

A NEW INSCRIBED STATUE BASE FROM THE SANCTUARY OF POSEIDON AT KALAUREIA¹

BY

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Abstract

In the Kalaureia Research Program excavations of 2007 and 2008, four joining blocks of a statue base were unearthed. The monument is a dedication from the polis of Arsinoe in the Peloponnese: its inhabitants offered two statues, of King Ptolemaios and his sister-wife Arsinoe Philadelphos, to Poseidon. The present article publishes the monument and its inscription, and proceeds to present a reconstruction and an attempt at positioning the monument in its historical context.¹

During the Kalaureia campaign of 2008, three separate blocks (B, C and D; *Figs. 2–4*) constituting the front of an inscribed statue base were discovered in secondary context in Area H. The fourth block of the base, block A, was excavated already in 2007 (*Fig. 1*): it is the central back part of the monument behind block C.² *Fig. 5* presents a perspective reconstruction of the monument. The inscription runs across all three blocks of the front and its well-cut regular letters present a text in the Dorian dialect that can easily be read in its entirety (*Fig. 6*):

Βασιλῆ Πτολεμαῖον καὶ Ἀρσινόαν Φιλάδελφον ἅ πόλις
ἅ τῶν Ἀρσινοῦσων ἀπὸ Πελοποννήσου Προσειδάνι

Height of letters: 2.1 (Ω)–2.8 cm (Σ; the sigma itself varies between 2.4 and 2.8 cm).

Distance between letters: 1.7–2.9 cm.

The monument is thus a dedication from the polis of Arsinoe in the Peloponnese: to our knowledge, it is the only known dedication presented by this city. The inhabitants of Arsinoe offered two statues, one of King Ptolemaios and one of his sister-wife Arsinoe Philadelphos, to Poseidon. Unfortunately, we cannot draw any conclusions about the appearance or material of the sculptures.³ The fragmentarily preserved cuttings on the upper surfaces are for gamma-clamps used to fasten the blocks to each other and for dowels to attach a rectangular slab on top of blocks A–D, so no traces of how the statues were attached to the base are currently preserved.⁴ The former existence of a covering slab is further supported by the fact that the central blocks A and C are not large enough to fully close the gap at the centre of the monument (*Fig. 6*).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STATUE BASE BLOCKS

The statue base comprises four blocks made of greyish limestone (*Fig. 5*): when viewed from the front, the left side of the

¹ JW is the principal author of the passages on the inscription and its historical context while JP has written the sections on the statue base blocks. JW wishes to thank Dr Ch. Henriksén and Mr Johan Heldt for kindly double-checking the accents, Ms A. Hooton for her excellent drawings, and Professor D. Gill for sending his article, ‘Arsinoe in the Peloponnese: the Ptolemaic base on the Methana peninsula’. We are also very grateful for the comments made by Professors Olga Palagia and Mika Kajava and the article referee.

² On the Kalaureia Research Program in general and the conducted excavations, see Penttinen & Wells *et al.* 2009, and the project website www.kalaureia.org. For a report on Area H, see Penttinen & Wells *et al.* 2009. Block A and the corner of block C are visible in the digital elevation model of the state of excavations at the end of the 2007 season: see Pakkanen 2009, fig. 1.

³ There are several previously known parallels for double portraits of Ptolemaios II and Arsinoe II: Pausanias (1.8.6) reports having seen the statues of Ptolemaios Philadelphos and his sister Arsinoe next to each other in the Athenian Agora by the entrance of the Odeion of Agrippa. The most famous double portrait was erected at Olympia consisting of two Ionic columns topped by statues in front of the Echo Hall; the dedication was made by Kallikrates of Samos, a Ptolemaic naval commander; Hoepfner 1971, 11–54. The couple is also depicted seated together with Amun on a fragmentary dedication from Alexandria and also on a gold octodrachm; Stanwick 2002, 55–56, figs. 9, 214. The sanctuary of Isis at Methana has previously been identified as the likely origin of an Egyptianising granite portrait head discovered in the harbour of Aigina; a fragmentarily preserved hieroglyphic inscription links the head with Ptolemaios VI Philometor, so the sculpture cannot originate from our new basis at Kalaureia; for a recent discussion of the portrait with references, see Bringmann *et al.* 1995, 455.

⁴ For different ways of attaching sculptures to bases, see Schmidt 1995 and Willer 1996. Parallels of bases with a rectangular extension on top of a profiled moulding are discussed in Schmidt 1995 and include the following: I.2.7 at Kamiros (c. 221 BC), VII.10 and VII.11 on Delos (before 171 BC; 138/37 BC), IV.1.147 at Pergamon (c. 65–50 BC); Schmidt 1995, 262, 384, 439–441, figs. 20, 72, 99–101. In late fourth- and third-century bases from the Amphiarion at Oropos the covering slab stretches over the maximum extent of the central inscribed part of the base, as in e.g. catalogue numbers 356, 422–425, 457; Petrakos 1997, 282–285, 324–329, 373–376. In parallel, the covering slab in *Fig. 6* could have been larger than how it is currently reconstructed.

