

**SUCCESS AT SEA: MARITIME VOTIVE OFFERINGS AND NAVAL
DEDICATIONS IN ANTIQUITY**

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

In ancient Greece and Rome, gods and goddesses were thought to have control over many aspects of the human world. In order to influence or appease the divine, Greeks and Romans regularly performed religious rituals. These rituals, which included prayer, sacrifice, and the offering of non-consumable votive objects, constituted an integral part of ancient Greco-Roman religion. Material remains of religious activity, as well as the testimonies of ancient writers, help elucidate the significance of ancient Greco-Roman religious ritual. While almost any occasion, such as birth, marriage, hunting, and harvest, was cause for invoking divine assistance, it was in times of anxiety and danger that religious ritual became a fundamental necessity. Seafaring, which is the focus of the present study, is one such example of a hazardous yet necessary activity that likely affected many individuals in the ancient world at one time or another.

Although it is impossible to observe ancient religious beliefs and practice directly, one can observe it indirectly through the excavation and interpretation of material remains. Since prayer and sacrifice generally are not visible in the archaeological record, the votive offering becomes the most informative component of ritual in the understanding of past religious behavior. Therefore, this thesis examines archaeological and literary evidence for votive offerings and dedications that are naval or maritime in nature.

Maritime votive offerings encompass small, portable objects such as metal and terracotta ship models, as well as naval equipment, such as anchors. These objects likely

represented thank-offerings given to the divine by seafarers after the fulfillment of a previous request for safe passage at sea, although offerings could have also been made by sailors seeking protection in anticipation of a future sea voyage. Naval dedications, on the other hand, include naval spoils, such as the detached ram or prow ornament taken from an enemy's ship, and in some instances, a whole ship, to commemorate a naval victory. Upon examination of this evidence, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions about past religious practices and also gain insight into the actions and motivations of the people who performed them.

DEDICATION

To my parents and my beloved Murphy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Religious ritual and cult played a major role in the daily lives of ancient Greeks and Romans. This is illustrated by archaeological remains of sanctuaries, altars, statues of deities and heroes, and vase paintings depicting religious scenes. Additionally, much of what we know about Greek and Roman religious ritual has been handed down in detailed accounts by ancient writers such as Homer, Herodotus, Strabo, and Pausanias. Upon examination of the literary and archaeological evidence, it becomes clear that ancient Greeks and Romans often looked to the gods to grant favors in many aspects of their lives. While almost any occasion (e.g., birth, marriage, hunting and harvest, war and victory, famine and plague), was cause for invoking divine assistance,¹ it was in times of distress and danger that religious ritual became a fundamental necessity. Seafaring is an example of one such dangerous activity that likely affected a large portion of the ancient populace at least once in their lives.

Seafaring facilitated the expansion of ancient Greek and Roman societies not only through the business of local and international trade, but also through military endeavors. Of course, fear of death at sea was undoubtedly a concern for ancient Greek and Roman sailors. The fear was perhaps precipitated less by the idea of death than by the irretrievability of the physical body. Being consumed by the sea and, therefore, lost

¹ Burkert 1985, 55.

forever was possibly more frightening than death itself. In Book I of Homer's *Odyssey*, Telemachus communicates this fear to Athena when speaking of his father, Odysseus:

But now the gods have willed otherwise in their evil devising, seeing that they have caused him to pass from sight as they have no other man. For I should not so grieve for his death, if he had been slain among his comrades in the land of the Trojans, or had died in the arms of his friends, when he had wound up the skein of war. Then would the whole host of the Achaeans have made him a tomb, and for his son, too, he would have won great glory in days to come. But as it is, the spirits of the storm have swept him away and left no tidings: he is gone out of sight, out of hearing, and for me he has left anguish and weeping.²

Hesiod, a contemporary of Homer, also talks about trepidation of death at sea in his description of ideal sailing times. He explains that "it is a bad business to meet with disaster among the waves," and only those men desperate for wealth risk the perils of a sea journey.³ These two examples, which date to approximately the end of the eighth century B.C.E., represent some of the earliest literary evidence describing sailors' fear of travel by sea.⁴

Since the lack of a body prevented the traditional burial of those lost at sea, symbolic burials were often carried out as a way to formally lay to rest missing persons presumed dead. Empty tombs called cenotaphs were erected as memorials for those whose physical remains had been lost. These metaphorical graves could be set up for anyone

² Hom. *Od.* 1.234-43. Translation from Murray 1919.

³ Hes. *Op.* 685-93.

⁴ In addition to literary accounts, depictions of shipwrecks in Geometric paintings (900-700 B.C.E.) possibly portray the fear of sea travel. For examples, see Coldstream 1991, 48-53 and Vermeule 1979, 184-5.

whose body had not been recovered, such as a soldier who had died in battle or someone who had simply died in a distant land. However, it seems likely this tradition originated for the purpose of honoring sailors who had perished at sea.⁵ One of the earliest known cenotaphs, which dates to the end of the seventh century B.C.E., is in the shape of a tumulus and is located approximately 100 m (330 ft) from the shore below an ancient port cemetery on Corfu (ancient Corcyra). It was erected in honor of the *proxenos* Menecrates and included an inscription specifying that he had died at sea.⁶ Evidence of this tradition is also reflected in the accounts of ancient writers. In the aforementioned scene from Book I of the *Odyssey*, Athena later tells Telemachus that he must carry out the required funerary rites if he learns that Odysseus has indeed died away from home.⁷ Additionally, in Euripides' *Helen*, the title character's fake funeral at sea for Menelaus was loosely based on traditional Greek burial practices where the physical body was missing.⁸ The tradition continued into Roman times with the *cenotaphium*, a monument created to house a body-less soul.⁹

The prescription of symbolic burials probably did little to ease the stress and fear of sailors embarking on a sea voyage. The most effective way to avert disaster, and thus avoid getting lost at sea in the first place, was to gain favor from the Olympian gods, who had the ability to interfere and intervene in the lives of mortal beings. Therefore,

⁵ Vermeule 1979, 187.

⁶ Frischer 1984, 81.

⁷ Hom. *Od.* 1.289-92.

⁸ Eur. *Hel.* 1057-1627. For a discussion of the burial rites of victims lost at sea employed by ancient Greeks, see Hausker 2009.

⁹ Toynbee 1996, 54.

mariners routinely performed religious rituals in hopes of propitiating the gods so as to ensure a safe and successful trip.

RELIGIOUS RITUAL AND SEAFARING

There are three primary components of ancient Greco-Roman religious ritual: prayer, sacrifice (i.e. consumable offerings), and the offering of non-consumable objects.¹⁰ In

“The Critical Element in the Embarkation Scenes of the *Odyssey*,” Elizabeth Greene examines the steps taken by Odysseus and other sailors prior to embarking on a sea journey which, if followed correctly, created a formula that guaranteed safe passage.¹¹

A successful embarkation scene consisted of the following six steps: “1) boarding the vessel with crew, belongings, and supplies, 2) hauling the ship down to sea, casting off from shore, or releasing the anchor, 3) setting out to sea (receiving a favorable breeze from the gods or beginning the journey with rowing), 4) rigging the vessel (stepping and fastening the mast and raising the sails), 5) making fast the rigging, and 6) offering a libation to the gods.”¹² Greene notes that the first five steps commonly occur in order. However, sacrifice and prayers may be presented at any time during the embarkation process. It is the last element — an invocation to the gods — that is essential for the success of the sea journey.¹³

¹⁰ Van Straten 1981, 78-83.

¹¹ Greene 1995, 217.

¹² Greene 1995, 223.

¹³ Greene 1995, 221.

Prayer and sacrifice were two rituals carried out prior to embarkation. A third component of religious ritual, the dedication of votive offerings, also occurred frequently in matters of seafaring, generally after the completion of a successful voyage. Relieved sailors and passengers offered gifts of non-consumable objects, such as tokens and figurines, to divine beings after the fulfillment of a previous vow requesting deliverance from the sea. Dedications could also be made before an event; however, these are not technically “votives” although people often refer to them as such. Additionally, offerings were not limited to mariners evading shipwreck. Fishermen dedicated items after a bountiful catch, in the same way that ancient Greek and Roman sailors showed their gratitude to the gods by offering them a portion of the spoils acquired in the wake of a naval victory. In addition to the sheer number of naval offerings, inscriptions, which often accompanied votive offerings and dedications, provide information regarding the religious beliefs and customs of ancient seafarers. Therefore, the present study focuses on an essential element of religious ritual, the offering, within the specific social context of seafaring and sailors.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

In this thesis, I analyze literary and archaeological evidence for votive offerings and dedications that are naval or maritime in nature within the broader spectrum of Greco-Roman religious ritual. Votive offerings are defined as gifts dedicated to the gods by

individuals or communities after fulfillment of a previous request.¹⁴ Countless votive offerings discovered in ancient sanctuaries coupled with a substantial corpus of dedicatory inscriptions provide incontrovertible proof that nearly anything could be dedicated.¹⁵ These objects could be purposefully manufactured for dedication, or they could be secular objects repurposed into votive offerings.¹⁶ Terracotta figurines, ceramic vessels, jewelry, tools, and weapons are a just a few examples of the variety of objects offered.¹⁷

The occasion for offering votive gifts was similarly varied. In his study of Greek votive offerings, Rouse includes “victory in war and the games, deliverance from disease, danger, or calamity, the crises of domestic life, memorials of honor and office, memorials of rituals, and propitiation of an offended deity” as the most significant occasions for presenting votive gifts.¹⁸ Although votive offerings could be dedicated on more joyous occasions, such as birth, transition into adulthood, and marriage, a majority of thank offerings were given during times of anxiety and vulnerability.¹⁹ This is the category into which many maritime votive offerings can be classified.

Votive offerings are dedicated objects; however, they differ from dedications in that they are generally small and portable. Dedications, on the other hand, typically involved an

¹⁴ For a summary of the differences between votives, offerings, dedications, hoards, and deposits, see Osborne 2004, 5.

¹⁵ Van Straten 1981, 80.

¹⁶ Baumbach 2004, 1.

¹⁷ Cole 2007, 295-6.

¹⁸ Rouse 1902, 2; see also Spivey 2013, 95-116.

¹⁹ Rouse 1902, 70-5 and 240-58.

erected monument, such as a building or tripod, and were often set up by victorious generals or poleis.²⁰ Moreover, the name of the dedicant often appeared on dedications, making them somewhat more personal, permanent, and ostentatious than votive offerings.

Instead of following the more conventional organizational approach of literary versus material evidence, the information in this study is presented typologically, providing a distinction between maritime votive offerings and naval dedications with an emphasis on their function. Maritime votive offerings encompass objects such as metal and terracotta ship models, and naval equipment, such as anchors. Naval dedications, on the other hand, include naval spoils, such as the detached ram or prow ornament taken from an enemy's ship, and in some instances, a whole ship, to commemorate a naval victory. Upon close examination of these examples, it will be possible to draw basic conclusions regarding the cultural, chronological, and regional significance of this particular maritime aspect of ancient Greco-Roman religious ritual.

Previous research on the subject is relatively outdated and has been somewhat limited to votive offerings in general, containing only several examples of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications within larger works.²¹ However, there are relatively few studies focused solely on this specific type of offering.²² In classical archaeology,

²⁰ Dedications were not exclusively made by city-states; individuals could also make them.

²¹ See Rouse 1902 and Van Straten 1981.

²² See Johnston 1985 and Wescoat 2005.

material is often published according to type and not function. Consequently, maritime votive offerings and naval dedications are generally discussed as a subcategory of votive offerings in Greco-Roman religion. This thesis focuses on those offerings and dedications of a maritime nature, which may have been given by seafarers after deliverance from sea, as well as sailors victorious in naval warfare.

Since the central theme of the present study is the dedication of votive offerings, a basic understanding of this particular feature of religious ritual is essential. Therefore, the next chapter lays the groundwork for a discussion of ancient Greco-Roman religion and addresses the challenges of recognizing religious ritual in the archaeological record. Additionally, Chapter II consists of an in-depth examination of votive offerings within the larger framework of Greco-Roman cult practice in the hopes of providing a better understanding of the mechanics of this ancient process of religious ritual.

In Chapter III, I analyze a number of iconographic, literary, and archaeological examples of maritime votive offerings dating from the early Archaic period (ca. 700 B.C.E.) to the end of the Hellenistic Period/Roman Republic (ca. 27 B.C.E.), and categorize them by type (parts of ships, models of ships, etc.). The iconographic evidence is comprised of votive stone reliefs, painted plaques, and tablets depicting scenes of a shipwreck — presumably that from which the dedicant was saved.²³ I include literary examples taken from narratives of ancient Greek and Roman writers, dedicatory inscriptions, and

²³ Examples of marine imagery in various media, such as sculptures, mosaics, and friezes, will be omitted from the analysis of iconographic evidence due to the difficulty of identifying their function as votive.

sanctuary inventories. Iconography and written evidence are presented first and intended to augment the material evidence. Through examination of these combined data, this chapter aims to show that maritime offerings were probably made by seafarers, and they were often dictated by the nature of the presiding god or goddess, as well as the geographical location of the sanctuary that housed them.

Whereas Chapter III focuses on smaller, modest votive offerings made by average Greek and Roman dedicants, Chapter IV consists of literary and archaeological examples of more ostentatious dedications, such as those erected to commemorate naval triumphs. In contrast to votive offerings, which may have been presented by pious sailors, naval dedications were monuments primarily, although not exclusively, set up by victorious city-states for purposes of civic pride, self-glorification, and political propaganda.

Finally, Chapter V attempts to draw some conclusions regarding the religious actions and motivations of ancient seafarers. In this chapter, I explore and compare several reasons for which offerings were presented to deities, as well as explore the relationship between dedicant and dedicatee. Also, I consider the geographical location of a site or maritime sanctuary, and the impact it may have had on the types of objects offered. Following a thorough investigation of the archaeological and literary evidence of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications, it is my hope that this thesis will reveal valuable information about the complex relationship between ancient seafarer and his

deities and ultimately enhance our knowledge of both Greek and Roman religious practices and Greek and Roman seafaring.

