

# The Athenian Athlothetai

*Blaise Nagy*

**I**N OFFICIAL Athenian terminology, Athlothetai were officials in charge of certain aspects of the Panathenaia.<sup>1</sup> Ten in number, the Athlothetai were men of some consequence whose activities ranged from financial transactions of considerable size to the supervision of the Panathenaic Peplos. In modern scholarship, the Athlothetai have fared ill. No comprehensive study exists, and what has been written is based on incomplete evidence. Historians, among them A. Mommsen, W. S. Ferguson and O. Reinmuth, have concluded that the Athlothetai ceased to exist towards the end of the fourth century B.C. As will appear, however, the history of the Athlothetai is longer lived by far.

## Existing Evidence

The earliest positive record<sup>2</sup> of the Athlothetai is IG I<sup>2</sup> 302, a list of the allotments from Athena's Treasury during the years 418/7 to 415/4 B.C. Among the payments of 415/4 was one of nine talents, made to ἀθλοθέταις ἐς Παναθήναια Ἀμέμπτο[ι . . . καὶ] χυρνάρχοι (lines 66–67).<sup>3</sup> The date for this disbursement is specified (in lines 67–68) as having been the twentieth day of the second prytany, an administrative date which B. D. Meritt equates with either the twenty-fifth or the twenty-sixth day of Hekatombaion.<sup>4</sup> If this is correct, the nine talents were accordingly paid out only two or three days prior to the twenty-eighth of Hekatombaion, Athena's birthdate and the day on which the Panathenaic celebrations began. The inscription does not specify whether the Panathenaia in line 66 were the Greater (quadrennial)

<sup>1</sup> In common parlance, *athlothetai* designated various officials entrusted with the awarding of prizes. Such is the case, for example, in Lucian, *Pisc.* 33. The intent of this paper is to examine only those attestations of *athlothetai* where the Panathenaic officials are meant.

<sup>2</sup> In an early fifth-century inscription from Marathon, *Hesperia* (1942) 333–37, ἀ[θλ|οθ]έταις is restored. These *athlothetai*, however, appear to be officials of the local Herakleia (and not of the Athenian Panathenaia).

<sup>3</sup> For the complete text, see R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford 1969) no.77, pp.229–36. I cite their line numbers.

<sup>4</sup> B. D. Meritt, *The Athenian Calendar in the Fifth Century* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1928) 93–94.

Panathenaia or the Lesser (annual) Panathenaia.<sup>5</sup> It can be reckoned, however, that the Panathenaia of 415/4 were of the latter sort. Meritt, therefore, concludes that the nine talents were paid to the Athlothetai for the expenses of the Lesser Panathenaia.<sup>6</sup> J. A. Davison, on the other hand, claims that the payment was made two or three days before the Lesser Panathenaia of 415/4 merely through an accident of intercalation, and that the money was intended for the Greater Panathenaia of 414/3.<sup>7</sup> It would have been administrative nonsense, according to Davison, for the Athlothetai to have tried dispensing the money in only three or two days. Nor can one assume, he argues, that the expenses of the Lesser Panathenaia of 415/4 could have been met by the Athlothetai themselves until they could be reimbursed with a sum as great as nine talents.

The one other record from the fifth century B.C. concerning the Athenian Athlothetai is IG I<sup>2</sup> 304, again a Treasury expenditure list but one that covers the payments of a single year only, 410/9, a year of the Greater Panathenaia. This time, the document specifies (in lines 5 and 6) that the Athlothetai, namely a certain Philon Kydathenaieus and his colleagues, received 5 talents, 1,000 drachmai for the Greater Panathenaia.<sup>8</sup>

IG I<sup>2</sup> 302 and 304 comprise the only positive evidence regarding the fifth-century Athlothesia. In Plutarch, *Pericles* 13.11, we read that Perikles had himself appointed *athlothes* for the musical contests of the Panathenaia. However, as E. Reisch (*RE* 2 [1896] 2064 s.v. Ἀθλοθέτης) has argued, Plutarch seems to be using *athlothes* in a general sense, as 'judge of the contest' (cf. Plato, *Leges* 6.765c).<sup>9</sup>

In the fourth century B.C. our evidence shows the Athlothetai continuing in their function as financial administrators of the Panathenaia. A decree from 347/6, IG II<sup>2</sup> 212, honors Spartokos and Pairi-

<sup>5</sup> The primary difference between τὰ μικρὰ παναθήναια (*Lys.* 21.2) and τὰ μεγάλα παναθήναια (*Thuc.* 6.56) was one of grandeur: the quadrennial 'greater' celebrations were conducted on a larger scale than the annual 'lesser'. See L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 23–25, for further testimonia.

