative records of Athenians were kept, and for the first time made available to the citizens for consultation.

The Boule (Council of 500)
 prepares decrees or law proposals
supervises, evaluates, and directs other officials
examines the qualification of citizenship
examines the qualification of officials
manages treasury
proceeds impeachments
approves the standard of weights and measures and supervises it
builds the triremes
inspects all public buildings and horses
inspects Incapables to give them a grant for food
trains the Epheboi (young men)
involves the sales of public land or mines
involves registration or payments (according to Aristotle’s Athenian Constitution)

Reported holdings of Metroon
Minutes of the Ekklesia and the Boule
Laws and decrees
Diplomatic records
Treaties
List of Epheboi (young men)
Examined financial documents
State contracts with individuals
Inventories of the temples
Oracles
List of Olympic game victors
the Indictment against Socrates
Texts of tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides
Will of Epicurus
Metroon seems not to be the central archives of entire Athens but the archives of the Boule, which is the center of her governance. Perhaps Metroon also might have documents of Stoa Basileus, which is the office of Archon Basileus where the laws are displayed and religious or manslaughter trials are treated.

Demosion was open to public (just male adult citizens).
Does it fulfill the requirement of Archives?
Who is the archivist of Demosion/Metroon?

Anagrapheus surveyed both inside and outside of the Bouleuterion.
Is Demosion a collective archives?
What is Demosophia Grammata (Peoples’ writings)?

In my opinion, the archivist is someone who made such system. In ancient Greece, orality and writing existed in parallel, as we have both paper and electronic records now. Public slaves in our days are computers.

Archons: Eponymous, Basileus, Polemarchos, 6 Thesmothetai
The Boule was consisted of 500 men, 50 men from each of the ten new tribes (demos), created by Kleisthenes. Members of the Boule served for one year and no man could serve more than twice in his life. They were strictly evaluated. The Prytaneis was the executives of 50 men in charge for a month. The chairman was elected from 100 Prytaneis, who guarded the seal of Athens and the key to documents and funds.

Function of the Boule & Holdings of Metroon

The building called Metroon since the middle of 4C BC.

Tholos was built for Prytaneis to watch out, next to the Bouleuterion, in about 470 BC.

Crises and Reforms in the Athenian Democracy

New Bouleuterion and Old Bouleuterion and Tholos

Discussions

★ Metroon of Athens, holding records, used to be Demosion, which means “belonging to Demos”.
Can we say that the origin of archives is not Archeion (Archon’s office) but Demosion?
★ Anagrapheus surveyed both inside and outside of the Bouleuterion.

Is Demosion a collective archives?
★ What is Demosophia Grammata (Peoples’ writings)?
★ Demosion was open to public (just male adult citizens). Does it fulfill the requirement of Archives?
★ Who is the archivist of Demosion/Metroon? Gramateus (Secretary scribe chosen by lot) or Demosion (=Public slave)?

In my opinion, the archivist is someone who made such system. In ancient Greece, orality and writing existed in parallel, as we have both paper and electronic records now. Public slaves in our days are computers.

★ What are Inscriptions? Publicity or Copy or Archives?
Inscriptions have format and style indicating metadata.

Some legislative inscriptions show Retention Schedule, following the Boule’s decision.