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Water in Sanctuaries and Sacred Places

Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and the Argolid

by

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for the degree of
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ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

For the transliteration of Greek names, this thesis steers a course between two different solutions. For well-known gods, authors or places, the Latinised versions are preferred (for example Aeschylus instead of Aiskhylos), while for the others a version closer to the ancient Greek was chosen, such as Asklepios rather than Asclepius. There is no clear-cut solution as to which should be Latinised and others not; the choice was ultimately my own.

Unless mentioned, the translations of literary and epigraphical texts are my own. The abbreviations used for reviews and journals are taken from the *Année Philologique*.

ABV	Beazley, J.D., <i>Attic black-figure vase-painters</i> (New-York: Hacker Art Books, 1978)
ARV ²	Beazley, J.D., <i>Attic red-figure vase-painters</i> , 2 nd edn., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963)
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , 7 vols. (Zürich, 1974-)
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
ThesCRA	<i>Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum</i> (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004-2005)

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Embarking on a PhD is first a personal commitment, but it can shift dangerously close to a lonely quest, in particular when this notoriously difficult academic exercise is done in a different language than your own. When I decided, in late 2003, to write a thesis on the other side of the Channel, little did I know what I was to experience. But, if committing to the task was a choice made on my own, I am indebted to many individuals whom I wish to thank.

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Jane Lachaud, my grandmother, a long time ago gave me my first book on Greek mythology at our home in La Réunion. She saw the beginning of this work but could not see its end. This thesis is dedicated to her memory.

DECLARATION

Pursuant to Regulation 55a of the University of Warwick Regulations Governing Higher Degrees, I hereby declare that the research has been completed by myself alone and that the material submitted in this thesis is not substantially the same as any that I have previously submitted or am currently submitting whether published or in unpublished form, for a degree, diploma, or similar qualification at any university or similar institution.

The material in chapter 1 was presented as a sole-authored paper at the conference, 'The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance' organised by the Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, 5-7 October 2006. The conference paper entitled 'Natural Water Resources and the Sacred in Attica' will be published in the conference proceedings (Brill, forthcoming 2008).

ABSTRACT

Water is often considered a self-explanatory subject by ancient and modern sources alike and as such has not always received the critical attention it deserves. Ginouvès' *Balaneutikè* (1962) remains the one major publication to date. This thesis contributes to a renewed interest in the subject and explores the presence of water in ancient Greek religion in the regions of Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and the Argolid. It uses Pausanias' *Periegesis* as a useful guide although it is not limited to the sites described by the ancient traveller. The thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach and uses both material and literary sources in order to assert the role played by water and the powers it was attributed in cult. Beside this traditional approach, the thesis also explores the question of water as a spatial component in the ancient Greek set of beliefs. For this, it draws on structuralist theories and the more recent development of landscape studies in ancient Greek history.

The first half of the thesis is organised by geographical area and surveys the sites where water had a known religious importance, thus making it possible to compare on a small scale between individual sites and, on a larger scale, between whole regions. Particular attention is paid to a relatively unknown site, the Kyllou-Pera in Attica, which epitomises the characteristics of the sites studied in this thesis as well as the problems created by unclear literary and archaeological evidence. A study of the various qualities and powers attributed to water by the ancient Greeks follows, where the previously surveyed sites and sanctuaries are used as a basis for the interpretations. The thesis finally describes how water possessed a strong spatial dimension and was as such an integral part of the ancient Greek religious landscape.

INTRODUCTION

'Ancient Greek authors tell us comparatively little about what Greece looked like: they assume their readers will know'.¹ A similar statement may be made on what the ancients tell us about water and their religion. Water appears in sources, even abundantly in some of them, but these references often lack the matter-of-factness historians need to fully comprehend water's significance and place in Greek religion. Furthermore, a trap awaits every student of water in ancient Greek history; taking for granted ideas and notions which appear to be very familiar to us. What could seem more natural than the presence of fresh water, this indispensable element of everyday life, in an ancient site? In such a mindset, the danger is to overlook certain questions, thinking that they are self-explanatory and unworthy of discussion, since they seem to belong to issues and realities shared by all human societies at all times. But, because of today's access to fresh clean and safe water, at least in industrialised countries, we are ill-prepared to fully understand what water meant for the Greek women of Athens going to the fountain of Enneakrounos, for the worshipper at a small shrine of the Nymphs, or for the priest at a sanctuary of the healing god Asklepios.²

It may not come as a surprise therefore that so little has been published on the subject. In archaeological studies, the emphasis has been particularly on water supply and display. Yet, Camp's *Water Supply of Ancient Athens from 3000 to 86 BC* remains an unpublished thesis, and Glaser's published thesis on ancient Greek

¹ Rackham (1996), 22.

² On the similar topic of environmental issues see Shipley (1996), 3: 'I enumerate these aspects of modern environmental concern in order to emphasize that the points of contact with a pre-industrial, largely agricultural society such as the ancient Mediterranean are close to zero.'

fountains was not translated and is now almost twenty years old.³ A substantial number of more general publications on water in ancient Greece is in the French language, with for instance the proceedings of the conference organised by the EFA on *L'eau, la santé et la maladie dans le monde grec*, or the series published by the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée on *L'Homme et l'eau en Méditerranée et au Proche-Orient*.⁴ On the more specific subject of water and Greek religion, however, the number of publications is even smaller and the only major study remains René Ginouvès' *Balaneutikè* which, despite being more specifically dedicated to bathing, also studied wider issues of water in Greek religion.⁵ Since then, such studies are only found here and there in articles and books dedicated to other topics.⁶ This thesis seeks to partly rectify this, by exploring the presence of water in the ancient Greek sanctuaries and sacred places. It does not claim to be exhaustive, since the topic of water in Greek religion is vast and can be approached from many different angles. The scope of this study has therefore been limited in several ways in order to have a clearer focus and outcome.

The geographical extent of the thesis is limited to Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and Argolid. These regions have been chosen for reasons of cohesion; they correspond to the continental part of Ian Morris' definition of 'central Greece', and

³ Camp, J.McK., *The Water Supply of Ancient Athens from 3000 to 86 B.C.* (unpublished doctoral thesis: Princeton University, 1977); Glaser, F., *Antike Brunnenbauten in Griechenland*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 161 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983).

⁴ Ginouvès, R. et al. (ed.), *L'eau, la santé et la maladie dans le monde grec*. Actes du colloque organisé à Paris (CNRS et Fondation Singer-Polignac) du 25 au 27 novembre 1992 par le Centre de recherche 'Archéologie et systèmes d'information' et par l'URA 1255 'Médecine grecque', BCH Suppl. 28 (Paris: de Boccard, 1994). The multivolume publication *L'homme et l'eau en Méditerranée et Proche-Orient*, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient (1981-1997) is available on the website of Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée: <<http://www.mom.fr/publinum/>> (last accessed 28/02/08). See also Argoud, G. et al. (ed.), *L'eau et les hommes en Méditerranée et en Mer Noire dans l'antiquité de l'époque mycénienne au règne de Justinien: actes de congrès international Athènes, 20-24 mai 1988* (Athens : Centre national de recherches sociales, 1992).

⁵ Ginouvès R., *Balaneutikè. Recherches sur le Bain dans l'antiquité grecque* BEFAR, Série Athènes 200 (Paris: de Boccard, 1962).

⁶ With the notable exception of the article by S.G. Cole (1988).

hence belonged to the same material culture in the Iron Age, the period when it is believed that many of the characteristic traits of Greek religion coalesced.⁷ Consequently, the first half of the thesis is devoted to a survey of the sites in each of these regions where water appeared to possess a special religious status. The path followed corresponds roughly to that of Pausanias, although the order in which the regions are studied is different and some sites explored here were not visited by the Greek traveller. In this approach, the thesis is unashamedly inspired by Pirenne-Delforge's *L'Aphrodite grecque*.⁸

At this point in the introduction, it is necessary to clarify the distinction made between 'sanctuary' and 'sacred place'. The modern term sanctuary is a difficult and much discussed one. The ancient Greek words are themselves of little help, with *hieron* simply meaning 'sacred place' and *temenos* the place 'cut-off'. For a place to be a sanctuary actually requires very little: a sacred ground where the most basic of the Greek ritual is performed, the animal sacrifice. The aim of this thesis is not to discuss the correlative issues of this definition, but to use it as a basis on which build the arguments. Its limitations have however led to the inclusion of the term 'sacred place' instead of 'sanctuary' because, in many of the sites studied below, the traces of sacrificial practices are not obvious, or clearly absent. Indeed, the Greeks' understanding of the sacredness of a place went far beyond our idea of a sanctuary, and included natural places such as groves (*alsos*), mountain tops and, importantly for this thesis, sources of water.

In the definition of what is meant here by 'water' lies another limitation in the scope of the thesis; only fresh water is included in the survey since sea water is an altogether different and vast subject which deserves a separate study of its own.

⁷ Morris (1997), 538-539.

⁸ Pirenne-Delforge, V., *L'Aphrodite grecque*, Kernos suppl. 4 (Athens: Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 1994).

Moreover, as is already clear from existing studies on purity or on the Greek sacrifice, water was a necessity in virtually every sanctuary. Its mere use in a sanctuary cannot therefore be a relevant criterion used to include a site in the surveys. The approach chosen here rests on the understanding that water can, through different types of evidence, appear more than a simple incidence in the existence of a sanctuary or a sacred place. These types of evidence are as follows: (1) water explicitly bears a religious significance in textual sources; (2) water-related buildings and/or material, discovered in a sanctuary or a place with a sacred connotation, come in support to a special religious status given to water; (3) a natural source of water is integrated into the fabric of a sanctuary in such a way that water appears to be a determining factor in the sanctity and/or religious operation of the place. The latter in particular is open to different interpretations, and some may disagree with the choices I have made.

This thesis is in some aspects ahistorical, because it explores phenomena and structures in which the *événement* does not generally play a central part. Although it somewhat gives the illusion of a study inserted in the *longue durée*, it would be an error to conclude that changes do not occur, and that these aspects of Greek religion are essentially conservative ones. Two important points must be borne in mind about the historicity of the subject; first, the bulk of the archaeological evidence examined is Archaic and Classical, and ventures where appropriate into the Hellenistic times but rarely beyond. The sites are studied within this time frame in a diachronic way, therefore emphasising the progressions, shifts and interruptions in their relationship with water. The survey is moreover limited to the Greek cults that existed in the Classical period, and ignores the newly arrived deities of the Hellenistic era. Second, the literary sources used are either within the same time brackets as the

archaeological ones or, if literary sources are of a later date (such as Pausanias), they often take an antiquarian point of view which recorded cults and rituals believed to predate the Roman rule. This last point obviously imposes upon the commentator's vigilance, but because vast numbers of available and concurring sources are but an impossible dream for the ancient historian, these testimonies cannot be discarded on the basis of their late date.

The first half of the thesis is devoted to the survey of Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and Argolid. The internal organisation of these chapters is articulated on a site by site basis, rather than a thematic approach. The nature of the primary sources used in these surveys varies considerably according to what is available. If in some cases it is possible to cross-reference literary sources and archaeological data, including site and material analyses, epigraphy or topographical observations, in many others our knowledge of a site has its origin in one type of document only.

One particular site has been accorded more attention than the others and is examined in a subchapter: the Kyllou-Pera on Mount Hymettos. This site receives this special treatment for several reasons; it is one of the least known sacred spots of Attica and very little has ever been published about it. Furthermore, it epitomises the difficulties one can encounter when studying the sacred sites where water was an important actor. Written sources on this cult are found in Byzantine lexicographers who in turn refer to fragments from 5th c. BC comic plays. We do not find any explicit references directly from the surviving ancient literary corpus, but an implicit one is perhaps to be detected in Plato's *Phaedrus*. The location of the site is inferred from the modern observation of the topography and toponymy, while the very limited archaeological exploration of the area supports the existence of a sanctuary somewhere in the vicinity. The paucity and elusiveness of each individual type of

source imposes a careful approach in order to find possible connections and build a case on the significance of water at this site.

In chapter 5, the evidence collected in the surveys is used to study the religious importance of water thematically. The material traces of this religious importance are briefly examined to establish whether they are sufficient to help determine water's religious status in a specific location. The core of the chapter is devoted to the religious significance given to water in the sites surveyed. Firstly, by examining which deities were particularly concerned with water and in which contexts they were engaging with it. Secondly, the particular powers attributed to water are discussed and organised within three specific themes: purity, life and death.

While in the preceding chapter water was understood as a substance, the final chapter explores water in its geographical dimension. In this chapter, the interactions of water and Greek religion are reinserted in the ancient Greek landscape. The embodiments of water – the springs, rivers and lakes – are studied as landmarks in space which bore mythical and cultic significance. To do so, and manage to see both sides of the coin, theoretical tools are borrowed from geography, as well as a structuralist approach to some cults. With this chapter, the thesis aims to be in the continuity of a recent trend of research in ancient history where the notion of landscape, with all its complex meanings, is central.

This thesis gathers the evidence available for the areas concerned and, despite its geographical limits, highlights the similarities between the different regions. Furthermore, the regional structure of the survey makes comparisons possible between the regions studied and emphasises their local specificities, contributing to a picture of ancient Greek religion which is more varied than usually thought.

Chapter 1: Attica

Attica is the first region to be surveyed in this thesis for several reasons. First, it is the first book of Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, and his point of entry into the 'Greek mainland' (ἡ ἤπειρος ἢ Ἑλληνικὴ). Second, Attica and Athens have without doubt received the most attention by scholars of ancient history in general, and of ancient Greek religion in particular. This richness of data makes it an ideal place to start looking for sites where water and religion co-existed.

The land of Attica receives less rainfall than most other regions of Greece. Dodwell's statement, made 200 years ago, is echoed by the description of Attica in Plato's *Critias*.¹ This aridity however is relative, and the mountain ranges of the Hymettos, the Parnes and the Penteli are natural water towers with many springs on their flanks. Rivers are few, and have a torrential regime which sees them practically dry out in summer months, but they do exist. It is in this context that the Attic sources of water have become an element of the religious life of the ancients, the characteristics of which are detailed here.

1. Athens

1.1. The Acropolis

The famous hill of the Acropolis is today an emblem for Ancient Greece, with the white marble columns of the Parthenon standing on bare rock and dominating the

¹ Dodwell (1819), 468: 'There is no part of Greece where the soil is so arid, and water so scarce as in Attica'. Plato, *Critias* 111a-b.

Athenian skyline. In this chapter, the term ‘acropolis’ does not merely mean the top of the hill as is often the case, but also includes its northern and southern slopes, and all the sites encircled by the ancient path called the peripatos.²

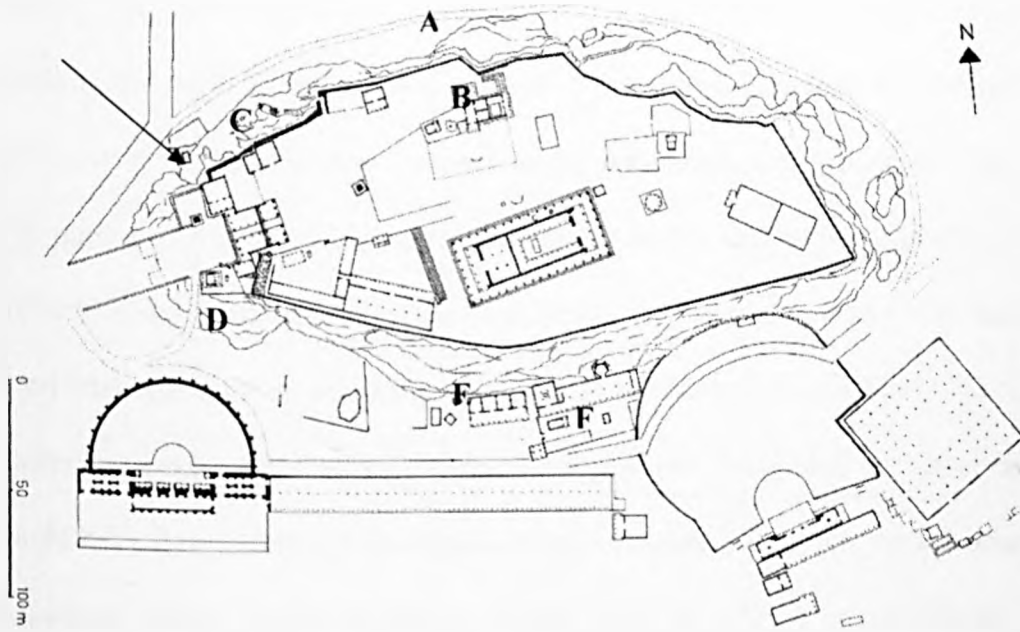


Fig. 1. The Athenian Acropolis, from Goette (2001), p.10. A. Peripatos. B. Erechtheion. C. Cave of Pan. D. Temple of Aphrodite Pandemos. E. South Slope Spring. F. Asklepieion. The arrow points to the Klepsydra.

1.1.1. The *thalassa* of Poseidon

In his description of the Erechtheion, Pausanias mentions the presence of sea-water inside the building:

There is also inside—the building is double—sea-water in a cistern ([καὶ] ὕδωρ ἐστὶν ἔνδον θαλάσσιον ἐν φρέατι). This is no great marvel, for other inland regions have similar wells, in particular Aphrodisias in Caria. But this cistern is remarkable for the

² An inscribed rock on the northern slope of the Acropolis (*IG II² 2639*: [τ]οῦ περιπάτο | περίοδος | πέντε) σ(τάδια) πόδες | Δ[5]II.) identifies the name of the path. Today the term applies to the path on its entire course around the hill. In the past, it might have only applied to its northern section. See Robertson (1998b), 292; Hurwitt (2004), 9 and fig. 11.

noise of waves it sends forth when a south wind blows. On the rock is the outline of a trident. Legend says that these appeared as evidence in support of Poseidon's claim to the land.³

Pausanias is not the only literary source to mention the well (or is it a pool, or a cistern? The term is unclear.). Herodotus and Apollodorus both mentioned it while recalling the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the control of Attica, with Poseidon giving the pool to the Athenians and Athena the olive tree.⁴ The nature of this 'sea' is unclear from the sources and is not elucidated by the archaeological exploration of the Acropolis. In such a context the successive interpretations found in scientific publications have been very different. Crouch, for instance, supports the view of a spring on top of the Acropolis, the water of which would have flowed through underground layers of salt.⁵ Jeppesen, on the other hand, expressed doubts of the existence of the 'sea' at all.⁶ A recent thesis on the Erechtheion is in favour of the presence of the cistern in the western half of the Erechtheion.⁷

In religious terms, the 'sea' was the physical manifestation of a mythical past in which the gods had fought over the protection of Athens. This was a means to express the pre-eminence of the gods, and their presence in the landscape. This myth

³ Paus. 1.26.5 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

⁴ Hdt. 8.55.1; Apollodorus 3.14.1. They both call it elusively a 'sea' (θάλασσα). Athena finally wins the contest. On the various particulars of the contest, see also Plut. *Them.* 19; Paus. 1.24.5; Ov. *Met.* 6.70; Hyg., *Fab.* 164. Gantz (1993), 63: 'There is no trace in the early literature of [Poseidon's] attempt to win the patronage of Athens or other territories'. It can be dated at least as early as the 5th c. BC, when Herodotus saw the 'sea' in the shrine (νηός) of Erechtheus, and it was the subject of the western pediment of the Parthenon.

⁵ Crouch (1993), 260-261.

⁶ Jeppesen (1979), 383-391: He refutes the existence of a well which should have been found, and suggests that Paus. did not even see a pool of water and only reported what he was told. For him, the best candidate for such a 'well' is not in the 'so-called' Erechtheion but in the cleft on the north slope of the hill (see section on the Mycenaean spring), although it only had existed in the distant past.

⁷ Lesk, Alexandra L., 'A Diachronic Examination of the Erechtheion and its Reception' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2005), pp. 38, 160-161, n. 483.

was also, according to Parker, part of a wider group of myths about godly contests in which the loser, almost invariably Poseidon, represented dangerous forces of nature including floods, storms and earth tremors.⁸ In any case, the 'sea' was situated at the heart of the most sacred part of the Athenian acropolis, itself at the heart of the civic and religious territory. Its symbolic importance as a proof of the god's favour and, ultimately, of Athena's victory, is undeniable.

1.1.2. The Mycenaean Spring on the Acropolis

In the *Critias*, Plato gives a description of Attica as it had allegedly been long before his time, and paints a striking picture of the Acropolis being blessed with a large source of water.

And near the place of the present Acropolis there was one spring – which was choked up by the earthquakes so that but small tricklings of it are now left round about; but to the men of that time it afforded a plentiful stream for them all, being well tempered both for winter and summer.⁹

This spring of old has been tentatively identified with one which had been in function during Mycenaean times, and was discovered during the archaeological exploration of the northern slope of the Acropolis organised by the American School in the 1930s.¹⁰ There is a cleft in this northern side of the Acropolis, which opens on its summit as well as onto the slope of the hill. Its complete excavation revealed that

⁸ Parker (1987), 199.

⁹ Plato, *Critias* 112c-d (trans. R.G. Bury).

¹⁰ On the Mycenaean spring: Broneer (1939); Broneer (1948), 112-113; Camp (1977), 36-40; Travlos (1980), 72-75; Crouch (1993), 255, 257-259. The text from Plato seems to imply that the springs existing around the acropolis by his time were the smaller remnants (νάματα μικρά) of a far larger spring. The fate of the Mycenaean spring, probably choked up by an earthquake (see below), is strikingly similar to that of the description given by Plato. See Camp (1977), 40.

it continues deep down into the rock where it reaches a spring. In the 13th c. BC, a staircase was built to allow a vital access to fresh water, accessible from within the Mycenaean fortress on the acropolis while remaining invisible for outsiders. The staircase was in use for about 25 to 40 years, at which point it was destroyed, probably by an earthquake. The spring was then abandoned and used as a dump filled by earth and debris. Some time in the 12th c. BC, the upper half of the stairs was rebuilt and permitted communication between the summit and the slope. It appears that this staircase was still in use, centuries later, during the Classical Age.

If one gives credit to Plato's description and accepts the identification of his spring with the Mycenaean one, as some already have, one must assume that the existence of the Mycenaean spring had not been forgotten centuries after it had been abandoned, although its location could have.¹¹ Interestingly, some think that the cleft was the backdrop to a mysterious ritual which took place in historical times, the Arrhephoria.

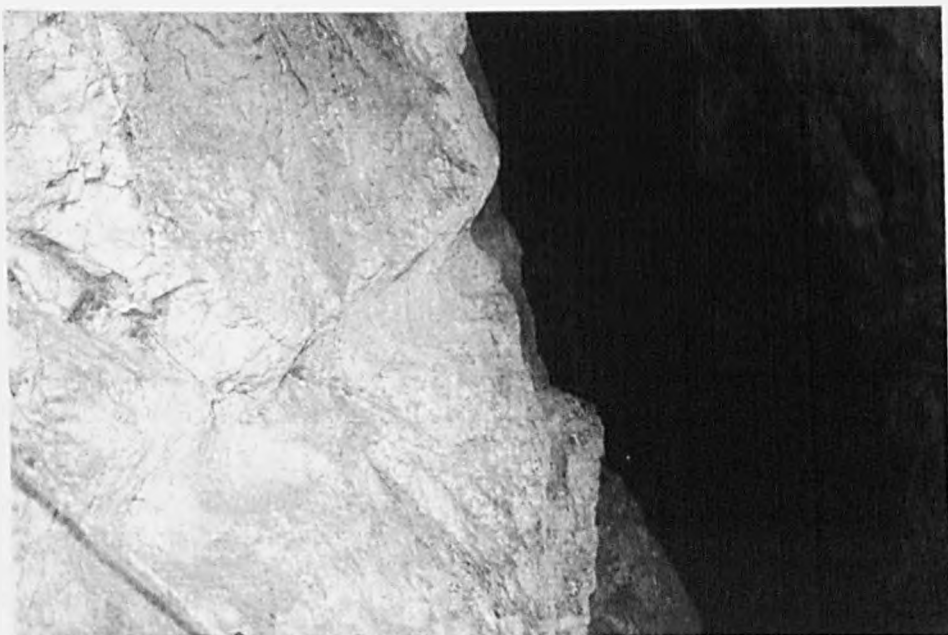


Fig. 2. Traces of the staircase on the natural wall of the Mycenaean cave (author's picture).

¹¹ Broneer (1939), 428-429; Travlos (1980), 72; Hurwit (1999), 79 n. 45.

Very little is known about the *arrhephoroi* and the ceremony of the Arrhephoria.¹² Their etymology has been the subject of many debated studies, none of which is entirely conclusive.¹³ Cook's theory is of particular interest because it links the cult with dew and its fertilising dimension.¹⁴

The *arrhephoroi* were young girls who were chosen to stay on the acropolis in a building reserved for them. They would stay there, between one to four years depending on the interpretations, and among other tasks weave the *peplos* destined to cover the *xoanon* of Athena.¹⁵ Their final duty was the most sacred, and also the one that has puzzled the most. Pausanias is our most precious source of information on the rite:¹⁶

Two maidens known by the Athenians as *arrhephoroi* dwell not far from the temple of Athena Polias. For a period they live with the goddess, and when the festival comes they do the following at night. They place on their heads objects which the priestess of Athena gives them to carry; neither she who gives it knows what kind of thing she is giving, nor do those who carry it understand. There is an enclosure in the city [or 'on the acropolis'] not far from the so-called Aphrodite in the Gardens, and through it a natural underground passage downwards. The maidens descend by this. They leave below what they were carrying and bring back another covered object

¹² Paus. 1.27.3 is actually our only extent description of the ceremony.

¹³ Cook (1940), 165-181, Gantz (1993), 238; Robertson (1983) rejects previous interpretations altogether and suggests "bearers of sacred things". Donnay (1997), 199 considers the etymology as a problem 'épineux' and Parker (2005), 219 as being 'beyond recovery'.

¹⁴ Cook (1940), 180, makes this suggestion on the basis that Herse and Pandrosos, two of Kekrops' daughters, have names linked etymologically with dew (ἔρση), as well as *arrhe-phoroi*, that he relates to *érsen/ársen/árrhen*, as the male seed fertilising mother earth. On dew as the embodiment of the god Eros, see W.M. Clarke, 'The God in the Dew', *AC* 43 (1974), 57-73.

¹⁵ The appearance of the *arrhephoros* among other offices in the famous passage from *Ar.*, *Lys.* 638-47 has prompted the assimilation of the Arrhephoria as a ritual concerned with an age-group. Parker (2005), 218-220; Donnay (1997), 198 estimates (based on lexicographers) that the girls retained the function between 7 and 11. He also gives a very useful list of all available ancient sources on the matter at p. 203-205. Others prefer the idea of a civic cult rather than an 'initiation' rite limited to an age-group. See below.

¹⁶ Paus. 1.27.3.

which they get there. Then they are dismissed and other maidens are brought to the acropolis in their place. (trans. Parker [2005], 221)

Since the discovery of the Mycenaean underground stairway, it has been widely assumed that it was in fact the 'underground passage' mentioned by Pausanias.¹⁷ Parker is understandably not convinced; the hypotheses concerning the unravelling of the Arrhephoria are too many in contrast with the secured facts and, besides, the interpretation does not fit easily with the text of Pausanias.¹⁸ The idea remains nevertheless attractive and is the most popular theory so far despite its inherent difficulties, making Plato's statement that sanctuaries were located where springs had existed all the more striking.¹⁹

The ritual's association with the myth of the daughters of king Kekrops, on the other hand, is generally accepted.²⁰ The similarities are indeed striking, the myth involving the three young girls being entrusted with the baby Erichthonios, hidden in a basket, by Athena, when the little *arrhephoroi* have to carry secret things in a basket down the elusive underground passage. The overall signification of the Arrhephoria, or at least how it is now interpreted, is unclear. Some interpret it as an initiation ceremony, but others prefer the more probable possibility of a civic cult, where the little girls did not so much represent their age group and their entrance into the age of puberty, but rather re-enacted an old ceremony for the protection of the city in its entirety.²¹ In this case, the aim would have been to ensure the fertility both of the crops and the community and, to a larger extent, the prosperity and

¹⁷ Broneer (1939), 428; Travlos (1980), 72; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 56-57.

¹⁸ Parker (2005), 221.

¹⁹ Plato, *Critias* 111d: '...whereof the shrines which still remain even now, at the spots where the fountains formerly existed, are signs which testify that our present description of the land is true'.

²⁰ Broneer (1939), 428; Gantz (1993), 235-239; Parker (2005), 221-222.

²¹ Initiation: Burkert (1983), 152; Brulé (1987), 79-83; Calame (2001), 131-132; Civic cult: Simon (1983), Donnay (1997), 177-205.

perpetuation of the polis.²² Donnay in particular stresses the possibility that it was a surviving trace of an ancient ritual dating back to the old royalty.²³ This last argument is particularly interesting if we are to believe these rituals are somehow connected with the old Mycenaean spring. There is however very little solid ground on which the two can be associated, even if the themes of fertility and prosperity are often associated with water, whether as springs or dew.

1.1.3. The spring Klepsydra

The Klepsydra springhouse lies on the north-west slope of the acropolis, at the merging of the Panathenaia procession way with the *peripatos*.²⁴ Its waters had been sought after since the Neolithic period, firstly drawn from shallow wells in the area, and then directly from the source, apparently as early as the Bronze Age.²⁵ The first springhouse was built in the second quarter of the 5th c. BC, and was probably part of Kimon's program for Athens' embellishment.²⁶

The springhouse was built in the cliff, under the natural rock projecting out of the Acropolis slope. The west and north sides of the fountain were left open. Walls were built underground, but stopped at ground level so as to let the natural light in, and also to maintain the impression of entering a cave. A parapet was the only barrier around the spring. At the north-west corner, a flight of steps, orientated west-east,

²² Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 54; Fowler (1995), 8-9. The latter suggests the Arrhephoria rituals show parallels with magic rites, and that their goal would be to secure the prosperity of the city and the king. Donnay (1997), 200: the author denies the initiatory aspect of the rites to emphasize its civic purpose. The Arrhephoria was linked to old rites connected with royalty and the permanence of the city. Parker (2005), 222 is far more cautious and suggests 'it will be well not to attempt to solve the "riddle of the Arrhephoria"'. He lists some recent and different interpretations in n. 21.

²³ Donnay (1997), 200. Burkert (1983), 150-54 sees the ritual as an initiation. The idea is dismissed in Simon (1983), 40-42. Simon and Donnay suggest the ritual had Mycenaean roots.

²⁴ Parsons (1943); Travlos (1980), 323-331; Crouch (1993), 262-263; Hurwit (1999), 78-79; Camp (2001), 70-71.

²⁵ Parsons (1943), 205-206; Camp (1977), 33-36, 44-46; Smithson (1982).

²⁶ Parson (1943), 228, 229-231; Camp (1977), 111-12; Holtzmann (2003), 201.

lead down to an L-shaped platform separated from the draw basin by a wooden rail, and replaced in the Hellenistic times by a marble parapet. The draw basin itself was rectangular (approximately 4.50x2.35 m.) and tapped the water gushing out of the rock some four metres further down.

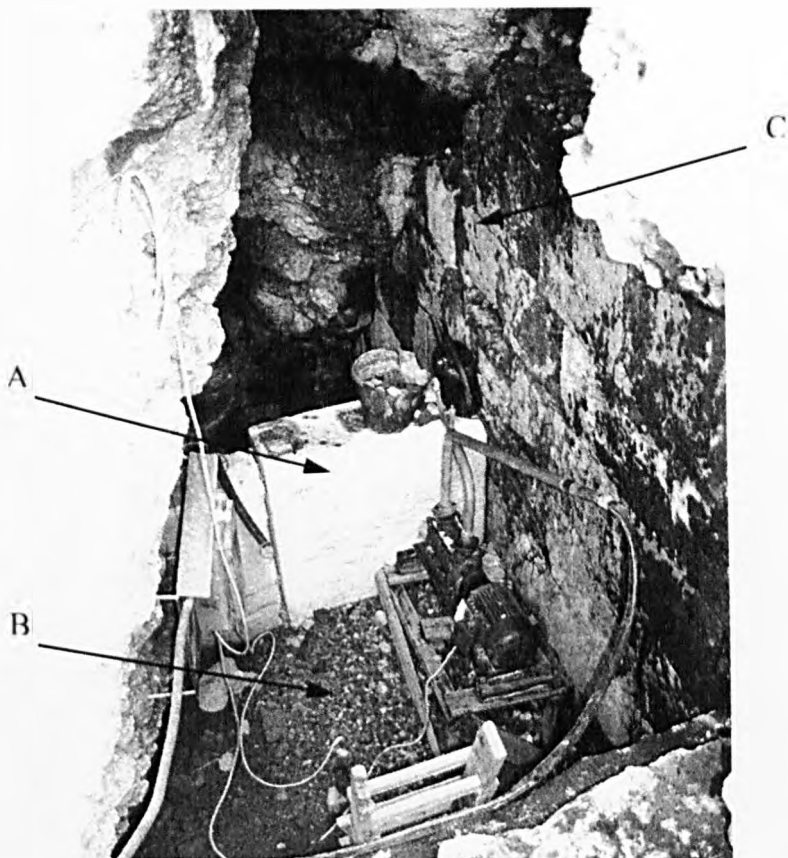


Fig. 3. The Klepsydra springhouse (author's picture). At the centre is the parapet marble slabs (A) over which someone standing on the platform (B) reached the draw basin. On the right is the man-made wall (C) which follows the natural cave walls and ceiling.

The architect took great care not to alter the natural setting, preserving its cave-like feeling by leaving the rock walls untouched. It is apparent that the collapse of the rock roof was feared, since precautions were taken to secure the overhanging rock with wooden posts, as well as to strengthen the draw basin with four transverse beams.²⁷ A first shifting of the rock occurred some time after the occupation of

²⁷ Parsons (1943), 222.

Athens by Sulla,²⁸ but the roof eventually collapsed, probably in the second half of the 1st c. AD, changing completely the configuration of the fountain.²⁹ It was no longer directly accessible and Pausanias, who visited Athens on the 2nd c. AD, only mentions a spring of fresh water, and not a fountain.³⁰ A roofed well structure was eventually built on the fallen rocks over it, so as to allow the access to the water. This was later transformed into a Christian chapel.

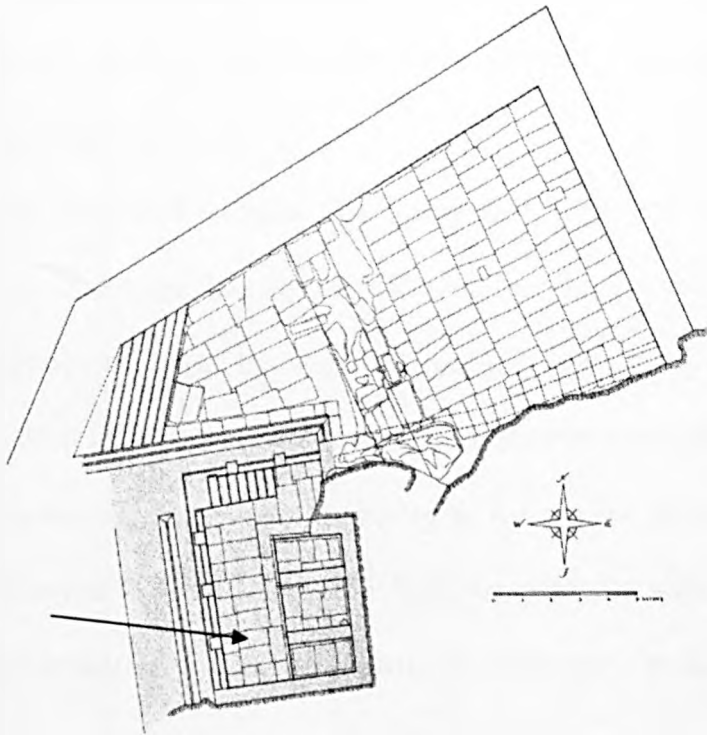


Fig. 4. Plan of the Klepsydra. The arrow shows the angle of the previous picture (from Parsons [1943], 64).

The identification of the spring as being the Klepsydra is not doubted. Parsons has compiled the literary sources, and a number of them give enough details about its

²⁸ Parsons (1943), 239-41. The marble parapet is dated to repairs made at this time. Small sherds of pottery (e.g. Megarian bowls), tiles and coins were found in a homogeneous fill behind them.

²⁹ Parsons (1943), 243-245. Parsons was tempted to date the resulting works to the time of Emperor Claudius.

³⁰ Paus. 1.28.4.

location to confirm it.³¹ But is it possible to attribute any sacred character to this spring and fountain-house? The former name of the spring was not Klepsydra, but Empedo.³² Parsons firmly believes that this is the name of the nymph that would have dwelled at that particular spring. The fact that there would have been two place-names at the same spring is hardly something unusual in the Greek landscape, in particular at Athens where another famous case is known, that of the Enneakrounos springhouse built on the spring Kallirhoe. The interpretation advanced by Parsons is that the name of the spring/nymph was Empedo, and that it was given a different name when the springhouse was built.

The name Empedo well suits this spring as a toponym, while Klepsydra, ‘water-stealer’, is also very descriptive. Meaning ‘in the ground’, and therefore ‘firmly set’, Empedo could also, by extension, mean ‘steady’; it is a right description of its situation, deep in the rock, and possessing a regular flow. But the name was also attributed to women, or at least a woman, as we can see on one black-figured cup depicting Theseus in Crete, alongside Athenian men and women identified by name. The scene is centred on Theseus slaying the Minotaur. On the left, seven men and women behind Athena, watch the scene. The last one, on the very end of the line, is Empedo (ΕΝΠΕΔΟ). Parsons suggested that two others among the women on the vase, Euanthe and Eunike, had links with the nymphs. If not proving that Empedo is indeed a nymph, this cup however attaches the name to the Mythical past of Athens; a mythical past strongly attached to the topography of the Athenian Acropolis. Moreover, it would be very surprising if a spring with such strong chthonic features,

³¹ Parsons (1943), 264-67; *Ar.*, *Lys.* 910-913 and schol. 911: ...πλησίον δὲ τοῦ Πανείου ἢ Κλεψύδρα ἦν κρήνη. Schol. 913: Ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλει ἦν κρήνη ἢ Κλεψύδρα, πρότερον Ἐμπεδῶ λεγομένη· ὠνομάσθη δὲ Κλεψύδρα διὰ τὸ ποτὲ μὲν πλημμυρεῖν ποτὲ δὲ ἐνδεῖν· ἔχει δὲ τὰς ῥύσεις ὑπὸ γῆν, φέρουσα εἰς τὸν Φλεγρεῶδη λειμῶνα. Photios s.v. Κλεψύδρα: κρήνη ἐν ἀκροπόλει οὕτως καλεῖται.

³² Schol. *Ar.*, *Lys.* 983; Schol. *Ar.*, *Wasps* 857; Schol. *Ar.*, *Birds* 1694; Hesychius s.v. Κλεψύδρα; s.v. Πεδῶ.

and situated in so sacred an environment, would not have been given the patronage of a nymph.



Fig. 5. Black-figured cup: Munich 2243 = ABV 163.2, 160.2
(from <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk> <last accessed 9 March 2008>)

There is also, according to Parsons, a piece of evidence linking the Klepsydra with a cult to the Nymphs. During the destruction of houses prior to the excavation of the Greek Agora, an inscribed stone, reused in a wall of one of the houses, was discovered near the northern edge of the site.³³ It was a boundary stone for a sanctuary of the nymphs, dated to the first half of the 5th c. BC. Parsons attributed it to the Klepsydra because it is contemporaneous with the construction of the springhouse and since, in all probability, it originally came from the northwest slope of the Acropolis.

Whether the fountain was a sanctuary to the Nymphs or not it was located at the heart of the Athenian sacred landscape, amongst many important sanctuaries. Furthermore, its position at the point where the Panathenaic way reaches the sacred

³³ Parsons (1943), 232; Meritt (1941), 38 = *IG I³ 1063*: [N]υμφα[ί]οσιερό ἡόρος.

hill made it a clear landmark at the entrance of the Acropolis' sacred area. This position was very advantageous and made the Klepsydra the ideal source of water for the purifications required before entering the sanctuaries. This function is explicitly drawn in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. In the play, Myrrhina, one of the women who barricaded themselves in the Acropolis, lures her husband Kinesias into the cave of Pan, just above the fountain. Kinesias is full of desire and his wife plays hard to get. To her objection that she could not possibly go back to the Acropolis if they had sex, he replies that she would only have to wash and purify herself with the water of the Klepsydra.³⁴ In this passage, the spring's strategic position next to the cave of Pan and just before the entrance of the Acropolis, as well as its potential use for purification, are remarkably demonstrated by Aristophanes.

An inscription, found in a wall next to the Beulé gate, dated to 287-6 BC, records a law proposed by Kallias son of Lysimachos, of the Deme of Hermos.³⁵ This law concerns the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos, which is located thanks to Pausanias right below the temple of Athena Nike, on the south slope of the Acropolis.³⁶ Among other duties given to the *astynomoi*, they have to take care of the 'bathing of the statues', probably those of Aphrodite Pandemos and Peitho seen by Pausanias.³⁷ The term used for the statues implies that they were not movable, and therefore the 'bath' would have been given at the sanctuary, unlike the case of the Plynteria where the *xoanon* of Athena was brought to her bath, possibly in the sea at

³⁴ Ar., *Lys.* 910-3 and schol. 911: ... πλησίον δὲ τοῦ Πανείου ἢ Κλεψύδρα ἢ κρήνη.

³⁵ Inscription: *IG* II² 659. See Parker (2005), 461. Beulé gate: This is the name of a French archaeologist given to the monumental gate below the propylaea, built during the 3rd c. AD after the Herulian invasion. See Camp (2001), 225, fig. 217-219.

³⁶ Paus. 1.22.3

³⁷ Line 26 of the inscription: καὶ λουσαι τὰ ἔδη. The two goddesses are also present together on the east frieze of the temple of Athena Nike, which/directly above the sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos. See Pemberton, E.G., 'The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike', *AJA* 76 (1972), 309, fig. 5.

Phaleron.³⁸ Could the water used for this bath be from the Klepsydra? If the choice is restricted to the nearest sources of water, it must have been at one of the springs on the slopes of the Acropolis.³⁹ The two possibilities are the sacred spring on the south slope or the Klepsydra. Both are close enough to be easily accessible, so the distance is not a criterion we can take into account. The sacredness of the water of the south slope spring is clearly attested (see below) but, as we have seen earlier, the sacred character of the water from the Klepsydra cannot be ruled out either. An anecdote told by Plutarch supports this:

When he was about to go forth to the war, he took a wreath from the sacred olive-tree, and in obedience to a certain oracle, filled a vessel with water from the Clepsydra and carried it with him.⁴⁰

Besides, the passage in *Lysistrata*, where Cinesias declares that Myrrhina can purify herself in the Klepsydra, would be even more *piquant* if the statues of Aphrodite and Peitho were cleaned with the same waters, both goddesses being very much present in Aristophanes' play.⁴¹ In parallel, a Roman rite accomplished during the *Veneralia* saw the statue of Venus bathed, while women would also bathe crowned with Myrtle, a plant sacred to Aphrodite. It might not be a coincidence that Myrrhina's name is the Greek word for myrtle, or even myrtle crown.

³⁸ See Parker (1996), 307 and Parker (2005), 478.

³⁹ The ceremonial bath water is generally taken from 'flowing' waters. The stagnant water from cisterns was avoided for not possessing the qualities looked for. See Hellmann (1994) 274, citing in particular Athenaeus, *Deipn.*, 2.42c: Running waters, including those drawn from an aqueduct, are as a rule better than standing water, and when aerated are still softer. This was itself a quote from Theophrastus' *On Waters*. In several myths, goddesses are said to bathe in flowing springs. The ceremonial bath taken before a wedding used water from springs and rivers. See Ginouvès (1962), 267-68, 282, 283-84.

⁴⁰ Plut., *Ant.* 34 (trans. B. Perrin).

⁴¹ Peitho is prayed to during the sacrifice performed before the women swear the oath to abstain from having intercourse with their husbands. See *Ar. Lys.* 203-4. The play, set on the Acropolis and its slopes, makes full use of its sacred topography; Cinesias is said to arrive on the scene via the shrine of Chloe, 'tormented by Aphrodite's swellings', and Paus. (1.22.3) situates this shrine in the same area as then sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos.

1.1.4. The Athenian Asklepieion and the South Slope Fountain

Leaving the theatre of Dionysos, Pausanias walked westwards along three terraces on the south slope toward the entrance to the Acropolis. Doing so, he passed by the sanctuary of Asklepios, of which he gives a very short description.⁴² Its installation there at the end of the 5th c. BC is very well documented, making it one of the best known foundations.⁴³

The presence of water is a generally expected feature of the sanctuaries of Asklepios, and the Athenian Asklepieion does not derogate from this 'rule'. Larson, and before her Martin and Metzger, have also suggested that the cult might have been established at a spot already sacred to a nymph and her healing spring, following a pattern that can be found at Lebena in Crete.⁴⁴ Ultimately, there are three water related structures, two of which are natural, situated in the sanctuary or in its immediate surroundings.

The first, a springhouse dating back to Archaic times, was built at the end of the 6th c. BC on the middle terrace, just west of the future Asklepieion.⁴⁵ It is

⁴² Paus. 1.21.4. The situation of the Asklepieion on the easternmost of the three terraces of the southern slope of the Acropolis, west of the Theatre of Dionysos, is not debatable because of the evidence of the excavation. Its original situation has proved nevertheless more problematic. If some have argued that the sanctuary founded by Telemachos in the late 5th c. BC should be situated on the middle terrace, Aleshire ([1989], 23-32, 34-35) follows the contrary opinion of Travlos ([1980], 127) and Koehler (*MDAI(A)*, 2 [1877], 255-260) and argues convincingly that the eastern terrace, although not possessing clear traces of a 5th c. Asklepieion, is a far better candidate than the middle terrace. The later incorporation of the middle terrace within the sanctuary of Asklepios remains a hypothesis which has not been clearly confirmed or rejected. The Ionic stoa is the only building on the middle terrace that could possibly also be part of the Asklepieion. See Hurwit (1999), 219-221.

⁴³ Beschi (1967/8), 381-437; Beschi (1982), 31-43; Travlos (1980), 127-142; Aleshire (1989); Clinton (1994), 17-34; Camp (2001), 122-123; Holtzmann (2003), 206-209. The installation of the god in Athens is particularly well known thanks to the monument of Telemachos. It consists of a votive relief, sculpted on both sides, put on a high base on which is carved the story of the sanctuary since its foundation (*JG II*² 4960-4961). For a reconstruction, see Vikela (1997), 191. For a recent reading of the inscription, see Clinton (1994).

⁴⁴ Larson (2001), 129-130.

⁴⁵ Martin & Metzger (1949), 342-343, 347-348; Travlos (1980), 138-142; Aleshire (1989), 22; Holtzmann (2003), 209. Travlos inappropriately called this the Asklepieion spring-house, although he was more cautious in his treatment of the building. Aleshire chose the less unfortunate term of south slope springhouse. This is the term chosen here.

essentially a rectangular stone-lined basin cut into the ground. At about 3.10 m. deep, it reaches the rim of a well, itself 1.25 m. deep where the spring water is collected. A Doric tristyle porch, giving to the ensemble a monumental character, covered it and was destroyed in the 4th c. BC, probably when a temple was erected directly to its south. There is no real doubt that the spring was sacred, since a boundary stone was found in the wall by the *peripatos* which reads 'boundary of the spring'.⁴⁶ It was possibly home to a cult of the nymphs, or to one nymph. Many votive reliefs with nymphs were indeed found in this area, while the presence of other deities – Pan, Hermes, Aphrodite, Themis and Isis – has also been established on the same terrace.⁴⁷ The boundary stone was put up at about the same time the Asklepieion was founded, possibly as a result of a rider by one Lampon:⁴⁸

(...) νέον ἄρχοντα τὸν δὲ βασι[ι]λέα ἠορίσαι τὰ ἱερά τὰ ἐν τ[ῶ]-
 55 ι Πελαργικῶι, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν μὲ ἐνὶ ἡδρῦεσθαι βομὸς ἐν τῶι Πελα-
 ργικῶι ἄνευ τῆς βολῆς καὶ τῶ δέμο, μεδὲ τὸς λίθος τέμνεν ἐκ τῶ [Π]-
 ελαργικῶ, μεδὲ γῆν ἐχσάγεν μεδὲ λίθος, ἔαν δέ τις παραβαίνει ν
 τ::: οὔτον τι, ἀποτινέτο πεντακοσίας δραχμάς, ἐσαγγελλέτο δὲ ἡ-
 [ο] βασιλεὺς ἐς τὴν βολῆν. (...)

The king archon is to set the boundaries of the sacred places in the Pelargikon, and in the future no altar is to be established without the *boulè* and the *demos*, nor is any stone to be quarried from the Pelargikon, nor is earth or stone to be taken away. If

⁴⁶ *IG I³ 1098-1099* (dated to ca 420 BC): ἡόρος κρένες

⁴⁷ Travlos (1980), 138, fig. 193-194; Aleshire (1989), 28. *IG II² 4994*: dated to the 1st c. BC, it shows the list of gods arranged in three columns: Hermes, Pan, Aphrodite/The Nymphs/Isis. The support of the inscription that some have interpreted as a base for an altar has yet to be confirmed. Two temples, one of Themis and one of Isis, both built on the same terrace, have been identified: Aleshire (1989), 22, n. 3.

⁴⁸ *IG I³ 78a*. The rider follows a law on Eleusis and the offering of the 'first fruits'. Cavanaugh (1996), 73-95 re-evaluates the previous studies of the inscription that dated it to around 422 BC. She dates the inscription to ca 435 BC, therefore before the Peloponnesian wars and the plague of 430. She suggests that Lampon's amendment was an effort to protect the Pelargikon before the Archidamian war (pp. 98-92).

anyone transgresses this, let him be fined 500 drachmas and let the king archon prosecute him before the boulè (trans. by Camp [2001], 123)

The reason behind such a law is unclear as it is not certain why the Athenians felt they needed to draw clear boundaries between the different sanctuaries. The decision to prohibit the removal of any stone and earth from within the Pelargikon clearly demonstrates that it had a sacred status at the time, notwithstanding the sacred status of each sanctuary found within it. It also shows that the Pelargikon was a possible target for such looting at this time in Athens. Although the area was supposed to be left free from occupation, the arrival of inhabitants within the protective walls of Athens during the Peloponnesian war implied that the Pelargikon became filled with squatters' buildings.⁴⁹ This occupation might be the reason behind the law and the eventual erection of the two inscriptions. On the other hand, the contemporaneity of the founding of the Asklepieion might suggest that there had been a dispute over the access, or control, of the spring and its land. Within the year following the foundation, an incident occurred with the Eleusinian *genos* of *Kerykes* who laid 'claim to the land'.⁵⁰ The details of the dispute have all but disappeared, but if the newly established sanctuary had attempted to lay claims on the fountain, or unduly use its water, it could have prompted the reaction of the *Kerykes* and the erection of the stone, in accordance with the law. In which case, the *horoi* stones would have been meant to establish the boundaries of the spring, which

⁴⁹ Thuc. 2.17; Camp (2001), 117-118. Here the problem of the datation of the rider is most acute. With the datation around 422 BC, the link between the two seems reasonably strong. With Cavanaugh's datation to ca 435 BC however, the motive would have been entirely different.

⁵⁰ SEG 25.226, ll.20-23; Parker (1996), 177; Aleshire (1989), 8-9. Parker stresses the otherwise welcoming attitude of the Eleusinian priesthood.

were perhaps menaced by an intrusive new neighbour, or simply to clarify where the boundaries were in order to prevent such a problem.⁵¹



Fig. 6. The Horos stone of the South Slope Spring in situ (author's picture)

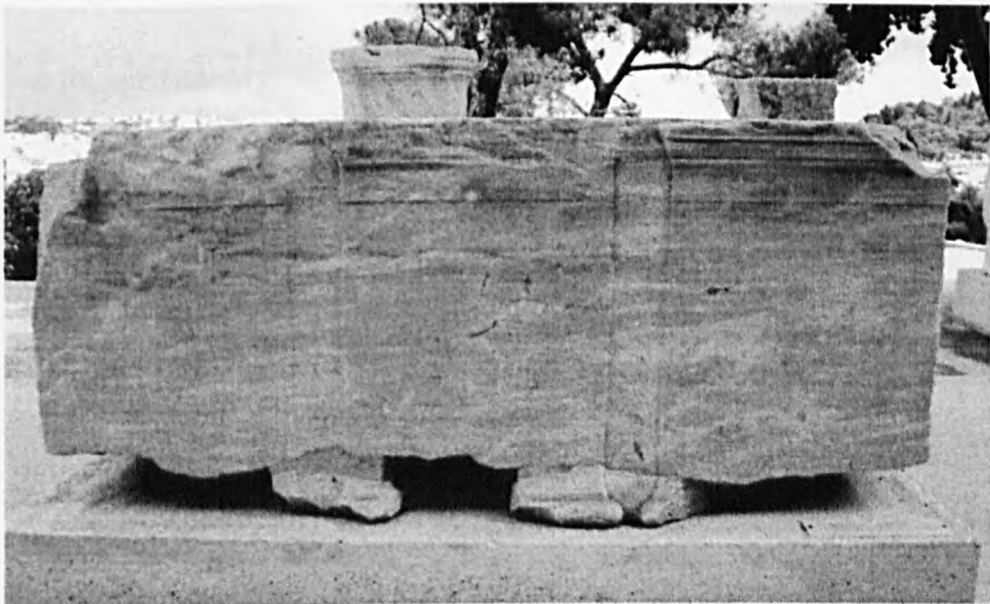


Fig. 7. Inscribed altar (?) on the south slope of the Acropolis dedicated to the nymphs among other gods. *IG II² 4994* (author's picture).

⁵¹ If one believes the Ionic stoa on the middle terrace was part of the Asklepieion, its date – ca. 420 BC – would coincide with a territorial dispute with the spring. See Hurwit (1999), 220.

The Asklepieion possesses its own but less abundant spring. A cave-like circular room, ca. 5.20 m. in diameter and 5 m. high, was built in the cliff to collect this water.⁵² The entrance, an arched doorway in the back wall of the Doric stoa, opens onto a short tunnel leading to the cave. Inside, a channel set under floor level ran all around the circular room, separated from the centre by a parapet made of Hymettian marble blocks. This room still exists and is now a chapel, while water still drips from the walls. The early association between the cult of Asklepios and this spring was once a matter of scholarly debate, but it seems now settled. The original form of the spring and its entrance is not known, nor is there any evidence that its existence was known before the cliff was quarried to allow space for the construction of the Doric stoa in the 4th c. BC.⁵³ The hypothesis of Pan and the Nymphs dwelling in this spring has been suggested, although nothing entirely conclusive has been put forward.⁵⁴ The devotees would have accessed this spring directly from the stoa and collected water there for cultic uses. Its importance is confirmed by the fact that, even when the sanctuary was transformed into a Christian basilica consecrated to Saint Andrew, access to the spring was preserved.⁵⁵

The last water-related structure of the sanctuary is the *bothros*, situated to the west of the Doric stoa. It was interpreted as a chthonian pit where sacrifices, maybe even holocausts, would have been performed.⁵⁶ This interpretation rests, however, on thin grounds; in the case of Robert's interpretation for example, the assumption that there were chthonic rituals performed at the pit relies on the existence of the festival

⁵² Travlos (1980), fig. 177-178; Aleshire (1989), 21, n. 4. The most complete description is in Camp (1977), 112-116.

⁵³ Camp (1977), 116.

⁵⁴ Aleshire (1989), 31, n. 1. That spring is also possibly the place where Ares was said to have slain Hallirhothios. See Paus. 1.21.4 and Gantz (1993), 81, 234.

⁵⁵ Aleshire (1989), 20.

⁵⁶ Camp (2000), 155; while admitting its function is uncertain, thinks it 'would do nicely to house snakes or receive libations'. He equates this feature with the heroic side of Asklepios, while the altar 'accommodates him as a god'.

τὰ Ἡρώια, although this festival is not attested before the 2nd c. BC.⁵⁷ Aleshire suggests instead that it might have been a reservoir. She is supported in this view by Verbanck-Pierart, who rejects the supposition of a chthonic feature.⁵⁸ This interpretation has the advantage of giving the sanctuary an alternative source of water for its everyday needs, while the sacred spring could in the best case be reserved for sacred uses.



Fig. 8. The Athenian Asklepieion as seen from the East.
The arched doorway (right) is the entrance to the spring (author's picture).

1.2. Fountains of Athens

1.2.1. The Kallirrhoe spring and the Enneakrounos fountain house

The Enneakrounos fountain is a problematic monument, since the ancient sources are not in agreement about its location. There is a contradiction between two series of

⁵⁷ Aleshire (1989), 26, n. 6-7; Robert (1939), 233-240 (Aleshire's bibliography wrongly refers to Robert's *Thymélè* as published in 1936). Robert (p. 234) denies the possibility of a cistern, but fails to argue why.

⁵⁸ Verbanck-Pierart (2000), 329-332, demonstrates this view, in complete opposition to Riethmüller (1999), by insisting on the location of the bothros within the building. The pit dominates indeed the rest of the stoa by 3.50 m., while chthonian rituals should be performed well underground.

sources, one originating in Thucydides' account of the topography of Athens and the other in Pausanias' own description. The former situates the Enneakrunos in the area southeast of the Acropolis, near the Ilissos, while the latter explicitly names a fountain in the Agora.⁵⁹

Thucydides: 'Before this what is now the Acropolis was the city, together with the foot of the Acropolis toward the south. And the proof of this is as follows: On the Acropolis itself are the sanctuaries of the other gods as well as of Athena, and the sanctuaries which are outside the Acropolis are situated more in that quarter of the city, namely those of Olympian Zeus, of Pythian Apollo, of Earth, and of Dionysos in Limnae, in whose honour are celebrated the more ancient Dionysia the twelfth of the month Anthesterion, just as the Ionians descendants of the Athenians also are wont even now the celebrate it. In that quarter are also situated still other ancient sanctuaries. And the fountain now called Enneacrunos, from the fashion given it by the tyrants, but which anciently, when the springs were uncovered, was named Callirrhoe, was used by the people of those days, because it was close by, for the most important ceremonies; and even now, in accordance with the ancient practice, it is still customary to use its waters in the rites preliminary to marriages and other sacred ceremonies.'⁶⁰

Pausanias: 'When you have entered the Odeum at Athens you meet, among other objects, a figure of Dionysus worth seeing. Hard by is a spring (κρήνη) called Enneacrunos, embellished as you see it by Peisistratus. There are cisterns all over the city, but this is the only fountain (πηγή)'⁶¹

⁵⁹ For the complete list of references, see Owens (1982).

⁶⁰ Thuc. 2.15.3-6 (trans. C.F. Smith).

⁶¹ Paus. 1.14.1 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

This problem seemed settled when a fountain was unearthed at the southeast corner of the Agora corresponding to the description and the location given by Pausanias.⁶²

This fountain-house had a rectangular plan, with a central porch and two draw-basins on each side. It was built in the second half of the 6th c. BC and would have been an important improvement for the Athenian population. It was most probably part of the Peisistratids' building campaign.⁶³

There remains, however, the problem of the many literary sources situating the Enneakrounos fountain in a different part of the city, much closer to the Ilissos. These sources have the advantage of having roots in the 5th c. BC and, in the case of Thucydides, of being from a first-hand witness.⁶⁴ One can hardly believe that the description by Thucydides of his own city could be inaccurate. The absence of archaeological remains of a monumental fountain-house in the area described by Thucydides has been a major difficulty in verifying his testimony, but this absence is not in itself proof that the Athenian historian was wrong. Owens has suggested that the original fountain had been destroyed at some point by the end of the 5th c. BC, possibly as a consequence of the siege of Athens by the democrats during the civil

⁶² Several attempts had been made to locate the springhouse prior to this discovery. One of the most popular was Dörpfeld's identification with water installations on the south side of the Pnyx, but this was later completely abandoned, when further excavations unearthed not a fountain-house but a private house: Dörpfeld (1892), 439-445; Thomson (1966), 52. For the Southeast fountain on the Agora see Thomson (1953), 29-35; Thomson (1956), 49-53; Travlos (1980), 204-209.

⁶³ Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 60-61, 63-65; Camp (1986), 42-44.

⁶⁴ Hdt. 6.137.3. Kratinos, in his play *Pytine* (fr.198 Kassel-Austin = fr.186 Kock) mentions springs called 'dodekakrounon' next to the Ilissos:

ἄναξ Ἄπολλον, τῶν ἐπῶν τοῦ ρεύματος, καναχοῦσι πηγαί· δωδεκάκρουνον <το> στόμα,
Ἴλισσός ἐν τῇ φάρυγι. τί ἂν εἴποιμ' <ἔτι>; εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἐπιβύσει τις αὐτοῦ τὸ στόμα, ἅπαντα ταῦτα
κατακλύσει ποιήμασιν

Great Apollo, what a stream of words, springs gush! His mouth is the dodekakrounos, the Ilissos is in his throat. What more can I say indeed? If he were not closing this mouth of his, he would submerge absolutely everything speaking this way.

The Suda (s.v. Δωδεκάκρουνος· κρήνη Ἀθήνησιν ἦν. Θουκυδίδης Ἐννεάκρουνον) associates these with Thucydides' Enneakrounos. Owens ([1982], 223) has a dubitative approach to Kratinos and the Suda. It is however possible that the name 'twelve spouts', instead of the nine, was just one of the poet's tricks to exaggerate the flow of the fountain. Again in the 4th c. BC authors refer to Kallirrhoe in association with the Ilissos: Ps-Plato, *Axiochos*, 364 a-b, d; Himerios (fr. 1.7: Εἰ δέ μοι καὶ τῆς ποιητῶν ἐξουσίας μετῆν, εἶδειξα ἂν σοι καὶ Ἴλισσὸν τοῦτον δακρύοντα, ἐχρῶσα δ' ἂν καὶ κατηφεῖ χρώματι τὰ καλὰ Καλλιρρόης νάματα...).

war and that its name was later transferred to another Peisistratid fountain-house in the Agora.⁶⁵ Tölle-Kastenbein explains the permanence of the spring name (Kallirrhoe) on the same site, as opposed to the fountain name (Enneakrounos), by its religious importance in the rituals for marriage. She has also demonstrated that the south-eastern fountain-house on the Agora cannot have been the Enneakrounos (or at least, not the original one) for it does not fulfil the essential conditions: above all, there is no natural spring on its site as opposed to what Thucydides had written and the situation right in the centre of Athens, next to the Panathenaic way, is not convincing either.⁶⁶



Fig. 9. The ford in the Ilissos riverbed.
The Enneakrounos was probably in the vicinity (author's picture).

⁶⁵ Owens (1982), 225.

⁶⁶ Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 57: If geologically, it is possible for a spring to have existed at the top of the Agora in ancient times, archaeology has demonstrated that water was brought to this fountain-house in terracotta pipes probably from the Penteli or the Hymettos; p. 60-61: Paus. was confused and used κρήνη and πηγή with less precision than he usually does. The author suggests that Paus., having seen the SE fountain on the Agora, the last and only surviving one from the tyrants' building programme, and being influenced by Thucydides, assumed, or was told, it was the Kallirrhoe/Enneakrounos.

Furthermore, the evidence from the figured ceramic which she uses appears to support her views. A group of painted vases, the Lysippides-Antimenes group, are plausibly depicting the Kallirrhoe/Enneakrounos fountain house. Two of the vases in this group actually name the fountain.⁶⁷ The others, although not naming the fountain, clearly represent the same architectural type of fountain and thus, being from the same group, are likely to be representations of the Kallirrhoe/Enneakrounos. The conclusive argument is that the comparison between these representations of the fountain-house and the one on the agora reveals important discrepancies, such as women filling their hydriai directly from the water spouts on the vases when this operation was impossible in the agora south-eastern fountain-house.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, in the absence of archaeological remains of a fountain-house near the Ilissos, the scholar is left with very little to work on concerning the original Enneakrounos and whether it was next to the spring in the bed of the Ilissos as it is thought today, or not.

This spring, and therefore the fountain-house built on it, was very important in Athenian religion. Its waters were fetched in a procession called the *loutrophoria*, for the bridal-bath that the groom and bride had to take before the wedding ceremony.⁶⁹ The practice of using this specific water, and no other, was attributed to tradition and demonstrates that not all waters are good enough for precise religious

⁶⁷ Hydria, British Museum (*ABV* 261.41), dated to 550-500 BC. Hydria, Athens Nat. Museum (*ABV* 393.1). Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 64, 69-70.

⁶⁸ Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 63.

⁶⁹ Thuc. 2.15.5; Suda s.v. Λουτροφόρος καὶ Λουτροφορεῖν· ἔθος ἦν τοῖς γαμοῦσιν Ἀθήνησι λουτρὰ μεταπέμπεσθαι ἑαυτοῖς κατὰ τὴν τοῦ γάμου ἡμέραν. ἔπεμπον δὲ ἐπὶ ταῦτα τὸν ἐγγυτάτῳ γένους παῖδα ἄρρενα· καὶ οὗτοι ἐλουτροφόρουν. ἔθος δὲ ἦν καὶ τοῖς ἀγάμοις ἀποθανοῦσι λουτροφορεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μνήμα ἐφίστασθαι· τοῦτο δὲ ἦν παῖς ὑδρίαν ἔχων. τὰ δὲ λουτρὰ ἐκόμιζον ἐκ τῆς νῦν μὲν Ἐννεακόρου καλουμένης κρήνης, πρότερον δὲ Καλλιρόης. It was customary for those getting married at Athens to send out for baths for themselves on the day of the wedding. They used to send for these the boy who was their nearest male relative; and these did the bath-carrying. It was also customary, when people died unmarried, to have a bath-carrier and position him at the tomb; this was a boy with a hydria. They used to carry the bath[-water] from the spring now called Enneakrounos, formerly Kallirrhoe (trans. D. Whitehead in www.stoa.org). See Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 63; Ginouvès (1962), 265-282.

purposes. In this case, one can hardly expect this important water to be drawn out from an artificial fountain like the one on the Agora.⁷⁰ The additional evidence for other parts of Greece clearly shows that water used in wedding ceremonies had to come from the local area and that running waters are favoured.⁷¹ This seems to indicate a certain link between a country and its inhabitants, not merely represented by water, but rather operated by water. Athenians boasted of being autochthonous – quite literally since they traced their ancestry back to Erichthonios, born of the Attic earth impregnated by Hephaistos' semen – thus the Loutrophoria should be seen not only as a fertility ritual, but also and maybe more fundamentally, as a way to restore their connection with their 'fatherland'.⁷²

1.2.2. The Panops fountain

In the *Lysis*, Plato describes Socrates walking from the Akademeia straight to the Lyceum.⁷³ He decides to walk along the path outside the city walls. When he reaches the small gate leading out to the fountain of Panops, he meets several youths with whom he engages in conversation. The description made by Plato one would use to locate the fountain seems clear, but the path taken by Socrates and his stopping place

⁷⁰ Aqueduct waters, however, were still considered better than many others because it is flowing water, as opposed to stagnant waters from cisterns for example. See n. 39 above.

⁷¹ See Ps-Aeschines, *Letters* 10.3-5, 8, for the equivalent in the Scamander, and possibly the Meander, admittedly reported in a bawdy context (See Puiggali [2003]). In Euripides, *Phoenissae* 347-8, Jocasta regrets that her son, Polyneices, got married away from Thebes, and did not observe the local rites. See also Euripides, *IT* 818.

⁷² For the birth of Erichthonios/Erechtheus, see Hom., *Il.* 2.547-48; Apollodoros, *Bibl.* 3.14.6; Ps-Eratosthenes, *Katast.* 13; Hyg., *Fab.* 13; Paus. 1.2.6. The rivers were seen as very closely linked with the land they were flowing through. This important position entitled them to possess the high hand on the choice of the tutelary deity in Argolis (Apollodoros, *Bibl.* 2.13-14; Paus. 2.15.4, 2.22.4), and to receive gifts from young boys and girls in rituals (see n. 128 below). On the possibility that babies were given theophoric names associated with river-gods such as Kephisodotos ('gift of Kephisos'), see the chapter by Parker (2000), the section below on the sanctuary of Kephisos and n. 128.

⁷³ Plato, *Lysis* 203a.

are more problematic that it first appears.⁷⁴ Kearns, for instance, writes that it was the road from the Akademeia, avoiding stating which road and on which side of the city that should mean.⁷⁵ Other sources are useful in this case. Strabo described a fountain situated outside the walls, in the vicinity of the Lyceum, which could potentially be identified with the Panops fountain, an interpretation widely accepted now.⁷⁶ This case has been strengthened by archaeology when Threpsiadis uncovered a portion of the city wall in 1959.⁷⁷

Between the streets of Mitropoleos, Voulis, Apollonos and Pentelis, Threpsiadis excavated a portion of the Themistoclean walls. A few metres east, another wall ('ΠΡΟΤΕΙΧΙΣΜΑ' on fig. 10) was found parallel to the first. Immediately to its east was a ditch, 9.80 m. wide and more than 10 m. deep, and to its south another wall joined it at a sharp angle, marking the southern limit of the ditch. Further to the south was another SW-NE wall. A large water channel (1.05 m. high and 0.85 m. wide) runs at almost right angle under this wall. In it was a ceramic pipe 0.62 m. high through which an arm of the Eridanos flowed. Two ceramic pipes protected by ceramic slabs joined it from the east (not on the figure). One might have come from the north-east, the other from the east. The main channel was then cut into the soil, made a light curve to the east, then turned again to the west and was lined with isodomic walls and covered with plaques of stone. It eventually reached the oblique

⁷⁴ For the path 'straight to the Lyceum', see for example Planeaux, Ch., 'Socrates, an unreliable narrator? The dramatic setting of the *Lysis*', *Classical Philology*, 96 (2001), 60-68, although his primary assumption about what the straight path to the Lyceum should be seems somewhat biased.

⁷⁵ Kearns (1989), 193.

⁷⁶ Strabo 9.1.19: 'Its sources [of the Eridanos] are indeed existent now, with pure and potable water, as they say, outside the Gates of Diochares, as they are called, near the Lyceum; but in earlier times there was also a fountain nearby which was constructed by man, with abundant and excellent water; and even if the water is not so now, why should it be a thing to wonder at, if in early times the water was abundant and pure, and therefore also potable, but in later times underwent a change?' (trans. H.L. Jones); Travlos ([1980], 345) for example, situates the fountain near the sources of the Eridanos, the Lyceum, and the Gates of Diochares.

⁷⁷ Threpsiadis in *Delton* (1960), 22-27. Reports: Hood (1960), 5; Daux (1960), 637-642.

wall, went under it through a hole where its water would have finally flowed into the ditch.

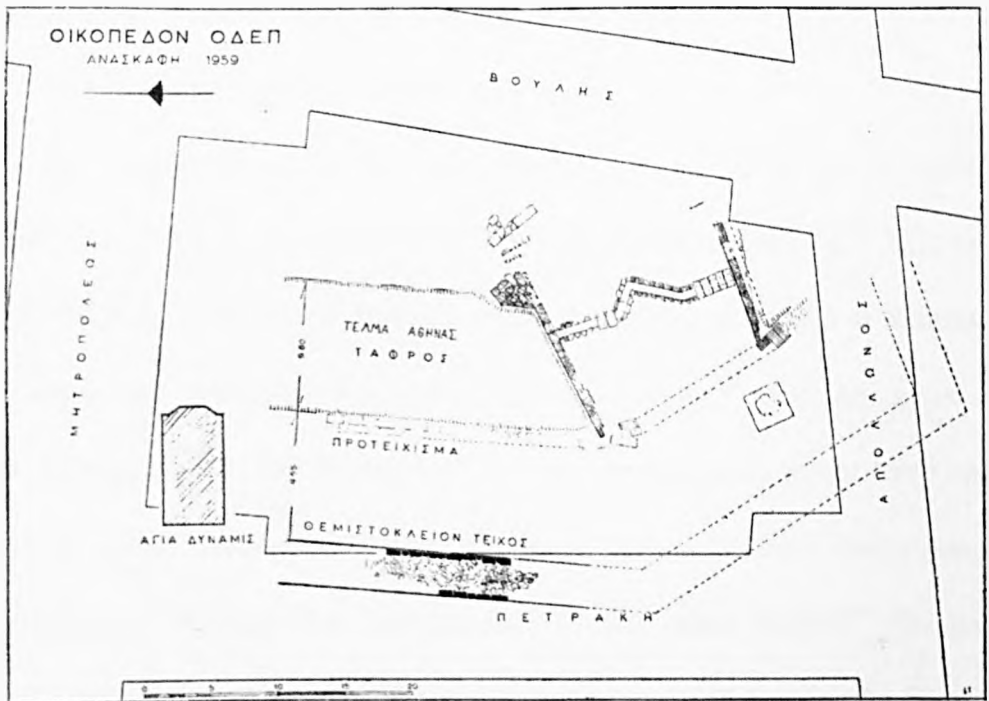


Fig. 10. Map of the area excavated. The 'swamp of Athens' (from Threpsiadis [1960], 23).

Threpsiadis believed the area of the excavation is what the ancient sources called the 'swamp of Athens' (Ἀθηνάς τέλμα).⁷⁸ The waters of the Eridanos and other clean and potable sources would have made the area damp. The purpose of the oblique wall was then to limit the stagnating water to the east. Considering also the amount of effort put into the channelling and storing of the water, Threpsiadis logically concluded that here was proof of an attempt to control and plan water resources. Moreover, the localisation there of the 'swamp of Athens' next to the walls, provides a strong argument in favour of the localisation of the fountain of Panops in the same area. This is because the swamp is associated in the sources with the gate of Diochares, and therefore with the area east of Athens, the Eridanos and the Lyceum,

⁷⁸ IG II² 2495.6-7:
 Ἀθηνάς τέλμα πρὸς ταῖς [πύλαις]
 ταῖς παρὰ τὸ Διοχάρο[υς ..5..]

all of which are spots somewhat associated with the fountain. Threpsiadis tries to identify the classical building he found east of the site with the fountain. It is tempting to believe so, although the remains of this 'oikos' are not important enough to make this hypothesis sound strongly conclusive.

The religious dimension of this fountain is based on Hesychius who wrote that Panops was a hero honoured with a temple, statue and spring.⁷⁹ It is not sure whether these are to be found together and if the spring of Panops at Athens is the one described by Hesychius. The etymology of the name Panops has given rise to several interpretations. The "all-seeing" Panops, for example, might have been the expression of the location of the fountain where one would have had a panoramic view of Athens, although this interpretation sounds rather forced.⁸⁰ The name of Panops is also linked to the god Hermes, either as an epithet or by the character of Argus Panoptes killed by the god.⁸¹

According to Photios, Panops was also one of the *eponymoi*.⁸² The hero would have been one of the 42 heroes attached to the 42 age groups of the Athenian armed body.⁸³ Interestingly, the other identified eponymous hero, although less clearly, is Mounichos whose trace was also found near Athens' walls. The inscription of a dedication, dated to 333-32 BC and made by ephebes of the Aiantis tribe, was discovered near the Pompeion.⁸⁴ It has been suggested age-set heroes could have been located around the walls of Athens, as symbolically protecting the city. Vidal-naquet also suggests that it is 'tempting' to identify twelve out of the 42 eponymous

⁷⁹ Hesychius s.v. Πάνοψ· ἥρωα Ἀττικὸς. ἔστι δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ νεώς, καὶ ἄγαλμα, καὶ κρήνη

⁸⁰ Bosch i Veciana (2002), 289. The author compiles the different interpretations on the etymology in n. 164.

⁸¹ Apollodoros 2.1.2-3; Aesch., *Suppl.* 303-305; Roscher (c1897), 1540.

⁸² Photios s.v. Πάνοψ· ἥρωα Ἀττικὸς· καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐπωνύμοις.

⁸³ Vidal-Naquet (1968), 163 and n. 9. Davidson (2006), 40: 'The lexicographical tradition knew of only two sets of Athenian "eponymous heroes" (...); Panops was not one of the *Phyle*-eponymouses, therefore he must have been of the age-set eponymouses.'

⁸⁴ *SEG* 21.680.

heroes with the monthly heroes of the Athenian calendar, among which would be Panops, celebrated in the month Pyanepsion.⁸⁵

1.3. The Ilissos River and its area

The Ilissos is, with the Kephisos, the most important river flowing through the Athenian plain. It has its sources in the Hymettos, north-east of Athens, and flows to the Saronic Gulf, skirting around the east of the city. Although it is now almost always entirely dry and built over by present day Athens' urbanisation, it was in ancient days important enough to be called a river.⁸⁶ The area near Athens it runs through, in the neighbourhood of the Olympieion, is one of the most anciently occupied in the city and many sanctuaries and shrines are found here.⁸⁷ Myths were also told about this area, such as the abduction of Oreithyia on the banks of the river by the Boreas, wind of the North.⁸⁸ All these elements made this Athenian district one of the most densely sacred of the city, somewhat on a par with the Acropolis.⁸⁹

Thucydides' interpretation for the reason why so many sanctuaries were concentrated in this area was to see it as the continuity with the ancient Athenians' occupation. Parker however reminds us that, although it was an astute idea, we do not have sufficient knowledge to confirm Thucydides' statement and we are left

⁸⁵ Vidal-Naquet (1968), 163 and n. 9, refers to Lycurgus (fr. 3 Durrbach) who wrote that the 'other Greeks' call Πανόψια the festival corresponding to the fourth month of the Attic calendar.

⁸⁶ Plato, *Phaedr.* 229a-c; Strabo 9.24; Paus. 1.19.5. The Ilissos was – and would still be without today's urbanisation in Attica – a typical Mediterranean small river with a torrential flow. From nothing but a small stream in summer, it could be transformed into a powerful river after a winter storm. See Travlos (1980), 341, fig. 441; Muirhead (1962), 87; records that floods of the Ilissos in 1896 were powerful enough to alter the contour of the rock near the Kallirrhoe.

⁸⁷ Thuc. 2.15.3-5, describes the area, which was according to him where the primitive Athenians lived, as being full of sacred shrines and sanctuaries.

⁸⁸ Plato, *Phaedr.* 229c; Hdt. 7.189; Paus. 1.19.5.

⁸⁹ Parker (2005), 55-56.

‘shooting arrows in the dark’.⁹⁰ On the other hand, it is certainly true that the area had been occupied since prehistoric times.⁹¹ The presence of water might have been a primary reason for human occupation in general and for religious establishments to exist there in particular. It is also probable that the antiquity and renown of early sanctuaries would have favoured the foundation of new ones and that a densification process might have been another reason for the number of sanctuaries and/or cults. Water was nevertheless a constituent feature of some of them, particularly some closest to the riverbanks. For instance, the mention by Pausanias of an altar dedicated to the Ilissian Muses sheds some light on a cult associating the Muses with the river by which they were revered.⁹² The closeness of the goddesses with a river is not at all surprising. Already in the first lines of the *Theogony*, Hesiod made the Muses delight in the Boeotian springs, dancing by them and washing in their waters.⁹³ It seems clear that in this case the Muses are not only strongly associated with a spot but also with water. If we have to believe the thesis supported by Camilloni, the Muses should even be understood as ancient deities of springs.⁹⁴ We have nevertheless to turn to more documented shrines for a better picture of what the river and its water stood for in some sanctuaries.

1.3.1. Dionysos in the marshes

In Thucydides’ description of the Ilissos district appears the mention of the sanctuary of Dionysos *en limnais* (‘in the marshes’). It seems that in this case the epiclesis is

⁹⁰ Parker (2005), 56.

⁹¹ Travlos (1980), 289.

⁹² Paus. 1.19.5: Ἐθέλουσι δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ ἄλλων θεῶν ἱερὸν εἶναι τὸν Ἰλισσὸν χωρίον, καὶ Μουσῶν βωμὸς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν Ἰλισιάδων

⁹³ Hes., *Theog.* 1-8.

⁹⁴ Camilloni (1998), 25-38, reviewed by P. Murray, *Classical Review*, 50 (2000), 294.

derived from the location of the sanctuary near the river. The problem, however, is that this sanctuary has never been located with certainty. Three possibilities have been supported: near the theatre of Dionysos on the southern slope of the Acropolis, west of the Acropolis on a site excavated by Dörpfeld, or finally somewhere next to the Ilissos.⁹⁵

Unless the sanctuary is finally discovered, the possibility that the sanctuary had been in or next to marshes remains pure conjecture. The depiction of the god in Aristophanes' *Frogs* as walking the way down to Hades, which is passing through swamps, has often been seen as a possible hint of the nature of Dionysos in the marshes. At Lake Lerna in Argolis, the god was believed to have descended into the underworld and to have come back through the same lake.⁹⁶ The sanctuary could possibly be seen as a passage to the underworld.⁹⁷ Parker however denies this interpretation of the cult as forced and based on a questionable comparison between Athens and Lerna.⁹⁸

1.3.2. The 'Lesser' Mysteries

Another cult was found in the area of the Ilissos, in which the river's waters have possibly played an important role. The so-called Lesser Mysteries of Agrai have remained largely, and appropriately, mysterious. They took place in the spring on the month of Anthesterion in the sanctuary of the Mother at Agrai.⁹⁹ It was presumably

⁹⁵ Pickard-Cambridge (1968), 19-25.

⁹⁶ Paus. 2.37.5-6; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.34; Schol. Hom., *Il.* 14, 319; Arrigoni (1999), 9-15; Casadio (1994), 236-237; Cole (2003), 193-217.

⁹⁷ See for example Hooker (1960), 117; Guarducci (1982), 167-172.

⁹⁸ Parker (2005), 290 n. 3.

⁹⁹ *IG I³* 6B.36-47; Plut., *Demet.* 26.2: 'Demetrius being about to return to Athens, signified by letter to the city that he desired immediate admission to the rites of initiation into the Mysteries, and wished to go through all the stages of the ceremony, from first to last, without delay. This was absolutely contrary to the rules, and a thing which had never been allowed before; for the lesser mysteries were

required to undergo this initiation before being admitted to the Great Mysteries at Eleusis a year later, although the precise association between the two is particularly unclear.¹⁰⁰ It is generally no longer believed that the Lesser Mysteries were associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries as early as its foundation. It was more likely to be an ancient independent cult that was later amalgamated with the other in the Peisistratid period.¹⁰¹ In any case, as Parker stated, ‘by the time that we can observe them, the *Lesser Mysteries* are, both in aetiology and in practical administration, firmly associated with the *Greater*’.¹⁰²

The exact location of the cult is difficult to assess. The cult took place in the district of Agrai, which has been situated somewhere on the left bank of the Ilissos, roughly opposite the Olympieion complex. The Ionic temple that stood on the left bank of the Ilissos – now destroyed – could have been a candidate, but today it is more often believed to have been a temple to Artemis Agrotera, or even Athena.¹⁰³

The aetiological myth of this cult involves Theseus founding them in order to purify Herakles (and/or naturalise him as Athenian) so that he can be initiated at the Eleusinian Mysteries.¹⁰⁴ One fragmentary Black-figure amphora (fig. 11), dated to

celebrated in the month of Anthesterion, and the great solemnity in Boedromion, and none of the novices were finally admitted till they had completed a year after this latter.’ (Dryden translation).

¹⁰⁰ Plato, *Gorg.* 497c.

¹⁰¹ Boardman (1975), 5 had argued in favour of a foundation under the tyranny of Peisistratos. Shapiro (1989), 78 follows E. Simon, “Neue Deutung zweier eleusinischer Denkmäler des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.,” *AntK*, 9 (1966), 72-92 and suggests an earlier foundation.

¹⁰² Parker (2005), 344-45 draws attention to the fact that passing dignitaries under Roman rule could not have been initiated to the two, and suggests it might never have been a true prerequisite. There is, for example, a great discrepancy between the numbers of initiands at the *Great* and at the *Lesser* in the year 407/6. He also rejects the idea derived from the scholion to Ar., *Plut.* 845b that the Great Mysteries were dedicated to Demeter while the Lesser were to Kore as pure schematism. For this discrepancy as a possible evidence that the Lesser Mysteries were not compulsory for the initiation at Eleusis see Clinton (1974), 13, n. 13 and *JG* 1³ 386.143-46 (the reading is that of Cavanaugh [1996], 188-190 and plate):

ἐπέτεια [λέμματα ἐκ τῶν] μεγάλων μυστηρίων

XXXXHHH[ΗΘΔΔΔΔ ΙΙ] ΙΙΙΙΙ

ΔΔΔΔΓΙΙ ἐκ τ[ῶν Ἄγραι]σι μυστηρίων ιιιι [vacat]

¹⁰³ Parker (2005), 344 and n. 76.

¹⁰⁴ Herakles washed at the Ilissos to purify himself either as a murderer after the slaying of the centaurs, or to be ‘naturalised’ Athenian so he could be initiated at the Eleusinian Mysteries. *Plut.*,

the 530s BC, displays a scene in which Herakles is present amongst other gods, and could be the representation of this tradition.¹⁰⁵ It seems therefore that the main purpose of these mysteries were, as it had been in the case of Herakles, to purify its attendants, but the correlative idea of ‘pre-initiation’ – the cultic preparation for the Eleusinian Mysteries – is a modern and problematic attempt to explain the role of these Lesser Mysteries in relation to the Greater.¹⁰⁶



Fig. 11. Black-figured amphora fragment: Reggio 4001 = ABV 147.6, 714.

On the more specific problem of the purifications, although Polyainos explicitly associated the Ilissos and the purifications occurring during the Lesser Mysteries, it is not clear whether water from the river was ever used for more than a usual preliminary.¹⁰⁷ Mylonas' view of the ceremonies including ‘sprinkling of water or

Thes. 30.5; *Diod.* 4.14.3; *Apollod.* 2.5.12; *Tzetzes, Chiliades* 4.14.3; Parker (1996), 98. For all the sources and traditions about Herakles in Attica, see Kearns (1989), 166.

¹⁰⁵ Shapiro (1989), 78-80, pl. 33a. From left to right are painted Demeter (or Persephone), Triptolemos, Athena, Herakles, Hermes and Ploutodotas. The latter was successively identified as Hades, a local deity associated with Demeter, and Dionysos/Iakchos. Shapiro convincingly proposes the alternative identification with Zeus Meilichios whose cult was also present on the banks of the Ilissos at the sanctuary of Pankrates.

¹⁰⁶ Parker (2005), 345 has particularly well exposed the lack of clarity and problems raised by that concept.

¹⁰⁷ Polyainos, *Strat.* 5.17: τὸν Ἰλισσὸν, οὗ τὸν καθαρμὸν τελοῦσι τοῖς ἐλάττοσι μυστηρίοις. Parker (1983), 284.

even bathing in the waters of Ilissos' can hardly be supported unconditionally while, on the other hand, the only explicit purification concerning Herakles is found on reliefs depicting the demi-god veiled and seated, holding a torch and a winnowing-fan.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, the possibility that the water of the Ilissos would have been used for the purifications of the lesser Mysteries remains conjectural. Because the rituals were performed in the spring however, the river could have provided more than enough water for any ritual.

1.3.3. Herakles at Kynosarges

A sanctuary of Herakles was possibly associated with the gymnasium of Kynosarges on the banks of the Ilissos.¹⁰⁹ This gymnasium was one of three Athenian gymnasia, along with the Akademeia and the Lykeion. Each was built in association with potential water supplies and had gardens. The Akademeia was built west of Athens, next to the Kephisos, while the Lykeion was on the right bank of the Ilissos, in the immediate vicinity of the fountain of Panops and the source of the Eridanos. The Kynosarges, probably on the west bank of the river, did not deviate from the rule. It is very likely that athletes used the waters of the river and, more hypothetically, of the Kallirrhoe spring.¹¹⁰ The shrine of Herakles at Kynosarges is usually closely associated with the gymnasium, but it could very well be an altogether separate

¹⁰⁸ Mylonas (1961), 240-241 and pl. 83-84; Parker (1983), 285 and n. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Billot (1992), 130: the author clearly demonstrated that scholars have relied too much on the assumption that the Kynosarges gymnasium and the sanctuary of Herakles at Kynosarges were both part of the same complex. The possibility of two distinct places should not be overlooked.

¹¹⁰ For Billot (1992), who compiled the sources, the precise location of the gymnasium and that of the sanctuary are difficult to assess, since the known sources and the present archaeological data are evasive and defy any definitive localisation. The author suggests that, if the gymnasium is probably somewhere next to the Ilissos, where the ground is flat enough, nothing proves that the sanctuary of Herakles was also next to the river. Travlos (1980), 340, who is criticised by Billot, believed it to be on the south bank of the river, in the area where British excavations of the end of the 19th c. found remains of a palaestra of the classical period and because two inscriptions (Raubitschek, *DAA* 318 and *IG II²* 2119.128) mention, the one a *dromos*, and the other a *stadion* at Agrai.

structure. This raises the problem of knowing whether the shrine was near the *Ilissos* at all.

