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PART III

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A General

Introduction

The festivals for Dionysus held by the Attic demes in the month of Posideon (late December: **Aiii**; **Rii**; **Y Introduction**) are known generally to modern scholarship and some ancient observers as the Rural Dionysia, τὰ κατ' ἀγροὺς Διονύσια (**Ai**; **Aiv**; **Oi**; **I Ai 1a**; Sch. Pl. *Rep*. 475d; Sch. Aeschin. 1.43, 95 Dilts; *AB* 1.235.6–8; Hsch. δ 1887). It would be preferable to call these festivals deme Dionysia, or Attic Dionysia. The qualifier τὰ κατ' ἀγρούς 'in the fields' first appears in 425 (**Ai**) and it has been plausibly suggested that the expression, along with the perception it embodies of a sharp antithesis between city and countryside, were products of the mass displacement of Athenians from the latter to the former in the early years of the Peloponnesian War (Polinskaya 2006, 72–3). The phrase is likely also to have depended to some extent on a distinction with the pre-existing name of 'the Dionysia in the City' τὰ Διονύσια τὰ ἐν ἄστει, but it never achieved the same quasi-official status. The demes themselves call their festival simply 'the Dionysia' (e.g. **Bvii**; **Diii**; **Div**; **Eii**; **Hx**; **Mx**; **Rii**; **Vv**; **Wv**; *SEG* 33, 147, l. 31; 'the festival and agon for Dionysus' τῶι Διο|νύσωι τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐποίησεν καὶ τὸν ἀγῶ|να in **Mvi**). The 'rural' sobriquet did however stick (**Oi**; cf. **Aiv**), but always reflects a vantage point from the city (Henrichs 1990, 272; Jones 2004, 127) and never appears in any document emanating directly from a deme. It cannot of itself sustain the view that the Dionysus of these festivals was much more closely tied than the god from Eleutherae to the productive life cycle of the land and to notions of fertility, his festival designed to promote vegetative fertility at a time – mid-winter – when it seems most absent (*DTC*^{2} 42–3; Henrichs 1990; Habash 1995, 560, 567), but there are all the same some grounds for such an interpretation. It rests heavily on the nostalgic image of the lost ways and pleasures of a settled country life enjoyed by Dikaiopolis as he celebrates his private Dionysia 'in the fields' during the Peloponnesian War in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (**Ai**, note also *Peace* 530, discussed there) and on the prominence of the phallic icon in the celebration of the god. It may find further support in an inscription from fourth-century Ikarion that, according to a recent analysis, associated the successful conduct of the Dionysia in that deme with an abundance of crops 'by means of the Ikarian *komos*' (**Mx**).

The Dionysus of the deme Dionysia is remarkably bare of any of the idiosyncrasy in epithet or cult practice more generally characteristic of the demes and well attested by their calendars and regulations (see for instance Parker 2010b, 197–200 in connection with the sacred law from Aixone; **Av** for the possible relevance of Dionysus Theoinos). We do find particularised cults of Dionysus in the demes – for instance Dionysus Anthios in Aixone (**D**), Myrrhinous (**R**) and Phlya (**U**), Melpomenos and Kissos in Acharnae (**B**) – but in no case is there any attested connection to the deme's Dionysia. There is a possibility that the god of the Rhamnus Dionysia was Lenaios, god of the wine press (**W Introduction**;

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Wiv), but this limited evidence sets into relief the general lack of precision as to just who the Dionysus of these deme Dionysia was. We find no indication of an attempt to identify him with Dionysus Eleuthereus (god of the City Dionysia: **I Aiii 4**) and some suggestive of the opposite. A tradition of uncertain date relating to Ikarion pointedly places the visit of Dionysus to Icarius earlier in time than the introduction of the image of Dionysus from Eleutherae to Athens by Pegasos (**M Introduction**; **I Aiv 2**). That implies an effort to claim a greater antiquity for the Ikarian cult over that of Dionysus Eleuthereus in the City, and certainly need not represent a response to a pre-existing assimilation between the god of the deme and of the City festivals (note however Lambert's 2003, 66 suggestion that the polis priesthood of Dionysus in Piraeus was held along with that of Dionysus Eleuthereus in the Athenian cult: **Viii**; and the likelihood that the icon brought to Piraeus was in fact the same Dionysus Eleuthereus as resided in the Athenian Sanctuary: **I Aiii 1**). There are also signs that an aetiological account was developed in the fourth century which derived not only the knowledge of viticulture and viniculture but the worship of Dionysus with drama from the missionary journey of Icarius around Attica (**Aiii**; **M Introduction**; **Y Introduction**; **I Aiv 21**; **I Avii 3**).

