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► **To cite this version:**

Michèle Brunet. Texts on Artifacts. How to improve Epigraphic Publication in a Digital Ecosystem. Beaulieu, Marie-Claire; Toillon, Valérie. Greek and Roman Painting and the Digital Humanities, 1, Taylor & Francis, Routledge, pp.89-104, 2021, Routledge Research in Art History, 978-0-367-54701-1. <10.4324/9781003092780-9>. <halshs-03615249>

HAL Id: halshs-03615249

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03615249v1>

Submitted on 23 Jan 2023

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Texts on artifacts: How to Improve Epigraphic Publication in a Digital Ecosystem

Inscriptions are artifacts, whether sculpted or painted, composed only of texts that feature juxtaposed letters or with both images and lines of writing. It is indeed as “works of art” that they are exhibited among statues and reliefs in major European and North American museums.¹ Of course, museum cartels never fail to emphasize their value as historical archives,² but what engages the visitor, regardless of whether or not they are able to decipher and contextualize the inscribed content, is the lettering, as it is most often impressive, original, seductive, and perceived as “aesthetic”.

The conception of the inscription as a work of art is rooted in the antiquarian tradition of collectors, which dates back to the 16th century.³ However, this line of thinking is not shared by all: there are still many historian-epigraphists today who believe that the entire value of an inscription as primary source material is concentrated exclusively in the textual message, and that the painted or sculpted features that may be associated with the text, the form of the artifact, the graphic design, and the layout are only very secondary elements. It would follow that disconnecting these elements from the critical edition of the text would pose no problem (except when the shape of the letters helps assign a date to the content)⁴ and could be left to other disciplines.

This conceptual dissociation, endorsed by scientific publications in the disjunction between corpora of epigraphic texts and museum catalogs, is not only a matter of academic traditions and epistemological boundaries between disciplines. As several studies have clearly shown,⁵ the technical vector of publication has also played a decisive role in this partition between the epigraphic text and all that materializes and accompanies it. The rupture took place very early on, directly following the invention of the printing press and in conjunction with the technical challenges and costs of producing and reproducing complete facsimiles of monuments bearing inscriptions. Once photographs replaced engravings in books during the 19th century, the situation did not change much: printing costs, layout constraints, and the associated copyright fees proved to be (and still are) an obstacle to the presence of extensive and systematic illustration, placed opposite the critical edition of the text, within

¹ Thus, referring to the Louvre Museum as just one example, there are spaces dedicated to the presentation of inscriptions in the galleries of the Department of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities, and in the galleries presenting the Arts of Islam.

² But always summarizing the content of the text very succinctly and without offering a complete translation.

³ See Pomian 1996.

⁴ As previously emphasized in 1969 by John Sparrow (Sparrow 1969, p. 12): « Historians and philologists, regarding inscriptions simply as historical evidence, have concentrated on their texts, paying regard to their script and their physical characteristics only in order to assign to them their proper date and provenance and so fit them into their historical context ».

⁵ See among others Stenhouse 2010.

epigraphic corpora.⁶ Lastly, the technique of making squeezes,⁷ which has been used by epigraphists since the beginning of the 19th century, has only reinforced the tendency of historians to focus exclusively on the textual component, since this type of facsimile, so invaluable for establishing the text, is created by casting the "epigraphic field" on stone, therefore reproducing *only* the area where the engraved letters are located.⁸

In epigraphy as in other scientific fields, we can thus observe the existence of a strong dialectical link⁹ between the epistemology of a discipline, the techniques of reproduction of original documents, and the vectors of publication.¹⁰ This explains why the current upheavals induced by digital formats and media and by the computer screen as a visualization frame should be perceived not as a threat, but as a tangible opportunity for an "epistemological overhaul" of epigraphic publication.¹¹ Indeed, among other advantages, these new editorial methods allow multiple images to be displayed in relation with the texts, offering the opportunity to reunite all components of the inscriptions in their analysis and presentation. Thus, they can be examined and interpreted in a manner consistent with the project underlying their production, as works bearing ostentatious writings designed for exhibition, to be noticed, viewed, and read.¹²

Once we acknowledge how inextricably linked the visual and textual dimensions are when defining an inscription as well as the fundamental need to consider all the components of the inscribed artifact for the epigraphic edition, we can start to build a global modeled analysis as a starting point for a digital editorial strategy. Over the last twenty years, the EpiDoc¹³ schema derived from the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)¹⁴ has become the standard for editing epigraphic texts on the web. But until now, most of the corpora and epigraphic

⁶ The 2012 publication of IG II/III³ 1, 5 (Bardani - Tracy 2012) by V. Bardani and St. Tracy was commended in particular because for the first time in this reference collection, it includes an illustration for each of the published inscriptions (395), in the form of 80 plates placed at the end of the volume. This editorial choice can clearly be explained by the method of classification and dating by the handwriting developed by St. Tracy throughout his career, which involves providing the reader with the visual means of "judging on evidence". Nevertheless, in spite of this progress, the plates are grouped together at the end of the volume: the illustration is therefore never "opposite" the edition of the text.

