Summary: This contribution contains a critical re-assessment of the earliest archaeological material originating from the Valley of the Muses, i.e. archaic vessels and figurines, two examples of hydriai allegedly linked with the Muses, and an iconographic testimony. In the current historiography, these sources are still considered to confirm the archaic, or even earlier, origin of the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon. An analysis of testimonies is complemented with an overview of a broader cultural context (i.e. the musical agones, the Muses and nymphs and the emergence of the cult of poets/intellectuals); this enables us to assess the sources and chronological considerations. Conclusions drawn from the re-assessment of testimonies are of key importance not only to the dating of the cult of the Muses at this site, but also to our assessment of the phenomenon of the cult of these goddesses in the Greek world in general.

Keywords: Valley of the Muses, Helicon, Thespiae, Nymphs, Hesiod

There are several reasons why the issue of dating the beginnings of the cult of the Muses in the valley below Mount Helicon needs to be re-examined. Firstly, until now the analyses focused on the exceptionally optimistic reasoning based on sources that are either ambiguous (e.g. Hesiod or the iconography) or unsubstantial (e.g. the archaeological data). Secondly, the proposed interpretations are weakened by the fact that important cultural contexts and proper diachronic perspectives have not been considered. Thirdly, a number of additional testimonies cited in recent publications confirm the early origin of the cult and therefore need to be further examined. Fourthly and finally, the significance of the cult in the so-called Valley of the Muses and the dating of its beginnings materially exceeds the local framework and is of key importance to the study of the origins and functions of the cult of the Muses as such. This is because the sanctuary at the foot of Mount Helicon is one of the most important reference points for the general assessment and the dating of the cult of the Muses in other regions of the Greek world.

*Kontakt: Tomasz Mojsik, E-Mail: tmojsik@uwb.edu.pl
Hence, the aim of the analysis presented herein is to critically assess the earliest archaeological material (i.e. dating from the seventh to fourth century BC) originating from the Valley of the Muses, as well as to locate the testimonies, and the actual proposal for dating the beginnings of the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon, in a proper historical and cultural framework. Already at this point it must be noted that conclusions coming from this analysis do not offer a basis for the dating that is currently accepted in specialist literature, since archaeological data from the archaic and classical period cannot be incontrovertibly linked with the cult of the Muses. The critical assessment of the reconstructions as made hitherto is further reinforced by referring to the broader picture of the cult’s development, as well as to the history of Thespiae and the surrounding region.

Hesiod and the Muses on Helicon

Hesiod’s testimony, especially the information about the dedication of a tripod (Op. 654–659), on the one hand, and archaeological data from the third century BC on the other, provide the departure point for the investigation of the cult practised in the Valley of the Muses.\footnote{See de Ridder 1922; Roux 1954; Schachter 1986, 147–179.} There is a clear discrepancy between these two sets of information, however, for two reasons: firstly, the type and nature of the sources, and secondly, the evident, at least 300 year-wide chronological gap that divides them. Attempts are made to fill this gap with various types of auxiliary material, including the references to the Helikon(a)des in literature after Hesiod,\footnote{See, however, Taback 2002, 49 f.: “Ancient authors after Hesiod, such as Pindar, who refer to the Helikonian Muses, were probably motivated primarily by literary allusion to Hesiod rather than by the renown of this Muse sanctuary and cult.”; Schachter 1986, 156, n. 4.} the aetiological tales about Aloades, Pieros and Pierides, or the local versions of the number and the names of the Muses.\footnote{Paus. 9.29.1; Cic. nat. 3.54; cf. Schachter 1986, 150–163.} Yet, for instance, the number of the Muses does not prove their archaic provenance at all, but rather results from the character of archaic culture.\footnote{See Mojsik 2011b.} The local names of these three Heliconian Muses date from the fourth century BC at the earliest, as has been demonstrated by Alex Hardie.\footnote{Hardie 2006, 43–47.} Aetiological tales, in turn, are a remarkably weak argument in favour of the archaic derivation of a cult at a given place. They are usually associated with the founding of the sanctuary and their purpose was, among others, precisely...
to demonstrate its exceptional age. Also, it is obvious that tales about Alcaeus and Pieros’ attempt to reconcile divergent traditions referring to the origin of the goddesses (Macedonia/Pieria versus Boeotia/Helicon), which points to the fourth century as their date. In the version presented by Pausanias, the tradition of three Heliconian Muses was to have preceded the nine Muses identified as the Pierian, and thus “Macedonian”, ones. In addition, the narration referring to the three original Muses and the later change into the Hesiodic nine is noticeable also in the tale about the Thespians commissioning statues of the Muses. In fact, it is worth pointing out here that the information about sculptors given by Pausanias, as well as Plutarch’s enigmatic story (de gen. 5–7) on the role of Spartans in organizing an agon in honour of the Muses, are further testimonies which link the beginnings of the cult with a date as late as the fourth century.

In these conditions, the correct assessment of those few archaeological testimonies that stand between Hesiod and the time the Thespians established an official cult is of key importance. And the central question in this respect is whether these testimonies can be considered proof of the existence of the cult of the Muses on Helicon, or in the valley at its foot, in the period between the seventh and the fourth century. Before we move on to the analysis of those testimonies, however, we must look at the history of archaeological research on this subject. This is because a set of unfortunate coincidences has caused the history of research on the Valley of the Muses to be a history of destruction, discontinuation and disregard. This, in turn, considerably influenced our ability to pose and verify research hypotheses.

---

6 Hardie 2006, 61: “It may therefore be right to think in terms of an emerging rivalry between a Macedonian cult that exploited territorial identification with Thracian Pieria and the Heliconian cult.” This rivalry must be associated with the activities of King Archelaus and the inclusion, in the late fifth century, of the Muses into the cult of Zeus at Dion. Generally, on Archelaus’ cultural activities, cf. Moloney 2014.
7 Paus. 9.30.1; cf. Aug. doctr. christ. 2.68–70 (after Varro).
8 Some studies contain the rather imprecise mentions of the cult of the Muses as being sited “on Mount Helicon”, even though in the Hellenistic period the sanctuary was clearly located in the valley at the foot of this mountain’s massif. This perception was most probably influenced by Hesiod’s tale. Of the cult being sited on Mount Helicon we may speak only in reference to Zeus.
9 See Müller 1996.
Archaeological Evidence

First of all, throughout Antiquity, but especially in the Roman period, the Valley of the Muses sanctuary was one of the best locations for obtaining valuable statues and other artefacts, and therefore was repeatedly plundered. Hence the assessment of the original status of the cult on the basis of what Pausanias – our fundamental source of information – saw there may arouse well-founded doubts.

