

Logbook

Hedvig von Ehrenheim, Patrik Klingborg, Axel Frejman, Water at ancient Greek sanctuaries: medium of divine presence or commodity for mortal visitors?

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Authors' and reviewers' comments:

Reviewer 1

Review

"Water at ancient Greek sanctuaries: medium of divine presence or commodity for mortal visitors?"

The manuscript under review is strong in some aspects, and weak in others. I think it merits publication in the end, but first it needs to be thoroughly revised and rewritten. I find the idea and pursued questions in the manuscript and project intriguing and potentially fruitful. Identifying a previously neglected category of material which is elaborated, is a common and often fruitful research strategy. However, I do not think that the manuscript is ready to be printed as it is now.

The manuscript is obviously a copy and paste from a research application. In parts, it is repetitious and the author/authors all too often mention what they will do in the project. One suggestion is to delete at least some of the many mentions of what they will do in the project.

I find the bibliography of the manuscript to be thin in every aspect except for the mentions of the ancient sources and the archaeological publications. Several recent and important publications even on ancient religion pertinent to their work are missing (by e.g. Julia Kindt, Jennifer Larson, Jörg Rüpke, Rubina Raja, Jas Elsner).

This is yet another example of a study that promises to do one thing but does another. The author/authors claim to be inspired by posthumanist theory, but they do not show how. A common research strategy in classical studies is to claim to have one theoretical perspective but do traditional positivist research. Archaeology has always been concerned with material aspects of life. The issue has been how things relate to human actions and perceptions. To merely present and sort ancient evidence and testimonies was established as a dominating research strategy in classical studies in the early 20th century. This is positivism and it should not be confused with recent materialist/posthumanist perspectives.

Posthumanism is theoretically sophisticated. Crucially an important aim is to come to terms with the asymmetrical power relations between humans and things, the anthropocentrism endemic to normative science. Posthumanists strive to give material things due credit and acknowledge their impact on humans. This lies at the heart of posthumanism. All attempts to present symmetrical relations between humans and things are not successful, but I am not convinced that a paper — such as this one under review — which first presents the evidence and then claims to be inspired by posthumanism is anything but positivist in disguise. The author/authors must show us an example of a posthumanist analysis in their paper (the paragraph on p. 7 in the manuscript does not qualify as one).

As it stands now, posthumanism is a late add-on with no bearing on their analysis. This is also indicated by the references they cite. It is hard to reconcile their claim that materialists “hold that objects in themselves have agency in a way similar to humans” with the scholarship of Tilley. Tilley (2001) claims for instance: “Things may be attributed agency, not in the sense that they have minds and intentions, but because they produce effects on persons.” Furthermore, I fail to see on what grounds they categorize Hodder (2003) as materialist, and Jones (2002) as posthumanist. Posthumanism has emerged out of the same concerns as postprocessualism/poststructuralism and it is a renewed attempt to address the shortcomings of normative scholarship. Posthumanists identified poststructuralist theories as inadequate, and therefore they introduced a new set of theories. Posthumanism may be a return to things, but it is not a reduction of scholarship to endless presentations of things. Only in positivism is the larger part of a paper an account of the sources.

The claim to be influenced by posthumanist reasoning needs to be substantiated in this paper.

A major aim of the project is to produce a comprehensive study of sacred and profane activities. This is the third part of their study that will contribute to alter our understanding of ancient Greek religion, according to the author/authors. This part needs some serious reworking. Everyday aspects of ancient Greek and Roman cultures have been studied since the 19th century, but it was only with the cultural turn that this field was theorized. The introduction of the academic discipline Cultural studies in the 1980s-1990s is a testimony to this. The author/authors seem unaware of scholarship about the everyday by scholars in several academic fields (e.g. Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Michel de Certeau, Clifford Geertz, Stephen Greenblatt, Meaghan Morris, and the German school of *Alltagsgeschichte*). They need to engage with this type of scholarship. This is furthermore a topic that permeated the cultural turn, how is it related to posthumanism?

Yet another problem that they need to address is that they will base their study on the analysis of five excavated sites in ancient Greece. However, all five of them are big dig excavations. In this tradition, archaeologists tend to have art historical agendas, and focus on exemplary finds that are studied and published, while mundane finds, such as coarse ware ceramics, have been discarded. More than one scholar have turned to big dig excavations to study everyday aspects only to realize that there is simply no material left illuminating these aspects. They ended up doing positivist studies producing yet another catalogue of excavated material — although in all fairness, the author/ authors indicate some awareness of this, and emphasize GIS-modelling instead. The probability that they will end up doing a positivist study, despite their claims to do otherwise, is high in my view — although I hope they will prove me wrong. They need to argue how they will avoid this pitfall.

Typically, the author/authors exhibit a good command of the ancient sources and the excavation reports, but exhibit at best a cursory awareness concerning relevant literature for other parts of their analytical process and which they need to address in order to make the analysis they promise.

In other words, they claim to be inspired by posthumanism, but present a positivist analysis and argue that they will focus on a topic that lies at the core of the cultural turn. Theoretical eclecticism may be a common phenomenon, but I am not convinced that the author/authors actually strive to be eclectic. In my view, they need to stop worrying about the meticulous presentation of the ancient evidence and start addressing the other parts of their analysis. If, and when they do so, I am convinced that this will be an interesting study.

I recommend this article for publication, but only after considerable rewriting.

Reviewer 2

Review of “Water at Ancient Greek Sanctuaries: Medium of Divine Presence or Commodity for Mortal Visitors?”

