

Attic Inscriptions: Education

Teachers' Notes on OCR A-LEVEL ANCIENT HISTORY

Attic Inscriptions for the Greece Period Study

These notes offer introductory commentaries on ancient Athenian inscriptions relevant to the Greece Period Study, 'Relations between Greek states and between Greek and non-Greek states, 492–404 BC'. They are aimed at teachers in the hope that they provide guidance on the relevance of ancient Athenian inscriptions to the specification and also some insight into the application and analysis of inscriptions as sources for ancient Greek history.

We focus on eight selected inscriptions. Three are prescribed sources for the specification, while five are non-prescribed. The non-prescribed sources allow teachers to widen their students' knowledge; moreover, it should be remembered that candidates can be credited equally for using prescribed and non-prescribed sources in their answers, and we feel that these five sources offer a great deal for teachers and students to work with.

The notes were written by Peter Liddel and James Renshaw, drawing upon the translations and commentaries of S.D. Lambert and others on the [Attic Inscriptions Online](#) website.

We welcome comments on this material or ideas for their expansion:

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Prescribed Sources:

1. [Athenian Tribute List \(454/3\)](#)
2. [Athenian relations with Chalkis \(446/5 \(or 424/3?\)\)](#)
3. [Decrees about reassessment of Tribute \(Thoudippos' decrees\) \(425/4\)](#)

Non-Prescribed sources:

4. [Memorial of Athenian war dead \(460-59\)](#)
5. [Regulations for Erythrai \(454-450\)](#)
6. [Foundation of colony at Brea \(c. 440-432\)](#)
7. [Financial decrees \(Kallias' decrees\) \(434/3?\)](#)
8. [Dedication of a Spartan shield \(425\)](#)

1. Athenian Tribute List

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/259>

Date: 454/3

Original location: acropolis

Current location: acropolis and nearby

Context:

From its foundation in 478/7 BC the Delian League, led by Athens to prosecute the war against the Persians, was funded through tribute (*phoros*) paid by members. The first assessment amounted to 460 Talents, according to Thuc. 1.96.2 (followed by Plutarch, *Aristeides*, chapter 24). Initially members could provide either ships or money, but as time went by those who supplied ships tended to commute, or were forced by Athens to commute, this into money, which, according to Thucydides, was one of the main causes of increasing Athenian dominance of the League. By the beginning of the Peloponnesian war only Chios and Lesbos still provided ships. On the amount of tribute after the initial assessment of 478/7, see below (**no. 3**), on the Thoudippos decrees.

At first the money was deposited on Delos (for which no inscribed records survive), but in 454/3 the treasury was transferred to Athens, and from then on lists of the 1/60th portion of the tribute paid to Athena as 'first fruits' were inscribed on *stelai* (slabs of marble stone) set up on the Athenian acropolis. Thucydides makes no mention of the movement of the treasury from Delos to Athens: this is striking, given his clearly-expressed view that the Peloponnesian war was caused by Sparta's fear of Athenian power growth (Thuc. 1.23; 1.88; 1.118). Plutarch's biography of Pericles (chapter 12) suggests there was debate at Athens about whether the treasury was moved in order to sustain war against the 'barbarian' (Persians) or to fund Athens' building programme. In fact it seems that the 1/60th was indeed used to fund building work in Athens; the rest of the money was managed by the Athenian officials known as the *Hellenotamiai* (treasurers of the Greeks), who would make payments from their treasury, e.g. to support Athenian generals on expeditions.

The earliest tribute list, sometimes known as the *lapis primus* (Latin for "first stone"), which at 3.8 m. high is the most massive of Athenian inscriptions, covered the years 454/3 to 440/39. Composed of 184 fragments, some aspects of the current reconstruction and that of the 73 fragments of the "second stone" (*lapis secundus*, 439/8-432/1) have been questioned. From that point the 1/60th was inscribed on smaller stones. One possible explanation for the size of the early blocks is that they were re-used from building projects.

The names of the contributing cities are usually given in ethnic form (e.g. Abderites, Olynthians), but occasionally by place-name. In the early lists cities are not listed geographically; later lists are organised according to payment area (e.g. 'Ionian

Tribute', 'Hellespontine Tribute', 'Thraceward Tribute': see below on [Thoudippos' decrees](#)).