CHAPTER II

KEY FEATURES OF GRECO-ROMAN RELIGION

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO DEFINING RELIGION

Any attempt to trace the origin of ancient Greco-Roman religion before the advent of writing is problematic, primarily because “the mediation of religion and the transmission of information about religion always proceed through language.”²⁴ Indeed, the complexities of ancient Greco-Roman religion can render any study of the subject a daunting one. Part of the problem stems from preconceived notions of what constitutes religion. It is a term open to a variety of interpretations. Early anthropological approaches to religion defined it primarily as a social function as opposed to an expression of the individual. For example, French anthropologist Émile Durkheim maintained that the main purpose of religion in society is to inspire social solidarity.²⁵ Influenced by Durkheim, anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown surmised that religion “contributes to the formation and maintenance of the social order.”²⁶ Cognitive archaeologists, on the other hand, focus primarily on the ritual aspect of religion and seek to identify cult activity in material remains. Moreover, post-processual, interpretative, and contextual archaeologists tend to avoid the term “religion” altogether, using the term “ritual” to describe religious activity.²⁷ Opposing interpretative approaches to the study of religion has surely contributed to the difficulty of

²⁴ Burkert 1985, 4 emphasizes that the literary evidence is still the most significant source for ancient Greek religion.

²⁵ Durkheim 1995.

²⁶ Radcliffe-Brown 1952, 154.

²⁷ Renfrew and Bahn 2005, 45-6.

understanding the varied nature of this cultural phenomenon. Another cause of confusion likely stems from too many definitions of religion and general disagreement over one specific meaning.

In the last two centuries, many have attempted to elucidate a suitable definition of religion, and as a result there is a vast amount of scholarship on the subject.²⁸

Unfortunately, there is no consensus on one single meaning of the word. For example, 19th-century British anthropologist E.B. Tylor offered a “minimum definition” that religion was simply a “belief in spiritual beings.”²⁹ This broad view specifies one key element of any definition of religion, which is the belief in forces beyond the physical world. However, Tylor’s description does not provide a distinction between belief and cult or between faith and practice; a distinction that Colin Renfrew maintains is of particular consequence to the archaeologist.³⁰ Belief and faith are abstract ideas that cannot be observed directly. Religious ritual, however, may be detected archaeologically under certain conditions, most notably when there are specific types of objects present, such as cult statues, figurines, or burnt animal bones, or if the activity occurs at a special, natural location, such as a mountaintop, spring, or cave.³¹ Most classicists — and with them classical archaeologists — follow Spiro’s definition, which

²⁸ There are several Oxford handbooks devoted to religion as it pertains to a variety of themes, such as science, health, emotion, and violence.

²⁹ Tylor 1871, 383.

³⁰ Renfrew 1985, 12.

³¹ Renfrew 1994, 51.

states that religion is “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interactions with culturally postulated superhuman beings.”³²

MYTH AND RITUAL

The two principal vehicles through which ancient Greco-Roman religion were expressed are myth and ritual.³³ The definition of myth has morphed over time. In early Greek literature, Homer and Hesiod used the term *muthos* (from which the English word is derived) to describe a lengthy, public speech that commanded authority, or simply the act of speaking in general.³⁴ In the fifth century B.C.E., the Greek poet Pindar equated the plural *mythoi* with lies and deception, assigning the word a negative connotation.³⁵ Around the same time, the Greek historian Herodotus used *muthos* in reference to something that was unbelievable.³⁶ It seems probable that this departure from the original meaning of “authoritative speech” ultimately led to the modern view of myth as fiction. However, there is ambiguity and disagreement concerning a universal modern definition of myth. In simple terms, it is defined as a conflation of traditional tales.³⁷ It may be further elaborated to include “narratives involving superhuman beings.”³⁸

³² Renfrew 1985, 12; Spiro 1966, 91.

³³ Burkert 1985, 8.

³⁴ Martin 1989, 12.

³⁵ Pind. *Nem.* 7.22-3, 8.53-6; Pind. *Ol.* 1.45-7; Bettini 2006, 196.

³⁶ Morales 2007, 58; Herodotus uses *muthos* twice in *Histories*. In the first instance, he refers to the implausible explanation for the Nile River flooding (2.23), and in the second, he dismisses as foolish Heracles’ story of nearly being sacrificed to Zeus by the Egyptians (2.45).

³⁷ Powell 2002, 14.

³⁸ Heehs 1994, 2.

Greco-Roman myths sometimes served an etiological function in that they explained the origins and proper execution of certain religious rituals. The *Homeric Hymns* contain several examples of etiological myths.³⁹ For instance, the *Hymn to Demeter*, which was composed sometime between the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., represents the earliest written evidence for the cult of Demeter at Eleusis.⁴⁰ Although the *Hymn* does not reveal precise information about the sacred rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries, since that information was obviously secret, it does contain the etiological myth that provides the foundation for initiation rituals.⁴¹ Returning to the example of Homer's *Odyssey*, his detailed descriptions of the embarkation process surely helped direct sailors toward the correct performance of ritual that would ensure a successful voyage.⁴²

The topic of myth dominated religious studies during the 19th century.⁴³ It is not at all surprising to find much scholarship devoted to myth within the context of Greek and Roman history, since it was such a prevalent theme. Myths were conveyed through various literary genres, such as epic, tragedy, lyric poetry, and in some cases, comedy.⁴⁴ Additionally, the visual arts provided a canvas for mythological scenes. Temple friezes, sculptures, and painted pottery depicted fantastic tales, making the subject of myth

³⁹ In antiquity, the *Homeric Hymns* were attributed to Homer since they were written in the same style and meter of poetry (dactylic hexameter) as the epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However, it is now believed that the *Hymns* were written sometime after Homer by several, anonymous authors (Rayor 2014, 2).

⁴⁰ Foley 1994, 65.

⁴¹ Mikalson 2010, 83; Faulkner 2011, 21.

⁴² Greene 1995, 217-23.

⁴³ Versnel 1993, 16.

⁴⁴ Mikalson 2010, 54.

symbolic, as well as rendering it accessible to the general public nearly everywhere throughout the Mediterranean.⁴⁵

Whether myth served an etiological function or an artistic one in the ancient world, it was essentially underscored by the importance of religious rituals. For example, Roman religion revolved around religious acts of humans and the fulfillment of ritual obligations.⁴⁶ Cicero considered ritual (*sacra*), auspices (*auspicia*), and prophetic warnings (*praedictiones*) the three main categories of Roman religious practice (*religio*).⁴⁷ Sacred rituals constituted a series of acts performed in a set sequence and usually at a specific time and place as an invocation of invisible, divine powers.⁴⁸ The next category mentioned by Cicero, auspices, revealed the intention or will of the gods. This was often achieved through the practice of augury. Augury, or “taking the auspices,” involved the act of interpreting omens primarily through the observation of birds, although spontaneous signs, such as lightning and thunder, were also included.⁴⁹ Lastly, prophetic warnings included those found in the Sibylline Books (a collection of oracles made by the Sibyl of Cumae)⁵⁰ as well as the advice of *haruspices*.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Woodford 2003, 10.

⁴⁶ Frankfurter 2010, 557.

⁴⁷ Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.5.

⁴⁸ Burkert 1985, 8.

⁴⁹ Rasmussen 2003, 149.

⁵⁰ Lewis and Reinhold 1990, 147.

⁵¹ Warrior 2006, 50. *Haruspices* were Etruscan diviners who dealt primarily with the examination and interpretation of the entrails of sacrificial animals (Dillon and Garland 2005, 115; Cic. *Div.* 2.26-53). They traditionally came from Etruria, although some also originated from other Italian regions (Horster 2011, 337).

Sacred rites proved to be more instructive for the modern student of ancient religion than did myth in the understanding of religious beliefs and practices.⁵² This is likely the reason why by the end of the 19th century scholarly interest in religious studies ultimately shifted away from myth and towards ritual. Belief in myth was not mandatory but was at the discretion of the worshipper; rather, “what was obligatory or meritorious was the exact performance of sacred acts prescribed by religious tradition.”⁵³ At the beginning of the 20th century, J.G. Frazer determined that myth was merely a fictional etiology created to explain a long-standing custom, of which the original meaning and origin had been forgotten.⁵⁴ An argument against this viewpoint may be supported by archaeological evidence of seemingly identical stories, some of which are accompanied by ritual and some which are not; similarly, there are rituals in both ancient and modern societies which lack corresponding, explanatory myths.⁵⁵ Whatever the precise relationship between myth and ritual, it is evident that these two aspects of ancient religion effectively merged as traditional forms of Greco-Roman culture.⁵⁶

The Mechanics of Religious Ritual

Belief in divine beings required the means to communicate with them, and this was the essence of ancient Greco-Roman religious ritual.⁵⁷ Prayer, sacrifice, and votive offerings were three vehicles through which ancient Greeks and Romans entered into

⁵² Burkert 1985, 55.

⁵³ Smith 1894, 17-8.

⁵⁴ Frazer 1915, 153.

⁵⁵ Burkert 1983, 31.

⁵⁶ Burkert 1983, 32.

⁵⁷ Versnel 1993, 7-8.

and maintained good relationships with their deities, and these religious acts figured prominently in both Greek and Roman cult practice.⁵⁸ Invocation or direct address was the most basic element and sometimes could be performed independently of other rituals. However, there was seldom a ritual without prayer.⁵⁹ Stating the right words could make the difference in whether one's pleas would be heard, let alone answered. First century C.E. writer Pliny the Elder contemplated the effectiveness of incantations and surmised that animal sacrifice was meaningless without the correct form of prayer.⁶⁰ Although it is impossible to observe prayer in archaeological remains, numerous literary accounts, inscriptions and dedications help substantiate its significance in Greco-Roman society.

Sacrifice was also a vital component of worship in ancient Greek and Roman society.⁶¹ It was a feature of a vast majority of large religious gatherings and festivals. For Greeks and Romans, sacrifice was a way to honor the gods, while enjoying a meat feast. It also provided an opportunity for them to offer thanks, request a favor, or mitigate an error, thus, initiating a system of reciprocity.⁶² In Greco-Roman religion, there were two types of sacrifice: blood and bloodless. Blood sacrifice referred to the ritualistic slaughter of animals in an effort to propitiate the gods.⁶³ As opposed to prayer, which could be expressed privately by an individual, sacrifice was largely a communal event. The

⁵⁸ Van Straten 1981, 65.

⁵⁹ Burkert 1985, 73.

⁶⁰ Plin. *HN* 28.3.10-1.

⁶¹ Beard et al. 1998, 148; Bremmer 2010, 132.

⁶² Allan and Maitland 2012, 43.

⁶³ Burkert 1985, 57; Beard et al. 1998, 148. Cattle, sheep, and goats were common sacrificial animals of both Greeks and Romans (Burkert 1985, 13; Warrior 2006, 21).

ceremony was both a solemn and festive occasion,⁶⁴ and it created solidarity through “communally enacted aggression and shared guilt,”⁶⁵ while also reinforcing social hierarchies within the animal, human, and divine worlds.⁶⁶

Although there are variations between Greek and Roman rituals of sacrifice, the stages were essentially the same: 1) preparation, 2) immolation, and 3) post-kill ritual.⁶⁷ In the first stage, the procession to the sanctuary consisted of individuals carrying sacrificial items, such as baskets, water vessels, incense burners, and torches, while another participant led the animal or animals to the altar.⁶⁸ This procession was followed by specific rituals performed by a priest prior to slaying the victim.⁶⁹ The animal was decorated with garlands, and the top of its head sprinkled with water. The natural response of the animal to shake its head was meant to signify its consent to death. Additionally, barley grains might be tossed on the altar fire, as well as on the victim’s head. Then, a lock of the animal’s hair was cut and thrown into the fire. Finally, the priest uttered a prayer just prior to the animal’s slaughter.⁷⁰

The second stage of the ritual was the actual killing. In ancient Greek religious practices, usually a priest or other officiant would promptly slit the animal’s throat with the sacrificial knife while female participants bellowed out their customary ritual cry

⁶⁴ Mikalson 2010, 24.

⁶⁵ Burkert 1985, 59.

⁶⁶ Rabinowitz 2008, 68.

⁶⁷ Gilhus 2006, 117; Van Straten 1995, 9.

⁶⁸ Burkert 1985, 59.

⁶⁹ Van Straten 1995, 13.

⁷⁰ Martin 2013, 163.

(*ololygmos*).⁷¹ In Roman ceremonies, slaves performed the actual sacrifice while the priest or officiant observed.⁷² Once the entrails had been inspected for omens, the animal was skinned and dismembered.⁷³

The third stage, or the post-kill ritual, included roasting portions of the animal on the altar fire as an offering to the gods.⁷⁴ Typically, the remaining meat would be divided among the worshippers to be consumed at the sacrificial feast.⁷⁵ During some sacrificial rituals, however, the animal was entirely destroyed without any consumption of the remaining meat by participants. Since the sacrificial feast was such an important source of meat consumption for the average citizen, this type of sacrifice was rare, occurring largely during times of crisis.⁷⁶

Animal sacrifice often incorporated other consumable offerings, such as cakes, fruit, vegetables, and grains. These gifts fell under the category of bloodless sacrifices if they were burned on the altar.⁷⁷ Libation, or the pouring of liquid, was also a form of bloodless offering commonly found not only in rituals of sacrifice but in most religious

⁷¹ Bremmer 2010, 136; Aesch. *Sept.* 269.

⁷² Warrior 2006, 22.

⁷³ Beard et al. 1998, 148; Warrior 2006, 23.

⁷⁴ Martin 2013, 163. The inner organs (*splanchna*) and thigh bones were among the animal parts presented to the gods (Bremmer 2010, 137; Burkert 1985, 56-7).

⁷⁵ Bremmer 2010, 138; Dunstan 2011, 36.