Apart from that, the manner of conducting the excavations, describing the finds and publishing research results leaves much to be desired. The site was identified by F. P. de Julleville and P. Decharme, who visited the locality in 1865. The first excavations were conducted by P. Stamatakis in 1882. Entrusting the explorations in the Valley of the Muses to French archaeologists under the supervision of P. Jamot (1888–1891) is considered to have been a breakthrough. The French conducted the excavations for only four seasons, and then they moved to Delphi. Before Jamot left the area, however, he had managed to dig in all around the Valley and discover, among others, the theatre, the stoa and the temple of the Muses, actually a monumental altar. Jamot never published a scholarly analysis of research results, most probably because he moved on to supervise the subsequent site. The few reports which appeared in the “Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique” contained only the initial, often erroneous assumptions.

The first attempt at an overall description and a preliminary analysis of the material discovered during those excavations was made only as late as 1922 – three decades after the excavations – by Jamot’s colleague A. de Ridder. His analysis was completed and summed up by G. Roux in 1954. In both those studies – although particularly in de Ridder’s one, as Roux’s work was already tending towards a synthesis – easily noticeable is the absence of information regarding the exact places where the artefacts were found, as well as photographs or sketches that would indicate their appearance. Thus, at the very outset of the research, its quality was damaged by the limited study of the archaeological material obtained at the site.

In 1978, research in Boeotia, including the vicinity of Thespiae, resumed in the framework of the “Cambridge – Bradford Boeotia Expedition”, “Boeotia Survey Project”, and recently the “Leiden – Ljubljana Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project”. In all these research teams, the key role was played by J. Bintliff. The projects involved, first and foremost, surface surveys, which made it possible to verify the earlier findings. Some of the collected data has already been ana-

10 Cic. Verr. 2.4.4; Plin. NH 36.39; Paus. 9.27.3–4; Zos. 5.24.6.
11 Roux 1954, 25–27.
12 Bintliff – Howard – Snodgrass 2007; Bintliff 1996.
lysed and published; the rest is still awaiting publication, including the crucial fourth volume, which will review the investigations in the area of Thespiae and the Valley of the Muses. Annual reports published in “Pharos” (most recently in 2013) are its substitute, if only to some extent.

Let us now proceed to the group of archaeological finds which are cited as an intermediary link that fills the gap between the archaic and the Hellenistic period. It is worth pointing out at the very outset that since the publication of the article by G. Roux, and especially the analysis by A. Schachter, these testimonies are generally and unquestionably considered to prove the existence of a continuity between Hesiod’s gesture and the Hellenistic sanctuary in the Valley of the Muses.13

The main source basis for this thesis is “a deposit of Korinthian aryballoi, Boiotian black figure skyphoi, and terracotta figurines”14. These artefacts were described for the first time by de Ridder in 1922.15 Unfortunately, his report was out of necessity brief, in most cases devoid of photographs or sketches, and was never completed with the much-needed details. In spite of gaps in the documentation and uncertainties regarding the archaeological context, the vessels and figurines became a key element in the conjectural reconstruction of how the cult of the Muses developed in this location. Here, a particularly important role was played by Schachter, who, summing up the source analysis concerning the Valley of the Muses in the second volume of “Cults of Boiotia”, stated: “The objects found near the later monumental altar [...] show that there was some kind of cult activity at this site in the archaic and classical period, and, given the location, it would be perverse to deny that this was directed at the Muses.”16 Further on, I will attempt to demonstrate that this interpretation may arouse many reservations, and the connection with the Muses, posed by Schachter as obvious, should be considered problematic and, at best, potential.

All the vessels were reportedly discovered in the area of Hagia Triada, and thus near the location of the later monumental altar. The figurines, in turn, came generally from the area of “Vallon des Muses”. The vessels seem to derive from the late sixth century, the figurines are variously dated, but some of them come

13 See e.g. Roux 1954, 43; Schachter 1986, 151; Taback 2002, 51 f.; Manieri 2009, 313. The only scholar to accept the possibility of other interpretations was Lamberton 1988.
14 Schachter 1986, 151; the same phrase is later used by Taback 2002, 47, n. 3, and Robinson 2012, 234.
15 De Ridder 1922, no. 145–149, 151 for pottery, and 197–201, 205, 208, 210–213, 225 for figurines.
16 Schachter 1986, 156, see also p. 163: “The Mouseion, like the Kabirion, shows signs of practically unbroken cult activity from late in the eighth century B.C. until late in the fourth century A.D. [...]”. Scholars referring to Schachter’s works do not always notice that in the essay on the Muses in the OCD he suggested the later dating.
from the archaic period. Yet de Ridder’s report does not offer an unequivocal foundation for an assumption that these objects are closely interconnected or that they come from a single area. It must be remembered that in the archaic and classical period the area of Ascra, including the valley, encompassed some eleven hectares, and Mount Helicon’s massif covers about 800 square kilometres.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, the spatial and temporal distribution, especially in the case of the figurines, which come from the entire area of the valley, does not suggest that we are dealing with a consistent deposit having an unquestionable cult purpose. In addition, entries from Jamot’s unpublished notebooks indicate that he acquired some artefacts from the local residents, who described to him where approximately they had been found.\textsuperscript{18} This absence of precise archaeological context, evident especially with regard to the terracotta figurines, makes the dating and the analysis difficult.

The only artefact that bears an inscription stands out from the pottery set. It is a shard sherd of black pottery with scratched marks HI $\ldots$, which suggests the word hieros/-on, often encountered on vessels.\textsuperscript{19} The shard is unfortunately too small to be identified or dated with more precision. All that is known about it is that it comes from (approximately) the Hagia Triada area and that it is a “Fragment de vase à couverte noire”; this is all the data gleaned from de Ridder. In the analyses, it has been assumed to have come from the same group as the other archaic vessels and to have dated from the late sixth century. This gave rise to the assumption that the remaining vessels must have also served sacral functions.

Yet, bearing in mind the interrupted excavations, the state of preservation of the sources, and the way in which they were examined, caution in drawing far-reaching conclusions is advisable.

In addition, further details should be added to Schachter’s analysis of the discovered objects. Apart from skyphoi and aryballoi, there is also one alabastron (no. 149 de Ridder) among the six cited vessels. Representations seen on the vessels are very diverse; the alabastron, for instance, shows a military scene, perhaps a fight with an Amazon. It must, however, be clearly stressed that none of the representations seems to be in any way connected with the topics of the Muses or mousikē; a matter to which Schachter did not devote any attention at all.

The question of the terracotta figurines is even more interesting. They are mentioned in one breath with the rest of the source material but, so far, they have never been discussed in detail. The problem with using them in researching the

\textsuperscript{17} Bintliff 1996, 197; Bonanno 2009, 260.
\textsuperscript{18} See IThesp. 273.
\textsuperscript{19} De Ridder 1922, no. 151: “Reste d’un graffite: HIC (sans doute ιερόν, mention fréquente sur les vases peints).”
beginnings of the cult of the Muses in the Valley of the Muses lies in the facts that (a) they come from the entire – and, besides, broadly understood – area of the valley, (b) some of them are impossible to date, as they are badly preserved and the archaeological context from which they came is usually unknown, (c) they do not evince any connections with the cult of the Muses. To focus on the last point: some of these figurines are clearly linked with chthonic cults (e.g. no. 201), some represent children (e.g. no. 210) or animals (e.g. a sheep, no. 211, a bird, no. 213, or a pig, no. 212) usually linked with the cult of other deities (e.g. Demeter), rather than with the cult of the Muses. Besides, no. 205 is an archaic terracotta male mask originating from the Valley of the Muses, identified by de Ridder as “Masque de Silène” (p. 302).

