

The Forgotten Sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Parnes

Introduction

A brief notice in the Greek daily newspaper *Kathimerini* of August 7th 1959 summarily discussed the results of a rescue excavation at a cave-site near the Ozea, Mt. Parnes' highest peak at 1412 m above sea level (**Figure 1**).¹ The inspection of the cave site was undertaken to allow for the construction of a military installation. The major feature of the site was described – erroneously it would turn out – as a funeral pyre for a great number of warriors killed in battle. Since the publication of this short note, the area has been hermetically sealed by the military, preventing on site inspection of the environmental conditions, which remain ill-understood.

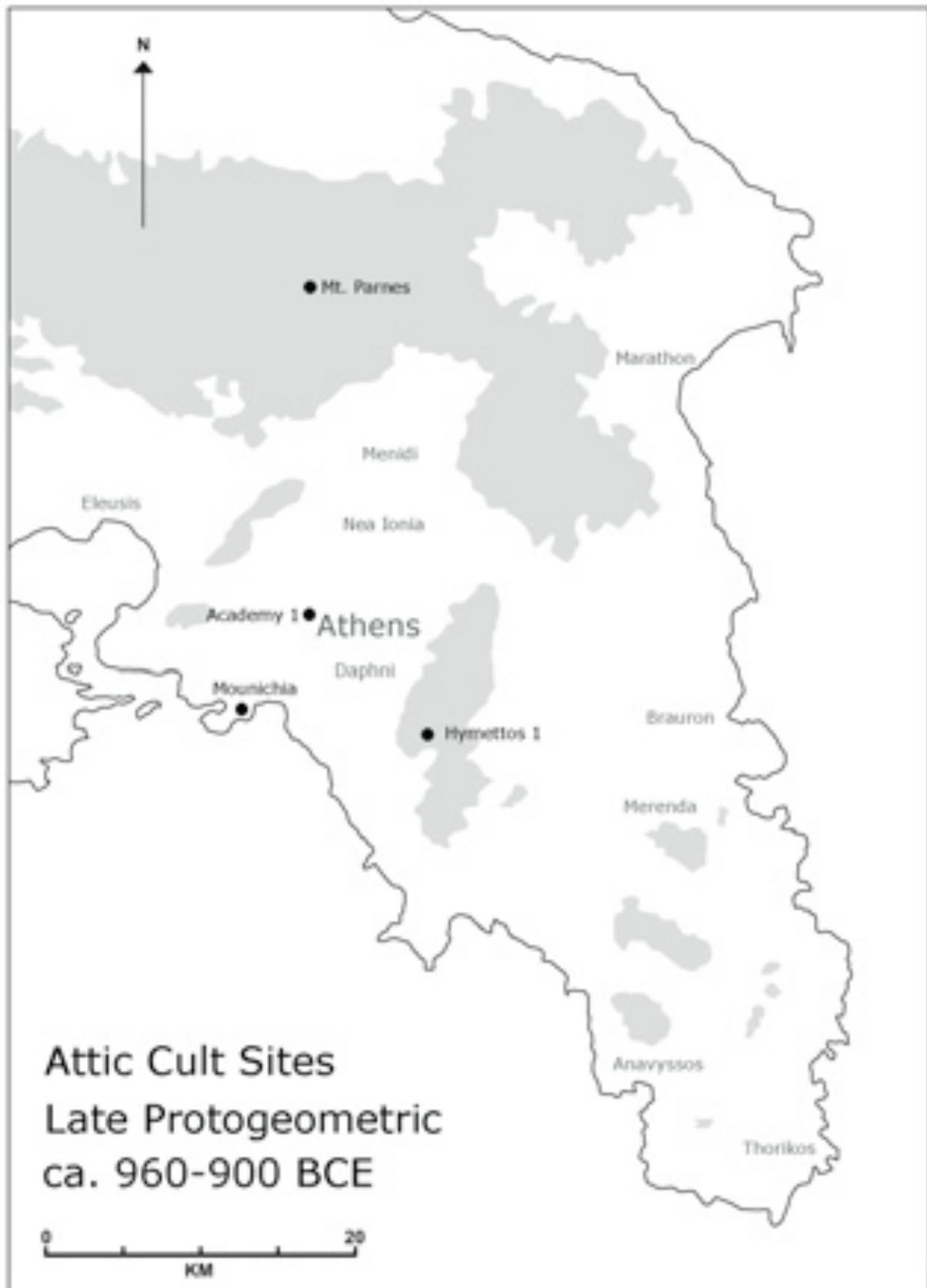
A short overview of the finds will illustrate the importance of this largely neglected site. A thick (ca. 2m) layer of ash was excavated over an area measuring approximately 100 m². It proved to be filled with small animal bones and bronze and iron finds, including numerous spearheads, swords, spits, sickles, axe heads pins, shields and cauldron fragments. While this listing in itself would be enough to justify an abundant publication (none has been produced to date), what really captures the imagination is the staggering find of some three thousand iron knives.² Pottery ranges from Late Protogeometric to Late Archaic or Early Classical and include Late (and Sub-) Geometric oinochoai, oinochoiskai and aryballoi, some specifically designed to serve as votives. From the same period kylikes and kantharoi were found. Furthermore, several hundred fragments of (Proto-) Corinthian alabastra and aryballoi were found, some dating as early as 700 BCE. Judging from the declining quantity of BF pottery the site seems to have been decommissioned during the sixth century.³ If the previous account of the finds on Mt. Parnes is correct, the site may represent the single largest religious deposit of pre-classical Athens.

