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Vincenzo Capozzoli (eds.)

**Rethinking Athens Before the Persian Wars**

Proceedings of the International Workshop at the  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
(Munich, 23rd–24th February 2017)



## Münchner Studien zur Alten Welt

herausgegeben von

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Band 17

This book was printed thanks to the financial support of the Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo of the Università degli Studi di Napoli »L'Orientale« and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

Umschlagabbildung: E. Dodwell, Views in Greece I (London 1821) Plate 474  
»Temple of Jupiter Olympios and River Ilissos«  
[<https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/dodwell1821/0059>].



Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in  
der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische  
Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Typesetting and layout: Vincenzo Capozzoli,  
Tommasina Matrone, Annika Busching

The English text was revised by Henry Heitmann-Gordon.

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ISBN 978-3-8316-4813-9

Printed in EU

utzverlag GmbH, München

089-277791-00 · [www.utzverlag.de](http://www.utzverlag.de)

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## Foreword

The Munich workshop, *Rethinking Athens – The Polis Before the Persian Wars: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, organised by a team of young scholars who also edited this book, remains unforgettable. The reasons are manifold. One was the choice of the period, the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, in which *Wilder Ursprung* (Walter Burkert) of Greek people was one of the anthropological catalysts for the development of the *polis*, namely that of Athens. Another was the group of people invited to participate: a vivid mix of passionate young and senior academics mainly from Europe, predominantly Greece. Here, an important driving force was the generous willingness to share new data about key sites in Athens and Attica, now published in this volume. This openness not only resulted in furthering knowledge but also provided new insights into the meandering process of how the city's spatial, material, religious, political, social and economic fabric was woven and constantly rewoven over a long period of time. This process came about in quite the opposite way to clear-cut modern categories as it bound together (seemingly) conflicting concepts, such as myth with history, religion with politics, life with death, aesthetics with brutality, glory with violence, success with failure, and agreement with contradiction. Unforgettable was also the constructive discussion and Mediterranean atmosphere of the workshop propelled by a plurality of hermeneutics, original thought, productive criticism, mutual respect, and a lot of enthusiasm and fun. Fortunately for us this book will keep some of the Munich conference spirit alive, in particular Athens' heritage as an exceptional workshop of all aspects of human life.

Prof. Dr. Rolf Michael Schneider  
*Professor Emeritus for Classical Archaeology*

# Introduction

CONSTANZE GRAML, ANNARITA DORONZIO  
AND VINCENZO CAPOZZOLI

## “Mind the Gap” or Historicity as a Heavy Burden for Pre-Classical Athens

Is it still possible, in 2019, to rethink pre-Classical Athens? The answer is certainly yes, and we might even say that it is not only possible, but in fact necessary. New field activities (be it planned or rescue archaeology) and the continuous advancement of research, along with the progressive publication of several corpora stored for years in the *Ephorates*' archives or even in the International Schools of Athens, require a continuous verification of the previous reconstructions in order to tell new stories of pre-Classical Athens<sup>1</sup>. It goes without saying that everyone as always will continue to do so in their own way. This is what makes the *Athenische Forschung* so exciting: the varied mass of discordant voices, affirmed, overcome

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1 This is not the place for an exhaustive bibliography, but it is certainly necessary to mention the major works of the last two decades. Besides the studies focusing on the *agora* or the *Kerameikos* in the pre-Classical period – especially the two volumes by J. Papadopoulos (Papadopoulos 2003; *Agora* 36) – we mention the PhD thesis of L. Costaki on the Athenian road-system from the Geometric to the Roman period (still unpublished but available online: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/NR16008.PDF>) and with a different approach, the study of L. Ficuciello on the Athenian roads (*SATAA* 4). Finally, with the other series of five volumes “*Topografia di Atene*”, the Scuola Italiana di Atene undertook the task to create a comprehensive and complete lexicon on Athens and partially on Attica (*SATAA* 1, 1–5). See also Valdés *Guía* 2012.

and then exhumed once more with the new perspective that every generational change brings into the discussion, obviously rooted in their own political and social ideologies. This is why the works of E. Curtius, U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, W. Judeich or W. Dörpfeld regularly resurface in the general debate<sup>2</sup>. The history and archaeology of pre-Classical Athens are even more exciting because of the very nature of the available documentation: an archaeological record that is certainly scanty, but still far more consistent than the poor written sources, often ambiguous and produced long after the fact. If we wanted to compile an exhaustive inventory of hypotheses, interpretations and historical reconstructions proposed during the last century for all events and structures of pre-Classical Athens, the length of this entire volume would not suffice. This shows not only the complex nature of this dossier, but also the richness of the existing ideas, approaches and interpretative models, so much that often the Athenian archeology has been conceived as a one-off case, forgetting, among others, how much this *polis* owes to an organic and systemic relationship with the whole of Attica.

