

HELLENISTIC LASAIA (CRETE): A DEPENDENT POLIS OF GORTYN. NEW EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FROM THE ASKLEPIEION NEAR LASAIA

The political geography of Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Crete is full of unsolved problems. The endemic wars constantly changed the picture, leading sometimes to the total destruction of a polis (e.g., Dreros, Praisos, and Phaistos in the 2nd century B.C.), often to a new arrangement of its frontier, and in several cases to a change of its status. In addition to the constant wars, interstate agreements —treaties of *sympoliteia* in particular— occasionally contributed to the creation of new political entities.¹ Literary sources and inscriptions provide us with direct information on these developments, but oftentimes we are left with equivocal pieces of evidence which invite us to speculate, until a new find contributes to a better understanding of the situation or simply adds new questions to the old ones.

The status of Lasaia, an important harbor on the south coast of Crete between the harbors of Matalon to the west and Lebena to the east, has puzzled modern scholars. The visible archaeological remains both in the site itself and in its vicinity suggest the existence of a prosperous settlement in the Hellenistic and the Imperial Period. The architectural remains at Lasaia have been attributed to a breakwater, a warehouse, a temple (?), a basilica, and an aqueduct system.² Two km to the west of Lasaia, another harbor at Kaloi Limenes is famous as the site where St. Paul landed; a necropolis and a farmhouse have been identified in its vicinity.³ Finally, immediately to the west of Kaloi Limenes, in the Agiofarango gorge, the survey of the region has led to the identification of five Hellenistic and nine Roman sites, probably farmsteads.⁴ The most prominent site in the gorge is Agia Kyriake, occupied from the late 5th century B.C. onwards. Here, a large building complex near a spring has been identified with an Asklepieion known from the dedication of a certain Krios to Asklepios.⁵ Neither the literary sources nor the inscriptions indicate Lasaia's status in the Hellenistic period —an independent polis, the

¹ For these questions, see more recently A. Chaniotis, *Die Verträge zwischen kretischen Poleis in der hellenistischen Zeit*, Stuttgart 1996, esp. pp. 27f. (wars), 104-108 (*sympolities*).

² D. Blackman and K. Branigan, «An Archaeological Survey in the South Coast of Crete, between Ayiofarango and Chrisostomos», *BSA* 70, 1975, pp. 28-32; I.F. Sanders, *Roman Crete. An Archaeological Survey and Gazetteer of Late Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Byzantine Crete*, Warminster 1982, p. 160.

³ Blackman and Branigan, art. cit., pp. 24-26.

⁴ D. Blackman and K. Branigan, «An Archaeological Survey of the Lower Catchment of the Ayiofarango Valley», *BSA* 72, 1977, pp. 13-84.

⁵ *I.Cret.* I,xv 3; cf. Blackman and Branigan, art. cit. (n. 4), p. 56; U. Bultrighini, «Divinità della salute nella Creta ellenistica e romana. Ricerche preliminari», *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medievale* 35, 1993, p. 100; cf. K. Sporn, *Heiligtümer und Kulte Kretas in klassischer und hellenistischer Zeit*, PhD dissertation, Heidelberg 1997.

