

# REVISITING MOUNT TAYGETOS: THE SANCTUARY OF ARTEMIS LIMNATIS

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*In memoriam* Yannis Sakellarakis and Chryssa Sgouropoulou

*The story of the borderline sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis forms an integral part of the history of ancient Laconia and Messenia. Since the discovery of the Volimnos inscriptions in 1835, many scholars have entered the still-continuing debate concerning the sanctuary's location, history and significance. In this article the available evidence for the Limnatis cult and history is presented and thoroughly discussed: the small finds, currently kept in the Kalamata Archaeological Museum, the inscriptions of the Kapsocherovoloussa chapel, the scattered spolia at Volimnos and their possible association with architectural structures of the sanctuary, the topography of the area in accordance with Inscriptiones Graecae V,1 1431 (Kolbe 1913, no. 1431) and the attested boundary stones discovered in an extensive survey along the ridge of Mount Taygetos, and finally the origin and nature of the Limnatis cult. This discussion is expected to further illuminate issues still unresolved, offering a chance to re-evaluate generally accepted arguments.*

## INTRODUCTION

Mount Taygetos dominates the southern Peloponnese, separating the Laconian and the Messenian plains, as it cuts through the Mani Peninsula (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Archaeological finds from the area demonstrate that it was inhabited as early as the Protogeometric era (McDonald and Rapp 1972, 93, 288 no. 138). The establishment of local *polismata*, and cultural and economic pressures presumably exerted by neighbouring areas in the Archaic period (Morgan 1999, 425), as well as the diversity of the landscape and the natural boundaries between agricultural and pastoral lands (Morgan 2003, 169–71), may have defined the borderlines of the territories, dividing the northern and central part of the mountain into two regions:

- 1) The Aigyti region, extending from the Arcadian settlement of Leondari to the Xerilas Valley and the Malevos turning point (Pausanias 8.27.4; 8.34.5; Kolbe 1904, 374–5; Pikoulas 1982–3, 262–3; Christien 1989, 30; Morgan 1999, 406; Luraghi 2002, 53 n. 44).
- 2) The fertile mountainous area of the Dentheliatis, extending from the southern edge of Aigyti to the gorge of Koskaraka (Kolbe 1904, 366, 375–7; Valmin 1930, 194–5; Pikoulas 1991, 279; Steinhauer 1988, 223 n. 29; Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, 55–6),<sup>2</sup> and renowned in

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<sup>2</sup> The gorge is also referred as Rindomo and Sadova or Sadava.

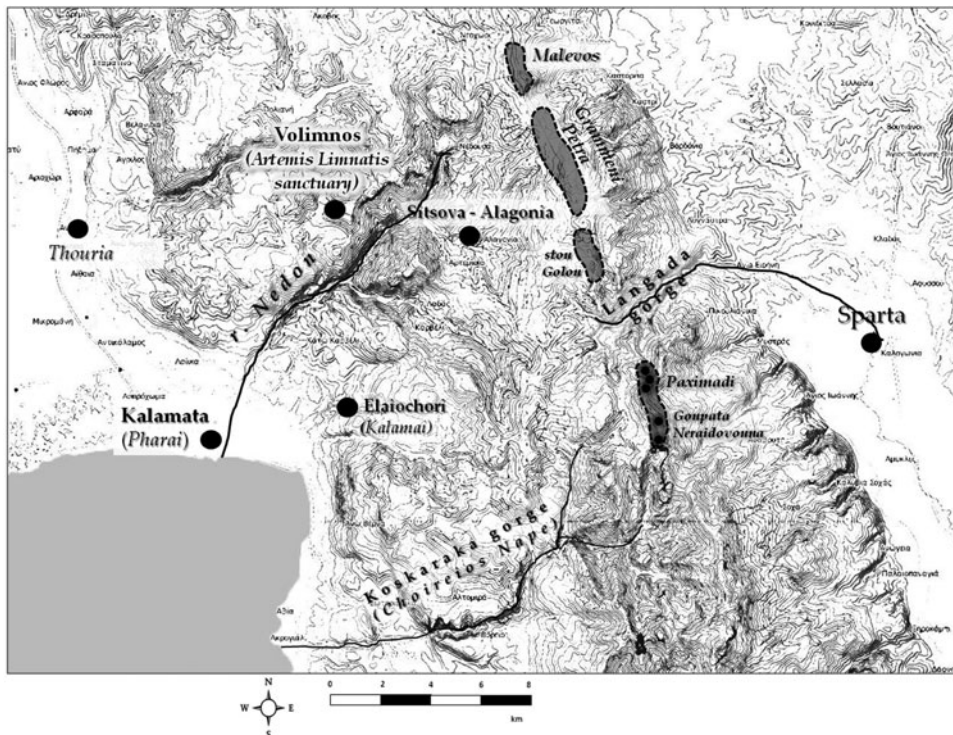


Fig. 1. Map of the Dentheliatís (Ager Denthaliatís).

antiquity for the famous ‘Denthis wine’ (Athenaeus 1.31c–d; Pikoulas 2009, 138).<sup>3</sup> This area was of great strategic importance, as it served as the main gateway from Laconia to the fertile Messenian plain, and a major junction of the mountainous road network connecting Laconia, Messenia and Arcadia (Steinhauer 1988, 223–5).<sup>4</sup>

#### LIMNATIS IN THE DENTHELIATIS: THE LITERARY SOURCES

The Dentheliatís was primarily associated with the famous sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis at the site of Limnai. As with border sanctuaries elsewhere, it is likely that in the early years the sanctuary was a meeting point for people and ethnic groups of the area (Polignac 2000, 67–70). In the early first century AD Strabo (8.4.9; 6.1.6) points out that, after the death of the Spartan king Teleklos in the Limnatis shrine, followed by the violation of the Spartan virgins who participated in the ritual, the relations of the neighbouring ethnic groups deteriorated dramatically.

Almost two centuries later, in the second century, Pausanias (4.31.3) attests that in the Messenian hinterland, in the vicinity of the *kome* Kalamai,<sup>5</sup> there was a *chōrion* called ‘Limnai’,

<sup>3</sup> For the production of Messenian wine, see Themelis 2009, 93–7.

<sup>4</sup> Stephanus Byzantius (*Ethnika*) notes that the *Denthalioi* were citizens of a town claimed by both Messenians and Lacedaemonians.

<sup>5</sup> The ancient *kome* of Kalamai should be located in the area of the village of Gianitsa (modern Elaiochori), in the western foothills of Taygetos, to the south-east of Volimnos (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1369–70; 1905, 59; Valmin 1930, 42–8; Papachatzis 1979, 105–9 n. 2, figs. 26–8; Sachs 2006, 126–8). Some 15 clay objects (12 figurines, one plaque and two miniature vases) were found in a cave in the vicinity of the Demiova monastery, and delivered to the Kalamata Archaeological Museum in 1965. The plaque depicts a naked woman, standing in front of a throne, flanked by two shorter, male consorts; the scene has been associated with the so-called ‘Magoula statue’, now exhibited in the Sparta Museum and identified as either Eileithyia (Marx 1885, 182–3; Pipili 1987, 58–60; Stibbe 1996, 250–3;

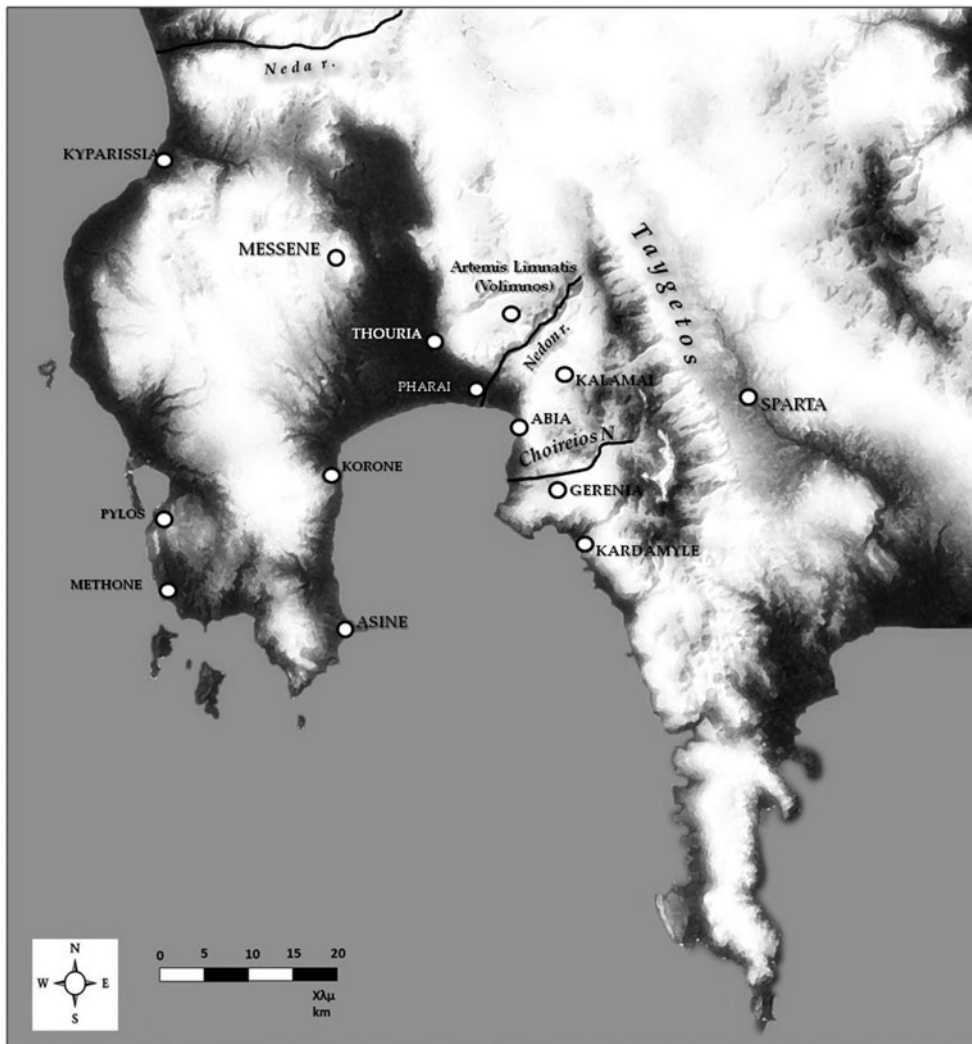


Fig. 2. Map of ancient Messenia.

which was related to the famous sanctuary where the Spartan king Teleklos was murdered. The ancient traveller also refers to the Spartan accusations against the Messenians for violating their virgins and assassinating their king during a common sacrifice at the goddess' festival, in juxtaposition to the Messenians' counter-allegations that young Spartiates were disguised by Teleklos as maidens in order to assassinate the Messenian magistrates (Pausanias 4.4.1–3; 3.2.6; 3.7.4). The incident was regarded as the reason for the outbreak of the First Messenian War and the beginning of a gradual, long-term conquest of Messenia by the Spartiates.<sup>6</sup> The importance assigned to the sanctuary of Limnatis by ancient Greek authors, and also its role in the history of the area, are clear.

Bonias 1998, 84–5) or the Spartan Orthia among their consorts (Palma 1974–5, 301–7; Pipili 1987, 60; Stibbe 1996, 253; Koursoumis forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> The conflict between the Spartan Euaiphnos and the Messenian Polychares was considered as an extra reason for the outbreak of the first war (Pausanias 4.5.1). On the Messenian Wars, see Beloch 1912, 268; Kiechle 1959, 22; Papachatzis 1979, 3–7, 65 n. 1, 66 n. 1; Parker 1991, 25–7; Richer 1998, 76–83, 538–41; Ogden 2004, 2–3, 129–33; Casevitz and Auberger 2005, 22–6; Luraghi 2008, 96–9.

