The Greek horos (boundary-marker) is a good starting point for a meditation on the social meanings that may be deduced by historians and archaeologists from the interrelationships between text and material artifact on the one hand, and between reference, performance, and social context on the other. In its simplest obviously recognizable form, the horos is a stone stele inscribed with the four letters ΟΠΟΣ. It may thus appear to be a rather simple sort of artifact (a block of stone) carrying a rather simple sort of text (a word). Neither the artifact’s form nor the text itself makes any claim to uniqueness. It can be iterated (copied or cited) by almost anyone in almost any context. At the same time, both the veracity and felicity of any given horos' claim to mark a boundary is a direct function of its specific location. The horos informs its reader that a border has been established at a particular point in space, and implicitly commands the reader to act accordingly. This command is an example of a written speech act in the form of a declarative statement: but what precisely is that statement?

Two narrow stone stelai, discovered still in situ during the excavations of the west side of the Athenian agora, make the horos' declaration explicit. Each stele is inscribed, in archaic Greek Examples (including such variants as ΗΟΡΟΣ [with three- or four-bar sigma], ΗΟΡΟ, ΟΡΟ, ΟΡΟΣ, [lunate sigma], ΟΡΟΣ Α' ['horos no. 1']): Inscriptiones Graecae I 902A, Inscriptiones Graecae II 2502-2524 (some 20 other examples are noted, but not actually printed, by the editors of Inscriptiones Graecae); J. Traill Demos and Tritys: Epigraphical and Topographical Studies in the Organization of Attica (Toronto 1986) 117, #7. As we will see, there are formally simpler types of horos; but these are not so easily recognized as horoi. I would like to thank Adrienne Mayor, Charles Hedrick, David Small, Merle Langdon, Greg Stanton, Hans Lohmann, and John Traill for comments and offprints which helped me to write a piece with which at least some of them will have profound disagreements.
Errata (N.B. The author was not given an opportunity to proofread the article before it was printed.).

Throughout: in capitalized Greek, "ς" represents lunate sigma ("ʃ").

p. 91 n. 1 line 1: HOPE = HOPOE
p. 91 n. 1 line 2: A' = A'

p. 92 n. 2 line 1: HOPE = HOPOE

p. 95 n. 1 line 1: Inscriptiones = Inscriptiones Graecae
p. 95 n. 9 line 2: OPEE = OPOE
p. 96 n. 10 line 1: (ἐνεχθοσσαμόνη) = ἐνεχθοσσαμόνη
p. 96 n. 10 line 2: ρ = β'


p. 100 n. 15 line 10: (199) = (1990)

p. 101 n. 17 line 3: ηθη = ηθη

p. 102 para. 1 line 11: 'shaking of off burdens' = 'shaking off of burdens'

p. 102 para. 2 line 3: Finely = Finley

p. 108 n. 32 line 3: zontes = zones

p. 108 n. 33 lines 14-21: confederation = confédération; beotienne = bétienne; économiques = économiques; frontiere = frontière; Hellenique = Hellénique

p. 109 n. 35 line 2: commissives = commissives

p. 111 para. 2 antepenult line: certainly almost = almost certainly

p. 117 n. 50 antepenult line: (ΟΡΟΣ/ΠΙΜ) = (ΟΡΟΣ/ΠΙΜ)
lettering, with the following text: ‘I [the stele] am the horos of the agora.’ On one level that sentence is a straightforward truth claim, a statement in the form of a declarative sentence that is either true or false. In order for the statement to be true (i.e. both accurate and coherent), the horos of the agora must remain fixed in its original position and the agora must exist. If someone were to pull up the agora horos and carry it somewhere else, the statement it proclaims would no longer be accurate, since it would no longer mark a boundary of the agora. And if no one knew what ‘the agora’ was, the statement would cease to be coherent. Likewise, iteration is likely to entail a loss of veracity: for example, the statement that marks the beginning of this section of my paper is false (when read as a declaration) in that the page on which it appears is not the boundary of the agora.

The veracity of the horos is thus directly tied both to its physical situation and to the existence of an identifiable referent for the space that it claimed to delimit. Yet presumably no one (in ancient Athens or today) would understand the sentence, ‘I am the horos of the agora,’ as merely referential, i.e. as representing nothing beyond a banal statement of fact in the form ‘x is y’ (similarly, no reader of this article would be likely to take the section heading as a false referential claim being made by the page itself). In using the first person singular in order to proclaim itself ‘the horos of the agora,’ the stele was doing rather more than just informing a curious bypasser that ‘this point just happens to be where the agora begins’; in asserting its presence in the first person, the horos takes for itself the role of watcher-over and guardian of the frontier it marked. As permanent watcher and guardian (one that remains present in the absence of its human author) the horos issued a command to the reader: ‘The authorities order you not to cross the frontier unless you are are among those entitled to do so.’ Thus, in the process of being informed that the agora begins ‘right here,’ the ancient Athenian reader of the agora horos was also enjoined to act in a certain way. If, for example, he had committed homicide, he was ordered to proceed no further: according to Athenian law, murderers (and certain other malefactors) were forbidden to enter the agora. The horos is thus an example of what some speech-act theorists call the performative-constative: that which is grammatically a statement of fact (a truth claim with a referentially clear subject) is also an action. That is, to say, the statement does something, it performs a significant and obviously recognizable social function.

The question one usually asks of a performative statement is not whether it is true or false, but whether it is felicitous or infelicitous, i.e. whether the intended speech act (in this case, an order) was efficaciously delivered and received—whether the ‘uptake’ was successful (this is, of course, not the same as asking whether or not the order was in fact obeyed). Achieving felicity is a matter of context. It requires that the parties

---


3 I am excepting here the case in which a legitimate authority moves the horos and reestablishes the boundary, e.g. in order to extend the space encompassed by the agora.

4 The Greek term for ‘watcher-over’ or ‘guardian’ is ὀροφός, formally identical to the Ionian from (used by Homer) for ὀρὸς and often used in compounds related to the protection of liminal zones, e.g. πυλὸρος (gate-keeper), θυρ᾽ορος (guard); even if, as is generally supposed, the terms (ὁρὸς, ὀροφός) do not share a common root, the concepts (border/watcher/guard) are intimately related in Greek practice and thought. On ‘egocentric’ (first person) inscriptions and their assertion of presence, see J. Svenbro (1988) ‘J’écris, donc je m’efface. L’enonciation dans les premières inscriptions grecques,’ in Phrasikleia: Anthropologie de la lecture en Grece ancienne, ed. J. Svenbro (Paris: 1988). Laws limiting access to the agora: Andocides 1.71, 76; Aeschines 3.176; Demosthenes 24.60; cf. D.M. MacDowell (1975) The Law in Classical Athens (Ithaca: 1975) 111; Camp (1986) 51.


6 The distribution between felicity and obedience is clarified by considering the order-issuing authority’s reaction to a failure to obey. That reaction can be quite different if the authority in question believes that uptake occurred (i.e. that the person given the order understood the order and the relevant social rules) or did not occur (i.e. the person ordered failed to grasp the sense of the order). An example of the first (felicitous) case
in question—she who gives the order and he who receives it—be willing to operate according to the same general set of social conventions. Furthermore, the receiver of the order must accept the legitimacy of the authority giving the order. Not every speech act which takes the form of a declarative sentence requires that the statement be true in order to achieve felicity. 8 But in the case of the horos, the felicity of the speech act does indeed seem dependent on its veracity, that is upon its being both properly located and referentially coherent.

