

# Studying Greek History through Inscriptions

## **Studying Greek History through Inscriptions. Purposes of the course**

Upon successful completion of the course you will be able to:

- have a solid knowledge of the various types of the ancient greek inscriptions and their content.
- display an in-depth understanding of the epigraphic habits of the Ancient Greek societies in the various historical periods.
- understand and critically evaluate the value of inscriptions in the study of the Ancient Greek world.
- approach and critically analyze inscriptions as a source for the history and the language of ancient Greece and other Greek-speaking or Greek-controlled areas.

# Studying Greek History through Inscriptions. Course outline

- Introduction to Ancient Greek Epigraphy
- The epigraphy of Greek communities: cities, federations, associations
- The Athenian democracy through its inscriptions
- The epigraphy of power: edicts and letters of Hellenistic and Roman rulers and decrees of the Roman senate relating to Greek matters
- The politics of munificence and the epigraphy of honour
- The epigraphy of piety and of religious beliefs
- The epigraphy of death
- Ancient Greek festivals and contests: the epigraphic evidence
- Slaves in Ancient Greek Inscriptions
- The Epigraphy of Gender: Women in Ancient Greek Inscriptions
- Business in Ancient Greek Inscriptions

## General bibliography

- Bodel, J., *Epigraphic Evidence. Ancient History through inscriptions*. London 2001
- Cook, B. F., *Greek Inscriptions*. London 1987
- Cooper, C. (ed.), *Epigraphy and the Greek Historian*. Toronto 2008
- Liddel, P. – Low, P. (eds.), *Inscriptions and their Uses in Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford 2013
- McLean, B. H., *An introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine*. Ann Arbor 2002
- Woodhead, A. G., *The Study of Greek inscriptions*. Cambridge 1981

# 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) Origin and development of the Greek alphabet
- 5) Some features of Greek inscriptions
- 6) The study of inscriptions
  - Methods of approaching the inscriptions
  - The tools of epigraphy
  - Dating of inscriptions
- 7) Publications and bibliography of inscriptions
- 8) Epigraphy and the Internet

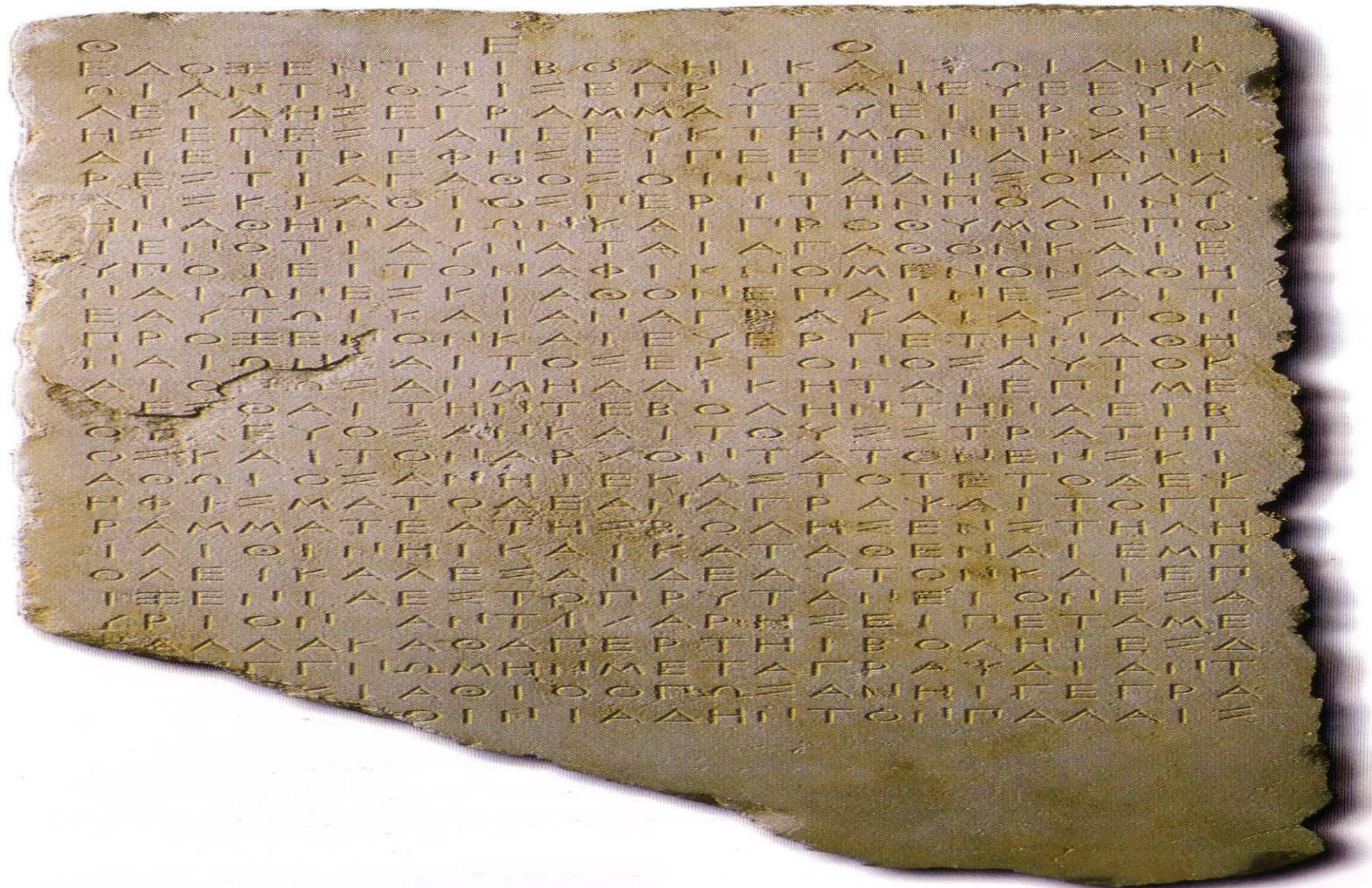
## Ottoman fortress in Thessaloniki (built 1431)



