

A NEW LOOK AT OLD FINDS:  
THE BRONZE HANDLE NAM X15463 FROM THESSALY  
AND THE SANCTUARY OF ATHENA POLIAS AT PHTHIOTIC THEBES\*

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This paper begins with a presentation of a late 4th century BC bronze handle which, albeit known in scholarship, has only been discussed in passing in treatises of bronze vessels and wrongly attributed to Pherai. Recent study of Apostolos S. Arvanitopoulos' archives and first-hand autopsy in the National Archaeological Museum at Athens have revealed that the handle was discovered during Arvanitopoulos' excavations in the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (fig. 1),<sup>1</sup> situated on the volcanic hill Kastro, about 1.5 km north from the modern village Mikrothives (formerly Aketsi). The relevant archival material will be discussed in the second part of this article since it demonstrates the challenges faced when dealing with finds from early, poorly documented, archaeological investigations. The study of the available evidence, archives and the artefacts themselves permit us to attempt a new presentation of the sanctuary of Athena Polias and a reassessment of its significance, especially during the Archaic and Early Classical periods.

**I. The handle NAM X15463:** Description, date, workshop (figs 2-5).

The handle NAM X15463 was first mentioned by Winifred Lamb in her 1929 monograph on bronzes, where its provenance was wrongly stated as Velestino;<sup>2</sup> it was subsequently discussed, in brief, in the seminal article on bronze plates by Ulf Jantzen, where it was illustrated,<sup>3</sup> and more recently by Chiara Tarditi in her study of Archaic and Early Classical bronze vessels from the Athenian Acropolis.<sup>4</sup>

*Dimensions:* L.: 11.6 cm; W.: 4.6 cm; vessel D.: 16 cm.  
*Condition:* intact; green patina; slightly oxidized surface especially on the right part of the rod handle, and also on the heads of the horses, where the features are not clear; some discolouration on the rod, especially on its right half.  
*Description:* Solid flat handle terminating in Pegasus foreparts. Its plain semi-circular rod is decorated by 21 flat tongues, outlined by engraved lines. The upper and lower edges of the rod are defined by engraved lines. The ends of the handle are moulded in the shape of

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site, and Aimilia Kalogianni for her help in the Athanasakeion Archaeological Museum of Volos (henceforth: Volos Museum); Nikolas Papazarkadas and Sofia Kravaritou for their constructive comments. Giorgos Kavvadias and Christina Avronidaki have been instrumental for the success of this project; I cannot thank them enough.

1. I use the term Phthiotic Thebes even when referring to periods prior to the 4th century BC for reasons of convenience, as we do not know the name of the pre-4th century settlement on the site. Phylake is a plausible, but still tentative, candidate (see below 105-106, and STÄHLIN 1934; DECOURT *et al.* 2004, 716-718, p. 440 (Phylake), 440 (Pherai)).
2. LAMB 1929, 137, where she characterized it as "inferior" to the Acropolis and Dodona examples).
3. JANTZEN 1938/1939, 144, no. 24, 148, pl. 34.2. The handle was also catalogued in E. Z 1965, 34 no. L95a.
4. TARDITI 2016, 294, 299, fig. 81, 391.

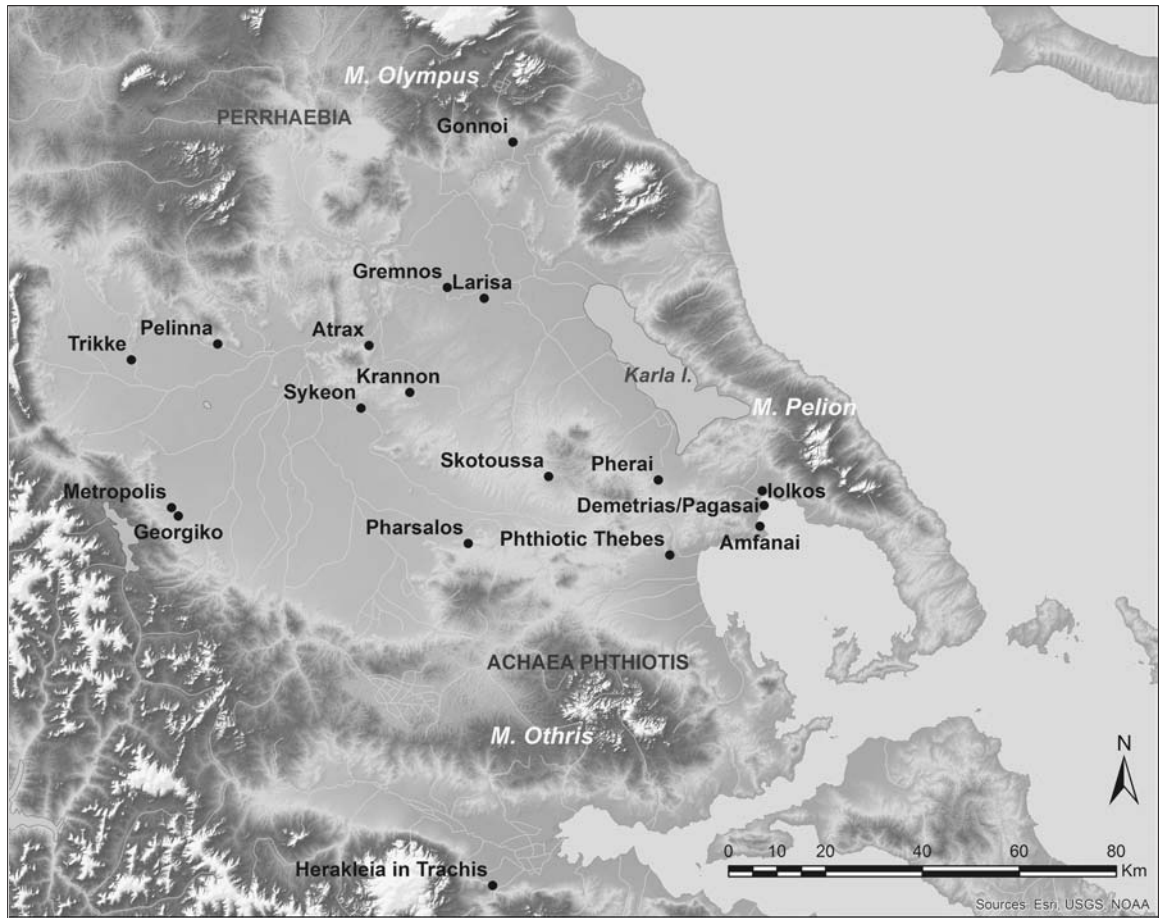


Fig. 1. Map of Thessaly showing sites mentioned in the text.



Fig. 2. View of the handle NAM X15463  
(photo M. Stamatopoulou).

Fig. 3. Back side of handle NAM X15463  
(photo M. Stamatopoulou)



Fig. 4. Details of the handle NAM X15463 (photo M. Stamatopoulou).

