



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE REGION OF THE MODERN MUNICIPALITY OF STYRA: OLD AND NEW FINDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a brief outline of the results of the salvage excavations undertaken in recent years by the 11th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (IA EPKA) in the area of Lefka, Nea Styra, together with a brief description of surface finds in the region of Styra. A more extensive archaeological description and topographical assessment of all known sites, including farm houses, towers, possible sanctuaries, tombs and quarrying areas will be provided in a forthcoming larger study by the author. The brief assessment of old and new data presented here is given as a preliminary summary of the topography of the ancient demos of Styra, which, according to inscriptional data, was incorporated in the Eretrian territory, during the last years of the 5th century B.C.

KEYWORDS: Styra, Lefka, Nimborio, Messochoria, Aghios Nikolaos fortification, bronze serpent column, Dragon Houses, farm houses, towers, quarries, Claudianus, cemeteries, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods

INTRODUCTION: EARLIER FINDS

The region of Styra in Southern Euboea (fig. 1) is first mentioned in the *Iliad* and then by ancient authors of the Classical, Roman and later periods (*Iliad* 2.539, Herodotus 8.1, 8.46.4, 9.28.5. Thucydides

7.57.4. Demosthenes, *Against Meidias*, 167. Pausanias 4.34.11, 5.23.2. Strabo, *Geographica*, X 1, 6–C 446. Stephanos Byzantios, 588, 14. See also: Hansen and Nielsen 2004, 660).