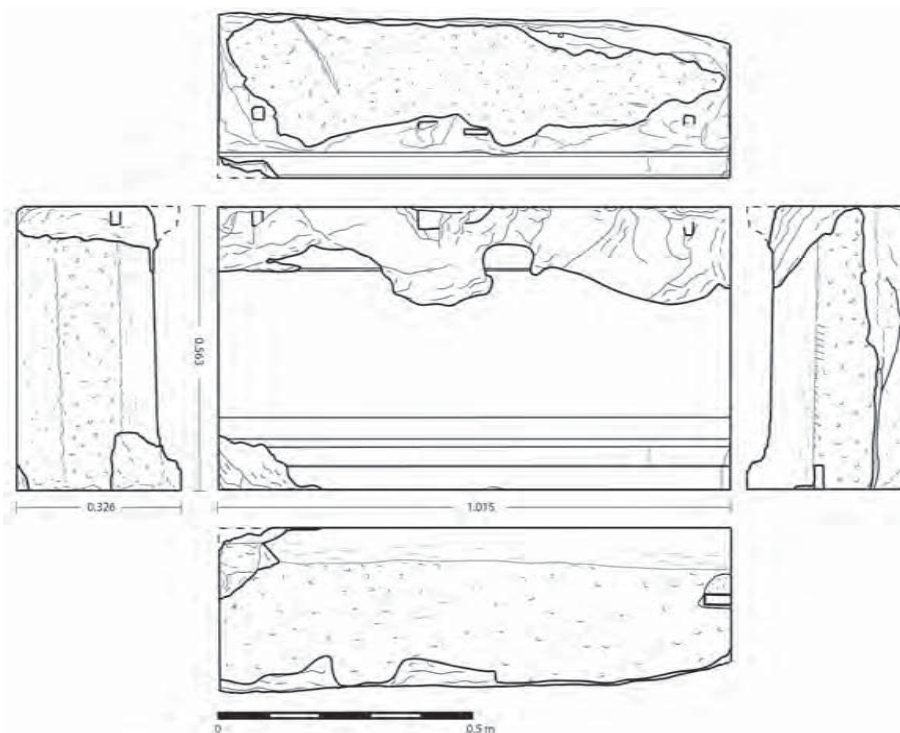


Fig. 1. Block A. Scale 1:15. By A. Hooton and J. Pakkanen.

monument is carved out of a single block (block B), the central part has front and back faces (blocks C and A), and the right side is formed again by a single block (block D). The end blocks were attached to the foundations by two rectangular dowels and the central blocks by a single one at the left end when viewed from the front, and the blocks were tied together with clamps. Blocks A and C have also partially preserved dowel holes: the dowels were used to attach the aforementioned covering slab to the base blocks.⁵ The vertical contact surfaces of the end blocks have anathyrosis on three sides; the contact surfaces of the central blocks have the anathyrosis at the top and the exterior faces only. The front main faces of the blocks slope slightly inwards towards the top.

The statue base has profiled mouldings both at the base and the crown; the dimensions of the profiles are given in *Figs. 7 and 8*. The base of the block has a vertical fillet, a cyma reversa, a narrow vertical fillet topped by an apophyge which is separated from the main face of the block by a narrow sloping fillet (*Fig. 7*). The top profile is basically the reverse of the base profile, but the crowning cyma reversa is more pronounced than the one at the base of the blocks (*Fig. 8*).

Block A (*Fig. 1*)

Back central part of the statue base. Height: 0.563 m; width: 1.015 m; depth: 0.326 m. Back of the block fully preserved but irregular.

Block B (*Fig. 2*)

Left end of the base when viewed from the front. Height 0.563 m; width 0.484–0.487 m (front face; the moulding projects more at the base than at the top), 0.452 m (back face); depth 0.740 m (at top, lower profile fully preserved only on one side of the block).

Block C (*Fig. 3*)

Front central part of the statue base. Height: 0.563 m; width: 0.973–0.975 m (the block tapers slightly from base to top); depth: 0.358 m.

Block D (*Fig. 4*)

Right end of the base when viewed from the front. Height 0.563 m; width 0.493–0.500 m (moulding projects more at the base than at the top); depth 0.708 m (maximum preserved). Traces of lead are preserved in the clamp cutting closest to the side with the inscription.

⁵ The dowel holes are very close to the block facade in order to facilitate pouring of lead into the cutting: the pouring channels were completely broken off when the monument was dismantled. The function of the cuttings with one slanting side next to the rectangular dowel holes cannot be determined.

