Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry, Vol. 16, No 1 (2016), pp. 269-271

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.44777

AN EXTENDED MESOLITHIC SETTLEMENT IN NAXOS

Adamantios Sampson

University of the Aegean, Laboratory of Environmental Archaeology, Rhodes 85132, Greece
(adasampson@gmail.com)

Received: 15/10/2015
Accepted: 19/12/2015

ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades of excavations and surveys, a Mesolithic cultural stage was discovered for the first time in the Aegean which until then had appeared in a few places in mainland Greece. The first Mesolithic site appeared at the Cyclops Cave in Youra of Northern Sporades in 1992 and then the Mesolithic settlement of Maroulas in Kythnos was excavated (1996-2005). The following excavation of the Mesolithic site of Kerame in Ikaria (2007-2008) showed that the Mesolithic culture of the Aegean extended to the eastern side of the Aegean too. The next few years, surveys in the central and southern Aegean yielded new Mesolithic sites such as the sites of Roos in Naxos and Areta in Chalki. So far, nearly all the sites are located next to the sea and seem to have been related to sea movements from island to island. Apparently, the obsidian sources of Melos must have been the main reference center for this period while secondary were the obsidian sources of Yali in Dodecanese. The site Roos in Naxos is particularly important because, besides presenting all the features of a typical Mesolithic site, it expands to an area of dozens of acres, much greater than those of Maroulas in Kythnos and Kerame in Ikaria. The stone industry includes Melian obsidian and flint from Stelida quarry of Naxos. The typology of artifacts refers to stone tools that have also been found in Ikaria, Kythnos, Chalki and the earliest layer X of Knossos. Some types of implements probably indicate that the site of Roos could be dated to a later Mesolithic stage than those of Kythnos and Ikaria.

KEYWORDS: Mesolithic, Melos, obsidian, flint artifacts, typology, Roos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent research of the Aegean University in Roos, at the southern side of Naxos, revealed a large quantity of lithics of the Mesolithic period showing an early establishment of 9thmillennium BC, judging by the types of tools (A. Sampson 2010, 85). Fig. 1-3.

Figure 1. Roos. View from the East

The sloping area of the settlement, having an extent of more than 20.000 sq. meters, lies next to a river with deep watercourse which flows into the sea. During the survey, the whole area was divided in five sectors for more effective collection of the surface findings (Fig. 3). The choice of location follows the usual model of occupation of Mesolithic settlements which are located mostly next to the sea with access to water sources. Naxos is the largest island of the Cyclades with many dietary resources and more sites of the same period are expected to be found.

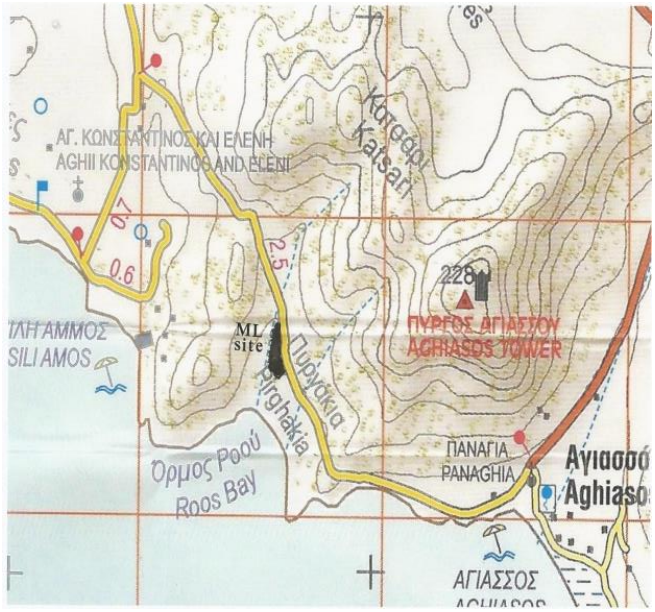

Figure 2. Map of the Roos area

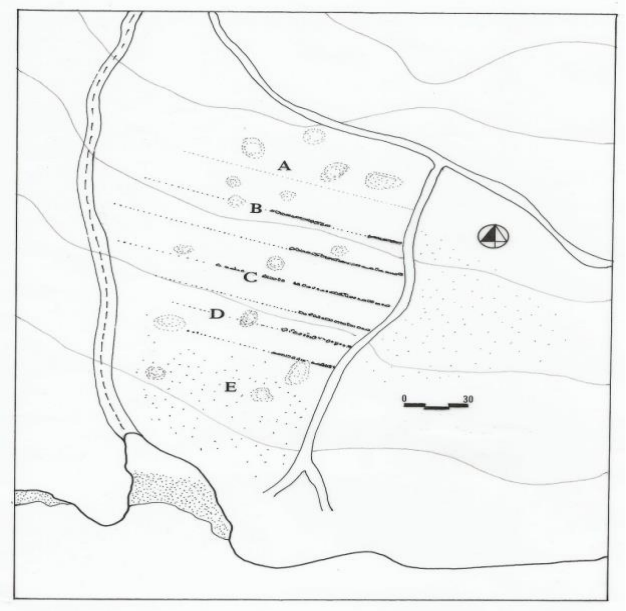

Figure 3. Topographical map of the site

An additional reason for attracting Mesolithic settlers was the existence of an extensive quarry of white flint at Stelida not far from Chora of Naxos (Seferiades 1983; Sampson 2010; Carter T. et al. 2015).