⁷ For a definition of squeezes and a presentation of the technique of casting inscribed stones, see the website (M. Brunet dir.) *E-stampages*, https://www.e-stampages.eu/s/e-stampages/page/les_collections (consulted on 2020/10/27).

⁸ In the collection of the French School of Athens, which includes more than 10,000 prints, less than a dozen reproduce zones with sculpted images.

⁹ On this issue, see the extensive survey of the *Lieux de Savoir*, "an archaeology of scholarly work" coordinated by Christian Jacob, in particular the second volume, *Les mains de l'intellect*, Jacob 2011.

¹⁰ See also Grafton 2012.

¹¹ See the collective synthesis Driscoll and Pierazzo 2017 and in particular the contribution of P. Sahle, Sahle 2017, which presents a very thorough and logical reflection on the impact of the digital turn on critical scholarly edition, and proposes modeling approaches that inspire the Greek inscription publication program of the Louvre *IGLouvre* that I coordinate.

¹² For this definition of the inscription inspired by Ph. Bruneau and M. Corbier, see below.

¹³ EpiDoc specifies a subset of the [Text Encoding Initiative](#)'s standard for the representation of texts in digital form using the [Extensible Markup Language \(XML\)](#), a technical standard promulgated by the [World-Wide Web Consortium](#), <https://epidoc.stoa.org/gl/latest/>.

¹⁴ <https://tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/index.html>

editions following the EpiDoc/TEI guidelines¹⁵ are mimetic transpositions of printed publications, extensions of the traditional editorial structure focusing on the text. This paper aims to prove that, while conforming to the EpiDoc/TEI schema and due to its great flexibility, it is possible to better integrate the material and iconographic components in order to yield a truly complete interpretation of the inscriptions.

1. Inscriptions Are a Unique Category of Texts

“Against the representation (...) according to which the text exists in itself, separated from all materiality, we must remember that there is no text apart from the medium provided to read (or hear), apart from the circumstances in which it is read (or heard). Authors do not write books: rather, they write texts that become written objects—handwritten, engraved, printed and, today, digitized—manipulated in various ways by human readers whose reading habits vary according to time, place and environment”.¹⁶

A salutary opening reminder from the fascinating *History of Reading in the West* by G. Cavallo and R. Chartier! There exists no text without support, without writing, without intention. Nevertheless, it is important to refine this definition, which is relevant to all categories of writing, to better understand what differentiates an inscription from a "simple" text. It is precisely at this juncture where things get complicated: surprisingly, few scholars have attempted to establish the precise definition of an inscription,¹⁷ and the boundaries of epigraphy as a "science of inscriptions" vary depending on the civilizations and/or periods studied. In keeping with the realm of Classics, the definitions offered by the most prominent scholars¹⁸ tend to privilege material criteria, such as the contemporaneity of the writing and of the text, and above all the choice of a durable support (stone or bronze), which would guarantee the preservation of the message conveyed. Silvio Panciera,¹⁹ however, refutes the value of this single criterion of the material, and demonstrates that it is preferable to consider the criterion of intentionality tied to the production and exhibition of a text in the public space. He thus proposes that we retain the will to address all (*erga omnes*) in the long term as an essential criterion, insisting that this particular intention prompts the use of materials and forms of writing in line with this purpose. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that none of these criteria, material or immaterial, are sufficient to establish a comprehensive definition of an inscription.

In his 1988 presentation²⁰ of epigraphy—apparently restricted to the modern and contemporary periods, but practically applying to all periods—Philippe Bruneau proposed a definition linked to an analytical grid, based on a modeled approach that is rooted in a theoretical background which is, in my opinion, the most comprehensive and relevant to date. An inscription is an ostentatious writing, a communication device that caters to the

¹⁵ An up-to-date list can be found at <https://wiki.digitalclassicist.org/Category:EpiDoc>

¹⁶ Cavallo and Chartier 2001, p. 11 of the French edition.

¹⁷ As is emphasized by Silvio Panciera at the beginning of his article, Panciera 2012, p. 1.

¹⁸ Without seeking an exhaustive review, I simply refer to Louis Robert (Robert 1961) "stone engraving has another purpose. It is not only a universal advertising (...) but a lasting one" (p. 71 of the republication in *Opera Minora Selecta V* 1965) and to P. J. Rhodes (Rhodes 2009; Online Publication 2012): "Inscription, the writing of texts on permanent materials...".