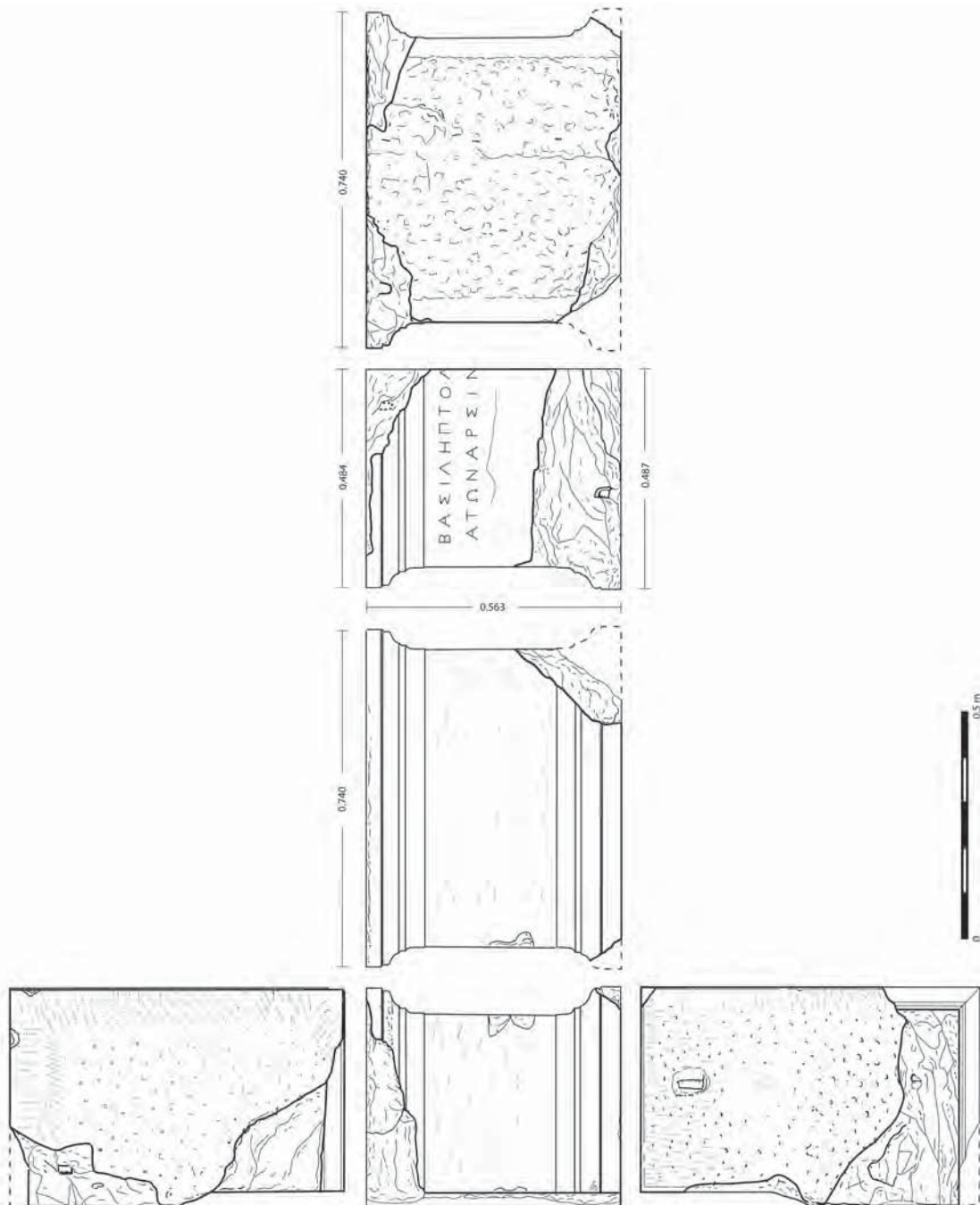


Fig. 2. Block B. Scale 1:15. By A. Hooton and J. Pakkanen.

THE DATE OF THE MONUMENT

The lettering is regular, carefully carved and can be broadly dated to the early Hellenistic period. The one M has almost upright *hastae*. The Π has a shorter right *hasta*, reaching somewhat below the middle of the left stroke. The omicron is only slightly smaller than the other letters, as is the one omega.

The statue base corroborates this broad dating. A very close parallel to its profiled mouldings is provided by a dedication made by the polis of Miletos in honour of Philotera, daughter of Ptolemaios I in 279/8–276/5 BC.⁶ However, the profiles are rather generic and cannot be used for precise dating of the base:

⁶ *IDidyma*, 122, no. 115, fig. 61; Schmidt 1995, 261–262, fig. 19.

