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Survey at a complex urban site

By John Bintliff, Emeri Farinetti, Božidar Slapšak and Anthony Snodgrass



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with contributions from
Philip Bes, Margherita Bonanno Aravantinos, Oliver Dickinson, Lorenzo Gentili, Catherine Grandjean, Machiel Kiel, Uroš Kirn, Chrystalla Loizou, Christel Müller, Robin Osborne, Jerome Poblome, Kalliope Sarri, Vladimir Stissi and Athanasios Vionis

Published by:
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
University of Cambridge
Downing Street
Cambridge, UK
CB2 3ER
(0)(1223) 333538
(0)(1223) 339336 (Production Office)
(0)(1223) 333536 (FAX)
eaj31@cam.ac.uk
www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk

Distributed by Oxbow Books
United Kingdom: Oxbow Books, 10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EW, UK.
Tel: (0)(1865) 241249; Fax: (0)(1865) 794449; www.oxbowbooks.com
USA: Casemate Academic, P.O. Box 511, Oakville, CT 06779, USA.
Tel: 860-945-9329; Fax: 860-945-9468

ISBN: 978-1-902937-81-6
ISSN: 1363-1349 (McDonald Institute)

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Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.
Typesetting and layout by Ben Plumridge.
GIS map illustrations prepared by Emeri Farinetti.

Cover images: (*front*) View of the site of ancient Thespiai (the greener patch in the middle distance) from the south-east; (*back*) The site of ancient Thespiai (middle distance), looking south from the modern village of Thespiés.

Edited for the Institute by Simon Stoddart (Series Acting Editor).

Printed and bound by Short Run Press, Bittern Rd, Sowton Industrial Estate, Exeter, EX2 7LW, UK.

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Chapter 6

Thespiai: the epigraphic city down to 171 BC

Robin Osborne

It is fundamental to field survey as practised in Boeotia that systematic close scrutiny of the whole surface of the landscape will yield signs of past human presence that are not arbitrary, and whose patterns mean something, if only we can decode them. What is left on the surface has only a somewhat attenuated relationship to what was once on the surface, and some types and periods of activity become more rapidly attenuated than others, but we do not expect there to have been any significant types of human presence that leave no material trace. We would, for instance, not expect to find every picnic, but we would expect to find some picnics – when crockery got broken, for instance – and we would expect the picnics we find (at which crockery got broken) to be a random sample of the non-random locational choices of all picnics.

Human judgement is, however, written all over the epigraphic record. There was always a significant cost to writing on durable materials, and those who decided, individually or as part of a group, to pay that cost will have been able to give some sort of an explanation for their decision. Their explanation will sometimes have involved merely citing what others do, but often a more particular reason for the permanent public display of a text could be given. We can be confident of this because of the way in which such reasons are sometimes themselves written in to texts. This makes the epigraphic city different, not only from the city of field survey but from the city of literary texts. Literary texts too were the product of conscious decision, but conscious decision by individuals, and often by individuals who do not belong to the city about which they write. In consequence, what gets recorded about a given city in literary texts is effectively random, and while literary texts may contain information of great value, we must hesitate before drawing conclusions from the pattern of what we are or are not told about a particular city. By contrast, on the basis of confidence that we have a more or less random sample of a purposive epigraphic legacy, the exclusively epigraphic city is worth excavating in a way in which the exclusively literary city is not. Like the material evidence, the epigraphic evidence can reckon to be an effectively random sample of decisions to record information on stone, decisions that are themselves part of the subject of interest – the history of Thespiai. The literary evidence, by contrast, constitutes a more or less random sample of activities that make up a subject which is, in this context, of no interest – the psycho-history of a self-selected group of élite individuals who were not themselves from Thespiai and whose common interest in this city is not enough to give them meaningful identity.

The advantages of looking at Thespiai, in particular, as an epigraphic city lie in the fact that this is a city of which we now have systematic archaeological knowledge, as well as one of which literary texts tell us a good deal. The epigraphic record can thus be read 'against' both random archaeological remains and arbitrary literary records. It is a further advantage that this is a comparatively rich epigraphy. In total number, Thespiai is the third best attested of Boeotian cities epigraphically, with some 734 epigraphic texts counted by Vottéro for the period of the use of the Boeotian dialect, behind Thebes (958 texts) and Tanagra (1151 texts); but in terms of the range of its epigraphic evidence it is much more interesting than Tanagra, where epitaphs, or Thebes, where private documents of various kinds including epitaphs, are overwhelmingly dominant (Vottéro 1998–2001: II. 42). Thespiai not only has a higher percentage of civic texts (21.2 per cent), but those texts are themselves very varied.

There are three sorts of questions we can ask of the Thespiai epigraphic corpus as a whole. The first, already implied, is what the people of Thespiai

decide to inscribe at all. The second is the language that the people of Thespiai decide to write in and how that changes. The third is how the people of Thespiai choose to identify themselves, that is their onomastic decisions – not as a matter of individual choice but as a choice of onomastic style. The first of these questions will dominate this paper, but I turn first to the other two.

The language story is a story of the persistent use of the Boeotian dialect, and then its abandonment. Thespiai certainly employs the Boeotian dialect through to the dissolution of the Boeotian confederacy in 172/1 BC even in those inscriptions (e.g. proxeny decrees), which elsewhere in Boeotia are most inclined to assimilate to the language of the person honoured, by using the form known as *koine*, the 'common language', based on the Attic dialect, which had become general across Hellenistic Greece.[1] After 172/1, however, *koine* takes over. This break is not clean-cut, in that five military catalogues from the early second century (*IThesp* 109–14) are in a mixture of Boeotian dialect and *koine*, but it is nevertheless notable.[2] The Romans themselves employed only *koine* in their written, and presumably spoken, communications, so that anyone wishing to get on had to use *koine*. Civic life before 171 was as part of the Boeotian Confederacy. Civic life after 171 was under Roman rule, and there was little place under Roman rule for a distinct Boeotian identity and so little place for writing other than in *koine*. The dialect rapidly disappeared from Thespiai. This story is quite significant in terms of the absence of linguistic resistance to Rome, which stands in striking contrast to the stories of other kinds of resistance in Boeotia in the 190s told by Livy, after Polybius, and to the destruction of Haliartos in 171 (Livy xxxiii. 28–9; xlii. 46. 7; lvi. 6; lxiii. 3–11; Strabo ix. 2. 30; Polybius xxx. 20). It signals how, despite the very light presence of Romans in Boeotia (Müller (2002)), Roman rule had a tight grip after 171, discouraging even linguistic acts of resistance. The only reappearance of the dialect at Thespiai comes at the end of the first century BC, when a dedication to the Muses puts all its headings – but nothing else – into Boeotian dialect (*IThesp* 288–97): a 'decorative' use of dialect, as Vottéro (1996a: 80) has termed it.

