The volumes *Tegea I* and *Tegea II* are publications of excavations of the Temple of Athena Alea and its sanctuary, which started in 1989 under the leadership of Erik Østby, who has spent almost three decades uncovering the area. In the two volumes, the excavations are presented with meticulous care and clear descriptions of the site, the architecture, the archaeological material, and also of the project developments. A vivid overview of the site is presented, and at the same time the reader feels confident that nothing has been overlooked.
The combined size of the volumes is impressive: 1091 pages, reflecting the rich, collaborative nature of the project, with contributions by twenty-seven scholars from nine different countries and two continents. The editor of the two volumes and his team should be commended for including a large number of illustrations that complement the text. Unfortunately, publications of this type are becoming rare, since excavation documentation is moving towards digitized formats for presenting the material. Often, this takes the form of work-in-progress notices, which are directed towards recipients who demand immediate information.

The organization of the volumes demonstrates the methodological structure of the work. The first volume includes an introduction written by Østby and presentations of the site and the architecture: Østby describes the sanctuary in the pre-Classical period and Gullög Nordquist, follows on swiftly, with a detailed report of the excavations in the temple sector. The documentation of the architecture is admirable, with no detail overlooked. The description conjures an idea of the magnitude of the temple in its heyday and, as such, its significance.

The second volume presents the find material. Mary Voyatzis has undertaken the studies of the early ceramics from the northern sector, which date from the tenth to the seventh century BC; she is also the author of the chapter on the objects from the temple excavation. The next chapter is by Jeanette Forsén, who presents the Neolithic and Early Helladic pottery. The chapter on miniature ceramics from the sanctuary is by Leslie Hammond. Østby has written about the sherds from a Middle Proto-Corinthian pictorial aryballos, and Nordquist continues with another chapter on the fragments of the house models from the sanctuary of Athena Alea. This is followed by an osteological investigation of the animal bones found in the temple, which are primarily from birds. The third part is composed of reports on the magnetometric survey undertaken by Tatyana Smekalova; such surveys are important for understanding the geomorphology of the site, which function as helpful guiding tools for further excavations. Peo Ekström reports on the chemical field methods applied during the 1994 excavation; Thomas Fenn and Matthew Ponting, together with Mary Voyatzis, present the results from the ceramic analysis of Laconian Proto-Geometric pottery. The last report is on the metals and slagged residues by Yannis Bassiakos. In the appendices there are overviews that help the reader to move easily between the text and the find contexts.

Østby visited Tegea for the first time in 1977, and the way in which he introduces the reader to the site has a personal flavour that evokes a vivid image of the area he met at the time, and its importance, which he immediately grasped. He describes the first encounter with Tegea as an academic love-story, which started on a cold day, but where he, in time, would spend many very warm summer days, as the project proceeded. Just as he had made a discovery that was to govern his career for decades, he was given a steaming cup of sweet coffee by the museum guard, Nikos Repas, who became a friend for life. Such remarks, of which there are many in the introduction to the first volume, bring to life the people involved in the project and give a voice to the main editor.
When Østby first came to Tegea, he was familiar with the excavations conducted by the French school in Athens at the site of the Temple of Athena Alea in the early twentieth century. The French archeologists had concluded that the large scale of the Classical temple was astonishing, confirming Pausanias’ comment that the fire in 395 BC had destroyed a temple on the site, which was succeeded by a Doric temple. The architect was the widely renowned Scopas. In the French publication of excavations at Tegea from 1920, Østby discovered a mistake in the interpretation: the parallel foundations, which stretched lengthways through the *cella* of the Classical temple, could not be Early Christian or Byzantine, as concluded by the French archaeologists, but were remains from the earlier temple, which was destroyed by the fire in 395 BC. The mistake that Østby discovered in the French publication sparked his interest and led to his adventures at Tegea, and the first, humble excavations that followed his discovery grew into a major investigation, which was to prove his hypothesis.

The French excavation had focused on the Classical temple, which, as claimed by Pausanias, was remarkable because of the architecture and the size (*Pausanias, Description of Greece* 8.45.5). While fourth-century Doric temples were typically smaller, the temple at Tegea was larger. The size can only be compared to the temple of Apollo at Delphi, the temple of Zeus at Nemea, the temple of Apollo at Thebes, and the *tholos* at Epidaurus. When a new temple replaced an older one on the same spot, on top of the earlier structure, it was usually larger and more impressive, but it would necessarily have to be built on the remains of the earlier building. The earlier temple would have had an influence upon the architecture of the later. The size of the Classical temple of Athena Alea is larger than most other temples of the period because the Archaic temple beneath had been of an impressive scale.

An early dating of the site would be interesting in relation to the myths connected with Tegea. As Østby points out in the first chapter of the first volume, the site of Tegea is in the heartland of Arcadia. He presents the complex myths connected to the site, and makes a point of the fact that Pausanias gives Tegea a great share of attention: the cult statue of Athena Alea was made of ivory and the artist’s name was Endoios. The protective qualities of the goddess attracted refugees from the region who sought asylum. The fame of the statue also attracted others. In the early Roman Imperial period, Emperor Augustus had the statue moved to Rome. Consequently, from the early first century, the Temple of Athena Alea was deprived of its cult statue. When Emperor Augustus brought the cult statue to Rome, the landscape of Arcadia had become a symbol of a utopian dream, and in Roman times the area was personified into a female figure. A Hellenistic female statue was found at the excavation site in 1992, but its identity is uncertain.

