

Βιβλιοκρισία

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Constanze Graml. 2020. *The sanctuary of Artemis Soteira in the Kerameikos of Athens*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. PHILIPPIKA - Altertumswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen / Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures 136. 226 pages, 63 plates, 5 foldouts (printed on both sides), hardcover. ISBN 978-3-447-11286-4.

Principal focal points of this book are the establishment of a cult site amid the necropolis of Kerameikos and its role within the sacred landscape of Attica. The *temenos* is surrounded by grave monuments lining the Street of the Tombs, and in scholarly works on ancient Greek religion it has been listed as a place of worship of the chthonic goddess Hekate. This identification, however, is attacked by Graml, who argues for Artemis Soteira being the dedicatee instead. Concentrating on the finds' religious connotations, the author aims to unravel the topographical, cultural, historical and political setting of the sanctuary, in order to better understand it in the religious background of the *polis* of Athens in the Hellenistic period.

In the first pages, the author walks us through the early excavations and primary attitudes toward the finds, down to recent restoration works. Graml's painstaking search of the archive has yielded diaries, manuscripts, drawings and sketches; however, a most demanding task was their juxtaposition to extant material evidence. In a holistic approach, Graml aims to re-contextualize all known finds and to interpret their function. To that end, she scrutinizes all previously neglected¹ or ranked as secondary material evidence.

The text is well articulated, segmented into digestible sub-chapters. Handy indices and the tabular arrangement of chronological pointers and cross-references add to the reader-friendly presentation. The catalogue of finds constitutes a corpus of information *per se*. Apart from being aesthetically smart, the inclusion of excerpts from diaries and manuscripts demonstrates the eloquence and utility of sketches, especially in the current digital era. Besides, archival data add to the historicity of research, since prior investigation defines a temporal and historical phase on its own. Images of finds embedded in the catalogue are balanced by illustrations of built structures and drawn reconstructions by Yannis Nakas, bringing out the spatial context and furnishing, with details in color where necessary (e.g. re-used blocks).

The idea of a *temenos* within the premises of a necropolis is fascinating, all the more so, because the cult recipient was not a chthonic deity but –according to Graml– Artemis Soteira. The reader cannot help comparing with Christian orthodox cemeteries, where a church is the epicenter of the graveyard. The interpolated brief excursion to cult sites within necropoleis is well-placed.

The Hellenistic votive inscription to Artemis Soteira, which largely determined the revised identification of the dedicatee, was engraved on a re-used orthostate, which subsequently served as the altar-table (*τράπεζα*). The matter of re-usage in antiquity re-emerges due to the robbed out monuments of Lysimachides and Kephisodoros. The gradual growth of the necropolis necessitated a clear demarcation of boundaries. Paradoxically, already existing walls were joined to form the *temenos* enclosure, which entailed the heterogeneous appearance of grave precincts, with disparate building materials and embedded *spolia*. The changing environs and gradual

transformation is a fact –and a factor– to be kept in mind while trying to comprehend polyvalent sites like the Kerameikos. Adaptability was a quality of the ancient Greeks, in the present case manifested in the re-contextualization of the Hydrophoros relief, converted from sepulchral to votive.

Modifications raise the question of management and administration, which Graml tackles based on the available epigraphic evidence. Yet, the extraction of polygonal blocks from the neighboring grave precinct of Lysimachides, resulting in a gap in its façade, sharply contrasts the regulations and building contracts of Classical antiquity. Apparently the status of ownership played some role: privately organized cult and privately owned grave precincts operated differently from sanctuaries managed by the state or the Amphictyonic Council, for example. On the other hand, the above described picture in the Kerameikos conforms to the decree/edict by Demetrius Phalereus in 317/07 B.C. for cutting down on superfluous expenses and extravagant luxury in sepulchral memorials. Whether the plot occupied by a *temenos* could be privately owned calls for a comment, especially as the notion of privatization affords some clarification. Gytheion² sets a good example. Given the city's financial strain, the restoration, maintenance and proper function of the dilapidated sanctuary of Apollo had to fall back on private attention and revenues. As a reward for the sanctuary's refurbishment, the Assembly awarded two wealthy individuals with hereditary priesthood for life, thus appointing them curators –rather than owners– of the sanctuary. They undertook the commitment to maintain and upkeep the sacred land, which was neither donated nor endowed but, instead, entrusted with. Migeotte stresses that the terms *εξουσία* and *επιμέλεια* mean caretaking in the execution of duties. Of course, for the individuals in charge, this was an opportunity for distinction and public self-representation – a typical Hellenistic phenomenon.

