

Jenny Strauss Clay, Irad Malkin, Yannis Z. Tzifopoulos (ed.), *Panhellenes at Methone: graphê in Late Geometric and Protoarchaic Methone. Trends in classics - supplementary volumes, 44.* Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2017. Pp. x, 377. ISBN 9783110501278. \$137.99.

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The finds from the excavations in Methone in Pieria finally saw the light in 2012 in the shape of a thorough study edited by Besios, Tzifopoulos and Kotsonas, in which all the inscribed and non-inscribed objects were compiled.¹ Following on from this publication, the present volume aims to offer multidisciplinary analyses of those documents previously published and to go deeper into the implications that this material has for ancient Greek archaeology, linguistics and culture. The contributions here are thus divided into three parts: “Graphê and Archaeology”, “Graphê, Alphabet, Dialect and Language” and “Graphê and culture”. As the titles of these sections make clear, the main focus of this collection is the epigraphical finds from the site and an examination of them from different points of view.

The first part of the book, “Graphê and Archaeology,” focuses on archaeological aspects of the Methonean inscriptions. In this section we find contributions concerning the vessels found in the Ypogeio and their written signs. These contributions show the versatility of the material and how it can be used for various studies and analysed from the viewpoint of very different disciplines. The morphology and use of the different transport amphorae is studied by Kotsonas et al. in the first paper included in the volume. Studies that focus on inscriptions and signs are those of Papadopoulos, who analyses inscriptions made before firing and thus considers them potters’ marks, and Verdan, who studies the possibility of a numerical notation that is different from the later acrophonic numerals that may also be related to Italic numeral systems. If this analysis is right and can be carried out successfully in the future, it would change the way in which we conceive and read single sign inscriptions. It would also be interesting to see in the future some cooperative work between these two areas of research in order to consider whether potters also imprint these numerals. Although all the contributions in the section keep in mind the Mediterranean context of these vessels and their inscriptions, two contributions deal with the broader context of the material in more depth. These are the papers by Kourou, who analyses the Euboean and Mediterranean trade networks in which these finds are situated, and by Johnston, who offers some parallels from around the Aegean and Mediterranean for the vessels found in Methone.

The second part explores, through many contributions based on Greek linguistics, the different implications that the inscriptions have in terms of dialect and script. Janko opens the section with a revised version of his publication in *BICS* two years previously.² In this article, he uses the epigraphical evidence from Methone in order to do a palaeographic analysis that connects Greek epichoric alphabets, Phoenician, Etruscan and Phrygian and explores the beginnings of alphabetic writing in the Mediterranean by taking into account the new radiocarbon dates for Carthage, Francavilla Maritima and Fidene, which, according to Janko, move the earliest inscriptions back to the 9th century BC. Woodard and, more successfully, Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou develop a typological study of the Methonean alphabet by studying the palaeographical features of the epigraphic evidence; this leads Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou to make a connection between the inscriptions found in Methone and the Eretrian epichoric alphabet.

In terms of dialectal studies, Dell’Oro offers a chapter on both the dialectal and palaeographic features seen in the western Euboean colonies and Himera that show linguistic contacts with other Greek dialects and alphabets in these colonies. However, she does not venture to do such analysis with the Methonean inscriptions because of the lack of evidence. A proper study of the dialectal features in these inscriptions is introduced in Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou’s chapter and fully developed by Méndez Dosuna. They both conclude that the evidence matches the Euboean dialect, which supports the evidence from the palaeographic studies.

One recurrent issue in this section is the initial aspiration in ΗΑΚΕΣΑΝΔΡΟ,³ a name that has been documented before without aspiration in many parts of Greece. Janko and Skelton agree on a name meaning “healer of men”, i.e. a compound with the word ἄκος (cure), the etymology of which is obscure. Skelton uses Mycenaean Greek evidence and the Celtic forms *hicc* “healing” (Irish) and *iach* (Welsh) “healthy” to make a Proto-Indo-European reconstruction such as *Hieh₂k-, that would allow the initial aspiration. Woodard, on the other hand, proposes that the sign □ actually renders /ks/, as he believes it also does in the inscriptions from Naxos. He argues that the name should instead be “shield of men”, where σάκος, σάκεος “shield” would originally have been ξάκος with a simplification of initial /ks/ to /s/ and continues his chapter with an excessively long lexicographic study on that possible σάκος and the verb στερέω, also present in the same inscription. Similarly, Méndez Dosuna tries to explain ΣΧΕΝΙ, another problematic term in the Methonean inscriptions.⁴ His proposal is based on a mistake of ΣΧ for ΧΣ and interpreting X as Euboean /ks/ with a pleonastic sigma. He documents the presence of this redundancy in other Greek areas very extensively, although if Méndez Dosuna’s interpretation is correct, this would be the only example of pleonastic sigma before xi, at least as far as I am aware.

