

BOIOTIAN TRIPODS

THE TENACITY OF A PANHELLENIC SYMBOL IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

For Elizabeth and Willy Childs

ABSTRACT

The author examines the ritual uses of tripod cauldrons in Boiotian public contexts, synthesizing material, epigraphic, and literary evidence. Dedications of tripods by individuals were expressions of prominent social status. Communal dedications made in the distinctively Boiotian rite of the *tripodephoria* were symbolic actualizations of power relations between the dominant center and its periphery. Remains of two *suntagmata* of tripods at the sanctuary of the hero Ptoios at Kastraki, near Akraiphia, provide evidence for the physical ambience of the sanctuary, the form of the tripods, and the collective rites associated with the dedications.

INTRODUCTION

The Greek tripod cauldron served as a powerful, panhellenic religious symbol from the Geometric through the Roman period (Fig. 1).¹ Nevertheless, it would be problematic to suppose that it was adopted without any differentiation of meaning throughout the Greek world. Rather, I would argue that the symbolism of the tripod can be understood only in terms of its local manifestations, which were as rich and variegated as the cultural landscape of the Greek world throughout antiquity. Perhaps nowhere can the career of this long-lived symbol be better sketched than in Boiotia,

1. This article developed from a paper presented at the Ninth International Conference on Boiotian Antiquities, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada in 1998. I am grateful to the organizers, Michael B. Cosmopoulos and John M. Fossey, for creating a congenial atmosphere of scholarly exchange and informal discussion that facilitated the generation and development of many of the ideas presented here. My work was made possible by

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imparting to me her enthusiasm about Boiotia. I would also like to thank Priscilla Keswani, and the editor and anonymous reviewers of *Hesperia*, for many constructive comments. Barbara Kierewicz undertook tedious revisions of the digital reconstruction of tripods with patience and good humor. Helena Kountouri, epimelete of the Ephoreia of Thebes, kindly shared information on the site with me. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.



Figure 1. Modern reconstruction (1974) of a Late Geometric bronze tripod cauldron from Olympia.

Photo G. Hellner, courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens (neg. D-DAI-ATH-1974/1115)

a stronghold of traditional ideas and religious conservatism throughout ancient times (Fig. 2).²

The use of the tripod cauldron as an object of dedication in Boiotian sanctuaries extends from the 7th century B.C. to the Roman Imperial period. The tenacity of the tripod in Boiotian culture is attested by both literary sources and archaeological data. Pausanias explicitly notes the presence of dedicated tripods at the sanctuaries of Apollo Ismenios and Herakles at Thebes and at the sanctuary of the Muses on Mt. Helikon as late as the 2nd century A.D.³ There is abundant archaeological evidence for dedications of monumental tripods from Mt. Ptoon near Akraiphia in the Archaic, Early Classical, and Hellenistic periods. Numerous tripod bases attest to the presence of other costly tripods in the civic center of Orchomenos during the Hellenistic period.

Thanks to several important studies, there is enough archaeological evidence to reconstruct, in broad outline, the religious biography of the tripod in ancient Boiotia. The material from Ptoon has been thoroughly discussed by Guillon in a two-volume monograph that is, to date, the only diachronic treatment of Boiotian tripods.⁴ The material from Orchomenos, which is still largely embedded in the masonry of a 9th-century church

2. This conservatism may be inferred from Pausanias's account of Boiotia. Pausanias was very careful in perceiving, recording, and presenting the religious traditions and phenomena of ancient Greece. See Habicht 1985; Schachter 1981, 1986, 1994a.

3. Thebes: Paus. 9.10.4, 10.7.6; Mt. Helikon: Paus. 9.31.3. See also *JG* VII 1773.

4. Guillon 1943a, 1943b.



Figure 2. Map of Boiotia showing sites mentioned in the text.

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(see below, Fig. 3), was published in detail by Amandry and Spyropoulos.⁵ These studies are supplemented by the thorough analysis of the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon by Ducat.⁶ In this article, I consider the two principal modalities of dedication associated with the tripod from the Archaic period onward: the individual and the collective. I also discuss the tripod monuments in the Akraiphian sanctuary of the hero Ptoios at Kastraki, examining their centrality in ritual events and practices with a distinctively Boiotian character.

TRIPODS AS SYMBOLS IN PANHELLENIC AND BOIOTIAN CONTEXTS

While there are abundant occurrences of the tripod cauldron in Boiotian contexts, no previous study has attempted to synthesize the evidence and interpret the symbolic meanings of the tripod in the various cultic environments of ancient Boiotia. How did this intricate object, which figured so prominently among the earliest dedications at the great panhellenic sanctuaries during the Geometric period, come to play an important communicational role in Archaic Boiotia? Did this dedicatory custom conform to a standard cultural template, or were there significant variations in Boiotian ritual practice?

5. Amandry and Spyropoulos 1974. See also Amandry 1978 for a group of typologically similar tripods from the sanctuary of Athena Itonia at Coronis (identification uncertain).

6. Ducat 1971.

In approaching these questions, it is important to stress the complexity of any diachronic study of religious dedications. The fragmentary remnants of tripods in the archaeological record can hardly echo the experiences they were intended to generate. It is extremely difficult to reconstruct the chain of decisions and procedural steps that resulted in the setting up of tripods in Boiotian sanctuaries, let alone the nexus of cultic behaviors associated with these monuments in time and space. Moreover, any attempt to trace the career of the tripod as a dedicatory or cultic object in a specific regional context must also take into account the shared values associated with it on a panhellenic level from the Geometric period onward.

The cognitive background in which tripods were invested with significance by their dedicants, viewers, and users was expressed first and foremost in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and a multiplicity of mythical traditions.⁷ Furthermore, during the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., numerous tripods in Olympia, Delphi, and Athens were provided with their own semantic apparatus, namely, iconic images in the form of three-dimensional anthropomorphic attachments in bronze. In the 8th century, these figures were warriors, each with an uplifted, spear-holding right arm. This schema of imagery registered the fame or glory (κλέος) of the individual dedicants.

The reciprocal relationship between the bronze attachments and the tripods to which they were attached encoded a wide range of messages. A symbol of wealth, authoritative discourse, and political power, the tripod was celebrated as the most prestigious attribute of the dedicant, whose heroic status was assertively proclaimed by his iconic avatar on the object of his dedicatory gesture. This schema was a rendering in visual terms of the Homeric ideal of leadership: “to be a doer of heroic deeds and a master of speech” (*Il.* 9.443).⁸ It may be best understood as an ideographic sign of the Homeric notions of δουρικλυτός and αἰχμητά. These terms were indispensable in celebrating the *kleos* of the dedicant and his offering.

In the 7th century, the warrior schema continued to be represented on tripods, but it was gradually supplanted by a different iconography. In the new schema, pairs of naked youths, often depicted with long hair and sometimes wearing Corinthian helmets, were combined heraldically to support the round handles of the tripod to which they were attached. This was an abbreviated way of showing that the figures carried the entire tripod on which they stood. Such a synoptic, narrative arrangement marked a radical departure from the iconic rigidity of the warrior schema.

Although it is amenable to many interpretations, the occurrence of the handle-holder iconography on monumental tripods of impressive dimensions, weight, and costliness suggests that it was devised to communicate a novel political statement. In a corporate context, the depiction of collaborating handle-holders emphasized the significance of the tripod as a shared, collective offering by a community to a god. The dedication of a costly and, by tradition, hallowed object made manifest the collective representation of the community in the eyes of the gods and the panhellenic society of humans.⁹ Thus, in both the Geometric and the Early Archaic periods, tripods played a central role in public rituals that dramatized the messages embedded in their anthropomorphic attachments.

7. Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 9–63.

8. Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 99–148.

9. Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 149–188.

To what extent do Boiotian tripods embody these panhellenic expressive values? It seems likely that the local elite would have been eager to express themselves in terms of a dedicatory code so widely employed in the otherworldly ambience of the great panhellenic sanctuaries.¹⁰ The tripods, laden with material and symbolic value, were intended to establish concrete and intimate links not only between the dedicants and their recipient gods, but also between the dedicants and their aristocratic peers inside and outside Boiotia. Nevertheless, in no instance to date has Boiotia yielded any tripods of the types that were current in the panhellenic sanctuaries of the Geometric period.¹¹

This situation may be due, of course, to accidents of preservation.¹² It is possible that a cultic site with deposits of early tripods, such as the recently excavated sanctuary of Apollo and Artemis at nearby Kalapodi (Phokis),¹³ still awaits discovery. The scarcity of early prestigious tripods in Boiotian sanctuaries may be the result of other factors, however. Local authorities or dedicants at the sanctuaries of early Olympia, Delphi, and Dodona may have had the power to control or even claim as exclusive the usage of expressive media such as tripods or certain types of figurative works. It is also possible that the local elite resisted the dedication of tripods in Boiotian sanctuaries at an early stage. Such resistance would have enhanced their aura as users of tripods away from home, while setting a clear standard as to what type of dedicatory behavior was acceptable in Boiotian sanctuaries.¹⁴

If the latter scenario is true, then Hesiod's well-known dedication in honor of the Muses at Mt. Helikon (*Op.* 654–657) may well have been an untraditional or even revolutionary gesture, motivated by his need to proclaim as unassailable his claims to divinely inspired authority and poetic prowess. Was Hesiod's usage of the tripod an attempt to invest an old revered symbol with new meanings?

Most of the early Boiotian tripods that have been well documented in the archaeological record date from the 6th century B.C., long after the crystallization of the two dedicatory modalities—individual and collective—in the great panhellenic sanctuaries. Despite this temporal distance, there is enough evidence to argue that both modalities were operative from the onset of tripod dedications in Boiotian sanctuaries, and that they remained so for a very long time. Tripods in Boiotia were dedicated by individuals as symbolic affirmations of their prestige and social status. They were also dedicated in collective gestures articulating the territorial definition of a

10. Morris (1997, 2000) and Strøm (1992) have stressed the emerging character of sanctuaries as otherworldly contexts for the competitive display of elites in the emerging poleis.

11. For tripods from Olympia, see Maass 1978; for tripods from Delphi, see Rolley 1977. For Athenian tripods, see Touloupa 1972, 1991. The two poros tripods from Plataia in the museum at Thebes have been dated to the 7th century B.C., mainly on the basis of

their incised decoration, perhaps an awkward imitation of the elaborate bronze tripods from the panhellenic sanctuaries; see Pharaklas 1970.

