Archaic Cretan Inscriptions: Texts or Things?

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## 1. Introduction: Classics and its problem with Things[1]

1   This edition of *Gaia* commemorates the contribution made to Archaic Greek Epigraphy by the publication of *Nomima* thirty years ago.[2] This volume has rightly been celebrated for its major contribution to our understanding of Greek law in the Archaic period: it brought together all epigraphically known legal inscriptions in a form convenient for historians to use. Many of these inscriptions come from Crete, an island with more than its fair share of Archaic legal texts (Figure 1). One of the two authors of *Nomima*—Henri van Effenterre—was as much an archaeologist as he was a classical scholar; he was used to dealing with both material and textual evidence. His formative archaeological experience was his involvement in the excavation of the ancient city of Dreros, one of the better known of the ancient cities on Crete.[3] And it is this aspect of van Effenterre's "scholarly personality" that I want to concentrate on here—the relationship not only between two different kinds of evidence (textual and material) but also between two very different approaches, one (archaeological) conceived primarily about things (and their contexts), and another (historical/ philological) conceived primarily around texts.

Figure 1. – Map of Crete, showing principal ancient cities.
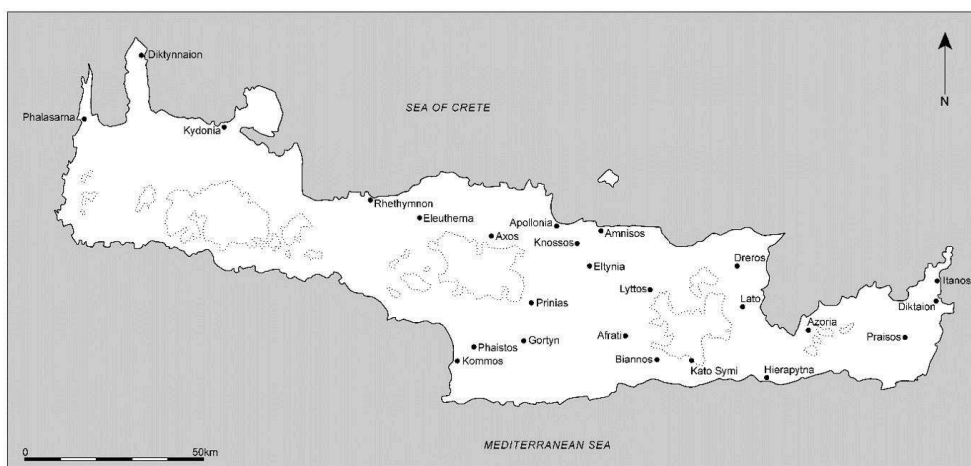
Prepared by Kirsty Harding.

2   Inscriptions however fall somewhere in between: inscriptions are both things and texts; they are both archaeological and textual. What a text says is bound by its materiality. The implications of this fact are several. For one thing inscriptions are bound by their setting and their occasion in a way that is not true for (say) a text that is written on papyrus and can be endlessly copied.[4] It is this double aspect of inscriptions I want to explore. My paper however seems to run rather against the grain of the CIEGL (*Congressus Internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae*) conference where this session took place. For in Bordeaux in August–September 2022 we heard much about inscriptions as texts but very little about inscriptions as things: speaker after speaker re-iterated the point (in Italian, French and German) that we (but who is this we?) need new and comprehensive publications with accurate transcriptions of all known inscriptions (and especially newly discovered ones), transcriptions which focus primarily of what the text *says*—that is, the *historical* information that they provide. Keynote speakers emphasised again and again that notice of new discoveries needs to be given promptly in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*). These scholars went on to emphasise that further editions of *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*), whether these new volumes cover new regions that have hitherto been little explored, or provide comprehensive and updated coverage of well-known regions (such as Attica), all should continue to be published both in large folio volumes and in Latin.[5] They were equally insistent that the current vogue for the study of "epigraphic habits" should be left to one side.[6]

3   That inscriptions also possess their own materiality was either dismissed or ignored. There was little or no discussion in the plenary papers of the prominently archaeological aspects of inscriptions: whether or not they are written on varieties of stone (limestone or marble mostly, but occasionally highly unsuitable material such as trachyte), bronze, or pottery; the fact that, in the Greek speaking Mediterranean at least, some artefacts (helmets, loomweights, cups) are frequently inscribed, whereas others (fibulae) only very rarely.[7] This material dimension of the epigraphic record was hardly discussed by scholars dealing with Greek material. The same was not quite true of discussions of Latin inscriptions—there were some excellent contributions by some of our Spanish colleagues who clearly understand that inscriptions require an approach

that is (simultaneously) philological, historical and archaeological (and so contextual in the full sense of this term).