An inscription, found near the *Lysikrates Monument* and dated to 440-430 BC, tells us of a decree put up on both sides of the river and forbidding tanners to throw the waste of their activity in the *Ilissos* above the sanctuary of *Herakles*.¹¹¹

IG I³ 257

[.....16.....δρ]-	...drachmas:
αχμάς· ἐπ[ιμ]έλεσθαι δὲ	The King is to take care
τὸμ βασιλέα· γράφσαι δ-	of it being written
ὲ ἐστελεῖ λιθίνει καὶ	on a stone stele,
στῆσαι ἑκατέρωθι· με-	and of its erection on both sides.
δὲ δέρματα σέπεν ἐν τῷ-	It is forbidden to soften skins
ι ἡλιζῶι καθύπερθεν	in the <i>Ilissos</i>
τῷ τεμένος τῷ ἡρακλέ-	above the sanctuary of <i>Herakles</i> .
[ο]ς· μεδὲ βυρσοδεφσῆν μ-	It is forbidden to tan
[εδὲ καθά]ρμα[τ]α <ἐ>ς τὸν π-	or to throw refuse
[οταμὸν βάλλεν . .]# [. .]	in the river...

The identification of this sanctuary of *Herakles* is still problematic. Two possibilities can be put forward: the sanctuary of *Kynosarges* on one hand and, on the other, the one dedicated to *Herakles Pankrates* which was situated upstream after the stadium, under the intersection of *Basileos Konstantinou* and *Basileos Georgiou II*.¹¹² The reasons why *Billot* prefers to identify the sanctuary concerned with the decree as the

¹¹¹ *IG I³ 257*; *Sokolowski* (1962), n°4, p. 19; *Travlos* (1980), 340-341; *Billot* (1992), 155-156.

¹¹² The case of the sanctuary of *Pankrates* is studied below in section 1.3.4.

one dedicated to Pankrates are sound. It is indeed true that it is the only one of which we know the precise location and which, moreover, is next to the Ilissos. This identification however suffers two major problems. First, it means that the tanners would have been allowed to pollute the waters of the river anywhere downstream from the sanctuary, hence concerning all the area where the Ilissos is nearest to the city, where without a doubt, many citizens and sanctuaries would have required clear clean water. Second, as Travlos has already suggested, the best location for the tanners is below the Kallirrhoe spring where the flow of water in the river is more important and regular. It would appear more appropriate to prevent the tanners from extending their activities in an area they would want to do so. The question therefore remains open.

The gymnasium was, furthermore, the only one in Athens that athletes who were not of pure Athenian parentage could frequent. This was already the case at the end of the 6th c. BC when Themistocles, born to a foreign mother and therefore a *nothos*, a 'bastard', frequented the gymnasium and invited 'well-born' friends to go there with him.¹¹³ The figure of Herakles, born to Zeus and a mortal woman, made him somewhat of a bastard himself and he received a cult from the Athenian *nothoi* at Kynosarges.¹¹⁴ The role played by the waters of the Ilissos in such a context is purely hypothetical since nothing of it is found in the sources, even if my interpretation of the inscription above is accepted. However, it would not be outlandish for a cult given to Herakles to use water from the Ilissos when the demi-

¹¹³ Plut., *Themistocles* 1; Ogden (1996), 54-58.

¹¹⁴ Dem., *Against Aristocrates* 213; Suda s.v. Ἀντισθενής, s.v. Εἰς Κυνόσαργες, s.v. Κυνόσαργες. The last definition by the Suda says that Herakles himself was a *nothos*, justifying the cult that was given to him at Kynosarges. The same is found in Plutarch, *Themistocles* 1. See Ogden (1996), 55 n. 94. The cult to Herakles is confirmed in a fragment of Polemon in which mentioned a decree proposed by Alcibiades on the monthly sacrifices given by the *nothoi* and their sons to Herakles at Kynosarges. Polemon F78 Preller = Athenaeus, *deipn.* 234d-f. See Ogden (1996), 199-203.

god, not Athenian himself, possibly obtained his naturalisation in the waters of the same river in what was to become the Lesser Mysteries.

1.3.4. Herakles Pankrates

As we have seen when studying the tanners' inscription above, there was another sanctuary of Herakles on the banks of the Ilissos.¹¹⁵ It is not mentioned in any literary sources and was discovered when works for channelling the river were begun in November 1952. Excavation campaigns followed in 1953 and 1954. The sanctuary, bordered on one side by the river, consisted of an open air court outlined by bedrock, forming some kind of natural theatre. Near the middle of the court was a natural cleft (fig. 12.C) and immediately beside it is what Vikela calls the 'cella area', outlined rather than enclosed by a wall.¹¹⁶

Of all the constitutive elements of this sanctuary, its topography is the one that most clearly indicates that water played some role in the cult: the configuration of the sanctuary as seen above makes it resemble a theatre open directly onto the Ilissos. According to Vikela, one should also see the river as the natural entrance of the sanctuary. Therefore, if the river was not at the centre of the sacred stage, possibly occupied by the cleft in the rock, it was always at the background.

¹¹⁵ Vikela (1994) is the one major publication about the site. The author's work on the reliefs and their classification has been very well received, while her chapter four treating of the religious background had a colder response. Reviews by C.L. Lawton, *AJA*, 100 (1996), 621-622; L.-A. Touchette, *CR*, 49 (1999), 519-520. See also Parker (2005), 412 n. 100, 419-421. Interestingly, excavations under Rigillis street (behind the National Byzantine Museum and near the river) and has uncovered remains of the palaestra of the Lykeion. Those have been connected with the sanctuary of Pankrates by the excavators. Both have contemporaneous activity, from the 4th BC onwards. See Ligouri-Tolia, *AD* 51 (1996), 48

¹¹⁶ For the description of the setting of the sanctuary, see Vikela (1994), 1-3 and Parker (2005), 419.



Fig. 12. Schematic map of the sanctuary of Herakles-Pankrates (from Vikela [1994], pl. 2).

All of this would denote a rather unassuming sanctuary, if it was not for the many votive reliefs found in this sacred space, the majority of which are dated to c.350 to c.250 BC.¹¹⁷ Two iconographical types of god are displayed on the reliefs: one older, bearded, wearing a cloak and bare-chested, usually seated with a cornucopia in the left arm, and appearing once as a large head on the floor (*protome*); the other has the attributes of Herakles, often holds a cornucopia and appears twice as a *protome*. The older god is called by a variety of names: Pankrates, Palaimon, Plouton and Theos. The Herakles figure is called Pankrates on four occasions and Herakles Pankrates once. The predominant name is therefore Pankrates, and it seems that it should be also the predominant deity of the sanctuary since its renown has survived in today's district name Pankrati.¹¹⁸ The possibility that the two distinct iconographies could represent the same god is perhaps invalidated by the appearance of Herakles along

¹¹⁷ In total 58 reliefs, all belonging to the period stated but one exception, dated to the 2nd c. AD (Vikela [1994], S4 p. 56).

¹¹⁸ Travlos (1980), 278.

the protome of the older god in the same relief, Parker arguing that this showed that two gods were worshipped.¹¹⁹

The reliefs do not specifically mention water, but by helping understand the cult better one sees that the use of water in the sanctuary would not be out of place. Apart from the setting itself, the reliefs show that the cult incorporated chthonic elements. It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate whether this term, clearly modern, is illegitimate or not. It is however clear that the sanctuary has something to do with the soil and, quite possibly, the underworld: a god's head surging from the earth, the kneeling figures, the 'banqueting hero' and the cornucopia.¹²⁰ The other gods mentioned are also associated with the underworld.¹²¹ Water is often part of the chthonian universe, in particular under the form of springs and rivers.¹²² An overall theme of wealth seems to pertain in this sanctuary.¹²³ Finally, it seems that the sanctuary preoccupation with wealth extended to health, since a couple of anatomical votive reliefs of Roman period were found; water is also a common feature of sanctuaries concerned with health, as is demonstrated in the numerous sanctuaries dedicated to Asklepios and in others such as the Amphiareion of Oropos.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Parker (2005), 420-21.

¹²⁰ Protome: Vikela (1994), B10, B13, B18. These recall the depictions of anodoi. See C. Bérard, *Anodoi. Essai sur les passages chthoniens* (Rome: Institut Suisse, 1974). Kneeling figures: Vikela (1994), A3, A10, A12, A20, F1, F8 and p. 166: 'Van Straten erweiterte die Interpretation des Kniens in dem Sinne, daß er sie allgemein mit den θεοὶ σωτήρες und ἐπήκοοι verband. Das Vorhandensein dieses relativ seltenen Motivs auf mehreren Pankrates-Reliefs spiegelt ganz besonders die Eigenschaft des Pankrates als eines chthonischen Heilgottes wider'. Banqueting Hero: Vikela (1994), A22. Cornucopia: A symbol for wealth, derived from the image of agricultural abundance, the cornucopia is generally associated with Ploutos, son of Demeter. See Hes., *Theog.* 912-14, 969-74. *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 486-89. Interestingly, in the case of Herakles the cornucopia is taken to be the horn he broke off from the river-god Acheloos. Diod. 4.35.3; Strabo 6.2.19; Hyg. *Fab.* 31; Ov. *Met.* 9.87-88. See Boardman et al. s.v. Herakles, *LIMC*, vol. 4.1 (1988), 729.

¹²¹ Palaimon, for example, is a complex mythological figure whose major cult is at Isthmia. His association with death and rebirth is well expressed in myth. See Pache (2004), 135-80; Parker (2005), 421 n. 15.

¹²² Ogden (2001), 170.

¹²³ See Parker (2005), 418-426.

¹²⁴ Asklepieion: the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros is considered to be the prototype and/or origin of many sanctuaries consecrated to the healing god. See Edelstein & Edelstein (1998), 238-242; Aleshire (1989), 7-8; Tomlinson (1983), 24-25.

2. Sites in Attica

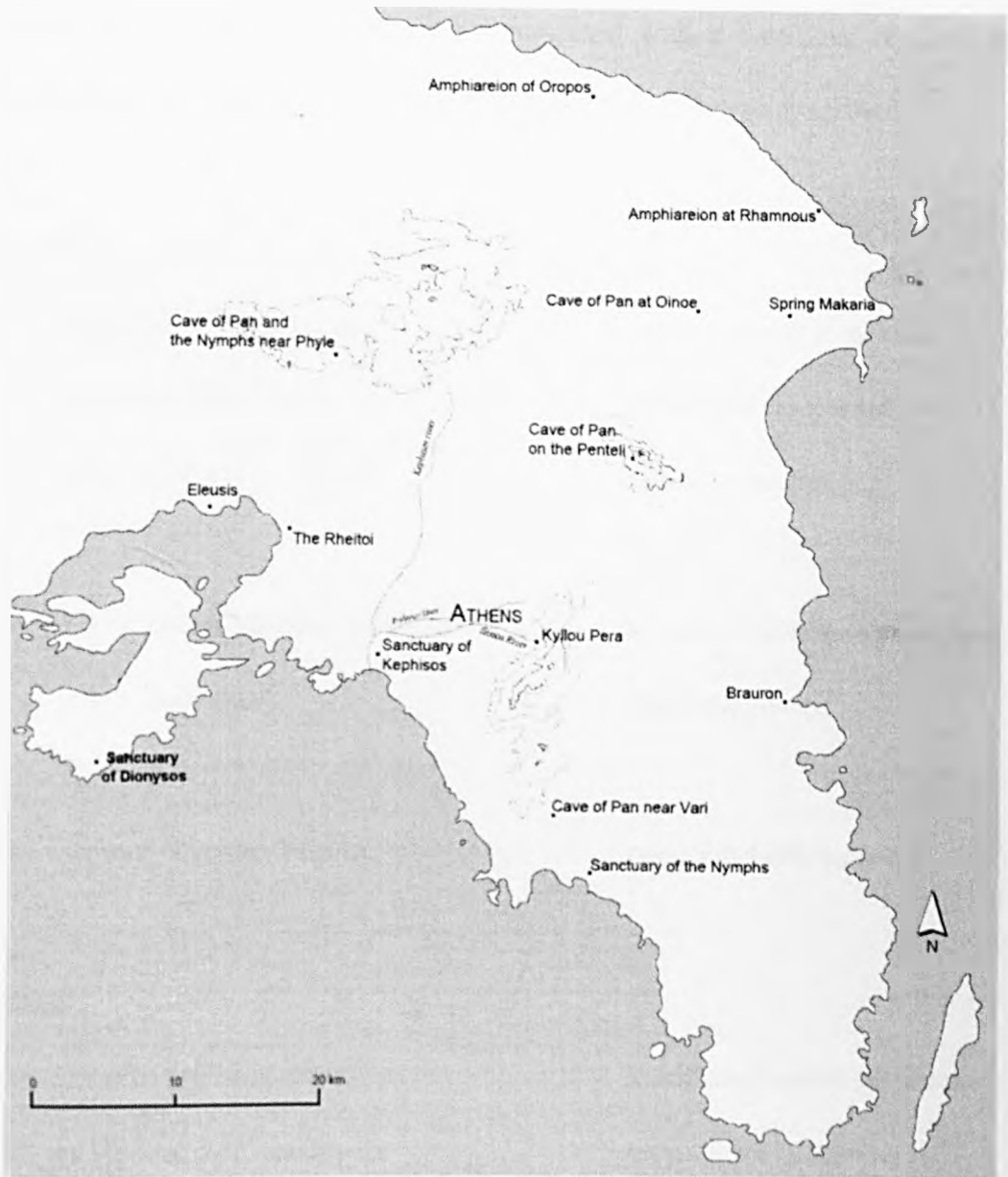


Fig. 13. Map of Attica with the sites studied.

2.1. The sanctuary of Kephisos

The river Kephisos is the other important river that flows through the Athenian plain into the Saronic Gulf, and was the object of a popular cult. Indeed, between the long walls, near the ancient Hippodrome and the coast, a sanctuary was discovered

dedicated to the river-god otherwise unknown.¹²⁵ Such was the proximity of the river that a dam, made of sand and pebbles, was erected to protect the shrine. In the precinct, two votive reliefs and a stone inscribed with a sacrificial regulation, all dated to the end of the 5th c. BC, or the very early 4th c BC, were unearthed.¹²⁶

IG I³ 986

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| A.1 | Κηφισόδοτος Δεμογένοσ
Βουτάδες ιδρύσατο
καὶ τὸν βωμόν. | Kephisodotos from the deme
of Boutadai has founded
as well as the altar. |
| Ba.1 | Ἑρμῆι καὶ Νύμφαισιν Ἀ<λ>εξὸ
[τὴνδ' ἀνέθηκεν]. | to Hermes and to the Nymphs Averters
[He dedicated this] |
| Bb.1 | ἡερμῆς. Ἐχελος. Ἰασίλη. | Hermes. Echelos. Iasile |

IG I³ 987

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 5 | Ξενοκράτεια Κηφισῶ ἱερ-
ὸν ιδρύσατο καὶ ἀνέθηκεν
ξυμβώμοις τε θεοῖς διδασκαλ-
ίας τόδε δῶρον, Ξενιάδο θυγάτ-
ηρ καὶ μήτηρ ἐκ Χολλειδῶν,
θύεν τῶι βουλομένῳ ἐπὶ
τελεστῶν ἀγαθῶν. | Xenocrateia founded the sanctuary
and dedicated to Kephisos
and to the gods on the same altar
this gift on behalf of the education
of Xeniadēs, as daughter and mother
of the deme Cholleidai, and sacrificed
in fulfilment of her wishes. |
|---|---|--|

¹²⁵ Larson (2001), 131-134.

¹²⁶ Reliefs: *IG I³ 986-87*. Cult regulation: *IG II/III² 4547*.

	Ἑστίαι, Κηφισ-	To Hestia,
	ῶι, Ἀπόλλωνι	Kephisos,
	Πυθίωι, Λητοῖ,	Apollo Pythios,
	Ἀρτέμιδι Λοχ-	Leto,
5	ίαι, Ἰλειθύαι, Ἀχ-	Artemis Lochia,
	ελώωι, Καλλ-	Eileithyia,
	ιρόηι, Γεραισ-	Acheloos,
	ταῖς Νύμφαι-	Kallirrhoe,
	ς γενεθλί-	Geraistai Nymphai Genethliai,
10	αις, Ῥαψοῖ.	Rhapso.

The sanctuary was a private foundation, by a woman called Xenokrateia, who set up a votive sculpture to Kephisos and 'the other gods of the same altar' on behalf of her son, Xeniadēs, for his education. On her relief a group of divinities is sculpted with a woman and a small child, probably herself and the young Xeniadēs.¹²⁷ A stone that accompanied it was most certainly used to bear the names of Kephisos and these 'other gods' to whom sacrifices were offered. The other dedicator's name we know of is Kephisodotos, i.e. 'gift of Kephisos'. He offered to the sanctuary an inscribed stele on which a two-sided relief was put up. The cult's regulation appears to confirm the prominence of the river god at the sanctuary, for he is the first divinity to be honoured after the preliminary sacrifice to Hestia. These offerings undeniably situate

¹²⁷ The identity of the gods represented is not assured, and several possibilities have been suggested. The problems result from the impossibility to make the relief correspond exactly with the list of gods on the inscription. Larson (2001) 132-133: follows the identifications made by C.M. Edwards (*Greek votive reliefs to Pan and the Nymphs*, Ph.D. diss. NYU, 1985) and underlines that the differences between the relief and the regulation are to be attributed to their different functions. While the list gives the order in which one should sacrifice, the relief depicts the relationship between Xenokrateia, her son, and the gods of the sanctuary.

this sanctuary amongst those devoted to the bearing, raising and education of young children, since in addition to Kephisos, deities such as Eileithyia (goddess of childbirth), Kallirrhoe (as we have seen above, strongly associated in Attica and Athens with marriage and thus with childbearing) and the Geraistian Nymphs Genethliai (Nymphs of birth) are honoured.¹²⁸

More generally, this sanctuary was founded by and for individuals. The scale of its influence was therefore, and as far as we know, limited. That does not imply, however, that the cult of Kephisos was as geographically limited as this sanctuary. The river crosses the two dedicators' demes – Boutadai and Cholleidai – and, certainly, the Kephisos was considered as one who ensured the fertility and welfare of these demes' communities. But his influence and protection might have extended to the whole of Attica, encompassing the limits of the demes nearest to its course. As an illustration of this idea, Erechtheus had married, according to Apollodorus, the granddaughter of the river.¹²⁹ The myth thus symbolically binds the whole community of the Athenians with the river. Concurrently, Pausanias described the five parts constituting the altar of the temple of Amphiaraos near Oropos, at the northern extremity of the Attic territory: 'The fifth is dedicated to the nymphs and to Pan, and to the rivers Acheloüs and Cephisos'.¹³⁰ Although this could be referring to another Kephisos, for example the Boeotian one, the proximity to the Athenian river

¹²⁸ The rivers were commonly understood as protectors of the youths. See for example Aesch., *Choeph.* 6; Paus. 1.37.3: 'By the river is a statue of Mnesimache, and a votive statue of her son cutting his hair as a gift for Cephisos. That this habit has existed from ancient times among all the Greeks may be inferred from the poetry of Homer (...)' (trans. W.H.S. Jones); Hom., *Il.* 23.141-153. See Parker (2000), 59-64, uses the evidence provided by this sanctuary in particular to suggest that some theophoric names, in particular those created with the compounds –doros and –dotos (given by), have a religious foundation, at least for the first bearer of such a name in a family line. The conservatism of name giving within a same family, and the 'contagious effect of fashion' are further factors that prevent us to see religious zeal and/or beliefs in the vast majority of the cases of theophoric names bearers (p. 62).

¹²⁹ Apollodorus, *Library* 3.15.1.

¹³⁰ Paus. 1.34.3 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

should allow us to suppose this was the one involved.¹³¹ Moreover, the presence of Kephisos alongside Acheloos, the Nymphs and Pan corresponds to the image of the protector of youth encountered in the small sanctuary near the Piraeus.

2.2. A sanctuary of the Nymphs on the coast

A marble stele was discovered in 1954 on the road to Sounion, 34 km from Athens, near a spring (or a well) called Πηγάδι τοῦ Ἄλυκοῦ.¹³² This name derives from the fact that the underground water is connected to the sea and when the wind is from the South, the water at the spring becomes slightly salty.¹³³ The stone is complete, but badly eroded at the top of the inscription. It has been variously dated, but it cannot have been written long after the very beginning of the 4th c. BC. It reads:¹³⁴

1 erased line	
	[...6...] Λ... .. [κ]αὶ θ[ύ]εν τ[ῆ]σι	...and to sacrifice to the Nymphs,
	[Νύ]μφησι κατὰ τὴν μαντεία[ν τῆ]-	as instructed by the oracle of Pythō.
4	[ν ἐ]μ Πυθῶθεν· τελεῖν δὲ ὀβολὸ[ν τ]-	Those drinking at the Halykos must
	[ὸ]ς πίνοντας τῷ Ἄλυκῷ τῷ ἔνια[υ]-	pay an obol a year for the sacrifices
	[τ]ὸ ἑκάστο ἐς τὰ ἱερά τῆσι Νύμ[φ]-	to the Nymphs. Anyone who does not
	[η]σι· ὅστις δ' ἂν μὴ καταθῆι τὸν ὀ[β]-	pay one obol may not drink at the
8	[ο]λόν, μὴ πινέτω τῷ Ἄλυκῷ· ἕαν δέ	Halykos. If someone drinks by force,

¹³¹ The altar is dated to the 4th c. BC. See Petrakos (1968), 96-98. The sanctuary of Amphiaraios at Oropos was subject to disputes between Boeotia and Attica. The Kephisos on the altar could be the Boeotian river flowing further north as well. See section on the Amphiareion of Oropos below.

¹³² According to Camp (1977), 356, a well is still in use there today.

¹³³ Halykos means literally 'salted'. Meyer (2004), 321.

¹³⁴ Meyer (2004), 322, who chooses the reading from the *Corpus*. The text is also in Sokolowski's *LSCG* (1969) # 178 and *IG I³* 256 but with a slightly different reading (*IG* and *LSCG*: line 10: δραχμᾶς and line 11: καταθῆς; *LSCG*: line 3-4: τῆμ instead of τὴν ἐμ). A picture of the inscription is in Bousquet (1967), 93, reproduced from Mitsos, *AE* (1965), pl. 46.

	τις βιαζόμενος πίνῃ, ἀποτίν-	let him be fined five drachmas.
	εν πέντε δραχμάς. ἐάν τις φέρη-	If someone draws or carries off water
	[ι] ἢ ἄγῃ τῷ ὕδατος [μῆ] καταθεῖ ὀ-	and does not pay an obol, let him pay
12	βολόν, τῷ ἀμφορέω[ς] ἑκάστο ὀφε-	fifty drachmas for each amphora as a
	[ι]λέτω [50] ἱεράς τα[ῖς] Νύμφαις νν.	consecration to the nymphs.
		(trans. based on Meyer [2004])

It is a regulation, put up after the consultation of the oracle at Delphi which instructed to sacrifice to the Nymphs. The local priests then decided to set the price to pay to have the right to drink water from the spring sacred to the Nymphs.¹³⁵ A few problems have arisen concerning the reading of the end of the text, since it is unclear whether it is to be read ‘if someone does not pay one obol, he must be fined 50 drachmas per amphora’ or ‘if someone does not pay one obol per amphora, he must be fined 50 drachmas’. In any case the fine of 50 drachmas is prohibitive when compared with the price of one obol. Meyer suggests reading ‘καὶ’ instead of ‘μῆ’ at line 11, with the subsequent translation as ‘if someone draws or carries away water, *even if* (and) he pays an obol, let him be fined 50 drachmas for each amphora as consecration to the Nymphs’.¹³⁶ This alternative is satisfactory inasmuch as it offers a logical explanation for the huge fine.

What does it mean in terms of cult? The sanctuary is dedicated to the Nymphs and, as a natural consequence, the spring or well is one of the central features of the sanctuary. Its water must therefore have been sacred, which does not

¹³⁵ Bousquet (1967), 93-95: the Delphic oracle was only concerned with the sacrifices offered to the Nymphs. When it came to regulate the use and price of the water from the Halykos, the priests of the sanctuary were the sole authority.

¹³⁶ Meyer (2004), 323-324.

necessarily mean that it could not be used for a secular use.¹³⁷ About the motives of the priests for putting up such a law, it is possible that only pecuniary reasons drove them to do so since they had to perform sacrifices following the oracle. It is also possible that the priests feared an overexploitation of their water resources, and reduced its use to a personal one within the limits of the sanctuary in order to avoid too much water being drawn and so hamper its salinisation.¹³⁸ Both reasons might be equally valid, but it is important to remember that a source of drinking water must, in such an arid place as the southern coast of Attica, have been a very sacred spot indeed. Another case of a sanctuary selling water is known from the inscriptions: that of Bendis at the Piraeus.¹³⁹

2.3. Cave sanctuaries

Many caves can be found in the Attic landscape, from the ones on the Acropolis to the remotest parts of the countryside. In some of them, traces of cult can be found and among these some have a spring in or near them. This section explores how the presence of water in these caves played a role in the cult which was devoted there.

¹³⁷ On the other hand, it supposes the prohibition of any use that can 'pollute' the water. Sacred laws were put up elsewhere to prevent such possibility, as we have seen in the case of the tanners on the banks of the Ilissos at Athens. A recent example of such a regulation was discovered on Delos in the spring 2005, forbidding to wash or to swim in the 'réservoir de l'Inopos'. See the short blog on http://tfl.lci.fr/infos/sciences/dossiers_science/efa/0,,3223787,00-decouverte-stele-antique-dans-cyclades-.html <last accessed 9 August 2006>. The report will be published in the *BCH*.

¹³⁸ Bousquet (1967), 95 reminds that these water sources are often connected to the sea, which should be the case here since the water can be salty. Drawing too much water from it consequently heightens its salt concentration and makes it improper to drink.

¹³⁹ Meyer (2004), 324-325 refers to another inscription (*JG II*² 1361 = *LSCG* n°45 = *SEG* 25.167.8-10) showing that the sanctuary of Bendis at the Piraeus sold its water for 'restoring the house and the sanctuary'. It is not clearly known how sacred was the water in question, nor what the price of the sale was. Another inscription (*JG II*² 1283 = *LSCG* #46, l. 18) shows that the procession to the Bendideion stopped at a *nymphaiion* where the processioners were given sponges, basins and water. Whether this is the water of the Bendideion or this is another sanctuary altogether is not evident.

2.3.1. The cave near Vari

This cave is situated on the south-western slopes of the Hymettos, near the town of Vari. This part of Attica is particularly dry, a fact reflected by the name given to this southern ridge of the Hymettos: *anhydros*.¹⁴⁰ An 18th c. English traveller, Richard Chandler, was the first to report his visit to the cave, until then unknown to foreigners: 'the Panéum or Nymphaeum by Vary is a singular curiosity, of a species, it is apprehended, not described by any traveller'.¹⁴¹ Several other travellers visited the cave in the 19th c. and archaeological excavations were eventually carried out at the very beginning of the 20th c. under the direction of Charles H. Weller of the American School.¹⁴² The many inscriptions found in the cave identified a man called Archedemos, who was of considerable importance in the history of the cult here.¹⁴³ He described himself as a 'nympholept' and we learn he had worked on the layout of the cave.¹⁴⁴

IG I³ 980:¹⁴⁵

Ἀρχέδημος ὁ Θ-

Archedemos the Theraean,

ηραῖος ὁ νυμφ-

the nympholept,

¹⁴⁰ See the article 'Hymettos' in Richard Stillwell and al., *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 400.

¹⁴¹ Chandler (1776), 158-160.

¹⁴² Among other travellers, Dodwell, Wordsworth, and Leake visited the cave. The excavations were conducted by the American School at Athens in early 1901 and were published in Weller et alii, *AJA*, 7 (1903), 263-349. For more recent studies, see Connor (1988); Borgeaud (1988), 104-107; Larson (2001), 14-16, 243-245. See in particular Schörner & Goette (2004).

¹⁴³ It is clear that this sanctuary has been strongly influenced by this unique individual and, as Connor (1988), 180 writes, '...it seems likely than one individual, Archedamos, was responsible for many of its distinctive features'.

¹⁴⁴ The inscriptions have been diversely dated, considering the variety of letterings encountered. Borgeaud (1988), 104 and n. 88, follows Himmelmann-Wildschütz, *ΘΕΟΛΗΠΤΟΣ* (Marburg: Eukerdruck, 1957), and believes some of the inscriptions have been made one or two generations after Archedemos, who received then a cult as founder. Connor (1988), n. 42 suggests it was still possible that all inscriptions concerning Archedemos had been made during his lifetime. Schörner & Goette (2004), 114 insist on the fact that nothing indicates a cult to Archedemos.

¹⁴⁵ Schörner & Goette (2004), 42-44; Dunham (1903), 299-300.

ὀληπτος φραδ-	at the instructions
αἴσι Νυμφῶν τ-	of the Nymphs
ἄντρον ἐξηργ-	worked out this cavern.
ἄξατο.	

IG I³ 979:¹⁴⁶

Ἄρχέδημος Ἄρχέδημος	Archedemos Archedemos
-----------------------	-------------------------

IG I³ 977 side A:¹⁴⁷

Ἄρχέδαμος ἡο Θερ-	Archedemos the Theraean
αἴος κᾶπον Νύ-	cultivated a garden
μφαις ἐφύτευσεν.	for the Nymphs

The cave is entered through a steep hole in the rocky ground, leading to a first slightly uneven landing. From there the cave is ‘divided into two great chambers by a wall of living rock’.¹⁴⁸ The easier one to descend into from there is the one to the West, where no archaeological material was found apart from late lamps. The alterations to this part of the cave are few but interesting, although they should be located to the ‘landing’ area rather than the West chamber proper. On the walls one finds a few niches and inscriptions, among which a sacred law prohibiting the cleaning of the entrails of the sacrificial victim inside.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly for our

¹⁴⁶ Schörner & Goette (2004), 46-47; Dunham (1903), 299.

¹⁴⁷ Schörner & Goette (2004), 51-54; Dunham (1903), 298-299, #17. At the reverse of this inscription is another about Archedemos perfecting the Nymphs’ domain, but the middle of it, reading ΧΟΛΟΔΟΝ-ΧΕΣΤΕ, is not easily understood, and might refer to dances (*choros*). See also Connor (1988), 171-173 for an alternative hypothesis.

¹⁴⁸ Weller (1903), 265; Connor (1988), 181; Schörner & Goette (2004), 17.

¹⁴⁹ Dunham (1903), 296-297. For Schörner & Goette (2004), 44-46, 111: the position of this inscription there at the landing in the cave indicates that it was not considered as ‘inside’

purposes, a small basin was dug in the rock and was connected through a long channel (approx. 4.50 m.) to a bigger basin, on which remains of plastering were found during the excavations. At its bottom was hewn a 'square depression... in whose centre is sunk a circular hollow'. It was first interpreted as the gardens consecrated by Archedemos to the Nymphs by Chandler, then as a cistern or reservoir by Weller. Schörner and Goette rejected the idea of a cistern on the ground that no influx of water can be found. They furthermore pointed out the strong similarities to their eyes with the Greek bath-tub and suggest the possibility that, rather than mere ablutions, one had to undertake a bath before going further into the cave.¹⁵⁰

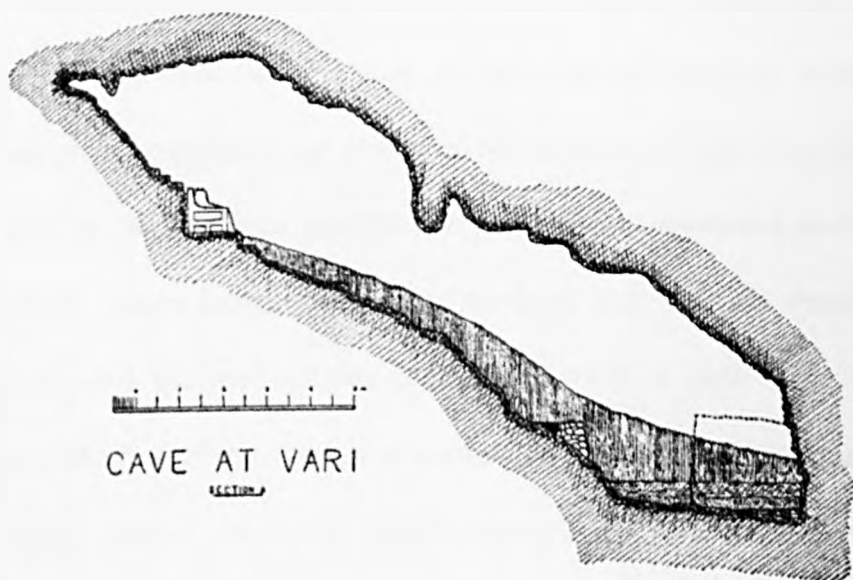


Fig. 14. Sectional drawing (N-S) of the East chamber of the cave of Vari (from Weller [1903], pl.2).

¹⁵⁰ Schörner & Goette (2004), 112. I wonder if, considering the presence of the spring below this structure, it would be possible to interpret it as a system to prevent rain water from flowing down the slope of the cave, thus polluting the spring. The hollow at the bottom of the cistern would then be where the dirt settles.

At the bottom of the chamber is the place where Chandler and Weller saw a spring. It has now dried up. The lack of votive offerings and the scarcity of the light have driven Schörner and Goette to suggest this area might just be a passageway to the other chamber, while Connor saw it as a step further in the 'separation from the ordinary world'. Indeed, a threshold was built at the level of a hole in the wall between the two chambers.

Gell, Connor and after them Schörner and Goette have insisted on the significance of this spot.¹⁵¹ From there, the visitor is suddenly embracing the entire chamber with its sculptures, altars and votives, facing the light pouring down from the entrance of the cave. In the mind of Connor, this has to be part of a dramatisation, of a progressive separation from the normality of the outside world and leading towards the holiness of the sanctuary in this part of the cave; it resembles stages of an initiation.¹⁵² It is here that the vast majority of votives and material were discovered, demonstrating that most of the activity in the cave took place there.¹⁵³ At least some part of the sacrificial process was probably accomplished on the double altar on the wall, or on a *bomos* made out of a pile of stones.¹⁵⁴ The sherds indicate that sacrificial meals included women. Across the room, a wall which no longer exists followed the line of the slope, and seems to have delimited the area around a couple of 'small shelves cut in the sloping rock of the floor'. It was used as a retaining wall for a small platform on which people could stand despite the steep

¹⁵¹ According to Schörner & Goette ([2004], 113), Connor ([1988], 182) takes after William Gell's essay *On some of the Sacred Caverns of the Greeks*, whose manuscript is at the Gennadion Library at the American School of Athens. He wrote (p. 25 recto-verso): 'Whatever have been the ceremonial, we find in the Grotto of Pan all that was requisite for the mysteries of initiation.'

¹⁵² Connor (1988), 187: 'The cave as a whole recreates the sequence of withdrawal, confrontation, exaltation, and reintegration that characterizes his state (i.e. possession)'; also in Schörner & Goette (2004) 112, who agree with the idea of initiation, but are more wary of the somewhat overstated interpretations by Connor.

¹⁵³ Weller (1903), 282; Schörner & Goette (2004), 112.

¹⁵⁴ Schörner & Goette (2004), 113.

slope.¹⁵⁵ Behind it, at the bottom of the cave, the floor was levelled and was clearly large enough for the dances that might have accompanied the sacrificial celebrations.¹⁵⁶

On the grounds of the epigraphical evidence, the deities worshipped at the cave are Pan, the Nymphs, Charis (or the Charites), Apollo.¹⁵⁷ There is another name given by Epigraphy, Hersos. The inscription has now vanished but was recorded by Milchhöfer at the end of the 19th c.: Ἀπόλλωνος . Ἑρσους.¹⁵⁸ The dot between the names is present in Dunham (1903) but not in Weller (1903). Weller and Larson read the inscription as 'Apollo Hersos', while Schörner and Goette consider Hersos as a separate male figure, maybe a hero.¹⁵⁹ A seated figure, sculpted in the wall of the cave, is maybe another one. She has her head missing and is generally thought to be female, although its sex is difficult to make out considering that the quality of the handiwork is quite poor.¹⁶⁰ Overall, the major deities of this sanctuary are clearly the Nymphs and Pan, in that order. Archedemos, who lived in the second half of the 5th c. BC, was *nympholeptos*: ravished/possessed by the nymphs, he built several features of the cave and made a garden for them. Another inscription mentions the Nymphs, and is one of the earliest in the cave being dated to the mid-5th c. BC.

¹⁵⁵ A natural cleft runs through the westernmost of the two 'shelves'. Weller (1903), 273, and most scholars after him, believed water used to run through this natural channel and that this 'may well have been regarded as the veritable retreat of the Nymphs'. Schörner and Goette (2004), 24-25 and pl. 13.1, on the contrary, refuse to see any water equipment there and believe, quite reasonably, that they must have been sockets for bases or altars.

¹⁵⁶ Weller (1903), 283 suggests, somewhat warily, that the oldest strata must be the platform found at the bottom of the cave, and tentatively dates it to the early 6th c. BC. But Larson (2001), 242 doubts it, considering that no objects found in the excavations can confirm this date.

¹⁵⁷ Schörner & Goette (2004), 114.

¹⁵⁸ Weller (1903), 271; Dunham (1903), 296; Larson (2001), 243.

¹⁵⁹ See note above, and Schörner & Goette (2004), 114. Hersē (female) is one of the three daughters of Kekrops entrusted with the baby Erichthonios by Athena. Her name, meaning dew, has prompted speculation on the ritual of the Arrhephoria. See section on the Mycenaean spring above. See also Kearns (1989), 23-27, 161-62.

¹⁶⁰ Weller (1903), 267-269; Larson (2001), 243.

τόνδε ταῖ Νῦ-	This was offered to the
φαῖσιν : ἠο	Nymphs :
Σκύρονος	Skyron
ἡαιπόλος	the goatherder

The prominent place given to the Nymphs and Pan is not surprising in the case of a cave cult, especially in Attica.¹⁶² Although the personality of Archedemos must have influenced the cult and its ritual components, it is first necessary to see what is 'typical' about this cave.¹⁶³ The presence of water is a first important element, as the spring is part of the natural 'décor' of the nymphs. In the same logic, the 'garden' offered by Archedemos must have reflected the natural aura of these deities. The votives, including fragments of 31 miniature loutrophoroi, the earliest dated to ca. 460 BC, and three articulated dolls are the remaining signs of the rites performed in relation with the women's fertility and marriage.¹⁶⁴ One can also suspect that Pan and the Nymphs were worshipped here as kourotrophic deities.

Finally, what consequences for the cult could Archedemos' quality of nympholept have had? It is not clear whether we have to believe that Archedemos was anything other than a very zealous worshipper of the Nymphs.¹⁶⁵ It is true that the arrangements made to the cave have an initiation feel to them, but no evidence was found in the cave of a hypothetical *manteion* whose *mantis* would be

¹⁶¹ Schörner & Goette (2004), 55-56; Dunham (1903), 292-293.

¹⁶² See below.

¹⁶³ The analysis is here restricted to what is linked with the scope of the thesis, water.

¹⁶⁴ King (1903), 322-324; Larson (2001), 242-243.

¹⁶⁵ Borgeaud (1988), 105: Nympholepsy is 'a form of inspiration' from the Nymphs that 'could confer the gift a divination'. It is interesting to see that if the nympholept is driven away by the Nymphs, is possessed by them, that does not automatically induce that he/she is given the power to prophesise. Schörner & Goette (2004), 118-119: Nympholepsy is the key idea to understand why so much work was put up by one man.

Archedemos, despite the literary parallels of nympholepts uttering prophecies, such as a playful Socrates in *Phaedrus*. In any case, if the cave has ever been a prophetic sanctuary, it must have been strongly attached to the figure of Archedemos the nympholept and might not have survived this man.

2.3.2. Other caves in Attica

The other caves studied here together are not as well documented as the cave at Vari and do not have an equivalent for the figure of Archedemos. They are studied here together because they share their main characteristics, the presence of a cult of Pan and the Nymphs and a supply of water.¹⁶⁶

First of all, it is worth pointing out that the well-known passage from Herodotus telling us about the introduction in Attica of the cult of Pan just after the battle of Marathon, seems to be confirmed by archaeology.¹⁶⁷ Apart from his cave on the north slope of the Acropolis, he is found in 6 others caves in Attica where, in every case, his cult appeared in the early 5th c. BC. The Nymphs are also present in these caves and, in all likelihood, were indeed the 'true owners' of the place.¹⁶⁸ There are other similarities, among which the offerings of wedding-related votives such as miniature loutrophoroi, demonstrating the orientation of these sanctuaries towards the question of fertility, and young people.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ See Wickens (1986) for an extensive study of caves in Attica, from Prehistory to late Roman times.

¹⁶⁷ Hdt. 6.105. Parker (1996), 163-168.

¹⁶⁸ Parker (1996), 165.

¹⁶⁹ This orientation was probably not exclusive. General health is another possibility as is shown by the offering of medical instruments in the Parnes cave.

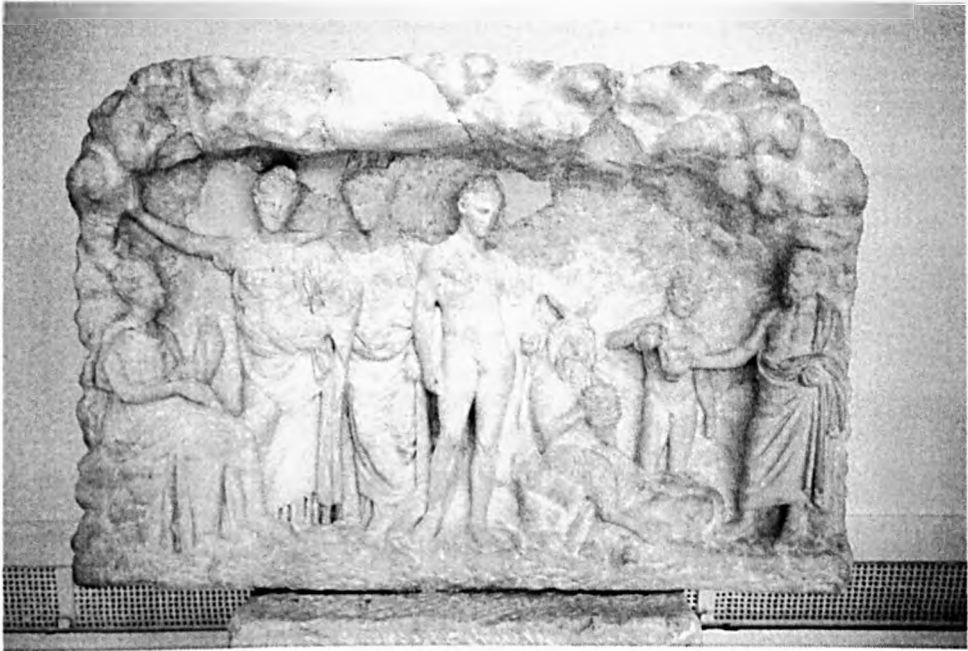


Fig. 15. The Agathemeros relief, one of the two found in the Penteli cave. National Museum, Athens (author's picture).

On the Penteli, a cave discovered by accident in a quarry showed traces of frequentation from the 5th c. BC until well into the Christian era. It was abandoned when its roof collapsed in the 2nd c. AD and sealed off the entrance.¹⁷⁰ Among the discoveries were two votive reliefs of high quality representing nymphs, Pan and Hermes. The presence on site of a marble basin and of pieces of terracotta conduits have led to the suggestion that there had been a spring in the cave.¹⁷¹ The suggestion made by Zorides that the sanctuary was a *manteion* where the prophecies were made by *lekanê* (looking into the basin full of water) cannot be proven.

On Mt Parnes, near the fort of Phyle, is the cave used as the location for Menander's *Dyskolos*.¹⁷² Water still flows from within the cave and two more springs are flowing at a short distance.¹⁷³ Among the votives are found Attic vases, including a *loutrophoros*, some terracottas of seated females, silens and Pan, and

¹⁷⁰ Daux, *BCH* 77 (1953), 202; Vanderpool, *AJA* 57 (1953), 281; Cook, *JHS* 73 (1953), 112; Zorides, 'Ἡ σπηλιά των νυμφῶν της Πεντέλης', *AE Chron.* (1977), 4-11; Travlos (1988), 329-330; Larson (2001), 246; Wickens (1986), #39, 202-211.

¹⁷¹ Wickens (1986), 203-5.

¹⁷² Wickens (1986), #47, 245-264; Larson (2001), 245-46.

¹⁷³ Wickens (1986), 247.

eight votive reliefs representing nymphs, Hermes and Pan. Two stone objects which could have been perirrhanteria are inscribed with the name of the dedicator. Beside the usual offerings found in the context of a sanctuary of the nymphs and Pan is the more unusual presence of surgical instruments, a cicada and a miniature bed, the latter two made of gold.

At the site of Oinoe, near Marathon, a cave was discovered by accident in 1958.¹⁷⁴ In addition to the type of offerings and the few terracotta Pans, the discovery at the entrance of an inscribed sacred law dated to 61-60 BC confirms that the cave was dedicated to the Nymphs and Pan.

E. Luru (2001), 120-121:

	Ἄγαθὴ τύχη· ἐπὶ Θεο-ν	Good Luck. In the
	φήμου ἄρχοντος· ννν	archonship of Theophemos,
	Πυθαγόρας καὶ Σωσι-ν	the coevals (synepheboi)
	κράτης καὶ Λύσανδρος	Pythagoras, Sosikrates,
5	οὶ συνέφηβοι Πανὶ καὶ	and Lysandros dedicated (this stele)
	Νύμφαις ἀνέθηκαν. {α}	to Pan and the Nymphs.
	ἀπαγορεύει ὁ θεός· μὴ	The god forbids (one)
	[εἰ]σφέρειν χρωμάτιν[ον]	to carry in either coloured (garments)
	[μ]ῆδὲ βαπτὸν μῆδὲ λ[.]	or dyed (garments)
10	[. . ca. 5-6 . .]ΕΙΣΠ[. . ca. 7-8 . .]	or [- -]

¹⁷⁴ Daux, *BCH* 82 (1958), 681-686; Daux, *BCH* 83 (1959), 587-589; Vanderpool, *AJA* 62 (1958), 321-322; Papadimitriou, 'Μαραθῶν, σπήλαιον Πανός', *Ergon* (1958), 15-22; Wickens (1986), #43, 223-39; Travlos (1988), 218, 246, figs. 302-303; Larson (2001), 246-248; Luru (2001), 119-124.

This identification enables the association of this cave with the description made by Pausanias of the cave he saw himself:

A little beyond the plain is the Hill of Pan and a remarkable Cave of Pan. The entrance to it is narrow, but farther in are chambers and baths and the so-called "Pan's herd of goats," which are rocks shaped in most respects like to goats.¹⁷⁵

The mention of baths (λουτρά) is particularly interesting, although what it actually meant in terms of cult is ours to guess. In any case, the suggestion made by Larson that the baths would be 'cave formations' like the 'goats' does not sound right; Pausanias indeed made a clear distinction between the rock formations and the baths. There is no spring inside the cave, but there is one in the vicinity.¹⁷⁶

2.4. The spring Makaria

In his description of the region of Marathon, shortly before telling us about the cave of Pan, Pausanias indicates the presence near Marathon of a spring Makaria. He then goes on to tell us that it owes its name to the daughter of Herakles who killed herself to help the Athenians win their first war against the Peloponnesians.¹⁷⁷ The suggestion, made by Daux, that the spring near the cave of Pan could be, among other possibilities, the Makaria, does not correspond to what Pausanias told us. Not only is the description of the two separated by the passage about the marshy lake in

¹⁷⁵ Paus. 1.32.7 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

¹⁷⁶ The cave is on the north side of the hill on which Oinoe was built, while the spring is at the bottom of the east slope, next to another sanctuary. Daux, *BCH* 83 (1959), 588-589 proposed three possibilities of identification: the spring Makaria cited in Paus. 1.32.6, the ἑσχάρα Διός found in Euripides, *Heracleidae* 111, 333, or the sanctuary of Apollo Pythios near Marathon cited in the scholia to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.

¹⁷⁷ Paus. 1.32.6. In Strabo 8.6.19, Eurystheus who battled against the Heracleidai at Marathon and lost, had his head cut off and buried near the spring Makaria. See Wilkins (1990).

the plain, but the location itself is not the same. While the Makaria spring is 'at Marathon' (ἐν τῷ Μαραθῶνι), the cave of Pan is 'at a little distance from the plain' (ὀλίγον δὲ ἀπωτέρω τοῦ πεδίου). The spring is today generally identified with one flowing on the eastern slope of Stavrokoraki Hill, called Megalo-Mati (the big eye).¹⁷⁸ The earliest source on the story is Euripides' *Heracleidae*, although he does not name Herakles' daughter. A scholion to Plato states that a hero cult was given to her, in which something (her tomb or the spring?) was adorned with garlands and flowers.¹⁷⁹

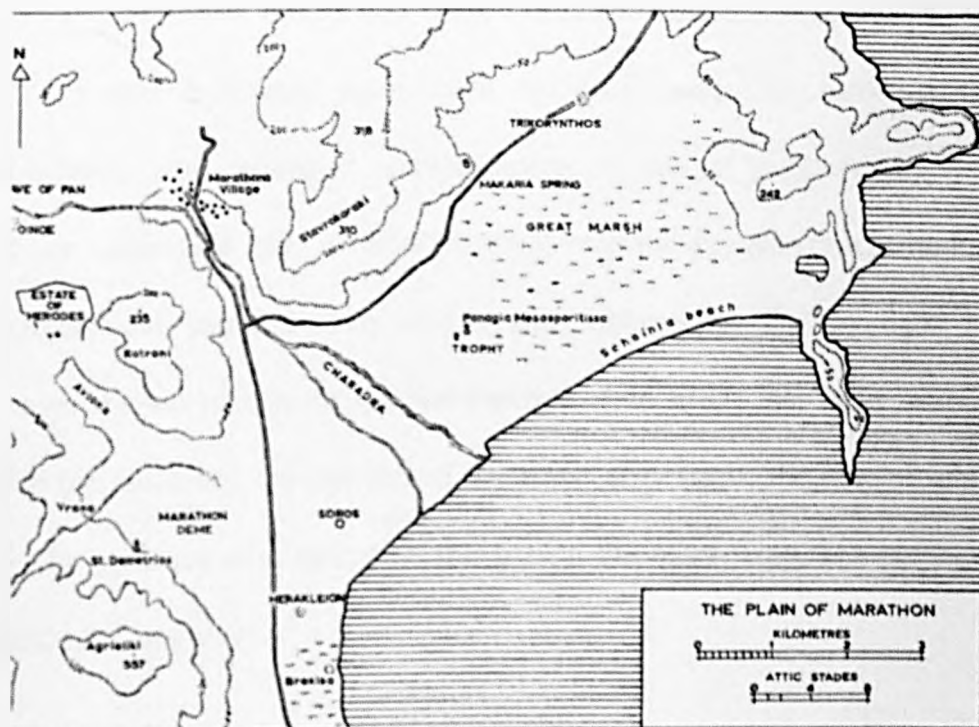


Fig. 16. Map of the plain of Marathon (from Vanderpool [1966], fig.3).

The way the spring-eponymous heroine Makaria died is not specified by the sources, but it probably has something to do with the spring which was close to where the battle occurred. In the *Suda*, Makaria is also daughter of Hades and the expression

¹⁷⁸ Hammond (1968), 20-21, pl. 3-4. The modern name of the spring is given in the commentary of Paus. 1.32.6 by François Chamoux (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), p. 238.

¹⁷⁹ Schol. Plato, *Hip. Mai.* 293a.

'go to blessedness (Makaria)' is said to mean 'go to death'.¹⁸⁰ We do not know if, apart from the legend and this last source, the spring itself had a particular link with death. Considering the beneficial outcome of her sacrifice, we could maybe presume that the spring's powers, if there were any, were of a positive nature as well as than related to her death.¹⁸¹

2.5. The sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron

Situated in the Erasinos valley, on the eastern coast of Attica, the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron is one of the most important sacred places of the Athenian polis.¹⁸² It was excavated from 1948 to 1963 under the direction of John Papadimitriou, who published annual reports in several publications.¹⁸³ These excavation campaigns have eventually, along with the ancient sources both literary and epigraphical, inspired many studies and publications. The scholars' interests have covered areas such as the age and function of the girls – the "little bears" – who attended the sanctuary, the imagery of these and of Artemis, the case of Iphigeneia, etc.¹⁸⁴ The presence of a spring on the site on the other hand, has apparently not attracted much attention.

¹⁸⁰ Suda s.v. Μακαρία and s.v. Βάλλ' ἐς Μακαρίαν.

¹⁸¹ Kearns (1989), 58-59 is dubitative on Makaria saving the land and argues that her intent was to die for her kin. She admits however (see n. 62) that the chorus in Euripides' play declares that her death was πρό τ' ἀδελφῶν καὶ γᾶς (622), which must mean Attica. See also Wilkins (1990), 336, n. 100 who is more inclined to believe her status of city saviour.

¹⁸² The sanctuary was home to important initiation ceremonies for young Athenian girls in their progression towards womanhood. See Gentili-Perusino (2002) and Kahil (1988) as examples of studies of the sanctuary.

¹⁸³ For a bibliography on the sanctuary, the ancient sources about Brauron and the reports by Papadimitriou see Ekroth (2003), 59-60 and n. 1-8.

¹⁸⁴ For the little "bears", see amongst others Grebe (1999), Perlman (1983) and Stinton (1976). Lilly Kahil has been the main researcher for the iconography of Artemis and, more specifically, for Brauron. See Kahil (1976, 1977, 1983, 1988).



Fig. 17. The spring at Brauron (author's picture).



Fig. 18. The bridge at the sanctuary of Brauron (author's picture).

This spring is, nevertheless, one of the focal points around which the sanctuary developed. The many findings unearthed near the spring seem to cover – from the 8th c. to the 4th c. BC – most of the sanctuary's functioning period and every type of object found in Brauron is represented there.¹⁸⁵ It was suggested that the spring area, as well as the so-called cave area, was the 'nucleus of the first establishment of the cult'. Some, following the term proposed by Papadimitriou, have called this area around the spring the 'holiest of holies' of the sanctuary.¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, the spring was not improved in any monumental way. The bridge, built in the archaic period or the early 5th c. BC over the small stream, is indeed a magnificent work of architecture, except it is not there to emphasise the source of water, but rather the entrance of the

¹⁸⁵ Ekroth (2003), 80-81, 103-113, figs. 6-9. For Ekroth (p. 103), the spring 'may have been the feature which attracted the worshippers to the site in the first place'.

¹⁸⁶ Daux (1962), 679; Themelis (2002), 109; Ekroth (2003), 80, 103.

sanctuary from Athens.¹⁸⁷ The spot was therefore supposed to remain 'natural' and 'uncivilised'. All these aspects suited the goddess well, since she was fond of the wild and wet regions of the world.

The actual use of the spring in this cultic context is unclear. It is probable, considering the residential aspect of the sanctuary, that the water of the spring was drawn for basic purposes such as drinking and washing.¹⁸⁸ However, the importance of the votive offerings around it indicates a strong religious aura. To whom these offerings were deposited is a more debated question. Some have underlined its heroic characteristics, willing to see them as gifts to Iphigeneia.¹⁸⁹ Others consider that the archaeological evidence is insufficient, or even non-existent, and challenges the literary testimony of the presence of Iphigeneia at Brauron.¹⁹⁰ As for the better-known ceremonies of the Arkteia, water is apparently not a major feature of the cult. One has to suppose that the usual libations, purifications and more trivial uses were practiced at the sanctuary of Artemis. But to infer any central role of the spring is to put emphasis on the location of the offerings regardless of the silence of the other types of evidence, in particular after the monumental development of the sanctuary in the 5th and 4th c. BC which puts the spring at the periphery of the built area. Should this mean that the spring was a fundamental part of the sanctuary at the beginning of its history, but that its religious importance slowly decreased, with the worshippers' attention progressively shifting away from it? Or that on the contrary, the monumental picture is misleading, with the spring, for want of it being spatially central, remaining ritually at the core of the cult at Brauron? One cannot give a definite answer to these questions considering the current state of our knowledge.

¹⁸⁷ Daux (1962), 680-81; Themelis (2002), 108.

¹⁸⁸ The ceremonies at Brauron implied that the young girls stayed at the sanctuary. See for example Lloyd-Jones (1983), 93 and n. 33; Ekroth (2003), 62-63 and n. 17.

¹⁸⁹ Themelis (2002), 109.

¹⁹⁰ Ekroth (2003), 59-101.

2.6. The sanctuaries of Amphiaraos

2.6.1. Amphiaraos at Oropos

The sanctuary of Amphiaraos, which lies at the limits of both Attica and Boeotia, not far from the coast opposite Eretria, is built on the banks of a river and around a sacred spring.¹⁹¹ It is part of the territory of Oropos, the strategic situation of which prompted an uninterrupted fight between neighbouring powers, in particular Thebes and Athens, to control the sanctuary from the 5th c. BC onwards.¹⁹² During the 4th c. BC, and well into the Hellenistic period, the Amphiareion benefited from constant development and building activity.¹⁹³ The inscribed statue bases, still visible today, offered by rulers such as Ptolemy IV of Egypt, his wife Arsinoe, or later Roman figures such as Brutus and Agrippa reflect its popularity until late in the Roman period.¹⁹⁴

The sanctuary was founded during Athenian rule sometime in the last quarter of the 5th c. BC, and developed itself around the sacred spring.¹⁹⁵ The hero Amphiaraos was an Argive seer who took part in the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, even though he knew it was bound to be defeated.¹⁹⁶ After the battle, during his flight from Thebes and at the moment he was nearly killed by Periklymenos, Zeus opened a chasm in the earth with his thunderbolt to swallow Amphiaraos and

¹⁹¹ The sanctuary is described by Paus. 1.34. On famous consultations of Amphiaraos, in particular Croesus and Mys, see Hdt. 1.46, 1.49, 1.52, 1.92, 8.134. On Athenian control and administration of the sanctuary, an insight is given by the trial of Euxenippos: Hyperides, *For Euxenippos*.

¹⁹² Argoud (1985), 9; Bearzot (1987), 80-99; Petrakos (1995), 6-9; Camp (2001), 322-324: the city of Oropos changed hands an amazing twelve times between 490 and the 1st c. BC.

¹⁹³ Coulton (1968), 181-3: The incubation stoa was built in the middle of the 4th c. BC (maybe 359-8 BC). Argoud (1985) and (1989): In the last third of the century, works were done to repair (or finish) the fountain and the adjacent baths, and a new evacuation channel was built for the male and female baths. The theatre had already been built since its blocks of stone were reused in these works.

¹⁹⁴ Goette (2001), 252

¹⁹⁵ Bearzot (1987), 80-99; Petrakos (1995), 7, 12. The spring is on the map in front of the temple.

¹⁹⁶ Aesch., *Seven*, 568-589. See Roesch (1984), 176.

his chariot.¹⁹⁷ According to the local legend at Oropos reported by Pausanias, he reappeared at this spring.¹⁹⁸

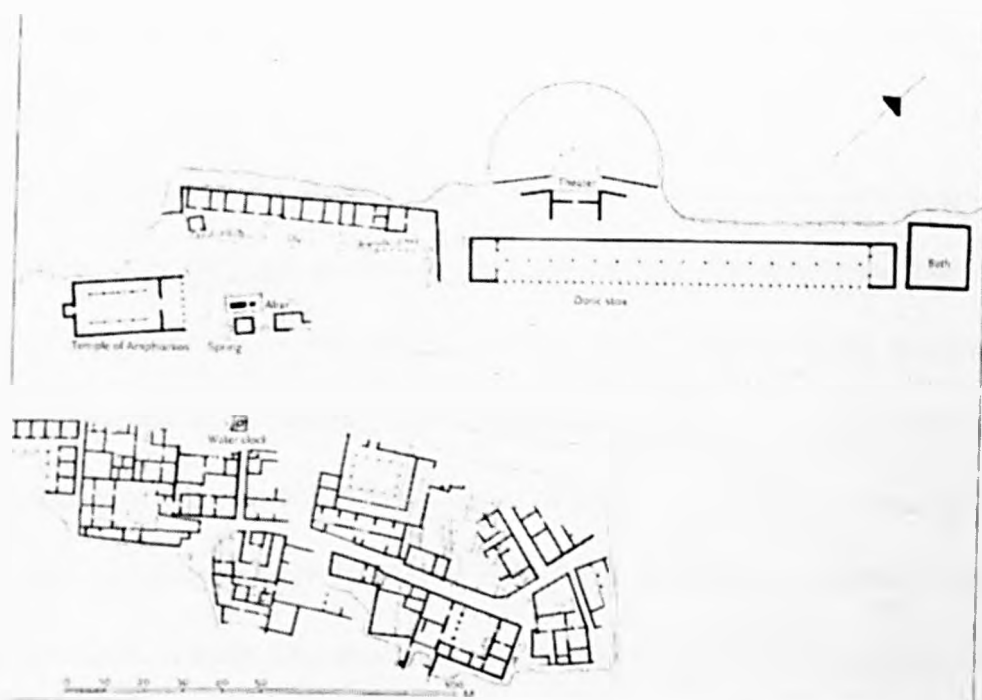


Fig. 19. Plan of the Amphiareion of Oropos (from Parker [2001], 322).

Reputed to be very cold, the water of this spring probably attracted worshippers for the same reasons many springs did in Greece.¹⁹⁹ However, a Boeotian origin could have specifically conditioned where and how the Amphiareion was founded.²⁰⁰

Although the foundation of the Amphiareion at Oropos is attributed to the Athenians, it leaves little doubt that the influence and the tradition from Boeotia played a

¹⁹⁷ Pindar, *Nem.* 9.23-27; *Nem.* 10.8-9. In Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.38-55, the seer appears to be still living while under the earth. Pindar situated the descent at Thebes. Strabo (9.2.11) ([Philochorus?]) in Jacoby 328 F 5) and Paus. (1.34.2) give the site of Harma near Tanagra. Paus. (9.8.3) reports another site between on the road between Potniai and Thebes.

¹⁹⁸ Paus. 1.34.4

¹⁹⁹ Xen., *Mem.* 3.13.3: Socrates answers to the worries of an Athenian about the temperature of his water by showing him it is cooler to drink than the water of Asklepios and warmer to wash with than the water of Amphiaraus, thus making an interesting parallel between the two gods and the different uses of their water.

²⁰⁰ Bonnechère (1990), 60: the author cautiously put the Amphiareion aside, arguing of its Attic character as well as Boeotian. However, the parallels are still striking and the Boeotian aspects of the sanctuary, even if founded by Athens, could be the expression of the continuation of an older cult situated there or elsewhere in Boeotia.

determining role in the cult.²⁰¹ A cult of Amphiaraos possibly existed previously in Thebes. The question whether it was 'transferred' to Oropos is a more contentious point but the foundation of a sanctuary dedicated to a hero mythically hostile to Thebes could not have displeased the Athenians, even if his cult was by nature Boeotian.²⁰²

It appears that the mantic aspect was predominant in the first years of the sanctuary – water probably played a role if only because the spring was the physical proof of the presence of Amphiaraos on the site.²⁰³ Very rapidly however, the sanctuary became an iatromantic one, following in this the success of Asklepios in Attica and, as is the case at the Asklepieion of Epidauros, divination was incubatory rather than by means of professional seers.²⁰⁴ The worshippers probably spent the night, for the incubation, in a stoa which was replaced later by the larger stoa built in the middle of the 4th c. BC.²⁰⁵ The chthonian aspects, already strongly implied by the myth and the presence of a sacred spring, are reinforced by Philostratos telling us of

²⁰¹ Schachter (1981), 21-22 and n. 3, rightfully underlines the strong similarities between the figures of Amphiaraos and of Trophonios at Lebadeia. Both are heroes 'killed' by a god, buried underground from which they return to give oracles directly to the consultant. The presence of water in both sanctuaries is another striking parallel.

²⁰² Theban amphiareion: Herodotus tells of the consultation of the oracle of Amphiaraos by Croesus and Mys. See Hdt 1.46.2; 1.49.1; 8.134.1. See also Bonnechère (1990), 53-54. Transfer: Strabo 9.2.10; Schachter (1981), 22-23 denies the sanctuary was ever transferred from Boeotia, and imagine a forgotten toponym as an explication for Strabo's statement. However, his reasoning has not really convinced other scholars. See Bonnechère (1990), 54, n. 7; Verbanck-Piérard (2000), 318, n. 163. Only Parker (1996), 148 advances the idea that one could perhaps see the introduction of Amphiaraos at Oropos in the same light as Asklepios at Athens, right after the great plague.

²⁰³ The testimony of Herodotus (see n. 164 above) implies that the *manteion* of Amphiaraos existed in Archaic times, although we do not know where. The original aspect of the cult of Amphiaraos was then prophetic.

²⁰⁴ The mythical figure of Amphiaraos was a seer, unlike Asklepios who had been a healer. The first traces of the medical function in the cult of Amphiaraos appear at Oropos at the end of the 5th c. BC. It is not known whether this function existed before although Herodotus described the oracular consultation as already incubatory. See Schachter (1981), 23-24; Verbanck-Piérard (2000), 319-320; Gorrini-Melfi (2002), 249-250; Ogden (2001), 79-80, n. 10, who also mentions that consultants and Amphiaraos himself were 'debarred from eating beans because they were held to fog up the perceptual abilities of the heart'.

²⁰⁵ Coulton (1968). Ogden (2001), 86.

the φροντιστήριον, 'place of reflection' which was a 'sacred and godlike fissure' (ῥήγμα ἱερὸν καὶ θειώδες).²⁰⁶

Gradually, the strictly mantic uses of the sanctuary lost ground to the iatromantic uses.²⁰⁷ From the end of the 5th c. BC onwards, the imagery of the hero Amphiaraos evolved to look more and more like Asklepios. He later received the whole apparatus of the healing hero: a stick, snake(s) and even a son, Amphilochos, and a wife, Hygieia.²⁰⁸ The presence of the river and of the spring was central to the religious and medical uses of the sanctuary. It appears that, if we are to believe Pausanias' account of the rituals, the spring itself was sacred, but its waters were not used for purification, which does not imply that it was not used at all.²⁰⁹ The mythological reappearance of Amphiaraos at the spring gave it a special status and, perhaps, this spring water was believed to be a form of the god's epiphany, in a way symbolising Amphiaraos' emergence from underground. On the other hand, several buildings were used for bathing, as attested by the archaeological discoveries and by the testimony of inscriptions found on the site.

²⁰⁶ Philostratos, *Imagines* 1.27 uses the word. Ogden (2001), 86.

²⁰⁷ The strictly mantic function, however, never disappeared. See Schachter (1981), 23, n. 6.

²⁰⁸ Gorrini-Melfi (2002), 249-250. Snake: see for example the superb votive relief (Petraikos [1995] 22) displaying the same young man called Archinos in three stages of his cure. From right to left: as a suppliant, sleeping while a snake licks (or bites?) his shoulder, and standing with the god curing his shoulder. The parallel between the snake and the god is striking.

²⁰⁹ Pau. 1.34.4: 'The Oropians have near the temple a spring, which they call the Spring of Amphiaraus; they neither sacrifice into it nor are wont to use it for purifications or for lustral water.' Lupu (2003) demonstrated that the account of Paus., if probably accurate for his own time, had to be relativised for earlier times, as the rituals must have been less strictly codified. On the other hand, purification in the case of the Amphiaraon was operated via the sacrifice of the animal and the use of its skin for sleeping. The importance of the baths at the Amphiaraion demonstrates that ablution took place, but they might have been only for the healing process, and not for 'purification'. The water from the river was perhaps (probably?) considered different from the water from the spring and therefore suitable for purifications that such a sanctuary would undoubtedly perform.



Fig. 20. Amphiarceion of Oropos. The bath next to the spring and the Altar. The grooves were made to avoid slipping (author's picture).

No less than three different baths were to be found in the sanctuary, two of them where gender separation was imposed.²¹⁰ The third one, right next to the fountain house and the sacred spring, was not attributed to either one of the sexes in the inscription concerning it. It was, nevertheless, closely related to the adjacent spring and fountain, since the works mentioned in the inscription concerns these all together. The medical uses of the baths can be ascertained, since the use of water in medical treatment was very important in ancient Greek medicine.

The precise uses of water in this religious context, however, are not known with certainty. The bath next to the spring was perhaps used for the preparation to the incubation, while the other two were more centred on medical treatment.²¹¹ If bathing was certainly one of the religious uses of water, drinking at the spring cannot

²¹⁰ The male bath was to the west of the temple, while the female bath was further east, next to the stoa and the theatre. See Argoud's demonstration from the inscriptions: Argoud (1985), 14-16 and Argoud (1993), 41-44. The third bathing installation was therefore the small building next to the fountain, below the great altar. Considering its position next to the sacred spring and the altar, one can suppose this was also an important and sacred element of the sanctuary. This is still called the 'men's bath' (τὰ ἀνδρικὰ λουτρά) in Petrakos (1995), 51-55 and (1968), 109-110. Admittedly, these baths are the only ones, along with the women's, to have been unearthed.

²¹¹ As suggested in Ginouvés (1962), 346-348. Considering its position next to the sacred spring and the altar, one can suppose this was also an important and sacred element of the sanctuary.

be ruled out either, even considering the dismissive statement from Pausanias.²¹² It is important to note at this stage that in the famous description by Pausanias of the great altar, divided between five parts attributed to five groups of deities, the fifth group is composed of divinities of water: ἑπέμπτη δὲ πεποιήται Νύμφαις καὶ Πανὶ καὶ ποταμοῖς Ἀχελῷῳ καὶ Κηφισῷ.²¹³ Archaeology has confirmed Pausanias' description.²¹⁴ This group is particularly typical of the reliefs found in the caves of Attica, where among others things they were concerned with were fertility, the young and their education.²¹⁵ It is obviously not out of place in a medical sanctuary particularly influenced by Athens.

2.6.2. Amphiaraos at Rhamnous

The cult of Amphiaraos was eventually successful enough to spread outside of Oropos.²¹⁶ At the fortress of Rhamnous, on the north-east coast of Attica, a sanctuary belonged to a local doctor-hero (*heros iatros*) called Aristomachos.²¹⁷ The figure of Amphiaraos was eventually attached to it and, perhaps, totally phased out the personality of its former occupier. This evolution can be seen on inscriptions found in the sanctuary.²¹⁸ The adaptation of the sanctuary to the cult of Amphiaraos is apparent in second phase of the sanctuary: opposite the small *oikos* which was the

²¹² Ginouvès (1962), 347, n. 1, relaying C. Carouzos's theory.

²¹³ Paus. 1.34.3

²¹⁴ Petrakos (1968), 96-98: this great altar was built in the 4th c. BC and covered two older altars. Verbanck-Piérard (2000), 323

²¹⁵ See above the sanctuary of Kephisos and the caves of Pan and the Nymphs.

²¹⁶ Parker (1996), 148 n. 105, 272, 339. At Piraeus: *IG II²* 1282. In Eleusinian accounts: *IG II²* 1672.305. Near Acharnae: *IG II²* 1344;

²¹⁷ Pouilloux (1954), 93-102; Parker (1996), 176, n. 80 and 83; Statue of Amphiaraos in the Athenian Agora: Paus. 1.8.2.

²¹⁸ In Pouilloux (1954), #30, dated to the first half of the 4th c. BC, the god honoured is only called the *heros iatros*. Gradually Amphiaraos is associated with him, but the *heros* is still mentioned first: Pouilloux (1954), #32 = *IG II²* 4436 and Pouilloux (1954), #33 = *IG II²* 4452 dated to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd c. BC. In Pouilloux (1954), #34, p. 145-146 = *IG II²* 1322: an association of amphieraists rebuilt the sanctuary after the 'liberation' of 229/228 BC. From then on the major god (only god?) was Amphiaraos.

temple, another building was equipped with benches and was probably used as an incubatory room.²¹⁹ The sanctuary lasted until late imperial times, as an inscription dated to the 3rd c. AD proves: Εὐχὴν Ἀμφιαράω Σωτήρ ἀνέθ[ηκεν].²²⁰

Pouilloux has insisted on the particularly arid environment at Rhamnous: 'Dans le site aride de Rhamnonte, on ne risquait guère de rencontrer une source miraculeuse comme celle qui fit la fortune d'Oropos'.²²¹ But the presence of water at the sanctuary is attested, at least in the form of a cistern (λάκκος).²²² On the other hand there is today a spring, situated near the sea and the modern church of Saint Marina to the North-West of the Amphiareion, which could have existed in ancient times and could have been used by the sanctuary.²²³

2.7. Dionysos on Salamis

On the island of Salamis, in the locality of Peristeria, a small sanctuary situated in front of a spring was excavated between 1998 and 2000.²²⁴ It was built in the 3rd c. BC and consisted of a simple rectangular shrine opening onto a 'place of worship with a built bench with a Γ shape'. A water-tank closed the space to the East.

The findings point to a cult to Dionysos and maybe Euripides, whose famous cave is close by. Dionysos would presumably have been honoured as the god of drama. In such a context one cannot guess if there was a specific importance attributed to water, whether from the spring or the reservoir. In the absence of

²¹⁹ Pouilloux (1954), 96-97; Petrakos, *Rhamnous* (Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1991), fig 37-37; Verbanck-Piérard (2000), 324; Gorrini-Melfi (2002), 252-253.

²²⁰ Catling, 'Archaeology in Greece, 1982-83', *Archaeological Reports* 29 (1982), 11.

²²¹ Pouilloux (1954), 97.

²²² Pouilloux (1954), 97 and #34 line 17; Verbanck-Piérard (2000), 324; Petrakos (1999), 311-12.

²²³ Gorrini-Melfi (2002), 254; Petrakos (1999), 312.

²²⁴ Blackman, *AR* 47 (2000-2001), 15-16.

evidence, one has to assume that water was used for the usual purificatory and otherwise secular needs of the sanctuary.

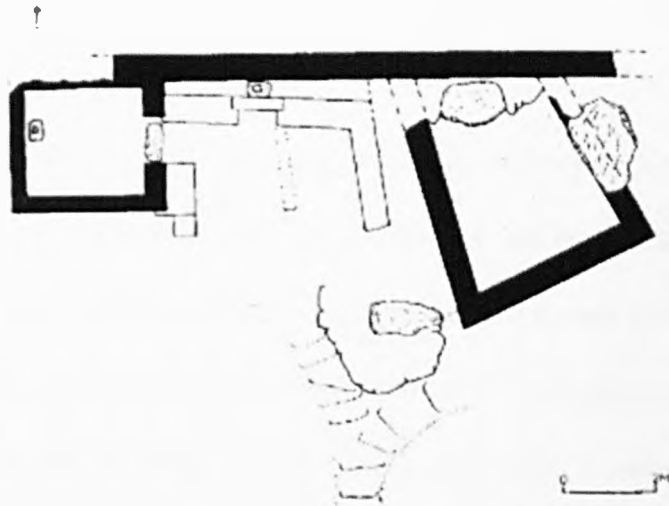


Fig. 21. Plan of the sanctuary of Dionysos at Salamis (from Blackman [2000-2001], 16, fig. 31).

2.8. The sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis

Of all the Attic sanctuaries, the precinct of Demeter and her daughter at Eleusis was without any doubt the most renowned all over the Hellenised world. Being open to all Greeks was one reason for its success, while the promise that those initiated to the Eleusinian mysteries would find a happy fate in the underworld was certainly a significant incentive too.²²⁵ This sanctuary was also deeply concerned with the growing of cereals, which was of extreme importance in the ancient times.²²⁶ This sanctuary's concern, if we are to believe Sourvinou-Inwood, was at first the only one, since the eschatological orientation of the cult was only added in the early 6th c. BC.

²²⁵ *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 480-2.

²²⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 26-28.

Given this importance of agriculture and by natural association, of fertility, one can be surprised by the almost total absence of water in the accounts on the cult. The only topographical evidence of the presence of water at the Eleusinian sanctuary is the existence of two wells, the Parthenion and the Kallichoron. These are present in the hymn to Demeter and were identified on site by Mylonas.²²⁷ He suggests that the Kallichoron well over which the king of Eleusis was ordered by Demeter to build her temple is the “very old well” found “at the foot of the northeast corner of the retaining wall of the stoa of Philon”, i.e. roughly at the east corner of the Telesterion (last state).²²⁸ This well had enough importance to force the builders of the archaic retaining wall to go around it instead of destroying it, creating a niche-like structure in the wall. The well was subsequently filled in during the reconstruction of the sanctuary after the Persian destruction.

Mylonas argues that the name Kallichoron was then transferred to the Parthenion well, situated in the court, hard by the propylaia. The latter had less topographical importance than the Kallichoron, which was still used in the rituals, thus making the changing of names more acceptable, or at least justified. Indeed, the worshippers of the two goddesses stopped their procession from Athens there, dancing and singing in honour of the deities during the night before entering the sanctuary proper the day after.²²⁹ However important these wells might have been, it is not clear whether they exclusively played a topographical role recalling a myth, or if their nature as water sources was important in itself. Unfortunately, we are not informed of any use of water in the Eleusinian rituals. Any hypothesis remains

²²⁷ Mylonas (1962), 44-47.

²²⁸ Mylonas (1962), W on fig. 6.

²²⁹ Eur., *Suppl.* 392; Paus. 1.38.6. This procession took place on 20 Boedromion. While the initiates were not yet allowed to enter the sanctuary, the Kallichoron well situated in the court was the closest place they could go to without infringing the sacred law. They joined (or were joined by) the procession of the previous day in their dances. Robertson (1998a), 558, n. 32.

highly conjectural, such as knowing the nature of the liquid used in the rite of “spilling liquid into the earth” on the last day of the Mysteries.²³⁰



Fig. 22. The 'Kallichoron' well at the entrance of the sanctuary at Eleusis (author's picture).

Pausanias recalls another Eleusinian link with water. On the sacred way from Athens, in the Eleusinian plain, one crosses small coastal ponds called the 'Rheitoi', sacred to Demeter and Kore.²³¹ According to Pausanias, they also marked the old border between Athenian and Eleusinian territories. According to a sacred law, a bridge was built there in order to 'safely bring the *hiera*' to Eleusis, which was also narrow enough to enforce the law according to which the procession was to go on

²³⁰ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 11, 486a; Robertson (1998a), 562-3.

²³¹ Thuc. 2.19.2; Paus. 1.38.1. The Rheitoi are streams flowing rapidly in the sea from two lakes fed by salted water resurgences. The smaller lake, on the west, was consecrated to Demeter, while the other was to Kore. Only the priests of the two goddesses were allowed to fish in them. See D. Musti (comm.) in Pausania, *Guida della Grecia. I. I. Attica* (Mondadori, 1982), p. 409-10.

foot from this point.²³² Furthermore, the bridge was built with re-used blocks of stone from the ancient temple of Demeter. These blocks were by their old function sacred. Re-using them for the bridge was a clear signal that the Rheitoi were integrally part of the Eleusinian sanctuary.²³³ A purificatory bath taken by the *thiasoi* (groups of worshippers) in the Rheitoi is attested by Hesychius.²³⁴

Another river flowed through the Eleusinian plain, named Kephisos like the Athenian river. Pausanias, referring to a place by this river called Eirene, records the local myth according to which Persephone was abducted by Hades and taken to his realm from there.²³⁵

²³² *IG I¹* 79; Shear (1982), 130-1; Robertson (1998a), 555-6.

²³³ *IG I¹* 79.5-11.

²³⁴ Hesychius s.v. 'Ρειτοί' ..., ὄθεν τοῖς λουτροῖς ἀγνίζονται τοὺς θιάσους. See Robertson (1999), 17-18 n. 62, who calls it a sea bath. I am reluctant to use this term, even if there was sea water in the Rheitoi, they were not the sea.

²³⁵ Paus. 1.38.5.

Chapter 2: Case study of the Kyllou Pera on the Hymettos

When thinking of the Athenian and Attic ancient topography, the place called Kyllou Pera is certainly not the first to cross one's mind. Its mere existence is known to us because it has survived through the testimony of lexicographers, and can be traced back to Cratinus and Aristophanes who, through their comedies, proved to be witty observers of 5th c. bc Athens. Although Attica is arguably the region of ancient Greece we know the best, there are still many areas that remains unexplored, in particular in its more rural parts. Any opportunity to have a better understanding of its landscape, and of the occupation of the Attic territory, is thus welcome. The Kyllou Pera is among those places in Attica remaining largely unknown, but for which there is a possibility for further study, as documentation exists. This chapter will explore the Kyllou Pera, in order to have a more precise idea of its whereabouts and what may have taken place there.

1. The Evidence

The texts mentioning explicitly the existence of the Kyllou Pera read as follows:¹

Aristophanes fr. 283 (273):

Hesychius κ 4521:

Κύλλου πήρα. ζητοῦσι διὰ τὸ πορνεῖον Κύλλου πήραν Ἀριστοφάνης εἶρηκεν ἐν Δράμασιν ἢ Κενταύρωι· τὸ ---- πήρα. ἔστι γὰρ χωρίον Ἀθήνησιν ἐπηρεφές καὶ κρήνη. ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ πέραν πήραν ἔφη.

¹ Aristophanes, fr. 283(273) in Kassel-Austin (1984), 161-162; Cratinus, fr. 110(102) in Kassel-Austin (1983), 178.

Cyllus' Wallet: They ask why Aristophanes calls the brothel Cyllus' wallet in *Dramas or Centaur* (quote). It's because there is a steep place in Athens with a spring, and he said "wallet" (πήραν) instead of "beyond" (πέραν). (trans. J. Henderson)

Zenobius, Ath. ii 37

Κυλλοῦ πήραν. αὕτη παραπλησία ἐστὶ τῇ ἐμβάλλεται εἰς κυλλήν· ἐπεὶ καὶ οἱ αἰτοῦντες τὴν χεῖρα οὕτω σχηματίζουσι... οἱ δὲ Κύλλου ἀναγινώσκοντες ὡς κύκνου βαρυτόνως τὴν παροιμίαν φασὶν εἰρησθαι ἐπὶ τῶν τὴν φύσιν βιαζομένων ἐξ ἐπιτεχνήσεως. λέγουσι γὰρ τόπον εἶναι ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ οὕτω καλούμενον Κύλλου πήραν καὶ κρήνην εἶναι αὐτόθι, ἀφ' ἧς τὰς στερίφας πίνειν γυναῖκας ἵνα συλλάβωσιν.

Beggar's Wallet: Similar to the saying about "putting into a crooked (κυλλός) hand," since beggars too thus shaped their hands... some, accenting κύλλος differently, explain the saying as referring to those doing violence to nature by artifice. For they say there is a place in Attica called Cyllus' wallet where there is a spring from which barren women drink in order to conceive. (trans. J. Henderson)

Cratinus fr. 110 (102):

Photios = Suda k 2672

Κύλλου πήραν· ἡ Πήρα χωρίον πρὸς τῷ Ἰμητῶι, ἐν ᾧ ἱερὸν Ἀφροδίτης καὶ κρήνη, ἐξ ἧς αἱ πιούσαι εὐτοκοῦσι καὶ αἱ ἄγονοι

γόνημοι γίνονται. Κρατῖνος δὲ ἐν Μαλθακοῖς Καλλίαν αὐτὴν φησιν, οἱ δὲ Κυλλουπήραν.

Cyllus' Wallet: The Wallet is a place near Hymettus in which there is a shrine of Aphrodite and a spring a drink at which promotes easy labour and cures sterility. In the *Softies* of Cratinus it is called '*the Hut (of Cyllus?)*'; by others it is called Cyllopêra or Cyllus' wallet. (trans. J.M. Edmonds)

Hesychius k 2685

Κίλλεια· εἶδός τι λαχάνου. ἢ ἄκανθαι τῶν ἐχίνων. ἢ πηγὴ, ἢ κρήνη. ἢ ὄρος τῆς Ἀττικῆς. χωρίον δασύ, ὅπερ διαφόρως προσαγορεύουσιν, οἱ μὲν Καλλίον, οἱ δὲ Κυλίαν, ἄλλοι Κύλλου πήραν.

Killeia: Shape of a vegetable. Or the spines of the hedgehog (or of the sea-urchin). Or a spring, or a fountain. Or a mountain in Attica, a wooded spot with different names, called Kallios by some, Kylia by others, Kyllou pera by the rest.

The information given about the Kyllou Pera is both rich and puzzling, and can be summarized in a few points:

Geographically, the Kyllou Pera is a wooded place in Attica with a spring, and was probably found on the slopes of Mount Hymettos since it is supposed to be a 'steep place in Athens' (χωρίον Ἀθήνησιν ἐπηρεφές) and is 'on the Hymettos' (πρὸς τῷ Ὑμηττῷ).

Its religious dimension is clearly established by the mention of a sanctuary of Aphrodite which was in the same area. Women gathered there to drink water at the spring in the hope either to become fertile, or to have a successful labour. These

women might have accomplished rituals, of which we have no real account and it is difficult to discern to what extent the rituals performed by women gathering at the spring were concerned by the proverbial description of persons ‘who violate nature by means of artifice’ (ἐπι τῶν τὴν φύσιν βιαζομένων ἐξ ἐπιτεχνήσεως).

Finally, the place had clearly sparked the interest of ancient Greek authors. It was visibly well-known since two of the most important Athenian playwrights of the 5th c. bc have mentioned it in their plays (the *Effeminate*s for Cratinus, and *Centaur* for Aristophanes). It was also part of popular folklore because a proverb mentioned it. The Kyllou Pera was therefore entirely part of the Athenian (or Attic) landscape inasmuch as it was not only a gathering place for women wishing to be mothers, but also as it appeared to have been well known by the whole community. Well enough, at least, to have attracted sneers from its most famous comic poets.

It remains to be said that, if these texts are an invaluable source of information, they are particularly striking for their silence on particular aspects of the Kyllou Pera. It might perhaps have something to do with the reason why Aristophanes called the place a *porneion*. We are notably left in the dark about the rituals accomplished by the women who went there. Water seems central to the rituals and it is tempting to attribute the mention about the ‘violence against nature’ to them, but apart from the strict juxtaposition in the description given by Zenobius, rituals and ‘violence’ are not strongly linked to each other. Likewise, the presence of the sanctuary of Aphrodite could be important, but its exact role in this case is not assessed. Except its existence there or in the immediate vicinity, it is not clear whether it was involved in the rites accomplished by the women or not, although it could be expected from the goddess of sexuality.

2. The monastery of Kaisariani and the surrounding valley

Most scholars have agreed on the location of the Kyllou Pera.² They however have not been very prompt to explain why and, sometimes, just assumed it was an established fact. Indeed, the monastery of Kaisariani has received the favours of travellers and researchers for different reasons that need to be better explained.

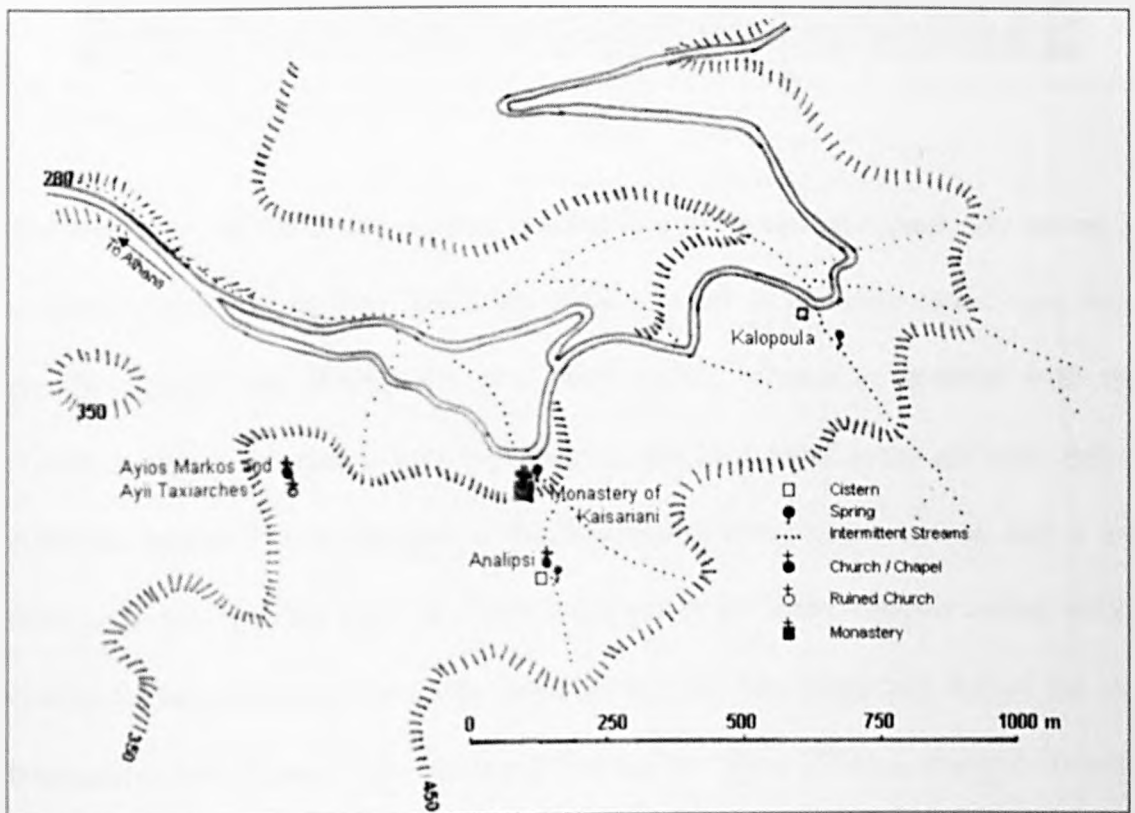


Fig. 23. The Kaisariani valley

² Dodwell (1819), 486; Curtius & Kaupert (1881), 24-5; Argyropoulou (1962), 14-6; Borthwick (1963), 226; Bühler (1982), 286-87; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 74-5; Goette (2001), 152.

