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POLITICS OF THE (RECENT) PAST

EARLY HELLENISTIC ATHENIAN DECREES BETWEEN
EPIGRAPHY AND LITERATURE*

ABSTRACT

This article explores the connections and exchanges between inscriptions and the writing of contemporary history, with a special focus on the case of Athens between the death of Alexander the Great and the Chremonidean War. After briefly tracing the use of inscriptions by Greek historians up to the end of the 5th century, the article touches upon the famous ‘false documents’ on the Persian Wars that started circulating in Athens around the time of the King’s Peace; these documents, certainly related to the re-inscription of old laws in Athens (Dracon, Solon), are taken as an indication of the increasing authority of documents in general, and of inscribed decrees in particular. The same phenomenon is then traced in the speeches of Athenian orators. The article then provides some perspectives on the role and perception of inscribed decrees as cultural artifacts in classical Athens. Finally, it turns to early Hellenistic decrees from Athens, showing how the historical narratives embedded in them can be seen as the product of attempts by Athenian politicians to control the

* I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Valérie Fromentin for inviting me to participate in the *Entretiens*, and to Pierre Ducrey for being such a congenial host. My friends Mirko Canevaro, Matthias Haake, and Stephen Lambert have read a preliminary version of this text, generously sharing with me their knowledge of Athenian politics and epigraphy. This contribution deals with questions I have been interested in for a while: I hope the reader will excuse me for making reference to previous works of mine more than a polite author normally should. Errors of commission and omission are of course my responsibility.

narrative on key and controversial political events and their protagonists. Their overlap with historiography and antiquarian research points to these different textual expressions originating within the same political milieus, in dialogue with one another from the outset.

Looking at Greek inscriptions as texts in their own right, rather than as documents that have a value only for the information they convey, has been a growing tendency in the scholarship of the last decades.¹ Accordingly, considering inscriptions as carriers of historical narratives relating to the recent past is but a logical step in a volume like the present one, that focuses on the writing of what we might call contemporary history in Antiquity. Within the broad field of Greek inscriptions, my contribution focuses on one particular kind of documents, mostly preserved in inscribed form, but very often referred to and occasionally even quoted word by word in ancient Greek literary works, namely decrees of the Athenians.² The choice of parameters is dictated by several considerations. First of all, Greek decrees in general allow the modern scholar to pose the question of authorship and purpose with a higher degree of confidence than most other Greek inscriptions. Second, decrees display a much higher level of textual complexity than other kinds of inscriptions whose purpose and authorship can be ascertained, such as dedications in sanctuaries, temple inventories or epitaphs. Third, decrees, inscribed or not, were the product of a very specific kind of political process that was characteristic of the world of the Greek polis, and as such provide specific insight into the culture of that world. Finally, as I hope to show in my paper, no other kind of Greek inscriptions has been engaged in a process

¹ For recent examples with a broad scope, see OSBORNE (2011) on Greek inscriptions and history-writing and CHANIOTIS (2016) for Hellenistic inscriptions as evidence for rhetoric and diplomacy.

² The Greeks' peculiar habit of inscribing decisions of the political community on public monuments makes the distinction between inscriptions and public documents particularly slippery; see below on the interchangeability of "decree" and "stele" in Greek parlance.

of bilateral entanglement with literary sources and with political practice that can compare in terms of intensity and complexity to the case of Athenian decrees.

In order to set my remarks in their appropriate historical context, I will start with a very concise overview of the presence of inscriptions and documents in Greek historiography from the generation of Herodotus to the generation of Demosthenes, devoting some attention to the retrospective publication of earlier Athenian documents, a subject that straddles epigraphy, historiography and rhetoric. A brief survey of the cultural history of Athenian decrees, focusing on perceptions of agency and authorship, will round off the stage-setting. The main body of my paper will be devoted to textual features of Athenian decrees between the end of the Lamian War and the end of the Chremonidean War and to their circulation and destruction. I hope to shed some light on a historical context in which indeed inscriptions operated as a way of “*écrire l’histoire de son temps*”.

1. Inscriptions as evidence from Herodotus to Demosthenes

Greek historians display from early on an interest in inscriptions. This interest has often to do with the potential for the written word to preserve texts over long periods of time, even after the corresponding memory had gone lost. If genuine, the anecdote about the father of Acusilaus of Argos digging up bronze tablets inscribed with long-forgotten genealogies from the mythic age would be a case in point.³ It is only with Herodotus, however, that the question of the use of inscriptions can be posed in a precise fashion.⁴ Famously interested in

³ *FGrHist* 2 T 1; Jacoby attributed this story to the forgery mentioned in T 7, but see FOWLER (2013) 624-625, who sees it as Acusilaus’ way of claiming authority for his work.

⁴ The two recent and excellent contributions of FABIANI (2003) and HAYWOOD (2021) cover most aspects of the subject and provide an even-handed evaluation of the evidence.

non-Greek cultural practices, Herodotus refers roughly as often to inscriptions in other languages as he does to inscriptions in Greek. His use of inscribed monuments is diverse and sophisticated, alert to the problem of their authenticity, as in the case of the Lacedaemonian dedicatory inscription associated to an item actually sent to Delphi by king Croesus (1, 51, 3-4). While perfectly capable of using inscriptions as evidence in support of an argument, as shown for instance by his excursus on the origin of the Greek alphabet (5, 58-61), Herodotus does not show a real interest in the potential for the written word to bridge the gaps of oral tradition, which is both his main source and the main mechanism for the transmission of knowledge about the past in his mental world.⁵ Tellingly, even in the case of the Cadmean dedications from Thebes, it was the shape of the inscriptions more than their texts that proved his argument. Still, Herodotus' use of inscriptions points to a cultural context in which the diffusion of writing was growing at a fast pace, and with it also the value and authority associated to the written word.

A few decades later, Thucydides uses documents and inscriptions in a distinctly different way, in order to undermine oral tradition and broadly shared notions about the past, as in his reference to the dedication of Pisistratus the Younger and to the stele on the injustice of the tyrants as evidence for the fact that Hipparchus was not the ruling tyrant when he was assassinated, contrary to what the Athenians generally believed (6, 54, 6 - 55, 2). On the other hand, Thucydides famously reported verbatim nine diplomatic documents of different sorts dating between 423 and 411 BCE. Two or three of them might conceivably derive from inscriptions, namely the texts of the alliance between Athenians, Argives, Mantineians and Eleians

⁵ His treatment of the Egyptian priests' knowledge of the distant past is particularly interesting here: while being perfectly aware of their reliance on written records, Herodotus applies to them the terminology of memory and tradition, as though he did not see a categorical difference between memory conveyed orally and written records; for more detail, see LURAGHI (2001) 153-154.

(5, 47, cf. *IG I³ 83*, 420 BCE), which Thucydides could have copied in Olympia, and of the Peace of Nicias and of the subsequent alliance between Spartans and Athenians (5, 18-19 and 23-24), but among the rest, some actually refer to negotiations that never reached fruition, so they most likely come from copies in possession of the negotiators. Robin Lane Fox may have exaggerated the haphazard nature of these insertions, but he is right to insist that they do not point to any specific methodology for the selection and use of documents or to a particularly sophisticated reflection on their evidentiary value.⁶ As was the case for Herodotus, for Thucydides, too, historical knowledge was transmitted and collected orally – and then transformed into a perennial textual artifact by the historian himself.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a Socratic, Xenophon does not display a particularly strong sense of the evidentiary value of written evidence, including inscriptions and documents more broadly, which is not to say that he did not make any use of them, of course.⁷ Already during his lifetime, however, an important development can be observed, which is of general importance for the relation of inscriptions and historiography and for the authority of the written word in documentary form. Around the time of the King's Peace or immediately thereafter, at Athens texts of decrees dating to the era of the Persian Wars began to appear.⁸ By the forties of the century, reference to these documents had become commonplace in the speeches of Athenian orators, but they were hardly responsible for putting them in circulation in the first place. The earliest signs of this documentary revival bring us back to an earlier moment, when the memory of Athenian achievements in the struggle against the Persians gained a new lease of life against the backdrop of

⁶ See LANE FOX (2010); the article tracks the likely ways Thucydides had access to each one of these documents.