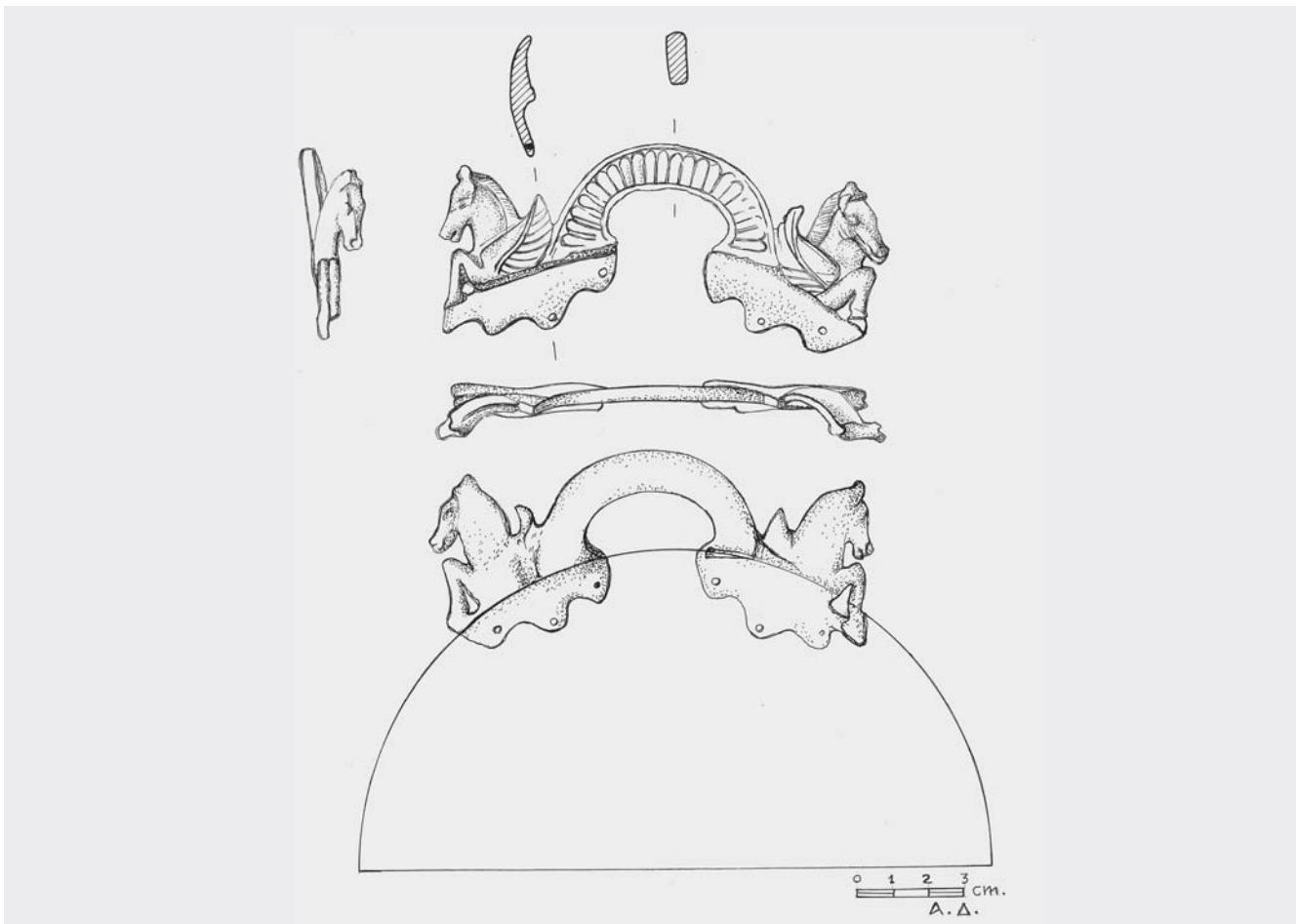


Fig. 5. Drawing of the handle NAM X15463 (A. Drigkopoulou).

winged horse protomes. Only the front part of the horse is shown, with its front legs joined, bent towards the chest. The horse's head is slightly turned upwards. Its mane has a raised tuft on the forehead, while on the rear side of the neck the strands are indicated by short parallel lines that are well preserved (fig. 2b). The horse's features are naturalistically rendered; although the surface is worn, it is evident that it had well-shaped ears, eyes, muzzle and mouth. The wings are shown with overlapping, upturned feathers; the main feather is outlined by a double engraved line while the other feathers by single engraved lines.

The back side of the handle is plain (fig. 3); the attachment is in the shape of a trilobate plaque. Three holes are still visible, parts of the nails are still preserved. *Discussion:* Our handle belongs to a type of plate that was popular in the second half of the 6th century BC, of which nearly 20 examples survive today.<sup>5</sup> The intact plate from Dodona in Berlin gives us a good idea of what such plates looked like.<sup>6</sup> The body of the vessel is shallow, occasionally decorated with incised motifs, while the decoration of the flat handles consists of snakes, horse or Pegasus foreparts, rarely other animals, or floral motifs. Tarditi has pointed out that although the horse was not a very common motif in the decoration of bronze vessels it is very frequently found on plates. Since most originate from the Athenian Acropolis she has explained the popularity of the motif in light of current fashions in the artistic repertoire of the city. As for the winged horses, Tarditi interpreted the choice of the motif as a "resumption of an oriental decorative motif" rather than an allusion to the Pegasus myth.<sup>7</sup>

The date of these plates, similarly to many bronze vessels, derives primarily from stylistic comparisons to other

examples and, in our case, to representations of horses in other media.<sup>8</sup> The earliest handles bearing the forepart of a horse or Pegasus are dated in 550-540 BC, for example the Acropolis handle NAM 7125,<sup>9</sup> and the slightly later specimens from Dodona and the Acropolis (formerly NAM 6673),<sup>10</sup> as the shape and features of the horse are stylized and quite schematic and the form of the neck of the horse and the feathers quite stiff. Later examples, of the late 6th century, display a more naturalistic and three-dimensional rendering of the horse's form.<sup>11</sup> Both Jantzen and Tarditi have dated the Thessalian handle to the last twenty years of the 6th century, because of the more "plastic" rendering of the features of the horse, the slight upward curve of its neck, the shape of the wings.<sup>12</sup>

Jantzen tentatively attributed our handle to a northern Peloponnesian workshop as he considered the Dodona and the Thessalian plates different from the others, which he had attributed to a Corinthian workshop. He characterized their craftsmanship as "less careful".<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile Conrad Stibbe and recently Tarditi have persuasively shown that the Athenian metalworking production in the 6th century BC was far more active and influential than was previously thought.<sup>14</sup> Tarditi has proposed that this type of plate with flat semi-circular rod handle was an Athenian creation, because of the distribution of the type, with more than half of the known examples originating from the Athenian Acropolis, stylistic and formal features.<sup>15</sup> She has argued for an Athenian origin for all surviving plates with semi-circular handles and horse or Pegasus foreparts, the Thessalian one included, as she sees very close similarities in style, form and structure among the known examples.<sup>16</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to challenge Tarditi's identification, however, we should note that

5. JANTZEN 1938/1939; BUCHHOLZ – WANGENHEIM 1984; TARDITI 2016, 210-211, 292.

6. Dodona plate: Berlin, Antikensammlung misc. inv. 10588: JANTZEN 1938/39, 144 no. 21, pl. 45.2; WALTER-KARYDI 1981, 20, cat. 6, 27, fig. 26; DIETERLE 2007, 222, fig. 111, 384; PICCININI 2015, 143, no. 117. For a similar, also intact plate of unknown provenance today in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, inv. no. 1986.322.2 (formerly N. Schimmel Collection) see BUCHHOLZ – WANGENHEIM 1984; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/255879?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&where=Greece&ft=Schimmel&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=14> (accessed on 23.3.2019).

7. TARDITI 2016, 294, 315, note 678; also JANTZEN 1938/1939, 152.

8. JANTZEN 1938/1939, 148-153; TARDITI 2016, 293-294, 319-320 on the dating criteria.

9. JANTZEN 1938/1939, 142, no. 2, pl. 31.4; TARDITI 2016, 210.

10. For the Dodona plate see above note 6; for the Acropolis plate: JANTZEN 1938/1939, 142, no. 4, pl. 31.1; TARDITI 2016, 211.

11. Acropolis, NAM 19811: TARDITI 2016, 211; Acropolis, without inv.: JANTZEN 1938/39, 143, no. 9, pl. 34.2; TARDITI 2016, 211.

12. JANTZEN 1938/1939, 153; TARDITI 2016, 294, note 558; 299, fig. 81; 307.

13. JANTZEN 1938/1939, 155.

14. STIBBE 2000, esp. 149-157; TARDITI 2016, 297-322.

15. TARDITI 2016, 292, 299, fig. 81.

16. TARDITI 2016, 294, 58, 299, fig. 81; 307, Appendix 4, p. 391.

despite the apparent similarities of the various specimens, especially those originating from the Athenian Acropolis, there is equally considerable variation in the rendering of various details, for example the position of the horses' legs, the rendering of the feathers or the mane of the horse, the tongue motif on the flat rod.

As mentioned above, our plate has been characterized as “less careful” or “inferior” to the Acropolis and Dodona examples, a comment that is not entirely justified. It is true that the decoration of the rod of the handle is simpler than in other examples, where the tongues are either concave or accentuated by double rows of engraved lines and their upper and lower borders consist of a row of raised beads and a row of beads and/or discs respectively; in our example the tongues are flat and the borders are plain.<sup>17</sup> Similarly in a few examples the lower edge of the handle is decorated by a row of small, engraved triangles,<sup>18</sup> while our example is plain. The horse's forepart is very well handled, although details on the features do not survive; there are affinities in the rendering of the feathers to the Dodona plate, although the latter is earlier and more stylized. Whether all these elements can serve as an argument for different origin for some plates is difficult to conclude. Although the Thessalian example could have been produced in an Athenian workshop given its similarity to various late 6th century plates from the Acropolis,<sup>19</sup> other examples look significantly different from the Acropolis specimens, such as the pair of handles from Acragas in Palermo.<sup>20</sup> In conclusion, although I find Tarditi's proposal for the Thessalian plate plausible I think it may not hold as well for the entirety of the examples.

Plates were common dedications in sanctuaries of the Archaic period. As already pointed out, most known

examples come from the Athenian Acropolis; others were found at Olympia, Dodona, Perachora. The examples with the horse/Pegasus handles were discovered in the Athenian Acropolis, Dodona, and Acragas.<sup>21</sup> Tarditi in her analysis of the distribution of the plates considers their discovery in Greek sanctuaries of the mainland as a feature revealing attendance by Athenian devotees, whereas she interprets the presence of plates outside the Greek mainland as a reflection of commercial and trade routes and specific trade interests, an explanation that is rather narrow in scope. It is well known that the range of long-distance activities that could lead to imported “luxury” items being dedicated at a site is wide and the reasons behind dedication complex and varied.<sup>22</sup> What about our plate?

