Studying Greek History through Inscriptions

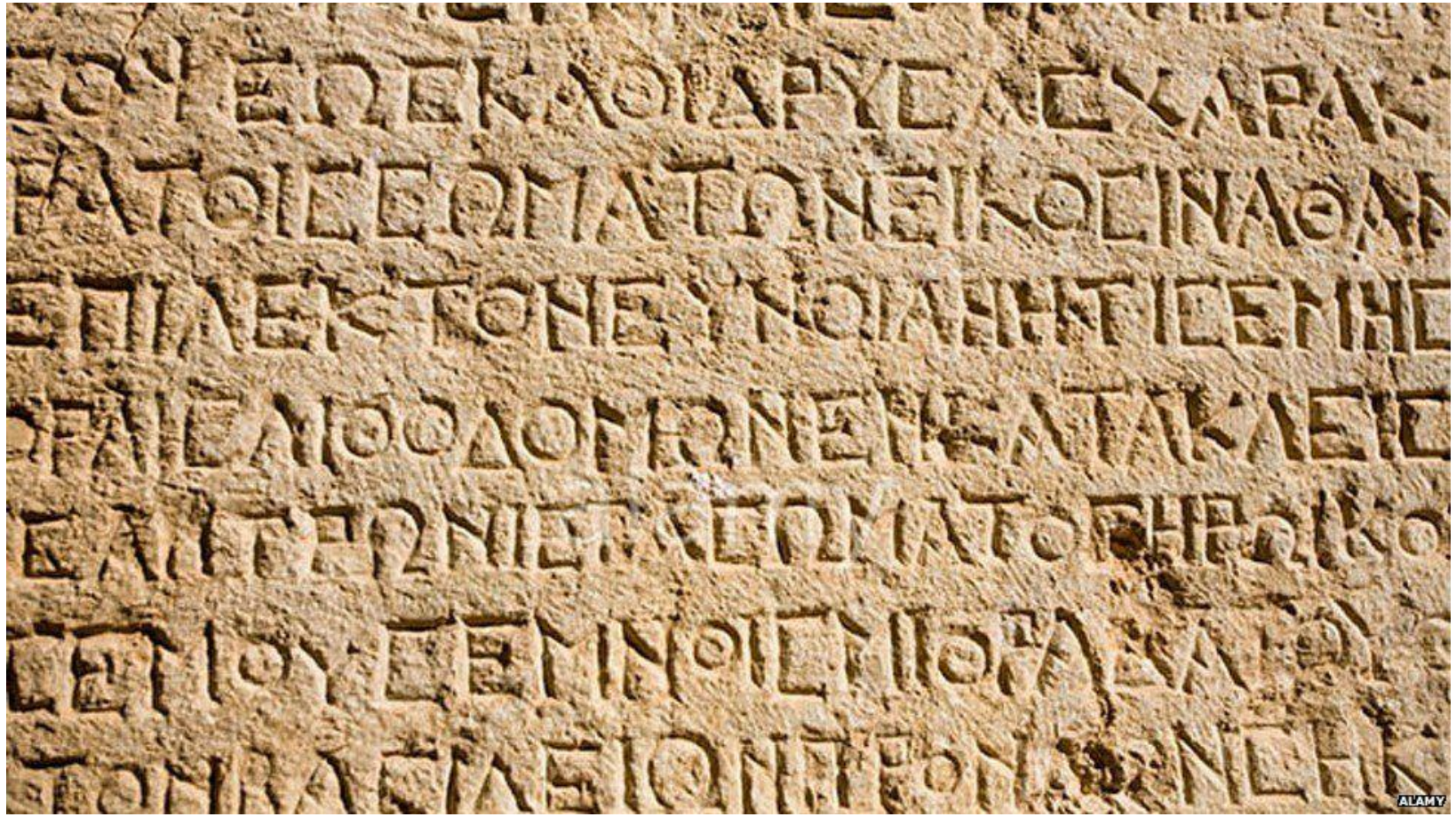
Introduction to Ancient Greek Epigraphy

1) ~~The value of inscriptions in the Study of Antiquity~~
2) ~~A Classification of Greek Inscriptions based on material~~
3) ~~A Classification of Greek Inscriptions based on content~~
4) **Some features of the Greek inscriptions**
5) **Origin and development of the Greek alphabet / Archaic alphabets**
6) **The evolution of the form of the letters**
7) The study of inscriptions
   - Methods of approaching the inscriptions
   - The tools of epigraphy
8) Publications and bibliography of inscriptions
9) Epigraphy and the Internet

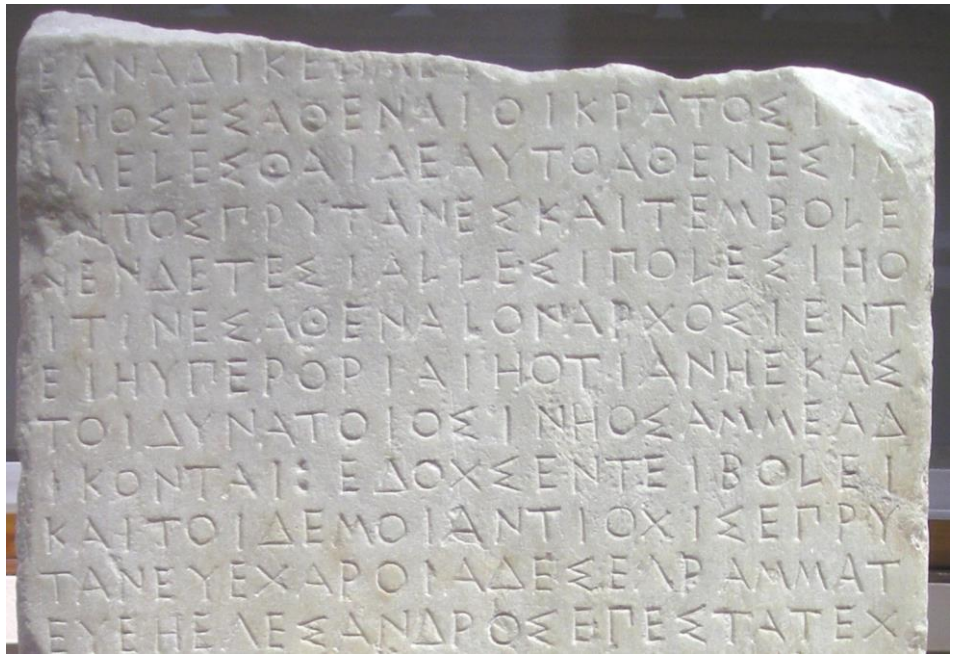
Some features of the ancient Greek inscriptions

- Capital letters
- Without spaces between words
- Without systematic punctuation