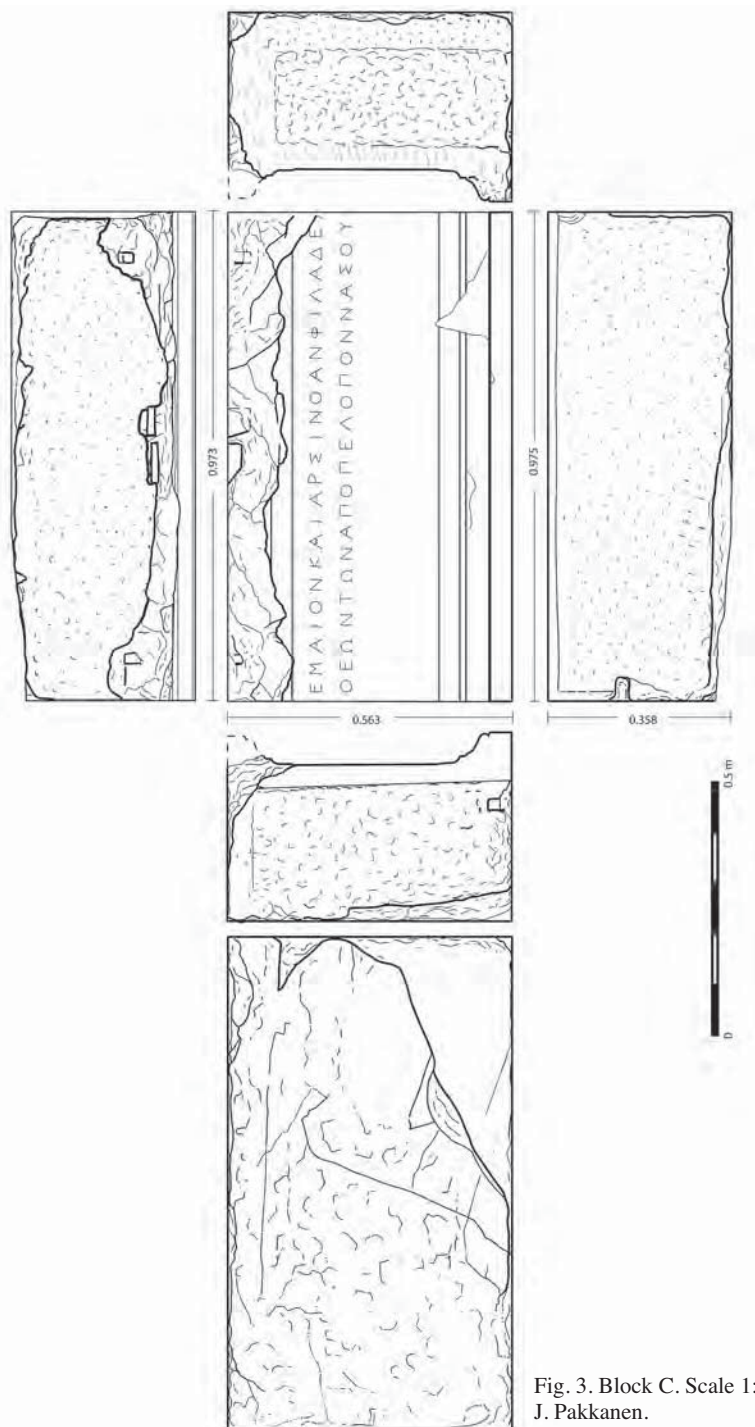


Fig. 3. Block C. Scale 1:15. By A. Hooton and J. Pakkanen.

for example, the late third century BC exedra near the Propylaia on Delos is also a close match to our blocks.⁷

The historical context of the inscription might provide further information regarding the date of the monument. Starting with the honorands, Ptolemaios took over the throne as sole ruler of Egypt in 282 BC and reigned until 246 BC, but the inscrip-

tion cannot of course have been erected prior to the somewhat controversial marriage between Ptolemaios and his full sister Arsinoe, which took place sometime between 279 and 274 BC. Regrettably, a study of the honorands will give us no further

⁷ Schmidt 1995, 472–473, figs. 122–124, 226.

