

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF HONOUR IN LATE CLASSICAL ATHENS: AN EPIGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Honour, or more precisely *time*, was the lifeblood of the ancient Greek city, in that it was a key driver of public behaviour. Arguably what motivated a Greek to act in the public interest above all was the *time*, respect, value, honour, that would accrue to him for his action from his fellow men, particularly, but not only, from the citizens of his own polis. This was the case in ancient Athens no less than in any other Greek city, and in Athens, as in other cities, it is a phenomenon to which the epigraphical record is eloquent witness, above all via the inscribed honorific decree.

We have records of honours awarded by a wide variety of bodies, not only Council and Assembly, but tribe, deme, phratry, boards of officials; to a wide array of different honorands, some members of the awarding group, some not; and a vast range of different honours might be awarded: statues, crowns, dedications, titles, rights and privileges, rewards both symbolic and practical. The bibliography on the topic is vast: At the head of **item 1** on the HO I list three recent works which engage thoroughly with the Athenian evidence, and through which references can be traced to much useful earlier work. Marc Domingo's book, though primarily about the origins of euergetism, also engages with its later development; Darel Engen's work focuses primarily on honours for trade-related services, but makes useful observations on honorific decrees more broadly; and Peter Liddel's study lays the groundwork for his full treatment of Athenian decrees in the literary record, which is currently in press with Cambridge University Press.

As a consequence of this abundance in the Athenian historical record, there are a number of different pathways the historian can trace through it. A traditional approach to history as grand narrative has tended to dominate, implying a focus on the highest honours, the so-called *megistai timai*, typically including a public statue and other high honours, the archetype of which was the posthumous award to the tyrannicides, Harmodios and Aristogeiton. This award was important in establishing a fundamental ideological link between democracy and honours for Athenian citizens, but it was never replicated under the radical democracy of the 5th century, and the next recipients of public honorific statues at Athens were the heroes of Knidos in 394 BC, Konon and Euagoras of Salamis on Cyprus. Thereafter the highest honours were awarded rather sparingly to a succession of prominent Athenian generals, and at least from the 330s also to leading civilian figures. It is these high honours to very prominent individuals that are the main focus of the treatment of 4th cent. Athens in Philippe Gauthier's influential 1985 study, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs*; and my own most recent discussion on them is in my notes to *AIUK 2 (BSA)* no. 1, the decree of 314/3 BC honouring Asandros of Macedon which is our earliest well-preserved inscribed case. The recipients of the *megistai timai*, however, were by definition members of the elite, and, though these honours were awarded by the collective, they are not democratizing in the sense I am interested in.

To understand the democratizing dynamic that interests me today, one needs to appreciate that two aspects of Classical Athens were in tension – first, it was indeed a democracy in the Greek sense. This meant not only that major decisions were taken by the collective, it also meant that there

was wide participation in office holding – offices were appointed by lot and tenure was typically just for one year. The success of the city depended on the performance not only, or indeed not mainly, of the elite who were candidates for the *megistai timai*, but the ordinary citizens who filled the vast number of annual offices.

A key driver of the performance of these officials was love of honour; it was in the city's interests to encourage this *philotimia* and harness it to the benefit of the city. The problem here, however, is that the pursuit of honour in the archaic period and the 5th century was a concern primarily of the elite. For the rest of this talk I shall trace, primarily through the epigraphical record, the process whereby, beginning in the last decade of the 5th century, this pursuit was systematically democratized and made to apply to citizen office-holders in the mass.

A. Democratization

1. The dawn of mass honours for Athenian officials: Council prytanies

1a and 1b on the handout are both inscriptions of the last decade of the 5th cent. BC, which, in different ways, manifest a democratization of honour in the sense I am interested in. The earlier of the two is *IG I³ 515* [HO 1a], which shows that, at the latest by 408/7 BC, the Athenians had instituted a competition among the Council prytanies to be voted the best prytany of the year. The prytanies were the tribal contingents of the Council and they functioned as a kind of executive committee of the Council for a tenth of the year in rotation. An important point to appreciate about them is that thanks to the appointment system for

councillors, above all the limitation on service to twice in a lifetime, they were manned at this period predominantly by more or less ordinary Athenian citizens in the mass, and not by the elite.