¹⁹ Panciera 2012.

²⁰ Bruneau 1988.

gaze, using a range of techniques and the combination of writing and images in order to construct meaning and engage the reader. In a few simple examples, Philippe Bruneau's paper shows how meaning arises at the intersection of all components, whether textual, graphic or iconographic, and also provides the most comprehensive theoretical modeling for the study of written artifacts from any period or civilization. Although it does not take full advantage of all aspects of this analytical grid, Mireille Corbier's²¹ collection of studies devoted to the public and private uses of epigraphic writing in ancient Rome demonstrates the rich benefits of this type of approach, which considers "the readers, the ways of reading, the places, the contexts, and the purpose of the display".

2. Advantages of Considering all Components

In her 2006 publication, Mireille Corbier nonetheless emphasizes (p. 49) the challenge of convincing Roman specialists to recognize the utility and legitimacy of an epigraphic science not restricting its ambition to the text to be established, restored in its damaged parts, dated and construed. In fact, despite repeated calls for interdisciplinarity, approaches rooted in the intersection of disciplines (philology, art history, archaeology) *because the object of study requires it* remain in the minority. They do exist, however, and here I will describe only a few recent examples that attest to a growing interest in the materiality of inscriptions and their spatial recontextualization.

In an article re-examining the document relief adorning the top of the stele of the alliance between Athens and Samos formed at the end of the Peloponnesian War, A. J. L. Blanshard²² demonstrates that despite the tradition of keeping separate the study of sculpted reliefs²³ and the edition of the texts in the IG volumes of Attica, it is critical not to separate the content of the inscribed text (treatises or inventories of goods belonging to deities) from the images placed above, which generally depict figures shaking hands (*dexiosis*). Blanshard provides a compelling explanation, asserting that the image is not simply a redundant illustration of the textual content; rather, the two maintain a non-univocal²⁴ relationship, whose exegesis enriches the meaning and comprehension of this type of document. Furthermore, I would add that the position of the image above the engraved text guides the viewer's gaze from top to bottom, inducing a "reading scenario" where the handshake is a digest, immediately understandable, of the very long text engraved underneath. And, due to its length, it is doubtful that many Athenians read it in its entirety while visiting the Acropolis. The movement of the eye, the way in which the gaze scans the monument between the image and text, thus appears to be a key element in the analysis of the epigraphic document, and invites us to explore the possibility of accounting for it with a digital tool.

²¹ Corbier 2006.

²² Blanshard 2007, study on IG I³ 127 = Lawton 12, Athens Acropolis Museum 1333.

²³ Listed in Carol Lawton's catalog, Lawton 1995.

²⁴ P. 21 : "a symbiotic relationship that is set up between the relief and its accompanying inscription. Such interdependence is rarely complementary. Instead, both art and text serve to extend, complicate, negate and consolidate each other. They pose a challenge in reading."

In an article devoted to groups of monuments bearing inscriptions that were erected in the 1st century in the city of Ephesos, A. Graham ²⁵ proposes a new method of studying the inscriptions displayed on monuments, emphasizing “the appearance of the text (e.g., its arrangement on the monument, the use of decorations, variations in letter size, and, in the case of bilingual inscriptions, the presentation of two different languages) and its relationship to the monumental context (in its architectural setting and the urban context).(...)The methodology demonstrates how an assessment of epigraphic monumentality can provide complementary information to that provided by the standard format of published inscriptions. Vital to an inscription’s monumental context is the role played by both architectural space and the monumental landscape in the visual articulation of the text. ”

To present a final example: in 2012, A. Graham, I. Petrovic and E. Thomas organized a meeting with the top experts at the University of Durham about the materiality of epigraphic text, based on the observation that: "In recent years, the study of ancient texts has gained from a focus on the physicality of text. Epigraphists are interested more than ever in issues of context, reading and performance. Furthermore, studies of architecture have fed on literary approaches to take account of displays of writing and their implications. with a special emphasis on the visualization of a text in a physical context, whether monumental or miniature; the relationship of inscriptions with their support, including steles and statue bases; the appearance of inscribed texts on buildings and their impact on the perception of architectural space; the form and varieties of lettering, the aesthetics of writing, and its implications for the reading of a text; issues of visibility and legibility; the role of inscribed dedications or commemorative texts in the perception of buildings sacred or secular; the placement and arrangement of inscriptions in public, religious or private space; the aesthetics of particular genres of text such as building contracts, epigrams and sacred laws; specific techniques in the display of prose and verse texts, ritual or magical use and performative aspects of inscribed texts; re-dedication and re-use of inscribed texts; and the use and contribution of specialized media of support from monumental bronze letters to miniature gold plaques and precious metals". With the recent publication of the contributions from this conference,²⁶ the importance of the artifact and its contextualization seem to have acquired both legitimacy and recognition.