4   There were of course some keynote speakers at the CIEGL conference who did acknowledge that some scholars have, in the past, taken a slightly different view— various allusions were made to Louis Robert's insistence that both the material form and the architectural (or archaeological) context of inscriptions are important, and for that reason images or photographs of inscriptions need to be published alongside transcriptions of the text. Louis Robert himself certainly practised what he preached.[8] Many French epigraphers in the 1930s (judging by their contributions to the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*)—including of course Henri van Effenterre—did as Robert did and provided illustrations of the inscriptions they published. This French example was not however universally followed in this period. The major German or Dutch based corpora—those that go by the abbreviations *Syll*[3] (*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, third edition), *SEG* or *IG* had however, by the 1930s turned away from illustration. Like references to sex in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, any reference in *IG* to archaeological context or to the type of materials used was confined to the decent obscurity of an (often invented) Latin term. For the editors of these volumes, inscriptions were texts but not (in any important sense) things.

5   It is, to me, to labour the obvious to state that inscriptions are both things and texts: an inscription is, by definition, a text inscribed on a surface of a pot, on a stone prepared by a mason or on a piece of bronze fashioned by a bronze-smith. Inscriptions are integrated text/thing hybrids, in other words. The earliest epigraphic studies acknowledged this fact, with handsome drawings showing what inscriptions actually looked like.[9] In the latter part of the nineteenth and the earlier part of the twentieth century however illustrations have gradually been sidelined. The conventions that now govern most of the ways in which inscriptions are published—in *Inscriptiones Graecae* and the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*—treat inscriptions as largely if not entirely textual—what they *say* is much more important than how they appear to us, where they were set up or where they are now to be found. In brief inscriptions have been treated primarily as texts, and only secondarily as things. Why is this so?

6   There are, I would suggest, two closely related reasons for this trend. First epigraphy is regarded primarily as a part (as a sub-discipline) of Classics, and Classics is fundamentally a text-centred (that is a logocentric) discipline, whose scholarly conventions were established in the late 19th century. To practise "the Classics" one has first to master the ancient languages, and then the literature written in these languages.[10] This has more widespread effects on the structure of thought within this particular *Wissenschaft* than one might think. One of these effects is how we frame our questions. The widespread popularity of the implausible idea that there was only one Greek alphabetic script, and that this "alphabet" was "invented" specifically to write down Epic poetry[11] is partly due to this logocentrism (in Derrida's sense) [12], a logocentrism that seeks the origins of script in speech: a good script is one that transcribes speech as accurately as possible. This hypothesis, for one thing, ignores a central fact about Greek archaic scripts: there was not one Greek alphabet, but at least four.[13]

7   The second related reason is that Classics is not a discipline that is comfortable discussing "theory". Courses on the history of thought in Classics, reflection on the underlying assumptions that create the space within which "Classics" can function *as a*

discipline are not commonly to be found on university curricula in either Classics or Ancient History (in most anglophone countries at least). Though most scholars know that the discipline of Classics took shape in the 19th century, and that its conventions were largely determined by German scholars, there is little sense that Classics has an underlying set of theoretical assumptions (assumptions which moreover might help to explain the peculiar conventions and divisions of scholarly labour within the field). There is little sense of Classics having a "paradigm" in Kuhn's sense or being part of a wider *episteme* in Foucault's.[14]

8   Archaeology (at least in English-speaking countries) is quite different in this regard. Instruction in the history of the discipline and in the theories that underlie it remain core to the curricula of all archaeology degree schemes in the United Kingdom and are explicitly set out in discipline-wide "Quality Assurance" (QAA) statements (and are, equally conspicuously, lacking in QAA statements for Classics and Ancient History).[15] There are moreover a whole series of well-established textbooks introducing archaeology students both to the history of the discipline and to the difficult topic of "theory".[16] There is absolutely no equivalent in Classics for any of these archaeological textbooks in any UK department that I know of.[17]

9   For these reasons there is a curious split within *Classics* about inscriptions. If asked "are inscriptions things or texts" the reply from epigraphers is often "inscriptions are both things and texts—we get it" (Sitz, pers. comm.). What is rarely if ever addressed is the logical follow-up question—if inscriptions are both things and texts (text/object hybrids) what precisely does this entail? How should we then approach them? The default answer (see above) is, of course, *as texts.* Yet this assumption (that inscriptions are primarily or essentially texts) has often led scholars to neglect what early inscriptions were written on—as Antonis Kotsonas has put it, it leads to the notion of a weightless and material-free understanding of what early alphabetic literacy might have entailed.[18]

10   Within Classics however, epigraphers who are also archaeologists have sometimes criticised this central idea—that inscriptions are primarily texts and should be published as such. As Lilian Jeffery famously remarked:

> Where archaic inscriptions are concerned, epigraphy is a branch of archaeology;
> the letters are written on objects of various type and material, and inscription and
> object must be considered in relation to each other.[19]

