

# MESSENIAN DIALECT AND DEDICATIONS OF THE “METHANIOI”

(PLATE 98)

TWO BRONZE SPEAR BUTTS, dedicated at different sanctuaries in the Peloponnesos but obviously parallel and seemingly related, have long puzzled epigraphists and historians.<sup>1</sup> One (Fig. 1)<sup>2</sup> was found at Olympia and bears the inscription:

ΜΕΘΑΝΙΟΙ ΑΠΟ ΛΑΚΕΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΟΝ



FIG. 1. Inscription on bronze spear butt dedicated at Olympia. Olympia Museum 10 (after *LSAG*, pl. 33:4).

The other (Fig. 2)<sup>3</sup> was found in the precinct of Apollo Korythos near Korone in Messenia and carries a fragmentary dedication, written retrograde on all four faces:

ΜΕΘΑΝ[ΙΟΙ] ΑΝΕΘΕ[Ν ΑΠ'] ΑΘΑΝΑΙ[ΟΝ ΤΑΣ] ΛΑΙΔΟ[Σ]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

- Buck, *GD* = C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects: Grammar, Selected Inscriptions, Glossary*, Chicago 1955  
*LCM* = *Liverpool Classical Monthly*  
*LSAG* = L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford 1961  
 Meiggs and Lewis = R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford 1969  
*SGDI* = H. Collitz and F. Bechtel, *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften*, 4 vols., Göttingen 1884–1915

<sup>2</sup> W. Greenwell, “Votive Armour and Arms,” *JHS* 2, 1882 (pp. 65–82), pp. 71–72, pl. xi; H. Roehl, *Inscriptiones graecae antiquissimae*, Berlin 1882, no. 46; W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, *Olympia*, V, *Die Inschriften von Olympia*, Berlin 1896, pp. 247–248; E. S. Roberts, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, I, *The Archaic Inscriptions and the Greek Alphabet*, Cambridge 1887, no. 286; *SGDI*, no. 3369; H. Roehl, *Imagines inscriptionum graecarum antiquissimarum*, 3rd ed., Berlin 1907, p. 110, no. 5; E. Schwyzler, *Dialectorum graecarum exempla epigraphica potiora*, Leipzig 1923, no. 106; E. Kunze and H. Schleif, *Olympische Forschungen* I, Berlin 1944, pp. 156–157, pl. 63:a; *LSAG*, Eastern Argolid, no. 4, pp. 177 and 182, pl. 33:4 (fascimile).

<sup>3</sup> P. Versakes, *Δελτ* 2, 1916, pp. 88–89, fig. 24: 1–4, 114–115; *LSAG*, Messenia, no. 3, pp. 203–204, 206, pl. 39:3 (facsimile).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffery’s restoration: *LSAG*, p. 204. She rejected Versakes’ restoration (*op. cit.*, p. 114: Μεθάν[ιοι] ἀνέθε[ν] Ἀθάναι [ἐκ] λαίδο[s]) on the grounds that a dedication to the goddess Athena in the sanctuary of Apollo



FIG. 2. Inscriptions on bronze spear butt from precinct of Apollo Korythos near Korone (after *LSAG*, pl. 39:3)

Despite their similarities, which extend to the letter forms, Jeffery hesitated to accept the idea that Methanians from the eastern Argolid could have dedicated spoils from a victory over the Athenians at a local sanctuary in the heart of Messenia.<sup>5</sup> As a result, she offered the hypothesis that the first dedication at Olympia “records an otherwise unknown defeat of the Lakedaimonians by the people of Methana” (p. 177) but that the second is unrelated to the Methanians of the Argolid and should instead be “connected with the perioikic town known to late writers as Methone or Mothone” (p. 177) in Messenia. In a long note on the problem (p. 204, no. 1), she admits that there is no evidence that the Messenian town of Methone was ever called Methana, but she still prefers to hypothesize that in an earlier period the inhabitants referred to themselves in Doric dialect as Methanians and that the Spartans, perhaps in connection with the Athenian defeat at Methone during the First Peloponnesian War (*ca.* 456/5),<sup>6</sup> allowed the people of Methone to put their own name on an offering made in a local sanctuary. What Jeffery did not know, for there was neither

