

# A NEW LATIN AND GREEK INSCRIPTION FROM CORINTH

## ABSTRACT

Presented here is the *editio princeps* of a recently discovered inscription from excavations at Corinth conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. The text preserves four fragmentary lines inscribed in Latin and two in Greek. Reference is made to a *sacerdos* of Proserpina as well as a stoa and temple of Pluto. The possibility that these monuments were originally located either at Corinth or in the Isthmian Sanctuary of Poseidon is explored here. Lacking any means to date the inscription with precision, I suggest a tentative date in the 2nd century A.C.

This brief note presents the text of an important, although fragmentary, inscription recently discovered in the excavations at Corinth by the American School of Classical Studies.<sup>1</sup> The text raises a number of interesting topographical and historical questions concerning both Corinth and Isthmia.

The fragmentary Latin and Greek inscription is on a stele discovered on May 6, 1997, in debris of Frankish date immediately east of unit 6, southeast of Temple E. The stele is of white marble, with the right, top, and bottom edges preserved. The stone is broken on the left and on the top right corner. The top of the stele is smoothly dressed; the bottom is sawn. The back is roughly finished on the left-hand side, perhaps quarry-faced. A slightly recessed area along the right side of the back surface is executed with diagonal point strokes. A hook clamp cutting, which may have been for a secondary purpose, is preserved on the bottom of the right side of the stele. The inscribed face is lightly polished. The deeply cut

1. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Charles K. Williams II, Director Emeritus of the Corinth Excavations, both for permission to publish the inscription and for his encouragement and suggestions during the preparation of this article. Thanks are also due to Nancy Bookidis, Assistant Director, for her assistance in

the Corinth Museum. Ronald S. Stroud graciously read drafts at both early and late stages; his comments and advice have been invaluable. I would also like to thank Elizabeth R. Gebhard for sharing with me her knowledge of the Isthmian sanctuary. David R. Jordan read a draft and provided many useful comments. Both he and Daniel J.

Geagan kindly allowed me to examine the Isthmian inscriptions assigned to them. The comments of the anonymous *Hesperia* readers saved me from numerous embarrassments and helped improve the article. The photograph for Figure 1 was taken by Ino Ioannidou and Lenio Bartzioti.

