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The Sanctuary of Artemis Soteira
in the Kerameikos of Athens

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Contents

Foreword.....	IX
Preliminaries.....	XIII
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 The So-Called Hekateion – a Detective Story About the History of Research and Its Consequences	1
1.1.1 Discovery and First Excavation of the Sanctuary by Kyriakos Mylonas in 1890	4
1.1.2 Excavation Campaigns from 1907 to 1915 by Alfred Brueckner and the Sondage of Camillo Praschniker and Konstantinos Rhomaïos in 1910	5
1.1.3 The First Restoration Works Carried Out by Alfred Brueckner and Hubert Knackfuß in 1914/1915	8
1.1.4 Post-Second-World-War Restoration Carried Out by Dieter Ohly.....	9
1.1.5 Work Conducted During the Era of Franz Willemsen (1961–1975).....	10
1.1.6 Work Conducted During the Directorship of Ursula Knigge (1975–1995).....	11
1.1.7 The Cleaning Campaigns in 2012 and 2013 and the Following Restoration Work Under the Auspices of Jutta Stroszeck	11
1.1.8 The Excavation Campaign 2015 Under the Directorship of Jutta Stroszeck – a Sanctuary Within the Sanctuary.....	12
1.1.9 History of Research on the <i>temenos</i> and Certain Finds With Provenance in the Sanctuary.....	13
1.2 Approaching What Is Already Known? Methodology of the Investigation At Hand	14
2 Back to the Beginning: Reconstructing the Archaeological Evidence at the Time of the Discovery.....	17
2.1 The Enclosing Walls	18
2.2 Built Structures Used for Ritual Practice.....	21
2.2.1 The Rectangular Block-Shaped Altar and the Adjacent Table.....	21
2.2.2 The Basis With the Prismatic Recess.....	24
2.2.3 The Omphaloid Monument and Its Substructure	25

2.3	Further Built Structures Within the <i>temenos</i>	25
2.3.1	Well B 18 and Its Phases of Use	25
2.3.2	The Cylindrical Lime Stone Block: a Possible Sundial	29
3	Finds From the <i>temenos</i> Area and Their Critical Evaluation	31
3.1	Potential Biases of the Small Finds	31
3.2	Analysis of the Finds – Chronology, Original Provenance of the Artefacts, and Function in the Sanctuary	32
4	The Spatial and Temporal Setting of the <i>temenos</i> : the Development of the Area South to the Street of the Tombs	37
4.1	Geological, Economical and Historical Factors	37
4.2	The Earliest Archaeologically Attested Structures Along the Street of the Tombs . .	40
4.3	The Late 5 th Century BCE	41
4.4	The Conception of the Necropolis Along the Street of the Tombs from 394/3 BCE until the Restriction of Funerary Expenses by Demetrios of Phaleron	42
4.5	The Area Behind the First Row of Grave Precincts and Its Use After Demetrios of Phaleron	44
4.6	The Establishment of the Sanctuary in the Early Hellenistic Period	45
4.7	The Sanctuary and the Surrounding Necropolis During the Hellenistic Period	46
4.8	The Sanctuary and Necropolis During the Roman Period	47
4.9	The Area's Last Phase of Use and the End of the Sanctuary	49
5	The Cult Recipients	53
5.1	Presupposing Hekate: the Arguments of the First Researchers and Their Refutation	53
5.2	The Attribution of the Sanctuary to Artemis Soteira	56
5.2.1	Who Was Artemis Soteira to the Athenians?	56
5.2.2	Iconography of Artemis Soteira	58
5.3	Another Possible Cult Recipient? The Votive Relief for Bendis	59
5.4	A 3 rd Century CE Addition: the <i>manteion</i> of Paian	61
6	Cult Organisation and Retraceable Ritual Practice in the Sanctuary of Artemis Soteira	63
6.1	Cult Administration	63
6.1.1	The Founding and Administration of the Cult	63
6.1.2	The 1 st Century BCE: the Cult Association of the Soteriasts	65
6.1.3	The Sanctuary of Artemis Soteira: the Cult Precinct of a Funerary Association?	66
6.2	Indications for Cult Practice Within the <i>temenos</i>	68
6.2.1	Founding a Sanctuary	69
6.2.2	Cleansing Rituals Along the Boundaries of the <i>temenos</i>	70
6.2.3	Cleansing Rituals Within the <i>temenos</i>	71
6.2.4	Sacrificial Rituals	72
6.2.5	Dedicatory Rituals	74
6.2.6	Mantic Rituals	76
6.2.7	Purely Performative Rituals	78

