

Ephesos. Honorary decree for the Rhodian Agathokles

Description: marble wall-block inscribed on the face, built into the proscenium of the theatre at Ephesos. The block (h:56.5 w:120.65) is made up of five marble slabs, with 21 lines of Greek inscription in two columns. On the block five different honorary decrees were inscribed

Layout: the writing is left to right

Letters: Ionic letters

Origin: the block had formed part of the walls of the Artemision at Ephesos, before being reused in the building of the theatre

Dating: 300 BC ca.

Findspot: The proscenium of the theatre at Ephesos

Current location: The British Museum, London, inv. 1868.0620.75

Reference Edition: *IEph* 1455

Other Editions: Wood 1877, no. 1; Hicks, *GIBM* III 455; C. Michel, *Recueil* 493; W. Dittenberger, *Syll.*³ 354; McCabe, *Ephesos* 59

Translations: Moretti 1977, 357 (in Italian; partial); Meijer, Van Nijf 1992, 96-97, no. 121 (in English); Austin 2006², no. 130 (in English); Fantasia 2012a, 37 (in Italian; partial); Bresson 2016, 325 (in English)

Bibliography: Moretti 1977, 357; Le Dinahet 1985, 39-45; Meijer, Van Nijf 1992, 96-7, no. 121; Jakab 1997, 70-93; Migeotte 2005, 287-301; Austin 2006², no. 130; Ampolo 2010, 53-54; Fantasia 2012a, 37; Bresson 2016, 325-326

[ἔδο]ξεν τῇ βουλῇ [κ]αὶ τῷ δήμῳ· Δί[ω]ν Διοπίθους εἶπεν· ἐπειδὴ Ἀγαθοκλῆς
 [Ἀ]γῆμονος Ῥόδιος σῆτον εισαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν πόλιν πυρῶν ἑκτεῖς μυρίους
 τετρακισχιλίους, καὶ καταλαβὼν τὸν σῆτον τὸν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ πωλούμε-
 νομ πλέονος δραχμῶν ἔχς, πεισθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγορανόμου καὶ βουλόμενος
 5 χαρίζεσθαι τῷ δήμῳ ἐπώλησε τὸν σῆτον πάντα εὐωνότερον τοῦ ἐν
 τῇ ἀγορᾷ πωλουμένου· δεδόχθαι τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ, δοῦναι Ἀγαθοκλεῖ
 Ῥοδίῳ πολιτείαν ἐφ' ἴσῃ καὶ ὁμοίαι καὶ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκγ[ό]νοις, ἐπικληρῶσαι δὲ
 αὐτὸν τοὺς ἐσοῆνας εἰς φυλὴν καὶ χιλιαστὺν καὶ ἀναγράψαι αὐτῷ ταῦ-
 10 τα τοὺς νεωποίας εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος οὗ καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς πολιτείας
 ἀναγράφουσιν, ὅπως ἅπα<ν>τες εἰδῶσιν ὅτι ὁ δῆμος ἐπίσταται χάριτας ἀπο-
 διδόναι τοῖς εὐεργετοῦσιν αὐτόν. ἔλαχε φυλὴν Βεμβίνης, χιλιαστὺν Αἰγώτεος.

Apparatus criticus: l. 2: [Ἀ]γῆμονος MacCabe : [Ἡ]γῆμονος Wood, Hicks, Michel, Dittenberger

Translation:

Resolved by the council and the people; Dion son of Diopithes made the motion: since Agathokles son of Hegemon from Rhodes, when he was importing grain to the city amounting to 14,000 hekteis and found that the grain in the agora was being sold at more than 6 drachms, was persuaded by the agoranomos and wished to do a favour to the people, and he sold all his grain at a lower price than that at which it was sold in the agora, be it resolved by the people to grant citizenship to Agathokles of Rhodes on a basis of full equality, to himself and his

descendants; the essenes shall allot him a tribe and a chiliastys, and the temple administrators shall inscribe these (honours) for him in the temple of Artemis, where they inscribe also the other grants of citizenship, so that everyone may be aware that the people know how to reward benefactors. He was granted to the tribe of Bembina and the chiliastys of Aigotis.

Commentary:

The supply of grain was one of the most important and delicate issues for the Hellenistic cities all over the Mediterranean. The local production of grain was not always enough to guarantee the amount of grain that the Greek cities needed. In addition, Hellenistic poleis frequently had to deal with long and difficult wars and famines, which, of course, complicated the supply of grain (Moretti 1977, 357-359). When the local resources of wheat were not sufficient and prices soared, poleis could turn to the many merchants (usually Greek or Phoenician) who provided a constant and, in some cases, cheaper supply of grain from the regions where the production of wheat was more abundant (Moretti 1977). Indeed, many honorary inscriptions show that merchants in some occasions might sell their grain more cheaply than the full market price in return for the honours rewarded to them by a city. Of course, this does not mean that the supply of grain was not a problematic issue for Hellenistic cities (Moretti 1977, 358), but rather that this was one of the possibilities that the poleis had for facing the problem. Specific magistrates, the *agoranomoi*, were in charge of grain supplies, as we can see in this inscription, which is a central document in the discussion about the process of grain supplies in the Hellenistic world.

