



Visual Culture and Ancient History: Issues of Empiricism and Ideology in the Samos Stele at Athens

Through a specific example, this paper explores the problems of empiricism and ideology in the uses of material-cultural and visual evidence for the writing of ancient history. The focus is on an Athenian documentary stele with a fine relief from the late fifth century BC, the history of its publications, and their failure to account for the totality of the object's information—sculptural and epigraphic—let alone the range of rhetorical ambiguities that its texts and images implied in their fifth-century context. While the paper reflects on the *Samos Stele* (the meanings of the *dexiosis* of the figures represented, and the repeated references to the “goodness” of the Samians with respect to the Athenians, for instance), it also considers the broader hermeneutic problems of approaching the different discourses of word and image within antiquity and worries about the distortions introduced into ancient history by modern formulations, descriptions, and translations of the past.

For J.M., loyal friend and ally; in the hope that our conversation
will not end with departure across the sea. . . .

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The Samos Stele
Acropolis Museum 1333 = *IG* I³ 127 and *IG* II² 1
Edited and translated by P. J. Rhodes and Robin Osborne

§i

Κ η φ ι σ ο φ ὶ ν Π α ι α ν ι ε ὺ ς
vac. ἐ γ ρ α μ μ ᾶ τ ε υ ε. *vacat*

Σαμίους ὅσοι μετὰ τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναί-
ων ἐγένοντο. *vacat*

- 5 ἔδοξεν τῇ βολῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ. Κεκροπίς ἐπρυτάνευε· Πόλυμνις Εὐνυμνεὺς ἐγραμμάτευε· Ἀλεξίας ἤρχε· Νικοφῶν Ἀθμονεὺς ἐπεστάτει. γνώμη Κλεσόφο και συνπρυτάνεων, ἐπαινέσαι τοῖς πρέσβεσι τοῖς Σαμίους τοῖς τε προτέροις ἤκοσι καὶ τοῖς νῦν καὶ τῇ βολῇ καὶ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Σαμίους, ὅτι ἐσὶν ἄνδρες ἀγαθοὶ καὶ πρόθυμοι ποιῆν ὅ τι δύνανται ἀγαθόν,
- 10 καὶ τὰ πεπραγμένα αὐτοῖς ὅτι δοκῶσιν ὀρθῶς ποιῆσαι Ἀθηναίους καὶ Σαμίους. καὶ ἀντὶ ὧν εὖ πεποιθήκασιν Ἀθηναίους καὶ νῦν περὶ πολλοῦ ποιῶνται καὶ ἐσηγῶνται ἀγαθὰ, δεδόχθαι τῇ βολῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ Σαμῖος Ἀθηναῖος ἔναι, πολιτευσόμενος ὅπως ἂν αὐτοὶ βόλωνται· καὶ ὅπως ταῦτα ἔσται ὡς ἐπιτηδεύοντα ἀμφοτέροις, καθάπερ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν, ἐπειδὴν ἐρήνη γένηται, τότε περὶ τῶν ἄλλων κοινῇ βουλευέσθαι. τοῖς δὲ νόμοις χρῆσθαι τοῖς σφετέροις αὐτῶν αὐτονόμος ὄντας, καὶ τὰλλα ποιῆν κατὰ τὸς ὅρκους καὶ τὰς συνθήκας καθάπερ ζύνκεται Ἀθηναίους καὶ Σαμίους. καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐνκλημάτων ἃ ἀγ γίνονται πρὸς ἀλλήλους διδόναι καὶ δέχεσθαι τὰς δίκας κατὰ τὰς συμβόλας τὰς ὅσας.
- 20 [ἐ]ὰν δέ τι ἀναγκάσιον γίνηται διὰ τὸν πόλεμον καὶ πρότερον περὶ τῆς πολι[τ]είας, ὥστερ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν οἱ πρέσβεις, πρὸς τὰ πάροντα βουλευόμενος ποιῆν [ῆ]ι ἂν δοκῇ βέλτιστον ἔναι. περὶ δὲ τῆς ἐρήνης, ἐὰγ γίνηται, ἔναι κατὰ ταῦτα [κ]αθάπερ Ἀθηναίους καὶ τοῖς νῦν οἰκῶσιν Σάμον· ἐὰν δὲ πολεμὲν δέη, παρασκ[ε]υάζεσθαι αὐτὸς ὡς ἂν δύνωνται ἄριστα πράττοντας μετὰ τῶν στρατηγῶν· [ἐ]ὰν δὲ πρεσβείαν ποι πέμπωσιν Ἀθηναῖοι, συνπέμπειν καὶ τὸς ἐξάμο παρόντας,
- 25 [ἐ]ὰν τινα βόλωνται, καὶ συνβουλευέειν ὅ τι ἂν ἔχωσιν ἀγαθόν. ταῖς δὲ τριήρεσι [ταῖς] ὅσας ἐς Σάμῳ χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς δῶναι ἐπισκευασαμένους καθότι ἂν αὐ[τοῖς] δ[ο]κῇ· τὰ δὲ ὀνόματα τῶν τριηράρχων ὧν ἦσαν αὐταὶ αἱ νῆες ἀπογράφαι [τὸς πρέσ]βεις τῷ γραμματεῖ τῆς βολῆς καὶ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς, καὶ τούτων εἰ πο[θὲν] τί ἐστὶν ἀναγεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ ὡς παρεληφῶτων τὰς τριῆρες,
- 30 [ἅπαντα ἐξαλειψά]ντων οἱ νεωροὶ ἅπανταχόθεν, τὰ δὲ σκευὴ τῷ δημοσίῳ ἐσ[πραξάντων] ὡς τάχιστα κα[ὶ] ἐπαναγκασάντων ἀποδῶναι τὸς ἔχοντας τούτων [τι ἐντελῆ. γνώμη Κλεσόφο καὶ] συνπρυτάνεων· τὰ μὲν ἄλλα καθάπερ τῇ βολῇ· [κυρίαν δὲ ἔναι τὴν δωρεῖαν τοῖς ἥ]κοσιν, καθάπερ αὐτοὶ αἰτῶνται, καὶ νῆμαι [αὐτὸς αὐτίκα μάλᾳ τὸς ἄρχοντας ἐς τ]ῆς φυλᾶς δέκαχα. καὶ τὴν πορείαν παρα[σ]κευάσαι τοῖς πρέσβεσι τὸς στρατηγὸς ὡς τάχιστα. καὶ Εὐμάχῳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Σαμίους πᾶσι τοῖς μετὰ Εὐμάχῳ ἤκοσι ἐπαινέσαι ὡς ὅσιν ἄνδρασιν [ἀγαθοῖς περὶ τὸς Ἀθηναίους. καλέσαι δ' Εὐμ]αχὸν ἐπ[ὶ] δ[ε]ῖπνον ἐς τὸ πρυτανεῖον [ἐς αὔριον. ἀναγράφαι δὲ τὰ ἐψηφισμένα τ]ὸγ γραμμ[ατέα τῆς] β[ο]λῆς μετὰ τῶν [στρατηγῶν ἐστῆλην λιθίνῃ καὶ κατα]θῆναι ἐς πόλι[ν, τὸς δὲ ἐλλη]νοταμίαις
- 40 [δῶναι τὸ ἀργύριον· ἀναγράφαι δ' ἐς Σά]μῳ κατὰ ταῦτα τέ[λε]σι [τοῖς ἐκέ]ντων.

29 Boegehold: [τι ὑπάρχει ἀ]ναγεγραμμένον Lolling, [τί ἐστι ὄφλημ]α γεγραμμένον Köhler (*IG* ii. v 1b). 31 μηχανῇ οὐδεμιᾷ[ι] (?) Merkelbach, ἀπολολότα κα[ὶ] Cataldi. 32 [τι ἐντελῆ] doubted Merkelbach, Boegehold, accepted M. J. Osborne. 33 Feyel (suggesting [κυρίαν δ' ἔναι τὴν πολιτείαν τοῖς as another possibility]: [ἔναι δὲ τὴν δωρεῖαν Σαμίων τοῖς] Kirchner (*IG* ii²): [εἶναι δὲ πολιτείαν Σαμίων τοῖς] Wilhelm (*IG* ii² *addenda*), M. J. Osborne. 34 Wilhelm, M. J. Osborne (α), Whitehead: ἐς τὸς δήμος καὶ τὰς Lolling, but δέκαχα is inappropriate to the demes. 37 π M. J. Osborne. 38 β M. J. Osborne.

§i

Cephisophon of Paeania was the secretary.

- 3 For all the Samians who joined with the people of Athens.
- 5 Resolved by the council and the people. Cecropis was the prytany; Polymnis of Euonymum was secretary; Alexias (405/4) was archon; Nicophon of Athmonum was chairman. Proposal of Cleisophus and his fellow *prytaneis*:
- 7 Praise the Samian envoys, both those who came previously and those who have come now, and their council and their generals and the other Samians, because they are good men and eager to do whatever good they can, and the deeds which they have done are judged to have been done rightly for the Athenians and the Samians.
- 11 And in return for the good which they have done for the Athenians, and because they now take trouble over the Athenians and propose good things, be it resolved by the council and the people that the Samians shall be Athenians, living under whatever constitution they wish; and, as they themselves suggest, so that this shall be as advantageous as possible for both parties, whenever peace is made, then we shall deliberate jointly about the other matters. They shall be autonomous, using their own laws, and in other respects they shall act in accordance with the oaths and the agreements as agreed by the Athenians and Samians.
- 17 Concerning any complaints which the two parties may have against each other, they shall give and receive justice in accordance with the existing convention.
- 19 If any crisis arises about the constitution because of the war and before [*sc.* the peace], as the envoys themselves suggest, the Samians shall deliberate in the light of the circumstances and do whatever they judge best.
- 21 Concerning the peace, if it is made, it shall apply also to those now living in Samos on the same terms as to the Athenians; or if it is necessary to make war, they shall prepare themselves as best they can, acting together with the [*sc.* Athenian] generals; and if the Athenians send an embassy anywhere, those present from Samos shall send jointly if they wish to send anybody, and shall give whatever good advice they can.
- 25 All the triremes which are at Samos shall be given to them [*sc.* the Samians] to use, once they have fitted them out, as they think best; the names of the trierarchs to whom the ships were assigned shall be listed by the envoys for the secretary of the council and the generals; and, if for any of these any [*sc.* obligation] is recorded anywhere in public from when they took over the triremes, all of this everywhere the *neoroi* shall delete, but they shall exact the equipment for public use as soon as possible, and compel those who have any of it to give it back intact.
- 32 Proposal of Cleisophus and his fellow *prytaneis*: In other respects in accordance with the council; but the grant shall be valid for those of the Samians who have come, as they themselves ask, and the archons shall distribute them immediately in ten groups among the tribes.
- 34 Traveling expenses shall be provided for the envoys by the generals as soon as possible.
- 35 Praise Eumachus and all the other Samians who have come with Eumachus, because they are good men with regard to the Athenians.
- 37 Invite Eumachus to dinner in the *prytaneion* tomorrow.
- 38 What has been decreed shall be written up on a stone *stele* by the secretary of the council together with the generals and placed on the acropolis, and the *hellenotamiai* shall provide the money; and it shall be written up at Samos in the same way at their own expense.