The relatively proxil (four-word) agora horos informs its readers of the name of the space it delimits; moreover, because the Athenian agora was public space, the inscription clearly implies that it was established and backed up by public authority (i.e. by the government of the polis of Athens). Thus anyone who knows the rules associated with the agora will understand how he or she is expected to act and by what body he or she might be expected to be punished for misbehavior. The simpler (one-word) form of horos, described in the first paragraph of this article, does not name what it delimits or who authorized it; rather it assumes that its readers will be able to supply those names and the associated rules for themselves. For the knowledgeable member of the society that established it, the one-word horos says a good deal: 'I am the boundary of 'x', established by the legitimate authority 'y', and you are accordingly ordered to act in the prescribed manner 'z'.' The fundamental interpretive problem presented by the laconic one-word horos is how we, not being members of ancient society, are to fill in the values of 'x', 'y', and 'z'.

The problem of interpretation is compounded by the possi-

---

of horoi discovered by field archaeologists, artifacts for which there is no secure literary attestation. I hope to make two main points: first, the horos is a marker of socially vital distinctions; next the nature of the distinctions in question is contingent on a knowledge of changing and historically specific social codes. Looking at how several texts treat horoi, and examining the horos as an 'artifactual text'—as a text that is an artifact, and at the same time an artifact that is a text—should help to elucidate some methodological problems involved with moving back and forth between texts and artifacts, history and archaeology. Along the way I hope to demonstrate that problems addressed by literary theorists and philosophers of language are not necessarily clever-but-irrelevant word games; certain of these problems can have direct bearing on the everyday work of historical and archaeological interpretation.

ATHENA'S STONE: HOROS OF THE PLOWLAND

In book 21 (403-405) of the Iliad, in the midst of a fight with the god Ares, the goddess Athena picks up a stone which, as Homer informs us, was 'lying there on the plain, [it was] dark, rough, and huge; former men had established it as a boundary of the plowland.'\(^\text{10}\) The brief reference does not, at first glance, give the reader a great deal to go on: The stone's great size (megan) points to Athena's superhuman physical strength. And the reference to 'former men' (andres proteroi) and their artifacts has obvious parallels with other poetic references to the ancient residents of the Troad and their artifactual remains.\(^\text{11}\) Athena's stone plays a minor role in the epic, but is a valuable starting point for investigating a horos in a literary text as a complex archaeological artifact.

The stone in question was rough (truchen) and so appar-

---

\(^\text{10}\) \(\hat{\eta} \hat{d} \hat{o} \) (ἀναχασσωμένη) λίθον εἴλετο χειρὶ παρείγῃ κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ μέλαινα, τρυπὴν τε μέγαν τε/ τὸν ἄνδρα πρότερον θέσαν ἐμεμενα οὕρουν ἀρχής-\(\varepsilon\) τῷ βάλε θυρόν 'Αρησ κατ' αὐγὴν, λίθον δὲ γῆς. "But she [Athena], drawing back, seized a stone in her mighty hand; it was lying there on the plain, dark, rough, and huge; former men had established it as a boundary of the plowland. With this she struck furious Ares on the neck, loosing his knees.'

\(^\text{11}\) E.g. 2.811-815 (the poet mentions a steep mound which men call Batieia, but the gods know as the sēma of Myrine); 23.326-333 (Nestor points out to his son a dead stump flanked by stones which he posits may either be the sēma of a long dead man or a race marker established by 'former men' (ἐπὶ πρώτοιν αὐθώπον).
say, archaeologists) attempting to reconstruct the code used by the former men will not be able to restore the earlier meaning unless they are lucky enough to have available a text that is quite specific about the location and appearance of the object. In this case, Homer’s text takes us part of the way, but not quite far enough.

Homer does name the space delimited by the horos; he tells us that the stone once marked the boundary of the plowed land. Thus the natural object, once it had been established as an artifact, differentiated the land that was cultivated from that which was not. Why had the former men thought it necessary or desirable to mark this distinction by establishing a horos? Once again, the text fails us. The poet does not indicate whether the boundary had a significance that was religious: was the wild land sacred to some deity? Or economic: was the uncultivated land owned by someone other than the owner of the cultivated land, and/or put to some different economic use (e.g., as grazing grounds)? Nor does he identify the authority by which the stone was established as a boundary: the decree of a king? an agreement among family groups living in the area? a divine pronouncement? We cannot even say whether the authority was sacred or secular, public or private. Moreover, lacking any further textual elucidation, we cannot say what the intended practical effect of the existence of the boundary would have been, that is to say, how the behavior of the ‘former men’ would have been altered after the horos had been established: were only certain persons given (or denied) permission to pass the boundary? Was it forbidden to cultivate land beyond it? We don’t know. And a fortiori we have no idea what sanctions might have been imposed upon those who chose to ignore the boundary marker or whose responsibility it was to enforce the sanctions.

Homer’s text does, however, make one further and very important point about the boundary-stone: if (per above) its meaning as a boundary was not fixed for all time, nor was its physical location. The marker could be and was moved (albeit by divine force). Through Athena’s action in grabbing it up, the stone was clearly stripped of any remnant of its former meaning as a boundary. After it had been used to bash Ares, the stone was no longer in situ and so could no longer be regarded as marking a boundary (existing or historical) even by those who had been informed by a poet of its (former) status. By employing the stone as a weapon, Athena in effect annulled its claims in regard to the delineation of space and returned the human artifact to the status of natural object. And thus, even the field archaeologist capable of locating the edges of ancient field systems would not recognize the displaced rock as a horos.

The fact that Homer felt it was worthwhile to mention that Athena’s stone had once been a horos points to the significance attached to the establishment of physical boundaries in Greek culture.\textsuperscript{13} To the members of the society that had installed it, the horos proclaimed that certain territory was ‘this, not that’—it marked a difference and enacted a distinction where distinction had not previously existed. And thus the establishment of a horos was a way of imposing human, cultural, social meanings upon a once-undifferentiated natural environment. The land was brought under human economic control by the work of cultivation and under semiotic control by the closely associated act of instituting markers. These markers had a functional purpose: they indicated different uses to which ‘this land’ could properly be put as opposed to ‘that land’ on the other side of the established boundary. Moreover, the distinctions thus marked had social ramifications: as signs of human control, markers could have the effect of establishing not just what the land could be used for, but who had the right to use, perhaps even to tread upon, the demarcated terrain.