3. New examination of the *loculus* slab Ma 4203 (Louvre Museum, Paris)

To address the question of transposing this approach within the XML/TEI/EpiDoc schema, I will refer to a document from the Louvre museum’s²⁷ Greek inscriptions collection. The document presents an interesting particularity in the context of this demonstration by associating a sculpted polychromatic representation with a painted inscription, which decorates a slab of which the original use can be reconstructed.

Dating from the first half of the 3rd century BCE, this 21 cm thick limestone slab, which is roughly square (each side measuring 50 cm), comes from the Eastern Cemetery of

²⁵ Graham 2013.

²⁶ Petrovic, Petrovic and Thomas 2019.

²⁷ Since 2013, I have been coordinating the digital publication of this collection of more than thousand stone and bronze inscriptions, see the presentation of the project: Brunet 2014, and the last part of this contribution.

Alexandria, known as the "Hadra-Chatby Necropolis".²⁸ On the front is a slightly protruding relief in the form of a small stele, highly comparable to the monuments which were often erected on tombs in open-air cemeteries throughout the Greek world. The frame evokes the facade of a building, featuring a low pediment covered with tiles and decorated with acroteria on the corners, above an architrave and two lateral pilasters. In the center, a deep window (7 cm) spans the entire width, in which a female figure and a dog look at each other; the female stands while the dog raises its left front paw towards her. The female figure wears a tunic with a fold over at the top belted at the waist, sandals, and a bracelet on her left wrist; her half-length, wavy hair exposes her forehead, and her arms and cheeks are a little "chubby", a sign that she is a child. Visually, the scene is organized around an exchange of glances, materialized by an oblique line beginning in the lower left corner, extending along the animal's back and the girl's right arm, and concluding at her forehead. On the architrave above the window, two names are painted side by side in red. In its current state, the inscription reads: Ἀντιγόνα Ἀριστόπολιν **ATTENTION : the underdot is under the iota letter, not under the lambda**ς "Antigona Aristopolis". Numerous remains of a vivid polychromy prove that the stele was originally painted in full: dark blue for the background of the window, light blue for the clothing, reddish-brown reflections for the hair, red for the sandals, the roof tiles, the inside of the pediment, and cornice, yellow for the pilasters and the dog's coat, and a combination of red, yellow and white for the egg and dart cornice. On the sides and on the front of the block that frames the protruding decoration, the remains of three superimposed coating layers suggest that this plaque served as the closing mechanism for a vault dug into a wall (*loculus*), where it was embedded and sealed with plaster.

<figure 6.1 here>

Over the last 30 years, this slab has been the subject of three independent records by specialists in catalogs and corpora publishing the Louvre's collections. In 1992, the inscription was republished with commentary by Étienne Bernand²⁹ in his corpus listing the *Greek Inscriptions of Egypt and Nubia in the Louvre Museum*. In 1998, the artifact was described as a sculpted work of art by Marianne Hamiaux in the catalog of the Louvre's Greek sculptures from the Hellenistic period.³⁰ Finally, in 2004, Agnès Rouveret included it in her catalog devoted to the *Louvre's Hellenistic Collection of Ancient Greek Paintings*.³¹ Each of these three records describes and provides commentary on either the inscription, the sculpted decoration, or the rich polychromy, emphasizing above all the characteristics relevant to the "disciplinary" point of view adopted. Any mention of components belonging to another "nature" are simple and brief, sometimes recorded in smaller characters.³² In my opinion, this disjunction is harmful: its immediate consequence is that none of the three

²⁸ Louvre Ma 4203, discovered in 1885, acquired in 1886. The somewhat confusing history of the identification of the discovery site has been clarified by a rigorous investigation conducted by A. Rouveret, see Rouveret 2004, p. 29-44.

²⁹ Bernand 1992, n° 48, p. 101.

³⁰ Hamiaux 1998, n° 187, p. 168.

³¹ Rouveret 2004, n° 24, p. 87. The record from this catalog is included in the online open access catalog, *Painting and Color in the Ancient Greek World*, <http://arts.ens-lyon.fr/peintureancienne/collection/fiches/AL4203/AL4203.htm>.

³² Thus, the descriptive lemma of the epigraphic corpus of E. Bernand, *op. cit.*

records directly tackles the somewhat delicate question raised by the association of *this* inscription with *this* figured representation. For indeed, how should the statement and the representation be linked; how should they be interpreted *in relation to* each other? When we examine these elements separately, not only do we deprive ourselves of the potential to answer these questions, but we also run the possible risk of misinterpreting the document.

