

Nikolaus DIETRICH – Johannes FOUQUET – Corinna REINHARDT, Schreiben auf statuarischen Monumenten. Aspekte materialer Textkultur in archaischer und frühklassischer Zeit. Materiale Textkulturen Bd. 29. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2020, XIV + 242 S., ISBN: 978-3-11-064541-5

This volume is the 29th of the De Gruyter open access series *Material Text Cultures*, which is the publication venue for the Collaborative Research Center 933 “Materiale Textkulturen: Materialität und Präsenz des Geschriebenen in non-typographischen Gesellschaften”, based at Heidelberg and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). As a result of the subproject A10 “Schrift und Bild in der griechischen Plastik: Exemplarische Untersuchung am Beispiel Athens und Olympias von der Archaik bis in die Kaiserzeit”, this volume directly refers to the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in T. Meier, M.R. Ott, and R. Sauer eds. *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2015 (*Materiale Textkulturen* 1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110371291>.

In the introductory chapter, Nikolaus Dietrich sketches the book’s scope and aims against the background of a historiographical review of the role played by inscriptions in the study of Greek sculpture. In particular, he highlights the paradox by which the *Plastikforschung* substantially failed to take the materiality of inscriptions into proper account, although it has been inherently and profoundly engaged with materiality since it was established as an independent field of investigation in 1778 with the foundational essay by Johann Gottfried Herder. Dietrich convincingly identifies the research principles, approaches, and questions that determined the “dematerialization” of Greek sculpture inscriptions, describing the different nuances with which this loss of material qualities manifests itself in classical archaeology, philology, and epigraphy. The research disinterest in the materiality of inscriptions, according to Dietrich’s balanced criticism, is historically detectable in the very taxonomic criteria, editorial practices, and reproduction choices adopted by the scholarly collections of inscriptions. In particular, following Emanuel Löwy’s *Inschriften griechischer Bildhauer* (1885), the false equivalence between Greek sculpture inscriptions and artists’ signatures has traditionally led scholars to focus exclusively on their information content, thus reducing them to mere texts. However, and unsurprisingly, this reductive understanding of the material aspects of sculpture inscriptions continued also after the research interest shifted to contexts and semantics. This partial view, as Dietrich notices, is still affecting the role played by inscriptions in the study of Greek sculpture, and risks being perpetuated without a change occurring in the standard scholarly approach. Dietrich appropriately argues that becoming aware of this bias

means more than indulging a fashionable trend in current research, and successfully advocates the need that scholars look at inscribed monuments as a whole by addressing the inscriptions not only as “written sources”, but also, and primarily, as an integral part of the sculpture.

In the first chapter, Corinna Reinhardt addresses the materiality of inscriptions on archaic funerary monuments from Athens and Attica. In particular, Reinhardt addresses the position and design of the inscriptions on the funerary monuments; the possible existence of a formal relationship between the inscription and the represented figure; the alignment, orientation, and spatial arrangement of the letters; the visual impact of the inscriptions. Reinhardt argues that the position and design of the inscriptions as well as their text establish a direct connection to the tomb, which is built, inscribed, and described as a permanent monument commemorating the deceased. Contrarily, the inscription layout does not seem to adopt similar formal strategies for connecting the represented figures to the inscribed text and its content. The lack of formal reference to the image in the inscriptions, according to Reinhardt’s analysis, indicates that text and image were not conceived – although they could be used by the viewer – as interdependent media to create an *iconotext*, i.e., an artifact “in which the verbal and the visual signs mingle to produce rhetoric that depends on the co-presence of words and images” (as defined by Peter Wagner in *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, Berlin 1996). In the appendix, Reinhardt provides a useful catalogue of the Archaic Attic inscribed gravestones examined in the chapter, with (too) essential information and references.

