



Royal Donations

Summary :

The term δωρεά (pl. δωρεαί) is a complex one. In a more specialized meaning, the δωρεά constitutes a grant of land by a king to an underling or vassal. The system of δωρεά was developed in pre-Hellenistic times, in both Macedon and the Achaemenid Empire. Precursors of a considerably earlier date cannot be ruled out. The practice of rewarding was closely connected with the policy of the Hellenistic rulers, while the royal gifts came to an end after Attalos III bequeathed the Pergamene kingdom to Rome.

Date

Classical, Hellenistic, Roman Period

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

1. Δωρεαί in Law

The term δωρεά (pl. δωρεαί) is a complex one. Essentially it merely signifies the handing over of something to someone else as a gift, also in a legal sense.¹ A gift is nothing more than the transfer of something into the possession of the recipient by way of an act of donation. In a more specialized meaning, the δωρεά constitutes a grant of land (which may or may not be passed on as an inheritance) by a king to an underling or vassal. As a rule, however, we may assume δωρεαί to be gifts in the form of money or goods, or grants of land. The first two tended to remain the property of the recipient. Grants of land, however, were frequently tied to the individual and reverted to the donor after the recipient's death (although they could occasionally also be passed on as an inheritance). As far as grants of land which a king made to his underlings are concerned, it usually included not only of the usufruct but also the authority over it. The system of δωρεαί was developed in pre-Hellenistic times, in both Macedon and the Achaemenid Empire.² Precursors of a considerably earlier date cannot be ruled out.

2. Classical Age

One of the first Greeks to be rewarded with a δωρεά was [Themistokles](#), the victor at Salamis against [Xerxes I](#). He paid the price for his exalted position in Athens less than ten years later by being exiled in an "οστρακισμός" (ostracism)³ and, after also being condemned to death in absentia, he fled via North Western Greece and Macedon to Asia Minor. There he was welcomed graciously by King [Artaxerxes II](#) who provided for him by granting him the cities of [Myous](#), [Lampsakos](#) and [Magnesia](#) as his fief.⁴ Apart from Themistokles there was also Koës who was given Mytilene by Dareios I for his useful advice during the crossing of the Danube⁵; Demaratos received Teuthrania and Halisarna,⁶ perhaps also [Alkibiades](#)⁷ and Gongylos of Eretria⁸. The earliest documented recipients of such gifts were Pytharchos of [Kyzikos](#)⁹ and [Kroisos](#)¹⁰; and generally, we may regard as beneficiaries of a δωρεά all so-called "Persian vassal tyrants", normally Greeks or locals who were rewarded by the Achaemenid Great King or his satraps with a tyranny over their (home) polis.

3. Hellenistic Period

In Asia Minor several smaller principalities emerged as a result of the consolidation of the larger Hellenistic kingdoms after 306/305 B.C. They were able either to carve out their territories by taking advantage of periods of weakness of the individual kingdoms (e.g., Philetairos of Pergamon), or by being granted their lands as a reward for their services (κτήσις εν δωρεάν). No differences in this respect can be discerned among the regions of Asia Minor. During the third and second centuries δωρεαί are attested in both the southern and western coastal areas that were subject to prolonged Greco-Hellenistic influence and in [Phrygia](#) with its indigenous traditions.



Royal Donations

More surprising is how [Seleucid kings](#) kept trying to establish contacts with these δωρεαί based rulers. By looking at the geographical distribution of this peculiar phenomenon it becomes clear that it occurs — apart from rare examples in the Ptolemaic kingdom — only within and near the Seleucid empire in Asia Minor.

As for the latter, it derives from the practices of the Achaemenid period, and [Alexander the Great](#) had already followed the example of his Achaemenid predecessors by granting four cities in Asia Minor to the Athenian general Phokion.¹¹ Other recipients of such gifts during the late fourth and third centuries BC were Mnesimachos of Sardeis,¹² Bulagoras of Samos,¹³ Aristodikides of Assos near Ilion and Skepsis,¹⁴ Eurydike of Miletos,¹⁵ Hermaios of Mylasa,¹⁶ and the Lysimachidai of Telmessos. From Syria we know Ptolemaios son of Thraseas received Skythopolis (modern Beth Shean).¹⁷ In Egypt the practice of rewarding worthy officials for their good services with a δωρεά also began in the third century. The best known one is the δωρεά received by the Ptolemaic διοικητής Apollonios, which was administered by Zenon.¹⁸ Ptolemaios Thraseou received his δωρεά while still in the services of the Ptolemies, and was able to keep his lands after he changed sides and joined Antiochos III during the Fifth Syrian War.