11   There seems to be something of a "Cretan exception" to this general scholarly consensus that inscriptions are primarily texts. Margarita Guarducci famously illustrated all her inscriptions in *Inscriptiones Creticae* and gave some indication of their context.[20] More recently, Paula Perlman has stated that "an inscription is not only a text but an artifact. To ignore its archaeological context is to deny the opportunity of asking a range of important questions that bear directly on the interpretation of a text".[21]

12   In the past decade or so several scholars have undertaken a more wide-ranging critique of the philological assumptions behind our understanding of inscriptions: both of the way they are published and of the way they are used in scholarship.[22] These critiques emphasise the materiality of early inscriptions. This paper is a continuation of this critique. I want to treat three well-known inscriptions from three major cities of Archaic to Classical Crete primarily as *things*, as examples of material culture. If inscriptions are a part of Archaic Greek material culture, then the theories we use to

understand material culture (i.e. various forms of archaeological theory) can also be used in their explication. In this paper I will be invoking notion of an "object biography",[23] as well as invoking (from time to time) Hodder's notion of "human-thing entanglement".[24] The term "biography" of course implies that, when discussing inscriptions, we are not only dealing with a thing but a person—or at least some-thing that has a social life. Being archaeological my approach is (of course) also *contextual*: not only is archaeological context important, but with inscriptions we must always strive to determine not only their *Fundort* (where archaeologists have found them) but also their *Standort* (their original position and architectural context). In Crete the latter is, more often than not, religious.

13   And these "lives" come to an end. I will discuss my three examples not merely as things but as persons,[25] as if I were writing their obituary. I will start with the earliest inscription, and the earliest "death".

2. Dreros

14   The Cretan city of Dreros boasts the earliest known Greek legal inscription (Figure 2),[26] now housed in the small *syllogos* of the small town of Neapolis, some 2 km from where it was originally discovered. It was found with several other laws which (it is thought) were displayed in the small *agora* of the Archaic to Hellenistic polis,[27] close to if not in the temple of Apollo Pythios.[28] It is well known, widely published and frequently discussed in histories of Archaic Greece.[29] The text is written *boustrophedon* (as the ox ploughs). As a text it reads:

θιός ολοιον. ᾶδ' εϝαδε πολιˑ ἐπεί κα κοσμήσει, δέκα ϝετίον τον ἀ-
ϝτὸν μὴ κόσμεν. αἰ δὲ κοσμησίε, ὁ[π]ε δικακσίε, ἀϝτὸν ὀπῆλεν διπλεῖ κἀϝτὸν
ἄκρηστον ἦμεν, ἆς δόοι, κὄτι κοσμησίε μηδὲν ἤμην. Vacat
ὁμόται δὲ κόσμος κοἰ δάμιοι κοἰ ἴκατι οἰ τᾶς πόλ[ιο]ς vacat.

Rough translation:

> May God be kind [?] The city [*polis*] thus decided. When a man has been
> *kosmos*, the same man may not be *kosmos* again for ten years. If he does act as
> *kosmos*, whatever judgments he gives, he shall owe double, and he shall lose
> his rights to office, as long as he lives, and whatever he does as
> *kosmos* shall be nothing [void]. The swearers shall be the *kosmos* and the
> *damioi* [people's representatives] and the twenty of the city.

Figure 2. – The Dreros Law on the term of office of the *kosmos*.

15   Its significance for Archaic Greek history is well established. It is the first Greek law that we know of—the earliest to be epigraphically attested (unlike the fragment of Drakon's law on homicide, which was re-inscribed at a much later date). It fits into several metanarratives, chiefly that of the rise of the polis. It seems to be designed to prevent any one man from accumulating power by acting as chief magistrate (*kosmos*) for several successive terms—and can thus be seen as a mechanism against tyranny. It testifies to the establishment of the *polis* as a political community based on power sharing and republican principles. Writing is here clearly being used in the service of the state (if we allow that such a small political community could be a state). It also provides evidence that early Greek law was primarily *procedural*—an early sign of the republican (and so proto-democratic) interest in "due process".[30] It is with these issues that van Effenterre and Ruzé are primarily concerned.

16   Not everyone accepts this standard interpretation. Gunnar Seelentag disagrees. There is now a debate about whether we should read this as a written law dictating the limits to the term of office of the *kosmos* or as an oath taken by the new *kosmoi* on taking up their office. Seelentag argues that another inscription that seems to be part of the same set (the oath of the ephebes) was not simply text to be read but was one to be read *out*—a prompt to speech.[31] He does not make an explicit argument to this effect for our inscription but rather suggests that the post of *kosmos* was much closer to that of a Homeric/Hesiodic *basileus* than earlier readings of the text have implied;[32] the *kosmos* was less a magistrate, more a Melanesian style or "Homeric" "big man".[33]