¹ Summarized in E. Vanderpool, *AJA* (1960), 269; G. Daux, *BCH* 84 (1960), 658; S. Hood, *AR* 1959-1960, 8; 1960-1961, 5.

² Some of these objects are now on display in the archaeological museum of Piraeus.

³ In addition, the reports mention some Roman lamps.

Figure 1



For years after the newspaper report, nothing was heard about the Parnes site. The first official publication of material from the site appeared as late as 1983, when one of the excavators, Evthymios Mastrokostas, lifted a tip of the veil in a short paper, containing little more than a summary of the finds and a short discussion of the Corinthian aryballoi.⁴ A full publication of the excavation and its intriguing finds is thus still sorely missed.⁵

This paper does not set out to fill this gap, nor is its author in any position to do so for lack of access to the finds. What is attainable, however, is to analyze what little information we do possess in the context of cult practice elsewhere in Attica, in the hope of bettering our understanding of this important but understudied site and of the Attic sacred landscape at large.

Identification of the site on Mt. Parnes

There has been some confusion about the exact location of the altar. Mastrokostas' report mentions a cave, situated inside a chasm running N-S.⁶ The mouth of the cave apparently opened to the south – presumably overlooking the *pedion* – had more or less vertical sides and measured ca. 3 x 5.5 m. Mastrokostas insists that the cave itself was the altar.⁷ However, Andrea Mersch, in her compilation of archaeological sites in Attica, seems to imply that there were two cult spots, one on the peak and one inside the cave, but this may well be a misinterpretation of Mastrokostas' scanty account.⁸ Presumably the cave was located very close to the top, effectively rendering both part of the same cult area. For the moment this is impossible to prove as the area has been hermetically sealed by the military, preventing on-site inspection of the environmental context.

In 1976 M. Langdon published his influential monograph of the sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Hymettos. Based on the finds as represented in *Kathimerini*, and inspired by analogies between this and many similar sites throughout Attica, he identified the Parnes site as yet another mountain-peak sanctuary, an identification still standing

⁴ Mastrokostas, 1983.

⁵ At the moment, Lydia Palaiokrassa, associate professor at the university of Athens, is preparing a full publication of the material found on this Attic mountain range.

⁶ Mastrokostas, 1983, 339.

⁷ This is not mentioned explicitly in Mastrokostas' modern Greek account, but the Italian résumé says: "Anzi la grotta stessa era un altare", Mastrokostas, 1983, 342.

⁸ Mersch, 1996, 167-168, nos. 53.1-2.

today.⁹ Langdon connected it with the cult of Zeus Ombrios and Zeus Apemios, who, according to Pausanias (1.32.2), shared a common altar in the Parnes range. Pausanias also mentions a cult of Zeus Semaleos who had an altar and Zeus Parnethios who had a statue nearby, although it is impossible to tell whether Zeus was already called by any of these names as early as the Archaic period. According to two EA graffiti bearing these names, he seems to have been worshipped at the ash altar as Zeus Parnesios and Zeus Hikesios as early as the seventh century BCE.¹⁰

Archaeology

The deposits uncovered in 1959 consisted of an approximate 100 m³ of ashes filled with pottery, numerous iron and bronze votives and animal bone. But while one early report mentioned that the deposit contained the incinerated remains of soldiers from the Atheno-Megarian war,¹¹ there can be no doubt that the ash layer represents the remains of offering rituals. The enormous quantity of ashes including animal bones, not to mention the inaccessible location, may be held as sufficient evidence for prolonged and consistently practiced sacrifice.

Further prove may be drawn from the pottery, the earliest of which seems to date to the late 10th century BCE (Late Protogeometric), the latest perhaps belonging to the final years of the sixth century BCE. The early date of the oldest sherds merits our attention, as it places the Parnes summit among the first Attic cult sites, together with the cult of Zeus on Mt. Hymettos and the cult of Artemis on the Mounychia peninsula (**Figure 1**).¹² The Protogeometric pottery on Mt. Parnes, mainly consisting of oinochoai and kantharoi, serves well in a cultic setting as requisites for drinking and libation. These types continue into the Geometric period proper when the assemblage

⁹ Langdon, 1976, 100-101, Cf. also Mazarakis Ainian, 1997, 315; Mersch, 1996, 167-168, nos. 53.1-2; Parker, 1996, 18, 31-32, ns. 2-4; Wickens, 1986, vol. I, 158-159, 165, vol. II, 243-245, site no. 46. Some of this material had already been noticed in an American School Paper by Esther Smith and Harriet Lowry in 1954.

¹⁰ *SEG* 33 (1983), 81-82, no. 244. Langdon also postulates a second altar, to Zeus Semeleos, on Harma (+ 867) near Phyle, based on Pausanias' description, Langdon, 1976, 101. In the Classical period lightning bolts were interpreted here as signs to send offerings to Delphi. There is, however, no evidence to suggest (or disprove) that this site originated in the Archaic period.

¹¹ E. Vanderpool, *AJA* (1960), 269.

¹² It has often been suggested that Athena was worshipped on the Acropolis continuously throughout the Dark Ages, but thus far no positive evidence has been adduced for any cult activity there before the eighth century BC, cf. van den Eijnde, 2010, 93-94.

is expanded with such types as miniature oinochoai, aryballoi and various cups and kylikes, all comfortably fitting within a cultic context of drinking and libation. The excavator has claimed that the pottery differs from that found in funeral contexts, presumably referring to finds in the Agora and Kerameikos, where many oinochoai contained pierced holes in the bottom.

The Geometric sequence runs into the conventional early seventh century sub-Geometric; but where Proto-Attic complements the cult assemblage at most sanctuaries (i.e. Hymettos), none was found on Mt. Parnes. On the contrary, Proto-Corinthian and Corinthian come up besides the Late Geometric and sub-Geometric types. The former consist of a few very early alabastra, dating in the later eighth-century, and a surprisingly large number of 215 aryballoi, to which we will return in a moment. Here it suffices to say that no other Attic sanctuary – let alone a mountain shrine – has yielded anywhere near this amount of Corinthian ware.

The other finds are, however, equally, if not more impressive. While some uncertainty exists over the precise amount and date of the finds, the general outline of the assemblage is clear. Although Mastrokostas does not treat them, the archaeological reports summarizing the archaeological effort of 1959 speak of 3000 iron knives or swords found mixed in between the ashes, a staggering amount, especially considering that nothing of the kind has been retrieved at any of the other early Attic shrines. Bronze finds include pins and shields as well as a few more knives. While we will have to await the final publication of the finds to be able to date these finds precisely, it seems most sensible to connect them with the main group of the Corinthian wares, which surely date to the seventh century BCE.

The sixth century, at last, saw the deposition of some Corinthian pottery before cult practice was discontinued here. A few Black Figure sherds represent the last evidence of cult activity.

Other Peak sanctuaries

The chronology of the Parnes site agrees well with what we know of other Attic peak shrines. In all, Langdon noted cult activity on nine peaks.¹³ Since the publication of his book in 1976, six more possible sites have been identified, thanks to the effort of

¹³ Langdon, 1976, 100-106.

the German scholars Lauter and Lohmann (**Figure 3**).¹⁴ Many of these sites consisted of little more than a simple ash altar with a find assemblage generally confined to a few, mostly Subgeometric, sherds, which place the *floruit* of these shrines in the seventh century. Not only does this chronologically agree with the great number of Corinthian aryballoi found on Mt Parnes, it also places the peak sanctuaries at the center of Attic religious life in a period, which has been called the “Seventh Century Gap”,¹⁵ a term referring to the general lack of finds from this period in Attica. A general decline of cult practice on mountain-peaks occurs from 600 BC onward. By the fifth century this type of worship had all but vanished. As I have argued elsewhere, the absence of many shrines and the decline of others in the plains below represents as a shift toward regionalism, with each local community investing in its own nearby mountain cult.¹⁶

Two of these cults stand out from the rest in terms of finds and architecture: the first is the one mentioned before on Mt. Hymettos, which was published by Langdon (**Figure 5**), and the second on Mt. Tourkovouni (**Figure 6**), a few miles north of the Acropolis, published by Hans Lauter.¹⁷ We will return to these sites momentarily, but for the moment it suffices to note that, here too, the seventh century shows an intensification of this type of cult activity, with Late Geometric, Proto-attic and Subgeometric dominating the find assemblage. However, the Parnes site also differs in some aspects. First, hardly any Corinthian ware has been reported from the other mountain shrines, whereas an unusual amount of Corinthian pottery was found in the Parnes ash deposit. Secondly, the enormous amount of iron knives/daggers found in the fill is without parallel at any of the other peak shrines, which may well be labeled as “poor”. Metal objects were found in relatively large numbers at shrines other than on mountain peaks, most notably in the sanctuaries of Athena on the Acropolis and at Sounion.¹⁸ Elsewhere such finds are an occasional, if not rare occurrence. It testifies to the relative importance of the Parnes sanctuary in the 7th century. A third idiosyncrasy is the presence of a cave at the cult site.

¹⁴ Lohmann, 1993; Lauter and Hagel, 1990; Lauter and Lauter-Bufe, 1986; Lauter, 1985, 12, 415 (PH5), fig. 68, pl. 123, 1-2; 388 (CH60); 504 (AN 21); 379-380 (CH60).

¹⁵ Whitley, 2001, 233-243; Osborne, 1989

¹⁶ van den Eijnde, 2010, 357-405, esp. 404.

¹⁷ Lauter, 1985.

¹⁸ Cf. van den Eijnde, 2010, 91-92 (Athens, cult of Athena) and 249-258 (Sounion), both with references and bibliography).