The onomastic story is the story, first of the late adoption of patronymics at all (as in much of the Greek world, only in the fourth century, and in official documents) then of the move from use partly of nominal patronymics and partly of patronymic adjectives until the middle of the third century, when in the 240s the use of patronymic adjectives disappears completely (Vottéro 1987; Knoepfler 1992: 450–2). This change is best seen as being, not about how people referred to each other in life, but about 'chancellery' decisions. It should be put in the context of a number of other changes of nomenclature and organization, and indeed in the context of decisions about what exactly ought to be inscribed at all.

The earliest inscriptions from Thespiai, with the exception of an inscribed bronze vessel, said to have been found on the summit of Helikon (*LSAG* 94, no.6; *IThesp* 273), which may date to *c*. 600, belong to the first half of the fifth century. They include dedications made by the Thespians as a body (*IThesp* 276; perhaps *IThesp* 225) and using the local alphabet, some private dedications, and some 30 epitaphs. Then from the late fifth century there are two lists of war-dead. Athens had been listing its war dead since at least the 460s BC and in the last quarter or so of the fifth century some of Athens' neighbours also adopted the practice: lists are known from Megara and from Tanagra, as well as from Thespiai.[3] What seems to be the earliest Thespian list (*IThesp* 484) contains some 21 names. It is not clear what battle is at issue here; in terms of known Thespian involvement on the battlefield, the main possibilities are either the battles of Tanagra and Oinophyta in the 450s or of Koroneia in the 440s. A terminus ante quem is provided by the second list (*IThesp* 485).

This second list is spread over nine *stelai*, found in 1882 in the road just north of the 'lion of Thespiai', forming part, like the lion itself, of a *polyandrion* in what seems to have been one of the already-existing cemeteries of the city (Schilardi 1977; Low 2003). The large funeral pyre, remains of cremated bodies, and seven inhumations were excavated along with numerous grave offerings of pottery, glass, bronze and bone. Reconstructions of the monument suggest there may originally have been as many as 25 *stelai*. Seven of the nine surviving *stelai* have 12 names each, one is complete with 10 names, and one, where traces of 8 names remain, originally seems to have had at least nine names. Although the *stelai* are very uniform in appearance, with letters evenly spaced as if written on squared paper (what is known as the *stoichedon* layout), they fall into two groups with regard to precise spacing and letter-form, presumably because two different masons or, perhaps better, workshops were involved. For Thespiai to have suffered (at least) 103 casualties (and perhaps as many as 280), we must be dealing with a major battle, and the assumption has always been that this monument, like the Tanagran monument (*IG* vii. 585), relates to the battle of Delion in 424, the casualties at which were so heavy for the Thespians (Thucydides iv. 96. 3) that the Thebans then took advantage of Thespiai's weakness to impose their demands on the city, razing the wall of a city that had lost its 'flower' (Thucydides iv. 133. 1), ironically on

the charge of '*attikismos*'. The list is notable for the inclusion of two individuals recorded, one after the other, as victors at the Pythian and Olympian games. Although identification of the deceased as victors in games occurs in individual epitaphs, and in one case we are even told that an individual was both an Olympic victor and died in war (*IG* v.1. 708), identification of victors in this way in a list of a group of war dead is unique: Athens allows only military officials to be picked out in its lists of war dead. We can in fact identify the Olympic victor here, the appropriately named Polynikos, with the Polynikos who is recorded in *P. Oxy* 222 Col. 2 32 (*FGrH* 415F2) as having won the boys' wrestling in the Olympic games of 448 – when he would have been 16 (and so 40 at the time of his death) (Moretti 1962: 164).

By the time that the Thespians next had occasion to put up a list of war dead, at least as far as the surviving records go, they were changing their epichoric alphabet for the Ionic alphabet. The heading to the list is in the local script, and the poorly preserved left hand column in larger letters seems to be in the same script; but the better preserved list of ten names in the right-hand column is in the Ionic alphabet and not Attic, as the use of omega shows. The whole list was inscribed most plausibly during the Corinthian war in 394, but with a second occasion at which casualties were suffered added to the first; in the meantime, the script had changed. A date in the 390s, and thus shortly after Athens herself had officially changed (in 403/2) from her epichoric Attic alphabet to Ionic, is most likely for the alphabet change, but a later date, in the 370s cannot be excluded (Vottero 1996b: 164–6; for recent discussions see Iversen 2010: 262–3, Aravantinos and Papazarkadas 2012: 243–4, 248–50). Whatever date we adopt, it seems that Thespiai was changing its alphabet not as an independent act, but in tandem with at least the bulk of the Boeotian confederacy (with Orchomenos lagging slightly behind).

Shortly after the list of war dead comes our earliest temple-inventory from Thespiai, a stone discovered at Chorsiai, headed 'Sacred money of the Thespians' and dated by Thespian archon (*IThesp* 38). This records, first objects in a Heraion (of unrecorded and unknown location), then three vessels and three '*drachma obeliskoi*' at Siphai and two vessels and two *drachma obeliskoi* at 'Kreisus'. The objects recorded here are not dedications but items of temple equipment. So the long list from the Heraion includes a saw, fire-dogs, cheese-graters, as well as more obviously sympotic equipment (couches, kraters, skyphoi and hydriai) (Tomlinson 1980: 221–4). This is a text entirely in the Ionic alphabet, except for the addition of digamma, but with various problems of transcription, including the use of omega on occasions which demand omicron, and the employment of H both for eta and for the aspirate (Vottéro 1996b: 166–70; cf. Iversen 2010).

The balance of advantage and disadvantage, in terms of representing the phonemes current in Boeotia, was not clearly weighted in favour of the new script. The change demands political motivation, and we must look therefore for a period when Boeotian relations are close and when the Boeotians have reason to assimilate themselves to other users of the Attic-Ionic alphabet, most obviously the Athenians. Either the years of the Corinthian war, or the very beginning of the 370s, offer appropriate conditions.

Not far from this date is the earliest of what will be a series of documents attesting to cultic groups in the Sanctuary of the Muses. Remarkably, this earliest example is a cult group for Thamyris, the man blinded for challenging the Muses. In a document dated by the 'hierarch' we are given the names of two 'θαμυρίδδοντες' and of 19 'ἁγιόμενοι' (*IThesp* 313). Equally interesting, and of very similar date, is a dedication to Hermes by a group of magistrates who style themselves 'The Eleven' (*IThesp* 282) and who are assumed to have the same functions as the Eleven at Athens and elsewhere (Roesch 1982: 380–2). Another group of Athenian look-alike magistrates appear on a very recently published statue (herm?) base: *pentekostelogoi* (Schachter and Marchand 2012: 278–80). From the very comparable letter-forms, this seems to be of the same date as *IThesp* 282. Though this was found on the site of ancient Thespiai itself, one would expect the 2 per cent tax on imports and exports to have been collected primarily at the port of Kreusis.