⁷ On Xenophon and documents, see BEARZOT (2003) and LIDDEL (2020) 194-197.

⁸ On these documents, see the classic study by HABICHT (1961). My views on the question owe much to DAVIES (1996) and THOMAS (1989).

the renewed Athenian ascendancy that was going to come to fruition in the Second Athenian League. This small corpus of documents includes very famous items such as the Peace of Callias or the Decree of Themistocles alongside somewhat more obscure and arguably less momentous ones such as the Decree against Arthmius of Zeleia.⁹ Whether or not these celebrated documents, or some of them, were genuine, or at any rate based on the texts of 5th-century originals, has been debated ever since Antiquity – actually the debate appears to have started within a couple of decades of their appearance or reappearance. Regardless of how one adjudicates the question, the emergence of these documents points to the growing prestige, among a broad audience, of the documentary form itself. As Rosalind Thomas pointed out, the Athenians had been appealing to the glories of the Persian Wars for a long time, without ever feeling the need to display documents in support of their story.¹⁰ If they did so now, it means that now they felt that written documents, and inscribed ones in particular, added to the persuasive force of their patriotic memories.

It is important to underline that what we are looking at is not a mere literary phenomenon. At least some of the decrees in question were actually inscribed, a crucial point that shows that they had an existence of their own outside of oratory or historiography – they were not literary products, much as they did get picked up and debated in historiography and bandied about in oratory.¹¹ Scholars have long since noticed that the way Isocrates refers to the Peace of Callias in his *Panegyric* (4, 120, 380 BCE) suggests that he had in mind an inscription, presumably a stele. Every doubt on the point is cancelled by the way Theopompus attacked the authenticity of Athenian documents relating to the Persian Wars, including the Peace of

⁹ On this rather peculiar ‘document’, see ERDAS (2002) 181–185.

¹⁰ THOMAS (1989) 86.

¹¹ I am not referring to the Decree of Themistocles (MEIGGS / LEWIS² 23) and the Oath of Plataea (OSBORNE / RHODES 88), in whose case the inscriptions on stone are or may be later than the first references in oratory.

Callias (115 F 154): by pointing to the use of Ionian letters instead of the old Attic ones, which had been discontinued by the decree of Archinus in the year of the archon Euclides, Theopompus implicitly signals that the debate revolved around actual inscriptions.¹² The decree condemning the shadowy Arthmius of Zeleia was inscribed in bronze on the Acropolis in the time of Demosthenes (19, 272). In other words, the scenario we are most likely looking at is one in which, approximately from the late eighties of the 4th century, inscriptions purporting to display texts of Athenian decrees from the time of the Persian Wars started appearing in Athens, most likely presented as re-inscriptions of old documents.¹³

This phenomenon needs to be seen in the context of another important development that had started in Athens in 409 BCE and continued after the restauration of democracy in 403, namely the republication of the old laws of Dracon and Solon, that an ad hoc committee was supposed to identify and bring to the assembly for approval. Once approved, the laws were to be inscribed and displayed in front of the Stoa Basileios. The prescript of Dracon's law on homicide, inscribed in 410/9, is the best-preserved example of this procedure.¹⁴ In other words, reinscribing the text of an old document was a very visible practice of the Athenian democracy between the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 4th.¹⁵ This process is inseparable from the inscription, purporting to be a reinscription, of (some of) the decrees from the time of the Persian Wars.¹⁶

¹² THEOPOMP. *FGrHist* 115 F 154 and 155 with POWNALL (2008) 121-122. On Archinus' reform, see D'ANGOUR (1999).

¹³ See DAVIES (1996) 35.

¹⁴ OSBORNE / RHODES 183. The evidence for this process is presented and explained in CANEVARO (2015).

¹⁵ Re-inscription is of course a much broader phenomenon; two especially striking examples from Thebes in PAPAZARKADAS (2014). In the Athenian case, however, we are looking at a large-scale initiative promoted and regulated by the political community itself: clearly, a procedure that was meant to have a significant impact.

¹⁶ For the sake of clarity, no statement is here being made regarding the authenticity of the decrees from the time of the Persian Wars, nor, for that matter, on the laws of Dracon and Solon. At any rate, the alternative between forgery

Most of these decrees soon became a standard component of Athenian oratory, to the point that Demosthenes, by the time of the trial for the embassy of 343 BCE, could refer to the Peace of Callias as if he expected his audience to be sick of hearing it mentioned (19, 273). Meanwhile, historians had started debating their authenticity, deploying antiquarian knowledge to a surprising level of sophistication; if Theopompus appears to have undermined the Peace of Callias, it must be pointed out that Ephorus, who seems to have accepted it as historical, was also aware of the change in the official alphabet used at Athens, which may suggest that he, like many modern historians, did not find Theopompus' arguments conclusive.¹⁷ Callisthenes on the other hand put forward a peculiar compromise, arguing that the Peace itself was not historical, but the Great King had been so impressed by the victories of the Athenians that he behaved exactly as the terms of the Peace would have required him to behave.¹⁸

There was, as always, another face to the coin. While historians debated the authenticity of certain documents from the past, trying to undermine patriotic claims based on them, orators deploying old and recent decrees in their speeches developed a notion of public documents as the foundation of democratic process and the ultimate touchstone of truth. Aeschines in particular has been seen as a pathbreaker in this process.¹⁹ His references to the dates of documents preserved in the public archives point to a very specific awareness of their format and of the potential implications of it. In his speech on the embassy to Philip, from 343 BCE, he tells the judges (2, 89):

“You have a practice which in my judgment is most excellent and most useful to those in your midst who are the victims of

and genuine archival documents is simplistic; see HAAKE (2013) for a more nuanced spectrum.

¹⁷ EPHOR. *FGrHist* 70 F 106.

¹⁸ CALLISTH. *FGrHist* 124 F 16.

¹⁹ THOMAS (1989) 69-71; Aeschines' particularly punctilious use of documents should of course not be seen in isolation from the common practice of using documents of all sorts in Athenian judicial practice.

slander: you preserve for all time in the public archives your decrees, together with their dates and the names of the officials who put them to vote.”

Again, in the speech against Ctesiphon (3, 24) he claims that the dates of Demosthenes’ magistracies, documented in the relevant decrees, prove his case. His aggressive use of recent documents, arguing from their implications based also on their formal properties, was novel enough that his opponents could still try and turn it against him: in his speech for the crown, Demosthenes calls him *γραμματοκύφων*, “somebody who bends his back over documents” (18, 209), clearly counting on his audience’s approval of the characterization. At the same time, however, both he (19, 129) and Lycurgus (1, 67) subscribe to the image of the Metroon as the guardian of the records of the Athenian democracy first propagated by Aeschines. There was no turning back from there.

By the time Alexander succeeded his father on the Macedonian throne, in Athens decrees were being re-inscribed, perhaps forged, certainly manipulated, debated by historians, collected by antiquarians and mobilized in public discourse by the leading orators of the time. They had acquired a crucial role in the imagination of the Athenians as an objective and intrinsically democratic sort of evidence for the past, distant and recent.

2. Athenian decrees: a cultural history

The peculiar habit of making political decisions by voting on a text, that is, a decree proposal, in a session of the general assembly, and then, in some cases, inscribing that text and putting it on display in a public space at public expenses, correlates to a number of equally peculiar mental habits and ways of thinking and arguing, which find their clearest expression in a specific set of metaphors and metonyms connected to Athenian decrees, some of which would not make sense in any other

historical context.²⁰ For a modern observer, an easy way of getting to the core of the matter consists in focusing on a small number of semantic slippages whose comprehensibility for the users was supported precisely by the specific combination of practices and mental habits generated by the political process in Athens.