12. Numerous representations of tripod cauldrons in Boiotian Geometric pottery demonstrate that these objects were well known and valued as a prestige symbol in Boiotia as early as the 8th century B.C. See Benton 1934–1935, p. 105, n. 11 (Hampe 1936, p. 52, fig. 25; Rombos 1988, pl. 57b); *CVA*,

Louvre 16 [France 25], pl. 26; *CVA* Tübingen, Universität, B. 2 [Deutschland 44], pl. 23; *CVA* Heidelberg, Universität, B. 3 [Deutschland 27], pl. 117 (Sakowski 1997, p. 229). For contexts other than pottery, see the fibula in *JdI* 1916, p. 297, fig. 3 (Hampe 1936, pl. 8, no. 103; Sakowski 1997, p. 231).

13. Felsch 2007.

14. Morgan (1990, pp. 43–47) has stressed the role of tripods as symbolic capital invested away from home.

community of people in a religious context. The individual dedications exemplify the survival of an aristocratic practice that originated in the pan-hellenic sanctuaries of the Geometric period, when the tripod functioned primarily as a symbol of authoritative discourse and political power. The collective dedication of tripods indicates a practice structurally opposed to individual dedications, one that expressed the symbolic transference of authority by a community to its patron god or divinity.

DEDICATIONS BY INDIVIDUALS

Dedications of tripods by individuals in Boiotian sanctuaries are first attested in the 7th century B.C. The earliest documented occurrence is the dedication mentioned above, made by Hesiod in honor of the Muses on Mt. Helikon (*Op.* 654–657).¹⁵ Hesiod claimed that his tripod was a prize in a poetic funeral contest at Chalkis, but the consecration of this highly valued object in a religious context symbolized more than Hesiod's desire to give the Muses their due. On the one hand, it was a material affirmation of the poet's divinely inspired capacity for articulating his political and poetic wisdom in the authoritative medium of the hexameter. On the other hand, it is clear from Hesiod's account that the establishment of a tripod at the site of the Muses' revelation to him was tantamount to the foundation rite of a famous and important sanctuary. Hesiod's tripod became the sanctuary's cornerstone, a sign that was to mark the site forever as a context of and for miraculous happenings. Hesiod's gesture thus expanded the expressive range of a symbol that had previously served as a token of victory and the special status emanating from it.

The significance of the tripod as a marker of poetic status is inherent in the tripods Herodotos saw in the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios at Thebes (*Hdt.* 5.59–61). These tripods are usually discussed in relationship to the origins of the Greek alphabet because of Herodotos's explicit mention of epigrams inscribed on them in Phoenician characters. Much less attention has been paid to the content of these epigrams, which, forged or not, must have echoed a pragmatic dedicatory ethos.¹⁶ They are of particular interest here because they exemplify, in a specific Boiotian context, the

15. On the Muses, their sanctuary, and the cult, see Schachter 1986, pp. 147–179. I have argued elsewhere that the bronze dedication of Mantiklos, the well-known figure in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (F. Bartlett Collection 03.997), should be interpreted as a tripod attachment, fashioned in the tradition of the prestigious warrior figures of the Geometric period (see Papalexandrou 1997; 2005, pp. 84–86). If correctly interpreted, this figure would be the earliest archaeological evidence for a tripod dedicated by an individual in a Boiotian sanctuary. In terms

of format, diction, and overall style, the dedicatory epigram on this bronze resembles the epigrams at the Theban Ismenion reported by Herodotos (5.57–61).

16. Scholars such as West (1985, pp. 289–295) and Powell (1991, p. 6) are all too quick to dismiss these tripods and their epigrams as forgeries. The epigrams most likely record prevalent beliefs about the tripod dedicants, whose *kleos* must have been acknowledged before the inscription of the epigrams. Moreover, the epigrams do not assert that they were written by the

alleged authors of the dedications (Amphitryon, Skaios, Laodamas). Rather, they attribute authorship of dedication according to norms current at the moment of the inscription. See the pertinent comments by Raubitschek (1991, p. 256), who dates the epigrams to the late 7th or early 6th century B.C. and comments that "gaben aber die Inschriften eine Tradition wieder, die in eine frühere Zeit zurückreichte und sich an die hochaltertümlichen Dreifüsse wohl geometrischer Zeit anknüpfte." See also discussion in Papalexandrou 2005, p. 59, n. 79.

association of the tripod with the hexameter and with the public affirmation of prominent social or political status. As Hesiod clearly states in the *Theogony*, in early Greece usage or mastery of the hexameter, the meter of authoritative discourse, was a form of political capital no less important than outstanding competence in battle or illustrious descent (*Theog.* 79–93).¹⁷ Consequently, the messages embedded in these legendary tripods had the value of powerful, indisputable pronouncements not only because of their literal content and the sacred ambience in which they were experienced, but also because of the persuasive resonance of their poetic mode.

The first tripod mentioned by Herodotos is a dedication of Amphitryon, the mortal parent of Herakles: “Amphitryon dedicated me upon returning from the Teleboae” (Hdt. 5.59). There is no doubt that this tripod was inscribed to substantiate its attribution to a prominent persona of the heroic age of Thebes. Pointing to a dedicatory gesture by one of the famous protagonists of myth and legend, this tripod ranked as a venerable relic and proof of the Ismenion’s establishment in the heroic age. But how is one to explain the prior association of a tripod dedication with Amphitryon? Pausanias, who saw the same tripod 600 years after Herodotos, thought that Amphitryon’s gesture was meant to celebrate the participation of young Herakles in the Theban rite of the *daphnephoria* (Paus. 9.10.4).¹⁸ The association of the tripod with a specific rite of passage, one that marked the official entrance of Theban youths to citizen status, has interesting implications.

In Pausanias’s day, it was customary for the young protagonists in the *daphnephoria* to dedicate a tripod to Apollo Ismenios commemorating their participation in the rite and their tenure as priests of Apollo.¹⁹ Pausanias clearly states that the *daphnephoroi* were members of prominent aristocratic families (παῖδα οἴκου τε δοκίμου). This fact, in conjunction with the structural similarities of the rite with practices current at Delphi, suggests that the *daphnephoria* was a rite of passage exclusive to the members of the ruling aristocracy.²⁰ Thus, on this occasion, the dedication of a tripod to the patron god of the Theban polis was not only an act of piety, but also an exclusive means of sanctioning a young individual’s claim to prominent social status. Walter Burkert has emphasized that the young *daphnephoros*

17. For discussion, see Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 47–48.

18. There is no reason to argue for the presence of two tripods of Amphitryon at the Ismenion. I believe that Herodotos and Pausanias saw the same tripod, a formidable relic of the heroic age. Pausanias stressed the outstanding character of this venerable object in terms both of its antiquity and the δόξα of the dedicant (Paus. 9.10.4: Ἐπιφανής δὲ μάλιστα ἐπὶ τε ἀρχαιότητι καὶ τοῦ ἀναθέντος τῆ δόξῃ τρίπους). Herodotos’s tone is not so emphatic, but he also commented on the antiquity of the tripod (Hdt. 5.59: κατὰ Λαῖον

τὸν Λαβδᾶκου τοῦ Πολυδώρου τοῦ Κάδμου). It is possible that with the passage of time the inscription Herodotos saw was no longer legible, and that Amphitryon’s tripod was associated with the *daphnephoria* of Herakles.

19. On the *daphnephoria* at Thebes, see Nilsson [1906] 1995, pp. 164–165; and Schachter 2000. Schachter (2000, pp. 114, 117) points out that Pausanias is the only source associating the dedication of a tripod with a rite of passage and considers this practice a “later misunderstanding of an earlier version of the rite” (p. 114), perhaps

arising as late as the 1st century A.D. I believe that this particular usage of the tripod need not be so late, especially if one takes into account the much earlier evidence from Delphi concerning the explicit association of the tripod with an initiatory rite. See Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 194–204. On the site of Apollo Ismenios, see Schachter 1981, pp. 83–85; Symeonoglou 1985a, pp. 236–239; 1985b, pp. 155–156.

20. On the Delphic ritual, see Nilsson [1906] 1995, p. 157, Schachter 2000, p. 113.

was essentially an alter ego of Apollo in looks and ethos, “the epitome of the youthful god with unshorn hair.”²¹ The idea that both the dedicant and the recipient of the dedication shared the qualities associated with the tripod—the mastery of authoritative discourse and political power—must have been latent in the practice of dedicating a tripod to Apollo by the *daphnephoros* or his family.

The wording of the epigram Herodotos saw clearly links Amphitryon’s dedication with an event at the land of the Teleboae, however, which raises an interesting question. What event in the land of the legendary Teleboae merited monumentalization in the form of a prestigious tripod in the civic sanctuary of Thebes?

According to the pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*, Amphitryon and his wife were not indigenous Thebans. They were strangers who sought refuge in Thebes after Amphitryon had murdered his father-in-law, an event that resulted in his expulsion from his native country ([*Sc.*] 1–13).²² The same source makes it clear that his naturalization as a Theban could not be fulfilled unless his marriage with Alkmene was consummated. But this could not occur unless he waged war against the enemies of Thebes in order to cleanse himself from the *agos* of murder ([*Sc.*] 14–19). Amphitryon fought valiantly against the Taphians and the Teleboae and defeated them. He thus became a legitimate member of the Theban polity, as well as an earthly alter ego of Zeus, who impregnated Alkmene with Herakles the same night she conceived Iphiklos with Amphitryon ([*Sc.*] 26–31).

I suggest that Amphitryon’s tripod combined the prestigious referentiality of the Greek tripod with the authoritative effect of the hexameter, serving as a visual commentary on the subtext of this important episode in the epic past of Thebes, along with the ideology it articulated. Amphitryon’s tripod at the Ismenion was perceived as more than a token of piety or a sign of victory by the victorious hero. I would argue that the Thebans saw in this religious gesture a symbolic manifestation of his accession to legitimate civic status and power. His tripod was set up in the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios, the patron god of the city-state, as a perpetual pointer to Amphitryon’s services to his new adoptive homeland, to the accession to political and military power that this entailed, and to his begetting of offspring—a future member of the community. Consequently, there is an implicit correspondence between the epic connotations of Amphitryon’s tripod at the Ismenion and the tradition reported by Pausanias that the same object celebrated his son’s coming of age. The former celebrated Amphitryon’s coming-of-age as a Theban; the latter transposed it to his son Herakles and an important civic rite of Thebes, the *daphnephoria*.

The second tripod Herodotos mentioned (5.61) also featured an authoritative statement inscribed in dactylic hexameters:

Λαοδάμας τρίποδ’ αὐτὸς ἐϋσκόπῳ Ἀπόλλωνι
μουναρχέων ἀνέθηκε τὲν περικαλλὲς ἄγαλμα.