This find leads us to the question which is overlooked in the analyses: was it only the Muses that were worshipped in the Valley of the Muses and its vicinity before the third century BC? In other words, should only these goddesses be taken under consideration as the addresses of the possible cult gestures that are being reconstructed here? Referring to the shard with the inscription hieros/-on, Taback prudently observed: “While this inscription may signal the presence of a sanctuary, nevertheless it cannot confirm that the sanctuary specifically honored the Muses.”

The above-mentioned terracotta figurines suggesting the presence of a cult of other deities – Demeter, Dionysus, the chthonic or fertility gods – should arouse similar doubts. Also, Hesiod himself mentioned that there had been an altar of Zeus on Helicon. In addition, the Muses shared the sanctuary in the valley with Eros, whom, according to Pausanias (9.27.1), the Thespians held in the highest regard; this fact is usually overlooked. In the case of Eros, the archaic origin of the cult seems far more probable than in the case of the Muses (as a poet’s guardians). This may also be indicated by the exceptionally old statue of this god, made of unhewn stone (σφισιν ἄγαλμα παλαιότατόν ἐστιν ἀργὸς λίθος), mentioned by Pausanias (9.27), as well as information about famous statues of Eros by Lysippus and Praxiteles. Poseidon and the nymphs should also be mentioned in the context of Helicon and the valley. A fragment of a bronze vessel, possibly a tripod, with an inscription […ei to Elikonio] running along the rim, published in 1926 by A. Plassart, also belongs to the set of early testimonies pointing to the presence of the cult of other deities. It was allegedly found on the slope of Mount Helicon, close to the Hippocrene spring. The artefact is usually interpreted as

---

20 Taback 2002, 48 f.
21 See Aravantinos 1996.
22 See Schachter 1986, 187 f., 190, 206 f.; Langdon 2000, 464; Soph. OT 1108 f.
23 Plassart 1926, 385–387; see IThesp. 273.
a dedication to Apollo, Zeus or Poseidon. To sum up: even if we overlook the doubtful and problematic cases and testimonies, we still have clear evidence that a substantial number of other deities had been venerated in the subsequent Valley of the Muses. The Muses certainly became the focus of the main cult in the third century, together with the establishment of a supra-regional sanctuary in the valley. Yet the extant archaeological material does not yield incontestable evidence that they had already been such a focus earlier; and they were certainly not the only deities worshipped in the vicinity.

There is one more way of explaining the presence of pottery shards and figurines in the valley. R. Lamberton suggests that they should be interpreted as evidence of human habitation associated with a large settlement identified as Ascra by the “Cambridge – Bradford Boeotia Expedition”. Surface surveys conducted since the 1980s have confirmed this model of habitation in the area of the Thespian chora. The authors of the volume “Testing the Hinterland” state:

“It is significant that a large village or small town (komopolis) of Askra lies much further – 7.5 km – from Thespiai, in a location where city residents would have been hard put to it to carry out intensive farming; and since 0.5 of Askra’s potential catchment lies to its west, that is further still from Thespiai, it is clear enough that the Valley of the Muses, the natural exploitation territory for Askra, was largely cultivated from Askra and its numerous satellite farms.”

The presence of those satellite farms in the Roman period seems to be confirmed by Pausanias (9.31.3), who mentioned in his description of the sanctuary that in his lifetime people still resided in the vicinity of the grove of the Muses (περιοικοῦσι δὲ καὶ ἄνδρες τὸ ἄλσος). This testimony, until now overlooked, additionally confirms archaeological research, which, let it be repeated once again, has clearly revealed evidence of human habitation in the area of this exceptionally fertile valley.

In connection with the additional contexts which have been pointed out here, i.e. the presence of other cults and the clear traces of habitation, it seems at least problematic to link the vessels and terracotta figurines with the cult of the Muses. This is because these objects can be interpreted as, on the one hand, traces of habitation and agricultural activity; on the other hand, if we assume that at least some of those objects had some religious function, they may con-

24 Schachter 1981, 236; Sporn 2013.
25 Lamberton 1988, 496; on Ascra: Snodgrass 1985.
26 Bintliff – Howard – Snodgrass 2007, 136 (my emphasis).
stitute a trace of some household’s religious activity.\textsuperscript{27} If we assume a wider cult context, we have a range of other deities worshipped in the valley and on Mount Helikon to choose from. In fact, in the case of terracotta figurines both these contexts: the habitation/agricultural one and the religious one, are combined, since some of them indicate that typically agricultural cults and fertility cults existed in that valley. To return to Schachter’s view cited at the outset of this analysis, it seems that caution in interpreting the above evidence is not at all “perverse”; it is a methodological requirement. The association of this evidence with the Muses results less from a meticulous assessment of the archaeological context than from the importance of the sanctuary of these goddesses in the later periods and from assumptions regarding cult continuity at this site.

Apart from the above set of evidence, other sources that supposedly confirm the early provenance of the cult of the Muses are sometimes cites in specialist literature. Let us begin our examination with a review of the iconographic representation. The white-ground lekythos, currently in the ‘Antikensammlung’ in Munich, shows two female figures.\textsuperscript{28} One of them is seated on top of a mountain captioned “Helicon”, the other is standing, facing her. Lower down between them there is a bird, perhaps a nightingale, and above a dedication to a boy (“Axiopeithes, the son of Alkimachos, is beautiful”). According to S. Bundrick, the lekythos came form a grave of a woman or a girl, “in which case Muses would serve as a favourable comment on the deceased’s sophrosyne and perhaps education”\textsuperscript{29}. The remark in \textit{Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum}, “Die zur Muse verklärte Verstorben auf dem Helikon und eine Zuhörerin”, also points to a similar interpretation of the vessel’s context.\textsuperscript{30} Considering it is being used in the debate on the dating of the cult in the Valley of the Muses, however, one reservation is especially worth pointing out. Is it, after all, possible that a representation on an Athenian vessel contained an allusion to a local cult from another \textit{polis} and, in addition, one located in Boeotia? Our impression that we are not dealing with a pan-Hellenic cult is reinforced by the fact that before the third century there is no indication whatsoever that a sanctuary had existed in the Valley of the Muses.\textsuperscript{31} The absence of any allusions to links between Thespiae and the Muses in literary texts dating

\textsuperscript{27} Barret 2015: “Certainly, structural parallels existed between civic cult and some aspects of household cult […], and similar terracotta types might appear in both households and sanctuaries.”

\textsuperscript{28} Schoen 80 = Beazley, ARV\textsuperscript{2}, 997, 155 – CVA Munich, Tafel 33–35 and p. 61–64.

\textsuperscript{29} Bundrick 2005, 58.

\textsuperscript{30} CVA Munich, 62.