Every year we witness an impressive bibliographical production and yet one cannot help but notice that the archae-

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2 Curtius 1862; von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1881; Dörpfeld 1929; Judeich 1931.

ology of pre-Classical Athens is actually riddled with doubts and contradictions, also because of the long history of archaeological research that began with the construction of the “new Athens” in 1833<sup>3</sup>. Even though the documentary gap of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. – denounced already by R. Osborne in the late 1980s<sup>4</sup> – was at least partially filled by the recent study of A. Doronzio<sup>5</sup>, the same cannot be said for the many other aspects raising similar problems. Still taking into account the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., we must note – what is doubtless surprising – that the chronology of the so-called Kylonian Affair has never been questioned. Many scholars seem to agree on a date between 636 and 624 B.C.<sup>6</sup>, but it is necessary to remember that according to E. Lévy’s careful study<sup>7</sup>, the episode should be post-dated by nearly 30 years (597–595 B.C.). Thus, Kylon could have been a contemporary of Solon (though here too we have to decide between high and low chronology)<sup>8</sup>, with easily imaginable historical, political and institutional consequences. As it stands, the chronological problem persists and should be tackled once and for all. Similar issues are also raised by the Aristotelian mention of the ten Archons and the *staseis* following Solon’s activities<sup>9</sup>. In this regard, it would indeed be beneficial to read again L. Gernet’s wise pages with which he inau-

gurated a criticist approach to the *Athenaion Politeia*, proposing – in our opinion – a correct way of interpreting the Aristotelian text<sup>10</sup>. One could continue with the semi-mythical figure of Epimenides, whose various chronolog(ies) span more than a century and are often bent to the needs of modern historical reconstruction<sup>11</sup>.

The same ambiguity lingers around the responsibility for the reorganization of the Panathenaic feast sometimes connected to Peisistratos, underestimating however, that in 566/5 B.C. the Archon was Hippokleides, perhaps the same Hippokleides tied to Miltiades the Elder<sup>12</sup>. In this respect, it is also worth reconsidering the first Parthenon. If it is true, as the latest research suggests that it was erected during the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., every possible connection with Peisistratos falls apart<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine he had the time and power to order the construction of the Parthenon, while he was taking his first public steps on the Atheni-

10 Gernet 1938. See the already mentioned contribution of Flament 2007 as well Flament 2017. Cfr. also Morris 1987, 25: “What faith are we then to place in the particular stories which have survived about early Athens? Following Jacoby, I would suggest that few of the episodes before 550 BC can be trusted in any detail. There is currently a tendency to accept large parts of the Constitution of Athens as a fairly accurate summary of seventh- and early sixth-century history, after a long period of scepticism, but this may not be a welcome trend [...]. Traditions about early history were extensively manipulated in fourth-century Athens, and Aristotle or his sources often seem to misunderstand, conflate or invent their information”.

11 Same criticism in Greco 2001, 27. On the written sources related to Epimenides see recently Bernabé 2007, 105–168.

12 Hdt. 6, 127–129.

13 See the paper of Sioumpara in this volume.

3 Bastea 2000, 108–118. 146–180.

4 Osborne 1989, 297.

5 Doronzio 2018.

6 Compare for example the paper of M. Valdés Guía in this volume.

7 Lévy 1978, 513–521; Giuliani 1999, especially 36; Duploux 2006, 86.

8 In this context see the still fundamental study by Flament 2007.

9 Aristot. Ath. pol. 13, 2.



an political stage as a very young *strategos* and engaged in snatching Salamis from Megara<sup>14</sup>. On the topic of Peisistratos, two other peculiar finds from the *agora* come to mind: the so-called Building F – the house of tyrants according to some, *oikos prytanikos* according to others<sup>15</sup> –, and the nearby necropolis on the north-western slope of the Areopagus. The latter has caused much ink to be spilled regarding its modern (and not ancient!) usage, and without any strong evidence, its interrupted use pattern is related to the erection of the pre-Themistokleian walls of Athens<sup>16</sup>.

Even on this latter matter, needless to say, there is no consensus: a century after the debate between W. Judeich and W. Dörpfeld, there are still scholars who try to deny the historicity of the event in every way, like J. K. Papadopoulos<sup>17</sup>. With the exception of its conclusions – which we consider problematic –, Papadopoulos' approach is interesting as far as it raises a central issue of the archaeology of pre-Classical Athens: the relationship between archaeological records and written sources<sup>18</sup>, and, in the case of the pre-Themistokleian walls, the feasibility of compensating for the absence of the former exclusively by taking into account

and accepting the latter. Clearly, we are often faced with an “either/or approach”, meaning *either* a material-based, fully archaeological approach to ancient Athens that uses the methodology of prehistorical archaeology and focuses on theory *or* an approach with a strong historical embedding<sup>19</sup> that adopts the history of events/political history as a framework for interpreting the material remains. In this second case, the information of non-contextualised written sources is projected onto the archaeological record. This problem should not be taken lightly, since it has an even heavier impact upon the issue of the Athenian public places<sup>20</sup>. Thus, the controversy continues to rage between supporters of a single *agora*<sup>21</sup>, that of the Kerameikos, those of two *agorai*, an older one located eastward of the Acropolis (never found, but considered certain by many), of which the west one – that of the Kerameikos – was the successor<sup>22</sup>, or even those of two *agorai* “and a half”<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, the old

19 Compare the most recent publications on Athenian topics from a historical point of view: Sviatoslav 2018; Riess 2018.

20 For R. Osborne this controversy is no more than a distraction: “In my view, the question of whether any Athenian referred to an ‘old agora’ is a distraction from the fundamental issue, which is whether Kleisthenic democracy opened up a new and distinctive location for what had become the most crucial activities of public life.” (Osborne 2007, 196). For criticism see Greco 2009, 222 f.