If horoi were centrally important symbolic and social markers, then it mattered a great deal who had the power to establish or to disestablish them. Possession of the authority to make or unmake distinctions, to attach new and widely accepted significance to objects (e.g. unworked stones), is surely one of the most fundamental measures of human power.\textsuperscript{14} This is particularly clear when the decision to create a distinction has obvious economic effects. In complex human societies, determining who can use parcels of arable land and for what purposes, has immediate and obvious economic implications. So historians and archaeologists certainly do want to know the nexus of human relationships and decisions that established horoi point to. But Homer’s account of Athena’s stone and its

\textsuperscript{13} Boundaries are, of course, important in other cultures as well; see e.g. \textit{O.T.} Genesis 31.44-48, Jos. 22.26ff., Is. 19.19–20; and in general Green and Perlman (1985); M.Z. Ispahani (1989) \textit{Roads and Rivals: The Political Uses of Access in the Borderlands of Asia} (Ithaca: 1989).

Solon pointedly contrasts (through a men/de construction) these acts of liberation—accomplished by power: force combined with justice—to his writing of laws (thesmous . . . egrapsa) that would be applied equally to bad and good alike.\textsuperscript{18}

Despite enduring academic uncertainties about Solon’s precise constitutional position, the interrelationship of political power, authority over horoi, and changes in social relations are explicit in this fragment. Solon freed the earth by annulling horoi, just as he freed the Athenians by announcing their liberation. In both cases, previously existing distinctions were declared invalid. Solon’s action meant that Athenians would no longer be subdivided into separate status categories of free and slave; to be an Athenian (male) now entailed being a free person, a citizen.\textsuperscript{19} And whatever distinctions, marked by horoi, that had formerly pertained in respect to use of the ‘black earth’ were now eliminated. But what distinctions did the pre-Solonian horoi mark? Even without knowing as much as we might like about the conditions of archaic slavery, we may hope to explain in general terms what it might have meant for an individual Athenian to be enslaved or to be freed. It is much more difficult to guess what it meant for ‘black earth’ to be in a condition of slavery or freedom. It is commonly assumed by scholars that the horoi annulléd by Solon were written records of indebtedness or encumbrance, more or less similar in function, and perhaps in form, to well-attested (archaeologically

\textsuperscript{13} ταύτα μὲν κράτει: ὁμόν κνίων τε καὶ διδυν ἑνομίζοντας, ἔρεσα καὶ δηλάδος ὡς ὑποχώρηθη

\textsuperscript{15} Solon speaks of the promises he was able to fulfill by exerting his own power (kratei) and by bringing to bear force (bia) combined with justice (dike).\textsuperscript{15} He asserts that if the extent of his reform program is ever brought into question, the black earth, supreme mother of the Olympians, will be his witness at the tribunal of Time: ‘For on her behalf I annulléd (aneilon) the horoi which had been established everywhere, so that being formerly enslaved, she is now free.’\textsuperscript{16} Solon’s claim to have acted as disestabolisher of horoi and liberator of the earth is closely connected in his poem to another liberation: the freeing (eleutheron ethêka) of Athenians: the repatriation of those Athenians who had been forced into exile or sold abroad as slaves and the freeing of those who remained in Attica but were forced into a slavish condition and trembled at their master’s every whim.\textsuperscript{17}
and in literary sources) inscriptional 'security horoi' of the fourth century B.C., which were quite detailed records cut into stelai, set up on land that was used as collateral to secure a loan. These fourth-century inscribed records publicly proclaimed the terms under which the property they demarcated was hypothecated. If the Solonian-era horoi were official land-encumbrance records of some sort, the annulment of horoi would mean the annulment of outstanding debt (or at least of the requirement to pay over some part of the crop annually) and so presumably the annulment would be part of (or equivalent to) the seisachtheia ('shaking of off burdens') mentioned by Ath. Pol. (6.1, 12.4) and Plutarch (Solon 15.3–5, 16.3). The presumptive beneficiaries of the annulment of horoi would have been the poorer Athenian peasants, the persons Plutarch (Solon 13.2) says were called hektémoroi.20

This scenario may well be generally correct, but it is complicated by the intractable problem of reconstructing archaic notions of 'ownership' and 'alienability'; moreover it goes considerably beyond what Solon himself says he did. As Linforth rightly pointed out, 'his [Solon's] statement is cast in a poetical form, sufficiently clear for his readers, who knew exactly what he was referring to, but somewhat obscure to us.'21 That obscurity is intensified by the fact that no archaic artifact has ever plausibly been identified as a horos of the sort Solon claims he annulled; there is no archaeological evidence for hypothecation stelai from Attica earlier than the late fifth century. This apparent gap in the archaeological record could be explained by supposing that the horoi in question were made of perishable material.22 But given the apparent absence of evidence for wooden horoi, the absence of Solonian-era horoi from the archaeological record might more easily be explained by the assumption that the horoi in question were unworked and anagraphic stones, similar in form to the horos of the plowland mentioned by Homer. If this is correct, the Solonian horoi may actually still exist and some may even be visible in the fields of Attica, but they are no longer recognizable as horoi. Yet if the horoi annulled by Solon were unworked, uninscribed stones, they were evidently markers of distinction rather than detailed records of financial transactions. So what distinction might they have marked before Solon's action? The context of the 'black earth' passage surely implies that the annulment was linked to the establishment (or restoration) of just relations between a powerful Athenian elite (the men Solon calls meizous kai bian ameiones: Ath. Pol. 12.5 = Solon F 37.4) and the Athenian masses (whom he calls the dèmos: F 36.22, F 37.1). As an alternative to the record of indebtedness/encumbrance thesis, we might posit that before Solon's action the horoi had marked areas of Attica in which the movements of Athenians of a certain status (e.g. hektémoroi, the enslaved, or non-Eupatrids) were restricted (e.g. areas which they could not leave or enter). This is all, of course, mere speculation. It is offered only to show that assuming the pre-Solonian horoi to have been financial records of hypothecation or encumbrance is also speculative and that internally coherent alternative hypotheses can be offered. In the end, we may be forced to admit that we do not know what a pre-Solonian horos would have looked like or precisely what it signified; as in the case of Athena's stone, the meaning of the marker is contingent upon a vanished (or, in this case, abolished) matrix of social relations and rules. We simply do not know enough of the social code of pre-Solonian Athens to reconstruct meanings that were presumably easily accessible to most members of early sixth-century Athenian society.

Solon uses the word horos metaphorically in another fragment (37) cited by Ath. Pol. (12.5) in discussing his relationship with the two parts (dèmos and powerful men) of Athenian society. He claims that whereas someone else in his position would not have restrained the common people nor rested before

---


21 Linforth (1919) 62. Cf. Andrewes (1982) 377: 'His [Solon's] hearers knew in detail what he meant but we have to guess, and the word horoi does not by itself settle the issue. . . . [But] Solon cannot be saying simply that he abolished many boundaries.'

22 Theory of wooden horoi to explain the fact that no Solonian-era horoi have ever been found: Stanton (1990) 56. Cf. Adcock (1926) 33–34: 'there is no reason to assume that the [boundary] pillars were of stone indelibly inscribed.'
his agitation had skimmed the butter from the milk, 'I set myself between them, like a horos in disputed terrain.'

23 Here the man who elsewhere boasted of having removed distinction-establishing horoi, proudly takes for himself the name and the distinction-enforcing role of the horos. Rather than being a devise instrument for the enslavement of that which should be free, here the (metaphorical) horos establishes the vital and legitimate distinction that prevents unfair treatment of one social group by another. One implication of Solon's self-description as a horos is that the problem he claims to have solved in the first passage was not the result of distinction ipso facto, but rather of the wrong sort of distinction. We may remember that Solon not only freed enslaved Athenians, but established (or at least revised) precisely defined, wealth-based status categories (tele) which officially determined the distribution of political powers and responsibilities for all Athenian citizens.

