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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Athenian Empire and epigraphic cultures

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Abstract

This article revisits the question of how the epigraphic culture of the fifth-century BC Athenian Empire impacted on the epigraphic cultures of other communities. Through consideration of the late fifth-century epigraphic cultures of Thasos and Rhodes, it argues that allied communities interacted with the epigraphic manifestations of Athenian authority in different ways, producing diverse epigraphic responses. Further, it argues that the first traces of the shift from the heterogeneity of archaic epigraphic cultures to the epigraphic convergence of the late classical world can be found in the tension between local and Athenian influences in late fifth-century public inscription beyond Athens.

Keywords: Greek epigraphy; Athenian Empire; Thasos; Rhodes; origins of epigraphic convergence

I. Introduction

In the Archaic period, Greek communities began to inscribe public documents on stone and other durable materials. No city inscribed to any significant extent, at least by later standards, and there was little uniformity in the kinds of documents different cities produced. The epigraphic landscape then changed irrevocably in the fifth century BC with the emergence of democratic, imperial Athens and its highly productive culture of inscribing documents, including the decrees passed by its council and assembly, on stone.[1] No other community had ever inscribed public documents to any comparable extent, and when the rate of public inscription beyond Athens picked up towards the end of the century, inscribed documents erected by a number of cities in the empire showed linguistic and monumental features first attested at Athens.

Scholars have questioned why there was such a disparity between epigraphic output at Athens and elsewhere, and several have argued that the Athenians suppressed political expression (either the underlying political activity or the act of inscribing itself) in the cities they controlled.[2] Such explanations neglect to take into account the exceptionalism of Athenian epigraphic culture and the significant departure it marked from the archaic epigraphic cultures that persisted elsewhere. I suggest that the question should be revisited; but rather than asking why most communities beyond Athens did not inscribe, we should ask why some *did* inscribe, and why, in certain cases, they began to inscribe documents with features first attested in Athenian decrees. A further fundamental

[1] I will follow Liddel's use of the term 'culture', as it captures the multivalent motivations for which communities erected inscribed monuments in public space: see Liddel (2009).

[2] For example Low (2007) 245–48; Liddel (2010) 115.

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question follows: what impact did the Athenian Empire and its unprecedented epigraphic culture have on other epigraphic cultures, particularly those in allied communities?

It is not a new claim to suggest that Athenian epigraphic culture influenced the way documents were inscribed in other cities.[3] Scholars have noted where other cities emulated particular linguistic or monumental aspects of Athenian inscriptions.[4] Some have seen the production of decrees by allied communities as indicative of the widespread diffusion or even imposition of democratic institutions by Athens.[5] But, in line with centralized and top-down approaches to the Athenian Empire more generally, there has been little acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of fifth-century inscribed decrees with Athenian features beyond Athens, and thus the diversity of allied interactions with the epigraphic manifestations of Athenian power.[6]

In this article, I will first outline how Athenian public epigraphic culture, including the inscription of decrees, represented an unprecedented departure from the limited and diverse archaic epigraphic trends maintained elsewhere. These factors, I will suggest, and not Athenian suppression of non-Athenian epigraphic activity, should frame our understanding of epigraphic development in the fifth century before its final decades. They also provide necessary context for the late-century innovations evident in the epigraphic records of some allied communities.

Next, I will examine how and why two of these communities, Thasos and Rhodes, began to inscribe decrees with some Athenian features towards the end of the century. I will situate Thasian and Rhodian epigraphic innovations within their particular relations with the Athenian Empire, but also within other local preoccupations: pre-existing epichoric epigraphic culture, internal political conflict and regional power dynamics (in the case of Thasos), and instability in far-flung commercial networks (Rhodes). The impact of the Athenian Empire on allied epigraphic cultures, the examples of Thasos and Rhodes will show, was not a matter of top-down imposition or homogenous emulation. Rather, local epigraphic cultures, which were not necessarily aligned with democracies, interacted in varied ways with the Athenian epigraphic idiom. Of course, the epigraphic records of these two relatively rich and powerful communities should not be seen as representative of allied communities more broadly. But this diversity in epigraphic motivation and output, alongside the appearance of new commonalities, is precisely what I want to emphasize. Robin Osborne and Peter Liddel have stressed the importance of highlighting variation in local inscribing practices, and, as Liddel demonstrates in the context of early Hellenistic Megara, supra-local powers could impact on local epigraphic cultures in different ways.[7] It is my aim in this article to highlight the tension between the local and supra-local (i.e. Athenian) in late fifth-century public inscription beyond Athens, and thus the complexity in cultural responses to the Athenian Empire.

Finally, exploration of this tension will allow me to return briefly to the broader chronological perspective of the first section, but now with an eye on the fifth-century origins of later epigraphic development. Moving beyond the scope of my original question, I will argue that the varied impact of the Athenian Empire on allied epigraphic cultures should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon, but as an important moment in a continuum of epigraphic innovation and expansion. Looking beyond the fifth-century Athenian Empire to the end of the fourth century, numerous cities across the Greek world

[3] Lewis (1997) 51–59. Liddel (2020) 187 notes the phenomenon and suggests that more analysis is needed.

[4] Rhodes with Lewis (1997) 550–57 for linguistic formulae; Austin (1938) for monumental form.

[5] A central concern of Swoboda (1890). The complex mechanisms by which democracy spread in the empire have not been fully illuminated and require fresh analysis: see Brock (2009); Robinson (2011) especially chapter 4; Lazar (2024) 61–64.

[6] An important exception is Liddel's 2010 statistical overview of fifth-century epigraphic trends, which has been formative for the writing of this article.

[7] Osborne (2009) 103; Liddel (2009) 41.

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were inscribing decrees, many containing features first attested or paralleled at Athens in the fifth century. This epigraphic 'convergence' only intensified in the Hellenistic period.[8] So how did the epigraphic landscape shift so dramatically, from localized and distinctive archaic cultures of inscribing at the beginning of the fifth century, to the more homogenous decree cultures of the late fourth? A full explanation is beyond the scope of this article; but, in my view, the fifth-century origins of the convergence have not been sufficiently analysed, given that the first appearances across different communities of later ubiquitous epigraphic commonalities indicate the beginning of a discernible trend. Accordingly, I will suggest, with reference to Rhodes, and to the nearby community of Iasos, that it is in the tension between the local and the supra-local in late fifth-century cultures of public inscription that the early stages of epigraphic convergence can be found.

II. Archaic epigraphic diversity, Athenian innovation

I turn first to the factors which shaped the epigraphic landscape of the fifth century before its final decades: the persistence of diverse and limited archaic cultures of public inscription in the broader Greek world, alongside epigraphic innovation at Athens.

Inscribed public documents on stone or other durable materials emerged around the middle of the seventh century. By 'public documents', I mean ordinances or laws pertaining to a group or community, inscribed and displayed in public space. The earliest known public document is from the community of Dreros on Crete and concerns the holding of a particular magistracy.[9] From this time on, there are examples of inscribed public documents from across the Greek world. There was clearly a desire in a growing number of communities to make certain ordinances permanent and to display them publicly, perhaps to give greater authority to contested measures. Given that inscriptions were often displayed in sanctuaries, divine authority or assent was likely also being sought.[10] However, while similarities and common preoccupations can be detected across different documents (many are concerned with sacred matters, for example), there is little uniformity in the physical form of the monuments, or in the structure, language and content of the documents themselves. They are not many in number.[11] Only in a few cases can particular local cultures of inscribing be identified: most notably, a cluster of Cretan communities, including Dreros, inscribed a number of public documents, mostly laws with broad application, which show discernible local epigraphic trends.[12]

In Archaic Attica, there is varied evidence of individuals writing.[13] By the sixth century, writing was used extensively in funerary and votive contexts. But, at least judging by the surviving evidence, Athens was later than other communities to inscribe public documents in the sense defined above.[14] The first known document explicitly authored by the

[8] The term 'convergence' is used with broader application by Ma (2018) to refer to the alignment of constitutional forms, institutions and cultural characteristics in many cities in the Hellenistic Greek world; Ma, at p. 289, refers to the spread of public epigraphy on the Athenian model as one aspect of this 'convergence'.