The first slippage is in many ways the simplest one, easiest to recognize, rather common among the Greeks well beyond Athens, and for this reason, not often noticed, let alone commented upon. In a seminal contribution, Enrica Culasso Gastaldi refers to it as “the phenomenon whereby the stele becomes the materialization of the inscribed text”.²¹ This phenomenon is visible in countless expressions, most of the time documented in the inscriptions themselves. A most striking and rather early example mentioned by Culasso Gastaldi appears in the Athenian decree for the foundation of a colony at Brea, where we read (*IG* I³ 46, trans. Lambert & Rhodes):

“If any one puts a motion to the vote contrary to the stele or any speaker proposes or tries to issue a summons detracting from or annulling any of what has been decreed [τὰ θεφεφεφισμμένα] he shall be without rights, himself and the sons born from him, and his property shall be confiscated and a tithe given to the Goddess, unless the colonists themselves make a request (?).”

Obviously, here “the stele” and “what has been decreed” are equivalent. Culasso Gastaldi concludes: “the stele *does not recall* a political action *but is* the political action itself”.²² Correspondingly, in epigraphic Greek at Athens and elsewhere, “to abide by a decision” is said “to remain within the stele”. By the same

²⁰ I here acknowledge my debt to LIDDEL (2020), a true monument of scholarship that will remain a reference for decades to come – and one whose full implications will take a long time to be absorbed. I am not entirely sure that the common notion that the texts of inscribed decrees represented extracts of the complete texts preserved in the archives should be accepted in every case and without doubt; see the references in FARAGUNA (2003) 489 n. 36.

²¹ CULASSO GASTALDI (2010) 140; I am quoting from the English translation published as *AIO Papers* 3.

²² CULASSO GASTALDI (2010) 141.

token, with reference to the destruction of inscriptions under the regime of the Thirty, an Athenian decree from the early 4th century reinstates the proxeny for (the descendants of) Xanthippus with the motivation “because the Thirty destroyed the proxeny”, with reference to the original stele.²³ The same language was parodied in comedy: the decree-seller in Aristophanes’ *Birds* uses *stèle* in the sense of decree, too (*Av.* 1049-1050). Against this background, one understands why the Thirty’s attack on democracy took the form of smashing stelae – a highly symbolic way of signaling the rescission of democratic political decisions.²⁴

The second slippage has to do with the very nature of the Athenian stelae/decrees. Simply put, Athenian decrees are often spoken of as if they had a personality and an agency of themselves: they could be good or bad, and even unfavorable, as the stelae mentioned in the Aristoteles decree (Osborne / Rhodes 22, 31-35, 378/7 BCE). A decree could be thrown in like a spark and set a whole city on fire (*Ar. Pax* 608-609). It could be called upon to speak in court like a witness (*Dem.* 23, 16). In general, decrees were seen as performing a vital function for the success of the Athenian democracy (*Dem.* 24, 91-93). An Athenian audience was even prepared to believe that their agency went beyond the borders of the polis itself, as shown by a passage from Demosthenes’ speech *Against Aristocrates*:

“And so that you may not be quite surprised to hear that decrees made in Athens have such great power (τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν ψηφίσματα τηλικαύτην ἔχει δύναμιν), I shall remind you of something that

²³ *IG* II² 52 with CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) 244-245.

²⁴ A reference to the destruction of (stelae carrying) democratic laws by the Thirty is found in the *Constitution of the Athenians* 35, 2, but most of the evidence is epigraphic, coming in the form of new inscriptions that refer to the destruction of the old ones; see CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) 244-248 and LAMBERT (2012) 257-259. SHEAR (2011) provides a detailed treatment of the impact of the Thirty on Athenian memory. It has to be noted that the mere fact of the survival of a stele did not by itself mean that the provisions recorded in it were still valid, as pointed out by BOLMARCICH (2007). The “unfavorable stelae” of the Aristoteles decree, here below, were documents of the first Athenian League, which obviously had no surviving legal force when the Athenians promised to take them down.

happened in the past that you all know. After the revolt of Miltokythes against Kotys, when the war had already lasted a considerable time, when Ergophilos had been superseded, and Autokles was on the point of sailing to take command, a decree was proposed here in such terms (ἐγράφη τι παρ' ὁμῶν ψήφισμα τοιοῦτον) that Miltokythes withdrew in alarm, supposing that you were not well disposed towards him, and Kotys gained possession of the Sacred Mountain and its treasures".²⁵

On the other hand, orators could reproach the Athenians for not living up to their decrees, almost as though the latter did not emanate from the former.²⁶ To be clear, it is not that the Athenians thought that their decrees had some magical power or a will of their own; rather, it is an aspect of their decree-mindedness, as Peter Liddel has called it, that they could easily refer to decrees as if they were autonomous entities provided with an agency. In political terms, this mental habit must have reinforced the sense of the implications and consequences of the democratic process. At the same time, it gave expression to the high cultural prestige of decrees among the Athenians.

Almost in direct contradiction to the tendency to talk about decrees as independent entities, the Athenians also appear to have been very prone to attributing decrees to their proponents, as though, as Thucydides would say (8, 1), they had not voted on them themselves. The modern habit of referring to a decree by the name of its proponent continues directly ancient Athenian usage. In the minds of the Athenians, though, this form of expression correlated with a much deeper sense of the way in which the very text of a decree was an expression of its proponent: the author of a proposal which gained approval in the assembly could be described as "victorious" or "the winner" (*Ath. Pol.* 45, 4), while decrees proposed by this or that orator could be mobilized as evidence for their ongoing political agenda and even for their character, in the way in which much

²⁵ DEM. 23, 104, on which see LIDDEL (2020) 163-164.

²⁶ LIDDEL (2020) 104-106.

later Plutarch will refer to decrees moved by Pericles.²⁷ The close identification between the proponent and the decree found visual expression in the use of reserving one line of the inscription for the name of the proponent, or leaving empty spaces before and after it, making it more visible on the stele; documented in the early thirties of the 4th century for decrees of Demades and Lycurgus, this habit became more common after 307 BCE.²⁸

Taken together, these mental habits, which find expression in the peculiar semantic slippages I just pointed out, indicate a close entanglement of inscriptions, decrees, memory, public and personal agency, and historical argument, which constitutes the cultural and historical background for the phenomena addressed in the next part of this paper.

3. Construction and destruction of documents and memories

The potential for decrees to convey bits of historical narrative had always existed in theory, whenever the text of the resolution needed to include the background for the decision, typically in the form of a motivation clause. Accordingly, decrees conferring honors of various sorts were the best candidates to harbor this kind of information. Still, as Klaus Rosen pointed out in a seminal contribution, 5th-century Athenians were perfectly satisfied with very laconic references to the fact that the people they were honoring had indeed deserved their honors by their behavior *vis-à-vis* the Athenians themselves, and the evidence from other *poleis*, such as it is, does nothing to change the picture.²⁹ During the 4th century, however, the narrative potential

²⁷ On inscriptions as evidence for character in Plutarch, see LOW (2016) 148-150; on the case of Pericles, LIDDEL (2020) 200-203.

²⁸ See TRACY (2000).

