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Section 2 Work in Progress

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Tracing Autochthony in Athens and Boeotia: A comparative Case Study¹

Boeotians² and Athenians,³ among several other Greek states — including the Arcadians⁴ and the Sicanians⁵ — considered themselves of autochthonous origin. Autochthony was a widespread ideology during the classical period, serving different purposes and scholars have examined different aspects of autochthony (with more emphasis in Athens), including: i) myths,⁶ ii) politics,⁷ iii) Attic drama,⁸ iv) gender,⁹ v) the work of particular authors, e. g. Herodotus¹⁰ and Plato¹¹ and vi) iconography.¹²

In terms of the city of Boeotia, there are several traditions regarding the autochthonous (or not) nature of the Boeotians. Hecateus of Miletus (*FGrH* 1 F 119) and Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 119)

¹ This publication serves as an introductory presentation of my upcoming work on the cultural interactions between Athens and Boeotia, as attested in myth, history and archaeology.

² For the ideology of autochthony in Boeotians, see Zeitlin 1990 and Detienne and Jones 2001.

³ The bibliography on the ideology of autochthony in Athens is massive (see also the following notes for further references), with most important and extensive studies being those of Loraux 1981a;1981b.

⁴ For the ideology of autochthony in Arcadians, see Rosivach 1987, 305, Scheer 2010; 2011 and Roy 2011.

⁵ For the ideology of autochthony in Sicanians, see Kennedy et al 2013.

⁶ Loraux 1981a;1981b; Montanari 1981; Rosivach 1987.

⁷ Blok 2009a; 2009b; Pelling 2009; Forsdyke 2012.

⁸ Saxonhouse 1986; Meltzer 2006.

⁹ Nimis 2007; Calame 2011; Räuchle 2015.

¹⁰ Thomas 2000.

¹¹ Pappas 2011.

¹² Shapiro 1995; 1998; 2008; Clements 2015; Mitsios 2018.

attest that — at an early stage — Boeotia was occupied by barbarian tribes: the Aones, Temmikes, Hyantes, Leleges and Pelasgians, while Philochorus (*FGrH* 328 F 94) states that the Aones invaded Attica — instead of Boeotia — during the kingship of mythical Kekrops. Some ancient authors, such as Pausanias (9.5.1) and Philochorus (*FGrH* 328 F 94), present these tribes as Boeotian, while Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 119), connects the Aones and Temmikes with Attica and more specifically the area of Sounion. Some effort has been expended by scholars to connect the word “Aones” with the one of “Iones” — suggesting a misspelling of the name — but with no great success.¹³ Given the testimonies, especially the one of the sixth-century B.C. author Hecateus of Miletus, there is good evidence to suggest that the traditions regarding the origins of the Boeotians may already have existed during the Archaic period. On top of that, no matter of the Athenian or Boeotian origin of Aones, and the migration “from” or “to” Attica, there is some vaguely remembered cultural link connecting the early history of the neighboring cities of Athens and Boeotia.

With regard to Attica, Herodotus (8.44) and Thucydides (2.15.1) — among several other ancient authors — name Kekrops¹⁴ as the first autochthonous king of Athens, while Pausanias (1.2.6) names Actaeus¹⁵ as the first one, followed by Kekrops. Just like the case of Boeotia, there are several traditions regarding the early genealogy of the city’s kingship.

Pausanias (9.5.1) names Ogyges, the king of Ectenes, as the first autochthonous king who occupied Boeotia and also attests that Ogygia was an epithet for the city of Thebes. The term Ogygia is applied to Thebes by other sources as well — such as Lycus (*FGrH* 380 F3) and Lysimachus (*FGrH* 382 F1) — and we also know that one of the gates of Thebes was called Ogygian.

Hellanicus of Lesbos (*FGrH* 323A F10) and Philochorus (*FGrH* 328 F 92) present Ogyges as the first, or one of the earliest earthborn kings of Attica, while Pausanias (1.38.7) names him as the father of the hero Eleusis. Just like the case of Thebes, Athens is also called Ogygia by

¹³ For references and criticism on the proposal, see Buck 1979, 56.

¹⁴ For extensive studies on Kekrops, see Kron 1976, 84-103; *LIMC* VI 1992 s.v. Kekrops, 1084-1091 (Kasper-Butz I. and I. Krauskopf); Gourmelen 2004; Mitsios 2018, 167-211; 2023; 2024; forthcoming a); forthcoming b).

