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Gods and farmers: the Late Antique village at Olympia, Greece

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VÖLLING, T. 2018. *Olympia in frühbyzantinischer Zeit: Siedlung - Landwirtschaftliches Gerät - Grabfunde – Spolienmauer*, ed. H. Baitinger, S. Ladstätter, A. Rettner. Wiesbaden: Reichert. Pp. x + 116 pages, illustrations and plans (2 foldouts, 1 insert). ISBN 978-3-95490-363-4, 3-95490-363-6.

From 1989 until his untimely death in 2000, Thomas Völling (V.) explored Late Antique Olympia by participating in systematic excavation and on-site archival study within the research program "Olympia in der römischen Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike." He developed a close knowledge of the pioneering excavators at the site in 1875–84 – "die Alte Grabung" – who cleared the upper strata of massive alluvium covering the Altis, or the precinct of impressive structures at the heart of the venerable sanctuary. V.'s project, eventually based at Würzburg, began with a series of incisive studies on metal finds[1] and progressed to his habilitation thesis on settlement, burial, and fortification at the site. Although he did not live to finish this work, V.'s publications and professional interactions, chiefly in Germany and Greece, which were by all accounts generous and probing, distinguished him as an early innovator in the now thriving field of Late Antique archaeology. Moreover, in an age when the proper treatment of "legacy data" has long since been adopted as a fundamental strategy in Mediterranean archaeology, we should recognize V. as a trailblazer. Even more so if we consider that the data from the 120-year-old excavations, and the legacy of research and ideology in Bismarckian Germany, are among the deepest and most challenging in the annals of Greek archaeology.

Olympia in frühbyzantinischer Zeit finally brings V.'s labor to fruition. In what must have been an effort both tedious and somber by the editors of the volume, who knew and admired V. the man, Holger Baitinger, Sabine Ladstätter, and Arno Rettner compiled his own unfinished drafts with gleanings from notes, papers, and discussions. They seem to have followed the author's intent judiciously, while memorializing with sincere gratitude his unique contribution to the field. The result is a valuable survey of the history and archaeology of Late Roman to Early Byzantine Olympia, or, according to the author's definition (3), the site from the late 3rd to the early 7th c. They have accomplished the basic goal (1–2) of disengaging Olympia from the worn epistemological framework of "Nachantike," "Niedergang," and "Dekadenz," revealing copious evidence for the survival of settlement, albeit of a radically different character, well beyond the once-hypothesized endpoints of invasion and legislation. After a succinct introduction, the book proceeds with discussions and catalogs of agricultural implements and graves, a

[1] Völling 1992; Völling 1996a; Völling 1996b; Völling 1997; Völling 2001b; Völling 2002; Völling and Zimmer 1995.

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description of the small fort with its walls of recycled blocks, and a historical essay. At the end are two foldouts and one pocket-insert with composite plans prepared by Gabriele Sorge to update Dörpfeld and Heyne's original drawing.[2] These painstaking graphic reconstructions from very old records give us the best possible rendering of the distribution of structures and burials in relation to the better-known topography of the Sanctuary between the Kronion Hill and the Kladeos and Alpheios Rivers.

V. has both broadened and clarified the picture of a Late Antique town glimpsed through ongoing excavation, the Christian church above the Pheidias Workshop, and the "Slavic" cemetery on the site of the New Museum. This book will appeal to different audiences. V.'s authoritative account of the twilight of the Panhellenic Sanctuary and the emergence of the succeeding community is a useful introduction for students and scholars alike to the complexities of ancient religion and society in transition. Art historians and archaeologists who study the Greek and Roman Sanctuary and its Games may gain a new perspective on what makes a site sacred by scrutinizing the same site when it is not. Specialists in Late Antiquity will find much substance and stimulation. Some, however, will hesitate over the thin coverage of habitational remains and entire artifactual classes; the occasionally spotty graphics; and a general approach to the material that is objectively profuse but subjectively modest. Such is the inevitable outcome of a project that has advanced through many stages and many hands: besides the guidance of the excavation director (Helmut Kyrieleis) and the series editor (Ulrich Sinn), the book has four senior contributors who acknowledge some half dozen assistants. Indeed, we should thank them all, for it is much better to present the evidence and its first interpretation now, within two decades of V.'s death, than either to bend his original aims or to rebrand his study as something newer but also distinct, following more years of intensive study. We can applaud the work done so far by V. and his editors, while at the same time observing its limitations and looking toward future avenues of inquiry. In this spirit, I will evaluate the book's contents as they stand and propose areas for growth.