Ptolemaios, the second son of Lysimachos (died 281) and (first son of) Arsinoë (later Philadelphos), was a nephew of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. He was first involved in some rather curious and politically obscure events in Macedonia where he served for several months as regent. In the years during and after the Second Syrian War (261-254) we find him in [Telmessos](#) in Lycia (Makri, modern Fethiye), in a position that instantly reminds us of a δωρεά. There is a lengthy inscription from 240 BC according to which Telmessos received aid from Ptolemaios that the latter was able to provide only because he was in possession of territory that afforded him the means.¹⁹ His family continued to hold their territory in Telmessos for another two generations; it was only with the [Treaty of Apamea](#) (188 BC) and its specific clauses that we lose sight of this family. The evidence of a dedication of a phiale by a great grandson of Lysimachos at Delos, however, suggests the possibility that the Treaty of Apamea took the interests of this family into account.

This particular δωρεά is of special interest because an inscription survives from Telmessos dating from autumn 279 BC which shows that [Ptolemy II Philadelphos](#) proposed to divest himself of Telmessos as a gift (εις δωρεάν).²⁰ We do not know the intended recipient of the gift, but he may have been a close relative of the king, perhaps even Ptolemaios son of Lysimachos. Envoys sent from Telmessos were able, however, to persuade the king to abandon his royal plans. Ptolemy conceded that their city should not become a δωρεά: Ὅπως οὖν εἰς δωρεάν μὴ καταχωρίζησθε, τοῖς τε παρ' ὑμῶν ἐξωμολογησάμεθα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς περὶ Φιλοκλῆν καὶ Ἀριστοτέλην γέγραπται ("that your city shall not become a δωρεά was conceded to your envoys and conveyed in letters to Philokles and Aristoteles").

As result the citizens of Telmessos conveyed honours on the king and proclaimed a curse on all those who at some time might consider handing over or accepting Telmessos and its citizens as a gift: "ὅς δ' ἂν τούτων τι ποιήσῃ παρευρέσει ηἰτιν οὖν, μήτε αὐτοὶ γῆ καρπὸν φέροι μήτε γυναῖκες τίκτοιεν κατὰ φύσιν, ἐξώλης δέ εἴη καὶ αὐτός καὶ τό γένος αὐτοῦ παν καὶ εἴη αμαρτωλός εἰς τὴν Λητώ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας ἅ τε ἂν λάβῃ ἢ κατακτήσῃται ἐκ τῆς χώρας ἔστω ἱερά τῆς Λητούς" (But to whoever commits such an act [i.e., to request or accept Telmessos as a gift], whatever the pretext may be, neither shall earth grow fruit nor women bear according to nature [i.e., bear healthy children], but he shall suffer destruction, he himself and all his descendants, and he shall be considered a blasphemer against Lato and other gods and goddesses, and may all that the harvests from the land or buildings on it be dedicated to Lato." [ll. 32-41])

Inscriptions from later periods show that condemnation and concessions were little more than perfunctory phrases, since Ptolemaios indeed received Telmessos (as well as the city's entire territory in the Fethiye plain) as a gift²¹, at the latest in 258/57 BC, which he was even able to pass on to his son and grandson, respectively.

In 227 BC, Rhodes suffered a severe earthquake in the wake of which it found its extremely important standing under threat. Damage to the city and its navy was enormous. The Hellenistic kings were persuaded by the arguments of the Rhodian envoys to invest huge sums in the reconstruction of the island state. They jointly offered the Rhodians building materials, funds and construction workers as a gift in order to restore the city to its earlier power and influence. Only seven years later Rhodes had regained its military strength to the degree that she was in a position to intervene in economic and political problems on the Bosphoros.²²



Royal Donations

Yet another δωρεά is mentioned in 2. Maccab. 4.30: Antiochos IV granted the [Cilician](#) cities of [Tarsos](#) and Mallos to his concubine Antiochis. The people in both cities, however, rebelled and after a lengthy struggle they achieved the cancellation of the gift.