Figure 2

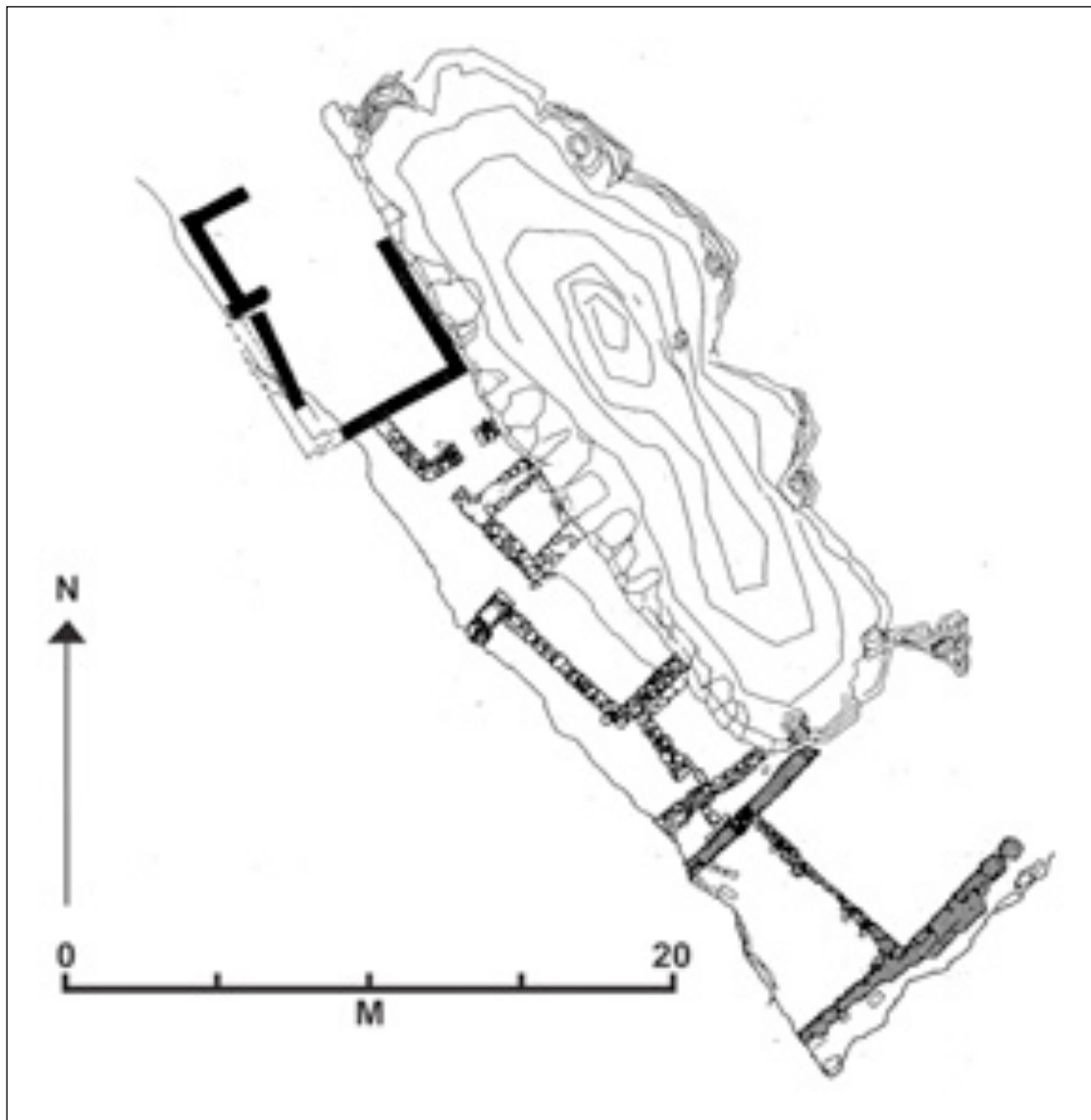


Figure 3 - So-called "Cave of Iphigeneia" at Brauron

The Cave

The cave was suitably placed near the top, inviting its use as a shelter against the rough weather conditions. The fact that the ash altar appears to have been found right in front of (or inside?) the cave must mean that the two were functionally related. Several other cult sites too made use of nearby caves. It has been argued that the cave at the sanctuary of Artemis at **Brauron** was used for ritual banquets and as a storage place for votives and other ritual paraphernalia (**Figure 3**).¹⁹ No doubt, a similar function can be assigned to the cave on Mt. Parnes. This function was presumably

¹⁹ Ekroth, 2003, 82-87.



Figure 4 – The “Spilia-tou-Daveli” cave near Anavyssos.

also comparable to that of the so-called “Sacred House” at the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis, which seems to have served as a place for ritual dinners and storage.²⁰ The presence of the rubble walls and pavement inside the caves at Parnes and Brauron suggest that the caves may have had similar functions and that the

former too may have been used for ritual dining, storage of ritual utensils, votives and the offering ritual itself.

The fact that the sanctuary on Mt. Parnes was situated in a cave is somewhat surprising, but not wholly unprecedented. None of the other peak sanctuaries in Attica were connected to a cave, presumably because they were not to be found in the vicinity. At other locations, however, caves did attract cult activity. The so-called “Spilia-tou-Daveli” at Anavyssos may have housed a cult of the Nymphs as early as the last quarter of the eighth century BCE (**Figure 4**).²¹ The so-called cave of Antiope near Eleutherae was used as a focus of worship as early as the 8th century.²² Finally, at Hymettos, what is known to the locals as the “Lion’s Cave” may have been used as a shrine in the seventh century BCE.²³

The combination of a cave cult and a summit shrine on Mt. Parnes seems to be no more than a coincidence due to the particular layout of the natural environment at this location. At the highest point in Attica, overlooking the peninsula to the south and neighboring Boeotia to the north, it was surely the mountaintop itself that attracted the ritual activity. The cave, on the other hand, was suitably placed near the top, inviting

²⁰ van den Eijnde, 2010, 168-185 (with additional bibliography); Mazarakis Ainian, 1997, 150-153, 317; Lauter, 1985, 163-169; Kourouniotes, 1938.

