Πλειών

Papers in Memory of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood

Edited by Athena Kavouliaki
Πλειών

PAPERS IN MEMORY OF CHRISTIANE SOURVINOU-INWOOD

Πλειών δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἄρμενος εἶη

Hesiod, Works & Days 617
Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood
at the Norwegian Institute,
Athens
Πλειών

PAPERS IN MEMORY OF CHRISTIANE SOURVINOU-INWOOD

Edited by
Athena Kavoulaki

Rethymnon 2018
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FOREWORD

Lucia Athanassaki
Dean of the School

I can think of no better introduction to the new series of Supplements to Ariadne than Πλειών: Papers in Memory of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. Ariadne Supplements is an open access peer-reviewed series that welcomes scholarly publications occupying the space between a journal and a book. These publications are usually Festschriften and Conference publications that have some unity, but are not in any sense book ‘chapters’.

We are delighted to be able to publish scholarly research without worrying too much about commercial issues, thanks to the support of the Ioanna Sfakianaki fund. Ioanna Sfakianaki was a Rethymniote who died in 1997 and bequeathed all her property to the School of Philosophy. Once the inheritance cleared, about 10 years ago, this special fund gave a huge boost to the publications of our School, which have since multiplied and are open access (<http://www.phl.uoc.gr/ekdoseis.php>).

The editor of this volume, my colleague Athena Kavoulaki, was a very close friend of Christiane since her days as a student at Oxford; I, however, only once met Christiane, cigarette in hand, at a book launch garden party that Oswyn Murray gave at Holywell Manor in 2004. At the time I was reading her Tragedy and Athenian Religion. I wish I had told her how much I enjoyed the amazing combination of vast knowledge, precise reconstructions of religious practices and power of visualization that pervades this book. But back then I thought we would have plenty of opportunities to talk at Oxford and Rethymnon. Christiane was known to be a timid traveler, but Athena kept trying to convince her to come to Rethymnon in order to give some lectures. Knowing Athena,
I was sure that sooner or later she would prevail. Unfortunately, it was not meant to happen. I remember the shattering news of Christiane's untimely death that reached us at Rethymnon a few days before the conference on Archaic and Classical Choral Song in May 2007. We scheduled an impromptu memorial event at that conference: Athena Kavoulaki, John C. Petropoulos and Ian C. Rutherford spoke about Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood as a great scholar and dear friend.

This volume springs from a formal memorial conference entitled ‘Reading Greek Religion,’ that Athena Kavoulaki organized in Rethymnon in 2012 in memory of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood’s scholarly achievements. I am delighted to see the volume in print. It is a volume that will attract great attention on account of the original and substantial scholarly contributions it contains, and also because it sheds light on an unknown aspect of Christiane’s personality, her youthful endeavors in writing poetry which we can now glimpse for the first time, thanks to Athena Kavoulaki who has edited them as an appendix to this volume. Christiane’s poems are sensitive, learned and annotated! They herald the formidable learning that would characterize her scholarly work a few years later.

I wish to thank the contributors, the anonymous referees, the copy-editor Kostis Psichoyos, the Publications Committee of the School of Philosophy and above all the editor, my valued colleague Athena Kavoulaki, for master-minding this volume which is a labor of love and exacting scholarship.

School of Philosophy,
University of Crete
February 2018
Illustrations

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            at the Norwegian Institute, Athens

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Scholarly journals normally appear as in *L’Année Philologique*. For ancient sources and basic scholarly works (collections and editions of texts, works of reference etc) standard abbreviations are used (mainly according to the system of *OCD*); but the following may also be noted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agora</strong></td>
<td><em>The Athenian Agora</em>. Results of excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CID</strong></td>
<td><em>Corpus des Inscriptions de Delphes</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIG</strong></td>
<td>A. Boeckh et al., <em>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</em>, 4 vols, Berlin 1828–77.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIGS</strong></td>
<td>G. Dittenberger, <em>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum Graeciae Septentrionis</em>, Berlin 1892.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FD</strong></td>
<td><em>Fouilles de Delphes</em>. Paris 1902–.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations may at times be included in the lists of works cited that can be found at the end of every chapter (note that no comprehensive bibliography is given at the end of the volume).

Transliterations of ancient Greek names are not characterized by strict consistency: it has seemed reasonable to use the familiar Latinized spelling for those names for which this has become normal English usage (e.g. ‘Plato’ instead of ‘Platon’, ‘Plutarch’ instead of ‘Ploutarkhos’). Hellenized transliterations have been adopted for less familiar terms or in order to avoid confusion.
Acknowledgments

The original idea for a volume in memory of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood was born at a conference organized in her memory in September 2012 in Crete. It was an event that proved rewarding and valuable in its own right. The friendly atmosphere, the stimulating talks and the lively discussions were an appropriate tribute both to Christiane’s scholarly achievements and to her passionate and inspiring personality. I am pleased to have the opportunity to express in writing my sincere thanks to all those who came to Crete at that time and shared scholarly ideas or fond memories, more specifically (in alphabetical order) E. Aston, L. Athanassaki, J. Blok, E. Bowie, I. Clark, R. Gagné, F. Graf, D. Hedley, S. Hitch, S. Humphreys, S. Iles Johnston, M. Inwood, D. Makri, A. Marinis, A. Nikolaides, N. Papalexandrou, R. Parker, J. Petropoulos, V. Pirenne-Delfolge, I. Rutherford, A. Serghidou, M. Vlazaki, P. Wilson.

When that event took place, the financial crisis in Greece had already set in. It was almost a miracle that the conference managed to take place. Warm thanks are due to those institutions and individuals who supported that project financially, as well as to all those (colleagues, students and friends included) who assisted in many different ways.

The enthusiasm engendered by the conference made the idea of the publication of the proceedings appear imperative. But the circumstances were adverse. Securing funds in those days proved difficult and dispiriting. The journey became a long one with repeated reconfigurations and rearrangements of schedules. I am grateful, however, to all those who persevered all the way, as well as to those who joined midway; their persistence—and patience—fueled the whole effort, and finally the destination has been reached.

I am fully aware, however, that this goal would have been unattainable, had it not been for the acceptance of the publication by the Editions...
of the School of Philosophy of the University of Crete. I am grateful to the former Dean of the School Prof. K. Kopaka and to the members of the committee who initially accepted my proposal, and I feel truly thankful to our current Dean, Prof. Lucia Athanassaki, for the lively interest, trust and support that she has shown towards this project. Her concern and her sense of kairos have proved more than decisive.

I would also like to thank the Sfakianakis Trust for funding the publication, the Resource Management Department of our University for making the funds available, the various readers of the essays for their helpful comments, and Kostis Psichoyos for his scrupulous preparation of the manuscript.

There are also debts of a different kind: to Mike Inwood for all his support and for entrusting me with Christiane's poetry notebook; to John Raffan for his friendship and for precious moments of learned interaction; and to my family for too many reasons.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of a great classical scholar, a beloved friend and a deeply sensitive person: Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. Her work will be long appreciated and will long continue to inspire scholarly discussions—and she will be remembered with gratitude for ever.

A.K.
December 2017
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Greek Inscribed Discs: Athletes, Dedications, and Tombstones*

Mika Kajava & Elina M. Salminen

Introduction
In this paper we shall examine a number of inscribed disc-shaped artefacts and, more particularly, round objects which, in one way or another, may be associated with athletes: dedications to deities, commemorative objects belonging to athletic funerary monuments, or just works of art somehow inspired by the athletic world and appearing in funerary contexts or elsewhere. Most of the evidence is datable from the late Archaic to the early Classical period and may come not only from Attica but from many parts of the Greek world. The present study is not self-contained: it derives from our ongoing work on ‘Greek Inscribed Discs’, a topic which we shall briefly introduce below (Section I); and at the same time it stands in dialogue with previously published work (by one of the authors) on a disc from Kyme (to which we shall also refer below in Section II). Our main focal point, however, remains the analysis of athletic disc-shaped artefacts (Section III).

It is our hope that this contribution may fittingly commemorate the remarkable scholarly efforts of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. Some of the arguments presented below have benefited greatly from her acute observations.

* Useful information on a number of details concerning athletic discuses and other types of disc was kindly provided by Angelos Chaniotis, Kirsten Dzwiza, Christopher Faraone, Klaus Hallof, Italo Iasiello, Daniela Marchiandi, Stephen Miller, Fred Naiden, Jari Pakkanen, Andrej Petrovic, Heikki Solin, Chiara Terranova and Marja Vierros.
I. Inscribed Discs – An Overview

Inscribed disc-shaped objects are documented in a multitude of forms from Archaic times onwards. Materials, types, and sizes can well vary, while the text inscribed on them can run in a spiral or in circles (or, at times, vertically), whether retrograde or from left to right. Some of the discs are pierced in the centre for fastening with nails (or for other reasons). Over time, especially during the Hellenistic and Roman times, the typology of inscribed discs increased considerably, especially as regards the shape and function of the objects, as well as the interplay between disc and text. It is therefore necessary to define which types of objects are included in our study project and which are not.

