

VOTE COUNTS, QUORUM, AND UNANIMOUS DECISIONS AT HALIKARNASSOS. WITH TWO NEW FRAGMENTARY DECREES

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Summary: There were at least three ways of voting in the assemblies of Classical and Hellenistic cities of the Greek-speaking world: by acclamation (βοή; sometimes combined with physical division of the audience), by show of hands (χειροτονία), and by secret ballot (the more technical sense of ψήφισμα or ψηφοφορία, from ψῆφος, ‘ballot’). In principle, only the last of these methods seems to have resulted in precise numbers of votes, since the ballots were counted. Yet, in Classical Athens for instance, a secret ballot appears to have been put into practice only in specific cases, where a quorum was also required. In large assemblies, it is generally agreed that a show of hands was the usual and most efficient method of voting. Relatively few results of voting are attested in inscriptions, and they tend to be Hellenistic or later. Iasos and Halikarnassos are to our knowledge the only cities where numbers of votes from both the council and the assembly are recorded. Four inscriptions with vote tallies were already known from Halikarnassos, and in this article we add two new honorific decrees to the evidence (inv. *287 and *435 = Decrees nos. 1 and 2). Both decrees are fragmentary and in neither is the identity of the individual concerned preserved. Despite their very partial character, the decrees appear consistent with the previously known evidence; in addition, they allow us to estimate the approximate size of the council and the assembly at Halikarnassos. Amid the half-dozen examples now attested, one of the previously known decrees (inv. *29) presents a significantly low tally of votes in the assembly, which leads us to reconsider it as a measure needing further sanction by the civic court (δικαστήριον). We conclude with some remarks on the probable chronology of the decrees preserving vote counts, but also with much caution about the fragmentary character of the evidence.

Introduction

It is to Mogens Herman Hansen that we owe a series of pioneering and magisterial studies on civic institutions and their mechanisms in Greek cities (especially in Athens), notably on voting methods in the 4th century BC.¹ Votes in the assembly were usually taken by a show of hands (χειροτονία).² In Hansen's view, which has been widely accepted, the raised hands were not precisely counted by the presiding magistrates, the *proedroi*.³ Only if a decree concerned an individual was a quorum of 6000 participants mandated and votes were counted by secret ballot (ψηφοφορία).⁴ In Athens, this quorum became a symbolic figure which represented the citizenry as a decision-making body. It is thus to be distinguished from the modern idea of a set fraction or majority of the constituent voters expected as a minimum level of participation; a definition of quorum as a minimum number of voters or votes is perhaps easier to

- 1 This article forms part of the prolegomena to the corpus of the inscriptions of Halikarnassos which we are preparing in collaboration with the Bodrum Museum. We are sincerely grateful to the General Directorate of Monuments and Museums in Ankara for permission to conduct this work. References to the corpus (*I.Halikarnassos*) are included here with a provisional numbering that follows the inventory of McCabe, Packard Humanities Institute; NB these inventory numbers (marked by an asterisk *) do not reflect the definitive numbers of the corpus but will be referenced in the corpus. We are grateful to Riet van Bremen for expertly critiquing and thereby improving our manuscript; we also extend our thanks to the anonymous reader of this paper.
- 2 Voting by acclamation (shouting, sometimes in combination with physical division of the audience) is known e.g. from oligarchic Sparta and is not further discussed here.
- 3 *Ath. Pol.* 44.3: τὰς χειροτονίας κρίνουσιν. Cf. Hansen 1977, comparing 19 inscriptions from other Greek *poleis*; updated version in Hansen 1983: 103-21, 207-26; Hansen 1987: 41-44. This view has been generally and widely accepted: e.g. Gauthier 1990: 428; Todd 2012: 38; Canevaro 2018: 116-17; cf. also Canevaro 2019. See further Liddel 2020 (vol. 2): 14, 24 n. 43.
- 4 Cf. *And.* 1.87: ἐὰν μὴ ἑξακισχίλοις δόξῃ κρύβδην ψηφιζόμενοις. There were many variations in the equipment used (pebbles, tokens, writing implements): cf. the survey of Lopez-Rabatel 2019.

maintain in a few other Greek cities, which had lower symbolic quora.⁵ The Athenian quorum is attested for grants of immunity from prosecution or remission of judicial penalty (*adeia*), ostracism, and grants of citizenship (for the latter, a secret ballot was held in a second, ratifying assembly).⁶ However, for a reason that is not entirely clear, there are no examples of fourth-century decrees from Athens which record the votes cast. Vote tallies of the Athenian assembly only briefly appear in inscriptions of the late 1st century BC.⁷ Various factors in explaining this ab-

- 5 For this important distinction with the modern idea of a quorum, see Gauthier 1990: 426-31. Gauthier 1990: 432 argued that the quorum of 6000 in Athens 'symbolised the totality of the civic body'. In his survey, he also discussed the only three or four other cases where one might properly speak of a quorum, though this evidence is very varied. At Delphi, the quorum was probably '400' as one inscription informs us (*Choix Delphes* 31.32-37, '400 and more') and this is relatively coherent with known vote tallies (though one law, *Choix Delphes* 66, was interestingly passed with only 353 votes; cf. also Todd 2012: 42 nos. A.7-10 for the evidence from Delphi). At Magnesia on the Maiander, there appears to have been a nominal quorum of 600, but much higher vote counts are recorded (Gauthier 1990: 442-43; 2113 to 4678 votes). A similar situation may have prevailed in Colophon, where registers of votes vary between 903 and 2000, and 1000 is reported as a quorum in the Archaic period (Gauthier 1990: 443-44; see further Rousset 2014: 75-76, with much caution about the approximative nature of all these figures). In addition, one should consider the decrees from Gortyn *I.Cret.* IV 162 and 181, both passed 'with 300 present'. The round numbers of 'minimum votes' attested at Teos (and Abdera) in the early 5th century BC (now Osborne & Rhodes, *GHI* 102) were viewed by Gauthier 1990: 436 as representing not majorities in vote counts, but as ideal or expected numbers of voters or votes in a public tribunal (though Gauthier resists calling this a kind of quorum).
- 6 Todd 2012: 34-35. On *adeia*, cf. Esu 2024: 152-76. For grants of citizenship, a second vote of ratification by secret ballot was introduced by ca. 385/4 BC: cf. Rhodes & Osborne, *GHI* 33.34-36 with comm. p. 165.
- 7 *SEG* 26.121 III (3461 for; 155 against); 47.143 I.62-64 (no votes against), II.67-69 (cf. Todd 2012: 41 nos. A.1-3). Compare e.g. the record of the vote in the δικαστήριον – a separate institution (Hansen 2010: 523-35) – recorded at *IG* II² 1641 (4th c. BC), face B (399 for; 100 against); for this type of evidence from trials as well as arbitrations, which contrasts with the unanimity or near-unanimity of voting in the assembly, see Todd 2012: 40-41, 45 no. B1 (on this case), 45-46 (many other cases); Canevaro 2018: 139-40. We only briefly consider ballots in law courts and arbitrations in the context of *I.Halikarnassos* *29 discussed further below.