<sup>6</sup> Meritt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 93–94. M. N. Tod, *Greek Historical Inscriptions*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford 1951) 190, agrees: "The 9 talents granted to the ἀθλοθέται for the Lesser Panathenaia of 415 (lines 60–62) were apparently paid before and not after the celebration." Meiggs and Lewis, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 236, go along with Tod but give no reasons.

<sup>7</sup> J. A. Davison, "Notes on the Panathenaia," *JHS* 78 (1958) 29–33, esp. 32.

<sup>8</sup> For the complete text, see Meiggs and Lewis no.84, pp.255–60. Philon is the only Athlothes who is specified by name in this document. Both IG I<sup>2</sup> 302 and 304 are discussed in W. Thompson, "Notes on Athenian Finances," *Classica et Mediaevalia* (1967) 224–31.

<sup>9</sup> But see Davison, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 33–36.

sades of the Bosphoran Kingdom for having supplied Athens with grain. The Athlothetai are mentioned (but not by their names) in lines 26, 35 and 40. The inscription records that the Spartokids received crowns which had been procured by the Athlothetai as part of their Panathenaic duties. These crowns, we are told, were subsequently placed by the Athlothetai in the temple of Athena Polias.

The one other inscription from the fourth century that mentions (*per* restoration) the Athlothetai is IG II<sup>2</sup> 380, a decree from 320/19. It deals primarily with the accomplishments of the Agoranomoi of the Peiraieus. According to lines 32–34, these officials returned funds to the Athlothetai. Presumably, Panathenaic funds could be lent out by the Athlothetai to other officials, such as the Agoranomoi of the Peiraieus. Perhaps the latter were to obtain supplies for the Panathenaia.

Literary testimony from the fourth century regarding the Athenian Athlothetai includes Demosthenes 39.9, where they are merely cited as examples of officials with *arche* who are capable of making appointments for public service.

More detailed information is given by Aristotle at *Ath.Pol.* 60.1 (= Pollux 8.87, 8.93), where we find a description of the Panathenaic functions of the Athlothetai: κληροῦσι δὲ καὶ ἀθλοθέτας δέκα ἄνδρας, ἓνα τῆς φυλῆς ἐκάστης. οὗτοι δὲ δοκιμαθέντες ἄρχουσι τέτταρα ἔτη, καὶ διοικοῦσιν τε τὴν πομπὴν Παναθηναίων καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς μουσικῆς καὶ τὸν γυμνικὸν ἀγῶνα καὶ τὴν ἵπποδρομίαν, καὶ τὸν πέπλον ποιοῦνται, καὶ τοὺς ἀμφορεῖς ποιοῦνται μετὰ τῆς βουλῆς, καὶ τὸ ἔλαιον τοῖς ἀθληταῖς ἀποδιδόσκει. The peplos in this passage is, of course, the hieratic garment which the Athenians presented to the *χοανον* of Athena as the climax to the Panathenaic celebrations.<sup>10</sup> According to Harpokration *s.v.* Chalkeia, nine months were spent in the preparation of the robe. Earlier in the *Ath.Pol.* (49.3) we see that controversy attended the selection of its designs and that the Boule lost control over this phase of its manufacture. It is clear that corruption could attend the production of an expensive festival like the Panathenaia, and consequently men of integrity were needed to run the events.

In *Ath.Pol.* 60.3, we see the rules for the dispensing of olive oil to the victors in the gymnast contests and the horse races. Here too the Athlothetai (they are called Παναθηναῖοις ἀθλοθέταις) figure prominently. The Tamiai initially take care of the oil while it is stored on

<sup>10</sup> B. Nagy, *The Ergastinai Inscriptions and the Peplos* (Diss. Harvard University 1972) 82–140.

the Akropolis. Later, they release it to the Athlothetai who, in turn, mete it out to the victors.

There is one additional reference in the *Ath.Pol.* to the Athlothetai (62.2): ἀθλοθέται δ' ἐν πρυτανείῳ δειπνοῦσι τὸν Ἑκατομβαιῶνα μῆνα, ὅταν ᾗ τὰ Παναθήναια. The Panathenaia in this passage ought to refer to the Greater (i.e. the quadrennial) Panathenaia: otherwise, ὅταν and the subjunctive would not be used. For the same reason, ὅταν ᾗ τὰ Παναθήναια shows that the Athlothetai were afforded this privilege only during the fourth Hekatombaion of their four-year tenure. Of course, the possibility of their functioning during the Lesser Panathenaia of the other three years is by no means excluded.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned earlier, historians who have studied the Athlothetai argue from silence that the Athlothesia went out of existence soon after ca 329/8 B.C., that is, not long after the composition of the *Ath.Pol.*<sup>12</sup> They have, however, overlooked a relevant Athenian decree, first published in 1911 by G. Oikonomos and then, in 1913, by J. Kirchner as *IG II<sup>2</sup> 784*.<sup>13</sup> It was passed during the archonship of Athenodoros, now dated 240/39 B.C., in the month of Skirophorion.<sup>14</sup> I cite the relevant portion:

ἐπειδὴ οἱ ἀθλοθέται ἐπεμελήθησαν [τῆς διοικήσεως τῶ]-  
 8 ν Παναθηναίων Ἀγαθαίου Προσπ[αλ]τ[ίου συντελοῦντος κα]-  
 ἰ τοῦ ἀγῶνος τοῦ τε μουσικοῦ καὶ [τοῦ γυμνικοῦ καὶ τῆς ἵππ]-  
 10 οδρομίας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἅ[παντα ὅσα προσῆκεν ἐποίησαν δι]-  
 καίως καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἅ[παντα ΚΤΛ.]

Here then is evidence, heretofore ignored, that the Athlothetai continued to function well into the third century B.C. It might be noted that the year of this inscription, 240/39, coincides with a Lesser Panathenaic year, and that the most recent Greater Panathenaia occurred in 242/1. Thus the Panathenaia mentioned in line 8 must have been the Lesser Panathenaia of 240/39.

<sup>11</sup> But see Davison, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 31.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. A. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen* (Leipzig 1898) 130; G. Busolt and H. Swoboda, *Griechische Staatskunde II* (Munich 1926) 1105; W. S. Ferguson, *Hellenistic Athens* (London 1911) 57 n.2, who writes "Athlothetai appear for the last time in our records 320/19 B.C."; L. Ziehen, *RE* 18.3 (1949) 457-93, esp. 467 s.v. "Panathenaia"; and O. W. Reinmuth, *Der Kleine Pauly I* (1964) 707 s.v. Ἀθλοθέτης.

<sup>13</sup> G. Oikonomos, "'Επιγραφὰὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις ἀγορᾶς," *ArchEph* (1911) 222-27.

<sup>14</sup> For the dating of Athenodoros' archonship, see the table in B. D. Meritt, *The Athenian Year* (Berkeley 1961) 234; cf. *Historia* 26 (1977) 176.

## New Evidence

New evidence sheds additional light on the history of the Athlothetai. IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060 (non-stoich.), described by Kirchner as “valde corrosus,” appears below as it was printed:

-----NK-----  
 2 -----ΔΙΟΙ . . ΛΟ . Ε-----  
 ----Λ . Σ . . . ΤΑ . ΕΝΑΙ . Τ . ΝΠ-----  
 4 [--τ]οῦ δήμου θαλλοῦ στεφά[νωι--  
 -----ΟΥ λευκὴν ἐσθῆτα Η---  
 [--ἀγωνο]θέτης εἰς τὴν πομπ[ὴν--

Close examination of a squeeze and photograph (PLATE 2 figure 1) of IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060 has produced important new readings that lead to a positive identification of the fragment. I submit below a new edition:

*Uncertain number of lines missing.*  
 [-----]ων καὶ[----]  
 2 [-----]ω[ . . . ]ς καὶ οἱ ἀθλοθέτα[ι----]  
 [---παρθένους] καλῶς προσημαμέναις τὸν π[έπλον---]  
 4 [--τῆς βουλῆς καὶ] τοῦ δήμου θαλλοῦ στεφά[νωι---]  
 [-----ἀντὶ πέ]πλου λευκὴν ἐσθῆτα η[-----]  
 6 [-----ἀγωνο]θέτης εἰς τὴν πομπ[ὴν----]  
 [-----]ο[ . ] καθ[άπερ----]

*Uncertain number of lines missing.*

All the letters except the last in ἀθλοθέτα[ι] are positively read. Also, the gains in lines 3 and 5 show that the subject matter is the Panathenaia.<sup>15</sup>

In the *apparatus* to this fragment, Kirchner advises the reader to compare it with IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036, since “aetate suppar est.” The latter monument, dated 108/7 B.C., is the lower part of a stele containing multiple decrees that honor the maidens who profess to have “worked the wool” of Athena’s Peplos (line 12).<sup>16</sup> Each of the girls is also voted a crown (line 21) and is further honored by having her name inscribed