During his rulership, Laodamas himself dedicated the tripod to the far-darter Apollo, a very pleasing gift for you, Apollo.

Laodamas, according to Herodotos the son and successor of Eteocles, was here the dedicant of a prestigious gift of a tripod to Apollo Ismenios—an

21. Burkert 1985, p. 97.

22. *New Pauly*, vol. I, 2002, p. 614, s.v. Amphitryon (T. Scheer).

ἄγαλμα περικαλλές.²³ This dedication was certainly meant to be understood as an act of piety, occasioned by Laodamas's need to sanction his rulership (μουναρχία) through an expressed relationship with the authority of Apollo Ismenios, the divine patron of the Theban state. Laodamas's dedicatory gesture clearly associated his political power with a tripod and the poetic affirmation of his sovereignty in hexameter form.

The third tripod Herodotos (5.60) described at the Ismenion carried an epigram that is reflective of a different dedicatory practice:

Σκαῖος πυγμαχέων με ἐκηβόλω Ἀπόλλωνι
νικήσας ἀνέθηκε τεῖν περικαλλές ἄγαλμα.

Skaïos, winner in a boxing context, dedicated me to Apollo the far-shooter, a very pleasing gift for you.

This epigram is once again replete with heroic overtones. It commemorates in hexameters the *kleos* of a certain Skaïos, who, Herodotos suggests, was the son of Hippokoon, a contemporary of Oidipous. Skaïos was an otherwise unattested persona of myth whose fame seems to have survived in Boiotian lore down to the time of Herodotos. Skaïos was awarded this tripod in a boxing contest in a manner reminiscent of the wrestling match of *Iliad* 23. Again, we are confronted with the same pattern noted above: victory, prestige, and status were always interdependent in Archaic Greek thought.²⁴

The literary evidence regarding individual dedications of tripods may be supplemented by the material evidence from the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoion. As the thorough study by Jean Ducat has shown, in the Archaic period several tripods were dedicated not only to Apollo Ptoios but also to Athena Pronaia.²⁵ The evidence is extremely fragmentary, but enough has survived for a partial, yet secure, reconstruction of the overall appearance of these monumental dedications. Ducat published 12 poros fragments from tripod dedications, 11 of which originally belonged to the central supports of the bronze cauldrons; another came from a triangular base.²⁶ These items, along with two rectangular blocks that originally served as bases²⁷ and five preserved bronze fragments from tripods,²⁸ constitute all the evidence we have regarding the Archaic tripod dedications at the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoion.

Most of the central columns originally bore dedicatory inscriptions in the Boiotian script, but only three among them are legible enough to reveal

23. In ancient traditions Laodamas's fate was unstable during and after the war of the Seven against Thebes. See *RE* XXIII.1, 1924, col. 697, s.v. Laodamas (K. Meuli). The tripod at the Ismenion must have functioned as an unquestionable affirmation of Laodamas's succession to the throne of his father. On the important semantic connotations, religious and aesthetic, of ἄγαλμα περικαλλές, see Karouzos 1982.

24. Nagy 1990, pp. 146–214; for the representation of two boxers on either

side of a tripod on a Boiotian Subgeometric krater, see Sakowski 1997, p. 243, no. SP-2 (Laurent 1901, p. 143, fig. 1).

25. Apollo Ptoios: Ducat 1971, pp. 389–395, nos. 240–243, 245, 246, 248; Athena Pronaia: Ducat 1971, pp. 396, 412, nos. 249, 261.

26. For fragments of columnar supports of tripods, see Ducat 1971, pp. 389–401, nos. 240–250. Ducat dates the fragment of the triangular base (p. 401, no. 251) to the 5th century B.C.

27. Guillon 1943b, p. 12, nos. I and II, redated by Ducat (1971, p. 399) to the Archaic period.

28. Ducat 1971, nos. 261, 285–287, 294, all of which are now lost (p. 43). No. 261 is a fragment of a leg with an inscription possibly dated to the end of the 5th century B.C. on palaeographical grounds (p. 413). Nos. 285–287 are all legs of small size, ascribed by Ducat to miniature tripods (Ducat 1971, p. 431). No. 294 (Ducat 1971, p. 432) is the round handle of a tripod.

the nature of the dedication. The most fully preserved, which is dated late in the first quarter of the 6th century, identifies a single dedicant named Euagon.²⁹ The other two would seem to represent joint dedications by two individuals.³⁰ The example of Euagon resembles the individual dedications at the Ismenion. The practice involving two dedicants is the more usual one at Ptoon, especially during the Late Archaic period, when even monumental kouroi in stone were offered jointly by pairs of dedicants.³¹

Unfortunately, none of the surviving inscriptions allow us to reconstruct the circumstances associated with the dedication of tripods at the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon. These occasions may have been comparable, however, to those inferred from the dedicatory inscriptions at the Ismenion. The Ismenion dedications exalted the dedicants' claims to prestige and power in visual form. The physical characteristics of the Late Archaic tripods at Ptoon are similar: they were expensive, monumental constructions in terms of their materials and size, combining poros stone with bronze.

These constructions required a considerable expenditure of labor and materials.³² Their introduction around the Temple of Apollo must have entailed a considerable reconfiguration of both the physical and the conceptual space of the public areas of the sanctuary, along with their hierarchies of emphasis and importance.³³ To be sure, these monuments were not always as costly as the large stone kouroi erected in large numbers during the Archaic period at the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon. Nevertheless, the traditional character of the tripod, already an ancient symbol at the time of the kouroi, must have imparted a particularly venerable aura to these monuments.³⁴

The last well-documented category of individual dedications of Boiotian tripods consists of a group of choregic monuments from Orchomenos.³⁵ Twenty-five tripod bases, most of them inscribed with a dedication, were found in or near the city theater. Several of the tripod bases were visibly—and perhaps intentionally—included as spolia in the masonry of the nearby church of the Virgin of Skripou (Fig. 3), an edifice dating to A.D. 873/4 and built entirely from architectural members of dismantled ancient structures on the site.³⁶ The dedicatory inscriptions on these monuments, all of which date from the 3rd century B.C., include the names of

29. Ducat 1971, p. 389, no. 240.

30. Ducat 1971, pp. 391–392, nos. 241, 242.

31. E.g., Ducat 1971, p. 355, no. 202.

32. See Morgan 1990, pp. 43–47, on dedications of early tripods as symbolic capital.

33. Guillon (1943a, p. 59) conjectures that the tripods at Perdikovrysi were originally arranged “le long d’une voie d’accès,” especially on the intermediate terrace where the massive rectangular bases were probably set up “de part et d’autre d’une allée qui, entre les deux groupes d’édifices de la terrasse

aboutissait à l’accès ménagé dans la terrasse du temple.” Moreover, Ducat (1971, pp. 382–383) suggests that the oblong foundation between the east facade of the classical temple and the altar may have supported an alignment of tripods, indicated by the fact that “sur cette fondation se sont alignées, et dans un cas, s’est appuyée, quatre bases de trépied.” These form a *suntagma* that runs parallel to the east facade of the temple. The southernmost base is triangular in shape (see Ducat 1971, plan B). The date of the bases and the long foundation is uncertain.

34. We cannot exclude the possibil-

ity that monumental kouroi and tripods were erected as combined dedications. Given the present state of the evidence for the original contexts and spacing of these monuments, however, this hypothesis cannot be pursued further here. The kouros type, in terms of its iconography and content, is akin to the symbolism of the tripod as early as the Late Geometric period. See Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 164–170, 189–204.

35. Amandry and Spyropoulos 1974.

36. Papalexandrou 2003.



Figure 3. North wall of the church of the Virgin of Skripou at Orchomenos. Tripod bases are immured in the lowest courses of the masonry. Photo A. Papalexandrou

the two choregoi, the name of the recipient of the dedication, i.e., Dionysos, and very often the names of the singer and the flute player.³⁷

Although a wide temporal distance separates the monuments of Orchomenos from the Archaic tripods of the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon, I would argue that these tripods can be considered the descendants of a long Boiotian tradition in terms of their capacity to communicate the prestige of their dedicants. It is, therefore, not accidental that the choregoi belonged to prominent Orchomenian families, members of which often held important political positions. For example, the choregos Pedakleis, son of Kephesiades, was the father of an Orchomenian polemarch.³⁸ Similarly, the choregos Eucharidas, son of Damatrichos, was polemarch at Orchomenos around 285 B.C.³⁹ The choregos Euroulochos, son of Dionysios, held the archonship the year he won the choregic contest.⁴⁰

The political significance of these tripod dedications is patent: the polis of Orchomenos set up the expensive tripods as prizes in the musical contests in honor of Dionysos, only to receive them back stamped with the *kleos* of its victorious citizens. The erection of the choregic tripods in a prominent public place at Orchomenos, within or at least not far from the agora and the burial site of Hesiod,⁴¹ provided the city with visual

37. On the cult of Dionysos at Orchomenos, see Schachter 1981, pp. 179–181.

38. Amandry and Spyropoulos 1974, p. 177.

39. Amandry and Spyropoulos 1974, pp. 178–180.

40. Amandry and Spyropoulos

1974, pp. 200–201.

41. According to the *Vita* of Hesiod (J. Tzetzes, *Vita Hes.*, lines 42–44 [Solmsen]), the bones of Hesiod were buried in the middle of the agora of the city. Pausanias (9.38.3) correlates, albeit vaguely, the location of Hesiod's tomb with the treasury of Minyas. See Wal-

lace 1985 for an attempt to resuscitate Schliemann's old hypothesis that Hesiod was buried in the tholos of Minyas. The perceptual background of the Orchomenian tripods was undoubtedly the revered ambience of the agora and the venerable tholos of Minyas. See also Alcock and Cherry 2006.

markers of the magnificence of both the city-state and its prominent choregoi. The choregoi, in turn, conspicuously emphasized their prominent status in Orchomenian society. As in the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon, however, we have no evidence for the exact placement of these monuments or for their spatial and visual correspondences with one another and with other prominent landmarks of the civic center of Orchomenos. We are left to wonder what physical or perceptual movements they were meant to create and how their arrangement affected the communication of their message.