The extraction of blocks from funeral façades, which Graml dissociates from the hostilities of 338 B.C., raises questions: Were the monuments obsolete or fallen in disuse? Under what regime was such despoliation legitimate? Did the funerary domain make way for the hieratic? The interpolation of a *temenos* in a cemetery might denote fusion of boundaries between the sacred and the sepulchral (almost along the lines of the conversion of the Hydrophoros relief). However, the establishment of a *temenos* in the vicinity of abandoned grave precincts disregards –if not degrades– its immediate architectural landscape. An emergency is detectable here.

Graml convincingly argues for a Hellenistic rather than Roman date, based on epigraphic remains and securely dated excavation horizons anchored in historic events. Among the components of the *temenos*, a niche with a prismatic statue (?) base, a possible sundial and an oracle are described. Based on previously neglected epigraphic evidence, Graml argues against the earlier identification of this *temenos* as dedicated to Hekate, which was essentially founded on a base with a triangular incuse/recess, apparently to support a prismatic shaft. Votive triangular pillars on a much larger scale are known in Classical sanctuaries (Delphi, Olympia, Thermon), crowned by statues, as inferred from the respective dedicatory epigrams. Here the shaft was expected to have carried a statue of the venerated deity; the prismatic shaft crowned by three heads in relief is regarded as ideal to fit the recess in the aforementioned base.

Despite the possible fusion/syncretism between Artemis and Hekate, Graml relies on parallels from Delos and Macedonia to associate the statue base exclusively with the epigraphically attested goddess Artemis.

Interestingly, the few preserved offerings suggest male dedicators. Because Maron donated the *τράπεζα* of the altar, and as it was customary for cult-staff to dedicate installations, thus equipping the sanctuary and facilitating its functionality, Graml deduces that Maron could have been a priest – a proposal reinforced by the graves of Maron and his family in close proximity to the *temenos*. Two cult associations (*θίασοι*) are presumed within a two centuries' time-span, one for Artemis *Αρίστη* and *Καλλίστη* and another (the *koinon* of the Soteriasts) for Artemis Soteira, with exclusively male participants. Indirectly, this corroborates the deeply rooted cult of Artemis, regardless of her different adjectives. What remains unresolved is why Pausanias referred only

2 Dignas 2006, 71–84, esp. 78–79; Meier 2012, 41–48, esp. 46–47; Migeotte 2018, 93–101, esp. 99–100.

to Αρίστη and Καλλίστη and, consequently, what was the state of preservation of the *temenos* of Σώτειρα by the time the traveler visited the Kerameikos.

The author evaluates the *epiclesis*/invocation Σώτειρα in Hellenistic Athens and the statuette of Artemis representing her as a torch-bearer (*Φωσφόρος*); the statuette is thought to convey the intertwining of light with salvation, popular in Hellenistic religion. The performance of the *Φωσφόρεια* festivals further emphasizes the guise of Artemis as light-bringer.