Korythos makes no sense and that the restoration does not fit “the normal formula to be expected in such a dedication” (p. 204); cf., e.g., A. Furtwängler, *Olympia*, IV; *Die Bronzen*, Berlin 1890, nos. 1052 and 1058; Dittenberger and Purgold (footnote 2 above), nos. 254–256: σκῦλα ἀπὸ θουρίων Ταραντῖνοι ἀνέθηκαν, etc. (3 examples); T. L. Shear, “The Campaign of 1936,” in “The American Excavations in the Athenian Agora, Twelfth Report,” *Hesperia* 6, 1937 (pp. 333–381), “The Captured Spartan Shield,” pp. 346–348: Ἀθηναῖοι ἀπὸ Λακεδαιμ[ον]ίων ἐκ Πύλου; G. M. A. Richter, “Greek Bronzes Recently Acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *AJA* 43, 1939, pp. 194–201: ἱερὸς Τυνδαρίδαις ἀπ’ Ἐραέον; J. McK. Camp, “A Spear Butt from the Lesbians,” *Hesperia* 47, 1978, pp. 192–195: Ἀθηναῖοι ἀπὸ Λεσβιδῶν Διοσκόροι.

<sup>5</sup> *LSAG*, pp. 203–204; she rejects the association of the two dedications proposed by Versakes (footnote 3 above) and accepted by E. Meyer (*RE* XV, 1932, cols. 1377–1378, *s.v.* Methana).

<sup>6</sup> Thucydides, 1.108.5; Diodorus Siculus, 11.84; on the date, see A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* I, Oxford 1945, p. 320.

evidence nor reason to suspect it, was that the enigmatic "Methanioi" can best be explained as nothing more than a lexical illusion created by the peculiar word formation of the Doric dialect of the Southern Peloponnesos. Once this is recognized, the dedications not only are easily understood but acquire new historical and epigraphic importance.

In 1974 Werner Peek published a fragmentary Spartan inscription containing twenty-three lines of a treaty between the Lakedaimonians and a previously unknown Aitolian group, the Erxadieis (Pl. 98:c).<sup>7</sup> Peek dated the treaty to roughly 500–470 B.C. (450 at the latest) on the basis of letter forms, but subsequent commentators have relied more heavily on historical considerations and proposed dates ranging from the end of the 6th century to the beginning of the 4th.<sup>8</sup> Despite this uncertainty, the treaty itself is perfectly clear about one point: the Erxadieis are obligated to follow wherever the Lakedaimonians lead on land and sea (lines 4–7). Expressed in Lakonian dialect, the clause reads:<sup>9</sup>

... [ἡεπο]-  
 5 [μ]ένος ἡόπνι κα<ι> Λα[κεδαιμόνι]-  
 [ο]ι ἡαγίονται καὶ κα[τὰ γᾶν]  
 [κ]αὶ καθάλαθαν, ...

While this is an ordinary enough diplomatic formula,<sup>10</sup> the exact dialectical language of the expression in line 7 (καθάλαθαν) is quite extraordinary.<sup>11</sup>

The unexpected spelling of *θάλαθαν* in line 7 demonstrates two unusual features of the writing of Classical Lakonian dialect: first, that single letters could be used for double in spelling (i.e., *θάλαθα* = *θάλαθθα*); and secondly, that the distinction between the spirant *sigma* and dental aspirate *theta* was seriously blurred, with not only the sibilantization of *theta* to *sigma* (*θ*>*s*) but also the reverse interchange of *sigma* into *theta* (*θ*<*s*). Neither of these observations is entirely new. Buck,<sup>12</sup> for example, comments that "the writing of single for double consonants is common in early inscriptions, with varying degrees of frequency. Thus in the earliest Attic inscriptions it is the usual practice." Among illustrations of this "graphic simplification" he cites *θάλασα* = *θάλασσα*, and actual instances of this case (*σ* = *σσ*) occur,

<sup>7</sup> W. Peek, "Ein neuer spartanischer Staatsvertrag," *AbhLeip* 65, fasc. 3, 1974, pp. 3–15.

