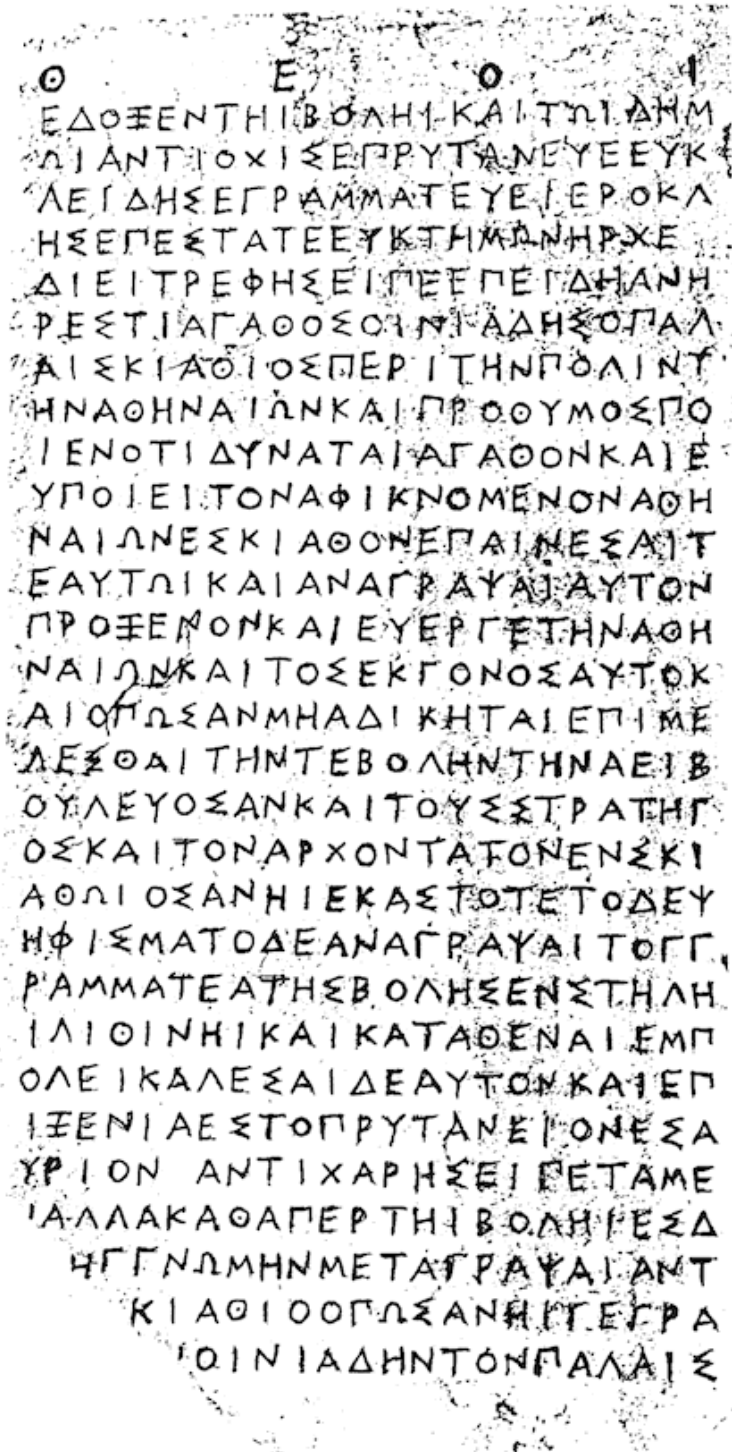


The picture below shows a retouched image of a stone inscription from late fifth-century Athens, a wonderful brief sample of classical Attic spelled in the Ionic alphabet but with some features of Old Attic spelling retained, and likewise an excellent introduction to many aspects of Athenian democratic government. (Based on the Tafel 41 in J. Kirchner, *Imagines inscriptionum atticarum; ein Bilderatlas epigraphischer denkmäler Attikas*, Berlin 1935.)