Of particular note in the first list is that the Aeginetans are listed as contributing 3000 drachmas to Athena's 1/60th, by far the highest amount. As there were 6000 drachmas in a talent, this means that they contributed 30 talents in that particular year. Together with the Thasians, who also paid 30 talents from 443, this is the highest tribute recorded in the pre-Peloponnesian War tribute lists. This no doubt reflects the powerful trading position of Aegina, and the substantial mineral and other resources of Thasos, and in both cases there may also be a punitive element: Aegina had been forced into membership of the League in 457 (Thuc. 1.105, 108), while Thasos had tried to revolt in 465 (Thuc. 1.100-101).

Further points of interest on the Tribute lists can be found in the notes on the AIO translation, and in Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 119. An explanation of the 'acrophonic' system of numbering can be found in the [AIE resources for KS 3](#).

2. Athenian relations with Chalkis

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/40>

Date: 446/5 (or 424/3)

Original location: acropolis

Current location: Acropolis Museum

Context:

This inscription sets out Athenian relations with the people of Chalkis, one of the larger cities of the island of Euboia. The context and consequently the date of this inscription are debated: Thuc. 1.113-14 records that, after the Athenian defeat at Koroneia in spring 446 BC and subsequent withdrawal from Boeotia, the Euboians revolted (see also Plutarch, *Perikles*, chapter 23). The revolt was put down by Pericles, who reached agreement with the other cities, but removed the population from Hestiaia, populating it instead with Athenians. The settlement recorded in this inscription belongs most plausibly in this context, though it can not be ruled out that it dates to 424/3, when, according to Philochoros (*FGH* 328 F130), the Athenians campaigned against Euboia (an episode not mentioned by Thucydides). The OCR A Level specification allows that students will use 446/5 as the likely date.

Another inscription, [AIUK 4.2 no. 3](#) (part of which is now at the British Museum), is usually taken to be the decree providing for the Athenian settlement in Hestiaia in 446 BC, though some scholars have thought that it too dates to 424/3.

The inscription consists of: an Athenian oath, sworn by councillors and jurors, making promises about their treatment of the Chalkidians (lines 3-14), an oath sworn by the Chalkidians pledging obedience to the Athenians (lines 22-31: see below); it makes reference to the Athenians holding onto Chalkidian hostages (lines 47-59); it states that foreigners who live in Chalkis are to pay taxation (lines 54-56); audits of magistrates are to be left in the hands of the Chalkidians except in cases involving exile, execution or loss of civic rights, in which case there is to be a right of appeal to an Athenian court (lines 70-76). Overall, it demonstrates Athenian interference in Chalkis after a settlement. Yet, unlike in Erythrai, Athens does not in this decree interfere in Chalkis' internal political arrangements, perhaps because it was already a democracy.

The text of the oath translates as following:

'I shall not revolt from the People of Athens by any means or device whatsoever, neither in word nor in deed, nor shall I obey anyone who does revolt; and if anyone revolts I shall denounce him to the Athenians, and I shall pay to the Athenians whatever tribute I persuade them to agree, and I shall be the best and fairest ally I am able to be and shall help and defend the Athenian People, in the event of anyone wronging the Athenian People, and I shall obey the Athenian People'. (lines 22-31)

When we compare this oath with the earlier one in the decree about Erythrai lines 21-29 (see below, **no. 5**), we note a similar emphasis on outlawing revolt. Yet in contrast to the Erythraians' oath, the Chalkidian version requires them to be loyal to the Athenians alone; there is no mention of its allies. The obedience required by the oath seems to be a far cry from the spirit of the Delian League established in the early 470s, and one recalls Thucydides' comments about the aftermath of the revolt of the Naxians of the early 460s: '*After a siege Naxos was forced back to allegiance. This was the first case when the original constitution of the League was broken and an allied city lost its independence, and the process was continued in the cases of the other allies as various circumstances arose*' (Thucydides 1.99, tr. Warner).

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see *AIO Papers 8*, section 2 and Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 131.

3. Decrees about reassessment of Tribute (Thoudippos' decrees)

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/AIO/959>

Date: 425/4

Original location: acropolis

Current location: Metropolitan Museum, New York; Epigraphical Museum, Athens

Context:

In the wartime conditions of 425/4 BC, Thoudippos, a member of the Athenian Council of 500 for the year, made the decree recorded in this inscription setting in place arrangements for a re-assessment of the Annual tribute. Thucydides, who is generally silent on the detailed administration of the tribute, does not mention this reassessment; the precise relationship of this decree to other events of this year, such as Cleon's return from his successful expedition to Pylos (Thuc. 4.2-41) and Nicias' expedition to Corinthia (4.42-45), is not clear. Nevertheless, the idea of tightening tribute seems to be in tune with the imperialist line associated with Cleon (e.g. his championing of a harsh punishment for the revolting Mytileneans: Thuc. 3.36-50).