²¹ M. Oikonomakou, *ArchDelt* 49 B1, 1994, 67-68 and van den Eijnde, 2010, 81-82 with further references.

²² Munn and Zimmerman-Munn, 1990, 36-37 and van den Eijnde, 2010, 189 (with full bibliography).

²³ Mersch, 1996; Küper, 1989; Wickens, 1986; Vanderpool, 1967 and van den Eijnde, 2010, 287.

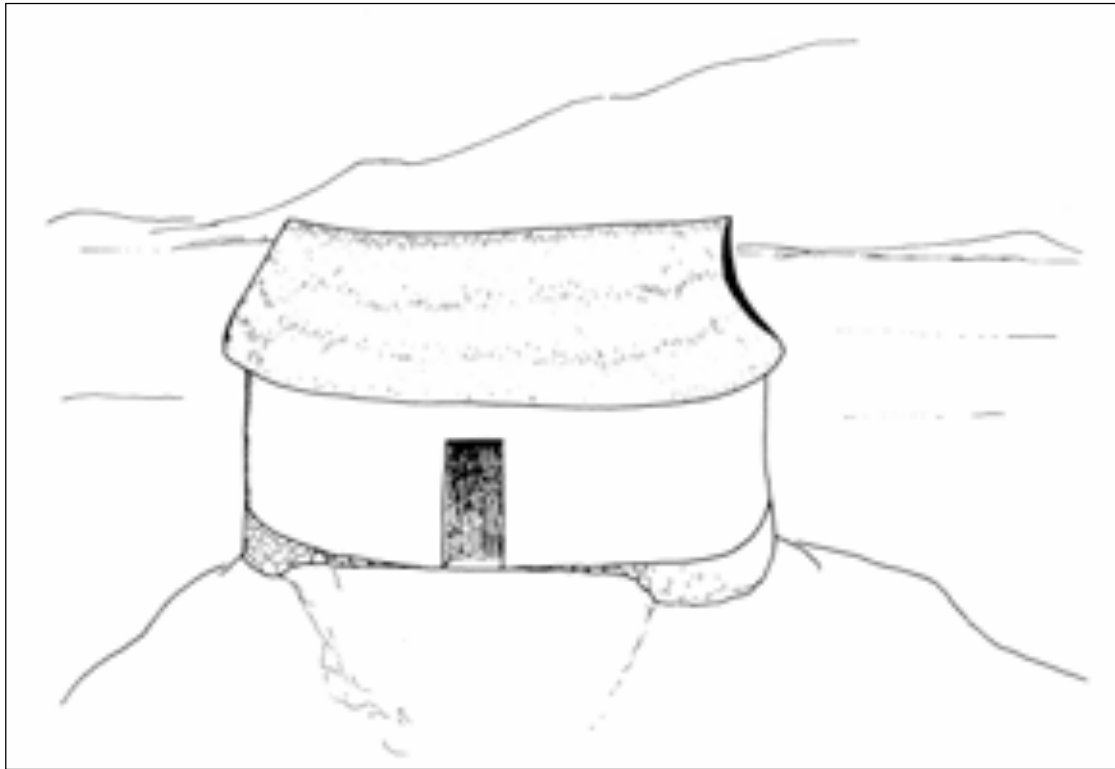


Figure 5 – The “Ostbau” on the summit of Mt. Tourkovouni.

its use as a place of storage and as shelter against rough weather.

We may never know precisely what transpired in the cave before, during and after the fire offerings. The few reported traces of walls and stone paving point to protracted ritual use other than the fire offering at the altar. A wall was constructed toward the back of the cave (north) and paving appeared underneath the altar at 2.20 m below the excavated surface. If the wall-remains do indicate partitioning screens inside the cave, it is not unlikely that the resulting inner chamber played an instrumental role in the rituals. Since we can exclude a profane function for these walls at this remote location, it is tempting to ponder what may have transpired inside this inner room.

Fortunately, we have some comparative data to work with. Ritual architecture is not uncommon in 8th and 7th century Attic sanctuaries. But while the experiment with temple construction largely bypassed the peninsula,²⁴ architectural practice within Attica leads us in a different direction. Two examples may serve to illuminate this point. Hans Lauter, who excavated and published the peak sanctuary on Mt.

²⁴ The exception being the Athena cult on the Acropolis, which seems to have had a simple temple at least from the seventh, perhaps as early as the late eighth century BCE, cf. van den Eijnde, 2010, 98-99 (with extensive bibliography on p. 91); Nylander, 1962.