[9] *SEG* 27:620 = Meiggs and Lewis (1989) no. 2 = Gagarin and Perlman (2016) Dr1.

[10] Thomas (1992) 71.

[11] Collected by Koerner and Hallof (1993); Effenterre and Ruzé (1994).

[12] Gagarin and Perlman (2016) identify about 200 inscribed public documents from ten Cretan cities, dated between *ca.* 650 and 400 BC; see also Irene Vagionakis' online Cretan Institutional Inscriptions database (https://ilc4clarin.ilc.cnr.it/cretaninscriptions/en/), which records 97 examples dated before 400 BC. For the characteristics of archaic Cretan epigraphy, see Whitley (1997).

[13] Whitley (1997) 641–45.

[14] Note *IG* I^3 507–09, inscribed dedications by Athenian officials found on the Acropolis dating to the mid-sixth century, which certainly have a 'public' aspect.

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Athenian state, concerning the nearby island of Salamis, is usually dated only to the final decade of the sixth century.[15] It is presented as a decision of the *dēmos*, with an introductory phrase, 'it seemed good to the people' (ἔδοχσεν τõι δέμοι), which would soon become the ubiquitous marker of a distinctive decree culture.[16]

After this comparatively late start, there was a trickle of further decrees in the first half of the fifth century BC, all with religious content, and some displayed in the sanctuaries to which their measures pertained.[17] Then, from the middle of the century, the rate of public inscription at Athens increased dramatically. This increase appears to have accelerated from around 430 BC onwards.[18] Alongside other genres of public document such as financial records and casualty lists, there are around 240 surviving decrees (the primary focus of this article) concerning a variety of subjects dated before the end of the century.[19] Somewhat unusually, the Athenians mostly chose to inscribe decrees, communal decisions replete with bureaucratic detail, which recorded time-specific business in the assembly, rather than laws with broader significance.[20] A distinctively formulaic language was developed for these decrees, with repeated phrases and structure, such as the introductory prescript mentioned in the previous paragraph.[21] These formulaic texts were often inscribed in a distinctive grid pattern (*stoichēdon*),[22] on free-standing stelai, which were largely standardized in form by the final decades of the century (see fig. 1, the decrees concerning the Euboian city of Chalkis).[23] This Athenian culture of public epigraphy was completely unprecedented in its productivity and standardization, even if certain aspects of Athenian inscription are paralleled elsewhere, or can be explained by external influence.[24] Never before and nowhere else had a Greek community inscribed public documents on stone on such a scale.

A number of factors help to account for this epigraphic explosion. Undoubtedly, the growth of the Athenian democracy played a part. The council and assembly made the decisions which were being inscribed. But, as is now widely accepted by scholars, inscribed decrees were far from straightforward archival records of democratic processes.[25] The inscription of decrees was limited and selective,[26] and the resulting monuments presented sanitized accounts of assembly business, devoid of any debate.[27] The relationship between inscription and Athenian democratic ideology was complex;[28] rather, inscribed decrees had multivalent memorializing and symbolic functions.[29]

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[15] *IG* I^3 1 with a new fragment published by Matthaiou (1993) 9–14; Attic Inscriptions Online 1672 for a revised text and translation (https://www.atticinscriptions.com).

[16] For the definition of 'decree', a decision by an assembly of citizens, see Rhodes with Lewis (1997) 1.

[17] *IG* I^3 2 = Attic Inscriptions Online 1707; *IG* I^3 3; *IG* I^3 4 = Attic Inscriptions Online 1692; *IG* I^3 5 = Attic Inscriptions Online 1284; *IG* I^3 6 = Attic Inscriptions in the United Kingdom 4.2 no. 1 (also at https://www.atticinscriptions.com); *IG* I^3 7 = Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 108 (hereafter abbreviated to OR); *IG* I^3 8.

[18] Liddel (2010) 101 provides a statistical analysis of this trend, although caution around the dating of fifth-century Athenian decrees must be exercised: see Rhodes (2008); Papazarkadas (2009).

[19] Counted by Sickinger (1999) 245 n.45.

[20] A handful of laws were inscribed by the democrats in the aftermath of the late fifth-century oligarchic revolutions, for example *IG* I^3 104 = OR 183.

[21] Rhodes with Lewis (1997) 18–24.

[22] For the development of the *stoichēdon* style, see Butz (2010).

[23] Davies (2005); Meyer (2016).

[24] For potential external influence on the Athenian inscription of magistrate lists, see Driscoll (2019) 28–29.

[25] As was influentially argued by Meritt (1940) 89.

[26] Lambert (2018) chapter 2.

[27] Osborne (1999).

[28] For a more nuanced take on the democratic ideology underlying the inscription of decrees, see Hedrick (1999) (with Sickinger (2009) for an opposing view).

[29] For example Lambert (2018) 26 on the agency of Athenian inscriptions; Low (2020) on their role in creating communal memory.

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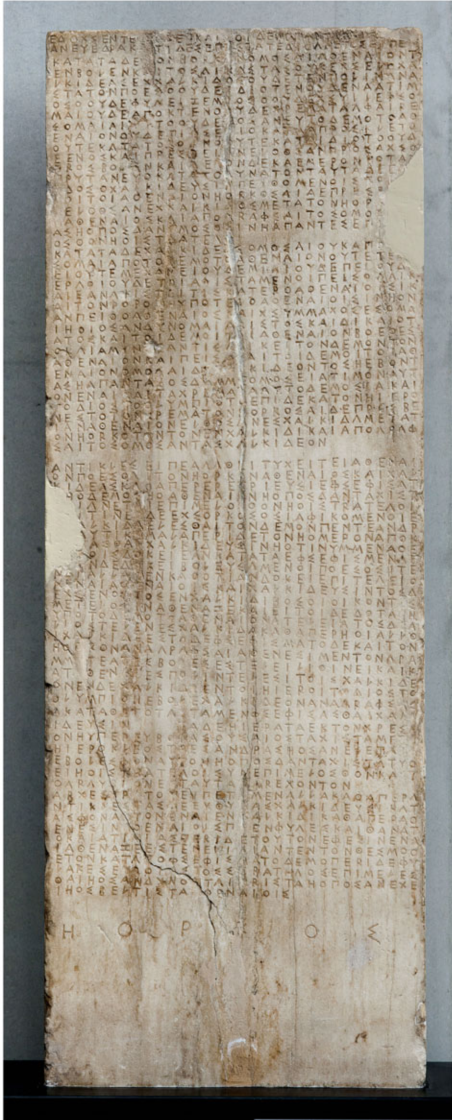

Fig. 1. Athenian decrees concerning the Euboian city of Chalkis, *IG* I³ 40 = OR 131. Ακρ. 6509 © Acropolis Museum, 2012, photograph Socratis Mavrommatis.

An important impetus for inscription was also provided by the monumental development of Athenian public space,[30] specifically of the Acropolis, where the majority of public documents from the middle of the century through to its final decade were displayed.[31] The sacred aspect of this display context must also be emphasized.[32] The link between the gods and inscription evident in the Archaic period was maintained in fifth-century Athens.[33] Many decrees and financial records had sacred content; even those with 'non-sacred' content were sometimes inscribed under reliefs depicting deities or headings invoking the gods.[34]

Finally, the expansion of the Athenian Empire should be taken into account. Public inscription was an effective means of asserting and monumentalizing Athenian power,[35] and imperial revenues would have helped to pay for the inscription and erection of stelai (made from the abundant local marble).[36] It is no coincidence that a large proportion of the documents chosen by the Athenians for inscription concerned external relations, in particular with allied communities.[37] As the fifth century progressed, the Athenians also increasingly used forms of honorific diplomacy to regulate interactions with both allied individuals and communities.[38] Honorific institutions were by no means exclusively Athenian creations, but their inscribed record was dominated by Athens at this time.[39] This trend would have provided another incentive for inscription, as public

[30] Moroo (2016); Lambert (2018) 29; Trampedach (2022).

