

Foreign Rulers in Athenian Honorific Decrees of the Fourth Century BC

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Introduction. In 394, Athens honored, early in the Corinthian War, Dionysios, the tyrant of Syracuse, perhaps attempting to win him over to the anti-Spartan side; in 336, Philip II of Macedon was assassinated two years after Chaironeia and the last glimmers of the Classical period faded (and with them Athenian power). In the period bookended by these dates, Athens attempted through various strategies to regain its preeminence, maintain the Second Athenian League (after 378), feed its citizens, and finally resist Macedon. At home, the democracy flourished, and we know a good deal about how it functioned in the fourth century.¹ This paper is a consideration of about a dozen Athenian honorific decrees from the period between 394 and 336 BC.

The decrees are all connected in some way to foreign rulers – that is, kings, tyrants, and other powerful individuals – and not the inhabitants of typical Greek *poleis*. The aim has been to look at the point of these decrees individually and as a group, not to construct a broad, systematic argument about relations between Athens and monarchical states during the fourth century. This approach leaves out, of course, a good deal of evidence, and is woefully inadequate to the goal of holistically understanding Athenian foreign policy, but it does allow a close examination, in their historical context, of the actual decrees, which might otherwise be lost except as

¹ Hansen 1999 [1991].

footnotes to support a wider argument.

Dionysios of Syracuse. Three of the inscriptions² relate to Dionysios I, tyrant of Syracuse. Between 395 and 386, Thebes, Corinth, Argos, and Athens fought against Sparta; the struggle is a dramatic tale full of shifting loyalties.³ One of the relatively minor players was Dionysios. In earlier times, he sided with Sparta, who also gave him military assistance in his ventures against the Carthaginian presence in Sicily. But in the early stages of the Corinthian war – ostensibly as he was preparing to dispatch his navies in support of Sparta⁴ - Athens evidently launched some sort of campaign to win Dionysios over. We have two pieces of this. First, the story that Konon persuaded Dionysios not to send his fleet, and second, inscription no. 1. This is an incomplete decree passed by the boule in 394/3.⁵ After the prescript, the decree praises (ἐπαινέσαι, l. 6) Dionysios, his brothers Leptines and Thearides, and his brother-in-law Polyxenos. The most noteworthy feature of the decree, aside from its existence, is the precise terminology used to describe Dionysios. He is “Διονύσιον τὸν Συκελίας ἄρχοντα” (l. 6-7). In actual fact Dionysios was a normal tyrant. He came to power in 405 shortly after being chosen (in 406) as the chief general, a position which he used to obtain a bodyguard, seize and fortify the strong points in Syracuse, and generally take control. Nevertheless, already in 394, the Athenians address him as “ἄρχων,” a more dignified

2 My nos. 1-3 (IG II² 18, 103, and 105). Rhodes and Osborne 2003 nos. 10, 33, and 34. Latter two are Bertrand 1992 nos. 46-7.

3 Buckler 2003: 75-183.

4 Buckler 2003: 132.

5 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 48-51.

title that he did not really “deserve.” Moreover, he is the archon not of Syracuse but of Sicily – this even though the Carthaginians controlled over a third of the island.

Particularly in the context of the Corinthian War, this all smacks of an attempt to curry favor from him. And, as pointed out above, it worked (or, rather, was part of a scheme that worked; one imagines that a “born leader of men”⁶ like Dionysios would hardly alter his policy towards Athens just because they honored him). Nevertheless, Dionysios does not show up again in my set of inscriptions until 369, a quarter of a century later. In the meantime, he never seems to have formed any sort of alliance with the Athenians, and a few years after our decree he did end up sending a small fleet to assist Sparta.⁷

The second two decrees form a pair. In 369, Athens and Sparta allied, paving the way for improved relations between Athens and Dionysios. Later the same year, in fact, the Athenians evidently began to make overtures in that direction, and we have the resultant honorific decree, no. 2. The Athenians again praise (ἐπαινέσαι, l. 18) Dionysios, including this time his sons, because they have been good men (ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί, l. 19-20) and have maintained or supported the King's Peace (βοηθοῦσιν τῆι βασιλέως εἰρήνῃ, l. 23-4). Dionysios is still the “archon of Sicily.” The Athenians also crown the three with golden crowns of 1,000 drachmas each (presumably; the crown for Dionysios himself had been voted in an earlier decree – l. 27) and send them off to Sicily, on account of their ἀνδραγαθία and φιλία. They are furthermore given citizenship and

6 *OCD*³, s.v. Dionysius I, p. 477.

