



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday March 1, 2022, at 17h Athens time (via Zoom link).

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***In the shadow of the Panhellenic Sanctuary.
Remarks on cult practices at the Eileithyia/Sosipolis Sanctuary of Olympia.***

ABSTRACT

A sanctuary of Eileithia and Sosipolis is mentioned by Pausanias in the following passages:

[6.20.2] At the foot of Mount Cronius, on the north . . . , between the treasuries and the mountain, is a sanctuary of Eileithyia, and in it Sosipolis, a native Elean deity, is worshipped. Now they surname Eileithyia Olympian, and choose a priestess for the goddess every year. The old woman who tends Sosipolis herself too by an Elean custom lives in chastity, bringing water for the god's bath and setting before him barley cakes kneaded with honey.

[6.20.3] In the front part of the temple, for it is built in two parts, is an altar of Eileithyia and an entrance for the public; in the inner part Sosipolis is worshipped, and no one may enter it except the woman who tends the god, and she must wrap her head and face in a white veil. Maidens and matrons wait in the sanctuary of Eileithyia chanting a hymn; they burn all manner of incense to the god, but it is not the custom to pour libations of wine. An oath is taken by Sosipolis on the most important occasions.

With the discovery of the sanctuary of Eileithyia and Sosipolis north of the Kronos hill in the last decade, a topographical problem concerning the sanctuary for a long time, was finally solved. In the context of the study of the findings from the excavation, which is still in progress, issues related to the worship which lasts from the archaic era to the late antiquity, will be discussed.

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