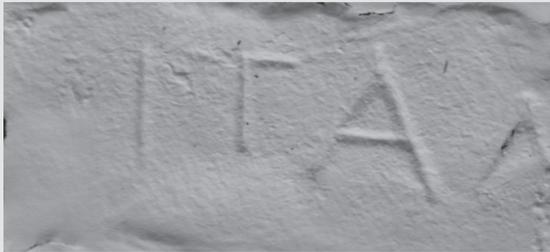




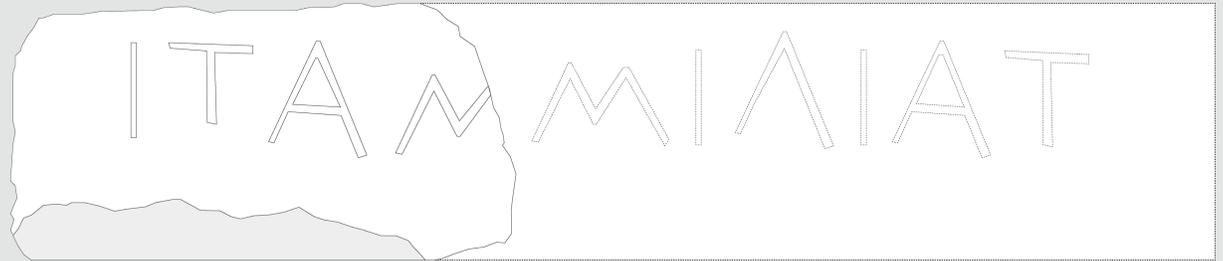
1. The stone bearing the inscription IG V1 1378 (ph. S. Kouroumis, detail of the fig. 4)



3. Detail of a squeeze showing that the two first letters on the left are I and T, not Π as in the corpus (see the commentary below; squeeze and ph. O. Gengler)



4. The stone with the inscription IG V1 1378 as it is now visible in the SW wall of the small chapel at Volimnos; below appears also the inscription IG V1 1376b (ph. S. Kouroumis)



2. Hypothetical reconstruction of the inscription IG V1 1378 after the new reading (scale 1/1, drawing O. Gengler)

Seemingly IG V1 1378 is an unimpressive inscription: the three letters Παι -, no supplement or hypothesis for its interpretation... (fig. 7 below). It has neither aroused any interest, nor any commentary since its publication a century ago. A re-examination of the stone in September 2008 brought, however, a slightly different reading, opening new perspectives.

The stone bearing that inscription is a grey marble piece, broken at the right and the rear side, built two meters above the ground in the west corner of a small chapel at Volimnos, on the Messenian side of the Taygetos (fig. 4-6). The stone is (after Kolbe) 10 cm high, 23 cm wide, 48 cm thick. According to Kolbe, who saw the stone lying on the ground near the ruined chapel, a cavity (18 cm long, 5 cm deep) was also carved in the upper side of the stone. The shorter side of the stone has four letters, accurately carved: ITAN, measuring in height respectively 3.6, 2.9, 4.6 and 3.3 cm (fig. 1-3). The last letter, which seems to be a N, might be also a broken M. The shape of the letters is not especially idiosyncratic, but belongs to the archaic Laconian types ι, τ, α1 and ν3 of Jeffery (1990, 183). The α1 is the usual one. The ν3 occurs—just as ν1 and ν2—during the whole archaic period, but seems to predominate in the earlier texts.

These letters might be the beginning of a word, since there is no trace of any letter at the left of the I. Furthermore, if the cavity at the upper side is as old as the inscription, the stone might be a basis, in which some kind of dedication was embedded. In this case, the letters are certainly not the continuation of a larger inscription beginning above or to the left of our stone. Since, besides the rare personal name Ἰτάμη/Ἰταμῖος, the only words beginning with the letters ITAM or ITAN is the name of the Cretan city Itanos and the relative ethnic (hence the personal name Ἰτανάιος)—which occurrence here would have to be explained—I suggest instead to read the inscription from right to left and to recognize here the end of a dedication to the goddess Limnatis, whose sanctuary was where the chapel now stand (lastly Gengler, 2009 with the bibliography): [Τῆς Λιμνιάτις.

Right-to-left inscriptions occur in Laconian epigraphy until ca. 500 (IG V1 1134 = SEG XI 919; Jeffery, 1990, n. 45; IG V1 700; see Jeffery, 1990, 184).

If my interpretation is correct, the particularity of our inscription consists in the mirror writing—that is to say left-to-right—of the N. There are other instances of inversed N in right-to-left inscriptions (e.g. Wace–Hasluck, 1910, 166 = IG V1 1142 = SEG 11 920) or even left-to-right (IG V1 1497, which is another dedication to Limnatis of unknown provenance). Moreover, this peculiar feature might be explained by the fact that the N is the only asymmetric letter in the words TAI LIMNATI.