7 Buckler 2003: 164-5.

πρόσοδος to the boule and demos. All of this adds up, of course, to a considerable expense (although this set of honors, about the highest Athens could bestow, is hardly unprecedented⁸).

Another revealing part of this decree is that fact that the first issue mentioned is a letter sent by Dionysios concerning “the building of the temple and the peace.” The temple in question is probably the temple of Apollo at Delphi, and the peace is the King's Peace, imposed by Persia, that was supposed to preserve the autonomy of all Greek poleis and prevent war, which evolved over the fourth century.⁹ Athens refers these issues to the assembly of its allies (in the Second Athenian League), rather than, for example, taking the stance of the fifth-century Athenian Empire by imposing its decisions on the 'allies'. This is of course part of the generally much more mild nature of the fourth-century institution.¹⁰ But is it not, too, reasonable to think that, coming only a few lines before Athens' affirmation of the crown it voted for Dionysios, it is meant to reassure him that Athens was not going to make a bid to regain sole control of the seas, the very issue Dionysios must have been most concerned about when it came to Athenian power?

The second of the decrees is almost entirely a treaty of alliance, but it also contains a standard commendation clause. Dionysios is to be praised because he has gone on being an ἄνηρ ἀγαθός towards the Athenians and their allies.

8 Henry 1983, chs. I, II, III, VI.

9 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 164-5; Buckler 2003; Buckler and Beck 2008.

10 Cargill 1981.

Evagoras of Salamis. In the same year as the first decree, 394, Athens also honored Evagoras, who like Dionysios was essentially a tyrant but gained respectability over time.¹¹ He ruled as king over Salamis and some surrounding parts of Cyprus; like Dionysios he hoped to eventually rule the entire island, and, again like Dionysios, this never transpired. The inscription giving him honors is extremely fragmentary.¹² All that can be gotten from the decree is that he was declared an ἀἴο ἀγαθός (l. 5), was referred to in connection with the title βασιλεύς (l. 16), was probably given a statue and a crown (ll. 20 and 29), and some other honors (perhaps proxeny, euergesy, and so on) both for him and his descendants.

This decree is easy to explain, since its date, nature, and the fact that it mentions Konon all point towards rewarding Evagoras for his part in the battle of Knidos, the sea battle at the start of the Corinthian War in which a combined Athenian/Persian fleet obliterated the Spartan navy. Evagoras had hosted Konon in the years after Aigospotamoi and was instrumental in setting him up as admiral for the Persians.

Orontes, Satrap of Mysia. Orontes was the satrap of Mysia during the Satraps' Revolt of the 360s.¹³ Not very much is known about him. There is also another Orontes, probably his descendant, who was satrap of Armenia in 331; it is generally assumed

11 OCD³ and Brill's New Pauly, s.v. Evagoras.

12 No. 4: IG II² 20, Rhodes and Osborne no. 11.

13 Debord 1999: 342ff.

that our next decree¹⁴ is about the former Orontes, but it is not impossible that it should actually refer to the latter. The problem is even more complicated because there were actually several important people named Orontes in the early and middle parts of the century.¹⁵ In any case, it is probably (but again: not certainly) dates from 349/8, and most scholars concur that it is about the Mysian satrap.

In any case, Orontes – the first one – seems to have participated only in the first part of the Satraps' Revolt, and he then more or less disappears aside from our inscription.¹⁶ It is thus assumed that he went on being satrap until the early 340s, when he moved to Athens. In the decree, the assembly apparently praises him as an ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (l. 5), crown him with a 1,000-drachma gold crown (l. 7-8), and make him an Athenian (l. 6, possibly including his descendants). This whole issue is rather puzzling. In the 370s, this Orontes was in charge of a fleet sent against Athens' erstwhile friend, Evagoras.¹⁷ We don't seem to have any record of other contact between Orontes and Athens, so it is hard to see what benefit Athens reaped from him.