## THE DENTHELIATIS IN TURMOIL: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The occupation of a great part of Messenia by the Spartiates ended in 370/369 BC, when the Theban general Epameinondas liberated the area and founded the city of Messene (Fig. 2). Tacitus (*Annales* 4.43.1–3) mentions the issue of dominance over the Ager Denthaliatis and the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis in detail. In 338 BC Philip II offered the region to the Messenians (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.43.1; Magnetto 1997, 293–4; Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 13, 53; Luraghi 2008, 17–18), presumably in order to reinforce the newly founded state against the Spartiates and further delimit Spartan power in the area, by averting them from playing a leading role in the ‘Koinon of the Greeks’ (Steinhauer 1988, 221–2, 227). Around 270 BC the Dentheliatis came, once more, under the rule of Sparta (Roebuck 1941, 62; Magnetto 1997, 294 n. 15; Luraghi 2008, 18–9, 256–7 n. 27), whereas in 222 BC, after the battle of Sellasia, Antigonos Doson returned it to the Messenians (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.43.1; Magnetto 1997, 293–4; Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 53; Luraghi 2008, 18 nn. 11–12).

Although Lucius Mummius must have awarded the land to the Messenians in 146 BC, an inscription on the pedestal of Paionios’ statue of Nike from the sanctuary of Olympia attests that the Dentheliatis was assigned to the Messenians a few years afterwards, through the arbitration of six hundred Milesian judges (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.43.3; Dittenberger and Purgold 1896, no. 52; Dittenberger 1917, no. 683; Ager 1996, 446–50 no. 159).<sup>7</sup> The decision of the Romans to assign the area once again to the Messenians may be interpreted in terms of a regional policy which aimed once again at the limitation of Spartan power in the area (Steinhauer 1988, 227–8). Nevertheless, things changed in the first century BC after Julius Caesar’s decision to reassign the Ager Denthaliatis (the new Roman name for the area) and other areas to Sparta, a decision associated with the need to secure the provision of the Roman army in the campaign against the Parthians (Steinhauer 1988, 227–9). After Caesar’s death and the battle of Philippi, in which Spartan troops had been deployed by the victors, Octavian and Marcus Antonius confirmed Spartan sovereignty over the ‘Ager Denthaliatis’ (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.43.1; Steinhauer 1988, 221–2; Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 87).<sup>8</sup>

In AD 14 the Messenians delegated an embassy to Rome to express the city’s grief at Augustus’ death, hail Tiberius’ enthronement and inform the new Emperor about their complaints over the loss of parts of their land, presumably including the Ager Denthaliatis (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 41 [1991], no. 328, 40–1).<sup>9</sup> Shortly after, Atidius Geminus, Praetor of Achaia,<sup>10</sup> reassigned the area to the Messenians; this decision was strongly contested by the Spartiates, who appealed in AD 25 to the Roman Emperor and the Senate requesting arbitration. Spartan and Messenian delegates supported their claims by calling upon myths, texts and monuments erected in the shrine of Limnai, as well as their recent history; in the end, the region was given to the Messenians (Steinhauer 1988, 219–32; Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 127; Luraghi 2008, 21–3 n. 30). This appeal has been interpreted as the last effort of the Spartiates to regain control over the southern Peloponnese (Steinhauer 1988, 223).

<sup>7</sup> Luraghi (2008, 20–1) argues that the judgment took place between 138 and 135 BC; see also Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 82–3, 85.

<sup>8</sup> For the possibility that Octavian bore the name Julius Caesar before 39 BC, see Luraghi 2008, 21 n. 26.

<sup>9</sup> For a dedication to Augustus and Tiberius in Messene, see Kolbe 1913, no. 1448; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 38 (1988), no. 340.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the interpretation of the last lines of *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 41 (1991) no. 328 as an implicit complaint to Tiberius over the loss of the Ager Denthaliatis, it seems very likely that Geminus’ decision was announced after AD 14. The institution of the imperial cult in Gytheion in AD 15 may also be interpreted in terms of the Lacedaemonians’ attempts to gain the new Emperor’s favour in the light of his decisions for the region (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 11 [1950], no. 923). For Atidius (also spelled Attedius) Geminus, proconsul and Praetor of Achaia see Groag *et al.* 1933–2009 vol. 1, 271 no. 1343; Thomasson 1984, 197 no. 59; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Kantirea 2001, 433–4 no. 58.





Fig. 3. The valley of Volimnos and the Kapsocherovoloussa chapel. View from the north-east (photo S. Koursoumis).

A fragmentary stele from the time of Vespasian,<sup>11</sup> found in the excavation of Messene, records the final(?) demarcation of the borders between Messenia, Laconia and the established territory of the Eleutherolaconian League, with boundary-markers incised on rocks along the ridgeline of Mount Taygetos. The text also records a sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis, located above the natural boundary of the Choireios Nape gorge (Kolbe 1913, no. 1431; 1904, 364–78; Steinhauer 1988, 229; Luraghi 2008, 17–27).<sup>12</sup>

#### VOLIMNOS: MISCELLANEOUS FINDS FROM THE AREA

As ancient authors and inscriptions attest, the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis was located on the steep slopes of Mount Taygetos, somewhere along the Laconian–Messenian borderline. As early as the eighteenth century, modern historians and archaeologists were attracted by its apparent importance and therefore began to investigate the area in search of it.

The earliest modern reference to the sanctuary is noted on Regas Pheraios' Balkan chart, the so-called *Charta*, published in 1797 (Karaberopoulos 1998, map 2). Thirty-eight years later, the Prefect of Messenia, Pericles Zographos, reported to Ludwig Ross, the General Ephor of Antiquities in Athens, the discovery of a small church at a remote site called 'Volimnos';<sup>13</sup> the site is located above the gorge of Langada and the old road from Kalamata to the villages of Megali Anastasova (modern Nedousa) and Sitsova (modern Alagonia), at an altitude of approximately 960 m above sea level (Fig. 3). Inscriptions found in the area documented the cult of Limnatis (Ross 1841, 5–15).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Kolbe (1904, 378) suggested that the year AD 78 should be considered as a *terminus ante quem* for the demarcation of the borderline along Mount Taygetos; his argument has been generally accepted.

<sup>12</sup> Cartledge and Spawforth (2002, 107) argue that, in the years of Marcus Aurelius, a recorded dispute between Sparta and Pharai indicates changes in the boundary line between Messenia and Laconia.

<sup>13</sup> Also recorded as 'Volymnos' and 'Volimos'.

<sup>14</sup> Ross (1841, 6) correctly argues that the toponym originates from the Greek words βούς (= ox) and λίμνη (= lake).

In the twentieth century, Protogeometric potsherds were collected at Volimnos by members of the Minnesota Messenian Expedition,<sup>15</sup> as well as other clay vessels and sherds dating from the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.<sup>16</sup> A substantial number of clay, metal and ivory objects, also brought to the Archaeological Museum of Messenia (AMM), have been interpreted as votive objects offered to the goddess of the sanctuary. A detailed catalogue of them, first published here, affirms the continuity of the cult in the area from the eighth century BC to the Hellenistic era.

### Miscellaneous objects

This incoherent group of objects comprises: a male terracotta figurine with raised arms,<sup>17</sup> a fragment of a bone four-faced seal (seventh century BC),<sup>18</sup> a conical spindle whorl of steatite,<sup>19</sup> a miniature lead object, probably a pendant (mid-seventh century BC),<sup>20</sup> a silver bead,<sup>21</sup> and a silver earring in the shape of a winding snake.<sup>22</sup>

### Bronze objects

This is the largest group of objects delivered from the area, consisting of a horse figurine (late eighth century BC) (Fig. 4),<sup>23</sup> six fragmentary pins (Late Geometric period) (Fig. 5),<sup>24</sup> two sections of pins (Late Geometric/Early Archaic period),<sup>25</sup> the head of a shoulder pin (first half of the seventh century BC) (Fig. 6),<sup>26</sup> a bronze figurine of a standing lion, part of a brooch (late seventh/early sixth century BC) (Fig. 7),<sup>27</sup> a bronze figurine of a siren or harpy wearing a polos, standing on a fibula plaque (early sixth century BC) (Fig. 8),<sup>28</sup> a bronze handle in the shape of two detached

<sup>15</sup> For the surface Protogeometric pottery from Volimnos, see Desborough 1965, 214; Hope Simpson 1966, 121 n. 51; McDonald and Rapp 1972, 288 no. 138; Coulson 1986, 35–7; Luraghi 2008, 114 n. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Archaeological Museum of Messenia (Kalamata Archaeological Museum) 194, 285, Π7419, Π7420 (Archaic); 509 (Classical); 1130–δ (Hellenistic). New sherds of fine ware, black-glazed vessels dating to the Late Classical/Early Hellenistic period, as well as a pyramidal loom weight, were delivered to the Museum by the writer in December 2013.

<sup>17</sup> AMM 179 (height 0.077 m). Not located in the storerooms of the Kalamata Museum.

<sup>18</sup> AMM M410 (height 0.021 m, width 0.013 m). For *comparanda*, see Dawkins 1929a, 228, pl. 139a.

<sup>19</sup> AMM 75 (height 0.014 m, base diameter 0.028 m). Not located in the storerooms of the Kalamata Museum.

<sup>20</sup> AMM M411 (diameter 0.018 m). The small projection on top is probably part of an oblong attachment pierced for suspension. Such small discs, decorated with a rosette pattern, are abundant in the Orthia sanctuary. Initially they were identified as earrings (Wace 1929, 258), but today are identified as pendants (Boss 2000, 123, fig. 94 (type 1417, motif 46.2). For similar discs, see Wace 1929, 258, pl. 180 (nos. 12–13), 265, pl. 186 (nos. 11–13). For shields of warrior figurines with a similar pattern from Laconian sanctuaries see Wace 1929, 262, 269, pls. 183 (nos. 2, 5, 10–11), 191 (nos. 1–3, 5, 10); Cavanagh and Laxton 1984, 27, 34–5, pl. 2 (nos. 41.2, 3, 5, 7); Boss 2000, 154–5, fig. 114 (type 348).

<sup>21</sup> AMM M7422 (height 0.003 m, width 0.006 m).

<sup>22</sup> AMM M38 (maximum diameter 0.024 m, minimum diameter 0.018 m). Not located in the storerooms of the Kalamata Museum.

<sup>23</sup> AMM M13 (length 0.058 m, width 0.051 m, height 0.059 m). For its chronology, see Zimmermann 1989, 133 n. 149; Luraghi 2008, 123; Kaltsas 2009, 43 no. 14.

<sup>24</sup> AMM M410-στ (M410: 0.010 m, M411β: 0.016 m, M411γ: 0.017 m, M411δ: 0.022 m, M411ε: 0.030 m, M411στ: 0.023 m); Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984, 127, 129, 130–1, 147–8, pls. 48 (no. 1407), 49 (nos. 1453–5), 50 (no. 1463), 61 (no. 1835). The inventory numbers given by Kilian-Dirlmeier do not correspond completely with the inventory numbers recorded in the catalogue of the Museum.

<sup>25</sup> AMM 55 (height 0.032 m), AMM 56 (height 0.026 m). See Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984, 190, 201, 204–5, pls. 79 (no. 3034), 83 (no. 3342). The objects are recorded in the inventory of the Museum, yet not found in the storerooms. The inventory numbers given by Kilian-Dirlmeier do not correspond to the numbers in the Museum catalogue.

<sup>26</sup> AMM M40 (height 0.063 m); Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984, 251, pl. 105 (no. 4434). Another pin from Alagonia published by her is neither recorded in the inventories of the Museum nor found in its storerooms (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984, 241, 256, pl. 97 [no. 4164]; Luraghi 2008, 123).

<sup>27</sup> AMM M12 (length 0.105 m, height 0.47 m). Droop 1929, 200, pls. 87:f, 88:m.

<sup>28</sup> AMM M20 (length 0.058 m, width 0.051 m, height 0.059 m). Daux 1959, 640–I fig. 21–2 (530 BC); Herfort-Koch 1986, 121 (K 156) and pl. 21.10 (590–580 BC); Luraghi 2002, 54 n. 47; 2008, 123 (early 6th century BC).