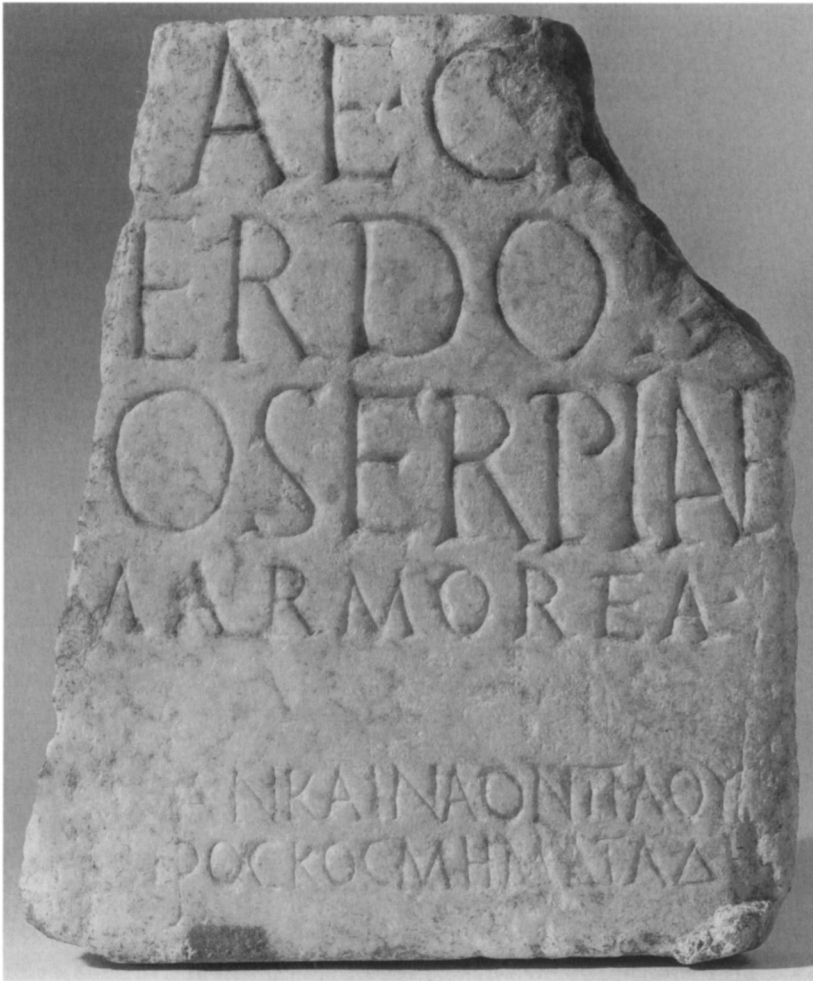


Figure 1. Latin and Greek inscription on stele found at Corinth. Scale 1:2. Photo I. Ioannidou and L. Bartzioti.

letters close to the right edge are well preserved while those on the left, in lines 5–6, are heavily worn, possibly from later reuse. Traces of cement, presumably also the result of secondary use, are preserved along the bottom right corner and within the break in the upper right corner.

Corinth inv. I 97-1

Fig. 1

H. 0.272 m; W. 0.223 m; Th. 0.10 m; L.H. 0.04–0.05 m (lines 1–3), 0.02 m (line 4), 0.015–0.022 m (lines 5–6); interlinear spacing 0.008 m (lines 1–4); 0.005 m (lines 5–6)

*saec. II p.*

- 1 [----] . AE · C . [...?]  
[-----SAC]ERDOS  
[----P]ROSERPINA
- 4 [----] MARMOREA ·  
[---?] *vacat* (0.035 m)  
[-----ετ]οὰν καὶ ναὸν Πλου-  
[τῶνος -- τὰ] προσκομήματα ΔΗ  
[---?] *vacat* (0.02 m)

## COMMENTARY

Line 1: Before the A is a slight trace of a vertical stroke with a serif at the bottom of the line, which could possibly belong to I, N, or H. The interpuncts between the E and the C in line 1 and at the end of line 4 are roughly triangular; both are positioned slightly above the midpoint of the line. After the C there is also the trace of a vertical stroke at the bottom of the line and a horizontal ending in a serif, which can only be an E or L. There is space for only one letter after this trace. If the cutter used a ligature here as he did in line 3, then we must admit the possibility of more than one letter. We should expect the name of the *sacerdos* here, but unfortunately, not enough of this line is preserved to speculate what the name may have been.<sup>2</sup>

Line 2: Perhaps a continuation of the name or another title.

Line 3: A slight trace of the serif at the bottom of the diagonal of the R is visible at the break. This trace is not visible on the photograph, but can be seen clearly both on the stone and a squeeze. The last three letters are cut in ligature, apparently because the cutter began to run out of space for the name of the deity at the end of the line. For a similar use of A and N in ligature, see *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 152, line 6.

If the stele was originally much wider, we might expect the name of another deity. In this case one could restore Ceres in conjunction with Proserpina<sup>3</sup> or possibly Pluto.

Line 4: There is an interpunct after MARMOREA. Latin inscriptions from Corinth are not usually punctuated in this way at the end of the text except in the case of an abbreviation, which we do not have here. The Latin inscription perhaps continued to another line and finished there, thus explaining the *vacat* on the right of the stone. The possibility that the inscription continued on another block to the right also cannot be excluded.

MARMOREA could refer to any number of architectural elements or to decoration, such as revetment.<sup>4</sup>

Line 5: At the left, before the alpha, is a trace of a stroke curving to the upper right. This could be an omicron or, less likely, a theta.