\textsuperscript{31} Schachter 1986, 151: “Probably, as G. Roux suggests, the sanctuary began as a simple open-air affair, with no buildings to speak of.”
from before the third century seems no less important.\textsuperscript{32} In these circumstances, the only reasonable explanation seems to be that we are dealing with an allusion to Hesiod’s text, and not to a local cult not confirmed in the classical period. Thus, let us repeat, following the remark in \textit{Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum} (since it takes under consideration the vessel’s purpose and its archaeological context), that the only certain explanation seems to be: “Die zur Muse verklärte Verstorbene auf dem Helikon.” Thus, in no way can this vessel constitute a proof of the existence of the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon in the fifth century.

The issue of a bronze hydria dating from the fifth century BC is far more interesting. It must be admitted that such a vessel bearing a dedication to the Muses would be a testimony of extreme importance; it could confirm that not only the cult, but also an \textit{agon} existed in the period in question. The problem lies in the fact that the information given by Taback can in no way be verified, because the vessel was sold in 2001 and currently is most probably in a private collection. Taback cites Sotheby’s catalogue from 2001, which contains a photograph and a short description\textsuperscript{33}. The photograph of the vessel in the auction catalogue does not show the inscription; neither is it mentioned in the description. Taback does not quote it either, even though she reportedly saw the vessel.

A description of what is evidently the same vessel is found in A. Sowder’s study of Greek bronze hydriai\textsuperscript{34}. According to Sowder the vessel bears two inscriptions, not one; it was “inscribed twice, once as a dedication to the Muses at Thespiai and at a different time, with the name of a man (?), ‘Philomelas [son of] Me[lan]thos’ ”\textsuperscript{35}. The problem again lies in the fact that Sowder obviously did not see the vessel and was unable to cite the first inscription, saying generally that it was “a dedication to the Muses at Thespiai”. Also, the fact that she cites the second inscription only in translation clearly indicates that she was entirely dependent on the catalogue and had no access to the vessel itself or to its photographs. Thus, until we are in possession of at least a good photograph of it, we are unable the verify the inscriptions and their dating. In addition, the assumption that the inscription must date from the same period as the vessel itself is also a considerable oversimplification; its making may have been occasioned by, for instance, the organization of a Hellenistic \textit{agon}. In the case of durable vessels –

\textsuperscript{32} I consider Corinna fr. 674 to be the first harbinger of a change in this.
\textsuperscript{33} Taback 2002, 51, n. 21: “The piece was recently included in a Sotheby’s auction.” So: Sotheby’s Antiquities, New York: June 12, 2001, 62, no. 71. I am grateful to Florenz Heintz for bringing this piece to my attention and allowing me to view it.
\textsuperscript{34} Sowder 2009, 200 and 557.
\textsuperscript{35} Sowder 2009, 200. Similarly in Sotheby’s catalogue: “[...] two punched inscriptions on top of the rim.”
and bronze hydriae are such – a “second life” of this kind was a relatively frequent occurrence. In fact, the second inscription on the vessel may point to this being the case.

In the same study, Sowder describes another vessel, which she associates with an *agon* in honour of the Muses held in Thespiae. The hydria, currently in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina (302, cat. no. 17.58), is dated, like the previous one, to 450–400 BC. It bears a partially preserved inscription: - - ] EPA [- ] O [-] ES THESPIAS. According to Sowder, it is a dedication to a deity. At this point, she mentions the cults of Apollo, the Muses, Eros or Hera, adding: “Any one of these could be the source of our prize hydriai.”36

In this case, however, it is certain that the vessel bears a dedication not to the Muses or any other deities mentioned by Sowder, but to Heracles.37 J. Vocotopoulou described it in “Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique” as early as in 1975, highlighting the fact that the original reading of the inscription by Ph. Petsas was confirmed after the surface of the vessel had been cleaned, and was reconstructed as “[H]erakleos es Thespias”. Of course, it is known from elsewhere that a cult of Heracles did exist in Thespiae; obviously contests in his honour were also organised and the hydriae were prizes for the victors.38

The conclusions from the above analyses of archaeological material clearly do not offer a basis for us to unequivocally state that the cult of the Muses was present in the valley before the fourth century. The available evidence is better interpreted as traces of human habitation or with religious gestures addressed to other deities whose presence in the valley and in the area of Mount Helicon is amply confirmed. At the same time, it must be noted that considering the current state of the evidence and the problems with its availability or examination, it is impossible to decisively exclude the option that the vessels or figures had, in fact, been associated with the cult of the Muses.

**Contexts**

Having reached an impasse, with the analysis of extant evidence not allowing us to proceed further, we must refer to our knowledge of the broader cultural context. In particular, it is worthwhile to note the issue of the Muses’ association

---

36 Sowder 2009, 366.
37 Archaeological Museum of Ioannina no. 302; Vokotopoulou 1975, 750–754; SEG XXX no. 541; see IThesp. 276–276bis.
38 Schachter 1981, 31–36.
with musical *agones*, as well as the link between the cult of these goddesses and the natural world and the phenomenon of the worship of intellectuals.

In analysing the already mentioned bronze hydriai, specialist literature accepts as a given the statement that all musical contests were organized in honour of the Muses, because it was so in Thespiae. It must be recalled, however, that the contest in the Valley of the Muses is confirmed only in the Hellenistic period. In these circumstances, the issue of the Muses’ association with *mousikoi agones* in the archaic and classical periods seems crucial.

Let us begin with Hesiod’s tripod. In the case of the poet’s victory at Amphidamas’ funeral games, the *agon* clearly had nothing to do with the Muses. At the most famous Pythian *mousikoi agones* in Delphi, in turn, the contest was under the protection of Apollo, and only his; the Muses were obviously not ‘there’ at all. The case was similar with the dramatic contest in Athens, which was under the protection of Dionysus, not to mention the Panathenaic games. In general, no less than seventeen *mousikoi agones* are confirmed to have existed before ca. 400 BC; yet solely at the *Olympia* of Dion did the Muses accompany Zeus at the dramatic *agones*.39 The first instance of a musical contest under the protection of the Muses are precisely the third-century *Mouseia* held in the Valley of the Muses. Since Muses are the divine patronesses of *mousikē*, the question arises as to the reason for their absence at musical contests, which is clearly revealed by the sources. It appears that these reasons may be several. Firstly, regardless of the connotation of the terms *Mousa/mousikē* in the sphere of the language, the phenomenon of *choreia* was older than the Muses and went far beyond the religious and cultural role of these goddesses.40 Secondly, extant sources indicate that before the fifth/fourth century BC, the Muses were a part of the metapoetic apparatus and did not play any significant role in the cult sphere.41 If so, the absence of the Muses would not be specific to musical contests, but would reflect a general tendency. This, in turn, is linked with the third argument, since the issue in question is most probably similar to that concerning the organisation of dramatic contests; and these, as it has recently been underlined, when staged outside Athens, were often protected by other gods than Dionysus.42 This is because the divine protection was determined by the god at whose sanctuary the theatre was located, as

39 For a list of *agones*, see Herington 1985, 160–166; *Olympia* in Dion: Mari 1998; Mojsik 2011a, 133–138.
40 See Calame 2001; Murray – Wilson 2004. It is worth noting that in ancient literature metapoetical functions were not limited to the Muses; other deities, e.g. Apollo, Charites or nymphs, also appeared in this context.
41 Mojsik 2011a.
42 See Wilson 2007.
it was e.g. in Syracuse with Apollo or in Messene with Asclepius, or by the inclusion of the dramatic contest into the festivals in honour of that god, as in the case of the Olympia held in Dion. The absence of the Muses at a musical contest must therefore be associated with, among others, their absence in the cult sphere.