COLLECTIVE DEDICATIONS

SANCTUARY OF PTOIOS AT KASTRAKI

An important example of collective dedicatory practice comes from the sanctuary of the local hero Ptoios at Kastraki, located 2 km southeast of Akraiphia (modern Akraiphion) on Mt. Ptoon (Figs. 4, 5).⁴² Here the bases of at least 29 tripods, ranging in date from the Late Archaic period to the mid-5th century B.C., were discovered mostly in situ (Figs. 6–9). Today, only part of a single tripod base survives at the site (Fig. 10). The tripods were erected in ceremonial alignments framing the road from the sanctuary to the city of Akraiphia and the path from the lower terrace of the sanctuary to the temple on the south terrace.⁴³ Some of the bases recorded by Guillon are of exceptional size: among the examples illustrated in Figures 8 and 9, base 14, consisting of four rectangular slabs, measures 1.87 × 1.79 m; base 15, with its northernmost slab missing, originally measured 1.88 × 1.90 m. The tripods they supported were the largest in the documented sequence of tripods at Kastraki. Guillon emphasizes that it is not accidental that these tripods (especially no. 15) formed the immediate backdrop of the performative space of the lower terrace.⁴⁴ The bases at Kastraki afford unparalleled evidence for the physical setting of this type of dedication.

In striking contrast to the tripods at the sanctuary of Apollo, all of the tripods at Kastraki were collective dedications by the city of Akraiphia. Their nature is attested by numerous dedicatory inscriptions that are still legible on the remnants of the central columnar supports.⁴⁵ The length of the columnar supports, one of which is preserved intact (see below, Fig. 13), suggests that the tripods often attained monumental dimensions, with heights ranging between 1.50 and 2.50 m (Fig. 11).⁴⁶ The costliness of these monuments affirms the prosperity of the city of Akraiphia,

42. Guillon 1943a, 1943b; on the cult of the hero Ptoios, see Schachter 1994a, pp. 11–21.

43. Guillon 1943b, pp. 57–62, pl. X; Ducat and Llinas 1964, fig. 2 (between pp. 850 and 851).

44. Guillon 1943b, p. 47.

45. Guillon 1943a, pp. 55–58.

46. For the intact columnar support, see Guillon 1943a, pp. 48–49, no. 7; the column measures 1.74 m. See also

Guillon 1943b, pp. 17–57, esp. p. 53; for the reconstruction drawing reproduced in Fig. 11, see also pl. IV. Guillon based his reconstruction drawing on tripod base 23 of the south alignment and inscribed column 11, the lower diameter of which fits almost exactly the diameter of the circular cutting of the base. For detailed discussion of these monuments, see below, pp. 271–276, and Appendix.

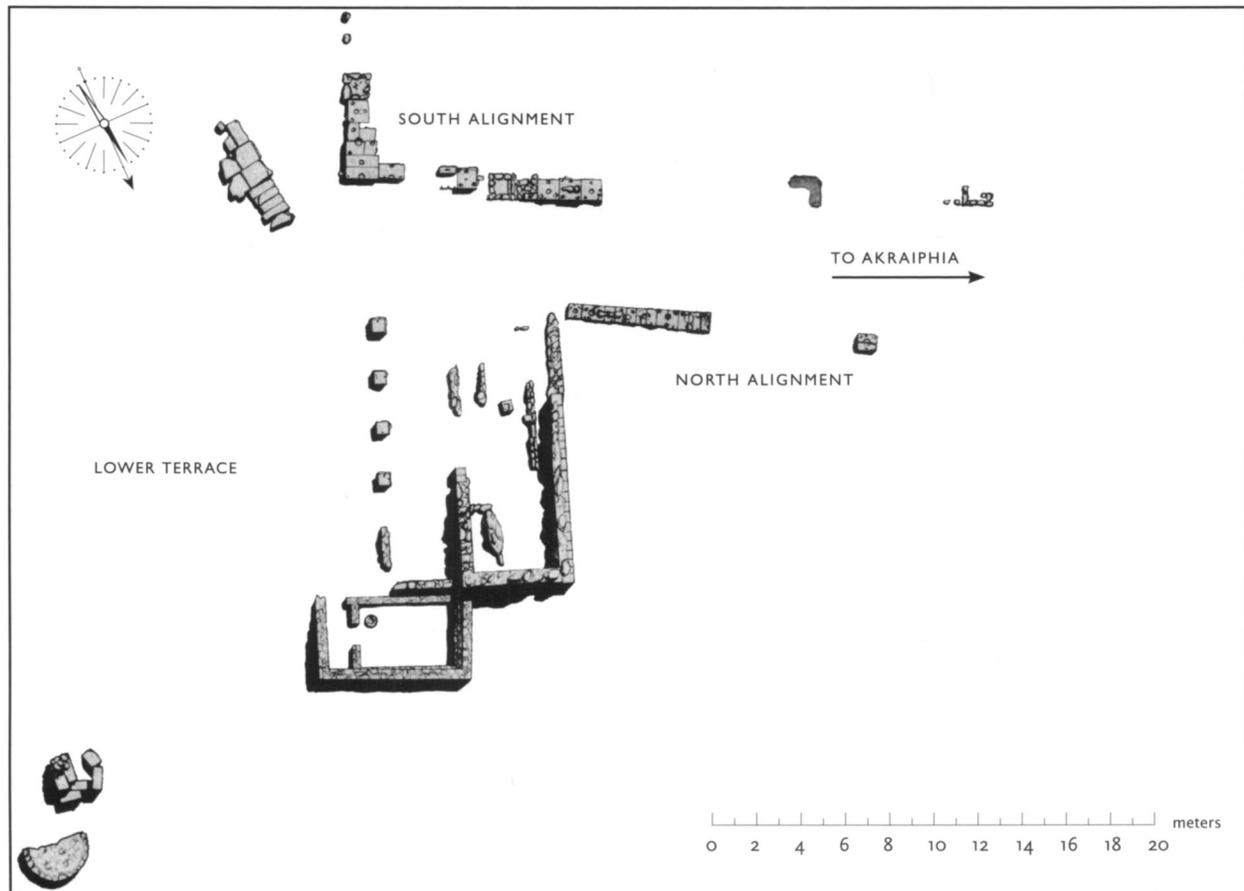


Figure 4. Plan of structures on the lower terrace of the sanctuary of Ptoios at Kastraki. After Guillon 1943b, pl. X



Figure 5. View of Kastraki from the north, June 2006. The lower terrace of the sanctuary of Ptoios is at the center. The strip of bare ground to the right coincides with the axis of the path that connected the sanctuary and the city of Akraiphia to the west. Photo N. Papalexandrou



Figure 6. View of the north alignment of tripod bases, from the east. Guillon 1943a, pl. VI:1



Figure 7. View of the south alignment of tripod bases, from the west. Guillon 1943a, pl. VI:2

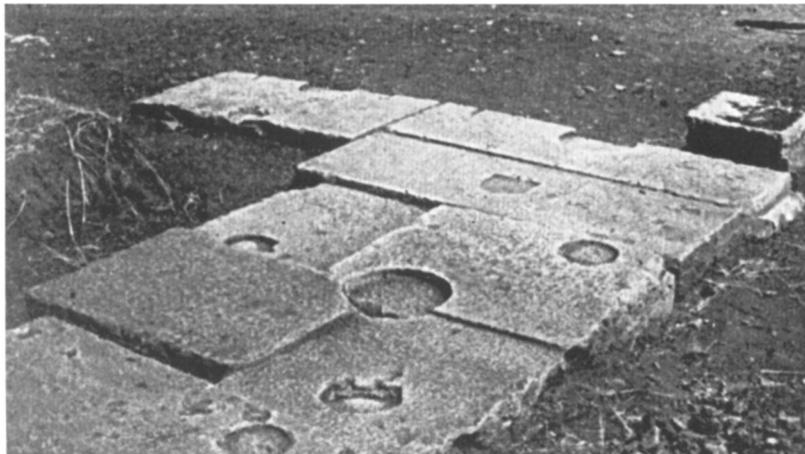


Figure 8. View of the southernmost section of the south alignment of tripod bases, from the south. The north side of base 13 is at the lower left; base 14 (four slabs) in the center; base 15 (northern slab missing) in the upper right; and base 16 (partly preserved) at upper left; see Figure 9. Guillon 1943a, pl. V:3

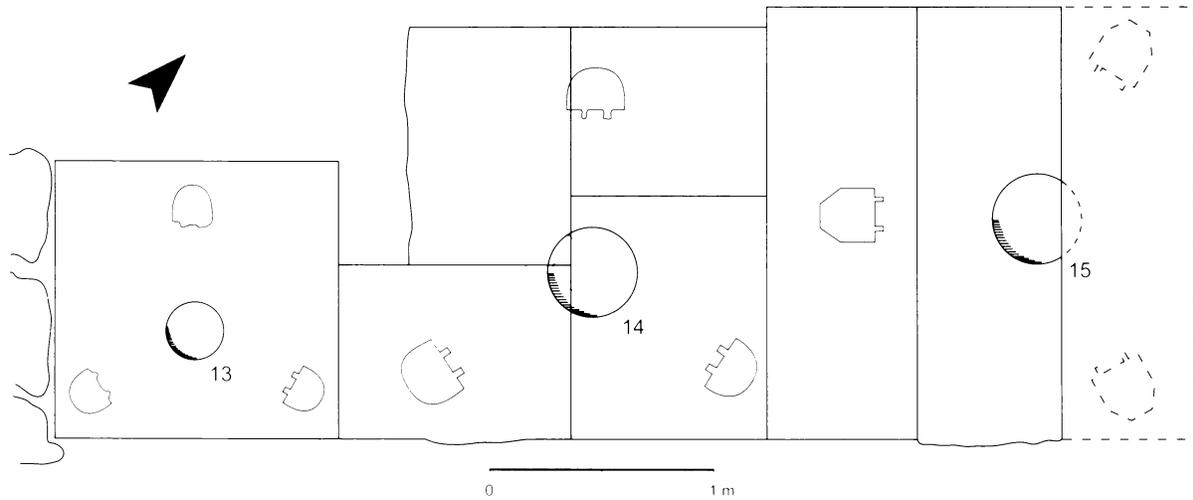


Figure 9. Bases 13–15 from the south section of the south alignment of tripods. Drawing N. Papalexandrou, after Guillon 1943a, pp. 37, 39, pls. 8, 9

Figure 10. Component of the only surviving tripod base in the sanctuary of Ptoios, discovered by Ducat and Llinas in 1964, photographed in June 2006. The block measures 1.30 × 0.66 × 0.18 m and has been moved from its original findspot. Photo N. Papalexandrou



which is also evident in the wealth of the city's cemeteries and in the quality of certain individual dedications in the nearby sanctuary of Apollo at Perdikovrysi.⁴⁷

In addition to demonstrating the wealth of the community, these tripods may also express the centrality of the indigenous hero Ptoios and his sanctuary within the collective identity of Akraiphia. Guillon interpreted the tripods at Kastraki as signifiers of Akraiphia's local particularism, proposing that the cult at Kastraki emerged in reaction to the presumed deposition of the hero from Perdikovrysi by Thebes in favor of Apollo and Athena Pronaia during the 7th or early 6th century.⁴⁸ Central to his argument, which presupposes a state of hostility between Thebes and Akraiphia, was the a priori assumption that tripods were exclusive to the cult of the hero, whereas the monumental stone kouros were associated exclusively with Theban practice. Guillon's theory has been decisively refuted by

47. Cemeteries: Andreiomenou 1996; Vlachoyianni 2002, pp. 339–349; Whitley 2002–2003, pp. 46–47; 2004–2005, pp. 44–45. Dedications: Ducat 1971, p. 355, no. 202 (kouros), p. 411,

no. 260 (bronze cauldron). Akraiphia: Schachter 1989, p. 75; Hansen and Nielsen 2004, pp. 437–438.