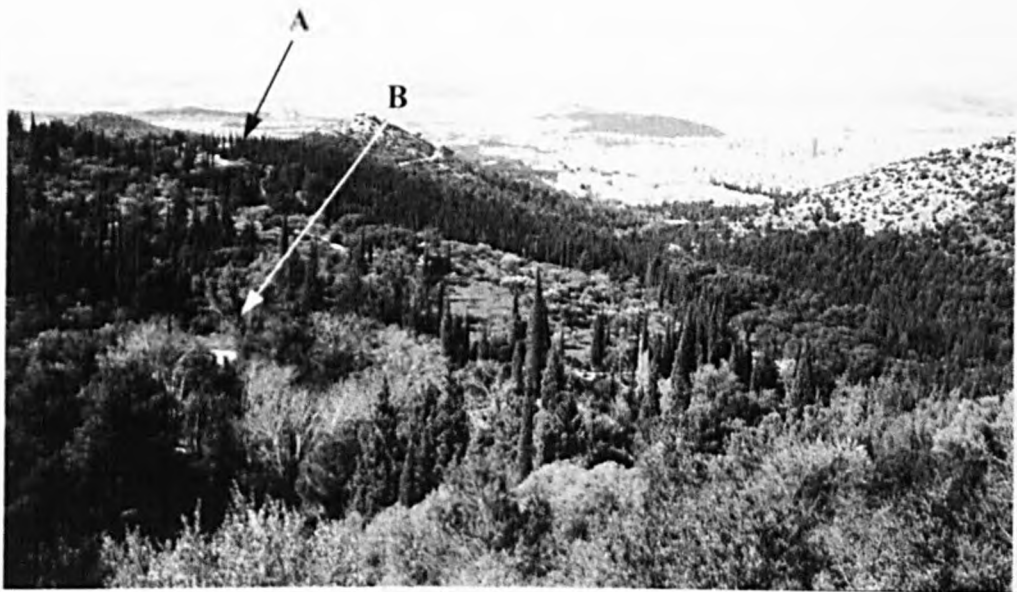


Fig. 24. View of the valley towards Athens from the path above Kaisiriani A: ruins of the Taxiarchs. B: The monastery is bottom left and centre (author's picture).

The monastery of Kaisiriani is situated some five miles east of Athens city centre, in a valley of mount Hymettos.³ Early travellers, as much as the more recent ones, have greatly enjoyed the atmosphere this small valley offered in contrast with the Athenian plain.⁴ The area is very well watered and its wooded paths are today full of Athenian hikers. This is because of the presence of three major springs, and a few more seasonal ones, the water of which is trapped in the funnel-shaped valley, before exiting through the narrow passage towards Athens, then becoming one of the two tributaries of the Ilissos.⁵ The striking difference the place offers in comparison with the Athenian plain has been the major reason invoked for the identification with the Kyllou Pera. It is a valid one to a certain extent, but it needs to be more developed. After all, there are a few other springs gushing elsewhere on the Hymettos.⁶ Nevertheless, the fact is that this valley is the only one to possess all qualities; the

³ See fig. 23.

⁴ For example Dodwell (1819), 486 wrote that the 'verdure' around the monastery formed a 'striking contrast with the parched and yellow hues of the plain'.

⁵ See fig. 23-24.

⁶ To the north, springs between the monastery of Saint John the Theologian and the church of Aghia Triada; to the south, another spring is near the monastery of Kareia.

northern part has springs, but no other valley is quite as large or as watered as at Kaisariani, nor is it as set apart from the Athenian plain, since this one slims down to a rather narrow gully at its exit onto the plain (Ill. 1). This argument, however, is not in itself enough to prove anything.

Few archaeological excavations have been conducted in the area, and these were mainly concerned with the Byzantine period.⁷ But blocks that belonged to more ancient buildings have been found in the monastery and in its environs (Ill. 3-6).⁸ These buildings were most probably built and localised in the valley. The area was built up as proven by the scarce remains found by the excavations. If the texts mention only a sanctuary of Aphrodite (ἐν ᾧ ἱερὸν Ἀφροδίτης), and not a temple, it is however tempting to believe that these blocks had been part of an edifice consecrated to the goddess. It also implies that the area received a substantial amount of attention from the ancient Athenians since the quality of the blocks found is rather high, denoting a significant investment for an important structure.

The practice of the establishment of a Christian church over an ancient 'pagan' shrine or sanctuary is commonplace in Greece, and the presence of the monasteries in this valley could possibly be explained in such a way.⁹ According to Goette, these blocks belonged to a temple, dated to the 2nd c. AD, which should be found on the site of the church of the Taxiarchs, while there is also the possibility that there was an ancient temple under the monastery's church.¹⁰ The religious dimension of the place is further suggested by the finding of an inscribed herm at the

⁷ The excavations were conducted in the 1950s in particular by E. Chatzidakis who found, under the 10th c. AD basilica of the Taxiarchs the remains of an early Christian building. See Hood (1960), 8; M. Chatzidakis, 'Σκαφικαὶ ἔρευναι ἐν τῇ Μονῇ Κατοσαριανῆς', *Praktika* (1949: 44-50; 1950: 138-144); G. Daux (1959), 582; (1960), 661.

⁸ One relatively recent discovery was made in 1993 when blocks from 5-4th centuries BC were found in a 'dump' near the monastery. French (1994), 5.

⁹ There are plenty of examples: the churches on or right next to former temples at Brauron, Eleusis, on the Athenian Agora at the Hephastieion, and of course the Parthenon itself.

¹⁰ Goette (2001), 152-3; I have not found his source for such a statement. For the possibility of an ancient sanctuary of Aphrodite under the monastery, see Megaw (1962), 6-7.

entrance of the monastery listing the genealogy of a hierophant (l.20: Ἱεροφάντης), whose grand-mother was also priestess of Demeter (l. 32-33: Διονυσία Δήμητρος ὕστερον ἱέρεια).¹¹ In this context, one of the theories about the etymology of Kaisariani becomes more interesting. Kaisariani, according to this theory, would be named after Saisara, daughter of Keleos, mythical king and priest of Eleusis.¹² The name of the monastery could possibly have been Saisariane, and in time was transformed into Kaisariani.



Fig. 25. Ruined church of the Taxiarchs, with a reused marble column in a wall (author's picture).

¹¹ IG II² 2342.

¹² Argyropoulou (1962), 12-13; Goette (2001), 152. Keleos and Saisara appear in Paus. 1.38.2-3.



Fig. 26. Reused ancient blocks at the monastery of Kaisariani (author's picture).

The springs themselves are of deep interest when it comes to determining whether the spot is in fact the Kyllou Pera. The monastery's baths are built over a spring, the water of which is now gushing out of a marble ram's head outside the eastern wall (fig. 27).¹³ Another one, the Agiasmos spring, is a short distance away above the monastery, near the chapel of Analipsi (fig. 28). This spring flows out of the slope, into a man-made channel directing it into the cistern built in front of the chapel. The last one is further away, north-east of the monastery, and is called today Kalopoula (fig. 29).¹⁴ It appears to the traveller in a large basin/cistern next to the road, but further up the slope is the spring, of which the water is naturally collected in a rocky

¹³ Today, the ram's head at the spring is a copy of the original one, identified as a *sima* from the 'old temple of Athena' on the Acropolis. The original is now in the collections of the Acropolis museum. See Wiegand (1904), 125.

¹⁴ The names Kallipoula or Gallopoula are already reported as inherited from the ancient name by Milchhofer in Curtius, E. and J.A. Kaupert (eds.), *Karten von Attika*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1883), p. 24. See Honigsmann, s.v. κύλλου Πήρα, *R.E.* 11 (1922), 2459-60.

basin-like formation, and then flows out of a fountain. The obvious importance of this last spring resides in its name, extremely close to the *Kyllou Pera*; and although it cannot be proven, the hypothesis that the one would be the replacement of the other is rather plausible. Meanwhile, these springs have also been attributed miraculous healing properties.



Fig. 27. The spring at the monastery of Kaisariani (author's picture).

The *Agiasmos* spring is only miraculous one day a year when, during the festivities of the Ascension, the 'holy dove' visits the pool of water.¹⁵ It is not possible to say if there is a link, not mentioning the possibility of continuity, with the ancient cult in the area. It is interesting to notice that, although clearly a Christian animal and symbol, the dove was also the animal of *Aphrodite*.

¹⁵ *Argyropoulou* (1962), 16, *Böhler* (1982), 284, *Forrest* (1991), 13-15.



Fig. 28. The spring-fed basin in front of the chapel of the Analipsi (author's picture).



Fig. 29. The fountain Kalopoula (author's picture).

The Kalopoula and the spring at the monastery are altogether more complicated to disentangle. Until recently, they were both attributed healing properties.¹⁶ The spring at the monastery would have been credited with curing sicknesses, maybe crippled limbs, while Athenian women went to the Kalopoula to drink and pray for children. Let us focus again on the ancient sources: these only mention one spring, but give several possible names for the area, each of which is very similar to the other. The question whether one spring gave its name to the region, or vice-versa, is impossible to answer. There is little doubt that the spring must have had a name (maybe even a nymph's name), especially because it was supposed to have curing powers. It seems that the confusion existed already in ancient times since there are so many different names (Kyllou Pera, Pera, Kallios, Kallias, Kalia, Kylia, Killeia). Photios' testimony might well be the clue to a possible explanation of this puzzle. He makes a distinction between the location (ἡ Πήρα χωρίον), called Pera, and the fountain, called either Kallias (Καλλίαν) or Kylloupera. Should we believe that the spring(s) and the region had had different names that merged in later times? Or does it mean that the presence of several springs possessing different but equivalent curing powers has confused the toponyms of the valley? One could easily find or imagine other explanations, each as valid as these. The fact is the name somehow survived until now at Kalopoula.

Architecturally speaking, however, the site of Kalopoula is not favourable for any building site. The slope there is quite steep, and the small valley it is nestled in is also too narrow. The monastery and the Agiasmos sites are comparatively far more likely to have been ancient sanctuaries, or at least its monumental part. On the other hand, the reverse argument can be applied to the site of the Basilica of the Taxiarchs;

¹⁶ See Argyropoulou (1962), 14-16.

it is flat, easily accessible, and enjoys a superb view on the environs, but no spring is to be found in the immediate vicinity, and the nearest one would be the spring at the monastery. It is a fifteen minute walk downhill to the monastery, and while it is not impossible for a sanctuary to be set away from such a natural water supply, the seemingly strong association between spring and sanctuary in the sources would invite us to expect it to be far closer. Another possibility would be to suppose there was more than one sanctuary in the valley, and the memory of Aphrodite's presence here is the only one that has survived.

3. What, whose and who for? The rituals at the Kyllou Pera

The first of these questions is the most difficult, and has probably no definite answer. The fact that women went to the Kyllou Pera for its water is attested by the ancient sources, and is echoed by the surviving tradition to attribute curative powers to the springs of the Kaisariani valley. Their prime concern in doing so was to ask for fertility and/or a safe labour. Such association of springs and water with female concerns is not surprising, and the Attic landscape – to limit ourselves to the same ancient Greek region – was not alien to such a thing.¹⁷

To give the most famous and basic example, Thucydides tells us about the tradition in Athens to use the water from the Enneakrounos springhouse, formerly known as the Kallirrhoe spring, before marriages and other sacred rituals.¹⁸ It seems clear that the aim of this bath was more for the fertility of the couple than a simple purification ritual. In this particular case it is interesting to observe that the Kallirrhoe is a spring in the Ilissos riverbed, while the spring of the Kyllou Pera is

¹⁷ Parker (2005), 430-1.

¹⁸ See chapter 1, section 1.2.1.

one of the springs of the Ilissos itself, and it has been shown that the rivers played an important role in the fertility of a region.¹⁹ It is possible that the Ilissos played a similar role, in the context of Athenian religion. The other major river of the Athenian plain, the Kephisos, was also considered to be a patron of childbirth and child-raising. Locks of hair were given to the river-god when leaving childhood, and in his sanctuary near Phaleron he is associated with other kourotrophic deities such as the nymphs and, interestingly, Kallirrhoe.²⁰ Furthermore, such names as Kephisodotos, Kephisodoros, etc. were, at least at the beginning, a clear message that the god was praised for its help in the conception of a child.²¹ One last example is the Cave near Vari, dedicated mainly to Pan and the Nymphs. Inside flows a spring which was visibly an important feature of the cult there, since a couple of basins were built in the natural floor to receive it. Furthermore, a 'large number' of miniature loutrophoroi, as well as three articulated dolls, were found during the excavations in the cave, suggesting that part of the cult there was marriage-oriented, and therefore was concerned with fertility.²²

What is more unusual is the aura of mystery and disrepute surrounding the place and, consequently, the cults. Aristophanes calls the place a 'brothel', men 'speak ill of it', and a proverb taunts it. This is all rather obscure, since we are left with the ancients' gibes but without any real description of the *porneion* in question. We can only imagine what women seeking fertility would do 'against nature' so that it gave the place a nefarious connotation. The presence nearby of a sanctuary of Aphrodite is another hint of the sexual dimension of the rituals. But is this to say that one should take literally the description of Aristophanes? It is difficult to decide from

¹⁹ Ginouvès (1962), 282, 421-2; Parker (2005), 430-1.

²⁰ Sanctuary of Kephisos: Larson (2001), 131-134; the cult regulation of the sanctuary (*IG II/III*² 4547) lists the gods present at the sanctuary. Gift to the river-god of a lock of hair: Paus. 1.37.3.

²¹ Parker (2000), 59-60.

²² King (1903), 322-24, 333; Schörner (2004).

what is, after all, only a fragment. Pirenne-Delforge suggests it might just have been a comic exaggeration, but the existence of the proverb apparently corroborating Aristophanes is somehow troubling.²³ Besides, the cohabitation between brothel and Aphrodite is not entirely foreign to the Greek mind.²⁴ Indeed, one of the major worries of the prostitute would have been the conservation of her working tool, her body. To quote Pirenne-Delforge: 'Si la "beauté" des futures femmes de citoyens signifiait qu'elles étaient mûres désormais pour le mariage et la maternité, la beauté des courtisanes étaient une fin en soi, la condition première de l'exercice de la séduction. Si les aspects physiologiques du patronage d'Aphrodite sur le mariage avaient paru essentiels pour comprendre son domaine spécifique d'intervention dans la vie des épouses et des mères, l'exemple de l'amour vénal éclaire d'une lumière distincte, mais convergente, les prérogatives de la déesse'.²⁵ Consequently it seems that the citizens' wives on one hand, and prostitutes on the other, were in search of the same thing, only for different reasons. And it is all down to the concept of beauty; that of the body to sell for the prostitute, and that of fertile body of the citizen's wife and mother.

This unexpected triangle constituted by the beauty, the wife/mother and the prostitute might well be valid in the case of the Kyllou Pera, even if it is only because of Aristophanes' mockery. Wives desiring to become mothers gathered there, in a place qualified as a *porneion* by Aristophanes, in all probability because of the rituals oriented towards feminine fertility. The third element, beauty, is maybe expressed by the name of the spot/spring itself. If the meaning of Kyllou Pera remains unclear, a few of its variants sound very much like 'beauty'. Kalia, Kallia

²³ Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 75.

²⁴ The association between prostitutes and Aphrodite is beyond question, unlike however the problem of 'sacred' prostitution. See Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 428-30; Davidson (1998), 197; Rosenzweig (2004), 68-81.

²⁵ Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 429.

and Kallios do indeed quite clearly link the place with beauty. Let us suppose for an instant that this name derives not only from a descriptive point of view (the beautiful spring), but also from the spring's properties. It could mean that, by drinking this 'beautiful' water, 'beauty' would be conferred to the drinker, making her fertile. This idea is largely hypothetical but, on the basis that the ancient Greeks attributed certain powers to different waters, not at all impossible.²⁶ By the same kind of association, people went to the spring at the monastery of Kaisariani in the hope it would cure crippled limbs. Kyllios (κυλλός) meant curbed in ancient Greek and we are told the Athenians gave this name to crooked hands and feet, and to limping people. Although Kyllou Pera (Κύλλου πήρα) is accentuated differently, the close association between name and cure is here again emphasized.²⁷ And if the sources do not allow us to assert whether this cure was already attributed to the spring in antiquity or not, the fact that it eventually was help us understand what women thought they would obtain from the water of the Kallia.

4. In the footsteps of Socrates: Ovid's Myth of Kephalos and Plato's *Phaedrus*

If no other sources mention the Kyllou Pera by name, some do mention springs on the Hymettos. One of the most famous is found in Ovid's version of the myth of Kephalos, in the *Ars Amatoria*:²⁸

²⁶ The ancient Greeks conferred curative powers to water well beyond fertility, as is particularly shown by the development of the hydrotherapeutic in Hellenistic times. See for example Parker (1983), 213-21; Boudon (1994); Lambrinouidakis (1994), 228-30.

²⁷ Some have thought that the name of Kyllou Pera is derived from a sanctuary of Hephaistos, the limping god, supposedly situated nearby, thus explaining the power of curing crippled limbs attributed to the spring. Absolutely no reference in the ancient sources on the Kyllou Pera or archaeological evidence can support this view. Argyropoulou (1962), 16; Bühler (1982), 287: 'at Vulcani κυλλοποδίου ibi nullus cultus traditur'.

²⁸ Ov., *Ars Am.* 3.687-694; Green (1982), 235.

High under flowery Hymettus' violet hillside
Flows a sacred spring: soft earth,
Lush turf, a little spinney of trailing arbutus,
Dark myrtle, rosemary, scented bay,
Thick-burgeoning boxwood, the brittle tamarisk, slender
Lucerne, domestic pines, a gentle stir
And rustle of warm spring breezes through that variegated
Leafage, an airy caress blown over the grass. (trans. Green)

Many have actually identified the place described by Ovid with the Kyllou Pera.²⁹ The localisation of the 'sacred spring' on the 'Hymettus' violet hillside' corresponds already, but it is the striking description written by the Latin poet of the green and fragrant place that has further convinced his readers. Ovid probably knew, or at least had heard of the Kyllou Pera, during his stay at Athens, and Gibson suggests that the place he describes 'must have been familiar to contemporaries'.³⁰ His version of the myth of Kephalos has no apparent link to the rituals at the spring, and it is more probably using the place as an allegory of the wild and dangerous space situated away from the civilised city.³¹ What is more interesting is the parentage of this description by Ovid with a much older text, Plato's *Phaedrus*. This type of description, called *locus amoenus* – an idyllic place with a spring and lovely vegetation – was very popular in Hellenistic erotic poetry and derives directly from

²⁹ Curtius & Kaupert (1881), 24; Borthwick (1963), 227-8; Muthmann (1975), 188; Green (1982), 401; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 75.

³⁰ Gibson (2003), 362.

³¹ It has been suggested that the myth of Kephalos could conceal an *aition* of rain-magic, and therefore be in disguise rituals aiming at rain-making and fertility: see Fowler (1995). The author however does not accept the localisation of Ovid's spot at the Kyllou Pera, arguing that in his view Ovid's *locus amoenus* is 'hardly probative of any particular locality' (n. 14).

the one Plato wrote about a place near the Ilissos' stream.³² But despite these strong literary and geographic parallels between Ovid and Plato's texts, the possibility that they would both refer to the same place was maybe evoked only once. It has indeed been suggested by Gibson that both describe the Kyllou Pera at Kaisariani, but he is alone in this case.³³ Actually, the problem raised by the place described by Plato is a tricky one, and many scholars have already attempted to find a convincing answer to the question.³⁴ It comes as a surprise since the platonic text possesses, at least in appearance, several topographical clues that should allow this identification.

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates is walking within the walls of Athens when he meets Phaedrus, coming back from the house of Morychos where he had listened to Lysias' speech on love. They then decide to leave the city and walk outside the walls, in order to find somewhere to stop and discuss this speech. The topographical clues Plato gives us are as follows:

- Phaedrus and Socrates are near the temple of Olympian Zeus when they meet and decide to walk out of Athens – 227b
- they walk along the stream of the Ilissos (κατὰ τὸν Ἰλισσὸν ἴωμεν) - 229a
- at some point they are two or three stades up from where there was a path crossing the river to Agra (ἀλλὰ κάτωθεν, ὅσον δὲ ἢ τρία στάδια, ἢ πρὸς τὸ τῆς Ἄγρας διαβαίνομεν) – 229c
- they stop under a very tall plane-tree, next to a spring – 230b

³² Motte (1963), 464; Hardie (1998), 238-39.

³³ Gibson (2003), 362: he mentions Plato's *Phaedrus* in his commentary on Ovid's text, but does not equate the one with the other

³⁴ An exhaustive bibliography of the attempts to answer the topographical question of Socrates and Phaedrus' route can be found in Görgemanns (1993), 122, n. 1. It includes in particular Wycherley (1963), whose case in favour of a localisation on the Ardetos stands out. The author seems to place too much importance on to the topographical clues he gleaned from Plato's text and, although he wrote himself: 'It would be probably unsafe to insist that he has a particular plane-tree, or even a particular spring in mind' (p. 91), he elaborated his argument to situate the dialogue at a spot where there is no spring attested.

- Socrates then gives a description of the place which is one of the prototypes of the locus amoenus. It matches Ovid's description which, in turn, matches Kaisariani's spot:

'By Hera, a fine stopping place! This plane tree is very spreading and tall, and the tallness and shadiness of the agnus are quite lovely; and being in full flower it seems to make the place smell as sweetly as it could. The stream, too, flows very attractively under the plane, with the coolest water to judge by my foot. From the figurines and statuettes, the spot seems to be sacred to some Nymphs and to Achelous. Then again, if you like, how welcome it is, the freshness of the place, and very pleasant; it echoes with a summery shrillness to the cicadas' song. Most delightful of all is the matter of the grass, growing on a gentle slope and thick enough to be just right to rest one's head upon.'(trans. Rowe)³⁵

Many have tried to situate this place, but only Green has located it at Kaisariani, and thus, at the Kyllou Pera. It is because all think of this place as being rather near the city walls. Wycherley even estimated that the conversation between the two men must not have been longer than 'two or three minutes', thus enhancing the proximity of the 'stopping place'.³⁶ The problem is that there is nothing in Plato's text that allows such precision, and one could argue that the few topographic details we are given are just a literary trick to create a sense of space and to suggest the two protagonists' trip. The sense of time, because of the absence of a narrator, is therefore artificially created by the dialogue itself, and invisible pauses in the dialogue could allow the distance walked by the two men to be longer than usually

³⁵ Plato, *Phaedr.* 230b.

³⁶ Wycherley (1963), 88.

thought.³⁷ On the other hand, Plato wrote this text to an audience that knew Athenian topography and could recognize the places he described. In this context, the valley of Kaisariani is as good as any other candidate, even if it is further away. It was well known by Plato's audience and matches some major qualities of Plato's *locus amoenus*. Beyond the mere similarities with the place itself – in terms of vegetation and presence of a spring – it is situated on the right side of the city of Athens, at one of the sources of the Ilissos both Socrates and Phaedrus were following. Although it has been argued that κατὰ τὸν Ἰλισθὸν actually meant walking down the stream of the Ilissos, and even if this argument is grammatically plausible, it does not fit the storyline at all.³⁸ It seems unlikely that they would reach a spring if they were walking downstream, and the alternative hypothesis of a spring close to the riverbed on the hill of Ardittos has the major drawback of being based on the mere assumption that a spring might have existed there in ancient times. To sum up, it appears that Plato made his characters walk out of the walls of Athens in the environs of the temple of Olympian Zeus. From there, they went down to the river-bed, and then strolled upstream for an undetermined amount of time to reach the famous plane tree and the spring. Finally, the last argument in favour of the equation of the *Phaedrus*' plane tree and spring with the Kyllou Pera is given by Strabo:³⁹

And such is still more the case with the Ilissus, which flows from the other part of the city into the same coast, from the region above Agra and the Lyceium, and from the fountain which is lauded by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. (trans. H. L. Jones)

³⁷ In Plato, *Laws* 625 a-b, three men walk from Cnossos to the cave of Zeus on Mt Ida, which would be a far longer walk than from Athens to Kaisariani.

³⁸ Wycherley (1963), 93.

³⁹ Strabo 9.1.24.

If Strabo knew the spring in Phaedrus was simply along the Ilissos, he would not have described it amongst the sources of the river, all found on the slopes of the Hymettos.

As a last word about the problem raised about the location of the place described in Plato's *Phaedrus*, it needs to be said that Plato probably never meant to be very precise about it.⁴⁰ He used settings that existed in order to make his story realistic but, as always with Plato, for reasons that are sometimes elusive. To these settings that his readers would have recognized, he added a vast amount of hidden references, puns and allusions, making of his *Phaedrus* a multi-layered literary composition. Trying to find in the Athenian topography the exact match of the setting of the *Phaedrus* is therefore as useless as trying to completely deny the fact that Plato used real places as an inspiration. That said, the Kyllou Pera and the *Phaedrus* might actually have things to teach us about each other.

It would be impossible to sum up all the interpretations of the *Phaedrus*, so many are the existing ones.⁴¹ Only a few, closely related to the religious elements already presented about the Kyllou Pera, will be discussed here. And Plato's description of the spring itself brings already its share of information. In Socrates' exclamation of delight when they reach their resting place, the philosopher mentions the presence of figurines and statuettes (ἀπὸ τῶν κορῶν τε καὶ ἀγαλμάτων), suggesting that the place is sacred to some Nymphs and to the Achelous. These divinities are common place in association with springs, while the Nymphs in

⁴⁰ I want in particular to thank Dr Repath for his ideas on the *Phaedrus*, and his insistence on Plato's use of the spot as a literary and metaphoric tool for his philosophical argument.

⁴¹ The list of commentaries on the *Phaedrus* is enormous, and the following titles are just examples in addition to those used here: D. Clay, 'Socrates' prayer to Pan', *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies presented to Bernard M. W. Knox on the occasion of his 65th birthday* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 345-352; I. Lambert, 'La fascination du monde et des Muses selon Platon: A propos de deux mythes du "Phèdre" (258d - 259d et 274c - 275b)', *Les Etudes Classiques* 53 (1985), 205-219; W. Bernard, 'Zu Platon, "Phaidros" 229c6ff.', *Museum Helveticum* 52 (1995), 220-4; J. Assaël, 'Sirènes, cigales et Muses', *RHR* 2 (2003), 131-151.

particular are known to play a role in the feminine life-cycle, and are concerned with fertility and child-raising.⁴² The parallels with the domains of activity of the cult practiced at the Kyllou Pera are already worth noting, but the mention by Socrates of τῶν κορῶν alongside statues at the spring come to reinforce that same idea. These are not just statuettes but in reality what their name describes; representations of young women, maybe even articulated dolls. These are a frequent type of offerings made by women, or young girls, at a key time of their life like just before their marriage.⁴³ Their exact nature is not here stated by Socrates, but their significance as a feminine votive cannot be denied.

The feminine character of the place is further implied by Plato as he inserts subtle details throughout the dialogue. Socrates' description of the locus opens with the exclamation 'By Hera!' (Νῆ τῆν Ἥραν), which is a typically feminine oath.⁴⁴ Although in other dialogues Socrates uses this exclamation as a way to mock his interlocutor, here in the *Phaedrus* he does not seem to be completely insincere, and this might be a hint of their entering into a feminine space. One notices also the presence of a plant strongly associated with women's fertility, the *agnus*, which was part of the female-only festival of the Thesmophoria. Its powers are not clearly well known, and it seems to have been both favouring and limiting fecundity.⁴⁵ But Plato's insistence on this particular plant— which he describes as being quite tall, shady and in full bloom – cannot be coincidental. Finally it has to be said that Aphrodite, whose sanctuary was near the Kyllou Pera, never appears herself in the

⁴² See in particular Larson (2001), 100-20.

⁴³ Bruit-Zaidman (2002), 473-474. Larson (2001), 101-7: the author demonstrated that the 'dolls' as toys or as votive offerings could be the same objects inasmuch as they were made by the same craftspeople. This does not imply that a doll used as a toy had to be eventually offered to the gods.

⁴⁴ Rowe (1986), 141; Calder (1983).

⁴⁵ Borengässer (1998). For its use during the festival of the Thesmophoria for 'inhibiting lust', and a complete bibliography, see Parker (2005), 274, n. 16. A view on the *agnus* as a plant with more balanced powers is in Versnel (1992), 35. Quite interestingly, the plant is still used today in alternative treatment for feminine cycle and fertility. See for example:

http://www.passeportsante.net/fr/solutions/plantessupplements/fiche.aspx?doc=gattilier_ps

dialogue. Her powers, however, pervade all the dialogue since it is concerned with love, while her son Eros is the clear subject of a good part of the dialogue, and receives a prayer as such.⁴⁶

5. If the *Phaedrus* was set at the Kyllou Pera

Plato concludes his *Phaedrus* by a final prayer to the god Pan and to ‘all ye other gods of this place’ in which Socrates asks to be granted beauty within (δοίητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τ᾽νδοθεν) and to have the exterior beauty in harmony with the inside.⁴⁷ The philosophical implications of this prayer for beauty is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the resonance it gives to the text in the context of the association with the Kyllou Pera is dramatic. As seen earlier, the quest for beauty permeates the rites at the spring of the Kyllou Pera. This makes Socrates’ last remark all the more relevant as his own quest for beauty is a quest for love and fertility as well, but of very different kind. Unlike the women who went to the Kyllou Pera for a physical fertility (then a physical beauty), Socrates asks the same gods, at the same spring, for the inner beauty that would allow him to be a complete philosopher and to pursue the truth. Plato there exemplifies his idea of the beauty as linked with the fertility of the soul too. As Sissa wrote: ‘[Celui qui s’oriente vers] cet autre amour qui à partir des beaux garçons conduit à la passion pour le Beau, l’amour initiatique (...) décide de faire valoir la fécondité non pas de son sexe masculin, mais de son âme, de sa psyché.’⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Plato, *Phaedr.* 257a-b.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Phaedr.* 279b-c. It is also remarkable that the dialogue is subtitled *on the beautiful* (ἡ περὶ καλοῦ).

⁴⁸ Sissa (2002), 85. She refers also to Plato, *Symposium*, 209b-c: ‘so when a man’s soul is so far divine that it is made pregnant with these from his youth, and on attaining manhood immediately desires to bring forth and beget, he too, I imagine, goes about seeking the beautiful object whereon he may do

The picture of the Kyllou Pera, while still incomplete, has become richer and, to a certain extent, more complex than one could have expected. Aristophanes threw an acid glance on the place and its rites, making fun of what he called a 'brothel'. His influence on the judgement men made in later times is impossible to assess, but it is quite clearly his view that prevailed, with Christian lexicographers relaying the poor reputation it apparently had. Yet it does not seem to have been too alien to the Athenian or, more widely, to the Greek rituals about fertility. Since absolutely no description of the rituals at the Kyllou Pera has survived, no one can tell what provoked such a diatribe from Aristophanes. On the other hand, and if the identification of the resting place in the *Phaedrus* with the Kyllou Pera appears to have some truth, Plato gives a more peaceful and beautiful picture of the spring and its setting. As always when it comes to the study of ancient Greek sacred topography, there are different ways to see the same place and cult, and it is not often possible to tell which one is closest to the truth.

6. Conclusion on Attica

There is a great variety observed in the group of sites studied in chapters one and two, whether in location, size, type of attendance or gods revered. One can however see a trend emerge from this variety. Most, if not all the sites reviewed, display a side of water which is benevolent. The occasional links that water has with the underworld are positive and related to water's nature (water is seen as originating from the underworld, e.g. a spring flows out of the earth and possesses positive

his begetting, since he will never beget upon the ugly. Hence it is the beautiful rather than the ugly bodies that he welcomes in his pregnancy, and if he chances also on a soul that is fair and noble and well-endowed, he gladly cherishes the two combined in one; and straightway in addressing such a person he is resourceful in discoursing of virtue and of what should be the good man's character and what his pursuits;' (trans. Harold N. Fowler).

powers from it), rather than as a source of fear. For example, with the exception of the Amphiareion which in any case has strong Boeotian aspects, there is no evidence in Attica of any oracular sanctuaries using a source of water.

It is perhaps telling that one of the most important sites studied here is not a sanctuary but a fountain. The Enneakrounos, fed by the spring Kallirrhoe, not only illustrates water's power over human fertility but was also a place where the Athenians renewed their attachment to their homeland, symbolised by the spring. In the same vein, the sanctuary of Kephisos expresses a similar faith in the power of springs and rivers to protect and nourish the young, but this time at the other end of the scale since it was a private foundation rather than a civic cult. There is also a sense that water, as we will also see in the other regions, was from somewhere and this is particularly well exemplified by its presence in small local shrines consecrated to nymphs or to heroes. The sanctuaries of Pankrates in Athens, of the doctor-hero at Rhamnous or of the Nymphs on the coast were humble shrines controlled by and catering for local communities. The Kyllou Pera was also very much a case where water, location and cult were three consubstantial elements of one same cult where, again, water had beneficial properties. But in this case, its very specific and localised nature could have played in its favour and attracted worshippers beyond the immediate surroundings, as its proverbial fame seems to indicate.

This overall positive impression could be due to the general aridity of Attica, making water a particularly precious substance, as well as to the local religious background and evolution. This study of water makes Attica's religious specificities stand out, in particular when compared to its neighbour Boeotia, where the picture is dramatically different.

Chapter 3: Boeotia

Boeotia is a large region compared to others in Greece. It is bordered to the south-east by Attica, to the south by the Gulf of Corinth, to the north by the stretch of sea between mainland Greece and Euboia and extends to the west until the confines of Locris and Phocis. The central part of Boeotia is occupied by a series of good arable plains lying around the lake Copais and crossed by several rivers, which makes it one of the most 'humid' regions of Greece, in stark contrast with neighbouring Attica.¹

Another specificity of Boeotia is the survival of a large number of independent *poleis* and, when possible, the sites are arranged according to the polis they belong to. But ultimately, Pausanias being our guide, the order in which the sites are studied is the same than the one in the book 9 of the *periegesis*. If a site is absent from the book, it is examined with other sites from the same geographical region.

1. Plataia

When Pausanias entered into Boeotia through the pass on Mount Kithairon, the first city he visited was Plataia, the foundation myths of which give a substantial place to water. He was told there that Plataea owes its name to the daughter of the river Asopos, although he preferred to rationalise the myth and believe that Asopos was actually an ancient king who gave his name to the river.² Another legend tells of a second foundation of the city after the deluge of Deucalion. Polybios of Argos was ordered by an oracle to follow a cow and to found the city where the animal stopped.

¹ For a more complete description of the land of Boeotia, see Buck (1979), 1-5.

² Paus. 9.1.1-2.

When it lay down, it struck the earth with its horn and a spring started to flow. The spring, and later its fountain, was called Boukeraïs.³

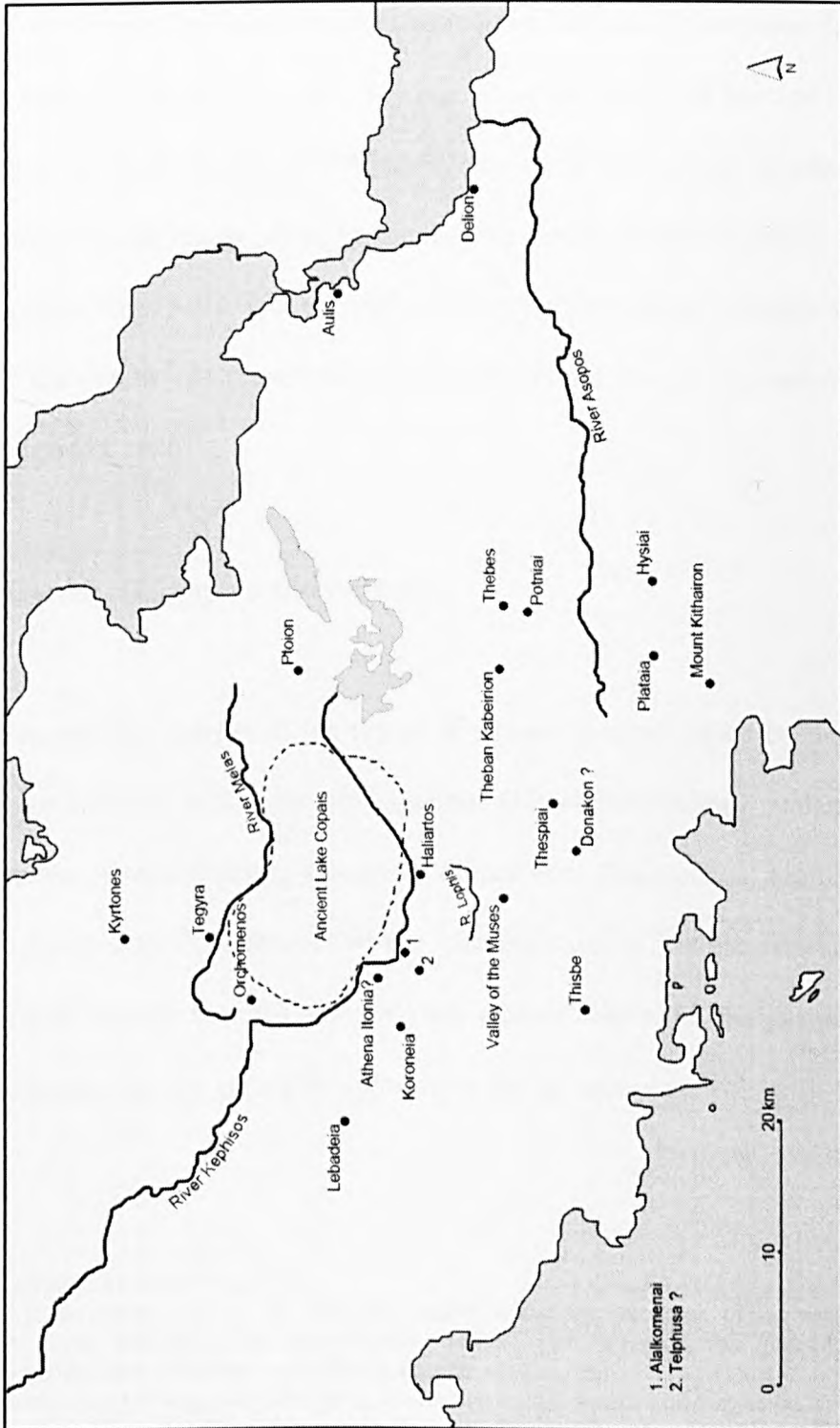


Fig. 30. Map of Boeotia with the sites studied.

³ Etymologicum Gen. s.v. Boukeraïs = Call. fr. 42 (Pfeiffer); Vian (1963), 89, n. 3.

1.1. Mount Kithairon and the sanctuary of Apollo at Hysiai

Several myths and cults link the city of Plataia with Mount Kithairon, nymphs and water. Nymphs called *sphragitides* dwelled in the mountain. A cave near the summit was their particular abode. It is said they had an oracle there and were so influential that many of the local people were *nympholepts*.⁴ It is not the only oracle by water that is reported in the region, since Pausanias also mentioned that in Hysiai there was an old sanctuary of Apollo with a sacred well (φρέαρ), the water of which was drunk to receive the oracle.⁵ At the site identified with Hysiai, traces of a sanctuary were found alongside a well.⁶

1.2. Artemis, Gargaphia and Actaeon

The presence of the nymphs in the region of Plataia is again stated by the story of Actaeon's unfortunate encounter with Artemis. Our earliest literary evidence of the story including Artemis bathing at a spring comes with Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas*. However, Apollodoros' statement that the 'bathing motif (...) is the version of most authors' could indicate that this motif already existed before the Hellenistic period.⁷ The identification of the spring in question is not always clear either. In Ovid and

⁴ Plutarch, *Aristeides* 11.3-4; Paus. 9.3.9.

⁵ Paus. 9.2.1; Schachter (1981), 49, expresses doubts about the existence of the oracle and its attribution to Apollo because of the total reliability on Pausanias: 'after all, what guarantee have we that his informants knew what they were talking about?'

⁶ Fossey (1988), 112-115 suggests identifying it with the Apollo temple and the sacred well. Pritchett (1957), 27 and (1979), 148-150, prefers the sanctuary of Demeter because of inscriptions found in the former church of Pantanassa that were dedicated to the goddess.

⁷ Callim., *Hymn*. 5.107-118; Gantz (1993), 480 reporting Apollodoros 3.4.4. See also Lacy (1990) who compiled all the sources on the myth of Actaeon. For Apulian and Lucanian vases depicting the myth include a personified Gargaphia: LIMC s.v. Gargaphia n°1-3. Lucanian vase dated to the 4th c. BC (Harvard University Art Museums 1960.367)

Hyginos, it is called Gargaphia.⁸ In Pausanias the spring is near a rock called the ‘bed of Actaeon’, on the road from Megara, but is not Gargaphia, which he describes later on.⁹ In the myth of Actaeon, the nymphs play the roles of the usual companions of the goddess while one of them, Gargaphia in Ovid and Hyginus, is the hostess of the bath.

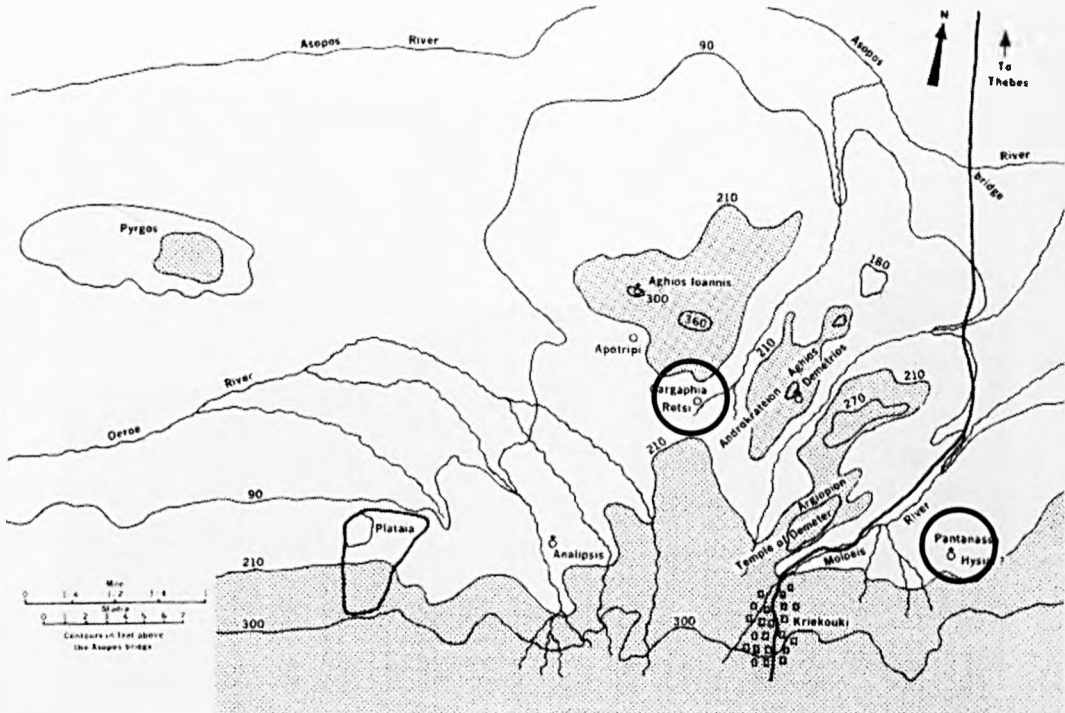


Fig. 31. Map of the region of Plataia (from Wallace [1982], fig. 1, p. 184). The circles show the possible locations for; from west to east, the spring Gargaphia and Hysiai. The Asopos is the river flowing W-E in the northern half of the map and the Kithairon is south of Plataia.

1.3. The Daidala

Of all the rituals once performed at Plataia, the best known is probably the festival of the *Daidala*. The Aetiological myth transmitted down to us by Pausanias, tells of the

⁸ Ovid, *Met.* 3.155-172; Hyg., *Fab.* 181.

⁹ Paus. 9.2.3, 9.4.3. Gargaphia plays a major topographical role in the description by Herodotus of the Battle of Plataia, and is usually identified with a spring north-east of the city: Hdt. 9.25, 49-52. See Wallace (1982), 185-186 and fig. 1.

ire of Hera against Zeus which drove her to leave him and go to Euboia.¹⁰ Zeus then went to Plataia to visit Kithairon, at that time king of the city, who advised him to take an image made of wood, disguise it as a young bride and put it on a cart, declaring he was marrying Plataia, daughter of the river Asopos. So Zeus did. Hera, fooled by the stratagem, came back from Euboia to confound him. After unveiling the log, she was amused by the trick and forgave Zeus.



Fig. 32. Mt Kithairon, view from Plataia (author's picture).

The actual rituals that took place at Plataia, in particular during the Great Daidala every 60 years, were a re-enactment the myth, with an aniconic log or plank probably bathed at the river Asopos, then dressed up as a bride and taken up to the summit of Mt Kithairon on a cart.¹¹ On top of the mountain, the figure was finally burnt on a large pyre. The significance of this festival in terms of affirmation of the sanctity of the marriage (since the false bride is eventually destroyed and the sacred couple of

¹⁰ Paus. 9.3.1-9.

¹¹ Paus. 9.3.3-8; Plutarch in Euseb. *Praeparatio evangelica*, 3.1.85c-86b cited in Donohue (1988), p. 311; Schachter (1981), 242-250; O'Brien (1993), 19 n. 5; Larson (2001), 113-114; Dillon (2002), 218.

Zeus and Hera reunited) has been demonstrated at length by Larson, Dillon and others. The fact that the fake bride had to be Plataia, daughter of the Asopos, and that the procession had to start at the same river (maybe by a pre-nuptial bath as is usual before a wedding) stresses the importance of water or, more precisely, of local streams and rivers in the rituals concerning weddings. Plutarch also mentioned that, in the myth, the nymphs of Triton were bridal attendants. Larson suggested that the local nymphs that dwelled in the Kithairon might also have played a similar role in the story.¹²

2. Potniai

The village of Tachi, identified with Potniai, is in the southern suburbs of modern Thebes, two kilometres from the Kadmeia. Three different sources describe the ancient spot: Strabo, Aelian and Pausanias, the latter being the most specific in his description.¹³ The literary evidence tells us of a sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, called locally *Potniai Theai*, which gave the location its name.¹⁴ Their images were placed next to the local river. Symeonoglou suggests that the sanctuary of the goddesses, their grove and images were situated next to the Ismenos at the location of a crossroad.¹⁵ His view is supported by the discovery in the area of votive terracotta pigs and boys, recalling the rituals described by Pausanias involving letting piglets loose in a place call ‘the halls’ (τὰ μέγαρα). Fossey points out that north of the village, ‘three torrents unite (...) to form the river’ called today Dirke. ‘This may

¹² Plutarch, fr. 157 = *FGrH* 388 F 1 (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 3 *Prooem.*3.1, 3.7.5-3.8.1); Larson (2001), 114.

¹³ Strabo 9.24; Ael., *De natura animalium* 15.25; Paus. 9.8.1-2. The two first refer to Potniai only in association with the myth of Glaukos and his mad mares.

¹⁴ Paus. 9.8.1.

¹⁵ Symeonoglou (1985), 174-177, n°201 fig. 5.1.

well be the river by which stood the statues of the goddesses'.¹⁶ The name Potnia is an old one and is attested at Thebes since Mycenaean times, although it is not known if it referred to a goddess and, if so, it is not sure whether this goddess became Demeter or Kore at all.¹⁷

During excavations in the 1990s a system of drains and wells 'probably associated with the springs and creek of the R. Dirke' was found among the graves of an ancient cemetery, but bearing no relation with it.¹⁸ The mention of the grove and the localisation of the images next to the river suggest the stream was part of the sanctuary. To assess the use of water in the cult, unfortunately, is beyond reach.

Another water-related spot in the village was a well, or a spring, the water of which was said to have made Glaukos's mares mad. The mares then tore their master to pieces. Aelian described it as a spring (Ποτνιας κρήνη). Strabo associated Potniai and the spring of Dirke with the story: 'ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ Δίρκη κρήνη καὶ Πότνιαι'. Pausanias, on the other hand, wrote of a well (φρέαρ). Fossey mentions two springs in the vicinity of the village one could identify with this famous spot.

3. Thebes

The city of Thebes was built on and around the low hill of the Kadmeia which commanded a rich agricultural plain. Three rivers or streams flow near the city, running down from the hills in the South to the plain in the North. They are, from West to East, the Dirke, the Strophia and the Ismenos. The near totality of their flow is dependant on the springs that feed them, and since their water is almost totally used up in Thebes itself, they have in effect dried up today.

¹⁶ Fossey (1988), 208-210.

¹⁷ Schachter (1994), 1-2.

¹⁸ Blackman, *AR* 45 (1999), 57; *AR* 46 (2000), 57; *AR* 47 (2001), 58.

3.1. The Springs of Thebes

The springs of Thebes are not easily located, since the sources are often imprecise or even contradictory and because of the direness of the archaeological evidence found near the modern springs.¹⁹ At least three are known from the ancient sources: the spring of Dirke, the spring of Ares and the Oidipodia. A series of modern springs/fountains to the north-west of the city exist today, but it has been found that they correspond to the route of an ancient aqueduct and are probably not natural. The remaining three have all links with Thebes' legendary past.

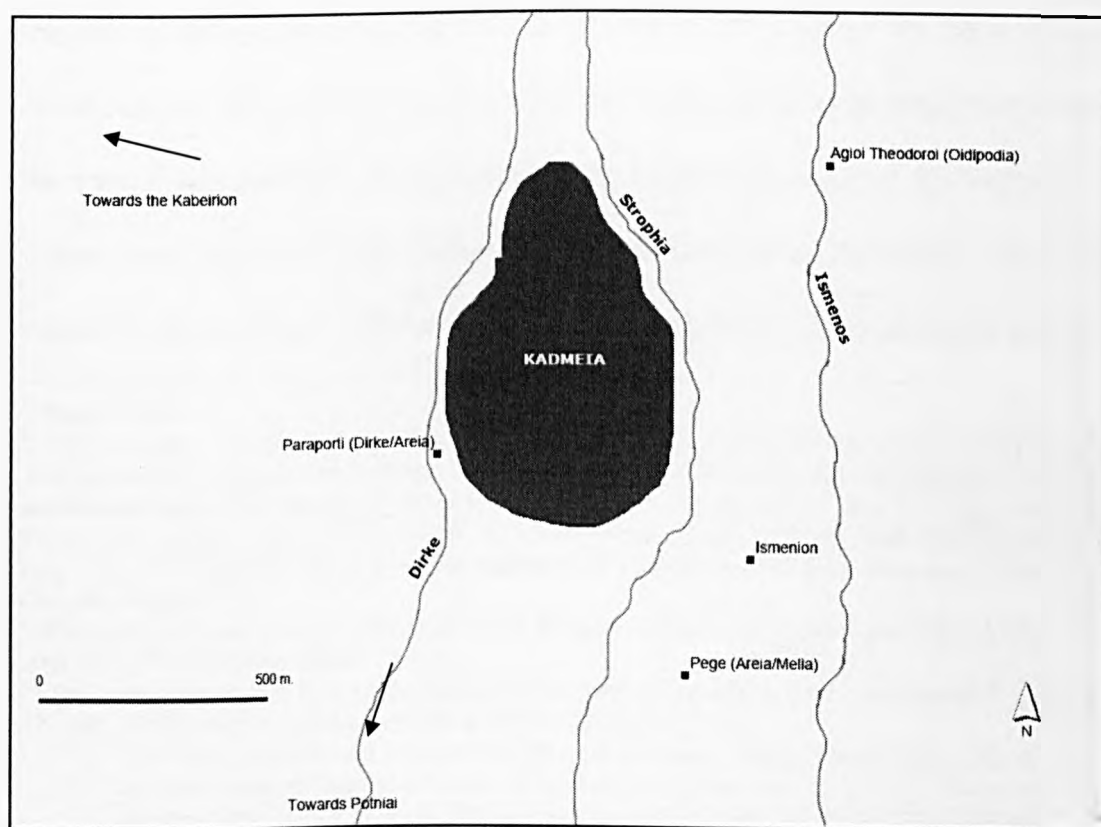


Fig. 33. The rivers and springs of Thebes

¹⁹ Larson (2001), 142.

3.1.1. Dirke

The spring Dirke is present in different literary traditions. Pausanias himself does not speak of a spring bearing that name but of a stream.²⁰ His testimony furthermore belongs to a series of sources about the myth of Antiope and of her twin sons, Zethos and Amphion.²¹ In this tale, Dirke was the wife of Lykos, king of Thebes, and tormented Antiope whose sons eventually avenged their mother by tying Dirke to a raging bull.²² Once dead, they threw her body in a spring that was then named after her.²³ This story is not however present in the oldest sources mentioning Dirke, such as Pindar, Aeschylus and Sophocles, which only make references to Dirke in terms of a landmark and not as a heroine.²⁴ Pausanias is the most topographically loquacious source, and situated a Dirke stream to the west of the Kadmeia. One could expect a spring which bore the same name mentioned in the other sources to be there too.²⁵ One modern spring located at the south-west corner of the Kadmeia has indeed been identified with Dirke, but this localisation is contested.²⁶ Pausanias' silence about a spring of Dirke is nevertheless surprising. The problem is deepened

²⁰ Paus. 9.25.3.

²¹ See Euripides' lost play *Antiope* (only fragments have survived), which largely inspired Pacuvius' *Antiope* and was summarised by Hyg., *Fab.* 8. See Gantz (1993), 483-488. Apollodorus 3.5.5. Other sources mentioning the spring at Thebes include Euripides, *Bacch.* 519; *IT* 400; *Her.* 784; *Hypp.* 555; *Phoen.* 647; Aesch., *Seven* 273, 307; fr. 347 Radt; Soph., *Antig.* 100-105, 840-845; Strabo 9.2.24; Hyg., *Fab.* 7, where the spring is on Mt Kithairon as a kindness from liber (Dionysos); Plin. 4.7.12; Ov., *Met.* 2.239.

²² The story of Dirke's end is the subject of a Roman sculpture called today the Farnese Bull. It is a copy of a 2nd c. BC Greek work.

²³ The earliest reference to a spring being named after a heroine is found in Euripides, *Antiope* fr. 223.109-14 (Kannicht). See the translation in Berman (2007), 29-31:

'But when you set your wife on the pyre and bury her, having collected the form of the poor woman's flesh and burned the bones, cast them into the spring of Ares, so that the name "Dirce" may be the eponymous name of the spring that flows out and passes through the city, irrigating the Theban plain with its water in perpetuity.'

²⁴ Pindar, *Ol.* 10.85; *Pyth.* 9.88; *Isthm.* 1.29, 6.74, 8.20; Aesch., *Seven* 273, 308; fr. 347 Radt; Soph., *Antig.* 100-105; 840-845. See Berman (2007), 21-28.

²⁵ For Berman (2007) there is no explicit references to a spring or stream, but rather to flowing water.

²⁶ The spring is called Paraporti. Today's remaining structures on the site are dated back to the Turkish period. See *AR* 49 (2002), 44; Symeonoglou (1985), 199. Berman (2007), 39: 'The prominent spring just to the southwest of the Kadmeia bears the name, but this may not be – in fact probably is not – where the original Dirce, whatever it was, was actually located'.

further by the suggestion in Euripides' *Antiope* that the spring called Dirke was beforehand the one sacred to Ares.²⁷ A sacred and secret burial site for a Dirke is mentioned in Plutarch where the Theban Hipparchs, those leaving their office and those entering it, meet to sacrifice.²⁸ There is no visible link with the spring and Berman expresses doubts as, apart from the passage from Euripides' *Antiope*, the sources do not fit well with the existence of a grave.²⁹ If spring and 'tomb' of Dirke were one and the same, this indeed poses the question of the secrecy of its location, supposed unknown from anyone but those taking part in the ritual.

The waters of Dirke, whether from a spring or a stream, were highly regarded at Thebes and Pindar sang of their powers.³⁰ Beside the place given to Dirke at the heart of one of the foundation myths of Thebes (Amphion and Zethos were said to have built the walls of the city), Herakles was said to have been reared by her nourishing waters, the Baby Dionysos bathed in them, and they also were a source for inspiration associated with Mnemosyne and the Muses.³¹

3.1.2. The spring of Ares

Dirke is in Euripides very closely linked with the spring of Ares. Beside the fragment from *Antiope* (see above), a passage in the *Phoenissae* also makes the connection.³² The myth of the foundation of Thebes tells how Kadmos, under guidance from the Delphic oracle, followed a cow until it reached the site where he founded the city. There, he killed a dragon that lived in a cave and guarded a spring. The dragon

²⁷ See n. 21 above and the section on the spring of Ares below.

²⁸ Plutarch, *De Genio Socratis* 578b; Schachter (1981), 198.

²⁹ Berman (2007), 28 n. 22.

³⁰ Pindar, *Isthm.* 1.29; *Isthm.* 6.74; *Isthm.* 8.19; *Ol.* 10.85; *Pyth.* 9.87.

³¹ Muses: Pindar, *Isth.* 6.74-5. Herakles: Pindar, *Pyth.* 9.87. Dionysos: Eur., *Bacch.* 519-25.

³² Eur., *Phoen.* 930-936: '(...) This boy must be slaughtered in the chamber where the earthborn snake, guardian of Dirce's waters, came to birth.'

belonged to Ares and its teeth once sowed gave birth to the Spartoi, the first Thebans.³³ The spring was therefore an important landmark of the Theban past.



Fig. 34. Paraporti fountain, with the cave behind it (author's picture).

Pausanias located this spring of Ares above the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenos.³⁴ Symeonoglou argues that this spring should be therefore identified with one called by the locals *Pege* which is situated on the Ismenion hill, further south from the sanctuary (see fig. 33).³⁵ This identification has the advantage of perfectly matching the description made by Pausanias. However, as Huxley has underscored, there is still the problem of the association with Dirke. His suggestion that 'the problem is, rather, to explain why Pausanias displaced Ares' spring from the vicinity of Dirke' is nevertheless probably looking for the wrong culprit for the confusing mismatch

³³ On the spring of Ares: Apollodoros 3.4.1-2; Apollonios Rh. 3.1179-1180; Schol. II. 2.494; Gantz (1993), 468-471.

³⁴ Paus. 9.10.5.

³⁵ Symeonoglou (1985), 180-181.

between the sources.³⁶ It is indeed difficult not to give credit to Pausanias who visited Thebes himself and who is more than often very reliable, but it is true that the site of Paraporti usually associated with Dirke, at the south-west of the Kadmeia, possesses a cave which Pege definitively lacks.³⁷ One can wonder if, rather than thinking that Pausanias had got it wrong, the site of the spring of Ares had, at some point, been transferred from one place (possibly Dirke) to another that eventually was shown to Pausanias.³⁸ The destruction of Thebes and the massacre of its population by Alexander in 335 BC had created a hiatus of several years (the city was restored in 316 BC by Kassander) which could have created the conditions for a re-creation of its sacred topography. Berman believes that the spring of Dirke, which had previously only a vague topographical existence, had finally overtaken the site of the spring of Ares following the success of the 'Euripidean aetiology', and explains Pausanias' text as an attempt 'to reconcile what he was aware were multiple strands of topographical and mythic material'.³⁹ This could be an explanation, unless this change he attributes to Pausanias had already been operated by the Thebans.

3.1.3. The Oidipodia.

The spring of Oidipous (or Oidipodia) appears in the description by Pausanias of the monuments along the road from Thebes to Chalcis, in the north-eastern corner of the city. This spring was allegedly 'so named because Oedipus washed off into it the

³⁶ See G.L. Huxley's review of Symeonoglou (1985) in *The Classical Review* 37 (1987), 71.

³⁷ Roesch (1992), 274-275 says *Paraporti* is the spring of Ares and mentions Dirke only as the stream nearby.

³⁸ Vian (1963), 84-85 already supposed this change of site for the spring of Ares. His assertion that it would be caused by the development of the Apollonian cult is however highly hypothetical, and in such a time span many factors could account for this.

³⁹ Berman (2007), 35-39.

blood of his murdered father'.⁴⁰ The spring is also mentioned in Pliny 4.12. It is today identified with the fountain of Agioi Theodoroi which was built in 1902. Practically nothing remains from any ancient structure on the site. The early 20th c. engineers apparently discovered that water was brought by ancient pipes still in place, which makes Symeonoglou suggest that this might not be a natural spring at all.⁴¹ Huxley has expressed surprise at the place of the Oidipodia here since he says that Oidipous came from Delphi. This location however fits Pausanias' description and Gantz demonstrated that in many early sources Oidipous actually did not come from Delphi at all.⁴²

3.2. The Ismenos and Apollo

Pausanias, in his visit to Thebes, gives the description now invaluable of the sanctuary devoted to Apollo Ismenios. His account is by far the most detailed and elaborate that has survived.

On the right of the (Elektran) gate is a hill sacred to Apollo. Both the hill and the god are called Ismenian, as the river Ismenus flows by the place. First, at the entrance are Athena and Hermes, stone figures and named Pronai. (...) The temple is built behind. (...) Here there is a stone, on which, they say, used to sit Manto, the daughter of Tiresias. This stone lies before the entrance and they still call it Manto's chair.⁴³

The link between the sanctuary, Apollo and the river Ismenos is not very clear. Pausanias seems to imply that the link was solely geographical, since the sanctuary is

⁴⁰ Paus. 9.18.6.

⁴¹ Roesch (1992) 275 ; Symeonoglou (1985), 194, 302-303.

⁴² G.L. Huxley's review of Symeonoglou (1985) in *CR* 37 (1987), 71; Gantz (1993) 493-494.

⁴³ Paus. 9.10.2-3.

built near the river. Nothing in the cult appears, furthermore, to specifically require the rivers' waters and Pausanias does not make further mention of the Ismenos in the description of the sanctuary. According to Herodotus, an oracle was performed the same way as in Olympia, by observing burning sacrifices.⁴⁴

The connection with water becomes however somewhat more visible in the legends concerning the origin of Ismenos of which there is at least three versions given respectively by Pausanias (9.10.5-6), an Oxyrrhynchus Papyrus (1241.4.5-10) and Hyginus (*Fab.* 94).⁴⁵ Apollo is involved in both Pausanias' and Hyginus's accounts. Pausanias writes that one Kaanthos tried to find his sister Melia who had been carried away by Apollo. Both were children of Okeanos. His request denied by the god, he tried to set fire to the Apollonian sanctuary and was subsequently killed. Melia bore two children to Apollo: Teneros who became a seer at the Ptoion and Ismenios who gave his name to the river. In Hyginus' version, Amphion (brother of Zethos) was killed by Apollo when he stormed the sanctuary after the god and Artemis had killed his children, among whom were, according to other sources, one Melia and one Ismenos.⁴⁶ Interestingly, in Pausanias the oracular powers of Apollo are transmitted to his son Teneros and, in Strabo, he is said to become a prophet at the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoieus.⁴⁷ Since the Apollo at the Ismenion was also oracular, drawing a parallel between the Teneros and his brother Ismenos does not appear impossible, in which case water would maybe have some part to play in the

⁴⁴ Hdt. 8.134; Soph. *OT* 21; Pindar, *Pyth.* 11.6. Schachter (1981), 81, n. 3: the author suggests that Herodotus wrote that the comparison with Olympia was only a possibility, and that Emphyromancy would not be the only method of divination possible at Thebes. On Emphyromancy, the type of divination performed at Olympia, see Parke, H.W., *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia, Ammon* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 183-84.

⁴⁵ Schachter (1967), 4.

⁴⁶ The killing of the Niobids, children of Amphion and Niobe was a popular theme in ancient literature. On the different versions see Gantz (1993), 536-40. Melia and Ismenos: Sostratos, *FGrHist* 23 F 5; Pseudo-Apollodoros 3.5.6; Ov., *Metam.* 6.224; Hyg., *Fab.* 11.

⁴⁷ Paus. 9.10.6; Strabo 9.2.34.

oracular process at the Ismenion, completing an otherwise succinct picture painted by Herodotus.

Concerning Melia, her affinity with a nymph is not limited to being the daughter of Okeanos in Pausanias' version of the tale. Larson demonstrated the association of this name and the nymphs in Boeotia, whether linked with water or with trees, in particular the ash.⁴⁸ She also demonstrated that Pindar's depiction of Melia made a lot about her 'sacred marriage' with Apollo, while in *Pythian* 11 she is shown as residing at the sanctuary of Ismenian Apollo.⁴⁹ In view of the literary evidence of connections of the cult with water, it is unfortunate that archaeology had not been able to support it. The site excavated and identified as the Ismenion is not next to the river, although it is not by any means very far. There is no spring either on the site. This identification, however, is still not certain nor is the total dimension of the site unearthed.⁵⁰ Perhaps it extended more towards the Ismenos? The parallels with other oracular sanctuaries to Apollo make it tempting to look for more than literary hints of a presence of water.⁵¹

A final word about the Ismenos: in Euripides' *Phoenissae* we are told that the water of the river was used for the nuptial bath, the same one that would have been given with the waters of Kallirrhoe in Athens.⁵² The Ismenos was therefore of great importance for the fertility and prosperity of the Theban community, since the river played an active part in the rituals supposed to guarantee them. This is similar to the image of Dirke as a protecting and nourishing deity.

⁴⁸ Larson (2001), 142-143. Hes., *Theog.* 187: the Meliai were born from the blood of Kronos. Call., *Hymn Del.* 79-85: Melia of Thebes is a nymph dwelling in a tree. Μελία is the ash-tree.

⁴⁹ Pindar, *Paeon* 9; *Pyth.* 11.1-7.

⁵⁰ Schachter (1981), 81.

⁵¹ Schachter (1967) argued in favour of a 'Boeotian cult type', notably concerning nymphs coupled with heroes, and included the Ismenion in this study.

⁵² Eur., *Phoen.* 347-8: ἀνυμέναια δ' Ἴσμηνός ἐκηδεύθη λουτροφόρου χλιδαῶς.

3.3. The Theban Kabeirion

The sanctuary of the Theban Kabeirion is about 6 km west of Thebes, in a small glen orientated north-south.⁵³ The presence of a rocky formation on the eastern slope of the glen seems to be the reason why the sanctuary was established there. Fresh water is provided to the sanctuary by two streams, one flowing east-west into the larger one flowing south-north. The first signs of occupation date back to the Neolithic period and the first attested signs of cult (small votive bulls) are dated to the Geometric period.⁵⁴ The building activity is nearly unattested until the end of the 6th c. BC. The subsequent constructions and alterations were led at a very slow and seemingly haphazard pace until the time when Thebes took control of its development. It is then, in the late 4th c. BC and in particular the 3rd c. BC, that large scale changes were undertaken.⁵⁵ Activity seemed to be suspended during the 2nd c. BC then took off again under Roman rule in the 1st c. BC and in the late 1st-2nd c. AD. The latest traces of occupation are coins from the 4th and 5th c. AD.⁵⁶ All along some major patterns marked the different phases of construction, notably the rocky formation that remained unaltered throughout the centuries.⁵⁷ The other is the natural 'cavea' provided by the slope on the east side of the glen. It was progressively banked,

⁵³ Paus. 9.25.5-10 is the only ancient testimony. He situated it 32 stades from the gates of Thebes. The site was excavated at two different periods of time, the first one in 1887-1888 and the second in the 1950s and 1960s. The findings and the bibliography are conveniently summed up by Schachter (1986), 66-110 and Schachter (2003), 112-142. More is expected in a new volume of the Teiresias supplement series *Cults of Boeotia*.

⁵⁴ Schachter (1986), 74.

⁵⁵ Schachter (1986), 75-78: first stages of the development of the sanctuary. 78-85: main construction period; Schachter (2003), 116-119.

⁵⁶ Schachter (1986), 85-88: after an apparent hiatus between 170-125 BC, new developments under the Roman rule. Schachter (2003), 120.

⁵⁷ Schachter (1986), 74: 'This (the rock being left untouched), together with its axial position, suggests to me that it was an essential feature of the sanctuary'. It is referred to as the 'Felsen' or 'Felsengruppe' in Heyder & Mallwitz, *Die Bauten im Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978).

reinforced and enlarged (which in turn caused the orientation of the sanctuary to shift from a north-south axis to an east-west one) but always remained.⁵⁸

On the sanctuary's management of its water resources:

- The smaller stream was channelled and complemented by a south-north aqueduct and another conduit some time in the middle of the 4th c. BC. All three are thought to be contemporaneous.⁵⁹
- A reservoir was later built at the end of the south end of the aqueduct, maybe towards the end of the 4th c. BC.⁶⁰
- In the 3rd c. BC, at the time when the cavea was enlarged and an important retaining wall (M57 in Schachter) was built to support it, the conduits were replaced by a new one, parallel to M57 (it cut through the aqueduct that served as a reservoir). Two *tholoi* were destroyed in the process. This is when the sanctuary's new axis was finally set.⁶¹
- An inscription, dated to soon after 171 BC, records the dedication of a δούτης (cistern or well) ἀπὸ τῶν προσόδων τοῦ θεοῦ (from the proceeds of the god). It could perhaps be identified with the second reservoir built south-west of the first at about the same time.⁶²

The fact that the cult there was a Mystery cult is confirmed by the description given by Pausanias and indeed not much is known of the cult itself. Even less can be said of the possibility of the use of water in the rituals. What can be surmised from the

⁵⁸ Shift of axis: Schachter (1986), 81; Schachter (2003), 118; Cooper's review of Heyder & Mallwitz (*op. cit.*) in *Gnomon* 54 (1982), 56-63.

⁵⁹ Schachter (1986), 78-79; Schachter (2003), 117.

⁶⁰ Schachter (1986), 80.

⁶¹ Schachter (1986), 81, n. 3; Schachter (2006), 118.

⁶² *IG* VII, 2477. For the meaning of δούτης, see Schachter (1986), 85, n. 1; Schachter (2003), 119. He refers to Mitsos, *AE* (1967 [1969]), 1-28, and Burford (1966), 270-271, 330. Reservoir: Schachter (1986), 84.

water related equipment is that it does not seem to have been at the heart of the sanctuary, a place which should be attributed to the rock formation. Overall, the efforts put towards these structures were very progressive (as seen from the chronology above) and not particularly early. The first ones concerned only the channelling of the stream and not the storage, distribution or display of water. The stream was ultimately hidden from sight. Later improvements were made for the storage of water, at a time when the popularity of the sanctuary clearly had grown and provisions of water were necessary to the attendants and the worshippers. With the initiatory dimension implicit in a mystery cult however, one expects rituals for purification to be part of the sanctuary's practices. A priest specialised in purification could have existed there and, according to Ginouvès, some vases figuring hydrophores could be ascribed to the practice of purificatory rites.⁶³

Among the findings, a *lekanè* with the rim inscribed ΤΟΘΑΜΑΚΟ (possibly meaning 'property of the husband'), which was consecrated and buried under an early tholos, had been used for libations.⁶⁴ The nature of the liquid used for the offering is anyone's guess, but the introduction of drinking vessels in the 6th c. BC alongside Dionysiac themes in art upsets the balance in favour of wine.⁶⁵ This sanctuary illustrates how difficult it often is to fully appreciate the role of water in a sanctuary. The evidence given by the monumental development of the sanctuary shows an important consideration given to the water supply but nothing more, while the other types of evidence are of little help in this matter.

⁶³ Purification priest: a vase found at, or near, the Theban Kabeirion inscribed with the word Κοης, to be associated with Hesychius s.v. Κοίης: ἱερεὺς Καβείρων, ὁ καθάρων φονέα. οἱ δὲ κόης. See Cole (1984), 19, 111 n. 153; Ure (1951), 195-96, fig. 2. Loutrophores: Ginouvès (1962), 399 and n. 6; Kern, *RE* s.v. Kabeiros, 1446: Auf die Reinigungsriten kann man auch die im Kabirion bei Theben gefundenen Terrakotten von Hydrophoren beziehen; A. Frickenhaus, *Tiryns* vol. 1, Kaiserlich Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut in Athen (Athens: Eleutheroudakis, 1912), 29, n. 2.

⁶⁴ Schachter (1986), 76-77; Schachter (2003), 122-123 with figs. 5.7 and 5.8. The tub was buried under the second tholos built on the site some time in the end of the 5th c. BC. Interestingly, its position is off-centred for the second building but at the centre of the first one.

⁶⁵ Schachter (1986), 108.

4. Tanagra

4.1. The Artemision at Aulis

The sanctuary of Artemis at Aulis is famous primarily for its role in the narrative of the *Iliad*, in which it is the Greek armies' port of call before their crossing the Aegean to attack Troy.⁶⁶ The site is described in several ancient sources⁶⁷ and, in Homer already, one of the prominent features of the sanctuary is its spring as well as a plane tree.⁶⁸

The sanctuary is situated on the coast of Boeotia, opposite the island of Euboia and close to the city of Chalcis, and was re-discovered in the 1940s following the construction of a road by a cement plant in 1941.⁶⁹ The subsequent excavations revealed a temple, perhaps built in the 5th c. BC, with a prodomos, a cella and an adyton. A prostoon was later added to the prodomos. At some point the temple was destroyed and incorporated into late Roman baths.⁷⁰ The identity of the sanctuary

⁶⁶ The story of the sacrifice by Agamemnon of his daughter Iphigeneia to obtain favourable winds was a popular theme in ancient Greek and, more widely, European literature. Hom., *Il.* 2.303-329; Eur., *IA*; See also Racine's *Iphigénie* or Gluck's opera inspired by it.

⁶⁷ Strabo 9.403; Livy 14.27.9; Statius, *Achil.* 1.447-448; Paus. 9.19.6-8: Pausanias visited the sanctuary and saw the spring, and remains of what was said to be the Homeric plane tree in the temple. He also says that the few inhabitants of Aulis are Potters, which fits perfectly with the potters establishment excavated west of the temple.

⁶⁸ Hom., *Il.* 2.305-307: '(...) and we round about a spring were offering to the immortals upon the holy altars hecatombs that bring fulfilment, beneath a fair plane-tree from whence flowed the bright water (...)' (trans. A.T. Murray).

⁶⁹ Threpsiadis (1962), 137-138; *BCH* (1956), 295-298; Fossey (1988), 68-69 for the description of the location.

⁷⁰ It is not entirely clear where the baths sourced their water. Apart from the spring, wells were found in the buildings of the potters.

was eventually confirmed by the discovery of an inscription found in the cella of the temple:⁷¹

IG VII 565:

Μνάσων καὶ Ἀθηνῶ Ζωπύρειναν	Mnason and Atheno, their daughter
τὴν θυγατέρα ἱερατεύσασαν Ἀρτέ -	Zopyreina having become
μιδι Ἀυλιδεῖα	priestess of Artemis Aulideia.

To the east of the temple, some eight metres from the temple's entrance, was found a fountain built over a spring, which immediately recalls the descriptions of the sanctuary by Homer and Pausanias.⁷² It consists of a square hole dug in the ground and built in Poros stone (1.80x1.80m). On its northern side, a well preserved staircase leads down into it. It is thought to have been covered by a two-slope roof. On the left, when watching the entrance to the fountain, was found the foundation of a square structure interpreted as an altar. To the right is a small square enclosure thought by Threpsiadis to have surrounded the famous plane tree, although it is difficult to accept that idea unconditionally.⁷³

The temple was dated on stylistic grounds and, while remains of a circular building dated to the Geometric period were found under the temple, the religious occupation of the site before the end of the Archaic period was not proven. In the absence of any evidence stating otherwise, it is not possible to place the foundation

⁷¹ Threpsiadis (1962); *BCH* (1957), 586-588. Daux (1959), 683-687; Daux (1960), 759-763; Wallace (1979), 29-31; Fossey (1988), 72. The Inscription was found in the cella during the 1956 excavations (see picture in Daux [1959], fig. 22, p. 687).

⁷² Threpsiadis (1962), 139-140, 142; Daux (1959), 684, 687; Wallace (1979), 30; Roesch (1992), 273.

⁷³ Threpsiadis (1962), 142; Daux (1959), 687. It was apparently not a sacrificial pit, since nothing but earth and two coins were found inside. Considering how large venerable plane trees can grow, an enclosure ca. 1 m. large seems small. Maybe, since by the time of Pausanias the remnants of the tree were in the temple, the square served only to mark the spot. This can only be suppositions.

of the sanctuary earlier than the late 6th or the 5th c. BC.⁷⁴ Schachter rightly suggested that, as an alternative to a hypothetical earlier foundation, there could have been ‘a “reconstruction” of the sanctuary in conformity with the [epic tradition]’. The sanctuary seems indeed to conform to the Homeric description (notably the spring and the plane-tree), and the ancients appear to have been keen to reinforce the association with the epic poem.⁷⁵ The episode of Agesilaus, King of Sparta, sacrificing at Aulis before sailing to Asia for his campaign against the Persian Empire in 396, clearly demonstrates the symbolic potency the sanctuary already held in the Classical period.⁷⁶

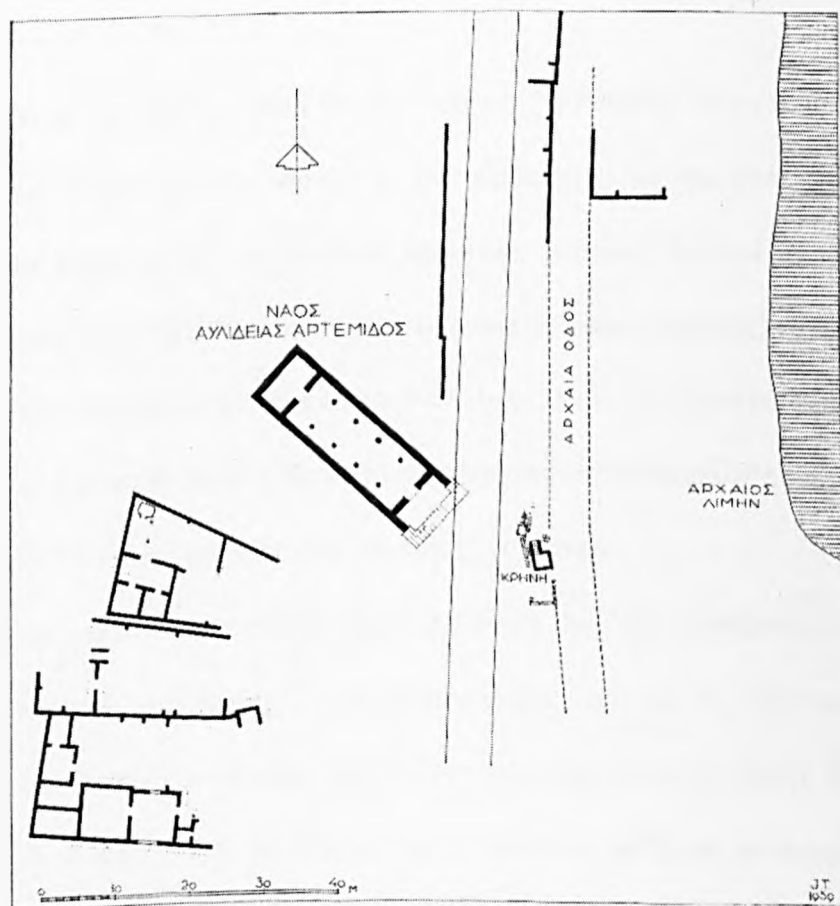


Fig. 35. Map of the sanctuary of Artemis at Aulis (from Threpsiadis [1961/2], 138).

⁷⁴ Threpsiadis (1962), 139; Schachter (1981), 96-97.

⁷⁵ Schachter (1981), 97.

⁷⁶ The Spartan king saw himself as a new Agamemnon, only better. His *mise en scène* at Aulis went wrong however when the Boeotarchs attacked and disrupted the sacrifices. Xen., *Hell.* 3.5.5; Paus. 3.9.3-5; Plut., *Ages.* 6.4-6. See Hornblower (2002), 214, 219.



Fig. 36. The spring at the sanctuary of Artemis at Aulis (author's picture)

The situation of the spring within the sanctuary is particularly interesting. Schachter strangely almost ignores the spring in his description of the site, although the fountain was arguably one of its most important features. Several factors tend to argue in favour of its significance: (1) the fountain is almost exactly in the axis of the temple; (2) the entrance to the sanctuary is likely to be in the immediate proximity of the spring, as the street leading from the nearby port to the sanctuary passes right by the fountain; (3) immediately next to the spring is an altar.

Hollinshead was more lucid when she wrote that 'the sanctuary of Artemis at Aulis was centred on a spring'.⁷⁷ Obviously it does not tell us why and how the spring and its fountain were important in the cult. One possible reason was simply because it was mentioned by Homer. It is however difficult to imagine that a sanctuary would have been built and have lasted several centuries on the sole ground that it was in the Homeric poem. Cult and ritual must have constituted an altogether

⁷⁷ Hollinshead (1985), 430.

more complex and interesting picture. Its position on the coast is obviously important and seems to correspond to a template found also at Brauron, Halai and Amarynthos.⁷⁸ The population of Aulis is likely to have never been important and many worshippers must have come by sea to the sanctuary, whether for 'tourism' or not. Fresh drinking water was important for seafarers while the goddess' approbation was possibly sought for safe passage on this maritime route, as it had been for Agamemnon and the Greeks going to Troy. Other possibilities, in particular derived from the position of the sanctuary near a spring on the coast, include the goddess's patronage of the young and the importance of springs in the domain of *kourotrophia*, or more simply the expression of the goddess's power over nature and the wild.⁷⁹

4.2. Apollo at Delion

Very little is known of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delion and its sacred water. Its memory might not have survived had it not been for battle that raged here in 424 BC, the eighth year of the Peloponnesian war. Thucydides described how the town and the sanctuary were strategic locations for the Athenians in their attempt to conquer Boeotia, and how the use of the sanctuary's water by the occupying Athenians provoked the Boeotians' anger.⁸⁰ The sanctuary had been taken over by the Athenian troops, fortified and later served as a retreat fort after the defeat inflicted by the Boeotian forces. A harsh negotiation ensued as the Boeotians would not allow the Athenians to retrieve the bodies of their dead unless they stop desecrating the

⁷⁸ Its location next to a safe port of call, opposite Chalcis and on a main maritime route makes it ideally situated to attract worshippers. See Cole (2004), 187, 192.

⁷⁹ All are usual domains for the huntress goddess. See for example Cole (2004), 192-194 or Parker (1996), 25.

⁸⁰ Thuc. 4.90 (fortification of Delion), 4.97.3: '(...) if the Athenians were to fortify Delium and live there (...) and drawing and using for their purposes the water which they, the Boeotians, never touched except for sacred uses.'

sanctuary of Apollo and left. The negotiations eventually failed and the Boeotian army retook possession of the sanctuary by force.

The episode is interesting because it illustrates the difficulties for sanctuaries to preserve their inviolability in time of war.⁸¹ Scholars have balanced both armies' motivations and arguments more than once, sometimes criticising the Boeotian sacrilegious refusal to allow the Athenians to retrieve the bodies, while in other cases the accusatory finger was pointed at the Athenians who desecrated a sanctuary and then advanced fallacious excuses such as necessity over piety.⁸² The most interesting point to our purpose is the fact that Thucydides put a particular emphasis on the fact that the Athenians had used sacred water for unholy purposes. It is perhaps to be viewed against the argument advanced by the Athenians that they did no harm to the sanctuary (to hieron) and would abstain from doing any voluntary damage in the future.⁸³ This seems to highlight either uneasiness or hypocrisy on behalf of the Athenians since they could not have ignored that they used sacred water.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the magnitude of the crime might come from the fact that they desecrated more than the buildings or votives; they lay their hands precisely on what gave the spot its sacredness. Some have also seen here the first occurrence of the

⁸¹ The question is developed in Orwin (1989).

⁸² Orwin (1989), 233-234: 'Seventeen days is a long time for corpses in the summer sun, and most critics have followed the Athenians and George Grote in blaming the Boeotians for flouting sacred law in the hopes of extorting an unearned victory'. Orwin himself does not seem to take too much of a stance against either side, although he admits that the 'Athenians' position is self-contradictory: 'If they may invoke the necessity of war to justify profaning the temple, why should not the Boeotians do so to justify their refusal to yield the bodies?' (p. 236). Jordan (1986), 129-130 is far less scrupulous in his charge against the Athenians.

⁸³ Thuc. 4.97-98.

⁸⁴ Jordan (1986), 130: 'Their claim that the Boeotians are the real aggressors, whereas they, the Athenians, are acting in self-defence is, on Thucydides' own account, a flagrant lie. (...) Equally specious is the argument that the necessity of war had forced them to use the sacred water: the occupation was not only voluntary, but premeditated'. Orwin (1989), 235.

notion that political necessity trumps the religious (and therefore many, if not most, of ancient society's) rules of conduct.⁸⁵

The site of Delion was tentatively identified with the modern village of Dhilesi, which is on the coast of the territory of Tanagra opposite Euboia, mainly on the base of Livy's description (35.51.1) and of the possible continuity of the toponym: Δήλιον to Δήλεσι. The sanctuary was not securely located, although architectural blocks belonging to a 5th c. BC discovered in the sea might belong to it.⁸⁶ No spring was discovered either, but wells exist on the site of Delion. One or several of them might possibly have been in the sanctuary.⁸⁷ Apart from stating the sacredness of the water, Thucydides' testimony is very brief, unclear and does not allow any conjecture about the possible properties and/or uses of the water. It can only be safely assumed that it was used as lustral water, maybe nothing more.⁸⁸ The insistence by the Boeotians on the water's sacredness could imply a more important role, whatever this may be. One may however discard the possibility of a manteion. The name Delion argues in favour of a Delian rather than Delphic Apollo, and the sanctuary does not appear in Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum*.

5. Akraiphia: The sanctuary of Apollo on M' Ptoion

The oracular sanctuary of Apollo Ptoieus is situated in the territory of the city of Akraiphia. It was founded on the steep slopes of the hill bearing the name Ptoios, in a

⁸⁵ Orwin (1989), 237-238. A Hellenistic stoa was uncovered in 1982-1983. Piteros (2000), 602 argues it was on the northern limits of the sanctuary which was then on the coast and not on a hill as usually thought. See *BCH* 124 (2000), 868.

⁸⁶ See Piteros (2000), 600, 602-03.

⁸⁷ Livy 35.51.1; Strabo 9.2.7; Paus. 10.28.6; Diod. Sic. 12.69; Wallace (1979), 27-29; Fossey (1988), 62-66; Schachter (1981), 44-47.

⁸⁸ Thuc. 4.97.3: ὕδωρ τε ὃ ἦν ἄψαυστον σφίσι πλὴν πρὸς τὰ ἱερὰ χέρνιβι χρῆσθαι

place called today Perdikovrysi where there is a spring flowing.⁸⁹ Literary sources relayed the knowledge of the existence of the sanctuary but did not disclose much about it, apart from the famous consultation of Mys, an agent sent by the Mardonios during the Persian wars to test the Greek oracles. During his consultation at the Ptoion, the prophet answered in a language that the three Theban delegates accompanying Mys did not understand but which, being in Carian, Mys understood.⁹⁰ Some have seen in this anecdote a sign that the sanctuary was in some way linked or affiliated to the mantic sanctuary of Apollo in Caria, where water was drunk at a sacred spring to obtain oracles.⁹¹ Finally and according to Strabo, Teneros, son of Apollo and the nymph Melia and brother to Ismenos, was a seer at the sanctuary.⁹² If we are to believe the authenticity of Strabo's statement, the close genealogic association of this mythical figure with water (Ismenos was after all the major Theban river) could be a first argument in favour of water playing some part in this oracle.

