

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE SANCTUARY OF HERA AT SAMOS. A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW INTERPRETATION OF TEMPLAR EDIFICES

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1. An overview of the archaeological evidence

The Samian extra-urban sanctuary of *Hera* is located 6 km far from the city.¹ Traces of religious practice inside the area date back to XIII century B.C., while the goddess cult was probably introduced in XI-X century, replacing an earlier cult connected to a fertility deity. The complex architectural organization of the sacred area shows an extensive use of templar buildings, whose function is not always comprehensible, so that one of the main problems concerning the study of the *Heraion* regards the buildings interpretation. Hence, the aim of the present paper is trying to partially solve this issue through the proposal of some edifices' identifications, by taking into account the archaeological, epigraphic and philological documentation and underlining the importance of economic activities carried out by the sanctuary.

In IX century, the *temenos* consisted of a sacred area focused on a simple rectangular altar. The *bomos* was the kingpin of sacrificial practice; therefore, archaeological findings referring to this period – mainly ritual utensils such as bowls and cups, animal and feminine figurines² – were prevalently discovered around the *bomos*.³

The altar underwent several reconstructions, finally acquiring a monumental form in the VI century B.C. (archaeological investigations led to the identification of seven previous architectural phases). The

¹ For a history of Samos: Shipley 1987.

² Concerning findings in the Samian *Heraion*, related both to this period and the subsequent ones: Brize 1985; Brize 1989–90; Brize 1992; Gehrig 1964; Kyrieleis 1988; Jantzen 1972; Jarosch 1994; Schmidt 1968; Schattner 1990; Vierneisel 1961; Webb 1978.

³ Brize 1997, p. 125.

construction was composed by an enclosure in the form of a Greek P, provided with a series of stairs giving access to the *trapeza*.⁴

Three wells were located along the ancient sacred way connecting the sea to the sanctuary from the south-eastern side.⁵ Originally used for water supplying and purifying rituals, they were subsequently employed as deposits for ritual dining remains and votive offerings.⁶ A second sacred way linked the northern part of the *temenos* to the countryside.

The first temple, known as *hekatompedon 1*,⁷ was built in the VIII century B.C. with mud bricks. It was characterized by a gable roof and narrow rectangular plan one hundred feet long (33 m per 6) and a axial colonnade. The edifice preserved the divine aniconic statue of the goddess.

The second temple, known as *hekatompedon 2*,⁸ built with limestone blocks in the second half of the VII century B.C. on the previous shrine, presented the same plan and dimension as *hekatompedon 1*. The elimination of the axial colonnade allowed a better vision of the new cult statue made by the sculptor Smilis (Paus. VII 4, 4). Pillars were set against the long sides of the building.

The *neos* reconstruction is part of the VII century overall reorganization project of the sacred area, that comprised, *inter alia*, the construction of a *temenos* wall;⁹ of the southern *stoa*, stone-made, 70 m long, with three internal navels divided by two internal colonnades; of the new sacred way linking the *polis*, by passing through its *agora*, to the eastern side of the sanctuary and thus marking the Samos domination on the territory.¹⁰

The third templar edifice,¹¹ planned by the architect Rhoikos and by Theodoros, was built in the first half of VI century B.C. It was the first

⁴ Schleif 1933; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 84–88; Kienast 1991, pp. 99–102; Kienast 1992, pp. 180–182; Kienast 2002, p. 322; Hellmann 2006, p. 136; Lippolis, Livadiotti, Rocco 2007, p. 159.

⁵ Dinsmoor 1950, p. 142; Gruben 1957, pp. 52–62; Charbonneaux, Martin, Villard 1969, p. 14; Coulton 1976, pp. 21, 27, 280; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 95–96; Gruben 2001, pp. 353–354. On the southern area of the *temenos*: Furtwängler 1980; Furtwängler 1981; Kopcke 1967.

⁶ Lippolis, Livadiotti, Rocco 2007, p. 131, n. 92.

⁷ Mallwitz 1981.

⁸ Buschor 1930, Buschor, Schleif 1933, Kienast 1992.