The above reasoning indicates that before the third century, the Greeks did not see the Muses as typical patronesses of mousikoi agones. In other words, their clear association with mousikē did not require to be manifestly reflected in the religious sphere. The case of Delphi is perhaps the best illustration here, since the Pythian agon was protected solely by Apollo. It seems that in order to watch over the mousikoi agones, Apollo did not necessarily have to be Mousagetes.

The assessment and chronological estimation of the Muses’ connection with landscape and nature in general seems to be equally important to the correctness of our appraisal of the sources. This also concerns the assessment of the Muses’ connection with the nymphs. These broad issues require a re-evaluation and further detailed study; in the current essay I shall only present some relevant suggestions.

The general view is that the Muses evolved towards the role of the patronesses of poets from their original role of deities linked with the natural world, e.g. the mountaintops or springs and water. In this role, they would have been similar to nymphs and other female deities, especially the group ones. The weakness of this hypothesis lies in its being insufficiently supported by the source material and in its referring to outdated theoretical conceptions. Thus, some scholars assume that the sanctuary at the foot of Mount Helicon points to this original character of the goddesses as deities linked with mountaintops or, more generally, with the natural world. The departure point for this reasoning is, again, Hesiod’s description of the meeting with the Muses. However, there is much to point that his description of the Muses’ epiphany did not arise from the desire to present their true character. His choice of the meeting place seems to have more to do with the general structural features of such narratives (city/frontier, peak/base) and with the manner of valuating space typical of the Greeks in the

---

43 In fact, the last case is to some extent an exception, because Archelaus, while reforming the festival in the late fifth century, incorporated the Muses into the cult of the Olympian Zeus. The key factor in selecting the deity was most probably Dion’s location in the very centre of Pieria. See Pingiatoglou 2010, 180 ff.

44 It may therefore be assumed that the presence of the Muses in the context of musical contests, which is confirmed in the later periods, is secondary and results from the development of the cult of the Muses, not the other way around.

45 Walde 2000, 512: “Ursprüngliche waren die oder eine ‘Ur-Muse’ vielleicht Göttinnen von Quellen und Gewässern.”

46 See e.g. Otto 1955.
archaic period.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, when in Hymn 5 by Callimachus, Tiresias unwisely spies on Athena bathing at a spring on the slope of Mount Helicon, this does not arise either from a special link between the goddess and this mountain or from her cult being located on mountaintops, but from the fact that an epiphany of a divine being was possible solely in remote and extraordinary places, such as mountains or caves.\textsuperscript{48} When the Muses dance on mountaintops, as seen in the \textit{Theogony}, their conduct is characteristic of the majority of female deities and, moreover, it is a reference to typical social practices.\textsuperscript{49} Given that, it cannot be assumed that the site of the epiphany points to the goddesses’ special bond with mountains or natural places, at least not in the sense of their behaviour being in some way different than the conduct typical of nymphs and nymph-like goddesses.

The next issue concerns the ties between the image of the Muses and the image of the nymphs. General similarities are obvious here, e.g. their group character, their names, their participation in the divine \textit{choreia}, their appearing together with other gods, often in natural places like meadows, mountains and springs. This occasionally leads scholars to voicing such opinions as: “It is probable that the early people of Pieria did not sharply distinguish between Muse and nymph.”\textsuperscript{50} Yet, apart from similarities, there are also significant differences. One of them is that the Muses, in contrast to the nymphs, do not seem to be attached to a concrete location. Nymphs are a decidedly epichoric phenomenon; Castalian nymphs just cannot be called \textit{Leibethrides} in the very next line. The Muses, however, can be called \textit{Helikoniades}, which means that they materialise and dance on Mount Helicon, but they can be \textit{Olimpiades}, \textit{Pierides} or \textit{Leibethrides} as well. The cult of nymphs was a local phenomenon, which means that they could be called upon as guardians of concrete natural sites; the Muses, in contrast, were an essentially pan-Hellenic creation. Thus, although the Muses may be considered to be nymph-like creatures, they could not have been a true personification of local landscapes and natural places; at least not before the Hellenistic period.

As it has already been indicated, extant archaeological, epigraphic and literary sources do not point to the existence of the cult of the Muses before the fifth century. This, in fact, is quite understandable, considering the image of the Muses in archaic literature and the clear transformation in their image and function in

\textsuperscript{47} Buxton 1994, 81–113.  
\textsuperscript{48} Buxton 1994, 91 f.  
\textsuperscript{49} See Calame 2001.  
\textsuperscript{50} Larson 2001, 169. One gets the impression that what Larson has in mind are some musically gifted Thracian/Macedonian shepherds. A thesis concerning the northern origin of the Muses is presented by Strabo (9.2.25 and 10.3.17). However, see Schachter’s correct opinion (1986, 188) regarding the historical value of Strabo’s testimonies: “Both are valueless.”
the classical period. Yet, until now, the key question concerning potential functions of these goddesses in the cult sphere before the classical period has for some reason not been posed in analyses. All that was referred to, and then not always, was a reconstructed and hypothetical— and quite detached from archaic sources— image of an Ur-Muse as a goddess associated with the natural world. The total absence of material evidence dating from before the fifth century was explained by assuming that the forms of the cult were such as not to leave discernible traces. At this point, however, the champions of this theory must consider an essential detail: the cult of nymphs assumed similarly evanescent forms, but even so it left numerous traces and is well attested to in sources referring to the archaic period.

In addition, it is worthwhile to consider particular sites: in the majority of locations later associated with the Muses, or with the Muses and nymphs together, the cult of nymphs was the original one. This is best seen in the case of the L(e)ibethrian cave, which, according to Pausanias (9.34.4), used to contain statues of both the nymphs and the Muses. Recent research has demonstrated that the cave was dedicated solely to the nymphs. The secondary character of the Muses is either clear or very probable also in reference to such cult sites as Ilissos, Cithairon, Syracuse or Chaeronea.