7	Artemis Soteira and Attica's Cult Topography	81
7.1	Ancient Greek Religion in Context	81
7.1.1	Athenian Religion	82
7.1.2	Religious Networks and Spatial Entanglements	85
7.1.3	The Relevance of Cults to Community/ies and the Establishment of Cult Centres ..	86
7.1.4	Religious Life at the Kerameikos Site	87
7.2	Artemis Soteira, Bendis and Their Role Within the Athenian Religion	90
7.2.1	The Attic Cult Topography of Artemis Soteira and Bendis	91
7.2.2	Diachronic Aspects of the Cults and the Cult Topography of Artemis Soteira and Bendis	92
7.2.3	Hindered Religious Practice – Substitute Sanctuaries? A Proposal	94
8	Summary and Outlook	99
9	Summaries in German and Modern Greek	101
9.1	Zusammenfassung	101
9.2	Περίληψη	103
10	Catalogue	105
10.1	Construction Survey of the Walls in the Area of the <i>temenos</i>	105
10.2	Finds from the <i>temenos</i>	118
	Inscriptions (Cat. 1–Cat. 15)	122
	Sculpture (Cat. 16–Cat. 25)	141
	Statuary (Cat. 16 and Cat. 17)	141
	Relief (Cat. 18–Cat. 21)	143
	Furnishings (Cat. 22–Cat. 25)	149
	Pottery (Cat. 26–Cat. 86)	151
	Debris of Pottery Production (Cat. 26–Cat. 50)	151
	Others (Cat. 51–Cat. 79)	174
	Terracotta (Cat. 80–Cat. 84)	188
	Lamps (Cat. 85 and Cat. 86)	191
	Architecture (Cat. 87 and Cat. 88)	193
	Various (Cat. 89 and Cat. 90)	194
	Illustration Credits	197
	Bibliography	205
	Indices	223
	Plates	

FOREWORD

An excavation site like the Kerameikos, with a history spanning more than 150 years, might seem to an outsider like a “well-grazed field”. After all, every stone has already been turned over, not once, but many times. New insights into old excavations are accordingly often regarded with scepticism as later researchers will never have the same insight into the archaeological record as the original discoverer and first excavators did. Regarding the study at hand, which focusses on the newly identified sanctuary of Artemis Soteira in the Kerameikos of Athens, this simple fact results in a number of biases, which might seem obvious, but cannot be stressed enough. First, the original and untouched archaeological record is naturally destroyed while excavating. Second, the successors of the first generation of researchers will gain only filtered information, i. e. an already interpreted and maybe even altered/changed archaeological record, the interpretation of which is clearly influenced by the excavators’ own perception. This perception is shaped by their environment, cultural imprint, social status, moral concepts, religious beliefs, political ideas and countless other factors. Contradictory archival data regarding the archaeological record or other seemingly inconsistent information may thus be due to the varying views and expectations of excavators, scholars and others brought to bear on archaeological records and finds. Sometimes, the source of these different views was the personal sphere where sympathies or antipathies between researchers – known from personal correspondence in letters or marginal notes in archival material – found their way into scientific publications. And finally, the succeeding researchers themselves become the next perceptual filter. Their reading of archival data or analysis of old hand-drawn plans or artefacts is shaped by their own cultural imprint. One of the highly regarded research ideals, namely objectivity, is thereby rendered an unattainable ideal. Regardless, abandoning research on intricate subjects is no solution. The attempt to crawl into the mind of a 19th century white male classicist remains challenging in every imaginable matter, especially for a 21st century female academic with a markedly different education. Besides, also the perception of the readers of this study may already have been shaped by expectations acquired on the modern excavation site of the Kerameikos.

