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The Armed Goddess of the Achaeans at Incoronata (Metaponto).

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Abstract: The archaic figurine of a goddess brandishing a spear within the assemblage of votive terracottas recovered on the plateau of Incoronata in the territory of Metaponto invites comparison with similar statuettes of an armed female figure from other Greek settlements in southern Italy and Sicily. The terracotta figurines belong to extensive networks of related molds and casts, shared among coroplastic workshops not only at Metaponto but also between the Achaean city-states of Magna Graecia. Technical aspects of production, entwined with choices of iconography, reflect local cult practice and belief. Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena may all be characterized as warlike. The significance of these votive images of a goddess exhibiting a martial character is explored at each site before focusing on what the Metapontine terracottas of an armed goddess wearing a snake-trimmed *aegis* — which, as I argue, portray Athena *Promachos* — reveal about the cults practiced at San Biagio and Incoronata.

Keywords: Incoronata; San Biagio; Metaponto; Athena; *Promachos*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Among the thousands of archaic terracotta figurines dedicated at the sanctuaries of Greek settlements in southern Italy, the infrequent, but highly distinctive, image of a bellicose female figure brandishing a spear commands a viewer’s attention¹. The presence of at least one such figurine at the site of Incoronata within the territory of Metaponto (fig. 1) serves as a centerpiece from which to explore the implications that this statuette holds not only within the specific context where it was found on the high plateau of Incoronata but also within the larger context of the Achaean foundation of Metaponto. Focus on this terracotta portrait of a female figure in arms widens to consider similar images which occur at other sites in southern Italy and beyond. Implicit in this investigation is the desire to seek answers to the question, “What can this terracotta from Incoronata tell us?”

¹ Heartfelt thanks are due to the organizers of the *Storie di Terracotta* international conference at the University of Cagliari as well as Joseph C. Carter for his invitation to publish the figurines from the University of Texas excavations at Incoronata. I am grateful for the assistance of Sveva Savelli, Spencer Pope, and numerous staff members at the National Archaeological Museums at Metaponto, Paestum, Policoro, and Reggio Calabria. For restoration of the *Promachos* figurine from Incoronata, gratitude is extended to Giuliana Albanese. For photography and graphic materials, I am indebted to Cesare Raho and Michael Holobosky. Funding for this research has been provided by the Institute of Classical Archaeology at the University of Texas and the Colgate University Research Council.

2. AN ARCHAIC SANCTUARY AT INCORONATA

The site of Incoronata is located on a plateau rising some 60 meters above sea level on the south bank of the Basento River, about 7 km today from the Ionian coast. Excavations have documented the domestic and artisanal character of the site from the late ninth until the last quarter of the seventh century BC, when the plateau was abandoned². They offer a wealth of evidence to explore intriguing questions about interactions between the indigenous population and the arrival and more permanent presence of Greeks in this coastal area.

The terracotta of an armed female figure belongs instead to the reoccupation of the southeastern spur of the plateau in the second quarter of the sixth century BC, signaled by a concentration of roof tiles marking the area of a large pit which contained painted geisa and antefixes, terracotta figurines, pottery, loom weights, spools, spindle whorls, and numerous mandibles and teeth of pig and sheep³. The pit and its contents have been interpreted as the result of the cleaning of a sanctuary, which had been established on the plateau by the mid-sixth century BC⁴. The close association within the pit of the terracotta figurines with miniature votive vessels, architectural revetments, and the redundant presence of mandibles (possibly reflecting the symbolic selection of a part of a sacrificial animal) persuasively argues for the use of the terracottas as votive offerings,

² For summary and bibliography: CARTER 2006, pp. 52-89; DENTI 2013, pp. 76-89; SAVELLI 2016, p. 371, nn.1-3; VITA, MANDIĆ, DENTI 2023, pp.12-13.

³ CARTER 2006, pp. 74-77, figs. 2.35-36, 39-41. The figured terracottas are the subject of a manuscript (AMMERMAN *in press*) submitted in 2018 to Sveva Savelli of St. Mary's University, now responsible for the final publication of the University of Texas excavations.

⁴ CARTER 2006, pp. 69, 74-78, fig. 2.16; SAVELLI 2016, pp. 380-381.

dedicated within a sacred space, before their final deposition with other cultic materials in the large pit⁵.

3. TERRACOTTA PRODUCTION, MARKETS, USE

At Incoronata, the terracotta statuettes, whether of smaller, 10-20 cm, or larger, 30-60 cm scale, represent a standing or an enthroned female figure, who usually wears a *polos* to mark her elevated status. The larger figurines belong to networks of closely related mold series, which coroplasts inventively embellished with hand-modelled additions to introduce variety among their finished products⁶. A layer of clay was first pressed into a single or often two separate frontal molds to create the head and torso (fig. 1b). To form the figure's skirt, the cast of the torso was attached to a thin slab bent in an inverted U-shape for a seated figure, or to a solid block of clay⁷ or a cylindrical tube thrown on a potter's wheel⁸ for a standing figure. Forearms, wings, elaborate headdresses, disc fibulae, and simplistically shaped animals were modelled by hand and joined to the cast to create an assortment of lively images. The stiff, schematic rendering of the anatomy and pose of figures may reflect larger statues or *xoana* made of flat planks or rounded posts of wood.

⁵ I reconstructed the armed figure from fragments (Inv. IC 77.202.01, IC 77.362.01, IC 77.183.01) recovered in different areas of the pit.

⁶ For fuller discussion: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 146-160, 168-182, 304-325, pls. 21-32, 36-41, 91-101; BARBERIS 2004, pp. 79-82, 85-86, 98-101, 116-117, figs. 101-109, 118-120, 151-159, 194-195; LETTA 1972, pp. 34-47, pls. 4.4-6.1; AMMERMAN 2002, pp. 45-50; AMMERMAN 2018, pp. 1168-1169.

⁷ For U-shaped skirt and throne: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 175-180, pls. 38-40.B26, B28-B29, B37; AMMERMAN 2002, p. 47, pl. 8B. For block of clay: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 146-147, pl. 21.A99.

⁸ OLBRICH 1979, pp. 150-151, pl. 24.A106 right (not fully restored); CROISSANT 2002, p. 407, pl. 7.47.