The inscription was found in the proscenium of the theatre at Ephesos; before being reused in the theatre it possibly formed part of the walls of the Artemision. The text is an honorary decree resolved by the council and the people of Ephesus, in which the merchant Agathokles son of Hagemon is praised for his trade of grain in the city. The structure of the decree is canonical:

1. The decree has been resolved by the council and the people (l. 1);
2. Reasons for the decree. Agathokles imported 14,000 hekteis of grain in the city of Ephesus and, persuaded by the *agoranomos*, sold it more cheaply than the grain sold in the agora (ll. 1-6);
3. Honours. Citizenship to Agathokles and his descendants; allotment to a tribe and a chiliastys (ll. 6-11);
4. The *naopoioi* are in charge of inscribing the honours for Agathokles in the temple of Artemis;
5. The tribe and the chiliastys to whom Agathokles was appointed.

As we have already said, this inscription shows that an *agoranomos* could be in charge of the negotiations with the merchants during the trade of wheat. Indeed, the act of *euergetia* made by Agathokles (*βουλόμενος χαρίζεσθαι τῷ δήμῳ*, ll. 4-5) is explicitly related to the intervention of the *agoranomos*, who is said to have persuaded him (*πεισθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγορανόμου*, l.4) to sell the grain more cheaply than the full market price. This is clear evidence of the concrete role played by the *agoranomoi* in order to guarantee the regular supply of grain (Migeotte 2005, 194) and gives us an idea of at least one of the *agoranomoi*'s tasks in the agora activity. Nevertheless, there are no other known inscriptions where an *agoranomos* is said to have negotiated the price of the grain with an *emporos*. For this reason, it has been argued that this task was not exclusive of the *agoranomoi* (Fantasia 2012a, 37-38) and that it was often carried out by wealthy and powerful citizens, no matter whether they were *agoranomoi* or other magistrates (Migeotte 2005, 294-295).

Focusing on the economic relevance of *IEph 1455*, it is important to note that this inscription has been used in the debate about the meaning of the expression *καθεστηκυία τιμή* (for a full overview of the scholarly discussion about this topic see Ampolo, *Le motivazioni della legge sulla tassazione del grano di Lemno, Imbro e Sciro e il prezzo di grano e pane*, 46 ff.). According to Bresson (Bresson 2000, 183-206), the *τιμή καθεστηκυία* or *καθισταμένη* was the official price of the imported grain, which was «réajusté périodiquement en fonction de la loi de l'offre et de la demande» (Bresson 2000, 205). In his view, this "official price" was determined by a negotiation between the city's magistrates and the merchants of grain (Bresson 2000, 183-206). Carmine Ampolo argues for a different explanation. According to Ampolo, it is difficult to explain why merchants would have tried hard to be aware of the official price of the grain (as, for instance, Kleomenes of Naukratis does in *Dem. 56.8*), if it was negotiable and could be changed with a new negotiation (Ampolo, *Le motivazioni della legge sulla tassazione del grano di Lemno, Imbro e Sciro e il prezzo di grano e pane*, 55). For this reason, Ampolo suggests that, at least in Athens during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, there were two different types of prices. The first one, related to the wheat produced on the public (or sacred) lands of the city, was decreed by the city's magistrates; this price might also be followed by the *emporoi*, in order to be publicly rewarded. The second price was variable, influenced by the free market. This price was higher than the first one and for this reason it was the most desirable for merchants and contractors (Ampolo, *Le motivazioni della legge sulla tassazione del grano di Lemno, Imbro e Sciro e il prezzo di grano e pane*, 59).

Even though *IEph 1455* makes no reference to the *τιμή καθεστηκυία/καθισταμένη*, in the inscription there are two explicit mentions of the "market price". The first one is at the beginning of the text, when it is said that in the market the grain was sold at more than six drachms (*τὸν σῖτον τὸν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ πωλούμενον πλέονος*