[31] Liddel (2003).

[32] Lambert (2018) 22.

[33] Meyer (2013) goes so far as to suggest that all inscriptions erected on the Acropolis were dedications which honoured Athena.

[34] Mack (2018).

[35] Thomas (1994) 44; Stroud (2006) 12–13.

[36] Sometimes allied communities were directly ordered to pay for the erection of stelai: Low (2005) 100–09. For the complex relationship between imperial revenues and Athenian building, see Kallet-Marx (1989).

[37] Liddel (2010) 101–02.

[38] Liddel (2010) 103; Papazarkadas (2014).

[39] Low (2007) 245–48; Mack (2015) 224–25; Lambert (2018) 85.

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display of such decrees would have advertised the honours granted, bestowed further honour upon the honorand and perhaps encouraged emulation.[40]

This complex Athenian epigraphic culture would have been visible to non-Athenians. Individuals from allied cities and elsewhere would have been exposed to Athenian inscriptions in Athens and at home. They may have come to Athens and viewed inscriptions in Athenian public spaces. The Athenians also ordered the display of some documents in the public spaces of allied communities, as recorded in certain decrees, such as the second decree for Chalkis (see fig. 1).[41] In a few cases, Athenian decrees have actually been found in other cities.[42] A joke in Aristophanes' *Birds* (line 1054) about a non-Athenian defecating on an Athenian stele indicates not only that Athenian stelai were erected beyond Athens, but that this erection might incite animosity.

But while allied communities would have been exposed to Athenian epigraphic culture, inscription on stone was limited elsewhere, within the empire and beyond it.[43] Of course, communities may have displayed public documents on less durable materials, inscriptions from elsewhere may not have survived and the Athenian acropolis is better excavated than other sites. Nonetheless, the picture is stark. Liddel's statistical analysis of fifth-century public inscription includes a breakdown of allied communities that inscribed in the fifth century, what kind of documents they inscribed and in what kind of numbers.[44] No allied community inscribed anywhere near the number of public documents produced at Athens. Thasos (which, as we will see, had a distinctive epichoric culture of inscribing) is in a distant second place, with only 13 known inscriptions. Most communities did not produce public documents at all. When they did inscribe, they tended to produce sacred regulations, or occasionally laws, rather than documents concerned with other foreign or domestic matters.[45]

Scholars have questioned why allied communities did not produce public documents to any significant extent in the fifth century. Liddel argues that the Athenian Empire had a 'profoundly limiting effect on the kinds of inscriptions that were set up by the communities that made up the empire'.[46] Polly Low contends that the Athenians dominated the inscribed record of honours because the empire distorted the norms of reciprocal diplomacy through its imposition of financial obligations, preventing allies from awarding honours at all.[47] While both of these discussions are valuable in other respects, they neglect to take into account the exceptionalism of Athenian public epigraphic culture in the fifth century.

For many other communities, in and beyond the empire, their inscribing or lack of inscribing continued the limited epigraphic trends of the Archaic period into at least the first half of the fifth century. The transition from the Archaic period to the Classical does not provide a useful cut-off for broad-based analysis of Greek epigraphic cultures. Some communities maintained epigraphic preoccupations from the sixth century into the fifth. For example, the handful of public documents from fifth-century BC Chios express the

[40] Lambert (2018) chapter 3.

[41] *IG* I^3 40 = OR 131 lines 61–62.

[42] See *IG* I^3 1453 = OR 155 ('Standards' decree); *IG* I^3 1454 = OR 136 = Attic Inscriptions Online 954 (decree for the Eteokarpathians) with Liddel (2003) 83–84.

[43] Communities beyond the empire with some fifth-century culture of public inscription, in addition to the Cretan communities, include Argos and Epidauros, whose classical epigraphic cultures are being illuminated through publications by Charalampos Kritzas among others; see, for example, Kritzas and Prignitz (2020).

[44] Liddel (2010) 113.

[45] Liddel (2010) 111.

[46] Liddel (2010) 115.

[47] Low (2007) 245–48.

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decisions of 'the popular council' (βολὴν τὴν δημ-|οσιήν, ML 8 C lines 2–3) first attested in an inscription from the first half of the sixth century, long before any Athenian democratic or epigraphic precedent.[48] This continuity of archaic epigraphic trends also helps to explain the prominence of sacred regulations in fifth-century public epigraphy (a trend from which Athens, as discussed, did not entirely diverge).

A new pattern, however, is discernible in the final decades of the century. Allied communities, it seems, began to inscribe more.[49] Some documents show features first attested in Athenian inscribed decrees, including Athenian epigraphic linguistic formulae (conveying the bureaucratic minutiae of a particular temporal context) and monumental features, such as the use of *stoichēdon*.[50] Given the current state of the evidence, it can be postulated that these features likely originated at Athens (or were at least first widely used by the Athenians), and were disseminated to other communities through direct or indirect contact with Athenians or Athenian documents. Linguistic formulae could have been dispersed through oral processes to allied individuals at Athens and abroad, or through copies of decrees on less durable materials sent by the Athenians to allied communities.[51] Nonetheless, as discussed above, it is clear that allies would have been exposed to inscribed decrees at Athens and in their own communities, due to the Athenian use of public inscription as an expression of imperial authority. I believe it is significant that allied communities were not only passing decrees rendered in Athenian linguistic formulae but were choosing to exploit the monumental possibilities inherent in the inscription of such decrees, sometimes through the use of Athenian monumental features. Individuals in allied communities may even have learned from the expertise of Athenian stone-cutters.[52] The allied adoption of 'Athenian-style' democratic institutions is not an unrelated phenomenon, but one that, as we will see, does not always correlate with the emergence of an 'Athenian-style' decree culture. Given that scholars now agree that Athenian epigraphic culture was not simply 'democratic', the same complexity and diversity of motivation should be assumed in analysis of other epigraphic cultures.

It is therefore valid to ask how Athens' innovative inscribed decree culture, one of the monumental representations of the empire, interacted with other epigraphic cultures. How did communities beyond Athens make increased use of the multivalent monumental possibilities afforded by public inscription, sometimes through use of the Athenian epigraphic idiom?[53] To answer this question, I will explore how two prominent allied communities, Thasos and Rhodes, developed their public epigraphic cultures and began to inscribe decrees in the final decades of the fifth century.

[48] See McCabe (1986) no. 2, a late fifth-century regulation on grazing, which is explicitly identified as a decision of the *boulē* in language not paralleled at Athens (βολῆς [γ]νώμη, line 2).

[49] Liddel (2010) 110–13.

[50] Inscriptions possibly dating to the fifth century containing common formulae first attested in Athenian decrees include *IG* XII 7 1 (sacred law from Arkesine on Amorgos); *IDélos* 71 (late fifth-century honorific decree from Delos); *IG* XII 9 187 A = OR 175 and *IG* XII Suppl. 549 (proxeny decrees from Eretria dating to the second half of the century); *IG* XII 5 593 = OR 193 (late fifth-century funerary laws from Iulis on Keos); OR 143 (sacred law from Miletos dated to 434/3); *IG* XII 8 2 (late fifth-/early fourth-century honorific decree from Myrina on Lemnos); Papazarkadas (2007) (honorific decree from Siphnos, dated by Papazarkadas to the late fifth or, more likely, early fourth century); Effenterre and Ruzé (1994) no. 1.32 (later reinscription of a honorific decree from Kyzikos, sometimes dated to the early fifth century); for decrees from Thasos and Rhodes, see below.