§ii

- [ἔδοξεν τῇ βολῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ. Πανδ]ιονίς ἐπρυτάνευε· Ἀγύρριος Κ[ολλυτ]εὺς
[ἐγραμμάτευε· Εὐκλείδης ἤρχε· Κα]λλίας Ὡαθεν ἐπεστάτει. Κηφισοφῶν [εἶπεν]·
[ἐπαινέσαι μὲν Σαμῖος ὅτι ἐσὶν] ἄνδρες ἀγαθοὶ περὶ Ἀθηναίους, καὶ ἅπ[αντα]
[κύρια ἔναι ἃ πρότερον ὁ δῆμος] ἐψηφίσατο ὁ Ἀθηναίων τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Σα[μίων].
45 [πέμψαι δὲ τὸς Σαμῖος ὥσπερ αὐ]τοὶ κελεύουσιν ἐς Λακεδαιμόνα ὄντινα [ἂν αὐ]-
[τοὶ βόλῳ]νται· ἐπειδὴ δὲ προ]σδέονται Ἀθηναίων συνπράττεν, προσελέσ[θαι]
[πρέσβες, οὗτοι δὲ συνπρα]ττόντων τοῖς Σαμίοις ὅτι ἂν δύνωνται ἀγαθ[ὸν καὶ]
[κοινῇ βουλευέσθων μετὰ] ἐκένων. ἐπαινοῦσι δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι Ἐφεσίος καὶ Νοτ[ιᾶς]
[ὅτι προθύμως ἐδέξαντο] Σαμίων τὸς ἕξω ὄντας. προσαγαγὲν δὲ τὴν πρεσβεία[ν]
50 [τῶν Σαμίων ἐς τὸν δῆμ]ον χρηματίσασθαι ἐὰν το δέωνται. καλέσαι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ
[δεῖπνον τὴν πρεσβ]είαν τῶν Σαμίων ἐς τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἐς αὐριον· Κηφισοφῶν
[εἶπε· τὰ μὲν ἄλλα κ]αθάπερ τῇ βολῇ· ἐψηφίσθαι δὲ Ἀθηναίων τῷ δήμῳ κύρια
[ἔναι τὰ ἐψηφισμ]ένα πρότερον περὶ Σαμίων καθάπερ ἡ βολὴ προβολεύσασα
[ἐς τὸν δῆμ]ον ἐσ[τ]ήνεγκεν. καλέσαι δὲ τὴν πρεσβείαν τῶν Σαμίων ἐπὶ δεῖπνον
55 [ἐς τὸ πρυτανε]ῖον ἐς αὐριον.*vacat*

§iii

- [ἔδοξεν τῇ βολῇ] καὶ τῷ δήμῳ. Ἐρεχθίδης ἐπρυτάνευεν· Κηφισοφῶν Πα[ι]ανιεύ[ς]
[ἐγραμμάτευε· Εὐκλ]εῖδης ἤρχε· Πύθων ἐκ Κηδῶν ἐπεστάτει. Εὐ[—c. 8—εἶπεν]·
[ἐπαινέσαι Ποσῆν τὸν] Σάμιον ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός ἐστιν περὶ Ἀθηναίους, καὶ ἀνθ' ὧν
[εὖ πεπότηκε τὸν δῆμ]ον διδόναι αὐτ[ῷ] τὸν δῆμ[ον] δωρεῖαν πεντακοσίας δραχμὰς
60 [ἐς κατασκευὴν στεφάνο, οἱ δὲ ταμί]αι δόντων τὸ ἀργύριον. προσαγαγὲν δὲ αὐτ[ὸ]-
[ν ἐς τὸν δῆμ]ον καὶ εὐρέσθαι πα[ρὰ] το δῆμ[ο] ὅτι ἂν δύνῃται ἀγαθόν. τὸ δὲ βιβλίον
[το ψηφισ]’σματος παραδόναι αὐτ[ῷ] τὸν γ γραμματέα τῆς βολῆς αὐτίκα μάλα.
[καλέσαι δὲ ἐπὶ ξένια Σαμῖος τὸς] ἤκοντας ἐς τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἐς αὐριον. *vacat*
[—10— εἶπε· τὰ μὲν ἄλλα καθά]περ τῇ βολῇ· ἐπαινέσαι δὲ Ποσῆν τὸν
65 [Σάμιον καὶ τὸς ὕ]ες, ἐπειδὴ ἄνδρες ἀγ[αθοὶ] ἐσὶν περὶ τὸν δῆμ[ον] τὸν Ἀθηναίων.
[καὶ κύρια ἔναι τὰ ἐψηφισμ]ένα πρότερον ὑπὸ τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναίων· καὶ ἀναγρ[α]-
[φάτω ὁ γραμ]ματεὺς τὸ ψήφισμα ἐσ[τ]ήλ[η] λιθίνῃ, οἱ δὲ ταμίαι παρασχόντων
[τὸ ἀργύριον ἐς τὴν στήλ]ην. δόναι δὲ Πο[σῆ]ι δωρεάν τὸν δῆμ[ον] χιλίας δραχμὰς
[ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα τῆς πρὸς Ἀθηναίους, ἀπὸ δ]ὲ τῶν χιλίων δραχμῶν στέφανον ποῆσα-
70 [ι, καὶ ἐπιγράψαι τοῦτωι στεφανοῦν αὐ]τὸν τὸν δῆμ[ον] ἀνδραγαθίας ἕνεκα καὶ
[περὶ Ἀθηναίους· ἐὰν δέ το δέωνται παρὰ] τῷ δήμῳ, προσάγε[ν] αὐτὸς τὸς πρυτάνες
[πρὸς τὸν δῆμ]ον πρῶτος ἀεὶ μετὰ τὰ ἱερ[ά]. προσαγαγὲν δὲ καὶ τὸς ὕες τὸς Ποσο
[τὸς πρυτάνες ἐς τὸν δῆμ]ον ἐς τὴν πρῶτ[ην] ἔδραν. καλέσαι δὲ κ[αὶ] ἐπὶ ξ[ένια]
75 [ἐς τὸ πρυτανε]ῖον καὶ Ποσῆν καὶ τὸς ὕες] καὶ Σαμίων τὸς ἐπ[ιδημ]όντας.

57, 64 Εὐ[ριπίδης], [Εὐριπίδης] (with rough breathing) W. Bannier, *BPW* xxxiv 1914, 1599. 68 τὴν στήλην Wilhelm *ap. SIG*³: ἀναγραφὴν *IG*. 74 τὸν δῆμ[ον] Rhodes: τὴν βολὴν previous edd.

§ii

- 41 Resolved by the council and the people. Pandionis was the prytany; Agyrrhius of Collytus was secretary; Euclides (403/2) was archon; Callias of Oa was chairman. Cephisophon proposed:
- 43 Praise the Samians because they are good men with regard to the Athenians; and everything shall be valid which the Athenian people decreed previously for the Samian people.
- 45 The Samians shall send to Sparta, as they themselves demand, whoever they themselves wish; and, since they also ask the Athenians to join in negotiating, they [*sc.* the Athenians] also shall choose ambassadors, and these jointly with the Samians shall negotiate whatever good they can, and shall deliberate together with them. The Athenians praise the Ephesians and Notians because they enthusiastically received those of the Samians who were outside [*sc.* Samos]. Bring forward the Samian embassy to the people to do business if they are in need of anything. And also invite the Samian embassy to dinner in the *prytaneion* tomorrow.
- 51 Cephisophon proposed: in other respects in accordance with the council; but the Athenian people shall decree that what was previously decreed about the Samians is to be valid, as the council in its *probouleuma* introduced to the people. And invite the Samian embassy to dinner in the *prytaneion* tomorrow.

§iii

- 56 Resolved by the council and the people. Erechtheis was the prytany; Cephisophon of Paeania was secretary; Euclides (403/2) was archon; Python from Kedoi was chairman. Eu— proposed:
- 58 Praise Poses the Samian because he is a good man with regard to the Athenians. And, in return for the good which he has done for the people, the people shall give him a gift of five hundred drachmae for the making of a crown; the treasurers shall give the money. Bring him forward to the people; and he shall obtain from the people whatever good he can. The secretary of the council shall hand over to him forthwith the book of the decree. And invite to hospitality in the *prytaneion* tomorrow the Samians who have come.
- 64 ——— proposed: In other respects in accordance with the council; but praise Poses the Samian and his sons because they are good men with regard to the Athenian people. And what was decreed previously by the Athenian people shall be valid; and the secretary shall write up the decree on a stone *stele*, and the treasurers shall provide the money for the *stele*. The people shall give Poses a gift of a thousand drachmae on account of his virtue with regard to the Athenians, and from the thousand drachmae shall make a crown, and inscribe on this that the people crown him on account of his goodness and virtue towards the Athenians. Also praise the Samians because they are good men with regard to the Athenians. And, if they are in need of anything from the people, the *prytaneis* shall always bring them forward before the people first after the religious business. The *prytaneis* shall also bring forward the sons of Poses to the people at its first session. Also invite to hospitality in the *prytaneion* Poses and his sons and those of the Samians who are present here.



Fig. 1: The four surviving fragments of the Samos stele as restored in the Acropolis Museum, Athens. Marble. 403/2 B.C.. Photographed with light source from the left. Acropolis Museum, Athens, no. 1333 (photograph: Socrates Mavromates, Acropolis Museum).



Fig. 2: The four surviving fragments of the Samos stele as restored in the Acropolis Museum, Athens. Marble. 402/2 B.C.. Photographed with light source from the right, probably in the 1920s or 30s. The marble is considerably dirtier than in figure 1 (photograph: Walter Hege, DAI Athens, Hege-1904).



Fig. 3: Detail of the relief of *dexiosis* at the top of the Samos stele, with Athena to the right (photograph: Richard Neer).



Fig. 4: Detail of the relief of *dexiosis* at the top of the Samos stele with the textual headings and the opening of the first decree (photograph: Walter Hege, DAI Athens, Hege-1905).



Fig. 5: The surviving fragments of the relief with *dexiosis*, with Athena to the right, from the head of an inventory of the treasurers of Athena and other gods, who served during the archonship of Laches (400/399 B.C.). From the Acropolis at Athens. Marble. About 399 B.C.. Photographed with a strong light source from the right. Formerly National Archaeological Museum, Athens, no. 3855; now Epigraphical Museum, Athens, no. 7862; (photograph: Museum).



Fig. 6: Detail of the *dexiosis* from the inventory of the treasurers of Athena and other gods, with Athena to the right (photograph: Emil Kunze, DAI Athens, NM-3855, now EM no. 7862).



Fig. 7: Grave stele with the *dexiosis* of two men, younger and older, without surviving inscription. From near the Dipylon Gate, Athens. Marble. Roughly 410–400 B.C.. Athens National Archaeological Museum no. 2894 (photograph Richard Neer).

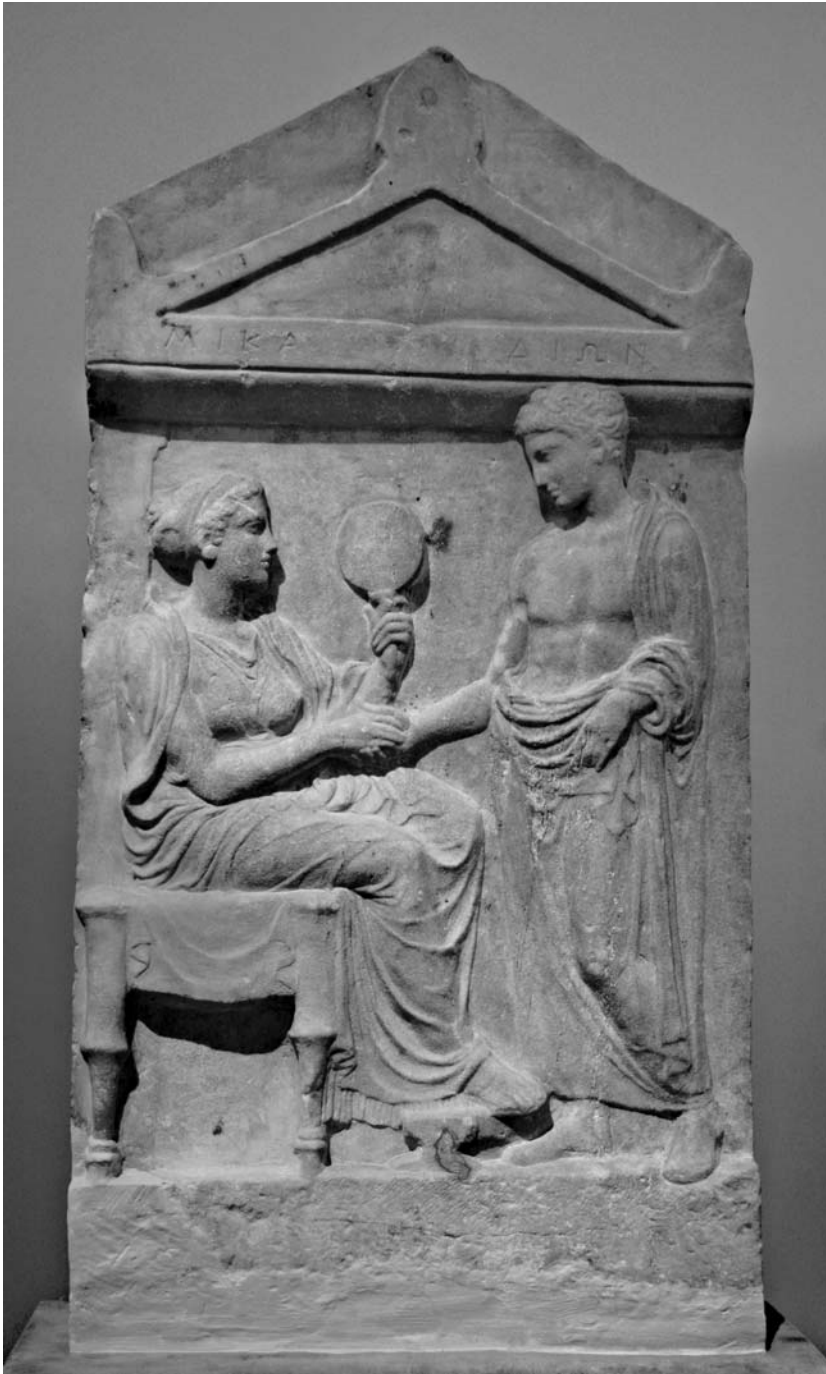


Fig. 8: Grave stele with the *dexiosis* of the seated Mika and the standing Dion (their names inscribed above the figures' heads). From the Kerameikos of Athens. Marble. Roughly 410-400 B.C.. Athens National Archaeological Museum no. 765 (photograph Richard Neer).