sence of voting figures in Athens might include an apprehension that recording precise numbers on stone would lead to a contesting of the vote.⁸ Despite many hotly debated issues in the assembly, consensus, if not always perfect unanimity, was what was sought in ancient deliberative decisions.⁹ Another part of the explanation, it has been suggested, is that vote counts are inherently the products of secret ballots, which were infrequent compared to normal voting procedures (once again, χειροτονία).¹⁰ Still, some of the actions concerned, such as grants of citizenship, were not so rare, and perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the ballot in an ulterior vote was less frequently recorded than the decision of a first assembly which voted by a show of hands.¹¹ In the present state of the evidence, it is noteworthy that the recording of numbers of votes appears to be tied to a particular chronological juncture, during the late renaissance of the Athenian democracy, and perhaps to a distinctive epigraphic habit.

After Hansen, Philippe Gauthier, Stephen Todd, and Mirko Canevaro, among others, have successively provided detailed analyses of the available material for vote counts from other Greek states, comparing these data with Athens.¹² Delphi is the only city where the publication of the

8 Cf. Todd 2012: 39, ‘the public recording of votes in the permanent medium of an inscription may be undesirable because it invites losers (particularly those who have lost narrowly) to revisit decisions that have been made’, who also considers other possible modes of explanation (39–40) for why voting figures were not recorded more often.

9 Gauthier 1990: 448–54; Canevaro 2018. Cf. e.g. Canevaro 2018: 139, ‘The Assembly procedures were designed to facilitate deliberation and the creation of consensus, and the little evidence we have suggests that they may have succeeded most of the time’. See also now the overview in Ma 2024: 240–41 and the paper by Kostas Buraselis on “The Allure of Consensus and the Perseverance of Minority” in this volume.

10 Canevaro 2018: 116–17.

11 Or simply specifying that a second assembly had ratified a decree, without exactly saying how: cf. n. 36 below.

12 Gauthier 1990; Todd 2012, responding to Maffi 2012 (who had focussed instead on ‘majority voting’); Canevaro 2018: esp. 110–22. See also Rhodes, *Decrees* 510–12. In what follows, we focus primarily on the material for vote counts during civic council meetings and assemblies, not on votes in demes or associations. Note that the decree

number of votes cast in the assembly is recorded throughout the 4th century, in the context of approving laws or granting special privileges. It would appear that this enumeration was a relatively circumscribed practice. Numbers of votes are not found from the 3rd century BC onward and any notion that a measure was passed with a quorum or a 'legal number of votes' (σὺμ ψάφοις ταῖς ἐννόμοις) – an extremely common phrase in official documents at Delphi – disappeared by around 90-80 BC, perhaps as a result of a reform.¹³ Otherwise, records of vote numbers tend to belong firmly in the Hellenistic period and are confined to a limited group of Greek cities.

Gauthier and Todd, followed by Canevaro, made several key observations in analyzing vote tallies found in these other decrees: 1) favourable votes (ψηφοὶ αἱ δίδουσαι, αἱ ἐπιδίδουσαι, or similar phrases) are often emphasized in the formulation of the decrees; 2) conversely, votes against a law or decree are seldom mentioned or no space is left to inscribe them, thus reinforcing the ideal of consensus;¹⁴ 3) where they are cited, votes against are either relatively negligible or said to be 'none' (οὐδεμία);¹⁵ 4) furthermore, clauses reporting a vote sometimes refer to

assigned to Kos in Gauthier, Todd, and Rhodes, now *IG* XII.4.3847, belongs to Halikarnassos (see further below). Generally on votes counts from the council and the assembly in Ionia, Karia, and the Dodekanese, see also now Bernini 2023: 28-31 and 158-59.

- 13 So Gauthier 2000. We are aware of the work of Kyriakidis 2025, but have not been able to take into account this volume which appeared as our article was finalized.
- 14 Votes against: only four cases are tabulated in Todd 2012: 37 with n. 26 and Canevaro 2018: 111 (including that from Athens mentioned above n. 7; though interesting as comparanda, one should exclude cases of votes that do not belong to the council or the assembly, such as *I.Iasos* 93.23). Canevaro and Todd appear to miss the following: *IG* XII.4.57.30-32 (Kos; 13 votes against). Cf. also *I.Cret.* III.IV.1.27-31 (= Chaniotis, *Verträge* no. 5; *Staatsverträge* III 554; Itanos; 3 against and the measure seems to have failed, because unanimity was required; further discussion of this case in Maffi 2012: 26). Yet far from diminishing it, these examples of course reinforce Canevaro's and others' point about unanimous or near unanimous decisions. No space left on the stone to inscribe negative votes: cf. Todd 2012: 37 with n. 28.
- 15 'None' against: for cases from Athens, see n. 7 above; *IG* XII.4.59.47-48 (Kos; Todd 2012: 42 no. A.15); *I.Knidos* 74.22-23 (1st-2nd c. AD; Todd 2012: 44 no. A34); add now *IG* XII.4.56.30-32 (Kos) and *SEG* 59.1100 A.32-34 and B.30-32 (decrees of a *koinon* of priests