Down to 300, then, we have no certain decrees of Thespiai, and although the standard of some inscriptions suggests well-practised inscribers, we have no sign of systematic public inscription of anything relating to the affairs of the city except for the lists of war-dead (two more of which are to be found in the third century, *IThesp* 487 and 488).[4] Whether we should see that as the effect of prolonged repression by Thebes within the Boeotian confederacy, or whether we should think it represents a minimalist attitude to civic life, is hard to determine. Certainly what Thespiai inscribes seems to be what her neighbours are also inscribing; nor does this picture change immediately as we enter the Hellenistic period.

The major new element in Thespian epigraphy of the Hellenistic period takes the form of catalogues of young men recruited to the army. Such catalogues have been found at all the Boeotian cities around the Copaic basin – Haliartos, Koroneia, Lebadeia, Khaironeia, Orchomenos, Hyettos, Kopai and Akraiphia, and

also from Thebes, Anthedon, Tanagra, Plataia, Thisbe and Khorsiai. Dated by the federal archon as well as by the archon of Thespiai, these inscriptions nevertheless do not initially use a stable terminology. In the earlier inscriptions the terms *neoteroi* (cadets) and *epheboi* are both used at Thespiai, with *epheboi* used at Akraiphia (where, however, instead of their becoming *hoplitai*, or *hoplitai* and *hippotai* (cavalry) as at Thespiai, they become *thyreaphoroi* (big-shield-carriers); so too at Thisbe). In the later inscriptions *epheboi* is the term most widely used, but Thebes and Hyettos use *wikatiwetees* ('20-year olds'). What they are enrolled into is now variously described as the *hippotai* and *agema* (division), *epilektoi* (select) and *peltophorai* (light-shield-carriers) (at Thespiai), *peltophorai* (at Akraiphia, Aigosthena, Thisbe, Kopai, Hyettos, Anthedon), the *tagma* (brigade) or *tagmata* (Thespiai, Khaironeia).[5] We seem to be witnessing here two contrasting phenomena: on the one hand the pull of fashion, so that once one city started to write up the lists of its young men serving in the army for the first time, others felt, or were, obliged to follow suit; and on the other hand the absence of central imposition of a precise terminology, either on what the new recruits were called or on how in detail they were trained.

These lists of recruits offer us two things: one is a cross-section of Thespian names, the other is an indication of numbers. The earliest inscription, preserving a complete cohort and with patronymic adjectives (*IThesp* 88) has 67 names, an almost complete later list has around 61 names *(IThesp* 98); the fullest later list has upwards of 85 names (*IThesp* 95). A cohort of seventy 20-year-olds is likely to be the product of a male population of around 3800 (Etienne and Knoepfler 1976: 202–6; Feyel 1942: 207–17). We do not know what formal or informal mechanisms may have limited the number of males aged 20 who were recruited. If the relationship between citizen population and ephebes was the same as in fourth-century Athens, then approximately half the age cohort will have served as ephebes, in which case we are dealing with a total population not of approaching 10,000 (3800 males, 3800 females plus slaves and resident non-citizens) but something more like 18,000.

If the prominence of the military service of young men is one feature that marks the Hellenistic age, the interest of Hellenistic kings is another. Four stones record dedications of land to gods by Philetairos, two to the Helikonian Muses (*IThesp* 58–9), one to the Muses and the Philetairean fellow-sacrficers (*synthytai*) (*IThesp* 60), and one to Hermes (*IThesp* 61). The four are contemporary and, on grounds of script, relate to the years around 270. Philetairos seems to have bought up land and then gifted it back to help support the cult (for his foundations more generally, see Hansen 1971). Presumably in every case there was a group responsible for ensuring that the income from the land did indeed go to the cult, but this is spelled out only in one case. The variation between the inscriptions here (only one declares itself a boundary stone, but all presumably were so placed) is another example of the resistance of Thespian epigraphy to technical formulas. The full procedure employed is laid out in detail in an inscription from two generations later (*IThesp* 62), probably from 210–208, recording a gift of money from Ptolemy and Arsinoe that the Thespians decide to use to buy land, which they then rent out to give annual income. Thespiai's religious assets, and its penchant for leasing land, are clearly visible here.

It seems to have been the new Hellenistic world that first obliged the Thespians, as it obliged many other cities, to enter into the public provision of honours for those aiding them in other states that are so prominent a feature of Greek public epigraphy. Although the earliest Thespian proxeny decree – that is, a decree in honour of a *proxenos* or member of another city who had acted as champion of the Thespians in his own city – which in this case does not preserve the name of the *proxenos*, is written in a fourth-century script (*IThesp* 1), all subsequent Thespian proxeny decrees (*IThesp* 2–26), with three exceptions (*IThesp* 27–9), date to the last two decades of the third century and to the first quarter of the second. It was in the face of the conflicts that would eventually lead to Roman control that Thespiai came to think that encouraging support from other Greek cities might be advisable. The preserved decrees make *proxenoi* of men from Corinth, Argos (twice), Aigina, Chalkis, Physka (Macedonia), Amphissa, Herakleia, Sikyon, Athens (thrice), Panopeus, Perinthos, Epidamnos, Kanopos, Taras, and Seleukeia.[6] The local centre of gravity of this collection is very striking. It contrasts very strongly with the distribution of *proxenoi* of Oropos, but is quite comparable to the distribution for other cities of the Boeotian confederacy, such as Tanagra.[7] This is largely because there were also *proxenoi* for the Boeotian confederacy, and these included a range of figures from more far-flung places (e.g. Rhodes and Sidon, *IG* vii. 4260, 4261; Sinope *SEG* 1.104). But it is in part because proxeny is a way of giving honours to men who have deserved them, not for what they have done for Thespians abroad, but at Thespiai itself. This is clear from the proxeny decree for the Athenian Sostratos (*IThesp* 29), dated to 250–40, where to a more or less standard proxeny decree is added a more extensive honorific decree in which his services in educating the ephebes ('the *paides* (boys)

and the *neaniskoi* (youths)') are celebrated and he is offered the job, at an annual pay of 4 *mnas*, as long as he wants it.

