



***Beyond Athenocentrism  
Greek Cities' Responses to Athenian Institutional and Judicial Legacy  
in the so-called 'Hellenistic Polis Convergence'***



**Conference Programme**

**List of Abstracts**



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin



**IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL**  
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

## 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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## 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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## **Democratic Institutions in the Hellenistic Cities and the Athenian Model: Recent Studies and Debated Issues**

The studies of the last decades have frequently highlighted the great vitality of Greek civic institutions in the Hellenistic age and on the ability of the *poleis* to adapt to a totally changed political landscape. The Greek cities proved to be able to build effective forms of relations among themselves and with the new great territorial states. Recent studies, more particularly, have insisted on the idea that the Hellenistic period saw the emergence of a largely shared pattern of the *polis*, characterized by democratic institutions and ideology, both ultimately derived from the Athenian classical model. This interpretation has definitely many merits, but it risks oversimplifying both the institutional landscape of the Hellenistic world (in which many local varieties survive), but the history of ancient Greek democracy as a whole. Already with reference to the classical period it is probably more correct to speak of ‘democracies’, in the plural, and Aristotle describes their functioning and ideology without having exclusively in mind the Athenian case. Polybius, in turn, more or less explicitly bears witness to the contemporary controversies and debates about the regimes that really deserved the qualification of ‘democratic’, and at the same time to the now largely spread positive evaluation of the noun *demokratia*. This paper will try to draw attention to some problematic aspects raised by the idea of a ‘great convergence’ of the Greek *poleis* towards a common form and to issues that still need to be clarified or fully explored, such as: 1. the importance of local developments in the history of Greek democratic regimes, not necessarily tied to (or inspired by) the Athenian model; 2. the complex history of the Athenian democracy itself and the deep differences between its different phases, from the early fifth century to the age of Alexander and beyond; 3. the alleged role of Alexander and of some Hellenistic kings in the diffusion of democratic governments in the Greek cities; 4. the enduring popularity of Athens’ literary, philosophical and political culture, to be put on a different level than the possible role of specific Athenian institutions and procedures as a model for Hellenistic democracies.

*Manuela Mari* (University of Bari “Aldo Moro”)

### **Writing the History of Hellenistic Athens**

The effort needed to persuade themselves and their audiences of the importance of this portion of Athenian history may have distracted modern historians of Hellenistic Athens from the peculiar challenges that this enterprise involves. In many ways, the history of the Athenians after the death of Alexander the Great was not terribly Hellenistic: it was not about expanded cultural contact with the Near East, Central Asia or Egypt – all of this exists, but is nowhere near as important as elsewhere; it was not about acquiring a new role in Eastern Mediterranean fluxes of wealth and power, as was the case for some of the cities of Asia Minor; it was not about creating new forms of political cohesion going beyond the *polis*, as was the case for the Achaeans and Aetolians. The problem can of course be avoided by a radically antiquarian approach such as that fruitfully championed by Christian Habicht. Attempts at a more historical approach on the other hand still tend to remain caught in the problem of explaining why Hellenistic Athens should not be regarded as a sad coda to the fifth and fourth centuries. This however makes it hard to come to terms with the cultural world of the Athenians. The present paper will offer some thoughts on two points in particular:

1. Periodization: the chronological frame can easily change the picture inside. I would like to discuss this in relation to modern histories of Hellenistic Athens.
2. The Hellenistic Athenians attitude to their classical past: the present image of fifth- and fourth-century Athens was to a significant extent created and articulated by Athenians during the Hellenistic age. This, I suspect, is an important cause of modern historians' difficulties in providing a persuasive image of the cultural life of Hellenistic Athenians.