‘all’ votes (πᾶσαι) or voters (πάντες) having been tabulated together;¹⁶ alternatively, a round number for the total votes is frequently provided.¹⁷ It has been thought plausible to match these total or round numbers, especially where they recur with some frequency, with the idea of a unanimous or near-unanimous vote and thus with a probable estimate of the size of the voting body.¹⁸

The recording of two sets of votes, from the *boule* and the *demos* respectively, is to our knowledge only found in two neighbouring Karian cities, Halikarnassos and Iasos.¹⁹ It is also remarkable that, when votes were recorded, these two *poleis* seem to have consistently recorded votes from *both* of these decision-making bodies (though there may be an exception at Halikarnassos, see Decree no. 2). The reason why we find this twofold record of secret votes is not entirely clear. *Probouleusis* is an institutional characteristic of many Greek *poleis*, including Iasos and Halikarnassos,²⁰ and so decrees normally made their way from a vote in the *boule*, to a larger χειροτονία in the assembly. *Probouleumata* from the councils at Iasos and Halikarnassos are sometimes explicitly recorded. An early 3rd century BC inscription from Halikarnassos preserves a specific or detailed (i.e. not open) *probouleuma* about honours for a citizen,

from Halaisa recording votes (probably) of a kind of amphictyony or (perhaps) of the civic assembly).

16 ‘All’ votes (πᾶσαι) or voters (πάντες) emphasised together with the number of votes: IG XII.3.249.39 (Anaphe; 1st c. BC; Todd 2012: 42 no. A13) and SEG 42.1065.40-42 (Kolophon; 200-150 BC; Todd 2012: 43 no. A22).

17 Round numbers: cf. Todd 2012: 37 n. 29.

18 See the affirmation of Canevaro 2018: 116, ‘These inscriptions not only record unanimity, but also choose to underline it’. More cautious is Bernini (2023: 158-59).

19 Cf. again Todd 2012: 37, who cautiously wrote that these double records of votes were ‘prominent in texts from Halikarnassos and Iasos’ (though again his only exception from Kos, no. A.14 = IG XII.4.3847, is a *pierre errante* from Halikarnassos; see further below). In the context of sketching the population of Priene, Kah 2014: 168-69 (Appendix II) acutely analyzed the then available material from Iasos and Halikarnassos. For a detailed discussion of the vote counts at Iasos, cf. especially Fabiani 2015: 118, 279-80. At Iasos, the phrase ἐδόθη ψήφῳ κρυφαίαι makes it explicit that we are dealing with a secret ballot. On the deliberative institutions at Iasos, see also now Fabiani 2025, with 210-11 on the evidence for vote counts, and a wider discussion of the role of the *prytaneis*.

20 Rhodes, *Decrees* 473-78; see also now Esu 2024.

Zenodotos son of Baukideus, which was then ratified by a separate decree of the assembly, recorded below it.²¹ *Probouleumata* were even more common and are to be implied by the phrase γνώμη πρυτάνεων ('proposal of the presidents of the council') frequently cited in the published decrees at Iasos and Halikarnassos. The vote tallies at Iasos and Halikarnassos can therefore be seen to reflect an aspect of this standard process of *probouleusis*, involving a first proposal and vote in the council, followed by another in the assembly, which would in certain cases be confirmed by secret ballots in both bodies of state. Yet whether secret ballots cast in *both* the council and the assembly constitute a particularity of the institutional processes at Iasos and Halikarnassos or were the norm elsewhere remains an open question.

New Evidence from Halikarnassos (Decrees nos. 1-2)

Two new decrees published here – nos. 1 and 2 – provide useful confirmation of what was already known in terms of vote counts and also allow us to shed further light on the matters of quorum and of unanimous decisions at Halikarnassos:

21 Carbon & Isager 2021, 114 (ca. 279/8-275 BC). On detailed/specific vs. open *probouleumata*, see e.g. Hansen 1981: 362. On *probouleusis* at Iasos, see Fabiani 2015: 206, 280; at Halikarnassos, Rhodes, *Decrees* 331-32.

**1. *I.Halikarnassos* *287:
End of an honorific inscription for unknown individual**



Fig. 1. *I.Halikarnassos* *287. Credit: Danish Halikarnassos Project.

Fragment of marble stele. Found in a modern rubble wall next to the excavation area of the Turkish-Danish investigations in the Castle of Bodrum in 2004. Now in the Bodrum Museum. A part of the front side, with the inscription, and the left side is preserved. The surface is somewhat worn and shows no remains of tool marks.

Date: 280-260 BC (see below on letter forms).

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- [- ? - εἶναι δὲ καὶ αὐτῶι πρόσδοδον πρός τε τὴν βουλὴν]
 [καὶ τὸν] δῆμον με[τὰ τὰ ἱερὰ πρῶτῳ καὶ προεδρίαν]
 [ἐν τοῖς] ἀγῶσιν· ἐξεῖνα[ι δὲ αὐτῶι καὶ εἰς -- ? --]
 [3-4 ἦ]ν ἂν βούληται πρ[οσγράφεσθαι· ταῦτα δὲ εἶναι]
 5 [καὶ α]ὐτῶι καὶ ἐκγόνο[ις· ἀναγράψαι δὲ τόδε]
 [τὸ] ψήφισμα ἐν στή[λῃ λιθίνῃ καὶ στήσαι]
 ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι τοῦ Ἀπόλλ[ωνος· ἐπιμεληθῆναι]
 δὲ τοὺς ἐξεταστά[ς· τὸ δὲ ἀνάλωμα δοῦ]-
 ναι τοὺς ταμίας· ψῆφ[οι ἐγένοντο - ? -]
 10 αἰ ἐν τῇ [βο]υλῇ ἐβ[δομήκοντα - ca. 3? -]
 αἰ δ' ἐν [τῶι] δῆμῳ[ι --- ca. 13? ---]
 πέντε ν [vacat]
 vacat