²⁹ See ROSEN (1987) with the remarks of FORSTER (2018) 89-90; on the increasing engagement with the past in Athenian inscriptions during the course of the 4th century, see also LAMBERT (2012).

of honorary decrees started to be realized. Strikingly, in one of the earliest examples, dating to 387/6 BCE, historical detail comes in a rider in which the influential politician and orator Cephalus added to the decree proposal the statement that Phanocritus of Parion was particularly deserving of honors because he had warned the Athenian *stratêgoi* regarding the movements of the enemy fleet, and if they had listened to him, they would have captured the enemy triremes. The historical reference may seem strangely sibylline, and it is of course possible that the main decree supplied the background – but then again, the addressees of Cephalus' tirade knew perfectly well what the background was; they hardly needed to be reminded of the names of the *stratêgoi*, left nameless in the text. To state the obvious, Cephalus' addendum was as much about Phanocritus' helpfulness as about the ineptitude of the Athenian *stratêgoi*. We are looking at a bit of assembly rhetoric captured in the text of a decree and inscribed on stone.³⁰

The evidence assembled by Rosen points to a recognizable turning point in the age of Alexander the Great. Almost symbolically, the transition from laconic to talkative motivation clauses is realized in the two Athenian decrees for Euphron of Sicyon, a loyal ally of the Athenians in the struggle against the Macedonians.³¹ The first decree, from 323/2 (*IG* II³ 1, 378), was rescinded and destroyed by the Macedonian-backed oligarchy after the defeat of the Athenians in the Lamian War, but in

³⁰ The inscription is *IG* II² 29, to be consulted in the new autoptic edition by CULASSO GASTALDI (2004) 89-101; the events alluded to are generally identified with those narrated in XEN. *Hell.* 5, 1, 25-29. On Cephalus, see BESSO (1997) and FORNIS / PLÁCIDO (2008) 66-67. Demosthenes (18, 219) regarded him as one of the great orators of a previous generation, alongside Callistratus of Aphidna; Cephalus prided himself on having proposed more decrees than any other Athenian yet never having been denounced for making an illegal proposal (AESCH. 3, 194). Aristophanes mocks him in his *Assemblywomen* (*Eccl.* 248-253), the *Hel-lenica Oxyrhynchia* (7, 2) lists him among the politicians who received bribes from Timosthenes of Rhodes (see also PAUS. 3, 9, 8), and Dinarchus (DIN. 1, 38) refers to him as a supporter of the Theban democratic exiles.

³¹ From here onwards, see HABICHT (2006) for a reliable guide to the complex historical background.

318/17, under the restored democracy, it was reinscribed, accompanied by a new decree (*IG II² 448*); the old decree, beyond a general reference to Euphron's benevolence for the Athenians, referred to his announcing Sicyon's support for the war, but the new one included also a laudatory reference to his ancestors, added details on his return from exile at the time of the outbreak of the war, and completed the story with his heroic death after the defeat – in other words, the second decree, beyond updating the first one as it were, added a significant amount of historical detail to the deeds already covered in a more general way in the first decree. It also added an explicitly pan-Hellenic dimension to the Lamian War, here called “the Hellenic War, which the demos of Athens undertook on behalf of the Greeks”.³²

The second decree for Euphron opens the way to a veritable sea-change in the style of Athenian honorific decrees, which now very often include specific historical detail on the actions performed by the honorees and the circumstances in which those actions had been performed.³³ The rather sudden increase in detail may be to some extent the consequence of a new legal framework for the granting of public honors at Athens.³⁴ This

³² On the decrees for Euphron, see especially CULASSO GASTALDI (2003a) 66-68 and WALLACE (2014). On the ancient designations of the Lamian War, see ASHTON (1984).

³³ Examples: *IG II² 450*, ll. 18-21, decree for Asander (314/13 BCE); *IG II² 467*, decree for Timosthenes of Karystos (306/5 BCE); *IG II² 469*, decree for]timos (306/5 BCE or slightly later); *IG II² 479*, decree for Pyrros (?) of Herakleia (305/4 BCE, including two archon dates of previous benefactions of the honoree); *IG II² 492*, decree for Apollonides, previously naturalized (303/2 BCE) etc.

³⁴ See *I.Eleusis* 95, a decree of the deme of Eleusis and the garrison stationed there in honor of Xenocles of Sphettos, dated to 321/0 or 318/7, which opens with the words (lines 7-10) “...since the law requires that it be specified in the decree what benefit the recipient of a grant has done to the city...”, with ROSEN (1987) 280, who remarks, rightly in my opinion, that the wording of the decree suggests that the law was still relatively new; as Stephen Lambert points out to me, *per epist.*, “the date, shortly after the end of the Classical Democracy, is surely significant”. Note however that non-detailed motivation clauses continued to exist: clearly the law, whatever its precise formulation, could be satisfied with rather perfunctory indications, as in the cases of the several decrees proposed by Stratocles for friends of Demetrius Poliorcetes, such as *SEG* 36, 164 or *IG II² 495*.

new style is represented most strikingly by a series of very famous honorary decrees for Athenians, often referred to in scholarship as “highest honors” or μέγιστα τιμαί decrees.³⁵ Two interconnected aspects of this group of documents, namely their impact on the literary tradition and the survival of a critical number of them in a good state of preservation, recommend focusing attention on them, before considering the possibility of generalizing some of the observations they suggest.

Scattered from 307 to 259/8 or thereabouts, with one or two outliers towards the end of the 3rd century or possibly in the first decades of the 2nd, these decrees stand out for their long motivation clauses, often packed with very specific narratives of events and pointed political statements.³⁶ Until not too long ago, scholars had been more interested in the honors granted by these decrees than in their texts. Honoring fellow citizens in the aggressively egalitarian cultural context of the Athenian democracy seemed like a delicate operation, and the precedents for this practice, from the tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogiton to Conon and the military leaders of the Second League, received special attention.³⁷ The relative uniformity of these documents in terms of the honors they granted has drawn some scholars to the conclusion that the procedure was regulated by a law that defined the parameters within which an Athenian citizen or his descendants were allowed to present a request for honors to the Athenians; however, the decree from which the details of this law are deduced is the very last one in time,³⁸ which

³⁵ List and discussion of these documents in KRALLI (1999-2000).

³⁶ The latest example, *IG* II³ 1, 1292, the decree for Cephisodorus, has been dated to 184/3 or 200/199 BCE, see KNOEPFLER (2015), with a strong argument in favor of the higher chronology which would completely change the historical context of this document and bring it closer to its immediate precedent, the decree for Euryclides. I am grateful to Stephen Lambert for pointing me to this important contribution. On Euryclides and *IG* II³ 1, 1160 see now TRACY (2015).

³⁷ For detailed discussions of Athenian honorary practices with regard to citizens during the late 5th and 4th centuries, see GAUTHIER (1985) 92-111 and DOMINGO GYGAX (2016) 139-180.

³⁸ *IG* II³ 1 1292, ll. 7-10; on the date of this document, see n. 36 above.

leaves space for the possibility that in the earlier phase the procedure may not have been regulated in this specific way.³⁹ More recently, important contributions by Enrica Culasso Gastaldi, Michele Faraguna, Stephen Lambert, Julia Shear and lately by Florian Forster have shed more and more light on the complexities of these texts.⁴⁰ While their performative side has attracted attention to their rhetorical elaboration and proximity to encomiastic oratory, their focus on the life achievements of single individuals has inevitably invited comparisons with the development of the genre of biography.⁴¹ In previous contributions, I have pointed to the way these texts created a notionally shared vision of the recent past, while at the same time giving specific Athenian politicians a way of promoting their own version thereof.⁴² In the following, I will continue on this line of thought, reflecting also on the implications of the fact that several of these documents were transcribed and circulated in literary works, and on the practice of creating and destroying documents that revolves around this corpus.

