



Kernos

Revue internationale et pluridisciplinaire de religion
grecque antique

14 | 2001
Varia

R. MERKELBACH, J. STAUBER, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*. Bd 1

Angelos Chaniotis



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/kernos/791>

DOI: 10.4000/kernos.791

ISSN: 2034-7871

Publisher

Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 January 2001

Number of pages: 319-320

ISSN: 0776-3824

Electronic reference

Angelos Chaniotis, « R. MERKELBACH, J. STAUBER, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*. Bd 1 », *Kernos* [Online], 14 | 2001, Online since 14 April 2011, connection on 22 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/kernos/791> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/kernos.791>

doute le manuel de Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Harvard, 1985) qui reste la meilleure vision d'ensemble avec, en outre, l'indication systématique des sources sur lesquelles le propos se fonde. C'est aussi le mérite du petit ouvrage de M. Jost. Ici, malheureusement, seules les références de quelques textes ou inscriptions sont explicitement données, sans que l'on sache le pourquoi de ces choix. En autant de pages, ce n'était pourtant pas une question de place.

Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge
(FNRS – Université de Liège)

Reinhold MERKELBACH, Josef STAUBER, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, Bd. 1. *Die Westküste Kleinasiens von Knidos bis Ilion*, Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1998. 1 vol. 19,5 × 28 cm, 600 p. ISBN : 3-519-07446-X.

This is the first of three volumes which will present the texts and German translations of the stone epigrams found in Asia Minor (c. 600 B.C. – 600 A.D.). The second volume with the epigrams of north Asia Minor (*Band 2: Die Nordküste Kleinasiens (Marmarameer und Pontos)*, Stuttgart/Leipzig, 2000) has already been published; the third volume will cover the epigrams of south Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Armenia, Iran and Baktria. Epigrams known to us only from the literary tradition, but which were originally written on stone, are also included in this collection. Many epigraphers will probably be shocked at the principles applied in the presentation of these inscriptions, but one should not forget that this is not an epigraphic corpus, but a collection of literary texts written on stone. The edition of the texts is not based on autopsy, but on existing editions and, whenever possible, on the study of photographs – the eds. regularly provide information on published photographs. The critical apparatuses are not exhaustive but contain only important *lectiones variae* and (rarely) new restorations. The stones are not described, their dimensions are not given; but when the iconography of the monument is relevant for the understanding of the text the description of an earlier edition (usually the ed. pr.) is quoted and, sometimes, a photograph or a drawing is printed. The *lemmata* give information about the date (usually the one suggested by earlier editors), the place where the stone was found and where it is now kept; the bibliography is extremely selective, and the commentaries brief, consisting usually of a summary of the text's content, an explanation of unusual expressions or aspects, or an identification of the poem's metrical structure. These principles have been dictated by the wish of the editors to come to an end of the task in hand (p. v: "wir wollen fertig werden"). What, however, are their aims? Since they do not explain these in the preface of this publication, one has to infer them from the final product: they present a collection of Greek stone poetry in the original and in (usually) reliable translations.

Since the first volume covers an area dominated by early Greek colonies it is of particular importance. The title is slightly misleading, since the volume considers not only the coast of Asia Minor but also sites of the hinterland (Karia with its hinterland and the Maeander Valley, Ionia, the valley of Hermos in Lydia, Aiolis, the Kaikos valley, Troas). One finds here both cities with a long cultural tradition (Knidos, Halikarnassos, Didyma, Miletos, Magnesia on the Maeander, Priene, Ephesos, Kolophon, Klaros, Teos, Erythrai, Smyrna) and major urban centers (Tralleis, Stratonikeia, Aphrodisias, Hierapolis, Sardeis, Philadelpheia, Pergamon) with a rich harvest of epigrams. The 749 texts of the volume represent all existent types of stone poetry. The lion's share naturally consists of funerary epigrams (and collections of epigrams composed for the same person), an excel-

lent source for the study of society. The historian of society will find countless titbits, from epitaphs of persons who died abroad (such as traders, soldiers, artists, or athletes) to thoughts on friendship and marital love. The honorary epigrams for governors, benefactors, and magistrates make up an other important group. Among the poems that commemorate buildings or mosaics and their donors one should single out those of Late Antiquity (e.g., 01/10/02-03, 01/12/11, 01/20/15-20, 02/01/06), e.g., the witty epigrams of Agathias on public toilets at Smyrna (05/01/20-23). The harvest is no less important for the student of Greek religion (cf. the discussion of this volume in *EBGR* 1998). Numerous funerary poems provide evidence for funerary practices and perceptions of death and after-life (cf. A. Chaniotis, "Das Jenseits – eine Gegenwelt?", in T. Hölscher, ed., *Gegenwelten zu den Kulturen der Griechen und der Römer in der Antike*, Munich/Leipzig, 2000, p. 159-181). The dedicatory epigrams are an excellent source of information concerning dedicatory objects, the factors which contributed to the setting up of dedications (e.g., dreams or miracles), and the worship of the gods. There are also numerous metrical oracles, a few prayers, a metrical *lex sacra*, a hymn praising Halikarnassos and her most famous sons, and poems with mythological narratives. It is with the help of such texts that one may approach the religious mentality not of intellectuals, but of ordinary women and men, such as the Alexandrian Apphion who asked Apollo at Didyma whether the Egyptian gods would bring him success "in dancing on his toes and in the training of bulls" (01/20/02).

This is not an epigraphic corpus and, therefore, it should not be judged by the standards of epigraphic corpora; one should rather compare it with the works which it aims at replacing, i.e. with the collections of G. Kaibel and W. Peek. These were also anthologies of poetry – a poetry which is directly related to everyday life in the Greek and Hellenized world. The new collection is more complete, not only because it contains finds made after Kaibel and Peek, but also because it provides translations and in some cases photographs; being more conservative with regard to restorations it is often far more reliable than its predecessors. This does not mean, of course, that some texts, translations, and commentaries would not have profited from a more intensive study (see, e.g., the criticism of Chr. Habicht, "Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten", *Tyche* 14 [1999], p. 93-99; see also C.P. Jones, *CR* 50 [2000], p. 170-172); but only unfinished works are beyond criticism, and scholars studying Greek literature, religion, society, everyday life, and epigraphy will without doubt be happier to have this volume than having to wait for something better (although many epigraphers will hesitate to admit this). Students will certainly not be happy about the high price of the volume (c. \$ 120) which is inexcusable, especially given the fact that according to a rather modest estimation more than 20% of the volume consists of white, unprinted paper. Such works can only make important ancient texts accessible to a wider readership than that of the specialist if they are affordable.

Angelos Chaniotis
(Universität Heidelberg)