⁷⁶ In this type of sacrifice, the gods would receive the entire animal, including the good parts (Van Straten 1981, 67). Also, there is literary evidence for large-scale animal sacrifices called hecatombs, which involved the ritual slaughter of 100 oxen (Hom. *Il.* 1.430-50; Naiden 2012, 65)

⁷⁷ Pedley 2005, 80.

and funerary ceremonies of the ancient Greeks and Romans.⁷⁸ Wine was the most common libation, although oil, milk, honey, and water were also used.⁷⁹

As mentioned earlier, Pliny the Elder opined that sacrifice without a suitable prayer was pointless, suggesting that these two aspects of ritual were viewed as inseparable acts within a religious ceremony.⁸⁰ Similarly, sacrifice could be followed by a vow to make another, more lasting gift to be dedicated after the request had been granted.⁸¹

Votive offerings and sacrifice are comparable in that they both offer something to the divine. However, a sacrificial offering is intended for consumption, whether divine or human, and is therefore temporary. A votive offering, on the other hand, is durable and serves as a visible, physical representation of gratitude to the gods.⁸² Additionally, dedications, which were generally larger than votive offerings and therefore, more permanent, represented an opportunity for a donor to flaunt his or her wealth and piety.⁸³ Even after a vow had been fulfilled and an offering presented, there remained some expectation by the celebrant that the deity's help and protection would continue in the future.⁸⁴ Therefore, these gifts also came to symbolize a continuous and reciprocal relationship between worshipper and deity.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Patton 2009, 52;

⁷⁹ Versnel 1993, 62; Warrior 2006, 8.

⁸⁰ See p. 17; Van Straten 1981, 67.

⁸¹ Warrior 2006, 8.

⁸² Van Straten 1995, 53.

⁸³ Whitley 2001, 140.

⁸⁴ Van Straten 1981, 72-3; *IG I(2)* 625.

⁸⁵ Yunis 1988, 102.

Votive offerings were fashioned from a wide variety of materials, such as stone, wood, and terracotta. Metal was also popular, as evidenced by the many votives that have been recovered from sanctuaries. For example, lead figurines from the Temple of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, as well as iron tools from the Heraion at Olympia, illustrate the range of metals used in the production of votives.⁸⁶ Bronze, however, was probably the most common metal utilized for this purpose. In addition to the type of material, the occasion for offering was also varied and essentially limitless.⁸⁷ Modest gifts might include terracotta figurines, while wealthier donors offered more lavish gifts such as life-sized bronze or marble statues.⁸⁸ Inscriptions often accompanied votive offerings and dedications, making the personal aspect of religious ritual particularly informative and ostentatious, as well as culturally meaningful.⁸⁹

Unlike prayer and sacrifice, which do not show up in the archaeological record, votive offerings were non-consumable, and the durability of these objects allows them to be observed in material remains.⁹⁰ A considerable number of artifacts have been discovered in ancient Greek and Roman religious settings (e.g., sanctuaries, temples, shrines, etc.), and these artifacts presumably signify ritual activity. However, in the absence of an explanatory inscription, a distinction must be made where possible between sacred objects intended as offerings to the divine and secular objects found

⁸⁶ Foxhall 2013, 151; Sweeney 2009, 28.

⁸⁷ Adkins and Adkins 2004, 334; Van Straten 1981, 88.

⁸⁸ Gates 2003, 204.

⁸⁹ Inscriptions may include the donor's name and a description of the offering (Rouse 1902, 333), as well as names and epithets of divine beings (Burkert 1985, 5).

⁹⁰ Van Straten 1981, 69.

within the same context.⁹¹ For example, if a spinning whorl is found at a location that also contains a large number of purpose-made objects, such as terracotta horse figurines or bronze warrior statuettes, it probably represents a votive offering and not an indication that weaving had taken place at the site.

RECOGNIZING RELIGIOUS RITUAL

Literary evidence provides valuable insight into past belief systems; however, accounts given by ancient writers are never entirely objective or complete. An author's desire to engage and entertain the reader may prompt him or her to note only unusual and exceptional rituals, while omitting common, everyday ones. This technique, while informative, paints an incomplete picture of past ritual activity.⁹² To fill in the blanks, archaeologists can infer religious beliefs from studying material remains, which also provide an incomplete picture requiring interpretation on the part of the researcher. In certain situations, it may be possible to interpret these archaeological remnants as the products of religious ritual.⁹³

In order to understand the function of religious ritual within society, it must first be identified as ritual activity.⁹⁴ In general, patterns of ritual behavior are easily discernible due to their stylized and repetitive character.⁹⁵ A ritual that was repeated over and over

⁹¹ Renfrew 1985, 2-15.

⁹² Morgan 2011, 449.

⁹³ Renfrew 1985, 12.

⁹⁴ Renfrew 1985, 3.

⁹⁵ Br c k 200 , 2 2.

in multiple places increases the probability of recognizing it in material remains.⁹⁶ The challenge arises when there is no clear distinction made between ritual and religion. These terms have been used interchangeably, particularly in archaeological contexts. Consequently, the concept of ritual has been applied to any behavior which is not clearly understood.⁹⁷ This creates a problem since rituals can be either religious or secular.⁹⁸ For the purpose of this study, a distinction between ritual and religious ritual is essential.

Context is key when attempting to differentiate between sacred and secular.⁹⁹ How can a single object be identified as having a religious significance when it also carries a secular function? For example, an athlete might dedicate his equipment upon retirement, and this equipment, which at one time was purely secular, would be transformed into religious relics. Likewise, equipment used in rituals, such as clay vessels and lamps, are also found in domestic contexts. The ubiquity with which some objects were used may impede their identification as secular or sacred. Fortunately, there are certain indicators that may signal the occurrence of religious ritual in ideal archaeological contexts.¹⁰⁰

Renfrew and Bahn group these into four categories, listing a number of archaeological indicators of ritual under each one: “1) attention-focusing, 2) the boundary zone between this world and the next, 3) presence of the deity, and 4) participation and offering.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Blake 2005, 104.

⁹⁷ Renfrew and Bahn 2005, 46.

⁹⁸ Insoll 2004, 10.

⁹⁹ Renfrew 1985, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Renfrew 1994, 51.

¹⁰¹ Renfrew and Bahn 2005, 47. For a complete list of archaeological indicators of ritual, see Renfrew 1985, 19-20; 1994, 51-2.

Attention-Focusing

Attention-focusing devices were often employed in order to provide a focus for the worshipper. For example, religious ritual often occurred in special places typically set apart from domestic settings. A location may have been significant due to its natural features, such as a spring or a cave, or it may be a building (e.g. sanctuary or temple) or an architectural element specifically constructed for the purpose of worship. Sacred locations are likely to contain special cult equipment, both fixed (altars, benches, hearths) and portable (lamps, vessels, torches). Furthermore, the presence of recurrent symbols is one of the most persuasive indicators of religious ritual.¹⁰² A compelling example of how the presence of attention-focusing devices aids in the identification of a site where religious ritual has occurred is the *Lapis Niger* in Rome. Excavations in the Roman Forum revealed a 3 x 4 m area of black stone paving situated at a level below the imperial white travertine paving and is enclosed within a wall of vertical slabs.¹⁰³ A series of monuments were discovered underneath the black paving; one of which was identified as an altar of the U-shaped type found in early Archaic Rome.¹⁰⁴ This altar likely served as an “attention-focusing device” for worshippers at one time.

Additionally, a fragmentary inscription on a stele found under the *Lapis Niger* provides more evidence of the area’s sacred nature. The inscription, which has been tentatively dated to the late sixth century B.C.E. based on the archaic letter forms, may refer to a *lex sacra*, a warning against violating the sacred site.¹⁰⁵ The inscription, however, is too

¹⁰² Renfrew 1994, 51.

¹⁰³ Holloway 1996, 81.

¹⁰⁴ Claridge 1998, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Holloway 1996, 82; Woodard 2013, 60.

fragmentary for a complete and accurate translation. Still, the *Lapis Niger* represents a good example of the importance of having different types of evidence at a single site in the identification of religious ritual at a largely civic space.

Boundary Zone between This World and the Next

In antiquity, the performance of religious rituals took place in an area between the human and divine worlds. This area is referred to as the liminal zone. Hazardous locations, such as those in close proximity to water, often represented areas of transition in the ancient world. Purification was required for those who wished to enter a sanctuary or other sacred area, so evidence of cleanliness or pollution may also signal the existence of a liminal zone.¹⁰⁶ Purification was a necessary component in a majority of ancient ceremonies, and there were different types of purification rituals. They were generally commensurate with the amount of pollution that needed to be removed. For example, purification rituals for murder, childbirth, or death were likely more elaborate than standard purification rituals.¹⁰⁷ Due to the importance of cleanliness, sanctuaries often supplied basins of water generally near the entrances, so that visiting worshippers could purify themselves before entering the sacred area.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Renfrew 1994, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Pedley 2005, 98.

¹⁰⁸ Cole 2004, 44; Pedley 2005, 98.

Presence of the Deity

The presence of the deity was often indicated by the existence of a cult image (iconic or aniconic) or other representation of a god or goddess. The existence of symbols that relate to the resident deity and their related myth may also be present. For example, trident symbols located within a maritime sanctuary almost certainly suggest links to the god Poseidon. Also, animal symbolism may be utilized, particularly with regard to animals associated with specific deities, such as the bull with Zeus, the horse with Poseidon, or the stag with Artemis.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, ritualistic symbols may relate to images observed in other types of ceremonies, such as funerals and other rites of passage.¹¹⁰

Participation and Offering

There are a number of indicators that may signal participation and offering. Gestures of adoration, such as prayer, which may be depicted in the iconography, may indicate the participation of celebrants. Additionally, offering may be indicated by the consumption of food and drink, as well as the practice of animal sacrifice. Non-consumable, durable objects may be presented (votive offerings), and the offering may involve breaking and discarding the objects. Furthermore, great investment of wealth may be illustrated in the votive offerings and cult equipment, as well as in the building itself.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Burkert 1985, 65.

¹¹⁰ Renfrew 1994, 50-1.

¹¹¹ Renfrew 1994, 52.

This list, while informative, is not entirely exhaustive nor does it take into account the effects of subsequent archaeological formation processes. Any of the indicators listed within the four categories described above could occur alone in contexts other than ritual practice.¹¹² However, out of all the archaeological indicators listed, Renfrew concludes that there are basically only two elements that are absolutely necessary in the identification of certain clues to religious behavior.¹¹³ First, there must be evidence of divine participation. The involvement of the deity may be reflected in the use of symbolism or by the presence of a cult image. Second, there must be some indication of interaction or exchange between the divine and the celebrant. This is best illustrated by the rituals performed, such as prayer, sacrifice, and offering. However, since prayer and sacrifice are two components not easily identified archaeologically, tangible offerings provide the best direct evidence of communication between worshipper and deity.¹¹⁴

Identifying Votive Offerings

Dedicatory inscriptions are essentially the only irrefutable evidence that can reveal an object's votive function, as well as link the dedicant to the dedicatee. Some inscriptions were incised or painted on the objects themselves, while others were inscribed on perishable material, such as ribbons.¹¹⁵ Inscriptions written on perishable material are less likely to survive in the archaeological record, making it difficult to identify the objects associated with them as votives. The difficulty stems from the fact that objects

¹¹² Renfrew 1985, 19-20.

¹¹³ Renfrew 1985, 20.

¹¹⁴ Renfrew 1985, 20.

¹¹⁵ Apuleius (*Met.* 6.3) mentions "ribbons lettered in gold" implying that inscribed ribbons were sometimes fastened to offerings (Baumbach 2004, 2).

located in a sanctuary were not always votive. Cult equipment, such as lamps and pottery, has also been found in sanctuaries. Without a dedicatory inscription, it is difficult to distinguish between these ordinarily secular objects and votive offerings.¹¹⁶ Following Renfrew and Bahn's list of indicators, it may be possible for the archaeologist to recognize an otherwise secular object as a sacred item.

Some archaeological contexts offer the opportunity to determine whether religious ritual has taken place. A *bothros* was a hole or pit dug outside a sanctuary, but still located within the *temenos*, generally designed to contain broken and discarded votive offerings that had been removed from the facility.¹¹⁷ However, a pit containing damaged items might also signal an ordinary domestic deposit. An important distinction is that a domestic refuse pit accumulated over time, whereas the material contained in a *bothros* was likely deposited simultaneously. The list of archaeological indicators may help in identifying the pit as a *bothros*. For example, a pit located in the vicinity of a *temenos* is likely to be a votive dump. The place may be situated in an area associated with certain natural features, such as a grove or spring, or may be located near a building whose architecture reflects its religious character. In addition to location, the contents of the pit may provide clues to its function. Objects fashioned from valuable material, such as gold, silver, and ivory, are possibly votive in nature. Besides containing objects made from different materials than those found in votive deposits, domestic deposits typically contain objects that are broken. Unfortunately, one indicator occurring in isolation is not

¹¹⁶ Baumbach 2004, 2 points out that cult equipment could also be dedicated.

¹¹⁷ Garfinkel 1994, 161.

enough to securely interpret a site as sacred. As Renfrew states, “It is not the presence or absence of specific diagnostic criteria of this kind which are significant, but rather the documentation of repeated actions of a symbolic nature which are directed, it may be inferred, towards non-terrestrial and therefore transcendent forces.”¹¹⁸

Since maritime votive offerings and naval dedications encompass many objects that at one time were secular, such as the parts of a ship, the identification of these dedicated objects may require reliance on several indicators from Renfrew and Bahn’s list.

Evidence of the liminal zone is likely to be the most convincing; however, the presence of attention-focusing devices, as well as the degree of wealth reflected in the offerings, may also contribute to a more precise interpretation of the objects, as we will see in the next chapter.

¹¹⁸ Renfrew 1994, 52.