17   Seelentag's arguments are a reminder that this text is not alone. It is one of at least seven legal inscriptions of Archaic date (circa 640 BC), inscribed on hard local limestone and found in a nearby cistern of Hellenistic date.[34] We cannot be absolutely certain about the original setting (*Standort*) of this inscription. That it was found (its *Fundort*) in

a cistern in the agora, close to the small temple of Apollo Pythios,[35] suggests that its original setting was nearby and that it was closely associated both with cult and with the public sphere of the agora—that it was a law publicly displayed. Perlman argues that all these laws were incorporated in the walls of the temple of Apollo overlooking the agora—that they were part of the fabric of the building, and therefore of the civic, religious and political life of the polis.[36]

18   The Dreros laws were then part of both a sacred and civic space. This affects how we interpret them as texts. I want to pause for a minute to think about whether Seelentag is right to think that this was an oath to be read out rather than just a law to be displayed. If it was read out annually—by the *kosmos* on taking up his office (or read out for them by the city's "*mnamon* and *poinikastas*")[37] then the inscription is not an inert thing but "speaks" at least once a year. In speaking once a year it takes on some of the properties of a person—so more like Phrasikleia,[38] and less like the inert object I have sometimes argued for in the past. That the law continued to be publicly displayed and remained in force (whether as law, or as oath) implies that its "personhood" was renewed every year.

19   Or at least it did so until the political community of Dreros came to an end. When did this happen? There is no direct record in any literary text, though the absence of Dreros from Eumenes of Pergamon's treaty of 183 BC with most of the known Cretan poleis has always caused suspicion.[39] A recently discovered Hellenistic inscription from Lyktos explicitly states that "Lyttos seized Dreros" (see Table 1) and thereby brought Dreros, as a political community, to an end as a political community.[40] This probably took place soon after 200 BC or thereabouts. In their eradication of the political community of the Drerians the Lyktian aggressors specifically targeted these laws. They were found at the bottom of a Hellenistic cistern in a manner that recalls the "clearing out" of votives in a sanctuary and their deposition in wells.[41] Gaignerot-Driessen emphasises the ritual dimension of this destruction—a true example of κατασκαφή.[42]

Table 1. – Sequence of actual and attempted destructions of settlements and *poleis* from the late 4th to 2nd century BCE in Crete.

Date BCE	Polis attacked/ destroyed	Polis attacking/ destroying	Source	Key Greek phrases	End of political community? Yes/No
221/220	Lyktos/Lyttos	Knossos	Polybius 4.53–4	τὴν δε πόλιν ἐμπρήσαντες καὶ κατασκάψαντες καὶ λωβήσαμενοι	No
Circa 200 (or before 183)	Dreros	Lyktos/ Lyttos	Archaeological (Gell, 1998), and Epigraphic *SEG* LXI 722, lines 9–10; for background, see *ICr* I.9.1.	οἱ Λύττιοι τὰν Δρῆρον ἧλαν	Yes
After 185	Lykastos	Knossos	Strabo X, 4, 14		Yes (but Lykastos not fully independent polis)
171/170	Apellonia/Apollonia	Kydonia	Polybius 28.14		Yes
Between 171 and 150	Rhaukos	Knossos and Gortyn	Polybius 30.23.1		Yes
Circa 150	Phaistos	Gortyn	Strabo X, 4, 14	Κατέσκαψαν Γορτυνίοι	Yes
145–140	Praisos	Hierapytna	Strabo X, 4, 12	Κατέσκαψαν δ' Ἱεραπύτνιοι	Yes

20   The obliteration of Dreros is one of several known destructions that took place between the late 3rd century BC to the middle of the 2nd. Such destructions have a particular archaeological signature—sanctuaries were targeted, their laws cast down and houses were abandoned (with the household pithos ostentatiously left behind in distinct abandonment horizons).[43] These destructions then were intended to bring political communities to an end—and in this they succeeded. In so doing they radically reduced the number of Cretan Hellenistic poleis.

3. Praisos

21   Praisos was the principal city of the Sitia peninsula in the far East of Crete.[44] That the effective destruction of a political community has both ritual and material dimensions is perhaps clearer in the case of this *polis* than it is in the case of Dreros. Praisos was destroyed by its neighbour Hierapytna between 145 and 140 BC—that is between the death of Ptolemy Philometor (145 BC)[45] in Egypt and the consulship of C. Laelius (140 BC)[46] in Rome.[47] Our principal source Strabo uses the phrase κατέσκαψαν δ' Ἱεραπύτνιοι.[48] As in the case of Dreros this entailed the destruction of the principal sanctuary of the city, the open-air altar on the Third Acropolis/Altar Hill, where the city's laws and treaties were set up.

22   In this paper I will just deal with the earliest of these laws, found by Comparetti and Halbherr in the 1880s.[49] This we unfortunately cannot read as it is written not in Greek but in "Eteocretan"; Greek letters (or a modified form of them)[50] are used to write in a language that has so far escaped decipherment (Figure 3).[51] The context of the find however suggests that, like the Dreros example, it is a law (and not a treaty, and certainly not a gravestone). It was found below the Third Acropolis to the Southwest,[52]

where it was presumed to have been cast down by the Hierapytnans (the early excavators were unequivocal on this point—see below).

Figure 3. – The Eteocretan (legal) inscription from Praisos.

23   How and when was it first set up? The only dating evidence we have are the letter forms, which put it at "circa 500 BCE".[53] Halbherr and Bosanquet presumed that it was to be associated with the sanctuary on the Third Acropolis or Altar Hill.[54] This open-air sanctuary had a parapet decorated with some quite striking terracottas—a lion and a "kouros" both in a Late Archaic style that seems to be contemporary with (or a little earlier than) the inferred date of this inscription. This sanctuary had no temple—it was "hypaethral", consisting of an altar with its parapet. The law then was integral to this Late Archaic refurbishment of a cult place that seemed to have been in operation since the 8th century BCE. Later refurbishments of the parapet (where we think the laws were set up to be displayed) included a classical or Hellenistic pilaster found by Davaras.[55] Despite linguistic differences the use of this law seems to have been similar to that of the one at Dreros (an argument made largely on archaeological grounds). In the cases of both Praisos and Dreros the "life" of the object—the law—is bound up with the life of the political community which the law served.

24   There is one area of divergence between the lives of these two inscriptions however: all the other laws associated with the cistern deposit in Dreros are (more or less) contemporary. Other Classical and Hellenistic inscriptions from Dreros have been found elsewhere. At Praisos however later inscriptions seem to have been added to the parapet around the Altar Hill. At first these seem to have been more laws, but from the 4th century onwards it is treaties rather than laws that prevail. This change is island wide. All three of our inscriptions belong to that period of law-inscribing on stone associated with the Archaic period—which in Crete means 650 to 400 BCE.[56] At Praisos

other inscriptions must have crowded out the earlier, Eteocretan law—which must have taken on, to some extent, the status of an antiquarian relic by the time the city was destroyed, since all inscriptions later than the 4th century are in Greek rather than Eteocretan.

25   The Hierapytnans destroyed both the sanctuary on the Altar Hill and the laws, which had been cast down to the NW and SW of this "Third Acropolis". Bosanquet is eloquent here:[57]

> the Hierapytnians [...] had made a clean sweep of any buildings that stood within the temenos wall [...] there can no longer be any doubt that they [the architectural members] and the inscribed stelai were deliberately broken and thrown over the cliffs [...].

26   They also seemed to have forced the population of the settlement to leave.[58] Going by the precedents of Apellonia and Phaistos (which happened a little earlier) this forced abandonment led to the loss of the "household pithos" as well as the more obvious signs of the civic life of the polis.[59] In practical terms, judging again by the precedent set by the Kydonia's sack of Apellonia, it required the enslavement of the free women and children and the slaughter of all the male citizens. The overall effect was radically to reduce the number of autonomous Cretan *poleis* in the century before the Roman conquest in 67 BC.

4. Gortys/Gortyn

27   Gortys is an obvious exception here. This is not only because it was a much more considerable city (and political community) than either Dreros or Praisos,[60] or because Gortyn, like Knossos,[61] was often the aggressor in the many wars and destructions of 2nd century BC Crete. Unlike Lyktos, Dreros and Praisos, Gortyn was never sacked and shrewdly took the side of Rome when Metellus first invaded the island.

28   These facts in part explain how differently the Gortyn Law Code was treated.[62] This law —the longest legal text known from the ancient world—survives almost complete[63] (Figure 4) as it was later incorporated into a later Roman Odeion which dates to the reign of Trajan.[64]

29   But to undertake a biography one has to start from the beginning. The law itself springs from a long Gortynian and Central Cretan tradition of inscribing laws in public places.[65] Earlier inscriptions had been placed, like those from Praisos and Dreros, within sanctuaries—there are a series of 6th century laws inscribed on the walls of the temple of Apollo Pythios.[66] The Gortyn Law Code itself however was so extensive that it required the construction of a separate semi-circular structure both to contain and display the laws.[67] The blocks are not flat but curved and placing each block in place must have taken some degree of mathematical sophistication (not unlike that required to build the Parthenon). This mathematical and engineering complexity was compounded by the fact that the Code is written in columns and written *boustrophedon*. The actual text seems to have been inscribed after the blocks were put in place, as in several places (notably in columns X and XI) the text runs over two blocks.