The first chapter is a dense history of the site (1–14, edited by Ladstätter). In examining the final years of the Sanctuary and its Games, V. rejects the old model of catastrophic change during the late 3rd and late 4th c. in favor of a new model of gradual transformation over several centuries. He thus opposes the perspective of Alfred Mallwitz in particular, who had championed an early end to activity at the site and an age of desuetude from the 4th c. onward.[3] So V. dismisses the tired presumption of a violent Herulian attack, stresses a limited (if any) local impact from the anti-pagan legislation under the Theodosii, and sees no significant presence of Christianity before the 5th c. He cites an episode of flooding, probably caused by earthquake, in the late 3rd c. up to ca. 300 CE and observes a vigorous program of renewal across the site in the early 4th c., tentatively attributing it to Licinius. The formal continuation of the Games down to at least 385 CE is already known from the remarkable bronze victors' list found in the Southwest Building in 1994.[4] V. considers the possibility that some

2 Dörpfeld 1897, pl. V; Adler 1897.

3 E.g., Mallwitz 1972; Mallwitz 1988; Mallwitz 1999.

4 Ebert 1994; Ebert 1997.

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form of sacred competition (centered at the Stadium?) persisted into the 5th c., even after the Olympian cults had ended and their dedicated art and architecture lay derelict. While such a late date might still bother traditionalists, V.'s picture of Late Roman Olympia, even more radical three decades ago, was ahead of its time. Today many researchers understand polytheistic cult-sites in Late Antiquity to have been evolving landscapes that residents and visitors continued to frequent, tolerating and even exploiting the environment of perpetual ruin while engaging in familiar activities, from gathering and celebrating to sacrifice and dedication. These activities need not have been chiefly or even essentially devotional, inasmuch they could satisfy the social needs of the participants and sustain a cultural memory of personal and communal glory that was not exclusively religious.

The Classical Sanctuary was eventually replaced by the Early Byzantine settlement that is the book's main revelation. This small town or village first developed on the west side of the Altis and out beyond the Kladeos, where it remains unexcavated. The residents reoccupied the old buildings of the Sanctuary, merged them into new buildings, some large enough to house wine presses, and maintained longstanding traffic routes. V.'s handling of the specific relationship between this new community and the earlier Sanctuary is imprecise. He does not fully explain the late settlement's existence, only alluding to local residents who had been previously attached to the site and imagining a synoecism of rural peoples from the larger area (8). Moreover, he equivocates between a caesura and a transition in discussing the Late Roman/Early Byzantine boundary, candidly admitting to the absence of clear stratigraphic evidence (6–7). On the one hand, he argues for a rapid shift from the activity of the Sanctuary to the activity of the village, considering the tight integration of the spaces and structures of both settlements. On the other, he argues for a gap between pagan cult and Christian worship at Olympia, presumably because the village and its church (here dated to the second half of the 5th c.)[5] so drastically displaced the monumental spaces of traditional rituals. Accepting the possible coexistence of Christians and pagans in the local community, or some hybridity of belief and practice, does not require a confrontational or violent interaction, as V. implies. He himself admits that the basilical church on the edge of the Altis need not have been among the village's first buildings. If so, we may reasonably ask whether a small town with Christian residents existed around the river during the early 5th c. or earlier and expanded eastward to the old core of the Sanctuary once the Games had ended.

The expansion of this village further eastward over the Altis is easier to trace. Another episode of deep (coseismic?) alluviation struck the site around the mid-6th c., roughly the same time that residents toppled the peristyle of the Temple of Zeus. The residential quarter situated thereafter directly east and southeast of the Temple counts among the largest so far uncovered in Early Byzantine Greece. The houses, arranged in an organic agglutination, show variable plans of small rooms, among which kitchens, storage and workrooms, courtyards, and curving pathways can be identified. I read in the reconstructed plan at least 30 units (houses?) comprising seven or eight complexes with shared walls (blocks?). V. notes abundant evidence not only for local subsidence and production, including kilns, farming tools, and smithies, but also for engagement with long-distance exchange, such as imported pottery, lamps, and metal adornments.