*Nino Luraghi* (New College Oxford)

### **Athens' Contribution to the Hellenistic Institutional *Koine*: Some Further Considerations**

The aim of the present paper is a re-examination of the widespread scholarly view that some institutional practices which are observed in the post-Classical *poleis* were, to different extents and in different ways, influenced by fourth-century Athenian polity. After a brief overview of how the 'vitalist' paradigm elaborated by Louis Robert and Philippe Gauthier contributed to the emergence of the notion of a Hellenistic city-state *koine*, I will focus on the shortcomings and achievements of an Athenocentric approach to the extant epigraphic evidence. Particular attention will be devoted to specific instances of convergence, at least on the terminological level, between Athenian legislation and legal phenomena which are observed in different Greek *poleis*, in an attempt to determine whether these apparent similarities actually resulted from an imitation of the Athenian pattern or whether they are better interpreted as the result of underlying procedural principles which should be regarded as universally Greek. The former possibility raises the crucial question as to how the transmission and importation of Athens' legacy may have concretely taken place.

*Davide Amendola* (Trinity College Dublin)

### **Law-Enforcement in the Hellenistic Cities: Athenian influence, Local Practice or Pan-Hellenic tradition? The Process of *Praxis* as a Test Case.**

One of the most essential aspects of the administration of justice are the processes by which decisions made by courts, councils and officials are enforced in practice. It is also an area where there is considerable potential for corruption, especially when it comes to the enforcement (*praxis*) of financial penalties such as fines and confiscation of property. Mismanagement and abuse of the authority to exact and administer financial penalties, whether by officials or by citizen volunteers, were widely recognised by the Greeks as problems that might potentially destabilise a community, and in the most egregious case even lead to full-blown *stasis* (civil war).

For classical democratic Athens we can observe a wide range of different measures by which the Athenians attempted to limit the opportunities for both officials and volunteers to abuse the system for personal enrichment, political ends, or for motives of personal friendship and enmity. Chief among them were accounting procedures for officials, transparency (including at public auctions when confiscated assets were sold), and oversight of officials achieved through a combination of incentivising the members of boards to police each other and inviting individual citizens (and sometimes also free non-citizens) to act as whistleblowers.

The desire to control and prevent abuse of the process of *praxis* is amply attested for a large number of communities across the Hellenistic world; indeed, regulations pertaining to *praxis* are among the best documented aspects of law-enforcement in communities other than Athens. It is therefore an area where we are best placed to compare and contrast the practices developed in fifth and fourth century Athens with practises used elsewhere. Often the practices attested for Hellenistic communities display striking similarities with those known from classical Athens. It might be tempting to conclude that such similarities can be ascribed to the significant influence that the Athenians exercised during the classical period, not only across the Aegean and along the western coast of Asia Minor, but also in the Black Sea region and in some communities along the coast of the north-western Greek mainland.

However, there are some significant methodological problems that have to be addressed before it can be concluded that similarities between attested processes of *praxis* in classical Athens and in a given Hellenistic community are due to a specifically Athenian legal legacy. These problems will be addressed in the present paper, which will consider other possible reasons for the ubiquity of certain practices and principles, including enforcement clauses inserted in inter-state treaties, in contracts between merchants, and in the regulations that the Greeks would have encountered regularly in their Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, from the archaic to the Roman imperial period.

*Lene Rubinstein* (Royal Holloway, University of London)

### **La diffusion des institutions éducatives dans le monde hellénistique: influence du modèle athénien?**

La diffusion des institutions éducatives (notamment de l'éphébie et du gymnase) est l'un des traits caractéristiques du monde hellénistique. Par leur structure et leur fonctionnement, ces institutions accusent une grande ressemblance, ce qui appelle une explication. Dans mon ouvrage *L'éphébie hellénistique* (2010), j'ai avancé la thèse selon laquelle cette ressemblance, à tout le moins en ce qui concerne l'éphébie, résulte de l'influence que l'éphébie athénienne avait exercée dans le monde des cités grecques : plutôt que d'un développement indépendant dans telle ou telle cité, il faut parler de la reprise du modèle athénien. Cette thèse a été tantôt approuvée, tantôt désapprouvée par les recenseurs de cet ouvrage. Depuis, de nouveaux éléments se sont ajoutés à cette discussion, notamment grâce à la publication de la loi éphébarchique d'Amphipolis et grâce aux recherches menées sur les courses aux flambeaux dans le monde grec. Dans la présente communication, je me propose de faire un bilan de ce débat, en présentant en détail les principaux arguments de ses protagonistes.

