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## “Review of R. Stroud, Corinth Volume XVIII. 6. The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions.”

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Corinth Volume XVIII.6. The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Inscriptions.* By RONALD S. STROUD. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2013. Pp. xxiv + 179. Hardcover, \$150.00. ISBN 978-0-87661-186-9.

This volume is the newest addition to the series of publications covering the results of the excavations of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore located on the slopes of Acrocorinth, carried out by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens from 1961 to 1975. Stroud presents almost every type of object with writing found in the sanctuary; excluded are only the stamped architectural terracottas and Roman lamps that have already been published, and the stamps on amphora handles and loomweights that will appear in a later volume. Of these 135 inscribed objects, all texts are in Greek save one Latin curse tablet, and they range in date from the 7th century BCE to *ca.* 400 CE. They fit snugly into one slim volume, which gives the reader the opportunity to examine all forms of writing from the sanctuary across categories, time periods, and materials.

As the final publication of a difficult corpus, this book is naturally intended for a specialized audience: little of the Greek is translated, the author assumes knowledge of the local Corinthian alphabet, and much space is devoted to necessary technical description. The texts are generally conservative, with possible restorations explored in the commentary so as not to mislead. However, Stroud organizes and explicates the material so clearly that it remains accessible. These texts speak to the use of sacred space, writing habits in the Corinthia, the participation of women in ritual, the contexts of magic, and the Romanization of Greece; scholars interested in these topics will all find valuable information here.

Although most of these inscriptions have received at least preliminary treatment in past publications, new information is abundant. For example, the context of the lead tablets were discussed in *Corinth XVIII.3* (architecture and topography, 1997), but without the texts themselves. Commentary is updated and texts improved, as in the case of the new reading of the inscribed marble vase (no. 10), achieved by lighting it from below.

The inscriptions are organized by material. Chapter 1 gathers the miscellany: stone (nos. 1-10), metal (a dedicatory bull, no. 11, and a lead weight, no. 12), bone (no. 13), and mosaic (no. 14). Stroud notes that we should not use the small number of stone inscriptions to draw negative conclusions about Corinthian literacy, especially in light of the writing on ceramic (3). There is a single Archaic dedication on poros (no. 1); the Roman-era inscriptions preserved on three inscribed marble revetment fragments are probably also dedicatory (nos. 7-9). A series of four poros boundary stones (nos. 2-5, probably before 300 BCE) are the first found in the Corinthia with the term *horos*. New commentary on the mosaic from the central Roman temple on the Upper Terrace concludes the chapter (no. 14, late 2nd-early 3rd CE).

Chapters 2-4 cover ceramics: dipinti (Chapter 2, nos. 15-40), graffiti (Chapter 3, nos. 41-97), and an unusual collection of inscribed clay pinakes (Chapter 4, nos. 98-117). The dipinti and graffiti are further separated in their respective chapters by categories, when able to be determined, and date. Texts include the usual: dedications, figure labels, *kalos* inscriptions, commercial markings, owner's inscriptions, and personal names. Of the 20 oblong clay tags from the Early Hellenistic period in Chapter 4, only four are complete. When it can be determined, they carry a single word in the genitive, often able to be interpreted as a deity name or epithet. Suggestions for the use of this puzzling group include games, allotment, or ritual, possibly carried out in the theatral area.

Chapter 5 is almost as long as all other chapters combined (80-157). Here Stroud examines 18 magical lead tablets (nos. 118-135), perhaps the most sensational finds from the site. Among them is the lone Latin inscription (no. 135, 4th CE). The presence of women in the texts both as targets and commissioners of spells is notable. The tablets are important not just for the curses they carry, but also because they come from stratified excavated contexts. Stroud updates earlier interpretations of their architectural setting; he presents a new plan of the interior of the Building of the Tablets and argues that this building would have been considered a part of the sanctuary even in the Roman period. He offers a possible reconstruction of the ritual, problematizes our modern (mis)understanding of "magic," and underlines the fact that the earliest activity in the sanctuary after the colony was established in 44 BCE was the deposition of lead tablets.

A black and white photograph and drawing accompanies almost every catalogue entry, and English translations are provided for the mosaic (no. 14) and lead tablets. The illustrations are incorporated within the text rather than relegat-

ed to plates, which both reduces flipping and encourages browsing. The photos are small, but the eBook format could allow readers to adjust the size if desired. The study is supplemented by a concordance; indices of topics, sources, Greek and Latin names, and Greek and Latin words; and several plans of the sanctuary.

The bulk of the texts in this volume are incomplete, hard to read, and even harder to interpret definitively. It is therefore essential to establish reliable readings if any further work is to be meaningful. Stroud states several times that his goal is to provide the groundwork, not exhaust all possibilities; that goal has been met and even exceeded. Future study can proceed from this firm, impressive foundation of both the texts and their meanings.

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