

The Athens Greek Religion Seminar, May 10 2016:

Michael Kerschner (Austrian Archaeological Institute, Vienna)

The beginnings of the Artemision of Ephesos in the Protogeometric periods: How to verify cultic activity in the Early Iron Age?

The Artemision of Ephesos had become one of the most important sanctuaries of the Greek world by the Hellenistic period, when the huge temple of the goddess was counted among the “Seven Wonders of the World”. Achieving this position, however, was a long process the beginning of which will be analysed in the present lecture.

The site was already frequented in the 2nd millennium BC, but the archaeological record is too scanty to specify if it was already used as a sanctuary during the Late Bronze Age. In the late 11th/10th century BC, indications for cult become more distinct: the functional range of pottery, the continuity of the archaeozoological profile and probable votive offerings like miniature vessels and terracotta figurines point to a ritual practice focussed on common consumption of food and drink. During the Early Iron Age the sanctuary was a small sacred precinct without any architecture. Votive offerings were rare and modest, and this did not change much in the Late Geometric period.

The paper will discuss in how far the analysis of deposits of artefacts and animal bones makes it possible to distinguish a sanctuary from habitation or artisan districts.