Unfortunately, the literary evidence does not provide us with explicit evidence regarding the use of water for the oracular process. In this context, the archaeological excavations are critical to our understanding of the sanctuary. Regrettably, these were marred with difficulties and tragedies leading to the destruction and/or loss of some of the discoveries as well as of the excavators' notes. Two large publications on the sanctuary, written by members of the French School, deal in particular with the vast amounts of tripods and *kouroi* found at the Ptoion.

⁸⁹ The name Perdikovrysi, 'the fountain of the partridges,' was used by the excavators to name the spot of the sanctuary. It comes from the name of the local fountain existing at the beginning of the archaeological campaigns and later destroyed to allow the excavations. A new functioning fountain was built above the site later in the 20th c.

⁹⁰ Hdt. 8.135; Plut., *De Def. Or.* 5; *Arist.* 19.1; Paus. 9.23.6. Herodotus uses the word 'promantis', while Plutarch wrote 'prophetes'.

⁹¹ See below p. 133.

⁹² Strabo 9.2.34.

Although these also deal with the sanctuary's other specificities to a certain degree, an extensive study on the Ptoion remains to be conducted and published.⁹³

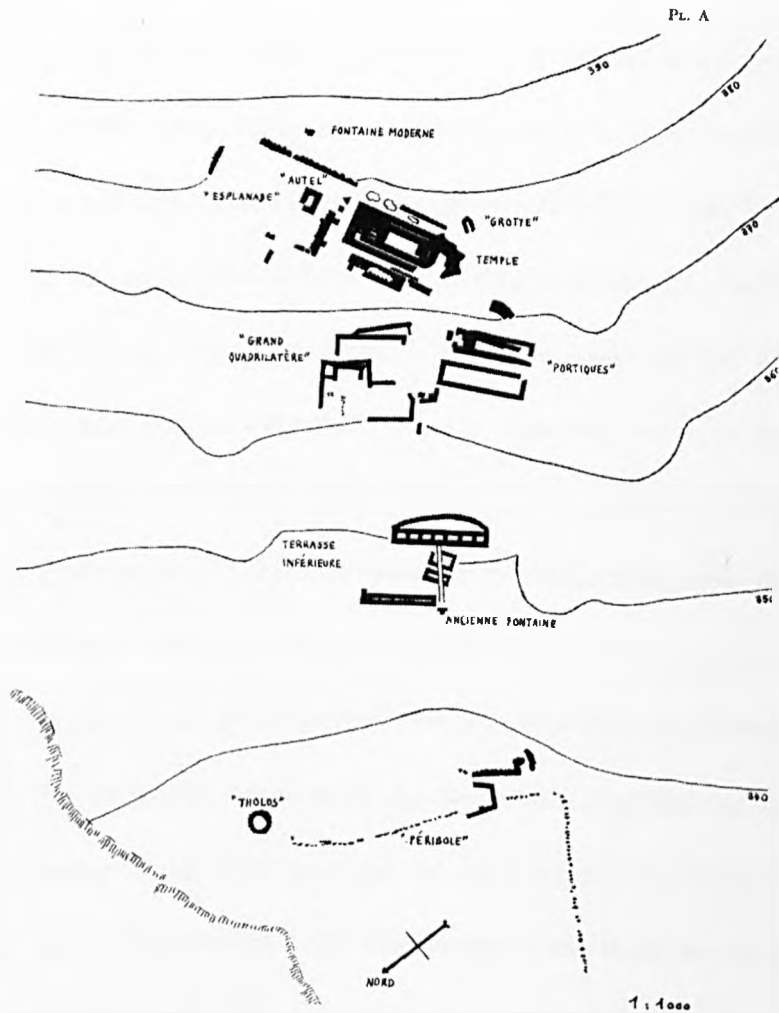


Fig. 37. Map of the sanctuary of Apollo on Mt Ptoios. (in Ducat [1971], pl. A).

The antiquity of the sanctuary is attested by the archaeological finds, dating the cultic activity at least back to the last quarter of the 8th c. BC.⁹⁴ The first record of the deity

⁹³ Excavations started at the end of the 19th c. (directed by Holleaux from 1885 to 1891) and went on at irregular intervals during the 20th c. Very little was eventually published and some of the reports and even findings were lost. The two major publications on the sanctuary are P. Guillon, *Les trépieds du Ptoion*, 2 vols., BEFAR 153 & 153 bis (Paris: de Boccard, 1943), and J. Ducat, *Les kouroi du Ptoion. Le sanctuaire d'Apollon Ptoieus à l'époque archaïque*, BEFAR 219 (Paris: de Boccard, 1971). The latter covers the history of the several excavation campaigns in his introductory chapter. The bibliography concerning the sanctuary, both ancient and modern, can be found in Schachter (1981), 52-53. Müller directed more recent excavations intended to clean some parts of the site and to draw new maps: Ch. Müller, 'Le Ptoion et Akraiphia (Béotie)', *BCH* 119.2 (1995), 655-660; Ch. Müller, 'Le Ptoion et Akraiphia (Béotie)', *BCH* 120.2 (1996), 853-864; Ch. Müller & F. Perdrizet, 'Le Ptoion et Akraiphia (Béotie)', *BCH* 121.2 (1997), 756-757.

worshipped, however, appears later in the 7th c. BC and names Apollo *Ptoieus*.⁹⁵ By this time, the sanctuary displays an extraordinary wealth, most notably through a large number of dedications of *kouroi* and of tripods. There is a debate whether Apollo was the original deity worshipped there or if he had taken over a sanctuary consecrated to a local hero, presumably called Ptoios, who subsequently would have been relocated to a newly found sanctuary right opposite the old one by the dismayed locals. Guillon, father of the theory of the displacement by Apollo, was later contradicted by Ducat who demonstrated the weaknesses of his arguments and concluded that, until proven otherwise, Apollo appeared to have been the deity worshipped at Perdikovrysi from the start. Schachter recognised that Ducat had made a point with his refutation of Guillon's theory, but was keen to stress that it was still possible that the hero had been Apollo's predecessor, perhaps because it would fit well with his own theory about hero/nymph couples found around Boeotia.⁹⁶

Of all the structural finds made by the archaeologists, the buildings and equipments related to water were amongst the most important, if only because they were amongst the best preserved.⁹⁷ On the lowest of the three levels on which the sanctuary was built, an ensemble of water-supply equipment was unearthed, erected at least in two different phases. The oldest consists of a couple of reservoirs placed

⁹⁴ Ducat (1971), 439; Schachter (1981), 54.

⁹⁵ Schachter (1981), 54; Ducat (1971), 89-90: two inscriptions, one mentioning the epithet *Ptoiei* (7th c. BC) and the other Apollo (ca. 640 BC); Ducat (1971), 79 = *IG VII 2729*: on a 'statue xoanisante en poros' was found this inscription, dated to 640-620 BC :

- ρον ἀνεθεκε τοι Ἄπολ
ονι τοι Πτοιεῖ
- ρτος ἐποίησε

⁹⁶ Guillon (1943) summed up in (1963), 79, n. 87, is refuted by Ducat (1971), 439-442. The idea of the usurpation by Apollo of the sanctuary of the hero Ptoios is now generally abandoned. The early years of the cult remain however particularly badly known and the arrival of Apollo in an already existing sanctuary cannot be entirely ruled out.

⁹⁷ The remains of the other buildings, in particular of the temple, were already scarce at the time of the excavations, and it is believed the local population used the excavation site as a quarry for their own use after the archaeologists left. See Ducat (1971), 36.

one in front of the other and separated by a 'corridor' 1.47 m. wide.⁹⁸ They communicated with each other through four bronze pipes terminated in the lower reservoir by elaborate spouts of which one survived. It is a snake head beautifully sculpted, its neck having a double curve so that the spout is decentred from the pipe's entry point.⁹⁹ The upper chamber had polygonal walls, was underground and in all probability played the role of reservoir while the smaller lower chamber was a drawing basin. Water was collected, according to Ducat, through the tightly adjusted walls which filtered the ground water into the reservoir. The structure was dated to the 6th c. BC both because of the polygonal wall and on stylistic grounds from the study of the snake-head *protome*. The structure was replaced later in the 4th c. BC by an even more important one: a curved retaining wall backed a long reservoir divided into seven compartments, from which the water was flowing into an underground aqueduct in masonry (it cut through the earlier reservoir and basin) where it flowed down to a fountain.¹⁰⁰

There is no clear evidence that these successive structures had been anything else but a water-supply system for answering the sanctuary and its worshippers' need for clear drinking water.¹⁰¹ The archaic fountain shared, however, its orientation with other buildings in the sanctuary, namely the temple and a long building on the middle terrace. This choice of orientation must have been made deliberately since it supposed that the fountain had to be built at an angle with the line of the highest

⁹⁸ See Ducat (1971), 425-429 where the author discusses the discovery of the snake-head and the archaic fountain.

⁹⁹ Ducat (1971), 427 and pl. 147.

¹⁰⁰ For the illustrations in particular see Daux (1965), 908-912 and Daux (1966), 936-939. Ducat (1971), 31-33, 35, 37.

¹⁰¹ Schachter (1981), 65 and n. 4-5. Ginouvès was convinced that they were too important to be anything else but intended to provide baths to the worshippers. See Ginouvès (1962), 331 who follows Guillon (1943), 142-43.

slope, which would have been the easiest one.¹⁰² It was also argued that the chthonic connotation of the snake *protome* could be a hint that this water had something to do with the cult, in particular the oracle.¹⁰³ Those two facts alone are not enough to lead to the conclusion of a mantic use of water.

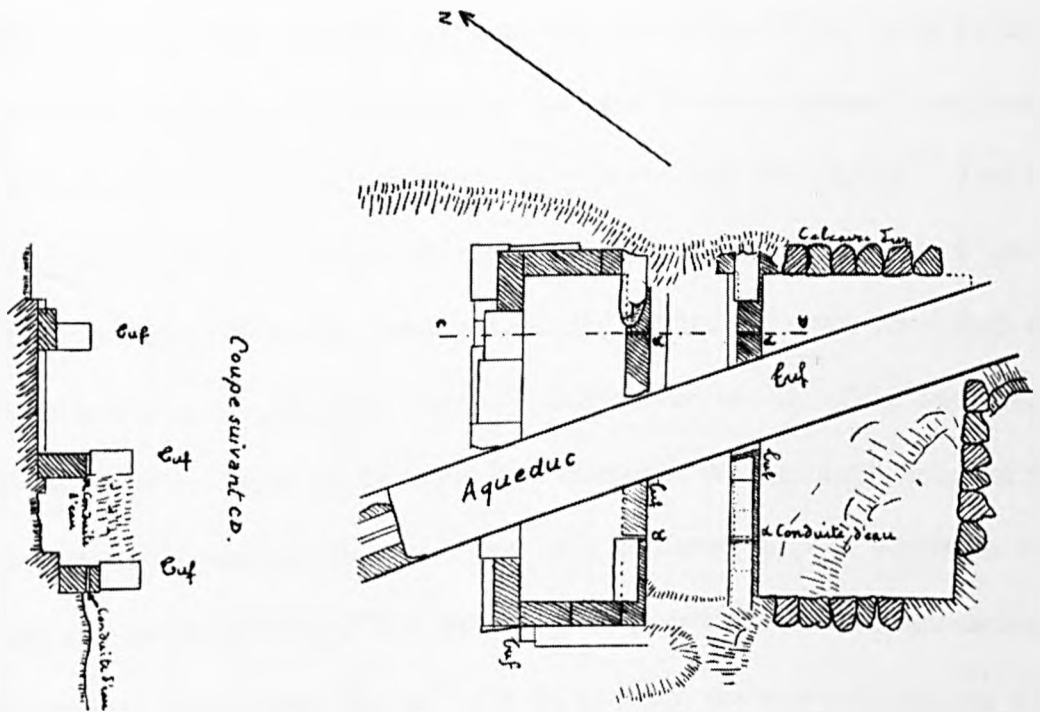


Fig. 38. Ptoion: The archaic fountain: plan and cross-section (in Ducat [1971], fig. 48, p. 428).

More interesting is the presence of an artificial grotto immediately behind the temple. The description found in Guillon is not very clear but the excavations notes by Holleaux conjure up a striking image:

'Les deux murs latéraux sont faits de blocs de grès irréguliers, juxtaposés et superposés grossièrement selon la méthode dite cyclopéenne. L'eau qui filtre sans cesse à travers les parois a peu à peu délitée la surface des pierres et l'a couverte de

¹⁰² Müller (1996), 862-963 stresses the similarity of orientation of the temple and the archaic fountain with a third building on the middle terrace that could hypothetically be the missing building dedicated to Athena Pronaia.

¹⁰³ Guillon (1943), 142-143.

stalactites (...). La couverture est faite de blocs alignés dans le sens longitudinal, soutenus par quatre blocs posés dans le sens transversal qui jouent ici le rôle de maîtresses poutres. Ces quatre derniers blocs sont énormes (...). En hiver, l'eau remplit la caverne jusqu'à une hauteur d'1,60; elle n'est à sec qu'au temps des plus fortes chaleurs.¹⁰⁴

In its roof, on the back wall, there was a metallic pipe at the end of a terracotta pipe, the remains of which were discovered by Holleaux. The pipe apparently originated from the area where a modern fountain was built and still exists today.¹⁰⁵ This led Guillon to compare it to the Carian oracle of Apollo and to identify it as a 'grotte prophétique' where the oracle took place once the prophet had drunk water from the underground fountain. Ducat has rightfully doubted the validity of the comparison with the oracle at Claros, but he might have dismissed the oracular function of the Ptoian grotto too quickly. His suggestion of a utilitarian purpose stands on thin ground and his exclamation: 'On n'imagine guère le prophète s'aventurant dans cet abri croulant' sounds rather forced.¹⁰⁶ On the contrary, one can only imagine with difficulty what sort of 'utilitarian' use Ducat might have thought of with such a small structure and with a large water-supply system already available on the lower terrace. The location of the grotto within the immediate proximity of the temple also suggests otherwise.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the literary sources on the episode of Mys being sent to the Ptoion do not clarify the process of consultation very much, if at all.¹⁰⁸ It can be surmised that there was a *promantis* who communicated the prophecy (directly as at

¹⁰⁴ M. Holleaux, from the archives of the Ecole Française d'Athènes (Ptoion 1, 1890).

¹⁰⁵ Guillon (1943), 141. The details are scarce in Guillon and, unfortunately, the archives at the French School are not of a great help, apart from the description of the grotto. Roesch (1992), 270, also believed this was an oracular fountain.

¹⁰⁶ Ducat (1971), 448 and 26 n. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Schachter (1981), 65, also makes much of the location of the grotto near the temple.

¹⁰⁸ See above n. 90. To name a few who have discussed the matter of the consultation by Mys: Robert, *Hellenica* 8 (1950), 29-30; Daux (1957); Ducat (1971), 446-448; Schachter (1981), 66.

Delphi? or already deciphered?) which was then possibly written on tablets. The exact process by which the prophet became inspired remains anyone's guess but, considering the large cisterns and fountain complex, the grotto and its terracotta channel and, finally, the seemingly humid figure of Teneros, water and obscurity might have been part of it.



Fig. 39. Ptoion: The polygonal wall of the archaic reservoir (author's picture).

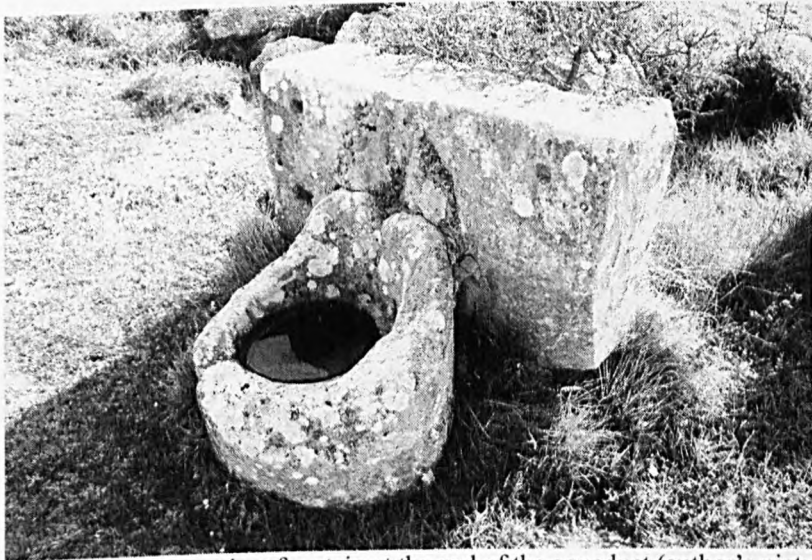


Fig. 40. Ptoion: The ancient fountain at the end of the aqueduct (author's picture).

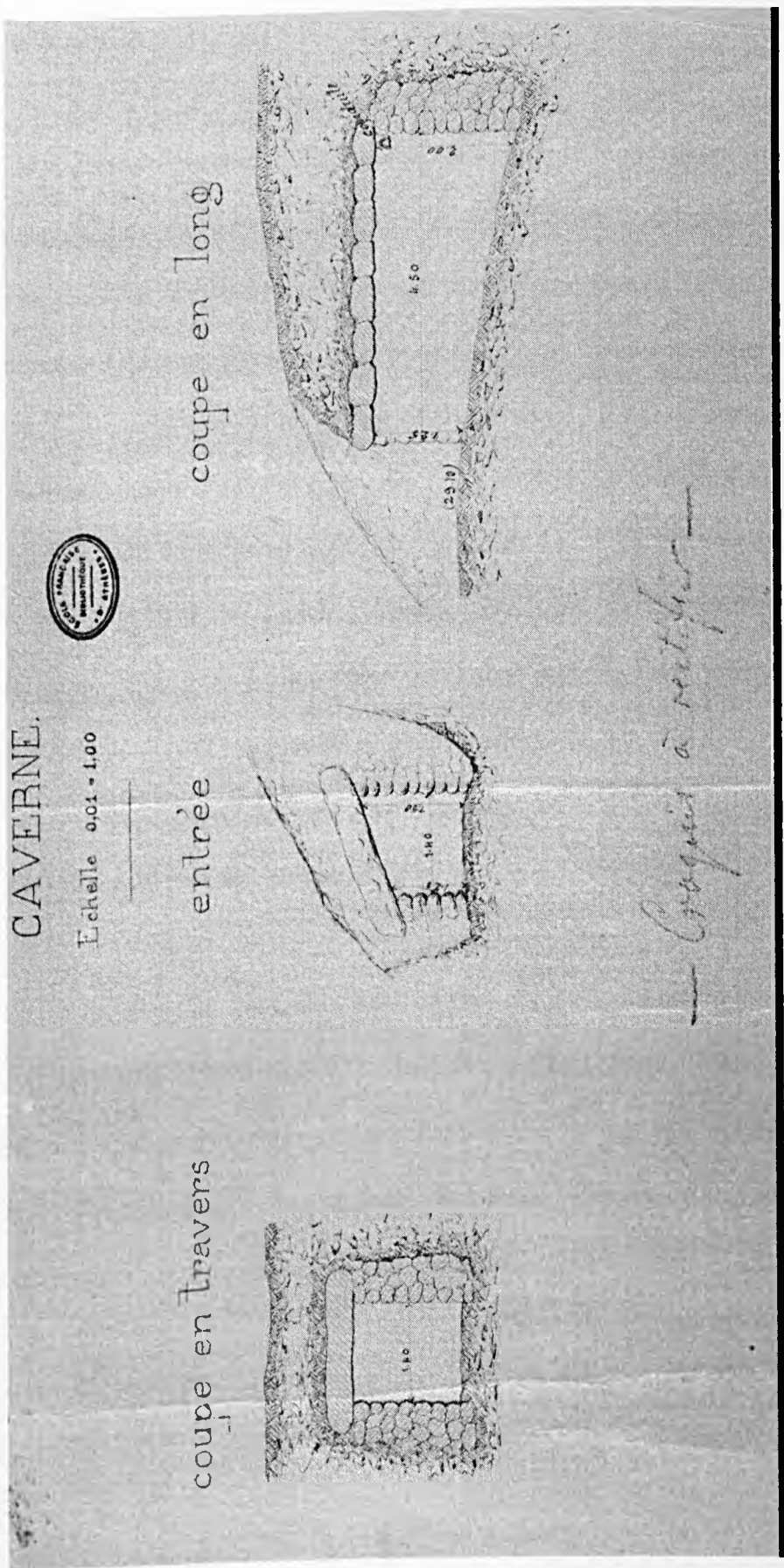


Fig. 41. Ptoion: Unpublished drawings of the sanctuary's grotto. From the report of the 1890 excavations by Holleaux in the EFA archives (courtesy of the École Française d'Athènes).

6. Thespiai

Thespiai is situated to the east of the mountainous range of the Helikon. In the town itself, Pausanias does not mention any source of water bearing a religious dimension, although he recorded one tradition which tells that the eponymous heroine Thespeia was a daughter of Asopos. She is another one of the many daughters of the river-god in Boeotia.¹⁰⁹ Roesch saw in the centre of the modern village a fountain called *Barbaka* which contained ancient parts, notably a wall (1.26 m. high x 6 m. long), and another fountain 50 m. away from the first called today the 'bath of Phryne'.¹¹⁰ Theophrastus wrote that the water of Thespiai promotes female fertility.¹¹¹ This compares to the spring at Kyllou Pera in Attica, both in their power to help procreation as well as in the vagueness of their location.

6.1. The sanctuary of the Muses

After his visit of Thespiai, Pausanias went on towards the Helikon 'rich in springs' (πιδακόμεις) and walked westwards into the valley of the Muses.¹¹² The sanctuary was found and excavated as early as the end of the 19th c., but was not extensively published.¹¹³ The majority of the structures discovered were found on the southern bank of the river flowing in the valley and identified as the Permessos. In the grove

¹⁰⁹ Paus. 9.26.6. The god had daughters falling into two geographical groups, one Peloponnesian, the other Boiotico-Euboian. From Boeotia: the cities of Thebe, Tanagra, Thespeia and Plataia; and also Ismene (the river in Thebes?), Oinoë/Oiroë, Antiope, Chalkis/Kombe and Euboia. Diod. Sic. 4.72; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.3, 3.12.6; Paus. 2.5.1-2, 5.22.6, 10.13.6, 9.1.1, 9.4.4, 9.20.2, 9.26.6; Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 6.144e; Larson (2001), 140-141, n. 47-49.

¹¹⁰ Roesch (1992), 271-272.

¹¹¹ Theophrastus, *Hist. Pl.* 9.18.10; *Caus. Pl.* 2.6.4. Cf. Ath., *Deipn.* 2.41f; Plin. (E) *HN* 31.7.

¹¹² Hegesinus fr. in Paus. 9.29.1.

¹¹³ Schachter (1986), 147-179 collated all the bibliography up to the 1980s. The excavations were directed first by Stamatakis (1882) then Jamot with the French school (1888, 1889 and 1890). For the topography of the sanctuary, see Roux (1954) and Wallace (1974), 5-24.

of the Muses was a stoa, orientated N-S, opening to the east and 96.7 m. long. Opposite was a large altar (5.8 x 9.8 m.) opening to the west. It was so large that it was originally mistaken for a small temple. Further to the south-west, nearly 300 m. from the stoa, a theatre was built on the slopes of the mountain, its skene and proskenion built in stone but with the seating area kept natural.¹¹⁴ There were other lesser known structures on the other side of the river: a building, 48 m. long, which could be another stoa, and also a 'circular structure' to the north of the altar. Schachter mentioned the latter and suggested it could be an exedra.¹¹⁵ The only water-related structure so far is actually a simple fountain that Roesch saw in the same area, consisting of a pipe jutting out horizontally from the earth, above which is 'une sorte de corniche moulurée dont la base est entaillée en arc de cercle là où se trouvait la bouche'.¹¹⁶ These monuments were all from the end of the 3rd c. BC and were not successors of any older structures. The existence on that spot of the sanctuary is however almost certainly assured in archaic times, though it must have been a very simple one without any apparent major building.¹¹⁷

In these circumstances, the connections with water of the Muses and their cult do not appear obvious. It is first necessary to shift back to the literary evidence to find more clues on this topic. When Hesiod opened his *Theogony*, he sung:

From the Muses of Helicon let us begin our singing, that haunt Helicon's great and holy mountain, and dance on their soft feet round the violet-dark spring and the altar of the mighty son of Kronos. And when they have bathed their gentle skin in Permessos, or the Horse's fountain, or holy Olmeios, then on the highest slope of

¹¹⁴ There might have been a wooden structure for seating. See Roux (1954), 36, n. 2.

¹¹⁵ Schachter (1986), 151.

¹¹⁶ Roesch (1992), 270 added that the basin in which water is collected was larger in antiquity.

¹¹⁷ Ceramic and terracotta found in the area of the altar: See Schachter (1986), 151; Roux (1954), 43; Ridder (1922), 288-290, n^{os} 145-149, 151 ('found at Hagia Triada' = spot of the altar) and 298-300, n^{os} 197-201; 302, n^o 205; 303, n^{os} 201-213 (found in the 'valley of the Muses').

Helicon they make their dances, fair and lovely, stepping lively in time. (trans. M.L.

West)

The poet anchored the Muses in his homeland and made them part of the country he lived in. But to do so he did not refer to forests, rocks, caves or air. He very closely associated them with rivers and springs, specifically naming them. Thus the Muses are made similar to these other feminine pluralities, in particular the nymphs who, like them, dance, haunt the mountains and revel in water.¹¹⁸

Their common nature might be extended to the realm of inspiration.¹¹⁹ If the Muses are well-known providers of inspiration and/or poetic skills, the nymphs are also inspirers. Nympholepsia is a clear sign of such a power and it is known of at least from Plato's time onwards.¹²⁰ But the nymphs' power was probably acknowledged in older times too, the clues being their strong association in particular with Apollo and famous seers like Teiresias and Bakis.¹²¹ Interestingly, and expectedly from the nymphs, water plays an important part of the process of inspiration, either in materially being the presence of the inspirers or by playing an active part in the inspiration. At the sanctuary of the Muses, though, it is difficult to

¹¹⁸ Larson (2001), 7-8. Schachter (1986), 188 n. 3. In Boeotia in particular, the Muses and the Nymphs seem very close. The nymphs share Mt Kithairon with Mnemosyne, the Muses' mother. On Mt Helykon, Nymphs called *Leibethrides* are said to dwell in a cave (see below). Euphoriion of Chalkis (fr. 416 Lloyd-Jones and Parsons) wrote παρθενικαὶ Λιβηθρίδες or γαίης παρθενικαὶ Λιβηθρίδος when referring to his Muses. He might have the inspiration for Virgil, *Ecl.* 7.21: *Nymphae, noster amor, Libethrides, aut mihi carmen, quale meo Codro, concedite.*

¹¹⁹ The concept of inspiration is difficult to analyse in detail. What is important is the fact that the Muses were believed to have an action, whatever it may be – temporary gift of knowledge, memory, or burst of poetic creativity – on the poet. See in particular Murray (1981).

¹²⁰ See in particular the famous scene in Plato's *Phaedrus* (238c, 241e) where Socrates declares being almost a nympholept. In *Ion*, Plato also develops the idea of possession (*enthusiasm*) by the Muses (536b-c). Connor (1988) studies the matter of nympholepsy and mentions *Ion* (p. 160). Nympholepsy is also archaeologically attested in Attica at the Cave of Pan, inhabited in the second half of the 5th c. by the *nympholept* Archedemos (see survey of Attica). Larson (2001), 13-16.

¹²¹ Paus. 10.6.4; Aesch., fr. 168 where the nymphs are called *namerteis*: infallible. Larson (2001), 11-20, 138 develops the subject: 'The attribution of divinatory powers to the nymphs or to those inspired by them was not uncommon in the Greek world. The nymphs' fundamental association with water, the vector of prophecy and inspiration, and their close association with the mantic god Apollo were both salient factors (p. 11)'.

be certain about the importance of water in the cult itself. The setting surely provided plenty of water from the river and the fountain, and the grove was also a sign of humidity. But what is maybe the clearest sign that water was part of the sacred environment is the simplicity of the sanctuary. Even when its building programme grew more ambitious the natural aspects remained important. What was interpreted as a matter of economy was also maybe a matter of choice; the fact that spectators at the theatre probably had to sit directly on the ground rather than on stone was perhaps significant.

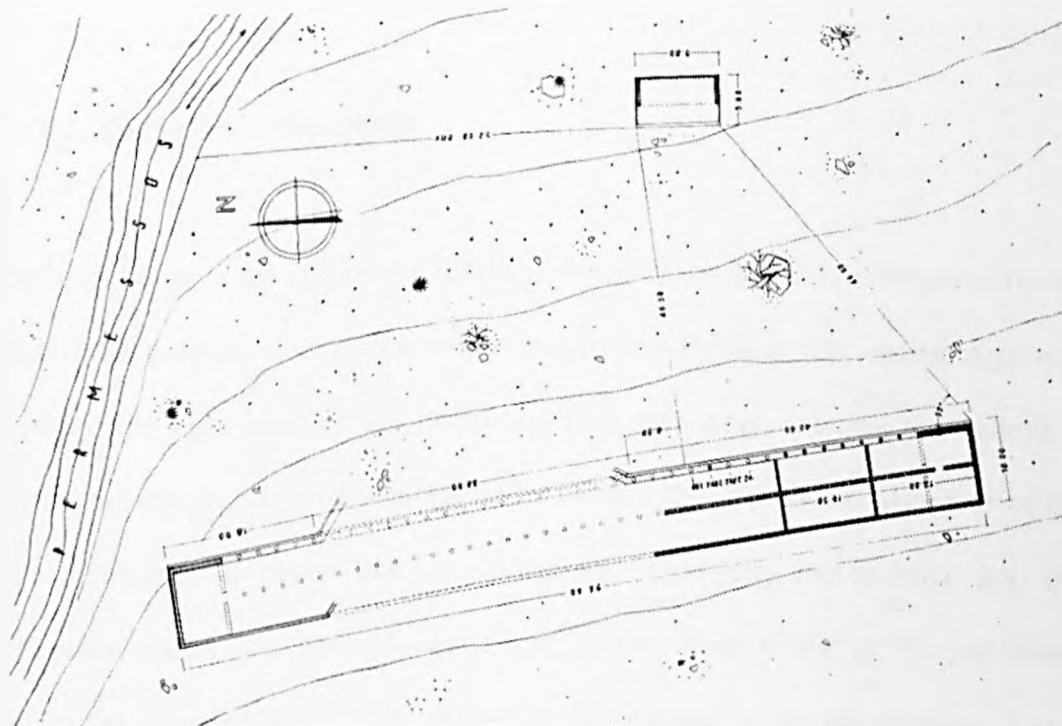


Fig. 42. Sanctuary of the Muses: The altar and stoa, south of the Permessos (in Roux [1954], fig. 10, p. 30).

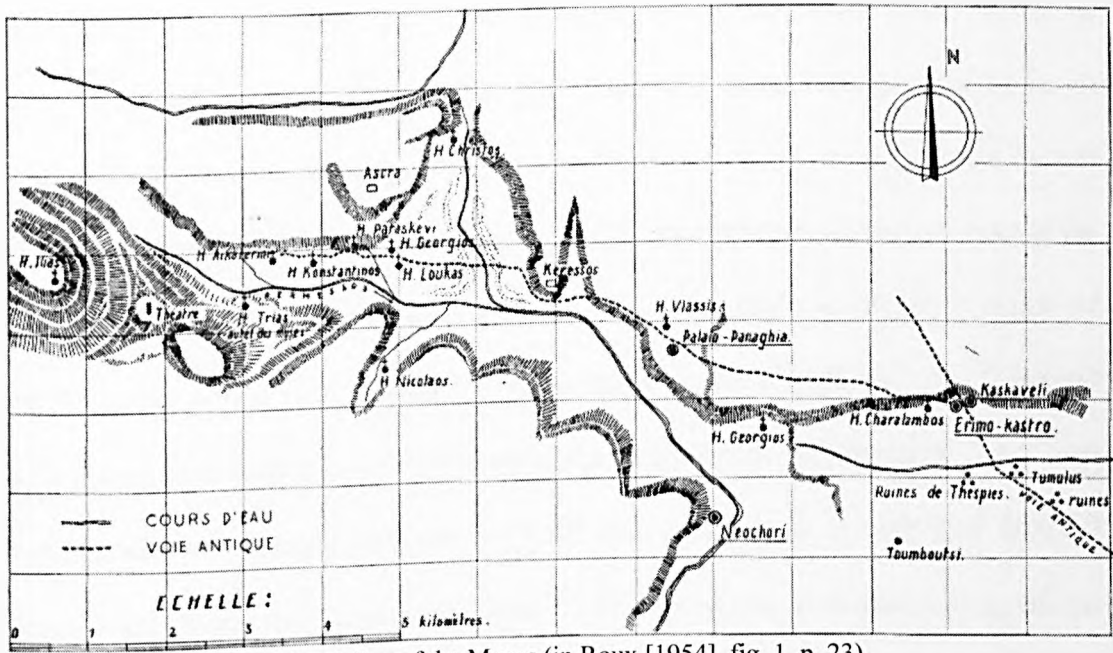


Fig. 43. Valley of the Muses (in Roux [1954], fig. 1, p. 23).

6.2. The valley of the Muses

The links between the cult of the Muses and their immediate environment is further established in other sites in the valley and on the Helikon. The spring Aganippe flows on the right bank of the Permessos (left side when entering the valley).¹²² Pausanias only points at its location and adds that the nymph was daughter of the river Permessos. It seems that the spring was eventually incorporated into the Helikonian Muses' paraphernalia quite late, making it an epithet of the goddesses, then called *Aganippides*.¹²³ The spring of Hippokrene is on the Helikon, today identified with the spring *kryopegadi*, the site of which corresponds with its

¹²² It is identified with the spring flowing next to the site of the dismantled church of Agios Nikolaos. Wallace (1974), 15, n. 33.

¹²³ Aganippe: Paus. 9.29.5; *Anth. Palat.* 14.120; Plin. (E), *HN* 4.12; Catullus 61.26; Ov., *Met.* 5.462; Virg., *Ecl.* 10.12. Aganippides: Ov., *Fasti* 5.7 and refers to the fountain Hippokrene. It seems however that he meant to refer to the Muses.

description given by Pausanias.¹²⁴ The spring is part of the world of the Muses as early as Hesiod's *Theogony*, with the poet depicting the goddesses bathing in its waters. This spring is possibly also the one described by the poet with the Muses dancing around it, with an altar of Zeus nearby.¹²⁵ The presence of the old poet at the spring was further reinforced by the exhibition of a lead tablet on which is engraved the *Theogony* which were shown to Pausanias when he visited the site.¹²⁶ Recent excavations at the spring have confirmed the antiquity of the fountain. They also found inscribed pottery (ΙΑΡΟΝ ΤΟΙ ΔΙ) next to a building in a very bad state of preservation, suggesting a cult of Zeus.¹²⁷ The spring is also the setting of the Callimachus' version of the myth about Teiresias' blindness.¹²⁸ Athena and the nymph Chariklo, mother of Teiresias, were accidentally seen by the young man while they were bathing. The goddess blinded him but, as an answer to Chariklo's protestations, granted him to be a *mantis*, a seer. The association of the gift of *manteia* with goddesses bathing in the Hippokrene is striking. The couple Hippokrene/Muses is already known and the choice of Callimachus to place the tale at the Hippokrene, whether he follows an earlier tradition or not, puts the spring at the heart of a complex of divinities and myths dealing with poetical/prophetic 'inspiration'.

The Muses are finally further linked to nymphs and thus to water, inasmuch as there is a cave on the Helikon where dwell nymphs called *leibethriades*, a reference to Pieria, the muses' homeland, where it is said there was a mountain called

¹²⁴ Paus. 9.31.3: 'Ascending about twenty stades from this grove is what is called the Horse's Fountain. It was made, they say, by the horse of Bellerophon striking the ground with his hoof.' Wallace (1974), 16-18 and fig. 5-6; Roesch (1992), 268.

¹²⁵ Hes., *Theog.* 6.

¹²⁶ Paus. 9.31.4.

¹²⁷ Blackman (2000), 57.

¹²⁸ Call., *Hymn* 5 ("Bath of Pallas"). The bath of Athena and Chariklo is attested before Callimachus in Pherekydes (3F92): Apollodoros 3.6.7; Gantz (1993), 530; Depew (1994), 411; Larson (2001), 139 and n. 41.

Leibethron (Λεΐβηθρον), or a city called Libethra (Λίβηθρα).¹²⁹ The cave is actually in the territory of Koroneia, on a northern hill part of Mt Helikon's range.¹³⁰

6.3. Narcissus at Donakon

A last site was mentioned by Pausanias in the territory of Thespiiai: the spring where Narcissus contemplated his own reflection, in a place called *Donakon*.¹³¹ The ancient traveller digresses on the tale, but does not say anything about a cult. The site is not located with certainty, although some have tried to identify the spring at a deserted village called Tateza. The evidence is scarce and limited to the presence of springs next to ancient buildings and funeral stelai.¹³²

7. Thisbe

The city owes its name to the local nymph, according to Pausanias.¹³³ It was identified with the modern village of *Kakosi*, renamed *Thisve*. There is no record of a sacred spring or fountain. Incidentally, water played an important part of the local topography; the valley where the city is built being a polje (a large locked depression typical of limestone geology where water is sometimes evacuated through underground rivers). The valley would have been marshy and the ancients built a dyke to protect arable land from the river.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Strabo 9.2.25; 10.3.17; Paus. 9.30.9-11

¹³⁰ See below section 9.3.

¹³¹ Paus. 9.31.7-9.

¹³² Fossey (1988), 147-149.

¹³³ Paus. 9.32.2.

¹³⁴ Traces of the dyke (terminus ante quem 3rd c. BC) have been found. See Fossey (1988), 180 and n. 14.

8. Haliartos

The city of Haliartos was already a desolate place by the time of Pausanias who describes roofless temples without statues.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the memory of cults, some of them having links with water, has been passed down.

8.1. The spring Kissoessa

The Kissoessa spring was, according to Callimachus, the location of an ancient Cretan festival named the *Theodaisia*.¹³⁶ Those were in all probability dedicated to Dionysos and the Nymphs, since several sources connect the festival, the location and these divinities together.¹³⁷ Plutarch is the most explicit, writing that Dionysos was bathed in the spring at his birth by his nurses. 'The water has the colour and sparkle of wine, is clear, and very pleasant to the taste'.¹³⁸ The spring is further linked with the nymphs by a tale, reported again by Plutarch, of a young girl called Aristokleia making, as was customary, a *proteleia* to the nymphs at the Kissoessa.¹³⁹ The exact meaning of the *proteleia* (sacrificing or collecting water for prenuptial bath) is unclear although it seems safe to associate it with the ceremonies of

¹³⁵ Paus. 9.33.3.

¹³⁶ Callimachus, *Aitia* 2.86-92. Roesch (1982), 212 gives the text but made an error in his reference (it should read *P. Oxy.* XVII, 2080):

... ἡ γάρ μοι θάμβος ὑπετρέφετο·
κισσοῦσης παρ' ὕδωρ Θεοδαΐσια Κρήσαν ἑορτὴν
ἢ πόλις ἢ Κάδμου κῶς Ἀλίαρτος ἄγει

¹³⁷ Roesch (1982), 212-213; Schachter (1981), 176; Hesychius s.v. θεοδαΐσιος; Suda s.v. ἀστυδρομία· παρὰ Λίβυσιν οἰονεὶ τῆς πόλεως γενέθλια, καὶ Θεοδαΐσια ἑορτὴ, ἐν ἣ ἑτίμων Διόνυσον καὶ τὰς Νύμφας· ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν, νηφάλιον τε καὶ τὴν ἀγαθὴν κρασὶν αἰνιττόμενοι.

¹³⁸ Plutarch, *Lys.* 28.4.

¹³⁹ Plutarch, *Amat. Narr.* 1 (772b)

marriage.¹⁴⁰ The Kissoessa could therefore be similar to the spring of Kallirrhoe at Athens and to the water of the Ismenos at Thebes.

8.2. Apollo and the spring Telphusa

Pausanias situated it some fifty stades away from Haliartos (ca. 9 km.) on Mt Telphusios.¹⁴¹ Several stories were told about the spring, the oldest one being in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*.¹⁴² The young god, leaving Delos, stops at the spring and declares to the nymph his intention to build a temple there. The nymph convinces him otherwise and directs him to Delphi, where he founds his sanctuary and kills the female dragon. Realising the nymph's deceit, Apollo returns to Telphusa, throws rocks over the spring and establishes an altar next to it. This would normally suggest that there had been a sanctuary of Apollo at the spring, but the only other reference to this sanctuary is found in Strabo.¹⁴³ The other sources on the spring only mention it in conjunction with the seer Teiresias' death. He was said to have died after drinking the water of the spring. The rationalist explanation was that the coldness of the water killed the old man.¹⁴⁴ Schachter has also suggested a link between Teiresias' status of

¹⁴⁰ Larson (2001), 111; Ginouvès (1962), 269, n. 2-3 gives the following text: ἕως ἡ κόρη κατὰ τὰ πάτρια ἐπὶ τὴν Κισσόεσσα, καλουμένην κρήνην κατῆει ταῖς Νύμφαις τὰ προτέλεια θύσουσα.

¹⁴¹ Paus. 9.33.1. Other orthographies can be found here and there in ancient and modern texts: Telphousa, Tilphousa, or Tilphoussa. See Fontenrose (1969), 120, n. 3. There are two possible locations for the spring and the sanctuary: one at a site where the hills reached near the lake Copaïs; another in the hill further south, near the church of Hagios Nikolaos, as suggested by Guillon (1943), 105 n. 2, and then Fontenrose (1969), but criticised by Ducat, *REG* (1964), 288-289. Schachter (1981), 76 n. 4, collects the bibliography but does not choose between the two sites. So far, the archaeological evidence concerns mainly the site of Petra where the remains of a temple were found, perhaps that of Apollo: Spyropoulos, *AAA* 6 (1973), 381-385, 394; Michaud, *BCH* 98 (1974), 643 and 646, fig. 1; Catling, *AR* (1974), 20. Fossey (1988), 335 and (1990), 177-178 supports the choice of Guillon and Fontenrose while acknowledging the criticism by Ducat.

¹⁴² *Hom. Hymn.* 3.244-276, 375-387. Other sources: Apollod. 3.7.3; Ath. *Deipn.* 2.41e (Pindar fr. 466 PLG; Aristoph. fr. 923 BLAYDES); Herodianus, *Grammatici Graeci* 3.1 (Leipzig 1867), 268.11-12; Lykophron, *Alexandra* 562 and schol.; Pindar fr. 198 (PLG); Strabo 9.2.27, 9.2.36.

¹⁴³ Strabo 9.2.27

¹⁴⁴ In Ath., *Deipn* 2.41e.

seer and 'the peculiar potency of the water'.¹⁴⁵ One could go further as to point to its strange similarity with the two springs encountered by souls on the way to Hades, the temperature of which is always stressed.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, while the Telphusa is supposed to be a spring of cold water, its equivalent in the underworld would be the spring of memory, a rather appropriate way to die for the man who was granted by Persephone to possess understanding even in death.¹⁴⁷ The myths surrounding the spring certainly betrayed a strong association with *manteia*, between Apollo's choice of the spot to erect an altar and the story of Teiresias' death and burial. There is also the possibility of rituals involving necromancy. We do not have, however, evidence that an oracle had been there at all.

8.3. The river Lophis

Pausanias gives another story before he leaves the territory of Haliartos. The river Lophis which flows from the hills south west of Haliartos, was said to rise from the blood of a young man called Lophis, killed by his father who had received the command from the Delphic oracle to slay the first man he encountered on his return to Haliartos in order to save his community from a drought.¹⁴⁸ In myth, this local river was therefore attributed an ambivalent origin, since it was by the murder of a son that the whole community benefited. Despite the obvious difference, this narrative recalls the sacrifice of the Attic heroine Makaria who saved the land from the enemy by her own death.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Schachter (1981), 76-77.

¹⁴⁶ The topic of the springs in Hades is developed in the study of the Trophonion at Lebadeia. See below.

¹⁴⁷ Hom., *Od.* 492-495.

¹⁴⁸ Paus. 9.33.4.

¹⁴⁹ See chapter 1, section 2.4.

9. Koroneia

9.1. Athena Alalkomenia¹⁵⁰

On his way to Koroneia, Pausanias walked by the old sanctuary of Athena at Alalkomenai. The monuments were in a poor state already in his day, the abandonment of which he linked with the removal of the cult statue by Sulla.¹⁵¹ By the sanctuary flows a river called Tritonis. The Periegete then reports the local tradition that the goddess was born there, hence the epithet Tritogeneia given to the goddess. Schachter sees this late tradition as 'Athenian' and wonders if it is not to be attributed to the control of the Haliartia by Athens from 171 BC.¹⁵² The identification of the site is not completely assured. Schachter follows reports of excavations and conclusions made by Pappadakis about the localisation of the sanctuary at the village of Agoriani and only refers to Fossey's different hypothesis in a footnote.¹⁵³ This identification has indeed been rejected by the latter who favours the site west of the hilly spur called *Petra*, otherwise identified by Spyropoulos as being the sanctuary of Apollo Telphousaion. This second site has the advantage of being part of 'a pair of sites with historic occupation, as required by the ancient descriptions of Alalkomenai'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Alalkomenai, which had been a polis in the Archaic period, was later incorporated in the city of Koroneia. See Hansen (2004), 438, 444.

¹⁵¹ Paus. 9.33.6-7.

¹⁵² Schachter (1981), 114.

¹⁵³ Schachter (1981), 111-112 and n. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Fossey (1988), 332-335.

9.2. Athena Itonia

The sanctuary of Athena Itonia was one of the most important of Boeotia, since it was the religious centre of the Boeotian League and the site of the *Pamboeotia*, federal games and festival held in the plain each autumn.¹⁵⁵ It was said by several sources to be located near the river Kouarion (or Koralios, Kouralios, Koualion), which flows from the south-west into lake Copais.¹⁵⁶ The location of the sanctuary proves difficult since there are two possible candidates. One is at the foot of Koroneia's acropolis and was excavated by Spyropoulos in 1972.¹⁵⁷ It revealed three buildings belonging to a sanctuary and a boundary stone. Roesch believed that this was the Itonion; Fossey on the other hand defends the alternative option, around the modern church of Metamorphosis in the village of Mamoura (renamed today Alalkomenai, but not ancient Alalkomenai). When the church was rebuilt in the 1960s, blocks belonging to an ancient temple came to light. In the village, six inscriptions with decrees of the Boeotian confederacy were also discovered. Fossey following Pritchett argues that this site is more appropriate for several reasons:

- It corresponds to the ancient sources' description which is not the case of the other site (a river by the sanctuary, found before Koroneia on the road from Alalkomenai and not in Koroneia)
- The inscriptions found in the village of Mamoura refer to federal decrees, unlike the inscriptions found at Koroneia deal with local affairs.

Of the use of water or the relevance of the proximity of the river for the cult, nothing is said in the available sources. Nonetheless one may wonder about the name of the

¹⁵⁵ Paus. 9.34.1; Strabo 9.2.29; Polybius 4.3; 9.34. Buck (1979), 88. See also Pritchett (1969), 85-89; Schachter (1981), 117-27; Roesch (1982), 217-224; Fossey (1988), 330-332.

¹⁵⁶ Strabo 9.2.9; Alcaeus fr. 9 (Bergk); Callim. *Hymn.* 5.64.

¹⁵⁷ Spyropoulos, *Praktika* 1975 (1977), 392-414; Spyropoulos (1973), 385-392, 394.

river. Kouralios sounds very close to *kore* (young girl), which is a name that would suit the virginal status of Athena and maybe suggest that river and goddess were somehow associated.¹⁵⁸

9.3. M¹ Libethrios and the cave of the Nymphs

Strabo and Pausanias both reported the existence of a cult on Mt Libethrios dedicated to the Nymphs and the Muses.¹⁵⁹ Pausanias mentions, in his description of the Koroneian territory, images of the deities and two springs (Libethrias and Petra) flowing from rocks shaped like breasts, the water of which is like milk. Strabo alone says it was a cave. The exact location of Mt Libethrios was unclear, until the cave itself was eventually identified in the 1980s with one situated west of the village of Hagia Triada, south-west of Koroneia. This identification was later confirmed by the discovery of inscriptions, notably on sherds, reading Λειβηθρίδες νύμφες and Λειβεσθριάδεσι Πυθία.¹⁶⁰ The cave also displayed a large number of female figurines, terracotta (including many Pyxides). The bulk of the finds date to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, but the complete chronology seems to range from final Neolithic to Roman.¹⁶¹ The little we know about this cult indicates an intimate link with the Muses and possibly with inspiration. The nature of the inspiration in question is more difficult to discern. Could the presence of the term ‘Pythia’ indicate an oracular type of inspiration? This would not seem exceptional in Boeotia where

¹⁵⁸ Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), s.v. κόρος, 567: ‘Il a dû exister aussi un diminutif (of Kore) κοράλλιον homonyme du nom du corail’.

¹⁵⁹ Paus. 9.34.4; Strabo 9.2.25. For the association with the Muses, see paragraph on Thespiiai and the Helikonian Muses above.

¹⁶⁰ Blackman, *AR* 47 (2001), 56.

¹⁶¹ *AD* 42 (1987), 703; *AD* 50 (1995), 832-834; Blackman (2001), 56; Larson (2001), 250. The stratigraphy was to a large extent disrupted by occupation and illegal excavations.

nymphs and prophecy are known to co-exist. The presence of springs and a cave also fit with the other examples.

10. Orchomenos

One of the oldest cults at Orchomenos was, according to Pausanias, that of the Charites. Their number of three was said locally to have been established by Eteoklos, an old king of the city.¹⁶² They were associated with a spring, called Akidalia or Argaphia.¹⁶³ They also were attributed inspirational powers that made them similar to the Muses and the Nymphs.¹⁶⁴ According to Segal, their control over water in general and the waters of Kephisos in particular reflects their nurturing power through song and poetry.¹⁶⁵ They seem, as a triad who loves dancing and intimately associated with a spring, very similar to nymphs indeed. In 1972-1973, a sanctuary was excavated south of the Mycenaean palace and east of the theatre which was tentatively identified as that of the Charites. It is 200 m away from the spring thought to be that of Akidalia.¹⁶⁶

Pausanias signals that seven stades (ca 1.3 km) away from Orchomenos a sanctuary of Herakles stood next to the spring of the river Melas.¹⁶⁷ There is no evidence of a special significance given to water in this cult. The Periegete however reported the Theban belief that Herakles had diverted the Kephisos into the

¹⁶² Paus. 9.35.1; 38.1-2.

¹⁶³ Spring: *Palat. Anth.* 9.638; *Geoponika* 11.4; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 41.225-226; Paus. 9.35.2. Akidalia: Pindar fr. 244; Suda s.v. ακιδαλία: ὄνομα κρήνης; Servius, Commentary on Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.720. Argaphia: Alkyphron 1.11; *Etymologicum Magnum* 135.32 s.v. Ἀγαφίης.

¹⁶⁴ Pindar, *Ol.* 14, in which the poet prays to the Charites who 'have their home by the waters of Cephisos'. Pindar, *Pyth.* 12.25-27.

¹⁶⁵ Segal (1985), 203-206.

¹⁶⁶ Spyropoulos, *AAA* 6 (1973), 224. Schachter (1981), 140-141. Column drums from the temple are incorporated in the walls of the adjacent church of the Dormition of the Virgin. Akidalia's location: Roesch (1992), 269.

¹⁶⁷ Paus. 9.38.6: the image of the god is described as small (οὐ μέγα).

Orchomenian plain.¹⁶⁸ Nothing much can be made out of this. Maybe it was the last trace of a local legend, similar to the stories depicting Herakles controlling water courses, such as the episode of the stables of Augeias or the battle between the hero and the River Acheloos.¹⁶⁹ The ‘terrace sanctuary of Petakas’, a site excavated some distance west of Orchomenos, was perhaps the site of the temple of Herakles although the remains are so scarce that any identification must remain hypothetical.¹⁷⁰ The figure of Herakles is perhaps the religious expression of the Orchomenians’ struggle to control their environment, between the river Melas and, more importantly, the lake Copaïs.

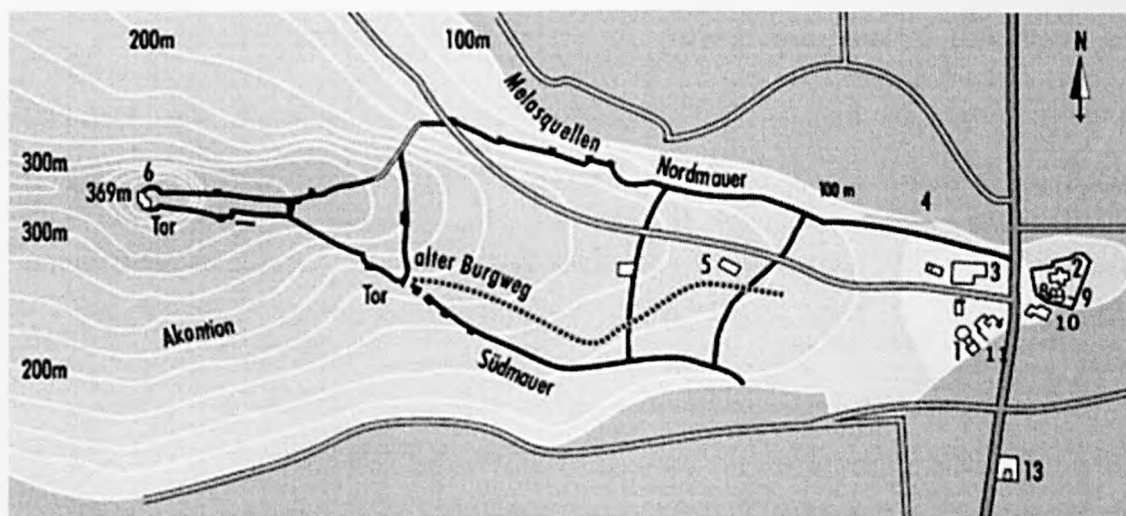


Fig. 44. Map of Orchomenos. 2. Church of the Dormition. 4. Spring Akidalia. 9. Mycenaean Palace. 10. Sanctuary of the Charites(?) (from website of Munich University <<http://www.antikesboiotien.uni-muenchen.de/orte/orchomenos/archaeologie/index.html>>)

¹⁶⁸ Paus. 9.38.7.

¹⁶⁹ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 2.88; 2.148; Diod. Sic. 4.35.3; Strabo, 10.2.19.

¹⁷⁰ Ridder (1895), 146-155. Schachter (1986), 11 n. 2, collated the sources doubting this identification. The distance to the sanctuary, if taken from the gate of the ancient city, corresponds roughly to that given by Pausanias. No blocks remain, but the place for a temple and six tripods can be seen in the rock. See Blackman, *AR* 45 (1999), 56.

10.1. The Argyneion¹⁷¹

Athenaeus relayed the story of Agamemnon who fell for a young man called Argynnis (Hymenaios in another tradition also transmitted by Athenaeus).¹⁷² The boy died by drowning in the river Kephisos in which he bathed very often. The king then buried him and built a sanctuary to Aphrodite Argynnis. A mutilated text from Stephanos Byzantios, referring to Aristophanes of Boeotia as a source, gives his genealogy and confirms the Boeotian settings (only suggested by Athenaeus as there are several rivers called Kephisos in Greece) as well as Agamemnon's infatuation.¹⁷³ This reference to Aristophanes of Boeotia, if accepted, makes the existence of the tale go back at least to the end of the 5th c. BC.

Schachter extracted the 'motif of the dying boy' out of this story and compared it to the myth of Narcissus. The death of young men and women in myths is sometimes understood to symbolise a transformation, or even an initiation, undertaken during the transition from childhood to adult life.¹⁷⁴ In other instances death by water is associated with transformation into a higher state or a new life.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ This site was not found and it is not known with certainty in which polis it was located. It was inserted here because of the site being associated with the R. Kephisos and Athamas, king of Orchomenos, being the ancestor of Argynnis.

¹⁷² Ath., *Deipn.* 13.603d: Ἀγαμέμνονά τε Ἀργύννου ἐρασθῆναι λόγος, ἰδόντα ἐπὶ τῷ Κηφισῷ νηχόμενον· ἐν ᾧ καὶ τελευτήσαντα αὐτὸν (συνεχῶς γὰρ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ τοῦτω ἀπελούετο) θάψας εἶσατο καὶ ἱερὸν αὐτόθι Ἀφροδίτης Ἀργυννίδος.

¹⁷³ Stephanos Byzantios s.v. Ἀργύννιον (Aristophanes of Boeotia, *FGrH* 379 F 9): * * Ἀργυννος, υἱὸς Πεισιδίκης τῆς Λεύκωνος τοῦ Ἀθάμαντος τοῦ Σισύφου τοῦ Αἰόλου, ἐρώμενος Ἀγαμέμνονος, Βοιωτὸς, ὃς ἀνίων εἰς τὸν Κηφισὸν τελευτᾷ· ἀφ' οὗ Ἀργυννίδα τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ἐτίμησε. λέγεται καὶ Ἀργουνίς. Ἀριστοφάνης δὲ Ἀργύννει<ον> διὰ διφθόγγου. ὁ οἰκῆτωρ Ἀργύννιος. The Boeotian background of the story is further established by Schachter (1981) 36 n. 4, who quoted an inscription found at Copais, dated to the first half of the 3rd c. BC, giving the anthroponym Ἀργουνίων (*IG* VII, 2781, 1.34).

¹⁷⁴ Schachter (1981), 36 and (1972), 23-24; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 294-296. Against mythical death as initiation: see Edmonds (2003), 183-84.

¹⁷⁵ Such is the case with Melikertes/Palaimon who died alongside his mother Ino/Leukothea (who had first tried to revive him by putting him in a boiling cauldron), when she jumped in the sea with her son before becoming immortals. See Halm-Tisserand (1993), 186-188; Pache (2004), 148; Apollod. 3.28; *Hyg., Fab.* 2, 4, 224; *Ov., Met.* 4.542; Paus. 1.44.7-8.

10.2. Kyrtones

Pausanias, on his way to Halai, reported a sanctuary of the nymphs at a village called Kyrtones (formerly Kyrtone). The sanctuary was by a spring of cool water and included a grove of cultivated trees.¹⁷⁶ The apparent emphasis on the cultivated world is interesting to note, as it displays a ‘civilised’ aspect of the nymphs one may link to their nourishing powers, as opposed to a more primeval and maybe violent nature of water. It illustrates how the nymphs, who are deities of nature, are actually at the border between the two worlds.¹⁷⁷ Kyrtones is believed to be located near the modern village of Kolaka. A spring does flow out of the rock nearby.¹⁷⁸



Fig. 45. Kyrtones: The spring at Kolaka (Etienne & Knoepfler [1976], fig. 5, p. 26)

¹⁷⁶ Paus. 9.24.4.

¹⁷⁷ See Larson (2007), 58-60.

¹⁷⁸ Etienne & Knoepfler (1976), 29-32. They dismissed, convincingly, the earlier identification of the site at Martinon found further east. This identification defended since the 19th c. was also rejected by Oldfather (1916), 163-165 who is the first to locate it at Kolaka.

10.3. Tegyra: The oracle of Apollo

We know of this sanctuary of Apollo essentially because of Plutarch's testimony.¹⁷⁹ Neither Strabo nor Pausanias had seen or recorded its existence. It was said to have flourished before the Persian wars, at which time it had predicted the Greek victory over the Persians, and survived until shortly before 375 BC, the year of the battle of Tegyra.¹⁸⁰ Two springs, called the Phoenix (Palm) and the Elaia (Olive), flowed behind the temple. A local tradition again reported by Plutarch claimed the god had been born there and not on the island of Delos, thus explaining the names given to the springs between which Leto was said to have given birth.¹⁸¹

It is another example of an oracle closely associated with flowing water which seemed to flourish in Boeotia, although the role of the springs in the sanctuary's life is not given by Plutarch. The springs' names which, according to the local belief, closely associated them with the god's birth, could possibly indicate that they were used for purifications rather than for oracular powers, since they would presumably have been used to clean baby Apollo. This is, by any means, only conjecture.

Its localisation is still problematic. There are two sites which are possible candidates: one at the village of Pyrgos, the other at a place called Polygira.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 16.3-4; *De defectu oraculorum* 5; Steph. Byz. s.v. Τέγυρα.

¹⁸⁰ Diod. Sic. 15.81.2.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Aelian, *VH* 5.4.

¹⁸² Fossey (1988), 369-372, defends the Pyrgos which is the most popular choice: 'the close correspondence of these requirements (Plutarch's description of the sanctuary) with the situation at *Magoula Pyrgou* is striking' (p. 372). Lauffer *RE*, suppl. 14 (1974), 325-328, offered the alternative of Polygira, some 5 km north of Orchomenos, where the works for draining water revealed two springs and blocks from a classical temple. See *BCH* 98 (1974), 643; Etienne & Knoepfler (1976), 237, n. 860.

11. Lebadeia

11.1. The Trophonion

The oracular sanctuary of Trophonios at Lebadeia, famous in antiquity for its unusual and terrifying methods of prophesising, was located somewhere on the banks of the River Herkyna near several springs. For this site the archaeological data is particularly wanting. Today's Lebadeia occupies the same place as the old city but no major excavations have been conducted in the area where the sanctuary of Trophonios would have been. The only important excavation campaign unearthed and cleaned the temple of Zeus Basileus, while the other discoveries were made during rescue excavations on constructions sites.¹⁸³ For the understanding of the sanctuary, we rely heavily on the ancient literary accounts, the clarity (or for that matter the lack of clarity) of these sources, and inscriptions.¹⁸⁴ The best and most recent studies on the sanctuary are those of Schachter, Bonnechère's book and articles on the subject, and one thesis by Lee Ann Turner.¹⁸⁵

This sanctuary was primarily a *manteion*, an oracular shrine. Pausanias, who had been himself a visitor there, gives the most detailed account of the sanctuary and the rituals performed within the precinct.¹⁸⁶ The main characteristics of the consultation at the Trophonion were the very long and elaborate preparations someone had to undertake beforehand, as well as the strongly chthonian aspects of its myths and rituals. Trophonios, if we are to believe Schachter and Ustinova, was the

¹⁸³ The (long) list of sources is in Schachter (1994), 66-68. The excavation of the temple of Zeus Basileus: Vallas & Pharaklas (1969), 228-233.

¹⁸⁴ List of sources in Schachter (1994), 66-68.

¹⁸⁵ Schachter (1994), 66-89; Bonnechère (2003a); Bonnechère (1990), 53-65; (1998a), 91-108; (1998b), 436-481; (1999), 259-297; (2002), 179-186; (2003b), 169-192. Lee Ann Turner, *The History, Monuments, and Topography of Ancient Lebadeia in Boeotia* (PhD diss., Ann Arbor University, 1994).

¹⁸⁶ Paus. 9.39.2-13. His description is irreplaceable.

local version of a nameless (pre-Hellenic?) deity who existed in the central and northern areas of Greece.¹⁸⁷

Different myths concern Trophonios in particular, but they all share common features. Trophonios himself was believed to have been a mortal, a skilled architect who designed and built with his brother the adyton of the Delphic temple for Apollo. He then died in differing circumstances, but remained underground at the spot where he died, at Lebadeia, forever fixed between the realms of the living and of the dead.¹⁸⁸ He then started uttering oracles.¹⁸⁹

The consultation process was complex, long and regularly involved water.¹⁹⁰ First, one submitted to a preparatory period of undetermined length during which one lived in a building in the sanctuary, sacrificed to the god and washed only in the cold waters of the river Hercyna. The time to consult came only when a sacrifice revealed to be propitiatory. The worshipper then accomplished a *katabasis*, very similar indeed to a descent into the world of the dead.¹⁹¹ The sources available report the terror inflicted on the consultants by the process and the sanctuary was famous for

¹⁸⁷ Schachter (1994), 71: 'the cult aitia refer to mortals, but the cult is the cult of an underground oracular god, who is immortal. It may be reasonable to assume that, since the god in question was given a different name in each of his sanctuaries (Trophonios and Amphiaraos), his original name had been forgotten'. The article by Ustinova (2002) goes further and draws parallels with gods in Thessaly and the Balkans. She sees them as mediators and suggests seeing their status as of 'absolute liminality', between life and death, humanity and divinity. See p. 288 for the possibility of the pre-Greek nature of these cults.

¹⁸⁸ Death in their sleep as a reward from Apollo: Pindar fr. 2-3 (Mähler); Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius* 14; Ps.-Plato, *Axiochos* 367c. Trophonios is a trickster and his swallowed by the earth: Paus. 9.37.7; Ps.-Plutarch, *Proverbs* 1.51; Schol. Ar. *Clouds* 508a; Suda s.v. Εἰς Τροφώνιου μεμάντευται: ἐπὶ τῶν σκυθρωπῶν καὶ ἀγελάστων ἡ παροιμία τάττεται. οἱ γὰρ καταβαίνοντες εἰς Τροφώνιον λέγονται τὸν ἐξῆς χρόνον ἀγελάστοι εἶναι. τὸν δὲ Τροφώνιον φασὶν ἔχοντα τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἀγαμήδους καὶ διωκόμενον ὑπὸ Αὐγαίου, εὐξάμενον εἰς χάσμα ἐμπεσεῖν, οὗ δὴ καὶ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστιν.

¹⁸⁹ Bonnechère (1999) gathers the literary evidence of Trophonios 'mythical personality'. See also Bonnechère (1998a), 96-98.

¹⁹⁰ See again the description given by Paus. 9.39.2-13; Schachter (1994), 82-83 who suggest from Plutarch (*De Def. Or.* 38) that the oracle was functioning 'only at specified times, possibly in connection with a festival'.

¹⁹¹ Schachter (1994), 80, n. 2; Bonnechère (1999), 286; Bonnechère (2002), 179-180. See also the story of Aristomenes travelling to the underworld at the Trophonion to recover his lost shield. See D. Ogden, *Aristomenes of Messene. Legends of Sparta's Nemesis* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2004), 75, 80-84.

this peculiarity.¹⁹² Aristophanes, to quote the most famous example, makes Strepsiades say in the *Clouds* (507-509): ‘Put a honey cake into my hands first, because I’m scared to go down inside there, as if into the cave of Trophonius.’ The analogy with the path taken by the dead can be found everywhere in the process of the ritual preparations, in particular just before the actual descent. The consultant was guided by two thirteen-year-old boys called *Hermai*. Hermes, as we know, is the *psychopompos* (guide of souls) *par excellence*.¹⁹³ He was washed in the river Hercyna, anointed with oil and then given a white linen tunic to put on.¹⁹⁴

After these preparatory rituals came a ritual that is of particular importance and which involved water. He had to drink from the two springs of Lethe and Mnemosyne. Thereafter he was taken to the chasm in which he descended by a ladder. In it was a very small hole in which one had to enter feet first. In there, absolutely terrified, he loses consciousness.¹⁹⁵ Trophonios uttered his oracle directly to the consultant, by sounds and/or a vision, during this unconscious state. After a while (the record-breaker is supposed to have stayed down there for a week), the consultant came out of the hole, feet first again, pale with fright and barely able to speak. He was finally seated by the priests on the throne of Mnemosyne (Memory) where he was asked to recall what he experienced to discover what the oracle was.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² This is associated in the sources with the loss of the ability to laugh. Paus. 9.39.13; Semos of Delos, *FGrH* 396 F 10. A proverb saying ‘It is prophesised by Trophonios’ referred to people who did not laugh. *Suda* s.v. εἰς Τροφωνίου μεμάντευται (see n. 188).

¹⁹³ Schachter (1994), 82; Bonnechère (1998a), 100-101. Hermes Psychopompos: Kerényi (1976), 9-10. Also on vases such as one white-ground lekythos (Munich, Antikensammlungen: 2797; *ARV²* 1022.138, 1678).

¹⁹⁴ Bonnechère (2003a), 236.

¹⁹⁵ An excavation in 1968 by Pharaklas and Vallas uncovered an underground chamber they identified with the reconstruction in later times of the seat of the oracle of Trophonios. The location of the classical one is still unknown. Schachter (1994), 74-75; Bonnechère (1998a), 94-95; Pharaklas, *AD Chronika* 22 (1968), 244-245.

¹⁹⁶ Schachter (1994), 83 believes the ‘state of shock’ of the consultant might have allowed the priest to manipulate the oracle. The seating in a throne is also compared by Bonnechère with the episode in the *Clouds* when Strepsiades is lied down and questioned by Socrates: Bonnechère (1998b), 456-459 and (2003b), 174-175. Edmonds (2006), 364 prefers a Korybantic *thronosis* to Trophonios.

The unfolding of the rituals, in particular the assimilation of these as an initiation by late sources, has troubled scholars.¹⁹⁷ Bonnechère has convincingly demonstrated that the parallels between the rituals for Trophonios and mysteries could be traced back to the 5th c. BC at least. Importantly, in doing so he also demonstrated that the landmarks of the springs of Lethe (oblivion) and Mnemosyne (memory) were already well established by the time of Aristophanes. Pausanias gave his own interpretation of the names of the two springs:¹⁹⁸

‘Here he must drink water called the water of Forgetfulness, that he may forget all that he has been thinking of hitherto, and afterwards he drinks of another water, the water of Memory, which causes him to remember what he sees after his descent.’

This interpretation is widely accepted. But here again Bonnechère insisted on the strong similarities these springs present with the journey into the realm of the dead. Funerary tablets found in tombs in all of the Greek world (the context of the burial is very diverse, including inhumation, cremation, male, female, etc.) depict what the dead are likely to encounter in the underworld and give instructions so that they go directly to the good part of Hades where souls are blessed.¹⁹⁹ Literary sources, adjoined with the testimony of the funerary tablets, tell of the two springs or rivers the souls can drink from in Hades.²⁰⁰ According to these sources, both springs are present on the way to Hades. The initiated soul is given the choice between the two, one being on one side and warm (generally Lethe), while the other was often further,

¹⁹⁷ See Bonnechère (1998b), 438-439.

¹⁹⁸ Paus. 9.39.8.

¹⁹⁹ Cole (2003), 201 and table 8.1. On Dionysos, who appears to be guiding souls in these tablets, and the descent to the underworld, see also the section on Dionysos at Lerna in chapter 5, section 10.

²⁰⁰ Homer, *Od.* 513-515; Pindar, *Ol.* 2.70-74; Plato, *Rep.* 10.621a.

or on the other side and cold (Mnemosyne), sometimes flowing from the 'pool of memory'.²⁰¹ The effects of drinking the water of either of them are drastically different. Someone drinking from the 'good' spring would go to the Elysian Fields and eventually 'become divine' once purified of earthly existence, while in the other lies only death as a shadow (In Plato's *Rep.* 10.621a, they are reborn to earthly life). It has to be stressed that one could drink from one of the springs only, whereas at Lebadeia one drank from the two. Bonnechère cautiously presented the hypothesis that, while the worshipper at Lebadeia was expected to descend to Trophonios, to a place between the living and the dead, he was to do so while still alive and was expected to survive in the process.²⁰² The fear of dying must have been real since Pausanias feels the need to point out that nobody had been killed (apart from one who did not respect the initiation).²⁰³ The spring of Lethe brought one nearer to the world of the dead while the spring of memory was necessary for the comprehension of the oracle and, quite crucially, allowed one to remain attached to the world of the living in order to come back again.

Water, or rather waters, were not in themselves the gateway to the underworld but the necessary tools for the descent, with their own powers. They prepared the worshippers, purifying him during the long preparation to the descent and then ensured his spiritual preparation with the waters of knowledge and oblivion. They were also landmarks which, because they also existed in Hades, further blurred the difference between the world of the living and that of the dead. It is finally important to stress that, at Lebadeia, the *katabasis* was accomplished by mortals, real men (there is no evidence that women were allowed) who consulted the god directly

²⁰¹ The specifics of the springs vary from one tablet to the other. Cole (2003), 209; Janko (1984).

²⁰² Bonnechère (2003a), 284-290. The idea is not completely developed in Ustinova (2002), 271.

²⁰³ Paus. 9.39.12.

and strongly believed that they communicating with the divine by entering an altogether different world.²⁰⁴

11.2. The nymph Herkyna

The city of Lebadeia was crossed by the river Herkyna, the waters of which are particularly important in the cult of Trophonios. This Herkyna was also a nymph who was worshipped in her own temple next to the stream. Her image in the temple was that of a 'maiden with a goose in her arms', a representation corresponding with the aetiological myth told by Pausanias.²⁰⁵ As a nymph she was playing with Kore when she let loose a goose she was holding. The animal hid under a stone in a cave and when Kore took the stone, the river started to flow. This story undoubtedly gives Herkyna the characteristics of a nymph (one of Kore's consorts, homonym of a river). On the other hand, the statues Pausanias saw at the spring in the cave liken the couple Trophonios/Herkyna with Asclepios/Hygieia, possibly making one the daughter of the other.²⁰⁶ The picture is therefore confused and was probably made so by successive assimilations from a nymph associated with Trophonios, possibly kourotrophos, to either his daughter or Demeter Europe.²⁰⁷

Chantraine suggested the name Herkyna was derived from ἔρκος (fence, barrier, space enclosed by fences). This is taken to signify that the river marked not only the frontier between town and sanctuary, but this world from the other.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Women not allowed: Schachter (1994), 80-81.

²⁰⁵ Paus. 9.39.2-3.

²⁰⁶ Schol. Lycophron 153.

²⁰⁷ Schachter (1986), 38-39; Larson (2001), 143.

²⁰⁸ Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris : Klincksieck, 1999), s.v. ἔρκος, p. 372-373; Schachter (1986), 38.

12. Conclusion

As the many sites studied above illustrate, Boeotia is not a land poor in water. What is more striking than the region's hydrology, however, is that it was extraordinarily rich in oracles. The once 'many-voiced' Boeotia appears indeed to have been a land of inspiration, whether poetic or oracular, or even both.²⁰⁹ Water seems, in many cases, to have played a role in these sanctuaries and, although this participation varies from site to site, the flowing nature of water and its subterranean origins are likely to be at the heart of this association.

The sanctuary of Apollo at Hysiai is the one where the oracular role of water is clearest, although our only source on this site is Pausanias. At the Ptoion on the other hand, the involvement of water in the oracular process is not crystal clear but the sheer importance of the water-related structures discovered could prove otherwise. Lebadeia is a very important site because of the description of the ritual given by Pausanias, in which water was used both for its properties and as a landmark recreating a descent into the underworld. The powers of inspiration attributed to water in Boeotia were not only oracular but also poetic. In the vale of the Muse in particular, but also at Thebes and perhaps at Orchomenos, springs embodied the creative inspirational potency of the goddesses who haunted them.

Themes already studied in Attica are again present in Boeotia, notably the idea of water bringing fertility and nourishment. The shrine of the Nymphs at Kyrtones illustrates perfectly the goddesses' intermediate position between the untamed natural world and that of the humanised garden. At the spring Kissoessa in Haliartos water played a similar role to that of the Kallirrhoe at Athens and is also a

²⁰⁹ Plutarch, *De def. Or.* 5, where oracles are compared to a flow which has, by Plutarch's time, dried up. The metaphor might not have been completely innocent.

protector of the young, as in Thebes where Dirke reared and nourished generations of Thebans, not least young Herakles. The Nymphs were also, along with rivers, such as the prolific Asopos and the Kephisos, intimately associated with the foundation myths of many cities.

Ultimately, the impression given by water in the Boeotian religious landscape is somewhat darker than the Attic one, with a stronger emphasis on the underworld, but with positive undertones of growth, nourishment and inspiration which were never far away, or even sometimes coexisting in the same place. Such is the case of Lebadeia where water guided worshippers to the underworld, but also purified, protected, and gave knowledge and nourishment.

Chapter 4: Corinthia

Corinthia has one of the driest climates in Greece, but this climate is counterbalanced by geology. The region is located between the mountains of the Peloponnese to the south and the Corinthian gulf to the north and is characterised by series of terraces sloping down to the sea. The rainwater falling on the southern mountainside is absorbed and collected above impervious layers. It then flows northwards until it reaches the surface, generally at the levels of the terraces' rims. The resulting springs were exploited early and made the city of Corinth famous.¹

Historically, one major rift is the year 146 BC when the Roman army led by Mummius destroyed the city of Corinth in its war against the Achaian league. The questions of the subsequent abandonment of Corinth and notably of the survival and/or continuity of the Corinthian religious practices are still a source of debate and readjustment.

1. Isthmia

1.1. The sanctuary of Poseidon

The isthmus was, and still is, the inescapable route to and from the Peloponnesus. Commanding that bridge of land, on a small plateau south of the modern Corinth canal, the sanctuary of Poseidon overlooked one of the major (if not the major) crossroads of ancient Greece, being in easy reach of the Peloponnese, northern

¹ Landon (2003), 43-45; Crouch (2004), 133-138.

Greece, the Aegean and the Corinthian Gulf, itself the route to the western Mediterranean.²

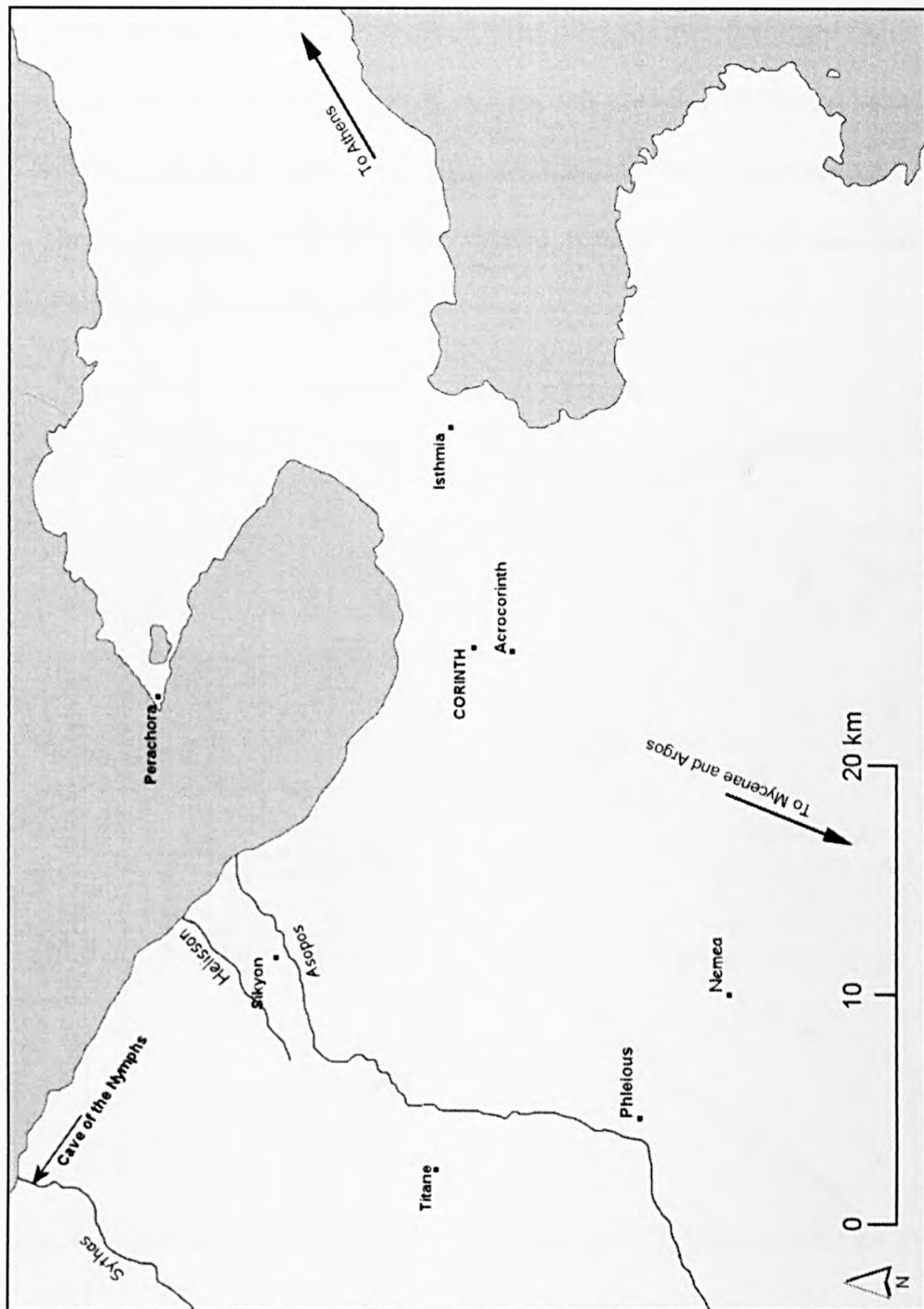


Fig. 46. Map of Corinthia with the sites studied.

² Early excavations were conducted in the area in 1883 by P. Monceaux and in 1930 by B.S. Jenkins and H. Megaw. Systematic exploration however, started after the discovery of the temple by O. Bronceer in 1952 and the ASCSA has since dug and published their findings. On the significance of the location of the sanctuary at a major crossroads see Morgan (1994), 118; Morgan (1998), 76.

This sanctuary, home of the Isthmian games where crowds gathered to honour the earth-shaking god, did not possess a natural source of water within its limits. Equipment was progressively built during its existence to overcome this difficulty, among which some were clearly religious structures and are examined below. The site was large, dry and the closest water resource was probably the spring located in a gully, 560 m. to the West of the sanctuary, from which water was eventually piped down. The sacred area, with its heart located around the temple and the altar, extended maybe as far as this spring.³

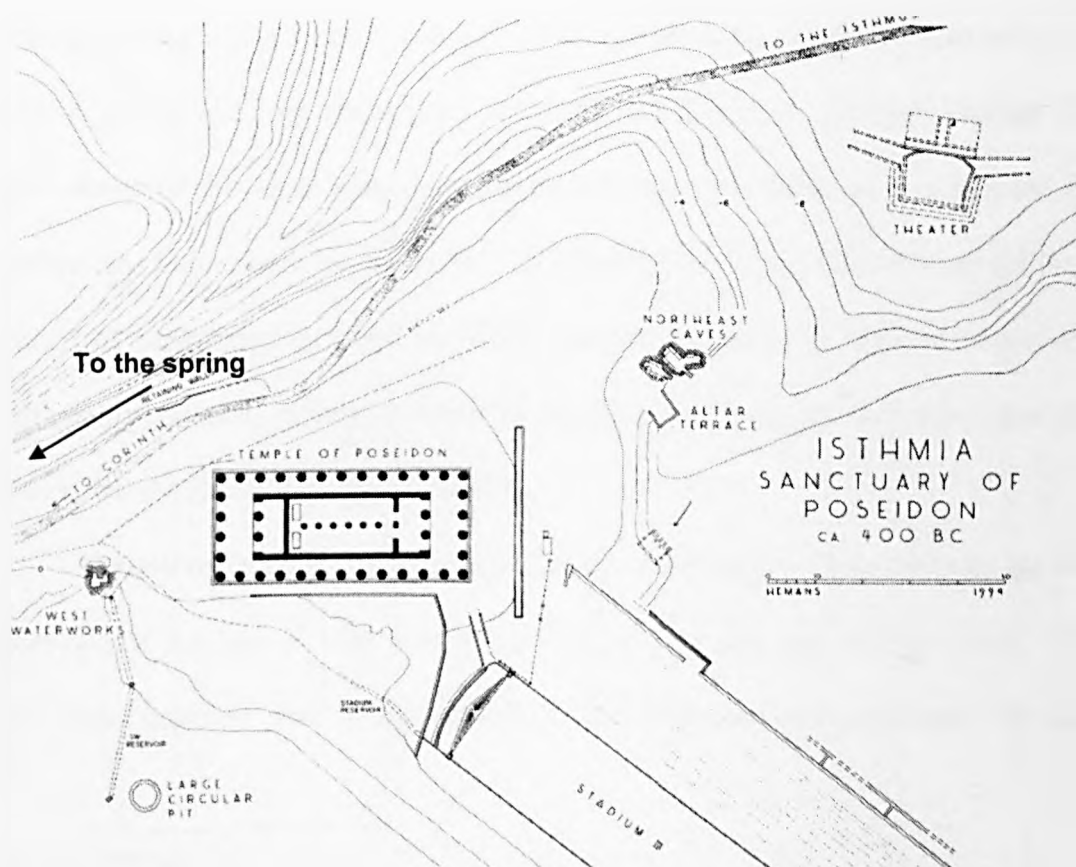


Fig. 47. Map of the sanctuary at Isthmia ca 400 BC (adapted from Hemans [1994], fig. 3).

³ The spring is still flowing but less abundantly than it must have in Antiquity because it is tapped by wells in the village. The village took its name from the spring and is today called Kyras Vrysi. Broneer (1973), 2; Gebhard (1993a), 156.

The first evidence of religious activity, consisting principally of remains of ritual dining (bowls, ash and animal bones), is traced back to the tenth century BC. Continuity of practice is also confirmed by an unbroken sequence of drinking vessels found on the plateau.⁴ The beginning of the architectural activity on the site was initiated by the erection of the archaic temple, the altar and a temenos wall.⁵ These are proof that the sanctuary grew in wealth and possibly in popularity, even more so when the games were founded in the early 6th c. BC.⁶

In any case worshippers would have needed water. One of the finest dedications found, a richly decorated marble perirrhanterion that stood in the northeast corner of the Archaic temple's cella and fixed into the floor, illustrates how water could be used for ritual purposes in the sanctuary. Its rim and handles still show traces of the wear caused by hands reaching for water, as it was used for purifications before entering the cella.⁷ This perirrhanterion stands out from the large amount of perirrhanteria found in Greek sanctuaries, not only because of its very high quality, but also because it is one of the earliest ever found.⁸ It is only later that the first water-related structure is attested.

Forty-three metres to the south-west of the temple, a large circular pit was excavated. It reached 19.75m in depth and had a 5 m. diameter at the mouth.⁹ This very large structure was finally interpreted as being an enormous well. Broneer

⁴ Gebhard (1993a), 156.

⁵ Broneer (1976), 41-43; Gebhard (1993a), 159; the recent estimations for the temple's erection date is between 690 and 650 BC.

⁶ The traditional date for the foundation of the Panhellenic Isthmian Games is around 580-582 BC; see Solinus 7.14 in M.L. West, "Eumelos": a Corinthian epic cycle?', *JHS* 122 (2002), 130; Gebhard (1993a), 167. The archaeological data about the construction of the early stadium points at the second quarter of the 6th c. BC. Gebhard (1987), 476; Gebhard (1993a), 162.

⁷ Broneer (1955), 129-130; Broneer (1971), 11-12; Broneer (1976), 45-46; Sturgeon (1987), 14-61; Gebhard & Hemans (1992), 36-37; Gebhard (1993a), 160-61. In Whitley (2007), 10: 'The base for the marble *perirrhanterion* was almost certainly set into the floor of the *E pteron* (...)'

⁸ Fullerton (1986), 207 n. 2 follows Richter G.M., *Korai, Archaic Greek Maidens* (London: Phaidon, 1968), n°5 who dates it to ca 675 BC. Sturgeon (1987), 53 dates it to 660-650 BC.

⁹ Broneer (1973), 22-24.

wondered about a possible religious use, but abandoned the idea as he pointed out that the pit was abandoned fairly early in the sanctuary's history. It was indeed filled in shortly after the destruction of the Archaic temple and the erection of the Classical one. Very little of the ash and debris from the old temple was found in the pit, while it was recovered in great quantity in the north gully. It appeared to have been intended to tap the underground water since no other device to bring water to the shaft was found on the surface. The water table's level however varied greatly during the year and it seems the structure eventually failed to supply enough water all year-round and was filled in.¹⁰

Some time later, a first water-channel (WCh1) was built to bring water from outside the sanctuary. It came in all probability from the spring to the west in the gully mentioned above. This channel was dug in the ground, with the sides and bottom coated with waterproof cement. Its construction is dated to a time later than the foundation of the classical temple because its course avoided it. It was still in use after, or maybe even built after the fire in 390 BC which destroyed the first classical temple since marble tiles were reused to cover the channel.¹¹ A second channel (WCh2) was later adjoined to the first one. It is slightly deeper, and also has its sides and bottom covered with cement, but it is less regular in shape. The flow of water was probably directed in either one or the other channels by a slab. A third channel (WCh3) branches off WCh2 and Broneer estimated it to be approximately of the same date as the WCh2. It is again slightly deeper and irregular in shape. WCh1 takes the general direction of the theatre but its final destination is not known. WCh2

¹⁰ Broneer (1973), 23, believed that, because the games occurred in April-May, the water table should have been high enough to provide water for the contestants.