Let's begin by calling attention to the problem : the inscription painted on the architrave, which acts as a sort of "title", juxtaposes two anthroponyms written on a line, both of which are in the nominative case. The first, "Ἀντιγόνα - Antigona", is a feminine name, the second, "Ἀριστόπολις" is masculine. Below, the polychrome relief "stages" a single character, who is female, and an animal. No difficulty arises in assigning the feminine name to the feminine figure, but what to do with the masculine name, which is also in the nominative case? In the absence of any masculine presence in the image, how can this be justified? No one has ever presumed that it could be the name of the dog, and this interpretation is certainly not a solution. In one of the first records referring to the inscription, Pfuhl³³ suggested that the male name had been "added". But upon performing an autopsy on the original³⁴ while writing this article, I can confidently dismiss this hypothesis, and move towards another, more simple explanation, which further confirms the legitimacy of the global analytical approach that I am striving to implement.

As seen in Figure 1, both the handwriting and the color of the inscription are quite homogeneous; furthermore, the written line was deliberately positioned so that the entity formed by the two names is roughly centered on the architrave. These technical and graphical characteristics therefore make it impossible to assume that the second name was added later. Nevertheless, it is clear that one specific detail did not catch the attention of previous commentators: a small surface of the right end of the architrave (see Fig. 2) has been retouched through the application of smooth plaster to fill in a small groove. I can confirm that it is not a modern restoration made since the slab has entered the Louvre collections, as no mention of any repair at this precise location is recorded in the archive file pertaining to the work, kept at the Louvre. And, above all, it is perfectly visible that the final Σ of Aristopolis is painted *on* the plaster. The letter following the Λ is also affected by this touch-up: its upper half was covered by the plaster, but the lower part has been preserved, and at the bottom of a vertical haste, one can clearly see the beginning of a horizontal line on the right: this letter was therefore initially an E.

<figure 6.2 here>

From these observations, we can consider two scenarios. Either the touch-up occurred in 1885 or 1886, when the slab was discovered and before it was sold to the Louvre, either this equivalent of a *rasura* was performed *in antiquity* on the last three painted letters of the second name to correct the form from the genitive: Ἀριστοπόλεως in order to obtain the nominative: Ἀριστόπολις. This second hypothesis seems preferable to me. The first instance of the epitaph therefore related exclusively to the young Antigona, who was designated as expected by her name and patronym, Ἀντιγόνα Ἀριστοπόλεως "Antigona daughter of Aristopolis". The touch-up on this initial inscription, resulting in a simple juxtaposition of two

³³ Pfuhl 1901, n° 26, p. 285.

³⁴ The slab is displayed in one of the showcases in gallery 339 of the Sully wing.

nominative names, might then indicate the burial of a second deceased (Antigona's father) in the vault.³⁵ In favor of this interpretation, are the superimposed layers of plaster, traces of which remain on the sides of the slab, suggesting that the vault was reopened and then closed again. And it is worth remembering that during the excavations at the Hadra-Chatby Necropolis in the nineteenth century, a cinerary hydria³⁶ inscribed with the name of Ἀριστόπολις Ἀριστοδήμου Πτολεμαίου (Aristopolis son of Aristodemos from Ptolemais)³⁷ was found there. Unfortunately, no precise excavation context allows us to confirm that this funeral urn comes from the loculus that was closed by Antigona's slab, and so to assert that Antigona was the daughter of that Aristopolis coming from Cyrenaica.

I will avoid developing this example further here, so as not to stray too far from my topic, but I felt it necessary to do so in order to emphasize the utility of reading the verbal and visual messages simultaneously, without decontextualizing the inscriptions. My explanation offers a simple and logical solution to what appeared to be a discrepancy between the epitaph's statement and the content of the image, an inconsistency that E. Bernand tried to solve without success. Because he used Seymour de Ricci's copy³⁸ (which, as Fig. 3 shows, does not suggest any alteration) as the starting point for his research, when publishing his new edition of the inscription, E. Bernand presented it as if it were originally a double epitaph: "Epitaph of Antigona and Aristopolis".