In the second chapter, the focus shifts to inscribed votive monuments. Johannes Fouquet examines a group of late archaic-early classical statue bases from Athens characterized by the rough-hewn treatment or anathyrosis-like finishing of the surface. From the analysis of the inscription layout, Fouquet argues that the deliberate “decorative unfinishedness” of these monuments may have been chosen to diversify the standard graphic design of the statue bases, thus serving primarily to enhance the prestige and aesthetics of the base and of the entire monument. The surface design of the base of Phrasikleia kore is identified as a possible forerunner of this intentional ornamental choice, which Fouquet traces back to the Ionian-Cycladic architectural tradition and understands as an effect of the spread of a new, Ionian-influenced visual aesthetics in late archaic Athens. This interpretation openly challenges the hypothesis by Catherine Keesling that the unfinished surface design, defined “architectural style”, was intentionally adopted to establish a visual link to the unfinished Older Parthenon in order to commemorate the Persian Wars (Ead., “The Callimachus

Monument on the Athenian Acropolis (CEG 256) and Athenian Commemoration of the Persian Wars”, in *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram*, edited by M. Baumbach, A. Petrovic and I. Petrovic, Cambridge 2010, 100–130). A useful catalogue of the monuments is provided at the end of the chapter.

In the third chapter, Nikolaus Dietrich develops the considerations on the layout and material execution of archaic Greek statue inscriptions made in the introduction. The dedication of Nikandre serves as a case study for refining the definition of “layout” and for identifying the principles of letter arrangement in the archaic Greek writing system. In particular, Dietrich highlights the apparent disregard for accurate planning and executing of the writing with regard to position, framing, length, word division, and metrical structure, arguing that archaic inscriptions were not primarily conceived and executed *qua* texts, but as two-dimensional strips of letters that were attached to their carriers following the logic of architectural decoration, i.e., as “letter friezes” (*Buchstabenfrieze*). This indifference toward the semantic and phonetic aspects of the inscriptions as well as the subordination of the inscriptions to their material carriers, as convincingly argued by Dietrich, show that the materiality of inscriptions must be taken into account when addressing issues regarding the perception of inscribed monuments, thus considering separately their impact on the viewers and their meaning. Of interest, but not original in literature, are Dietrich’s observations on the possible role played by inscriptions in the production process of inscribed monuments. The fact that inscriptions do not appear to alter the conception and planning of the monument is tentatively interpreted as evidence that the carving of the inscription belonged to the final step of the process, when the monument was transported to its final destination and erected. The important implications of this statement for the study of the production, circulation, and reception of marble sculptures in the archaic period, however, are only partially outlined and not appropriately supported by sculptural evidence (see below the case of the Sombrotidas’ kouros; these themes have been extensively investigated in G. Adornato, ed., *Scolpire il marmo. Importazioni, artisti itineranti, scuole artistiche nel Mediterraneo antico*, Milano 2010, not mentioned in the bibliography).

In the fourth chapter the three authors sketch a diachronic perspective on Greek statue inscriptions by presenting three case studies (of three different periods and of three different contexts), in order to emphasize the identified peculiarities of Greek archaic and early classical inscriptions by contrast with later Greek writing practice. Through the example of the late-fifth-century BC funerary relief of Ampharete from the Athenian Kerameikos, the authors describe a major change in classical tomb reliefs with regard to the inscriptions

position and layout. In particular, by placing the inscriptions above the images and by visually orienting the names to the figures, classical reliefs introduce new formal strategies to establish and enhance interaction between text and image. The layout of the epigrams on the Hellenistic monument of Daochos at Delphi serves as a contrast to the archaic and early classical statue bases characterized by “decorative unfinishedness”, showing that over time the inscriptions lost their strict relationship with the materiality of the writing surface and were, instead, oriented to the sculptures to which they refer (in this perspective, a thorough investigation of the epigrams with many deities on this long base would have been a significant contribution to this interpretation). The monument for Diomedes in the Amphiareion at Oropos provides further ground for identifying the archaic and early classical layout principles by comparison with later practices. Along with the distancing of the writing from the block’s edge, the respect of the line breaks, the center alignment of the lines, the formal distinction of the text according to its information content, the authors identify a major and most consequential difference in the new status that is attributed to the image by the inscriptions, whose materiality documents a shift of focus from the sculpted monument as a whole to its representational content.