This official Athenian decree began its life as a proposal (*γνώμη*) or motion in the Boule (Council of 500, *βουλή*) and then was brought to the next meeting of the Ecclesia or Demos (*δῆμος*), the Assembly of Athenian citizens, for discussion, possible amendment, and approval or disapproval. The Council consisted of ten groups of 50 Councilors (*βουλευταί*), one group from each of the ten Athenian tribes established when the democracy was founded about 100 years before the date of this decree. The government year (which extended from about the middle of our calendar year to the middle of the next) was divided into ten equal parts (*prytanies*, *πρυτανείαι*), during which each tribe took its turn being the executive subcommittee (*πρυτάνεις*, sing. *πρυτάνης*). Decrees normally have a formula at the beginning: this first records the approval of the resolution (*ἔδοξε* + dat.); then it provides information that allowed them and us to date action—the tribe that held the prytany (thus identifying which tenth of the civil year it was; in this decree the Antiochis tribe, *Ἀντιοχίς φυλή*, was in charge); the name of the secretary (*γραμματεὺς*) at this time; the name of the Councilor from that tribe who presided (by lot) at the relevant Assembly-meeting (*ἐπιστάτης*, *ἐπιστατέω*); the name of the eponymous archon of the year (*ἄρχω* in this formula means *be the eponymous archon*; we know that this Euktemon gave his name to the Athenian civil year that corresponds to what we would call 408/407 BCE); and finally the name of the one who moved the proposal in the Assembly.

Decrees usually have a formal structure with a *whereas* clause (*ἐπειδὴ*) setting forth the reasons for the action followed by infinitives with imperatival force (depending on the opening *ἔδοξε*). The Oiniades decree is of a type known as the “honorary decree” or “proxeny decree” because in it the Athenians declare a citizen of another community to be a public benefactor and an official liaison (*πρόξενος*) for any Athenian who visits his city. It is typical that this honor is recorded on stone and set up in a prominent place (here on the Acropolis), and that the honoree is also invited to be a guest at dinner in the town-hall (*πρυτανεῖον*). It is also typical that the honor is declared to be inheritable by Oiniades’ descendants (*ἔκγονοι*).

Another fascinating feature of this decree is that it records the process of amendment that occurred in the Assembly. Skiathos is a small island in the northwest Aegean Sea, just off the coast of the eastern tip of Thessaly. Apparently at some point the main community there moved and retained the name Skiathos, while the older town was renamed Palaiskiathos (Old Skiathos): perhaps the old town was farther inland and higher up, for safety from piracy, and the new town was settled when the Aegean was more peaceful. The Council and Diitrephes have mistakenly called Oiniades a citizen of Skiathos (the newer town), but Antichares rose in the Assembly to amend the resolution so that it would contain the correct designation (apparently Oiniades was proud of the distinction).

The decree is inscribed in a style known as *stoichedon*, meaning there is a precise grid into which the letters are placed and every line has the same number of letters (here 23). As usual in this period, there is no space between words and no punctuation; but note the empty space at the end of the dating formula, after HPXE (line 5), and another one before Antichares’ name (line 26), setting apart the amendment. The decree is preceded by the vocative *θεοί*, an invocation of the gods’ favor for the action taken by the citizens.