48. Guillon 1943b, pp. 116–134; esp. pp. 124, 133; see also pp. 170–171.

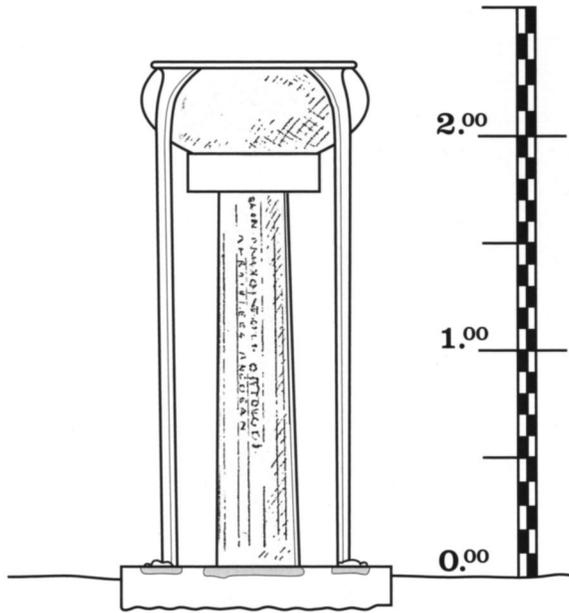


Figure 11. Guillon's reconstruction drawing of a tripod at Kastraki. Guillon 1943a, p. 49, fig. 3

Ducat, who demonstrated that Akraiphia was adequately represented by lavish dedications, such as the tripods discussed above, in the sanctuary of Apollo.⁴⁹ Prosperous as it was in the Archaic period, Akraiphia could afford to sustain a dynamic presence in both the sanctuary of Apollo and the sanctuary of its local hero.⁵⁰

The problem of the unparalleled syntax of votive tripods in the sanctuary of the hero Ptoios still remains open. Under what circumstances was the tripod selected to convey messages regarding the relationship between Akraiphia and her local hero? What compelled Akraiphia to display the symbolic expression of her intimate bond with the hero Ptoios in such a conspicuous manner? Guillon stressed the traditional character of the tripod, but this alone cannot explain the institutionalization of the tripod monuments and their unusual arrangement at the sanctuary of the hero.⁵¹ In order to understand the votive custom at Akraiphia, a comparison with other instances of collective dedications of tripods in Boiotia may prove useful.

THE TRIPODEPHORIA OF THE THEBAGENEIS

The *tripodephoria* of the Thebageneis affords one example of the political significance of collective dedications in Boiotia. Our knowledge of this dedicatory rite derives mainly from the ancient scholiasts of the first paian of Pindar.⁵² The main theme of the paian must have been the mythological *aition* for the rite.⁵³ Pindar composed the *τριποδηφορικόν μέλος* for

49. Ducat 1964, pp. 286–288; Ducat 1971, pp. 400, 441–442. Ducat had much more evidence at his disposal than Guillon, who published the results of his excavations in the chaos of the Second World War.

50. Schachter 1994b, p. 302.

51. To be sure, the pronounced

association of the tripod with a hero has a substantial precedent in the famous cave at Polis Bay in Ithaca. See Benton 1934–1935 and Malkin 1998, pp. 94–119, esp. p. 113, for discussion of the possibility that tripod dedications were offerings made “on the communal level.” See also Papalexan-

drou 2005, pp. 22–23.

52. Maehler 1989, schol. on fr. 66; also schol. on Pind. *Pyth.* 11.5, where Pindar refers to the Ismenion as a “treasury of golden tripods.”

53. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1922, pp. 185–186.

the principal *dromenon*, which involved the ceremonial transference and dedication of a golden tripod by the Thebageneis to the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios at Thebes.⁵⁴

From Ephoros we learn that the Thebageneis were a racially mixed (σύμμικτοι) group of people who inhabited the borderland between Boiotia and Attica along the valley of the Asopos River.⁵⁵ Ephoros states that the Thebageneis were originally independent, and that at some point they were annexed by the Thebans to be part of the Boiotian League. The ancient sources do not contain any indications regarding the date of the annexation of the Thebageneis, but the fact that the theme was treated by Pindar suggests that the *tripodephoria* was already an established institution in his lifetime, perhaps as early as the 6th century B.C.⁵⁶

The ceremonial transference of a tripod by the Thebageneis from the annexed territory to Thebes was a clear and public manifestation of their dependent status.⁵⁷ It celebrated the recurrently renewed ties between the subdued and Apollo, the patron god of Thebes, of whom the tripod was the most appropriate attribute. The communicational efficacy of this rite for both performers and their audiences was based upon a semantically important aspect of the tripod in early Greek thought: its symbolic function as a token of territorial sovereignty.⁵⁸ This function is latent in the myth of the famous struggle for the Delphic tripod between Apollo and Herakles, which became popular in representational arts from the second quarter of the 6th century onward.⁵⁹

The tripod also plays a crucial role in numerous ancient traditions in which a well-hidden example guarantees the sovereignty of a group of people over their territory, on the condition that the secret of its location within this territory is closely guarded. Herodotos (4.179) offers a good example in his account of the Argonauts' voyage in Libya, on the occasion when they exchange a tripod for navigational information from Triton, a local daimon. Triton prophesies that "if a descendant of those belonging to the crew of Argo steals the tripod, the foundation of a hundred cities around Lake Tritonis will be unavoidable." Herodotos concludes the story by saying that when the local inhabitants heard the prophecy, they immediately hid the tripod to block the migratory movement and ensure their exclusive rights to the land.

The territorial significance of the tripod is evident in a similar account by Apollonios of Rhodes in the *Argonautica* (4.1537–1591). In this case, the tripod was exchanged for a clod of earth, which was later miraculously transformed into an entire island (*Arg.* 4.1756–1758). The territorial significance of the tripod was also associated with the foundation myths of certain ancient Greek cities, such as the little town of Tripodiskos near

54. Schachter 1981, pp. 82–83.

55. *FGrH* 70 F21.

56. Schachter 1981, p. 83, n. 2. Vian (1963, p. 197, n. 3) questions the validity of Ephoros's testimony, proposing instead that it was Ephoros's "transcription historicisée" of the myth of Lykos and Nykteos. In Theban propaganda, the origins and ethnic constitution of

the Thebageneis fluctuated in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., reflecting the political interests of Thebes as leader of Boiotia. The same holds true for claims regarding the Theban attitude toward these marginal populations. See Vian 1963, p. 161; Sordi 1966, pp. 18–21.

57. Schachter (1981, p. 83) con-

jectures that the *tripodephoria* of the Thebageneis "may have been a regular ritual performed in recognition of the hegemony of Thebes."

58. This subject is explored in detail in Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 37–42.

59. See Bothmer 1977; Boardman 1978; Sakowski 1997, pp. 113–163.

Megara (Paus. 1.43.7). In view of these examples, it is clear that the *tripodephoria* of the Thebagenesis to the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios served to dramatize the political surrender of the Thebagenesis to the authority of Thebes.

THE TRIPODEPHORIA TO DODONA

The *tripodephoria* from Thebes to the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona may have been initiated in the context of similar political considerations.⁶⁰ The *aition* of this rite is associated with the Theban war against the Pelasgians, who inhabited the area of Panakton at the mountainous borderland between Attica and Boiotia.⁶¹ According to this story, the Thebans consulted the Pelasgian sanctuary of Hepeiros for a method that would result in the successful subjugation of the Pelasgians. The oracular response implied that the Thebans would succeed if they committed an impious act. They did so by murdering the priestess at Dodona. Later, it turned out that the unclear oracle meant that the Thebans were to steal a tripod from a Theban sanctuary after dark and transfer it to Dodona. The Thebans performed the rite and institutionalized it after successfully subjugating the Pelasgians.

The pattern of this story is the inverse of the *tripodephoria* of the Thebagenesis, as the tripod was taken away from Boiotia. Nevertheless, the tradition exemplifies the stealthy removal of a tripod from a Boiotian sanctuary, an act performed as a ritualized sacrilege.⁶² In light of my analysis of the *tripodephoria* of the Thebagenesis, it would seem that in this case Thebes ritually acknowledged its deference to the revered sanctuary of Dodona through the maintenance of material and symbolic ties with it.

I would argue that the underlying motivation for the *tripodephoria* to Dodona is to be found in the Theban claims over the marginal land of the Pelasgians. This land was often a cause of dispute between Thebes and Athens in the Archaic and Classical periods, and several legendary traditions were devised by both contenders to legitimize their claims.⁶³ The transference of a tripod to the Pelasgian Zeus of Dodona (*Il.* 16.233) was intended to establish a special link between Thebes and Dodona and to ground the Theban claims over the land of the Pelasgians in myth and ritual. In other words, at Dodona the Thebans exchanged the material and symbolic value of a tripod for the divinely sanctioned right to expand their dominion over Pelasgian territory.

The dedication of a tripod to Dodona by the Thebans was a symbolic actualization of the surrender of Theban authority to the supreme jurisdiction of the Pelasgian Zeus of Dodona. Moreover, given the territorial significance of the tripod, we may also see the *tripodephoria* to Dodona as a ritual that expanded the limits of Thebes all the way to Pelasgian Dodona and vice versa. The notional thread that connected Thebes and Dodona (and, by extension, both of these sites with Panakton) was realized as a pragmatic one in the path of the procession to Dodona. The tripod was removed from Thebes under circumstances (ιεροσυλία) that rendered it a talisman or a token of the city's territorial unassailability.