The provisions of the decree include the following: announcements were to be made to each of the areas of the Athenian empire: Ionia, Caria, Thrace, the islands, the Hellespont; assessors were appointed to review the tribute, '*since the tribute has become too little*' (16); the revised assessment was to be written up on stone inscriptions (lines 23-25); subject cities should bring a cow and panoply to the Athenians at the Great Panathenaia, and they would take part in the procession for Athena (lines 56-57).

The inscription lists the amounts to be paid by each city or community, ordered by district. The overall total is lost, but is restored by modern scholars as over 1460 Talents per annum: this can be contrasted with the 460 of the first assessment (see above, on the [Tribute List](#)) the 600 Talents claimed in 431 (Thuc. 2.13.3) and the c. 400 Talents actually received per annum as shown by Tribute Lists of the 430s. It seems unlikely that the Athenians would ever have received the full 1460 Talents that they demanded.

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see *AIO Papers 8*, section 3 and Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 151

Further inscriptions relevant to our understanding of the Athenians' management of tribute and its collection include (a) the [Kleinias decree](#) (part of which is now at the British Museum) arranging for tribute collection and (b) the decrees about the tribute (known after its proposer as the [Kleonymos decree](#)) of c. 428-425 BC. The Kleonymos decree addresses the receipt of tribute by the Athenians: first, member states were

required to appoint individual citizens of their own as 'collectors' of tribute; second, lists were to be published annually of states which had paid their tribute fully and those in arrears. Tellingly, the inscription includes at its top a moulding representing bags of coined money. The Athenians were to send men to those cities who owed money to exact it. The survival of such inscribed decrees may say something about the amount of time that the Athenians dedicated to discussion of management of the tribute at the council and assembly.

4. Memorial of Athenian war-dead

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/1147>

Date: 460-59

Original location: Athens

Current location: Louvre, Paris

Context:

This inscription records Athenians of the tribe Erechtheis who had died in war in Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenicia, Halieis, Aegina and at Megara, probably in the year 460/59 BC.

It was an "ancestral custom" for Athenians to bury their war dead at Athens, though there were exceptions (e.g. Marathon: Thuc. 2.34; Plataia: Hdt. 9.85, Paus. 9.2.5-6). Ten coffins, one for each tribe, were carried in procession for public burial in the Kerameikos. According to Diodoros 11.33.3, a public funeral oration (of the type most famously delivered by Pericles over the dead of the first year of fighting of the Peloponnesian War: Thuc. 2.34-46) and Funeral Games were instituted in 479 to commemorate those who had died in the Persian Wars. Pausanias 1.29.4 records that there was a monument for all Athenian war-dead, except those of Marathon, in the cemetery on the road to the Academy, and *stelai* inscribed with their names, the first being those who died at Drabeskos in Thrace in conflict with the Edonians (465/4, Thuc. 1.100.3).

The historical context is supplied by Thuc. 1.104-105, who records that Athens launched a major naval expedition against Cyprus in 460, diverting to Egypt on hearing of the revolt of Inaros there, and around the same time campaigned in Halieis, Aegina (a great sea-battle) and Megara (where Athens, with regular troops fully stretched, sent "the oldest and youngest" to counter a Corinthian invasion). He does not mention Phoenicia, but that would accord with actions against Cyprus and Egypt. This inscription therefore validates the account of Thucydides that Athenian-led forces were fighting war on two fronts at this time: in Greece and in the eastern Mediterranean (it also supplies some evidence against the account of Diodoros 11.71 ff., who spreads these events over six years).

This *stèle* (marble slab) was probably part of a series of *stelai* (slabs plural) set up as part of a bigger monument, one for each tribe, recording the dead in these battles. The inscription lists individuals named just with their personal name, two generals (Ph-chos (line 6) and Hippodamas (line 63) may have succeeded Ph-chos (6). It is notable that there are no other distinctions of rank, or e.g. as between, at the upper end of the social scale, cavalry and hoplites, and at the lower end, sailors and peltasts (light-armed troops), except for the four archers (67-70). It is unclear why these were listed separately; one possibility is that they included non-Athenians. Telenikos is, however, identified as the seer (128-29). Seers commonly accompanied armies and inspected

animals sacrificed before a battle for omens. The absence of patronymics (names of fathers) and demotics (inherited home villages) which would identify individuals also serves to emphasise the collective character of this commemoration and the contribution in particular of the Erechtheid tribe.