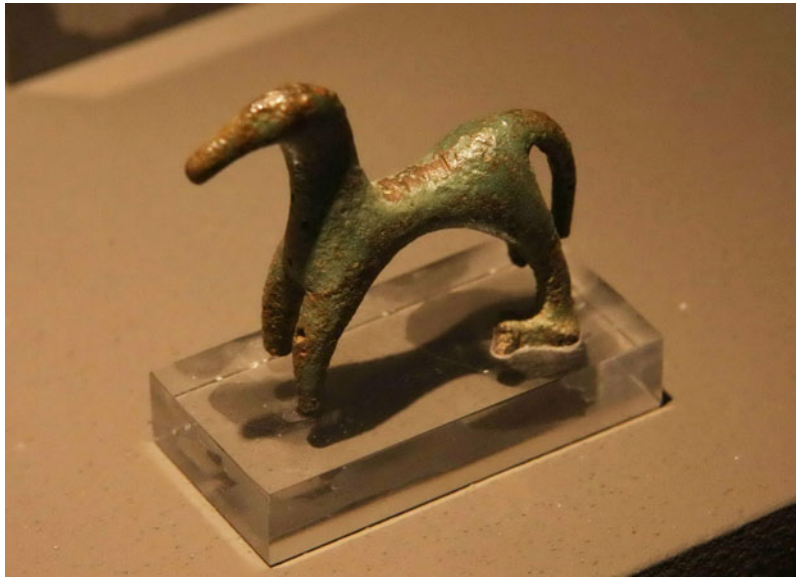


Fig. 4. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M13. Horse figurine, 8th century BC (photo V. Georgiadis).

snakes, most probably from an oinochoe (sixth century BC) (Fig. 9),<sup>29</sup> a bronze cymbal in the shape of a shield (late sixth/fifth century BC) (Fig. 10),<sup>30</sup> a bronze die (Fig. 11),<sup>31</sup> a bronze miniature bell,<sup>32</sup> the bezel of a bronze ring,<sup>33</sup> a bronze bead,<sup>34</sup> a miniature bronze lion figurine, probably a pendant of the late Archaic period,<sup>35</sup> and a fragmentary handle of a bronze mirror bearing the incised depiction of a young woman dressed in a peplos (sixth century BC) (Fig. 12).<sup>36</sup>

For a fibula of this type and a siren figurine from Sparta, see Lamb 1926–7a, 88–9 fig. 3; 1926–7b, 101–2, pl. 11:17. For a similar fibula from Messene, see Themelis 2003a, pl. 31b; 2003b, 46–7 fig. 41. For a bronze vessel in the form of a siren from the sanctuary of Apollo Tyrinitas in Kynouria, see Faklaris 1990, 175, pl. 78γ–δ.

<sup>29</sup> AMM M23 (height 0.062 m, length 0.072 m). For its chronology, see Kaltsas 2009, 176 (no. 79), and for snake heads on handles of bronze Archaic vessels, see Gauer 1991, 240 nos. P27 and P28, 248–9 nos. Te7 and Te8, 253 nos. M13 and M16, pls. 62:2–4, 69:1–3, 76:1–2. A recent photo showing the horizontal handle of an Archaic bronze hydria from Volimnos was delivered to the Kalamata Museum by Panayotis Riganas; I am deeply grateful to him.

<sup>30</sup> AMM M39 (height 0.18 m, diameter 0.80 m). Luraghi 2008, 124 n. 74; Gengler 2009, 67 n. 56. On cymbals from Laconian sanctuaries, see Fränkel 1876, 28–33, pl. 5; Wace 1929, 279, pl. 200 (nos. 24–8); Bonias 1998, 211–12, 217, pls. 62 (nos. 581–2), 63 (no. 547); Boss 2000, 139–40; Gengler 2009, 59–64, pls. 4–5. An Archaic bronze female figurine of Laconian craftsmanship from the village of Tseria in the Messenian Mani, currently exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Kalamata (AMM 918), had been identified as a cymbalist (Herfort-Koch 1986, 103 K74) and subsequently associated with the Limnatis sanctuary (Luraghi 2008, 124 n. 74), though there are no indications of its origin. On cymbalists, see also Tsountas 1892, 10–11, pl. 1; Kaltsas 2009, 169 (no. 72).

<sup>31</sup> AMM M54 (height 0.16 m). On dice dedicated in Artemis sanctuaries, see Dawkins 1929a, 237, pl. 166:1 (Orthia).

<sup>32</sup> AMM M43 (height 0.075 m, diameter 0.054 m). Not found in the storerooms of the Kalamata Museum. On bells as votive objects, see Versakis 1916, 93 no. 25, fig. 33; Bonias 1998, 100–1, 212, pl. 62:548; Luraghi 2002, 52 n. 34; Villing 2002, 223–95.

<sup>33</sup> AMM M41ζ (diameter 0.014 m). Bonias 1998, 99, 211, pl. 62:544–6.

<sup>34</sup> AMM M7423 (height 0.004 m, width 0.010 m).

<sup>35</sup> AMM M7421 (length 0.012 m, height 0.017 m, base diameter 0.018 m).

<sup>36</sup> AMM M32 (length 0.21 m, width 0.080 m). Papathanassopoulos 1961–2, 96 fig. 4; Oberländer (1967, 32–4 no. 40) dates the figurine to 530 BC, while Stibbe (1996, 151–2 no. 55, fig. 78) notes that it should be dated earlier (570–560 BC). See also Luraghi 2002, 54 n. 48; 2008, 123. For the identification of the Laconian figurine of a girl wearing a peplos as Artemis, see Richter 1968, 87 no. 144, figs. 456–9; Comstock and Vermeule 1971, 20–1 no. 19, fig. 19; Herfort-Koch 1986, 92 K45, pl. 5:1–3; Thomas 1992, 23, fig. 10; Kaltsas 2009, 168 no. 71.

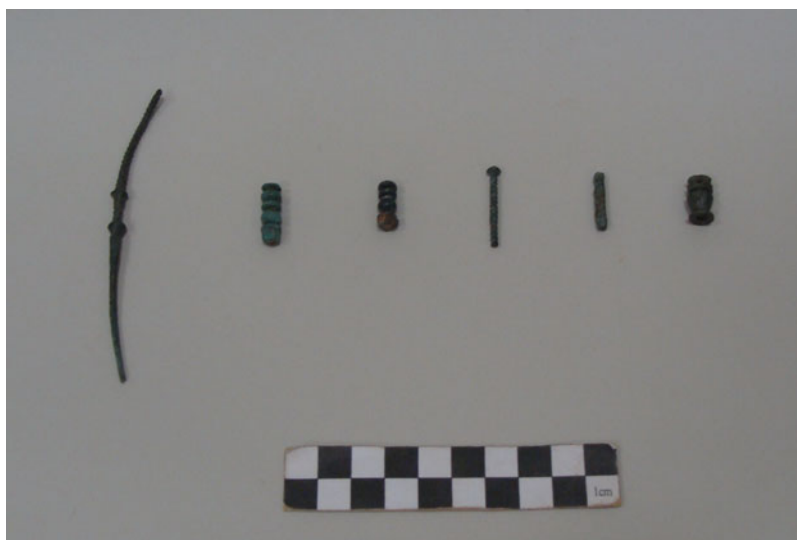


Fig. 5. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M41α–στ. Bronze pins, late 8th century BC (photo S. Koursoumis).



Fig. 6. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M4ο. Head of shoulder pin, 7th century BC (photo Chr. Sgouropoulou).

Furthermore, there is a bronze mirror from the early fifth century BC, bearing the following inscription (Figs. 13 and 14): <sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> AMM 872 (height 0.30 m, diameter 0.14 m). Parlama 1973–4, 315, pl. 198a; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 29 (1979) no. 395; Luraghi 2002, 54 n. 49; 2008, 123 n. 74; Koursoumis 2004–9, 317–19, figs. 1–2; Gengler 2009, 67 n. 52.





Fig. 7. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M12. Bronze figurine of a standing lion, part of a brooch, 7th–6th century BC (photo V. Georgiadis).



Fig. 8. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M20. Bronze figurine of a siren, part of a brooch, 6th century BC (photo V. Georgiadis).

Λιμνάτιο[ς]· Φιλίππα μ' ἔθηκες  
(*I belong*) to *Limnatis*; *Philippa* dedicated me

The inscription was written in the Laconian/Messenian alphabet, while the name Philippa is likely to be of Messenian origin.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> N. Luraghi (2002, 54) argues that the alphabet and dialect of the dedication are Laconian. According to Thucydides (4.3.3; 4.41.2), the Messenians were *homophōnoi* with the Spartiates, using a similar alphabet (Jeffery 1990, 202–6). The name Philippa is recorded in Messene, in the Hellenistic period (Themelis 1991, 91–2; Fraser and Matthews 1997, 451 s.v. (4)).



Fig. 9. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M23. Handle of a bronze oinochoe, 6th century BC (photo V. Georgiadis).



Fig. 10. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M39. Bronze cymbal, 6th–5th century BC (photo S. Koursoumis).

Other objects recovered from Taygetos, bearing inscriptions in the local alphabet, have also been associated with the Volimnos sanctuary (Luraghi 2002, 54 n. 49; 2008, 123 n. 78):

(a) A bronze pin from Mystras from the sixth century BC (Le Bas 1844, 722, pl. 6 no. 18; Foucart 1870, 78 no. 162; Fränkel 1876, 28–9; Kolbe 1913, no. 226; Robert 1969, 1682–3; Gengler 2009, 55–8, 63–5, figs. 2, 6):

Πριανθίς ἀνέθηκε τῇ Λιμνάτι  
*Prianthis dedicated (this) to Limnatis*



Fig. 11. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M54. Bronze die (photo V. Georgiadis).

(b) Two bronze inscribed cymbals, probably from the mid-sixth century BC:<sup>39</sup>

(i) Λιμνάτις  
*Limnatis*

(ii) Ὅπωρις ἀνέθηκε Λιμνάτι  
*Hoporis dedicated (this) to Limnatis*

(c) An Archaic bronze mirror (Oberländer 1967, 44 no. 52; Stibbe 1996, pl. 12; Luraghi 2008, 124 n. 74):

Λιμνάτις  
*Limnatis*

The bronze artefacts from Volimnos mentioned above, as well as other objects recorded as having been found in Taygetos, are probably products of local workshops (Herfort-Koch 1986, *passim*).<sup>40</sup> These luxurious items, identified as votive offerings to Artemis Limnatis, document unbroken activity from the Late Geometric until the Late Hellenistic period at a sanctuary of great importance. It is very likely that the cult continued uninterrupted in Roman times, as further documented by inscribed architectural remains built into the walls of the chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa.

<sup>39</sup> (i) Le Bas 1844, 721, pl. 6:3; Foucart 1870, 78 no. 161; Kolbe 1913, no. 225; Robert 1969, 1682–3; Gengler 2009, 55, fig. 2; (ii) Fränkel 1876, 28; Reinach 1888, 101–2, pl. 108; Kolbe 1913, no. 1497; Gengler 2009, 59–63, fig. 4; Fraser and Matthews 1997, 345. The name Hoporis is also recorded in a 5th century BC inscription from Italian Kyme (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 345). On the interpretation of cymbals as *phialai*, see *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 34 (1984) no. 306; Jeffery 1990, 194 n. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Luraghi (2002, 56 n. 66) persuasively argues that Archaic Messenian bronze workshops should be regarded as branches of the famous Laconian workshop.

