

The topic of my research project is the concept of *aretē* (ἀρετή = virtue) in Hellenistic inscriptions from 323 to the middle of the second century B.C. Starting from the premise that *aretē* was a multifaceted concept in the Greek world, with nuances that might vary according to context, this study hopes to explore the various manifestations of civic *aretē* as recorded in honorific inscriptions of the Hellenistic period.

Unlike previous studies on the concept of *aretē*, which either have not examined systematically the evidence provided by the epigraphic material or have confined the discussion of the epigraphic evidence for *aretē* and other aspects of civic virtue narrowly to the Classical period (with overwhelming emphasis on Classical Athens), this study intends to exploit the inscriptions from different regions as fully as possible as the main source of evidence. The proposed study will place equal emphasis on every individual Greek *polis*, and aims to map out possible regional patterns. In the diversity of the Hellenistic *poleis* the striking recurrence of *aretē* in honorific inscriptions raises the question of change and continuity in comparison with the Classical period. Thus, a different perspective will be proposed in this study, that of exploring and interpreting the evolution of civic values within the individual *poleis* with a view to comparing and contrasting different cities, which in turn will add a new dimension to our reconstruction of the history of Greek values, institutions and political ideology.

The methodology of multiple case studies will allow the construction of a database of inscriptions, which will provide the empirical basis for my regionally-based project. Moreover, the comparative-historical method will help the contextualization of the inscriptions. The overriding aim of my investigation is to contribute to the current debate on Greek culture and political mentality in the Hellenistic cities: change vs. continuity, Hellenization vs. Greekness, individual and communal, local and ethnical identity, civic ideology vs. popular morality.