



THE KARYSTIAN KAMPOS SURVEY PROJECT: METHODS AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Tankosić, Ž.¹ and Chidioglou, M.²

*¹Indiana University, Department of Anthropology,
Student Building 130 Bloomington, IN 47405, USA*

*²Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 20 Bouboulinas Str., 10682 Athens, Greece,
(mchidioglou@yahoo.gr)*

Received: 30/11/2009

Accepted: 16/02/2010

Corresponding author: ztankosi@indiana.edu

ABSTRACT

The Karystian Plain (the Kampos) is part of the Karystia that had not been archaeologically explored in a systematic way despite its obvious economic importance for the inhabitants of southern Euboea. In the course of two seasons of fieldwork the Kampos Survey was able to cover approximately forty percent of the designated survey area. In the process we located 36 previously unknown archaeological findspots ranging in date from the end of the Neolithic to the Late Byzantine times. In this paper we present our preliminary results. Our data suggest that the Kampos was as important to the ancient Karystian as it is to the area's inhabitants today.

KEYWORDS: Karystian Plain, prehistory, Classical and Roman periods, obsidian, surface survey

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we present preliminary results of the two seasons of intensive archaeological field survey of the Karystian Plain or Kampos. The project is organized by the Southern Euboea Exploration Project (SEEP) with the permission from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. The project is funded by the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP) and by the personal funds of the late Professor Malcolm Wallace. The fieldwork part of the project took place during the summers of 2006 and 2007. Currently, the detailed study of the material and other data collected in the field is under way by an international team of scholars.

The Kampos is located northwest of the Bay of Karystos (fig 1) and stretches roughly east-west, starting at the head of the bay, where it is the broadest and where the modern town of Karystos is located, and tapering somewhat towards Marmari on the western coast.



Figure 1 The Karystian Kampos viewed from the east. South Euboean Gulf and east coast of Attica in the background.

On the north it is bordered by the Karpaston range and on the south by the Bay of Karystos and the northern foothills of the Paximadhi Peninsula. It is the largest agriculturally viable piece of land in the area and is also fairly well watered, especially in the spring. This agricultural po-

tential of the Kampos as well as its geographical location between Karystos and the sheltered deep water port at Marmari were added incentives to the research project. The Karystia, although somewhat marginal in modern times, had been an important region in the past. Previous work in the area by both the Greek Archaeological Service represented by the 11th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and by SEEP provided a sizeable body of data to support this assertion. Although the eastern part of the Kampos had been explored in the course of previous work, large gaps in our knowledge of the area, potentially very important for reconstructing the Karystian past, still remained. It was our goal to fill in those gaps.

The survey target area in the plain covers approximately 260 ha (fig 2), including the lower foothills of the Karpaston range to the north and of the Paximadhi Peninsula to the south.

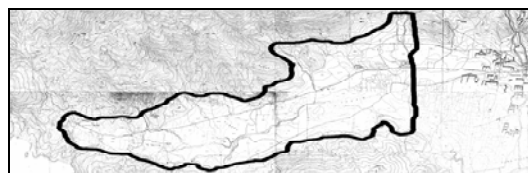


Figure 2 Topographic map of the Kampos with the boundaries of the survey area. North is up.

The boundary of the survey area in the east coincides with the westernmost extent of Dr. Donald Keller's dissertation survey (Keller, 1985). Our aim was to learn as much as possible about the use of the Kampos in the past and to locate the focal points of that use in the form of findspots. Since the Kampos is under rapid modern development, obtaining information on the exact location of archaeological sites in the area will help in their protection. An important goal of the Kampos survey was to compare in the

same setting some of the methods used previously in the field by SEEP in order to gauge their reliability and effectiveness. In addition, we wanted to examine whether some of the routes that exist today in the Kampos have been used as thoroughfares in the more distant past. Finally, we wanted to examine the effects of alluviation on the visibility of ancient remains in the plain.