Capital letters without spaces



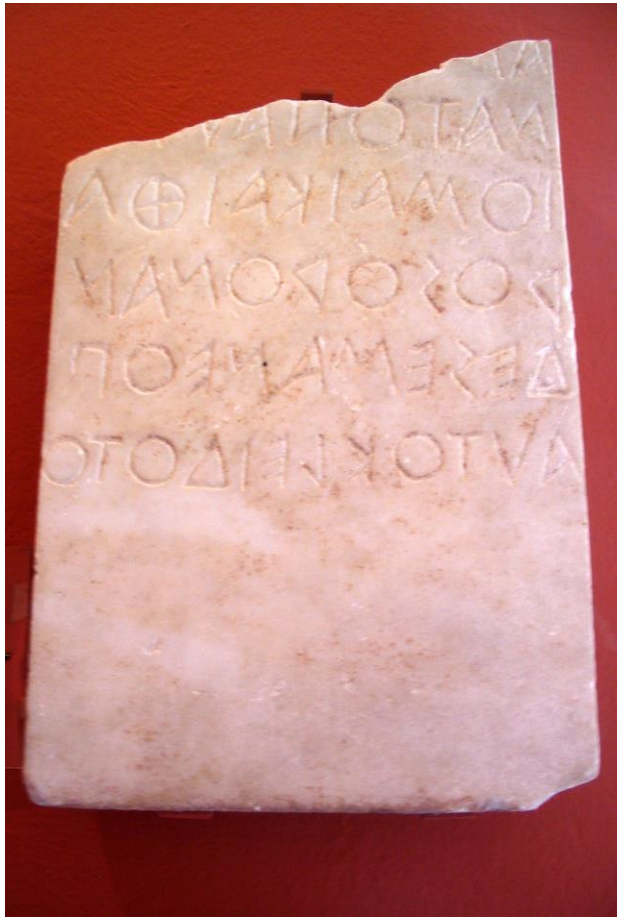
Punctuation



Direction of letters and text in the early inscriptions

From right to left (ἐπὶ τὰ λαιά): Grave-stele of Keramo, Athens, 625-600 BC

From right to left and from bottom to top:
Grave-stele of Autokleides, Athens, ca. 550 BC



Boustrophedon

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF TEXT THAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN OUT IN THE BOUSTROPHEDON STYLE, WHERE LINES ARE ALTERNATELY WRITTEN LEFT TO RIGHT AND RIGHT TO LEFT.

The most complex case: vertically and boustrophedon

Establishment of the Panathenaic games, Athens, 570-560 BC

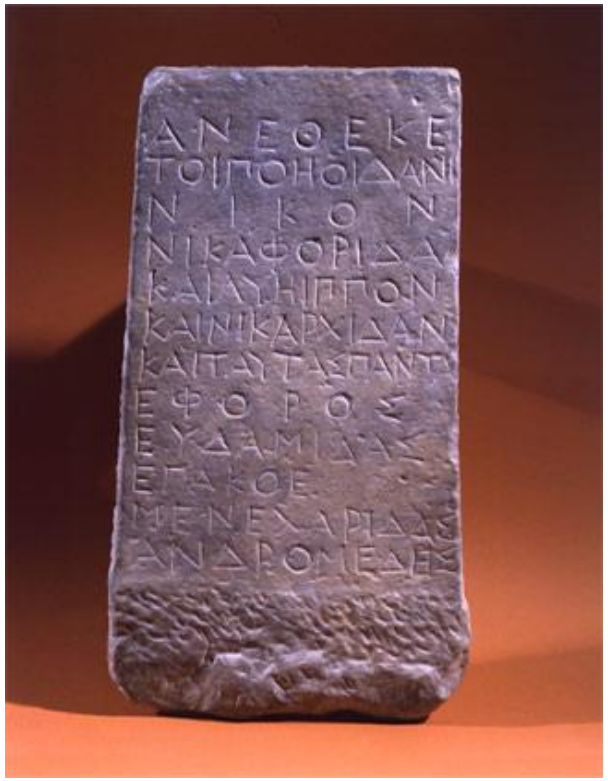
Position of the letters/text on the stone/metal/teracotta

Stoichedon-style

A piece of art: the Hecatombedon-inscription, Athens, 485/4 BC

Non-stoichedon style

Liberation of slaves, Tainaro/Sparta, later 5th - early 4th century BC



Opramoas inscription, Rhodiapolis, Turkey, 2nd c. AD

α β γ δ ε ζ η ϑ
π ο ξ ν μ λ κ ι
ϱ σ τ υ φ χ ψ ω

κιονηδὸν δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ τούτοις

α ε ι ν ϱ φ
β ζ κ ξ σ χ
γ η λ ο τ ψ
δ ϑ μ π υ ω

πλινθηδὸν οὕτως

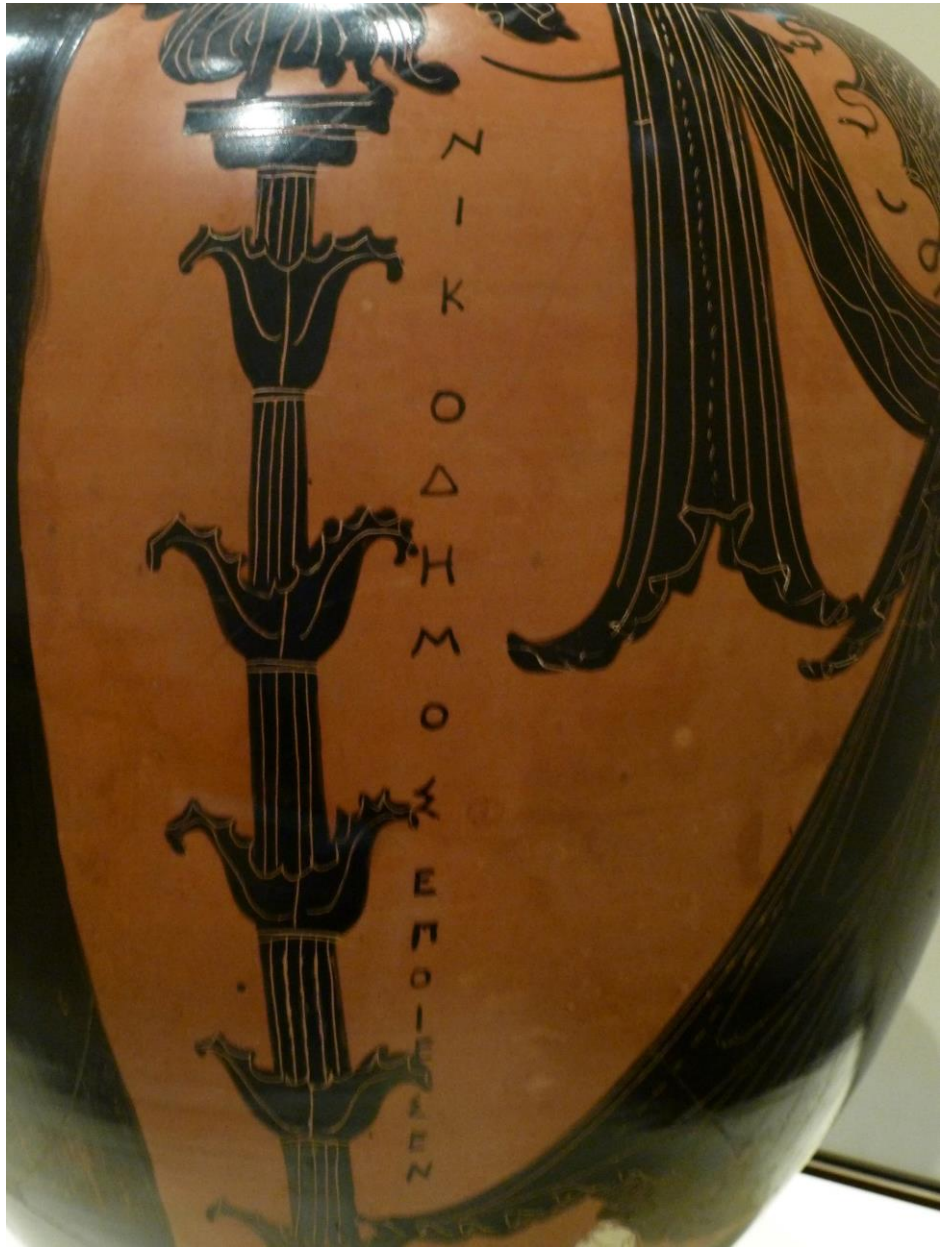
α β γ δ ε ζ
η ω
ϑ ψ
ι χ
κ φ
λ υ
μ τ
ν ξ ο π ϱ σ

