Re-dating the Athenian Empire

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Option H  Greece:  The Greek World 500 – 400 BC Development of Athens and the Athenian Empire
Option G  Pericles  Evaluation
What I will discuss

- The nature of the problem & why it is important
- The history of the 3-bar sigma debate – the “sigma-enigma”*
- New dating criteria
- Old & new dates
- 2 case studies
- Dating imperialism

* A. Henry, ZPE 120 (1998) 45-8

Cavalcade. Block II from the west frieze of the Parthenon, ca. 447–433 B.C.
The nature of the problem & why it is important

* Our understanding of the Athenian Empire is based upon three types of evidence:
  1. Texts, including Thucydides, Plutarch, Xenophon, Diodorus Siculus, plays etc
  2. Archaeology, including artefacts such as coins
  3. Inscriptions

* There has been a tendency to privilege the first type of evidence, especially Thucydides, with absence of evidence often being seen as significant

* Epigraphical evidence from inscriptions can pose interpretive difficulties due to missing or damaged sections, especially dates which rely mainly on the name of the eponymous Archon being preserved. In the absence of this, epigraphists have relied upon other criteria
The history of the 3-bar sigma debate

- ATL published in 1939
- Used the 3-bar sigma lettering criterion which held that no Athenian public document containing this form (as opposed to the Ionic 4-bar sigma) could predate the year 446 B.C. (= date of last aparchē inscription – IG I3 265)
- Cf use of ‘tailed rho’
- From 1961, Harold Mattingly alone opposed
- In 1990, Chambers, Gallaci & Spanos used photo-enhancement & laser scanning to argue that the archon on the Egesta decree was [Ant]iphon (418/7 B.C.), not [Ha]bron (dated 458/7 B.C.).
- It took until 2010 for this to be widely accepted

Athenian tribute lists in the Athens Epigraphical Museum. It is worth remembering how much is restored, and missing! Cf. Stroud 2006
New dating criteria

• Historical contextualisation should always take precedence over other considerations.

• Grammatical observations can be good guidelines: similarity in diction, syntax, idioms and *similia* offer good comparison anchors.

• Archon names appear in the prescripts of Attic decrees from 421/0 onwards. Clearly something caused the Athenians to reorganise their bureaucratic protocol (perhaps the Peace of Nicias).

  (Papazarkadas 2009, 68)

But, not every 5th-century inscription *must* be down-dated; it only means that the later date cannot be ruled out on account of its letter forms.

  (Rhodes 2008, 503)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M&amp;L</th>
<th>IG I³</th>
<th>M&amp;L date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>469-50</td>
<td>Phaselis</td>
<td>Compelling court cases to be held at Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>11. a</td>
<td>458/7</td>
<td>(S)Egesta</td>
<td>Involvement in Sicily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>c. 453/2</td>
<td>Erythrae</td>
<td>Allied submission - requirement for members of the League to bring offerings to Great Panathenaia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>c. 448</td>
<td>Athena Nike</td>
<td>Acropolis building program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1453 + ors</td>
<td>450-46</td>
<td>Coinage etc</td>
<td>Enforcing the use of Athenian coins, weights and measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>447 ?</td>
<td>Tribute (Clinias)</td>
<td>Tightening up tribute collection – allies as cash cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>447/6 ?</td>
<td>Colophon</td>
<td>Treaty imposing democracy</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>Chalcis</td>
<td>Oath of loyalty to Athens</td>
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Key decrees – new dating

<table>
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[ἔδοχσεν τει βολεί καὶ τοί] [δὲ]μο[ι·...] 1
[.....ἔπεστάτει..8].ικος είπε· [τει]
[Ἀθεναίαι τει Νί]κει χιέρεαν ή έ γν[C]
[.....11.....]ι εχς Ἀθεναίον ἅπτισσ[ο]
[ν...7....].σθαι καὶ το ήπερον θυροσσ- 5
ι καθ’ ο τι ἂν Καλλικράτες χυγαράφος-
ει· ἀπομισθοσαι δὲ τός πολετας ἐπι τ-
ες Λεοντίδος πρυτανείας· φέρεν δὲ τ-
ἐν χιέρεαν πεντέκοντα δραχμάς καὶ
tά σκέλε καὶ τά δέρματα φέρεν τον ἐ- 10
μοσίον· νεόν δὲ οίκοδομεσαι καθότι
ἄν Καλλικράτες χυγαράφ᾿ καὶ βο-
μὸν λἴθινον. νας.