¹¹ On water channels 1, 2 and 3 see Broneer (1973), 25-27; Gebhard & Hemans (1998a), 51, n. 137. Broneer thought that the tiles were a later addition and dated the channel to the 5th c. BC, but the archaeological campaign also found tiles built in the walls of the channel. It could have been a repair but Gebhard and Hemans favour a construction date after 390 BC. This consequently dates WCh 2 and 3 later in the 4th c. BC.

emptied its contents into the reservoir built at the early stadium south-east of the temple. Finally the short WCh3 brought water to the so-called 'West Waterworks'.

These 'West Waterworks' are a complex structure combining a reservoir, manholes and basins.¹² Water brought by the WCh3 was first collected in a manhole (ca 1m wide and 2.20 m. deep) from which it then flowed into a large reservoir almost as high as the manhole and 43.50 m. long. On the west side of the manhole, a terracotta pipe placed 1.93 m. above the floor brought water three metres to the north-west into a rectangular tank (0.98x0.56x1.27 m.). The large reservoir had to be completely full before water could flow into the tank from which it then overflowed into an irregularly shaped room lined with waterproof plaster. Two stairways at either side of the room gave access to it. Although it is now open to the sky, it is possible that it had originally been built within a cave. The top layer of the ground of this part of the sanctuary was completely levelled in Roman times when the West and South Stoas were built. Broneer had suggested that the odd shape of the room could be caused by other pre-existing buildings, but the idea of the cave solved this problem since the room would have followed the contours of the rock.¹³

The function of the room is very likely to be religious. It cannot have been a normal fountain. The channel that brought water from the reservoir to the basin was very high in the former. If water was regularly drawn from the basin, it would have been emptied very quickly, without receiving more water from a reservoir almost full. This water was supposed to be used sparingly.¹⁴ Broneer did not find any cultic objects apart from a vase discovered in a layer of coarse pottery in the manhole. This

¹² The structure was excavated and labelled 'West Waterworks' by Broneer. See Broneer (1955), 121-122; Broneer (1973), 27-29.

¹³ Broneer (1973), 28. The idea that the room had been in a cave was suggested in Gebhard & Hemans (1992), 5, n. 11.

¹⁴ Broneer (1973), 28-29. The reservoir was in all probability used as a water supply system for all the sanctuary and not for the waterworks only.

krater-shaped vase has two discs decorated with concentric circles on both sides of the handles, over each of which are applied a moulded snake climbing over the rim of the vase.¹⁵ Because of its peculiar shape and style, it was interpreted as a ritual object linked with a chthonic cult.

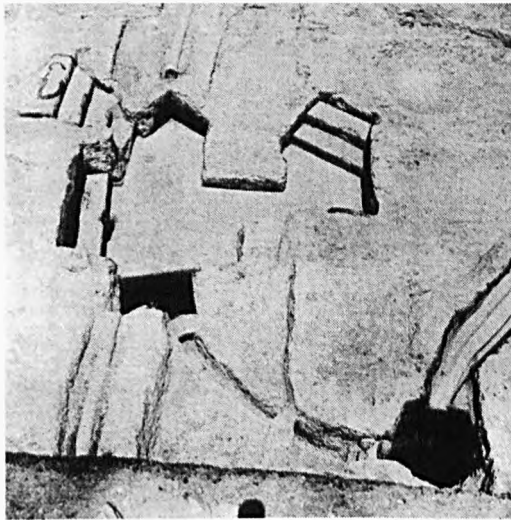


Fig. 48. Isthmia: The 'west waterworks', view from the south (from Broneer [1955], pl. 47, fig. c).

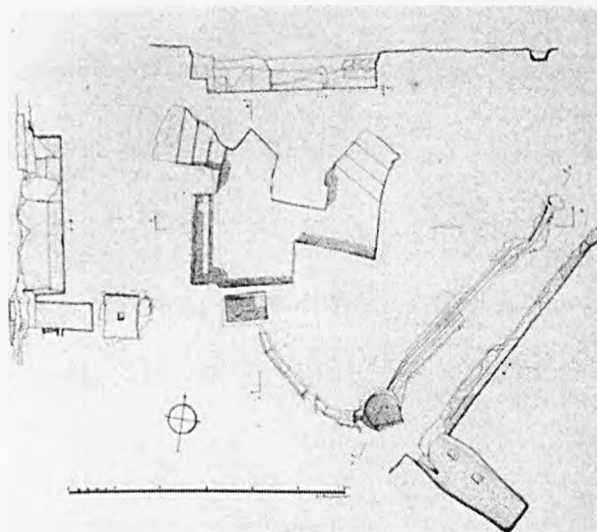


Fig. 49. Isthmia: Detailed plan and elevation of the WCh3, the first manhole and the 'west waterworks' (from Broneer [1955], pl. 47, fig. a).

¹⁵ Inventory #IP 363: Broneer (1955), 134, #30; Broneer (1973), 29; DeMaris (1995), 109-110: the vase is plausibly linked with a cult related with the realms of death and the underworld. Several fragments of pottery with similar snakes were found at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth. It is likely to be early Roman. Its link with the West Waterworks is unclear.

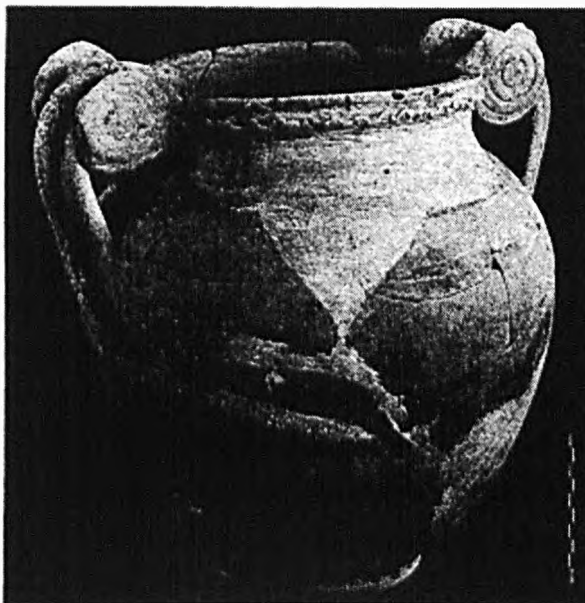


Fig. 50. Isthmia: The snake vase (from Broneer [1955], pl. 52, fig. d)

The actual use of this structure remains unclear and any attempt at explanation must be hypothetical. However, it seems clear that water was used there for some kind of ritual. The room was certainly not large enough to hold large crowds. Rather, some sort of circuit seems to have been in use to allow access for a limited amount of people at any one time. The two stairs could be an entrance and an exit. The bench was maybe there to allow people to sit while someone else had access to the water tank, or it might have been used to put sacred objects on it, although no such object has been found in the room. This room, along with the adjoining reservoir, was in use for a long period of time, probably until late Hellenistic times. The pottery recovered from the room and the reservoir included Megarian bowls and late Hellenistic lamps.¹⁶

The WCh2 led to the reservoir next to the early stadium. This reservoir was underground with a total length of 17 m. Its bottom width varies from 0.45 to 0.75 m. and its maximum height on its southeast end was 1.20 m. It was accessible by a flight of stairs on the northwest end, which is now left open to the sky because of the

¹⁶ Broneer (1973), 29.

levelling of the slope accomplished in Roman times. It redistributed water to the stadium through two channels running on both sides of the racetrack.¹⁷ Marchetti believed it to be a device to sacralize the racing area by separating it from the outside with this water barrier.¹⁸ Piérart rejected the idea and favoured a more trivial explanation given by Romano; water was brought to the stadium to be spread over the track to soften it and make it more comfortable for the competing athletes.¹⁹ Piérart's reluctance to see a religious dimension in the water channel is understandable and becomes even stronger when considering the hypothesis that there was continuity of meaning (if not of use) with the later structure over the reservoir: the temple of Palaimon.

Some other reservoirs were built in Hellenistic and Roman times to provide water to the large crowd of worshippers. More specifically, in the northern part of the sanctuary, Roman baths were unearthed under which were also found Greek baths. The discovery was exceptional since the Greek pool was very large and is still in near working order.²⁰

1.2. The Palaimonion

In Roman times, the Palaimonion held a place of honour in the Isthmian sanctuary. Water is at the kernel of the myth of this young boy turned god, where it played an active part in his resurrection and sublimation from mortal to immortal. This could indicate a role of water in his cult, maybe even before his Roman floruit.

¹⁷ Broneer (1973), 27, 49.

¹⁸ Marchetti & Kolokotsas (1995), 204 cited in Piérart (1998), 101.

¹⁹ Piérart (1998), 101-104; Romano (1993), 88, 230 n. 66.

²⁰ Gregory (1995), 303-312.

The legend of Palaimon was known early as it first appears in the *Odyssey*, although rather vaguely.²¹ The kernel of the myth tells of Ino, wife of Athamas, king of Orchomenos, fleeing the persecution of her husband who was driven mad by the wrath of Hera. Ino, holding her baby Melikertes in her arms, jumped from the cliffs of the Geranian Mounts and died in the sea along with the child. Both were then made immortal and their names were changed to Leukothea and Palaimon.

Our most extensive source describing the ancient sanctuary of Palaimon is again the unavoidable Pausanias. Leaving Attica behind him and entering Corinthia he sees, on the shore, the altar to Palaimon where the legend says that his body was brought by a dolphin after he had drowned, and where Sisyphos founded the Games in his honour. Pausanias then proceeded to the Isthmian precinct:

Within the enclosure is on the left a temple of Palaemon, with images in it of Poseidon, Leukothea and Palaemon himself. There is also what is called his Holy of Holies, and an underground descent to it, where they say that Palaemon is concealed. Whosoever, whether Corinthian or stranger, swears falsely here, can by no means escape from his oath.²²

This short description, alongside the account of the myth Pausanias gives elsewhere, has been at the origin of much debate, in particular since the beginning of the excavation campaigns at Isthmia. The previous assumption that the cult of Palaimon was one of the oldest on the site was indeed contradicted by archaeological finds dated almost exclusively to the Roman phases of the sanctuary.²³ What was found by

²¹ Homer, *Od.* 5.333-35. The sources on Ino/Leukothea and Melikertes/Palaimon are collated in Gantz (1993), 176-180, 478. Piérart (1998) and Pache (2004), 135-180 studied in detail the mythological and archaeological evidence on Palaimon/Melikertes at Isthmia.

²² Paus. 2.2.1 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

²³ Paus. 1.44.7-8, 2.1.3. Will notably believed Palaimon to be a very old deity at Isthmia: Will (1955), 168-180. Some concluded that the cult of Palaimon at Isthmia had been a Roman invention: See

Broneer's excavations was a Roman structure built over the old stadium reservoir. This structure consists of a square podium (8.80 x 8 m.) through which was pierced a corridor that led to the old stadium reservoir.²⁴ The elevation had not survived, but was reconstructed from the iconographical evidence given by a series of coins found at Isthmia depicting the temple of Palaimon. It was a round building with eleven Corinthian columns and a domed roof.²⁵ Broneer believed that the underground passage leading to the former reservoir was the *adyton* mentioned by Pausanias.²⁶ The Periegete's description was however clear on the fact that temple and *adyton* were two separate entities. Gebhard suggested that when Pausanias visited the sanctuary, the temple he saw was not the one over the reservoir but a structure until then identified with an altar, on the left of the eastern entrance in front of the temple of Poseidon. She called it the 'Hadrianic temple'.²⁷ Her idea is based on Pausanias' description, the similarities in shape between the two surviving square structures and the fact that the early representations of the temple found on the coins do not show a door in the podium. Despite Piérart's dismissal of the iconographical argument as 'de simples variations graphiques', Gebhard's suggestion is still the only sensible and convincing explanation given the present state of our knowledge.²⁸

Ultimately, the problem of the identification of the reservoir as Palaimon's resting place still remains. It appears this was the common belief for the Roman period (at least from the foundation of the sanctuary in the middle of the 1st c. AD),

Hawthorne (1958) and Koester (1990). Others still believed it possible to predate the Roman period: Rupp (1979).

²⁴ The rediscovered reservoir was part of the Palaimonion from the first phase, founded when the athletics came back to Isthmia ca. 50 AD. At first distinct from any other structure, the underground passage was later incorporated into the podium of a new temple to Palaimon found by Broneer (Phase V: ca. 161-169 AD). See Gebhard (2005), 189-92, 197-200, figs. 6.7a-b, 6.11-12.

²⁵ Or fifth period in the description by Broneer of the Roman sanctuary to Palaimon. See Broneer (1973), 107, 109-112; Broneer (1976), 57, fig. 22.

²⁶ Broneer (1973), 110-2; Broneer (1976), 58-9.

²⁷ Gebhard, Hemans and Hayes (1998), 438-441.

²⁸ Gebhard (1993b), 78-94. Piérart (1998), 96-97, 100.

but any attempt to date this identification to earlier times collapses under the overwhelming lack of evidence. Everything in this area of the sanctuary points to a break of continuity since there is no activity recorded and the place was covered with mud and sand after the late Hellenistic neglect of the sanctuary.²⁹ The current hypothesis is that during the reinvestment of the sanctuary, the long forgotten reservoir was rediscovered and reinterpreted as Palaimon's *adyton*.³⁰ The first phases of the sanctuary of Palaimon, while incorporating the reservoir, kept it distinct from any architectural development until the very last phase (phase V: 161-169 AD) when the second temple was built over it and a passage built in the podium to replace the manhole previously used.³¹

The overall picture seems plausible but problems still remain. Broneer was very keen to add the presence of water to the oath ritual described by Pausanias. This theory was criticised because the reservoir was no longer functioning at the time of the sanctuary.³² On the other hand, if water was not to be found in the underground passage anymore, why would the Roman builders of the second temple make the effort to apply watertight stucco on the walls of the corridor leading to the old reservoir? Piérart judged the crypt too small for the athletes to gather in and swear an oath, a ceremony which would generally be conducted collectively and publicly. He eventually insisted on the Roman recreation of the cult at Isthmia. But the oath mentioned by Pausanias need not be the one sworn by the Athletes, whether Palaimon was at the origin of the games or not.³³ Furthermore, Gebhard and Dickie

²⁹ Broneer (1973), 100; Piérart (1998), 102-103; Gebhard (2005), 189.

³⁰ The idea is from Piérart (1998), 103-104.

³¹ Gebhard (1993b), 3. The Hadrianic Temple of Palaimon: Gebhard (2005), 197-203, fig 6.7a-b.

³² Piérart (1998), 101 citing Broneer (1973), 308: 'the channel and the reservoirs supplied by it had fallen into disuse before the temenos wall was constructed'.

³³ Plutarch, *Thes.* 25.4; Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 46.40. Both mention the rites to Melikertes as being τελετή. Plutarch description of rituals done by night is confirmed by the many 'Palaimonion lamps' found on the site. Gebhard (2005), 194, 202-203.

demonstrated that the literary evidence of a heroic cult of Palaimon at Isthmia before Roman times does exist.³⁴ One of Pindar's fragments of the Isthmian odes reads:

They ordered Sisyphos, the son of Aiolos,
to establish an honour that can be seen from afar
for his dead child Melikertes.³⁵

The authors used these fragments and scholia as well as a comparison with the other Pan-hellenic sanctuaries, particularly Nemea and Olympia, to defend the idea that a heroic cult to Melikertes/Palaimon existed in association with the Isthmian games well before the Roman times.³⁶ Pache added that 'the Penteskouphia panels show that a narrative of the boy riding on the dolphin was present at Corinth from the mid-sixth century B.C. on'.³⁷



Fig. 51. Penteskouphia panel and drawing
(Berlin Staatliche Museum F779, in Pache [2004], 161).

³⁴ Gebhard & Dickie (1999), 161-162.

³⁵ Pindar, *Isthm.* fr.5 (Maehler). Translation from Pache (2004), 137:

Αιολίδαν δὲ Σίσυφον κέλονται
ὦ παιδί τηλέφαντον ὄρσαι
γέρας φθιμένῳ Μελικέρτῃ

³⁶ The funereal connotation of the pine crown given to the victors at Isthmia is another one. A cult to Palaimon before 146 BC might also have incorporated laments and songs around the 'tomb' of Melikertes. See Gebhard (2005), 174-181.

³⁷ Pache (2004), 176.

Although it is not possible to demonstrate the presence of the cult of Melikertes on the site of the stadium reservoir at an early period, it is surprising that no one mentioned the possibility of the association of Melikertes with the 'West Waterworks' of the classical sanctuary. It is true that there is nothing to identify by name the presence of the child hero in the small room, but the characteristics of the structure point to a chthonic, hence possibly heroic, cult; the snake vase is one, the underground nature of the room is another. The use of water is another striking feature closely associated with the myth of Melikertes/Palaimon. In some versions of the myth, the boy was dipped in a cauldron before dying in the sea. The whole myth evokes strongly the metaphors of immortality brought by death and water.³⁸ Had the room been used for oaths the same way the stadium reservoir was centuries later? The size of the room suggests a ritual performed on a rather small scale, maybe involving individual initiation (the mention of *teletai* by Plutarch and Aelius Aristides springs to mind).³⁹ Some fountains built in sanctuaries to Asklepios also show parallels with this (cave or cave-like structures, small size, small quantity of water provided). This has to remain highly hypothetical, although the association of water and Palaimon was also exemplified in the Roman baths in the northern part of the sanctuary. A monochrome mosaic discovered there and dated to the 2nd c. AD depicts a veiled woman riding tritons and a young winged boy riding a dolphin. These are conventional iconographies but, in the context of Roman Isthmia, they would not have failed to bring Ino and her child to one's mind.⁴⁰

³⁸ Halm-Tisserant (1993), 184-188: the different versions of the myth (dip in boiling cauldron, leap in the sea) share eventually the themes of resurrection and deification.

³⁹ Pache (2004), 144, 154, 156. *teletē*: see Plutarch, *Thes.* 25.4; Aelius Aristides, *Isthm.* 46.40; *telestikos*: Philostratos, *Heroikos* 207 (Kayser) = 53.4 (Lannoy)

⁴⁰ Monochrome mosaic: Packard (1980), 332-333, pls. 97-99.

2. Corinth

The city of Corinth is situated in one of the driest locations of mainland Greece and even the rest of Corinthia is noticeably more humid. But, as we have seen above, what the city lacked in rainfall it made up for its location's geology.⁴¹

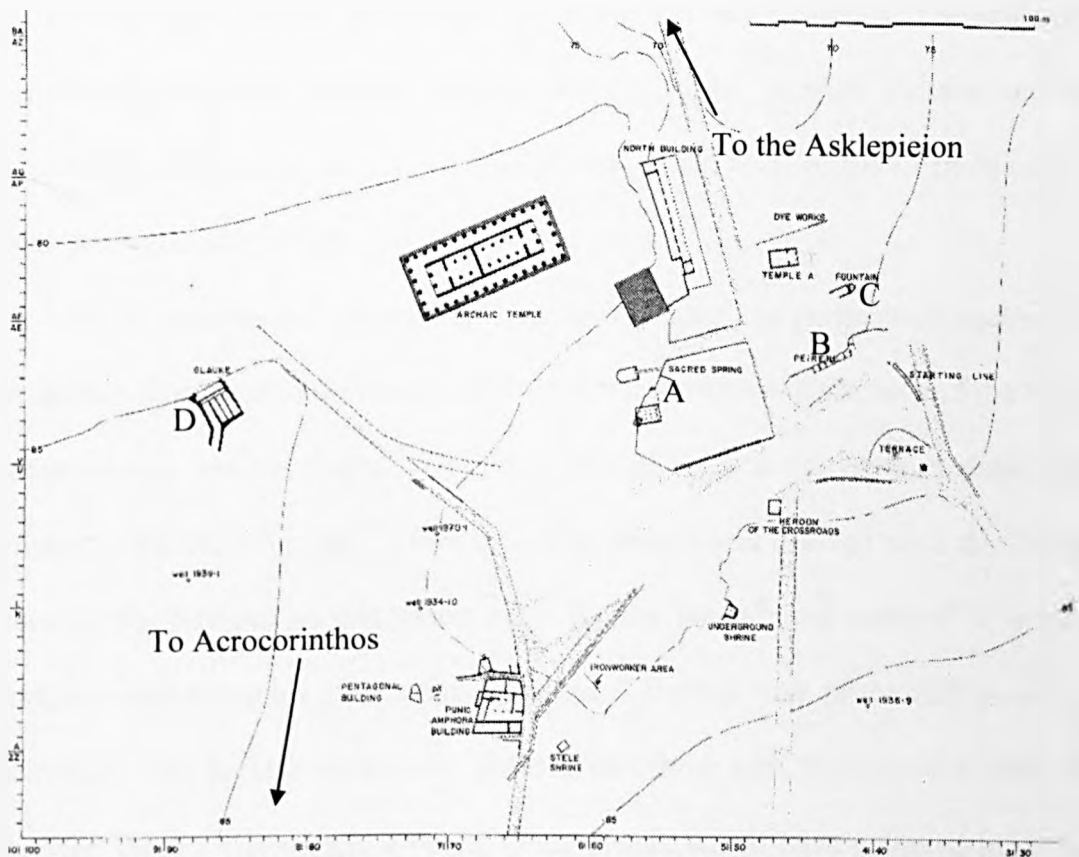


Fig. 52. General map of the Agora of Corinth in the 2nd 1/2 of the 5th c. BC. A. Sacred Spring. B. Peirene. C. Cyclopean Fountain. D. Glauke (from Bookidis [2003], xxv).

2.1. The Sacred Spring

From the Greek agora, a road ran north towards the Lechaion port of the Gulf of Corinth. A smaller street branched off at right angle from that road, to the left

⁴¹ Landon (2003), 44.

towards the large ramp that climbed up the hilltop where the Archaic temple was built. On this street, opposite the ramp, a sanctuary otherwise unknown from the literary accounts was discovered and excavated at the turn of the 20th c.⁴² It is today known as the sacred spring because of the small source of water that was capped and built over within the precinct. Its flow was never important but was somewhat increased in the usual Corinthian way; two tunnels were dug into the cliff face along the flow of water in order to channel it and make it more copious. The sanctuary occupied a prominent location, between the agora, the fountain Peirene and the temple of Apollo. It was a very complex shrine, at the heart of the Corinthian city, which put water at its centre.

If the site was occupied already in the Neolithic, the permanent sequence of occupation dates back to the Protocorinthian when the tunnel at the back of the future fountain-house was first built.⁴³ The first traces of cultic activity proper dates back perhaps to the late 6th c. BC.⁴⁴ From then it developed and evolved until the Roman attack of the city put an end to its use.⁴⁵ By the late 6th and early 5th c BC, the fountain-house became a monumental structure.⁴⁶ Built in front of the cliff as well as partly in it, this fountain-house was divided into three parts from west to east: the reservoir, the draw-basin and a porch where people would have gathered to collect water. The façade of the building was tristyle in antis with a pediment and would have appeared to surge out of the cliff.⁴⁷

⁴² This area of the Corinthian Agora was excavated at the turn of the 20th c. under the direction of B.H. Hill for the American School at Athens. Incidentally, it is on this site that stratigraphical techniques were introduced in mainland Greek archaeology. Hill (1964), vii. Pausanias did not mention it during his visit. By his time, the sanctuary was forgotten and covered by other structures.

⁴³ Williams (1971), 3.

⁴⁴ Williams (1970), 30; Williams (1978), 132.

⁴⁵ Hill (1964), 197; Williams (1970), 21.

⁴⁶ A more precise date for this first phase of the fountain has eluded the archaeologists. Williams (1971), 10: '(...) as yet no pottery has been found that can be associated directly with construction of the reservoir and the façade of the building.'

⁴⁷ Williams (1969), 38-40.

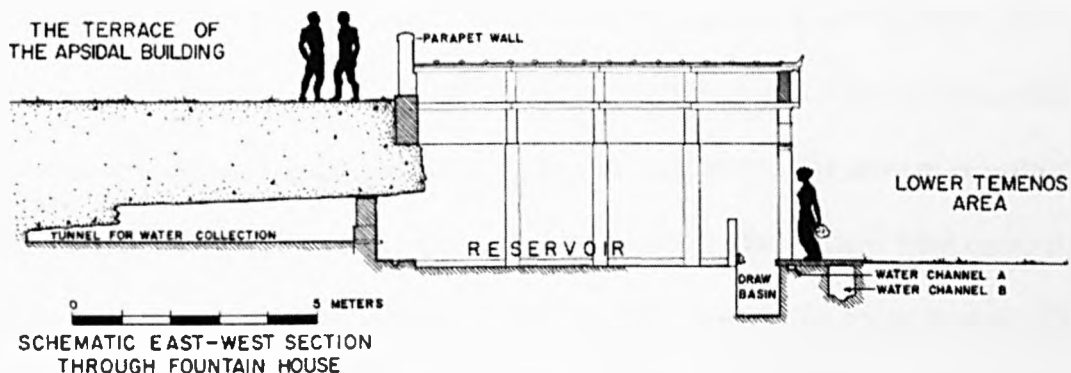


Fig. 53. The fountain at the Sacred Spring, phase 1 (from Williams [1969], pl. 12a).

At the same period, an apsidal building was built on top of the cliff and further to the north.⁴⁸ It shared roughly the same orientation as the fountain-house and possibly also very similar façades.⁴⁹ A small tunnel with a built-in water channel was dug from this building down to the west wall next to the entrance to the sanctuary.⁵⁰ Its function is still obscure and debated. What it clearly does however is physically link this building with the Sacred Spring complex. The association between the fountain-house and the apsidal building is further confirmed by later phases. Interestingly, it might be a reason why both of them were originally designed to have similar façades. From the entrance, the terrace wall on the right-hand side was decorated with a triglyph frieze. One of the frieze's metopes served as a door to access the tunnel and channel from the apsidal building.⁵¹

The subsequent phases of the sanctuary saw the fountain lose its peaked roof for a flat one on which people could have stood and accessed water through a well-

⁴⁸ Hill (1964), 129-137; Williams (1969), 43.

⁴⁹ An epistyle block reused in a Roman building was probably part of this building. If so, it tells us that the building was also tristyle in antis. Williams (1969), 41-43; Pfaff (2003), 123-4.

⁵⁰ The role of this area is evidenced by a horos stone found in situ. It was inscribed:

ἄσυλος μὴ καταβιβασκέτω ζαμία |||||

It was translated as 'Let no one descend'. The eight bars were interpreted as a potential fine of eight drachmas. Smith (1919), 353-357; Hill (1964), 143-144.

⁵¹ Hill (1964), 138-141. Hill suggested that the Greek builders took great pain to build this door in such a way that it was invisible to those who did not know its existence.

shaft. Water was no longer accessible from the front side of the fountain-house. This terrace was also linked to the upper level where the apsidal building stood. In the ultimate phases (late phase 6 to phase 8), the triglyph wall was extended diagonally over the old fountain-house, dividing it in two unequal parts. The eastern two-thirds of the reservoir were filled in and the terrace dismantled. The western third under the cliff remained accessible by a flight of stairs, going through the triglyph wall. The result restored in practicality the underground quality of the spring, one having to descend in it as if into a cave.

Other structures included a succession of four mud-altars in front of the fountain-house showing traces of fire and animal sacrifice (phase 3). A tunnel ran southwards from the southeast corner of the fountain-house. It was very similar to the tunnel from the apsidal building and also possessed a water channel. It was built (phase 3) as a replacement for a previous drain which brought water from the cliff on the south side of the sanctuary to a place somewhere northeast outside the sanctuary. To the south of the fountain-house was found a line of stone steps extending towards the eastern limits of the sanctuary and interpreted as seats (phase 2). They were replaced first by a new line of steps further north (phase 3), then by three lines of bleachers (final phase 3 to phase 7). The focal point of these consecutive structures were not the altars but the area more to the east which is thought to have been used as an open area for dramatic presentations, dances, or at any rate activities that required a large area and an audience.⁵² In the end, the southern boundary of the sanctuary was shifted to the north to allow the building of a new Hellenistic racetrack, burying in the process most of the old southern side of the precinct.

⁵² Williams (1971), 19, n. 12; Williams (1978), 134.

The sacredness of the spring is not to be doubted, at least since the 6th c. BC until 146 BC. The horos stone, the offerings, the complexity of the buildings and obviously the successive altars, provide enough evidence that the spot was sacred. But to borrow Williams' expression, if the archaeological data give a picture, they do not give a name.⁵³ The absence of specific literary or epigraphical evidence about the deity to which it was dedicated has left this sanctuary somewhat orphaned. Several possibilities have been raised since the excavations, motivated in particular by the curious tunnel and channel unearthed at the apsidal building. Bonner thought the channel was built in order to perform a 'pious fraud'; that is, to secretly mix water flowing from the apsidal building with wine. The worshippers gathered at the bottom of the channel would marvel at the Dionysiac miracle.⁵⁴ Elderkin suggested later the existence there of a *manteion* of Apollo because of the proximity of the temple on the hill he attributed to the god and because of the discovery of tripod bases on the triglyph wall.⁵⁵ In his hypothesis, sacred water from the spring was brought to the apsidal building which reproduced the cave and the priest would have drunk it to utter oracles, either in the building or at the end of the channel. Both ideas make interesting use of the tunnel and channel but fail to convince entirely. The first is that there is absolutely no evidence that the gods worshipped are Apollo or Dionysos despite the presence of the tripods. The further interpretation of the sanctuary as being oracular rests on thin ground; the presence of a spring, of a mysterious and complex structure and the proximity of a sanctuary of Apollo (yet to be fully proved) are not enough, in particular in the absence of any written evidence of an oracle existing in Corinth. These theories seem all the more gratuitous when the location of

⁵³ Williams (1978), 131.

⁵⁴ Bonner (1929), 369-374.

⁵⁵ Elderkin (1941), 126. The first to suggest a *manteion* was the excavator Hill, who suggested the strange shape of the temple end of the channel was a 'megaphone' used to voice oracles. This interpretation is seconded in Smith (1919), 356-57, n. 1.

the channel is taken into account. Why would such feats be performed immediately at the entrance of the sanctuary and not at its heart? I would agree with the general idea of the spring water being used in the apsidal building and then flowing through the channel to the small basin, but it would seem logical to expect this water to be used for purification since it is positioned at the entrance of the sanctuary, near a boundary stone. The sacred spring did not have an important flow and therefore an economical use of its sacred water is to be expected.

The more recent excavations directed by Williams gave no name but more clarity about the layout of the sanctuary. The free space to the east of the spring is now understood as a one maybe used for dramatic representations, dances or another group-based manifestation. This new element coupled with the restricted entrance to the sanctuary demonstrates circumstances normally found in Mystery cults. In the light of the new excavations, Williams ventured to follow an earlier thesis by Lisle and suggests that the sanctuary might have been that of Kotyto, one of the mythical daughters of King Timandreu who were killed by invaders.⁵⁶ Ann Steiner recently studied the pottery found in the sanctuary and was surprised by the fact that many of them were oil containers, offerings generally found in a funerary context and therefore almost never found in sanctuaries.⁵⁷ She noted that oil containers like them are often linked to bathing – a fact which suits this sanctuary well – but also insisted on their association with death and therefore maybe with a hero or heroine.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Schol. Theoc., *Id.* 6.40; Schol. Pindar, *Ol.* 12.56b; Lisle (1955), 104-106; (Williams [1978], 135-136; Steiner (1992), 387, 404-405. The dossier concerning Kotyto is a complex one and needs more than just a few lines. It is sufficient here to know that this cult was possibly orgiastic and required initiation by water. Both would be catered for by the Sacred Spring sanctuary.

⁵⁷ Steiner (1992), 402-403.

⁵⁸ Steiner (1992), 402.



Fig. 54. Sacred Spring: Triglyph wall and the entrance to the underground fountain (author's picture).

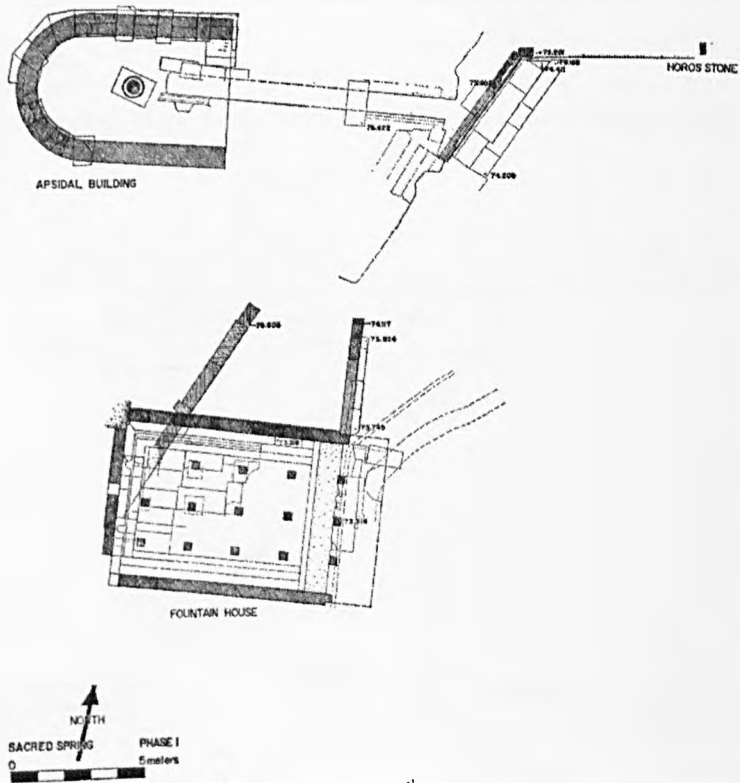


Fig. 55. Sacred Spring, phase I – before early 5th c. BC (from Williams [1969], 37, fig. 1).

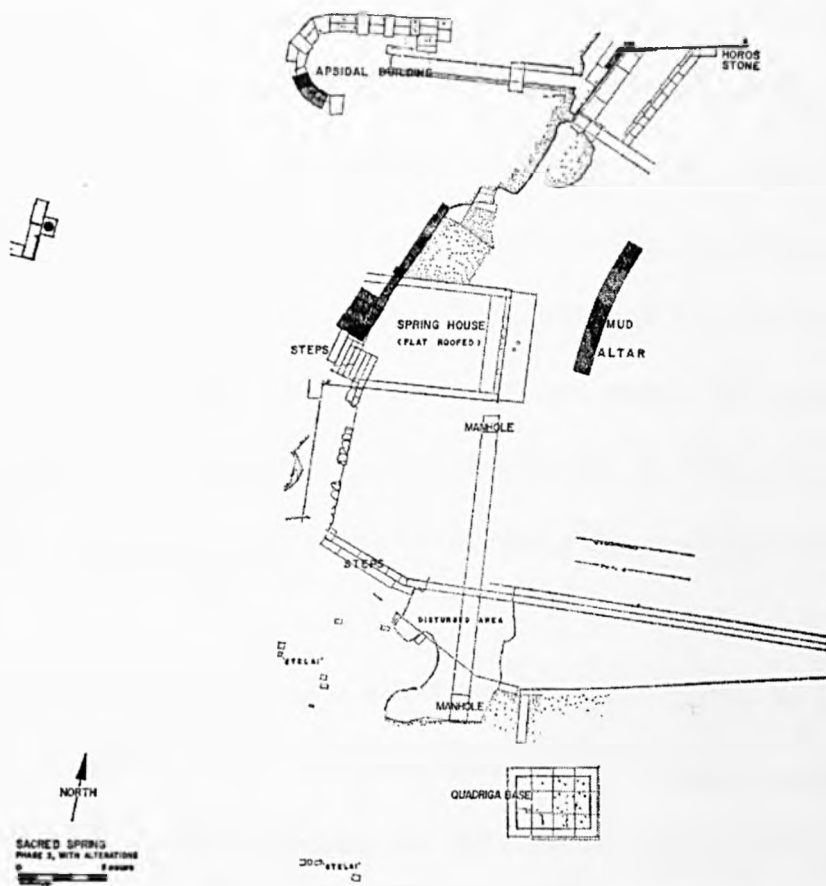


Fig. 56. Sacred Spring, phase 3 – first quarter of 4th c. BC (from Williams [1971], 12, fig. 6).

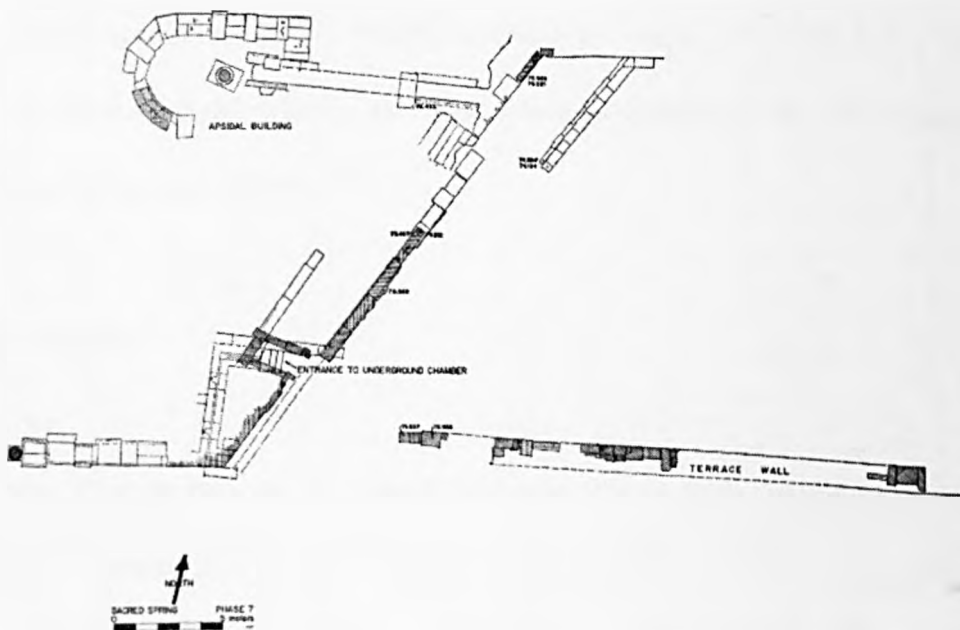


Fig. 57. Sacred spring, phase 7 – late 4th c. BC (from Williams [1969], 50, fig. 5).

As seduced as I am by the suggestion of Kotyto, I would like to advance another possibility; that of Palaimon/Melikertes. The absence of traces of holocausts in the sanctuary would only be a disadvantage for this possibility insofar as it was Melikertes the hero who was honoured and not his double, Palaimon the god. The presence of water and the possibility of a cult requiring initiation are other elements suiting the personality of the god. The immediate proximity of the stadium, finally, reminds us that he was honoured as the founder of the games at Isthmia. There would be nothing surprising in finding in Corinth a small precinct acting as a satellite for Isthmia.⁵⁹

The case remains unsolvable unless anything more conclusive arises in the future. What is clear however is the strong association with the underworld and the sanctuary. Apart from funerary pottery and the chthonic dimension of water drawn from a cave-like fountain, the triglyph wall itself acts as a reminder of the underground quality of the site. Triglyph friezes are commonplace in Greece, but not at eye-level. Architecturally, it would have been associated in Greek minds with the top of a building. Symbolically, this wall could have implied that there was more underground that meets the eye.⁶⁰

2.2. Peirene

The spring Peirene became so famous in Ancient times as to eventually become a symbol of Corinth. In Pindar, it was the 'city of Peirene' while Corinthians 'live

⁵⁹ Paus. 2.3.4. In Pausanias' time, statues of Poseidon, Leukothea and Palaimon on his dolphin were seen on the Lechaion road, therefore not far from where the Sacred Spring precinct would have stood. Unfortunately, one can hardly make any conclusions from this presence.

⁶⁰ I owe this suggestion to G. Sanders.

around beautiful Peirene' in Herodotos.⁶¹ Pausanias is the only ancient source who gives description of its location:⁶²

On leaving the market-place along the road to Lechaeum you come to a gateway (...).

A little farther away from the gateway, on the right as you go in, is a bronze

Heracles. After this is the entrance to the water of Peirene. The legend about Peirene

is that she was a woman who became a spring because of her tears shed in

lamentation for her son Cenchrias, who was unintentionally killed by Artemis.

The spring and fountain were finally rediscovered by excavations conducted in 1898 and later.⁶³ The massive ruins of the fountain are on the site of a natural spring, flowing from the same cliff face as the smaller sacred spring further to the West.⁶⁴ In all probability the spring was used as early as the Archaic period, maybe even earlier, and its already large flow was increased by the digging of an extensive network of tunnels and channels. It was progressively enlarged until Roman times when Pausanias visited it in its large and ostentatious phase.

The religious dimension of the spring and fountain is less obvious than its architectural and civic importance. It largely derives from mythical connections. The name Peirene, as Pausanias tells us, comes from a woman who was the mother of a youth killed by Artemis, who wept at the death of her son Kenchrias and was transformed by the goddess into the eponymous spring. The mythical motif is well-known and the 'woman' mentioned by Pausanias could very well be the nymph of

⁶¹ Pindar, *Ol.* 13.61: ἐν ἄστει Πειράνας. Herodotos, 5.92.2: οἱ περὶ καλὴν Πειρήνην οἰκεῖτε

⁶² Paus. 2.3.2 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

⁶³ Hill (1964), 7, 11; Landon (2003), 45-46.

⁶⁴ Hill (1964), 15.

the spring.⁶⁵ In Euripides, Peirene's waters are *semnon*, which could mean august or holy.⁶⁶ Alexander Aetolus used the adjective ἀλφεισίβοιος to describe its waters. This word meaning 'bringer of oxen' is found in Homer in relation to maidens who bring a great dowry and, in Alexander's fragment, Peirene has nourished (θηλήσει) the son of Melissos.⁶⁷ The links here made with marriage is clear, as well as the notion of Peirene being *kourotrophos*.



Fig. 58. Coins figuring the fountain of Bellerophon.
Coin XXXII also figures Artemis (from Imhoof-Blumer & Gardner [1885], pl. LI).

Another tradition implies that the spring was the spot where Pegasus was caught and tamed by Bellerophon.⁶⁸ The mythical episode was commemorated in Roman times by a fountain described by Pausanias. It was next to the statue of Artemis Huntress, near the Baths on the right of the Lechaion road, some 150 m. north of the excavated

⁶⁵ Bacchylides, *Epinicians* Ode 9 tells of the many daughters of the river Asopos, among which he names Peirene, sister of Thebes and Aegina. Pausanias (2.2.3) reports other genealogies where Peirene is either daughter of the Acheloos or, according to the *Ehoiai*, daughter of Oebalus.

⁶⁶ Eur., *Tro.* 205-6: ἡ Πειρήνας ὑδρευσομένα πρόσπολος οἰκτρὰ σεμνῶν ὑδάτων.

⁶⁷ Alexander Aetolus fr. in Parthenios, *Narrationum Amatoriarum* 14.1-13; Hom. *Il.* 18.593; *Hom. Hymn. Ven.* 119. Actaeon, the son of Melissos, is unnamed in the fragment but his story is told by Plutarch (*Am. Narr.* 2). *Alphesiboios* is also in Aesch., *Supp.* 854-57 in the sense of water that gives life.

⁶⁸ Pindar, *Ol.* 13.61-66; Eur., *Electra* 475 called Pegasus the 'colt of Peirene' (Πειρηναῖον πῶλον). Pausanias (2.4.1,5) also tells us that there was a sanctuary of Athena Chalinitis (bridler) near the Theatre. She was called so because she helped Bellerophon to capture Pegasus.

hoof of the horse Pegasus'.⁶⁹ The statue was perhaps the one represented on a series of Roman coins.⁷⁰

2.3. The Cyclopean fountain

A few metres north of the fountain of Peirene, another fountain was discovered in the 1908 and 1910 campaigns.⁷¹ It was fed by the overflow of Peirene's draw basins running through a channel inserted in a terrace wall east of Peirene. Thence it connected with another channel which flowed into a basin built within an artificial grotto. The large irregular blocks used for the construction of the fountain gave its modern name of 'cyclopean fountain'. Hill thought that the entrance to the fountain was originally almost level with the basin, although later it seems that it was accessed by a ramp or a stairway set between walls. The chronology of the building is rather obscure.⁷² The grotto-shaped fountain is a striking structure and although there is no evidence of it having religious importance so far, it is almost impossible not to wonder whether it had been connected with rituals.

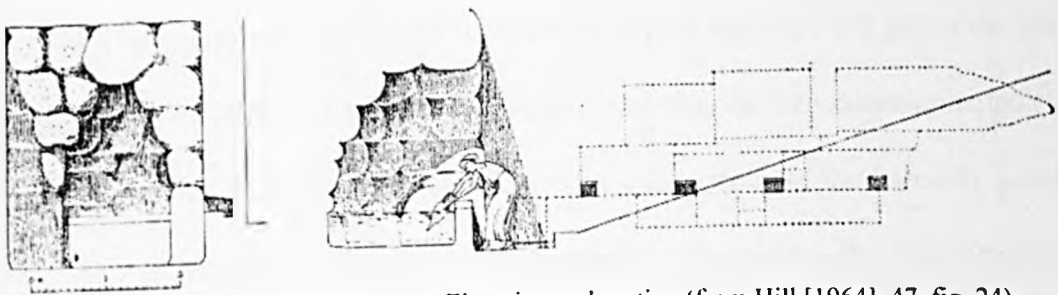


Fig. 59. The Cyclopean fountain – Elevation and section (from Hill [1964], 47, fig. 24).

⁶⁹ Paus. 2.3.5 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

⁷⁰ Imhoof-Blumer & Gardner (1885), 62-63 and pl. LI, # xxxi-xxxii; Musti & Torelli (2000), 224.

⁷¹ Hill (1964), 13.

⁷² Hill (1964), 46: 'It is probably the earliest built fountain extant that drew water from Peirene'. Pfaff (2003), 135.

2.4. Glauke

The fountain of Glauke is today one of the most visible buildings on the Corinthian agora. It emerges as a monolithic block west of the temple hill to which it was primitively attached before the rock was quarried. Its identification is not debated, thanks to Pausanias' account, but its erection date is more problematic. While the excavators and subsequent publications were keen on dating it to the Archaic period, Williams suggested it should be down-dated to Roman times.⁷³ Pfaff has more recently been a partisan of a middle way, notably by showing that the waterproof cement used in the reservoirs and the draw-basin of the fountain was of a Greek-style found elsewhere in Corinth.⁷⁴

This last up-dating opens the possibility that the fountain had a religious importance in Greek times, the hypothesis that Williams' down-dating had contributed to refute.⁷⁵ In Pausanias' description, the fountain was the scene of the mythical death of Glauke; in one of the story's versions, the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, was poisoned by Medea because of Jason's remarriage to her and, according to Pausanias, she threw herself in the fountain that was then named after her.⁷⁶ Will suggested that while the fountain of Glauke had been cut out of the cliff, a Greek temple of Hera was built over that cliff and that the two communicated.⁷⁷ He also believed that rituals at the Heraion must have incorporated the fountain, possibly in relation to Medea's children who, according to Pausanias, she had buried in a

⁷³ Williams and Zervos (1984), 99. He has since then abandoned this idea. Landon (2003), 48, n. 21, suggests a Hellenistic building date and refutes the usual dating to Archaic times.

⁷⁴ Pfaff (2003), 134: e.g. 'the walls of the 5th-century B.C. Painted Building at the north side of Temple Hill'.

⁷⁵ Williams and Zervos (1984), 100.

⁷⁶ Paus. 2.3.6; Eur., *Medea* 1125-1221, followed by Apollodoros 1.9.28.

⁷⁷ Will (1955), 90-91.

sanctuary of Hera, hoping to make them immortal.⁷⁸ For this theory, Will goes with Scranton's conclusions but against the later opinion that the opening in the roof of the fountain had been enlarged and supplied with stairs only in medieval times when it had been converted into a house.⁷⁹ Moreover, the description of Pausanias seems to locate and associate the *mnema* of Medea's children more closely with the theatre than with the fountain.⁸⁰ This *mnema* need not be a tomb but could simply be a memorial. Ménadier places Medea's children's tomb and cult entirely at Perachora.⁸¹ This theory of a shrine to Hera built over the fountain of Glauke has so far failed to convince.⁸²

2.5. The Asklepieion

North of the city centre, just within the Hellenistic city walls and at the rim of another of Corinth's terraces, stood the sanctuary of Asklepios that was closely associated with a large structure usually known today as the fountain of Lerna.⁸³ In Archaic times, a small temple stood there which was almost certainly dedicated to Apollo. A small krater, recovered from a 6th c. BC deposit in a shallow cutting a short distance north-east of the temple, is inscribed 'Ἀπέ[λ]λονος ἰμί.⁸⁴ Near the cutting a well had been dug some time later and remained in use until the late 4th c. BC. There

⁷⁸ Will (1955), 99 based on Paus. 2.3.10-11 = Eumelos fr. 20,23 (West); Schol. Pindar, *Ol.* 13.74f = Eumelos fr. 17 (West). Will follows the observations and conclusions made by Stilwell et al. (1941), 151, 156-158, 162.

⁷⁹ Hill (1964), 213, 227.

⁸⁰ Paus. 2.3.7. Williams & Zervos (1984), 104 against Stilwell et al. (1941), 151-165 and Scranton (1951), 71.

⁸¹ Ménadier (1995), 202-209. See also Johnston (1997), 46-48. See also n. 142 below.

⁸² See Bookidis (2003), 254 n. 63.

⁸³ The site was excavated by de Waele in 1929-34 and published by Roebuck in 1951. The identification of Lerna derives from Pausanias (2.4.5): 'Not far from this theatre is the ancient gymnasium, and a spring called Lerna. Pillars stand around it, and seats have been made to refresh in summer time those who have entered it. By this gymnasium are temples of Zeus and Asclepius.'

⁸⁴ Roebuck (1951), 15-16, #1, fig. 4; Lang (1977), 3-4, fig. 2.

well had been dug some time later and remained in use until the late 4th c. BC. There is very little left from this phase of the sanctuary; there are only cuttings in the bedrock to allow us to attempt any reconstruction of the buildings.⁸⁵ A small drain appeared to have been dug in the ground-rock, starting from the centre of the temple, maybe next to the altar and statues, and finishing its course into a settling basin south-east of the temple. It is believed to have been an underground drain used for the libations poured in the temple. One can also wonder if it could have been used for other rituals such as the ceremonial bathing of the cult statue.⁸⁶

The settling basin emptied into a larger channel running west to east. The channel started about a metre west of the basin and was traced on ca 21 m. east of it. It was probably used to drain structures the traces of which have now largely disappeared. Excavators suspect that there was a water basin there, perhaps supplied by a pipe running parallel to the drain channel some 2.40 m. south of it. A gutter that was connected to the drain was destroyed by the shallow cutting in which the 6th c. BC deposit was made, thus dating it alongside the drain and the temple 'before the middle of the sixth century'.⁸⁷ A well was later dug through the cutting and remained in use until it was filled in the late 4th c. Another well, north of the temple, shows a similar style of cutting and was also filled in at the same time.⁸⁸ The early sanctuary to Apollo was thus equipped to be provided with water. Determining a reason for building this equipment other than the usual cultic requirements of any sanctuary is

⁸⁵ The nature of the building is debated. The excavator (de Waele) suggested a small naïskos, an idea rejected by Roebuck who preferred an open air shrine. Pfaff recently argued in favour of a small temple, perhaps prostyle, but without de Waele's columns in antis. Roebuck (1951), 8-12; Pfaff (2003), 125-127.

⁸⁶ The location of the drain 'head' right next to the altar or ceremonial table (see plan of the cuttings in Roebuck [1951], 9, fig. 2 or Lang [1977], 4, fig. 3) argues in favour of a ritual use of the drain rather than a simple utilitarian device, such as the cleaning of the temple. The bath of statues is a practice well-known in ancient Greece. See for example the article by Lilly Kahil (1994) largely inspired, if not more, by Ginouvès (1962).

⁸⁷ Roebuck (1951), 22.

⁸⁸ Roebuck (1951), 14-15, fig. 2.

dimension of the sanctuary before the arrival of Asklepios is a fairly strong possibility, in which case water could have been very useful to the sanctuary indeed.

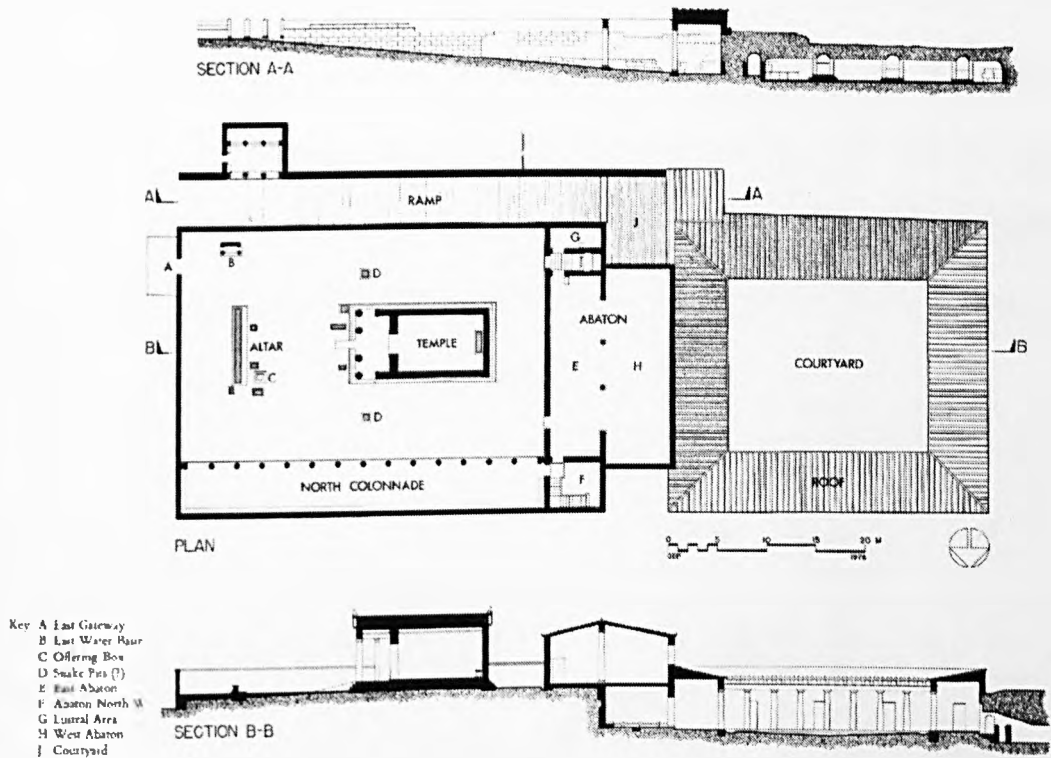


Fig. 60. Plan and west-east sections of the sanctuary of Asklepios Hellenistic phase (from Lang [1977], 16-7, fig. 15).

In the late 4th C. BC the sanctuary was extensively transformed, with votives clearly showing that the medicine god Asklepios had then become at least the main deity if not the only one. The transition from the cult of Apollo to the cult of his son is not very clear and the former might have received a cult until late in Classical times while the latter probably appeared some time in the late 5th c. and progressively supplanted his predecessor.⁸⁹ A new larger temple was built over the old one and new buildings erected. In the south east corner of the sanctuary, not far from the entrance, a small basin was built within a porch-like structure. It received water from

⁸⁹ Roebuck (1951), 22, 154.

a terracotta pipe coming from the east and was probably used for preliminary ablutions by those entering the sacred space.⁹⁰

At the same time, within the same building programme, a large fountain-house identified as Pausanias' Lerna was erected west of the temple and on the lower terrace. The structure, organised around a square courtyard, abutted the cliff to the south and the east. It was accessible on its north side and its south-eastern corner; in the latter case by a ramp leading to the sanctuary level. On the south side, five reservoirs were dug into the cliff in addition to a spring house. The spring itself very probably existed before this arrangement.⁹¹

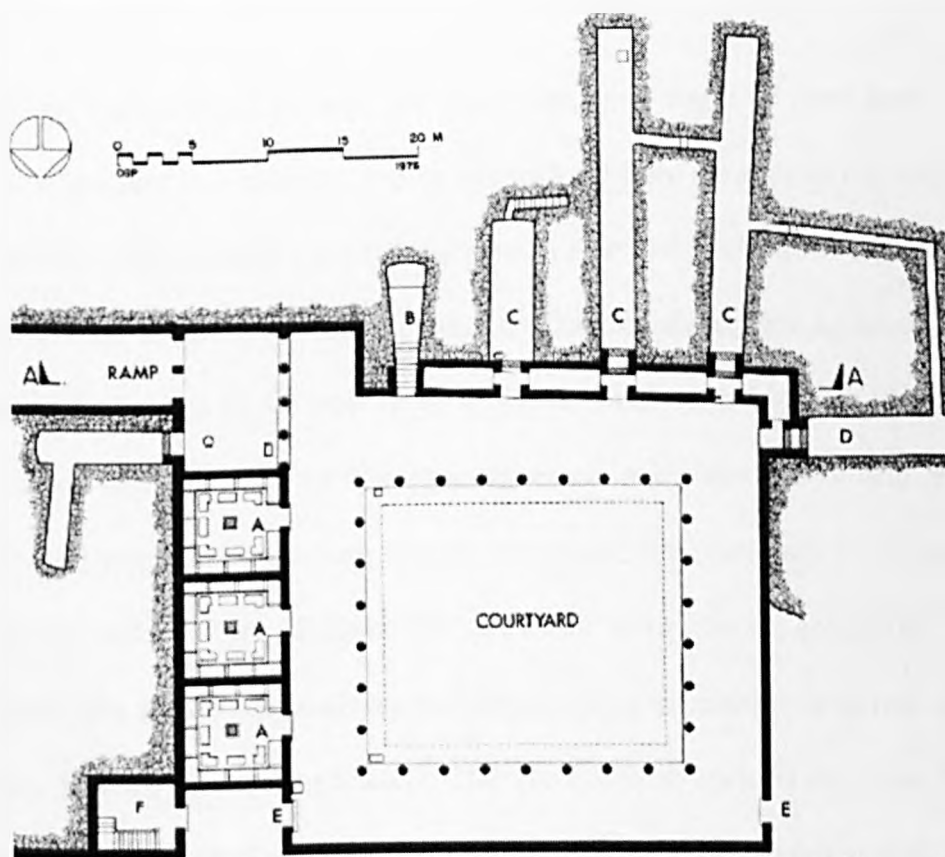


Fig. 61. Plan of the 'Lerna' complex with courtyard, dining-rooms (A), spring (B) and reservoirs (C-D) (from Lang [1977], 13, fig. 13).

⁹⁰ New temple: See Roebuck (1951), 30-39; Lang (1977), 10. East water basin: See Roebuck (1951), 26-28 and again Lang (1977), 10. For the different uses of water in sanctuaries of Asklepios see Cole (1988), 163.

⁹¹ Identification as Lerna in Paus. 2.4.5. Lerna is studied in the chapter 4 and the ramp in chapter 3 of Roebuck (1951), 85-110. For the spring house see pp. 96-99 and fig. 25, for the reservoirs see pp. 102-106.



Fig. 62. The lustral rooms and the temple – view from southwest (from Roebuck [1951], pl. 13.2).

The spring was accessed through the south wall by a flight of nine steps leading down to a platform into a small cave. Water trickled from the rock at the back of the cave and was collected into a reservoir separated from the platform by a parapet. The reservoirs were arranged around the southern half of the square so as to provide symmetrical openings in the wall. They collected water both from the ground level above them and (at least for the interconnected reservoirs III, IV and V) from underground water through a long system of tunnels. The reservoirs III, IV and V had draw basins built in front of them. The other two were directly accessible. On the east side of the square, a two-storey building acted as an architectural link with the sanctuary situated on higher ground.⁹² The ground floor opening onto the fountain square was divided into three dining rooms. The top floor, on the other hand, opened on its east side towards the sanctuary's esplanade. This floor was tentatively identified as the sanctuary's *abaton* where Asklepios' worshippers would sleep in order to find a cure. Smaller rooms were built in the north and south wings of the

⁹² It is called the Abaton building in Roebuck (1951), 42-57; Lang (1977), 10-11.

building. The north one is thought to have housed a staircase leading down to the lower level, thus connecting the spring house with the sanctuary.

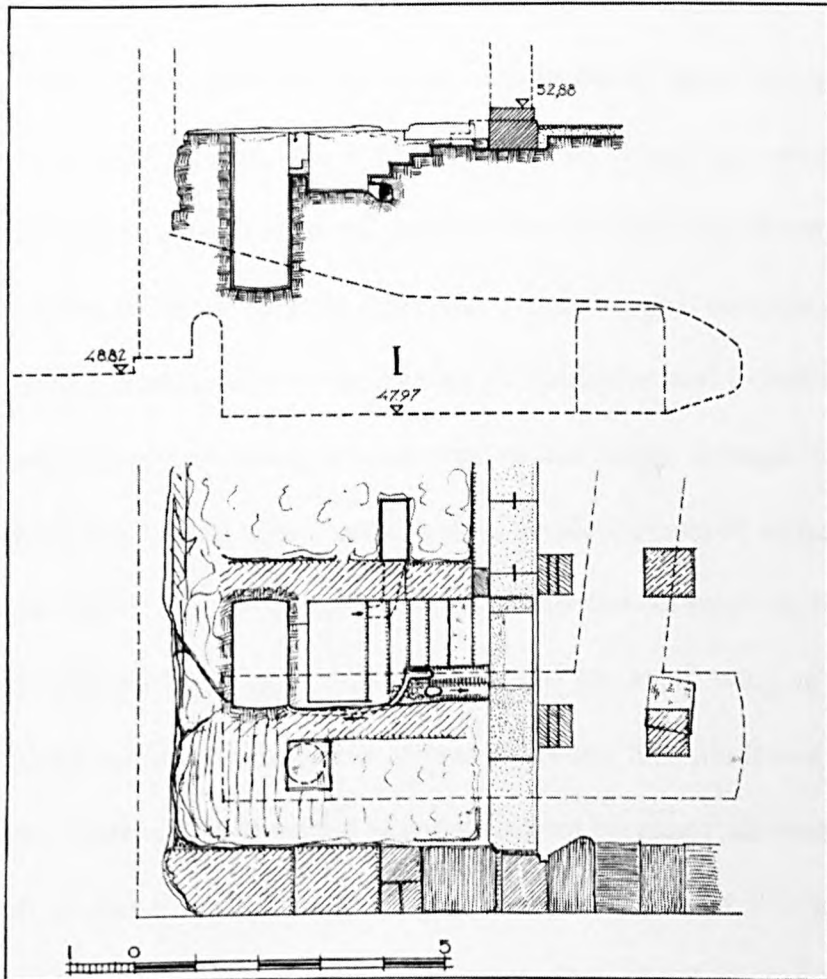


Fig. 63. The 'lustral' room, plan and section (from Roebuck [1951], 47 fig. 11).

In the south wing were two small rooms. The one further south had a circular shaft in the ground which opened down to the reservoir below. The other was a narrow and small room, where one would walk down a short flight of six stairs leading to a small platform in front of a basin cut into the rock and lined with waterproof cement (fig. 62-63). It was in effect similar to an underground fountain with flowing water, brought in by the same pipe that fed the basin in the sanctuary's courtyard. The pipe

arrived under the second stair above the platform, emptied its contents into a small channel cut into the south wall of the room which in turn fed the draw basin. Two drains put at different levels, one in the platform, the other under the fourth stair, brought the spilled or excess water back into a shaft where it was stored.

This room, as suggested by Roebuck, was probably meant to reproduce the feeling of being inside a cave. The care taken over its design and erection and its position within the sanctuary are strong points in favour of its religious importance.⁹³ There is no written evidence about its particular use, although it matches comparable devices in other contemporaneous sanctuaries of Asklepios and therefore could be interpreted accordingly. A crack in the rock of the basin through to the shaft eventually made the 'lustral room' useless. This accident occurred sometime in the Hellenistic period (3rd c. BC?), perhaps very early after the construction of the room. The platform and the basin were then filled in and the south wing of the abaton possibly used for storage. Roebuck has offered to see the fountain house built in the 3rd c. BC in the south wall of the ramp as a replacement because it showed 'very little sign of wear, so that it must have had a restricted use'.⁹⁴ Whilst it is true that the abaton does not seem to have had any lustral room after the old one was abandoned, this suggestion suffers from the important differences in size, type and location between the two structures. The latter was an open fountain prominently placed on the ramp towards the Lerna complex, while the 'lustral room' was a small enclosed part of the sanctuary with direct access to the abaton.

The possibility given to the worshippers to access water directly in the sanctuary brought Roebuck to make a clear distinction between a sacred area and the

⁹³ Roebuck (1951), 48.

⁹⁴ Roebuck (1951), 50-51, 69-74: this fountain, built later than the ramp, consisted of an anteroom and a narrow draw basin. The water inlets have now disappeared. In all probability, water was piped from the south into a reservoir located around the south and west sides of the fountain from which it flowed into the draw basin.

Lerna complex. This dichotomy was thus exemplified by the building of the abaton: 'in the upper storey [of the abaton], entered from the precinct, was the sacred part of the building used for incubation. In the lower storey were the dining rooms opening from the colonnades where the visitors might find rest and refreshment during the day'.⁹⁵ The fact that Lerna and its water were accessible to many is very probable; that it was not 'sacred' is more problematic. Several factors point at a more subtle division: the only natural source of water of the whole area is the cave spring in Lerna. It was, interestingly, the spot chosen in later times by Christians to build a chapel. Furthermore, the dining rooms could very well be an integral part of the sanctuary as is the case in many sanctuaries elsewhere in Greece and in Corinth. Lastly, the development of the Asklepieian cult in the Hellenistic period made a wide use of water treatments and, as Lang rightly suggested, the ramp leading down to the fountain was 'suitable to the lame, the halt and the blind'.⁹⁶ I would, in conclusion, argue in favour of seeing the sanctuary of Asklepios, fountain and courtyard as a whole.⁹⁷

2.6. Kokkinovrysi: the spring of the Nymphs

To the northwest of ancient Corinth, just outside the walls on the road to Sikyon, an Archaic stele-shrine was discovered in the immediate proximity of a spring called today Kokkinovrysi.⁹⁸ The shrine consisted of a stele associated with offerings

⁹⁵ Roebuck (1951), 55. On p. 25 he also wrote: 'Originally, however, it is probable that Lerna was regarded in some degree as the secular part of the establishment.'

⁹⁶ Lang (1977), 12.

⁹⁷ Wiseman (1970), 137 has already questioned the identification of the fountain as Lerna in these terms: 'The identification of the fountain beside the Asklepieion as Lerna has always been troublesome because it is so closely tied to the sanctuary. It seems, indeed, far more an adjunct of the Asklepieion than a public fountain house'. He is followed in this by Williams and Zervos (1984), 103.

⁹⁸ The shrine, largely unpublished, was excavated in the years 1962 and 1963. Daux (1963), 724-5 is a French translation of Robinson, 'Excavations at Corinth', *ArchDelt* 18 (1963) [1965], 77-78; Daux

buried in a pit (believed to be a *favissa*), the majority of which are terracotta figurines of female dancers arranged in circle around a flute-player.⁹⁹ This type of offering seems characteristic of a cult to the nymphs and the proximity of the spring could support this identification. Williams also believed that the ‘stele’ rather used to serve as a base for a small statue. The shrine is believed to have been founded in the 6th c. BC.¹⁰⁰ Immediately north of the terrace where the shrine was, a channel was built through it to bring rain water and possibly also the overflow from the spring. North of the terrace wall a reservoir was built, dated to the 4th c. BC. It does not seem to have had any religious use.¹⁰¹



Fig. 64. Terracotta dancers and flute player from the Kokkinovrysi shrine (from Merker [2003], 237, fig 14.8).

(1964), 705, 708; Williams (1981), 409-410; Landon (2003), 60 #22, fig. 3.2; Merker (2003), 237, fig. 14.8; Bookidis (2003), 251 n. 43, 253 and fig. 15.2.

⁹⁹ The figurines are from the early 5th c. to the mid-4th c. BC. N. Robertson, ‘Excavation at Kokkinovrysi near Corinth, 1962-63’, *AJA* 68 (1964), 200.

¹⁰⁰ Bookidis (2003), 253.

¹⁰¹ Daux (1963), 724-725.

3. Acrocorinth

3.1. The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore

On his way to the summit of the Acrocorinth, the dramatic rocky hill dominating the south of ancient Corinth, Pausanias described sanctuaries in the order he saw them. In doing so, he gave the earliest and only explicit literary reference to the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth.¹⁰² The site lies some 300 m. above the last spring on the otherwise dry slope of the Acrocorinth which does not allow for its convenient use.¹⁰³ The sanctuary is attested as early as the 8th c. BC and remained in activity until 146 BC and the destruction of Corinth, with the period of greatest activity from the 6th to the 4th c. BC.¹⁰⁴ This site owes its mention in this survey to the bathing facilities discovered in association to the many dining rooms it possessed in the lowest of its three terraces.

These dining rooms are remarkable for their large number and relatively small sizes. While their important number indicates that a large amount of diners were catered for in total, they were never meant to each accommodate large parties and were each self-sufficient. This type of organisation is the main specificity of the sanctuary.¹⁰⁵ The first dining rooms appeared in the 6th c. BC and the first contiguous bathing room was built in the early 5th c. BC. The bathing rooms became common in the late 5th c. and, finally, all dining rooms had one by the late 4th c. BC.¹⁰⁶ They had a water-proof cement floor elevated from the rest of the floor, with a raised lip on the

¹⁰² Paus. 2.4.7. Other literary sources mention Demeter and Kore at Corinth, but not the sanctuary. See Bookidis (1997), 1-2.

¹⁰³ Bookidis (1997), 5-6, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Bookidis (1997), 425, 434. The sanctuary has a second life in the Roman period until the 4th c. AD. See Bookidis (1997), 437-39.

¹⁰⁵ See Bookidis (1997), 393.

¹⁰⁶ Bookidis (1997), 402-403. A 6th c. BC might have been used for washing but it has not been ascertained.

open side and a drain along the wall. Such an arrangement suggests that the whole body was washed as opposed to simpler topical ablutions and would have required a small basin or a servant pouring water over the bather.¹⁰⁷ Where the water was sourced is a more problematic question. On the lower terrace only three rain-fed cisterns – the earliest dated to the second half of the 5th c. BC – and in the other two terraces only one Hellenistic cistern and a well, probably Roman, were found. Before that, the spring situated 300 m. below the sanctuary is a possible source but hardly a convenient one. This is a striking problem in particular since spring water was generally preferred to rain water.

Another interesting fact concerning the importance of water at this sanctuary is the important presence in the Hellenistic period of votive miniature hydriai. ‘Second only to the kalathos, miniature unpainted hydriai now become numerous enough as offering to suggest that water may have been important in the ritual’.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, the picture of this sanctuary’s cult is incomplete but, because of the often initiatory nature of cults to Demeter, one would expect a certain amount of purification to occur, as was the case for example at the lesser mysteries at Athens.¹⁰⁹ The Hellenistic hydriai might also point at a more feminine side of the cult, unless they are a reflection of the importance of water for agriculture.¹¹⁰

3.2. Aphrodite and the upper Peirene

The only source of water within the walls of the Acrocorinth was very near its summit. The upper Peirene, as it is called, is said by Pausanias to be ‘behind’ the

¹⁰⁷ Bookidis (1997), 403-404. Ginouvès (1962), 151-56. No fragment of tub was found in the sanctuary.

¹⁰⁸ Bookidis (1997), 433; Bookidis (1987), 29.

¹⁰⁹ The separation of functions on the different terraces might suggest the organisation of the sanctuary according to different stages of rituals, maybe for an initiation. See Bookidis (1997), 427.

¹¹⁰ See Cole (2001), 204-205.

temple of Aphrodite.¹¹¹ The link with the goddess and her sanctuary seems however more topographical than cultic while the spring was important to the whole of the Acrocorinth, its water allowing settlement on top of the mountain. There is however evidence that the spring had a religious dimension, at least at a later date.

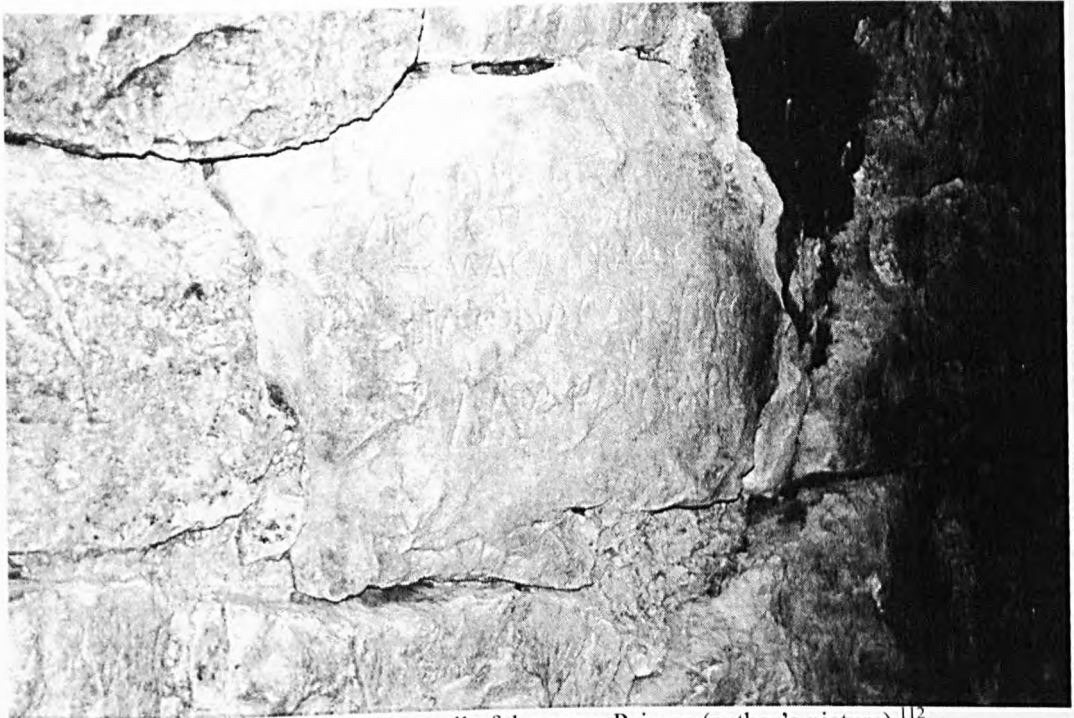


Fig. 65. Inscription on a wall of the upper Peirene (author's picture).¹¹²

The inscriptions on the walls of the underground spring have been known for a long time but they were finally completely studied during the American excavations in 1926.¹¹³ These inscriptions, all containing the expressions ἐμνήσθη and some also ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ, proved to belong to a type of very formulaic inscription found elsewhere in

¹¹¹ Paus. 2.5.1: τὴν δὲ πηγὴν, ἣ ἐστὶν ὀπισθεν τοῦ ναοῦ, δῶρον μὲν Ἀσωποῦ λέγουσιν εἶναι, δοθῆναι δὲ Σισύφῳ. The location 'behind the temple' has led Blegen to suggest that the temple could have been open towards the north (Blegen [1930], 20-21). The other possibility is that Pausanias placed the spring behind the temple because he was describing the Acrocorinth as seen from Corinth.

¹¹² Broneer (1930), 50-51, #1:
 Ἐμνήσθη(α)ν
 Εὐπορ(ο)ς τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ ἀδελφοῦ,
 Ἀπελλᾶς Νήψιδος,
 Φιλωνᾶς Διονυσίου,
 μαρμαράριοι.

¹¹³ Broneer (1930), 50 and n. 2: Cyriacus of Ancona is the first to mention seeing the inscriptions in the 15th c. AD.

Greece, Epirus and above all in Egypt, on the legs of the 'Vocal Memnon' near Thebes.¹¹⁴ They are expressions, in the words of Broneer, of 'a vicarious act of worship on behalf of those whose names are "remembered"'.¹¹⁵ The fact that all such inscriptions of known origin found outside Corinth were found at or near a shrine should allow the identification of the spring as a religious site. The inscriptions were difficult to date and Broneer has suggested an alignment with that of the Egyptian inscriptions, themselves dated between the reigns of Nero and that of Septimus Severus.¹¹⁶



Fig. 66. The reservoir of the upper Peirene (author's picture).

¹¹⁴ On the statues see for example Heizer et al., 'The Colossi of Memnon Revisited', *Science*, New Series, 182 (1973), 1219-20, or A. Gardiner, 'The Egyptian Memnon', *JEA* 47 (1961), 91-99.

¹¹⁵ Broneer (1930), 57-59.

¹¹⁶ Broneer (1930), 60.

It is harder to prove the antiquity of this religious aura. The sources locating the mythical episode of Bellerophon capturing Pegasus at this spring on the Acrocorinth are late in date, the earliest being Strabo. These same myths were, before Strabo, attributed to the 'true' Peirene in the Corinthian agora.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, whether Blegen and Broneer were right about the late mythical attributions to the spring or not, the upper Peirene remains the only natural water-supply existing on top of the Acrocorinth and as such has probably permitted the early human occupation of the site. If it is not enough to attribute to the spring a religious significance before the evidence of the inscriptions, it should be fairly safe to suggest that it was an important and life-supporting landmark of the Acrocorinth.

4. Perachora

The Heraion at Perachora was established at the tip of a rocky peninsula, situated directly across the gulf from Corinth. The site is completely devoid of natural water resources; it was therefore pointed out that the choice of this site had been such because it was a convenient harbouring stop on the maritime route to the west. The harbour at Perachora was, however, far too small to have been used by large ships which instead would have anchored outside in the bay. Smaller boats could on the other hand harbour, probably only to disembark men and goods. Eventually, the main entry point to the sanctuary seems to have been by land from the east. Nevertheless,

¹¹⁷ Broneer (1930), 59. Peirene on Acrocorinthos where Pegasus is drinking from the spring: Strabo 8.6.21. Peirene (which one is unclear) created by Pegasus striking the earth: Dio Chrys., *Orat.* 36.46; Statius, *Theb.* 4.60-61. See also n. 67-68 above.

the peninsula did not as a consequence lose its importance as a landmark, in particular from the viewpoint of Corinth and its maritime interests.¹¹⁸



Fig. 67. The promontory of Perachora as seen from ancient Corinth (author's picture).

The presence of this waterless site in the survey can be justified by the very important efforts that were made architecturally to offset the absence of water. The questions these efforts raise in terms of importance of water for the sanctuary's life and rituals are particularly relevant here, as well as the problem posed by the choice made to found such a sanctuary where it is. The sanctuary is one of the richest ever excavated, but paradoxically, is also one where many questions about the cult remain unanswered.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Excavations from 1930 to 1933: See H. Payne, *Perachora I* (Oxford: 1940); Dunbabin, *Perachora II* (1962). Harbour: Blackman (1966), 192; Morgan (1994), 132.

¹¹⁹ Sinn (1990), 209: 'Ciò che negli anni '30 Humphrey Payne e i suoi collaboratori della *British School at Athens* portarono poi alla luce nel corso di uno scavo straordinariamente fruttuoso ed esemplare sotto ogni punto di vista (...).' The sanctuary proved particularly rich in Archaic bronze votives. Whitley (2001), 145: 'At Perachora, so many Archaic bronze votives were found that the excavators stopped counting – but they estimated that there must have been over 2,000.'

Archaeologically, there is evidence that the sanctuary existed maybe as early as the first half of the 8th c. BC.¹²⁰ The successive temples were built between the cliff and the shore in the little creek (called 'harbour' by most scholars) towards the south. When a new temple was built in the 6th c. BC, the cliff wall had to be dug back to allow more space. Even then, it could not allow for a peristyle.¹²¹ In front of the temple, and somewhat contemporaneous to it, was built an altar with triglyphs.¹²² Interestingly, the water equipment appeared very early in the life of the sanctuary. If the site's aridity explains why their presence was necessary, their association with any precise ritual or function is on the other hand quite problematic.¹²³

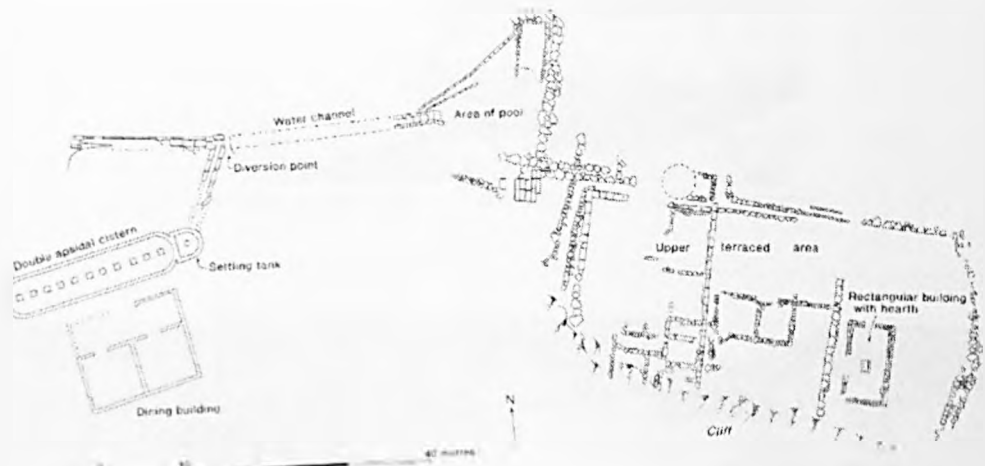


Fig. 68. Sanctuary of Perachora, small valley area (from Whitley [2001], fig. 12.3).

¹²⁰ Salmon (1972), 129; Morgan (1994), 129.

¹²¹ Pfaff (2003), 119-121. The dating of the preceding temple(s) is difficult and varies between the 8th c. to the late 7th c. BC.

¹²² Plommer and Salviat (1966), 214; for detail about its reconstruction see 207-211 and figs. 2-3, 5. Triglyph altars are a type well known in the Peloponnese and in the Corinthian colonies of Syracuse and Corcyra. The earliest example is the large 6th c. BC altar at the sanctuary of Artemis in Corcyra. Examples of triglyph altars are found at Nemea, in the Argive Agora and possibly at the Asklepieion at Corinth. See Yavis (1949), 138-39; Roux (1953), 116-23; Miller (1989), 149; Rupp (1975), 274; Hardwick (1999), 185-91. This type of altars is thought to be principally associated with 'chthonian' gods, notably because it is typically low. See Hardwick (1999), 194-95.

¹²³ Tomlinson (1988), 167.



Fig. 69. Double apsidal cistern. View from west (author's picture).



Fig. 70. Water channels, left to the cistern. View from east (author's picture).

The earliest is what Payne, the first excavator at Perachora, called the 'sacred pool'. It was a man made circular hollow dug in the ground up to 3 m. deep. The details about the pool (e.g. the stratification, the hypothetical lining of the pool, etc.) are difficult to discern because of the lack of precision from the excavation reports. It was readily associated with the cult because of the large amount of votive objects recovered in it such as statuettes, terracotta figures and pottery. What particularly caught the attention of scholars however were the 200 bronze phialai found in the bottom of the pool.¹²⁴ Their exact nature eludes us. Dunbabin first suggested they had been deposited there after being used for libations, before offering the alternative of the phialai being used as tools in an oracular demand.¹²⁵ Tomlinson refuted these theories, preferring a more trivial yet hypothetical explanation; the phialai had been stored near the pool and accidentally fell in it all at the same time after, which the abandoned pool was progressively filled in by silt.¹²⁶ This interpretation is not without problems. If the presence of so many expensive items in the 'pool' was accidental, why leave them there and not recover them?

At about the time when the sacred 'pool' was abandoned, maybe in the late 5th c. BC, a great double apsidal cistern was built at a little distance to the west. It was built concomitantly with an adjacent building with two symmetrical rooms identified as a *hestiatorion*. The two were clearly designed to be together. The cistern was filled with rain water from the upper terraces through a large drain built with stone slabs. It could either empty its content into a settling tank on the eastern side of the cistern, or be redirected lower down the valley. A staircase led inside the cistern on its western

¹²⁴ Excavations: Payne (1940), 120.

¹²⁵ Dunbabin in Payne (1940), 153; Dunbabin (1951).

¹²⁶ Tomlinson (1988), 169-170. This idea is attractive and is by default the most convincing theory to date. But it is still nothing more than a hypothesis since it is mainly based on the assumption that the phialai were all found in the same layer and that there had been a hypothetical mud-brick building next to the pool now completely disappeared.

side, an arrangement which allowed drawing water directly from it, presumably for the hestiatorion.¹²⁷ There also was another smaller cistern north-east of the former pool.¹²⁸

All these constructions must be put into perspective with the cult as practiced at Perachora. This is a difficult exercise because of the scarcity of the evidence, but also because of the many and often very different theories that have already been elaborated.¹²⁹ It is now generally accepted that there was one and not two sanctuaries at Perachora. The hearth building on the uppermost terrace that had previously been identified as a temple of Hera Limenia is now believed to be a dining hall.¹³⁰ The only attested temple remains the one on the harbour. Yet, many votives were found in the same area and it seems clear that the ritual activity extended to this terrace. At the same time, three epithets of Hera are attested at Perachora, a fact from which one should not assume there were three sanctuaries or three temples. These are Leukolenos, Limenia and Akraia. The former two were found archaeologically while the latter is the one used in the literary evidence.¹³¹ Leukolenos and Limenia in particular seem to indicate an interest in the protection of seafarers, but also in the realms of death and initiation rituals of the young.¹³² In the case of rituals of initiation and/or involving the world of the dead, water is expected to play an active part. Two literary traditions come in support of these last two themes being important at Perachora.

¹²⁷ Tomlinson (1969), 157-164.

¹²⁸ The rectangular cistern might have been a replacement for the pool and fell into disuse at the time when the double apsidal cistern was built. Tomlinson (1977), 200 n. 14.

¹²⁹ In any case, the water equipment was used for the most basic needs of any sanctuary, both practical and ritualistic.

¹³⁰ Payne (1940), 110-113; Tomlinson (1977), 200; Pfaff (2003), 128-130

¹³¹ Novaro-Lefevre (2000), 45, 52-53. Akraia is found notably in Strabo 8.6.22; Plutarch, *Cleom.* 20.3 (814); Livy 32.23.1-11.

¹³² Novaro-Lefevre (2000), 52-53.

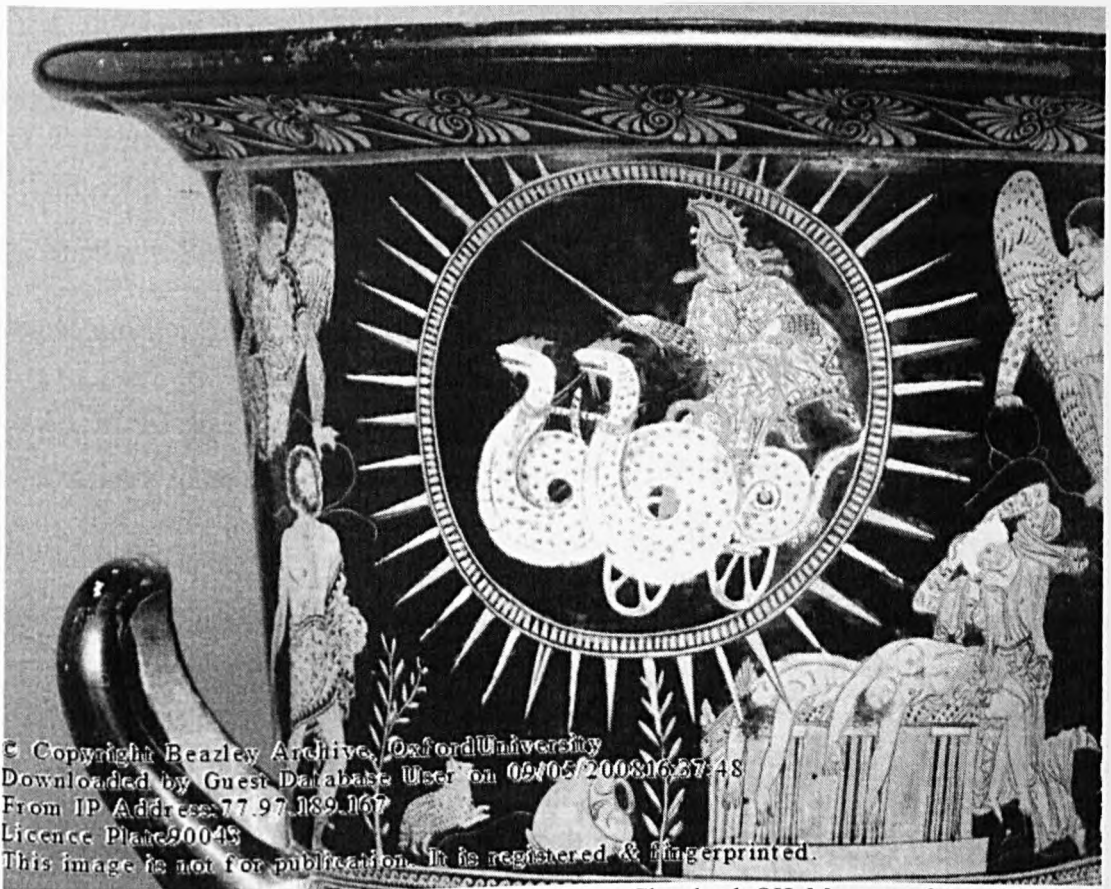


Fig. 71. Detail of a Lucanian calyx-krater ca. 400 BC = Cleveland, OH, Museum of Art: 1991.1. Medea is on her chariot. Below and to the right, the nurse laments the death of Medea's children lying on a glyph altar. On each side of Medea's chariot are two Eumenides.