Moreover, Solon's legislation forbidding the future enslavement of Athenians by their fellows may be regarded as the origin of the formal status of the citizen: an impassable boundary was (metaphorically) erected between the categories of 'free Athenian' and 'Athenian slave.' It is very likely that Solon's permanent ban on the enslavement of Athenians took the form of a written thesmos. If so, it was distinct in Solon's mind and

poetic description from the original liberation itself, which had been accomplished (according to the fragment quoted above) by personal power and 'force combined with justice.' Thus power (kratos) and force (bia) could justly be employed to disembarrass illegitimate distinctions; but the establishment of new distinctions through the production of law is described by the poet-statesman simply as 'writing' (thesmous... egrapsa).

The differentiation between the conditions he thought appropriate for performing the two varieties of speech act may cast some light on how Solon viewed (at least in retrospect) the role he had played in the restructuring of Athenian society, and how he understood the nature and extent of the powers he had temporarily wielded. The term Solon uses for 'disputed terrain,' metaichmion, refers literally to the space between the spears of opposing armies. Yet clearly Solon's use of the word is metaphorical: setting a horos between two armies would be nonsensical, whereas establishing a boundary in a disputed frontier zone is a reasonable and understandable way of preventing destructive conflict. Solon's metaphorical reference to his own political position as a horos, marking a disputed frontier, points to the actual role of physical horoi in establishing the exterior territorial borders of a self-contained society (a polis), as well as in establishing valid distinctions operative within a society.

**HOROI OF THE PATRIS**

Sometime in the archaic period, perhaps even before Solon's reforms, the Athenian ephesbes, eighteen- and nineteen-year-old Athenian soldiers-in-training, began to swear a standard

said to be before his period of nomothesia. Plutarch, Solon 15.3, lumps these altogether under the rubric of the politeuma which Solon wrote. Cf. Linforth (1919) 65–66, who considers forbidding human collateral to be a formal law and separate from the liberation itself.

It is tempting to suppose that Solon felt that a tyrant was one who used kratos and bia (rather than the writing of thesmoi) to establish new social distinctions. Such a description would certainly suit sixth-century tyrants such as Kleisthenes of Sicyon (Hdt. 5:67–68).

A paratactic reading is assumed by P. Vidal-Naquet (1986) reading might be supported by Thucydides' reference (6.13.1) to (lines 10-12).

For Alcibiades' reputed skill as a speaker: Plutarch, patridos, to the second (metonymic) hypothesis, the patridos 106 OBER GREEK in mind as a referent for the words suppose that 'wheat, barley, vines, olives, figs' is a collective along with all the others. '29 The oath itself is followed by a long list of witnesses (histores): 'gods, Agraules, Hestia, Enuo, Enualios, Ares and Athena Areia, Zeus, Thallo, Auro, Hegemone, Herakles; horoi of the patris, wheat, barley, vines, olives, figs.'

What did the ephebes and those administering the oath have in mind as a referent for the words horoi tis patridos (boundaries of the fatherland)? The grammar of the second part of the list of witnesses is not absolutely clear. The witness list begins with the term 'theoi' (gods). The gods in question are then named: a total of eleven divinities, including personifications of 'increase, growth, and leadership' (Thallo, Auro, Hegemone). So far so good. The second part of the list begins with the term horoi of the patris and continues with five major products of arable agriculture. And here lies the crux: Is this part of the list paratactic: a series of (six) separate witnessing entities, one of which is 'horoi'? Or is the phrase horoi tis patridos, like theoi, a collective noun whose elements are described by the (five) words that follow? On the second hypothesis, we might suppose that 'wheat, barley, vines, olives, figs' is a collective metonymy for 'the horoi of the fatherland.' Or (on an even closer parallel with theoi) that among a larger set of horoi tis patridos, the particular horoi that will witness the oath are (again metonymically) the several products. According to the first (paratactic) hypothesis, the horoi are not defined as agricultural products; their physical form remains textually indeterminate. According to the second (metonymic) hypothesis, the horoi themselves are actually agricultural products. The metonymic reading certainly makes for better syntactic parallelism (theoi/horoi). Moreover, according to Plutarch (Alcibiades 15.4), a metonymic reading was adopted as early as the late fifth century by the politician and general, Alcibiades, who supported his policy goal of boundless imperialism with the argument that the Athenians had sworn to treat as their own patris any place in which wheat, barley, vines, olives, and figs were grown. But we need not accept Alcibiades as an unimpeachable authority for the original, archaic reference; his manipulation of the language of the oath falls squarely within the sophistic tradition of twisting accepted meanings to support otherwise dubious positions.31

Supposing that wheat, barley, etc. actually are horoi requires that we accept a set of referents for the term horoi that is at odds with the referents implied by the Homeric and Solonian passages discussed above. Yet even on a paratactic reading, the syntax of the witness list obviously implies a close relationship between the horoi of the fatherland and the various agricultural products. This relationship is hardly unexpected: 'Athena's stone' marked the border of the plowland and the horoi Solon annulled to free the black earth certainly had something to do with the use of arable land. As an alternative to a purely metonymic or purely paratactic reading, one might be tempted to try a metaphorical compromise: the wheat, barley, vines, olives, and figs refer metaphorically to the actual stone boundary-markers which delimit the fields in which these products were grown. This hypothesis allows the ephebes to imagine as witnesses familiar and concrete entities ('boundary-stones,' which, as we have seen above, could assert both their presence and a truth claim by 'speaking' in the first person) rather than an abstraction ('borders') reified as a set of agricultural products. Moreover, given its general 'watching-over and guarding' function (see above), the horos qua boundary-stone would seem to make an eminently suitable witness to an oath. And yet the


30 A paratactic reading is assumed by P. Vidal-Naquet (1986) The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World. trans. A. Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore: 1986) 122: the ephebe guarantees 'to protect the boundary-stones of his country, and with them, the cultivated fields.' A metonymic reading seems to be assumed by Siewart (1977) 109. The latter reading might be supported by Thucydides' reference (6.13.1) to the sea as the horos between Athens and Sicily.

31 For Alcibiades' reputed skill as a speaker: Plutarch, Alcibiades 10.2-3, 13.1-2; as a sophistic interlocutor: Xenophon, Memorabilia 1.2.40-46.
metaphorical reading raises its own problems: just as the horos tês agoras formally delimited the physical space of the agora, the 'boundary-markers of the patris' should delimit the physical fatherland, the polis itself. Thus horoi tês patridos can hardly refer to each and every field boundary in Attica.

In order to try to solve the conundrum, we will have to look outside the text of the oath itself, and consider some aspects of its context. In Athenian myth and fourth-century military practice, the ephebes were associated with and responsible for patrolling the frontier zones of Attica. Assuming that this association of ephebes with the frontier extended back to the time of the archaic oath, we might narrow the metaphoric reading suggested above: the referent implied by horoi tês patridos was, I would suggest, the line of field horoi which defined the outermost reaches of Athenian agricultural enterprise. Within this line of horoi was the fatherland. The territory outside the line was in some sense wilderness: undesignated, undefined, unmarked.