[5] Adler 1892.

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This community achieved modest prosperity, but, according to V., it did not last more than a few generations. Bearing in mind the paucity of well-dated evidence from secure depositional contexts, I cannot affirm his explanation of the settlement's end (13–14). He rightly interprets 13 coin hoards found among the houses as emergency deposits in the face of the Avaro-"Slavic" incursion, here dated to 577/8 CE (?).[6] His approach to this notorious thicket of scholarly debate – contending a single wave of invaders, disparaging the historicity of the *Chronicon Monemvasiae*, and denying "einer dauerhaften slawischen Landnahme der Peloponnes" – is conservative. We cannot rule out the possibility, raised by both textual and archaeological evidence, of a second wave during the first decades of the 7th c., and some would even argue for an extended period of fluctuating immigration. Furthermore, in evaluating the utility of the *Chronicon*, reasonable critics can dismiss the blatant inaccuracies of the narrative even as they accept its overall impression of an enduring foreign presence in the Greek heartland. Noting the discovery of a scattering of coins of Phocas, V. argues that the Early Byzantine village at Olympia survived only into the beginning of the 7th c. Dating the earliest burials in the cremation cemetery ca. 500 m north-northwest of the Altis to the second quarter of the 7th c., he firmly concludes that the long-established Christian villagers and their newly arrived Slavic neighbors were distinct groups, perhaps even separated by a gap of several years.[7]

We should not, however, force the loose chronology of burial and settlement to prove such a specific interpretation. In general, many elements of the Early Byzantine assemblage cannot be dated more precisely than to roughly a half century. The rapid decrease in coins from the reigns of Phocas and Heraclius onwards, almost totally disappearing apart from an uptick under Constans II, is a well-known pattern at other Peloponnesian sites. It may well arise not from outright abandonment but from fundamental changes in Imperial minting and compensating troops, or a regional trend in production and exchange toward a hyperlocalized and demonetized economy. We should therefore ask whether the Christian village at Olympia could have persisted, even reduced to a smaller size or moved to a nearby locale, to at least the mid-7th c. In fact, a recent reconsideration of the Early Byzantine jugs and amphoras from the site has convincingly dated them, respectively, to the first three quarters of the 7th c. and to the last quarter of the 7th to beginning of the 8th c.[8] As for the Slavic presence, no village has yet been found. The small part of its cemetery so far uncovered has produced 32 graves containing cremations, 42 handmade and wheelmade vessels, 27 metal objects, and 37 glass beads. The definitive study of these remains by Tivadar Vida in conversation with V. has dated the burials from the second quarter of the 7th through the 8th c.[9] For these reasons we should question how confidently V. denies any coexistence, let alone interaction, between Greeks and Slavs during the "dark age." Other scholars have speculated over a symbiosis between natives and foreigners, proposing varying degrees of cultural assimilation, material exchange, intermarriage, and religious conversion. Finds at certain sites have been interpreted as evidence for contact between Slavic settlers and Greek residents, such as mixed pottery at Isthmia, Argos, and Palladion, and the recently discovered second "barbarian" cemetery in

6 Cf. Athanassopoulou-Pennas 1981; Avramea 1983; Oikonomidou-Karamesini 1991.

7 See also Völling 2001a.

8 Schilbach 1999, 146–51; Lambropoulou and Yangaki 2012–13.

9 Vida and Völling 2000, 91–97.

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southern Greece.[10] Although we do not possess comparable remains at Olympia, we must remember that the total evidence presently available for the 7th-c. settlement is very limited. A model of interaction should be a hypothesis to test, not a theory to dismiss.