These distinctive terracottas were popular dedications at Metapontine sanctuaries in the mid-to-late-sixth century BC⁹. Excavations at the sanctuary at San Biagio, for example, recovered more than 300 such figurines while those at the urban sanctuary yielded more than 400. A comparison between a votive terracotta from Incoronata and a better-preserved cast of the same mold series from the sanctuary at San Biagio¹⁰ shows that seemingly identical procedures were followed in fashioning the hand-modeled additions (*polos*, disc fibulae, arms, skirt) to the casts. These correspondences suggest that the two figurines, though dedicated at sanctuaries on opposite banks of the Basento River, may have been produced in batches by artisans who followed standardized processes in constructing the figurines through a combination of mold technology and hand-modeling. The coroplasts thus created attractive figurines with a generic imagery that would be appropriate as offerings to an array of deities. The use of molds and a normative set of hand-modelled features led, if not to true mass-production, at least to efficient workshop practice.

The comparison between the two terracottas raises moreover the complex issue of where the Metapontine coroplasts plied their craft and sold their goods. Were the two figurines products of the same workshop or even the same artisan? If so, how did they find their way to shrines on

⁹ For extensive bibliography: AMMERMAN 2002, p. 46, n. 10; AMMERMAN 2011, p. 491, n. 11; AMMERMAN 2018, p. 1169, nn. 357-363; BARBERIS 1995, p. 19, n. 38; BARBERIS 2004, pp. 80-82, nn. 331, 339-346; pp. 85-86, nn. 372-375. In addition, for terracottas from the spring sanctuary at Pantanello: AMMERMAN 2018, pp. 1168-1172. For two dozen from Incoronata: AMMERMAN *in press*. From Site 57 of the pipeline near San Teodoro: NAVA 2003, pp. 672-673, pl. 37.2. Fragmentary examples (Nos. 163, 232, 234, and 245) were recovered by the ICA Survey at Sites 334 and 477 that have both been interpreted as rural sanctuaries: AMMERMAN 2011, pp. 491, 510, 523, 530, 533. On occasion, the figurines turn up at farmhouses within the *chora*: BARBERIS 1995, pp. 18-20, n. 29.

¹⁰ From Incoronata: AMMERMAN *in press*, Inv. IC 78.417.01. From San Biagio: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 146-147, pl. 21.A99.

different sides of the Basento River? Were they purchased at a single workshop by worshippers who subsequently dedicated the figurines at two different sanctuaries? Or did the coroplast bring his wares to sell near the grounds of the two sanctuaries themselves? In short, more needs to be known about the systems of coroplastic production and distribution at Metaponto¹¹. Nevertheless, the dynamic relationship between the craftsmen who made figurines for a market of worshippers who purchased and dedicated a figurine, and the visitors who subsequently observed the votive image in its ritualized setting should be kept in mind in discussing the terracotta of an armed female figure from Incoronata, which likewise belongs to one of these extensive mold series that are the signature products of Metaponto's coroplastic workshops in the sixth century BC.

The warlike figurine from Incoronata belongs to a mold series that was usually employed to fashion a standing or seated female figure who holds her upper arms vertically along the sides of her torso and extends her hand-modeled forearms horizontally forward, as in a terracotta (fig. 2)¹² dedicated at the spring sanctuary at Pantanello, north of the Basento River. The two casts belong to the same generation of casts within the mold series and so exhibit identical features, such as four, beaded strands of hair falling along the neck to the outer side of each breast and a *peplos* with an *apoptygma* that dips slightly over the torso and is accented by an incised line following the lower border of the overfold. The cast of the statuette from Incoronata has

¹¹ For now, see AMMERMAN 2019, pp. 293, 301-302, fig. 20.4.

¹² AMMERMAN 2018, pp. 1169-1170, Cat. No. PZ TC 14 (PZ 74.038.01). For additional figurines that may belong to the variant of the mold series in which the figure holds her upper arms along the sides of her torso with hand-modeled stubs added to the cast to represent her forearms extended horizontally forward from San Biagio, the urban center, and Site 57 of the pipeline near San Teodoro (just east of Incoronata), respectively: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 152, 155, pls. 25.A109, 27.A117b-c; LETTA 1972, pp. 42-44, pl. 5.1-2, 4; NAVA 2003, pp. 672-673, pl. 37.2 upper left.

however been altered to portray a threatening figure, who brandishes a spear in her raised right hand. The narrow swag of drapery falling from her right shoulder along the side of her torso is, in fact, the vestige of the lowered upper arm of the figure before the coroplast modified the cast with the hand-modelled addition of a muscularly flexed arm that extends horizontally to her right side before bending sharply upward at the elbow to wield a weapon. The craftsman likewise modeled by hand the buttoned sleeve of a *chiton* over her upper right arm and a narrow lappet of clay hanging over her right shoulder.

A linear ridge, running diagonally upward from above the figure's right breast across the neckline of the *peplos* to the upper left side of her neck, occurs on both the cast from Pantanello (fig. 2) and that from Incoronata (fig. 1c). This faint rise in the surface of the two figurines results from an unintended scratch cut into the mold used to cast the figure's torso. This shared irregularity suggests that the figurine from Pantanello not only belongs to the same mold series and generation as the armed figurine from Incoronata but may have been cast even from the same "scarred" mold. The coroplast varied the hand-modeled elements added to each cast to create semantically different images from a single mold. In one case, the mold was used to fashion a static image of a female figure that was dedicated at a rural spring sanctuary, where I have argued a nymph was propitiated as part of such rites of transition as marriage¹³. In the other case, the coroplast deftly transformed the cast into a dynamic, belligerent image that was dedicated at a shrine on a high plateau rising south of the Basento River.

4. IMAGERY OF VOTIVE TERRACOTTAS

¹³ AMMERMAN 2018, pp. 1148-1162.

Beyond these telling technical aspects of craft production, what might the coroplast's decision to fashion a votive figurine that portrays an armed female figure reveal about ritual practice and religious belief at Metaponto? To what extent did the craftsman himself determine the imagery of the objects that he produced for votive purposes? Or did he instead respond to worshippers' requests for terracottas that presented a specific imagery? While questions about the coroplast's contribution to iconographical decisions may go unanswered, the presence of the distinctive statuette among the votive terracottas at Incoronata implies that the representation of an armed female figure was considered an appropriate offering for the cult practiced at the southeastern spur of the plateau in the mid-sixth century BC. That a second figurine of an armed female figure was dedicated at the shrine is moreover strongly suggested by a hand-modeled arm, bent sharply upward at the elbow, probably to hold a spear, within the assemblage of terracottas from Incoronata¹⁴.

