

ACTIVE FAULTS' ADORATION IN THE EAST-MEDITERRANEAN REGION.

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An interdisciplinary survey has been performed on some famous ancient sanctuaries (Italy, Greece, Turkey) whose myths contain relevant telluric references, such as mythological openings on the underworld, earthquakes and/or chthonic dragons.

This analysis combines tectonic, historical and archaeological studies, and indicates that the origin of many of these sanctuaries may be related to the occurrence of coseismic surface ruptures, or related effects, on local active faults. In the sanctuaries the 'sacred area' is laid right on such ruptures and, because of their long existence, in a few case faulting occurred again affecting the archaeological relics, right through the main temple (e.g. Delphi, Cnidus, Hierapolis of Phrygia). Given the strong correspondence between local geological evidence and myths, these latter are to be regarded in some way as describing natural phenomena.

The mythological stratification of most of these sanctuaries dates back to prehistoric times, showing a common derivation from the cult of the Mother Goddess: a cult largely widespread since at least 25000 BC and later reconverted into various different divinities.

Thus, this work points not only to the identification of previously unknown historical surface faulting events, but also to the possibility, in particular cases, of locating pre-historical events whose forgotten memory survives in myths and legends. In fact, although at a preliminary stage, evidence collected allow the inference that some coseismic ground breaks on active faults' traces may have been noted in the past, interpreted as openings to Hades, and therefore worshipped as 'sacred places'.