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The stuff of the gods

The material aspects of religion
in ancient Greece

Edited by Matthew Haysom,
Maria Mili & Jenny Wallensten

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Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies
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ABSTRACT

The “material turn” in the humanities and social sciences has brought about an expanded understanding of the material dimension of all cultural and social phenomena. In the Classics it has resulted in the breaking down of boundaries within the discipline and a growing interest in materiality within literature. In the study of religion cross-culturally new perspectives are emphasising religion as a material phenomenon and belief as a practice founded in the material world. This volume brings together experts in all aspects of Greek religion to consider its material dimensions. Chapters cover both themes traditionally approached by archaeologists, such as dedications and sacred space, and themes traditionally approached by philologists, such as the role of objects in divine power. They include a wide variety of themes ranging from the imminent material experience of religion for ancient Greek worshippers to the role of material culture in change and continuity over the long term.

Keywords: Greek religion, Etruscan religion, Mycenaean religion, materiality, religious change, *temenos*, temples, offerings, cult statues, terracottas, *omphalos*, cauldrons, sacred laws, visuality, purity, pollution, gods’ identities, divine power, inscribed dedications

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BOOK EDITORS

Matthew Haysom, Newcastle University
Maria Mili, Glasgow University
Jenny Wallén, Swedish Institute at Athens

I4. Writing to the Gods?

Archaic votives, inscribed and uninscribed

Abstract

Every Classical scholar interested in Greek religion is familiar with the ἀνέθηκε (ανεθεκε) formula, where X dedicates Y to a deity. But it is wrong to think that what is familiar is what we fully understand. Not all votives were so inscribed, or even inscribed at all, and the ἀνέθηκε formula was by no means universal across the Greek-speaking Mediterranean in the Archaic period. In this paper I explore what factors might have led to a votive being inscribed, and to look at whether inscriptions made any difference as to how votives were used and valued. Were inscribed votives in use for longer, or did they remain visible for longer, than uninscribed ones? This paper will adopt a contextual approach to an examination of the contexts in which such objects were used and found. It will take as its starting point the idea that writing is there to inscribe agency (*sensu* Gell 1998) in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. It will concentrate on the evidence from Olympia between 800 and 420 BC, with a particular focus on dedications of armour and weapons (which can sometimes be grouped into trophies). It will also look at other factors that may have affected a votive's use and longevity (exotic origins, and other, non-Greek inscriptions).*

Keywords: inscriptions, agency, votives, Archaic period, Olympia

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Introduction: The problem

Why inscribe an object when dedicating it to a god? This question is of course tied up with a broader question of “why did the Greek gods need stuff?”, and “what kind of stuff did they need?” which together form the key themes of this volume. It is a question that almost forces itself on the archaeologist who is bound to be struck by the overwhelming number of “gifts to the gods” encountered in a site like Olympia.¹ But it is not a question which I think has been much asked by ancient historians: that is by scholars concerned primarily with Greek religion or by those specifically concerned with ancient literacy.

The field of ancient Greek religion is of course a vast one, and one that often takes its lead from the ancient written sources. Votives (or at least ἀνάθηματα “things set up”) are absent from the list of characteristics of “religion” listed by Dionysios of Halikarnassos.² Walter Burkert acknowledges that votive offerings were an important, material dimension of Greek religious practice.³ Folkert T. Van Straten discusses the idea of “*do ut des*”, that offerings are given in thanksgiving for either favours given or in the hope of favours received.⁴ Recent scholarship has investigated both the kinds of stuff dedicated to gods and the names that the Greeks gave to this stuff (ἀνάθημα, δῶρον, δεκάτη, ἀκροθίνιον, ἄγαλμα, ἀπαρχή, ἱερά,

¹ E.g. Snodgrass 1980, 49–84.

² Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* 2.18.2 lists the following characteristics “ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα καὶ δαιμόνια σεβασμῶν. ἱερά, τεμένη, ξοάνων ἰδρύσεις (...) ἑορταί, θυσίαι, ἐκεχειρίαι, πανηγύρεις and πόνων ἀναπαύλαι”; adding later (2.63.2) “ἀγνείαι, θρησκείαι, καθαρμοὶ καὶ ἄλλαι θεραπείαι καὶ τιμαί”. A rough translation (mine) might read “of the reverent things pertaining to the gods and spirits [there are] sanctuaries, holy spaces, the establishment of divine images (...) celebrations, sacrifices, truces, festivals and relief from pain’ later adding ‘purifications, rituals, cleansings and other services and honours’. Parker 2011, 1 n. 2 calls this “a useful list of the components of ‘religion’”.

³ Burkert 1985, 68–70; 1987.

⁴ Van Straten 1981; 2000. The Latin phrase *do ut des* means “I give so that you may give”.

etria the word *ἱερε* (for *ἱερὸν*—“sacred to/of”) appears.¹⁸ Or the object itself could be allowed to speak “*Διὸς εἰμί*”—I am of Zeus, as in several other early inscriptions on cups from Mt Hymettos.¹⁹ Some of the early (Late Geometric II i.e. late 8th century BC) inscriptions from Methone and from the sanctuary of Apollo Daphnephoros at Eretria follow this *εἰμί* (I am) formula, even though few of these inscriptions are dedications as such.²⁰ Sometimes the *εἰμί* is dropped and the simple genitive is used.²¹ The *ἀνέθηκε* formula is therefore far from universal.

The existence of other formulas raises the question of why the *ἀνέθηκε* is used so frequently. Is it a matter of context? On the Athenian Acropolis the dedications are both largely of marble and clearly “set up” on stands, columns or pillars—visible for all to see. In this respect the formula makes sense. It also makes sense for other things that were “set up” for the most part on the southern boundary of Stadium I such as the trophies of arms and armour at Olympia which we will come to later. *Ἀνέθηκε* may not however be as suitable for the many cups we find that seem to have been used as votives. The earliest inscriptions from the sanctuary deposits from Eretria do not use this formula (see above) though from the beginning of the 7th century BC it becomes standard on cups from Mt Hymettos;²² in the much later (largely 6th century BC) “bespoke” offerings of painted Chiot cups (mainly chalices) dedicated to various gods (Aphrodite, Apollo and Artemis) at Naukratis it has become standard.²³ One of the most elaborate of incised *ἀνέθηκε* inscriptions from Naukratis is on a late 7th century BC “Wild Goat Style” Chiot *lekane* dedicated to Aphrodite.²⁴ Quite how this *lekane* (or indeed) any of the cups was “set up” is unclear. Be that as it may by 600 BC this formula had become standard regardless of whether the object itself was “set up” in a physical sense. It had come to mean “dedicated”.

The *ἀνέθηκε* formula however never entirely displaced other formulas all of which are to be found in Olympia in Archaic times. As we saw above the earliest Greek dedications often preferred *εἰμί*. Objects so inscribed have been called “*oggetti parlanti*”, “speaking objects”.²⁵ To write so as to allow an object to speak is to endow it with agency, in Alfred Gell’s sense.²⁶ The concept (agency) helps to explain many of the specific features of Archaic Greek material culture such as the “apotropaic” function of a gorgon-headed shield blazon—how a shield could frighten the enemy.²⁷ I wrote in my abstract that “writing inscribes agency”, and this is certainly true in the sense that such writing makes it apparent what these agency relations are, both to modern scholars and to other literate Archaic Greeks.²⁸ But in another sense this is misleading. By no means are all votives—that is gifts to the gods found in sanctuaries—actually inscribed; and not all inscriptions found in sanctuaries are votive in character. Of the 27 early graffiti from the sanctuary at Eretria (see above) none is unambiguously a dedication to Apollo. And of the kinds of objects found in sanctuaries that are inscribed only a small proportion ever get written upon.

This leads on to another issue—what *kinds* of things found in sanctuaries are actually inscribed? Or, to put it another way, is there a clear principle or criterion by which we can predict (or judge) whether an object would be inscribed or not? A common-sense answer might be that cult equipment would not normally be inscribed (as it is just there to be used in cult), but gifts to the gods ought to be, since the god would want to know who was dedicating what to him (or her). Common sense here requires extensive qualification: first because we know (from the lists of objects kept on the Acropolis)²⁹ that some cult equipment was inscribed; and second because, outside of Attica, the vast majority of offerings (votives) are never inscribed (see below).

Another common-sense answer would be that the more valuable the gift to the deity, or the more important the dedicator, then the more likely the object is to be inscribed. Well, this is again only true in a very qualified sense. In support of this “common sense” thesis one might cite the inscribed golden *phiale* dedicated at Olympia by the “Sons of Kypselos” (erstwhile tyrant of Corinth; *Fig. 1*);³⁰ or the fact that, at the

¹⁸ Verdan 2013, no. 380. This formula is also found at Olympia; see Frielinghaus 2011, 423 G17.

¹⁹ Langdon 1976, 15 nos. 4 and 6; see now Whitley 2021.

²⁰ One *dipinto* on a cup reads *λαδοεμ*: Kenzelmann *et al.* 2005, 59 no. 1 (FK00382). *λαδο* cannot conceivably be interpreted as a fragment of a hitherto unknown epithet of Apollo, and so this cannot be a dedication but a mark of ownership. For the inscription from Methoni with this formula see Besios *et al.* 2012, no. 7 (M0 2255) pp. 350–351.

²¹ As in Frielinghaus 2011, 433 G60.