<sup>8</sup> P. Cartledge, "A New 5th-century Spartan Treaty," *LCM* 1, 1976, pp. 87–92 (summer 426 or 425/4); D. H. Kelly, "The New Spartan Treaty," *LCM* 3, 1978, pp. 133–141 (ca. 388); P. Cartledge, "The New 5th-century Spartan Treaty Again," *LCM* 3, 1978, pp. 189–190 (mid-420's); F. Gschnitzer, *Ein neuer spartanischer Staatsvertrag und die Verfassung des Peloponnesischen Bundes* (*Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 93), Meisenheim am Glan 1978: ca. 500–470 (following Peek, *op. cit.*; cf. Cartledge, rev. of T. A. Boring, *Literacy in Ancient Sparta*, *CR* 30, 1980 [pp. 294–296], pp. 295–296).

<sup>9</sup> Peek's text has been improved by others: see preceding note with *SEG* XXVI, 461, *SEG* XXVIII, 408, and W. Luppe, "Zum spartanischen Staatsvertrag mit den Αἰτωλοὶ Ἐρξαδιεῖς," *ZPE* 49, 1982, pp. 23–24; however, all subsequent commentators have accepted Peek's reading of these lines.

<sup>10</sup> See Gschnitzer (footnote 8 above), pp. 34–36.

<sup>11</sup> Cartledge (1976 [footnote 8 above], p. 91) calls it a "first" for Lakonian dialect; Peek ([footnote 7 above] p. 7) finds a parallel only in Cretan texts of the 2nd century B.C.; see discussion below, p. 665 with footnote 21.

<sup>12</sup> Buck, *GD* § 89.6, p. 76; cf. F. Bechtel, *Die griechischen Dialekte* II, Berlin 1923, p. 322, § 19 and 326, § 25 (Lakonian).

e.g., in *IG IX i*, 333, line 3: τὰ ξενικά ἐ θάλασας ἡάγεν / ἄσυλον πλὰν ἐ λιμένος τῷ κατὰ πόλιν (early 5th-century treaty between Lokrian Oianthea and Chaleion)<sup>13</sup> or *SIG<sup>3</sup>*, 56B, line 7: τ[ὸ]/[ν δὲ κατ'] θάλασαν τὰ ἡμίσα ἔχεν πάντων (mid-5th century treaty between Argos, Knossos, and Tylissos).<sup>14</sup> Now the treaty between the Spartans and the Erxadieis presents evidence of this shortening in a Classical Lakonian inscription, but with an unexpected twist.

The spelling of θάλαθα is unprecedented in Lakonian. We know from other evidence, beginning as early as the poetry of Alkman (*ca.* 600) but especially from the comic language of Aristophanes, that by the late 5th century Lakonian θ “had become a spirant which would strike the Athenian ear as σ, even if not yet fully identical with it.”<sup>15</sup> The *Lysistrata* provides, e.g., Ἀσαναῖοι = Ἀθηναῖοι (lines 170, 980, 1244, 1250, and 1300); σιώ = θεώ (lines 983, 1105, 1171, and 1174; cf. 1299, 1306, and *Pax* 214); σιάν = θεάν (line 1320; cf. line 1263: παρσένε σιά); ὀρσά = ὀρθή (line 995); σέλει = θέλει (line 1080); and ἐλσών = ἐλθών (line 1081; cf. lines 105: ἔλση and 118: ἔλσοιμ’). Even granting Aristophanic exaggeration, there is no reason to doubt that the interchange of the dental aspirate σ with spirant θ was a regular feature of Lakonian Doric, accurately recorded in such quotations as Thucydides, 5.77.4: τῷ σιώ σύματος for Attic τοῦ θεοῦ θύματος.<sup>16</sup>

But what was unknown before the discovery of the Spartan treaty with the Erxadieis was that Classical Lakonian also allowed θ to stand where we would normally expect σ: θάλαθα = θάλα(θ)θα = θάλασσα is new and has few epigraphical parallels elsewhere in Doric. Buck attributes the phenomenon generally to assimilation under the heading of “interchange of voiceless and voiced stops and aspirates”, and he cites the specific cases of θεθμός (examples from Lakeldaimon, Epidauros [and Thessaly]) and θέθμιον (Lokris) = τεθμός, τέθμιον (ordinary Doric) or θεσμός, θέσμιον (Attic).<sup>17</sup> In Doric inscriptions from Crete, the

<sup>13</sup> *SGDI*, no. 1479; Roehl, *Imagines* (footnote 2 above), p. 93, no. 2; Roberts (footnote 2 above), no. 232, pp. 354–357; Buck, *GD*, “Selected Inscriptions,” no. 58, pp. 253–255; *LSAG*, Ozolian Lokris, no. 4, p. 106, pl. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Buck, *GD*, “Selected Inscriptions,” no. 85, pp. 285–287; *LSAG*, Argos, no. 39:a, b, p. 165; Meiggs and Lewis, no. 42.