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 109.

5. Regulations for Erythrai

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/MalouchouSecondfacsimile/1>

Date: c. 454-450

Original location: acropolis

Current location: now lost

Context:

Erythrai, an Ionian city on the coast of Asia Minor opposite Chios, was probably an early member of the Delian League. Traditionally it was viewed as an Athenian colony, and so was expected to send offerings to the Panathenaia, as is asserted in lines 3-4 of this inscription. From at least 425/4 the requirement to send a cow and a panoply applied to all League members: see above on the [Chalkis decree](#).

The wording of this decree setting out regulations for the Erythraians makes reference to exiles and partisans of the Persians (lines 26-28), tyrants (33), and Athenian overseers and garrison commanders (13). Accordingly, it appears to belong to a settlement of the city imposed by Athens after a period of revolt or at least civil strife. Though the decree can not be dated with certainty, the period immediately following the failure of Athens' Egyptian expedition c. 454 (Thuc. 1.109-110) is commonly supposed to supply the most plausible context for unrest backed by the Persians. Moreover, it has been suggested that there is circumstantial support for this in the Tribute lists, from which (if they have been correctly reconstructed and restored) Erythrai is absent in 454/3, but present, with its small neighbour, Boutheia, in 453/2. Both Erythrai and its neighbours are listed together in 450/49 and subsequently, perhaps reflecting a return to status as a regular ally.

The decree sets out provisions for a Council at Erythrai (lines 8-12). This Council is based broadly on an Athenian model. Its size, 120 as opposed to 500 in Athens, doubtless reflects the smaller citizen population of Erythrai, but the age limit of 30 was the same as in Athens (distinguishing this Council from the Council of Elders (*Gerousia*) that existed for example in Sparta), and the crucial restriction on the number of times one could serve, though less stringent than in Athens (where the maximum tenure, until the Hellenistic period, was twice in a lifetime), nevertheless went in a similarly democratic direction. On the importance of the Council as a defining feature of democracy, see the discussion in the [A/E A-level Classical Civilisation notes](#) on Athenian democracy.

The decree makes provisions for an ad hoc body of overseers and a garrison commander (lines 13-14) apparently to be sent to oversee the implementation of a new regime. For a satirical view of their activities see Aristophanes, *Birds* 1021-34 (produced in 414 BC), where an Athenian *episkopos* (inspector) arrives in the Birds'

fantasy city in the sky and is immediately chased away. The decree sets out an oath that is to be sworn by Erythraian councillors (lines 21-29) in which they swear to:

“be a councillor as best and most justly (?) I can for the mass of the Erythraians and of the Athenians and of the allies; and I shall not defect from the mass of the Athenians or of the allies of the Athenians myself, nor shall I be persuaded by another who defects myself nor shall I persuade another; nor shall I take back any single one of the exiles, nor [shall I be persuaded to take back?] any of those who have fled to the Medes, without the permission of the Council and the People of the Athenians; nor shall I exile any of those who remain, without the permission of the Council and the People of the Athenians.”

The reference to the “mass” of Erythraians suggests that the Athenians had set up a regime with a democratic flavour at Erythrai; probably the Athenians hoped that this would be a way of setting the Erythraians on a pro-Athenian path. We might compare this oath to the one sworn to the Athenians by the Chalkidians (see above, **no. 2**): the Chalkis oath seems more hard-line in terms of requiring obedience to the Athenians (without mentioning their allies). Yet the regulations for Erythrai contain more specific measures outlining the precise political arrangements of that city. It also makes more explicit reference to those who revolted, implying that they had fled to the ‘Medians’ (shorthand for the ‘Persians’).

A fragment of this decree, or a closely related one, is preserved at the British Museum: see [AIUK 4.2 \(British Museum. Decrees\) no. 2](#).

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 121.