²² Langdon 1976, 15–17 nos. 11–19. Only one of these (13) is on a closely datable sherd (Early Corinthian).

²³ Cook & Woodhead 1952. In these cups the dedicatory inscriptions have been painted on the cups before firing; they are not incised.

²⁴ Now in the British Museum; GR 1888,0601.456 (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1888-0601-456) which joins British Museum GR 1924,1201.418. The inscription reads *Σώστρατος μ' ἀνέθηκεν τῇ ἀφροδίτῃ*... –‘Sostratos dedicated me to Aphrodite’; see also Ebert 1975.

²⁵ The phrase is Burzachechi’s (1962). On this formula more generally in early inscriptions see Whitley 2021.

²⁶ Gell 1998. For applications of this concept, see papers in Osborne & Tanner 2007b.

²⁷ Osborne & Tanner 2007a.

²⁸ Whitley 2006; 2007; 2017; 2021.

²⁹ Harris 1995.

³⁰ This is Boston MFA 21.1843 (Caskey 1922; Jeffery 1990, 127–128 and 131 no. 13). The inscription reads *Φυρμελίδαι ἀνέθεν ἐξ Ἡρακλείας* (‘the Kypselidai set [this] up from Herakleia’) in Corinthian letters of the late 7th century BC. Rich dedications (six gold kraters) of Kypselos him-



Fig. 1. The golden phiale dedicated by the Kypselidai, now in Boston (Boston MFA 21.1843). The inscription reads *Κυψελίδαι ἀνέθεν ἐξ Ἡρακλείας* in Corinthian letters of the late 7th century BC. Caskey 1922; Jeffery 1990, 127–128 & 131 no. 13. Courtesy/copyright Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Argive Heraion, dress pins of silver were inscribed, whereas those of bronze were not (see Table 1).³¹ Or we might, using Anthony Snodgrass' distinction between "raw" and "converted" offerings³² (the former being objects in use in everyday life that become votives once dedicated; the latter objects such as statues which can only ever have had a dedicatory purpose) expect that while "raw" offerings (e.g. dress pins, bronze *fibulae*)³³ were only sometimes inscribed, elaborate "converted" offerings which were "set up" for all to see (such as marble statues) almost invariably were. Again, this generalisation may be true in a very broad sense, but there are important exceptions. The giant *kouros* from the Samian Heraion (Isches) (Fig. 2), or the numerous marble votives (including the *korai*) from the Athenian Acropolis, such as Antenor's *kore*, are certainly inscribed (see above).³⁴ But again there are regional variations: inscrip-

self are also known from Delphi (Hdt. 1.14), though the famous "chest of Kypselos" at Olympia was dedicated again by the "Kypselidai" (Paus. 5.17.5–6).

³¹ For the silver pin, see Jeffery 1990, 168 no. 1; Du Cou 1905, 339. Jacobsthal (1956, 31, 96, figs. 84 and 314) notes only two inscribed pins, the first our one from the Argive Heraion and the second from Paphos.

³² Snodgrass 2006, 258–268.

³³ Of the 10,282 *fibulae* catalogued by Buxton 2019 only two (that is 0.0195%) are inscribed. Both are 6th century BC "lion" *fibulae* (shape FU1, Buxton 2019, nos. 9428 and 9434), inscribed *ΑΠΟΛΩΝΣ ΕΜ* ('I am of Apollo') and *ΙΑΙΛ* respectively. See also Jacobsthal 1956, 97; Blinkenberg 1926, 280–281.

³⁴ For Isches, whose name (Ἰσχυῆς ἀνέθηκεν ὁ Ῥήσιος 'Isches of Rhesos set [this] up') is inscribed on the leg of the *kouros*; see Kyrieleis 1996, 45–46 (Neumann) and extended discussion in Duplouy 2006, 190–203. For Antenor's *kore* (Acr 618), see Payne & Mackworth-Young 1950, 31–34; Keesling 2003, 43–45, 56–49, 71–72 and 213. For the accompanying

tions are not common amongst the largest concentration of votive *kouroi* we have from Mt Ptoion in Boiotia.³⁵ Moreover, many of the things that have dedicatory inscriptions and have found in sanctuaries were quite humble.³⁶ The commonest votive object is probably the ceramic drinking cup, beginning with examples from Mt Hymettos and Eretria³⁷ but continuing throughout the Archaic period at sites like Naukratis and the Samian Heraion.³⁸

The minimum we can conclude from all this is that the value of the material used as a votive is no sure guide to whether it will be inscribed or not. Though this may not in itself invalidate the hypothesis that the act of inscribing of a votive is in part a way of communicating with a god or goddess, it does raise the question of whether the inscription itself was strictly necessary for a votive to perform its function as an offering. When writing on a votive, was one then "Writing to the Gods?" Well, up to a point, yes, in that the votive was the god's possession (as indicated by dedications in the genitive) or given to him or her (when made in the dative). There are, moreover, examples where gods are actually addressed or invoked on inscriptions—the Mantiklos Apollo, with its dedicatory formula followed by a prayer is one example;³⁹ another is the late 6th century BC Ionic column shaft from Melos inscribed "Child of Zeus, accept this blameless statue from Ekphantos, for Gryphon vowed it to you and has performed his vow" (translation by Robin Osborne).⁴⁰

inscription (on the base below), see Raubitschek 1949, 232–233 no. 197 = *IG* I³ 628.

³⁵ Of the 140 fragments of *kouroi* and *korai* from this sanctuary (Ducat 1971), only two (no. 46 a *kore*, and no. 202 a *kouros*) are inscribed. There are of course seven inscribed bases, probably for *kouroi* (nos. 232–238). But there are far more inscribed bases for tripods, and inscriptions are to be found on virtually every other kind of object dedicated in this sanctuary of Apollo, including small bronze statuettes and bronze arms. It is far from the case that the bigger the *kouros*, the more likely it was to have an inscription.

³⁶ E.g. the inscribed spindle whorl no. 490 (Verdan 2013, 140) from the sanctuary of Apollo at Eretria; or the inscribed loom-weights to be found in sanctuaries of female deities (Dhoga-Toli 2006).

³⁷ For Mt Hymettos see Langdon 1976; for Eretria, Kenzelmann Pfyffer *et al.* 2005.

³⁸ In both cases the inscriptions on the drinking vessels were painted on before firing. For Naukratis, see Cook & Woodhead 1952. For the Samian Heraion (where the cups are plain with one handle and painted HP), see Avramidou 2016. Avramidou argues that these cups are not inscribed as "gifts" to Hera (that is they are not votives in the normal sense of the term) but nonetheless indicate Hera's "ownership" of them.

³⁹ The inscription on this bronze Apollo (Boston Museum of Fine Arts 0.3.997) reads Μάντικλος μ' ἀνέθεκε φεκαβόλοι ἀργυροτόξοι/τὰς {δ} δεκάτας. Τὺ δὲ Φοῖβε δίδου χαρίεσσαν ἀμοιβάν 'Mantiklos dedicated me to the far-darter, him of the silver bow, as a tenth part of his spoils. So do you, Phoibos, grant me a pleasing gift in return' [translation Powell] (Jeffery 1990, 90–91 and 94 no. 1; Powell 1991, 167–169; Day 2010, 33–48).

⁴⁰ *IG* XII.3.1075 = Jeffery 1990, 324 no. 23 pl. 62, Berlin Museum 1485. The Greek reads "Παῖ Διὸς Εκπλήντοι δέξαι τοδ' ἀμεινπῆς ἄγαλμα/

But against this we must set the relative rarity of votive inscriptions. By no means were all dedications inscribed—by my estimate, only about 3–7% of “raw” offerings at Olympia were (see *Tables 6–9* below). Sometimes, as at the Argive Heraion, the proportion is much smaller (see *Table 1*). For reasons given below, we cannot see inscribed offerings as being the *pars pro toto* of much larger dedications; dedications as humble as an (uninscribed) bronze pin or terracotta figurine could not realistically have been part of a larger ensemble.

These statements raise two possible objections. The first concerns votives contained in boxes, where the dedicatory inscription is found only on the outside. We do have several examples of these listed in the inventory records from the Athenian Acropolis.⁴¹ But this can only have applied to a relatively small number of small and valuable dedications (of gold, silver and gems)—there are no known boxes that contain terracottas or cups. Second, it is possible that dedications were grouped and marked by labels of some kind. Indeed, labels would have been needed to relate the inventory records to the things (e.g. the dedications in boxes) that they record. If these labels took the form of perishable material (papyrus, linen, wood) then such labels would have to be renewed every so often, if they were meant to last. Such may have been the case with dedications in some treasuries viewed by Pausanias, where no inscription is mentioned.

But such perishable labels can hardly have suited major dedications such as trophies of arms or armour which were set up to be seen. If the use of such labels was widespread, they ought to be in something more permanent (e.g. bronze). I know of only one such “label”, a bronze fragment of a tripod re-used to mark a collection of iron weapons dedicated at Olympia.⁴² There is no positive evidence to suggest that such labels were common. If labels for iron weapons (and other dedications where objects had to be grouped together) were commonly made in bronze (as this one was) we would expect more of them to have survived. If not, we are left with the classic spoiler argument; all labels must have been made of perishable materials, and so have perished.

