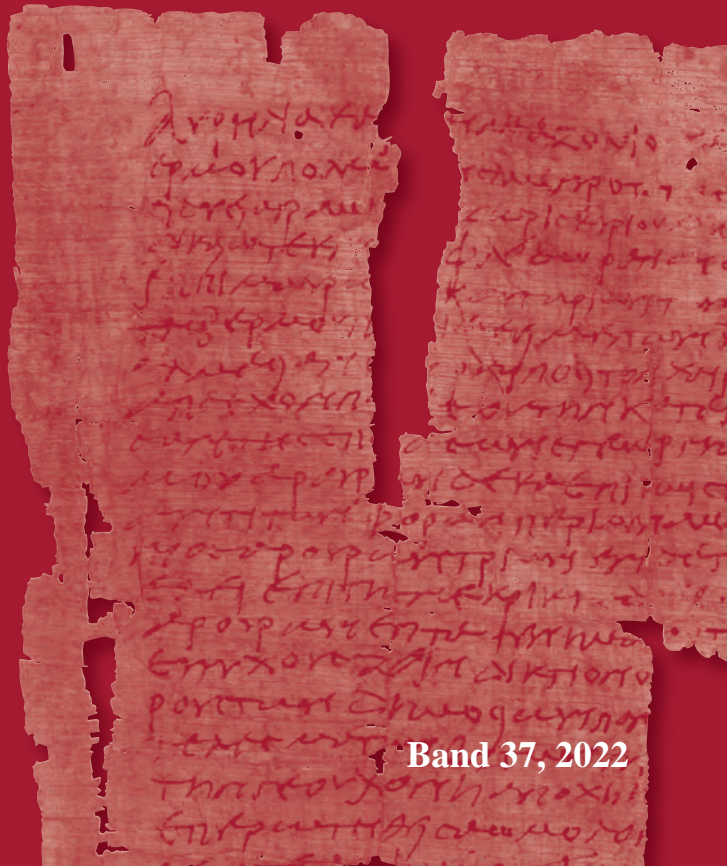


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IOANNIS MYLONOPOULOS

A Pig for Poseidon*

A Laconian Votive Relief in the Athens Epigraphic Museum
(EM 8926)

Plate 22

Despite its artistic crudeness, a rather famous and without doubt exceptionally interesting funerary relief dating to the 2nd/3rd century CE from Macedonian Edessa¹ attests to the connection between a small pig that had died in an accident and its owner with the following words:

*Here lies “the Pig,” beloved by all, a young quadruped, having left the land of Dalmatia, brought as a gift. I set foot in Dyrrhachion and longing for Apollonia I crossed every land on foot, alone, and undefeated. But now, I have abandoned the light due to the wheels’ violence. I wished to see Emathia and the chariot of the phallus, but now I lie buried here, although I was too young to pay my tribute to death.*²

The distressed owner of the pig with whom the unlucky pet was traveling to Edessa, possibly to perform in a festival, had his beloved animal buried at the site of the accident and a gravestone erected in its memory, decorated with a relief and bearing a quite

* I would like to thank Charalampos Kritzas, former director of the Epigraphic Museum, Athens, who first gave me permission to study the relief. I would also like to thank Nassos Themis, current director of the Epigraphic Museum, Athens, who gave me permission to study the relief anew in late July 2022 as well as Irini-Loukia Choremi (archaeologist, Epigraphic Museum, Athens) and Theodoros Mavridis (restorator, Epigraphic Museum, Athens) who facilitated my study. Special thanks have to go to Angelos Chaniotis and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge who discussed with me various aspects of the paper and to the anonymous reviewers whose insightful remarks enriched the final version of this article.

Except where otherwise indicated, all translations are the author’s.

¹ G. Daux, *Építaphe métrique d’un jeune porc, victime d’un accident*, BCH 94 (1970) 609–618.

² The most recent edition can be found in *I.Kato Maked.* II 264 (with previous bibliography): Χοῖρος ὁ πᾶσι φίλος, τετράπους νέος, ἐνθάδε κείμει, Δαλματῆς δάπεδον προλιπὼν δῶρον προσεγεχθεῖς. Καὶ Δυρράχιν δὲ ἐπάτησα Ἀπολλωνίαν τε ποθήσας καὶ πᾶσαν γαίην διέβην ποσὶ μόνος, ἄλιπτος. Νῦν δὲ τροχοῖο βίη τὸ φάος προλέλοιπα, Ἡμαθίην δὲ ποθῶν κατιδεῖν φαλλοῖο δὲ ἄρμα. Ἐνθάδε νῦν κείμει τῷ θανάτῳ μηκέτ’ ὀφειλόμενος (translation with minor alterations: A. Chaniotis, *Age of conquests: The Greek world from Alexander to Hadrian*, London 2018, 394–395).

affectionate inscription.³ This is a unique monument not so much because it demonstrates publicly the tender connection between an owner and his pet, but because the pet is a pig.