1-3. restored from the expected formulary, cf. e.g. *I.Halikarnassos* *21 / *SEG* 26.1224.7-10 || 3-4. [φυ|λὴν] is the restoration which immediately springs to mind, but cf. a similar stipulation at *I.Halikarnassos* *16 / *SEG* 4.183.15-16, [τοὺς δὲ ἐξετ]αστὰς προγράψαι αὐτὸν | [- - - τ]ῆς φυλῆς ἣν ἂν βούληται, implying that a subdivision of the tribe was meant; an ὀγδομορίς is attested in an unpublished inscription as a division of the tribes at Halikarnassos; restore tentatively here [ὀγδομο|ρίδα] and also [ὀγδομο|ρίδα] in *I.Halikarnassos* *16 / *SEG* 4.183.15-16 || 10. *in fine* after the *epsilon*, though the surface is damaged, the faint outline of a vertical and the top of a rounded trace can be most plausibly interpreted as a part of a *beta* || 11. probably [τετρακισχιλῖαι], which would suit the approximate space available.

“[... and he shall have access to both the council and] the people [first] after [the sacred affairs and the right of a front seat in] the contests. He shall also have the right [to be enrolled in whichever ...] he wants. [This is to apply both] to himself and to his descendants. [Inscribe this] decree on a [stone] stele [and set it up] in the sanctuary of Apollo. The *exetastai* [are to take care (of this)]. The treasurers are [to pay the

cost incurred]. The votes [were]: those in the *boule*, seventy [...], those in the assembly, [...] five.”

2. I.Halikarnassos *435:

End of a decree concerning a request (αἴτησις)



Fig. 2. I.Halikarnassos *435. Credit: Danish Halikarnassos Project.

Fragment of tapering stele made of white marble with large crystals and faint light-greyish veins. Found in Bodrum. Now in the Museum of Bodrum (inv. 6632). The fragment is heavily battered and worn on all

sides except for a small part of the left side and of the front, which is inscribed.

Maximum preserved height: 18.5 cm; maximum preserved width: 15.1 cm; thickness: 8 cm (top) – 10 cm (bottom).

Date: ca. 250-200 BC (see below on letter forms).

 [------·δε]-
 δόχ[θαι-----]-
 μίας Ε[------]-
 καθ' ἃ ἀἵτ[----- ψῆφοι ---- αἱ ἐπι]-
 5 διδοῦσα[ι-----χι]-
 λίαι πέντ[ε· vacat?]
 τὸ ψήφισ[μα -----]-
 ΤΑΣ[.]ΕΤ[-----]-
 ΤΩΝ ΕΠ[-----]-

The length of the lacunae cannot be estimated and the presentation here is a suggestion only || 3. e.g. [φιλοτι]μίας ε[ις --] or ἔ[νεκα] *vel sim.* or [τα]μίας Ε[--], but there appear to be too many possibilities for restoring this line || 4. probably καθ' ἃ ἀἵτ[εῖται] or καθ' ἃ ἀἵτ[οῦνται]; in the lacuna, before αἱ διδοῦσαι or αἱ ἐπιδιδοῦσαι, there may have been the verb [ἐγένοντο] and/or another qualifier such as [στερεαί] || 5. we would have expected something like διδοῦσα[ι ἐν τῇ βουλῇ ἑκατὸν, ἐν δὲ τῷ δήμῳ τετρακισχι]-, which however would result in a long line of 47 letters; it is also possible that only the votes in the assembly were recorded || 8. read perhaps ΤΑΣ ΤΕ Τ, but the letter that disappeared is quite unclear.

“[...] it was decided: [...] according to what [...] asked [... Votes ...] in favour (lit. giving) [...] thousand five [...] the decree [...]”

Description of letter forms: Both decrees presented here show characteristics of official Halikarnassian inscriptions of the 3rd century BC,

namely slender letters with generally straight long bars and tiny serifs (*alpha* with a straight crossbar; *mu* with slightly diverging outer bars and a deep v; small floating *omicron*; *pi* in one line, the right vertical short; four-barred *sigma*, the outer bars slightly diverging or parallel; four-barred *xi*). But their lettering also differs to some degree.

In decree no. 1, the verticals are very straight, and there is a variation in letter forms. For *pi*, twice the right vertical curves, once it is straight. There are two different forms of the body of *phi*: once an ellipse sharply divided in two, once a more rounded form. There are also two types of *nu*, a more narrow form, with the right vertical ending well over the baseline, and a broader one, where the right vertical seems to reach the baseline or nearly so. These letter forms come close to a group of inscriptions that are dated also from historical criteria to ca. 280-260 BC (cf. Isager & Pedersen 2015 [SEG 65.954], Carbon & Isager 2021, for some relevant examples).

No. 2 is cut in an easier hand than no. 1: long verticals tend to tilt forward. The inscription has fewer letters which makes it risky to generalize on its letter forms, though they seem to be more uniform than in no. 1. The crossbar of *alpha* is slightly higher set than in no.1, which also has a crossbar sloping upwards. The central horizontal of *epsilon* is always short in no. 2, while it tends to equal the other horizontals in no. 1. The same goes for *xi*. The right vertical of *nu* always reaches the base line in no. 2. Its *pi* has a right vertical which is quite short and straight. *Omega* is very small and floating, while it has about the same height as the other letters in no. 1. The letter forms of no. 2 thus belong somewhat later than no. 1 and have much in common with *I.Halikarnassos* *503 / IG XII.4.3847 which can probably be dated to ca. 250-200 BC.