<figure 6.3 here>

This prompts him to write a biased description of the stele in the epigraphic lemma, presenting Antigona as a "young woman" and assuming that the male name could be "that of her brother, son or husband". This presentation is not acceptable for two reasons. On the one hand, on the countless funerary steles erected in Greek necropoleis since the archaic period, representations of couples and of filiation follow very different patterns, pointed out by a handshake (*dexiosis*) between spouses and children on their knees or at the feet of a seated parent. On the other hand, since the first description written by E. Pottier,³⁹ the general consensus is that the image depicts a "little girl" facing her pet. This analysis was confirmed by research carried out in the Alexandrian necropoleis by the teams from the Center for Alexandrian Studies in the 1990s and 2000s,⁴⁰ establishing new parallels. In the rich documentation provided by these new excavations, tombs of children and adolescents were identified, that contained terracotta figurines depicting little girls, among other

³⁵ Ancient and recent excavations in the necropoleis of Alexandria and its region show that the occupation of *loculi* by several people of the same family was common. For example, the ALE257 burial combined the remains of a child deposited at the bottom of the vault with the remains of an adult in a hydria placed at the entrance, see Nenna 2012, § 10.

³⁶ Ceramologists have shown that the vast majority of these funerary hydria discovered in such large numbers in the Hadra Necropolis (hence the name *Hadra hydria*) were produced in Crete and date from the second half of the third century BCE, see Empereur 1998.

³⁷ Néroutsos 1888, n° 33 p. 111 and Edgar 1911, n° 26254 p. 49. In note 48 of his corpus, E. Bernand raises the question of a possible rapprochement between the two Aristopolis, that of the painted slab and that of the cinerary hydria, without proposing any further investigation. The ethnic Πτολεμαίου can most probably be linked to the Ptolemais of Cyrenaica (Barkes Limen Tolmeita, Pleiades ID 373879 and iDAI gazetteer 2042663).

³⁸ Plate 30 of E. Bernand's corpus shows top and bottom the B&W photograph of the slab Ma 4203 and the reproduction of this handwritten copy.

³⁹ Pottier 1889, p. 63-64.

⁴⁰ CEALex, <http://www.cealex.org/>

objects. All of them are dressed as Antigona, wearing a chiton with a high belted flap to represent the little girl archetype common in Alexandria in the Early Hellenistic period.⁴¹ Similarly, the scene of a child playing with their pet, whether a bird or a dog, belongs to a long tradition that was well documented in Attica in the 5th century BCE and perpetuated throughout the Greek world in the Hellenistic period.⁴² While alluding to this tradition, the representation on the stele at the Louvre cleverly shifts the *topos* of the child waving a bunch of grapes or a bird towards another child or an animal.⁴³ Here the scene seems to me, on the contrary, to be imbued with a certain solemnity tinged with sadness: it is not a game, but rather a farewell scene; the position and reciprocal gestures of the girl and the animal transpose the *dexiosis* farewell exchanged by adults into the child sphere. This "portrait for eternity" conceived by her family is quite original in that it associates the depiction of this memory of mutual affection between young Antigona and the family dog with the little girl's full name on the architrave. If one accepts my interpretation, when the second burial occurred, the epitaph was only slightly corrected without interfering with the memorial image, which therefore remained exclusively centered on the little girl. Thus, taking into consideration all the coexisting elements present on this decorated block facilitates a more or less coherent interpretation, whereas specialized approaches always prove incomplete and lead to bypass interpretation issues, even running the risk of a misinterpretation. As such, the merits of a holistic analysis for the study of inscriptions appear indisputable.

4. TEI EpiDoc and *IGLouvre* encoding strategy

To return to the initial question, let us examine the possibility of transposing an analysis such as the one presented above, by integrating it into an epigraphic edition compliant with the XML/EpiDoc schema, closely associating the material and iconographic components as well as their semiotic relations. As previously demonstrated, these determining factors are indispensable for the accurate interpretation of the epigraphic semantics.⁴⁴

The fundamental structure of a TEI/EpiDoc document⁴⁵ is composed of three main elements: a <teiHeader> ; a <facsimile> ; and a <text>. The <teiHeader> is more or less the equivalent of the descriptive lemma in a printed epigraphic corpus, which contains the descriptive information pertaining to archaeology and art history, as well as the artifact-support's

⁴¹ Nenna 2012.

⁴² For parallels found in the cemeteries of Alexandria, see Guimier-Sorbets 2012, as well as Ludovic Laugier's 2009 remarks on the stele of Metrodoros and Matreas discovered in Smyrna (Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma 3300), to be compared with a stele preserved in Leiden, Pfuhl - Möbius 1977, n° 710.

⁴³ E. Pottier indicates in his note that the child could be holding something in her hand, but there is no sign of any damage at that very location.

⁴⁴ A study comparable to that conducted in the context of the digital publication of the *IGLouvre* is currently being led by Nicolas Souchon, as part of his PhD program at the EPHE under the direction of Laurent Coulon. The thesis focuses on the decorative program of cube-statues, a type of statue depicting a seated figure, knees bent against the torso, between the New Empire and the Libyan period (16th to 8th century BCE). The various sides of the statue may be covered with inscriptions and figurative representations, the reciprocal organization and meaning of which call for better interpretation. To this end, a large part of the research work focuses on the encoding strategy to be developed by optimizing the resources proposed by TEI in the framework of the EpiDoc schema. We are preparing a joint publication that will present our encoding strategies in detail, which differ only on minor points.