What messages, then, was the imagery of these two votive terracottas intended to convey? The posture of brandishing a spear in the right hand endows the figure with a bellicose personality that must belong to a goddess, for only mythic and divine females exhibit the *persona* of a warrior. It is thus fair to conclude that such clay images portray a divinity in the guise of *Promachos* or *Hoplosmia*¹⁵. Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera are the goddesses within the Hellenic pantheon to whom a warlike personality is most frequently ascribed¹⁶. Before considering the implications that the

¹⁴ IC 77.281.03, AMMERMAN *in press*.

¹⁵ *Promachos* refers to a warrior standing in the front line of battle as a champion. *Hoplosmia* refers to the bearing of arms, both offensive (such as a spear) and defensive (such as a shield).

¹⁶ For extensive discussion and bibliography: SOLIMA 1998; GIANGIULIO 2002, pp. 284-286, 294-296; TORELLI 2003, pp. 674-677; TORELLI 2016, pp. 5-9, 12.

votive image of a goddess with a martial character holds for the nature of the cult practiced at Incoronata, it is instructive to examine the range of varied contexts in which votive statuettes of a goddess as *Promachos* occur. As previously observed, the portrait of an armed goddess stands out prominently among the figurines from Incoronata, which otherwise offer more customary, all-purpose representations of female figures whose high status is conveyed by the presence of a *polos* or throne. The image of a bellicose goddess is likewise exceptional among the extensive number of archaic figurines recovered from sanctuaries within the territory of Metaponto as well as in the broader expanse of southern Italy.

4.1 METAPONTO: SAN BIAGIO

Only one figurine of an armed goddess (fig. 3)¹⁷ is known from Metaponto beyond the two from Incoronata. It comes from the rural, spring-fed sanctuary at San Biagio and derives not from the same mold series used to fashion the *Promachos* figurine at Incoronata, but from a closely related, and equally versatile, mold series that was again normally employed to fashion an enthroned goddess¹⁸. As this engaging terracotta demonstrates, the coroplast could easily modify a cast with the hand-modeled addition of a raised right arm brandishing a spear and thus

¹⁷ OLBRICH 1979, p. 158, pl. 30.A124 (Inv. 29892).

¹⁸ For bibliography regarding these related mold series used notably among *apoikiai* of Achaean origin for all-purpose figurines: AMMERMAN 1991, p. 207, nn.16-18; AMMERMAN 2002, 46-47, 49, nn. 11-19, 34; AMMERMAN 2018, p. 1169, nn. 357-363; BARBERIS 2004, pp. 81-82; BARBERIS 1995, p. 19, n. 38. In addition, for those from Heraclea: OSANNA, PRANDI, SICILIANO 2008, p. 39, pl. 9, lower six terracottas. From Timpone della Motta at Francavilla Marittima: STOOP 1974-1976, pp. 117-121, pls. 58.1a-b, 2-5; 59.1, 3-6a, c; 61a, e; CROISSANT 2002, pp. 553-554, pls. 39.1-2; 40.2, 3, 5. From S. Anna di Cutro near Croton: LA ROCCA 2008, pp. 213-214, figs. 32-39. From Poseidonia: AMMERMAN 2002, pp. 46-50, 53-64, pls. 6-10, nos. 36-95; CIPRIANI 2008, pp. 118-119, figs. 7-8. For this general kind of figurine, but not of the same mold series, from Temesa: LA TORRE 2002, pp. 241-243, pl. 27b-d.

expand his repertoire to include a portrait of a combative goddess. The figure wears a *polos* embellished by floral buds while disc fibulae secure a garment that falls symmetrically along the sides of her torso. A hand-modeled snake rises above her right shoulder. What contribution can this striking figurine make to understanding the nature of the cult practiced at San Biagio, where Zeus, Artemis, and Hera have been put forward as possible patrons of the sanctuary¹⁹? Detailed discussion of the reasoning behind the different attributions lies beyond the scope of this paper. In brief, an inscription to Zeus Aglaïos on what may have been a boundary marker reused for a Roman tomb near the sanctuary was initially adduced in favor of Zeus²⁰. A single, large-scale archaic figurine has accordingly been interpreted as a portrait of the god²¹. Among the hundreds of archaic terracottas representing female figures, the repeated dedication of one portraying a winged *Potnia Theron* holding a variety of animals as well as the location of the sanctuary near the margins of the cultivated *chora* of Metaponto suggest the presence of Artemis²². The imagery of two terracotta plaques representing a *ἱερός γάμος* (interpreted as that of Zeus and Hera) is offered as support for Hera, especially when seen against the background

¹⁹ For historical summary of the varied attributions: GIANGIULIO 2002, pp. 289-294; TORELLI 2011, pp. 211-213; DE STEFANO 2014, pp. 11-14; MONACO, CANTORE 2019, pp. 27-29; GRECO 2020, pp. 100-103.

²⁰ ADAMESTEANU 1966, pp. 129-131, pl. 4.3. More recently and for additional bibliography: MONACO, CANTORE 2019, pp. 28-37; GIANGIULIO 2002, p. 289, n. 41; GRECO 2020, p. 101.

²¹ GIANGIULIO 2002, pp. 289, 293-294; DE STEFANO 2014, p. 9. For the terracotta: OLBRICH 1979, pp. 149-150, pl. 23.A105; MERTENS-HORN 1992, pp. 7-8, 41, 91-94, pls. 24-25.

²² OLBRICH 1976; OLBRICH 1979, pp. 70-77, 97-98; TORELLI 2011, pp. 211-213. There is moreover the persistent desire to link archaeological evidence to literary testimony, in this case the eleventh epinician ode by Bacchylides in honor of the Pythian victory of Alexidamos, a young wrestler from Metaponto. Bacchylides refers to the assistance Alexidamos received from Artemis, who was propitiated at Metaponto, thus enabling the poet to expand his narrative to the myth of the intercession of Artemis of Lousoi regarding the daughters of Proteus. For salubrious admonitions about forcing archaeological evidence to fit such mythic narratives: GRECO 2020.

of the numerous figurines portraying a female figure at San Biagio and the central role the goddess plays at Achaean foundations in Italy²³.