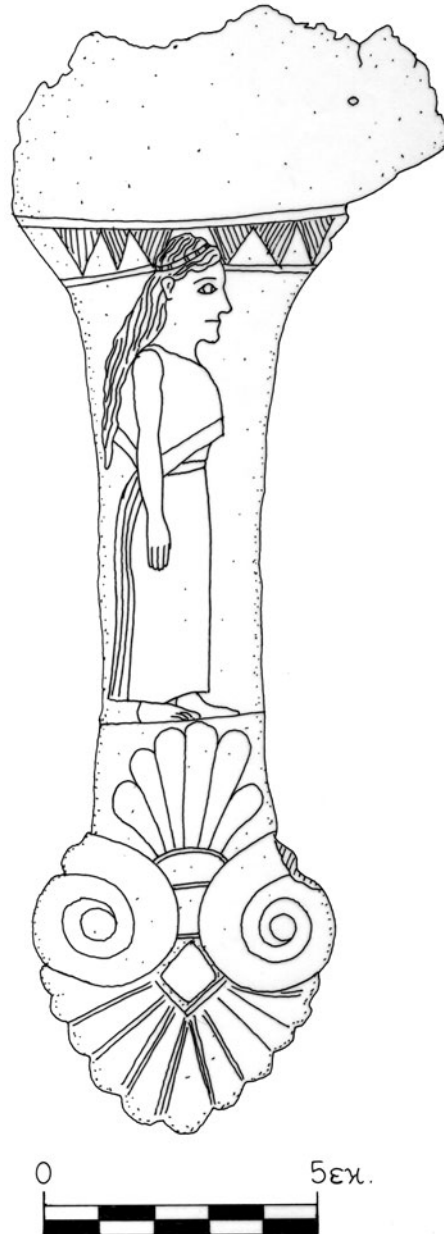


Fig. 12. Archaeological Museum of Messenia M32. Bronze mirror with incised decoration, 6th century BC (drawing Y. Nakas).

### Inscribed architectural members

The chapel of Panayia Volimniotissa or Kapsocherovoloussa is built amidst ancient architectural remains, on a small terrace at Volimnos to the north-east of the fertile valley.<sup>41</sup>

Only five out of the seven inscriptions published by Ludwig Ross, Philippe Le Bas and Paul Foucart can nowadays be seen on the southern and western facades of the chapel, where they

<sup>41</sup> The site is remote and almost inaccessible, a modern refuge for outlaws and fugitives; therefore no excavation or survey has been carried out there so far.





Fig. 13. Archaeological Museum of Messenia 872. Bronze inscribed mirror, early 5th century BC (photo V. Georgiadis).

were incorporated by modern constructors (Ross 1841, 5–10; Foucart 1870, 147–9 nos. 295–300).<sup>42</sup> In the south-western corner of the church the inscription Kolbe 1913, no. 1378 was identified, inscribed on a small fragment of a blue-grey marble *spolion* (Fig. 15):<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See also Bursian 1868–72, 171; Valmin 1930, 194; Hope Simpson 1966, 121; McDonald and Rapp 1972, 98 n. 194, 288 no. 138; Meyer 1978, 179–80; Zunino 1997, 36–7; Sachs 2006, 121–6; Gengler 2009, 66–7.

<sup>43</sup> The dimensions of the stone are: south (inscribed) side: length 0.20 m, height 0.10 m; west side: length 0.48 m, height 0.10 m. On the upper side of the stone a cavity is attested by Kolbe (1913, no. 1378).

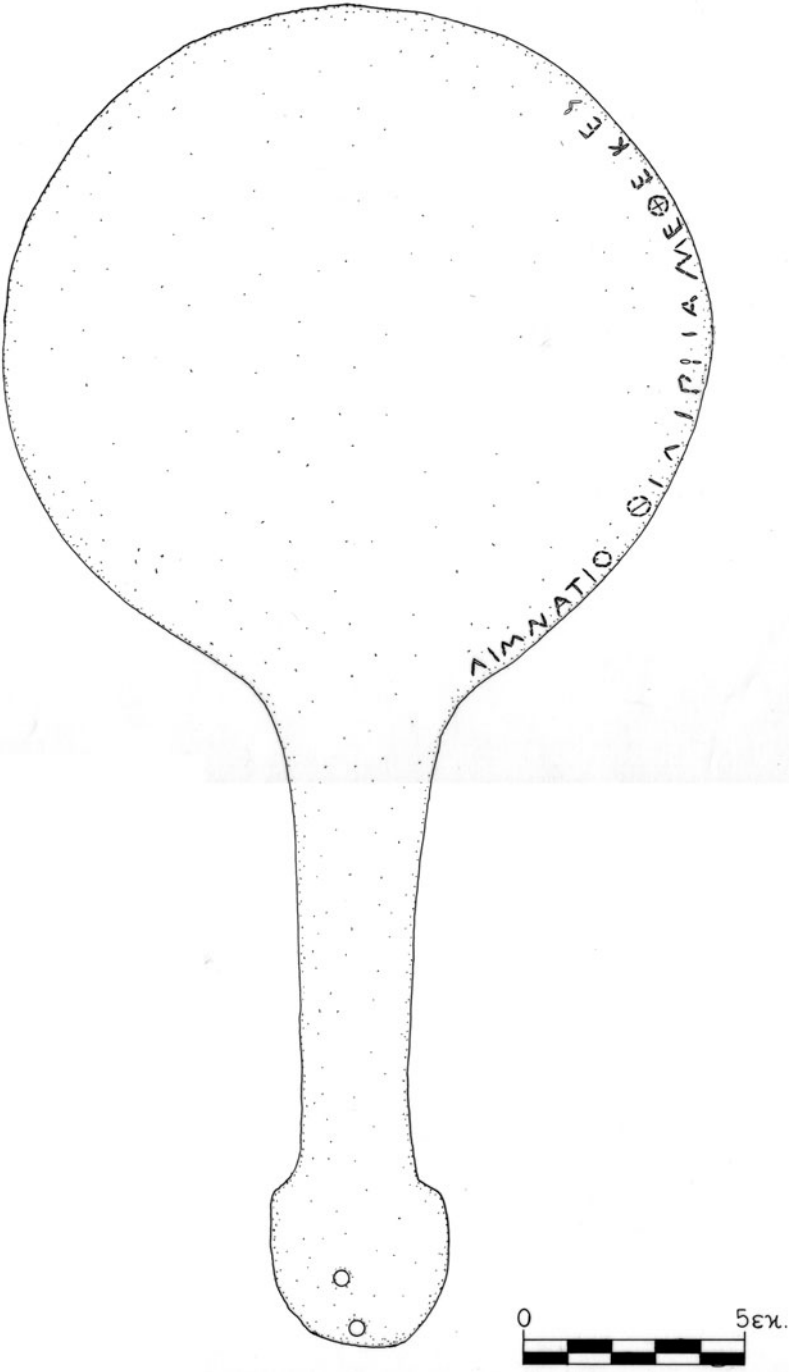


Fig. 14. Archaeological Museum of Messenia 872. Bronze inscribed mirror, early 5th century BC (drawing Y. Nakas).



Fig. 15. Chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa (south facade). Inscribed architectural fragments.  
Above: Kolbe 1913, no. 1378; below: Kolbe 1913, no. 1376B (photo V. Georgiadis).

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Though the restoration of the text remains problematic,<sup>44</sup> the form of the letters suggests a date in the fourth century BC or even later.<sup>45</sup> It is worth mentioning that, according to Tacitus (*Annales* 4.43.2), the Messenians maintained in the presence of the Emperor that all texts written in stone in the sanctuary of Limnatis were inscribed by them, that is presumably after 338 BC when the area was assigned to them by the Macedonians.

Just below it, the inscription Kolbe 1913, no. 1376 was identified, inscribed on a marble block. The stone is adorned with a cymatium, bearing on its narrow (i) and long (ii) sides the following inscriptions (Fig. 15):<sup>46</sup>

- (i)  $\theta\epsilon\alpha\varsigma \Lambda\mu\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota\delta[ος]$   
 $\theta\epsilon\epsilon\alpha\varsigma \Lambda\mu\nu\acute{\alpha}[τιδος]$   
*of the goddess Limnatis*  
*of the goddess Limnatis*
- (ii)  $B\text{[ορθίη]} \theta\epsilon\omega - - - - - \Lambda\text{[ι]μ[νατ] - }$   
 $\text{Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ἐλιζὼ ἀγωνοθέτης θεᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος]}$

<sup>44</sup> In Kolbe 1913, no. 1378 the text was dated to the 5th–4th century BC and transcribed as “ΠΙΑΜ - -”. On the other hand, Olivier Gengler (2013, *passim*) read the text in retrograde and transcribed it “Τᾶι Λμ]νᾶτι”, as part of a dedicatory inscription. I am most grateful to him for our fruitful co-operation, as well as his permission to refer to his poster presentation.

<sup>45</sup> In accordance with other Laconian inscriptions of the early 4th century BC, the last letter should preferably be transcribed as *Mu*, though its fourth stroke is missing. A similar form of *Mu* is recorded in an inscription from Pellana, dated to the late 4th century (Zavvou 1999, 66–7 no. 6 [ΜΣ 11721], pl. 11:2–3).

<sup>46</sup> The dimensions of this marble fragment are: west side, length 0.36 m, height 0.27 m; south side, length 0.79 m, height 0.27 m; cymatium: west side, length 0.24 m, height 0.038 m; south side, length 0.69 m, height 0.035 m. Ross (1841, 9) published only the two lines of the narrow side, while Foucart (1870, 148 no. 297) transcribed the second line of part 2 as follows: “Αὐρ(ηλίου) Ἐλιζὼ ἀγωνοθέτης θεᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος]”, and restored part 1 as follows: “ὁ δεῖνα ἀγωνοθέτης θ]εᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος], ὁ δεῖνα ἀγωνοθέτης θ]εᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος]”. On the other hand Kolbe (1913, no. 1376) suggested another restoration for the first two lines: “[Ἔτους - - ἀγωνοθέτης θ]εᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος] [Ἔτους - - ἀγωνοθέτης θ]εᾶς Ἀμυνάτ[ιδος]”. See also Brulotte 1994, 237; Zunino 1997, 37 T16–T17. In the inscription, underlining indicates letters which were formerly legible and published, but which cannot now be read.

To goddess Vorthia - - - - - Limnatis  
 Aur(elia) Helixô was agonothetes of the goddess Limnatis

The epithet *Vorthia*<sup>47</sup> (= Orthia), the name of the Spartan goddess, which later became an epithet for Artemis,<sup>48</sup> indicates that the goddess of Volimnos shared the attributes of the patron goddess of both the Spartiates and the Messenians.<sup>49</sup> It was the watchful eye of Orthia that oversaw the athletic and dance contests of the *epheboi* in Sparta (Pausanias 3.11.9; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.4.16; Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae*, *Lycurgus* 21.2; Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.107; Brelich 1969, 138–40; Lo Monaco 2010, 315). As in Sparta, so in the Limnatis-Vorthia sanctuary at Volimnos, games were probably funded by the *agonothetes* Aurelia Helixô,<sup>50</sup> a woman of Greek origin who undertook the magistracy and was authorised to supervise athletic or artistic contests held in the sanctuary.<sup>51</sup> The form of the letters of the text suggests a date in the late second/early third century AD.

In the western facade of the church the inscription Kolbe 1913, no. 1375 was also located inscribed on a marble block adorned with a moulding (cymatium) (Ross 1841, 9–10; Foucart 1870, 148 no. 298; Brulotte 1994, 237; Zunino 1997, 36 T12) (Fig. 16):<sup>52</sup>

Ἔτους σμθ' Αὐρ(ήλιος) Πρεῖμος  
 [ἀ]γωνοθέτης θεᾶς Λιμνάτιδος

In the year 249 Aur(elios) Preimos  
 agonothetes of the goddess Limnatis

Based on the Actian era (31 BC), the date given above is AD 218. The Roman name Aurelios Preimos (Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 499 MES 81) is also attested in an ephebic catalogue from AD 246 from ancient Korone (Kolbe 1913, no. 1398, 61; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 499 MES 80).<sup>53</sup> However, the Koronian Preimos, an ephebe in AD 246, was certainly younger than the *agonothetes* of Limnatis, and presumably a relative.

