Orality, Liturgy, and Imperial Authority in Inscribed Texts from Late Antiquity: The Layered Meaning in Two Inscriptions from the Corinthia

The last 30 years of research in ancient epigraphy have opened new perspectives on the interpretation of inscribed texts in Late Antique society. In general, this work has emphasized the public, oral context of reading and writing inscriptions and shown how inscribed texts as oral monuments contributed to the experience of place, memory, and ritual within the Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean.[1] In the interpretation offered by scholars such as Svenboro, Thomas, Day, and Papalexandrou reading inscribed texts cued ancient voices to enliven the seemingly silent stones of cemeteries, religious monuments, and civic spaces. This emphasis on the physical, ritual, and social context of inscriptions has enriched our understanding of the ancient practices of reading and writing. Moreover, interpretations that take into account the broader oral context of texts also provide considerable insight into issues of traditional concern for scholars of the ancient world. The following article will consider the dynamic relationship between public texts and orality as the basis for the intertextual analysis of two short inscribed texts of Late Antique date from the Corinthia, Greece.

In doing this I will advance two arguments: one broadly methodological and one narrowly historical. From a methodological perspective, I seek to argue that the productive tension between oral and written forms of expression, particularly in inscribed texts, can inform our reading of the cultural and political life of the Late Antique world. This article will emphasizes the importance of inscribed texts for understanding the relationship between the public life of the provinces and policies associated with the name of the emperor. By realizing the significance of inscriptions as documents which draw meaning from the spoken word and public performance, we can observe the process whereby notions of the imperial and ecclesiastical authority centered on the capital became manifest in the wider provincial world. From a more narrow historical perspective, this approach is particularly significant in the context of southern Greece. Corinth and its hinterland fell within the province of Achaia, part of the prefecture of Illyricum Orientalis, which came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the western papacy and the political hegemony of the Eastern capital.[2] The place of Corinth and the province of Achaia in general, in the theological controversies of the day has rarely been considered by historians or epigraphers. By examining the broader cultural context of inscribed texts we are able to gain insights into some aspects of the social, political, and theological life of a region often marginalized in the contemporary scholarly debate. Moreover, Southern Greece offers an informative case study for understanding how Justinian sought to balance western ecclesiastical authority and his own centralized view of imperial power.

To advance these arguments this article will utilize an interpretative paradigm loosely based M. Bakhtin's idea of *heteroglossia*, which he advanced in the context of the novel.[3] He

---

[1] J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthopology of Reading in Ancient Greece.* Trans. J. Lloyd. (Ithaca 1988); R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992); J. Day, "Interactive Offerings: Early Greek Dedicatory Epigrams and Ritual," *HSCP* 96 (1994) 37-74; --, "Toward a Pragmatics of Archaic and Paleochristian Greek Inscriptions," in *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter*, ed. S.J. D. Kries and C. Brown Tkacz (New York 1999) 243-258; A. Papaxandrou, "Text in context: eloquent monuments and the Byzantine Beholder," *Word and Image* 17 (2001) 259-283.
[2] A. Avraméa, *Le Péloponnèse du IVe au VIIIe siècle: changements et persistances* (Paris 1997), 37-38; C. Pietri, "La géographie de l'Illyricum ecclésiastique et ses relations avec l'Église de Rome (Ve-VIe siècles)" in *Villes et peupklement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin, Actes du Colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome.* (Rome 1984), 21-59.
[3] M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist and transl. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. (Austin 1981), 301-331.

argued that the novel integrated numerous speech types into a hybrid construction in which each component contributed meaning based upon its context both outside the text and within the novelistic narrative. Inscribed texts, I will argue, likewise draw on multiple oral genre's to produce meaning. By emphasizing the oral nature of these inscribed texts as the basis for a heteroglot, intertextual analysis, I will represent these inscriptions as drawing upon oral, performative, and ritual contexts. Scholars interested in issues of performance and orality, in particular R. Bauman, have provided valuable tools for unpacking the meaning of texts through an emphasis upon those culturally specific verbal cues which serve to alert the audience to shifts in context or even genre.[4] These cues indicate to a reader how a particular passage should be understood.

This approach marks a modest expansion of recent studies of inscriptions which closely associate issues of orality in these texts with debates over whether these texts were actually vocalized by a reader.[5] There is, of course, substantial evidence to suggest that inscribed texts, if not all texts, were read aloud,[6] and from a practical perspective, the public reading of texts made inscriptions accessible to the illiterate who must have accounted for a substantial part of the ancient population.[7] More importantly, however, by vocalizing an inscription the reader supposedly transposed the text from the "static" world of the stone into the realm of spoken performance.[8] The oral world of the text is where performance and ritual combine to open a narrow window on the broader cultural life of a society bound between traditions of orality and literacy.[9] By recognizing the importance of orality in the ancient world we must both understand inscribed texts as written words as well as the manifestations of a spoken or vocalized expression.[10] For the following analysis, therefore, the question of whether certain public inscriptions were meant to be spoken and performed is less significant than determining how these inscribed texts drew upon traditionally oral genres to produce meaning. By focusing on the interaction between ancient orality and inscribed text, this approach explores the way in which oral rituals, both great, like the liturgy, and small, like spontaneous oral prayer, informed meaning when manifest in texts.

My analysis of epigraphic texts from Late Antiquity isolates three different external narratives which produced social, ritual, and political meaning. One, these texts used language and structures derived from public rituals such as oral acclamation to commemorate specific real or imagined acts. This article will show that these inscriptions had close parallels with inscribed texts broadly recognized as "oral" as well as urban rituals with significant oral components. Two, these texts joined aspects of oral ritual and expression to a particularly potent, if contested source of authority, namely the language and communal experience of the Christian liturgy. This combination served to project Christian ritual authority into the nominally secular realm of imperial authority. Finally, these texts drew upon language relevant to the 5th and 6th century Christological controversies in the service of Justinianic strategies for the expansion of political authority. Thus, these written texts

---

[4] R. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, Ill 1977); J.M. Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana 2002) 82-94.

[5] Day, "Toward a Pragmatics," 245-248; Papalexandrou, "Text in Context," 261-264.

[6] For reading aloud see: B.M.W. Knox, "Silent Reading in Antiquity," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 421-435; R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992) 91. For a nuanced dissenting view see: A. K. Gavrilov, "Techniques of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *CQ* n.s. 47 (1997) 56-73.

[7] W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA 1989) 285-322.

[8] R. Thomas, "Performance Literature and the Written Word: Lost in Transcription?" *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005) 1-6 notes this tendency. For epigraphy, in particular, see A. Papalexandrou, "Text in context," 249-260: The idea that an inscribed text as a text was somehow more static, distilled, or even "pure" if it is studied apart from its physical, architectural, or performative environment is unsustainable. Texts always exist in context.

[9] For the basic problematic see: W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*: *The Technologizing of the Word* (London 1982).

[10] For a good use of this technique see: E. Watts, "Orality and Communal Identity in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers*," *Byzantion* (forthcoming).

demonstrate how inscribed texts combined allusions and evocations of public ritual and religious authority in the service of the imperial image.

The following study will present these three contexts separately as a heuristic concession to modern scholarly categories. In the experience of a Late Antique reader or writer, these contextualizing "narratives" would have functioned in highly dependent and simultaneous ways. Such intertextual readings produced the subtle and layered meanings of inscribed texts that served to infuse public space of the fractured and fractious world of Late Antique Christianity with political, ritual, and theological significance. These texts, then, played a central role in presenting an integrated Christian cosmology which would come to characterize the social and political organization of the Byzantine period.

The Texts

The two texts which will form the center of this paper derive from the environs of Corinth. The city of Corinth remained one of the most significant settlements of the Greek peninsula throughout the Late Roman period. As both excavation and survey have shown that 5th-6th century Corinth participated in a vigorous Late Roman economy, erected several monumental basilicas complete with Proconnesian marble furnishings, and received impressive fortifications.[11] These displays were fitting for a city of Corinth's status as the seat of the governor of Achaia and with a bishop with metropolitan status in Illyricum Orientalis. Moreover, it reinforced the city's important place within in the region and its ties to sources of authority in the imperial capital.