# **A Classification of Greek Inscriptions based on material**

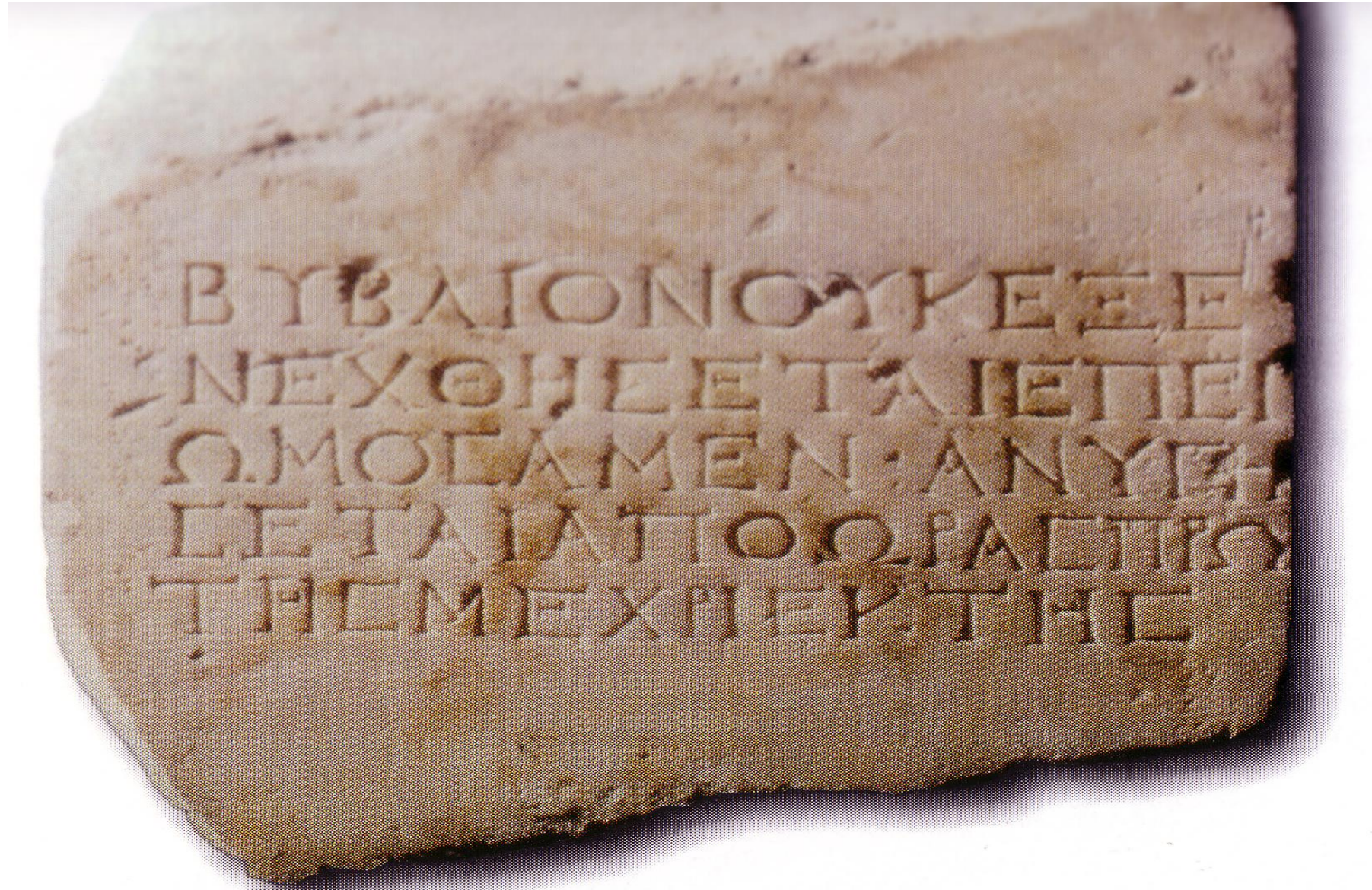
# Stone/marble

## Athenian decree, 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC





# Instructions of a library, Athens, 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD



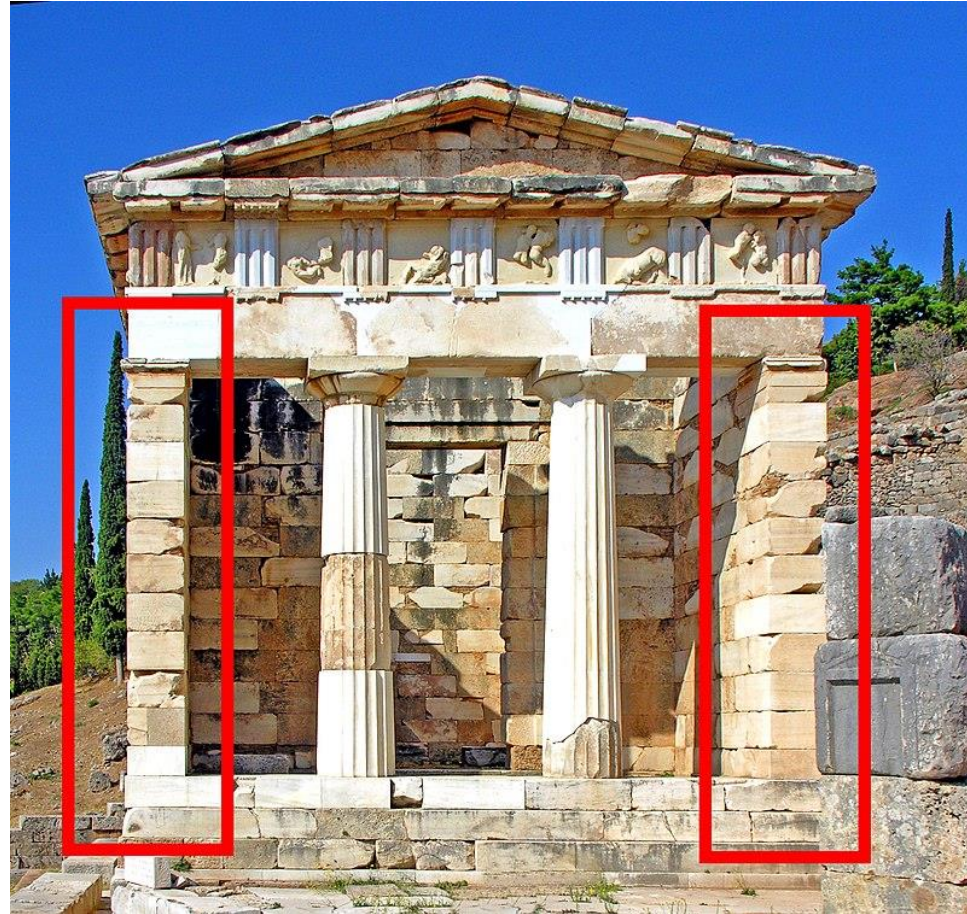
ΒΥΒΛΙΟΝΟΥ ΚΕΕΕ  
ΝΕΥΘΗΕΤΑΙΕΤΕΙ  
ΩΜΟΛΑΜΕΝΑΝΥΕ  
ΛΕΤΑΙΤΙΟΩΡΑΔΙΩ  