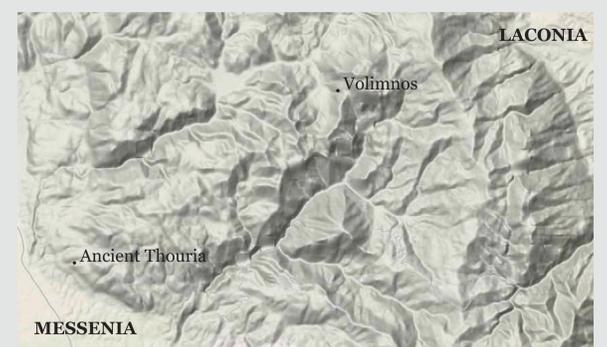
The date of the divinity's name is the minimal form of Greek dedication. As a matter of fact, the length of the inscription so reconstructed as to respect the scale of the remaining letters (fig. 2) fills perfectly a space of ca. 48 cm, that is to say the real thickness of the stone. The formula type τῷ θεῷ is however not frequent and many examples, which are fragmentary, might have been originally more developed. In the case it is possible to offer a dating, the known instances range from the end of the 7th to the 5th century BC. They occur especially in Small sanctuaries—as the one of Limnatis, despite its political importance (lastly Luraghi, 2008), very likely was—and mainly on tiny objects, more rarely on steles (2 cases against 20: Lazzarini, 1976, 120). But the name of the dedicant might have been written on the object dedicated, perhaps—given the size of the cavity—a relief similar to that offered by Φαναξιβίος to Athena Chalkioikos in Sparta (IG V1 215).

References

- M. Lazzarini, *Le formule delle dediche votive nella Grecia arcaica*, Roma, 1976 (Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, ser. VIII, Memorie, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, vol. XIX).
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5. The chapel from the SE (ph. O. Gengler)



6. Topographical map of the region around Volimnos, in the Taygetos, between Messenia and Laconia

Acknowledgements

I owe my Greek colleague Sokrates Kouroumis a special thanks for inviting me to cooperate in the study of the material from Volimnos and the Ephor of Messenia (ΑΗ' ΕΠΙΚΑ), Dr. Xeni Arapoyanni, for the authorisation to publish anew the present inscription. Prof. Dr. Klaus Hallof (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften) liberally opened to me the archives of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* and kindly answered to all my requests. I am also grateful to the British Epigraphy Society and the organisers of the Viennese Spring Meeting for giving me the opportunity to present this poster and to my colleagues Th. Pantzer and J. Piccinini for improving my english. The fieldwork and the first draft of this study were undertaken as I was a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the University of Freiburg (Germany).

The IG edition

The draft for the publication of the text in the corpus is preserved in the archives of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (fig. 7).

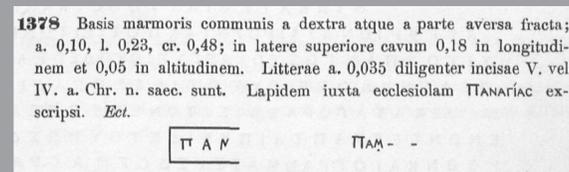
Header: the future number of the inscription in the corpus, corrected several times (left) and the provenance: 'Mess. Βόλιμνος'

Draft of the lemma: 'Basis marmoris communis a dextra atque a parte aversa fracta; a. 0,10, l. 0,23, cr. 0,48; in latere superiore cavum 0,18 in longitudinem et 0,05 in altitudinem. Literae a. 0,035 diligenter incisae / in rasura: in θεῶι, quam hodie vocant Βόλιμνος, inventam / exscripsi. / in rasura: Habeo quoque ectypum chartaceum. / Ect'. This lemma, after being corrected, is published in the volume (fig. 8).

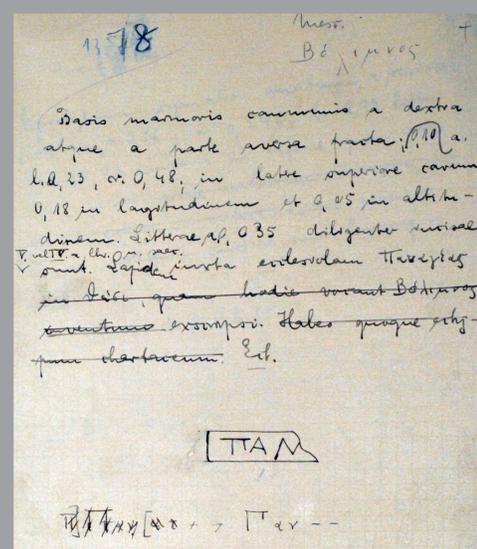
The transcription that follows, demonstrates that Kolbe read the inscription correctly. Indeed, beside a *fac simile* of the inscription (slightly better than that published), appears (right) a transcription: Παι -, and (left) a proposal to supplement the remaining letters: Π] τται[ατ -. Kolbe himself or one of the reviewers of his manuscript corrected the letters ττ in Π and crossed the entire word out.

This supplement is not possible, since there is no trace of any letter on the left. Kolbe's proposition, however, proves that he was able to read the two first letters of the inscription, i.e. I and T.

We do not have Kolbe's original notebook, in which he copied the text when in Volimnos on Monday the 27th sept. 1904—as stated in another notebook where he used to record the details of his journey—, but only the squeeze he made. On this squeeze, now in Berlin, the letters IT merge, so that the reading Π seems evidently the best one. It seems probable that during the preparation of the text for the corpus, the transcription made in loco was then corrected on the basis of the squeeze.



7. Edition of the inscription in IG V1, p. 261



8. Preparatory note for the edition of the text in the IG, fo. 3230 (BBAW, archives IG; O. Gengler).

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W. Kolbe, 'Bericht über eine Reise inn Messenien', *Sitzungsbericht der Berl. Akad.*, 1905, 53-63.
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