

## Hellenic Society Dover Fund Award Report

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Project outline: Fieldwork to undertake epigraphic research for PhD thesis 'Boiotian Games: Festivals, *Agōnes*, and the Development of Boiotian Identity', September 2016

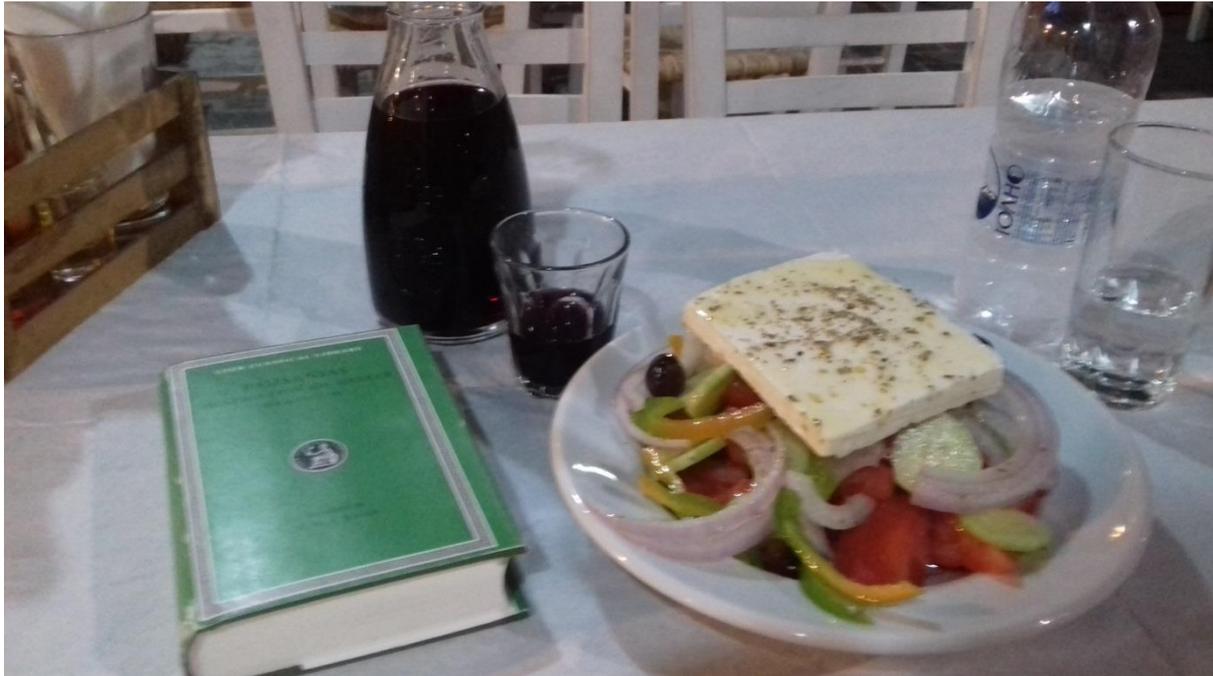
In the summer of 2016 I was awarded travel funding from the Hellenic Society Dover Fund for a visit to Boiotia in central Greece to undertake epigraphic research for my PhD thesis entitled 'Boiotian Games: Festivals, *Agōnes*, and the Development of Boiotian Identity' (awarded July 1017). The explicit purpose of my trip was to study the epigraphy relating to games and religious festivals in the newly re-opened Archaeological Museum in Thebes ([http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/eh151.jsp?obj\\_id=3372](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/eh151.jsp?obj_id=3372)) and the Archaeological Museum at Chaironeia ([http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/eh155.jsp?obj\\_id=3430](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/1/eh155.jsp?obj_id=3430)), and to visit the religious sites where many of these inscriptions had been originally situated throughout Boiotia.

With the help of the Dover Fund and an additional award from the University of Warwick, I was able to visit Boiotia between 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, including three nights at the British School at Athens ([www.bsa.ac.uk](http://www.bsa.ac.uk)). The staff at the BSA – especially Chryssanthi Papadopoulou, Tania Gerousi, and Vicky Tzavara - were incredibly helpful in helping me organize my trip prior to my arrival in Greece, putting me in contact with people who could offer travel advice (such as Dr Robert Pitt whose recommendations of which hotels to avoid in Lebadeia was very gladly received), and arranging museum permits and contacts with the Archaeological Museum of Thebes. I also received helpful travel advice from Professor Fabienne Marchand and Dr Michael Scott, and while in Boiotia benefitted greatly from my email correspondence with Dr Stella Kastarou. I am particularly indebted to Dr Olga Kyriazi and her team at the Archaeological Museum at Thebes for all their help during my visit. The newly re-opened museum is a world-class attraction and well worth a visit, and I was lucky to receive a glimpse behind the scenes and to be allowed to study the vast collection of epigraphic texts not on public display.

In addition to this opportunity for close study of the epigraphic texts, the Dover Fund afforded me the opportunity of visiting the religious sites of Boiotia and of experiencing the realities of the Boiotian landscape as lived. The appreciation of the visible links between the separate Boiotian communities, and of the physical placement of the sanctuaries within the Boiotian landscape, were perhaps the most important things to have come out of my visit, something which no amount of book-learning could have provided. In a very real sense the award of the Dover Fund, without which I could not have undertaken a visit to Boiotia during the study of my PhD, transformed my understanding of the region and had a real impact on the shape of my final thesis.

This is not the place to speak in detail of the epigraphic texts studied, and I would like, instead, to give a brief overview of my itinerary in Boiotia, and to share a few pictures from my trip. After flying in to Athens on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, I spent five nights in Thebes, using the city as a base (rather like Pausanias) from which to explore wider Boiotia in a series of day excursions when not studying the epigraphy at the Archaeological Museum.

(Pausanias and Greek salad, Thebes)



From my base at Thebes I visited a number of key sanctuaries for the Boiotians, including the sanctuary of Poseidon at Onchestos (currently being excavated by the University of Columbia - <http://onchestos.mcah.columbia.edu> ), and that of Apollo Ptoios near Akraiphia, the oracle of Apollo famous for its dedications of *kouroi* during the Archaic period.

(Site of Sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios)



I visited the battle-site of Leuktra, where the Boiotians defeated the Spartans in 371BC, and Plataia beneath Mount Kithairon, where the Boiotians performed the ritual of the Daidala. In the Valley of the Muses, I visited the theatre where the Mouseia festival was held on the slopes of Mt Helicon.

(View towards Helicon and the Sanctuary of the Muses)



After Thebes, I spent two nights at Agia Anna on Helicon, from where I visited Koroneia, home to the important Boiotian sanctuary of Athena Itonia where the festival of the Pamboiotia took place. After this I arrived at Lebadeia, my final base in Boiotia, and from which I visited Mycenaean Orchomenos with its Treasury of Minyas, the Mycenaean fortress of Gla, and Plutarch's Chaironeia – with its excellent archaeological museum and important epigraphic collection - before seeking out the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia, which despite my best efforts still remains undiscovered.

(Herkynna Gorge, Lebadeia – possible site of the oracle of Trophonius)



My final nights were spent at the British School at Athens, from where I was able to visit the Archaeological Museum, the Epigraphic Museum, and the Acropolis Museum, thus concluding my trip.

I would like to thank the Hellenic Society, whose Dover Fund allowed me to undertake this trip which, both in the specifics of the epigraphy I was able to study, and in the opportunity it afforded to experience the landscape of Boiotia first-hand, had such an important and positive impact on the shape of my final thesis. I would especially like to thank Richella Doyle, for her help with my application and the subsequent arrangements.

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