One point of importance for the present discussion should be observed immediately: while all the decrees in this group are rather long, not all of them include in the motivation clause specific historical details about the actions performed by the honorees and the circumstances in which such actions had been performed – or indeed, their dates. As an example, the decree for Philippides of Paiania (*IG II³ 1, 857, 293/2 BCE*) lists the kinds of benefactions performed by Philippides and his ancestors, referring to his tenure of the offices of general over the

³⁹ Law: GAUTHIER (1985) 104-105; FARAGUNA (2003) 485-486; doubts: FORSTER (2018) 91-95 – the possibility that the regulations came later is admitted also by FARAGUNA (2003) 487; see also the detailed discussion of KRALLI (1999-2000) 138-145.

⁴⁰ CULASSO GASTALDI (2003b) and (2010); FARAGUNA (2003); FORSTER (2018) 51-95; LAMBERT (2015); SHEAR (2017) and (2020).

⁴¹ On the relationship between biographical narratives in inscriptions and literary biography, see among others ERRINGTON (2005) and LOW (2016), and most recently SCHULER / FORSTER (2020).

⁴² LURAGHI (2010), (2018a), (2018b), (2019).

fleet, *basileus* and *agônothetês*, but provides no specific detail that would make it possible to locate precisely in time these worthy performances – to be compared, for instance, to the abundance of historical detail and the many archon dates included in the decree for Phaedrus of Sphettos (*IG II³ 1, 985, 259/8?*).⁴³ The fact that the decree for Philippides of Paiania towards the end gives the honoree the option of listing his benefactions and those of his ancestors suggests that inclusion or exclusion of historical detail was a conscious choice on the part of the man who drafted the decree; it should be noted that this decree was proposed by the same man who wrote the decree for Lycurgus in 307, namely Stratocles of Diomeia.⁴⁴

Of the nine decrees that are generally recognized as belonging to this category, as many as three are preserved in a documentary appendix to the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, a series of short biographies of Athenian orators that was attached to the corpus of Plutarch's *Moralia* at some point before the compilation of the *Catalogue of Lamprias* in the 3rd or 4th century CE;⁴⁵ for one of the three, a somewhat mutilated inscription is preserved, as well.⁴⁶ There is, however, positive reason to think that the group of Athenian politicians who were granted this high distinction in the period in question may have been somewhat larger than the direct evidence would suggest. The orator Demades was allegedly rewarded with a statue and *sitêsis* for his diplomatic role either after the defeat of the Athenians at Chaeronea or more likely at the time of the revolt of Thebes against Alexander.⁴⁷ In his

⁴³ The chronological precision of the decree for Phaedrus, even in the parts that describe the worthy deeds of his father, has been pointed out in particular by FORSTER (2018) 77 and SHEAR (2020).

⁴⁴ On Stratocles and Philippides of Paiania, see LURAGHI (2014) 214-219; on the text of the decree, FORSTER (2018) 63-65.

⁴⁵ On these texts and their nature, see especially PITCHER (2005) and MARTIN (2014).

⁴⁶ This is of course the decree for Lycurgus, *IG II² 457* and 3207, likely from two different stelae of the same decree, as LAMBERT (2015) suggests. For a comparison of inscription and literary version, see PRAUSCELLO (1999).

⁴⁷ On the honors granted to Demades and the controversies that accompanied them, see BRUN (2000) 78-83; ORSI (2002) 40. DOMINGO GYGAX (2016)

case, the continuity with the military leaders of the Second League would have been paradoxical – they had guided the Athenians to victory, Demades had attenuated the consequences of defeat or averted royal wrath.⁴⁸

More interesting, and more closely connected to the other cases from the end of the century onwards, is the case of Phocion. At the end of his biography, Plutarch (*Phoc.* 38, 1) remarked that the Athenians regretted executing him, and soon enough decided to erect a statue of Phocion and to bury his bones at public expenses – initially, it had been forbidden to bury him within the borders of Attica. Clearly, this happened as a consequence of a new regime change: the regime that granted these honors to Phocion was the one imposed in Athens by Cassander, the regime of Demetrius of Phaleron.⁴⁹ The erection of the statue presupposes a decree. The fact that it has not survived is no wonder, considering the way the Athenians dealt with the monumental heritage of Demetrius of Phaleron.⁵⁰ The conjectural decree for Phocion would cast a peculiar light on that for Lycurgus, which may be seen as a rejoinder. Taken together, the two of them would represent attempts at imposing contrary interpretations of the recent past of the Athenians; in both cases, the biographical memory of the honorees may have been less important than the statement about political legitimacy associated with either one of them. After all, the

125 and n. 97, 228 sets them in the broader contexts of Athenian honorific culture. For the view that Athenians resisted at first the notion of extending highest honors from victorious generals to politicians, see KRALLI (1999-2000) 145-148.

⁴⁸ DMITRIEV (2021) 255-258 proposes a skeptical revisitation of the evidence for the honor to Demades, but cf. AMENDOLA (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ The rehabilitation of Phocion has been attributed to Demetrius by several scholars, partly independently of one another; see e.g., AZOULAY (2009) 310 and ORSI (2002) 34-35. O'SULLIVAN (2009) 159-160 is somewhat guarded on this; on the other hand, the way Phocion ended up depicted as a new Socrates in the biographical tradition (PLUT. *Phoc.* 38, 5) appears to confirm that his legend was largely a product of Demetrius' regime, in spite of the doubts of O'SULLIVAN (2008); see BAYLISS (2011) 27-33.

⁵⁰ See STRAB. 9, 1, 20 and DIOG. LAERT. 5, 77 with AZOULAY (2009) 322-332.

sheer fact of honoring a deceased politician marked these decrees as operations of memory politics. The same is of course true of the decree for Demosthenes proposed by Demochares in 281/0.⁵¹

One further case documented indirectly points to the question of how the texts of these decrees found reception in literature – I will use this broad category for the moment. Archon eponymous twice in a row after Demetrius Poliorcetes' conquest of Athens, Olympiodorus of Konthyle was also one of the leaders of the insurrection in 287 BCE, when he led the conquest of the Macedonian fort on the Mouseion Hill.⁵² As in the case of Phocion, the statue of Olympiodorus mentioned by Pausanias (1, 25, 2) presupposes the existence of a decree, and in fact, the information Pausanias provides regarding the exploits of Olympiodorus reads very much as if it derived from such a decree, to whose existence, in two copies, Pausanias himself alludes (1, 26, 1-3). This point has been observed by scholars long ago.⁵³ If a decree was the ultimate source of the details on Olympiodorus' deeds however, it is quite unlikely that it was Pausanias' direct source, too. On the contrary, the decree for Olympiodorus must have been recorded, in a more or less complete form, in one of the periegetic works Pausanias relied upon – a very plausible candidate being the antiquarian Polemon of Ilion, who lived between the second half of the 3rd century and the early 2nd and was nicknamed "the eater of stelae".⁵⁴

How closely the case of Olympiodorus relates, in terms of tradition, to those of the decrees for Lycurgus, Demosthenes

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion of this decree proposal, see SHEAR (2017) and my remarks in LURAGHI (2018a) 32-34. On the date of Demochares' proposal, I follow BYRNE (2006-2007) 169-175. See IACOVIELLO (forthcoming) for a persuasive argument to the effect that, around the same time, posthumous honors were decreed for Hyperides as well.

⁵² See HABICHT (1979) 27-30, 58-60.

⁵³ See already FERGUSON (1911) 464 – a rather uncontroversial view; HABICHT (1979) 102-107.