Text 1

Text one was found in the late 19th century in the vicinity of the monumental South Gate of the fortress at Isthmia situated on the eastern extent of the Hexamilion wall The Hexamilion wall stretched for some 7.5 km across the isthmus of Corinth, and it is likely that the South Gate provided one of the main routes through the fortification. While the inscription was found in fill, it may have remained *in situ* as late as the mid 15th century. In fact, a Byzantine *Short Chronicle* from the 15th or 16th century preserved a credible edition of this text.[12] Although it is impossible to know if the text recorded in the *Short Chronicle* stood in its original location or where later reconstructions placed it, it seems likely that this text occupied a highly visible place on the fortified South Gate of the Hexamilion fortress.[13] The text would have been highly visible to travelers approaching the fortress from the Peloponnesus and mark a significant landmark on the road north from the Peloponnesus.

> +Φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸς
> ἀληθινὸς ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,
> φυλάξῃ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα
> Ἰουστινιανὸν καὶ τὸν
> πιστὸν αὐτοῦ δοῦλον
> Βικτορῖνον ἅμα τοῖς
> οἰκούσειν ἐν Ἑλάδι τοὺς κ(α)τ(ὰ) Θεῶν
> ζῶντας. +

---

[11] D. Pallas, s.v. "Korinth" in *Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst* 4. (Stuttgart 1990); A. Avraméa, *Le Péloponnèse du IVe au VIIIe siècle: changements et persistances* (Paris 1997) 164 for a useful summary of the archaeological, textual, and literary sources.

[12] T.E. Gregory, *Isthmia V: The Hexamilion and the Fortress*. (Princeton 1993) 15-16 no. 8; P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken. Volume 1* (Vienna 1975) 286.

[13] T.E. Gregory, *Isthmia V: The Hexamilion and the Fortress*. (Princeton 1993) 12-13 no 4. with full bibliography and discussion of this text; Procop. *Aed*, 4.27-28.

"Light of Light, True God of True God, guard the emperor Justinian and his faithful servant Viktorinos along with those who dwell in Greece according to God." [14]

Text 2

Another inscription from the Corinthia whose similarities in spelling, orthography, and language suggests an identical date to our text 1, invokes the protection of the Virgin.[15] This text was brought to Venice by Sigismond Alberghetti and later moved to Verona where it is now located. T. Gregory has suggested that it most likely stood on the city walls of Corinth which Justinian seem to have repaired at the same time as his repair of the Hexamlion.[16] The link between this text and the city walls largely rests upon on the textual and archaeological evidence that Justinian rebuilt the cities fortifications. Recent analysis by G.D. R. Sanders and K. Slane has reinforced a Justinianic date for the Late Roman fortifications.[17] Unfortunately it is impossible to reconstruct an exact placement of this inscription or to even be sure if it came from the wall at Corinth as opposed to the Hexamilion or even elsewhere. Nevertheless, its close parallel with the Isthmia text makes it essential to include here.

+ Ἀγ(ία) Μαρία Θεοτόκε, φύλαξον
τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ
φιλοχρίστου Ἰουστινιανοῦ
καὶ τὸν γνησίως
δουλεύοντα αὐτῷ
Βικτωρῖνον σὺν τοῖς
οἰκοῦσιν ἐν Κορίνθῳ κ(ατὰ) Θεὼν
ζῶντας. +

"Holy Mary, Theotokos, safeguard the empire of the Christ-loving Justinian and his faithful servant Viktorinos, along with those who dwell in Corinth living according to God."

These two texts are fundamentally similar in format, style, and content. Alan Cameron referred to them as examples of "unadorned and unimpeachably Christian prose."[18] Each text begins with a brief invocation: to God in creedal language as in text 1 and to the Virgin in text 2. The texts ask the divine to protect, in order, the emperor Justinian, Viktorinos, and then those living in Corinth or in Greece. In doing so, they use the same word φυλάσσω albeit in the subjunctive (or possibly indicative) and imperative respectively. The last phrase in both texts also displays some irregular grammar with a dative participle (τοῖς οἰκούσειν/οἰκοῦσιν) and an accusative participle (ζῶντας) arranged in a parallel construction. These similarities make it safe to assume that these texts are contemporary.

While the structure, language, and style of these inscriptions are consistent with texts throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkan peninsula, texts specifically mentioning

[14] T.E. Gregory, *Isthmia V: The Hexamilion and the Fortress* (Princeton 1993) 12-13, no. 4.

[15] T.E. Gregory, *Isthmia V: The Hexamilion and the Fortress* (Princeton 1993) 14 no. 5 with bibliography.

[16] T. E. Gregory, "Late Roman Wall at Corinth," *Hesperia* 48 (1979) 272-273; T. E. Gregory, "Procopius on Greece," *Ant Tard* 8 (2000) 113. Procop. *Aed.*, 4.2.27.

[17] G. D. R. Sanders and K. Slane, "Corinth: Late Roman Horizons," *Hesperia* 74 (2005) 292-293.

[18] Al. Cameron, "Greek Tragedy in Sixth-Century Epirus," *CR* 17 (1967) 134.

the name of Justinian are virtually absent from the eastern Balkans south of Macedonia.[19] We know, however, from Procopius' catalogue in Book 4 of the *De Aedificiis* that Justinian engaged in rather extensive building activity in Greece including the refortification of the Isthmus and the city of Corinth. Thus, it seems likely that we can associate these texts with specific policies of the emperor recorded elsewhere. Moreover, the references to the (re)fortification of the Corinthia combined with absence of any mention of Justinian's wife Theodora, allow us to date these texts to between Theodora's death in 548 and the publication of the Buildings between 554 and 560.[20] Recent archaeological evidence has tended to confirm this with several of the major Early Christian basilicas in the Corinthia being re-dated to the middle years of the 6th century.[21] Perhaps we can associate these activities with the repairs to the fortification of Greece after the earthquake of 551. The Viktorinos of our texts seems to have been responsible for the construction of fortifications in Illyricum Orientalis, and evidently elsewhere, during Justinian reign and appears in a number of inscriptions from the Balkans. It seems likely that held some significant office, and perhaps he was the praetorian prefect of Illyricum Orientalis, a position often associated with the construction of fortifications in the epigraphic record.[22] As throughout antiquity fortifying cities occupied a major responsibility for both local and imperial authorities and taking credit for building projects of all kinds was common way to garner prestige.

Performance and Commemoration

The following section will examine how these two Corinthian texts appealed to orality and the language and structure of public ritual to communicate and produce political authority and social order. These functions are common to inscriptions in antiquity and in the Justinianic period in particular.[23] Texts regularly utilized oral grammatical forms and syntax in conjunction with forms adopted from public, vocalized rituals such as acclamations. Appeals to public rituals in an inscribed context added an expanded significance to the inscribed text in its local environment. In particular, rituals, or more broadly recognizable performances, evoked in inscribed texts (and perhaps reenacted by the reader) served to commemorate past events and contributed to the construction of a form of collective "social memory."[24] Reading our two Corinthian inscriptions as designed, in part, to invoke modes of oral communication common to inscribed texts and, more specifically, to recall or reproduce

---

[19] Aside from the two included here, there is one additional text from the Corinthia that mentioned Justinian by name: D. Feissel and A. Philippidis-Braat, "Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historique de Byzance. III. Incriptions du Péloponnèse," *T&MByz* 9 (1985) no. 15. It appears in the dating formula of a epitaph; E. Sironen, *The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions of Athens and Attica* (Helsinki 1997), lists no inscriptions that name Justinian. Nor does: G. Kiourtzian, *Recueil des inscriptions Grecque chrétienne de Cyclades* (Paris 2000); D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétienne de Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle. BCH-Suppl.* 8 (Paris 1983) no. 81 and one possible reference in a dating formula from a heavily restored epitaph no. 133.

[20] Gregory, "Procopius on Greece," 113; Cameron, *Procopius*, 3-18; J. A. S. Evans, "The Dates of the *Anecdota* and the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius," *Classical Philology* 64 (1969) 29-30.