Our focal interest lies on athletic discuses, but our overall study will also include what may be labelled as ‘documentary’ discs. These are bronze round-shaped artefacts, bearing various kinds of administrative documents, such as decrees concerning citizenship, proxeny and theorodokia. Significantly this evidence, dated broadly to the Classical period, comes from a restricted region in western Peloponnesos: Lousoi in Arkadian Azania, Triphylia south of Elis, and Olympia.¹ It is noteworthy, however, that some ‘documentary’ objects that have often been considered as discs are not such at all, their circular form resulting apparently from reuse of rectangular plaques.²

In addition to athletic and documentary discs, our typology includes several other categories. Among these are shields or shield-like objects with circular writing, which are typologically close to inscribed discs, such as those dedicated to various gods by Rhodian stratagoi on leaving office in the Hellenistic and Roman times.³ Similarly, the category of ‘discs’ can, in broad terms, be applied to discoid objects such as bronze voting ballots (like those known from Elis and Olympia, in particular), various sorts of inscribed tags and tokens, coins when used to stamp funerary discs, and even disc-shaped silver ingots dedicated to gods (from

¹ See, in particular, IG V 2, 387 (Lousoi, proxeny decree); SEG XL 392 = MINON 2007, no. 29 (Triphylia; bestowal of citizenship); MINON 2007, no. 16 = N.I.Olympia 5A = Rutherford 2014, App. B2 (citizenship and theorodokia).
² Cf. IG XIV 954 and IG XIV 955 (= IGUR 4), both honorific decrees from the late Republic. For further discussion, see now KAJAVA 2014.
³ Tit. Cam. 65-78c, Suppl. 78d (Kamiros); SUSINI, Suppl. epigr. 218 (Kasos); I.Rhod.Peraia 781-782, 784 = HICarie 62-63, 65; I.Knidos 801 (from Kamiros?); IG XII 4, 2, 568, 570-578 (Kos). Cf. also the series of funerary discs from Kasos: IG XII 1, 1044-1059; Suppl. epigr. pp. 219-224.
Poseidonia). Moreover, the use of discs as well as of painted circles and circular writing is well documented in the world of magic, and round-shaped magical gems and similar objects are known from many parts of the ancient world. It is true that magical amulets and curses were less frequent on discs or round tablets, yet there are some noteworthy instances.

By contrast, in our project we have omitted stamped discs such as those of terracotta used as loom weights as well as the innumerable circular inscriptions engraved, scratched or painted on a wide range of round-shaped artefacts, in particular on the bases, feet or rims of various sorts of vases (aryballoi, hydriai, phialai, skyphoi, etc.). On the other hand, there are some interesting cases of vase bases which have been reused as writing material, with the text proceeding in circles as if on real discs.

Besides the inscriptions on them, the appearance of the objects themselves also comes under scrutiny, in consideration of the contexts in which the discs were originally used, as far as this is possible: there

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4 Elis and Olympia: BAITINGER and EDER 2001; ROY 2006; cf. N.I.Olympia 246-249 (with pp. 243-244). — For tags, cf. a small Lakonian bronze disc (diam. 4 cm) from the first half of the sixth century BC, with central hole and an inscribed dedication to Apollo, perhaps originally appended to a votive: SEG XI 890 (Μέλας μ᾿ ἐνικε· Πυθαιεῖ), better J. and L. ROBERT, BE 1950, 113 (ἐνικε = ἠνικε), accepted by KIRTSAS 1985, 715-716 and L. Dubois, BE 1987, 621. This case will be discussed in more detail in another article. — Poseidonia: JEFFERY 1990, 252 = IGASMG IV 19 = IGDGG 18; IGASMG IV 20 = IGDGG 20. — Discs with the impression of a coin: e.g., SEG XLVII 826 (Theesprotia, second century BC); SEG LV 647 (Phoinike, Illyria; Trajan's time).

5 Cf., e.g., the curses of judicial content written on both sides of an early fifth-century lead tablet from the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros at Selinous in Sicily: JEFFERY 1990, 277 no. 38a (500-475?) = IGDS 37 = GAGER 1992, no. 51 = IGASMG I 61 = VAN EFFENTERRE and RUFÉ 1994-95.1, no. 5 = BETTARINI 2005, no. 20; also in JACOBSTHAL 1933, 30 (fig. 22). At least two further curses on lead discs from the Malophoros sanctuary are known: IGASMG I 65 = BETTARINI 2005, no. 21, of judicial character (spiral script on recto; first half of the fifth century BC), and ROCCA 2012 from around 500 BC (of difficult interpretation; cf. p. 405 for the possible presence on the disc of ὀσόλος used in Homer in reference to discus-throwing).

6 The considerable evidence from Taras and environs, often misleadingly labelled as oscilla, is now discussed by L’ERARIO 2012. Inscribed loom weights from Sicily (circular, also conical or pyramidal): SEG L 988, 1029. Circular loom weights are also well known from mainland Greece and Asia Minor.

7 Cf. the well-known graffito from the Athenian Agora scratched in Megarian script in two concentric circles on the base of a skyphos of Corinthian shape, perhaps dating around, or shortly after, the middle of the sixth century BC (Agora XXI B 1 = CAVI 540): [---] : κάθες : ινπό τού λοδίν τάς θύρας τό κάτπο : πύρον(α), ‘Put the saw under the threshold of the garden door!’ A sort of occasional message, in other words, incised on a vase base, which both the sender and the receiver may well have conceptualized as an actual disc with circular writing.
is frequently little or no information concerning the exact provenance of an object. On the whole, while the materials make up a rather heterogeneous group, most of the objects obviously relate to public life and ideals, regardless of their find context.

The number of documented inscribed discs is trivial when compared with what we know about inscriptions on rectangular plaques, slabs and tablets, whatever the materials used. That this proportion reflects to some extent the situation in antiquity is beyond any doubt. Despite their restricted and unimpressive number, inscribed discs are significant for various reasons. In particular, it was probably both the decorative aspects and the symbolic meanings attached to the circular form that partly contributed to the introduction of this specific method of displaying written texts or other visible messages in an attractive and inspiring way. Writing in spiral is mentioned in Greek literature, the most famous recorded case being perhaps the bronze disc of King Iphitos of Elis, inscribed with the terms of the Olympic truce and kept in Hera’s sanctuary in Olympia (Pausanias 5.20.1: ἐς κύκλου σχῆμα περίεισιν ἐπὶ τῷ δίσκῳ τὰ γράμματα). Circular writing, whether on discs or elsewhere, is also well documented for non-Greek cultures: cf., e.g., the Minoan clay disc from Phaistos, the Etruscan lead disc of Magliano, or the early Faliscan Ceres inscription from Civita Castellana, all showing symbols or text running in spiral. From a technical and visual perspective, writing in spiral was close to writing *boustrophedon*, in that the objective of both styles was to continue uninterruptedly from start to finish. In this regard, texts engraved in separate rings represented a different type. However, any circular writing could also play a role in the context of sacred texts because of its symbolic value, and this was duly noted by Paul Jacobstahl in his still useful article on ‘Diskoi’

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9 Which is, of course, not accepted by all as authentic.
10 This text is spiralling downward around the shoulder of a vase: Bakkum 2009, 393-406. Also spiralling downward is the Duenos inscription from Rome, written in three units on the sides of a kernos. There are many other examples.
11 For clay discs (and matrices) of a very particular type, perhaps related to ritual activities, cf. those of Hellenistic date from Taras and nearby Heracleia and Metapontion as well as from Luceria, with ideographic symbols (possibly) corresponding to divisions within the civic population: Loprete and Bini 1989.
12 Or ‘false boustrophedon’, that is, with letters or a whole line written ‘upside down’: Jeffery 1990, 49-50 (characterized as ‘Schlangenschrift’ by Zinn 1950).
from 1933: ‘Daß die Wahl des Rundes zur Aufzeichnung sakraler und öffentlich-rechtlicher Texte tiefer begründet ist als durch ästhetisches Belieben, läßt sich durch einen Blick auf einige entlegenere griechische und italische Denkmäler wahrscheinlich machen.’ This symbolic value must have been recognized by practitioners of ancient magic as well.

Jacobstahl touched upon many relevant questions in that work but often in passing; since then, disc-shaped artefacts have never been the object of systematic research. Nonetheless, their detailed study as a group allows in-depth analysis of numerous issues, including epigraphic corrections and new readings of the texts inscribed.

II. The Kyme Disc

The impulse for the Greek Inscribed Discs project reaches back to a recent analysis of a much-debated inscribed bronze disc from Italy by one of the present authors. That study, however, did not take into account the appearance and function of the object. It seems useful to use the opportunity now to complete the discussion of that particular disc; by doing so, we can introduce some of the main arguments lying at the centre of our research interest in this paper too.

The artefact in question is a small bronze disc (diam. c. 8 cm), possibly from Kyme and perhaps dating as early as the 7th century BC (Fig. 1). The text in Euboic lettering is incised in a retrograde spiral along the edge and is usually agreed to read as follows: ἡρε οὐκ ἐᾶι{ι} ἐπιμαντεύεσθαι, that is, ‘Hera does not allow further prophecy’. The

13 Jacobstahl 1933, 31 (inscriptions are discussed on pp. 23-32). The evidence has increased since by many remarkable exemplars.
14 Cf. Karouzos 1951, 98, in his stylistic analysis of Classical marble discs with reliefs: ‘But though several scholars have made excellent detailed observations about them, these monuments have not yet been systematically studied and little light has been thrown on their evolution either as cult objects or as works of art.’
15 Kajava 2010, with full bibliography and a survey of interpretations.
16 Regarding the expression οὐκ ἐᾶι, there may be a parallel engraved in Parian alphabet on a sixth-century tile fragment from Thasos (Ghali-Kahil 1960, 122 no. 19, Pl. 51, 19), perhaps reading as follows: [---]EMA ζωκ ἐᾶι / [---]Ν οὐτέω, and probably with an infinitive depending on the phrase of prohibition. Although it would be attractive to see here the name of Hera, on sixth- or early fifth-century Thasos one would expect not only an ‘Ionic’ form for the theonym but also its initial being written with either Β or rather Η (ἡ would be somewhat surprising). So EMA probably belongs to a word ending in -ἐοι. The expression θεὸς οὐκ ἐᾶι also occurs in relation to dice oracles in some inscriptions of the second century AD from Asia Minor (TAM II 1222, Lycia; CIG 3956c, Phrygia).
text has been commonly interpreted as a lot with an oracular response that was handed over to a consultant. However, as was argued in the above-mentioned article (n. 15), such an interpretation encounters significant difficulties: there are no explicit parallels for sortes forbidding re-consultation, and the verb ἐπιμαντεύεσθαι always means ‘to prophesize’, ‘to give a response’, and never ‘to ask for a response’ or ‘to consult an oracle’ (moreover, to express iteration and succession of oracular

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17 Some Latin texts from the Late Republic might be remotely comparable, but they derive from a completely different context (e.g., CIL I 2.2185 = ILLRP 1084: Nunc me rogitas, nunc / consulis? Tempus abit iam; CIL I 2.2189 = ILLRP 1087a: Quir petis postempus consilium? / Quod rogas non est).
consultation one would expect ἀναμαντεύεσθαι instead\textsuperscript{18}). Furthermore, the disc would be the only proof in favour of the idea that the Kymeian oracle originally belonged to Hera and only later to Apollo; if, on the other hand, Apollo was the local oracular god from the beginning, explaining Hera’s interference in the Apolline consultations would require unnecessary speculations. Finally, while surely possible, a Kymeian origin for the disc is by no means certain.