CHAPTER III

MARITIME VOTIVE OFFERINGS

When Diagoras, whom they call the Atheist, visited Samothrace, a friend remarked to him: “You believe that the gods are indifferent to human affairs, but all these tablets with their portraits surely reveal to you the great number of those whose vows enabled them to escape the violence of a storm, so that they reached harbor safe and sound.” “That is the case,” replied Diagoras, “but there are no portraits of those who were shipwrecked and drowned at sea.”¹¹⁹

Although the anachronistic exchange between the fifth century B.C.E. atheist Diagoras and an unnamed friend portrays a rather cynical view of religion, this excerpt from the first century B.C.E. Roman author Cicero conveys significant information regarding the religious practices of seafarers on the island of Samothrace.¹²⁰ The passage most likely describes votive *pinakes*, which were pictures painted on tablets made of wood, stone, or terracotta, and often hung within a sanctuary. One of the largest assemblages of votive *pinakes* comes from Penteskouphia near Corinth and dates to the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. Thousands of terracotta tablets and tablet fragments were discovered in 1879 in a votive deposit near the sanctuary of Poseidon.¹²¹ The tablets were recovered by unknown excavators and later purchased by the Berlin Museum in 1905.¹²² Decoration on the *pinakes* includes images of Poseidon and his consort Amphitrite, as well as depictions of potters, warriors, and naval scenes.¹²³ One *pinax* decorated with a

¹¹⁹ Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.89. Translation from Walsh 2008.

¹²⁰ Jacobs 2013, 59.

¹²¹ Walters and Birch 1905, 51.

¹²² Papadopoulos 2003, n. 34.

¹²³ Larson 2007, 60-1; Robinson 2011, 162.

naval scene depicts a merchant vessel, along with a number of pots. The tablet was dedicated by a merchant who presumably found success selling pottery overseas.¹²⁴

Another terracotta *pinax* featuring a ship decoration comes from Sounion (ca. 700 B.C.E.). The plaque displays a warship, marines with their spears up, and a detailed depiction of the helmsman. There is also a small hole in the top corner, likely added so that the votive plaque could be hung in the sanctuary or on a tree just outside the sanctuary (fig. 1).¹²⁵



Figure 1. Votive plaque from Sounion, ca. 700 B.C.E. (photo by E. Galanopoulos, used with permission from the National Archaeological Museum of Athens)

Several stone reliefs, which may have been dedicated by sailors, also portray naval scenes. A relief from Piraeus (ca. fourth-third century B.C.E.) depicts a crewman, who is possibly the dedicator, at the bow of a boat, greeting the Dioscuri. One of the

¹²⁴ Van Straten 1981, 95.

¹²⁵ Camp 2001, 306.

Dioscuri is on horseback, while the other is on foot, and each is clothed in a small chiton and a chlamys.¹²⁶ The dedicant, who is smaller in scale than the Dioscuri, has his hand raised in veneration to his saviors (fig. 2).¹²⁷ Another stone relief from the early first century C.E. comes from Tomis (present-day Constanta, Romania). The votive image depicts a sacrificial scene above a ship and, once again, shows a sailor with raised hands that suggest he is pleading for divine assistance.¹²⁸ The accompanying inscription states: “This has been dedicated by Dioskourides, the son of Ariston, in redemption of his vow to Heros Manimazos.”¹²⁹ There is not enough information to securely identify the donor as a sailor, but the fact that the dedicant’s name is derived from Dioscuri, who were believed to be protectors of sailors, seems enough to warrant the dedication.



Figure 2. Votive relief from Piraeus, ca. fourth-third century B.C.E. (from Kaltsas 2002, fig. 580).

¹²⁶ Kaltsas 2002, 277.

¹²⁷ Rouse 1902, 230; Van Straten 1981, 97. The relief also resembles a funerary stele, so it is possible that it served a votive and funerary function.

¹²⁸ Van Straten 1981, 97.

¹²⁹ Van Straten 1981, 95.

The examples mentioned above illustrate how votive offerings could reflect the beliefs and motives of the dedicator. *Pinakes* and stone reliefs depicting naval scenes were offerings that were perhaps given by sailors. This claim is strengthened by the literary passage from Cicero, which describes the offerings of votive tablets by sailors in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace. Additional textual and archaeological evidence of maritime votive offerings substantiates this correlation between donor and choice of gift.

SHIP AND BOAT MODELS

Literary Evidence

Replicas of boats and ships were likely votive offerings given by seafarers who had been rescued from the perils of the sea or had experienced some other achievement, such as victory in naval warfare. A silver replica of a trireme dedicated by King Seleukos I (ca. 279 B.C.E.) may represent a thank-offering following the dedicator's success in naval battle. The dedication has not survived in the archaeological record but is listed in the Delian inventories among the offerings made to the Temple of Apollo.¹³⁰ Inventories, which were typically inscribed on stone and updated annually, were one way for religious officers (*hieropoioi*) to monitor dedications made to the divine by keeping detailed records of a sanctuary's contents.¹³¹ Extant sanctuary inventories have been

¹³⁰ Hamilton 2000; see also Homolle 1882, 47.

¹³¹ Pedley 2005, 114.

recovered from Athens, Delos, Samos, and Cyrene, and generally span a period of 200 years between the fourth and second centuries B.C.E.¹³²

Votive ship models are also mentioned in the accounts of ancient writers. For example, in the first century C.E., the Greek biographer Plutarch described a gold and ivory trireme, two cubits long (approximately one meter), given to Lysander by Cyrus to commemorate his victory over Athens in 404 B.C.E.¹³³ Lysander then dedicated the ship model at Delphi and it was stored in the Treasury of Brasidas and the Acanthians.

Archaeological Evidence

The earliest physical representations of seafaring ships in the Aegean date to the Early Bronze Age (3000-2000 B.C.E.). Three lead ship models from the third millennium B.C.E. were discovered on the island of Naxos (fig. 3), and a terracotta ship model, also from the third millennium, was found in an ossuary at Palaikastro, Crete (fig. 4).¹³⁴ All four models came from burial contexts, as do all other ship models from the Early Cycladic period (ca. 3200-2000 B.C.E.). One theory for the presence of a ship model in a burial is that the model belonged to the deceased and was considered valuable enough (even sentimentally) to be included in the burial. Another theory is that the deceased was a sailor in life and the model was a symbol or token of his profession.¹³⁵ A wooden ship model set on a wheeled cart, dating to the second millennium B.C.E., also came

¹³² Pedley 2005, 114 notes that the tradition is likely a “continuation of an earlier tradition.”

¹³³ Plut. *Lys.* 18.1.

¹³⁴ Wachsmann 2008, 69-75.

¹³⁵ Johnston 1985, 11.

from a burial context in Gurob, Egypt. Interestingly, although the model was recovered from a tomb in Egypt, a recent study has linked the ship type to the Aegean-style oared vessels used by proto-Greeks, as well as the Sea Peoples.¹³⁶ In fact, the analysis concluded that the model likely belonged to — and was buried with — someone of Sherden descent.¹³⁷



Figure 3. Lead boat model from Naxos, ca. third millennium B.C.E. (from Renfrew 1967, pl. 3).



Figure 4. Terracotta boat model from Palaikastro, Crete, ca. third millennium B.C.E. (from Wachsmann 2008, fig. 5.9).

¹³⁶ For a complete, detailed analysis of the Gurob Ship-Card Model, see Wachsmann 2013.

¹³⁷ Wachsmann 2013, 172. The Sherden were one of the Sea People tribes.

Boat and ship models found in ritual or sanctuary contexts are not known before the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1600 B.C.E.). The oldest surviving examples of votive ship models in the ancient Mediterranean once again come from Crete.¹³⁸ Votive models appear in regions other than Crete, such as the Aegean islands and the Greek mainland, by the Late Bronze Age (1600-1000 B.C.E.).¹³⁹ Although most of the models from the Bronze Age (3000-1000 B.C.E.) and Geometric period (900-700 B.C.E.) come from burial contexts, there appears to have been a shift in function during the Archaic period (ca. 700-480 B.C.E.). Only one of the many boat models with known provenience comes from a burial, although its original function is unknown.¹⁴⁰ The remaining boat models which come from securely identified contexts are believed to have been votive offerings.

Excavations at the Sanctuary of Hera on Samos have revealed a number of wooden boat models dating to the seventh century B.C.E. There are a total of 40 ship models, each measuring approximately 40 cm in length (fig. 5).¹⁴¹ One of the models has a very small hole between the keel and the deck at approximately amidships. The hole may have been made for a fastener, or it may just be a root or knot hole.¹⁴² Although the location of the models within the sanctuary suggests that they are votive, there remains some debate about their true function. For example, based on the models' stylized form and

¹³⁸ Johnston 1985, 12.

¹³⁹ Johnston 1985, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Johnston 1985, 50.

¹⁴¹ Baumbach 2004, 163.

¹⁴² Johnston 1985, 58. Analysis of the wood grain around the hole under a microscope might reveal whether it was drilled or resulted naturally.

the unusual material from which they were fashioned, Kyrieleis interpreted the models as possible cult objects used during festivals on the island rather than votive offerings.¹⁴³ The ship symbol fits well with the island's status as a formidable naval power, even before the tyrant Polycrates' seized control of Samos in the second half of the sixth century B.C.E.¹⁴⁴ However, as Jens Baumbach points out, neither the form nor the type of material of these boat models entirely rules out a votive function.

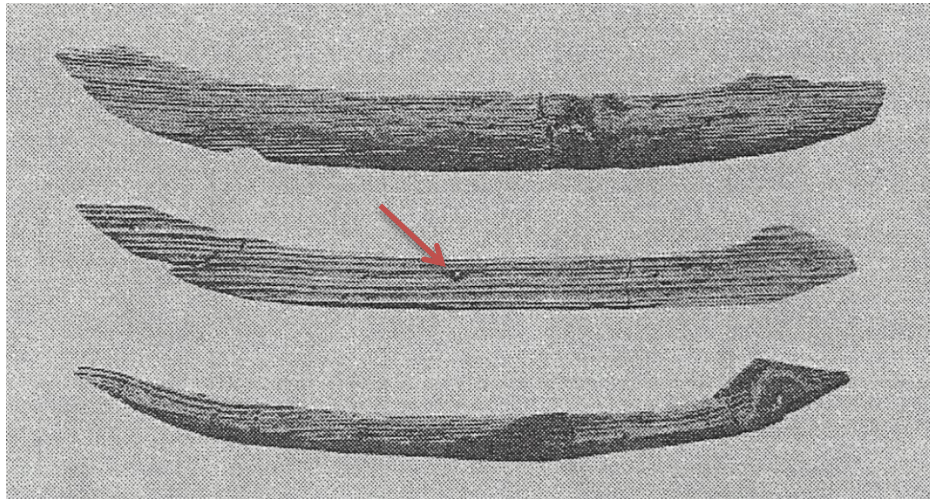


Figure 5. Wooden boat models from the Sanctuary of Hera on Samos, ca. seventh century B.C.E. (from Baumbach 2005, fig. 6.35).

¹⁴³ Kyrieleis 1995, 112.

¹⁴⁴ Johnston (1995, 50) argues that Samos' naval power existed as early as the late eighth century B.C.E., when the island acquired four warships from its Corinthian allies during the Lelantine War (Thuc. 1.13). During his tyranny, Polycrates is said to have had a fleet consisting of 100 fifty-oared ships (penteconters) and 40 triremes (Hdt. 3.39-44).

The similarity in form and material suggests that the Samos wooden boats may have been manufactured in one place, since it is possible for models to come from the same workshop. If this was the case, the replicas could represent cult objects deposited in a single event as a group *or* votive offerings deposited over time.¹⁴⁵ The crude craftsmanship of the models, however, may point to an alternative interpretation. Kopcke proposed that the models were fashioned and dedicated on the island by a warship crew following a victory at sea.¹⁴⁶ This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that the long, slender shape of the boats resembles that of Greek warships.¹⁴⁷ However, one cannot rule out the possibilities that the models represent votive offerings made by local Samians who had averted disaster at sea or that the objects were offerings given by any city-state who wished to honor Hera after a naval victory on or near the island.¹⁴⁸

Although the naval offerings could be explained by the fact that Samos was simply an island full of sailors, there is evidence elsewhere of a connection between the Hera cult and seafaring. A miniature terracotta boat model, as well as a clay figurine of the goddess with a ship, was discovered in the temple of Hera at the coastal site of Perachora. A similar figurine depicting Hera carrying a ship was also recovered from her sanctuary at Tiryns, a site that is not located directly on a coast but in close proximity to one.¹⁴⁹ All three objects date to the Archaic period.

¹⁴⁵ Baumbach 2004, 163.

¹⁴⁶ Kopcke 1967, 145.

¹⁴⁷ Kyrieleis 1995, 112.

¹⁴⁸ Johnston 1985, 50.

¹⁴⁹ Kyrieleis 1995, 112.

NAVAL EQUIPMENT

Literary Evidence

Another common votive offering of a maritime nature was naval gear, which included different parts of an actual ship. However, naval equipment made of perishable materials, such as wood, rarely survive in the archaeological record, so accounts of ancient writers that testify to the dedication of maritime votives, which have otherwise disappeared, are particularly informative. For example, in the *Odyssey*, the seer Teiresias advises Odysseus to dedicate an oar in order to propitiate Poseidon.¹⁵⁰ Also, in the third century B.C.E., Callimachus described the dedication of a ship's rudder to the goddess Artemis: "Lady of Khesion, Imbrasia, high throned: Agamemnon dedicated his rudder to you in your temple; a sweet charm against storm or deadly calm. When you bound the winds, the Akhaian ships sailed to grieve the cities of the Trojans, maddened over Rhamnusian Helen."¹⁵¹ While Artemis is not fundamentally linked with sea travel, Agamemnon asked for her help with the winds.¹⁵² One possible reason for the selection of Artemis as the recipient of the offering stems from the myth of Iphigenia, Agamemnon's daughter. After Agamemnon hunted and killed a stag sacred to Artemis, the goddess became so angry that she sent storms to prevent his fleet from sailing to Troy.¹⁵³ The seer Calchas explained to Agamemnon that the only way to appease the goddess was to sacrifice his daughter. So Agamemnon lured his daughter to Aulis

¹⁵⁰ Hom. *Od.* 11.120-37.

¹⁵¹ Callim. *Hymn* 3, 228-32. Translation from Lombardo and Rayor 1988.