Once again, we are confronted with a complete absence of archaeological evidence that might clarify our literary testimonia. No inscribed Athenian horos 'of the patris' has ever been found.33 The text of the oath itself may suggest an explanation for their invisibility. The ephebes taking the oath promise not only to defend their homeland, but also to augment and extend it: 'I shall not hand down a lessened patris, but one that is increased in size and strength.' If the young men swearing the oath took that statement literally (and supposed that the goddesses Auxo and Thallo took an interest in the growth and increase of the patris proper, as well as of crops and livestock) then they could not in good conscience allow the horoi tês patridos to remain fixed. It would be their sacred duty to increase the extent of the cultivated land, by pushing back the boundaries of the wilderness.34 As this process continued and new fields were marked out, the outer line of the horoi was necessarily and continually constructed anew. And thus, the precise referent of the phrase horoi tês patridos was inherently unstable—and its semiotic instability was a direct function of the sincerity with which the speech act of the oath was performed.35 If we imagine the horoi in question to be unworked stones designating the borders of agricultural fields, similar to the Homeric example, the exact stones in question would not be the same from generation to generation: an individual horos which once designated the boundary of the patris would, by the fulfillment of the terms of the oath, become an 'internal' horos; the distinction it marked would consequently be altered significantly and it would no longer be included in the witnesses for the oath sworn by the next generation of ephebes.

The ephebic oath might be read as a textbook example of a self-deconstructing text: the deathless 'witnesses' of the oath, the guarantors, intended as fixed and stable points of reference, are themselves destabilized (their meanings radically altered) by the fulfillment of the conditions imposed upon the oath-takers. The demand for augmentation in the oath renders impossible the stability of the witnesses who are supposed to ensure that the demand is fulfilled. The changeless refers

32 Ephebes and frontiers: in myth: Vidal-Naquet (1986); in practice: Ober (1985) 90–95. Siewert (1972) 109, claims that the lack of an explicit reference to frontier zones (eschatia) is evidence for the ephebic oath's archaic character.

33 Markers of national and even ethnic boundaries are mentioned by ancient authors, e.g. Plutarch, Theose 25.3 (the stele which Theseus was supposed to have established at the Isthmus, stating on one side 'Here is Ionia, not Peloponnesus,' on the other, 'Here is Peloponnesus, not Ionia'); Xenophon, Anabasis 7.5.13 (Thracian tribes which establish piracy zones with στράτες ὐφλίτων). Lycurus 1.113, 115, could speak of the bones of the Athenian Phrynnichus being dug up and 'thrown beyond the borders of Attica' (ἐξορίστας ἐξαὶ τῆς Ἀττικῆς); cf. Dinarchus 1.77. Pausanias mentions frontier markers of various sorts: 2.38.7; 8.25.1, 34.6, 35.2, 38.7. Moreover, some 150–200 inscriptions dealing with various aspects of polis borders (including border-markers from e.g. Ætolia, Laconia/Messenia, and Boiotia) have been found; see e.g. SIG 941; SEG 23.297, 35.406; IG V.1 1371–1372, VII 2792, IX.1 427, IX.7 1, 116. See P. Roesch, (1965) Thespies et la Confédération boïotte (Paris: 1965) 61–63; M.K. Langdon, (1985) 'The Territorial Basis of the Attic Demes,' Symbolae Orosenenses 60 (1985) 13–14 n. 4; M. Sartre, (1979) 'Aspects économiques et aspects religieux de la frontière dans les cités grecques,' Ktisma 4 (1979), 216–217; Daverio Rocchi, (1988), 93–177; J.M. Camp II, (1991) 'Notes on the Towers and Borders of Classical Boiotia,' American Journal of Archaeology 95 (1991) 195 n. 9; D. Roussef and P.P. Katzouros, (1992) 'Une délinitation de frontière en Phocide,' Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique 116 (1992) 197–215. A corpus of border inscriptions has been announced by Roussef.,


35 The oath, as a form of promise, is a standard form of speech act: Austin (1975) 157–60 ('commises'); Searle (1969) 54–68: 'As illocutionary acts go, [promising] is fairly formal and well articulated; like a mountain­ous terrain, it exhibits its geographical features starkly' (54). Note that the instability still pertains even if we accept the metonymic hypothesis and accept the agricultural products as the horoi in question.
of the oath and the established distinctions they mark cannot survive in the endlessly changing world which the oath itself enjoins. The inherent instability of the text and its witnesses may in turn have encouraged new (and sometimes seemingly perverse) citations and interpretations: Alcibiades is able to cite the oath as authorizing a reckless and (when viewed in retrospect) destructive plan for overseas imperialism. Even if we regard Alcibiades' sophism as a special case, however, there is surely no doubt that the ephebes who swore the oath in the post-imperial era of the later fourth century, when the oath itself was reinscribed, had something quite different in mind than their archaic and mid-to-late-fifth-century predecessors: The wording of the oath might be *patridos* ('ancestral,' i.e. a word-perfect citation of the archaic original), but its meaning was not.\(^{36}\)

Does the claim that the referent of the term *horoi tēs patridos* was unstable and that the meaning of the oath itself changed over time, necessarily lead to a 'strong' deconstructive conclusion: i.e. that this text is evidence for the inevitable and general collapse (or even impossibility) of meaning itself? I would say not. At the solemn annual oath-taking ceremony each ephebe performed a speech act (more or less sincerely), and that act was felicitous in that it was comprehensible and regarded as binding by both the oath-taker and his community. The fact that a historian can show that the meaning of the oath and the identity of some of its witnesses must have changed over time need not lead us into the functionally useless assumption that words, meanings, signs, and referents are somehow unreal for the members of any given human society at any given point in its history.\(^{37}\) Each generation of ephebes supposed it knew what the oath entailed and who (or what) were its witnesses. The ephebes either kept their promise or failed to do so, and were judged accordingly by their community. It is the social contingency of meaning, rather than its ontological indeterminacy, that is historically significant. Accepting social meanings as contingent (as opposed to utterly indeterminate) does not make historical explanation impossible. But it does entail the closest possible attention to details of social context. This consideration underlines the vital importance of incorporating both 'historical' and 'archaeological' evidence, both texts and artifacts, when we attempt to describe and to explain what was going on in past cultures.\(^{38}\)

**BORDERLANDS: Ta METHORIA**

I suggested above that the land which lay outside the *horoi tēs patridos* could be regarded as 'wilderness' undesignated, undefined, unmarked. Yet the land beyond the established frontier was not a trackless wilderness in any simple sense; rather it was a border zone that led eventually to the established frontiers of Megara or the poleis of Boiotia. The borderland between poleis was sometimes referred to as *gē methoria* (Thuc. 2.27.2, 4.56.2) or *ta methoria* (Thuc. 2.18, 5.3.5): literally that which lay 'between the *horoi*.\(^{39}\) Athenian actions which fulfilled the expansivist goals of the ephebic oath tended to bring land once outside the borders within the full political control of the state. Because this process was incremental, *ta methoria* remained a rather fuzzy category: yesterday's borderland was today's Attic land. The Athenian garrison town of Oinoe provides a good example. Oinoe was described by Thucydides (2.18.1–2) both as 'in Attica' (*πολις Αττικής*) as 'in the *methoria* between Attica and Boiotia' (*ἐν μεθορίῳ τῆς Αττικῆς καὶ Βοιωτίας*). The chronological reference point of Thucydides' comment is 431 B.C., the first year of the Peloponnnesian War. And yet by that time Oinoe certainly almost enjoyed full deme status and so was a constituent part of the Athenian polis.\(^{40}\)


