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CORINTO E SIRACUSA.
RELAZIONI, SCAMBI, INFLUENZE

CORINTH AND SYRACUSE.
CONNECTIONS, EXCHANGES, INFLUENCES

Proceedings of the International Conference (Siracusa, December 5-7, 2024)

a cura di
GIULIO AMARA
ROSA LANTERI



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Relazioni, Scambi, Influenze

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Chiseling connections: architecture and epigraphy between Corinth and Syracuse

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Abstract

Official epigraphy on stone differs significantly from more spontaneous forms, such as writing on pottery sherds or vessels. Stone epigraphy demands specialized knowledge of stonemasonry, access to appropriate tools, and dedicated workspaces. This points to organised workshops with masters and apprentices, and raises the question of whether stone inscribers shared their expertise with other stoneworkers, or if they were, in some periods (particularly in the Archaic period), not solely letter-carvers, but also skilled in various forms of stonework, including architectural masonry and sculpture.

Our contribution examines stone-working practices in architecture and epigraphy between Corinth and Syracuse, adopting a truly interdisciplinary approach and the anthropological concept of 'community of practice'.

Keywords: Communities of practice, Mobility of craftsmen, Stonecutters, Tool assemblages, *Apollonion* of Syracuse.

Preface

The practice of epigraphy on stone, *i.e.* the skill and technique of carving inscriptions on stone, is different from extemporaneous epigraphy, such as graffiti on sherds of pottery or vessels. It requires a knowledge of stonemasonry[1], the knowledge and possession of the appropriate tools, and working spaces, which implies the existence of workshops, masters, and pupils. The most logical and economical consequence of this is that stonemasons were not only letter-carvers (which would have been of little use to them as a profession, given the scarcity of stone documents, especially for the Archaic period), but also people capable of working stone for different purposes, i.e. architectural stonemasons and sculptors, fields that also extended to architecture and perhaps also parallel craft production such as woodworking and even shipbuilding[2]. The division of expertise between epigraphy and sculpture or stonemasonry, especially for the Archaic period, may reflect our own disciplinary divisions rather than the actual reality.

Our contribution approaches the study of stone-working practices – in architecture and epigraphy – between Corinth and Syracuse from an intra-disciplinary perspective. Drawing on expertise in both epigraphy and architecture we examine the exchange and transmission of knowledge, art, and craft from a new perspective, closer to the historical reality of the actors involved. This case study 'chiseling connections' across related areas also provides the perfect opportunity to apply the communities of practice concept to an ancient setting[3]. The sharing of learning situations and the fostering of skills can be considered not only between Corinth and Syracuse, but also more widely between Corinth, Syracuse,

This paper is the result of close collaboration and sustained dialogue among all three authors. While the work reflects a shared intellectual effort, specific areas of expertise are primarily the responsibility of individual contributors: David Scahill is responsible for the sections concerning architecture; the epigraphic contents are authored by Valentina Mignosa; and the theoretical framework and approach has been formulated and suggested by Franco De Angelis. The research contribution by Valentina Mignosa to this article was carried out within the project TES: Tracing Eastern Sicily's Networks (11th–6th centuries BCE) (project code SOE2024_0000093) and funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), Mission 4, Component 2, Investment 1.2 Young Researchers (CUP No. H73C24001530001).

1 See, for example, the experimental work of Wayne Hart (https://www.qest.org.uk/alumni/wayne-hart/).

2 Scahill 2017.

3 Souza 2024.

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and the wider networks of which they were a part. In doing so, we gain a new appreciation of the sharing, learning, and transference of knowledge and skills that made possible the ancient material culture so visible to us today.

Theoretical premise: insights from the «community of practice» perspective

To make our argument requires lateral thinking. The community of practice approach provides a «simple», «flexible», and «powerful explanatory tool» – to quote R. Souza – in his recent plea for greater usage of this concept[4]. Souza also provides a succinct definition: «A community of practice is a group (the community) that is defined and held together by the participation of its members in a particular activity (the practice) and a shared goal of excellence in that activity»[5]. Our approach is material-focused, even contemplating the different skill-sets and crafts involved, and that is precisely where the community of practice approach can have its greatest impact. It is worth noting in this respect that, of the three types of practice most commonly addressed by archaeologists, craftworking and its associated labour were the first sphere where the community of practice concept was tested. In fact, craftworking and its associated labour remain the most popular application of the community of practice concept to material-focused approaches[6]. In other words, the community of practice concept supplies an overarching interpretative thread that ties together what, at first glance, might be considered separate and unrelated craftworking activities.