## II. NAM X15463 in context: The sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of (later) Phthiotic Thebes

### a. The evidence from archives

The Thessalian provenance of our handle is certain but, instead of Pherai,<sup>23</sup> it was actually discovered on 19 August 1908, during Arvanitopoulos' excavations at the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (fig. 6), to the east of the eastern wall of the temple, near the bases visible on fig. 11, in the so-called “third layer”.<sup>24</sup>

Crucial for the identification of the provenance of our bronze plate handle and for understanding the range and number of dedications at the sanctuary is the archival material of Arvanitopoulos' activities in Thessaly. This consists of photographs and drawings of finds,<sup>25</sup> the

17. TARDITI 2016, 210-211, 293. Compare our plate to Acropolis, no inv. and NAM 6673: TARDITI 2016, 211.

18. Acropolis, NAM 6673 & 19811: TARDITI 2016, 211; the Dodona plate (see above note 6).

19. Athens, NAM inv. 6672: TARDITI 2016, 210.

20. For the Acragas plate: JANTZEN 1938/1939, 145, no. 28, pl. 39; notice the treatment of the horses' eyes, the mane and the feathers. TARDITI 2016, 294 downplays the differences.

21. For a list: TARDITI 293-294, 315, note 678.

22. GUNTER 2009, esp. 126-131, 142-154; TARDITI 2016, 316-318, 325.

23. The inventory of the NAM lists its provenance as Pherai: I would like to thank G. Kavvadias for the information.

24. For an image of the general area of the excavation: ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 182, fig. 6, left half of the image. For the plate see: Αρχ. Αρβ 22: 19.8.1907. In the same layer he found parts of a large bronze vessel, fibulae, a clay figurine of Athena (18.8.1908), parts of other clay figurines, two pomegranate pendants, fibulae, rings, a bronze sandaled foot of the 5th century BC, a bronze rooster, vases with figured scenes and a sherd with a grafitto. The handle is also mentioned in the “Inventory”, box 6, no. 5 and shown in a photograph (fig. 6) copies of which exist in ΔΔΕΑΜ (formerly in the Greek Epigraphic Society) and in the archives of the ASA, A/A 8726.

25. For a discussion of the relevant archival material see: ΣΤΑΜΑΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ 2004-2009, esp. 638 and figs 3-5; ΣΤΑΜΑΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ 2012, 23-24.

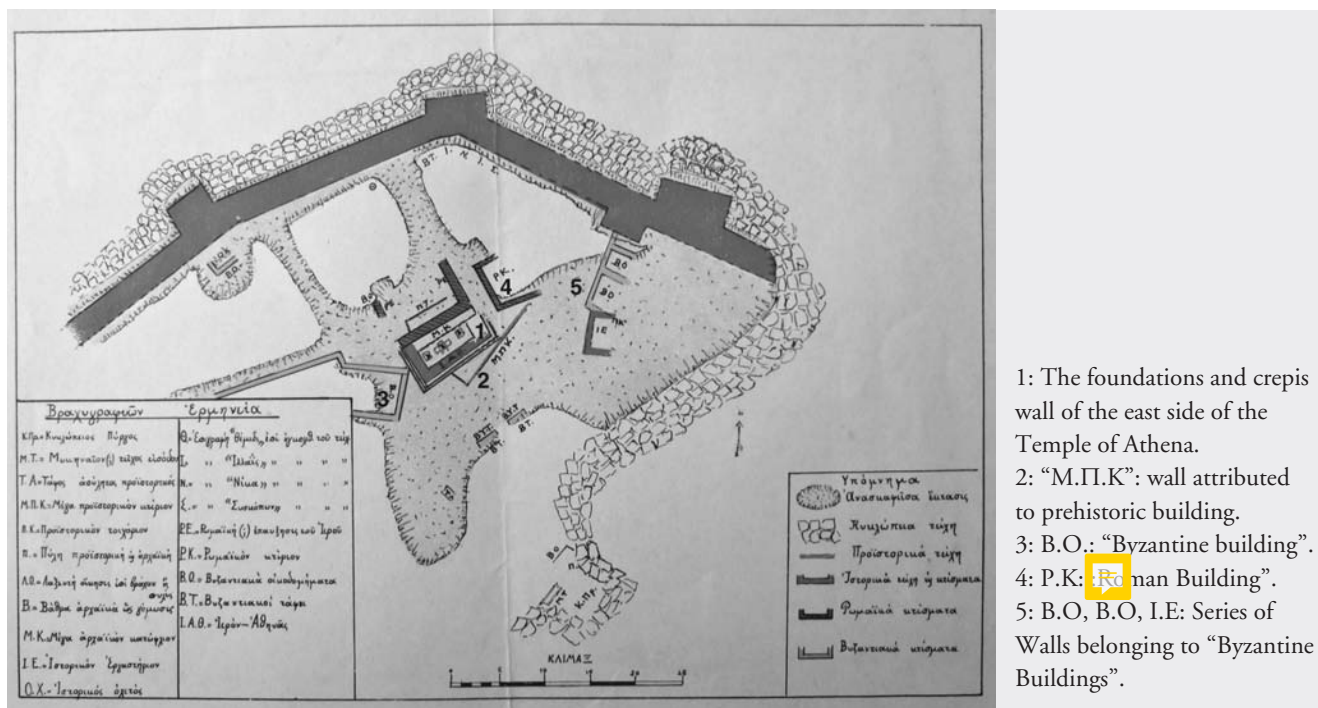


Fig. 6. Plan of A.S. Arvanitopoulos discoveries in the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (© Greek Epigraphic Society, ΔΔΕΑΜ).

excavation daybooks,<sup>26</sup> lists of objects sent to the NAM for conservation,<sup>27</sup> and the documents pertaining to the notorious criminal investigation of Arvanitopoulos prompted by the theft of the gold wreath from Demetrias that was subsequently found in Copenhagen.<sup>28</sup> Their study and an examination of artefacts in the relevant museums have shown that most of the bronze votives from the sanctuary of Athena Polias, now in Athens (fig. 7), have been wrongly catalogued as originating

from the Sanctuary of Zeus Thaulios and E[redacted] at Pherai,<sup>29</sup> and at least one vase, an early 5th century black-glaze skyphos with the graffito ΣΑΜΙΑ, now in Volos, has been attributed to Pharsalos (fig. 8).<sup>30</sup>

This confusion can be easily explained by the inadequate publication of Arvanitopoulos' excavations in Thessaly and the complex museum history (display, storage, recording) of his finds.<sup>31</sup> Arvanitopoulos' brief reports of his investigations at Phthiotic Thebes in the

26. The excavations are discussed in five daybooks (in the archives of the ASA): Αρχ. Αρβ 6, Αρχ. Αρβ. 7, Αρχ. Αρβ. 21, Αρχ. Αρβ. 22, Αρχ. Αρβ. 23.

27. E.g. the handwritten catalogue in the archive of the Greek Epigraphic Society (now in the ΔΔΕΑΜ) that was compiled by Arvanitopoulos in Volos on the 3rd of September 1914 and is titled: "Ευρετήριο Χαλκών Θεσσαλίας προς καθαρισμόν εν Αθήναις. Κιβώτια και κντία χαλκών κτλ. του Αθανασακείου Μουσείου Βόλου μεταφερόμενα εις Αθήνας προς καθαρισμόν. 7 Αυγούστου - 3 Σεπτεμβρίου 1914" (henceforth: "Inventory").

28. The relevant documents are parts of the large dossier titled: ΥΠΠΕ 19: ΖΗΜΙΑΙ ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ (1912-1932) kept in ΔΔΕΑΜ, especially the detailed report, compiled by Ioannis Chrysafis, Georgios Kapsalis, Nikolaos Louvaris, and Konstantinos Romaios that contains numerous documents that discuss specific antiquities.

29. For example the bronze pendants whose inv. nos are written on fig. 7 were catalogued in KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1979 as originating from Pherai: NAM X15498 (KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1979, no. 748, pl. 41),

15497/1 (*ibid.* 733, pl. 39), 15613 (*ibid.*, no. 1559, pl. 90), 15711 (*ibid.* 188, pl. 63), 15509 (*ibid.*, no. 914, pl. 50). For the bronzes from Pherai see: BÉQUIGNON 1937, 67-96; ORFANOU 2015.

30. Volos Museum K2911. The skyphos, of Attic Type A, can be dated to the 2nd quarter of the 5th century BC on the basis of its shape (SPARKES – TALCOTT 1970, nos 342-343, fig. 4, pl. 16) and letter forms, notably the alpha, type A3 in JEFFERY 1961, 96 with close parallel on the stele of Polyxena from Larisa: ΔΟΥΛΑΓΕΡΗ-ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΑΟΓΛΟΥ 2000, 80-82, no. Α12, pl. 36; ΜΠΟΣΝΑΚΗΣ 2013, 249-250, pl. 9.

31. The reasons behind the dearth of documentation in the Volos Archaeological Museum prior to 1925 are too complex to discuss in this paper. See Christos Karouzos' report to the Ministry dated 4.12.1925 (no. 40, Protocol no. 56474 in the ΔΔΕΑΜ). Regular inventories began when Nikolaos I. Giannopoulos took over the direction of the museum.