On an oblong architectural fragment, a marble block adorned with a narrow cymatium now serving as the southern door jamb of the church, Kolbe 1913, no. 1377 was located (Fig. 17):<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> As documented in a recent autopsy at Volimnos, the remaining traces of the first line of the second inscription are almost indiscernible.

<sup>48</sup> The name Orthia in Sparta was associated with Artemis as an epithet only in the Flavian period (Woodward 1929, 293; Lo Monaco 2010, 316 n. 106), whereas in Messene Orthia was identified as Artemis from the 2nd century BC (Orlandos 1976, 38; Themelis 1994, 106–7).

<sup>49</sup> On the use of F at the beginning of the epithet Orthia (= Βορθέα = Βορθία), see Buck 1955, 47 no. 51. For the worship of Orthia in Sparta see Kolbe 1913, nos. 252–356; Rose 1929, 400. For the worship of Orthia in Messene, see Themelis 1994, 101, 105–7; 2002, 85–7, figs. 72–5; Zunino 1997, 48–55.

<sup>50</sup> Neither the Roman *gentilicium* Aurelia nor the Greek cognomen Helixô are recorded elsewhere in the Peloponnese (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 140; see also Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 491 MES 35).

<sup>51</sup> Women *agonothetai* are barely attested on the Greek mainland. In Hellenistic Megara, Arete daughter of Aristandros funded the celebration of an agon (Dittenberger 1892, no. 43; Camia 2011a, 61), while in the town of Gytheion Phaenias Aromatation provided the oil for the local gymnasium (Kolbe 1913, no. 1208; Harter-Uibopuu 2004, *passim*). Finally, in 3rd century AD Sparta, Aurelia Xenô Eutychou funded the honorary statue of her husband (Kolbe 1913, no. 535; Rizakis and Lepenioti 2010, 75 LAC 70, 413–14 LAC 633). On the magistracy of *agonothesia* in Roman times, see Camia 2011a, 57–70.

<sup>52</sup> Dimensions: west side, length 0.92 m, height 0.27 m; south side, length 0.495 m, height 0.26 m. Cymatium: west side, length 0.905 m, height 0.035 m; south side, length 0.48 m, height 0.035 m.

<sup>53</sup> The Roman name Primus is also attested in an inscription from AD 50–80, in the Spartan sanctuary of Orthia (Kolbe 1913, no. 277; Woodward 1929, 308–9 no. 25; Fraser and Matthews 1997, 377). For the identification of the modern town of Petalidi with ancient Korone, see Tod 1905, 39–40; Valmin 1930, 175; Papachatzis 1979, 165 n. 3; Themelis 2005, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Dimensions: length 0.88 m, height 0.26 m, width 0.23 m. Foucart (1870, 148 no. 299) restored the text as follows: “ὁ δεινα ἀγωνοθέτης θεᾶς Λειμνάτιδος[ος]”. In Kolbe 1913, no. 1377 the word Ἔτους was also added at the beginning of the line: “[Ἔτους - - ὁ δεινα ἀγωνοθέτης θεᾶς Λειμνάτιδος[ος]”. See also Brulotte 1994, 238; Zunino 1997, 36 T13.





Fig. 16. Chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa. Inscribed architectural fragments (west facade).  
Above: Kolbe 1913, no. 1376A; below: Kolbe 1913, no. 1375 (photo D. Kosmopoulos).



Fig. 17. Chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa. Inscribed architectural fragment (west facade). Kolbe 1913, no. 1377 (photo S. Koursoumis).



Fig. 18. Inscribed marble plaque from the chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa (photo S. Koursoumis).

θεᾶς Λειμνάτειδ[ος]  
*of the goddess Limnatis*

The form of the letters suggests a date in the late second/early third century AD.

During the most recent visit of the author to the area, an inscribed, fragmentary marble plaque was discovered encased in the lintel of the door of the chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa (Fig. 18):<sup>55</sup>

Ἀρχιπ <π> ο[---]  
*Archip <p> o*

The form of the letters suggests a date in the Roman period.<sup>56</sup> The name Ἀρχιππος is quite common in the Greek world and especially in the Peloponnese.<sup>57</sup> In Hellenistic Messenia it is recorded at Abia (Kolbe 1913, no. 1351), as well as in Messene (Klaffenbach 1932, no. 31), while it was common in Sparta and Laconia during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Klaffenbach 1932, no. 137; Kolbe 1913, nos. 611, 96, 899a–b, 211, 50, 95, 127; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 11 [1950], nos. 570, 562, 610, 545).

Three other published inscriptions (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1373, 1374 and 1374a), reported to have been carved on a two-faced marble epistyle encased in the walls of the chapel, were unfortunately not found.

<sup>55</sup> Dimensions of the plaque: length 0.30 m, height 0.24 m, width 0.09 m. The plaque was delivered to the Kalamata Museum.

<sup>56</sup> Omission of one of the two letters *pi* of the name is attested for the first time. The unusual, rectangular form of the loop of *rho* is paralleled in Laconian inscriptions of the 2nd century AD (Zavvou 1999, 67–8 no. 8 [ΜΣ 11755], pl. 12:2).

<sup>57</sup> In the Peloponnese the name is also attested in Achaia, the Argolid, Arcadia and Elis (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 77), while it is very common in the rest of the Greek world.

Kolbe 1913, no. 1373:

--- τα . . σεβαστο[ῦ υἱ]ός ---  
 -----  
 -- νος σεβαστοῦ, θεοῦ σεβαστοῦ ---  
 ----- σεβ[αστο --- -]<sup>58</sup>  
  
 --- ta . . son of sebastos  
 -----  
 of -- on sebastos, of god sebastos  
 ----- sebasto --- -

The recurrent *sebastos* (latin *augustus*) is an adjective commonly used for the invocation of Roman emperors and members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in general by the Greeks.<sup>59</sup>

Kolbe 1913, no. 1374:

Χάρτος Εὐθυκλέος ἱερεὺς Ἀρτέμιτος.  
 Θεοξενίδας Εὐθυκλέος [ἱε]ρε[ὺς Ἄρ]τέμιτος  
 Νικήρατος Θεώνος. Στράτ[ων Σ]τράτ[ω]νος

*Chartos son of Euthykles priest of Artemis*  
*Theoxenidas son of Euthekles priest of Artemis*  
*Nikeratos son of Theon. Straton son of Straton*

The inscription may be identified as an honorary decree, honouring priests who undertook magistracies in the Limnatis sanctuary.<sup>60</sup> The names of the two priests of Artemis, Chartos and Theoxenidas, are not attested elsewhere in Messenia or Laconia.<sup>61</sup> Though the name Euthykles is attested in Laconian inscriptions (Kolbe 1913, nos. 92, 209; Fraser and Matthews 1997, 165),<sup>62</sup> there are no other indications that he was of Laconian origin. On the other hand, Nikeratos and Straton were probably Messenians,<sup>63</sup> as they should be identified with two religious magistrates in Messene, the *Gerontes tēs Oupēsias*, supervising the cult of Artemis

<sup>58</sup> P. Foucart (1870, 147 no. 295) restored the third line of the text as follows: “Νέρω]νος Σεβαστοῦ, θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ”.

<sup>59</sup> On the use of the epithet *sebastos* in Messenian inscriptions see Kolbe 1913, no. 1450; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 23 (1968), no. 208; 35 (1985), no. 343; 38 (1989), nos. 337, 340; 45 (1995), no. 311; 46 (1996), no. 418; Camia 2011b, 217–18.

<sup>60</sup> The inscription was initially published together with the following text: “Ἀβρατῶν πόλις --- | ἐπὶ Μόσχου τοῦ Μεν ---” (Ross 1841, 8–9; Foucart 1870, 147 no. 296). Later on, the two texts were distinguished by W. Kolbe (1913, nos. 1374, 1374a). See also Brulotte 1994, 237; Zunino 1997, 37 T15.

<sup>61</sup> The name Chartos as a cognomen is recorded in an honorary inscription from Tainaron, dated to the 2nd/3rd century AD (Kolbe 1913, no. 1246; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 11 [1956], no. 943; Fraser and Matthews 1997, 475; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 184 LAC 282). Names beginning with Chart- have been recorded in Messenia, Laconia and all over the Peloponnese (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 475). The name Theoxenidas is attested in Hellenistic inscriptions from Epidaurus, Mantinea-Antigoneia and Pheneos (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 205).

<sup>62</sup> The name has been also recorded in the Argolid, Elis and Corinth (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 165).

<sup>63</sup> The name Neikeratos is recorded in Messene (Groag *et al.* 1933–2009 vol. 2, 202 no. 873; Mommsen 1873 Part 1, no. 495; Kolbe 1913, no. 1455; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 518 MES 150, 524–5 MES 161), as well as in Laconia (Kolbe 1913, no. 533; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 46 [1996], no. 427; 47 [1997], no. 400; Themelis 2002, 125–6; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 189 LAC 294), Achaia, Arcadia and the Argolid (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 320). Straton is a common name in Messenia, Laconia, and all over the Peloponnese (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 404).

Orthia-Phosphoros (Orlandos 1965, 116–21; Robert and Robert 1966, 378–80; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 23 [1968], no. 208).<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, a donor bearing the name Nikeratos Theonos is attested in a decree of the Augustan period from Messene (Orlandos 1959, 170–3; Robert and Robert 1966, 375–7; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 23 [1968], no. 207).<sup>65</sup>

Kolbe 1913, no. 1374a:

Ἀβεατῶν πόλις - - - - - | ἐπὶ  
Μόσσχου τοῦ Μεν - - - - -  
. . . . τα - - - - -

*The city of the Abeates - - - - - | when (eponymous magistrate was)*  
*Mosschos son of Men - - - - -*  
. . . . *ta - - - - -*

The text (Foucart 1870, 147 no. 296; Kolbe 1913, no. 1374a; Brulotte 1994, 237) is probably part of an honorary decree, while Mosschos<sup>66</sup> was likely an eponymous magistrate of the Messenian city of Abia.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the inscribed base *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 39 (1989), no. 388, found at Volimnos and transferred to the Kalamata Archaeological Museum, bears the following inscription:<sup>68</sup>

[ - - - - - ] οἰος Ω Τ [ - - - - - ]  
[ - - ἄγων] οθέτης Ἀρτέ[μίδος - - -]  
ἐκ τῶν εἰδίω[ν]

- - - - - *oios O T - - - - -*  
- - - *agonothetes of Artemis - - -*  
*at his own (expense)*

Apart from Kolbe 1913, no. 1378, which is probably earlier, the rest of the inscribed fragments should definitely be dated to the Roman period. At least two (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1374, 1374a), or even three (Kolbe 1913, no. 1373), should be dated to the first century AD. The former two may well be dated after AD 25, when the Limnatis sanctuary and the Ager Denthaliatis came under the rule of the Messenians, in accordance with the Emperor's and Senate's decision. This suggestion is further supported by reference to the two Messenian *Gerontes tēs Oupēsias*, the priests Nikeratos and Straton, in an honorary decree of AD 42 from Messene (Orlandos 1962, 102 and pl. B; 1976, 32; Robert and Robert 1966, 378–80; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

<sup>64</sup> A board of religious magistrates, regarded as descendants of the Dorian King Kresphontes, who were responsible for the operation of the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia-Phosphoros in the Asklepieion (Themelis 1994, 185). See also Orlandos 1976, 32–5, figs. 21–4; Themelis 2007, 523 n. 96. The institution is also recorded in (Roman?) Thouria and Roman Korone; on its origin and role in the Roman era, see Makres 2011, 72–6.

<sup>65</sup> Orlandos dates the inscription between 27 BC and AD 14 (Orlandos 1959, 171). For the name Theon, see Messenia (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 46 [1996], no. 427; 47 [1997], no. 400; Themelis 2002, 125–6; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 524–5 MES 161) and Laconia (Kolbe 1913, nos. 80, 211, 1301; Rizakis, Zoumbaki and Lepenioti 2004, 81 LAC 87). The name is also recorded in Achaia, Arcadia and the Argolid (Fraser and Matthews 1997, 209).