<sup>15</sup> In line 6, the restoration [ἀγωνο]θέτης is preferable to [ἀθλο]θέτης, since *athlothes* always appears in inscriptions in the plural. For the Panathenaic duties of the Agonothetes see Ferguson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 57.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning the date, see W. K. Pritchett and B. D. Meritt, *Chronology of Hellenistic Athens* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1940) xxxiv. At present the inscription is set in the pedestal of a statue in Petworth House: cf. C. A. Hutton, “Inscriptions at Petworth House,” *BSA* 22 (1914/16) 155–63.

in a list of well over one-hundred names. I saw IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 during the summer of 1977 (in Petworth House, England) and have had access to squeezes of both IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 (PLATE 2 figure 2) and 1060. The following observations have been taken:

LETTER-SHAPES IN IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 AND 1060. In both fragments, *omegas* are well-rounded and inscribed with ample feet: e.g., *καλῶς* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.3 and *ἐξάγωγαι* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036.3. The straight strokes within the *thetas* never quite touch the perimeters of the circles: e.g., *θαλλοῦ* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.4 and *Ἀθηνᾶι* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036.16. The diagonals of *kappas* do not extend as high or as low as the verticals: e.g., *καί* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.2 and *Ἀγκυλῆ[θεν]* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036.8. The right strokes in *upsilons* are carved with the point and in a uniform curve: e.g., *δήμου* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.4 and *συνεπιμελομένου* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036.4. Finally, the horizontal strokes in *pis*, carved with prominent serifs at one end only, extend ca 0.0015 m. beyond the second verticals; both verticals are of equal length: e.g., *πομπ[ήν]* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.6 and *παραλάβωαι* in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036.2.

MEASUREMENTS OF THE TWO FRAGMENTS. Measurements of the thicknesses cannot be compared since IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 is presently fitted into the base of a statue. Letter-sizes in both fragments vary from 0.005 m. to 0.009 m., but the average height is ca 0.007 m.

More significant is the comparison of measurements for vertical spacing. Five lines plus five interlines in Decree I of IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 equal 0.078 m., as do five lines plus five interlines in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.

WATER-WEAR ON IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060 AND 1036. Both fragments exhibit damage caused by water that stood in the depressions of the letters. Strokes affected in this way become enlarged and, as it were, swollen, so that there is some overlapping in strokes where the letters are close together. Even where the entire original surface of a letter has been eroded (as in most of the letters in *ἄθλοθέτα[ι]* of IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060.2), the strokes can still be made out since they are corroded more deeply than the uninscribed portion of the letter. IG II<sup>2</sup> 1036 has letters enlarged by water primarily in the first halves of the first five lines but also scattered throughout the upper left half. In IG II<sup>2</sup> 1060 such letters can be seen especially in lines 1–3 but also in lines 5 and 7.

An unusual set of circumstances has to be posited for this type of water-wear to occur. The upper surface of the stele had to be exposed to water; the stele itself had to be in a level position; and the water, which could then collect in the depressions, had to be protected (from sun, wind) in order not to dry out quickly. A routine collection of

squeezes or photographs will yield hardly one per cent of inscriptions affected in this way. As an example, not one of the fragments in S. Dow, *Prytaneis* (*Hesperia* Supplement I, 1937) seems to exhibit damage from standing water.

In sum, *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1060 is both thematically and physically similar to *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1036—enough so to warrant the conclusion that *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1060 comes from the same stele as *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1036. Moreover, we now have evidence that the Athlothetai continued to exist at least to the end of the second century B.C., that is, more than two centuries longer than had been previously acknowledged.<sup>17</sup> *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1060 + 1036 also shows that the Athlothetai of the second century were still associated with such Panathenaic duties as the procession and the Peplos, the same concerns that are attributed to them in *Ath.Pol.* 60.1. Finally, *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1060 + 1036 demonstrates that the Athlothetai of the second century had duties at the Lesser Panathenaia, inasmuch as 108/7, the date of this inscription, was a year of the Lesser Panathenaia.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> One other document might be mentioned. *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1368, *ante a.* 178 p., details the statutes of the Iobakchoi. These include the stipulation that a member had to arrange for a feast upon acquiring the office, *inter alia*, of the *athlothesia* (lines 131–32). The context is of little help, but it seems likely that the word *athlothesia* is used (once again) loosely to mean ‘office of prize giver’ (*cf.* W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge*<sup>3</sup> III [1915] no.1109).

<sup>18</sup> I wish to thank S. Dow for making available squeezes of the inscriptions and for his generous advice in the preparation of these pages. The photograph of *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 1060 is by courtesy of E. Thanos. The financial support of the College of the Holy Cross and its Bachelor Summer Grant is gratefully acknowledged.