Praktika of 1907 and 1908 are too summary and accompanied by a few illustrations of the site and finds but lack an overall plan of the site. Whereas his 1907 report discusses the site's monuments in topographical terms,<sup>32</sup> in the longer 1908 report he chose to present his findings according to "chronological layers/stages", a description that fails to give a coherent overall impression of the temple and other built structures unearthed on the acropolis.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, a plethora of finds from Phthiotic Thebes were transferred to Athens in at least two occasions, in 1914<sup>34</sup> and in 1924;<sup>35</sup> an unspecified number of finds was returned to Volos in 1931.<sup>36</sup> In 1940 at least ten small boxes of bronzes and other finds from Phthiotic Thebes were on display in the Museum of Almyros, later to be moved to Volos.<sup>37</sup> To-date there is no comprehensive catalogue of Arvanitopoulos' discoveries from Phthiotic Thebes; the finds are dispersed between the Museums of Volos and Almyros in Thessaly, and the NAM.

This unfortunate state of affairs has seriously affected the scholarly attention this sanctuary has received. With the exception of a brief excavation season aiming to clarify the stratigraphy on the acropolis,<sup>38</sup> Arvanitopoulos' excavations remain the only extensive investigations on

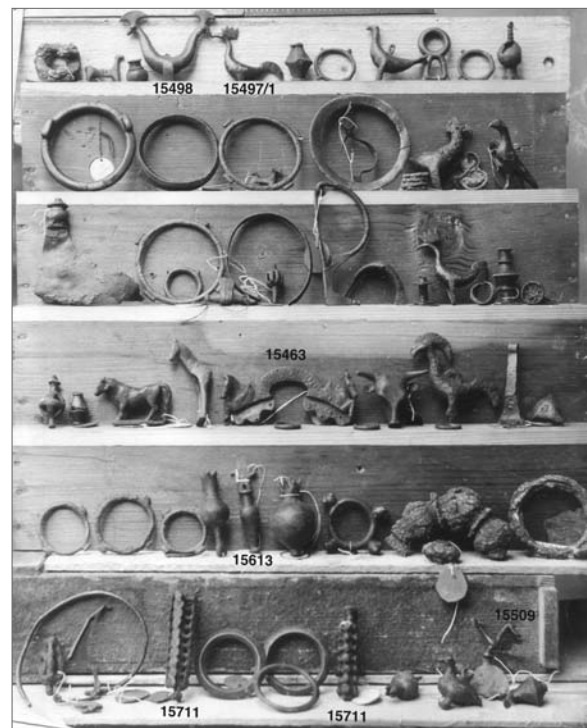


Fig. 7. Bronze finds from the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (© Greek Epigraphic Society, ΔΔΕΑΜ).



Fig. 8. Pottery and other finds from the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (© Greek Epigraphic Society, ΔΔΕΑΜ). On the 3rd row from the bottom, 2nd from the left is the skyphos base with the graffito ΣΑΜΙΑ.

32. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, 164-169, pls B fig. 4, Γ fig. 5.  
 33. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, esp. 163-201; see also ΒΟΥΖΑΞΑΚΗΣ 1997, 225-227, 237-239.  
 34. "Inventory".  
 35. ΔΔΕΑΜ: ΥΠΗΓΕ 19: ΖΗΜΙΑΙ ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ (1912-1932), esp. the document no. 40 of 1.1.1928 titled 'Περὶ τῶν ἀρχαιοτήτων τοῦ Μουσείου Βόλου' signed by K. Romaios. It is clear that in 1924 Arvanitopoulos sent to Athens (originally planned for 1922) 33 boxes containing antiquities from various Thessalian sites. Some were sent directly to the NAM while about ten boxes were sent to the Annex of the Ministry of Education where Arvanitopoulos had his office; these were subsequently moved to the NAM. In the summer of 1925 the then director Konstantinos Kourouniotis opened a number of boxes (nos 14, 16, 25, 30, 35) in Arvanitopoulos' absence and their contents were displayed in the Museum; these were later recorded by K. Romaios.  
 36. Seventeen boxes were returned to the Volos Museum on 31 July 1931 (Protocol no. 62072/2292); see also N. Giannopoulos' telegram no. 67889/3120, of 3.11.1930.  
 37. Very useful is the inventory of the Almyros Archaeological Museum compiled by N. I. Giannopoulos and S. Kourtis following the no. 125038/4556 letter from the Ministry (dated 30.11.1940); besides the ten boxes containing bronze and iron objects from Phthiotic Thebes there were also many prehistoric vessels, as well as sherds and parts of figurines. ΒΟΥΖΑΞΑΚΗΣ (1997, 227) was able to identify 550 prehistoric sherds from Arvanitopoulos' excavations on the acropolis.  
 38. ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994; ΒΟΥΖΑΞΑΚΗΣ 1997.

the site. As his discoveries remain unpublished, scholars have been reluctant to discuss the site in the context of other contemporary cult places in Thessaly, e.g. the sanctuary of Enodia and Zeus Thaulios at Pherai, or the sanctuary of Athena Itonia at Philia.<sup>39</sup> Thus our appreciation of the sanctuary's significance has been seriously hampered.

It is beyond the scope of this brief paper to fully analyse Arvanitopoulos' work on the site, but a brief description of his findings on the acropolis is necessary in order to understand the findspot of our plate and the sanctuary itself. Contrary to the *Praktika* reports, his descriptions in the excavation daybooks are quite detailed and accompanied by numerous sketches of the site that aid our understanding of his progress, while the unpublished illustrations and drawings allow us to understand the proximity of later buildings to the temple.

### b. The excavation and building remains

Arvanitopoulos focused his investigations on the part of the acropolis at its highest point, near the fortification walls. He excavated for two seasons, for eleven days in June 1907 and for three and a half months in 1908 (1 July to 4 October). On the blocks of the fortification walls, a number of inscriptions were preserved, carved in letters of the 4th and 3rd century BC, bearing dedications to Themis, Illais, Nika, and the dedication of an altar to Eirene by Stratokles, Phalaikos and the Syskopoi (guards).<sup>40</sup>

Near the walls and to the south, the key find in 1907 was the partially preserved foundation of a temple (fig. 6 no. 1, fig. 9), a large number of artefacts, and at deeper

levels clear evidence of prehistoric activity of the Middle, Late and Final Neolithic.<sup>41</sup> His understanding of the situation at the site was hampered by the walls of later buildings and by his excavation methodology.<sup>42</sup>

He investigated the temple by opening a number of long trenches, originally radiating from the fortification walls to the temple,<sup>43</sup> and, after he had discovered the latter, by new trenches in front and to the east of the temple in order to refine the stratigraphy of the site.<sup>44</sup> Very near the surface were low walls belonging to various structures that he dated "not long after the 3rd century AD",<sup>45</sup> and four tile-covered graves.<sup>46</sup> Further below he found a distinct layer, which he called "Roman" or "Graeco-Roman" that was directly above the crepis of the temple.<sup>47</sup>

The temple was partially preserved (fig. 9); three courses of its eastern crepis wall survived, made of well-dressed ashlar blocks that were in second use. There was considerable disturbance at the site, for example the south-east corner of the temple had been destroyed by a later building, the so-called "Byzantine Building" (fig. 6 no. 3 = «B.O.»).<sup>48</sup> Arvanitopoulos lists the dimensions of the temple as 9.37 × 11.45 m,<sup>49</sup> however these should be considered as tentative until a new recording of the architectural remains is undertaken. Behind the crepis wall a number of stone bases for stelai and bronze statuettes were incorporated in the structure while other bases and fragments belonging to marble statuettes were found immediately above it;<sup>50</sup> a further base was found built on one of the long sides.<sup>51</sup> Moreover low walls, made of small stones and reused architectural material, were found behind and to the north of the crepis (fig. 10, fig.

39. A good example is MORGAN 2003, where the sanctuary of Zeus and Enodia at Pherai is discussed in pp. 135-140, Philia in pp. 140-142, while the Phthiotic Thebes sanctuary is mentioned briefly in one footnote (p. 141 n. 66, which is on pp. 258-259). Equally KILIAN 1975, 10 is very brief as only very few of the bronzes were available to him. MILI 2015 discusses the sanctuary in more detail but her analysis is problematic (see below note 92).

40. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 171-173; HEINZ 1998, 432-433, cat. nos 116-120 and 396-397, no. A28 (archeskopoi); MILI 2015, 44, also Appendix 1, nos 219, 256.

41. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, 167; ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 176-178.

42. See ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, pl. B, fig. 4 (= A/A 8535) for a photo that shows the early stages of excavation in the area of the temple, and the threshold found behind the temple wall to its N; also fig. 11.

43. See the sketches in: Αρχ. Αρβ. 21: 17.6.1908; also the photo in ASA A/A 8432 for the area in front of the crepis wall (excavated

towards the end of the 1908 season).

44. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 182, fig. 6. Very useful are the sketches in: Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 18.7.1908; Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 27.9.1908 and the photo A/A 8540 taken SW of the temple towards the E-NE.

45. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, 167; ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 174.

46. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 174.

47. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 175-176; sketch in Αρχ. Αρβ. 21: 21.6.1908 showing the stratigraphy of the site; also description in Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 1.7.1908, 18.7.1908.

48. See above note 42; also: Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 11.9.1908.

49. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 176.

50. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, 167, pl. Γ, fig. 5β-γ; ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 175. Αρχ. Αρβ. 6: 26.6.1906; Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 9.7.1908; see also the sketch in Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 11.9.1908.

51. Very informative are the sketches in Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 18.7.1908, and Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 9.9.1908.



*Fig. 9. View of the east side of the crepis wall of the temple of Athena (© ASA, A/A 8539).*



*Fig. 10. View of the excavations at Phthiotic Thebes from the north (© ASA, A/A 8541). In the foreground the Roman and later additions to the temple (1), the large threshold (2), the temple crepis wall viewed from the interior of the temple (3), one of the statuette bases mentioned by Arvanitopoulos (4), and "Roman Building" (5).*



Fig. 11. View of the excavation area in front of the temple (from SW to E-NE). The handle NAM X14563 was found near the two bases that are visible in front of the temple wall (shown by the arrows) (© ASA, A/A 8432).

6: «Ρωμαϊκή Επαύξησης»). A monumental marble threshold for a two-leaf door was found in second use, parallel to the crepis wall at the level of its upper step,<sup>52</sup> while coloured plaster was preserved both on the temple wall and on the later walls. Based on the stratigraphy of the site and pottery finds Arvanitopoulos attributed these later walls to a Roman-period transformation of the temple. Furthermore, he considered the crepis wall to be contemporary to the erection of the fortifications (which he assumed was in the 5th century),<sup>53</sup> which is now agreed to have occurred in the late 4th–early 3rd century BC.<sup>54</sup>

Arvanitopoulos found many rooftiles in the vicinity of the temple, one with a stamp which tentatively reads [Πολ]ιάδ[ος],<sup>55</sup> and behind the crepis wall near the threshold a clay lion head from a cover tile, which he dated to the “Archaic period”.<sup>56</sup> He assumed that the early temple was distyle in antis and that its superstructure was made of mudbrick with a wooden roof,<sup>57</sup> statements that have been repeated in modern scholarship.<sup>58</sup>

The temple wall partially stepped on an earlier wall, built of small stones, with a slightly different orientation; it was evidently earlier than the temple and

52. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, pl. B, fig. 4 (foreground); he apparently found many nails and traces of wood belonging to a two-leaf door at this spot: Αρχ. Αρβ. 6: 23-26.6.1907 and sketch of the threshold by the page dated 23.6.2907.

53. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 168.

54. DECOURT *et.al.* 2004, 717-718; ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 2012.

55. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 177; Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 15.7.1908: it was

found beside the first step of the temple. It has not yet been possible to locate the rooftile.

56. Αρχ. Αρβ. 21: 25.6.1908; it was found in the NW part of the temple, between its wall and the later ones. It was located in the NAM in August 2018.

57. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 177.

58. ΜΙΛΙ 2015, 341.

Arvanitopoulos initially characterised it as a “prehistoric sanctuary” and later as a “prehistoric building” (fig. 6 no. 2: “M.Π.K”, fig. 9).<sup>59</sup> At the level of the lower step of the crepis and over a large area in front and to the east and northeast of the temple he found a very large number of clay and bronze artefacts of votive character which will be discussed below. At deeper levels he found pottery fragments, which he described as Geometric and a few Mycenaean, while further below were distinct layers datable to the Neolithic period.<sup>60</sup>

East of the temple, he excavated part of a building that was originally characterized as “Byzantine” and later as “Roman” (fig. 6 no. 4: «P.K.», fig. 10 to the left of the temple),<sup>61</sup> and further east, a series of walls starting from the fortification walls and continuing to the south that he dated to “Byzantine and earlier periods” (fig. 6 no. 5: “B.O, B.O., I.E.”).<sup>62</sup>

### c. The Finds

Arvanitopoulos discovered a very large number of artefacts in the sanctuary. Despite references in the excavation daybooks to specific finds their exact findspot cannot be precisely determined, even in cases such as that of our handle, because the description is vague, detailed plans are missing, and many items, such as rings, do not have diagnostic features that would permit their easy identification.

In the upper level, the so-called “Byzantine”, he discovered many lamps bearing the cross and other relief decoration, glass finds etc.<sup>63</sup> In the level immediately below, just above the upper course of the temple wall, he mentions the discovery of numerous fragments of bases for statuettes as well as marble statuette fragments, and of fragmentary stelai, some bearing inscriptions. Of these only a few of the statuettes can be identified at present, the head of an Athena, part of a sandaled foot, a hand holding a piece of cloth.<sup>64</sup>



Fig. 12. Pottery, figurine and other finds from the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes (© Greek Epigraphic Society, ΔΔΕΑΜ).

Already in 1907 Arvanitopoulos had unearthed a significant number of clay statuettes and protomes depicting female figures (figs 8, 12). Some were found in the so-called “third layer” near the “Byzantine Building” and others in the area of the “Roman Building” and east of the temple.<sup>65</sup> Their exact number can no longer be ascertained, but it has been possible to identify, catalogue and study many of these terracottas in the NAM. Late Archaic female protomes of various types prevail (fig.

59. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 179, fig. 5 (P.K), 184; Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 28.8.1908 («ερό»); see ΒΟΥΖΑΞΑΚΗΣ 1997, 225-227 for a more detailed description of these remains. The question of the date of this wall must at present remain open.

60. ΒΟΥΖΑΞΑΚΗΣ 1997.

61. Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: sketch by date 18.7.1908; Αρχ. Αρβ. 23, 4.10.1908, with sketch.

62. Αρχ. Αρβ. 22, 16.7.1908-24.7.1908; Αρχ. Αρβ. 23, sketch by 27.9.1908.

63. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1908, 174.

64. He described these in Αρχ. Αρβ. 7: 12.8.1907. Two were illustrated in ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, pl. Γ, fig. 4 β (Athena head: Almyros Museum Λ643) and (part of hand), and in the unpublished photo ASA A/A 8450. They are in the Almyros Museum.

65. Some are described in Αρχ. Αρβ. 7: 12.8.1907. Their exact findspot cannot be recovered today, as many of the 1907 finds were retrieved from the excavation debris the following year: Αρχ. Αρβ. 21: 25.6.1908. One protome is illustrated in ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1907, pl. Γ, fig. 58. Many are illustrated in the unpublished photo: ASA A/A 8432 (bottom).

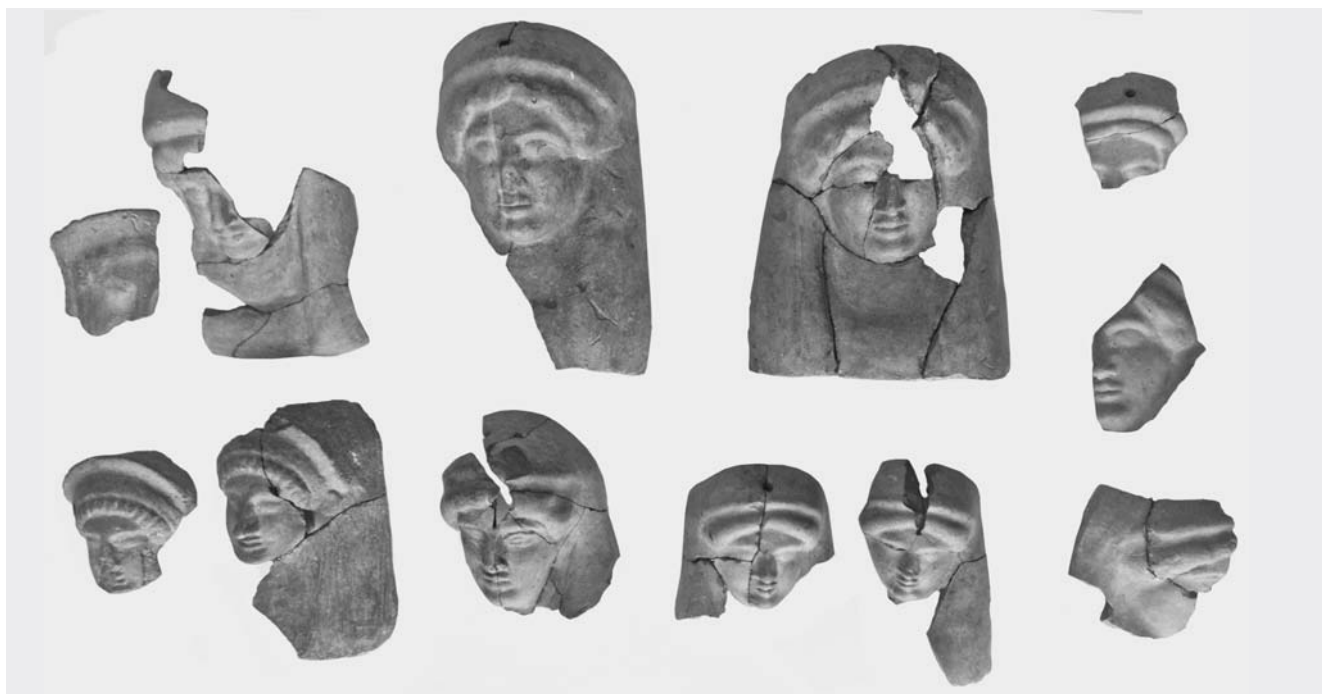


Fig. 13. Clay protomes from the “third layer” of the sanctuary of Athena Polias in the NAM (photo: author).

