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South-Western Laconia–Sites

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SOUTH-WESTERN LACONIA.

SITES.

I PROPOSE in this paper to give some account of the topography and existing remains of the district lying between the range of Taygetus and the eastern coast of the Messenian Gulf. The ground covered extends from Pyrgos on the south, some eight kilometres south of Areopolis, to Kalamata.

GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The sea border of the eastern shore of the Messenian Gulf consists of a narrow shelf of land lying along the foot of Taygetus, which here approaches everywhere nearer to the sea than on the side of the Laconian Gulf. It is everywhere mountainous, and in many places the outlying spurs of Taygetus run abruptly into the sea. Harbours are not infrequent, those of Limeni and Kardamyle being the safest and most commodious. The rivers are mere mountain torrents; water is scarce; the land is everywhere infertile, except here and there, where either a small stretch of plain borders the shore, as at Levctro, or a high plateau overlooks the sea, as at Koutiphari and Platsa; the rich valley of Kampos in the north is the only instance of an inland plain.

LITERARY EVIDENCE.

Under such geographical circumstances it can hardly be expected that the district can ever have possessed much historical significance. We possess, however, a certain amount of literary evidence, which shews that

though far from the centre of the Greek world, it possessed a number of flourishing communities of which evidence still exists in the shape of inscriptions and remains of ancient structures.

Homer mentions several early sites in this district, 'Kardamyle, Enope and grassy Ira' (*Il.* ix. 150) and Oetylus in the 'Catalogue of the Ships' (*Il.* ii. 585). The principal remains of early civilisation are the 'beehive' tomb near Kampos and the splendid remains of polygonal masonry at Jannitsa.

The frontier of Laconia and Messenia was a matter of dispute in classical times and was subject to variation.¹ The disputed territory was that which lies between the 'Glen of the Choerus,' now the Sandava, on the north, and the river Pamisus, now the Milia, on the south. In the fourth century, it seems to have belonged to Laconia, since Philip of Macedon, after Chaeronea, bestowed it upon the Messenians as a punishment to his foes, the Lacedaemonians; Augustus restored it to Laconia to punish the Messenians for having sided with Marcus Antonius, and the glen of the Choerus remained henceforward the line of division. Since this is so, and since Pausanias included all the district south of this point in his *Laconica*, it is convenient to take the glen of the Choerus as the north boundary of Ancient Laconia.

TOPOGRAPHY.

The district is, as I have said, a narrow shelf of land along the sea coast and a single main route forms the connection between north and south; the best method of description is therefore to treat of the ancient sites and existing remains in the order in which I myself visited them.

Travelling from Gytheion I approached the Messenian Gulf by the low pass leading through Taygetus from Skutari to Areopolis. The furthest point reached to the south was the village of Charouda, where I hoped to copy the inscriptions in the church of Παναγία Ἐστὴ Καβαθάκια, partly transcribed by Le Bas (Le Bas-Foucart, 2786: Collitz-Bechtel, 4505): unfortunately they have been removed and used for building the new tower of the Church of Hagios Taxiarchos. Neither here nor at Pyrgos, whence I publish two inscriptions (Nos. 1 and 2), are any traces of ancient settlements to be found.

¹ See Frazer's note on Paus. iv. 1. 1.

PYRRHICHOS.

These inscriptions, were probably brought from Kavalos, which lies some five kilometres inland from Areopolis about midway between the Messenian and Laconian Gulfs, and has been identified with the ancient Pyrrhichos.¹ This no doubt is a correct identification, and I add a few facts which further confirm it. Numerous ancient remains are to be found here, including two statues, one a torso of a Roman female portrait statue, and a small gliding figure, apparently a Niké, and numerous columns and capitals. North of the village, on a terrace on the hill-side, have been recently found a number of columns of two sizes, which probably mark a temple site. Again, the plain east of the village is still known by the name of Pyrkos. Inscriptions have been found in the neighbourhood, including one published below (No. 3). The well of Silenus mentioned by Pausanias is probably one of the two large wells in the village; he says of this well that 'the inhabitants would be in want of water if it failed'; the inhabitants of the village of Kavalos say that they have to depend entirely on their two wells in the summer. On a hill, about half an hour to the south-east, is a cave with the entrance partly built up, now called *σπὸ παλάτι*, and lower down is an artificial cave fifteen metres deep. On the top of the hill is the medieval fortress of Kastraki.