[21] Sanders and Slane, "Corinth: Late Roman Horizons," 291-292.

[22] The identity of Viktorinos is unknown, although I would tend to accept Gregory, *Isthmia V*, 13 and E. Groag, *Die Reichsbeamten von Achaea in spätrömischer Zeit* (Budapest 1949) 80, contra Feissel, "L'architecte Viktôrinos", 139-141.

[23] A. Papalexandrou, "Text in Context," 261-263; Day, "Toward a Pragmatics", 243-244; see especially R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality*, 84-93.

[24] The relationship between rituals and performance is a standard debate in the study of both fields. For a useful summary see: C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford 1992) 37-46. Seminal in this debate is S. Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65 (1979) 113-169. On the role of commemorative events in the construction of social memory see: P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge 1989) 41-71.

meaningful public events provides a convenient lens for understanding how an imperial presence embedded itself in the provincial landscape.

Both texts preserve important indicators of the interpenetration of oral and written texts in the ancient world. Text 2, for example, begins with a vocative invocation of Holy Mary, the Theotokos. Both Corinthian texts further invoke the oral idiom through the use exhortative verb forms, in text 1 uses subjunctive (φυλάξῃ) and text 2 the imperative φύλαξον, which are common to texts from throughout the Greek world and persists into the Justinianic era. Preserving the grammar and syntax of the spoken word substantiates the close ties in the mind of ancient people between acts of reading, hearing, writing, and speaking. The potency and immediacy of this language functioned to structure the relationship between the reader or listener, divine audience, and imperial authority.[25] A typical example of an orally inspired inscription from our period with strong roots in ancient oral idioms derived from the fortifications of the town of Byllis (ancient Apollonia) in Epirus Nova. This text almost certainly refers to the same Viktorinos mentioned in Text 1 and 2 above and is therefore Justinianic in date:[26]

Ὦ ξένε μὴ παρίδῃς τῆς Βυλλίδ(ος) τὴν χάριν
ἧς ποτε τίχαι πεπτωκότα ἀνέγειρεν
ὁ θρασὺς Βικτωρῖνος.

Stranger, do not overlook the grace of Byllis: its ramparts, formerly broken down, bold Viktorinos constructed.

Texts which call out to the passer-by are not rare in the ancient world. Moreover the vocative and imperative structure has clear similarities with the structure to our Corinthian texts.[27] While the inscription from Byllis uses the vocative and imperative to exhort the reader to admire the works of Viktorinos, our Corinthian texts use oral grammar to call out to the divine. All three texts provide cues embedded in the text itself which allow us to see how an inscription could use the voice of the reader to communicate its message.[28] This technique functioned to establish a relationship between the monument and the individual reader. In the case of the Byllis text, the inscription called out to the reader as an outsider, a "stranger" presumably unfamiliar with the text and its local significance. Upon reading the Byllis inscription the reader would be compelled to look at (or at least not overlook) the renovated fortifications and to realize their previously dilapidated condition. In this way, the reader, the text, and the ramparts themselves conspired to commemorate the history of the place and the agency of 'the bold Viktorinos'. Thus, the text drew upon a relatively simple oral syntax to establish relationships between the reader, the text, and the wall. The text itself functioned to place the reader in time, in space, and in social relations: a "stranger" to his or her present environment.

Familiar grammar and syntax, however, are not the only way to evoke the oral or performative context for an inscribed text. Certain elements of our Corinthian texts appear to draw upon language derived from a characteristically oral genre, the acclamation. C.

---

[25] Svenbro, *Phrasikleia*, 44-63.
[26] D. Feissel, "L'architecte Viktôrinos et les fortifications de Justinien dans les provinces balkaniques," *BSNAF* (1988) 138. See also : W. Bowden, *Epirus Vetus : the Archaeology of a Late Antique Province*. (London 2003) 178-180.
[27] R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana 1962) 230-232.
[28] Svenbro, *Phrasikleia*, 46-47 proposes a radical assessment of the act of appropriating the reader's voice considering it to be an act of violence in which the written text literally forces the reader to accept and promulgate the message of the words.

Roueché provided the most thorough analysis of Late Antique acclamatory texts.[29] She demonstrated how certain inscriptions, common in dedicatory and commemorative contexts, evoked the kind of oral acclamations that would often erupt at the circus, during public meetings, at times of great political tension such as the Ecumenical Councils of the fifth and sixth century, or during visits of dignitaries. These metrical or rhythmic chants regularly included an initial statement of faith, a list of dignitaries in descending order of rank, and a kind of "acclamatory request" directed either to the individuals present or a prayer directed toward the divine.[30] The hierarchical nature of acclamatory texts proceeding from the initial invocation suggests parallels with Late Roman urban rituals, particular Late Roman processions such as *adventus*, the liturgical or triumphal processions when the appropriate dignitaries would follow a cross, relic, or icon just as dignitaries followed statements of faith in acclamatory inscriptions.[31] The inscribing of these acclamations suggests that such texts could reproduce and commemorate urban rituals maintaining a prominent oral component.[32]

The structure and language of the Corinthian texts find close parallels with a series of acclamatory texts described by C. Roueché.[33] From Ephesus, a series of these texts lining the Marble Street call upon God to help (βοήθη) the emperor Phokas and for the Theotokos to help the city. While these texts, like our inscriptions from the Corinthia and from Byllis, follow traditional vocative and imperative forms, inscribed acclamations elsewhere have slightly more complex structures. For example, the set of inscribed acclamations from Aphrodisias which form the core of Roueché's study begin with statements of belief and include the names of the acclaimed officials arranged in hierarchical order. The structure and language of the Corinthian inscriptions have parallels with the hierarchical structure of these acclamations which combines with the oral language to suggest a fundamentally oral character to these public inscriptions.

It is clear, in fact, that the structure of acclamations, in particular their initial statement of belief and hierarchical arrangement of officials, find parallels in dedicatory inscriptions throughout Late Antique epigraphy.[34] An example of a Justinianic text sharing structural similarities with acclamations appeared on the Agora Gate of Miletos commemorating its rededication 538/9:[35]

+ Ἅγιος [ὁ θ]εὸς
ἅγιος ἰσχυρὸς
ἅγιος ἀθ[ά]νατος
ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.

---

[29] C. Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire," *JRS* 74 (1984) 181-199; Papalexandrou, "Text in Context", 278-280.

[30] C. Roueché, "Acclamations," 183.

[31] Day, "Toward a Pragmatics" 249-250, observes as much in his reading of this text, but I propose a slightly broader interpretation. For ritual see: S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1981); see: M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Medieval West* (Paris 1987); Baldovin, J., *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. OCA* 228 (Rome 1987) for discussions of urban processions. In art see: T. Mathews, *Clash of Gods*. rev. ed. (Princeton 2003) 142-176.

[32] P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 41-71, provides the best brief summary of how ceremonies, like reenacting a public acclamation preserved in an inscribed text, serve to ensure continuity between present acts and past events.

[33] C. Roueché, "Looking for Late Antique Ceremonial: Ephesos and Aphrodisias," in H. Friesinger and F. Krinzinger (eds.)*100 Jahre Osterreichische Forschungen in Ephesos Akten des Symposions Wein 1995.* (Vienna 1999), 161-185

[34] E. Petterson, *Heis Theos* (Göttigen 1926) provides numerous examples of these inscriptions.

[35] H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie Miuneure* (Paris 1922) no. 219 ; D.F. McCabe and M.A. Plunkett, *Miletos Inscriptions* (Princton 1984) no. 627 ; C. Foss, "Archaeology and the Twenty Cities of Byzantine Asia," *AJA* 81 (1977) 477-478; G. Kleiner, *Die Ruinen von Milet* (Berlin 1968) 61-63.