13);<sup>66</sup> also common are statuettes depicting standing female figures wearing a high polos,<sup>67</sup> early Severe-style female figurines, a few plaques of a female figure/deity holding an animal against her chest.<sup>68</sup> Notable are the Athena figurines, at least six,<sup>69</sup> recognizable by the helmet and shield (fig. 14) that can be dated to the late Archaic period and prove that Athena was worshipped at the site from at least the 6th century BC.

Prevalent among the finds were bronze votives (fig. 7). They were found in the lower part of the “third

layer”. In his 1914 “Inventory”, Arvanitopoulos mentions at least 460 intact or fragmentary rings of various sizes and types that range from simple open rings to thick specimens bearing three to five protrusions, and vessel supports.<sup>70</sup> Also numerous were fibulae, with at least 40 examples, intact or in parts, some oversized; they include specimens of the Thessalian type.<sup>71</sup> Among the other bronze votives common were various bird pendants (rooster, duck, hen,<sup>72</sup> an eagle pendant),<sup>73</sup> small animal figurines depicting horses, a dog, a heifer, a bull’s head.<sup>74</sup>

66. There is also a [redacted] e: fig. 11 [redacted] m row, 2nd from left.

67. Fig. 8: 3rd and bottom row, fi [redacted] ottom row 2nd from right. Αρχ. Αρβ. 22: 29.7.1908. Some are very similar to examples from the sanctuary of Zeus and Enodia at Pherai: BÉQUIGNON 1937, 59-60, pl. 18.5.

68. Αρχ. Αρβ. 23: 20.8.1908. Fig. [redacted] row 3rd from the left; fig. 1 [redacted] 5th row from the top, 3rd from the right.

69. An intact statuette is illustrated in the unpublished photo in ASA A/A 8715; a further one was discovered in 1994: ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994; Almyros Museum BE16154.

70. Rings were also extremely numerous at Pherai: ORFANOU 2015, 224, 226, 367-370. For Philia: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 52-60, esp. 54, List 31 on p. 273, pls 9, 58. Rings with protrusions were also common at Kalapodi: FELSCH 2007, 175-177. They are also attested in graves in Thessaly: ΤΣΙΑΚΑ 2009, 435; also ΜΙΣΑΗΛΙΔΟΥ-ΔΕΣΠΟΤΙΔΟΥ 2011, 105-106 (Macedonia). Please note that the list of parallels here

and in the following footnotes is not meant to be exhaustive but indicative, focusing on Thessalian examples. The discussion of the meaning of rings is beyond the scope of this paper.

71. For fibulae in Thessaly: Pherai: BÉQUIGNON 1937, 67, 69-70; KILIAN 1975, 57-87; ORFANOU 2015, 97-99, 217-224, 284-285, 472-473; Philia: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 20-25, 218-223; Soros: ΒΗΤΟΣ – ΠΑΝΑΓΟΥ 2009, 317. Compare with Kalapodi: FELSCH 2007, 122-174.

72. Pherai: ORFANOU 2015, 480, 504.

73. Bird pendants were very popular at Pherai: BÉQUIGNON 1937, 68; KILIAN 1975, 57-87; ORFANOU 2015, 234-236, 371-372, 457. At Philia they are less popular: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 62-63. Also FELSCH 2007, 67-75 who stresses the similarities between Kalapodi and Thessaly.

74. For pendants and their uses: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1979, 262-264; ΜΙΣΑΗΛΙΔΟΥ-ΔΕΣΠΟΤΙΔΟΥ 2011, 54-59, 130-131; MILI 2015, 337.



Fig. 14. Athena statuettes from the sanctuary of Athena Polias in the NAM (photo: author)

There were also eleven bronze pendants in the form of pomegranates,<sup>75</sup> two wheels, a double axe, vase pendants, biconical beads and other “Macedonian bronzes”,<sup>76</sup> some tweezers,<sup>77</sup> fish-hooks and a cheese grater.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Arvanitopoulos lists numerous fragments of metal vessels, handles but also parts of the body of vessels of varying thickness; some are characterized as lopades or shallow open vessels.<sup>79</sup> He also mentions a silver gilt ornament ending in a lion’s head, a bronze sandaled foot which he

dated to the 5th century BC, bronze coins, a miniature falcon and a double axe made of bone, many amber and glass beads (fig. 15).<sup>80</sup> A large number of beads made of glass, amber, faience, have been located in Athens; unfortunately some have been mixed with very similar finds from the contemporary sanctuaries of Zeus Thaulios and Enodia at Pherai and the Oracle of Apollo at Korope.<sup>81</sup>

Arvanitopoulos refers in his daybooks to the discovery of black- and red-figure pottery, some black-glazed

75. Pomegranate pendants are very popular at Philia: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1979, pl. 35; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 63.

76. KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 102-103; ORFANOU 2015, 377-378 (with earlier bibliography). Also: ΜΙΣΑΗΛΙΔΟΥ-ΔΕΣΠΟΤΙΔΟΥ 2011, 64-65.

77. KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 70, pl. 67; ORFANOU 2015, 508 (Pherai). Also: FELSCH 2007, pl. 49 (Kalapodi); PICCININI 2012, 206-207 (Dodona).

78. Also at Philia: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 16, pl. 183, no. 213.

79. *Αρχ. Απβ.* 22: 18.7.1908, 18-19.8.1908.

80. *Αρχ. Απβ.* 21: 25.6.1908; *Αρχ. Απβ.* 22: 18-30.7.1908, 18.8-19.8.1908; *Αρχ. Απβ.* 23: 20-21.8.1908. On glass beads: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 71-86 (Philia); Also: IGNATIADOU 2000, 94-99. For artefacts made of bone found at Soros, in particular a similar miniature double axe from Soros: ΒΗΤΟΣ – ΠΑΝΑΓΟΥ 2009, 322 (with earlier bibliography), fig. 10. These axe pendants are common finds in 7th- and 6th-century sanctuaries: DAWKINS 1929, 237-238; BOARDMAN – HAYES 1966, 163-165, pl. 104, nos 80-82; MAZARAKIS-AINIAN 2005, 98-106 (with earlier bibliography), pl. 19c; ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ 2016, 25, no. 65. See also: SKON-JEDELE 1994, esp.

892-904 for the faience and “egyptianizing” votives from Pherai and Philia.

81. The sorting out of the material in Athens has shown that, although the finds from Pherai are by far more numerous and more elaborate (bone spectacle fibulae, beads, bone appliques; faience scarabs, amulets; glass beads), all three sanctuaries share strong similarities in their votives, especially amber and glass beads, and faience. Besides the “Inventory”, crucial for the identification of Athenian finds was a report by K. Romaios in ΔΔΕΑΜ: *Επίτομα* 15: 13.6.1933. According to this, Box 35, contained among others: clay pyxides, figurines and jewellery from Demetrias and Metropolis, the inscribed gold lamella from Pherai NAM X1130 (PARKER – STAMATOPOULOU 2004), high quality black-figure pottery from the Oracle of Apollo at Korope and numerous finds from Phthiotic Thebes and Pherai. It is mentioned that “Inside the pyxides from Demetrias were placed” the beads etc., among them an “Egyptian hawk from Phthiotic Thebes”, while a round box contained beads from Phthiotic Thebes.” For the criteria by which to define votives as prestige items: KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 215-219.



Fig. 15. Beads and small finds from the “third layer” of the sanctuary of Athena Polias in the NAM (photo M. Stamatopoulou).

fragments bearing graffiti, as well as Geometric-style pottery. Some fragments of Geometric pots have been illustrated (fig. 12), as well as a Corinthian alabaster,<sup>82</sup> but it has not been possible to locate them. We have been able to identify the pottery bearing graffiti, of the early 5th century BC: this includes the aforementioned Attic skyphos of the 2nd quarter of the 5th century BC, bearing on the base the graffiti ΣΑΜΙΑ,<sup>83</sup> four sherds from the base and rim of open vessels (cups).<sup>84</sup> A small box in the NAM contained many pottery fragments with indices

signifying that they were collected from the same level as the bronzes and the protomes, i.e. “end of layer 3”.<sup>85</sup> These include high quality figured black-figure pottery of the 2nd half of the 6th century to the early 5th century BC, for example Little Master Cups, late 6th century cups and skyphoi, some depicting Athena (fig. 16).<sup>86</sup>

Although the date of this pottery fits well with the peak of activity in the sanctuary and the indices suggest that it originated from Phthiotic Thebes there is still some doubt regarding their origin, i.e. whether all or a

82. Unpublished photo in ASA A/A 8717.

83. See above n. 30.

84. NAM 32180, 32181, 32182, 32183.

85. I. Dalla and T. Koutouvali helped with the conservation of the vases (July and December 2016).

86. The earliest vases contained in this box date to ca. 600 and the latest (three sherds) to the mid-4th century BC. Notable among them is a Little Master Cup that is decorated on the top frieze (on the lip) with a representation of athla and on the lower frieze with a Centaureomachy (with Kaineus) and a Dionysiac scene, NAM 32191.