epineion of another polis, or a dependent community.⁶ Modern scholarship has developed a series of criteria which allow us to recognize an independent polis, even when no written source explicitly attest to its status: an independent polis issues decrees and concludes treaties; it has its own coinage; there is evidence of local political authority (magistrates, council, assembly); its citizens use an ethnic name.⁷ Unfortunately, in the case of Lasaia we lack such evidence. Only the *Acts of the Apostles* (27,8) call Lasaia a polis (ἤλθομεν εἰς τόπον τινὰ καλούμενον Καλοῦς Λιμένας, ὃ ἐγγὺς πόλις ἦν Λασαία). Of course, this text is far from being a reliable document for the political status of a settlement. Equally inconclusive is the evidence provided by the Delphic list of *theorodokoi* (c. 230/210 B.C.), in which Lasaia is included among the Cretan towns where a *theorodokos* had been appointed (*SEG* XXVI 624 col. IV 9: Λασσοία).⁸ The *theorodokoi* received in their town the sacred envoys of the Delphic sanctuary who announced the Pythian festival.⁹ In a recent discussion of this text,¹⁰ P. Perlman has demonstrated that the Delphic list of *theorodokoi* can be used as evidence for the existence of a polis. However, not every polis which had a *theorodokos* was *independent* at the point when the list was written down; but even those poleis which were not independent have had this status in the past. So, the fact that Lasaia appears in the Delphic list indicates a polis status, but does not necessarily mean that it was *independent*. Two other sites which appear in the same list, Matalon and Lebena, had been independent in the past, but by the late 3rd century B.C. had become dependent poleis of Phaistos and Gortyn respectively.¹¹ I have also expressed my doubts whether four other sites which appear in this list of *theorodokoi* (Biannos, Pelkis, Phalanna, and Oleros) should be regarded as independent poleis.¹² On the basis of this evidence, some scholars regarded Lasaia as an independent polis.¹³ P. Perlman, who has presented

⁶ I prefer the term «dependent community» («abhängige Gemeinde»: cf. Chaniotis, *Verträge*, pp. 160-168; cf. «abhängiger Ort»: F. Gschnitzer, *Abhängige Orte im griechischen Altertum*, Munich 1958) to the term «dependent polis», not because I question the existence of dependent *poleis* on Crete (cf. P. Perlman, Πόλις ὑπήκοος. The Dependent Polis and Crete, in M.H. Hansen, ed., *Introduction to an Inventory of Poleis. Symposium August, 23-26 1995*, Copenhagen 1996, pp. 233-285), but only because I doubt whether *all* dependent communities were *poleis*, especially those which lack an ethnic name, as, e.g., Kaudos (Chaniotis, *Verträge*, p. 161).

⁷ P. Perlman, «Θεωροδοκῶντες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν. Panhellenic Epangelia and Political Status», in M.H. Hansen (ed.), *Sources for the Ancient Greek City-State*, Copenhagen 1995, p. 130f.; cf. already P. Faure, «La Crète aux cent villes», *Kretika Chronika* 13, 1959, pp. 180-184.

⁸ For the Cretan part of the Delphic list of *theorodokoi*, see most recently A. Inglese, «Itinerario cretese dei Theoroi di Delphi. Proposta di integrazione nel percorso orientale», *Miscellanea Greca e Romana* 16, 1991, pp. 165-171; ead., «Theorodokoi e prosseni Cretesi ad Epidaurò e Delfi», *Parola del Passato* 51, 1996, pp. 351-358. For the date (c. 230/210), see most recently M.B. Hatzopoulos, «Un prêtre d'Amphipolis dans la grande liste des théarodokos de Delphes», *BCH* 115, 1991, pp. 345-347; cf. id., *Bull. épigr.* 1994, no. 432; cf. Perlman, art. cit. (n. 7), p. 130.

⁹ For the nature of the *theoria* and the function of the *theorodokoi*, see Perlman, art. cit. (n. 7), pp. 113-164.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 134, 136-138. Cf. Chaniotis, *Verträge*, pp. 12f. n. 36, 33 n. 151, 161f.

¹² A. Chaniotis, Review of M.H. Hansen (ed.), *Introduction to an Inventory of Poleis. Symposium August, 23-26 1995*, Copenhagen 1996, in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 8.8, 1997, p. 736.

¹³ M. Guarducci, *I.Cret. I*, p. 105; cf. Faure, art. cit. (n. 7), p. 196; Blackman and Branigan, art. cit. (n. 2), p. 28.

two important contributions to the political geography of Crete (n. 6 and 7), in her earlier article (1995) preferred to leave the question open,¹⁴ but in the latter (1996), she included Lasaia among the independent *poleis* of Crete.¹⁵ Because of the existence of a powerful center, Gortyn, to the north of Lasaia, and because of the fact that all the harbors to the south of the Mesara plain had lost their independence by the late 3rd century B.C., I have assumed that in the Hellenistic period Lasaia, too, must have been a dependent community of Gortyn.¹⁶ A recent epigraphic find offers additional support for this view.