<sup>15</sup> Buck, *GD*, § 64, p. 59; cf. E. Boisacq, *Les dialectes doriens. Phonétique et morphologie*, Paris/Liège 1891, pp. 94–98; E. Bourguet, *Le dialecte laconien*, Paris 1927, pp. 6–8.

<sup>16</sup> See A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, IV, *Books V 25–VII*, Oxford 1970, pp. 131–134 and 136–138; they explain: “Inscriptions retain θ down to the fourth century, when *IG V.1.255* and 1317 have ἀνέσηκε, and 1317 adds σιώ: but Ar. *Lys.* already in 411 puts σ for θ whenever the speaker is a Spartan. Wilamowitz’s explanation [*Aristophanes Lysistrata* (Berlin 1927), p. 127] is surely correct: θ was written at Sparta, but its pronunciation as a spirant began there earlier than elsewhere, and Aristophanes represents this by σ for an Athenian audience” (p. 133); cf. A. Thumb and E. Kieckers, *Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte*, 2nd ed., Heidelberg 1932), § 95, pp. 90–92; Bourguet (footnote 15 above), § XV, pp. 75–78; D. L. Page, *Alkman: The Parthenion*, Oxford 1951, pp. 142–143.

<sup>17</sup> Buck, *GD*, § 65, pp. 59–60. The sources of Buck’s examples are: θεθμός: Lakeldaimon: *SGDI*, no. 4598, side a, line 7; side b, line 11; Roberts (footnote 2 above), no. 257, side A, line 8; side B, line 12 and p. 359; *LSAG*, Arkadia, no. 27, p. 213; Epidauros: *SGDI*, no. 3342, line 12; θέθμιον: Lokris: Roberts, no. 231, line 46 and p. 354; *LSAG*, Ozolian Lokris, no. 3, p. 106; Meiggs and Lewis, no. 20; θέθμιον: Elis: Roberts, no. 295 and p. 368; Schwyzler (footnote 2 above), no. 411; *LSAG*, Elis, no. 10, p. 218; τέθμος: Lokris: Meiggs and Lewis, no. 13:A1; *LSAG*, Ozolian Lokris, no. 2, p. 105; Delphi: Schwyzler, no. 324, line 1; τέθμιον: Boiotia: *SGDI*, no. 488, lines 165, 169, 172, 175; Orchomenos: Schwyzler, no. 523, line 64; for θεσμός, θέσμιον, Attica,

interchange occurs more broadly than elsewhere, including  $\theta < \sigma$ ,  $(\theta)\theta < \sigma\theta$ , and  $\theta\theta < \sigma\sigma$ : for example,  $\tau\alpha\theta$  *θυγατέρας* =  $\tau\alpha\varsigma$  *θυγατέρας*,<sup>18</sup>  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\theta\theta\alpha$  =  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\sigma\theta\alpha$ <sup>19</sup> or  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\alpha\tau\tau\acute{\alpha}\theta\theta\alpha\iota$  (and  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\alpha\tau\eta\theta\alpha\iota$ ) =  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\delta\alpha\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ,<sup>20</sup> and  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\theta\theta\alpha$  =  $\theta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha$ .<sup>21</sup> Such interchanges are significant because they provide a context for understanding what is apparently a characteristic blurring of the distinction between  $\theta$  and  $\sigma$  among some Doric speakers. For these people, when they undertook to inscribe their spoken language, the difference recognized elsewhere between  $\theta$  and  $\sigma$ , even in the double-consonantal value ( $-\theta\theta$  or  $-\sigma\sigma$ ), could be ignored. Hence  $\theta$  could be written for  $\sigma$  or  $\sigma\sigma$ , and this has important epigraphical consequences.