After this historical introduction, the book's next chapters focus on particular classes of finds. Arguably the strongest among them is the second chapter, on agricultural implements (15–45, edited by Baitinger). The early excavators found as many as 26 iron tools of Early Byzantine date, mostly concentrated in the central residential quarter. These include diverse implements both for tilling and cultivation (plowshares, garden and field hoes, pick- and double axes, spades) and for manual harvesting (sickles and other curved blades). The authors have effectively placed these tools in the larger traditions of Roman agriculture and adduced a range of comparanda particularly from southeastern Europe. The significance of the finds does not therefore lie in their uniqueness but rather in their abundance for a region and period whose farming technology and practice are poorly understood. Moreover, this assemblage – as much for what it is as for what it is not – furnishes valuable evidence for the subsidence strategies and environmental conditions of the late community at Olympia. These tools were suited for turning rough or rocky soil on the wider scale of fields and for cultivating soil beds on the narrower scale of gardens or orchards. Baitinger correctly emphasizes the lack of evidence for husbandry, such as scythes for haying, combs, sheers, brands, and castrating tongs, or, one suspects, harnessing fixtures. The total picture of architecture and artifacts would thus support the reconstruction of a village with the dense core so far uncovered, where residents engaged in the more spatially restricted activities of kitchen gardening and workshop-production, and a peripheral zone, as yet unexplored, where residents could find more open ground for keeping livestock and tending grapevines.

V. intended the third chapter on burials to be the centerpiece of his study (47–118, edited by Rettner). Exploration in and around the Altis has uncovered up to 400 graves associated with the Early Byzantine settlement, among which 337 could be cataloged, together representing the mortuary practices of perhaps 700–800 local residents. This is an enormous sample from across the whole site, and both the early abandonment (or relocation?) of the village and deep sedimentation above it had apparently kept the graves undisturbed. Even though the 19th-c. excavators were unusually conscientious for their era, their documentation of much of this cemetery was incomplete and rudimentary, and the burials themselves are now largely gone. V. heroically extracted as much knowledge as possible from the old notebooks and sketches,[11] and he evidently benefitted from his own experience digging ten interments during the 1990s.

In general, the cemetery at Olympia shows the essential forms and practices of Christian burial in Late Antique Greece. The deceased were buried in cists built from slabs of local shelly limestone or covered with Laconian tiles, though one burial contained a child in a large jar. The bodies were inhumed in a supine, extended position with the heads in the west. Multiple burial was commonplace, so that as many as nine bodies could accumulate over time in a single cist. Fewer than one quarter of the burials contained funerary objects. Mourners sometimes dressed the dead with articles of jewelry and clothing, including

10 E.g., Aupert 1980; Iozzo and Pogano 1995; Gregory 1993; Anagnostakis and Poulou-Papadimitriou 1997; Vida and Völling 2000, 13–26; Athanasoulis 2014.

11 See also Furtwängler 1890, 208–12.

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earrings, hair and dress pins, bracelets, finger rings, and belts. Only a small number of graves contained single vessels, in particular a distinctive form of pitcher with a flat bottom and cylindrical body showing wavy-line decoration, but also in one case a piriform flask in glass. Other rare but noteworthy finds include bronze coins, a miniature bell, a shell, and a collection of seven or more tortoises. The continued use of traditional funerary coins throughout Late Antiquity and indeed during later eras of Greek history calls for discussion. The use of bells (e.g., Grab 108) was certainly an apotropaic measure, as may have also been the case for the fine bronze bracelets intricately carved with Christian symbols and other linear motifs, which are reminiscent of magical nails in the Roman Mediterranean (Gräber 166, 234, 256). The bizarre deposit of tortoises, presumably a deliberate act rather than an ecological coincidence, may be one of those precious discoveries that speaks to the personality of the dead. Could they have been pets – intact canine skeletons have been found among human skeletons in Late Antique Greek burials – or sacrifices that symbolize a profession or activity – burials with medical kits and fishing gear are known – or both? In any case, the choice of this species is obscure.

The residents of the Early Byzantine village during the 5th to early 6th c. interred their dead in even rows in and around the church and in an apparently random arrangement across the ruins of the Altis, while their successors in the late 6th c. may have used some of the same areas. Without the full stratigraphic contexts of many late buildings and burials, it is hard to map the distribution of graves by period. The dense composite plans do not indicate whether the numerous graves dispersed over the former Altis were located inside or below houses, giving the improbable impression either of cists cut through the floors of occupied homes, or of funerary *periboloi* in the midst of a village (Foldouts 1, 2). Only after scrutinizing the catalog does the reader find that many (all?) of these graves underlie occupation levels ("unter den Slawenmauern," etc.). This raises the crucial question of where exactly the residents of the settlement in the late 6th to early 7th c. buried their dead.