Although Graml rejects Brueckner's proposal for an aniconic stele of Hekate represented in the votive relief of a sacrificial procession (clg. no 20), it is quite likely that the artist carved an abbreviation of the partly aniconic triangular shaft crowned with relief heads. Given the unfinished state of the relief, the heads were yet to be carved. Graml maintains that, by depicting a foreign female worshipper, the scene is automatically put into a non-Greek setting and the venerated deity has non-Greek traits. She infers this from the rare depiction of foreign worshippers on Athenian votive reliefs. However, Kim's analysis³ of the depiction of foreigners in art suggests that they were not regarded as an exotic element, but rather integrated in society. The large number of foreigners depicted in art of the Hellenistic period, in particular, was due to the cosmopolitan lifestyle in Greece, after the expeditions of Alexander the Great. The notion of cosmopolitanism is based on equality for all people.

Graml deduces the veneration of Bendis in the Kerameikos from the aforementioned votive relief (clg. no 20), which she explains as probably serving as *αφίδρυμα*. In our opinion, the relief alludes to the broad spectrum of worshippers and the appeal of the *temenos* of Artemis Soteira to non-Greek population, as well. There is no reason to extrapolate the worshipper's foreignness to the venerated deity, seeing no clue to a non-Greek setting in the scene. On the contrary, the relief most probably features an actual component of the *temenos* in the Kerameikos, the partly aniconic stele.

The position of the relief, immured in the altar, could instead be symbolic/emblematic, to reflect the guise of Artemis Soteira, precisely as delineated by Graml: a goddess actively involved in the public domain, in military events and the everyday life of Athens, inhabited also by foreigners and metics. The depiction of a foreign worshipper in such a central position, as an altar, reaches out to the respective portion of the city's population, declaring Artemis as warrant of salvation for non-Greeks alike. The location and the transitory character of the Kerameikos as a notional threshold fit such a reading. A brand new publication,⁴ discussing Soteira as saviour of ships and a Hellenistic Mediterranean deity, endorses her cross-cultural importance and, by extension, the significance of the homonymous *temenos* in the Kerameikos.

As concerns the consideration of Bendis as a potential *σύμβωμος θεά* of Artemis Soteira in the Kerameikos, let us note that the Hellenistic period favored religious syncretism. In this sense, fusion between Artemis and Hekate cannot be excluded, either.

Sprinklers (*περιρραντήρια*) or water-basins for cleansing marked the territorial transition to a different realm. Allegory is yet another nodal feature of ancient Greek religion; here it involves topography. Based on installations and iconography, Graml categorizes the rites as cleansing, sacrificial, and dedicatory, i.e. the process of presenting a votive offering. A marble basin is recorded in the archives as dedicated by a male from Antioch. Again, the action of a foreigner or metic endorses our alternative reading of the supposed 'Bendis relief'. A member of priest Maron's family also originated from Antioch. Apparently foreigners were admitted/welcome to this *temenos*, which further confirms its widespread, cross-cultural recognition, even though it was not a state establishment.

The inclusion of an oracle in a *temenos* within a necropolis is yet another intriguing aspect. Essential in its configuration is the omphaloid stone capping of a deep subterranean shaft, of which the interior walls were sheathed in tiles. Graml convincingly argues for Paian being a byname for Apollo, the prophet-god *par excel-*

3 Kim 2012.

4 Bedin and Gambash 2021, 89–119.

lence, but she doubts the use of the shaft as a well. In our opinion, the shaft suggests liaison with the bowels of the earth. The placing of the omphalos above the shaft, as if blockading it (rather than marking it), could perhaps be viewed as reminiscent of the setting at Delphi, where the potential use of the omphalos to blockade the emission of prophetic gases in periods beyond the operation of the oracle, has been discussed. This indirectly corroborates Graml's proposed association of Paian with Apollo.

The omphalos sealing off the shaft, and hence serving as a marker of some obsolete/redundant function, sounds like a feeble hypothesis, given that these two components make better sense as contemporaneously functioning. The shaft was a notional channel to the underground, regardless of whether water welled up here or not. In this way, the setting reproduced –or borrowed– features of renowned oracles of the Classical antiquity, such as the Delphic one (with the chasm of earth) and that of Trophonios at Levadeia, where the descent to a subterranean chamber was fundamental in the ritual process of divination. This makes the omphalos in the Kerameikos a mantic accessory, rather than a mere capping stone.