It is worth considering what a community of practice approach contributes that aligns with, yet also distinguishes itself from, other established interpretative frameworks. A community of practice approach is related to a 'community archaeology' approach[7]. Although both approaches each have a large and expanding body of academic literature, they are not synonymous. While some studies on community archaeology have addressed questions of learning situations and the producers and transmitters of knowledge, such questions are not the primary focus of community archaeology. By contrast, these concerns lie at the heart of a community of practice approach, which is a better suited concept to discuss them. A community of practice approach is also related to but different from P. Bordieu's famed practice theory with its central concept of the *habitus*[8]. Bourdieu's social theory is related to a community of practice, in that both discuss learned dispositions and socialized norms that guide an individual's and group's practices, but the *habitus* captures only a part – an important part no doubt – of the more encompassing definition of 'social' that lies at the centre of the community of practice approach[9]. In this definition of social, the emphasis lies on how communities and individuals interact, with a particular focus on agency and the networks that shape and sustain practices. These dimensions, often overlooked in traditional 'community archaeology' or 'practice theory', are illuminated by the concept of a 'community of practice'. However, the idea of a community of practice also extends beyond localized interactions to encompass broader, interconnected systems of practice. This broader perspective is captured in E. Wenger's concept of a 'constellation of practice'. Wenger[10], the original formulator of the community of practice concept, defines a constellation of practice as follows: «The term 'constellation' refers to a grouping of stellar objects that are seen as a configuration even though they may not be particularly close to one another, or the same kind, or of the same size. […] there are many different reasons that some communities of practice may be seen as forming a constellation, by the people involved or by an observer. These include: (1) sharing historical roots; (2) having related enterprise; (3) serving a cause or belonging to an institution; (4) facing similar conditions; (5) having members in common; (6) sharing artifacts; (7) having

4 Souza 2024, p. 183.
5 Souza 2024, p. 185.
6 For full discussion, see Souza 2024, pp. 186-187.
7 Souza 2024, p. 183.
8 Souza 2024, p. 184.
9 Souza 2024, p. 184.
10 Wenger 1998, p. 127.

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geographical relations of proximity or interaction; (8) having overlapping styles or discourses; (9) competing for the same resources».

In this work, we engage with the community of practice approach from two distinct yet interrelated perspectives, which we propose as productive and transferable for application in other contexts and case studies. While analytically separable, these perspectives are deeply interconnected – as will become evident in the following paragraphs – and should not be viewed as entirely independent from one another.

The first can be described as 'diatopic', encompassing not only the relationship between Corinth and Syracuse, but also the diverse components within Corinth itself. This perspective draws on a 'translocal' approach, emphasizing the exchange and interaction of craftsmen, ideas, and technologies across geographically distinct yet culturally interconnected regions. This perspective highlights the movement of artisans, tools, and design principles between cities, creating a shared architectural and epigraphic language that transcended local boundaries while adapting to regional contexts. To this first meaning we can apply some of the conditions that create the constellation of practice: (1) sharing historical roots; (2) having related enterprise; (5) having members in common; (7) having geographical relations of proximity or interaction.

The second perspective can be defined as 'diatechnic', between different *technai*, expertise: *i.e.* between epigraphy and architecture. To this second meaning we can apply some other conditions that create the constellation of practice: (4) facing similar conditions; (5) having members in common; (6) sharing artifacts; (8) having overlapping styles or discourses; (9) competing for the same resources. We highlight in particular the last four components of Wenger's definition that are of immense significance to our own approach in this paper[11]. One final advantage that a community of practice approach offers is translocalism[12]. Translocalism is a common theme in globalization and migration studies with their entangled narratives, but it is also inherent in any community of practice approach for these reasons and for their underlying flexibility in terms of actors, scales, behaviours, expressions, and outcomes in time and space.

Before we wrap up discussion of our theoretical premise, and on the heels of translocalism, we would like to highlight one of the fundamental underlying implications for the community of practice concept for questioning the 'craftworking nationalism' that is usually assumed in most accounts of 'Greek' art (broadly conceived). Corinth lies at the heart of this problem, which has two dimensions. On the one hand, as our paper argues, we need to be thinking laterally in order to connect what are usually considered separate and unrelated craftworking activities. On the other hand, we need to be thinking laterally more in terms of translocalism. While there can be absolutely no doubt that Archaic Corinth was a major manufacturing centre, it is less appreciated that this was only because Corinth absorbed talent and ideas from all over to make, and then export, its fine products. Factoring in such mobility into our narratives also highlights the difficulty of accepting *tout court* the literary tradition of Demaratus, the supposed unidirectional culture-bringer from Corinth, who apparently brought high calibre craftworking to the western Mediterranean. C. Ampolo[13] has recently unravelled the ancient and modern traditions regarding Demaratus in his characteristically brilliant way. Some Western Mediterranean archaeologists have been challenging the Demaratus narrative for the last generation. But, to them, we can now add another fundamental point made by N. Arrington in connection with the directionality of cultural flows: the so-called Orientalizing pottery style developed in Greek Sicily and southern Italy before being transferred eastwards to Corinth and Athens[14]. The evidence for foreign craftsmen at Corinth, moreover, is substantial and hard to deny[15]. The concept of communities of practice best captures what was happening among the various craft workers operating together at Corinth, and for that matter elsewhere across the entire Mediterranean (such as Sant'Imbenia in Sardinia). 'Greek Corinth', therefore, is short-

11 See also Souza 2024, pp. 186-188 on the constellation of practice.
12 Souza 2024, pp. 187-188.
13 Ampolo 2017.
14 Arrington 2022, pp. 94-98.
15 Morris, Papadopoulos 1998; Brisart 2011, pp. 199-201; Ziskowski 2016; Sherratt 2020; López-Ruiz 2021, p. 53.