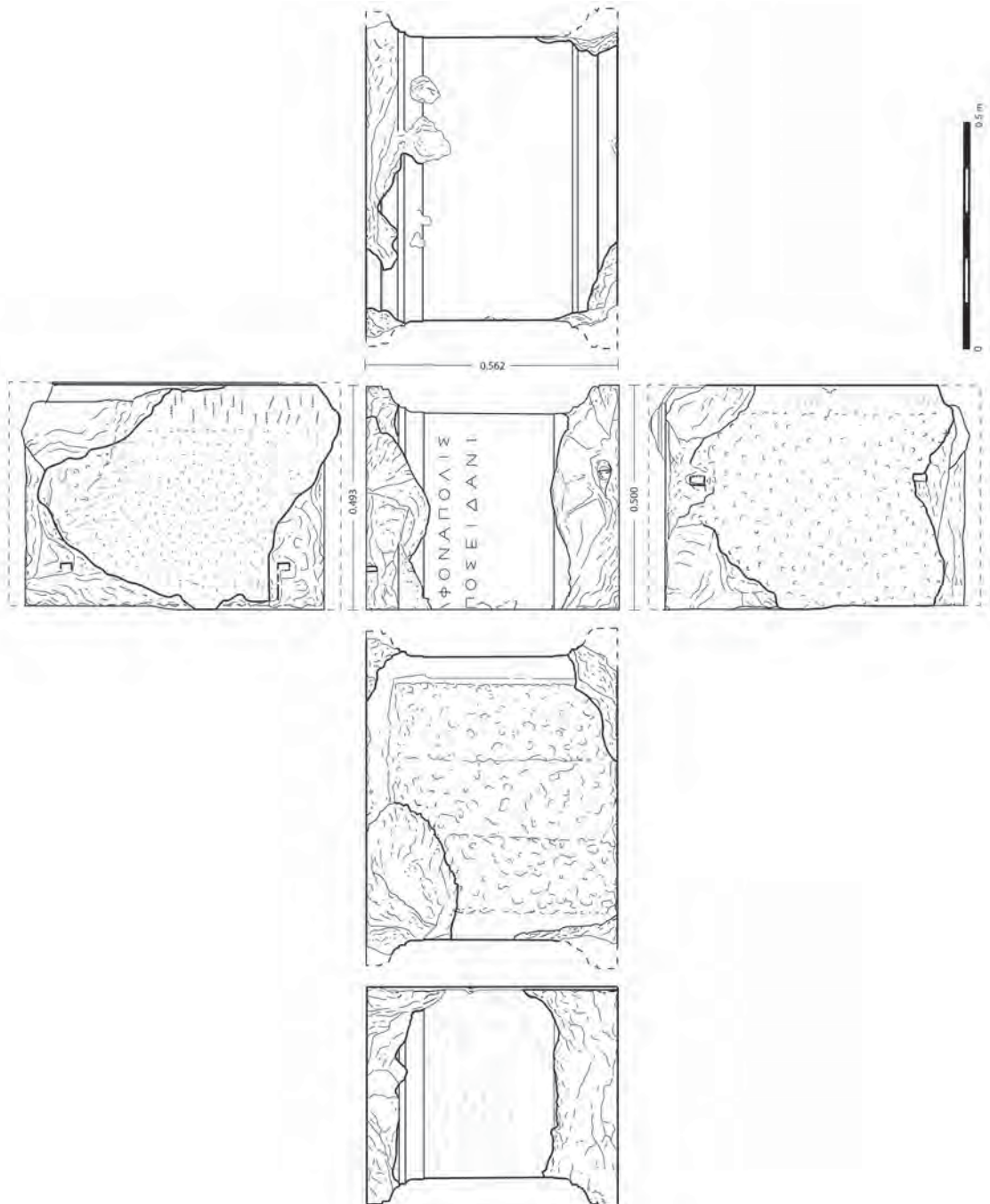


Fig. 4. Block D. Scale 1:15. By A. Hooton and J. Pakkanen.

chronological information. Arsinoe's epithet Philadelphos does not provide additional information, since it is not known exactly when the queen received this title. She probably bore the name of Philadelphos even before her death in 270 or 268 BC, at which point she undoubtedly received it as a cult title.⁸ Likewise, the lack of a designation as *thea* does not provide further

⁸ Hölbl 2001, 111. See Anastassiades 1998, 135–136, for a summary and references of the discussion. For the possible use of the title before her death, see for example the Salaminian inscription *ISalamis* 13, 63, dated c. 285–273 BC. Death of Arsinoe in 270 BC: Huss 2001, 310, n. 41, with references; Hölbl 2001, 40; death of Arsinoe in 268 BC: Grzybek 1990, 103–112, 171; Habicht 1992, 72, with references, Cohen 1995, 126 n. 4, with references.

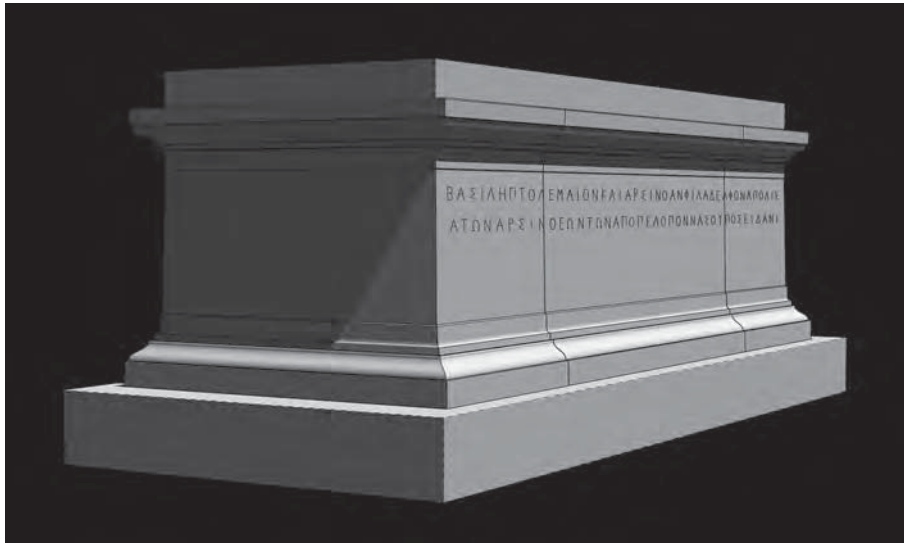


Fig. 5. Perspective reconstruction of the statue base. By J. Pakkanen.