Tourkovouni, reconstructed an oval-shaped building at the highest point of the hill.²⁵ This so-called “Ostbau” (**Figure 5**) appears to have been used as a banqueting hall for a core group of worshippers, providing ample protection against the harsh winds at this altitude. Merle Langdon, who published the peak sanctuary on Mt. Hymettos, attributed the rectangular remains at this site to an altar (**Figure 6**).²⁶ However, no offering remains were found at this location, but at a rather more easterly point, inside a natural depression in the terrain. Furthermore, the lack of comparative evidence from similar altars during this period and in this region invites an alternative explanation. I would suggest that the structure on Mt. Hymettos was used as a banqueting hall, which has the benefit of explaining the extreme thickness of the northern and eastern walls, which may have partly served as benches. Benches have been attested inside other cult buildings, such as the seventh and sixth century BCE Tholos building in Lathouriza. Another space that may well have served as a banqueting hall is the easternmost room of the so-called “Sacred House” at Eleusis.

²⁵ Lauter, 1985, 123-143.

²⁶ Mazarakis Ainian, 1997, 143. Note that Langdon attributed the rectangular structure to an altar. However, no offering remains were found at this location, but at a rather more easterly point, inside a natural depression in the terrain. This interpretation has the benefit of explaining the extreme thickness of the northern and eastern walls, which may have served as benches. Benches have also been attested inside other cult buildings, such as the seventh century Ruler's Dwelling and sixth century Tholos building at Lathouriza, cf. Seiler, 1986, 7-24.

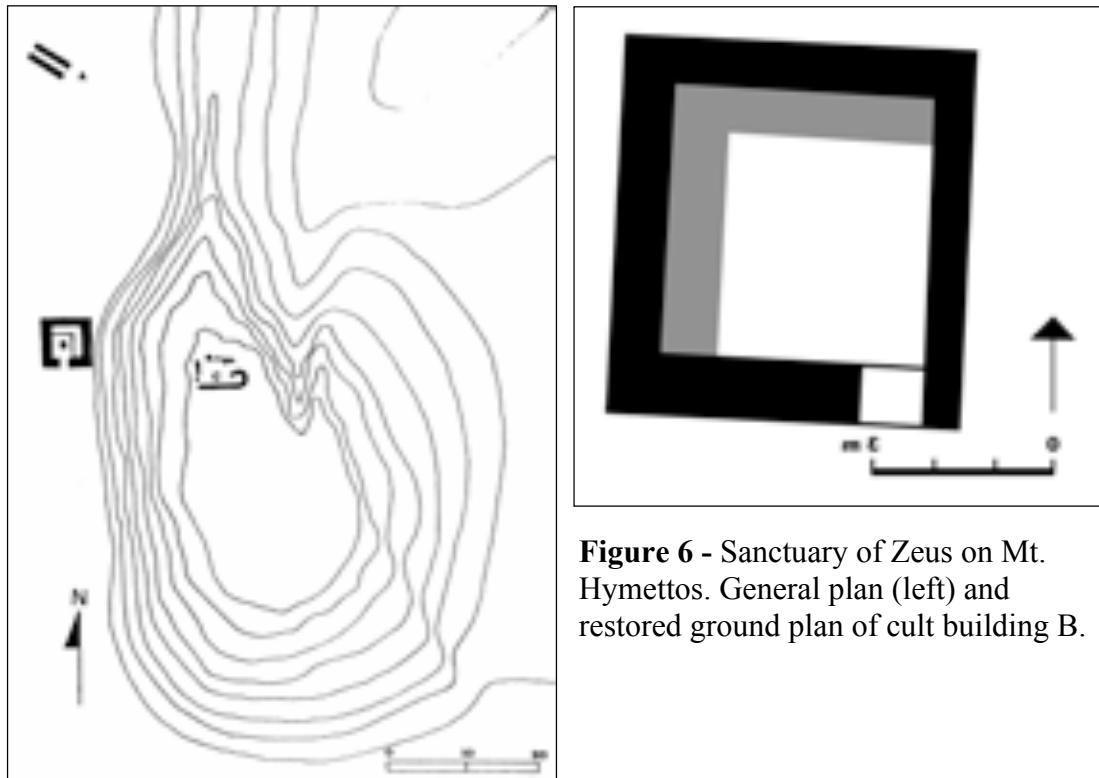


Figure 6 - Sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Hymettos. General plan (left) and restored ground plan of cult building B.

Thus, it appears that on-site banqueting was a common practice in early Archaic Attica and it was to this end that the Athenians applied their architecture, both at mountain shrines and elsewhere. I would propose that the cave on Mt Parnes, too, possessed an inner room, inside the cave, expressly constructed for ritual dining and adding a sense of intimacy and shelter – not to mention secrecy – to the cave’s most inner part. A similar attempt at secrecy may be found at the “Spilia tou Daveli”, mentioned before, where a wall was constructed near the entrance in the Classical period to fence off the inside.

Social context

The two most diagnostic features in social terms are the hoard of seventh century (Proto-) Corinthian aryballoi and the enormous amount of iron blades.²⁷ Since none of the other peak sanctuaries have yielded anything resembling these finds, it will be useful to place them in a somewhat larger social context.²⁸

The type of Corinthian wares, and the aryballoi in particular, favour a specific ritual preference such as pouring ointment over the fire altar. However, this may only

²⁷ For the aryballoi cf. Mastrokostas, 1983, 341-342.