In 1987, roof tiles of the Corinthian type inscribed with the name of Asklepios were found in the valley of Agia Kyriake, c. three km to the west of Lasaia, confirming the earlier suggestion of D. Blackman and K. Branigan that this was the site of a sanctuary of Asklepios.¹⁷ Some of the tiles are stamped with a monogram (possibly ΠΥΡ) and some with a stamp whose text was read by D. Vallianou as Ζηνᾶς Ἀπελλωνίῳ Ἀσκληπιῶ (cf. SEG XLII 804). The correct reading is: Ζηνᾶς Ἀπελλωνίῳ (Dorian genitive) Ἀσκληπιῶ. «Zenas, son of Apellonios (i.e., Apollonios), for Asklepios». The text implies that Zenas had sponsored or was responsible for the construction or the restoration of a building — possibly the temple — of Asklepios at Lasaia. The palaeography supports a date in the later part of the 2nd century B.C.¹⁸

The name Zenas is attested on Crete only in Aptera, in northwest Crete (I.Cret. II, 46), and in Gortyn (I.Cret. IV 251). In Gortyn, the person bearing this name is, exactly as in Lasaia, the son of Apellonios, known from an inscription found in the Gortynian Pythion and recording the restoration of an unknown facility (possibly a σήκωμα, a measure), under the supervision of the agoranomoi:

Ed.pr. F. Halbherr, *Relazione sugli scavi del tempio d'Apollo Pythio in Gortyna*, *Mon.Ant.* 1, 1889, 63f.; cf. I.Cret. IV 251.

Ἐπὶ Κύδαντος vac. τῷ Κ[ύδαντος? - - -

Ζηνᾶς Ἀπελλωνίῳ /[- - -

τᾶς ἐπισκευᾶς τῷ.[- - -

4 μνάμων vac. ἀγορανομ[- - -

τας vac. Ἰάσων vac. Καν[- - -

1. Κ[ύδαντος Κρητάρχα?], Halbherr, Guarducci. 2. ἀ[γορανομήσας ἐπεμελήθη?], Guarducci. 3. τῶν [σηκωμάτων]. 4. μνάμων ἀγορανόμ[ων] or μνάμων, ἀγορανόμοι —], Guarducci. 4, in fine, possibly [Ἀντιφά]τας, very common in Gortyn (cf. LGPN I, s.v.). 5, in fine, possibly Κάν[αχος], attested in Gortyn (cf. LGPN, I, s.v.).

The restoration of this inscription is not possible, because the length of the lines cannot be determined. F. Halbherr and M. Guarducci identified the magistrate on L. 1 with Kydas, son of Kydas, Κρητάρχας καὶ ἀρχός, known from I.Cret. IV 250 (mid-1st

¹⁴ Perlman, art. cit. (n. 7), pp. 131, 136.

¹⁵ Perlman, art. cit. (n. 6), p. 260, 282.

¹⁶ Chaniotis, *Verträge*, p. 12f n. 36.

¹⁷ D. Vallianou, *ADeltion* 42 B2, 1987 [1992], p. 549 and Pl. 322.

¹⁸ Cf. the letter forms in Vallianou, art. cit., pl. 322a-b and the chart of letter forms in Chaniotis, *Verträge*, p. 453.