The date the competition was instituted is not known, but it may not be coincidental that our first evidence for it dates shortly after the democratic restoration which followed the oligarchic revolution of 411. This may well be significant for two reasons, one pragmatic, one ideological: first, pay for councillors and other officials had been abolished in 411. In Plato's view there were two types of political pay: money and honours. It is no surprise that honours should emerge in the epigraphical record just at the point where money ceases to be an element in the equation. The second way this timing is significant is ideological. According to Otanes, the supporter of "democracy" in the debate on the constitutions staged by Herodotos 3.80 in Persia in 522 BC, alongside appointment by lot and accountability of officials, the relationship between Council and Assembly was one of the three cornerstones of "rule of the mass", or *isonomia*, a constitution in which "all proposals are referred to the collective" (βουλευματα δὲ πάντα ἐς τὸ κοινὸν ἀναφέρει); in the constitutional upheavals of 411 an attempt had been made to shift the balance of power from the Assembly to a smaller, more "oligarchic" Council of 400, a regime which was overthrown by Aristokrates and Theramenes precisely because, contrary to the principle formulated by Otanes, the Four Hundred decided everything themselves and referred nothing to the wider body of the Five Thousand. In other words, I doubt that it is coincidental that this attempt to incentivize good performance by the Council came about just at the time when the

Council's constitutional position and performance had been at the top of the political agenda.

In any case, whatever the precise origins of this competition, it is democratizing in the sense that it taps into agonal instincts and behaviours connected with the pursuit of *time* which can arguably be associated with elite ideology and socialization, and aims to transfer those behaviours to the Council prytanies, which were much more broadly representative of the Athenian citizen population.

It is, however, also a limited democratization. The inscription doesn't actually use the language of honour and its associated paraphernalia, particularly crowns; and not all the prytany members are listed, and this may be in part at least because the dedication was privately funded and only those who contributed to the cost of it had their names inscribed.

1b - honours for Athenians who had resisted the 30

A rather stronger democratizing flavour attaches to our second epigraphical exhibit: 1b on the handout, the inscription by which, in 401/0, the restored democracy honoured those Athenians who had formed the core of the democratic resistance movement that had opposed, and had eventually overthrown, the oligarchic junta known as the Thirty which had been imposed on Athens by Sparta following Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War. We possess a poorly preserved inscribed version of the decree, but Aeschines gives a full account of the inscription in his speech against Demosthenes in 330, in the context of a review of monuments in the Agora commemorating the great deeds of Athenians of the past. Aeschines has the epigram on the monument read out in court - I reproduce on the handout the text and translation of the epigram, and also

the initial lines of the text of the accompanying decree. Aeschines fills out our knowledge of the decree, stating that the honorands were awarded foliage crowns, also alluded to in the epigram, and money for sacrifices and a dedication.

A third decree, 1c, is also relevant: on the restoration of democracy following the oligarchic coup of 411, Theozotides successfully proposed a decree committing the city to supporting the orphans of those who had been killed in the oligarchy while supporting the democracy, as if they were war orphans:

. . . Theozotides proposed:
as many Athenians as died a violent
(5) death in the oligarchy while supporting
the democracy, to the [children] of these,
because of the benefaction of their fathers towards
the Athenian People and their manly virtue,
to give to the children of [all?] these
(10) an obol a day [maintenance like that which?]
they would give to the orphans . . .

This is not precisely an honorific decree in form, but it is in substance; and it echoes the awards to the tyrannicides in recognising those who fell in the service of democracy. Again, those honoured are ordinary Athenians.

In different ways these three early cases of awards of honours to ordinary Athenians – the competition for the Council prytany, and the two examples of honours for those who had fought in defence of democracy –

all three dating to the last decade of the 5th century, and all from the aftermath of oligarchic coups, lent a particularly democratic flavour to this genre of inscription in its earliest phase of development.

2. Introduction of public funding for inscribing dedications commemorating honours for officials in 357/6

In the following years there is sporadic evidence for the honouring of Athenians by the city, mainly in the form of inscribed dedications by office holders, but it is not until half a century later that wording commemorating crowning by the Council and People first appears on dedications by Athenian officials, in three official dedications dating to 357/6 [HO 2-4].

The first of these [HO2] is a dedication to the Twelve Gods by the whole Council, the second a dedication at Eleusis by the holder of an unstated office [ho3], and the third [ho4] is a dedication by trierarchs. Although there are no extant dedications by officials from the immediate couple of years previous to 357/6, and we therefore can't be certain that this new style wording wasn't in fact introduced a year or two earlier, I suggested in my recent discussion in *AIO Papers 9* that it is unlikely to be coincidental that we have three dedications carrying this new-style wording dated to the same year, and that in particular the unique dedication by the whole Council to the Twelve Gods, no. 2 on the Handout, explicitly commemorating the Council's crowning by the People, would have been an entirely appropriate way to inaugurate, by example, the "new style" which was henceforth to apply to all dedications by councillors, Council prytanies and other officials over whom the Council exercised oversight.