⁵⁴ On the kind of sources Pausanias drew upon, see WILAMOWITZ-MOELLEN-DORFF (1881) 206 n. 31 and SEGRE (1921) 217-218. On Polemon and inscriptions, see recently ANGELUCCI (2003) 169 and n. 16; his nickname: ATH. 6, 234 D.

and Demochares is difficult to tell. The texts of the latter three, preserved in the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, are certainly not derived from stelae: for Demochares and Demosthenes, what we have is actually the text of the request for honors that was supposed to be presented to the *boulê*, while the decree for Lycurgus is embedded in a request by his second son Lycophron for the *sitêsis* to be transferred to him, presumably after the death of his elder brother Habron.⁵⁵ Unless we think that the documents derive ultimately from copies owned by the drafters themselves, their originals must have been preserved in the archive of the *boulê*, in the Metroon.⁵⁶ In the case of Olympiodorus, we simply have insufficient evidence to even pose the question. On the other hand, in broad terms the information on the orators in the *Lives*, including the decrees, derives ultimately from the same group of periegetic/antiquarian works Pausanias drew upon, too – Faraguna has pointed to the resemblances between what Pausanias has to say about Lycurgus (1, 29, 16) and the text of Stratocles' decree, which indicate that the former depended on the latter, albeit not at first hand.⁵⁷ Jacoby thought that the antiquarian source behind the *Lives of the Ten Orators*, conveyed by intermediaries he identified with Hermippus and Caecilius of Cale Acte, was the antiquarian Diodorus the Periegetes, whose work *Περὶ μνημάτων* appears to be quoted regarding the burial of Hyperides.⁵⁸ A shadowy but intriguing scholar, Diodorus wrote a work on the demes of Attica, of which a total of 33 fragments survive, providing the tribal affiliation of as many Athenian demes – with one possible exception all the

⁵⁵ FARAGUNA (2003) 489.

⁵⁶ On Athenian archives and their use by antiquarians, see ERDAS (2002) 34-37 with further references.

⁵⁷ FARAGUNA (2003) 487; compare PAUS. 1, 29, 16 and Ps. PLUT. *Mor.* 852B-C; on the building projects mentioned in those passages, see HINTZEN-BOHLEN (1997).

⁵⁸ *FGrHist* 372 F 34; see JACOBY (1955) 140-143. The biographer Hermippus, writing in the second half of the 3rd century, provides a terminus ante for Diodorus, since he appears to have known Diodorus' work, as shown by *FGrHist* 1026 F 46e with BOLLANSÉE (1999) 386-387. ANGELUCCI (2014) 13 dates Diodorus to the second half of the 3rd century, without any explanation.

indications are confirmed by inscriptions.⁵⁹ Even though Diodorus can hardly have composed his work before 307 BCE, the existence of the two new tribes instituted in that year, the Antigonis and the Demetrias, is studiously ignored.⁶⁰ This potential indication of antiquarian resistance to Macedonian encroachment might recommend, in the footsteps of Jacoby, placing Diodorus' work in the years after 287, in the climate of cultural re-entrenchment which prepared in Athens the Chremonidean War.⁶¹ Both the level of antiquarian competence and the potential political bias would make of Diodorus a perfect candidate for having excavated from the Metroon the documents on Lycurgus, Demosthenes and Demades.

Jacoby's attractive reconstruction may not be demonstrated, but the fact that antiquarian works of this sort included extended references to Athenian decrees, and in some cases their very texts, deserves to be kept in mind. It parallels and complements the emergence of erudite works devoted specifically to Athenian decrees, such as the collection of Craterus,⁶² or to Attic inscriptions more broadly, such as Philochorus' *Ἐπιγράμματα Ἀττικά*, and provides the background to the lively interest in inscriptions documented for almost all historians active in Athens in these years.⁶³ Obviously, the boundary between epigraphy and literature was a highly porous one at this point in time, perhaps more than ever before, and it was relatively easy for texts to

⁵⁹ The fragments of Diodorus' *Περὶ τῶν δῆμων* are *FGrHist* 372 F 1-33, all from the lexicon of Harpocration; see JACOBY (1955) 140-141. The only error is the attribution of the deme of Phegaia to the tribe Aiantis instead of the Aigeis in 372 F 31, and of course it cannot be excluded that the mistake crept in at some point between Diodorus and Harpocration, whose direct source was probably Didymus. For the tribal affiliation of Phegaia, see TRAILL (1975) 7 and table II and HUMPHREYS (2018) 884-886.

⁶⁰ See *FGrHist* 372 F 9, 12, 17, 23 and 33, all demes assigned to the two new tribes, which Diodorus refers only to their original Clisthenic tribes.

⁶¹ LURAGHI (2018a) 30-36.

⁶² On Craterus' collection of Athenian decrees, see ERDAS (2002) 27-38.

⁶³ On the epigraphic interests of historians operating in Athens during the last decades of the 4th century and the first half of the 3rd, see LURAGHI (2017) 197-198.

cross it. The drafters of decrees knew this, of course: some of them were themselves historians or antiquarians.⁶⁴ By drafting decree proposals, they could disseminate biased versions of recent history which coupled the high authority associated to decrees of the Athenians with the capacity for transmission and dissemination of literary texts.

The enduring prestige of Athenian decrees as a touchstone of truth in the perception of the Athenians, and apparently also of the other Greeks, is demonstrated by a curious document recently brought to scholarly attention by Matthias Haake.⁶⁵ An Arabic biography of Aristotle included in *The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians* by the 13th-century Damascene doctor Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah includes the story of a decree in his honor which was first passed by the Athenians, then destroyed by an Athenian by the name of Himeraeus, and finally inscribed anew by initiative of the Athenian Stephanus.⁶⁶ The new text included also a reference to the destruction of the previous one and to the successive execution of Himeraeus, on orders of Antipater. The story of the two decrees for Euphron immediately comes to mind;⁶⁷ this time, however, the destruction of the inscription is attributed to the initiative of one of the leaders of the anti-Macedonian democracy at the time of the Lamian War, Himeraeus, brother of Demetrius of Phaleron and a victim of Antipater’s repression after the war.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ As I pointed out in LURAGHI (2017) 194 and 201.

⁶⁵ HAAKE (2006).

⁶⁶ See now the edition of SAVAGE-SMITH / SWAIN / VAN GELDER (2020) 4.6.2.2. The passage is presented as a quote from Ptolemy’s *Epistle to Gallus on the Life of Aristotle*, itself extant in an Arabic translation preserved in a manuscript from the 16th c.; see now the commented edition by RACHED (2021) 6-8 (I am grateful to Matthias Haake for bringing this recent contribution to my attention). The text probably derives from a version in Syriac, itself going back to a late-imperial Greek original, see HAAKE (2006) 337-338 and RACHED (2021) cxi-cxii.

⁶⁷ HAAKE (2013) 96 n. 130; on the decrees for Euphron, see p. 214-215 above.

⁶⁸ Himeraeus was one of the orators condemned to death by the Athenian assembly on proposal of Demades; he was then hunted down alongside Hype-rides by the notorious Archias of Thourion, who proceeded to deliver him to

While most unlikely to be genuine, the decree for Aristotle, whose traces Haake follows back to the work of Andronicus of Rhodes in the 1st century BCE, even in the Arabic rendition shows the typical phraseology of an Athenian honorary decree of the Hellenistic period, which convinces Haake that it probably originated in 3rd-century Athens.⁶⁹ The apologetic purpose of the decree is obvious, and may well belong in the contestation of the role of the philosophical schools in Athens between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 3rd, which Haake himself has investigated in other contributions.⁷⁰ The point of interest here is that inventing a decree was seen by this pro-Aristotelian tradition as a strong way of affirming that, far from being a political traitor, Aristotle had in fact been highly appreciated by the Athenians. One could scarcely imagine a more eloquent indication of the prestige and truth-value associated with decrees and of the way they were employed and manipulated in order to write, or in this case, rewrite, the history of the recent past. The Athenian decree for Zeno, transmitted by Diogenes Laertius with a striking textual fidelity to the preambles and formulae of Athenian decrees, drives the point home: even for the philosophers, a decree of the Athenian demos was the touchstone of social prestige.⁷¹

Drawing together the somewhat disparate lines of enquiry evoked up to this point, it is possible to formulate some tentative remarks on the cultural logic of historical narratives of the recent past in Athenian decrees of the early Hellenistic period. The high social authority of decrees in Athenian public discourse,

Antipater, who had him executed; see PLUT. *Dem.* 28, 3-4 and the complete collection of evidence on Himeræus in HAAKE (2006) 342-343.