By the time that the bulk of these Thespian proxenies were inscribed, Thespiai had taken to writing up rather more on stone. But although the bulk of public inscriptions from the years 245 to 172 is very much greater, it remains dominated by a small number of classes of evidence. Apart from the proxenies and the lists of newly trained soldiers, the most important classes of document are financial (largely to do with the leasing of land, but also the record of the repayment of a loan to Athens, perhaps dating to the 220s, *IThesp* 40), or relate to the contests of the Mouseia, or list magistrates.[8]

Although there are fragments of several others (*IThesp* 85–7), there is only one substantially surviving list of magistrates (*IThesp* 84, definitively studied by Roesch (1965)), which runs to 88 lines and records both the federal magistrates and the magistrates of Thespiai for two, successive, years around 210 (Roesch 1965: 18–19; Knoepfler 1996: 159–60 for the date). At the federal level, 7 federal officials are elected by Thespiai (3 *synedroi*, a *thesmophylax*, an *aphedriates* with secretary, and an *agonarch*).[9] But it is the city officials who are most of interest to us. Roesch suggests that the inscription lists them as one group of 'central administration', consisting of the archon, the three polemarchs and their secretary and the hipparch, and five other groups: magistrates responsible for finance and religious affairs, of whom there are at least 14 with two secretaries;[10] military commanders of various sorts, of whom there are at least 21; officials in charge of provisions and finance, of whom there are at least 16 plus two secretaries; those to do with festivals and the gymnasium, of whom there are 13 and a secretary; and miscellaneous, consisting of five 'officers of the Eleven' (*hendekarchoi*) with a secretary; and three 'road-leaders' (*hodegoi*) with their secretary. Numbers can only be approximate since it is one of the puzzles of the inscription that the numbers are not consistent from year to year and in general the second year seems more condensed than the first, with fewer magistrates in various categories.[11]

If a sum of upwards of 72 magistrates is hardly comparable to the 700 at home and 700 abroad claimed by the *Constitution of the Athenians* 24.3 for fifth-century Athens, that is hardly surprising given the different size of the two cities, and 72 is nevertheless a sizeable body.[12] But the interest is not merely in the number but in the distribution. Comparison with fourth-century Athens is interesting for both number and kind (the Athenian data are conveniently collected in Hansen 1980). In some areas the comparison is close – much closer than the discrepancy of size of city would have one expect: Athens had 5 *hodopoioi* to compare to the 3 *hodegoi* at Thespiai (for their role, see Roesch 1965: 244–5). The 5 *hendekarchoi* should perhaps be compared to the 11 *hendeka* (Roesch 1982: 380–2). The 21 military officials compare with 44 (plus three treasurers for them) at Athens. Even when it comes to managing the grain supply, the difference is only by a factor of 5: Athens had 35 *sitophylakes* to compare with the 7 *sitonai* and *sitopolai* at Thespiai. But whereas at Thespiai, if purely financial officials are separated from those whose role is connected to religious cults and festivals, there are 8 or 10 (3 *katoptai*, 3 *tamiai* of the polis, 5 or 7 *limenarchoi* at Kreusis, plus a secretary), at Athens we would have to count more than 80: 10 *poletai*, 10 *apodektai*, 10 *agoronomoi*, 10 *metronomoi*, 10 *epimeletai tou emporiou*, 10 *logistai* with their 10 *synegoroi*, 10 *praktores*, not including various *tamiai* (of the *boule*, the people, the shipyards, etc.). And against the 19 magistrates and one secretary that Thespiai has to look after sacred matters and festivals, Athens has up to around 130. What is most striking, however, is the absence of any reference to magistrates or colleges of magistrates who take overall charge of the city and its rules. Thespiai elects a *thesmophylax* for the Confederacy, but unless they are hidden in the lacuna (lines 37–42, where Roesch suspects the *hierarchai* are concealed) between the buyers of grain and the *tamiai* of the polis, Thespiai has no board in charge of its laws, no equivalent of the *thesmothetai*, *nomothetai*, and *nomophylakes* at Athens. And it is something of a shock to find that although Thespiai sends 3 councillors to the Federal synedrion, there is no direct reference, here or elsewhere, to any council at Thespiai.[13]

What emerges from all of this is that, despite its heavy investment in festivals and in the training of young men as soldiers, Thespiai ran itself with an extremely light touch. It is not just that Athens has the various financial and legal officials mentioned above: it also had the Council of 500 to discharge, directly or through its committees, a great deal of oversight of financial and other transactions. At Thespiai there are, first, very few people performing these functions, and secondly they are somewhat invisible. We meet the *katoptai* in the one substantial decree, from 189/8, in response to an embassy from Delphi asking Thespiai to send them three judges (*IThesp* 30). Here the *katoptai* are responsible for sorting out the purchase of the *stelai* on which the decree will be inscribed (line 19, cf. line 22). We meet them also in the earliest of the land leases, from the 240s, where they scrutinize the guarantors offered by the lessees (*IThesp* 44.7), and we meet them when the commission charged with

re-leasing property is required to clear its accounts with them (*IThesp* 56.10). By contrast, the *tamiai* of the polis never put their head above the epigraphic parapet at all.

This very light civic (as opposed to religious or military) administration is in one respect reassuring. The failure of Thespiai to inscribe decrees, beyond a small number of proxeny decrees and one or two others extorted from them by the actions of other cities (like the Delphian embassy), comes to appear most plausibly not as an unwillingness to inscribe, but as a failure to pass decrees in the first place. The epigraphic record is the one appropriate to a city whose communal civic activities were slight enough to be supported by the very light magisterial infrastructure described in the stele of the magistrates.

How could a city like Thespiai be so inactive as a political community? Part, at least, of the answer must be the existence of the Boeotian confederacy. Whatever we think the political organization of Boeotia was in the sixth century and the first half of the fifth, from 447 onwards Thespiai had always been part of a wider confederacy that both was responsible for Boeotian external arrangements, and imposed a measure of uniformity on Boeotian cities in their internal arrangements. The demand, and the scope, for an active political life in Thespiai itself was limited because of the responsibilities assumed by the confederacy. But part of the answer must also lie with a different attitude to magistrates and their oversight. Whereas Athens went consistently for boards of ten, with individual magistrates as a consequence having little responsibility, Thespiai used small groups, perhaps even expanding or contracting them according to the weight of business. Individuals must have ended up doing much more on their own in an unsupervised way.