After 357/6 this wording appears regularly on dedications by officials, including in the continuing series of dedications by Council prytanies: [example at **ho 5**]

So we have a new style wording referring to the crowning of officials by the Council and People from 357/6, but what did it signify? It did not, it seems, signify the beginning of the practice of crowning officials, as a few such crownings are attested earlier. Most likely perhaps the change reflected a systematic overhaul in the arrangements for accounting by officials for their conduct in office, the *euthynai*, and the consequent award of crowns which followed successful completion of that process, but in the absence of other explicit evidence for such an overhaul, literary or epigraphical, we can only speculate on the detail. However, there is one specific change that I suggested in *AIO Papers 9* may have accompanied the introduction of the new-style wording, whether or not it was the main point of it. Early dedications by officials were more or less clearly dedicated at the expense of the officials themselves. We already observed this in relation to the dedication of 408/7 BC by the prytany of Erechtheis. In contrast, by the 340s BC, when, as we shall see shortly, decrees honouring officials begin to be inscribed, public provision is made not only for the cost of inscribing the decree but also for a sacrifice and a dedication. Examples are detailed at 6 on the handout:

357/6 BC might, therefore, I suggest, have been the year in which public provision for the cost of dedications commemorating the award of honours to officials was introduced: the correlate of public funding of the dedication was that it was required to carry the “official” formula. If this is right it represents an important further step in the democratization of the culture of honour: advertisement and commemoration - in modern

terms publicity for - honour is at the centre of very concept of *time* itself. Broadly speaking, *time* increases in proportion to the number of people that know about it. One only has to think of the contention surrounding Ktesiphon's proposal that the crown for Demosthenes' should be proclaimed in the theatre of Dionysos, in other words before a vast audience gathered from across the Greek world for the City Dionysia – one of Aeschines' key arguments against the award is precisely that such a proclamation was illegal. If my interpretation of this development in the wording of dedications by officials is right, from 357/6 BC it seems it was open to any Athenian official who had passed his *euthynai* to seek to have that commemorated by a dedication paid for from the public purse.

3. Mid-340s - praise for *philotimia*, hortatory intention and inscribed decrees commemorating honours for Athenians

The logical next step in the process was the inscribing of the full text of the honorific decree, and this was not long delayed. In the mid-340s decrees of the Council and Assembly honouring Athenian officials begin to be inscribed in full; the earliest in the regular series is the fragmentary IG II³ 1, 301, of 346/5 BC, [HO 7]. This coincides with two developments in the wording of inscribed decrees more generally: the demonstration of *philotimia* towards the People or Council and People, begins to be praised explicitly; and at the same time hortatory intention clauses are introduced into the texts of honorific decrees, clauses that is which state that the intention of the honours, sometimes explicitly the inscribing of the honours, is to encourage others to behave likewise.

There is an example of all three phenomena in *IG II³ 1, 306* of 343/2 BC honouring Phanodemos of Thymaitadai, HO 8.

I discussed these three contemporary developments in honorific decrees - the introduction of inscribed decrees honouring Athenian officials, of explicit praise of *philotimia* and of hortatory intention clauses - in a paper first published in 2011 in the *FS* for Nick Fisher and reprinted in 2018, where I suggested that they represented a concerted attempt to instrumentalize the honorific decree as an agent to incentivize behaviour in Athens' interests by both foreigners and Athenians. I also suggested that these developments can be seen as a counterpart to an impetus to penalise aberrant behaviour by officials that helps explain how Aeschines' intrinsically weak case against Timarchos was successful, and which is manifest above all in the series of aggressive prosecutions of individual Athenians launched by Lykourgos. Just as miscreant civic behaviour should be punished, so virtuous behaviour should be rewarded; and I suggested that it is not coincidental that these developments took place at a time when Athens' political and military position in the Greek world were threatened by the Macedonians.

4. The profile of late classical honours for Athenians

With the beginning of the practice of inscribing the texts of the decrees themselves in the 340s, honours for Athenian officials emerge from the shadows and from now on we are in a much better position to analyze them. I catalogued the decrees in this category in a paper first published in 2004, and reprinted in 2012, and discussed them most recently in an essay published in 2018. References to these two papers are on the HO at

9. Down to 321 such decrees typically honour Athenians for the performance of democratic offices.

Importantly, the honorands were on average more or less ordinary Athenians, of no particular wealth or prominence; and in my 2018 paper I noted that the proposers of such decrees were commensurately of relatively modest status when compared with the more elevated status of proposers of decrees honouring foreigners.