OETYLUS.

North of Areopolis lies the bay of Limeni, in the north-east corner of which is the village of Oetylus, or Vitylo, on a steep hill overlooking the sea. South of this hill and between Oetylus and the hill of Kelepha, which is surmounted by a Venetian castle,² is a deep ravine through which, in winter time, a broad stream flows to the sea. Not far to the left of the mouth are the remains, apparently, of a Hellenic building *in antis* with numerous large blocks still *in situ* and others built into walls near. The ancient town was probably one of the oldest and most important in the district.³ The modern village is approached by a steep winding path; half-way up lies the ruined Church of Hagios Demetrios

¹ Paus. iii. 25. 1. First identified by Boblaye (*Recherches*, p. 88).

² See Coronelli, *Descr. de la Morée* (Paris, 1687), p. 37, with a plan of the fortress.

³ Paus. iii. 25. 10. Strabo viii. 360. Ptol. iii. 14. 4. 3. Tozer, *J.H.S.* 1882. p. 355.

in which inscriptions have been found (Nos. 4 and 10). Immediately below it is the corner of a wall of Hellenic masonry, 10 courses high, of blocks measuring about 1 m. by 1.5 m. The Church of Hagios Soter contains numerous ancient blocks and some columns. Numerous inscriptions are built into the Churches of the *Κόλμησις τοῦ Θεοτόκου* and Hagios Taxiarchos (see below, Nos. 5, 6, 9, 11, 12). Below the village to the south, the half-ruined Church of Niarmitsa seems to consist largely of Hellenic masonry of large *poros*-blocks still *in situ*. There are traces of an ancient cart road leading north from the village, and higher up numerous rock-cuttings indicating an ancient quarry.

THALAMAE AND THE ORACLE OF INO-PASIPHAÆ.

The next ancient site to the north of Oetylus was Thalamae, the site of which has never been ascertained, though the literary evidence about it is considerable.¹ It was about 80 stades from Oetylus and 20 stades from Pephnos (Paus. iii. 26, 1-2); it was not immediately on the sea coast (Ptol. iii. 16, 22); in the near neighbourhood was a famous sanctuary of Ino-Pasiphae (Paus. *loc. cit.*; Plutarch, *Agis* 9; *Cleomenes*, 7; Cic. *de Div.* i. 43, 96), where worshippers slept and received oracles in dreams. This oracle was, according to Pausanias, on the road from Oetylus; according to Cicero, 'in the fields near the town':² it was therefore near the town to the south. A spring of fresh water flowed from the sanctuary.

At the village of Koutiphari are two inscriptions, mentioning the people of Thalamae (Nos. 19, 20), the latter on a block of such a size that it could hardly have been brought from another site. To the east of the village, on higher ground at a place called Palaiochora, numerous ancient remains, columns and walls, have come to light, including an inscribed *pitheos* (No. 16); and other inscriptions are built into churches and houses (Nos. 14, 15, 17, 18, 20). The distance from Oetylus, which is 19 kilometres, agrees with the 80 stades given by Pausanias, and the site is not immediately on the sea coast, but some 3 kilometres

¹ Leake placed it at Platsa (*Pelop.* p. 178 f.); Boblaye (*Recherches*, p. 92 f.); Bursian (*Geog.* ii. p. 153) and Curtius (*Pelop.* ii. p. 284) in the valley of the Milia.

² The whole passage runs, 'atque etiam qui praeerant Lacedaemoniis, non contenti invigilantibus curis in Pasiphae fano, quod est in agro propter urbem, somniandi causa incubabant' (Cic. *loc. cit.*).

inland. I have therefore no hesitation in fixing Thalamae at the modern Koutiphari.

Near to Palaiochora and south of the main part of Koutiphari is a large open space in which are two copious springs arched over with vaulting. With the exception of the village of Langada, where are no traces of antiquities or inscriptions, there is no natural spring on the whole road from Oetylus, and all the villages have to depend on cisterns for their water supply. It is the larger and more southerly of these springs which, I think, marks the site of the Oracle of Ino-Pasiphae; and in further confirmation of this view, I found built into the window-sill of the neighbouring schoolhouse an inscription recording a dedication to Pasiphae (No. 15).

THE RIVER PAMISOS, PEPHNOS AND LEUCTRA.