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hand for a craftworking phenomenon whose insights are best understood via a community of practice perspective[16].

A constellation of practice between Corinth and Syracuse (diatopic perspective)

The work of one of the present authors is based on this very perspective. On the development of the Doric order, D. Scahill[17] begins by quoting R.R.R. Smith, the renowned sculpture specialist: «Clients and artists moved around the Mediterranean, not disembodied stylistic influences»[18]. In essence, the quotation from Smith embodies a community of practice thinking *avant la lettre*.

One avenue of inquiry that is important for understanding the development and transmission of design is the role of the craftsmen, *i.e.* agency. Identifying the groups involved in the design and construction of these buildings, as well as understanding the ways in which they operated, involves examining the development and diffusion of technologies. These technological processes are closely tied to a wider network of agents and events connected to the political and social structures that had taken shape in the Greek city-states by the end of the 7th century BCE.

The development and transmission of architectural design in the ancient Greek world is deeply tied to the role of craftsmen, their mobility, and the technologies they employed. These craftsmen – stone masons, carpenters, sculptors, and other specialists – formed the backbone of monumental construction, enabling the spread of styles such as the Doric order. By examining archaeological evidence, political contexts, and technological developments, particularly in Corinth and its colonies, we can better understand how a shared architectural 'language' or *koiné* emerged and flourished.

The interaction of craftsmen at international sanctuaries like Olympia and Delphi played a significant role in disseminating styles. These sites, as interregional showcases, attracted teams from various cities, allowing for the exchange of techniques and ideas. The infrastructure for such projects often involved neighbouring city-states, which contributed both resources and manpower.

Corinth emerges as a pivotal player in this narrative. Its craftsmen, skilled in quarrying and carving limestone, were among the first to exploit the material on a monumental scale during the Geometric period. Recent excavations push this tradition back to the early 8th century BCE, when Corinthian artisans began producing large limestone sarcophagi. This technological expertise likely transitioned into temple construction, supported by Corinth's political and trade networks, which facilitated the movement of materials, craftsmen, and ideas. Based on evidence of middle Geometric burial practices in the Corinthia, A.C. Brookes, posits stone carving practice and the tool assemblages necessary (*i.e.*, chisels), ca. 800-750 BCE with increasing tool technology ca. 750-720 BCE[19]. Brookes' toolkit was modified by R.F. Rhodes, who also argued that the beginning of exploration by craftsmen carving poros limestone took place in the 8th century at Corinth[20]. We must also take into account that such 'toolkits' also existed at this time in places like Samos, where soft limestone was readily available. The important point to make here is that the soft limestone could be carved with the same tools used for carving wood[21]. Ch. Pfaff argued that the technology to construct these sarcophagi would have included an ability to quarry, cut and lit heavy blocks of limestone[22]. New skills were needed to deal with material that must have developed *ad hoc* with a desire for a new burial practice, or, transference of skills from something else to burial practice. Whatever the scenario, it is the first time since the Mycenaean period that we see stone being quarried and worked on this scale.

The mobility of craftsmen was a driving force in the dissemination of architectural styles. Skilled artisans carried their knowledge across the Mediterranean, integrating local materials and techniques

16 For similar thinking, see Souza 2024, pp. 184-185.
17 Scahill 2017.
18 Smith 1981, p. 30, note 58.
19 Brooks 1981.
20 Rhodes 1987; Rhodes 2003. Scahill 2017, p. 226 for an overview and further bibliography.
21 For basic tool assemblages see: Orlandos 1955; Hodge 1960; Goodman 1964.
22 Pfaff 2007, pp. 530-531. Sanders *et alii* 2014, pp. 36-37 supports Pfaff's assessment.

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into their projects. For example, Corinthian masons likely brought their expertise to colonies like Syracuse, where they combined their skills with local innovations to create new architectural forms.

The Doric order, as a common language of design, was thus not a static inheritance but a dynamic tradition shaped by the interplay of regional practices, technological advancements, and the movement of craftsmen. This interaction highlights the agency of artisans in shaping cultural identity through architecture.

A constellation of practice between architecture and epigraphy (diatechnic perspective)

Craftsmen were central to the realization of monumental architecture. Their work was not limited to the execution of designs but often involved innovative problem-solving in the face of new materials and techniques. For instance, masons required training in carving specific types of stone, such as soft limestone or marble, which demanded different tools and approaches. These skills often overlapped with other fields, such as carpentry, where the knowledge of joinery contributed directly to architectural stability. Training in carving specific types of stone was likely to be shared with stone-cutters, even with those working on the stone to carve inscriptions.