⁶⁹ See the close analysis of the text in RACHED (2021) cv-cxix, who pleads for its authenticity. I find Haake's arguments more persuasive. The traces of apologetic writings defending Aristotle from several politically-motivated accusation indicate a context for the original fabrication; see HAAKE (2006) 344-348 and FORD (2011) 54-67.

⁷⁰ See especially HAAKE (2008).

⁷¹ *IG* II³ 1, 980, from DIOG. LAERT. 7, 10-12; HAAKE (2004) argues in this case for manipulation of an original Athenian document.

documented already by 5th- and 4th-century literature, and the way decrees were at the same time seen as expressions of their drafters but also as potent entities with an agency in themselves, form part of the background. The ingenuity lavished on proving or disproving their authenticity indicates that the question of their truthfulness was taken very seriously. On the other hand, the facility with decrees displayed by all sorts of politically-involved writers, specifically historians, antiquarians and orators (categories that variously overlap in the period we are looking at), tells us something about the skills and intellectual personalities of the drafters. Against this background, it is clear that adding historical details to decree proposals presented to the Athenian assembly could easily be seen as a way of creating a specific historical record, and a highly authoritative one at that.⁷² The destruction of documents, associated explicitly in our inscriptions with the oligarchs but in fact practiced by all political parts, is the other side of the coin – a radical way of influencing the historical record, by erasing parts of it. To state the obvious, the action of destroying stelae in order to cancel the memories they conveyed takes for granted the role of inscribed decrees in creating historical narratives and transmitting historical memory.⁷³

The interventions of the Macedonian-backed oligarchies, especially the one that followed the capitulation of Athens to Antipater, were reviving the example of the Thirty, whose destruction of decrees with democratic associations has left traces in the epigraphic and literary record. The anti-Macedonian democrats responded in kind, with Stratocles mobilizing the memory of Lycurgus as a model democratic citizen, uncompromisingly opposing Macedonian encroachment, as a way of setting the record straight as regards the conflicts between the Athenians

⁷² On this, see LURAGHI (2010).

⁷³ LURAGHI (2019) 115-126 explores the battle for memory waged within the Athenian political elite in the course of the late-4th and 3rd centuries, culminating in the *damnatio memoriae* of the Antigonids in 200 BCE, on which see LIV. 21, 44, 4-8 and BYRNE (2010).

and the Argeads. The democratic restoration, too, built on the foundations of its late-5th century predecessor, even in terms of manipulating memory by way of a combination of re-inscription and – we may be confident – destruction.⁷⁴ In the years following 307 BCE, a whole series of decrees appeared, packed with references to the Lamian War and to the struggles against Cassander, undertaken for the freedom of the Greeks.⁷⁵ Their purpose to establish a historical narrative of the Athenians' struggle for independence is transparent. Judging by the texts of the decrees he proposed, Stratocles may have played an especially prominent role in this process, but by no means an exclusive one: other citizens also proposed decrees with embedded historical narratives and an explicit ideological agenda. In the years that followed, more decrees operated on the same level, including veritable historical narratives and conveying specific, occasionally pointed statements on recent political events and their interpretation – the proposal for Demochares being perhaps the most striking example, with its implicit claims about the oligarchic nature of Stratocles' Athens.⁷⁶ The decree for Phaedrus of Sphettos, currently (tentatively) dated immediately after the end of the Chremonidean War, with its attempt at reconciling political positions that were objectively irreconcilable, bookends this process in a worthy way – a man for all seasons, Phaedrus had been honored by the demos while at the same time being intermittently a friend of the Antigonids and opposing them in “difficult times”. In the retrospective appraisal of his career, the attempt at creating a seamless and coherent narrative of Athenian political history has created endless problems to modern interpreters.⁷⁷

In other words, in many cases Athenian drafters of decrees, especially in the years between the Lamian War and the Chremonidean War, were, among other things, writing (and rewriting)

⁷⁴ On this, see especially SHEAR (2012).

⁷⁵ See CULASSO GASTALDI (2004) 239-242.

⁷⁶ LURAGHI (2019) 119-121.

⁷⁷ For these aspects of the decree for Phaedrus, see especially SHEAR (2020).

the history of their times, consciously and intentionally, in the expectation that their version would enjoy a high authority and some diffusion. For all they knew, this was a justified expectation, considering the authority and currency of the medium. Time has at least in part vindicated them. Some of their decrees, surviving on stone, constitute the backbone of modern reconstructions of Athenian history, others have been absorbed in literary works of various sorts and some have come to rub shoulders with forgeries intended to be parasitical with respect to the authority of the original texts. Athenian decrees give modern histories of Hellenistic Athens their characteristic texture, infuriating at times, and their value as evidence for political ideology and political struggles is far from having been exhausted. They give the modern reader the most immediate evidence of how individual Athenians attempted to formulate their version of the history of their times but then, instead of disseminating it in literary form, attempted to turn it into a permanent record of the collective will of the Athenians – and of the arguments and conflicts that surrounded this endeavor.⁷⁸

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DISCUSSION

R. Nicolai: La relazione recupera il ruolo dei decreti nella costruzione di una memoria storica, nella prospettiva della *intentionale Geschichte* di Hans-Joachim Gehrke: parlo di *una* memoria perché in alcuni casi i decreti venivano distrutti da oppositori e nuovamente iscritti. Ai decreti vanno aggiunti i *logoi epitaphioi*: non diversamente da alcune opere di storia gli epitafi prendevano le mosse dagli *erga* più antichi per arrivare al presente e all'occasione dei discorsi, alla storia contemporanea, in altri termini.

Un aspetto molto interessante da te sottolineato mi sembra la contiguità (e le aree di sovrapposizione) tra estensori dei decreti, storici, oratori, categorie per noi separate, ma nella realtà politica ateniese molto difficili da distinguere. Noi viviamo in un mondo iperspecializzato, in cui talvolta è difficile dialogare con il collega di una disciplina contigua; ma nell'Atene del V e del IV secolo il termine *rhetor* indica l'oratore, il politico e anche il maestro di retorica, e non esiste una categoria professionale di storici, come nelle nostre università.

N. Luraghi: Indeed, the lack of a meaningful separation between the different categories you mention has always seemed to me a characteristic aspect of the cultural world of Athens in the Early Hellenistic period, even more than was the case before. I would add to your list the comic poets (think of Philippides of Kephale, a *philos* of King Lysimachos) and the antiquarians (think of Phanodemos, Attidographer and reformer of cults in the Athenian territory). So, thank you for bringing attention to an aspect of Athenian social and cultural life that was implicit in my paper and on which I should have perhaps insisted more.

G. Schepens: I very much welcome the special approach you have taken to the exploration of the theme of the present *Entretiens* by looking at what the Athenian decrees can teach us about the ways the ancient Greeks dealt with current events and the recent past. I do not have so much as a question to ask, but I would like to explain why I find your contribution so interesting.

For one thing, you have shown that the inscriptions in question can indeed give us a specific insight into the historical culture of the ancient world. Compared to the literary texts of historians and orators, the Athenian decrees give us the most direct access we can get to the creation, circulation and, in some cases also, destruction of historical memory within the *polis*. As a whole, the decrees constitute, alongside historiography, an important alternative channel for the *polis* community to retain and handle the memory of important events and achievements of leading figures. Particularly with regard to recent and contemporary history, it is fascinating to see how ‘memory politics’ operates through the incision and/or the removal of words on stone so characteristic of Greek public life.