*Andrzej S. Chankowski* (Université de Poitiers / HeRMA EA 3811)

### ***Psephophoria*, Honours and Naturalisation around the Aegean: A Case of Athenian Institutional Influence?**

This paper investigates a possible case of direct – and then wider and looser – Athenian institutional influence in the practices and procedures of a number of Hellenistic *poleis*: the use of *psephophoria* – vote by secret ballot – in political decision-making, particularly in its connection with naturalisation. First, it describes the technicalities of the use of *psephophoria* in

the Assembly of Classical Athens. Then, it turns to analysing a number of inscriptions from the earlier Hellenistic period whose evidence suggests that when *psephophoria* first appears in the epigraphical record of the Hellenistic cities, it is used in a way that is remarkably close to the Athenian arrangement, and by and large for the same purposes, i.e. naturalisation (as well as, occasionally, other public honours). The focus throughout is not just on generic institutional arrangements, but on their most minute procedural niceties. Finally, the paper ends with some methodological considerations about whether particular kinds of arguments for institutional borrowing/derivation – which are, ultimately, arguments from probability – are more or less convincing. How close do the institutions in question need to be? How much difference is too much difference for us still to maintain influence/derivation? Is describing similar institutions with the same language/formulas a discriminating factor? Are there other corroborating factors that can be brought in, to enhance the probability of actual filiation/influence?

*Mirko Canevaro* (The University of Edinburgh)

### **Real Security and Property Registers in the Aegean (3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c. B.C.): Between Athenian Legacy and New Archival Practices**

The influence of Athens in the field of public archives regarding sale and property transactions in the Hellenistic Aegean is somewhat paradoxical. While many aspects in the documentation of the Cyclades on this topic can be traced back to Athenian practices (accounting and administrative practices in Hellenistic Delos, terminology of leases or credit transactions linked with real security, hypothecation *horoi*...), Athens has long been regarded as an exception precisely in the field of land and real estate archives, because no State record of this kind has survived in Attica. As M. Faraguna demonstrated in the late 1990s, this peculiarity of the Athenian record is mainly due to the decentralized fashion in which archives on property were kept in Attica. Accepting this postulate helps better acknowledging the extent of Athenian legacy in the islands of the Aegean, where legal institutions and the terminology of credit transactions show a clear convergence with Athenian sources of the classical period; at the same time, it helps highlighting the social and economic implication of new archival trends, such as the development of central records of individual sales and credit transactions displayed publicly in Hellenistic Tenos, or the recording of all private contracts by state officials in the neighboring Paros.

*Julien Faguer* (École française d'Athènes)

### **The Long Shadow of Athens? Dramatic Performances in the Hellenistic City-States.**

Recent research has confirmed that dramatic performances of various types took place all over the ancient world. The Athenian model of dramatic performances was just one such, an extremely articulated and complex one. For various reasons, it became the central one – and for once, this is not just an effect of our sources being mostly Athenian or Athenocentric. The fifth century Athenian empire and the fourth century Athenian league have been pinpointed as specific moments of diffusion. And yet, diffusion of one type of dramatic performance did not ever mean simple acceptance and reproduction of the model. In my paper I want to look at the nexus between dramatic performances, institutions and religion: the point is that dramatic



performances per se could easily travel, but the social, cultural and economic contexts in which they were embedded featured specific characteristics. I want to look at a few different specific contexts – notably Samos and Chios in the Aegean, as well as Cyrene, to highlight the agency of the poleis themselves.

*Paola Ceccarelli* (University College London)

### **Hekataios of Abdera and the Alleged Egyptian Origins of Athens and the Eleusinian Mysteries**

After some general considerations about the prestige of Athens in Hellenistic historiography (*cf.* Clarke 2008; Schmitz 2011; Luraghi 2017; Canevaro & Gray 2018), I shall focus specifically on the claims about the Egyptian origins of Athens and the Eleusinian mysteries reported by Diodoros I 28-29. Whatever the merits of recent doubts about Hekataios of Abdera as the main source of Diodoros' first book (e.g. Caneva 2019), in this instance the origin seems confirmed by the Hekataian quotation at Diod. XL 3.2 (= *FGrHist* 264 F6). Although it is unclear whether Hekataios himself accepted or merely reported these claims, it does raise the question of the intention behind Hekataios' *Egyptiaka* and its relation to the political interests of Ptolemaios I (*cf.* Gruen 2017; Nesselrath 2018). This involves the issues of Ptolemaios' relations with Athens, the knowledge of the Egyptian priests about Greek historical thought, and Diodoros' methods and interests.