+ Ἐγένετο ἡ πόρτα βασιλίας τῶν εὐσεβ(εστάτων) ἡμῶν δεσποτῶν
Φλ. Φλ. Ἰοστινιανοῦ καὶ Θεοδώρας τῶν φιλοχρίστων
ἔτους ιβ′, καὶ ὑπατίας Φλ. Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐνδοξ(οτάτου) ὑπάρχ(ου) τῶν
ἱερῶν πρετορ(ίων) τὸ β′, κ(αὶ) πατρικ(ίου) κ(αὶ) ἄρχοντος Νόννου τοῦ
μεγαλοπρεπ(εστάτου) κόμη(τος)
κ(αὶ) ὑπατ[(ικοῦ)] τὸ γ′, ἐπισκοποῦντος Ὑακίνθου τοῦ ἁγιωτ(άτου) ἡμῶν
ἀρχιεποσκό(που) κ(αὶ) πατερεύοντος
Ἰωάννου τοῦ λαμπρ(οτάτου) κόμ(ητος) ἰνδ(ικτιόνος) α′ ε[ὐτυ]χ(εστάτης) +

> Holy God,
> Holy Strong,
> Holy Immortal,
> Have mercy on us

This is the gate of the twelfth year of the rule of the blessed and Christ-loving the Justinian and Theodora, and of the consular Fl. Ioannos the honorable prefect of the holy praetorium for the second year, and in the third year of father and archon Nonnus, the most worthy and consular, and of the most holy archbishop Hakynthos, and of the father Ioannes, the most illustrious. In the most fortunate first year of the indiction.

While this text does not coincide with all aspects of a formal acclamation as defined by Roueché – for example, it does not appear to be rhythmic or metrical – it nevertheless possessed elements common to acclamations. The opening lines feature a charged statement of belief, the Byzantine Trisagion, and it is followed by a list of dignitaries arranged in hierarchical order. The trisagion had a history of use in vocalized acclamation, such as when it was chanted by heterodox bishops at the council of Chalcedon in 451, and, moreover, it was linked to processions.[36] The acclamtory structure present in the Miletos and Corinthian inscriptions could well have invoked the kind of ritual performance that would place a piece of architecture in its social context. By invoking the kind of ritual that served to present and reify the structure of the social hierarchy, we witness a function broadly similar to the more simple expression in the inscription from Byllis where the reader is named a "stranger" or outsider to the walls being commemorated. Our two Corinthian inscriptions, then, can be seen to have multiple parallels with the dedicatory texts common to the Justinianic period as well as the structure, language, and sentiments of contemporary acclamations both of which rely upon "oral" formula or genres common to epigraphic culture throughout the East.[37]

The location of the inscriptions also plays a role in how we understand these texts as engaging the ritual language and performance. Although the ambiguous archaeological context forces us to become more speculative, it seems likely that the place of the Corinthian texts on fortifications, almost certainly situated at or near gates, made them visible to the regular stream of travelers heading north from the Peloponnesus or into the city of Corinth. It may even be that such gates featured prominently in local rituals ranging from processions to *adventus* which would have featured hierarchical arrangement of individuals such as those visible in these texts (although probably not the emperor!). Such urban rituals served to produce and reinforce the existing social structure as would their commemoration in the inscribed text. Moreover the placement of the text may have even encouraged the reader to

---

[36] Mansi, *ACO* 2.1.195; R. Taft, s.v. "Trisagion" in A. Kazhdan (ed.) *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford 1991) 2121. Day, "Toward a Pragmatics," 250-251; B. Croke, "Two Early Byzantine Earthquakes and their Liturgical Commemoration," *Byzantion* 51 (1981) 122-147 esp. 127-131.
[37] Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire," 185.

recognize or even to reenact on a small scale and personal level an event or ritual as they pass through the gates and toward or away from the city.[38]

 The language and hierarchical arrangement of individuals in these inscriptions combined with the location of the text itself to project the structure of imperial authority into the provinces.[39] Like the *Buildings* of Procopius, inscriptions such those in the Corinthia, Byllis, and Miletos demonstrated a desire to link the emperor or his representative to architecture as a key element in the public positioning of the imperial image. The presence of inscriptions in public spaces which evoked both the sound of acclamations and the structure of processions linked the emperor to particular projects and established the relationship between the emperor and the individuals who lived in the provinces. In fact, it is possible that these inscriptions could even appropriate buildings initiated or completed under Justinians' predecessors.[40] The structure, language, and placement of these two inscriptions which could be read by individuals passing through the gates into the city of Corinth or into the Hexamilion fortress, commemorated imperial contributions to either real or perhaps even mythical acts of construction. The language of these texts employed language with strong oral components to establish relationships, invoked urban rituals, and embed the imperial presence in the Greek landscape.

Religious Ritual and Authority in Inscribed Texts

 The oral component of public rituals like processions or acclamations mark only one element of orality invoked by inscribed texts. The use of religious language in these texts similarly demonstrated the high degree of permeability between written and spoken language in ancient epigraphy. Religious inscriptions, however, have a wide range of forms and functions, but many allude to religious rituals which would have been familiar to the population not through written texts, but rather through their regular oral performance.[41] When combined with sentiments present broadly in public rituals such as processions and acclamations, allusions to consecrated, religious rituals sought to co-opt the authority preserved in these acts as a means of reinforcing the political and social authority articulated in the text by other means.[42] Again, this distinction between "social authority" and "religious authority" is largely heuristic.[43] By Late Antiquity, however, the emergence of a powerful and at times independent ecclesiastical hierarchy whose authority was vested in part in its control over specific religious rituals does imply that some forms of authority existed outside of the raw political power wielded by imperial elites.

---

[38] C. Roueché, "Looking for Late Antique Ceremonial," 161-185 for the placement of acclamatory texts at Ephesus and Aphrodisias; Day, "Toward a Pragmatics," 251 for the placement of inscriptions with the trisagion in ritually significant places.

[39] J. Elsner, "Monuments, Travel, and Writing," in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.) *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge 1994), 253 (224-254) discusses the role of the inscription in creating the monument.

[40] A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London 1985) 109-112; For a general discussion of Justinian's activity in Greece see: G. Fowden, "Late Roman Achaea: Identity and Defence," *JRA* 8 (1995) 549-567; T.E. Gregory, "Procopius on Greece," 105-114; D. Feissel, "Les Édifices de Justinien au témoignage de Procope et de L'épigraphie". *Ant Tard* 8 (2000) pp. 81-104

[41] J. Day, "Archaic and Paleochristian Greek Inscriptions," 245 and note 15. Some scholars have even argued that the orthography preserved an oral character. For phonetic spelling as a characteristic of oral language see: J. Tuerk, *How to do thing with words and images in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, (Diss. Univ. of Chicago 2002) 87-89 and D. Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions," *Helios* 21 (1994) 195-196.

[42] The links between spiritual, political, ritual, and even military authority have recently been explored by C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 2005), and M. Gaddis, *There is No Crime For Those who Have Christ* (Berkeley 2005)

[43] R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge 1990). Discusses the expansion of Christian into the "secular" culture of Late Antiquity.

The most common type of religious ritual preserved in inscribed texts are simple, spontaneous prayers made up a verb in the imperative and a noun in the vocative, such as the well-known "Κύριε, βοήθει" inscriptions which ask the Lord for help with vivid, grammatical immediacy. Other examples of religious texts are more complex and draw on the language of formal prayers or the liturgy as evidence for their origins in the world of vocalized ritual acts.[44] Like acclamations and other public rituals, it would appear that the line marking the spoken language of a ritual act from written inscriptions was highly permeable. This permeability suggests that an inscribed text could preserve the power of the original utterance. The concept of an illocutionary utterance as formulated by John Austin has provided a useful tool for understanding this phenomenon.[45] Austin argued that an illocutionary utterance is a spoken act that performs the actions which it articulates. In the example of a simple prayer "God, help!" the illocutionary sense is that the individual making this statement assumes that God will and can, in fact, respond to the individual's request for "help", thus turning the act of speaking itself into an action binding God to help.[46] While this category of "speech-acts" is not limited to religious utterances, this approach has proved particularly valuable for understanding the function of magical texts, particularly those found on amulets which include requests for divine assistance. As the use of "speech-act" theory has developed, scholars have realized that it is necessary to consider the conditions which allow an individual to make an illocutionary utterance as well as the individual's authority to have the request headed. Religious speech acts, in particular, rely upon some source of authority drawn typically from the status of a particular individual, a well-defined ritual context, or a supporting narrative of consecration.[47] The dynamic relationship between text and underlying sources of authority provides a useful tool for understanding how monumental inscriptions functioned in a Late Antique context. The following section will consider how our Corinthian texts drew upon the authority vested in consecrated language to establish a link between human action and divine power.[48]