If then we judge by what we know (taking into account known unknowns, and not treating the whole material record as an unknown unknown inaccessible to any form of reasoning) we must conclude that inscriptions then were not *essential* features of votive offerings; the gods, being gods, would know who had given them a fine gift regardless of its being written upon. This minimalist conclusion does not invalidate



Fig. 2. Inscription on the leg of “Isches”, from the Heraion of Samos.
Photograph: James Whitley.

further archaeological investigation—there may be patterns in what is inscribed, and what not, which require further elucidation.

Inscriptions in sanctuaries

It is difficult to make generalizations about which votives do and do not get inscribed.⁴³ Quite apart from variations between regions there are also variations between sanctuaries. So, of the 2,775 bronzes from the Argive Heraion, only 21 (0.753%) were inscribed (see *Table 1*). Of the enormous range of bronze objects recovered from this site, only rings, mirrors, binding strips, plates, vases/cauldrons, sieves, bars and parts of vehicles are ever inscribed, and only on vases/cauldrons and plates are inscriptions at all common. This highly selective

σοὶ γὰρ ἐπευκλόμενος τοῦτ' ἐτέλλεσσεν Γρόπιδων.

⁴¹ Harris 1995, 50–52.

⁴² Frielinghaus 2011, 549 n. 43 = Jeffery 1990, 199 no. 19.

⁴³ Lazzarini 1976, 55.

Table 1. *Bronzes and inscriptions on bronzes from the Argive Heraion (information from Du Cou 1905, supplemented by Jeffery 1990, 168 no. 1).*

Type of object	Number	Number inscribed	% inscribed
Dress pins	756	0	0
<i>Fibulae</i>	141	0	0
Rings	597	1	0.17%
Mirrors & mirror handles	31	1	3.23%
Binding strips	29	1	3.45%
Plates of bronze	27	4	14.81%
Cauldrons & vases	198	11	5.56%
Sieve & related forms	17	1	5.88%
Parts of vehicles	4	1	25.00%
Bar	6	1	16.66%
Other bronzes	983	0	0
Total	2,789	21	0.75%

pattern of what is and is not inscribed can also be paralleled at Olympia and in Phokian sanctuaries to Apollo (Delphi and Kalapodi).

Of the “raw” inscribed offerings in general, arms, armour, bronze vessels, bronze (but not terracotta) bells,⁴⁴ drinking cups, plain stones, athletic equipment (such as jump-weights—*halters*)⁴⁵ are often inscribed; loom-weights, pins and *fibulae* only rarely; and exotic oriental and orientalizing metalwork are never written upon in Greek characters. There are no inscriptions on the cauldrons with griffin or lion protomes from Olympia.⁴⁶ The “entangled objects” or antiques from the Levant, such as Phoenician (or North Syrian) bronze bowls,⁴⁷ horse frontlets found in Eretria and in the Samian Heraion,⁴⁸ or the Cypriot/Cretan bronze tripods and stands that turn up in later sanctuary deposits, though sometimes inscribed in Phoenician or Aramaic,⁴⁹ are never inscribed (or re-inscribed) in Greek characters.⁵⁰ This picture too is compli-

cated by regional variations. There are no inscribed helmets from Delphi or Kalapodi,⁵¹ and no inscribed tripod cauldrons in the “Geometric” style from Olympia.⁵² Conversely a fair number of tripod cauldrons of “Geometric” type from Delphi bear inscriptions that indicate which tripods were prizes, and which gifts to the god.⁵³ In general, then the pattern we find can be summarized in *Table 2*.

The resulting pattern is unusual and very difficult to account for. What underlying principle, structuring or otherwise, can be discerned here? One possible answer to this question is that the types of things that are inscribed in general relate to the Archaic Greek “culture of competition.”⁵⁴ This would certainly help to explain why certain types of objects were selected—captured weapons, or the actual jump weight the Spartan Akmatidas used when competing in the pentathlon.⁵⁵ If international competition and the celebration of victory to an international (or at least panhellenic) audience were a factor, then we would expect that the more panhellenic the sanctuary, and the more agonistic the spirit then the more likely a captured shield or helmet would be to be inscribed.

This brings me to the main theme of my paper: military dedications found in sanctuaries to male deities (Zeus and Apollo) in Phokis and at Olympia. Of course, iron weapons (swords, spear-heads, javelin heads and weapons) were dedicated at Kalapodi and Olympia,⁵⁶ but these are usually so corroded that we cannot tell whether they bear any kind of mark. Inscriptions on bronze armour (helmets, shields and greaves) and weapons (spear-butts) are reasonably common—at least in some sanctuaries, such as Olympia, where inscriptions are found on around 3–4% of closely datable examples (see *Tables 6–9*; and below). Of these, one could argue that captured shields had the greatest potential both to commemorate victory and to humiliate one’s enemy—it is not for nothing that Spartan warriors were enjoined to “come back with your shield or on it.”⁵⁷ This potential to humiliate the other-

⁴⁴ Of the 34 bronze and 102 terracotta bells from Athena Chalkioikos listed by Villing (2002, 224–243) only six examples, all bronze, are inscribed. The only other inscribed example is bronze, from the Kabeirion (Villing 2002, 249 fig. 14; British Museum GR 1893.12-21.1).

⁴⁵ Quite apart from the example of Akmatidas (Jeffery 1990, 191 and 199 no. 20; Kunze 1937, 82–84) there are the considerable number of such weights found in and around Sparta (at the sanctuaries of Athena Chalkioikos and of Zeus Messapeus at Tzakona [Catling 1990]), all of which are inscribed. See Whitley 1997, 646–647 n. 67, with references. I had the pleasure of finding one of these myself (Catling 1990, 32 pl. 5f.). This pattern has been confirmed by another recent find from Athena Chalkioikos (Morgan *et al.* 2009, 31 fig. 46).

⁴⁶ Herrmann 1966; 1979.

⁴⁷ On North Syrian/Phoenician bowls see Markoe 1985; on “entangled objects” in the Early Iron Age Mediterranean: Whitley 2013.

⁴⁸ On finds in Eretria see now Verdan 2013, 126–127 nos. 391 and 392; on those from Samos see Kyrieleis & Röhl 1988.

⁴⁹ On Cypriot/Cretan bronzes see Papasavvas 2001, 238 and 252–256.

⁵⁰ On Aramaic/Phoenician inscriptions on bowls, Markoe 1985, 72–74. There are however some 7th century BC Greek alphabetic votive inscrip-

tions on some Egyptian (largely basalt) statues to be found in Rhodes and other parts of East Greece; see Kourou 2015, 248–250.

⁵¹ On Delphi, Frielinghaus 2007. On Kalapodi, Felsch 2007, 210–225.

⁵² Geometric tripods from Olympia see Maass 1978. The only possible case for an inscribed tripod is Frielinghaus 2011, 549 n. 43. But, if this was once part of a tripod, the inscription seems to be associated with its secondary use as a “label” for a collection of captured iron weapons dedicated by one Eurystratidas, a Spartan (Jeffery 1990, 199 n. 19).

⁵³ Rolley 1977, 24–30. The inscriptions (if not the cauldrons) date from the 7th to 6th centuries BC. Nos 267 and 268 are clearly prizes, nos. 269, 270 and 271 clearly dedications. The fragments of Cypro-Cretan stands and tripods (Rolley 1977, 115–129) from Delphi have no inscriptions (see also Papasavvas 2001, 252–256).

⁵⁴ Fisher 2009.

⁵⁵ Jeffery 1990, 191 and 199 no. 20; Kunze 1937, 82–84.

⁵⁶ For Kalapodi see Schmitt 2007. For Olympia Baitinger 2001.

⁵⁷ This tradition is, of course, very late, only recorded in Ps-Plutarch, *Mor. (Apophthegmata Laconica)* 241. F. no. 16. I would argue that it is however

Table 2. Frequency of types of object inscribed (relating to sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, in Phokis and in Boiotia). Information: from Jeffery 1990; Buston 2019; Avramidou 2016; Jacobsthal 1956; Immerwahr 1990; Wachter 2001; Felsch 2007; Frielinghaus 2011; Ducat 1971; Herrmann 1966; 1979; Kunze 1991; Rolley 1977; Maass 1978; Whitley 1997.