The identity attributed to the single figurine of an armed goddess (fig. 3) has been made to follow the suit of whichever of the two goddesses, Artemis²⁴ or Hera²⁵, is favored as patroness of the cult. Discussion will return to the interpretation of this arresting votive image after completing a survey of archaic figurines representing an armed goddess in southern Italy.

4.2 POSEIDONIA

Like Metaponto, so too Poseidonia was founded by Achaean Sybaris. Close ties between the two city-states are reflected in architecture, coinage, and terracotta products of the sixth century BC²⁶. Direct links in coroplastic practices are documented by the mold series shared between the sites – especially among those mold series that portray the generic image of a goddess wearing a tall, flaring *polos* and *peplos*²⁷. Also at Poseidonia, such mold series were modified to create the image of an armed goddess.

A terracotta of a female figure wielding a spear in her raised right hand (fig. 4a) was recovered at the southern urban sanctuary at Poseidonia,²⁸ where inscriptions testify to the cultic presence of Hera.²⁹ The figurine has been repeatedly cited as evidence for the worship of Hera in the guise of

²³ DE STEFANO 2014, pp. 9-11; DE STEFANO 2016, pp. 135; MONACO, CANTORE 2019, p. 37.

²⁴ OLBRICH 1976, pp. 391-392; OLBRICH 1979, p. 80; SOLIMA 1998, pp. 400-402, 416; OSANNA, BERTESAGO 2010, p. 450.

²⁵ DE STEFANO 2014, p. 10.

²⁶ AMMERMAN 1991, pp. 213-214; AMMERMAN 2002, pp. 27-29, 37-38, 46-49.

²⁷ *Supra* notes 18 and 26.

²⁸ For figurine: CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 40, 81, pl. 14d. For additional bibliography: AMMERMAN 2001, p. 49, n. 35.

²⁹ CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 48, 57, 102, 300-305.

Hoplosmia, an epiclesis that Lycophron assigns to her worship at Croton.³⁰ An archaic inscription on a silver disc found within a small temple in the northwestern sector of the southern urban sanctuary speaks to Hera's interest in military arms and so offers support for such a characterization of Hera at Poseidonia.³¹

Archaic figurines representing a goddess in the guise of *Promachos* have likewise been recovered from the northern urban sanctuary, where inscriptional evidence points to the worship of Minerva after the foundation of the Latin colony in 273 BC³². Most of the more than a dozen archaic figurines of an armed goddess from the sanctuary (fig. 4b) derive from either the same mold series as the isolated figurine from the southern urban sanctuary or one that is closely related³³. Another terracotta of the later sixth century, belonging to a mold series of a different stylistic tradition, portrays a goddess in a helmet of eastern Mediterranean style that is associated more specifically with Athena³⁴. Terracotta figurines that certainly depict Athena wearing her snake-trimmed *aegis* with the head of the Gorgon along with this distinctive type of helmet continue to be dedicated in significant numbers at the northern urban sanctuary from the end of the fifth throughout the fourth century BCE.³⁵ The iconographic evidence provided

³⁰ Lycophr., *Alex.*, 856-858. For cautionary remarks about interpreting evidence to designate Hera as the main deity worshipped in the southern urban sanctuary as well as such facile assignments of different aspects to her character based primarily on the evidence of the imagery of votive terracottas: CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 47-48, 307.

³¹ CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 48, 102, 300-304.

³² CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 310-311. For earlier inscription naming Athena that is possibly associated with the northern urban sanctuary: CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 293-295.

³³ With additional bibliography: CIPRIANI 2017, pp. 55, 218, no. 14; CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 40-41; CIPRIANI 2002, pp. 39-41, figs. 2-3; SESTIERI BERTARELLI 1989, pp. 28-35, figs. 19a, 21. For a *promachos* figurine from a mold series of a different style: SESTIERI BERTARELLI 1989, pp. 32-34, figs. 19b; and possibly CIPRIANI 2017, p. 221, no. 19.

³⁴ CIPRIANI 2017, pp. 55, 220, no. 17; CIPRIANI 2002, p. 41, fig. 4.

³⁵ CIPRIANI 2017, pp. 56, 221-222, nos. 18, 20; CIPRIANI 2002, pp. 41-44, figs. 5-6, 8-9.

by the protective garments and armor worn by the fictile goddesses thus confirms the identity of the *Promachos* worshipped at the northern urban sanctuary as Athena, who, after the arrival of the Latin colonists, continues to be propitiated as the armed goddess, Minerva.

My study of the extensive terracotta assemblage from the northern urban sanctuary has identified almost 400 classical and Hellenistic figurines of Athena in a variety of styles and guises, frequently including those wearing a helmet associated with the eastern Mediterranean³⁶. The preponderance of votive figurines representing the image of a warlike goddess at the northern urban sanctuary, where Athena/Minerva certainly presided, stands in stark contrast to the limited presence of similar imagery among the terracottas recovered from the southern urban sanctuary. In addition to the single archaic figurine of an armed goddess (fig. 4a), only four heads of Athena of the fourth or third century BC have been identified among the masses of votive terracottas³⁷. How much weight then should be given to the isolated archaic figurine of a *Promachos* (fig. 4a) in seeking to understand the nature of the deities propitiated in the southern urban sanctuary in the sixth century BC? Did the dedicant intend that the votive terracotta be seen as a specific portrait of Hera as *Hoplosmia*, or was it meant to speak more generally to a martial concern that the cult may have addressed in practice? Would other worshippers, who observed the figurine, have invested the

³⁶ My on-going study, in collaboration with Marina Cipriani, focusses on some 10,000 fragments of votive figurines recovered in excavations of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1950s at the northern urban sanctuary: AMMERMAN, CIPRIANI 1997.

³⁷ For two heads found with images of Artemis and piglet bearers and two other heads also associated with figurines of Artemis, Eros, piglet bearers as well as busts and thymiateria: CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 55, 81.

same meaning in the warlike imagery as the dedicant? Or, for that matter, the same meaning seized upon by modern scholarly interpreters?