⁹ Gruben 2001.

¹⁰ Kienast, Kyrieleis, Weisshaar 1985, pp. 369 ss.; Kienast 1992, pp. 193 ss.

¹¹ Musti 2004, pp. 83–86; Kienast 1991; Maggi, Troso 2004, p. 491.

Ionian colossal temple, thus serving as a model for all other Ionian sacred constructions. Erected once again on the same place of *hekatompedon* 1 and 2, the *neos*, mainly made of *poros*, was a huge (105 m per 55) dipteral structure with double rows of eight Ionic columns on the front and the back sides and of twenty-one columns on the long sides. The temple was composed by a *pronaos* and a cella, both organized in three navels.

The fourth phase of the temple is dated to the second half of the VI century B.C. Also in this case, the structure is a huge (109 m per 52) dipteral construction that incorporates the previous one, with *pronaos* and *naos* and an additional row of columns on front and back.

During the Archaic age, many sacred monuments were constructed in the *temenos*. The northern *stoa*,¹² built in the first half of the VI century, was used to define the northern side of the sanctuary; two *propyla* provided access from north and east.¹³

Several small buildings, whose plan recalls the templar one, were erected as well.¹⁴ Among these, the so called ‘temple A’ (first half of VI B.C.) was composed by a small cella, with statue basis, and a vestibule;¹⁵ the ‘temple B’ (first half of VI B.C.) was composed by a cella, with traces of a statue basis, and a (maybe dystile) vestibule;¹⁶ the ‘temple C’ (second half of VI B.C.) was composed by a *pronaos* and a cella and was surrounded by a peristasis;¹⁷ the ‘temple D’ (second half of VI B.C.) was composed by a *pronaos*, a cella and a *opisthodomos*.¹⁸

Finally, the sanctuary hosted two major buildings, whose dimension was slightly less than the main temple’s one. The so called *Nordbau*,¹⁹ located in the northern sector of the *temenos* and built in the VI century (first phase: first half of the century; second phase: second half of the

¹² Dinsmoor 1950, p. 142; Walter 1965, pp. 62–63, 79; Coulton 1976, pp. 27, 30–31, 279–280; Isler, Kalpaxis 1978.

¹³ Carpenter 1979, pp. 64–67; Bergquist 1967, pp. 46–47; Isler 1978; Kienast 1992, p. 196; Kienast 2002, p. 322.

¹⁴ On their role and function, see: Furtwangler, Kienast 1989; Ohly 1953a.

¹⁵ Kienast 1974, p. 89; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 47, 108–110.

¹⁶ Mussche 1968, p. 3; Kienast 1974, p. 89; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 47, 113–115; Lippolis, Livadiotti, Rocco 2007, p. 749.

¹⁷ Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 112–113.

¹⁸ Kienast 1974, p. 89; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 47, 108; Sinn 1985, pp. 129–158.

¹⁹ Furtwangler, Kienast 1989; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 115–117.

century), showed a cella with three navels divided by two colonnades and a closed rear chamber, i.e. the *adyton*. The construction (25 per 41 m) was surrounded by a peristasis of 5 per 21 columns (double row of columns on front and back).

The *Sudbau*,²⁰ located in the southern area of the sanctuary and built in the VI century B.C., showed a *pronaos* and a cella, both provided with an axial colonnade. It was surrounded by a peristasis on three sides.

In order to clarify the role and function of some of the above-mentioned buildings, an analysis of the most significant philological and epigraphic documents related to the sanctuary has been carried out, with the purpose of investigating the religious, political, social and economic activities taking place in the sacred area.

2. Ritual practice and cults

According to Greek, Roman and Christian literary tradition (see: Paus. IV 4; Apul. *Metamorph.* VI 4; Lact., *Inst. Div.* I 17, 8), *Hera* was born in the island of Samos under the *lygos* tree still visible in Pausanias' age (Paus. VIII 23, 5).