Frequency of inscription	Often inscribed	Inscribed at Olympia (not Delphi)	Inscribed at Delphi (not Olympia)	Rarely inscribed	Never inscribed (in Greek characters)
Type of object	Drinking cups; votive statues (<i>kouroi</i> , <i>korai</i>); Bronze shields; jump weights (halters)	Helmets; greaves	Geometric tripod cauldrons	Loom-weights; spindle whorls; dress pins; <i>fibulae</i>	Oriental (e.g. Phoenician/North Syrian bowls, Cypro-Cretan stands and tripods) and orientализing metalwork (including cauldrons with griffin protomes) of all kinds

wise perennially victorious Spartans was fully realised by the Athenians in the manner in which they commemorated their victory at Sphakteria. They placed captured shields up in the Painted Stoa between painted panels depicting other famous Athenian victories (Paus. 1.15.4). The inscription on the one surviving shield could not be more pointed ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΙ ΑΠΟ ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜ[ΟΝ]ΙΩΝ ΕΚ [ΤΥ]ΛΟ.⁵⁸ Shields also feature prominently in many of the trophies commemorating victories that Pausanias viewed at Olympia: the “Myonian” trophy in the Sikyonian treasury (Paus. 6.19.4); and the bronze trophy under the plane trees set up by the Eleans to commemorate an otherwise unknown victory over the Spartans (Paus. 5.27.11). Sometimes a captured shield was not enough—the Spartans used a specially commissioned gold shield attached to the temple of Zeus itself perpetually to remind the Argives, Athenians and Ionians of the “gift” (δῶρον) they had bestowed on the Spartans at their victory at Tanagra.⁵⁹

Shields do seem to have been a major focus for commemorating military victory in late Archaic times, as the following example illustrates. Sometime in the late 6th century BC the Thessalians invaded Phokian territory (Hdt. 8.27; Paus. 10.1.3–9) with (seemingly) overwhelming force. The Phokians, outnumbered, responded with an ingenious night attack and so won a famous victory near Mt Parnassos—a Phokian Bannockburn. Of the four thousand Thessalian shields that they captured half were dedicated in the sanctuary of Apollo at Abai and the other half at Delphi. Here they constructed an elaborate “converted” offering with statues.⁶⁰ If Wolf Niemeier is correct in his identification of the sanctuary of Apollo at Abai with Kalapodi⁶¹ we ought to have some of

these shields. Fragments of at least 32 “Argive” round shields have been published, some with the characteristic guilloche rim that would place them approximately in the right time period.⁶² One might think that such a famous victory would deserve at least an inscription, or some kind of commemoration. But, while one shield (no. 2078a) does have a fragmentary inscription, it is not one that can with certainty be linked to this battle. Indeed, dedicatory inscriptions of any kind are rare from Kalapodi—only four (0.171%) out of a total of 2,343 bronzes from here are inscribed.⁶³ The Archaic inscriptions that allow us to identify this with certainty as a cult to Apollo are to be found on potsherds and not on bronzes.⁶⁴

So, despite the suitability of shields as a means of commemorating military victory, inscribed shields remain relatively uncommon in sanctuary deposits. Of the captured arms dedicated at Abai only one shield and no helms are inscribed.⁶⁵ This appears to be true of that other great sanctuary of Apollo in Phokis—Delphi. Here we have figures only for helms and not for shields. None of the 90 helms dedicated here between 700 and 400 BC were inscribed.⁶⁶

Arms, armour and states at Olympia

Things were different at Olympia—here we have many more inscribed helms, shields greaves and spear-butts than anywhere else. One possible reason for this is that while, at Delphi, the Pythian Games took place “dans la pleine alluviale de Pleistos, à un endroit non localisé entre Krisso et Itea”⁶⁷—that is, far away from the sanctuary of Apollo—state-level and individual athletic competition at Olympia in Archaic times took place within the sanctuary, close to the altars of Zeus and Hera and their associated cult activity. Before the construction of Stadium II around 450 BC (or possibly earlier) competition

implied by Thukydides’ account (especially 4.36.3, 4.37.2–38.1, 4.40.1) of the Sphakteria episode and his incredulity that they had actually given up their arms. On Archaic shields generally see Snodgrass 1964, 61–68.

⁵⁸ “The Athenians [took these] from the Lacedaimonians from Pylos”: on the discovery of this shield, Shear 1937a; 1937b; on the agency of its inscription, Whitley 2006, 229–232.

⁵⁹ Paus. 5.10.4; Frielinghaus 2011, 551 n. 70. The Spartan victory at Tanagra in 458–457 BC (Thuc. 1.107.5–108.1) is intelligently discussed by Gomme (1945, 313–316).

⁶⁰ Paus. 10.13.7; Jacquemin 1999, 348 no. 409.

⁶¹ Discussed in Whitley 2008; Prignitz 2014.

⁶² Felsch 2007, 227–230 and 367–369.

⁶³ Felsch 2007, nos. 78, 119, 2078a and 2171.

⁶⁴ Prignitz 2014.

⁶⁵ Felsch 2007, 208–209.

⁶⁶ Frielinghaus 2007.

⁶⁷ Aupert 1979, 54.

and commemoration was up close and personal.⁶⁸ Dedications, both military and athletic, that had been “set up” here were very much on display—they were made visible to the other competitors to Olympia during the festival. By the end of the Archaic period captured armour, shields, helmets, greaves and spear-butts were gathered together into trophies.⁶⁹ When did this practice begin?

Though cult practice requiring animal sacrifice and ritualized commensality begins at Olympia from as early as the Late Bronze Age,⁷⁰ dedications of any kind appear much later. Helmets may have been dedicated at Olympia from Middle Geometric times—the earliest a “*Kammhelm*” of Italian type dates to around 800 BC and the Geometric “*Kegelhelm*” seem to date to the 8th century BC (see *Tables 7–9*).⁷¹ None of these examples is inscribed. The earliest inscriptions (late 8th to early 7th century BC) are found on Corinthian helmets, one (D2) inscribed *ἡἰαρά Ὀλυπίανδε*, another (D8) *Διὶ Ὀλυμπίοι*.⁷² Inscriptions on greaves soon followed.⁷³ These appear to be personal dedications, which need not have been part of any larger trophy. Such personal dedications persist throughout the Archaic period, notable examples being the Corinthian “Miltiades helmet”⁷⁴ and the Illyrian helmet C65 inscribed *φέρζαν Γράβωνος φέρζαντος εἰμί*⁷⁵ that appears to be among the last datable dedications of helmets in the 5th century BC. All these dedications, on shields, helmets, spear butts and greaves were, with one exception,⁷⁶ dedications to Zeus.

Trophies are distinct from personal dedications. To make a trophy one had to gather arms together and place them on a wooden armature.⁷⁷ To attach either helmets or greaves one had to drill a hole and nail the helmet or greave to this wooden frame. This practice seems to have begun as early as the 7th century BC, the earliest example from Olympia being the

Corinthian helmet D132 which is not inscribed.⁷⁸ In general no more than 10% of either greaves or helmets have such holes. Trophies seem to have been set up on the South side of the First Stadium, opposite the treasuries.⁷⁹

It is only from around the middle of the 6th century BC that we can identify trophies (defined as collections of captured arms dedicated by political communities) through their inscriptions (see *Table 3*). Amongst the earliest recorded is a victory by Orchomenos over its Boiotian neighbour Koronea (D123) dating to around 550 BC.⁸⁰ From this time on though dedications of armour forming parts of trophies become relatively common—we know of 23 of these that can be dated to between 550 and 425 BC. The majority of these trophies (14) are single finds; others are assemblages of shields, helmets, greaves and spear butts (four with two finds, three with three; see *Table 4*) with an average of 2.17 pieces per trophy. Did then inscribed pieces of armour form part of larger trophy, the bulk of which comprised uninscribed armour? Certainly, the general rarity of inscriptions (only 3.95% of helmets, only 6.25% of greaves; see *Tables 6–9*) on the major classes of armour might suggest this. The fact moreover that some un-inscribed helmets have holes indicating that they were parts of trophies shows that not all parts of a trophy were inscribed (see above). Were then inscribed pieces acting as a kind of *pars pro toto*? The figures from *Tables 3–5* suggest a more complex picture; sometimes two helmets, of the same type, were inscribed (as in the Zanklean/Messenian trophy over Mylai); and sometimes a shield and a greave (as in the Zankle dedication) or a helmet and a greave (as in Rhegion’s trophy over Gela). In the trophy of the Myanoi in the Sikyonian treasury helmet, shield and greaves all seem to have been inscribed.⁸¹ Contextual analysis of associated finds cannot help here, as trophies seem to have been broken up when deposited in wells or other defined locations (see below).

The other striking feature of these dedications is how sharply they diverge from the historical record as given in Herodotos and the first book of Thukydides. Only seven (out of 23) of the battles these trophies commemorate were noted by Herodotos, Thukydides, Diodoros, Pausanias or indeed any other ancient historian we know of (*Table 5*). Most of the early dedications relate to quarrels between small (and apparently insignificant) Western Greek (Hipponion, Medma), Arcadian (Psophis) and Boiotian political communities—this example (*Fig. 3*) is a single find of an Illyrian helmet celebrating

⁶⁸ This possibility is raised by Barringer (2009) who re-dates Stadium II to the era immediately following the Persian wars rather than to 450 BC. But see arguments in Brulotte 1994.

⁶⁹ Jackson 1991.

⁷⁰ Eder 2006; Benecke 2006; Kyrieleis 2006.

⁷¹ *Kammhelm*, Frielinghaus 2011, 235 A1; *Kegelhelm*, Frielinghaus 2011, 235–239; Snodgrass 1964, 13–16.

⁷² D2 Olympia M1516 Frielinghaus 2011, 258 and 548 no. 33; D8 Olympia B10523 Frielinghaus 2011, 261 and 546 no. 1. The “*Kegelhelm*” (uninscribed) is also attested at Isthmia in the 8th century BC; see Jackson 1999, 161–162 no A1.

⁷³ Kunze 1991, 91 no. II.30 and p.125 no. 1.

⁷⁴ D478 Olympia B2600 Frielinghaus 2011, 383 and 548 n. 40.

⁷⁵ C65 Frielinghaus 2011, 257 and 549 n. 41. The meaning here is not entirely clear to me, except to point out that it must have been dedicated by Gravon son of Werzan.

⁷⁶ The exception is a dedication to Herakles on a shield (B5233; Frielinghaus 2011, 548 n. 29). There are no dedications of arms or armour either to Hera or to Pelops to be found at Olympia. A full list of inscriptions on arms and armour from Olympia is given by Frielinghaus 2011, 546–549.