There has been much recent discussion of the relationship of archaeology and history in the study of the ancient world, with a touch of polemic from the archaeological side about being taken for a handmaid.¹ The conversation has not given much space to the *visual* as offering a complex but empirically rich range of historical data, and indeed some areas of archaeology have been dismissive of the specific formalist and stylistic elements that remain key to the study of ancient art.² This paper focuses on the complex example of a single monument from Classical Athens, whose evidence comprises a combination of material culture, epigraphic text, and visual imagery, in order to make the case that we cannot conduct an ancient history adequate to the rich potential of our empirical data unless we can simultaneously bring to bear a variegated epistemology that is sensitive to assessing the range of visual as well as material-cultural and literary evocations—their varieties of rhetorics, one might say—simultaneously and with equal weight.³ This entails the need for ancient historians and Classical archaeologists concerned with writing history to be more open than they have been both to literary-critical and to art-historical approaches.

The particular problem I examine here is the juxtaposition of text and image within a single archaeological artifact—a common aspect of our material evidence from antiquity but an issue that is ultimately a subset of the much wider range of word and picture relationships that have been much explored recently in ancient culture, from ekphrasis and literary epigram to the placement of described or actual pictures and diagrams at the head of varieties of ancient writings from the novels to mathematical treatises.⁴ The value of a detailed account of a piece of evidence of this kind is that it can show the weaknesses of the continuing hegemony that assumes “the history written in texts to be the only history there is.”⁵ It has been said that “to write the history [of the Athenians] solely on the basis of what they said is to write the history of a fantasy.”⁶ We may say that to write a history that includes images and material culture is not to write less of a fantasy but to modulate our responses to one kind of fantasy produced by

1. For example Morris 2004; Sauer 2004, wherein especially Foxhall 2004: 82 and Laurence 2004; Hall 2014: 1–16 (“handmaid”) and 207–20.

2. So, e.g., none of the items in the previous note has much interest in the visual nature of art-historical evidence. A riposte to this posture: Neer 2010: 6–11; a case for style as essential to writing ancient history: Smith 2002: 98–100.

3. A fundamental case for the integration of the “history, archaeology, and art history of Classical Greece” in writing ancient history is Osborne 2011 (quote from p. 1, but see esp. 6–26), concerned specifically with the body.

4. On art and text, see e.g., Rutter and Sparkes 2000; Small 2003; and Squire 2009. Recently on ancient ekphrasis, see Elsner 2002; Webb 2009; Zeitlin 2013; and Dufallo 2013. On ekphrastic epigram, see, e.g., Gutzwiller 2002; Gutzwiller 2004; Goldhill 2007: 15–19; Männlein-Robert 2007: 37–81; Prioux 2007 and 2008; Tueller 2008: 141–65; Bing 2009: 194–216; Bruss 2010; Squire 2010a and 2010b. On the described pictorial frontispiece in the ancient novel, see still Schissel von Fleschenberg 1913 and on mathematical diagrams see Netz 1999: esp. 12–67.

5. See Osborne 2011: 227.

6. Ibid.

the ancients by reference to other fantasies in different discursive registers, to the better critical understanding of all.

I. A PIECE OF EVIDENCE: THE SAMOS STELE (ACROPOLIS MUSEUM 1333)

Let us begin with a famous stele (AM 1333, Figs. 1 and 2), probably set up on the Acropolis of Athens in 403 or 402 BC, which happens to contain both an inscription (i.e. documentary evidence for ancient history) and a relief at its top (Figs. 3 and 4).⁷ What has been restored in the Museum and has long been published as a single monument was in fact put together in the last two decades of the nineteenth century from a series of fragments found in a variety of places.⁸ The major section (known as fragment a) with the top of the stele, the pictorial relief, and most of the text of what scholarship has established as the monument's first decree, was found on the Acropolis in July 1888 and published swiftly in the same year without a text but with a line drawing of the relief.⁹ The text received rapid early editions in 1889 and 1890.¹⁰ It was immediately recognized that the stone belonged with two others, which had been found in April 1876 between the Theatre of Dionysus and the Odeon,¹¹ that preserved most of the texts of the monument's second and third decrees.¹² A small fourth fragment, apparently with no recorded provenance and with some part of the text of the third decree, was subsequently added.¹³ The definitive modern edition was published in 1913 in the new *IG II*².¹⁴ We do not know how tall the stele was, or whether other decrees that do not survive may have been inscribed beneath the text of fragments c and d.¹⁵ This means we cannot be at all sure how easy the texts were to read, for

7. The stele is Acropolis Museum 1333, *IG I*³ 127 and *IG II*² 1. Likely site: Palagia 2006: 148 and Shear 2011: 231 and 247.

8. Provenance of fragments: Lawton 1995: 88, no. 12. One fragment (a) was found on the Acropolis but others (b and c) between the Theatre of Dionysus and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus. Fragment d seems not to have had a provenance recorded.

9. First publication: Kabbadias 1888, along with the famous relief of the Mourning Athena found on the Acropolis in June 1888.

10. The first editions are by Lolling 1889 and Lipsius 1890, followed by *IG II*¹ 5, 1b, pp. 1–3 (published in 1895 by U. Koehler).

11. See Kumanudis 1876: 92–94 and *IG II*¹ 1, “Addenda et Corrigenda” 1b, pp. 393–95 (published in 1877 by U. Koehler).

12. In what was effectively the first publication of the entire text of the stele, Lolling put all three decrees together from the three fragments, a, b, and c: Lolling 1889: 25–27. Intriguingly, he appears to have known the text of the further small fragment, d, apparently found by Adolf Wilhelm, which fits at the end of the third decree and whose provenance has not been recorded.

13. On fragment d, see Wilhelm 1903: 779–80 (= Wilhelm 2002: 277–78).

14. *IG II*² 1, pp. 1–3 (by J. Kirchner).

15. What were the circumstances of the breaking of the surviving stele into its four (and more) fragments? Intriguingly, fragment a—in very good condition—contains the relief, the heading, and the bulk of the inscription of the first decree. Might the stele have been deliberately broken in the wake of later Athenian discord with Samos—for instance in the context of the Athenian siege of

those who could do so, or how visible the relief was for those who went past the monument.

Although the sculptor of the relief and the mason who cut the inscription are likely to have been different people,¹⁶ for the sake of argument I will assume, following the history of the stele's archaeological reconstruction in the late nineteenth century, that this is a single monument, made in one go, so as to function as a whole and to have whatever impact or influence it was to muster as a whole on its audience in the late fifth century BC and thereafter. Indeed, although interest has largely focused on the inscription's *contents*, the fact is that it was made as a fine example of the *stoichedon* script in the Ionic alphabet, where letters are placed in vertical and horizontal alignment and at equal intervals.¹⁷ It has an impressive pair of headings in much larger letters than the rest of the text (the first of these bigger than the second, Fig. 4). Its writing is, in short, no less carefully crafted to make a significant public impression within a highly formalized medium of visual presentation than its relief sculpture, which might be said to be the first and most impressive of its series of headings.

If we look at its function as a document in the writings of a series of ancient historians from Gomme via Meiggs to Rhodes and Shipley, then it has served (as a brief précis) to stand for the Athenian willingness to grant citizenship to loyal allies,¹⁸ and as a document in the history of Samos.¹⁹ Following Polly Low's work on how Athenian imperialism was rather nicer in its forms of epigraphic expression than it may have been in its actions, the text has been taken (still as a précis) as an emblem of bilateralism and equality between partners within the Athenian empire.²⁰ In Julia Shear's recent book, it has been treated as a document of democratic self-assertion at Athens in the face of the revival of democracy after the fall of the Thirty Tyrants in 403 BC.²¹ That is, its empirical evidence appears to follow changes in fashion about how to do Greek history and to be capable of accommodating quite different kinds of questions and conclusions.

If we look at commentaries on the inscription (for example those by Tod, Meiggs and Lewis, or Rhodes and Osborne)²² we find that its historical context

366/5 which led to a long Samian exile lasting till 322? On Samos and Athens in the fourth century, see Shipley 1987: 138–43, 155–68.

16. See Lawton 1995: 64–66 and Blanshard 2004: 4n.19.

17. On the *stoichedon* style, see Austin 1938, with 45–46 and 53 on the Samos stele; also Osborne 1973.

18. This may be a general proposition: so Gomme 1956: vol. 1, 240 and vol. 2, 340; or it may be inflected specifically to the historical moment of the late fifth century: so Meiggs 1972: 211 and 357 or Rhodes 2010: 194.

19. See Shipley 1987: 130–31.

20. Esp. Ma 2009: 128 and Brock 2009: 161. On the epigraphic language of Athenian imperialism, see Low 2005.

21. Shear 2011: 236–37, 249, 252, 258–59.

22. Tod 1946: 231–34, no. 96 and Tod 1948: 1–4, no. 97; Pouilloux 1960: 89–96, nos. 23 and 24; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: 283–87, no. 94; Osborne 1981–1983: vol. I, nos. D.4 and 5 pp. 33–37 (whole Greek text, no translation or image, with some commentary) and vol. II, pp. 25–26 for

is discussed—notably the loyalty of Samos to Athens when all others had deserted her after the defeat of Aegospotami in 405. A certain amount of the history of the object itself is clarified—such as the fact that the surviving monument includes three decrees, one of which was originally set up in 405 and the remaining two dating from 403/2. We are nowhere told in the inscription, but the commentators surmise, that the original of the decree of 405 was destroyed by the Thirty during their reign in 404/3.²³ We are offered a certain amount of discussion of the figures named in the stele—for instance Cephisophon and Agyrrius.

Now the fact that a single monument—set up to be a single monument with an impressive visual heading and a preface in very large letters as an epigraphic heading for the entire text of the three decrees (unless it serves also as a kind of “caption” for the image)²⁴—should contain documents from *different* moments in the history of Athens, has resulted in the unfortunate—indeed the very odd—consequence that the first decree, made in 405 before Athens and Samos capitulated to Sparta, is placed by the commentators in one set of volumes,²⁵ while the second and third decrees, of 403/2, are placed in a second set.²⁶ So—before we even start to think about this monument—we are confined to a strange Procrustean Bed of historical interpretation that prejudices not the archaeological reality or integrity of the inscription but the dates of its original *texts* as decisions of the assembly, according to an exegesis that creates the dates from the names of the relevant secretaries and archons.²⁷ In other words, the discipline’s decision about

some discussion; Cataldi 1983: 350–90, no. 12; Bertrand 1992: 77–81, no. 34; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 12–17, no. 2. The best discussion is Blanshard 2007: 33–36.