METHODS

In 2006 the survey methodology consisted of two to four people walking in transects determined mainly by natural or man-made features of the terrain (fig 3). This method intentionally corresponded to the “route survey” approach used by SEEP east of the Bay of Karystos on the Bouros-Kastri Peninsula. Our transects followed paved and unpaved roads, footpaths, gullies, ravines, and current or seasonal water flows; in short, all features of the terrain that could serve as thoroughfares. Additionally, two long arbitrary transects that roughly coincided with the edges of the survey area were surveyed on the north and south foothills bordering the Kampos. The team members were also allowed to depart from the transects and investigate any areas that seemed promising as potential locations of findspots. Only a small representative sample of material was collected during this phase of the survey and only from locations that were designated as findspots.

The 2007 survey was executed using the intensive stratified sampling method. The survey team in the 2007 season consisted of seven to ten people in the field at any time. The entire survey area was divided into 100 x 100 m squares, which were then surveyed independently or in clusters using the stratified sampling approach (fig 3).

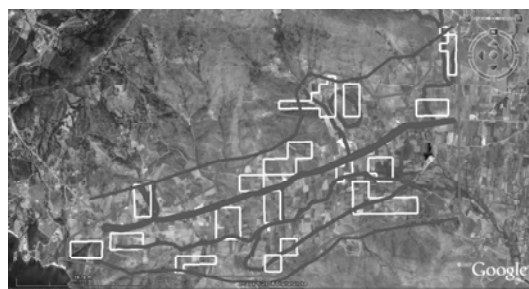


Figure 3 Survey coverage. Dark gray – the 2006 transects. Light gray – squares surveyed in 2007. Courtesy of Google Earth.

“Stratified sampling” in this particular case meant that the squares to be surveyed were not chosen randomly but with respect to specific predetermined guidelines; e.g., to include all of the different geomorphological features present in the survey area as well as taking into account some of the results of the 2006 season. The 100 x 100 m squares were further divided into ten 10 x 100 m transects, each surveyed by a team member. Total collection was carried out on the surface of all the areas designated as findspots, while the thin material scatter between the findspots was recorded (in case of non-diagnostic material) or recorded and collected (diagnostic sherds, obsidian, etc.).

We were able to locate 20 findspots in 2006 and 16 in 2007. Judging only by the number of discovered findspots it would be possible to conclude that the extensive method employed in 2006 was more productive. However, the degree of efficiency notwithstanding, the route-survey method was not able to address other aspects of the use of the Kampos—namely the offsite distribution of archaeological materials. Moreover, many of the findspots discovered in 2007 are located not far from the 2006 survey transects. This shows the inadequacy of the extensive survey when trying to locate all past remains in a given area and especially the ones located at unexpected locations. Therefore, the main

difference between the methods used in 2006 and 2007 field seasons is not in the quantity but in the quality of data that was acquired.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

We were able to locate and record 36 new archaeological findspots in the course of the survey. As we suspected, the plain was not a forgotten area in the past but was the location of lively activity in both prehistoric and historic periods.

The prehistoric finds were the most surprising. At the beginning of the project one of our working hypotheses was that prehistoric remains would be largely covered by alluvium. Consequently, we only expected to find evidence of the prehistoric use of the plain in areas located on higher grounds and on other locations away from the heaviest effects of alluviation. Contrary to our expectations, we have found at least 15 findspots that are either purely prehistoric or have a prehistoric component. They are located on both schist outcrops and on the flat alluvial soil of the plain. Moreover, some findspots located on sloped terrain (e.g., findspot 06N16) did not show evidence for deflation and displacement of materials, which would have been the case if they were affected by alluvial or colluvial shifts of the topsoil. This suggests that either the major alluvial events that participated in the formation of the Karystian Kampos originated earlier than our earliest prehistoric finds (dated to the Final Neolithic or at least the EBA) or that alluviation in the plain was topical—i.e., it affected different parts of the plain in different ways. Final answers to these questions can only be provided by geological analyses. What is puzzling is that we did not find any prehistoric findspots that could be termed

“settlements” as they are traditionally defined based on surface finds—we did not find any architectural remains and pottery is present only in the form of a few very small fragments. Most of the prehistoric findspots are characterized by obsidian scatters, some of which are among the largest found in Greece thus far (William Parkinson pers. comm.). Good illustrations of this are findspots 06N16, 07S28, and 07N35 (fig 4).

