

Delphic honorific inscriptions – description for the general public

Why honorific inscriptions?

The aim of my project is to examine and discuss a sub-set of Delphic honorific inscriptions (*tituli honorarii*), documents granted by the citizens of Delphi in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (ca. 323 BC – 2nd c. AD). *Tituli honorarii* are a very brief, informative inscriptions that are typically carved on the statue bases, less frequently on stelae or on columns. The aim of the honorific inscriptions was to praise and commend city's benefactors for their merits towards Delphic polis and the sanctuary. *Euergetai* (gr. benefactors) in return for their sacrifices, services, donations and foundations were praised with numerous honours and privileges. In the entire Greco-Roman world, statues were among the most exceptional privileges one could obtain. This was mainly due to the visual impact, cost of their construction and their lasting character. The aim of inscription, usually carved on statues' bases, was to commemorate those who were granted such portraits, as well as institutions and/or organisation responsible for setting up the statue. Such honorific inscriptions are the focus of my research. The phenomenon of Delphic honorific inscriptions dating from the Hellenistic period up to the end of the 2nd century AD lies in number of epigraphic material: these inscriptions number over 800 in total. Such a vast amount of material provides a lot of information about the matters that will be examined in my project.

Why Delphi?

Delphic city is particularly interesting and worth examining due to the fact that for many years scholars' have focused their attention on Athens and Sparta, since the first mentioned polis provides us with the largest number of sources, both literary and epigraphic, while Sparta's attraction lies in its unique social and military organization. The re-discovery of Delphi started with the French excavations held at the end of the 19th century. Since then, scholars' attention focused on the famous sanctuary of Apollo and the oracle, on Pythia and her prophets, on Plutarch who was both - priest of Apollo in Delphi, and wrote several works on Delphi, like '*On the E in Delphi*'. The small polis that existed in the shadow of the Panhellenic sanctuary has received less scholarly interest. There are over 800 preserved Delphic honorific inscriptions. Such a large number of unexplored materials will provide new information on Delphic polis, its organization, citizens, wildly understand honorific culture, as well as on the international relationships between Delphi and other Greek poleis, Hellenistic monarchs, and with the Roman Empire. Another reason explaining my eagerness to explore statues set up in Delphi lies in the uniqueness of Delphi. Delphic polis was a relatively small Greek city-state which had low number of citizens, however its fame equal that of Athens, Sparta or Thebes. The fame of Delphi is primarily attributed to the oracle of Apollo, the polis' patron. To explore potential of Delphi lost through the centuries, further research on its political and economic history, society, as well as on the landscape of the territory, is needed.

Project's objectives?

None before has studied Delphic honorific inscriptions and therefore my research on Delphic *tituli honorarii* will be innovative, and the employment of epigraphic, archaeological, philological and art historical perspectives on my evidence will make my project an interdisciplinary one. Research on Delphic honorific inscriptions will not only allow to investigate one of the most numerous types of extant inscriptions at Delphi, but also to study Delphic 'statue habit' and 'statue culture' in post-classical times, which have been a 'hot' topics lately. I would like to explore Delphic 'honorific statue habit' due to the fact that 'statue habit' was a phenomenon and a distinctive feature of Greek and Roman culture. It began around 600 BC and ended around 600 AD. Greek and Roman cities were filled with big lumps of bronze or painted marble, fashioned in human forms. No other culture before or since has displayed so many large, public, three-dimensional figures on stone and metal. In my project I would like to focus on the 'statue habit' at Delphic to establish whether there was any pattern in 'statue habit' at Delphi, and whether the 'statue culture' developed over time. What factors influenced developments in Delphi? what caused changes? What difference did the advent of Rome make to the people of Delphi and their system of granting *tituli honorarii* upon meritorious people?

In my project I would like to focus on the following issues:

- the awarding bodies that allowed for setting up statues in a public place in Delphi
- the location of the statues within the public space
- the language of honour and rhetoric of honorific inscriptions
- the recipients of statues
- the stones on which inscriptions have been carved, investigating the monuments, decorations or drawings on the stones, letters etc.
- the economies issues related to the statue habit, therefore the cost of a statue.

My project will contribute to international discussion on the honorific habit and monumental space in the Hellenistic and Roman city, which are currently 'hot' topics. The issues of habitus, memory, and spatiality, as well as monumental aspects of inscriptions and their engagement with the space around them are the objects of many scholars research recently. It is enough to mention J. Ma's book (2013) *Statues and Cities*, G.J. Oliver article on Athenian statue habit (2007, *Space and the visualization of power in the Greek*), or R.R.R Smiths publications. Moreover, two major international projects: 'Civic honours' and 'The last statues of antiquity' are devoted to wildly understand honorific culture.

Lastly, terms 'statue habit' and 'statue culture' are now widely used by foreign scholars (e.g. J. Ma, R.R.R. Smith and G.J. Oliver) and no study exist in Polish literature indicating the neglect of this topic in Polish academia.