4.3 FRANCAVILLA MARITTIMA

Although archaeological investigations at Sybaris, the Achaean *apoikia* which founded both Metaponto and Poseidonia, have recovered figurines belonging to the extensive mold series that elsewhere were, on occasion, imaginatively embellished to portray an armed goddess, none depicts a bellicose deity³⁸. Excavations at the nearby sanctuary of Timpone della Motta at Francavilla Marittima have however yielded several archaic terracottas of a goddess brandishing a spear or wearing a helmet (fig. 5)³⁹. The figurines are closely related to the mold series of the armed goddess at Incoronata. An inscription on a bronze plaque of the sixth century BC mentions, moreover, a dedication to Athena by the Olympic victor, Kleombrotos⁴⁰. This is the most outspoken testimony for the identity of the deity worshipped at the sanctuary⁴¹. Votive terracottas of classical style that unambiguously portray an armed Athena wearing the *aegis* likewise attest to the continued presence of the goddess at the sanctuary⁴².

4.4 SIRIS/HERACLEA

³⁸ CROISSANT 1993, pp. 553-554, pl. 40.1; AMMERMAN 2002, p. 46, n. 11 (for bibliography).

³⁹ STOOP 1974-1976, pp. 117-122, 140, pls. 58.1a-b, 2-5; 59.1, 4, 6a, c; possibly 61.1e; ZANCANI MONTUORO 1975, p. 138, pl. 7, fig. 12; CROISSANT 1993, pp. 553-554 pl. 40.3, 5; KLEIBRINK 2011, 118, fig. 154. For the limitations of relying on the imagery of the armed goddess and other figurines to identify a specific deity worshipped at the archaic sanctuary: GENTILE *et alii* 2005, pp. 661-663.

⁴⁰ GENTILE *et alii* 2005, pp. 651, 657, 661-663, nn. 35, 55; KLEIBRINK 2011, pp. 117-118, fig. 152.

⁴¹ For recent evaluations of cultic evidence: BROCATO 2022, pp. 13-14; COLELLI 2017, pp. 118-128.

⁴² STOOP 1974-1976, pp. 122-123, pl. 63.1-2, 6, 7a-b.

Around 570 BC, an alliance of Sybaris, Croton, and Metaponto conquered the Ionian *apoikia* Siris, which thus came into the political and cultural sphere of its Achaean neighbors. The coroplastic arts appear to have been affected by this situation: casts belonging to mold series common at these Achaean sites in the sixth century BC turn up in excavations at Heraclea, a settlement founded in close proximity to Siris in the second half of the fifth century BC⁴³. At Heraclea, excavations at a classical and Hellenistic sanctuary attributed to Demeter recovered, for instance, a small assemblage of archaic terracottas including a single figurine of a helmeted *Promachos* (fig. 6) and three helmeted female heads⁴⁴. It has been suggested that a sanctuary of Athena, who is attested in literary sources and portrayed in the later coinage of Heraclea, should be sought at the nearby Castello del Barone, the highest point of the site, where fictile heads of Athena of late classical and Hellenistic date have been found⁴⁵.

4.5 LOCRI EPIZEPHYRII AND MEDMA

At Locri Epizephyrii, at least two archaic figurines portraying a female *Promachos* (fig. 7) have been recovered among the thousands of terracottas dedicated at the Manella sanctuary where Persephone is considered the

⁴³ For bibliography: AMMERMAN 2002, p. 46, n. 12. See also, OSANNA, PRANDI, SICILIANO 2008, p. 39, pl. 9.

⁴⁴ Inv. 213475: OSANNA, PRANDI, SICILIANO 2008, pp. 39, 74, pl. 9 lower row.

⁴⁵ OSANNA, PRANDI, SICILIANO 2008, pp. 35-37, 102-107, 123-126; COLELLI 2017, p. 119, n. 401. For terracotta heads of Athena: LO PORTO 1961, pp. 139, 141, fig. 16b; NEUTSCH 1967, p. 166, pl. 35.2-3.

presiding deity⁴⁶. The figurines belong to technical and stylistic traditions, which differ from those of the armed goddesses found at the Achaean *apoikiai* of southern Italy, but are consistent with other terracottas found at Locri Epizephyrii and its sub-foundations of Hipponion and Medma. One of the bellicose statuettes preserves the head of the figure who wears a *polos*. Hand-modeled arms are attached to a molded block representing the overfold of her peplos which is, in turn, attached to a tubular skirt thrown on a potter's wheel. Her right arm extends horizontally to her side before bending upward at the elbow to grasp a raised spear; her left forearm extends forward, perhaps to carry a shield. Again, a coroplast's clever manipulation of hand-modeled arms transformed a cast from a mold series conventionally employed to portray a standing or seated figure in the rigid style of an archaic *xoanon* into the image of an animated warrior⁴⁷.

Some interpret the presence of the fictile *Promachoi* as a reflection of a poliadic, protective aspect of Persephone's multi-faceted character at Locri, bolstering their argument with the fact that inscriptions on two helmets dedicated at the Mannella sanctuary explicitly name Persephone or "the Goddess" as the intended recipient⁴⁸. Others suggest that the figurines may alternatively represent Athena or Aphrodite, whose presence in the sanctuary as a combative personality is attested by these two votive terracottas of an armed goddess⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ CARDOSA 2018, p. 131; CARDOSA 2014, p. 26, 43, Cat. Nos. 12-13; CARDOSA 2002, p. 100. BARRA BAGNASCO 1986, p. 152, mentions three terracottas.

⁴⁷ For figurine from the same mold series that has not been modified to portray an armed goddess: SABBIONE 1996, pp. 35, 38 top left.

⁴⁸ For Persephone as protectress of the city and of the transition of Locri's youth to adulthood and their military role: CARDOSA 2018, p. 131; CARDOSA 2014, pp. 23, 26-27, 29; CARDOSA 2002, p. 100.

⁴⁹ BARRA BAGNASCO 1986, p. 152; SABBIONE 1996, p. 33.

Additionally, some twenty late archaic and early classical figurines of an armed goddess were recovered from the grounds of a small temple on the Mannella hill near the sanctuary of Persephone⁵⁰. The molded terracottas render the anatomy of the *Promachos* in a more three-dimensional, less schematic manner than those found at the sanctuary of Persephone and thus represent a different technical and stylistic approach to the production of this warlike imagery⁵¹. One figurine of the early fifth century BC unambiguously represents Athena clad in her *aegis*, fringed by curling serpents (fig. 8)⁵². The figurines have led to the identification of the patron of the small sanctuary and temple as Athena.