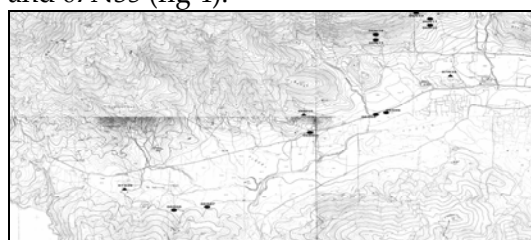


Figure 4 Locations of findspots mentioned in the text. Triangles mark prehistoric and circles Classical/Hellenistic/Roman findspots. North is up.

The findspot 06N16 is located on a ridge north of the modern road to Marmari and above the small Ay. Photeini chapel. The site consists of a large number of obsidian flakes, tools, and core fragments (ca. 400 pieces) and small pottery fragments. The evidence suggests blade and flake production on the site (William Parkinson pers. comm.). Three tanged points also came from this findspot. Findspot 07S28 is located in the western part of the Kampos, around a rocky outcrop at the edge of a modern farmstead. A total of 287 obsidian pieces were collected from the area of about 100 x 50 m. The significance of this site is that almost the entire lithic reduction sequence is represented among the finds. Findspot 07N35 is located on the eastern side of the survey area and in the immediate vicinity of the excavated EBA site of Ay. Georgios. The findspot consists of a large obsidian scatter of about 2500 fragments stretching

over an area of at least 150 × 100 m. We also surveyed parts of this findspot in more detail using a 2 × 2 m grid. Our goal was to check for any patterning in the material distribution that would help us identify the specific activities taking place at this location. The 07N35 assemblage consists of tools made on pressure flakes, many of which can be identified as notches and borers, but no blade cores were found. The material is chronologically consistent with the LN/EB period (William Parkinson pers. comm.). On the basis of current data this findspot could be tentatively interpreted as a specialized site, a place where particular chipped stone tools were produced or modified to be used for specific, yet unclear, activities. There is little evidence for blade production at the site, which suggests that the blades were produced elsewhere. This seems even more probable given that the nearby EBII site of Ay. Georgios, excavated by the 11th Ephorate, produced evidence for the full reduction sequence accompanied by a wealth of lithic material (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1992 and personal observations).

We located a limited number of Classical and Hellenistic findspots in the northwestern and western region of the Karystian plain during the 2006 and 2007 survey seasons. The large number of Roman findspots, as well as the large amount of Roman material scatter, in comparison to the distribution range of the Classical to Hellenistic findspots, can hypothetically reflect varying degrees of intense Roman farming versus pastoral activities in the Kampos, from the 5th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. Due to the visible architecture and their prominent locations, sanctuaries were the most clearly visible remnants of the Classical and Hellenistic

periods (fig 4) with parallels in Attica and most of the Cycladic islands.

Findspot 06N14 is located at the north central edge of the Kampos, on a rocky outcrop. Three sets of steps cut on two different levels in the natural rock lead to a platform at the summit of the outcrop and to several niches. Parts of a dry-stone wall of N-S direction are visible to the west of the outcrop. Black glazed sherds, belonging to skyphoi and a kantharos and plain ware sherds, together with millstone fragments and a black glazed roof tile were found at this site. These finds, together with the form and location of the pits, the niche, the rock cut steps leading to it, and the possible *perivolos* wall suggest that the remains belong to a small Classical rural sanctuary. Another probable sanctuary with a rock cut niche on a stone outcrop facing east with surface finds of Roman times was identified at findspot 06N19. An additional rectangular cut was found on the top of the outcrop. Plain and combed Roman sherds were observed at this site.