<sup>66</sup> The name Moschos Euamerou is recorded in a 1st century BC honorary decree from Messene (Themelis 2007, 516). On the use of the name in Achaia, the Argolid, Arcadia, Elis, Corinth and Sicyon, see Fraser and Matthews 1997, 306.

<sup>67</sup> Kolbe 1913, no. 1352, 7 (ἡ πόλις τῶν Ἀβεατῶν). Ancient Abia formed part of the Eleutherolaconian region from 21 BC until AD 25 (Luraghi 2008, 21–2); later on it constituted a Messenian boundary town (Pausanias 5.30.1). For its location at the modern site of Palaiochora Abias, see Valmin 1930, 181; Hope Simpson 1957, 240; Themelis 1966, 163, pl. 153a, b; McDonald and Rapp 1972, 316 no. 545.

<sup>68</sup> Archaeological Museum of Messenia 3040. Not located in the storerooms of the Kalamata Museum. For its publication, see also Papakonstantinou 1982, 136; Pariente 1990, 742; Zunino 1997, 36 T14. The form of the letters suggests a date in the 2nd/3rd century AD.



23 [1968], no. 208; Moretti 1987–8, 249; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 38 [1988], no. 337; Brulotte 1994, 248–50; Themelis 2007, 523).<sup>69</sup> The presence of Messenian magistrates, representing at least two (Messene and Abia)<sup>70</sup> and presumably three (Korone) (Kolbe 1913, no. 1375) Messenian cities, may be interpreted in terms of an established Messenian sovereignty over the area after Augustus' death, and apparently as late as the time of Vespasian. This assumption is further supported by the restoration of the third line of the inscription Kolbe 1913, no. 1373 suggested by P. Foucart (1870, 147 no. 295);<sup>71</sup> therefore it should probably be dated to the mid-first century AD.<sup>72</sup> The references to the Emperors and in general the Roman imperial family may well be associated with the institution of the imperial cult in the sanctuary and the area,<sup>73</sup> yet 'the border between civic and religious honours cannot be easily determined, because it did not exist for the ancient Greeks' (Camia and Kantirea 2010, 381).

Furthermore, at least four inscriptions probably date to the second/third century AD (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1375, 1376A–B, 1377; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 39 [1989], no. 388). The former three have been inscribed on almost identical marble blocks, probably sections of a marble cornice. All fragments bear the same narrow cymatium – a bead-and-reel form, placed on a rectangular band. The type of moulding is rather unusual, but a chronology after the mid-second century AD seems likely.<sup>74</sup> Apparently, all blocks are parts of a single monument on public display, on which the names of the *agonothetai* were inscribed, in order to be honoured and viewed by everyone.

### Architectural remains

Architectural remains and fragments are abundant in the Volimnos area.<sup>75</sup> A few of them were built into the walls of the chapel, while the rest remain either on the terrace or scattered on the mountain. The majority of them are constructed of local, blue-grey limestone that was extracted in the area (Fig. 19).<sup>76</sup> The average dimensions of the blocks (0.50 × 0.50 × 1.30 m) indicate one or more architectural constructions of substantial dimensions (Fig. 20).<sup>77</sup> A semicircular pedestal,

<sup>69</sup> The decree recording the donation of Nikeratos Theonos, due to the reference to *sebastos*, was initially dated between 27 BC and 14 AD (Orlandos 1959, 171). Nevertheless, as Nikeratos Theonos from Volimnos is identified with the Messenian magistrate attested in *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 23 (1968), no. 208, and the epithet *sebastos* was also used for the invocation of several members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, it is likely that the two Messenian inscriptions and the one from Volimnos are contemporary.

<sup>70</sup> Abia is predominantly considered a Messenian town, due to Pausanias' (4.30.1) reference. It is worth mentioning that in 182 BC Abia, Thouria and Pharai gained their independence from Messene (Polybius, *Historiae*, 23.17.2; Steinhauer 1988, 224 n. 36).

<sup>71</sup> "Νέρω]νος Σεβαστοῦ, θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ".

<sup>72</sup> In AD 66/7, numerous celebrations and festivals were organised all over the Peloponnese on the occasion of Nero's visit to the region. The Emperor was also honoured in Messene (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1449, 1450; Themelis 2002, 142).

<sup>73</sup> As documented by inscriptions from Gytheion and Messene, the imperial cult, including festivals in honour of Augustus ("θεοῦ Καίσαρος θεοῦ υἱοῦ Σεβαστοῦ σωτῆρος ἐλευθερίου") and Tiberius ("αὐτοκράτορος [Τι]βερίου Καίσαρος Σεβαστοῦ"), was introduced in the southern Peloponnese in the 1st century AD (Gytheion: *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 11 [1950], no. 923; Camia and Kantirea 2010, 376–7, 382. Messene: *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 41 [1991], no. 328).

<sup>74</sup> A similar, more stylised, but not identical moulding on the entablature of the 'Captives' facade' in Roman Corinth is dated to the mid-2nd century AD (Scranton 1951, 64–5 fig. 44). I thank Prof. Aileen Ajootian for our fruitful discussion of this.

<sup>75</sup> An initial recording of the *spolia* in the vicinity of the chapel at Volimnos was made by E. Papakonstantinou (1982, 136), who visited the site in 1982 and recorded a Roman terrace, a semicircular pedestal, a stone basin and at least three octagonal columns – noting that on one of her previous visits there were either five or six.

<sup>76</sup> At least two quarries have been traced on this slope, one on the upper terrace and another to the north-west of the chapel. A marble semicircular fragment is also built into the western facade of the chapel (length 0.57 m, height 0.40 m). For the blue-grey marble of central Taygetos, see Philippson 1959, 418.

<sup>77</sup> On the eastern part of the terrace one conglomerate block is an integral part of the natural bedrock, and therefore part of the foundations of some architectural or other structure. On the other hand, there are no traces of ancient foundations beneath the walls of the chapel, as the modern walls have been built directly on the soil.



Fig. 19. Volimnos. Quarried bedrock, on the upper terrace (photo S. Koursoumis).



Fig. 20. Chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa. Octagonal column shaft amidst architectural fragments (photo D. Kosmopoulos).

probably an exedra, made of local limestone, was also discovered on the slope to the south of the terrace.<sup>78</sup>

Two column shafts have been located in the area: one at the foot of the slope to the south-west of the terrace, and another standing reversed beside the south-eastern corner of the church. Made of local blue-grey limestone, the shafts belong to two separate, octagonal columns (Figs. 20, 21).<sup>79</sup> Moreover, a fragment of an octagonal capital, preserving part of the abacus, the echinus and the hypotrachelium,

<sup>78</sup> Diameter 1 m, height 0.29 m. Rectangular as well as circular cavities of several dimensions have been carved on its upper and back, narrow sides.

<sup>79</sup> Column shaft A: height visible 0.67 m, base diameter 0.48 m; cavity: 0.03 × 0.027 × 0.035 m. Column shaft B: height 0.63 m, top diameter 0.445 m, base diameter 0.452 m. According to the architect Tess Paulson, the two shafts belong to different columns. I cordially thank her for sharing her thoughts and remarks on the scattered architectural material at Volimnos. Her forthcoming thesis on the typology and chronology of octagonal columns in the Greek world will further illuminate the association of the column shafts with structures in the sanctuary.



Fig. 21. South-west slope. Octagonal column shaft (photo D. Kosmopoulos).

was found next to the church and originally associated with the columns (Fig. 22).<sup>80</sup> A date in the fifth century BC is suggested for them<sup>81</sup> and consequently for the structure they belonged to.<sup>82</sup>

At this point, it is rather tempting to recall Tacitus' note, based on the Spartan assertion that the Limnatis temple had been built by their ancestors, presumably before 338 BC when the Dentheliatis was initially assigned to the Messenians (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.43.1),<sup>83</sup> and in accord with Strabo's reference (8.4.9) that the temple was erected by the Spartiates.

#### SANCTUARIES AND *HOROI* IN A 'NO MAN'S LAND'

The discovery and identification of boundary stones along the ridge of Mount Taygetos, also documented in Kolbe 1913, no. 1431, apparently provide an answer to the question of the sanctuary's precise location. Extensive surveys carried out in the area have identified at least 12 *horoi*:<sup>84</sup> the northern *horos* was discovered in the Malevos area, at the northern edge of the Ager

<sup>80</sup> Total height 0.25 m. Abacus: height 0.10 m. Echinus: height 0.07 m. Hypotrachelium: height 0.08 m.

<sup>81</sup> A comparison with octagonal columns from other Greek monuments, such as the so-called 'Fountain House of Theagenes' at Megara (Gruben 1964, 37–41, pls. 22–8, plan 1; Hellner 2009, 38–45, figs. 11–18), may be illuminating for the dating of the octagonal columns from Volimnos. Though the latter seem to be more slender (Volimnos: diameter 0.46 m/Megara: diameter 0.53 m), the capital associated with them has almost identical dimensions to capitals from Megara (Volimnos: height 0.25 m; Megara: height 0.24 m). The octagonal columns from Megara are dated to the first half of the 5th century BC; therefore a similar chronology for the columns from Volimnos is suggested. It is also noteworthy that the former are restored to a height of approximately 5.20 m = ten times bottom diameter (Gruben 1964, 38), while the columns of the Xenon in Nemea, dated to the late 5th century, with a diameter of 0.31 m, are restored to a height of 2.40 m (Birge, Kraynak and Miller 1992, 131).

<sup>82</sup> From the Archaic to the Hellenistic era octagonal columns were largely used in secular buildings, e.g. propyla, stoas, fountains, while only few of them were erected in sanctuaries (Hellner 2011, 257–8).

<sup>83</sup> As Steinhauer (1988, 221–2, 225–6) points out, in their address before the Senate and the Emperor the Spartan delegates focused mainly on the erection of the temple by their ancestors, whereas rights over the land were only implied. All in all, the practice of marking and controlling disputed areas with structures of religious importance was commonly observed by Greek cities.

<sup>84</sup> Only five out of the 12 *horoi* discovered in the area were relocated during the 2009–11 survey in central Taygetos. On the identification of the relocated boundary stones with those discovered in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, 70–4, fig. 9. Another two boundary stones were attested by K. Pittakis (1837, 26) in the area of Koutsava, identified by Y. Pikoulas with the modern Messenian village Karveli, in the vicinity of Volimnos, thus raising the total number to 14. Evidently, Pittakis' reference has to be further examined.





Fig. 22. Chapel of Kapsocherovoloussa. Fragmentary octagonal column capital (photo S. Koursoumis).

Denthaliatis and the central section of Taygetos, three others to the east of Sitsova (modern Alagonia) (Ross 1841, 2–4; Kolbe 1913, no. 1372 [= Dittenberger 1920, no. 935]; Pernice 1894, 351–5), and eight on the ridge of Mount Paximadi, to the south of the Langada Gorge (Kolbe 1904, 364–78; Giannoukopoulou 1953, 7–12, pls. 1–3; Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, 63–9, figs. 5–7b). It is worth noting that the southern boundary stone was discovered on the peak of Neraidovouna, above the Koskaraka/Rindomo Gorge, at the southern edge of Mount Paximadi, approximately 17.5 km to the south of the northern *horos* (Figs. 1, 23, 24) (Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, fig. 9).