Voting Practices at Halikarnassos

Both decrees are extremely fragmentary, though no. 1 can be restored from the well-known formularies found in the ca. 50 decrees extant from Halikarnassos. Regrettably, both decrees provide only limited information about their context. No. 1 appears to include a grant of citizenship, since in lines 3-4 we read that the honorand will be enrolled in one of the civic subdivisions of Halikarnassos, ‘whichever one he wants’ (the

name of the type of subdivision is missing in the lacuna). The secret ballots recorded here are therefore of the same type as the one required during the second, ratifying assembly in Athens.²² The use of the secret ballot is paralleled in honorific decrees from Halikarnassos, where further ratification of special privileges for individuals seems to have been necessary: amid possibly other privileges now lost, *I.Halikarnassos* E1 (*IG* XII.4.142; ca. 220 BC) voted a (golden?) crown in honour of a doctor from Kos; E2 (*IG* XII.4.176; ca. 200-150 BC) is a similar decree awarding a golden crown to a Koan. As mentioned above, most of the decrees containing vote counts from other Greek cities are decrees passed in honour of specific beneficiaries, usually including special honours.

Decree no. 2 is much more lacunose and also more intriguing. It seems to respond (line 3: καθ' ἃ αἴτ[ε]ται *vel sim.*) to an official petition (αἴτησις) made by one or more individuals who approached the council or assembly at Halikarnassos.²³ While normally only citizens had right of access (πρόσοδος) to the council and assembly, this could also be granted to foreigners, as we find in many honorific decrees and notably at Halikarnassos.²⁴ Comparanda at Halikarnassos for an official petition by citizens or by those having this right of access include an honorific decree for a man called Antiphon, which notably awarded him a golden crown.²⁵ This refers to an appeal by the *neoi*, who perhaps sought to set up a statue of the

22 Cf. *I.Ephesos* 3111.11-13 (Phygela, ca. 310 BC) = Todd 2012: 43 no. A18, also a grant of citizenship.

23 On petitions to the council and the assembly, see the comprehensive analyses of Gauthier 1985: 83-88 (for Athens), 181-90 (by foreigners in Athens: Appendix II), 191-95 (evidence beyond Athens: Appendix III), and cf. the further discussion of Zelnick-Abramovitz 1998. See now Ma 2024: 241, with further references. On the right of 'approach' to the council and the assembly (πρόσοδος), cf. recently Bernini 2023: 44-45, 95-96.

24 E.g. *I.Halikarnassos* *21 / *SEG* 26.1224.8-10 (in a grant of citizenship; ca. 260-240 BC) and *I.Halikarnassos* *23 / Paton 1894: 218 no. 2.3-5 (in an honorific decree which does not appear to grant citizenship; ca. 320s-280s BC).

25 *I.Halikarnassos* *5 / *I.British Mus.* 890 (late 3rd/2nd c. BC), lines 3-6: [?αἰτοῦν|τ]αι δὲ καὶ οἱ νέ[οι] ἀναθεῖναι εἰκόνα - - - -] | Ἀντιφώντος [- - - - - - - - - - καθάπερ?] | ἐψηφίσθαι δοῦ[ναι δὲ αὐτοῖς? στιῆσαι? - - -] εἰκόνα καθάπε[ρ αἰτοῦνται?]. Another case, analysed by Gauthier 1985: 192-93, is *I.Halikarnassos* *22 / *SEG* 26.1223 (3rd c. BC), which responds to a petition to the council and the assembly by a foreigner

man, a request which was apparently granted by the civic authorities, though a considerable part of the decree and its resolutions is restored and the conclusion is missing, along with any possible record of votes by ballot. *Mutatis mutandis*, a further comparandum may be another decree recording voting figures (*I.Halikarnassos* *503 / *IG XII.4.3847*), which alludes to the erection of a statue (line 1: εἰκόني ἐν τῷ [– –]) and precedes a list of contributors (lines 6-7: [οἶδε ἐπην|γ]εῖλαντο δώσειν Δίω[ν κτλ.], who apparently promised sums of money to pay for the honours voted. While little certainty is possible, decree no. 2 seems to have had something to do with an official request (αἵτησις) to the council or the assembly, which likely concerned a specific individual and special privileges of some kind, and thus needed to be confirmed by a secret ballot. The awarding of one or more statues to prominent benefactors is something that many *poleis* sought to validate through a ratifying vote; examples include early 2nd-century BC decrees from Magnesia-on-the-Maeander and Priene, as well as an early Imperial text from Knidos.²⁶ Clauses in decrees from Kos make it clear that there was a limit to the honours, specifically the worth of a ‘crown’, which could be decided by the δᾶμος during a vote by hand (χειροτονία).²⁷ From this evidence, it can be deduced that, if honours exceeding that limit were passed for one or more individuals, a simple vote by hand would not suffice and confirmatory votes by secret ballot would be required. The need for validating types of honours which exceeded certain legal parameters is likely to have been quite

wishing that the right of ἔγκτησις be granted to him and his descendants. The conclusion of this decree is also not preserved.

26 *I.Magnesia* 92A.1-2 (Todd 2012: 44 no. A35); 92B.11-12 (Todd 2012: 44 no. A35); *I.Priene* B-M 403.8-9; *I.Knidos* 74.16-23 (1st-2nd c. AD; Todd 2012: 44 no. A34). The latter case is particularly clear about the specific process, recording two χειροτονίαί, in the council and the assembly successively, followed by a third vote consisting of ψᾶφοι.

27 See especially *IG XII.4.22.5-8* (early 3rd c. BC), 25.14-16 (ca. 295-280 BC), 30.21-23 (mid 3rd c. BC), 37.1-3 (ca. 250-200 BC), and 3959.15-16 (mid 3rd c. BC), all preserving variations of the phrase καὶ στεφανῶσαι χρυσῶι στεφάνωι ὅσωι κύριός ἐστιν ὁ δᾶμος / ἡ ἐκκλησία (ἐκ τῶν νόμων / κατὰ τὸς νόμος) χειροτονίαί μεγίσταν δωρεάν (δι)δόμεν. Cf. again generally Grieb 2008: 156. On *megistai timai* (statues set up in the agora, *sitesis* in the *prytaneion*, and *proedria*) in the Hellenistic period in Athens, Gauthier 1985: 79-83.

similar at Halikarnassos, where in the Imperial period we also find references to ‘the greatest honours allowable by law’ (*megistai timai* or similar formulations).²⁸

