

„ARTEMIS VENDIS / VASSILEIA”: PHOCEAN ASPECTS OF A NORTHERN CULTURE

Sotiris Y. Raptopoulos (Delphi - Greece)

Key-Words: rock sanctuaries, cave rituals, Greek religion, northern culture.

The term “Rocky Sanctuary” [“sanctuaire rupestre”] was in use to describe the city sanctuaries of goddesses such as Demeter and Persephone, founded by the first Greek colonists in Southern Italy and Sicily [“Magna Graecia”]¹.

These sanctuaries combined the cut-in-rock chambers, known in greek religion as places where *cave rituals* were performed² – with a façade of a normal temple, in the Doric order. Their function is considered as “official”, “state-like” – in other words, they were considered as important, central sanctuaries, their rituals having something to do with the religious motives the first colonists brought along with them from *Mainland Greece*.

German nineteenth-century archaeologist *Lolling*, the first that studied the famous “Rocky Sanctuary” of *Artemis*, noted that this curious, three-aisled building of classical date – partially curved in the slopes of mount *Kefali*, in the *Phocean town of Antikyra* (**Phot. 3**) (the Antikyra sanctuary, sketch by Lolling) (**Phot. 4**) (the Antikyra sanctuary, recently taken photographs) was very important – because it was the only one of its type in Mainland Greece that came to his attention³. The other examples he could offer are to be found in Asia Minor...

Lolling seemed to ignore the “Rocky Sanctuaries” of “Magna Graecia” – yet, he is not to be blamed for something the archaeological research would not come in terms with, until many decades later... The Asian “rocky sanctuary” he is having in mind is undoubtedly *Yasilikaya* –in central Asia Minor- dedicated to the cult of *Astarte/Artemis*⁴.

So, our type of sanctuary is to be found in Central Greece, in Magna Graecia – and in Asia Minor. Dedicated to Goddesses [and also to male gods] is strongly connected with city / i.e. “official” rituals⁵. In the late 20th century, as the archaeological research progressed, we begun to understand –more and more- the pattern :

Originating from Central Greece, the *rocky sanctuary model* is to be found almost everywhere in the Greek World : The Antikyra Sanctuary, that housed one of the masterpieces of sculptor *Praxiteles* (**Phot. 5**) (statue base), is placed in the middle of an area full of such sanctuaries : This area is identical with *Central Greece itself*...

The *Aesculapius* sanctuary (in *Naupactus*)⁶, the sanctuary of *Oeanthea* described by *Pausanias*⁷, the recently found rocky sanctuary at *Pente Oria [Chaleum]* possibly dedicated to

¹ Le DINAHET, p. 143-4.

² ΠΙΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΣ, ~ 3-4.

³ LOLLING, p. 229-232, pl. 7.

⁴ Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut – AUSGRABUNGEN / FORSCHUGEN, Seit 1950, p. 44.

⁵ GRAF, p.63.

⁶ ΠΑΥΣΑΝΙΑΣ, X, 38, 9.

⁷ ΠΑΥΣΑΝΙΑΣ, X, 38, 9-10 και 12-13.

*Apollo, Artemis and Aesculapius*⁸ (Phot. 5) (rocky sanctuary at Pente Oria), (Phot. 6, 7) (rock-cut niches in the Pente Oria sanctuary), the sanctuary of Trophonius in Levadeia⁹ (Phot. 8) (19th-c. gravure of the Trophonius sanctuary) – and, of course, the Delphi sanctuary itself (Phot. 9, 10) (rocky sanctuary to the north of, Apollo temenos, Delphi)! This pattern passed over to Asia Minor and Sicily – and also to *Macedonia* and *Thrace* (As we take a look at the *Philippi* rocky sanctuaries, we realize that the Artemis of the rocky reliefs is that *at the type of Kynagetis*, the Praxitelian one, known from Athens¹⁰ and Antikyra (Phot. 11, 12, 13) (Philippi, rocky sanctuaries).

The form under which Artemis was worshipped in Thrace, is that of *Vendis* or *Vassileia*, a type of “*potnia theron*” [“mistress of the hunting”] : Its characteristic “sack”, the conical covering / “hat” on her head, is known from statuettes found in the *Antikyra Archaic Cemetery*¹¹ – and her name can be seen in a stone-cut inscription from modern coastal town Glypha¹² [possibly ancient *Oeanthea*¹³], near modern Naupactus.

We reach the conclusion that *Phocis* and *Western Locris*, “*ethne*” of Central Greece, played an important role in forming the Orphic / Thracian cult of *V e n d i s*: We shouldn’t forget that *Pylades*, Orestes colleague who helped him bringing the statue of Artemis from Krimaia to Greece (according to the ancient drama tradition), was a Phocian!¹⁴

There are two features of the rocky sanctuaries’ cult, that give it its unique character : First of all, its *complexity* : Beyond its primal deity, a rocky sanctuary houses more “secondary” deities / cults. In Antikyra, it houses many “*forms*”/“*eponyms*” of Artemis (Phot. 14, 15) (inscriptions of the Antikyra sanctuary, that include various eponyms of Artemis). This complexity is reflected in modern *Dhistomon*, where, in a Christian church dedicated to *Aghia Paraskevi* / *Aghios Panteleimon*, a 3rd c. B.C. marble base fragment is holding the following inscription :

Ἰ ΣΩΤΕΙΡΑΙ
ΠΡΟΜΑΘΕΙ

i.e., Ἀρτέμιδι Σωτεῖρα
Προμαθεῖ

<...to Artemis saviour
...to Prometheus >

3rd c. B.C.

¹⁵(Phot. 16, 17) (inscription of *Aghia Paraskevi* / *Aghios Panteleimon* church, *Dhistomon*)

The inscription belongs to a dedication to both Artemis and Prometheus

Deukalion, the *son of Prometheus*, was the patriarch of the post-cataclysm phase of humanity – and, according to Phocian mythology, his boat [a parallel to Moses’ boat – if we want to search for biblical references] landed, after the cataclysm, on top of mount *Parnassus* – only few kilometers far from this *Dhistomon* church... But the most important clue for our research, is that *Prometheus belongs to the old order of gods, he is the one that is punished by the “new leader” Jupiter, being tied up in a rock on Caucasus Mountain – his connection with*

⁸ Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1, σ.17.

⁹ see note “6”.

¹⁰ Μ.ΜΠΡΟΥΣΚΑΡΗ, σ. 91-2.

¹¹ Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 2.

¹² I.G.IX, J, “PHOKIS – INSCRIPTIONES LOCORUM OCCIDENTALIUM”, p. 92, no 355.

¹³ Χρονικά Α.Δ. 2003, Φωκίδα [under publication].

¹⁴ M.BROOKS BERG, p. 232.

¹⁵ Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1, σ.12.

North – Eastern cult being more than obvious... And, as a carrier – stealer of the divine fire, is pretty close to Artemis –and her form of **Pyrforos**, “the light-carrier” . The sister of Apollo is widely known and respected in Northern cultures...

Then, in almost all these sanctuaries, we meet the custom of *manumissions* :

The ultimate dedication to the God is the *human life*, a life that is dedicated «επ’ελευθερία» ,”to be free”: Here we have the connection to the Orphic / Early Christian culture : A «δούλος θεού»-*slave to god* is not claiming that his slavery is a god-sent gift – on the contrary, he is saying that he is *free in the name of god* :

The “800-name bearer” *polygonal wall* of the Apollo sanctuary at Delphi (**Phot. 18**) (the Polygonal Wall in Delphi) >is the ultimate monument of freedom, in an ancient society that believed in freedom beyond the socio-economic context of its era¹⁶...

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BROOKS BERG – M.BROOKS BERG, Legent, cult and culture of three sanctuaries of Artemis, U.M.I., 1979.

Le DINAHET M.-TH. Le DINAHET, Sanctuaires chthoniens de Sicile – in: G.ROUX, *Temples et Sanctuaires, Maison de l’ Orient 7*, Lyon 1984.

GRAF – F.GRAF, Apollon Lykeios at Metapontum: The inscriptions and the cult – in: 8th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy, Athens 1987.

LOLLING – H.LOLLING, Das Artemisheiligtum bei Antikyra, *A.M.* 14, 1889.

ΜΠΡΟΥΣΚΑΡΗ – Μ.ΜΠΡΟΥΣΚΑΡΗ, Τα μνημεία της Ακρόπολης, Αθήνα 1996.

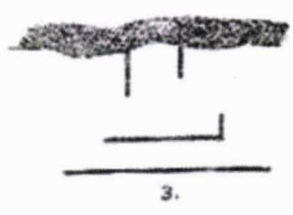
ΠΑΥΣΑΝΙΑΣ – ΠΑΥΣΑΝΙΟΥ, Ελλάδος Περιήγησις, Φωκικά.

ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΣ – ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΥ, «Περί των εν Οδυσσειάι των Νυμφών Άντρου».

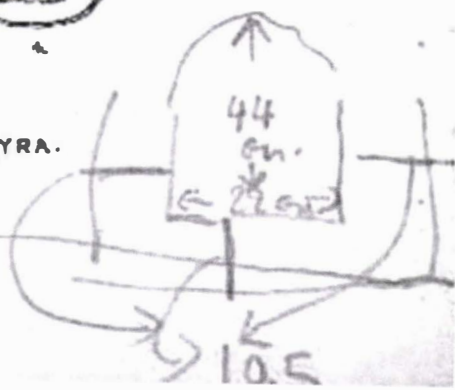
Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1 – Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, «Το βραχώδες Ιερό στην Φωκική Αντίκυρα, Δελφοί 2005.

Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 2 – Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, «Ευρήματα ανασκαφών Διστόμου-Αντικύρας», Δελφοί 2005.

¹⁶ Σ.ΡΑΠΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1, σ. 19.



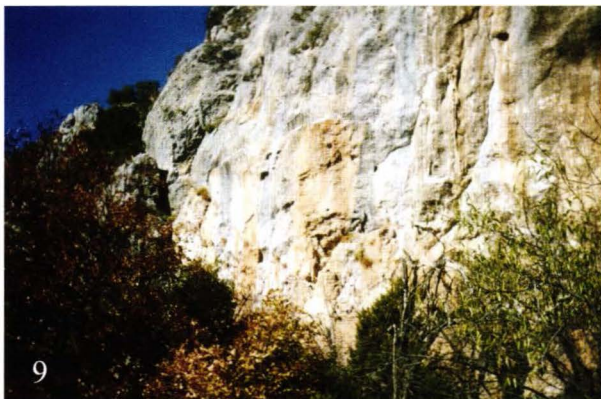
ARTEMISHEILIGTUM BEI ANTIKYRA.



Phot. 1 (the Antikyra sanctuary, sketch by Lolling).



Phot. 2, 3 (the Antikyra sanctuary, recently taken photographs). **Phot. 4** (statue base). **Phot. 5** (rocky sanctuary at Pente Oria). **Phot. 6, 7** (rock-cut niches in the Pente Oria sanctuary). **Phot. 8** (19th-c. gravure of the Trophonius sanctuary).



LES RELIEFS RUPESTRES

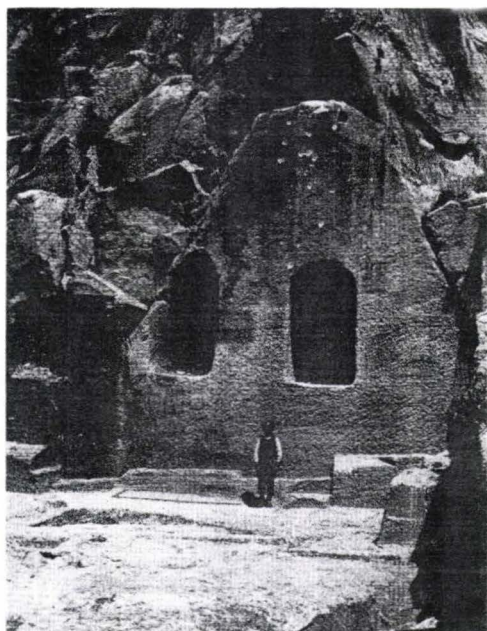


Fig. 5. — Le sanctuaire aux niches.



Fig. 20. — Reliefs 9, 10 (Diane), 131 (figures féminines) et 165 (inachevé).

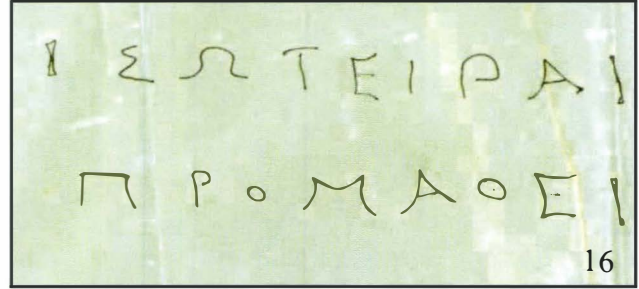


13a



13b

Phot. 9, 10 (rocky sanctuary to the north of Apollo temenos, Delphi). **Phot. 11, 12** (Philippi, rocky sanctuaries). **Phot. 13a** (sketch of an Antikyra coin). **Phot. 13b** (inscriptions of the Antikyra sanctuary, that include various eponyms of Artemis).



Phot. 14 (inscriptions of the Antikyra sanctuary, that include various eponyms of Artemis). **Phot. 15, 16** (inscription of Aghia Paraskevi / Aghios Panteleimon church, Dhistomon). **Phot. 17** (the Polygonal Wall in Delphi). **Phot. 18** (IVth c. Clay statuette of Artemis Vendis from the ancient cemetery of Antikyra).