indications as to the date. The King and Queen could be referred to as gods during their lifetime, but this was never a necessity: Arsinoe is in fact rarely called *thea* in the epigraphic material, even in contexts where she was clearly conceived as such, for example in inscriptions mentioning her priests or *kanephoroi*.⁹

The identity of the dedicators might however yield a somewhat more defined, sequential context, since the foundation of the city of the “Arsinoeans from the Peloponnese” must also contribute to a *terminus post quem* for the erection of the monument. Arsinoe was the new name given to the city of Methana in the Argolid.¹⁰ The re-foundation has been attributed to Arsinoe II Philadelphos herself,¹¹ to Ptolemaios II Philadelphos through the agency of his *strategos* Patroklos sometime after the Queen’s death, or to Ptolemaios Philopator and Arsinoe III.¹² Bagnall finds it unlikely that Philopator had any expansionist goals in the area in question, and although Queen Arsinoe took a very active interest in politics—she is believed to have played a significant role in the Egyptian anti-Macedonian foreign policy that led to the Chremonidean War—most scholars opt for the middle suggestion.¹³ Patroklos operated in the Aegean during this war (267–261 BC), owing his important position in the opinion of some scholars to the goodwill of the then deceased Arsinoe.¹⁴

Although the Ptolemaic Empire was an ally of Athens, they did not have access to the harbour facilities of the Piraeus, since this part of the city was under occupation by Antigonos Gonatas’ opposing forces. Patroklos thus strengthened Ptolemaic military presence in the Aegean by operating through a number of more or less permanent bases. In Attica, traces of his strongholds and activities have been identified in Koroni, Rhamnous and the islet opposite Cape Sounion (Gaidouronisi, also known as the “Island of Patroklos”), for example, and among the is-

lands, Keos (Koressos) as well as Crete (Rethymnon, Itanos) and Thera can be mentioned.¹⁵ It is generally believed that the Methana peninsula also became a part of Patroklos’ defence system. It was turned into a Ptolemaic foreign territory and Arsinoe was founded as an important Ptolemaic base on the Greek mainland. Methana/Arsinoe was clearly chosen for its strategic position, close to Attica and controlling maritime traffic in the Saronic Gulf, as well as for its well-developed harbour and especially docking facilities. The primary goal of the foundation should be understood as being support for the Egyptian fleet while operating in the Aegean.¹⁶

⁹ Anastassiades 1998, 131. For further epigraphic examples, see for example Bernard 1970, 989; Bernard 1992, no. 13; *ArchPF* 13, 1939, 28, 13.

¹⁰ For evidence regarding the identification, see Cohen 1995, 125, with references. A first summary of the evidence was presented by Hiller von Gaertringen in *ArchEph* 1925–26, 68–76.

¹¹ Cohen 1995, 34.

¹² Cohen 1995, 125; Bagnall 1976, 135.

¹³ Huss 2001, 271–276, 310; Hölbl 2001, 40–41; Bagnall 1976, 135.

¹⁴ Launey 1945, 44.

¹⁵ Gill 2007, 90–91; Huss 2001, 275–276. We are very grateful to Prof. Gill for kindly sending us his article.

¹⁶ Archibald 2007, 256; Hölbl 2001, 40–45; Cohen 1995, 34, 125; Habicht 1992, 89; Bagnall 1976, 135. Similar settlements named Arsinoe are found in Crete and on Keos as well. Koressos was renamed Arsinoe by Patroklos, as was Rethymnon in Crete, for example (Mueller 2006, 157; Cohen 1995, 139; Bagnall 1976, 141–142). Cohen 1995 attributes this to “the strength of the Ptolemaic thalassocracy as well as the influence of Queen Arsinoe II” (Cohen 1995, 34–35).



Fig. 6. Front elevation and top plan of the monument. Scale 1:10. By A. Hooton and J. Pakkanen.