⁷⁷ Frielinghaus 2011, 130–184.

⁷⁸ Jackson 1987, 113–114; D132 Frielinghaus 2011, 298.

⁷⁹ Jackson 1991.

⁸⁰ D123 Athens National Museum 15155 Frielinghaus 2011, 295–296 and 551 no. 73; Baitingier 2001, 241 no. 9; Jeffery 1990, 93 and 95 no. 11.

⁸¹ Paus. 6.19.1, 6.19.4–5; Frielinghaus 2011, 550 n. 66.

a Koroneian victory.⁸² Conspicuous by its absence is any trophy by the Spartans—though there is one by the Messenians (Methanioi).⁸³

How long did these trophies stay up? From a detailed analysis of the typology of helmets and the contexts in which such objects were eventually deposited it seems that most trophies did not stay up for more than 50 or so years.⁸⁴ There were however exceptions. If your state had a treasury, then trophies could last much longer: even such perishable trophies as the three linen corselets Gelon of Syracuse captured at Himera could be kept and displayed for several hundred years.⁸⁵

The numbers of both the helms and greaves from Olympia are large enough to yield viable statistical results (see *Tables 6–9*).⁸⁶ Of both greaves and helms between 3% and 7% were inscribed. There seems to be no particular preferences for types of helms: the numbers of the main Greek types (Illyrian, Chalcidian and Corinthian) inscribed range between 3–5%, the same number as the overall proportion of inscribed to un-inscribed helmets (3.95%; see *Table 9*). It is striking, however, that all the “foreign” types of helms deposited between 500 and 450 BC (Etruscan and Persian) were inscribed. Some other patterns stand out. Of the closely datable helms (*Tables 7–8*) and greaves (*Table 6*) both the absolute number and the proportion of inscribed to un-inscribed examples (almost 10% in 550–500 BC and almost 17% in 500–450 BC for helms; and for greaves rising to over 35% in the latest period) increases markedly in the years after 550 BC, and peaks around 500 BC. This pattern cannot be explained simply by saying that this is a function of the Persian wars, since most trophies (22 out of 23; see *Table 5*) come from Greek-on-Greek conflicts.

Let us look in detail at the most elaborate of these trophies, and one of the few that involved two of the major players of Archaic Greek politics, Argos and Corinth. This is the Argive trophy, which is by far the largest of its kind. It comprised five “Corinthian” helmets, nine hoplite shields (like the ones from Kalapodi), a shield blazon and a bronze greave.⁸⁷ All are inscribed with the words ΤΑΡΓΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΕΘΕΝ ΤΟΙ ΔΙΦΙ ΤΟΝ ΦΟΠΙΝΘΟΘΕΝ “The Argives dedicated [these] to Zeus from Corinth” [i.e. the Corinthians], and must have formed a single ensemble. Though this trophy has long been known to archae-



Fig. 3. Illyrian helmet now in the British Museum inscribed [Φο]πové[ε]ς ἀνέθειαν τοῖ Δι Ὀλ[υ]ππία[ι] (London British Museum GR 1914.4-8.1; Frielinghaus 2011, C53). Photograph: Ruth Westgate, modified by Kirsty Harding. Courtesy and copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

ologists it was long thought that it must date to the period of Argive resurgence after the Persian wars (Paus. 2.15.4, 2.16.5).

Lilian Jeffery, however, could not reconcile this date with the letter forms of the inscriptions, nor the typology of the helms themselves.⁸⁸ It is only recently that a convincing date for the battle it commemorates (which was not mentioned by Herodotos) that seems to resolve all these difficulties has been put forward by Alastair Jackson, whose account I follow.⁸⁹

Sometime between 504 and 494 BC the Argives won a great victory over the Corinthians. The trophy they put up out-did all others—here the principle of *pars pro toto* certainly does not apply. The inscriptions were written with great care and in such a way as to harmonise with the existing decoration: the one on the helm in the British museum (*Figs. 4–5*) follows the base of the helm beginning with the left cheek piece; the inscription on the greave (B4462; *Fig. 6*) follows the central ridge upwards towards the greave’s “face”. In both cases the inscription seems, if anything, to emphasise the “apo-

⁸² C53 (London British Museum GR 1914.4-8.1) Hockey *et al.* 1992; Frielinghaus 2011, 253–254 and 551 n. 74; Jeffery 1990, 434 n. 12b.

⁸³ Spear butt Br219; Frielinghaus 2011, 550–551 n. 67; Baitinger 2001, 240 n. 3; Jeffery 1990, 177 and 182 n. 4; Bauslaugh 1990.

⁸⁴ Frielinghaus 2011, 170–184 and 464–545.

⁸⁵ Paus. 6.19.7; Frielinghaus 2011, 552 n. 53.

⁸⁶ Frielinghaus 2011, 159 fig. 18.

⁸⁷ Jackson 2000; Frielinghaus 2011, 549–550 nos. 44–69; helm nos. D417, D450, Do, D512 and D525; Whitley 2011, 182.

⁸⁸ Jeffery 1990, 162 and 169 no. 18.

⁸⁹ Jackson 2000; Whitley 2011, 182.

Table 3. State dedications at Olympia, in approximate chronological order. B and Br numbers refer to Olympia bronzes (as used by Frielinghaus 2011 and Kunze 1991). All finds are from Olympia and are to be found there, unless otherwise stated.

Date	Inscription	Shield(s)	Helm(s)	Greave(s)	Spear-butts and other inscribed bronzes	Historical reference	Reference
550–525 BC	Ἐρχομένησι ἀνέθεσαν τοῖ Δι τοῖ Ὀλυ<v>πιοὶ Ὀρομένη[θεν]	0	D123 Corinthian (Athens National Museum 15155)	0	0	None	Frielinghaus 2011, 295–296 and 551 no. 73; Baitinger 2001, 241 no. 9; Jeffery 1990, 95 no. 11.
525–500 BC	Θεβαῖοι τῶν ΗΥΕΤΙΩΝ	0	0	B4743 (Kunze 1991, III 27)	0	None	Frielinghaus 2011, 551 no. 74; Baitinger 2001, 241 no. 10; Jeffery 1990, 434 no. 12a; Kunze 1991, 105.
same	Ταναγραῖοι τῶν ...	Shield B346	0	0	0	None	Frielinghaus 2011, 551 no. 76; Baitinger 2001, 241 n. 11; Jeffery 1990, 95 no. 12.
same	[Κ]ιρονίοι χέρματ[α ...] ε[[Δι]ι Ἀθεναῖοι ἀνέθεσαν τῶν Ταναγραῖ[ων ἡλώντες	Shield B1975	0	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 551 no. 77; Baitinger 2001, 241 no. 12; Kunze 1956, 36–37 & fig. 17.
same	τοὶ φειπονίαι ἀνέθεσαν τῶν Ὀροτονια[τῶν] καὶ Μεδμαῖοι καὶ Λ[ορραῖ]	Shield blazon B999; “ <i>Blechstreifen</i> ” B521	0	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 551 nos. 78 & 79; Baitinger 2001, 242 n. 13; Jeffery 1990, 286 no. 2.
same	[Ο]λορονέ[ις] ἀνέθεσαν τοῖ Δι ὈΛ[υ]ντιοῖ	0	Illyrian C53 (London British Museum GR 1914.4–8.1)	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 253–254 and 551 n. 74; Jeffery 1990, 434 n. 12b; Hockey <i>et al.</i> 1992.
same	Τοὶ Κλεωναῖοι μ’ ἀνέθεσαν τοῖ Δι τ’ Ὀλυ<v>πιοὶ	0	0	B4465 (Kunze 1991, 105 Nr III 29)	0	None	Frielinghaus 2011, 550 no. 60; Baitinger 2001, 239 n. 1.
same	Τάργεῖοι ἀνέθεσαν τοῖ Δι τῶν Ὀρινθῶθεν	Shields B955; B956; B1004; B4959; B163; Inv 493; B2737; B2671; B4444; Shield blazon B1644 (10 in all)	Corinthian helmets D417 (B4411); D525 (B4504); D512 (London British Museum 251 = GR 1824.0407.32); Do (Adolphseck Schloss Fasanerie FAS Br1); D450 (B8108) (5 in all)	B4462 (Kunze 1991, 104 III 21)	0	None	Frielinghaus 2011, 549–550 nos. 44–59; Baitinger 2001, 239–240 n. 2; Jeffery 1990, 169 no. 18; Kunze 1991, 126 n. 6.
500–475 BC	ὈΛ[υ]ν<v>πιο<v> Ὀρινθῶθεν	Shield blazon B5218	0	0	0		Frielinghaus 2011, 550 no. 61; Baitinger 2001, 240 no. 3; Jeffery 1990, 449 no. 20a.
same	Ἀθεναῖοι [τῶν] Ἐγ[Λέων]	0	Corinthian D516 (Athens MN 15 189)	0	0	Hdt. 6.136–137?	Frielinghaus 2011, 397 and 551 n. 71; Baitinger 2001, 241 n. 7;
same	Δι Ἀθεναῖοι Μεδων λαβόντες	0	“Assyrian” or Persian K1 (B5100)	0	0	Marathon Hdt. 6.107–117.	Frielinghaus 2011, 448 and 551 n. 72; Baitinger 2001, 241 n. 8; IG I ³ , 1467.

Table 3 continued.