Several terracottas of a *Promachos* of late archaic or early classical style were likewise dedicated at the sanctuary of Calderazzo at Medma, which Locri Epizephyrii founded on the Tyrrhenian coast by 600 BC⁵³. Some unmistakably portray Athena sporting her characteristic *aegis* adorned by snakes' heads and a Gorgon⁵⁴. Still other figurines represent Athena in a guise different than that of a *Promachos*⁵⁵. Yet, within an assemblage of over a thousand terracottas, which otherwise demonstrates a close affinity with that of Persephone at Mannella, how should this handful of distinctive terracottas of an armed goddess be evaluated in interpreting the nature of

⁵⁰ ORSI 1911, pp. 64-67, figs. 47-48.

⁵¹ Two may again be hand-modelled modifications to a standard cast of a *kore*. The figure's right arm has been altered to raise a weapon menacingly and her head embellished by a helmet with a tall *lophos*: ORSI 1911, p. 65, fig. 47 center right and lower left.

⁵² ORSI 1911, p. 66, fig. 48.

⁵³ The terracottas date stylistically to the first half of the fifth century BC: ORSI 1913, pp. 100-106, 144, figs. 116-119; MILLER 1983, pp. 216-217, pl. 10.106, 108, 149; BENCZE 2019, pp. 15-16, fig. 7. Bencze has notably assembled fragments of a life-size terracotta statue of a *Promachos* from Calderazzo which awaits publication.

⁵⁴ PAOLETTI 1996, pp. 104, 109, fig. 2.24.

⁵⁵ MILLER 1983, pp. 216-217, 232-233, 238, 243, 250-251, pls. 10.106, 108, 149; 15.183; ORSI 1913, pp. 105-108, figs. 122-123.

the cult and the personality of the deity (or deities) propitiated at Calderazzo?

5. ARMED GODDESSES BEYOND THE COROPLASTIC ARTS

Three additional votive statuettes of the early sixth century BCE merit note: one from Temple A at the poliadic sanctuary of Himera in Sicily⁵⁶ and two from the emporion sanctuary at Gravisca in Etruria⁵⁷. They are however cast, not in clay, but in bronze. Although these bronze statuettes share such formal traits as the tubular skirt of the clay figurines (thought to reflect archaic *xoana*), they stem from stylistic traditions that differ from those of the coroplastic workshops at the Achaean *apoikiai* or Locri Epizephyrii in southern Italy. At Himera, excavations at Temple A yielded, moreover, a second statuette of a goddess holding a hand-modeled shield, made of terracotta and dated to the second half of the seventh century BCE⁵⁸. Its ill-proportioned, columnar form recalls another fictile *Promachos* from the sanctuary of Athena at Gortyn in Crete, which is likewise dated to the seventh century BC⁵⁹. The worship of Athena is attested at the acropolis sanctuary of Himera by two dedicatory inscriptions of the late sixth and mid-fifth centuries BC and further supported by two molded terracottas of a *Promachos* of archaic style⁶⁰. At Gravisca, inscribed vessels name

⁵⁶ BONACASA 1970, p. 91, pl. 31; ALLEGRO, CONSOLI 2020, pp. 284-285, fig. 3.

⁵⁷ TORELLI 2016, pp. 5-6, 8-9, figs. 6, 10. For a fourth bronze figurine of Athena *Promachos*, wearing her snaky *aegis*, from a private collection said to be from Selinus, but not from a systematically excavated context: DEMARGNE 1984, p. 971, no. 138.

⁵⁸ ALLEGRO, CONSOLI 2020, pp. 284-285, fig. 2.

⁵⁹ In addition to a tubular skirt thrown on a potter's wheel, some of the terracotta figurines from Gortyn share a second feature with the bronze statuette from Himera – a detachable helmet: RIZZA, SANTA MARIA SCRINARI 1968, pp. 54, 161, 215-218, 249-250, figs. 84c, 278a,b-280, pls. 9-11, Cat. Nos. 57-59; JOHANNOWSKY 2002, p. 74, pls. 44-45, 65, Cat. Nos. 508-510; DEMARGNE 1984, p. 961, no. 34; NEER 2018, p. 168, fig. 6.21.

⁶⁰ For the inscriptions and the terracottas, which date respectively to 530-520 BC and the beginning of the fifth century BC: ALLEGRO, CONSOLI 2020, pp. 284-286, 289-291, figs. 5-6, 8.

Aphrodite and Hera as the deities propitiated at the emporion⁶¹. The archaic bronze *Promachoi* at Himera and Gravisca have been interpreted respectively as representations of Athena and Aphrodite⁶².

6. CROTON'S *HOPLOSMIA*, VOTIVE ARMS AND ARMOR

Notwithstanding the epiclesis, *Hoplosmia*, assigned by Lycophron to Hera at her sanctuary on the Lacinian promontory at Croton⁶³, no image of an armed goddess has been recovered from the sanctuary. Excavations did however yield some miniature fictile shields, which are the only material evidence reflecting the Hellenistic poet's characterization of the goddess⁶⁴. In this survey of images of an armed goddess, one should note that both arms and armor were dedicated at numerous sanctuaries of varied female deities throughout the Greek world, including many in Magna Graecia, where an archaic statuette of a *Promachos* likewise figured among the votive offerings⁶⁵.

7. THE *AEGIS* AND WINGS OF ATHENA AT SAN BIAGIO

⁶¹ Aphrodite appears to be the first deity present, but is soon joined by Hera, and later Demeter: TORELLI 2016, pp. 7-20, figs. 11, 13-14.

⁶² For summary of earlier interpretations of the bronze figurines at both Himera and Gravisca: SOLIMA 1998, pp. 413-416. Recently for Himera, affirming the presence of Athena and rejecting the proposal by TORELLI 2003 to see the *Promachos* statuette as Aphrodite: ALLEGRO, CONSOLI 2020, pp. 284-286, 289-291. For Aphrodite at Gravisca: TORELLI 2016, pp. 5-6.

⁶³ Lycophr., *Alex.*, 856-858. GIANGIULIO 1982, pp. 15-19.

⁶⁴ SPADEA 1997, p. 248. Croton's Vigna Nuova sanctuary, also attributed to Hera, has instead yielded more weapons and armor: SPADEA 2014; SPADEA 2018, pp. 64-72.