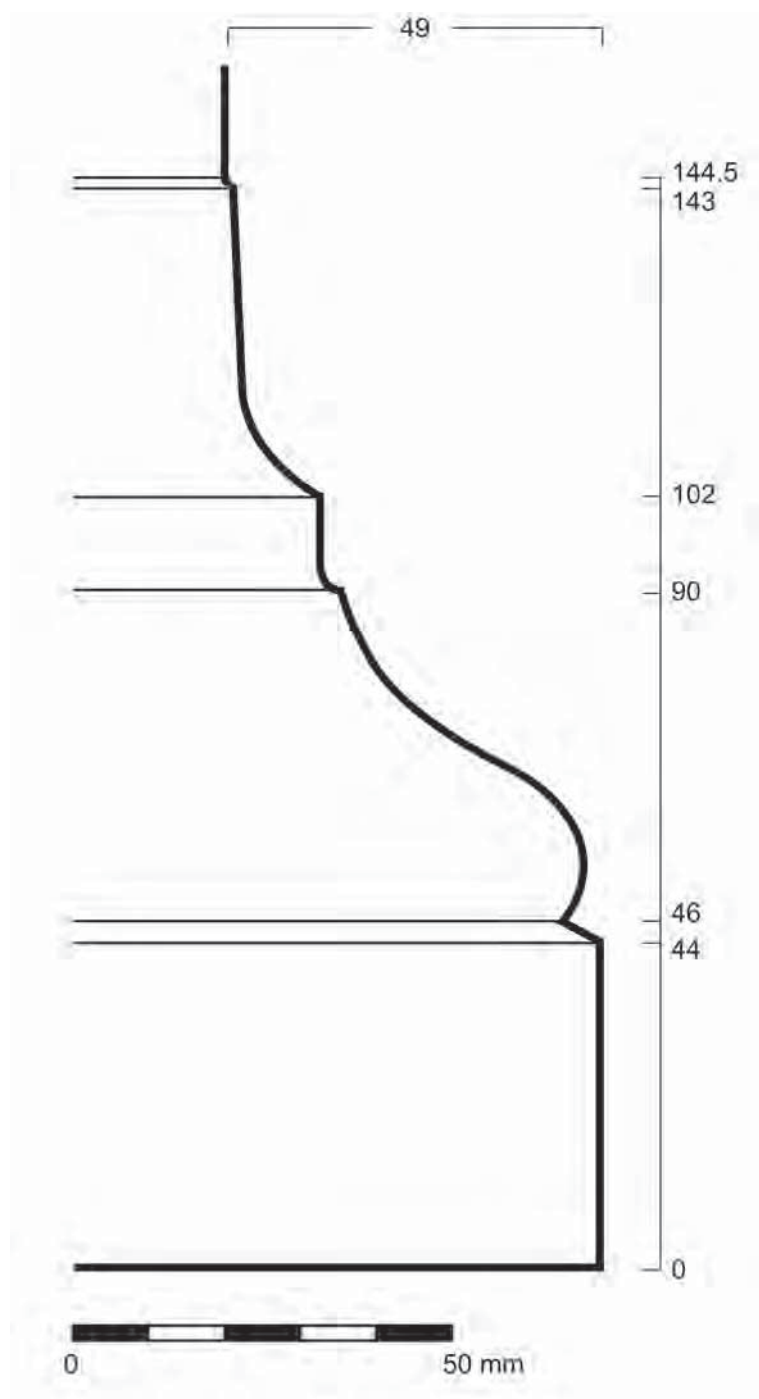


Fig. 7. Profile of the bottom moulding of the statue base. Scale 1:1. By A. Hooton.

Arsinoe in the Peloponnese kept its importance as a Ptolemaic stronghold until *c.* 145 BC, when Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes II withdrew the Egyptian troops.¹⁷ The polis seems to have reverted to its old name of Methana,¹⁸ and under various overlords, the base appears to have stayed in use until the 3rd century AD.¹⁹

Our inscription should thus probably be dated to the period after the death of Arsinoe, but in the lifetime of Ptole-

¹⁷ Gill 2007, 104; Huss 2001, 103–104; Hölbl 2001, 43.

¹⁸ Gill 2007, 98–99, 105; Cohen 1995, 125.

¹⁹ Archibald 2007, 256; Bagnall, 1976, 134.