21 Doronzio 2011, 15–85; Doronzio 2012, 11–43; Doronzio 2018, 201–211 with previous bibliography.

22 Robertson 1998, 283–302.

23 Cfr. Greco 2009, 224 f. who suggests searching for the “agora” of Apollodoros somewhere on the Acropolis: “io credo che ci sia una possibilità di salvare la testimonianza ed è quella di mettere in rapporto dialettico l’agora di Apollodoro, non con quella archaia delle pendici

14 Hdt. 1, 59, 23–24; Aristot. Ath. pol. 14, 1.

15 On the issue see recently Doronzio 2012, 28–30 with earlier bibliography. See also Osborne 2007, 196: “Most puzzling is the so-called Building F, which is a building of some size; but it remains the case, as with the Temple of Apollo Patroos further north, that a ‘public’ function has only been ascribed to this building because of the later public buildings on the same site”.

16 See the paper of Capozzoli in this volume.

17 Papadopoulos 2008.

18 In this regard see the still useful analysis of A. Snodgrass in Snodgrass 1987, 36–66.

matter of the altar of the Twelve Gods is making a comeback: the construction of the building (or at least of the first phase of its *peribolos*) has been post-dated from the last quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the first years after the Persian Wars, and it has even been suggested that it was relocated from one *agora* to another, i. e. from the hypothetical one to the east of the Acropolis to that of the Kerameikos<sup>24</sup>. Not only the altar of the Twelve Gods but also the *Leokoreion* is travelling, at least within the universe of our bibliography: the latter certainly has nothing to do with the quadrangular *abaton* found by the American School at the northwest corner of the *agora*<sup>25</sup>. This assumption has a major impact on the Athenian topography, since the *Leokoreion* constitutes the only certain topographical reference point for the pre-Themistokleian walls<sup>26</sup>. The latter should also give us an idea of the Athenian *forma urbis* before the building of the

great city walls of Themistokles: this is how we enter an even darker universe, in which one might feel compelled to rely on the beloved and much abused *polis trochoeides* of Herodotus, or rather of the Pythia in Herodotus<sup>27</sup>. But the urbanistic of pre-Classical Athens should not be restricted to an enigmatic wheel-shaped plan – and certainly not to a circular one as many have mistakenly translated *trochoeides*! Indeed, even assuming that it really existed and had both topographical and geometric concreteness, the *polis trochoeides* cannot tell us very much about an urban development and a spatial definition that began several centuries before the statement of the Pythia. And finally, we mention one last substantial problem, which is the lack, until the very recent publication of E. Dimitriadou (see *infra*), of an adequate cartography of pre-Classical Athens, for which we were all too often forced to rely upon the Classical age cartography.

We stop here, but this review could be much longer. Nonetheless, we can immediately point out that the whole set of events and artefacts mentioned above relate (or have been related by us modern archaeologists), without exception, to a period between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. But what happened before? Indeed, we come to a fundamental feature of pre-Classical Athens: the absence of monumentality. Working on pre-Classical Athens requires first of all that we give up writing a *Baugeschichte*, while at the same time adopting the proper methods to study *disiecta membra*, often difficult to identify and interpret. Yet it is clear that overall pre-Classical

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dell'acropoli, ma con quella del Kerameikòs [...]. Insomma, non cercherei le tracce archeologiche dell'agora arcaica di Apollodoro, perché non è mai esistita, ma interpreterei la notizia come il plasma di un'eteria o di una stasis, nell'ambito della competizione politica ateniese di età classica, disponendo in opposizione dialettica Urania-Egeo-Pericle-Fidia vs. Pandemos-Teseo-Kallias-Kalamis, evitando di accusare Apollodoro di pasticci e, ancora peggio, di versare nella muta agora arcaica alle pendici dell'acropoli tutti gli avanzi della tradizione che non trovano una soddisfacente collocazione, come fanno molti oggi”.

24 On the controversial archaeological remains see most recently: Neer – Kurke 2014, 527–579 with the hypothesis of a “transplantation” of the altar. See instead on the importance of the findspot of the altar on the north-west corner of the *agora*, near the southern bank of the Eridanos: D’Onofrio 2017c.

25 Santoro 2015; Monaco 2017.

26 Thuk. 6, 57, 1–4.

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27 Hdt. 7, 140, 5–6.

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