Both of the new decrees provide only very fragmentary records of the numbers of votes cast. Nevertheless, these can be generally compared with the previously known data (Table 1). No. 1 gives us a figure whose exact reading is somewhat difficult. The number can most plausibly be resolved as ἐβ[δομήκοντα – ca. 3? –], which would give us at least 70 votes in the council (since there is room to increase the number somewhat in the following lacuna). This figure would only roughly correspond to the three others previously known: 92, 100, 113. The previously attested numbers led to the conclusion that they must represent ‘close to the unanimity of the *bouleutai*’.²⁹ We therefore expect the council at Halikarnassos to have had at least 114 members (the number ought to be divisible by the three Doric tribes known), perhaps slightly more (125 *bouleutai* have been hypothesised at Iasos, when it had five tribes, though 111 is currently the highest number attested there).³⁰ In decree no. 1, if our reading is right, we would have a substantially lower record on this occasion, 70–79, though still one that would likely represent a majority of the votes in the council. Generally speaking, such a lower number could be paralleled by the lowest turnouts currently attested in the council at Iasos, 68 (SEG 41.932.10–12), and 83 (SEG 41.929.34–35).

28 *I.Halikarnassos* *257.1–2 (unpublished inscription; 1st c. AD); *I.Halikarnassos* E3 / *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 12.27.ii.9–10 (ca. 127 AD); cf. also *I.Halikarnassos* *88 / *LBW* 505.4–7 (1st c. AD).

29 Canevaro 2018: 114. Compare Bernini (2023: 30), ‘Le Conseil d’Halicarnasse avait sans doute une taille analogue à celui d’Iasos avec 120 ou 125 bouleutes’. Unless there were more tribes in certain periods of time, the second number seems impossible, however, since it is not divisible by three, the only known number of tribes at Halikarnassos.

30 Cf. Fabiani 2015: 280; Fabiani 2025: 211.

TABLE 1. Vote counts in inscriptions from Halikarnassos
(NB E1 and 2 are Halikarnassian decrees inscribed on Kos; *503 / IG XII.4.3847 was found on Kos but is a *pierre errante*.)

Main Publication	I.Halikarnassos inv. no.	Date	Votes in Council	Votes in Assembly
Decree no. 1	*287	ca. 280-260 BC?	70-79	> 5 (4005?)
Decree no. 2	*435	ca. 250-200 BC	not recorded or missing	> 1005 (4005?)
Wilhelm, <i>Akademieschriften</i> 1.298-300	*29	ca. 225-200 BC?	92	1200
IG XII.4.142	E1	ca. 220 BC	100	4000
IG XII.4.176	E2	ca. 200-150 BC	113	> 200 (3900?)
IG XII.4.3847	*503	ca. 250-200 BC ("3rd c. BC", IG)	missing	= or > 4000

More intriguing, once again, is our decree no. 2. It is far from clear whether votes cast in the council were actually recorded in the tally provided. This is possible, but it would result in quite long lines. Another possibility is that only votes from the assembly were recorded in this inscription. This would make the text unique among the half-dozen examples now known from Halikarnassos (and exceptional also in comparison to the 4 records of votes known from Iasos). Yet, if right, this ought not to be completely surprising: other neighbouring communities like Kos and Theangela only recorded the votes cast in the assembly.³¹ The second

31 Kos: IG XII.4.41 (late 3rd c. BC), 56-57 (mid-2nd c. BC) and 59 (after mid-2nd c. BC). Cf. Grieb 2008: 156 with nn. 115-16, for a synthesis of the Koan material. Theangela: IG XI.4.1054B.21-22 (decree recorded on Delos; ca. 230-220 BC) and IG XII.4.159.5-6 (decree recorded on Kos; ca. 200 BC).

peculiarity of this decree from Halikarnassos is that it is the only one known to employ the formulation ψήφοι αἱ διδοῦσαι or αἱ ἐπιδιδοῦσαι, which is found on Kos and at Iasos, and which stresses that what follows are the votes in favour of the proposal, granting the honours or other resolutions.³² Given the extensive lacuna also in line 6, we cannot know if these votes were followed by an indication of those ‘against’, by space left empty, or by some continuation of the text. Though vote tallies usually marked the conclusion or the near-conclusion of a decree (so clearly in *I.Halikarnassos* E1-2), a third point of originality is that decree no. 2 appears to contain further text below the enumerations in lines 7-9, which refer to a decree (τὸ ψήφισ[μα]), presumably the decree itself, and preserve other traces which are difficult to interpret. It is hard to know what to make of these lines. They do not seem to correspond to a subscription list like the one we find at the conclusion of the potentially parallel *I.Halikarnassos* *503. A better parallel might be the addendum in *I.Halikarnassos* *29, which we discuss further below, but such a suggestion remains highly conjectural unless a more definitive reading of lines 7-9 can be attained.

Back to the figures themselves: in decrees nos. 1 and 2, the votes counted from the assembly must have been in the thousands (especially clear in no. 2.5-6: [- -χι][λίαι] and the numbers cited both intriguingly end in ‘5’ (πέντε). In *I.Halikarnassos* E1.22, we have a number of votes that is one of those famously round and precise numbers, 4000; in *503.6, a number that is equal to or greater than 4000 (τετρακισ[χίλιαι – -]). The figure reported in E2.24-25 is different: with extreme caution, it can be said to have been greater than 200 ([- -κό][σιαι]), but, by comparison with the two aforementioned cases, Klaus Hallof, following Rudolf Herzog, did not hesitate to restore this number as 3900 ([τρισχίλιαι ἐνακό][σιαι]). With all due caution, we could tentatively propose to restore the vote counts in nos. 1 and 2 as “4005” ([τετρακισχίλιαι] suits particularly well an estimated length for the lacuna at the end of line 11 in

32 Not being aware of this new evidence, Canevaro 2018: 114 had written that at Halikarnassos ‘The formulas... do not give any clear indication of whether the votes were those generically cast, or those in favour’. On the basis of the comparison with Iasos, Kah 2014: 168 was more affirmative, ‘ist es einfacher, die Formel mit einem Abstimmungsverfahren zu erklären, bei dem nur positive Stimmsteine abgegeben wurden’.

no. 1). Whatever the exact case may be, we seem to be dealing with figures for the votes in the assembly which revolve around 4000.