The lack of cultic specificity attaching to Dionysus of the deme festivals suggests the relatively recent introduction of his cult. It seems likely that demes which did not have a significant (or indeed any) local cult of Dionysus in the sixth century may have decided to introduce one in close association with that of a more prominent, pre-existing local deity or hero, in order that they could hold a Dionysia. Sites where such cultic 'piggy-backing' by Dionysus may have taken place include Eleusis (**H**), Sphettos (**X**) and possibly Halimous (**L**), in the case of all three within the context of pre-existing cults of Demeter. At Halai Araphenides Dionysus may have been woven into the mythical and physical topography of the place long associated with Artemis (**Kii**; see also **G**). We might envisage a similar development in Ikarion, where the sanctuary (and cult) of Dionysus sits close by that of Apollo Pythios, and where the theatre itself was immediately adjacent to the temple of Apollo rather than that of Dionysus (**M Introduction**; **Mi**).

Every deme that held a Dionysia will probably have had a priest who administered the god's cult, although we do find demarchs making sacrifices to Dionysus in the context of the local festival (**Hvii**). Priestesses of Dionysus are as well attested in the demes as their male counterparts (*SEG* 21, 541 Δ, ll. 33–40, Erchia ca. 375–350; *SEG* 54, 214, ll. 9–11, Aixone ca. 400–375; Philoch. *FGrH* 328 F 206, Semachidai), but there is no evidence to suggest the involvement of these priestesses with a theatre or even a Dionysia. As it happens, only in Sphettos (**X**) and Piraeus (**Viii**; **V Introduction**) do we find a priest of Dionysus, and the priest of Dionysus in Piraeus was an appointee of the polis and not required to be a demesman. At Sphettos the close connection between the priest of Dionysus and the theatre is guaranteed, for his presence *ex officio* in prohedric seating was evidently the norm.

The issue of the festival's nomenclature is highly relevant to its treatment in modern times. The view long prevalent that everything about the theatre of the Attic Dionysia was irredeemably mediocre (e.g. **Y Introduction**) can ultimately be traced back to a few remarks of Demosthenes (and his nephew Democharis) cast in the face of his political opponent, the ex-actor Aeschines, described as a 'real ape on the tragic stage, a rustic Oenomaus' (**Oiii**) who 'hired yourself to those famous bellowers, the actors Simykkas

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and Sokrates as a player of third parts' (**Ov**) and 'wandered through the fields' (**Oiv**) 'collect(ing) figs and grapes and olives like a grocer selling stolen fruit, earning more from that than from the contests, in which you competed for your very life' (**Ov**). Demosthenes grossly exaggerates the 'rural' character of the Dionysia at which Aeschines competed. The extent of his misrepresentation is clearest from the fact that the one festival he mentions is the Dionysia of Kollytos. This was held not only within the City walls but quite possibly in the Theatre of Dionysus itself, which will have been no more than a short walk from anywhere in this urban deme (**O**). Demosthenes' casual and polemical insinuation of boorish rusticity has nonetheless stuck. The fact that we possess only one Classical text of any extension relating to the Attic Dionysia, and that this is from an Aristophanic comedy (**Ai**), has also had a distorting effect, further encouraging the view that deme theatre need not be taken seriously as a context for drama of any standing in itself or of significance for the long-term history of the theatre.