Moving onto HO11, in two cases, honouring Phanodemos for substantial works at the Amphiaraiion (*IG II³ 1, 348*), and Pytheas of Alopeke for his work as manager of the water supply (*IG II³ 1, 338*), the wording of the decree hints at personal contributions of financial value, but falls short of explicit praise for financial donations. It is clear enough from the literary record that office-holders might contribute financially in the 4th cent. democracy and that this could, in some cases, be a contributory factor to the award of honours; but the inscribed record reflects the strongly collectivist ethos of the classical democracy, in which the wealthy were obliged to contribute of their wealth, could claim credit for it in forensic contexts, but could not expect public recognition for it in official citations for honours voted by the Assembly. Such recognition was invidious and potentially elitist in a polity in which the contributions of all were valued, regardless of financial status.

More usually the offices filled by the honorands did not obviously entail financial contributions; and the honorands were not men of wealth or prominence. I mention one case that illustrates the general pattern: HO 12. *IG II³ 1, 476* is a decree which probably honoured the *proedroi* the presiding committee of the Assembly which, remarkably, was in office

for just one day. This in a sense takes democratization of honours to extremes, not only because of the extremely short period that the honorands were in office, but also because the *proedroi* were ordinary Athenians par excellence, rarely men of wealth or prominence, as is illustrated by the statistics set out in the table at 12 on HO:

	% class A	% class B1	% class B2	% class C
Liturgist	59	14	14	14
Proposer of law or decree	38	21	22	19
<i>Proedros</i>	1	6	38	55

What this table shows is that while the majority of liturgists and decree proposers are attested in classes A or B1, this applies to only 7% of *proedroi*.

Against this background it is unsurprising that there are murmurs of discontent in our literary sources. It is a *topos* in the orators in the later fourth century to complain about the proliferation and devaluation of honorific decrees compared with the “good old days” (see e.g. Aeschin. 3.177-88); and Theophrastos in his *Characters* 21 significantly chose to satirize the “seeker after petty honours”, *mikrophilotimos*.

A more sober assessment of the situation might be that the price exacted by the Demos for the policy of explicitly encouraging *philotimia* from the 340s onwards was not only that, to be praiseworthy, *philotimia* must be directed at the demos itself, but also that a wide cross-section of the citizens should be encompassed within its scope, both as honorands and proposers of honours.

Conclusion

Briefly, in conclusion, to tie some threads together. I have tried in this paper to sketch a trajectory of honorific decree-making as directed at Athenian officials from the late fifth century BC. We start from a situation in which the pursuit of honour belongs in the world of elite ideology and socialization. It emerges in the epigraphical record in relation to Athenian citizens at the end of the fifth century in contexts which are in different ways strongly democratizing: in the competition for best prytany of the Council, which is first attested in 408/7 BC, timing which is suggestive of origins in the context of the democratic reaction to the oligarchic revolution of 411, and which shows the Athenians harnessing an elite behavioural dynamic and applying it to a democratically constituted body. Secondly, in the aftermath of the oligarchic revolution of 404, we observe the city honouring those Athenians who had formed the core of the democratic resistance movement to the Thirty, a very pointed case of the application of the dynamic of honour to ordinary Athenian citizens. Thirdly in Theozotides' decree for the orphans we observe the Athenians implicitly honouring the men who had been killed supporting democracy against the oligarchs of 411.

In the fourth century democracy we witness two key developments, or sets of developments: in 357/6 the introduction of public funding for dedications commemorating the award of honours to democratic officials; and in the mid-340s the linked phenomena of the introduction of praise for *philotimia*, of hortatory intention clauses and of inscribed decrees honouring Athenian officials. For the next 25 years or so these decrees gave public prominence to officials who did not for the most part belong

to the elite, and praised them for the due conduct of their official duties and not for the expenditure of personal wealth in the public interest. Similarly the proposers of the relevant decrees were typically men from modest backgrounds relative to the more elite backgrounds of proposers of decrees honouring Athenian officials.

We lack the evidence that would enable us to assess systematically whether the developments sketched in this paper were successful in encouraging good performance of officials in the city's interests; cases that we get to hear about in detail tend to be documented in the orators, and therefore by definition tend to be contested and obscured by political or forensic rhetoric. But what the epigraphical evidence shows us is a process whereby the city is operating I think in a rational and sensible way, given the political and ideological structures that existed in Classical Athens, to democratize the pursuit of honour in the interests of optimising the performance of the city as a whole. To that extent I suggest that these developments can be placed on the positive side of the balance in the terms of the present conference, as an example of the *Funktionalität der Demokratie* rather than the *Dysfunktionalität*.