Leaving Koutiphari, the road passes Platsa and descends into the valley of the Milia, the ancient Pamisos (Strabo, viii. 362). Off the mouth of it lies the rocky island of Pephnos,¹ upon which were once statues of the Dioscuri, which agrees exactly with Pausanias' description, 'not much larger than a great rock.' The town of the same name on the mainland was probably the port of Thalamae: the distance of 4 kilometres from Koutiphari to the mouth of the Milia agrees exactly with the 20 stades between Thalamae and Pephnos given by Pausanias; Levctro, the ancient Leuctra (Paus. iii. 26, 4), lies 4 kilometres to the north. The ancient Acropolis hill rises out of a plain and is surmounted by the ruins of a Venetian castle where in antiquity stood a shrine of Athena. Below this to the south are some remains of ancient masonry, including a long stretch of Roman wall; to the north are said to be the remains of a subterranean channel for water. At Levctro, I found two inscriptions (Nos. 21, 22), the latter of which confirms Pausanias' statement as to the worship of Asclepius at Leuctra. I was informed that on the banks of a small stream north of Levctro the natives dig up charcoal; this must, I think, mark the position of the Grove of Eros mentioned by Pausanias, which was burnt down in his time.

¹ Paus. iii. 26. 2. First identified by Mr. Morritt of Rokeby (the friend of Sir Walter Scott), see Walpole's *Memoirs relating to Turkey*, i. p. 51.

KARDAMYLE.

After Leuctra, the road again becomes exceedingly hilly and rugged and no villages occur until, after seven kilometres, Kardamyle is reached. A modern town has recently grown up round the excellent little harbour; the older village is now almost deserted and occupies the site of the ancient city on a hill overlooking the sea, rather less than two kilometres distant, eight stades according to Pausanias (iii. 26, 5): it agrees well with the words of Strabo (viii. 360), who says that it was situated 'on a steep rock.' The only remains of antiquity now to be seen there are numerous rock cuttings and an Ionic capital outside the Church of Hagia Sophia.

In the lower town south of the mouth of a stream, foundations are said to exist under the soil, and terracottas have been found; perhaps they mark the site of 'the sacred enclosure of the daughters of Nereus, near the shore' (Paus. *loc. cit.*). Near this stream I found the tomb inscription (No. 23). Built into a house in the main street is a white marble herm, 1.3 m. in height, representing a bearded figure, with locks falling over the shoulders: it is in excellent preservation and seems to belong to the fourth century B.C. Between the upper and lower towns a rock-cut tomb of two chambers has recently been discovered: the natives call it 'the tomb of the Dioscuri.'

GERENIA AND ALAGONIA.

North of Kardamyle, a large spur of Taygetus, now called Kephali, runs down into the sea at the promontory of Kourtissa, reaching a height of 550 metres. It is undoubtedly the mountain of Kalathion (Paus. iii. 26, 11), for it is the only at all striking eminence in this neighbourhood. It lay in the territory of Gerenia as to the position of which there has been some controversy. The only indication that Pausanias gives is that Alagonia lay thirty stades inland from Gerenia. This clearly implies that the latter was on the sea coast. Both must lie within a district bounded by Taygetus, the mountain Kalathion, the sea and the 'Glen of the Chorus'—the modern Sandava. Leake placed Gerenia at Kitries, and I think rightly, since Pausanias implies that it lay on the sea coast and this is the only harbour between Cape Kourtissa and the Sandava. Near the shore, to the north of Kitries, some columns and a plain tessellated pavement have been

found ; but it is probable that here, as in so many places in Greece, the sea has encroached on the ancient site.

At Gerenia was a famous shrine of Machaon, and it is interesting to find it mentioned as one of the places where a copy of the inscription published below (No. 21), found at Leuctra, was to be set up.

If Gerenia is placed at Kitries it is easy to assign a site to Alagonia, which lay '30 stades inland from Gerenia' (Paus. *loc. cit.*). At Kampos, besides the well-known 'beehive' tomb, are considerable remains of antiquity ; inscriptions and very numerous coins have been found here, there are columns and ancient blocks built into the houses, and ancient foundations have been dug up in the fields west of the village. Moreover, the distance of six and a quarter kilometres from Kitries to Kampos agrees well with the thirty stades from Gerenia to Alagonia given by Pausanias.

