



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday February 6, 2024

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A cult statue of Dionysus from a private sanctuary of the second century B.C. in Piraeus

ABSTRACT

The state cult of Dionysus in Piraeus was centered around the theatre on Mounychia Hill, where the temple of Dionysus is also thought to have been located. The cult is documented by literary and epigraphical evidence of the fourth century B.C. The sources, however, fall silent after the occupation of Mounychia by a Macedonian garrison in 322 B.C. After the departure of the Macedonians in 229 B.C., the worship of Dionysus appears to have shifted to a private sanctuary closer to the chief harbour of Piraeus. In 1884 rescue excavations for the construction of the municipal theatre of Piraeus revealed a large private house which contained three inscriptions of the early second century B.C. documenting a private cult of Dionysus, along with the marble torso of an over-life-size statue of the god. The statue is a Hellenistic variant of an early fourth-century type, transmitted through votive reliefs and Roman copies. The inscriptions mention two statues of the god, a cult statue and a votive statue, both dedicated by the same man. The evidence indicates that the torso belongs to the cult statue. The statuary type is similar to that of Bendis, whose sanctuary was also located on Mounychia Hill. It will be suggested that the torso from Piraeus was inspired by a prototype erected in the temple of Dionysus on Mounychia Hill and not by a statue standing in one of the sanctuaries in Athens (Dionysus Eleuthereus or en limnais).

The seminar takes place **Tuesday February 6, 2024, 17.00 (Athens time)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or via zoom link.

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