A central question within our argument concerns the extent to which expertise overlapped and boundaries – if any – were maintained between the various components of the community of practice involved in stonemasonry and the workshop. In order to address this issue, we need to look at later periods, when the practice of epigraphy was much more standardised and widespread than in the archaic period.

In a passage from Sidonius Apollinaris' *Epistula* XII we can read:

> [5] *quod peto ut tabulae, quantumcumque est, celeriter indatur; sed vide ut vitium non faciat in marmore lapidicida; quod factum sive ab industria seu per incuriam mihi magis quam quadratario lividus lector adscribet*[23].
>
> [5] I ask that the inscription, however small it may be, be quickly placed on the tablet; but see to it that the stonecutter does not make a flaw in the marble. For whatever defect occurs, whether through intent or negligence, the envious reader will attribute it to me rather than to the letter-cutter.

Although the passage belongs to a much later context and the considerable chronological distance inevitably diminishes its direct evidentiary value for the Archaic period, it remains a meaningful point of comparison in the absence of earlier testimonia. Moreover, its relevance is not merely methodological: in certain technical and artisanal domains, including those related to stonemasonry and workshop organisation, practices tend to develop conservatively and exhibit long-term continuity. For this reason, later evidence may illuminate procedural habits and distributions of expertise that, while not strictly comparable, can nonetheless offer heuristic insight into earlier forms of artisanal organisation.

As G.C. Susini noted: «The passage of Sidonius Apollinaris enables us to understand that it was not possible to use precise terms for the different artisans working in a stonemason's shop. Even today, when making arrangements for the funeral monument of a member of his family, an Italian will use the words 'scalpellino' or 'marmista' or – if he happens to remember his Classical studies – the word 'lapicida' for 'stonemason'»[24].

Sidonius Apollinaris used the terms *lapicida* and *quadratarius* interchangeably, despite likely being aware that, in a strict sense, the two terms referred to distinct roles in the inscription-making process. The *lapicida* was the artisan responsible for wielding the chisel or axe, while the *quadratarius* was more

23 Sidon. II, *epist.* 12, 5.
24 Susini 1973, p. 14.

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specifically tasked with the ordination – the meticulous preparation of the inscription surface. This included adding margins, marking alignment for the letters, calculating the proportions of each line, and sketching the text to guide the cutter, as theorized by J. Mallon[25].

Does this theoretical distinction hold consistently in practice? The ancient sources do not clearly differentiate between the workers performing these roles, unlike the clear division of labour observed in other crafts, such as Greek vase production. Even for major and prestigious monuments, the overlap between these roles suggests a more integrated and flexible approach to the production process[26]. The same workshop could encompass all these roles and functions, as Susini notes, with stonecutters, surface preparers, engravers, and other specialists working side by side, often blurring the boundaries between their individual tasks and expertise[27]. As has been noted for another field of production – namely ceramics – a thorough understanding of the transmission of a technical tradition requires attention both to the operational sequence that structures its manufacture and to the actors responsible for circulating that knowledge. Such analysis demands a multi-layered approach drawing on different methodological perspectives and grounded in a framework that brings together «economic and social history, technological studies, and the history of artisanal knowledge, integrating data relating to both production and consumption»[28].

It can be reasonably hypothesised that within workshops the division of labour was not rigid and that there was significant overlap in skills and responsibilities. The stonecutter who shaped the blocks might also be involved in the preparation of surfaces for inscriptions, a task often attributed to the *quadratarius* in later periods. This preparatory phase required precision and artistry, as it involved creating smooth surfaces, aligning proportions, and even sketching the letters or decorations to guide the engraver. Similarly, the *scriptor titulorum* (inscription draftsman), tasked with transcribing the text, might collaborate directly with the engraver to ensure consistency between the intended design and the final product.

In cases of smaller projects or less prestigious commissions, it is possible that the same individual performed multiple roles, from shaping the stone to inscribing the text. When considering the Archaic period, the overall scarcity of inscribed stone monuments suggests that demand for such work was too limited to sustain a highly specialised labour structure. Artisans could not have relied on epigraphy alone as a primary occupation; rather, multiple competencies were likely concentrated within the same individuals, with clearer professional differentiation emerging only later as inscriptional output expanded and commissions became more frequent. Workshops may thus be understood as collaborative environments in which artisans shared not only tools but also techniques and, at times, areas of expertise. The instruments employed – such as chisels, compasses, and straightedges – were likely common across different stages of production, enabling a fluid exchange of responsibilities. More importantly, shared workspace and constant interaction would have fostered the circulation of ideas and collective problem-solving. For example, a stonecutter's knowledge of the material – its density, grain, and susceptibility to splitting – could directly inform the engraver's technique for carving letters or decorations without causing damage to the stone.

A direct and logical consequence of this hypothesised work environment is the integration of inscriptions into the broader architectural framework. In monumental constructions, inscriptions were not standalone elements but were designed to complement the structure, aligning with its proportions, ornamentation, and symbolic significance. This required meticulous coordination between the architect, artisans responsible for the architecture and those crafting the inscriptions, when they were different persons.

