

# 2

## LESSON

# HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY 1

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

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- 1 Understand the democracy of Athens, ancient Greece.
- 2 Understand the relationship between the Magna Carta and democracy.

## TERMS TO KNOW

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- Demos
- Magna Carta
- Constitutional monarchy

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## Direct Democracy in Athens, Ancient Greece

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Democracy first began in Athens, Greece. In Athens, an ancient city-state, besides the nobility, there was a class of citizens called Demos. At the age of 18, men could register with Demos and receive citizenship. In the 5th Century B.C., Athens was at war with the Persian Empire. Demos participated directly in the battlefield as part of the military and performed many activities. Eventually,

Athens won the war and Demos' influence in Athens grew as great as that of the nobility. From that time on, the word *Demokratia*, meaning the rule of the people (*Kratos*), was used in Athens, and it was translated into English as Democracy.

A characteristic of Athenian democracy is that it was a direct democracy in which citizens directly participated in policy making. The assembly was an organization that gathered the opinions of all citizens, and any Athenian citizen could attend the assembly. Opportunities to serve



**Figure 2-1** *Pnyx Hill, where the assembly was held regularly*

in councils and civil courts were given to anyone who wished to do so. In addition, ordinary citizens who were not of noble origin could also be elected as consuls through a lottery.

However, there were clearly limits, too. The right to vote was given only to male adults who made up only 10-20% of the total population of Athens. Moreover, women did not have the right to vote. Slaves and foreigners who made up nearly half of the population were not recognized as citizens. Nevertheless, the Athenian democracy was the first democracy in human history and had a great influence on the re-emergence and development of democracy in later generations.

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## Magna Carta

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The Magna Carta, written in England in 1215, is the document that became the seed of democracy. The Magna Carta is a document that shows that the power of a king can be limited by law. This document greatly reduced the powers of the king which soon led

to the creation of a parliament. Currently, the United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. This is because it has a monarch, but they are only a symbolic existence. The country is actually governed by the constitution and laws.

In 1215, England was ruled by King John. Britain was at war with France over territorial disputes, but King John was not a war adept king and lost every war he fought. Whenever he was defeated, he collected additional taxes and recruited the military again. Eventually, King John lost a lot of territory, and he even earned the infamous nickname, John Lackland. In this situation, a more fatal event occurred. King John, who opposed the Pope, was excommunicated. The King's excommunication made it impossible for the Catholic Church in England to hold Mass. Also, funerals could not be held in Catholic ceremonies, and babies could not be baptized even after they were born. Anger against the king erupted everywhere. Eventually, the nobles rebelled against the king and took the king's residence at Windsor Castle by

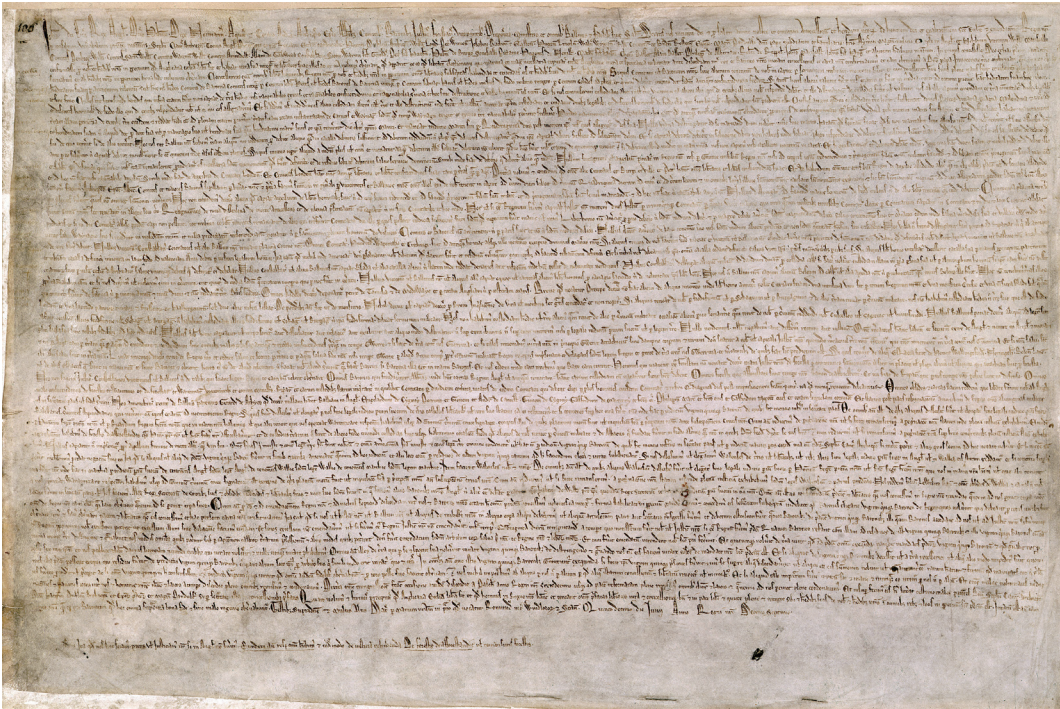


Figure 2-2 *The Magna Carta (originally known as the Charter of Liberties) of 1215*



Figure 2-3 *The Magna Carta Memorial at Runnymede is the place where King John signed the Magna Carta*

force. The nobles presented 63 articles of demand from the King, and on June 15, 1215, King John signed this document.

This document is the Magna Carta. The key articles are Article 12 “The king may not impose taxes without the approval of the nobles” and Article 39 “No arrest or detention other than in accordance with the law.” It contains the will of nobles to run their own country

according to laws and principles, rather than entrusting the fate of the country to the king. The Magna Carta was originally a document confirming the rights of the nobles, but over time it was used more and more as a basis of defending the rights of ordinary citizens. Therefore, it has become a frequently cited document in the history of democracy to protect civil liberties and rights.

## Reviewing the Lesson

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- 1 What were the characteristics of Athenian democracy in ancient Greece?
- 2 What were the limitations of Athenian democracy in ancient Greece?
- 3 What do you call a country that has a monarch like the United Kingdom but is ruled by the constitution and the law?
- 4 What is the name of the document signed by King John of England in 1215?
- 5 What were the two key articles of the Magna Carta?

## Activities

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- 1 Search the internet for photos or videos that show Athens, the birthplace of democracy. Let's also find places such as the Acropolis, Agora, and Pnyx Hill. Find out what they were used for and share them with the class.
- 2 Let's research and present more data about King John of England and the Magna Carta on the Internet.

## Image Credits

Figure 2-1 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Pnyx-berg2.png>

Figure 2-2 [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/ee/ee/Magna\\_Carta\\_%28British\\_Library\\_Cotton\\_MS\\_Augustus\\_II.106%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/ee/ee/Magna_Carta_%28British_Library_Cotton_MS_Augustus_II.106%29.jpg)

Figure 2-3 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/ABA-wyrdlight-815935.jpg>

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