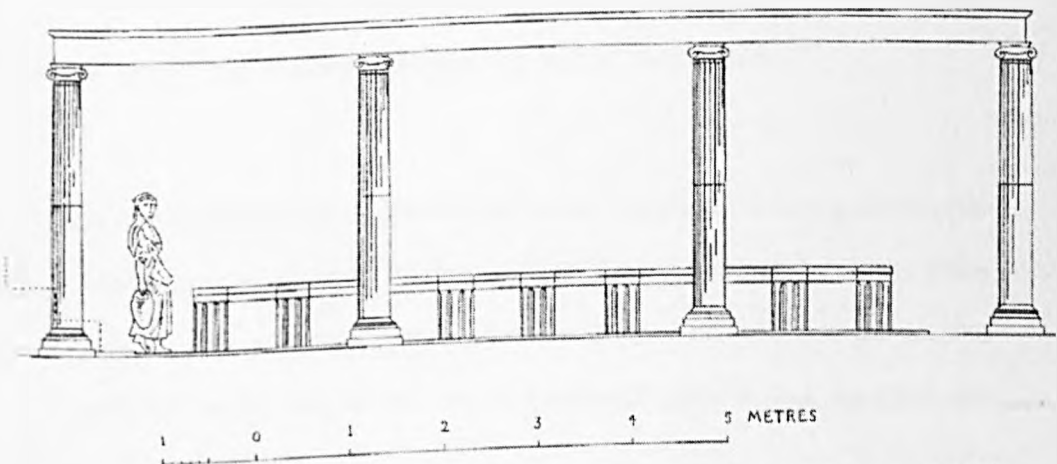


Fig. 72. Reconstruction of the altar ca 400 BC (from Plommer & Salviat [1966], 215 fig. 5).

First, the only literary testimony that referred specifically to a type of cult at Perachora is found in Strabo: 'In the interval between Lechaeum and Pagae there used to be, in early times, the oracle of the Acraean Hera'.¹³³ This concise statement by Strabo, which clearly refers to the sanctuary at Perachora, has motivated many conjectures from the scholars; can we trust Strabo? If true, what sort of *manteion* was the heraiion at Perachora? When was it in function? The evidence about the presence of a *manteion* has not been conclusive so far. What appear to be clear on the other hand are the several chthonian aspects of the site, the architecture and maybe the cult. One example could be the altar that belongs to the particular type of the 'triglyph altars'.¹³⁴ The sacrificial table originally had a hole set into it to allow liquids, either libations or blood, to flow down to the earth. By the beginning of the 4th c. BC, a colonnade was erected around it which possibly held a roof that would have prevented the smoke from rising directly to the sky. Both are characteristics of chthonian cults that in return would fit a still hypothetical prophetic sanctuary, in particular the *nekromanteion* suggested by Will.¹³⁵

Second, the myth of Medea and her children is at the heart of rituals that were performed every year at Corinth before the 146 BC destruction:¹³⁶

But as their death [Medea's children] was violent and illegal, the young babies of the Corinthians were destroyed by them until, at the command of the oracle, yearly sacrifices were established in their honor and a figure of Terror was set up. This figure still exists, being the likeness of a woman frightful to look upon but after

¹³³ Strabo 8.6.22 (trans. H.L. Jones).

¹³⁴ See above n. 122. Hardwick (1999), 189 included in his list of triglyph altar the triglyph wall at the sacred spring at Corinth, not as an altar, but as an example of a triglyph frieze close to the ground in a 'chthonian' sanctuary.

¹³⁵ Manteion: Dunbabin (1951); Will (1953); Lisle (1955), 10ff. The case is summarised in Salmon (1972), 165-168 who wisely advised to 'leave the question open' (p. 167). Ogden (2001), 24 and n. 19: mentions Will's theory of a *nekromanteion* at Perachora based on his disputable interpretation of Herodotus 5.92, and calls it 'arbitrary'.

¹³⁶ Paus. 2.3.7 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

Corinth was laid waste by the Romans and the old Corinthians were wiped out, the new settlers broke the custom of offering those sacrifices to the sons of Medea, nor do their children cut their hair for them or wear black clothes.

Pausanias does not mention the sanctuary of Perachora, but the association may be found in an older source, Euripides' *Medea*:

Certainly not. I shall bury them with my own hand, taking them to the sanctuary of Hera Akraia, so that none of my enemies may outrage them by tearing up their graves. And I shall enjoin on this land of Sisyphus a solemn festival and holy rites for all time to come in payment for this unholy murder.¹³⁷

The usual interpretation had been that the playwright was referring to a sanctuary of Hera that was actually in the city of Corinth, possibly on the flanks of the Acrocorinthos in the sanctuary of Hera Bounaia as mentioned by Pausanias.¹³⁸ It was however pointed out that *akraia* could very well mean 'of the promontory' rather than 'of the height' and the topographical details given by ancient sources clearly demonstrate that Hera at Perachora was *akraia*.¹³⁹ In which case the sanctuary of Hera was also the mythical resting place of Medea's children and the place where, each year, the Corinthians sent fourteen young boys and girls from aristocratic families.¹⁴⁰ The initiatory dimension of this festival is clear; the use of water in such a context is far less obvious.¹⁴¹ The tentative parallel made by Tomlinson between

¹³⁷ Eur., *Medea* 1379-83 (trans. Kovacs).

¹³⁸ Paus. 2.4.7; schol. Eur., *Med.* 1379; Payne (1940), 19-20; Williams (1978), 46-9.

¹³⁹ Euripides' text would also appear to imply that Medea left Corinth on her chariot with her children.

Morgan (1994), 135, 142; Ménadier (2002), 86-88.

¹⁴⁰ Schol. Eur., *Med.* 264. Full text and translation in Dunn (1994), 106. One Lucanian crater (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1991.1) displays Medea on her chariot leaving her two sons lying dead on a triglyph altar. See Hardwick (1999) who suggest that such a representation would evoke a

Corinthian sanctuary to the onlooker, although not specifically the sanctuary of Perachora.

¹⁴¹ Ménadier (2002), 88-89.

the *mnema* to Medea's children and the fountain of Glauke on the one hand and the cult to Hera and the 'sacred pool' on the other was with reason dismissed by Ménadier. But she might dismiss the water equipment at Perachora too fast when she says 'water was a necessary and integral element at all Greek sanctuaries'.¹⁴² Not all sanctuaries display such an important effort concerning their water-supply equipment. Furthermore, while the chthonic context of the sanctuary was clear both in literature and archaeology (e.g. the lying place of Medea's children, the possible *manteion* and the altar), the water equipment could have participated in this atmosphere. For example, although the exact use of the water collected into the sacred pool must remain a mystery, the pool itself must have been an important landmark in the sanctuary. This was not a mere cistern or water tank, but something made to look natural and rather deep. The cistern built later was clearly man-made, but interestingly it seems one had to walk down into the cistern to draw water rather than doing it through a well-shaft. Without even including the other very large fountain and cisterns found close by outside the sanctuary the length to which the sanctuary was equipped is impressive. The ultimate reason why it was so remains elusive and, according to Whitley, comparisons with other sanctuaries of Hera have failed to explain why.¹⁴³ Maybe it is in the strong chthonian aura the goddess possessed at Perachora, the needs for rituals of initiation and/or the presence of a *manteion* that we could find the origin of such high demand.

¹⁴² Ménadier (2002), 89 who argues that the *mnema* could simply be a cenotaph and not a tomb. Novaro-Lefèvre (2000), 60-61 plausibly suggests that the *mnema* could have been the location of rituals for the 'reintegration' of the fourteen youths.

¹⁴³ Whitley (2001), 299.

5. Sikyon

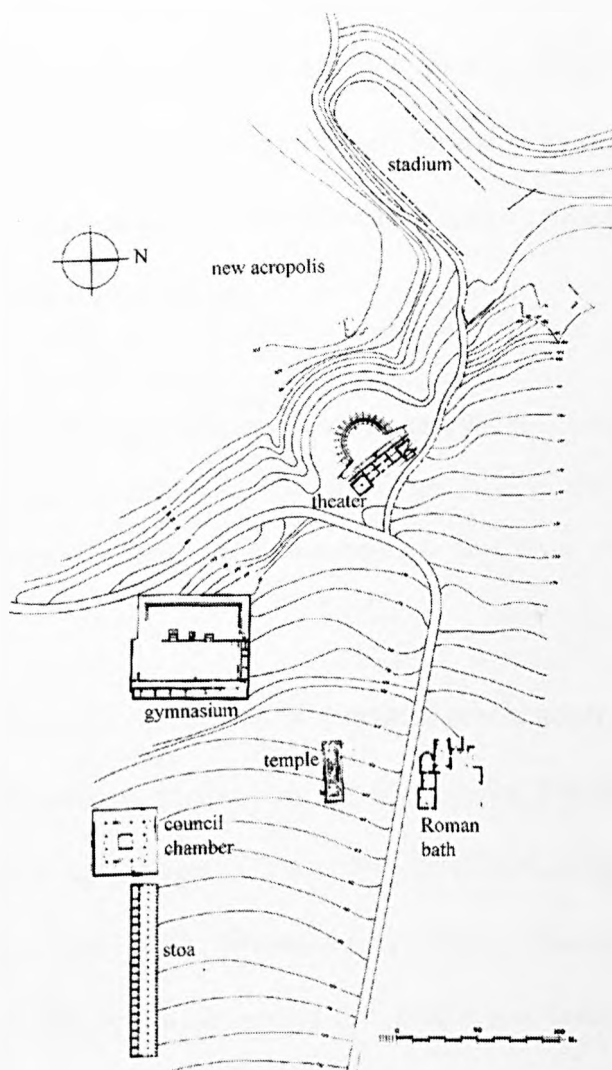


Fig. 73. Excavated Site of Hellenistic and Roman Sikyon
(from the survey website: <<http://extras.ha.uth.gr/sikyon/en/previous.asp>>)

Sikyon, located west of Corinth and before Achaia, occupied two different sites in its history. In Archaic and Classical times, the town of Sikyon was in the plain, not too far from the sea. In 303 BC, Demetrios Poliorketes defeated the city and transferred it to the old acropolis because it was a more defensible site and, according to Diodoros Siculus, a pleasant one well provided with water.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Diodoros Sic. 20.102.4. Two major monographs were written on Sikyon: Ch. H. Skalet, *Ancient Sikyon with a Prosopographia Sicyonia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928); A. Griffin, *Sikyon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). Excavations were conducted by the American School in the end of

5.1. Artemis Limnaia

Our knowledge of Sikyon's topography had been greatly improved these last years by the survey project. However, Pausanias is still the major source for understanding the ancient city and its cults. On his way from the theatre towards the agora, he saw the ruined temple of Artemis Limnaia:

As you walk from the temple of Dionysos to the agora you see on the right a temple of Artemis Limnaia. A look shows that the roof has fallen in, but the inhabitants cannot tell whether the image has been removed or how it was destroyed on the spot.¹⁴⁵

The epiclesis *limnaia* (of the lake or of the marshes) would seem to imply a link with water. The epiclesis appears in the vast majority in the Peloponnesus and is not always found in clear association with a humid landscape, although generally in a rural context. In the case of the Sikyonian sanctuary, Sinn, followed in this by Morizot, has argued that Artemis Limnaia occupied a wet landscape corresponding to her name.¹⁴⁶ Griffin has suggested that the original sanctuary could have been in the plain and transferred to the plateau in 303 BC.¹⁴⁷ The sanctuary that Pausanias saw between the theatre and the Agora was already old and derelict. An archaic temple reconstructed in Hellenistic times was found and excavated in the 1930s and was tentatively identified by Orlandos, the excavator, as the temple of Artemis

the 19th c. and by the Greek Archaeological Society from the 1920s to the 1950s. The Archaic/Hellenistic temple was further studied in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently an extensive survey was conducted under the direction of Yannis Lolos. The results are to be published in Y. Lolos, *Land of Sikyon: archaeology and history of a Greek city-state*, Hesperia supp. 39 (Forthcoming in 2007).

¹⁴⁵ Paus. 2.7.6.

¹⁴⁶ Sinn (1981), 30-33; Morizot (1999), 270-272; Cole (2004), 191-192.

¹⁴⁷ Griffin (1982), 16.

Limnaia.¹⁴⁸ Roux has expressed his doubts at this identification because of the position of the temple within the agora's boundaries rather than between the agora and the theatre to the west. He suggested instead identifying it with the temple of Apollo. He is followed in this by Lolos. Furthermore, the geophysical survey of the site in 2004 discovered signs of a structure between the theatre and the excavated temple that could be another temple.¹⁴⁹

If we admit that the temple of Artemis Limnaia was always on the plateau, the epiclesis *limnaia* does not seem to be less relevant than if it had been primarily founded in the plain. The plateau is, for a start, well provided with water. It was also, perhaps more relevantly, on Archaic and Classical Sikyon's acropolis and therefore outside the city centre. As pointed out by Calame, Artemis Limnaia (or Limnatis) could be not only associated with water but did also possess a liminal dimension; the goddess Artemis ruled over the spaces beyond the civilised areas (this includes marshes and lakes) and over the transitional times of the Greeks' lives. She protected in particular the young girls, still virgins but at an age to marry.¹⁵⁰

Ultimately, this analysis of the cult of Artemis at Sikyon based on the comparison with other cases remains unsolved. Our main source, Pausanias, ignores or does not tell what cult had been practiced in the sanctuary before it was derelict, or at least he did not link it directly with the ruined temple of Artemis. Almost immediately after this passage he describes the temples of Peitho and Apollo, about which he relays both the foundation myth and the resulting ceremony.

¹⁴⁸ The results of the excavations conducted on the temple in the 1980s were, unfortunately, never fully published.

¹⁴⁹ See <<http://extras.ha.uth.gr/sikyon/en/season2004.asp>> (last accessed 14/04/08). A possible identification with the temple of either Artemis or Dionysos is suggested.

¹⁵⁰ Calame (1977), 253-262; Morizot (1999), 271-272.

5.2. Artemis, Apollo and the suppliants to the river Sythas

Immediately after seeing the temple of Artemis, Pausanias entered the then Agora of Sikyon and saw a sanctuary dedicated to Peitho (Persuasion) about which he narrated the aitiological myth:

When Apollo and Artemis had killed Pytho they came to Aegialea to obtain purification. Dread coming upon them at the place now named Fear, they turned aside to Carmanor in Crete, and the people of Aegialea were smitten by a plague. When the seers bade them propitiate Apollo and Artemis, they sent seven boys and seven maidens as suppliants to the river Sythas. They say that the deities, persuaded by these, came to what was then the citadel, and the place that they reached first is the sanctuary of Persuasion.¹⁵¹

The local myth is all the more interesting because an associated ritual was still performed in Pausanias' times. Each year, the Sikyonians sent their children (probably fourteen as in the myth) to the river Sythas, west of Sikyon and next to the modern town of Xylokastro, from whence they brought the statues of the gods first to the temple of Persuasion and then, 'back' to the temple of Apollo on the agora.¹⁵²

The myth and its cultic results are interesting to our topic here for several reasons. One of the main themes of the cult is the search for purification. Apollo and Artemis had come to Sikyon for purifications after the killing of Pytho, but could not complete them and instead fled to Crete. Then, as if the pollution of the 'murder' had been transferred from the gods to the Sikyonians, a plague ravaged the country. To propitiate the twin gods, young children were sent to a river on the confines of the

¹⁵¹ Paus. 2.7.7-8.

¹⁵² Paus. 2.7.8.

territory. This cult recalls other cases of cults involving young boys and/or girls cut off from society in order to appease gods; for instance the children of Medea at the Heraion of Perachora in Corinthia and at Brauron in Attica, in this latter case also to appease a plague sent by Artemis. These cults have been commonly analysed as a coming of age ritual for the youth.¹⁵³ But what is more in the case of Sikyon is the clear involvement of the statues of the gods. They are brought in procession from the river Sythas back to the sanctuaries of Peitho and Apollo. Since the myth implies the gods being polluted by the murder of Python, it would seem quite *a propos* to perform a purification of the statues in the river Sythas before their return, or maybe even at the sanctuary of Peitho since we are told the area does not lack water. Pausanias does not mention baths but again he had not witnessed the ceremony himself and the ritual bath of statues was commonplace in ancient Greece.¹⁵⁴

Finally, the sanctuary of Artemis Limnaia would easily find a place in this mythical context. The goddess is already associated with this cult and her sanctuary was in the immediate neighbourhood. Furthermore her epiclesis, as seen above, made her not only the patron of a humid landscape but also of young girls becoming *parthenoi*. In Pausanias' times, both statues are taken to the temple of Apollo. Maybe in earlier times, when the temple of Artemis was not ruined, it had housed this statue of Artemis.

A last element seems to connect the Sikyonian Apollo with water. Pausanias reported that the temple of Apollo he saw had been rebuilt because the original one was destroyed in a fire.¹⁵⁵ This original temple was said to have been built by Proitos to mark the place where his daughters recovered from their madness. The myth of the Proitids is essentially about young girls' reluctance to leave their father's house to

¹⁵³ For the example of Perachora see Menadier (2002), 88-89 and n. 26.

¹⁵⁴ Kahil (1994), 217-223.

¹⁵⁵ Paus. 2.7.8.

join that of their husband; the daughters of Proitos, king of Tiryns, boasted in a temple of Hera that the house of their father was richer. Then, an irate Hera drove them mad and condemned them to roam in the mountains like wild animals before they were cured by Melampous or by Artemis, but not before one of them had died.¹⁵⁶ A 4th c. BC bronze tablet discovered in the plain of Sikyon in 1952 sets the burial in the city.¹⁵⁷

The link with water is tenuous, but in one version Strabo says that the Proitids were cured by being washed in the waters of the spring Anigros.¹⁵⁸ In Sikyon, Pausanias linked them with the temple of Apollo, which is strange because he is not present in any other versions of the myth. I suggest that the myth was possibly attached to the temple of Artemis and that, once the temple was abandoned, it was transferred to the nearby temple of her brother Apollo. There again Artemis plays the role of protector of the transition between the states of daughters and wives, a domain in which water plays a role for the pre-nuptial bath in many Greek cities.

5.3. Aphrodite and her neighbour Asklepios

Pausanias is again the only ancient source describing the sanctuaries of Aphrodite and Asklepios.¹⁵⁹ Their location has not been discovered by archaeologists yet and the Periegete's topographical information is not very clear. Though it seems safe

¹⁵⁶ For the different versions of the myth, see Gantz (1993), 311-313. See also Seaford (1988), 118-124.

¹⁵⁷ *Praktika* (1952), 394-395, fig. 11 quoted in Roux (1958), 144-145:

Ἐνθάδε ὑπὲρ Προίτου παίδων ἔκρυψε Μελάμπους
βλαψίφρονος μανίας φάρμακα λυσίνοσα,
ἧ τε ἔθανεν παίδων, ὅτε δεῦρο ἔμολον διὰ μῆνιν
Ἴηρας, Ἴφινόην, ἧδ' ἀγορὰ κατέχει.

¹⁵⁸ Strabo 8.3.19.

¹⁵⁹ Paus. 2.10.2-6.

enough to say that they are somewhere below the gymnasium since one had to walk up to it from the sanctuaries.

Nothing is said of water in the sanctuary of Asklepios, although one should expect the cult to have made use of water, if only for purifications. On the other hand, in the adjacent sanctuary of Aphrodite, one of the two priestesses ascribed to the goddess was a young virgin called the *loutrophoros* (λουτροφόρος). In Attica this name was given to the young boy who carried the bath-water in the procession before the wedding ceremonies and, eventually, to the very specific type of vase used for this function. In Sikyon, the function of this priestess thus appears deceptively transparent. Deceptively, because we do not know with certainty if there actually was a bath and who it was intended for. There is however a number of details in the description of the sanctuary by Pausanias that can in return help us to understand the particulars of Aphrodite's cult better.

The sexual dimension, not so surprisingly with Aphrodite, is predominant; the two priestesses are explicitly banned from any sexual activity while the access to the statue of the goddess is strictly limited to them. The chryselephantine statue itself bore the symbols of fertility, an apple (μήλον) in one hand and the poppy (μήκων) in the other. The parallel with the name of *loutrophoros* usually found in Attica in the case of the fertility bearing bath is tempting. Pirenne-Delforge, who thoroughly studied the case, cautiously but clearly associated the Sikyonian cult with marriage and fertility. This Aphrodite could indeed be the representation and patron of the bride before her marriage.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the origin of the water the *loutrophoros* would have brought to the temple is unknown. The proximity of a sanctuary of Asklepios could possibly indicate that there was a source of water nearby, although

¹⁶⁰ Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 131-150.

this does not mean the nearest one would have been automatically favoured over another one further away. It is finally remarkable to find another cult in Sikyon requiring the bath of a statue, showing similarities and differences. There again the bath would sacralise a change of state; but here the bath gives the water's powers for growth and fertility while, in the case of Artemis and Apollo, it was the purifying and civilising powers that were emphasised.

5.4. Cave of the Nymphs

In the region of Xylokastro, west of ancient Sikyon, a cave Saftoulis was explored in 1934. Among other offerings, painted wooden tablets were discovered with one in near perfect condition. The best preserved one shows a now famous sacrificial scene, a second one shows women in conversation and the last two fragments of women. The former two have inscriptions, notably dedications to the Nymphs.



Fig. 74. Pinax dedicated to the Nymphs from the Pitsa cave
(from <<http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/dlevine/ReligionImages.html>>).

Larson has stressed the interest of the depiction of a blood sacrifice to the Nymphs which, although not unthinkable, was far less common than humbler offerings.¹⁶¹ These tablets, or *pinakes*, are dated to the Archaic times (the two best preserved are dated to 540-30) and belong to a continued series of offerings made to the Nymphs in this cave from the 7th c. BC to the Hellenistic times. The presence of a spring is not recorded today in the cave.¹⁶²

6. Titane

On his way to Titane, Pausanias crossed the river Asopos on his left to reach a grove of oak trees in which was a sanctuary of the Eumenides:

On one day in each year they celebrate a festival to them and offer sheep big with young (πρόβατα ἐγκύμονα) as a burnt offering, and they are accustomed to use a libation of honey and water, and flowers instead of garlands. They practise similar rites at the altar of the Fates; it is in an open space in the grove.¹⁶³

The Eumenides were known to relish libations of water, honey and milk, while they refuse wine.¹⁶⁴ Here μελικράτω is usually translated by 'honey and water'. Their local attachment to water is also expressed in Statius' *Thebaid* (4.53-58); the poet describes the Helisson, river flowing on the other side of Sikyon, as the place where the Eumenides 'sink their faces therein and the horned snakes that pant from draughts of Phlegethon'.

¹⁶¹ See for example Euripides, *Electra* 785-6 where Aegisthus sacrifices an ox to the nymphs.

¹⁶² Larson (2001), 149, 232-233.

¹⁶³ Paus. 2.11.4 (trans. H.L. Jones).

¹⁶⁴ In Esch., *Eum.* 107 and Soph., *OC* 100, they are αἰνοί. In Soph., *OC* 470, 481, they ask for offerings (χοάς) of spring water and of water mixed with honey.

Further on, at Titane, Pausanias described the local sanctuary of Asklepios at length.¹⁶⁵ Although without any mention of water being in use in the sanctuary, excavations have revealed the existence of Roman baths and a cistern within the presumed peribolos of Asklepios.¹⁶⁶ As for the choice of its location there, Lolos has argued that the presence of a spring below the hill of Titane had not been the primary concern, since there were more copious ones elsewhere. Also, it had been needed to bring water from two other springs through clay pipes. The likely presence of a pre-existing religious cluster on the spot is a better option.¹⁶⁷ Whether the reason for the foundation of the Asklepieion on this spot or not, there was water being brought to the area and in all probability was used in the sanctuary.

7. Conclusion

Corinthia is a region characterised first by the impressiveness, in terms of size, number and complexity, of the water-related structures found in sanctuaries and elsewhere. The city of Corinth in particular is a striking example of how the Greeks had found ways to take advantage of their geology. The network of tunnels tapping the springs is so large it was described as ‘one of the most extensive underground water systems in the ancient world’.¹⁶⁸ The site of the Heraion of Perachora is, rather perversely, a great example of this importance of water in Corinthian religion, being completely short of water supplies but extraordinarily rich in water-supply structures built during its existence. In another sanctuary, that of Demeter and Kore on the slopes of the Acrocorinth, the development of ritual dining was accompanied with a

¹⁶⁵ Paus. 2.11.5-8.

¹⁶⁶ Lolos (2005), 281-2, fig. 7.

¹⁶⁷ Lolos (2005), 287-292.

¹⁶⁸ Wiseman (1969), 75.

concern for ritual purity illustrated by the bathing facilities adjoined to the dining rooms. It also is an example of a site, as the Argive Heraion will also be in the next chapter, where the offerings of miniature and/or full-sized hydriai (water pots) raise possibly more questions than they give answers.

Like Boeotia, Corinthia has many 'humid' sanctuaries which seem to have a particular interest in the underworld, but unlike Boeotia, this is not in the form of oracular shrines. If death is present in sanctuaries such as Isthmia, the sacred spring at Corinth, the cult of Apollo and Artemis at Sikyon and possibly at the Heraion of Perachora, it is generally also associated with ideas of rebirth or transformation. The best example is that of Melikertes who died only to be reborn as the god Palaimon. The hero turned healing god Asklepios is also more present, possibly because of the proximity of Epidauros.

Unlike in Attica and Boeotia, the Nymphs do not have a large presence in this survey. This conspicuous scarcity of site is very possibly due to our lack of surviving evidence. It is somewhat compensated by the extraordinary finds of wood paintings at their cave-shrine near Xylokastro.

Finally, the problem of the historical fracture of the Roman destruction of Corinth in 146 BC is real, as is attested by the archaeological layers of abandonment in many Corinthian sanctuaries and at Isthmia. But the old Olympian cults were often re-founded at the same places and today's understanding of the question is that there was a certain form of continuity with pre-Roman times, although often with a strong Roman reinvention of ancient Greek cults, while the 'peculiarly local Corinthian cults' vanished with the Roman destruction.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ See Bookidis (2003), 257

Chapter 5: Argolid

Argolid is, with regard to water, a land of ambivalence. The Argive plain, in particular, has a double-faced nature when it comes to water resources. The north-eastern half of the plain was mainly dry, criss-crossed only by seasonal streams while the south-western half, on the other hand, was occupied by coastal marshes, ponds and lakes which contrasted dramatically with the rest of the region.¹

This situation was echoed in the mythical corpus. Pausanias, who after visiting Nemea was on his way to Argos, reported the mythical origins of the region and its inhabitants. He notably wrote that the plain of Argolid had been the object of the dispute between Poseidon and Hera. The river-gods Inachos, Kephisos and Asterion were chosen as judges in the contest and, when they decided to elect Hera, Poseidon in his fury made their waters disappear.² This is, as admitted by Pausanias himself, the explanation for the mostly dry course of these rivers, 'except after rain'. It is furthermore one first testimony of the importance given to Hera in Argolid. In an alternative ending for the contest, Poseidon floods the plain and an altar in Argos marked the place where the waters stopped.³ Water in the Argive cults is thus characterised either by its abundance or its rarity and, in each case, this had an effect both monumentally and ritually.

¹ For this division, see for example Piérart (1992), 122-3 who reiterates the idea in Piérart (1996a). See below the section 4.2 below.

² Paus. 2.15.3-4.

³ Paus. 2.22.4. See section 4.2 below.



Fig. 75. Map of Argolid with the sites studied.

1. Nemea: the sanctuary of Nemean Zeus⁴

The games organised in honour of Zeus at Nemea were one of the four stages constitutive of the 'circuit', the famous calendar of the pan-Hellenic games. They

⁴ This sanctuary is included in the survey of Argolid rather than Corinthia because, for a large part of its history, the Nemean Games were administered by and even organised at Argos. See Xenophon, *Hell.* 4.7.2; Miller (1977), 10 suggests that the control of Nemea by Argos should date from some time during the Peloponnesian wars. The games are also inserted in the Argive sphere from the mythological point of view.

took place for most of their history at the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea, before moving to Argos around 270 BC. By Pausanias' time, the sanctuary had long been abandoned but still showed some traces of activity.

'In Nemea is a noteworthy temple of Nemean Zeus, but I found that the roof had fallen in and that there was no longer remaining any image. Around the temple is a grove of cypress trees, and here it is, they say, that Opheltes was placed by his nurse in the grass and killed by the serpent. The Argives offer burnt sacrifices to Zeus in Nemea also, and elect a priest of Nemean Zeus; moreover they offer a prize for a race in armour at the winter celebration of the Nemean games. In this place is the grave of Opheltes; around it is a fence of stones, and within the enclosure are altars. There is also a mound of earth which is the tomb of Lycurgus, the father of Opheltes. The spring they call Adrastea (sic) for some reason or other, perhaps because Adrastus found it. The land was named, they say, after Nemea, who was another daughter of Asopus'.⁵

His description is minimal. Most of the monuments must have been in ruins for some time and the games were, in his days, held at Argos.⁶ The temple of Zeus had lost its roof and image and no mention is made of the stadium or some of the other buildings discovered in the excavations. On the other hand, the cult of Opheltes, the baby hero for whom the games were founded according to one of the three alternative traditions, was apparently still in activity.⁷ This tradition involved the Seven who, on their campaign to attack Thebes, stopped at Nemea where they met Hypsipyle, nurse to the king's son Opheltes. Asked by the seven to find fresh water for a sacrifice, she

⁵ Paus. 2.15.2-3.

⁶ See Pache (2004), 114.

⁷ See Doffey (1992), 185-93. Of these three traditions, the foundation of the games by Herakles who had just killed the Lion of Nemea is possibly the best known but is also probably a late assimilation of what had only been an antecedent to the games (p. 187). The second is the foundation by Adrastus for his brother Pronax, killed by Amphiaraos, which probably were actually the games at Sikyon. Late sources confused the two foundation myths (p. 189).

leaves the baby asleep on the ground and guides the seer Amphiaraos to a spring. In Euripides, the baby is in a ‘meadow’ (λειμών).⁸ Before they are back, a snake kills the baby. The games are founded later in honour of the baby who is then called Archemoros.⁹ In the Roman mythographer Hyginus’s account, the baby is put on the ground among wild celery, a plant that was used for the victor’s crown at Nemea, while the snake is the spring’s guardian.¹⁰ The spring is probably the Adrasteia, whose name derives from Adrastus, one of the seven as pointed out by Pausanias.

The Adrasteia was identified by the excavators with a spring gushing some distance to the east of the sanctuary, behind an old Turkish fountain, and which ‘clearly was tapped by an arched tunnel carefully cut into the native conglomerate rock’.¹¹ There is no chronological evidence for the building of the tunnel, but it is suggested that it could belong to the building phase of the sanctuary’s bath and its aqueduct.¹² An aqueduct was built between the spring and the sanctuary but it is not certain whether it belongs to the original phase or a later one. The importance of the spring Adrasteia in myth is not really translated into archaeological evidence. It is not at the heart of the sanctuary and, more precisely, not at all in the small enclosure of Opheltes. The association of water, meadow and snake is however a mythical context often found in relation to the underworld and, in particular, matches with the

⁸ Euripides, *Hypsipyle* fr. I.iv.29-36 and fr. 754N in Pache (2004), 100-3. Fragments edited with commentary by W.E.H. Cockle in Euripides, *Hypsipyle* (Rome: Ateneo, 1987), 83:

εἰς
τὸν λειμῶνα καθίτας ἔδρεπεν
ἕτερον ἐφ’ ἐτέρῳ † αἰρόμενος
ἄγρευμί ἀνθέων ἠδομέναι ψυχᾷ
τὸ νήπιον ἄπληστον ἔχων

⁹ See also Bacchylides 9.1-14; Schol. Pindar, *Nem.* 8.85; Apollod., *Bibl.* 3.64-66.

¹⁰ Hyginus, *Fab.* 74. The snake as guardian of the spring is a motif also present, as we have seen, at Thebes.

¹¹ Miller (1992), 221.

¹² The datation of this phase is thought to be attributed to the second half of the 4th c. BC at the earliest. Earlier buildings found on the same spot and dated to the end of the 5th c. BC give a *terminus post quem*. It personally strikes me that the picture of the tunnel (fig. 76) is very similar to the picture of the aqueduct at the Asklepieion at Epidauros, built in the 4th or the early Hellenistic period (fig. 90).

similar cases encountered at the other pan-hellenic games of Olympia, Isthmia and Delphi.¹³



Fig. 76. Interior of the tunnel at the spring Adrasteia (from Miller [1992], 224, fig. 315).

Other water resources are found within the sanctuary's boundaries. Two wells were found and excavated very near the temple of Zeus. Their religious bearing was however downplayed considering the lack of evidence, in particular of any objects that can be identified as votives among those recovered from the southernmost and undisturbed well.¹⁴ The caution taken by Birge in arguing against a religious dimension is understandable, but her reasoning seems flawed. She assumes that a well is sacred when there is a deposition of votive objects. But if votives are a mark of sacredness, their absence can hardly be used to prove the opposite point. The

¹³ See Pache (2004), 113. She cites Statius, *Thebaid* 6.1-14.

¹⁴ The northern well was cleaned and reused in the 3rd and 4th c. AD. The southernmost of the wells was sealed and left untouched since the late Hellenistic period. See Miller (1979), 74-81; Birge (1992), 73-74.

ancient Greek notion of sacredness, in particular concerning water, is much more complex and elusive. The Greeks did not give offerings to water but to gods, heroes or, closer to our topic, to nymphs while some waters had ‘powers’, were ‘holy’ but did not command a cult.¹⁵ On the other hand, the position of the wells in the immediate vicinity of the temple should allow, at least, the suggestion that their water had something special in the eyes of the people gathering at the games. Whether this water had ever actually been used in rituals is probably impossible to determine and, in any case, one source of sacred water could be used for various purposes, from the ritualistic to the very ordinary indeed.¹⁶

The excavators believe they have determined the location of the grove, described in Pausanias as the place where baby Opheltes was killed. It was southeast of the temple, between the latter and a ‘row of oikoi’, in an area called ‘the open space’ on one of the several boundary stones found there and inscribed ΩΡΟΣ ΕΠΙΠΟΛΑΣ.¹⁷ Pits uncovered there were tree planting pits and the decomposed material recovered from some of them corresponds to either cypress or fir trees, matching Pausanias’ description.¹⁸

The last water-related equipment also present at the sanctuary seems to be related to its function of athletic centre. During the building phase of the late 4th c. BC, a bath was built southwest of the temple. It consisted of a rectangular building oriented east-west and divided roughly into two square halves. The bath proper was located south of the western half and water brought by terracotta channels was

¹⁵ See for example for waters of Peirene that were ‘semnon’ (Eur., *Tro.* 205-6) or the Klepsydra’s water in the anecdote of Anthony (Plutarch, *Ant.* 34).

¹⁶ It is maybe noteworthy to remark on the presence in the temple of a crypt within the ‘adyton’, the use of which is unknown, but is reminiscent of possible chthonic parallels. An oracle is the usual tentative suggestion, although literary sources are silent on the case. Water is generally believed to play an active role in such instances. See Miller (1990), 140-141; Bacchielli, ‘L’ “adyton” del tempio di Zeus a Nemea’, *RAL* 37 (1982), 227-37.

¹⁷ Birge (1992), 96-98.

¹⁸ Birge (1992), 85-96.

collected in reservoirs alongside the exterior of the southern wall before being redistributed in a pool and two rows of basins. The stadium built in the same period had channels distributing water from the starting lines and on both sides of the race track. No religious explanation has so far been used in explaining the presence of either the bath or the water channels in the stadium; the more prosaic and utilitarian functions have prevailed.

Pausanias also reports tradition telling that Nemea was named after one of the many daughters of the river Asopos.¹⁹ As a daughter of a river, it was very probably a local nymph. This places Nemea under the patronage and protection of a water-bearing deity, another daughter of the prolific Asopos, also present as we have seen in Boeotia.

2. Mycenae: the fountain Perseia

Continuing on the path leading him further in Argolid, Pausanias passed by the ancient site of Mycenae, the mythical foundation of which he reports two differing versions.²⁰ The first says Perseus founded the city where the pommel (μύκης) of his sword fell on the ground. In the second, the hero looking for water picked a mushroom (μύκης) and a spring gushed forth. The second version is interesting inasmuch as it links the hero and his city with a spring.

Excavations conducted in 1922 unearthed, between the 'Gate of the Lions' and the 'tomb of Clytemnestra', water basins that were first misidentified as part of a gymnasium but, from the 1952 campaign, were identified with the fountain called

¹⁹ Larson (2001), 139-40, 150-51.

²⁰ Paus. 2.16.3. Cf. Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Μυκῆναι. See also Nicander, *Alexipharmaka* 98-130, where Perseus is shown the by a nymph the spring of Langeia.

Perseia seen by Pausanias.²¹ The fountain's construction is dated to the Hellenistic period and is associated with two earlier inscriptions. One, dated to the early 5th c. BC, was found reused as a dividing wall between two of the basins and was a boundary stone for a sanctuary of Hera.²² The other is a poros stone base with a channel cut through it to hold a metal tube clearly associating it with water. Jameson suggested that it could have been part of the predecessor of the Hellenistic fountain Perseia. The excavation report shows that there was a building dated to the 5th or the 4th c. BC at the same location, possibly an earlier fountain or a shrine. The second inscription reads: 'If there is no *damiorgia*, the *iaromnamonas* (« the recorders of sacred matters ») for Perseus are to serve as judges (*kriteres*) for the parents, according to what has been decided'.²³ This is the only material evidence of a cult to Perseus and, the inscription being dated to the late 6th c. BC, it predates the destruction of Mycenae by Argos and the dispersion of its population in 468 BC. Jameson has offered to see it as the trace of an initiation ritual for young boys entering their community and he actively links this initiation with the fountain. His argument, as I understand it, is twofold. It is based, on the one hand, on the initiation rituals on the citadel of Tiryns dedicated to Hera, as was shown by the archaeological evidence, and at Sparta's sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; and on the other hand on the myth of Perseus.²⁴

²¹ Paus. 2.16.6; A.J.B. Wace, 'Mycenae, 1952', *JHS* 73 (1953), 131; E. Vanderpool, 'Newsletter from Greece', *AJA* 57 (1953), 282; Wace and al. (1979), 19-29, pls. 12-15; Jameson (1990), 215. The Mycenaean cistern accessed via an underground passage within the citadel is also referred to as the 'Perseia' in some articles and books. One should not confuse it with the fountain as they are of very different styles and periods, although they very probably share the same source of water, i.e. the spring today called Neromana, capped by successive aqueducts since the Mycenaean age.

²² *SEG* 13.236: Ὅρος Ηεραίας. See Woodhead in Wace et al. (1979) 27-9.

²³ *IG* IV 493: αἱ μὲ δαμιοργία εἶε, τὸς ἱαρομνάμονας τὸς ἐς Περσεῖ το<ι>-σι γονεῦσι κριτῆρας ἔμεν κατ(τ)ὰ φεφρῆμένα. Translation by Jameson (1990), 215.

²⁴ Jameson (1990). Ogden (2008), 102-103 is clearly not convinced by this admittedly very hypothetical reconstruction. He raises notably the question 'why Perseus' sacred-recorders (*iaromnamonas*) should only have been employed exceptionally, as it seems, in the rite to which the hero was supposedly central'.

At Tiryns (7th c. BC) and Sparta, masks of grotesque, frightening and heavily wrinkled figures were deposited.²⁵ These ‘demons’, Jameson argues, are feminine figures the young male hero has to fight. He tentatively identifies them with the three mythical hags from whom Perseus stole the ‘eye’ he used to find Medusa. This mythical fight was maybe re-enacted in a dance where young men fought the female monsters, the masks afterwards being offered to the goddess in her sanctuary. The offering of a sickle by victorious young men at Sparta also recalls the 6th c. representations of Perseus armed with such an instrument to behead Medusa.

The idea of a similar cult to be found at Mycenae is seductive although largely hypothetical. The mention of ‘parents’ and ‘judges’ in the inscription is, however, certainly evocative of ritualistic competitions for youngsters and, with Perseus being the honoured hero, one can expect some link with him and what is known of his myth. The connection with water deities is otherwise frailer. The inscription was part of the structure of a fountain, but can it automatically mean that water is involved in the ritual? Jameson suggests that the myth of Perseus, who sought the help of friendly nymphs who gave him magic objects on his path to Medusa’s murder, is a clue in this direction.²⁶ The fountain at Mycenae was then perhaps a reminder of the nymphs’ helping hand in the hero’s trials and, as a consequence, it is possible that the local community had sought the same support for its young boys on the verge of adulthood.²⁷

²⁵ Jameson (1990), 216-18. On the Spartan masks and their possible origin in middle-eastern civilisations see Carter (1987).

²⁶ Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.38-39 The myth is attested iconographically first on an Athenian loutrophoros dated to ca. 560 BC and, shortly after, on a Chalkidian Amphora. Loutrophoros: Halm-Tisserant and Siebert, *LIMC* supp. s.v. Nymphaei #55. Amphora (Hydria?): Larson (2001), 151, fig. 4.6; Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), #148.

²⁷ Jameson (1990), 220.



Fig. 77. Terracotta mask from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (from Carter [1987], 357, fig. 2)

3. Prosymna: the 'Argive' Heraion

Hera was said to be the primary deity of Argolid. The myth of her contest with Poseidon for the patronage of the region, judged by the local rivers, already sets the tone. She is also called 'Argive Hera' in Homer, is the 'goddess of Argos' in Aeschylus and finds Argos suitable for her divinity in Pindar.²⁸ The major sanctuary of Hera in Argolid is not in Argos but across the plain, approximately halfway to Mycenae, in a region called Prosymna. This sanctuary and its location prompted de Polignac's study on the genesis of the Greek polis in relation with extra-urban sanctuaries.²⁹ While the human occupation of the site is old and probably takes back as early as the Neolithic through Mycenaean and Bronze ages, the religious

²⁸ Hom., *Il.* 4.8; Aesch., *Suppl.* 299; Pindar, *Nem.* 10.2

²⁹ De Polignac (1995), 52: 'Le cas le plus éclairant est celui de l'Héraion d'Argos, sanctuaire exemplaire à plus d'un titre'.

dimension of the site is probably more recent, dating to the 8th c. at the earliest. As for the presence of water at the sanctuary and in its cult, Pausanias' testimony alone leaves little doubt about it.

Fifteen stades distant from Mycenae is on the left the Heraeum. Beside the road flows the brook called Water of Freedom. The priestesses use it in purifications (πρὸς καθάρσια) and for such sacrifices as are secret (ἐς τὰς ἀπορρήτους). The sanctuary itself is on a lower part of Euboea. Euboea is the name they give to the hill here, saying that Asterion the river had three daughters, Euboea, Prosymna, and Acraea, and that they were nurses of Hera.³⁰

Straight away water appears to have been symbolically charged and ritually used. The site of the sanctuary is circumscribed on two sides by streams; the first, the 'Ἐλευθέριον ὕδωρ', provided water for purification and secret rituals. The name of this stream was interpreted in ancient times as being related to Hera protecting the liberation of slaves, while we know from Plutarch that the Heraion had also guaranteed the *asylia*.³¹ The other stream, the Asterion, was thought to be the father of three nurses of Hera. The river had therefore, through its mythical daughters, assumed the charge of raising the young Hera.

To what extent these myths had been the reflection of the cult at the sanctuary is a difficult question to answer. There is no reason to doubt Pausanias when he says that the water of the Eleutherion was specifically used for purifications and secret rituals. It was clear from ancient sources that, if most waters were appropriate for

³⁰ Paus. 2.17.1 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

³¹ On the Heraion as an refuge, see Plut., *Pom.* 24. On the water of freedom see Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 3.123c; Eustathios *ad Od.* 13.408: οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἐν Ἄργει Κυνάδρα κρήνη, ἐξ ἧς ἔπινον οἱ ἐλευθερούμενοι. ὅθεν τὸ ἐν Κυνάδρα ἐλευθέριον ὕδωρ παροιματικῶς ἐπὶ τῆς κατ' ἐλευθερίαν ζωῆς; Hesychius s.v. ἐλεύθερον ὕδωρ: ἐν Ἄργει ἀπὸ τῆς Κυνάδρας πίνουσι κρήνης (οἱ) ἐλευθερούμενοι τῶν οἰκετῶν, διὰ τὸ καὶ τὸν Κέρβερον κύνα ταύτη διαδρᾶναι καὶ ἐλευθερωθῆναι.

cleaning and drinking, all waters were not considered equals for religious purposes. Parker notably has demonstrated that specific sources of water were preferred to others for purifications.³² The same can be said for water used for sacred reasons other than purification, such as oracles or fertility rites.³³

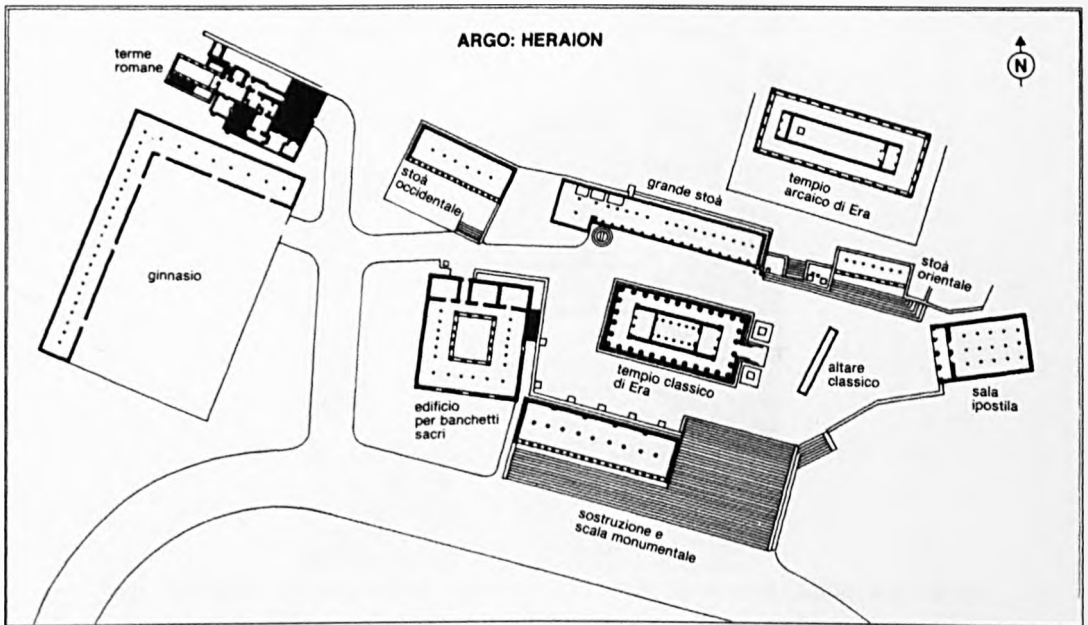


Fig. 78. Plan of the Argive Heraion (from Torelli & Musti [2000], LXVIII).

If what Pausanias said is true for the 2nd c. AD, the architecture of the earlier stages of the Heraion also demonstrates that water was used at the sanctuary. Particularly interesting is the so-called ‘north stoa’ (labelled ‘grande stoa’ on the map) where rainwater falling on the roof was stored in a reservoir on the northern side of the left-half of the stoa. Not far away, three cisterns or pools had been built between the central colonnade and the back wall.³⁴ The stoa itself was variably dated to the 7th or

³² Parker (1983), 226-27.

³³ See for example the Kyllou Pera in Attica (ch. 2) or the springs at the Trophoneion at Lebadeia (ch. 3, section 11.1).

³⁴ Waldstein (1902), 112; Ginouvès (1962), 382, n. 6-7.

the 6th centuries BC.³⁵ The waterworks in the north stoa are not dated and the excavation report is not of any help in this matter.³⁶



Fig. 79. Cistern or reservoir in the north wall of the north stoa (author's picture).



Fig. 80. Remains of a cistern or bath in the north stoa (author's picture).

³⁵ Amandry (1952), 273 dates it to the 7th c. BC. See also Coulton (1976), 29, 215; Ström (1988), 196, n. 157; Bergquist (1967), 21-2, 35-6, went as far down as the 5th c. BC, associating it with the erection of the second temple of Hera initiated some time in the second half of the 5th c. BC.

³⁶ Waldstein (1894), 65 and Waldstein (1902), 75 mention that they were 'probably of a later date'. These are the only attempts at datation.

According to the reports on Waldstein's excavation, several cisterns and channels were found all over the site, most of them related to the stream flowing west of the site and identified with the Eleutherion, and one terracotta channel going from the western half of the north stoa along the new temple of Hera to its north-eastern corner.³⁷ Waldstein believed that this channel brought sacred water to the area in front of the temple.

The excavations co-directed by Caskey and Amandry in 1949 unearthed many fragments of pottery. Of the total amount of Archaic pottery found, more than half was constituted by miniature three-handled vessels (hydriai) amounting to 475 near complete individuals and half that amount again of more fragments.³⁸ Although they vary in shape and style, these vases all have three handles mounted as for hydriai and are likely to have been offered by women or girls.³⁹ The general assumption is that they were a type of offering appropriate to a goddess but also, as Hall writes: 'The appearance at the Heraion of what are often described as "feminine" dedications, such as jewellery or hydriai, may say more about the donors than the divine recipient, just as "masculine" dedications, such as kraters or tripod cauldrons, evoke male activities rather than the nature of Hera'.⁴⁰ This type of offering would seem to support the idea that water had a role to play in the cult as early as the Archaic period. It is tempting to think that, because of Pausanias' testimony on the cult and the local myths, some 'secret' cult reserved for women was practiced, possibly concerned with fertility or the raising of children. Nevertheless, the time gap between, on the one hand, the cult practiced in the 7th and 6th c. and, on the other, the cult of the 2nd c. AD mentioned but not described by Pausanias, is very

³⁷ Waldstein (1902), 17-18, 136.

³⁸ Caskey & Amandry (1952), 197-9.

³⁹ Caskey & Amandry (1952), 211-2.

⁴⁰ Hall (1995), 597-8.

important and one should remain wary of too readily comparing the two. The myth of Hera's bath at the spring Kanathos (see section 9 below) has also been seen as the expression of a cult where the statue of Hera was bathed.⁴¹ It is not possible to know whether this ritual was performed at the Argive Heraion. The *eresides*, Argive girls or priestesses who had the function to draw Hera's bath, were maybe involved in the cult at the Heraion.⁴²

Argive Hera had another link with bathing, the myth of the Proitids. The young girl refused to marry and, as punishment, Hera disfigured them or, in other sources, made them mad. They were cured by Melampous who, in one version, bathed them in the spring of the Anigrad nymphs. This bath can also be understood as a pre-nuptial bath symbolising their resolution to marry and the end of Hera's hostility.⁴³



Fig. 81. Remains of the new temple and the north stoa.
View from the old temple's terrace (author's picture).

⁴¹ Paus. 2.38.2.

⁴² Hesychios s.v. Ἠρεσίδες: κόραι αἱ λουτρὰ κομίζουσαι τῇ Ἥρᾳ; Etym. Magn. s.v. Ἠρεσίδες: αἱ ἱέρειαι τῆς ἐν Ἄργει Ἥρας... αἱ ἀρῦόμεναι τὰ λουτρὰ. See Larson (2001), 115; Dillon (2002), 132.

⁴³ Hes. fr. 130-33; Pherecydes 3 F 114; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.26-29. Anigrad nymphs: Strabo 8.13.19; Paus. 5.5.10. Pausanias gives another location implicitly associated with bathing at the Arcadian Lousoi (8.18.7). See also Larson (2001), 114-15.

4. Argos

4.1. The Altar of Zeus Hyetios

In Argos, Pausanias singled out the sanctuary of Apollo Lykios as the ‘the most famous building in the city’ (τὸ ἐπιφανέστατόν). This sanctuary was located in the city’s agora, and believed today to have been in the immediate proximity of the excavated ‘hypostyle room’.⁴⁴ Using this temple as topographical start, Pausanias described what he saw along his way in the city. Close to the temple he mentioned very briefly an altar to Zeus Hyetios (Ἰετίου), Zeus rain-giver.⁴⁵ Nothing more precise is given about this altar other than it was next to an image of Apollo ‘of the streets’ (ἄγυιεύς) and that the oath taken by young Argives to support Polyneices was taken there.⁴⁶ It is however worth noticing that such altars celebrating Zeus controlling rainfall had so far usually been seen on top of mountains rather than in town centres.⁴⁷

4.2. The sanctuary of Kephisos, Poseidon flooder and ‘Thirsty’ Argos

Next to the building where the Argive women gathered to mourn and worship Adonis, Pausanias reports that there was a sanctuary dedicated to the river

⁴⁴ Thuc. 5.47.11; Eur., *El.* 6-7; J. Des Courtils, ‘Note de topographie argienne’, *BCH* 105 (1981), 607-10; Paus. 2.19.3, comm. by Musti & Torelli (2000), 274.

⁴⁵ Paus. 2.19.8.

⁴⁶ The epiclesis ἄγυιεύς signals that the image was probably aniconical. See *LSJ* s.v. ἄγυιεύς: a name of Apollo, as A. guardian of the streets and highways, 2. pointed pillar, set up as his statue or altar at the street-door.

⁴⁷ See for example the altars of Zeus Ombrios in Attica, on top of Mt Hymettos and Mt Parnes: Paus. 1.32.2. See also in Argolid the altar of Zeus and Hera on top of mount Arachnaio to whom people sacrifice in need of rain: Paus. 2.25.10. Zeus was also called Aphiesios on a mountain between Megara and Corinth (Paus. 1.44.9) because he had ended a draught and ‘sent forth’ rain (ἀφείναι).

Kephisos.⁴⁸ Here the river was said to have partly survived from Poseidon's wrath which had followed the contest won by Hera and could still be heard flowing underground. We are not given any details of the cult that had been practiced there. However, if conjectured from the other river-god sanctuaries elsewhere, one can expect it had something to do with the domains of fertility and *kourotrophia*. In which case the juxtaposition with a cult-place consecrated to the ever-sterile Adonis is revealing of the worry expressed by the Greeks in general, and the Argives in this case, to include both extremes of one and same issue in their religion.

Pausanias then alludes in this description to the myth of Poseidon and Hera's contest for supremacy in Argolid. The similarity with the fight between Poseidon and Athena in Attica is interesting, although in Argolid water is more present. Two versions of the myth give different outcome for Poseidon's anger. In the first one, the god punishes the rivers-gods, who had acted as judges in the contest and favoured Hera, by drying their courses.⁴⁹ In this context, the survival of an underground Kephisos appear almost like a compromise granted to the Argives.

In the second version of the myth, Poseidon flooded the plain and a sanctuary dedicated to the god was built on the spot in Argos where the flood reached its maximum extent. Poseidon was worshipped there with the epiclesis *προσκλυστίου* (flooder).⁵⁰ This alternative version of the dispute's outcome emphasises the double nature of Argos and Argolid, as is represented in the Hesiodic poem quoted by Strabo: 'of waterless Argos the Danaids made well-watered'. Strabo also quoted

⁴⁸ Paus. 2.20.6.

⁴⁹ Apollodorus, *Lib.* 2.1.4; Paus. 2.15.5.

⁵⁰ Paus. 2.22.4. Tomlinson (1972), 204 suggests that the possible rational explanation for the myth would be the tidal waves resulting from the catastrophic eruption of Thera in the middle of the second millennium BC. Billot in Piérart (1992), 153-4 offers a similar possible explanation, although she is less specific, and adds another: the conquest under Hera's patronage of arable lands over the wetlands in the southern part of the plain.

Homer who called Argos 'πολυδίψιον' (parched).⁵¹ Strabo, who had tried to explain these names as not representing the reality of Argolid, was accused by Piérart of misunderstanding both the poem and its geographic context. Piérart argued that the two versions of Argolid existed – the well-watered to the south and the 'thirsty' to the east and north – and that to each region corresponded a different corpus of myths and genealogies.⁵²

The legendary daughters of Danaos, the Danaids, clearly belonged to the well-watered half. Four wells or springs in Argos were identified with some of the Danaids and were sacred to them: Amymone, Automate, Physadeia and Hippe.⁵³ One myth told by Apollodorus said that Amymone was wooed by Poseidon and that in exchange for a sexual liaison he gave her the secret of the sources at Lerna, consequently providing water to Argos.⁵⁴ The wells named after the Danaids also had some religious rules since, for example, it was forbidden for women who had given birth to wash with water drawn from the Physadeia but should use water from Automate instead.⁵⁵

The application of these myths to reality in general, or even to precise climatic or geological events in particular, has been discussed many times. The universal and recurrent character of droughts as well as the subsequent society's

⁵¹ Strabo 8.6.7-8; Homer, *Il.* 4.171.

⁵² Piérart (1992), 122-3 in particular; Piérart (1996a), 171-2. See also Hall (1997), 67-110, notably for the division of the Argive plain between a Dorian Argos in the west and the Akhaians (Herakleidai) in the eastern cities of Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea, with each group having their own mythical genealogies. Hall opposes Piérart for his overly historicist approach to myths. See for example p. 86-88.

⁵³ Callim., *Aitia* fr. 66.8-9. Apollodorus, *Lib.* 2.14; Eustathios, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, vol. 1, M. Van der Valk (ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1971), Δ v.171 (461). Physadia and Amymone in Callimachus, *Bath of Pallas* 45-48. See Larson (2001), 53.

⁵⁴ Pausanias saw a river Amymone on his way to Lerna (2.37.1).

⁵⁵ Callimachus, *Aitia* 3 fr. 65 (Pfeiffer) in Nisetich (2001), 140; R. Pfeiffer (ed.), *Callimachus*, vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 68-69.

struggles to obtain water is however too widespread to ever hope to totally link such myths with one particular drought or series of events.⁵⁶

4.3. A sanctuary of Erasinios

A small bronze bowl, dated to the second quarter of the 5th c. BC, was found in a well dug in the rock between the thirteenth and fourteenth rows of the theatre at Argos. It bears an inscription on the rim reading: τὸ Ἐρασίνο ἐμὶ τῷ Ἄργε (I belong to Erasinios of Argos).⁵⁷

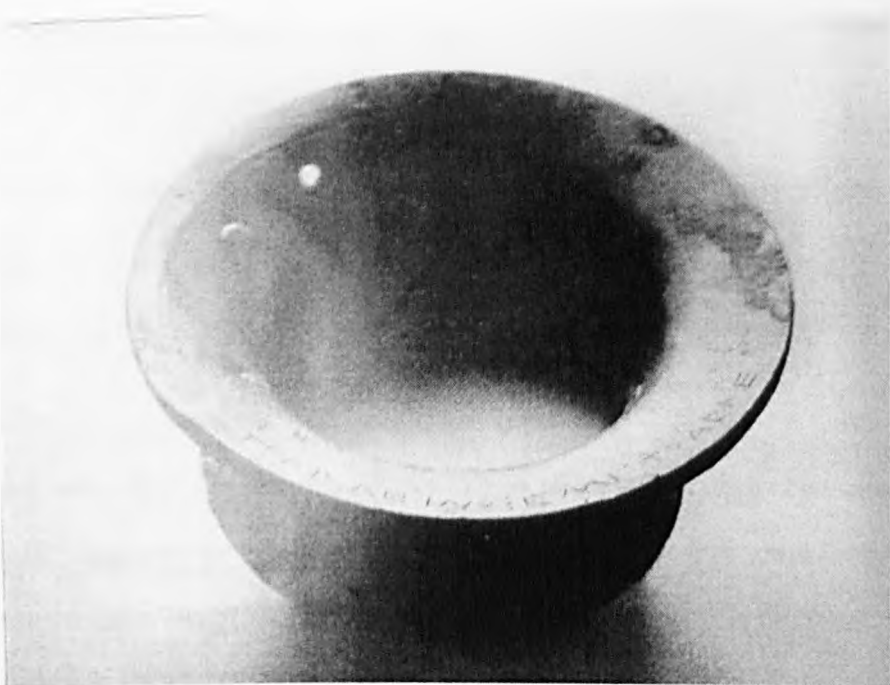


Fig. 82. Bronze bowl with inscription to the Erasinios
(from Vollgraff, 'De Erasino Argivo', *Mnemosyne* 60 [1932], pl. 1).

The well itself is anterior to the theatre which was built at the beginning of the 3rd c. BC. Vollgraff, the excavator, believes that the bowl was found in situ and does not

⁵⁶ Piérart (1992), 155.

⁵⁷ *SEG* 11.329; Vollgraff (1932), 231-238; Moretti (1998), 239-40.

belong to dump fills but rather to the period when the well was in function.⁵⁸ This should mean that the bowl was an offering to the river Erasinos and that the well was somehow related to the river-god. The area of the theatre had previously been occupied by dwellings and sanctuaries.⁵⁹ This well could have been part of what remained of one of them. Moretti suggested that the ancient Argives might have believed that the river Erasinos had an underground course at the level of the well. The presence at the springs of the Erasinos of a cult to Dionysos and Pan (see below section 5) might also suggest that Dionysos was present on the future site of the Theatre.

4.4. The Inachos and the bath of Athena

In his hymn to Athena, Callimachus, who was mainly concerned with the bath that the goddess took in Boiotia, mentions another bath taken by Athena in the river Inachos at Argos.

Come out, Athena, city destroyer, helmed in gold, thrilled by the clash of horses and shields! We'll have no water drawn today: today, Argos, drink from springs and not from the river! Today, servants, take your pitchers to Physadeia or to Amymona, daughter of Danaos: down from the nurturing mountain Inachos will flow, bearing gold and flowers on his currents – a bath for the beauty of Pallas. But as for you, men of Pelasgia, beware of seeing the queen, even unwillingly. The man who sees Pallas, guardian of cities, naked looks upon this town of Argos for the last time.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ The inscription was dated by Jeffery ([1990], 169) to between 475-450 BC. Vollgraff (1932), 232 suggested 475 BC. See Moretti (1998), 239.

⁵⁹ Moretti (1998), 233.

⁶⁰ Callimachus, *Bath of Pallas* 43-54, translated by F. Nisetich in *The Poems of Callimachus* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001).

In this song, the poet warns the Argives: the waters of the Inachos are not to be drunk (nor probably used in any other way) the day when the goddess is bathed in the river and they should draw their water from the wells of Physadeia or Amymone instead. This story belongs to the fairly well-known theme of the bathing goddess which here corresponds probably to an actual ritual. Here the waters used for the bath become explicitly out of bounds on the day it is taken.

If the reason why unauthorised male eyes were not to see the naked goddess is relatively clear, the reason why the waters should not be drunk is less straightforward. One could already suppose that the simple contact of the goddess (her statue in the actual rites) with the river's waters makes them sacred, although it would mean as a general rule that anything in contact the statue was not to be touched, which was probably not always the case. The reason for the bath and the religious significance of water are in all likelihood the places to look for explanations. As Ginouvès and Kahil after him have suggested, these baths of divinities were not only processes by which the statue's cleanliness was obtained, but have an altogether more resounding religious importance. Ginouvès has tried to classify the baths of divinities, essentially female, between pre and post-nuptial stages. In the cases of Athena or Artemis, the warrior and virgin goddesses, some have suggested that their baths could have derived from an ancient cult pre-dating their virginal symbolism, but Ginouvès rightly doubted such easy interpretation.

The least one can say about the rite at Argos is that the water of the Inachos became out of bounds because it washed away the goddess' impurities. But, unlike Parker's suggestion that 'Pallas' bath in Argos is only taken for bathing's sake', it is also probable that the goddess was regenerated by the bath and had her powers

renewed.⁶¹ This is even clearer in the case of the bath taken by Hera in the Canathos spring studied below (see section 9). The statue of Athena which was bathed at Argos is possibly that of Athena Polias whose temple was on the Acropolis of the Larisa. Pausanias tells us nothing of this statue when he describes her temple as worth seeing, but later writes that it is similar to the wooden *xoanon* of Athena he saw at the village of Lessa.⁶² Some Roman coins from Argos possibly represent a temple on a hill (the Larisa?) with an armed statue of Athena inside.⁶³



XI.II

Fig. 83. Argive coin, dated to Antoninus Pius
(from Imhoof-Blumer & Gardner [1885], pl. K, XI.II).

To conclude this section on the Inachos, the river was also very probably a *kourotrophos* river-god. At the beginning of the *Libation bearers*, Orestes says: '[Look, I bring] a lock to Inachos in requital for his care, and here, a second, in token of my grief'.⁶⁴ There is no reason to doubt that the Argive really offered lock of hair to the Inachos, or to other rivers of Argolid, since the practice is so largely attested in ancient Greece.⁶⁵

⁶¹ On the bathing of statues cf. Parker (1983), 28; Ginouvès (1962), 283-98; Kahil (1994), 217-23; Piérart (1996a), 188-89.

⁶² Paus. 2.24-3, 2.25.10.

⁶³ Imhoof-Blumer & Gardner (1885), #22, p. 88-9, pl. K, XI.II.

⁶⁴ Aesch., *Cho.* 6-7 (trans. H.W. Smyth).

⁶⁵ See Hom., *Il.* 23.141-153; Paus. 1.37.3; Paus. 8.20.2.

4.5. Apollo Deiradiotes

Making his way up to the acropolis of ancient Argos, situated on top of the Larisa hill dominating the city, Pausanias' path took him to the sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes.⁶⁶ This sanctuary was discovered on the south-west slope of the hill called Deiras and was excavated in the early 20th c.⁶⁷ Epigraphic evidence found during the excavations directed by Vollgraff confirmed the identification with the sanctuary of Apollo, although some problems still remain today as to its precise extent.⁶⁸ In his description, Pausanias does not make any explicit reference to water being present in either sanctuary or cult. The site of the sanctuary is not known for ever having had a natural source of water of some kind.⁶⁹ But Pausanias' silence is contradicted by the archaeological discoveries, since several important structures concerned with the storage and use of water were unearthed.

The sanctuary was built on a series of four terraces, the altitude of which declines from east to west. The easternmost and highest terrace was largely levelled by digging the rock on its north and east side while a retaining wall was built to the south-west. The structure built on this terrace was centred on a large underground cistern. Twenty stone pillars in the cistern supported flagstones which were made waterproof with a pebble mosaic. Water was provided by the rain falling on the roof and was supplemented by a rupestral fountain's overflow. This fountain, located in

⁶⁶ Paus. 2.24.1-2.

⁶⁷ The Deiras is regularly referred to as the 'Aspis' by several authors. Piérart insisted that this was not the correct denomination. See Piérart (1996a), 178.

⁶⁸ Vollgraff (1956), 26-7. The identification of the sanctuary with the one seen by Pausanias was in great part confirmed by an honorific inscription of Roman time mentioning repairs to the temple τοῦ Δειραδιώτο[υ Ἀπόλλωνος]. See the inscription in Vollgraff (1909), 448-49, #16. Among the problems resulting from the excavations and the discovery of the inscriptions, is the exact dimension of the sanctuary, whether all or some of the terraces only are to be attributed to Apollo and the location of the temple mention in the inscriptions but not discovered on site. Other gods were present on the site as is proven by the presence of altars to Aphrodite, Demeter, Zeus and Leto. See Vollgraff (1956), 27-28.

⁶⁹ For the absence of spring water on the hill, see Vollgraff (1956), 39.

the northern half of the building's eastern wall, had a reservoir cut in the rock which still shows traces of calcification. There is no source of water there nor was there any on the rest of the hill. A channel must have brought water from somewhere else, possibly from another cistern.⁷⁰



Fig. 84. Sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes:
The 'square' cistern (author's picture).



Fig. 85. Sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes:
The rupestral fountain (author's picture)

Usually in such a case, the water stored in the cistern would be drawn from a sealable well-head built over it. Here however an underground channel, ca 8.50 m. long and 30 cm. above the bottom of the cistern, links the cistern with a well a few meters away to the southeast. Channel and well were both found covered with thick waterproof plaster of a 'late date'. This arrangement must have been costly to build and, because this is not the usual design, Roux believed that a religious necessity

⁷⁰ Vollgraff (1956), 51-2 attributed the building to the sanctuary of Athena Oxyderkes seen by Pausanias. Roux (1961), 66-71 attributes it to Asklepios and confines Athena to the third terrace, south of the fourth, on which remain very meagre traces of a tholos building (p. 71).

must have prevailed in the matter.⁷¹ In support of this idea, the well was found in what very probably was a separate room which would have allowed for a limited access to the water. Furthermore, fragments of marble statues were recovered from the cistern: one of Asklepios, one of Hecate and a headless statue possibly belonging to Aphrodite.⁷²

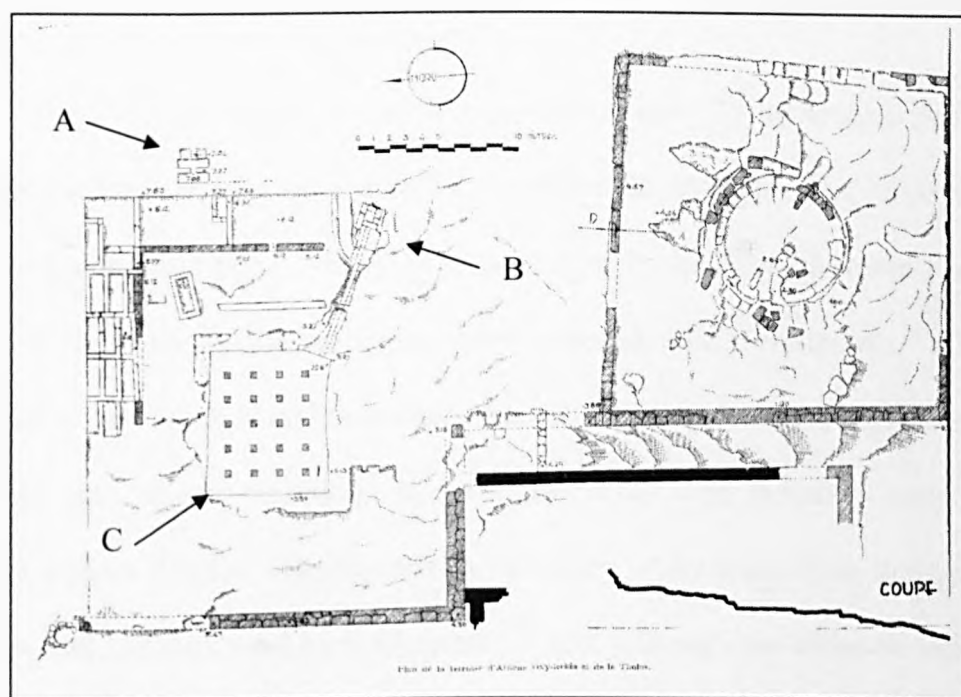


Fig. 86. Plan of the upper terraces of the sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes (from Vollgraff [1956], pl. XI) A. Rupestral fountain. B. Well. C. Cistern.

If Vollgraff attributed this building to the sanctuary of Athena Oxyderkes seen by Pausanias next to the sanctuary of Apollo, Roux preferred to see it devoted to the cult of Asklepios. The importance of water, the architectural similarities with structures found in sanctuaries of Asklepios elsewhere (cave-like fountain, peristyle *abaton*), the possibility that the building was not easily accessible from the supposed location of the temple, as well as the the statue of Asklepios are as many points in support of

⁷¹ Roux (1961), 68.

⁷² Vollgraff (1956), 55-68.

Roux's idea.⁷³ There remains the problem of Pausanias' silence on the presence of Asklepieion. Roux suggested that the ancient author simply omitted Asklepios because it was a 'minor' Asklepieion compared to the other ones found in Argos.⁷⁴ This fails to completely convince, in particular because of the otherwise total absence of epigraphic and material evidence of a medical function at the sanctuary. It is true that the remains are scarce but the picture drawn by them allows other possibilities concerning the function of this building.

The apollonian *manteion* may have existed as early as the Archaic period, but is proven to exist at least since the 4th c. BC when the sanctuary was refurbished as described in an inscription.⁷⁵ It was still in function in the 2nd c. AD when Pausanias visited it. He wrote that the prophetess still prophesied once every month.⁷⁶ Although the process he described does not imply the use of water, it is very probable that it had been part of one or several stages of the ritual. The sanctuary very clearly claimed a direct filiation with the Delphic sanctuary where water from the springs of Castalia and Cassotis were very important.⁷⁷ And although the chthonic aspects of the rupestral fountain would be suitable in a sanctuary of Asklepios, they certainly would not be misplaced in the context of an apollonian *manteion*.⁷⁸ In any case,

⁷³ One thinks in particular of the Asklepieion at Epidauros, Athens and Corinth. Roux (1961), 70-1.

⁷⁴ Roux (1961), 71.

⁷⁵ The inscription, found in the rectangular cistern west of the sanctuary, is dated by Vollgraff to the 4th c. BC, by Piérart to ca 340 BC while it was attributed by others to the 3rd c. BC. See Vollgraff (1956), 26, n. 1; 109-17; Vollgraff (1957), 475-77; Roux (1957), 486; Roux (1961), 66; Billot (1989-90), 54; Piérart (1990), 321, 329-30; Deshours (1999-2000), 475. Incidentally, it is from this inscription that we know of the existence of a temple which has completely disappeared. The attempt by Vollgraff to situate it under the Basilica has failed to convince because no archaeological traces were discovered.

⁷⁶ Paus. 2.24.1.

⁷⁷ Paus. 2.24.1; 2.35.2. Pausanias says the temple was built by Pythaeus, son of Apollo who comes from Delphi. He also cites the 5th c. BC poetess Telesilla (fr. 4-5 *PLG*) who wrote that Pythaeus went first to Argos. In the 4th c. BC inscription mentioned above there is the mention of an *omphalos* (line 6), reconstructed by Roux [(1961), 78] near the altar. See Kadletz (1978), 100.

⁷⁸ Particularly striking is the method of divination as described by Pausanias. Each month a lamb is sacrificed at night and the prophetess tastes its blood before uttering prophecies. This type of consultation recalls the one performed at a sanctuary of Earth at Gaios in Achaia, where a chaste

Apollo was the major deity of the sanctuary and remained so throughout its history, as opposed to the examples of other shrines clearly 'high-jacked' by Asklepios where Apollo's presence became secondary. The *manteion* is well documented until late in the history of the sanctuary and, if there ever was an Asklepieion functioning alongside it there, it has not left anything but very faint traces.

In addition to this major structure, the sanctuary possessed other means to store and supply water. On the middle terrace where a Byzantine basilica later stood, a double-nave stoa built on its northern half also recuperated rain-water into channels which emptied into two settling basins. Water was then stored into an oblong cistern located between the two basins outside the stoa's western wall.⁷⁹ Further west, among the 'steps' carved in the rock in front of the similarly carved altar, a well was dug some 17.80 m. deep which never reached water level.⁸⁰ Water had therefore to be brought from somewhere else, possibly another cistern filled with rainwater. Vollgraff believed that it was an oracular well: he suggested that fragments of Hellenistic amphoriskoi were thrown into it as a means to receive an answer from the god. Roux was far more dubious about this hypothesis and did not attempt to explain the well's function. It was probably built before the creation of the 'steps' and was still in use afterwards as is proved by the amphoriskoi as well as by the drain channel crudely cut through the steps.⁸¹ Lastly, a large rectangular cistern (5x14 m.) was discovered in the western part of the lower terrace. It was cut into the rock and possibly sealed by a wooden cover. Water was drawn up from a well head on its

priestess descended into a cave, drank bull's blood and prophesied. Pliny, *NH* 28.147; Paus. 7.25. See Ogden (2001), 246.

⁷⁹ This was dated by Vollgraff to the Archaic period and by Roux to the 4th c. BC at the earliest. See Vollgraff (1956), 36-7; Roux (1961), 73-74.

⁸⁰ Those 'steps' were never used as such nor as bleachers. Roux suggest they were simply a mean to emphasise the altar by creating a perspective. Roux (1961), 77-78.

⁸¹ Roux (1961), 78.

eastern side. The waterproof cement and brick mortar found inside is of Roman date, but Vollgraff thought it ought to have been built earlier.⁸²



Fig. 87. Sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes: The altar and the 'stairs'. The well opening can be seen in the top-left corner (author's picture).

5. On the route to Tegea: Dionysos, Pan and the sources of the Erasinos

On the road leading south-west from Argos to Tegea, Pausanias visited the source of the Erasinos which was said to be a resurgence of Lake Stymphalon.⁸³ Pausanias here makes an evasive reference to a sanctuary of Dionysos and Pan that would have existed near the sources of the river. Boblaye, who visited the place in the first half of the 19th c. AD, said he had seen the ruins of a temple on the right bank of the Erasinos as well as, right opposite the entrance of the large caves from whence the

⁸² Vollgraff (1956), 47.

⁸³ Paus. 2.24.6; Herodotus 6.76.1; Strabo 6.2.9, 8.6.8; Diodorus 15.49.5. The link between Lake Stymphalos and the Erasinos is today supported by geological studies. See W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography*, part 3: Roads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 54-77 (chap. 2: the road from Argos to Hysiai via Kenchreai) p. 55, n. 5.

river flows, an ancient ash and bone altar.⁸⁴ The only detail given by Pausanias is that there was a festival in the honour of Dionysos called *Tyrbe* (τύρβη). The name of the festival suggests disorder, revelry, etc., and is associated with the dithyrambic dance called *tyrbasia*.⁸⁵ It is not known if water had a role to play in the festival. The location of the sanctuary near large springs surging from caves is certainly not anecdotal; both Dionysos and Pan enjoyed the company of nymphs who one could expect to have inhabited such a place and would have joined the gods in their dances.

6. Epidauros: the sanctuary of Asklepios

The sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros is certainly the most famous of the healer god's precincts, although it is better known today for its superb theatre than its cultic past. Considering the importance water had taken in the more humble sanctuaries of Asklepios throughout the Greek world, one can expect waterworks to be at the top of the list of the structures found there.

The first archaeological exploration of the site was carried out by the French 'expédition en Morée' in the 19th c., but it was not thought to be rich enough to justify important excavations. The real campaigns started later. The site was indeed excavated from 1881 to 1928 by Kavvadias, under the auspices of the Athenian Society of Archaeology. Excavations with modern techniques were resumed a few years later, when the French school excavated during and shortly after the Second World War. The exploration of the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas started in 1974. In

⁸⁴ Boblaye (1835), 47: 'Ce fleuve, le plus beau cours d'eau de l'Argolide, sort au-dessous de vastes cavernes qu'on est surpris de ne point voir jouer un rôle dans les fables argiennes. On trouve à la rive droite du fleuve les ruines d'un temple à quelque distance de la source et près d'elle, en face de l'ouverture des cavernes, un petit terre autel antique formé de cendres, de charbons et d'ossements : c'est sans doute là que l'on sacrifiait à Bacchus et à Pan'.

⁸⁵ Hesychius s.v. τυρβασία; Pollux 4.105; Lawler (1950), 83. See Nilsson (1906), 303-4.

1984, the Greek Ministry of Culture decided to start a new archaeological study and began a protection and restoration programme of the sanctuary of Asklepios.⁸⁶

6.1. Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas

Before the foundation of the sanctuary of Asklepios in the valley, the first cultic establishment was dedicated to Apollo on the hills further east. The oldest traces of occupation on those hills are dated to the 3rd millennium BC. Mycenaean habitations with cultic traces, near a valley where springs were abundant, were also discovered. It is on this same site that, by the 8th c. BC, the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas was founded, although no continuity with earlier periods can be proved. Water had, it seems, a certain importance for the sanctuary from the start. Several springs were in easy reach and offerings such as frog figurines were found. The medical role is also attested here very early. Offerings of snakes and medical tools were indeed found in the ash of the altar, next to which a well had been built.⁸⁷

6.2. Sanctuary of Asklepios

By the middle of the 6th c. BC, the medical dimension of the sanctuary was well established. More space was needed, so the sanctuary was in effect doubled with the foundation of a new sanctuary on the plain where the Asklepieion is now. The arrangements of the old sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas are replicated: an ash altar, a

⁸⁶ Lambrinouidakis (1987-8), 298-9; Bory de Saint Vincent et al., *Expédition scientifique de Morée* (Paris: Levrault, 1836-8). For the earlier excavations, see Kavvadias, *Fouilles d'Épidaure* (Athens, 1891) and *Τὸ Ἱερόν τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ* (Athens, 1900). See also the index in *Το Ἔργον τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας κατὰ τὴν πρῶτην αὐτῆς ἑκατονταετιαν 1837-1937* (Athens, 1938). Brief reports are being published since the archaeological activity was resumed at the sanctuary in 1974: See *Praktika* 1974-present; *Ergon* 1984-present.

⁸⁷ Lambrinouidakis (1994), 225-6; Tomlinson (1983), 93-4.

well built just next to it and a building where people could stay. Both sites were part of one same complex where Apollo and his son Asklepios were worshipped.⁸⁸

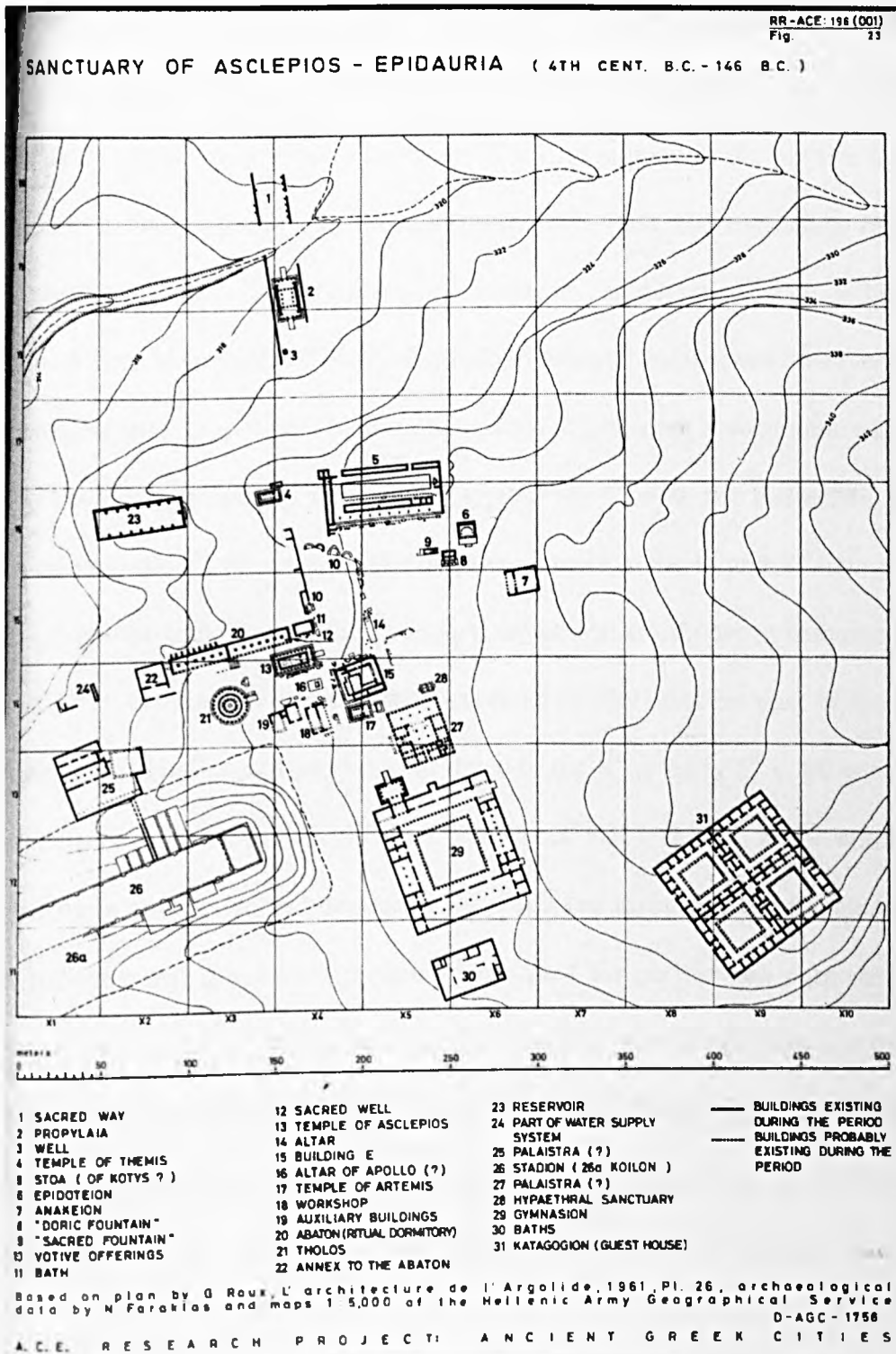


Fig. 88. Map of the Asklepieion of Epidauros, 4th c. BC-146 BC (from Pharaklas [1972], fig. 23).

⁸⁸ Lambrinouidakis (1994), 226-7.

In the Classical period and later, the sanctuary gained in fame and importance. The plague that had affected Athens and other Greek regions in 430 BC is thought to have been the impetus the sanctuary needed to develop its influence throughout the Greek world.⁸⁹ A major building programme started and the growing influence of the sanctuary is illustrated by an inscription (*IG IV² 94*) which lists people from other Greek cities who received and/or supported the envoys from the Asklepieion. These envoys' duty was to promote the cult and eventually to collect funds for the sanctuary.⁹⁰ This list records names in far-off regions such as Thessaly, Boiotia, Attica, Macedonia or Sicily. No Peloponnesian city is listed however. While it is possible that these were listed on a separate stone, such a document was never found. The building activity went on throughout the 4th c. to the Hellenistic period, subsided from the 2nd BC to the 1st BC and peaked again in the 1st and 2nd AD.

From the early days of the sanctuary, water was an important resource for the cult. A 5th c. BC stone-built well was discovered in 1991 not far east of the sacred fountain studied below and another well dated to the 6th or early 5th c. BC was built a short distance after the propylon.⁹¹ The position of this last well, at the entrance of the sanctuary, just inside its boundaries but still a fair distance from its monumental core, indicates that it had very probably been used for purification purposes.⁹² The well built in the 6th c. BC at the heart of the sanctuary, next to the altar and later the *abaton*, was very probably the most important source of water from the sanctuary's early years. Its religious significance is plainly demonstrated by its incorporation within the 4th c. BC *abaton* (the stoa where worshippers would sleep to receive

⁸⁹ Tomlinson (1983), 24; Burford (1969), 20.

⁹⁰ Tomlinson (1983), 25.

⁹¹ Well near the sacred fountain: Lambrinoudakis (1994), 27; Well by the propylon: Lambrinoudakis (1994), 227; Tomlinson (1983), 17, 46.

⁹² Tomlinson (1983), 46-47. The well predates the propylon dated to the first half of 3rd c. by Roux (1961), 274.

dreams from the god), although it seems the well was no longer in use and that water from springs was then brought to the sanctuary. Around 450 BC and consequently before the construction of the *abaton*, a bathing establishment was built east of the well. The Roman baths mentioned by Pausanias was found on the same spot, an indication that the dedicated function of the area endured for centuries.⁹³



Fig. 89. The Well at the Propylon (author's picture).

Water from the spring east of the sanctuary, near the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas, was transported to the sanctuary through an aqueduct dug into the rock. Lambrinoudakis seems to think it is Classical, but Peppas-Papaioannou states that it is Hellenistic. Halfway to the sanctuary a cistern had been built as early as the Hellenistic times to store water from the aqueduct. The water was then settled into

⁹³ Tomlinson (1983), 67-8; Burford (1969), 51; Martin & Metzger (1942-43), 327-331.

basins and redistributed throughout the sanctuary where it was brought notably to fountains and fountain-houses.



Fig. 90. The rock-cut aqueduct (from Lambrinoudakis [1994], 233).

The sanctuary was eventually criss-crossed by channels, basins, drains and sewers, making water accessible almost everywhere with basins regularly situated along the conduits. Several perirrhanteria, the basins used for water ablutions and purifications, dotted the sanctuary.⁹⁴ To secure water reserves that would be large enough to accommodate the sanctuary's growing needs, two cisterns were built: one to the north and another beside the track leading to the sanctuary of Apollo both belong to a Hellenistic type, with arches supporting the roofs, such as the cistern found near the theatre of Delos.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Lambrinoudakis (1994), 227; Peppas-Papaioannou (1990), 553-4.