As a solution to the various problems concerning the ‘oracular’ content of the prohibition, it has now been proposed (n. 15) that the infinitive may be read as ἐπιμαστεύεσθαι (cf. ἐπίμαστος ἀλήτης, [probably] ‘vagabond mendicant’, said of Odysseus in Homer, \textit{Odyssey} 20.377 with schol.),\textsuperscript{19} which could mean that we are dealing with a ban on begging and related activity within an area sacred to Hera, perhaps implemented in the wake of problems concerning the upkeep of the sanctuary. Various sorts of disciplinary prescriptions were commonly implemented in Greek sanctuaries, and they are well documented.\textsuperscript{20}

If, nonetheless, the bronze disc should be associated with oracles, the likeliest alternative is that it forbade independent diviners from practising their business in Hera’s sacred area. This is definitely a regulation rather than a divine response.\textsuperscript{21} In other words, whatever the correct

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} As was also observed by Pugliese Carratelli 1979, 223; 1986, 17-18.
\item \textsuperscript{19} See Kajava 2010, 15-18, for language, literary evidence and palaeography, and the fact that the incisor first wrote ἐπιμαστεύσθαι, the supposed \textit{sigma} between \textit{α} and \textit{τ} being a later addition either by the man himself or by another hand. The existence of the prefixed forms ἐπιματεύω: ‘ἐπιματεύω is certainly conceivable beside the well-known pair μαστεύω: ματεύω (‘seek’, ‘search after’, ‘crave’, ‘need’, etc.), and the same must apply to the middle voice forms as well.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Besides the collections by Sokolowski (\textit{LSAM}, \textit{LSS}, \textit{LSCG}), see Lupu 2005 and Carbon and Pirenne-Delforge 2012 (on the problematic term ‘sacred law’ and with a review of earlier research). For non-metrical and non-oracular prohibitions by divine authority, cf. SEG XXXVI 267, 7 = Lupu 2005, no. 4 (Marathon, Cave of Pan; 61/60 BC): ἀπαγορεύει ὁ θεός; IG II2 1289, 9-10 (with SEG LII 132; early third century BC): ἀπαγορεύει δὲ καὶ ἡ θεὸς κ[α]ὶ ὁ προφήτης / Καλλίστρατος, etc. (related to the settlement of a lawsuit involving argonones of an unknown goddess). See also SEG XXVI 1084 = Lupu 2005, no. 25 (Megara Hyblaea; first half of the sixth century BC), though the reading is under dispute: Πάσοι: ἀράξ: τὸ [8]/[ε]δ: ἡδ: etc. (‘This is the imprecation of the god for all’, Lupu); SEG XXXVIII 421 = Lupu 2005, no. 7 (Megalopolis, Arkadia; c. 200 BC): Στάλα Ἴσιος Σαράπιος, suggesting divine interest in the inscription listing the regulations for entry into the sanctuary. A god’s disapproval might also be conveyed by phrases like οὐ θέμις (ἐστί). For the rare use of ἀπαγορεύειν in sacred contexts (and the more common formulaic expression ὁ νόμος ἀπαγορεύουσιν), see Hitch 2011, 120. As for oracular and metrical inscriptions, the prohibitions are usually expressed in more implicit terms such as ἥρι μαντεύεσθαι, i.e., ‘Hera forbids
\item \textsuperscript{21} Thus also Dillery 2005, 225-226, following Renehan 1974, though building on earlier research, with a different interpretation of the content (ἦρι μαντεύεσθαι, i.e., ‘Hera forbids
reading of the verb, what we have here is most likely a sacred disciplinary regulation related to a cult of Hera either in Kyme or elsewhere in Campania. This observation brings us closer to some of the main arguments of the present article. If indeed a sacred regulation (or, for that matter, any text with some degree of public relevance) was intended to communicate effectively to an audience, how was this goal achieved using a tiny disc showing the divine prescription in circular writing? Although accessibility and readability of inscribed legal documents may not always have been a primary concern for Archaic Greek communities, the question of communication certainly deserves attention. Regarding the item in question, though not incised by a practised hand, the text could presumably have been read without difficulties by those few who were familiar with inscriptions; but the situation might have been different if the text was considerably longer. This is especially true of discs affixed to a wall or a door. Reading through a lengthy text written in spiral on an immovable disc is not quite the same thing as consulting something engraved (boustrophedon or not) in horizontal lines on a rectangular plaque. The text on the Kyme disc is so short that it could have been read with ease even if displayed on a wall, but the curious thing is that there is nothing to suggest that the disc was ever attached to a wall or any other foundation (there are no holes, and nothing is reported concerning fastenings on the reverse). If the disc was not mounted in order to be consulted, where and how was it stored?

If the small disc was kept somewhere at the entrance to the temenos with the inscribed text conspicuous on it, it would be interesting to know what the visitors’ reactions were when confronted with the regulation. Would they think that the goddess would know if they broke her proscription? Was it a warning to be taken seriously? What really was the oracular consultations in the morning’), but cf. KAJAVA 2010, 9. For further arguments against regarding the disc as a lot (sors), see BUCHHOLZ 2013, 127-129, showing, moreover, that none of the handful of allegedly oracular discs with Etruscan or Oscan (or Latin) writing known from Italy is likely to be a sors (ibid. 138-140). If, occasionally, oracular responses appear on discs, then we are dealing with reused vase materials; for an interesting case from the early fifth century BC, cf. IGDOlbia 48, scratched on both sides of the foot of a lekythos, showing the reply of Achilles on one side and the subsequent dedication by a consultant to the hero, on the other. The use of ostraka in oracular consultations is also otherwise well attested (in Egypt and elsewhere).

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22 See the evidence collected by GAGARIN 2008 (Ch. 2), esp. 64-65, discussing a group of texts from Tiryns (SEG XXX 380) inscribed not only in a dim location (on the walls of a covered passage), but also in a ‘serpentine’ fashion (see further Z. PAPAKOSTANTINOU, in a review of Gagarin’s book, BMCR 2009.06.49).
communicative function of the disc? Did it have any? This communica-
tive function may have been indirect if the disc was an (archive?) copy
reproducing the text appearing on a stone inscription set up at the gate
of the sacred area. However, if indeed the disc was a copy of a lapidary
inscription, it might also conceivably have served as a kind of badge that
was shown to disorderly visitors as needed. All the same, considering
that the disc format may not have been the obvious choice for any kind
of copy, one may wonder whether the object was originally manufac-
tured to be used for purposes other than writing (as part of the wardrobe
of a statue, for example) or for a different type of text, e.g. a dedication.
Finding this sort of material for re-use may have not been difficult, if we
consider that anepigraphic small-size discs of bronze or other material
have been discovered in large quantities in Greek sanctuaries, with the
most conspicuous materials perhaps coming from the Argive Heraion
and from the votive deposit of Hera Limenia at Perachora.

III. Athletes and Discuses

While it may be incidental that the Kymean text was inscribed on a disc,
there are other inscriptions in which the circular form served a specific
function. In particular, texts engraved on athletic discuses seem to have
been inherently linked to the shape of the object, so that it was both the
artefact and the writing together that referred to athletic activity. We
know of a number of inscribed discuses mostly from the Archaic and
Classical periods that are related to discus throwing or may at least be
associated with athletic discuses. Similarly-shaped discuses without text
but with illustrations of athletes (some of them including concentric
guidelines like those seen on inscribed discuses) further reinforce the
link between such objects and athletics. In one interesting case (Catalogue A, No. 18), the inscription in circular form is actually not on a

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23 The copying of sacred regulations is well documented from later times; cf. Petrovic and
Petrovic 2006, 174-175 (also on the placement of such texts and their integration into the
sacred space).
24 Those with a hole in the centre, either plain or ornamented, could have been pierced for stringing
on fibulae, or they were used as ear-rings, buttons, or pinheads. Others having holes near their
edges may have been sewn on dedicated dresses. Argos: de Cou 1905, 267-269, Pls XCIX-CI, also
referring (p. 267 n. 2) to Olympian evidence for plain discs with central hole on edge of quiver.
Perachora: Dunbabin 1940 (bronzes); Stubbings 1962 (ivories). Cf. also Baumbach 2004, 36-37.
25 For a survey of Greek athletic discuses and discus throwing, see Miller 2004, 60-63.
26 E.g., Jacobstahl 1933, Pls I-II; see below n. 81.
discus, but the context strongly suggests that it may be associated with athletic discuses.

The relevant material is listed for convenience in the following two-part Catalogue. The order is geographical, as in the SEG, with a typological organization for the Athenian material, while the subsequent discussion partly proceeds thematically. References to photographs or drawings, if any, are at the end of the entries. Although the evidence presented and discussed below does not claim to be complete, it affords a substantial overview that allows drawing some reliable conclusions.

**Catalogue A (Archaic / Classical)**

1) *IG I3 1394*: Τελεσάρχο ἐκ τὸ ἐρίο. – Marble discus (diam. 28.9 cm; th. 5.9 cm [centre]); late 6th cent. BC; Athens (precise provenance unknown). – Photograph: Jacobsthal 1933, 18 no. 2 (fig. 9); [https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/255826](https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/255826) (with erroneous measures, confusing in. with cm.).

