

New Inscriptions from Thalamai (Ancient Lakonia)

A. Makres – A. Scafuro

The inscribed base that we shall present was found in 1995 built into the chapel of St. George located at the site “Koumani” in the modern Messenian Mani. The base is in the form of a pillar of red marble of Taygetos (rosso anticco) broken at the bottom and inscribed on three of its sides. It was transferred to the Archaeological Museum of Messenia in Kalamata by the 38th Ephorate of Antiquities under the Directorship of Dr. Xenia Arapogianni.

The monument yields five proxeny decrees which seem to belong to the time of the League of the Lacedaemonians, i.e. they date to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE; the League itself, however, is not mentioned.; the two longest decrees are for judges; the ephors of the ancient Hellenistic polis of Thalamai are attested here for the first time; and in their publication clauses the decrees also mention that they were to be set up at the oracular Sanctuary of Pasiphae known from literary sources and only one other dedicatory inscription (IG VI, 1317). The literary sources mention that the sanctuary of Pasiphae was located at Thalamai so that the find spot of the new inscribed monument constitutes important evidence on the location of the sanctuary. It also shows that the Sanctuary of Pasiphae was used for displaying important public documents such as decrees of the polis of Ancient Thalamai.

Of the two proxeny decrees honoring judges, the first was enacted by the city of the Gerēnoi for three judges from Thalamai. The second proxeny decree honoring judges is a decree of Thalamai honoring judges from Oitylon. The letters are preserved in poor condition so that the motivation clause and the names of the judges are elusive. The two decrees indicate close and amicable relations among former perioikic cities, between Thalamai and Gerēnia and between Thalamai and Oitylon. This allows us to identify a kind of ‘judicial networking’ among the cities of the League of the Lakedaimonians.

The third partially preserved decree inscribed below the one honoring the judges from Oitylon begins by mentioning a petition for honors made by two Lacedaimonian brothers to the demos of the Thalamatai and a renewal of their friendship; The articulation of the request is in the form of *πόθοδον ποιησαμένων* in the first line.

The third inscribed side of the pillar preserves two (one complete and one fragmentary) abbreviated proxeny decrees enacted by the polis of the Thalamatai. Both begin with the common expression calling for good fortune and deliverance. The first is for a Spartan whereas the name of the honorand in the second decree is not preserved. These decrees show amicable relations between Thalamai, a former perioikic city and Sparta, the former ruling power. This fits in with other testimonies of the relations between former perioikic cities and Sparta in the second and first centuries BCE.