

Background: The Athenian Tribute Lists

TRIBUTE AND ITS COLLECTION

Even before the treasury was moved to Athens, the Athenians decided which communities would make monetary contributions and which would supply ships. It is reported that the Athenian Aristides was commissioned to estimate the amount of tribute (*phoros*). The Athenians were also responsible for the institution of the *hellenotamiai*: these “treasurers” handled the collection of assessed tribute, which is confirmed by several decrees (IG I³ 34.30 and 44, 68.11 and 19). After collection, the tribute was handed over to a board of religious magistrates who in turn presented the *aparchai* (the first-fruits dedicated to Athena, 1/60th of each assessed tribute amount) to the Thirty for audit. Tribute, ranging from 300 drachmas to 30 talents, was reassessed every four years and remained relatively consistent.

We do not have an exact date for the transfer of the Delian League treasury from Delos to Athens, however, the practice of inscribing *aparchai* began in 454/3 BCE. The last datable list is from 418/17 but it is not known when the practice actually stopped. In 414/13 Athens switched to a 5% harbour tax for all the allies, although tribute may have been reinstated again in 410/409.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

The Athenian Tribute Lists (ATL) can be divided into two categories – the assessment decrees and the tribute quota lists.

The remains of three assessment decrees have been preserved but only the decree of 425/24 can be understood comprehensively. They describe the amount of tribute settled on by the Athenians for the *poleis* to pay.

The quota lists record the *aparchai* assessed for the allies of the Athenians. The *lapis primus* is the biggest stela, inscribed on all four sides, and records the first 15 years. The first and second lists covered two sides, while the rest were inscribed on one side only. Subsequent lists were inscribed on two sides of a stela only. Most entries were given as ethnics, such as *Milesioi* rather than *Miletos*, with 30 given as toponyms and some 70 given as both. Each list begins with a prescript giving the name of the secretary of the board of *hellenotamiai* and the serial number of the year counting from 454/3.

The layout of these lists changed over an eleven year period starting in 454/3. These improvements made in the layout and administrative procedure suggest that inscribing the *aparchai* was new for the Athenians in 454/3 and had not occurred when the treasury was housed on Delos. By 442, the lists were organized into five regional panels -Hellespontine, Ionian, Carian, Thracian, and Island - with the Carian panel eventually being combined with the Ionian.

During the first assessment period (454/3-451/50), the average amount of tribute paying allies was 155. By the second assessment period (450/49-447/6), 200 allies are likely. In List 5 there is a change: at least 20 *poleis* from the Ionian, Carian, and Hellespontine districts paid only partial payments and many are attested twice in the same list. This has been interpreted as a reluctance to pay the full tribute amount in the first place. In 448, there is a possibility that no tribute was collected as there is one year unrepresented on the *lapis primus* but this is currently being disputed.

SIGNIFICANCE

Although the literary sources give us information on the Athenian Empire and tribute collection, if we did not have the ATL, there would be many more gaps in our knowledge. Without them, we would not know whether the number of allies was relatively constant from 454 to 413 nor how much each ally paid. We would have no idea that the year 454/3 was the first year in which *aparchai* was recorded in Athens or that Athens seemed to be in financial difficulties in 425/4. Thucydides neglects to mention this rather harsh re-assessment that took place and is known to us because of the decree of 425/4. Despite the ATL as an important source for the reconstruction of the history of the Athenian Empire, they also hint at the economic ability and political observation of the smaller *poleis*, that lie beyond Athens and Sparta. Lastly, there are 39 place names or communities that are attested only in the ATL.

For more information on the Athenian Tribute Lists please see:

Paarmann, Bjørn. 2007. *Aparchai and Phoroi: A New Commented Edition of the Athenian Tribute Quota Lists and Assessment Decrees*. diss., l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse).