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# Studies

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

# ARCHAIC INSCRIBED VOTIVES ON THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS: DATING THE DEDICATIONS OF ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN

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**Abstract:** Sacred landscapes, like all landscapes in Greece, were subject to natural disasters; sometimes, however, Greeks could protect themselves and their buildings. N. Makris and his collaborators have explained in numerous publications how Greek architects and builders designed some of their temples in such a way that they were protected from destruction by earthquakes.[1] There were, however, other causes of ruin: the temple of Zeus at Nemea, for example, was destroyed by human looters. Unlike destruction due to some natural causes, protecting temples from human destruction could not so easily rely upon scientific ingenuity and experience. The destruction that the Persians wreaked upon the Acropolis of Athens in 480 BCE is perhaps the best known: it is well documented in the descriptive accounts of ancient historians (Herodotus, Thucydides and Diodorus Siculus) as well as in the archaeological evidence on the ground; the case for the totality of that destruction is accepted by most scholars today.

Here we focus, however, not on the destruction, but on the chance preservation of material objects in the Acropolis deposits; our interest lies broadly in the methods used for dating the oldest of these deposits, viz., the rubble left by the Persian devastation (often designated the *Perserschutt* in the last century); eventually, we shall be interested in identifying a method for dating the letters of inscribed texts amongst the oldest finds. The preliminary enterprise here is part of a larger project, the publication of a new edition of the archaic inscribed bronze dedications on the Athenian Acropolis.[2]

**Keywords:** *Athenian Acropolis, onomastic, social structure, Persian devastation, material culture.*

Identifying the Persian rubble and distinguishing that from later rubble (e.g., from the Periclean building program) has been a well-known and exciting problem for archaeologists—exciting, because any deposit of material objects that coalesced and became 'rubble' as a result of the Persian devastation would allow the dating of its contents to the period before the arrival of the Persians, i.e., before 480 BCE. Many deposits were in fact found on different sides of the Acropolis and so have been candidates for the title, *Perserschutt*; but the assignment of the title remained controversial for decades as the objects found in the separate deposits and subsequently studied and re-studied were discovered to be non-homogeneous; now,

[1] E.g., KONSTANTINIDIS/MAKRIS 2004; MAKRIS/VASSILIOU 2014; MAKRIS/KAMPAS 2016.
[2] See MAKRES/SCAFURO forthcoming.

**Fig. 1.** Kavvadias' excavation in 1886, NW of the Erechtheion (*Perserschutt*).

however, it is generally accepted that only one deposit can, with certainty, be assigned to the Persian phase of destruction. This deposit was located close to the northwest corner of the Erechtheion; it contained, among other finds, many of the celebrated Acropolis *korai* (**Fig. 1**). The objects were discovered in 1886 during the excavations conducted by Panayiotis Kavvadias who reports in the *Ephemeris Archaeologike* of 1886: "The most important finds in the excavation were those discovered at the beginning of the year and specifically on January 25th and 26th. That is, in the depth of 3 to 4.5 meters from the surface, and not far from the northwest corner of the Erechtheion, 14 archaic female statues were found, some larger than life size, some of natural size and some smaller than life size. These statues are preserved in relatively good condition and eight preserve their heads". Kavvadias, in the same essay of 1886 described the archaeological context of the Jan. 25th and 26th finds by saying: "All these statues were found opposite to the part of the fortification wall of the Acropolis that is constructed, as far as the part that looks inward into the Acropolis, with regular rectangular stones that are mixed with a variety of common stones, archaic inscriptions, architectural members, a column drum from the archaic temple of Athena Polias, and several stone bases, so that this entire body of debris reached a little more than the height of four courses of the wall and [sc. reached downwards] all the way to the level of the Acropolis rock." Kavvadias continued his description of the layers of the deposit and demonstrated beyond any doubt that this deposit represented an undisturbed Persian destruction layer (*Perserschutt*). While other Acropolis deposits discovered during Kevvadias' excavations, and also those discovered subsequently, have been proven to contain non-homogenous fills and therefore post-date 480, the dating of the deposit close to the northwest corner of the Erechtheion has remained firm.

This is, from the chronological point of view, precious attestation, since, as mentioned earlier, everything deriving from this deposit has the date 480 BCE as a *terminus ante quem*. The year 480 BCE, however, not only marks the date of the Persian invasion that led to the creation of the important layer that preserved archaic sculpture and a few inscriptions; it also marks a turning point in Greek history: the Persian devastation on the Acropolis would soon be followed by their defeat at Salamis (480, Herodotos 8.40-128) and by subsequent defeats at Plataea and Mycale (479, Herodotos 9.25-107). Persian defeat would lead to the creation of the Delian League and, along with the League, Athenian power would grow exponentially, and the city would become ever so much more democratic even as it would become harsher and tyrannical in the rule of its augmented empire (e.g, Thucydides 2.63.2-3; MATTINGLY 1964; SCAFURO 2014).

Aside from marking an important and obvious historical turning point in the evolution of empires, many scholars have argued that the Persian devastation of the Athenian Acropolis and the subsequent Greek defeat of the Persians also marks a turning point in the evolution of Greek art: is there a causal link? While the dating of the emergence of the Severe Style of sculpture, also known as the Early Classical Style, has been controversial for decades, a consensus developed in the late eighties and thereafter, based on detailed studies of style and findspots, that the

**Fig. 2.** The Kritios Boy (AkrM 698), Severe Style post 480 BCE.

Severe Style emerged in Athens *after* 480 BCE and not before. **Fig. 2** shows the Kritios Boy, an exemplar of the style, whether forerunner or frontrunner. Hurwit in his 1989 landmark study of the archeological context of the findspot of the statue and its artistic style concluded that the statue post-dated the Persian destruction by a few years and its transformative style owed nothing to the Persian defeat.[3] STEWART 2008, in a three part study, re-examined the Acropolis deposits, and took the argument much further: the Severe Style probably did not predate the Persian invasion of 480-479 BCE; similar results are found outside of the Acropolis—in Athens, Attica, and other cities; the famous Tyrannicides of Kritios and Nesiotes of 477/6 (dated by the Parian Marble) inaugurated the style. In the end, Stewart speculated that the Greek victories in 480-479 "somehow inspired it, at least in part" (2008, 581); the statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton celebrate a "new, militaristic, disciplined, almost puritanic ideal" and ushered in a new spirit for "the new style that satisfied everyone. . . the new Greek—like the Tyrannicides—was simply invincible" (2008, 610). Stewart's work was exciting and won many followers. Recently, however, an opposing view has gained ground; e.g., Adornato, in a series of essays pointing to evidence outside of Athens, has argued that the late sixth century and early fifth century were periods of transition, and the evolution in style did not occur in one fell swoop;[4] and Meyer, in the introduction to a volume of essays co-edited with Adornato soberly reminds readers, *inter alia*, that "the earliest dated evidence is not necessarily evidence for the first appearance of a phenomenon".[5] There are attractive arguments on both sides, and also vigorous advocates for each; unfortunately, this very important question can neither be examined nor answered here—it is well beyond the scope of this essay.[6] Nevertheless, the debate has given significant attention to the methods of dating material evidence and especially to the dating of artistic phenomena. One specific phenomenon, relevant to this study, is not contested: that *kouroi* and *korai* (**Fig. 3** and **4**) ceased to be dedicated on the Acropolis after 480 BCE; while the precise motive for their 'cancellation' from the sculptural repertoire cannot be identified, it surely must somehow be associated with the Persian destruction.

The Persian destruction of 480 BCE seems also to have had an impact on the epigraphic habit in the realm of inscribed dedications; we note that certain archaic types that had been so common previously, the *aparchai* and *dekatai*, now disappeared. A *dekate* was usually one tenth of a completed (e.g. annual) revenue of the property in question and thus was certainly dedicated in retrospect, i.e., after the full revenue had accrued. An *aparche* was a smaller amount than a *dekate* and may often have been dedicated as soon as the first (and not the whole) revenue of the year accrued. *Aparchai* (often translated 'firstlings' or 'first fruits') were more common in sacrificial and agricultural contexts. Both *aparchai* and *dekatai* may have been dedicated as a fulfilment of a vow or simply as a thank offering to the gods. The phenomenon of their near disappearance after 480 BCE invites reflection: perhaps it was a result of altered social and economic circumstances or perhaps, even more importantly, the Athenian perspective regarding religious dedications may have changed.[7] Moreover, the statues of victorious athletes and generals that were dedicated in the Classical Period surely represented civic values and were not just advertising the individual's prosperity. This point finds corroboration in the interesting transition of the bronze Athena Promachos:

[3] HURWIT 1989 provides a meticulous treatment of the archaeological context and artistic evidence; he concludes (in a statement that simplifies his detailed study), ". . .I find the evidence of style marginally decisive. There is at any rate, nothing—no archaeological datum, no parallel—that definitely places the Kritios Boy before 480, and the propensity of the evidence as it is suggests that the statue, and thus the crucial transformation of free-standing statuary to which it is the earliest extant witness, should be dated to the years between 479 and, say, 475. That transformation, it should be stressed, had nothing specifically to do with the destruction of the Acropolis: the Archaic style had been coming to an end for decades, and the Persians can take no credit for that" p. 80).

[4] ADORNATO 2017; 2019 a, b, c; 2020 in MEYER/ADORNATO 2020

[5] MEYER 2020a in MEYER/ADORNATO 2020; see also MEYER 2020b 2020b.

[6] The argument continues even to the moment of writing, with the December 2021 publication of Stewart's 'Continuity or Rupture', apparently written for his followers; some of his basic principles listed at the outset may be troublesome to some scholars.

[7] Cf. KEESLING 2003: 84-85 with n. 10, "When viewed from the perspective of the Acropolis statue bases, 'the great divide' of 480 B.C. has more to do with the shift from marble to bronze as the predominant material for large-scale sculpture than it does with a sociological revolution marked by the demise of the kouros and kore types . . .[dedicatory formulae remain the same before and after 480] . . .The 'shift' on the Acropolis should be conceived of mainly as a matter of chronological distribution: overall, it appears that life-size or larger bronzes were far more common after 480 than they were in the Archaic period, with very few marble statues in the round dedicated after 480."

**Fig. 3.** The Moschophoros of the Acropolis Museum (AkrM 624).

from appearing as a statuette in the archaic period, dedicated as an *aparche* or a *dekate* of private wealth dedicated by individuals, it becomes a larger-than-life-size bronze Athena Promachos standing on the Acropolis rock, constructed from the *dekate* of the Persian booty—and thus symbolizing the great military victory of the Athenians collectively. In other words, the small private bronze Athena Promachos of the Archaic Period transitioned into a large public monument in the Classical period.

While the near disappearance of *aparchai* and *dekatai* is certain, yet the dedicatory formulae remain much the same.[8] And while letter forms do change over time, these changes, as we shall see, can neither be precisely pinned to a date nor associated with the Persian destruction. On the other hand, inscribed texts on the dedicatory statue bases or on other fragmentary objects that belong to the one certain Persian destruction layer must of course pre-date 480, but that identification still does not tell us when the statues were sculpted or the bases inscribed. We shall shortly consider some letters and broader aspects of archaic epigraphic style (e.g., *stoichedon*), looking at texts that belong to the *Perserschutt* layer and especially at their 'distinctive' letters and comparing them with those same letters in texts that

[8] LAZZARINI 1976.

**Fig. 4.** Acropolis Kore (AkrM 670).

cannot be dated to that singular deposit. Since letters and style can only suggest a rough archaic dating, we consider other criteria that may prop up such rough datings.[9]

To carry out these comparisons, we must return to Kavvadias' excavation report of 1886 that was mentioned earlier in this essay. There Kavvadias announced the discovery of six inscribed fragments, all carved on stone, from the same deposit that was subsequently confirmed as authentic *Perserschutt*.[10] The fragments are important not only for their historical and archaeological value but also for the assistance they provide for dating letter forms. Our first example comes from the base of one of the *korai* found in the deposit; the *kore*, the largest one preserved on the Acropolis, is the work of the well-known sculptor Antenor (**Fig. 5**) and

[9] Regarding early Athenian letter forms, TRACY 2016, 17 remarks: "there are also the complicating factors that very probably these earliest letter cutters not only experimented some with varying shapes but that inscribing letters was new enough to them that they may not yet have become habituated to inscribing them in just one way". Tracy, however, is studying early fifth century Athenian decrees and not the archaic inscribed private dedications that are very different in nature, especially those that may come from identifiable workshops.

[10] KAVVADIAS 1886, 79-82, and pl. 6. Although each of the five texts is an *editio princeps* and while all are cited in *IG* I$^3$ 2: 618, 628, 699 and 787 (618 consists of four fragments, including Καββαδίας nos. 1 and 3; see DAA 6+ for references), nonetheless, only one in that edition includes Kevvadias' name in the entry (*IG* I$^3$ 699, a dedication of Onesimos to which a later dedication was added by his son). The first epigraphic finds (excluding those of early travelers) on the Acropolis were made by K.S. Pittakis in 1833 (reported by KAVVADIAS 1906, 1 and 2; ROSS 1863, 237-38); these were subsequently published in the first edition of *IG*.

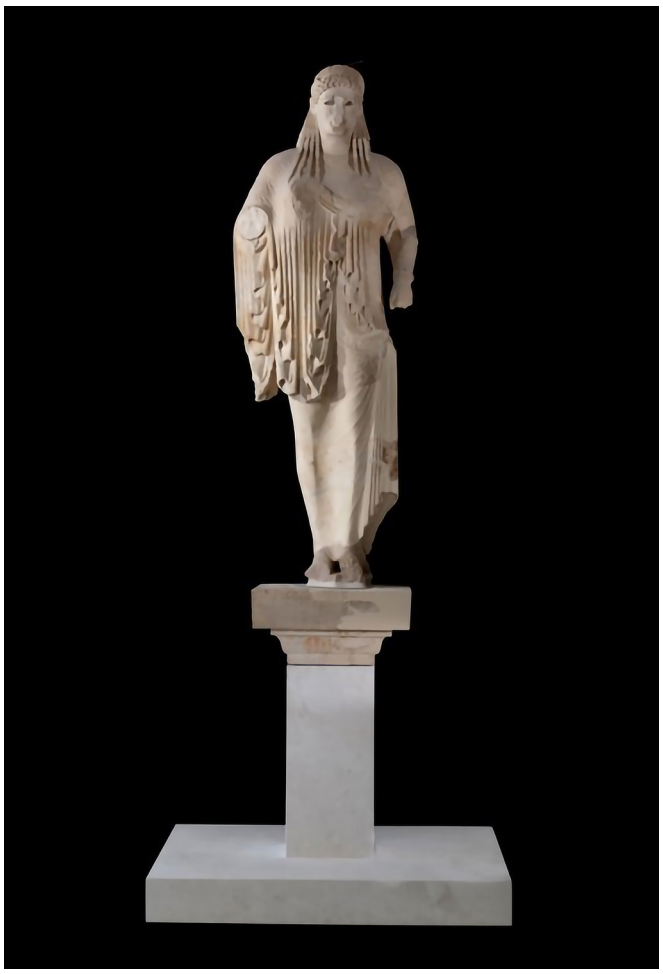

**Fig. 5**. Antenor's kore (AkrM 681). *Aparche* dedication of Nearchos the potter ca. 520 BCE.

was dedicated by Nearchos. The dedicatory inscription (IG I$^3$ 628) in the orderly *stoichedon* style is not fully preserved but enough letters survive to give us important clues about Attic letter forms dated before 480 BCE—and even decades before—if the association of the statue with the inscribed base (**Fig. 6** and **7**) is correct.[11] The dedicatory text runs:

I.1 Νέαρχος ἀνέθεκεν [*h*ο κεραμε]-
ὺς ἔργον ἀπαρχὲν τὰθ[εναίαι].
vacat 0.043
II.1 Ἀντένορ ἐπ[οίεσεν *h*]-
ο Εὐμάρος τ[ὸ ἄγαλμα].

Characteristics of early letter forms appear here: the chi resembles a cross, the theta has a cross inside its circle, the horizontal strokes of the epsilon are slanted and the lower end of the vertical extends beneath the third horizontal stroke, the nu and the mu have very short right bars that do not reach the bottom of the letter, and the rho has a triangular loop (**Fig. 6** and **7**).

[11] *IG* I$^3$ 628, *DAA* 197 and pp. 481-483, with a date between 525 and 510; Raubitschek's criteria are reviewed by KEESLING 2003, 56-59 and 213 for the association of the statue and base. (The *IG* entry mentions scholars who have doubted the association; more recently KISSAS 2000 cat. no. B 45 figs. 110, 111 leaves the question open.) A date before 480 BCE is certain because of the findspot of the dedicatory text, but other criteria are needed to establish the rough sixth century date. If it is associated correctly with the statue, then the lettering is certain to be thirty to fifty years earlier. Lewis dates the text 'c.a. 520'.

**Fig. 6.** *IG* I628 $^3$. The base of Antenor's kore.

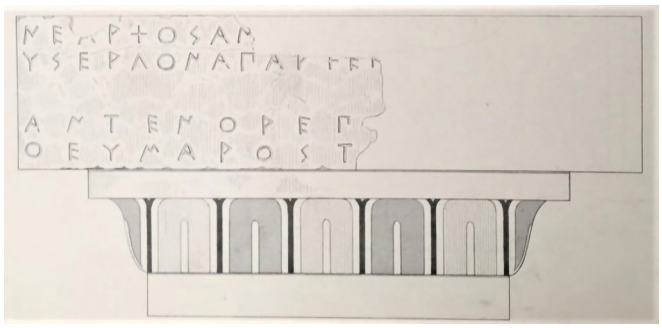

**Fig. 7.** The base of Antenor's kore, drawing from Kavvadias' publication in 1886.

These letters can be compared with those inscribed on a bronze base that was excavated on the Acropolis but from a deposit that is *neither* homogenous *nor* attached to a securely dated archaeological context. *IG* I526 $^3$ (**Fig. 8**) is the dedication to Athena of two men named Aischines and Charias:

Αἰσχίνες: Χαρίας:ἀνεθέ|τεν τὰθε|ναία<ι> ἀπαρχέν.

The letters in Aischines' dedication and those in Nearchos' are quite similar: once again, the chi resembles a cross, the theta has a cross inside its circle, the horizontal strokes of the epsilon are slanted and the vertical is extended, the nu has a very short right bar, and the rho

**Fig. 8.** The bronze *aparche* dedication of Aischines and Charias (I$^3$ 525) (NAM X 6491).

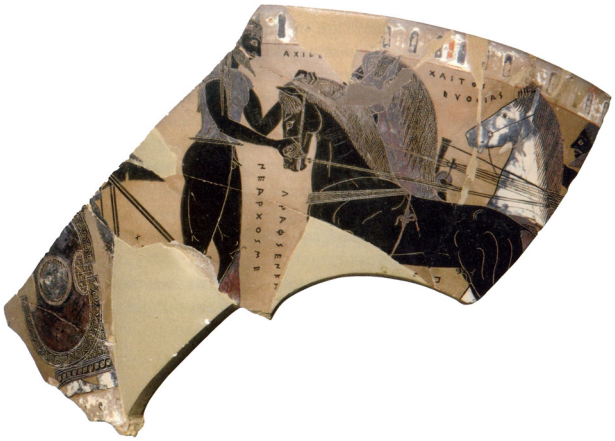

**Fig. 9.** Black figure vase with Nearchos' signature (NAM 15166 (Akr. 611))

has a triangular loop. Nevertheless, the letters in Aischines' dedication, by themselves, cannot guarantee a date prior to 480 BCE since they could very well have been inscribed subsequently. Only a combination of criteria can provide a near certainty of the early date. These include (1) letters, but also: (2) prosopographical information; (3) the artist's name or the workshop, especially useful if the artist or workshop is datable; (4) the architectural features of the bronze base (sockets, dowels, steps, etc.) and (5) an attached sculpture, (a) if it has been found—its style may provide dating indications, and (b) if it has not been found, markings on the top surface of the base may provide clues to a statue type—or rather—statue stance--that is especially associated with a particular period, such as the Athena Promachos who puts one foot ahead of the other as she takes a stride. We have much of this information for Nearchos' dedication of Antenor's sculpture: (1) The findspot of the statue guarantees that the letters of the dedication were carved before 480 BCE. (2) Nearchos, the dedicator, is probably the famous sixth century potter (see **Fig. 9**, the famous black figure fragment in the National Archaeological Museum (inv. no 15166, Akr. 611) with the horses of Achilles bearing Nearchos' own signature and dated to 560-550 BCE); his son Tleson is thought to have taken over the workshop in the last quarter of that century and so Nearchos will have made the dedication in his retirement, ca. 525-500. (3) The 'profile of the moulding, and the style of the statue' conform to the date.[12]

Yet Aischines' and Charias' dedication is not without at least one indication its surface has two sockets to which dowels for an Athena Promachos were once fixed—i.e., its architectural detail, like its lettering, is suggestive of an early date; and indeed, Lewis and Jeffery in their edition of *Inscriptiones Graecae* tentatively suggest a date between 525 and 500—thus, the date is conjectured to be the same as that of the Nearchos dedication.

Another inscribed text found in Kavvadias' early layer the dedication of Alkimachos (*IG* I$^3$ 618):

> Ἀλ|κίμαχός μ' ἀνέ{σ}θεκε Διὸς κόρει τόδ' ἄγαλμα /
> ε|ὐ|χολέν, ἐσθλο͂ δὲ πατρὸς *h*ῦς Χαιρίονος ἐπεύχεται
> <ἔ>να[ι].

[12] Thus Raubitschek in *DAA* 197, p. 233

When we look at the drawing included with Kavvadias' report, we see a fluted column on top of which a capitol at one point had been placed (**Fig. 10**). Probably most evident on first glance is that the text is inscribed 'retrograde' and the direction of the lines is vertical, starting from the left side of the column. Only two letters appear in the first vertical line, alpha and lambda (the first letters of the dedicant's name); the rest of that line appears to the left of those letters—or as much of the vertical line as was preserved at the time of excavation (ΚΙΜΑΧΟΣΜΑ). In the third vertical column, another line begins—but once again, two letters appear, this time to the right of the line. This odd arrangement was best explained by Raubitschek (*DAA* 6, p. 11): "... the first two letters of each line were engraved when the capital was already connected with the column. By an error of measurement, the inscription was apparently too high, so that the capital, when in position, hid the first two letters." Among the notable letters here are a theta with a dot in the center and another theta with a cross. The display of the letters, especially because of the error of measurement, is much less pretty than the neat stoichedon (equal spacing) in Nearchos' dedication. Nonetheless, the lettering, in combination with a prosopographical possibility, suggests that Alkimachos' text may belong to the same time period as Nearchos' dedication or perhaps a little earlier. Raubitschek (*DAA* 6) proposed that Chairion, the father of Alkimachos, may be the same man as Chairion son of Kleidikos who, as treasurer of the goddess Athena in the mid-sixth century (*IG* I$^3$ 590), dedicated an altar to the goddess.[13] Raubitschek fills in this hypothesis with another detail from the epigraphical record: that a Eupatrid Athenian Chairion who is inscribed on a tombstone in Eretria (*IG* XII, 9 296) may additionally be the same man as the treasurer and father of Alkimachos; his status (aristocrat), his date (mid-sixth century), his tombstone's location (Eretria), may also suggest a connection with Peisistratos, but even if not, still, "there is no reason to doubt that between 527 and 514 BC, members of the Athenian aristocracy were active in Athens" (*DAA* p. 12).[14] The hypothesis gives quite a run to the name Chairion; it is a possibility and nothing more.

These examples show the difficulty of dating the archaic texts, even with the aid of the texts and sculpture from the one genuine *Persershutt* deposit; it seems that we are engaged in degrees of greater and lesser probability rather than certainty. The 480 date is only a coincidental marker—in the realm of letters, it does not affect the art of letter forms. The association of statues with bases can be an aid, that is, if we are certain of their physical association, and if one or the other, statue or base, is securely dated. That is the reason why the great debate over the consequences of the *Perserschutt* context remains important. It is merely a coincidence that when David Lewis was preparing the archaic inscriptions with the aid of Jeffery, he was deeply troubled by the debate that had arisen in the mid-eighties over the dating of archaic sculpture and its relation to *Perserschutt*;[15] it

[13] *IG* I$^3$ 590 [— —c.13— — ἀνέθ]εκεν : Ἀθεναίαι : Χα[ι]ρίον : [τ]αμιεύον : Κλεδίᾳ[ο *h*υιός].

[14] *IG* I$^3$ 618 offers a date of ca. 520-510, hesitantly agreeable to Raubitschek's hypothesis.

[15] Lewis was concerned with the re-dating of various Acropolis deposits

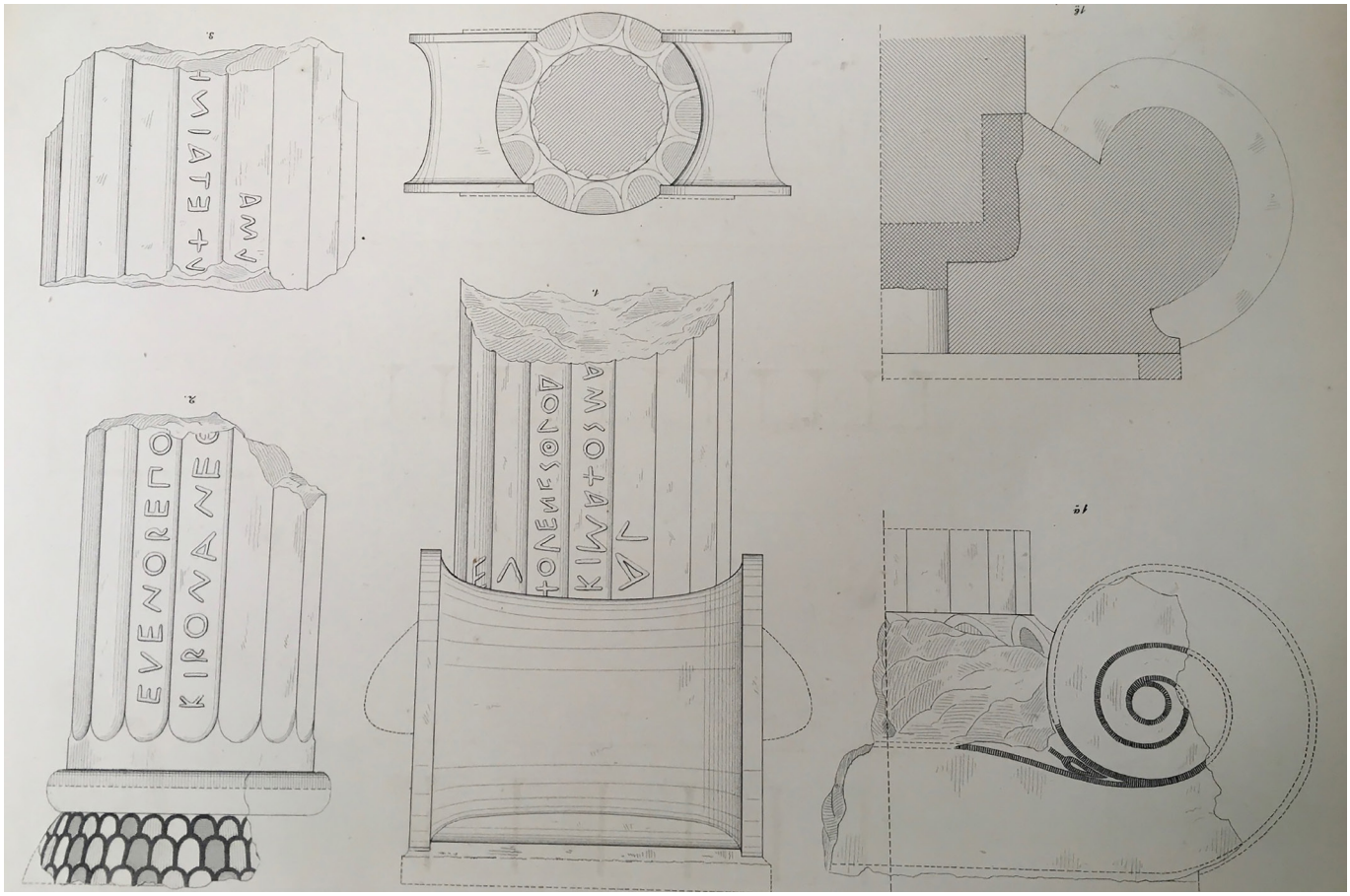

**Fig. 10.** Drawing in Kavvadias' publication of 1886 of Alkimachos' dedication (IGI$^3$ 618).

seems that we are in the same situation today. As we prepare our edition of a small portion of archaic texts, the inscribed bronze dedications of the Acropolis, we are endeavoring to ground the dates provided by Lewis and Jeffery with more transparency given to all criteria, but to give a stronger focus to the workshops of artists, and above all, to be consistent in the application of criteria, especially letter forms, given the fact that unfortunately, for the bronze dedications, the archaeological stratigraphy of the findspots is unknown.

Before we conclude, we turn to another facet of the Persian devastation in 480 BCE: the fact that we know about the bronze dedications and the *kouroi* is due to the destruction! It may be worthwhile to pause here and speculate, by means of both personal experience and imagination, on the nature, the degree and intensity of human suffering that can be deduced from the damaged ancient