V.'s conception and description of the burials, which are characteristically lucid and compact, were a signal achievement for the 1990s, and his study remains useful. He could not, however, benefit from two research trends that have accelerated over the past two decades: the burgeoning interest in "death-ritual and social structure" within the field of Classical archaeology broadly defined, and the intensive documentation of Late Antique burials across Greece.[12] In this light, V.'s interpretation falls short in three respects. First, he provides little insight into the ritual processes of burial as a material, spatial, and behavioral medium for representing identity and generating memory, in particular the expression of Christianity. In reporting on the jugs, he alludes to their offering for the figurative participation of the dead in a funerary meal, but he does not imagine how mourners could have used them as containers for liquid in commensal rites. The presence of large slabs at ground level, even without epitaphs, were focal points for graveside commemoration, forming a lasting marker for mourners to find the place but also furnishing a platform for mourners to leave offerings and mementoes. The absence of lamps is noteworthy. Is it possible that these votive instruments, which are found in other Late Antique

[12] See in general Rife, Forthcoming; Morris 1992 was an early barometer, if not cause or catalyst, of these trends.

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Christian burial contexts, were instead used at Olympia chiefly in the bereaved home or at the church, both of which were situated in proximity to the cemetery?

Second, V. does not attempt in any consistent manner to associate the funerary remains with the social structure of the Late Antique community. The range of graves show a degree of variability in their design and contents that may reflect slight differences in the investment of resources and effort by mourners, such as the more monumental stone-built tombs and the few with multiple funerary articles (e.g., Gräber 27, 34, 323, 324). But it is hard to read this as strict status-differentiation. The orderly interments in and around the church are distinguished by their placement but not by their forms (Gräber 68–70, 76–80, 182–193?). This large cemetery gives an overarching impression of mortuary homogeneity. Apart from essential differences by gender and age – feminine beauty was connoted by certain jewelry, and children were placed in smaller cists – men and women, adults and children were by and large buried in the same manner. One explanation, which I have proposed for the Late Antique burials at Isthmia,[13] is that local families lived and worked together in an egalitarian community and depended on one another for success as a farming village. In the disruptive event of death, residents chose familiar behaviors, materials, and spaces for burial to solidify cohesion rather than to assert divisions between elite and nonelite.

Third, V.'s discussion raises the key question of what an appropriate field of reference is when analyzing mortuary remains. Rettner confesses that the citation of comparanda in this chapter is deficient (48). I ask whether comparing the practices of southern Spain or Carthage is a useful strategy for interpreting the late cemetery at Olympia. To be sure, the ceramic assemblage alone demonstrates that the western Peloponnese was connected through networks of exchange with the central to western Mediterranean.[14] It seems doubtful, however, that the villagers at Olympia would enact and construe their own rituals of death under the strong influence of foreign travelers, when they could find more accessible and comprehensible models within their own regional ambit and cultural tradition. Comparative study has revealed that in fact the Greek world, from southeastern Europe across the Aegean basin, formed a definable sphere of mortuary behavior in Late Antiquity. V.'s inclusion of Balkan parallels is welcome, but we can now adduce much richer material from Greece, including the northeastern and western Peloponnese.[15]

The fourth chapter, on the *Spolienmauer*, surveys the architectural remains and their chronology (119–27, edited by Ladstätter). The massive double-shelled wall, with an estimated height of up to 8–10 m, was skillfully composed out of recycled ashlars, column drums, entablature, and roofing. Very few images survive of this extraordinary masonry (plates 1–5), which had been mostly dismantled during the early campaigns. V. has meticulously identified the *membra disjecta* to show how large portions of buildings, such as the Treasuries of Gela and Megara, were incorporated piecemeal into the new enclosure. We are reminded that the laborers in what must have been a coordinated reclamation project found ancient buildings still substantially preserved into Late Antiquity. The new walls formed a trapezoidal enceinte around the Temple of Zeus and the South Hall with two

[13] Rife 2012, 213–22.

[14] Martin 1996; Martin 1997; Martin 2014; Schauer 2010; Lambropoulou and Yangaki 2012–13.