Caneva, S. (2019), 'Kings and Elites in an Intercultural Tradition: From Diodorus to the Egyptian Temples', *G&R* 66, 179-202.

Canevaro, M. & B. Gray (2018) (edd.), *The Hellenistic Reception of Classical Athenian Democracy and Political Thought*, Oxford.

Clarke, K. (2008), *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, Oxford.

Gruen, E.S. (2017), 'Hellenistic Court Patronage and the Non-Greek World', in A. Erskine, L. Llewellyn-Jones & S. Wallace (edd.), *The Hellenistic Court: Monarchic Power and Elite Society from Alexander to Cleopatra*, Swansea, 295-318.

Luraghi, N. (2017), 'Timaeus' Athens Revisited: Culture and Politics in Early Hellenistic Athens', *ASNP* 9, 179-208.

Nesselrath, H.-G. (2018), 'Gli Aigyptiaka di Ecateo di Abdera ed il loro retroterra filosofico', *Eikasmos* 29, 269-282.

Schmitz, T.A. (2011), 'The Image of Athens in Diodorus Siculus', in id. and N. Wiater (edd.), *The Struggle for Identity. Greeks and their Past in the First Century BCE*, Stuttgart, 235-251.

*Alexander Meeus* (Mannheim)

### **Fourth-Century and Early Hellenistic Reconciliation and Amnesty: Reception of Athens 403 and Other Inspirations**

This contribution will address a case-study which illustrates both the spread of Athenian institutions and ideology and the force of rival civic models in the fourth century and early Hellenistic period: institutions of reconciliation and amnesty across the Greek world. It will examine through this lens two recently published reconciliation agreements, from Macedonian

Dikaia (*SEG* 57.576, 365–359 BC) and Telos (*IG* XII 4 1 132, later fourth century BC), comparing them with some other examples from the Aegean islands and Peloponnese. Taken together, these texts offer clear evidence for the diffusion of the Athenian model of reconciliation, particularly striking at Dikaia, at an interestingly early date. Yet they also demonstrate the simultaneous, interlocking influence of multiple non-Athenian inspirations, which enabled different poleis to tailor reconciliation to their own needs and contexts. In particular, several poleis progressively developed a model of ‘impartial’ conflict resolution and oversight of civic stability from outside, reliant on their participation in a range of supra-polis frameworks, which offered their own institutional models: the Macedonian kingdom (even before Alexander); *sympoliteia* and federal structures; and regional dynamics of non-hegemonic inter-polis interaction.

*Benjamin Gray* (Birkbeck College, University of London)

### **Demagogues in Hellenistic Greece: An Athenian Export?**

Sustained discussion of “demagoguery” (populist political leadership) begins in Athens in the later fifth century BCE with the writings of Aristophanes and Thucydides. The way these authors treated the phenomenon, and in particular the leadership style of Cleon, had a major impact on subsequent political and cultural discourse – so much so that we may wonder whether the Classical Athenian paradigm of “demagoguery” led to anachronistic distortion in later writers. In this paper I explore two questions: 1) to what extent are characteristics of Athenian demagogues (mis)applied to Hellenistic political actors by ancient historians, and 2) do instances of “demagogic” politics in the Hellenistic period owe their form to Classical Athenian models? I argue that while the Athenian treatment of demagogues was the earliest and most famous example, it is unlikely to have caused later historians fundamentally to misrepresent what was happening in Hellenistic politics. The spread of democratic institutions over the fourth and third centuries created a common environment in which demagoguery, if not inevitable, was at least always a possibility.

