

Introduction / Archaeology of Sanctuaries

MSFAU Journal of Social Sciences special issue of Spring 2019 on Archaeology of Sanctuaries has been prepared with the aim of presenting the studies about the sanctuaries of Classical Antiquity and Early Christianity Periods. Thus, it was expected from authors to prepare papers within the framework of various disciplines such as Archaeology, Ancient History Anthropology, Philology or within interdisciplinary studies, and to present an original development by discussing new findings or by reinterpreting existing datas.

Archaeology of sanctuaries can be briefly defined as the study of material cultural remains associated with rituals (Blakely, 2013, p. 2). In ancient Greek and Roman cultures, religious activities have a great importance in social life. One may propose that religious beliefs in antiquity were mainly structured around rituals and lack a definite doctrine of worship. Moreover, they do not have a dogma defining the divine powers, they vary widely in the region, and perhaps the most importantly, the relationship between humans and the gods was organized by communal activities (Bruit-Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel, 1999, p. 27). Especially because of their intense relationship with social life, ancient religious beliefs and rituals have always been one of the most important aspect of the ancient history studies. However, the identification and interpretation of material culture associated with cults and rituals constitute a neglected part in these investigations, and the increasing importance of such studies corresponds to a relatively recent field within the discipline of ancient history. Naturally, the focus of this research area, which is under the control of archaeology, is the examination of finds such as architectural remains, various gift objects or remains of sacrifices from the sanctuaries.

While the ancient Greek and Roman deities have long been a part of our popular culture, the characteristics of the ancient temples and their architectural orders are known by a large community, and beautiful ancient statues decorate many museums, scientific studies on the religion of antiquity are paradoxically limited. Likewise, there are hundreds of books about the ancient sculpture and architecture, while relatively few has been written under the title of cult or ritual archaeology. As a result, it is surprisingly rare to see publications where archaeological and philological materials were combined to interpret religious evidence. In this context, if we take a brief look at the history of the studies associated with the rituals of antiquity, we can observe the two basic paradigms ruled for a long time. The paradigm that had a wider and longest effect in the discipline, was to investigate the “psychological” and “intellectual” characteristics of the religion (Morris, 1993, p. 15). Basically, it consists of the study of ancient texts and epigraphical sources to understand concepts such as “god”, “sin” or “other world”, which are usually inspired from the Christian theology. Also, the proponents of this paradigm are interested to introduce the basic rules on the organization of religious ceremonies such as sacrifice, votive process or procession. The alternative paradigm can be defined as “ritualist” and it had a less impact and rest in a relatively shorter period. The focus of the research area is to try to understand the position of religious activities in social relations and the evolution of the primitive religions towards more complex religions by investigating ancient texts and inscriptions, but they also include the archaeological data in the evaluation process (Morris, 1993, p. 22).

It can be said that the research area, which is shaped around these two paradigms, has been monopolized by the researchers of Ancient History and Religion History for a long time. On



the other hand, if we evaluate the studies of classical archaeologists in the context of religious studies, one of the most striking feature is that, archaeological investigation of important sanctuaries, especially Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, constitute one of the most rooted practices of discipline (Dyson, 2006, pp. 76-85). Naturally, these studies have exposed a significant number of material culture products. The inscriptions, which constitute an important part of these finds, were mainly observed by historians and philologists who study the history of religion because they display important data about the activities and sacred laws of the sanctuaries. On the other hand, archaeologists seem to be more interested in the artistic values of the architectural and sculptural products recovered in these areas. Thus, in a large part of the past two centuries they have mainly intended to describe and to catalog the objects found in archaeological excavations (Osborne, 2004, p. 3). The practice of highlighting the artistic values of objects has led to the neglect of many “seemingly” insignificant finds from the important sanctuaries for almost two centuries. In fact, to collect and evaluate non-precious materials or bone residues which provide information about the ritual practices and sacrifices is actually a habit that has been acquired at a much later date in the history of excavations. Moreover, symbolic meanings and social functions of these objects also seem to have been ignored most of the time. Therefore, especially in the excavations carried out before the Second World War, it is often impossible to question the relationship between various objects coming from the same context and to illuminate the details of the ritual they are used in.