In Greek art, pigs feature in the vast majority of cases as sacrificial animals in scenes depicting processions⁴ and as stand-alone terracotta or, more rarely, bronze figurines that symbolize past or promised future sacrifices by their dedicators.⁵ Hardly ever do we see pigs decorating dedicatory reliefs as single figures and thus monopolizing the interest of the viewer; here too, they usually accompany as sacrificial victims procession participants,⁶ although in dedicatory reliefs bovines are clearly the preferred sacrificial victims, particularly in the context of significant rituals.⁷

The EM 8926 — The object

A small votive relief depicting a standing pig that was found towards the end of the 19th century in Laconia (pl. 22, fig. 1) goes against the tradition described above that usually avoids the placing of a single pig outside the context of a sacrificial procession on reliefs of dedicatory nature. The inscribed object was first mentioned very briefly in 1891,⁸ before the text of its inscription made it into the fifth volume of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* with materials from Laconia and Messenia in 1913.⁹ The relief was last discussed in my book on sanctuaries and cults of Poseidon on the Peloponnese.¹⁰ It was

³ A. Chaniotis, N. Kaltsas, I. Mylonopoulos (eds.), *A world of emotions: ancient Greece, 700 BC–200 AD*, New York 2017, 37 no. 16. E. Voutiras, *Η λατρεία του Διονύσου στην Έδεσσα*, in: P. Adam-Veleni, K. Tzanavari (eds.), *Διηέσσα. Τιμητικός τόμος για την Κατερίνα Ρωμοπούλου*, Thessaloniki 2012, 564–565 has argued that the pig may have been trained to perform acrobatic tricks or to compete in races. To the latter might point the characterization of the animal as ἄλυτος (= undefeated).

⁴ On the various ways sacrificial animals (including pigs) are depicted in processions on Greek vases, see, in general, J. Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia. Attische Tieropferdarstellungen auf schwarz- und rotfigurigen Vasen*, Münster 2002, 179–189.

⁵ See, in general, H. Meyer, P. R. Franke, J. Schäfer, *Hausschweine in der griechisch-römischen Antike. Eine morphologische und kulturhistorische Studie*, Oldenburg 2004, 49–59 (with a strong zoological perspective).

⁶ F. T. van Straten, *Hiera Kala. Images of animal sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece*, Leiden 1995, 170–175 demonstrates that in sacrificial calendars sheep dominate as preferred sacrificial victims, in vase painting cows and bulls are predominant, while in votive reliefs pigs are favored.

⁷ A. Klöckner, *Votive als Gegenstände des Rituals – Votive als Bilder von Ritualen*, in: J. Mylonopoulos, H. Roeder (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual. Auf der Suche nach der rituellen Handlung in den antiken Kulturen Ägyptens und Griechenlands*, Vienna 2006, 141–144. More recently, G. Schörner, *Sacrifice d'animaux dans les provinces romaines d'Asie Mineure: représentations de rituels en contexte*, in: A.-F. Jaccottet (ed.), *Rituels en image – Images de rituel. Iconographie – Histoire des religions – Archéologie* (EGeA 9), Bern 2021, 223 confirmed, based on iconographic evidence, Klöckner's results for Asia Minor in the Imperial period as well.

⁸ M. Mayer, *Funde*, MDAI(A) 16 (1891) 140.

⁹ *IG V 1*, 1218.

¹⁰ J. Mylonopoulos, *Πελοπόννησος οικητήριον Ποσειδῶνος. Heiligtümer und Kulte des Poseidon auf der Peloponnes* (Kernos Suppl. 13), Liège 2003, 240–241.

reportedly found in the area of Skopa, a small promontory near the village of Kotronas, 87 km to the south of Sparta.¹¹ Kotronas has been traditionally identified with Teuthrone,¹² one of the members of the League of the Eleutherolaconians.¹³

The relief is 16.5 cm long and 13.7 cm high; its thickness varies from 2.5 cm in those areas without to 3.1 cm in those areas with relief decoration. It is made of fine-grained white-greyish marble¹⁴ and its overall state of preservation is good with areas missing only in the upper corners, with the top right corner of the object having suffered more damage than the left one. A fine, superficial tear starts behind the front legs and just below the belly of the pig. It runs to the left all the way down to the lower end of the relief. Very small damages can also be observed on the lower left corner of the relief. The back appears roughly worked with some deeper markings that seem modern. At the front side, the lower part is occupied by a band in relief of approximately 2 cm in height. The figure of the pig is at its max. height in the area of the head 8.2 cm. The upper part of the relief is reserved for a short two-lined dedicatory inscription that occupies approximately 2.2 cm in height of the relief's surface.

The inscription: As has been already mentioned, the inscription consists of only two lines that state the most basic information: the name of dedicator in nominative, the name of the divine recipient in dative, and the reason for the dedication (pl. 22, fig. 2). Letters are missing only at both ends of the first (upper) line. So far, three slightly different readings have been suggested:

Mayer: . . . ιπ]πίδας Πο[τι]/δᾶνι εὐχάν
 IG V 1: [. . . ι]πίδας Πο[τοι]/δᾶνι εὐχάν
 Mylonopoulos: [—]πίδας Πο[τι]/δᾶνι εὐχάν

There are still traces of a letter right before the clearly preserved Π in the name of the dedicator, which could belong either to an I or to a second Π. This would result either in a male name ending in -πίδας or in one ending in -πίδας. Based on the size of the relief, there is only space for 4 to 5 letters at the most — including the badly preserved Π or I — depending on the size of the individual letters. I would like to exclude the reading -πίδας that I suggested in 2003,¹⁵ since there are only two ancient

¹¹ Mayer, *Funde* (s. n. 8) only refers to “Maina” (= Mani). It is the commentary of the entry in the *Inscriptiones Graecae* (s. n. 9) that adds the important information that the relief was found on the small promontory of Skopa.