We should expect a verb before the direct object. Possibilities include ἐποίησεν or ἐπεσκεύασεν, found on *IG* IV 203 (lines 19 and 23) from Isthmia in relation to προσκομύματα dedicated in the temples of Demeter and Kore and in the Plutoneion, respectively.

Line 6: The right vertical stroke, the right half of the horizontal, and part of the left vertical stroke of what can only be a pi are preserved before the rho. The vertical of the rho extends 0.011 m below the line and curves slightly to the left at the bottom. The final two letters are ΔΗ. There is no space for further letters on this line, thus these two letters may be an abbreviation. If ΔΗ is not an abbreviation, then we must once again admit the possibility that the inscription extended onto another block to the right, but this seems unlikely as there is no clamp on the top of the stone. Furthermore, if the sawn bottom is the result of a secondary use, then the existence of a seventh line could certainly be assumed. A hypothetical seventh line on the extant stele, however, is highly unlikely considering that a

2. Cf. *SEG* XXXVII 559 no. 4, a bilingual Latin and Greek text from Kassandreia in which A. Κορυνθίσιος Ταραντίνος is honored for dedicating a gymnasium with its προσκομύματα to the city with his own money.

3. Cf. *CIL* III 547 from Eleusis: Cere[ri] | [et Proserpi]nae.

4. For examples of marble revetment dedicated at Corinth, see *Corinth* VIII, iii, nos. 170, 322, 340.

space of only 0.02 m is uninscribed at the right edge of the stone below line 6.

The last two letters, ΔΗ, could be an abbreviation for the monetary unit denarius, denarii. This is paralleled in *IEphesos* no. 27 (lines 111–112, 324, 362–363, 530–531). In each of these cases, the word *προσκόμηναι* is followed by the name of a divinity in the genitive case, the abbreviation of ΔΗ, and then a numerical amount. Another possible abbreviation, especially if the inscription continued onto another block, is Δή(μητρος).

The original width of the stone cannot be determined with any accuracy. All that we can say with certainty is that the stele had to be wide enough to accommodate the three missing letters [SAC] on the left side of line 2. Since calculations of the minimum number of letters missing at the left side of the stone do not yield a satisfactory text, it would appear that the stone was wider than just the three letter spaces needed to fill out [SAC]ERDOS of line 2.

### THE DATE OF THE INSCRIPTION

To propose a date for this inscription, we must examine the relationship between the Latin and Greek texts, since we have no prosopographical or historical evidence to serve as the basis for assigning a date. The text is not sufficiently preserved to argue that this is a true bilingual inscription with a literal translation of the Latin into Greek. It is also possible that the two texts are not contemporaneous, for the Greek may have been inscribed after the Latin. The number of bilingual or Latin and Greek texts found at Corinth is too small to improve our interpretation of the inscription.<sup>5</sup> All that can be said with certainty is that Greek inscriptions are rare in Roman Corinth in the period before Hadrian. J. H. Kent, in fact, maintains that until the time of Hadrian, nearly all official inscriptions at Corinth were published in Latin.<sup>6</sup> Only after this time does the percentage of official texts inscribed in Greek increase in number. At best we can conclude that the primacy of the Latin text suggests a date roughly around the time of Hadrian, or slightly earlier, and that the presence of the lunate sigma and

5. Only five inscriptions from Corinth (*Corinth* VIII, i, nos. 71, 130; *Corinth* VIII, iii, nos. 276, 306, 342) have both Greek and Latin on the same stone. Only one of these (*Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 276), which was found in Solomos and not Corinth itself, is a literal translation from the one language to the other.

