

G. S. MERKER: *Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Vol. XVIII, Pt. IV. The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: Terracotta Figurines of the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*. Pp. xxvii + 394, pls. Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2000. Cased, \$100. ISBN: 0-87661-184-6.

This volume is essential reading for anyone investigating ancient Greek religion; it is a valuable study into the production, function, and meaning of terracotta statuettes. This class of artefacts has too often been dismissed as the cheap, mass-produced, simplistic offering at a sanctuary or grave by a member of the poorer strata of society. Such an attitude seems in part to be based on the old maxim, 'familiarity breeds contempt', since terracotta figurines are ubiquitous in museum displays of ancient Greek art and artefacts. M., however, boldly declares that, in light of recent work, 'few would now accept the view that iconography of votive figurines is arbitrary and carries no particular cultic significance . . .' (p. 323). This study, based on a huge quantity of material carefully recovered from a clearly identified sanctuary using modern excavation techniques, allows M. to discuss the figurines far beyond the standard typological study one expects from an excavation catalogue.

By far the most important contributions of this volume are M.'s summaries in Chapter VIII. These include interpretation, based on the 'multivocality of symbols' which informs her work, and a partial reconstruction of the extensive coroplastic industry at Corinth (to be supplemented with the publication of a forthcoming conference presentation). The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore provides such a quantity and range of figurines spanning the Archaic through Hellenistic periods as to allow intelligent speculation about the functionalism and symbolism of figurines. M. emphasizes that the sanctuary provides a context that allows for interpretation of cultic significance, and that changes in iconography over time may imply intensification of certain aspects of worship rather than straightforward changes. M. remains focused on the material from the sanctuary first, and then privileges comparanda coming securely from within the boundaries of ancient Corinth. Only after assessing these qualities, does interpretation judiciously extend to external comparanda.

Brief discussion about workshops and the relationship of figurines to other arts are especially informative. M. has included the breadth of evidence for Corinthian manufacture, which has come from the over 100 years of excavation there.

M. has made extensive use of ethnographic and anthropological studies to support her methodology. The results are a stimulating, diachronic discussion of the types of rites that may have been performed, the ages and gender of participants, and the time of year during which some of these occurred. The discussion is by no means dogmatic. It leaves scope for further development, which we anticipate in the publication of the final volume of the sanctuary excavation report. In the meantime, this volume should be essential reading for any scholar or student of ancient Greek religion.

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BLANCHE MENADIER

P. VALAVANIS: *Hysplex. The Starting Mechanism in Ancient Stadia. A Contribution to Ancient Greek Technology*. (University of California Publications: Classical Studies 36, translated from the Greek with an Appendix by Stephen G. Miller.) Pp. xviii + 183, ills. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999. Paper, \$40. ISBN: 0-520-09829-3.

In recent years researchers have sought to improve our knowledge of ancient technology by building replicas of the devices whose dimensions and mode of operation are largely unknown. Examples are the trireme *Olympias*, the sailing merchantman *Kyrenia*, and, of course, many kinds of ancient artillery. The only reservation is that these replicas seem to work much better than they have any right to: the trireme attained optimum speed while rowed by a crew of