What propelled Thespiai into the epigraphic limelight (apart from the expectation of the confederacy that troops would be provided and trained), was above all her religious resources. The Muses of Helikon, responsible for Boeotia's emergence into literature in the poems of Hesiod, created an interest outside Thespiai to which Thespiai was expected, certainly by the Boeotian confederacy as a whole but in some senses also by a wider community, to respond. In the 220s, for reasons not easy to recover but perhaps connected with changes in the Amphictyony under the benign hegemony of Aitolia, the Boeotian confederacy seems to have gone in for a wave of religious renewal ('une réactivation très remarquable des cultes civiques', Knoepfler 1996: 166). At Akraiphia the Ptoia were reorganized (*LSCG* 148–9, no.73 and Manieri 2009: 63–129, esp. 80–7); at Thebes the Agrionia (*SEG* 28.487 and Manieri 2009: 290–1); and at Lebadeia construction was begun of the temple of Zeus. As Knoepfler has shown, the reorganization of the Mouseia so as to have a quadrennial stephanitic contest – that is, one whose prize took the form of a simple wreath (*stephanos*), as at the Olympic Games – belongs in this context (Knoepfler 1996; more generally, Schachter 1986: 163–6; Manieri 2009: 318–22). The city of Thespiai and the Boeotian confederacy sent one Hierokles as an ambassador to the Technitai ('Artists of Dionysos') of Isthmus and Nemea, to ask for their support in turning the thymelic contest of the Mouseia into a stephanitic event (on the *technitai* generally, see the parallel treatments of Le Guen 2001 and Aneziri 2003). The Technitai obliged, and the first stephanitic Mouseia were held, with Hierokles as the agonothete (*IThesp* 156; Manieri 2009: Thes. 10). Similar requests were, it seems, sent to other groups of Technitai, and from the inscription which relates to the Technitai from Athens, we might conclude that the initiative was seen as more a Boeotian than an Athenian one, since reference is made to 'the Boeotians and the city of the Thespians', in that order (*IThesp* 157.10; Manieri 2009: Thes. 11 B20–1). Another decree of the *technitai* of Ionia and the Hellespont, dating from *c.* 170 BC and displayed on Delos, shows that the Delphic oracle was also consulted on the issue of the standing of the Mouseia at Thespiai, but from the way in which the Mouseia are there coupled with the Herakleia at Thebes, as well as with the Pythia at Delphi, it seems probable that the consultation was not by the *polis* of Thespiai but by the Boeotian confederacy, seeking to have two major events in Boeotia recognized as equal to the Pythia (*IG* xi. 4: 1061. 14). All of this makes it unsurprising that the federal archon, Lykinos, heads the catalogue of victors at the Mouseia (*IT*hesp 161.7; Manieri 2009: Thes. 17), and that in listing victors the ethnic 'Boeotios', rather than the particular city ethnic, is used down to 171. We should not see Thespian initiative behind the reorganization of the Mouseia, or at least not without confederate pressure. That said, when support was sought from Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe, and from another King, the letters that came back were addressed to the polis of the Thespians, and we might have a purely city initiative here (*IThesp* 152–4; Manieri 2009: Thes. 15, with the Thespian decree *IThesp* 155; Manieri 2009: Thes. 12). In the end, for all the attention-seeking publicity, the Mouseia seem not to have greatly increased their reach: the victor lists to 171 yield 6 Boeotian victors, 4 from nearby cities, and 4 from elsewhere.

It is in this context of a city sitting light to administration, whose priorities are coming to be determined by decisions made externally, in the Boeotian confederacy, that it is necessary to re-examine

Hellenistic Thespiai's singular epigraphic legacy – the land leases. As published in Roesch's corpus, there are 14 leases (*IThesp* 44–57), not counting the lease of lands newly acquired following the Ptolemaic donation (*IThesp* 62). But in terms of the number of separate inscribed stones, we are dealing with just six. The earliest is a large opisthographic stele (i.e. one inscribed on the back as well as the front) whose long inscription history has been established by Knoepfler (1992: 469–70). This earliest text (*IThesp* 44–7) dates to the middle of the 240s. The fragmentary opening records the names of those responsible for leasing what is plausibly restored as 'the sacred land and the Nympheion at Pheriai', a special commission, afterwards referred to as ἡ ἀρχή). We then have set out the financial conditions on which the land is to be let, involving inspection of the guarantors (*prostatai*) by the *katoptai*, and punitive measures over non-payment (rent increases 50 per cent for non-payment along with re-lease of the plot; previous tenant to pay a supplement if the new tenant only agrees to pay less). Fragments of the list of those leasing and guaranteeing leases then follow, but insufficient to enable any quantitative analysis to be made. The text on the back (*IThesp* 48–52) opens with the naming of Thespiai's magistrates and the naming of a three-man commission, and their secretary, responsible for leasing out 'each of the *tomoi*', then glossed as 'the sacred *tomos* and the Nympheion'. The conditions of lease follow, again concentrating on the provision of guarantors (*prostatai*) and what happens in case of default. In this case the scrutiny of the guarantors is by the commission, not by the *katoptai*. Once more there are clauses about the previous lessee being obliged to continue payments if the land is leased for less to the subsequent tenant. The period of lease is 20 years. The other fragments give lists of lessees and of guarantors, now referred to as *enguoi*. The bottom fragment preserves part of three totals, restored as the total of the first, second and third '*tomos*'.

The second stone (*IThesp* 53), to be dated perhaps in the early 220s, is a decree of the people ordering the five *hierarchai* to record the conditions on which they leased 'the public land in Drymos', those to whom they leased, with their guarantors, and the area leased and rent paid. This appears to be a purely Thespian decision, with the city's polemarchs to be consulted over where the stele should be put up. The conditions about payment of rent are essentially similar to those on the first stone, but the land here is rented out for 25 years. About 5 or 6 plots of land seem to be listed. At the end of the text a total is given for the rent from all the plots leased, but the crucial first figures are missing.

The third stone (*IThesp* 54–5) is once more opisthographic, but in this case the two sides may have been inscribed at the same time, at a date between the early 220s and 215. On one side we have the end of the conditions of rental (standard, but with an additional mention of trees), followed by a space and then a list of those who in the year of the archon Charopinos have rented 'the sacred lands of the Muses' for 40 years. The plot is identified with the phrase 'the (land) *par* + name in genitive'. Three interpretations of this formula have been offered: traditionally it has been taken to indicate the name of the last tenant, a position to which I offered objections in 1985 but now reasserted by Pernin 2004; Sosin 2000 has suggested that it indicates the name of the last owner of the land before the land was acquired for renting; I myself had argued that it identified the neighbour of a property (Osborne 1985). Once the first plot is dealt with, the next leases are described as 'other leases on the same conditions', and then two plots are described in the same way, one leased for 20 and one for 10 years. Then are listed 'other leases on the same conditions for six years', and 5 lessees are recorded, all apparently of land '*par*' the same person. At this point we have the name of an archon and the record of a dedication by the priest of the Muses of 4200 dr., the income from which is to be used to purchase an ox for sacrifice. There follows a decree proposed by one Damon son of Mnasarchos, setting up a two-man commission to record, along with the other gifts to the Muses, the land at Kereisia left in his will by Gorgythos son of Kleisthenes. This in turn is followed by a list of those who in the year of the archon Nikon have leased the 'oil-land' sacred to Hermes, on the same conditions, for 40 years. There follow the names, rent and guarantors of 12 lessees of 'land *par* Andreas' (including three men each leasing two plots), and then three men each leasing land *par* a different individual. Then we have 'other leases', dated to the same year of Nikon, for 20 years: first six leases of 'land *par* Andreas' (again), four of which are taken by one individual and a fifth by a man who might be his son, then one lease of land *par* Hagasistratos. The total for the leases of the sacred land for Hermes is then given as 2222 drachmas.