σπειρηδὸν οὕτως

α ϑ ι π ϱ ω
β η κ ο σ ψ
γ ζ λ ξ τ χ
δ ε μ ν υ φ

KIONEDON

Panathenaic amphora



Speiredon

Origin and development

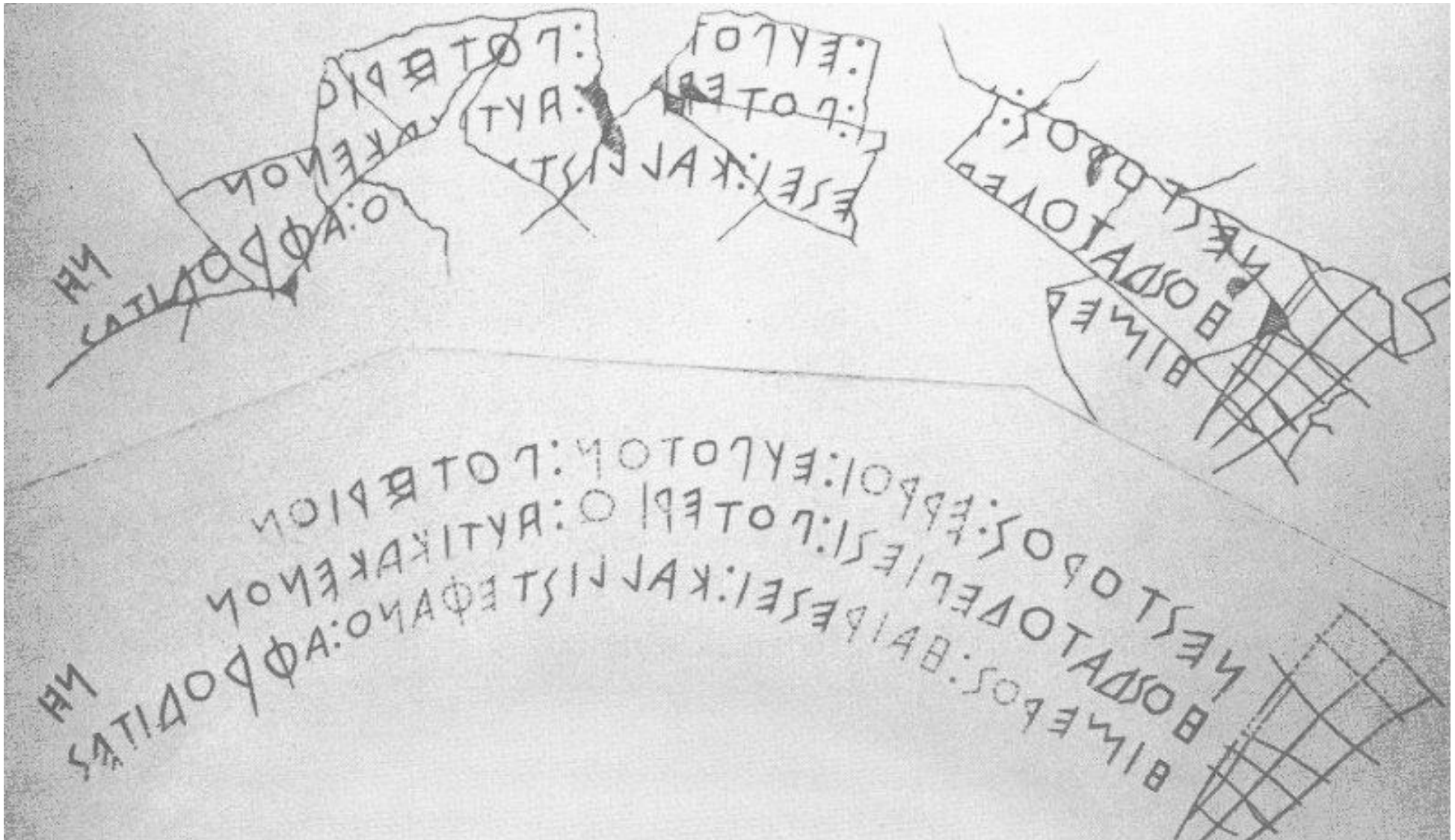
of the Greek alphabet

Phoenician letters – Greek letters

Αιγυπτιακή ιερογλυφική		Φοινικικό		(αρχαϊκό)	Ελληνικό	(κλασικό)	Λατινικό
	βόδι	𐤀	Aleph	Α	Άλφα	Α	A
	σπίτι	𐤁	Beth	Β	Βήτα	Β	B
	καμήλα	𐤂	Ghimmel	Γ	Γάμμα	Γ	C
	πόρτα	𐤃	Daleth	Δ	Δέλτα	Δ	D
	χαρά	𐤄	He	Ε	Έψιλον	Ε	E
	στύλος	𐤅	Waw	Ϝ	Δίγαμμα	Ϝ	F
		𐤆	Zayin	Ζ	Ζήτα	Ζ	Z
		𐤇	Cheth	Η	Ήτα	Η	H
		𐤈	Theth	⊗	Θήτα	Θ	
	χέρι	𐤉	Yod	Ι	Ιώτα	Ι	I
	φυτό	𐤊	Kaph	Κ	Κάππα	Κ	K
	σκοινί	𐤋	Lamed	Λ	Λάμβδα	Λ	L
	νερό	𐤌	Mem	Μ	Μυ	Μ	M
	φίδι	𐤍	Nun	Ν	Νυ	Ν	N
	ψάρι	𐤎	Samech	Ξ	Ξει	Ξ	
	μάτι	𐤏	Ayin	Ο	Όμικρον	Ο	O
	στόμα	𐤐	Pe	Π	Πει	Π	P
		𐤑	Sade	Μ	Σαν		
		𐤒	Qoph	Φ	Κόππα	Φ	Q
	κεφάλι	𐤓	Resh	Ρ	Ρω	Ρ	R
	βουνό	𐤔	Shin	Σ	Σίγμα	Σ	S
	σταυρός	𐤕	Tau	Τ	Ταυ	Τ	T
					Ύψιλον	Υ	VY
					Φει	Φ	
					Χει	Χ	X
					Ψει	Ψ	
					Ωμέγα	Ω	