⁹⁵ Tomlinson (1983), 69, 93.

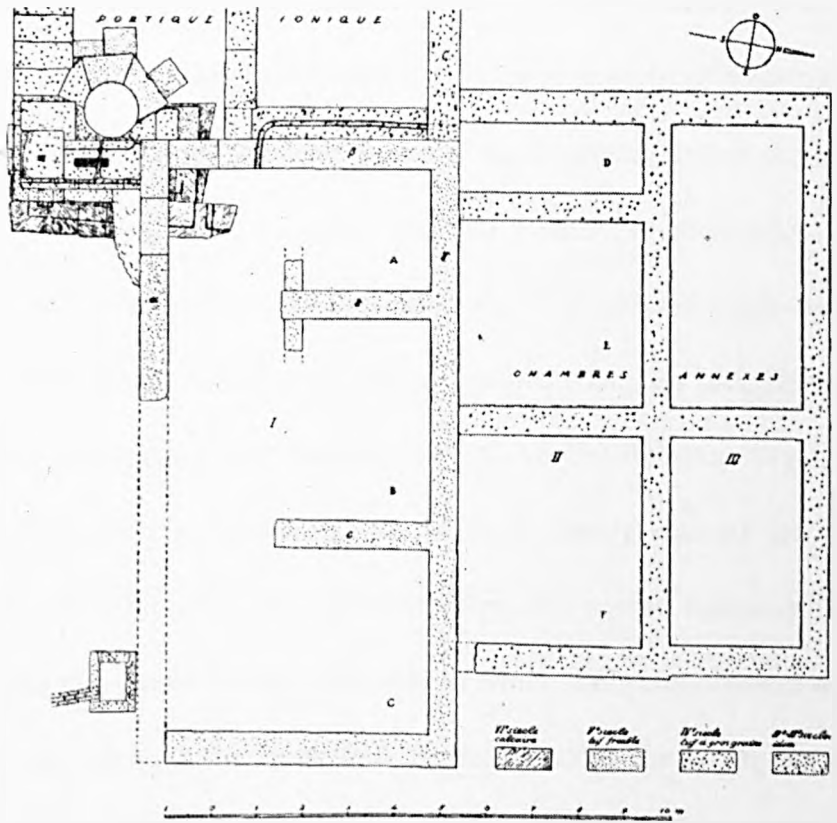


Fig. 91. East end of the *Abaton*, the sacred well and the baths (from Martin & Metzger [1943], pl. XV).

Next to the entrance of the temple of Asklepios (4th c. BC) was found a bronze statue cleverly connected to a water conduit so that water would have flowed from a dish in the hand of the god before being redistributed to the *abatón* where it flowed in a channel.⁹⁶ Remarkably, the god was in this way explicitly represented as giving water to the worshippers. The sacred nature of this water cannot be doubted. The fact that it flowed through the *abatón* is another indication of the importance of water in the incubation. Water was maybe attributed here powers of inspiration, resembling what happened in the oracular sanctuaries of Apollo and Trophonios studies in the chapter on Boeotia, where water played such an important role.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ J. Paton, 'Archaeological news', *AJA* 11 (1907), 92; Ginouvès (1962), 354; Lambrinoudakis (1994), 230. For the general architecture of the *abatón* see Coulton (1976), 47, 237-38.

⁹⁷ Cf. Ginouvès (1962), 352

One fountain house probably built around 300 BC was found west of the *abaton* and was tentatively identified with the fountain seen by Pausanias.⁹⁸ Two other fountains, located east of the central core of the sanctuary, retain our attention because of the quality of their execution but also because of their good state of conservation.⁹⁹ The first is called the Doric fountain. It is oriented north-south with the entrance to the south and would have been tetrastyle. Channels brought water via the aqueduct from the springs near the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas. Water passed first through a first, then a second settling basin. It finally entered the building through its east wall. The main part of the building is a square reservoir (4.60 m. wide) divided into two compartments by a wall in which the water channel was. The north reservoir was intended for the sacred fountain nearby, the south one was for this fountain. Water gushed out through three lion-head spouts. Water overflowed in a basin under the façade portico where water could be drawn from. All this arrangement was to ensure the purity of the water, but also its availability, since it could be stored before being distributed in the draw basin. There were also evacuation channels, one of which can be seen out of the front basin. This so-called Doric fountain (Tomlinson argues it could as well be Ionic), has a clear utilitarian function. The type of fountain is well represented in Greece, in particular in the Peloponnese.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Tomlinson (1983), 68; Burford (1961), 61-2.

⁹⁹ On both fountains see Tomlinson (1983), 50-51.

¹⁰⁰ Roux (1961), 285-89.



Fig. 92. The back reservoir of the 'Doric Fountain', the canalisation in the wall and a settling basin at the front (author's picture).



Fig. 93. Entrance of the 'Sacred Fountain'. The roof at the back is over the remains of the 'doric fountain' (author's picture).

The sacred fountain is an altogether more complex building. Though the actual remains are a Roman reconstruction, parts of the visible building are reused from an earlier Hellenistic one. It is a long and narrow construction (11.50x3.45 m.) orientated west-east. One would have entered in it from the western side, into a first room which was an inner square courtyard. It is not known clearly whether it was roofed or not. The evacuation channels on the floor could have been meant for different functions (e.g. drain evacuating water from the rain, water used for cleaning or an overflow from the fountain). One would then have accessed the fountain proper through a monumental door leading into a small corridor. The square draw-basin was doubled behind the back wall by a reservoir.¹⁰¹



Fig. 94. Square draw basin of the 'Sacred Fountain' (author's picture).

¹⁰¹ Roux (1961), 289-91.

The narrowness of the draw basin, the splendour of the construction and the complexity of the plan suggest a cultic use. The overall impression given by the sacred fountain is of a building attempting to recreate the impression of going underground. The parallels found at the sanctuaries of Asklepios at Athens or Corinth where there were fountains in caves or cave-like rooms could come in support of this interpretation.¹⁰²

Stylistically some architectural parts of the sacred fountain could be Classical, such as the faux arch above the door to the corridor. Roux dates the original construction of the mid-3rd c. BC, while Tomlinson mentions the possibility that it could also be about 50 years older.¹⁰³ It is probable, because of the system created to supply water to the sacred fountain from the reservoir in the other fountain-house, that the two buildings were conceived and built at the same time. We have therefore two examples of water-supply development that are contemporaneous but answered two different needs. One is the distribution of water used in a 'domestic' way, for drinking, cooking and cleaning. The other building is complex and probably fully inserted into the religious life of the sanctuary. This is not a surprise that the two buildings are so clearly distinct, both in shape and orientation, and at the same time were conceived in one and same programme. It is maybe not a surprise either if the sacred fountain is the one that opens towards the heart of the sanctuary.

There were also baths built throughout the sanctuary's history. Those next to the *abaton* are dated to the 5th c. BC and were considerably refurbished in Roman times.¹⁰⁴ The epigraphic evidence mentions, though scarcely, a *balaneion* and

¹⁰² Ginouvès (1962), 352-55; Lambrinoudakis (1994), 229.

¹⁰³ Roux (1961), 291; Tomlinson (1983), 51.

¹⁰⁴ Paus. 2.27.6; Tomlinson (1983), 67. The tiles at the bath next to the *abaton* are stamped with Antoninus' name.

loutra.¹⁰⁵ Another supposed Greek bath is situated to the south of the sanctuary. The building was identified as such because of the discovery of bath tubs and a water supply system. It was built in Hellenistic times and went through major transformations in Roman times with the addition of two swimming pools.¹⁰⁶

The small sacred building π to the east of the sanctuary, dated to the 4th or to the early 3rd c. BC, was also equipped with a small fountain. The basin was intermittently filled with water by an 'overpressure system' and was probably used for ablutions, maybe in the context of a mystery cult.¹⁰⁷

There is a small paradox in the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros. Apart from the wells, most of the water comes from outside the sanctuary. It is maybe because the sanctuary itself had taken another one, that of Apollo Maleatas, as a model. The level of equipment to obtain, store and distribute water throughout the sanctuary is nevertheless impressive and none of the potential sources (rain, wells, springs) were neglected. It clearly shows that water was of primary importance in the smooth running of the sanctuary and so on different levels.¹⁰⁸ The first, which should not be overlooked, is the purely pragmatic use of an element that allows human life. Because of the growing success of the sanctuary water was needed in important volumes to provide for the pilgrims' needs. On a second level, water was the expression of the god's presence and power, as is clearly expressed by the way water spouted from the hand of the statue of Asklepios. In a way, the more water there was, the more the god's divinity was materially made present. On a third level, water was the necessary tool of the worshippers' purity, which became important to the extreme in the Asklepieion where perirrhanteria scattered the sanctuary. So important as to

¹⁰⁵ *IG IV*² 109 II.85; III.32-47; *IG IV*² 110 C.7; *IG IV*² 116.10-11; *IG IV*² 123.130.

¹⁰⁶ Tomlinson (1983), 84; Aslanidis & Pinatsi (1999), 51-2.

¹⁰⁷ Lembidaki (2002), 134-36, n°3 on fig. 1.

¹⁰⁸ I borrow three levels from Lambrinoudakis (1994), 228-31, to which I added the first and more prosaic one.

have prompted this sentence to be eventually inscribed on the propylon: 'He who enters the fragrant temple must be pure; purity is to think holy thoughts'.¹⁰⁹ On a final level, water is a tool used to cure patients and if in the beginnings of the sanctuary's history cult and cure tended to overlap, the medical dimension grew steadily afterwards.¹¹⁰

7. Troizen

7.1. The purification of Orestes

In Troizen, Pausanias was shown the building where, according to the legend, Orestes was housed and cleansed of his matricide by nine local men. They used the water from a local spring called the Hippokrene, to which was attributed the same legend as the Hippokrene in Boiotia which appeared where Pegasus struck the earth. The location of the spring is unknown and need not be in the immediate vicinity. The tools used for the cleansing, including probably some of the water, were buried not far from 'Orestes' booth' and a bay-tree seen by Pausanias was said to have grown from it. Other than the legend, the descendants of those who purified Orestes still regularly gathered.¹¹¹

7.2. Hippolytos, Asklepios and the spring of Herakles

¹⁰⁹ Porphyros, *De abstinentia* 2.19.

¹¹⁰ On the 4th c. BC inscriptions called *ιάματα* detailing miraculous cures see LiDonnici (1992) and (1995).

¹¹¹ Paus. 2.31.4,8-9. On the political dimension of the building and on the unknown location of the spring, see Torelli & Musti (2000), 319.

Outside the city walls, Pausanias visited a sanctuary of Hippolytos within which was a temple to Apollo. A statue of Asklepios described by Pausanias seems to also indicate that the healing-god was worshipped there too. Lastly, there was a fountain ‘of Herakles’ said to have been discovered by the demi-god.¹¹² The existence of a sanctuary to Asklepios is Troizen in confirmed by a passage of the Epidaurian *Iamata*: Ἀρισταγόρα Τροζανία. Αὐτὰ ἔλμιθα ἔχουσα ἐν τᾷ κοιλίαι ἀνεκάθευδε ἐν Τροζᾶνι, ἐν τῷ τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ τεμένει.¹¹³ Some distance northwest of the city a sanctuary was excavated very near a church where inscriptions were discovered.¹¹⁴ One of them, dated to ‘no later than the 5th c. BC’ (*IG* IV.760), records directions given seemingly from an oracle including a sacrifice to Herakles and the necessity to bathe:

Εὐθυμίδας
 ἀνέθεκε,
 ἡ ἀκαπ<ο>ιῶν,
 π<ο>ὶ τ<ο>ν θεόν
 5 <ο>ίε {ι} λ<ο>υσάμε-
 ν<ο>ς δαῖναι χρῆ-
 [ι]ζων. θυσάμεν
 ἡῆρακλει, Ἀλίωι
 ἰδ<ο>ντα [ε]πιαλῆ
 10 <ο>ίων<ο>ν.

¹¹² Paus. 2.32.1-4.

¹¹³ *IG* IV² 122.10-11.

¹¹⁴ Legrand (1905), 288-9. For the inscriptions see Legrand (1893), 86-93.

The other two explicitly refer to Asklepios (*IG IV.771-772*).¹¹⁵ The excavations finally unearthed the remains of a complex group of buildings surrounded by a protective wall and built at the end of the 4th c. or the beginning of the 3rd c. BC. Immediately after the monumental propylon gate, a small temple opening onto an altar was found and identified with that of Hippolytos. Behind it was an enclosure very similar to that found at the *heroion* of Opheltes at Nemea. More to the south-west is another building, tetrastyle in antis and opening to the east, identified with the temple of Apollo Epibaterios. To the south-east of the complex, rooms organised around a peristyle, built in the 4th c. BC, seem to have been dining and sleeping rooms linked to the cult of Asklepios and to its medical aspects. Further south-east, outside the complex, a doric and peripteral temple is probably that of Asklepios.

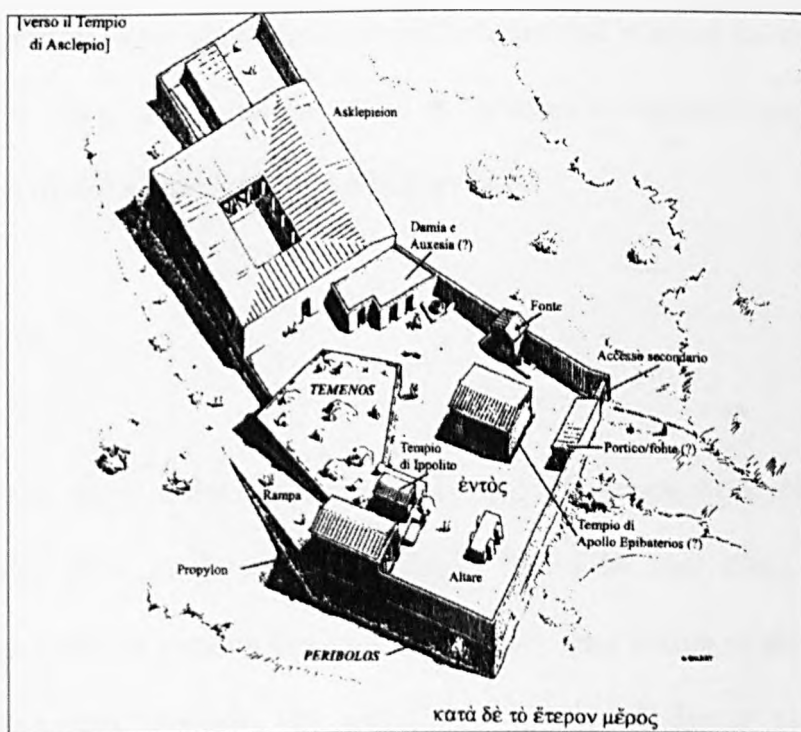


Fig. 95. Reconstruction of the sanctuary of Hippolytos. The temple of Asklepios would have been further up (from Saporiti [2003], 367, fig. 6).

¹¹⁵ Another inscription from Troizen (*IG IV 782.3*) refer implicitly to an Asklepieion by mentioning the city's 'arch-doctor' (ὁ ἀρχίατρος τῆς πόλεως).

The fountain of Herakles mentioned by Pausanias is however more elusive. Maybe up to two fountains existed within the limits of the sanctuary but it is not possible to definitely equate any of them with that of Herakles. Their position in the first section of the sanctuary, after the propylon and before the area reserved to Asklepios, can possibly be explained by the need to purify oneself before being anywhere near the Asklepieion. Their being inside the sanctuary rather than immediately outside could also mean that their water was sacred.

7.3. From Troizen to Hermione

On the mountainous way from Troizen to Hermione, Pausanias saw the spring of the river Hyllicus which, he says, used to be called Taurus.¹¹⁶ This toponym is an interesting parallel of the usual depiction in literature and in art of the rivers as bulls, the archetype being the Achelous which is so often represented on Attic reliefs alongside the nymphs like a bull with a human face.

8. Hermione

On the southern shore of the Peninsula is the city of Hermione, believed by locals to be the closest point to descend to Hades.¹¹⁷ Pausanias saw there a temple to Klymenos he said was actually the name of the god ‘who is king of the underworld’ (βασιλεύς ὑπὸ γῆν). Opposite this temple was another dedicated to Chthonia.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Paus. 2.32.7.

¹¹⁷ Strabo 8.6.12.

¹¹⁸ Paus. 2.35.9-10. A series of inscription from Hermione mention the triad Demeter, Kore and Klymenos. See *JG* IV 686-691. There is several local legends on the identity of Chthonia reported by Pausanias (2.35.4). Ultimately it is the association with Demeter and her festival that stands out (2.35.5).

Behind the temple of Chthonia in Hermione were three places: the place of Klymenos where there was a chasm, the place of Pluto and a lake called Acherusian.¹¹⁹ Already by their name, these places were clearly linked with the underworld and the local legend adds that Herakles brought back Cerberus from this chasm. The association of the lake with Hades is toponymical and material; the calm waters of a lake are often seen as a passage to the underworld as well as a reflection of the type of landscape found there.¹²⁰

9. Nauplion: the bath of Hera

‘(...) in Nauplia are a sanctuary of Poseidon, harbors, and a spring called Canathus.

Here, say the Argives, Hera bathes every year and recovers her maidenhood.’¹²¹

The myth of Hera bathing every year at the spring Kanathos is part of the group of myths about the bath of goddesses (see also section 4.4 above).¹²² The generally accepted theory is that this story was the mythical counterpart of a ritual during which a statue of Hera was bathed. This can be inferred from Pausanias who stated that the story of Hera’s bath is ‘one of the sayings told as a holy secret at the mysteries which they celebrate in honor of Hera’.¹²³

Here the aim of the bath is unusually clear, since it was said that the goddess recovered her virginity every time she bathed. The significance of the rite and the myth would therefore be at least twofold. First, the goddess recovering her virginity is purified, with the taint from sexual activity being washed away by the waters of

¹¹⁹ Paus. 2.35.10.

¹²⁰ See below section 10. Cf. for example the lacus Avernus in southern Italy. See Virgil, *Aen.* 125-7.

¹²¹ Paus. 2.38.2 (trans. W.H.S. Jones)

¹²² See Parker (1983), 28; Ginouvès (1962), 283-98; Kahil (1994), 217-23; Piérart (1996a), 188-89.

¹²³ Paus. 2.28.3 (trans. W.H.S. Jones).

the spring. Second, the virginal status is something which is given back to the goddess and not only something taken away. Water acts somehow actively to provide the goddess with renewed life and powers; the waters of the spring give to the goddess their own life-giving powers. Both these dimensions of the ritual of statue-bathing are present in the other stories of bathing goddesses. The bath in the spring is taken as the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. The spring Kanathos was identified with the one flowing at the monastery of Agia Moni, some three kilometres northeast of modern Nauplion.¹²⁴

10. Lerna: the Mysteries of Dionysos

Lerna, on the southern coast of the plain of Argos, is certainly best known for being the location of one of Herakles' labours: the Hydra that terrorised and killed the local inhabitants. But less well known is the presence of Dionysos in the same marshy landscape just kilometres away from Argos. The clearest and most extensive accounts of this presence are from Pausanias and Plutarch.¹²⁵

Pausanias was following the road from Argos towards the south-west and entered the well-watered area of Lerna. There he reached a grove (ἄλσος) of plane-trees, situated between mountain and sea and between two rivers. He saw stone images of Demeter Prosymna and of Dionysos, and a wooden image of Dionysos saviour (σωτήρ) in a temple.¹²⁶ He then stopped by the Alcyonian Lake, generally identified with Lake Lerna:

¹²⁴ Frazer (1898), vol. 3, p. 304-5; Musti & Torelli (2000), 338.

¹²⁵ On Herakles and the Hydra see Gantz (1993), 23, 384-6. Dionysos at Lerna: Paus. 2.37.1-6; Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 35.

¹²⁶ Paus. 2.37.1. Cf. Paus. 2.17.2. where Prosymna, a daughter of the river-god Asterion and sister of Euboia and Akraia, nurse the young goddess Hera.

'I saw also what is called the spring of Amphiaraus and the Alcyonian Lake, through which the Argives say Dionysus went down to Hell to bring up Semele, adding that the descent here was shown him by Polymnus. There is no limit to the depth of the Alcyonian Lake, and I know of nobody who by any contrivance had been able to reach the bottom of it; since not even Nero, who had ropes made several stades long and fastened them together, tying lead to them, and omitting nothing that might help his experiment, was able to discover any limit to its depth. This, too, I heard. The water of the lake is, to all appearance, calm and quiet; but, although it is such to look at, every swimmer who ventures to cross it is dragged down, sucked into the depths, and swept away. The circumference of the lake is not great, being about one third of a stade. Upon its banks grow grass and rushes. The nocturnal rites performed every year in honour of Dionysus I must not divulge to the world at large.'¹²⁷

The belief in a bottomless lake is obviously erroneous. The small lake today identified with the one Pausanias saw still has the same size (roughly 60 m. of circumference) and is not very deep; it was proved that it never was.¹²⁸ This view is however very interesting and illustrative of the religious belief according to which this lake was a gateway to the underworld. In the myth, the god Dionysos used the lake as a way down as well as a way out of Hades. Other sources, among which the most informative is Clement of Alexandria, reveal more than Pausanias on the way Dionysos obtained information about this lake from Polymnos (also called Prosymnos in Clement of Alexandria and Hypolipnus in Hyginus) in exchange for sexual favours.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Paus. 2.37.5-6 (W.H.S. Jones).

¹²⁸ See Zangger (1991), 8, 11-3. On the name 'Alcyonian', see Casadio (1994), 233-34.

¹²⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.34; Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.5; Casadio (1994), 298-301. Prosymnos is often the version preferred because there was a parallel with the possibly pre-Hellenic toponym Prosymna at the Argive Heraion and the image of Demeter Prosymna seen by Pausanias in the grove. See Casadio (1994), 300, 317-18.

There is an alternative myth about Dionysos at Lerna. In a scholion to Homer's *Iliad*, Dionysos is depicted as being thrown in the lake by Perseus and consequently killed:¹³⁰

Δανάης· ἔξ Εὐριδίκης καὶ Ἀκρισίου. [...] τινὲς δέ φασι πλείονα Ἑρακλέους αὐτὸν εἰργασμένον οὐ τυχεῖν δόξης, ὅτι Διόνυσον ἀνεῖλεν εἰς τὴν Λερναίαν ἐμβαλὼν λίμνην.

Danae: Daughter of Euridike and Akrisios. [...] But some have said that he (Perseus), although he had accomplished more deeds than Herakles, did not gain fame because he killed Dionysos by throwing him in the Lernaean Lake.

Casadio, and Arrigoni even more so, have insisted on translating the scholion correctly, which is Dionysos being thrown in the lake and killed in the process rather than killed before being thrown.¹³¹ To this puzzling combination of stories needs to be added the account by Plutarch of rituals accomplished by the Argives:

'And the epithet applied to Dionysus among the Argives is "son of a bull" [βουγενής]. They call him up out of the water by the sound of trumpets, at the same time casting into the depths a lamb as an offering to the Keeper of the Gate. The trumpets they conceal in Bacchic wands, as Socrates has stated in his treatise on The Holy Ones.'¹³²

We are confronted with a complex tale, or group of tales, which were the mythical context in which a cult to Dionysos took place in Lerna. The joint accounts of

¹³⁰ Schol. T. Hom., *Il.*, 14.319 = H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in homeri iliadem*, v.3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 641; Arrigoni (1999) 11

¹³¹ For different versions and the corresponding historiography see Arrigoni (1999) 9-30

¹³² Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 35 (trans. by F.C. Babbitt).

Pausanias and Plutarch confirm that rituals took place at the lake. There is indeed a consensus among scholars that the abyss Plutarch was referring to is the Alcyonian Lake. About the nature of these rites, performed by night, the silence Pausanias has pledged to keep suggests they are mysteries. The structure of the myth with Dionysos being guided by Prosymnos and thus somewhat initiated in order to enter Hades and come back from death, are strikingly reminiscent of an aition for a mystery cult. Interestingly enough, if the orthography Prosymnos is preferred over that of Polymnos, it makes Dionysos' guide the *paredros* of Prosymna, epiclesis given to Demeter at Lerna.¹³³

Piérart cautiously does not fully confirm this interpretation and insists on the fact that the Lernaean cult to Dionysos has to be clearly set apart from the cult to Demeter.¹³⁴ In late antiquity Dionysos was, however, associated with Demeter in Argolid, suggesting they had parallel interests, or enough common points to allow their connection.¹³⁵ Scholars have also debated the local nature of the cult/myth picture. Some have seen a link with the Argive myth cycle, while others have insisted on its local nature, the latter seeming more plausible.¹³⁶

Water is here very much linked with the underworld. Water is often seen as a chthonic element because surging from the springs, but here it is the form of the lake that suggests the kingdom of Hades. Pausanias' description conjures up a luxuriant vegetation due to the humidity, but it is also a disturbing landscape, similar to that

¹³³ Ginouvès (1962), 389. On parallels with mysteries in the cult for Dionysos, see Casadio (1994), 308; Casadio (1992), 212-13. On the fact that Pausanias calls the rites at Lerna *telete* see Graf (2003), 241.

¹³⁴ Piérart (1996b), 142, 151.

¹³⁵ Piérart (1997), 149-57 finds links between Lerna and Eleusis in 4th c. AD in *IG* II² 3674 and, in particular, *IG* IV 666. But he insists that the documents that would trace this evolution are missing.

¹³⁶ The myth of the war between Perseus and Dionysos is more clearly integrated to the Argive cycle than the myths on Dionysos, Prosymnos and Semele. The name Prosymnos, existing at the Heraion, seems to indicate an early date. Piérart (1996b), 147-50. See also Libanios, *Or.* 14.5.7.

found in the underworld.¹³⁷ Dionysus went down to Hades through the lake, an abyss in the words of Plutarch. He did so either as a mortal, as argues Arrigoni, and then was killed in the process; or he did so as a god, in which case he was able to come back, bringing Semele with him. Water is here therefore a gateway, physically materialised by the depth of the lake, but also by its narrowness. Plutarch, who is fortunately a bit more loquacious on the rituals of Dionysos, describes the sacrifice of a lamb thrown in the lake for the 'gate-keeper', whose identity is quite mysterious, but nevertheless refers to a chthonic power of the underworld guarding its entrance.¹³⁸ This contact point also allowed the mortals to call the god back from the depths of the lake. The idea developed by Arrigoni that this ritual invocation described by Plutarch is very similar to magic rites for calling the dead, therefore having troubling similarities with necromanteia, is astute. Pausanias, though, describes this Dionysos as a god, not as a killed mortal.¹³⁹ Ogden proposes to compare the cult at Lerna with the festival *Agriōna* celebrated at Boeotian Chaironea described by Plutarch. In this festival, women look for Dionysos as if he has run away, then give up and say he has fled to the Muses and hidden with them.¹⁴⁰ For Ogden, the Argive festival for the dead also called Agriania (or Agrania) was probably the one described by Plutarch at the lake, in which Dionysos was 'hidden'.

The Lernaean picture is therefore complex and probably implies that the rites had an array of different meanings, the ultimate thorny problem being to reconcile late sources, Archaic features and the cult as it would have existed in Classical and Hellenistic times. The general absence of early sources, literary and archaeological, on Dionysos at Lerna prevents any definitive conclusions.

¹³⁷ Cole (2003), 212; Aristophanes, *Ran.* 352-3: προβάδην ἔξαγ' ἐπ' ἀνθηρὸν ἔλειον δάπεδον χοροποιὸν μάκαρ ἦβαν.

¹³⁸ On the different identities tentatively given to the *πυλάοχος*, see Casadio (1994), 236.

¹³⁹ Arrigoni (1999), 41-4.

¹⁴⁰ Plut., *Quaest. Conv.* 8. 717a. Ogden (2008), 29-30.

It is necessary here to briefly recall the Dionysian association with death in general and mysteries in particular. Susan G. Cole has demonstrated that throughout the Greek world there was a common belief concerning the geography of the underworld. The funerary tablets found in tombs in most parts of the Greek world – however diverse the context of the burial which could be inhumation/cremation of a male or female person – depict what the dead are likely to encounter in the underworld and give instructions so that they go directly to the part of Hades where souls are blessed. Dionysos appears to be in several of them a ‘guide’ for the initiated, presiding over the transition of the soul to the underworld, negotiating its fate with Persephone and Hades themselves. This idea is illustrated on a Krater now at Toledo. This whole idea, present throughout the Greek world, suits well the Lernaean Dionysos who can come and go between the surface and the world of the dead.¹⁴¹



Fig. 96. Scene Volute Krater with Dionysos clasping hands with Hades. Toledo 1994.19. (from Johnston [1996], pl.1).

¹⁴¹ Cole (2003), 193-217, especially pp. 205, 211-12.

11. Conclusion

In its religious relationship with water, Argolid is possibly the most complex of the regions studied in this thesis. Most, if not all, types of cult in which water had a role are represented here. Nymphs, some of them daughters of river-gods, give their names to cities (e.g. Nemea) or nurse and help young gods and heroes (Hera at Prosymna or Perseus at Mycenae), as well as the local communities (See Orestes' offerings to the Inachos in section 4.3 above). The nourishing and renewing powers of water are celebrated in particular with Hera, but also possibly with Athena's bath in the Inachos. These cases could be the illustration of New Year ceremonies or, as Parker would prefer to call them, 'Renewal Rituals', where the powers of water are summoned to close a cycle and start a brand new one.

Purification is also very much present, for example at Troizen where Orestes was cleansed of his mother's murder, but also and especially at the Asklepieion of Epidauros, home of the healer god. There the necessary purity had reached a new dimension with the important development of wells, reservoirs, fountains, channels, perirrhanteria and bathing facilities. As the water giving statue of the god was strikingly demonstrating, water had become the physical proof of Asklepios' presence and support.

Finally, the 'darker' powers of water, in its association with the underworld, are also very well represented. Oracular shrines are present in Argos and possibly also at Nemea, where the baby hero Opheltes was killed by a snake guardian of a spring. The oracle of Apollo Deiradiotes at Argos in particular used methods of divination resembling necromancy – notably blood tasting and night rituals – and water almost certainly played a role which would be reminiscent of what happened at

Delphi or, in within our survey, Lebadeia. Even more remarkably, Argolid has not only one but two entrances to the underworld, one at Hermione and the other at Lerna, and both are associated with water. The rich complexity of the case of Lerna is again an illustration of the diversity of guises taken by water sometimes at the same sites, being in turn menacing, deadly and source of life or purity.

The complexity of this Greek region is not limited to the way water is given a religious dimension. Argolid was home to different populations; Achaians, Dorians, Ionians and Dryopes, claiming various origins and ancestry, and which have evolved over the centuries. Disentangling the different mythical genealogies and trying to attribute a sacred ritual to such and such a group has been a prolific research area which is by and large beyond the scope of this thesis. But it is interesting to observe how the place of water in Argive religion should be, maybe as a consequence, so rich and complex.

Chapter 6: The presence of water in the surveyed sanctuaries

Religious and material implications

The importance of water in everyday life was as deep in ancient Greece as it is inconspicuous today. Environmentally, the conditions are assumed to have been approximately identical to what they are now; the Mediterranean climate does not imply an absence of water, but the dry and hot summers meant that populations were heavily reliant on natural sources of water that would not dry up, or on alternative man-made solutions.¹ It is somewhat difficult today in our easier and more advanced conditions of living, where opening the tap is taken for granted, to grasp the importance that access to fresh water had in the ancient world. Paradoxically, the very obviousness of its importance in the ancient Greeks' eyes, notably in the religious domains, means the ancients did not really write a great deal about it. Literary sources rarely take water and its religious significance as its major subject. On the other hand, the sheer pervasiveness of water in Greek religion means that valuable information can be found in many different texts, such as poetry in Archaic times, Classical theatre and Roman time travelogues. It is also sometimes only through the presence of certain objects, material traces of the uses of water, that one can detect a cultic dimension attributed to water. This material will be discussed below.

To research water and its place in Greek sanctuaries is therefore to be confronted with polysemous and changing sources, a situation which makes the choice to use different types of documents all the more necessary. This chapter will

¹ Whitley (2001), 58. See also Osborne (1987), 16: 'We are given no picture of life on a peasant holding, no notions of the strains and stresses of eking out a living in conditions where the rainfall vital for an adequate crop frequently failed to materialize'.

investigate the different expressions, implications and reasons for the presence of water in sanctuaries, referring along the way to the sites studied in the preceding chapters. Water is taken here as an element rather than as its geographical embodiments (i.e. not a water landmark, river, spring, etc.), which will instead be studied in the next chapter. To begin with, the religious importance of water is examined from two thematic angles: first the deities whose relationship with water has a significant impact on their cults and myths and, secondly, the powers attributed to water in those same cults and myths. Finally, the material traces of water in sanctuaries are briefly explored.

1. Water and deities

1.1. Olympian Gods

Interestingly, the variety of powers and meanings ascribed to water is also reflected in the variety of divinities concerned. Indeed, within the scope of the regions studied in the previous chapters, most of the Olympian gods appear at some point in myth alongside water resources and/or have sanctuaries where water is present.

Some of them are seen near water sources in most regions, such as Artemis who, in these cases, matches her description as goddess of the untamed and uncivilised world.² Her sanctuaries at Brauron and Aulis are both coastal, the sea being a very short distance away, and each possessed a spring of fresh water.³ At Sikyon, she was called Limnaia and her sanctuary is thought to have been located in

² See Cole (2004), 191-194 for the location of her sanctuaries and water, and pp. 180-185 for the different possible explanations of her sanctuaries location pattern.

³ Brauron: Chapter 1, section 2.5. Aulis: Chapter 3, section 4.1.

a spot well provided with water.⁴ She is also associated in myth with nymphs, for example in the episode of her bath in the spring Gargaphia where Actaeon saw her and died as a punishment.⁵ Her brother, Apollo, is also present in many places. He was particularly well established in Boiotia where his ‘humid’ sanctuaries were almost exclusively prophetic ones.⁶ The sanctuaries where his mantic role was not present, or is not documented, are those at Delion and Telphusa.⁷ In the latter case there still was, in its foundation myth, a strong association with the Delphic sanctuary. The god’s ‘humid’ presence in the other regions is less widespread. In Corinthia, when he is associated with water, it is alongside another god. His statue was worshipped with that of Artemis in Sikyon, where they probably protected the youth, in a procession to the river Sythas and back.⁸ He was with Asklepios in Corinth where his archaic temple preceded the arrival of the healing god’s sanctuary.⁹ In Argolid, he again precedes Asklepios at Epidauros, where he kept his own sanctuary in the hills when the Asklepieion was founded and developed in the plain.¹⁰ In Argos, the sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes is prophetic and linked with the Delphic oracle. The important presence of water there and the discovery of a statue of Asklepios has also led some to conclude that, there again, Apollo played host to the healing god. It is suggested here that an Apollonian manteion is already a good reason for the need of a large supply of water, and the existence of a healing sanctuary there is hardly documented.¹¹ In Attica, finally, Apollo is scarcely found in

⁴ Chapter 4, section 5.1.

⁵ Chapter 3, section 1.2.

⁶ The sanctuaries of Apollo at Hysiai (chapter 3, section 1.1), Apollo Ptoieus (chapter 3, section 5) and Apollo at Tegyra (chapter 3, section 10.3) were all manteia and had a good natural water supply. Apollo Ismenios at Thebes (Chapter 3, section 3.2) used empyromancy. See Hdt. 8.134; Soph. *OT* 21; Schachter (1981), 81, n. 3; Bonnechère (2007), 152.

⁷ Delion: see chapter 3, section 4.2. Telphusa: see chapter 3, section 8.2.

⁸ See chapter 4, section 5.2.

⁹ See chapter 4, section 2.5.

¹⁰ See chapter 5, section 6.1 and 6.2.

¹¹ See chapter 5, section 4.5.

association with water. His name only appears in lists of gods to be sacrificed to at the sanctuary of Kephisos and on the altar of the Amphiaraion.¹²

Demeter and her daughter Kore are less often found in humid contexts. The 'clearest' case in Attica is on the banks of the Ilissos for the 'lesser mysteries'.¹³ As far as we know, fresh water did not play a major part in the unravelling of the Eleusinian cult, but punctuated the landscape of the Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis, with the *Rheiti* sacred to the goddesses along the path, and the Kallichoron well marking the end of the procession and the final entrance into the sanctuary where the worshippers received the initiation.¹⁴ In Boiotia they are found next to the river Ismenos near Thebes, where they are called the *Potnias Theas*.¹⁵ In her sanctuary at Corinth, despite the absence a convenient source of water, the practice of ritual-dining was developed to an impressive scale and each dining room had bathing facilities¹⁶. In Argolid, Demeter was established near the lake Lerna where she had the epiclesis *prosymna*, possibly a very old name which is to be compared to the figure of Prosymnos who had helped Dionysos find his way to Lake Lerna.¹⁷ She was eventually, in late antiquity inscriptions (4th c. AD), explicitly associated with Dionysos and his cult, which centred on the lake.¹⁸

Aphrodite's connection with water features prominently at two sites. The first one was on the Hymettos, at the spot called Kyllou Pera, where her powers over sexuality and fertility, or at least those attributed to the spring, were sought by

¹² Sacrificial list: *JG* II² 4547. Altar at the Amphiaraion: Paus. 1.34.3 where he is Paiðnos (healer) and in the same group as Herakles and Zeus.

¹³ See chapter 1, section 1.6.2.

¹⁴ Chapter 1, section 2.8.

¹⁵ Chapter 3, section 2.

¹⁶ Chapter 4, section 3.1.

¹⁷ Prosymna was also the name of the region of the Argive Heraion (Paus. 2.17.2) and of one of Hera's nurses.

¹⁸ Chapter 5, section 10. A statue of Demeter Prosymna was seen by Pausanias (2.37.1) with a statue of Dionysos, as well as a smaller statue of a seated Demeter. In late antiquity the mysteries of Dionysos at Lerna had links with the Eleusinian mysteries, but the origins of this association are unknown. See Piérart (1997), 150-152.

women wishing to become pregnant and to relieve them from the pains of labour.¹⁹ The other is in Sikyon, where the use of water in the goddess's cult is verified by the office title, *loutrophoros* (bath-water bearer), given to a young woman officiating in her sanctuary. Again, there are good reasons to believe this function had derived from Aphrodite's jurisdiction over human fertility, in this case in the context of the pre-nuptial bath.²⁰

Another goddess concerned with sexuality and marriage is Hera, and some of her cults and myths found here reflect this attribution well. Her annual bath (mythical and perhaps cultic) at the spring Canathos in Argolid gave her back her virginity, marking the continuance of a cycle she represents.²¹ Her control over marriage itself is emphasised in the cult of the *daidala* in the Boiotian city of Plataea where, at regular but complex intervals, a wooden statue of a 'fake bride' was bathed in the river Asopos, carried in procession to the top of the Kithairon and then burnt in celebration of the mythical reconciliation of Zeus and Hera's godly couple.²² But the goddess also had large civic sanctuaries dedicated to her and proving to be more complex in their function. Two of these sanctuaries have a high degree of integration of water: Perachora in Corinthia and the Argive Heraion. There are good reasons to believe water was used in feminine contexts at the Argive Heraion, but the sanctuary had a wider civic importance in Argolid which meant that water was also used in sacred instances that were not exclusively feminine. The liberation of slaves in the stream of 'freedom' was one; the large waterworks built in the stoa across the new

¹⁹ See chapter 2, section 1. The sources refer to a place in which there was a spring and a sanctuary to Aphrodite. If both seem closely linked, ultimately the powers emanated from the spring Athenian women drank water from for pregnancy and a safe birth. The presence in the same place of Aphrodite goddess of sexual love cannot, however, have been a coincidence.

²⁰ See chapter 4, section 5.3; Paus. 2.10.4-6; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 131-150.

²¹ See chapter 5, section 9.

²² See chapter 3, section 1.3.

temple were possibly used in another.²³ In the waterless site of Perachora, the impressive development of water-supply equipment continues to puzzle archaeologists and historians, and several hypotheses have been advanced on their function, none entirely convincing.²⁴

Dionysos appears several times in ‘humid’ contexts in Attica. He is found near a spring on Salamis, at the sources of the Erasinos in Argolid, and the Kissoessa in Boiotia was said to have water the colour of wine because the nymphs cleaned him as a baby in its waters.²⁵ In the last two sites in particular, Dionysos comes across as a god of vegetation. But nowhere is his association with water clearer than at Lerna in Argolid where, both in myth and in cult, the lake played an important role. Thought to be a gateway to the underworld, the lake was also the theatre of the rituals performed in honour of Dionysos, whom they call out of the water. Dionysos is there a god present in, and navigating between, the two worlds of the living and the dead. Water, for its part, acts both as frontier and passage.²⁶

Poseidon is generally known as god of the sea, but was also called the ‘earth-shaker’, and controlled rivers and springs.²⁷ As such, one could have expected to see more examples of cults related to these powers. Perhaps characteristically, he appears three times within the frame of a mythical dispute between gods over the control of a region. Twice he loses; in Attica, traces of the contest were shown to visitors on the Athenian Acropolis in the shape of a trident’s marks in the rock and sea water in a

²³ See chapter 5, section 3

²⁴ See chapter 4, section 4. Whitley (2001), 295: ‘More remarkable are the lengths that the Corinthians went to in order to supply the sanctuary with water. (...) Quite why the sanctuary needed so much water is unclear.’

²⁵ Salamis: chapter 1, section 2.7. Erasinos: chapter 5, section 5. Kissoessa: chapter 3, section 8.1.

²⁶ See chapter 5, section 10. On water as frontier and passage see below section 3.3 and chapter 7.

²⁷ *Hymn. Hom. Pos.* 2: γαίης κινητήρα. He water on the earth as opposed to Zeus who controls rain. Poseidon struck the earth of the Athenian acropolis to create a spring and, in Argolis, he dried the course of the rivers in his anger but showed to Amydone the springs of Lerna. See chapter 1, section 1.1.1 and chapter 5 section 4.2.

well (φρέαρ).²⁸ In Argolid, Hera's final victory over him meant he dried all the country's rivers who had acted as judges.²⁹ In another version of the myth, he flooded most of the plain, and a sanctuary dedicated to him marked the site of the flood's maximum extent.³⁰ In the third case, and his only victory, Poseidon was given the control of the Isthmus linking the Peloponnesian peninsula with the rest of Greece.³¹ Poseidon's most famous sanctuary was located there, and water was brought from nearby springs into the precinct. The water-related structures found are extensive and some of them clearly suggest a cultic use, although the ultimate ritual significance of water in these cases remains elusive.³²

Athena has, at least in the preceding survey, very little to do with water. Two of her sanctuaries in Boiotia are close to rivers which might have received their names from her or from one of her attributes.³³ Elsewhere, the main recurring theme is her bath, whether mythical or actually performed with her statue. Often the two are coinciding, with the myth presented as the original event used as a model for the ritual. In Boiotia the goddess, bathing in a spring accompanied by her fellow nymphs, is seen by the young Teiresias who then loses his sight but is granted the gift of foresight.³⁴ The theme is a variation of the well known mythical episode of Artemis and Actaeon.³⁵ In Argolid, the goddess' statue is bathed annually in the river Inachos, on a day with prescriptions about which water can be used. It is also specified that the goddess should not be seen by male eyes.³⁶ The femininity of the

²⁸ Paus. 1.24.3, 24.5, 26.5, 27.2; Hdt. 8.55; Apollod., *Bibl.* 3.14.1; Plut., *Them.* 19; Ov., *Met.* 6.70-82; Hyginus, *Fab.* 164.

²⁹ Paus. 2.15.5, 20.6; Apollod., *Bibl.*, 2.1.4. See chapter 5, section 4.2.

³⁰ Paus. 2.22.4.

³¹ Paus. 2.1.6.

³² See chapter 4, sections 1.1-2.

³³ See chapter 3, sections 9.1-2: Athenia Alalkomenia was near the river Tritonis from which the goddess was born (*tritogeneia*). Athena Itonia was near the river Kouarion.

³⁴ See chapter 3, section 6.2.

³⁵ See chapter 3, section 1.2.

³⁶ See chapter 5, section 4.4.

goddess, usually rather played down, is emphasised in her relation with water and she then appears closer to Artemis, Hera and Aphrodite.

Zeus is maybe the least present of the aforementioned Olympian gods. Apart from cases where he is present alongside Hera (in the *Daidala* notably), he is principally referred to as the god of rain. On the mountain tops of Attica and Boiotia, as well as in the centre of Argos where there was an altar of Zeus *Hyetios* (rain giver).³⁷

1.2. The Nymphs, the Heroes and other Deities

Usually classified as minor deities, the Nymphs here take an altogether more important place. They are present in a large number of the sites where a water resource was at hand, whether as the main deities or as 'deputy' deities. They were especially connected to springs, described by J. Larson as their 'microhabitat', but were also worshipped near streams, in caves and, more generally, in mountains which were their 'macrohabitat'.³⁸ Of all the deities concerned by this study, the nymphs are the closest to water inasmuch as they are generally the water resources' divine embodiment.³⁹ One piece of evidence of this close link is the name shared by springs and their nymphs, such as Empedo, Kallirrhoe or Gargaphia. It is not easy to assess whether, in the Greek mind, a nymph and its spring were actually one and the same entity, or if she only gave it her name. Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, says that the spring he and Phaedrus sit next to is 'sacred to nymphs'.⁴⁰ In Homer the goddesses

³⁷ Paus. 1.32.2 (Zeus *Ombrios*), 2.19.8 (Zeus *Hyetios*), 2.25.10, 9.39.4 (Zeus *Hyetios*). See chapter 5, section 4.1. De Polignac (2002), 119-122.

³⁸ Larson (2007), 61-63; Larson (2001), 8-11.

³⁹ Larson (2001), 8: 'The most basic of these [topographical features] is the spring, for nymphs are above all deities of water'.

⁴⁰ Plato, *Phaedr.* 230b.

‘haunt’ and ‘inhabit’ springs but are not them.⁴¹ In a passage of the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the poet describes the birth and death of a nymph and her tree in a way that seems to imply that the two, although they are different beings, share some sort of symbiotic life and attributes. When the one dies, so does the other.⁴² I assume this could also be true for spring nymphs.

With the river-gods, who incidentally are very often fathers to nymphs, the identification of the divinity to the river is clearer. Their representation in art was, until the Hellenistic period, not entirely humanised, but that of a bull with a human face, or even a snake with a human face and bull’s horns.⁴³ When Achilles fought the Trojan river-god Skamandros, he struggled with the river itself and its powerful waters, but the poet described the river using metaphors and images of a raging bull.⁴⁴

Both Nymphs and River-gods had a direct control over human fertility and the protection of children. They were given the status of protector of the community as a whole at the same time than, and probably because, they were intrinsically part of the landscape.⁴⁵ In the deeply agro-pastoral society that was ancient Greece, rivers and springs were vitally important for crops and cattle, and therefore river-gods and nymphs were worshipped as protectors of these activities and, by extension, of the community’s perpetuation. Nymphs were also, beyond the borders of civilisation, divinities of the wild where they were often given divinatory powers.⁴⁶ It was in these geographical contexts that are found examples of people being *nympholeptos*

⁴¹ Hom., *Il.* 14.442-45, 20.7-9, 24-613-17; *Od.* 13.102-12. Larson (2001), 20-33, especially 21-26.

⁴² *Hymn Hom. Ven.* 264-272.

⁴³ Examples of such representation of the pan-Hellenic river-god Acheloos: As a bull with a human face: Black-figure amphora dated to 550-500 BC, *ABV* 368.104. As a bull with a human torso: Red-figure krater dated to 500-450 BC, *ARV²* 236.3 As a snake with a human torso and bull’s horns: Red-figure stamnos dated to 520-510 BC, *ARV²* 54.5, 1622.

⁴⁴ Hom. *Il.* 11.233-239.

⁴⁵ Larson (2007), 63, 64-66; Parker (2005), 430-431. See also section 3.2 below.

⁴⁶ For Nympholepsy see Larson (2001), 11-20; Borgeaud (1988), 104-107; Connor (1988).

(carried away by the nymphs), such as Archedemos in the cave at Vari in Attica, or the population living near Mount Kithairon in Boiotia.⁴⁷

Asklepios was a relative newcomer in ancient Greek religion compared to the Olympian gods. The earliest evidence of his cult at Epidauros is dated to the very end of the 6th c. BC, and his cult expanded to the rest of the Hellenised world from the end of the 5th c. and took off in the 4th c. BC.⁴⁸ The specialisation of his cult towards the worshippers' health is one major reason why water took an important place at Epidauros, and the characteristics of the Epidaurian sanctuary in this matter were reproduced in most shrines dedicated to Asklepios.⁴⁹ In these, it is not only the purificatory powers of water that are emphasised, but also its chthonic attributes. Asklepios had been a mortal, a son of Apollo stricken by lightning because he resuscitated the dead, and his sanctuaries were also home to sacred snakes, to cave-like springhouses and to healing methods where water could have been a source of dreams.⁵⁰

Amphiaraios' largest sanctuary was in the territory of Oropos, at the confines of Attica and Boiotia, but he also had a smaller shrine in Rhamnous.⁵¹ The relations this deified hero had with water were very similar to that of Asklepios inasmuch as his cult evolved in parallel to that of the healing god. He was more strongly rooted to the site of his sanctuary in the sense that he was very closely linked to the spring where he was said to have come out of the earth.⁵²

Trophonios is another local deity whose reputation grew to cross the borders of its home region without actually having new sanctuaries founded. His mantic

⁴⁷ Vari: chapter 1, section 2.3.1. Kithairon: chapter 3, section 1.1.

⁴⁸ Edelstein & Edelstein (1998), 238-39, 251; Tomlinson (1983), 15; Parker (1996), 176-177.

⁴⁹ Edelstein & Edelstein (1998), 238-242; Tomlinson (1983), 24; Burford (1969), 20.

⁵⁰ See Ogden (2001), 84 n. 21.

⁵¹ See chapter 1, section 2.6.1-2.

⁵² Paus. 1.34.4.

sanctuary was very famous for its unusual method of divination where the worshipper was ultimately put in 'direct' contact with the god after a long preparatory period. Water was present both in the physical and the cultic environment of the sanctuary, and was given chthonic qualities borrowing an imagery usually associated with the underworld.⁵³

In the same vein as the previous examples, heroes and local gods were part of the religious landscape of ancient Greece, the majority of which has left very few traces or none at all. Remarkably, rivers, springs and lakes could not only be associated with local nymphs but also with local heroes. This link could be by name, such as the spring of Oedipus in Thebes, of Makaria in Attica or Adrasteia at Nemea.⁵⁴ But sometimes the association seems stronger, whether because the hero is at the origin of the water source (e.g. the river Lophis in Boiotia or the spring Peirene in Corinth) or because hero and water were associated in the cult/myth (e.g. Polymnos at Lerna or Perseus at Mycenae).⁵⁵ Herakles, the one hero who largely surpassed its local origins to become a pan-Hellenic hero, was present in several surveyed regions in a variety of cases.⁵⁶ In Athens he was put at the origin of the purificatory and initiatory rituals of the Lesser Mysteries as well as in the obscure cult to Pankrates, to which he was sometimes assimilated, where chthonic and medical aspects appear in votives.⁵⁷ He discovered a spring in Troizen, was worshipped next to springs in Boiotian Orchomenos, and was nurtured by the spring

⁵³ See chapter 3, section 11.1.

⁵⁴ Spring of Oedipus: chapter 3, section 3.1.3; Paus. 9.18.6, Pliny the elder, *NH* 4.12. Spring Makaria: chapter 1, section 2.4; Paus. 1.32.6. Spring Adrasteia: chapter 5, section 1; Paus. 2.15.3; Apollodorus, 3.6.4.

⁵⁵ Lophis: chapter 3, section 8.3. Peirene: chapter 4, section 2.2. Polymnos: chapter 5, section 10; Paus. 2.37.5; Hyg., *Poet. Astr.* 2.5; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 2.34.

⁵⁶ On the atypical case of Heracles as opposed to the far more usual 'local hero' type, see Ekroth (2007), 101.

⁵⁷ Lesser Mysteries: see chapter 1, section 1.3.2. Herakles Pankrates: see chapter 1, section 1.3.4.

Dirke in Thebes.⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Herakles was often associated with hot springs.⁵⁹ From all these examples we know of, one wonders about the countless local heroes and heroines whose traces have disappeared and who would very probably have populated the Greek springs, rivers and lakes.

2. The different sacred dimensions of water

Water was, as stated above, present in virtually every ancient Greek sanctuary and was necessary for their basic functioning and sacred needs. But this presence was sometimes more important, both materially and ritually, and implied new attributions which gave water a deeper and denser set of meanings. These were occasionally expressed in cult. The following sections explore the various sacred dimensions attributed to water. They roughly follow the classification elaborated in Ginouvès'

Balaneutikè:

‘(...) il nous a semblé que l’action de l’eau, dans le monde religieux, se situait à trois niveaux, d’ailleurs reliés par des transitions insensibles : l’eau purifie ; mais aussi elle tue le passé, pour préparer une renaissance ; et enfin, par une sorte d’efficacité immédiate, elle donne fécondité, force ou régénération, santé ou connaissance.’⁶⁰

2.1. Water and Purification

Purification was very important in ancient Greek religion, and water was the most basic tool used to attain purity.⁶¹ Plato defined the process of purification as retaining the better and throwing away the worst, and R. Parker, developing the idea, described

⁵⁸ Troizen: chapter 5, section 7.2. Orchomenos: chapter 3, section 10. Thebes: Pind., *Pyth.* 9.87.

⁵⁹ Diod. Sic. 5.3.4; Schol. Pind., *Ol.* 12.25. See Gais (1978), 368.

⁶⁰ Ginouvès (1962), 426.

⁶¹ Parker (1996b), 226-227; Bendlin (2007), 180-181.

purification as a ‘science of division’.⁶² The importance of purification is therefore to set differences and limits, and to enforce them. Those differences could be between individuals, communities, times and spaces, etc. In the context of Greek religion, these differences were important because they were the expression of the sacred as well as of identity; a sanctuary was a sacred place set apart from the profane world, and purification was necessary to enter it. The expression ‘sharing lustral water’ would have meant belonging to a community and partaking in its own cults and rituals, and at the same time setting the community apart from the ‘others’.⁶³ In the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, access to a sanctuary was limited to those who have ‘besprinkled’ themselves with water.⁶⁴

Archaeologically, the fact that sacred grounds were marked out by purifying water is illustrated by the many perirrhanteria found in sanctuaries with some of them, like the one found at Isthmia and dating back to the middle of the 7th c.,⁶⁵ demonstrating that the need for purifying water was present very early in the sanctuaries’ existence. Used as a way to physically sacralise the temenos’ space, purification (by water or any other agent) was also used to sacralise a moment or an action. This could be done inside or outside a sanctuary and, to borrow R. Parker’s words, ‘served to lift the event itself out of the familiar plane and to imbue it with sanctity’.⁶⁶

The reason why water was a basic tool in purification could almost seem self-evident, since water is universally used for washing and cleaning. Water acts

⁶² Plato, *Soph.* 226d: τῆς δὲ καταλειπούσης μὲν τὸ βέλτιον διακρίσεως, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον ἀποβαλλούσης ἔχω; Parker (1996b) 18-31.

⁶³ Euripides, *Electra* 791-2: λούτρ’ ὡς τάχιστα τοῖς ξένοις τις αἰρέτω, ὡς ἀμφὶ βωμὸν στῶσι χερνίβων πέλας.

⁶⁴ Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease* 1 = Hippocrate, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, (ed. and trans.) E. Littré (Paris: de Baillière, 1849), p. 364, cited in Bendlin (2007), 181. This edition is also available online. See <<http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica/cote?34859x06>>

⁶⁵ Broneer (1976), p. 45, fig. 7.

⁶⁶ Parker (1996b), 21.

mechanically to remove stains and dirt that are then absorbed and thrown away with it. But when we move to the symbolically charged religious scene, the purifying powers attributed to water become more complex and therefore less obvious. A perirrhanterion (water basin) used in sanctuaries, for example, does not hold enough water for a thorough cleansing of the worshippers, and it is unlikely that it was ever used for anything more than a very basic and limited ablution.⁶⁷ Similarly, the attendance at a sacrifice was purified very often by the priest dipping a torch or an olive branch in water and then sprinkling them. The ‘washing’ administered could not have been anything else than symbolic or, more likely, would have been understood as something quite different from a mere toilette.⁶⁸ Psychologically, fresh water is naturally pure, in particular if taken at the source, where the water is flowing and free from pollution.⁶⁹ This is very probably why flowing water from a spring, as opposed to the still water of cisterns, was favoured when possible to be used in cult. The use of ‘pure’ water for purification aimed at obtaining purity from it, as well as washing away the symbolical dirt. Water therefore not only takes away, but also brings something along with it, something immaterial yet powerful in the ancient Greek’s mind.⁷⁰ In effect, water passes on its own purity, and a few drops are sufficient to make this action effective.⁷¹

Sanctuaries with a source of pure water within their enclosure or at least nearby were in many ways in an advantageous position. Firstly, in a practical manner, they would not have had problems obtaining water for their daily operation.

⁶⁷ Lucian, *Sacr.* 13; Pollux, 1.8; Fullerton (1986), 207; Parker (1996b), 19, n. 4; Ginouvès (1962), 299-310.

⁶⁸ Parker (1996b), 20

⁶⁹ Ath., *Deipn.* 2.42c; Arist., *Pol.* 7.1330b; Bachelard (1993), 153: ‘l’imagination matérielle trouve dans l’eau la matière pure par excellence’. Ginouvès (1962), 406; Hellmann (1994), 274.

⁷⁰ Aesch., *Persians* 201-202 (dip hands in flowing spring), 214 (virgin spring); *PB* 434-435 (pure-flowing rivers).

⁷¹ Bachelard (1993), 163: ‘A l’eau pure on demande donc primitivement une pureté à la fois active et substantielle.’ *Ibid.* p. 164: ‘L’eau pure et l’eau impure ne sont plus pensées comme des substances, elles sont pensées comme des forces.’

But also, and maybe more importantly, they would have a continuous and flowing source of purity at hand. It is difficult to believe that ‘most sanctuaries had a spring near at hand’.⁷² In the face of the archaeological evidence this is simply not true, and many sanctuaries had to ensure that they would not run out of water by elaborating alternative solutions (rain-water storage, well-digging, aqueducts and fountains).⁷³ On the other hand, those fortunate enough to possess one tried to make sure to protect them. One example would be the sacred law put up on both banks of the Ilissos in Athens prohibiting tanners from polluting the waters upstream from the sanctuary of Herakles (the identification of which is not established).⁷⁴ The inscribed text does not state whether the law was intended to protect the sanctuary of Herakles specifically, or if it was only used as a landmark. Several sanctuaries had existed in the area, and although one of them might have been more concerned by the interdiction, it is probable that most would have benefited from a clean river.

Springs, wells, or any other source of water in a sanctuary, as anything found within a *temenos*, were sacred and as such certain rules applied to keep them safe, although the enforcement of such rules could be problematic.⁷⁵ The episode of the battle between Boiotian and Athenian armies in and around the sanctuary of Apollo at Delion is in that matter exemplary. Thucydides described the besieged Athenian fortifying the sanctuary and the Boeotian leaders accusing them of desecrating it, in particular by using the water reserved for holy rites. Athenians claimed that the rules

⁷² Parker (1996b), 20.

⁷³ Only one example from the many sites of the preceding surveys, the Heraion at Perachora was a very successful sanctuary where huge efforts were put in action to overcome the absence of natural sources of water.

⁷⁴ *IG* I³ 257. See chapter 1, section 1.6.3.

⁷⁵ Cole (1988) 161. See for example a law from Carthaea on Ceos: *IG* 12,5.569; The corpus of these inscriptions is still expanding: An inscription protecting the ‘réservoir de l’Inôpos’ was found during a campaign on Delos in 2005 (personal communication, but to be published in the *BCH*).

of war and necessity prevailed, but the tone of Thucydides' testimony made clear that the Athenian position was controversial.⁷⁶

Not all sources of water were equally valuable for purification. In order to succeed it was sometimes recommended to use water from several springs, or to mix water with other powerful purifying agents such as salt or a branch from the olive or laurel tree.⁷⁷ The spring water which had been used for the purification of a famous and severe pollution was therefore particularly sought for and valuable. In Troizen, a college of local men commemorated the purification of Orestes with the water of a spring called Hippokrene.⁷⁸ Pausanias, who recorded the tradition as being still alive in his own day, does not particularly insist on the spring itself and discussed only its name. But it is to be expected that the famous spring was used for purifications.

In the Amphiaraiion of Oropos, Pausanias recorded the interdiction of using the sanctuary's spring water for purifications or ablutions, or sacrificing in it.⁷⁹ It was not a problem in practical terms since the river flowing in the sanctuary would have been a good alternative source of water, but the significance of this prohibition is unclear. There is little chance that the spring was thought unsuitable, since the myth makes it the place where Amphiaraios reappeared out of the earth, thus being the geographical feature anchoring the god to the spot and, flowing from the deep, forever re-enacting the god's *anodos*. The fact, recorded by Pausanias, that cured patients were to throw coins of silver or gold in the spring could demonstrate the opposite; the spring is too sacred to be used for the purifications and could also possibly reflect an underlying assimilation, or at least a very strong association, of the god with his spring. This would not be incompatible with the possibility that

⁷⁶ Thuc. 4.76.4, 4.90.1-4, 4.97.2-4. See chapter 3, section 4.2.

⁷⁷ Parker (1996b), 226-229 and n. 109; Ginouvès (1962), 405-407.

⁷⁸ See chapter 5, section 7.1. Other places claimed to have purified Orestes; see Ginouvès (1962), 323, n. 3-4.

⁷⁹ Paus. 1.34.4. See chapter 1, section 2.6.1.

water could be drunk for the incubation.⁸⁰ As for the interdiction on sacrifice, this corresponds perhaps to an ever larger corpus of regulations protecting the integrity of springs for dirt and general pollution.⁸¹ Sacrificing in water is a relatively uncommon practice but examples exist. As an example chosen within the preceding survey, the lamb thrown in Lake Lerna for the cult to Dionysos is one form of sacrifice involving the complete destruction of the animal.⁸²

Some mystery cults, with their emphasis on initiation which draw a line between the initiates and the non-initiates, made extensive use of water for this purpose. The ‘lesser mysteries’, performed on the banks of the river Ilissos in Athens, were supposedly founded by the purification of Herakles by Theseus, either because he had killed centaurs, or because he needed naturalisation as an Athenian in order to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries.⁸³ Although Polyainos associated the Ilissos with the initiands’ purification, the unfolding of the lesser mysteries is still largely unknown and the river’s contribution in the matter is particularly unclear.⁸⁴ The preparatory phase to the consultation of the oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia was in many points similar to a mystery cult, and was characterised by a long purification process: the rule was among others to avoid hot baths and wash in the cold waters of the river Hercyna. The actual consultation was initiated by a final bath in the river.⁸⁵ It is probable that some other mystery cults also insisted on extensive purification by water. The sanctuary of the Kabeiroi near Thebes, for example, had a

⁸⁰ Ginouvès (1962), 347. About drinking sacred water in mantic sanctuaries, see below section 3.3.

⁸¹ See n. 75.

⁸² See Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 35. In Aeschylus’ version of Odysseus’ contact with the dead, the hero is advised to sacrifice a sheep and let its blood flow in the waters of a lake. Aesch., *Psychagogoi* F 273 *TrGF*. See Ogden (2001), 47-48.

⁸³ See chapter 1, section 1.3.2., nn. 104-105.

⁸⁴ Polyainos, *Strat.*, 5.17. See chapter 1, n. 107.

⁸⁵ See chapter 3, section 11.1.

stream flowing across it but the silence of material, iconographical and literary sources prevents from any firm conclusions.⁸⁶

The sanctuaries concerned with health, and primarily those of Asklepios, were finally very much prone to use water for purification. If Pausanias specified that the spring at the Amphiaraion was not to be used for purification and ablution, it is probably because those were known practices at the sanctuary, and the writer himself mentions the preliminary obligation of purification before any consultation. The excavations of the sanctuary and the epigraphical texts eventually uncovered the presence of baths for both sexes.⁸⁷ The Asklepieion of Epidauros was even better equipped, with perirhanteria, cisterns, wells, fountains, baths and distribution channels found all over the sanctuary.⁸⁸ There the purification eventually had taken on an even more spiritual and somewhat moral dimension when, in the 4th c. BC, the following inscription was put over the portal of the temple: ‘He who goes inside the sweet smelling temple must be pure. Purity is to have an honest mind (*literally*, to think *hosia*).⁸⁹

2.2. Water, life and strength

Beyond the needs for purification, water was attributed powers that reflected the deeply agrarian traits of ancient Greek society. The importance of water for an agriculture still highly dependent on the climate, and consequently the importance of

⁸⁶ It is thought that a mystery cult was practised at the sanctuary of the sacred spring at Corinth (ch. 4, section 2.1), where the spring could have provided water for such purifications. Theban Kabeirion: see chapter 3, section 3.3.

⁸⁷ See in particular Petrakos (1968), 72-77, 108-110; Petrakos (1995), 24, 50-5; Argoud (1993), 34-46.

⁸⁸ See chapter 5, section 6.2.

⁸⁹ Porphyry, *De Abs.* 2.19. Translation from Parker (1996b), 322-323. A law regulating the entrance into a sanctuary in Astypalaia (dated to after 300 BC) says something similar: *IG* 12,3.183:

[ἐ]ς τὸ ἱερόν μὴ ἐσέρπεν ὅς-
τις μὴ ἀγνός ἐστι, ἢ τελεῖ
ἢ αὐτῶι ἐν νῶι ἐσσεῖται.

water for the community's wealth and survival, was translated in religious terms with cults and rituals which aimed at controlling water's powers.

One of Zeus' attributes was rain-giver (*hyetios* or *ombrios*) and he was worshipped as such very early in different regions, notably in Attica and Argolid. His cult was often located on a mountain summit, presumably to reflect his position as god of the skies. Traces of this largely humble and rural cult are found on mountains tops as far back as the 8th c. BC, with an apex in the 7th c. BC. It declined in the following centuries. Several theories exist to explain this decline, among which a climatic change resulting in the water stress becoming less important. There is however little reason to believe that the need for rain had diminished at all during these centuries, and a better guess would be a change in cult practice such as a migration of the cult to another place and/or to another god.⁹⁰

The divinities most traditionally associated with this aspect of religious water are the nymphs and the river-gods.⁹¹ In myth, river-gods were very often placed at the origin of the communities in the surveyed regions. Two rivers bearing the name Asopos, one in Boiotia and the other near Sikyon, were said to have fathered a large number of nymphs, some of which had given names to places and cities. Aigina, Thisbe and Plataia are among them.⁹² In Argolid, the river Inachos was said to have been the first ruler of the land, and again had a daughter, Mykene, associated with a city.⁹³ Beyond the stories putting them at the origin of the land and their communities, these deities received a fervent if somewhat understated cult in

⁹⁰ De Polignac (2002), 119-122.

⁹¹ Larson (2007), 63, 64-66; Parker (2005), 430-1; Larson (2001), 42, 43, 111.

⁹² Hom. *Od.* 11.261; Pind. *Isthm.* 8.16-19; *Ol.* 6.84-87; Hdt. 5.80.1; Paus. 1.35.2, 2.5.1, 2.15.1, 2.29.2, 5.22.6, 9.1.1, 9.20.1, 9.26.6; Hyg. *Fab* 52; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 13.201; Bacchylides, fr. 9; Apollod. 2.1.1; Apollonius Rhodius, 2.946, 4.567; Diodorus Siculus 4.72.1.

⁹³ Inachos: Eurip. *Or.* 932; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.25.4; Hygin. *Fab.* 143. Mykene: Paus. 2.16.4.

historical times.⁹⁴ They were believed to protect and literally nourish children and adolescents with populations living by their course being raised, fed, nourished and reared by them.⁹⁵ This protection is repaid by offerings, generally of a lock of hair given at the end of adolescence when the young boys and girls become adult. The model is that of Achilles, the epitome of the young man, who vowed to keep his hair long so he could offer a lock to the Spercheios once back from the war.⁹⁶

The implication of water in human fertility is particularly apparent in the cases of the mythical baths taken by goddesses, which were sometimes re-enacted in cult.⁹⁷ These baths are generally categorised in scholarly literature between pre-nuptial and post-nuptial ones, consequently attributing to them the relevant properties. On the other hand, R. Parker, writing on the case of Athena's bath in the Inachos at Argos, described it as being taken merely for 'bathing's sake'.⁹⁸ But the theme of the bathing goddesses, in particular when the myth was supported by actual rituals, was anything but innocent. In the surveyed regions, such different goddesses as Athena, Hera, Artemis and also Aphrodite were concerned. Artemis bathed in Boiotia and was seen by Actaeon who then lost his life. Athena bathed in the spring Hippokrene on the Helikon, and Callimachus used this myth as a reference when he describes the ritual bath of her statue in Argos.⁹⁹ Her statue was also bathed in Athens during the festival called *Plynteria*, although the location of the bath is

⁹⁴ See for example the opening of Menander's *Dyskolos* on the sanctuary of the nymphs at Phyle in Attica.

⁹⁵ Aeschylus, *Supp.* 497-8; *Pers.* 805-6; *Seven* 307-8, 584; *Ag.* 1157-9; See also chapter 3, n. 31. See also above n. 91.

⁹⁶ Hom. *Il.* 23.140-142.

⁹⁷ Ginouvès (1962), 283-298; Kahil (1994), 217-223; Dillon (2002), 132-136. See also the bath taken by a mother and her new born child in myth and practice: Parker (1996b), 50-51, n. 69.

⁹⁸ Parker (1996b), 27-28.

⁹⁹ Artemis: see chapter 3, section 1.2; Athena on the Helikon: See chapter 3, section 6.2, n. 128; Athena at Argos: see chapter 5, section 4.4.

unsure.¹⁰⁰ Hera was said to bathe every year in the spring Canathos near Nauplion where she recovered her virginity, and Argive priestesses called the *Eresides* drew water for her bath.¹⁰¹ Aphrodite's baths in myth are in Cyprus, but ritual baths of her statue are attested in Athens (Aphrodite Pandemos) and possibly in Sicyon where one of her priestess was *loutrophoros*.¹⁰²

Cleaning statues was a duty in many, if not all, sanctuaries that possessed an image, and water was generally involved.¹⁰³ Porphyry described how an Arcadian called Klearkhos cleaned the statues of Hermes and Hekate every month. Whether this duty was observed as regularly and scrupulously, one can only guess, but it must have been widespread in the Greek world.¹⁰⁴ If bathing a cult statue in a river or a spring can also be seen as a cleaning procedure, it was also far more than that since it implied the removal of the statue from its usual place and its complete immersion as opposed to simply washing it. It is therefore necessary to look for the other motives behind these ceremonies, and myths give several examples of 'meaningful' baths.

Aphrodite had a bath before joining Anchises (pre-nuptial) and a bath after leaving Ares' bed (post-nuptial), in which she is made more beautiful, with her powers over sexuality visibly enhanced.¹⁰⁵ But even when myths do not provide an explanation for a goddess's bath other than pure enjoyment, as in the example of Artemis bathing with nymphs, the world of sexuality is never far away. Men were explicitly banned from seeing the statue during the bath of Athena at Argos, while

¹⁰⁰ Parker (2005), 211, 478-479; Parker (1996), 307-308; Depew (1994), 417-418, n. 45; Parker (1996b), 26-27.

¹⁰¹ Kanathos: see chapter 5, section 9. Eresides: Hesychios s.v. Ἑρεσίδες : κόραι αἱ λουτρὰ κομίζουσαι τῆ Ἥρα.; schol. Pind. *Ol.* 6.149b, g. Larson (2001), 115.

¹⁰² Myth: See below n. 105. Sicyon: see chapter 4, section 5.3. Athens: see chapter 1, section 1.1.3; *I.G.* II/III² .659; *JG* I³.375; Paus. 1.22.3.

¹⁰³ Ginouvès (1962), 283-284.

¹⁰⁴ Porphyry, *de abst.* 2.16.

¹⁰⁵ Pre-nuptial: *Hymn. Hom. Aph.* 61-63. She also bathed in the Acheloos before sleeping with Hermes in Hyg. *Astronomica*, 2.16. In Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 13.456-460, the river Setrachos in Cyprus is the goddess' 'bridebath'. Post-nuptial: Hom., *Od.* 364.

Actaeon and Teiresias were male mortals punished by female goddesses. Besides, the fact that a bathing Hera could take repossession of her virginity, a quality prized above all by Athena and Artemis, may well imply that their bath too had this power. Interestingly, the bath taken by the goddesses in these instances would not only represent a purification (post-nuptial baths), a means to 'delete the past', but also the recovery of a virginal status.¹⁰⁶ In other words, water brought with it renewed powers in general, and fertility in particular.¹⁰⁷ The bath represents the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. And, through the regeneration of the goddess' powers, it symbolised the permanence of her protection of the community she presided over.¹⁰⁸ This is why R. Parker's stance on Athena's bath at Argos, where men and non-citizen women were overtly unwelcome and which was visibly held at regular intervals, seems inappropriate.¹⁰⁹ That virgin goddesses, such as Athena or Artemis, could be associated with these powers is not paradoxical if we understand them as life-giving powers. These powers are sexualised and deeply feminine ones, and are not antithetical with a virginal status.¹¹⁰

Women who desired to ensure their fertility followed the divine examples and bathed too. The best known occurrences of such ritualistic baths are those taken before wedding ceremonies, when the importance of future fertility is clear. In Athens, the water of the spring Kallirrhoe was brought back to the bride's house (probably also the groom's) in a *loutrophoros*, a vase which became symbolic for

¹⁰⁶ Ginouvès (1962), 416: 'Le sentiment pouvait naître ainsi d'une purification opérée (...) par l'immersion complète, qui efface la vie antérieure et tout ce qui a pu la marquer, rendant ainsi possible un renouveau total'.

¹⁰⁷ Ginouvès (1962), 295-296.

¹⁰⁸ Davidson (2007), 209-210; Parker (2005), 210-211; Pirenne-Delforge (1994), 142. Burkert believes that the washing of the statue of Athena at Athens during the festival of the Plynteria was linked to the New Year ceremonies. See Burkert (1985), 79, 228. Parker prefers the term 'festival of renewal' to the concept of 'New Year'.

¹⁰⁹ Callim., *Pall.* 45-48; Dillon (2002), 132-3; Larson (2001), 115.

¹¹⁰ Versnel (1992), 49-51.

wedded men and women.¹¹¹ The spring/nymph Kallirrhoe was also present in the sanctuary of Kephisos amongst a group of deities protecting children and fertility.¹¹² This ritual was widespread in the Greek world; at Thebes they would have used the water from the Ismenos, at Argos from a local river or spring that Clytemnestra had taken with her to Aulis for Iphigeneia's wedding, and Porphyry argued that because brides are 'married for childbearing' they are called nymphs and covered in water 'drawn from springs or streams or everflowing fountains'.¹¹³ It appears to have also been the case at the spring Kissoessa in Boeotia, where brides would, if not draw water, at least make offerings to the nymphs.¹¹⁴

After the wedding, the newlywed woman would dedicate the *loutrophoros* she had used, or miniature ones, to the nymphs. In Athens, a sanctuary dedicated to *Nymphe* on the south slope of the Acropolis received a vast number of these offerings while, in the rest of Attica as well as in Boiotia and Corinthia, they were deposited in the caves dedicated to them. It is possible that the springs sometimes found in those caves also provided the water for the ceremonial bath.¹¹⁵

The evidence available on rituals related to fertility is overwhelmingly feminine in nature. The sources having generally a male point of view, they provide often a vague, if not biased, record on those rituals performed by women only. The case of the Kyllou-Pera in Attica is exemplary of a female cult, very probably closed to men, which attracted jibes and suspicion because of its sexual nature. Reading past those comments to detect what sort of ritual was performed is somewhat difficult, but

¹¹¹ Hesychius, *Suda* s.v. λουτροφόρος

¹¹² *I.G.* II².4547. See chapter 1, section 2.1.

¹¹³ Eur., *Phoen.* 346-9 and schol 347; Plutarch, *De Exil.* 16; Eur. *IT* 818; Porph., *De antr. nymph.* 11-12 (trans. Larson (2001), p. 59). No springs are explicitly linked with marriage in Corinth, but the fountain Peirene is the most likely candidate: See Chapter 4, section 2.2.

¹¹⁴ See chapter 3, section 8.1.

¹¹⁵ Ginouvès (1962), 275. Parker (2005), 441-443. Sanctuary of *Nymphe*: *I.G.* 1³. 1064; *λόρος ηιερό Νύμφης*. Larson (2001), 112; Travlos (1971), 361. Caves of Attica: see chapter 1, sections 2.3.1-2.

the ultimate objective remains clear enough; the promotion of female fertility as well as the establishment and reinforcement of the bonds between participating women.¹¹⁶

2.3. Water and the world of the dead

Death was a more familiar sight in pre-industrial civilisations like ancient Greece. When death occurred, water was involved in funerary ceremonies for purifications, since the dead were a major source of religious pollution. A vessel with water was left at the entrance of a house where someone had died, both as a way to allow purification as well as a warning to the unwary neighbour or visitor.¹¹⁷ Murder was a source of even more serious pollution which is, in Aeschylus, impossible to purify with water: 'And though all streams flow in one course to cleanse the blood from a polluted hand, they rush in vain'.¹¹⁸ Other sources nevertheless record the cleansing of Orestes after he had killed his mother and Aegisthus, one of them seeing the murderer attended by nine men for Troezen using the water of a spring Hippokrene. Pausanias, who recorded the story, wrote that the event was still regularly celebrated in his day by the descendants of the nine men.¹¹⁹

Beyond purificatory reasons, water was a privileged substance in the Greeks' affairs with death. First through libations, poured for the dead and some gods, of pure water or water mixed with honey or milk.¹²⁰ These 'sober' (νηφάλια) offerings were first interpreted as particularly suited to chthonian powers. However, the sources available somewhat defy categorisation, and later studies preferred to

¹¹⁶ Kyllou-Pera: see chapter 2. Cf. the festivals of Demeter: Morgan (2007), 304: '(...) women separate themselves from men, they perform secret rites, they handle sacred artifacts, and they laugh, blaspheme, or abuse each other'. Dillon (2002), 109, 113.

¹¹⁷ Parker (1996), 35, n. 10.

¹¹⁸ Aesch., *Cho.* 71-74 (trans. H.W. Smyth).

¹¹⁹ See chapter 5 section 7.1: Paus. 2.31.4, 2.31.8-9. On the political dimension of the building and on the unknown location of the spring, see Torelli & Musti (2000), 319.

¹²⁰ Aesch., *Cho.* 129-30. In Attica, Muses, Eos, Selene, the Nymphs and Aphrodite Ourania received these wineless libations: Polemon of Ilium *FHG* fr. 42. Larson (2001), 310, n. 127.

underscore the tendency of these offerings to be unusual, out of the ordinary, and as such being “ritual symbols” which marked special “marginal” phases and transitions during the “ritual process” as a whole.¹²¹ Pausanias mentions one example of such offerings, on his way to Titane, in a sanctuary dedicated to the Eumenides located in a grove, very similar to their sanctuary at Colonos described by Sophocles, where they, as well as the Fates, received libations of honey and water.¹²²

It was in some oracular sanctuaries that water displayed its closest association with the underworld. As it will be seen below after the brief overview of the sites, water in these sanctuaries assumed strong chthonian characteristics, often in a context which situated it very close to Hades.

In Boiotia where most cases are found, many *manteia* were located near springs the water of which played a role in the oracular process. The best known example is the sanctuary of Trophonios at Lebadeia where water abounded, in the form of the river Herkyna and several springs.¹²³ There, water not only played an important role in purifications (the consultant had, for a certain amount of time, to wash daily in the cold river water) but it was also the physical reminder of the chthonian character of the cult. Just before the consultation, water from the springs of memory (*mnemosyne*) and oblivion (*lethe*) had to be drunk. These were a clear reflection of the ancient Greek’s vision of the underworld geography where such springs were to be found.¹²⁴ Souls drank from these springs and somehow the consultant at Lebadeia re-enacted a *katabasis*, a descent into the underworld before being given the oracle directly by Trophonios. In other sanctuaries, the association is

¹²¹ Henrichs (1983), 97 and n. 52 quoting F. Graf, ‘Milch, honig und Wein. Zum Verständnis der Libation im Griechischen Ritual’, in *Peremittas, Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome: Ateneo, 1980), pp. 209-221.

¹²² Paus. 2.11.4. See chapter 4, section 6.

¹²³ See chapter 3, section 11.1.

¹²⁴ Cole (2003), 200, 208-210, 212; Edmonds (2004), 49-55.

less transparent since we do not have the same extent of sources available. The sources, both primary and secondary, on the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoos only allow an incomplete picture of water's implication in the cult. But the extensive efforts made in terms of water equipment, including a curious but revealing conduit bringing water to the bottom of the grotto, give rise to the idea that water played a role in the oracular process, and certainly possessed chthonic characteristics.¹²⁵ At Hysiai, the otherwise unknown sanctuary of Apollo possessed a well the water of which was drunk for prophecies, and at Tegyra two springs flowed behind the temple of Apollo, recorded by Plutarch among the former oracles.¹²⁶ Amongst the sites studied in this thesis, the only oracle outside Boiotia with a probable implication of water was the sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes at Argos.¹²⁷ Pausanias' account of the consultation process does not mention the use of water whatsoever, and the important hydraulic installations tentatively, but not convincingly, attributed to an Asklepieion, even if the only clearly established cult until late in Roman times is the Apollonian oracle.¹²⁸

The key point in the association of water with *manteia* is the fact that water from rivers and springs originally came from the underworld and was directly associated with the Earth (*Gē*), which was responsible, according to some, for the prophetic powers at Delphi.¹²⁹ Water shares its powers with the earth as it comes from and returns to it and, in the cases of oracles, the earthly origins of water are clearly emphasised not only by their natural origin (a spring, a well, a river of cold water) but also by their context (a converted grotto at the Ptoion, names and functions associated with the path to the underworld at Lebadeia). The oracular

¹²⁵ See chapter 3, section 5.

¹²⁶ Hysiai: see chapter 3, section 1.1. Tegyra: chapter 3, section 10.3.

¹²⁷ Other oracular Apollonian sanctuaries not studied in this thesis were given an important place to water. Delphi was the best known but equally famous were the sanctuaries of Didyma and Klaros in Asia Minor where water played. See Roux (1981), 155-9.

¹²⁸ See chapter 5, section 4.5.

¹²⁹ Ogden (2001), 245-247; Ginouvès (1962), 424. All fresh water comes from Okeanos and eventually comes back to him: Hom., *Il.* 21.194-197; Hes., *Theog.* 337-370; Aesch., *PB.* 136-143.

properties of water, in particular of springs, were furthermore demonstrated by the nymphs' capacity to seize people. The *nympholeptos*, possessed by the nymph, would have sometimes been able to prophesise.¹³⁰ Similarly, the Muses, kindred to the nymphs by their plurality and their association with water and found, for example, around the spring Hippokrene on Mount Helicon or next to the river Ilissos at Athens, could 'inspire' poets.¹³¹ Water diffuses knowledge, sometimes by its consumption, other times simply by its proximity.¹³²

At first glance, the healing sanctuaries of Asklepios and Amphiaraos seem misplaced amongst cults related to death and the underworld, but their strong similarities with oracular cults justifies this position. The Greek practice of healing by incubation, i.e. the god's visit in the dreams of those sleeping in his sanctuary, is alike to an oracular consultation inasmuch as the dream received is similar to a prophecy given by the god.¹³³ Both types of sanctuaries also had preparatory periods during which the consultant would undergo purifications and perform prescribed rituals. Water played a part in various stages, from purification to the actual consultation, and became strongly associated with the healing sanctuaries. Xenophon's story about Socrates comparing the warm water of Asklepios with the cold water of Amphiaraos illustrates the deep connection between a god and his water. In these sanctuaries the underworld was also an important feature.¹³⁴ Both Asklepios and Amphiaraos were heroes who died and came back from the dead. Amphiaraos' resemblance to an oracle was even stronger, having been a seer in life,

¹³⁰ On nympholepsy see above n. 46-47. The case of Bakis is the best known example in ancient literature. The nymphs of the Corycian cave were supposedly the ones who inspired him. See Paus. 4.27.4, 10.12.11; Ar., *Pax* 1070; schol. Ar., *Pax* 1279; Hdt. 8.77.1-2.

¹³¹ In Hes., *Theog.* 30, words **flow** (ῥέει) from their sweet mouths. For the Muses, water and inspiration see Camilloni (1998), 22-38.

¹³² In Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates pretends to be a nympholeptos (238c-d), to be possessed by the nymphs (241c), and became a *mantis* (242c), he is only next to the spring or about to cross the stream, but he did not drink water.

¹³³ Bonnechère (2007), 153-154; Ogden (2001), 84 n. 21, 85-90.

¹³⁴ Xen., *Mem.* 3.13.3.

while water in Asklepieia was often drawn from ‘chthonic’ structures (wells, caves or cave-like fountains).¹³⁵ Other healing sanctuaries were also heroic shrines; the Amphiaraion at Rhamnous was first dedicated to the ‘doctor hero’ (*heros iatros*) only, and the sanctuary of Herakles Pankrates on the banks of the Ilissos received anatomical dedication, hinting at his healing powers.¹³⁶

Places with water could also be thought of as dangerous, in particular the lush and green meadows (λειμών) near springs, rivers and lakes. The abduction of Oreithyia by the northern wind Boreas happened on the banks of the Ilissos and an altar to the god recalled the event. Hallirrothios, son of Poseidon, raped Alkippe and was subsequently killed by her father Ares next to the spring of the Athenian Asklepieion.¹³⁷ In Boiotia the young Argynnis dies by drowning in the lake Copaïs, and Narcissus perished after being subjugated by his own reflection.¹³⁸ At Thebes, Dirke was thrown in the spring which was afterwards called after her and a similar fate occurred to Glauke in Corinth.¹³⁹ The untimely deaths of youngsters in such places were sometimes assimilated to being carried away by a nymph.¹⁴⁰

Several themes appear in this apparently disparate group. Firstly the lush and humid meadows are dangerous locations where rapes and abductions happen, and many of them were stories following the model of Persephone driven away by Hades to the underworld where other meadows await her. This was in stark contrast with their apparently calm and peaceful settings and, possibly, only a means to reinforce the narrative of young innocent youngsters, in general virgin girls, symbolised by the

¹³⁵ Amphiaraos as seer: Apollod., *Bibl.* 3.6.2; Hyg., *Fab.* 73; Pind., *Nem.* 10.12-13; *Ol.* 6.19-21; Paus. 2.13.7. Chthonic fountain in Asklepieia: see chapter 1, section 1.1.4; chapter 4, section 2.5; chapter 5, section 6.2.

¹³⁶ See chapter 1, sections 1.3.4 and 2.6.2.

¹³⁷ Eur., *El.* 1258-62; Paus. 1.21.4; Apollod. 3.14.2; Suda s.v. Ἄρειος πάγος: (...) ἢ ὅτι ἔπηξε τὸ δόρυ ἐκεῖ ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ποσειδῶνα ὑπὲρ Ἀλιρροθίου δίκη, ὅτε ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτὸν βιασάμενον Ἀλκίππην τὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ Ἀγραῦλου τῆς Κέκροπος θυγατρὸς, ὡς φησὶν Ἑλλάνικος ἐν α#.

¹³⁸ Argynnis: see chapter 3, section 10.1. Narcissus: chapter 3, section 6.3.

¹³⁹ Dirke: chapter 3, section 3.1.1-2. Glauke: chapter 4, section 2.4.

¹⁴⁰ Larson (2001), 63. Such is the fate of Hermaphrodite: Ov., *Met.* 4.285-388.

spring-like settings.¹⁴¹ Secondly and more importantly, the water's hidden depths as in the case of Lerna where a lake was seen as the gateway to the underworld. The calm waters of Lake Lerna, set in a marshy and green landscape, were hiding the awful 'reality' of its abyss. Any man, tells Pausanias, who would try and swim across would invariably be dragged down into the depths of the lake, as had before him the god Dionysos who was thrown in it by the Hero Perseus.¹⁴² The god would have been called from the depth at a ceremony involving the playing of trumpets and the sacrifice of a lamb cast in the lake.¹⁴³ At Hermione, also in Argolid, there was an Acherusian lake, near a place belonging to Ploutos and a third belonging to Klymenos 'king of the underworld' (Hades) with a chasm from which Herakles brought back Cerberus. Hermionians were so convinced of possessing a direct route down to Hades that they did not leave an obol with their dead.¹⁴⁴ Ogden has suggested that spots like these 'did not *lead to* the underworld: they *were* the underworld, and they were all simultaneously the same underworld'.¹⁴⁵ The calm watered lakes would possibly have been like a two-faced mirror, bottomless not so much in depth but on the surface, both in the world of the living and already in that of the dead.