The religious language in both the Corinthian texts is clear. The inscriptions ask God and the Virgin to protect (φύλαξον/φυλάξη) the emperor, his servant Viktorinos, and "those who dwell" in rather direct language. Such simple requests are tremendously common in ancient epigraphy and have been recognized as illocutionary in several ancient contexts. This reading of our text is consistent with the use of illocutionary language in inscribed texts in literary sources from antiquity. Theophanes, for example, among several other authors, claimed that after an earthquake in Antioch in 528 many citizens of that city fled to the mountains to avoid the continuous collapse of buildings damaged by the tremors.[49] As the cold of winter descended on those who remained in the shattered city, they conducted a procession and cried out "Κύριε ἐλέησον" ("Lord, have mercy"). God intervened in a vision, where he instructed a pious citizen to tell the assembled Christians to write on the

---

[44] Day, "Toward a Pragmatics," 243-258.

[45] J.F. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA 1962). J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge 1969) For the specific application and refinement of this philosophy in the context of religious texts see: S.J. Tambiah, "The magical power of words," *Man* 3 (1968) 175-208 especially 181-182.

[46] Searle, *Speech Acts*, 67-69.

[47] This condition is stressed in: S.J. Tambiah, "The magical power of words," 175-208. P. Bourdieu, "Authorized Language: The Social Conditions for the Effectiveness of Ritual Discourse," in J.B. Thompson (ed.) and transl. G. Raymond and M. Adamson *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge 1991) 107-116.

[48] The importance of consecration in Late Antiquity and its role in the tension between charismatic and institutional authority is evident throughout the work of P. Brown. The *loci classici* for this discussion: P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holyman in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971) 80-101; P. Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclast Controversy," *EHR* 88 (1973) 1-34.

[49] Theophanes 178, AM 6021. Cedrenus 1.646.18; Leo Grammaticus 126.1-5; Nicephorus Callistus *PG* 147.225 A; Glycas (500.13-16); G. Downey, "Inscriptions in the Chronicle of Malalas," *TAPA* 66 (1935) 64-65.

lintels of their doors the phrase, "Χριστὸς μεθ᾽ ημῶν. Στῆτε." (Christ [is] with us. Stand.) The text itself is in the form of a statement of belief (Christ [is] with us) and an imperative verb (Stand). The object of the imperative would appear to be the house itself which is being commanded by the text to remain standing.[50] The inscribed text expressed its message through a direct command to the house and derived its authority from being a divine response to a simple, vocalized prayer.[51]

The probable placement of the Corinthian inscription on fortification walls adds potency to the illocution.[52] The emperor's act of protecting Greece or Corinth accomplished through the construction of a fortification, was parallel with the request for divine protection. This parallelism recommends an analogical reading of these texts which lends additional authority to the illocutionary request: the inscriptions seek divine aid to protect the emperor, his servant Viktorinos, and the residents of the Corinth and Hellas, as these walls protect the Corinth and Hellas.[53] Such analogical interpretation of ancient texts finds numerous examples. Perhaps the best-known example derives from the practice of inscribing the correspondence between Abgar and Jesus on the wall of the city of Edessa. According to several sources, in the correspondence between Jesus and the King of Edessa, Jesus promised to protect the city.[54] The fullest account derives from the nun Egeria who visited Edessa in the second half of the 4th century.[55] According to the pious nun, whenever a foreign power threatened Edessa the bishop both displayed the letter and read it at the walls of the city. By Procopius' time, the letter with its promise of protection was inscribed upon the gates of the city.[56] This letter made the translation from a written text, to an oral text, to an inscribed text. Procopius, somewhat skeptical of the authenticity of this text, was even willing to acknowledge that God may protect Edessa because so many people believe that this text protects the city.[57] Once the letter appears in inscribed form it spread through the Eastern empire in inscribed form, appearing in numerous places ranging from the walls of houses in Ephesus to the walls of Neapolis, the port city of Philippi in Macedonia.[58] The context and function of the letter in Edessa seems to have validated by means of analogy God's ability and willingness to protect other cities. Both the texts from Antioch and the Letter of Jesus to

---

[50] It could also echo the language of New Testament in particular exhortations to Christians to "Stand firm!" in Eph. 6:14; 2 Thes. 2:15.

[51] These kinds of inscriptions are relatively common throughout Roman Syria, see: J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, "Epigraphic Evidence on the Christianization of Syria," in D. Baker ed., *The Church in Town and Country. Studies in Church History* 16 (1979) 17-24.

[52] Places apotropaic inscriptions on fortifications was common in Late Roman times. For a discussion see: D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1987) 130-140; For examples, D. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest. BAR* 99 (Oxford 1981), 1.164.

[53] For the power of analogy in ritual language see: J. Tuerk, "An Early Byzantine Inscribed Amulet and Its Narratives," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999) 25-42. Such analogical interpretations have been most profitably discussed in the realm of images, see for example: P. Brown, "Images for a Substitute for Writing," in E. Chrysos and I. Wood (eds.) *East and West: Modes of Communication* (Leiden 1999), 15-34, esp. 31-34; G. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington DC 1982); --, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium" *DOP* 38 (1984) 65-86; --, "Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis in Early Byzantine Religious Art," in R. Ousterhout (ed.) *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Chicago 1990), 97-107; H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: the Terrestrial World in Early Byzantium* (University Park, PA 1987) 21-25; H. Maguire, E.D. Maguire, M.J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and the Holy Powers in the Early Christian House* (Urbana, Ill 1989).

[54] Euseb. *Hist. Ecc.* 1.13 preserves the text of these letters without the later promise by Jesus to protect the city. This is most likely a later accretion which was known by the visit of Egeria some decades later.

[55] Egeria, 19.7-15.

[56] J.B. Segal, *Edessa 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford 1970) 73-76; C. Picard, "Un texte nouveau de la correspondance entre Abgar d'Osrosene et Jésus-Christ grave sur une port de ville, a Philippes (Macédoine)," *BCH* 44 (1920) 41-69. Procop. *Bell.*, 2.12.20-34.

[57] Procop. *Bell.*, 2.12.29

[58] C. Picard, "Un texte nouveau de la correspondance entre Abgar d'Osrosene et Jésus-Christ," 41-69.

Abgar derived their consecrated status from divine origins which granted authority to the texts themselves and survived the translation from oral utterance to inscribed text. Moreover, both these texts functioned as Austin's idea of an illocutionary utterance, albeit in slightly different ways. In the case of the inscription from Antioch, the demand that the building stand, in fact, makes it stand. In the Edessene text, it is the promise that the city will never be taken, made at the walls of the city, ensured that it would not fall.

The examples from Antioch and Edessa functioned effectively by relying upon language, location, and narratives that make explicit their ties to sources of authority. This is also true of the texts from the Corinthia. Text 1 begins with an excerpt from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which is a statement of belief rooted in the sacred authority of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils and likely reinforced by its inclusion in the liturgy.[59] Patriarch Timothy "The Cat" of Constantinople under Anastasius I (r. 491-518) promulgated the inclusion of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed in Constantinopolitan liturgy when previously it was only read in capital during the Good Friday catechesis.[60] Whether and when the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed appeared in the liturgy of the 6th century Balkan provinces is not clear as we do not have any Late Antique liturgies from Balkans, but its use in a public inscription implies the kind of familiarity with the text that could come from liturgical use.[61] In the text from Isthmia the link between the divine, Justinian, Viktorinos, and everybody else is manifest in the use of the creed which although appropriated from its proper ritual context continued to preserve the sacred authority rooted in its ecclesiastical use.