ΤΗΜΕΧΡΗΕΥΤΗΙ

# Building inscriptions

Athenian stoa, Delphi, 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC

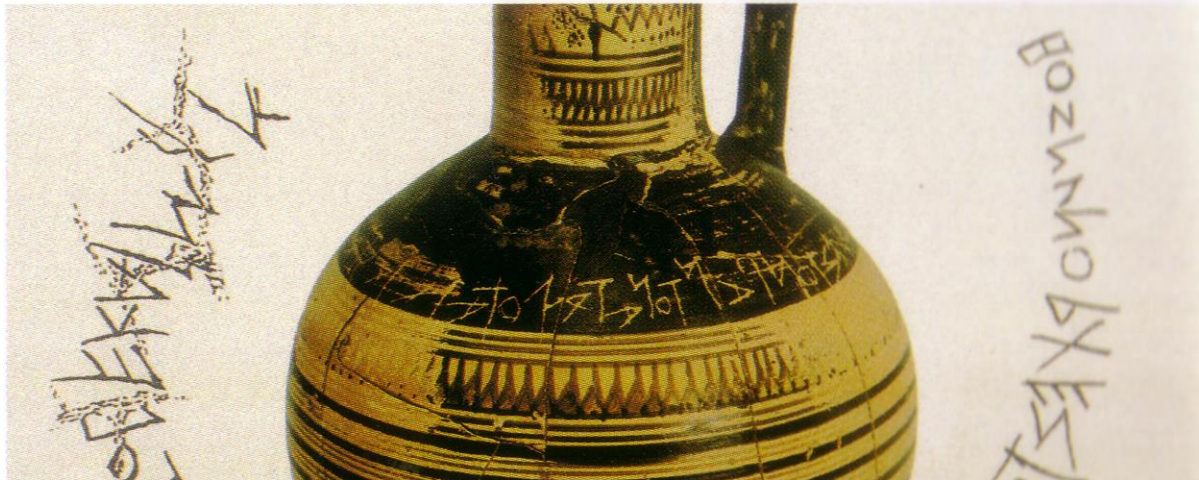


# Athenian Treasury, Delphi, 5<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC

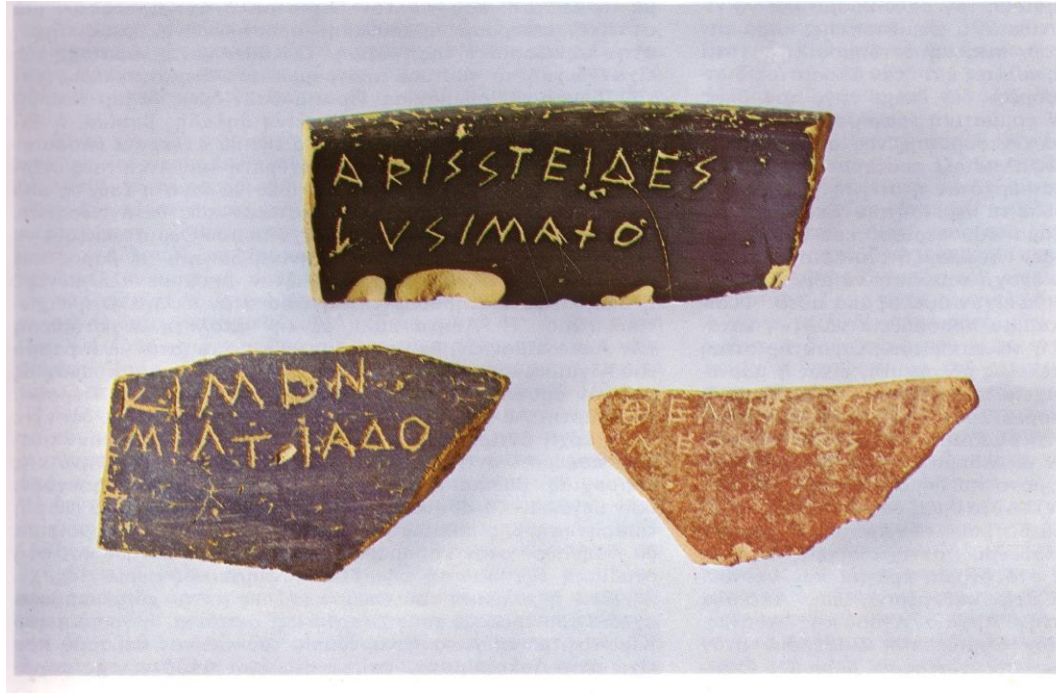


# Inscriptions on terracotta

Inscriptions on vases, Athens, 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC



# Ostraca of ostracism, Athens, 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC

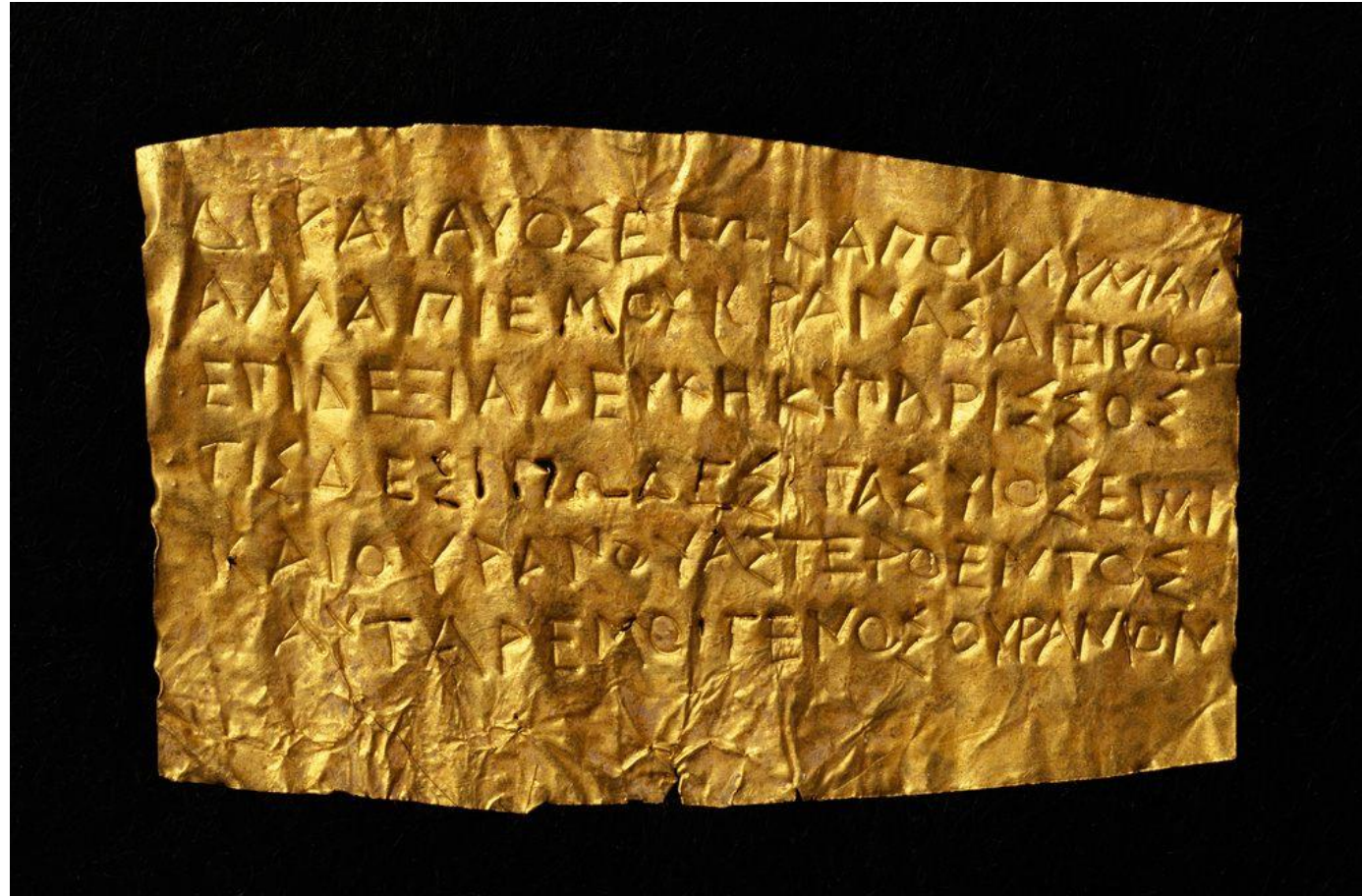


# Stamps on amphorae, Rhodes and Thasos

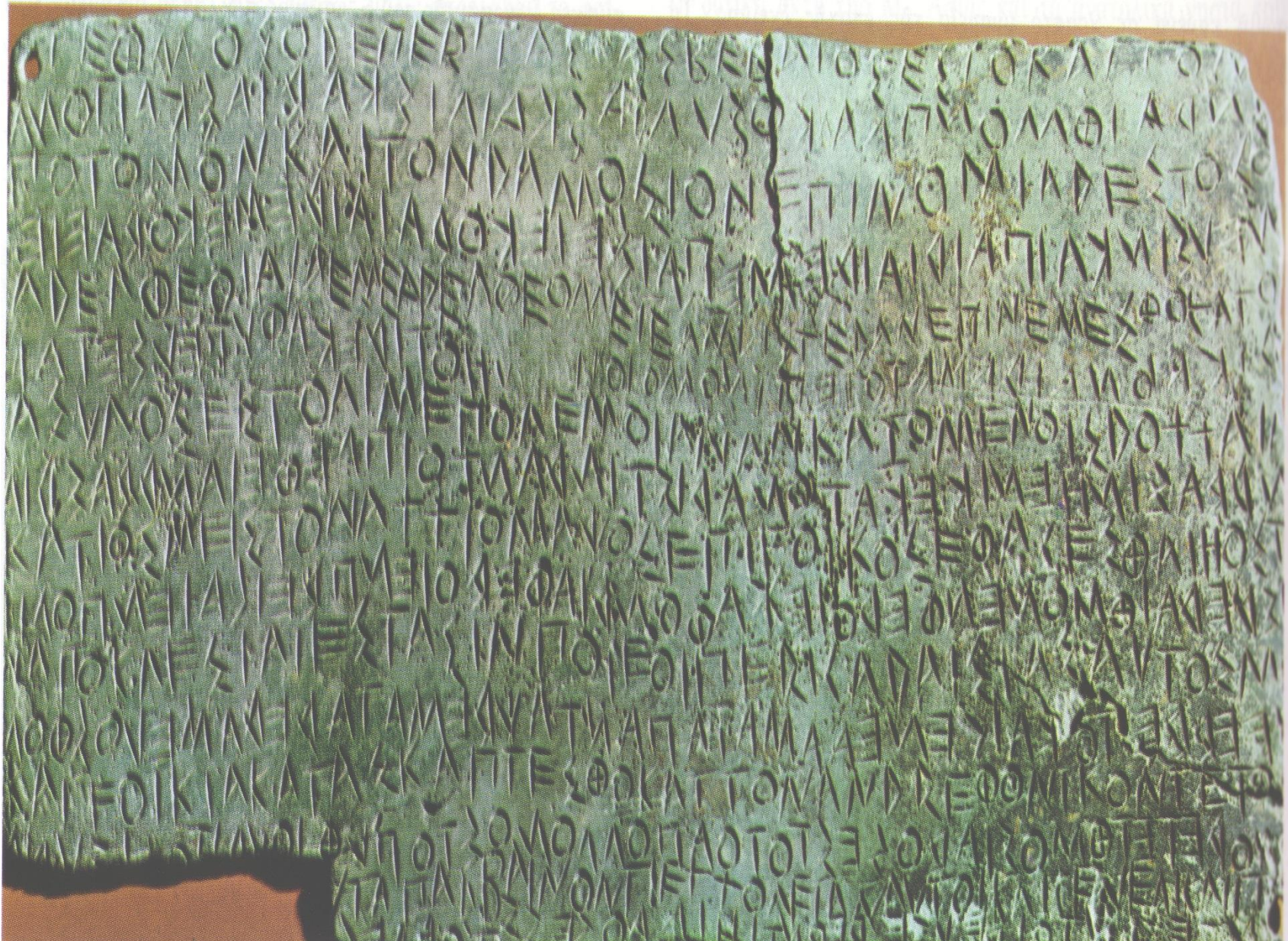


# Inscriptions on metal

Orphic tablets in gold, Paul Getty Museum, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC



# Law in bronze, Naupaktos, 525-500 BC



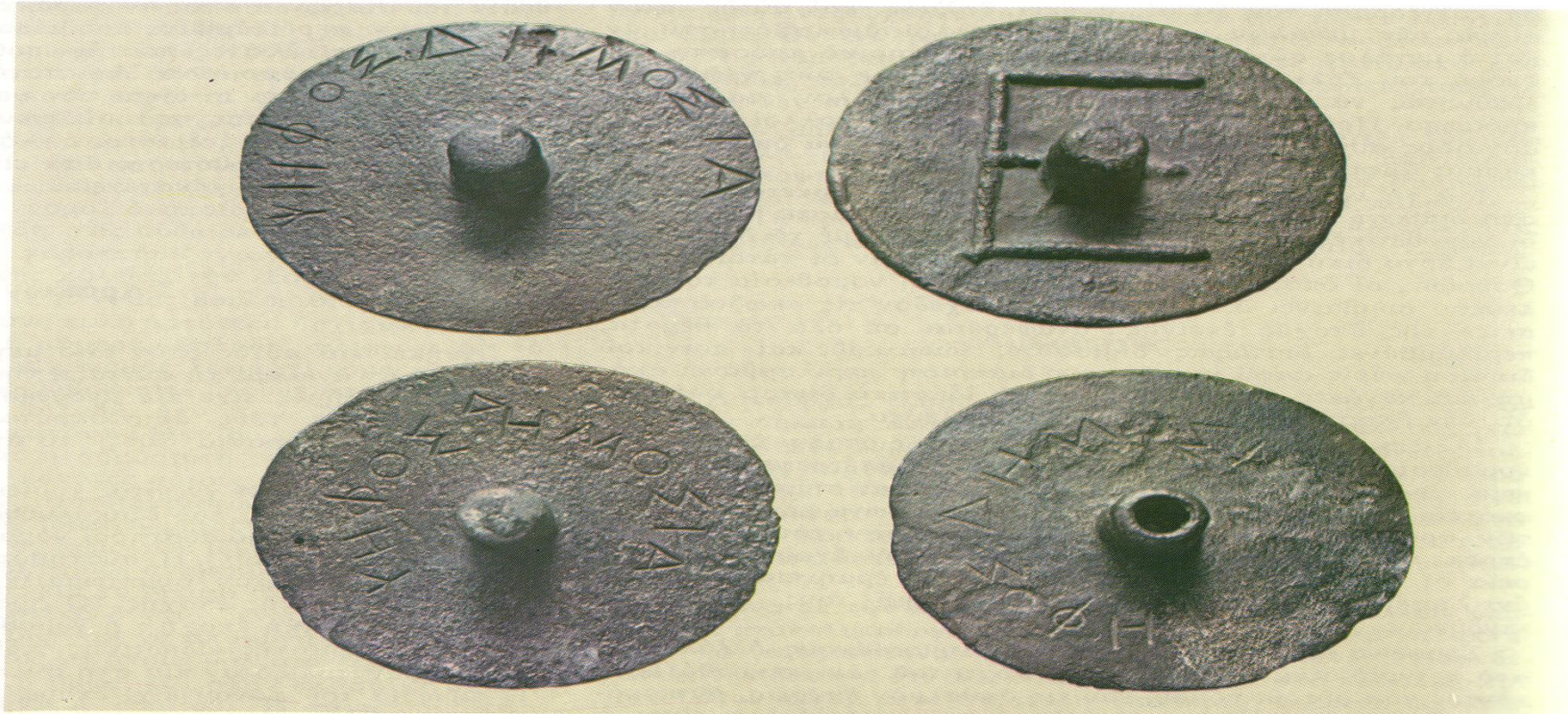


# Curse in lead, Athens, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC



# Public votes, Athens, 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC

ΨΗΦΟΣ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ



# Inscriptions on mosaics

Hatay, Turkey, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC(?)