δραχμῶν ἔχς); a few lines later Agathokles is said to have sold the grain *εὐωνότερον τοῦ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ πωλουμένου* (more cheaply than the market price). One could wonder if these mentions of the grain's price in the agora may be related to the *τιμὴ καθεστηκυῖα / καθισταμένη* (using the definition suggested by Ampolo). First of all, the inscription does not say whether the wheat sold in the agora was locally produced or imported. Moreover, it is difficult to determine whether this official price had been established by the polis or was determined (and/or influenced) by the market trend (but it is clear that it was not decided after a negotiation between the polis and the merchants: why, in that case, would there have been a subsequent negotiation between the agoranomos and Agathokles?). One has to consider that it is not impossible that the polis had decreed the price of 6 drachms (it is not extremely high indeed; see *infra* and comment at l. 4) and that the agoranomos then managed to persuade a merchant to sell a large amount of grain cheaply (the fact that the price of Agathokles' grain is not mentioned in the inscription suggests that it was probably not much lower than the current one; see Ampolo, *Le motivazioni della legge sulla tassazione del grano di Lemno, Imbro e Sciro e il prezzo di grano e pane*, 54). Nevertheless, this does not exclude that the grain was sold in the agora at 6 drachms due to the trend of the free market. In both cases the scenario shown in the inscription is coherent with the double economic system suggested by Ampolo (Ampolo, *Le motivazioni della legge sulla tassazione del grano di Lemno, Imbro e Sciro e il prezzo di grano e pane*, 59). Finally, it is worth noting that, if one interprets the mention of the grain's price in the agora as a reference to the *τιμὴ καθισταμένη*, the act of euergesia made by Agathokles is not necessarily situated in an economic context of grain shortage.

To conclude, *IEph 1455* has been also used in the discussion about the role played by Rhodes in the Aegean trades during the Hellenistic period. According to Berthold, for instance, Agathokles is «a perfect example of Rhodes' already well-developed position as middleman in the Aegean grain trade» (Berthold 1984, 82).

- ll. 1-2. Dion son of Diopetithes is mentioned here as the one who moved the motion for granting honours to Agathokles. A Dion son of Diopetithes Ephesios is mentioned also in a record of the grant of citizenship to individuals from Theodosia, Pidasia, Halikarnassos, Sardis, Kolophon, and Ephesos, possibly dated to 200 BC (McCabe, *Miletos* 152).

Agathokles son of Hagemon from Rhodes is certainly the same Agathokles Rhodios honoured in a proxeny decree from Arcesine dated to the end of the 4th century BC (*IG XII 7 9*; Ziebarth 1932, 916). The reasons for his proxeny are not expressed in the decree, but it is very plausible that he was appointed proxenus in reward for his activity related to the import of grain in the city (Gabrielsen 1997, Fantasia 2012a, 37, n. 16). It has been also suggested that he might be a member of a wealthy family of merchants from Kamiros, who traded grain in the Aegean at the end of the 4th century BC (Gabrielsen 1997, 79, Bresson 2000, 196-197).

- ll. 2-3. 14,000 hekteis are equivalent to around 2,333 medimnoi.

- l. 4. *πλέονος δραχμῶν ἔχς*. The inscription says that the grain was sold in the market at Ephesus at more than 6 drachms, without giving any information about the price of the grain sold by Agathokles. The majority of the scholars interpreted the *δραχμῶν ἔχς* using the medimnoi as a unit of measurement (Austin 2006, 242, no. 2, Fantasia 2012a, 37, n. 16 with bibliography, Rogers 2013, 55). If so, the price of the grain at Ephesus was not exceptionally more expensive than the "standard" price of 5 drachms, which is seen as a reasonable price in the Athenian market at the end of the 4th century BC (Bresson 2000, 189 ff.; Fantasia 2012a, 37, n. 16). Le Dinahet suggests, instead, that the unit of measurement should be the hekteis, because it is the only one explicitly mentioned in the inscription (Le Dinahet 1985, 40 and 44, n. 7). Following this interpretation, the price of grain at Ephesus in that moment would have been around 40 drachms for a medimnos, which seems to be extremely high for the Hellenistic age. Fantasia argues that, if the price of grain was so high, the honorary inscription should also have been more explicit about it (Fantasia 2012a, 37, n. 16).

πεισθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγορανόμου. The agoranomoi usually supervised the market's activity, trying to guarantee a fair trade of goods in the agora (Migeotte 2005, 288, Fantasia 2012a). The agoranomia developed greatly in the Hellenistic period and from the 4th century onward numerous decrees praised the agoranomoi for taking care of the grain supply as well as for their activity of surveillance in the cities' markets (Fantasia 2012a, 37, n. 16 with bibliography).

- l. 8. The essenes were a college of priests at the Artemision (see *Syll.*³ 352, l. 6, 363, l. 10, Paus. 8.13.1). Among other tasks, they were in charge of determining the tribe and the chiliastys of the new citizens; in inscriptions this task is usually expressed in the formulaic phrase *ἐπικληρῶσαι αὐτὸν τοὺς ἐσσηνας εἰς φυλὴν καὶ χιλιαστὴν* that also appears in this document (see McCabe, *Ephesos*, nos. 21, 30, 32, 37, 45, 51, 59, 62, 66, 68, 78, 87, 89, 103, 117 and Hicks, *GIBM* III, 85). The chiliastys was a subdivision of the tribe.

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