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## **The island of Skyros from Late Roman to Early Modern times : an archaeological survey**

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## Chapter 4

### Previous Archaeological and Historical Research

#### *The first Notes to the Archaeological Journals*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> there appear the first reports regarding the antiquities of the island in the journals of the recently founded foreign archaeological schools of Greece, namely the *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique*, *Annual of the British School at Athens*, *Athenische Mitteilungen* and *Revue Archéologique*.

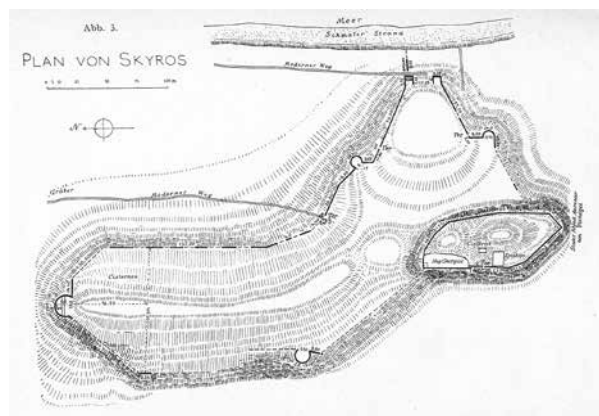
These reports are clearly distinguished from the previous travellers' references regarding the antiquities of the island, in that simple mention of them within the general description of the island are no longer made in passing, but form the focus. Five European scholars led early archaeological investigations on the island (Lebeque 1873, Girard 1879, Mayer 1893, Dawkins 1904 and Fredrich 1906), a result of archaeological itineraries made over large territories of the country, within the general explosion of the archaeological discovery of Greece undertaken by the recently founded foreign archaeological schools in Athens.

The reports consist of simple text (Lebeque, Girard, Mayer), include transliteration of some inscriptions (Lebeque, Girard), or even plans and photographs (Dawkins, Fredrich). All scholars described the most impressive archaeological evidence of the island, namely the fortification of the ancient *Polis* centre, in the present town. Fredrich was the first who studied meticulously the fortifications and tried to plan the external enceinte, giving measures and adding photographs (Fig. 4.1). Three of the scholars (Dawkins, Mayer and Fredrich) recognised the cemetery of the settlement in the valley of Magazia-Kambos (S10, S12), the first two entering also into ceramological discussions on the pottery found in the tombs.

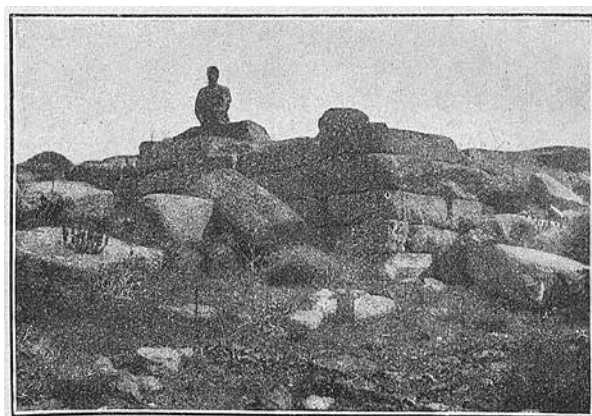
Apart from the ancient *Polis* centre, the attention of scholars also fell on the archaeological remains at Ari, Paliokastro, Ayios Fokas and Kalamitsa (Lebeque, Girard and Fredrich). The site of Markesi at the northern promontory of the island, with its ancient temple, necropolis and tufa quarries received

also their attention, with Fredrich being the first to present a plan of the visible part of the temple (Fig. 4.2). Finally, Girard and Fredrich made some comments about the ancient marble quarries of the island at the sites of Kolones, Marmara and Tris Boukes.

Although the focus of the first scholars was on the glorious ancient past of the island, some observations on the medieval monuments of the island also



**Fig. 4.1:** The first plan of the ancient fortifications of the *Polis* centre of Skyros, made by Fredrich in 1906.



**Fig. 4.2:** Fredrich on the ancient temple of Markesi in 1906.

took place. Thus, Lebeque, besides commenting on the reused ancient sculptures at the monastery of Ayios Dimitrios (C55), noted the “very nice” post-medieval frescoes of the church. Fredrich transliterated the painted and carved inscriptions of the same monastery as well as one inscription from the monastery of Ayios Georgios (C05) on the castle. Dawkins and Fredrich studied the church of the Episkopi (C01), presenting its plan and transliterating the inscription of its foundation. Additionally, Fredrich commented on the late-medieval cistern of the castle as well, being the first, once more, to present its plan.

#### *The first ‘histories’ of Skyros*

During the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first books dedicated to Skyros made their appearance. In 1901 M. Konstantinidis published *The island of Skyros, a historical essay from the ancient until modern times*, in 1906 Graidor the *Histoire de l’île de Skyros jusqu’en 1538* and in 1909 Papageorgiou the *History of Skyros from the ancient times*.

