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Section 1 Excavation Reports

No reports

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Section 2 Work in Progress

Lucreza MASTROPIETRO (Scuola Superiore Meridionale)
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PhD thesis: Βοιωτικοὶ Κοῦροι: An Ancient “Heritage Community”? New Analyses for a Regional Sculptural Production

Overview

The doctoral project focuses on Archaic Boeotian sculpture, with particular attention to the kouroi from the Ptoion sanctuary. Since Ducat's publication (Les Kouros du Ptoion, 1971), the kouroi have received comparatively little attention in studies of Archaic Greek sculpture. Historically regarded as “indigenous” and isolated, Boeotian art was often negatively appraised; however, more recent scholarship has emphasised the region's ability to rapidly absorb artistic innovations. This project aims to identify the distinctive and autonomous character of Boeotian sculptural production, in both style and form, from the Early Archaic period onwards, exploring possible local workshops and the presence of a specific ‘school’, while highlighting how the production of kouroi reflects communal values and shared cultural practices.

Objectives and Methodology

The project undertakes a direct study of the kouroi preserved in Athens and Thebes, including photographic documentation, measurements, and reconstructions. The collected data are organised into a chronological, topographical, and production-related dataset, aimed at reconstructing the phases of sculptural production, stylistic identity, potential external

suggestions, patronage, and workshop organisation. The second part focuses on reconstructing the sacred landscape of the Ptoion and the display of kouroi in religious and/or funerary contexts, examining the relationship between the community, cult practices, and identity self-representation. The approach combines art-historical methods, technical analyses, statistical-quantitative studies, and the investigation of the socio-cultural environment.

The work specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

- How and where does the sculptural workshop operate?
- How is the exploitation of materials, both local and non-local, carried out?
- What are the relations with the outside world?
- How are the kouroi presented in the sanctuary of Ptoion and in funerary contexts?
- Why did the community, or communities, choose the Ptoion as the setting for this form of self-representation, and what meanings are associated with the choice of the kouros?

All the documentation gathered during the various stages of investigation flows into a new, organised, and complete collection of the archaic sculptures of Boeotia, structured around broad themes:

- a) Records and descriptions of all sculptural materials, with the corresponding photographic documentation.
- b) Description of all data obtained through statistical-quantitative analyses, with graphical representations, and the identification of a local sculptural school.
- c) Reconstruction of the landscape (and its seasonality), and the “socio-cultural environment.”

Preliminary Results

The ongoing research highlights the extraordinary scale and coherence of Boeotian kouroi, the largest corpus in Greece. The catalogue compiled includes 189 objects, incorporating previously unstudied material. Analysis shows that production spans roughly a century, with notable peaks in activity. Kouroi vary in size and material, with local and imported marbles commonly used, reflecting connections between resources, stylistic choices, and production practices. Three broad stylistic tendencies—local, Attic, and insular—can be identified, yet all share a coherent Boeotian character, indicating a deliberate expression of community identity. Examination of

fragments, anatomical features, and proportions allows the identification of patterns in Boeotian sculptural production, including early stages and later adaptations that selectively incorporate external influences while maintaining local traditions. Functionally, the kouroi served as dedications, markers of social or communal status, and expressions of collective identity within sanctuary contexts. The scale and distribution of these dedications suggest participation from multiple communities, highlighting the Ptoion's role as a regional centre of religious, social, and cultural interaction within a broader network of Boeotian sanctuaries.

Overall, the preliminary results demonstrate that Boeotian kouroi were not merely artistic exercises but active expressions of collective identity, stylistic autonomy, and socio-political engagement, showing a deliberate interplay between tradition, innovation, and community self-representation.

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Workshop Report: Μαντεῖον ἀψευδές. 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 aphedriats 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 *AK[PH]ΦEIN* as the Boeotian adjective equivalent to Attic *ἀκραιφνής* 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.