30   The Gortyn Code is also distinct in that its monumentality has not escaped the notice of its principal interpreters. Both Guarducci and Willetts deal with the Code as much as a monument as a text.[68] Here there arises a paradox—or a tension between its materiality and its textuality. Many historians have commented that the Code is less of a complete

Code—that is a definitive and final codification of the laws of Gortyn—than its monumental form would immediately suggest.[69] It contains inconsistencies and is in some respects (in a purely legal sense) provisional. Van Effenterre and Ruzé (1995) treat the provisions of the Code in piecemeal fashion,[70] according to theme: parts of it relate to divorce,[71] other parts to the role and rights of a widow,[72] or to provisions relating to inheritance.[73] Often related themes are to be found in very different parts of the Code itself. It is then by no means the *Code Napoléon* of ancient Gortyn.[74]

31 I have always argued that this matters much less than many historians might think.[75] The Code's monumentality was part of its point. It was there to present the majesty of the Law to a population where only a minority—probably the full citizens, rather than the lower strata (slaves, serfs and *apetairoi*)—were literate. It is not easy to read its individual provisions but it, like Trajan's column, it is plain to everyone what it *means.* It is the visible and concrete expression of the Law, and so of the built-in inequalities of the citizen-state of Gortyn.

32 We do not however know where it was set up, or where the original structure which contained the law was to be found. There are some indications that this original building might also have contained at least one supplementary law.[76] If the Code was in or close to a major sanctuary (following local and Cretan precedent) it is not one we have yet identified—it is unlikely to have been put up in the sanctuary on the Acropolis above,[77] nor by the temple of Apollo Pythios[78]. Wherever it was placed one presumes that it remained in force throughout the period of Gortyn's independence. Some scholars have argued that at some point it was incorporated in a late Classical and Hellenistic bouleuterion close to where the Code is now placed.[79] Presumably in Hellenistic times its provisions—written in Archaic Cretan script and in an Archaic Doric dialect—could still be read and understood. If not as a complete Code, it still had the force of law.

33 The question then arises—to what extent was Gortyn's autonomy compromised by Roman rule? The Gortynians had allied themselves with the Romans, and so were allowed a degree of autonomy not enjoyed by other Cretan cities.[80] They may also have benefited from Gortyn being established as the capital of the united province of Crete and Cyrene. How could such a set of laws remain in force for a political community that was not only subject to Rome but also functioned as the provincial capital? The period to which this question is most pertinent is that between the conquest in 67 BC and the Code's incorporation in the Odeion after 98 AD.[81] There were, after all, physical constraints. Its incorporation into the Trajanic Odeion must have required it to be dismantled and then re-erected, forming part of the sub-structure in the gallery below (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. – Part of the Gortyn Law Code.

Photo author.

Figure 5. – The setting of the Great Code in the Odeion of Gortyn.

34   This affects how we interpret its incorporation into the Odeion. Was this an acknowledgement of the continued force of its provisions? Or an act of antiquarianism, a reminder of past glories as a political community? Tzamtzis argues that much of the provisions of the Code remained in force at least down to 235 AD (that is down to the

death of Alexander Severus, which for him marks the end of the Principate).[82] Tzamtzis further argues that the continued force of the law was partly due to the similarity to the oligarchic constitutions of Gortyn and Rome—the two legal systems were closely compatible with one another.

35   It is less clear what happened thereafter. Gortyn continued to exist as both a Roman town and a centre for Roman administration down to the Arab conquest in 823 AD. By this time however Christianity had taken over the Roman empire. Gortyn was thereafter remembered for its Christian heritage—as the place where Titus, companion of Paul, died; and the site of the most important Cretan martyrdom, that of the "Holy Ten" who were put to death during the persecution of Decius in 251 AD. The physical survival of the Code was then no guarantee that it would be remembered. In the end it was not. What was remembered about Gortyn in subsequent centuries was its association with St Titus, not its Great Code. That it simply faded from view, rather than being ritually destroyed, seems to have had no ultimate effect on social memory.[83] As with the other two inscriptions, it is only thanks to modern scholarship—and archaeological and epigraphic investigation—that we are now able to write its "obituary".

5. Some conclusions

36   Crete has become, in recent years, one of the main proving grounds for "archaeological history". Since at least the turn of the millennium it has provided archaeologists with the opportunity to challenge Atheno-centric, Atheno-teleological and text-centred narratives about how Greek society, culture and politics developed in the Archaic period. Such Atheno-teleological narratives, of course, continue to appear.[84] The study of Archaic Crete is not then simply one of new discoveries,[85] but also one where scholars feel more able to provide counter-narratives to the tyranny of the text.[86] This has in part been enabled by a very different tradition of epigraphic study from the one that has dominated Athens and Attica.