The appearance of liturgical texts on fortifications is not unusual.[62] So it is not surprising to find further echoes of liturgical language arise in the Corinthian inscriptions as they call on the divine aid to protect the emperor and Viktorinos "together with all those living in Greece (or Corinth) according to God" ("ἅμα τοῖς οἰκούσειν ἐν Ἑλάδι τοὺς κ(α)τ(ὰ) Θεὼν ζῶντας" or "σὺν τοῖς οἰκῦσιν ἐν Κορίνθῳ κ(ατὰ) Θεὼν ζῶντας"). Both Deissman and Feissel find potential parallels with the language of liturgical commemoration or the diptychs in somewhat later Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom which reads: "Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῆς πόλεως ἐν ᾗ παροικοῦμεν καὶ πάσης πόλεως καὶ χώρας καὶ τῶν πίσει κατοικούντων ἐν αὐταῖς."[63] An inscription from Neapolis (now Kavala) the port of Philippi in Macedonia also echoes a version of this phrase:

[- -]
[Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστὲ ἐκ τῆς π]αρθέ|νου Μαρίας σταυρ[ωθεὶς]
　　　[δι ἡμας, βοήθει τῇ πόλ]ει ταύτῃ | στῆναι εἰς ἅπαντ[α]
[χρόνον καὶ φύλαξον τοὺς ἐ]ν σοὶ κατο[ι]κοῦντας εἰς δόξα[ν σου].
　　　　　　　　　vacat.
[- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -]παρθέν| [- -]

[59] Mansi, *ACO*, 8.1066; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London 1952) 348-351. R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance*. *OCA* 200 (Rome 1975) 398-402.

[60] R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance*. *OCA* 200 (Rome 1975) 398-402.

[61] There is no reason to accept the arguments by Soteriou, Orlandos, Pallas, and others for the relationship between various liturgical texts and the liturgy of Greece. For a summary of some of these lines of argument see: W. R. Caraher, *Church, Society, and the Sacred in Early Christian Greece*. (Diss. Ohio State Univ. 2003), 85-90.

[62] Other examples of liturgical texts on fortifications of various kinds: trisagion: *IGLS* 289, 1726; sanctus: *IGLS* 1914, 2528.

[63] D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétienne de Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle*, 190-191. A. Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*. transl. L.R.M. Stracham. 4th ed. (London 1995) 455. Deisman related our Corinthian texts to the famous angel text of Miletus which uses a very similar formula in an inscription of more ambiguous religious orientation. F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies: Eastern and Western* (Oxford 1896) 389.28-29. This may imply that by the Justinianic period certain elements of the liturgy in the church in Greece were parallel to those of the Constantinopolitan liturgy.

...Lord, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified for us, help this city stand for all time and guard those living in it for your glory...

While "φύλαξον τοὺς ἐ]ν σοὶ κατο[ι]κοῦντας εἰς δόξα[ν σου]" is not a verbatim invocation of the later diptych and has been restored, these texts would appear to preserve a fundamentally similar sentiment in a similar architectural context.[64] Moreover, the diptychs of the living in later liturgical texts comprised of a list of dignitaries starting with the emperor and the patriarch. During the Acacian Schism, in particular, the Patriarch of Constantinople removed the name of the Pope in Rome from the diptychs of the church in Constantinople as an expression of theological disapproval and a means of breaking communion.[65] By including the emperor, and perhaps more importantly all those living in Greece or Corinth, this inscription may have sought to imply that those so invoked were in communion with the church at Constantinople. Finally, in most liturgies dating to the 6th century and later the creed occurred almost immediately before the diptychs in the liturgy.[66] So, if we assume that the excerpt from the creed in text one would have evoked the liturgy, it would have also prepared the reader to recognize the liturgical language at the end of the inscription. Thus these texts, and text 1 in particular, would appear to have some structural relationship to the anaphora, and this likely functioned to expand the evocative nature of the two Corinthian inscriptions.

The practice of inscribing the Christian liturgy parallels the appearance of inscribed oral texts in Antioch and Edessa. In both cases the texts appearing in an inscribed context would continue to derive their authority from rituals or narratives of consecration which reinforced and contextualized the illocutionary nature of the language itself. This is consistent with a generally expanded use of the Christian liturgy outside of a formal ritual context to authorize and legitimize political and religious power during the 6th century.[67] Presumably this trend recognized that the commemorative and mystical interpretations of the central Christian ritual served to mediate between humanity and the divine both within the context of clerical authority and outside of it.[68] The best-known example of the liturgy functioning outside the formal bounds of clerical authority derives from John Moschos. In the *Pratum Spiritualis* a group of boys from Apamea uttered the prayer of consecration while pretending to be priests celebrating the liturgy. Upon doing this, a flame from heaven consumed the bread that their prayers had consecrated in order to prevent its defilement. Elsewhere Moschos told of a simple monk who absent-mindedly recited the prayer of consecration while carrying the unconsecrated host to the church for the liturgy. When the priest during the service noticed that his words did not affect the bread on the altar, he became distressed until an angel informed him of the careless monk's act.[69] Thus, at least by the 6th century, there is strong evidence to suggest that the language of liturgy performed the sacred act which facilitated human access to divine authority.

---

[64] Y. Namagata, "Plato, Memory, and Performance," *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005) 111-129 noted that such imperfect transcriptions of oral texts are not uncommon in the translation from oral to written form.
[65] Taft, *The Diptychs,* 122-124; A. Fortescue, *The Reunion Formula of Hormisdas. Unity Studies* 16 (Garrison, N.Y., 1955) 6-8.
[66] Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 398-403, 48-49 for a table summarizing the structure of various pre-anaphoral rites.
[67] The manifestation of this trend are numerous and complex. Some particularly important examples and analysis appear in the following: P. Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *EHR* 88 (1973) 5-9; S. A. Harvey, "The Stylite's Liturgy, Ritual and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity, *JECS* 6 (1998) 523-539; Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, 233-235.
[68] For useful summaries of the prevailing interpretation of the liturgy see: H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy* (Crestwood, NY 1993); R. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MI 1992).
[69] John Moschos *Pratum Sp.,* 25. Teurk *How to do things with words and images*, 133.

The appearance, then, of references to Christian liturgy in inscribed texts represents another example of the permeability of the spoken and inscribed word in antiquity, and finds parallels with illocutionary power of liturgical language more broadly. W.K. Prentice presented a detailed analysis of inscribed liturgical texts in the early years of the 20th century in a catalogue of inscriptions from Syria that used liturgical language.[70] More recent epigraphers have noted liturgical allusions in their editions of inscriptions from throughout the Mediterranean basin.[71] Further demonstrating the proliferation of liturgical language in everyday life is the evidence from 'magical' amulets, the *PGM* and other collection of magical spells. In magical texts and objects liturgical language mixed freely with Gnostic prayers, quotations from scripture, and even references to consecrated, apotropaic texts such as the letter of Christ to Abgar.[72] Most uses of fragments of liturgical language in the context of magic reflect a *pars pro toto* relationship between these texts and the liturgy. This approach to more lengthy texts is common in antiquity. In fact, well-known texts, such as the Psalm 91 or 120, were commonly abbreviated in inscriptions which nevertheless rely on the full meaning of the Psalm.[73] It seems the case that even brief references to powerful texts from the Bible or the liturgy could invoke the full power of consecrated language as an act of mediation between human concerns and divine authority.[74]

Thus, our Corinthian texts evoke three closely interrelated attributes of Justinian's reign: through the location of the inscriptions our texts makes clear the emperor's role in the physical protection of the empire, through the illocutionary prayers they link the emperor's role as fortifier to divine protection, and, through liturgical language our texts justify and actualize the emperor's position as a mediator between humanity and the divine. This elaborate analogical and illocutionary interpretation depends on our understanding that these texts functioned as such because the line between oral ritual and inscribed text was permeable in the ancient world. This permeability served to allow an inscription not only to invoke a ritual, narrative, or text derived from an oral context, but also to actually perform a ritual act by establishing a *pars pro toto* and analogical relationships with a more expansive rituals of mediation.