[51] For the dissemination of Athenian decrees to non-Athenian audiences, see Liddel (2020) chapter 4.

[52] Lewis (1997) 53 raises this possibility.

[53] Possible interaction between Athenian epigraphic culture and the fifth-century epigraphic cultures of communities beyond the empire, such as Argos (which would have had a different relationship with Athenian power and thus with Athenian inscriptions), merits fuller exploration elsewhere.

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III. Thasos' epichoric epigraphic culture

My first study focuses on the island of Thasos in the North Aegean.[54] Towards the end of the fifth century, I will argue, the leaders of the oligarchic party at Thasos adapted their own epichoric epigraphic culture to the demands of competition with Athens, before the Thasian democratic leaders adopted decrees on the Athenian model to make their own mark on the Thasian monumental landscape.

Thasos was unusually productive in its output of inscribed public documents in the fifth century BC, relative to other cities. Writing had already been prominent in public space on the island in the Archaic period: for example, the late seventh-century BC memorial to Glaukos son of Leptines, a figure known from the poetry of Archilochos, occupied a prominent place in the Thasian agora by the end of the sixth century.[55] By the first half of the fifth century, Thasos was producing inscribed legislation of considerable length with non-sacred content, including one law regulating the production of wine and another concerning behaviour in the streets.[56] As Osborne emphasizes, the public epigraphic culture of Thasos was independent, with localized characteristics and preoccupations.[57]

Why did Thasos inscribe public documents? The island was a producer of high-quality marble suitable for inscription. It derived significant revenue, with which it could fund the erection of monuments, from wine production,[58] mining activity (Hdt. 6.46; Thuc. 1.100) and participation in mainland commercial networks, facilitated up until the first half of the fifth century by control of coastal settlements.[59] Osborne argues that it was their regulation of these commercial interests and their particularly intense external relationships which led the Thasians to initiate their distinctive culture of public inscription, with an intended external audience.[60]

Thasos' regional power, however, was directly threatened by the Athenian Empire. After revolting against Athens and being brought back into line by siege in the 460s BC, Thasos' lucrative mainland possessions were confiscated by the Athenians (Thuc. 1.101). Thasos then disappears from the literary record for several decades, before re-emerging at the time of Athens' oligarchic revolution in 411 BC. Like many other allied communities, Thasos was turned to oligarchy by the Athenian oligarchs at Samos; shortly afterwards, the newly installed Thasian oligarchs instigated another revolt from Athens, as noted by Thucydides (8.64). Until 407 BC and its reintegration into the Athenian alliance (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.9), Thasos was hostile to Athens and aligned with Sparta (notwithstanding some anti-oligarchic resistance: Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.32). The scanty literary record of this hostility can be supplemented with epigraphic evidence, which shows that the Thasians challenged the Athenians in coastal Thrace once again during this period, and that both sides used public inscription to assert their competing claims.

IV. Competition through inscription

Competition between Athens and Thasos is directly attested in the Athenian epigraphic record, in a dossier of Athenian decrees found at Athens (dated between 409 and 407 BC)

[54] For more extensive discussion of the relationship between Athens and Thasos, see Lazar (2024) 152–70.

[55] ML 3; Grandjean and Salviat (2000) 69–70.

[56] Wine law: Pouilloux (1954) no. 7 = OR 103 A. Law regulating behaviour in the streets: Duchêne (1992) = OR 104.

[57] Osborne (2009).

[58] Evidenced by the Thasian laws concerning the wine industry discussed below, and the many Thasian amphorae handles found abroad: see Archibald (2013) 200.

[59] See again Thuc. 1.100. For the identification of particular settlements as Thasian, see Thuc. 4.107.3; Hdt. 7.108–09.

[60] Osborne (2009) 109–10.

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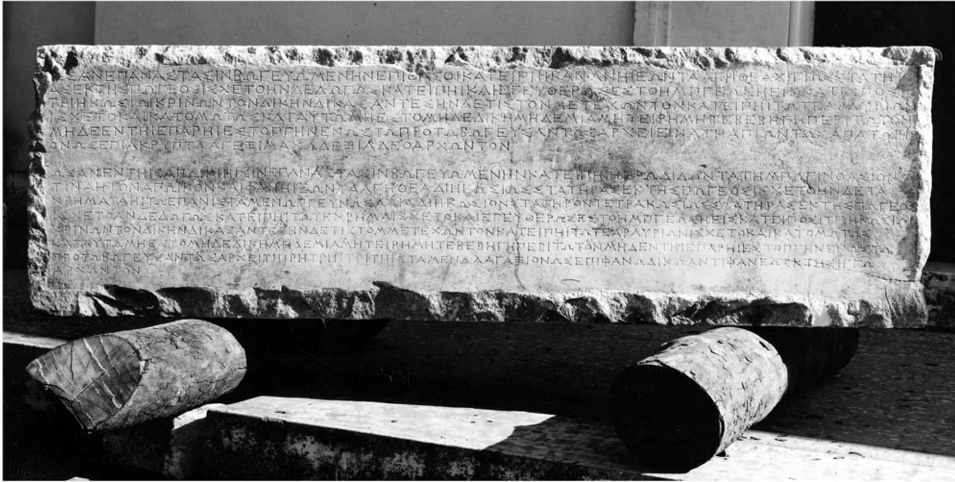

Fig. 2. Thasian laws concerning informers, Pouilloux (1954) no. 18 = OR 176. Thasos Archaeological Museum. Photograph from the archive of L.H. Jeffery, Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford, printed with the permission of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala/Thasos.

granting honours to the coastal Thracian *polis* of Neapolis in return for its support against Thasos.[61] Neapolis, located at modern Kavala, was originally a Thasian foundation but remained loyal to Athens when Thasos revolted. This is emphatically shown in the inscription itself by a correction to the wording of the first decree. The correction is ordered by the second decree, presumably at the request of the Neapolitans (lines 58–59), and is visible on the stone: the Neapolitans were originally described as 'settlers of the Thasians' (ἄποικοι ὄντες Θασίον) but the corrected decree describes how 'they fought the war with the Athenians and were besieged by the Thasians' (συνδιεπο[λέμεσ]αν τὸν πόλεμον μετὰ Ἀθεναίο[ν καὶ πολιο]|ρκόμενοι ὑπ[ὸ Θασίον], lines 7–8). It is easy to understand why the Athenians would have granted the Neapolitans honours: not only did Neapolis stay loyal (lines 8–9) and give the Athenians significant financial contributions (lines 32–33), it would have been a strategic base for the Athenians, as it had a harbour with a direct sight-line to Thasos. For my purposes, it is significant that the Athenians chose to record these honours on stone, in a high-quality inscription with a document relief: their assertion of power in coastal Thrace and their intervention in the historic relationship between Thasos and Neapolis was asserted through public inscription. The first decree, presumably with its corrected wording, was not only displayed in Athens but was also to be inscribed on a stele and erected in the Neapolitan sanctuary of Parthenos (lines 44–45).

This Athenian epigraphic assertion of authority was matched by Thasian use of public inscription. Two laws inscribed on the same stone (fig. 2) can almost certainly be dated to this period and attributed to the oligarchs,[62] due to their use of an archaizing Parian alphabet and their inclusion of subject matter directly reflecting the geopolitical turmoil of the time.[63] The laws offer rewards to informers who provide information on potential plots against the authorities. The first is aimed at Thasos itself, the second at Thasian mainland settlements: 'whoever denounces an uprising that is being plotted in the settlements abroad …' (ὃς ἂν ἐν τῆις ἀποικίησιν ἐπανάστασιν βολευομένην κατείπῃ, line 7).

[61] *IG* I³ 101 = OR 187 = Attic Inscriptions Online 1176.
[62] Pouilloux (1954) no. 18 = OR 176.
[63] Avery (1979); Simonton (2017) 142–46.