ΕΥΦΡΟΣΥΝΟΣ

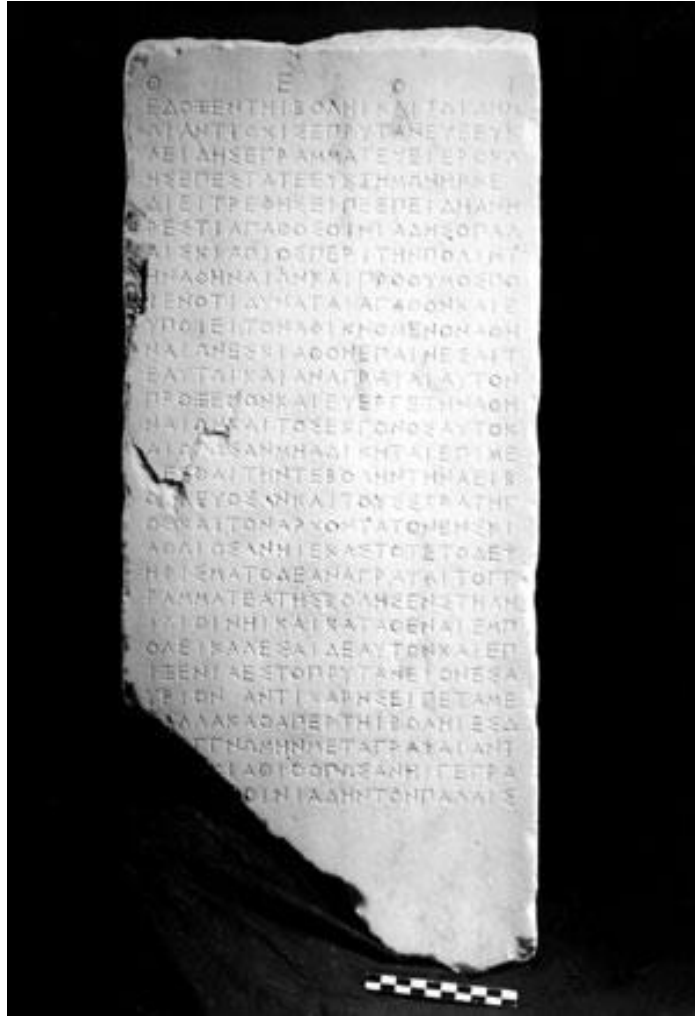


# Israel, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC



**A Classification of Greek Inscriptions  
based on content**

# Decree for Oiniades of (Palai)Skiathos, Athens, 408/7 BC



- Gods.
- Decree. The Council and the People decided. Antiochis was the prytany. Eukleides was secretary. Hierokles was chairman. Euktemon was archon. Dieitrephes proposed: since Oiniades of Palaiskiathos is a good man with regard to the city of Athens and eager to do what good he can, and does good to any Athenian who arrives in Skiathos, to praise him and inscribe him as a proxenos and benefactor of Athens, and his descendants; and there shall take care, so that he suffers no harm, the Council in office at any time and the generals and whoever the officer in Skiathos may be on each occasion; and the secretary of the Council shall inscribe this decree on a stone stele and set it down on the acropolis; and to invite him also to hospitality in the city hall tomorrow.
- Decree. Antichares proposed: in other respects in accordance with the Council, but in the proposal a correction shall be made for 'of Skiathos', so that there shall be written, 'Oiniades of Palaiskiathos'.



Honorific inscription  
from a gymnasium,  
Athens, 325-275 BC

"People" and  
"The young" in a  
couronne.  
Beneath  
"Aristoxenos son  
of Démophon"  
(benefactor of the  
gymnasium)

# Letter of Septimius Severus to the city of Nikopolis ad Istrum, Dacia



Emperor Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus, Conqueror of Arabia and Adiabene, and Greatest Conqueror of Parthia, Son of the deified Marcus Aurelius Pius ... and Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antonius Augustus [Caracalla] ... Greet the archons, the city council, and the people of Nicopolis ad Istrum. We have seen your remarkable devotion declared in our decree. As well-meaning and loyal people striving to receive a more favorable assessment in our eyes, you have clearly shown that you share our joy from the recent events; you have also conducted mass celebrations at the news for our successes – the common peace which has arrived for all people thanks to the victory over the barbarians who constantly embolden themselves to attack the empire, and the joint leading of the state by the two of us in just collaboration, together with the legal Caesar [Geta] belonging to our family. That is why we have read the decree with the due respect to the monetary installment of 700,000 [denarii] as coming from well-meaning people. Our friend and legate, the excellent Ovinus sent the decision.



# Inventory of the Temple of Apollo, Delos, 296 BC

- In the archonship of Phillis we took over the following from the hieropoioi Diakritos, Dexi[krates], Phillis

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- [In the Temple of Apollo.] seventeen gold [crow]ns; gold collar [- - -]; gold [crow]n, dedication of Aristaichmos; three phialai [which Stesileos dedicate]d; silver rose, dedication of Dexikrates; crown [- - -]wh]ich Timokrates dedicated; silver cup; kra[ter- - -r]ings (55) silvered two hundred twenty; gilded [- - -st]aff silver. Bronze: three keys of the Temple of the Seven Statues. In a chest we received by weight various gold, weight seventy four drachmas, three obols; from this we subtracted (gold) for the crown for Leto voted by the demos, weight 20 drachmas. Weight of various silver with the Chalcidian (coin) and the little moons, fifty-eight drachmas.