23. Tod 1946: 234, and less definitively Tod 1948: 2; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: 286; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 14–15.

24. On questions of image and text in combination see e.g., Snodgrass 2000 or Squire 2009: 146–89.

25. *IG* I³ 127, which includes only the first decree (of 405) but also, irrationally, the heading (of 403/2), with Nachmanson 1913: no. 22; Tod 1946: no. 96; Pouilloux 1960: no. 23; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: no. 94. Bengtson 1975: no. 209; and Cataldi 1983: no 12.

26. *IG* II² 1, which includes the entire document from heading to last decree. The commentators only include and discuss the last 2 decrees (of 403/2), excluding the heading, although that is also 403/2; see Tod 1948: no. 97 and Rhodes and Osborne 2003: no. 2. A full translation, under *IG* II² 1, was added to Attic Inscriptions Online in 2014. Pouilloux 1960: no 24, publishes the second and third decrees in the same volume as the first but as a separate item.

27. The creation of dates is so normative an act in the writing of history that it goes entirely unremarked. But it is also a hugely distorting interpretative shift. If I say “my post in Chicago was renewed when Don Randel was President, Richard Saller Provost, Danielle Allen Dean of Humanities, and Martha Ward Chair of Art History,” that formulation places the event in a litany of memory and experience for a specific community for whom such information has meaning because they lived that time too. It is very far from the kind of significance given by a linear narrative and a specific date. Indeed it does not evoke the date 2007; it evokes the memory of a moment, now gone (which does happen to coincide with 2007). The fact that a pretty precise date can be accessed from the information is not the point of putting it that way. Greek dates by prytanies, secretaries, and archons, as offered in inscriptions, belong to the evocation of a local history of close-focused and collective memory, not to anything like the specific intimations of 405 and 403/2.

how to package the elements of this stele according to a text-driven dispensation derived from the information of its writings, rather than according to its epigraphic reality as a single set of inscribed writing put up in 403/2, already frames, and indeed distorts, any attempt to approach it.²⁸

However you interpret that modern historical framework in terms of assumptions about the Periclean fifth century and the dismal fourth (or whatever), the fact is that a caesura is established through a series of publications that divide a continuous span of history at the date of Athens' defeat (before the fifth century was over): and nothing proves the continuity, which all this interpretation has conspired to deny, more than the fact that it is a single inscription and a single monument which these publications set asunder. In the light of these observations confined merely to the inscribed text, it is hardly surprising that the image which was chosen by the original dedicators to stand at the top of the stele and was thus an integral part of its original discourse, should be placed in yet a third range of publications (art history rather than history proper).²⁹ Moreover, with the exception of a fine paper by Alastair Blanshard, this image is not discussed by anyone who discusses the text, despite the fact that—whatever levels of literacy we may imagine for Athens in c. 400 BC—clearly many of those who saw the object were able to look at its iconography and its writing but could not read its text.³⁰ The relief was not even illustrated by the British epigraphers until the most recent of the commentaries—Rhodes and Osborne—in 2003.³¹ It might be added that none of those on the visual side who illustrate the piece show the whole—image and all the text together—other than Rhodes and Osborne.

That the dedicators of the stele (if indeed we should think of it as a dedication)³² chose to reinscribe what was—we surmise—a democratic decree carved on a monument demolished by the oligarchs of 404, but did so without any

28. The Samos stele is not a unique victim of the disciplinary impasse between epigraphy and archaeology as traditionally practiced, coupled with an anal attention to the original dates of decrees as drivers for the dismemberment of monuments in publication. *IG II²* 448—a stele headed with a fine relief and containing two decrees granting citizenship to one Euphron of Sikyon, the first of 323/2 and the second (a reaffirmation of the first) of 318/7—was first published by Dittenberger 1915, vol. 1 nos. 310 (first decree) and 317 (second decree), with no intimations of a relief. This division translates into the first decree translated by Harding 1985: 152–53, no. 123 and the second translated by Austin 1981: 48–50, no. 26. Neither of these mentions the relief either, which is published by Meyer 1989: no. A134 and Lawton 1995: no. 54. Like the Samos stele, this is a case of an original monument erected by a deomocracy suffering iconoclasm from an oligarchic regime (of 322) and being restored by the resurgent democracy of 318: see *IG II²* 448. 61–74. Thanks to Peter Thonemann for alerting me to this example.

29. Meyer 1989: no. A26 and Lawton 1995: no. 12.

30. For some discussion of the issues, see Thomas 1989: 15–34 and 1992: 128–57.

31. Rhodes and Osborne 2003: plate 1; see Blanshard 2007. Weirdly, Cataldi 1983 illustrates the relief at the top of the stele (plate XI) and the bottom three fragments (plate XII) although these contain the text of the second and third decrees, which he at no point discusses.

32. For some reflections on dedications in the culture of Athenian epigraphy, see Detienne 1992; also on issues of production and placement, Pébarthe 2006: 247–60.

mention of the history of iconoclasm, is itself an extremely interesting aspect of the object's nature as a monument. It belongs to a specific group of dedications set up by the resurgent democracy in 403, which celebrate and comment on the fall of the tyranny of the Thirty—a theme acutely discussed by Shear.³³ The larger letters of the heading, announce:

Κηφισοφῶν Παιανιεὺς
ἐγραμμάτευε.
Σαμίοις ὅσοι μετὰ τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ἀθηναί-
ων ἐγένοντο.

Cephisophon of Paiania was secretary. For the Samians who sided with the Athenian *demos*.

This certainly emphasizes the monument's status as the product of the revived democracy (*IG* I³ 127.1–4 = *IG* II² 1.1–4).³⁴ Indeed, given that Cephisophon's name appears in large letters at the heading before the first decree, twice in the second decree as the figure who proposed it, and once more at the heading of the third decree as secretary, it may be argued that the entire stele is effectively a memorial to him, presented in terms of constitutional action within the democracy and as a man whose function was to render traditional honors and gratitude on behalf of the Athenian state to deserving friends and allies.³⁵ But unlike some inscriptions, which repeat earlier documents but make explicit their destruction "in the time of the Thirty" so as to force into focus the political rupture of 404/3,³⁶ the Samos stele is absolutely silent about the circumstances of iconoclasm. Only if you know the names of the officials and can place their chronology, can you determine that the first decree was made before the oligarchy and the remaining two, as well as the stele itself, after its fall: indeed, these considerations are what cause the commentators to choose into which volume to put which bits of the monument. In place of any explicit reversal of oligarchic action or reference to the disruptions of recent political history, the Samos stele chooses a discourse of democratic continuity, as if the Thirty had never taken power.³⁷ Visual and epigraphic rhetoric combine into a suggestion of no oligarchic rupture, no change in relations with Samos,

33. Shear 2011: 227–322.

34. Shear 2011: 249. On the heading see also Blanshard 2007: 30–31.

35. Thanks to Charles Crowther for this suggestion. For the role of the secretary in the Eucrates stele (Athens Agora I.6524, *SEG* 12.87) see Blanshard 2004: 3–4 and n.12. For another prime mover of decrees honoring allies, in this case Pandios honoring Dionysius of Syracuse as "a good man with regard to the people of Athens and their allies," see *IG* II² 103 and 105, Rhodes and Osborne 2003: nos. 33 and 34.

36. See Shear 2011: 258 on *IG* I³ 229, also an Acropolis inscription—*ibid.* 247: cf. *IG* II² 6 and 9, with Tod 1948: 4–6. Further on iconoclasm of inscriptions by the Thirty: Sickinger 1999: 73, 77–78.

37. Shear 2011: 258, although Blanshard 2007: 35 argues that "in reinscribing this out-dated decree, the memory of its abolition under the Thirty is preserved."

no gap between the sentiments of the first decree of 405 and the second two of 403/2, so that there is—in the face of the political reality—an apparent assertion of a continuous concord of the kind evoked by the divine handshake of the relief at the top.

In fact, between the lines, the text of the Samos stele is interestingly self-reflexive about the issue of destruction.³⁸ At lines 27–30 of the first decree of 405, reinscribed in 403/2, explicit reference is made to the erasure of the names of any trierarchs owing debts, whose ships are to be assigned to the Samians. That act of deletion is to take place in relation to what has been “recorded anywhere in public” (ἀ]ναγεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ, l. 29), a phrase that from the later fifth century appears also to refer specifically to the Metroon or city archive.³⁹ The first decree’s active provisions therefore include deliberate iconoclasm of written decrees (whether stored epigraphically or otherwise), a fate to which this very decree in its initial inscribed form of 405 was itself subject. The reinscription of the decree as the first in the Samos stele thus implicitly signals the story of its own fate through the citation of the original text, and comments on the fall of the Tyranny by virtue of its reinscribed existence as an epigraphic monument of the revived democracy.

Before we turn to the relief, a word or two on the rhetoric of the inscription. The ancient-historical commentators seem to me to show a remarkable lack of interest in, or sensitivity to, two significant aspects of the stele. First, there is almost no acknowledgment of the range of gaps and elisions that inevitably divide an actual civic decree made in the assembly and the ideological and economic, as well as aesthetic, motivations and constraints involved in recording it as an inscription.⁴⁰ Not all decrees were inscribed and those that were, were clearly marked as significant; nor can we be at all sure that what was inscribed was exactly what was decreed.⁴¹ In their enthusiasm for the evidence of Athenian actuality implied by the decrees of the stele, our commentators show very little interest in the potential gaps between its rhetorical existence as monument and its evidential value as history, or in the material and visual semiotics that package (and partially transform) the information that it appears to relay. Second, there is very little concession to the literary texture of the three decrees.

38. Further on issues of erasure and notably the obliteration of criminal records and debts in Athenian inscriptional culture, see Thomas 1994: 41–43, Sickinger 1999: 68–70, and Pébarthe 2006: 261–63.

39. For discussion of this passage in relation to a central archive, see Boegehold 1972: 23–25 and 29, Samons 2000: 66, and Pébarthe 2006: 143–44. On the Metroon as a dedicated archive store from the later fifth century, see Thomas 1989: 39, Sickinger 1999: 114–38, and Pébarthe 2006: 147–71. For the difference between display in a public space and deposition in a (potentially publicly accessible) archive as expressed by the phrase ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ, see Klaffenbach 1960.

40. On the complexities of moving between orality and literacy in the public record in fifth-century Athens, see Thomas 1989: 45–94 and Thomas 1992: 74–100.

41. See Bertrand 1990: 107–108 and especially Osborne 1999.

All three open in panegyric mode with a clear injunction to “praise the Samians”;⁴² this encomiastic form and discourse receives no mention from any commentator, save Blanshard.⁴³ Note that the precise recipients of the praise are left vague: all the Samians or some? Just the ambassadors mentioned in line 7 or the ambassadors as representatives of the all the people of Samos? By the last decree, the general praise of the Samians appears reduced or at least specified to the much more particular case of Poses and his sons (lines 58, 64, 68, and 73–74). All three decrees close with the ritual of invitations to dinner at the prytaneion;⁴⁴ again a topic of no interest to the commentators except insofar as the terms used for the supper—*deipnon* and *xenia*—define the difference between Athenians and foreigners respectively and hence relate to the offer of citizenship.⁴⁵ An ideological reading, alongside the repetition of the term *demos* (especially at the opening of each decree),⁴⁶ might see the anaphora of repetitions and rituals as affirming both the continuous democracy and the absence of a gap in the polity between 404 and 403—or plausibly the voluble assertion that, despite the oligarchic interlude, all aspects of democracy including such things as relations with democratic allies and the rituals of the assembly (in making such decrees and having them inscribed) and of state dining (in honoring the Samians) were fully and unshakably back in place by the time the stele had been set up.