The Conclusion summarizes the content of the chapters, providing a reading line for the structure of the volume as well as a discussion of its aims and possible limits. Acknowledging the risk of shifting from an exclusively content-focused approach to a likewise limited “illiterate” approach, the authors conveniently contextualize their research scope and add some final remarks regarding the issues of reading the inscriptions, which is a recurring, although not central, theme throughout the volume. The main argument of the authors that inscriptions must be considered also as part of the visual culture of Greek sculpture is certainly convincing and capable of being fruitfully developed in future research. An English translation of the conclusion chapter is provided at the end of the volume.

In a volume entitled to the materiality of inscriptions and despite the sound theoretical and methodological approach outlined in the introduction, however, the absence of relevant material information comes somewhat unexpected.

In order to better understand the materiality of the textual culture, it would be more fruitful to extend the investigation and consider the *medium* on which the inscription has been carved. The majority of the examples here analyzed are made by marble: no details are provided in the entries on the quality of marble used for the sculpture and/or the base. This aspect is of primary importance in

order to reconstruct the sculpting process in the workshop and the final display of the statue: it includes issues related to the provenance of the (Parian, Naxian, Thasian, Pentelic) marble, the sculptor, the letter-cutter, the reader. During the Archaic period, most of the marble statues are imported from the Cycladic islands, implying that the sculptor was trained to work on that specific stone; what about the skills and competence of the letter-cutter? In the case of the Sombrotidas' kouros from Megara Hyblaea (Siracusa, Museo Archeologico Regionale "P. Orsi", inv. no. 49401, not mentioned in this study), we know that the Naxian marble (from Melanes) statue was imported to Sicily and the inscription was later carved on the right leg by a letter-cutter who used the local (Megarian) alphabet. This detail enriches the material perspective of the *iconotext*, as writing and reading in the Archaic Mediterranean are strictly connected to the materiality of inscriptions.

In this context, the case of the "signature" of the sculptor, which is usually in the alphabet of his provenance despite the dedication is in the alphabet of the agent, represents a further field of material information: the position of the signature and the difference of alphabets used to distinguish the two sets of information are remarkable in the perspective outlined by the Authors. This theme has been extensively investigated by A. Dimartino, *Artisti itineranti: l'evidenza epigrafica* (in G. Adornato, ed., *Scolpire il marmo...*, 9-40), a contribution not quoted in the book. In this frame, the combination of material evidence, epigraphy, and literary sources allowed us to reject the hypothesis that the sculptor Endoios came to Athens from Asia Minor to work for Ionian clients: on the inscriptions no Ionian letters, like long vowels, are detectable and literary sources link Endoios to Athens (*genos Athenaios*), even he worked at Ephesos and Erythrai (G. Adornato, *Bildhauerschulen: un approccio*, in G. Adornato, ed., *Scolpire il marmo...*).

The book's focus is on marble statuary and this is understandable considering the need to narrow a vast topic of investigation by addressing selected case studies. However, the exclusion of bronze statues and statuettes, at least as comparison when the general principles of Greek writing culture are stated, is apparently without methodological reasons. Mantiklos' dedication (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 015) and Kidos' statuette (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 7403), for instance, offer striking examples of the materiality and decorative use of inscription on the thighs of the kouros-type bronze in the first case and on the chest, stomach, leg in the second one. Here, letters and anatomy are interconnected and visually sympathetic. The conceptual and visual relevance of the legs as a place of display of the inscriptions is attested not only in colossal statuary examples, such as the

Isches kouros, but also in literary sources, as in a well-known passage of *Od.* 18, 67-8, mentioning the beautiful and great thighs of Odysseus.

Regarding the layout of the inscription, no attention has been paid to two further material details: the letters' height and the location of the inscription itself.