We already know that the Messenians (*Μεσσηνιοί* in Attic) were sometimes identified in an epigraphical context by the Doric dialectical spelling *Μεσάνιοι*.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, given that Lakonian now also demonstrates the interchange of  $\theta < \sigma$ , it becomes possible to interpret the puzzling dedications of the *Μεθάνιοι* as, in fact, victory offerings of the Messenians using a variant spelling of their name. The objection that the 5th-century Messenians may not have spoken (or written) the same peculiar Lakonian Doric as the Lakedaimonians is answered by Thucydides, who specifically emphasizes that the Messenians did speak the same dialect.<sup>23</sup> Surely Jeffery was right, and her reluctance to accept the Methanians of the eastern Argolid as dedicators of a spear butt in the Messenian sanctuary of Apollo Korythos can now be properly explained without resorting to any hypothetical (and unsubstantiated)

see E. Ruschenbusch, *ΣΟΝΩΝΟΣ ΝΟΜΟΙ*, Wiesbaden 1966, nos. 5a, 22, 37a, 70, 93a; Meiggs and Lewis, no. 86, line 20 (restored); cf. E. S. Roberts and E. A. Gardner, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, II, *The Inscriptions of Attica*, Cambridge 1905, no. 94, line 27 (A.D. 305). I can find no evidence to support Buck's addition of Thessaly as a region yielding evidence for *θεθμός* (pp. 60, 131); it is not mentioned in the earlier version of *GD*, *Introduction to the Study of the Greek Dialects*, Boston 1928, §§ 65 and 164.4. Cf. also West Greek *δαιθμός* = Attic *δασμός* (Schwyzer, no. 313, lines 23, 75).

<sup>18</sup> *ICr* IV, no. 72 (the Gortyn Law Code), col. iv, lines 47–48; discussed in Buck, *GD*, § 97.5, p. 83 and R. F. Willetts, *The Law Code of Gortyn*, Berlin 1967, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *ICr* IV, no. 72, col. v, line 8 and col. vi, line 24; cf. col. iv, line 52: *πρόθθ*?, col. vii, line 13: *πρόθ*?; discussed in Buck, *GD*, § 133.1, pp. 104–105 and Willetts, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> *ICr* IV, no. 72, col. iv, lines 29–30 and col. viii, line 7; cf. *ἀγέθαι*, *ἀλλνέθαι*, *ἀνπαινέθαι* (or *ἀμπαινέθαι*), *δεκάθαι*, *δολοσάθαι*, *ἐπιδεκέθαι*, *καταθιθέθαι*, *πραδδέθαι*, *τραπέθαι*; cf. *ICr* IV, no. 41: *δέκσαθαι*, *ἐπιδίεθαι* (and *ἐπιδίεθθαι*), etc. See the discussion in Buck, *GD*, § 89.6, pp. 76–77; he states that in *ICr* IV, no. 72 *-σθαι* is changed to *-θαι* or *-θθαι* at a proportion of roughly 3:1; cf. Boisacq (footnote 15 above), p. 95; Bechtel (footnote 12 above), no. 708; Thumb and Kieckers (footnote 16 above), pp. 157–158; Willetts (footnote 18 above), p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Found in texts of Hellenistic Gortyn; see *ICr* IV, no. 184, line 19; no. 186, lines B9, 14, 7; discussed in Boisacq (footnote 15 above), p. 95, Thumb and Kieckers (footnote 16 above), p. 159, and Buck, *GD*, § 81, b, p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., *LSAG*, Messenia, no. 14 (5th century), p. 205, *Σκό[τ?]εας Μεσάνιος*; cf. *ICr* V, no. 2, line 419 (3rd century): both *Μεσάνιοι* and *Μεσσάνιοι*; shortening discussed in Buck, *GD*, § 89.6, pp. 76–77. It should be noted that the Messenians of Sicily cannot be meant here, because they spelled their name *Μεσσένιοι*: see E. Kunze, *VIII. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia. Herbst 1958 bis Sommer 1962*, Berlin 1967, pp. 103–106.

<sup>23</sup> Thucydides (4.3.3) states that the Messenians were *δμόφωνοι τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις*; cf. 3.112.4 and Pausanias, 4.27.11: "the Messenians . . . have changed none of their customs and not even unlearned their Doric dialect, but even to this day they preserve it in its purity better than anywhere else in the Peloponnese" (trans. P. Levi). Bechtel ([footnote 12 above] pp. 430–433) and Thumb and Kieckers ([footnote 16 above] pp. 103–104) place too much emphasis on differences between Lakonian and Messenian dialects, given the limitations of the evidence and Thucydides' positive statement.

connection with the local Methonians or Mothonians.<sup>24</sup> The real dedicators can now be seen to have been the indigenous inhabitants of the region, the Messenians, who happened to inscribe their name with an unexpected but, as we now know, not unparalleled spelling: ΜΕΘΑΝΙΟΙ = ΜΕΣΑΝΙΟΙ = ΜΕΣΣΗΝΙΟΙ.

