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Sanctuaries & cults in the Peloponnese: new evidence for sanctuaries & sacral contexts, 2010–2020

Maria G. Spathi | Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies | maria.spathi@hotmail.com

Sanctuaries remain important for the study of ancient Greek life and culture because they express the values and concerns of the communities where they were established and developed. The investigation of sanctuaries remains a fundamental aspect of research. The new data that have come to light clearly confirm that their study has in no way been exhausted. The Peloponnese has been at the centre of scholarly interest in this subject from the very start, and continues to be today. This article offers an overview of the excavations and publications of the last decade, recording also new trends in sanctuary research.

Introduction

The Peloponnese abounds in myths, cults and shrines. In the 19th century it was already a focus of research for travellers and archaeologists, both Greek and foreign. This period saw the initiation of the first excavations; among these are the sites of the great sanctuaries, where research continues to the present day. The impetus for this intense interest was surely the accounts of the second-century AD traveller Pausanias, who continues to act as a reference point. Interest in the region, continually nourished by new discoveries, has not waned. Universities, foreign archaeological schools, scholars from all over the world and, of course, the Greek Archaeological Service study the Peloponnese unceasingly. All contribute to a better understanding of the dense network of sanctuaries and cults that are interconnected, directly or indirectly, but which differ considerably from one another in terms of size, complexity and location, as well as in their significance and whether they were established for a small community, a single polis or a broader Panhellenic audience.

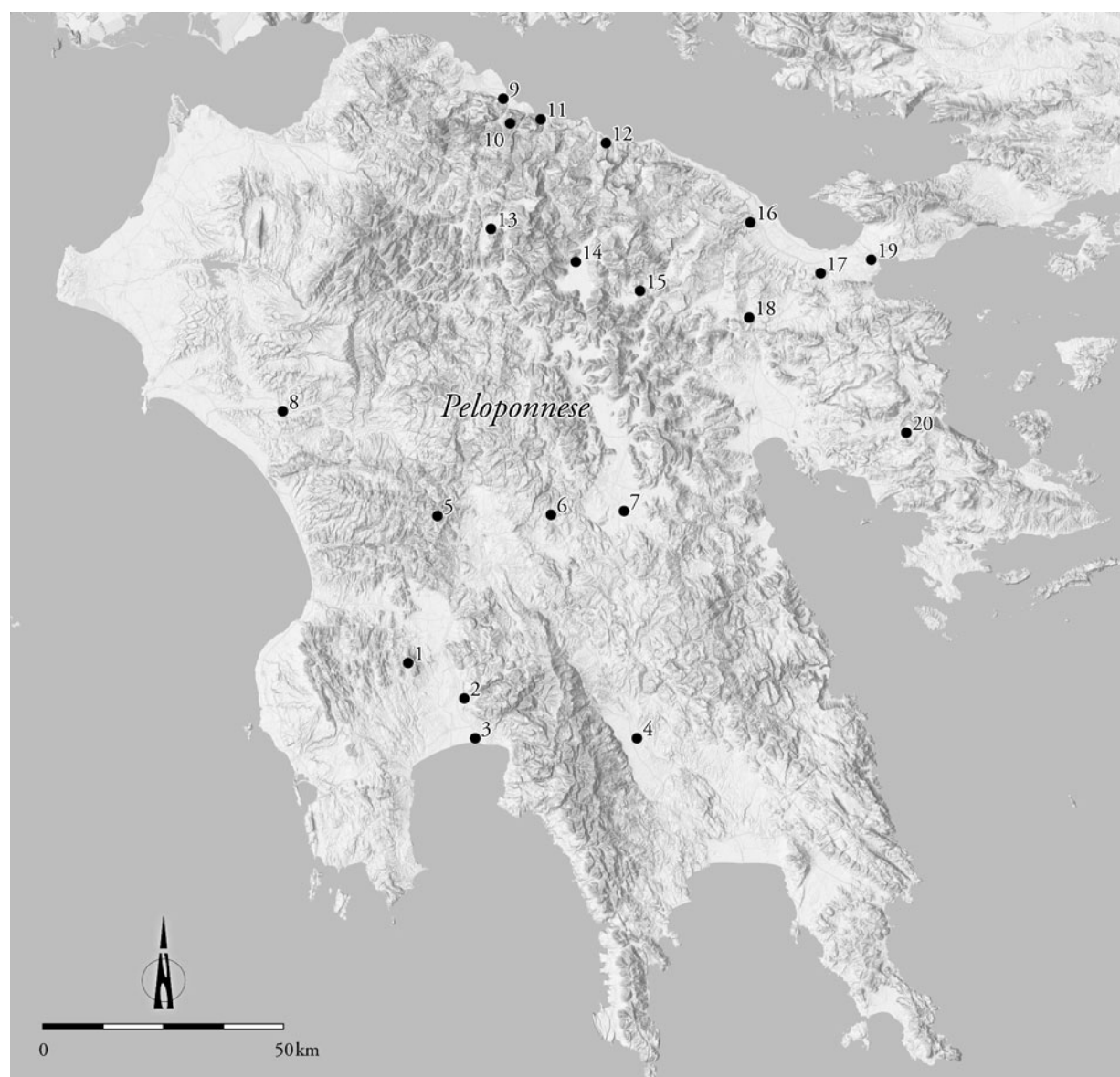
This report details work conducted in the course of the past decade on Peloponnesian sanctuaries and cults. More precisely, it presents the publications of both sanctuaries that have come to light in 2010–2020, typically occasioned by major public works, and those excavated some time ago but published only recently (including regional sanctuaries, as well as older sanctuaries where research is ongoing, such as the great Panhellenic sanctuaries). To a great extent the publications comprise new reports of archaeological material or the interpretation and reassessment of older published material in the light of new research data. This is not an exhaustive presentation of all relevant publications, but rather a selection of recently published archaeological data. The time frame of this report covers the early historical period down to Roman times. The main sites covered by this report are shown on **Map 6**.

Messenia

I begin in the south, with Messenia and the ancient city of **Messene** where the last decade has seen the discovery of several sanctuaries, both in the centre of the city and on Mount Ithome in an area nevertheless within the city walls.

In 2010, investigations in the sanctuary of Messana, the deified pre-Dorian queen, were completed. This Doric peripteral temple, which Pausanias (4.31.11–12) certainly saw intact, had strong political and symbolic importance for Messenians, as is evident by its conspicuous location in the centre of the agora and, especially, the abundance of decrees and inscribed bases along the temple's northern and southern sides, which bore statues honouring Roman emperors (*Prakt* 2010: 59–61).

Excavations that began in 2008 are continuing in the sanctuary of Isis south of the theatre (**ID6527**, **ID6528**, **ID6892**) (**Fig. 134**). The sanctuary consists of an underground stoa that is pi-shaped and vaulted. Work in the southern part of the sanctuary has revealed eight underground halls that are over 6m in height and of varying widths, and which are aligned in two parallel rows extending over 50m in total. These



Map 6. Sites referred to in the text: 1. Messene; 2. Thouria; 3. Akovitika; 4. Amykles; 5. Mount Lykaion; 6. Arachamitai; 7. Tegea; 8. Olympia; 9. Nikoleika; 10. Mamousia; 11. Trapeza; 12. Aigeira; 13. Lousoi; 14. Pheneos; 15. Stymphalos; 16. Sikyon; 17. Acrocorinth; 18. Nemea; 19. Isthmia; 20. Epidauros. © BSA.

halls, dating from the second to the first century BC, were linked to each other through arched doorways, 4m high and 1.6m wide. Their ceilings had collapsed and they were covered by earth and decaying undergrowth. North of the Isis sanctuary, an architectural complex was excavated between 2015 and 2017. This comprises three cisterns and surrounding rooms which contained stone benches around their interior walls. The excavator associates the complex with initiation rites related to the worship of Isis and dates it to the Late Roman period (*Prakt* 2016: 101–02; *Prakt* 2017: 85–87; *Ergon* 2018: 16).

Within the fortification wall of Messene, which encompassed a large area of cultivated fields and pastureland on the southern slope of Mount Ithome, two sanctuaries were built after Epameinondas refounded the city in 369 BC: the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis and the so-called sanctuary of Eileithyia and the Kouretes. Discovered in the early 19th century by Philip Le Bas, the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis is located on the southeastern flank of Mount Ithome. Its identification is confirmed by a Hellenistic inscription that names two priestesses of Limnatis (*IG* V.1.1442). The sanctuary's main building is a



134. Messene: temple of Isis from the northwest. © Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies.



135. Messene: sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis. © Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies.

Corinthian-style anta temple; south of the temple lie the remains of four smaller buildings which are orientated perpendicular to it (**Fig. 135**). About 15m downslope is a large terrace with a small fountain house which is not aligned with the other buildings of the sanctuary. The temple, which measures 16.7m × 10.6m, has two Corinthian columns in antis, a deep pronaos and a wide cella.

The four adjoining buildings (A–D) south of the temple of Artemis Limnatis are of varying sizes. Building B, excavated in 2012 and 2013 (Wannagat and Linnemann 2017), is *ca.* 7.5m wide and *ca.* 10m long. It has a podium running along its interior with a minimum depth of 0.62–0.7m and the floor was laid with elaborate ornamental pebble designs. The depth of the surrounding podium and the lack of an altar suggest that Building B, with its lavishly decorated pebble floor, was used as an assembly building.

Excavations were continued in August 2018 by the University of Rostock and the University of Kiel in co-operation with the Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies (Feuser and Spathi 2020). The campaign focused on the area adjacent to Building D and its northern side, as well as part of its interior. Building D, located in the southwestern part of the temenos at the edge of the natural plateau atop a rocky outcrop, is rectangular in shape and measures 11.25m × 6.25m. About 15m below the rock spur housing the temple and the other buildings lies a large terrace (*ca.* 40m × 10m) with a small fountain house (6m × 2m); in the southern section there is a cavity in the natural bedrock from which water flowed until the 1980s. The excavation and landscaping campaigns in the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis have yielded a quantity of pottery (mostly table ware) and terracotta figurines as well as various bronze finds.



136. Messene: terracotta figurine of Artemis from the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis. © Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies.

A notable number of Artemis figurines came to light in the 2018 excavation season, probably from a dispersed deposit located primarily west of the temple. At Messene, Artemis is mainly represented clad in a short chiton with an overfold and the tail of an animal skin wrapped around her body and bound with a belt hangs down between her thighs (**Fig. 136**). On her feet are high leather boots (ἐνδοποιίδες) and on her head a tall wreath (στεφάνη). She holds a very long torch, either in her left hand or by her right side, whilst a dog is often seated by her right foot, its head tilted towards her (Spathi 2020).

Lying 300m northwest of the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis, not far from the shrine of Zeus Ithomatas on the mountain's summit, is the so-called sanctuary of Eileithyia and the Kouretes (**ID2086**). This site was systematically excavated in four campaigns undertaken between 2006 and 2013. Both the temple and its finds, which are currently being studied by the author, will soon be published in a monograph. The temple, located on a rocky terrace accessible from the east, is prostyle with four Ionic columns at the front. It has a narrow vestibule and a rectangular cella (7.6m × 5m). The remains of a retaining wall are visible to the north of the temple. This runs parallel to it to form a second terrace where the foundations of another building are preserved. In the middle of the cella, in front of its western wall, is a tall pillar-like limestone base, still *in*

situ, that would have held a small marble cult statue. Part of this statue was found south of the temple among other discarded architectural fragments. It represents the goddess in a smaller than life-size form (0.54m high) and wearing a heavy peplos with a himation draped across the right shoulder and around the torso. Numerous finds were excavated. These predominantly comprise terracotta figurines of females and animals, but also include pottery, including many miniature vases (Spathi 2017).



137. Akovitika: temple of Poseidon. © Petros Themelis.

The proceedings of a conference on the shrines and cults of Messene held in Athens in 2014 include contributions on these sanctuaries and several other aspects of interest: the votive deposits from the site, evidence for the worship of Hercules at Messene, epigraphic evidence for Messenian cults, the votive reliefs with snakes from the city and the clay plaques from Laconia and Messenia with the familiar stereotypical patterns of secular and funerary-heroic iconography (Themelis *et al.* 2017).

A volume on the sanctuary of Poseidon at **Akovitika** was published in 2010 (Kiderlen and Themelis 2010). This sanctuary functioned as a cult centre for seafarers in the coastal zone belonging to the perioikic city of Thouria. A rescue excavation in 1969 revealed the sanctuary (**Fig. 137**) and it was identified by a dipinto inscription mentioning Poseidon on a fragment of a one-handed beaker (mug) dated to the late seventh or early sixth century BC. An interdisciplinary research campaign took place in 2005, comprising a geophysical survey of the site to ascertain its extent and a geological survey around the mouth of the river Ares in order to establish the limit of the ancient shoreline. Some finds date from the Early Iron Age, but the majority of the pottery consists of black-glazed vessels of the seventh to the fifth century BC.

Excavations at the city of **Thouria**, initiated in 2009, have continued in the sanctuary, which is now firmly identified with Asklepios (**ID2565**, **ID3314**, **ID4426**, **ID6121**) (**Fig. 138**). In 2011 two limestone bases were found *in situ* in front of the temple. One bears a votive inscription by a couple, Damophantos and Nikandria, who dedicated



138. Thouria: temple of Asklepios from the south. © ASA.

statues of their two sons to Asklepios and Hygeia. A rectangular limestone altar located parallel to the temple's façade was also found. Immediately to the west, a second altar was located in 2013, surrounded by a deposit of burnt soil, ash, burnt animal bone and pottery. Among the finds are inscribed sherds with dedications to Asklepios. The excavation continued in 2015, when the façade of the temple and three altars in front of it were uncovered and cleaned. In the area of the temple, part of an Ionic stoa, defining the sanctuary from the north, also came to light. Many artefacts, such as terracottas, relief plaques and bronze medical tools, were found in the area of the stoa (<https://ancientthouriaexcavation.gr/en/2015-2/>).

Between 2010 and 2011, in Ano Melpēia on the border with Arcadia, a temple of an unknown divinity was discovered. It probably dates to the Classical period. The fill along the temple's southern long side contained miniature vessels, bronze sheets, bracelets and many spearheads and dagger blades (Arapogianni 2017). Another shrine of an unknown divinity was discovered at Romanos near Pylos, during the development of a golf course in the area (Arapogianni 2017).

Laconia



139. Amykles: sanctuary of Apollo, the 'South Building'. © ASA.

In Laconia, excavations have continued in the sanctuary of Apollo at **Amykles**, 5km southeast of the centre of Sparta on the western side of the Eurotas river (**ID6895**) (**Fig. 139**). The sanctuary has received considerable attention as the only site in Laconia identified to date with evidence for cult activity from *ca.* 1200 BC through to the Archaic period and down to Roman times. On the southern part of the low hill, where the sanctuary is situated, the foundations of a building with a pi-shaped plan came to light in 2017. This building was quadrilateral or rectangular; the preserved sides measure 22m × 8m × 6m, but the entire southern side is missing, perhaps due to subsi-

dence. To the north, the building functioned as a retaining wall, since this side abutted the slope of the hill that had been cut away. The western end was formed by cutting into the conglomerate bedrock, which also functioned as a socle for the superstructure. The building is distinguished by the closed corridor, shaped like an inverted L, that takes up the western and northern sides. Based on the finds, this corridor is thought to have been roofed, with a superstructure of fired brick. To the east, the building is delimited by just one wall. This was constructed on the poros bedrock and later reinforced along its entire length by a second wall built against it. This configuration suggests that the centre of the building was an open space ('atrium'). In the eastern part of this atrium were strong traces of red, grey and black soil, along with iron tools, glass slag and burnt lumps of clay. These were possibly associated with workshop installations, in all likelihood kilns that operated in this space in the Late Roman period. Of particular interest is the eastern side of the building, where evidence dating it to the late sixth century BC was found. This dating is supported by the stratigraphy, the portable finds and the discovery of a wall foundation to the east of the building with the same orientation. The structure may be part of the Late Geometric peribolos, and its destruction should be dated, on the basis of the finds, to the second half of the sixth century BC, when the 'South Building' was erected.

Drawing upon recent evidence, two papers by Vicky Vlachou discuss the material for the cult of Apollo Hyakinthios and the festival of the Hyakinthia at Amykles, in particular the ceramic assemblages connected with drinking and dining at the sanctuary from the 11th to the late eighth century BC (Vlachou 2017; 2018). Vlachou suggests that the consumption of food and drink by participants formed an important element of the activities undertaken throughout the period of use. She also emphasizes the value of specific finds, such as terracottas and loomweights, as evidence for the character of the rituals performed.

Two hilltop sanctuaries near Geraki, at Magoulitsa, 4–5km southeast of the town, and Rikakia, about 3km northwest of it, have been identified by Ioannis Pikoulas, who suggests that they were situated on important routes (Pikoulas 2012: 197–99 no. 33a, 251–55 no. 42).

In 2014 Gina Salapata published her doctoral dissertation on the terracotta votive reliefs from the sanctuary of Agamemnon and Cassandra. These are votive offerings characteristic of sanctuaries associated with hero cult. Salapata was among the first researchers to study these dedications, which are particularly typical of Laconia and Messenia, systematically (Salapata 2013). Similar dedications dated to the Hellenistic period, and excavated in 1978–1983 at Voidokoilia in the region of Pylos, have been published by Irini Peppa-Papaioannou (2012). Hero worship was widespread across the Peloponnese, particularly in Laconia and Messenia and the Argolid, and is typified by certain types of offerings, such as these plaques and miniature vessels (Boehrer 2001).

Nicolette Pavlides (2018) discusses the sanctuaries in the area of the Thyreatis and Kynouria, a region traditionally disputed by Sparta and Argos. Focusing on two Laconian sanctuaries, those of Apollo Maleatas and Apollo Tyritas, she argues that they formed a Laconian sacred landscape, uniting the centre (Sparta) with the Laconian and Messenian countryside through the celebration of common cults and festivals. She believes that enough evidence exists to suggest that Laconian and Messenian sanctuaries functioned as gathering places for Spartans and *perioikoi*. Socrates Koursoumis (2014) re-evaluates the arguments related to the location of a similar frontier sanctuary, that of Artemis Limnatis in the Dentheliatas on the Laconian-Messenian border at Volimos.

Jonah Lloyd Rosenberg (2015) deals with a completely different subject: the terracotta masks found in pits in the sanctuary of Ortheia at Sparta. These have been an active subject of debate from the moment they were first published and have engendered much controversy concerning their use and the interpretation of their different iconographies. Based on theories of masking from Classical literature as well as from Japanese Noh theatre and neuroscience, he interprets the masks as comic and satirical figures. He argues that the masks from the sanctuary can be placed at the beginning of the shift from purely ritual drama to drama in which a broad range of masks was used. Another recent paper also refers to masked figures, mostly terracotta figurines from the Peloponnese that were discovered in a cave in Lechova in Corinthia. This article provides an approach to interpreting the use and meaning of masks in Greece in general, taking into account the masks from Ortheia, the masks from Tiryns and the masked figures from Lykosoura (Spathi 2018).

Elis

At the sanctuary of Zeus in **Olympia (ID2077, ID5047)**, researchers have conducted a new architectural study of the so-called South Stoa, obtained cores and geoelectric profiles in the area southwest of the sanctuary in order to illuminate the history of sedimentation in the area and carried out restoration work on the monument of Ptolemy II and the temple of Zeus. Excavations conducted by the then Seventh EPCA (now the Ephorate of Antiquities of Elis) completely exposed the Hellenistic gymnasium (dated to the second to first century BC) situated on the bank of the Kladeos river, northwest of the altis. In a recent paper, Signe Barfoed (2015) reports the absence of miniature vessels from the sanctuary of Zeus during the Archaic period. Her study suggests, by comparing the assemblages at Olympia with those from other sanctuaries, mainly in the Peloponnese, that the roles that miniature vessels may have played in these contexts were probably more complex than previously thought, and went beyond a ‘votive’ role to include commemorative and possibly ritual roles.

Achaia

Large-scale public works in Achaia, namely the construction of the Olympia highway and the new Athens to Patras railway line, have necessitated extensive archaeological investigations. Hundreds of test trenches have been opened, and ancient remains have been identified in several, mostly located in the eastern part of Achaia, in the area of Aigialeia (the coastal zone that stretches from Aigion to the boundary between Achaia and the Corinthia). These public works have provided an impetus to locate and excavate new sanctuaries that can contribute to understanding the architectural and cultic evolution of this particular region. It

is in this area only, rather than the western region, that Geometric and Archaic temples have been found so far in Achaia. The region appears to have maintained close relations with the Corinthia and the Argolid, as reflected in the architecture of these temples (Kolia 2017; 2011; Kanellopoulos and Kolia 2011).

The architectural remains of a sanctuary were detected in one of these test trenches at a site on the west bank of the river Krios near the modern settlement of Marmara. The subsequent excavations lasted from 2009 until 2013 and revealed a sanctuary that stretched across two successive terraces (Kolia 2017). On the upper terrace is a rectangular naiskos with a shallow pronaos, whilst an ash altar was found 17m to the south of it. On the lower terrace, east of the temple, eight buildings with rectangular or trapezoidal ground plans were investigated. According to the excavator, who compares the sanctuary with that of Demeter and Kore at Acrocorinth, they may have been dining rooms for common ceremonial meals. Based on the evidence of the finds, worship at the site appears to have begun in the seventh century, but occupation can be traced back to the Late Geometric period. After suffering major damage, perhaps in the late fourth or early third century BC, the sanctuary was repaired and continued in use during the first half of the third century. The shrine probably belonged to the chora of Aigai and was dedicated to Demeter, with Eileithyia worshipped as a secondary goddess.

Rescue excavations in the village of **Nikoleïka** near Aigion, in the chora of ancient Helike, have brought to light an apsidal temple (Kolia 2011). The building was erected at the end of the eighth century BC; a row of wooden columns on stone bases stood inside. A mudbrick altar erected in the first half of the eighth century lay buried beneath the temple floor. Remains of the sacrificial fire were deposited around the altar. Noteworthy among the finds are 60 wheels from chariot models and terracotta horse figurines with holes in their shoulders for attachment to model chariots; these can probably be associated with the cult of Poseidon on the site. A *terminus ante quem* for the abandonment of the Geometric temple is provided by mid-sixth-century BC architectural terracottas, which presumably come from its successor. Recent excavations at the site have revealed parts of the tiling of the Archaic temple as well as remains of ritual meals from the eighth century BC (**ID8560**). The temple is likely that of Poseidon Helikonios in Helike. Dora Katsonopoulou (2019) also discusses the sanctuary of Poseidon Helikonios and that of Zeus Homarios (or Homagyrios) in a recent paper that tries to establish the history and topography of the two sanctuaries by considering both ancient sources and new archaeological evidence. Schilardi 2019 also discusses the continuity in the cult of Poseidon in the sanctuary.

Also in Aigialeia, in a marginal location near the peak chapel of Profitis Ilias at **Mamousia**, systematic excavations have revealed the remains of a sanctuary that may have belonged to the territory of ancient Keryneia (Kanellopoulos and Kolia 2011). An Archaic peripteral temple, dated between 500 and 490 BC, dominated the peak; to its east, the remains of an altar and a small oikos have been identified. The Archaic sanctuary was probably destroyed by the earthquake of 373 BC. West of the peripteral temple, another small temple has come to light. It is dated to the middle of the fourth century BC and is distyle in antis and with a square cella. The northwestern corner of the pronaos contained a rectangular pit built of irregular slabs; this is interpreted as a *bothros* for liquid offerings.

At **Trapeza** in Aigion, the local Ephorate of Antiquities reports the discovery of a Geometric temple immediately beneath the Late Archaic temple excavated in 2009 (**ID3564**; Vordos 2019) (**Fig. 140**). At **Aigeira**, the Austrian Archaeological Institute began a project in 2011 to conduct further research into the so-called Naiskoi D, E, and F located north and south of the theatre. These naiskoi were first excavated in the 1920s and then investigated again in the 1970s and 1980s; their use has subsequently been debated. The new research project aims to investigate their architectural form, chronology and use.

Michalis Petropoulos (2010) discusses the worship of Demeter in Achaia, which appears to have been one of the region's principal cults. He reports on the Demeter sanctuaries in Patras, Aigion, Boura, Thea near Patras, Petrochori and Pellene, and, on the basis of the most recent excavated finds, attempts to identify them with the sanctuaries mentioned in the sources.

The small finds, mostly terracottas and bronzes, from the excavations conducted by the Austrian Archaeological Institute between 1986 and 2000 at the Arcadian sanctuary of Artemis Hemera at **Lousoi**, now in the prefecture of Achaia, are the subject of a monograph by Veronika Mitsopoulos-Leon, the second



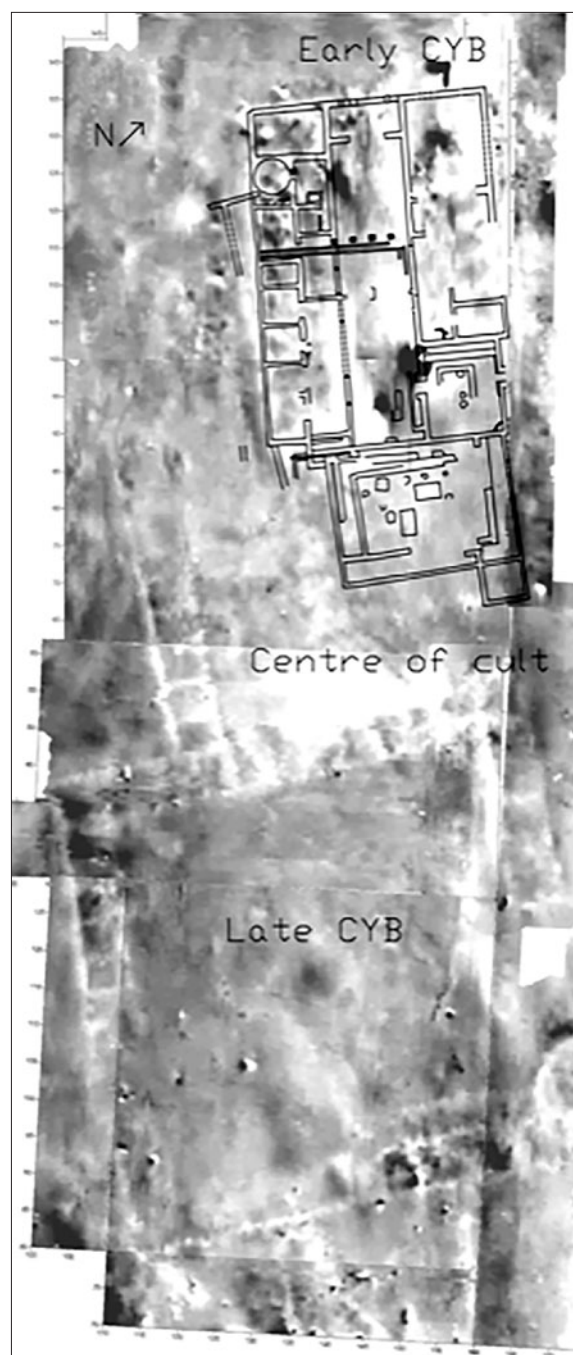
140. Trapeza: the Archaic temple with the Geometric temple beneath. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports: Ephorate of Antiquities of Achaia.

about this site (Mitsopoulos-Leon 2012). Three other papers also discuss material from the site. The first, by Alexandra von Miller, is a preliminary report about the ongoing research on the sanctuary's Geometric and Archaic pottery (von Miller 2016). Focusing mainly on the finds from a *bothros*-like structure at the northeastern edge of the terrace and on the ceramic inventory from the sanctuary generally, she seeks to understand the cult rituals that likely took place there. Two papers by Christa Schauer are also devoted to the sanctuary. In the first, she discusses a votive deposit from the small cult building, dating from the late second to the early first century BC (Schauer 2014). In her second paper (Schauer 2017), she utilizes the evidence of the excavated material, mostly pottery and animal bones, to examine ritual dining and drinking in the sanctuary from the Geometric to the Roman period by presenting the finds that she considers to be related to the ritual consumption of food and drink.

Arcadia

Investigations at the sanctuary of Zeus on **Mount Lykaion** have continued under the auspices of the University of Arizona together with the local Ephorate of Antiquities of Arcadia in Tripoli (**ID1879**, **ID2419**, **ID8119**). Five study seasons, from 2011 to 2015, have been followed by a five-year programme of excavation and survey from 2016 to 2020. Excavation of the altar, situated at the southern summit of the mountain, continued to reveal evidence for the earliest phases of activity, including Late Neolithic and Early, Middle and Late Helladic pottery mixed with burnt animal bones. Above this level lay Sub-Mycenaean and Dark Age material. On top of that, Geometric, Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic sherds were found in an apparently continuous sequence. Excavation extended to the lower sanctuary at the western end of the stoa, in the Ionic building located immediately west of the stoa and the interior of the administrative building in order to find the floor surface and the levels of use. Excavation was also conducted in the 30m-long corridor that likely served as the route walked by athletes from the heart of the lower sanctuary to the 'hippodrome' and the stadium.

The local ephorate worked in the Greek bath to the northeast of the ‘hippodrome’, where a mosaic floor in the area of the Agno Fountain and a human burial in the centre of the ash altar of Zeus were discovered. During the past decade, the results of earlier excavation seasons have been published. The first report (Romano and Voyatzis 2014) focuses on the altar and temenos areas in the upper level of the sanctuary. Excavation of the ash altar revealed evidence of a Mycenaean mountaintop shrine, whilst the votives and the burnt animal bones suggest continuity of cult from the Late Helladic through to the Late Classical period. The second report (Romano and Voyatzis 2015) concentrates on the lower sanctuary, where the earliest remains date to the seventh century BC. A major building programme during the second quarter of the fourth century BC was followed by a period of continued activity of various kinds until the first century BC.



At the site of **Agia Paraskevi** in the area of **Arachamitai**, located at the highest point of the road leading from Asea to Arachamitai, a new five-year excavation programme conducted by the Finnish Institute at Athens (University of Helsinki) commenced in 2015 (**ID1926**, **ID2422**, **ID3257**). During the initial excavation programme (2010–2014) the investigation focused on the sanctuary, which was finally identified with that of Artemis Lykoatis mentioned by Pausanias (8.36.5–8), and on the Late Hellenistic rectangular building with a central courtyard that was replaced by a larger Roman building further to the east (**Figs 141, 142**) (see <http://www.arachamitaiexcavation.info/> for this early work). The new excavation programme has mainly been concentrated on the cult centre located between these buildings. According to the excavator, cult activity took place from at least the tenth century BC to the third century AD (Forsén 2017; 2018).



142. Arachamitai: examples of inscribed roof tiles from the Hellenistic courtyard building. © Arachamitai Project.

141. Arachamitai: plan of the Hellenistic courtyard building with outlines of other buildings visible on the magnetometer survey. © Arachamitai Project.

In 2014 the Norwegian Institute at Athens published two volumes on their investigation of the temple of Athena Alea at **Tegea**, conducted in 1990–1994 and 2004. *Tegea* 1 and 2 comprise a variety of contributions on the site and the temple through time, including both examinations of the material evidence, such as pottery, stone tools and animal and human remains, and reports on metals analysis and a magnetometry survey (Østby 2014a; 2014b).

In 2011 the University of Trier and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Corinthia began research at Arcadian **Pheneos**, now in the prefecture of Corinthia. Investigation was focused on the Hellenistic Asklepieion, where work had been carried out in the 1960s by Evangelia Protonotariou-Deilaki. The team concentrated chiefly on processing and studying the finds, both architectural and portable, that the older excavations had brought to light and reporting on the sanctuary in general, including both the earlier and the more recent excavations (Kissas *et al.* 2017). A sanctuary dedicated to a female deity was found on the eastern slope of the acropolis, where a rectangular structure with a monolithic stone base for the cult statue and a terracotta hearth were excavated (**ID2015**).

The publication of the proceedings of a symposium held at Graz addressing Arcadia as a whole contains papers about the region's sanctuaries and cults, such as that of Despoina at Lykosoura, hero cult and the worship of Pan (Tausend 2018). A recent article by Erin Walcek Averett (2019) engages with the theriomorphic figurines and related imagery from the Arcadian sanctuaries, including that at Lykosoura, whilst Anna Karapanagiotou and Iphigeneia Leventi (2018) discuss the figurines from the sanctuary at Agios Sostis in Tegea.

Corinthia

In the Corinthia, investigations have continued at the long-excavated Panhellenic sanctuaries of **Nemea** and **Isthmia**. At the sanctuary of Zeus in Nemea, conservation and restoration were undertaken in the stadium tunnel, the tripartite cistern and the temple of Zeus (**ID1880**, **ID2406**, **ID2965**, **ID4881**). Excavation took place east of the Heroön wall and in the surrounding area in order to trace and define more clearly the prehistoric and early historic phases of the Heroön itself, the Archaic Heroön mound and its boundary walls, and to understand more fully the area west of it. Evidence of Bronze Age occupation was identified under the later building along with a greater investment in construction during the Archaic period. A ground-penetrating-radar survey was conducted in order to determine the location of the hippodrome.

At Isthmia, excavation at the sanctuary of Poseidon was limited to the large Early Roman building in the area east of the temenos and north of the Roman bath, which may have been a heated room added to the earlier Classical bath prior to construction of the Roman facility (**ID1883**, **ID2489**, **ID2969**, **ID4452**, **ID882**). To the east of the Roman bath complex lies a rectangular space, marked by a series of stoa-like structures and an interior colonnade, that may be the Classical and Roman gymnasium. However, the past decade has been dedicated largely to study of the artefacts, both pottery and terracotta, and reappraisal of the older excavations in the sanctuary; this programme of research has yielded some interesting new findings about ritual behaviour at the site (Frey and Gregory 2016). The area of the reservoir appears to have been used for food preparation and feasting from *ca.* 550–450 BC. Material associated with feasting also came from the two dining caves and from the Sacred Glen, which has now been identified more definitely with the sanctuary of Demeter (Risser 2015). Study of the finds indicates that the terracotta figurines from the sanctuary declined in number and then disappeared in the course of the fourth and third centuries BC. In the area of the Long Altar, the decline in dedications, which included arms and armour, and feasting-related pottery suggests a change in ritual behaviour long before the Archaic temple was destroyed.

In 2015, a volume of papers dealing with the wider area of the Isthmus of Corinth and eastern Corinthia was published by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Among the subjects treated are the terracotta figurines from the sanctuary of Poseidon, the dining vessels from the aforementioned reservoir at Isthmia, the two caves and the temple deposit (Gebhard and Gregory 2015). The same year also saw the publication of Torsten Mattern's book on the Herakles sanctuary in Kleonai, 14km northwest of Corinth; its main focus is the architecture of the temple, a Doric edifice that dates to the beginning of the

second century BC (Mattern 2015). The temple first came to light at the beginning of the 20th century; research excavations resumed in 2000, and, over the course of the past decade, excavation at the site has focused on the buildings by the agora (**ID2076**, **ID2409**).

The results of archaeological research in the Corinthia are highlighted in a collection of papers featuring numerous contributions by members of the Greek Archaeological Service, international institutions active in the region and individual scholars (Kissas and Niemeier 2013). Of particular note are treatments of an Archaic deposit at Nemea, the early temple of Zeus at the sanctuary of Nemea and the cult places of Zeus in the region.

In the northwestern part of the agora of ancient **Sikyön**, the foundations of a small temple (11m × 7m) have been found (**ID6126**). It was built at the end of the Classical or the beginning of the Hellenistic period and was dismantled in the early years of Roman rule.

In 2014 the first volume on the Canadian Institute's excavations at **Stymphalos** was published. This is concerned with the sanctuary on the acropolis, which was most likely dedicated to Athena. The volume contains contributions on the ancient sources for the site and the various categories of finds, including faunal and skeletal remains (Schaus 2014).

Three more volumes on the excavations in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on **Acrocorinth** have appeared. The first is concerned with the assemblage of large-scale terracotta sculpture dating from the seventh to the fourth century BC (Bookidis 2010). This consists of fragments of statues, from half to near life-size, mostly representing young men, although females and infants also appear. The second volume, the final report on the inscribed objects excluding loomweights and amphora handles, presents more than 170 examples and uses them to interpret various activities that were undertaken in the sanctuary (Stroud 2013). The third volume reports on the lamps made from the seventh to the second century BC and offering trays – other than the winnowing-basket (λίχνον) type already published – that had a symbolic ritual function (Bookidis and Pemberton 2015). In a very recent paper, Elizabeth Pemberton (2020) discusses the miniature vases from various sanctuaries and burial sites of ancient Corinth, and revisits earlier studies and interpretations of these artefacts (for example, as low-quality reproductions of large vessels or gifts made by the poor). Pemberton's study clarifies where and when shapes appeared, and thus helps us to understand better the importance of miniature vases in both religious and burial contexts.

Argolid

A book focused on the Argolid region, and the city of **Archaia Epidauros** in particular, addresses the subject of the city's development from prehistory to Late Antiquity, chiefly by an assessment of the excavated finds (Proskynitopoulou 2011). Two articles are concerned with the Argive Heraion. The first discusses the architectural developments in the sanctuary from the Archaic period to the fifth century BC (Emme 2011). In the second, Chris Pfaff considers the cult of subsidiary deities and presents evidence for limited cult activity of Artemis and an anonymous hero based on overlooked evidence in the form of a skyphos with a graffito dedicated to a hero (*heroos*) and a monolithic inscribed altar dedicated to Artemis (Αρτάμιος) (Pfaff 2013). At the Asklepieion at **Epidauros**, further excavation conducted between 2001 and 2011 in the so-called 'Building E' revealed the evolution of cult ritual in the area of the building, the altar and the tholos from the seventh century, when cult activity began, until at least the fourth century BC (Lambrinoudakis *et al.* 2018). Recent excavations at the site, in the area where the tholos was erected in the fourth century BC, have revealed a new structure (<https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=3388>). The building, with a basement and a ground floor, is probably a forerunner of the tholos and dates to around 600 BC. The excavation is still in progress (**ID8577**).

Stephen Ahearne-Kroll deals with a totally different and rather unusual topic relating to the Epidaurian Asklepieion: looking at the ways in which the healing inscriptions from the sanctuary transfer the private experience of the supplicants into the public realm. He emphasizes the key role of the goddess Mnemosyne in the process of recollecting, understanding and, finally, producing a narrative that was publicly exhibited (Ahearne-Kroll 2014). Finally, cult is the subject of *Tiryns* 18 (Brüggemann 2015), which presents the Archaic material from the excavations conducted northeast of the lower citadel between 1999 and 2001.

Summary

The quantity of archaeological work and publications focused on the Peloponnese over the last decade highlights the significance of research on temples. Answers to a range of questions, in addition to the dating and identification of sanctuaries, and the typology and study of material, have certainly been clarified. A trend for interpretations based on material culture is evident, especially finds related to ritual dining and drinking, as at Amykles, Lousoi and Isthmia. Overall, interpretation of the finds leans towards the reconstruction of the ritual and cultic contexts. New methods for the excavation and recording of finds continue to develop with the aid of technology, and faunal and skeletal remains are now taken into consideration more systematically and are included more often in excavation reports. Long neglected and undervalued materials, such as miniature vases and terracottas, are at last being studied, whilst other artefacts, like the hero reliefs and the masks from Ortheia, are being reassessed. The reports from the large sanctuaries, such as those at Mount Lykaion, Isthmia, Corinth, Epidauros and Nemea, demonstrate that projects with long histories can contribute significantly to our understanding of the continuity of cult activity or changes in ritual behaviour at sites through the study and publication of previously excavated evidence and associated materials. The discovery of new sanctuaries has changed the picture we had of several regions, Aigialeia for example. On the other hand, ongoing research, for instance at the Amyklaion and Mount Lykaion (as well as in other parts of Greece, too), has revealed a continuity of cult that would have been scarcely credible some decades ago. The centre of focus no longer rests so heavily on identifying sanctuaries by references in the sources and on interpreting their role or cultic and political importance, but also on reconstructing ritual through the study of the excavated artefacts.

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