6. *Corinth* VIII, iii, pp. 18–19. Kent notes here that of 104 inscriptions datable prior to Hadrian's reign, only three (*Corinth* VIII, i, nos. 14, 19, 70) were inscribed in Greek, two of which are lists of victors from the Isthmian games. To this number should now be added a fourth published by Martin

(1977, no. 1, pp. 178–179 = *SEG* XXVI 394). Geagan (1975 = *SEG* XLV 234) also published another Greek inscription from Corinth predating Hadrian's reign; it records an official letter of Trajan to a synod at Isthmia. Another list of Isthmian victors has been published since the appearance of *Corinth* VIII, iii (Biers and Geagan 1970) that is datable to A.D. 127, during Hadrian's reign. A total of only six Greek texts from Corinth can be dated prior to the reign of Hadrian, four of which deal with the Isthmian games and a fifth with an Isthmian synod. This adds further weight to the case that our text should be dated close to the Hadrianic period.

a capital mu in the Greek text points to a date as early as the reign of Hadrian.

Close parallels for the Latin letter forms, which might assist us in dating the inscription, do not exist at Corinth.<sup>7</sup> The presence of a lunate sigma within a Greek text has generally been used to date Greek inscriptions from Corinth to the second half of the 2nd century A.C., but it can be earlier.<sup>8</sup> The use of the lunate sigma is also frequently associated with the lunate epsilon, cursive (minuscule/lower case) mu, and cursive omega. Of these letters we have only mu preserved on the stone, but not in its cursive form. Several published inscriptions from Corinth on which both a lunate sigma and a capital mu appear have been dated between the reigns of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius.<sup>9</sup> The evidence of the Latin and Greek texts together, therefore, suggests a Hadrianic date for this inscription, but does not exclude the possibility that it is post-Hadrianic.

### POSSIBLE ASSOCIATION WITH THE ISTHMIAN SANCTUARY OF POSEIDON

The use of *προσκομήματα* in line 6 suggests one possible interpretation of the text. This word, paralleled elsewhere, refers to adornments in buildings such as temples, stoas, gymnasia, and theaters.<sup>10</sup> The most useful parallel is *IG IV 203* from Isthmia, now in Verona, a catalogue of P. Licinius Priscus Iuventianus's dedications at the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. Priscus and his family are well known from Corinth and Isthmia as generous benefactors.<sup>11</sup> Among Priscus's dedications recorded on this stele are the *προσκομήματα* in temples of Demeter and Kore located in the Sacred Glen (lines 16–18), his restoration of the Plutoneion (lines 20–21), and his erection of a stoa next to the stadium (line 24):<sup>12</sup>

ν τόν τε | περίβολον τῆς ἱερᾶς νάπης καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ | ναοὺς ν  
Δήμητρος ν καὶ Κόρης καὶ Διονύσου | καὶ Ἀρτέμιδος σὺν τοῖς ἐν

7. Several inscriptions do show similarities in letter forms, but unfortunately, they are not datable by any criteria other than their letter forms. For example, see *Corinth VIII*, ii, no. 103, and *Corinth VIII*, iii, no. 222, where the A, E, M, O, R, and S all show similar characteristics, including serifs. The editors offer no dates for these inscriptions. Cf. also *Corinth VIII*, ii, no. 12, and *Corinth VIII*, iii, no. 237, which are both dated to the second quarter of the 2nd century A.C. Although their letter forms do not exactly parallel those on our inscription, they do share some similarities.

8. See *Corinth VIII*, iii, p. 36. For examples within the Hadrianic period, see *Corinth VIII*, iii, nos. 124, 139.

9. *Corinth VIII*, i, no. 86; *Corinth VIII*, iii, nos. 139, 223, 269.

10. *CIG 3080* (Teos); *IG IV 203* (Isthmia); *SEG XI 923* (Gytheion); *IEphesos* nos. 10, 27, 3214+3334 (*SEG XXXIII 946*) and *SEG XXVIII 866* (Ephesos); *SEG XXXV 744* (Kalindoia); *SEG XLI 910* (Aphrodisias); *TAM II*, i 396 (Patara); *SEG XXXVII 559* (Kassandraia); [Longinus] *Subl.* 43.3.