The *θριγκός* framing and secluding the omphalos from the rest of the *temenos* could use further elaboration. This entablature could well have formed part of a baldachin or a canopy, which again points to Delphi and the proposed locations of the omphalos there. So does the subterranean shaft and the water probably used in the process of divination – something not accepted by the author. The moulded entablature block (clg. No 87) with an archivolt spring should not be dissociated from the *temenos* so readily. Even if the span of the arch does not match the width of the niche, its assignment to a superstructure sheltering the omphalos/oracle is worth exploring, especially since they both date in the Roman times. The fragment might be relevant to the *θριγκός*. As for the niche, I think Graml correctly assumes that its walls were coated in stucco.

From a cultic perspective, Graml seeks the purpose served by a *temenos* to Artemis so close to that of Artemis Mounichia in Piraeus, and its role in the sacred landscape of Hellenistic Athens. The answer probably lies in the diversity and versatility of cult practices in ancient Greece, as pointed out by the author and earlier by De Polignac and Polinskaya. We can say that freedom in religious expression defines the quintessence of paganism precisely because it was being adapted and adjusted to individual needs.

Graml proposes a club sanctuary for a dining society, which possibly also functioned as a funerary association. Such an interpretation is not far from Geometric funeral dining and communal feasting, usually in conjunction with ancestors' cult, which was practiced in Attica (Athens, Eleusis) as shown by the studies of Mazarakis Ainian and Alexandridou.⁵

For more answers, Graml aptly turns to topography. Due to its location, intra-urban and extra-urban at the same time, the Kerameikos with the Pompeion marking the beginning of major processions should indeed be understood as a symbolic topographic threshold into and from the city of Athens. Within its premises, the mingled land use, funerary and industrial, shows the involvement of the religious sentiment in every aspect of ancient life. By interpreting the overall setting of the *temenos* of Soteira as a topographical threshold, the foreign worshipper in the supposed 'Bendis relief' makes even more sense: the savior light-bearer Greek goddess embraced the foreigners and their homage.

If the cult of Soteira was important to the public, why was she worshipped in a privately established *temenos*, privately undertaking the furnishing, enclosure and maintenance? Perhaps the answer to this contradiction lies in the pluralism of the ancient Greek religion.

After the battle at Chaeroneia and the settling of a garrison in Athens, the city was separated from its port, Piraeus. War ordained the shifting of religious activities to other cult-spots. Under the circumstances, Graml envisions the Kerameikos *temenos* operating as a replacement/substitute of the Mounichia sanctuary – an explanation consonant with the sense of emergency detected in the extraction of building material from the grave precincts.

5 Alexandridou 2017; Mazarakis Ainian and Alexandridou 2011.

From the outset, the reader's understanding of the topography is one of the author's main concerns and it is served well. Clues to walking levels, passageways, axes of visibility and perhaps movement, as implied by the orientation of inscriptions, optimize the reader's perception of space and spatial development. While cataloguing the finds, the author devotes a section to structural remains, a survey of walls built of rubble, *spolia* and bricks. Here the archival records were valuable in supplying the original picture seen by the excavator. Amendments and decay in the course of centuries, along with consolidation works conducted after the walls' recovery in the 19th–20th centuries, altered the post-excavation picture. The re-used ancient bricks to stabilize the structures, perhaps uncritically employed in such quantity, changed their appearance radically. Dating and evaluation becomes a truly difficult task, which Graml copes with patiently, struggling to notionally 'peel off' all posterior layers and interventions that conceal the walls' original outlook and to restore their state when unearthed, in other words, the last phase of their ancient use.

It is fair to say that the book at hand inputs to studies in Athenian religion.

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