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25 Mallon 1982, a work that, although outdated in several respects, remains a foundational reference for understanding the technical and graphic principles of stone epigraphy.

26 Susini 1973, pp. 14-15.

27 Some epigraphic evidence from the Erechtheion and Parthenon, reveals that craftsmen transitioned between related fields, with some architects beginning their careers as carpenters. Cfr. *IG* I^3 474-475 (409/8 BCE); *IG* I^3 476 (408/7 and possibly 407/6 BCE); *IG* I^3 477 (405/4 BCE). On the overlap of carpenters and stonemasons, see Scahill 2017, p. 225 and note 22.

28 Esposito 2020, p. 154. See also Hasaki 2019, who applies a similar 'community of practice' perspective to the crafts of pottery production. See also X. Charalambidou, C. Pfaff, I. Tzonou, A. Hein in this volume.

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Another key figure in this equation concerning construction-site expertise and its transmission and application is, naturally, that of the architect. Several scholarly contributions have explored the intellectual and social standing of this professional within the context of the ancient Greek world[29]. Seminal works by Clarke and Ross Holloway[30], which problematized the boundary between master builder and designer, were followed by Harrison's deeper analysis of the architect's identity in the Classical period[31]. More recently, studies by M.-C. Hellmann, H. von Hesberg, and especially Francesco De Angelis have turned attention to the emergence of specialised writing practices in the domains of art and architecture, and to the broader implications of technical literacy in ancient Greek society[32].

This is not the place to examine in detail the figure of the architect or the numerous epigraphic testimonies linked to his role in the *polis*–richly documented in works such as *Recherches sur le vocabulaire de l'architecture grecque, d'après les inscriptions de Délos* by M.-C. Hellmann and the *Lexicon* compiled by Travlos and Orlandos[33]. Our focus is on how the architect's practical knowledge intersected with epigraphy and writing. There are multiple instances in which architects do not merely engage in technical drawing or oral instruction but participate directly in written documentation – both as communicators within the construction site and as mediators between the administrative apparatus and the citizen body[34].

One particularly revealing example is the inscription dated to 422/1 BCE, which records the building of a bridge for the priestesses traveling to Eleusis[35]: λίθοις δὲ κατ[ακ]αλύφσαι τὰς διαρροὰς το Ρρε[τ]ο καθότι ἂν χσυγγρ<ά>φσει Δεμομέλ[ες ὁ ἀρχιτέκτον][36]. In this case, the verb *syngraphein* does not denote a contract or a legal decree, but rather prescribes in precise terms the method for arranging reused blocks, a technical specification to which the masons were required to adhere. This specific use of writing reflects an expanded scope of architectural responsibility – one in which the architect's prescriptions become part of the material logic of the building process. This intersection between architecture and epigraphy in Classical Athens thus reveals a use of writing that transcends the domain of the specialist letter-cutter and reaches into that of the architect himself. As G. Marginesu has aptly written, the architect writes to communicate with his workforce – as seen in the Eleusis inscription – and also to inform the citizens of his *polis*, particularly through the drafting of *syngraphai*[37]. In the first instance, these documents were intended to be read and acted upon by the craftsmen and workers on site, raising the broader question of whether–and to what extent – the Classical Athenian workforce was able to engage with written instructions. This type of engagement would correspond to what has been defined as 'craft literacy'[38], that is, a level of literacy probably attested among professional groups (such as masons or merchants) whose work required interaction with written documents and familiarity with technical terminology, yet did not reach the threshold of 'full literacy'[39].

A significant link between public inscriptions on stone and the work of those who shaped individual architectural elements can be observed in the functional stone marks, such as masons' marks and construction drawings[40]. These elements serve as «un vero e proprio metalinguaggio posto alla base

29 See Marginesu 2008, pp. 83-89.
30 Clarke 1963; Ross Holloway 1969.
31 Harrison 1973.
32 See Hellmann 1994; De Angelis 2015, pp. 70-83; von Hesberg 2015.
33 Orlandos, Travlos 1986; Hellmann 1992.
34 Marginesu 2008, pp. 90-93; De Angelis 2015.
35 *IG* I³ 79, ll. 14-17 = *I.Eleusis* 41. See Marginesu 2008, p. 92.
36 «And to cover the channels of the Rretos with stones, in whatever way Demomeles the architect shall *set down in writing*».
37 See Marginesu 2010.
38 Oxford Classical Dictionary, *s.v.* «literacy» by Thomas 2016.
39 For a detailed discussion of the different levels of literacy in the ancient world, see Oxford Classical Dictionary, *s.v.* «literacy» by Thomas 2016.
40 These marks and drawings can be categorised into two broad groups. The first, defined as execution drawings, encompasses drawings that contribute to the conception and graphical design of architectural or decorative elements. These were used to transmit instructions to workers and ensure the proper execution of the design. The second category, installation drawings, consists of marks that facilitate the assembly and correct positioning of architectural or decorative elements. These functional inscriptions underscore the integrated process of creating monuments, where textual and architectural elements operated in close collaboration.

