

## **“Aphrodite Erykina”, 25 Years After: The Interpretation of the Sanctuary Revised**

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### *Summary*

My paper deals with the well-known sanctuary of “Aphrodite Erykina” according to Chr. Kardara’s interpretation, who excavated it in 1968-69 and 1980-81 and published it with admirable promptness: *Ἀφροδίτη Ἐρυκίνη. Ἱερὸν καὶ μαντεῖον εἰς τὴν ΒΔ Ἀρκαδίαν*, Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικῆς Εταιρείας vol. 106, Athens 1988. The sanctuary was situated on the saddle of Hagios Petros (about 1155 m above sea level) on Mount Aphrodision, in the modern prefecture of Gortynia, between Erymanthos and the Ladon valley, just on the frontier between Psophis and Thelphousa. Today a new road leads to Kontovazaina (12 km), branching off from Highway 111 (Tripolis – Patra), and reaches the saddle with the sanctuary after 8 km.

I present the data of the excavation and I propose a new interpretation of the remains of the buildings of the sanctuary, 25 years after my participation in another excavation at the same territory under the auspices of Prof. Chr. Kardara and the study of the finds from the sanctuary in the museum of Olympia (1977). I also present a new plan of the sanctuary complex. (Fig. 1)

According to my interpretation the “altar” and the “sacred road” are remains of the main entrance to the sanctuary, like a propylon. The “telesterion” was actually a double stoa and the “temenos” was in fact the temple, today partly preserved (not excavated) under the modern church of Hagios Petros; the temple was Doric and peripteral. The so-called “omphalos”, inside the cella, was a typical *thesauros*. The complex of buildings to the east consisted rather of workshops, guest-houses etc. There is no evidence for the existence of a “stadium” or an “odeion”. It is more probable that the sanctuary was an Artemision than an Aphrodision, and not specifically an oracle/*manteion*, as Kardara argued. Pausanias did not mention this sanctuary or the surrounding area.

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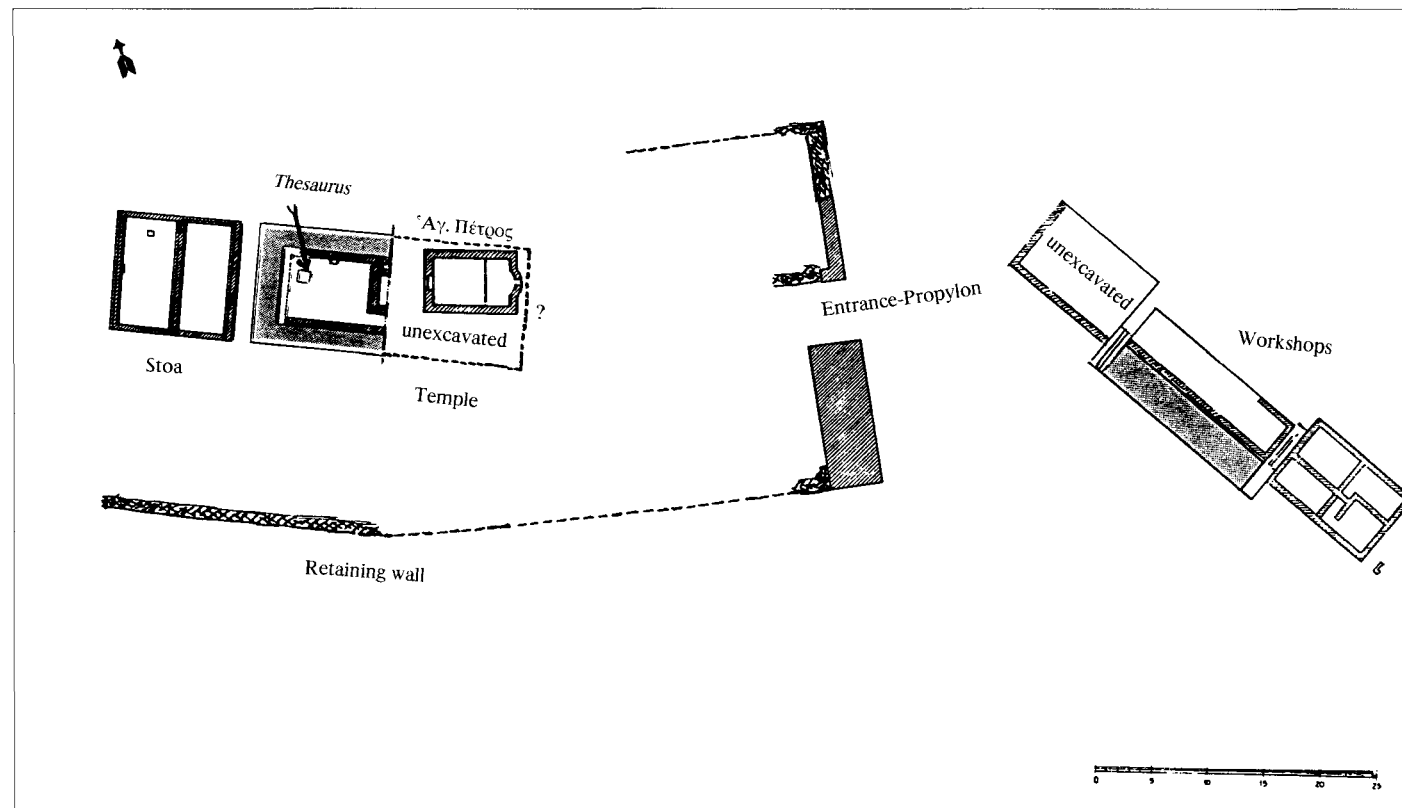


Fig. 1. The plan of the sanctuary at Mount Aphrodision. (After Kardara 1988, pl. 1, with new identifications of the various structures added.)