2. THE LITHIC MATERIAL

The most representative material was obsidian, which may have originated from the island of Melos. Although Roos lies 120 km away, there was an easy access to Melos by a chain of islands. Less frequent is a white patinated flint probably coming from the quarry of flint at Stelida or other sources of the island. Quartz was also used relatively often. It is worth noticing that obsidian artifacts in Roos (Fig. 4) include primarily blades and splintered pieces (84.6% of splintered pieces are made of obsidian).

The general tool repertory in Roos does not diverge from other sites of the Aegean Mesolithic, such as Maroulas in Kythnos (Sampson et al 2010) or Kerame 1 in Ikaria (Sampson et al 2012). Similarities can be demonstrated to the inventory from the island of Chalki (Sampson 2010), and to some degree also to the aceramic (X) level in Knossos (Kaczanowska and Kozłowski 2011). All the mentioned sites are distinguished by the high percentage of denticulate tools with notches and retouched flakes. The small differences observed may reflect the different functions of the sites, although one cannot rule out that they may be chronological and cultural markers.

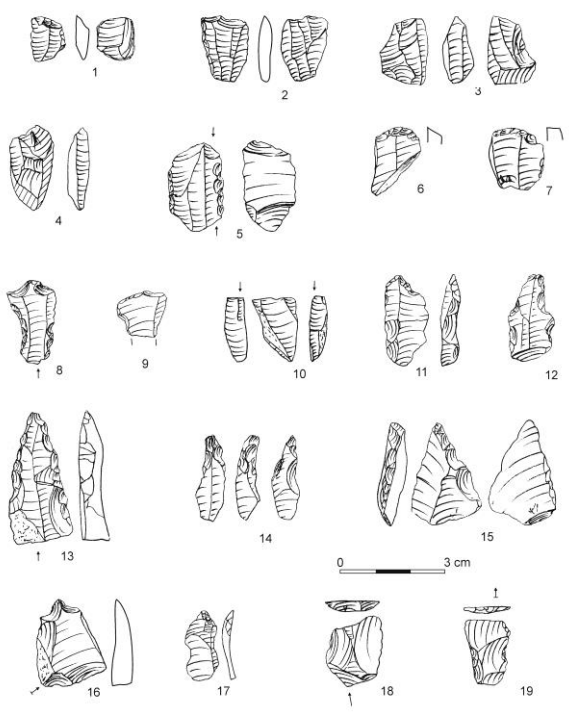

Figure 4. Mesolithic artifacts from Roos

The most numerous group of tools in Roos are perforators, which in Maroulas make up 15.5% of the inventory and are completely absent in layer X in Knossos. The second most numerous group in Roos consists of retouched flakes and denticulate tools with notches, which are the most frequent tool forms in Maroulas and Kerame 1. In Roos, the frequency of backed and truncated pieces, which in Maroulas and Knossos (layer X) account for 1/5 of all tools, is similar to that of retouched flakes and denticulate tools. In recent survey at Stelida (South-West coast of Naxos) several Mesolithic artifacts have been collected, mostly similar to those of the early phase of the Aegean Mesolithic such as denticulates, retouched flakes, end-scrapers, atypical perforators, truncated bladelets and convex backed bladelets.

3. CONCLUSION

It is the first time that such an old settlement is located in Cyclades, except from the already excavated Mesolithic settlement of Maroulas in Kythnos, thus extending to the southern Aegean the already known Mesolithic network of sites. All indicate that the cultural stage of the Mesolithic (9000-7000 BC) was widespread in the whole Aegean area, from the north (Cyclops Cave in Youra, Sampson 2008) to the south, where the last five years the Aegean University's research under the direction of prof. A. Sampson has spotted another large Mesolithic site in Chalki, Dodecanese (A. Sampson, *Mesolithic Greece* 2010, 139). The Mesolithic habitation on the islands presupposed early seaways from all the Aegean areas to the reference center of the major sources of obsidian on the island of Melos and these, although inferior in significance, of Yali Island in the Dodecanese. For the moment, the exact chronological location of Roos is premature, however the appearance of tools made on regular blades (e.g. trapezes and retouched blades), may point to a later Mesolithic phase than Maroulas in Kythnos.

REFERENCES

Carter, T. et al. (2015) The Stelida Naxos Archaeological project: new data on the Middle Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Cyclades, *Antiquity* 341.

Kaczanowska, M., Kozłowski, J.K. (2011) Lithic industry from the aceramic levels at Knossos: an alternative approach. *Eurasian Prehistory*, 8, 1-2, 67-88.

Sampson, A. (2008) *The Cyclops Cave on the island of Youra, Greece. Mesolithic and Neolithic networks in the Northern Aegean Basin. Intra-site analysis, Local Industries, and Regional Site Distribution*, Vol 1, INSTAP Academic Press, Philadelphia.

Sampson, A. (2010) *Mesolithic Greece*, Ion ed., Athens.

Sampson, A., Kaczanowska, M., Kozłowski, J.K. (2010) *The prehistory of the island of Kythnos (Cyclades, Greece) and the Mesolithic settlement at Maroulas*. Krakow.

Sampson, A., Kaczanowska, M., Kozłowski, J.K. (2012) *Mesolithic occupations and environments on the Island of Ikaria, Aegean, Greece. Monograph in Folia Quaternaria* 80. Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Seferiades, M. (1983) Un centre industriel préhistorique dans les Cyclades: Les ateliers de débitage du silex de Stelida (Naxos), in *Les Cyclades, Matériaux pour une étude de géographie historique,* Univ. de Dijon.