¹⁵² Artemis is best known as the goddess of the hunt, which may also encompass fishing.

¹⁵³ Soph. *El.* 559-72. Several motives for Artemis' wrath have been offered. One variation has the goddess angered at the thought of all the men who will die at Troy during the war (Aesch. *Ag.* 122-39), while another version depicts Agamemnon's boasting as the source of her rage (Apollod. *Epit.* 3.21).

(Boeotia) by telling her she was to wed Achilles. However, when she arrived, she was killed at the altar.¹⁵⁴ Although in other versions, Artemis spares Iphigenia and accepts the sacrifice of an animal instead, the Greeks eventually receive their favorable wind and set sail for Troy, thus marking the beginning of the Trojan War.¹⁵⁵

In addition to the accounts of ancient writers, sanctuary inventories provide evidence for offerings that have not survived archaeologically. For example, the Delian inventories, many of which are incomplete, consist of a list of offerings from the temples on Delos, their respective weights, the location where they were kept, and the year they were inventoried.¹⁵⁶ Apart from the aforementioned silver trireme model dedicated by King Seleukos I, a number of maritime offerings were recorded in the sanctuaries on the island.¹⁵⁷ The majority of these objects appear to have been naval equipment. Among the dedicated objects are three trireme rams and trireme gear that included anchor ropes, 28 mast lines, steering oars, and hemp stern mooring lines.¹⁵⁸ However, anchors appear to have been the most common naval equipment listed in the Delian inventories. For example, a wood anchor cut off from lead, a two-pronged wood anchor, and a complete iron anchor were among the dedications from the Samothrakeion, the sanctuary of the Great Gods.¹⁵⁹ The Samothracian *Theoi Megaloi* (Great Gods), who are sometimes equated with the Dioscouri, have previously been mentioned regarding their role as

¹⁵⁴ Aesch. *Ag.* 218-49; Pind. *Pyth.* 11.22-3.

¹⁵⁵ Pausanias 1.43.1 recites an account given by Hesiod in his *Catalogue of Women* in which Artemis immortalizes Iphigenia by transforming her into the goddess Hecate.

¹⁵⁶ For a work on the temple inventories of Delos, see Hamilton, 2000.

¹⁵⁷ See p. 33.

¹⁵⁸ Hamilton 2000, 398, 404, 406-7.

¹⁵⁹ Deonna 1938, 197-8; *ID* 1417 A.1. (155 B.C.E.); Hamilton 2000.

protectors of seafarers, so it is not surprising to see them listed as recipients of maritime votive offerings in the Delian inventories.¹⁶⁰

Offerings of naval gear are also indicated in dedicatory inscriptions. Inscriptions are an invaluable supplement to archaeological evidence, since they often provide important information that might otherwise be unknown from archaeological excavations, such as the name of the dedicant and recipient, as well as what is being offered. The *Palatine Anthology*, which is a collection of Greek poems and epigrams ranging in date from the seventh century B.C.E. to the tenth century C.E., contains several references to equipment offered by sailors and fishermen. For example, it was not uncommon for fishermen to dedicate the tools of their trade upon retirement. An epigram from Leonidas of Tarentum dating to the third century B.C.E. tells how the fisherman Diophantus dedicated his hook, fishing line, net, trident, and two oars. The inscription does not specify the recipient of this offering; it simply states that Diophantus dedicated his gear to the “patron of his craft.”¹⁶¹ There are at least two documented offerings of fishing gear to the god Hermes. One epigram, written by Philippus of Thessalonica in the late first century C.E., states that the aging fisherman Piso dedicated his fishing rod and line, his oar, fishhooks, and anchor to the deity.¹⁶² An epigram from Julianus, Prefect of Egypt, dating to the sixth century C.E., similarly describes the offering of gear to Hermes by the fisherman Baeto upon his retirement.¹⁶³ Another retired fisherman

¹⁶⁰ See p. 30.

¹⁶¹ *Anth. Pal.* 6.4.

¹⁶² *Anth. Pal.* 6.5.

¹⁶³ *Anth. Pal.* 6.28.

offers his net to the minor god Priapus: “Priapus of the beach, neighbor of the seaweed, Damoetas the fisherman, the fathomer of the deep, the very image of a sea-worn crag, the leech of the rocks, the sea-hunter, dedicates this sweep-net, with which he comforted his old age.”¹⁶⁴ The epigram was written by Statilius Flaccus; however, the date is unknown.

Naval equipment was not the only type of offering presented by fishermen. One inscription states that a fisherman vows the yield of his first cast to the nymphs of Syra (Syros).¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Maecius Quintus wrote two epigrams (date uncertain) describing the dedications to Priapus by fishermen. The first epigram lists the dedication of a beech-wood bowl, a stool carved from heath, and a wine glass, and claims that the gifts were paid for by the profits of the fisherman’s catch.¹⁶⁶ The second epigram states that the fisherman Paris hung up a crab he killed with his lucky fishing rod. He then roasted it, and, after consuming part of its flesh, dedicated the part of the creature he could not use (i.e. the shell) to Priapus.¹⁶⁷

Dedicatory inscriptions also mention votive offerings made by seafarers who had survived a shipwreck or some other peril at sea. One traveler who had avoided drowning at a dangerous river crossing in Phrygia dedicated a memorial at the site to

¹⁶⁴ *Anth. Pal.* 6.193.

¹⁶⁵ *IGA* 7, cited by Rouse 1902, 57.

¹⁶⁶ *Anth. Pal.* 6.33. Although Priapus is typically regarded as a god of sensuality and fertility or simply as a god of fruitfulness in general, he is also viewed as a protector of sailors and fishermen (Paus. 9.31; Blakely 2006, 126).

¹⁶⁷ *Anth. Pal.* 6.89.

Zeus, Athena, and all the deities.¹⁶⁸ At Delos, a mariner named Eutyclus, which means “good luck,” offered thanks to fair-weather Zeus as well as four Egyptian gods on behalf of himself, his children, and the rest of his ship’s passengers.¹⁶⁹ Another inscription from Delos describes a dedication made by Demetrius of Sidon to the Egyptian god Anubis. The offering comprised a fragment of the ship’s deck which likely saved the dedicant’s life after the ship was wrecked.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, on the island of Lesbos, a family offered their gratitude to the god of high places (Zeus), after surviving a storm at sea.¹⁷¹

Dedications were also made by sailors requesting protection in anticipation of a future sea voyage. For example, an inscription from the Greek island of Syros describes a dedication made to the god Asclepius by sailors seeking protection from shipwreck.¹⁷² Although Asclepius was primarily worshipped as a healing god, he was also viewed generally as a source of protection from danger.¹⁷³

Archaeological Evidence

Unfortunately, the perishable nature of organic materials has contributed to a lack of material evidence for votive naval equipment. However, ship parts and other naval gear fashioned from more durable materials, such as stone and metal, have survived in the

¹⁶⁸ Duchesne 1879, 479; Rouse 1902, 230.

¹⁶⁹ Hauvette-Besnault 1882, 328.

¹⁷⁰ Hauvette-Besnault 1882, 340; Rouse 1902, 230.

¹⁷¹ *IG* 12(2) 119; Shields 1917, 23.

¹⁷² Girard 1878, 87.

¹⁷³ Rouse 1902, 229.

archaeological record. Evidence of stone anchor votive offerings exists throughout the Mediterranean and Near East. This evidence appears to be consistent with literary accounts, which reveal anchors as common offerings among seafarers. The largest votive anchor assemblage from an excavated terrestrial site was discovered at Kition on Cyprus. The anchors, which date stylistically to the thirteenth century B.C.E., have been interpreted as votives due to their location within the sacred precinct of Apollo.¹⁷⁴ Some of these votive anchors, however, may have had a secondary function as architectural supports.¹⁷⁵ Similar Bronze Age anchor assemblages from sanctuaries have been found at Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) and Byblos, located on the Syro-Palestinian coast, as well as at Kommos on Crete.¹⁷⁶ Anchor dedications are also well attested in the Archaic period at coastal sites in Greece and Italy. Votive anchors dedicated to Hera in Italian sanctuaries at Croton and Metapontum provide additional support for the goddess's involvement in seafaring matters.¹⁷⁷

Aside from Hera, a number of divinities received votive anchors as gifts possibly from grateful sailors. A few miles south of Croton, a stone block believed to be an anchor stock was dedicated by Phayllus to Zeus Meilichius, a god associated with the underworld and often represented in serpent form.¹⁷⁸ It has been suggested that the dedicator is the same Phayllus described by Herodotus as the famous athlete who also

¹⁷⁴ The use of three-holed composite anchors was common east of the Aegean during the Late Bronze Age (Shaw 1995, 284).

¹⁷⁵ Karageorghis 1976, 60, 69, 72, 78.

¹⁷⁶ Frost 1969a; 1969b; Shaw 1995, 279-282.

¹⁷⁷ Lattanzi 1991 cited in Demetriou 2012, 87; Gianfrotta 1975, 314.

¹⁷⁸ Gianfrotta 1975, 316-8; Larson 2007, 22.

commandeered a warship during the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.E.¹⁷⁹ One of the most well-known votive anchor stocks was dedicated to Apollo by a man named Sostratus at Gravisca in Etruria (fig. 6).¹⁸⁰ The Greek inscription reads: “I belong to Apollo of Aegina...Sostratus the...made [me]...”¹⁸¹



Figure 6. Stone anchor stock from Gravisca, dedicated by Sostratus. (from Roebuck 1988, fig. 39).

¹⁷⁹ Cerchiali et al. 2004, 109; Hdt. 8.47.

¹⁸⁰ Torelli 1971; see also Roebuck 1988, 457. It is possible the dedicated anchor was offered by the successful trader, Sostratus of Aegina, mentioned by Herodotus (4.152). The overlap between the textual and archaeological records is likely the reason that this is one of the most well-known examples of votive anchors.

¹⁸¹ Translation from Brown 2000, 211.

Stone anchor stock fragments lacking dedicatory inscriptions were also found at Gravisca.¹⁸² Unfortunately, in the absence of an inscription, the dedicant and dedicatee remain unknown. One scholar suggests that the votive fragments were sacred to Aphrodite since they were recovered from a room believed to be her cult space.¹⁸³

Aphrodite's connection to the sea can be traced as far back as the eighth century B.C.E., when Hesiod described the goddess as having been born from the foam of the sea.¹⁸⁴ This passage from *Theogony* represents an early example of her maritime association. There is additional evidence of her veneration by sailors. Two more votive anchor stocks dedicated to the goddess further links her to the sea. An early Iron Age stone anchor stock was recovered from her sanctuary in Amathus, Cyprus, and a section of a marble anchor stock from around 475 B.C.E. was found on the island of Aegina inscribed with a dedication to Aphrodite Epilimonia (Aphrodite at the Harbor).¹⁸⁵ It is important to note that that all of the votive offerings mentioned above have been found on islands, thus reinforcing her connection to the sea.

Interestingly, a second stone anchor stock discovered on Aegina (fig. 7) bears the inscription, “*μὲ κίνε τόδε,*” meaning “do not move this.”¹⁸⁶ It was tentatively suggested by M. Fraenkel, who published the inscription in 1902, that the anchor stock may have

¹⁸² Gianfrotta 1977, 287.

¹⁸³ Torelli 1977, 435.

¹⁸⁴ Hes. *Theogonia*. 190-8.

¹⁸⁵ Hermary 1980, 235; Gianfrotta 1975, 315; Larson 2007, 123.

¹⁸⁶ *IG IV*, 176; Kritzas 1989, 203.

served as a grave marker. Several decades later, Gabriel Welter interpreted the inscribed stone as an invocation to the gods of the sea.¹⁸⁷



Figure 7. Inscribed anchor stock from Aegina, ca. fifth century B.C.E. (from Kritzas 1989, fig. 1).

The amount of archaeological and literary evidence for votive anchors is not surprising since the anchor was considered one of the most important safety features of a sea-going vessel. If there was no harbor for a ship to seek or beach on which it could land, the crew had to rely on the anchor to keep the ship stable. The anchor was especially vital during stormy weather and rough seas. If a crew was unable to avoid running the vessel aground during bad weather, dropping the anchor could provide salvage at the last

¹⁸⁷ Welter 1938, 490-1. Kritzas 1989, 203-5 disagrees with Welter's assessment that the anchor stock was an invocation to the gods, claiming instead that it functioned as a boundary stone.

possible minute. The anchor was essentially the ship's lifeline, which is why in antiquity it was likely regarded as sacred.¹⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

Examination of the above literary, iconographic, and archaeological evidence for maritime votive offerings makes it possible to draw basic conclusions about certain shared features of cults and the deities worshipped. In those instances where the recipient of the votive offering is known, there appears to be a connection between gift and deity. This connection is illustrated by the fact that many of the maritime votive offerings presented in this chapter were offered to seafaring deities or to deities that had at least a minor or indirect role in seafaring. Hence, I am inclined to agree with Boardman who suggested that the "character of the presiding deity determines the type of dedications in a sanctuary."¹⁸⁹

Another factor that likely influenced the decision to dedicate naval offerings was geographical location. The majority of these dedications occurred at sanctuaries on islands and at coastal sites. There also appears to have been a link between the location where the offering was made and the deity who received it. For example, maritime votive offerings that were dedicated to Hera generally occurred at marine sanctuary sites, such as Perachora, Croton, and on the island of Samos, whereas a sanctuary of Hera not directly located on the coast, such as Tiryns, contained votive offerings that reflected the

¹⁸⁸ Kapitän 1989, 152.

¹⁸⁹ Boardman 1980, 56.

goddess's concern with agriculture, wild animals, and cakes and fruits.¹⁹⁰ In this instance, the nature of votive offerings was likely dictated by the presiding deity *and* geographical location.

¹⁹⁰ Baumbach 2004, 179.