²⁸ The original *Kathimerini* article mentioned transmigrant (Corinthian?) shepherds participating in the rituals. This view has been rightfully discounted by Langdon, 1976, 101, n. 3.

be part of the explanation. It does not explain why this is an important feature of the Parnes sanctuary, while it is largely absent at the other peaks. Secondly, it also does not explain why some of the other vessels, for which perfectly good Attic equivalents existed such as the kylix, were Corinthian imports. In fact, the Attic equivalent to Corinthian wares (Protoattic) appears to be wholly absent; the luxury ware of choice here seems to have consisted exclusively of Corinthian shapes.²⁹ Since no satisfactory solution to this problem has been presented on purely ritual grounds, the answer is, in my view, better framed in an ideological, rather than a functionalist context. In general, we may state that the use of Corinthian wares in Attic contexts were complementary to Protoattic wares. With their elaborate decoration, both styles were essentially expensive status objects targeted on the elite. However, while Protoattic vessels could be obtained on the local market, the Corinthian wares had to be acquired through trade at obvious additional cost.³⁰

At the other peak sanctuaries, however, Protoattic is much preferred; only three (!) Corinthian sherds have been found on Hymettos, a few more have been reported at the other peak shrines.³¹ It appears that special significance and prestige was thus attached to the sanctuary on Mt Parnes, as the choice for Corinthian in favour of the local style set it apart from other sanctuaries and presumably entailed additional expenditure. The question we should thus ask is: what caused this partiality for Corinthian wares?

The most obvious difference between the Zeus altar on Parnes and the other sites is its location. The peak sanctuaries of Attica are dispersed over much of its territory, but the only cult site situated on the border is the Zeus sanctuary on Mt. Parnes. This mountain range divides Attica from Boeotia, two regions that were not merely politically separate, but, according to Coldstream, also represented two

²⁹ We have to bear in mind, however, that only a small part of the pottery was mentioned in Mastrokostas' preliminary report. The full publication of this material by Lydia Palaiokrassa is therefore anxiously awaited.

³⁰ Note that Whitley, 1994, 224-225 has drawn attention to the aristocratic value of the orientalisising pottery, the use of which he attributes to the elite and to liminal contexts such as tomb cult and ancestor cult.

³¹ Langdon, 1976, 70, nos. 314-316 lists fragments of an aryballos, an alabastron and a closed vessel from Hymettos. All belong to the "Ripe" Corinthian style. In addition, there are two fragments from PC aryballoi at Profitis Ilias and a PC kalathos and some Protocorinthianizing kotylai at Tourkovouni, van den Eijnde, 2010, 246 and 268 (both with additional bibliography).

differentiated cultural zones.³² And indeed, there is evidence for cross-cultural attendance. An inscription in the Boeotian script on a Protocorinthian sherd suggests that people on the farther side of Parnes were aware of the shrine and acknowledged its existence.³³ To what degree Boeotians were involved in the rituals is difficult to ascertain, but the absence of Boeotian wares seems to indicate that inhabitants of Attica controlled the cult.³⁴ We cannot be sure as to who the participants were on the Athenian side of the border, but another graffito of the same period has *Eroiades* inscribed on it, which may refer to people living in the area of the Cleisthenic deme Eroiadai near Mt. Aigaleos in the upper *pedion*.³⁵ The graffito thus may reveal something of the particular importance of this sanctuary in the upper *pedion*.

I would suggest that the unusually large amount of Corinthian wares and daggers on Mt. Parnes are best understood as the result of cross-cultural rivalry, mediated by the display of (relatively) expensive votives. Corinthian pottery was universally accepted in Greece during this period, functioning as a kind of material *lingua franca*. Assuming that the ideological scope of this sanctuary extended to the other side of the Attic-Boeotian border, Corinthian wares are intelligible as prestige objects carrying an intelligible message for both parties. This also helps to explain the general absence of Corinthian wares at the other mountain shrines, which were not situated along the border.

The great promulgation of these sites from the late eighth century seems to have been caused by the fact that the numerous disparate communities of Attica required a peak shrine at close distance to fulfill their religious needs. This entails that these sites had little value as centers of social mediation with outside groups as they were primarily focused on the local community itself. Their prime emphasis lies on a specific, group-internal functionality, serving as focal points for ritual performances and social cohesion within local communities.³⁶ In contrast with Parnes, these sites never attracted the same prestigious votives, presumably as a result of the absence of

³² Coldstream, 1983.

³³ Mastrokostas, 1983, 341.

³⁴ Awaiting final publication of the pottery, it is difficult to assess its precise content.

Corinthian is followed by Attic BF and seems to have been preceded by Attic Geometric.

³⁵ Mastrokostas, 1983, 341. Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, Mt. Aigaleos has not yielded any concrete evidence of a peak sanctuary, cf. van den Eijnde, 2010, 293; Langdon, 1976, 105. There was also another deme called Eroiadai from the tribe Antiochis, which has not been located, though it may have been near its namesake.

³⁶ van den Eijnde, 2010, chapter 7, esp. 404-405.



