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***Response: Eckert on Johnston on Eckert, Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer.* Response to [2019.05.53](#)**

Response by Martin Eckert, Archaeological Museum Hamburg (krt@martineckert.org)

I am very grateful to Dr Johnston for taking the time to review my book *Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer*, and I appreciate his advice, corrections and additions. In this respect, his “selection of comments” (as he calls it) about some rather randomly chosen aspects of my publication is in many regards helpful. His objections against specific statements in my research are detailed, but with respect to its general outline and to essential parts of my argument he proceeds in too cursory a fashion. Therefore I would like to contribute a reply.

Dr Johnston has presented some obvious flaws in my study. I am well aware of an array of question marks and weaknesses, and I carefully tried to identify and specify the obstacles to my research in the introduction (p. 15–30); unfortunately, Dr Johnston seems to have disregarded these discussions almost entirely.

To be clear, I stated at different points (p. 30; 588) that my aim was never to provide clear-cut, exhaustive or ultimate answers to the array of challenging questions that derive from this subject. On the contrary, my aim was to conduct a trial run, as it were, and a probe into the possibility and utility of a comprehensive study of harbour sanctuaries, of which the sanctuaries of Aphrodite without doubt constitute a considerable share.

In the first paragraph of his review, Dr Johnston states that the catalogue consists of 172 sites

“basically those within reasonable distance to the sea.” This is a basic misunderstanding. The catalogue aims to list *all* sanctuaries of Aphrodite known from ancient sources or archaeological excavation before Hellenistic times: that means the seaward sanctuaries *and* the sanctuaries inland (p. 13; 16). The catalogue therefore deals not only with Axos (its position is further discussed on p. 19; 470), Psophis and Orchomenos, but also with all the other landlocked sanctuaries of Aphrodite except the inland sanctuaries in Cyprus. As I explained in the introduction, I chose to undertake this broader research in order to look for the diagnostic characteristics (typical votives, offerings, architectural setting, features, location in regard to the city boundaries, visitors) that could possibly help to distinguish the sanctuaries of Aphrodite from the sanctuaries of other goddesses like Hera or Artemis. This broader research might also aid to establish some basic criteria on how to distinguish locally-frequented sanctuaries from more internationally-frequented contact-sanctuaries (p. 13; 18–19). Finally, in the conclusion, I statistically examined the entirety of all sanctuaries listed in the catalogue in order to assess in numbers not only the relationship of sanctuaries of Aphrodite to the sea (p. 463–464; 582–587), but also an array of other characteristics: geographical peculiarities, the positioning of the sanctuaries, their main features and functions (e.g. metallurgy), diagnostic votives and offerings, names and by-names of the goddess, her male consorts and cultic neighbours, and last but not least paradoxical phenomena that could not be sufficiently approached. Again, Dr Johnston in his review omits all of this.

Instead, he claims that the conclusion deals only with “the depth of Phoenician input into Aphrodite cults.” He ignores that “thought-provoking speculation,” especially about the “sexual and aggressive nature of (armed) Aphrodite and her predecessors” or the “hunter-gatherer origins of an aggressive female deity,” which is summarized for further discussion in a separate chapter called “Collected Assumptions.”

His claim that my referencing is “at best poor” is at best misleading. As stated on top of the bibliography (p. 537), all abbreviations of periodicals follow the guidelines of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI); abbreviations of ancient sources follow the guidelines of *Der Neue Pauly III* (1997), XXXVI–XLIV and *Lidell-Scott-Jones*, XVI–XLV, as stated on page 574–575, where all abbreviations applied to ancient authors are unravelled. Only two or three times in a footnote I mention a “Mitteilung,” which refers to hints and clarifications I received from other researchers, orally or by e-mail.

Full-page colour illustrations, e.g. a Cycladic figurine and the Artemision Zeus, do not necessarily target a “more general readership of the book”. The Artemision Zeus (*National Archaeological Museum*, Athens: fig. 238) in my opinion represents the Hellenic adaptation of the Near Eastern storm-god or “smiting god” who is being followed throughout the study, and the Cycladic figurine (*Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*, Richmond: fig. 98) possibly hints to an early connection of the gesture of the folded arms underneath the breasts with the gesture of the Near Eastern “naked goddess” presenting her breasts—a path that also is consistently explored.