60. Schachter 1994a, pp. 154–155.

61. Proklos in Photios, *Bibl.* 239 (321b–322a Bekker); Ephoros, *FGrH* 70 F 119. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1922, p. 186), followed by Breglia Pulci Doria (1997, pp. 205–206), conjectured that the *aition* of the *tripodephoria* to Dodona was identical to that of the *tripodephoria* of the Thebagenesis. He based his argument on the fact that both rites were related to events that took place in the borderland between Boiotia and Attica.

62. Proklos, Bekker 322a: ὡς ἱεροσυλοῖ; Ephoros, *FGrH* 70 F 119: λάθρα.

63. Munn 1989, pp. 236–242.

AN AKRAIPHIAN TRIPODEPHORIA?

I now return to Akraiphia to consider the possibility that the dedication of tripods at the sanctuary of the hero may have resembled other Boiotian dedicatory rites in its symbolic function. Were these tripods intended to affirm, as Guillon has suggested, the sovereignty of the Akraiphian polis over its territory? Guillon stressed the topographical importance of the site of Kastraki, which occupies a visible location near the path leading from Thebes to the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon. Imposing and firmly anchored in the holy ground of the sanctuary of Ptoios, the tripods must have conveyed a strong, nonverbal message to visitors from Thebes and other locations.⁶⁴

In view of the significance of the *tripodephoria* of the Thebageneis and Dodona, the tripods at Kastraki may be regarded as visible tokens of the Akraiphians' concerted efforts to unite themselves under the patronage of the local hero. It might be speculated that the erection of each of the tripods as a component of the spatial symbolism at Kastraki involved the performance of a local *tripodephoria*. I propose that this ritual event actualized the Akraiphians' consensual surrender to the hero and affirmed the pragmatic and conceptual links between the civic center of Akraiphia and the sanctuary at Kastraki, along with its surrounding landscape.

This rite and the monumental commemoration of its performance would have played a crucial role in the formation and consolidation of Akraiphia's collective identity. Public processions, sacrifices, and civic festivals were instrumental in the periodic reaffirmation of the existing social order within the Greek polis.⁶⁵ In their format, costliness, and spatial arrangement, the tripods at Kastraki would have provided an imposing backdrop against which these civic rituals were performed. They not only lined the sides of the road from Akraiphia to the sanctuary, but they were similarly arranged within the lower terrace of the sanctuary, where communal rites such as sacrifices, ceremonial meals, and dances are archaeologically attested.⁶⁶

The proliferation of tripods at Kastraki during the second half of the 6th century coincides with the gestation period of the Boiotian League under the domineering leadership of Thebes.⁶⁷ It is possible that through the conspicuous display of solidarity around a local hero, the Akraiphians asserted their autonomy to Thebes, along with their ability and determination to avoid the fate of the Thebageneis in the south.⁶⁸ This was a strategy of nonverbal bragging, effected by emulating the illustrious ambience of Theban sanctuaries laden with venerable relics such as the heroic tripods of Amphitryon, Laodamas, and Skaios. Furthermore, no visitor from Boiotia or elsewhere could ever observe the tripods of Ptoios without recalling the power of Hesiod's tripod, epitomizing the foundation rite of the famous Helikonian sanctuary. The multiple usage of tripods in Boiotian sanctuaries and rites constituted a local ecology of sacredness that conditioned the reception of Ptoios's tripods in terms of both Boiotian values and panhellenic meanings.

64. Guillon 1943b, pp. 87–98.

65. Burkert 1985, pp. 99–102; Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992; Graf 1996; see also the detailed discussion below.

66. Ducat and Llinas 1964; Ekroth 1998, pp. 122–123, 128.

67. Hansen and Nielsen 2004, p. 431.

68. As Schachter (1989, p. 75) writes, "there is . . . no proof of hostility between Akraiphia and Thebes over rights at the Ptoion." The emergence of Thebes as a leading power, however, must have caused concerns in Akraiphia.



Figure 12. Inscribed cylindrical base of a dedicatory tripod formerly in the courtyard of the church of the Virgin of Skripou in Orchomenos.
Photo N. Papalexandrou

It was precisely this local ecology that ensured the survival (or revival) of the tripod as an expressive medium in the Hellenistic period. An epigram in hexameters wrought with epic allusions preserves the *kleos* of the Thespian participants in the expedition of Alexander in Asia.⁶⁹ Assuming the voice of the entire community of Thespieae, the epigram exalts the distinguished Thespians who celebrated their victory over the barbarians by dedicating an elaborate and costly (*δαιδάλεον*) tripod to Zeus at Thespieae. In doing so, they acted on behalf of all Thespians, who were thus redeemed for the sufferings of their heroic ancestors during the Persian wars (*Anth. Pal.* 6.344, line 2: *τιμωρὸς προγόνων*). Inscribed on the base of the collective dedication of the Thespians, this epigram was a poetic appendage to the Thespian symbol of victory.

During the 3rd century b.c., the tripod was used for the monumental proclamation of the political and spiritual authority claimed by the Boiotian Confederacy. This use is attested by epigraphic evidence for the dedication of 12 tripods by the *koinon* of Boiotians to various divinities.⁷⁰ Seven of these dedications came from the sanctuary of Apollo at Ptoon, the official oracle of the Confederacy during this period.⁷¹ Three tripods were dedicated to Zeus Eleutherios at Plataia, one to the Graces at Orchomenos (Fig. 12), and one to the Muses at Thespieae.⁷² The dedicatory inscriptions do not mention the specific circumstances that led to the erection of these monuments. They indicate, however, that the dedications were instigated by oracles issued by Apollo Ptoios.

Guillon has suggested that these oracles sanctioned the resuscitated agonistic movement in places like Orchomenos, Plataiai, and Thespieae, and placed it under the auspices of the Boiotian Confederacy.⁷³ According to this reasoning, the Confederacy checked the growth of local particularism

69. *Anth. Pal.* 6.344; Schachter 1994a, p. 150.

70. Roesch 1965, pp. 137–141.

71. *IG VII* 2723, 2724, 2724a–e. The sanctuary of Apollo also received at least one tripod dedication by the city of Akraiphia; see *IG VII* 4157.

72. Zeus Eleutherios: *IG VII* 1672–1674; Graces: *IG VII* 3207; Muses: *IG VII* 1795. The base from Orchomenos is also inscribed with the proxenia decree *IG VII* 3166.

73. Guillon 1943b, pp. 161–163.

and strengthened the federal cause. Such a strategy would be appropriate in communities like Orchomenos, where the tripod was no less a symbol of personal victory and status than a token of the city's affluence and power. The massive, cylindrical base of the tripod at Orchomenos (Fig. 12) indicates that the tripod it supported was a sizable object, one that was intended to convey a powerful message.⁷⁴ Conspicuously erected in the sanctuary of the Graces, in close proximity to the civic center of Orchomenos, this monument was an eloquent reminder of the power and authority exercised by the Boiotian Confederacy.

TRIPODS OF THE SANCTUARY AT KASTRAKI

I sketched above two basic patterns of tripod dedication in Boiotia. In some cases, tripods were set up by individuals as markers of prestige and political power. In other cases, tripods were erected by entire communities or collective bodies seeking to affirm their sovereign status in religious contexts. Both practices had a long life in Boiotia, although the reasons for this tenacity are not entirely clear.

The panhellenic communicational power of the tripod and the conservative character of religious practices in ancient Boiotia may have contributed equally to the shaping of these dedicatory customs. As a symbol of victory in poetic and other contests, as a symbol of political authority or civic status, as an attribute of Apollo, or as a symbol laden with territorial connotations, the Boiotian tripod could accommodate many messages. These might be appropriate for heroes (Amphitryon, Herakles, Ptoios), Olympian gods (Apollo, Zeus, Athena, Dionysos), and common mortals.⁷⁵ The traditional, panhellenic referentiality of tripods in epic sources and in the great sanctuaries largely accounted for the multivocality of the Boiotian tripods as well.

The particular semantic nuance of an individual tripod was ultimately generated in each tripod's physical or conceptual context. The physical context is now lost in most locations from which remnants of tripods have been archaeologically retrieved. Nevertheless, it is likely that the exact placement of each tripod within a sacred space was the result of careful planning and calculation. Religious authorities and dedicants were aware that the format of the tripods was a means of shaping sacredness. The physical presence and position of these symbols must have radiated a wealth of emotions no less intense than those generated today by the sign of the cross for Christians or the menorah for Jews. Moreover, each tripod fulfilled its role as a monument in concert with, or in opposition to, other monuments, buildings, or landmarks—elements of both its immediate context and of more distant locations. Unfortunately, the semantic charge that was generated by these contextual associations and their details is now largely lost.

The ceremonial alignments of tripods at Kastraki suggest that the tripods served as markers of performative space, significant backdrops against which a community acted out its proud sense of identity to itself, its patron hero, and others. Similarly, the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios

74. On cylindrical and triangular bases, see Guillon 1943b, p. 28.

75. There are allusions to the divinatory function of tripods in the fragments of the Boiotian poet Corinna, preserved in the Berlin papyrus, P. Berol. 284. See Page (1953, fr. 1, col. III, lines 25–26) for the mantic role of the male descendants of the river Asopos; also lines 33–34, where Apollo is reported to have given Euofnymos, a son of the Boiotian river Kephissos, tripods for issuing oracles.

was home to several tripods whose very presence there presupposes the collective rite of the *tripodephoria*, a pompous procession that made the tripod a spectacle to remember and celebrate with song and possibly with dance.⁷⁶ An equally spectacular *tripodephoria* forged special ties between Thebes and the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona. In the context of these Boiotian practices, it is possible that each tripod at Kastraki was meant to signify a local *tripodephoria*, a public procession performed by the civic body of Akraiphia from the civic center to the sanctuary of Ptoios. This rite would have established a renewable and recurrent contract between the entire community and the local hero. Its performance would have been a unique event that was recorded both in collective memory and in the votive inscriptions on the central columns of the tripods.

A good example of an inscription survives in the best-preserved support at Kastraki, a fluted column 1.74 m tall, with a base diameter of 0.35 m (Fig. 13). The text runs from top to bottom along the length of a flute:

Σιμωνίδα ἄρχοντος τῷ ἕρῳ τῷ Πτοίῳ Ἀκριφιδῆς ἀνέθεαν.

