

## Manufacturing Descent: Adoption, Inheritance and Civic Identity in Isaios 7.33-42

[Ἰσαίος] ἦν δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ δόξα παρὰ τοῖς τότε γοητείας καὶ ἀπάτης, ὥς δεινὸς

ἀνὴρ τεχνιτεῦσαι λόγους ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρότερα. . .

“[Isaios] had a reputation among his contemporaries for deception and being clever at contriving arguments for the worse cause” (D. H. *Isaios* 4)

Dionysios finds a good measure of Isaios’ flair for mendacity in his distinctive form of *ethopoiea*, whose artifice and subtle complexity contrast sharply with the simplicity and naturalness of Lysias’ (cf. D. H., *Isaeus* 6-11). Modern critics have tended to locate Isaios’ attacks and *encomia* in the realm of the extraneous (e.g. Griffith-Williams 2013:20-1; Rhodes 2004:146). The extended assaults upon the character, acts, and motives of his opponents (e.g. *Is.* 2.27-37; 4.1-6; 6.10-26) and the unstinting praise of his client’s familial loyalty and civic *philotimia* (e.g. *Is.* 2.36-7; 4.27-30; 6.51-61) are more for the sake of ἀπάτης than argument.

This seems particularly pronounced in the case of Isaios 7, “On the Estate of Apollodoros.” As Griffith-Williams (2013: 77) notes, fully one quarter of the speech is devoted to *ethopoiea*. This may indicate the intrinsic weakness of Thrasylos’ case, after all his alleged *inter vivos* adoption by Apollodoros was never completed (*Is.* 7.27-8). However, it may not be that Thrasylos’ case is weaker than his opponent’s, but that both sides’ claims are manifestly deficient (cf. Todd 1993: 38). The dispute resists resolution by careful consideration of the particulars. In order to fill the void, Isaios not only brings character to the fore, but the logographer advances a striking *variatio* upon the theme of civic virtue and deficiency. Isaios manufactures a civic descent for Thrasylos that serves as a *credible substitute* for “evidence” based arguments. The shared civic genealogy between Thrasylos, Apollodoros and namesake “grandfather,” Thrasylos is rooted in their shared devotion to Athens past and prospective.

In 7.33-42, Isaios carefully develops a rhetorical parallelism to describe the particular expression of their shared civic devotion to cement their shared civic identity. All three are characterized *philotimia*. Thrasyllus' modest litotes of his dedication to the *polis* (οὐδ' αὖ ἀφιλότιμον [7.35]) is matched by the much more emphatic devotion of his father ((πάνθ' ὑπηρετεῖ φιλοτίμως, οὐδέν τ' ἀδικῶν ἐκ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ φιλοτίμως ἐπειρᾶτο ζῆν [7.39]). Both are outstripped by the elder Thrasyllus' unparalleled devotion to the *polis* (ἀλλ' ὥς οἶον τ' εἰς τὰ ὑμέτερα προθυμοτάτους [7.37]). Both grandfather and father performed the most demanding liturgies and he too expects to perform the same services (cf. 7:35-6, 7.38, 7.42). Thrasyllus, like his father and grandfather, will not just comply but will contribute far in excess of what the *polis* requires. He will leave it to his opponents to conceal what little wealth they do not privately consume (7.39). Thrasyllus will be the same kind of citizen Apollodoros and Thrasyllus were. He is their true lineal descendant.

Isaios forges an intricately intimate connection between Thrasyllus, Apollodoros and the elder Thrasyllus in order to "prove" that the younger Thrasyllus should be considered Apollodoros' son and heir. His acts and disposition reveal him to be a true son, which requires only the formal endorsement of what Apollodoros earnestly desired: to make his kindred spirit his son. More broadly, Isaios' extended "excursus" upon Thrasyllus', Apollodoros' and Thrasyllus' shared character transcends the customary and cursory enumeration of civic virtues and service. Isaios crafts his *ethopoiea* to underscore their congruent political identities. Isaios creates a political genealogy that validates the partially completed familial one. For the *dikast* confronted with competing legal claims whose merits are both deficient, Thrasyllus' political descent provides the clarity necessary to resolve the legal uncertainty. Isaios manufactures Thrasyllus' descent because he fully recognized that for the Athenians the political is personal.

## Bibliography

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