Figure 7 - Corinthian helmet dedicated at Olympia (7th century BCE).

social or cultural tension between the various groups that made up the cult community. Since all visitors of these cult sites can safely be held to have been inhabitants of Attica, there was no need for extravagant votives such as foreign imports to communicate with nearby social groupings.

The same applies to the swords or daggers, which represent another feature not shared with the other Attic peak sanctuaries.³⁷ They seem to fit in the same mould as the Corinthian wares as objects dedicated with an eye for their *apotropaic* potential. The offering of deadly tools, rare in the Attic sacred landscape, can be interpreted as a clear show of strength towards a culturally distinct group of people. Here it may be useful to point at the case of Olympia, where military gear of all kind was dedicated in a show of masculine prowess and political prestige toward other poleis, and thus playing a role in interstate communication (**Figure 7**).³⁸ The example of Olympia underscores the importance of the Parnes sanctuary as an important conduit of Attic-Boeotian relations, where religion was applied to diplomatic relations.

³⁷ Elsewhere the practice of depositing expensive votives on mountaintops has been attested. Sakkelarakis, 1985 mentions weapons dedicated at the common sanctuary in the Zeus Cave on Mt Ida on Crete: bronze and iron weapons, arrowheads and fibula with warrior scenes. See also Chaniotis, 2006, 203.

³⁸ Mallwitz, 1972, 24-34.

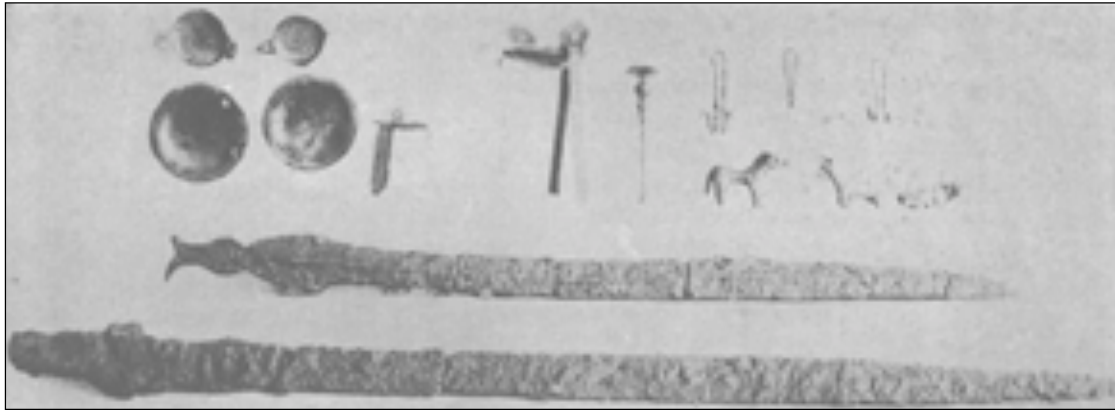


Figure 8 - Votive offerings from the sanctuary of Athena at Sounion, including iron swords, bronze miniature shields, pins and tripods.

Conclusion

Returning to Attica, we may conclude by noting that, beside the Parnes sanctuary, metal dedications were made in bulk only at the sanctuaries of Sounion and the Acropolis – both not located on mountaintops. It was only at the sanctuary of Athena at Sounion that weapons reminiscent of those reported from Mt. Parnes were found (**Figure 8**). It is generally understood that both cults had regional appeal and were supported by powerful elite individuals representing multiple local communities. The sanctuary of Zeus at Mt. Parnes was clearly geared towards the communities of the upper Athenian plain and takes its place in between the other regional sanctuaries, which beside Athens and Sounion also include Brauron and Eleusis.³⁹ One of the least known of the early Attic sanctuaries should thus be considered as one of the principal cult sites during the still badly understood period between 900 and 600 BCE. The fact that regional communities chose to invest their economic resources in their local cults during this period – rather than in a pan-Attic sanctuary such as the cult of Athena Polias was to become – indicates that the Athenian polis was still coming into its own and testifies to the fragmented nature of early Attic society.

What set the Parnes sanctuary apart from the other regional sanctuaries was its position near the Boeotian border. Frontier shrines, a quite common element in many Greek religious landscapes, were essentially absent in Attica, the sanctuary of Zeus being the sole exception. The proximity of the cultural divide caused the members of the northern *pedion* to choose as a location for their main sanctuary the mountain

³⁹ The other two sanctuaries generally thought of as regional, Brauron (Papadimitriou, *Prakt*, 1948, 86; 1949, 79.) and Eleusis (Kokkou-Vyridi, 1991, A 175-185, 188-189, pl. 56, 58) have yielded dome gold sheet and few metal objects, but nothing of the kind comparable to Sounion and Athens.

range that divided the two territories, Attica and Boeotia, a place where a statement of wealth and military valor could be transmitted to their neighbors to the north.

Perhaps we are right to see a reflection of that same military prowess in the fact that the demesmen of Acharnae were known to worship warlike Ares in later times, when the inhospitable Parnes sanctuary had become obsolete and the inhabitants of the northern *pedion* had long since recognized the primacy of Athena Polias.⁴⁰ What remained was the martial reputation of the Acharnians, which was renowned throughout the Greek world.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Traill, 1986, 142 ff.; Whitehead, 1986, 396 ff..

⁴¹ Pind. *Nem.* 2.16.

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