

## The Athenian epehebic oath and the 'oath of Plataea', mid fourth century

Marble *stèle* found at Akharnai (formerly Menidhi) together with a fourth-century deme decree of Acharnae (SEG-xxi 519) relating to the altars of Athena Areia. Now at the French School in Athens (inv. no. I 7). In the pediment above the inscription a large round shield flanked by helmet and greaves on one side, cuirass and (?)mantle on the other. Phot. Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai*; G. Daux, *Charakterion A. Orlandos*, i. 177; and (?)mantle on the other. Phot. Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai*; G. Daux, *Charakterion A. Orlandos*, i. pls. I-II; (relief) Lawton, *Attic Dacummi Reliefs*, pl. 92 no. 177; our Pl. 8.

θεοί.

ἱερεὺς Ἄρεως καὶ Ἀθηναίης  
Ἀρείας Δίωνος Ἀχαρ-  
νεὺς ἀνέθηκεν. *vacat*

§i

5 ὄρκος ἐφήβων πάτριος, ὃν ὀμνύναι δεῖ τ-  
οὺς ἐφήβους· <sup>vvv</sup> οὐκ αἰσχυνῶ τὰ ἱερά ὀπ-  
λα οὐδὲ λείψω τὸν παραστάτην ὅπου ἂν σ-  
τειχίσω· ἄμυνῶ δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἱερώων καὶ ὀ-  
ίων, καὶ ὅκ ἐλάττω παραδώσω τὴν πατρί-  
10 α, πλείω δὲ καὶ ἀρείω κατὰ τε ἑμᾶυτὸν κα-  
ὶ μετὰ ἀπάντων, καὶ εὐηκόησω τῶν ἀεὶ κρ-  
ανόντων ἐμφρόνως καὶ τῶν θεσμῶν τῶν  
ἰδρυμένων καὶ οὓς ἂν τὸ λοιπὸν ἰδρύσω-  
νται ἐμφρόνως· ἐὰν δὲ τις ἀναιρεῖ, οὐκ ἔ-  
15 πιτρέψω κατὰ τε ἑμᾶυτὸν καὶ μετὰ πάντ-  
ων, καὶ τιμήσω ἱερά τὰ πάτρια. ἴστορες [ο]  
θεοὶ Ἄγλαυρος, Ἑστία, Ἐννώ, Ἐνυάλιος, Ἄρ-  
της καὶ Ἀθηναίης, Ζεὺς, Θαλλώ, Αὐξώ, Ἥγε-  
μόνη, Ἥρακλῆς, ὄροι τῆς πατρίδος, πυροί,  
20 κριθαί, ἄμπελοι, ἐλάαι, σικαῖ. *vacat*

*vacat*

§ii

ὄρκος ὃν ὤμοσαν Ἀθηναῖοι ὅτε ἤμελλον  
μάχεσθαι πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους· <sup>vvvvv</sup>

Attic-Ionic occasionally retaining old ε for εἰ, ο for οἰ and once, perhaps, ο for ου. *Stoichedon* 20 lines 2-4; *stoichedon* 31 from line 5 onwards.

Whole *stèle*: Robert, *Épaves épigraphiques et philologiques*, 302 ff.; Tod 204; G. Daux, *Charakterion A. Orlandos*, i. 78-90; Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai*. \* Epehebic oath only: Daux, *REG* lxxiv 1971, 370-83; Merkelbach, *ZPE* ix 1972, 277-83; Siewert, *JHS* xvii 1977, 102-11; Trans. Harding 109 (epehebic oath only), Fornara 57 (Plataea oath only). See also C. Habicht, *Hermes* lxxxix 1961, 1-35; Burekhardt, *Bürger und Soldaten*.

Gods. The priest of Ares and Athena Areia, Dio son of Dio of Acharnae has dedicated this.

§i

5 The ancestral oath of the epehebes, which the epehebes must swear. I shall not bring shame upon the sacred weapons nor shall I desert the man beside me, wherever I stand in the line. I shall fight in defence of things sacred and profane and I shall not hand the fatherland on lessened, but greater and better both as far as I am able and with all. And I shall be obedient to whoever exercise power reasonably on any occasion and to the laws currently in force and any reasonably put into force in future. If anyone destroys these I shall not give them allegiance both as far as is in my own power and in union with all, and I shall honour the ancestral religion.

16 Witnesses: the Gods Aglauros, Hestia, Enyo, Enyalios, Ares and Athena Areia, Zeus, Thallo, Auxo, Hegemone, Heracles, and the boundaries of my fatherland, wheat, barley, vines, olives, figs.

§ii

21 Oath which the Athenians swore when they were about to fight against the barbarians.

Siewert does not indicate *vacat*.

7-8 σ|τ|ε|χ|ή|σω on stone. σ|τ|ε|χ|ή|σω Siewert after Robert (comparing Poll. viii. 105).

9 ὄκ on stone; ο(ὄ)κ Siewert after Robert: 'perhaps due to a careless omission', 'probably a careless mistake' Thraette, *Grammar*, i. 352 n. 2, 256 n. 5, but N.B. δδδ in IG-ii<sup>2</sup> 236. a. 12 in the context of an oath, firmly dated to 338.