On the reverse of this stele are further lists of leases of land sacred to the Muses (*IThesp* 55). The archon Charopinos is again mentioned, but the bulk of the action seems to happen in the year of Nikon (and at a point when the name of the archon after him is not yet known). We have once again a list of conditions of lease (for 20 years) spelled out, this time for property identified as 'the garden which Sostratos dedicated to be sacred to the Muses'. The *tamias* of the Muses is here responsible for receiving the rent and for action in

case of default. It is clear that these conditions are set out for land to be leased for the first time. Something identified as 'the garden *par* Philotis' is then rented for 20 years for 121 drs. (the same rent as is stated for the garden which Sostratos dedicated, which must surely be that garden); and the total of rent from sacred land of the Muses given as 591 drs.[14]

The fourth stele (*IThesp* 56) is explicitly for the renewal of leases of plots in Apharkeioi that were leased when Empedokles was archon, in accordance with the original conditions. A three-man commission, plus secretary, is set up to do this re-leasing, and to lease the Nympheion at Pheriai, leased when Charopinos was archon, that is, the lease recorded in *IThesp* 44. Tenants who have kept their conditions and irrigated their property are allowed to lease again on the original conditions. 23 plots are then recorded as leased, with lessees and guarantors (here *prostatai*) recorded, plus the Nympheion, which is leased for 90 drs. 20 of the 24 plots have their lease renewed by the former lessee or his next of kin, and seven lessees continue to lease more than one plot.

The fifth stele (*IThesp* 57) is a fragment of only 14 lines recording the lease of numbered items, of which we appear to have here from the fifth to the 11th, plus a named plot, the Euonoumion. The plots here are bizarrely small (rents of 12 drs. or less except for the Euonoumion at 21 drs. 1 obol; the median of 10 drs. here contrasts with medians of 55, 50, 50.5 and 58 drs. elsewhere) and we must wonder whether we are dealing with land at all. The number system employed is slightly different from that in other Thespian leases and it is also notable that the names here are all otherwise unknown. The provenance of the inscription is not known (it was simply found by Roesch in Thebes Museum) and although this is certainly a Boeotian inscription it would probably be a mistake to conclude anything about Thespiai on its basis.

The sixth stele (*IThesp* 62) was mentioned above (p. 225), since it records the donation of land by Ptolemy as well as the leasing of that land. On the stone we have a decree ('The polis decided…': contrast, on *IThesp* 53 and 56, 'The people decided'…), setting up a commission to buy and rent out land, the description of two plots of land, one of them enormous, and their neighbours, and the leasing of that land for 14 years, with the second plot specified as leased at 2 drs. per *plethron* (where a *plethron* is a unit of area equivalent to just under 0.1 ha). The stone does not survive and we must rely on Jamot's transcription and on what Holleaux made of that and of a squeeze (Holleaux 1897; Sosin 2000 attempts, unconvincingly, to reduce irregularity here). The unexampled commission of six, according to Holleaux (the last of whom, Parmenias son of Phanteios, also leases the larger plot of land) has raised suspicions; but there are a number of irregularities here, such as fixed price rental for the smaller plot. Nor does the addition of the leasing of the larger plot to a member of the commission seem impossible, especially when the larger plot is 49 ha in area and rented out for 1451 drs., that is something like 25 times the median sum for land in other leases. The largest single sum paid in rent for a single plot in any earlier lease is 375 drs. in *IThesp* 54, so this plot is almost four times as large. Yet in date this document, which Knoepfler (1992: 470) argues should be of precisely 209, is more or less contemporary with *IThesp* 56, where the largest rent is 164 dr. We must accept that this lease is simply working in a different way from the others.

The land leases present a number of challenges. They offer some rich and specific data, relevant to the political, religious, social and economic life of Thespiai. But what are we to make of these data? Certain features of the evidence need to be stressed.

First, much of the land leased is explicitly sacred, and it is not clear that any of it is not sacred (compare Migeotte 2006: 381). The earliest opisthographic text refers directly, front and back, to 'sacred land and the Nympheion', and the text at the back also refers to 'the land of Herakles'. The second stone has everything in the hands of the *hierarchai*, although it does talk of 'public land'. Roesch denied that the land here was sacred, but his own description of the competence of the *hierarchai* makes it clear that they always operate in the sacred realm.[15] The third stone, front and back, is a collection on sacred matters, largely involving the Muses, but also Hermes. The plots re-leased on the fourth stone include the Nympheion. The fifth stone has the problematic tiny rents, but Schachter has suspected cult in the name 'Euonoumion' here. The sixth stone is the donation of Ptolemy, explicitly for the Muses. We can safely conclude that there is no evidence that the people of Thespiai leased land other than to raise money for cult expenses. Between them, the third and sixth stones show something of the mechanisms involved: either a donation of money is converted into land to give regular income (as with Ptolemy's donation), or individuals dedicate or bequeath land – a garden, as Sostratos has done, or the land at Kereisia left by Gorgythos – which is then leased out. Thespiai's land rental, or at least its epigraphically recorded land rental, is a direct product of its prominent cults, particularly the cult of the Helikonian Muses.

Second, there is a good chance that land leasing is something new to third-century Thespiai. The various donations are clear evidence that the stock of

land to be leased increased during the period of this documentation, but two further features encourage the thought that leasing itself is a new phenomenon. The first is the care with which the conditions, that is the financial conditions, for leasing land are set out. We find them set out on the front and back of the first stone, on the second stone, on both sides of the third stone, and alluded to in the fourth stone. The demand for guarantors who are scrutinized to see if they are credit-worthy, for a down-payment and for a tax payment on the rent, plus the requirement that if conditions are not met, either in terms of provision of guarantors or of subsequent failure to pay the rent, the plot will be re-leased and the first lessee liable for any comparative shortfall in rent, are extremely stringent. They suggest, on the one hand, a desire to put off those who are poor and might not be able to get sufficiently credit-worthy backers or to pay the deposit (see further below); and, on the other, considerable anxiety about how the rental process will work out. In the different leases the conditions are set out in very similar terms, but not in the same wording. Even the term used for guarantor varies between *prostatas* and *enguos*, in a pattern not simply determined by date. Nor are the lengths of leases constant, even when set up by the same officials. The variation in wording goes along with the variation in officials involved: there is a great deal of *ad hoc* invention here, as commissions of various sizes and compositions are set up, different officials are called on to validate guarantors, and so on. None of this reads like the practice of a city where this land has already been leased for generations. Feyel and Roesch have disputed whether the idea of a permanent commission makes sense, with Feyel (*BCH* 60 (1937), 407) objecting that with leases of 20 years, a permanent commission makes no sense, and Roesch insisting that commissions could be periodically renewed, citing a parallel from Tanagra dating to 90–80 BC (Roesch 1965: 187–93, at 192, citing *Arkhaiologike Ephemeris* (1956), 36–7). Roesch is clearly right that commissions can be kept rolling, but Feyel must also be right that if one were planning how to deal with these things, one would not put long-term oversight in the hands of a special commission. It is not hard to see why, when donations came in, a special committee was set up to deal with them, but the failure to create an overarching body responsible for the on-going oversight of leased land is a measure both of the novelty of the situation for the Thespians and of the lightness of their civic administration.

The third point to make is about the funding of cult. The amounts of money involved in these leases are certainly not enormous. Surviving figures here (*IThesp* 53 rents in total 1974 drs.; *IThesp* 54 rents for Hermes of 2222 drs.; *IThesp* 55 rents for the Muses of 591 drs.; *IThesp* 62 rents from the Ptolemaic gift of 1701 drs.) indicate total income per year of over 1 talent. But if not enormous, this is also not a negligible sum and will have ensured that an impressive amount of festival activity could take place in style. We simply do not know how cult at Thespiai had funded itself in the Classical period, but it is likely that the new gifts brought additional and not merely substitute funding.