2) *IG I3 1395*: ἐκ τὸν ἐρίον (rather than ἄθλον, ‘utrumque legi potest’ IG, but the crucial letter seems to be E). – Marble discus (diam. 28.4 cm; th. 6.13 cm [centre]) with remains of painted decoration in the centre, ‘fortasse equitis’ (IG); late 6th cent. BC; Athens (precise provenance unknown). – Photograph: Jacobsthal 1933, 18 no. 1 (fig. 8); [http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/discus-130164](http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/discus-130164), (with ‘overall (on mount)’ measures, differing from those of the discus itself).

3) *IG I3 1397*: ἐχ τὸν ἐρίον εἰ(μ)ι (EINI stone). – Marble discus (diam. 27.8 cm; th. 5.5 cm [centre], ‘crassior medio quam in marginibus’ IG; lett. ht 4.5 cm); late 6th cent. BC; Athens (‘angeblich aus einem Grab bei Analyssos’: Jacobsthal 1933, 19 no. 4). – Photograph: Stupperich 1990 (Pl. 16, 6.7); [https://www.museum-digital.de/westfalen/singleimage.php?imagenr=334&inw=1&w=1040&h=768].

27 Disc-like objects serving as architectural elements and with no obvious connection with authentic discuses are omitted, e.g., *IG I3* 872 (‘discus’, Acropolis) = CEG 275 (perhaps part of a tripod dedication); 888 (‘discus’ from the Acropolis, supporting some dedicated object(s)). The small bronze disc *IG I3* 547 from the Acropolis (‘discus parvulus’, ‘small discus’ [Dillon 2002, 17]), which Lysilla dedicated to Athene as a first-fruits offering in the early fifth century BC, is perhaps a bronze cymbal (see Z. D. Papadopoulou, ThesCRA II, 353 no. 69, with further evidence for inscribed votive cymbals), unless it was from a fibula. On the other hand, we have included No. 11 from Eretria, a funerary disc that may at least be compared with some Athenian exemplars.

28 Note that No. 11 from Eretria is listed under Athens, as the epitaph concerns an Athenian.
4) *IG* I 1396: Ὄεθεν ἄθλα. – Poros discus (diam. 28 cm; th. 6 cm; lett. ht 1 cm); late 6th cent. BC; Athens (‘angeblich Vari’: JACOBSTAHL 1933, 19 no. 3). – Photograph: BROMMER 1975, 181-182 (Pl. 63, 1).

5) *IG* I 989: Αἰοί[μίδες μ' ἀνέθε]κεν. – Fragment of marble discus (width 24+ cm) with inscription along edge; ‘600-550?’ (*IG*, from JEFFERY), but perhaps somewhat later; from Eleusis. – Photograph: JEFFERY 1949, 25 (fig. 1).

6) *IG* I 860bis: Δεμ[όφι][ς μ' ἀνέθεκεν ---] (‘suppl. exempli gratia’). – Three fragments of marble discus (diam. 30+ cm; th. min. 4 cm); ‘470-450?’ (*IG*); from the Acropolis. – No photograph available.

7) SEG LV 71 (Athens): Δικαῖος ἀνέθεκεν. – Marble discus (the original publication [OIKONOMAKOU 2005, 41] does not give measurements); probably before 403/2 BC (because of spelling); excavated some fifteen years ago in Agios Andreas (Nea Makri). – No photograph available.

8) *IG* I 1398: ἡγαν. – Marble discus (diam. 13 cm; th. 4.5 cm); latter half of the 5th cent. BC; from the Acropolis. – Drawing: RAUBITSCHEK 1949, 417.

9) *IG* I 1393 = CEG 62: Μνείμα τόδ’ Αἰνέο σοφίας ἰατρόν ἀρίστο. – Marble discus (diam. 27 cm; th. 3.5 cm) with flat back and convex front and with painting representing a bearded man sitting in a chair to right, two holes in the centre with traces of iron nails; late 6th cent. BC; Athens (precise provenance unknown, but it was at the Piraeus in 1899: DAUX 1972, 520). – Drawing: BERGER 1970, 157 (figs 164-165).

10) *IG* I 1210 = CEG 37: Γνάθονος: τόδε σήμα: θέτο δ᾿ αὐτὸν: / ἀδελφὲ: / ἕλιθιον: νοσελεύσα:/σα. – Marble discus with bevelled edge (diam. 27 cm; th. 3.5 cm), writing in rings; late 6th cent. BC; Athens (precise provenance unknown). – Photograph: JACOBSTAH 1933, 26 (fig. 19).

11) *IG* I 1516 (Eretria): Χαιρίον / Ἀθεναῖος / εὐπατρίδιον / ἐνθάδε / κεῖ/τα<ι>. – “Discus lapidis caerulei” (diam. 49 cm; th. 5 cm) with inscription in horizontal lines; “546-525?” (*IG*). – Photograph: BINKENBERG 1919, 8 (fig. 2).

12) SEG XI 670 (Sparta): ἁζε<θ>λων Αμυκλής· Αἰγυπτίαν · – Bronze discus (diam. 19 cm; weight 3.28 kg) with inscription on the flat side (the other side slightly convex); 6th cent. BC (LAZZARINI 1976, no. 834); from the Amyklaion. – Photograph: PROSKYNI TOPOLOU 2004, no. 94.

13) SEG LVII 398 = N.I.Olympia 33B: Ἡερμέςόσιος: μ' ἐποίεσε: Λακεδαιμ[όνιοι] [---] Αἰγυπτία/ /[---]οι ἀνέθεσαν: [---] (for a new reading
of the text, see below). – Bronze ‘discus’ (diam. 19.7 cm) with flat reverse and rectangular hole in the middle, decorated with twenty-four incised crescents (whirling motif); inscription on rim; second half of the 6th cent. BC; ‘Gefunden südlich der Westthermen 19.6.1941 Raum in der NO Ecke’ (Patay-Horváth 2007, 124). For a completely different interpretation of the object’s function (Siewert 2010 and N.I.Olympia 33B), see below. – Photograph: Patay-Horváth 2007, Pls 4-5; <http://www.bollettinodiarcheologiaonline.beniculturali.it/documenti/generale/1_PATAY-HORVATH.pdf>.

14) SEG XLIV 424 (Boeotia?): Σίμος μ’ ἐποίϝεισε. – Bronze discus (diam. 18.6-18.9 cm; th. max. 1.9 cm; weight 3.75 kg) with inscription incised in a semi-circle along the rim; ca. 525-500 BC; assigned to Boeotia on the basis of writing. – Photograph: Neils (ed.) 1992, 166 no. 33; Ortiz 1996, no. 128; <https://www.georgeortiz.com/objects/greek-world-cont/128-discus-archaic/>.

15) IG IX 1² 4, 1566 = CEG 391 (Kephallenia): Ἐχσοίδα<ς> μ’ ἀνέθεκε Διϝὸς ϙόροιν μεγάλοιο / χάλκεον ἵνα νίκασε Κεφαλᾶνας μεγαθύμος. – Bronze discus (diam. 16.5 cm; th. 0.4 cm) with spiral inscription; mid-6th cent. BC; ‘said to have been found in Cephallenia’ (Jeffery² 1990, 231). – Photograph: Jacobstahl 1933, 18 (fig. 12); <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=365012001&objectid=399627>.

16) Trakosopoulou-Salakidou 2004, 159 (Akanthos, Chalkidike): marble discus (diam. 14 cm; weight 978 gr) found inside a late Archaic tomb (no. 11075). Most unfortunately, no text is given, but the artefact is said to have been inscribed spirally and in insular lettering with reference to the inglorious death of the buried person, obviously in the first person singular as the text is on a ‘speaking object’.

17) I.ScM I 102 (Histria on the Black Sea): (A) Τέλονος ἐμί. (B) Τέλονος ἐμί. – Opistographic granite discus (‘disc de granit de formă elipsoidă, aproape rotund, scris pe amindouă fețe‘; diam. 36 cm; lett. ht. 10 cm) with hollow in the middle of one of the sides (the text on this side is only partly readable on the photograph in I.ScM); latter half of the 6th cent. BC; from east area of the Thermae. – Photograph: I.ScM.

18) *I. Délos* 5 = CEG 404: πεντέϙοντα π[όδας πήδη]σέ μοι ἐ<ν>θάδ᾿ [---]. – Flat marble fragment (28 × 19 cm) with spiral inscription; 7th cent. bc? (Jeffery 1990, 304 no. 8). – Photograph of squeeze with drawing: Ebert 1963, 42 (Pl. 2).

19) Jacobstahl 1933, 23 = Tuchelt 1970, 115 (Didyma): [--- ἀνέ-] θηκεν Ε(?[---]. – Fragment of marble discus (diam. 32-34 cm [Wiegand, *apud* Tuchelt], c. 28 cm [Jacobstahl]; th. 0.8 cm [edge; W.], 5.3 cm [centre; J.]); late 6th cent. bc (Jeffery 1990, 343 no. 35). – Photograph: Jacobstahl 1933, 19 (fig. 13).

**Catalogue B (Hellenistic / Roman)**

20) *SEG* XIV 312 (Sikyon): Μηνόδοτος (Μηνοδότου) γυμνασιαρχῶν Ἑρμᾶι Ἡρακλεῖ, ἔτους ἑ[β]δομηκοστοῦ. – Bronze discus (diam. 21 cm) with inscription in two rings, one close to centre and the other along edge; ad 39. – Drawing: Orlandos 1951, 190-191 (fig. 5).

21) *I. Olympia* 240: Διὶ Ὀλυμπίῳ, ἀλυτάρχου Φλ(αβίου) Σκρεβωνιανοῦ, συνγενοῦς / συνκλητικῶν καὶ υπατικῶν, Ὀλυμπιάδος υνςʹ. – 241: Εὐχαριστήριον Διεὶ Ὀλυμπίῳ, Πόπλ(ιος) Ἀσκληπιάδης Κορίνθιος πένταθλος, / Ὀλ̣(υμπιάδι) συνεʹ (word order according to Ebert 1987, 13). – Opistographic bronze discus (diam. 34 cm) decorated on both sides with concentric circles with the inscriptions incised in between; ad 241 (no. 241; 240 is earlier). – Drawings (of both sides): Christesen 2007, 511. – For a photograph, see, e.g., <http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/4/eh430.jsp?obj_id=11141>.