According to Pausanias, the legendary foundation of Tegea was the site of origin of Telephos, who was to become the mythical ancestor of the Pergamene kings. Telephos was the son of Heracles and Auge, daughter of king Aleos, who founded the deme where Tegea and the sanctuary of Alea formed the centre of his kingdom. Alea was a local goddess who probably was later assimilated with Athena. The foundation myth of Tegea is more complex than this
simplified version. What is important here is that Østby realized that if the sanctuary proved to have prehistoric origins, the origin of Tegea would be deeply entangled with the earliest myths of Arcadia. It might be possible to trace these myths as far back as to the Mycenaean era. One of the anecdotes presented by Pausanias that connects Tegea to the distant past tells of a lock of Medusa’s hair that had been given to the city by Athena, as a magical talisman, which guaranteed the freedom of the city. Thus, the Tegean coins depict the hair lock which was, of course, kept in the sanctuary.

When Østby had confirmed his hypothesis with regard to the early dating of the temple, his interest in the Athena Alea temenos did not decrease, but instead raised new questions, and in order to obtain an overview of the area that was as full as possible, he continued his work. Østby’s ambition in investigating the temple of Athena Alea was to reveal the pre-Classical temple.

A discovery of particular interest was the find of two Late-Geometric cult buildings from the late eighth century BC. The buildings were found on top of each other, and the larger is eight metres long and four metres wide. The excavations of this area required prehistoric archaeological expertise, as the material was scant and the archaeological features were post holes and remains of clay walls. I would like to draw attention to the two fragments of the house models studied by Nordquist in the second volume. The first fragment was found in a mixed layer, the other in the northern part of the temple trench. Other examples have been found in Hera shrines, and one in particular from Perachora is considered by Nordquist to have been a convincing parallel. In the discussion she writes:

I believe that the models should be considered in a wider context and that their contextual content relates to expressions of symbolic behaviour in elite circles in a changing society, reflecting developments which may be distinguished in many ways during the Late Geometric and Early Archaic period. The emerging sanctuaries and the physical manifestations of cults connected with them became more and more important as arenas for symbolic behaviour during this phase. The space, the rituals and symbolic contexts offered by the sanctuaries would have been efficient vehicles for such functions. The manifestations may have taken the shape of cult buildings or temples, or as other monuments or votive objects in the sanctuaries; whatever form they took, they would have filled an important role in the interaction within and between the local elite families and the emerging polis states.

These observations enlighten the reader who seeks to understand the temple in a broader context. The significance of the temple, as an institutionalized entity in the early Tegean society, becomes very clear. The understanding of the social and religious life that took place in the
shrine in the early period adds a meaning to the function of the temple. Such house models can give us insight into the social structures in the societies that constructed the early temples.

The publication that is now available will be appreciated by scholars outside the field of Greek architecture, as the site and the cult, which was worshipped at Tegea, is of interest to Classical archaeologists and historians in general, including historians of religion and of architecture.

The long list of financial sponsors who made it possible to undertake this enterprise is truly impressive and has no parallel in Norwegian Classical Archaeology. The investigations undertaken by Østby were supported by the Norwegian Research Council, The Swedish Research Council for Humanities, and The National Geographic Society. Additional funds were granted by The Benneche Foundation; The Nansen foundation, which is administered by the Norwegian Academy of Sciences; The Swedish Gunhild and Josef Anér Foundation; The Svenska Atheninstitutets vänner; The University of Arizona; The American Council of Learned Studies; and The Samuel Kress Foundation in the United States. In addition, parts of the project were financed by the Norwegian and Swedish institutes in Athens; The French and Italian schools in Athens; The Tegeatikos Syndesmos in Athens; The University of Bergen; and The Università Cattolica at Brescia. Individuals who were of great significance to the realization of the project included Mario Iozzo from the Italian School in Athens, Robin Hägg from the Swedish Institute in Athens, and two prominent Greek archaeologists, Theodoros Spyropoulos, ephor of the Athena Alea area, and Angelos Delivorrias, former ephor of the district, and then director of the Benaki Museum in Athens.

The sponsors can hardly have been disappointed. After the 1994 campaign, Østby concluded: ‘On the whole, the progress of our excavation endorsed the old truth that the most important results of an excavation project always come at the end’. In the pronaos area they made a long sought for discovery so late in the season that it was impossible to empty the pit – a votive pit, bothros – in which they found material from the tenth century BC. Based on the discovery, they could state that the Athena Alea sanctuary was one of the earliest in the entire Peloponnese. The activity on the site could be traced back to Neolithic times.

The quantity of material that has been found at the site is sufficient for the establishment of a long chronology, starting with the prehistoric material, which from the outset Østby rightly hypothesized would be there. Østby and his team have proved this with their careful study of every stone and artefact still present at the site. An abbreviated chronology and rough outline of the work that has been undertaken provides a sense of the scale of the project, and can be summarized as follows: 1989: Østby started the work at Tegea; 1991-1994: The excavations took place; 1994-1996: The post-exavcation work on the documentation of architecture and find materials was undertaken; 1998-2006: Knut Ødegård continued the work with surveys of the surrounding areas. At present, Tegea is also the focus of doctoral research.
As for the future, in the conclusion of the introduction to the second volume Østby observes that there was less geometric material in the northern sector, and he encourages further investigations to focus on this part of the site, and on the layers that may clarify the activities in the Geometric and Proto-Corinthian phases. It could be argued, based on this, that there is a need for specialists in prehistoric archaeology in the forthcoming investigations at Tegea. More could also be done in terms of exhibitions and augmented reality technology, both at the site and in museum exhibitions, preferably with joint Greek and Norwegian (Scandinavian) forces.

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