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del linguaggio architettonico»[41]. This 'metalanguage' of functional markings reflects the intersection of architectural and epigraphic practices. It remains entirely plausible that the marks incised on building blocks to indicate their placement were, for example, made by the craftsmen themselves–given the clearly different and more theoretical and intellectual role of the architect (as suggested, for instance, by the passage in Vitruvius[42], which refers to the lost treatises written by architects in the Archaic period). Once again, it seems that epigraphy – in one of its forms, namely that of the non-textual mark, symbol, or abbreviation – becomes the domain of actors other than the traditional figure of the specialised letter-cutter.

An interesting example of this phenomenon – pertinent to the Syracuse area, and dating to the 4th-3rd century BCE – can be found in the masons' marks on some of the blocks of the Euryalos Fortress[43], in particular at the entrances to the galleries A-D of the fortress. Based on the insight of M.L. Lazzarini, the characters are identified as numerals in the acrophonic system. In line with the local practice in Sicily, they are arranged in ascending order. The inscriptions, listed from north to south, are as follows: a: 38 ½; b: 39 ½; c: 59 ½; d: 48. The shape of the signs is similar to numeral forms found on tablets from Locri (those representing 5 and 10) and in one of the decrees from Entella[44], both dating to the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. However, the purpose of these numerical markings remains unclear. It seems unlikely–contrary to earlier assumptions–that they indicate the completed lengths of the respective galleries. These signs, in any case, suggest that those working between the quarry and the actual construction area of the fortress were able to write. It may be hypothesised that the same architect was responsible for inscribing them. As supporting evidence of this, in gallery C, a vertical incised line and a horizontal notch were carved into the rock. These likely served as alignment and level indicators at the start of construction.

The Temple of Apollo at Syracuse

The Temple of Apollo at Syracuse[45] (Fig. 1) provides a compelling case for applying the perspective of the community of practice to a specific architectural project, revealing how local and imported traditions intertwined within a colonial context (diatopic perspective) and how different fields of expertise were closely interconnected in its execution (diatechnic perspective). An inscription on the stylobate credits a certain *Kleo*(…)*es* as responsible for the works (*erga*)[46]:

Κλεο[c. 4-5]ες: ἐποίεσε τὸπέλονι: *h*o Κνιδιάδᾱ: .ẹ[c. 3]ẹ στυλεῖα: κα[λὰ] ϝέργ[α][47]

Kleo[c. 4-5]es, the son of Knidiadas, made for Apollo [- - -] colonnades: beautiful/successful works!

While it remains unclear whether this individual was an architect, an *epistates*, a contractor, or a donor, the project required complex coordination, including quarrying, transporting, and assembling materials on a large scale.

41 Inglese, Pizzo 2016.
42 Vitr. VII, *Praef.* 12.
43 *IG* XIV 17 = *ISic*000419; see also Beste, Mertens 2015, especially pp. 147-148, figs. 179.a-d.
44 A1 = *SEG* 30.1121 = *ISic*030298.
45 For a broader contextualization and a comprehensive overview of the scholarship on the temple, see De Angelis, Mignosa 2025, pp. 291-294, 328-331.
46 On this much-debated issue, see more recently Hellmann 1999; Di Cesare 2020; Sapirstein 2021. For a comprehensive list of editions, refer to *ISic*000822. On the inscription and building techniques, see also P. Sapirstein in this volume.
47 The edition presented here is based on our own reading of the image produced by Sapirstein using the enhanced visualisation technique. Although we rely on his imaging, the text does not follow Sapirstein's edition; for his readings and alternative restorations, see Sapirstein 2021, pp. 419-441.

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Fig. 1. Temple of Apollo, Syracuse. Photo: V. Mignosa (De Angelis, Mignosa 2025, fig. 3.7).

The architectural design of the temple suggests Corinthian influence, which aligns with the city's historical ties to Syracuse through its colonial foundations[48]. Yet distinct local Sicilian innovations – such as equestrian *akroteria* and sophisticated terracotta revetments[49] – point to early regional adaptations of mainland models. This demonstrates how Greek colonies adapted and expanded upon imported traditions, contributing to the broader Doric *koina*. The alphabet used in the inscription on the crepidoma reflects the same phenomenon and dynamic. The monument's overall dating to 590-580 BCE, together with the palaeographic characteristics of the inscription, suggest that the inscription was carved during the 6th century BCE, perhaps the first half. This was a transitional period in the development of the Syracusan alphabet, when certain epigraphic forms (*e.g.* angular gamma; lambda with its second stroke placed halfway) – were being abandoned in favour of a more enduring standard – (*e.g.* featuring a lunate gamma and a 'regular' lambda). As is well known, Syracusan alphabet deviated from the 'diagnostic' types of the Corinthian alphabet – beta meander type, E or B for ε, three or four strokes iota, sign derived from 'san' for sibilant – developing its own standard, also adapted to the local epigraphic landscape (Megarian and Geloan in particular). This evolution reflects a community, four generations settled, where a distinct culture reshaped the alphabet and its uses.