The Akraiphians dedicated [the tripod] to the hero Ptoios in the archonship of Simonidas.⁷⁷

The text of this dedicatory inscription identifies the authors of the dedication and places their votive gesture in historical time. Its format and placement on the shaft of a centrally situated support epitomized the act of the dedication itself. It was as if the column (and by extension the entire monument) verbally incorporated the entire community of Akraiphians.⁷⁸ The static monument of a tripod thus became more than a lavish and prestigious memorial; it served as the perpetual embodiment of its performers and the reenactment of the original dedicatory rite. Through the calculated, meaningful combination of the base, inscribed central column, and tripod cauldron, the monument became an image of an actual *tripodephoria*.

The significance of the various correspondences would have been meaningful to individuals emotionally and psychologically conditioned for this type of encounter. At the outset, they would note that each tripod monument was firmly anchored in the ground by means of a very low rectangular base (Figs. 6–8, above).⁷⁹ This was significant because the closeness to the ground would have visibly evoked the theme of territoriality. In the middle, the columnar support (Fig. 13) physically supported the cauldron



Figure 13. Central column of tripod monument at the sanctuary of Ptoios, Kastraki. Guillon 1943a, pl. XV:1

76. Tripods as epicenters of choral events are discussed in Papalexandrou 2005, pp. 189–216.

77. Guillon (1943a, pp. 48–49, no. 7, 54; 1943b, p. 67) dates the text to the middle of the 6th century B.C. Jeffery (1990, p. 93), however, strongly argues for a dating in the last decade of the 6th century B.C.

78. A well-known parallel is the Plataian tripod at Delphi. Its support featured a serpentine body inscribed with the names of the Greeks who contributed to the victory against the Persians.

See Jacquemin 1999, pp. 176, 336; also Steinhart 1997.

79. The height of the rectangular bases, most of which were carved in local tufa stone, varied from 0.10 to 0.20 m. A considerable portion of each base was set below the surface of the ground, as, for example, in the bases with sides that featured anathyrosis “sur 0.05 à partir du bord supérieur”; Guillon 1943a, p. 33, nos. 6–8 (north alignment), and p. 36, no. 13 (south alignment); see also Guillon 1943b, p. 26. Thus, the refined side of the base

that was intended to be above ground was emphasized and set apart from the lower, invisible part with a rough surface. All tripods at Kastraki seem to have conformed to this principle. This aspect of these monuments would not have escaped the Akraiphians’ attention. Connection to the land was an essential dimension of group identity, both in Boiotia, where the Akraiphians had to deal with assertions of an eminent Theban past (Vian 1963; Sordi 1966), and elsewhere (see, e.g., Loraux 1993).

of the tripod above, but at the same time it stood for the collective spirit of the dedicants. Both literally and metaphorically, *φέρει τὸν τρίποδα* was the overarching theme that made each tripod the mediatory site between the people and the hero, the people and their land, the hero and their land, and the people and their past.⁸⁰ Finally, the bronze cauldron on top gave value, form, temporal fixity, and substance to the monument as a whole and to the rite that the monument embodied. These attributes, in conjunction with the panhellenic and regional values of the tripod, would have informed the local significance of this powerful symbol.

While the vertical axis of the tripod monuments at Kastraki corresponded to a vertical order of significances, the carefully calculated placement of each of these tripods along a horizontal sequence shaped their performative space. Two alignments of rectangular or square tripod bases were found in situ at the site (Figs. 4, 6–8, above). It is significant that the tripods supported by these bases framed the sides of the main route from Akraiphia to the lower terrace of the sanctuary.⁸¹ The so-called north alignment, comprising the bases for nine tripods, was documented for a distance of 20 m west of the entrance to the lower terrace of the sanctuary (Fig. 6; for reconstruction of eight of the nine tripods, see Figs. 14, 15, and Appendix). The south alignment ran parallel to the north at a distance of 6 m and was documented, with lacunae, for a distance of 125 m. At the southwest corner of the lower terrace of the sanctuary, this alignment turned to the south at a right angle. Here the bases lined the path that led up to the terrace of the temple and were documented for a distance of ca. 10 m (Figs. 8, 9, above).⁸² The south alignment comprised the bases of another 19 tripods altogether.

Given the ruinous state of preservation of these composite monuments (the tripods have disappeared, while most of the columns were displaced

80. Practical, structural, or economic considerations alone (see, e.g., Chamoux 1970, pp. 323–326) are not sufficient to explain the specific articulation of the monuments at Kastraki. By the time of the erection of the columns, the metaphoric association between the column and the human body was an established means for conceptualizing fundamental values of both. Onians (1995, pp. 34–35) emphasizes the Greeks' thinking of the warrior's body in terms of the vigor and strength of the column. Rykwert (1996, pp. 177–178) discusses Greek architectural terminology in terms of its explicit corporeal associations. The anthropomorphic substitutes of columns in monuments like the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi or the Temple of Zeus at Akragas are understandable as architectural elements precisely in terms of this metaphoric association. Based on this way of thinking, Pindar refers to

Hector as "Troy's invincible steadfast column" (*Ol.* 2.81); Troy is thus conceptualized as an architectural structure.

81. See detailed discussion in Guillon 1943a, pp. 28–43; 1943b, pp. 57–62. There is hardly any evidence left in place at the sanctuary, where almost all the bases have disappeared (personal observations, July 13, 2005, and June 22, 2006). I saw only half of the tripod base brought to light by Ducat and Llinas (Ducat and Llinas 1964, pp. 855–856, fig. 7); see Fig. 10, above.

The destruction (deliberate or accidental) of these valuable monuments must have reached a considerable degree by the time Ducat and Llinas undertook systematic investigations at the sanctuary. See Ducat and Llinas 1964, p. 851, n. 4: "Au cours des ans les constructions de la Terrasse inférieure, autels, 'Hérôon,' 'Édifice A' et bases de trépieds ont été abondamment pillées: l'alignement des bases du sud' et une

partie des pierres de l'alignement Nord' ont disparu."

82. Guillon's discoveries were corroborated by Ducat and Llinas (1964, 1965), who found one more rectangular base of a tripod on the axis of a line of worked blocks running southeast–northwest to the east of the south branch of Guillon's south alignment. This led Ducat and Llinas (1964, p. 856, figs. 4, 7–9) to interpret these stones as belonging to tripod bases as well. If they are correct, the path leading to the terrace of the temple was lined on both sides with tripods, and the awkward orientation of this alignment might have been dictated by the morphology of the ground. Ducat and Llinas (1964, pp. 856, 858, fig. 11) also discovered the fragment of another tripod base 200 m west of the sanctuary and close to the path leading from Akraiphia to Kastraki.

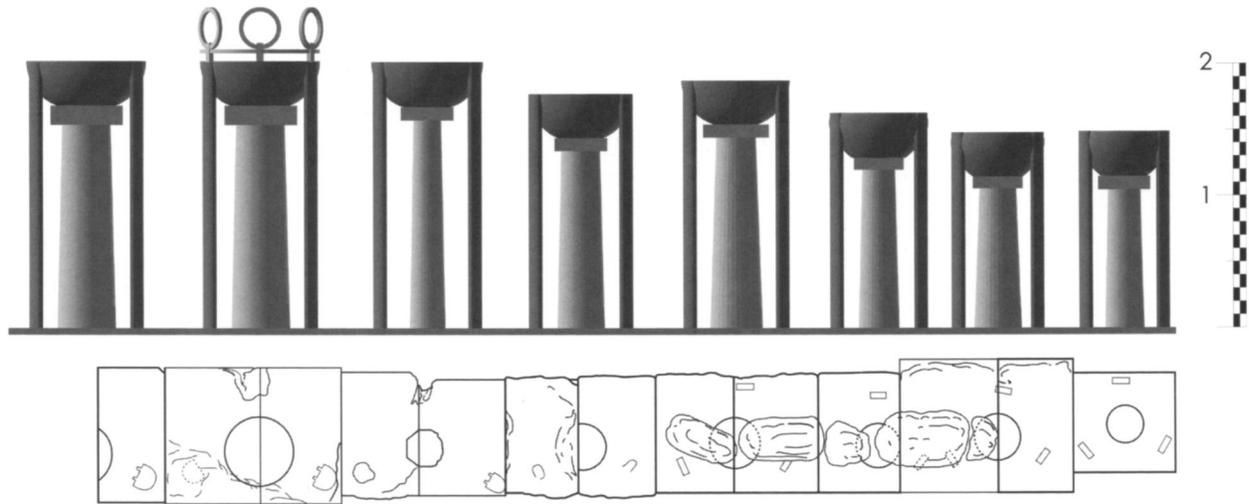


Figure 14. Tentative reconstruction of the north alignment of tripods at the sanctuary of Ptoios at Kastraki. Plan of bases after Guillon 1943a, pp. 30, 32, 34, pls. 5–7. N. Papalexandrou and B. Kierewicz

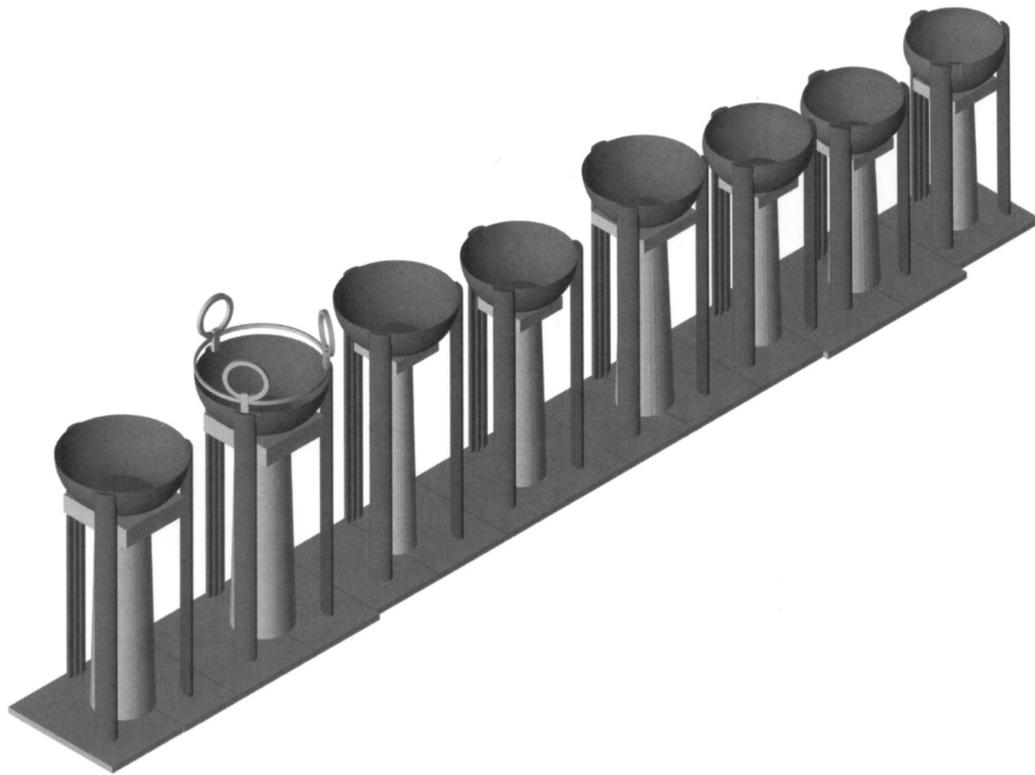


Figure 15. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the north alignment of tripods. N. Papalexandrou and B. Kierewicz

and fragmented), it is impossible today to assess whether the relative position of the tripods expressed a temporal or hierarchical order of sequence. Nevertheless, the linearity of this design must have existed from the beginning, and it was apparently respected, maintained, and reinforced with the passage of time.⁸³ The alignment of tripods monumentalized the approach to the sanctuary by emphasizing the pragmatic and notional axis between the sanctuary and the city of Akraiphia (Figs. 14, 15). In making their way to the sanctuary, visitors or participants in processions would have moved along this axis.⁸⁴ In doing so, they would have encountered each individual tripod in the context of all the other tripods that visually manifested the cultic history of the site and the worshipping community of Akraiphia.