¹² W. M. Leake, *Peloponnesiaca: a supplement to travels in the Morea*, London 1846, 172; J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias' description of Greece*, vol. 3, London 1898, 278; C. LeRoy, *Lakonika*, BCH 85 (1961) 215–216.

¹³ P. Cartledge, *Sparta and Laconia: a regional history 1300–362 BC*, London 2002, 275–276.

¹⁴ On Laconian quarries, in general, see G. Kokkorou-Alevra, I. Poupaki, A. Eftathopoulos, A. Chatzikonstantinou, *Corpus αρχαίων λατομείων. Λατομεία του ελλαδικού χώρου από τους προϊστορικούς έως τους μεσαιωνικούς χρόνους*, Athens 2014, 180–193 no. 661–702. No. 678, 681, 683, 691, 692, 694, 696–699, and 701 are marble quarries. Interestingly enough, a significant number of the Laconian marble quarries are situated in the Mani area.

¹⁵ Mylonopoulos, *Poseidon* (s. n. 10) 240.

Greek names that, according to *LGPN*, could be considered: Ὀλιπίδας, used once in Epidauros¹⁶ and Εὐριπίδας, attested only outside the Peloponnese.¹⁷ Ὀλιπίδας would have left far too considerable a gap between the border of the relief and the beginning of the inscription, which, I believe, seems to have occupied the entire length of the relief in the upper line, while being more centered in the second one. According to *LGPN*, there is a single male name not ending in -πιπίδας or -πίδας and this is Προπίδας, which is attested only in Boeotia.¹⁸ Among the names ending in -πιπίδας that are found in Laconia and would fit into the space before the preserved text begins, Ἀγυπιπίδας, Ἡριπιπίδας, Λακιπιπίδας, Νικιπιπίδας and Φιλιπιπίδας are, in my view, the most promising possibilities.¹⁹ The name Ἀγυπιπίδας, which would have left too much space empty at the beginning of the inscription, appears in Sparta once in an inscription from the 1st cent. CE.²⁰ The name Ἡριπιπίδας that presents the same problem as Ἀγυπιπίδας is attested only once in Sparta in the late 4th or early 3rd cent. BCE.²¹ The name Λακιπιπίδας is also known only from Sparta and is attested four times between the 2nd cent. BCE and the 3rd cent. CE.²² Νικιπιπίδας is attested only twice in Sparta,²³ and is more often used in the form Νεικιπιπίδας, which would have not fit into the missing part of the inscription.²⁴ Finally, the name Φιλιπιπίδας is known only from a 2nd-century-BCE inscription that was found in Gytheion.²⁵ It seems that only the names Λακιπιπίδας, Νικιπιπίδας, and Φιλιπιπίδας can be considered. Among them, Λακιπιπίδας appears to be the strongest candidate not only because it is the name most often attested, but more importantly because one of the inscriptions attesting the name is a document from the 1st cent. BCE that lists members of the Tainarioi, among them Σιδέκτας, son of Λακιπιπίδας.²⁶ The Tainarioi were a cult association supervising the cult of Poseidon Tainarios in Sparta and probably involved in the affairs of the sanctuary of the god on

¹⁶ *IG* IV² 1, 102 (c. 370 BCE).

¹⁷ Naupaktos: *IG* IX 1² 3, 638,7; 638,12 (153/2 BCE); Kallion in Aitolia: *SGDI* 2137 (139 BCE).

¹⁸ Ptoion (refers to a man from Orchomenos): *IG* VII 4149 (after 87 BCE); Hyettos: *IG* VII 2825 (215–205 BCE); *IG* VII 2829 (260–240 BCE).

¹⁹ Names such as Γορυπιπίδας, Δαμιπιπίδας, Θηριπιπίδας, Κρατηπιπίδας, Μεληπιπίδας, Ὀρριπίδας, or Πασιπιπίδας also attested in Laconia should not be considered, because they would not fit the gap in the upper right corner due to either the width of letters such as Δ, Θ, Ο, or Π (Δαμιπιπίδας, Θηριπιπίδας, Ὀρριπίδας, Πασιπιπίδας) or the number of letters before the first Π (Γορυπιπίδας, Κρατηπιπίδας, Μεληπιπίδας).

²⁰ *IG* V 1, 337.

²¹ P. Poralla, *A prosopography of Lacedaimonians from the earliest times to the death of Alexander the Great (X–323 B.C.)*, rev. by A. S. Bradford, Chicago²1985, no. 349.

²² *SEG* 11.471 (2nd cent. BCE); *IG* V 1, 212 (1st cent. BCE); *IG* V 1, 595 (3rd cent. CE) — two different individuals, father and son).

²³ *IG* V 1, 71 (c. 150–160 CE); *IG* V 1, 97 (late 1st cent. CE).