We now turn to the diatechnic dimension of our community of practice approach. P. Sapirstein's important and recent study of the Apollonion inscription offers a particularly clear analysis of the technical features of the inscription, shedding light on numerous irregularities in the chiselling and the execution process. As noted by Sapirstein, there are repeated instances of some letters (*e.g.*, *epsilon* or *lambda*) which exhibit more than one typology attested in the Syracusan alphabet. In addition, many irregularities characterised the inscription, such as the different spacing among the letters and their different modules (Fig. 2). It is worth noting that all these characteristics are indeed extremely common in archaic documents (see, *e.g.*, the inscription from Syracuse Μεγάλας [Θεᾶς(?)])[50], especially in environments like Syracuse where the epigraphic landscape in archaic period is not characterised by a very high number of texts. All the hypotheses of integration, from Roehl onwards, are based on this assumption. What is striking in the Apollonion, however, is that irregularity in lettering coincides with irregularities in the stone and in the structure of the crepidoma itself, something that was already noted by G. Cultrera but which was not given the importance it deserves until Sapirstein's work. Immediately following the end of the inscription, the stone surface appears markedly roughened, exhibiting bands of indentations characteristic of tool marks – likely those of a flat chisel – left during the initial rough-cutting or shaping phase. The irregularities in the lettering and the surface preparation of the stone suggest a workmanship far less meticulous than the importance of the building might initially imply. It is possible that the variation in letterforms and the uneven spacing between them reflect the work of individuals who were not professional letter-cutters but were nonetheless able to produce legible inscriptions.

Reconstructing the broader context of this inscription requires considering the overlap between different skill sets during the Archaic period. It is worth noting that the tools and materials of the time, particularly the use of soft stones, could make inscription work accessible even to those with limited

48 Scahill 2017, pp. 233-234. On this issue, see also P. Sapirstein in this volume.
49 Cfr. Marconi 2007, pp. 38-41; Marconi 2016, pp. 77-78.
50 *SEG* 32.0935 = *ISic*001472 (with image of the document).

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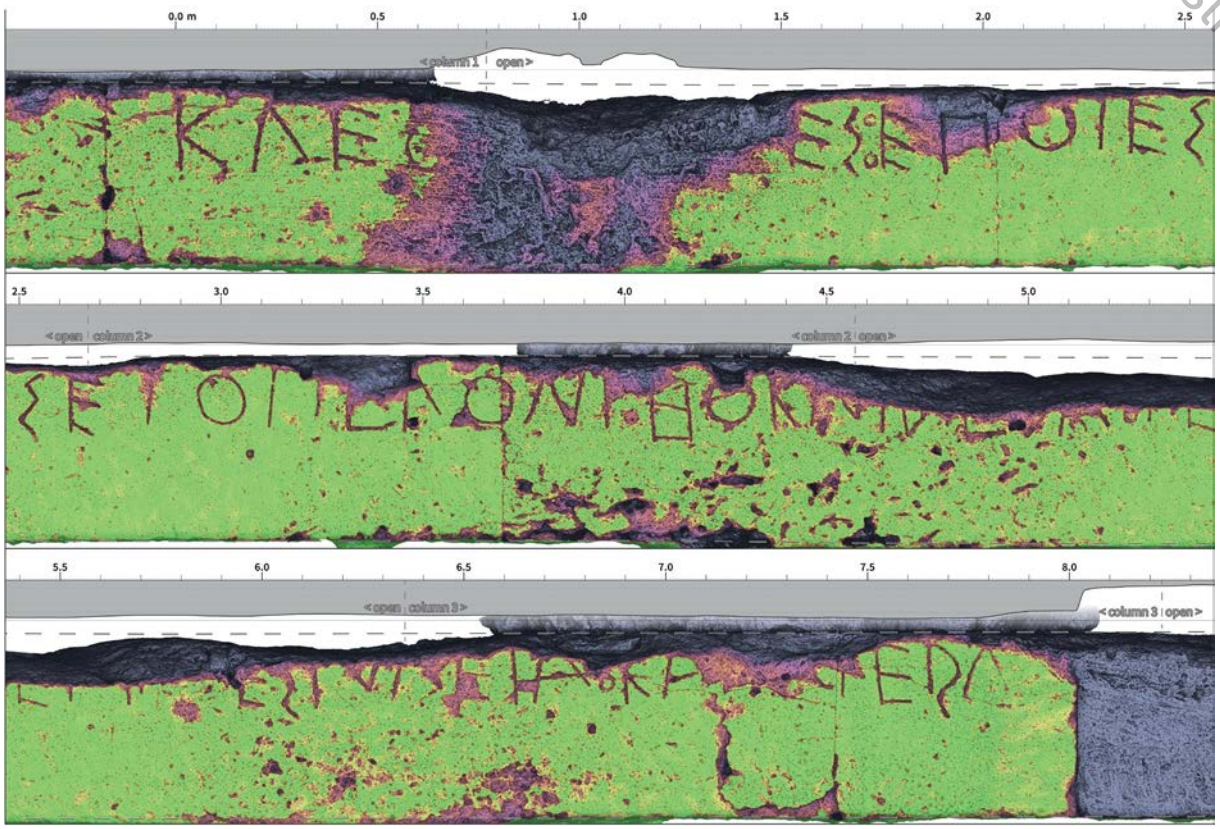