The “various Aphrodisian adventures” Dr Johnston mentions is one lengthy, but necessary citation of Lucian, *Amores* 7–11, which refers to a garden within the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Knidos. This feature is a key element in my concluding discussion of the general architectural settings of these sanctuaries, and also in the discussion of possible places for feasting and sexual activities (p. 485; 491–493).

“The [odd] notion that sex on board ship was tabu” is not something I made up, but part of the discussion about whether there existed any religious need of ‘purity’ in any sense on board a ship (p. 4–5). I refer to Achilleus Tatios (Ach. Tat. 5, 16), who raises the topic of the ambivalent religious relationship of the ancient Greek people towards the sea, something between joy, fear and respect. Dietrich Wachsmuth in his ground-breaking study *ΠΟΜΠΙΜΟΣ Ο ΔΑΙΜΩΝ* (Berlin 1967) meticulously examines the relevant ancient sources (Wachsmuth 1967, 201–203; 219–223; 283–289). This issue is in my opinion relevant for any discussion concerning the notion of ‘sacred prostitution’ (p. 505–510); instead of just a good-humoured interjection, a little more profound treatment of the matter would have been helpful.

Wachsmuth 1967 and others (as referred to in footnotes: Buchholz 1959; Lenz 1995; Marinatos 2010; MacGillivray 2012) have also extensively studied the significance of birds and other representations of the goddess (e.g. the double-axe, the six- or eight-pointed star; see p. 451–452) in the context of early seafaring.

The “Phoenician trade-route from the Saronic Gulf through the Corinthian Gulf” that Dr Johnston singles out is only one of three alternative trade-routes mapped in the north, but also in the south of the Peloponnese around Cape Malea (p. 467–471). Aphrodite on Kythera (including the Cycladic marble bowl with Babylonian dedicatory inscription) and further West on the Southern coast of the Peloponnese are indeed mentioned on p. 470–471.

Kommos got included in the catalogue (No. 3.5) because of a possible connection of Herodotus's "foreign Aphrodite" in Memphis (Hdt. 2, 112) with the possible worship of a triad Baal – Athirat/Asherah – Astarte in Kommos (p. 181–183). There are proposals about this point circulating in the scientific community that I did not want to neglect.

The volume Dr Johnston refers to regarding a single dedication by a woman at the Zeytintepe sanctuary at Miletus deals only with the "Imported Attic Pottery" (this volume was published in August 2016, when my book was already in the print shop); in any case, the evidence for foreign female visitors in the sanctuary to which I refer does not appear on ceramics, but on metal (p. 229, n. 76).

Regarding the significance of the lotus flower on Greek pots well into the fifth cent. BC, I want to point to the comprehensive and careful study of Gundel Koch–Harnack, *Erotische Symbole* (Berlin 1989).

Unfortunately it is impossible to discuss all of Dr Johnston's objections in detail. Certainly he has detected a number of errors, mistakes, and "solecisms." I have to acknowledge full responsibility not only for these, but also for all typos and odd lettering, which might occur here or there, and for all "major defects in both the text and its representation," because I organized most of the typesetting myself. Technically, a book exceeding 600 pages should be split in two volumes: the best solution of course would have been one volume for the study, and one volume for the catalogue. A limited budget, however, prevented this solution. Because one of my major objectives was also to provide a useful field manual (or better, a ship manual) for anybody interested in the topic, I tried to fit the complete material within 600 pages. Given that, I generally favoured the completeness of the evidence plus the quality of the illustrations over strict perpetuation of the system of the catalogue – with ancient literary and epigraphic sources "placed on the verso, commentary on them and archaeological evidence on the recto." At some point, due to limited space, I was forced to abandon this system "halfway through the treatment of the Cypriot sanctuaries." I chose to do so because I simply trusted in the ability of an attentive user to see through this and to deal with it. I am glad that Dr Johnston clarifies this muddle in his review and explains the partial break down of the system in detail. I regret not only this confusion, but much more the lack of an index for my book.

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