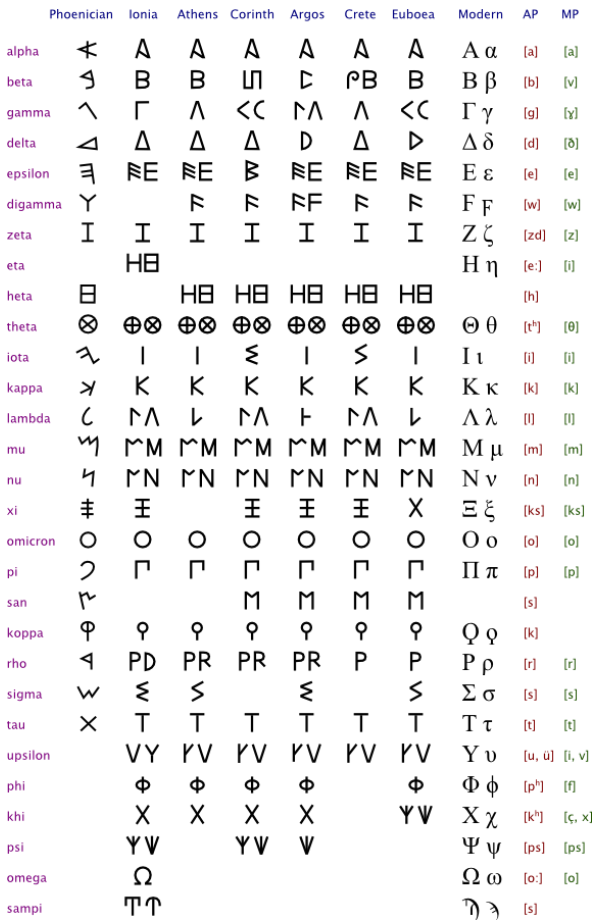
Dipylon-inscription, late 8th c. BC

Cap of Nestor, late 8th c. BC



Vessel with double alphabet inscription

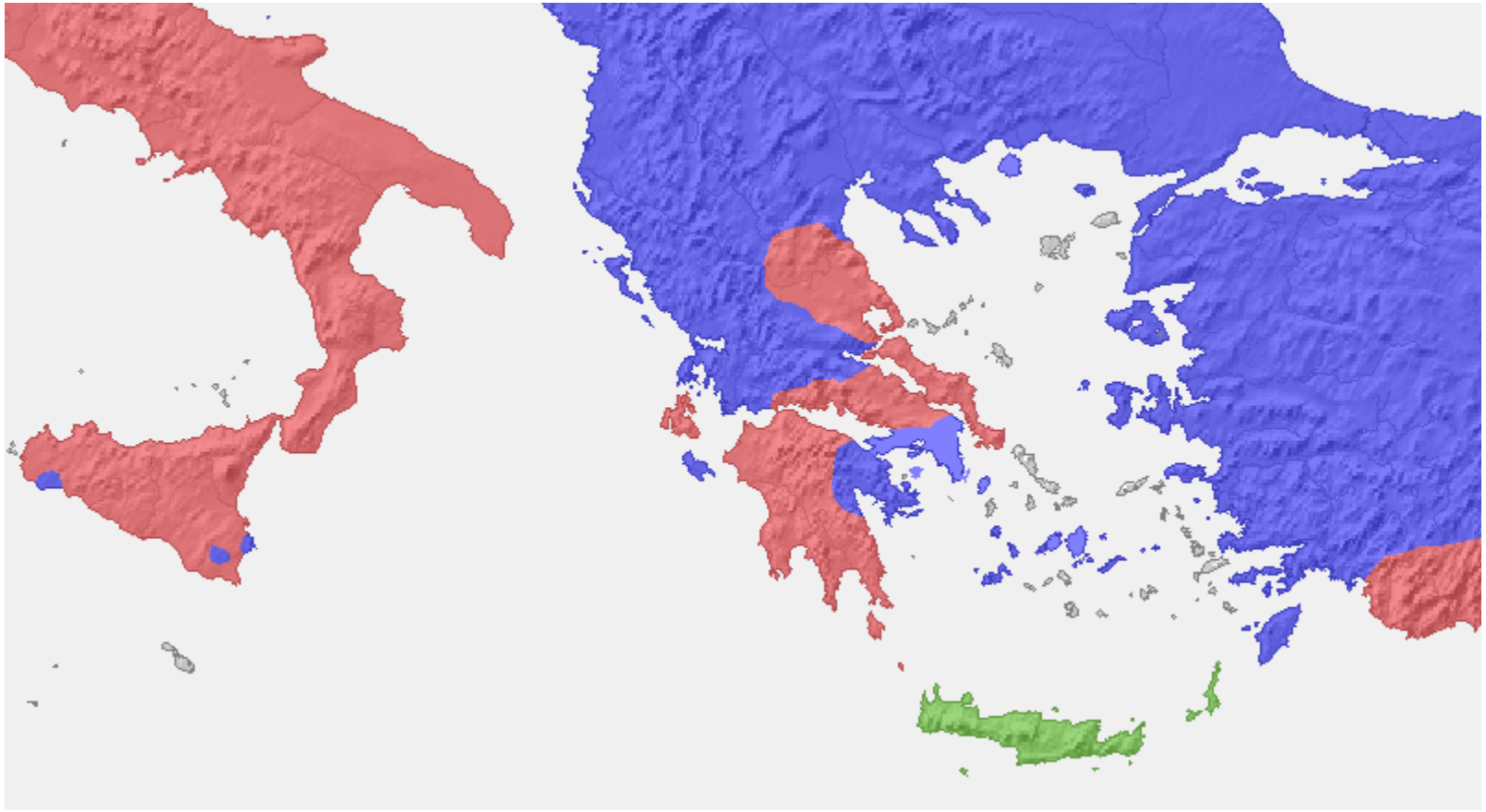
Archaic Greek alphabets



	Phoenician	Ionia	Athens	Corinth	Argos	Crete	Euboea	Modern	AP	MP
alpha	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	𐤀	Α α	[a]	[a]
beta	𐤁	𐤁	𐤁	𐤁	𐤁	𐤁	𐤁	Β β	[b]	[v]
gamma	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	Γ γ	[g]	[ɣ]
delta	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	Δ δ	[d]	[ð]
epsilon	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	Ε ε	[e]	[e]
digamma	𐤅		𐤅	𐤅	𐤅	𐤅	𐤅	Ϝ ϝ	[w]	[w]
zeta	𐤆	𐤆	𐤆	𐤆	𐤆	𐤆	𐤆	Ζ ζ	[zd]	[z]
eta		𐤇						Η η	[eː]	[i]
heta	𐤈		𐤈	𐤈	𐤈	𐤈	𐤈		[h]	
theta	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	Θ θ	[tʰ]	[θ]
iota	𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	Ι ι	[i]	[i]
kappa	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	Κ κ	[k]	[k]
lambda	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	Λ λ	[l]	[l]
mu	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	Μ μ	[m]	[m]
nu	𐤎	𐤎	𐤎	𐤎	𐤎	𐤎	𐤎	Ν ν	[n]	[n]
xi	𐤏	𐤏		𐤏	𐤏	𐤏	𐤏	Ξ ξ	[ks]	[ks]
omicron	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	𐤐	Ο ο	[o]	[o]
pi	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	Π π	[p]	[p]
san	𐤒			𐤒	𐤒	𐤒	𐤒		[s]	
koppa	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	Ϙ ϙ	[k]	
rho	𐤔	𐤔	𐤔	𐤔	𐤔	𐤔	𐤔	Ρ ρ	[r]	[r]
sigma	𐤕	𐤕	𐤕		𐤕		𐤕	Σ σ	[s]	[s]
tau	𐤖	𐤖	𐤖	𐤖	𐤖	𐤖	𐤖	Τ τ	[t]	[t]
upsilon		𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	Υ υ	[u, ü]	[i, v]
phi		𐤘	𐤘	𐤘	𐤘		𐤘	Φ φ	[pʰ]	[f]
khi		𐤙	𐤙	𐤙	𐤙		𐤙	Χ χ	[kʰ]	[ç, x]
psi		𐤚		𐤚	𐤚			Ψ ψ	[ps]	[ps]
omega		𐤛						Ω ω	[oː]	[o]
sampi		𐤜						𐤝	[s]	

Euböa	Ionien	Athen	Korinth	modern
A	AA	AA	AA	A
B	B	B	𐤁	B
𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂	𐤂
𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃	𐤃
𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	𐤄	E
𐤅	-	𐤅	𐤅	(F)
I	I	I	I	Z
𐤈	𐤈	𐤈	𐤈	H
𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	𐤉	Θ
I	I	I	I	I
K	K	K	K	K
𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	𐤋	Λ
𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	𐤌	M
𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	𐤍	N
X	𐤏	(X𐤊)	𐤏	Ξ
O	O	O	O	O
𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	𐤑	Π
𐤒	-	-	𐤒	(𐤒)
𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	𐤓	(𐤓)
P	P𐤃	P R	P R	P
𐤊	𐤊	𐤊	-	Σ
T	T	T	T	T
𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	𐤗	Υ
𐤘	𐤘	𐤘	𐤘	Φ
𐤙	X	X	X	X
(𐤘𐤊)	𐤙	(𐤘𐤊)	𐤙	Ψ
-	Ω	-	-	Ω

The four main variants of the Greek alphabets
green (Cretan), red (Euboean or Western) and blue (Ionic, Attic and Corinthian)



Variations in additional letters

In some, but not all, Greek dialects, additional letters were created to represent aspirated versions of Κ and Π (an aspirated version of Τ already existed as described above) and combinations of Κ and Π with Σ. There was some variation between dialects as to the symbols used:

- [k^h] could be Κ, ΚΗ, Ψ, or Χ
- [p^h] could be Π, ΠΗ, or Φ
- [ks] could be ΚΣ, ΧΣ, Χ, or Ξ
- [ps] could be ΠΣ, ΦΣ, or Ψ

Vowels

Greek, like Phoenician, made a distinction for vowel length.

At the beginning Greek had five short vowels (α, ι, ε, ο, υ) and four long vowels (η, ω, ει, ου), but only five vowel letters.

As in Phoenician, the difference in length was not originally made in writing.

However, later the letter eta (not needed for a consonant in eastern dialects of Greek, which lacked [h]) came to stand for the long vowel [η], and a new letter, omega (ω), was developed for long [o].

Long [e:] and [o:] were written with the digraphs ει and ου, respectively.

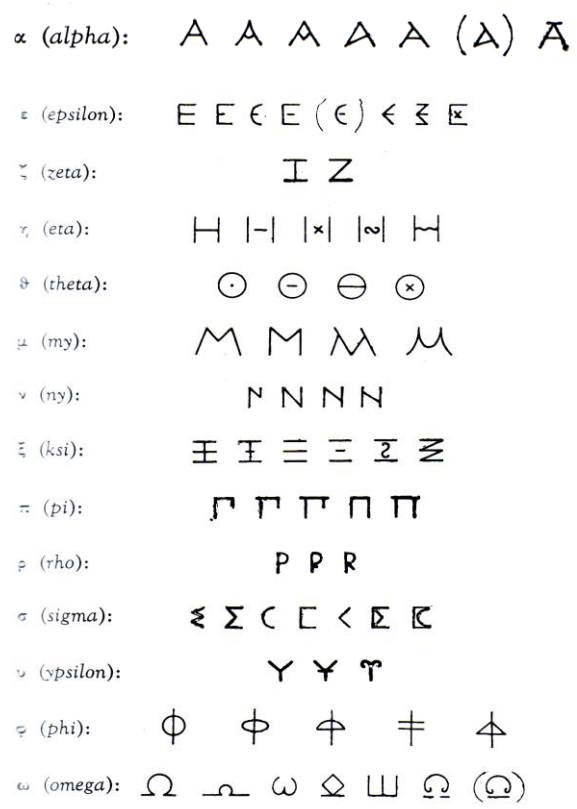
Standardization – the Ionic alphabet

In 403/2 BC, following the defeat in the Peloponnesian War and the restoration of democracy, the Athenians voted to abandon the old Attic and to introduce a standardized variant of the eastern **Ionic alphabet**, after a proposal by archon Eukleides. This **alphabet** included eta and omega. All vowels could be written systematically, thus becoming the first 'true' alphabet.

In the course of the 4th century to displace the local alphabets throughout the whole Greek-speaking world.