The monographs of the two Greek - Skyrian writers are typical of the historical books which appear at the beginning of the century, made usually by intellectual locals as an offer to their birthplace. Besides the historical outline and the description of the archaeological finds which the Skyrian writers offer, their books include a detailed description of the physical geography, the culture and the daily life of the island. The information given about the economy, agricultural production, demography and the daily life of the island are precious today.

The book of Graindor is completely different from the previous two. A strictly historical text, characterised by its scientific style and based on the ancient and medieval historical sources, this book is the most meticulous historical study of its time.

#### *Towards a more intensive study and the first excavations*

From the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a more intensive study of the island’s antiquities takes place. Skyros is mentioned for the first time in the journals of the Archaeological Service of Greece, *Archaiologikon Deltion* and *Archaiologiki Efimeris*, while Greek scholars this time take up the reins of studying the island. The titles of the articles have no

more the general ‘notes on Skyros’ or alike, but are focused on specific subjects.

Evangelidis in 1918 conducted the first formal excavations, although brief, on the island, in the name of the Archaeological Service of Greece, reporting the results to the *Archaiologikon Deltion*. He excavated on the hill of Fourka (S05) the foundations of an ancient temple, some Roman graves close to the temple, while at the site of Magazia (S10), close to the site where Dawkins made his remarks about sub-Mycenaean and Geometric pottery, he recorded four Proto-geometric and Geometric graves (Evangelidis 1918).

Defner’s contribution comes in three articles in the *Archaiologiki Efimeris*, regarding a palimpsest Hellenistic inscription, the ancient quarries of the island and a second detailed study (after Fredrich), of the fortification of the ancient *Polis* centre (1923 and 1925-26 respectively).

More evidence from the Geometric cemetery north from the ancient urban centre, was brought to light by the Skyrian archaeologist Papadimitriou, through a small excavation at the hill of Themis (S11), where he excavated five Proto-geometric graves (Papadimitriou 1936). In the next year, at the site of Magazia (S10), Stavropoulos excavated some more Proto-geometric and Geometric tombs (Stavropoulos 1937)

#### *The beginnings of Prehistoric Archaeology on Skyros*

Research until the WWII was mainly focused on the historical periods. The foundations for the archaeological research of the prehistoric period of the island were laid down by the Skyrian archaeologist Dimitris Theocharis. In his article in the *Archaiologiki Efimeris* of 1945-47, Theocharis published the Neolithic pottery from the site Papa To Chouma (S08), on the eastern flank of the ancient acropolis, and a series of Mycenaean rock-cut chamber tombs at the site of Krokos, on the east edge of the town of Skyros. In 1959 Theocharis published his second article on prehistoric Skyros, where he supplemented the last paper, adding also his remarks about probable Mesolithic and possibly Palaeolithic evidence at the site of Spiliotissa at Achili (S60).

The explosion of Prehistoric research on Skyros started in 1981, with the systematic excavation at the site of Palamari (S27) under the direction of Liana Parlama (still in progress). This first and, to this day, unique systematic archaeological fieldwork on the is-

land, brought to the light a fortified settlement of the Early and Middle Bronze Age, contributing further to Aegean Prehistory (Fig. 4.3).

Apart from the excavation at Palamari, Parlama also undertook a general study of the prehistoric period of the island for her PhD dissertation in 1984. The study of Parlama uncovered an archaeologically hardly known period on Skyros, and was until recently the only strictly archaeological monograph dedicated to the island. Besides her focus on the Bronze Age, Parlama presented in her thesis the first long-term archaeological catalogue of the island.

*The systematization of the rescue excavations by the Archaeological Service of Greece and the evidence for Skyros in the Early Iron Age*

The attention to the island's antiquities became more intense from the 1970s onwards, after the establishment of the 11<sup>th</sup> Ephoreia at Chalkis in 1977 (Touloupa 1978, 120). The new Ephoreia started the systematic control of building activity in the area around Kastro and its slopes and at Magazia/Kambos, the two areas where in the past Prehistoric and Early Iron Age archaeological remains had been identified (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1997b, 35). The result of this control and of the numerous rescue excavations was the recovery of an extensive Protogeometric, Geometric and Archaic cemetery. Until 2002, 45 tombs had been revealed, of cemeteries belonging to several settlements, with the key associated settlement that at



**Fig. 4.3:** One of the first teams of the systematic excavation at Palamari, in 1986 (archive-courtesy Scientific Committee of Palamari Skyros).

the top of Chora (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 2001-02, 165 and 188). The studies on the finds from these tombs show a flourishing settlement of the island during the Early Iron Age, suggesting that Skyros was a dynamic centre of exchange of objects and ideas, with many contacts with the North Cyclades, Euboea and Attica (Desborough 1980, Kalogeropoulou 1983, Vlavianou-Tsaliki 1998).