Alagonia should therefore, I think, be placed at Kampos. The French surveyors and Prof. Curtius place Gerenia at Zarnata, just to the west of Kampos, and Alagonia near the head of the valley of the Choerus (Sandava).¹ As regards the first, there are no ancient remains at Zarnata, which is a Venetian fortress, and Pausanias implies that Gerenia was on the sea coast : as regards the second, the upper course of the Choerus flows through a narrow gorge which would hardly leave room for a town and contains no modern village. I could hear of no ancient remains in this district, and if Alagonia had lain on the Choerus, Pausanias would probably have mentioned this river in connection with it, rather than when speaking of the Messenian town of Abia (iv. 30. 1).

THE MESSENIAN FRONTIER. ABIA. REMAINS AT JANNITSA.

The 'Glen of the Choerus,' the boundary of Laconia and Messenia, is the bed of the modern Sandava which enters the sea some two kilometres north of Kitries. It is the only at all considerable stream between Cape Kourtissa and Kalamata, and as in its upper course it runs through a deep ravine, it forms a natural territorial boundary.

The distance of nearly four kilometres from the Sandava to Palaiochora, which has been identified with certainty as the ancient Abia (Paus. iv. 30. 1), agrees well with the distance given by Pausanias from the

¹ Boblaye, *Recherches*, p. 93 ff. ; Curtius, *Pelop.* ii. p. 284.

Glen of the Choerus' to Abia. The remains of antiquity at Palaiochora are inconsiderable. A small valley runs down to the sea in which are some traces of Roman masonry, and there are some late tombs near a wall running south at right angles to it. The Church of the Panagia, in which Leake and others saw a mosaic and an inscription on the Hagia Trapeza, has been restored and both have disappeared. I copied an inscription (No. 24) built into a neighbouring house.

Four kilometres north of Palaiochora are the salt springs mentioned by Pausanias (iv. 30. 2) at the place now called Halmyro.

There appears to have been no ancient site, and no ancient remains now exist between Palaiochora and Kalamata. At Jannitsa, however, north-east of the angle of the gulf, some six kilometres east of Kalamata, are some most striking 'Mycenaean' remains of early polygonal masonry, which crown the summit of the hill round which the modern village is built.¹ The position is exactly such as would be chosen for a 'Mycenaean' fortress, since it occupies a commanding eminence at no great distance from the sea and controls an ancient carriage route over Taygetus, considerable traces of which are to be seen further to the east. Mr. R. Weil would identify it with the ancient Kalamae, which, however, more probably lay in the Messenian plain,² while Mr. E. Pernice thinks that the ancient Pharae stood here and not, as is generally accepted, at Kalamata: but Pausanias (iv. 30. 1) gives the distance from Pharae to the sea as six stades and Strabo (viii. p. 361) as five; they agree closely and are not both likely to be wrong, and the distance of Jannitsa from the sea is at least four kilometres. The ancient fortress of Jannitsa must, however, have been an important early settlement, and two inscriptions found near and a number of coins of the fourth and third centuries B.C. discovered within its walls, shew that it was also occupied in classical times. Strabo in discussing (viii. 360) the position of the Homeric city of Ira proposes two sites for it, one at Oechalia, and the other at 'the place now called Mesola, between Taygetus and the Messenian Gulf.'³ This description is particularly applicable to Jannitsa, since it lies on a

¹ E. Pernice in *Berl. phil. Wochenschrift*, 1893, p. 1373 f., and *Mittheil.* 1894, pp. 355-367; R. Weil, *Mittheil.* 1882, p. 216.

² See Mr. Frazer's note on Paus. iv. 31. 3.

³ Pausanias (iv. 30) speaking of Abia says 'Ἰρην καλεῖσθαι πάλαι . . . φασιν,' implying that he does not feel sure of the identification, and Palaiochora, which lies on a plain and near the sea shore, is hardly a likely site for a 'Mycenaean' fortress.

spur midway between the range of Taygetus and the north-east corner of the gulf, and was occupied in classical times.

I would therefore suggest that the Homeric Ira and classical Mesola was situated at Jannitsa.

There can be little doubt that the Homeric fortress of Pharae occupied the hill overlooking Kalamata, which is now covered by the ruins of the important Frankish fortress of Villehardouin.

EDWARD S. FORSTER.