37   There are signs that things are changing—there is increasing acknowledgement that the material dimensions of inscriptions matter. Some recent publications of inscriptions on the Greek mainland and in the Greek islands[87] acknowledge that inscriptions have a dual character, and that the text and the thing that the text is written on must be discussed together. Our understanding of the text informs our understanding of the materiality of the inscription, and the meaning of the genre of sculpture (whether this be a Classical marble lion from Thebes, archaic grave bases from Attica, or the famous marble votive dedicated by Nikandre on Delos) in which the inscription appears. Treating inscriptions as things moreover enables scholars to bring in theories from elsewhere (such as that of an object biography, or Gell's agency).[88] Public inscriptions like those in Dreros, Praisos and Gortyn were intimately tied up with the public life of the political communities which they served: they lived and died with the life of these communities. Bringing such inscriptions into the realm of a wider archaeological and anthropological debate about the agency of objects (as in Gell, 1998) enables us to see this more clearly.

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Note: I have not used the abbreviations recommended in *L'Année philologique* (where *IG* stands for something quite distinct from *Inscriptiones Graecae*, and there is no abbreviation at all for *Inscriptiones Creticae*) because these abbreviations seemed peculiarly ill-suited to an article that is mainly about inscriptions. Instead, I have used the abbreviations recommended by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition).

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Abbreviation

IC 1–4 = GUARDUCCI Margherita, *Inscriptiones Creticae Opera et Consilio Frederici Halbherr Collectae* I–IV, Rome, Libreria dello Stato, 1935–1950.

NOTES

1. Article based on a paper given at the session "L'épigraphie grecque archaïque au XXIᵉ siècle" organised by Olivier Mariaud (Grenoble) and Robin Osborne (Cambridge) for the conference "Bordeaux 2022: XVI Congressus Internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae".

2. Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1994, 1995).

3. Demargne & Van Effenterre (1937a, 1937b).

4. Osborne (2022).

5. Of course, these requirements, of prompt publication and publication in Latin, pull in different directions, as *IG* requires a sophisticated understanding of the (modern) Latin terms it uses. That these (highly technical) terms are often difficult to understand even for those with some Latin and more Greek—especially in relation to the actual objects inscribed—did not seem to concern many of the speakers in Bordeaux.

6. The study of regional differences on what gets inscribed, and in what materials—presumably referring to such articles as Whitley (1997).

7. Whitley (2021a, 2024a).

8. See Robert (1936, 197–9).

9. See Kirchoff (1877), Roehl (1907).

10. My view is that the gradual "textualization" of Classics was partly of a function of its professionalization, and this resulted in the hardening of disciplinary boundaries in the years after 1920 (first in German-speaking, and then in English speaking countries). This is not an argument however that can be pursued here. See Whitley (2024b).

11. As in Powell (1991).

12. Derrida (1976).

13. Something we have known since 1826: Kirchoff (1877), Sitz (2023).

14. Kuhn (1962), Foucault (1970).

15. The most recent QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) statements were both published simultaneously in March 2022. For Classics and Ancient History ("Subject Benchmark Statement", 2022b), see <www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/classics-and-ancient-history-(including-byzantine-studies-and-modern-greek)>; for Archaeology ("Subject Benchmark Statement", 2022a), see <www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/archaeology>.

16. Trigger (2006), Johnson (2019), Harris & Cipolla (2017).

17. Though there is now a course on "an introduction to literary theory" taught by Tim Whitmarsh in the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge given in the timetable for 2023–4:

<www.classics.cam.ac.uk/student-information> (accessed 7 June 2024). This does not, by definition, treat Classics as a discipline as a whole—but as a collection of disciplines with different "theories" for different parts of it.

18. Kotsonas (2022a).

19. Jeffery (1990, VII in preface).

20. Guarducci (1935, 1942, 1950).

21. Perlman (2004b, 181).

22. See Kotsonas (2022a), Whitley (2017, 2021a, 2021b).

23. Kopytoff (1986).

24. Hodder (2011).

25. Whitley (2021a).

26. Perlman (2004a, 1157–8).

27. Demargne & Van Effenterre (1937b).

28. Marinatos (1936).

29. Jeffery (1990, 315), Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 200–7), Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1994, 306–9).

30. Gagarin (1986, 81–97).

31. Seelentag (2009b).

32. Seelentag (2009a, 2015, 141–55).

33. Sahlins (1963).

34. Demargne & Van Effenterre (1937a, 27–31, 1937b).

35. Marinatos (1936).

36. Pearlman (2004b, 191–5).

37. Jeffery & Morpugo Davies (1970).

38. Svenbro (1993, 8–25).

39. *SIG*³ 627 = *IC* 4.179.

40. *SEG* LXI 722, lines 9–10; Kritzas (2011).

41. Demargne & Van Effenterre (1937a, 27–31, 1937b).

42. Gaignerot-Driessen (2013), Conor (1985); see also Whitley (2023a, 332–3).

43. Whitley (2011, 2023a).

44. Perlman (2004a, 1183–4).

45. *IC* 3.4.9, lines 42–4.

46. *IC* 3.4.10, lines 22–3.

