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The stuff of the gods

The material aspects of religion
in ancient Greece

Edited by Matthew Haysom,
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ABSTRACT

The “material turn” in the humanities and social sciences has brought about an expanded understanding of the material dimension of all cultural and social phenomena. In the Classics it has resulted in the breaking down of boundaries within the discipline and a growing interest in materiality within literature. In the study of religion cross-culturally new perspectives are emphasising religion as a material phenomenon and belief as a practice founded in the material world. This volume brings together experts in all aspects of Greek religion to consider its material dimensions. Chapters cover both themes traditionally approached by archaeologists, such as dedications and sacred space, and themes traditionally approached by philologists, such as the role of objects in divine power. They include a wide variety of themes ranging from the imminent material experience of religion for ancient Greek worshippers to the role of material culture in change and continuity over the long term.

Keywords: Greek religion, Etruscan religion, Mycenaean religion, materiality, religious change, *temenos*, temples, offerings, cult statues, terracottas, *omphalos*, cauldrons, sacred laws, visuality, purity, pollution, gods' identities, divine power, inscribed dedications

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II. Adding buildings to Early Iron Age sanctuaries

The materiality of built space

Abstract

During the Early Iron Age, the decision taken in many parts of Greece to adapt available technologies to erect buildings of varying forms on often long established cult sites implies visions (plural) of the ways in which built space could contain, shape, or help to articulate activities linked to religious belief. This article explores the insertion of cult buildings into sanctuaries and analyses how they then came to operate as material objects within sacred space. Such a materiality-based perspective will enrich the complex discussion of temples and other cult buildings in Early Iron Age–Archaic religion, previously dominated by questions focussing on architecture and/or the rise of the *polis*.

Keywords: Early Iron Age, Archaic, Peloponnese, Ionian Islands, Crete, temple, *temenos*, architecture, sanctuary, cult image, labour, materiality, technological change

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The decision taken by many Early Iron Age Greek communities (mostly, but not exclusively, during the 8th and 7th centuries BC) to adapt available technologies to erect buildings of varying forms, often on long established cult sites implies visions (plural) of the ways in which built space could contain, shape, or help to articulate activities linked to religious belief.¹

Phrased in this way, the proposition problematizes approaches to the material record of Greek sanctuaries which implicitly or explicitly emphasize progress towards an Archaic or Classical socio-political or artistic “ideal”.² It casts doubt

upon their capacity to accommodate local variation and shifts in direction, and exposes them as reductive, perpetuating a particularism liable to distract from broader comparisons (e.g. with Etruria, as discussed by Charlotte Potts, *Chapter 12* in this volume). It also highlights the disjunction between the way in which material typologies currently underpin historically driven narratives and the materiality with which this book is concerned.

Discussion of the agency behind temple construction has tended to focus on the role of high political authority.³ Yet building projects rest upon and may empower a wide range of people and/or social roles, from those able to mobilise materials and labour to those involved in design and production,⁴ or with the religious authority to influence how a structure should belong in the space of ritual activity. During this early period it is unusual for such individuals to be identified. A rare example, an inscription on the east *stylobate* of the Temple of Apollo at Syracuse (c. 600 BC), names Kleomenes, although in what capacity (perhaps donor, architect, or contractor) we cannot tell given its poor preservation.⁵ Emphasis on political authority and social capacity should not, however, distract from matters of religious practice and the material expression of belief, since built space had the potential to intervene in, suppress, or enable patterns of behaviour within sanctuaries.

The central concern of this chapter is to delineate the constraints imposed by current approaches to early temples and identify a larger range of possible questions about them. It therefore constitutes a first step towards bringing the dis-

¹ For a review, see Mazarakis Ainian 2017.

² Morris 1998, 19–20; 2000, 273–276. *Contra* Morgan 2014. Barletta 2001, 21–29 is a recent reiteration of a traditional approach to architectural development, *contra* Wilson Jones 2014, chapter 2. I am grateful

to Alessandro Pierattini for extensive discussion of our mutual research interests (see now Pierattini 2022).

³ E.g. Prost 2010, 232–233.

⁴ On labour and energetics with particular reference to the Archaic Corinthia: Pierattini 2022, 225–228, app. 2, 3; Sapirstein 2021.

⁵ Shepherd 2015, 365–368; more generally, Umholtz 2002.

course around early construction into closer relation with the kind of approaches to materiality represented throughout this volume.

Temples, agency, and socio-political change

A widely cited narrative around the appearance of buildings constructed for purposes linked to cult (“temples” for short)⁶ draws on the idea that because city-state religion was a public concern, temple construction reflected the transfer of religious power from rulers to the collectivity, and was thus a key symbol of *polis* formation from the 8th century BC onwards.⁷ Both elements of the underlying equation—the position of the *polis* in our understanding of Greek religion and the assumptions surrounding construction—should be picked apart, although progress to date has been greater on the former than the latter.⁸

Past approaches to Crete illustrate exactly why it is important to clear away preconceptions about the socio-political significance of temples. Most accounts of early sanctuaries implicitly or explicitly treat Crete as exceptional, if they mention the island at all, and few studies of Cretan sanctuaries and religion attempt wider comparisons beyond the island.⁹ One of the factors cited in explanation is that despite a rich tradition of religious buildings of other forms throughout the Early Iron Age, the “canonical” Greek peripteral temple was, on present evidence, not adopted here until Hellenistic or even Roman times. This contributes to the view that Crete was fundamentally different in its development, and the island therefore tends to be side-lined in architecturally oriented discussions of temple development. Yet Crete is awkwardly large, rich, and widely connected to set aside in this way, and it is more likely that the difficulty lies with our questions and models than with the data themselves.

Significant differences certainly existed. Nowhere else in the Aegean do we find cult buildings in all major Late Minoan IIIC and later settlements (alongside more remote shrines, especially in caves), plus a widely shared image in the form of

the goddess with upraised arms.¹⁰ Yet there are more similarities than often allowed. An increasing weight of architectural evidence supports long-voiced objections to the idea that the 8th century BC marked a transformation in the physical form of sanctuaries across the Greek world following a phase of post-Bronze Age spatial indeterminacy.¹¹ Clear examples of pre 8th-century BC cult buildings on the Greek mainland include Building Στ at Mende Poseidi in the Chalkidiki¹² and the long sequence of temples at Kalapodi.¹³ It is also worth emphasizing the uncertainties surrounding sites such as Tegea, where evidence of cult activity dates back to the 10th century BC, but where we do not yet know the number or date of the structures which likely existed beneath the earliest excavated (8th-century BC) temple.¹⁴ This is not to diminish the importance of change in the physical form of sanctuaries from c. 750 BC onwards, merely to emphasize that the evidence is substantially more complex than sometimes allowed—all the more so if we take into account the potentially long history of use of portable objects for “stage setting” examined below.¹⁵

On Crete, greater regionalism and variety in the form of cult buildings from the late 10th century BC onwards (and especially from the 8th century BC), and in the extent and nature of their decoration, raises numerous questions about the functions performed in and around them.¹⁶ These included provision for private, institutional, or communal meals (*sys-sitia* or the Cretan *andreia*);¹⁷ the display of status and wealth (the armoured-lined hall at Afrati may be for cult and/or dining, for example);¹⁸ or as places for meetings of politicized/political institutions or for major celebrations (such as rites of passage, as suggested at Prinias, where Temple A was built in an area long used for ritual consumption).¹⁹ The fine (and perhaps blurred) line between private and civic activity, and the material overlap between “religious” and other forms of social/political ritual should come as no surprise.²⁰ The visual

⁶ “Temple” is here used as a shorthand term for a prominent sanctuary building in some way linked to cult practice and usually characterized by elevated architectural/artistic investment by contemporary standards. This very general definition allows us to treat temple structures as a group without prejudging the range of functions they may have served.

⁷ Snodgrass 1980, 58–62, a view most fully developed by Mazarakis Ainiian 1997.

⁸ De Polignac 2019; Morgan 2003, 142–155; 2017; Kindt 2009.

⁹ For critical overviews, see Haysom 2011; Prent 2005, 211–244. See also Haysom, *Chapter 10* in this volume.

¹⁰ Prent 2005, ch. 3 summarises the evidence, with discussion of the goddess image at 181–184; Prent 2009. Note however, commonalities beyond Crete: Marinatos 2000.

¹¹ Sourvinou-Inwood 1993 remains a classic critique; see also Pierattini 2022, ch. 1.

¹² Moschonissiotti 1998, 265–267.

¹³ Niemeier 2017.

¹⁴ Østby 2014, 13–26.

¹⁵ For a review emphasizing conservatism as well as change in late-8th and 7th-century BC architectural development, see Mazarakis Ainiian 2017. See also Haysom 2020.

¹⁶ Prent 2005, ch. 4 offers a synthetic overview.

¹⁷ Seelentag 2015, 394–397, 403–413.

¹⁸ Hoffmann & Raubitschek 1972; Viviers 1994, 244–249; Brisart 2011, 264–269; Prent 2005, 383–388.

¹⁹ D’Acunto 1995; Pautasso 2013 emphasizes a long history of food preparation and consumption (dating back to LMIIIC) in the area of the *eschara* of the Archaic Temple A.

²⁰ Rabinowitz 2014; Perlman 2010, 98–103 examines state-controlled arms dedications, attested epigraphically at Archaic Axos, in the context

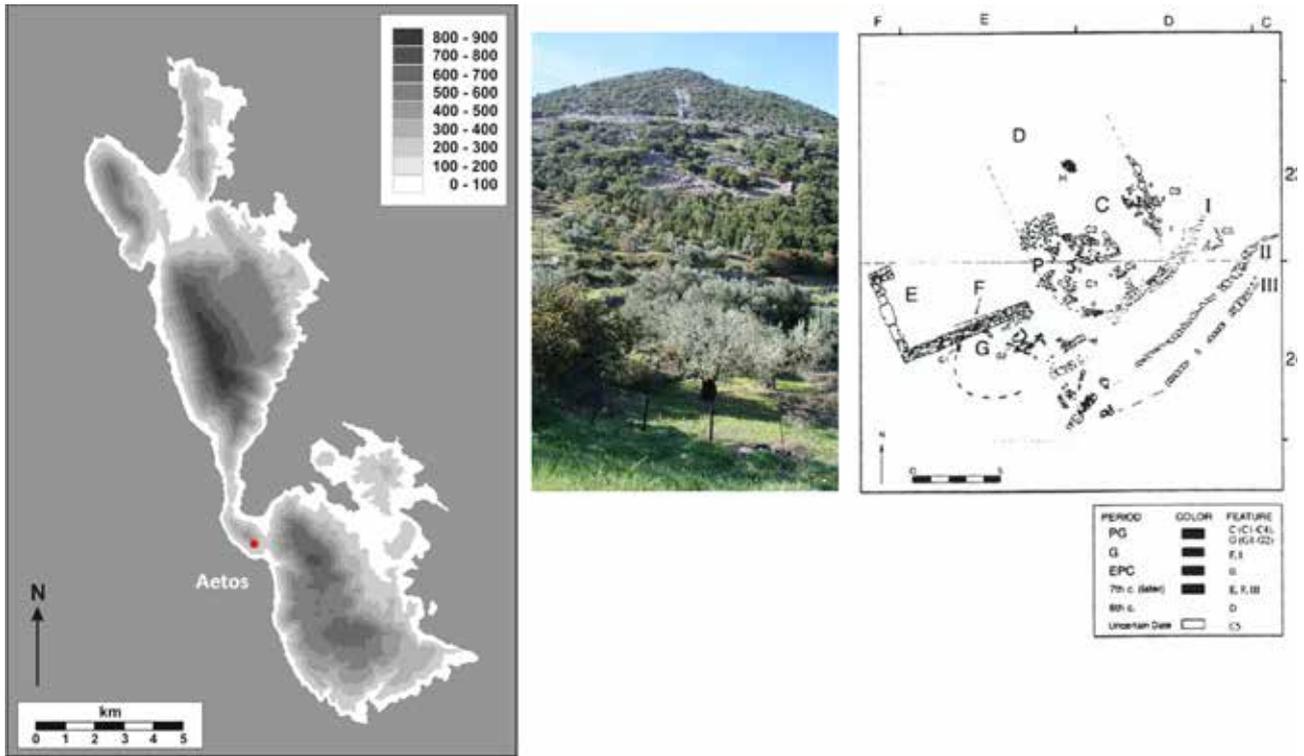


Fig. 1. Aetos: site location. Illustration: © Stavros Valley Project and author. Map by C. Hayward; view looking west from lower town to acropolis. Photograph: © C. Morgan; plan of principal Protogeometric to 7th-century BC buildings in the cairns area. Plan: © N. Symeonoglou.

language used in imagery on, in, and around the buildings to mark out and protect activities associated with them, and on a broader level the interaction between ritual and social groups and events, makes greater sense of the complexity and apparent blurring of artificial categories, and opens the way to more effective comparison with other parts of Greece.

Diversity, connection, and comparison

The costs of tailoring evidence to fit general models of sanctuary development may be illustrated by consideration of buildings in three very different communities, all located within the broad (and highly connected) ambit of the Corinthian Gulf.

AETOS

At Aetos on Ithaca, the development of the sanctuary in the central cairns area serves to illustrate the reductive effect of treating a religious building as a marker of one kind of collectivity (Fig. 1). Votives (largely redeposited) confirm the exist-

ence of a sanctuary in the central part of the settlement for much of the Early Iron Age. Whether any of the neighbouring long buildings which housed domestic and probably also ritual activity by the 11th century BC at the latest should be characterised as a temple remains a matter of debate.²¹

However, a growing wealth of small votives was concentrated in deposits outside these buildings from the late 8th century BC onwards.²² Prominent among them are items of personal ornament—*fibulae*, amulets, and especially beads (including large quantities of amber)²³ which could have been used in a variety of ways, from singleton pendants or seals to the composite necklaces which may have been personal, even “biographical” assemblages.²⁴ Absent or very rare are the tripods, bronze vessels, and arms and armour prominent at a second sanctuary in Polis bay, on the northeast coast of Ithaca.²⁵ The overall picture therefore suggests growing spatial differen-

of earlier practice at Afrati. On ritual: Pakkanen 2015, 26–30.

²¹ Symeonoglou 2002, ch. 1 offers the fullest review of the architectural evidence; Morgan 2017, 204–205.

²² Morgan 2011.

²³ Morgan 2011, 118–119.

²⁴ Hughes-Brock 1999 discusses potential combinations.

²⁵ Benton 1934–1935, 56–73.

tiation and complexity in the deployment of different types of material object both at Aetos and on Ithaca as a whole.

The role of built space in this varies. The ceramic record at Polis indicates that communal consumption was a central feature of cult activity probably from the 10th century BC onwards, with more costly bronze votives added from the 8th century BC, and a large terracotta sphinx safeguarding the site from the first half of the 7th century BC. Yet despite the size and value of certain offerings, there is no evidence of any structure, natural (i.e. the supposed Polis “cave”) or manmade, nor is there yet secure evidence of local settlement before the latter part of the 7th century BC.²⁶ The situation at Polis underlines the fact that large and/or costly portable dedications and cult buildings were not inextricably tied—buildings were only one way to safeguard such offerings.

At Aetos there is no unequivocal evidence for a separation of cult and domestic built space until the construction of cult Building E at some point in the 7th century BC.²⁷ Indeed, an unusually rich range of lighting equipment suggests that light and dark, interior and exterior, remained implicated in ritual throughout, with some of the most elaborately decorated Archaic pieces contemporary with or post-dating the construction of Building E.²⁸ Ritual vessels, such as terracotta tripods and *kernoi* used from Protogeometric times onwards, were also in some cases associated with buildings.²⁹ These too were more common from the 8th century BC onwards, when new forms and contexts of performance and display came into play. A consistent emphasis on fertility, the household, and personal identity is evident in, for example, the domestic scale of ritual dining sets, the personal ornament, and (from the later 8th century BC onwards) figurative iconography.³⁰ This too continued beyond the construction of Building E. The buildings in the heart of the settlement at Aetos were fundamentally implicated in the enactment of these interests via ritual and dedication. The offering of a cult building continued this process, and the fact of architecture itself was celebrated in terracotta dedications, notably a model roof (a feature frequently singled out as symbolic of the whole).³¹ On Ithaca, it is relatively straightforward to tease out issues of practice and agency, but this demands that we treat built spaces as artefacts within a matrix of relationships rather than as isolated indices of broader processes.

THERMON

The question of non-linear trajectories of development is well illustrated in the case of the sanctuary of Apollo at Thermon in Aetolia (*Fig. 2*). In the period between the destruction of the elite residence Megaron B in the late 9th or early 8th century BC and the construction of the first temple of Apollo around 630 BC, the footprint of Megaron B was developed into a kind of *temenos*. The rear room of the *megaron* was re-roofed to create a support building (perhaps a store or treasury), with the front area left open and containing an ash altar for holocaustic sacrifices and (slightly later) *bothroi* for offerings and animal sacrifices.³²

The most recent excavator of Thermon, Ioannis Papapostolou, argues convincingly that Megaron B was not a temple, although the placing of a sacrificial pit and platforms outside it (and lavish provision for feasting) may reflect its status as the seat of a leader.³³ Thereafter, as he shows, there is no evidence that the later cult relied upon this previous status, for example via hero or ancestor worship.³⁴ Whether the use of the ruins of Megaron B in the 8th- and 7th-century BC ensemble was a matter of simple convenience or drew on their perceived biographical qualities, the juxtaposition of different sacrificial contexts requires explanation. Papapostolou suggests that they met the needs of different worshipping groups (perhaps families from different parts of the region).³⁵ Not least due to its location, the shrine could have attracted varied and geographically diverse worshippers, making it necessary to consider questions both of geographical reach and of the potential interests behind the maintenance and development of different parts of the *temenos* infrastructure. Indeed, the *temenos* underwent a further rearrangement early in the 7th century BC, when the rear room was rebuilt, a new floor laid up to the altar, and further steps taken to define the sacred area; new focuses of non-holocaustic animal sacrifice then appeared. The fact that this arrangement was subsequently erased by the construction of a richly decorated temple *c.* 630 BC in turn raises questions about the agents involved in these changes and the degree of consensus involved.

The choice of this site for a sanctuary is of some interest. The wealth of the inhabitants of Megaron B is commonly attributed to Thermon’s strategic location to the northeast of Lake Trichonis, on a plain enclosed by mountains and with access to the main passes and river routes (via the Acheloos and Evinos) down to the Gulf and inland to the mountainous

²⁶ Morgan & Hayward 2021; Morgan 2008; Morgan forthcoming.

²⁷ Symeonoglou 2002, 32, 352–353.

²⁸ Morgan 2011, 116–117; Symeonoglou 2002, 197–202.

²⁹ Symeonoglou 2002, 173–208.

³⁰ Morgan 2006; 2011, 116.

³¹ Morgan 2001, 195–213; 2011, fig. 3; on roofs compare Gadolou 2015; 2019.

³² For a full account of the sequence, see Papapostolou 2008, 190–223.

³³ Papapostolou 2010, 8–11; Wardle & Wardle 2021 (advocating a link between feasting and cult practice).

³⁴ Papapostolou 2010, 12–22.

³⁵ Papapostolou 2008, 247–276.

interior of Aetolia and Evrytainia.³⁶ At present, Megaron B is unique in its local and regional context.³⁷ The 30 or more groups of Protogeometric and Geometric tombs which extend for almost 8 km along the ridge of Stamna towards Aitoliko indicate a prosperous society with a wealthy elite whose funerary rites featured ritualized drinking and dining.³⁸ At the head of the Gulf of Aitoliko, for example, the 109 Late Protogeometric burials so far excavated in the Kephlovrysi-Stamna tumulus include three cremations in bronze *lebetes* with rich textile remains.³⁹ But these burials cease in the late 9th or early 8th century BC. And while evidence of 8th- and 7th-century BC Aetolian settlement has grown rapidly over the past decade, especially along the south coastal, Kalydon is as yet the only settlement with an 8th-century BC sanctuary and a cult building (the Late Geometric apsidal Building D in the sanctuary of Artemis Laphria).⁴⁰

Chalkis, while extensively excavated, has not produced evidence of a public cult building, suggesting that communal rituals were enacted in another setting (perhaps in or around housing),⁴¹ while rescue excavation at ancient Makyneia has so far revealed only small parts of a late 8th-century BC and Archaic settlement and no evidence for cult.⁴² The challenge for the future, as the quantity of comparative data grows, will be to link the different forms of construction and portable object found at Thermon to settlement, sanctuary, and mortuary data from across the region, with the aim of reconstructing the multiple and shifting interests behind these swift changes in thinking about space, sacrifice and building in one small ritual area.

The case of Thermon reinforces the point that complex trajectories of sanctuary development are more common than we may allow and are not in themselves characteristic of any particular course of political development.⁴³ Physical remains may retain their potency even after a shrine is redeveloped, requiring a strategy to contain or exploit them. Sometimes this reflected one-off or occasional circumstances. At Kalapodi, for example, a long succession of temple buildings were erected on the same spot since the Late Bronze Age,⁴⁴ with no perceived need to preserve any particular structure beyond recognizing the significance of the precise place. Yet when the sanctuary was destroyed by fire, perhaps due to Persian action

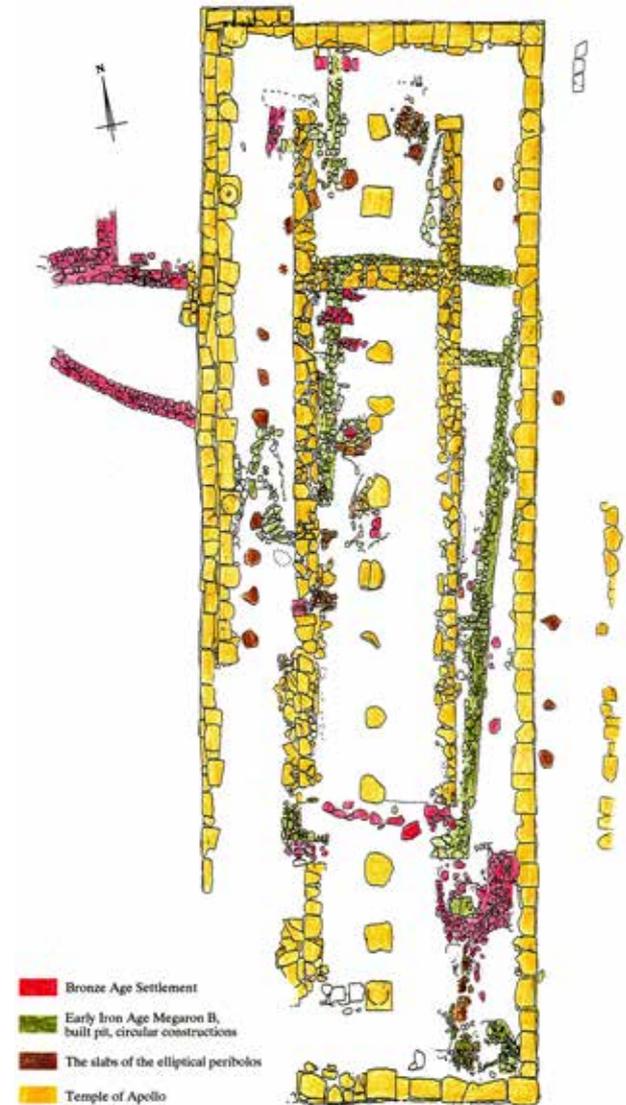


Fig. 2. Thermon: the sacred area and the ash altar in relation to the remains of Megaron B. © Archaeological Society of Athens; Plan: A. Goumaris.

in 480 BC (Hdt. 8.32–33), an exceptional response may reflect particular circumstances. A temporary hearth altar and offering bench (on which were placed objects more common as grave goods) were built within the ruins of the north temple and were in turn entombed within the Classical north temple begun in the mid-5th century BC.⁴⁵

³⁶ Papapostolou 2008, 3–4.

³⁷ Papapostolou 2008, 160–163, 253–264.

³⁸ Christakopoulou 2001; Christakopoulou-Somakou 2009; 2018; Stavropoulou-Gatsi 1980; 2011.

³⁹ Kolonas 2018; Kolonas *et al.* 2017.

⁴⁰ Barfoed 2019; Dietz 2019.

⁴¹ Houby-Nielsen 2020, 471–477.

⁴² Saranti 2018.

⁴³ Morgan 2003, ch. 3; Mackil 2013, 147–236. Analogous cases include that of Eleusis: Cosmopoulos 2014.

⁴⁴ Niemeier 2017.

⁴⁵ Felsch 2007, 19–20.

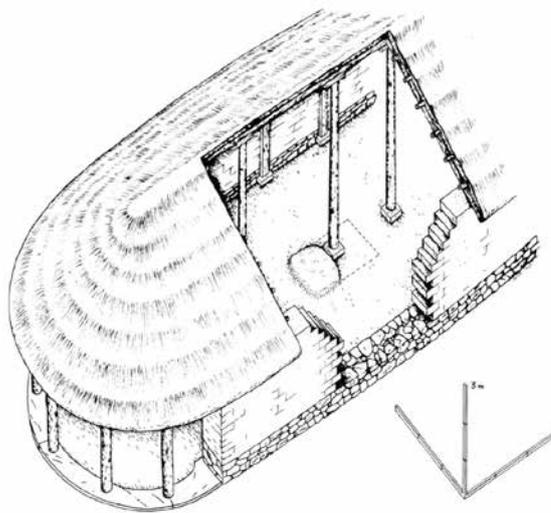


Fig. 3. Sanctuary of Poseidon at ancient Helike (Nikoleika): a) view of the altar from the northeast. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. Photograph: E. Kolia; b) axonometric reconstruction of the Geometric temple © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. Drawing: E. Kolia & N. Petropoulos.

HELIKE

The sanctuary of Poseidon at ancient Helike (modern Nikoleika) in Achaia presents a different response to the problem of reshaping ritual space (Fig. 3).⁴⁶ Here cult activity dates back to the Protogeometric period and was probably performed in the open air, although any associated structure could have been destroyed when the site was levelled for the construction of a temple at the very end of the 8th or the early 7th century BC.⁴⁷ At that time, the earlier, late 9th- or early 8th-century BC monumental altar, built of alternating layers of red-brown mud-brick and buff soil, was contained beneath the floor of the new building.⁴⁸ The plethora of votives found outside the temple suggests that a new offering place and altar were established beyond the boundaries of the excavated area, but plainly the “decommissioning” of the first altar did not leave it as rubble for recycling. As the excavator, Erophyli Kolia, notes, there are strong similarities with Thermon, where the 7th-century BC temple of Apollo covered the earlier altar;⁴⁹ yet when the Helike temple was replaced early in the 6th century BC, it was not on the same spot.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Kolia 2011.

⁴⁷ Kolia 2011, 221. Since 2020, excavation of a second plot to the east of the Geometric temple has revealed a further 8th-century BC structure adjacent to a deposit of consumption vessels and animal bone likely from ritual meals: *Archaeology in Greece Online* ID 8560; Anastasia Gadolou pers. comm.

⁴⁸ Kolia 2011, 212–217.

⁴⁹ Kolia 2011, 234.

⁵⁰ Kolia 2014.

Overall, the spectrum of attitudes to the remains of ritual structures revealed in the examples cited, from recycling to veneration, makes it plain that built features could have potency and agency, but that this need not reach beyond their period of direct use. Here too, close study of individual contexts is essential.

Materiality and architecture

A final point of critique concerns the different intellectual affordances of material typology and materiality. Here we return to architecture. By later Archaic and Classical times it is generally assumed that a temple was a highly desirable, if not an integral, part of a sanctuary, and that some consensus had emerged, at least at regional level, about its ideal form and appearance. Hence the creation of order architecture, noting also the likely role of circuits of craftsmen in sharing aspects of design and technology.⁵¹ Retrojecting this view in interpreting 8th- and 7th-century BC buildings has fostered a tendency to equate “advanced” architectural traits with the importance and influence of a building.⁵² But influence on what? Placing a particular building within a typology of monumental ar-

⁵¹ Pierattini 2022, ch. 3; Wilson Jones 2014, 33–60.

⁵² Barletta 2001, 21–29 rightly notes that the preservation of stone in “pre-order” architecture leaves certain buildings more prominent in developmental sequences; but preservation does not automatically mean prominence in antiquity.

chitecture and its orders is one thing, assessing its social and ritual context and affordance quite another.

In Corinth, for example, the fact that two temples built in quick succession—that of Apollo on Temple Hill in the city centre, *c.* 680 BC (*Fig. 4*), and that of Poseidon at Isthmia, with a *terminus post quem* of *c.* 690–650 BC⁵³—made extensive use of the local limestone, has fed an implicit equation of monumental architecture with stone and with temples.⁵⁴ But this is hindsight. From a 7th-century BC perspective, once the decision was taken to erect each building, existing technologies based on locally available raw materials were heightened to produce particular results. The Corinthian elite who likely made these decisions were already accustomed to dressed stone as the material of choice for often monumental sarcophagi (from Late Protogeometric onwards) and for key elements of their homes.⁵⁵

At Isthmia, where the evidence is better preserved, the wall blocks of the Archaic Temple were plastered: innovation in cutting was directed towards their setting, with minimal trimming to ensure fit and no real dressing of surfaces which were not intended to be visible.⁵⁶ Technological tradition aside, progressively greater use of stone in the walls of the two buildings was a practical solution to the problem of supporting a roof of composite terracotta tiles weighing 30–35 kg each.⁵⁷ The roofs, while more innovative, raise no difficulties of material given the local tradition of jar and then amphora manufacture using a similar fabric with mudstone temper; the tile moulding process was likewise adapted from mud-brick manufacture.⁵⁸ The precise wall dimensions required by the roof favoured the quarrying of blocks of relatively regular size, but this was hardly a radical demand.⁵⁹

More interesting are the implications for planning and supply arising from the unprecedentedly precise relationship between the elements of the building. It is interesting to consider who was implicated in the construction process and the extent to which the working practices developed built on and/or helped to create mobile technologies. In a study of Corinthian tile production, Philip Sapirstein concludes that “both the Corinth and Isthmia roofs could have been produced in a single potting season by a small team of fewer than 7 workers, one donkey and an ox cart.”⁶⁰ He further suggests that all of the composite roofs so far known—at least six, add-

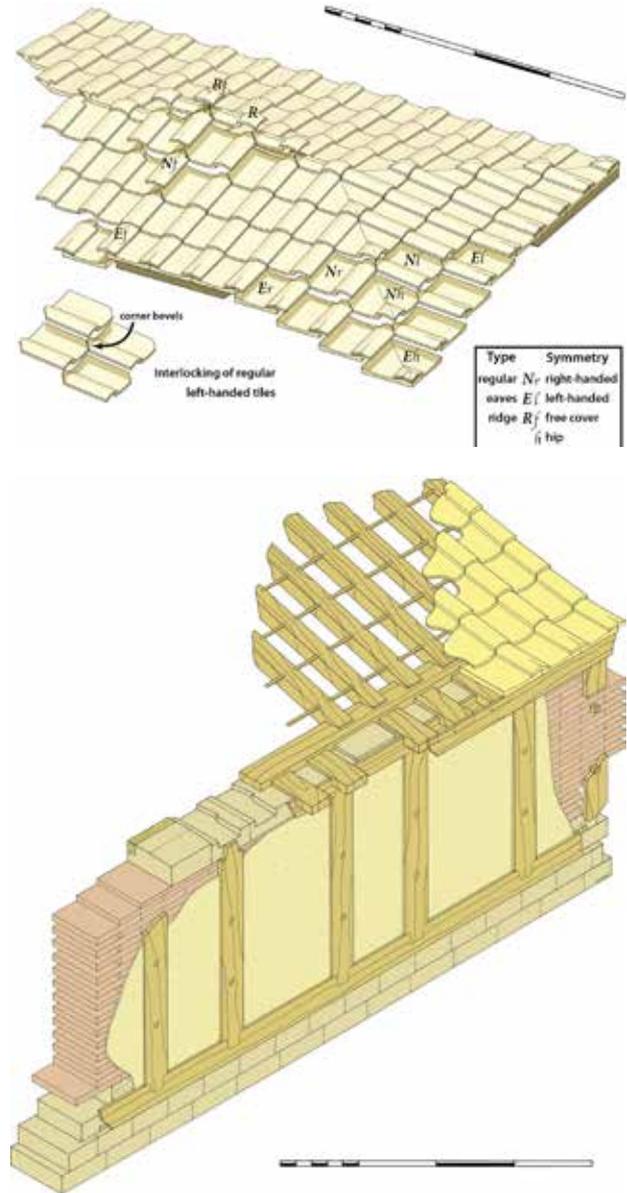


Fig. 4. Old Temple on Temple Hill, Corinth. Top: reconstruction of typical roof conditions at the ridge, hip, and edge; bottom: wall construction and junction with the roof. © Top: P. Sapirstein; bottom: R. Rhoades, Corinth Excavations.

ing one more at Corinth, at least two at Delphi, and at least one at Perachora—required less than a decade of summertime work, with the makers probably relocating, rather than keeping permanent workshops, to avoid the cost of moving heavy loads overland.⁶¹ The implications of technology transfer and mobility of craftsmen are potentially more significant in the medium-long term than the existence of any single building.

⁵³ Robinson 1976, 211–212, 224–235; Hemans 2015; Rhodes 2003.

⁵⁴ Morgan 2017.

⁵⁵ Brookes 1981; Hayward 2013; Pfaff 2007, 530–531; Pierattini 2022, 192–193, table 3.1; Sanders *et al.* 2014, 36–37.

⁵⁶ Hemans 2015, 42–49.

⁵⁷ Sapirstein 2009, 197.

⁵⁸ Sapirstein 2009; 2021; Hemans 2015, 50–53, 59.

⁵⁹ Hemans 2015, 42–49.

⁶⁰ Sapirstein 2008, ch. 8, quotation at p. 329.

⁶¹ Sapirstein 2009, 196 with bibliography.

Similar questions may be asked of clusters of early buildings elsewhere—in Achaia for example, where a good case for an early regional architectural style is based primarily on evidence from Ano Mazaraki and Nikoleika.⁶² But without wishing to diminish their significance, these questions follow from the fundamental problem of the rationale for the introduction or transformation of built space in sanctuaries, and engagement with this space on a practical, aesthetic, and conceptual level.

Literary sources privilege a standard set of reasons for building temples as part of acts of settlement foundation, as (usually communal) thank offerings for divine intervention, or in expiation. However, this generalised picture cannot be relied upon to explain the roots of the phenomenon in a series of novel decisions taken in the period from the 9th to 7th centuries BC. Indeed, the idea that the actual practice of religion focused on the altar as the place of sacrifice, leaving the temple as an added extra with no obvious single role, should encourage closer examination of the totality of evidence for the rationale behind early temple construction.⁶³ For the remainder of this chapter, I will pursue two aspects of this phenomenon—the complex material worlds into which cult buildings were added, and the relationship between building and religious imagery.

Cult buildings and material worlds

Assessment of the relationship between early cult buildings and trends in contemporary ritual practice and sanctuary-related behaviour, as well as the subsequent affordance of these buildings, must begin from the complexities of open-air sites.⁶⁴ Post-palatial continuities in aspects of material practice have been observed in several parts of the Greek world, a widely cited example being the burnt sacrifice, feasting, and use of the *kantharos* attested at Pylos and Mt Lykaion, and then at the Amyklaion and Olympia from the 11th century BC onwards.⁶⁵ Yet changes in setting are non-trivial, especially when one considers the sensory impact of ritual conducted on a different scale of social inclusion and with different lighting, visibility, and physical closure.⁶⁶ Interest in the impact on visitor perceptions of the layout and decoration of Bronze Age complexes⁶⁷ has rarely been extended to the use of space in early open air shrines, and the ways in which relationships and boundaries were made visible and equipment and offerings displayed and managed. While the structured

deposition of objects to create a (mutable) “picture” has been explored in relation to Late Bronze Age cult buildings, and recurs in discussion of divine imagery and buildings from the 8th century BC onwards (see below), it has not yet featured in consideration of those Early Iron Age sanctuaries which lacked buildings.⁶⁸

One might reasonably object that evidence on the necessary scale often comes from old excavations of long-lived sites such as Olympia or Delphi, where Iron Age material may be scattered or poorly recorded, and fine-grained spatial detail lacking.⁶⁹ Equally, an apparent reduction in the repertoire of material objects designed specifically for ritual (in comparison with the Late Bronze Age) may raise questions of visibility. Yet the picture is far from bleak. Figures and figurines are portable images *par excellence*, with an unbroken and highly inventive tradition,⁷⁰ even though iconographic treatment of ritual performance other than sacrifice and dedication becomes plentiful only from the late 8th century BC onwards (as, for example, the bronze group of masked figures from Petrovouni in Arkadia).⁷¹ So despite obvious limitations, the basic parameters can at least be explored.

The purely open-air phase at Olympia was among the longest in the Greek world. The simplest spatial distinction, between camping grounds and the sacred area (i.e. the earliest Altis which contained the altar, Early Helladic III burial mound visible near the later Pelopion, and space for athletic events), is delimited by the early course of the Kladeos and the position of wells containing “clean” debris (pots, fragmentary metal vessels, wood, tent pegs, spits for meat etc.).⁷² The remains of “dirty” activity such as the holding of animals for sacrifice, slaughter, butchery, and consumption present further problems. The slaughter of multiple animals by the altar risked a stampede and would also have been messy; the death of a single animal avoids the former problem, but the question of removing waste and separating useful secondary products (such as bone, hides, and fat) remains. The scarcity of evidence for meat processing in Greek sanctuaries may suggest that it was largely segregated and/or that particular attention was paid to cleaning.⁷³ Manufacturing (notably metal casting) also lay “around the margins”, although interestingly one of

⁶² Kolia 2011, 228–231.

⁶³ Barletta 2001, 22–23; Wilson Jones 2014, 16–27.

⁶⁴ A point also made, with different emphasis, by Wilson Jones 2014, ch. 1.

⁶⁵ Eder 2001; 2006, esp. 566–568; 2019; Stocker & Davis 2004.

⁶⁶ Hamilakis & Konsolaki 2004.

⁶⁷ Maran 2006; Thaler 2006.

⁶⁸ Haysom 2020.

⁶⁹ On Olympia, see Kyrieleis 2006, 27–55.

⁷⁰ For example, Vettters 2015 and Thurston 2015 document the long development from post-palatial city life through the Early Iron Age.

⁷¹ Voyatzis 1990, 45–46.

⁷² Kyrieleis 1992 conveniently summarises the topography of the early Altis. The contents of the earliest (7th-century BC) wells beneath the north wall of the stadium and in the southeast quarter exemplify this kind of debris: Gauer 1975, 216–218.

⁷³ McInerney 2014, 121–123; 2010, noting 153–169 on sacred land and pasture, 169–170 on the Early Iron Age origins of cattle sacrifice, and 183–189 on the commercial/managerial aspects of sacrifice and meat

the later functions of cult buildings elsewhere was to store raw materials (as noted in the Archaic temple at Isthmia).⁷⁴

Offerings of bronze and iron tripods, weapons and personal ornaments, and terracotta and bronze figurines have different implications. As objects implicated in prayer, as expressions of status (and thus perhaps rights within the sanctuary), and as pleasing gifts, their capacity to express the donor's desires and position before the community and the deity begs questions of size, material, and scale (in the sense of investment, manipulability, and visual qualities), "biography", placement especially in relation to the altar, and the length of time objects could be left in place. On the latter questions in particular, a small body of much later regulations reveals the kind of concerns that one might also envisage for this early period.⁷⁵

At Olympia, we lack direct evidence for the display of Early Iron Age dedications in the open air other than the location and contents of the "black layers" of mixed earth, ash, charcoal, and bone within which many were found. These layers can provide valuable information on a variety of matters, including distinctions between sacrificial debris and cult meals, the nature of wood or other organic materials used, the question of which artefacts constitute votive offerings and which may relate to other sanctuary activities, and the treatment of artefacts at the end of their use life.⁷⁶ The black layers represent the final deposition of objects which in some cases had been specially prepared. Bronze sheet was deliberately folded, and larger bronze vessels, notably tripods, cut up, with single pieces left in the black layer and the remainder presumably recycled.⁷⁷ But while bronze could be recycled (even if this was not always done, to judge from often large pieces deposited in wells), rusted iron and broken terracotta are of little use other than in landfill.

Fine-grained spatial analysis of an early sanctuary remains a wish; the Olympia deposits, while rich, were levelled and evidently raked over perhaps on many occasions. But we can at least see how acts of communal consumption and performance, participation and piety, were entwined in the social rivalries, profit, and controlling behaviour which, together with religious belief, governed the handling of the "stuff" of the gods. In a space of unwritten rules, conventions, and be-

liefs, new buildings had the potential to disrupt as well as to enhance or enable.

At Olympia, Joachim Heiden's Roof 1 currently constitutes the earliest evidence for a post Bronze Age monumental building, although neither its form nor its purpose is known.⁷⁸ Dating evidence consists in two pan tiles found in well SO118,⁷⁹ a context for which a helmet of the third quarter of the 7th century BC gives a *terminus ante quem* (although this is a late outlier in the fill as a whole, and an earlier date for the tiles remains possible). Heiden cautiously linked Roof 1 to Corinth and proposed that the building occupied part of a plot cleared for the construction of the Nymphaeum. This is plausible if unprovable, but it neither indicates a date nor favours any one of a range of permutations for the origins of craftsmen, materials, and design. Comparison with the Corinth and Isthmia roofs is also plausible, but on the available evidence only a preconception of Corinthian pre-eminence dictates an east–west flow of ideas. Heiden ascribed his Olympia Roof 2 to Sikyon because two pieces were found in the foundation of the later Sikyonian treasury, and because Pausanias (6.19.2) records the construction of a treasury by Myron, tyrant of Sikyon, in the year of the 33rd Olympiad (648 BC). If correct, this would indicate a date later than the Corinth temple and closer to Isthmia—and it is also possible that the 6th-century BC temple at Sikyon had an early Archaic predecessor, although this cannot be dated precisely.⁸⁰

In both regions, the insertion of buildings coincides with changes in the range and diversity of offerings, as well as in the equipment used in the consumption of food and drink (potentially with greater diversity in portion size and in the material, form, and decoration of vessels).⁸¹ At Isthmia, debris left *in situ* shows that by the time of its destruction by fire in the second quarter of the 5th century BC, the first temple had come to be used as a store for a wide range of objects, from consumables and equipment to items of special value (including some in discrete repositories), votive offerings (perhaps after a period on display), and materials for their repair.⁸² Comparison may also be made with Tegea, where finds from the two earliest buildings (which span the period from the mid-8th century to c. 675 BC) indicate a role as a store for pottery (especially drinking vessels), votives, and personal ornament. At Tegea, a repository in the porch of the younger Building 1 would have been generally accessible to visitors wishing to leave offerings in a way that the building's interior may not have been.⁸³ There is thus a straightforward case for buildings

consumption by the Classical period. See also Ekroth, *Chapter 6* in this volume.

⁷⁴ Risberg 1992. Gebhard 1998, 102 notes the storage of fragmentary metal vessels in the Archaic temple at Isthmia for recycling. On waste and recycling in the early Greek world, see Lindenlauf 2000; 2006.

⁷⁵ Summarised by Bookidis 2010, 16–18.

⁷⁶ Bocher 2015.

⁷⁷ Baitinger 2021; Bocher 2015, 53–55; Pakkanen 2015, 32–38. On breakage as an aspect of ritual, Renfrew *et al.* 2015, 386–390, 556.

⁷⁸ Heiden 1995, 12–18.

⁷⁹ Heiden 1995, 15–16, 171–172.

⁸⁰ Krystalli-Votsi & Østby 2014, 198–199.

⁸¹ Morgan 2017; forthcoming.

⁸² Gebhard 1998.

⁸³ Nordquist 2013.

as offerings with the capacity to enhance and transform ritual behaviours via storage and the provision of new qualities of interior space.

Cult buildings and ritual images

Returning to the question of imagery and the implication of built space in “stage setting”, a prominent argument in previous work on the rationale for early temples (notably that of Walter Burkert)⁸⁴ emphasizes the import of eastern ideas of buildings to house cult images. The much larger problem of what constitutes a “cult image” is beyond the scope of this chapter.⁸⁵ For present purposes, I focus on the general category of relatively large freestanding figures or statues which depict deities or appear to be directly implicated by their subject or placing in the performance of worship.

Such figures can of course be found inside buildings. An obvious example is the set of three bronze *sphyrelaton* figures associated with the cult building on the saddle at Dreros and interpreted as representing the triad of Apollo, Leto, and Artemis, although these may be up to 50 years later than the building itself.⁸⁶ One exceptional case, that of Ephesus, is considered further below. Another consists of a large piece of burnt wood found in front of a limestone base inside the west end of the *cella* of the Middle Geometric II South Temple 6 at Kalapodi. This was interpreted by the excavator, Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier, as a *xoanon*, and corroboration of Pausanias’ view that cult statues developed from primitive *xoana* in “primeval” materials.⁸⁷ By the mid-8th century BC there was a long tradition at Kalapodi of storing precious objects inside well-fitted temples: the wooden feature is certainly large and its preservation unusual, but its interpretation is open to discussion. Even if one accepts a cult function, it is a major step to see it as a *xoanon* in the Pausanian sense, not least as this runs counter to the current consensus of opinion on the development of the concept in ancient and modern thought.⁸⁸ A third potential exception, a supposed early statue base inside the Samian Heraion, was found in pieces and in secondary deposition; its date was assumed from its findspot at the lowest foundation of the southern *ante* of the first *Hekatompedon*, and its function is a matter of supposition.⁸⁹

However, the larger divine, ritual and/or apotropaic figures found across the Greek world through the 7th century BC were mostly portable (so could be set up in any combination or context)⁹⁰ or monumental, in some cases to the point of being impractically large for any building. Striking among the latter are the Naxian dedications to Apollo and Artemis at Delos, noting that the dedicatory inscription of the colossal male *kouros* refers to the cutting of statue and base from the same “stone”, perhaps meaning the same block, thus adding a feat of workmanship to the offering.⁹¹ As *agalмата* or pleasing offerings, figures could protect places and articulate worship whatever their size. Experiment with size was a broader later 8th- and 7th-century BC interest (be it the monumentality or the miniaturism liable to transform the function of an object),⁹² but whatever the result, these figures played an important role in setting the stage for ritual. Their coincidence with built space brought together ideas which could develop in different ways in different parts of the Greek world, as we will see presently in the case of 7th-century BC Ephesus. On the Greek mainland, the earliest secure evidence for fixed divine images in temples dates to the 6th century BC and tends to emphasize works in valuable materials such as gold and ivory. But ultimately even material was no guarantee of a temple setting—for example, the eleven 6th-century BC chryselephantine statues from the so-called Halos deposits in the central area of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi may have come from a treasury.⁹³

Overall, it is helpful to take a wider view of cult buildings as in various ways framing and enhancing rituals which may involve portable or fixed imagery. Furthermore, temples were themselves blank canvases to which figurative decoration could be added in different places and different media, a practice which developed rapidly from the late 8th century BC onwards as we have seen in the case of Crete. The earliest extant example is probably the late-8th century BC limestone frieze from Chania, assuming that it belongs to a religious building.⁹⁴ A wide range of securely associated evidence then followed, from wall paintings inside the *cella* of the mid-7th century BC south temple at Kalapodi and perhaps outside the Archaic temple at Isthmia, to the warrior frieze carved into the wall of the second Heraion at Samos (c. 670–650 BC).⁹⁵ The decoration of a small number of the model buildings or

⁸⁴ Burkert 1988; 2013, 88–92; Barletta 2001, 23–24.

⁸⁵ Scheer 2000, with a review of scholarship at pp. 4–8.

⁸⁶ Prent 2005, 284–289.

⁸⁷ Niemeier 2017—he also notes (p. 328) the term “*sanis*” or plank applied by Callimachus to an early image from the Samian Heraion, citing Romano 1980, 250–251 (see also p. 258 on the Geometric Heraion).

⁸⁸ Donohue 1988; 1997; Scheer 2000, 19–21.

⁸⁹ Buschor & Schliel 1933, 154, 161; I thank Georg Herdt for drawing this reference to my attention and for discussion of the problem.

⁹⁰ For a summary of the evidence for the most common medium, terracotta, see Bookidis 2010, 35–41, note also the earlier coil-built sphinx from the shrine in Polis bay on Ithaca, Morgan 2008.

⁹¹ Bruneau & Ducat 2005, 85–89, 177–181; D’Acunto 2008.

⁹² Coldstream 2011; Gimatzidis 2011; Luce 2011.

⁹³ Lapatin 2001, 57–60; Amandry 1991, 191–195, 199–202. Topography of the central area: Jacquemin & Laroche 2014.

⁹⁴ Pierattini 2022, 161–162, fig. 2.38.

⁹⁵ For a review of the evidence, see Marconi 2007, 1–28, noting also Niemeier *et al.* 2012.

parts of buildings dedicated at Greek sanctuaries plays on the relationship between structure, votive object, ritual action, and image: a particularly rich example is a late-8th century BC model roof dedicated at the sanctuary of Poseidon at ancient Helike (*Fig. 5*), which features a chariot race, the dedication of a prize tripod to the deity, and perhaps also the abduction of an elite maiden.⁹⁶

Cult buildings and the organisation of space

Imagery provides one answer to the question of how buildings could be embedded within the established framework of ritual space. A second line of approach is to consider how buildings connected structurally with the surrounding area. Discussion so far has focused on enclosed space (emphasizing the storage capacity of temples), although the actual degree of closure is an important question. Painted and carved decoration inside temples was clearly intended to be seen, highlighting the need to define rights of access. The blending of interior and exterior to create new intermediate, sheltered space, is a further step; there is something of this quality in the porch of Building 1 at Tegea noted above. At Yria on Naxos, for example, the 9th-century BC first *oikos* sheltered an offering table which had been in use since the end of the Bronze Age; by the third building phase, *c.* 700 BC, a colonnade framing the facade provided an intermediate gathering space.⁹⁷ The earliest independent stoa structures, found in Asia Minor, the Peloponnese, and Magna Grecia, followed later in the century.⁹⁸

A particularly striking illustration of changing conceptions of built space in relation to ritual action is the building sequence in the Artemision at Ephesus during the 7th century BC (*Fig. 6*). The hilltop site of the temple had been a cult place from the late 11th century BC, with substantial evidence for the offering of votives, sacrifice, and the preparation and consumption of food. The potential contents of the cookpots, cups, and *skyphoi* found here—meat, grain, and wine—have different implications for the supply and storage of resources, labour, and the sensory experience of preparation and serving.⁹⁹ The hilltop was levelled for the construction of the first temple in the second quarter of the 7th century BC (*c.* 660–640 BC). This was a small peripteral structure, framed by the blended space of the colonnade (in analogous fashion to Yria), with a double row of interior columns to sup-



Figs. 5a–c. Terracotta roof model from the sanctuary of Poseidon Helikonios. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. Photographs: A. Gadolou & N. Petropoulos.

⁹⁶ Gadolou 2015, 270–274; see also Gadolou 2019.

⁹⁷ Bournia 2002.

⁹⁸ Coulton 1976, 22–23, 26–30.

⁹⁹ Kerschner 2011; 2017, 12–32; Kerschner & Prochaska 2011, 76–77.

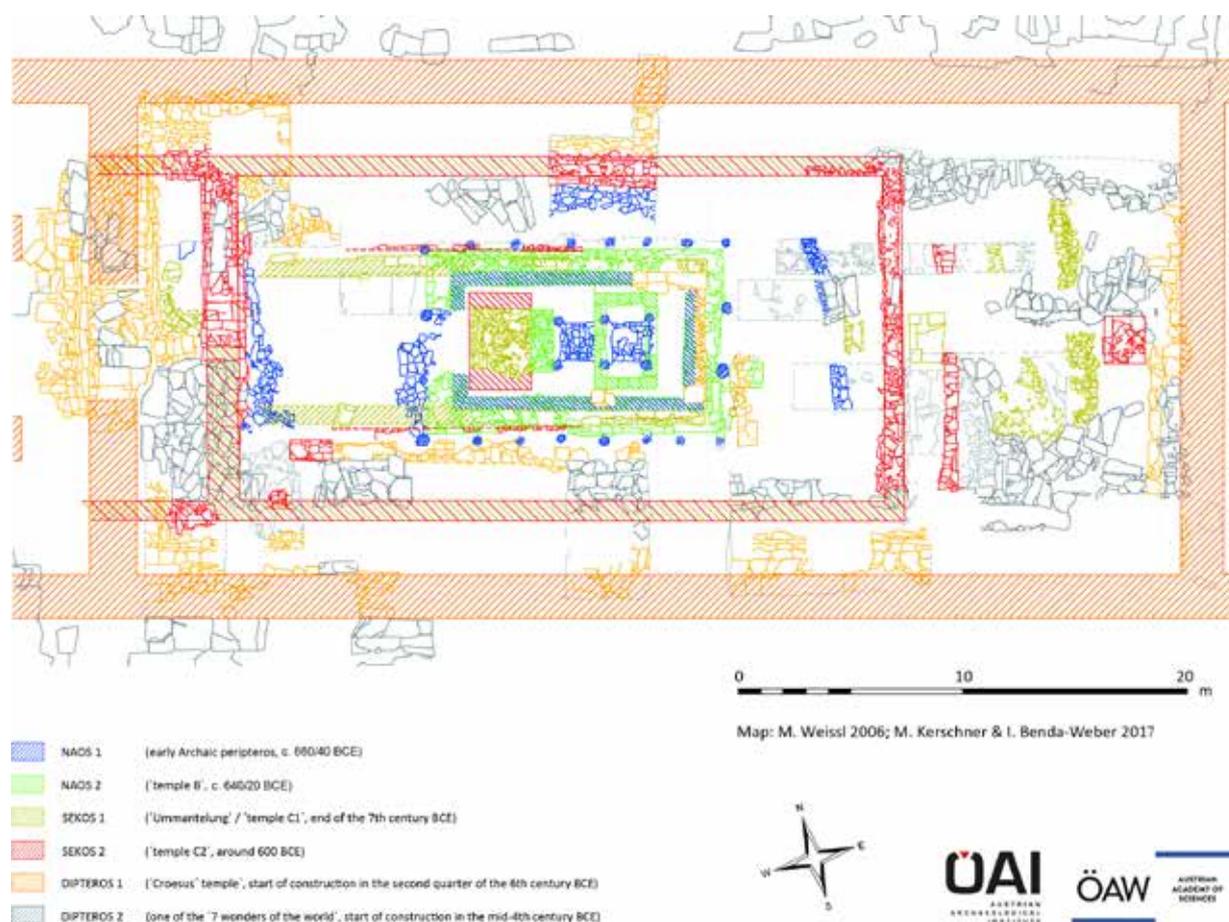


Fig. 6. Early structures within the sekos of the dipteral marble temples of Artemis at Ephesos: temples and contemporaneous altars and bases.
 © Austrian Archaeological Institute/Austrian Academy of Sciences/Ephesus Excavations. Plan: M. Weissl 2006; M. Kerschner & I. Benda-Weber 2017.

port the roof. Inside, a stone base may have belonged to an altar, offering table, or support for a cult image; its exact function cannot be determined because the top surface is lost. If the interior structure was an altar, this would imply that the building housed acts of sacrifice previously performed outside. However, given the uncertainty of the identification and the constraints of space, the most recent excavator, Michael Kerschner, suggests that sacrifice and food preparation may have continued in a new location outside, with offerings then brought onto the table inside.¹⁰⁰

This building was replaced on the same footprint by Temple 2 c. 640/620 BC; this stone-walled *cella* did not have an exterior colonnade and its interior was substantially replanned. The floor level was raised (with the so-called “pot hoard” of electrum coins inserted into the clay levelling layer

as a foundation offering), and two stone bases constructed. Even though their top surfaces are also lost, the existence of two structures strengthens the case for a statue base as well as an offering table, especially as a group of some 1,500 votives in precious materials (silver, gold, ivory and amber) was deposited during the reconstruction, perhaps as ornament for the goddess.¹⁰¹ If an image of the goddess was set up in the *cella* at this time, this would have enhanced and complemented activity elsewhere in the sanctuary, since the established practice of dedicating often quite large figures (including composite statuettes in bone, ivory and other materials) also grew more prominent.¹⁰² It would also make it more likely that the *cella* of Temple 2 was roofed, even though there is no evidence of internal columns to support a roof.

¹⁰⁰ Kerschner & Prochaska 2011, 77–82; Kerschner 2017, 33–43; 2020, 198–206.

¹⁰¹ Kerschner & Prochaska 2011, 82–88; Kerschner 2017, 43–52; 2020, 206–225. Amber: Naso 2013. “Pot hoard”: Kerschner & Konuk 2020.

¹⁰² Bammer 1992; Muss 2007.

Late in the 7th century BC (c. 630–600 BC), however, the building was replaced by two successive open-air courts (sekos 1 and 2) almost three times the size of the previous temple.¹⁰³ These courts contained a small central roofed shrine for the cult image. This relationship between space, image, priest and/or worshipper was continued on even larger scale (in terms of both size and cost of materials) in the 6th century BC Artemision (*Dipteros* 1), enhanced by the addition of a colonnade and the use of figurative *columnae caelatae* on the front side of the temple to accompany the worshipper into the “forest of columns” around the building.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

Numerous questions surround the insertion of cult buildings into sanctuaries. The decisions taken and solutions adopted affected the way in which buildings then operated as material objects within sacred space. Yet somehow, this important area of study has fallen into a gap between architecture-focused research and an unhelpfully reductive emphasis on political development and the rise of the *polis*. Reposing the problem in terms of materiality opens the way for more sophisticated discussion both of technology and the experience of Early Iron Age and Archaic Greek religious practice. This chapter has served to delineate a set of questions liable to engage comparative discussion and to chart connections on local and regional scales in the flow of ideas and practices.

This is more than period-specific curiosity. Since order architecture implies a greater degree of consensus that buildings of a certain function and status should look a certain way, the sheer complexity of the Early Iron Age inheritance throws into sharp relief the question of how and why such a consensus was reached. This is the next step from the developments described here, and a larger one than often envisaged.

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¹⁰³ Kerschner & Prochaska 2011, 88–91; Kerschner 2017, 56–58; 2020, 225–238.

¹⁰⁴ Kerschner 2020, 235–238.

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