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A second document can also likely be dated to this period, due to its explicit focus on extra-island activity.[64] Two laws inscribed on the same stone dating from the final decades of the fifth century regulate aspects of the wine trade, maintaining the preoccupation of the earlier law mentioned above.[65] The first is dated by letter forms to *ca.* 420 BC and concerns the buying of wine. The second seems to be dated later and is concerned with selling wine. Notably, this latter text not only regulates activity on Thasos but also asserts its authority beyond the island. In the event of infringement, 'magistrates whose area of responsibility is the mainland are to bring a court action' (οἱ πρὸς τὴν ἤπειρον ἐπιτετραμμένοι δικασάσθων, ii line 3). The law also aims to stop Thasian ships from bringing foreign wine into the region between the Athos peninsula to the east and the Nestos river to the northwest.[66] The Thasians, in inscribing this law, were maintaining their distinctive epigraphic concern with the production and sale of wine attested throughout the fifth century, in the early fifth-century law mentioned above and in the law of the 420s on the same stone. But there is a change in this latest law: it explicitly attempts to control activity beyond Thasos, both on land and on sea.

It is difficult to know whether the rebellious Thasians only now renewed their claims to their former mainland assets, after their confiscation by the Athenians 60 years earlier, and chose to assert this renewal through public inscription. Alternatively, a change can perhaps be detected in Thasian epigraphic culture which did not correlate exactly with the reality on the ground. Regardless, there is a notable shift in the way the Thasians used public inscription to assert external authority, likely just at the time that the Thasian conflict with Athens was reignited. The Thasians tried to control behaviour 'in the settlements' (ἐν τῆις ἀποικίησιν), while the Neapolitans asked for their status as Thasian 'settlers' (ἄποικοι) to be expunged from the Athenian epigraphic record.

The Thasian examples discussed here are very much epichoric monuments: the wine law addresses specifically Thasian issues previously documented epigraphically, while the law concerning informers has no parallels in the Athenian record in terms of subject matter or language. The monuments are not like Athenian stelai in form: the inscriptions are on horizontal blocks, found in the non-sacred space of the agora and perhaps used as architectural members (although the later wine law, unlike the earlier laws, is inscribed in *stoichēdon*, a potential nod to Athenian inscription style). What has changed is the explicit assertion of extra-island authority. Liddel has suggested that the Athenians may have been aware of Thasian epigraphic culture when they chose to inscribe the decrees for Neapolis.[67] I argue that Thasian epigraphic adaptation is also visible here: the Thasians modified their own epichoric epigraphic culture to compete with the Athenians, perhaps even following the precedent set by their competitors. Conceivably, a multidirectional dynamic of epigraphic competition can be reconstructed.[68]

V. The emergence of Thasian decree culture

After the restoration of the Thasian democracy, further innovation in Thasian public epigraphic culture is apparent: specifically, a move towards a more 'Athenian-style' decree culture. The democracy was first restored in 407 BC, before the Spartan general Lysander

[64] Additionally, if the text were inscribed any later, it would likely have been in the form of a decree (see below).

[65] *IG* XII Suppl. 347 = OR 103 B i and ii.

[66] OR 103 ii lines 8–9.

[67] Liddel (2010) 109.

[68] For another example of the oligarchs' use of public epigraphy to assert control over Thasian public space, see *IG* XII 8 263 with *IG* XII Suppl. p. 151 = OR 177, an inscribed list of individuals (including two Neapolitans) from whom property was confiscated; Pouilloux (1954) 145–46 associates this list with the law concerning informers mentioned above.

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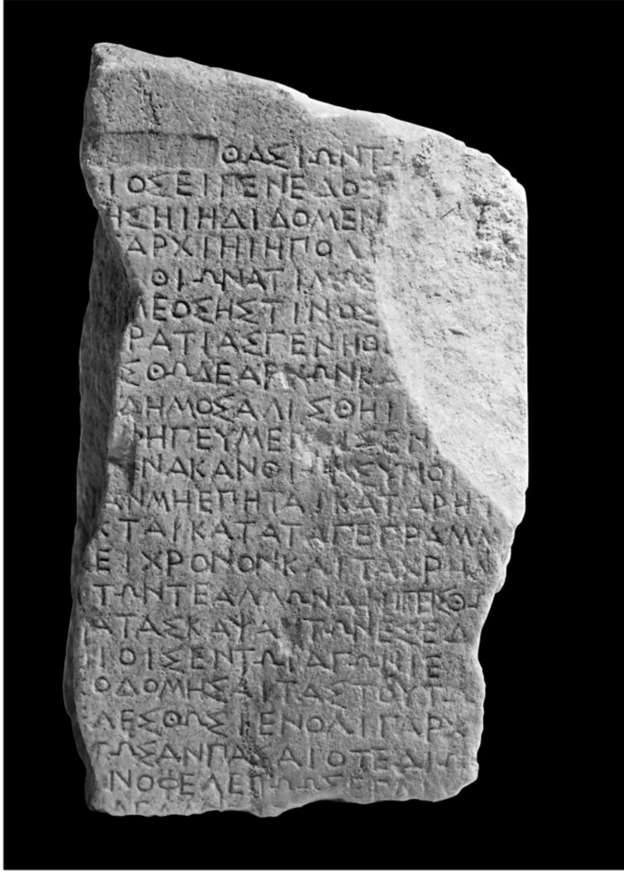

Fig. 3. Thasian decree concerning post-oligarchic reconciliation, *IG* XII 8 262 = Hamon (2019) no. 1 Fragment A. Photograph from the archive of the École française d'Athènes.

took the island in 405 BC;[69] the Thasian democrats once again gained control in the early fourth century.[70] A fragmentary inscription found at Thasos (fig. 3) is particularly interesting in this connection, as it possibly belongs to the exact moment of transition from oligarchy to democracy.[71] The document is concerned with the return of 'exiles' (οἵ τε φεύγοντες, B line 5) after an oligarchy, to which there are repeated references. It was inscribed shortly after 'the restoration of the democracy', which is possibly referred to ([δημοκ]ρατίας γενηθε[ίσης], A line 7). In a departure from earlier Thasian inscriptions, the document contains elements similar to the key linguistic components of an Athenian decree. For example, the proposer is recorded, and there is a (fragmentary) decision formula: '-ios spoke. It seemed good [to the council and the people]' ([-]ιος εἶπεν· ἔδοξ[ε τῆι βο-|λῆι καὶ τῶι δήμῶι], A lines 2–3). Like Athenian decrees, and unlike earlier Thasian documents, the text explicitly reflects the temporal context of the decision. It is also inscribed on a narrow, upright stele, in contrast to the large horizontal blocks used for some of the earlier documents. This inscription was not integrated into the monumental landscape of Thasian public space, but was an assertive, free-standing monument, perhaps on the Athenian model. Yves Grandjean and François Salviat, in fact, argue that the inscription *is* an Athenian decree, from the time of Thasos' return to the empire in 407 BC; the involvement of a community or communities other than Thasos is certainly evident in the text.[72]

I think, however, that this scenario is an unlikely one. While elements of the document look Athenian, they are not quite typical of an Athenian decree:[73] in the text just quoted, for instance, the proposer comes before the decision formula. Rather, it seems that this is

[69] Polyaenus, *Strat.* 1.45.

[70] Picard (2000).

[71] *IG* XII.8 262 with *IG* XII Suppl. p. 150; new fragment added by Grandjean and Salviat (1988) with their full text presented in *SEG* 38:851; Hamon (2019) no. 1 with discussion and extensive bibliography.

[72] The decree refers to the Akanthians (A lines 5 and 11). Additionally, the involvement of another city, which scholars have variously identified as Athens, Paros or Akanthos, is implied in the double dating formula in the final lines of fragment B: Hamon (2019) 39 summarizes the various arguments.