Dating of inscriptions by letters

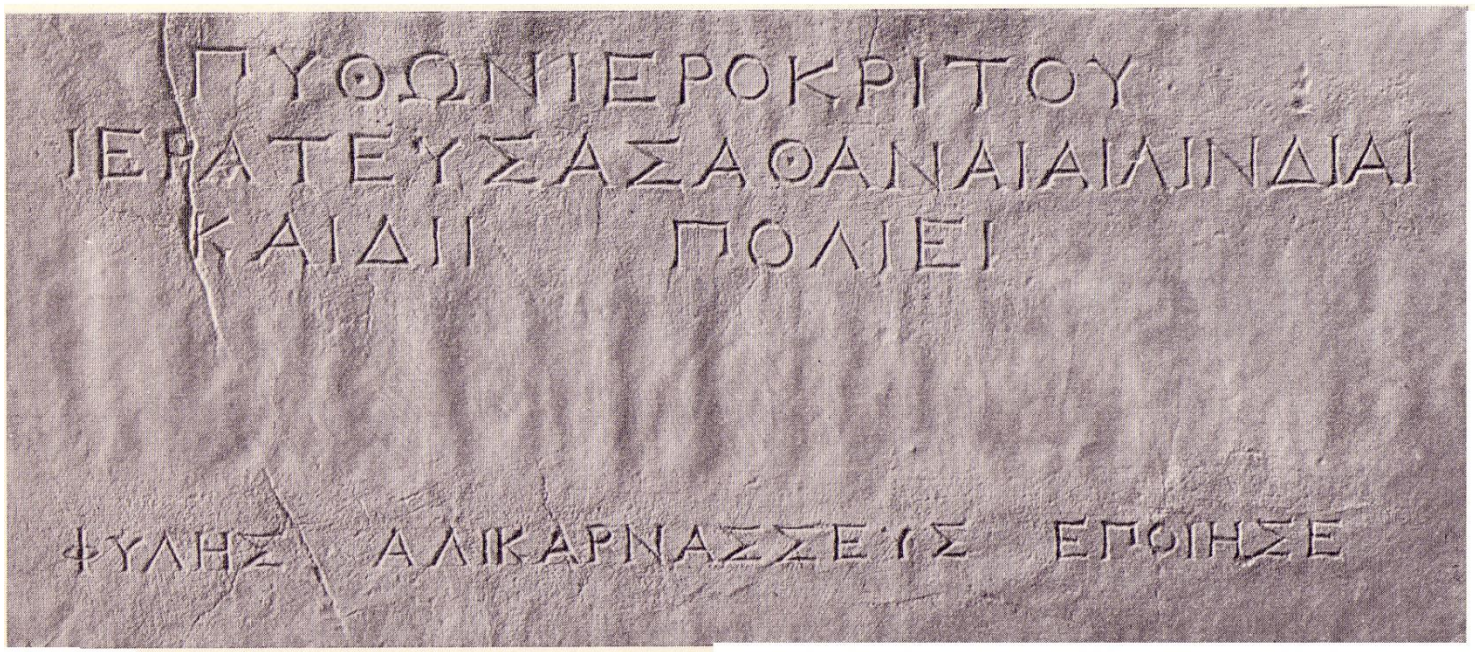
THE EVOLUTION OF THE FORM OF THE LETTERS



Methods of approaching the inscriptions

SQUEEZES

Blinkenberg, *Lindos* I 93A, ca. 240 BC



a

Πυθων Ιεροκριτου
ιερατευσας Αθαναιαι Λινδιαι
και Διι Πολιει

Φυλης Αλικαρνασσευς εποιησε

Collections of squeezes

- **The Oxford Center for the Study of Ancient Documents (CSAD)**

The CSAD has built up a considereabl squeeze collection which ist now entering in an image bank. You will find images for various areas of the Greek world.

- **Images of the squeeze collection at the Ohio State University.**

The *Center for Epigraphical and Palaeographical Studies* at OSU offers photographs of a a large selection of (mainly) Athenian documents. For each image publication details are provided. You can of course browse for individual publications.

- **The McGregor squeeze collection at the University of British Columbia**

The McGregor squeeze collection consiste of more than 1000 squeeze of inscriptions mainly from classical Athens and Nemea.

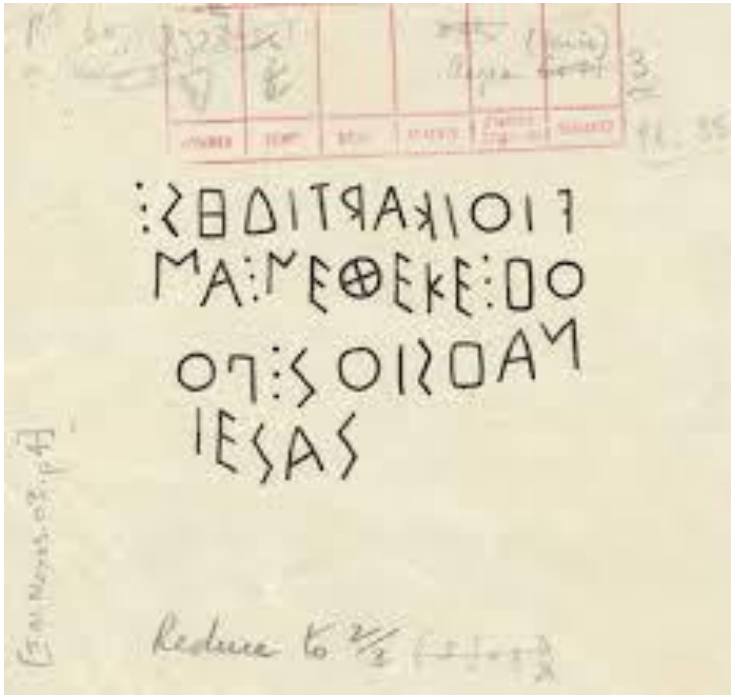
- **Ecole française d'Athènes / Institut Fernand Courby HiSOMA**

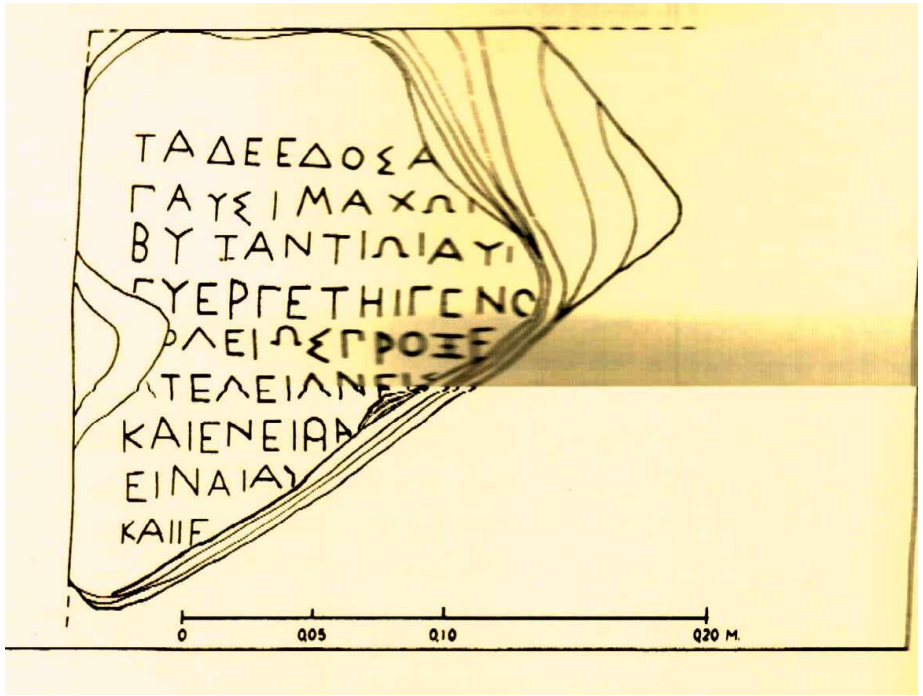
A project to make the many squeezes of French archaeological prohects that are kept in the EfA and the Institut Fernand Courby is now under way. You find more information HERE.

