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Section 2 Work in Progress

Una MARKHAM (University of Reading)

PhD thesis: Boiotia Through the Eyes of a Boiotian: The Depiction of Boiotia in Plutarch's Corpus

I have recently gained my doctorate at the University of Reading, under the supervision of Professor Emma Aston, for my thesis: *Boiotia Through The Eyes of a Boiotian: The Depiction of Boiotia in Plutarch's Corpus*. I submitted in March 2023 and had a successful viva in July. The following is the abstract:

“This thesis examines Plutarch's depiction of his home region, Boiotia, and explores his Boiotian identity by studying the image of Boiotia that emerges, through literary, historical and political analyses of his corpus. Although his Boiotian identity will be a significant factor throughout this investigation, we cannot assume Plutarch always identified as Boiotian. His projected (often overlapping) identities include being Chaironeian, Boiotian or Greek. This study demonstrates how Plutarch balanced his multiple identities within his broader panhellenic vision, enhancing our understanding of this author.

An analysis of references to Boiotians in Plutarch's corpus reveals his principal focus was on the early fourth century, enabling him to construct an idealised vision of the Boiotia of the past and to live down the charge of its earlier medism. This was the time of Epameinondas, portrayed as having all the necessary Greek virtues of the ideal man, and as an *exemplum* for any Greek or Roman.

Life in contemporary Boiotia is portrayed by Plutarch as intellectually stimulating and fulfilling, populated with his family and many friends, both Greek and Roman. However, he did not shy away from the realities of Roman domination. His political treatises provided the

necessary advice to maintain *harmonia* and thereby freedom from Roman interference. It will be shown that Plutarch, in his role as a Greek philosopher, was effectively a node in a network that included both Greeks and Romans.

By viewing Boiotia through the eyes of a Boiotian, this study provides a deeper appreciation of the importance of Boiotia in Plutarch's corpus and sheds new light on his Boiotian (and other) identities. Boiotia as an entity was symbolically important to him and he defended it as a Boiotian, despite the negative stereotypes associated with it, portraying it as on a par with Athens or Sparta."