A corrective began with the systematic collection by Whitehead (1986a) of the evidence then available within the context of his comprehensive study of deme life. The corpus has since been updated by Jones (2004, 124–58) and Goette (2014) and continues to grow. A number of contributions to a more thorough and sympathetic analysis of the material have appeared in the last decade (Csapo 2004; Spineto 2005, 327–50; Summa 2006; Wilson 2007a; Paga 2010; Csapo 2010, 89–95; Wilson 2010a; Wilson 2011b; Wilson 2013; Wilson 2015; Bultrighini 2015, 349–64; Wilson 2017b). Study of the religious life of the demes more generally has flourished (Mikalson 1977; Henrichs 1990; Humphreys 2004, 130–96; Parker 2005, 50–78; we also draw attention to the doctoral thesis of Kazuhiro Takeuchi 2018 on the epigraphic evidence for the cult of Dionysus in Attica) and monographs devoted to individual demes that take account of important recent archaeological findings have brought a deeper understanding of several relevant communities (Garland 1987 on Piraeus; Petrakos 1999 on Rhamnus; Platonos-Yiota 2004 and Kellogg 2013 on Acharnae; Clinton 2005 on Eleusis; Vivliodetis 2005 on Myrrhinous; Ackermann 2018 on Aixone). A better grasp of the evidence and an attitude to it free of prejudice have led to a more nuanced understanding of the nature and quality of theatre in the demes, and to its significance in the spread of drama, the formation of a canon and the growth of a theatre industry.

If it were not for the haphazard discovery of inscriptions and theatre architecture across Attica, we would hardly know that this energetic theatrical culture existed at all, for it features very little in literary sources, and except in the case of the *Acharnians* passage (**Ai**), where it does, it is late (**Aiv**), not especially informative (**Aii**; **I Ai 1a**), deliberately misleading (Demosthenes on Kollytos, above) or of ambiguous relevance (**Aiii**; **Av**; the Dionysia in Piraeus is a partial exception, but this was a festival significantly sponsored by the city of Athens: **V**). The fact that deme theatres have been discovered by sheer accident as recently as 1993 (Halimous **L**) and 2007 (Acharnae **B**), and that knowledge of the presence of a dramatic festival in a deme can depend on the evidence of a single fragmentary inscription (e.g. **C**; **P**; **T**; cf. **J**; **S**; **X**), means that the figure of twenty-three demes which on present evidence are with certainty or strong likelihood attested as having held theatrical performances is virtually certain to be much lower than the total that actually did so. In the case of some eighteen (see Table) we can be confident the context was a Dionysia. In places where drama is attested but not a Dionysia we can be fairly sure that the context

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for performance was a Dionysia, as there is no evidence that drama was performed in the demes in any other festival context than for Dionysus.

The evidence for the twenty-three demes with theatrical performances, as also for Brauron (a settlement on the east coast of Attica that was not a deme), is presented and analysed in separate sections below (**B**–**Y**), following a survey of the limited material from the literary tradition (**A**). This introduction will confine itself to questions of a more general nature. The Table below summarises the material presented fully in the following pages, to capture: the dates at which deme Dionysia are first attested; evidence for the presence of a theatre building; and the first attestation of drama. The last column represents an assessment, on the basis of all the available evidence, of the likely starting date of drama in the deme. Neither Salamis nor Oropus was ever incorporated into the Attic deme system. We therefore consider Salamis, which had a Dionysia from at least ca. 400, in **IV Dxii** and Oropus, which had a theatre by ca. 335, perhaps with a wooden precursor from around 420, in **IV Ci**.

Four other demes are sometimes brought into the discussion of local Dionysia but do not in our opinion warrant inclusion in our list. The first is Cholleidai, with the notably small bouleutic quota of 2. We argue (**Ai**) that the inclusion of this as a deme with attested Dionysia by Jones (2004, 131) is unwarranted. Pallene, Gargettos and Erchia all had cults of Dionysus but none at present has provided explicit evidence for a festival, theatre or drama. A boundary marker from Pallene in the northern Mesogaia (bouleutic quota 6) identifies land belonging to Dionysus, and so points to a cult of the god in that deme by the late fifth century (*SEG* 57, 162; Takeuchi 2010–2013, 101–2). The case of neighbouring Gargettos (bouleutic quota 4) is more suggestive. We know that this inland deme (near modern Gerakas) possessed a temenos of Dionysus, since an honorific decree dated to the second half of the fourth century shows that this was a place where public documents were erected (*SEG* 46, 155, ll. 4–5: ἐν τῶι τοῦ | Διονύσου τεμένει Γαργηττοῖ 'in the temenos of Dionysus at Gargettos'; Goette 1992–1998, 107; Marchiandi 2011, 622). This demonstrates the importance of the cult to the deme. This use of the sanctuary of Dionysus as a place of local civic display, and the fact that Dionysus of Gargettos is unadorned with any further epithet, are consistent with the practice of demes that did hold Dionysia. Humphreys (2004, 180–1) is willing on this basis to deduce the existence of a theatrical Dionysia in Gargettos, but one wants something more.