However, from the 1960s and 70s onwards, this situation started to change by the influence of the structuralist / anthropological approaches of the Paris School, and by the impact of New Archaeology. The latter considered the culture as a system, and classical archaeologists started to interpret the findings as evidence for these systems. From on, it can be observed that while most of the ancient historians continue to be interested in “psychology”, archaeologists who were also influenced by the studies of semiotics invented by linguists, accept these new ideas by adopting the idea of “reading” the material culture products (Morris, 1993, p. 25). Another effect of this change is that the level of archaeological documentation has greatly increased and that documenting the context as well as the stratigraphy has been transformed into a very important part of the archaeological record. The importance given to the context has provided a better understanding of the relationships of different objects in the horizontal plane, and the higher standard of archaeological documentation made it possible to examine small archaeological remains such as bones or plants which were previously not part of the archaeological record. New Archaeology also suggested that settlement systems should be perceived as a whole with their environment. As a result , archaeological research started to combine the data from the excavations which usually focus on city centers with that from the archaeological surveys which are systematically collected from the environs (Blakely, 2014). As a natural consequence of this development, different locations related to rituals such as caves, rural sanctuaries or holy groves, which were rarely found in archaeological records before, were also included in the analysis and synthesis processes. Such investigations can also be supported by evidence from inscriptions and ancient texts, iconographic narrative in different media, and landscape analysis. The understanding and interpretation of all these gathered data associated with rituals doubtlessly improves our understanding of the nature of religious activities in sanctuaries, and this insight gives a new perspective to our efforts to understand the beliefs of a society by their cultural, psychological or social aspects (Morris, 1993, p.15). One of the important indicators of the development in the discipline is that the analysis of the ancient cities include data from their activities in the periphery, and



therefore the evaluation of archaeological data from a more holistic perspective.¹ As a result, the newly created discipline of landscape archaeology, defines meaningful landmarks for communities and evaluates the rituals of a community as a geography-related experience.

The special issue of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Journal of Social Sciences should not be considered independent from the all these developments in the discipline and from contemporary paradigms. First, the preparation of this volume by MSGSU Archaeology Department can be interpreted as an indication of the adoption of the epistemological change observed in cult research in the current archaeology practice, when ritual research has become one of the most important research areas of the discipline of Classical Archaeology. Another consequence of the epistemological change is to rejuvenate the existing studies by new studies from fields such as Archaeology, Ancient History, Anthropology, Philology, or by interdisciplinary research in order to present new findings in existing studies on sacred spaces, or to bring an original new interpretation to the existing research. When the titles of the articles in this issue are examined from this perspective, it can be seen that from the survey data to the museum studies, and from numismatic research to the reading of ancient texts, contributions from all fields of ancient researches are included.

The understanding and interpretation of all the clues associated with rituals by a new understanding naturally enhances our knowledge of the nature of religious activities in the sanctuaries. Thus, this insight gives a new perspective to the efforts to understand the psychological or social aspects of beliefs in a society. If we take a brief look at the titles of the articles, it can be observed that in the future, one of the greatest research practice on the archaeology of cults will be archaeological surveys, because, this research practice makes it possible to examine the relationship of religion with the geography in a holistic way. In this file, there are articles following this trend, which evaluate the information obtained from the findings of the surveys. Another area of investigation is to interpret, by examining the archaeological data, how the religious geography of a city is shaped by the influence of religious culture and also how the sacred places react to the changes in the religious culture. Another research topic is the revision of the old excavation findings in the light of a new paradigms. This review included the reevaluation of materials that were neglected since they had no obvious artistic value, and a contextual reexamination of the groups of finds that were published independently. These investigations may also provide a better understanding of the economic activities associated with religious activities.

Zeynep Koçel Erdem's study reveals the findings of the author's survey of the Gallipoli peninsula (Thrace Chersonese), and presents an analysis of the original findings associated with the ancient cults and cult areas in the countryside. Thus, this article derives interesting new results about the cults of the Thracian gods and their beliefs, which had been ignored until now.

Hüseyin Erpehlivan's study also presents an evaluation of the cults and sanctuaries in the Archaic and Classical Periods in vicinity of the Propontis, in the northwest Anatolia. Within the scope of the study, not only are ancient and modern sources but also author's field research and published artefacts considered. In conclusion, both ethnic diversity in the region and the broad scope of local cults and the features of sanctuaries were carried out.

Another similar study is the assessment by Elif Koparal of rural temples in the Klazomenaian khora. This study is an indicator of how current studies attempted to comprehend the cultural topography of a city as a whole by evaluating the ancient cities together with their surroundings areas.