Secondly, and no less importantly for our purposes, is the fact that these inscriptions, by the inclusion of ever more historical detail, gradually come closer to what may be called ‘history writing’. The more they realize their historical potential – a feature manifesting itself plainly towards the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd century BC – the more they become attractive sources to be consulted and exploited by proper history writing. It is perhaps not a mere accident or just a matter of personal methodological preferences that so many ‘political documents’ could be identified (be it by means of *Quellenforschung*) in Hieronymus of Cardia’s lost history of the Diadochs (see K. Rosen, “Political Documents in Hieronymus of Cardia [323-302 B. C.]”, *Acta Classica* 10, 1967, 41-94). This historian, who on account of his huge range of personal experience and close relationship to the key leading figures of his age was uniquely qualified to record the history of the time he lived

through (a point duly emphasized in the *Anonymous Evaluation of Historians* [P.Oxy. 4808]), did apparently not limit himself, in the manner of Thucydides, to writing his history on the basis of his own presence to the events and the cross-questioning of eyewitnesses. We witness an interesting shift here in the methods employed by writers of contemporary history.

A further noteworthy feature I would like to single out is the approximation of the decrees to some form of proto-biographical writing. The fact that the lives of prominent political and military leaders were so prominently dealt with in inscriptions as well as in historical works may go a long way towards explaining why 'political biographies' were so late to emerge within the history of ancient biographical writing. Cornelius Nepos' *Lives of the Foreign Generals* are known as the first extant example of this specific branch of biographical literature, which came to full development in Plutarch's Greek and Roman Lives.

N. Luraghi: Thank you very much for your generous comments. The trends you outline are indeed visible in the evidence I have been presenting, more or less explicitly. The link between honorific decrees and biography may be the closest, as shown by the way texts of decrees were used as starting points for biographical sketches or indeed included in works of a broadly biographical character, such as the *Lives of the Ten Orators*. On the other hand, the inclusion, or perhaps the intrusion of historical narrative and argumentative assembly rhetoric into the texts of decrees show that we are really looking at a two-way process, facilitated by the fact that many of the main actors in the two fields were actually the same individuals.

J. Marincola: I think you have made a very persuasive case for the importance of inscriptions when thinking about contemporary history and who gets to tell the story of the events. Some of the examples (those of Herodotus, Thucydides on the Peisistratids, Theopompus on the Peace of Callias, and we could add

Polybius checking treaties between Rome and Carthage) come from writers of non-contemporary history, though of course the documents in Thucydides V are from a contemporary history. My question, then, is whether we need to distinguish the role(s) that inscriptions play for contemporary and non-contemporary historians, and if so, what the differences might be.

N. Luraghi: My impression is that the differences were less clear than we would have expected. In principle, Greek historians who dealt with the distant past could recur to inscriptions in order to go beyond the threshold of oral tradition, but the process does not appear to have been straightforward. In Greek historiography, as far as I can tell, inscriptions and documents more in general tend to appear embedded in historical narratives which mostly draw on oral sources – and of course, for narratives of the recent past, also on the author's direct knowledge and experience. It seems to me that Greek historians did not tend to isolate inscriptions as if they were the documentary underpinning of reconstructions of historical events not otherwise documented. This made it less obvious in their eyes that inscriptions could have a different role for the study of the distant past compared to the study of the recent past. Not that they did not realize this, but it does not seem to have been terribly important to them. To give you an example *e contrario*, when Theopompus argued against the authenticity of the Peace of Callias based on the letter forms of the relevant inscription, he was really mounting a much broader attack on the deceitful boastfulness of the Athenians, of which documentary forgeries were an expression. He did not seem to have thought in terms of unmasking the forgeries in order to undermine the factual narratives of early 5th century history.

B. Bleckmann: Sie stellen fest, dass die Antragsteller der Volksbeschlüsse ihre Version der jüngeren Vergangenheit niederlegen, „in the expectation that their version would enjoy a high authority and some diffusion“. Dass – natürlich in völlig verschiedenen

Kontexten – inschriftlich hochtendenziöse und gelenkte Deutungen der jüngsten Vergangenheit gegeben werden, ist ein in der Alten Welt verbreitetes Phänomen (z. B. Bisutun-Inschrift; *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*). Erlauben die von Ihnen vorgestellten Inschriften konkrete Aussagen hinsichtlich der Adressaten und der zeitlichen Reichweite?

Wie würden Sie die Motive der Zusammenstellung der Psephismata durch Krateros einordnen? Erfolgte diese Sammeltätigkeit etwa im Rahmen der peripatetischen Schule?

N. Luraghi: Let me start with your second question. The most recent editor of Craterus' fragments, Donatella Erdas, does tend to see his activity in the intellectual framework of the Peripatetic School (Erdas [2002] 38-42). I agree, even though I also see the danger of attributing every antiquarian initiative in Athens to the influence of the best-known milieu of antiquarian research and knowledge. Diodorus the Periegetes for instance has never been tied to the school, and there is no obvious reason why he ought to. As for the audience of Athenian decrees, Peter Liddel's recent work shows that the Athenians at any rate were persuaded that the rest of the Greeks took notice of what they, the Athenians that is, decreed. And while Greek inscribed decrees tended to gesture towards posterity, it seems to me that their intended political audience was very much contemporary: they seem to have engaged first and foremost in existing arguments on current and recent political developments.

E.-M. Becker: Thank you very much for your paper which made me think about the specifics of epigraphical memory as historical memory, and in contrast to literary memory. If we see epigraphical and historiographical/literary sources for a moment both as 'historical memory': Can both types of memory be classified as "public documents" (as you say regarding the decrees) – and if so, in which way? If not: would the difference regarding their 'public status' influence the way in which historical

memory of both types can function as a “touchstone of truth” as you observe? Could we, from this observation, possibly better understand why history-writers (from Thucydides onwards) need and want to make truth-claims on various levels of their writings? In other words: do these truth-claims intend to overcome the ‘individual’ scope of the historian’s task as a literary creator of ‘historical memory’? Even to *zuspitzen* my question: Are truth-claims then a literary compensation for an absence of public authority applied to literary history?

N. Luraghi: It is certainly the case that the implied collective consensus underpinning the text of an inscribed decree endowed it with a very strong claim to authority and truthfulness. Historians on the other hand, who tended to present their own version of events, and proudly so most of the time, did need additional ways of supporting persuasively their own accuracy and truthfulness – by claiming access to reports not generally accessible, or even more often, by arguing for their superior interpretive powers, as in the case of Thucydides. Interestingly, these two very different ways of claiming authority could get entangled in practice, since the citizens who drafted the texts of decrees were themselves politically active and often also writers of history in their own right – one thinks of Demochares of Leukonoion, for instance. This is a phenomenon we identify especially in the segment of Athenian history I have been concentrating upon, but there is every reason to assume that, with a more extensive selection of evidence, we would observe it also in other parts of Greece around the same times and later.

H. Inglebert: Comme les décrets honorifiques athéniens sont liés à la démocratie, il est logique qu’on retrouve des décrets similaires dans les autres cités avec le développement du régime démocratique à l’époque hellénistique. A-t-on des exemples de l’utilisation de ces décrets par des historiens hors d’Athènes, et dans quel type d’œuvres ?

N. Luraghi: Guido Schepens alluded to the use of documents in the historical work of Hieronymus of Cardia, which partly answers your question. Historical narratives with a strong political orientation embedded in decrees are found in Hellenistic Asia Minor, especially around the time of the Mithridatic War. Florian Forster devoted most of his 2018 book to non-Athenian Hellenistic decrees, and has presented a paper specifically on documents from Asia Minor and their relation to the Athenian precedents at a conference some months ago, which is the reason why I decided not to treat them in my own presentation today. I cannot think of evidence for the use of these decrees in the works of Greek historians, but again, this may well be a consequence of the small amount of evidence available.