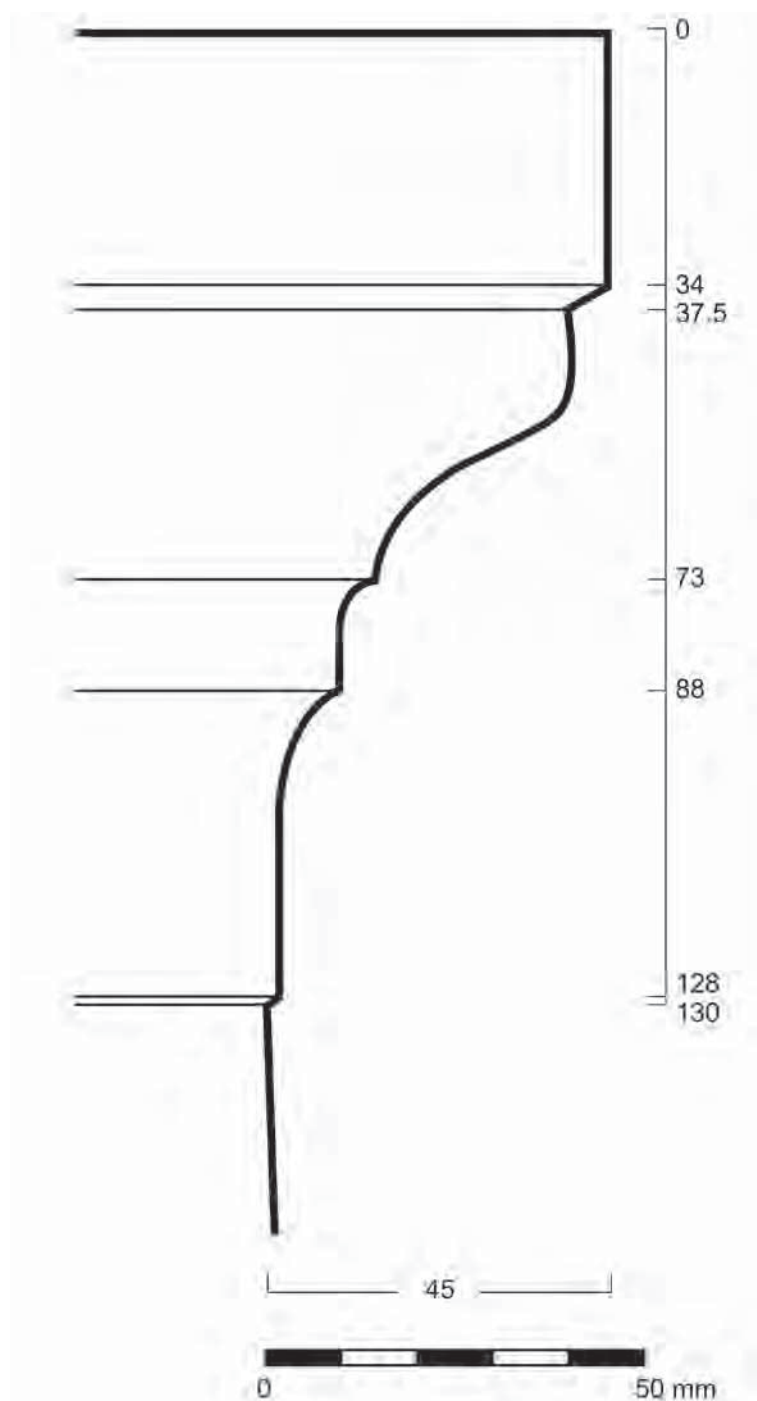


Fig. 8. Profile of the top moulding of the statue base. Scale 1:1. By A. Hooton.

maios, broadly, c. 270–246 BC. We believe that the earliest years of this period are the most likely, i.e., during the Chremonidean War.²⁰ At this point, the “new” city of Arsinoe needed to establish its identity. They did this through the minting of new coinage: the legend ME or MEΘ and a reverse featuring the head of Hephaistos was replaced by the

²⁰ It is noteworthy that the later documents mentioning Arsinoe use the formula Ἀρσινόη ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ, *IG XII,3 466/1390* (c. 160 BC) or simply the name Arsinoe (*IG IV² 76*, possibly *IG IV² 72*), not as in our inscription ἡ πόλις ἁ τῶν Ἀρσινοέων ἀπὸ Πελοποννήσου. Perhaps the official appellation of the city was not fixed at this early point in its history?

letters ΑΡΣΙ, Arsinoe's portrait on the obverse and on the reverse a naked warrior with a spear and a snake.²¹

A second effective way of presenting the new city would be to put up a large votive monument in a famous sanctuary, and within the temenos, preferably on a very visible spot. The Sanctuary of Poseidon at Kalauraia would have been a suitable choice, drawing visitors from near and far. Penttinen moreover believes that the monument was originally placed prestigiously close to the temple.²² This surely impressive monument, its base almost 2 m in length, placed at the heart of the sanctuary, would have provided a clear introduction to the new city. The monument not only presented the city's new name, however; it also gave Arsinoe an opportunity to show its identity through its allegiance. The choice of honorands could be interpreted as a political statement, which shows the city—as we would expect—firmly on the side of the Ptolemies and thereby as the enemy of Antigonos Gonatas.

The Ptolemaic influence in Methana was not restricted to building activities. They are also thought to have made their imprint through religious activities, encouraging the worship of Egyptian Sarapis and Isis as well as the local deity Poseidon Phthalmios.²³ Regarding our inscription, should we see in it an allusion to any specific religious policy of the Ptolemies in the choice of Poseidon as recipient deity? Most likely, we should not. Poseidon seems generally to have been an important god in the early Lagid Kingdom, not surprisingly against the background of the sea-faring Ptolemies²⁴ (and he was otherwise perhaps most closely associated with his self-proclaimed descendant Demetrios Poliorketes and his family).²⁵ The locality surely guided the polis of Arsinoe in its choice of god: the newly discovered dedication was presented to Poseidon of Kalauraia as the owner and main deity of the sanctuary.

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²¹ Methana had minted coins in its own name in the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods, before the re-foundation (Gill 2007, 97–98, with references; Gill 1997).

²² Penttinen & Wells *et al.*, this volume.

²³ Foxhall *et al.* 1989, 248.

²⁴ Mikalson 2005, 210–211.

²⁵ See, for example, Pollitt 1986, 31–32.

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