What the commentators do is to turn this discourse of praise and reward “for the Samians for being good men with regard to the Athenians” (a form of words repeated in all three decrees)⁴⁷ into a *history* of loyal support for Athens from 412 to 404, during the Peloponnesian War, and into discussion of the offer of citizenship. Where the commentators do show sensitivity to the document’s rhetorical structure is in the way they follow and capture the chronological flow of three decrees promulgated one after the other and then written down one after the other starting from the top of the stele. What the historical exegesis of the document has done is to translate its panegyric form and ritualized structure (a ritual of repetitions, of civic decrees in the assembly, of dining referred to, of writing down a set of public decisions as a permanent and visually distinctive memorial) into something perhaps more historical by modern criteria but far removed from the flavor and nature of the original. The text is transformed (especially in its rhetorical force), but certain aspects of it—its chronology and the flow of its arguments—nonetheless survive into the

42. Decree 1, line 7: ἐπαινέσαι τοῖς πρέσβεσι τοῖς Σαμίοις. *IG* I³ 127.7; decree 2, line 43: *IG* II² 1.43 (admittedly ἐπαινέσαι is restored here, cf. also line 48, *IG* II² 1.48, for praise of the Ephesians and the Notians); decree 3, lines 58, 64, and 71: *IG* II² 1.58 (again ἐπαινέσαι is restored) and *IG* II² 1.64 for praises of Poses the Samian and his sons, followed at *IG* II² 1.71 by more praise of the Samians (again with ἐπαινέσαι restored).

43. And not much from him, but see Blanshard 2007: 35, 36.

44. *IG* I³ 127.37; *IG* II² 1.51 and 54; *IG* II² 1.63 and 74–75.

45. Tod 1946: 234; Meiggs and Lewis 1969: 286; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 16.

46. *IG* I³ 127.3, 5; *IG* II² 1.41, 56, 59, 61—with Shear 2011: 258.

47. *IG* I³ 127.9–10; *IG* II² 1.43 (whence the quote), 58, 65, 70–72.

commentaries, if not by and large into the uses made of the document in narrative histories.

The failure to account for the decree's chosen discourse of encomium and honor means we cannot assess what this discourse covers up and was perhaps deliberately designed to cover up. Blanshard has rightly emphasized that the Samos and the Samians praised in these decrees, and especially in those of 403/2, were after 404 the scattered exiles of a defeated city, only wrested from Spartan control after 394.⁴⁸ Their diaspora is noted by the Samos stele when it praises Ephesus and Notion for receiving the Samian refugees.⁴⁹ The rhetoric of praise, mutuality, equal exchange between democratic states, not to speak of the apparently happy *dexiosis* of the relief, belies a much messier and more painful reality. That reality itself gives more than merely rhetorical substance to the Athenian offer of citizenship and even the invitation to dinner. But certainly the stele—both as image and as text—papers over the problems of the Samians after 404 quite as much as it does those of the Athenians. The apparent equality of the figures (not identified with inscriptions)⁵⁰ in the relief on top of the stele, belies the fact that Samos was still in Spartan captivity, when the stele was erected in 403/2, whereas Athens, whose patron goddess is at once recognizable iconographically in the figure on the right, had at least restored its democracy after defeat.

In none of this has the relief at the head of the monument figured very much (Figs. 3 and 4).⁵¹ Indeed, with the exception of Blanshard's specific discussion of art and inscription, most historians ignore it entirely.⁵² Art historians, when they have discussed it, have been at best trivial. In general accounts of Greek art, the panel has a marginal place as one of the major and better preserved examples of a genre—so called “document” or “record” reliefs—which is not very highly regarded, and as a piece of sculpture which is securely dated. Both Martin Robertson (who dates the stele correctly) and John Boardman (who does not, since he mistakenly gives 405) lament the fact that despite precise epigraphic dating, this kind of object is not much use for discussing stylistic change.⁵³ Olga Palagia bemoans the “inherent conservatism of these monuments” in general—although this is itself a significant datum for their rhetorical effect as visual artifacts in their context of erection and display.⁵⁴ Marion Meyer, in her major

48. Blanshard 2007: 31–33.

49. *IG II²* 1.48–49.

50. We would not necessarily expect an inscription for Athena—she is recognizable iconographically. On other documentary stelae, personifications of cities are indeed supplied with written identifications, for instance Lawton 1995: 59, no. 66 (*MESS* for Messenia) and no. 128 (Salamis).

51. The relief is published by Meyer 1989: no. A26, p. 273 and Lawton 1995: no. 12, p. 88–89, both with bibliographies.

52. One exception among historians is Shear 2011: 14, but she does not illustrate. For similar subservience of relief to text in the traditional literature on the Law of Eucrates, see the critique of Blanshard 2004: 4.

53. Robertson 1975: vol. 1, 373; Boardman 1985: 186–87.

54. Palagia 2006: 148–49.

study of document reliefs, effectively has the image shadow the politics of the epigraph's contents, as summarized by the commentators.⁵⁵ Carol Lawton in her catalogue of document reliefs thinks the panel “eloquently sums up the situation” described in the inscribed documents, implying, alongside Meyer, that the image is a kind of illustration of the text.⁵⁶

We should begin however with the crucial observation that the relief is a deliberately replicated *type* with the handshake gesture of *dexiosis*,⁵⁷ of which the earliest surviving examples on figured stelae (both gravestones and document reliefs) probably date to the 420s.⁵⁸ It is in fact closely related to a surviving relief of 399/398, also found on the Acropolis but in much worse condition, now in the Epigraphical Museum in Athens, EM 7862, that heads an inventory of the treasurers of Athena and other gods (Figs. 5 and 6).⁵⁹ While the second relief is usually described as a copy of the Samos stele,⁶⁰ the likelihood is that both derive from standard types.⁶¹ Indeed the final sentence of the first decree of the inscription (the only decree made when Samos was still a free and democratic city) specifically calls for the monument (does this mean image as well as text?) “to be inscribed also in Samos in the same way at the Samians’ own expense” (l. 40: ἀναγράφαι δ’ ἐς Σάμῳι κατὰ ταῦτὰ τέ[λε]σι [τοῖς ἐκέ]νων).⁶² That call to copying, coupled with reference to copies of decrees in the public archive at l. 29, indicates not only a culture of epigraphic replication in late fifth-century Athens but also a clear self-awareness on the part of the stele’s patrons and inscribers about the issue. In effect, the replicative logic of the image as a visual type reflects that of the text, whose first decree was to be duplicated in Samos, and whose three decrees imitate each other in certain fundamental formal effects—notably the opening with *boule* and *demos*, as well as the naming of the prytany, secretary, archon, and president, the rhetoric of praise, the closing invitation to dinner. The collective propensity to replication in relief and epigraphy draws attention to duplication as a fundamental aspect of the ritual culture of the monumental setting up of such decrees, specifically in this case when they mark the reciprocal relations of cities. Of course an unanswerable but potent issue is whether the stele of 403/2 replicates a relief originally accompanying the first decree of 405. Even

55. Meyer 1989: 87.

56. Lawton 1995: 30.

57. Blanshard 2007: 21–28 discusses this at length, but most accounts note the issue. On the gesture of *dexiosis*, see Neumann 1965: 49–58; Davies 1985; Pemberton 1989; Meyer 1989: 140–45; Breuer 1995: 15–39; Bergemann 1997: 61–62; Sojc 2005: 107–17 (for females in *dexiosis*) and 120–24; Smith 2011: 107. On gods and heroes on document reliefs, see Ritter 2001.

58. See Pemberton 1989: 49.

59. This is EM 7862, *IG* II² 1374, with Meyer 1989: A27 and pp. 110–11, 113–14; Lawton 1995: no. 13.

60. e.g., Lawton 1995: 89; Palagia 2006: 148; Blanshard 2007: 22–25.

61. Cf. Blanshard 2007: 25–26.

62. *IG* I³ 127.40. The absence of course of such an injunction in the second and third decrees is a further comment of the lack of reciprocity between Athens and Samos after 403, when Athens was a restored democracy and Samos was not.

if it did not—that is, there was no original relief image before the stele that we have—the culture of reciprocal duplication at Samos suggested by the first decree as well as the ways the following decrees replicate parts of the form and content of the first decree, suggest the possibility that such a relief existed. In doing so, the stele even suggests a tradition of Samian decree reliefs accompanying Samian stelae at Athens.⁶³ The reality of such a tradition is less important—for the discursive and ideological functions of the Samos stele—than its evocation in the context of the love-in between the two cities.

Of course the theme of copies and types always prompts the question of how close a replica really is. In visual terms the reliefs at the heads of the Epigraphical Museum inventory and the Samos stele show some differences. Notably, there is no frame on the sides of the relief of EM 7862, meaning that its pictorial space as a whole is less constrained than that of the Samos stele relief, although its top squashes much more closely on the two figures, abutting the head of the personification to the left and squeezing Athena's helmet even more than on AM 1333. The billowing of the robe of the figure to the left in EM 7862 is less flamboyant than on the Samos stele and she looks more masculine. Most strikingly perhaps, the handshake gesture is arguably more equal in EM 7862—more robust from both figures and placed in the space between the figures, whereas in AM 1333 Athena reaches into the body-space of the personification to the left, whose right arm falls much lower down her body than on the inventory relief. These differences, observable in the scope of a kind of close analysis that was surely very rare in antiquity,⁶⁴ may mean nothing, may simply indicate different artistic hands, or they may have had some significance for Athenian viewers looking at these images. But, in addition to the insoluble question of how they affected meaning, they do raise the issue of whether epigraphic copies of documents (such as the first decree, prescribed to be replicated in Samos) were in fact precise and accurate, by our standards, or offered perhaps interpretatively crucial minor variations.

Art historically, the tradition of overt public replication of visual types in extremely high profile sites such as the Acropolis is a significant corrective to the scholarly obsession with innovation, artistic experimentation, and radical change in the rise of naturalism in Greek, and specifically Athenian, art of the fifth and fourth centuries.⁶⁵ The visual point is that such change coexisted with deeply conservative and replicative monumental statements that were as typical of

63. A Hellenistic copy of about 200 BC or later of an Athenian proxeny decree (*IG* II³ 3) of either 412/11 or 400–386 survives in Iasos. It was itself copied from a fifth or fourth century version of the Athenian inscription in Iasos (or from a later copy thereof), demonstrating the tradition of replicating such decrees outside Athens. See *SEG* 51.1506.

64. If there is an ancient viewer whose writings show kinds of observational and connoisseurial sensitivity of this type, it is Pausanias, writing more than half a millennium after these two reliefs were erected. See Elsnér 2007: 51–58.

65. For versions of this story, see e.g., Stewart 1990: 103–85; Spivey 1996: 17–53; Osborne 1998: 157–87; Tanner 2006: 31–96; Neer 2010.

public dedication in Athens as they were of honorific statuary in the Hellenistic and Roman periods,⁶⁶ and as they are of civic statuary in modernity. The progressivist art-historical story we like to tell (Pliny's "passage from winter to spring")⁶⁷ is by no means necessarily the story that many in the ancient Greek world would have told at the time.

But the replication issue is more complex. Everyone, without exception, assumes that *dexiosis* in document reliefs and especially when involving deities is an allegory for agreement, affection, sociability.⁶⁸ But it is not at all obvious that any of the classes of object (like "documentary reliefs"), constructed by modern scholarship, are in fact self-sufficient visual forms, immune from other Athenian iconography of their time.⁶⁹ The fact is that the gesture is extremely common in leave-taking scenes, especially in death—above all on relief sculpture (Figs. 7 and 8), although also (much more rarely) on pots.⁷⁰ In other words, the iconography—in terms of the history of visual types—is equally appropriate for moments of greeting and moments of parting between people (not unlike the hug, embrace, or handshake in modern experience and social practice).⁷¹ We may add further that the likelihood is that the workshops for making reliefs on documentary stelae and funerary stelae were the same—at any rate a stele of 332/1 showing the Deme Eitea honoring Hippokles Demokleous (EM 13461, *SEG* 28.102), found in 1961 in the Attic village of Grammatiko, was topped in the form of a palmette (as is typical of funerary but not of documentary stelae), implying that it had been intended for mortuary commemoration but was appropriated to a different purpose in the workshop.⁷² It would not be abnormal for some aspects of a funerary meaning to be present in the image on the Samos stele, at least for some viewers. Or can we say with absolute and irrefutable confidence that when gods (who are immortal) shake hands, there were no connotations of death or leave-taking potentially evoked for any of an image's spectators? If any aspect of the ramifications

66. See, e.g., Ma 2006; Trimble 2011: 104–49; Ma 2013: 243–90.

67. Cf. Bryson 1984: 7.

68. I quote Neer 2010: 204; but cf. Lawton 1995: 30–32, 36: "a symbol of more general unity and accord"; Pemberton 1989: 49–50; Blanshard 2007: 19, 36; Smith 2011: 103–104: "a visual idiom of *philia* or friendship."