*Matt Simonton* (Arizona State University)

### **Royal Interaction with Athenian Institutions and Ideology in the Early Hellenistic Period**

Athens may have lost the Lamian and undergone a period of declining international importance in the late fourth and early third centuries, but the city remained a key player in the wars of the Diadochoi and Epigonoι. Alexander’s successors understood well the city’s importance and held it as a military outpost with garrisons on the Mouseion hill and in the port of Piraeus, but they also recognised its potential for ‘soft power’: there was much to be gained by counting Greece’s leading democracy and the liberator of the Greeks during the Persian wars among one’s allies.

This paper will examine the evidence for royal interaction with Athenian democratic institutions and ideology in the early Hellenistic period, from the reign of Philip II to Demetrius II Aetolicus, c.338-229. It will analyse the degree to which regime change and political reforms necessitated or elicited direct royal interference, the ways in which kings engaged with Athenian democratic institutions, and the formative and hitherto underestimated influence that the Athenian ideals of *eleutheria* and *demokratia* had on royal engagement with the city. Focus will



be placed in particular on the regimes of Demades and Phocion (322-319), Stratocles (307-301), and Athens under the control of Antigonos Gonatas (263/2-239). While kings did on occasion impose their will directly on the city – and direct royal interference appears to have been more common by the reign of Gonatas – they more commonly worked through citizen intermediaries and political partisans, thus preserving the apparent freedom and independent operation of the democratic offices and institutions.

*Shane Wallace* (Trinity College Dublin)

### **Beyond Athens – Hellenistic ‘biographical’ Decrees in Praise of Good Citizens and their Possible Connections with the Athenian Epigraphic Habit**

Inscribing honorific decrees in praise of good citizens was a typical feature primarily of the Hellenistic period, although the phenomenon itself even in Hellenistic cities remained quite rare. While many more decrees might have been passed within the assemblies, at least the permanent publication in stone remained an exceptional practice and can in most cases only be observed under certain circumstances, mostly as a response to crises or other special occasions. The preserved inscriptions themselves differed very much in style and length, ranging from, sometimes quite short, decrees focusing on a special occasion to long ‘biographical’ decrees.

The practice of permanently inscribing honorific decrees in praise of good citizens itself was not an Athenian invention. Though there are, especially for the early Hellenistic period, many examples of this practice from Athens, similar inscriptions – sometimes maybe even older than the first Athenian honorific decrees – are for the same time attested within the whole Greek world, e.g. in Priene, in Erythrai, on Samos, or even on the north shore of the Black Sea in the city of Olbia.

Within these decrees, long ‘biographical’ decrees – a type of inscriptions only very seldomly attested – form a category of their own. In the early Hellenistic period, most of these decrees are, with few exceptions, attested for Athens. In the course of the second century B.C., the focus switches to Asia Minor – especially with the well-known examples from Priene and Kolophon from around 130 B.C. onwards. The paper focuses on the development of the special category of long ‘biographical’ decrees within the general phenomenon of Hellenistic honorific decrees in praise of good citizens and will also discuss the possible influence of the early Athenian examples on this special category of inscriptions in general.

*Florian Forster* (Goethe Universität Frankfurt)

### **Les affaires de Madame Nikareta: A *sui generis* Model for Financial, Legal, and Institutional Practices in the Hellenistic Boeotian Confederacy?**

This paper explores legal and financial practices in Hellenistic Boeotia. It focuses on the dossier of Nikareta of Thespiai (*IG VII 3172*; Migeotte 1984, p. 53-69 no. 13), who demands and obtains repayment of a loan from the city of Orchomenus. This legal procedure involves a contract (*sungraphè*), written in koinè instead of the Boeotian dialect used in the rest of the text. This sign of an extra-regional influence, as well as the use of formulas paralleled in several other financial documents outside Boeotia, including Ptolemaic papyri, argues in favour of the parallel development of legal practices through cultural transfers. Boeotian poleis, either directly or

through the intervention of the Confederacy, seem to adapt templates drawn from different sources, rather than simply inheriting Athenian legal procedures in a straightforward manner.

*Christel Müller and Jules Buffet* (Paris Nanterre University)