Recommendation: Accept with revisions

The article under review is an interesting introduction to what appears to be an important research project that aims to investigate the multivalent nature of water in Greek sanctuaries. The theoretical framework of examining the agency surrounding water installations in sanctuaries—in addition to considering the ancient conceptions of water itself by ancient Greeks—is *au courant* with scholarship on water in the ancient Mediterranean. The following comments are intended to improve the content and structure of the article, while language and style will be excluded, per the instructions of the *JAAH* editors.

First, I would introduce the project better for readers on a basic level. In addition to the scholarship already conducted, it was clear that GIS data would be used for the five sanctuaries. But I think it would be helpful to have more about the actual parameters of the project at the beginning of the article, in the introduction. Is there a time duration? Is it hosted by a specific organization? I think the reader needs to be better oriented at the onset of the article about the logistics of the project to contextualize it better.

Second, I think that the discussion of the theoretical framework could be strengthened, especially the section on Spatiality and Movement (page 8). I particularly enjoyed seeing how agency is

being considered in connection with water in Greek sanctuaries—but I thought the two frameworks of ‘post-humanist’ and ‘materialist’ need to be defined better. I am familiar with the work of the scholars that the author(s) cited, but I did not know exactly what was meant or intended by the two names given to the frameworks, especially ‘post-humanist.’ I think by fleshing out the two will situate the reader better on this aspect of the theoretical underpinnings of the project, which I think is crucial. In addition to this, the author(s) might consider introducing aspects of liminality in their discussion of the relationship between water sources and the temenos. And this may be a wider consideration for the project writ large—the implications of water at liminal spaces in religious spaces in the ancient Mediterranean. (For example, author(s) can consult the work of Dylan Rogers on the subject in the Roman world.)

The organization of the article is strong. It flowed well—and it was easy to see where the author(s) wanted to lead the reader. I found it easy to follow, and the author(s) clearly delivered on the promises made in the introduction.

There were a few things for the author(s) to consider moving forward that I thought might strengthen the article moving forward:

- Is there a distinction being made between ‘Greek’ sanctuaries (namely ones that see the most usage/traffic during the Greek period) and ones that were used both in the Greek and Roman periods? Are there implications for continued use through the Roman period? How does that impact your project on the whole? For example, on page 5, there is a nod to this transition between the periods, which might be a prime space to deal with the problem. There are also citations for specifically Roman fountains there, such as the Bol 1984, which documents the second-century CE nymphaeum of Herodes Atticus—although, arguable, in the ancient ‘Greek’ sanctuary of Olympia. If the author(s) wish to keep the nymphaeum of Herodes, what about citing Robinson’s 2011 monograph on Peirene, one of the most famous spring fountains of the ancient world?
- The section, ‘Research Foci,’ on page 8 was helpful for me—but it felt like the second paragraph repeated much of what was stated in the first paragraph. Perhaps the two could be combined to streamline the section.
- I think it would be helpful for readers to provide English translations of Greek passages that you cite (e.g., page 17), so that we know exactly how you are interpreting that particular passage.
- A question that came to mind on page 19, when discussing washing in sea water (although it might not have bearing on the present article): what do you make of the ritualistic washing of piglets in the sea water at Phaleron in the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries? That might be a curious rite to consider—at least in the future of the project.
- Yegül 2015, cited in the text, is missing from the bibliography. I did not check for any other missing citations, however.
- Other bibliography to consult moving forward would include chapters in the following edited volumes:
Wellbrock, K., ed. 2017. *Cura Aquarum in Greece*. Siegburg.
Bassani, M., M. Bolder-Boos, U. Fusco, eds. 2019. *Rethinking the Concept of ‘Healing Settlements’: Water, Cults, Constructions and Contexts in the Ancient World*. Oxford. [Although many of the chapters here deal with problems associated with water usage in Roman sanctuaries, there is much food for thought here, I think. Also, consult Gorrini’s chapter on Athens and Oropos.]

All in all, I think with some revisions, this article will be a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on the relationship between water (usage) and Greek religious practice.

Authors' comments

We wish to acknowledge our gratitude to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their suggestions. All comments have been taken into consideration, though not all have been incorporated in the text. We will below briefly respond and explain our decisions on this matter.

The section on sources of theoretical inspiration was unclear in the draft version of the paper, and led to some misunderstanding from the reviewers. Thanks to their input, and changes based on this, we hope that our theoretical standpoint is now more transparent to the reader. The paper was explicitly framed as a position paper intended to lay out the aims of the project, present key evidence and provide a view into our approaches. The theoretical perspective will naturally continue to develop as the project proceeds.

PR1 identified the field everyday studies or *Alltagsgeschichte* as lacking in the discussion on sacred and utilitarian uses of water. While one could easily get the impression that utilitarian uses are the same as everyday uses, the situation is, in our view, more complex than that. Everyday use and religious use do not stand in opposition to each other, nor do they operate on the same scale. One operates on a scale with the mundane or everyday on one side, and the extraordinary or special on the other side. The other operates on a scale that has non-religious or utilitarian on one side, and religious on the other. We are interested in the latter. Although the two can often be seen as overlapping, they are not the same. For example the recurrent daily sacrifices conducted at the sanctuary of Olympia, for the upkeep of the good will of the god, were both religious and mundane, while a battle between city states was an extraordinary event, but not a religious one (although religious elements were present). Everyday aspects, which operate on the first scale, is therefore not as relevant for the study of religious and utilitarian uses of water as would first seem. We may still engage with this field at a later stage, but it was not deemed necessary to include in this overview article.

In regards to the suggestion by PR2 about expanding on the Roman material and perspective. The point made was valid, but instead of expanding the Roman material, we decided to streamline the arguments, and keep closer to the Greek material, corresponding to the primary period of focus in our study. Consequently, we have, for example, removed the reference to the Nymphaeum of Herodes Atticus in Olympia.