Sometime around 460 BC a decree was passed at a meeting of “Halikarnassians and Salmakians and Lygdamis” (commonly called “The Lygdamis Decree”). The text has an intriguing history, going back to the eighteenth century; it has been a focus of study since the 1860s, yet with no satisfactory solution to the major problems. The main provisions of the decree deal with mnemones, official “rememberers.” The aim of this essay is to reach a better understanding of their role in this particular context. The investigation is complicated by gaps in the text and in the historical record and (perhaps most of all) by conflicting assumptions about what early mnemones might be expected to do. We cannot hope to solve all the difficulties, but it may help to untangle the other complications if we can more clearly characterize the mnemones’ essential function—how they used their memory. Let us first re-examine the broken text and trace the main lines of interpretation that diverge from it (Section 1), then consider the closest comparanda, in order to see what it is that early mnemones are especially called to witness and how they apply that knowledge (Section 2). Based on that profile I propose a new reconstruction of the role that mnemones were expected to play in the Lygdamis decree (Section 3).

1. **Text and Main Lines of Interpretation**

   τάδε ὁ σύλλογος ἔβολεύσατο ὁ Ἡλίκαρνασσις καὶ Σαλμακιτεῶν καὶ Λύγδαμις ἐν τῇ ἱερῇ

   Thus resolved the assembly of Halikarnassians and Salmakians and Lygdamis, in the sacred agora:

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1 Meiggs and Lewis (1969: 69-72, no. 32); Tod (1985: no. 25); Syll. 3 45. Cf. Valeton (1908-9), who lists earlier studies. Maffi (1988) is the most systematic treatment of this problematic text, with a thorough review of earlier scholarship. Effenterre and Ruzé (1994: 90-93, no. 19) recognize Maffi’s contribution but discount his solution; cf. Körner and Hašlov (1993: 316-23, no. 84). I am indebted to Maffi for critical comments on a draft of this paper (not that he is at all persuaded).
the fifth of Heraion, with Leon in the prytany, the son of Oassassios, and Sarussollos, son of Thekuillos, temple administrator, (regarding?) Mnemones:2 (One is) not to transfer land or buildings to the mnemones under the mnemonship of Apollonides the son of Lygdamis and Panamyes the son of Kasbollis, and, for the Salmakians, Megabates the son of Aphysis and Phormio the son of Panyassios. But if anyone wishes to bring suit regarding land or buildings, let him make his claim within 18 months from the date of this decree; in accord with current law let the judges administer the oath; whatever the mnemones know shall prevail. And if anyone brings suit after this 18-month period, the oath shall be for the holder of land or buildings (to swear) and the judges shall administer the oath, receiving “a twelfth”; the oath shall be (sworn) in the presence of the opponent. They have decisive right to land or buildings who held them when Apollonides and Panamyes were mnemones, unless they sold thereafter.

If anyone attempts to alter or abrogate this law his property shall be forfeit to Apollo and he shall be punished with eternal exile; if his net worth is not 10 staters, he shall be sold abroad, never to return to Halikarnassos. Any Halikarnassian has the right to bring suit who does not transgress these rules, just as they concluded the settlement and not transgress these rules, just as Halikarnassos. Any Halikarnassian can claim against the land or buildings of any Halikarnassian when Apollonides and Panamyes were mnemones, unless they sold thereafter.

2 ἐπικαλῆι {νίδεω καὶ ὡι ὑμπάντων περ ναι ἡσσόν ἤν. ὦι [δίδο τω ὀκτωκαίδεκα σθαι τότ] ἐπρῆσθαι νυάιος φυάσιος αἰεί· ἐξα γωγῆι στατήρων ἐοντα μνήμονας· ἔταμον Ὑστῆρον ἐπὶ ἧσαν τὸς νόμον ἐστηκότος αὐτοῦ τὸς μνημονας· ἔτωι παραβαίνηι δὲ, ὡλλο Παναμύως· ἔτωι Ὅαξια ἀπεπέρασαν· τὸν νόμον τοῦτον ἤ της θέλη συγχέαι ἢ προβήταται[|] ψήφου ὡστε μὴ εἶναι τὸν νόμον τοῦτον, ἢ τὸν θεόν αὐτὸ πεπρήθωμαι καὶ τὸπολλάκιον εἶναι ἑρα καὶ αὐτοῦ φιάνον αἰει· ἢ καὶ δια κόσμου αὐτοῦ [πνημόνας]. ἀποφθέγματα ἢπὶ ἑξαγωγῆι καὶ μὴ δὲ αὐτὸν προνικήσαι τὸν τὸς αὐτοῦ. ἀποδεκτὸν ὑπὲρ Παράσκευος καὶ Παναμύως· ἀποφθέγματα ἢ τὸς θρησκεύων τούτων ἐλεύθερον ἢ[ι] ναι, δε αὐτῶν μὴ παραβαίνηι κατὸ τοῦ ὁρκού ἄταμου καὶ ὡς γέγραπται ἐν τῶι Ἀπολλωνίῳ επικαλεῖν.