Transcription	Interpretation according to modern conventions
Θ Ε Ο Ι ΕΔΟΞΕΝΤΗΒΟΛΗΚΑΙΤΩΙΔΗΜ ΩΙΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΣΕΠΡΥΤΑΝΕΥΕΕΥΚ ΛΕΙΔΗΣΕΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥΕΙΕΡΟΚΛ ΗΣΕΠΕΣΤΑΤΕΕΥΚΤΗΜΩΝΗΡΧΕ 5 ΔΙΕΙΤΡΕΦΗΣΕΙΠΕΕΠΕΙΔΗΑΝΗ ΡΕΣΤΙΑΓΑΘΟΣΟΙΝΙΑΔΗΣΟΠΑΛ ΛΙΣΚΙΑΘΙΟΣΠΕΡΙΤΗΜΠΟΛΙΝΤ ΗΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝΚΑΙΠΡΟΘΥΜΟΣΠΟ ΙΕΝΟΤΙΔΥΝΑΤΑΙΑΓΑΘΟΝΚΑΙΕ 10 ΥΠΟΙΕΙΤΟΝΑΦΙΚΟΜΕΝΟΝΑΘΗ ΝΑΙΩΝΕΣΚΙΑΘΟΝΕΠΑΙΝΕΣΑΙΤ ΕΑΥΤΩΙΚΑΙΑΝΑΓΡΑΨΑΙΑΥΤΟΝ ΠΡΟΞΕΝΟΝΚΑΙΕΥΕΡΓΕΤΗΝΑΘΗ ΝΑΙΩΝΚΑΙΤΟΣΕΚΤΟΝΟΣΑΥΤΟΚ 15 ΛΙΟΠΩΣΑΝΜΗΔΑΔΙΚΗΤΑΙΕΠΙΜΕ ΛΕΣΘΑΙΤΗΝΤΕΒΟΛΗΝΤΗΝΑΕΙΒ ΟΥΛΕΥΟΣΑΝΚΑΙΤΟΥΣΣΤΡΑΤΗΓ ΟΣΚΑΙΤΟΝΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΤΟΝΕΝΕΣΚΙ ΑΘΩΙΟΣΑΝΗΕΚΑΣΤΟΤΕΤΟΔΕΥ 20 ΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΔΕΑΝΑΦΡΑΨΑΙΤΟΓ ΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΑΤΗΣΒΟΛΗΣΕΝΣΤΗΛΗ ΛΙΘΙΝΗΚΑΙΚΑΤΑΘΕΝΑΙΕΜΠ ΠΟΛΕΙΚΑΛΕΣΑΙΔΕΑΥΤΟΝΚΑΙΕΠ ΙΞΕΝΙΑΕΣΤΟΠΡΥΤΑΝΕΙΟΝΕΣΑ 25 ΥΡΙΟΝΑΝΤΙΧΑΡΗΣΕΙΠΕΤΑΜΕ ΝΑΛΛΑΚΑΘΑΠΕΡΤΗΒΟΛΗΕΣΔ [ΕΤ]ΗΓΓΝΩΜΗΝΜΕΤΑΓΡΑΨΑΙΑΝΤ [ΙΤΟΣ]ΚΙΑΘΙΟΟΠΩΣΑΝΗΓΕΓΡΑ [ΜΜΕΝΟ]ΝΟΙΝΙΑΔΗΝΤΟΝΠΑΛΛΑΙΣ 30 [ΚΙΑΘΙΟΝ]	θεοί· ἔδοξεν τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ· Ἄντιοχὶς ἐπρυτάνευε· Εὐκλείδης ἐγραμμάτευε· Ἱεροκλῆς ἐπεστάτει· Εὐκτῆμων ἦρχε· Διειτρέφης εἶπε· ἐπειδὴ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ ἀγαθὸς Οἰνιάδης ὁ Παλαισκιάθιος περὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν Ἀθηναίων καὶ πρόθυμος ποιεῖν ὅ τι δύναται ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὖ ποιεῖ τὸν ἀφικόμενον Ἀθηναίων εἰς Σκιάθου, ἐπαινέσαι ¹ τε αὐτῷ ² καὶ ἀναγράψαι αὐτὸν πρόξενον καὶ εὐεργέτην Ἀθηναίων καὶ τοὺς ἐκγόνους αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἀδικῆται ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τὴν τε βουλήν τὴν αἰεὶ βουλευούσαν ³ καὶ τοὺς στρατηγούς καὶ τὸν ἄρχοντα τὸν ἐν Σκιάθῳ ὃς ἂν ᾗ ἐκάστοτε. τὸ δὲ ψήφισμα τόδε ἀναγράψαι τὸν γραμματέα τῆς βουλῆς ἐν στήλῃ λιθίνῃ καὶ καταθεῖναι ἐν πόλει ⁴ . καλέσαι δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπὶ ξένια εἰς τὸ πρυτανεῖον εἰς αὐριον. Ἀντιχάρης εἶπε· τὰ μὲν ἄλλα καθάπερ τῇ βουλῇ ⁵ , εἰς δὲ τὴν γνώμην μεταγράψαι ἀντὶ τοῦ Σκιάθου ὅπως ἂν ᾗ γεγραμμένον Οἰνιάδην τὸν Παλαισκιάθιον.

¹ The actions enjoined by the decree are expressed in infinitives. For the first two infinitives the subject is understood to be the Athenian state or its citizens (implied by *Council and People* in the opening phrase). Subsequent infinitives have subjects expressed, as usual, in the accusative: τὴν τε βουλήν κτλ for ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, τὸν γραμματέα for ἀναγράψαι and καταθεῖναι. But the subjects of καλέσαι and μεταγράψαι are again not explicit.

² The dative is sometimes used with ἐπαινέω instead of an accusative direct object.

³ *The Council that is in office at any time* (with αἰεὶ in a distributive sense) is a technical idiom to indicate that this duty is incumbent not just on the Council serving for the current year, but on any future year's Council as well. A similar point is made in the subsequent phrase ὃς ἂν ᾗ ἐκάστοτε, *whoever may be the governor on each (future) occasion*.