Considering our current knowledge, we may pose the hypothesis that the Muses were originally formed so that they resembled nymphs and for this reason shared many features with them. Archaic sources indicate, however, that their original “area of expertise” was limited to guardianship over literary life and the creative process. The cult of the Muses as goddesses protecting the process of intellectual development and mousikē emerged only with the transformations which occurred in the Greek culture; with the emergence of schools and the increase in literacy. Of course, the classical and Hellenistic cults known to us are not limited to this function; still, it remains the central component of their cultic image. It seems that after the emergence of the cult of the Muses, in many places they began to be again, secondarily, so to speak, identified with the nymphs. The manner of presenting both groups of goddesses and the forms of their cult

51 Murray – Wilson 2004; Mojsik 2011a.
52 See Roux 1954; Schachter 1986.
53 Larson 2001, passim.
54 See Vasilopoulou 2013.
55 The possible secondary character of the Muses in reference to nymphs was pointed out already by Farnell 1909, 434–437.
facilitated this identification greatly, and the process of their creative reinterpretation continued, in diverse forms, until the end of Antiquity.56

Ultimately, therefore, I tend to assume that it is more probable that the Hellenistic sanctuary was located in the valley below Mount Helicon and had the nature of a natural place because of Hesiod’s descriptions, and not because of the conjectural primeval character of the goddesses in question. This indicates that the poet’s works and biographical tradition played a key role in the organisation of the cult. This, in turn, leads us to the next noteworthy context, i.e. the emergence of the cult of poets/intellectuals.

To begin with, it is worth noting that the singular gesture of Hesiod, who allegedly deposited a tripod in the place of the goddesses’ epiphany on Mount Helicon, did not necessarily have to result in the emergence of an enduring cult. In addition, this gesture was of importance mostly on the literary level, and not in the cultic reality of Ascra or Thespiae.57 Also, the question of the role in which the residents of Ascra/Thespiae would be supposed to venerate the Muses after Hesiod’s death would still require an answer.58 Would they be seen as deities protecting the poet or poetic inspiration? This function may have been meaningful to Hesiod, but it did not have sufficient social or religious importance and probably for this reason it is not confirmed in the archaic source material available to us. This conclusion is also confirmed by our knowledge of professional poets/bards, who were outsiders needing to work for their position rather than men of importance to the structure of a polis.59 Hence, before the fourth century, military command or, generally, participation in socio-political life were evaluated more highly than literary or intellectual talents.60

In the late fifth and early fourth century, together with changes in culture and the growing impact of education and intellectual skills on the social life of a polis, this situation changed as well, finally resulting in the emergence of the cult

56 On the multifunctional character of the statues of the Muses, see Cic. fam. 7.23.2; a “dancing Muse” changed into a nymph from the fountain, cf. Grünhagen 1977, 272–283; similar examples: Ridgway 1990, 246–264.
57 See Murray 2015, 162: “[...] when Hesiod describes his meeting with the goddesses on Mount Helicon (theog. 22–34), regardless of how we view its authenticity (Most 2006, xii–xix), his account should not be interpreted as a record of a private experience, but rather as a symbolic statement through which he stakes his claim to the authority that the inspiration of the Muses traditionally bestows.”
58 Interestingly, Hesiod’s biographic legend (cf. esp. Thuk. 3.96.1) states that the residents of Ascra or Thespiae were not interested in his person; cf. Koning 2010, 133–138; Nagy 2009.
59 See Slings 1989; Thomas 1995; Mojsik 2011a, 222–255.
60 On the epitaph of Aeschylus, see Sommerstein 2010. On the statue of Anacreon see Zanker 1995.
of poets/intellectuals.\textsuperscript{61} Considering the extant testimonies concerning Hesiod’s position in Thespiae and in the Valley, it must be assumed that the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon was one of the effects of this transformation. This is indicated by the existence of a society of “Hesiodic Muses”, the fabricated tripod with an inscription confirming a victory over Homer, tablets with the text of “Works and Days” held at Hippocrene, or statues of Hesiod located in the valley and in the centre of Thespiae.\textsuperscript{62} The existence of a cult, in the broad sense of the term,\textsuperscript{63} of Hesiod is indirectly indicated by the narrative of his remains being transferred to Orchomenos;\textsuperscript{64} this may also suggest a rivalry regarding control over this cult.

Thus, again, it seems that the starting point for the sanctuary in the Valley of the Muses was not an actual tripod of Hesiod and some later, perhaps sporadic, religious activities at the site of the goddesses’ epiphany, but rather his poems and the legend concerning his rivalry with Homer.\textsuperscript{65} Considering our knowledge about the changes in approach to the figure of a poet/intellectual in the late fifth/early fourth century, this means that the \textit{terminus post quem} for the institution of the cult must be placed sometime in this period; this, in fact, seems to agree with other evidence and our general knowledge about Ascra and Thespiae.\textsuperscript{66}

\section*{Conclusions}

Let us begin by recollecting that current image of the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon, as present in the historiography, results largely from the fact that the valley is viewed as the site of the Thespian \textit{Mouseia}. They, in turn, are viewed as the largest festival of this polis in the Hellenistic period and, in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{61} See Zanker 1995; Clay 2004; Kimmel-Clauzet 2013; Mojsik 2013 and 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} IG 7.1785 = ITesp. 65; Paus. 9.31.4; 9.30.3 (a statue in the Valley of the Muses); 9.27.5 (a statue in the Thespian agora); Paus. 9.31.3 (tripod). Aulus Gellius (3.11.1–3) points out that the inscription on the tripod allegedly indicated a victory over Homer (cf. also Dio Chrys. 2.11; Vita Hom. 2.210–214 and Nagy 2009, 300; Robinson 2012, 247); see Lamberton 1988, 503: “There are various reasons to believe that this sort of fabrication of an archaic past was a widespread phenomenon among Hellenistic institutions.” Literature on the heroic cult of Hesiod is abundant, e.g. Calame 1996; Beaulieu 2004; Bershadsky 2011, but some of its aspects seem to require further study.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} See Mojsik 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Plut. mor. fr. 81; see Wallace 1979; Snodgrass 1985, 94; Koning 2010, 133–138, Kivilo 2010, 25–36.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Other examples of cults inspired by a literary text are also known, e.g. the case of Plato’s \textit{Phaedrus} and the cult of the Muses at Ilissos, cf. Mojsik 2011a, 65–77.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} See Plut. de gen. 5–7; Paus. 9.30.
\end{itemize}
addition, as presumably the largest festival of the Muses and the site of their cult to exist in Antiquity. As a result, all the evidence gathered in the valley was automatically linked, first and foremost, with the cult of the Muses. Yet, in the light of the above source analyses, this perception needs to be corrected. To begin with, it is necessary to recall that since the research began, the process of reasoning has been hindered by the state of the excavations and the manner of examining and publishing the source material. Hence, bearing in mind that the conclusions drawn from analyses were prone to error, scholars should already at this level look for additional, for instance contextual arguments to support their theses.