century B.C.), but this identification is not certain.¹⁹ First of all, we do not know whether Kydas' father's name in this inscription is Kydas. Second, the letter forms of the two inscriptions are not identical, as asserted by Guarducci; the forms of Ε, Σ, and Ω on the facsimiles are different, and I.Cret. 251 is probably earlier (2nd century B.C.) than the inscription mentioning the Kretarchas.²⁰ Third, the name Kydas is extremely common in Crete, particularly in Gortyn, where at least eight persons bearing this name are known in the Hellenistic period; an identification of the persons mentioned in I.Cret. 250 and 251 cannot be supported by the homonymity alone.²¹ It is also not necessary to restore a title after Kydas' name. In Gortyn, the dating formula ἐπὶ + name of the president of the kosmoi + father's name is attested already in the early 2nd century B.C. (I.Cret. IV 235: [ἐπὶ] Ἀντιφάτα τῷ Κύδατος). Likewise, we do not know if Zenas, son of Apollonios, was agoranomos (cf. L. 2) or the scribe of the agoranomoi (cf. L. 4), whose names were written on LL. 4-5. From other Gortynian inscriptions (I.Cret. IV 253; cf. 255 and 302), we may infer that the board of agoranomoi consisted of three agoranomoi, one scribe (mnamon), and one assistant (σπεῦσδος). If this number remained unchanged, Zenas (L. 2) was the scribe, and the names of the three agoranomoi were recorded on LL. 4-5. Despite these uncertainties, the rarity of the name Zenas, the unique combination of names Zenas and Apollonios, and the activities attested for Zenas in Gortyn and in Lasaia leave hardly any doubt that we are dealing with the same individual.

Since the brief inscription on the roof tile does not mention an office, we do not know whether Zenas carried out the construction activities at the Asklepieion of Lasaia as a private sponsor or as a Gortynian magistrate. In Crete, such activities were usually part of the responsibility of officials, as numerous inscriptions which record building activities, restorations, and dedication in cult places show.²² In the case of Gortyn, we know that Gortynian magistrates were responsible not only for the sanctuaries in the city of Gortyn, but also for the Asklepieion in the dependent polis of Lebena.²³ However, a private dedication of Zenas should not be excluded altogether, particularly since we cannot determine the precise nature of the cult building to which Zenas' roof tiles belong.²⁴ No matter whether Zenas was acting as a private individual or —more probably— as a Gortynian magistrate, it seems improbable that he was doing so in the sanctuary of a

¹⁹ For Kydas, see A.-M. Rouanet-Liesenfelt, «Le crétarque Kydas», in *Aux origines de l'hellénisme, la Crète et la Grèce. Hommage à Henri van Effenterre*, Paris 1984, pp. 343-352; cf. ead., «Remarques sur l'assemblée provinciale crétoise et son grand-prêtre à l'époque du Haute-Empire», *Ktéma* 19, 1994, 13, who regards the identification of the persons mentioned in the two inscriptions as possible, but not as certain.

²⁰ Cf. the chart of letter forms in Chaniotis, *Verträge*, p. 453.

²¹ See the lemmata in LGPN, I, s.v. Kydas. Another Kydas, son of Kydas, is known from Knossos (I.Cret. I,viii 3), and possibly another one from Gortyn (I.Cret. IV 398).

²² E.g., I.Cret. I,v 5; I,xvii 4-6; I,xviii 12-13; I,xxii 2, 8; I,xxiii 4; M.W. Baldwin Bowsky, «Portrait of a Polis: Lato pros Kamara (Crete) in the Late Second Century B.C.», *Hesperia* 58, 1989, pp. 338-341, 345-347, nos 5, 7, 9, 12, 19-21.

²³ I.Cret. I,xvii 2, 4-6, 8; M. Bile, «Quelques termes religieux en crétois», in P. Goukowsky and Cl. Brixhe (eds.), *Hellénika Symmiktá: Histoire, archéologie, épigraphie*, Nancy 1991, 7-14; Bultrighini, art. cit. (n. 5), p. 91-99; Ch. Kritzas, «Nouvelle inscription provenant de l'Asclépiéion de Lebena, Crète», in *Preatti del XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina*, Rome 1997, 227-234.

²⁴ Cf. I.Cret. I,xxii 8 (Olous, Hellenistic), which shows that the restoration of a temple and its roof, under public supervision was sponsored by a private person (L. 8: χαρογήσαντος).

foreign polis. Dedications of foreigners are not unusual in civic sanctuaries, but extensive building activities in cult places are carried out only under supervision of civic authorities (see n. 21 and 22). It follows that in the 2nd century B.C., the Asklepieion at Agia Kyriake was part of the Gortynian territory and that Lasaia was a dependent polis of Gortyn.