²⁴ *IG* V 1, 41; 52; 79 (1st cent. CE); *IG* V 1, 162 (mid-2nd cent. CE).

²⁵ *IG* V 1, 1143. Note that *LGPN* associates the inscription not with Gytheion, but with the area of Asopos.

²⁶ *IG* V 1, 212 l. 29.

cape Tainaron as well.²⁷ It represents a rather tempting hypothesis that the dedicator of the small relief and the father of Σιδέκτας are the same person, but there is absolutely no evidence to support it. However, the coincidence of someone with this name being involved through his son with the Tainarioi, the use of the name only in Lakonia, the vicinity of Teuthrone to cape Tainaron, the temporal proximity (on the date of the relief see below) of *IG V 1 212* and the relief, as well as the fact that names in ancient Greece are used repeatedly within the same family, occasionally for centuries, might point in the direction of at least a familial connection between the dedicator of the relief and the father of Σιδέκτας.²⁸

Although it is clear that the relief has been dedicated to Poseidon, there is uncertainty as far as the exact form of the deity's name is concerned. All three suggested readings assume that the form Ποτ(ο)ιδᾶν was used in the text. However, the form Ποτοιδᾶν is known only from an early Classical inscription from the area of Pergamon.²⁹ The form Ποτιδᾶν is known only from inscriptions found in Thessaly and Rhodes.³⁰ On the contrary, the forms Ποσιδᾶν, Ποσειδᾶν, or Ποσοιδᾶν are in fact found on the Peloponnese. Ποσιδᾶν is attested in Arcadia, Epidauria, and more importantly Laconia,³¹ Ποσειδᾶν is found almost 30 times on the Peloponnese, with two of these instances associated with the sanctuary of Poseidon on cape Tainaron,³² and Ποσοιδᾶν is used only in Arcadia.³³ In my view, it appears most probable that the form Ποσειδᾶν was used in the inscription: this version of Poseidon's name was used in the area where the relief originates from and ΣΕΙ would fit quite nicely into the gap on the upper left corner of the relief. The inscription should thus read as follows:

[Λακκ]πίδας Πο[σει]/δᾶνι εὐχάν

Lakippidas (dedicated this) to Poseidon (in fulfillment of) a vow.

²⁷ Mylonopoulos, *Poseidon* (s. n. 10) 219–221. *IG V 1*, 210 and 211 are also member lists of the Tainarioi. E. Kourinou, *Σπάρτη. Συμβολή στη μνημειακή τοπογραφία της*, Athens 2000, 185–199 was able to identify the exact find spot of the three inscriptions and thus of the sanctuary of Poseidon Tainarios in Sparta. Kourinou (*ibidem* 192–193) assumes that the lists represent a re-organization of the cult of Poseidon Tainarios in the city of Sparta and at the same time an attempt to influence one of the central cults of the Koinon of the Eleutherolaconians, the cult of the same god on cape Tainaron.

²⁸ Interestingly, all documents containing the name Λακκίπιδας refer to rather distinguished members of the Spartan society (members of the same family?): In *SEG 11.471* the son (name not preserved) of Lakippidas is honored by the city of Tralleis in a decree found in Sparta; *IG V 1*, 212 refers to Sidektas, the son of Lakippidas, a member of the Tainarioi; *IG V 1*, 595 explicitly mentions the πρόγονοι εὐδοκιμώτατοι of M. Aurelius Lakippidas who bears the same name as his father.

²⁹ L. H. Jeffery, *The local scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford 1961, 362 no. 13.

³⁰ Thessaly: V. Milojević, *Bericht über die deutschen archäologischen Ausgrabungen in Thessalien 1973*, *Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα ἐξ Αθηνών* 7 (1974) 74; Rhodes: *IG XII 1*, 786; *I.Lindos 378*.

³¹ *IG IV² 1*, 555; *IG V 1*, 469; 1336; *IG V 2*, 274.

³² *IG V 1*, 1226; 1227.

³³ *IG V 2*, 95; 96.

The figurative decoration: The votive relief is decorated by a single figure, that of a pig stepping on a high base line in relief and facing to the right (pl. 22, fig. 3). The animal is rather long-legged and with a relatively lean body, which, however, appears heavier in the front half. The head seems small with a disproportionately long and pointy snout that ends to a blunt end where the nostrils are situated. The mouth is clearly indicated. The visible-to-the-viewer left eye of the pig is big and looks upward following the slightly lifted position of the head. The somewhat worn surface makes the discerning of the left ear problematic. The transition from the head to the body appears awkwardly thick, especially when compared to the admittedly slender body of the animal. The tail is first twisted upwards and to the left, before falling down and outwards, above a detail that seems to indicate the existence of a scrotal sac. If the lower end of the tail is indeed resting on a scrotal sac, then we are dealing with a male pig, a boar. One should note, however, that no other sex-related characteristics are visible, but it would be appropriate to dedicate the image of a male pig to a male deity. Compared to modern-day pigs, the legs are rather tall and well-proportioned.³⁴ From the area of the head, right above the ear, all the way to the tail a mane-like feature is visible, a typical characteristic of ancient depictions of domesticated pigs both in vase painting and relief sculpture.³⁵

Date: Scholars have already pointed out the problems associated with the dating of inscriptions based on letter forms.³⁶ Nevertheless, one could cautiously argue that the overall emphasized width of the letters in the dedicatory inscription, especially noticeable with the letters Δ, Υ, and Ν, and the slight backwards tilting of the upper part of the letter Σ place the relief in the late Hellenistic period, towards the end of the 2nd cent. BCE or, more probably, in the 1st cent. BCE. In addition, the overall historical context points in the same direction, since the cities of southern Laconia flourished especially after the creation of the Koinon of the Lacedaimonians, in particular after 146 BCE.³⁷

³⁴ The pig on the relief seems to belong to the type “hochbeinige Schweine” in the typology of Meyer, Franke, Schäfer, *Hausschweine* (s. n. 5) 88–90.