As the Messene inscription states that the boundary line ended above the Choireios Nape gorge, the Koskaraka gorge should be identified with the ancient Choireios Nape. On the other hand, the Limnatis sanctuary recorded in the Messene inscription was probably located within the vicinity of the Neraidovouna *horos*, overlooking the gorge (Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, 74).<sup>85</sup> Valmin (1930, 187–90, figs. 36–9) placed the sanctuary of Limnatis on a fortified hill over the Koskaraka gorge, a few kilometres away from Neraidovouna, near the modern village of Brinda (modern Voreio Gaitson).<sup>86</sup> Apparently, as the Ager Denthaliatis and the sanctuary at Volimnos had been incorporated into the Messenian region after AD 25, a second sanctuary of Limnatis must have been established in the area, to the south of Neraidovouna, above the Koskaraka gorge, marking the new borders between the Messenians and the Eleutherolaconian League.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> See also Kolbe 1904, 366; Giannoukopoulou 1953, 7; Pikoulas 1991, 282–3 n. 11. The sanctuary has not yet been located.

<sup>86</sup> There are no inscriptions or finds associated with ritual practices in support of Valmin's argument. According to Pausanias (3.26.11), the Eleutherolaconian *polisma* of Alagonia and also the sanctuaries of Artemis and Dionysos were located in this area. W. Kolbe (1905, 62) was the first to suggest that the Alagonian sanctuary mentioned by Pausanias may be the one recorded on the inscription Kolbe 1913, no. 1431 (Papachatzis 1979, 40; Brulotte 1994, 239; Solima 2011, 158–9).

<sup>87</sup> For discussion concerning the existence of two Limnatis sanctuaries, see Papachatzis 1979, 108 n. 1; Steinhauer 1988, 226; Pikoulas 1991, 283–4 nn. 11, 13; Brulotte 1994, 239; Koursoumis and Kosmopoulos 2013, 70–4.



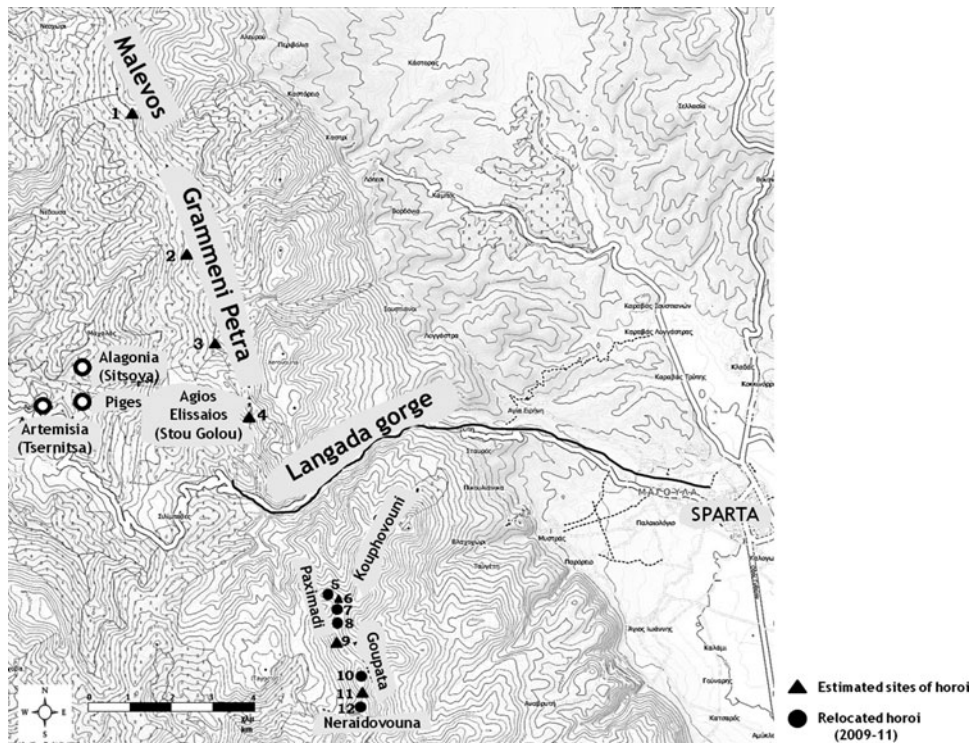


Fig. 23. Map of central Taygetos. The located boundary stones of Kolbe 1913, no. 1431.

### WORSHIPPING LIMNATIS

Artemis was a prominent goddess in the Greek religious system. In the southern Peloponnese, her name has been identified on Linear B tablets from the Mycenaean Palace of Pylos (Ventrìs and Chadwick 1956, 125–7; Zunino 1997, 33; Weihartner 2005, 113, 120, 173; Bendall 2007, 248–9), next to a name which has been interpreted as Orthia (Ventrìs and Chadwick 1956, 277–9; Zunino 1997, 52–3). Pausanias mentions that Artemis played a critical role in the outcome of the conflict between Messenia and Laconia, showing her displeasure towards the Messenians in crucial moments of the warfare (Pausanias 3.18.8; 4.13.1; 4.14.2; 4.16.9–10; Papachatzis 1979, 383–5 n. 2). After 369 BC, Artemis was worshipped all over Messenia with several epithets: in Messene as Orthia-Phosphoros-Oupesia (Orlandos 1976, 32–5, figs. 21–4; Brulotte 1994, 240–51; Themelis 1994, 101–22; Chlepa 2001, 13–67, fig. 2; Themelis 2002, 74–6, 85–7, figs. 56–60, 72–6; Zunino 1997, 56–61),<sup>88</sup> Limnatis (Le Bas 1844, 422–5; Reinach 1888, 134–8, pls. 1–4; Brulotte 1994, 253; Zunino 1997, 61–6; Themelis 2004, 143–54; Mùth 2007, 211–16; Solima 2011, 203–4) and Laphria (Pausanias 4.31.7–8; Brulotte 1994, 246–7; Zunino 1997, 62–3; Themelis 2002, 139–40, fig. 84; Themelis 2004, 152–3; Solima 2011, 204–6), and in philo-Laconian Thouria as Oupesia (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 23 [1968], no. 208).<sup>89</sup> In northern Messenia, along the Arcadian-Messenian borderline, an Archaic temple was erected and presumably dedicated to Artemis Dereatis/Eleia (Valmin 1930, 122–4; Koursoumis 2012, 1–16). The goddess was worshipped as Paidotrophos in Korone (Pausanias 4.34.4–5; Farnell

<sup>88</sup> For the Phosphoros cult statue, see Pausanias 4.31.10. For the inscription referring to the Oupesia of Messene, see Orlandos 1962, 102 and pl. B; Orlandos 1976, 32; Robert and Robert 1966, 378–80 no. 202; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 33 (1983), nos. 208, 215–17; 38 (1988), no. 337; Moretti 1987–8, 249; Brulotte 1994, 248–50; Themelis 2007, 523; Mùth 2007, 160–7; Solima 2011, 198–204.

<sup>89</sup> For the numismatic depiction of Artemis holding torches, see Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner 1964, 69, pl. O:23; Kahil 1984, 659 no. 492; Papachatzis 1979, 103, figs. 20–1; Brulotte 1994, 257.

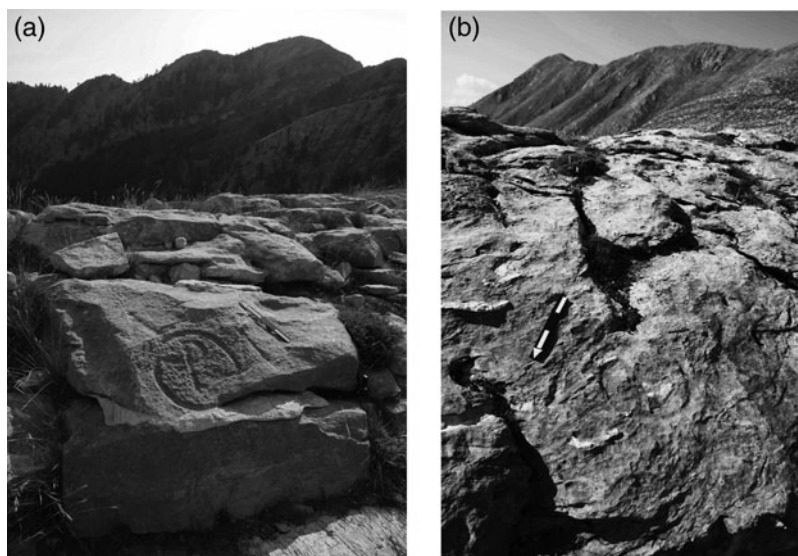


Fig. 24. Mount Paximadi (central Taygetos). The *horoi* at (a) Voidolakoula and (b) Diassela (photo D. Kosmopoulos).

1896–1909, 463, n. 70; Brulotte 1994, 232–3; Solima 2011, 197–8), while her cult is also attested in Kolonides (Head 1911, 432–3) and Mothone (Pausanias 4.35.8; Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner 1964 73 no. 3, xiii pl.; Brulotte 1994, 253). In Laconia her cult was also popular throughout the whole region, including Sparta and its periphery.<sup>90</sup>

Artemis bearing the epithet Limnatis was associated with lakes, wetlands, springs, rivers and swamps (Farnell 1896–1909, 427 and nn. 1–2; Nilsson 1967, 493; Calame 1997, 143; Morizot 1999, 270–1).<sup>91</sup> It should be underlined that the sanctuaries of Limnatis were usually located in remote, disputed, mountainous areas, overlooking cliffs and gorges, in order to emphasise her role as a guardian of boundaries (Sinn 1981, 25–71; Morizot 1999, 270–1; Polignac 2000, 66, 75; Lo Monaco 2010, 311). The remark by Strabo (8.4.9) that her sanctuary on Taygetos gave its name to the site of Limnai in Sparta where the Orthia sanctuary was located, and also the Spartan assertions concerning the erection of the Limnatis temple (Tacitus 4.43.1), apparently reflect the strong influence of the Spartan patron goddess in the area and designate Limnatis as her *alter ego* (Steinhauer 1988, 225; Luraghi 2002, 56).

Dedications of figurines and various objects bearing images of wild animals affirm the role of Limnatis as Mistress of Animals (*potnia therôn*), while bronze cymbals found in her sanctuaries allude to musical contests and choruses or even the goddess' orgiastic rituals.<sup>92</sup> Artemis was also

<sup>90</sup> Pausanias 3.14.2 (Aiginaia); 3.16.8 (Anaiitis); 3.25.3 (Astrateia); 3.24.8 (Daphnaia); 3.20.7 (Dereatis); 3.24.9 (Diktyнна); 3.14.6 (Hegemone); 3.14.2, 3.25.4 (Issoria); 3.10.7 (Karyatis); 3.18.4 (Knagia); 3.18.9 (Leukophryene); 3.16.11 (Lygodesma); 3.20.9 (Mysia); 3.16.7, 3.17.1 (Orthia); 3.16.8 (Taurike).

<sup>91</sup> On the sanctuaries of Limnatis in the Peloponnese: Patra: Pausanias 7.20.7–9; Herbillon 1929, 109–18 (especially 113–17); Brulotte 1994, 29; Solima 2011, 30–2. Tegea: Pausanias 8.53.11; Brulotte 1994, 101–2; Solima 2011, 116–17. Troizen: Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1133; Brulotte 1994, 132. Epidauros: Peek 1972, 34–5. Sicyon: Pausanias 2.7.6; Brulotte 1994, 144–5; Lo Monaco 2010, 314; Solima 2011, 153; Lolos 2011, 279–82, 379. Kombothekra (Limnaia): Müller 1908, 323–6; Sinn 1981, 98–9, figs. 3–7; Brulotte 1994, 149 n. 494; Solima 2011, 123–5. Boiai to Epidauros Limera: Pausanias 3.23.10; Wace and Hasluck 1907–8, 176; Pikoulas 1988, 281–3, map no. 1; Brulotte 1994, 170; Solima 2011, 166. Sparta: Strabo 8.4.9; Pausanias 3.23.10; Herbillon 1929, 108–12; Brulotte 1994, 185–7; Solima 2011, 182–3.