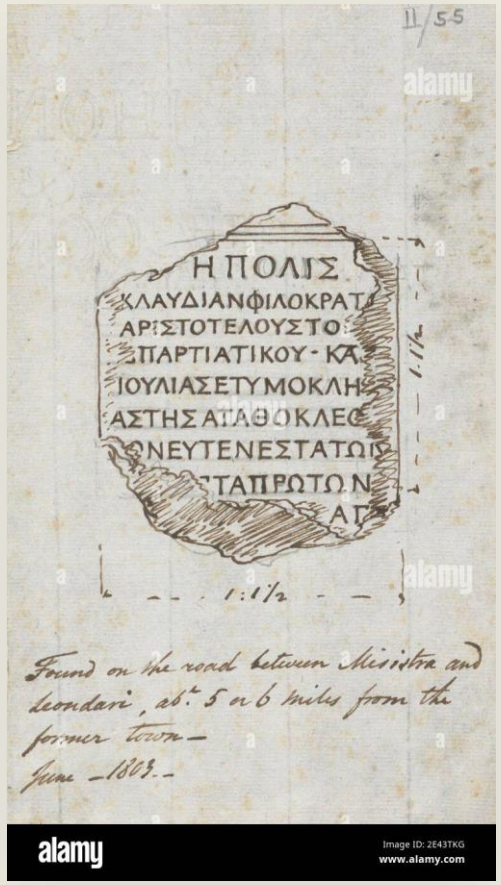
- **Institute for Advanced Study, KRATEROS project**

https://www.ias.edu/krateros

COPIES





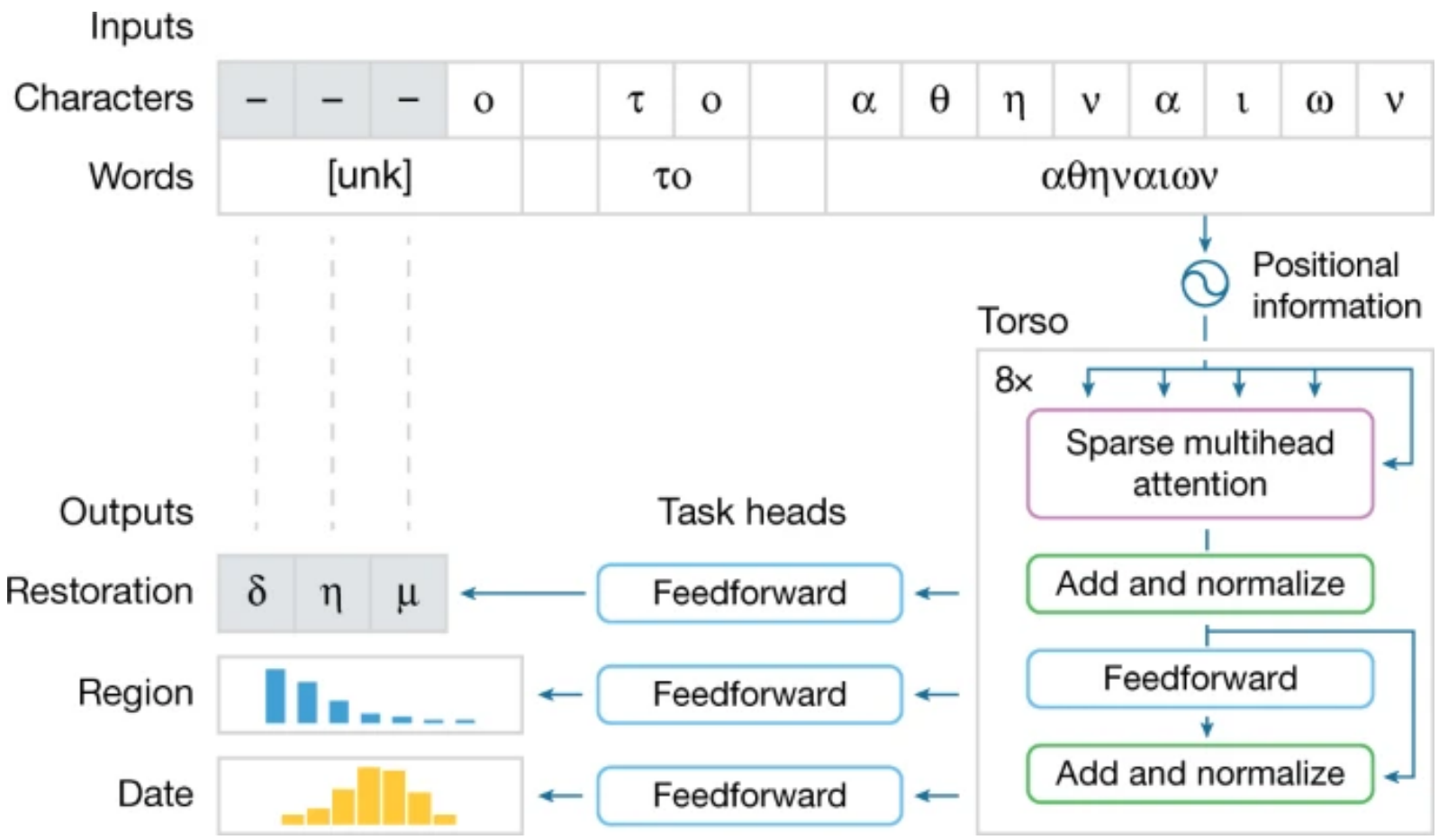

II/55
Η ΠΟΛΙΣ
ΚΛΑΥΔΙΑΝΦΙΛΟΚΡΑΤΗ
ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΟΥΣΤΟ
ΠΑΡΤΙΑΤΙΚΟΥ-ΚΑ
ΙΟΥΛΙΑΣΕΥΜΟΚΛΗ
ΑΣΤΗΣΑΤΑΘΟΚΛΕΟ
ΝΕΥΤΕΝΕΣΤΑΤΩΙ
ΣΤΑΠΡΩΤΩΝ
1:1½
Found on the road between Misistra and Leondari, abt. 5 or 6 miles from the former town—
June—1863.—