4. Asia Minor as a Roman province

Gifts εν δωρεά by Hellenistic kings in Asia Minor come to an end in the years 133/29 with the will of the king [Attalos III](#) of [Pergamon](#)²³ and the *senatus consultum*²⁴ regarding the [Attalid](#) inheritance. From its inception until the conclusion of the Roman fight against the pretender to the throne [Aristonikos](#) (i.e. Eumenes III), this decision of the senate remained contested. This *senatus consultum* decrees that the royal gifts (granted by Attalos and his predecessors) shall be regarded as legitimate and legally binding, so long as they had been granted no later than the day before the death of king Attalos III, including gifts of freedom from taxation, citizenship, money and territory. The *senatus consultum* did not recognize those awards that were granted on the day of the death of the king; also, retroactive claims were deemed inadmissible.

By contrast, the subjects of the Pergamenian kingdom were treated more generously in the king's will:²⁵ the territory of the city of Pergamon was enlarged, and it was proclaimed a free city, which was important with regard to provincial taxation, with one significant caveat, namely, that it had to be recognized by the Romans. *Paroikoi*,²⁶ inhabitants, *katoikoi*, in the city and in the countryside, *Makedonioides*,²⁷ indigenous populations, and mercenary contingents, received Pergamenian citizenship; others (except the *servi publici*)²⁸ were admitted to the status of *metoikoi*. Once the province of Asia was established (between 132 and 129 BC) the institution of the δωρεά as a gift of territory with a claim to its rule was abolished since the former Pergamenian kingdom had now come under the rule of the *populus Romanus*.

1. That a δωρεά was a gift or honour is shown by the inscription at *Didyma* 237 II, l. 5 f. which records the office of *prophetes* to one Claudius Damas as λαβόν τήν προφητ[ε]ίαν δωρεάν.

2. Wörrle M. Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens II", *Chiron* 8 (1978) p. 208 n. 29.

3. ostracism: method of banishing a citizen for 10 years exile in Athens .

4. Others were Metiochos Miltiadou and Koës of Mytilene. Themistokles was the first Greek to issue in his Ionian δωρεά coins which showed his portrait on the obverse. The obverse shows a bearded man with (leather?) cap and wreath (looking to the right). The letters Θ and Ε can be discerned on the obverse, while on the reverse we read a ΘΕ ligature inside a "pearl square"; F.R. Künker Münzhandlung (Hannover): *Lagerkatalog* 161 – November 2001, Hannover 2001, p. 5 no. 23 with image.