11. For epigraphical references to Priscus, see *IG IV 202*, 203; *IG XIV 2543*; *Corinth VIII*, i, no. 105; *Corinth VIII*, ii, no. 70; *Corinth VIII*, iii, nos. 199–201, 306; Clement 1976, p. 230 (*SEG XXVI 410*). For discussions of Priscus and the inscriptions, see Broneer 1939 (*SEG XI 51*); Robert 1940; Robert 1966, pp. 754–755; Ritti 1981, pp. 30–

31, no. 6 (*SEG XXXIX 340*); Puech 1983, pp. 35–41 (*SEG XXXV 264*); *Isthmia IV*, pp. 10–11 (*SEG XXXVII 263*); Geagan 1989 (*SEG XXXIX 340*); Jordan (1994, pp. 115–116, note 7 = *SEG XLIV 303*), who “tentatively associates” another inscription previously published by Clement (1974, pp. 110–111 = *SEG XXIX 339*) with Priscus's building program; Piérart 1998, pp. 97–100; for his prosopography, see *PIR<sup>2</sup> V*, i, p. 55, no. 232.

12. For a discussion of the temples located in the Sacred Glen, see *Isthmia II*, pp. 113–116. *IG IV 203* also records a number of other monuments that were either constructed or restored by Priscus.

αὐτοῖς ἀγ[άλ]μασιν καὶ προσκοσμήμασιν καὶ προνά[οις] | ἐκ  
 τῶν ἰδίων ἐποίησεν *v* καὶ τοὺς ναο[ὺς] | τῆς Εὐετηρίας καὶ τῆς  
 Κόρης *v* καὶ τὸ Πλ[ου]τῶνειον καὶ τὰς ἀναβάσεις καὶ τὰ  
 ἀναλήμματα ὑπὸ σεισμῶν καὶ παλαιότητος διαλελυμένα  
 ἐπεσκεύασεν *vv* ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ | τὴν στοὰν τὴν πρὸς τῷ σταδίῳ  
 σὺν | τοῖς κεκαμαρωμένοις οἴκοις *v* καὶ προσίκοσμήμασιν *vv*  
 ὑπὲρ ἀγορανομίας | *v* ἀνέθηκεν. *v*<sup>13</sup>

A second fragmentary inscription, *SEG XXXIX* 340, also relates to the activities of Priscus at Isthmia.<sup>14</sup> Recorded on this stele is the response from a proconsul, possibly the governor of Achaia, regarding Priscus's request to purchase the ruins of the stoa of Regulus in order to transform it into fifty *oikoi* for competitors at the Isthmian games.<sup>15</sup> The completion of this project is only one of the dedications for which Priscus was honored in *IG IV* 203.

The dedication of *προσκοσμήματα* in temples of Demeter and Kore and the restoration of the Plutoneion, together with the reference to a stoa on the Isthmian stele (*IG IV* 203), raise the possibility that this new Corinthian inscription is another record of Priscus's benefactions at the Isthmian sanctuary. This new inscription is the only literary or epigraphic testimony for temples dedicated to these deities at Corinth, except for a reference to Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth by Pausanias,<sup>16</sup> but, as we have seen, temples of Demeter and Kore and a Plutoneion at Isthmia are attested.

