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Section 2 Work in Progress

Tong WU (University of Leeds)
mltwu@leeds.ac.uk

Announcement of PhD Research

I am currently writing a PhD thesis on the cult of Asclepius, covering the period from its mythical origins to the Hellenistic age. My research focuses on the birth myth of Asclepius and its association with early cult sites (before his introduction to Athens), the establishment of his cult in Athens, the spread of Asclepius' worship to other regions in the fourth century BCE and beyond, and the succession of healing functions among Apollo, Asclepius, and his family members. I am now working on the development of the cult of Asclepius in Athens, and the presence of other healing cults in the region of Attica, especially that of Amphiaraus at Oropos, has led me to explore more deeply the possibility of interaction or competition between these two cults.¹

¹ All images presented here are my own photographs.



Figure 1 The Temple of Amphiaraus in Oropos

The region of Oropos experienced a complicated political history. Located on the border between Thebes and Athens, it was at various times controlled by Athens, by Thebes, or remained independent. As a result, the cult of Amphiaraus at Oropos also shifted in control during this time. Geographically, Oropos lay close to central Greece, where the cult of Asclepius appears to have been not well developed; consequently, other healing cults would have been more prominent in this area.



Figure 2 The Theatre

My focus on the Amphiareion at Oropos arises from my interest in the extent to which the cult of Asclepius may have influenced other healing cults, with that of Amphiaraus providing a particularly good example. In my thesis I have already argued for several connections between the two cults. For instance, the cult of Amphiaraus originally functioned as an oracle in which worshippers received responses through incubation, and it was only after the introduction of the cult of Asclepius to Athens in 421/20 BCE that the sanctuary at Oropos seems to have incorporated healing practices, inspired by the combination of incubation with healing rituals. Furthermore, the cult of Amphiaraus appears to have adopted the system of divine family members associated with Asclepius, such as Iaso, Hygieia, and Panacea, who were originally understood as his daughters. This is supported by Pausanias (1.34.3) and by Aristophanes' lost play *Amphiaraus*, where a *scholium* (on Ar. *Wealth* 701) reports that Amphiaraus addressed Iaso as his daughter.



Figure 3 The Stoa

Few scholars have examined the relationship between these two cults, and when they are mentioned together, they are often presented simply as the healing cults of Athens, with their deeper connections largely overlooked.² Therefore, I believe that my research on the cult of

² E.g., Parker 1996; Mikalson 1998; and Wilding 2022 whose work focuses only on the cult of Amphiaraus itself and does not consider the possibility of interference from the cult of Asclepius.

Amphiaraus can offer new insights into the impact of the introduction of the cult of Asclepius, as well as contribute to my broader investigation into why Asclepius' cult was comparatively underdeveloped in the region of Boeotia.

Bibliography

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