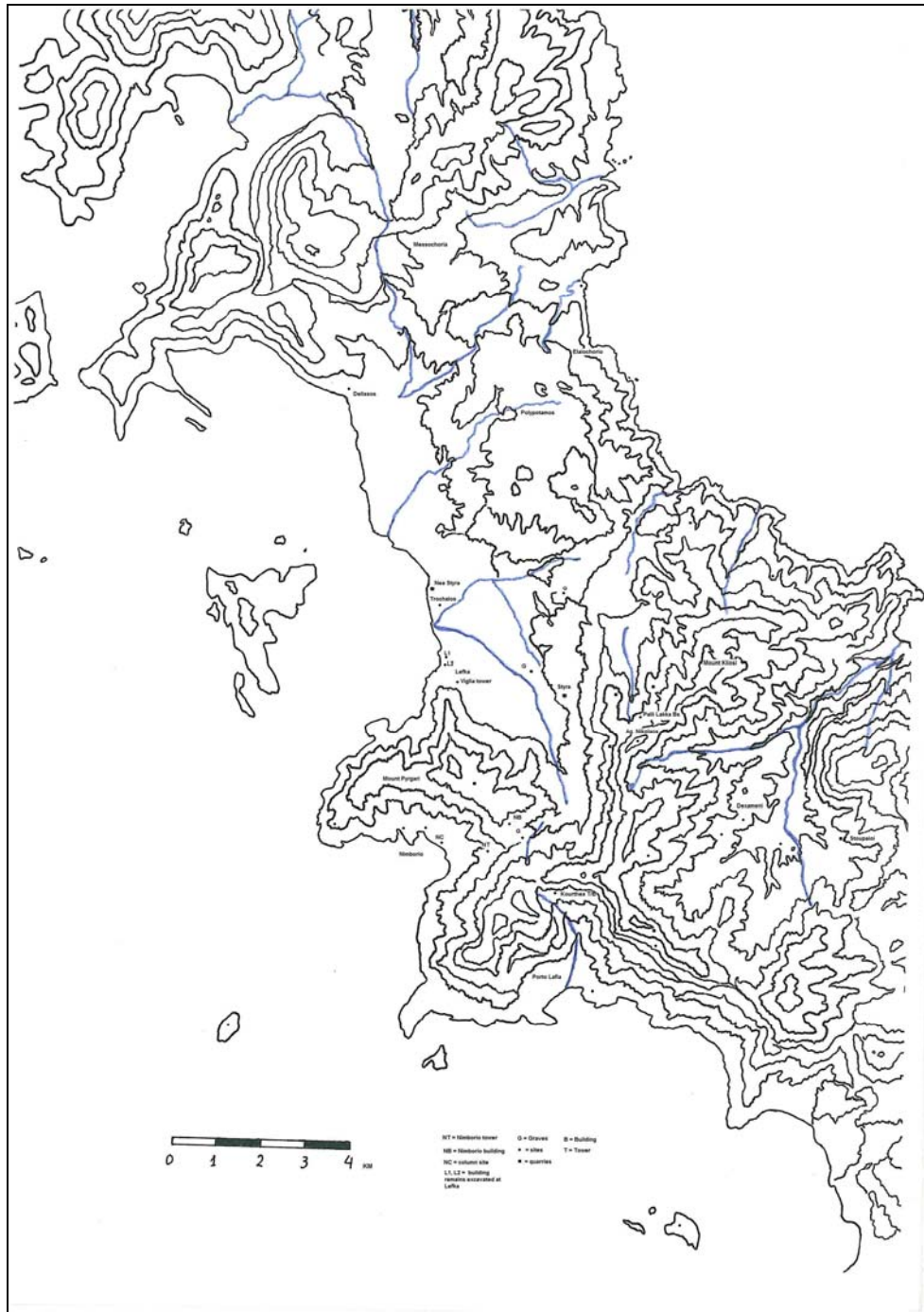


Fig. 1 Map of the region of Styra, Southern Euboea, showing sites mentioned in the text

Travelers and scholars of the 19th and early 20th century took interest in a number of antiquities extant in the region of Styra, including the Aghios Nikolaos fortification on Mount Kliosi, the complex of three buildings known today as the Palli Lakka Dragon Houses (fig. 2, 3), the Roman cipollino quarries, and inscriptional finds of the region (Ross 1848. Ross 1851. Rangabé 1853, 218-224. Lacroix 1853, 419-421. Bursian 1856, 49-50. Bursian 1868-1872, 430-431. Baumeister 1864, 24-27. Girard 1851. Girard 1852. Geyer 1903. Philippson 1951, 625. *IG* XII.9.52 to *IG* XII.9.71. Johnson 1925, 401-405. See also: Fittschen 1999-2000, 133-147).



Figs. 2, 3. Styra, Palli Lakka site. Views of the ancient buildings – Dragon houses.

Historians and other literati of the 18th and 19th century referred to the Styreans

fighting with the Athenians against the invading Persians in the battles of Salamis and Plataiai in 480 and 479 B.C., a fact memorized by Herodotus and the well known inscribed bronze serpent column that was dedicated by the Spartans and Greek allies in the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi and now in the Hippodrome (At Meydanı) in Istanbul (fig. 4) (Herodotus 8.1, 8.46, 9.28, 9.31, 9.81. See: Gauer 1968, 75-96. Bommelaer 1991, fig. 69, left. Lacroix 1989, 183-198. Stichel 1997, 315-348, pls. 52-57. Neer 2007, 239, fig. 26).



Fig. 4. Istanbul, Hippodrome (At Meydanı). The visible part of the bronze serpent column.

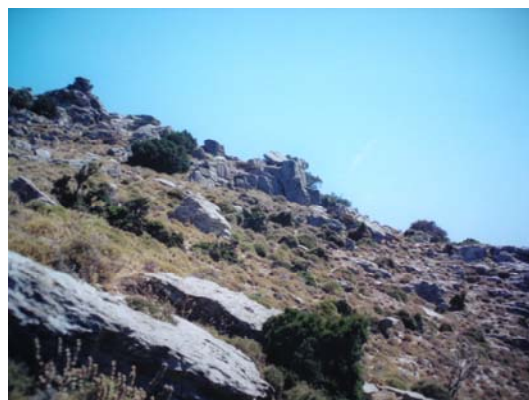
In the second half of the 20th century, scholarly research focused on historical testimonies connected with ancient Styra, such as its Dryopian origin (Herodotus 8.46.4. Pausanias 4.34.11. Dryopian Karystos: Thucydides 7.57.4. See: Fourgous 1989, 5-32), its pro-Athenian contribution to the Persian wars, the inclusion of the city, as an independent polity, in the First Athenian or Delian League and its subse-

quent annexation by the city state of Eretria (IG I³ 269.V.29. IG I³ IV.28. 263. IG I³ 71.I.74. Thucydides 7.57.4. See: Meritt et al., 1950, 198-199). According to recently studied inscriptional testimonies, the demos of Styra was incorporated in the Eretrian territory, during the last years of the 5th century B.C. (IG II 5, 116 c. IG II² 230. Strabo, *Geographica*, X, 1, 6 - C 446. Wallace 1947, 118, 130, 142. Knoepfler 1971, 223-244. Reber 2002, 40-53. Contra: Wallace 1972, 59-69). Also, in the second half of the 20th century and onwards, archaeological research in southern Euboea and the region of Styra has been conducted by the Greek Archaeological Service (IA EPKA) and foreign archaeological institutes, including the Swiss Archaeological School and the Southern Euboea Exploration Project (SEEP), under the aegis of the Canadian Institute in Greece.