³⁵ *Vase painting:* Athens, National Museum, inv.no. Akr 607 (black-figure dinos, c. 560–540 BCE); Athens, National Museum, inv.no. Akr 636 (red figure loutrophoros, c. 525–500 BCE); Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, inv.no. 9.17 (red-figure pelike, c. 490–470 BCE); Paris, Louvre, inv.no. G 112 (red figure kylix, c. 525–500 BCE). *Relief sculpture:* Athens, Acropolis Museum, inv.no. 581 (the famous so-called pig-relief from the Athenian Acropolis, c. 500–480 BCE); Athens, National Museum, inv.no. 1330 (votive relief from the City Asklepieion of Athens, 4th cent. BCE); Athens, National Museum, inv.no. 1395 (votive relief from the Amphiareion at Oropos, 4th cent. BCE).

³⁶ S. V. Tracy, *Attic letter cutters of 229 to 86 B.C.*, Berkeley 1990, 223–236; A. Chaniotis, *Die Verträge zwischen kretischen Poleis in der hellenistischen Zeit*, Stuttgart 1996, 452.

³⁷ S. Giannopoulos, *Η νομισματοκοπία και ο ενεργητισμός του Ευρυκλή στη Λακωνία*, in: E. Apostolou, C. Doyen (eds.), *La monnaie dans le Péloponnèse. Production, iconographie, circulation, histoire. De l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, vol. I (BCH Suppl. 57), Athens 2017, 445–458 focuses on Eurykles, but sheds light on the history of the region before Eurykles as well. M. Karambinis, *Urban development in Roman Greece: an overview*, ASAA 99 (2021) 611–612 is, in my view, too critical and applies perhaps too modern a criterion when he writes that the koinon was simply a “move to weaken Sparta, and must not be conceived of as a sign of

The EM 8926 — Its local context

As has been already mentioned, the small votive relief was found in Kotronas, a small village in modern-day Mani, identified with the ancient city of Teuthrone. Not much is known either through ancient written sources or archaeological exploration about Teuthrone. Pausanias mentions the city in his book on Laconia twice, but very summarily and identifies it as one of the eighteen cities of the Koinon of Eleutherolaconians.³⁸ Pausanias apparently did visit Teuthrone, but he only refers to the mythical founder of the city, the Athenian Teuthras, the cult of Artemis Issoria, and a spring called Naia.³⁹ Several ancient blocks have been found reused in houses of the area.⁴⁰ In addition, ancient walls, Doric column drums, at least one Doric capital, and Late Roman mosaic floors have been mentioned in various reports in connection to the village of Kotronas.⁴¹ A small altar bearing decoration in relief and a dedicatory inscription as well as a votive relief can be associated with the cult of Artemis, mentioned by Pausanias; both finds seem to belong to the Hellenistic period.⁴²

Besides the small relief in the Athens Epigraphic Museum, there is no other evidence for the cult of Poseidon in Teuthrone and thus it is impossible to decide whether the votive points to a cult of the god here or to a single dedication to him offered at the sanctuary of a different divinity.⁴³ The importance of the cult of Poseidon for the southern

florescence in the area. The small, packed poleis in the Mani peninsula **remained essentially villages**” (emphasis mine).

³⁸ Paus. 3.21.7: ἀριθμὸς δὲ τῶν Ἐλευθερολακίων ὀκτὼ πόλεις καὶ δέκα εἰσὶ, πρώτη μὲν καταβάσιν ἐξ Αἰγίων ἐπὶ θάλασσαν Γύθειον, μετὰ δὲ αὐτὴν Τευθρόνη (“the number of the cities of the Eleutherolaconians is eighteen. The first one as one comes down by sea from Aigiai is Gytheion. After this [town] comes Teuthrone”).

³⁹ Paus. 3.25.4: Ἀπὸ δὲ Πυρρήχου καταβάντι ἐς θάλασσαν ἔστι Τευθρόνη· τὸν δὲ οἰκιστὴν οἱ ταύτῃ Τεύθραντα Ἀθηναῖον ὄντα ἀποφαίνουσι, τιμῶσι δὲ θεῶν μάλιστα Ἴσσωρίαν Ἄρτεμιν, καὶ πηγὴ σφισίν ἔστι Ναία (“Teuthrone is on the road as one comes down to the sea from Pyrrhichos. The inhabitants claim that the founder was Teuthras, an Athenian. Among the gods, they honor Artemis Issoria the most and they have a spring called Naia”). On the cult of Artemis Issoria in Teuthrone, see, most recently, I. Solima, *Heiligtümer der Artemis auf der Peloponnes*, Heidelberg 2011, 193–194.