proportion of them were discovered at Phthiotic Thebes. This is due to the fact that, with the exception of a single reference to black-figure sherds with figured scenes, there is no other mention of high quality pottery from the site.<sup>87</sup> By contrast it is often stressed, both by Arvanitopoulos himself and later in K. Romaios' reports, that pottery sherds belonging to black-figure kylikes bearing high quality figured scenes were among those discovered at the contemporary Oracle of Apollo at Korope, in Magnesia.<sup>88</sup> Given that some small finds from the two sites have been mixed and there is a box of antiquities still to be located in the NAM we refrain from reaching definitive conclusions at this point. It has to be stressed however, that in either case, this pottery is proof of high quality Attic imports in coastal Thessaly in the second half of the 6th and early 5th century, a phenomenon that has been observed elsewhere in the region.<sup>89</sup>

### III. The development of the Sanctuary of Athena Polias over time

**Phase I:** late 8th/7th century and 5th century BC. As already mentioned, discussions of Iron Age-early 7th century BC sanctuaries in Thessaly usually focus on the sanctuary of Zeus Thaulios at nearby Pherai<sup>90</sup> and the sanctuary of Athena at Philia,<sup>91</sup> omitting Phthiotic Thebes or the sanctuary of Athena Polias at Gonnoi, thus drawing conclusions that are somewhat misleading.<sup>92</sup> It is now evident that in the second half of the 8th century BC there was activity on the acropolis at Phthiotic Thebes, which was possibly cult-related; the Geometric pottery sherds are testament to this. The type of artefacts, e.g. rings of various types, fibulae, various pendants – esp. bird pendants and pomegranates, metal vessels,



Fig. 16. Attic black figure pottery sherds from the “third layer” of the sanctuary of Athena Polias in the NAM 32184 (photo M. Stamatopoulou).

beads – are common in the sanctuaries at Pherai, Philia and Thebes, and imply similar dedicatory patterns (dress ornaments, jewellery) and investment by the respective communities, irrespective of the venerated deity.<sup>93</sup> In all three sanctuaries, but also in the sanctuary of Athena Polias on the acropolis of Gonnoi,<sup>94</sup> the 7th and especially the 6th century BC witnessed an increase in the quantity and variety of dedications, with a peak in the second half of the 6th and early 5th century.<sup>95</sup> The similarities in both dedicatory practices and votives among the known Archaic Thessalian sanctuaries hint at the existence of a “koine” irrespective of the various population groups that are recorded as inhabiting the respective regions. Differentiations, such the deposition of weapons and tripods and the concentration of imported “valuable”

87. See above [redacted].

88. For Korope: ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1906, 125; Αρχ. Αρβ. 3, 22.7-10.8.1906.

89. ΚΑΤΑΚΟΥΤΑ – ΣΤΑΜΑΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ (forthcoming).

90. For Pherai: ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1926; ΒÉQUIGNON 1937, esp. 57-97; KILIAN 1975, 6-8; ΑΡΑΧΩΒΙΤΗ – ΔΟΥΛΓΕΡΗ-ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΛΟΓΛΟΥ – ΤΣΙΓΑΡΑ 2006; ΑΡΑΧΩΒΙΤΗ – ΔΟΥΛΓΕΡΗ-ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΛΟΓΛΟΥ – ΤΣΙΓΑΡΑ 2012; MILI 2015, 336-338; ΟΡΦΑΝΟΥ 2015, esp. 95-100. MORGAN 2003, 142 discussed Pherai on 135-140 and Philia on 140-142, and on 142 stressed the difficult nature of the evidence; Phthiotic Thebes is mentioned in passing.

91. KILIAN 1075, 8-10; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002; ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΛΟΓΛΟΥ 2003; SCHMID 2003; MILI 2015, 339-341.

92. MILI 2015, on p. 30 includes among the Geometric period sanctuaries only those at Philia and Pherai and on p. 105 (her discussion of poliadic cults) the Gonnoi and Thebes sanctuaries are described as going back to the 6th or even 7th century, even though in her description of the sanctuary of Phthiotic Thebes (pp. 341-342) she specifically mentions Geometric finds. Such contradictions and her somewhat uncritical repetition of Arvanitopoulos' views affect her interpretation of the dedication patterns and the origin of worshippers in Archaic sanctuaries of Thessaly.

93. KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 215-229, esp. 223-229; she also discusses the differences among the various sites.

94. For Gonnoi: ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1910, 252-259, esp. fig. 24 B no. Γ; HELLY 1973, 75, 95, 120, 147-148; MILI 2015, 327.

95. Also observed by MORGAN 2003, 140; MILI 2015, 33-34.

goods at Philia and, to a lesser extent, Pherai,<sup>96</sup> are related to the specific role of each site. The sanctuaries of Athena Itonia at Philia and Enodia and Zeus Thaulios at Pherai are interpreted as places of supra-regional appeal. At Mikrothives, the artefacts from the site have a strong “Thessalian” element, at least until the mid-6th century when imports increase.

The 6th and early 5th centuries BC witnessed a number of new features in Thessalian sanctuaries: firstly, the investment in monumentalizing cult spaces with the erection of new temples, such as at Omolio, Korope, Iolkos-Kastro/Palaia Volou, Soros, Theotokou, Pherai, Moschato in western Thessaly, and the repair of earlier ones as at Gonnoi.<sup>97</sup> There may have been a temple on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes before the 5th century BC but, as we saw, the evidence is limited and inconclusive. That Athena was venerated on the site from at least the 6th century BC is revealed by the dedication of clay statuettes of the goddess on the acropolis. Among the finds from Thebes dating to the second half of the 6th-early 5th century BC belong the high quality Attic black-figure vases, our Pegasus bronze handle, the numerous figurines and protomes, some of the bronze pendants and jewellery, a number of bronze figurines and possibly vessels. The increased imports from Athens or the bone and faience “trinkets” show that the community was open to the outside world, through xiv relationships, participations in games and/or trade conducted via the harbour at Pyrasos, modern Nea Anchialos.

During the 6th century BC one can also observe in Thessaly an interest in promoting the cults of heroes. Notable examples are the cult of Aiatos by the Late Bronze Age tholos tomb at Georgiko, near later Metropolis in western Thessaly, and Herakles at Pherai. Near the border of the chora of Pherai (but also Glaphyrai), along the route to Pagasai and the harbour, the sanctuary of Herakles at the locality Spartias/Latomeio, received important dedications in the 6th century, such as marble stat-

uary (kouroi and korai) and weapons.<sup>98</sup> During this period and in the early 5th century, somewhere in Achaia Phthiotis, i.e. in the wider region of Phthiotic Thebes, funeral games were organized in honour of the hero Prote-silaos.<sup>99</sup> Thus it seems that the practice of honouring heroes was widespread in Thessaly at a time when organized polities were consolidating.

This brief presentation of the re-discovered finds from Thebes has shown the potential of a new overall study of Thessalian sanctuaries in the Archaic period for tracing commonalities in dedication, investment, and “Thessalian” features in cult. It has to be conceded that, at least for the old excavations, there will remain serious obstacles, due to the poor documentation and selective collection of artefacts by the excavators and the brief information regarding the exact provenance of items. At Phthiotic Thebes the large number of metal and pottery offerings were concentrated in the layer excavated immediately below the foundation of the temple that extended over a large area to the east and northeast of the temple. It is unclear from the illustrations and Arvanitopoulos’ descriptions whether the finds were part of a large fill or were gathered in more than one, distinct, deposits/favissae.

Vasiliki Adrymi-Sismani conducted a brief investigation on the site in 1994 with the aim of clarifying its stratigraphy and Neolithic occupation.<sup>100</sup> East of the temple, she found part of a deposit that contained bronze rings, fibulae, fragments of female protomes, a clay Athena figurine and a marble helmeted Athena head belonging to a Roman period statuette, which attests to the continuity of cult during the Imperial period (2nd century AD).<sup>101</sup> The most important discovery, however, was a stone stele bearing a building inscription that states that Peisias and Epithetas “made the temple” when Chabios and Pyrgon were archontes; it has been dated by Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou to the mid-5th century BC.<sup>102</sup> This date fits very well with the situation described by

96. SKON-JEDELE 1994, 892-904; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2002, 223-229; SCHMID 2003; ORFANOU 2015, 238-239, 284-285.

97. MORGAN 2003, 141-142; STAMATOPOULOU 2007, 319-321 (with earlier bibliography).

98. ΣΤΑΜΕΛΟΥ – ΔΟΥΛΓΕΡΗ-ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΛΟΓΛΟΥ 2010.

99. STAMATOPOULOU 2007, 333-334.

100. ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994.

101. ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994, pl. 104 α-β (Almyros Museum BE 16191).

102. It is displayed in the Almyros Museum, inv. BE16090: ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994, 323; ΔΟΥΛΓΕΡΗ-ΙΝΤΖΕΣΙΛΟΓΛΟΥ 2000, 167-168, no. Φ03, pl. 75; BE 2015, no. 376. The text, as transcribed by Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou, reads: Πεισίας | κ’ Ἐπιθέτας | τὸν ναὸν | ἐποίησαν | Χάβιος : ος< | καὶ Πύργον- | ἀρχόντων· | [ἐ]πιστά- | ται | [.4.]παονος | [...5..]ΣΑΧΟ.