Having removed the Messenians' disguise, can we identify the specific victories commemorated in their dedications at Olympia and Messenia? Certainly the very similar letter forms (and peculiar spelling) of the two dedications (Figs. 1 and 2), together with their modest form and scale (simple inscribed spear butts presumably taken from an enemy in battle), provide valuable clues which associate the dedications with one another in time and circumstance, even though one commemorates victory over the Lakedaimonians and the other over the Athenians. Epigraphists have argued that the letter forms of the dedications fit best into the first half of the 5th century<sup>25</sup> and in fact the general appearance of the writing does appear to be close to such Lakonian inscriptions as the Spartan victory monument at Olympia (Pl. 98:a),<sup>26</sup> another spear butt dedication believed to come from the Peloponnesos (Pl. 98:b),<sup>27</sup> and the new treaty between the Spartans and the Erxadieis (Pl. 98:c).<sup>28</sup> The problem is that looks, as well as spelling, can deceive. As Meiggs and Lewis admit in their commentary on the Spartan dedication at Olympia: "There is hardly enough comparative material in the first half of the fifth century to make a firm date for the lettering possible" (p. 47). Likewise, in her commentary on the Archaic script, Jeffrey concludes: "Lakonian inscriptions are thus particularly difficult to date by their letter-forms alone, presenting as they do a deceptive mixture of forms normally considered as advanced (as the *alpha* and *mu*) with others which, normally hall-marks of the Archaic period (as long-tailed *epsilon* and *upsilon*, or closed *beta*), are still in use in the fifth century for formal inscriptions" (*LSAG*, p. 187). The wide range of proposed dates for the treaty of the Spartans and the Erxadieis reflects specifically this unfortunate situation,<sup>29</sup> and obviously the spear-butt dedications should not (and indeed cannot) be dated according to letter forms alone. The content of the inscriptions is a more trustworthy indication of their date.

During the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) the Messenians were staunch allies of the Athenians. In 425 they occupied Pylos on the coast of Messenia together with the Athenians and harassed the Spartans from there for much of the remainder of the war. In retaliation, the Spartans expelled the Messenians from Naupaktos soon after the defeat of Athens.<sup>30</sup> It

<sup>24</sup> *LSAG*, p. 177.

<sup>25</sup> See footnotes 2 and 3 above.

<sup>26</sup> *SEG* XI, 1203a; L. H. Jeffery, "Comments on Some Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *JHS* 69, 1949 (pp. 25–38), pp. 26–30; *LSAG*, Lakonia, no. 49, pp. 195–196, pl. 37:49 (facsimile); Meiggs and Lewis, no. 22.

<sup>27</sup> Greenwell ([footnote 2 above] p. 77) draws attention to the similar letter forms used in this dedication and the spear butt offered by the Methanioi at Olympia. He publishes facsimiles side by side (pl. xi).

<sup>28</sup> See footnotes 7 and 8 above.

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of the treaty with the Erxadieis, see footnote 8 above; cf. Meiggs and Lewis, 2nd ed., Oxford 1988, p. 312. Alan Johnston has kindly informed me that his forthcoming second edition of *LSAG* will argue for a general downdating of Lakonian inscriptions.

<sup>30</sup> Occupation of Pylos: Thucydides 4.3–6, 8–12, 23, 26, and 41; 5.35, 56, and 115; 6.105, 18, and 26; expulsion from Naupaktos: Diodorus Siculus, 14.34.2–3.

follows that a dedication commemorating victory over the Athenians is incompatible with a date during the Peloponnesian War, even though the Messenians may well have had access to the sanctuary of Apollo Korythos during the years of their occupation of Pylos.