⁴⁰ *IG V 1*, 1221 was seen (and its text copied) in one of the houses of Kotronas, for example.

⁴¹ The evidence has been collected in N. D. Papachatzis, *Παυσανίου Ἑλλάδος Περιήγησις. Βιβλίον 2 καὶ 3. Κορινθιακὰ καὶ Λακωνικά*, Athens 1989, 438–440 with n. 3 on page 438 and n. 1 on page 439.

⁴² *Altar*: D. Peppas-Delmouzou, *Βωμίσκος τῆς Ἴσσωρίας Ἀρτέμιδος*, Αρχαιολογικὰ Ανάλεκτα ἐξ Αθηνῶν 6 (1973) 482–491 (Artemis); *ead.*, *Autel portatif trouvé à Teuthrone*, in: *Mélanges helléniques offerts à Georges Daux*, Paris 1974, 303–307 (either Artemis or Hekate). *Relief*: A. M. Woodward, *Laconia. Topography and inscriptions of Taenarum and S. Maina*, *ABSA* 13 (1906/07) 256–257; *AD* 23, *Chron.* (1968) 155 with pl. 107b.

⁴³ Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge suggested to me in an email communication that one could at least consider that the relief is a so-called wandering stone and that it was originally dedicated to the sanctuary of Poseidon at cape Tainaron and transported later to Skopa. This is definitely a possibility, but there is no evidence to support such an assumption, especially since the concrete circumstances around the discovery of the relief are not mentioned in Mayer, *Funde* (s. n. 8). In

part of Laconia⁴⁴ and the close proximity of the small city to the famous sanctuary of Poseidon on cape Tainaron with its important role both in the Koinon of the Lacedaimonians and later in the Koinon of the Eleutherolaconians⁴⁵ might indicate that there was indeed a cult of Poseidon in Teuthrone, probably centered around a small sanctuary where the rather simple relief in the Athens Epigraphic Museum was dedicated.

Pigs for Poseidon

Whenever ancient literary sources choose to actually define the kind of the sacrificial animal, instead of referring more generically to a *thysia* of unspecified animals, they seem to focus usually on the sacrifice of bovines.⁴⁶ The imposing appearance, the costliness, and the prestige associated with these animals do make them appropriate not only for elevating rituals in narratives, but also for creating an enhanced ‘reality’ in the world of images.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, a famous passage in the *Odyssey* describes *en detail* the sacrifice of a five-year-old and thus adult male pig⁴⁸ by Eumaios in honor of Odysseus, whom the swineherd has not yet recognized.⁴⁹ In addition, the paradoxical situation of willingly killing animals with such important a role in agricultural labor, bovines, often attracted the attention of ancient authors and has been the starting point of some of the most influential (theoretical) studies on ancient Greek sacrifice.⁵⁰

addition, the particularly small size of the relief does not recommend its having being moved from Tainaron in order to be used as building material in Skopa.

⁴⁴ Mylonopoulos, *Poseidon* (s. n. 10) 241–243.

⁴⁵ J. Mylonopoulos, *Von Helike nach Tainaron und von Kalaureia nach Samikon: Amphikytionische Heiligtümer des Poseidon auf der Peloponnes*, in: K. Freitag, P. Funke, M. Haake (eds.), *Kult – Politik – Ethnos. Überregionale Heiligtümer im Spannungsfeld von Kult und Politik*, Stuttgart 2006, 140–146.

⁴⁶ For example, Hom. *Od.* 3.5–9 describes the rather impressive sacrifice of 81 black bulls to Poseidon.

⁴⁷ van Straten, *Hiera Kala* (s. n. 6) 177 calculated the price of cattle (adult) based on epigraphic evidence between 40 and 90 drachmai.

⁴⁸ According to van Straten, *Hiera Kala* (s. n. 6) 177 the price of an adult pig was 20 to 40 drachmai and for piglets 3 to 3.5 drachmai. On the various terms used in ancient Greek to denote “pig” and “pigskin,” see, most recently, P. Pakkanen, *Beyond skin-deep: Considering the pig in ancient Greece through the particularities of its skin*, *Kernos* 31 (2021) 125–129.

⁴⁹ Hom. *Od.* 14.414–449. In line 419 gender, age, and physical appearance of the sacrificial pig are made clear: μάλα πίονα πενταέτηρον. See the exhaustive analysis of the passage in E. Kadletz, *The sacrifice of Eumaios the pig herder*, *GRBS* 25 (1984) 99–105. For a slightly different understanding of some of the ‘sacrificial’ terms used in the passage, see G. Ekroth, *Meat for the gods*, in: V. Pirenne-Delforge, F. Prescendi (eds.), *Nourrir les dieux? Sacrifice et représentation du divin* (*Kernos* Suppl. 26), Liège 2011, 19–21.

⁵⁰ W. Burkert, *Homo Necans. Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen*, Berlin 1972; R. Girard, *La violence et le sacré*, Paris 1972; J.-L. Durand, *Sacrifice et labour en grèce ancienne. Essai d’anthropologie religieuse*, Paris 1986.