Date	Inscription	Shield(s)	Helm(s)	Greave(s)	Spear-butts and other inscribed bronzes	Historical reference	Reference
same	Δαυκᾶται Περὶνον	Shield B2651	0	B310 (Kunze 1991, IV 6)	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 552 nos. 80 and 81; Baitinger 2001, 242 n. 14; Kunze 1991, 118 n. 6 and 128–129 n. 10; Jeffery 1990, 243 and 247 n. 6.
same	Τῶι Διι Περὶνοι Γελεάτων	0	Corinthian D 493 [B4413]	B8370 (Kunze 1991, IV 7)	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 388 and 552 n. 82; Baitinger 2001, 242 n. 15; Jeffery 1990, 455 n. E; Kunze 1991, 118–119 and 129 n. 12.
475–450 BC	Ἡιάρων ὁ Δει- νομένης καὶ τοὶ Συρακόσιοι τῶι Δι Τυρ<ρ>αν ἀπὸ Κύμας	0	Corinthian D 529 (M9); Etruscan “Negauer” L1 (M 844); L2 (London British Museum GR 1923.6– 10.1) (3 helmets)	0	0	Diodoros 11.51; Pind. <i>Pyth.</i> 1.18 and 72.474 BC	Frielinghaus 2011, 402, 448 and 552 nos. 90–92; Baitinger 2001, 243 n. 19; Jeffery 1990, 266 and 275 n. 7.
same	Διφίλος Ὀλυμπίου Φαλειφόνταθεν	0	Corinthian D477 (Paris, Cabinet des Medailles)	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 383 and 550 n. 62; Baitinger 2001, 240 n. 4; Jeffery 1990, 146 n. 1;
same	Μεθάνιοι ἀπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων	0	0	0	Spear butt Br219	Possibly but not cer- tainly Thuc. 1.101.	Frielinghaus 2011, 550–551 n. 67; Baitinger 2001, 240 n. 3; Jeffery 1990, 177 and 182 n. 4; Bauslaugh 1990.
same	Τοὶ Σεκύριοι ἀνέθεν τῶι Δι ἐξ Ἀλκίειοι[ν] ἈθENAίων h<ε>λόντες	0	0	B2777 (Kunze 1991, IV 16); B3006 (Kunze 1991, IV 17) (two greaves)	Spear butt Br2794	Possibly Thuc. 1.105.1 (though only Corinthians are mentioned)	Frielinghaus 2011, 550 nos. 62–64; Baitinger 2001, 240 n. 6; Jeffery 1990, 442 n. 14a & C; Kunze 1991, 120 nos. 16 and 17, 128 nos. 9 and 10.
same	Διι Περὶνοι Λοκρῶν	0	Corinthian D492 (B5172)	B4140 (Kunze 1991, IV 10)	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 388 and 552 nos. 84 and 85; Baitinger 2001, 242 n. 16; Jeffery 1990, 455 n. F; Kunze 1991, 119 n. 10 and 129 n. 13
same	Διι [ΟΛ]υνπίο[ι] Μεσσένιοι Λοκ[ρῶν]	0	Corinthian D549 (B499)	B5180 (Kunze 1991, IV 11)	0	Possibly alluded to in Thuc. 1.103.3 (though no battle is mentioned directly)	Frielinghaus 2011, 406 and 552 nos. 86 & 87; Baitinger 2001, 242–243 n. 17; Jeffery 1990, 454 n. C; Kunze 1991, 119 and 129 n. 14.
same	Μεσσένιοι Μυλᾶιου	0	Corinthian D 498 (B4165); D568 (B4882)	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 390, 409–410 and 552 nos. 88 & 89; Baitinger 2001, 243 n. 18; Jeffery 1990, 454 n. 6a.
same	Ἀπολλωνιάται Ο ΑΟΚΡ	0	Chalcidian G18 (B6900)	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 423–424 and 553 n. 98; Baitinger 2001, 244 n. 22.
450–425 BC	[ι]αρά vacat Συρακόσιοι ἀπὸ Ἀκραγαντίνων λάφυρα	Shield B2590	0	0	0	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 552–553 n. 94; Baitinger 2001, 243 n. 20; Jeffery 1990, 267 and 275 n. 11.
same	Σκύλα ἀπὸ Θουρί- ων Ταραντῖνοι ἀνέ- θεκαν Διι Ὀλυμπίοι δεκάταν	0	0	0	Spear butts Br7452, Br12537 and Br14064	?	Frielinghaus 2011, 553 nos. 95–97; Baitinger 2001, 243 n. 21; Jeffery 1990, 282 and 284 nos. 10a–c.

Table 4. Numbers of inscribed arms from state dedications (information from Table 3 above).

Date range	Shields	Helms	Greaves	Spear butts	Total	No. of trophies
550–525 BC	0	1	0	0	1	1
525–500 BC	14	6	3	0	23	7
500–475 BC	2	1	4	0	7	5
475–450 BC	0	9	4	2	15	8
450–25 BC	1	0	0	3	4	2
Total	17	17	11	5	50	23

Table 5. Victors, vanquished and the historical record (in approximate chronological order). Information from Table 3. Numbers refer to poleis listed in Hansen & Nielsen 2004. Where there is no number for the political community page numbers are given.

Date range	Victor	Hansen & Nielsen no. and region.	Vanquished	Hansen & Nielsen no. and region.	Historical reference
550–525 BC	Orchomenos	213 (Boiotia)	Koroneia	210 (Boiotia)	None
525–500 BC	Thebes	221 (Boiotia)	Hyettos	207 (Boiotia)	None
525–500 BC	Athens	361 (Attica)	Tanagra	220 (Boiotia)	None
525–500 BC	Hipponion (Weiponies) &	53 (South Italy)	Kroton	56 (South Italy)	None
Same event	Medma (Medmaioi) &	60 (South Italy)	Kroton	56 (South Italy)	None
Same event	Lokroi	59 (South Italy)	Kroton	56 (South Italy)	None
500–475 BC	Koroneia	210 (Boiotia)	Unknown	-	None
525–500 BC	Kleonai	351 (Argolid)	Unknown	-	None
525–500 BC	Argos	347 (Argolid)	Corinth	227 (Corinthia)	None
500–475 BC	Psophis	294 (Arcadia)	Unknown	-	None
500–475 BC	Athens	361 (Attica)	Lemnos?	Not numbered but see pp.756–757.	Hdt. 6.137–140, 499 BC
500–475 BC	Koroneia	210 (Boiotia)	Unknown	-	None
500–475 BC	Athens	361 (Attica)	Medes (& Persians)	n/a	Marathon Hdt. 6.107–117, 490 BC
500–475 BC	Zankle (Messana)	51 (Sicily)	Rhegion	68 (South Italy)	None
500–475 BC	Rhegion	68 (South Italy)	Gela	17 (Sicily)	None
475–450 [474] BC	Syracuse	47 (Sicily)	Tyrrhenians (Etruscans)	n/a	Diodoros 11.51; Pind. <i>Pyth.</i> 1.18 and 72
475–450 BC	Unknown		Phleious	355 (Argolid)	None
475–450 BC	Messenians	Not numbered, but see pp. 547–568 esp. 550	Lacedaimonians (Spartans)	Not numbered but see pp. 568–598	Possibly but not certainly Thuc. 1.101
475–450 BC	Sikyon	228 (Sikyonia)	Athens	361 (Attica)	Possibly Thuc.1.105.1 (though only Corinthians are mentioned)
475–450 BC	Rhegion	68 (South Italy)	Lokroi	59 (South Italy)	None
475–450 BC	Messenians (i.e. Zankle/Messana)	51 (Sicily)	Lokroi	59 (South Italy)	Possibly alluded to in Thuc.1.103.3 (though no battle is mentioned directly)
475–450 BC	Messenians (i.e. Zankle/Messana)	51 (Sicily)	Mylai	38 (Sicily)	None
475–450 BC	Apollonia (which one?)	Probably 77 (Adriatic—modern Albania)	Unknown	Unknown	None
450–425 BC	Syracuse	47 (Sicily)	Akragas	9 (Sicily)	None
450–425 BC	Tarentum (Taras)	71 (South Italy)	Thurii (Thourioi)	74 (South Italy)	Probably Antiochos of Syracuse, <i>FGH Hist</i> 555 fr. 11. (War over Siris)

Table 6. Number of bronze greaves deposited at Olympia. Information from Kunze 1991, supplemented by Frielinghaus 2011. Readers should note that Kunze's chronology is more stylistic than stratigraphic (see Snodgrass 1993).

	No. of greaves	Number inscribed	Proportion inscribed (as %)
"früharchaisch" 725–625 BC	33	0	0
"hocharchaisch" 625–550 BC	78	1	1.28%
"reif und spätarchaisch" (550–500 BC)	70	7	10.00%
"früklassisch und klassisch" 500–400 BC	17	6	35.29%
Totals	198	14	7.07%

Table 7. Number of closely datable helmets deposited at Olympia, 800–300 BC. Information from Frielinghaus 2011. Please note that these represent only the closely datable helmets. The vast majority of the less closely dated examples are likely to derive from Archaic deposits, between 700 and 450 BC.