In fact, friendship and military cooperation between the Messenians and Athenians dates to a specific occasion much earlier in the 5th century. It must be emphasized, however, that unlike Messenian hostility to Sparta, friendship with Athens was not a traditional condition but the result of an abrupt change in Athenian policy which occurred during the Messenian revolt of the 450's.<sup>31</sup> Prior to this occasion the situation was very different. When the Messenians began their uprising against Spartan rule and seized Mt. Ithome, the Athenians were still formally allied with the Lakedaimonians; and through the influence of Kimon, they duly sent a force, at Sparta's request, to campaign against the Messenians.<sup>32</sup> The presence of this Athenian contingent failed, despite the reputation of the Athenians for success in siege warfare, to dislodge the Messenians from Mt. Ithome, and suspicion arose that the Athenians might secretly collaborate with the Messenians. An embarrassing (and for Kimon politically disastrous) dismissal of the Athenian force followed, and that, in turn, led to Kimon's ostracism and the end of Athenian cooperation with Sparta.<sup>33</sup>

The Messenians meanwhile continued to hold Mt. Ithome against all Spartan efforts until they were finally compelled to negotiate a surrender on terms requiring that they withdraw from the Peloponnesos. It was at this moment that the Athenians repaid Sparta's insult by offering the rebellious Messenians refuge at Naupaktos.<sup>34</sup> The Messenians accepted the offer, and former enemies became firm allies. During nearly ten years of revolt and occupation of Mt. Ithome, Messenian rebels had successfully defended themselves against the joint military forces of Sparta and Athens, an impressive achievement and a rare combination. Certainly dedications must have been made during these years, both at local shrines and panhellenic sanctuaries. But with the outcome undecided and rebel activity increasingly restricted to the defense of the stronghold of Mt. Ithome, simple and modest offerings would obviously have been in keeping with the reality of the situation.

It would be hard to imagine a better historical context for explaining the puzzling dedications at Olympia and Messenia. The Messenian revolt and prolonged occupation of Mt. Ithome beginning in the 460's contain precisely the combination of circumstances reflected in these modest and seemingly contemporary dedications commemorating victories

<sup>31</sup> Thucydides, 1.101.2; for complete list of sources, see G. F. Hill, *Sources for Greek History between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1951, pp. 358–359; for further historical discussion, see P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Lakonia. A Regional History 1300–362 BC*, London/Boston/Henley 1979, pp. 220–223; see also M. Buonocore, "Ricerche sulla terza guerra messenica," *Miscellanea greca e romana. Studi pubblicati dall' Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica* 8, Rome 1982, pp. 57–123 and M. Steinbrecher, *Der Delisch-Attische Seebund und die athenisch-spartanischen Beziehungen in der Kimonischen Ära (ca. 478/7–462/1)* (Palingenesia 21), Stuttgart 1985.

<sup>32</sup> Plutarch, *Cim.* 16.8; Thucydides, 1.102.1; Diodorus Siculus, 11.64.2.

<sup>33</sup> Thucydides, 1.102.4; Plutarch, *Cim.* 17.2. See A. Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 B.C.*, Portland, Oregon 1988, pp. 109–110.

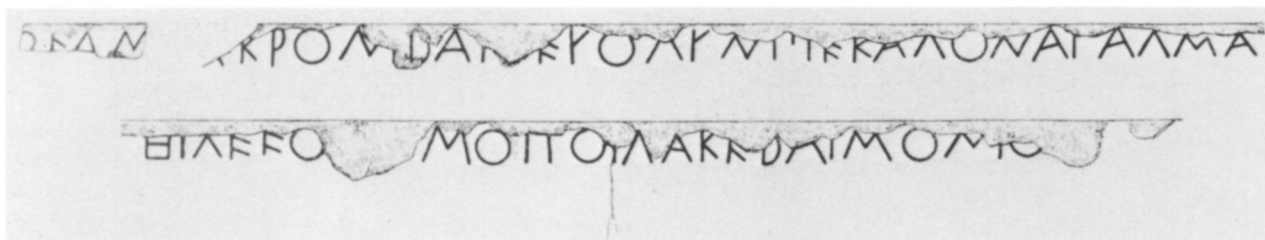
<sup>34</sup> Thucydides, 1.103; see G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, London 1972, pp. 179–181.

over Sparta and Athens. Furthermore, as we have seen, there is nothing in either the letter forms or the language which prevents us from making this connection. On the contrary, if the reconstruction proposed here is correct, we not only gain new information about the peculiarities of Lakonian-Messenian dialect but also establish two fixed points for assessing Messenian epigraphical evidence; and we can finally eliminate once and for all the phantom Methanians of the eastern Argolid from the very select group of Greek states which could claim victories over both the Lakedaimonians and the Athenians.