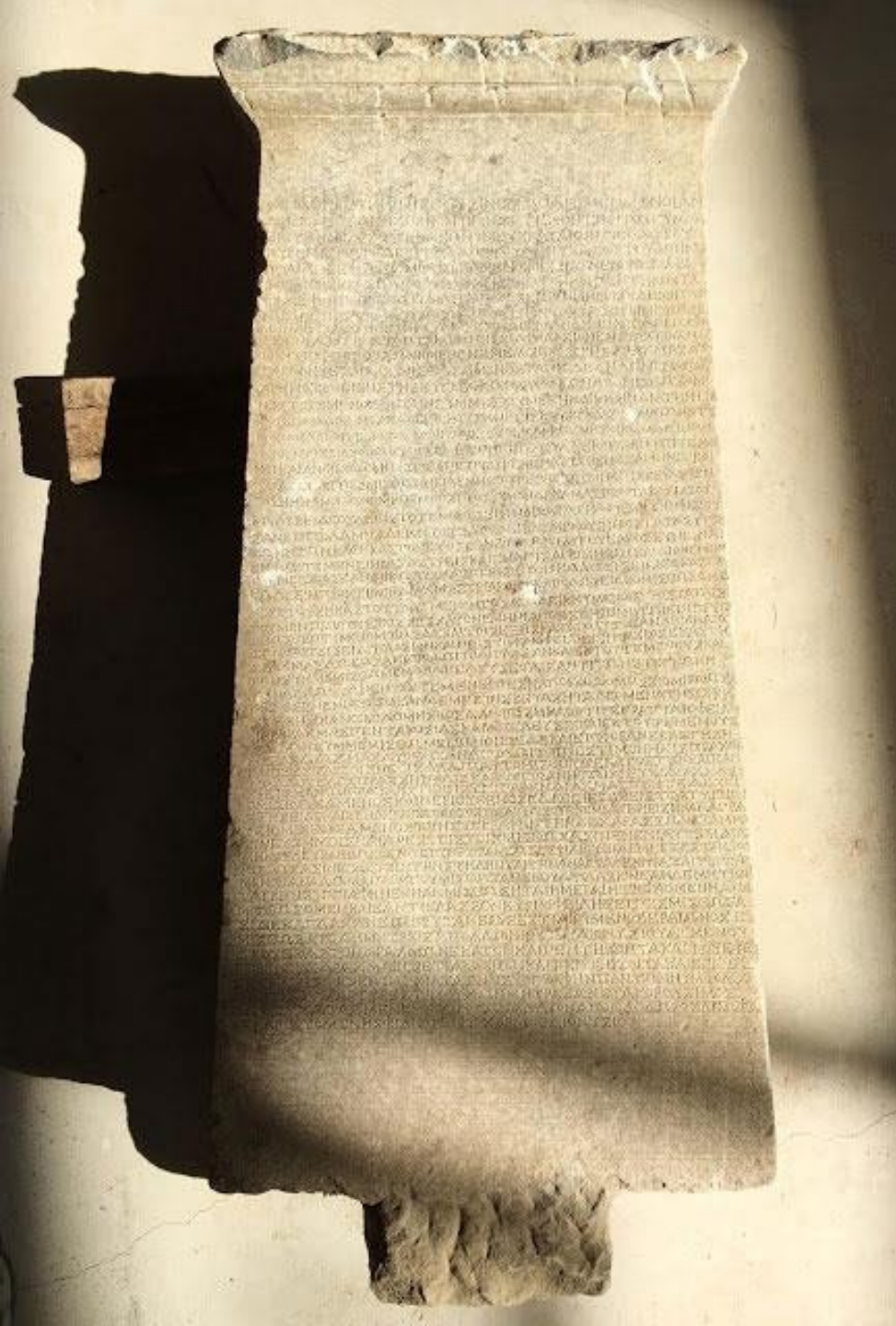






## Lease of tenement-houses by the deme Eleusis, 337-324 BC

[On these terms the Eleusinians lease the] tenement-houses. The lessee of the [tenement-house next to the agora?] of the Eleusinians will pay the rent to the deme [of the Eleusinians for ten years? 70]0 drachmas [a year]; on the tenth or fourth of [Boedromion 200, of Posideon] 200, of Mounichion 200, and a hundred 5 [drachmas (on the tenth or fourth) of Skirophorion] . . .



## Leasing contract, Teos/Ionia, 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC

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The contract was made with a guarantor and six witnesses. The *Neoi* (group of the gymnasium) inherited the land, including structures, slaves and the holy altar, from a person in Teos. Aiming to cover the expenses and gain some income the *Neoi* rented the land.



## Manumission of Damon by a doctor, Delphi, 155/4 BC

When Athambos son of Habromachos was archon, in the month of Ilaios, Dionysios and Politas, sons of Asandros, sold to Pythian Apollo a male slave, named Damon, on these terms, at a price of six minas of silver, as Damon entrusted the sale to the god, on condition that he would be free and unseizable by everyone for all time, doing whatever he wishes and going off wherever he wishes. Guarantors in accordance with the law of the city: Dromokleidas son of Hagion, Astoxenos son of Dionysios, and Dion son of Alexon. And if anyone seizes Damon for re-enslavement, the vendors Dionysios and Politas and the guarantors - Dromokleidas, Astoxenos and Dion - shall present the sale to the god as secure... If Dionysios has need, Damon shall share with him in the doctor's work for five years, receiving what he requires for food, clothing and bedding. Witnesses: priest of Apollo: Amyntas; magistrates: Aristion son of Agon; private individuals: Sosikrates, Philaitolos son of Phainis, Diodoros son of Herakon, Eukleidas, Dromokleidas, Astoxenos, and Dion.



**Dedication written on  
the surface of the  
figurine of a musician,  
Metropolitan Museum,  
New York, 6th c. BC.**

Dolichos dedicated me.

# Dedication on a statue base, Athens, 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD



Fl(avios) Epiktetos  
consecrated the statue  
by making a wish  
acompagning a wish to  
Asklepios

# Oracle, Dodona, late 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC.



Hermon asks to which god he should pray to have useful children from his wife Kretaia, apart those he already has.



# Tombstone, Demetrias/Thessaly, 3rd c. BC



Menelaos, son of  
Hegesilaos, from  
Amphipolis

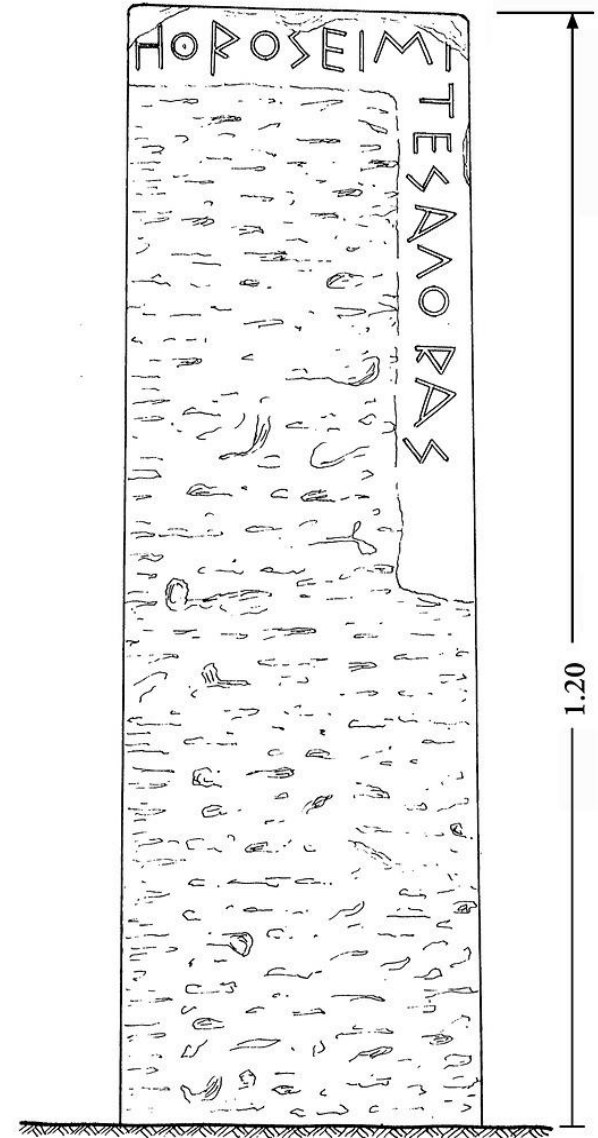
# Funerary epigram for a pig, Edessa, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD

A pig, friend to everybody  
a four-footed youngster  
here I lie, having left  
behind the land of Dalmatia,  
offered as a gift,  
and Dyrrachion I trod  
and Apollonia, yearning  
and all the earth I crossed  
on foot alone unscathed.  
But by the force of a wheel  
I have now lost the light,  
longing to see Emathia  
and the chariot of Phallos  
Here now I lie, owing  
nothing to death anymore



“horos eimi tēs  
agoras”

I am the  
boundary-stone  
of the Agora





**Greek Graffiti on the wall of the gymnasium of the city of Priene**



**Greek graffito on the  
wall of a building  
located on Rome's  
Palatine Hill**

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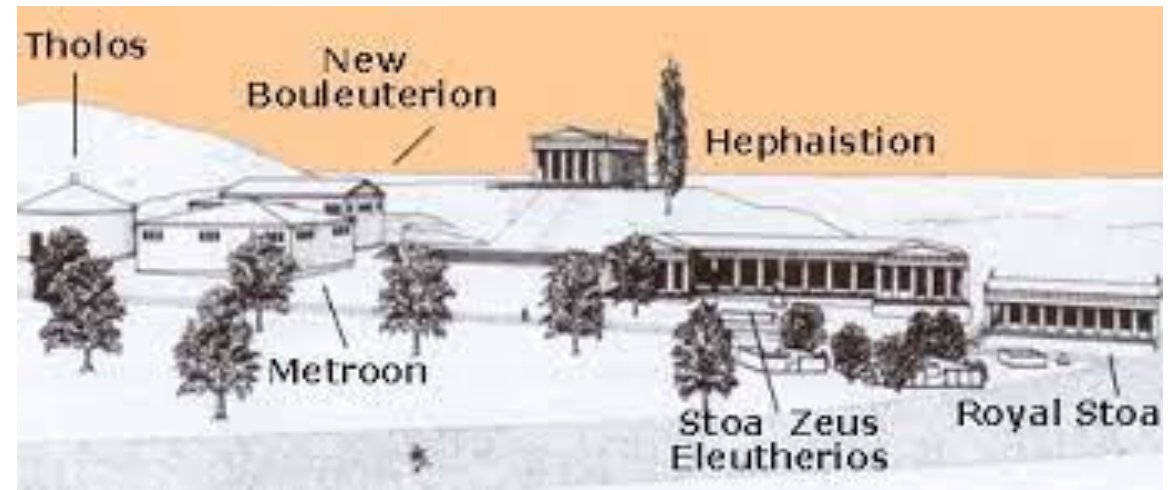
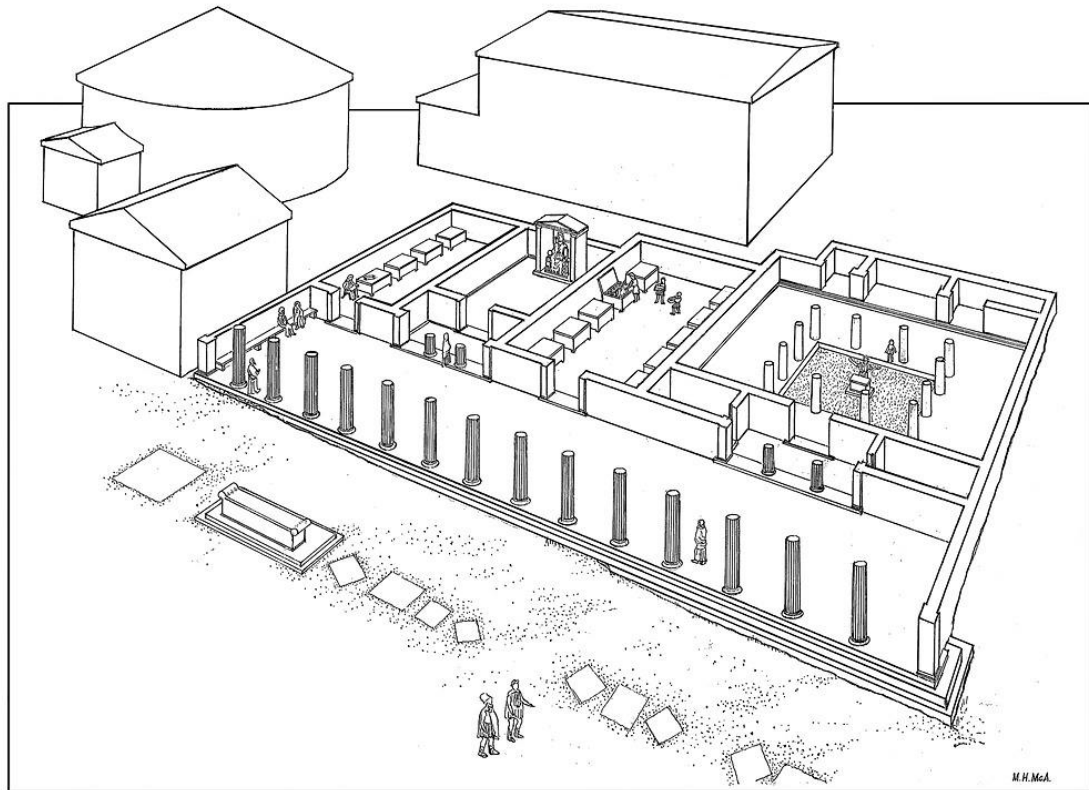
Alexamenos worships

God





Base of portrait statues signed by Praxiteles,  
Athens, before 361 BC



# The Metroon of Athens

# The Monument of the Eponymous Heroes in the Agora of Athens