The case of prosperous Erchia (bouleutic quota 6 or 7), also in the northern Mesogaia (bouleutic quota 7), is similar. The famous fourth-century cult calendar of the deme entitled 'the greater demarchy' (*SEG* 21, 541) shows sacrifice of a goat 'to Dionysus' (Δ, ll. 33–40), and another for Semele 'on the same altar', on Elaphebolion 16 (A, ll. 44–51). The meat is 'to be handed over to the women and to be consumed on the spot'. (The priestess who is to receive the skin in either case doubtless held a single office: Parker 2010b, 197. There is also a young kid for Dionysus on 2 Anthesterion: Γ, ll. 43–7.) These sacrifices to Dionysus and Semele on Elaphebolion 16 were evidently made in some association with the City Dionysia, which finished on Elaphebolion 15. It would be rash however to use this as evidence for the absence of Erchian women from the Theatre (Elaphebolion 16 seems normally to have been the day on which the Pandia fell, and immediately after which the

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post-Dionysia assembly was held in the city: **I Aix 1**). While this is good evidence for some form of recognition of Dionysus' City festival at the deme level (and something similar may have happened in Marathon: **Q**), there is nothing listed in the calendar for Dionysus in the month of Posideon. On Posideon 16, Zeus is to be given a sheep 'on the rock' (E, ll. 22–7). The latter could conceivably be 'part of the local celebration for the Rural Dionysia' (Humphreys 2004, 180), but aside from the date there is nothing to suggest it was, and one would have to ask why on this theory the calendar ignores the principal deity. Given that one purpose of the Erchian calendar may have been to divide up the deme's sacrificial needs into liturgical-size units (Dow 1965, 193–5; cf. Papazarkadas 2011, 145–6), one might propose that the sacrifices for Dionysus himself at his festival in Erchia did not appear in it because they were provided separately by choregoi. The string of hypotheses is however long and fragile.

	Festival First attested	**Earliest Theatre Building**	**Drama First Attested**	**Drama Likely Start**
Acharnae	Dionysia by early 4th c. (I)	ca. 400–350; partially excavated (A, I)	comedy and possibly tragedy (I)	first half 4th c.
Aigilia	Dionysia by early 4th c. (I)		By early 4th c. (I)	first half 4th c.
Aixone	Dionysia by ca. 330 (I)	Remains noted in 19th c. (A); before ca. 330 (I)	comedy by ca. 320 (I)	mid 4th c.
Anagyrous	Dionysia by ca. 350 (I)	By ca. 325 (I)	tragedy by ca. 440 (I), comedy by ca. 350 (I)	ca. 450
Athmonon	Amarysia or Dionysia by ca. 350 (I)			
Eleusis	Dionysia by first half 4th c. (I)	Seen in 18th c.; no longer visible (A); by ca. 350 (I). Possibly a second theatre under control of Athenians by ca. 355 (I)	tragedy and comedy by late 5th c. (I)	5th c.
Euonymon	Dedication to Dionysus in theatre by ca. 330 (I)	ca. 400, excavated but unpublished (A)	an *agon* by late 4th c.	5th c.
Halai Aixonides	Dionysia tentatively deduced from choregic dedication, mid 5th c. (I)	Unconfirmed reports of remains in 20th c. (A)	comedy and tragedy by ca. 430 (I)	mid 5th c.
Halai Araphenides	Sanctuary of Dionysus by ca. 350 (I); Dionysia likely	By ca. 350 (I)	comedy by ca. 340 (Ic)	first half 4th c.