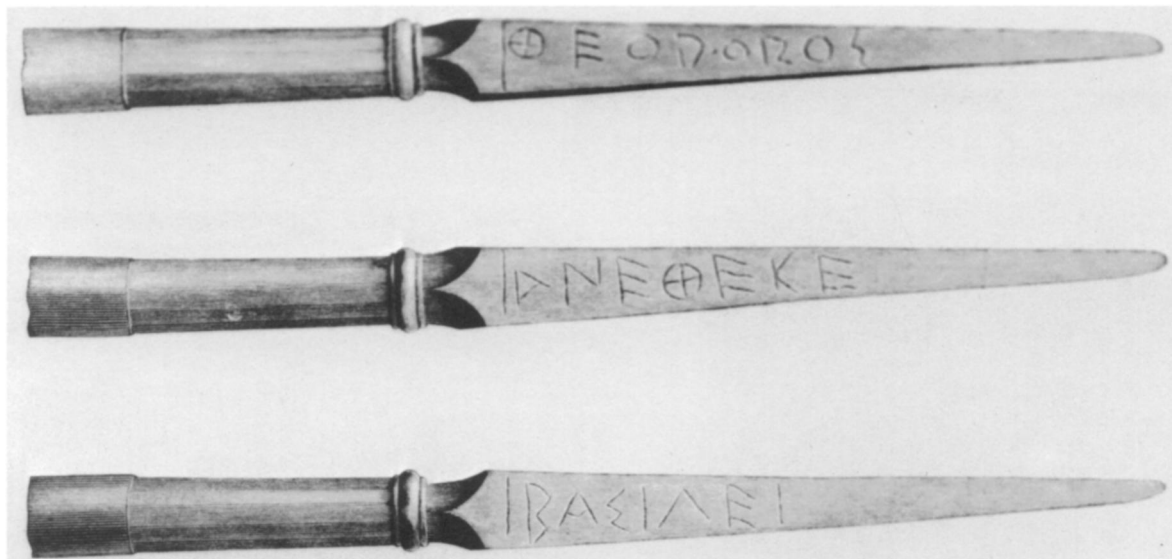
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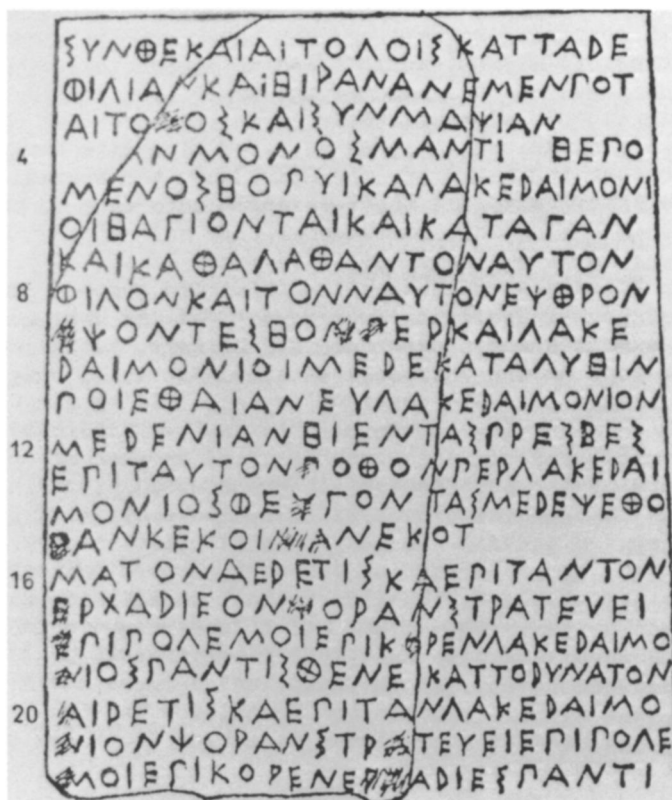




a. Dedicatory inscription. Olympia Museum 43 + 510 (after *LSAG*, pl. 37:49)



b. Bronze spear butt (after *JHS* 2, 1882, pl. xi)



c. Restored text of Spartan treaty with the Aitolians. Sparta Museum, inv. no. 6265 (after W. Peek, *AbhLeip* 65, fasc. 3, 1974, p. 4)