Hebryzelmis, King of the Odrysai. The Odrysian kingdom was a Thracian political entity that controlled at various points much of the land between Amphipolis and Byzantium, stretching northwards into what is now Bulgaria (where its base of power was).¹⁸ Our honorific decree is from 386, a period of renewal. King Hebryzelmis

14 No. 5: IG II² 207 and no. 2 in Lambert 2006; I follow Lambert's text (p. 124) for fragment *a*.

15 Lambert 2006: 126-7; Debord 1999: 149ff.

16 Debord 1999:350-2.

17 Debord 1999: 280-1.

18 May 1950: 4, 16, and *passim*.

himself evidently reigned only from 390/89 – 383.¹⁹ However, he situated himself at Kypsela, located somewhere north of Ainos near the Hebros river. Ainos was a commercially important city traditionally within the Athenian sphere of influence (although it did not join the League until 375).²⁰ A strong Odrysian presence along the Hebros, an important trade route, was thus detrimental to its fortunes; and this may be one reason Athens was keen to keep him friendly. Furthermore, Kypsela itself may have at least partially dependent on Ainos.²¹

The honors conveyed on Hebryzelmis by this decree²² were not especially substantial. He is praised as an ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (l. 7) and given all the same unspecified honors that the Athenians had given his ancestors: ...[κα]ὶ ἐ<̂>ναὶ αὐτῶι ἄπερ τοῖς π[ρογό]- | νοι[ς] ἄπα[ν]τ[α]” (ll. 8-9). What these were I do not know. However, a remarkable feature shows up towards the end. The decree specifies that three men are to be chosen from the Athenians to go to Hebryzelmis and inform him of the decree (ll. 17ff). This clearly is not unique (for example, the second decree in honor of Dionysios includes provisions for actually sending him the crown voted by the assembly) but I have not found any other examples of it, so it must have been quite rare to explicitly arrange for the announcement of an honorific decree. Obviously, the Athenians wanted to be sure that Hebryzelmis found out about his honors as quickly as possible in order to minimize the economic damage to Athens and its allies in the League.²³ It also paved

19 390: May 1950: 184-5; 389: Topalov 1994.

20 OCD³ s.v. Aenus; Isaac 1986: 140ff.

21 Hansen and Nielsen 2005: 878.

22 No. 6: IG II² 31.

23 Decline in Ainos' prosperity during this time: May 1950 ch. 6. But see too Isaac 1986: 155 for words of caution.

the way for further diplomatic successes in the region, perhaps including the Chalkidian entrance into the Second Athenian League in 375.²⁴

Arybbas, King of the Molossoi. Our sixth text²⁵ is not a standard honorific decree (although it does reaffirm an earlier decree and bestows a new honor) but rather established a sort of protocol for handling the arrival in Athens of Arybbas, in person, after Philip II expelled him from his kingdom (essentially Epirus) in 343/2.²⁶ The decree begins by affirming that the citizenship and “[αἰ ἄλλαῖ δ] | ωρεῖαί” (ll. 4-5) given to his father and grandfather still hold, and that he has access to the boule and assembly, and should not be wronged by any Athenian. He is to be invited to the prytaneion for dinner, and anyone who kills him shall be treated as if they had killed an Athenian. (This last seems a logical result of 'being an Athenian', but in fact was part of a distinct class of honors, protection.²⁷) Finally, as if an afterthought, the text of the decree ends: ἐπιμελεῖσθ[αι δ] | ἐ καὶ τοὺς στρατηγού[ς οἱ ἄ] | ν στρατεγῶσι ὅπως Ἄρ[ύββα] | ς καὶ οἱ παῖδες αὐτοῦ [κομί] | σωνται τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν [πατρ] | ώιαν (ll. 42-7). As far as we know no action was ever actually taken towards the promised restoration, although Rhodes and Osborne suggest that it may have seemed a credible promise at the time to the anti-Macedonian faction in Athens.²⁸

24 Bertrand 1992: 85.

25 No. 7: IG II² 226, Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 70.

26 Cargill 1981: 92-3; Cawkwell 1978: 115. But see, *contra*, Errington 1975 who seems unable to fathom the idea that somewhere along the line “went into exile” was reported as “died,” although his dating of Arybbas' exile to 349 makes good sense otherwise and may ultimately be right.