If correct, this would leave only the round, but remarkably low figure of 1200 (χίλια διακ[ό]σιαι) in *I.Halikarnassos* *29.8 to be explained. The discrepancy has already caused some uncertainty in those studying vote counts. Gauthier, for example, wondered whether the number 4000 could represent a unanimous decision at Halikarnassos, while the lower figure of 1200 could have implied a large number of votes against the motion.³³ Canevaro considers this figure ‘certainly troublesome compared with the others’ and concluded that ‘it is impossible to tell whether the figure... indicated a heavily split vote or simply very low attendance’.³⁴ We cannot definitely solve this question. What we think we can do is suggest how this low figure was dealt with by the civic authorities. Most of the aforementioned analyses of *29 fail to note that this decree – whose exact substance is unclear to us – was followed by an addendum at a later date and in another hand.

I.Halikarnassos *29.8-12 has been admirably restored and interpreted by Adolf Wilhelm in this way:

ἐπὶ Κλεομήδου τοῦ Κλ[εοστράτου *e.g.*]
 μηνὸς Ἀρτεμισιῶ[νος *day*]
 εἰσεδώκαμεν εἰς τὸ δικαστή-
 ριον καὶ ἐδόθη π[αψηφεί]

“Under (the priest) Kleomedes son of Kl[eostratos?], on the [...] of the month Artemision, we have brought (this decree) into [the public tribunal] and it was given (i.e. approved) [with all votes].”

Wilhelm collected parallels for the bringing of decrees to a ratifying vote, but while he thought that these concerned a public tribunal (δικαστή-

33 Gauthier 1990: 446, ‘le chiffre de 4 000 correspond-il à l’unanimité des présents, alors que les 1 200 votes du second seraient à compléter implicitement par un nombre important de voix contraires?’ Cf. also Kah 2014: 168, ‘Bislang noch nicht befriedigend erklärt sind die zwischen 1200 und über 4000 stark schwankenden Stimmenzahlen in der Volksversammlung’.

34 Canevaro 2018: 114.

ριον) as a place of validation, that reading is no longer favoured in the most recent editions of the inscriptions concerned.³⁵ Instead, the examples cited by Wilhelm are probouleutic proxeny decrees which were brought before a later assembly.³⁶ John Ma has recently approved of Wilhelm's work, viewing this particular case from Halikarnassos as a 'sign of automaticity... magistrates duly took the decision to the courts for a second vote, no doubt in accordance with the law'. The courts certainly 'had their own autonomous existence, reflecting another sphere of state operation and legitimacy',³⁷ but both Wilhelm and Ma appear to miss some of the originality of the provisions appended to the Halikarnassian decree. Adding *yet another secret ballot* is in and of itself something noteworthy. If Wilhelm's restoration [εἰς τὸ δικαστήριον] is correct,³⁸ we should view the later confirmation of this decree by the public court as something more exceptional or at least distinctive. We hypothesise that the motivation for having this decree approved by a third organ of the state had *precisely* to do with the low number of votes recorded in the assembly (1200). Far from being a sign of 'automaticity' or normal procedure then, the decision to take the measure to the courts for what was presumably a fifth (!) vote – after *probouleusis* and a vote in the assembly through χειροτονία, as well as a secret ballot in both the council and the assembly – resulted from an apparent concern about consensus. By bringing the decree before another institution, the [δικαστήριον] in this particular

35 Wilhelm, *Akademieschriften* 1.298-300, citing the Athenian δοκιμασία for grants of citizenship and especially the inscriptions that are now *I.Oropos* 110, 213, and 215; approved by Ma 2024: 237 and 582 n. 51. In both *I.Oropos* 213 and 215, however, Wilhelm's reading δικαστηρίου is no longer adopted and month names are restored instead: [ἐν δήμῳ Προστα]τηρίου δε[κάτηι]; [ἐν βουλευῇ μηνὸς Πανά]μου τριακάδι, ἐν [δήμῳ...].

36 The case added by Ma, *I.Delphinion* 153 (mid-2nd c. BC), seems a better example of the need for a second assembly and a second decree ratifying a crown or a significant honour (in this case for a foreign judge). See also the clear example of this kind of procedure during grants of proxeny on Rhodes, as studied by Badoud, *Temps de Rhodes* 16 (τοῖσδε ἐδόθη[η]σαν προξενίαι ἐπὶ μίαν ἐκκλησίαν; ἔδοξεν τῷ δάμῳ ἐν ταῖ | δεύτερον ἐκκλησίαι).

37 Again, Ma 2024: 237.

38 We unfortunately have little information about the law courts at Halikarnassos, except for the existence of the δικαστήριον as a public building in the agora: *I.Halikarnassos* *26 / *I.British Mus.* 897.19 (ca. 260-220 BC?).

case, the magistrates could ensure that it was passed $\pi[\alpha\mu\psi\eta\phi\epsilon\iota]$ by those citizens of Halikarnassos who served in the court – however many they may have been is not known. This further vote reflected a successfully unanimous decision, which had not been the case in the assembly during the secret ballot, where the number of votes fell far short of the expected figure of 4000 or slightly more.