μαχοῦμαι εἰς ἂν ζῶ, καὶ οὐ περὶ πλεόνος  
 ποιῶμαι τὸ ζῆν ἢ τὸ ἐλεύθερος εἶναι, κ-  
 25 ν οὐκ ἀπολείβω τὸν ταξίαρχον οὐδὲ τὸ-  
 ν ἐνωμοτάρχην οὔτε ζῶντα οὔτε ἀποθαν-  
 όντα, καὶ οὐκ ἄπεμι εἰμ μὴ οἱ ἡγεμόνες  
 ἀφηγῶνται, καὶ ποιῶ σ' ἂν οἱ στρατηγ-  
 οὶ παραγγείλωσιν, καὶ τοὺς ἀποθανόντ-  
 30 ωὶ καὶ ἄθαστον οὐδένα καταλείβω· καὶ ν-  
 κήσας μαχόμενος τοὺς βαρβάρους δεκ-  
 ατεῖσω πῆν Θηβαίων πόλιν, καὶ οὐκ ἀνασ-  
 τήσω Ἀθήνας οὐδὲ Σπάρτην οὐδὲ Πλαται-  
 35 ἀς οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων τῶν συμμαχεσ-  
 αμένων οὐδεμίαν, οὐδὲ λιμῶν περιόριμ-  
 αι ἐργομένους οὐδὲ ὑδάτων ναματιαίω-  
 ν εἶρξω οὔτε φίλους ὄντας οὔτε πολεμί-  
 ους. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἐμπεδορκοῖν τὰ ἐν τῶι ὄ-  
 40 ρκῶν γεγραμμένα, ἢ πόλις ἡμῶ ἄνοσος εἶ-  
 η, εἰ δὲ μὴ, νοσοῖ· καὶ πόλις ἡμῶ ἀπόρθη-  
 ος εἶη, εἰ δὲ μὴ, πορβοῖτο· καὶ φέροι ἡμῶ, ε-  
 ἰ δὲ μὴ, ἄφορος εἶη· καὶ γυναῖκες τίκτου-  
 εν εὐοκῶτα γονεῦσιν, εἰ δὲ μὴ, σέρατα· κα-  
 45 ἰ βοσκήματα τίκτοι εὐοκῶτα βοσκήμασ-  
 ι, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τέρατα. ταῦτα ὁμόσωντες κατα-  
 καλύβαντες τὰ σφάγια ταῖς ἄσπίδων ὑπ-  
 ὀ σάλπιγγος ἀρὰν ἐποιήσαντο, εἴ τι τῶν  
 ὁμωμομένων παραβάνοιεν καὶ μὴ ἐμπε-  
 50 δορκοῖ(ε)ν τὰ ἐν τῶι ὄρκωι γεγραμμένα, α-  
 ὑτοῖς ἄγος εἶναι τοῖς ὁμόσασιν. *vacat*

25 ταξίαρχον Daux, ταξίαρχον Robert.  
 on stone.

42 καὶ(καρποῖς) φέροι(γῆ) TodtaterPrakken.

50 δορκοῖν

Despite the inscription of 'Gods' on the cornice of the pediment of the *stèle*, in a man-  
 ner reminiscent of decrees, this stone is a dedication by Dio, priest of the cult Ares  
 and Athena Areia at Acharnae. We know nothing more of the priest, but a further  
 inscription found together with this one records the decision by the deme of Achar-  
 nae, following an oracular consultation, to build an altar to Ares and Athena before  
 the sacrifice of the Areia 'in order that the Athenians and the Acharnians may be  
 pious toward the gods' (*SEG* xxi 519), and we may take the dedication of the text of  
 these oaths to be a further way of manifesting Athenian piety. *SEG* xxi 519 is headed  
 by a relief showing Athena, with aegis, helmet, and shield, crowning Ares who is  
 shown in hoplite armour (Lawton, *Attic Document Reliefs*, no. 143, pl. 76). Acharnae,  
 the largest of Athenian demes, contributing 24 of the 56 epehebes enrolled by the tribe

23 I shall fight while I live, and I shall not put life before  
 being free, and I shall not desert the taxiarach nor  
 the enomotarch, neither while they live nor when  
 they are dead, and I shall not depart unless the  
 leaders lead the way, and I shall do whatever the  
 generals command, and I shall bury in the same  
 place the dead of those who were allied, and I shall  
 leave no one unburied.

31 And when I have been victorious fighting against  
 the barbarians, I shall (totally destroy and) dedi-  
 cate a tenth of the city of the Thebans, and I shall  
 not raze Athens or Sparta or Plataea or any of the  
 other cities that were allied, and I shall not over-  
 look those who are oppressed by hunger and I shall  
 not keep them from running water, whether they  
 are friends or enemies.

39 And if I keep true to what has been written in the  
 oath may my city be free from sickness, if not, may  
 it be sick; and may my city be unravaged, but if not,  
 may it be ravaged; and my (land) bear, but if not,  
 may it be barren; and may the women bear chil-  
 dren like their parents, but if not, monsters; and  
 may the animals bear young like the animals, but if  
 not, monsters.

46 They swore these oaths, covered the sacrificial  
 victims with their shields and at the sound of the  
 trumpet made a curse: if they transgressed what  
 was sworn and did not keep true to what had been  
 written in the oath, a curse was to be upon the very  
 people that had sworn.

Oineis in 330/29 (Reinmuth, no. 12), had a fifth-century reputation for belligerence  
 (*Ar. Ach.*, esp. 204–36; *Thuc.* ii. 20. iv). Ares is widely attested as a god by whom oaths  
 are sworn, and these two inscriptions suggest that the cult of Ares, which is attested  
 in no other Attic deme, was promoted in connection with epehebic service by the  
 deme of Acharnae with the support of the Athenians as a whole. The letter forms of  
 the two inscriptions indicate a date in the middle of the fourth century, the similar  
 sculptural treatment of the two cuirasses links the two reliefs, and the relief on the  
 deme decree is closely related to other reliefs securely dated to the third quarter of the  
 fourth century.

The interpretation of the inscription is tied up with the question of the genuineness  
 of the two oaths which it records: do lines 5–21 indeed record the 'ancestral oath of the