Celebrations taking place in *Heraion* were named *Toneia*, as testified by Athenaeus (Ath. *Deipn.* XV 671–673), although it is still not clear if the *hieros gamos*²¹ was part of the annual festival in honor of *Hera*, i.e. the *Heraia*, and if the latter was included in the just mentioned *Toneia*.²² A representation of the *hieros gamos* can be detected in certain clay reliefs²³ as well as in a preserved wooden one.²⁴ Moreover, sacred

²⁰ Kienast 1974, p. 89; Freyer-Schauenburg 1974; Kyrieleis 1981, pp. 47, 90–94; Rocco 2003, p. 92. For its interpretation as the temple of Hermes and Aphrodite, see: Gruben 2001, p. 359. See also Buschor 1957.

²¹ On the subject, see: Klaffenbach 1926; Kremer 1982.

²² On cult practices taking place in the *Heraion*: Fehrle 1910, pp. 142ss.; Buschor 1930; Klinz 1933, p. 104; Nilsson 1955², p. 46ss.; Walter 1965, pp. 12 ss.; Kerényi 1972, pp. 119–133; Kipp 1974, pp. 157–209; Meuli 1975, pp. 1035–1081, partic. 1059–1064; Nafissi 1983; Kron 1988; Carter 1987; Carter 1988; Kyrieleis 1993; Furtwängler 1997.

²³ For the clay relief representing a male figure touching, with his hand, the chin of a naked female figure see: Eilmann 1933, p. 123, fig. 69; Ohly 1941, p. 35; Walter 1990, p. 39, fig. 22.

²⁴ Ohly 1953b, pp. 77–83; Walter 1990, 39, fig. 23.

marriage ritual in the *Heraion* is documented by Christian authors Lactantius and Augustinus (Aug. *De civ. Dei* VI 7, 3).

The ritual practice can be reconstructed after the text of Athanaeus, reporting the aetiological tale of Menodothos of Samos.²⁵ It comprised the transfer of the sacred statue of *Hera* from the temple to the shore, where the image was purified and dressed with new clothes.²⁶ After having received ritual offerings, the simulacrum was brought back to the *neos*. The kingpin of the celebration was the sacrificial action and the consequent sacred banquet involving Samian citizens, as documented on archaeological ground from VII century up to Archaic age.

A decrease in the participation in the ritual dining occurred in the V century, as part of a general reduction of the civic participation to collective religious celebration; meanwhile, athletic games were probably introduced. After the end of the Athenian occupation of the *polis*, the original ritual practice was reestablished.

In addition to the cult of *Hera*, owner of the whole sacred area and probably of its main edifices, the sanctuary was the place of worship of further divine entities with a secondary, complementary role.

The presence of Zeus can be assumed on the basis of the above-mentioned presence of the *hieros gamos*, but also cause of the discovery of a consistent number of miniaturistic shields, usually documented in areas connected to the god, such as Olympia, Ida²⁷ and Gortyn²⁸ in Crete. In addition, the presence of the letter ‘delta’ (Δ) on several findings (especially cups) has been, up to now, wrongly interpreted as a ‘rho’ (Ρ) or, according to other interpretations, integrated as *demosio*. Conversely, the delta can probably be regarded as the first letter of the name Dios, i.e. Zeus. Lastly, the following elements can be regarded as indirect proofs of Zeus cult inside the sacred area: several male figurines have been found in the sanctuary; Athens dedicated a sculptural group including Zeus; the text of Athanaeus explicitly mentions the presence of the cult of a male god.

The cult of *Aphrodite* was present in the celebration, as the goddess was worshipped through a race with torches. She is attested, as well as *Hermes*, in epigraphic documents.

²⁵ See Kroll 1931.

²⁶ On *Hera* cult in Samos: Cirio 1981; Dunst 1967; Dunst 1971.

²⁷ Halbherr 1888, pp. 711 sgg.; Sakellarakis 1983, p. 438.

²⁸ Levi 1955/1956, pp. 207–287; Rizza, Santa Maria Scrinari 1968.