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PhD thesis: Religious connectivity in Boeotia. The sanctuaries of the Kopais region (abstract)

My PhD thesis, a project to which I have dedicated the past three years under the supervision of Professors Hans Beck, Daniela Bonanno and Matteo Zaccarini, and which is now reaching its final stages, investigates religious connectivity in Boeotia through a case study of the sanctuaries in the Kopais region. The thesis aims to elucidate why these particular religious centres became associated with an identity that was not merely local but regional in scope. It argues that the sanctuaries situated around the lake Kopais basin played a crucial role in fostering diverse forms of religious connectivity among Boeotian communities that underpinned every political configuration that took shape in the region from the Archaic through the Hellenistic period.

The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence and interpreting it through a range of theoretical perspectives that fall under the broad framework of connectivity.

The first chapter provides a geographical, historical, and environmental overview of the lake Kopais basin, with the aim of clarifying its hydrography and the ways in which it shaped settlement patterns, inter-community connections over time, and the religious dynamics that involved Boeotian populations from very early periods.

The second chapter focuses on the first major hub within the religious landscape of the Kopais area: the sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos. This sanctuary was deeply embedded in the territorial and religious connectivity of lake Kopais due to its geographical location, its cultic functions, and its relationships with the communities living around this hydrological resource. Situated at a strategic crossroads on the boundary with the *chorai* of several major cities of the region the sanctuary of Poseidon emerged as one of the earliest points of convergence for Boeotian communities and the landscape that framed them. Its prominence made it a highly

coveted site for those seeking control of the region and allowed it to develop into one of the principal centres of the Boeotian confederation from the sixth century BCE onwards.

The third chapter aims to investigate two sanctuaries, each representing a node within the network formed by the Kopais landscape: the cult site of Athena Alalkomenia, located to the south of the lake, and that of Athena Itonia, situated to the southwest of the basin, within the territory associated with the city of Koronea. Positioned in visually prominent locations within the lacustrine landscape and, like Onchestos, along one of the main communication routes, both sanctuaries played a leading role in the processes of ethnic integration that led the Boeotians to perceive themselves as part of a single group. The Alalkomeneion occupied a liminal landscape, at the interface between plain and mountain. Its physical characteristics gave rise to stories and traditions, which contributed to the shaping of Boeotian identity over the centuries. The Itoneion, on the other hand, attracted Boeotian populations due to the fertility of its location and was associated with a supra-regional network that extended to Thessaly, the region from which the Boeotians believed they originated as early as the Archaic period.

The fourth chapter, by contrast, focuses on another hub within the religious landscape of the lake: the Ptoion of Akraiphia. Located northeast of lake Kopais, this sanctuary occupied a key position along another important communication route in Boeotia, linking the southern part of the region to northern continental Greece, from which the main roads leading to the Euboean sea diverged. Its strategic position as well as the reputation of its oracular site, made it a central node of religious and cultic connectivity. This explains why the sanctuary dedicated to Apollo attracted not only the inhabitants of nearby Akraiphia but also the wider populations around the Kopais basin, becoming one of the symbols of the Boeotian confederation.

Finally, the last chapter proposes an interpretation of the Kopais region as a connective landscape, in which water, lake access routes, and roads served as primary channels of communication among the region's populations. It demonstrates how this landscape also became a connective religious space, promoting cultic mobility. Festivals, processions, and diverse rituals made the Kopais sanctuaries the principal centres of attraction for the Boeotians as early as the eighth century BCE. The ritual and symbolic connections established around the lake's

sanctuaries fostered the development of a shared Boeotian identity. The data from the individual case studies are integrated in this chapter to show how these cult sites functioned synergistically to maintain cohesion among those moving within the network, even during periods of instability. A new reading of Boeotian history from the Archaic period to the second century BCE is consequently proposed.

This study aims not only to contribute to the understanding of the religious landscape of the Kopais region but also to a broader reflection on how cult sites within a region operate as part of a network that generated mobility, inter-community ties, and shared symbols. In areas characterized by federative experiences, such as Boeotia, such networks constituted the true cradle of the regional identity that defined the communities.

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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



Figure 1 The Temple of Amphiaraus in Oropos

¹ All images presented here are my own photographs.

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 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.

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.

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Section 4 Material Culture and Epigraphy

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Reviews

No reviews.

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Section 5 Language and Literature

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