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**Erotic Footprints on Two Rupestral Inscriptions: Attica and Thera**

This paper aims to include the inscribed footprints in the erotic contexts of two inscriptions. We may view these imprints as part of a little-noticed aspect of ancient foot fetishism.

Merle Langdon found fifteen pairs of ancient foot outlines (*plantae pedis*) carved into the bedrock on Mt Hymettos. He points out that two pair of these footprints accompany a late fifth-century kalos inscription. In addition, what look like a double phallus and a crudely-rendered pudenda muliebria emphasize the erotic context.

Langdon compares this Attic inscription to IG 12.3 553 = Suppl. 1417 (Thera): an archaic pederastic rupestral inscription with an accompanying pair of footprints and what looks like a phallus graffito nearby. He asserts that the foot outlines "are commemorative without religious or erotic meaning." Indeed, foot inscriptions in sanctuaries and elsewhere often serve as simple mementos.

The pseudo-Aristotelian Problems 4.5 (877a) associates sexual intercourse with barefootedness: "Why is it that bare feet are not good for sexual intercourse?" Its very existence is likely a response to a popular association between the sex act and the feet. This idea possibly lies behind vase paintings of a shod Zeus chasing a barefoot Ganymede, pairs of lovers consisting of shod *erastai* and barefoot *eromenoi/ai*, and a shod Achilles bandaging a barefoot Patroclus. In Old Comedy "*pous*" (foot) was slang for "penis", and the double association was known to the audience of Euripides' *Medea*.

The eroticization of feet finds further support in several late Greek fictional letters attributed to Alciphron and Philostratus, which show an overtly erotic context of footprints (*ikhnê*) and emphasize the ground's receiving a mark of the beloved's tread.

Literary evidence thus illustrates the inscriptions, where the *plantae pedis* literally "walk on" the lovers: making a visual statement to accompany the written words -- a metaphor for sex. The foot images actually tread upon the writing itself, and actualize the lover's wish. The Theran and Hymettan carved footprints are more than the commemorative personal mementos. In these two cases, feet are erotically-charged illustrations, emphasizing the passionate content of their accompanying texts.