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Halimous		Partially excavated (A)		4th c.
Ikarion	Dionysia by ca. 450 (I)	4th c. (A), with likely earlier phase; not properly excavated	tragedy by ca. 450 (I)	early 5th c.
Kephale		Possibly seen in 17th c.		? 4th c.
Kollytos	Dionysia by ca. 350 (L)		comedy and tragedy by ca. 350 (L)	first half 4th c.
Lamptrai	Dionysia by ca. 325 (I)			mid 4th c.
Marathon	Dionysia by ca. 350 (I)		tragedy by ca. 350 (I)	first half 4th c.
Myrrhinous	Dionysia by ca. 320 (I)			4th c.
Oa	Dionysia tentatively deduced from possible choregic dedication late 4th c. (I)			? 4th c.
Paiania	Dionysia tentatively deduced from choregic dedication ca. 350 (I)		tragedy by ca. 350 (I)	first half 4th c.
Phlya	Dionysia by ca. 400 (L)			? early 4th c.
Piraeus	Dionysia by ca. 350 (I)	By ca. 420 (L); seen in 18th and 19th c. with limited exploration (A)	tragedy by ca. 425 (L), comedy by first half 4th c. (L)	5th c.
Rhamnus	Dionysia by ca. 250 (I)	By mid 4th c. (A)	comedy by ca. 300 (I)	4th c.
Sphettos	Dionysia deduced from existence of priest, theatre and tragedy by ca. 350 (I, Ic)	By ca. 350 (I)	tragedy by ca. 350 (Ic)	first half 4th c.
Thorikos	Dionysia by ca. 425 (I)	ca. 460 (A, S)	tragedy and comedy by ca. 420	early 5th c.

A = Architecture I = Inscription Ic = Iconography L = Literary text S = Stratigraphy

We can state with some confidence that drama featured at Dionysia in at least seven demes already in the fifth century: Piraeus, Eleusis, Ikarion, Euonymon, Halai Aixonides, Anagyrous and Thorikos. But the idea that it in fact began in rural Attica, and notably in Ikarion, rather than in the City of Athens, is an artefact of late Classical pro-Athenian cultural propaganda, propagated widely in Hellenistic scholarship (**Avi**; **M Introduction**).

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The theory appears to have been forged by local Attic historians and publicists such as Phanodemus or Philochorus in accord with a broader Lycurgan policy of cultural and economic regeneration, to which the theatre culture of Athens was central, at a time when theatre was becoming less and less exclusively Athenian in reality (Csapo and Wilson 2014; **VI I**). It is clear that the choice of Ikarion as the 'birthplace' of drama was determined in large part by the existence of a genuinely old tradition of dramatic performance and Dionysiac worship there, the latter certainly dating back to the Pisistratid period and perhaps even to Pisistratid promotion (**M Introduction**). But the earliest evidence for drama in Ikarion places it around 460 (**Miii**). This happens to coincide with the most recent stratigraphic dating of the first phase of the theatre of Thorikos (**Y Introduction**), where direct evidence for drama begins some four decades later.

Although the evidence is insufficient to ask it to bear too much probative weight, it is notable that the demes with drama attested in the fifth century represent a wide geographical spread across Attica – with Ikarion to the north, beyond Mt Pentelikon, Thorikos on the far south-east coast, Eleusis on its bay to the west; Piraeus, Euonymon, Halai Aixonides and Anagyrous at points on or near the western coast and easily accessible to the city and one another by road. The pattern is at least suggestive of a progressive development by which demes introduced drama to meet a demand in their area, or to stimulate one (below). The existence of a 'circuit' of deme theatre in the later fifth century is explicitly noted by Plato (**Aiii 2**). It is noteworthy (always acknowledging the modest evidentiary base and the imprecision of the dates given to many relevant inscriptions) that several other demes are likely to have had drama by the early fourth century, despite its being a time of considerable economic hardship for Athens. It is clear too that more demes added or elaborated theatrical Dionysia over the course of the second half of the fourth century, notably the period of settled prosperity from the time of the financial stewardship of Eubulus (ca. 355). The practical aspects involved in timetabling these many Dionysia in the month of Posideon are considered in **Aiii**.