[15] E.g., Anagnostakis and Poulou-Papadimitriou 1997, 242–51; Vikatou 2002; Bourbou 2004; Vikatou 2006; Rife 2012; Metaxas and Tritsaroli 2017; Rife, Forthcoming.

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towers each on the east and west sides, a main entrance in the south face, and posterns in the other walls. V. observes that this impressive construction was deliberately erected on a low terrace projecting from the Kronion, where it could envelop preexisting architecture while also avoiding floods. Another factor may well have been proximity to former points of ingress and egress. V. decisively rejects Mallwitz's identification of the *Spolienmauer* as a fortification against the Herulians. Their putative invasion of southern Greece was a once-popular but unproven theory based on the well-documented attack on Athens in 267/8 CE, and on the brief testimony of the early-9th-c. chronographer George Syncellus (AM 5748). V. rightly questions the weak stratigraphic and artifactual argument for the late 3rd-c. date, which derived from excavations by Werner Fuchs in 1953–55 between the Leonidaion and the western wall.[16] Instead V. returns to the original "Byzantine" chronology of Ernst Curtius, Wilhelm Dörpfeld, and Friedrich Adler, placing the *Spolienmauer* between the end of pagan cult-activity, whose facilities it largely dismantled, and the latest phase of the Early Byzantine village, which supplanted it, that is, between the early 5th and the mid-6th c.

The fifth and final chapter is an independent historical essay on the Late Antique settlement and fortification by Martin Miller (129–43). From the outset he repeats archaeological and historical content, especially from chapters 1 and 4. By avoiding the awkward task of stitching together old and new work into a single discussion, the editors have preserved V.'s original interpretations in his own words. But Miller's rehearsal and amplification of V. distracts the reader, who must shuttle between the start and end of the book to piece together a complete picture. Notwithstanding this organizational inefficiency, Miller elucidates the historical setting of the *Spolienmauer*. He invokes the widespread phenomenon in Late Antique Greece and Asia Minor of small fortresses woven into a broader urban fabric that could house a garrison and offer refuge. One possibility is that the great building at Olympia was prepared in response to the Visigoths' disastrous incursion, which culminated in the summer of 397 CE when Stilicho confronted Alaric near Elis. During the early 5th c., the western Peloponnese and specifically the inland route up the Alpheios Valley had gained strategic significance for Constantinople. However, as Miller observes, Imperial investment in Olympia is unlikely, and indeed certain weaknesses in the location and design of the *fortessa* – namely, its siting at the foot of the Kronion and the placement of its towers and northeast entry – do not reflect expert engineering to create a durable strongpoint. He concludes that the erection of the massive enclosure in the early 5th c., roughly contemporary with the settlement further west, may have been intended both to protect the Temple of Zeus and bronze statuary from rampant plundering and to provide safe storage and shelter for local residents under threat. After all, "Die Ummauerung stellt trotz ihrer fortifikatorischen Mangel einen Festungsbau dar, der Schutz mehr vor herumziehenden Banden als vor wirklichen Heeren bieten sollte" (143).

Miller paints an attractive picture that can be brought into sharper focus. Some readers may not accept the two suggestions that the *Spolienmauer* was an ineffective fortification, and that it was at least partly intended to preserve the antiquities of Zeus. The chryselephantine statue had probably been removed before the construction of the fort, which in any case excluded other revered spaces, such as the Altar and the Heraion. Moreover, it

[16] Fuchs 1993, 27–31; Fuchs 2013. U. Sinn has also examined the date and setting of the "Herulian Wall": Sinn 1991; Sinn 1996; Sinn 2004, 229–32, 258.

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seems unlikely that the enormous building was designed to shield statuary posted on the stylobate, when both valuable art and useful metal must have been accessible to looters across the former Altis. Certainly the fortification does not compare with the major Theodosian walls that encircled Constantinople and Corinth and spanned the Isthmus; it is difficult to imagine that this inland site along a route into Arcadia was on the front line of defense against the armies of Gaiseric. We should not, however, overplay the weakness of a structure with such a thick and tall rampart. Any notion that the position of the fortress off the Kronion would have left it vulnerable to attack from a higher vantage point seems misplaced, if we recognize that the village was unlikely to draw an orchestrated assault by artillery hauled up the slope, and that archers would be hard pressed to land arrows throughout the enceinte from the distant summit. I do wonder whether the South Hall supported a parapet overlooking the river basin, and whether disengaged stones and dilapidated buildings around the fort were obstacles to an arrayed attack in the apparent absence of a *proteichisma* or *taphros*. In short, the *kastraki* at Olympia may exemplify defensive self-sufficiency on a local scale in the wake of the Visigoths' Peloponnesian advance. Residents were already skilled at repurposing the monumental ruins in their midst. Their walled enclosure, even with its idiosyncrasies, would have effectively protected a sizable and growing community that received travelers and traders.