Pigs, on the contrary, have not been yet at the center of scholarly studies on ancient sacrifice,⁵¹ with the exception of the use of piglets in rituals for Demeter and Kore,⁵² although recent osteological research reveals that they do represent in many cases the preferred sacrificial animal or at least represent a big part of a much more varied sacrificial animal ‘menu’ than epigraphic documents, literary sources, and visual evidence would let us believe.⁵³ Cult regulations and sacrificial calendars add another piece to the puzzle, since they seem to preserve an ancient preference for sheep.⁵⁴ The situation becomes more intriguing when one takes into consideration Gunnel Ekroth’s suggestion that pigs “may have been ritually slaughtered by a different ritual than cattle, sheep and goats ... which involves the burning of hair and meat as well as the offering of cooked meat portions, but no cutting out of thigh bones or tails,” which she based on the observation that pig bones tend to be scarce in altar deposits, but appear rather strongly in ritual consumption debris.⁵⁵ In order to understand Greek sacrifices in general and the role pigs played therein more concretely, the disparity among literary sources, epigraphic evidence, visual media, and archaeological materials should be at least partially understood as reflecting the discrepancy between the imaginary and the ideal on the one and the real on the other side.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Based on epigraphic evidence and literary sources, K. Clinton, *Pigs in Greek rituals*, in: R. Hägg, B. Alroth (eds.), *Greek sacrificial ritual: Olympian and chthonian*, Stockholm 2005, 167–179 discusses the role of pigs in cults associated with Demeter and rituals considered purificatory. Clinton convincingly rejects the notion that rituals involving the sacrifice of a pig or piglet were ‘chthonian’ and offers a more nuanced understanding of the use of pigs and piglets in so-called purificatory rituals. Based on evidence from cult regulations, Zoé Pitz analyzed in her Ph.D. at the University of Liège (*À chacun le sien: associations entre animaux sacrificiels et destinataires divins dans les normes rituelles grecques*, 2019) the relationship between the identity of a divinity and the types of sacrificial animals they tend to receive. Pitz is currently preparing the publication of the manuscript, which will appear in the supplement-series of Kernos (I thank Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge for this information). In her paper, Pakkanen, *Beyond skin-deep* (s. n. 48) 123–158 focuses primarily on pigskin, but addresses to a lesser degree more general issues about pig sacrifices as well.

⁵² D. Ruscillo, *Thesmophoriazousai. Mytilenean women and their secret rites*, in: G. Ekroth, J. Wallensten (eds.), *Bones, behaviour and belief. The zooarchaeological evidence as a source for ritual practice in ancient Greece and beyond*, Stockholm 2013, 181–195 demonstrates that even for the ‘use’ of piglets in the cult(s) of Demeter, zooarchaeology can enhance previous knowledge: the author discusses *inter alia* the role of snakes in said rituals.

⁵³ D. Mylona, *Dealing with the unexpected. Unusual animals in an early Roman cistern fill in the sanctuary of Poseidon at Kalaureia, Poros*, in: Ekroth, Wallensten, *Bones* (s. n. 52) 149–166 presents evidence not only for cattle, pigs, sheep, or goats used as sacrificial animals, but also for the offering of dogs, donkeys, birds and birds’ eggs, snakes, frogs, and fish in blood sacrifices.

⁵⁴ van Straten, *Hiera Kala* (s. n. 6) 171–173. A quick search in the database *Collection of Greek Ritual Norms (CGRN — cgrn.ulg.ac.be)* seems to confirm van Straten’s results. The sacrificial calendars of Erchia (*SEG* 21.541) and Thorikos (*SEG* 33.147), however, do mention stand-alone pig sacrifices to Poseidon and other divinities.

⁵⁵ G. Ekroth, *Thighs or tails? The osteological evidence as a source of Greek ritual norms*, in: P. Brulé (ed.), *La norme en matière religieuse en Grèce ancienne* (Kernos Suppl. 21), Liège 2009, 54.

⁵⁶ van Straten, *Hiera Kala* (s. n. 6) 170–175; Klöckner, *Votive* (s. n. 7) 139–152.

In the Greek world, sacrificial rituals specifically in the cult of Poseidon present a situation very similar to the one just described: Most written sources refer to sacrifices of bovines or focus on extraordinary sacrificial victims, such as horses or fish,⁵⁷ and rarely mention pigs.⁵⁸ A cult regulation from Kamiros on Rhodes does refer to the sacrifice of a pig to Poseidon, but the ritual killing of the animal takes place in the context of a τριπτοία sacrifice.⁵⁹ In the *Odyssey* too, we find a reference to the sacrifice of a male pig in honor of Poseidon as part of a τριπτοία.⁶⁰

On the Peloponnese, more concretely, the ancient literary sources refer to bull sacrifices in most cases as well.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the sanctuary at Isthmia is in this context particularly interesting, since here, the archaeological evidence enriches the rather one-sided information delivered by ancient authors: At least five, from Herodotos to Stephanos Byzantios, mention either exclusively bull sacrifices or unspecified *thysiai* and other forms of sacrificial rituals like *spondai* in honor of Poseidon at his Isthmian sanctuary.⁶² However, the osteological material from excavations at the sanctuary reveals a more nuanced situation: pigs, sheep, goats, and even birds and one dog were sacrificed to Poseidon alongside the expected cattle. Interestingly, heads and horns were also discovered, an indication that occasionally animal heads were also burnt on the Isthmian altar.⁶³