27 For which see Henry 1983: ch. 5, specifically 168ff (on the same τιμωρία).

28 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 354.

This decree is to be explained in two ways. First, aside from this last bit, no particular consideration of Arybbas comes through. He was already an honorary Athenian citizenship, since that grant was apparently made to his father and grandfather, each presumably including the standard clause that it applies to the honorand's descendants. He is not further praised as a good man, given a crown, or any other typical honor. Thus, the decree is mostly a reaffirmation of already extant grants and serves only to welcome Arybbas and express Athens' friendship towards him.

But the last few lines highlight the second avenue of support he evidently had. This is 343 BC, in the middle of the tense years following the ratification of the Peace of Philokrates before the resumption of war. Demosthenes had recently delivered the Second Philippic and would soon give the Third; public opinion in Athens was divided between the pro-and anti-Macedonian groups. The arrival of Arybbas, who could make a very strong case to be the 'rightful' king of Molossia, would have been seen by Demosthenes and his ilk as a potentially useful event. They could not only strike against Philip indirectly by attacking his toady²⁹ in Molossia, but also gain a powerful ally in Arybbas if he regained his kingdom. Why this never happened might be a mystery but it could simply be due to the fact that Arybbas died in 342.³⁰ If he did not, however (and we can not be sure), then the reason is probably to be sought in a quite reasonable hesitation to openly defy Philip without actually restarting the war, which few would have wanted.

29 Cawkwell 1978: 115, 179.

30 Errington 1975: 49.

Two Pelagonians. Texts seven and eight concern two Pelagonians.³¹ The first of them, which *IG* only dates “ante 353” but Rhodes and Osborne (following D. M. Lewis) put in 371,³² declares the king of the Pelagonians (whose name is lost aside from the initial Π in l. 4 and is otherwise unknown) a proxenos and euergetes of the Athenians. The second is more detailed; it is for not the king, but someone “probably related”³³ to him, named Menelaos. The context of this decree is the war Athens waged in the 360s to recover Amphipolis (founded by them shortly before the Peloponnesian War began but then lost to Brasidas in 424³⁴), which ended in failure and alienated some of its former allies in the region, the Chalkidians.³⁵ Oddly enough, at this time Macedon and Athenians were cooperating militarily, and it is from this background that Menelaos comes along. In 363, he assisted the Athenian general Timotheus monetarily and by fighting with the Athenians himself against the Chalkidians and Amphipolis, and in return for this, he was brought before the assembly that winter and praised for being a good man and for benefiting the Athenians. An amendment specified that he was to be written up as an euergetes, since his ancestors were (ll 21-23, heavily restored).

These inscriptions could be cast in a variety of lights depending on whether or not the two are actually related, how much that relation effected the Athenians' attitude towards Menelaos (not very much, it would appear, although the fact that his ancestors

31 Nos. 8-9: *IG II²* 190 and 110. The latter is Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 38.

32 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 195.

33 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 194.

34 Thuc. 4.106.

35 Cargill 1981: 168; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 194.

were euergetai is very interesting), and what year the first inscription is from. My view, however, is that the latter seems to be a fairly ordinary *quid pro quo* honorific decree: Menelaos assisted the Athenians, they praised him. (And later he apparently returned to Athens permanently and helped them fight against Philip.³⁶) The first is so terse that it almost seems like a diplomatic courtesy of some sort. In any event, it does not tell us very much about Athenian relations with foreign rulers without extensive speculation.