The reassessment of the archaeological source material conducted in the current essay has indicated that this material cannot be indisputably associated with the cult of the Muses. In the archaic and classical periods, agricultural activities were conducted in the valley, with farms and hamlets being located there. Some of the evidence, e.g. shards of vessels or terracotta figurines, can be associated with these activities and, generally, with human habitation. In addition, even if it is assumed that some evidence – e.g. the vessel with the hieros/-on inscription – does point to cult activity, it is impossible to irrefutably state that the religious gestures in question were associated with the cult of the Muses. Firstly, they may be remnants of cult activities within households or hamlets. Secondly, and more importantly, other deities, e.g. Zeus, Eros, perhaps Poseidon, Heracles or the nymphs, and most probably Demeter as well, were also venerated in the valley and its vicinity. This means that their link with the Muses is only one of several possible interpretations and it has to be substantiated. The data concerning bronze hydriai, in turn, either cannot be verified or are wrongly interpreted. The case of the iconographic representation on the Attic lekythos is similar; all it proves is the popularity of Hesiod’s text and his description of the Muses’ epiphany, it does not prove the existence of a local cult. All this shows clearly that apart from Hesiod’s testimony, whose historical value must be considered dubious, no firm evidence points to the cult of the Muses being practised at the foot of Mount Helicon before the fourth century.

Bearing this in mind, referring to a broader cultural context is of crucial importance. In this case, our general diachronic knowledge about the cult of the Muses, the goddesses’ association with mousikoi agones, the development of the cult of poets/intellectuals in the fourth century, and the history of Thespiae and their region, does not permit us to date the beginnings of the cult of the

67 The example of the hydriai in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina seems to be the best illustration of this tendency. The significance of the cult of the Muses in Thespiae’s religious calendar is indubitable; but this statement is true only from the diachronic point of view, and that is the difference.
Muses to the archaic period. It must be added at this point that exactly the same conclusions must be drawn from the analysis of other evidence, e.g. the Muses’ local names, the aetiological tales, Pausanias’ (and Varro’s) information about the commissioning of statues, or Plutarch’s report about the role of Spartans in the foundation of the cult.68 None of these testimonies points to a period earlier than the fourth century. What is more, almost all of them suggest precisely the fourth century as the period when the cult was being instituted. Thus, instead of forcibly arguing for the continuity of the cult and looking for explanations that would confirm the cult’s local character and a special (read: traceless) character, it would be more useful to admit that the current state of evidence is better interpreted as pointing to Hesiod’s isolated gesture and the institution of the cult in the fourth/third century BC. And, in addition, regardless of who had been responsible for its introduction, the cult was ultimately appropriated by the Thespian polis.69 The starting point and the aitition of all this process must have been Hesiod’s poetic fame and his tale of how he had dedicated a tripod to the Muses.

Finally, I would like to briefly refer to the importance of the above considerations and the resultant conclusions in the broader research on the cult of the Muses. Firstly, due to the significance of the Thespian Mouseia, it is usually assumed that the early origin of the cult as practised in the valley below Mount Helicon confirms the conjectural antiquity of this cult at other sites, e.g. in Delphi or in Pieria. Its beginnings were dated to such an early period because aetiological myths and poetic epithets, for instance, were assessed favourably and the testimonies of later authors were interpreted optimistically and sympathetically.70 Yet this dating lacks a reliable source basis; in particular, it is not rooted in solid archaeological evidence. It also leaves the recurrent question as to the function of the Muses in Greek religiosity before the fifth century without an answer.

Secondly, the conjectured early origin of the cult suggested that in the religious sphere, the Muses were associated with mountains, springs or the natural world in general. This bolstered earlier hypotheses about the Muses’ original association with landscape and nature. Yet, as I have attempted to demonstrate in this essay, the problem lies in the fact that those cultic associations are most obviously secondary. On the one hand, a good example here are the analyses concerning Delphi and the association of the Muses, and more generally of poetic

68 For reasons of brevity, the presentation of this evidence is here reduced to a minimum. A full analysis, which this evidence absolutely deserves, would require several articles or even a monographic study.
69 See IThesp. 65. On other cases of the polis accepting individual innovations in a cult, see Scott 2015.
70 E.g. Strab. 9.2.25; 10.3.17.
inspiration, with water, which is firmly substantiated only as late as in the Hellenistic period. On the other hand, the example of nymphs, whose cult is archaeologically confirmed from the archaic period onward and everywhere clearly predates the association of those natural sites with the Muses, is of key importance. Thus, traces of the cult of the Muses are absent from archaeological data coming from before the fifth century not because of some special nature of this cult, but simply because of its non-existence.

Thus, when the beginnings of the cult of the Muses at the foot of Mount Helicon are dated to the fourth century, as suggested herein, and Hesiod’s description is perceived either as a singular gesture or as a literary phenomenon, this calls in question one of the most important arguments posed by the advocates of the early dating of this cult and of the Muses’ original association with nature.

Bibliography

Aravantinos 1996: V. L. Aravantions, Topographical and Archaeological Investigations on the Summit of Helikon, in: A. Hurst – A. Schachter (eds.), La Montagne des Muses, Geneva 1996, 185–192.
Barret 2015: C. E. Barret, Material Evidence, in: E. Eidinow – J. Kindt (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion, Oxford 2015.
Barrigon Fuentes 1996: M. del C. Barrigon Fuentes, Sobre el culto de las Musas en Delfos, Cuaderno de Filologia Classica 6, 1996, 237–250.
Beaulieu 2004: M. Beaulieu, L’héroïsation du poète Hésiode en Grèce ancienne, Kernos 17, 2004, 103–117.
Bershadsky 2011: N. Bershadsky, A Picnic, a Tomb, and a Crow. Hesiod’s Cult in the Works and Days, HSPh 106, 2011, 1–45.
Bintliff 1996: J. Bintliff, The Archaeological Survey of the Valley of the Muses and its Significance for Boeotian History, in: A. Hurst – A. Schachter (eds.), La Montagne des Muses, Geneva 1996, 193–210.
Bintliff – Howard – Snodgrass 2007: J. Bintliff – P. Howard – A. Snodgrass, Testing the Hinterland. The Work of the Boeotia Survey (1989–1991) in the Southern Approaches to the City of Thespiai, Exeter 2007.
Bonanno 2009: M. Bonanno, The Helikon and its Environs, in: A. Vlachopoulos (ed.), Archaeology. Euboea and Central Greece, Athens, 260–269.