The demes known to have celebrated a Dionysia with drama are well above the average size of all demes, as judged by their bouleutic quota (Jones 2004, 139). Based on the list above (excluding Kephale and Oa as too uncertain, and calculating the Lamptrais and Paianias as the sum of their Upper and Lower parts), the average figure is 8.15, as compared to an overall average of ca. 3.6. Size and associated material resources were clearly important, if not essential, factors in a deme's capacity to run a festival as complex and costly as a theatrical Dionysia. In general it is probably safe to assume that a theatrical Dionysia was beyond any deme with a bouleutic quota of 1 or 2, representing some nominal 40/60 or 80/120 adult male demesmen (the alternatives depend on whether we assume a citizen population of 20,000 or 30,000: Jones 2004, 140, 296–7). That covers more than half of all demes (and is another argument against Cholleidai: above). Kollytos is the only deme with a bouleutic quota of 3 or less (it was 3) known to have celebrated the festival (**N**). As an intramural deme, the actual resident population of Kollytos will have been far higher than reflected in its bouleutic quota. It will certainly have been able to draw very large audiences from beyond its own members, and that in itself will have yielded significant income. The performances were quite possibly held in the urban Theatre of Dionysus.

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The size of some deme theatres – with capacities very much larger than for audiences composed solely of deme members (and their families, including female members and slaves: **Ai**; **Aiv**; **I**; **V**; **Y**) – has prompted the further suggestion that they sought to attract audiences from beyond their membership. This is highly plausible, and is in fact assumed as a norm by Plato, who makes the economic motive of the arrangement explicit (**Aiii 1**). Plato's choice of words indicates that revenue from the sale of seats at deme Dionysia is anticipated (on seat-sales: **Bvi**; **V Introduction**; **Vvi**), and we should probably think in addition of a boost to the local market economy from the influx of visitors (Jones 2004, 152–7; Wilson 2010a). This was a time of year when agricultural activity was at its quietest, and so ideal for the distractions of Dionysia. The creation of a staggered 'circuit' of deme Dionysia no doubt enabled performers to move from one to another during the busy festival season of Posideon; but Plato's emphasis is on the capacity of audience members to do so.

Under these circumstances it is a reasonable hypothesis that smaller demes adjacent to large ones with established theatrical Dionysia would attend – and perhaps participate more fully in – that of the latter (**M Introduction** for possible involvement as performers or worshippers, where a case is made for a significant degree of participation on the part of tiny Plotheia, north of Ikarion, in the latter's Dionysia; Goette 2014, 95–6). But that reasonable assumption needs some modification: the case of Halimous (**L**) most clearly disrupts any neatly systematic theory of regional sharing, and demonstrates the importance of local pride and tradition. Halimous had its own theatre in close proximity to that of its much larger neighbour Euonymon (**I**), which in turn was only some 7 km distant from Aixone (**D**) on the Athens road; the demes of Halai Aixonides (**J**) and Anagyrous (**E**) follow in sequence on the same southerly road. The concentration of Dionysia in the Mesogaia is also noteworthy (**X**). Some have argued that demes possessed of substantial theatres may have made them accessible, perhaps under a leasing arrangement, to others nearby who did not (Lohmann 1993, 288–9; Goette 2014, 96). We regard the interpretation of one relevant item of evidence to this effect as faulty (**R**) and the other as at best unproven (**Q**), but this does not strike the idea down in principle. The city may have sought to maximise the return from its cultural facilities 'out of season', leasing out the Panathenaic stadium for use as pasturage when the festival was not on (*IG* II^2 1035, l. 50, but the date is the Augustan era). Demes that had invested in high-quality cultural infrastructure may have done the same. This high degree of involvement on the part of non-members will have given these Dionysia a somewhat different character from most other local festivals.

Another and not necessarily incompatible explanation for the apparent pattern of spread of demes with large theatres considers local political needs. Some deme theatres were demonstrably multi-functional places. Rhamnus (**W**) is a good example, for its open-plan theatre also served as an agora and place of dedication to multiple deities. The same was doubtless true of others, though one must always be attentive to distinctive local custom suggested by the (limited) evidence: Thorikos for instance possessed a significant commercial agora that was quite separate from its fine theatre (**Y Introduction**). Meetings of the deme assembly are more likely to have taken place in the theatre than in the agora of Thorikos, and in general demes that possessed a theatre are very likely to have used it for their assembly meetings. The fact that these theatres were far larger than required to

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