CHAPTER IV

NAVAL DEDICATIONS

In Chapter I, I provided a distinction between maritime votive offerings and naval dedications.¹⁹¹ Votive offerings included small, portable gifts presented to the divine either after a request was granted in relation to a specific vow or as a thank-offering following an unexpected event. Alternatively, dedications were on a much larger scale than votive offerings, and generally encompassed monuments, tripods, and other structures set up to commemorate a victory or other significant achievement. Following a similar organizational format as the previous chapter, I divide naval dedications by type and provide literary examples first as a means of introducing and supplementing the archaeological evidence.

DEDICATED SHIPS' RAMS

A majority of the offerings discussed thus far have been votive in nature. However, a second class of offerings emerged in the Archaic period: dedications that symbolized something more than mere gratitude. Naval equipment from captured enemy ships became a physical representation of naval power put on display primarily to commemorate a historical event or battle. However, these naval dedications were also used for the purposes of civic pride, self-glorification and political propaganda.¹⁹² Naval

¹⁹¹ See p. 5-6.

¹⁹² Pritchett 1979, 285. The lack of this type of dedication prior to the Archaic period suggests the possibility that state-organized navies did not exist in Greece before this time.

spoils might include the prow of an enemy ship, the ship's figurehead, or stern ornaments.¹⁹³ However, literary and archaeological evidence indicate that the ram taken from the prow of a captured warship was the most valuable and symbolic dedication of naval spoils among both Greeks and Romans.

Literary Evidence

There are numerous references by ancient authors to the dedication of captured ships' rams and figureheads, as well as many depictions in vase paintings. Herodotus describes a naval memorial set up by the Aeginetans sometime after they captured the Samian colony of Cydonia on Crete around 519 B.C.E.¹⁹⁴ The display, which was erected in the temple of Aphaia at Aegina, consisted of detached prows that were shaped as boars' heads. Additionally, the Athenian Lycomedes, who was said to have been the first Greek to capture a Persian ship, dedicated the prize ship's *παράσημα περικόψας* (figurehead or name device) to Apollo Daphnephoros at Phyla.¹⁹⁵ The second century C.E. geographer Pausanias recounted an earlier example of dedicated naval spoils. In the Olympieion at Megara, the Megarians dedicated the bronze beak of a captured ship to commemorate a naval victory over the Athenians off the coast of Salamis around the end of the seventh century B.C.E.¹⁹⁶ Likewise, the Athenians constructed monuments showcasing spoils acquired from naval battles. They decorated their stoa in the panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi with the figureheads of enemy ships taken during the

¹⁹³ Pritchett 1979, 281; see also Rice 1993, 242, and Murray and Petsas 1989, 93.

¹⁹⁴ Hdt. 3.59.

¹⁹⁵ Hdt. 8.11.2; Plut. *Them.* 15.

¹⁹⁶ Paus. 1.40.5. The dedication must have taken place in the late seventh century B.C.E. before the Athenians recaptured the island under Solon during the early sixth century B.C.E. (Plut. *Sol.* 8).

Persian Wars.¹⁹⁷ While the dedication of naval spoils in the stoa may have represented a thank-offering to the divine following a victory at sea, the primary purpose of the monument seemed to be more of a grand display of Athenian naval might, particularly since stoas were inherently civic (and not religious) buildings.

The rams of enemy ships were also displayed in the Roman Forum, Rome's political center. The speaker's platform, originally referred to as a *templum*, became known as the *Rostra* (rams of ships), when Roman generals began to adorn it with the bronze rams taken from captured ships.¹⁹⁸ C. Maenius was the first to decorate the platform with the rams of six Volscian ships captured at Antium in 338 B.C.E.¹⁹⁹ Sometime later, in 44 B.C.E., Julius Caesar relocated the *Rostra* from its original position to the western end of the Forum.²⁰⁰

In addition to decorating the speaker's podium, naval spoils also adorned freestanding columns in the Forum. The most famous example of this was the *Columna Rostrata*, a white marble pillar awarded to C. Duilius after his defeat of the Carthaginians at Mylae in 260 B.C.E.²⁰¹ Although only the base survives, depictions of similar columns on coins provide a general image of the monument type, and some even portray the actual

¹⁹⁷ ML 25; see also Murray and Petsas 1989, 92. Pritchett 1979, 281 aptly recognizes Pausanias' misidentification of the spoils as those taken during the Peloponnesian War (Paus. 10.11.6).

¹⁹⁸ Livy. 2.56.9-10, 3.17.1

¹⁹⁹ Livy. 8.14.12.

²⁰⁰ Cass Dio. 43.49.1.

²⁰¹ Westropp 1884, 95.

monument (fig. 8).²⁰² The preserved column base bears a partial inscription describing the classes of ships to which the rams belonged (fig. 9).²⁰³ The Archaic spelling of some of the words has led scholars to suggest that the inscription retains original elements.²⁰⁴ However, it was heavily restored during the Augustan period, so it seems probable that the restorers used archaisms to maintain the original style and content of the inscription.²⁰⁵



Figure 8. Coin depicting Octavian atop the *Columna Rostrata* (from Murray and Petsas 1989, fig. 63).

²⁰² Roller 2009, 211.

²⁰³ *CIL* 6 1300.

²⁰⁴ Roller 2009, 221.

²⁰⁵ Clackson and Horrocks 2011, 108 have also suggested the possibility that the restored inscription was a modernized version modeled after genuine inscriptions contemporaneous with the original.



Figure 9. Fragmentary inscription on the base that supported the *Columna Rostrata* (from Egbert 1896, p. 244).

Archaeological Evidence

The most impressive and informative archaeological evidence for dedicated rams is the war memorial set up by Octavian to commemorate his victory over Antony’s fleet in the Actian War (31 B.C.E.). The monument was constructed on Octavian’s campsite, and its ruins comprise 23 empty sockets of different sizes.²⁰⁶ The true function of the sockets was deduced following the discovery of a Hellenistic warship ram off the coast of Athlit, Israel, in 1980.²⁰⁷ A careful study of the shape and dimensions of the Athlit

²⁰⁶ There were 23 sockets visible; however, the original number of rams displayed was between 33 and 35 (Murray and Petsas 1989, 34 and 56); see also Murray 2012.

²⁰⁷ Linder and Ramon 1981.

ram provided enough evidence to reveal the true composition of the Actium monument. The sockets at one time held bronze rams of several different classes of ships, ranging from “fives” to “tens,” taken from the fleet of Antony and Cleopatra. The monument, which was dedicated to the gods Neptune and Mars, provided a visible reminder of Octavian’s historical triumph and forever immortalized this pivotal battle, as well as Rome’s naval supremacy (fig. 10).²⁰⁸

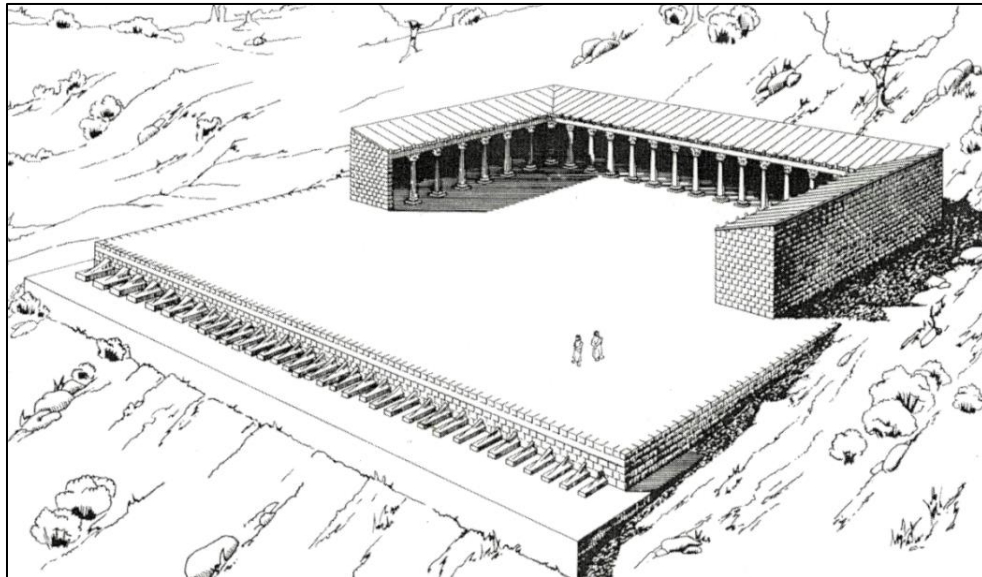


Figure 10. Restored view of the Actium Monument (from Murray and Petsas 1989, fig. 54).

²⁰⁸ Murray and Petsas 1989, 87; Suet. *Aug.* 18.2. According to Cassius Dio (50.4.4), the Romans did not officially pronounce Antony a public enemy, choosing instead to declare war on Cleopatra, a foreigner. By not formally declaring war on Antony, Octavian was able to commemorate his achievement as a victory over a foreign enemy and avoid celebrating a triumph in civil war.

Although rams from captured enemy ships appeared to be popular dedications in the ancient Mediterranean, this type of offering was not always feasible. Ships were undoubtedly prized trophies, but they were also costly to produce. Most scholars generally agree that it cost around one talent, or 54 lbs. of silver, to produce a warship.²⁰⁹ This is based on a statement made by the second century C.E. writer Polyaeus, who describes the outfitting of 100 ships for one talent each.²¹⁰ Diodorus indicates that 500 talents of silver were used to construct and outfit 100 triremes.²¹¹ The cost of rigging the vessel, paying the crew, and maintaining it might also be included in the amount. Due to this great expense, it is likely captured warships were repaired so that they could be reused in future naval skirmishes. The discovery of at least seven bronze warship rams from the Egadi Islands off Sicily provide possible evidence for the reuse of enemy ships. The rams, which date to the third century B.C.E., were likely involved in the last battle of the First Punic War between Rome and Carthage in 241 B.C.E. The naval battle at the Egadi Islands resulted in a defeat for the Carthaginians who were forced to relinquish control of Sicily to the Romans.²¹² A preliminary analysis of the rams has revealed inscriptions on five of them. Egadi rams 1, 4, 6, and 7 bore Latin inscriptions attesting to Roman manufacture, while Egadi ram 3 carried a Punic inscription indicating Carthaginian construction.²¹³ Since the Carthaginians experienced more losses than the Romans during the battle, the greater number of Roman rams recovered seems odd. It is possible, therefore, that the rams bearing Latin inscriptions belonged to Roman ships

²⁰⁹ Boeckh 1828, 146; see also Buckley 1996, 222; Morris 2009, 145; Feist 2010, 65.

²¹⁰ Polyaeus, *Strat.* 1.30.5.

²¹¹ Dio. Sic. 14.39.1-2.

²¹² Polyb. 1.61-2.

²¹³ Tusa and Royal 2012, 43.

that had been captured by Carthaginians prior to 241 and subsequently used as part of a quickly-assembled Punic fleet sent to relieve the blockade located off the islands.²¹⁴

Monuments decorated with representations of ship parts would have instilled the same sense of pride and awe without the cost of sacrificing usable parts. The Arch of Augustus at Arausio (Orange, France) depicts warship rams comparable to those once displayed at Actium. This iconic triumphal monument consists of three arches framed by Corinthian columns. Images of naval spoils decorate the tympanum between the two side arches just below the entablature. Representations of ships' rams are also depicted on the upper rectangular panels on the front and back side of the structure.²¹⁵ The Arch represents an effective example of the symbolic significance of synecdoche, a rhetorical term meaning to use a part to represent the whole. The artist, who was possibly working with a limited amount of space, could sculpt the rams of ships instead of whole ships and still convey the same message to the viewer.

The famous Nike of Samothrace constitutes another example of a monument depicting a part of a ship. The marble sculpture features a winged Nike, goddess of Victory, affixed to a base shaped like a warship's prow. The exact date of the Hellenistic monument is unknown, although some scholars have assigned it on stylistic grounds to the late third or second century B.C.E.²¹⁶ The occasion for the dedication is also the subject of much

²¹⁴ Tusa and Royal 2012, 44-5. The Carthaginians had captured 93 Roman warships at the battle of Drepanum in 249 B.C.E. (Polyb. 1.51).

²¹⁵ Murray and Petsas 1989, 101.

²¹⁶ Sleeswyk 1982, 234.

debate. The traditional interpretation connects the Nike monument to the Rhodian naval victories over Antiochus III and his Seleucid navy off Side and Myonnesus in 190 B.C.E.²¹⁷ However, this does not explain its location in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods. There are several possibilities for this. One is that the Samothracian sculptor, Hieronymus, who had been working on Rhodes around 220 B.C.E., constructed the monument for his homeland.²¹⁸ The period certainly coincides with the late third century B.C.E. date for the sculpture. However, there is no definitive evidence of an artist's signature, so it is impossible to attribute the Nike to any sculptor with certainty.²¹⁹ A second explanation is that the Nike commemorated Samothrace's own naval prowess, which, incidentally, still may have been created by the sculptor Hieronymus.²²⁰ A third possibility is that the monument was following in the tradition of a type of naval monument (i.e. the ship dedication) that had already been established on the island, as we will see in the next section.

A smaller naval monument from Lindos, Rhodes, dating to around 265 B.C.E., comprises a base in the shape of a ship's prow. The ship base, which is located in the stoa of the Sanctuary of Athena, was erected against the east wall facing the sea. The

²¹⁷ Rice 1993, 242. Ridgway 2000, 159 has suggested that the date of the Nike of Samothrace is contemporaneous with the Pergamene Gigantomachy, which puts its dedication around 160 B.C.E. and separates it from the Rhodian naval victories at Side and Myonnesus.

²¹⁸ Ridgway 2000, 151.

²¹⁹ The sculpture has also been attributed to Pythokritos of Rhodes based on an inscription. However, the name could represent a dedicant and not the sculptor. Even so, it is probable that the inscription is not associated with the Nike monument at all (Ridgway 2000, 151-2).