Finally, the mysterious figure of *Euaghellis*, reported in the inventory list of the temple, is documented. She was probably associated with *Hera* in the main temple and could be identified in the feminine figure appearing near the goddess in numismatic finds.²⁹

These cults were most probably worshipped in conjunction with *Hera* or were located in the minor small buildings of the *temenos*, as secondary figures complementary to *Hera*, who was the possessor of the whole sanctuary.

3. The Samian sanctuary and economics: philological and epigraphic documents

A comprehensive study concerning economic aspects of the sanctuary of *Hera* at Samos is still lacking. Nevertheless, the exam of archaeological, philological and epigraphic evidence clearly shows that financial transactions, related both to the public and the private sector and pertaining both sacred and profane funds, occurred in the *temenos* on a regular basis. The management of the sacred treasure was administered by *tamiai ton ieron*,³⁰ in analogy with other Greek sanctuaries, such as the Athenian Acropolis or the *Heraion* and *Athenaion* in Argos.

An established relation between civic and sacred resources is documented by multiple factors, starting from the passage of Herodotus (Hdt. IV 152, 4), stating how the inhabitants of Samos used the *dekate* of their income to create a colossal bronze vessel, supported by bronze figures, to be placed inside the *Heraion*. The text noticeably indicates that the hoarding of metals such as bronze, but also silver and gold, inside the sanctuary was usual procedure – this practice is widely attested throughout Greek sacred places, such as in the Athenian Acropolis, where inventory lists report massive concentration of golden, silver and bronze items inside the Parthenon, aimed to constitute a fund of the *polis* to be used in emergency situations (for instance, during the Peloponnesian war). Furthermore, it shows how citizens' relation with the sanctuary was not limited to the pure formal worship practice addressed to the goddess,

²⁹ Regarding reproduction of statue images on numismatic findings, see Lacroix 1949.

³⁰ On the existence of a Samian *tamias ton hieron*: Habicht 1972, p. 191, n. 9, ll. 15 ss.; Transier 1985, p. 67.

since the vessel, far from being a simple religious offering, represented an economic obligation (i.e. a tax) paid by Samian citizens to the *temenos*.

An Archaic inscription for the goddess, dated to 580 B.C., proves that the citizens of Perintos, a colony of Samos, had similarly devoted the *dekate* of their income to the *Heraion* in Samos, by dedicating «a golden gorgon, a silver siren, a silver *phiale*, a bronze candelabrum, having spent for the whole dedication two-hundred-twelve staters, including the *stele*». So the colonists coming from Samos, like the inhabitants of Samos, were obliged to take part to the economic life of the main sanctuary of the *polis*, dedicating to it objects made of precious metals that represented a specific percentage of their total income.

This practice was indeed common in the context of sanctuaries belonging to *poleis* with colonialist experiences. For example, the *Didymaion* in Milet used to receive periodically, from the inhabitants of Cios (Milesian colony), a certain amount of *phialai* and, in the same way, gathered *prosekonta charisteria* for Apollon from the inhabitants of Apollonia ad Rhyndacum (another Milesian colony); the Athenians living in Thrace in V century B.C. were requested to economically contribute to Athens festivals in honor of *Athena* and of *Dionisios*.

Therefore, the just mentioned documents testify that the sacred treasure of the goddess included funds of public, non-religious, origin – as the Athenian sanctuary of *Athena* on the Acropolis contained resources coming from taxes collected by the *Hellenotamiai* and as the Argive treasury of *Athena* comprised war booty and confiscated goods.

The metal objects hoarded in sacred areas could thereby serve as communitarian funds that citizens could use to face extraordinary expenses in difficult times (see the Argive sanctuary of *Athena*, that used the divine treasure to face the war with Corinth).

Besides, also private financial transactions took place in the *Heraion* of Samos, as illustrated by a passage by Cicero (Cic. *De leg.* II 6). The author, when speaking about the sacrilege committed through the theft of private resources safeguarded in sanctuaries, cites the *Heraion* as a model of *temenos* functioning as a place where private deposits were kept. Cicero also hands down how Cleisthenes entrusted his daughters' dowry to the Samian *Heraion* (Cleisthenes spent part of his life in exile and, returned back to Athens in 508 B.C., had thereafter to leave his homeland again, so that he was rightfully reluctant to place his properties under the care of Athenian sanctuaries).