Inscriptions as Evidence for the Greek Response to the Christological Controversies of the late 5th to early 6th Centuries

The language of public ritual and the Christian liturgy infused the Corinthian inscriptions with both divine authority and a social significance relevant to a wide audience in the Christian Mediterranean. This would be consistent with an imperial emphasis on political and theological unity dating from the reign of Constantine. Justinian in particular recognized

---

[70] W.K. Prentice, "Fragments of Early Christian Liturgy in Syrian Inscriptions," *TAPA* 33 (1902) 81-100.

[71] E.g. D. Feissel, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétienne de Macédoine.* nos. 15, 35, 180, 208, 277, 281. All of these texts appear in either an ecclesiastical or funerary setting. Kiourtzian, *Recueil des inscriptions Grecque chrétienne de Cyclades,* nos. 3, 11, 67, 92.

[72] There are, of course, numerous examples. Liturgical Language (especially the trisagion and sanctus see: G. Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP* 38 (1984) 75-80; Excerpts from the Creed: G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978* (North Ryde, N.S.W. 1981) 114-115. Letter of Christ to Abgar: W. Till, "Zu den Wiener koptischen Zaubertexten," *Orientalia* 4 (1935) 195-221 (215-218)

[73] It is possible, in fact, the word φυλάξη in text 1 echoes the language of Ps. 120.8, "κύριος φυλάξει..." which commonly appeared on lintels of homes, fortifications, and churches in Eastern Mediterranean. See L. Jalabert, "Citations biblique dan l'épigraphie grecque," *DACL* III.2 (Paris 1914) 1731-1756 ; L. Malunowicz, "Citations bibliques dans l'épigraphie grecque," *Studia Evangelica* 7 (1982) 333-337; D. Feissel, "The Bible in Greek Inscriptions," in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*. P. M. Blowers. (ed. and transl.) (Notre Dame, IN 1997) 289-298.

[74] Day, "Toward a Pragmatics," 251.

the importance of unity in the maintenance of the Empire.[75] The theological disputes of the late 5th and early 6th century, by contrast, exposed deep rifts in façade of the imperial church which emperors were at pains to mend by negotiating the perilous straits between imperial authoritarianism and highly localized differences in beliefs. The mid 6th century date for our Corinthian inscriptions suggests that the liturgical overtones of both of these texts resonated with the religious and imperial politics of the day. That inscribed prayers demonstrated a resonance with theological or Christological issues is not a novel interpretation. In his reading of liturgical language in Syrian inscriptions, Prentice noted the appearance of the trisagion in an inscription on a church at Bshindelinteh in Syria which included the so-called theopaschite addition typically associated with the firebrand monophysite Bishop of Antioch, Peter the Fuller.[76] Prentice proposed that the appearance of this formula may have protected the community of Bshindelinteh from the depredations of roving bands of monophysite monks. We may extend this further to suggest that it perhaps even served to attract positive attention to the community and the church from Monophysite bishops, archmandrites, or even powerful local magnates. It seems likely that the use of the trisagion without the theopaschite addition on the agora gate of Miletos, quoted earlier in this article, associated the emperor and the local hierarchy adherence to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. While Asia Minor did not suffer the same threat of zealous monks as Syria or Egypt, the mid-5th century activities of Monophysite evangelizers such as John of Ephesus in Asia Minor are less than a decade after this text's probable date.[77] Thus, the local politics expressed in this text may have marked the city of Miletos and its residents as conforming to the Chalcedonian perspective on the liturgy and resistant to anti-Chalcedonian challenges. My foregoing analysis has argued that the Corinthian inscriptions evoked acclamatory and liturgical precedents in order to acknowledge imperial authority and attract divine protection to Corinth and southern Greece. It is, however, necessary to consider the political environment of southern Greece and recognize that these texts must have also resonated with the immediate theological and political tensions of the middle years of the 6th century.

Justinian sought religious unity in the empire through finding a compromise position between the increasingly monophysite policies of the East and the militant Chalcedonianism of the West. The roots of this conflict date to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 which accepted the *Tome of Leo's* position on the hypostatic union of Christ two natures, the divine and the human. This decree marginalized whole groups in Egypt and Syria who held very different interpretations of the nature of Christ as defined by the first three Ecumenical councils. The next several centuries were spent attempting to find compromise between those who adhered to the creed of Chalcedon and those who found it an unacceptable deviation from earlier teachings.

The efforts to find compromise intensified in the late 5th and 6th centuries. The Emperor Zeno and Anastasius sought reconciliation within the framework of Zeno's *Henotikon*.[78] Satisfying neither the opponents of Chalcedon nor its supporters in the West, this policy resulted in the Acacian schism and ultimately drove a wedge between Constantinople and the Pope in Rome. The impact of this schism seems to have been

---

[75] G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth* (Princeton 1993) 80-99. A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley 1991) 189-221. J. Meyendorff, "Justinian, the Empire, and the Church," *DOP* 22 (1968) 43-60.

[76] W.K. Prentice, "Fragments of Early Christian Liturgy in Syrian Inscriptions," *TAPA* 33 (1902) 81-100.

[77] F. R. Trombley, "Monastic Foundations in Sixth-century Anatolia and Their Role in the Social and Economic Life of the Countryside," *GOrTR* 30 (1985) 45-59. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia : land, men, and Gods in Asia Minor. Volume 2: The Rise of the Church* (Oxford 1993) 116-119.

[78] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge 1972) 184-295. P. Charanis, *Church and State in the Late Roman Period.* (Thessaloniki 1974) for a short summary of this conflict that pays particular attention to the role of Greece.

particularly violent in Illyricum, which remained under the political jurisdiction of Constantinople, but the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rome. The tension between political and religious authority manifest itself in the tendency of the metropolitan bishop of Illyricum Orientalis, resident in Thessaloniki, to side with the proximate power of Constantinople even when it placed them at odds with his ecclesiastical superior in Rome. This divided allegiance during the Acacian Schism led 40 bishops of Illyricum Orientalis under the leadership of Alkison of Nikopolis to ask for admittance into direct communion with the Pope Hormisdas in 515.[79] This rift was not healed until the reign of Justin in 519 and his repeal of the Henotikon.

The scars of the Acacian schism, however, ran deep and confounded efforts by Justinian to complement his military conquest of the west with strong bonds of religious unity. Renewed tensions emerged in the middle years of the 6th century when the Three Chapters Controversy regarding the Origenist works of Theodore of Edessa, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, again made clear the incompatibility of imperial religious unity and the passionate Chalcedoneanism of the Papacy. Even Justinian's (or perhaps Theodora's) hand-picked Pope Vigilius refused to conform to imperial expectations. In 553 Vigilius's promulgated the *Constitutum* endorsed by 16 western bishops 2 of whom were from Illyricum and rejected Justinian's condemnation of the Three Chapters while the Fifth Ecumenical Council was busy proclaiming its anathema on those very texts.

Read in this context, our Corinthian texts take on clear significance. Both texts appear to speak directly to issues of import in 6th century ecclesiastical controversies. At this point, however, we are compelled to confront some pressing interpretive issues as we attempt to read these texts in the narrower interpretive context of imperial policy. If we assume that these texts are associated with the reconstruction of the Hexamilion fortress and the walls of Corinth during Justinian's reign, and if we assume that Viktorinos was an important imperial official (perhaps even the praetorian prefect of Illyricum Orientalis) who oversaw these construction projects, then it is reasonable to see these texts as expressions of an imperial policy, at some level, executed by Viktorinos. Moreover, it would seem that our text 1 from Isthmia was almost certainly mounted outside a major gate into a fortress where a garrison was likely stationed.[80] The role of Viktorinos and the military context of text 1 would suggest that a certain intent resided behind the composition of this inscription, namely: Viktorinos and Justinian, whatever the emperor's specific role in the wording, positioning, and commissioning of this particular text may have been, would have a vested interest in the loyalty of the troops and, indeed, the protection of the Peloponnesus offered by this particular strong point – a point confirmed by the refortification of the Peloponnesus recorded in Procopius. Along these same line, neither Viktorinos nor Justinian would have been inclined to antagonize the local population, and this attitude of accommodation can been read in other inscriptions in Illyricum. In fact, another inscription naming both Viktorinos and Justinian from Byllis expressed referred to Justinian in language that echoed the paganism of the Classical period.[81] The local population, however, could be expected to read this text, as well as the text from Corinth, in a way suitable to their own situation. Thus, we can assume that inscriptions such as these allowed for both parties to negotiate the kind of accommodation

---

[79] A. Fortescue, *The Reunion Formula of Hormisdas*.