In these experiential circumstances, each tripod was perceived as a link in a continuum of ritual practice that was infinitely expandable in space and time. The directional force created by the arrangement of tripods on either side of this “voie des trépieds” must have governed the mood and movement of isolated visitors or participants in formal processions.⁸⁵ It is possible that each tripod was a station for a pause allowing the enactment of a memorial gesture linked with the reading of the dedicatory inscription.⁸⁶ Moreover, at the southwest corner of the lower terrace—the spatial focus of the cultic events in honor of the hero—the tripods at the east end of the east–west branch of the south alignment and those that lined the path to the upper terrace (Figs. 8, 9, above) formed a backdrop for an area where there is evidence for the performance of sacrifices, meals, and other ritual events. These *dromena* were as significant for the cultic life of the Akraiphian community as the *tripodephoriai* that were perpetually reenacted in the two tripod alignments.⁸⁷ This congruence of actual and symbolic enactments of rituals must have intensified the sacred ambience of the site.⁸⁸

Finally, in the midst of their surrounding landscape, the size, material, and architectural impact of the tripods must have rendered them formidable landmarks. The prevailing east–west axis of their arrangement visually punctuated the connection between the sanctuary and the *astu* of Akraiphia. This effect can only be imagined today but it must have been a striking one, especially if we consider it from the vantage point of a higher altitude, as found at Perdikovrysi or along the paths leading there from Thebes or elsewhere (Fig. 16). If the splendid rock that hangs over the sanctuary of Perdikovrysi was the unmistakable physical attribute of Apollo Ptoios, the tripods of the hero came to form, ca. 530–450 B.C., commensurable cultural attributes of the sanctuary.

83. Guillon 1943b, p. 59. As Jones (2002) has shown (based mostly on representations of tripods in the figurative arts), the paratactic arrangement of monumental tripod cauldrons seems to have been practiced as early as the 8th century B.C.

84. On processions and their significance in the social life of communities and the delimitation of their physical and conceptual surroundings, see Connor 1987; Polignac 1995; Graf 1996.

85. Guillon 1943b, p. 57.

86. Xenophon's recommendations (*Eq. Mag.* 3.2) for the enactment of processions and dances in Athens during the Dionysia and other festivals allow us to speculate on the nature of staged events that people experienced at the sanctuary at Kastraki.

87. Ducat and Llinas 1964; Ekroth 1998, pp. 122–123, 128. Guillon calculated that the largest tripods of both alignments were nos. 13, 14, and 15, i.e., the easternmost tripods of the

south alignment (Figs. 8, 9). Tripod 15, the largest (overall height close to 3 m; Guillon 1943b, p. 54, table III), was set up at the spot where the south alignment turns south and forms the most prominent and imposing backdrop of the performative space of the lower terrace. See Guillon 1943b, pp. 47–48.

88. Redundancy of symbolic expression, material or other, is an unmistakable element of sacred space; Renfrew 1985, pp. 14–15.



Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct the spatial arrangement of tripods in other contexts, such as at Orchomenos or Thebes. One wonders whether the many tripods at Orchomenos were set up to create a meaningful paratactic sequence, as was the case at Akraiphia. The Street of the Tripods and numerous other monuments in Athens would have served as even grander examples to follow, at least in terms of urban planning and monumental effects.⁸⁹ Although the ambience of the Theban sanctuaries is now completely lost, we may presume that here, too, each venerable relic was positioned with careful planning and systematic curatorship.⁹⁰

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The history of Boiotian tripods is only one chapter of a much larger history of religious symbols and practices that varied from one regional culture of Greece to another. Tucked as it was between Attica and Phokis—both regions with older and distinctive uses of tripods—Boiotia invested the panhellenic tripod with meanings deriving from local social and historical circumstances.

89. On the Street of the Tripods, see Choremi-Spetsieri 1994. See also Matthaiou 1994, pp. 183–188, for the discussion and reconstruction of a choregic monument that featured a parataxis of three monumental tripods celebrating victories in dithyrambic contests at the City Dionysia. The effect of the arrangement of tripods along the Street of the Tripods is exemplified today by

the Lysikrates monument; Camp 2001, pp. 147–148; Alemdar 2000. See also Amandry 1976 and 1977 for the publication of numerous tripod bases from Athens (5th and 4th centuries B.C.). The absence of discussion of their original arrangement in spatial context is largely owing to the displacement or reuse of the surviving bases of the tripod monuments. The same holds true

Figure 16. The sanctuary at Kastraki in its physical context, June 2006. Modern Akraiphnion is visible at the far right. Photo taken from the modern road leading from Akraiphia to the sanctuary of Apollo at Perdikovrysi. Photo N. Papalexandrou

at Delos; Amandry and Ducat 1973.

90. Guillon (1943b, pp. 57–62) discusses in detail various pieces of evidence regarding monumental *suntagmata* of tripods in ancient Greece. See in particular his mention of Mommsen's hypothesis that the tripods at the Hismenion were set up "le long d'une voie unissant l'Herakléion et l'Isménion" (Guillon 1943b, p. 58, n. 3).

Boiotia is probably the only region in the Greek world that offers an abundance of material, epigraphic, and literary evidence for reconstructing the dedicatory uses and meanings of tripods in their social contexts and physical settings. I have attempted to elucidate the Boiotian life of tripods in diachronic perspective by synthesizing this evidence, emphasizing the significance of individual and collective dedications in public settings. In the distinctly Boiotian rite of the *tripodephoria*, the ritual usage of the tripods constituted the symbolic actualization of power relations between the dominant center and its periphery.

At the Akraiphian sanctuary of Ptoios at Kastraki, it is possible to reconstruct both the physical ambience of the sanctuary and the collective rites associated with the dedications. The corporate nature of the offering community of Akraiphia is reflected in the physical appearance of the tripod dedications at Kastraki. The tripod cauldrons were meant to shape the space around them, functioning as three-dimensional entities, precisely like statuary or architecture. Just as the aural, chromatic, and reflective properties of the sanctuary affected the senses and minds of the worshippers, the architectural quality of the monumental tripods also influenced the experience of cult practice at Kastraki.

APPENDIX

RECONSTRUCTING THE TRIPOD ALIGNMENTS

The reconstructions of the tripod alignments shown in Figures 14 and 15 are based on Guillon's precisely documented measurements, his careful considerations, and his own reconstruction of an average-sized tripod, reproduced here in Figure 11.⁹¹ Guillon devised two alternative formulas to estimate the size, proportions, and overall format of the tripods at Kastraki.⁹² He based his reconstruction of proportions on representations of tripods on vases and other media of the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C.⁹³ He estimated an approximate proportion of the height of a tripod (tripod base not included) to width (understood as the diameter of the cauldron at the rim): $H = 4R$. In this equation, H = the height of the tripod cauldron, and R = the radius of the circular cauldron, measured on the base as the distance between the center of the central column and the inner face of the leg.

The only direct, physical evidence that Guillon had at his disposal for estimating the height of the tripod cauldrons came from three completely preserved central columns found at Kastraki. These three columns featured a standard ratio of $H = 5D$ (H = height of tripod column, and D = lower diameter of column). Guillon found that his calculations of the height of the tripods on the basis of the $4R$ ratio were, in almost all cases, incompatible with those calculated on the basis of the $H = 5D$ ratio, estimated from the preserved columnar supports.

The difficulties of this reconstructive exercise are exemplified by the case of the north alignment, in which the tripod monuments were generally smaller than those of the more grandiose south alignment. Guillon concluded that an estimation of the height of the tripods on the basis of the $H = 4R$ ratio would result in squat monuments with disproportionately thick central columns. The application of the $H = 5D$ ratio (with the necessary adjustments), however, resulted in a disproportionately high or attenuated tripod.

To solve this problem, Guillon proposed that the ideal congruence of both $H = 4R$ and $H = 5D$ would be possible if the tripod cauldrons of the north alignment had legs that inclined inward. Thus, the cauldron would have been much wider than the estimation made on the basis of the radius measured on the base.⁹⁴ Following a similar reasoning, he suggested that the tripods of the south alignment, all of which featured slimmer, more

91. Guillon 1943a; 1943b, pp. 45–57.

92. Guillon 1943b, pp. 54–55.

93. Guillon 1943b, pl. IV.

94. Guillon 1943b, p. 47.

elegant central supports, should be reconstructed with outward-leaning legs. In general, he concluded that all tripods presented an evolutionary tendency toward balanced, light proportions and format, exemplified by the tripod he reconstructed graphically.⁹⁵ He emphasized, however, that in general the type of tripods attested at Kastraki remained throughout “assez peu varié: la régularité y frappe, plus que la diversité.”⁹⁶

In the graphic reconstructions of the north alignment presented above (Figs. 14, 15), I have not followed Guillon’s reconstruction (Fig. 11) in every detail. Contrary to his suggestions, the tripods have straight legs, precisely like the tripods represented on vases of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. Moreover, they appear somewhat squatter than those envisaged by Guillon. Given the current state of the evidence, it is impossible to propose an accurate reconstruction of each tripod. I have attempted instead to offer an approximation of what these monuments might have looked like when they stood as an integrated group in the sanctuary of Ptoios.

95. Guillon 1943b, p. 49, fig. 3.

96. Guillon 1943b, p. 53.

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