In conclusion, the Samian *Heraion* appear to be a sort of ‘deposit’ where both public and private resources, deprived of a strict religious meaning but rather characterized by economic significance, were managed. Of course, the *temenos* was also the sacred place where dedications representing the outcome of cult and worship acts were consecrated: for instance, a private citizen dedicated in the area a golden cup originally meant to be given to king Creseus (Hdv. I 70, 3), Amasis dedicated statues (Hdt. II 182, 2) and the architect of Darius, Mandrokles, dedicated a painting representing the bridge on the Bosphorus (Hdt. IV 88, 1). Hence, the sanctuary gathered together elements of both religious and profane origin.

4. The inventory list and the resources’ hoarding process

One of the most outstanding documents for the understanding of the economic functions carried out by the *Heraion* edifices is the inventory list IG XII 6, 1, 261 (V³¹ or IV³² century B.C.), concerning objects preserved in three sacred buildings, inventoried in three different days. The inscription clearly follows the Athenian scheme, with a prescript specifying the archon, the *tamiai*, the *boule*’s members and its President.

The first part of the document concerns items kept in the major temple – *en toi megaloi neoi*: it should be pointed out that also in the Athenian inventory lists the foremost temple, i.e. the temple of *Athena Polias*, was the only one named *neos*, while different terms were used to designate other temples with different functions, such as the Parthenon. This temple contents consist of the principal cult simulacrum, secondary cult statues, pertinent ornaments, clothes and the *trapeza*. Therefore, the main temple seems to hold a specific religious nature, connected to the cult of the statue.

The second part, drawn up during the second day, refers to a structure mainly focused on the preservation of objects with an evident ritual destination and presumably connected to the sacred banquet taking place during the celebration held in honour of *Hera*. *Klinai*, chairs, and other furniture, cups, bowls, knives, basins are in fact mentioned. Although objects made of precious metals, such as golden jewels are cited, the quantity of precious metal is not so important to assume an exclusively economic function for this second building.

³¹ Denham Rose 1902, p. 404.

³² Curtius 1877, p. 12 (346/345 B.C.); O’ Brien 1993, p. 25, n. 17 (364/363 B.C.).

Finally, the third structure, analyzed during the third day, is organized in multiple shelves, each of them containing a fixed amount of *phialai*, whose correspondent financial value is systematically expressed in drachmas – usually 900 drachmas for each rack. The recorded shelves are twenty-three, but the inscription is incomplete and probably further shelved were inventoried. This third edifice, therefore, seems to be marked by a pure financial function, serving as a deposit of precious metal objects representing hoarded resources that do not belong only to the sanctuary, but that are possessed by the whole *polis*.

The importance of assessing the wealth of the sanctuary, by reporting the financial value of the objects preserved inside it, is in fact a typical feature of temples marked by an economic function and it is properly underlined by the well-known Kallias Decrees, that reads: “The Treasurers (...) shall made the inventory and weigh the resources (...) and they shall report all the items on a *stele*, separating the gold from the silver” (A, ll. 20-24) and also: “Golden and silver items should be weighed” (B, ll. 26-29).

This practice is widely attested in Greek temples, starting from the Athenian Acropolis case. Besides, the inventory lists of the Milesian *Didymaion* mention *phialai* whose value is 100 drachmas each, together with other golden and silver objects; the inventory lists of the *Athenaion* in Halicarnassus count *phialai* whose value was comprised between 87 and 132 drachmas; those of Amos *phialai* whose value is 200 drachmas circa; the same happens in the *Athenaion* of Ilion and so on.

As inventory lists in most cases refer to temples, possibly the three Samian buildings the epigraphic text deals with are three temples. Coherently, it is possible to assume that the third edifice is actually a temple, although deprived of a strict religious nature, but rather characterized by an economic role. The analyzed Samian inventory clearly indicates that the third temple main function is safeguarding objects that were kept inside it in order to constitute a patrimonial fund.

