

Ritual and Time in Votive Depositions: Selinunte's Temple R

Time has become an increasingly important component of our understanding of the archaeological record over the past decade thanks to theorists like Gavin Lucas. We have been reminded that, despite our desire to seek out phenomena and large-scale processes, the materiality of depositional action obscures and flattens time. Yet, temporality was essential to ancient Greek ritual action, whether foundation deposits marking the construction of a temple, the iterativeness of sacrifices and offerings that marked cultic calendars, or the ritual killing of things at the end of their use.

Excavations jointly conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU and Università degli Studi di Milano in the Main Urban Sanctuary of Selinus—modern Selinunte—provide an unparalleled opportunity to test questions of temporality as they relate to the material remnants of ancient ritual practice. In the southern area of the sanctuary, a cult to a female divinity was founded in the first generation of the settlement's foundation ca. 625 BCE, and would come to focus around a structure identified as Temple R. Scores of discrete ritual depositions document foundation depositions made to consecrate, and then reconsecrate, the temple as it was built and repaired over the centuries. These depositions can be further deconstructed, providing insight into the dozens of individual actions that in aggregate created the event. Residual faunal and ceramic evidence collected around altars, and embedded in floors, meanwhile, provide insight into iterative ritual actions conducted *between* the more legible ritual events associated with construction and repair. While giving insight into the nature of the cult and the deity to which it was dedicated, these ritual depositions also allow us to consider how the ancient Selinuntines engaged with questions of time as they maintained, but also curated, the materiality of their rituals within and around Temple R.