Fig. 2. *IG* XIV 1 (ISic000822): Enhanced visualization (Sapirstein 2021, fig. 3. Image reproduced with permission of the copyright holder, P. Sapirstein).

expertise[51]. Such materials, being easier to carve, allowed for inscriptions to be executed by individuals whose primary expertise may have lain elsewhere – architects, artisans, or even the dedicants themselves. As Susini[52] remarks, the choice of materials often influenced the level of craftsmanship required for epigraphic work, bridging the gap between the professional scribe and the lay artisan.

This interplay between architectural and epigraphic elements is particularly evident in this case, where the inscription itself reflects the irregularity of the stone's surface, as observed by Sapirstein. The roughened area near the end of the inscription, with its distinctive «bands of indentations» likely made with a flat chisel, suggests that the structural and textual components were treated as parts of the same broader process. This practical integration highlights the overlapping expertise of the individuals involved and their shared reliance on tools and techniques that bridged the gap between design and execution.

Moreover, Sapirstein, comparing the inscription to a group of early architectural texts, suggests that the use of ποιέω in our document could have a range of meanings not too far from the better-attested uses with sculptors and potters: «In summary, the most relevant comparanda to *IG* XIV 1 are consistent with ἐποίησε meaning more than just 'dedicated' or 'financed' when applied to architecture, including the sense of 'making'.[53]» If Sapirstein's recent interpretation of the term ποιέω is correct – suggesting that this verb, in architectural inscriptions, extends beyond mere 'dedication' to include also meanings such as 'making' or 'constructing' – then the inscription serves not only as both a votive and a building dedication ('iscrizione edilizia'), but also as a commentary on the creation process itself, functioning as a 'metalanguage' in relation to the architectural work. Together, these elements highlight the inscription's

51 These considerations stem from W. Hart's research and his presentation to a group of epigraphists convened by J. Prag during a palaeography workshop, the proceedings of which are forthcoming (see Stoyanova, Prag forthcoming).
52 Susini 1973, 24.
53 Sapirstein 2021, p. 454.

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dual role as both a textual artifact and an integral component of the monument's physical and symbolic architecture.

The issue of authorship must also be considered in relation to the authority that commissioned and financed such monumental works. While *IG* XIV 1 does not provide explicit evidence for financial oversight in the early 6th century–and Sapirstein has shown that later models of *epistatai* should not be projected backwards onto the Apollonion–it remains likely that decisions concerning public inscriptions and building expenditures were made within civic frameworks. In later periods, boards of *epistatai* are epigraphically attested as overseeing payments to contractors and managing funds in major temple projects. Even if such formal roles had not yet crystallised in early Syracuse, the inscription should be understood not merely as a technical product of workshop practice, but as an expression of institutional agency. Yet we remain unable to determine how institutional authority shaped the practical organisation of labour in this early phase. The irregularities of both lettering and stonework do not necessarily reflect poor execution, but may rather be symptomatic of a production environment where specialised epigraphic roles had not yet fully emerged, where artisans worked across multiple technical domains, and where time or material constraints shaped the final outcome.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to bring together various threads in Corinthian and Syracusan craftworking that are usually discussed separately as self-contained activities. While it is not to be doubted that fruitful discussions can be had, and have indeed been had, about these activities as separate entities, we argue that much more can be gained by treating them as interconnected and overlapping activities. In doing so, we have adopted both a diatopic perspective – emphasizing geographic and cultural connections across regions – and a diatechnic one, focusing on the shared technical knowledge, tools, and practices that underpin different artisanal domains. Together, these perspectives highlight the importance of examining craft not in isolation, but as part of a broader and dynamic network of skills, materials, and interactions.

Our community of practice approach does that and provides an overarching theoretical, and yet practical, framework for uniting various craftworking activities under a single banner. It is also necessary, moreover, to modernize our ideas of who made up the community of practice in general. Clearly, a case can be made, and indeed has again been made, to show that Corinth attracted craftspeople from all over, from the eastern Mediterranean but also, arguably, from the western Mediterranean[54]. The literary tradition of Demaratus continues to cast a long shadow over our subject in ways that we have already recognized and need, we have argued, to be recognized even more. Here is where we see our paper making a larger contribution beyond just attempting to link together separate craftworking activities into a single whole, itself a contribution in its own right.

54 Movement of craftsmen from the West to Mainland Greece can be witnessed by recent chemical analysis of terracotta roofs from the western treasuries at Olympia that shows the clay was local while suggesting the craftsmen who made them were from South Italy/Sicily: Helfert, von Hesberg 2023.

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