⁴⁵ Cf. *EpiDoc Guidelines, Structure Of An EpiDoc Edition*, <https://epidoc.stoa.org/gl/latest/supp-structure.html>

history, which are subsequently collected and formatted in an unstructured text block, often printed in a tiny font. This typographical presentation is not conducive to sustained reading, and *de facto* reveals the lesser significance assigned to this information in contrast with the essential—the critical edition of the text. The electronic TEI/EpiDoc file, on the other hand, does not impose any hierarchical organization of the data based on relative utility. Similar to a database, it is a system that differentiates and categorizes information, which is then organized within a logical tree structure. Thus, each of these sets as well as each data point at the desired level of granularity, can be employed and treated as an independent item. This is extremely useful for the design of the interface, as its flexibility liberates the user from the usual organization and typography practices of the printed corpus page. It is in the final <text> element that the complete critical edition of the epigraphic text appears, with all the standard components of a printed edition: the transcription of the text in lowercase greek characters with diacritic signs, the formal/critical notes, the translation, the commentary, and a structured bibliography.

During the first EAGLE consortium conference held in Paris in 2014,⁴⁶ Emmanuelle Morlock and Eleonora Santin presented, on behalf of the project team, part of the editorial strategy developed for the *IGLouvre* program. Using various examples that illustrated different possible configurations of the relationships between the artifact-support and the inscribed⁴⁷ text units, they demonstrated the way in which our underlying modeling is aligned with the EpiDoc schema. In doing so, they complemented this schema with supplementary elements borrowed from TEI, notably the <msitem>, which is essential for explicitly considering the co-presence of several text units on a specific support material, where they can be linked to clearly demarcated locations. Morlock and Santin emphasize the significance we attribute to linking the descriptive metadata of the header and the textual units in the div <edition> via the mechanisms proposed by the TEI (attributes as @target or @corresp), which is achieved by assigning each semantic unit a unique @xml:id attribute.

In this first presentation of our modeling, the focus was exclusively on the relationship between <header> and <text> without addressing the issue of the <facsimile> element, as this subject had not been sufficiently developed for conclusions to be drawn. This article presents the opportunity to supplement our model in a succinct manner. As Elena Pierazzo reminds us, the role of images in digital scholarly editions is never self-evident; rather, these images even become a topic of debate.⁴⁸ This clearly explains the TEI's rather delayed investment in this domain. The <facsimile> element has only been well integrated since 2007 (P5 version) and even more so since 2012, "when the TEI has provided a further support to documentary editing in the form of new specialized elements for the inclusion of transcription of the text within, so to speak, the facsimile itself, therefore allowing for the production of hyper-diplomatic editions, able not only to reproduce the texts in documents to a great extent of details, but also its layout, including also non-textual features". Most

⁴⁶ Morlock - Santin 2014, see in particular the tables. 22.2 p. 341 and 22.3 p. 343-344.

⁴⁷ *Art. cit.* p. 327: "Several common epigraphic scenarios and configurations of interaction between epigraphical text and the artifact bearing the text : a composite text on a single artefact-support, a simple or composite text on a composite artifact and also, the rather common case of the support's re-use."

⁴⁸ See Driscoll - Pierazzo 2017, § 10, as well as the chapter E. Pierazzo, "Facsimile and Document-Centric Editing," in *Creating a Digital Scholarly Edition with the TEI, a Textbook*, 2017 (online course), from which I took the following quote.

recently, Chapter 11: "Representation of Primary Sources" of the *TEI Guidelines*⁴⁹ has been completely restructured, reflecting a growing interest shared by all disciplines that work with text. The epigraphic artifact cannot be assimilated to a manuscript, and an approach that includes the edition of the text in the <facsimile> element is not well suited to this type of document. The *IGLouvre* encoding schema thus conforms to the tripartition recommended by EpiDoc and integrates a <facsimile> element at the articulation of the <teiHeader> and the <text>.

