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Boeotian identity formation

The Thessalian influence in Boeotia is an area which has rarely been examined. In this paper, I explore this by evaluating the way in which Athena Itonia was imported into Boeotia. I argue that scholarship uses artificial conceptual geographical boundaries which shade rather than highlight cultural identity in this context. By exploring the use of the temple of Athena Itonia as the political centre of the Boeotian koinon I illuminate a significant shift in at least one section of Boeotian society. In order to fully understand the reasons for the selection of this particular temple, I examine the potential geophysical placement of this site, as well as its political implications within Boeotia and the non-geographic evidence. This includes numismatic motifs, analysing the level at which they were employed. The changing myths surrounding this temple, as well as its original eponymous hero, Itonus, give insight into how external influences are worked into local mythography. Comparing the various ways in which this deity was represented over time indicates a more complex and multi-layered renegotiation of local and regional identities than has previously been considered. In turn, I argue that there must be a conceptual shift in order to view local practices within a local, regional, and transregional context to fully understand the emergence of a Boeotian identity, rather than Boeotian identities.