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**Rings, pits, bone and ash. Greek altars in context**

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Abstract

Greek altars have received ample attention in scholarship as to their appearance, construction and location within a sanctuary, as well as their importance as the central feature for the rituals allowing communication with the gods. The immediate surroundings of altars have not been considered to the same degree. This paper will explore the context of Greek altars and some of the features located here, for example, rings for fastening animals, stone lined pits and remains of previous sacrifices. Of particular interest is the use of the top of the altar for ritual purposes in relation to the space surrounding the altar. A study of the wider contexts of altars, as to their use and the material remains found here, may provide a better understanding of the complex ritual reality of the ancient Greeks.