\(^{37}\) Cf. Thuc. 1.103.4: Megara allied with Athens because Corinth was at-

tacking the former in a war about border land (*περὶ γῆς ὀρῶν*); 1.122.2: the Corinthians remind the Spartans that the coming conflict with Athens will be much different from disputes about border land (*περὶ γῆς ὀρῶν καὶ διαμορφώ*). On the dynamism of internal and external frontiers and on border zones vs. border lines, see Daverio Rocchi (1988), 20–47.


\(^{39}\) The fourth-century copy of the oath is prefaced by the statement "*Ὀρκος ἐκ των ἄνθρωπων, ὃς ἀφεττοῦσαν εἰς τὸν ἐγκώπου, 'the ancestral oath of the ephebes, which the ephebes must swear" (line 5). The 'post-imperial' fourth century: see below.

Whenever the town was incorporated, however, the Thucydides passage shows that in the latter fifth century Oinoe could still be described as being located ‘between the horoi.’ And thus, the term ta methoria could be used (even by a self-consciously precise author like Thucydides) conventionally as well as referentially. It proves to be no easier to define with precision what it meant for a classical writer to say that some place was ‘between the horoi’ than it is to fix the meaning of the horos itself.

The extension outwards of the borders of Attica and Athenian encroachment on the methoria were not processes that could be indefinitely prolonged without provoking Athenians’ neighbors. The wild, uncultivated methoria may seem in one sense a structural inverse of the cultured world of the polis, and thus an ideal liminal space for the conduct of rites de passage such as the ephebeia.42 But in the world of inter-polis diplomacy, which depended on establishing distinctions that would be recognized and respected by discrete political entities, it was necessary that the methoria be defined in functional terms as carefully as was the land within the borders. As in the case of the horos-delimited land we have considered above,

(which was never a deme in the Athenian constitutional sense) as δήμους τοις εσχάτους της Ἀττικῆς ('frontier towns of Attica').


42 By the time of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians had built a fortress there; the place was captured by the Boiotians early in the war, and they proceeded to slight the walls before handing it back to the Athenians under the terms of the Peace of Nicias. When the Athenians protested the slighting, the Boiotians produced the following excuse (prophasis): ‘as the result of a dispute, there were ancient oaths in force to the effect that neither side was to possess the place, but they were to graze it in common.’

It is worth noting that the terms of the agreement cited by the Boiotians stipulate grazing, rather than arable agriculture as the permitted (common) use of the land in question. But regulation under a formal interstate agreement is far from the romantic image of the frontier zone as an unrestricted and undefined wild space. On the other hand, the Athenian action in building the fort, which (at least according to the Boiotians) contravened the old agreement, demonstrates how very difficult it might be to maintain agreed-upon inter-border land-use standards when more than one society was involved. In this case the expansivist ideals we have seen embedded in the ephoric oath (horkos ephédon) evidently overrode the ‘ancient oaths’ (horkoi palaioi) sworn by the Athenian ambassadors to their Boiotian counterparts; the speech-act conventions pertaining within Athenian society proved stronger than those employed between the two states. The Boiotian attempt to ‘annul’ the inter-polis boundary-marker represented by the Athenian fortress at Panakton proved to be unsuccessful in the long run. The fort was rebuilt by the Athenians in the fourth century and was indeed used as a base for Athenian ephebes.


44 Thuc. 5.42.1: ἐπὶ προφάσει ἢς ἥνα ποτὲ Ἀθηναίοι καὶ Βοιωτικοί ἐκ διαφορές περὶ εὐτοῦ ὅρκου παλαιοῦ μητέρευς οἰκέων τὸ χορίον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ νόμουν

45 This has been conclusively demonstrated by a Stanford University survey and excavation; the field work has not yet been fully published but cf.
The Athenians' tendency to augment their own polis militated against the very concept of ge methoria as frontier zone and may, ironically, have given impetus to the eventual establishment of relatively stable linear frontiers. I have argued elsewhere that the period after the Peloponnesian War saw a systematic attempt on the part of the Athenians to rationalize their northern and western land frontiers through the construction of a system of fortresses and watch-and-signal towers. This program represented a significant change from former practice: rather than establishing new fields or garrison towns in order to roll back the borders, the Athenians now focused their attention on the attempt to define a stable border line. Although the ephebes continued to swear that they would augment the size and strength of the fatherland, that promise would no longer be fulfilled by extending Athenian control over the methoria. The line of border fortifications implied the existence of a fixed linear frontier, or at least signalled an Athenian desire that stability should pertain. Although even in the fourth century we have no epigraphic examples of Athenian state-border horoi, the forts and towers themselves may be thought of as representing a line of border-markers which defined the limits of the Athenian patris.

RUPESTRAL HOROI OF ATTICA

What effect might the stabilization of the national frontier have had on the production of social meanings assigned to intrapolis horoi? This question brings us back to a consideration of archaeological evidence proper. In the course of the last decade, a fair number of ancient rupestral (rock-cut) horoi have been published from various sites in southern Attica. Although the inscription sometimes includes an indication (severely abbreviated and thus cryptic) of what sort of territory is being delimited, often just the four letters of the word itself (OPOΣ) were cut directly into an exposed shelf of bedrock. In several cases, the rupestral horoi is clearly part of a series which defines a line or even a corner. The single-word rock-cut horoi is, at first glance, the simplest possible sort of text and simultaneously the result of a very basic process of artifact production: the natural bedrock is turned to human uses through the action of inscribing the four letters. The rupestral horoi can be viewed as a particularly pure example of text-as-artifact and artifact-as-text: viewed as a text the horoi is nothing but an artifact (a word in lieu of a stele); viewed as an artifact it is nothing but a text (the bedrock is unaltered except for the inscribed letters).