Greek temples were often used as deposits for valuable items made of precious metals, as they were usually the safest structures in the *temenos*, in some cases provided with a college of *tamiai* in charge of the administration of the resources. Several literary sources mention temples as places of deposit. For instance, Strabo attests how the *Heraion* in Ephesus contained a valuable amount of resources and the *Asklepieion*

in Kos had a special ditch serving as a treasure place. In some cases, even the *agalma* itself could be regarded as a sort of treasure that could be used when monetary needs arose. This is the case of the Athenian chryselephantine statue by Phidias, whose gold was melted by Lachares to pay his soldiers.

5. Interpretative proposal

The most documented case of a sanctuary hosting several temples dedicated to the same deity but characterized by different, complementary functions is the Athenian Acropolis.

The Athenian inventory lists, in fact, clearly distinguish a temple, named *neos*, dedicated to *Athena* and provided with an altar, focused mainly on the worship of the sacred *agalma* of *Athena Polias* as well as on sacrificial practice, and a second temple, namely the Parthenon, also dedicated to the same goddess *Athena*, but mainly pursuing an economic purpose, serving as a place where a concentrated mass of gold, silver and bronze was preserved, in order to be used in critical moments – as it happened during the Peloponnesian conflict: in 407/406 B.C., all silver vessels of the *pronaos* were melted to produce coins to face military expenditures and, in 406/405, the same happened to the *opisthodomos*, deprived of its silver and electrum resources.

Likely, the three main edifices of the Samian *Heraion* – namely the main structure provided with altar, plus the *Nordbau* and the *Sudbau* – are three temples, all three dedicated to the same goddess *Hera*, but holding different roles.

Apparently the *neos* mentioned in the inscription should be identified with the main temple of the area, the one provided with altar, which should therefore be regarded as a temple with religious meaning, firstly connected to the preservation of the divine *agalma*. The second building could be a temple with a religious yet minor role, and the third building a temple with primarily economic function, serving, as the Athenian Parthenon, as a deposit of precious objects hoarded for financial reasons. These latter two buildings could be identified with the *Nordbau* and *Sudbau*.

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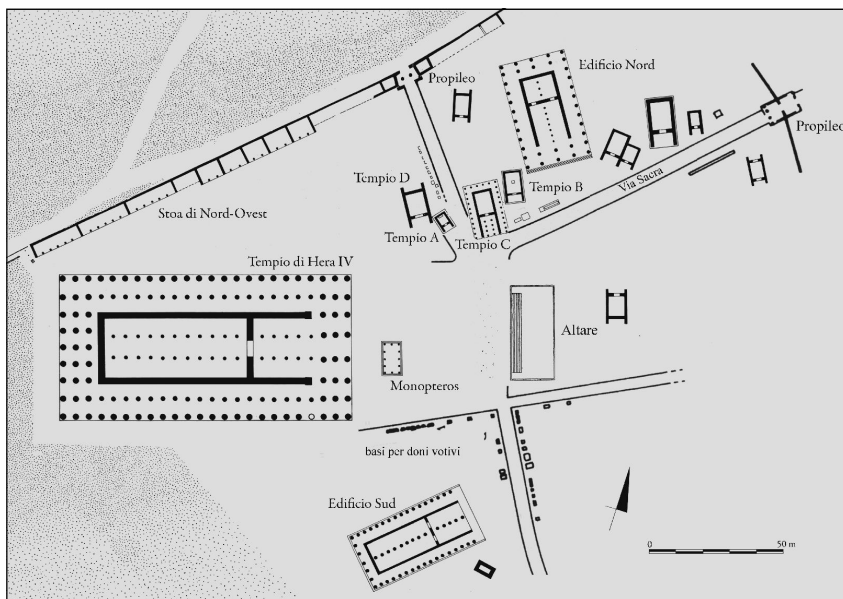
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Sanctuary of Samos, general plan (Lippolis, Livadiotti, Rocco 2007, p. 245)