Thanks to V. and his dedicated colleagues, Olympia has emerged as a premier site for studying a significant but overlooked class of settlement, the Early Byzantine village. Furthermore, I have suggested that its abundant remains may reflect an evolution between the early 5th and the early 7th c. from the semiurban to the semirural, or from the small town to the small village. Similar trajectories of ruralization have been observed at former provincial centers such as Athens, Messene, and Euchaïta.[17] Olympia joins the other three Panhellenic Sanctuaries as loci of production and exchange, with small but resilient communities that outlasted the dissolution of polytheism, its cult apparatus, and its sacred landscaping. We assume that the ancient shrines still afforded residents the tangible and intangible advantages of accessibility, familiarity, traffic, resources, and perhaps even a potent memory of the place's erstwhile – and abiding?– specialness. We can begin to outline a spectrum of habitation and burial across the wide variety of Greek settlements lasting into the late 6th c. and beyond the Avaro-Slavic "Landnahme." There are, in my estimation, refuges (the Andritsa cave) and transient camps or squatting (Kenchreai, Corinth); single or clustered dwellings and farmsteads (Pyrgouthi, Demetrias?); villas or otherwise enclosed complexes (Lechaion, Louloudies); collections of households or small villages (Isthmia, Nemea?, Zygouries?, Palladion?, Tiryns?); large villages to small towns (Olympia, Messene, Delphi?); and active harbors and cities (Kenchreai, Corinth, Thessalonica).

The appearance of *Olympia in frühbyzantinischer Zeit* is an opportunity for critical reflection on how we collect, present, and interpret the growing body of evidence for Late Antique Greek society. V.'s admirable project makes a strong case for archaeological discovery not only in the ground but also in the storeroom. It reminds us of the severe limitations of old records, especially the gaping vacuum of depositional context, and by example it underscores the importance of comprehensive and prompt publication. We now have excellent, full treatments of the agricultural tools and funerary offerings from Olympia.

17 E.g., Haldon 2018; Tsivikis 2020.

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We hope it will not be decades before syntheses of the pottery (but see n. 14 above), lamps, coins, glass, and human remains associated with the Early Byzantine settlement appear, assuming that those finds still exist at least from excavation after World War II. V. brought an enlightened perspective to Olympian research by replacing the Mallwitzian paradigm with a model of gradual transformation, and by looking beyond the dichotomous formula of church and fortress by which Ernst Curtius had defined the settlement (48, 119)[18] to see its graves, houses, and equipment. But V.'s Olympia has a strange emptiness: a cemetery without mourners, a village without families, plows without farmers, fortifications without builders. One new horizon for Olympian studies, apart from the mere collection of fresh data, would be to populate the Late Antique village with residents who interacted, adapted, and struggled as their environment and their neighbors changed in unexpected and challenging ways. Where after all was the house of Kyriakos, the *anagnostes* and *emphyteuses tes kteseos* who donated the church's beautiful pavement,[19] how did he work the land, and what was his final resting place?

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Tra terra e cielo: la topografia ed il culto del *lucus Deae Diae*

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Il volume, dedicato alla storia degli scavi ed alla topografia generale del santuario della Dea Dia (La Magliana), rappresenta *le point final*, il punto d'arrivo, di un'esplorazione archeologica iniziata oltre quaranta anni fa, ma che nel tempo è stata già gradualmente descritta e pubblicata in sedi e contributi diversi.[1] Un'esplorazione problematica per più

[1] Tra i molti contributi, alcuni dei quali pubblicati nei *MÉFRA* (1976, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1986), qui segnalo almeno i volumi Broise and Scheid 1987; Scheid 1990a; Scheid 1990b.

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