*The study of the marble quarries of the island*

Apart from the old publication regarding the ancient quarries of Skyros by Defner in 1923, a special interest in the marble quarries of the island has taken place in the recent years. Apart from Dworakowska's article of 1972, a more systematic study took place after 1990, with a general interest towards the ancient stones, initiated by the *Association for the Study of Marbles & Other Stones in Antiquity* (ASMOSIA), founded in 1988 (Lazzarini 1999; Lazzarini & Turi 1999; Lazzarini & Cancelliere 2000; Bruno 2002; Lazzarini 2007, 161-75; Karambinis & Lazzarini forthcoming).

*The Research on the Medieval to Modern era of the Island*

References to the medieval past of Skyros are restricted in the architecture and history of art. Apart from the mentions by the first European scholars of the late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries cited above, several Byzantinists during their study regarding the ecclesiastical architecture of Greece, have made some brief remarks on the architectural type of the church of the Episkopi (C01), based on the plans of Dawkins and Fredrich, without visiting the island.<sup>1</sup> The first proper study of this important medieval monument came in 1960 by Bouras. Apart from that, archaeological activity on the medieval period of the island has been until today restricted to rescue conservation and restoration works of the Archaeological Service and to accordingly brief reports in the *Archaialogikon Del-tion* (1971, 26.B1, 278-9; 1972, 27.B2, 372-3; 1981, 36.B1, 81; 1982, 37.B1, 74).

1 G. Millet, *L'école grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, Paris 1916, 43; M. Sotiriou, Ο ναός της Σκριπούς στην Βοιωτία, in *Archaialogiki Ephimeris* 1931, 139; A. Χυngορουλος, Ο ναός της Επισκοπής Σκοπέλου, in *Archaialogiki Ephimeris* 1956, 191-2.

More plentiful are the historical studies. Vasileios Atesis, bishop of Lemnos and Skyrian in origin, has offered a series of articles and a monograph regarding the ecclesiastical history of Skyros, while Xenophon Antoniadis has presented a significant work regarding the history of the island during the medieval and mainly post-medieval times (including the study of the local historical archive). Apart from those, several other Skyrians contributed to the historical study of medieval and post-medieval Skyros, such as Kostas and Manos Faltaits, Kostis Konstantinidis, Napoleon Xanthoulis, Theodoros Skouras and Dimitris Theocharis (see references).

Apart from history and archaeology, the rich in 'traditional elements' island of Skyros has been the subject of several folklore studies. The island caught the attention of the folkloric scholars as early as the beginnings of the 20th century, within the general intellectual movement of that period in Greece, characterised by the search for the 'original' elements of the Greek 'tradition', as a reference to long-term Greek civilisation reacting to the increasing Europeanization (Theocharidis 2009). Apart from the study of Konstantinos Psachos in 1910 regarding the songs of Skyros, in 1925 Angeliki Chatzimichali, one of the leaders of the aforementioned intellectual movement, published her book *Folk art of Skyros*, a work of reference for folk life studies of Greece, examining Skyrian architecture and handicraft. This was followed in 1940 by a second important work by Niki Perdika, with the title *Skyros, Impressions and descriptions-historical and folkloristic notes-customs and monuments of the people* (Academy of Athens honorary award).

The aforementioned intellectual movement led in 1920s to the creation of the first communal folklore (and archaeological) collection of the island (Faltaits 1931, 15-6)<sup>2</sup>. After this first attempt, in 1964 Manos Faltaits founded the 'Faltaits Historical and Folklore Museum' one of the oldest private museums of the kind in Greece, and in the following years he released a series of articles concerning folk life and material culture of Skyros (see references).

Interest in the folk life of the island never ceased. Two more books dedicated to the songs of Skyros were published by Tsianis (2003) and Lamprou (2004), and one more for the Skyrian costumes by Lamprou (1994). Lately, an old unpublished study of Vamvakeridis saw light in 2008.

The island of Skyros was also the subject of three PhD dissertations by social anthropologists: Cornelia Zarkia, *Societe et Espace dans l'Ile de Skyros* (1991), Agapi Amanatidi, "*Coming into Being*": *Metaphors of Self and Becoming in Carnival on the Aegean Island of Skyros* (2005), and Andronikos Theocharidis, *Material Culture, Social Structure and Memory, heirlooms and objects of 'folk art and handicraft' on Skyros and their circulation inside and outside the limits of the local* (2009; in modern Greek).

Concluding this review on the research on the medieval to early modern era of Skyros, it would be an omission not to mention the well known Melissa series of *Greek Traditional Architecture* and the volume dedicated to Skyros, written by Arnaoutoglou (1982).

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<sup>2</sup> This first collection constituted eventually the core of the Archaeological Museum of Skyros, founded later by the State.