Finally, the last section explores social and cultural implications derived from the epigraphic evidence in Methone. These range from literacy studies to the aesthetic aspect of the inscriptions and even the socio-cultural context where the inscribed objects came into use. Oikonomaki contributes to this section by applying modern literacy theories to the material found in Methone. But what really differentiates this study from previous approaches to literacy in ancient Greece, such as those of Thomas and Harris,⁵ is her analysis of the epichoric evidence, which takes into account the heterogeneity of the Greek populations and so tries to analyse local literacies instead of a “Greek literacy” that was probably non-existent in the early 7th century BC. She is followed by Pappas, who continues her previous work by using a combination of epigraphy and art history to analyse content, form and function and how these are expressed in what she calls the *eidography* of the inscriptions.⁶ The volume closes with Węcowski’s analysis of the broader socio-cultural context in which early Greek alphabetic writing is embedded. He analyses the important role that Euboea, its colonies and their sympotic culture played in the expansion of the practice of writing on drinking vessels. He also explores the function of these inscriptions in the symposium and how they worked as elements of social recognition. Although this might be a good explanation for most of the inscriptions found in Methone and other parts of Greece (Węcowski mentions Euboea, its western colonies and Kommos in Crete), we must bear in mind that it is nonetheless a fragmented view of what early writing in Greece meant, particularly since alphabetic writing clearly had more uses in Methone and other parts of Greece.

This volume is a sample of how the material retrieved from an underground storage in a colony in Macedonia is of surprisingly great value for scholars in different disciplines and for our understanding of the ancient Greek world and language in general. The epigraphic material has been especially appreciated by Greek epigraphists, since written material from the Late Geometric and Early Archaic periods is quite scarce. In fact, the implications of the Methonean epigraphic material for the study of the origin of the Greek alphabet is discussed repeatedly in this book: see, for example, Papadopoulos, Janko and Węcowski.

Another important issue deriving from the study of the archaeological finds in the Ypogeio is the great activity of the port in Methone, which was connected to many other cities in Greece according to the variety of imported vessels found here, although there seems to be quite a contradiction between the archaeological and the epigraphic analyses of the material when considering the possible cohabitation of “Panhellenes” in Methone. As Méndez Dosuna points out, and other contributions in the second part of this book support, although the archaeological record shows a material culture that indicates a close connection between different Greek populations, at least in terms of trade, linguistically there is a clear uniformity, and the written samples relate the dialect and alphabet of Methone to those of Euboea and specifically Eretria, as Janko and Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou believe as well. I especially recommend Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou’s table 1 (pp. 234-236), which shows the difficulties in interpreting the inscriptions on the imported vessels. These were incised after firing, which means that each of the inscriptions could have been made either in their place of origin or in Methone. Nevertheless, the table shows that although these differences were taken into account when studying the inscriptions, the homogeneity of both dialect and alphabet can only lead to the conclusion that the imported material was inscribed in Methone, as Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou argues. This implies that there is an unquestionable tension between the archaeological and epigraphical evidence in the Methonean Ypogeio. While the epigraphical material does not support the existence of a Panhellenic community in Methone, as Méndez Dosuna points out, the archaeological finds indicate a diversity in the geographical origin of the objects that makes the importance of the trading activity in the Methonean port with several other Greek populations undeniable.

Authors and titles

Introduction. Jenny Strauss Clay, Irad Malkin and Yannis Z. Tzifopoulos (1–5)

Part 1. Graphê and Archaeology

Transport Amphorae from Methone: An Interdisciplinary Study of Production and Trade ca. 700 BCE. Antonis Kotsonas, Evangelia Kiriatzi, Xenia Charalambidou, Maria Roumpou, Noémi Suzanne Müller and Matthaïos Bessios (9–19)

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Notes:

¹ Besios, M., Tzifopoulos, G.Z. and Kotsonas, A. (2012), *Μεθώνη Πιερίας: Επιγραφές, Χαράγματα και Εμπορικά Σύμβολα στη Γεωμετρική και Αρχαϊκή Κεραμική από το Υπόγειο της Μεθώνης Πιερίας στη Μακεδονία*. Thessaloniki.

² Janko, R. (2015), “From Gabii and Gordion to Eretria and Methone: The Rise of the Greek Alphabet” *BICS* 58, 1–32.

³ Inscription no. 2 in Besios et al. *op.cit.* p. 339

⁴ Inscription no. 22 in Besios et al. *op.cit.* p. 369

⁵ Harris, W.V. (1991), *Ancient literacy*. London. Thomas, R. (1992), *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge.

⁶ Cf. Pappas, A. (2004), *Greek Writing in its Aesthetic Context: Archaic and Hellenistic Arts and Letters*. Diss. University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. —. (2011), “Arts in Letters: The Aesthetics of Ancient Greek Writing”, in M. Shaw and M. Dalbello (eds.), *Visible Writings: Cultures, Forms, Readings*. New Brunswick, NJ, 37–54. —. (2012), “More than Meets the Eye: The Aesthetics of (Non)sense in the Ancient Greek Symposium”, in I. Sluiter and R. Rosen (eds.), *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity*. Mnemosyne Supplement, Monographs on Greek and Latin Language and Literature 350. Leiden, 71–111.

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