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Section 2 Work in Progress

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Workshop Report: Μαντεῖον Ἄψευδές. The Sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios in Boeotia. International Workshop on Boeotian Studies organised by Scuola Superiore Meridionale at Naples (13 November 2025)

The International Workshop on Boeotian Studies, promoted by the Scuola Superiore Meridionale and coordinated by Professor Carlo Rescigno, Professor Giovan Battista D'Alessio, and Dr Lucrezia Mastropietro, brought together scholars from various Italian and international universities to explore, through an interdisciplinary approach, the role of the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios in shaping Boeotian identity and its place within the broader religious and cultural landscape of ancient Greece.

After the institutional greetings by Professor Carlo Rescigno (Università degli Studi della Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli' / Scuola Superiore Meridionale), the event began with an opening lecture by Professor Christel Müller (Université Paris Nanterre). The presentation began with a reminder of the city's territory and a brief overview of the sanctuary of Apollo and its monuments, which were excavated by members of the French School of Athens from 1885 onwards. The forthcoming publication (2026?) of a booklet in the Epitomè collection on Akraiphia and Ptoion, written by C. Müller, Th. Lucas, and D. Bartzis—the architect responsible for describing and interpreting the archaeological remains—was announced. The sanctuary of Ptoion displayed multiple identities—local, regional, and pan-Boeotian—unlike the hero

sanctuary at Kastraki, where dedications were made mainly by the people of Akraiphia. A survey of the dedications showed that two-thirds were individual offerings, mostly dating to the 7th–5th centuries BC, while collective dedications were rare and, between 500 and 400 BC, addressed to Athena Pronaia, including by the Boeotians. In the Hellenistic period, activity revived under the koinon (287–171 BC), evidenced by tripod dedications mentioning the federal archon, the apheidiasts commission, and a seer (mantis) acting on behalf of the Confederacy. From 221/0 BC onwards, the Ptoia games in honour of Apollo were attested, continuing into the imperial period even after the Hellenistic koinon dissolved, thanks to enduring bonds of *philia* and *sungeneia* between Boeotian poleis. Despite not serving administrative functions, the sanctuary's religious significance means it can be described as a “federal sanctuary.”

This was followed by a presentation by Michael Alexander Dyer (University of St Andrews), who focused on the connections linking the sanctuary with northern Boeotia and Opountian Locris. He first examined the regional environment, highlighting how both long- and short-term fluctuations of Lake Kopais shaped a complex pattern of settlements and networks during the first millennium BC. He then offered an overview of comparable dedications across different sites, alongside epigraphic evidence and culturally similar practices attested in literary sources. In his concluding remarks, Dyer emphasized the fluid environmental and political landscape of the region in antiquity, where intense cultural interaction coexisted with the persistence of local characteristics.

The second session, chaired by Dr Davide Amendola (Scuola Superiore Meridionale), started with a paper by Professor Giovan Battista D'Alessio (Sapienza Università di Roma / Scuola Superiore Meridionale), who contributed a critical survey of Pindar's fragments related to the Ptoion sanctuary. In this context, D'Alessio anticipated the results of his revision of the text of Strabo's quotation of fragment 51a, based, *inter alia*, on new high-quality multispectral images of the Vatican palimpsest. He more generally provided a fresh assessment of the evidence offered by Ptoion-related fragments from the books of the paeans, the processional songs and the hymns, arguing (also on papyrological grounds) that pae. 7 was meant for performance at the Ptoion, not at the Ismenion. D'Alessio also examined the mythical and cultic background of Teneros emerging from the extant texts, making a case for an original link of the hero/seer not primarily

to Thebes but to Northern and/or possibly Eastern Boeotia.

Professor Lucia Prauscello (University of Oxford) then gave a presentation. She reconsidered the long-standing issue of the cultic Sitz im Leben for Corinna's Asopids (PMG 654 coll. ii–iv), by focusing on the genealogical sub-section of the poem at col. iii. 32–43, where the speaking mantis detailed the successions of the prophets incumbent at the mantic site. Schachter's interpretation of ΑΚ[PH]ΦΕΙΝ as the Boeotian adjective equivalent to Attic ἀκραϊφνής was rejected, and Wilamowitz's original hypothesis of a cultic setting at Akraiphia or in an Akraiphia-related sanctuary was explored.

The presentation by Dr. Marilou de Vals (Université Paris Nanterre) opened the third session, chaired by Professor Müller. Her paper focused on the local geology of Boeotia and on the stone sculptures found in the Ptoion sanctuary. She studied fragments of kouroi, votive columns, and other sculptures from Boeotia from the point of view of the material—the nature of the stone employed. Different limestones were identified macroscopically, and they appeared to be imported, possibly from the region of Tanagra and Thebes, as they did not exist in the local geological context of the Ptoion. Our knowledge of the geology of Boeotia was still very limited regarding stone resources, and its study could have provided new insights for understanding the stone sculptures from this region.

Lucrezia Mastropietro's presentation (Scuola Superiore Meridionale) focused on the kouroi from the Ptoion sanctuary, emphasising their Boeotian stylistic identity, production, and functions. The statues display distinct stylistic trends while maintaining a coherent Boeotian character, reflecting both local traditions and subtle interactions with broader Greek artistic currents. The kouroi served both religious and social functions, acting as markers of communal identity, status, and pan-Boeotian connections. Overall, they expressed the collective identity, artistic autonomy, and cultural dynamics of Boeotian society, highlighting the role of art in reinforcing social cohesion and regional distinctiveness.

The final session, chaired by Professor D'Alessio, focused more on the religious aspects of the sanctuary.

Alice Solazzo (Università degli Studi di Palermo / Universität Münster) examined the sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios at Akraiphia to explore religious connectivity in Archaic Boeotia. Located in the Lake Kopais landscape, the sanctuary served as a regional hub, drawing communities together and shaping a shared Boeotian identity. Using a connectivity-based approach, she analysed how the sanctuary mediated interactions within broader cultural and political networks. Its position within the Lake's hydrological, ecological, and symbolic environment reinforced its role in fostering a supra-local identity and demonstrated how devotion to Apollo Ptoios was embedded in both local practices and regional dynamics.

Francesco Ischia (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) examined the ritual and ideological significance of tripod cauldrons in the religious landscape of Boeotia, focusing on the main sanctuaries where they were documented during the Archaic period. Although tripod dedications appeared relatively late in Boeotian sanctuaries, the case of the Ptoion nonetheless represented the key dynamics that led to the adoption of the tripod as a votive offering from this period onwards. Its success, however, was not attributed to any intrinsic 'meaning' attached to the object itself, but rather to its material and semiotic properties. These properties also enabled further developments relating to the monumentalisation of sanctuaries, and the potential implications of this process for the prophetic activity of the sanctuary of Apollo.

In sum, the workshop underscored the Ptoion sanctuary as a central site for understanding Boeotian religious, artistic, and social life. Presentations demonstrated how the sanctuary functioned both as a religious centre and as a hub of pan-Boeotian connectivity, with art and ritual reinforcing social status and collective identity. It is hoped that proceedings could be published, and future research is expected to continue advancing our understanding of Boeotian material culture, artistic production, and the broader social and religious dynamics of the region.