Archonides and Demon of Herbita. The next pair of honorands are even more obscure. Archonides and Demon of Herbita – a small polis in Sicily (exact location unknown)³⁷ – are written up as proxenoi and euergetai.³⁸ The inscription is dated to 385, but Henry puts the actual decree in the late fourth century.³⁹ He does not explain why, but presumably it is because the text is grammatically quite irregular, the amendment is unusually formulated, and the wording of the proxeny grant is atypical for the fourth century.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the fact that the decree was (as everyone seems to agree) inscribed in 385 implies that it was still important in that year.

The Archonides of the decree is presumably the same Archonides who was ruler of Herbita in 403.⁴¹ However, it is not entirely clear to what extent Herbita was ruled by him, as against being democratic, since Diodoros writes about the Herbitaians and the

36 Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 195, where they reference Dem. 4.27.

37 Hansen and Nielsen 2005: 198.

38 No. 10: IG I³ 228 = IG II² 32.

39 Henry 1983: 123. He suggests 435-415 in an endnote (following Walbank, 1978, *Athenian Proxenies of the Fifth Century B.C.*).

40 Henry 1983 ch. 4.

41 Hansen and Nielsen 2005: 198.

demos of the Herbitaians concluding peace agreements with Dionysios.⁴² In any event, since we do not know when the original decree was passed – was it connected to the Sicilian Expedition? later, earlier? Totally unrelated to the Peloponnesian war? - it is difficult to conclude that this decree was particularly important, especially since Herbita was a tiny polis of little importance.

The Spartocids. Our last decree touches on an area that is far too complicated and broad to discuss in even summary fashion. The relationship between Aegean Greece and the Black Sea in the fourth century is complicated especially by the peculiar nature of the Greek presence in the Black Sea itself. The interface between the “Greek” and “non-Greek” elements in the *poleis* of the region (and the Bosporan kingdom) was complicated and by no means constant.⁴³ The Black Sea was the last region of the Greek world to be colonized and

So it is inevitable that I will be unable to explore the decree for Spartocus and his brothers fully.⁴⁴ This is the only surviving Athenian honorific decree for the Spartocids, but for a variety of reasons we can be positive that there were others, possibly several or even many, before it. In ll. 22-5, the decree gives to Spartocus the same grants that the Athenians gave to Satyros and Leukon (his grandfather and father, who ruled from 433

42 Diod. 14.16.1 and 14.78.7, referenced in Hansen and Nielsen.

43 Burstein 2006.

44 This is no. 11: IG II² 212. Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 64. There are many other Athenian decrees of interest in this connection, and although I won't discuss them specifically, it would be necessary to refer to them to actually get the Black Sea region's relations with Athens in this period: IG II² 408, 363 (nos. 81 and 84 in Lambert 2007), not to mention inscriptions unrelated to Athens such as those discussed in Tokhtas'ev 2006, Burnstein 1976, Hagemajer Allen 2003, Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 65, and elsewhere.

until ca. 389 and then from 389 to 349); likewise, in Demosthene's *Πρὸς Λεπτίνην*, the honors granted by the Athenians to Leukon are made much of. “[Leptines' proposed law] therefore takes away from Leucon, ruler [ἄρχων] of the Bosphorus, and his children the award that you gave them.”⁴⁵

It is clear, then, that there existed a long tradition (in 347, the year of our decree) going back until at least the beginning of the century and in actual fact probably until before the Peloponnesian War,⁴⁶ of cordial relations between Athens and the Bosporan kingdom.⁴⁷ This was a mutually profitable situation, since the Athenians brought a huge amount of trade to the Bosphoros, and on their grain purchases they did not have to pay tax. The relationship is all too easily simplified to this commercial exchange on grain alone. In fact, however, there was a brisk trade in all sorts of goods, including the export in all periods of Athenian pottery and other “luxury” goods.⁴⁸ Undoubtedly grain was Athens' major interest in the Bosphoros region and hence the most important thing about the relationship, but there was more to it than this.