	800– 750 BC	750– 700 BC	700– 650 BC	650– 600 BC	600– 550 BC	550– 500 BC	500– 450 BC	450– 400 BC	400 BC and later	Totals
Kegelhelm	16	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
Illyrian Helm	0	5	29	2	7	10	9	5	0	67
Corinthian helm	0	3	43	141	85	63	42	0	0	377
Chalcidian helm	0	0	0	0	0	9	28	0	0	37
"Classical helm" (2 types, H and J)	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	21	1	32
Other types (Cretan, Ionian, Etruscan, Assyrian)	1	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	9
Totals	17	30	72	147	92	82	92	26	2	560

Table 8. Numbers and proportions of inscribed helms as against total number of datable helms, information from Frielinghaus 2011. Please note that these proportions are probably exaggerated, since the helms total 886. The percentage of inscribed helms against total number of helms is therefore 3.95% not 6.25%. Heide Frielinghaus herself gives slightly different figures (Frielinghaus 2011, 159 fig. 18).

	No. of closely datable hel- mets	No. of inscribed helmets	Proportion of inscribed hel- mets (as %)
850–750 BC	17	0	0
750–700 BC	30	1	3.33%
700–650 BC	72	4	5.556%
650–600 BC	147	2	1.36%
600–550 BC	92	3	3.26%
550–500 BC	83	8	9.64%
500–450 BC	89	16	17.97%
450–400 BC	28	1	3.57%
After 400 BC	2	0	0
Totals	560	35	6.25%

Table 9. Proportions of inscribed helm by type (information from Frielinghaus 2011).

Type of helm	Total number	Number inscribed	Proportion (as %)
Kammbelm (A)	1	0	0
Kegelhelm (B)	38	0	0
Illyrian (C)	67	3	4.48%
Corinthian (D)	632	25	3.96%
"Mehrteilig Helm" (E)	3	0	0
Cretan helm (F)	1	0	0
Chalcidian Helm (G)	107	4	3.74%
Classical Helm (type H)	2	0	0
Classical Helm (type J)	31	0	0
Assyrian (conical) helm (type K)	1	1	100%
Etruscan (Negauer) helm (type L)	2	2	100%
Conical helm (type M)	1	0	0
Totals	886	35	3.95%



Fig. 4. One of the helmets captured by the Argives from the Corinthians (British Museum GR 1824, 0407.32; Frielinghaus 2011, **D 512**), left side showing the beginning of the inscription ΑΡΓΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΕΘΕΝ ΤΟΙ ΔΙΦΙ ΤΟΝ ΦΟΡΙΝΘΟΘΕΝ running from the base of the cheek piece to the right round the base. Photograph by James Whitley adapted by Ian Dennis. Image courtesy and copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 5. Same Corinthian helmet, showing continuation of inscription on the other side. Photograph by James Whitley adapted by Ian Dennis. Image courtesy and copyright Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 6. Bronze greave from the same Argive dedication with the same inscription, Olympia B 4462 (Kunze 1991, 104 III 21 and 126 n. 6), side view, showing the relationship between the “apotropaic” decoration and inscription. Photograph by Gösta Hellner, DAI neg. no. D-DAI-ATH-1972/2827. Photograph courtesy and copyright Deutsches archäologisches Institut, Athens.

tropaic” function of the decoration that was there before the inscriptions were made. Such an elaborate trophy, making such an obvious point about Argive superiority and Corinthian humiliation, must have rankled with the Corinthians. This bold trophy with such an explicit inscription could even have bordered on *hybris*, in Nick Fisher’s understanding of the term.⁹⁰

And the trophy itself did not remain undamaged—at least one of the helms **D525** was deliberately damaged.⁹¹ While the damage to the central nose piece could be viewed (in Gell’s terms) as a deliberate way of humiliating a defeated enemy by proxy, the damage to one of the cheek pieces *after* it had been inscribed is harder to explain. It is one of several damages in

this way, and a possible reason is that its prominence, on the south side of the stadium where Corinthian athletes would be competing against Argive ones, was considered an act of *hybris*—and a Corinthian damaged the trophy. This may be one reason why it did not last. By 475 BC at the latest (that is just after the Persian wars) the whole trophy had been dismantled.

Its contents were found in several places. Parts of the trophy must have ended up in the Alpheios river⁹² (see Figs. 4–5), but the bulk was found by German archaeologists from 1937 onwards in various parts of the North Wall of the third Stadium. These comprise wells 13, 16 and 17.⁹³ The most complete information comes from well 17. Here one part of the Argive trophy (a bronze shield Olympia B4959) has been buried with

⁹⁰ Fisher 1992; Whitley 2011, 168–174.

⁹¹ B4504; Frielinghaus 2011, 400–401. On this practice see also Frielinghaus 2006.

⁹² **Do** and **D512**; Frielinghaus 2011, 395–6 and 549–50.

⁹³ Frielinghaus 2011, 152–156 and fig. 17a. The grave B4462 was found in the vicinity but not in a well.

two inscribed parts of two different trophies (a greave B4743) commemorating a Theban victory and a (private?) dedication of a Chalcidian helm **G60**; other uninscribed armour (a greave, fragments of several shields), presumably from other trophies; some early Classical pottery; and vast amounts of Oriental bronzework that had been re-worked to form *sphyrrelata* statues were all found in the same deposit.⁹⁴ This Oriental bronzework was much older, at the time of its deposition, than the fragments of the Argive and other trophies. These elaborate bronzes remained forever un-inscribed, though great care had been taken to retain the integrity of their deposition. This manner of dealing with trophies was not unusual in Olympia—in several other cases (such as the trophies commemorating the Sikyonian victory at Halieis, Rhegion's victories over both Gela and the Lokrians, and the Messenian [Zanklean] victories over the Mylaians and the Lokrians) separate inscribed parts of the trophy had been placed in separate contexts. I know of no case where the integrity of the trophy was respected, and the contents placed in the same deposit, once the trophy had been cleared away.

I don't think we can do much more than guess at the meaning of these examples of structured deposition. Heide Frielinghaus argues consistently that in general trophies were kept together—but it seems from the evidence she has gathered that whole trophies are almost never found in the same well context, though it is often true that parts of them are found in adjacent wells (as here). The memory that trophies represented seem to have been deliberately effaced in many cases; whether or not your votives had been inscribed was no guarantee of longevity. Indeed, uninscribed votives, such as the peculiar *sphyrrelata* statues buried in well 17, may have retained “social memory” for far longer than any inscribed trophy.

However we interpret it we have to acknowledge that, if the Argives' intention was to commemorate their victory, then the means they chose were (in the long run) singularly ineffective. The dismantling of the trophy may have been part of a general clean out in advance of the construction of the second and third stadium, but I think that (after the Persian wars) Corinthian and Spartan pressure on the Eleans to remove this particular sign of Corinthian humiliation must have played its part;⁹⁵ the memory of the victory was entirely effaced from the historical record for over two thousand years.

As this example makes clear, votives in general and military trophies in particular are linked to social memory—a trophy was “a visible knot that tied together an invisible skein of re-

lations fanning out into social space and social time.”⁹⁶ One cannot read Herodotos (or indeed Pausanias) without realising that inscriptions on public votive offerings were one of the principal means by which events of the late Archaic and Classical period were remembered in later times. In this respect the writing on the Argive trophy failed, whereas the near contemporary “converted” offering of a stone base supporting four bronze horses commemorating the Athenian victory over the Boiotians and Chalcidians in 506 BC succeeded in a quite spectacular fashion.⁹⁷ The success of these and other similar monuments, and the need to secure social memory for great deeds may then explain the general switch from “raw” votives (such as trophies of captured arms) to “converted” ones (such as statues with bases) in the course of the 5th century BC. You cannot “clear out” a statue with an inscribed base in the same way you can “clear out” a trophy of captured arms. By the end of the century, the most effective trophies were of the converted kind—the Winged Nike of Paionios of Mende commemorating the Messenian/Naupaktian victory over the (unnamed) Spartans at Pylos towers over all its neighbours.⁹⁸ But this change was not immediate.

The period around the Persian wars represents a peak in the erection of trophies of captured arms and armour:⁹⁹ Διὶ Ἀθηναῖοι Μέδον λαβόντες “The Athenians [dedicated this] to Zeus taking it from the Medes” says the sole Persian/Assyrian helm dedicated at Olympia (**K1**).¹⁰⁰ Soon after, in 474 BC Hieron of Syracuse obviously felt that captured Etruscan helmets were the most effective means of celebrating and commemorating his victory at Kyme (Cumae).¹⁰¹ But it is a sign of the times that Hieron chose a quite different form of commemoration of the same victory at Delphi, a gold tripod set up on a stone base just outside the East entrance of the temple.¹⁰² Hieron and his brothers (Gelon and Polyzyalos) had been, in a sense, experimenting with the best means of victory commemoration. For their athletic victories (horse races and chariot races) bronze statues and lyric odes by Pindar and Bacchylides has been preferred since the 480s BC.¹⁰³ Aside from the Tarentine dedication of three spear-butts around 440 BC,

⁹⁶ Gell 1998, 62; cf Whitley 2011, 171.

⁹⁷ This is Raubitschek 1949, 168 (pp. 191–194), Athens Epigraphical Museum 6286 = *IG* I³ 501 A (Jeffery 1990, 78 no. 43), noted by Herodotos (5.77.4), Diodoros (10.24.3) and Pausanias (1.28.2)—though it was probably the monument re-furbished around 455 BC (Raubitschek 1949, 173 [pp. 201–205] = *IG* I³ 501 B) that Herodotos and Pausanias actually saw.