The physical presence of these simple inscriptions on the bare rock of Attica brings us face to face with the horoi's basic function: those who chiseled the letters into the bedrock clearly intended to establish a distinction or set of distinctions. Before the letters were cut, the rock face was a simple, brute fact of nature. With the removal of a few chips of stone, that selfsame fact of nature was redefined in overtly cultural, social terms. The rupestral inscription is, by definition, in situ; indeed its precise situation and immovability seem intrinsically bound up in its meaning. Unlike Athena's stone, the rupestral horos (which exists as an inscribed absence of material, rather than a material presence) cannot be picked up or pushed aside. Unless it is chiseled away or covered up (by human agency or a natural accumulation of debris) it both keeps its place and maintains its claim to establish distinction in this particular place. When several horoi form a line, we can say with certainty that the social meaning once imposed upon the ground lying on one side of the line was non-identical to that imposed upon the ground on the other side: As long as there are humans able to construe the four inscribed signs as letters spelling out a word for 'border-marker,' the rock-cut horoi will continue to proclaim, 'Over here, "this"; over there, "that"'.
But, perhaps to an even greater extent than in the cases of horoi attested in literary sources, the rupestral horos remains silent in regard to both the nature of the significance it marked and the agency which authorized the establishment of a distinction. In the absence of an explanatory context, we can say nothing with certainty about a isolated single-word rock-cut horos beyond the claim that a distinction was once established at the point of its situation. Nor does the existence of a line of horoi get us much further, except insofar as we can now plot the distinction spatially. Chronological context turns out to be very hard to come by: Dating rupestral horos can be a hazardous enterprise; close dating is usually impossible. Exposed bedrock has no stratigraphy; surface sherds (when they happen to be found) cannot be securely associated with the date of the inscription’s cutting. We lack a dated typological sequence for rock-cut letter forms; and the relationship between the relatively huge, roughly-cut letters of the rupestral horos and the careful work of professional stone-cutters on non-rupestral inscriptions remains somewhat tenuous.49

Yet there is one notable point about Athenian rupestral horoi that has been taken by some scholars as pointing to a context: their occurrence is quite widespread within Attica. Several series of one-word horoi, all of which resemble one another in that they employ lunate (rather than three- or four-bar) sigmas, have been found on hills in southern Attica: on Mt Lykabettos, on Alepovouni in the southwestern foothills of Mt Hymettos, on Kaminia in southeastern Attica near Vari, on Megalo Baphi near Legrena, and on a ridge east of Mt Merenda.50 It is cer-


50 These are tabulated and discussed in Traill (1986) 116–22. Traill #4 =

tainly possible to argue (if not to prove) that these various inscription series were cut at about the same time. Assuming that to be the case, one may be willing to take the next (rather large) step and suppose that the inscriptions were cut at the direction of a single authorizing agency. And finally, given their scattered proveniences and the rather large areas they seem to define, one who has swallowed the two previous premises might further speculate that the authority in question was the central government of the polis. And it would then seem reasonable to ask what the Athenian government’s purpose might have been in establishing boundaries at various places around Attica. This chain of reasoning brings us back (albeit in a rather roundabout way) to the question posed above, regarding the impact of fixed borders upon the internal subdivision of Attica. If the chain is sound and if the inscriptions could be dated to the century after the Peloponesian War, then we might be in a position to make some interesting suggestions about fourth-century Athenian attitudes towards borders generally. But if any one of the chain’s links is very weak, we will have to admit that the rupestral horoi will not help us solve this historical problem.

A number of scholars have in fact asserted that one or more of several south Attic rupestral horoi series (including the various lunate-sigma series noted above) were cut in the fourth-century B.C. at the behest of the Athenian state, in order to regularize or reorganize the borders between Attic demes.51 This is an extremely seductive notion in that it transforms the simple horos into highly significant evidence for an important political program. It means that historians can employ spatially fixed


51 Traill (1982); Lauter (1982); Stanton (1984); Whitehead (1986), 29 n. 110 (doubting that the Panagia Thiti and Alepovouni series were deme-markers, but accepting the Megalo Baphi series); Langdon (1988b); Lohmann (1992) 33.
archaeological evidence to define the precise borders of demes and hence estimate the size, resources, even populations of individual demes. The demo-marker hypothesis turns these otherwise maddeningly laconic markers into evidence that might be applied to a variety of historical puzzles, from Kleisthenes' original plans to (per above) the impact of state border stabilization on the political organization of the polis. On the whole, it would be very good news for historians of classical Athens if the demo-boundary explanation for the rupestral horoi were correct.

Is it correct? In 1981, before most of the horoi-series from other parts of Attica had been reported, I published a series of four rupestral horoi from Alepovouni on the slopes of Mt. Hymettos. I suggested that the Alepovouni horoi, which describe a corner (three inscriptions in line with a fourth at a right angle to the third) were best explained as marking the corner of a Roman bee-farm. That explanation was challenged in separate studies by H. Lauter (1982, 315) and G.R. Stanton (1984, 301–303); the latter argued that the letter forms were less diagnostic than I had supposed and might be much earlier. Lauter and Stanton advanced the classical demo-marker explanation for the four Alepovouni horoi and for a horoi on Kaminia. J.S. Traill (1982) meanwhile suggested that a series of horoi (reading OP/TPM, rather than OPQ) on the Panagia Tithi ridge south of Hymettos were late fourth-century deme-markers. Shortly thereafter, H. Lohmann (1983) adopted the classical demo-marker explanation for the recently discovered Megalo Baphi series. M. Langdon (1985a) in turn rejected the Lauter/Stanton demo boundary hypothesis for the Alepovouni horoi, partly on the grounds that demo boundaries should follow the natural contours of the ground and should not therefore make right-angle turns. Langdon, following an earlier suggestion of G. Culley, proposed associating the Alepovouni horoi with a Roman-era inscription which mentioned 'public highlands' (or démosia) in the Hymettos region and concluded that 'the temptation to link this information to the horoi on [Alepovouni] is practically irresistible.' By 1986 Traill (1986: 79–77) was ready to assert that 'the demes were served by rupestral horoi' and felt it no longer necessary even to argue the case that most of the known rupestral horoi of Attica (and several non-rupestral examples) marked demo boundaries. Langdon (1988), who found a second horos on Kaminia, was subsequently persuaded by Traill to adopt the fourth-century demo-marker explanation for the two Kaminia horoi. Yet accepting the explanation Langdon found 'practically irresistible' for the Alepovouni series and his preferred explanation for the Kaminia inscriptions entails separating the Kaminia series from the Alepovouni series in date and function, and so the argument from similarity of appearance must be discarded. On the other hand, Traill's interpretation of the Panagia series, with its different text, raises the possibility that variant types of horoi could have the same (demo-marker) significance. And thus we are left with the possibility that similar texts may have different meanings; and dissimilar texts identical meanings.

My bee-farm hypothesis was, I admit, simply a speculation, based on the ancient reputation of Hymettos as a honey-producing region, the existing vegetation (especially thyme) in the area around the horoi themselves, and what I took to be their date. The demo-marker explanation is predicated in part on the existence of horoi-series in different geographical locations around Attica. Does the multiplicity of superficially similar inscriptions move the latter explanation out of the realm of speculative hypothesis? Regrettably, it does not. First, it is not possible to prove that a single agency was responsible for all of the horoi imitation (e.g. by private individuals or by local officials) would explain the physical evidence just as well as unitary authorship. Next, there is no necessary reason to suppose that all of the lunate-sigma rupestral horoi were cut at or even about the same time. If we do not assume unitary state
authorship a priori, a standard diffusionary model would lead us to expect that formally similar rupestral *horoi* would appear considerably later at locales distant from the point of invention and first use.\(^{56}\) Third, the form of even the several series of single-word lunate-sigma inscriptions is far from standardized: the notable differences in size and lettering style seem to preclude the possibility that a single lettering crew was at work.\(^{57}\)