**Discussion**

Let us start from a group of three marble discuses from Athens (Nos 1-3), all dated to the late 6th century bc approximately and inscribed along the edge with the phrase ἐκ τὸν ἐρίον or a variation of it. The meaning of this expression has been widely discussed. Since ἠρίον is traditionally translated as ‘mound, barrow, tomb’, it has been a popular interpretation since Jacobstahl that ‘from the grave-mound(s)’ is a reference to funeral games commemorating individuals and that the preserved discuses were those awarded as prizes to winners at such games.30 Since one of the discuses (No. 3; *Fig. 3*) was reportedly found in (or near) a grave, Jacob-

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30 Jacobstahl 1933, 22; see, e.g., Immerwahr 1967, 263-264; Roller 1981, 3-5; Stupperich 1990, 73-75 no. 65 (= Catal. No. 3). Kyle (1987, 19) was reasonably cautious. Gardiner (1930, 156) argued, implausibly, that the barrow might have been the tomb of the hero in whose honour the games were held. Jüthner (1935, 41-42) regarded all these texts as modern forgeries. For
stahl assumed that the others, too, could have been buried together with successful athletes at their death.

Various objections may be raised to this view. Firstly, the term ἠρία (or ἠρίον) is not otherwise known to have been used for funeral games. Secondly, ἐκ τὸν ἑρίον is not what one would expect for prize inscriptions, which were normally construed with partitive genitive (e.g., τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἄθλων, ‘(one) of the prizes from Athens’, which is often mis-translated as ‘from the games at Athens’). At most, one could think of (τὸν) ἐκ τὸν ἑρίον (ἄθλου), though one wonders why, then, the somewhat ambiguous phrase was not written out in full. Thirdly, and most importantly, as Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood demonstrated, ἠρίον actually does not mean ‘mound’, but denotes ‘grave monument’ independently of its precise appearance. This also seems to have been the specific meaning of ἠρίον when candidates entering office in Athens were traditionally asked whether they had family tombs and where these were located (ἡρία εἰ ἔστιν καὶ ποῦ τάυτα). Later on, the term began to cover the broad concept of ‘tomb’, occurring in funerary epigrams and various other sources, but in the Archaic period it must have meant ‘grave monument’. In our material, this should be evident already from No. 1, which is in the singular form (Τελεσάρχο ἐκ τὸν ἑρί[ο]) and thus clearly marks the grave monument of Telesarchos; reference to various games and contests was as a rule made in the plural. Finally, it is noteworthy that all these discuses, as well as some others of the same date

prizes won at public games in Athens in memory of war victims, see Marchiandi 2010, 223.

31 Also, τὸν Θεσποι σιθλο (Jeffery 1990, 95 no. 16, prize hydria from Thebes, c. 470 BC); τὸν ἐπὶ (τῶν δεῖνα) σιθλο, and sim. (ibid. 91, Archaic Boeotian prize objects); παρ’ ἱέρας Ἀργείων ἐμὶ τὸν ἀφήθθουν (SEG XXIX 652 = XXX 648, bronze tripod in Argive lettering from Vergina, mid-fifth century BC; cf. below n. 89; the same phrase in IG I 1386bis, bronze lebes from a grave in Attica, c. 440-420 BC).

32 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 126-128 (analysis of Hom. Il. 23.126, the only Homeric passage where the term occurs, in relation to the monument that Achilles planned for Patroklos and himself), 152-158 (on the late sixth- or early fifth-century epitaph of the Selinountian Archedamos from Delphi [SEG 11 = IGDS 67 = IGASMG I 33], with ἐριον inscribed on the back of the stele. The reason for uniquely adding this designation seems to be that the epitaph itself most untypically did not refer to the grave monument or burial: 157-158).

33 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 126-128 (analysis of Hom. Il. 23.126, the only Homeric passage where the term occurs, in relation to the monument that Achilles planned for Patroklos and himself), 152-158 (on the late sixth- or early fifth-century epitaph of the Selinountian Archedamos from Delphi [SEG 11 = IGDS 67 = IGASMG I 33], with ἐριον inscribed on the back of the stele. The reason for uniquely adding this designation seems to be that the epitaph itself most untypically did not refer to the grave monument or burial: 157-158).

34 Note that the inscription ΗΡΙΑ from Aegina that is usually read ἠρία and taken as a boundary marker of a necropolis (IG IV 1593; Immerwahr 1967, 263 n. 19; Roller 1981, 4 n. 28) is actually of Byzantine date; see IG IV 2, 1075.

35 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 126-128 (analysis of Hom. Il. 23.126, the only Homeric passage where the term occurs, in relation to the monument that Achilles planned for Patroklos and himself), 152-158 (on the late sixth- or early fifth-century epitaph of the Selinountian Archedamos from Delphi [SEG 11 = IGDS 67 = IGASMG I 33], with ἐριον inscribed on the back of the stele. The reason for uniquely adding this designation seems to be that the epitaph itself most untypically did not refer to the grave monument or burial: 157-158).
from Athens (Nos 4, 9-10), were almost identical in diameter (c. 28-29 cm), as if designed for similar use—or, perhaps more accurately (see below), to imitate artefacts of similar use.

A different explanation of the ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων phrase was proposed by Lilian Jeffery. She argued that the discuses featuring this phrase formed part of the superstructure of funerary monuments, their main purpose perhaps being to ‘ensure that such a useful and portable object was not snapped up by some passing Autolycus’. The term ‘portable’ was a necessary addition, for if the discuses were of considerable weight the remainder would not have made sense. The preposition ἐκ is also quite apposite here, as it could denote origin and belonging to a category or a group. Protection from theft seems, indeed, a credible interpretation: inscribed on a disc, the phrase ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων could probably remind passers-by that the object was part of the grave monument and that it should be left where it was affixed. The proper epitaph, of course, was engraved on the stele or another type of monument. This would have been the case also with No. 1 which names the deceased. As we shall see, when the epitaph was written on the discus itself (Nos 9-10), there was no need for additional designation as ‘(belonging to) grave monuments’.

Before turning to other discuses and to the issue of how all these objects were associated with athletes and their world, we should comment on an artefact that relates to the question raised about the phrase ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων. One of the inscriptions on a small clay ball from Athens of about 500 BC has been read as follows: ἡος ἔοικεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίων ἐναί{αι} with the translation ‘(The boy is handsome), who seems to be from the mounds’, that is, from the funeral games. The reference would be to the standard ἡο παῖς καλός also scratched on the ball, which, in turn, may describe one of the youths appearing in the athletic scenes of the central frieze. However, as we have seen, ἐρία means ‘grave monuments’, and not contests of any kind. In fact, the ball comment should probably be understood in a completely different way, and thus it cannot possibly under-

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37 Immerwahr 1967 (figs 1–7) = SEG XXIV 73. Note that Immerwahr (1967, 264 n. 12) objected to Jeffery’s idea about the funerary function of the discus with ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων: ‘Her explanation seems unlikely, since two of Jacobsthal’s discuses are anonymous and since the statement “from the tombs” would make sense only after the object had been removed from the tomb.’ But the anonymous discus would naturally have been accompanied by epitaphs. The second objection remains partly opaque. Roller (1981, 4) also missed the point when referring to anonymity, which would have made the use of the discus ‘as burial markers or votives improbable’. 

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mine the interpretation of the Athenian discuses inscribed ἐκ τῶν ἔριων.\textsuperscript{38}

The actual purpose of Nos 6 and 8 (Fig. 4) from the Acropolis is uncertain, though both might be dedications (the former surely is, if the proposed restoration is correct), perhaps made by athletes.\textsuperscript{39} The dedication No. 7 by Dikaios to an unknown deity from Agios Andreas

\textsuperscript{38} For a detailed discussion, see now Salminen and Kajava 2013.

\textsuperscript{39} No. 8: ‘ἡγυί(ᾶς) s. ἡγυί(ᾶς) s. genetivus’ (Hiller, at IG I’ 738). Raubitschek (1949, 416-417 no. 388) took the discus as a dedication by an athlete called Hagnias (= Kyle 1987, 216 P79: ’He may be related or identical to Ἀγνίας Ἰ Βουσέλου whose family had wealth above the minimal liturgical status’). If 6 is restored as Δεμ[όφι]λ[ός] μ’ ἀνεθέκεν --- | (IG I’ 1398), it could start a verse in hexameter.
(deme of Probalinthos or of Phegaia) poses a challenge, as we are very poorly informed about the appearance of the discus. However, one may not be wrong in guessing that Dikaios was an athlete, as perhaps was also Aesimides, who dedicated a marble discus at Eleusis towards the end of the 6th century BC (No. 5), and the same concerns the dedicant of No. 19, a late 6th-century marble discus from Didyma (Fig. 5), perhaps offered to the local Apollo, the estimated diameter of which (c. 28

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40 Cf. IG I² 1206 (‘ca. 530?’), gravestone of an Aesimides who was commemorated by his mother. D’ONOFRIO (1998, 110) thought that this man may be identical with the dedicator of Eleusis (cf., concerning the discus, ‘allusion probable à un contexte agonistique’).
This inscription, which by a slip Rehm did not include in his I.Didyma, is one of the relatively rare dedications of Archaic age from the sanctuary. For an update and a new dedication to Apollo from the latter half of the sixth century BC, see Günther 2012, 255-257.

Any association with burial was denied by Roller 1981, 4.