Surveys by Theocharis, Sampson, and the British School at Athens reported prehistoric building remains and Late Neolithic to Early Bronze age sherds in the areas of Lefka, Trochalos at Nea Styra, and Delissos. Three fragmentary marble Early Cycladic figurines from the site of Gkisouri, probably at Nea Styra, were published by Wolters in the late 19th century. Similar new finds are currently under investigation by M. Kosma (IA EPKA) at Nea Styra (Wolters 1891, 54-55. Theocharis 1959, 279, 284, 309-310. Sampson 1980, 128, no. 36, 218, 246, note 136. Sackett et al. 1966, 78-80, no. 88, esp. note 131, figs. 14, 15, 18, no. 25).

Many archaeological and historical issues, including the location of the ancient city of Styra, its public buildings, and the extent of its habitation and cemetery sites remain unresolved. New research, however, has been conducted at the Classical to Hellenistic fortification better known since Medieval times as Kastro Larmena

at the site of Aghios Nikolaos on Mount Kliosi (Sackett et al. 1966, 79, note 130. Koder 1973, 123-125. Skouras 2003, 103-104, no. 132. Fachard 2005, 114-123. See also: Fachard 2006, 87-96). Kastro Larmena covers an area of 3.5 hectares on a plateau between two schist peaks and consists of two long E-W curtain walls, in pseudo-isodomic trapezoidal masonry. Each wall is provided with a projecting square tower (fig. 5, 6). There is one impressive gate 3.50 m high, built of local limestone blocks, in the west side of the northern wall and possibly another in the southern wall. Classical and Hellenistic sherds, iron slag, and terracotta beehive fragments were found at the site (Fachard 2005, 122, pl. 23,3. cf. *Agora* XII, 287, no. 711).



Figs. 5, 6. Styra, Aghios Nikolaos. Views of the fortification (photos by N. Simos).

Additionally, special interest in a growing catalogue of ancient square and rectangular buildings located on mountain ridges or low hills in the area of Styra and now collectively known as the Styra Dragon Houses was promoted in the late 1950s by N.K. Moutsopoulos and more recently by K. Reber and the late T. Skouras (Moutsopoulos 1982. Skouras 1991. Reber 2001a). Also, for other sites in Southern Euboea: Reber 2001b). The so-called Dragon Houses share similarities in construction, including limestone and schist pseudo-isodomic, trapezoidal masonry, large one-slab lintel and door jambs and the corbel roofing system attested in at least some of the buildings. Some of these constructions, including the square or almost square buildings at Nimborio (fig. 7) and Viglia-Lefka can be identified as ancient towers with many parallels in Attica and the Aegean islands and may be related to the supervision of cultivation at nearby fields or the exploitation of marble quarries (Cf. Attica: Suto 1993, 1-19. Thorikos: Spitaels 1978, 39-110. Kampos, Aliveri in Euboea: Chatzidimitriou 1999, 340, fig. 8. Kea: Mendoni 1998, 275-307. Kythnos: Chatzianastasiou 1998, 259-273. Andros: Koutsoukou and Kanellopoulos 1990, 155-174. See also: Moreno 2007, 134-135). During a number of investigations conducted by IA EPKA, amphora and pithos sherds of late Classical to Hellenistic date have been observed and sampled in the area of a number of these buildings, e.g., the towers at Kourthea-Porto Lafia and Viglia-Lefka. Other Dragon Houses, e.g., the rectangular building excavated and reconstructed by N.K. Moutsopoulos at Metsifi, conform to the usual rural farm house type, sometimes with rooms created in two rows along the long axis. The building at Metsifi is located near a rock horos inscription belonging to the de[mos]

probably of Styra (Moutsopoulos 1982, 340, 347-370, horos: figs. 53-55). An inscribed schist stone with an erotic inscription of the Archaic period was found inside the same building at Metsifi and was recently published by A. Matthaïou (MK 27. Moutsopoulos 1982, 358, 362, fig. 79. Matthaïou 2007, 161-168).



Fig. 7. Styra, Nimborio. Ancient tower.

Architectural remains with sherds of Classical to Hellenistic date have been located at Styra (Keller 1985, 262-263). Chidioglou reports sherds of the 5th century B.C. near walls located on Mount Pyrgari in 2000, (filed in IA EPKA = 11th Ephorate of Prehist. & Class. Ant.) and later ones at Nimborio, associated with a 37.5 x 20 m structure and nearby looted cist tomb, in 2003 (filed in IA EPKA). Two pre-modern, circular stone lined kilns or storage pits were found in the area of Delissos in the mid 1990s and an apsidal building associated with Roman surface sherds was located in the area of Dexameni a few years later (Chidioglou, reports filed at IA' EPKA). Graves of the 5th century B.C. have been investigated at the site of Gyzi (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1990, 160-162) and looted stone sarcophagi of Hellenistic to Roman date have been found at Nim-

borio, Messochoria, and on the road to Nea Styra.