69. For instance, on the presence of visual reference to the Tyrannicides group, erected in the Agora in c. 477 BC, in pots and funerary stelae, see Ober 2005: 212–47.

70. For pots, see Oakley 2004: 61, 181. For the frequency and ambivalence of the gesture on Attic funerary reliefs, see Johansen 1951: 29–36, 54–62. The numbers are huge. For example for stelae with *dexiosis* and inscriptions from c. 430–350, see Clairmont 1970: nos. 27, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 83, 85, 89. For *dexiosis* in fifth- and fourth-century funerary contexts see Clairmont 1993 (plates volume): 2.051, 2.121, 2.149, 2.154, 2.155, 2.175, 2.177, 2.180, 2.181, 2.184, 2.185, 2.188, 2.189, 2.190, 2.193, 2.196, 2.197, 2.205, 2.207, 2.210, 2.210a, 2.212, 2.214, 2.216, 2.222, 2.224, 2.226, 2.227, 2.227a, 2.228a, 2.229a, 2.232, 2.234, 2.235, 2.236, 2.241a, 2.242, 2.248, 2.252, 2.254, 2.258, 2.267, 2.268, 2.268a, 2.270a, 2.271, 2.272, 2.273, 2.277a, 2.277b, 2.279, 2.280, 2.283b, 2.284, 2.2.85, and so on—there are many, many more.

71. Davies 1985: 639: "it was the themes of parting at death and reunion of the family in the afterlife that would have been uppermost" among the motif's "multiplicity of associations."

72. See Lawton 1995: 102–103, no. 43.

concerned with departure *were* present, then far from the usual assumption of harmony or serenity between cities, the image would have implications of Athens taking leave of Samos. In the context of the politics of 403/2, with democracy and autonomy restored in Athens but with Samos languishing under a tyranny set in place through Spartan control, this is a potent set of resonances. The stele's relief may imply harmony and goodwill, but it may also mean "Goodbye Samos." Such a meaning adds edge, spice, and substance to the Athenian willingness to grant citizenship to a people who may be virtually familial and much loved but are also, in political terms, the living dead.

Now that "goodbye"—like "hello" or tipping one's hat in greeting, in Erwin Panofsky's famous example—is a sign capable of numerous resonances.⁷³ "Goodbye Samos" could mean "requiescat in pacem, with regrets"; but it could also mean "to hell with you, a burden on us long enough," and a myriad of other intimations in between. The simple sign of *dexiosis* covers up the complications—but the range of their ramifications were up to viewers and available to them in all their variety in reaction to the image and its text. The remarkable openness of the relief to an extraordinary spectrum of potential meanings—from hello to goodbye, and including all the emotive baggage such greetings may carry—is in stark contrast with the apparently precise designations of the inscription, from its dates via the specific decisions of its decrees to the rituals of dining. That openness could be negatively characterized as vacuity or fatuousness by contrast with the precision of the text; but it could also be seen as an alternative discursive framing (to that proposed by the epigraphy) of what the monument as a whole is to mean. That is, the stele's full force comprises the sum of a visual discourse, open to an extraordinarily wide range of interpretative investments, and a verbal discourse that narrows interpretation significantly by comparison but which at the same time potentially suppresses explicit articulation of a number of likely problematic or conflictive issues.

Here is how Blanshard describes the relief of the Samos stele, in what is certainly the best discussion:

We see the two deities for whom each state had particular affection (Athens for Athena; Hera for Samos) captured in a gesture of greeting and agreement (*dexiosis*); a seamless join between art and text that celebrated friendship and allegiance. Athena stands on the right wearing a peplos, himation and aegis with small gorgoneion. Her shield rests against an olive stump. In her left hand, she holds her spear, its tip to the ground. Hera, dressed in a sleeveless peplos, faces her on the left. She holds a sceptre in her raised left hand and wears a diadem. A shoulder mantle billows behind her.⁷⁴

73. Panofsky 1939: 4.

74. Blanshard 2007: 19–20. Most of the terms (even "billows") are borrowed from Lawton 1995: 88.

This is pretty good; yet note the many interpretative slides, normal in art history but tendentious nonetheless: the term “affection” for the relationship of cities and their patron deities; the assumption of equation between city and deity “(Athens for Athena; Hera for Samos)”,⁷⁵ the emotive verbal formulation of “greeting and agreement,” “friendship and allegiance”—pairs of nouns for the pair of deities and cities in *dextrarum iunctio*; the blindness (shared with all other commentators) to the real funerary meanings of the *dexiosis* gesture and their potential political relevance in this case; the assumption that the tree is an olive stump, that what Hera carries is a sceptre; the word “billows” for her mantle. None of this is excessive, but it all manages to translate the image into a form that enables it to play a discursive part in a complex discussion. In fact, its rhetorical tendentiousness within the structure of Blanshard’s argument is carefully crafted. His piece proceeds to undermine all the assumptions so naturally and easily set up in his description. He plays with doubt about whether Hera is not perhaps Demeter, since the iconography suits the latter perfectly and concludes that it is only the viewer’s shift from image to text—to the inscription’s relentless focus on Samos—that can clinch the identification of Hera (27–28, 30–31).⁷⁶ He explores the “perfection” implied by the image (36) against the “confusion, pain and exile” of the Samians after 404, which is “far removed from the serenity of the *dexiosis* of Athena and Hera” (33). He wonders, in reading the inscribed decrees, about the “generosity of the Athenian people,” speculates that “Samos seems to be gripping the outstretched hand a little too eagerly,” (35) and comments that “the treatment of such dear friends seems to have been less than satisfactory” (36).⁷⁷

In his conclusion Blanshard comments that the stele involves “us in a discussion of interpretative practice” and argues that the “oblique relationship between image and text draws the viewer into an exercise in constructing meaning” (37). How can I disagree? His entire essay, he claims, turns on the way image and text “subvert” each other (34) and on the “the gap between reality and promise made by this monument” (33, the word “gap” appears twice also on 34). And yet, one might argue that the real commentary of his essay is *not* on the image but on the tendentious description of the image he offers in its second paragraph (quoted

75. This goes back to the very first publication of the stele: Kabbadias 1888: 123–24.

76. In fact, while Athena is certainly Athena for iconographic reasons, the figure to the left is only “probably Hera”—a viewer’s inference at best, whether in antiquity or in modernity. The interpretative desire to have the two figures as equals (i.e. both gods) on the relief is arguably not supported by the evidence of the funerary stelae with handshakes, where it is very likely that one figure in the *dexiosis* was imagined as dead while the other is still living (see Johansen 1951: 54–62). It is by no means impossible that the difference between Athens and Samos in the ideological construct of the stele’s makers might be represented by having Athena as embodiment of Athens but just a nondescript female personification to represent the Samians. For non-personification of Athens except by Athena, see Smith 2011: 92–93; for the use of personifications for cities and regions outside Attica, see Smith 2011: 102–106.

77. One might add in support of giving the upper hand to Athens, that the *gorgoneion* at Athena’s breast is the one frontal element looking resolutely out of a relief of figures in profile, into the viewer’s space. Athena’s power extends beyond the internal space of the relief and looks out.

above) which sets up the space for the gaps and subversions he so ably exploits. This is certainly about interpretative practice, but we may worry about whether the interpretation is of a fifth-century BC Athenian image or a twenty-first-century AD account of that image, constructed in order to be undermined. And of course, if you read the image with connotations of the death of Samos as a free democracy, then a quite different gap is opened between its implications and those of all that praise, or quite a different confluence from anything Blanshard assumes between the pain of Samian history and the relief's suggestion that the entire stele might be read as a funerary monument for Hera's city.

I should make clear that the problem is less with Blanshard's particular description than with the need to turn visual objects into textual descriptions in order to treat them historically in the first place. That is, in itself, an interpretative practice which we conduct at our peril because it is always within the limitations of our own ideologies and axiomatic assumptions. It has hardly been theorized art-historically,⁷⁸ let alone in relation to the use of the descriptions of objects for the purposes of history. It is not unrelated moreover to the pertinent question of whether our accounts of the text (for instance the commentators' failure to accommodate its panegyric form) are a fair set of translations, and of how the two kinds of translation (ancient epigraphic text, construed into English—or whatever other modern tongue—and then reformulated or interpreted so as to write “history,” and ancient sculpted image turned into description so as to make it into material suitable for “history”) can be made to cohere. The teleology of the two processes is the same (to write history) but there are substantive differences, above all in the fact that one form of translation is from text to text and the other is intermedial, that is, from image to text.

Before I attempt to draw conclusions about what value, if any, these reflections might offer for how we use material and visual culture to help us practice ancient history, let me add a few further observations in relation to issues missing from the existing discussions. None of the decrees says anything whatsoever about the gods; religion is firmly absent from the epigraphy. By contrast, on the image there are no men; the activities of human beings are entirely absent from the relief. While the decrees concern the actions of men (and I do mean males) and cities, the image is about the actions of females who are deities. This keeps within the Blanshard territory of the “gap” between image and text, but it strays into a different arena—one not irrelevant to the provenance of the stele on the Acropolis—namely, the sacred. One reason that arena has been entirely untouched in any discussion of the stele heretofore is that scholars, not only historians but equally art historians,⁷⁹ are obsessed by texts and follow their lead whenever we can, even when they limit rather than enable our interpretations.

78. Discussions include Panofsky 2012 (originally in German, 1932) and Elsner 2010. Further on the incommensurability of image and text, see Gombrich 1959: 110; Schapiro 1973: 12; Bal 1991: 34; Heffernan 1999; Squire 2009: 35–41.

79. Cf Steinberg 1980: 210.

There is indeed a profound homology between the visual and the epigraphic spheres in the Samos stele: it lies in the link between the *dexiosis* of female figures in human form, one of whom is indubitably a deity, who in certain respects may be taken to represent and even personify their cities, and the reciprocity of actions in which the “good” (that repeated term *agathos*) of Samian men and their deeds is reciprocated by the good returned to them by Athenian men.⁸⁰ We might note in passing that the repetition of *agathos* itself ramifies against the funerary theme potentially suggested by the imagery of shaking hands: the word is regularly used in fifth-century Athens in a eulogistic context of the dead.⁸¹ I might add that this homology of reciprocation works both for the usual celebratory interpretation of the *dexiosis* and for any intimations of lament for the death of Samian freedom.⁸² That mutual goodness is about more than a reward for loyalty: it is about standing together in war and peace (*IG* I³ 127.19–23), about mutual negotiations if such there must be (*IG* I³ 127.24–25), and specifically after 403 about the Athenians doing what they can to help the Samians in negotiations with Sparta (*IG* II² 1.45–46).⁸³ War and peace are present in the image, with Athena armed but her shield resting by the tree stump—an iconography that can speak at once of two allies preparing together for war or of two friends rejoicing in peace. The visual type is well chosen to be appropriate to all the historical possibilities and uncertainties about war and peace envisaged in the conditions of 405, when the first decree was promulgated and the Peloponnesian war still being waged, as well as the post-war context of 403.

But more generally, the image places the specificities of the text—particular people, particular embassies, decrees enacted at particular meetings—into a much more generalized frame of the gods, at least of one god distinctively concerned with Athens, and hence *sub specie aeternitatis*. Insofar as there is anything “good” in the actions of Samos and Athens, and in the actions of the Athenians

80. *IG* I³ 127.9, 12, 25, 35 (ἀγαθοῖς restored here) and *IG* II² 1.43, 58, 65, 70 (ἀνδραγαθία), 71—in all these cases of the good things done or the good qualities displayed by the Samians; *IG* II² 1.61 of the benefits (ὁ τι . . . ἀγαθόν) which Poses the Samian will receive of Athens.