¹⁵ For the “shady” figure of Actaeus (and the limited literary and iconographic evidence), see *LIMC* I 1981 s.v. Aktaios I, 469-470 (Berger-Doer).

several ancient authors, such as Aeschylus (*Persians* 975), Antiochus (*FGrH* 333 F3), Charax (*FGrH* 103 F30) and Thalius (*FGrH* 256 F2). Given the similarity on the literary sources, it has been noted by scholars that Ogyges is a hero common to both Attica and Boeotia, a shadowy, vague figure, connected with the early kingship of both neighboring cities.¹⁶

Other examples of mythological interactions between the Athenian and Boeotian kingship exist, the more characteristic ones being king Thespius and king Kekrops. Diodorus Siculus (4.29.2) and Pausanias (9.26.6) attest that Thespius was the son of the Athenian king Erechtheus and queen Praxithea who founded the Boeotian city of Thespieae. According to Pausanias (9.33.1), the mythical Athenian king Kekrops had a shrine in Boeotia, in the area of Aliartos. It has to be noted, though, that no shrine of Kekrops has been found on Aliartos but again, the area has not been widely excavated and the examination of the local pottery shows a clear Attic influence.¹⁷

The fact that the literary sources name the same autochthonous heroes for Athens and Boeotia and the same tribes immigrating from one city to the other, may indicate some kind of interaction and there is a possibility that the identical mythological motifs may be historical reflections of cultural interactions. It is true, though, that none of the literary traditions can be relied upon for the validity of any particular incident or of any chronological sequence and together they provide little more than contradictions of one another's surmises, but a closer look on the archaeological evidence, may suggest a possibly historicity behind the mythical tradition.

In terms of archaeological evidence, the early Geometric pottery, mainly deriving from the neighboring areas of Vranesi and Orchomenos, on the north-western shore of Lake Copais, shows a clear interaction between Athens and Boeotia. In fact, the resemblance to Attic products is so striking that the Protogeometric pottery from these sites is hard to distinguish from its Attic models.

Proto-geometric amphorae, oenochorae and cups from the area of Vranesi, dating to 10th century

¹⁶ Buck 1979, 56.

¹⁷ Austin 1931-1932, 190.

B.C., appear to represent Athenian influence.¹⁸ The decoration of a neck-handled amphora — with semicircles on the shoulder — as well as the decoration of a trefoil lipped oinochoe — with dog-tooth round the belly — both reflect Athenian influence, which is further confirmed by a cup with high conical foot that was probably imported from Athens.¹⁹

The same applies to findings from Orchomenos, including oinochoae, amphorae and skyphoi, dating to 10th and 9th centuries B.C., which bear striking similarities to Attic works.²⁰ The decoration of two shallow skyphoi and oinochoae — with enclosed panels containing meander or multiple zig-zag — proves that the Attic style was closely imitated at this time.²¹

Other archaeological evidence of Athenian influence during the Geometric period, although surviving on a notably lesser scale, is traced in the pottery of Oropos,²² Panakton²³ and Aliartos.²⁴ Besides pottery, the same connections apply to metalwork, such as fibulae, which also show a clear Attic influence.²⁵ The Boeotian fibulae appear to be larger than the Attic ones and the most usual type — with square catchplate and uninterrupted convex bow — is of Athenian origin and it seems that it was adopted by the Boeotians at about the time when it died out in Attica.²⁶

Given that the archaeological findings from Boeotia during the Geometric period show a clear Attic influence, they have even been interpreted — by some scholars — as a reflection of an Athenian expansion and migration from Athens to Boeotia during the 10th century B.C.²⁷ Furthermore, the lack of evidence of local pottery, earlier than the Attic, at the sites of Vranesi and Orchomenos seems to point on that direction.²⁸ Strong Athenian influences continued in Boeotia during the Archaic period, with Athenian vase-painting surpassing all other regional

¹⁸ Desborough 1952, 197-198, 299; 1972, 202; Coldstream 1968, 196-197; 1977, 38; Snodgrass 1971, 69-70.

¹⁹ Desborough 1972, 202.

²⁰ Desborough 1952, 198, 299; 1972, 202. Coldstream 1968, 196-197; 1977, 38. Snodgrass 1971, 69-70.

²¹ Coldstream 1977, 38.

²² For the examination of pottery from Panakton, see Munn and Zimmermann-Munn 1989; 1990.

²³ For the examination of pottery from Oropos, see Vlachou 2010, 369-370.

²⁴ For the examination of pottery from Aliartos, see Austin 1931-1932, 190.

²⁵ Athens, National Museum 8199; London 94.7-19.10. Coldstream 1977, 202-204.

²⁶ Coldstream 1977, 202-204.

²⁷ Desborough 1952, 198, 299; Coldstream 1968, 337, 343; Buck 1979, 80, 87.

²⁸ Desborough 1952, 198, 299.

schools combined, a fact that shows a clear continuity of Athenian cultural influences.²⁹ By examining these similarities from a holistic perspective, which takes into consideration the literary and archaeological evidence, as well as the historical context, my upcoming work aims to trace the mythological, cultural and historical interactions between Athens and Boeotia and provide a possible interpretative model of their context.

²⁹ Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum 597.*BAPD* 300133. Kilinski 1990, 44-45. See for example the technique of the Istanbul Painter that seems to be influenced by the painting style of the (Athenian) Gorgon Painter.

Abbreviations

BAPD: Beazley Archive Pottery Database.

FGrH: F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* Berlin.

LIMC: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich and Munich.

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