MORE ON RECENT FINDS

More recently, in the area of Lefka, Nea Styra, the remains of two late Hellenistic to late Roman buildings were investigated. The first building, measuring 7.70 x 3.25 m and dating to Roman Imperial times, came to light in 1999, in a salvage excavation undertaken by the Archaeological Service. Its walls had been constructed of schist slabs embedded in lime cement. Three rooms on an E-W axis and earthen floors were partially revealed. The foundation of the walls had been set on a thick ancient cement layer, as a precaution against the danger of flooding, imminent even today. Part of a low wall of simple dry stone construction, perhaps representing the remains of an enclosure or court, came to light in the west (Cf. Adam Veleni et al. 2003, 109-114). Late Roman Imperial to Early Byzantine sherds of plain wares and pithoi, glass panel and vessel fragments, and some metal finds also came to light. Some of the sherds belong to vessels of terra sigillata type. One clay oinochoe handle was preserved with an incised cross. In the same area a marble Ionic capital was visible at the time of the excavation, built into the small chapel of Aghios Ioannis. The chapel is modern, but a predecessor in the same area is probable (Chidiroglou 1999, 343-344).

The second building of Hellenistic to Roman date was also partially excavated in a flooded area nearby. Its dry stone walls, constructed of small to medium sized schist slabs set in layers, were preserved to a height of 0.25 to 0.40 m. Sherds of Hellenistic and Roman date, belonging to pithoi, amphorae and jugs were found on the surface and in all excavated layers

(Cf. Jones et al. 1973, 355-452. Adam Veleni et al. 2003, 56-60, 78-82).

A larger version of this paper will be presented in a forthcoming article by the author containing an overall outline and topographical assessment of all known sites, as well as a description of recent and old ceramic and metal finds from the Styra region (fig. 1). The publication will also report on the relevant ancient sources and inscriptions pertaining to the region, including the recently relocated inscribed Roman funerary stele of Lais (*IG XII.9.66*, now MK 434. Papavassileiou 1910, 100, no. 25) and two inscribed marble funerary stelai of the 4th century B.C., found in 1988 in Karalides, Elaiochorio at Polypotamos, and now in the Karystos Museum (MK 347, MK 348: For their types cf.: Knoepfler 1984, 245, fig. 8. Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 223 and fig. 52. Möbius 1968, 108).



Fig. 8. Karystos Archaeological Museum. Cipolino column with quarry inscription from Nimborio.

In conclusion we can tentatively assert the following: An Early Bronze Age settlement with Cycladic connections can be located at Lefka-Trochalos and Gkisouri, Nea Styra. Based on the testimony of the extant towers and farm houses of Classical to Hellenistic date, the habitation nuclei of historic times seem to have been dispersed, although a fortified stronghold, most probably an acropolis, existed at

Aghios Nikolaos on Mount Kliosi and can be dated in the same period. This well-built fortification, attests to communal effort or central, perhaps Eretrian, administration guidance. Dispersed civic nuclei of Classical to Hellenistic date are also verified by the various cemetery sites, looted or excavated, known in the area. Two habitation buildings of the simple farm house type, dated from late Hellenistic to late Roman times have been partly excavated at Lefka, near the once visible ancient mole. The imposing tower and farm house remains, together with inscriptions, ceramic, and metal finds of the Archaic to Hellenistic periods denote elite group activity in the region of ancient Styra.

A significant economic factor in Roman times was the systematic and extensive exploitation of southern Euboean marble quarries by local officials and Imperial delegates, such as Claudianus, as attested by inscriptions on a column in a quarry on Mount Kliosi and on two 6 m long columns recently found at Nimborio beach (fig. 8) (Quarries: Papageorgakis 1964, 262-278. Lambraki 1980, 31-62. Zappas 1981-1982, 243-275. Vanhove 1989, 226-231. Vanhove 1996. Lazzarini 2007, chapter 12. Chidioglou 2009, 73-91).

Systematic site recording and further investigation in southern Euboea will provide more answers to a number of historical and archaeological issues for this region and its relationships to Athens, the Cyclades and the rest of ancient Greece.

ABBREVIATIONS

Agora XII Talcott L. and Sparkes B.A., *Black and Plain Pottery of the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries B.C., The Athenian Agora XII*, Princeton, New Jersey 1970.

IG I^B Lewis D., *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores, I, Decreta et Tabulae Magistratum*, Berlin 1981.

IG II Köhler U., *Inscriptiones Atticae aetatis quae est inter Euclidis annum et Augusti tempora*, Berlin 1895.

IG II² Kirchner J.E., *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores*, Berlin 1913.

IG XII.9. Ziebarth E., *Inscriptiones Graecae, XII.9*. Berlin 1915

MK Karystos Archaeological Museum

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