

THE FORMATION OF SACRED SPACE
AND LANDSCAPES IN THE PAST

DIVINE ACTION OR
HUMAN CREATION?

Abstracts

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CHRISTINA WILLIAMSON, UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN:

Crowned heights. Sacred mountains and developing political landscapes in Asia Minor

Mountains are ubiquitous in the Anatolian landscape, yet certain crests had that special numinous quality that set them apart as sacred, often associated with supreme deities such as Kybele or Zeus. Besides their innate link with the divine, these sacred peaks were also integral to the human landscape as they defined horizons, marked borders, or identified zones of transition. Because of this they had an immense political power that accumulated over time, and they were often targeted by rising city-states in the Hellenistic period, increasingly in need of an all-powerful, tutelary deity. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan observed how “modern nations like to think that a high peak, if not the world’s highest, lies within their border” (1977, 40). This might also be said of ancient city-states, but was it the mountain or its majestic occupant that they were after? This paper examines the agency of Anatolian hilltop sanctuaries in developing political landscapes with a focus on the Hellenistic period. Case studies such as the landscapes of Amaseia, Pergamon, Pisidian Antioch, Mylasa and Stratonikeia will be examined in order to interpret strategies behind the uses of cult places on mountains as political and civic space. At critical points in time political authority appears firmly anchored to the landscape and in each of these cases particularly through mountain sanctuaries. Under what circumstances were sacred mountains drawn into the urban sphere? How did the character of these shrines change as the dominant political power took over? Which rituals appeared and how did they reinforce the bond between god and city, central authority and local communities? By addressing these questions it will become clear how landscape itself was an actor in tightening the overlap between sacred and political spheres.

OLIVIER HENRY, BILKENT UNIVERSITY:

Religious and Political Landscape in 4th century Karia

Based on a reconsideration of both old archaeological material and analysis of new data from the site of Labraunda, this paper challenges the acknowledged idea according to which Hekatomnid Labraunda was conceived as one single large rural sanctuary. A new conception of the 4th century Hekatomnid project considers the sanctuary of Zeus Labraundos to be smaller in size than previously thought, and engulfed in what recalls a large palatial-type complex. Such layout reveals the dynamics of an integration between local traditions and Persian behaviors, resulting in the combination of Religious and Political landscape in Late Classical central Karia.

ERIKA MEYER-DIETRICH, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY:

Different sound codes for holy spaces

The production of sound is an important means for the ritual creation of sacred social spaces. The social space gets by the repeating of auditive codes features which create a community spirit and the sounds become orientation guides. However, the temporality of a listening event implies the attained sacredness of a place for a certain period of time. This phenomenon leads to different sound codes for the same physical space. The sound codes and their interrelation will be investigated on the necropolis during New Kingdom Egypt.

ANGUS GRAHAM, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY:

Seeing the Divine in 'unconstructed' topography and natural phenomena in ancient Egypt and Nubia

The paper will present briefly examples of natural topography and natural phenomena and look at the meanings ascribed to them by the ancient Egyptians and interpretations of Egyptologists. It will also address the construction of landscapes to enhance their conceptualisation.

In certain places natural weathering of limestone and sandstone cliffs in the Egyptian and Nubian Nile Valley presented silhouette metaphors to the Egyptians that they assigned cosmological and mythical significance. A number of these landscapes were to become 'persistent' and integral places within Egyptian religion, politics and culture. At the most fundamental level the natural phenomenon of the Nile inundation, its recession and the subsequent revelation of high ground (islands and levees) in the floodplain was understood as central to the cosmogony of the ancient Egyptians. These primeval mounds were ideal places to found temples to the gods.

JUDY BARRINGER, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH:

The Contours of Olympia

Our knowledge of the Altis, the sacred area of Olympia, is known to us from Pausanias (who also provides the appellation, 'Altis') read together with the archaeological remains. The contours or shape of the Altis evolved as early excavators uncovered the site and adjusted their identifications of various structures. Since early in the last century, the contours of the Altis were considered 'fixed.' However, recent discoveries in conjunction with a re-reading of Pausanias' text yield a dramatically new picture of the Altis, which is much larger than previously thought.

MYRTO VEIKOU, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY:

Byzantine Constructions of In-Between Sacred Spaces (or How to Build a Pillar...)

Ascetic pillars (στύλλοι) were Byzantine sacred spaces constructed as mediators between the high spaces of divinity (heaven) and the low spaces of sin (human bodies on the earth). The isolated and elevated position on a pillar allowed one – specific – human body (i.e. that of a special, ‘holy’ man) to be “literally in the world yet not of it”. This quality transformed the space of a pillar into a particular technical device appropriate for the Byzantine sanctification process. Based on material remains in the form of archaeological evidence and pictorial representations, and on Byzantine narrative texts, I will investigate this function of those particular spaces. I will do that by analysing the fashioned construction of pillars in relation to their spatial experience in the late antique and medieval Eastern Mediterranean.

AXEL FREJMAN, UPPSALA UNIVERSITY:

Spatial organisation and sacred lands at Labraunda

Through the inscriptions in the so-called Olympikos dossier, dated to the second half of the 3rd century BCE, Labraunda is known to have had sacred lands. The location of these sacred lands is not known, but it is probable that parts of them were located around the sanctuary. The Surroundings of Labraunda survey has during its four years of work identified zones of activity around the *temenos*. These zones are possibly the result of a conscious spatial organisation in the landscape. This paper examines how the spatial organisation around Labraunda correlates with the situation known from the inscriptions, and if the identified activity zones can be understood as a planned spatial organisation driven by the sanctuary’s – and by that Zeus’ – needs and interests.