artifacts, especially keeping in mind that the Periclean building program did not start until 447 BCE that is, more than 30 years later: a whole generation of Athenians experienced the Acropolis, the main sanctuary of the city, as an extensive site of ruins. And yet this is the very period that Athens' power grew to unprecedented levels due to the expertise of her navy and so became the hegemonic power in the Delian League. It is when the Acropolis was a ruin that Athens became great: the Athenian tribute lists were erected on the Acropolis when no temple of Athena was standing—nothing but the ruins of the Temple of Athena Polias. Thus, interestingly, human suffering and its archaeology leads us to move away from the element of destruction and to head towards the constructive element, i.e. the archaeology of recovery, that is, the way in which the devastated population dealt with the remains of their material culture: the reconstruction of destroyed buildings, recycling of spolia, secondary usages of damaged objects, and the preservation of ruins for symbolic purposes related to the community's identity. In other words, the archaeology of destruction by human violence can be paired with the archaeology of recovery of buildings and monuments, of political and economic growth.

The importance of material culture both from the point of view of practical usage and as symbolic of notions that are valued by the community are important to be explored and discussed. They are far too neglected in scholarship. We think that it is imperative to introduce a strong humanistic element in the study of archaeology by promoting the notion that the study of objects or structures that have been damaged by human violence deserve special attention. It may be that museums, too, might present these objects with more attention to the circumstances that rendered them broken, unusable, or disabled in their own lifetime—if we may confer a lifetime on a dedication to the gods.

proposed by VICKERS 1985, 22-34; we are grateful to Charles Crowther. for scanning Lewis' unpublished notes about the problems the dating posed for him. Lewis' views are stated succinctly in the preface to *IG* I$^3$ 2.

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