Concerning archaic period, specially in Athens, researchers face problems of method extremely dangerous for the identification of ruins. Concerning cults, the date of the first temples is usually combined to results of Classical and Hellenistic periods or identifications are forced to correspond to historical events. A new study of archeological remains may provide a different point of view of the cult organization in Athens. We propose as study example the sanctuaries of Apollo in Athens.

In the area East of Kolonos Agoraioi, a temple of Apollon Patrôos was excavated by Dörpfeld (AM 21 1896, 107; AM 22, 1897, 225) and the Archeological society of Athens (ΠΑΕ 1907, 54; 1908, 59). In the thirties, Thompson (THOMPSON 1937, 77-84), draw three phases of the temple construction: the first between the 6th cent. and 480 B.C, the second in the beginnings of the 4th cent. and the third of the late 4th cent., Ionic temple with four columns in antis. Only the third phase sanctuary is attributed to Apollo Patroos with arguments (TRAVLOS 1971, 96-99). In general, this interpretation of ruins by Thompson is accepted by historians who want to date cult in honor of Apollo since Pisistratos, when the contacts with Delos where supposed to be strengthen. (For example, BOARDMAN 1978, 234: “Athens’ Apollo Patroos was the Ionian Apollo of Delos and only later assimilates to the Pythian. The Patroos temple was built in the Agora mid-6th c. Pisistratus cultivates the Delian connection with his purification of the island in local cycladic affairs”). The archaic temple would have an apsidal form and the cult statue of Apollo in bronze would be confectioned behind the front wall.

After a detailed description of ruins and study of the plans of the constructions, we doubt of the existence of a sanctuary in this area and we may consider that this structure was a workshop of bronze sculpture. No argument is important enough to prove that Apollo Patroos was honored in tyrants’ times at all and no evidence or offerings attest the cult of Apollo or any divinity in this structure. Literary sources are not very explicit either. This example will be presented in parallel with other structures of the area developed east of Kolonos Agoraioi. What was its role for the civic life of Athens in the 6th cent.?

Apollo is honored in Athens at Ilissos by the cult of Apollo Pythios. Only on the 4th cent. Apollo Patroos is introduced in Athens to reinforce the links with Delos and the Ionian origins of the Athenians. The offerings in honor of Apollo (Hypoakraios) on the north slope of the Acropolis me be interpreted as a double sanctuary of Apollo Pythios, a place for the rites of Pythaistes and the reference of Delphes.