[80] For the nature of garrison forces in Justinianic Illyricum see: A. Dunn, "Continuity and Change in the Macedonian Countryside from Gallienus to Justinian," in W. Bowden et al. (eds.) *Recent Research on the Late Antique* Countryside (Brill 2004) 575-585; P. Nick Kardulias, *From Classical to Byzantine : social evolution in late antiquity and the fortress at Isthmia, Greece* (Oxford 2005) 95-124.

[81] D. Feissel, "L'architecte Viktôrinos," 137; *SEG* 2.377; Gregory, *Isthmia V*, 13. Although was probably done for poetic effect rather than religious. See: Al. Cameron, "Greek Tragedy in Sixth-Century Epirus," 134. Cameron notes, in another example of intertextual play, that the second line of this text is a quote from Soph. *Aj.* 646.

perhaps designed by an official, like Viktorinos who would have had at least some local knowledge and legitimized by imperial authority. The reading of the texts themselves would have presumably produced meanings within an acceptable semantic range for a broad intended audience. It is this negotiation of meaning between an imperial power and a local audience that, in fact, constructs political authority and validates the processes by which it is constructed and projected.[82]

With this in mind, it becomes possible to consider these texts in the ecclesiastical context of the day. Text 1 from Isthmia begins with a reference to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Anastasius inserted this text into the liturgy amidst some controversy in an effort to demonstrate a continued adherence to the theology of Nicaea (and imply a rejection of Chalcedon). While it is not impossible to view this inscription as anti-Chalcedonian, it would seem unlikely that Justinian would appeal explicitly to this interpretation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed in the context of Illyricum an area with some loyalty to Chalcedonian doctrine. Therefore, the use of the creed in this text can also be read as an effort to re-appropriate the creedal language of the liturgy and Nicaea in a pro-Chalcedonian way. This reading is confirmed by what we know about meaning of the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed in the middle years of the 6th century. It appears to have been transformed from an anti-Chalcedonian statement to a proclamation designed to be acceptable to groups with divergent Christological positions by the time Justin II comes to the throne in 565. Perhaps in response to Justinian's drift toward heresy at the end of his life, Justin II had the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed sung throughout the empire.[83] Corripus, a Latin poet of the second half of the 6th century resident in Constantinople although probably from Africa, certainly recognized the Creed as a statement of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy in his panegyric written on the accession of Justin II.[84] In Book 4 of his, *In laudem Iustini*, dated to 566 or 567, Corripus in clear Chalcedonian language describes the architecture of St. Sophia using direct citations from the Creed.[85] This text dates to less than 20 years after our inscriptions suggesting that the Monophysite reading introduced by Anastasius did not represent the preferred reading in the context of 6th century Greece by Justinian's reign.[86] Finally, if we can accept that this text bears some echo of liturgical structure, as I have argued above, the use of language closely associated with the diptych of the living as read in Constantinople would have confirmed the place of the local population (ἐν Ἑλάδι/ ἐν Κορίνθῳ) among the Orthodox. Thus, the use of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed represents a theologically ambivalent statement of faith that could be read by either side within the theologically charged context of the middle 6th century.

Text 2 could also be read in the context of the debates surrounding the 5th Ecumenical Council. Scholars have regularly noted the rise in Marian devotion over the course of the 5th and 6th centuries. Part of the goal of the 5th Ecumenical council was to distance Justinian's reading of Chalcedon from charges of "Nestorianism" leveled by his rabidly anti-Chalcedonian (primarily radical Monophysite) opponents. One of the most basic allegations

---

[82] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London 1994) 145-174. Bhabha is his essay "Signs taken for wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817" captures some of the ambivalence that would come to characterize the discourse between an imperial power and the colonized. While the analogy with 6th century Greece is imperfect, it is clear that the very ambivalence present to our Corinthian texts represent the sources of their authority.

[83] Cameron, "The Theotokos in 6th century Constantinople," *JTS* 29 (1978) 94; John Biclar. a. 567.

[84] A. Cameron, "The Early Religious Policies of Justin II," *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976) 54-55.

[85] Corippus, *Iust.* IV 290-305. For the date see: Flavius Cresconius Corripus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti monoris Libri IV*. Av. Cameron. (ed. and transl.) (London 1976) 1-2.

[86] An inscription from Corinth dated to after 574 records an acclamation referring to Justin II as "ὀρθόδοξων" (D. Feissel and A. Philippidis-Braat, "Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historique de Byzance. III. Incriptions du Péloponnèse," no. 18.)

leveled against the "Three Chapters" was Nestorianism. Direct and explicit references to Mary as the Theotokos (God-Bearer) complemented the banning of the Three Chapters in countering the accusations of anti-Chalcedonian factions elsewhere in the empire.[87] This text would clearly not have the polemical resonance that a reference to the Creed would possess in a local context, but it nevertheless resonated with the Christological and theological discourse of the day. Like text 1's reference to the creed, it is most valuable to read this inscription in an ambivalent way. If we accept A. Cameron's observation that Mary's principle role in the middle years of the 5th century was intercessor, we can suggest a parallel between the invocation of God in creedal language and the use of Mary in her theologically most potent form, the Theotokos.[88] Both texts invoke the divine using theologically correct expressions which gracefully avoided the theological conflicts characteristic of the 6th century.

Orality, Authority, and Orthodoxy in the Inscriptions of Late Antique Greece

The divisions in this article are essentially heuristic concessions to the nature of modern scholarship. Nevertheless, it is clear that these texts draw meaning from the public and religious life of the Late Roman world. The reading of these inscriptions activated and commemorated the various well-established oral "events" not in a neat one-to-one fashion, but rather by referring in an almost cacophonic way to public rituals, the liturgy, and Christological controversies simultaneously. The oral nature of these texts referred the reader to the intersection of broadly defined genres, such as acclamation and oral inscriptions, and specific rituals, namely the Christian liturgy. The language of these inscriptions situated the individual reader in time, within a social structure communicated through public and ecclesiastical ritual, and even in the realm of belief, by drawing careful parallels between the authority of divine powers (God or the Virgin), the emperor, his servants, and the inhabitants of Greece or Corinth.

To a Late Antique audience the various contexts and effects proposed for the two Corinthian inscriptions would likely be too tightly interwoven to discern as independent phenomenon. The groups that chanted late antique acclamations knew that their calls possessed an illocutionary authority capable of moving emperors, magistrates, and even the divine. Moreover, the increasingly Christianized public discourse, rich with references to the liturgy, the Bible, and other Christian symbols, must have represented potent watchwords for religious belief. Clearly the proper understanding of Christian theology not only underpinned claims to political legitimacy, but also validated the divine authority which imperial and ecclesiastical elites articulated in displays of ritual, spiritual, and social power. The advantage of disentangling the various means of reading these inscriptions is to demonstrate how this "totalizing discourse" is manifest outside the realm of ecclesiastical councils and imperial proclamations.[89] The communication of subtle changes in the way in which social, political, and religious authority was articulated demanded an attention to the oral, inscribed, and aural landscape of the empire. By crafting inscriptions which invoke imperial authority in a conscious blend of public ritual, liturgical language, and locally-relevant, imperially-recognized theology, the totalizing discourse of the Christian empire established and reified ties between the emperor and the provinces.

---

[87] P.T. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)* (Leiden 1979) 71-72.

[88] Cameron, "The Theotokos," 97-105; G. Fowden, "Late Roman Achaea," 558 suggested that in an Athenian context the Justinianic interest in the Theotokos as protector would have resonated with the local tradition of Athena as the protector of Athens. It may be that this was only part of the story.

[89] A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley 1991) 189-221.