⁴ πόλις is here used in a traditional local sense to mean the Acropolis.

⁵ The dative depends on an understood ἔδοξε.

ἀναγράφω (ἀνα), *record publicly, enroll, register*
 βουλή, -ῆς, f., *council* [in other contexts can mean *counsel, advice*, and the like]
 γραμματεὺς, -έως, m., *secretary, recorder*
 γραμματεύω, *serve as secretary or recorder*
 ἔκγονος, -ου, m., *offspring, descendant*
 ἐπιστατέω, *to serve as chair or presiding officer* [denominative verb from ἐπιστάτης, -ου, m., *supervisor, presiding officer*]
 εὐεργέτης, -ου, m., *benefactor* [from which comes the denominative verb εὐεργετέω]
 καθάπερ, *exactly as* [from κατὰ ἅπερ]
 λίθινος, -η, -ου, *of stone* [for the adjectival suffix compare ἀνθρώπινος, ἀδαμάντινος, γήϊνος]
 μεταγράφω (μετα), *rewrite, correct, emend*
 ξένια, -ων, n., *guest-gifts, hospitality*
 πρόξενος, -ου, m., *proxenos*
 πρύτανειον, -ου, n., *town-hall*
 πρυτανεύω, (of a tribal contingent in the Council) *hold the prytany (leadership in the Council and Assembly)*
 στήλη, -ης, f., *slab, block*
 ψήφισμα, -ματος, n., *decree (voted on by a legislative body)*

FROM A TRANSCRIPTION TO AN ARTICULATED TEXT

In the left column of the previous page is a simple transcription into the capital Greek letters of a present-day font (not much different from the letter-forms on the stone). In the right column is an articulated text following the conventions that developed over a number of centuries and that characterize what most literary Greek texts look like when printed today: the words are separated, their spelling standardized, punctuation and diacritics are added, and the letters have their “lowercase” form based on medieval minuscule script.

The inscription is consistent in using the Ionic letters Η, Ω, Ξ, and Ψ, which in the older Attic script would have been Ε, Ο, ΧΣ, ΦΣ. The older script would have used Ο for omicron, for omega, and for the ου that results from contraction or compensatory lengthening (spurious diphthong: see U1.7, or the Pronunciation tutorial screen omicron), and Ε for epsilon, for eta, and for the ει that results from contraction or compensatory lengthening (spurious diphthong: see U1.7, or the Pronunciation tutorial screen epsilon). The transition to use of ΕΙ and ΟΥ for the spurious diphthongs is, however, still in progress, and the inscription is not consistent. βουλεύω has ΟΥ in line 18, but βουλή has the older spelling with plain omicron in lines 1, 17, 22, and 27. ΤΟΥΣ appears in line 18, but the same word is spelled ΤΟΣ in line 15, and elsewhere we have ΕΚΓΟΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟ (15), ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΣ (18-19), ΤΟ ΣΚΙΑΘΙΟ (29). Ε is used throughout for ει when the spurious diphthong is involved: ΕΠΕΣΤΑΤΕ (5), ΠΟΙΕΝ (9-10), ΚΑΤΑΘΕΝΑΙ (23); note also that the preposition is always ΕΣ, although this could represent pronunciation with a long vowel (εῖς) or short vowel (ἔς). Note, in contrast, genuine ΕΙ in words like ΕΙΠΕ (6, 26) and ΠΟΙΕΙ (11).

The spelling also reveals in a few places the assimilation of consonants in the combination of the definite article or preposition with the following word. Such assimilation may have been regular in pronunciation, but in the tradition of writing the habit of standard spelling came to override the pronunciation (or even perhaps influence the pronunciation, for some speakers). Note τῆμ πόλιμ in 8, τὸν γραμματέα in 21-22, τὴν γνώμην in 28, and ἐμ πόλει in 23-24. Another reflection of pronunciation is the use of a single sigma in place of two in the phrase ἐς Σκίαθον in line 12.

Note that what we print as iota subscript (in dative singular endings like βουλήῃ, δήμῳ, or in subjunctive -ῆ) is an ordinary letter in the line. At the period of this inscription it was pronounced and therefore not omitted, but within a few generations inscriptions give evidence of its becoming silent, since it is often omitted, and later students and scribes had to be trained to include silent iota (still within the line of writing, until the middle Byzantine period).