⁶⁵ For surveys of votive arms at sanctuaries in southern Italy and Sicily: PARRA 2006, pp. 232-237; CARDOSA 2002, pp. 99-103. For arms at sanctuaries where a statuette of an armed goddess was also dedicated: Metaponto, San Biagio: SAN PIETRO 1991, p. 17. Poseidonia, southern urban sanctuary: D'ANTONIO 2018, pp. 43-48. Poseidonia, northern urban sanctuary: LONGO 2018, pp. 25-42; GRAELLS, LONGO, ZUCHTRIEGEL 2017. Francavilla Marittima, Timpone della Motta: LUBERTO 2018, pp. 75-82. Locri Epizephyrii, Manella sanctuary of Persephone: CARDOSA 2014; CARDOSA 2018, pp. 127-131. Medma, Calderazzo sanctuary: CARDOSA 2018, pp. 135-138. Himera, Temple A: CARDOSA 2002, pp. 101-102.

Returning to Metaponto, the figurine from San Biagio (fig. 3) provides an intriguing parallel for the terracotta from Incoronata. The coil of clay depicting the head of a snake that the Metapontine coroplast added by hand to the molded torso of the armed goddess represents a conscious choice by the artisan. He additionally attached to the outer edge of each shoulder a rounded lappet of clay, which I argue represents the tail of a snake. The craftsman thus embellished each shoulder of the goddess with the curling head as well as the tail of a serpent. Her garment has likewise been modified by hand to fall symmetrically along the sides of her torso to a rounded tip at waist-level. These flattened borders of clay with a pointed lower edge are an unusual feature for not only this mold series but also closely related mold series within the repertoire of the Metapontine coroplast⁶⁶. Perhaps the falling drapery of a himation or the overfold of a peplos is all that the craftsman intended. Considering the prominent presence of the snake, it is nonetheless tempting to see the garment as the snake-trimmed *aegis* worn only by the goddess Athena. In like fashion, the heads of snakes curl high above the shoulders of Athena *Promachos*, who is unambiguously portrayed on numerous black-figure vases of the sixth century BC (fig. 9) and so contemporaneous with the figurine from San Biagio⁶⁷. The coroplast at Metaponto, who carefully adorned the terracotta cast with snakes, appears to have been working within the same iconographic milieu as the vase-

⁶⁶ They occur where normally the coroplast would instead add hand-modeled forearms to the cast of the torso of this mold series in order to produce a generic image of a female figure: OLBRICH 1979, p. 158, pl. 30.A124, lower terracottas; also pp. 150-157, pls. 24-29.A106-A123. It is of interest that such a pointed addition of clay is similarly fashioned along the right side of the *Promachos* figurines from Poseidonia: *supra* notes 28 and 33.

⁶⁷ For a few of many examples on Panathenaic amphorae, scenes of Athena's birth, etc.: DEMARGNE 1984, p. 1010, nos. 118-119, 349, 351, 485.

painters when portraying these distinctive characteristics of Athena brandishing her spear.

Although scholars have constrained the imagery of this figurine to fit their own interpretation of the identity of the goddess — be she Artemis or Hera — who presided over the cult practiced at San Biagio, it is more reasonable that this fighting portrait of Athena stand boldly on her own within the assemblage of terracottas dedicated at the sanctuary⁶⁸. To this end, Zancani Montuoro viewed the figurine as evidence for the worship of Athena at San Biagio. The focus of her argument was not so much to identify the cult patron at San Biagio but instead to demonstrate that the goddess, represented by archaic terracottas which show her brandishing a spear or holding animals at such Achaean sites as Timpone della Motta, Sybaris, and Metaponto, manifests a multi-faceted character derived from the Bronze Age Athena of Crete and Linear B tablets, which address her as *Potnia*⁶⁹.

In considering the implications of the terracotta for the cult practiced at San Biagio, it should again be emphasized that not every figurine of a deity within a large assemblage of votive terracottas need portray the cult patron. Nor should a single votive image within a large assemblage dictate which deity received the attention of cult participants. The semantic value of the imagery of a terracotta figurine must be assessed within the full context of the sanctuary where it served as a votive gift and, when possible, even beyond the boundaries of that temenos.

Accordingly, the depiction of Athena wearing a snake-headed *aegis* and sporting wings (fig. 10) on a black-figure amphora, possibly of Italiote

⁶⁸ *Supra* notes 24 and 25. Paribeni suggests briefly that the terracotta may portray either an armed Hera or an armed Athena: PARIBENI 1974, p. 457.

⁶⁹ ZANCANI MONTUORO 1975, pp. 134-135, 137-139; ZANCANI MONTUORO 1976, pp. 660-661.

manufacture, of the last quarter of the sixth century BCE found at San Biagio⁷⁰ is particularly fascinating in light of the numerous votive terracottas portraying a winged goddess dedicated at the sanctuary⁷¹. An investigation of the imagery of a winged Athena and its implications for the cults practiced where such winged images served as votive gifts lies beyond the parameters of this study. One should nevertheless note that figurines with wings were recovered from sanctuaries at Incoronata⁷² and Timpone della Motta⁷³, where terracottas of an armed goddess were likewise dedicated. By emphasizing a multi-dimensional character for Athena as *Promachos* and *Potnia*, Zancani Montuoro may point to a fruitful path for better understanding the archaic cult at San Biagio.

8. THE AEGIS OF ATHENA AT INCORONATA

How does this survey of votive images of a martial goddess in southern Italy contribute to our perception and interpretation of the figurine of a *Promachos* from Incoronata? A comparison with the terracotta portraying Athena from San Biagio is instructive. A narrow strip of hand-modeled clay with a rounded end falls over the preserved right shoulder of the armed goddess from Incoronata (fig. 1a, c). It bears a striking resemblance to the lappets of clay falling over each shoulder of the statuette from San Biagio

⁷⁰ SAN PIETRO 1991, pp. 58, 66-73, 124-125, 142-146, Cat. No. 32.

⁷¹ OLBRICH 1979, pp. 74-75, 155-159, pls. 24, 27-29, 31. A106, A117-A123, A128.

⁷² Two wings (Inv. IC77.196.03 and IC 77.281.02) as well as the body of a quadruped which is often held by such winged figures (Inv. IC77.50.01) were found at Incoronata: AMMERMAN *in press*.

⁷³ At Timpone della Motta, Stoop identified the tip of a wing as the *lophos* of a helmet: STOOP 1974-1976, p. 119, pl. 59.3. Russo identifies the hand-modeled fragment correctly as a wing and accordingly ascribes this trait to the Athena propitiated at Timpone della Motta: RUSSO 1996, pp. 534-539, fig. 4.