The surprising form ἀθλα was one of the reasons that led Jüthner (1935, 42) to take this disc as non-authentic (as he did concerning Nos 1-3: see above n. 30). Dow (1963, 169-170) also had suspicions (‘lost and dubious’), but he did not know Jacobstahl’s publication and, moreover,
What we may take for granted on the basis of these considerations is that discuses were not only given as dedications to gods, but they were also used in funerary contexts. Those who dedicated discuses to gods may well have been athletes even if this was not stated in the inscription (sometimes it was: see below No. 15), and this should be equally true of those whose graves were marked by discuses. On the other hand, lacking contrary evidence, funerary discuses such as those inscribed ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων may well have been used by any Athenian, though they perhaps appealed more to men than to women. Conceivably, they may have imitated real athletic discuses, perhaps occasionally even associating the

Fig. 5. Fragment of marble discus (Didyma). From Jacobstahl 1933, 19.

cited the text as Ὀαθεν αθλον according to W. Wrede, RE XVII (1937), 1673, s.v. Oa; cf. also Brommer 1975, 181. Note, incidentally, SEG XLV 1334 (Phaistos, Crete): [ἐκ τῶν Ἀ]θήνηθεν ἀθλων, where the preposition is superfluous.
deceased with athletic prowess.\textsuperscript{44} That the use of discuses in funerary art seems to have been confined to a relatively short timespan in the late Archaic and early Classical periods might point to an emerging trend inspired by contemporary athletic culture. It may not be a coincidence that the \textit{diskobolos} also began to appear frequently from the last quarter of the 6th century in black- and red-figure art.\textsuperscript{45} In any event, the use of standard-type discuses in non-athletic funerary contexts is actually confirmed by the following two artefacts.

The first (No. 9; Fig. 7) is a remarkable late Archaic marble discus (diam. 27 cm) that bears a painted representation of a seated bearded

\textsuperscript{44} See below, esp. nn. 52-53.

\textsuperscript{45} \textsc{Kyle} 1987, 180-181. If we may trust Pausanias (2.29.9), the use of funerary discuses could also be inspired by myth: on the tomb of Phocus on Aegina, beside the shrine of Aeacus, there was a \textit{mnema} in the shape of a rough stone (\textit{λίθος τραχύς}), recalling the fatal one, a substitute for a discus (\textit{οὗτος γὰρ ἀντὶ δίσκου σφίσιν ἦν}), that was hurled by his brother Peleus during a pentathlon contest.
man and is inscribed with an epigram praising the wisdom of the physician Aeneas (unless Aeneios): Μνήμα τόδ᾿ Αἰνέο σοφίας ἰατρὸ ἀρίστο. A look at the commentary of IG I3 1393 shows that opinions on whether this was a dedication or part of a funerary monument are strongly divided, the question being left unanswered by some. However, even if a hero-doctor with the name Aeneas is known from later

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46 For example, Karouzos (1951, 98) opted for a votive in the form of a painted pinax (but cf. Jeffery 1962, 147 n. 16: ‘the inscription is against this’). Clairmont (1970, 17-20 no. 3) argued, implausibly, that the disc was perhaps dedicated in a sanctuary of a hero (cf. Daux 1972, 519-520). Further, Hillery 1990, 66 (either a votive given to a hero or a funerary relief); Donofrio 1998, 110: ‘votive ou funéraire’; Samama 2003, 109 n. 1: ‘votif ou funéraire’.
Thessalian dedications of *pinakes*, and even if the text does not refer explicitly to Aeneas’ death, this is evidently a memorial for the ἵπτρος ἄριστος, whether Athenian or foreigner, who is characteristically praised on account of his σοφία. That the discus was attached to a grave monument may be further suggested by the two holes in the centre of it. Another question is how and where exactly it was fastened, on a stele or somewhere else. In any case, it should have been plainly visible to the passers-by. Two further points are of interest. The first is, as has often been noted, that the great-uncle of Hippocrates of Cos was called Aineios. Whether this is anything more than incidental remains uncertain. Secondly, the doctor’s figure on the discus is astonishingly similar to the one represented on a presumably contemporary funerary relief now in Basle.

The inscription on the second discus (No. 10; Fig. 8; diam. 27 cm), incised in two rings (with σα, lacking space, written inside the interior ring), shows the funerary epigram of Gnathon who died from some illness, set up by his sister who tried in vain to tend to him: Γνάθονος: τόδε σεμία : θέτο δ᾿ αὐτὸν : / ἀδελφὲ : ἡλίθιον : νοσελεύσα:/σα. As no holes are reported, the discus may have been set on a grave without fastenings, or perhaps it could close an opening for offerings, or the mouth of a funeral vase, or it would serve as the covering of an urn. In theory, Gnathon may have been an athlete; his discus, however, was probably modelled upon authentic sporting equipment.

One wonders, likewise, whether the funerary discus (?) bearing the epitaph of Chairion, an Athenian who probably died in exile during the Peisistratids and was buried in Eretria on Euboea, manifests Athenian

47 IG IX 2, 1064 (first century bc); SEG XVI 381 = XXIII 443 (21/20 bc); SEG XVII 299 (second/first century bc).
49 BERGER 1970, passim and 155-158 (Aineios). Judging by Berger’s analysis, the Basle monument perhaps comes from one of the Dodecanese islands or from the opposite mainland coast between Knidos and Halikarnassos.
51 See MARSHALL 1909, 153-154; KAROUZOS 1951, 98-99 n. 6; JEFFERY 1962, 147 no. 64; HILLERT 1990, 68-69 n. 8; RIDGWAY ‘1993, 236.
style with athletic connotations (No. 11; Fig. 9). He is described as one of the *eupatridae*, a fact which may suggest belonging to anti-tyrannical elite rather than denoting Eupatrid genos. Would an athletic (?) discus be ideologically compatible with partisan status? Untypically for contemporary discuses, however, the inscription is engraved in horizontal lines and the disc format might simply derive from the object’s use for closing a funerary pithos, although Blinkenberg observed that the grave could also have been crowned by a superstructure.

Let us now leave Athens and have a look at some characteristic examples from other sites. We start with No. 17 (Figs 10a-b) from the Mile-

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52 *Figueira* 1984, 454. Duploy (2003, 11-12) argued that, in the Euboean context, *eupatrides* may have served to underline that Chairion was an anti-tyrannical Eupatrid.

53 Osborne’s 1998 article on the importance of aristocratic display in the form of athletic and military feats on Archaic funerary markers suggests that the answer is ‘yes’.

54 Blinkenberg 1919, 10 n. 1: ‘Muligt er det dog også, at graven kan have været en almindelig jordgrav, kronet af overdelen af en pithos.’
The central hollow on one of the sides perhaps served to fix the object to a grave monument, unless it results from (considerably?) later re-use for other purposes. If originally attached to a monument, the discus

55 Jeffery 1990, Suppl. 479 J: 'marble disc marking the grave of Tel(l)on'.
would have been set up in such a way as to have both sides visible. If Telon were an athlete, as he may well have been, the discus could perhaps have both agonistic and funerary character.56

The 6th-century bronze discus found in the Amyklaion at Sparta (No. 12; Fig. 11) bears a dedication to Apollo Amyklaios (ἀεθλον Ἀμυκλαῖοι). Considering that discuses used by athletes are known to have been biconvex, this particular example (diam. 19 cm) could hardly have been used in a contest.57 It could probably be a prize awarded to or commissioned by the winner, who afterwards dedicated it to the divine protector of the games. What is peculiar, though, is the mason’s work, which is somewhat inaccurate for a prize inscription. In any case, the anonymous discus-thrower must have known the story about Hyakinthos’ unhappy end at Amyklai, according to which he was acciden-

56 Regarding the name Tel(l)on, note, incidentally, the boxer Tellon from Orestasion in Arkadia, Olympic winner in 472 bc (the base of his statue, recorded by Paus. 6.10.9, is preserved: I. Olympia 147-148 = CEG 381; cf. Moretti 1959, 92 no. 231).
57 As already pointed out by Jüthner 1935, 40 n. 23.
tally killed when hit by a discus thrown by his lover Apollo. In fact, it is a reasonable guess that the prize was won at the three-day festival of the Hyakinthia, the second day of which was dedicated to Apollo.

The next discus (No. 15; Fig. 12) is also concerned with athletic contests, but its inscription is much more eloquent. The text is engraved in spiral on a thin bronze discus (diam. 16.2 cm), perhaps from Kephallenia and datable around or after the mid-6th century bc, which records and praises the achievements of Exoidas: Ἐχσοίδας μ’ ἀνέθεκε Διϝὸς ϕόροιν μεγάλοιо : / χάλκεον ἴνι νίκασε Κεφαλάνας μεγαθύμος. As the epigram tells, Exoidas dedicated to the Dioscuri this bronze version of the discus with which he had won a contest in Kephallenia. In other words, this was a bronze imitation of an original in stone, which would have been somewhat larger in diameter. Exoidas himself was perhaps from Kephallenia, for otherwise he might have mentioned his own native city. On the other hand, the reference to the victory over the “magnanimous Kephallenians” might suggest that he came from some other place to participate in a festival on the island. This issue is complicated by the fact that the provenance of the discus is not absolutely certain.

At this point it is worth adding a methodological reminder. A closer look at the appearance of the Exoidas discus reveals that without the reference to the Kephallenian event we might not recognize that we are dealing with an authentic discus. This is because the artefact shows an upwardly projecting rim, making the thin bronze discus look like a platter or plate. A comparison with two 6th-century bronze plates from the Argive Heraion may illustrate the point (de Cou 1905, 336 no. 1877: Θαμόφιλός με ἀνέθεκε ταί ἡραι : τας Καρνείιας; no. 1878: Νικασίας με ἀνέθεκε ταί ἡραι). Both bear a dedication to Hera, inscribed in spiral writing along the border. These plates show considerable similarity to the Exoidas discus, even if they are slightly depressed (significantly, while 1877 is bordered by a rim, 1878 is not, which makes this plate even more disc-like). The Argive plates are relatively small (diam. 10.7 cm and 6.85 cm, respectively), but size is not decisive here: as we have

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58 For the dangerously erotic and even deadly aspects of discus-throwing in mythology (besides Hyakinthos, cf. Akrisios, Phokos, Krokos, Thermios), see Moreau 1988 and above n. 45.
60 Cf. Jüthner 1935, 38; Moretti 1953, 12-13 no. 6; Guarducci 1967, 276 no. 3.
61 No. 1877 may have been a prize won at the (local?) Karneia festival that was subsequently dedicated to the goddess: Lazzarini 1976, 142. Or perhaps it was just a dedication recording a victory.
seen (Kyme disc, Exoidas discus, etc.) and will see, discs could differ significantly in size. Although it is true that a plate seems a likely gift to Hera, while athletic discuses seem to be fitting for Dioscuri, the similarity of these objects is certainly significant.