ἥεσταῖος είπε· τρες ἀνδρας ἥελεσθ-
αι εγ ρολες· τούτος δὲ μετ[ὰ] Καλλικρά- 15
[το]ς χυγαράφοςαντας ἐπ[.....10......]
[..4..]ει καθ’ ο τι ἀπομ[ισθόθησεται..]
[.....6....] ει [.] ος [.....18........]
Case studies

IG I$^3$ 35 – Athena Nike decree

[...].ikos proposed: to select (or: establish) as a priestess for Athena Nike whoever will be [allotted] from all Athenian women and to provide the sanctuary with doors in whatever way Kallikrates will specify; and the poletai are to place the contract within the prytany of Leontis; the priestess is to receive fifty drachmai and to receive the backlegs and hides of the dêmosios sacrifices; and that a temple be built in whatever way Kallikrates may specify and a stone (marble) altar. vac. Hestiaios proposed: that three men be selected from the boulê; and that they will make the specifications with Kallikrates and [.....] in accordance with [the contracts...]

- The polis decided to honour Athena with new sacrifices
- Paid by the dēmos to garner her support or thank her for victory
- Radical step of creating a new priestess selected from all Athenians (not a genē)
- Glorious new temple and altar
- Priestess appointed for life and renumerated by perquisites + 50 drachmae. p.a.
• *Post quem* is 448 when the Acropolis building program was conceived. The embellishment of the cult of Athena Nike and the construction of her temple are part of this.

• *Ante quem* is *IG* I³ 36 which refers explicitly to the earlier decision conventionally dated to 424/3.

• The temple was built in the 420s and Mattingly suggested the decrees should be associated with this.

• **BUT:**
  • The decree could have been associated with the commissioning of the building works in 448.
  • The plan of the temple required integration with the SW wing of the Propylaea begun in 437; there was a large treasury of Nike in her sanctuary before 433/2 which could have required doors.

So there are several plausible historical contexts
Case studies

IG I³ 1453 & ors – The Coinage Decree

- Many examples all found outside Athens: Smyrna; Olbia (?); Aphytis (in Macedonia); Kos, Siphnos and Syme (islands); Hamaxitos (in the Troad)
- No fragment has a date or datable reference
- Numismatic evidence is no help
- Kos fragment inscribed in Attic with the 3-bar sigma

Possible dates:
- 449 – ‘missing year’ on the ATL
- 414 - Aristophanes *Birds* 1040 ff parodies the decree
- Mid 420s = consensus
Case studies

IG I³ 1453 & ors – The Coinage Decree

• Aphytis fragment is in two parts. The 1st fragment was published in 1935
• The 2nd fragment was discovered in 1969 but “languished unrecognized” until publication in 2003 by Miltiades Hatzopoulos
• The second fragment (non-joining) preserves the end of the stele

So what?

The Smyrna fragment contains the same final words as the Aphytis fragment, but its text continues for another 9 lines, with big discrepancies in content.

Major implications for epigraphical method. Cannot assume a ‘composite’ text. Different copies were set up tailored to local circumstances. Was there more than one date and/or more than one decree? (Per R. Stroud [2006], 18-26)
Dating imperialism

- The word ‘empire’ has pejorative connotations - changed over (modern) time
- Inscriptions attest to democratic practice
- Thucydides (1.95-9) – summarises substantive change from 478 – 467 from hēgemonia (popular leadership) to archē (exacting rule/control)
- He portrays Athenian empire as moderate under Pericles, but harsh under Cleon and his fellow demagogues. Scholars tend to read the ‘tone’ of inscriptions through this prism
- A down-dating (or redating back) of many of the inscriptions to 430s/420s fits this literary evidence better
- Harris (2016) argues that paired opposites of demokratia/oligarchia enter discourse in the context of tensions with Sparta. Word demokratia 1st appears in the 420s – cf. Pericles’ funeral oration (Thuc. 2.37.1). Previously Athens based her right to lead on fighting the Persians and opposing tyranny.
- Was there ever any intention to have an empire?
Select Bibliography


* J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas, R. Parker (Eds.), *Interpreting the Athenian Empire* (Duckworth 2009).


* Collection of articles, many of which are useful in this debate.
Thank you

ANY QUESTIONS?