¹ It is possible to assume that Anthony Snodgrass was made the pionerring reseraches but the real shift of the paradigm should date after the Polignac's book in 1984.



Kenan Eren's evaluations on archaic gift objects found in the sanctuaries of Miletus can be considered as an extension of the same approach. The author tried to evaluate the roles of different sanctuaries in the city's pantheon by examining the city center and countryside as a whole through the results of the long-standing excavations in the city and its surroundings.

The article by Esen Ögüş examines the modifications that sanctuaries and cities, particularly necropoleis, of Asia Minor went through in Late Antiquity (roughly the fourth-seventh centuries C.E.), by focusing on the conversion of the Temple of Aphrodite in Aphrodisias into a church. The study reveals how the mental conflicts between pagans and Christians changed the cultural life and the sacred geography of a city.

Reconsideration of previously unremarked or unrecognized finds to understand cult activities is one of the natural consequences of the recent developments in archaeological practice. Thus, some of the articles in this volume also provide examples to this phenomenon.

Christine Özgan examines the findings from the Metroon in Kolophon, and shows that ancient religious centers have different functions, and sometimes there are extensive economic activities within them. Therefore, beyond the religious symbolism of sanctuaries, this article illuminates the economic and social importance for the cities they are connected to.

Dinçer Savaş Lenger's article also makes an important contribution to the understanding of the relationship between the sanctuaries and the local economy. The author, through the Panegyris coins that were struck in the city of Seleukia-Tralleis, evaluates how sanctuaries struck coins during the religious festivals in order to provide a single instrument of payment to facilitate the exchange and monetize the festival organization with the applied exchange rate system.

Arda Bülbül's work can also be evaluated in relation with the economic activities around the sanctuaries. The author assesses the existence of a local workshop which can be related to the production of votive gifts by evaluating the "Naiskos stele with the figure of sitting Goddess", which was discovered in the ancient city of Perinthos, in Tekirdağ.

The volume also includes examples of reinterpretation of archaeological and written documents in order to understand the specific features of individual buildings. There are also articles interested by the archaeological and the epigraphic evidence of the distribution of a particular cult into a wider geography.

In this context, Gülgün Koroğlu's study presents a detailed examination of the iconography of the figures and compositions related to the Christian faith on the door frame of the west gate of the West Church of the Alahan monastery, an important pilgrimage center belonging to the Early Byzantine period.

The study of Işık Şahin and Ebru Güven on the Kabeiros / Kabeiroi Cult is related to the spread of the cult according to ancient texts, inscriptions and coins. Also, they tried to observe the distinctions between the masculine semi-gods such as Korybantēs, Kouretēs, Dioskouroi, Daktyloi and Megaloi Theoi.

Gamze Polat's article of some examples of the sanctuaries of Mother Goddess in Western Anatolia gives information about both the open air sanctuaries dedicated to the Goddess and the Metroons built within the city. Thus, it also provides information about the developing social status of the cult which found itself a strong place in the Hellenic and Roman pantheon and its place in the city life.

Finally, Ferit Baz's article, by investigating the ancient texts and epigraphic documents, discusses the approach of the emperor Tiberius, who inherited the Roman throne from Augustus, to the imperial cult, as well as some cults and divine honors established for him.



In the end, our call for this issue, corresponded with original studies relevant with the latest research practices of the field. Articles of the issue bring together researchers from different levels of the academic ladder, from doctoral students to the established professors, and this diversity offers us a perspective about the studies regarding the cult archaeology in Turkey. We hope that this issue, which brings together articles by researchers who are trying to find answers to different problems related to the archaeology of sanctuaries by using different materials and different viewpoints, provides inspiration for new researches in the field.

References

Blakely, S. (2014). Religion, Greek, Archaeology of. C. Smith (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. New York: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_1437.

Bruit-Zaidmann, L., Schmitt-Pantel, P. (1999). *La religion grecque dans les cités à l'époque classique*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Dyson, S.L. (2006). *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Morris, I. (1993). Poetics of Power : The Interpretation of Ritual Action in Archaic Greece. C. Dougherty ve L. Kurke (Eds.), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* içinde (ss. 15-45). Cambridge: Oxford University Press.

Osborne, R. (2004). Hoards, votives offerings: the archaeology of the dedicated object. *WorldArch*, Vol. 36, No.1, ss. 1-10.

Polignac, F, de. (1984). *La naissance de la cité grecque*. Paris: La Découverte.