No. 13 (Figs 13a-c; diam. 19.7 cm) from Olympia, inscribed in Aeginetan script of the second half of the sixth century BC, has been identified as a discus once held by a now lost diskobolos statue measuring c. 1.20 m in height. The text is here given after N.I.Olympia 33B:

\[
\text{\textit{he\meros} : \imu\, \textit{epoiese} : \textit{La\ke\dalphaim}\text{[\textit{o}]\nu[\textit{o}]\text{[\textit{s}] : \textit{\aigina}\text{[-[\textit{ca. 4-5}]]}}}} \\
\rightarrow \\
\text{\textit{oi an\v{e}the\v{e}a\v{n} [ca. 10] vac.}}
\]

The inscription seems to mention the artisan, Hermesios of Sparta (who may well have been of Ionian origin⁶³), and the Aeginetans who made the dedication (but see below), while any possible information regarding the winner and his success would have been recorded on the statue base.

This interpretation was recently challenged on morphological grounds in favour of the hypothesis that the object might instead be the wheel of a miniature four-horse chariot dedicated by the Aeginetans who commemorated their victory with the inscription.⁶⁴ According to this reconstruction, the necessary mention of the winner would have been made.

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⁶³ Thus, plausibly, Catling 2010, 44-53, discussing the name Hermesios, which probably points to East Greece, and the mixture of Doric and Attic-Ionic elements (accepted by Dubois, BE 2011, 279, cf. also SEG LXI 315).

⁶⁴ Siewert 2010, 234, points out that neither squared central holes nor sickle-shaped radii are otherwise attested for discuses. See now also N.I.Olympia 33B.
collectively by recording ‘the (victorious) Aeginetans’ as dedicators. In principle, this seems possible, and if the technical arguments concerning the type of the central hole and the decoration of the object are valid (see n. 64), then the wheel hypothesis may well prove true.
However, the context of the dedication needs reconsideration, as the standard reading of the inscription is problematic. There seem to be several letters between ΑΙΓΙΝΑΙ and ΟΙ, and the final word is followed by many more letters. The former have been dismissed as nonsense ‘Vorzeichnungen für die Buchstaben’65 which is hardly true. Moreover, recent and accurate analysis correctly points out that not only Αἰγινάται in place of ‘Αἰγιναῖ’ would be normally expected, but a mention of Zeus Olympios as the recipient of the dedication might also be anticipated, although the name of the deity could certainly be omitted.66 The denomination Αἰγιναῖοι, while frequently referring to Aeginetan coinage or to goods, and occasionally to Aeginetan women (i.e. Αἰγιναῖα as a rare alternative to the common ethnic Αἰγινῆτις), seemingly never occurs as a collective term for the Aeginetans and their state, a male Aeginean being constantly known as Αἰγινῆτης/Αἰγινάτας.67 Since Αἰγιναῖοι is hardly acceptable in the present context and because what remains of the text does not possibly allow reading the standard Αἰγινάται,68 it seems to us that the most likely solution is the locative Αἰγίναι, the use of which in similar contexts is paralleled by other evidence.69 From a palaeographic perspective, one may observe that no interpunctuation is marked after the point where the direction of the script changes: the first five words are inscribed from left to right, while the rest runs from right to left. Understandably, inscribing along the edge of a circular object that has to be rotated during the writing process may affect the script direction. Here the change of direction coincides with a natural break, i.e., with the transition from one sentence to another.

Close inspection of the photographic evidence makes a long vacat between ΑΙΓΙΝΑΙ and ΟΙ rather unlikely, and indeed it should be here that the subject of ἀνέθεσαν, probably ending in -ιοι, is recorded. While

65 Πατάγ-Ηορβάθ 2007, 124 (referenced in N.I.Olympia 33B): ‘einige schwach eingeritzte Linien, … die möglicherweise Vorzeichnungen für die Buchstaben gewesen sein dürften. Sie ergeben auf jeden Fall keinen Sinn und unterscheiden sich auch aus technischer Sicht so eindeutig von der eigentlichen Inschrift, daß sie bei der Lesung unbeachtet bleiben dürfen’.
66 Catling 2010, 46, 49.
67 Evidence collected and discussed by Catling 2010, 46. He records only one exception in a late text (IG IV² 2, 772, 3: ἲερὰ πόλις Αἰγεινέων; AD 244-249).
68 Thus tentatively in Catling’s drawing (2010, 44), where the ending AI appears immediately after ΑΙΓΙΝΑΤ at the beginning of the alleged vacat (note, however, that the inscription has ΑΙΓΙΝΑΙ).
69 Cf. N.I.Olympia 33A (statue commissioned and dedicated by Byzantians; late sixth century BC): Πελανίδας ἐποίει Αἰγίνα, etc., perhaps another early case of the weakening of the iota in -ᾱι (unless it is a stonecutter’s error); FD III 1, 500: [--- ἐποίει : Αἰγίνα] (early fifth century BC), and the discussion in Halløf, Herrmann and Prignitz 2012, 224-225.
-ιοι is fairly well discernible, the other letters are much more difficult: after a possible *vacat*, there might just possibly be a circular letter (Ο, Θ) followed by I (or Λ?) and E. One should stress, however, that the reading of this part of the text is problematic to the extent that some curves and strokes that give the impression of being parts of letters may actually be abrasions. The dedicatory verb, then, is followed by a series of some ten further letters, many of which look like either I or O (the first letter following the verb has the shape of an *alpha*, but might also be Λ, or even Δ; the second one is probably O, less likely a *theta*, as in that case it would differ from the one in ἀνέθεσαν; the fifth letter seems an Aeginetan *phi*, etc.). It is possible that one or more of the following items were recorded here: the dedicated object, perhaps either specified70 or simply labelled as ἆθλον, the deity receiving the *anathema*, and the context occasioning the dedication.

In sum, the text should probably be understood as follows (note, however, that many of the underdotted letters are more or less bold guesses):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hermēsios : μ’ ἐποίεσε} & \quad : \text{Λακεδαιμόνιος} : \text{Αἰγίναι} \\
& \rightarrow \\
\text{vac.(?)} & +\text{Ι[E[c. 2]}ΙΟΙ \text{άνέθεσαν ΑΟΙΟΦΙΙΟΙ} & \text{vac.} \\
& \leftarrow \\
\end{align*}
\]

Thus, it seems to us that those who made the dedication at Olympia were not the Aeginetans; on the other hand, it was Hermesios (apparently an itinerant craftsman of Ionian derivation and a naturalized citizen of the Lakedaimonian state) who manufactured and inscribed the object on the island of Aegina. This would not conflict with the dialectical mixture of the inscription71 nor with the observation that the script and the interpunctions are of the Aeginetan type. If correct, this conclusion supports the notion that the object was dedicated at Olympia (most likely to Zeus Olympios) as a gift commemorating a victory, be it in chariot racing, in battle, or something else, but it still leaves open the identity of the victorious dedicants.

70 In view of the present case, cf. the dedication of a bronze wheel on Rhodes: *Tit. Cam. Suppl.* 237, 115a (second half of the fifth century BC): τροφὸν άρματος.

71 *hermēsios*, ἀνέθεσαν instead of Dor. *hermēsios*, ἀνέθεν, and the other way round, not quite unexpectedly, Αἰγίναι pro Att.-Ion. Αἰγίνη. The language may suggest, on one hand, that Hermesios was a first generation immigrant in Doric-speaking territory, and on the other, that Ionicisms could be tolerated on Aegina. Cf. Catling 2010, 49.
The bronze discus No. 14 (Fig. 14; diam. c. 19 cm), assigned to Boeotia and dated to the late 6th century BC, is problematic insofar as it shows only the signature Σίμος μ᾿ ἐποίεισε. It has been implausibly suggested that this perhaps indicated a dedication by the manufacturer. At most, the discus could be part of a dedication with other information having been recorded on some lost object(s). Its weight of 3.75 kg might not be excessive for an authentic throwing-discus, for which the most common size was about 21 cm in diameter. In any case, the dedicator may well have been an athlete, but it is equally possible that the artefact was placed in someone’s burial, whether the deceased was an athlete or not.

That discuses were indeed buried with athletes may be shown by No. 16, a marble discus from a late Archaic tomb in Akanthos (Chalkidike). Although nothing particular may perhaps be revealed by the ‘speaking’ inscription, athletic associations are suggested by the grave goods that included not only the discus but also an iron strigil (and a bronze signet ring). According to the excavation report, the discus would have been originally fixed to a wooden coffin with an iron nail. What is remarkable is that the artefact may have been reused inside the burial, since it was probably originally meant to be viewed and its inscription read by passers-by. Was it first designed to mark the outside of the same tomb but eventually placed inside it, or had it been used in some other context? On the other hand, one could hypothesize that, if attached to a coffin, the discus was publicly visible before being buried with the corpse. (For the question of a possible reuse of discuses, see below in the section ‘Use and Social Context’.)