In sum, any given *horos* series certainly might have defined a deme boundary at some point in its history, but equally possibly, it might not have. There exists, at the moment, no means of falsifying counterhypotheses (e.g. that the inscriptions are the traces of a fad for permanently marking the boundaries of private holdings or sacred precincts that began in the immediate environs of the city and eventually spread to the south and east), and no way of refining the chronology.\(^{58}\) Nor can the Gordian knot be cut by assuming that all Attic rupestral *horoi*, regardless of form or text, are classical deme-markers; there are simply too many *horoi* that must be left out of any single, comprehensive explanation of their meaning.\(^{59}\) Since some rupestral *horoi* clearly are not deme-markers, the argument becomes completely subjective: *horoi* are deme-markers when they show up in places where one supposes deme-markers should show up; other explanations (or no explanation) can be adduced when they show up where one does not want deme-markers showing up. The level of subjectivity would be considerably lessened if there were independent textual authority pointing clearly to where we should look for deme-borders, but no such evidence has as yet been brought forward.\(^{60}\)

The argument for accepting the several series of *horoi* discussed above as classical deme-markers (or as markers of a Roman bee preserve) requires reading certain very specific sorts of signification onto ambiguous marks, while denying the possibility (or at least the likelihood) of all other possible significations. In the case of the deme-marker hypothesis, the driving force behind the exclusionary reading is the intense longing of historians and archaeologists alike to be able to delimit specific demes at specific times in history. Yet in the end, the argument rests precariously on the linked a priori assumptions that if a deme was a distinct geographical entity with secure borders, then its borders should be defined by

---

\(^{55}\) *Græcae* V,1 1371 a-c. This series might also be taken as proof that different texts could carry identical meanings; although other readings of the texts and their meanings are of course possible.

\(^{56}\) Spatial diffusion and chronological seriation. J. Deetz and E. Dethlefsen (1965) *The Doppler Effect and Archaeology: A Consideration of the Spatial Aspects of Seriation*, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 21 (1965) 196–206. Note that the distances involved need not be great. Deetz and Dethlefsen's test case of gravestone motif preference showed considerable artifact seriation among several towns located in Eastern Massachusetts in the period 1700–1829; the greatest distance involved was about 35 km (straight line: Lexington to Groton). Coincidentally, the Alepovouni *horoi* (nearest the city) are about 35 km (straight line) from those at Megalo Baphi (furthest from the city).

\(^{57}\) Letter heights and inscription length (in meters): Megalo Baphi #2: 0.14–0.20 (h) x 1.01 (l), #5 0.15–0.19 (h) x 0.84 (l); Kaminia #2: 0.08–0.12 (h) x 0.42 (l); Alepovouni #1: 0.26–0.32 (h) x 1.10 (l), #2: 0.12–0.17 (h) x 0.60 (l); Lykabettos #1: 0.065–0.13 (h); E of Merenda: #1:2: 0.12–0.14 (h). Style: Megalo Baphi: stem of rho seems to extend above loop but extends below the line. Alepovouni: large omicrons, rho with very small loop, stem of rho strictly aligned with other letter bottoms. Lykabetatos: very large, loopo rho, stem aligned with letter bottoms; Merenda: Large omicrons, rhos with fairly small loops, stems extend below the line.

\(^{58}\) The distribution pattern of known rupestral *horoi* (map: Traill (1986) 121, from Alepovouni to Megalo Baphi, could be accommodated by the simplest sort of diffusion model (assuming the city of Athens as the point of origination). The argument of Lohmann (1992) 33, that since the Megalo Baphi inscriptions extend across the heads of two valleys, they may be deme markers, is far from definitive, since there is no way to preclude a very large temenos or private holding. Sacred precincs defined by *horoi*...
prominent ridges separating agricultural valleys, and so if horoi are found on an appropriate ridge, then they must be polis-established boundary markers. Lacking secure textual evidence for demes as geographical entities or for the nature of their boundaries, the deme-marker hypothesis remains in the category of speculation. The iterability of the marks in question and the potential for the imposition of new meanings on existing marks still defeats the hope of securely fixing their significance. Although the rupestral horoi are fixed in their location, and so cannot be grabbed up by a god looking for a weapon or pulled up by order of a political reformer, in the long run their meanings were no more securely fixed than those of Athena’s stone, the pre-Solonian horoi, or the horoi of the patris.

The ancient rupestral horoi are still too spare; there is as yet no way to provide them with a context secure enough to control the range of meanings they might once have proclaimed. Historians and archaeologists must not allow either the desirability of the most interesting explanation of archaeological evidence (which is certainly the deme-marker hypothesis) or bare assertions by scholars (however distinguished) to stand for proof of a hypothesis’ correctness. This rather depressing negative conclusion points to what seems to me an important (although also negative) archaeological point: a text that is nothing other than an artifact, an artifact that is nothing other than a text has remarkably little to say. Artifacts and texts alike gain meaning through their situation in a broader social and ritual context—when deprived of their context, they are also deprived of their power to impart meaning. The horos was intended by those who inscribed it as a speech act: an imperative to the members of society, ordering them to act in conformity with the distinction proclaimed by the marker. But outside its social milieu, that speech act is infelicitous. Shorn of context, the text-as-artifact/artifact-as-text can refer to nothing outside of its proclamation of self-presence and difference.

---


62 This does not mean that one should not propose speculative hypotheses; indeed speculation is a necessary and salutary part of the interpretive process. We must not have working hypotheses, so that when further evidence is discovered (and I do not suppose that all the visible rupestral horoi of Attica have yet been found or published) those hypotheses can be strengthened or tossed aside. My point is that we should recognize these hypotheses for what they are. We must not suspend critical judgment in the face of an argument from authority (and a fortiori from anonymous authority). And we must guard against drifting into accepting a hypothesis as a ‘foundational fact,’ or discarding alternative hypotheses, simply because we want it to be true.
HISTORICAL TEXT AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN ROMAN NORTH AFRICA: THE ALBERTINI TABLETS AND THE KASSERINE SURVEY

R. BRUCE HITCHNER

INTRODUCTION

Justifiable emphasis has been placed in recent years on the importance of context in the interpretation of archaeological data. Context is defined by Hodder as 'the totality of the relevant environment where 'relevant' refers to a significant relationship to the object—that is, a relationship necessary for discerning the object's meaning'. Context can also depend, again following Hodder, on the nature of the questions posed. Context is likewise critical to the understanding of and questions put to the meaning of past events or actions recorded in texts. In ancient history, where the textual record of historical events consistently falls short of capturing 'the totality of the relevant environment,' archaeology has often been called upon to fill the contextual lacuna. There are, of course, difficulties in this approach having to do with determining the veracity of the historical event under scrutiny and the appropriateness of the archaeological evidence brought to bear. The benefit, however, is that when these obstacles are overcome, a signal advance in the understanding of the event itself and of its relationship to larger and longer term patterns is frequently achieved.

The employment of archaeological knowledge as a meaningful structure within which historically documented events can be located and interpreted has particular merit for the

---

2 Hodder (1991) 143.
SUPPLEMENTS TO MNEMOSYNE


Prospectus available on request

E. J. BRILL — P.O.B. 9000 — 2300 PA LEIDEN — THE NETHERLANDS