²²⁰ Lehmann and Lehmann 1973.

crowning statue of the base is now missing, but it was likely a Nike.²²¹ A fragmentary inscription describes the dedication of the first fruits to Athena Lindaia from the spoils obtained by those “who had sailed in the *trihemiolias*.”²²² The details of the inscription and the fact that the monument’s base is in the form of a *trihemiolia* implies the commemoration of a Rhodian naval victory.²²³ However, since the inscription mentions the crew and officers but fails to denote a specific event, it is also possible that the monument was erected to honor the integrity and courage of the ships’ crews.²²⁴ Also at Lindos, there is a rock-cut relief located at the base of the acropolis on which sits the Sanctuary of Athena. The relief, which dates around 180 B.C.E., depicts the stern of a warship, possibly a *trihemiolia*. An inscription indicates that the deck of the ship once served as the base for a statue of Hagesandros, a priest of Poseidon.²²⁵

SHIP DEDICATIONS

Structures adorned with parts of ships functioned as symbols of naval might and must have commanded awe and respect from those who gazed upon them. The most extravagant naval dedication, however, was that of an intact ship. As stated earlier, warships were costly to produce, and most city-states in antiquity could hardly afford to sacrifice an entire ship for this purpose. The cost and amount of space needed to house a dedicated warship particularly at sanctuaries where space is precious, as well as the

²²¹ Ridgway 1971, 354.

²²² Hamiaux et al. 1998; Rice 1991, 31-2.

²²³ It has been suggested that the monument commemorated a Rhodian naval victory over pirates (Blinkenberg 1938, 37).

²²⁴ Ridgway 2000, 156. For a study on Rhodian naval aristocracy, see Gabrielsen 1997.

²²⁵ Winter 2006, 212.

difficulty of transporting it to a *temenos*, would have added to the burden of setting up such a display. For these reasons, this type of monument appears to have been exceptionally rare.²²⁶ Nevertheless, there is direct and indirect evidence for whole ship dedications.

Literary Evidence

There are many references in ancient literary accounts for this type of naval dedication, which provide significant personal evidence that archaeology alone can rarely illustrate. Jason dedicated his famous ship, *Argo*, to Poseidon at the Isthmus of Corinth.²²⁷ In *Histories*, Herodotus mentions the dedication of three Phoenician triremes by the Greeks after their victory at Carystus (480 B.C.E.): two warships were offered to Poseidon, one at the Isthmus and the other at Sounion, and the third warship was set up for the hero Ajax at Salamis following Xerxes' defeat (480 B.C.E.).²²⁸ Both the Athenians and the Peloponnesians erected naval monuments comprising a captured ship at Rhium after their encounter during the battle of Naupactus in 429 B.C.E. The Athenians dedicated to Poseidon one of the 12 warships seized by Phormio's fleet after the Peloponnesians' attempt to escape to Patrae and Dyme, and the Peloponnesians consecrated an enemy vessel also to Poseidon following their minor victory over the Athenians.²²⁹

²²⁶ Wescoat 2005, 154-5.

²²⁷ Apollod. 1.9.27.

²²⁸ Hdt. 8.121.1. Murray and Petsas 1989, 115.

²²⁹ Thuc. 2.84.3-4, 2.92.5.

Although the dedication of entire ships appears to have been largely a Greek tradition, there is at least one Roman memorial mentioned by the Greek geographer Strabo which coincides with Octavian's Actium monument. After his victory over Antony and Cleopatra, he erected two naval monuments: the first was the memorial located at the site of his camp, which consisted of captured enemy rams,²³⁰ the second was a naval station constructed near a sacred grove across from the newly renovated temple of Apollo Actius.²³¹ Here, Octavian dedicated ten captured ships which he placed in corresponding *neoria*.²³² Unlike the campsite memorial, however, there are no traces of this naval museum. According to Strabo, a fire destroyed the warships and their housing.²³³

Archaeological Evidence

In addition to the wooden ship models found in the Heraion on Samos, excavators discovered a row of nine stone blocks next to the altar outside the temple in the sanctuary. The blocks, which date to ca. 600 B.C.E., appear to have served as supports for an actual, full-size ship approximately 23.0 m long and 3.2 m wide.²³⁴ Based on ancient ship-shed dimensions, the typical trireme measured around 35.0 m long x 3.5 m

²³⁰ See p. 54-5.

²³¹ Murray and Petsas 1989, 5-6.

²³² Strab. 7.7.6. Murray and Petsas 1999, 116 claim that the naval station contained a "full complement of ten ships, one from each class." However, it is important to note that Strabo only specifies that the smallest was a "one" and the largest was a "ten."

²³³ Strab. 7.7.6. It has been argued that Strabo wrote a majority of his *Geography* by 7 B.C.E., so the memorial's destruction likely occurred sometime prior to this date (Murray and Petsas 1989, n. 27). Interestingly, there is a close parallel between the destruction of the Actium naval museum and Emperor Caligula's Nemi ships, which were destroyed by fire during World War II.

²³⁴ Morris 2009, 118.

wide.²³⁵ Although the foundation is too small for this type of ship, the dimensions match quite well with those of a penteconter, a slim war-galley probably measuring at least 25 m long x 3.2 m wide.²³⁶ This interpretation is strengthened by the similarity in shape between the foundation and the wooden ship models from the Heraion, which may have represented long, slender warships, such as penteconters. It has been suggested that the dedication belonged to Kolaïos, the Samian ship owner mentioned by Herodotus.²³⁷ However, there is no evidence to support this interpretation. Moreover, Herodotus' account describes the dedication of a bronze *krater* by Kolaïos, not a ship, and it seems unlikely that the historian would neglect to mention such a grand display.²³⁸

Probably the most well-known indirect archaeological evidence for ship dedications comes from the Greek islands of Delos and Samothrace. The buildings that housed these votive ships have been studied extensively. The Monument of the Bulls on Delos, so named because of the bull's head decorations, or *bukrania*, on the triglyphs, is located in the Sanctuary of Apollo.²³⁹ The long, narrow structure has been interpreted as a *neorion* (ship-shed) to house a dedicated ship.²⁴⁰ Inside the building is a long gallery decorated with marine sculptures, as well as a marine *thiasos* frieze.²⁴¹ Additionally, in the center

²³⁵ Tobin 1993, 88.

²³⁶ Wallinga 1993, 49-51; Snodgrass 2006, 223.

²³⁷ Payne 1935, 163; Höckmann 1995, 210.

²³⁸ Hdt. 4.152.

²³⁹ Webb 1996, 22.

²⁴⁰ Rice 1993, 245.

²⁴¹ Rice 1993, 245; Wescoat 2005, 159. A marine *thiasos* refers to a grouping of sea gods, nymphs, tritons and various other mythological sea creatures (Stewart 2004, 98).

of this gallery is a sunken basin measuring 45.65 m long x 4.85 m wide.²⁴² There are no traces left of the ship itself, but the dimensions of the building coupled with the shallow basin and marine motifs suggest the structure's purpose as housing for a dedicated ship. The chamber has been linked to the *neorion* cited in Delian inscriptions, which date between 166 and 155 B.C.E.²⁴³ It has also been suggested that the ship dedication on Delos is the same one mentioned by the writer Pausanias (1.29.1) in the second century C.E.²⁴⁴ The absence of a dedicatory inscription makes it impossible to identify the donor and occasion for the dedication. This has not impeded scholars from offering some insightful suggestions. One of the earliest explanations was that the structure housed the dedicated flagship of Antigonus Gonatas, the *Isthmia*.²⁴⁵ However, careful analysis of the monument's architectural style and construction techniques places the building's creation in the late fourth century B.C.E. The earlier date sets up the possibility that Demetrius Poliorcetes, Antigonus Gonatas' father, actually commissioned the construction of the *neorion* to commemorate his victory over Ptolemy at Cypriot Salamis in 306 B.C.E., but died prior to its completion.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the building would have been earlier than the dedication inside, so it is not impossible that Antigonus utilized it for his flagship.²⁴⁷

²⁴² Wescoat 2005, 166.

²⁴³ Aldrete et al. 2013, 15.

²⁴⁴ Rice 1993, 245.

²⁴⁵ Tarn 1910, 215-7. Antigonus dedicated his flagship to Apollo after his triumph over the Ptolemaic fleet at Cos (Ath. 5.209e). The precise date of the battle is unknown, but scholars generally agree that it took place sometime between 262 and 256 B.C.E. (Rice 1993, 245 n. 2).

²⁴⁶ If the building was not utilized by Demetrius Poliorcetes, this would explain the lack of the *neorion*'s mention in Delian inscriptions dating to this period (Vallois 1944, 34-6).

²⁴⁷ Wescoat 2005, 169 surmises that the building was likely commissioned and, in fact, used by Poliorcetes but rejects the idea that it was eventually utilized by his son.

A building located in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on the northern Greek island of Samothrace also held a votive ship. The Samothracian monument, which measures approximately 27 m x 12 m, was of more modest scale than the Delian example. There is a colonnade that runs lengthwise inside the building, so the actual breadth of the ship would have been limited to around 4.3 m. Like the Delian monument, there are no traces of the ship left, but the presence of stone keel supports along the length of the structure helped illuminate its function. The dedication, which dates to the beginning of the third century B.C.E., was initially credited to Antigonus Gonatas, although it is highly unlikely the building housed his flagship.²⁴⁸ It is more plausible that Gonatas dedicated a smaller, enemy ship captured after one of his naval victories at Cos or Andros. The building, however, is too small for even a trireme, so if it did house a military vessel, it must have belonged to a class comparable to a swift *hemiolia*.²⁴⁹ Another possibility is that the dedication did not commemorate a naval victory at all. Instead, it was a votive offering presented to the gods by a thankful mariner who had previously survived a dangerous voyage at sea. The Great Gods of Samothrace were protectors of seafarers, so this type of dedication would have been appropriate.²⁵⁰

A third possibility is that the ship was dedicated by Arsinoe, sister of Ptolemy II, after twice escaping her husband (who was also her half-brother), the Macedonian Ptolemy Ceraunus.²⁵¹ A ship delivered her and her sons safely from Ephesus to Cassandreia after

²⁴⁸ McCredie 1987, 270.

²⁴⁹ Wescoat 2005, 167.

²⁵⁰ Wescoat 2005, 170.

²⁵¹ Wescoat 2005, 170-1.

she received word that her husband Lysimachus had died in battle at Corupedium in 281 B.C.E. She later fled from Cassandreia and sailed to Samothrace after Ceraunus allegedly murdered her sons.²⁵² Commemoration of the ship that delivered Arsinoe to safety twice (if it was indeed the same ship) would also have been a suitable dedication. She could have dedicated it while she was on the island, or others could have erected the ship monument after her death in 270.²⁵³

Archaeological excavations in Athens have also revealed evidence of what may be a ship dedication. The monument in question was found on a hill above the Panathenaic stadium, southeast of the Acropolis. Initially, the structure was identified as the tomb of Herodes Atticus, who rebuilt the stadium.²⁵⁴ However, the style of the structure does not match any other tombs of the period. An analysis of Philostratus' description of the inaugural procession of the new stadium has permitted an alternative interpretation.²⁵⁵ Jennifer Tobin has suggested that the long, narrow structure (ca. 42.0 m x 9.5 m) was intended to house the especially elaborate ship that Herodes Atticus supplied for the Panathenaic procession in 143-4 C.E.²⁵⁶ If this building was in fact a *neorion* constructed to house a Panathenaic ship, it would constitute a unique naval dedication in ancient Greco-Roman history in that it is the only extant archaeological evidence for the dedication of a ship used in the procession of the Panathenaia.

²⁵² Hölbl 2001, 35-6. Polynaenus. *Strat.* 8.57; Just. *Epit.* 24.2-3.

²⁵³ Wescoat 2005, 171.

²⁵⁴ Gasparri 1974, 377.

²⁵⁵ Tobin 1993, 87; Philostr. *V.S.* 2.550.

²⁵⁶ Tobin 1993, 88-9.

CONCLUSION

The above examples demonstrate how literary, iconographic, and archaeological evidence can be brought together to achieve a more comprehensive and richer picture of the phenomenon of ship dedications than any of the evidence can alone. As was the case with maritime votive offerings in the previous chapter, literary accounts and iconography substantiate archaeological evidence for naval dedications, and despite ancient writers' interest in the exceptional, significant information may still be gathered from this evidence. Whereas maritime votive offerings were likely given by pious seafarers thankful for deliverance from the sea, dedicated spoils of war, which sometimes included an entire ship, were typically showcased by victorious generals commemorating success in naval warfare. With the exception of the Panathenaic ship dedication in Athens, which possibly represented a memorial honoring Herodes Atticus, the rest of these grand monuments were dedications "more in the nature of self-glorification on the part of a victorious state or hegemon, [and an indication] that pride had swallowed up piety, and that the dedicated article has become a monument of naval success often set up for purposes of propaganda."²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Pritchett 1979, 285.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

By Hera, it is a charming resting place. For this plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then too, the spring tree, and its water is very cool, to judge by my foot. And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues.²⁵⁸

The above passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*, written in the fourth century B.C.E., is part of a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus in which Socrates describes a country shrine he visited near Athens. Although it appears he is unfamiliar with the nature of the cult, he deduces that the shrine belonged to nymphs and the river deity Achelous based on the types of figurines and statues left at the site.

Jens Baumbach utilizes this excerpt from Plato to support the claim that votive offerings can provide significant information about certain cult characteristics.²⁵⁹ Conversely, it has been argued that votive offerings do not offer "any major insight into ancient thoughts or beliefs."²⁶⁰ However, the material presented in the previous two chapters demonstrates how archaeological evidence, when integrated with literary texts, can reveal illuminating information about a dedicant's actions and motivations. The

²⁵⁸ Plato. *Phdr.* 230b-c.

²⁵⁹ Baumbach 2004, 3.

²⁶⁰ Simon 1986, 410.

examples of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications discussed in this thesis are summarized below (Table 1).

Table 1. Archaeological and literary evidence for maritime votive offerings and naval dedications.