[73] See Gauthier (1989) no. 254.

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more likely a document of the restored Thasian democracy,[74] from the late fifth or early fourth century.[75] Julia Shear has argued that the late fifth-century Athenian oligarchs and democrats made competing epigraphic and monumental claims in Athenian public space;[76] a comparable phenomenon, it seems, can be detected on Thasos. Notably, when the restored Thasian democratic leaders erected an inscription regulating the transition from oligarchy, they chose to do so with an 'Athenian-style' decree, on a free-standing stele, in an emphatic departure from their own epichoric epigraphic culture. We cannot discount possible Athenian influence or a desire to align with Athens in the adoption of this epigraphic form (and potentially also in the shape of the underlying democratic institutions). The role of another community or communities (perhaps including Athens) in the reconciliation may have also prompted the use of the Athenian epigraphic idiom, which would have been more widely recognized beyond Thasos. But this epigraphic expression was also locally rooted, in an ideologically charged monumental dynamic particular to Thasos. The Thasians continued to inscribe decrees in the fourth century and beyond;[77] the fourth century also saw the Thasian inscription of magistrate lists, perhaps following the Athenian precedent of inscribed records of archons.[78]

Moreover, it seems that the Thasian democrats built on the lessons learned by the oligarchs about inscription as a means of asserting extra-island authority. An inscription found at the Thasian metropolis of Paros is identified by Jean Pouilloux as declaring an alliance between Thasos and Neapolis, perhaps arbitrated by Delphi.[79] Certainly a copy of the text is to be displayed there ([μ]ίαν δὲ ἐς Δελφού[ς], line 4). Some years later, the top of a stele with a sculptural relief was found at Delphi; Jean-Charles Moretti argues that this was the Delphic copy of the agreement.[80] It is likely that the alliance dates from the end of fifth century or the beginning of the fourth, after the resolution of the conflict between Thasos and Neapolis attested in the Athenian decrees for Neapolis.

The surviving text shows that the treaty was ratified by the taking of oaths, a practice used by the Athenians, although by no means exclusively. But the particular wording of the oath taken by the Neapolitans is strikingly reminiscent of those taken by recalcitrant Athenian allies returning to the empire after unsuccessful revolts.[81] It likely features a so-called 'anti-deceit clause' attested only in Athenian decrees of this period: 'I will not disobey [by any means, by any trick] or device whatsoever, either in word [or deed this oath and agreement]' (οὐ παραβ[ήσομαι οὐδενὶ τρόπωι οὔτὲ τέχνηι οὐ]-|δὲ μηχανῆι οὔτε λọ́[γωι οὔτε ἔργωι τοὺς ὅρκους τούτους καὶ τὰς συνθή]-|κας, lines 9–11).[82] The democratic Thasians, then, even more than their oligarchic competitors, appear to have followed an Athenian epigraphic precedent in the regulation of their relationship with the less powerful mainland community of Neapolis, both in terms of the oath used and its inscription and display. This was not the only inscription from around this time used to reassert Thasian claims over Neapolis: a decree found on Thasos granted citizenship to Neapolitans with Thasian mothers.[83]

[74] As already suggested by Pouilloux (1954) 162–78.

[75] As the road to democratic stability was rocky, scholars have thus variously dated this text between the late fifth and early fourth century. See, for example, Grandjean and Salviat (1988) for a fifth-century date; Picard (2000), supported by Hamon (2019), for an early fourth-century date.

[76] Shear (2011); see also Simonton (2017) chapter 4.

[77] See the examples in Hamon (2019).

[78] *IG* XII.8 271–355; Hamon (2019) 82–90.

[79] *IG* XII.5 109. See Pouilloux (1954) 178–92.

[80] Moretti (1987).

[81] For example in the treaty with Chalkis (*IG* I³ 40 = OR 131 lines 21–36).

[82] The surviving letters are enough to warrant this restoration, or something similar. The phrase 'anti-deceit clause' was coined by Wheeler (1984); see also Bolmarcich (2007) 31–33.

[83] *IG* XII 8 264 = Hamon (2019) no. 2.

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The Thasian adoption and adaptation of decrees with Athenian-style linguistic formulae and even monumental form, then, cannot be explained through Athenian imposition, but rather must be situated in the context of a number of local dynamics: Thasos' own epichoric culture of inscription, its opposition to and emulation of Athens, its territorial claims to the Thracian mainland and the competition between different internal political factions, as played out in the monumental landscape of the *polis*.

VI. Rhodes and the southeast Mediterranean

My second study focuses on another large Aegean island and prominent allied community, Rhodes.[84] Rhodes, like Thasos, adopted aspects of Athenian decree culture in the late fifth century and, like Thasos, it did so for distinct and localized reasons, among which was its need, I will argue, to maintain commercial relations with the southeast Mediterranean. I will also suggest that Rhodian decrees of the late fifth century, alongside similar decrees from nearby Iasos, can be taken as early indications of the epigraphic convergence discussed in the introduction.

For most of the fifth century, Rhodes had three constituent *poleis*: Lindos, Ialysos and Kamiros. These communities were Athenian allies until their defection and turned to oligarchy in 411 BC at the instigation of the Peloponnesians (Thuc. 8.44). In 408/7 BC, the three *poleis* synoecized (Diod. Sic. 13.75.1). This union was both physical, with a new city of Rhodes built at the northern tip of the island, and political, with the three old *poleis* becoming subordinate tribes of the new state, which would become a dominant Aegean power in the Hellenistic period.

The Rhodian *poleis* did not have a culture of public inscription before the fifth century, at least as far as we know, although inscribed dedications, funerary epitaphs and graffiti are attested.[85] There is also evidence of Rhodian writing beyond the island: two of the mercenaries who scratched their names into the façade of the temple at Abu Simbel in Egypt in the early sixth century identified themselves as being from Ialysos.[86]

The Rhodian graffiti at Abu Simbel is one of many sources attesting to extensive mobility between the southeast Mediterranean and Rhodes in the Archaic period, due to the island's strategic position and safe harbours at the southeast edge of the Aegean. According to Herodotus 2.178, for example, the Rhodian cities were founders at the Greek trading settlement of Naukratis in Egypt in the late seventh century. These links emerge even more strongly in the Hellenistic period, when the Rhodians maintained close ties with the Ptolemies (Diod. Sic. 20.81.4–82.1). We can gather that the Rhodians themselves were mobile, but that their harbours also provided a stopping place for other travellers, and thus an opportunity for the Rhodians to profit from taxation.[87]

The evidence for the maintenance of these links in the fifth century is scarcer. They were presumably disrupted by the conflict between the Athenians and the Achaimenid Empire in the first half of the century.[88] However, there is some evocative testimony for sustained relationships between the Rhodian *poleis* and Egypt in the late fifth century, and it is provided by two inscribed decrees, with a distinctive fusion of Athenian and non-Athenian characteristics.

[84] For further discussion of Rhodes' position in the Athenian Empire see Lazar (2024) chapter 5.

[85] See Blinkenberg (1936).

[86] ML 7.

[87] See Polyb. 30.31.12 for Rhodian harbour taxes in the Hellenistic period.

[88] See, for example, Thuc. 1.104, 109 and 112 for Athenian intervention in Cyprus and Egypt in the 450s BC.

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VII. The Rhodian honorific decrees

The Rhodian cities began to inscribe public documents in the final decades of the fifth century. Two fifth-century BC inscriptions survive from Kamiros, and six from Lindos (including two Lindian documents found elsewhere).[89] These consist of a fragmentary treaty, a sacred law (both kinds of documents inscribed elsewhere in the Archaic period) and five honorific documents, including two near-complete decrees awarding the honorific status of proxeny, a kind of formalized public guest-friendship, to individuals in Egypt.