<sup>92</sup> On the association of cymbals with orgiastic rituals in honour of Artemis, see Calame 1997, 148–9. On orgiastic dances performed by women during the goddess' festivals, see Nilsson 1967, 161–2; Parker 1989, 151–2. A modern carnival celebrating the fertility and advent of spring and Easter is held every Ash Monday, *i.e.* the first day of Lent (the 40-day fasting period before the Greek Orthodox Easter), in the modern village of Nedousa (former Megali

worshipped as protectress of new mothers and children, a *kourotrophos* or a *paidotrophos*. Ornaments such as earrings, beads, pins<sup>93</sup> and bronze mirrors, underline the piety as well as the strong presence of women that characterised the sanctuary. Young girls or their devout parents dedicated personal belongings such as mirrors, ornaments and toys, a ritual associated with the end of adolescence (Fränkel 1876, 29; Bevan 1987, 17–18; Calame 1997, 114–15).<sup>94</sup> The possible presence of young girls in ceremonial clothes and jewellery (*ἑσθητή καὶ κόσμῳ*) (Pausanias 4.4.3) should apparently be related to the processions, choruses, even rites of passage performed in the sanctuary (Brellich 1969, 30–1; Zunino 1997, 50–1; Polignac 2000, 92–4),<sup>95</sup> just as at the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis at Laconian Boiai (Kolbe 1913, no. 952; Calame 1997, 148). On the other hand, the story of Spartan youths disguised as girls alludes to the cross-dressing of adolescents attested in rites of passage, an act typical of the transitional phase before entering adulthood (Brellich 1969, 30–1; Calame 1997, 145–7). Agonistic contests superintended by the goddess herself were also incorporated into the ritual tradition of the Limnatis sanctuaries (Lo Monaco 2010, 319; see also Kolbe 1913, no. 952).

Adult women facing gynaecological problems, or having undergone a hazardous labour, must also have visited the sanctuary, offering to the goddess pins, fibulae, garments, even shoes worn during their pregnancy and labour (Rose 1929, 403; Polignac 2000, 92–4).<sup>96</sup> The role of Limnatis as protectress of pregnant women and young mothers is reflected in the cult of Panayia Kapsocherovoloussa at Volimnos; the Christian chapel is dedicated to the offering of the Holy Garment of the Virgin (*timia esthēta*), a narrative which reflects the offering of garments to Limnatis, suggesting continuity of cult.<sup>97</sup>

#### EPILOGUE: BEHIND LIMNATIS' MIRROR

It is evident that Artemis Limnatis was worshipped at Volimnos continuously from the Geometric era down to the third century AD. Regardless of whether her sanctuary had been founded by the Spartiates or not,<sup>98</sup> it is likely to have become a meeting point for locals (Luraghi 2002, 56–7 n. 67; Deshours 2006, 161–2; Koursoumis 2004–9, 318).<sup>99</sup>

After 369 BC, the new Messenian polity was at pains to prove its hereditary rights to the land, contesting the Spartan refusal to acknowledge that the people of the new state were descendants

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Anastasova), in the vicinity of Volimnos (Meraklis 2001, 15–22, figs. 2–24). The ritual at Nedousa is likely to reflect orgiastic rituals performed in pagan sanctuaries in the area, *i.e.* the Limnatis sanctuary at Volimnos.

<sup>93</sup> The *parthenoi* in the Orthia sanctuary of Messene wore their hair in *Melonenfrisur*, without veils but with bands (Themelis 1994, fig. 25; Lo Monaco 2010, 318). In Lousoi, hair-locks of young girls serving in the sanctuary were dedicated to Artemis Hemerasia (Lo Monaco 2010, 321).

<sup>94</sup> Bonias (1998, 94 n. 386) points out that votive offerings related to children, such as dice, had possibly been used as toys before being offered to the deity.

<sup>95</sup> C. Calame (1997, 144–5) argues that the story of the rape of the maidens at Limnai alludes to the choruses and rites performed by young girls during the festival.

<sup>96</sup> A unique relief stele from Achinos in Phthiotis depicts young women, holding offerings and an infant, approaching the goddess, while in the background chitons, himatia and shoes can be seen hanging on a rope or wall as offerings either from grateful mothers or from the families of women who died in labour (Dakoronia and Gounaropoulou 1992, 217–27, pls. 57–60).

<sup>97</sup> I owe many thanks to my colleague Nikolaos Siomkos for our fruitful discussion of this.

<sup>98</sup> Steinhauer (1988, 225–6) argues that the sanctuary was founded by the Spartiates during the reign of Teleklos, as a result of their territory demarcation policy; this was achieved through the establishment of sanctuaries dedicated to Artemis.

<sup>99</sup> The *perioikoi* were presumably present at official Spartan festivals, although they must have had their own shrines, festivals, games and oracles (Parker 1989, 145). On the identity of the *perioikoi* in Messenia during the Laconian occupation and the construction of Messenian identity after the liberation, see Alcock 1999, *passim*; Luraghi 2002, *passim*.

of the ancient Messenians.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, it was a matter of utmost importance that ‘all aspects of the Messenian narrative and cultural record [should] undergo a metamorphosis’ (Alcock 1999, 337), in order to support their ethnic goals; a new ethnic history, containing narratives of Dorian genealogies, crucial events and incidents, the suicide of king Aristodemus and the exploits of the hero Aristomenes, and the ethnos’ rebellions, as well as the story of its liberation, had to be recorded.<sup>101</sup> Old and new cults were established in the city centre, reinforcing Messenian claims concerning their origin. In the late fourth century/early third century BC the Asklepieion, at the heart of the new centre of the city, was erected to accommodate cults of ‘Messenian’ gods and heroes, while the ethnos’ Dorian genealogy was depicted in the paintings of the temple of Messene (Pausanias 4.31.11–12). From the mid-third century BC writers began to document Messenian history: Myron of Priene wrote a historical account of the First Messenian War, while a few decades later the Cretan poet Rhianus composed an epos on the Second Messenian War in Andania, describing the borders of the Messenian land (Pausanias 4.6.1–6; Luraghi 2008, 286). Apparently, the new polity’s propaganda regarding its ancestral rights to the region incorporated narratives and monuments that were thought to reflect the past, especially when associated with areas over which dominance remained disputed. Pausanias’ (4.31.3) pro-Messenian argument that Limnai was related to the Messenian, yet philo-Laconian, mountainous *kome* of Kalamai indicates that the conflict between the two neighbouring ethne, even as late as the second century AD, was still unresolved.

Contemporary and consistent with the above developments was the establishment of the Artemis Limnatis cult on the western slope of Mount Ithome, within the city walls. In a small shrine facing the city, next to a spring, a small temple of Ionic or Corinthian order was erected sometime in the third century BC; the cult statue of the goddess, depicting her as a hunter, a *kynēgetis*, stood inside the cella (Le Bas 1844, 422–5; Reinach 1888, 134–8, pls. 1–4; Themelis 2004, 143–54; Müth 2007, 211–16, fig. 112). Inscriptions related to the sanctuary record the epithet of the goddess (Kolbe 1913, nos. 1442, 1458; Themelis 1988a, 45–6; 1988b, 72; Brulotte 1994, 255–7; Müth 2007, 213–15), who was worshipped ‘in the marshes’, overseeing the manumission of slaves as a guardian of social boundaries (Kolbe 1913, no. 1470). The foundation of a Limnatis temple on the slope of the Messenian ‘holy’ mountain should be perceived as an explicit reference to the Messenian claims over the Taygetos sanctuary, reflecting the fact that by that time the Dentheliatis region was or had been under Spartan rule (Roebuck 1941, 62; Magnetto 1997, 294 n. 15; Luraghi 2008, 18–19, 256–7 n. 27, 287).

Although the historical importance of the Limnatis sanctuary in terms of military and political rule over central Taygetos is well documented and persuasively recorded in literary sources, the material evidence from Volimnos remains scanty and incoherent. Various votive offerings, remains of architectural structures and epigraphic material documenting the presence of high-ranking priests and wealthy benefactors are just reflections of the history of a sacred area of great importance and reputation. As we still know nothing about the precise find spots of the objects, we may entertain all manner of conjecture about the exact site of the sanctuary, and the size of its temenos and its temple respectively. Nothing more definite can be maintained, short of excavation on the terrace and an extensive survey along the valley and the western slopes of the mountain.

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<sup>100</sup> Only a few years after the Messenian state was founded (365/4 BC), an inscribed stele from Olympia records a military alliance between Pisa, the Arcadian Confederacy, Akroreia, Messenia and Sicyon (Ringel, Ruggeri and Taeuber 2013, 46–9 no. 11; Ringel, Siewert and Taeuber 1999, 413–20, figs. 201–2), against the alliance of Elis, Achaia and Sparta. Apparently, regardless of their common military interests, the Messenians and the Pisatans viewed the alliance as a chance to gain pan-Hellenic recognition.

<sup>101</sup> On the continuity and discontinuity of Messenian history, see Alcock 1999, *passim*; Luraghi 2002, 47–8.



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#### Ανακαλύπτοντας εκ νέου τον Ταῦγετο: το ιερό της Αρτέμιδος Λιμνάτιδος

Η λατρεία της Αρτέμιδος Λιμνάτιδος, θεάς των ορίων και των μεταβάσεων, υπήρξε εξαιρετικά δημοφιλής ανάμεσα στους Πελοποννησίους. Το ιερό της στο όρος Ταῦγετος περιγράφεται από τον Στράβωνα και τον Πανσανία ως ο τόπος της δολοφονίας του σπαρτιάτη βασιλιά Τηλέκλου. Καθώς το ιερό συνδέθηκε με την έναρξη των Μεσσηνιακών Πολέμων και την κατοχή της Δενθελιάτιδος, αλλά και το άλυτο ζήτημα των συνοριακών διαφορών μεταξύ των δύο γειτόνων, καθιερώθηκε στην κοινή μνήμη ως σύμβολο της σπαρτιατικής κυριαρχίας και συνάμα ως τρόπαιο της μεσσηνιακής ανεξαρτησίας. Στο παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζονται και συζητούνται διεξοδικά παλαιά και νεότερα δεδομένα της αρχαιολογικής έρευνας από την περιοχή του μεσσηνιακού Ταῦγέτου. Ειδικότερα, επιχειρείται μία συστηματική καταγραφή και χρονολόγηση των μικροαντικειμένων που κατά καιρούς περισυλλέγησαν στον Βόλιμνο, καταδεικνύοντας μία αδιάλειπτη συνέχιση της λατρείας της θεάς από τους Γεωμετρικούς έως τους Ελληνιστικούς χρόνους. Στο ίδιο πλαίσιο και με προφανή στόχο την σύνδεση της επιγραφικής μαρτυρίας με την καταγεγραμμένη ακολουθία των ιστορικών γεγονότων, συζητούνται εκ νέου παλαιές και νέες επιγραφές από το ιερό και την ευρύτερη περιοχή. Επιπλέον, επιχειρείται μία πρώτη, συνοπτική παρουσίαση των διάσπαρτων αρχιτεκτονικών μελών και σχολιάζεται η πιθανή σχέση τους με μνημεία του ιερού. Με αφετηρία τον εντοπισμό ορισμένων εκ των οροσίων της κορυφογραμμής του Ταῦγέτου που καταγράφονται στην *Inscriptiones Graecae V,1, 1431* (Kolbe 1913, no. 1431), αναμοχλεύεται η συζήτηση για την θέση του ιερού, σε συνάρτηση με την αρχαία τοπογραφία του μεσσηνιακού Ταῦγέτου, ενώ στο τέλος εξετάζεται περαιτέρω η φύση της λατρείας της θεάς. Παρά τα λιγοστά και ετερόκλητα δεδομένα, η πρόθεση ανασύνθεσης της εικόνας του ιερού και της λατρείας της Αρτέμιδος Λιμνάτιδος είναι προφανής, με αιώτερο στόχο την διεύρυνση της συζήτησης για την επιρροή και τον ιστορικό ρόλο του ιερού του Βολίμνου σε μία περιοχή με ρευστά σύνορα και ρευστές εθνοτικές ταυτότητες.