Several difficulties are immediately apparent in associating the inscription with Priscus's building program at Isthmia. First, Priscus's program is generally dated to the second half of the 2nd century A.C.<sup>17</sup> Such a date is most likely too late for this inscription. Second, there seems to be no way to construe Priscus's name with the surviving letters in line 1. Furthermore, we would not expect the title of *sacerdos*. Priscus is known to have held the title of *ἀρχιερεὺς διὰ βίου* when he was honored for his benefactions at Isthmia on *IG IV* 203.<sup>18</sup> We should expect *archiereus*, a simple transliteration of the Greek into Latin, as Priscus is referred to in *Corinth*

13. *IG IV* 203, lines 14–27. The text is based on Geagan's interpretation (1989, p. 350), with a few modifications based on the text of Ritti (1981, p. 31, no. 6) and on the photographs provided by both Broneer (1939, p. 187) and Ritti (1981, p. 30). Ritti bracketed the last two letters in lines 17 and 19, and the last three in line 18, which were read both in *IG IV* 203 and by Geagan. Ritti did not include the *vacats* in his edition, which were noted by Geagan, nor did he bracket the last two letters in line 20. Both photographs clearly show the *vacats* and indicate that the final two letters of line 20 no longer survive on the stone, and thus I bracket them here.

14. Geagan 1989 = *SEG XXXIX* 340. This inscription, which Geagan refers to as Stele B, consists of ten joining fragments found at Corinth and Isthmia. The Corinthian fragment was originally published by Broneer (1939). For this inscription, see also *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 306. The Isthmian fragment was first reported by Broneer (1955, p. 124), who concluded that the stele was originally set up at Isthmia; see also the comments of Geagan (1989, p. 349).

15. For the possible identification of the proconsul with the governor of Achaia, see Geagan 1989, pp. 354–355. For a discussion of the *oikoi* and *IG IV*

203, see Jordan and Spawforth 1982, pp. 67–68 (*SEG XXXII* 364), and Jordan 1994, p. 115.

16. Paus. 2.4.7. For a detailed discussion of Demeter and Kore at Corinth, see *Corinth* XVIII, iii, pp. 1–11.

17. For the date, see Geagan 1989, pp. 358–360; Gebhard 1993, pp. 89–93; and Gebhard, Hemans, and Hayes 1998, pp. 438–444.

18. *IG IV* 203, lines 4–5; see also *IG IV* 202; *IG XIV* 2543; *Corinth* VIII, ii, pp. 53–54, no. 70; and *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 199. Priscus is also attested simply as *ιερεὺς*: *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 201, a statue base on which is inscribed Ἰουβεντιανὸς | ἱερεὺς.

VIII, ii, no. 70, and *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 199. These discrepancies, therefore, indicate that Priscus's building program and this inscription should not be associated.

The final issue that must be addressed is the original location of the stele. The inscription is probably too early to be associated with Priscus's building program at the Isthmian sanctuary, and the monuments mentioned in it might better be sought at Corinth itself. This is, however, not conclusive evidence for the original location of the stele. Its findspot in Corinth, as has already been seen in the case of *SEG XXXIX* 340, is not proof that the inscription was originally set up there.<sup>19</sup> It is certainly possible that the stone was originally set up at Isthmia and later moved to Corinth.

## CONCLUSION

The inscription on this stele, if it refers to buildings at Corinth, may shed important new light on the topography and monuments there. It is unfortunate that the name of the dedicant is not preserved, but it records what may be the first testimony of a temple of Pluto and a stoa possibly associated with it at Corinth. It seems unlikely that this inscription should be associated with the building program of P. Licinius Priscus Iuventianus at Isthmia. The fact that the monuments mentioned on this new inscription are also attested there does, however, raise various other possibilities: 1) that the stone refers to monuments at Isthmia and was originally set up there; 2) that the stone refers to monuments at Isthmia, but was originally set up at Corinth; or 3) that the stone refers to buildings at Corinth and was originally set up there. The last of these, if true, would also suggest that either a local citizen or a prominent Roman other than Priscus was responsible for the construction or restoration of the monuments mentioned on the stone. More evidence, however, must be forthcoming to place any conclusion beyond dispute.

19. This is also the case with *Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 201, a statue base in honor of Priscus found in New Corinth, which Kent believed originated at Isthmia, not Corinth. I found no associated or joining fragments among the unpublished inscriptions from Isthmia.

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