Offering type	Date	Location	Recipient
pinax	700 BCE	Sounion	Poseidon
pinax	7th-6th century BCE	Penteskouphia	Poseidon
oar	8th century BCE	unknown	Poseidon
warship	429 BCE	Patrae?	Poseidon
warship	426 BCE	Rhium	Poseidon
warship	480 BCE	Isthmus, Corinth	Poseidon
warship	480 BCE	Sounion	Poseidon
Argo (ship)	3rd century BCE	Isthmus, Corinth	Poseidon
wooden ship models	7th century BCE	Samos	Hera
ship model	Archaic period	Perachora	Hera
figurine w/ship decoration	Archaic period	Perachora	Hera
figurine w/ship decoration	Archaic period	Tiryns	Hera
anchor	unknown	Croton, Italy	Hera
anchor	7th-6th century BCE	Metapontum, Italy	Hera
whole ship dedication	600 BCE	Samos	Hera
anchor stock	500 BCE	Gravisca, Etruria	Apollo
silver trireme model	279 BCE	Delos	Apollo
trireme rams	4th-2nd centuries BCE	Delos	Apollo
trireme gear	4th-2nd centuries BCE	Delos	Apollo
anchors	4th-2nd centuries BCE	Delos	Apollo
captured ship's ensign/figurehead	480 BCE	Phyla	Apollo
whole ship dedication	4th century BCE	Delos	Apollo
stone anchor stock fragments	unknown	Gravisca, Etruria	Aphrodite ?
anchor	Iron Age	Amathus, Cyprus	Aphrodite
anchor stocks	475 BCE	Aegina	Aphrodite Epilimena
votive tablets	1st century BCE	Samothrace	Great Gods
whole ship dedication	3rd century BCE	Samothrace	Great Gods
Nike naval monument	3rd-2nd century BCE	Samothrace	Great Gods
anchor stock	500 BCE	Croton, Italy	Zeus Meilichios
unknown thank-offering	unknown	Lesbos	Zeus
unknown thank-offering	unknown	unknown	Zeus and four Egyptian gods
memorial	unknown	Phrygia	Zeus, Athena, and all deities

Table 1. Continued.

Offering type	Date	Location	Recipient
fishing gear	unknown	unknown	Priapus
wooden bowl, stool, wine-cup	unknown	unknown	Priapus
crab shell	unknown	unknown	Priapus
stone relief	4th-3rd century BCE	Piraeus	Dioscuri
stone relief	1st century CE	Tomis (Romania)	Heros Manimazos
naval monument	31 BCE	Actium	Neptune
monument w/ship base	3rd century BCE	Lindos, Rhodes	Athena Lindiai
naval memorial	519 BCE	Aegina	Athena
naval/fishing gear	1st century CE	unknown	Hermes
naval/fishing gear	6th century CE	unknown	Hermes
first cast	unknown	Syros	Nymphs
gold/ivory trireme model	5th century BCE	Delphi	unknown
rudder	3rd century BCE	Samos	Artemis
part of a ship's deck	unknown	Delos	Anubis
unknown thank-offering	unknown	Syros	Asclepius

DEDICANT VS. DEDICATEE

In the absence of an inscription, it is impossible to know exactly who was doing the offering. It is possible, however, to infer significant information about the dedicant's motivations from the type of offering itself. In the same manner that individuals suffering from an ailment, or cured of one, might have dedicated votive body parts to healing divinities, maritime votive offerings were conceivably made by those involved in seafaring or other sea-related activity.²⁶¹ For example, we know from epigrams that fishermen dedicated their gear as a way of showing gratitude to the divine for the bountiful catches. Bronze fishhooks discovered at sanctuaries of Hera, as well as

²⁶¹ Baumbach 2004, 2.

Demeter, corroborate this textual evidence.²⁶² Another example in which archaeological evidence and literary texts may be used together to provide insight into the beliefs of a dedicant is the votive anchor from Gravisca that was dedicated to Aeginetan Apollo by Sostratos. Although the inscription reveals the dedicant's name and the recipient of the offering, it does not tell us the occasion or whether the dedicant was a sailor. If, as suggested by scholars, the Sostratus from the inscription is the same successful trader from Aegina mentioned by Herodotus, it is perhaps possible that the offering was dedicated by someone in a maritime-based profession, since in antiquity trade often involved sea travel. Therefore, the votive anchor may represent a thank-offering following a successful journey at sea. Of course, this interpretation is only speculation, and one cannot rule out the likelihood that bakers or potters were just as capable of dedicating maritime votive offerings as sailors.

While maritime votive offerings may have been dedicated by sailors, fishermen, or the passengers of ships, naval dedications were typically erected by triumphant generals or city-states celebrating a naval victory. This distinction may be observed in the gifts themselves. Votive offerings given by pious Greeks and Romans who evaded disaster at sea primarily comprised small, somewhat modest objects, such as a model boat or figurine, and these offerings may have functioned as symbols of both gratitude and humility. Naval dedications, on the other hand, were imposing and grandiose structures that not only flaunted the spoils of a victorious naval commander or polis but also

²⁶² Baumbach 2004, 179-80.

evoked civic pride while demanding respect from potential enemies. Thus, although maritime votive offerings and naval dedications are similar in that they both represent a type of thank-offering and gift to the divine, they differ in size, splendor, presentation, and even purpose.

The dedicant of naval offerings, whether small or ostentatious, was perhaps a factor in the types of objects being dedicated. Similarly, the type of offering may provide details about the deity receiving the gift. As archaeological and textual evidence has shown, maritime votive offerings were often presented to deities linked with seafaring.

So, who received offerings and why? As ruler of the sea, Poseidon not only had the power to end potentially disastrous storms, he could also cause them. Additionally, he had the ability to grant good sailing (εὐπλοία), and numerous ship dedications to Poseidon mentioned in the accounts of ancient writers reflect his concern with naval warfare.²⁶³ Hence, naval votive offerings and dedications form appropriate gifts to the god who essentially had complete control in matters of seafaring.

Poseidon's close connection with the sea made him an obvious recipient for naval offerings. Less obvious, however, are those deities whose primary concern did not outwardly involve seafaring. An epithet, which is a word or phrase describing an attribute of someone or something, may accompany the name of the deity in a

²⁶³ Parker 2002, 152. The epithet *Euploia* is more commonly associated with the goddess Aphrodite.

dedication, and although ancient writers sometimes used epithets for poetic purposes, these descriptive tools reveal specific cult aspects of various divinities. For example, Aphrodite, who was the recipient of maritime votive offerings, is probably best known as the goddess of love, beauty, desire, and female sexuality. However, in addition to Hesiod's account claiming she was born from the sea, Aphrodite had numerous epithets, such as *Euploia* (of Good Sailing), *Pontia* (of the Deep Sea), and *Limenia* or *Epilimenia* (at the Harbor), that reflected her connection with seafaring and navigation.²⁶⁴

Apollo, who was known as the god of prophecy, healing, and music, was also worshipped as a protector of sailors. The deity's connection with seafaring possibly originated from the role of the Delphic oracle in directing Greek colonization.²⁶⁵ Since it was Apollo who directed colonists to travel overseas, surely he would be the one called upon to protect them on their journey.²⁶⁶ Apollo's link with seafaring may also be observed in a passage from Apollonius' *Argonautica*, in which Jason sets up an altar prior to embarking on his journey and dedicates it to Apollo *Aktios* (Apollo of the Shore) and *Embaterios* (Apollo of Embarkation).²⁶⁷ As with the goddess Aphrodite, Apollo's epithets help to identify specific features of his maritime character.

In addition to Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Apollo, the goddess Hera received maritime votive gifts and dedications. The figurines of Hera carrying the flower-decorated ship

²⁶⁴ Paus. 1.1.3, 2.34.11; Larson 2007, 123.

²⁶⁵ Hdt. 5.42.

²⁶⁶ Albis 1996, 44.

²⁶⁷ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.359, 404.

that were recovered from Perachora and Tiryns coupled with the small boat model (also from Perachora) may signal the goddess's function as protectress of fishing. This role is further strengthened by the presence of bronze fishhooks located at her sanctuary at Perachora and Foce del Sele (Paestum).²⁶⁸

The slender boat models recovered from the Samian Heraion resemble war-galleys, making it probable that they convey Hera's role as protectress of the fleet. Furthermore, the lack of evidence for this type of boat model and other dedications for naval triumphs at other Hera sanctuaries, such as Perachora and Tiryns, suggests that on Samos she was venerated as protectress of the Samian fleet, which "is a local peculiarity that demonstrates that the Heraia are embedded in the social and political situation of the city-states they belong to."²⁶⁹

These examples illustrate that the maritime nature of some cults may be inferred from the deity's close connection with the sea (i.e., Poseidon), as well as from descriptive titles (epithets) that sometimes accompany the deity's name in a dedication.

Additionally, some lesser divinities were regarded as patrons of seafarers, such as the Dioscuri, the Great Gods of Samothrace, and the minor god Priapus. In the absence of this information, however, it is possible to identify the maritime aspect of a cult based on the types of votive offerings deposited in the deity's cult space, as shown by the bronze fishhooks, figurines, and boat models recovered from different Hera sanctuaries.

²⁶⁸ Baumbach 2004, 179-80.

²⁶⁹ Baumbach 2004, 181.

Furthermore, recipients of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications need not be seafaring deities at all. Individuals who had survived a shipwreck or other disaster at sea may have dedicated votive gifts to their own resident cult deity. This might explain naval offerings made to such deities as Zeus Meilichios and Hermes, as well as dedications to Anubis and other Egyptian gods. Thus, naval offerings and dedications may convey revealing information about both dedicant and dedicatee.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The geographical position of a sanctuary was undoubtedly an important factor in the selection of offerings. It can hardly be coincidental that nearly every sanctuary where naval votives and dedications have been recovered, as well as those mentioned in literary texts, is located either on an island or along the coast (fig. 12-13). Returning to the example of Apollo, with a few exceptions, much of the literary and archaeological evidence of naval offerings to him come from Delos. This is not surprising since the island was believed to be his birthplace. However, the geographical location of the island was as significant an element in the choice of offering as the presiding god. Delos' location in the center of the Cyclades made it an ideal center for maritime activity, whether that activity was commercial or military in nature, and this might explain offerings to deities other than Apollo.

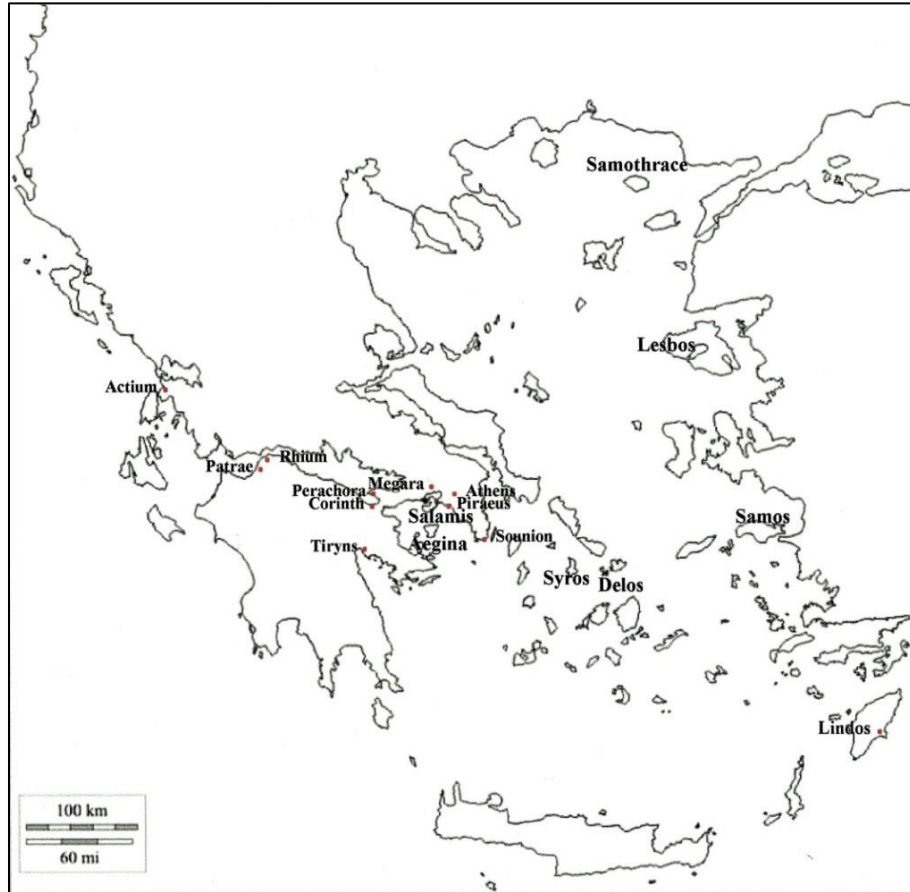


Figure 11. Geographic distribution of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications, on mainland Greece and in the Aegean Islands.



Figure 12. Geographic distribution of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications, Etruria/Italy.

The example of the dedicatee Aphrodite also illustrates how geographical location may reveal a cult's maritime character. In addition to votive anchors dedicated to the goddess and her marine origins described by Hesiod, her association with the sea may be indicated by the location of her sanctuaries on islands, beaches, and at harbor towns.²⁷⁰ Likewise, many sanctuaries of Hera are positioned in close proximity to water. The Samian Heraion is located at the mouth of the Imbrasos River on the island of Samos, while the Hera sanctuary at Foce del Sele is situated at the mouth of the Sele River. It is important to note that areas located near water were considered dangerous and suspicious places in the ancient world, so they were often treated as areas of transition or liminal zones.

The purpose of this thesis was to utilize literary evidence and existing archaeological examples of maritime votive offerings and naval dedications to illustrate that the votive offering is arguably the most common and archaeologically prolific aspect of ancient Greco-Roman religious ritual in revealing the nature of a cult. Geographic location alone does not determine a cult's maritime character, but the types of votive offerings and dedications located within a marine sanctuary can provide evidence for the recognition of a cult or deity's association with the sea. Although votive offerings may not uncover specific details about the dedicants themselves, they do offer the opportunity to infer general information about their thoughts and motivations. Unfortunately, no one

²⁷⁰ Cyrino 2010, 108.

body of evidence can paint the whole picture, and the real challenge is to incorporate many different types of evidence to reveal a more accurate history of ancient religion.

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