The first of these decrees records a proxeny grant by the Lindians to a certain Damoxenos, who was living in Egypt:[90] 'he and his descendants are to be awarded tax exemption on imports and exports, in war and in peace' (ἀτέλε-|ιαν ἦμεν καὶ αὐτῶι | καὶ ἐκγόνοις καὶ ἐ-|σαγωγὰν καὶ ἐξαγω-|γὰν καὶ ἐμ πολέμωι | καὶ ἐν ἰρήναι, lines 10–15). It was inscribed in a *stoichēdon* pattern on a basalt stele. The stone surfaced on the market in Egypt without an excavation context but was likely found in the vicinity of Naukratis (the Hellenion sanctuary is mentioned in lines 17–18). Given that the decree was passed by the Lindians, a date before the synoecism of 408/7 BC is secure.

The second decree (fig. 4), found in the sanctuary of Athena at Lindos, makes an individual living in Egypt, perhaps an interpreter (the text is fragmentary), 'a *proxenos* of all the Rhodians' (πρόξενον | [ἦμ]εν Ῥο[δ]ίων πάντων, lines 5–6).[91] This unparalleled formulation has led to much debate about the date and origin of the text.[92] The honorand was awarded comparable honours to Damoxenos, indicating a similar date: 'he and his descendants are to have the right to enter and leave with inviolability and neutrality, both in peace and in war' (κ-|αὶ ἦμεν αὐτῶι καὶ ἔσπλ-|[ο]ṿ καὶ ἔκπλον καὶ αὐτῶ-|[ι κα]ὶ ἐκγόνοις ἀσυλὶ κ-|[αὶ ἀσ]πονδὶ καὶ πολέμο | [καὶ εἰρ]ήνης, lines 7–12).

Given the evidence of Rhodian ties with the southeast Mediterranean in the *longue durée*, it is not unexpected that Egyptian residents are the subjects of these Rhodian honorific awards.[93] However, the honorific form of the documents and their public inscription *is* surprising. Although there is evidence that honorific institutions such as proxeny were not exclusively Athenian creations,[94] the Athenians dominated the inscribed record of honorific grants in the fifth century.[95] There are very few examples of honorific inscriptions known from allied communities, or indeed from elsewhere.[96] While it is unclear to what extent the Athenians shaped the form of the underlying institutions, they were undoubtedly innovative in their culture of inscribing honorific decrees. The Athenians used the institution of proxeny in the regulation of their relations with prominent individuals both in and beyond the empire.[97]

[89] Lindos: treaty with Lyktos in Crete (Blinkenberg (1941) no. 13); fragmentary honorific document (?) (Blinkenberg (1941) no. 14); fragmentary honorific document (Blinkenberg (1941) no. 15); proxeny decree of all the Rhodians (Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16); proxeny decree of the Lindians (Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16 appendix); decree concerning the cult of Enyalios (Blümel (1991) no. 251). Kamiros: fragmentary regulations (Segre and Carratelli (1949) no. 102); fragmentary honorific document (Segre and Carratelli (1949) no. 103). Blinkenberg (1941) nos 13, 15, 16 appendix, Blümel (1991) no. 251 and Segre and Carratelli (1949) no. 103 include references to the ethnonym or toponym of Lindos or Kamiros, likely dating the documents before the synoecism.

[90] Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16 appendix lines 4–6.

[91] Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16.

[92] For example, Berthold (1984) 21; Figueira (1993) 316.

[93] For discussion of these inscriptions in their Egyptian context see Malkin (2011) 85–87; Demetriou (2012) 123–28.

[94] For instance, a Kerkyraian is identified as a *proxenos* on a late seventh-century cenotaph (ML 4). For broader studies of the institution of proxeny, see Marek (1984); Mack (2015).

[95] Low (2007) 245–48; Mack (2015) 224–25; Lambert (2018) 85.

[96] For a rare exception see *SEG* 13:239, a fifth-century proxeny decree from Argos.

[97] Fifth-century Athenian proxeny grants are collected by Walbank (1978).

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Fig. 4 Proxeny decree of all the Rhodians, Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16. Photograph from the archive of the National Museum, Denmark, AS-4219 (Open Licence).

With these two proxeny decrees, and the few other fragmentary honorific documents, Rhodes shows the highest concentration of honorific decrees in any allied community by some way. This in itself is worthy of comment. But it is even more notable when we consider the productive and distinctive epigraphic culture of Hellenistic Rhodes. Strangely, although this kind of document would become widespread in the Greek world more generally, there are no known inscribed proxeny decrees from Rhodes dated after these fifth-century examples, even though other categories of evidence show that Rhodes participated in proxeny networks in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods.[98] In fact, decrees of any kind were not a common epigraphic genre in Hellenistic Rhodes.[99] In the late fifth century, Rhodian communities inscribed honorific decrees, and then never again. Why?

Emulation of Athenian practice is likely part of the picture. As noted above, the Lindian decree awarding proxeny to Damoxenos was inscribed in *stoichēdon*. Both decrees show the distinctive linguistic markers of the Athenian decree, language not found in any later Rhodian documents.[100] For example, an Athenian-style prescript is preserved in the Lindian decree: 'it seemed good to the council and the people. Despon was secretary, Archeanax proposed' (ἔδοξε τᾶι βωλᾶι κα-|ὶ τῶι δάμωι· Δέσπων | ἐγραμμάτευε, Ἀρχε-|άναξς εἶπε, lines 1–4).[101] The Rhodian decree likely contained an adapted version referring just to the council: [ἔδοξε τᾶι β]ολᾶι (line 1).[102] This phrase perhaps indicates a date after the island's turn to oligarchy, a salient reminder that the inscription of 'Athenian-style' decrees need not correlate with the adoption of 'Athenian-style' democracy.

[98] There are records of ten grants of *proxenia* to individuals from other communities by Rhodes and 64 grants of *proxenia* to Rhodian individuals by other communities (figures from proxenies.csad.ox.ac.uk).

[99] Noted by Badoud (2015) 7. The Rhodians did begin to inscribe lists of priests at a similar time to the Thasians' inscription of magistrate lists, perhaps following an Athenian model: see Badoud (2015) 153–200 for the chronology.

[100] See Rhodes with Lewis (1997) 265–70 for the language of Rhodian decrees.

[101] See also Blümel (1991) no. 251 lines 1–4.

[102] Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16.

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Individuals from Rhodes possibly had exposure to inscribed Athenian decrees. Two fragments of the Athenian 'Standards Decree' were found on the nearby island of Syme,[103] and an Athenian decree referring to the Rhodians was found on the not-too-distant island of Karpathos.[104] There is also evidence that the Athenian proxeny network stretched to Rhodes.[105] For the Rhodians, there was perhaps a perceived connection between certain Athenian features and the inscription of public documents: if they wanted their inscription to be recognized as a communal monument by other communities, then the easiest way would presumably be to follow the widespread Athenian epigraphic idiom. Like the Athenians, they may have also had religious motivations in erecting decrees in sanctuaries.

The primary linguistic content of the Rhodian proxeny decrees, however, as well as of the fragments of the other honorific documents, owes little to an Athenian model. Much of the content repeated across these documents is unattested in fifth-century Athenian proxeny grants: the privilege of movement in and out of the harbour;[106] the specification that the honorand is to travel 'with inviolability and neutrality';[107] and the promise that the privileges are to be valid 'in peace and in war'.[108] Readers familiar with honorific and proxeny decrees of other regions and time periods will recognize these phrases. Notably, these are some of the earliest attestations of these formulae, and they are different from the only widespread inscribed honorific decree culture of the fifth century, that of Athens. They may have been present in uninscribed proxeny grants of other communities (indeed, they were soon to surface in the epigraphic record at Iasos) but the Rhodians were among the first to record them on stone.

This language shows a clear preoccupation with mobility.[109] The Rhodians used the institution of proxeny to strengthen their commercial connections, certainly in Egypt but perhaps also elsewhere. They then chose to commemorate their honouring of the individuals who maintained these connections through public inscription, an act which would have added force to the proxeny grants themselves. The Lindian decree is in fact the earliest known example of an inscribed proxeny decree found in the community of the recipient.