⁹⁸ Hölscher 1974; Whitley 2006; 2011, 161–166 and 176–178.

⁹⁹ Baitinger 1999.

¹⁰⁰ B5100 Frielinghaus 2011, 448 and 551 n. 72.

¹⁰¹ Diodoros 11.51; Frielinghaus 2011, nos. **L1**, **L2** and **D529**, p. 552 nos. 90–92; see Whitley 2011, 184–185.

¹⁰² Jacquemin 1999, 353 no. 447.

¹⁰³ Whitley 2011, 182–185.

⁹⁴ The contents of the well are listed in Borell & Rittig 1998, 1–2 and 208–211. For the bronze shield from the Argive trophy Olympia B4959 (Kunze 1967, 93 pl. 49, 2); for the greave from the Theban victory B4743 see Kunze 1991, 105 III no. 27; for the Chalcidian helm **G60** (B5150) of around 550 BC inscribed Διὸς Ὀλυμπίο see Frielinghaus 2011, 433.

⁹⁵ Whitley 2011, 168–174.

Hieron's dedication of captured Etruscan helmets is the last major trophy of this type at Olympia. In this sense the Persian wars were a real turning point. Victory had been commemorated both by trophies of captured arms and by the most spectacular of "converted" offerings, the bronze Serpent Column put up at Delphi to commemorate the victors at Plataia, now in the Hippodrome of Constantinople/Istanbul.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the 5th century BC any kind of votive—whether athletic or military—that celebrated victory at Olympia was of the converted kind.

Discussion and conclusions

None of the "common sense" propositions with which I began this article has stood up to close scrutiny. The value, rarity or status of an object does not increase its chances of being inscribed when given to a god—oriental and orientalizing bronzes or "Homeric" entangled objects¹⁰⁵ are never inscribed. There is little positive evidence to support the proposition that higher-status persons are not more likely to inscribe than lower-status ones. Inscribed votives do not have a longer "life" than un-inscribed ones—writing in and of itself provides no guarantee of the longevity of social memory. The integrity of inscribed trophies of captured arms was not respected when these trophies were re-deposited—indeed there seems sometimes to have been a deliberate attempt to break them up. Inscriptions do not necessarily add value to dedications, and in some cases (as in the case of the Argive trophy) an inscribed trophy placed where it could be seen by competing athletes from other *poleis* risked *hybris*, an offence which may considerably shortened the trophy's life.

In general, only around 3–7% of objects dedicated are actually inscribed (and these proportions are lower for Kalapodi and the Argive Heraion). There is some evidence to suggest that state (*polis*) dedications are slightly more likely to be inscribed than private ones—though clearly some helmets that formed parts of larger trophies were not inscribed. The proportion of inscribed to uninscribed armour increases in late Archaic and Classical times, and this may be due to increased competition between states. This "culture of competition" favoured the inscription of some kinds of objects (armour, *halters*) and not others (pins, exotica). Writing was not for the benefit of the gods but for other men (and, in some cases, women). Writing then played little or no part in that form of generalized reciprocity between gods and men we refer to as *χάρις*.

That objects were inscribed not for the benefit of the gods but rather of other humans should not surprise us. Writing was not, unlike fire, of divine origin. It was a human invention, one where the ancient Greeks acknowledged their debt to the Phoenicians.¹⁰⁶ Why then would the gods need to read? Of course, being gods, they could presumably learn to read if they so wished—but being divine they may not have needed to. They would have other ways of knowing who may have given them a pleasing gift and why. So when Catherine Keesling states (of the inscribed Archaic votive statues from the Athenian Acropolis) that "all votive statues accompanied by inscribed statue bases functioned simultaneously as pleasing gifts to the gods and as memorials to the giver", the former functioning as an *agalma* and the latter as a *mnema*¹⁰⁷ she is certainly right in emphasising that ostentatious giving is in no wise incompatible with "religious" motives, but she is (I think) wrong to imply that writing, in and of itself, had both a human and a divine face.

One could of course object here and point out that my conclusions only apply to "raw" offerings, objects which had had a "life" before they became dedications. And it is true that these conclusions do not hold for Athens and Attica. Attica was the most literate region of Archaic Greece.¹⁰⁸ There are more inscribed tombstones from Attica than from anywhere else, and a high proportion of artisans (in particular potters and painters) could and did write.¹⁰⁹ In particular inscriptions on "converted" dedications, such as those from the Athenian Acropolis¹¹⁰ appear earlier and become standard practice earlier than in other Greek sanctuaries. At the same time, Athens continues to make use of "raw" dedications (such as captured shields) to commemorate military victory for much longer than other regions. There is no parallel at Olympia for the shields in the painted stoa, or the dedication of captured armour that Alexander the Great sent to the sanctuary of Athena after the battle of Granikos.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Hdt. 5. 58; see Jeffery 1990, 1–5; Powell 1991, 5–10. I know of no discussion of whether or not the gods were literate and await to be corrected on this issue. Robert Parker (email 6 June 2016) thinks that "the written record is secondary to spoken prayer, and that the latter was the main communication with the gods".

¹⁰⁷ Keesling 2003, 199.

¹⁰⁸ Whitley 1997, 640–645; 2001, 255–265.

¹⁰⁹ For tombstones see Jeffery 1962; for artisans Beazley 1932; generally, Whitley 1997, 642 tables 2 and 3; Missiou 2011.

¹¹⁰ Keesling 2003; Raubitschek 1949; Whitley 1997, 641 table 1. A recent re-evaluation of the bronze finds from the Athenian Acropolis by Scholl (2006; see also *IG I³* 526–583) demonstrates that, in general, on the Acropolis, bronze "raw" objects are much less likely to be inscribed than marble "converted" ones in Archaic times.

¹¹¹ Arr. *Campaigns of Alexander* 1.16.7; Plut., *Vit. Alex.* 16.8. Arrian counts 300 Persian panoplies, and Plutarch 300 shields. They agree however about the wording of the inscription: Ἀλέξανδρος Φιλίππου καὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες πλὴν Λακεδαιμονίων ἀπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων τῶν τὴν Ἀσίαν

¹⁰⁴ Steinhart 1997; Hdt. 9.81.1; Paus. 10.13.9; Thuc. 1.132.2–3.

¹⁰⁵ For this term see again Whitley 2013; Hodder 2011.

But if inscriptions were not essential for the vast bulk of “raw” offerings in Archaic times, the “converted” offerings which proliferate at Olympia during Classical times¹¹² could not function without them. These inscriptions came to form the social and historical memory of ancient Greece as recorded by Pausanias. At Olympia the transition from “raw” to “converted” offerings was effected earlier in athletic dedications than in military.¹¹³ Bronze statues of victorious athletes, or victorious chariots (such as Gelon’s)¹¹⁴ along with the epinician poems of Pindar, Simonides and Bacchylides, represent the early 5th century BC culmination of the Archaic “culture of competition”. Yet these largely bronze statues were not themselves inscribed. The inscription was placed on a stone base into which these statues were inserted. We now have the bases but not the statues—athlete statues such “Myron’s Discobolus” survive mainly in the form of marble copies.¹¹⁵ Such copies (or versions) are now to be found in Rome not Greece, where (minus their bases, which often survive *in situ*)¹¹⁶ they have been turned into “works of art”. De-contextualization of this kind—or, to put it more kindly, “re-contextualization” in a new setting with a view to placing these objects “in dialogue”¹¹⁷ with others of the same status—is essential to creating art out of sculpture. Our witness here is the former Director of the British Museum, who says of the pedimental sculptures of the Parthenon before and after Lord Elgin took them to London: “Until then they [the Parthenon sculptures] had been architectural decoration, adjuncts to a great, but ruined, building. Now they became independent sculptures, *works of art* in their own right” (emphasis mine).¹¹⁸

Decontextualizing statues from their stone bases and removing them from sanctuaries was the key practice that transformed mere votive offerings into something new and Roman: exemplifications of *ars*. In this transformation inscriptions, especially inscriptions which recorded what the statues were for (to commemorate victory, either athletic or military) were redundant. It is surprising then that the man who initiated this transformation, and who must be given the most credit for inventing the western concept of Art finds no honour in

departments either of Classics or of Art History. At Olympia he left his mark in the form of 21 golden shields placed on the temple of Zeus itself, shields whose inscriptions commemorate his victories.¹¹⁹ Who was he? Lucius Mummius, of course, the despoiler of Corinth.

JAMES WHITLEY
Cardiff University

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κατοικούντων—‘Alexander son of Philip and the Greeks (except the Lacedaemonians) [took these] from the barbarians who live in Asia.’

¹¹² Whitley 2001, 311–313; Snodgrass 2006, 258–268; Kindt 2012, 123–154.

¹¹³ Smith 2007.

¹¹⁴ Paus. 9.4–5; Dittenberger & Purgold 1896, no. 143; Roehl 1907, 68, no. 6.

¹¹⁵ Whitley 2012, 591–594. Of course there are smaller versions of such copies, and paintings and copies of the originals. None of these however preserve the original inscriptions.

¹¹⁶ Dittenberger & Purgold 1896.

¹¹⁷ Here I am adopting the terminology of the “Neo-Bloomsbury” school of Classical studies.

¹¹⁸ MacGregor 2014, 4.

¹¹⁹ Paus. 5.105; Frielinghaus 2011, 553 n. 99.

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