



Research project

The federal sanctuaries of Boeotia and Thessaly from the late 6th century to 197 BC

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Current Scholarship

In the study of the history of the Boeotian *koinon* from its inception to its evolution in the Hellenistic period, scholars have produced either short contributions on the confederation within more general investigations on federalism in the ancient world (Larsen 1968, Beck-Ganter 2015) or research focusing on the analysis of a specific historical period (Salmon 1978, Buck 1979, Roesch 1982, Gartland 2016).

Historical research has been accompanied by religious research through the systematisation of archaeological, epigraphic, and literary sources relevant to the cults of the area (Schachter 1981-1994).

Only recently, however, has there been a lively interest in the federal sanctuaries of Greece, following the publication of Funke and Haake's volume in 2013. The part devoted to Boeotia is edited by Angela Ganter, who dwells in depth on the *Ptoion* of Akraephion and briefly on the sanctuary of Athena Itonia at Coronea and that of Poseidon at Onchestos. The decision to devote more space to the former was dictated by the fact that in the period before the publication of Funke and Haake's volume it was the only one to have been the subject of major studies (Ducat 1971). The two monographs on the other sanctuaries, the *Itoneion* and the *Onchesteion*, are later and differ greatly from each other in that the volume on Athena Itonia by Lalonde (2019) is a survey of the spread of the cult over several regions of Greece, while that of Varvarousses-Papaevangelou (2017) is devoted to the copious epigraphic, literary and archaeological material that has come down to us on the sanctuary of Onchestos.

Studies on Thessaly present a partially different situation: the only volume devoted to the entire history of the region is that of Sordi (1958); for the rest, the bibliographical material remains meagre. Synthetic but essential are the contributions of Larsen (1968) and Bouchon - Helly (2015) on the birth and development of the *koinon* in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Research on Thessaly, in fact, focuses either on a few prominent personalities in Thessalian history (Helly 1995) or on individual centuries (Westlake 1935; Graninger 2011).

An analysis oriented more on the religious aspect and the way the Thessalians represented themselves in sacred places was, on the other hand, conducted by Mili (2015).

The bibliography on the region's federal sanctuaries is even scarcer: the only specific study is the one that Lalonde (2019) conducted on the Thessalian *Itoneion*, within the previously mentioned volume on the *Itoneion*; while Graninger (2011) devotes only one chapter of his volume to this topic.



Project presentation

The reason why the writer has chosen to propose a project on both regions is plural: 1) these are the two cases in which the structure of a federal system emerges in all its evidence, albeit with their respective peculiarities (see the testimony of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* for Boeotia and the *Peri Thessalōn*, Aristotle's fragments on the Thessalian constitution and a few pages of Xenophon's *Hellenica* for Thessaly), which makes it possible to verify how the two ancient federal states represented a model for modern federal governments and how the latter directly influenced the consideration and interpretation of the Greek federal *lexicon*; 2) interest is aroused by common traditions dating back to the period of migrations; 3) by the fact that throughout Greek history these regions interacted actively, participating in each other's historical dynamics.

To pursue the objective of outlining the functions and characteristics of the federal sanctuaries, I believe it is appropriate to investigate both certain aspects of Greek federalism - also with a view to a comparison with modern federal states - and the individual phases in the history of the two regions.

The first step will be to investigate the use of the federal *lexicon*, since both the distinction between the terms κοινόν, συμπολιτεῖα, ἔθνος and συμμαχία and the translation that scholars propose of them are still unclear, as there is no perfect synonymy between the Greek *lexicon* and the target language. To do so, it is necessary to examine the occurrences of these terms in literary sources (from the historiography of 5th century B.C. to that of 2nd century A.D.) and in epigraphic sources (especially IG VII and IX, SEG, BullÉp) with the aim of systematising the results. In a second step, it will be interesting to verify how scholars translated the federal *lexicon* into the different European languages.

This will be followed by a detailed analysis of the study of the Koina from the end of the 6th century to the Roman conquest, since there are no publications covering this historical period in its entirety. Along with the study of political changes, it will be necessary to focus on the federal offices, specifically the magistracies of the *tagoi*, tetrarchs, polemarchs and archons for Thessaly, and the beotarchs and *aphedriateuntes* for Boeotia, whose attestations are documented in epigraphic and literary sources.

Based on this research, we will then move on to the heart of the project: the federal sanctuaries of Boeotia - of Athena Itonia, Posidon in Onchesto and Apollo Ptoio - and those of Thessaly - of Athena Itonia and Zeus Olympius-Eleutherius.

The evidence of the Homeric poems, the Catalogue of Women, the lyric poets, some tragedies (mostly by Euripides), Greek historians in fragments (Ellanicus, Simonides, Armenidas and Lycus of Thebes), Eratosthenes, Strabo and Pausanias are necessary to reconstruct the genealogies linked to the recipients of the federal cults, which, depending on the historical period in which they arose, offer new perspectives on the ways in which populations wished to represent themselves. The question of cultural memory is to be examined in depth: it will be seen, therefore, how certain mythical tales are intended to remodel or re-evaluate events in the history of Boiotia and Thessaly. These findings must be corroborated by an inclusive investigation of the epithets of the deities, especially since in some cases they may be indicative of a link between the two regions under study, and of the mythical traditions revolving around the sanctuaries, as in the case of Simonides', Apollodorus', Diodorus' and Pausanias' accounts of the *Onchesteion* and the *Itoneion* of Coronea.

The literary sources mentioned above, supported by the fictile and epigraphic evidence, will make it possible to outline the profile of the deities and assess the rituals associated with them with a view to contributing to the total understanding of the cult. Only when these sources are supplemented with the texts of Greek historians from the 5th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. will it be possible to observe the characteristics that the federal sanctuaries had in the Classical Age first and in the Hellenistic Age later, to



verify how these sacred spaces were used according to the different historical moments that the regions experienced.

The method we propose to adopt is based on the principles of the so-called *Intentionale Geschichte* and incorporates the new acquisitions obtained from memory studies, in order to interpret the sources in such a way as to take into account the motivations that drove these populations to alter certain events with their narratives, to draw an alternative picture of the past and to establish themselves in places of worship by performing certain rituals.

Research of this kind should show that in the Classical period, concomitant with the new-born desire on the part of the populations to create narratives that aimed to strengthen regional identity, there is the desire to set up some sanctuaries as places around which to create traditions and in which to manifest and present themselves as a single *ethnos*.

It is only from the 3rd century B.C. that the characteristic of the sanctuaries to be federal can be seen with greater persistence: documents in which the *koinon* and the offices connected to it are mentioned multiply; regional festivals are celebrated and copies of the confederation's covenant treaties with other peoples are displayed inside the sanctuaries; these places of worship, in some cases, become the seat of *synedrion* meetings.

We will therefore come to understand the distinction between sanctuaries that can be defined as federal, insofar as they are linked to the *koinon*, and those that, on the other hand, must be renamed due to the fact that they develop only some of the characteristics that make a sanctuary such or do so limited to a certain historical period. It is no coincidence that the epigraphic documents of the latter often have contents that cannot be systematised and from whose results we do not obtain general data, as they are mostly local.

The history of the *koina* is not only aimed at an attempt to understand the organisation of the federal states but shows how in the ancient world these also permeated the spheres of religion and ritual, using them to underpin their ideals and structure their organisation.

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