This conclusion should not, however, be regarded as certain before we consider two further possibilities. The first is that the Asklepieion near Lasaia attracted worshippers from various parts of Crete, who engaged themselves in building activities. The sanctuary of Hermes Kedrites at Simi Biannou presents such a unique case on Crete. The inscribed roof tiles found there bear different ethnic names: of the Arkadians, Lyttians, Priansians, and Hierapytnians, i.e., of several neighbouring poleis.²⁵ Here, the building activity in the late Classical and Hellenistic period seems to have been carried out under the responsibility or with the financial aid of several cities. The sanctuary at Kato Simi, on the «Sacred Mountain» (Ἱερόν Ὀρος) was near the common frontier of several cities; it played an important role in the rituals of ephebic initiation; and the Dorian cult had predecessors which reached back to Minoan times.²⁶ This cult place may have been the center of a local amphictiony.²⁷ A similar assumption cannot be supported in the case of the Asklepieion near Lasaia.

The second possibility is that the Asklepieion was near the frontier of Gortyn and Lasaia, but on Gortynian territory. In this case, Lasaia would still be an independent polis, but its territory would not reach the gorge of Ayiofarango. Lasaia would be a small independent polis, surrounded on all sides by Gortynian territory. This scenario is even less probable. The survey of D. Blackman and K. Branigan has made plausible that the area as far as Cap Lithines, i.e., to the west of the Agiofarango gorge, belonged to the territory of Lasaia.²⁸ In fact, the *Acts of the Apostles* associate Kaloi Limenes (near Agiofarango) with Lasaia. With Agiofarango, less than 3 km to the west of Lasaia, in the possession of the Gortynians and Lebena, less than 8 km to the east of Lasaia, being a dependent polis of Gortyn, Lasaia's territory would have been a narrow coastal strip with a maximum length of c. 5-6 km. It is also inconceivable that the Gortynian expansion would have stopped at Agiofarango and stopped there, leaving the harbors of Kaloi Limenes and Lasaia out of the Gortynian control. In the course of the 3rd and early 2nd century B.C., the Gortynians incorporated into their territory the entire plain of Mesara. Of the coastal towns, Lebena was a dependent polis of Gortyn by the end of the 3rd century at the latest and Matalon, a dependent polis of Phaistos in the late 3rd century (above, n. 11), became Gortynian when Phaistos was destroyed by the Gortynians probably in the mid-2nd century.²⁹ In light of this, it would be surprising if Lasaia had been able to retain its status as an independent polis in the 3rd century.

²⁵ A. Chaniotis, «Habgierige Götter - habgierige Städte. Heiligtumsbesitz und Gebietsanspruch in den kretischen Staatsverträgen», *Ktéma* 13, 1988 [1991], p. 33.

²⁶ A. Lebesi, *Τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ἑρμῆ καὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης στὴ Σύμη Βιάννου*. I.I. Χάλκινα κρητικὰ τορεύματα, Athens 1985.

²⁷ Cf. Chaniotis, art. cit. (n. 25), p. 33f.; Chaniotis, *Verträge*, pp. 129f. However, until all the inscriptions found in the sanctuary of Kato Simi are published, one should leave the question of the sanctuary's status — a sanctuary controlled by an individual polis or an amphictionic center — open.

²⁸ Blackman and Branigan, art. cit. (n. 4), p. 56; art. cit. (n. 2), p. 28.

²⁹ Chaniotis, *Verträge*, p. 27, 49.

The new inscriptions found at the Asklepieion near Lasaia most probably mention a Gortynian citizen who is known to have occupied an office in Gortyn — probably that of the scribe of the agoranomoi. This implies that the Asklepieion near Lasaia was in the possession of Gortyn, exactly like the Asklepieion at Lebena. In light of this new evidence, it seems probable that Lasaia had become a dependent polis of Gortyn by the late 2nd century B.C., possibly one century earlier.

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