Liddel suggests that this flurry of documentary activity on the part of the Rhodian *poleis* could be part of an increased civic awareness in the years before the synoecism.[110] But it is interesting that the proxeny decree, and indeed the decree more generally, was not a genre favoured by the new synoecized *polis*. I argue that we need to see these decrees, with both Athenian and non-Athenian elements, as an expression of the liminal position Rhodes occupied in the late fifth century, at the interface of the Athenian Aegean and the southeast Mediterranean. There was revolt in Egypt and conflict in the eastern Aegean, so the phrases 'with inviolability and neutrality' and 'in peace and in war' may have had real efficacy.[111] These unstable circumstances may in fact have provided the impetus for the Rhodians' unusual inscription of the decrees, in an attempt to sustain their vital

[103] *IG* I^3 1453 = OR 155.

[104] *IG* I^3 1454 = OR 136 = Attic Inscriptions Online 954.

[105] *Agora XVI* 37 1 with Robert and Robert (1949) 104–05.

[106] ἐσαγωγὰν καὶ ἐξαγωγὰν in Blinkenberg (1941) no. 14 line 4; no. 15 lines 10–11; no. 16 appendix lines 12–14. ἔσπλ[ο]ṿ καὶ ἔκπλο in Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16 lines 8–9.

[107] Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16 lines 10–11: ἀσυλὶ κ[αὶ ἀσ]πονδὶ; Segre and Carratelli (1949) no. 103 lines 7–8: ἀσυλεὶ [καὶ ἀσπονδ]ẹὶ.

[108] Blinkenberg (1941) no. 16 lines 11–12: πολέμο [καὶ εἰρ]ήνης; no. 16 appendix lines 14–15: ἐμ πολέμωι καὶ ἐν ἰρήναι.

[109] For a discussion of local specificity in the form of proxeny decrees at Delos see Constantakopoulou (2017) chapter 4, with an overview of local studies of proxeny grants at p. 113.

[110] Liddel (2010) 111.

[111] For the Egyptian revolt from Persia, see Briant (2002) 619.

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commercial relations. Given that the same commercial relations made Rhodes a valuable ally for Athens (they no doubt contributed to the Rhodian cities' high tribute assessment in earlier years),[112] the inscription of these decrees was also not a straightforward act of anti-Athenian resistance or competition.

VIII. Towards epigraphic convergence?

This epigraphic phenomenon was limited in a Rhodian context, as decrees were not a key part of the epigraphic culture of the synoecized *polis* in later periods; but, as I will explore in the final part of this article, it was arguably part of a broader epigraphic trend in the region.

Shortly after the Rhodian examples, proxeny decrees with very similar language were inscribed at nearby Iasos in coastal Karia. In three decrees inscribed on a marble doorpost, and a further decree on a block found in the agora, all likely dated to the early fourth century and among the earliest public documents inscribed at Iasos,[113] the citizens of Iasos awarded proxeny and related honours to individuals from elsewhere in Karia (including one Knidian).[114] An Athenian-style prescript is visible in three of the four documents and was probably also present in the fragmentary fourth. But three of the four decrees contain variations on privileges concerning movement in and out of the harbour, in language similar to that of the Rhodian decrees, and specify that these privileges are to hold in war and in peace (for example, εἰσαγωγὴν καὶ ἐξαγωγὴν καὶ | ἐμ πολέμωι καὶ ἐν εἰρήνηι, *SEG* 36:982 A lines 4–5).[115] As I have described above, this language is not attested in fifth-century Athenian proxeny grants.

Iasos was a short sail away from Rhodes, and a significant harbour in its own right. Did the Iasians, integrated into the same local networks as the Rhodians (and indeed the Knidians, one of whom was honoured at Iasos), independently choose to monumentalize honorific diplomatic interactions which were occurring more widely?[116] Or were the Iasians directly influenced by the epigraphic culture of Rhodes, the most prominent and well-connected community in the region? Were the Iasians competing with the Rhodians, and perhaps other communities, through their use of honorific institutions to strengthen their inter-*polis* ties, and honorific inscriptions to adorn their public spaces (which the Iasians did in their own innovative way)? Direct interaction with Athenian epigraphic culture may have played a role at an earlier stage, but by the time the Iasians inscribed these documents they likely would have been under the control of the Hekatomnids.[117] Once the Athenian epigraphic idiom had spread through the empire, mechanisms independent of Athenian control might have supported its further diffusion.

Whatever the case, I argue that this cluster of early inscribed proxeny decrees from Rhodes and Iasos is significant, and potentially grants a snapshot of the beginnings of convergence in epigraphic culture described in the introduction. A regional pattern is evident: clearly, a particular language of proxeny was in use, one conditioned by the needs of these coastal communities. Around the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the fourth, these communities began to see the benefits of monumentalizing their honorific

[112] Lazar (2024) 189–90. For Athenian consideration of diverse resources in tribute assessment, including local taxes on mobility, see Nixon and Price (1990).

[113] A sacred law concerning the priest of Zeus Megistos (Blümel (1985) no. 220) is also dated to around this time.

[114] *SEG* 36:982–83 with Frei and Marek (1997) 56 n.134 for the fourth-century date.

[115] See also *SEG* 36:982 C lines 9–10; *SEG* 36:983 lines 11–13.

[116] Ma (2003) employs the concept of 'peer-polity interaction' to explain the spread of institutions in the Hellenistic world; Mack (2015) chapter 3 identifies regional patterns in what he terms 'proxeny networks' and discusses the role of trade in creating them.

[117] Hornblower (1982) 34–36.

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relationships through public inscription. This was not a solely regional phenomenon, however, as the documents were influenced by the linguistic markers of Athenian decrees. These were documents which by their nature had to be recognizable in contexts beyond the community which inscribed them, and the Athenian epigraphic idiom was presumably the most widely known way of marking an inscription as a communal monument. The process of epigraphic convergence had a long way to go before reaching the virtual homogeneity of Hellenistic decree cultures, but at this moment in the early fourth-century southeast Aegean, we can see how different local and supra-local factors might bring about commonalities in inscribing across *poleis*.

XI. Conclusion

In the introduction to this article, I asked what impact Athens' unprecedented culture of public inscription in the fifth century BC had on epigraphic cultures in other communities. I maintain that an impact can be identified, but that it cannot be envisaged as homogenous. Allied communities interacted with the epigraphic manifestations of Athenian authority in different ways and produced diverse epigraphic responses (or, at least, a handful of communities with the necessary resources did). The complexity of motivation now commonly assumed by scholars in analysis of Athenian public epigraphic culture should be applied to consideration of public inscription in other communities, even when these communities produced documents which to some extent emulated Athenian decrees. Epichoric cultures of inscription, the monumental landscape of the community in question, local and regional networks; these are the kinds of factors, I suggest, which should be taken into account alongside any diverse interactions with Athens, when explaining late fifth-century epigraphic cultures beyond Athens. This analysis also has potential implications for our understanding of the heterogenous nature of fifth-century Athenian power more broadly, and of the varied mechanisms by which Athenian cultural forms spread throughout the empire.

But recognition of these kinds of complex and interrelated factors can also help to reconfigure our understanding of epigraphic development in the *longue durée*. We should not explain the imbalance in the fifth-century epigraphic record through Athenian suppression of inscription elsewhere. Rather, we should track how the innovative use of inscription at Athens began to impact on the diversity of archaic epigraphic cultures, producing a diversity of new kinds of epigraphic response. The movement towards Hellenistic epigraphic productivity and homogeneity was only in its infancy at the end of the fifth century, but we can already see how forces at the level of the *polis*, region and supra-local power might begin to produce commonalities in public epigraphic cultures across different communities.

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