5. Hdt. 4.97, 5.11

6. Hdt. 6.70.2; Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.6; *Anab.* 2.1.3, 7.8.8 ff.

7. Gryneion; Nep. *Alcib.* 9.3.

8. Pergamon, Myrina, Gryneion, Gambreion and Palaigambreion; Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.8.

9. Agathokles, *FGrHist* 472 F 6.

10. Ktesias, *FGrHist* 688 F 9.5.

11. Plut. *Phoc.* 18.5.



Royal Donations

12. W.H. Buckler , D.M. Robinson (ed.), *Sardis VII. Greek and Latin inscriptions. Part I* (Leiden 1932); See, Descat, R., "Mnésimachos, Hérodote et le système tributaire achéménide", *REA* (1985), p. 97-112.
13. *SEG* 1, 366; Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 113; Bagnall, R. S., Derow, P., *Greek Historical Documents: The Hellenistic period* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study 16, Chico CA 1981) no. 64.
14. *OGIS* 221 , Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 180.
15. Wörrle, M., "Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens I", *Chiron* 7 (1977) p. 56.
16. Bringmann, K. – von Steuben, H. (ed.), *Schenkungen hellenistischer Herrscher an griechische Städte und Heiligtümer. Teil I: Zeugnisse und Kommentar* (Berlin 1995) Nr. 298: from Philipp III Arrhidaios to Hermaios of Mylasa.
17. Landau, Y.H., A Greek inscription found near Hefzibah, *IEJ* 16 (1966) p. 54-70; L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.*, in: *REG* 1970, no. 627.
18. Also *P.Revenue Laws*, col. 36 (ed. J. Bingen, *SB Berlin*, Beiheft 1, 1952); cf. *COrd.Ptol.* 17-18; Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 235 and Bagnall, R. S. – Derow, P., *Greek Historical Documents: The Hellenistic period* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study 16, Chico CA 1981) no. 95), which deals explicitly with land owners ἐν δωρεαί .
19. *OGIS* 55 , *TAM* II 1. Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 271.
20. See BA. Wörrle M., "Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens II", *Chiron* 8 (1978), p. 201 ff.; *SEG* 28 (1978), no. 1224. Generally regarding this family: Kobes J., "Kleine Könige". *Untersuchungen zu den Lokaldynasten im hellenistischen Kleinasien (323-188 v. Chr.)*. (PHAROS 8, St. Katharinen 1996) p. 78-80, p. 96 f., p. 145 ff., p. 195 ff.
21. Regarding this text see Segre, M., "Iscrizioni di Licia: Tolomeo di Telmesso", *Clara Rhodos* 9 (1938) p. 181-208 and the corrections by Kobes J., "Anmerkung zu einer hellenistischen Inschrift aus Telmessos", *ZPE* 101 (1994) p. 299 f.
22. See Kobes J. "Rhodos und das Erdbeben von 227 v. Chr.", *MBAH* 12 (1993) p.1-26 and, more recently, Wiemer (H.-U., *Rhodische Traditionen in der hellenistischen Historiographie* (Frankfurter Althistorische Beiträge 7, Frankfurt 2001), p. 33-39.
23. *IPergamon* 249 , *IGRR* IV 289 , *OGIS* 338 (*SEG* 38, 1266; *SEG* 39, 1272; *SEG* 47, 1673); Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 211.
24. *OGIS* 435 , Sherk, R.K. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the Greek East. Senatus consulta and epistulae to the age of Augustus* (Baltimore 1969) no. 11; Austin, M.M., *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest. A selection of ancient sources in translation* (London – Cambridge 1981) no. 214.
25. *OGIS* 338.
26. Paroikoi: in first sense neighbours, in Hellenistic time often used in the same sense as metoikoi, namely alien residents in a foreign city without any citizen rights.
27. Makedonioi: descendants of the soldiers of Alexander's army, who have not yet seen Macedon, the home of the ancestors.
28. Servi publici : "slaves of the city"; the group of δοῦλοι (slaves) is divided in the βασιλικοί (kings's slaves) and the δημοσίοι (city's slaves). The βασιλικοί were transferred to the status of the metoikoi.



Royal Donations

Bibliography :

	Descat R. , "Mnésimachos, Hérodote et le système tributaire achéménide", <i>REA</i> , 1985, 97-112
	Kobes J. , "Anmerkung zu einer hellenistischen Inschrift aus Telmessos", <i>ZPE</i> , 101, 1994, 299-300
	Kobes J. , "Rhodos und das Erdbeben von 227 v. Chr.", <i>MBAH</i> , 12 , 1993, 1-26
	Kobes J. , <i>Kleine Könige. Untersuchungen zu den Lokaldynasten im hellenistischen Kleinasien (323-188 v. Chr.)</i> , St. Katharinen 1996, Pharos. Studien zur griechisch- römischen Antike 8
	Landau Y.H. , "A Greek inscription found near Hefzibah", <i>IEJ</i> , 16, 1966, 54-70
	Robert L. , "Bulletin épigraphique", <i>REG</i> , 83, 1970, 469-473
	Sancisi-Weerdenburg H. , "Gifts in the Persian empire", Briant, P. – Herrenschildt, C. , <i>Le Tribut dans l'Empire Perse. Actes de la Table ronde de Paris 12-13 Décembre 1986</i> , Paris 1989
	Segre M. , "Iscrizioni di Licia: Tolomeo di Telmesso", <i>Clara Rhodos</i> , 9, 1938, 181-208
	Wieshöfer J. , "Tauta gar en ateleia. Beobachtungen zur Abgabefreiheit im Achaimenidenreich", Briant, P. – Herrenschildt, C., <i>Le Tribut dans l'Empire Perse. Actes de la Table ronde de Paris 12-13 Décembre 1986</i> , Paris 1989, 183-191
	Wiemer H.U. , <i>Rhodische Traditionen in der hellenistischen Historiographie</i> , Frankfurt 2001, Frankfurter Althistorische Beiträge 7
	Wörle M. , "Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens I", <i>Chiron</i> , 7, 1977, 43-66
	Wörle M. , "Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens II", <i>Chiron</i> , 8, 1978, 201-246
	Wörle M. , "Epigraphische Forschungen zur Geschichte Lykiens III", <i>Chiron</i> , 9, 1979, 83-111

Glossary :

	katoikoi
inhabitants, often military settlers or colonists, settled by a Hellenistic king's will.	