However, the focus on grain is borne out by moving at last to the inscription at hand. It dates from shortly after Spartocus inherited from his father Leukon. It is a reaffirmation on both sides that the good relations enjoyed in the past will continue (ll. 20ff) and conveys significant honors on the recipients: commendation (l. 12), the declaration that they are ἀδρὲς ἀγαθοί (l. 13), and regular crowning with 1,000-

45 Dem. 20.29 (Trans. Harris 2008: 31).

46 Burstein 2006: 142-4.

47 See also Braund 2003.

48 As Burstein 2006: 144 mystifyingly calls them.

drachma gold crowns (ll. 24-6). The rest of the decree consists of instructions for handling these expenses, paying off an outstanding debt owed by Athens to the Spartocids, and effusively thanking them for the export of grain – well-deserved, since the Athenians had received “incalculable quantities” of the stuff thanks to the Spartocids.⁴⁹

Conclusion. In the case of citizen honorands, doing good works to the city (loaning or giving money, etc.) is probably the most common cause for an honorific decree; foreigners are honored for a more spread-out range of reasons.⁵⁰ As is well known, the main purpose of an honorific decree is to encourage the sort of behavior being honored. This is obvious not only from the inscriptions themselves but also from the ancient discourse about them. For example, Demosthenes 20 is loaded with *quid pro quo* language. Inscriptions themselves also frequently contain clauses to the effect of “honor X so that everyone may see that Athens honors its benefactors just as they deserve” - thus compacting both the reciprocal nature of the honorific system and the idea that the rewards will be proportional to the benefits.⁵¹ Finally, a fact that is receiving more attention nowadays,⁵² the actual inscription of an honorific decree itself constitutes an honor.

But the case of kings is not well explained by this; a private citizen, competing in

49 Tokhtas'ev 2006: 40.

50 Gauthier 1985 reviews this whole issue from a quite broad diachronic perspective, although I haven't been able to make much use of his work.

51 See Henry 1996 on a specific type of these clauses.

52 Gauthier 1985: 18; Lambert 2006: 116.

the agonistic political arena, might be easily motivated by public recognition, and foreigners often had something to gain from their deeds anyway. But kings – for example Dionysios or Leukon – are hardly going to be persuaded to make important policy decisions because the Athenians gave them a crown and called them good men. (Although being given Athenian citizenship, even though it shows up in many of our decrees, was a fairly rare and important honor, which undoubtedly would have been a point of pride for many of its recipients.⁵³) Instead, I think that the inscriptions we have, giving honors to tyrants and kings, are best understood as a kind of diplomatic courtesy. Some of them are less well-explained in this way than others; for example Evagoras' honors are quite profuse and are clearly a quite honest expression of deep Athenian gratitude for his part in helping them erase the shame of Aigospotamoi by destroying the Spartan fleet at Knidos.

In general, however, this position is borne out by the similarity between the decrees. Of the reasons stated in the decrees as motivation for the honors, almost all of them (7-10 are the exceptions, and of them, 7 isn't a simple honorific decree, 9 isn't for a king, and 10 may represent an earlier decree and the honorand may not actually be an autocratic ruler, and the “ἐπειδή” clause is in any case lost in the lacuna) give ἄνῆρ ἀγαθὸς ἐστὶ,” and only the second decree for Dionysios gives other motivations (ἀνδραγαθία and φιλία) besides that. “Ἄνῆρ ἀγαθὸς ἐστὶ” is probably the vaguest term of approval in honorific decrees,⁵⁴ and while we can speculate about the historical

53 Lambert 2006: 115.

54 Veligianni-Terzi 1997: 247-54 and elsewhere.

situation lying behind a particular decree, without at least some external information it is usually impossible to know what behavior the Athenians are praising (in these decrees). Thus, their existence smacks more of a diplomatic formality, the omission of which would be an offense, than a genuine attempt to exhort such behavior in the future.

Finally, then, I conclude that these decrees honoring foreign rulers reveal that Athenian foreign policy vis-a-vis such states was conducted with remarkable impartiality. The honors and commendations given to somewhat Hellenized tyrants such as Evagoras and the Spartocids, foreign kings like Arybbas and Hebryzelmis, and even a Persian satrap are very similar.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ See on a similar note but looking at a totally different problem, Hagemajer Allen 2003: 242-3.