With this question, we thus come back to the matters of a symbolic quorum and of unanimous or near-unanimous decisions that may reflect the actual number of citizens in the community. There is no precise evidence for either a symbolic quorum or a required minimum number of votes at Halikarnassos, so we must tread cautiously in using these concepts in connection with our evidence. But if we are right, the decision passed with a round number of 1200 votes may perhaps have met, or been close to, an expected quorum – after all, the measure passed. This symbolic quorum of 1200, however, was underwhelming in terms of consensus. A unanimous resolution seems to have been eventually obtained in the lawcourt ($\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$), though the exact size of this court is elusive.³⁹

The number ca. 4000 more typically recorded as a tally of votes in the assembly is likely to be close to the number of citizens in Halikarnassos in the early Hellenistic period. These men could have sat as part of an assembly in a variety of venues, such as occasionally in the theatre of Halikarnassos.⁴⁰ The seating capacity of the theatre of Halikarnassos may be roughly estimated by comparison with the theatre at Epidauros. This has been calculated to hold 12000-12500 people if each person disposed

39 Compare Canevaro 2018: 118, citing Hansen *per litt.*: ‘A subsequent *psephophoria* would be superfluous if checking that the quorum had been reached was the sole purpose’. And further Canevaro 2014: 118-19: ‘The secret ballot not only allowed to check that the quorum had actually been achieved, but provided an actual record of the wide agreement on the particular measure approved. The need for this must have been particularly strong in the case of sensitive decisions, or decisions on matters that were institutionally singled out as of particular concern for the *polis*’. We propose that *I.Halikarnassos* *29 is a case in point.

40 No mention of an assembly held in the theatre is attested at Halikarnassos, but this is relatively common in other cities. On the use of the theatre for assemblies in the region, see recently Bernini 2023: 154-56, 161-63.

of 0.5 m of space, or about 14000 if each had only 0.4 m.⁴¹ The diameter of the theatre at Epidauros is ca. 119 m, while that of the theatre of Halikarnassos is ca. 110 m; it therefore has five or six fewer rows of seats than that in Epidauros. In total, this would mean ca. 2000-2500 seats fewer than Epidauros or a capacity at Halikarnassos of ca. 10000-11000 persons. Citizens, guests, and still other attendees of the performances or the assembly will therefore have sat comfortably within this space. What the figure of 4000+ citizens represents in terms of the overall population of Halikarnassos is hard to evaluate, however. It is perhaps suggestive of an overall population at least three or four times that size (adding roughly equal numbers of women, children, and non-citizen or enslaved persons?).⁴² Among the citizens of Halikarnassos, only 2.85-3% would be serving as members of the council during a given semester.⁴³

Conclusion

Finally, what can we say about the praxis of counting ballots and of inscribing the results at Halikarnassos? The half-dozen examples collected here show that this practice was not necessarily rare among the ca. 50 decrees known from Halikarnassos, though it remained used in specific circumstances: grants of citizenship; official petitions by or for individuals; confirmation of special honours for individuals, notably the awarding of special crowns to foreigners and the erection of statues; and perhaps others. We would be hard-pressed to lay too much emphasis on any

41 Epidauros: von Gerkan & Müller-Wiener 1961: 10; Svenson-Evers 1996: 424-25. Halikarnassos: similar calculations already in Pedersen & Isager 2015: 296. For a discussion of the smaller theatre at Priene (5000-6500 seats) and its connection with an estimate of the population of the city, see Kah 2014: 152 with n. 27.

42 It is good to echo the words of caution of Ma 2024: 519, 'we do not know what the figures mean without a sense of the size and the structure of the rest of the population across the whole polis'.

43 Cf. Kah 2018: 157, who estimates the proportion of *bouleutai* to citizens at 3% in Halikarnassos, 10% in Iasos (with a citizen population in Iasos probably barely 2000 strong: 157 n. 59). There is evidence for a βουλευτήριον at Halikarnassos (*I.Halikarnassos* *26 / *I.British Mus.* 897.10) but it has never been located and its size cannot be estimated. On *bouleuteria* and civic councils in Asia Minor and the Dodekanese, see also now Bernini 2023: 135-57; 179-263.

statistics here, however, since among those ca. 50 decrees, other than those discussed here, the conclusion of the document is securely preserved only in a handful of cases. These include, for example, the honorific decree for Zenodotos (ca. 279/8-275 BC) mentioned above, which does not pass any special measures, but appears to echo honours awarded to this individual in Troizen and merely grants him a dinner in the *prytaneion*; or the sale of a priesthood later in the 3rd century BC.⁴⁴ Only in such instances is it perhaps safe to say that votes by secret ballot were neither held nor recorded.

We initially noted how chronologically anchored were the records of numbers of votes in Athens and in Delphi. A similar case has been made for Iasos. There, the vote counts are particular to one ensemble of honorific decrees, the latest and widest chronological group which has been studied, ranging from the ca. 230s to the 180s BC.⁴⁵ The decrees from other neighbouring communities show a similar chronological range: at Theangela, records of votes are attested in ca. 230-200 BC; on Kos, from the late 3rd century BC to ca. 150 BC.⁴⁶ The dates of many decrees from Halikarnassos are uncertain, but the pair inscribed on Kos (E1 and E2) are thought to belong to ca. 220 BC and ca. 200-150 BC respectively, in the first case on relatively firm prosopographic grounds. These dates broadly correspond to those of the relevant decrees from Iasos, Theangela, and Kos. But it remains more difficult to assign the other Halikarnassian decrees listed in Table 1 to a very specific chronological framework, since their dates can only be approximately established through an analysis of letter forms. At any rate, it is possible that, as in neighbouring communities, secret ballots were especially recorded at Halikarnassos during a relatively limited part of the Hellenistic period. We might thus be dealing with a kind of epigraphic habit. Not surprisingly, this is also the period during which we have the most evidence for inscribed decrees from Halikarnassos. Once again, caution is therefore warranted and statistics of

44 Zenodotos: see n. 21 above. Sale of priesthood: *I.Halikarnassos* *3 / *I.British Mus.* 895 (ca. 250-200 BC). At least 1 unpublished Classical decree does not record a secret ballot despite granting πολιτεία, and several early Roman honorific decrees also do not preserve any tallies.

45 This is the 8th group ('ottavo gruppo') of decrees in Fabiani 2015: 264.

46 See n. 31 above.

any kind are inherently hazardous. New evidence is bound to continue to refine our tentative conclusions, but, partly in the spirit of Hansen's work and his famous "shotgun method", we hope to have made some progress towards an understanding of the phenomena of vote counts, quorum, and consensus decisions, as they apply to a single city, Halikarnassos.⁴⁷

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47 For this method in demographic analyses, see Hansen 2008, with earlier references.

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