71 See Barrigon Fuentes 1996; Mojsik 2011a, 86–90.
72 Of course, the incompleteness of our source knowledge, also knowledge based on archaeological sources, must always be remembered. Every new piece of evidence may overturn the reasoning presented herein. As long as there are no testimonies dating from before the fifth century, however, we must limit our conclusions to the data available to us. In the study of Antiquity, the proviso that these conclusions are conjectural is obvious.
Bundrick 2005: S. Bundrick, Music and Image in Classical Athens, Cambridge 2005.
Buxton 1994: R. Buxton, Imaginary Greece, Cambridge 1994.
Calame 1996: C. Calame, Montagne des Muses et Mouseia: la consécration des Travaux et l’héroisation d’Hésiode, in: A. Hurst – A. Schachter (eds.), La Montagne des Muses, Geneva 1996, 43–56.
Calame 2001: C. Calame, Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece. Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Functions, Lanham 2001.
Clay 2004: D. Clay, Archilochos Heros. The Cult of the Poets in the Greek Polis, Cambridge (MA) 2004.
Farnell 1909: L. R. Farnell, The Cults of the Greek States V, Cambridge 1909.
Grünhagen 1977: W. Grünhagen, Die Statue einer Nymphe aus Muniguia, MDAI(M) 18, 1977, 272–283.
Hardie 2006: A. Hardie, The Aloloades on Helicon. Music, Territory and Cosmic Order, A&A 52, 2006, 42–71.
Herington 1985: J. Herington, Poetry into Drama. Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition, Berkeley 1985.
Kimmel-Clauzet 2013: F. Kimmel-Clauzet, Morts, tombeaux et cultes des poètes grecs. Étude sur la survie des grands poètes des époques archaïque et classique en Grèce ancienne, Bordeaux 2013.
Kivilo 2010: M. Kivilo, Early Greek Poets’ Lives. The Shaping of the Tradition, Leiden 2010.
Koning 2010: H. H. Koning, Hesiod: The Other Poet. Ancient Reception of a Cultural Icon, Leiden 2010.
Langdon 2000: M. Langdon, Mountains in Greek Religion, CW 93.5, 2000, 461–470.
Lamberton 1988: R. Lamberton, Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiai, ICS 13.2, 1988, 491–504.
Larson 2001: J. Larson, Greek Nymphs. Myth, Cult, Lore, Oxford 2001.
Manieri 2009: A. Manieri, Agoni poetico-musicali nella Grecia antica, I: Beozia, Rome 2009.
Mari 1998: M. Mari, Le Olimpie macedoni di Dion tra Archelao e l’età romana, RFIC 126, 1998, 137–159.
Mojsik 2011a: T. Mojsik, Antropologia metapoetyki. Muzy w kulturze greckiej od Homera do końca V w. p.n.e., Warsaw 2011.
Mojsik 2011b: T. Mojsik, Between Tradition and Innovation. Genealogy, Names and the Number of the Muses, Warsaw 2011.
Mojsik 2013: T. Mojsik, Some Reflections on the Muses and the Cult of the Dead, Przegląd Humanistyczny 437, 2013, 79–85.
Mojsik 2015: T. Mojsik, Arist. Rhet. 2.23.1398b and the Cult of Pythagoras, Classica Craciensia 16, 2015, 275–292.
Moloney 2014: E. Moloney, Philippus in acie tutor quam in theatro fuit … (Curtius 9, 6, 25). The Macedonian Kings and Greek Theater, in: E. Csapo et al. (eds.), Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC, Berlin 2014, 232–248.
Müller 1996: C. Müller, Les recherches françaises à Thespies et au Val des Muses, in: A. Hurst – A. Schachter (eds.), La Montagne des Muses, Geneva 1996, 171–183.
Murray 2015: P. Murray, Poetic Inspiration, in: P. Destrée – P. Murray (eds.), A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics, Oxford 2015, 158–174.
Murray – Wilson 2004: P. Murray – P. Wilson, Introduction, in: P. Murray – P. Wilson (eds.), Music and the Muses. The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City, Oxford 2004, 1–8.
Nagy 2009: G. Nagy, Hesiod and the Ancient Biographical Traditions, in: F. Montanari et al. (eds.), Brill's Companion to Hesiod, Leiden 2009, 271–312.

Otto 1955: W. Otto, Die Musen und der göttliche Ursprung des Singens und Sagens, Darmstadt 1955.

Pingiatoglou 2010: S. Pingiatoglou, Cults of Female Deities at Dion, Kernos 23, 2010, 179–192.

Plassart 1926: A. Plassart, Fouilles de Thespies et de l'hiéron des muses de l'Hélicon, BCH 50, 1926, 383–462.

de Ridder 1922: A. de Ridder, Fouilles de Thespies et de l'Hiéron des Muses de l'Hélicon, BCH 46, 1922, 217–306.

Ridgway 1990: B. S. Ridgway, Hellenistic Sculpture I, Bristol 1990.

Robinson 2012: B. A. Robinson, Mount Helikon and the Valley of the Muses. The Production of a Sacred Space, JRA 25, 2012, 227–258.

Roesch 2007: P. Roesch, Les Inscriptions de Thespies (IThesp), Lyon 2007.

Roux 1954: G. Roux, Le Val des Muses, et les Muses chez les auteurs anciens, BCH 78, 1954, 22–48.

Schachter 1981: A. Schachter, Cults of Boeotia, I: Acheloos to Hera, London 1981.

Schachter 1986: A. Schachter, Cults of Boeotia, II: Herakles to Poseidon, London 1986.

Schachter 1996: A. Schachter, Reconstructing Thespiai, in: A. Hurst – A. Schachter (eds.), La Montagne des Muses, Geneva 1996, 99–126.

Scott 2015: M. Scott, Temples and Sanctuaries, in: E. Eidinow – J. Kindt (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion, Oxford 2015.

Slings 1989: S. R. Slings, Poet's Call and Poet's Status in Archaic Greece and Other Oral Culture, LF 112, 1989, 72–80.

Snodgrass 1985: A. Snodgrass, The Site of Ascra, in: P. Roesch – G. Argoud (eds.), La Béotie antique, Paris 1985, 87–95.

Sommerstein 2010: A. Sommerstein, Aeschylus Epitaph, in: A. Sommerstein, The Tangled Ways of Zeus, and Other Studies In and Around Greek Tragedy, Oxford 2010, 195–201.

Sowder 2009: A. Sowder, Greek Bronze Hydriai, unpublished PhD thesis, Emory University 2009.

Sporn 2013: K. Sporn, “Der göttliche Helikon”. Bergkulte oder Kulte auf den Bergen in Griechenland?, in: R. Breitwieser et al. (eds.), Calamus: Festschrift für Herbert Graßl zum 65. Geburtstag, Wiesbaden 2013, 465–477.

Taback 2002: N. Taback, Untangling the Muses. A Comprehensive Study of Sculptures of Muses in the Greek and Roman World, unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University 2009.

Thomas 1995: R. Thomas, The Place of the Poet in Archaic Society, in: A. Powell (ed.), The Greek World, London 1995, 104–129.

Vasilopoulou 2013: V. Vasilopoulou, Prehistoric Use And Ancient Ritual Worship At the Cave of Hagia Triada on Helikon, in: F. Mavridis – J. T. Jensen (eds.), Stable Places and Changing Perceptions. Cave Archaeology in Greece, Oxford 2013.

Vokotopoulou 1975: J. Vokotopoulou, Le trésor de vases de bronze de Votonosi, BCH 99, 1975, 729–788.

Walde 2000: C. Walde, s.v. “Muses”, in: DNP VIII, 2000, 511–514.

Wallace 1979: P. W. Wallace, Strabo's Description of Boiotia. A Commentary, Heidelberg 1979.

Wilson 2007: P. Wilson (ed.), The Greek Theatre and Festivals, Oxford 2007.

Zanker 1995: P. Zanker, The Mask of Socrates. The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity, Berkeley 1995.