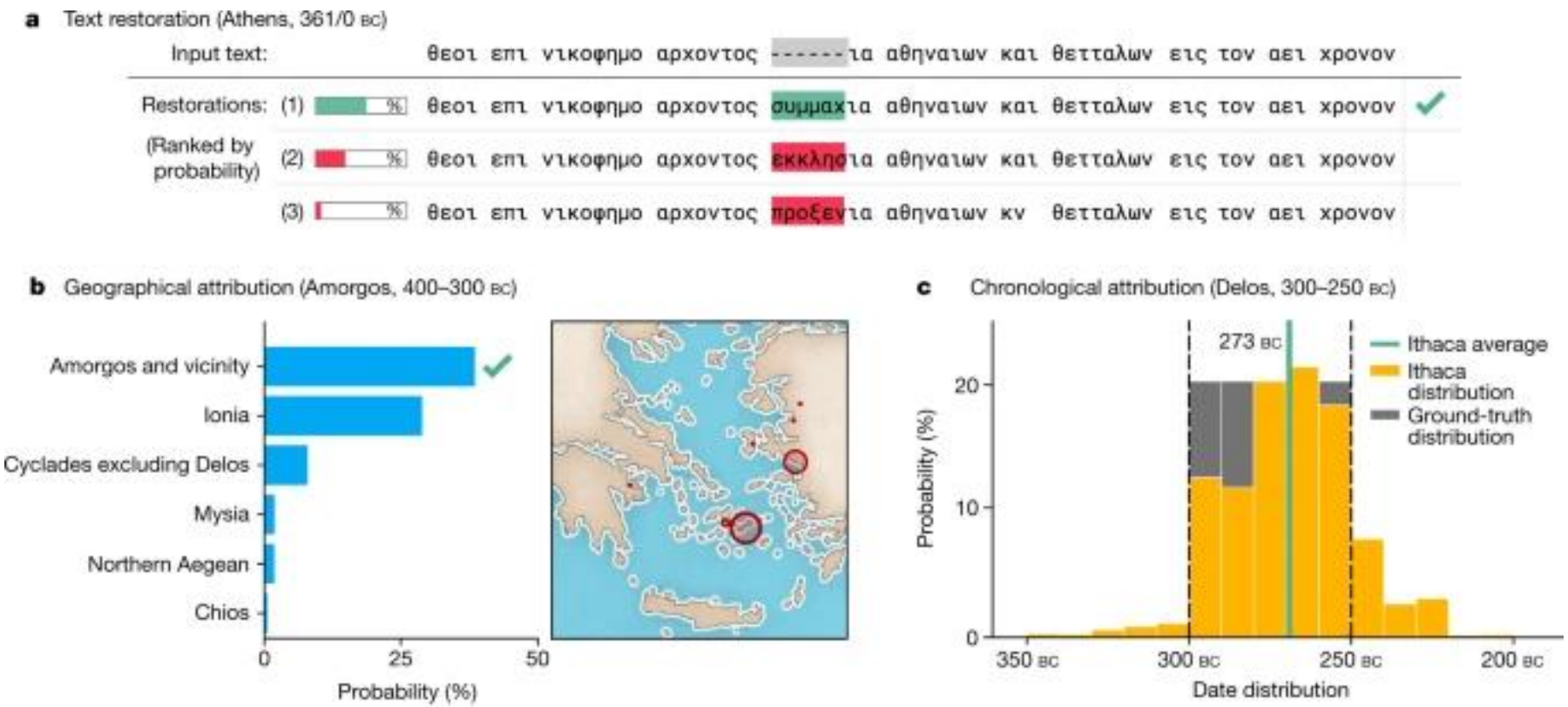
Restoring ancient Greek inscriptions

Joining fragments

Fill the gaps

https://ithaca.deepmind.com/




a Text restoration (Athens, 361/0 BC)
Input text: θεοι επι νικοφημο αρχοντος ------ια αθηναιων και θετταλων εις τον αει χρονον
Restorations: (1) % θεοι επι νικοφημο αρχοντος συμμαχια αθηναιων και θετταλων εις τον αει χρονον
(Ranked by probability) (2) % θεοι επι νικοφημο αρχοντος εκκλησια αθηναιων και θετταλων εις τον αει χρονον
(3) % θεοι επι νικοφημο αρχοντος προξενια αθηναιων κν θετταλων εις τον αει χρονον
b Geographical attribution (Amorgos, 400–300 BC)
Amorgos and vicinity
Ionia
Cyclades excluding Delos
Mysia
Northern Aegean
Chios
0
25
50
Probability (%)
c Chronological attribution (Delos, 300–250 BC)
273 BC
Ithaca average
Ithaca distribution
Ground-truth distribution
Probability (%)
20
10
0
350 BC
300 BC
250 BC
200 BC
Date distribution
d Chronological attribution (Athens, 414/3 BC)
Saliency map: δε ες σικελιαν εγον τα χρεματα στρατεγοις νικιαι κυδαντιδει και χσυναρχοσι

Epigraphic conventions

Symbol	Meaning
[abc]	Letters once present, now missing due to damage to the surface
[– – –]	Damage to the surface or support; letters cannot be restored with certainty
a(bc)	Abbreviation; text was never written out; expanded by editor
[[abc]]	Letters intentionally erased in antiquity
– – – – –	Lost lines, quantity unknown
?	Uncertainty
ạḅ	Subscribed dot. Characters damaged or unclear that would be unintelligible without context
⟨abc⟩	Letters erroneously omitted by the text, restored by the editor.
{abc}	Letters considered erroneous and superfluous by the editor.

Epigraphic corpora

***CIG* =** *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (4 volumes)
***IG* =** *Inscriptiones Graecae,* Berlin (30 volumes)
***IK* =** *Inschriften aus Kleinasien,* Bonn (68 volumes)
***MAMA* =** *Monumenta Asiae Minoris* (10 volumes)
***TAM* =** *Tituli Asiae Minoris* (9 volumes)

As example: Tituli Asiae Minoris (TAM)

- Tituli Lyciae lingua Lycia conscripti, E. Kalinka, 1901
- Tituli Lyciae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti, 3 τόμοι, E. Kalinka, 1920-1944
- Tituli Pisidiae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti. Tituli Termessi et agri Termessensis, R. Heberdey, 1941
- Tituli Bithyniae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti. Paeninsula Bithynica praeter Chalchedonem, F. C. Dörner, 1978
- Tituli Lydiae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti, 2 τόμοι, P. Herrmann, 1981-1989
- Συμπληρωματικοί τόμοι
- G. Laminger-Pascher, Die kaiserzeitlichen Inschriften Lykaoniens I. Der Süden. TAM Ergänzungsband 15. Wiener Denkschriften 232, 1992
- H. Malay, Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Manisa Museum. TAM Ergänzungsband 19. Wiener Denkschriften 237, 1994
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Selections of inscriptions

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Translations

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If you want to find new inscriptions, comments of publications on published inscriptions, or other editions of a text you need to consult one or more of these important **heuristic instrument**s, Some, but not all, are on-line.

- Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
- L'Année Epigraphique
- Bulletin Epigraphique
- Guide de l'épigraphiste
- Kernos Epigraphic Bulletin

Epigraphy and the Internet

- Packard Humanities Institute – Greek Epigraphy: http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/
- Inscriptiones Graecae: http://pom.bbaw.de/ig/
- Inscriptions of Aphrodisias : http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/inscriptions/index.html
- Attic Inscriptions Online (AIO): http://www.atticinscriptions.com/
- Collection of Greek Ritual Norms: http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/
- Dodona online: https://dodonaonline.com/
- GEI – Greek Economic Inscriptions: http://saet.sns.it/en/gei-greek-economic-inscriptions/
- Current epigraphy: http://www.currentepigraphy.org/