No. 18 (Figs 15a-b) is a 7th-century (?) BC Delian marble fragment that, judging by the content and the spiral form of its inscription, may well imitate a throwing-discus. The Naxian script suggests that the unofficial athletic record mentioned in the epigram belonged to a Naxian who had perhaps participated in some contest on Delos: πεντέϙοντα π[όδας πήδησέ] μοι ἐ<ν>θάδ᾿ [---]. This reconstruction is suggested by a well-known epigram praising Phayllos of Kroton, who was not only a famous athlete, but also came to help the Greeks in the Battle of Salamis: Πέντ′ ἐπὶ πεντήκοντα πόδας πήδησε Φάυλλος, / δίσκευσεν

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72 T. Šelov-Kovedjašev (apud Ortiz 1996, no. 128). For (the relatively rare) dedications by artisans, see Lazzarini 1976, 293-295.
73 Miller 2004, 60.
74 Trakosopoulou-Salakidou 2004, 159.
75 Thus restored by Peek 1957, 572 no. 18; similarly Ebert 1963, 42-43 and Hansen, CEG 404.
δ’ ἑκατὸν πέντ’ ἀπολειπομένων. The result of fifty-five feet in long jump (c. 17 m), which actually may have been the cumulative result of five jumps, would seem to offer a plausible parallel to the 50 feet on Delos (c. 15.40 m). For obvious lack of space, the Delian inscription hardly made a reference to both jump and throw, but suppose that instead of the former it recorded only the latter. The substitution of δίσκε-]σε for πήδησε might not be a problem, except perhaps for the 50 feet, which seems a poor result in discus-throwing (Phayllos’ 95 feet equates


77 See Ebert 1963, 42-43, 62.

78 Note δίσκει vs πήδηι: in archaic Naxian, while the original long ā was typically rendered by η (ἐ), ε stood for both the original and the secondary ē (there is some fluctuation, though; cf. I.Delos 3 = CEG 402 [seventh century BC?]). Δισκέω is Homeric, and cf. IG V 1, 828 (Sparta, sixth century BC?) with αἱ τις διοκιός, though the text is suspect; cf. Jeffery 1990, 184. While the Phayllos epigram may well go back to the fifth century BC, the spelling δισκεύσει seems later.
to c. 30 metres). The discus used on Delos of the heavier sort? (We know that there was local variation in the weight and size of discuses, and while the common weight was about 2 kg, the same as the modern discus, some excavated examples weighed almost 6 kg.) Or perhaps the athlete was a young boy. At any rate, this might have been a personal and unofficial result, which should not be put on a par with that of the legendary Phayllos. On balance, however, the above results make it more likely that the sport of the anonymous Naxian athlete that was recorded in the inscription was the long jump. Moreover, πήδησε suitably saves the triple alliteration in the verse, and examples of long jumpers engraved on discuses show that there were few qualms about entangling references to multiple sports in a single artefact (see Fig. 2).
As has already been pointed out, the habit of inscribing and dedicating athletic discuses seems to have been more typical of the Archaic (and early Classical) periods, which partly reflects the importance accorded to athletic culture and victory memorials in those eras.82 Certainly discuses continued to be given to gods, but the preserved evidence suggests that the phenomenon became proportionally less frequent over time. In fact, we have only two exemplars to offer from later periods. The first is a bronze discus from Sikyon (No. 20), which the gymnasiarch Menodotos son of Menodotos dedicated to Hermes and Heracles jointly in AD 39. Whether this discus was actually thrown by someone in a contest is uncertain, even if its diameter (21 cm) corresponds to the standard one for throwing-discuses.83 At least there is no mention of a victory, and the dedication was made by the gymnasiarch. An office-holder’s involvement also appears in No. 21, a well-preserved bronze discus (diam. 34 cm) from Olympia, which the pentathlete Popllos Asklepiades of Corinth dedicated to the Olympian Zeus as a thanksgiving offering in AD 241. It has been suggested, as an explanation of the different dating systems appearing on the two sides of the discus, that the inscription engraved on the reverse, recording the alytarch Flavius Scribonianus, may be several years earlier (and not contemporary with Asklepiades’ dedication). This would probably mean that, during his office, Scribonianus had a series of similarly inscribed discuses prepared to be handed over to future Olympic winners for use as dedications to gods.84 However, recent analysis seems to make it more likely that Scribonianus had produced the discus specifically as a gift to the next winner of the pentathlon, who could thus immediately dedicate it to Zeus.85

Use and Social Context

For most of the athletic discuses there is limited or non-existent information about the archaeological and historical context in which they were found. This fact poses serious challenges to any attempt at a synthesis, but some tentative observations can be made regarding their use and the social context to which they belonged.

83 Schörner (2003, 71 n. 498) claimed that the discus was an authentic sportive article. The artefact does not seem to be recorded in Lolos 2011.
85 Christesen 2007, 510-513. See further Gardiner 1930, 156 no. 1; Jacobstahl 1933, 22 (victory dedication); Jüthner 1935, 38 (votive gift in the form of a decorated disc); Moretti 1959, 173 no. 930 (victory dedication). Schörner (2003, 456 no. 883) implausibly thought of a real throwing-discus.
The discuses cluster strongly in the late 6th and early 5th centuries BC, and there is no clear pattern to be detected in terms of diachronic change in morphology or geographical spread over time. On the basis of possible use and function, however, the discuses may be divided into two broad categories: those dedicated to gods protecting contests by successful diskoboloi or other athletes, and those marking the tombs of either athletes or other males. If associated with non-athletes, the discuses might still have suggested athletic prowess or implied that the deceased lived up to the ideal of a male citizen more generally. While the discuses commemorating athletes in various funerary contexts could be just works of art, it is not unlikely that some of them might have actually been thrown at contests.

The inscribed Akanthos disc (No. 16) as well as other (uninscribed) finds from Aegina, Paros and Rhodes prove that some of the discuses were placed inside tombs, either loose in the grave or attached to walls or even used as urn lids. Moreover, one of the ἐκ τῶν ἐρίων discuses (No. 3) was reportedly found in a burial. In fact, given the relatively good preservation of most of the discuses—especially in the case of the bronze ones—one suspects many of them survived because they were enclosed in burials. If so, various questions about the reuse of discuses can be raised, given that many of them might have been originally either deposited in sanctuaries or somehow displayed outside tombs where they could be read by passers-by. This applies not only to ‘speaking objects’ such as the Akanthos one but probably also to many others listed in the Catalogue (passim). As a concrete piece of evidence for reuse one may cite the Paros discus of the Classical period which was found in a Hellenistic burial (n. 86).

The eventual placement of a Classical discus in a tomb long after it was made invites us to contemplate how an artefact would have been perceived not only in the Classical period but even much later. Recalling, for example, the mid-5th-century bronze prize tripod from the Argive games which was found in Tomb II of Vergina, one might argue that,

86 Aegina: above n. 81. — Paros: fifth-century BC marble discus (diam. 32.7 cm) with two suspension holes and showing a painted discus-thrower, reused as an urn lid in a Hellenistic burial (Zapheiropoulou 1984 [1989], 295; Brinkmann 2003, no. 343; Zapheiropoulou, Kourayios and Detoratou 2004, 180 [‘votive discus’]; Despinis 2009, 5). — Rhodes: marble discus (diam. 22.5 cm) decorated with a painted diskobolos from a fifth-century BC cist grave: Jacopi 1929, 252 (fig. 248 on p. 251); Jacobstahl 1933, 17 (fig. 7); Despinis 2009, 5.

87 For the possibility that this discus remained visible for some time before the actual burial, see above at No. 16.

rather than old junk, it was placed in the tomb precisely because it had a long life-history associated with it, and that furthermore its placement was a very conscious act, either to show respect by removing a precious heirloom from circulation or to seal up an artefact that could potentially be used for (undesirable perhaps) propaganda purposes.89 Similarly, it is interesting to ponder how those placing the discuses inside burials might have perceived them. If deposited long after manufacture, the discuses must have been marked as old; their text might have lost its comprehensibility, or in other cases some folklore connection about the context might have survived. At all events, the perceived age, history, and connection to people long past might have invested the discus with special weight or even with magical properties particularly suitable for a funerary context.

Besides the occasional funerary contexts, other factors also make it appealing to view the texts inscribed on discs both as material objects and as linguistic structures approached through philological methods. The question of the practicality of spiral writing has already been brought up. Especially those discuses attached to something else would not have been easy to read. Given the contested but presumably low literacy rates of the Archaic period,90 one wonders if the viewer was meant to read the text or merely to admire the aristocratic erudition conveyed through the text. Combined with the aristocratic overtones associated with athletics, the ‘message’ would have been clear even without reading the inscription.

It is perhaps not surprising that all discs found at Athens or in nearby regions are of marble or poros stone. If the scanty evidence allows for valid comparisons, Peloponnesians seemed to favour bronze, although in making such generalizations we must remember that bronze was even more likely to end up recycled than marble. Differences in size, however, offer further evidence for two traditions of athletic discuses. The Athenian ones are from 27 to 29 cm in diameter (with two fifth-century exceptions, namely Nos 6 & 8 of the Catalogue). Peloponnesian discuses (if No. 13 is truly a discus) and the one Boeotian discus listed above (No. 14) range from 18 to 21 cm in diameter (cf. also No. 20 from Sikyon, with a diameter of 21 cm). Following Miller, the latter group would be

89 For the tripod, see, e.g., ANDRONIKOS 1984 or, more recently, KOTTARIDI 2011. See also SALMINEN 2017, who discusses the various ways in which identity was communicated in Tomb II, including heirlooms.

90 HARRIS 1989, 49. This topic has been thoroughly rediscussed during the past two decades.
closer in size to discuses actually used at competitions. In sculpture and vase-painting, the discuses seem to measure closer to thirty centimeters than twenty. Needless to say, the depictions on vases were predominantly produced in Attic workshops, and one wonders if instead of mere artistic liberty we should here detect evidence of an Attic standard that was larger than that of the more southern areas. Regarding the discuses from Kephallenia (15), Akanthos (16) and Histria (17), their respective measures are hardly close to any standards.

Bibliography


91 Miller 2004, 60. He does not mention his sources however.
92 See, e.g., the illustrations in Jacobstahl 1933 and, of course, the Diskobolos.


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