Remains of a Byzantine chapel (06N11) were found not far from the northeastern border of the survey area. It is possible that some of the Cape Mnima sandstone blocs used in its construction belong to an earlier edifice—perhaps a Roman tower. A poorly preserved circular stone construction (06N12) preserved at a height of ca. 0.50 m and located in the immediate vicinity of 06N11 could represent the remains of a round Classical tower (cf. for Attica e.g. Suto 1993, 3, table 1); however, at this point there is no sufficient evidence to support that. The other, perhaps more likely, possibility is that these remains represent an old threshing floor.

Many findspots consisted of scatters of Early to Late Roman plain and combed ware pottery of different intensity includ-

ing pithos sherds, amphora and jug strap handles, rim and base parts, other utilitarian vessel fragments, and column fragments and tiles. Roman constructions or building remains were visible at several locations, such as findspot 06S07, where parts of a water pipe were found apparently in situ. A number of cist graves, probably dating to the Roman period, were found at findspot 06S08 (Chidiroglou 1997, 405 and 1998, 363-366).

At other findspots Roman surface material was mixed with Byzantine, as at findspots 06S05 and 06S06 and at the site of the modern church of Eisodia Theotokou, where traces of a Byzantine chapel (06N13), together with six blocks of Cape Minima sandstone, two fragmentary *cipolino* columns and a small white marble Ionic capital were also found. Blocks and parts of stone olive or wine presses were found reused in various modern rural installations in the Kampos, serving as a reminder of the perennial recycling of ancient building materials. A good example of this practice is findspot 06N02 where a Roman sandstone block serves as a doorstep to the modern installation and a schist counterbalance block of an ancient olive press (cf. Brun 2004, 98, 102) has been incorporated into the (relatively) modern threshing floor nearby.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our results allow us to formulate several tentative conclusions. The area of the Karystian Kampos, probably due to its economic importance, has been inhabited from Prehistoric to modern times. It seems that the densest human presence is at-

tested in the Kampos during the EBA and Roman periods, a fact that indicates interest in the resources of the plain during these times. Intense olive or wine cultivation could be the reason during the Roman period. Due to the lack of palynological studies, this hypothesis remains a possible but unsubstantiated way of explaining the density of Roman sites. At the moment, it is more difficult to interpret the interest that prehistoric populations had with the Kampos, but it is likely that it was also based on its significant agricultural potential.

The scarce Classical to Hellenistic finds can be variously explained. One should keep in mind the factor of chance in locating sites in alluvial soils or areas with long centuries of cultivation and of building material recycling. Moreover, the pertinent material evidence has not been studied in full and some reinterpretations are possible. On the other hand, one could hardly expect the Karystians, who suffered during the Persian wars and were then for years penalized by the Athenians (Herodotus, 6.99. 2, 8.112. 2, 8.121.1, 9.105; Thucydides 1.98.3, 4.42.1, 4.43.3, 7.57.4, 8.69.3; also see Wallace 1972, 171-254), to expand their cultivation in the Kampos in these difficult years.

To conclude: despite our relative successes more work remains to be done in the Kampos, not only in the study of data collected during the most recent survey, but also in the form of further archaeological exploration of the areas not yet surveyed and in the form of additional detailed research at particular findspots.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all the people involved with the organization and execution of the Kampos Survey. We are grateful to INSTAP, Indiana University's Schrader Fund,

and Malcolm Wallace for generously providing funds for this project. We are particularly grateful to Dr. Donald Keller for his involvement in the survey and for providing valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

ABBREVIATIONS

ArchDelt Archaeological Report (Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον)

KODAI Kodai. Journal of ancient history

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