(fig. 3) that I propose represent the tails of snakes adorning the *aegis* of Athena. The close correspondence between these elements that coroplasts consciously added by hand to a cast, which they further modified by fashioning a hand-modeled arm raised to brandish a spear, suggests that the artisans were following standardized procedures of construction employed in coroplastic workshops at Metaponto. In both cases, the craftsman was guided by a mental pattern or formula in creating the figurine of an armed goddess sporting a snake-embellished *aegis*, which he envisioned as a portrait of Athena *Promachos*.

What then motivated the worshipper who acquired the bellicose image of Athena to dedicate it on the high plateau at Inoronata? If excavations had yielded a preponderance of votive terracottas portraying Athena, one would surmise that the dedicant was following standard ritual practice by honoring the goddess with her own image. But this is not necessarily the case. As previously noted, excavations recovered a fragmentary raised right arm suggesting that two figurines in the attitude of a *Promachos* are present in the assemblage of some forty votive terracottas⁷⁴. Again, one faces the dilemma of how much weight to place on the distinctive imagery of an infrequently represented votive terracotta within an assemblage of otherwise generic female figurines recovered from a sanctuary.

On balance, however, this survey of sanctuaries where statuettes of a female *Promachos* were dedicated shows that additional evidence, such as

⁷⁴ *Supra* note 14. Two wings, though of interest, cannot be adduced as strong evidence for the presence of an image of a winged Athena within the assemblage: *supra* note 72. Denti states that two fragments of a large terracotta snake from the western area of the plateau at Inoronata might belong to the *aegis* of Athena, Medusa, or a plastic vase, but reflect primarily chthonic rites of the second half of the seventh century BC: DENTI 2020, pp. 9-16, figs. 11-12. Due to the presence of the image of Athena *Promachos* at the archaic shrine on the southeastern spur, a review of the evidence for ritual activity at different areas of the plateau is perhaps warranted.

inscriptions or figurines of later date that incontrovertibly name or portray Athena, frequently points to the goddess as the recipient of these votive gifts. Athena appears to have presided over the cults practiced at Timpone della Motta at Francavilla Marittima, the northern urban sanctuary at Poseidonia, and Temple A at Himera from the sixth century BC throughout the long religious life of each sanctuary. These three shrines as well as the postulated sanctuary of Athena at Castello del Barone at Siris/Heraclea occupy moreover a commanding position on the landscape. The goddess with her menacing posture symbolically protects the territory claimed by her worshippers. Hilltops and promontories are repeatedly consecrated to Athena in Magna Graecia and throughout the Greek world⁷⁵. The terracotta figurine of an armed goddess from Incoronata suggests that the Achaean settlers at Metaponto, in like fashion, established a shrine on the high plateau so that their recently acquired territory would enjoy the protection of the goddess Athena.

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⁷⁵ For example, at Agropoli near Paestum: CIPRIANI 2012, pp. 146-148. For Castrum Minervae and other promontory sanctuaries of Athena in southern Italy: D'ANDRIA 2009, pp. 45-53. For Athena shrines on hilltops and promontories mostly in mainland Greece: ROBERTSON 1996, pp. 387-388, 438-467.

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Fig. 1. Figurine of armed female figure from Incoronata (Inv. IC 77.202.01 + IC 77.362.01+ IC 77.183.01); a: front, b: back, c: top. Photo: R. M. Ammerman (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture – Regional Directorate of Basilicata Museums).



Fig. 2. Figurine of female figure from Pantanello, Metaponto (Inv. PZ 74.038.01). Photo: V. Cracolici (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture – Regional Directorate of Basilicata Museums, Museum of Metaponto).

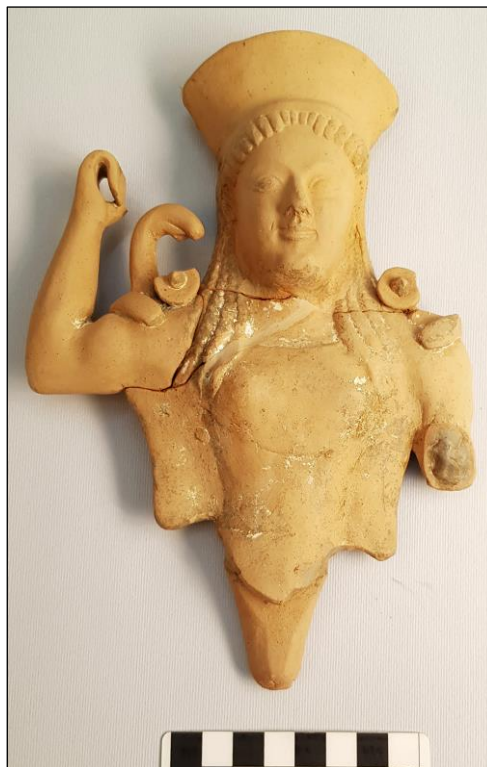


Fig. 3. Figurine of armed female figure from San Biagio, Metaponto (Inv. 29892). Photo: V. Cracolici (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture – Regional Directorate of Basilicata Museums, Museum of Metaponto).



Fig. 4. Figurines of armed female figure from Poseidonia; a: from southern urban sanctuary (Inv. 1884); b: from northern urban sanctuary (Inv. 4467 CE). Photo: R. M. Ammerman.



Fig. 5. Fragmentary figurines of armed female figure from Timpone della Motta, Francavilla Marittima; H. head: 9,5 cm; H. torso: 7,0 cm (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture n.8 of 06/02/2024 – National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria).



Fig. 6. Figurine of armed female figure from Siris/Heraclea (Inv. 213475). Photo: R. M. Ammerman (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture – Regional Directorate of Basilicata Museums).



Fig. 7. Figurine of Armed Female Figure from Mannella sanctuary of Persephone, Locri Epizephyrii (Inv. 5678); H: 16 cm (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture n.8 of 06/02/2024 – National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria).



Fig. 8. Figurine of Athena *Promachos* from Mannella sanctuary of Athena, Locri Epizephyrii; H: 18 cm (Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture n.8 of 06/02/2024 – National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria).



Fig. 9. Athena *Promachos* depicted on Panathenaic amphora (British Museum Inv. B130, 1842, 0728.834).



Fig. 10. Winged Athena depicted on black-figure amphora from San Biagio, Metaponto (Inv. 29959); after SAN PIETRO 1991, n. 32).