The human factor of modern research, however, is not the only complication one has to address in approaching such a project. The complexity of the object of research, which also comprises humans and human activity of the ancient past taking place in a historical geography naturally also comes into play. The modern archaeological park with the name Kerameikos, measuring approximately 3,5 hectares, had a multitude of uses in antiquity. The modern area is i. a. commonly known as the site of one of the most famous necropoleis of the *polis* Athens and of the highly prominent potters’ quarter where masterpieces of Athenian pottery were crafted. Since the term Kerameikos was used with varying meanings already in antiquity and also referred to spaces lying

outside the excavation area, not all information taken from written testimonies can be related to the modern site. Other parts of it, such as those along the Street of the Tombs and the Sacred Way, were likely not included in the ancient understanding of the Kerameikos. For example, the discussion of the terminology on the Inner and the Outer Kerameikos, relating to the separation of two areas by the city walls, demonstrates the difficulties of determining boundaries with regard to the chronology.

Besides the terrain, the things related to the archaeological record are embedded in their own social life'. Regarding their modern find spot, one has to expect that not all of these artefacts were fabricated for their final use. This fact becomes even more obvious when considering the material aspects of religious practice, since the act of placing a thing into a sanctuary can be due to a multitude of motivations: it can provide infrastructure necessary for ritual practice, be an object given due to its personal relevance, or be related to time-, gender-, socially bound norms etc. Some things may have been moved from other contexts and their initial setting and the number of steps their journeys had generally remains obscure. Others were placed/erected prior to the establishment of a cult place and thus, initially had no use within the sanctuary. Due to their spatial setting, however, they were then included at a later stage. Regarding their function after the inclusion, a new intention of use for such things/objects/installations can thus be expected. If this use is only a performative act, the archaeological record remains silent on the change and it depends on the perception and intention of the researcher to put forward a plausible interpretation. Therefore, the research biases are manifold and the careful reader will notice the abundant use of a cautious subjunctive.

In emphasising these various potential biases based on the multitude of perceptions, I am well aware of the irony that it presents results of my very own perception. And moreover, it should certainly not be taken as an accusation of the preceding generations of researchers for relying on the methods of their time. By comparison with current excavation reports using up-to-date methods, such as geophysical prospections or approaches taken from the digital humanities, this study of an excavation carried out over 100 years ago may seem a little antiquarian, as it is based on a cautious study of the accessible archival data, which luckily survived so many decades in the archives of the Kerameikos excavation, the Stadtmuseum Kassel and in the archive of the German Archaeological Institute. Other archival materials unfortunately proved irretraceable. This fragmentary initial situation obviously leads to fragmentary results. Given these preconditions, the work on the one hand aims to be seen as a contribution to the understanding of the research history of one of the most prominent, oldest, and still active excavation sites of Greece, where countless individuals contributed to its exploration. On the other hand, the study wants to make the still retraceable archaeological record of a fascinating but long neglected sanctuary accessible to the research community. And even if this step of interpreting the sanctuary and embedding it into the context of the Athenian *polis* may seem hazardous to some, as it is based on the fragment of a fragment of a fragment, this step has to be made and was attempted, clearly with my very own personal cultural imprint. The potentially controversial impact of this study made it seem well suited for the Philippika series and I sincerely thank the editors, especially Torsten Mattern for accepting my work. The study has been revised and literature on certain aspects of the site included up to 2019. I hope that by publishing my study in English, the supposedly already well-known Hekateion sanctuary, which has to be attributed to Artemis Soteira instead, will get the attention it deserves.

This work would not have been possible without Jutta Stroszeck, head of the Kerameikos excavation, who pointed me towards this special sanctuary and generously granted me permission to study and publish the archaeological record. She also made the archival data accessible. The study

1 Moyer 2016 relating to Appadurai's work (2010) on the social life of things.

was undertaken under the supervision of Heide Frielinghaus (University of Mainz). I thank both for their invaluable input and support.

Moreover, I would like to thank Helga Bumke (University of Halle), Detlev Kreikenbom (University of Mainz), Marietta Horster (University of Mainz), and Klaus Junker (University of Mainz) for their assistance and for their participation in the examination board.

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