Arvanitopoulos and the depositional pattern observed by [redacted] since the most recent finds in the “third layer” date to the 2nd quarter of the 5th century BC. Thus, his hypothesis, that the burying of the pre-Classical artefacts was prompted by the erection of a new temple and the need for levelling the terrain, is most likely correct.

The reference to officials, the archontes, and the epis-tates, implies the existence of an organized community during the 5th century BC that was in charge of the sanctuary. This occurs at a period that pre-dates the foundation of Phthiotic Thebes, which is assumed to have occurred in the 4th century BC. We do not know much about the pre-Hellenistic settlement on the site of the later city, as excavations [redacted] have been few and have yet to reveal Archaic and 5th century BC finds other than on the acropolis.<sup>103</sup> Be that as it may, the recent rescue excavations in the cemeteries of the city, especially the southern [redacted] have brought to light a significant number of 5th century tombs that were well furnished, some with weapons and especially with high quality imported pottery from Attica but also Boeotia.<sup>104</sup>

Many scholars have sought to identify the Archaic and Classical settlement on the site of (later) Phthiotic Thebes with ancient Phylake;<sup>105</sup> the latter is mentioned in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships (Il. 2.695-710), while later sources consider it a predecessor of Phthiotic Thebes. Protesilaos, the main hero of Phylake,<sup>106</sup> was portrayed on the early Hellenistic coinage of Phthiotic Thebes and, as mentioned above, was honoured with funeral games in the wider region. An identification of the pre-4th century BC remains as belonging to Phylake is attractive, yet the issue cannot be resolved on present evidence.

**Phase II:** Hellenistic: To this period date the remains of the crepis wall of temple that survives today, showing extensive reuse of the stone blocks of its predecessor. According to Arvanitopoulos and other scholars the temple was contemporary to the fortifications of the city. The dedicatory inscriptions engraved on the fortification blocks mentioning Themis, Illais, Nika, and the altar to Eirene by the Syskopoi date to this phase.

It is well known that Phthiotic Thebes was founded in the course of the 4th century BC, incorporating communities such as Pyrasos (the harbour) and Phylake and that Cassander had garrisoned the city and attempted a synoecism of the nearby settlements, which failed due to the activities of Demetrios Poliorketes. The city prospered because of the control of the harbour at Pyrasos and the command of the very fertile plain of Almyros (Krokian field), until its destruction by King Philip V in 217 BC.<sup>107</sup> It is likely that the erection of the new temple was part of a programme of refurbishment and monumentalization of the new city. The stamped monograms on roof-tiles found on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes bear very close similarities to examples from Gonnoi (Athena Polias), Korope (Oracle of Apollo), Omolio, hinting at a more centralized initiative for the repair and restoration of cult places of Thessaly during the early Hellenistic period.<sup>108</sup>

The stelai and other votives that Arvanitopoulos ascribed to this period were found immediately above or next to the crepis wall and had been reused. In the early Hellenistic period, as is common in other sanctuaries in Thessaly, the dedicatory pattern had changed, and marble statuettes, among them statuettes of Athena and inscribed stelai, were the most common finds. Worthy of

103. For a history of the investigations at the site: STÄHLIN 1924, 10-174; STÄHLIN 1937; ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 2012; ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ – ΚΡΑΒΑΡΙΤΟΥ (forthcoming).

104. Of the 259 graves excavated to-date in the Southern cemetery only one Geometric-period tomb is reported; this should probably be explained by the nature of the investigations. See: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ – ΚΡΑΒΑΡΙΤΟΥ (forthcoming); ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ 2006, esp. 610-613 (P. Koumarianos' field; K. Tsampiras' plot, T.1: of the 10th century BC), 616-617 (G. Alektorides' plot, T. 8); ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ 2007, 702 (P. Koumarianos' field); ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ – ΑΛΜΑΤΖΗ 2009, 332.

105. DECOURT *et.al.* 2004, 716, no. 440, 717; BE 2015, no. 376.

106. MORGAN 2003, 17, 102-105 (the issues regarding the Catalogue of Ships' description of Thessaly). Also ΓΟΥΝΑΡΗΣ 2006.

107. On Thebes: STÄHLIN 1924, 172-174; STÄHLIN 1934; BOEHM 2011, 1-2, 31-33, 68-69; BOEHM 2018, 68 and [redacted] 32.

108. ΑΡΒΑΝΙΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ 1911, 287; HELLY 1973, I, 95; ΒΗΤΟΣ 2008, 35. We should note here that the sanctuary of Asklepios excavated by V. Adrymi-Sismani at Phthiotic Thebes in the early 1990s (ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1991, 209-210), also dates from the late 4th century BC onwards, which may suggest that during the late 4th-early 3rd century there was considerable investment in cult and monumentalization at Phthiotic Thebes.

mention are the dedications by civic groups called *syskopoï* and *archeskopoï*, guards and their leaders, which Mili and Kravaritou have linked to *ephebes*;<sup>109</sup> the latter considers them as *ephebes* responsible for the patrolling of the city and its territory. Moreover, during this period, the sanctuary was the place for setting decrees of the city, as is inferred by the known stele from Delphi recording an arbitration between Phthiotic Thebes and Halos, of the 2nd century BC.<sup>110</sup>

**Phase III:** Roman period. Very little is known about this phase, except that the deity received statuary dedications and that there were possible changes/additions to the temple building, which was covered with plaster. Activity on the site continued until the late 4th-5th century AD as is implied by the numerous buildings erected on the site, the depth of the fill (more than 1 m) and the various artefacts. Arvanitopoulos initially hypothesized that the buildings served as guardhouses. He later suggested that some may have formed part of chapels, based on the numerous lamps bearing the cross, the candle holders and various glass artefacts collected from the surface level, an identification promoted by the recent excavators at the site.<sup>111</sup> The site was most likely abandoned in the 5th century AD when the city declined and most of the population moved to coastal Pyrasos that was eventually renamed Thebes.<sup>112</sup>

To conclude: The bronze plate handle decorated with the Pegasus foreparts was the starting point for discussing a sanctuary that has been neglected in discussions of Archaic Thessaly as it was either perceived to have been later than the key sites at Pherai and Philia or characterized as provincial, which is understandable given the absence of publication. The discovery of a proportion of Arvanitopoulos' finds has significantly increased our understanding of the site. Firstly, the number and character of the finds, with a plethora of bronze votives, metal vessels, jewellery, high quality Athenian pottery, despite the limited scale of investigation, suggest a similar investment of the local community to that attested at Pherai and Philia and, likewise, continuity of cult at the site since the late 8th century BC. Although not as extensive as Pherai and Philia, the finds from Phthiotic Thebes are by no means insignificant. With regards to later periods, the investment on the acropolis of Phthiotic Thebes follows the development of the settlement itself and its fortunes. There is much that we do not yet understand; only new archaeological excavations on the site will clarify its stratigraphy, temple architecture and later phases. We hope that the completion of the identification of the finds and their full publication will allow far more sophisticated conclusions regarding cult practices and material culture in Archaic Thessaly, especially the 7th and 6th centuries, periods for which published information is scant.

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109. MILI 2015, 106-107, note 35; KRAVARITOU 2018, 383, 385.

110. AGER 1996, no. 153; *SEG* 56: 557.

111. ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1994, 324; she comments on the thickness of the Byzantine deposit.

112. The evidence from V. Adrymi-Sismani's excavations in the city and the theatre reveal that there was activity until the 4th century AD: ΑΔΡΥΜΗ-ΣΙΣΜΑΝΗ 1997, 135.

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## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Με αφορμή ένα παλαιό εύρημα.  λκινη λαβή EAM X15463 από τη Θεσσαλία και το Ιερό της Αθηνάς Πολιάδος στις Φθιώτιδες Θήβες

Με αφορμή μία χάλκινη λαβή πινακίου που απολήγει σε προτομές φτερωτού αλόγου, η οποία είχε λανθασμένα αποδοθεί στο ιερό του Διός Θουλίου και της Ενοδίας στις Φερές, ενώ προέρχεται από τις ανασκαφές του Απόστολου Σ. Αρβανιτόπουλου στο ιερό της Αθηνάς Πολιάδος στην ακρόπολη των Φθιώτιδων Θηβών, επιχειρείται μια επανεξέταση του ιερού αυτού. Παρουσιάζονται τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης του αρχαιολογικού υλικού από τις παλαιές ανασκαφές του Αρβανιτόπουλου

στη Θεσσαλία καθώς και των εγγράφων που αφορούν στην υπηρεσιακή δράση του ανασκαφέα, τα οποία συνέβαλαν στην κατανόηση της ανασκαφής και στην ταύτιση πολλών ευρημάτων στο Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο. Η μελέτη των ευρημάτων αυτών οδηγεί σε νέα συμπεράσματα για τη σημασία και την εξέλιξη του ιερού και τη θέση του στο λατρευτικό τοπίο της ανατολικής Θεσσαλίας.