6. Foundation of colony at Brea

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/46>

Date: c. 440-432

Original location: acropolis

Current location: Epigraphical Museum, Athens; Agora Museum, Athens

Context:

The decree relates to the foundation of a colony (*apoikia*) at Brea, perhaps identifiable as modern Verghia, near Nea Syllata on the Chalkidike peninsular in the northern Aegean, on the coast north-west of Potidaia, and perhaps referred to by Thuc. 1.61.4. Though it cannot be dated precisely, the foundation is perhaps similar to other foundations of new settlements by Athens after c. 450 (e.g. Histiaia and in this region Amphipolis in 437/6). Accordingly, a date in the (mid-late?) 430s has been plausibly suggested, in the context of deteriorating relations with Potidaia and Perdiccas of Macedon leading up to the dispute with Potidaia which was one of the causes of the Peloponnesian War.

A colony (*apoikia*) was an independent settlement, distinguishable from a cleruchy (a settlement made up a group of Athenian citizens granted landholdings overseas who retained more direct links to Athens [e.g. that on [Salamis in the late sixth or early fifth-century BC](#) or the one sent to Lesbos after its revolt in 427: Thuc. 3.50]). The wording here suggests that Athenians and/or Athena were already present in Brea and/or that good relations had already been established with the place.

The provisions include the detail that land was to be set aside for the gods. Athens quite commonly set aside land for the deity Athena in the territory of members of the Delian League, and would naturally have done so on the foundation of a colony. At the end of the decree it is stated that the settlers are to be drawn from the lower two of the four "Solonian" property classes ([Aristotle], *Ath. Pol.* 7.3-4): perhaps this indicates that the Athenians were interested in finding employment and land for the less rich of their citizens. Indeed, Plutarch (*Pericles*, chapter 11.4-5) asserts that Pericles was interested in raising the living standards of the poorest citizens of Athens by dispatching them to settlements overseas.

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 142.

7. Financial decrees (Kallias' decrees)

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/52>

Date: 434/3(?)

Original location: acropolis (?): discovered used as an altar in the Attic village of

Charvati

Current location: Louvre, Paris

Context:

In ancient Greece, cults of specific deities possessed their own financial treasuries. The state would sometimes borrow considerable amounts from these funds to support specific activities (often military in character or related to building work).

The two decrees recorded on this inscription order the creation of a consolidated treasury of the Other Deities (created from the various smaller sacred treasuries of deities other than Athena). They authorise further, specific, building work on the acropolis, walls and dockyards, but otherwise limit expenditure from the treasury of Athena: in the future expenditure would have to be authorised by a vote of the people. One view is that they arrange for the winding-up of expenditure on the acropolis building project. Though the precise motivation for this measure is uncertain, some scholars have supposed that the Athenians at this time were consolidating their previously scattered treasuries as a way of putting their finances on a war footing in preparation for a conflict with the Spartans. Thucydides (2.13) indirectly quotes Pericles talking (at the start of the war in 431 BC) of a sum of 6000 Talents worth of silver that was available as a reserve-fund on the acropolis and also money in other temples; he suggests that this sum might be drawn upon as an emergency fund as long as it was eventually repaid.

Repayment of money previously borrowed from Athena for the city's purposes (as e.g. for the war of 440/39 against Samos) had apparently just been completed, and the Athenians were now in a position to repay money borrowed from the Other Deities. Yet they appear to have been ready to resume borrowing money from these treasuries immediately (e.g. to support the expeditions to Corcyra in 433).

For a fuller discussion of this inscription see Osborne and Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*, no. 144.

8. Dedication of Spartan shield

AIO link: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/522>

Image: [click here](#)

Date: 425

Original location: Athens, agora (or elsewhere?)

Current location: Agora Museum, Athens

Context:

Thucydides recounts the surrender of the 120 Spartan soldiers on the island of Sphacteria off Pylos in 425 (4.36-39) and the shock this event caused in the Greek world (4.40) since the Spartans had previously been famous for their 'no-surrender' attitude to warfare, most famously at Thermopylae in 480. The Spartan captives were brought to Athens and held as hostages (4.41). Pausanias (1.15.4), writing centuries later, reports that some of the bronze shields taken from the Spartan prisoners were put on display as war trophies in the Painted Stoa in the Athenian agora in his day, alongside paintings of the battle of Marathon fought in 490.

This is one of the shields taken from the Spartiates at Pylos after their surrender. As a 'dedication' it was essentially made into a thank-offering to a deity for the Athenian victory, and would serve also as a visual commemoration of the Athenian triumph. However, this shield was deposited in a cistern (some distance from the north side of the agora), apparently as a lid, before 300 BC, so it was not among those that Pausanias saw in the Stoa. In fact, it may have been dedicated on the Nike temple bastion on the acropolis or elsewhere.