The <facsimile> fulfills two complementary functions: it assembles all the information relevant to digital facsimile(s) of any nature - photographs, drawings, squeezes - and formats (2D or 3D), which reproduce all or part of the epigraphic artifact. It also presents all the correlations established by the analysis between the artifact, the iconography, and the text, by aligning and mapping selected elements of the <teiHeader> and the <text>, conforming to the mechanism of assigning a unique identifier to each discrete semantic unit. Indeed, as I hope the analysis of the slab bearing the epitaph of the young Antigona has shown, simple observation does not suffice; it is not enough to juxtapose one or more illustrations with the text edition. The iconographic details and the relevant prominent features must be singled out and highlighted, in accordance with the methods recommended by leading experts in art history.⁵⁰ The TEI provides an adequate tool for this task by respecting the essential distinction between all types of facsimile and the artifact itself, the physical object⁵¹ that is described in the <supportDesc> element alongside its state of preservation, material and actual dimensions. In the <facsimile> element, all data provided relates to *digital images*,⁵² reproducing all or parts of the artifact's details; therefore, all the dimensions recorded in the form of spatial coordinates *relate only to the digital images*, and not to the original artifact. We transpose the descriptive analysis onto the digital reproductions by delimiting as many regions of interest as necessary, and by structuring them within the elements <surface>, which are parents of <zone> elements, each of which is assigned a unique identifier @xml:id. These subdivisions and delimitations performed on the reproductions within the <facsimile> can be considered the equivalents of the frames and outlines that we trace on images in a PowerPoint slideshow.

This introduces the possibility of representing correspondences by linking different types of elements, words, and iconographic components, and of making one or more reading scenarios more explicit for the verbo-visual artifact with the markup. Moreover, the trajectory of the gaze upon the artifact, deduced from the modelled analysis, which largely constitutes and establishes the interpretation of the epigraphic document, which we exhibit

⁴⁹ Latest TEI P5 Guidelines, Chapter 11 "Representation of Primary Sources" <https://www.tei-c.org/Vault/P5/4.1.0/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/PH.html> completely restructured in the latest version released in August 2020 (Version 4.1.0. Last updated on 19th August 2020, revision b414ba550).

⁵⁰ Cf. Arasse 1992 and also the very relevant remarks of Elli Doulikaridou in her paper "L'histoire de l'art et sa technologie", presented at the conference *L'image-document face au numérique : mise en crise ou mise en lumière ?* organized at Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, March 5, 2012, <https://observatoire-critique.hypotheses.org/1862> (consulted on 10/2020).

⁵¹ Equivalent Cidoc-CRM E19: Physical Object <http://www.cidoc-crm.org/entity/e19-physical-object/version-6.0> (consulted on 10/2020)

⁵² All of these images are not originally digital, some may be the result of the digitization of previous representations of any type: film photography, original drawing, paper squeeze.

in the <commentary>, is thus easily visualised on the screen through a system that associates shapes and colors to one or more words in the text and one or more image elements. Due to this system of markup and linking, the approach that I implemented for the study of Antigona's epitaph-slab, exposed above in a narrative form that employs many sentences to direct the reader's gaze towards specific visual elements, can be fully transposed into a digital editing system, which simplifies certain aspects while considerably enriching the analysis. The appeal of this approach is evident when it comes to identifying individuals in the context of a funerary stele portraying a family unit, or drawing attention to the underlying intention behind the construction of a funerary stele such as that of Sosinous of Gortyne, built as a network of internal and external mapping of words and images.⁵³

The choices made later in the publication process, in the design of the interface thus dictate the appearance and display of the information from the three main elements <teiHeader> <facsimile> and <text> of the TEI/EpiDoc file. In this way, the researcher has complete flexibility to decide on the relative display of image and text, and the display of the physical features of the monument. In addition, the *IGLouvre* display will make use of the Alpheios tools (see Almas paper in this volume) to display information about Greek words, such as a French translation imported from the Bailly Greek-French dictionary, as well as information about morphology and syntax.

Conclusion

At every stage, publishing programs designed in a digital ecosystem of production and dissemination challenge the working methods and academic standards of scholarly publishing. Over the centuries, all members of the scientific community have learned to play with the constraints imposed by printed scholarly publication, segmented by discipline, generating a lot of implicit things embedded in "publishing standards", which each discipline has worked to refine over time. Digital publishing based on XML/TEI markup requires a more rigorous approach, as this method calls for classifying and qualifying logical components and relevant features that were highlighted prior to encoding by a modeled analysis, which, as an intellectual procedure, remains independent of any tool and medium of distribution. Thus, a digital publishing program such as the *IGLouvre* program seeks the best possible match between the modeling of its object of study, a sufficient level of scientific description, the precision of expression permitted and required by the digital tool, and finally, the time devoted to each stage of the process. It's a big job, but it's worth the while.

⁵³ See the commentary https://vimeo.com/460539334_A 4-minute video entitled *Une stèle subliminale*, presenting the funerary stele of Sosinous of Gortyne (Ma 769, Denon, Room 347), produced with Jean-François Dars and Anne Papillault, CNRS, scientific documentary film-makers.

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