In this context, the small relief from Teuthrone does seem to reconcile the ideal with the real: the dedicator of the relief had a pig placed on his votive, probably a petrified memory of an actual sacrifice he had already performed in honor of Poseidon in Teuthrone; by representing the sacrificial animal, the dedicator turned an ephemeral ritual into a perpetual thanksgiving to Poseidon. The specific reason for the sacrifice and the small votive remains unknown, since the inscription refers very generally to a vow (εὐχάν). Most probably, the dedicator — who might even have had a familial connection to the cult of Poseidon Tainarios in Sparta, if Lakippidas was indeed his

⁵⁷ Drowning of horses in the Argolid (Genesion): Paus. 8.7.2; sacrifice of tuna fish in Boeotia (Halai): Ath. 7.297e.

⁵⁸ See *CGRN* 84.91 (Attica, 363/62 BCE); *CGRN* 115.4 (Lindos, 3rd cent. BCE); *CGRN* 199.3 (Delos, 178 BCE) for instances in which Poseidon is honored with the sacrifice of a pig. The indicative, albeit not exhaustive catalogue of sacrifices to Poseidon in A. Hermay, M. Leguilloux, V. Chankowski, A. Petropoulou, *Les sacrifices dans le monde grec*, in: *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum, vol. I: Processions, sacrifices, libations, fumigations, dedications*, Los Angeles 2004, 87–88 lists the same three pig sacrifices to Poseidon mentioned above (*ibidem* 88 no. 214e = Attica; no. 217 = Delos; no. 221 = Lindos).

⁵⁹ *LSCG Suppl.* 94.

⁶⁰ Hom. *Od.* 11.131.

⁶¹ Mylonopoulos, *Poseidon* (s. n. 10) 319–335.

⁶² Aristid. *Isthm.* 31; Hdt. 8.123; Himer. *Or.* 47.82–84; Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἴσθμός; Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.

⁶³ O. Broneer, *Isthmia I. Temple of Poseidon*, Princeton 1971, 56. E. R. Gebhard, D. S. Reese, *Sacrifices for Poseidon and Melikertes-Palaimon*, in: Hägg, Alroth, *Greek sacrificial ritual* (s. n. 51) 140.

name, thanked the deity for rescuing him at sea or rather from an earthquake.⁶⁴ Poseidon is known, after all, both to cause and to protect from earthquakes, and the neighboring sanctuary of Poseidon Tainarios was associated with one of the most catastrophic earthquakes in the history of Laconia and Greece in general.⁶⁵ If this holds true, then the sacrifice of a pig and the commemoration of the ritual act through the dedication of a tiny and rather simple relief were a small price to pay.

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⁶⁴ See, for example, the dedication of a herm to Poseidon Asphaleios by Damophon (perhaps the sculptor) in Megalopolis, after having been rescued either at sea or from an earthquake (*IG* V 2, 454) or the dedication of Panteimia to Poseidon in Messene for saving her husband and her son (*SEG* 45.305, but see also *EBGR* 1994/95, 359 no. 345).

⁶⁵ J. Mylonopoulos, *Poseidon der Erderschütterer. Religiöse Interpretationen von Erd- und Seebeben*, in: E. Olshausen, H. Sonnabend (eds.), *Naturkatastrophen in der antiken Welt*, Stuttgart 1998, 82–89.



Fig. 1: Late Hellenistic dedicatory relief from Skopa (Laconia, Greece) in the Athens Epigraphic Museum (EM 8926) (© Ioannis Mylonopoulos)



Fig. 2: Late Hellenistic dedicatory relief from Skopa (Laconia, Greece) in the Athens Epigraphic Museum (EM 8926): Inscription (© Ioannis Mylonopoulos)

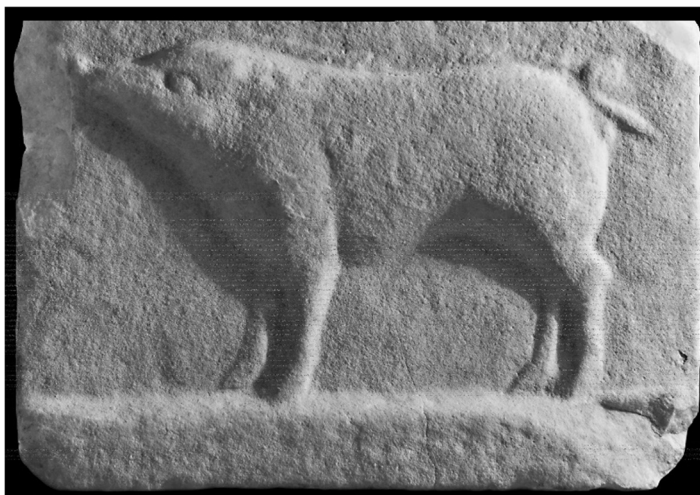


Fig. 3: Late Hellenistic dedicatory relief from Skopa (Laconia, Greece) in the Athens Epigraphic Museum (EM 8926): Figure of a pig (© Ioannis Mylonopoulos)