

## CAPInv. 474: **Sympotai**

### I. LOCATION

i. Geographical area	Peloponnese with Adjacent Islands
ii. Region	Corinthia
iii. Site	modern Kamari

### II. NAME

i. Full name (original language)	Συμπόται (Hesperia 18.1 75)
ii. Full name (transliterated)	<i>Sympotai</i>

### III. DATE

i. Date(s)	iii BC
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### IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

ii. Name elements	Other:	<i>sympotai</i> : The collective name defines merely "those who drink together".
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### V. SOURCES

i. Source(s)	Hesperia 18.1, 75 pl. 2 (BE 1950: no. 104)
i.a. Source type(s)	Epigraphic source(s)
i.b. Document(s) typology & language/script	A fragmentary votive Greek inscription to Artemis Oraia by the <i>Sympotai</i> , possibly followed by a catalogue of names, from which only three initial letters of one name are preserved.
i.c. Physical format(s)	The inscription is carved on the rock in a small open-air sanctuary.
ii. Source(s) provenance	region of modern Kamari, on the west side and near the peak of mount Megalovouni, between Argos and Nemea.

## VI. BUILT AND VISUAL SPACE

### i. Archaeological remains

The inscription is carved on the rock in a small open-air sanctuary which was installed in a large cavity in the face of a high steep cliff of the mount Megalovouni. A precarious stairway cut in the rock leads to the sanctuary. It is noteworthy that the stairs are nowadays still in use, as they lead to the only spring in that area. The rural sanctuary consists of two niches cut in the rock. Votive statues and four female heads are also carved in the rock and are dated from the 6th to 3rd c. BC according to M. Mitsos. In the cavity several terracotta figurines have been found, representing women -among them one representing a pregnant woman- and animals -among them the figurine of an ape.

## IX. MEMBERSHIP

### iii. Age

Adults

#### Note

If we have to do with an association of drinkers, they must be considered as adults.

## X. ACTIVITIES

### iii. Worship

The inscription is a dedication to Artemis *Oraia* and the small rural sanctuary was apparently devoted to her worship.

Artemis *Oraia*, known also from an inscribed altar from Peiraeus (IG II.2 4632), is the goddess who makes things ripen; therefore she causes the ripening of fruits and the growth of animals and of the embryos (cf. the terracotta figurines representing animals and the one representing a pregnant woman, that have been found in the sanctuary, see above VI.i).

M. Mitsos mentions that the group of *Sympotai* could have put themselves under the protection of Artemis who is connected in this instance with Dionysiac worship.

#### Deities worshipped

Artemis *Oraia* (?)

## XII. NOTES

### i. Comments

Since the group is called *Sympotai*, it is likely that they drank together on some occasion.

On composite words with *syn-*, a word designating ritual action, see Chariots 2006: esp. 228-229.

If there was a list of names in the lost part of the inscription, only the name of a certain Τιμ[- -], *Tim*[- -], is partially preserved: he could have been one of the *Sympotai*.

### iii. Bibliography

Bakalakis, G. (1938), 'Ανασκαφή ἐν Καβάλα καὶ τοῖς πέριξ', *PAAH*: 75-102, esp. 94-6.

Chaniotis, A. (2006), 'Rituals between Norms and Emotions: Rituals as shared experience and memory', in E. Stavrianopoulou (ed.), *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*. Liège: 211-38, esp. 228-9.

Mitsos, M. (1949), 'Inscriptions of the Eastern Peloponnesus. D. Artemission', *Hesperia* 18.1: 73-7, esp. 75.

## XIII. EVALUATION

### i. Private association

Possible

**Note**

Mitsos 1949: 75 mentions that the word *Sympotai* could refer to the "members of a religious group (θίασος, *thiasos*) which was under the protection of Artemis who is connected in this instance with Dionysiac worship". It is unknown, whether the definition *sympotai* refers to an organized group of worshippers whose activity was subject to concrete common rules or merely to the participants of an occasional isolated *symposion*. However, the fact that there is a sanctuary which was regularly frequented, as the votive offerings show, does not exclude the possibility that the *sympotai* met there on a regular basis and perhaps formed an organized group. Physical cavities were often used for common meals by groups who worshiped deities related to nature and growth of the vegetation and animals, such as Dionysos, Nymphai and here Artemis. An example of a mention of συμπόται, *sympotai*, in a similar context, is found in a fragmentary inscription from a cave near Kavala, where remains of common meals (drinking vessels, amphoras, bones etc.) have been found, see Bakalakis 1938: 94-6.