81. For instance, in literary texts, see Thucydides 2.35.1 and 2.42.3 (both times in Pericles’ famous funeral speech), Aeschines 3.154, Herodotus 9.75, Lysias 12.97, with discussion by Rusten 1986: 71–74, and for more on the thematic, see Loraux 2006: 146–48, 152–55, 157. In epigraphy, one might cite the “*Agathoi* decree” from Thasos of 360–350 BC, where citizens killed in war are repeatedly called ἀγαθοί: see Fournier and Hamon 2007: 316–17, lines 3, 8, 11, and 36 with some comment at 318. See also *IG* II² 448, the stele with a pair of decrees of different dates (323/2 and 318/7) honoring Euphron of Sikyon: although the relief does not show *dexiosis*, the object is in effect funerary since it is clear that Euphron was dead (fighting on behalf of the Athenians) by the time the stele was set up and both decrees repeat the terminology of ἀγαθός in speaking of Euphron’s relations with the Athenians (decree 1: *IG* II² 448.7–8, decree 2: *IG* II² 448.42). For bibliography, see note 28.

82. We might moreover ask what it means for immortals to shake hands in a parting that could intimate death, but should note that the imagery of gods doing things that men ought to do—for instance pouring libations (which is what you expect men to do for the gods)—is rather frequent, on which see e.g., Patton 2009: 3–159.

83. Some discussion in Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 16.

in doing what they have done for the Samians (which includes the setting up of this very stele, something self-reflexively referred to in the last decree),⁸⁴ it is so in relation to and perhaps in imitation of the divine sphere explicitly framing the inscription through the choice of iconography. That is, the stele—in all its political specificities—is nevertheless, both visually and through its placement on the Acropolis, a piece of theological commentary.⁸⁵ And yet in constructing the “goodness” of Athenians and Samians in terms of the *dexiosis* of a deity and a personification that may imply a deity, the stele also affirms that the politics of its decrees—above all, the rituals and politics of democracy as a system of government—is what these gods approve. Implicitly, it is the divine heading for this strangely concocted, but carefully integrated, mix of decrees of different times in an inscription that never mentions the Thirty, which constitutes the monument’s simultaneously silent but powerful condemnation of their impiety. If the gods affirm democracy, what they condemn is the oligarchy, which briefly intervened.

More narrowly, one feature of the relief is the way it is crammed into, even cramped by, its frame. The edge of “Hera’s” cloak and the tip of her scepter, the end of Athena’s spear and especially the crest of her helmet, all are just cut off at the frame. It should be said that this sense of the restriction of image by frame is typical of the so-called document reliefs.⁸⁶ However, while the choice in the document reliefs is often made for the figures to extend beyond the frame,⁸⁷ announcing their significance perhaps as not constrained by the mere formalities of representation, in this case it is as if we view through a window out of this world and into another one. The full reality of these visual figures appears to lie beyond and behind the stele, although they appear to stand on the base of the relief panel. That glimpse of a divine act of reciprocal acknowledgment depicted on, but not wholly commensurate with, the material limitations of the stele is itself a further tantalizing differentiation of the divine world evoked by the image and the human world of the monument and its inscriptions. That choice of framing—placing the deities away and behind the rest of the monument rather than bursting through its boundaries—is itself a further theological twist. There may be a homology of reciprocities—the exchange of human goodness imitating the *dexiosis* of a divine model, the gods’ handshake emblemizing the relations of Samos and Athens—but *is* there a link between these worlds beyond merely the implied assertions of image set alongside inscription? We are offered no whisper of mediation or

84. *IG II²* 1.66–68; cf. also the crown for Poses, *IG II²* 1.60, 69–70.

85. For some thoughts on visual theology in ancient Greece, see Osborne 2011: 185–215 (on “godsbodyes”); Platt 2011: 77–123; Squire 2011: 154–201; Gaifman 2012: 243–70; and Gaifman forthcoming.

86. For example, Lawton 1995: nos. 13, 14, 28, 30, 35, 36, 38, 46, 54, 73, 81, 83, 85, 89, 96, 98, 100, 103, 105, 106, 115, 116, 125, 126, 127, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147.

87. For example, Lawton 1995: nos. 14, 28, 36, 38, 43, 68, 73, 75, 85.

linkage beyond the hint of the terminology of “sacred business,” which comes even before the Athenians may turn their attention to the Samians, at the end of the third decree.⁸⁸ That surely raises some questions, in anyone who may have cared to ask them.

A final—let us call it, existential—point, before we turn to some larger questions. Let us take the image and text together as part of a single monument whose meaning is not just about the specific issues alluded to in its verbal and visual representations. Then it can be seen as an existential statement, a declarative act of dedication by the city on the Acropolis within a ritual and performative culture of such epigraphic statements. In the course of his major paper on “inscribing performance,” Robin Osborne has commented on the way that the texts of the Samos stele fulfill “a demand for repeated expositions of honours in order to establish their ongoing truth.”⁸⁹ That truth—exemplified on both the civic level of Athenian relations with Samos and on the personal level of specific honors for Poses—is guaranteed not only politically through the various pronouncements of the *demos* and *boule* but also religiously in the *dexiosis* of deities on the relief. We may say that ultimately the monument stands in its totality as a token or pledge for the trustworthiness and even cognitive reliability of what its texts inscribe and profess (which is to say what the democracy determined), just as the act of *dexiosis* was the sign of a solemn oath or pledge in Athenian culture.⁹⁰ The imagery and the writing down of the decrees in stone as a permanent record, beyond orality and beyond the book (*biblion*) mentioned at *IG* II² 1.61 which was given to Poses, is the means by which the re-democratized state affirms—perhaps more to itself than to outsiders—its worthiness and credibility as a polity to be trusted by its citizens.

The monument’s directedness at the Athenians themselves, rather than at anyone else, is significant. If we return for a moment to the image of *dexiosis*, one might argue that its strength lies in its vacuity—its ability to mean pretty well anything in terms of the relations of Athens with Samos, depending on what a viewer would want, and its visual way of signaling the divine order (rather like the epigraphic term *THEOS* or *THEOI* at the top of many an inscription).⁹¹ But in fact, as Blanshard pointed out, the vacuity is carefully modulated. While the image of Athena is overdetermined with iconographic identifiers, making it absolutely

88. *IG* II² 1.73 (τὰ ἱερά, admittedly a word largely restored).

89. Osborne 1999: 354.

90. Flory 1978: 70 and Pemberton 1989: 46–47.

91. For instance Meiggs and Lewis 1969: nos. 5, 23 (restored), 46, 54, 60 (restored), 63 (restored), 64, 69, 82, 89, 90; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: nos. 3, 14, 26, 27, 28, 32, 35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 70, 73, 75, 81, 82, 88, 91 102. Of course the comparison of a heading saying *THEOI* and an image of the (I hope I have shown) semiotically ambivalent scene of *dexiosis* in which one figure is certainly a god and one an indeterminate personification, raises all the issues of the commensurability of text and image which this paper is addressing. The very fact that Greek documentary epigraphy had more than one way of gesturing to the divine context (i.e. in images and in writing) is itself a sign of the complexity with which the polis claimed a sacred framing for its political life.

and unassailably clear without any recourse to the text that it is the patron goddess of Athens who is intended, the image of Hera is much less certain. Only a reading of the inscription and the knowledge that Hera is the patron deity of Samos, allows us (and viewers of the late fifth century) to surmise her identity—which we do in relation to the text; but visually she may be Hera, or Demeter, or any old nymph, or an abstract personification. This is because in the end it is the “goodness” of Athens that matters in the Samos stele, and the goodness of others, let alone those to whom the Athenians are good, is much less important. The iconography of the Samos stele is carefully and deliberately targeted in giving us the visual information to determine the divine identities of those who shake hands, and the inequality of that information is highly significant. We may say that alongside the multiple ambivalences of *dexiosis* and its potential to mean “goodbye,” the differential information supplied by the image for identifying the deities supports a reading whereby the relief calmly betrays the Athenians’ lack of concern for the Samians, even as the text appears to affirm the reality of Athenian “goodness” in response to Samian “goodness.”

If one were to accept my reading of the Samos stele, or Blanshard’s, or indeed someone else’s which developed or corrected mine, one could then use the resulting information to write history. The stories, to which it might be turned and to which it might contribute, are many: the end of the Peloponnesian War, or the history of the relations of Athens and Samos, Athens and its allies, Athens and other states, or the history of citizenship at Athens, or whatever. My point here is not to write any such histories but to illustrate the work we need to do to get monuments and iconography into a fit state where they can do some historical work, alongside the kinds of materials more normatively used in the traditional writing of ancient history. But we need to be very clear about the status of what I have been doing. It is not factual data, nor is it material capable of positive proof or disproof. It lies in the complex, uncertain, and indeterminate arena of hermeneutic likelihood and interpretative probability.

II. VISUAL CULTURE AND ANCIENT HISTORY

Now I have been consciously worrying at a number of large issues on the very small scale of a single monument. We have, however, the benefit of deep and careful exploration of several of these themes on a rather grander scale in Robin Osborne’s recent book, *The History Written on the Classical Greek Body*. Osborne is self-consciously on the side of the gods (from my point of view!) in wanting to write a history that is sensitive both to images as such and to the different methods needed to make use of visual evidence in contrast with textual evidence. He opens his book by arguing that the structures for historical analysis required by language (and the study of ancient texts) “are necessarily more formal than those required by images, and that the fundamentally arbitrary relationship between words and

things means that words require and produce classifications which images, which are not entirely arbitrary signs, are always liable to undermine.”⁹² What he means by the difference of word and image here—and I quote his comments to me in a clarifying email—is the difference of the “arbitrary relationship between ‘C A T’ and a small furry pet, compared with the not-completely-arbitrary relationship of a drawing of a small furry pet to that pet.” For Osborne, this represents a fundamental disjunction between images and texts in the ways they represented and structured ancient experience (to reflect what the Greeks said and what they saw, as he puts it),⁹³ and it has inevitable entailments in the differences of approach we need to apply to make best use of the evidential material.

In other words, when confronted with basic empirical evidence—and before we worry about how we make history from it—we need to be sure we have the appropriate hermeneutic tools to grasp what it is telling us (and how much it can tell us) about the actualities of life in antiquity. In the case of the Samos stele, its empirical evidence comes in three chunks. First, archaeological: the monument survives in four joining fragments whose findspots make it likely (not certain but certainly a sensible best guess) that the original was erected on the Acropolis⁹⁴—an important contextual datum about its potential significations. Second, art-historical: the relief at the top, whose potential meanings, as we have seen, must be reconstructed with reference to a series of comparanda that circle the object in a ripple effect; these include other document reliefs, other examples of the *dexiosis* iconography from roughly the same period, other examples of the iconographic types of Athena and Hera from roughly the same period, and so forth. Third, textual: the inscription, with its specific and formalized verbal formulations and their resonances across other Athenian epigraphy and literary texts of the period, as well as issues of letter-cutting and inscriptional execution. The burden of Osborne’s argument in *The History Written on the Classical Greek Body* (and he is entirely right) is that my evidential chunks 2 and 3 (that is, images and texts) belong to different and largely independent discursive strategies in ancient culture and need different hermeneutic methods in modernity to soften them up for historical understanding.

But—and still before we enter the maelstrom of how we write history—the problem remains of what the data evokes for understanding ancient realities. It is not at all obvious that what the Greeks represented visually—for instance, the goddess Athena on the Samos stele and the figure that may be Hera—had a direct

92. Osborne 2011: 2 with extended discussion at 8–18. Osborne’s theoretical range of reference here is very French poststructuralist (Foucault, Cixous, Bourdieu) with a touch of Gadamer. But one might add that there is an Austro-Hungarian-British inflection to these issues also—one thinks especially of Wittgenstein 1958: II. xi, 193e–215e, or the critique both of Wittgenstein and of Oxford linguistic philosophy by Gellner 1959, and art-historically also the classic American account of Schapiro 1973.