47. Whitley (2023a, 323).

48. Strabon X, 4, 12.

49. Comparetti (1888), *IC* 3.6.1, Duhoux (1982, 138–9), Jeffery (1990, 316, fig. 2).

50. See Jeffery (1949).

51. Conway (1901–2, 1903–4), Duhoux (1982).

52. Though the precise location is not known, all laws and treaties from Praisos seem to have been "cast down" either to the Northwest or Southwest of the Altar Hill. For the latest discussion of context, see Whitley (2023a, 337–9).

53. Jeffery (1990, 316).

54. Halbherr (1901, 375–84), Bosanquet (1901–2, 254–9).

55. Davaras (1980).

56. Seelentag (2015).

57. Bosanquet (1909–10, 281).

58. Whitley (2011).

59. Whitley (2023a, 336–41).

60. Perlman (2004a, 1161–5).

61. Whitley (2023b, 161–2).

62. *IC* 4.72, Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 334–428), Willetts (1967), Jeffery (1990, 315), Osborne & Rhodes (2017, 132–47).

63. Most of the inscription remains in Gortyn, apart from one fragment in the Louvre and another in the Heraklion Museum. See Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 334–5).

64. Di Vita (2005).

65. Whitley (1997, 2005).

66. *IC* 4.1–40, Jeffery (1990, 315), Perlman (2004b, 182–8).

67. Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 334–5).

68. Garducci (1950, *IC* 4.72), Willetts (1967).

69. See Osborne & Rhodes (2017, 132–47).

70. Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1995).

71. Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1995, 110–15).

72. Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1995, 17–37).

73. Van Effenterre & Ruzé (1995, 159–63, 174–5).

74. Chabod (2022).

75. Whitley (1997), *contra* Willetts (1967).

76. *IC* 4.73, Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 428–30).

77. Rizza & Scrinari (1968).

78. Whose walls were inscribed with Archaic laws. See Perlman (2004b, 182–8), Gagarin & Perlman (2016, 265–90).

79. See Chabon (2022).

80. Notably Knossos, which had been the centre of Cretan resistance. Whitley (2023b, 162–3).

81. Di Vita (2005).

82. Tzamtzis (2020).

83. *Sensu* Assmann (2011).

84. See Billows (2023).

85. Kotsonas (2022b).

86. See Erickson (2023).

87. Dietrich (2020a, 2020b), Papazakardas (2022), Reinhardt (2020).

88. Gell (1998).

ABSTRACTS

Archaic Crete has recently received much attention from historians and epigraphers (Seelentag, 2015; Gagarin & Perlman, 2016). Both these works recognise that Cretan legal inscriptions are both things and texts: what matters is not only what the Greek words on the inscriptions say but also how and where they were set up (in or near sanctuaries, sometimes forming part of the fabric of temples) and what the words are written on (generally stone). This paper explores further the role of inscriptions as *things* and considers the "biography" (*sensu* Kopytoff, 1986) of three of them: the Dreros *kosmos* inscription (Gagarin & Perlman, 2016, 200–7); the Praisos Eteocretan inscription (*IC* 3.6.1); and the Gortyn Law Code itself (*IC* 4.72). In all cases the archaeological context matters. In both Praisos (Bosanquet, 1902) and Dreros (Gaignerot Driessen, 2013) the inscriptions were deliberately destroyed when their respective political communities were brought to an end in the 2nd century BCE—a fact which demonstrates their

symbolic importance for these two political communities. The Gortyn Law Code however was not destroyed but later incorporated into a Roman Odeion. This surely has implications for our understanding of social memory in ancient Crete.

La Crète archaïque a récemment reçu beaucoup d'attention de la part des historiens et épigraphes. Les ouvrages de Seelentag (2015) et de Gagarin et Perlman (2016) reconnaissent que les inscriptions juririques crétoises sont à la fois des objets et des textes : ce qui compte réellement, ce n'est pas seulement ce que disent les mots grecs sur les inscriptions mais aussi comment et où elles ont été placées (dans ou près des sanctuaires, parfois en faisant partie du tissu des temples) et sur quoi les mots sont écrits (généralement de la pierre). Cet article explore le rôle des inscriptions en tant qu'objets et examine la « biographie » de trois d'entre elles : l'inscription Dreros *kosmos*, l'inscription Praisos Eteocretan, et le code juridique de Gortyn. Dans tous les cas, le contexte archéologique est important. Tant à Praisos qu'à Dreros, les inscriptions ont été délibérément détruites lors de la fin de leurs communautés politiques respectives au IIe siècle av. J.-C., démontrant leur importance symbolique pour ces communautés politiques. Toutefois, le code juridique de Gortyn n'a pas été détruit mais incorporé plus tard dans un Odeion romain. Cela est certainement à prendre en compte pour notre compréhension de la mémoire sociale dans la Crète antique.

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