Water in these conditions was the ultimate instrument of metamorphosis, being the way to death, it also allowed re-birth in a superior state. The mortal hero Amphiaraios, killed and swallowed by the earth, reappeared at the surface at a spring in Oropos. The god Dionysos, killed in Lake Lerna, can be recalled from the depths of the waters. It was perhaps a similar phenomenon that took place at the Argive

¹⁴¹ *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 5-18.

¹⁴² Paus. 2.37.5-6. Perseus: Schol. T. Hom., *Il.* 14.319 = H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in homeri iliadem*, v.3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 641.

¹⁴³ Plut., *De Is. et Os.*, 35.

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 5, section 8.

¹⁴⁵ Ogden (2001), 253.

Heraion where the Eleutherion stream was said to have provided water for a ceremony of emancipation of slaves. Maybe slaves died symbolically by water and were reborn free.¹⁴⁶

3. The material traces of water: a brief outline

Water was virtually present in every sanctuary, if only for the daily necessities of maintenance such as cleaning the altar and the sacrificial tools, or to provide drinking water.¹⁴⁷ In sanctuaries catering for large crowds, this implied the necessity of a copious supply of fresh water. This explains why so many traces found in excavated sanctuaries concern water and its supply, storage, distribution and use.

Pottery constitutes a very important part of the Greek archaeological evidence.¹⁴⁸ Ancient Greek pottery had evolved in such a way that distinctive shapes of vases corresponded to a specific purpose, which makes it easier for archaeologists to recognise, date and interpret them.¹⁴⁹ Vases such as the *hydria* or the *loutrophoros* were specifically made to hold water but other vessels, the most versatile of which being the *amphora*, could also be used as water-containers.

Some of these water vases or pots were specifically made for rituals. The *loutrophoros*, to begin with, was used to carry the water for the bath preceding the marriage ceremony principally in Athens and Attica.¹⁵⁰ Full-sized and miniature

¹⁴⁶ Eleutherion stream: see chapter 5, section 3. Paus. 2.17.1.

¹⁴⁷ One example of such a daily duty is found in a fragmentary 'sacred journal' from Epidauros dated to the 2nd or 3rd c. AD, in which warm water was possibly used to cleanse the altars. See Sokolowski (1962), #25; Dignas (2007), 164.

¹⁴⁸ Ceramic does not decompose and has survived where organic or even metallic objects have not. A quick read of any edition of the *Archaeological Reports* would suffice to demonstrate the importance of pottery as material evidence in ancient Greece.

¹⁴⁹ See <<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/shapes/default.htm>> from the Beazley archive, on ancient Greek pottery's shapes.

¹⁵⁰ Chapter 3.3 in Ginouvès (1962) is consecrated to 'baths and wedding rituals'. See in particular pp. 267-276; Dem. 44.18, 30. See sources where the *loutrophoros* is the boy or girl bearing the vase:

loutrophoroi were offered, probably by women after their wedding, to deities concerned with fertility and marriage such as the Nymphs or the little known figure of *Nymphe* (bride) on the south slope of the Acropolis.¹⁵¹ The shape was very distinctive and symbolically charged and was also used as a funerary symbol for persons who had passed away before being married. Some loutrophoroi were consequently decorated with funereal scenes while stone loutrophoroi, or even the representation of a loutrophoros, were put on some tombs.¹⁵²

Another type of vessel, the Phiale was also a religiously charged object because it was used for libations. They were often standing out from the ordinary by being luxury bronze, silver or even gold items, a world away from utilitarian pottery.¹⁵³ Because libations generally involved wine rather than pure water, the presence of this type of material in a sanctuary does not usually imply that water had a cultic importance. In the Heraion of Perachora however, around 200 phialai were discovered at the bottom of a 'pool' of water. Different explanations have been advanced, none completely satisfactory. One could reasonably suppose that they had been used for libations of water; a type of 'sober' (*nēphalia*) offering reserved to gods such as the Eumenides who would not be out of place in a ritual related to the vengeance of Medea and the death of her children (see fig. 71).¹⁵⁴

Hesychius s.v. λουτροφορά ἄγγη, λουτοφόρος; Suda s.v. λουτροφόρος καὶ λουτροφορεῖν (see chapter 1, n. 69); Poll. 3.43, 8.66; Eust., in *Il.* 23.141.

¹⁵¹ Parker (2005), 442; Larson (2001), 112; Ginouvès (1962), 275. Some were also found in the sanctuaries of Artemis Brauronia on the Acropolis and of the hero Amyntos, located between the Pnyx and the Areopagos.

¹⁵² Demosthenes, *Against Leochares* 18, 30; schol. Eur., *Phoen.* 347; Eustathios, ad *Il.* 23.141: ...κάλλις εἰς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ ὅτι ἄλουτος τὰ νυμφικά [καὶ ἄγονος] ἄπεισι. See Ginouvès (1962), 257-64. It would seem that the funerary use antedated the nuptial use.

¹⁵³ Use of Phialai: von Bothmer (1962), 154; Boardman et al., 'Greek dedications', in *ThesCRA* vol. 1 (2004), 305. Its main use was for libation but it was probably also used as a drinking vessel in ritual dining.

¹⁵⁴ Perachora: see chapter 4 section 4. The phialai were dated to 650 BC down 'well into the 6th c.' Tomlinson (1988) suggested that they were stored near the pond and accidentally fell into it all at the same time. The pond was out of use by the end of the 5th c. BC.

But other pots, like the hydria, were not specifically designed to be offerings and were everyday objects which could be offered in turn to the gods. Such was the association of the hydria with water that its deposition can reasonably be used as an evidence for the presence of water in the sanctuary's life.¹⁵⁵ But the reasons behind and the implications of this presence are not easily clarified. Only helped with the archaeological context of the deposition and possibly by cross-referencing with other types of sources (literary, epigraphical, etc.) one might advance possible answers. One illustration of such a problem is the large series of miniature hydriai offered in the sanctuary of Hera at Prosymna (Argive Heraion).¹⁵⁶ They were clearly made to become votives there because of their miniaturisation, but what they say about the status of water at the Heraion is far less straightforward.¹⁵⁷ According to Hall: 'the appearance at the Heraion of what are often described as "feminine" dedications, such as jewellery or hydriai, may say more about the donors than the divine recipient, just as "masculine" dedications, such as kraters or tripod cauldrons, evoke male activities rather than the nature of Hera'.¹⁵⁸ This may be so up to a certain point. Hall is justified in insisting that offerings often define the dedicators as a group, since taking part in a certain ritual was the mark that someone belonged to a precise community (gender, age-group, family, city, etc.), but he is forgetting that a divinity's existence and identity were not independent from its cult. Apart from the oral traditions and poetic texts that had constructed the deity's core identity recognisable all over the Greek world, the local legends, cults and rituals were the

¹⁵⁵ See notably Erika Diehl's book *Die Hydria* (1964) and her preliminary statement (p. 2) that water was one of the oldest types of offering and that it influenced the reasons behind the depositions of water containers such as the hydria.

¹⁵⁶ Caskey & Amandry (1952), 197-9; Diehl (1964), 176-179, esp. 178-79.

¹⁵⁷ On miniature votives, see Boardman et al., 'Greek Dedications', in *ThesCRA* vol. 1 (2004), 316.

¹⁵⁸ Hall (1995), 597-598.

deity's flesh and blood.¹⁵⁹ In this perspective, the offerings do not only say much about the 'donors', but in parallel were the expression of how these same donors perceived their deity. And, in the case of the Heraion of Prosymna, the association of the deposition with literary sources stating a role played by water could foster the idea that it held an important place in the cult to Hera.¹⁶⁰ To quote Morris, 'pots and poems were used by the same people, who – in case we should be foolish enough to doubt it – make it clear in their writings that they employed both in efforts to construct and contest categories'.¹⁶¹

The case of such water containers, found in sanctuaries dedicated to female deities, are particularly symptomatic of our difficulty to distinguish whether these offerings represent the group of persons offering it or its former specific use. The importance of taking into account the specificities of each location should also be stressed before making hasty generalisations. This distinction is not always easy to make and the presence of a hydria in a sacred place does not necessarily imply that water had any sacred importance.

The presence of water is more clearly attested when water-supply systems are discovered. Wells and fountains are regularly present in sanctuaries and some found outside sanctuaries were nevertheless associated with a cult. An example would be the rock-cut well excavated near the theatre at Argos in which was found a bronze bowl dedicated to the river Erasinos.¹⁶² It is not possible to say whether the well was inside or near a sanctuary dedicated to the river-god, or if the well was itself somehow connected to his cult. Conversely, the well located in the abaton of the

¹⁵⁹ Dowden (2007), 42-55; Parker (2005), 2: 'the names of the main gods may be largely the same from state to state, but the division of functions between gods, the balances and combinations and emphases within the pantheon, differ radically from place to place.'

¹⁶⁰ See above the study of the Argive Heraion in chapter 5.

¹⁶¹ Morris (2000), 27.

¹⁶² See section 4.3 in chapter 5.

Epidaurian Asklepieion, because of its location and its conservation was clearly an important part of the sanctuary.

Fountains were more monumental than wells and as such sometimes played a more prominent role in a sanctuary. Some of them were clearly conceived with a ritualistic rather than practical use in mind. Such is the example of the 'sacred fountain' at Epidauros next to another 'standard' fountain built at the same time.¹⁶³ The sacred fountain was narrower, almost built underground and was never meant to provide water to many persons at the same time. It could not have had the secular use of the over fountain, which was a far more commonplace type of building.¹⁶⁴

The other types of structures demonstrating the presence of water are usually for storage and distribution purposes. They are cisterns, pools, channels, metal and terracotta conduits, aqueducts, basins, waterproof plasters, etc. These are generally not differentiable from those used in secular contexts. The perirrhanterion was, on the other hand, a typically religious object. It was a water basin present in many sanctuaries to provide water for purifications, and could be made of stone, terracotta or bronze. The earliest found is believed to be one from Isthmia, dated to the 7th c. BC, set directly into the floor of the eastern side of the temple of Poseidon.¹⁶⁵

In some cases, the only indication that water had a religious dimension in a particular place is given by epigraphical texts and/or iconography. The presence of a sanctuary of the nymphs on the southern coast of Attica is indeed known to us only from the testimony of an inscribed text legislating the access and use of the nymphs' water.¹⁶⁶ As a final example, our knowledge of the fountain Enneakrounos built on spring Kallirrhoe in Athens and of its role in the *loutrophoria*, if it is mainly known

¹⁶³ For the description and discussion on the fountains see section 6.2 in chapter 5.

¹⁶⁴ Roux (1961), 291: the 'Doric fountain' is of a utilitarian type frequent in the Peloponnese.

¹⁶⁵ Whitley et al. (2007), 10. See section 1.1 in chapter 4, particularly n. 7-8.

¹⁶⁶ See section 2.2 in chapter 1.

from ancient literature, gained importantly from the vases on which are painted scenes at the fountain and in the procession.¹⁶⁷ The remains of the fountain have otherwise not been discovered and the spring itself has been the victim of modern Athens' urbanisation.¹⁶⁸

4. Conclusion

Most of the considerations about water in ancient Greek religion developed above were not historical and very little space was given to chronological matters. The information gathered about these 'humid' sanctuaries, myths and rituals are not easily ascribed to a period of time. This should not, however, be taken as an argument in favour of 'universal' truths on water and its implications on human behaviour. Beyond the fact that water is a biological necessity for human life, it remains that cultural factors have a huge influence on the matter and, as such, the way water was considered in ancient Greek religion was prone to changes over time.

One example would be the changes in popularity of the cult of Zeus rain-giver on mountain tops. Different theories have been advanced to explain why the once flourishing cult in the Archaic period declined sharply from the 5th c. BC onwards. The climatic argument was rejected by de Polignac in favour of a political one, as he suggested that cults related to rain and ultimately to the protection of crops, and the community in general, were transferred to the religious centre Athens had become at the expense of smaller communities. This argument is not exempt

¹⁶⁷ See section 1.2.1 in chapter 1. On the representation of Athenian fountains on vases see Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 64-73. For the *loutrophoria* see Ginouvès (1962), 267-76.

¹⁶⁸ The river was still seen flowing in photos taken in the last quarter of the 19th c. (see Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), fig. 2) but the spring has all but disappeared today.

from problems, but it is ultimately impossible to detect a clear-cut cause for these changes.¹⁶⁹

The healing sanctuaries, in particular the Amphiareion of Oropos, are another example of the evolution of water's religious significance over time. As newcomers on the religious scene, the evolution of these sanctuaries is better documented and, in the example of the Amphiaraion, saw a shift from what was first an oracular sanctuary towards a healing one, finally borrowing characteristics typical of an Asklepieion. It is not entirely clear if the powers attributed to water there evolved in consequence of this shift. The only practical assessment of the sacredness of the spring of Amphiaraos is found in Pausanias who wrote in the 2nd c. AD, when it was forbidden to use the spring's water for purification and to sacrifice in it. Lupu also demonstrated that Pausanias' description of the rules of pre-incubation sacrifice, if valid in his time, were substantially more flexible in the 4th c. BC.¹⁷⁰ This supports the idea that the rules concerning the spring could have been somewhat different in the sanctuary's early years, although the one protecting its purity has many equivalents in Classical and Hellenistic periods.¹⁷¹ The possible evolution of water's powers at the Amphiaraion, if it ever occurred, was probably minimal, since the properties required for a manteion and those found in a healing sanctuary were very close.

Water had finally a typical way to possess powers in ancient Greek sanctuaries. Beyond the classification into three or more groups of properties and, as Ginouvès had himself suggested, water displayed a gradation of all of them, 'par des

¹⁶⁹ De Polignac (2002), 119-122.

¹⁷⁰ Lupu (2003), 334: 'Studied in the light of other available evidence for sacrifice at the sanctuary, the fragment informs us about the cult itself by supporting the notion that the rules affecting the pre-incubation sacrifice at the Amphiareion were more flexible than they appear from Pausanias's account.'

¹⁷¹ See above n. 75.

transitions insensibles'.¹⁷² No purification without instauration of a new self, no fertility without the possibility of death, no water of memory without the water of oblivion, and this permanent balance operated by what in the end is the one and same substance.

¹⁷² Ginouvès (1962), 426.

Chapter 7: The Presence of Water in the Surveyed Sanctuaries:

A sacred geography of water landmarks

1. Landscape and ancient Greece

The interest in the landscape of ancient Greece, and its study by the moderns, is by no means anything new. It could even be argued that this interest is the foundation of today's classical archaeology. The poets, artists and men of science travelling in 18th and 19th c. AD Greece and Italy – and sometimes even earlier – were avid observers of ancient ruins which stood dramatically in a beautiful landscape, although they did not always describe them with an attention to reality.¹ With the establishment of more scientific methods in archaeology and the 'big digs' initiated in the 19th c., research focused more on specific and prestigious sites, material artefacts and architecture rather than on landscape.² Since then, the development of archaeological surveys from the 1960s onwards has shed more light on ancient Greek landscape, and books and articles have started to wrestle with the difficult questions raised by the subject, in particular since the 1980s.³ In the Classical field at least, the topic still

¹ Some, like Shelley, did not even go to Greece and Italy. Etienne (1992) treats extensively of the rise of western interest in ancient Greece. See in particular pp. 56-59 for a Greek landscape, imagined and real. See also Whitley (2001), 44-47: some scientific expeditions (for example the travels of Dodwell, Leake or the 'exploration scientifique de Morée') were the first serious attempts at description and identification of the ancient sites with the use and criticism of ancient texts.

² See Whitley (2001), esp. pp. 32-36 on the 'big digs', pp. 47-50 on the 'intensive' surveys. Short histories of Greek Archaeology and corresponding theoretical issues can also be found in Etienne *et al.* (2000), 5-20; Morris (2000), 37-76.

³ Research had since then favoured the cities rather than the countryside. From the 1960s, however, archaeological surveys were particularly embraced by prehistorians and, since the 1980s, their popularity extended to later periods (Whitley [2001], 49-50). On Religion and landscape, the archaeological discovery that, during the so-called 'dark age', the many offering deposits were principally found in extra-urban contexts shed a new light on the question of the formation of the polis and was the impetus for De Polignac's *La naissance de la cite grecque: cultes, espace et société, VIIIe-VIe siècles* (first published in 1984). This argued in favour of a dynamic religious landscape,

does not have the prestige of other branches, such as ceramology, iconography or more generally site and monument studies. Whitley has criticised the fact that Classical scholars have had virtually no interest in the study of 'environmental and economic change'.⁴ Fortunately, more rigorous studies are replacing earlier publications such as architect Vincent Scully's *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture*.⁵ The purpose of this chapter is to return springs, lakes and rivers to the geographical studies of Greek religion, as some of the elemental components in the fabric of the ancient Greek landscape.

In the context of the present chapter, it is essential to have a clear definition of what is meant by landscape. The term clearly implies the notion of space, but beyond this spatial 'evidence', the attributions to, the connotations of, or the interactions with the term *landscape* are certainly not simple. Within the scope of this study, landscape is as much about a natural and physical context – including mountains, plains, rivers, lakes, springs and coastlines – as about its human occupation, division, perception and transformation. Difficulties arise from the many possible relations between these different facets.⁶ Some, for example, state the

influenced by factors such as politics, gender or tradition. See for example the introduction to Alcock & Osborne (1994), 1.

⁴ Whitley (2001), 57.

⁵ Vincent Scully's book (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1962) has, in the words of Jameson (*CPh* 60 [1965], 214): 'tried to convert metaphor into scholarship'. His ambition to study temples within their environment is praiseworthy, but his analyses, very highly based on his own perception of the Greek interpretation of the forms of the Greek landscape, meant to represent horns, breasts or hips, and his assumption that these same meanings were present from Minoan times down to late antiquity, are to say the least polemical. With the 1980s, less poetic and more pragmatic studies on Greek religion in its environment were published. De Polignac's book is, in that matter, very important and initiated many more studies on the interactions between religion, polis and landscape. The introduction to Osborne (1987) insisted on the necessity to include a study of the Greek city within its surrounding territory. More recent and religion specific publications include Alcock and Osborne (1994); Cole (2001) or Larson (2007).

⁶ Our concept of landscape originates in the western pictorial tradition and the term has since then kept a strong aestheticising sense. The disciplines of Geography and Ethnography have reappropriated the concept and built on it. Geography has worked on landscape as the observable space, integrating the physical background with human occupation and perception. Ethnography has added to this a "processual" vision; landscape is also about the relationship between human everyday life experience and the ideal existence seen as potentially inscribed in the cultural and physical environment. In Archaeology, particularly for prehistoric periods, the problem of landscape studies resides in

primacy of the natural context over the human influence, a position akin to determinism.⁷ Others, following a *possibilist* trend, argue that the physical setting is only the basis on which society imposed its own choices.⁸ Furthermore, tools developed by geographers could be used to analyse and/or interpret the ancient Greek landscape.⁹

Because the places studied in this thesis are religious ones, the human and social dimensions of these places are very important. The landscape they were part of will be understood not only as the spatial context of human beliefs and activities, but also as an *espace perçu*. Indeed, the ancient Greek landscape was not only a space where people lived, worked and worshipped, but was also experienced through a vast set of concepts such as distance, separation, density, sacredness, purity, alikeness or strangeness.¹⁰ The structuralist approach has already made use of such terms with regard to gods and their sanctuaries.¹¹ The usual example is that of Artemis as the goddess of liminal spaces, situated at the limit between two territories, between land

accessing the interpretations made by the communities of a past time. See Hirsh (1995); Norton (2000), 2; Layton & Ucko (1999).

⁷ This sort of analysis, still seen here and there, can lead to disputable conclusions. See for example Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, vol. 1: To 1715, 6th edition (Wadsworth publications: 2006), p. 52: 'Geography played an important role in the evolution of Greek history. (...) The mountainous terrain had the effect of isolating Greeks from one another. Consequently, Greek communities tended to follow their own separate paths and develop their own way of life. Over a period of time, these communities became attached to their independence and were only too willing to fight one another to gain advantage'.

⁸ See for example Crouch (1993) and Crouch (2004) for a study of the geological settings of ancient Greek urbanisation. The danger of such approaches linking human behaviour and activities with their natural environment would be to give too much influence to the latter over the former.

⁹ The use of GIS (geographical information systems) in archaeology, for instance has been the topic of several conferences and publications. See for example Lock G. and Z. Stančić (eds.), *Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems: A European Perspective* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995) or Mueller, K., 'Geographical information systems (GIS) in papyrology: mapping fragmentation and migration flow to Hellenistic Egypt', *BASP* 42 (2005), 63-92. For an example and analysis of spatial models of ancient Greek cities and their territories see Etienne et al. (2000), 94-97.

¹⁰ For a definition of landscape from an ancient history point of view see Alcock (1993), 6-8. See also Cole (2004), chapter 1, esp. pp. 7-10. The notions of perceived space, or of experienced space, are familiar to geographers and sociologists, but have sometimes been borrowed by historians. On the Greek perception of sacred spaces for example, see Rudhardt (2001).

¹¹ Vernant (2004), 106: 'Une religion, un panthéon nous apparaissent ainsi comme un système de classification, une certaine façon d'ordonner et de conceptualiser l'univers en y distinguant des types multiples de pouvoir et de puissance'. See also Vernant (1996), 155-201 on the religious expression of space and movement through the divine figures of Hermes and Hestia. On structuralism, language and Levi-Strauss, see Morley (2004), 120-127.

and sea or between wilderness and agricultural lands.¹² These spatial ideas were said to be reflected in (or the reflection of) her cult, in particular in her being the protector of the adolescents, between childhood and adulthood.¹³ This chapter will explore the presence of water landmarks in the landscape of ancient Greek religion, as seen through the sites studied in the preceding surveys, and will suggest possible interpretations on what these landmarks could have meant in the context of Greek cults and sanctuaries.

2. Water as spatial objects in the sacred landscape

Every Greek sanctuary had its own area of influence, and was a spatial entity engaging with the ancient landscape. This is obviously not a concept that can be restricted to the sanctuaries studied in the preceding surveys only. The particularity of the places considered here lies in the fact that water resources were part of their spatial identity. One has therefore to question whether these water resources played any role at all in how these places were integrated in the ancient Greek sacred landscape. Further, in the case of an answer in the affirmative, the specifics of this role require clarification.

2.1. Water as a point in space

Of all the embodiments of water, springs are those closest to what can be called a point in space. They sometimes move, can dry up or have a varying flow, but at a given moment in time they are spatially set in one spot. They consequently have the

¹² For a definition of liminal (from the Latin *limen* for threshold), see Turner (1975), 231-232 passim.

¹³ See Cole (2004), chapter 6 and pp. 181-182 in particular.

spatial properties of a point in the sense that they can be centres, hubs and have an attraction zone or, on the other hand, they can be peripheral, secondary or even centrifugal.¹⁴ Wells can have these same properties even though they are man-made and not natural.

In terms of sacredness, the presence of water as a point in space leads to several situations in the religious landscape. In the cases of myths associated with a particular water resource, such as the rape of Alkippe by Hallirrhothios at the spring inside the Athenian Asklepieion, the landmark anchored the myth in reality; it gave it a spatial consistency.¹⁵ It is not always easy to decide whether this corresponds more to folklore than to religion; however, myths clearly had something to do with local tradition and identity.¹⁶ One might think for example of the many English landmarks associated with the figure of Robin Hood.

In Athens, an altar marked the spot next to the Ilissos where the north wind (Boreas) abducted the young princess Oreithyia. Plato, from whom we learn the existence of the altar in the *Phaedrus*, makes Socrates talk about the 'wise men' who 'might give a rational explanation, that a blast of Boreas, the north wind, pushed her off the neighbouring rocks as she was playing with Pharmaceia, and that when she had died in this manner she was said to have been carried off by Boreas'.¹⁷ Remarkably, and despite appearances, the event itself is not doubted nor is the divine status of the northern wind, but Plato showed that some had doubts over the marvellous in the story of Oreithyia's abduction. The presence of an altar however

¹⁴ In the chorematic modelisation of space elaborated by Brunet in 1980, the point is one of the basic elements of spatial organisation as represented in cartography and can be associated with different forces and interactions (e.g. centres, attraction, orbit, passage...). See Brunet, R., 'La carte-modèle et les chorèmes', *Mappemonde* 86/4 (1986), pp. 4-6.

¹⁵ On Alkippe and Hallirrhothios, see Paus. 1.21.4.

¹⁶ For Veyne, the term folklore implies an external point of view which considers its own culture as the 'good and true one'. In the 5th c. BC and still at the time of Pausanias, 'fable was not folklore, anymore than the athletic contests at Olympia (...) were spectacles to please the crowd; they were national customs'. See Veyne (1988), 96-97. See also Graf (1993), 6-7.

¹⁷ Pl., *Phaedr.* 229c-d (trans. H. N. Fowler).

confirms that a cult was honouring Boreas at the Ilissos, sacralising in a monumental fashion the spot where the god appeared.¹⁸ The same could be said of the spring next to which Phaedrus and Socrates sit later in the dialogue; the setting itself is striking for its natural beauty, which is sometimes enough to the Greek eye to denote divine presence, but the deposition there of small figurines and statues (ἀπὸ τῶν κορῶν τε καὶ ἀγαλμάτων) confirms the place's holiness.¹⁹ The concurrence in one place of water, myth and cult occurred in many places and, sometimes the water's nature was described in support of the beliefs attached to it. For example, the Kissoessa spring in Boiotia, where it was told that the baby Dionysos was bathed by nymphs, 'has the colour and sparkle of wine, is clear, and very pleasant to the taste'.²⁰ In Argolid, the sanctuary of the river-god Kephisos was situated at a place where the river could be heard flowing underground, as an illustration of the wrath of Poseidon who had punished it by drying it up for having preferred Hera in the godly contest for the land.²¹

These spots can be more than just an illustration of myth, since they were also places for cult and devotional practices. Sanctuaries were, by nature, immovable.²² Therefore the association of a sanctuary with a fixed water resource, which is itself a point in space, reinforced the permanence of the place. Thus anchored, it became an evocative landmark and was accordingly perceived as such by the ancient Greeks, in particular when water resource and sanctuary were deeply integrated with each

¹⁸ Paus. (1.19.5) echoed the tale and its location given by Plato. He adds that the north wind became, by this union with an Athenian princess, a friend of Athens. Herodotus tells how he was said to have helped during the Persian wars, destroying the enemy's fleet on two occasions in 492 and 480 BC. Hdt. 6.44.2, 7.189. See Parker (1996), 156 n. 12-14.

¹⁹ Pl., *Phaedr.* 230b-c. Natural beauty as mark of holiness: Larson (2007), 57: 'How did the Greeks determine which places were holy? Often, the holy places were the most beautiful'. Rudhardt (2001), 177-179. See also Soph., *OC* 16-18.

²⁰ Plut., *Lys.* 28.4 (trans. B. Perrin).

²¹ Paus. 2.15.4-5, 2.20.6.

²² The definition of the temenos, one of the Greek terms for sanctuary, but literally meaning 'space cut off', underlines the fixity of the sanctuary in space. See Burkert (1985), 84.

other.²³ The sanctuary of Kyllou Pera on Mount Hymettos, for instance, established its fame thanks to the fertilising and pain-relieving powers attributed to the spring.²⁴ The written sources, admittedly of late antique or Byzantine date, but based on 5th c. BC playwrights, attributed the name Kyllou Pera to the source of water as well as to the spot and the sanctuary.²⁵ This might not have been entirely caused by confusion, but possibly by the identification of the spring with the spot and vice-versa. The spring itself was the destination for the worshippers, undoubtedly attracting people from well beyond the area any normal spring would.

This case is similar to other examples of water sources that were also centres which attracted various amounts of worshippers. Probably in every Greek region, a specific source of water provided for the wedding ceremonial bath.²⁶ Attested examples in the surveyed regions are the spring Kallirrhoe in Athens, or the water of the river Ismenos at Thebes.²⁷ Euripides tells also of the ceremony for Argolid without mentioning which spring or river was concerned.²⁸ Such sources of water were landmarks symbolically representing a sentiment of belonging for the local community. The place and its water symbolised the ancestral land and acted as a centre for it. But it was also a means by which, through the practice of the ceremonial wedding bath, a community renewed its ancestral rights to it.²⁹ The

²³ The classic example is the way sanctuaries and their waters became inseparable so that one would have spoken of the 'water of Asklepios' or the 'water of Amphiaraos' (Xen., *Mem.* 3.13.3). Cf. the example of the spring Peirene which had become as early as Pindar synonymous with Corinth, the 'city of Peirene'. Pindar, *Ol.* 13.61.

²⁴ See chapter 2.

²⁵ Hesychius s.v. Κύλλου πήρα and the Suda (Photios) s.v. Κύλλου πήραν, refer respectively to passages of Aristophanes' *Centaurs* and Cratinos' *Malthakoi*.

²⁶ Ginouvès (1962), 265-282, esp. p. 268. See chapter 6, section 2.2.

²⁷ Kallirrhoe: Thuc. 2.15.5; Hesychius and Suda s.v. λουτροφόρος. Ismenos: Eur., *Phoen.* 347-8.

²⁸ Ceremony in Argolid: Eur., *IT* 818. Other possible examples: Kissoessa in Boiotia (see chapter 3, section 8.1), Peirene in Corinth (see chapter 4, section 2.2) and Canathos in Argolid (see chapter 5, section 9).

²⁹ See Cole (2001), 27-29; Ginouvès (1962), 295-296, 421-422; Larson (2007), 64-66. The rivers and springs were nourishing deities, protectors of a community's survival and growth through its children and agriculture. This thematic of reaffirmation of belonging to a land is present in contexts other than the wedding bath, in the sanctuaries and rituals of kouroutrophic river-gods and nymphs (e.g. Kephisos

extent of these spots' area of influence must have been relatively well defined in the ancient mental landscape. No-one would have envisaged the performance of the ceremony with water from the incorrect source or from outside the community's territory.³⁰

Sanctuaries blessed with healing or prophetic waters also had their own area of influence from which their pool of worshippers originated, but the size and permanence of these areas were the result of different factors. Some of them were, and remained throughout their history, local sanctuaries catering for the population living in the immediate surroundings. Others, at the other end of the spectrum, were very large establishments that attracted pilgrims from most parts of the Hellenised world and, later, the Roman Empire.³¹ The success of the healing sanctuaries of Asklepios, for example, was illustrated as much by the huge powers of attraction of Epidauros (Cos and Pergamon are other examples outside the geographical limits of this thesis) as by the numerous smaller sanctuaries founded across the cities and countryside.³²

Prophetic sanctuaries where water played a part were in the vast majority of the surveyed cases found in Boiotia, and some of them had existed from early times.³³ Their water resources (generally springs) were important in their prophetic

in Athens, or the baths of civic goddesses such as Hera at Argos and Plataia or Aphrodite Pandemos at Athens). One wonders if the bath given in Athens to the statue of Aphrodite *Pandemos* (of all the people) had used the waters of Kallirrhoe.

³⁰ Such is the grief of Jocasta, lamenting the marriage of her son away from Thebes, and without having used the water of the Ismenos. Eur., *Phoen.* 346-9 and schol. 347.

³¹ Compare for example the sanctuaries of Asklepios at Titane (chapter 4, section 6) and at Epidauros (chapter 5, section 6.2), or the sanctuaries of Amphiaraos at Oropos and Rhamnous (chapter 1, section 2.6).

³² Edelstein & Edelstein (1998), 108-125.

³³ Cult activity at the Ptoion is attested archaeologically from the 8th c. BC. See Ducat (1971), 439; Schachter (1981), 54. Plutarch said that the Apollonian oracle at Tegyra was in function during the Persian wars (*De Def. Or.* 412b-d; *Pelopidas* 286b-c). The sanctuary of Trophonios was already famous in the 5th c. BC at the time of Aristophanes' *Clouds*. See Bonnechère (1998b), 438-439.

process and were given a prominent status, mythically or architecturally.³⁴ In some of them the close connection between water and prophecy is strongly asserted, as in the cases of the 'prophetic well' at Hysiai, or the springs of 'Memory' and 'Oblivion' at the Trophoneion of Lebadeia.³⁵ The possibility that the prophetic function had been associated with the spring or well before the founding of a sanctuary on the same site is a difficult question to answer. The myth of Apollo's installation at Telphusa, where a Nymph had already dwelt, shows parallels with that of Delphi where, for some, Earth (Ge) had previously been giving oracles, and raises the question of Apollo taking over the mantic powers of these sites.³⁶ Such an idea is impossible to generalise to every apollonian *manteia*. It is however interesting to consider the case of Mount Kithaeron, where the nymphs Sphragitidai gave oracles in their cave, but also where the local dwellers were *nympholeptoi*.³⁷ Nympholepsy does not automatically imply the power of prophecy but, in this case, the juxtaposition of both features is quite striking and could suggest that the power to prophesy stems from the place and its water, as personified by the nymphs.³⁸ The prophetic dimension of these sanctuaries was then very probably connected to their own spot and local source of water, which made them a difficult model to export or reproduce at will in other regions.

³⁴ At the Ptoion (see chapter 3, section 5), the architectural efforts in terms of water equipment are important, with a large fountain structure which has two distinct phases of development, as well as the terracotta channel bringing water to the grotto. The prophetic sanctuary of Apollo Ismenion (chapter 3, section 3.2) is linked to water through the epiclesis linking the god to the river, as well as mythically with the union of the god with the nymph Melia who gave birth to Teneros, the first prophet at the Ptoion. The names given to the springs at Tegyra (chapter 3, section 10.3) suggest a strong mythical link with Apollo's birth.

³⁵ Hysiai: Paus. 9.2.1. Lebadeia: Paus. 9.38.8. See more in chapter 3, section 11.1.

³⁶ Apollo succeeding to Ge at Delphi: Aesch., *Eum.* 1-8; Eur., *IT* 1234-1258; Pindar, fr. 55 (Snell-Maehler); Aristonoos, 1.17-24 (Powell); Paus. 10.5.5-6; Diod. 16.26.3. On the antecedence of Ge (Gaia) as the deity worshipped and rendering oracles at Delphi, the debate is still open. See for instance West, M.L., 'Hesiod's Titans', *JHS* 105 (1985), 174-175 for a short summary on the question. See also Larson (2007), 67.

³⁷ Plut., *Aristeides* 11.4-5; Paus. 9.3.9

³⁸ For a definition of nympholepsy see Borgeaud (1988), 105: 'However nympholepsy is not always linked with possession and enthusiasm as a form of inspiration. It can also take the form of a literal rapture'. See also Larson (2001), 11-20; Connor (1988).

This seemed not to have been a problem with healing sanctuaries, in particular those of Asklepios, which grew in popularity from the end of the 5th c. BC and spread throughout the Greek world during the Hellenistic period. Water was an essential feature of these sanctuaries because of their role in the process towards healing. But although some sanctuaries' water resources were eventually known for themselves, the sanctuaries of the healing god did not base their existence on a fixed water resource but rather on a good water supply.³⁹ On the other hand, they were eager to emphasise the sacred nature of at least some of their water, notably by architectural means, as is shown in the cases of fountains recreating cave-like features, examples of which are found at the sanctuaries of Asklepios at Epidauros and Corinth, or even in a real cave as was the case at Athens.⁴⁰

In most cases, the extent of the area of influence of the sanctuaries studied in this thesis had little to do with the water resource alone. Small shrines in which the spring or well was the one and only sacred feature, very much like the one described in Plato's *Phaedrus*, must have dotted the ancient Greek countryside, but most are unknown because of the lack of monumental development, literary testimony and archaeological evidence. In the sites surveyed here, the power of attraction observed is often a result of the source of water being associated with other features such as the presence of an oracular seat, a healing shrine or a specific civic cult. Therefore, factors such as the overall popularity of a cult, the political context, the economic power of the sanctuary or even chance, each one subject to radical changes over time, have combined to influence the sacred 'humid landscape'. The situation, for

³⁹ Water could be and was transported from outside the sanctuaries. The presence of natural sources on site were however preferred when possible. At Epidauros, springs were present at the earlier sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas. At the Asklepieion founded in the plain, the wells did not suffice and water was brought from the springs to the east through an aqueduct (chapter 5, section 6.2). At Titane (chapter 4, section 6), water was also brought from outside.

⁴⁰ See chapter 1, section 1.1.4; 4, section 2.5; 5, section 6.2.

example, of the Amphiaraion of Oropos in a region disputed between Boiotia, Attica and Eretria, gave to the sanctuary a political dimension it would hardly have had otherwise.⁴¹ Similarly, Athena Itonia was worshipped on a federal scale in Boiotia with her sanctuary next to the river Kouarion acting as the seat of the Boeotian confederacy.⁴² The Attic sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia perhaps received the favours of Peisistratos.⁴³ The plague in Athens and parts of Greece in the beginnings of the Peloponnesian wars was a possible catalyst for the foundation of the Athenian Asklepieion.⁴⁴ Afterwards, the growing popularity of the cult encouraged the numerous new foundations throughout the Greek world. Water remained however a distinctive and constitutive feature of most of these sanctuaries.

The presence of sacred water resources as points in space also made possible the establishment of networks, although going so far as to imagine the Greek sacred landscape along the lines of the central place theory developed by Christaller is not defensible.⁴⁵ Even if the Greek sanctuary could pretend to the status of centre inasmuch as it was also a place of economic and political importance, several issues argue against the strict application of Christaller's theory, such as the mountainous physical landscape, the diversity of behaviours and practices from one cult to another, one region to another, one period to another, or the collusion with a more typical and defensible network constituted by the 'urban' centres. Nevertheless, these water resources were part of networks, real and perceived, associating them

⁴¹ The Amphiaraion is described as 'showered (...) with attentions and honours' in Parker (1996), 25. Evergetism remained strong in Hellenistic and Roman times. See Petrakos (1995), 9.

⁴² See chapter 3, n. 9.2.

⁴³ Photios s.v. Brauronia: καὶ ἦν τὸ ἱερόν πρὸς τῷ Ἐρασίῳ ποταμῷ κατασκευασθὲν ὑπὸ Πεισιστράτου. Osborne (1994), 151-152, n. 15; Parker (1996), 97; Ekroth (2003), 112, n. 260; Lavelle (2005), 22-23.

⁴⁴ Tomlinson (1983), 24; Parker (1996), 180; Edelstein & Edelstein (1998), 120-121.

⁴⁵ Walter Christaller's theory, elaborated in 1933, is an attempt to rationalise and explain the spatial organisation and hierarchy of human settlements, placing them at regular intervals and at distances which allow profitable economical relationships through transport and administrative control. Its rigidity has been widely criticised, but its ideas have been inspiring for some historians. See for example Kosso (1995).

with each other and possibly also creating hierarchies. For instance, the Ilissos, the Rheitoi and the wells at the sanctuary of Eleusis are different sacred spots all associated with the Mystery cult of Demeter, Kore and Iakkhos. These water sources became geographical markers for different stages in the initiation, as well as being individual spots with a distinctive sacred potency.⁴⁶ One example of a hierarchy between 'watery' spots is found amongst the sanctuaries dedicated to Apollo. The sanctuaries of Apollo Telphusaion in Boiotia and Apollo Deiradiotes at Argos are both linked to the illustrious sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. In the case of Telphusa, the sanctuary's foundation myth echoes the idea that it shows, if not submission, at least a status of affiliation to Delphi.⁴⁷ In Argos, the sanctuary of Apollo Deiradiotes was said, by the time of Pausanias and possibly earlier, to have been founded by Pythios, son of Apollo, who came from Delphi.⁴⁸ The reference to the Delphic oracle is explicit, and places the sanctuary in the cultural and cultic orbit of Delphi. It does not necessarily mean that Delphi ever had a direct control over these sanctuaries, but that at some point they recognised Delphi's antecedence, or attempted to gain protection and/or higher status in doing so.

The most obvious expression of this sacred network is the ancient practice of the procession.⁴⁹ Water sources could be the end destination of processions, as well as a stage in their course. In wedding rituals, the ceremonial bath taken by the bride and groom implied the prior procession to the customary source of water and, interestingly, it is the procession rather than the actual collection of water that is

⁴⁶ See chapter 1, sections 1.3.2 and 2.8.

⁴⁷ See chapter 3, section 8.2. The status of the sanctuary at Telphusa as a possible *mantion* is unclear and archaeology has not settled the question. The myth suggests Apollo desired it to be before he founded Delphi.

⁴⁸ See chapter 5, section 4.5. Paus. 2.24.1.

⁴⁹ Bruit Zaidman & Schmitt Pantel (1989), 77: 'Quelles sont les fonctions du rituel de procession? (...) Une réaffirmation du caractère sacré des différents lieux où la foule fait halte (autels en particulier) et, d'une manière générale, une réappropriation symbolique de l'espace de la cité par la communauté'.

painted on a series of figured vases.⁵⁰ Processions to and/or from rivers are in a way more problematic since a point along their course had to be chosen as a destination. It is unlikely that any spot would do. Among the sites studied here, the cases of procession to rivers generally lack precision concerning the exact location; the young Sikyonians went ‘to the river Sythas’ (ἐπὶ τὸν Σύθαν ποταμὸν), the Plataeans went first to the Asopos (τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα κομίσαντες παρὰ τὸν Ἀσωπὸν) on their way to the summit of the Kithaeron, and the Argives brought the statue of Athena to the river Inachos, again at an undetermined spot.⁵¹ It is possible that such a spot had been marked by a recognisable monument, similar to the altar of Boreas next to the Ilissos, but it was not always necessary with the strength of customs.⁵² The reason behind the choice of one spot over another is not particularly clear either, but it must have been related to required qualities. If Hesiod, for example, recommended avoiding urinating in a river at its source or its mouth, it was for symbolical reasons, clear at least to him and his audience, and cannot have meant its entire course, attributing to these parts of the river some kind of pre-eminence.⁵³ In the context of processions, the spot was also presumably at the connection of the river with a road or a path, but assessing which was at the origin of the other – either crossing or sacred spot – is impossible.

⁵⁰ For representation of processions with a loutrophoros see Ginouvès (1962), 268-272. Distinguishing between the procession to the spring and the one to the bride’s new home is however a difficult task. See also Tölle-Kastenbein (1986), 66-73 for the corpus of vases figuring fountains.

⁵¹ Paus. 2.7.8; 9.3.7; Callim., *Hymn.* 5.43-54.

⁵² As the example of Oedipus at Colonus shows, local knowledge of sacred spaces was sufficient to impose prohibitions. Soph., *OC* 16-18, 36-37.

⁵³ Hes., *Op.* 757-758: μηδὲ ποτ' ἐν προχοῆς ποταμῶν ἄλαδε προρεόντων
μηδ' ἐπὶ κρηναίων οὐρεῖν, μάλα δ' ἐξάλεασθαι

This concurs with Fontenrose’s remarks in his review of W. Bühler, *Die Europa des Moschos: Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (1960) in *AJPh*, 83 (1962), pp. 305-306: ‘He (Bühler) believes that προχοαί may refer to any part of the course. (...) Although *prochoai* may mean a spring, as an outgushing of water, or a pouring forth of liquid from a pitcher, there is no good evidence that it may signify a stream’s central course’. West’s translation (Oxford: OUP, 1988) is therefore misleading: ‘And never urinate in the waters of rivers that flow to the sea, or at springs (...)’

2.2. Water as a frontier

Water can create natural limits within the landscape. Rivers in particular, and also lakes, produce lines across the territory which can be difficult to cross. In religious terms however, the vision of water landmarks as borders in the landscape imply the idea of division between different spaces, a here and a beyond, an inside and an outside, which can in turn correspond to several sacred concepts.

2.2.1. Between sacred and profane spaces

The use of water as a purification device at the entrance of sanctuaries, as seen in the previous chapter, enhances the spatial dichotomy between spaces outside and inside sacred grounds.⁵⁴ This is obvious when a water source, the provider of purity, is located at the entrance of the sanctuary; a well is situated directly after the propylon at the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros, and the spring Klepsydra is on the processional way almost immediately before the entrance to the Acropolis.⁵⁵ An even more substantial example is at the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron where the small stream flowing from the sacred spring had to be crossed at the entrance. The crossing was facilitated by a low stone bridge which, in a way, monumentalised all the more the boundary created by the stream.⁵⁶ The divisions between sacred and secular grounds were very serious ones in the ancient Greek mind, but the barrier was generally immaterial, with walls present in only a fraction of sanctuaries.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁴ See chapter 6, section 2.1. Parker (1983), 18-20, 23: 'Purification, therefore, marks off sacred places from profane, creates special occasions, and unites individuals into groups'.

⁵⁵ Well at Epidauros: see figs. 6.2. Tomlinson (1983), 46. Klepsydra: See chapter 1, section 1.1.3; *Ar., Lys.* 912-913.

⁵⁶ See chapter 1, section 2.5.

⁵⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood (1993), 10.

presence of a water source at the entrance of a sanctuary was therefore a material way of marking the divide, emphasising the necessity of purification.

This use of water at the entrance of sanctuaries is clearly not limited to those with an adequately located source of water; perirrhanteria or fountains have been largely used to this effect.⁵⁸ But whereas springs and rivers belong to the natural settings and therefore are particularly close to the gods, even if monumental elements were added to them, perirrhanteria and fountains are explicitly human constructions. These human constructions sometimes tried to recreate a certain amount of 'natural' qualities, either to recall the water's natural origins when built over a water source, or occasionally to create 'naturalness' where there is only human intervention. The Klepsydra in Athens was a fountain house built over a spring, and respected the natural setting of the spring to a high degree and maintained it underground.⁵⁹ At the sanctuary of Asklepios in Corinth, on the other hand, a basin was built at the entrance of the sanctuary, and a monumental fountain-house was built at the entrance of the ramp leading down to the complex of Lerna. Both fountain and basin certainly did not appear natural, but they provided water in a monumental way which effectively created an invisible frontier.⁶⁰ The case of the sanctuary of the sacred spring at Corinth is not as clear-cut. The channel hidden behind a metope at the entrance of the sanctuary has been variously interpreted. Its peculiar arrangement suggests some ritual purpose, possibly in connection with a mystery cult. But certainly the suppositions, defended by some, of a trick performed by priests to fake a Dionysian

⁵⁸ See Cole (2004), 43-47. See also the case of the private house where, when a death occurred, a pot of water was displayed outside during the *prothesis* to allow visitors to purify themselves when they arrived and left, as well as simply to signal the presence of death; Parker (1983), 35 and n. 10.

⁵⁹ Parsons (1943), 211-212. See chapter 1, section 1.13.

⁶⁰ See chapter 4, section 2.5. Bibliography for the fountain-house: see Landon (2003), 60.

miracle, or of a device providing oracles, are both too far-fetched.⁶¹ Considering the channel's position immediately at the entrance of the sanctuary, a means of purification could be a more plausible explanation. If this hypothesis is right, then this 'human' source of water would have appeared to flow from the wall, in a manner very similar to the Corinthian springs which were flowing from cliff edges.⁶²

2.2.2. Between the wild and the civilised

Water did not only represent a limit between the pure and the impure, but also between the wild and the civilised. The case of Artemis is the archetypical example of this framework applied to the sacred landscape, in particular in the structuralist interpretation of Greek religion. Artemis was the hunting goddess of the wild and a protector of birth and children, in particular young girls. The structuralist approach emphasised the idea that she was a goddess of the untamed, from the wild animals to children yet to become adults. This was thought to be reflected in the location of her most famous sanctuaries; at the margins, at the limits between civilised agricultural lands and wild expanses, and the term *liminal* was attributed to her religious personality.⁶³ This idea is somewhat reflected in the relations of some of her sanctuaries with water. Brauron and Aulis are both located very near the sea coast, next to a spring of fresh water, and this juxtaposition of two antagonistic types of water is typical of her position at the turning point between two opposites.⁶⁴ The visitor approaching Brauron 'by land or sea, had to cross a **boundary** between water

⁶¹ For the site see chapter 4, section 2.1. On a Dionysian miracle: see Bonner (1929); on a *manteion*, see Elderkin (1941).

⁶² On the particularities of the springs at Corinth, see Landon (2003), 44-45.

⁶³ See Dowden (2007), 51-52, the chapter on Artemis in Vernant (1991), 195-206; or Vernant (1990), 137-207. See also the chapter on 'landscapes of Artemis' in Cole (2004), esp. p. 181.

⁶⁴ Brauron: see chapter 1, section 2.5. Aulis: see chapter 3, section 4.1.

and land'.⁶⁵ In a similar way, the procession in honour of Apollo and Artemis conducted by fourteen boys and girls to the river Sythas from Sikyon was linking the centre of the polis with its western border materialised by the river, as well as involving men and women to be.⁶⁶ In myth and cult, the goddess presided over the *entre-deux*, the transitional zones and times, which is why she was particularly worshipped as protector of adolescence, a time between the clearer ages of childhood and adulthood. The rituals incorporating the segregation of groups of young people from society reflect this power and water seems, at least from these examples taken in the preceding surveys, to have added to their overall significance.⁶⁷

Other deities also represent the wild side of water, although in a less bipolar manner. Nymphs are particularly associated with sources of water, wells, springs and rivers.⁶⁸ They belong to a natural world which was not the opposite of the human civilisation *per se*, but which was distinct and older, to the world that had been inhabited by the gods first.⁶⁹ The wild/civilized boundary represented by the nymphs is in a way more tenuous, and less rigid than that represented by Artemis. Virtually every single spring was inhabited by a nymph and therefore appeared within urban contexts too. In the case of the Klepsydra/Empedo, the natural appearance was preserved to a certain extent, as at the fountain Peirene at Corinth.⁷⁰ In the countryside, one expects this distinction to be more clear-cut, but it is not entirely true; at Kyrtones in Boiotia, the Nymphs sanctuary was said by Pausanias to include

⁶⁵ Cole (2004), 192-193 (emphasis added).

⁶⁶ See chapter 4, section 5.2.

⁶⁷ The notion of segregation is largely borrowed from Van Gennep's work. A traditional example of a segregation ritual taken from outside our geographical limits is that of the sanctuary of Artemis on borderland between Laconia and Messenia where young *parthenoi* came to sacrifice. Paus. 3.2.6, 4.4.3; Str. 6.3.3, 8.4.9. See Calame (2001), 142-149; Cole (2004), 180.

⁶⁸ See Larson (2001), 8-11; Larson (2007), 61-63.

⁶⁹ Cole (2004), 37.

⁷⁰ See chapter 1, section 1.1.3 and chapter 4, section 2.2. These fountains did not appear 'natural', they were not meant to hide human construction, but the natural presence of rock and water was preserved so as to clearly state the origin of their water.

a grove of ‘cultivated trees’ (ἡμερα δὲ ὁμοίως πάντα ἐν τῷ ἄλσει δένδρα), and Archedemos at Vari tendered gardens for them.⁷¹ The nymphs, there again, seem to be at the edge between two different worlds. They are thought to relish the wilderness, to bathe in springs and streams with Artemis, to abduct unsuspected humans; but they also have ‘gardens’ cultivated for them, protect the young humans and their growth, as well as pastoral activity.⁷²

A usual companion of the nymphs and particularly revered by herdsmen, the god Pan is another deity connected to the wild.⁷³ His sites included in the surveys are however only found in Attica where his worshippers are, in Osborne’s words, ‘prosperous citizens’.⁷⁴ Because Arcadia, home of the god, is not surveyed here the scope of the following conclusions is limited. In terms of landmarks, he is here more at home with caves than with water, but he is also very strongly associated with the nymphs in Attica where many sculpted reliefs show him playing music to the female deities dancing alone or accompanied by Hermes.⁷⁵ Some of his caves have springs, and Pausanias mentioned baths at the cave of Oinoe.⁷⁶ The possibility of these springs seen as forming borders or frontiers derives mainly from their location in the hills near caves and the personality of the god. The testimony left by the nympholept Archedemos, who lived in and maintained the cave at Vari, is also striking of a situation at the margins of human society, not only in terms of location but also of behaviour.

⁷¹ See chapters 3, section 10.2 and 1, section 2.3.1.

⁷² On the intermediate status of nymphs and their ‘gardens’, see Larson (2007), 58-60. The *wilderness* is a contested term for the land which was not agricultural in ancient Greece, because it does not mean they were not productive. For these lands as essential part of ancient Greek society see Forbes (1996), 68-97.

⁷³ Borgeaud (1988), 52, 77, 139; Larson (2007), 63-64.

⁷⁴ Osborne (1987), 192.

⁷⁵ On the attic votive reliefs of the nymphs and Pan, see Larson (2001), 258-267, esp. p. 266.

⁷⁶ Paus. 1.32.7. See chapter 1, section 2.3.2.

Rivers are perhaps the clearest embodiment of a liquid frontier. River gods are, like the nymphs, concerned with the protection of a community's fertility and prosperity and, in a ceremony which appears to have been widespread throughout the Greek world, young men and women dedicated a lock of hair to their local river god when about to leave the wild childhood for civilized adulthood.⁷⁷ There again water appeared as a symbolic frontier between the two worlds. But it is perhaps as a frontier between the living and the dead that water is better known.

2.2.3. Between the living and the dead

In myths related to the descent to the underworld after death, water played a dramatic part which became such an integral part of western culture that it still survives after two millennia of Christianity.⁷⁸ The figure of Charon the ferryman is indeed as striking as it is enduring. The particulars of Hades' geography vary through time and from region to region, but the constant is the presence of water, under one form or another, as a last limit between the worlds of the dead and of the living. This role is alternatively played by the river Styx, the river Acheron or the Acherusian Lake. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses is told by Circe to sail until he reaches Hades at the place where four rivers, the Acheron, the Cocytus, the Styx and the Pyriphlegethon meet, but only after he has crossed the Oceanos, the mythical ur-river.⁷⁹

Amongst the sites studied here, several explicitly incorporated water landmarks believed to be boundaries beyond which lays the world of the dead. The

⁷⁷ Larson (2007), 64. Hom., *Il.* 23.142-153; Paus. 1.37.3, 8.20.2; Nonnus, *Dion.*, 3.345; 47.490.

⁷⁸ See for example Dante, *Inferno* 3.79-81: 'Allor con li occhi vergognosi e bassi, temendo no 'l mio dir li fosse grave, infino al fiume del parlar mi trassi'. It is also true that the water barrier between the living and the dead exist in non-western cultures. See Edmonds (2004), 125, n. 34. For an ethnological study of the ferryman in several cultures see for example L. V. Grinsell, 'The Ferryman and His Fee: A Study in Ethnology, Archaeology, and Tradition', *Folklore* 68 (1957), 257-269.

⁷⁹ Hom., *Od.* 10.508-515, 11.13-19.

clearest case is that of Lake Lerna where the god Dionysos was killed by being thrown by Perseus in it, or alternatively descended into the underworld through it.⁸⁰ In Argolid again, the city of Hermione had a lake called Acherusian, a homonym of the one said to be in the underworld. What is more, the area was infamous for being a short-cut to Hades.⁸¹ At other sites, water's connection with the underworld is not as obvious. Near Eleusis, Pausanias saw a place where people located Kore's abduction by Hades, 'by the side of' (παρ' αὐτῶ) the river Kephisos.⁸² At Athens, the sanctuary of Dionysos in the marshes poses problems because it has not been found and studied. Therefore the only hint at a position in a marshy area is its name, and possibly Aristophanes' play of the *Frogs*. In this play the god descended into the world of the dead, leaving from Athens and reaching immediately the marshy lake he has to cross. This topography was tentatively associated with his temple at Athens but this vision is strongly disputed.⁸³

2.3. Water as a passage

Directly deriving from the idea that water could create limits and boundaries is the notion of water also being a passage, a gateway. This is particularly true for the type of border envisaged above, where lakes, marshes, rivers created the frontiers between the worlds of the living and of the dead, but also constituted the passage through which the departed had to travel. It is mainly a question of approach and context. Rivers taken transversely are borders, which can however be crossed in the right

⁸⁰ See chapter 5, section 10.

⁸¹ Strabo 8.6.12: παρ' Ἑρμιονεῦσι δὲ τεβρῶληται τὴν εἰς Ἄιδου κατάβασιν σύντομον εἶναι. See chapter 5, section 8.

⁸² Paus. 1.38.5.

⁸³ The article by Hooker (1960) places the crossing of the lake at the temple ἐν λίμναις, but was rejected by Edmonds (2004), 122, n. 27 as 'strained' and by Parker (2005), 290 n. 3 as 'forced'.

conditions; considered along their course, rivers are paths used for travelling short and long distances.⁸⁴

From this point of view, the landmarks are more active, creating movement between two different planes rather than just separation and tension. The Rheitoi, on the sacred way from Athens to Eleusis, marked a sacred frontier between both territories. A bridge was built in 421 BC to accommodate the crossing, but with specific conditions; the bridge had to be five feet wide so as to prevent wagons from passing but to allow passage to those going on foot to the sanctuary.⁸⁵ This bridge therefore was intended as a means to segregate the passage, and thus highlights both spatial aspects of the Rheitoi, the obstacle and the passageway.

The examples of sites being frontiers between the worlds of the dead and of the living in the previous section illustrate especially well this ambivalence. Here again the site at Lerna is the most striking. The lake was described materially as a gate to the underworld, being narrow but bottomless.⁸⁶ One of the myths associating Dionysos with the lake tells of the god using it as a way to reach Hades and bring back his mother Semele, inducing the possibility of communicating in both directions. This is illustrated further by the ritual, described by Plutarch, where worshippers call the god out of the depths of the lake after having sacrificed a lamb to the 'Keeper of the Gate'.⁸⁷ At the Amphiareion of Oropos the sacred spring was where the hero Amphiaraos came back to the surface of the earth, after having disappeared in its depths.⁸⁸ One of the candidate sites for the latter event was said by

⁸⁴ See for instance Breuillot (1985), 793-794, or in a more casual way in Pl., *Phaedr.* 229a.

⁸⁵ *IG I³* 79.11-14: πλάτος δὲ ποιόντων [π]εντέποδα, ἵνα μὲν ἡμάχῃσι διελαύνονται ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἰσοῖν εἰ βαδίζεν ἐπὶ τὰ ἱερά. Paus. 1.38.1.

⁸⁶ See chapter 5, section 10.

⁸⁷ Dionysos going to Hades: Paus. 2.37.5-6; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.34; Hyginus, *Astronomica* 2.5. Keeper of the gate: Plut., *De Is. et Os.*, 35.

⁸⁸ Paus. 1.34.4.

Pausanias to be along the way along the river Ismenos from Potniai to Thebes.⁸⁹ Water is seen here as communicating with the underworld, which is possibly derived from the belief that water flowed in underground streams, all originating from Oceanos.⁹⁰ In the case of Lerna, the lake was a water landmark as well as an abyss, both features seeming to reinforce each other.⁹¹ Interestingly, this status of gateway given to these spots tends sometimes to blur the division between both worlds. The landscape around the Alcyonian Lake at Lerna is somewhat reminiscent of that found in Hades, with a grove (of plane trees), springs, and a lake with, on its banks, grass and rushes.⁹² At Lebadeia, the river Herkyna flows through an impressive gorge, and forms the boundary between the city and the sanctuary so that one had to cross it to reach the oracle.⁹³ During the oracular process and before the descent into a chasm, the worshipper has to bathe in the river, wear white linen and drink at two springs, one of memory and one of forgetfulness. These procedures have similar characteristics to what was thought to happen in the underworld.⁹⁴

To these examples one might possibly add the mythical death in springs and lakes. The story of Dirke, for example, killed by Amphion and Zetos and then thrown in the spring sounds strange.⁹⁵ Why throw the body in the stream? It is possibly a simple case of eponymy, but maybe the tale of Dirke's death, for which the earliest source is Euripides and which developed in Hellenistic times onwards, is corrupted

⁸⁹ Paus. 9.8.3. Another was on the road from Thebes to Chalcis at the place called Harma (the chariot): Paus. 1.34.2.

⁹⁰ Hom., *Il.* 21.195-197; Hes., *Theog.* 337-370; Orphic hymn 83 (to Oceanos).

⁹¹ The gateway to the underworld was not always a lake. It was more often cave, a cleft, or a chasm. See for example the hole at Hermione (Paus. 2.35.10) or the sanctuary of Poseidon at Tainaron. For the latter, Ogden lists the references which describes it at a gate to the underworld; see Ogden (2001), 34 n. 17.

⁹² Paus. 2.37.5-6.

⁹³ See chapter 3, section 11.1. Paus. 9.39.5, 9.39.7-12. At the sanctuary of Olympia, women crossing the river on days prohibited to them a cast off a cliff of Mount Tropaion; Paus. 5.6.7.

⁹⁴ See Cole (2003), 208-210, 213; Edmonds (2004), 49-55, 61-63.

⁹⁵ See chapter 3, n. 3.1.1. In the earliest version of her death (Eur., *Antiope* fr. 223.109-14), her body is burnt and her ashes are buried next to the spring of Ares which is renamed after her.

and Dirke had been originally killed by being thrown in the spring as Dionysos had been in the lake at Lerna. Or maybe she was thrown in because this was the shortest way to the underworld. The case is not unique; in Attica the spring Makaria was said by Pausanias to be named after the daughter of Herakles who killed herself to save Athens.⁹⁶ The way she died is not mentioned but the spring itself seems a possibility. Interestingly, in the Suda, Makaria is also daughter of Hades and the expression ‘go to blessedness (Makaria)’ is said to mean ‘go to death’.⁹⁷ It is however dangerous to over-generalise the idea. At Corinth the name Glauke was given to a fountain in which Pausanias tells us that the eponymous princess had thrown herself. The fountain, however, is not built over a natural spring.⁹⁸ More usually, deaths by drowning in springs are considered to be abductions by the nymphs.⁹⁹

So far water has been viewed as a passage for individuals, whether humans, heroes or deities. But water could as much, if not more readily, be seen as a passage for specific powers. In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Socrates claims he might be inspired (lit. be a nympholept) by the place which has something divine (τῶ ὄντι γὰρ θεῖος ἔοικεν ὁ τόπος εἶναι), that the nymphs will possess him (ἄρ’ οἴσθ’ ὅτι ὑπὸ τῶν Νυμφῶν). Later on, he describes a good speech as ‘fresh water’ (ποτίμω λόγῳ).¹⁰⁰ But Socrates did not drink from the stream, he just sat by it.¹⁰¹ At the Asklepieion of Epidauros, the *abaton*, where the sick slept to be visited by the god, was built so as to have water flowing in the back wall. This water spouted from a dish in the hand of a bronze statue of the god; the message intended, that water and its powers were a gift

⁹⁶ Paus. 1.32.6.

⁹⁷ Suda, s.v. Μακαρία and s.v. Βάλλ’ ἐς Μακαρίαν.

⁹⁸ See chapter 4, section 2.4.

⁹⁹ Larson (2001), 66: ‘Drowning in a river or spring is another example (of death as a kind of selection by the gods), attributable to the nymphs as water deities’.

¹⁰⁰ Pl. *Phdr.* 238c-d, 241e, 243d.

¹⁰¹ The idea is not foreign to Plutarch who wrote, in his *de defectu oraculorum*, 432d-e: ‘Moreover the earth sends forth for men streams of many other potencies (...). But the prophetic current and breath is most divine and holy, whether it issue by itself through the air or come in the company of running waters’.

from the god, cannot be clearer.¹⁰² At the vale of the Muses in Boiotia, springs and rivers were the haunts of the goddesses who inspired poets. Pindar also gave the Muses' inspiring power the value of oracles.¹⁰³ At the Amphiareion at Oropos where the sick also received dreams from the gods, a river flowed right across the sanctuary.¹⁰⁴ These types of 'inspiration' are substantially different from others where water is drunk, or gazed in. Here it is only its sheer presence which is potent. One may suggest that the fact that water is, in these cases, flowing and not stagnant is a relevant issue, or even a fundamental one.¹⁰⁵ One etymological theory made the *muse* a name of Semitic origin meaning the 'spring', both in its idea of movement and of water. This etymology makes the Muses goddesses of inspiration and of water.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the Muses are regularly compared to or assimilated with nymphs.¹⁰⁷ In the case of the gods Asklepios and Amphiaraos, their power was chiefly dreams and oracles, and water could have been the channel for the inspiration they bestowed.¹⁰⁸ Finally, at the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoieus in Boiotia, where so little is known of the oracular process, the existence of a grotto behind the temple

¹⁰² Epidauros: see chapter 5, section 6.2. In Athens, the sacred spring is directly behind the stoa thought to be the *abaton*; meanwhile at Corinth the *abaton* is in the immediate proximity of the springs, with a small room opening right above one of them; see chapters 1, section 1.1.4 and 4, section 2.5.

¹⁰³ On the Muses being associated with other female collectives concerned with growth and nature, including the nymphs, see P. Murray, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Muse?', *Métis* (forthcoming). Vale of the Muse: see chapter 3, section 6.1. Inspiration: Pindar, fr. 150 Maehler: μαντεύο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ' ἐγώ. Muses as nymphs: Larson (2001), 7-8, 303 n. 38. Inspiration as oracle/possession: see Plato, *Leg.* 119c: '(...) whenever a poet is seated on the Muses' tripod, he is not in his senses, but resembles a fountain, which gives free course to the upward rush of water (...) (trans. R.G. Bury). There is a difference between the Platonic conception of poetry as possession and Pindar where the poet is the interpreter. On the idea that the poetic inspiration seen as an ecstatic madness is not older than the 5th c. BC, see Murray (1981), 87-88.

¹⁰⁴ See chapter 1, section 2.6.1. All the sacred buildings were on one side of the river, with hostels and a water-clock on the other. Maybe the river also acted as frontier between sacred and profane grounds. For rivers as frontiers see above and also Paus. 9.39.2 where the river Herkyna marks the frontier between Lebadeia and the *alsos* of Trophonios.

¹⁰⁵ On the notion that flowing water is best, see Hellmann (1994), 274. Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 41e.

¹⁰⁶ See Camilloni (1998), 25-38, esp. pp. 36-38.

¹⁰⁷ Larson (2001), 200, 223-224, 303 n. 38; Camilloni (1998), 25: 'Analogie di nomi o di funzioni tra le Ninfe dell'elemento liquido e le Muse emergono da qualche testo (...)'.
¹⁰⁸ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3.3; Paus. 1.34.5.

with, on its bottom wall, a terracotta channel bringing flowing water, cannot fail to suggest a role for water to play in a prophetic contact with the chthonic world.¹⁰⁹

The preceding section about water as a frontier described how water could mark a boundary between times in life. Here again, it could also act as passage between two different times in the year, different seasons or different ages of human life. After all, rivers and springs follow the seasons, with their hydrologic regime changing during the year, especially in a Mediterranean country such as Greece which has very marked dry and humid periods.¹¹⁰ The bath of statues in a specific river or spring was, in most of the cases surveyed, an annual event. Such were the baths of Athena at Argos or Athens, the bath of Hera at Canathos, or possibly Aphrodite and Peitho at Athens.¹¹¹ But other rhythms, sometimes very complex ones, also existed, such as that of the great Daidala at Plataia.¹¹² Because these ceremonies were attached to a specific source of water, this source became the spatial marker of a passage through time, in a way very similar to the way today's New Year celebrations are strongly connected to specific places: Big Ben, Times Square, the Eiffel Tower or the Puerta del Sol. In the ancient Greek case, those baths celebrated the completion of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. Just as the goddesses regenerated their powers and, like Hera at Canathos, regained their virginity, and hence their full generative powers, so did the communities these goddesses protected.¹¹³ These sites were not sources of water by chance. In the agro-pastoral context of ancient Greek society, human, animal and vegetative fertility was extremely important since it represented the survival of the community. Besides,

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 3, section 5 and fig. 41.

¹¹⁰ Argoud (1987), 25-28.

¹¹¹ See chapter 1, section 1.1.3; chapter 5, sections 4.4, 9.

¹¹² See chapter 3, section 1.3.

¹¹³ Parker casts doubts over an agricultural interpretation of the bathing festivals, and suggests instead the possibility of the rituals being aligned with the agricultural calendar and an emotional function: Parker (1983), 29.

those springs and rivers were the humid embodiments of the ancestral claim on the land.¹¹⁴ In this context, the performance of such a cult was highly political, as it implied claims over a certain territory. For example, it is not very clear at which point of the river Inachos the bath of the statue of Athena was performed by the Argives, although one would suspect it was at the junction of the river with the sacred way to the Heraion. Not only the way was already sacred, but it allowed the Argives to express an ancestral attachment to the agricultural plain in full view of Mycenae and Tiryns, rivals of Argos.¹¹⁵

The bath given to Apollo and Artemis at Sikyon refers to a different type of temporal change. In this case, the transition is made between different human ages. The temporary exclusion of individuals representing an age group (here seven girls and seven boys) as an initiation ritual, with the three phases of separation, transformation and re-integration is well known, documented and criticised.¹¹⁶ This type of ritual can be found in many different places; at the Artemision of Brauron, at the Heraion of Perachora or on the Athenian Acropolis with the little Arrhephoroi. Several interpretations have been given to explain the precise signification of these rituals, but they share an allusion to the insertion of the community in time and space, attaching it to a land with surface and boundaries, and connecting it to its past while ensuring its perpetuation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ See chapter 1, section 1.2.1, n. 72. See also chapter 6, section 1.2.

¹¹⁵ On Argive politics, the sanctuary of Hera and the processional way, see de Polignac (1995), 55-56 and Antonaccio (1994), 93-96. In more general terms, see de Polignac (1995), 59.

¹¹⁶ Sikyon: see chapter 4, section 5.2. Initiation: see Van Gennep's book *Les rites de passage* (1909). It particularly influenced the structuralist movement.

¹¹⁷ The insertion of a community in time is suggested by the fact these rituals involve age-groups, concerning only one fraction of society at a given time, but the whole of the society over time. Davidson (2006), 34-35: '« rites of passage » in a structured age-class system, in which the initiation of one group precipitates the promotion of all, are different from those in less comprehensively structured systems (...)'. The segregation of a portion of the population at the borders of the community's territory was also a way to assert the whole community's claim over the land. Cole (2004), 228: 'The females who danced for Artemis at the borders of the *polis* danced for the entire community. (...) Processions and festivals that linked border territories with the heart of the city

From one type of transformation by water to another, the last instance in which water landmarks could represent or generate passageways is found in the initiatory context. At the lesser mysteries, rituals were performed on the banks of the Ilissos at Athens. Unsurprisingly for a mystery cult, we do not know the particulars of what actually happened. But considering that the cult is a preparation for the Eleusinian mysteries, as well as its foundation myth seeing Herakles' purification for murder (or naturalisation) as starting point, the inclusion of the river in the rituals appears only natural.¹¹⁸ Beyond the basics of purificatory routine, however, the river could mark the beginning of a long process which will eventually bring the initiands to the telesterion at Eleusis. The story about Herakles undergoing a naturalisation ritual by Theseus is an interesting one, since it makes of the Ilissos the location (or the means) of Herakles' transformation into an Athenian.¹¹⁹ The crossing of rivers during the procession to Eleusis constituted significant points along the way. At the Kephisos near Athens mockery and jibes awaited the procession. Further on, the bridge at the Rheitoi had to be crossed on foot. In the end, the Kallichoron well at the entrance of the sanctuary at Eleusis marked the very last stop before the initiation.¹²⁰ On a smaller scale, the oracular sanctuary of Trophonios had a complex of rituals similar in form if not in function with an initiation. During the preparatory period baths in the river took a substantial place. Finally, as seen above, the river and the springs of Lethe and Mnemosyne were important stages on the day of the oracular consultation.¹²¹

expressed the confidence and the security of a community safe from incursion and confident in its own future'.

¹¹⁸ See chapter 1, section 1.3.2.

¹¹⁹ See chapter 1, section xxx for the sanctuary of Herakles at, or near, the gymnasium of Kynosarges on the banks of the Ilissos, and reserved for non-citizens.

¹²⁰ Bridge at Kephisos: Strabo 9.1.24; Parker (2005), 350 and n. 96. For the Rheitoi see above n. 85. For the procession and the well Kallichoron, see chapter 1, section 2.8.

¹²¹ For the rituals at Lebadeia as initiation, see Bonnechère (1998b), 438-439.

3. Water resources as spatial objects in sanctuaries

As explored above, water resources were recognizable landmarks in the sacred landscape of ancient Greece. But they also were spatial entities on the smaller scale of the sanctuary itself, in the context of which they did not always hold the same place within the local sacred systems. Some were more prominent while others were in the background. But before examining these various places given to water resources in sanctuaries and sacred places, one has to consider how they can be assessed.

3.1. Evidence of the sacredness of water landmarks

A water landmark's status can be detected in different ways; first by the presence of votive deposits found next to or in the water source. At the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia, for instance, offerings made at the spring are amongst the earliest recorded there, and the practice of deposition on this spot was continued at least until the end of the 5th c. BC.¹²² Without these, the sacredness of the spring would have been ignored because of its absence of monumentalisation, its position at the periphery of the 5th and 4th c. BC architectural developments, and the inexistence of literary sources mentioning it. At Argos, an inscribed bronze bowl was found in a well identifying the river god Erasinus as at least one (if not the only) deity to which the site was consecrated.¹²³ This kind of ritual practice underpins the holiness of the water resource since the choice of the location of such depositions was never done at random. Thankfully the literary sources come in support of the idea and provide

¹²² See chapter 1, section xxx. Ekroth (2003), 80-81, 103, 105, 110 and figs. 6-9.

¹²³ See chapter 5, section 4.3.

several more examples at other sites. At a spring (the Kyllou Pera?) visited by Socrates and Phaedrus, statues and statuettes of the nymphs and Achelooos allowed the philosopher to know for whom the spring is sacred.¹²⁴ Interestingly, this observation comes only as a final confirmation of a feeling he had while describing the natural setting of the spot. At the Amphiareion of Oropos, Pausanias describes how the cured had to throw coins of gold or silver in the sacred spring, giving another testimony of a practice which asserted a source of water's sacredness.¹²⁵

Literary sources are irreplaceable when it comes to our knowledge of undiscovered sanctuaries, and on the subject of ritual practices they are sometimes the only testimony that has survived. Pausanias is our major source, but while he is very reliable on the ruins and monuments he saw, he cannot escape from being a traveller in 2nd C. AD Greece, a time far removed from the Archaic and Classical periods. Caution is therefore necessary, although his conclusions have the advantage of being made on direct observation and/or taken from people for whom those rituals and myths were considerably closer to their own world than to ours. Pausanias however is one source available out of many more and the immense dramatic, poetic and philosophical corpus is full of references to water landmarks otherwise unknown.

On the sanctuary of Apollo at Hysiai in Boiotia, for example, we learn from Pausanias that the well was sacred and its water was drunk in order to 'obtain' oracles.¹²⁶ In Argolid, near Nauplion, the spring Canathos was sacred to Hera who, every year, recovered her virginity in its waters.¹²⁷ The springs Kissoessa and Telpusa are Boeotian springs that are not located with certainty but whose sacred

¹²⁴ See above n. 19.

¹²⁵ Paus. 1.34.4.

¹²⁶ Paus. 9.2.1. See chapter 3, section 1.1.

¹²⁷ Paus. 2.38.2. See chapter 5, section 9.

importance is attested to by literary texts.¹²⁸ The case of Kyllou Pera on Mount Hymettos is the ultimate example of the contribution made by literature as well as the inherent problems it creates, such as interpretation of the texts, assessing their credibility or locating the site.¹²⁹

Epigraphy, when available, is also an essential source of information for water landmarks. The sanctuary of the nymphs on the southern coast of Attica is only known from an inscription which details the regulations about its sacred spring (or well). Another inscription tells us of the importance of the Rheitoi on the sacred way to Eleusis.¹³⁰

Archaeologically, another way by which we can detect the status of water is by its insertion within the monumental framework of a sanctuary. In the case of Brauron, the monumental development of the sanctuary meant that the spring became spatially peripheral, but it does not mean that it had lost any ritual importance.¹³¹ The fact that the spring itself was not built up could on the contrary mean that it was too sacred to do so, and that it was its natural state which mattered. Its position at the edge of the sanctuary could also mean that it was not supposed to be accessed easily, but rather after a progressive preparation. The apparent decline of the practice of deposition at the spring is more difficult to explain.

It is easier to make conjectures, however, when the opposite happens. In some places, the source of water was indeed the occasion to erect prestigious buildings which, by their position, structure or decoration, revealed the spot's sacredness. The sanctuary of the so-called 'sacred spring' at Corinth, for instance,

¹²⁸ See chapter 3, sections 8.1-2.

¹²⁹ See chapter 2.

¹³⁰ Nymphs: Sokolowski (1969), # 178; *IG I¹* 256. See chapter 1, section 2.2. Rheitoi: *IG I¹* 79. See above n. 85.

¹³¹ Morizot (1994), 203 observes the shift of the spring's position in the sanctuary's topography but does not venture any explanation.

had a natural if meagre source of fresh water on which was, as early as the first architectural stages of the sanctuary, built a fountain-house. The fountain-house, considering the sanctuary's entrance and boundaries, was the focal point around which everything else was organised, clearly expressing the prevalence of the spring over everything else.¹³² At the Asklepieion of Epidauros, the 'sacred fountain' was part of a complex of two fountains at the east of the sanctuary's core. The structure of this fountain is as unusual as the other is standard. Conceived as a succession of aligned architectural components, it became narrower and lower as one went nearer the fountain proper, at which point only one person could conveniently reach the square draw basin. The fountain was furthermore built against the natural slope of the ground so as to give the illusion of going underground. The architectural complexity of the fountain house, in particular when juxtaposed with the neighbouring fountain, emphasised a cultic rather than a secular function, albeit sharing the same water.¹³³ Similarly, at the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, the complex waterworks south-west of the temple, with its huge reservoir and its oddly shaped underground room with a basin, suggest anything but secular use.¹³⁴

Finally, more than the monumentalisation of water itself, and contrary to what happened at Brauron, the position of the water source in relation to the monuments of a sanctuary can sometimes underline water's religious importance. At the Artemision of Aulis, the spring was converted into a fountain but the architectural additions were kept to a minimum. It consisted of a square basin dug into the ground and lined in poros stone. A few steps led down directly to the water. What signalled the spring's importance, beyond its appearance in the literature about the site, was its position right across the temple's entrance. Temple and spring

¹³² See chapter 4, section 2.1.

¹³³ See chapter 5, section 6.2.

¹³⁴ See chapter 4, section 1.1.

consequently formed a duo, visually and very probably also ritually, since the spring occupies the space where conventionally an altar could have stood.¹³⁵ At the Asklepieion at Epidauros, a well, which had existed since the 6th c. BC in the early stages of the sanctuary, was later incorporated into the newly built *abaton* and not filled, even though it appears that it was not in use anymore. The respectful way it had been preserved in one of the most important buildings of the healing sanctuary states its sacred status better than any embellishment would have.¹³⁶ In Athens, the spring Kallirrhoe and its corresponding fountain house, the Enneakrounos, were not in a sanctuary but, as Thucydides described it, amongst and close by many ancient sanctuaries, with its water 'used for the most important ceremonies'.¹³⁷ Thucydides explained that its proximity was the reason for such a ritualistic use, but his description also betrays the religious importance of its location and the antiquity of the practices. It also reveals the fundamental question, perhaps impossible to answer: did the sacredness of the spot arise from the spring or was it the presence of sanctuaries that gave the spring its ritual importance? One part of the answer is probably found in the idea that, where natural features are concerned, the sacredness of a spot has generally a right of antecedence over human interventions.¹³⁸

3.2. A sacred taxonomy of water landmarks

As seen above, water landmarks held different positions within the ancient Greek sanctuary. These positions can be tentatively categorised according to the integration and position of the water landmark in the fabric of a sanctuary.

¹³⁵ Aulis: See chapter 3, section 4.1.

¹³⁶ See chapter 5 section 6.2.

¹³⁷ Thuc. 2.15.5.

¹³⁸ Cole (2004), 37-39.

3.2.1. Water is the focal point

In these instances, water is the *raison d'être* for the cult. In general, this meant that the sanctuary was devoted to a deity who was the embodiment of a water landmark; a nymph who inhabits a spring or a river-god. In rarer occurrences, water itself rather than a godly figure seems to have been in the limelight. At the Kyllou Pera, the rituals and the cult revolved around the spring, and even if several gods were associated with the spot, such as Aphrodite or possibly also Demeter, they did not embody for the spring. At the sanctuary of the 'sacred spring' at Corinth, the total absence of epigraphical or literary evidence naming a deity does not allow us to associate the cult with a certain god with certainty. The only clear sacred focus in the sanctuary is the source of water.

3.2.2. Water is in the cultic inner circle

In other sanctuaries, the water resource was not the object of the cult, but was strongly associated with what made the spot sacred, or with the sanctuary's *raison d'être*. The healing and oracular sanctuaries studied in the preceding surveys are all found in this category, because water was not only an essential tool for their functioning but also participated in the deity's personality. The fact that Boiotia, the region with the largest number of attested prophetic sanctuaries, also was the most blessed with water resources, whether in the form of springs, rivers or lakes, is certainly striking. Mystery cults are also well represented in this category, with the Eleusinian mysteries at the forefront, but maybe even more so with lesser known

cults, in particular that of Dionysos at Lerna, Poseidon and Palaimon at Ishtmia, Hera at Prosymna and maybe also at Perachora. Artemis too proved to have a special affinity with water at Brauron, Aulis and Sikyon.

3.2.3. Water is in the cultic outer circle

In these cults, although a water resource is present, water is confined to the cultic background and does not seem to have played a particularly important role. Water was necessary in virtually every ancient Greek sanctuary for purification, or simply for practical reasons, such as cleaning or drinking, and for cooking the sacrificial meat.¹³⁹ Our perception of the sanctuaries in these categories is that they did not need their water resource for anything beyond these basic uses, although it is perhaps sometimes due to our lack of knowledge.

3.2.4. Other cases

Finally, these last cases do not quite fit in any other category for various reasons. First, there are the sites which are outside sanctuaries proper but are still sacred; the fountains of Kallirrhoe (perhaps a sanctuary to nymphs, but it has not been proven yet) and Enneakrounos at Athens were used in sacred contexts. The latter in particular was the source of predilection for the wedding ceremonial bath. This type of site was in all probability found in most of the ancient Greek regions. In our

¹³⁹ Water was brought in procession along with all the material necessary for the sacrifice. Participation of Hydriaphoroi at the Panathenaia is documented in literature: Demetrius of Phaleron, *FGrH* 228 F 5 ap. Harpoc. σ 21; Pollux 3.55; Ar., *Eccl.* 738-739. See Parker (2005), 258. On the north side of the Parthenon frieze, four male hydriaphoroi (water-bearers) are sculpted. See Simon (1983), 63-65, pl. 19.1.

surveys, examples include the river Ismenos at Thebes, the spring Kissoessa in Boiotia, an unknown source in Argolid and perhaps Peirene in Corinth.

In the cases of the bath given to statues, mainly feminine ones, the water landmark took on a special ritual power and importance at least once a year, if not more often. They are usually believed to have been the ritual expression of the local communities' regard for natural cycles of time, seasons, agriculture, etc. Interestingly, in the poem by Callimachus Athena's bath in the river Inachos, the idea that the river's waters were particularly sacred on this very day shows a possible example of intermittent sacredness for some water landmarks.

In the final cases, water appeared only as one part of a large set of sacred features, such as in the caves dedicated to Pan and the nymphs. Here water is undoubtedly sacred, but more in a participating way, the cave appearing to be the main feature.

CONCLUSION

‘... nullus enim fons non sacer.’ Servius on Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.84.

This sweeping assertion has sometimes been used to characterise not only the Latin religion which after all it was concerned with, but also the ancient Greek religion’s approach to springs.¹ The absence of major studies on water and the sacred in ancient Greece since Ginouvès’ *Balaneutikè* has done little to help better understand the question and to challenge Servius’ assertion. The aim of this thesis is to correct this and therefore to steer a course between the overly generalising and the unduly critical on the matter. To that purpose, chapters 1 to 5 have gathered the available information in Attica, Boeotia, Corinthia and the Argolid in order to allow for easier comparisons and interpretation. It is believed that this approach is also one that can, by providing the available data, foster further analyses, discussions and debates which in time will build a better understanding of the topic.

Within the framework of this thesis, the survey has highlighted the common points and regional specificities. If the importance of oracular shrines in Boeotia was an already well known fact, more surprising was the Attic relationship with water which was almost exclusively focused on its nurturing aspects and, at least from the late 5th c. BC onwards with Asklepios and Amphiaraos but maybe even earlier at a site like the Kyllou Pera, on its curative properties. Both Corinthia and Argolid present a broad spectrum of types of water-related cults. What these differences actually say about the origin and evolution of religion in these regions is anyone’s guess and was not this thesis’ endeavour to discover. This research has nevertheless

¹ See for example W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination a Study of Its Methods and Principles*, first published in 1913 (Kessinger Publishing Co, 2003), 116 n. 2, 118.

contributed to a more local approach to Greek religion which sees it not as a canonical and somewhat diluted body of beliefs, but rather as a diverse and changing whole which was primarily experienced by local communities and families.

In chapter 6, the first of two chapters devoted to the analysis of the information collected in the regional surveys, the implication of water in Greek religion was studied from the angle of powers and/or values it was attributed. In this matter, the brilliant analyses given by Ginouvès more than forty years ago are still of great help. The different powers of water had been particularly well identified and set out in three categories: water cleans and purifies, water erases the past and allows renewal, and water is the vehicle of properties such as fertility, nourishment or knowledge. This thesis has developed the idea already present in *Balaneutikè* that these categories are very flexible and very much influence each other. One spring in Attica could bring fertility whilst another in Boeotia was oracular. Furthermore, water in one site could possess very different properties according to the needs or the time of year. It was not permitted, for example, to draw and use water from the Inachos in Argolid, and presumably some other springs and wells, on the day of the goddess Athena's bath. The rest of the year, the water of the river would have received the offering of a lock of hair from adolescents entering adulthood.

Chapter 7 is where this thesis takes its most original approach, by studying water as a spatial element of the Greek religious landscape. As such, the thesis is part of a larger trend of research which focuses on ancient Greece as a spatial whole, including city centres, rural areas and empty spaces and, in the more specific topic of Greek religion, what Parker summed up by the question: 'What gods where?'² This thesis shows that water indeed played a part in the religious landscape in different

² Parker (2005), 51.

ways. It could alternatively be a point of focus, a barrier, a place of passage, attraction or even repulsion. This was true both in the space of a whole region or within the confines of one sanctuary. In this sense, water was attributed religious properties in a spatial context which were in turn validated by a community's behaviour towards its environment. From then on, this chapter also demonstrates how the Greeks (in the regions studied) saw their environment and what sets of meanings they gave to their territory; their religious approach to water had become a means to do so.

This thesis is not, by any means, a definitive study on water in ancient Greek religion. The geographical limits set here can be extended, if only to cover the entire geographical limits of Pausanias' *Description of Greece*. This thesis has demonstrated how the place of water in religion differs from one region to another. Other regions known to have particularly strong individualities, such as Arcadia or Laconia, and important sanctuaries such as Delphi or Olympia, which were outside the geographical limits of this research, deserve attention. Future explorations should also include insular Greece where water is, both in environmental and spatial terms, a particularly sensitive issue.

Future avenues of research could also further explore the topic in its chronological dimension. This thesis was not a history, since it sought principally to establish general ideas on water and its place in Greek religion. It does not mean however that what was true about water in Archaic Greece was automatically valid for the Hellenistic period. Because of the constraints of a historical examination, as well as the vastness of the subject, this should probably be done within the limits of one region. Amongst the regions studied here, the ideal candidates would be Attica

and the Argolid. Attica, because of the rich documentation we possess, allows a relatively precise investigation of how the place of water in religion changed over time and may help to establish continuities and ruptures with more accuracy. In the Argolid, as we have seen above, the way water was part of the local myths and cults was more diverse than in Attica. This diversity is of great interest if one is to study the different ways in which water was given a role in religion and their historical evolution.

In this day and age of increasing concern for environmental issues, we are more sensitive to the potency and importance of fresh water, of its access and its protection. The Mediterranean world in particular already feels the strain on this precious resource. Barcelona is forced to import its fresh water by boat from France while water is one of the key geopolitical and cultural issues in the relations between Israel and its neighbours.³ Ancient history has here the opportunity to show its relevance in today's world. The ancient Greeks may not give us straight answers, but water was already for them a major issue and a constant source of marvel.

³ On Barcelona see for example: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/europe/arid-barcelona-forced-to-import-water-807810.html> (last accessed 9 May 2008). On Israel see for example the article by M. Giordano et al., 'The Geography of Water Conflict and Cooperation: Internal Pressures and International Manifestations', *The Geographical Journal* 168 (2002), 293-312.

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