All of these points suggest that in the middle of the third century there was an injection of funding and energy into Thespiai's most prominent cults, those based in the Valley of the Muses. But where did the initiative for this come from? The cult of the Muses had certainly long attracted interest: Pausanias (ix. 30. 1) indicates that there were major sculptural groups there by the early fourth century, further enhanced during the fourth and into the third century. The interest already shown in the first half of the third century by the Attalid Philetairos suggests that external factors may have been important in promoting the cult further. Whatever Thespiai was already doing to celebrate the Muses, it offered an occasion for display to some who were eager for such opportunities. The result, by the end of the third century, was not only the re-organization and up-grading of the Mouseia but the monumentalization of the sanctuary with the construction of at least one portico and a theatre.[16]

It follows from the relatively modest total of rent – even if we double up we are dealing only with around 2 talents annual rent – that the economic effect of this activity will also have been relatively modest. If we take the rate of 2 drs. per *plethron* in *IThesp* 62 to be normal, then we are dealing with around 6000 *plethra* of land (some rents include an element for buildings) – that is about 525 ha, or enough on normal calculations to feed 100 families.[17] Just how modest the effect of renting this out was will depend on who rented it. Feyel famously argued that the leases, at least those of the 220s on, were part of an effort to provide land to the landless. He was encouraged in this thought by the relatively low levels of overlap between the names of those leasing and the names of those known to take office, or otherwise prominent, in Thespiai. Yet some of those who lease property were certainly of high status (e.g. the polemarch Theirarchos son of Kanas, who leases four plots in *IThesp* 50), and the relatively high degree of repetition within individual lease inscriptions, where the same individual may lease multiple plots (of the 46 preserved names of lessees in *IThesp* 48–52, 54, and 56, 19 lease more than one plot) or appear as guarantor as well as lessee (9 individuals appear in both categories in those same inscriptions) discourages the view that we are dealing

with the poor.[18] I have suggested that what we see is relatively wealthy men taking advantage of land for leasing when they already have interests in that area, and not otherwise (hence the relatively small overlap of personnel from one lease inscription to another).[19]

The readiness of the relatively wealthy to lease property is significant in one particular respect: while the produce from one's own land can be directly eaten, or used for gifts, those who lease property are required to sell some of the produce in order to pay the rent. Readiness to lease will therefore relate to expectations about the marketability of the produce that can be grown. The more we stress this aspect, the more striking it is that Thespiai has so few officials regulating behaviour in the market. We should not think of the light administration as being simply a product of a heavily subsistence-based society and economy; it must also have reflected a political decision.

We can see something of the same point from the debate about the status of those leasing property, which arises from the nature of Thespian epigraphy. Although we have quite a lot of Thespian names, we have them mainly from the lists of recruits and from these leases. Neither serving as a soldier, nor leasing a plot of land is in itself a mark of status. What we lack from Thespiai are lists of individuals serving the city in ways that require money or status. The closest we come to this is in the inscription recording the repayment to individuals of money loaned to Athens, plausibly in 229 when they bought out the Macedonian garrison (*IThesp* 40). As a result, whether we take the lessee of the massive property bought with the Ptolemaic gift to be Parmenias son of Phanteios or Ari..idas son of Dio.., we are dealing with an individual who is otherwise unknown (except in as far as Parmenias serves on the commission to purchase and lease this same land). This is both a fact about the epigraphy and a fact about Thespiai as a city. That becomes apparent from the fact that only half of those wealthy enough to give a substantial sum towards the loan to Athens turn out to have names that occur at all elsewhere in Thespiai's record: of the nine named individuals – Kalliteles, Timyllos, Pouthodoros, Triax, Menalkis, Karon, Dion, Antidoros, Pedagenes – to whom sums of money received back from Athens are paid over, and to whom individually sums amounting to almost 4000 dr. are repaid, only Pouthodoros, Dion, Antidoros and Pedagenes have names that are even attested otherwise at Thespiai. The city sat light to its inhabitants, and they, even when wealthy, sat light to it.

I promised at the beginning of this chapter to read this evidence against both archaeological and literary evidence. Polybius famously complains about the state of the Boeotians in the early years of the second century, saying that they had been in bad way for many years (xx. 4–6). In particular, he claims that for almost 25 years there had been no administration of justice, either in private or in public cases, with magistrates concentrating on garrison duty and military campaigns and deferring justice, and generals using public funds to pay wages to the poor. He goes on to suggest that, along with corruption in high places, there was a general tendency of the childless to spend their money on feasts, so that many had more feasts to go to than there were days in the month. Feyel reviewed Polybius against the epigraphic record and came up with a story in which the years 245 to 220 were years of Boeotian renewal following conquest by the Aitolians; that Polybius knew this but concealed it because of his *'amour-propre achéen'* over the defection of Megara in 224; but that after 220, everything Polybius said was true.[20]

The epigraphy gives no grounds for thinking that there was any marked change in Thespiai in or around 220. Feyel's attempt to see changes in the size of plots leased in these years is in vain. But arguably Polybius' picture of Boeotia is not seriously at odds with the epigraphic record of Boeotia either before or after 220. What Polybius describes is what the epigraphic record also shows.[21] Thespiai is keen on military service – keen enough, at least, to write up the lists of recruits. The elaboration of the Mouseia will undoubtedly have led to more feasts, and we see individuals giving money to enable more animals to be sacrificed or giving property to be rented out to pay for cult activity. Such activity seems to have attracted, rather than repelled, those outside, at least to judge from the Ptolemaic benefaction. But it went with minimal civic institutions, and in particular minimal interest in regulations or regulatory bodies.

What of the archaeological evidence? Here the survey has provided rich evidence for small sites being densely scattered across the late Classical and Hellenistic landscape, subsequently to thin dramatically in the early Roman period. Exactly what we should make of the politics of that decision to live, or at least to spend much time based, outside nucleated settlements will only become clear when truly comparable evidence exists from enough areas where we are confident of the local political arrangements.[22] But it is at least worth observing that the choice of the less sociable option in terms of settlement pattern accords with the light-touch civic administration (both enabling the light touch and sharing the 'light-touch' mentality), and that the economic arguments in favour of living close to land farmed would also be arguments that caused even relatively wealthy men to be interested in acquiring land to lease only if that land was near their existing

landed interests (and presumably near their, at least temporary, residence). At the very least, nothing in the archaeology renders anything that we have deduced from the epigraphic and literary record surprising.