93. Osborne 2011: 1–2, which specifically emphasizes issues of perception and experience.

94. Lawton 1995: 88 and Shear 2011: 246–47.

or extrapolatable relationship to what they actually saw (or even to what they thought they saw). It is, I think, optimistic to suggest that what they saw and what they represented in art are the same. We may indeed see what we represent, but what we represent is not necessarily a reflection of what we see. Nor is it clear that what the Greeks represented in writing has much relationship to what they said: in that space lies the great theme of orality and literacy—the difference, for instance, on the Samos stele between the three written decrees and the actual decrees made in the assembly.⁹⁵ Both the written and the depicted are formal and ritualized modes of representation dependent on all kinds of tropes and genres, and while there surely is a link to direct experience, it'd be a brave person who could show how to determine experience from the evidence as it survives.

It is not obvious, thinking of the Samos stele, that the image of the deities is any less “arbitrary,” to use Osborne’s repeated term,⁹⁶ than the long epigraphic text. In fact, the inscription of the first decree at least reflects in some form that of an earlier and lost inscription, while all three decrees instantiate in stone (in a form that may be very different from the original and may not) what was once proposed, agreed, and pronounced in the assembly. The image on the other hand, as a gesture in the history of visual types, makes at best a highly general and emblematic commentary on any kind of actuality, and one that I have tried to show can be plausibly taken in more than one way. The text surely is—however adapted it has been to become an epigraph—a representation of what the Greeks said, but I have no idea in what sense the image depicts what they saw, except of course for reflecting other images like it. But certainly both image and text in the Samos stele, while comprising one monument, use different—and arguably independent—discursive strategies drawing on different generic and communicative models, to make their case. To assess image and text as historical evidence requires the sensitivity to read both forms of discourse on their own terms.

One might say that what image and text reveal is not realities but the different and complex worlds of ancient *representations* (visual and textual). Such representations are emblematic within the cultures that produced them, in that they offer—within their respective generic and discursive structures—complex rhetorical and ideological signals, not always consistently. In the case of the Samos stele, we have a more general kind of discourse in the relief (capable of numerous and different meanings) and a more specific discourse in the text (certainly capable of as much suppression and denial—in what it does not say—as of articulation of what it does say). As a monument, the stele was part of Athenian reality at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries BC; but as a statement within its time and taken as a whole (monument, image, and text), it was a claim to attention, a representation, capable of a range of expectations, meanings, and investments from both Athenians and foreigners, let alone Samians.

95. Generally see Thomas 1989, 1992, and 1994.

96. Osborne 2011: 2.

There remains the problem of what happens when we make use of a monument, and the various areas of evidence it may offer, in the historical accounts we ourselves produce. The combination of image and word has certainly not been frequently enough adduced in the case of historians' uses of the Samos stele, which have all but ignored the iconography. When we use ancient documents in historical analysis, we can quote them (or their translations) directly—forging their rhetorical flow into and within our own rhetorical flow of historical argument. Despite their many departures from the rhetoric and form of the decrees in the Samos stele, historians have indeed caught and made use of the chronological flow of the three decrees in their accounts. In the case of images, as we saw in examining Blanshard's description, we have to *translate* them, as well as their effects and certainly the forms in which they were visually embodied, into descriptions written according to particular genres (or rhetorical rule books), descriptions that are inevitably tendentious in setting up the argument we are going to make. This is an intermedial act in that—for an object whose existence and form of communication is material and visual to become a type of evidence usable in prose—the work of art must be made to shift its medium from visual to verbal. The image as empirical datum within history has a different status in any given argument from a text, because it has been repackaged (should I say translated, traduced, or betrayed?) *as* a modern text—a contemporary ekphrastic description—in order to figure in the structure of a modern discussion. In the case of the Samos stele, that repackaging (on the archaeological and hence intermedial side) has to be conducted both in relation to the relief and in relation to the material totality of the monument as a whole.

This means that, on the level of our writing of history as opposed to that of assessing the evidential value of empirical data, we must step back from Osborne's model of the relative semiotics of image and text. He has argued that the relationship of words to things is more arbitrary than that of images to things, since in various ways, more or less schematically, more or less naturalistically, images resemble the things they signify rather than denote them conventionally, as words do. But in our writing of history, which turns everything into a textual discourse (albeit one which may describe visual or archaeological material, and which may illustrate some of it), the words we use in reformulating the words the ancients we are studying used are differently configured in their relation to the evidence from the words we use to describe the images they produced. In the case of the modern historical text (whether the texts we read and teach or the ones we produce ourselves) the semiotic relationship of word to word (that is, documentary evidence to historical argument) is very different from that of word to image (that is, the words we choose to describe images vis-à-vis the original images themselves).⁹⁷

97. Indeed, while he does not make this point explicitly, Osborne 2011 is well aware of it in his brilliant demolition of all the usual guff about musculature and athletics, body "fascism" and beauty, in the recent art historical discussions of the male nude in antiquity, which he performs in

In part our problem is an anthropological one: our histories are *etic*, or outsiders', texts whereas our evidence (visual and verbal) reflects the *emic* responses of actors within the culture. But that anthropological impasse is itself mapped onto the further gaps of how words and images in ancient discourse do not obviously or transparently convey ancient experience, and how words in modern historical discourse do not obviously or transparently reflect the range of significations in either ancient words or ancient images. That at least is my sense in analyzing the visual and documentary accounts of the Samos stele, where clearly all modern reformulations are very far from what the ancient image depicts and the ways the ancient text expresses itself.

So where is this getting us? One issue, in thinking of the futures of ancient history, is that we might return to its most cherished and oldest starting points—such as Greek epigraphy—and start again with a little more archaeologically inflected and visually sensitive empiricism and respect for the object than our dear commentators on the Samos stele were able to demonstrate. Robin Osborne, interrogating the ways historians use different bodies of evidence and consciously attempting to extend the range of usable data by claiming the rich territory of ancient images for ancient history, invokes images to “undermine” the evidence produced by words, “since people live their lives not simply according to the dictates of words but according to their observations of the world around them.”⁹⁸ I would like to invoke the “archaeologicality” of material culture, and the particular problems of interpreting works of art, to undermine our use of the words we summon to write history by reminding ourselves of how selective and self-serving our choices are—and especially the choices by which we conflate the evidence of word and image (as well as word and object) or juxtapose one with the other. Whether we think of the language of praise and dinner, or of the *visuality* of *dexiosis*, or of the material address of a tall monument somewhere on the Athenian Acropolis with an image on the top and a lot of writing—as both information and decoration—beneath it, or of the visual emphasis on a divine sphere, these are not how the Samos stele has been used in history, and our history is the poorer for not finding space for them.

The specific artifactuality of material culture should make history stumble.⁹⁹ Images (their necessarily silent objections, as material and visual artifacts, to

chapter 2. He shows there that the ekphrastic genre in which a group, perhaps the majority, of modern scholars have been engaging has very little to do with the objects on which it is focused, if one looks specifically at the discussions of musculature and athletics in ancient texts of the same period as our images.

98. Osborne 2011: 2.

99. The worst cases are those which *do* depend in part on material or visual evidence but fail even to illustrate this, let alone indicate any methodological difficulty in using it. A recent example (it being always of course unfair to point a finger at a single instance!) is Van Dam 2011, which discusses the arch of Constantine in Rome (124–40), the arch at Malborghetto (181–90), the colossal statuary of which fragments remain in Rome (190–203), and the Christian buildings (203–15) without a single image or genuflection to the problems of visual material, as if they were texts. . . .

textual reformulation, the ways their reporting is incommensurate when they are transformed into texts with the reporting of literary or epigraphic evidence) and monuments, including inscriptions (their particularity, reluctant and resistant to generalization), need to be used both to make the bigger historical case and also to argue their special and particular nature against the bigger case. They should make both writer and reader stub a toe against the possibility that the totality of evidence marshaled for an argument, or to maintain a proposition, does not and cannot fully reflect the original state of affairs in that comprehensive plenitude we imagine as the ancient world that once was. Material culture should trouble us with the possibility that the smooth explanations we seek may cover up or simplify the potentially conflicted nature in which our chosen subject of interest actually may have existed in its ancient reality. They should provoke us to question our history as we write it and read it; to question the limitations of what we can know, based on a speculative and imaginative reconstruction from tiny and fragmentary parts of a totality now lost.¹⁰⁰

I have worked myself around to arguing, I think, for the *necessity* of images if we are to do a cultural history that attempts at all to be true to what went on in Greek and Roman minds. But to do this requires great methodological care, self-conscious circumspection, and rhetorical discretion. Arguably, it is only when we realize that art constitutes a discourse of its own, and one that may at times be independent of verbal discourse, that we can find a place for art history in the writing of history. If one were to object that this is only one small element of the totality of what ancient historians do, then I fear that is something I can hardly deny. But if some part of what ancient historians do ought to stand the test of being passed by the cultural categories imagined by ancient Greeks and Romans, then the evidence of images cannot wholly be ignored.

I have been exploring my theme from the point of view of what might be called “lovable empiricism”—the touchy-feely space of the investigator at the coalface of empirical evidence. Let me present it a little more analytically. Empirical data for ancient history comes in a number of forms—in the case of the Samos stele, as archaeologically attested fragments of a monument, as a relief panel, and as a documentary inscription. That data *always* points in two ways: towards an ancient reality (of which it can give evidence, if appropriately examined) and towards the production of a modern interpretative narrative, satisfying and convincing, one hopes, in the era when it is written. There is always a triangulation of *data*, the *ancient actuality*, which it evidences, and the *historical argument* produced from it (the latter of course always in connection with other data and a range of authorial assumptions). We may say that the data—surviving from antiquity into modernity—sits between the past, which we wish to access, and

100. For instance, we might worry that the ways we extract evidence from our different fragments (textual and material) may render that data as mutually exclusive rather than complementary or compatible.

the present moment in which we do the accessing, as a point of mediation. It is certainly the subjectivity of the historian—itself hardly independent of the attitudes and subjectivities of other historians in his or her time and context (although often in conflict with them)—that determines what hermeneutic means, what methods of analysis, what models of discourse, to apply to the data in order to render its information interesting to us and to incorporate it into an historical argument.

Empirical data, in other words, sits between two not certainly compatible ideological worlds—the ideologies of the past (in this case, of ancient Athenian democratic monuments and decree-making in relation to allies in the later fifth century BC) and the ideologies of modern scholarship (themselves, in the case of this stele, susceptible to a long history from the Greek excavators and German epigraphers of the later nineteenth century to varieties of contemporary views from scholars of different national and linguistic formations), all of which have some ancestral investment in issues of Athenian political history. The past did exist, but exists now only in the history of its modern interpretations. The ideologies of the present construct themselves in part in relation to views of the past. The empirical data—archaeology, images, and texts—stand as the mediating frame around which these various constructions are (more and less plausibly) mounted.

My two points in this paper have been the following. First, we have to be extremely sensitive about the different discourses of word and image within antiquity, if we want the latter to be included in history, and we have to find appropriate hermeneutic means to assess both.¹⁰¹ Second, as we write history, we have to be equally sensitive to the distortative nature of our writing when it comes to reducing the meanings of images (as a play of the visual) to the descriptive constructs of modern ekphrastic accounts that enable objects to function in a written discourse.¹⁰² This is not to say that our writing does not also reduce the meanings of documents from the past, but it does so differently from the ways it reduces images—since it is not the same to translate word to word as it is to translate image to word. What I have said, in the specific context of a single monument situated at a particular point in Athenian history, seems to me in principle generalizable to any ancient monument or set of monuments at any point in the past. But the hermeneutic challenge—above all to our own

101. Effectively here I follow the broad thrust of Osborne 2011.

102. It is true, however, and I am most grateful to Francesco de Angelis for making this point to me, that the use of photographs in modern publication at least allows an element of control to be applied to the descriptive excess of accounting for images. Arguably there is less of a control on what the modern historian writes about events and how he or she interprets texts or objects not directly quoted or illustrated. Both with and without illustration, what we write is ekphrasis (more or less evocative, more or less rigorously governed by particular descriptive conventions), restrained by virtue of what one can get away with within the limits of what is academically acceptable in scholarly circles at any given time. But the two forms of ekphrasis are not quite the same.

complacency in making the evidence tell the story we want it to tell—is never a simple one.

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