The entries at the end of chapters 1 (97-102) and 2 (140-145) do not provide measurements of the letters' height and, consequently, it is not easy to determine accessibility and readability of the inscription on the base or on the statue. The only exception is the fragment of a base mentioning a sculptor from Chios, Abb.2.7. A student or unexpert reader of this volume might suppose that the letters' height on the Phrasikleia base is of the same height, as that on the dedicatory inscription on the block of the Athenian Stoa in Delphi.

Materiality of inscription must include information regarding the location of the inscription: on Kleobis' and Biton's bases (not included in the volume) and on the Kyniskos' one (Abb. 0.2), the inscriptions run on the upper surface of the base and are not immediately visible to the ancient and modern visitor (the modern display in the museums allows visitors to look at the monument): this typology has not been included and investigated, the authors are more interested in the frontal display and visualization of the inscription. A fruitful approach to materiality of inscription is the performative dimension of the monument and the directionality: the ancient (and modern) viewer/reader/visitor is invited to look around the statue and the monument, to discover inscriptions carved on the sides of a statue (as in the case of Nikandre or Chares, see below) or on top of a base (like the monument to Kyniskos), to come closer to the *mnema* in order to read the small letters.

From a typological point of view, it is not clear the choice of the monuments here investigated: chapter 1 deals with funerary monuments for the Archaic period, avoiding to include or, at least, to touch the coeval votive offerings; chapter 2 is dedicated to Late Archaic and Early Classical votive monuments. The diachronic organization of the chapters, using two different sets of evidence, does not allow the reader to evaluate similarities and differences in the writing practice among coeval funerary and votive monuments: a beginner might suppose that during the Archaic period there is no evidence of votive offerings.

Significant votive offerings from the Early Archaic period are totally excluded from the investigation, such as the colossal Apollo dedicated by the Naxians at Delos, whose inscription reads "I am of the same stone, both statue and base (*sphelas*)", a strong visual and conceptual link between the two parts of the dedi-

cation, or the fragment of a Naxian kouros with a belt carved by a boustrophedon inscription on four lines (*ID 3*), a truly unique and rare case of materiality.

The inclusion of monuments such as the inscribed statues of the Branchydai from Didyma would have enriched and supported some conclusive remarks, as the ornamental and performative functions of the inscription. Looking at the seated statue of Chares from Teichioussa (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1859,1226.5), we can appreciate the statue not only from a frontal point of view, but also the side, since the carving of the letters runs around the right angle of the chair's arm. On the enthroned statue signed by Eudemos (London, British Museum, inv. no. 1859,1226.6), the inscription runs on the left arm-rest. Thanks to this peculiar solution, the carving of the inscription on the marble chair imitates the wooden (or ivory) decoration of the furniture. A similar, decorative position is on the seated female figure – the inscribed name of Phileia is followed by the signature of Geneleos –, dedicated in the Heraion at Samos (only Ornithe inscription is briefly discussed). The omission of this typology represents a serious obstacle in defining a wider frame in a synchronic and diachronic perspective, and in identifying patterns and practices of writing in the Mediterranean area. The geography of inscriptions is (almost) limited to examples from Athens and Attica: no comparanda are provided from other Greek *poleis* and archaeological contexts, like the panhellenic sanctuaries (the title of the subproject A10 includes Olympia, for instance): exceptions are Nikandre, the Geneleos group, the Cheramyas kore, the Kyniskos' base, the Daochos group, and Diomedes' monument.

The bibliography is wide, but not complete; minor typos were detected throughout the text.

We hope further investigation on this topic not only in a diachronic extension of this field of research, as stated at the end of the volume, but also in a more comprehensive geo-artistic perspective, focused on all the *material* aspects of the textual culture.

Gianfranco Adornato
Scuola Normale Superiore
E-Mail: gianfranco.adornato@sns.it

Gabriella Cirucci
University of Copenhagen, SAXO Institute
E-Mail: gabriella.cirucci@hum.ku.dk