Arguments from silence draw widespread criticism, and any attempt to draw a portrait of a city from its inscriptions, like any attempt to draw a portrait of a city from the archaeological sites revealed by survey, will end up resting on what is not recorded, as well as on what is. I have tried to show how, in the case of Thespiai at least, absences of evidence can reasonably be taken as evidence of absence, since the record that does exist in various ways reinforces and reconfirms the absence. The result is a picture of a Greek city strongly contrasted to either the litigious and political Athenians, or the people of classical Thasos with their regulatory obsessions (Osborne 2009, based on similar epigraphic analysis). Thespiai emerges instead as a city where long years of important decisions being made at arms' length led to the construction of a community held together not by doing business together but by playing together – playing soldiers, and watching festival plays. The evidence for significant personal wealth and for a significant body of individuals able to take on additional rented land suggests that, whatever our Polybian moral disapproval of so light a state presence, Thespiai enjoyed in consequence at least a moderately well-distributed prosperity.[23]

Notes

1 Compare the way in which Thespiai is traditionalist in its orthography, keeping the letter E and not assimilating *e** + V to *i* (Vottéro 1996a: 85). This seems to be an element of Thespian resistance to Thebes. Note also that Thespiai, like other cities of Boeotia, keeps the use of Boeotian numerals in documents for internal consumption, but goes over to a more universally recognized numerical system when dealing with others (Vottéro 1996b: 178–9).

2 The story is explored by Vottéro 1996a, esp. 88–90. The shortage of independently dated inscriptions must be borne in mind when discussing the issue of how sharp the division at 171 was, and there are certainly other cities in Boeotia where use of dialect clearly persisted after 171: see Müller 2005: 98–9, citing in particular inscriptions from Akraiphia and Orchomenos, and below, Chapter 7, p. 232.

3 *SEG* 39 (1989) 411; *IG* vii. 585. Further afield, there is also a fifth-century casualty list from Argos. For a list of casualty lists from outside Athens see Pritchett (1985): 140–5. In the fourth century, lists are known from Plataia and Thebes, as well as from Argos, Corinth, Epidauros, Mantineia, and Tegea.

4 The latter identifies five dead men, four of them with their places of death localized, one dying at Oinophyta, two at Oropos and one at Koroneia: the reinscription of a family monument of fifth-century date (with Oropos as a way of referring to Tanagra) has been suggested.

5 See Roesch 1982: 340–3. The watershed between the two groups has conventionally been dated to 245 BC, but recent (unpublished) research by Y. Kalliontzis has argued that it should be placed at 225 BC.

6 This distribution is one of the things that argues against Fossey's view (1994: 40–3) that it is possession of coastal areas that leads a city to make a large number of proxeny decrees, despite his claims to the contrary.

7 Marek 1984: 27–32, and map between pp. 28 and 29 for Oropos; see also Fossey 1994. For proxeny in general, see now Mack 2015.

8 Although there is some element of the official about them (*IThesp* 214 even heads itself 'Gods. Good Fortune', like a decree), the 7 inscriptions recording the enfranchisement of slaves are in fact private documents, something reflected in the absence of regular vocabulary to describe what is being done or of consistent demands on the newly enfranchised. As in Boeotia generally, the Thespian acts of enfranchisement date to the end of the third and first part of the second century BC. See generally Darmezin 1999.

9 Thespiai was one of three cities (the others were Thebes and Tanagra) that each on their own constituted one of the seven *telê* of the Hellenistic confederacy: see Corsten 1999: 38–47; Knoepfler 2000; Müller 2011.

10 This is the least coherent group, but the case for all these officials having charge of money is made by Roesch 1965: 24.

11 For the way in which the numbers of any particular magistracy seem to vary from year to year more generally in Boeotia, see Schachter 1997: 278, who remarks there that Thespiai variously fields 1, 2, 3 or 5 *hierarchai*.

12 72 compares closely with 70 ephebes; Athenian ephebic numbers were around 500 a year in the fourth century (they would have been something like double that number had they existed in the fifth century). Ideally one would compare the array of magistrates at Thespiai to the array of magistrates in a city closer in size and time to Hellenistic Thespiai, but we have no comparably complete list from elsewhere.

13 Roesch (1965: 126–33) fudges the issue of whether there is a Council; Rhodes and Lewis (1997: 124) contemplate the possibility of there being no Council, even when a probouleutic formula is employed in decrees. Whether or not Thespiai did have a council, its complete absence from view cannot plausibly be regarded as an epigraphic accident: it tells us a great deal about its place within the city.

14 Pernin (2004) 223–4 sees the conditions, which mention that the lessee receives the land *par* the magistrates (i.e. the commission that has set up the lease), as being set up for the first-time lease, with the leasing which is then recorded being not the first but (at least) the second lease, so that the property is not received '*par*' the magistrates, but '*par*' Philotis. This enables her to retain the traditional understanding of *par* + personal name in the leases.

15 Roesch 1965: 189 for denial that the land here is sacred ('ce sont des domaines publics, et non des propriétés

sacrées, qui sont mis en location'); 204–5 for the invariably sacred tasks of the *hierarchai*.

16 The precise date of buildings is uncertain, but Roux believes them to be third-century: *BCH* 78 (1954), 43.

17 Thespiai, without Chorsiai, Siphai, Thisbe, and Eutresis is reckoned by Hansen (2004: 457) to possess 200 sq. km (20,000 ha); with them, it was 425 sq. km.

18 Pernin (2004: 228) takes issue with my suggestion that lessees were 'well-off', but without engaging with the full evidence. See more generally Müller 2010, who discusses the leases at 232–5.

19 Pernin (2004: 229–30) wonders whether the repeated appearance of the Nympheion undermines the case for the lands leased in the separate inscriptions being geographically separate, and prefers to see the fact that only occasionally do the same names occur in different leases as a product of leases tending to stay within a broad kinship or friendship group.

20 Feyel 1942: 304, 'à partir de 220, le jugement si sévère de Polybe paraît tout à fait justifié. Mais, précisément, il ne l'est pas avant cette date'; 305–6 for Polybius's reasons.

21 For a reading less sympathetic to Polybius, seeing his account as a literary *topos* of Roman origins, see Müller 2013.

22 See Osborne 2004 for the current problems of comparison of settlement evidence.

23 I am very grateful to participants at a workshop on Boeotia held in Cambridge in autumn 2011 and again at the 2011 autumn meeting of the British Epigraphy Society, and particularly to Albert Schachter, for comments on and reactions to an earlier draft. Christel Müller, Nikolaos Papazarkadas and Caroline Vout read and improved improved an earlier draft and, although I have sometimes stubbornly failed to follow their guidance, I warmly thank them for their help.



Boeotia Project, Volume II: The city of Thespiai

Few major Classical cities have disappeared so completely from view, over the centuries, as Thespiai in Central Greece. Only the technique of intensive field survey, carefully adapted to a large urban site and reinforced by historical investigation, has made it possible to recover from oblivion much of its life of seven millennia.

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Published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research,
University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3ER, UK.

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Printed by Short Run Press. Distributed by Oxbow Books.
Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.

ISBN-13: 978-1-902937-81-6

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