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III. —Thalamae: IV.—The *ρμαί* on the N.E. Frontier

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The Annual of the British School at Athens / Volume 11 / November 1905, pp 137 - 138

DOI: 10.1017/S0068245400002513, Published online: 18 October 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0068245400002513

How to cite this article:

K. Romaïos (1905). III. —Thalamae: IV.—The *ρμαί* on the N.E. Frontier. The Annual of the British School at Athens, 11, pp 137-138 doi:10.1017/S0068245400002513

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LACONIA.

IV.—THE 'Ερμαῖ ON THE N.E. FRONTIER.

'Ανατείνει δὲ ὑπὲρ τὰς κόμας ὄρος Πάρνων, καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων ἐπ' αὐτοῦ πρὸς Ἀργείους ὄροι καὶ Τεγεάτας εἰσὶν ἐστήκασι δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς ὄροις Ἑρμαῖ λίθου, καὶ τοῦ χωρίου τὸ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν.—PAUS. II. 38. 7.

An excavation of the three mounds of stones and earth at the spot called *ἵστοις Φονεμένους* between Hagios Petros and Arachova, undertaken by me last July, showed that these mounds were formed in ancient times, and made it highly probable, if not certain, that they are the *Ἑρμαῖ* mentioned by Pausanias as marking the boundaries between Laconian territory and that of Argos and Tegea. The most important find is a slab of common schist, mutilated on the left hand side, and bearing in large characters the inscription ΝΕΘΛΟΞ (Fig. 1). Although I have not been able to find a name ending with precisely these letters, it is certainly a man's name in the nominative, and the slab must be explained as a tombstone. There were also found a small piece of an archaic *gorgoneion* of terracotta, a small vase without its neck resembling the spherical Corinthian *aryballoi*, and some insignificant fragments of small vases, covered with glaze-paint, and of roof-tiles. The hope that tombs dating, as the inscription suggested, from the pre-Persian period might be discovered, was not fulfilled. Inside the mounds nothing was found that could throw light on the original construction of these tombs, except in one of them a poorly built wall of common unworked stones, about 6 m. long. No bones were noticed and only a small quantity of charcoal.

Nevertheless it seems highly probable that we have to do with tombs resembling that found at Pikramygdalia near Chrysapha, from which came the famous stele and the stone inscribed 'Ερμᾶνος. A heap of unworked stones, large and small, with an admixture of earth and fragments of vases and tiles—such was the tomb of Pikramygdalia. The inscription from 'στοὺς Φονεμένους can hardly be explained on any other supposition. If it be granted that the three mounds were tombs, it is easy to suppose that on them there stood herm-pillars, probably in the form of unworked slabs set upright on the cairns, so that from these herm-pillars the place got its name of 'Ερμαῖ when the existence of the tombs was forgotten.

A full discussion of the question must be postponed until after next summer, both because certain details of the discovery require further elucidation on the spot, and—what is more important—because there is a fourth mound hitherto unnoticed, lying about 300 metres west of the others and exactly resembling them, which still awaits excavation. When I return to the subject I shall think myself fortunate if I may avail myself once more of the hospitality of the *British School Annual*.

K. ROMAÏOS.

FIG. 1.—INSCRIBED SLAB FROM 'στοὺς Φονεμένους.