Artemis in Athens
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My paper focuses on the cult for the goddess Artemis and the frequent assumption that the perception and the rituals for the goddess changed as a result of her role in certain events during the Persian Wars.

For the cult practices prior to the Wars, previous research has tended to strongly emphasize the female sphere, especially the transitional rites for young girls (arkteia). The two prominent battles of the Persian Wars at Marathon and Salamis have been understood as marking a turning point in the veneration of Artemis. For the military success at Marathon, Artemis was granted an annual sacrifice of 500 goats at the Artemis Agrotera sanctuary to commemorate the great victory (probably Aristoph. Eq. 660-662; Xen. Anab. 3, 2, 11-12; Plut. Mor. 349e). The victory in the battle of Salamis was attributed to the help of Artemis, who supported the Greek fleet by shining brightly upon the battle in her lunar aspect. Commemorational rites were held at the sanctuary in Mounichia (Plut. Mor. 349f). Moreover, Themistocles erected a sanctuary for Artemis with the epiclesis Aristoboule (“Good Counsel”) near his private house in Melite (Plut. Them 22).

Unambiguous material evidence for the martial aspects of Artemis dating to this period is as yet unpublished; her connection to the male sphere, especially war, is therefore principally attested in written sources, often written several centuries after the battles. The question is thus whether her martial aspects are indeed clearly limited to the period after the Persian Wars or are there in fact earlier traces? Pottery fragments from Brauron and Mounichia attest warrior depictions dating to the Archaic period. By contrast, the sanctuary of Artemis Aristoboule with its strong ties to the Persian Wars has revealed fragments of krateriskoi with depictions of running maidens - which are therefore interpreted as references to girls’ transition rites.

By analysing the chronology of attestations of girls’ transition rites and of warrior depictions together, I try to show, that also at Athens, Artemis was probably already linked to the martial sphere before the Persian Wars. Our view of the Attic cult of Artemis as being characterised by a gendered sacred landscape therefore probably requires revision. The emphasis on Artemis’ connection to the female sphere in scholarship may have resulted from the emerging research interest in female history in the 2nd half of the 20th century, which was at least partially rooted in the rising feminist movement.